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a cura di

MARCO MERLO, FABIO ROMANONI e PETER SPOSATO



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Stamp of the Teutonic Knights from the 14th century. (“Visitatorum Magister in Allemaniae”). Material: brass Deutschordens-Zentralarchiv, Singerstraße 7, 1010 Vienna, Austria Foto Frank Bayard 2012 Wikimedia Commons CC SA 3.0

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# Siege and Fortification in Medieval Europe

by JOHN FRANCE

Professor Emeritus Swansea University

The first part of fighting is the shooting of arrows, then the pointing of spears, then the thrusting of hem to left and right and then the drawing of swords. That's all there is to it.<sup>1</sup>

**T**hus a ninth century Arab writer characterised the nature of war, and his emphasis on close quarter fighting with edged weapons, which forces men on foot or horse, to confront one another in an intimate way, explains the vital supremacy of fortifications in the Middle Ages. The man crouched behind a palisade set on a pile of earth has an obvious advantage over the fellow climbing up, while he who stands on the walkway of a stone wall is in a much better position than one climbing a ladder to reach him. It is, therefore, no accident that castles, mostly ruined, occasionally barely discernible, are the strongest reminder of the medieval past in Europe.

Of course, medieval people enjoyed fine models from Rome, primarily city walls, for the Romans were great fortifiers. They inherited an ancient tradition which had developed almost all the techniques of building strong defences long before them.<sup>2</sup> But there were many kinds of fortifications. Britain is marked by a number of earthwork dykes, of which Offa's Dyke, 177 miles (285 km), roughly corresponding to the border between England and Wales, and Wansdyke (Woden's dyke), 35 miles, (56 km), are the best known. However, we know little about them or when and how they were operated. Villages in France and the Netherlands were sometimes protected by *haie*, small hedged earthworks. In some places there are traces of much bigger earthwork and timber enclosures, as

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1 al-Harith b. Abi Rabi'a quoted and translated in Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs. Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2001), 23.

2 For a summary see J. France, *Perilous Glory. The Rise of Western Military Power* (London: Yale, 2011), 23-29.

at Le Puiset, built to protect the local population in times of trouble, but we know little of them.<sup>3</sup> Armies in the field commonly built field fortifications of earthwork and timber: in 554 a Frankish army ravaged Southern Italy and, when challenged by a Byzantine force, constructed a mighty earthwork by the river Volturno, only to be defeated.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that Charlemagne's great effort to conquer the Saxons hinged upon establishing Frankish fortifications and destroying native ones. Both sides used earthwork and timber to protect these bases.<sup>5</sup>

We have close knowledge of actual systems of fortification, in what we now call France, England and Germany. Charles the Bald (843-77), faced by fast-moving Viking raids which penetrated France via its rivers, tried to draw the invaders into diplomacy, but ultimately improved his army, established fortifications at key point and built fortified bridges across the great rivers.<sup>6</sup> Paris, in the ninth century, was centred on an island in the Seine, the Île de la Cité. Thanks to Charles' efforts, by 885-86, when the city was attacked by a large Viking army, it was connected to the north bank by a stone bridge guarded by an incomplete stone tower, while a wooden bridge and tower linked it to the southern (in modern terms "Left") bank. It was around these structures that an epic siege erupted. This was a savage siege but ultimately it ended in a compromise. The Emperor Charles the Fat (881-87) permitted the Vikings to continue upstream to ravage his enemies in Burgundy even though they had been unable to take Paris, whose citizens cared little for the Burgundians.<sup>7</sup>

Alfred of Wessex (871-99) was faced by the same Viking enemies: they could come by sea or by land from the Midlands and North which they had conquered. In response, he constructed "*burhs*", a network of fortified settlements in which the local population could shelter. These were earthwork and timber enclosures. A system of compulsory service provided garrisons, and although they were not individually especially strong, they could resist initial attacks and pin down the enemy until a parallel system of raising a field army could attack them. In the

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3 J. France, *Medieval France at War. A Military History of the French Monarchy 885-1305* (Leeds ARC, 2022), 79.

4 J. Haldon, *The Byzantine Wars* (Cheltenham: History Press, 2008), 1.

5 B. S. Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns (768-777)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

6 J. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London: Longman, 1992), 2011-219.

7 *Viking Attacks on Paris. The bella Parisiaca urbis of Abbo of St Germain* ed. N. Dass (Leuven: Peeters, 2007); France, *Medieval France at War*, 50-53.

890s this definitely annulled Viking attack.<sup>8</sup>

The German kings, who were also dukes of Saxony, faced attack by the Magyars of what is now Hungary. These were steppe horsemen, lightly armoured fierce fighters whose speed and hitting power made them deadly enemies. Henry I (919-36) bought them off for a period during which he built up his cavalry and began to construct a network of fortresses, enabling him to crush them at the battle of Riade in 933. His son, Otto I (936-73) defeated them again at the Lechfeld in 955, but on this occasion the local garrisons massacred the survivors as they took flight, ending the Magyar threat.<sup>9</sup>

Such networks of fortifications were a terrible burden on medieval monarchs and their subjects. Charles the Bald's system was dissipated in the succession problems after his death. In England *burhs* survived as local centres, and some like Winchester became cities with walls, but within half a century the defensive network had vanished - to the great profit of later Viking attackers. Equally in Germany some centres became important towns, but the network disappeared as the enemy weakened and political circumstances changed. The real lesson of these cases is that while strength of fortification is important, in the end none could hold out without hope of relief. It was the combination of fortification and a strong Anglo-Saxon army which made Alfred's system successful. In Germany the kings built up heavily armed cavalry and at the Riade Henry I advised his cavalry:

When you sally out to the field of battle let noone ride faster than another but keep together. The shields of each should guard his neighbour so that they can receive the first volley of arrows from the enemy [Hungarians]. Then charge very fast before the enemy can fire again for the weight of your armour will prevail.<sup>10</sup>

Given their success why did such networks vanish? Armies and fortifications were incredibly expensive and a great pressure on society. All monarchies had to depend on the social and political elites who saw themselves as enjoying a high degree of autonomy in political and military affairs. Fundamentally medi-

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8 R. Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars. Sources and Interpretations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).

9 C.R.Bowlus, *The Battle of the Lechfeld and its Aftermath, August 955. The end of the Migrations in the Latin West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

10 Liudprand, *Antapodosis* ed. J.Becker (Hannover: MGH, 1915) Bk 2 ch. 31, 51-52 and see also Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae* ed. P.Hirsch and H.E.Lohmann (Hannover: MGH, 1935), Bk 1 ch. 38, 58.

eval society was based on an agriculture in which, for every seed of grain sown the peasant typically could reap only 5, and in a bad year less. Medieval people had ingenuity and skill, but only limited means so the whole structure of society had to march to the pace of the agricultural year. In consequence armies and military enterprises, with very few exceptions, were short-lived, and because of that relatively incoherent. These characteristics became more evident as political circumstances changed.

### *The Castle: Origins*

Castles had rather different origins from the royal networks already mentioned. In his Edict of Pîtres of 864 Charles the Bald showed he was well aware of the dangers of private fortifications:

And it is our wish and express command that if anyone has built castles, fortifications or palisades at this time without our permission, such fortifications shall be demolished by the beginning of August, since those who live nearby and round about are suffering many difficulties and robberies as a result.<sup>11</sup>

The Franks were dominated by a bickering and feuding aristocracy who, even under a great ruler like Charlemagne, enjoyed a monopoly of political office - it was they who became Counts, Dukes and Margraves, the key territorial administrators. They were supervised by the *missi dominici*, travelling inquisitors, but even they were drawn from this class. In practice, therefore, they enjoyed considerable political autonomy and the Carolingian kingship strengthened their power over others.<sup>12</sup> This was backed by their substantial military retinues. When the Carolingian hold on power in France was challenged in a conflict which endured for a century by the rival dynasty of the Capetians monarchy ceased to count for much. The great aristocrats, to whom governmental power had been confided, were able to exercise it for their own benefit. Their actual lands were scattered across and even beyond the areas in which they claimed to administer justice and government, but houses built on them were vulnerable to attack by rivals.

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11 *Edict of Pîtres*, trans. Simon Coupland consulted on 08.04.25 at [https://www.academia.edu/6680741/The\\_Edict\\_of\\_Pitres\\_translation](https://www.academia.edu/6680741/The_Edict_of_Pitres_translation).

12 C. West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution. Political and Social Transformation between Marne and Moselle, c.800-c.1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); S.D. White, *Rethinking kinship and feudalism in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2006).

The castle was a solution to this problem being a fortified home, garrisoned by dependent knights, built where a lord had lands, serving to coerce the agricultural population and protect the family's wealth from rivals. The fate of Egfrid illustrates how important this was:

‘At a certain villa Egfrid [friend and ally of Charles the Bald] refused to emerge from the strongly fortified house in which he had shut himself up; so they set fire to it and drove Egfrid out, chopped off his head and threw his body into the flames.’<sup>13</sup>

As kingship was disputed kings could no longer manipulate aristocrats by offers of office or grants of land, so dependence on land and governmental rights over it increased making protection the more urgent. This was the more urgent and important because in the tenth century peasants expanded the area of agriculture and made such local rights very valuable. And conflict between the great men, the need to cater for family or create and maintain alliances permitted the rise of middle-ranking aristocrats so that by the 11th century castles were becoming quite common, especially in France south of the Loire where contact with the monarchy was becoming rare. As these multiplied it became very difficult for kings, dukes and counts to maintain control over them. The dukes of Aquitaine, for example, lost control of the Limousin to a group of aggressive vice counts.<sup>14</sup> Although such great men retained their eminence they depended greatly on playing off their nominal subordinates against one another.

Underlying this process, around 1000 a Burgundian cleric noted the impact of the new agricultural wealth on the church:

Just before the third year after the millennium, throughout the whole world, but most especially in Italy and Gaul, men began to reconstruct churches, although for the most part the existing ones were not in the least unworthy. But it seemed as though each Christian community were aiming to surpass all others in the splendour of construction. It was as if the whole world were shaking itself free, shrugging off the burden of the past, and cladding itself everywhere in a white mantle of churches. Almost all the episcopal churches and those of monasteries dedicated to various saints, and little village chapels, were rebuilt better than before.<sup>15</sup>

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13 *Annals of St Bertin* ed. J.Nelson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) Year 868,143.

14 J.France, “People against mercenaries. The Capuchins in Southern Gaul,” *Journal of Medieval Military History* 8 (2010), 1-22.

15 Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum Libri Quinque* ed. J.France (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 114-

His “white mantle” could soon have been applied to castles which flowered as the century proceeded. In Italy a parallel process known as the *incastellamento* began at the same time in response to the weakness of the monarchy.<sup>16</sup> But castles were not simply defensive. We are told in a charter that the Lord of Saumur “terrified Fulk [Nerra, Count of Anjou 987-1039] as its garrison rode about ravaging his lands.” Horsemen based in a castle could patrol, to defend or attack, up to 15 miles in a day from their base. And castles were built to attack. Around the year 1000 Audoin bishop of Limoges (990-1014), supported by the duke of Aquitaine, built a castle at Beaujeu to protect his lands, but Jordan II of Chabannes saw this as a provocation and defeated his forces.<sup>17</sup> Of William the Conqueror his biographer remarked:

This was his chosen way of attack: to strike fear into the settlement by frequent, lengthy expeditions in that territory, to lay waste the vines, fields and domains, to capture fortified places and put garrisons in them wherever it was desirable; finally to attack the region relentlessly with a great multitude of troubles.<sup>18</sup>

Richard I (1189-99) built Château Gaillard in two years (1196-98) as a base for his projected reconquest of the Norman borderlands seized by the French monarchy during his absence on crusade.<sup>19</sup>

Kings had greater resources than aristocrats but even the strongest monarchs could not prevent great men from constructing them. In France the monarchy struggled with the castellans. Concerning the castle of Monthéry, which stood on the route between the royal cities of Paris and Orleans, Philip I of France (1060-1108) is said to have remarked to his son:

Beware, my son, keep watch and guard that tower; the distress I have suffered from it has nearly made an old man out of me. Its plots and vile treachery have never allowed me good peace and quiet.<sup>20</sup>

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16 A.A.Settia, *Proteggere e dominare: Fortificazioni e popolamento nell'Italia medievale* (Roma: Viella, 2011).

17 Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon* ed. P.Bourgain, R.Landes and G.Pon (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), CCM 129, Chap. 42, 163.

18 William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi* ed. and tr. R. H. C. Davies and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1998), Chap.38, 61.

19 J.Gillingham, *Richard I* (London: Yale, 2002), 304.

20 Suger, *Deeds of Louis the Fat* ed. R.C.Cusimano and John Moorhead (Washington: Catholic University, 1992),40.

The Counts of Champagne dominated the valley of the Marne with no less than six castles, and they had fortified cities like Troyes and many castles elsewhere. Yet Brionne remained a bone in the throat until its acquisition in 1121.<sup>21</sup> In France castles spread like a rash, so that in the general area of Capetian dominance, the Île de France, some 148 private castle sites have been identified.<sup>22</sup> However, the monarchy could generally count on the support of senior clergy, who often controlled cities and castles. In the longer run as towns developed their people looked to the monarchy for aid against aristocratic pretensions and violence, providing finance and the shelter of their walls.

In Germany, where the outbreak of civil war under Henry IV (1056-1105) provided a powerful stimulus, it has been calculated that between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries 10000 castles were built.<sup>23</sup> The Hohenstaufen dynasty, kings and emperors in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were named for their home castle. In Italy the Plain of the Po was dominated by great trading cities with formidable fortifications who were very frequently at war with one another. Many of the nobles of the countryside moved into the cities where they built towers, such as can still be seen at San Gimignano, while preserving castles on their estates. War between the cities usually consisted of attacking not cities themselves, but outlying fortifications and castles to chip away at the *contado* of the enemy city and force concessions.<sup>24</sup>

After the Norman conquest of England William I (1066-87) gave lands to his Norman followers, establishing, however, quite harsh terms to control them. But even in England the Conqueror and his successors needed aristocratic support and castles multiplied. When King Stephen (1135-54) took the throne many lords favoured his rival, Mathilda, and the ensuing war developed into a series of local struggles in which sieges of castles predominated.<sup>25</sup>

Aristocrats were not necessarily building castles out of hostility to royal power,

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21 M. Bur, *La formation du Comté de Champagne v.950-1150* (Nancy: Université de Nancy II, 1977), 277-79.

22 A.Châtelain, *Châteaux forts et féodalité en Île de France du xi<sup>ème</sup> au xiii<sup>ème</sup> siècle* (Paris: Créer,1983), 225-27.

23 W.F.Schueri, *Medieval Castles and Cities* (London: Cassell, 1978), 87.

24 J. France, "Thirty Years of War: the cities of the Lombard Plain," in R.G.Khamisy, R.Y.Lewis, V.R.Shotten-Hallel (eds), *Exploring Outremer I Studies in History in Honour of Adrian J.Boas* (London: Routledge, 2023), 127-41.

25 D.C.Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135-54* (London: Routledge, 2016).

but when it was weak they had to guard their interests. And castles were not just block-houses. They were residences, social centres, stores and status symbols, deeply treasured by their owners, not least because from them their bully-boys, the knights, dominated the peasants and assured collection of rents and dues. When Robert Giroie's castle of St Céneri was taken by surprise and burned by his enemies a chronicler recorded of its owner: "So at one blow the noble knight was utterly disinherited and forced to live in exile in the houses of strangers."<sup>26</sup>

But castles were clearly seen as having vital military and strategic importance for Ordericus comments:

In the lands of the English there were very few of those fortifications which the French call castles: in consequence the English, for all their martial qualities and valour, were at a disadvantage when it came to resisting their enemies.<sup>27</sup>

Ordericus was probably wrong because England had fortified *burhs*, and many aristocratic homes were fortified.<sup>28</sup> But he shows the importance contemporaries attached to castles.

In 1184 the county of Hainaut was invaded by three allied armies led by the count of Flanders. Baldwin V of Hainaut was greatly outnumbered and could not possibly challenge such overwhelming force in the field. He abandoned weak castles and ordered his vassals to concentrate their men in the strongest places they held, and to devastate the countryside. To encourage them he sent round the following message:

Take comfort and be strong, because our enemies will withdraw at some time, and leave our lands to us, because they cannot take the lands with them.<sup>29</sup>

These allies all had different reasons for joining the attack, and when the prospect of a long war in the face of a determined defender loomed, they withdrew. It was typical of medieval armies that short-term issues were of overwhelming

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26 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica* ed. M.Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969-79), 3: :294-95. 4: 295-96.

27 OV 2:219.

28 G.Beresford, *Goltho: the development of an Early Medieval Manor, 850-1150* (London: English Heritage, 1987).

29 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut* tr. Laura Napran (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), Chap.114, 95.

importance. And after all “they cannot take the lands with them.” And such problems persisted. In 1310 Frederick of Austria attacked the castle of Schaerding, but his hastily gathered force soon retreated in the face of poor logistics, bad weather and loss of horses.<sup>30</sup> Baldwin V was fortunate that his vassals remained loyal; in 1216 Prince Louis of France rallied the rebellious English barons against King John. Many lords went over to Louis and their castles strengthened the revolt, but some remained loyal and royal castles were numerous and strong.<sup>31</sup> The resistance of Dover to Louis’ attack was crucial to the royalist cause. Under the determined leadership of Hubert de Burgh a well-supplied garrison of 140 knights and many others tied up powerful elements of the rebels for some two years - blunting the threat to the English monarchy.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Castle and its Fortifications*

Much recent writing has stressed the many functions of the castle.<sup>33</sup> Castel del Monte, built by the Emperor Frederick II in Apulia c.1240, was primarily a “pleasure palace.”<sup>34</sup> Bodiam castle in East Sussex was constructed in 1385 as a status symbol by a successful soldier who made his fortune in the “Hundred Years War.”<sup>35</sup> In fact, this approach is part of a general tendency amongst historians to play down violence and its importance in medieval history. But, of course, given their origins as residences, few castles can be seen as mere bunkers. In the case of the examples above it is worth noting that both were built in peaceful areas, and they were still highly defensible and shared features with the more obvious bunkers of their age.

It is generally observed that most castles built between the mid tenth century

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30 *Annales Osterhovenses* 754-1433, MGH SS 17:556.

31 S.McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar. The Forgotten Invasion of England 1216* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2013).

32 J.Goodall, “Dover Castle and the Great Siege of 1216,” *Château Gaillard: Études de castellologie médiévale* (2000), 91-102.

33 C.Coulson, *Castles in Medieval Society: Fortresses in England, France, and Ireland in the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) has been highly influential in this respect.

34 G.Masson, *Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. A Life* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957), 193-99.

35 C.Coulson, “Some analysis of the Castle of Bodiam, East Sussex”, *Medieval Knighthood* 4 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992), 51-108.

and the later twelfth were of earthwork and timber. There were exceptions. Doué-la-Fontaine was a ninth-century stone-built great hall, fortified by the count of Blois about 950 with the addition of an upper storey. Around 1000 this whole structure was buried in a great earth motte and a donjon (keep) built on top.<sup>36</sup> Fulk Nerra count of Anjou (987-1040) was a great builder of castles, and it seems as if from early in his reign he built in stone with Langeais completed before the end of the tenth century.<sup>37</sup> The Conqueror built the great stone White Tower to overawe London.<sup>38</sup> But these were exceptions. Earthwork and timber was for long the norm. This can be connected to the reasons why lords wanted such structures. They were seeking to protect, or extend, wealth-giving lands or the rights over them. Not all lords had strong elevated sites, but earthworks could be built almost anywhere. Moreover they were relatively cheap. No special skill, such as that of the mason, was required, and most aristocrats had, in one way or another, acquired the power to demand manual labour from their peasants. By contrast, in the Holy Land, the crusaders found an absence of timber, but a plethora of ancient ruins whose ready cut stone they therefore used to build castles. Saforie castle, for example, where the crusaders held a fractious conference before the battle of Hattin in 1187, has ancient sepulchres embedded as corner stones.

Earthwork and timber castles were very effective in defence.<sup>39</sup> Two types dominated. The Ringwork was simply a circular ditch with the spoil of the excavation carefully piled inside, thus presenting an attacker with a ditch and a steep ascent to a wooden palisade. This was probably the kind of protection constructed around Goltho manor. It clearly has much in common with the marching camps used by the Franks and others since time immemorial. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the rival cities in the plain of the Po frequently constructed camps of just this kind in the course of their attacks upon one another.<sup>40</sup>

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36 M. de Botiard, "De l'aula au donjon: les fouilles de la motte de la Chapelle à Doué-la-Fontaine (x-xi siècle)," *Archéologie Médiévale* 3-4 (1973), 5-110.

37 B.S. Bachrach, "The cost of Castle building: the case of the tower at Langeais, 992-92," in *The Medieval Castle: Romance and Reality* ed. K.L. Ryerson and F. Powe (Minnesota: Centre for Medieval Studies, 1991), 47-62.

38 R.A. Brown, *English Castles* (London: Chancellor, 1970), 15.

39 The key work is R. Higham and P. Barker, *Timber Castles* (London: Batsford, 1992).

40 On Goltho see above p.00, n.00: J. France, "Campements fortifiés, sièges et engins de siège dans la vallée du Po au XIII siècle," in N. Prouteau, E. de Crouy-Chanel and N. Faucherre (eds), *Artillerie et Fortification 1200-1600* (Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes,

A more complex type was the motte and bailey. This was built in much the same way. A circular ditch was created, and the earth piled inside in a mound around the lower part of the timber framework of a tower which could then be furnished with the required number of stories. Some considerable care was needed to distribute the earth across the mound to make it stable. In 1066 William of Normandy brought with him a prefabricated castle, and in the Bayeux Tapestry his labourers can be seen painstakingly layering the earth of the motte to take the weight which would be placed on it.<sup>41</sup> The tower on the motte could be connected by a bridge across the ditch which separated it from the bailey, if there was one, which was essentially a ringwork protecting stores, stables and other assets. If this was breached the owners of the castle could seek refuge in the wooden tower. No doubt some of these structures were better or bigger than others, but what we know of ditches suggests they were formidable. In 1091 William II of England and his brother issued decrees in an attempt to end warfare and castle-building in Normandy. Amongst other provisions it was decreed:

No-one in Normandy may dig a ditch in open country unless from the bottom of this ditch the earth can be thrown out of it without the aid of a ladder, nor may he set up more than a palisade which must have neither redan nor rampart-walk.<sup>42</sup>

This suggests that ditches could be very deep, and by extension, mottes or earthwork redoubts very high. Anyone who has seen the massive earthworks at Berkhamstead castle, built very quickly after 1066, will appreciate the strength conferred by excavation. The earthworks cover 11 acres: the motte is 40 ft high, and the bailey 300x500 ft, the whole surrounded by a double bank and ditch.<sup>43</sup> Not the least of the advantages of a motte was protection against fire. In the Bayeux Tapestry the Normans attack Dinan, but are shown having to mount the motte to use it, exposing them to the defenders. Fire arrows are, contrary to Hollywood movies, relatively poor at the job, while sticky fire was rare in the west.<sup>44</sup>

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2011), 33-40.

41 *The Bayeux Tapestry* ed. D.M.Wilson (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985), 49-50. The layers are carefully picked out in different colours.

42 F.Barlow, *William Rufus* (New Haven: Yale, 1983), 286-87.

43 P.M.Remfry, *Berkhamsted Castle and the Families of the Counts of Mortain, the Earls of Cornwall and the Crown* (Worcester: SCS, 2009).

44 BT 23.

The number of such earthworks is immense. In England the new Norman aristocracy created a rash of such fortifications to hold down their new lands, and they continued to be created, though at a much slower rate, right through the Middle Ages. English heritage suggests that there are some 700 such sites in England and Wales. There is no single pattern. Some are simply plain are classic motte and bailey, others just mottes or ringworks, a few utilise the sites of prehistoric earthworks and many are modified natural features. A lot of these structures had very short lives, and are long decayed. The motte at Pentre where the M4 crosses the river Lloughor is commonly dismissed as a heap made during building of the road. But many others were developed and modified over the years, often with stone castles erected upon them. Most of the castles held for the count of Hainaut in 1184 would have been earthworks.

The rising tide of stone castles in the twelfth century owed a great deal to the increased wealth of Europe, much of which was creamed off by the aristocracy. They offered their owners greater comfort, provided an intimidating element in the landscape, and were highly flexible. Roman city walls provided a model for construction. There was no fixed pattern and the primary determinants of layout were the sites available and the wealth of the owner. A common feature of prominent castles in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was a great square or oblong donjon tower. One of the earliest was Loches begun by Fulk Nerra c. 1035 and completed by his son. It stands 23.3 by 15.4 metres (76 by 51 ft) with walls 2.8 m (9 ft 2 in) thick. It is 37 m (121 ft) high, and each storey of the four storeys is a single room. In England the White Tower is of the same magnitude, while Hedingham is a more modest example. Its keep is 16 m (53 ft) x 18m (58 ft) and rises through five floors to 21 m (70 ft), while turrets rise up to 7.6m at each corner. It stands on a rock spur dominating the nearby countryside of Suffolk and Essex.

Around many of these donjons there were earthworks, soon replaced or augmented by outer walls to form a concentric defence. Plain walls, up to 10m high, were a substantial obstacle, especially if, as was commonly the case, they were built on earthworks. However, the addition of a walkway, protected by a wall with merlons (crenelations) offered defenders cover, making them even more formidable. Towers, which were higher and projected outwards from the wall, enabled the defenders to take attackers in the flank. Dover, reconstructed under Henry II (1154-89), had a mighty square five storey donjon at its heart, surrounded by a high curtain wall with massive square towers, and the whole was

encircled with another curtain with towers. In the thirteenth century this outer wall was extended to cover the whole of the plateau on which the castle sat, and the main gate rebuilt massively: by this time many of the towers projecting from the wall were, in the new fashion, round. These certainly offered a better all-around view than square towers which, however, continued to be built.

Perhaps the greatest castle in twelfth century Europe was Château Gaillard, constructed by Richard I, 1196-98, on a rock spur high above the river Seine. It was connected to the fortified town of Les Andelys by the river and supported by other castles in the region. With cliffs on three sides, it could only be approached from the east where a huge and strongly fortified outer bailey blocked the way of any attacker. This was cut off from the inner bailey by deep rock-cut ditch beyond which another strong bailey faced the attacker. This, in turn, was connected by a bridge to the inner bailey with its great tower. In England the greatest castle was Caerphilly, a private structure begun in 1268 by the Claire family: it is surrounded by a huge artificial lake which kept throwing machines at bay and prevented mining.<sup>45</sup> Only the huge royal castles built by Edward I (1272-1307) to control North Wales rivalled but never surpassed it. This network of castles in North Wales served as bases to put down any rebellion and, by that very fact, strengthened them. But they were in themselves massive enough to provide time for relief to gather. They were hugely expensive and the resources of much of the English kingdom were drawn on for construction,<sup>46</sup> but compared to the cost of continual mounting of huge expedition this was an economy. And privileged towns, erected in the shadow of such monsters, generated taxation to offset their costs. Only kings and the very greatest princes could afford such structures. They were massively built and their complex designs with successive lines of defence made penetration difficult. Gates were always weak points. Barbicans, enclosed the immediate approaches, providing outlying defence. The gates themselves increasingly took the form of two linked round towers in a single block through which the entry ran like a tunnel. It was blocked by portcullises and in its roof and walls were "murder holes." But such refinement was not common and, in any case, more modest measures could be very successful. In 1214 King John invaded France from the south while his allies attacked from the north. John enjoyed

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45 D.Renn, *Caerphilly Castle* (Cardiff: CADW, 2002).

46 For a comprehensive view see *The History of the King's Works I and II The Middle Ages*, ed. R.A.Brown, H.M.Colvin, A.J.Taylor (London: Stationery Office, 1963), 293-408.

much success but this was halted by the resistance of the castle of La Roche-au-Moine. It was not a particularly strong place but the garrison was determined and bought time for the French to mobilise and block John's attack.<sup>47</sup> When Toulouse was besieged by the Albigensian Crusade in 1217 its fortifications had been largely demolished, but it was too big to surround and an attempt to storm it failed in the narrow streets with defenders throwing missiles from roof-tops. In the end the siege failed with the death of its leader, Simon de Montfort, in 1218.<sup>48</sup>

Few cities could afford truly elaborate fortifications. In fact, many city walls perhaps were intended to enforce tax collection as much as to resist attack. But in Italy, where the cities often fought one another, the citizen armies were a real defence, no matter how modest the actual fortifications. But the real challenge offered by a city was, in an age of small armies, its size. Crema, a small city with powerful fortifications including a double wall, held out against Frederick Barbarossa for six months 1159-60, while the siege of Milan, much bigger but indifferently fortified, 1161-62 took almost a year.<sup>49</sup> Frederick II had magnificent armies but he failed before Brescia in 1238 and Parma in 1248.<sup>50</sup> Cities could be well-fortified, like Carcassonne which in the late 13th century received a double set of walls, but even without such refinements they could resist siege. As long as the citizens acted carefully. In July 1209 a crusading army besieged Béziers. The citizens were confident that this huge of army of 20000 would soon move on unable to feed itself for long. The citizens harassed and taunted the attackers, but failed to shut their gates which the crusader infantry poured into for a great massacre.<sup>51</sup>

### *Siege Warfare*

Besieging a castle or city created enormous organizational and logistical problems for the attacker. Assault, entering the place over, under or through its walls, was bound to be a bloody affair if the defenders were determined. Philip II of France besieged Château Gaillard in September 1203, but only after he had seized nearby fortresses and captured the fortified town of Les Anelys which was

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47 France, *Medieval France at War*, 134.

48 L.W.Marvin, *The Occitan War, A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-18* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 268-96.

49 France, *Western Warfare*, 110, 14.

50 Masson, *Frederick II*, 285-87, 344-47.

51 Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 37-45.

connected to the castle. A relief expedition was then fought off. A strong camp was established by the south wall and a series of assaults began, but success came only in May 1204. Philip had raised a very large army to tackle a fortress with a garrison of 40 knights and 120 lesser men. French losses were heavy but included only four knights, so the burden of loss fell on mercenaries and poor foot.<sup>52</sup> This was a huge effort, justified only by the scale of the Anglo-Norman war. The costs of such an effort were only justified if the rewards were great. Bribery of garrisons was cheaper. The siege of Antioch on the First Crusade ended after eight months when a garrison commander was bribed.<sup>53</sup> Quite commonly siege ended with an agreement but things did not always go smoothly. In 1104 Baldwin I of Jerusalem besieged Acre and was happy to offer generous terms when the citizens offered to surrender. But he had the aid of many Italian ships and troops who wanted plunder, and they attacked the citizens as they left the city.<sup>54</sup>

Surprise, of course, as in the case of St Cénéri, was effective. Castles had to be prepared for siege. Garrisons had to be reinforced and extra food laid in. The gates had to be strengthened, areas cleared of food sources and defences improved. Hoardings had to be built; these were wooden structures cantilevered from the wall or tower enabling archers to cover blindspots and to drop stones on enemies at the base of the wall from which they projected. And catapults had to be erected to counter those of the enemy. But surprise was difficult to achieve as news of preparations inevitably travelled.

Assault was likely to be bloody, so blockade was an alternative. This required the attackers to create shelter and to establish lines of supply, which Philip did by careful preparation at Château Gaillard in 1203. In July 1247 Emperor Frederick II besieged Parma, establishing a strong camp, entitled Vittoria, so that by February the city was starving. Frederick left the siege to hunt and the garrison, by now desperate, made a major sally and destroyed the attacker. The loose structure of medieval armies made blockade very risky.

A third strategy, which often accompanied assault or blockade, was to destroy

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52 France, *Medieval France at War*, 127-29.

53 Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* ed. R.Hill (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1962), 44-45.

54 J. France, "Surrender and capitulation in the Middle East in the Age of the Crusades," in Holger Afflerbach and Hew Strachan (eds), *How Fighting ends - a History of Surrender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 82 [73-84].

the countryside round about, so that the defenders faced grave difficulties whatever the outcome of the actual siege. In 1144 Turks had seized Li Vaux Moise near Petra. Baldwin III of Jerusalem (1143-63) realised that the inhabitants depended on cultivation of olive trees, and it was decided: “therefore, to root out the trees and burn them.” The Turks were then ejected by the local population and the castle returned to the Franks.<sup>55</sup> On 1 May 1179 Richard Lionheart attacked Taillebourg, then thought impregnable because there were cliffs on three sides, and the fourth was protected by a well-fortified town. On 8 May Richard set about destroying everything in the countryside. This provoked the townspeople into a sally, which Richard crushed, following them into and seizing the town. Deprived of the supplies there, the castle soon surrendered.<sup>56</sup>

If assault was contemplated, the attacker had a choice of going over, under or through the walls before him. In practice at a major siege all three would be attempted. In combination, of course, with blockade, for apart from anything else siege was a psychological struggle and a sense of isolation was destructive of morale.

Even a simple fortification could be formidable. In 1111 Louis VI of France, in alliance with Theobald of Blois, decided to attack Hugh of Le Puiset. This was an earthwork enclosure, a ditch and bank crowned with a palisade, with a motte in one corner. Louis fortified nearby Toury, which belonged to the abbey of St Denis, and stocked it with food. The royal army drove Hugh’s forces into the castle, and tried to burn the main gate with blazing carts. Theobald attacked elsewhere but his forces were harassed by some of Hugh’s cavalry. While the king was stalled before the gate, a bald priest, the leader of a peasant militia which they bishops had ordered to support the king, climbed up the earthwork and chopped a hole in the palisade, opening the way to the king’s men. Hugh fled into the motte and later surrendered.<sup>57</sup> The farcical elements in this story should not be allowed to detract from understanding how difficult it was to take even a simple fortification. In this case royal resources were augmented by the church, which had been plundered by Hugh, in what was a major undertaking. Le Puiset was unusually large, so Hugh could not guard its whole circuit, enabling the bald priest to do his work. His success also underlines the need for infantry in sieges.

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55 Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, 25-27.

56 J.Gillingham, *Richard I* (London: Yale, 2002), 81.

57 Suger of St Denis, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat* ed. R.C.Cusimano and J.Moorhead (Washington: Catholic University, 1992), 84-89.

Archery was vital to both sides in a siege. The attacker needed to keep the defenders' head down, so that the walls could be assaulted. Strong penthouses were often constructed and moved close to the walls to protect miners picking at the foundations. Towers could be built to dominate a section of the walls with arrow fire, and, as at Jerusalem in 1099, they could be moved up to the wall on wheels and a drawbridge dropped.<sup>58</sup> Defenders needed to bring the maximum firepower to bear at the point of danger. Arrow-slits in the walls were of vital importance to defenders, especially as cut into projecting towers they could take any attack on the walls in the flank. Though it has to be said that shooting galleries with multiple slits were never safe places.<sup>59</sup> Such considerations partly explain the growing popularity of crossbows, a weapon with a flat trajectory which assisted accuracy, and used in conjunction with the plunging fire of ordinary bows must have been deadly.

Arrow fire had a very important impact on castle design in the crusader states. At first crusader castles were simple affairs, like the "Red Tower", a two-storey donjon surrounded by a square outer wall.<sup>60</sup> But as the settlers came under enemy pressure, mighty fortresses arose showing careful design. In 1168 the Hospitallers constructed Belvoir on the flat western edge of the Jordan valley, "set amidst the stars like an eagle's nest and abode of the moon."<sup>61</sup> A wide rock cut moat surrounds the massive square outer castle on three sides (the other is the cliff over overlooking the Jordan valley on which sat a great tower) each set with square towers. A precise small copy forms the inner castle. But the special conditions of siege in the Middle East was that wealthy hostile states could use archery on a scale unknown in the west.

Turkish horse archers was the staple of Middle Eastern armies, and the proximity of the steppe meant they could be hired in large numbers, to supplement local mounted and foot archers. Bowmen on this scale could saturate the defences and even arrow slits would become very hazardous: mighty Margat fell to the Mamluks in 1285: around the arrow slits, buried in the interstices of the building

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58 J.France, *Victory in the East. A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 346-55.

59 P. Jones and D. Renn, "The military effectiveness of Arrow Loops: Some Experiments at White Castle," *Château Gaillard* 9-10 (1982), 445-56.

60 D.Pringle, *The Red Tower (al-Burj al-Ahmar)* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1986).

61 Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, 58-61.

blocks the archaeologists found numerous arrowheads.<sup>62</sup> This is why at Belvoir and other great crusader castles the outer walls are lined with buildings, like stores and stables, all having numerous loopholes.

Crac des Chevaliers in Syria illustrates the importance of missile weapons and their impact. The castle is built on a spur of the mountain accessible only from the south. Its highest point was sculpted to house the inner castle. On its south side a great talus and towers confronts the enemy, all providing ample cover for defenders. The outer wall on the south is lined by a huge stable with arrow slits. The west wall is immensely thick and set with shooting galleries and box machicolations - effectively small stone hoardings projecting from the walls covering blind spots. To the east is the main entrance, fully enclosed and provided amply with firing positions. On the south, between the outer and inner walls is a great cistern which, when filled, would be a deterrent to mining. In effect, the south outer wall and talus of the inner castle provide layers of firing points. At the very top are much wider openings for large crossbows which could be brought to bear on enemy catapults.

These heavier missile weapons were trebuchets, which by the thirteenth century were of two kinds, both relying on a rotating arm with a sling attached. The traction trebuchet operated by human pulling power, could throw only relatively small missiles, but with a high rate of fire. It was clearly an anti-personnel weapon, though larger models could probably damage the crenulated wall protecting the walkway of a castle or city wall. Such weapons seem to have originated in China but were in use in Western Europe by the tenth century. The counterweight trebuchet, which appears simultaneously in Europe and the Middle East in the later twelfth century, threw a much heavier ball. Neither could reach beyond 150-200m, and it is noted that in operation usually had to be screened from their target's arrow fire. Neither could smash heavily built masonry walls, but both were major threats to fighting tops, and in the Middle East therefore increased dependence on concealed and well protected firing points.<sup>63</sup>

A rather more mundane means of attack was mining. In October 1215 King John besieged the great keep of Rochester castle, digging a mine under the tower at its south-east corner. Props were placed and a fire set, fuelled by "forty of the fattest pigs of the sort least good for eating." The subsequent collapse enabled

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62 Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, 179.

63 I follow here M.S.Fulton, *Artillery in the Era of the Crusades. Siege Warfare and the Development of Trebuchet Technology* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

John to take the place.<sup>64</sup> Mining was highly developed in the Middle East.<sup>65</sup> In 1271 Baybars, Sultan of Egypt attacked Crac. His Mamluk regime in Egypt had developed a formidable standing army, far greater than anything that the weak kingdom of Jerusalem could field. Baybars quickly destroyed the lesser crusader castles which supported Crac and arrived before it on 3 March. He quickly overran the incomplete barbican in front of the south wall and placed his trebuchets there. A mine was dug under the south-west tower under cover of fire from these engines and bowmen. Once the tower collapsed, the garrison accepted terms and left the castle on 8 April.<sup>66</sup> It seems strange that so mighty a fortress fell so quickly, especially as it was held by the fighting monks of the Order of St John of whose bravery there can be no doubt. But Baybars' army was well equipped, and ready to pay the blood-price of the attack. And above all there was no chance of relief, and that really governed the fate of any fortification faced by a determined enemy.

Castles and city defences changed relatively little in the later Middle Ages, but states and armies did. The competence of governments was extended and deliberate strategic choices made about where to strengthen fortifications. In fact, lesser castles, while still useful in local warfare, were eclipsed. Armies became better organized and coherent. By the mid-thirteenth century gunpowder was known, and the first illustration of a gun is dated 1326. Guns were heavy and clumsy, of limited use in the field, but very valuable to both sides in a siege.<sup>67</sup> Henry V's conquest of Normandy, 1417-19, proceeded by a series of sieges in which cannon were vital. However, it should be noted that this happened at a time when French government was in disarray and incapable of mounting a challenge in the field.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, gunpowder artillery was a real challenge for contemporary ironworkers: Mons Meg now in Edinburgh castle weighs 15,366 pounds (6,970 kg) and is 13 feet (4.0 m) in length. Such weight made for great difficulties of movement. And gunpowder was very expensive. And just as castles used trebu-

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64 R.A. Brown, *Rochester Castle* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969), 14.

65 N. Prouteau, "Beneath the Battle? Miners and Engineers as 'Mercenaries in the Holy Land (xii-xiii siècles)," in J.France (ed.), *Mercenaries and Paid Men. The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 105-18.

66 Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, 149-50.

67 C.J.Rogers, "The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War," *Journal of Military History* 57 (1993), 241-78 reproduced in C.J.Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate* (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 55-94.

68 J.Sumption, *Cursed Kings: The Hundred Years War 4* (London: Faber, 2015), 530-80.

chets against attackers, so cities and castles had their own cannons, and defensive devices. When the English threatened to besiege Orléans in October 1428 the French protected the bridge across the Loire with a *boulevard*, a strong point to keep the enemy away from the city. The English mined this but the French countermined; however this bulwark fell and the French retreated. The city was bombarded by English cannon, but the French had their own cannon, one of which fatally wounded the English commander, the earl of Salisbury. Thereafter the city was partially surrounded with a series of earthwork and timber forts. Ultimately the French, inspired by Joan of Arc were able to resupply the city and to force the abandonment of the siege.<sup>69</sup>

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was the culmination of a superbly organized assault by the Ottoman Turks. On his accession the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed II (1451-81) built fortresses and improved roads so that the city was isolated. An army of over 50,000 encamped before the city in April and it confronted about 8000 defenders who manned the immensely strong walls of the city. The Ottomans certainly used large guns, some of which survive to this day, but their eventual success on 29 May owed much more to the disciplined and well organized siege and the Sultan's acceptance of heavy casualties.<sup>70</sup>

### *Consequences*

Many sieges failed, though rarely without loss to attackers and defenders. Many also ended in compromises of one kind or another. For what attacker did not prefer an intact city, the ransoms of its leaders and the domination of industrious citizens, to burning ruins and piles of profitless dead? On the First Crusade the crusaders in 1097 prepared a great assault on Nicaea, but under cover of preparations their Byzantine allies secretly negotiated a peaceful surrender.<sup>71</sup> But the crusaders stormed Jerusalem in July 1099 after a savage siege, and as a result: "The city was filled with corpses and blood."<sup>72</sup> There were no formal laws of war in the Middle Ages. Nobles might ransom other nobles if fighting was not too

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69 K. DeVries, *Joan of Arc: a Military Leader* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999).

70 S. Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople, 1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

71 *Gesta Francorum*, 16-17.

72 Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* tr. A.C.Krey, *The First Crusade* (Gloucester Mass.: Smith, 1958), 261.

bitter, but such consideration was rarely extended down the social scale. If a fortress was stormed all within were at the mercy of a wildly out of control soldiery. Commanders, therefore, had to make careful calculations. Too early a surrender and they would be dishonoured, too late and they risked being dead!

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Old Testament miniatures with Latin, Persian and Judaeo-Persian inscriptions. Paris, France, 1244-1254, © J. P. Morgan Library and Museum, M638, fol. 23v. (Saul victorious, a proven Leader).



© J. P. Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.638 fol 42r.  
(Uriah Refuses to return home, Uriah is slain)



© J. P. Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.638 fol 43v.  
 (David orders the destruction of Sheba. Joab pursue Sheba in the city of Abel)

# The Battle of the Leitha River in 1246: the mystery of the King of Rus'<sup>1</sup>

by ILLIA PARSHYN

**ABSTRACT:** The article analyzes the course and historical circumstances of the battle of the Leitha River in 1246, which became a turning point in the struggle for the Austrian inheritance after the death of Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome, the last representative of the Babenberg family in the male line. Attention is paid to the participation of the Rus' prince in the army of the Hungarian king Béla IV. The aim of this article is to re-examine the identity of this mysterious ruler mentioned in Austrian and Hungarian medieval sources and to determine whether Rostyslav Mikhailovych or Danylo Romanovych could have been the Rus'ian prince involved in the conflict. The results of the analysis allow us to conclude that the most likely participant in the battle was Prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych, son-in-law of Béla IV and an active figure in Central European politics in the mid-13th century. Data from the "Continuatio Lambacensis" and other Austrian annals further confirm the identification of this figure with the participant in the sudden attack during which Duke Frederick II was killed. The scientific novelty lies in a comprehensive reinterpretation of the "Rus' trace" in the events of 1246, which has long remained marginalized in historiography. The article contributes to the study of dynastic politics in Central Europe, allowing for a new assessment of the role of Rus'ian princes in the struggle for the Austrian inheritance and the relations between local elites.

**KEYWORDS:** KING OF RUS', LEITHA, DUKE FREDERIK II THE QUARRELSOME, BÉLA IV, DANYLO ROMANOVYCH, ROSTYSLAV MYKHAILOVYCH.

The struggle for the Austrian inheritance in the middle and second half of the 13th century turned into a full-scale European war. The whole conflict began in June 1246, when the armies of Hungarian King Béla IV (1206–1270) and Austrian Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome (1211–1246) clashed near the Leitha River. The Austrian duke died. The next era saw intense

1 This research was carried out with the financial support of the Deutsch-Ukrainische Historische Kommission (German Ukrainian Historical Commission, DUHK), which operates with funding from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

internal conflict involving foreign powers. The wealth and extremely advantageous geographical location of the Alpine country made it an attractive possession for any neighboring ruler. Individual sovereigns created entire factions, supported their candidates, and sought to occupy the throne of the Austrian duchy (either personally or indirectly). The local nobility aimed to at least retain their old privileges and sided with various contenders. The papal curia also had its own interests, as it could strengthen its influence over the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire and the territory of Northern Italy thanks to the local clergy. The struggle for the Austrian duchy also became a separate chapter in the gender history of Europe. According to the Privilegium Minus (1156), if the male line of the Babenbergs died out, power could be inherited by women. So, princesses-representatives of this family immediately became “desirable partners” among the European nobility. At least, the Habsburgs ultimately prevailed when Rudolf I (1218–1291) defeated Přemysl Ottokar II (1233–1278) of Bohemia in 1278<sup>2</sup>. During this time, local noble elites emerged as a dominant political force in the Duchy of Austria.

Scientists turned to analyzing the political history of this period. Austrian researcher Karl Lechner described the general course of the battle and its consequences<sup>3</sup>. Alphons Lothsky provided detailed information about the main sources on the history of medieval Austria, including chronicles and annals describing the death of the last of the Babenbergs<sup>4</sup>. Polish researcher Norbert Mika analyzed the struggle for the Austrian inheritance, noting the formation of political coalitions in Central and Eastern Europe in the mid-13th century<sup>5</sup>. An important aspect of his research was the battle of the Leitha River. Other researchers also concluded that this battle in 1246 triggered a whole kaleidoscope of political events and became a catalyst for dynamic changes on the political map of Europe at that time<sup>6</sup>. From

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2 Dušan Zupka, «Forms of Communication of the political Elites in medieval central Europe (Hungary, Austria and the Czech lands 1250–1350)», *Historický Časopis*, 67 (2019), pp. 800–801.

3 Karl Lechner, *Die Babenbergen: Mark-Grafen und Herzoge von Österreich 976–1246*, Böhlau, 1994.

4 Alfons Lhotsky, *Quellenkunde zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte Österreichs*, Hermann Böhlau, 1963.

5 Norbert Mika, *Walka o spadek po Babenbergach 1246–1278*, Wydawnictwo i Agencja Informacyjna WAW, 2008.

6 Witalij Nagirnyj, *Polityka zagraniczna księstw ziem halickiej i wołyńskiej w latach*

this point of view, it is worth noting the important “Rus’ trace” that has been marginalized in scientific interest. In Ukrainian historiography, the presence of warriors from Rus’ was noted by Isidor Sharanevych<sup>7</sup>, Leontii Voitovych<sup>8</sup>, and Illia Parshyn<sup>9</sup>. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, a classic figure in Ukrainian historiography, also devoted considerable attention to this issue. In his seminal work (“History of Ukraine-Rus’”), he reviewed the main reports on the participation of Rus’ian rulers in Austrian events, not overlooking the battle near Leitha<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, contemporary Belarusian scholar Alexei Martyniuk also pointed to the key role played by the Rus’ prince and discussed his figure in detail<sup>11</sup>. However, this issue is still little known in scientific literature and therefore requires further research. It is particularly relevant to return to this issue against the backdrop of the anniversary of this important battle, which will take place in June 2026. Raising this issue in the year of the 780th anniversary of the battle near Leitha is important for Ukrainian historical science, if only because of the involvement of Rus’ian princes in European politics after the Mongolian invasion.

The course of the battle of Leitha in 1246 is well known, primarily from Austrian medieval sources and Hungarian documents. It is believed that Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome attempted to take advantage of the unrest in the western Hungarian counties and annex them to his lands. This was facilitated by the generally dire situation of the Hungarian Kingdom, caused by the Mongol devastation of the early 1240s. King Béla IV still viewed his eastern possessions with fear, trying to quickly restore the castles near the Carpathians and prevent a possible repeat of the Mongol conquest. Under these conditions, he concluded several dynastic alliances – with the Krakow prince Bolesław V the Chaste (1226–1279) and two Rus’ian princes, Rostyslav of Chernihiv (1219–1262) (the Olgovych clan from Chernihiv) and Lev (d. after 1301), son of the prince (after 1253 – king

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1198(1199)–1264, Avalón, 2011.

7 Isidor Szaraniewicz, *Die Hypatios-Chronik als Quellen-Beitrag zur österreichischen Geschichte*, Druk v. J. Dobrzánski & K. Groman, 1872.

8 Leontii Voitovych, *Halych v politychnomu zhytti Yevropy XI–XIV stolit*, Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakevycha NAN Ukrainy, 2015.

9 Parshyn, Illia, *Dyplomatiia Halytsko-Volynskoi derzhavy: yevropeiski naratyvni dzherela XIII–XV stolit*. Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakevycha NAN Ukrainy, 2018.

10 Hrushevsky, Mykhailo, *Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy*, vol. 3, Kyiv, 1993, pp. 67–69.

11 Martyniuk, Alexei, *Do Herbershteina. Avstryia i Vostochnaia Evropa v systeme personalnykh svyazei (XIII – nachalo XVI veka)*, Kvadriga, 2019.



Fig.. 1. The seal of Béla IV (circa 1250).

of Rus') Danylo (1201–1264) (a branch of the Galician-Volhynian Romanovych family). In a letter to Pope Innocent IV (1190–1254) from 1247, Hungarian king explained these steps by his fear of the Mongols: “Returning to what we could do for the good of Christianity, we humbled our royal dignity and gave two of our daughters in marriage to two Rus’ian princes, and the third to a Polish prince, so that through them and our other friends in the East, we might learn news that is largely hidden about the Tatars, so that we might in some way better resist their attempts and insidious tricks”<sup>12</sup>. Under the conditions of the Austrian invasion, Béla IV had to use the forces of his new allies, who only partially belonged to the Western Christian world.

12 Roman Hautala, «Letter from King Béla IV of Hungary addressed to Pope Innocent IV on November 11, 1247», *Qazaq Historical Review*, 2 (2024), pp. 436–438. See: “Nos vero, ad id, quod potuimus, recurrentes, propter bonum Christianitatis majestatem regiam humiliando, duas filias nostras duobus ducibus Ruthenorum et tertiam duci Polonie tradidimus in uxores, ut per ipsos et alios amicos nostros, qui sunt ex parte Orientis, sciremus nova, que multum latent de Thartharis, ut sic eorumdem conatibus et fraudulentis ingeniis utcumque commodius resistere valeremus. Cumanos etiam in regno nostro recepimus, et – prohdolor! – per paganos hodie regnum nostrum defendimus et per paganos infideles ecclesie conculcamus. Amplius propter defensionem fidei Christiane filio nostro primogenito Cumanam quandam thoro conjunximus maritali, ut per hoc vitaremus deterius et ut occasionem aliquam na[n]eisci possemus, per quam valeremus eosdem, sicut plures jam fecimus, ad baptismi lavacrum convocare”.



Fig. 2. The battle of Leitha (Tapestry of the 15th century)

The battle began on June 15, St. Vitus' Day. Part of the Hungarian army crossed the Leitha (in Hungarian tradition, the Sárón River) and engaged in battle against the vanguard of Frederick II the Quarrelsome's army. According to Hungarian records, the losses on both sides were immediately significant. The Hungarian Erne Akós knocked one of the Austrian knights out of the saddle with his spear and sent his severed head to the royal camp<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, Pál, a former judge of the Kingdom of Hungary, was hurt. With seven other compan-

13 Georgius Fejér (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, vol. 4, pars 2, Budae, 1826, pp. 93–94.



Fig. 3. Seal of Frederick II the Quarrelsome. Source: Karl von Sava, *Die Siegel der österreichischen Regenten bis zu Kaiser Max I*, Gerold in Komm, 1871, p. 89.

ions, he was taken prisoner by the Austrians. Heinrich von Liechtenstein set out with his men to meet the enemy, while Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome lined up his knights and addressed them with words of encouragement. The Austrian ruler did not notice that part of the Hungarian cavalry was already advancing on him: in the general melee, he found himself surrounded by Hungarians and the loyal knights of Heinrich von Liechtenstein. In the heat of battle, no one noticed that Frederick II had been wounded in the face and knocked from his horse. In the end, it was only after the battle was over that it became clear that the Austrian duke had been killed. This, however, did not prevent the Austrian heavy cavalry from scattering the Hungarian attackers and quickly pushing them back to the river. The main part of the Hungarian knighthood had not even joined the battle when its outcome was already clear. In fact, the battle of 1246 did not bring any other notable results except for the death of the last male representative of the Babenberg dynasty.

The mysterious death of Frederick II gave rise to many rumors. The Hungarian side emphasized the role of Hungarian knights in the death of the last of the Babenbergs. This is evident in the hagiographic account of the life of Saint Margaret (1242–1270, canonized in 1943), written in the 14th–15th centuries. The source states that once, when Margaret was about four years old and her father was leading an army against Austria, she was staying with her mother. She asked the girl what the outcome of the campaign would be. Then, so that the Lord would reveal the Spirit that would guide her in the future, Margaret replied, as if she were a prophetess: “My lord king will return unharmed. His army will be defeated, but the Austrian duke will die.” Soon, events confirmed her prophecy. The king did indeed return unharmed, although he lost many warriors, and the Duke of Austria was killed in battle by Hungarian knights who loyally served the king<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, Austrian medieval authors noted a clash with the

“King of Rus’” which was the last for Frederick II. This episode can be found in several chronicles and annals, although the identity of this ruler from Rus’ is difficult to determine.

In historiography, the discussion revolves around two figures who could have been involved in this event. These are the Galician-Volhynian prince Danylo Romanovych or his rival, prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych of Chernihiv, son-in-law of the Hungarian king Béla IV. Most historians tend to see Rostyslav Mikhailovych at the head of the Rus’ contingents in the Hungarian army<sup>15</sup>. Among the main arguments of this group of researchers is Prince Danylo’s departure to the Horde to obtain the khan’s charter (yarlyk)<sup>16</sup>. This made his return to Rus’ before June 1246 doubtful. Therefore, he would not have been able to physically reach the battlefield on the Hungarian-Austrian border. It should also be noted that Prince Rostyslav’s presence in the Hungarian army is confirmed by documentary evidence. In 1255, King Béla IV honored the relatives of knight Andreas, who fought against the Austrian duke, with a valuable gift. Prince Rostyslav was a witness to the Hungarian warrior’s merits<sup>17</sup>. However, the late Hustyn Chronicle,

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14 Ildikó Csepregi, «Miracle Types and Narratives The Case of Saint Margaret of Hungary», *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections*, Brill, 2021, pp. 345–346.

15 Lechner, *cit.*, pp. 295–296; Mika, *cit.*, pp. 18–19.

16 Nagirnyj, *cit.*, pp. 229–230; Martyniuk, *cit.*, pp. 50–64.

17 Georgius Fejér (ed.), *cit.*, p. 314.



Figure 4. Prince Rostyslav Mykhailovych (on the horseback) (miniature of the 16th century)

compiled in the first half of the 17th century, directly attests to the presence of Prince Danylo Romanovych in the battle of the Leitha River and his victory over the Austrian duke<sup>18</sup>. Although the sources of this monument are little known, some researchers have suggested that Prince Danylo could indeed have sent aid to his Hungarian ally<sup>19</sup>.

Thus, a Rus'ian prince, whose identity requires further verification, took part in the military campaign of 1246. For example, in the text of the Cologne Royal Chronicle (“*Chronica regia Coloniensis*”) it is noted: “Around that time, the prince of Austria [Frederick II] fought with the king of Bohemia [Wenceslaus I]; having emerged victorious, he captured about two hundred soldiers. That prince [of Austria] met the King of Hungary [Béla IV] on the battlefield sometime in June. Fighting fiercely in a duel with a certain king of Rus', he killed [him] himself and received a mortal wound from him, living for two days; however, his army won the battle”<sup>20</sup>. From the general style of the excerpt, the anonymous author was working with uncertain information. In our opinion, this is evidenced by the frequent use of the adverb “circa” (“about, around, approximately”), as well as the absence of references to the names of influential Central European rulers of that time – Wenceslaus I, King of Bohemia, Hungarian monarch Béla IV, and even Frederick II himself, the last representative of the Babenbergs in the male line. It is also incorrectly stated that the Austrian duke did not die on the battlefield but died from his wounds a few days later.

It is important to mention the participation in the armed conflict of the Rus'ian ruler, who inflicted a fatal wound on the duke, although he himself was allegedly killed in the process. Both princes (Danylo Romanovych and Rostyslav Mykhailovych) died after 1246, so at first glance, the record does not refer to them. However, N. Mika considered it necessary to understand “*quodam rege Ruscie*”

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18 Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej, *Hustynskaya letopis*, Moskva, 2003, p. 121.

19 Mykola Kotliar, *Voienne mystetstvo Davnoi Rusi*, Nash chas, 2011, pp. 202–205.

20 Georgius Waitz (ed.), *Chronica regia Coloniensis (Annales maximi Coloniensis)*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, t. 18, Hannoverae, 1880, pp. 289–290: “Circa idem tempus dux Austriae cum rege Bohemiae dimicavit; ibi victor existens, circiter ducentos milites captivavit. Idem dux circa mensem Iunium congressus est cum rege Hungariae in bello campestri. Cum quodam rege Rusciae singulariter in prelio dimicans, ipsum interfecit et ab eodem mortale vulnus accepit, supervivendo duobus diebus; exercitus tamen suus triumphavit”.

as “the former king of Rus”<sup>21</sup>. Accordingly, Prince Rostyslav fully fell under this definition (although the record of his death still appears to be accidental).

Returning to the phrase “quodam rege Ruscie,” we can identify certain negative connotations. At least, such unflattering epithets were used in relation to Rus’ian princes during the struggle for the Austrian inheritance. For example, Prince Roman, son of Danylo, earned such a review in “Continuatio Praedicatorum Vindobonensium” when he left his pregnant wife Gertrude, niece of Frederick II the Quarrelsome: “1252. The ruler Gertrude (...) married someone from Rus’, who, when he was unable to establish himself, returned to his lands, unworthily abandoning his own wife”<sup>22</sup>. Chroniclers viewed Prince Roman’s brief stay in Austria negatively. Escape was considered a dishonorable act, which, given medieval knightly ethics, deserved a corresponding characterization. Thus, “quodam rege Ruscie” in the battle of the Leitha River in 1246 could also have acted unprincipled, proceeding suddenly, without adhering to the rules of combat acceptable for a nobleman.

Ulrich von Liechtenstein (1200–1275) briefly described the “dishonesty” of the “King of Rus” during the campaign in his poem “Frauendienst” (“Service to Women”). In his description of the battle of Leitha between the Austrians and Béla IV, he noted the presence of “Rus’ians” (“Riuzen”) on the battlefield and confirmed the death of the duke during their attack. The Rus’ians unexpectedly attacked the Austrian ruler from behind when he addressed his own warriors with words of encouragement<sup>23</sup>. There are no grounds for mistrusting the author: due to his high position at the Austrian court and his good knowledge, the poem “Frauendienst” is rightly considered a valuable source of European political and social history<sup>24</sup>. In addition, Heinrich von Liechtenstein, his father, was on the battlefield at the time – it was he who found the body of Duke Frederick II. The “King of Rus”, who led an entire detachment, did indeed behave treacherously,

21 Mika, *cit.*, pp. 18–19.

22 Wilhelm Wattenbach (ed.), *Continuatio Praedicatorum Vindobonensium*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 9, Hannoverae, 1925, p. 727: “1252. Domina Gerdrudis (...) dum proficere non posset, reversas ad partes suas uxore sua relicta minus honeste”.

23 Karl Lachmann, *Ulrich von Liechtenstein*. Berlin, 1841, pp. 527–528.

24 Franz Spechtler, «Liechtenstein, Ulrich von». *Neue Deutsche Biografie*, 14 (1985), pp. 522–523.

according to Ulrich's assessment, by suddenly attacking the enemy from behind. It is difficult to say whether he delivered the fatal blow or whether Frederick II the Quarrelsome was killed by his own confused knights while repelling the sudden attack. However, the reference to a significant number of Rus' warriors in the Hungarian army of Béla IV does not allow us to establish the identity of their leader<sup>25</sup>. On the other hand, A. Martynyuk particularly emphasized the importance of this historical source. According to the scholar, the information provided by the Austrian nobleman Ulrich and the mention of Prince Rostyslav in the Hungarian letter as a direct participant in the battle near Leitha testified to the prince's unique combat-style. Given Prince Rostyslav's young age, his impulsiveness and boldness in attack took the Austrian duke by surprise and led him to death<sup>26</sup>. In this context, A. Martynyuk significantly developed M. Hrushevsky's version that it was Prince Rostyslav who participated in the battle near Leitha<sup>27</sup>. But did he really lead the Rus'ian warriors?

In "Annales Sancti Rudperti Salisburgenses" (Salzburg, Austria), another Latin-language source that mentions the battle of 1246, no precise details can be found: "The King of Hungary, gathering a huge number of warriors, and at the same time "Bruscie" and the king of Rus', invaded neighboring Austria. Prince Frederick went out to meet him and fought him fiercely near the Leitha River; there, many of the king's [of Hungary] troops were killed and numerous others taken prisoner, and the prince of Austria himself was killed, either by his own men or by his enemies. His army, having won the victory, returned home"<sup>28</sup>. This work initially covered events from the beginning of our era to 1286, later Archbishop Waikart continued it to 1307–1308, after which, thanks to the efforts of

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25 Vitalii Mandziak, «Rostyslav Mykhailovych – "Dux Galiciae et imperator Bulgarorum"», *Kniazha doba: istoriia i kultura*, 5 (2011), pp. 137–138.

26 Martyniuk, *cit.*, pp. 62–64.

27 Hrushevsky, *cit.*, pp. 67–68. It is important to note that the researcher found the existence of another source describing the events – "Continuation Lambacensis" (see below for more information about this evidence).

28 Wilhelm Wattenbach (ed.), *Annales Sancti Rudperti Salisburgenses, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 9, Hannoverae, 1925, p. 789: "Rex Ungarie collecta magna multitudine pugnatorum, simulque Bruscie et Ruscie regibus, confinia Austriae invasit. Cui occurrens dux Fridericus iuxta Leitam fluvium, cum eo acriter dimicavit; ubi pluribus ex acie regis interfectis et multis captivatis, ipse dux Austriae vel a suis vel a hostibus, sicut dubitatur, fuit interemptus. Exercitus tamen ipsius accepta victoria ad propria est reversus".

an unknown author, the information was brought up to 1327, and already in the 15th century the annals of St. Rupert's Monastery in Salzburg were thoroughly supplemented up to and including 1398<sup>29</sup>. Commenting on this news, we should note that the king "Bruscie" refers to the Polovtsians. However, Béla IV already held the title of king of the Cumans at that time, and the annalists' references to a separate monarch seem strange. In addition to the mention of the "King of Rus'" the annalists' remark about the uncertainty of the circumstances of the death of Frederick II the Quarrelsome, who "was killed, either by his own people or by his enemies, it is not known," is valuable. Obviously, this happened during the sudden attack mentioned by Ulrich von Liechtenstein.

An analysis of the "Continuatio Lambacensis", the annals of the Lambach monastery in Upper Austria, will help to identify the Rus'ian ruler who took part in the battle of the Leitha River. This work carefully records the events of 1197/98–1283. However, the text of the monument contains separate additions for 1330 and 1348. The names of the analysts are unknown, but from a general overview of the contents of the manuscripts, researchers have concluded that they were loyal to the German king and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen<sup>30</sup>. Let us focus on two interesting excerpts: "[In] 1246, Frederick, Prince of Austria, defeated King Wenceslaus I of Bohemia in battle, capturing the Prince of Carinthia along with many other nobles, and returned home as a glorious victor. In the same year, [Frederick II] started a dispute with three kings, the King of Hungary [Bela IV], the King of Cumania, and the King of Rus', in which countless [soldiers] on the side of the King of Hungary were killed and drowned, and Frederick himself, having won the victory, died in battle in a strange way"<sup>31</sup>.

29 Ernst Klebel, «Die Fassungen und Handschriften der österreichischen Annalistik», *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich*, 21 (1928), pp. 125–134; Lhotsky, *cit.*, pp. 197, 242, 411.

30 Lhotsky, *cit.*, pp. 179–181; Hannes Möhring, «Friedrich II. und das Schwert des Messias in der Continuatio Lambacensis», *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 58 (2002), pp. 213, 216–217.

31 Wilhelm Wattenbach (ed.), *Continuatio Lambacensis, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 9, Hannoverae, 1925, p. 559: "1246. Fridericus dux Austrie regem Boemye in bello devicit, in quo duce Karinthie cum aliis multis nobilibus captivatis ad propria victor revertitur gloriosus. Eodem etiam anno cum tribus regibus, cum rege Ungarie et rege Gomanorum et rege Ruscie, certamen iniit, ubi innumerabili multitudo ex parte regis Ungarie occisa et submersa, ipse Fridericus hac obtenta victoria, in bello mirabiliter occisus occubuit".

Rus'ian sources also indicate the strange circumstances of the Duke's death<sup>32</sup>.

At first glance, the report does not change the established view of the military operations of 1246, but unlike other cited sources, the Lambach annalists mention the "King of Rus'" a second time: "Ottokar, King of Bohemia, divorced his wife Margaret; and instead took the daughter of the King of Rus' as his wife; whom he crowned with the royal crown a little later"<sup>33</sup>. In 1260, Czech King Přemysl Otakar II divorced Margaret, a member of the Babenberg family. This event had political consequences, as the official break with the heiress to the Austrian dynasty called into question the legitimacy of his rule in the Duchy of Austria. This provoked a short-lived conflict between the Czech monarch and Béla IV, which ended with the defeat of the Hungarian army in the battle near Kressenbrunn in 1260. Then, a peace agreement between the parties was sealed by the marriage of Přemysl Otakar II and Kunegunda, daughter of Rostyslav, granddaughter of King Béla IV<sup>34</sup>. Thus, anonymous compilers from the Lambach monastery understood the "king of Rus'" to be one and the same person. It is obvious that in both cases they were writing about Prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych, a young warrior who was knowledgeable about medieval tournaments<sup>35</sup>.

It is difficult to determine to what extent Rostyslav Mikhailovych was recognized as an owner of the royal title. After all, he himself never called himself "king"<sup>36</sup>. At the same time, his daughter Kunegunda is known in some Austrian annals precisely as the daughter of the "King of Rus'"<sup>37</sup>. This discrepancy could have been caused, on the one hand, by the geographical and chronological distance of chroniclers and analysts from the place and circumstances of the events described. It is also worth noting the widespread practice among medieval Latin-speaking authors of considering influential princes of Rus' (and sometimes

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32 Szaraniewicz, *cit.*, pp. 69–70.

33 Wattenbach (ed.), *Continuatio Lambacensis*, p. 560: "Otacharus rex Boemorum uxorem suam Margaretam a se separavit; et pro ea sibi filiam regis Ruscie copulavit; quam etiam in reginam secum brevi post tempore coronavit".

34 Voitovych, *cit.*, p. 209–210.

35 Khrystyna Mereniuk, «Gloria et Virtus: Hastiludium in Ruthenian Lands and Beyond XII–XV Centuries», *Nuova Antologia Militare*, 6 (2025), pp. 111–138.

36 Parshyn, *cit.*, pp. 90–91.

37 Georgius Waitz, (ed.), *Annales Frisacenses, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores sectio*, T. 24, Leipzig, 1925, p. 66.

their sons) to be equal in status to other European monarchs<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, although there were no legal grounds for using “rex Russiae” in relation to Rostyslav Mikhailovych, in the Latin tradition his title, given his proximity to the Hungarian king, is quite natural.

Therefore, based on the review and study of European medieval sources, we believe that the mysterious Rus’ian ruler who took part in the battle of the Leitha River on June 15, 1246, as part of the Hungarian army against the Austrian Duke Frederick II the Quarrelsome, was Prince Rostyslav Mikhailovych, son-in-law of the Hungarian king Bela IV. Additional confirmation of this assumption can be found in “Continuatio Lambacensis” from the Lambach monastery. It is possible that the detachment led by the prince suddenly attacked the Austrian ruler’s positions and killed him during the ensuing confusion. Suddenness was not welcome in the medieval world, so Prince Rostyslav earned not very “good reviews” in the sources, causing at the same time a major dynastic crisis in Austria.

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<sup>38</sup> Parshyn, *cit.*, pp. 99–100.

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The battle between the Austrians and the Hungarians took place on 15 June 1246 on the banks of the Leitha River, between Ebenfurth and Neufeld. © NordNordWest, own work, 2023. CC-BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons

## “*Riuzen Stürm*” in the Epic Tradition of the 13th–14th-Century Holy Roman Empire

by KHRYSTYNA MERENIUK

**ABSTRACT:** This study examines the phenomenon of the “*Riuzen Stürm*” in German epic literature of the Middle Ages. Comparison with Rus’ian chronicles suggests that the motif may be understood as part of the image of Rus’ circulating among the military elites of the Holy Roman Empire. This diffusion can be attributed to the active participation of Rus’ian princes in 13th-century military campaigns, an involvement that left a durable mark on the historical and cultural memory of German knighthood. Most notably, this relates to the Hungarian campaigns into Central Europe, where Rus’ian contingents under King Danylo or Prince Rostyslav fought alongside King Béla IV. The presence of Rus’ian warriors in the struggle for the Austrian inheritance of the Babenbergs and their participation in the battle near the Leitha River in 1246 could have had a significant impact on the emergence of ideas about the “*Riuzen Stürm*,” an unusual method of warfare that was remembered by the European nobility of the time. German poets mentioned the existence of individual songs dedicated to the “*Riuzen Stürm*,” but none of them, as far as I know, have survived. Detailed descriptions are unavailable in Rus’ian chronicles, although the closest thing to this concept is the mention of “*Роскыи бои*” (“Rus’ian battle”, or “Rus’ian attack”), also cited in the context of the words of the Polish prince. Therefore, information about the peculiarities of Rus’ian medieval attacks could have spread far beyond Rus’ itself.

**KEYWORDS:** RUS’, GERMAN EPIC SOURCES, MINNESÄNGER, GALICIAN-VOLHYNIAN STATE, “RIUZEN STÜRM”.

**T**he perception of Rus’ in medieval Western European culture is an essential component of research into inter-civilizational contacts. One of the least explored aspects of this topic remains the image of Rus’ (*Reuzen*, *Riuzen*, *Reussen*, *Rüßen*, *Rüzen*, *Rüezzen*) in the military-epic tradition of the German-speaking world, particularly in 13th-14th century poetic texts created within the Holy Roman Empire. Even though in the 19th century scholars paid considerable attention to critical editions of poems and biographies of the minnesingers (*Minnesänger*), the “Rus’ian theme” itself remained a marginal subject. It

did not emerge as a distinct field of medieval studies<sup>1</sup>.

A more detailed acquaintance with German poems of the 13th century testifies that the “Rus’ian theme” was much more popular than previously thought. This secular poetry has preserved unique accounts of the Rus’ troops’ participation in real battles and has creatively elaborated on the literary motifs derived from these events. The primary consumers of the poems were the secular nobility, who were

1 The foundations for studying this topic were laid in the second half of the 19th century, when the renewed interest in medieval literature – at first inspired by Romantic enthusiasm – led to the systematic republication and scholarly editing of Middle High German texts. The corpus of German poetry deserved a new assessment, and the reissue of the greatest works was accompanied by thorough commentaries, introductory papers, and attempts to separate purely literary material from the historical realities of the era. The key scholarship on this issue includes: Arthur Amelung, Oskar Jänicke, *Ortnit und die Wolf-dietriche*, Bd. 1., Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1871; Oskar Jänicke, Franz Roth (Eds.), *Biterolf und Dietlieb*. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1866; Gustav Ehrismann (Hrsg.), *Hugo von Trimberg. Der Renner*, Bd. 1, Tübingen, 1909; Heinrich Rückert (hrsg.), *Lohengrin*. Quedlinburg und Leipzig, 1858; Ludwig Tieck (Hrsg.), *Frauendienst oder: Geschiebte und Liebe des Ritters und Sängers Ulrich von Lichtenstein, von ihm selbst beschrieben*. Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1812; Karl Lachmann, *Ulrich von Lichtenstein*. Berlin, 1841. However, scholarly literature has long overlooked German–Rus’ian contacts in the study of medieval poetic heritage. Only in the late 19th - early 20th centuries did the first attempts at a systematic understanding of the image of Rus’ in German Middle Ages literature appear. Further development was evidenced by the studies of Arnošt Kraus, who turned to Slavic characters in the German folk tradition (Arnošt Kraus, «Slováne v národní pověsti německé». *Slovánský sborník*, 8 (1887), pp. 371–389). However, the turning point was the research of Pavel Berkov, who was one of the first to raise the question of the specifics of the reception of “Riuzen” in courtly and heroic poetry of the 12th–14th centuries (Pavel Berkov, «Das “russische Thema” in der mittelhochdeutschen Literatur». *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 21 (1976), pp. 297–310). Besides, Mechthild Keller, devoted to the conceptualization of “Riuzen” in German medieval literature (Mechthild Keller, «Perspektiven: Vorstellungen von ‘Riuzen’ in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters». *Russen und Rußland aus deutscher Sicht: 9.–17. Jahrhundert*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1988, pp. 84–109). In current medieval studies, German literary sources have only been fragmentarily attracted to the attention of scholars (Alexei Martyniuk, Do Herbershteina). *Avstryia i Vostochnaia Evropa v sisteme personalnykh svyazei (XIII – nachalo XVI veka)*, Kvadriga, 2019; Oleh Odnorozhenko, *Rus’ian royal, economic and princely seals of the 13th–16th centuries*, Kharkiv, 2009; Vladyslav Kiorsak, «Eastern European Elements of Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana through the Prism of Greco-Roman and Germanic Myths». *Scandia: Journal of Medieval Norse Studies*, 5 (2022), pp. 6–27; Kiorsak, Vladyslav. «Rus’ in the Concept of Ragnar Lodbrok’s Empire: Scandinavian Sources through the Prism of Politics of Memory». *Siverianskyi litopys. [Siverian Chronicle]*, 6 (2021), pp. 4–14; Khrystyna Mereniuk, «“Riuzen” and “Polen” in the Dietrich cycle of German heroic epic». *Kniazha doba: istoriia i kultura [Princely era: history and culture]*, 17 (2025), pp. 103–126).

interested in the details of the main characters’ adventures, descriptions of military scenes, and the exploits of heroes from different countries. A distinctive feature of these sources is that a significant part of their authors were minnesingers, or persons closely associated with the “bellatores”. Their participation in campaigns and battles, knowledge of knightly customs and combat techniques, influenced the artistic structure of the texts. The authors recreated details of weaponry tactics and elements that could only be noticed by people familiar with military culture. Therefore, accounts of battles and assaults involving Rus’ are of considerable historical value, as they allow scholars to reconstruct key elements of the medieval military landscape in Central and Eastern Europe. Amid the diversity of literary heritage, I would like to draw attention to several essential poems that echo military campaigns and their participants.

The poem “Lohengrin”, written by an unknown author (attributed to an epigone of Wolfram von Eschenbach, 1160/80 – 1220), explains the battles that took place between European warriors and Hungarians in the 10th century. Considering the poem’s dating to the late 13th – early 14th centuries, the text describes knightly armies that did not yet exist. When describing the struggle of the German king Henry I the Fowler (876–936) with the Hungarians, an unknown king of Rus’ (“der Riuzen künece”) (verse 2715), whose troops managed to prepare for battle during the decisive clash but suffered a mighty blow from the German knights<sup>2</sup>.

In the text of “Lohengrin”, the ruler of Rus’ is mentioned only once, without any further details: his figure is not recorded during the gathering of the Hungarian army. It is not even known on whose side he fought, since the interpretation of the Upper German text allows for different readings of the brief note about him. However, I can assume that it would be natural for the king of Rus’ to be part of the Hungarian army, and that the events described in “Lohengrin” have a double meaning.

On the one hand, Henry I the Fowler did indeed fight the Hungarians and won several important battles. After his triumph at Riade in 933, the Hungarians temporarily ceased their devastating raids deep into East Frankish territory<sup>3</sup>. Considering that the anonymous author of the text relied on numerous historical sources

2 Heinrich Rückert (hrsg.), *Lohengrin*. Quedlinburg und Leipzig, 1858, p. 73.

3 Laslo Veszprémy, «The Military history of Hungary from the first contacts with Europe to Mohács 862–1526», *Illustrated Military History of Hungary*, Zrínyi, 2012, p. 8.

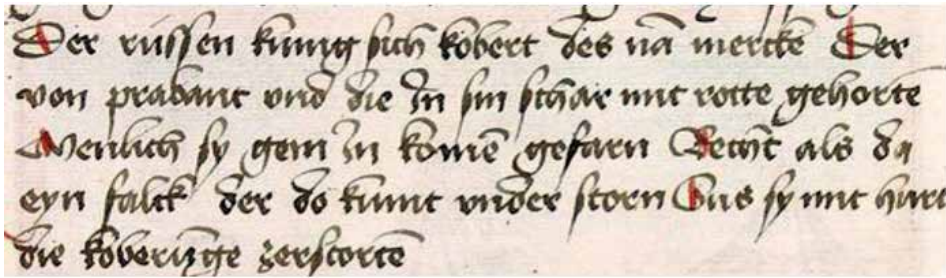


Fig. 1. Folio 67r of the Lohengrin handwriting, referring to the King of Rus'. Lohengrin; Friedrich von Schwaben. Stuttgart: Werkstatt Ludwig Henfflin, 1470. Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 345.

(the “Repkau Chronicle”, the “Swabian Mirror”, and other German records), the course of the battles and their participants are described in considerable detail. The list of figures creates a mosaic picture of rulers of the 10th–11th centuries. Among those mentioned are Henry II (973–1024), his wife Cunigunde (approx. 975–1033), his sister Gisela (Gyfel) (approx. 985–1065), married to Stephen I of Hungary (Steffan) (approx. 975–1038), Mieszko II Lambert (“des küneges Stefens swester sun der Pôlân künec”) (990–1034), Pope Benedict VIII (980–1024), and others. However, all these figures are mentioned at the end of the text and relate to a separate passage. Besides, the King of Rus’ is named in the description of a war between the Holy Roman Empire, which did not yet exist in the time of Henry I the Fowler, and the Hungarians. Moreover, no other known sources confirm Rus’ participation in the German-Hungarian conflicts of the 10th–11th centuries.

On the other hand, the description of the Hungarian invasion of Europe also corresponds to the realities of the 13th century. Although the figures of the 10th–11th centuries are mentioned in the text with precise genealogical details, the descriptions of the campaigns include a different set of principal protagonists. For instance, the Hungarian king “Pêlân” (verse 2830) – evidently King Béla (most likely Béla IV, 1206–1270) – appears alongside Duke Ludewin, the German Duke Henry, the Polish Duke Pomyzla (probably Duke Przemysł, i.e., Przemysł II, 1257–1296), and the Duke of Brabant (likely one of the Brabantine rulers such as Henry III, 1231–1261, or John I, 1252–1294)<sup>4</sup>. These figures indicate a shift in

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Rückert, *cit.*, pp. 73–76.



Fig. 2. Fol. 66v–67v. Attack on the Camp of the Hungarian Army. Heidelberg, University Library, Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 345. Lohengrin; Friedrich von Schwaben. Stuttgart, Workshop of Ludwig Henfflin, 1470.

the narrative of the battle and its connection to the 13th century.

King Béla IV of Hungary organized several large-scale campaigns against the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Austrian and German duchies. For the period, his active ally was Prince – and later King of Rus’ – Danylo Romanovych (1201–1264). Accordingly, the Hungarian incursions into Central European lands and the active participation of Rus’, as described in “Lohengrin”, could be seen as a kind of reminiscence of the events of the 1250s–1260s. Moreover, considering the date of composition of the poem between 1276 and 1289, this interpretation appears even more plausible<sup>5</sup>. It may be assumed that its author either drew inspiration from relatively recent events or relied on well-established notions of the Hungarians and the Rus’ as active participants in European conflicts. Ultimately, such a dating is also supported by several specific episodes included in the text. For example, the Duke of Bavaria is mentioned as one of the electors of the Holy

5 Heinrich Rückert, cit., pp.258

Roman Empire – he received this right at the Reichstag in Augsburg in 1275. In addition, the poem is associated with Duke Henry of Lower Bavaria (Heinrich von Niederbayern, 1253–1290)<sup>6</sup>. Together with his brother Ludwig (Count Palatine), he was one of the most influential princes of his time.

The depiction of a Rus' king participating in warfare together with the Hungarians may allude to the 13th-century alliance linking Rus', Poland, and the Kingdom of Hungary. General ideas about Rus' as a force that exerted significant influence on the political map of Central Europe at that time are evident. The anonymous author of the medieval poem used this plot to demonstrate the power of German warriors, who, together with the hero Lohengrin, overcame the resistance of the Hungarians and the Rus'. Clearly, this image corresponds to the perception of the Christian Hungarian ruler as understood in contemporary German historical narratives. Moreover, unlike descriptions of the North, descriptions of the East of Europe are completely devoid of fantastic details<sup>7</sup>.

Similar concepts are also found in the "Nibelungenlied". Considering the date of creation of the original version (1205), the hymns of the event in later versions of the text contain insertions of other elaborations made in the middle and second half of the 13th century. In versions B and C, the army of Etzel (the Hungarian king) includes representatives from different parts of his multinational empire: Rus', Greeks, Poles, Wallachians, and other peoples (verses 1339-40)<sup>8</sup>. The image of Etzel can be interpreted in different ways. According to some historians, the figure represents King Géza I, the last pagan ruler of Hungary<sup>9</sup>; however, others argue that it depicts King Béla IV<sup>10</sup>. The poem clearly emphasizes that Etzel united both Christians and non-Christians in the army: "von kristen und von heiden" (verse 1338)<sup>11</sup>.

6 Heinrich Rückert, cit., pp. 259.

7 Alexander Sager, «Hungarians as fremde in Medieval Germany», *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, Routledge, p. 107.

8 Helmut de Boor, *Die deutsche Literatur im späten Mittelalter. Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, vol. 3/1, Beck, 1962, p. 216; Alexander Sager, «Hungarians as fremde in Medieval Germany», p. 107.

9 Alexander Sager, cit., p. 107–108.

10 Pál Gyulai (Ed.), *Budapesti Szemle. Negyvenharmadik kötet (103. 104. 105. szám)*, Franklin-Társulat, 1885.

11 Helmut de Boor, cit., p. 216.

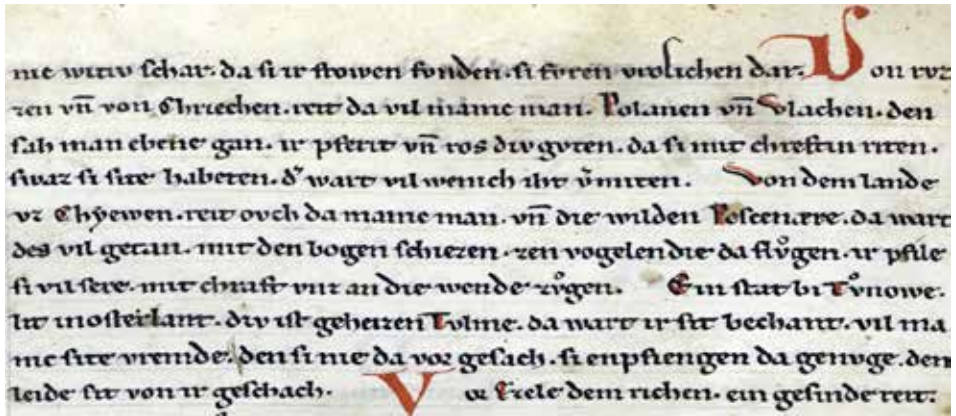


Fig. 3. Fol. 52v. Mentioning Riuzen (Rus') and Kiewen/Chyewen (Kyiv) in the German epic. Das Nibelungenlied (Handwriting C). Karlsruhe. Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Donaueschingen 63, Nibelungenlied.

The Slavic groups listed above, and the religious distinctions associated with them, are well attested in 13th-century historical sources. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the Hungarian army of King Béla IV near Kressenbrunn in 1260, with which he fought against the Czech king and Austrian duke Ottokar II Přemysl (1233–1278). The list of military contingents was outlined in a letter to Pope Alexander IV by the Bohemian ruler: “Grais belli, quod adversus Belam et natum eiusdem Stephannum, Ungarie Reges Illustres, et Danielem Regem Russie et eius filios eius et certos Ruthenos et Thartaros, qui eidem in auxilium venerant et Boleslaum Cracoviensem et Laczkonem iuvenem Lansacie Duces et innumeram multitudinem inhumanorum hominum Cumanorum, Ungarorum, et diuersorum Sclauorum, Sicularum quoque et Valachorum ... etiam utpote Grecorum, Bulgarorum, Rasniensium et Bosniensium hereticorum...”<sup>12</sup>. Thus, the army of the Hungarian ruler is similar to the forces gathered by Etzel in the “Nibelungenlied”.

12 “The great war fought against Béla and his son Stephen, the renowned kings of Hungary, together with Danylo, King of Rus’, his sons, and certain Ruthenians and Tartars who had come to his aid, and against Boleslav of Kraków and Leszek the Young, Dukes of Lesser Poland, and an innumerable multitude of inhuman peoples – Cumans, Hungarians, and various Slavs, as well as Szeklers and Vlachs... and likewise also Greeks, Bulgarians, Rascians, and Bosnian heretics”. Antonii Boczek (Ed.), *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Moraviae*, vol. 3 (1241–1267), Ex Typographia Aloysii Sharnitel, 1841, pp. 285–286.



Fig. 4. Fol. i09r. Battle near Kressenbrunn (July 12, 1260) between King Béla IV of Hungary and King Ottokar II of Bohemia. Johannes Thuróczy. *Chronica Hungarorum*, 15 saeculi. Bibliotheca Corviniana Virtualis, inc. 1143, fol. i09r.

King Danylo Romanovych's participation in the military campaign of 1260 is indirectly confirmed in the chronicle. Under pressure from the Mongols, who appeared within the borders of the Galician-Volhynian state and forced the Rus'ian rulers to participate in campaigns against Poland, King Danylo "fled to the Hungarians"<sup>13</sup>. As a result, he could well have been part of the army of Béla IV, who sought to capture the Austrian possessions of Ottokar II. The King of Rus' may have been accompanied by his sons – probably Mstyslav (d. after 1292) and Shvarno (d. after 1269), who were old enough to be distinguished alongside their father.

The battle near Kressenbrunn did not go well for the Hungarians – in fact, their main Cuman forces were defeated even before the royal troops entered the combat. The memory of these events was still fresh, and the writers of the "Nibelungenlied" could draw on such images in their work. Scholars drew attention to the "multinational" army of Béla IV to explain the hostility between the two

<sup>13</sup> Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej, Ipatievskaya letopisej. Izdavaemoe Arheograficheskoy komissieju, Sankt-Peterburg, 1908, col. 850.

Christian rulers<sup>14</sup>. It seemed that Ottokar II deliberately exaggerated the “barbarian” contingents in his opponent’s army to justify himself before the Pope<sup>15</sup>. However, King Danylo’s presence belongs to the Christian part of the Hungarian ruler’s army (just as Rus’ was among Etzel’s Christian allies).

A striking example of the military power of Rus’ is the text from the German epic poem “Ortnit” (1230). King Ilias (Ellias) of Rus’, who was the uncle of the protagonist, offered him his help: five thousand horsemen who were to support Ortnit in the fight against the Syrian king. This is the first and not the only demonstration of Ilias’s power and influence in the poem. The text emphasizes the peculiarity of Rus’ians, who had steel armor “white as snow”<sup>16</sup>. This indicates their excellent equipment from the perspective of a European knight:

Da sprach der kunig von Reussen  
 Jch fuer dir vber See  
 Fünfftausent schneller helde  
 leucht als der schnee.  
 in liechtem stahel ringen....  
 nidert man Sy plecken sicht  
 wohin ich meinen Fanen naige  
 dauon so komend sy nicht

Then the king of Rus’ said:  
 I will take you across the sea  
 5 thousand swift heroes, who  
 shine like snow,  
 in light steel mail  
 If they try to overcome  
 They hold their line firmly,  
 and wherever I raise my  
 flag, from there they will not flee  
 (verse: 46).

The literary mention has several original details that require analysis. Comparing it with the text of the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle reveals several parallels. The chronicler also used “shining” epithets to describe the Rus’ army when describing battle scenes. When the Hungarian king Andrew II (1175 – 1235) marched with his knights to Volodymyr (Volhynia), he supposedly spoke respectfully of the city, while the defenders were on the walls, whose shields and

14 Illia Parshyn, *Dyplomatiia Halıtsko-Volynskoi derzhavy: yevropeiski naratyvni dzherela XIII–XV stolit.* Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypıakıevycha NAN Ukrainy, 2018, pp. 183.

15 Mariusz Bartnicki, *Polityka zagraniczna księcia Daniela Halickiego w latach 1217–1264*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005, pp. 199–200.

16 Mario Klarer (Hrsg.), *Ortnit, Wolfdietrich A*, De Gruyter, 2022, T. 10, p. 19.

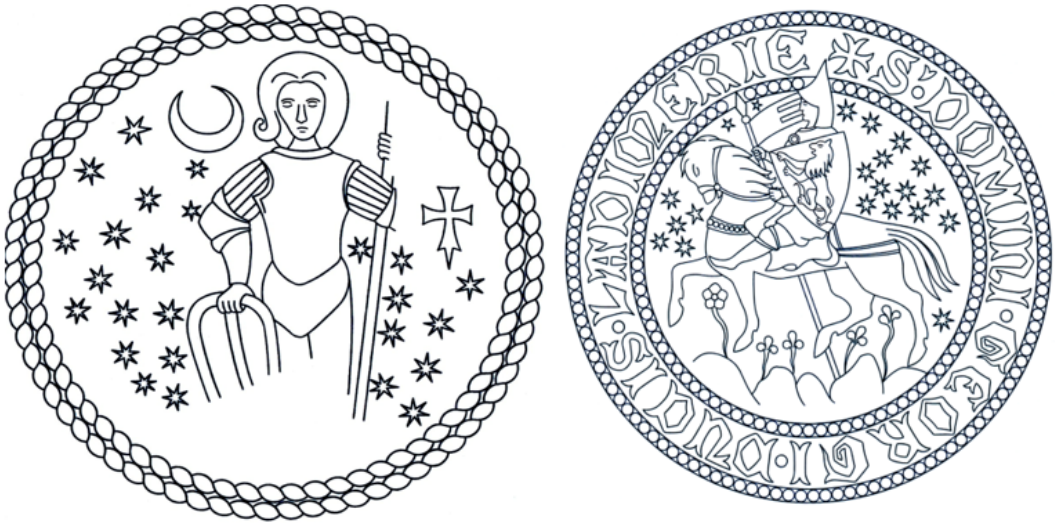


Fig. 5. Shields on the seals of Rus' rulers: Lev Danylovych (left) and his son Yuriy (right). Draw by O. Odnorozhenko.

Oleh Odnorozhenko, The seal of Lev I Danylovych <https://sigillum.com.ua/stamp/lev-i-danylovych/> ; Idem, The seal of Yuriy I Lvovych. <https://sigillum.com.ua/stamp/yurij-i-lvovych/> About Yuriy Lvovych see: Illia Parshyn, «King Yuriy Lvovych on pages of West European chronicles». *Rusin*, 30 (2012), pp. 73–85.

armor shone like the Sun («такo соущоу вроужьникомъ стоаещимъ на немъ блистахоуся щити и вроужници подобни солнцю»)¹⁷. Similarly, during the campaign against the Jatvyags, a Rus'ian chronicler colorfully described the armor of Danylo Romanovych's warriors, whose helmets and shields “sparkled like the morning Sun” («щитѣ же ихъ аѣко зарѣ бѣ шоломъ же ихъ аѣко слнцю восходащоу»)¹⁸.

When the prince Danylo himself arrived in Pressburg (Bratislava) to attend the assembly with the Hungarian ruler Béla IV, he astonished the Germans present with his striking appearance («...и бѣ полковъ его свѣтлость велика»)¹⁹. How-

17 Literally: “Around him stood warriors; they had shields and weapons shone, like the Sun”. *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, *Ipatevskaya letopis*, col. 765.

18 Literally: “Their shields were like the dawn, and their helmets were like the sun rising”. *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, *Ipatevskaya letopis*, col. 813.

19 Literally: “...and great was the brightness of his troops”. *Ibidem*, col. 814. Kozak, Mykola. “How the Germans marvelled at the Tatar Arms”: What Weapon Was the Chronicle



Fig. 6. Gilded fragments of a shield from a burial mound at Halychyna Mohyla (Krylos). Ivano-Frankivsk Museum of Local History, collections. (photo by M. Kozak)

Mykola Kozak, *Ozbroiennia viisk Halytskoi ta Volynskoi zemel u XIII–XIV st. (to-rhivlia, trofei, vlasne vyrobnytstvo)* [Armament of the armies of the Galician-Volhynian lands of the XII – XIV centuries (trade, trophies, production)], PhD Thesis, Lviv, 2024, pp. 321–322.

ever, the weapons of Danylo Romanovych’s warriors metaphorically sparkled with brilliance. This emphasized their distinctiveness and readiness for battle.

Undoubtedly, some literary exaggerations were inherent in the chronicle’s narrative. Scholars interpret the episode in Pressburg as a literal borrowing from Greek translated literature<sup>20</sup>. However, the comparison with “Ortnit” suggests the possibility of a genuine surprise among the German nobility (the potential readers of the poem were precisely representatives of the “bellatores”) at the appearance and armor of the Rus’ian army. This can also be supported by Ilias’s remark about light chain mail. The peculiarity of the army of Rus’ also lay in the use of chain mail rather than plate armor<sup>21</sup>. Archaeological excavations have revealed the widespread use of this type of protective equipment, which has been in use for

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Describing in the Episode of the Meet in Pozsony and What Is Its Origin?” *Ethnic History of European Nations*, vol. 67, 2022, pp. 7–16. See also: Kozak, Mykola, «Protective Equipment of the Old Ukrainian Warrior of the Princely Era». *The Prince’s Era: History and Culture*, 70 (2025), pp. 17–70; Parshyn, Illia, «Poiedynok kniazia Rostyslava Mykhailovycha ta lytsaria Vorsha – preliudiia do Yaroslavskoi bytvy 1245 roku», *Problemy istorii viin i viiskovoho mystetstva*, 2 (2019), pp. 147–156.

20 Tolochko O. (Ed.), *Halytsko-Volynskiy litopys: tekstolohiia* [Galician-Volhynian litopys: textology], Akadempriodyka, 2020, pp. 428–441.

21 Ihor Voznyi, Andrii Fedoruk, «Viyskovyy obladyk i sporiadzhennia vershnyka X–XIV st. na terytorii mizh Verkhnim Siretom i Serednim Dnistrom» [Military armor and equipment of a horseman of the 10th–14th centuries in the territory between the Upper Siret and the Middle Dniester]. *Archaeology*, 4 (2012), pp. 62–65.

several centuries<sup>22</sup>. Although “Ortnit” is an epic poem, it is not impossible that its creators drew on practical experience and were acquainted with members of the Rus’ian military not only through legends or literary tradition, but also through direct personal encounter.

Subsequently, in the figure of the King of Rus’, Ilias provided Ortnit with substantial military support. Courage, determination, and at times ferocity and cruelty are traits characteristic of the Rus’ warrior’s image. His decisiveness becomes especially clear in the figure who initiates the first battle against the pagan forces (referred to in the epic as the Syrians). Ilias carried a banner bearing the image of a golden lion and took his stand in battle<sup>23</sup>:

Das wayss got sprach der Reusse  
 nu gib mir jn an die hannt  
 einen swären fanen  
 Er do angepannt  
 daraus ein Lewe leuchtet  
 von schönem golde rot  
 die zwen künige fuerten  
 vil manigen in den todt.

“God knows this,” said the Rus’ian  
 [king], “so hand it over to me.”  
 He pulled up a heavy banner.  
 From it shone a lion of  
 shining red gold.  
 The two kings led many people  
 to their deaths (verse: 299)

The last phrase, “die zwen künige fuerten / vil manigen in den todt” (“the two kings led many people to their deaths”), demonstrates the equal participation of kings Ortnit and Ilias in the depicted battle<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, the author of the poem uses the epithet “starche” (strong) when describing the Rus’ian ruler: “Es nam der starche Reusse...”<sup>25</sup>. Among other emblematic details, the mention of a lion as the main heraldic figure on Ilias’s banner is particularly noteworthy. From the context, it is difficult to determine unequivocally whether the coat of arms described belongs to the King of Rus’ or to Ortnit himself. However, O. Odnorozhenko argues that the heraldic image refers explicitly to the Rus’ rul-

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Mario Klarer, *Ortnit. Wolfdietrich A*, p. 119. See also version C: Arthur Amelung, Oskar Jänicke, *Ortnit und die Wolfdietriche*, Bd. 1., Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1871, p. 8 (verse 312–13).

<sup>24</sup> Mario Klarer, *Ortnit. Wolfdietrich A*, p. 119.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 143.

er<sup>26</sup>. In the later heraldic tradition, represented in European heraldry from the 15th century, the lion is associated with the Ruthenian lands, primarily the Principality of Galicia<sup>27</sup>. In the armorial of Conrad Grünenberg (1480), a similar Rus’ coat of arms is depicted: a golden lion with red claws on a black shield<sup>28</sup>. The Rus’ lion emerging from flames is also recorded on the Babenberg family tapestry (15th century) – on the heraldic shield of Gertrude of Babenberg, whose third and last husband was Roman, the younger son of king Danylo.

Ilias acted as an ally of the main character and, at crucial moments, gave Ortnit a sword – a symbolic act of trust and military support<sup>29</sup>. At the same time, Ilias’ ferocity in the poem is expressed through his uncontrollable desire to annihilate his enemies. The concept of the “Riuzen/Reussen in fury” (“der Reusse wolt vor zorne / Es nam der starche Reusse den fanen in zorne do...”) appears several times in the text. He became so absorbed in destroying his enemies that he almost quarreled with Ortnit, who urged him not to be so cruel.

On the other hand, the Rus’ king embodies all the traits characteristic of a European knight: defending his honor and seeking revenge for fallen comrades, he fiercely devastated his enemies. He also reveals himself as a Christian warrior, for when his opponents begged for mercy, he agreed on the condition of penance: everyone struck by the King of Rus’ was to observe a strict fast until the Day of Judgment. In other handwriting versions, Ilias, together with Ortnit, baptized the pagans, while the ruler of Rus’ destroyed their idols: “der künig von Reussen die abgötter von sien altaren”<sup>30</sup>. In the poem’s decisive moment, their victory over the pagans culminates in Ortnit’s marriage to the Syrian ruler’s daughter.

The active military campaigns of Rus’ian lands drew the attention of 13th-century minnesingers. After 1230, the poet Konrad von Marner (d. 1265) turned to the kind of legend that noble patrons desired to hear performed by courtly singers<sup>31</sup>.

26 Oleh Odnorozhenko, *Nauka pro herby*. <https://sigillum.com.ua/geraldyka/majsternya-2/>

27 Ibidem.

28 Oleh Odnorozhenko, *Nauka pro herby*. <https://sigillum.com.ua/geraldyka/majsternya-2/>

29 Arthur Amelung, Oscar Jänicke, *Ortnit und die Wolfdietriche: nach Müllenhoffs Vorarbeiten (Deutsches Heldenbuch)*. Teil 4, Band 2, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1873, p. 255.

30 *Heldenbuch*. Augsburg: Johann Schönsperger, 1491. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 19r. *Strassburger Heldenbuch* Straßburg: Johann Prüss, 1479. [Ohne Paginierung], Gedruckt in gotischer Schrift, Inkunabel, p. 56.

31 The name of the author has not been established. However, scholars of his work believe

Das er im gab ein schlag  
 Mit seinem güten schwerte  
 Gar bald er tode lag.  
 ¶ Sein wunnighliches waffen  
 Im in der hende kland  
 Er machte manigen schlaffen  
 On allen seinen danck  
 Vil manigem faracenen  
 Nam er do sein leben  
 Vnd das stünd auch die seimen  
 Weyst got wol vnuetgeben.

**Hye streypt heylser** Ot  
 nit mitt den heyden vor der burg  
 vnd schlüg je vil zü tode.



Man lassen wir sy streypten  
 Also sprach elter rich  
 Vns wirt leicht über reyten  
 Der heydnisch künig rich  
 Die heyden vns erfaren  
 Die porten sind bewart  
 Die vor hyn offen waten  
 Die sind nun zü gesparrt.  
 ¶ Magst du das hezz nit wende  
 Du reicher künig otmit  
 Sy brennen dir behende  
 Dein hiel in kurzer zit  
 Des hast du lützel ere  
 Vnd darzū grössen schaden

Vnd kumbst auch nymetmere  
 Zü cristenlichem staden.  
 ¶ Mit mit geschwinde worten  
 Do einen heyden zwang  
 Der schloß im auff die porten  
 Mit den seimen er auftrang  
 Sy entwichen im on gnade  
 So krefftig was sein gewoz  
 Er schlüg je vil zü tode  
 Vnd ertrendte sy in dem mörz  
 ¶ Do otmit der bescheyden  
 Dem reussen do entweich  
 Do ward auch gegen den heyde  
 Sein streypten also weich  
 Sy frümpten im schaden zwate  
 Den er nit mocht vol klagen  
 Er verlor sein helde gate  
 Vñ ward auch nyder geschlagen  
 ¶ Do kam elterich der kleine  
 Hyn widerumb geritten  
 Höz edeler fūrste reine  
 Hie ist genüg gestritten  
 Ker dich zü andern streüssen  
 Vnd rich du deimen zorn  
 Oder du hast den reussen  
 Vnd all dem man verlor.  
 ¶ Do sprach der lampartee  
 D dhem elygas  
 Es leyt mie ymmer schwete  
 Das ich nit bey dir was  
 Ich müß nach deinem tode  
 Immer traurig wesen  
 Das got deinet sel genade  
 Vnd wöll dir genädig wesen.  
 ¶ Der edel heldt ellende  
 Sein schilt zü rugken warff  
 Er nam zü beyder hende  
 Sein liechtes waffen scharpff  
 Die schwert gar lant erklungen  
 Gar fast er auff sy schlüg  
 Die vor hyn auff in drungen  
 Die lieffen weyt genüg.

Fig. 7. Folio 18r. The struggle of Ortnit's troops against the pagans.  
*Heldenbuch*. Augsburg: Johann Schönsperger, 1491. München, Bayerische  
 Staatsbibliothek, 2 Inc.c.a. 2575.



Fig. 8. Folio 19r. Ilias of Rus' topples pagan idols, while Ornit baptizes the people. *Heldenbuch*. Augsburg: Johann Schönsperger, 1491. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Inc.c.a. 2575.

He listed various interests among the knightly public: some favored the exile of Dietrich von Bern, others preferred King Rother, some wanted stories about the “Riuzen Stürm” (“the Rus’ian attack”, or “the Rus’ian assault”), others focused on Eckhart’s misfortune, and some were drawn to Kriemhild’s treachery<sup>32</sup>.

Unfortunately, the author did not go into detail about what the “Rus’ian attack” was. This mention is neither unique nor an accident in German medieval literature. The mysterious “Riuzen Stürm” was cited by the poet Hugo von Trimberg (1235/1240–1313), who is also known for his didactic works. He composed the poem “Der Renner” in Middle High German – a didactic manuscript that contains descriptions of practical exercises in text structuring, designed for teaching purposes at the University of Tübingen. Nowadays, it is rightly considered a masterful example of refined High Medieval German poetry.

Like Marner’s poem, Hugo von Trimberg addressed the switching moods, desires, and demands of people, and considered changes in the tastes of the elite to be important for minstrels. Among other things, he listed popular topics in his time. Among them are the adventures of Dietrich von Bern, the hero of Ecken, the “Rus’ian attack” (“Rus’ian battle”), and the lives of the heroes Siegfried and Tristan: «...sprichet einer, ich hoerte gern / Von hern Dietrich von Bern / Und ouch von den alten recken, / Der ander wil von hern Ecken, / Der dritte wil der Riuzen stürm, / Der Vierde wil Sifrides wurm, / Der fünfte wil hern Tristerant...») (verses 16183 – 88)<sup>33</sup>. Hugo von Tremberg’s “Der Renner” should not be considered a compilation of Marner’s poem. Obviously, the theme of the “Rus’ian attack” was still relevant among representatives of the knightly elite at the beginning of the 14th century, although individual preferences had changed. Unfortunately, the author did not provide any additional information about the content of this song,

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that he was a traveler and held a prominent position among his contemporaries, as evidenced by frequent mentions of him. From the analysis of other sources, it can be assumed that his name was Kondrat (Philip Strauch, *Marners Leben und Dichtungen. Inaugural-dissertation zur erlangung der Philosophischen doctorwürde an der Universität Strassburg*, 1876, Trübner & Comp., p. 1.

32 Quote: “Singe ich dien lüten minú liet / so wil der erste daz, wie dietrich von berne schiet, der ander / wa kúnig Ruother sas, der dritte wil der rússen sturm / so wil der vierde eggehartes not / der fünfte, wen kriemhilt verrie”. Ewa Willms (Hrsg.), *Der Marner: Lieder und Sangsprüche aus dem 13. Jahrhundert und ihr Weiterleben im Meistersang*, Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p. 250; Strauch, *cit.*, p. 124.

33 Gustav Ehrismann (Hrsg.), *Hugo von Trimberg. Der Renner*, Bd. 1, Tübingen, 1909, p. 283.



Fig. 9. Title page of "Der Renner" (1468). Der Renner. Switzerland, c. 1468. Colodny, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 91.

so little is known about it except for its general title. In later parts of the poem, the development of the same idea about the existence of this epic work is noticeable: “Dirre saget von den Priuzen, Jener singet von den Riuzen” (lines 10603–4)<sup>34</sup>. According to P. Berkov, these lines sound like a proverb rather than an author’s expression. The following references to Riuzen in the poem are given as follows: “Denne swere in stinge oder sagte hiute / Von den Riuzen bî guotem wîn” (lines 9560–64)<sup>35</sup>. This also indicates the existence of a song or ideas about a Rus’ian attack<sup>36</sup>. The scholar of Marner’s works, Philipp Strauch, found no clear explanation for the use of this expression. In his opinion, it is merely “a general phrase that defies interpretation”<sup>37</sup>. He did not delve into an analysis of the ethnonym “Riuzen”, simply noting that battles with Ruthenian warriors are also found in the “Thidrekssaga” and in the “Wolfdietrich poems”<sup>38</sup>. When analyzing the latter, general references that are unrelated to the “Rus’ian attack” (battle) are noticeable. However, later studies have pointed to more thorough explanations. First, there are well-founded opinions that references to the “Rus’ian attack” relate to a certain epic work that the Germans remembered in the 13th – early 14th centuries<sup>39</sup>. In addition, according to P. Berkov, these references may not refer to a single work but to several songs or poems that tell of a successful Rus’ian assault or battle<sup>40</sup>.

Against this background, it is worth comparing the Rus’ian (Galician-Volhynian) chronicler’s reports on the “Rus’ian battle”. This source contains separate episodes from the military history of the Galician-Volhynian state in the 13th century, in which this concept is used, but without a detailed explanation. Moreover, the “Rus’ian battle” was characteristic not only of the military art of the Rus’ian elite but also became popular among the Polish nobility. The chronicle mentions the Mazovian prince Konrad I (1187–1247), who, during the campaign near Ka-

34 Literally: “One tells of the Prussians, the other sings of the Rus’”. Gustav Ehrismann (Hrsg.), *Hugo von Trimberg. Der Renner*, p. 49.

35 Literally: “Then he would swear, declare, or tell today of the Rus’ over good wine”. *Ibidem*, p. 6.

36 Pavel Berkov, “Das «russische Thema» in der mittelhochdeutschen Literatur”, *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 21/1 (1976), p. 302.

37 Strauch, *cit.*, p. 34.

38 *Ibidem*.

39 P. Berkov argued that “if this source did not exist or if it were not one of the most beloved works in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, then Hugo von Trimberg would hardly have listed it among other epic poems”. Berkov, *cit.*, p. 302.

40 *Ibidem*.

lisz in Poland, urged his knights to battle. Among other things, it is noted here that “Konrad liked Rus’ian battle” (“Кондратоу же любящю Роускыи бои”)<sup>41</sup>. Unfortunately, apart from this brief mention, no other information has survived. Accordingly, it is difficult to determine how well the German knights and minstrels of that time understood “Riuzen Stürm” and whether this concept coincided with the preferences of the Mazovian ruler.

Scholars have suggested that references to Rus’ may have been influenced by Prince Alexander Yaroslavovich’s (d. 1263) victories over the Teutonic Knights in several battles. The Livonian Rhymed Chronicle about the exploits of the Novgorod army was cited in support of this view<sup>42</sup>. Whether this victory could have become a certain literary basis for the spread of “Riuzen Stürm” in the poetry of the Holy Roman Empire cannot be answered unequivocally. In addition, from around the 1240s, Prince Danylo successfully resisted the Hungarian-Polish coalition, a resistance that may also have been reflected in European poetic tradition. It is also worth remembering that during the battle near Yaroslav in 1245, the Hungarian ban Filny described the Rus’ian troops as an army that attacks skillfully but cannot maintain pressure for long<sup>43</sup>. The representative of the Hungarian nobility had a well-established idea of the power of the Galician-Volhynian state, so the capabilities and military glory of Rus’ were known in Europe. It is unknown to what extent the German knights were impressed by the Rus’ warriors’ victory over them. The information about “Riuzen Stürm” is unlikely to be related to the defeats by Prince Alexander. From this point of view, the military glory of Danylo Romanovych (reinforced by campaigns against the Czech Kingdom and an alliance agreement with the Teutonic Order) could have played a significant role in European opinion.

Besides, another source may be proposed that offers significant evidence concerning Rus’. Ulrich von Liechtenstein’s (1200–1275) poem “Der Frauendienst” had an impact on the European medieval world. The famous minstrel distinguished himself by his service at the court of the last Austrian Babenbergs and took part in

41 Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej, Ipatevskaya letopis, col. 755.

42 Berkov, *cit.*, p. 302–303.

43 Roman Holyk, «Тоземльцы и иноплеменики»: “ruskyi patriotyzm”, “obraz svitu” ta etnichni stereotypy serednovichnoi Halychyny u Volyni». *Kniazha doba: istoriia i kultura [Princely era: history and culture]*, 4 (2011), p. 102.

the struggle for their possessions after the dynasty's extinction<sup>44</sup>. As a 13th-century military man, he was well versed in the customs of medieval warfare. Describing the battle near the Leitha River on June 15, 1246, between the armies of Frederick II the Warlike (1211–1246) and the Hungarian king Béla IV, he noted the decisive influence of the Rus'ian warriors: "der Reuzzen schar dô kom gerant"<sup>45</sup>.

The "Reuzzen" (Riuzen) squad began the battle, and Lord Heinrich von Liechtenstein (father of the poet Ulrich) and his knights opposed them. Between these two forces stood Duke Frederick II the Warlike. He instructed his warriors, promising to make them rich in case of victory. While he was busy with this, the Rus'ian knights approached him from behind, after which he died ("jämmerlich todt lag")<sup>46</sup>:

Owê des, daz dô geschach!  
 der fürste leider übersach,  
 daz dar gesprangte der Reuzzen schar  
 (daz übersach er leider gar),  
 die wîle er hie di sînen mant.  
 der Reuzzen schar dô kom gerant  
 hinden ûf den fürsten rîch:  
 dâ von gelac er jâmerlich.  
 Der strît zesamne schön kom sâ.  
 dô weste ouch niemen, daz lac dô  
 des strîtes herre ze einer sît.  
 ûf dem stuont vast enstet der strît:  
 owê, owê der grôzen nôt!  
 dâ gelac der fürste tôt.

Oh, woe for what happened there  
 The prince, alas, did not see  
 that the Rus' host had broken  
 through, (for he, regrettably, did not  
 notice it at all), for at that moment, he  
 was tending to his own men.  
 And the Rus' contingent then surged  
 forward and struck the mighty prince  
 from the rear; From this, he fell in  
 grievous suffering.  
 The battle closed into a tight,  
 narrow struggle.  
 And no one knew who it was that lay  
 there – the commander of one side of  
 the fight. At that place, the combat  
 grew fiercely intense:  
 oh woe of great misfortune!  
 There the duke fell dead  
 (verse: 1666-1667)

44 Franz Spechtler, «Liechtenstein, Ulrich von». *Neue Deutsche Biografie*, 14 (1985), pp. 522–523.

45 Karl Lachmann, *Ulrich von Liechtenstein*. Berlin, 1841, p. 527. Rus' was well known among the Austrian nobility. The German poet Tannhäuser († 1256) counted Rus' on a par with Poles, Czechs and Hungarians among the tributaries of the Austrian duke. (Johannes Siebert, *Der Dichter Tannhäuser*. New York, 1980, p. 82).

46 Ludwig Tieck (Hrsg.), *Frauendienst oder: Geschichte und Liebe des Ritters und Sängers Ulrich von Liechtenstein, von ihm selbst beschrieben*. Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1812, p. 259.; Bechstein, Reinhold (Ed.) *Ulrich von Liechtenstein, Frauendienst*, vol. 2, F. Leipzig, A. Brockhaus, 1888, p. 256.

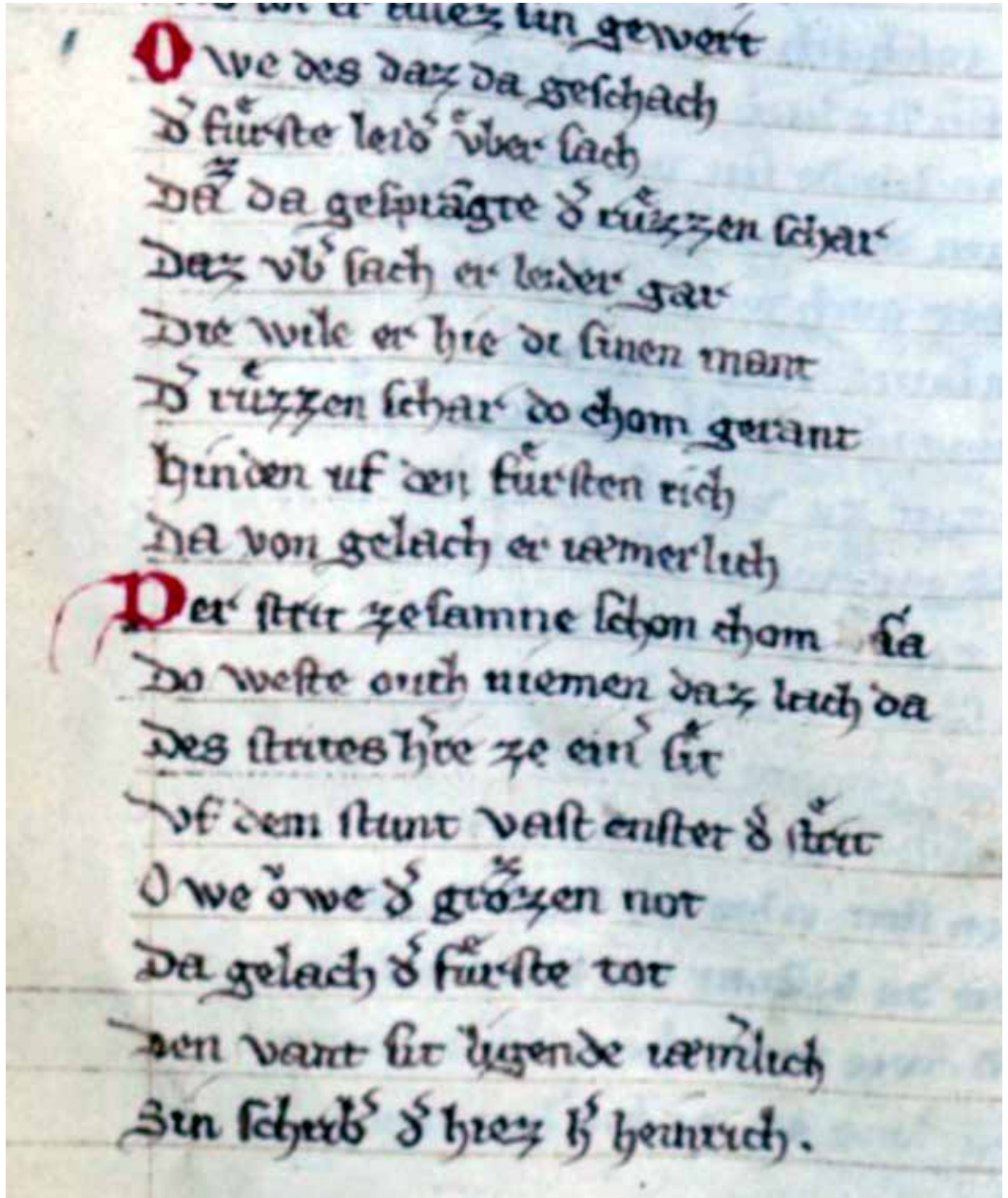


Fig. 10. Folio 116v. The “Rus’ian host” (“rūzzen schar”) breaks through the battle line and strikes Duke Frederick II of Austria from the rear. Ulrich von Lichtenstein, Frauen- dienst. Süddeutschland, ca. 1300–1320. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 44.

This episode clearly showed that the Rus'ian tactics surprised their opponents and left a mark on German poetry. Although the Austrian duke was unprepared for the sudden and powerful attack of the Rus'ian warriors and died during this battle, his army still defeated the invaders. There is no reason to doubt the historical accuracy of this information. The tradition of the death of the Austrian duke in battle with the king of Rus' is reflected in several chronicles of the 13th–14th centuries<sup>47</sup>. The resonance of the battle's outcome near the Leitha River was also reflected in the chronicle tradition. The Galician-Volhynian Chronicle notes that the duke died in battle, but at the hands of his own "boyars" (noblemen)<sup>48</sup>. The anonymous compiler of the Hustyn Chronicle (an early modern historical source) did not doubt that the Austrian duke died in battle with Danylo Romanovych<sup>49</sup>. Contemporary scholars are unsure whether Prince Danylo led the Rus'ian detachment or whether it was his rival for the Galician lands, Prince Rostyslav Mykhailovych (the son-in-law of the Hungarian king<sup>50</sup>). In any case, Rus'ian participation in the battle near the Leitha River had a noticeable resonance. This event could have served as the basis for the formation of the image of "Riuzen Stürm" in the German-language poetry of that time.

In the heroic epic "Biterolf and Dietleib," the circle of heroes is expanded to include Eastern European princes serving the Hun (Hungarian) king Etzel. This epic poem was written around 1250. It intertwines various plots, making it more of a chivalric romance than an epic. According to the text, Etzel captured the king of Prussia and made him his vassal. In the service, he was ordered to fight against neighboring Poland. The text of "Biterolf and Dietleib" demonstrates the emotions of a medieval warrior: the difference is shown between the actions a person performs himself and those he must perform according to his duty. Therefore, the Prussians and Poles in the author's mind were neighbors who did not seek war. As indicated in recent studies, the time in the novel reflects an era before conflicts between these peoples (unlike the time when "Biterolf and Dittleib" was

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47 Parshyn, *cit.*, pp. 89–91.

48 Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej, Ipatevskaya letopis, col. 820.

49 Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej, Hustynskaya letopis, Vol. 40, 2003, p. 121.

50 See also: Karl Lechner, *Die Babenbergen: Mark-Grafen und Herzoge von Österreich 976–1246*, Böhlau, 1994, p. 296; Norbert Mika, *Walka o spadek po Babenbergach 1246–1278*. WAW, 2008, pp. 18–19.

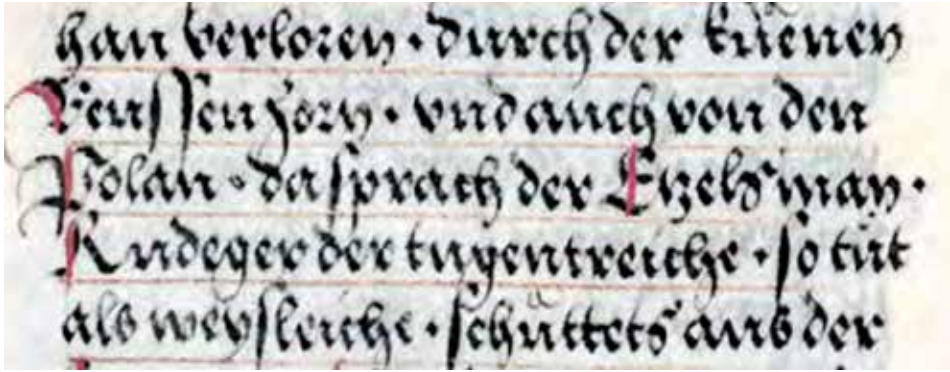


Fig. 11. Lamentation for the heroes slain by the Rus' (Riuzen zorn) and Polish (Pölan) troops.

Mario Klarer, (Ed.), *Ambraser Heldenbuch*, De Gruyter, 2022, p. 202.

written in the 13th century)<sup>51</sup>. Poles and Rus' in the epic are perceived together as common enemies of German chivalry. According to the plot, the knight Ramung mourned the fallen warriors who perished because of “the valiant wrath of the Rus' and the Poles” (“durch der küenen Reussen zorn vnd auch von den Polan”) (verses 3769–71)<sup>52</sup>. The insertion about the “küenen” (bravery) of the Rus' is not accidental, because in the minds of German authors, Rus'ian warriors were often defined by courage. Accordingly, the unknown author of the poem (who was a knight and well-versed in warfare) noted the courage of the Rus'. For him, defeat by weaker or less courageous warriors could be perceived as a shame, so the insertion about the Rus' wrath is quite appropriate, as it emphasizes both their skill and the suddenness of their attack.

However, whether this “Rus'ian wrath” was originally part of the concept of the “Riuzen Stürm” is difficult to determine. Yet, given the explicit reference to Polish troops' participation in the battle, this episode makes clear historical allusions. In 1253, Danylo Romanovich's expedition to the Opava land took place in support of his son Roman's claims to the Austrian ducal throne<sup>53</sup>. The expedition

51 Florian Schmid, *Constructions of Identities and Processes of Othering. Images of Polish Characters, Polishness and Poland and Their Roles in Medieval German Literature. Germans and Poles in the Middle Ages*, BRILL, 2021, p. 285.

52 Oskar Jänicke, Franz Roth (Eds.), *Biterolf und Dietlieb*. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1866, p. 56.

53 Alexei Martyniuk, *Do Herbershteina. Avstryia i Vostochnaia Evropa v systeme personal-*

of the Rus'ian army, which included contingents of Polish princes and "exotic" Lithuanian reinforcements<sup>54</sup>, could have had wide resonance, as reflected in "Bitterolf and Dittlieb"<sup>55</sup>. Also noteworthy is the author's significant expansion of his knowledge of political geography: the fighting for the German knighthood expanded far to the east, covering Prussia and the Polish principalities. This aspect fully corresponds to the realities of the 1250s for the poem's composers.

Thus, secular medieval poetry preserved necessary evidence of the imagery of Rus' and its warriors, who became a significant part of the European cultural sphere and historical memory. The depictions of Rus'ian troops – whether in references to the "Riuzen Stürm" or the participation of Rus' contingents within multiethnic armies – underscored the symbolic and geopolitical significance of Rus' in the imagination of medieval European chivalry. A characteristic feature of these representations was the interplay between historical reality and literary convention: Rus'ian warriors were portrayed at times as allies, at others as members of the "barbarian" forces opposing the heroes of Western European epics.

In connection with the "Riuzen Stürm", it is worth mentioning the "Rus'ian attack" ("Rus'ian battle") known from the chronicles. It remains uncertain what the scribe precisely meant by this term. However, one known supporter of this "Rus'ian battle" ("роускѣи бои") was the Mazovian prince, who, from the perspective of the Rus'ian elite of the time, was a foreigner. No other adherents of this episode, nor the regions of its diffusion, are attested in surviving sources. Thus, the writings of the German poets Marner and Hugo von Trimberg reflect a certain awareness – perhaps differently articulated – of these distinctive martial and cultural features, which left a lasting imprint on the literary imagination of the late Middle Ages.

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*nykh sviazei (XIII – nachalo XVI veka)*, Kvadriga, 2019, pp. 208–209.

54 Leontii Voitovych, *Halych v politychnomu zhytti Yevropy XI–XIV stolit*, Lviv, 2015, pp. 308–309.; Parshyn, Illia. «The Galician-Volyn State at the Crossroads of Worlds». *The Path from Primitiveness to Civilization. Ukrainian Medieval Costumes*, 2023, pp. 393–446.

55 Martyniuk, *cit.*, pp. 208–209.

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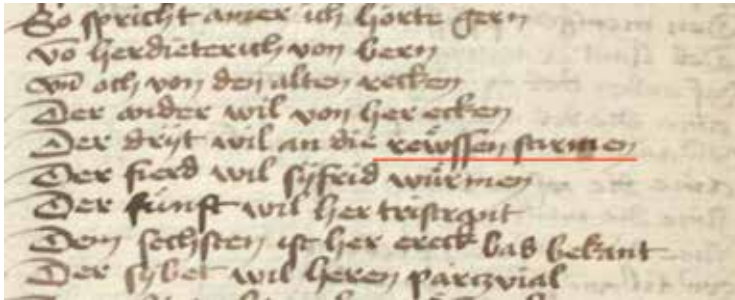
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# The Treatises of Pierre Dubois

## Project for a New French Century

by JÜRIG GASSMANN

**ABSTRACT.** The medieval Norman lawyer Pierre Dubois wrote two treatises for his sovereign, King Philipp IV the Fair of France: A shorter tract, composed around 1300, with recommendations on the royal conduct of warfare as well as on the reform of legal procedure; and a second, longer one purportedly developing a plan for the reconquest of the Holy Land. This second tract, written 1306-10, is part of the “Recuperation” literature prevalent in this period. The rediscovery of Dubois’ writings in the late nineteenth century led to a spate of articles treating Dubois as a visionary forerunner of such concepts as universal peace, European union, and international law as a means for settling disputes among princes. Scholarship in the meantime was sparse but is now picking up again, aided by a new edition making the texts easily accessible. Recent authors rather argue that Dubois’ proposals are very much part of intellectual streams prevalent in his age, though they are remarkable for their stringency and consistency. At the same time, Dubois was a forceful advocate for a European pre-eminence of the French crown.

**KEYWORD.** MEDIEVAL WARFARE; MILITARY HISTORY; FRENCH HISTORY; HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL LAW; RECUPERATION LITERATURE; SOVEREIGNTY

### *Introduction*

Pierre Dubois’ works today frequently lurk in the background of articles about the efforts to re-establish a Latin presence in the Holy Land after the loss of Acre in 1291 (the recuperation literature<sup>1</sup>), or about texts on military strategy and tactics from the Central Middle Ages. But these references tend to be passing, lacking a reasoned dialogue with Dubois’ writings. This situation may now be remedied by a recent redaction and translation (into French) of Dubois’ two main treatises, *De recuperatione terre sancte* and *De abbreviatione*

1 For an overview over the recuperation genre see Antony LEOPOLD, *How to Recover the Holy Land: The Crusade Proposals of the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Aldershot / Burlington VT / Singapore / Sydney, Ashgate, 2000).

*guerrarum et litium regni Francorum*.<sup>2</sup> The objective of this article is to provide an overview over the two tracts, and to situate them within the politics and the intellectual landscape of the time.

To avoid disappointment, a content warning is indicated: Even though both texts purport to deal with military matters, to the extent they do so, they focus on constitutional and fiscal military organisation. Strategic or tactical advice is sparse. Most of the text is dedicated to constitutional reform and institutional strengthening in line with Dubois' ideological bent.

Dubois was writing at a time when the three-way ideological battle between papacy, imperial dignity, and royal authority was reaching a culmination point. By his office and his activities, he himself was a protagonist in this battle, avowedly on the royalist side. Even though he was (it seems) a minor protagonist, his treatises provide a fascinating glimpse into the then-current political altercation. Both of Dubois' texts are addressed to his monarch, King Philipp IV the Fair (1268-1314, king since 1285), but there is no evidence that Dubois frequented the French court, or that anyone at the court, let alone King Philipp himself, ever read Dubois' tracts.

### *The Author*

Such biographical information as we have on Pierre Dubois is principally provided by himself, in his writings. He was born around 1255, probably in Coutances in Normandy, then (again) held by the French crown. He studied in Paris under both St Thomas Aquinas and Siger of Brabant,<sup>3</sup> two towering intellectuals of their time. His frequent references to Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis* indicate he

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2 Pierre DUBOIS, *De recuperatione terre sancte* (On the recuperation of the Holy Land), LANGLOIS, Charles-Victor (ed.), SÁGHY, Marianne and LÉONAS, Alexis (trans. – Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2019), pp. 329-519 (referred to here as the “Recuperation”); and Pierre DUBOIS, *De abbreviatione guerrarum et litium regni Francorum* (On the curtailment of the wars and the law suits in the kingdom of the Franks), FORCADET, Pierre-Anne (ed. and trans. – Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2019), pp. 1-327 (referred to here as the “Abbreviation”). Translations into English are mine unless otherwise stated.

3 DUBOIS, p. XXIII, pp. 128-29 (§63 / cap. XL), pp. 302-03 (§132 / cap. LXXX); Pierre-Anne FORCADET, « Pierre Dubois: conseiller de Philippe le Bel en matière politique et militaire », in *L'armée, la paix, la guerre, journées de la Société d'Histoire du Droit*, DE LOS MOZOS TOUYA, José Javier (ed. – Valladolid, Ediciones Universidad de Valladolid, 2009), pp. 209-228, at pp. 209-11.

must have studied law as well, likely in Orleans.<sup>4</sup> By trade he was a notary, first in Coutances, and represented Coutances at the Estates General of 1302.<sup>5</sup> In 1306 he served the English king Edward I as advocate in Guyenne.

In the conflict between Pope Boniface VIII (1230-1303, pope 1294) and the French crown, Dubois vociferously supported his king and wrote blistering tracts opposing the papacy's designs.<sup>6</sup> As mentioned, the two treatises discussed in this article were written for King Philipp the Fair. The earlier one, the Abbreviation, is anonymous and undated, but Natalis de Wailly's dating at 1300 and attribution to Dubois are not doubted.<sup>7</sup> The Recuperation text was handed to the king during his stay at Chinon on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1308.<sup>8</sup> The king's reaction is not known, if he or any one of his courtiers even read either one, and Dubois was never an adviser to the king.<sup>9</sup>

By his own account, he was quite wealthy.<sup>10</sup> Dubois died some time after 1321.<sup>11</sup>

### *Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant, and Aristotle*

The contribution of Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) to the intellectual landscape of the Central Middle Ages (and beyond) requires no further comment. Siger of Brabant (c.1240-1284) is probably less well known; that Dubois specifically and repeatedly mentions him merits further investigation. Like the *doc-*

4 Benjamin GALERAN, « Le recours à l'Antiquité dans le *De recuperatione Terre Sancte* de Pierre Dubois », in *Les aspects politico-juridiques de la domination: De l'Antiquité au Moyen-Âge*, BOUINEAU, Jacques (ed. – Paris, L'Harmattan, 2020), pp. 211-250, at pp. 217-18, 223-24.

5 This gathering, the first Estates General in France, was a key move by Philipp IV against Boniface VIII – see below; Andrew LATHAM, *Medieval Sovereignty: Past Imperfect* (Leeds, ARC Humanities, 2022), p. 57.

6 DUBOIS, p. XXV

7 Dubois himself in the Recuperation refers to an earlier text of his – see below.

8 DUBOIS, pp. XXVI-XXVII.

9 FORCADET, « Conseiller », p. 211; LEOPOLD, pp. 30-31.

10 DUBOIS, pp. 308-09 (§135 / cap. LXXXI).

11 DUBOIS, pp. XXIII-XXVIII. A summary of Dubois' biography in GALERAN, pp. 211-12; Pierre-Anne FORCADET, « Le *De recuperatione Terre Sancte* de Pierre Dubois: prétexte de croisade et pouvoir royal », in *Les projets de croisade: Géostratégie et diplomatie européenne du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, PAVIOT, Jacques (ed. – Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2014), pp. 69-86, at pp. 69-71.

*tor angelicus*, Siger was an Aristotelian, despite the Parisian clerical authorities' Condemnations of Aristotelianism in 1210. Thomas referenced especially Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina, c.980-1037), less so Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126-1198).

Siger on the other hand was a committed Averroist. Averroes had focused on stripping Avicenna's writings of Neoplatonism and reverting to a pure Aristotelianism. Thomas sought to integrate the Aristotelianism-based, reasoned approaches to truth into Christian enquiry, but to subordinate them to the Scripture-based revelation of truth. Averroism taken to its logical consequence would permit a reasoned discussion on the question whether God existed, and allow two opposite and unreconcilable true conclusions, one arrived at through reason, the other derived from faith. Though Siger in his writings never went that far, he and his followers were skirting heresy. The Condemnations of 1270 were directed at the Averroists, and Siger in 1274 left Paris for Liège. The Condemnations of 1277 then specifically mentioned Siger. Siger eventually fled to Italy and died in Orvieto, probably murdered.<sup>12</sup>

Dubois' frequent quotations from Aristotle's different works show that he had more than a passing familiarity with The Philosopher's writings.<sup>13</sup>

### *The History of the Texts*

Both texts are preserved in just one manuscript exemplar each. The Recuperation copy, from the fourteenth century, is located – ironically – in the Vatican.<sup>14</sup> The Abbreviation copy is from the fifteenth century and located in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.<sup>15</sup> There is no evidence of them being in circulation

12 For the review of a debate involving the philosophers referenced here Dragos CALMA, « *Sine secundaria*: Thomas d'Aquin, Siger de Brabant et les débats sur l'occasionalisme », in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, vol. 1, CALMA, Dragos (ed. – Leiden / Boston MA, Brill, 2019, pp. 268-300). On the Condemnations Luca BIANCHI, « Students, Masters, and 'Heterodox' Doctrines at the Parisian Faculty of Arts in the 1270s », *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 76 (2009), pp. 75–109. More generally on the contentious atmosphere at the Sorbonne GALERAN, pp. 239-41; Gianluca BRIGUGLIA, *Giovanni Quidort di Parigi, Egidio Romano: Il potere del re e il potere del papa: Due trattati medievali* (Genoa/Milan, Marietti, 2009), pp. 218-20.

13 GALERAN, pp. 220-23, 228-32.

14 DUBOIS, pp. XLII-XLIII – MS Reg. Lat. n° 1642.

15 DUBOIS, p. 331 – Ms. Latin 6222C.

during Dubois' lifetime or during the subsequent decades. He is referenced by some authors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but experienced a revival only in the nineteenth century.

The *Recuperation* was first published in print by Jacques Bongars in 1611. Charles-Victor Langlois produced a French translation in 1891; this translation forms the basis for the modern edition, with some minor corrections that do not change the meaning. The modern edition preserves the partition into chapters introduced by Bongars (in Roman numerals), as well as the partition into paragraphs by Langlois. Angelo Diotti in 1977 added the subtitles, which the modern edition also largely preserves.<sup>16</sup>

As mentioned, the *Abbreviation* is anonymous, it has no dedication, and it is not known whether it was handed to the royal chancellery or if it was, whether it was ever noted there. The first edition of the text was not until 1936 in Germany, but it found little traction. As a consequence, the *Abbreviation* has seen even less academic attention than the *Recuperation*. The modern edition is rendered as a continuing text, along with its often interminable sentences and peculiar diction, reflecting the original. The edition marks the different folios, which are also used in this article.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Pre-Eminence of the French Crown – Rex imperator in regno suo*

The *Recuperation* is dedicated to Edward I, King of England (1239-1307, king 1272),<sup>18</sup> it is not the compliment it appears at first blush.

For one, the possessions of the English king within the confines of modern France were technically fiefs of the French crown, so though Edward was king in England and so of equal rank with Philipp, in his capacity as Duke of Guyenne he owed allegiance to Philipp.

But secondly, Dubois elsewhere advocates that the monarch's life is too important to be risked on campaign; he should therefore remain behind in safety.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> DUBOIS, pp. XLIII-XLV.

<sup>17</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 344-47.

<sup>18</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 1-4 (Preamble, §1 / cap. I).

<sup>19</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 276-81 (§§119-120 / cap. LXXIV; also in the *Abbreviation*, pp. 404-11 (fol. 10<sup>v</sup>-12<sup>r</sup>); FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 214-16.

So Dubois building up Edward to go forth and lead the Crusade implies that Edward was, bluntly put, expendable.

The pre-eminence of the French crown is a constant theme in Dubois' writings and informs his military plans. To understand the political and diplomatic context of Dubois' arguments, some historical background is in order.

On Christmas Day 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Roman Emperor, thus effecting the *translatio imperii* from the Roman people to the Frankish people.<sup>20</sup> The ideology underpinning the relationship between pope and emperor was encapsulated in the Two-Swords-Doctrine of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), imaginatively derived from the events surrounding Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Pursuant to this doctrine, all rule on earth proceeded from God via His two representatives in this world, the Pope and the Emperor, where the Pope wielded the spiritual sword and the Holy Roman Emperor the temporal sword. Both of His vicars on earth mediated His rule and anchored the feudal order. According to the original doctrine, the papacy and the imperial dignity were the only two *necessary*, immutable offices in the world.<sup>21</sup>

### *The investiture controversy*

Reality on the temporal side did not develop entirely in accordance with doctrine. The imperial dignity quietly moved from the Franks to initially the Eastern Frankish part, eventually to the Saxons, and to the Italian and Germanic lands generally. While the Holy Roman Emperor's mystique as the temporal head of Christendom continued, effective power fragmented.<sup>22</sup> Monarchs outside the kingdoms of Germany and Italy increasingly asserted their rule independently of the Emperor, and the Emperor did not have the military power to impose domi-

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20 According to the prophesy in Chapter 2 of the Book of Daniel, there would be four worldly empires before Judgement Day. It was accepted that Alexander's empire was the third and the Roman empire the fourth. Since Judgement Day had not yet arrived, the Roman empire had to be continuing.

21 For a potted summary see LATHAM, pp. 4-5.

22 Dante FEDELE, *The Medieval Foundations of International Law* (Leiden / Boston MA, Brill, 2021), pp. 32-37 – though the Holy Roman Emperor could not be conceived of as the supreme secular ruler, his position legitimised the hierarchy of power; Luca DEMONTIS, « Giudicati e signorie: Due percorsi di potere nel medioevo a confronto », *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 38.1 (2008), pp. 3-25, at p. 5



Fig. 1 – *Grandes Chroniques de France*, Tribute by Edward I to Philipp IV  
Bibliothèque Municipale Toulouse, Ms 512, fol. 317<sup>r</sup> (14<sup>th</sup> century)  
Bibliothèque Municipal Toulouse via Wikimedia Commons, public domain

nance. Events such as the battle of Bouvines (1214) reinforced the factual independence of “peripheral” kings.<sup>23</sup>

The papacy did its own to undermine the authority of the imperial dignity. In 1075, Pope Gregory VII issued the *Dictatus papae*, asserting the Pope’s pre-eminence over the Emperor, precipitating the investiture controversy.<sup>24</sup> The controversy brought to a head two diverging policies: The Church was keen to disentangle clerics from their secular roles, while the emperors since Carolingian times had used senior clerical appointments (bishops and abbots) to neutralise dynastic and factional disputes. But while the Church wanted to remove bishops and abbots from these disputes, the Church was not willing to give up the secular powers that were associated with the appointments.<sup>25</sup>

To confine the discussion to the subject-matter relevant to this article and still provide background to the concepts deployed by Dubois, an exemplary look at Sicily (or rather both Sicilies) is worthwhile – the *dramatis personae* or their successors all feature in Dubois’ tracts.

The German crown was united with the Italian crown, but the southern Italian kingdom, known as the *Regno*, was not unified with either of the two crowns. It comprised the island of Sicily as well as the southern half of the boot and was populated by communities with Arab, Byzantine, Lombard, and Norman traditions. The crown of Sicily was in 1198 inherited by Frederick II, then four years old.<sup>26</sup> His mother died the same year, leaving Frederick the ward of Pope Innocent III (1161-1216, pope 1198), foremost of the lawyer popes and author of *Per venerabilem* (see below). Though legend had it that the orphaned Frederick grew up as a street urchin in the alleys of Palermo, he was in fact highly educated and

23 DEMONTIS, p. 5.

24 Translated in Italy into the controversy between Ghibellines (imperialists) and Guelfs (papacy). FEDELE, pp. 59-62.

25 It is this papal overreach that prompted secular authorities to look for models that were compatible with the developing notions of internal sovereignty, either by excluding clerics from the exercise of secular rule (the solution argued by Dubois, see below) or by integrating them into and subordinating them to the secular power structures; DIEGO QUAGLIONI, *La sovranità* (Rome, Laterza, 2004), p. 19.

26 Frederick II of Staufen (or Hohenstaufen, with their main power base in Swabia, 1194-1250) was elected German king in 1212 but could not assert his crown over Otto IV until Otto was fatally weakened by his defeat at Bouvines 1214. In 1220, he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor.

multilingual, earning from his contemporaries the sobriquet *stupor mundi*.

One of Frederick's achievements was the 1231 *Liber constitutionum regni Siciliae* (also *Liber Augustalis* or Constitutions of Melfi). The work reflected current law in the kingdom, building on the received legal traditions of the kingdom's constituents as well as Canon and Roman law. More importantly and relevantly, Frederick by his choices established himself as supreme legislator of *Sicilian* law.<sup>27</sup> In doing so, he was obliquely challenging Innocent III's no less papal supremacy-minded cousin and successor-but-one, Pope Gregory IX (1145-1241, pope 1227).

Though Frederick II avoided direct confrontations with the papacy, he charted an independent course emphasising Roman law-derived imperial prerogatives. However, he did no better than his grandfather, Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1122-1190, emperor 1152), in his efforts to consolidate imperial authority in Italy. He died in 1250; his heirs did not fare well. 1268 Conradin, sixteen years old and last of the Staufen line, lost the battle of Tagliacozzo to Charles I of Anjou (1226-1285), who promptly had the youth executed.<sup>28</sup>

Charles was the founder of the (new) Angevin line, a cadet line of the Capetians. He was a younger brother of St Louis IX, who in turn was the grandfather of King Philipp the Fair. Pope Clement IV (1190-1268, pope 1265) had supported Charles against the Staufen, fearful of the Staufens' power and political skills. He quickly realised that in promoting the energetic, ruthless, and meddlesome Charles, the papacy had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. Clement IV's eventual successor, Pope Gregory X (1210-1276, pope 1271), in 1275 sought an alliance with the newly-elected German king, Rudolph of Habsburg.<sup>29</sup>

27 I.e. in his capacity as King of Sicily; this authority was not derived from the fact that he was also Holy Roman Emperor – Mario CARAVALE, « Federico II e il diritto comune », in *Gli inizi del diritto pubblico, 2: Da Federico I a Federico II*, DILCHER, Gerhard, QUAGLIONI, Diego (eds. – Bologna, Mulino / Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 2008), pp. 87-109, at pp. 90-91.

28 DEMONTIS, pp. 4-5; subsequent Holy Roman Emperors gave up trying to assert their authority in Italy. The Staufen partisans fled to Aragon, since King Peter III (1239-1285) had married Constance II of Sicily (1249-1302), the daughter of Manfred of Staufen, Emperor Frederick II's natural son. Pursuing his wife's claim to the throne of Sicily, Peter successfully exploited the 1282 Sicilian popular uprising against Charles I's imperious reign, the Sicilian Vespers. This resulted in there being two Kingdoms of Sicily, one comprising the island, the other the mainland half of the kingdom.

29 DEMONTIS, pp. 5-6.

Charles wasted no time in picking up the reins of the rich, efficiently organised, and well-run kingdom he had just won. Among his first moves was to re-found the law school in Naples, which had already served Frederick II as think-tank and as talent factory for the kingdom's judges and royal officials.<sup>30</sup> Both he and his son called renowned professors from the universities of Orleans (Dubois' presumed legal *alma mater*) and Toulouse to teach in Naples.<sup>31</sup> The focus of the curriculum was on Roman law, but the university also held lectures on regnal law, relevant for training the court's top advisers and administrators.<sup>32</sup>

One of the prominent adjunct professors, so to say, on regnal law was Marinus de Caramanico, who compiled the *glossa ordinaria* on the Constitutions of Melfi<sup>33</sup> – which remained part of the law of the Kingdom of Naples until the early nineteenth century. Precious little is known about his personal biography; the one thing we do know is that he was a judge at the *Magna Curia*, the royal law court.<sup>34</sup>

Legal historians accord particular attention to Marinus' *Prooemium*, his foreword and introduction to his gloss on the Constitutions, likely completed sometime before 1285. Right at the beginning, Marinus recites the *Corpus Iuris*-derived authority of the emperor to legislate.<sup>35</sup> He goes on: “Yet regarding the free king, who is not subject to the power of any other, we declare the same, that is, that the king himself can make law.” One such free king was the King of Sicily, and his power extended to legislate even in divergence from common (Roman) law.<sup>36</sup>

30 Luca LOSCHIAVO, « Marino da Caramanico: Giudice, giurista, intellettuale », in *Formations et cultures des officiers et de l'entourage des princes dans les territoires angevins (milieu XIII<sup>e</sup>-fin XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, MATHIEU, Isabelle, MATZ, Jean-Michel (eds. – Rome, Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2019), pp. 243-64, at p. 248.

31 LOSCHIAVO, p. 250-52.

32 LOSCHIAVO, pp. 247-56; while Justinian's compilation is today mainly considered for its influence on the development of private law in modern civil law systems, from the twelfth to the fourteenth century lawyers studied especially the public law sections of the *Corpus Iuris* – *ibid.* p. 256.

33 Michele SPADACCINI, *Wer erklärt das Gesetz des Königs? Die Glossatoren des Liber augustalis im Königreich Sizilien* (Göttingen, V&R unipress, 2024), pp. 141-49.

34 LOSCHIAVO, pp. 243-47; SPADACCINI, pp. 161-76 – a birth date not much earlier than 2140 seems likely, and he probably died around 1289.

35 SPADACCINI, pp. 135-41. Marinus was relatively unknown to modern historiography until Francesco Calasso brought him to scholarly attention in the mid-twentieth century. The *Prooemium* is reprinted in Francesco CALASSO, *I Glossatori e la teoria della sovranità*, third edition (Milan, Giuffrè, 1957), pp. 179-205 – here on p. 179.

36 “Sed in rege libero, qui nullius alterius potestati subiectus est, idem dicimus, scilicet ut rex

With the demise of the Staufens, the papacy had essentially won the investiture controversy by default. The effects were subtle but important. It became increasingly accepted that the secular authority of the Holy Roman Emperor was limited to the territories of the Emperor's two royal crowns, the German crown and the one of Italy (by territorial extent northern Italy up to the papally-ruled Donation of Constantine, separating the Empire from the *Regno*).<sup>37</sup> However, in northern Italy, Imperial authority (Ghibellines) remained in military conflict with the Guelfs, typically referred to as the papal faction. It would be more accurate to describe the Guelfs as rejecting Imperial overlordship and being supported in this by the Popes.

In the ideological sphere, the revised version of the Two-Swords-Doctrine was promulgated by Pope Boniface VIII in his 1302 bull *Unam sanctam*, putting us squarely in Dubois' time. Pursuant to Boniface' version, the Lord provided both swords to the Pope, and it was the Pope who conferred the sword of temporal power on the Holy Roman Emperor. The imperial dignity was therefore the Pope's to give or take away.<sup>38</sup>

The investiture controversy had a corollary effect, initially supported by the papacy as a device to undercut the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor but in its ultimate consequence surely unintended and rued. Pope Innocent III in his 1205 decretal *Per venerabilem*, though concerned with a minor matter unrelated to the relationship between Pope and Emperor, used a form of words suggesting that certain kings were not subject to a higher temporal authority (i.e. the Holy Roman Emperor).<sup>39</sup> This formulation later gave rise to the phrasing *Rex est imperator in regno suo* in its many variants.

Royalist ideology went one step further: The kings asserted the eternal nature of their own rights to temporal rule. Both the papacy and the imperial dignity, they

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ipse possit condere legem"; CALASSO, pp. 180-82; on p. 189 he says the term *princeps* derives from the fact that he "alium superiorem non habet." This line of argument was already laid down by Frederick II, it was not an invention of Marinus' – see fn. 27.

37 Voiced e.g. by Marinus de Caramanico: CALASSO, p. 198.

38 LATHAM, p. 59; FEDELE, pp. 84-89. Marinus de Caramanico does not just assert royal authority to be dependent on no-one on earth, he subordinates popes to royal power: "Papa etiam regi obsequitur et ei se subesse fatetur", just as Jesus acknowledged the obligation to obey worldly kings (CALASSO, p. 184).

39 See the discussion with LATHAM, pp. 31-44, for the subject-matter here especially pp. 32-33; FEDELE, pp. 95-104, on France specifically from p. 101. Marinus de Caramanico refers to *Per venerabilem*: CALASSO, p. 201.

argued, were historical artefacts; *royal* rule eternally predated both.<sup>40</sup> Kingship in Catholic Europe did indeed predate Pope Leo's coronation of Charlemagne; and since the papacy claimed to derive from Jesus' commission to St Peter, its emergence only in historical times could not be disputed. Concomitantly, kingship was increasingly sacralised.<sup>41</sup>

The polities in Italy rejecting Imperial rule through their conduct were in fact asserting themselves as *civitates superiores non recognoscentes*<sup>42</sup> – a position clearly displeasing to Dubois.<sup>43</sup> However, they still looked to the Holy Roman Emperor as source for the legitimisation of their rule,<sup>44</sup> so they had little interest in political theories that delegitimised the Emperor.

### *Dubois' literary production*

Dubois in his writings pulled on various strands in this history. In his justifications, though, he does not engage with or even rehearse the legal arguments his predecessors developed. His style is that of a pamphleteer; to the extent Dubois reasons, his tool is logic. That King Philipp the Fair is *imperator in regno suo* is, for Dubois, a given.

His one abiding theme, developed also in his other writings, was his opposition to the efforts of Pope Boniface VIII to assert temporal dominance of the papacy over all monarchs.<sup>45</sup>

40 Gianluca BRIGUGLIA, *Giovanni Quidort di Parigi, Egidio Romano: Il potere del re e il potere del papa* (Genoa/Milan, Marietti, 2009), p. 15; GALERAN, pp. 237-38; Georg JOSTKLEIGREWE, « 'Rex imperator in regno suo': An Ideology of Frenchness? », in *Imagined Communities*, PLESZCZYNSKI, Andrzej, SOBIESAK, Joanna, TOMASZEK, Michał, TYSZKA, Przemysław (eds. – Leiden / Boston MA, Brill, 2018), pp. 46-84, at p. 59. Marinus de Caramanico as well argues that kings and royal authority predated imperial authority: CALASSO, p. 180. Following Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, it was the Holy Three Kings (as the Magi are termed outside the Anglo-Saxon sphere) who offered homage to the Saviour, long before the pope appeared. LATHAM (without engaging with the symbolisms I here advance) refers to this as the “dualist-regnalist” model: pp. 5-6.

41 Hermann KAMP, *Friedensstifter und Vermittler im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Darmstadt, 2001), p. 15; CARVALE, pp. 94-95. So also Marinus de Caramanico, pointing out that Roman kings of Antiquity were at the same time *sacerdos* and *pontifex*: CALASSO, pp. 184-85 and *passim*.

42 See fn 85.

43 See fn 68.

44 DEMONTIS, p. 5; FEDELE, pp. 32-37.

45 FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 216-17. The dispute between Philipp and Boniface origina-



Fig. 2 – The Holy Three Kings assemble before Paris  
*Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, fol. 51<sup>v</sup> (15<sup>th</sup> century)  
Musée Condé/Chantilly via Wikimedia Commons, public domain

His approach to the pre-eminence of the French crown among Europe's monarchs was threefold. Primarily, he asserted the sovereignty of the French king on the basis of the *rex imperator in regno suo* doctrine. Though the Holy Roman Emperor in protocol outranked kings, he was (one is tempted to say "in international law") on par with the kings. Indeed, in one passage discussing the Emperor, Dubois used "emperor" and "German king" interchangeably.<sup>46</sup>

Secondly, Dubois argued that among all the kings of Christendom, the French king as the *princeps christianissimus* deserved pre-eminence, based on his power and prestige.<sup>47</sup>

Thirdly, and somewhat contradictorily, Dubois in a later tract also seemed to argue that it was a mistake that the imperial dignity descended along the East Frankish (i.e. the German) line and so ended up being linked to the crowns of Germany and Italy. Properly, the dignity should have remained with the Western Franks (i.e. the French). The Pope had the power, and should exercise it, to correct this aberration and confer the dignity back on the French crown.<sup>48</sup>

Stepping back from Dubois' *pro domo* arguments, the dispute over the questions to what extent we can in the early fourteenth century employ the concepts of sovereignty and, related to it, international law, is a live one. Academics studying the history of international relations argue that a concept of sovereignty began to be developed in the thirteenth and crystallised in the fourteenth century.<sup>49</sup> It is, I

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ted in Philipp's move to tax clerical property. LATHAM sees this altercation, and especially the polemical literature arising from it, as pivotal to the development of the notion of sovereignty, pp. 8, 45-54 and *passim*; BRIGUGLIA, pp. 14-15; Boniface was considering abrogating *Per venerabilem* and re-asserting the French king's subordination to the Holy Roman Emperors – JOSTKLEIGREWE, p. 58.

46 DUBOIS, pp. 30-33 (§13 / cap. VIII); JOSTKLEIGREWE, pp. 53-54 – arguing for the concept's importance for especially for the ideology of French national identity *ibidem*, pp. 50-52. See also LATHAM, p. 35.

47 The phrase *princeps christianissimus* with DUBOIS, p. 252 (§111 / cap. LXX); FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 225-27; *idem*, « Prétexte de croisade », p. 82; GALERAN, p. 243; not specifically on Dubois JOSTKLEIGREWE, pp. 51-52.

48 DUBOIS, p. XXVII; FORCADET, « Prétexte de croisade », pp. 85-86; FEDELE, pp. 102-03; without reference to Dubois JOSTKLEIGREWE, pp. 60-62.

49 For many LATHAM, who defines "sovereignty" as the "supreme authority to command, legislate, and judge" – p. 1. Clarifying the legal concepts of "legislation" and "judging" Pierre-Anne FORCADET, « Arbitrage, justice internationale et souveraineté au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle », in *Avant l'état: Droit international et pluralisme politico-juridique en Europe, XIII<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, FEDELE, Dante, LESAFFER, Randall, SAVY, Pierre (eds. – Rome, Historia et Ius, 2004),

believe, a persuasive one. It does not matter whether this was accidental or done deliberately. In other words, did the various intellectuals and pamphleteers formulating aspects of the doctrine already have in mind the concept of sovereignty that formed the basis for the Westphalian System, or as sovereignty was defined by Jean Bodin and Emer de Vattel? Or were they simply arguing ephemeral narrow polemics?<sup>50</sup>

### *The Tract De recuperatione terre sancte*

Latin Outremer's last major base in the Holy Land, Acre, had fallen in 1291. The Knights Templar still held on to Ruad, a small island fortress off the coast north of Tripoli until 1302. Plans to reestablish a Latin presence in the Holy Land commenced little later. Dubois evidently wrote the *Recuperation* in two stages, explained in §110. According to this passage, Dubois transmitted the first part to King Edward I, whose advisers vetted and commented the text. The second part then was directed at King Philipp the Fair and focused more specifically on the political, economic and diplomatic environment in France as it pertained to the implementation of Dubois' proposals.<sup>51</sup>

Dubois was exceedingly vague about exactly how the Holy Land should be recaptured. Twice he said that the contingents should travel mostly by land, but also by sea, but was no more specific.<sup>52</sup>

Otherwise, he pointed to his previous work in two places. The title references are similar, but not identical. *Super abbreviatione guerrarum et huiusmodi provisionibus*<sup>53</sup> and *De abbreviatione guerrarum et litium regni Francorum et de ref-*

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pp. 99-115, at pp. 99-103. For the very different lens applied to the concept of sovereignty by legal historians also QUAGLIONI, pp. 22-30. FORCADET (*ibid.*, p 112-13) further points out that in thirteenth century French vernacular usage, *souverain* was a current and uncontroversial term, referring to a lord's jurisdictional authority within the vassalitic hierarchy of feudal law – a very different concept than the international or constitutional law concept of “sovereignty,” for which contemporary Latin used variations on the term *superior* (ref. QUAGLIONI, p. 25).

50 FORCADET, « Arbitrage », p. 102; JOSTKLEIGREWE (p. 79) advocates the second view. On Bodin's developed concept of sovereignty QUAGLIONI, pp. 48-53.

51 DUBOIS, pp. XLVI, 248-49 (§110 / cap. LXIX *in fine*); the first part comprised §§1-109 (cap. I-LXIX), the second part the remainder, §§110-142 (cap. LXIX-LXXXIII).

52 DUBOIS, pp. 46-51 (§26 / cap. XII), pp. 222-25, (§§104-105 / cap. LXIII); see below fn. 103, 105.

53 DUBOIS, p. 268 (§117 / cap. LXXII).

*ormatione status unibersalis reipublice christicolarum*<sup>54</sup> leave little doubt that he was referring to his earlier, shorter Abbreviation.

His one other military comment targeted the military constitution of his day. Dubois was highly critical of the prevalent practices for raising the French host. Feudatories of the king who should be serving because they were under a duty to do so instead claimed payment, he said, sometimes from several sources.<sup>55</sup> Alternatively, they bribed the king's officials to be exempted from serving.<sup>56</sup> To make up the numbers for his armies, the king was relying on the *retrobannum* or general levy – the men beholden to the crown's feudatories. These would normally be subject to call-up only in the gravest emergency, and then only as contingents of the crown's feudatories, not called up directly by the crown.<sup>57</sup> The individuals making up this general levy were too poor to afford the time off work to render service and were ill equipped, resulting in a host that was great in numbers but no more than an ineffectual rabble. Dubois urged a return to the feudal principles of military service, where the crown's wealthy feudatories served as of duty, and the general levy was not burdened.<sup>58</sup>

But the vast bulk of his tract instead dealt with organisational and flanking measures: Peace in Europe to free up money and troops for a Crusade; lay administration of ecclesiastical property, again to free up funds; education of likely boys and girls in languages, skills, and religion to anchor Catholic rule once the Holy Land was recaptured; the political reorganisation of Europe under the leadership of the French crown; and some other issues, such as criticism of Philipp's debasement of the currency.

In this article, references are to the Recuperation unless otherwise stated.

54 DUBOIS, p. 282 (§120 / cap. LXXV).

55 DUBOIS, pp. 284-95 (§§121-127 / cap. LXVI-LXXVIII).

56 DUBOIS, pp. 296-307 (§§128-134 / cap. LXXVIII-LXXX).

57 For background see Caroline DECOSTER, « La fiscalisation des aides féodales sous le règne de Philippe IV le Bel : une stratégie au service de la souveraineté royale », in *Monnaie, fiscalité et finances au temps de Philippe le Bel*, in CONTAMINE, Philippe, KERHERVÉ, Jean, RIGAUDIÈRE, Albert (eds. – Vincennes, Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.igpde.10333>; open access online).

58 DUBOIS, pp. 284-305 (§§121-132 / cap. LXXVI-LXXX); FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 218-19 – though in a situation of *necessitas* (a Roman law concept), the king could directly summon the *retrobannum*.

### *The Tract De abbreviatione guerrarum*

The Abbreviation was written anonymously in 1300. It is addressed to King Philipp IV, though there is no formal dedication or evidence of the tract having been handed to the King or to the court.

Dubois already discussed in the Abbreviation some of the issues he fleshed out in the Recuperation; main commonalities and differences will be pointed out. A key difference is that the Abbreviation did not focus on the reconquest of the Holy Land. What is known about Dubois' other works and his personal history argues that he genuinely believed in the effort, and he was not just cynically leveraging the reconquest as a vehicle for advancing his pet plans.<sup>59</sup> This article cannot provide more clarity on this question.

The Abbreviation is much shorter than the Recuperation, only about a third of the length. Stylistically, it is less well edited than the Recuperation. Sentences are occasionally rambling and sometimes opaque, and there are many repetitions in the text.

The original does not have a formal title; in the Recuperation, Dubois refers to this earlier text under the title *De abbreviatione guerrarum et litium regni Francorum et de reformatione status unibersalis reipublice christicolarum* (On the abbreviation of wars and law suits of the Kingdom of France and the reformation of the universal condition of the commonwealth of Christians). Other editors have chosen the title *Summaria brevis et compendiosa doctrina felicis expeditionis et abreviacionis guerrarum ac litium regni francorum* (Brief and summary resumé on a felicitous approach to expedite and curtail the wars and law suits of the Kingdom of France).<sup>60</sup> Both versions of the title point to the two subject-matters that take up the bulk of the text: Curtailing armed conflicts in and around France, and reforming legal procedure.

The objective for Dubois was to enable the French crown to establish itself as the undisputed and unthreatened power in Europe; proud rebellious lords and barbarian princes alike would be subdued.<sup>61</sup> Dubois began his discussion on the armed conflicts with a historical review; in the early days of the Frankish realm,

<sup>59</sup> LEOPOLD, pp. 30-32.

<sup>60</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 331-32.

<sup>61</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 350-51 (fol. 1<sup>r</sup>).

the land was thinly populated, game abounded, and armies were small. A force could live off the land. Armaments consisted of cuirass, helmet, and shield, fighters wielded swords and daggers.<sup>62</sup> That had now changed. The dominance of the French forces lay in their knightly cavalry. But even minor lords had realised that a castle negated the power of the cavalry. Besieging a castle took time, while the attacker incurred heavy costs for the maintenance of the idle horses. Too often, the rebels would not be overcome.<sup>63</sup>

If a rebellious lord would eventually be subdued, by rights, he and his family and entourage had earned the death penalty. But it was both cruel and unrealistic to visit such destruction on so many. In combination, the consequence was that the cost of rebellion, whether successful or not, was low.

Dubois' suggested solution was to use the superior royal field force to flood and devastate the rebellious lord's countryside. This would rapidly bring the rebels to reason. Having made a dramatic example of some rebellious princes, the mere threat would be enough to achieve submission.<sup>64</sup> To those who would argue that such a method of waging war was contrary to the successful strategy of Charlemagne, Dubois answered that the situation in Charlemagne's days was different. Change in response to changing conditions was not a bad thing; Islamic philosophers, so Dubois, bemoaned the straitjacket imposed on society by the doctrine of immutable laws.<sup>65</sup>

Having established peace and dominance for the benefit of the commonwealth,<sup>66</sup> the French king could confer on the papacy the true secular dominion over Tuscany, the Kingdom of Sicily, the City of Rome, and the Donation of Constantine. But popes were generally not well suited to exercise secular rule and the military effort that went with the job. They were typically elected when they were already advanced in age, and they had not had experience in government or military leadership. The secular administration of the papal holdings should therefore be under the guardianship of a king who was able to discourage attainders on the

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62 DUBOIS, pp. 352-53 (fol. 1<sup>v</sup>), 380-81 (fol. 6<sup>r-v</sup>).

63 DUBOIS, pp. 354-59 (fol. 2<sup>r-v</sup>).

64 DUBOIS, pp. 370-75 (fol. 4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>v</sup>); FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 217-18.

65 DUBOIS, pp. 376-83 (fol. 5<sup>v</sup>-6<sup>v</sup>). In passing, Dubois recalls that Charlemagne subdued the Lombards, got himself appointed Roman Senator, and acquired the right to appoint popes and prelates – *ibid.* pp. 378-79 (fol. 6<sup>r</sup>).

66 DUBOIS, p. 382 (fol. 6<sup>v</sup>): “propter tocius rei publice salutem”.

papal holdings – and in the world there was no prince more suited for this role than the King of France.<sup>67</sup>

At the same time, the recalcitrant Lombards could be brought to heel, and the proper rule by the German crown reestablished in Lombardy. This would put an end to the depredations the Lombards visited on others. The kings of Sicily and Germany would surely and gladly assist in the effort.<sup>68</sup> Key to any success was that an expeditionary force would remain in the subdued territory and not simply return home once victory was achieved. France for instance could easily raise 2,000 cavalry composed of landless knights and 80,000 foot for a force that could remain in place, and doing so would not diminish the military power of France.<sup>69</sup>

The military part of the Abbreviation formally concluded with an emphatic “Amen”, to be followed on a new folio by a disquisition on legal procedure.<sup>70</sup> To recall, Dubois in the Recuperation pointed to his earlier tract the Abbreviation for specifics on the military aspects of the reconquest of the Holy Land. Reviewing the first, military half of the Abbreviation, one is, I submit, none the wiser on how the reconquest should be undertaken.

### *Continuation of the tract: De abbreviacione litium regni Francorum*

The main issue with legal procedure identified by Dubois was the effort of the clergy to insulate themselves from royal jurisdiction.<sup>71</sup> The clergy rejected efforts of the royal courts to enjoin clerics and clerical assets even in matters clearly

67 DUBOIS, pp. 382-91 (fol. 6<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>); and after all, the French king as successor to Charlemagne was also hereditary Roman Senator – see fn. 65. FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 226-27; *idem*, « Prétex de croisade », p. 83-84. Charles I of Anjou had repeatedly had himself elected Roman Senator.

68 DUBOIS, pp. 390-95 (fol. 8<sup>r</sup>-9<sup>r</sup>). FORCADET, « Prétex de croisade », p. 80. A later passage recommends the subjection of Hungary as well, *ibid.* pp. 402-03 (fol. 10<sup>v</sup>). In Hungary, Charles Robert of Anjou, a grandson of Charles II of Anjou, had been elected king in 1301, but was not able to assert himself against competitors until 1312. It also has to be borne in mind that at the time, there were two Kingdoms of Sicily, one comprising the island itself and then reigned by Frederick III of Aragon, whom Dubois considered an usurper (see fn 28 and 120). The other, centred on Naples, consisted of the southern half of the boot and was reigned over by Charles II of Anjou (1254-1309), son of Charles I.

69 DUBOIS, pp. 394-95 (fol. 9<sup>r</sup>).

70 DUBOIS, pp. 410-11 (fol. 12<sup>r</sup>).

71 DUBOIS, beginning pp. 410 (fol. 12<sup>v</sup>); on the background FEDELE, pp. 67-74.

secular, and they retaliated against any royal officials who had the temerity to try by excommunicating and publicly shaming them. This, Dubois insisted, had to stop – and he pointed to the practice of the English kings to imprison obstreperous bishops, without any protest from the Pope.<sup>72</sup> After all, the Pope himself had confirmed the French king as being a prince who had no superior in his kingdom. Denying the king the exercise and enforcement of royal jurisdiction throughout his realm would suggest that the king was not indeed sovereign, contradicting the premise.<sup>73</sup>

A further device by which the clergy inserted themselves into secular affairs was by providing certifications – and in the process might, if it affected Church interests, slant the certification to their advantage; Dubois suggested that the French crown should itself establish such a service.<sup>74</sup>

Another issue with civil procedure briefly referenced later in the text was that law suits took far too long and were far too costly, due to lawyers devising ever more elaborate schemes for delay and inventing new legal concepts to distract from a common-sense resolution. The effect was that the nobility saw their funds, energies, and focus diverted from the pursuit of arms to sterile legal wranglings.<sup>75</sup> However, Dubois did not offer a remedy here.

As an aside, in the *Recuperation* Dubois recommended the promulgation of a civil procedure specifically for the reconquered Holy Land, supported by two key arguments; a bespoke civil procedure code would provide the opportunity to rationalise and streamline the process, discarding the Baroque accretions proliferating in France. Secondly, it had to be a procedure that applied equally to all residents in the Holy Land, never mind where in Europe they had hailed from. It had to be a stand-alone effort that united all; if it were identified with any particular European kingdom, it would lead to division and disaffection.<sup>76</sup>

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72 DUBOIS, pp. 462-63 (fol. 23<sup>v</sup>).

73 DUBOIS, pp. 462-65 (fol. 23<sup>v</sup>).

74 DUBOIS, pp. 434-39 (fol. 18<sup>r-v</sup>).

75 DUBOIS, pp. 506-09 (fol. 31<sup>v</sup>-32<sup>r</sup>). Marinus de Caramanico mentions among the motivations that caused him to compile his gloss at that particular time the need to counter lawyers' self-serving interpretations and sowing confusion: CALASSO, p. 204.

76 DUBOIS, pp. 184-207 (§§90-99, cap. LV-LVIII); FORCADET, « Conseiller », p. 224; *idem*, « Prétexte de croisade », pp. 74-76.

The Abbreviation dealt with a few other issues; one touched on only briefly was the debasement of the currency, leading to inflation and bad money driving out the good.<sup>77</sup>

A further, somewhat surprising one was the celibacy of the clergy – it was a subject not raised in the Recuperation, maybe because his far more radical proposals there obviated the need. Dubois carefully prepared his argument by referencing St Augustine. In an effort to ensure the excellence of the priesthood, St Augustine had decreed that he would refuse to consecrate anyone who was not willing to completely commit himself to a religious life. The effect of this well-meant policy, St Augustine found, was that individuals in an effort to please him and win ordination would commit the mortal sin of perjuring themselves, of dissimulation and hypocrisy. This was far more deleterious to the morale and standing of the priesthood than slight imperfections in their *vita religiosa*. So St Augustine publicly reversed himself, withdrawing his decree.<sup>78</sup>

Similarly, celibacy had been a well-meaning policy advocated by the Church Fathers – who, when they propounded it, were all of advanced age and decrepit and so were not sacrificing anything.<sup>79</sup> The policy went against clear Scriptural advice, as when St Paul said that *every* man shall have his wife so as to avoid fornication and enable chaste living – making no exception.<sup>80</sup> But even worse, it led precisely to the dissimulation and hypocrisy St Augustine had realised were the real-life effects of his own policy. Reversing a policy that had proved itself to be counterproductive was not inconsistent with Scripture; indeed, the Lord Himself had used the New Testament to correct the Old.<sup>81</sup> In the same vein, his sainted majesty the king should argue both utility and necessity to revise the policy. In doing so, he would be acting for the common weal on the basis of prudence, according to Aristotle the queen of virtues.<sup>82</sup>

77 DUBOIS, pp. 508-13 (fol. 31<sup>r</sup>-33<sup>r</sup>); this issue is picked up again and elaborated in the Recuperation, see below fn. 118.

78 DUBOIS, pp. 486-91 (fol. 28<sup>r-v</sup>).

79 DUBOIS, pp. 492-95 (fol. 29<sup>r</sup>).

80 DUBOIS, pp. 492-95 (fol. 29<sup>r</sup>); 1 Corinthians 7:2.

81 DUBOIS, pp. 502-03 (fol. 31<sup>r</sup>).

82 DUBOIS, pp. 502-05 (fol. 31<sup>v</sup>).

### *Peace – for Europe*

Dubois began his Recuperation with a call for peace. But for Dubois, peace was a means to an end: Though he quoted Aristotle's dictum of war as an intrinsic evil,<sup>83</sup> the Recuperation only objected to wars among Christians. The reason for the objection was that such wars distracted Christians from where the focus of their efforts should be, that is, to make war on the Saracens in order to re-conquer the Holy Land.

Any nobleman who engaged in warfare against his fellow should be deprived of his lands and wealth. He and his followers should be shipped to the Holy Land, to apply their belligerence against the Saracen and in aid of the reconquest. Good behaviour and performance could win back enough of the wealth to reestablish him, but in the Holy Land. The excess confiscated wealth would be used to fund the reconquest.<sup>84</sup>

All these measures would be proclaimed by a General Council to be called by Edward I and presided over by the Pope. The Council would also issue a plenary indulgence for all participants in the Crusade.

Disputes between sovereign princes and cities like the Italian cities (*civitates et multi principes in terris superiorem non recognoscentes*)<sup>85</sup> regarding any of these issues would be heard by a tribunal composed of twelve arbitrators, where each of the litigants nominated three bishops and three lay arbitrators; the lay arbitrators should be chosen from the wealthy so that they were not prone to bribery. The Pope would act as the only and final appeal authority.<sup>86</sup>

While with the concept of sovereignty Dubois was following a nascent doctrine, with his proposal on arbitration tribunals he was attempting to leverage a receding practice – and receding precisely because of the coalescing notion of sovereignty. In the thirteenth and into the fourteenth century, jurisdiction – in the sense of a court's competence to resolve disputes laid before it – was not linked to sovereignty in the modern sense. Dispute resolution was a service provided to the

83 DUBOIS, pp. 8-11 (§3 / cap. III); also in the Abbreviation, pp. 360-61 (fol. 3<sup>v</sup>), though since the Abbreviation does not advocate an invasion of the Holy Land, the statement is more internally consistent there.

84 DUBOIS, pp. 16-27 (§§3-11 / cap. IV-VI); FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 222-23.

85 DUBOIS, p. 26 (§12 / cap. VII); FEDELE, pp. 138-42.

86 DUBOIS, pp. 26-29 (§12 / cap. VII).



Fig. 3 – Pope Boniface VIII declares the Jubilee Year 1300  
Giotto, Fresco in St John in Lateran, Rome (early 14<sup>th</sup> century)  
Wikimedia Commons, public domain

litigants, and courts competed with each other to attract litigation by providing a superior service in terms of costs, efficiency, and professionalism.<sup>87</sup> Edward I frequently appeared in the *Cour du roi* in Paris, both as claimant and defendant;<sup>88</sup> the English king Henry III and his rebellious barons submitted their dispute to St Louis IX for arbitration in 1264, resulting in the Mise of Amiens;<sup>89</sup> and Philipp

87 FORCADET, « Arbitrage », pp. 104-05; similarly, lordly court proceedings in compelled jurisdiction (e.g. violent crime) as well focussed more on composition and resolution than on retribution and punishment: KAMP, pp. 31-34.

88 FORCADET, « Arbitrage », p. 107.

89 FORCADET, « Arbitrage », p. 110 – which was rejected by the barons and war resumed.

IV himself submitted a dispute with Edward I to arbitration by Boniface VIII.<sup>90</sup>

So the notion of sovereign princes submitting their disputes to arbitration in and of itself was not a revolutionary concept in Dubois' time. But Dubois of course went a step further; though the composition of the tribunal mirrored the modern practice of having the litigants nominate the arbitrators, Dubois' tribunal was a compulsory, not a voluntary one. There was the possibility of appeal, but it was to the Pope, who by that time was in French "Babylonian Captivity."<sup>91</sup> In line with the general thrust of Dubois' tract, the proposal can be seen as yet another device to mediate the pre-eminence of the French king.<sup>92</sup>

### *Reorganisation of the Holy Roman Empire*

A further measure to secure peace should be a reorganisation of the Holy Roman Empire, which Dubois saw as coterminous with the German kingdom. In the passage, he used "Emperor" and "(German) King" interchangeably. The elective nature of the dignity led to instability and wars, Dubois argued, and the amount of money required to be spread among the electors to win the election could be put to better use. All this would be avoided by making the dignity hereditary, in the Habsburg line.<sup>93</sup>

At the time of Dubois' writing, there was no anointed Holy Roman Emperor, and had not been since the death of Frederick II of Staufen in 1250. Rudolph I of Habsburg had secured for himself the German crown in 1273, ending the *interregnum* that followed Frederick's death. Rudolph was the first of the Habsburgs to do so, but was unable to obtain his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor before his death in 1291. He tried to pass the German crown on to his son Albert, but the electors chose Adolph of Nassau instead. In 1298 then, Albert managed to

90 FORCADET, « Arbitrage », p. 114. It also has to be borne in mind that in the medieval conception of law, law was a universally pre-existing, transcendental and for mortals immutable artefact; law was *found*, not *made*: QUAGLIONI, pp. 23-24. As popes and Holy Roman Emperors laid claim to the classical Roman law prerogative of the *princeps* to legislate as it was expressed in Justinian's *Corpus Iuris*, and this prerogative was claimed by the kings *superiorem non recognoscentes* as well (see Marinus de Caramanico, fn 36), so not just procedural law, but also substantive law progressively became a hallmark of sovereignty.

91 FORCADET, « Conseiller », p. 227.

92 FORCADET, « Arbitrage », p. 112; *idem*, « Conseiller », pp. 220-22, 225-27.

93 DUBOIS, pp. 30-33 (§13 / cap. VII), pp. 260-63 (§116 / cap. LXXI).

gain the German crown, but was assassinated in 1308, not having been anointed Emperor. He was succeeded by the short-lived Henry VII of Luxembourg as German king, crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1312. It was not until Frederick III's coronation in 1452 that a Habsburg became Holy Roman Emperor.

Philipp initially had a close relationship with the Habsburgs. Rudolph in 1280 agreed a settlement on the investiture of Provence, easing its later complete integration into the French kingdom.<sup>94</sup> Philipp in 1299 further agreed the marriage of his half-sister Blanche to Albert's son Rudolph, but Blanche died in 1305 and Rudolph in 1307; there were no surviving children.<sup>95</sup>

The preceding paragraph may give an indication why Dubois was arguing for making the Imperial crown hereditary specifically to the Habsburgs. While the Habsburgs were at the time a reasonably prominent house in Germany, they had neither the power nor the seemingly perennial claim to the Holy Roman crown they acquired in the fifteenth century. In the Abbreviation, Dubois argued that the future children from the marriage between Blanche and Rudolph should be educated at the French court, with a view to them eventually inheriting the Imperial crown. Dubois was *avant la lettre* channelling for France the verse later ascribed to the Habsburgs: *bella gerant alii | tu felix Austria nube*.<sup>96</sup>

By the time of writing of the Recuperation, Dubois' cunning plan had of course fallen apart, though he still clung to it. Maybe he harboured hopes of persuading Philipp to pursue a dynastic strategy in Germany. In any event, the secular rivalry between France and the Habsburgs was still generations in the future.

### *Resolution of the Castilian Succession and Completion of the Reconquista*

Another issue Dubois felt needed to be resolved by Philipp was the disputed Castilian succession. On the death of Alfonso X in 1284, the Castilian crown passed to – or was usurped by, as Dubois saw it – Alfonso's brother Sancho V, instead of passing to the children of Alfonso's predeceased eldest son, known as Ferdinand de la Cerda and married to Blanche, a daughter of St Louis IX.

94 DUBOIS, p. 363, fn. 14. One of Charles I of Anjou's fiefs was the Duchy of Provence, then still part of the German-Italian *regnum*.

95 Dealt with in the Abbreviation: DUBOIS, pp. 402-05 (fol. 10<sup>v</sup>).

96 DUBOIS, pp. 402-05 (fol. 10<sup>v</sup>).

The Pope should compel Sancho V, Dubois wrote in the *Recuperation*, to deploy the full military might of Castile to remove the remaining Saracens from Iberia and so redeem himself. The crown of Granada could then be conferred on Ferdinand de la Cerda's eldest son, and other issues resolved contemporaneously.<sup>97</sup>

Dubois addressed the Castilian succession already in the *Abbreviation*. There, Dubois challenged Philipp to avenge the wrong done to the honour of France (by way of Blanche's involvement) and by extension to the memory of Charlemagne, who had invested so much effort into his campaigns south of the Pyrenees.<sup>98</sup>

### *Merger of the Assets of Templars and Hospitallers*

The assets of the Hospitallers, Templars and other orders originally tasked with defending or aiding the Holy Land should be placed under unified, secular administration. Those of the Brothers who were capable of fighting should do so for the benefit of the Crusade; those who were not should be retired to Cistercian monasteries, where they would have to live a properly monastic though still comfortable life. The commanderies of the Orders would generate the supplies for the Crusade, their ships undertake the logistics. The sheer amount of income the Orders were generating would be made public. This would reveal the extent to which the Orders had been preying on the faithful, and so finally destroy any goodwill they might have enjoyed.<sup>99</sup>

The idea to unify the Orders was not a new one, it had already been proposed at the Council of Lyons in 1274.<sup>100</sup> Pope Clement V suggested it to the respective Grand Masters in 1305. Philipp made his move against the Templars on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1307, so about six months before Dubois handed his tract to the King's chancellery. Dubois did of course know of the arrests; he attended the 1308 Estates

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97 DUBOIS, pp. 218-222 (§103 / cap. LXII), pp. 264-67 (§116 / cap. LXXI); already in the *Abbreviation*, pp. 398-99 (fol. 9<sup>v</sup>). Philipp had been closely involved with the disputes and wars around the throne of Aragon – including the futile effort to make his younger brother Charles of Valois King of Aragon – already as crown prince: Léo PERRET, « Philippe le Bel avant Philippe IV, quelle diplomatie? (1276 – 1285) », *Medievalista* 36 (2024), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/12ufl> (open access online).

98 DUBOIS, pp. 398-99 (fol. 9<sup>v</sup>).

99 DUBOIS, pp. 32-37 (§§14-15 / cap. IX).

100 DUBOIS, p. 35, fn. 24.

General in Tours, where the issue was discussed.<sup>101</sup> But the fate of the Templar assets had at that point not been decided.

### *Beginning the Crusade and Securing the Holy Land*

To launch the Crusade, the Pope acting through the Council should instruct bishops and princes, and anyone else who was able to, including wives and widows, to raise as many troops as possible. They should be in splendid uniforms, different for cavalry and infantry, and equipped with impressive arms. Their departure for the Holy Land should be launched in a gay parade, accompanied by marching bands, to instil hope, optimism, and moral support for the effort.<sup>102</sup>

Dubois was exceedingly vague about exactly how the Holy Land should be recaptured. In two separate passages, he dealt with the route. Given the challenges of maritime transport, especially for horses, the bulk of the troops should travel overland. In the first relevant passage, he advised the contingents from Germany, Hungary, Greece, and all to the north of these, to follow Charlemagne's example and march by land, taking the route Emperor Frederick I had embarked on 1190 when he drowned in the Halys. Arrangements should be made with the Byzantine Emperor for passage and supplies. The contingents from France, Spain, and all Italian polities would travel by sea, though those who wanted to avoid the journey by sea could choose the land route, the additional expense being for their account.<sup>103</sup> In a later passage, he advised that the host should be split into four corps, three of which would travel by sea and one, the largest one, by land. The land-based contingent should follow the route taken by Charlemagne, Emperor Frederick I, and Godfrey of Bouillon.<sup>104</sup>

On the return journey, the land-based contingent could oust Andronicus II Palaiologos and put Charles of Valois on the throne. The preoccupation with the Eastern Empire is already evident in the Abbreviation; Dubois there, in 1300, suggested that Charles should marry the daughter of "the Emperor" – by which he

101 DUBOIS, p. XXVI.

102 DUBOIS, pp. 36-39 (§16 / cap. X); FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 223-24.

103 DUBOIS, pp. 46-51 (§26 / cap. XII); Frederick's death brought the Third Crusade to a premature end – see below fn. 121.

104 DUBOIS, pp. 222-25 (§§104-105 / cap. LXIII) FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 223-24; *idem*, « Prétex-te de croisade », pp. 77-78.

meant Baldwin II, the last Latin emperor in Constantinople (1217-1273, emperor 1240, deposed 1261). Charles in 1301, the year after the Abbreviation was written, indeed married Catherine of Courtenay, Baldwin's granddaughter and titular heir to the (Latin) crown of the Eastern Empire.<sup>105</sup>

Once conquered, though, the Holy Land would need to be secured, and most of the Recuperation dealt with long-term measures to ensure continued Catholic control. Some of these measures were specifically military in nature, such as the injunction that magnates should not withdraw all their troops from the Holy Land post-conquest, but leave experienced commanders and elite knights behind to garrison the new frontiers. The major towns should organise their populations and the populations of their surrounding areas into militias.<sup>106</sup> Again, though, the advice remained vague and general.

### *Secular Administration of Ecclesiastical Property*

The secular wealth of the Church and of its senior clerics was a perennial topic of discussion and dispute in the Central and Late Middle Ages; Dubois was not breaking new ground here. His solution was in practice daring, but in its legal underpinnings less radical than competing contemporary proposals.

According to Dubois, all ecclesiastical property, including that of the Holy See, should be put in trust to secular administrators, who would from the proceeds finance the clerical maintenance. The advantage of this arrangement would be that clerics would be weaned off their predilection for expensive law suits and other worldly endeavours to expand their holdings; they would be freed up to focus on their ministry. The resulting cost savings would mean that the senior clerics could be maintained in the lifestyle they had become accustomed to, low-level clerics could be properly paid and would no longer have to prey on the common folk, and there would even be a surplus that could be used to fund the expeditions into the Holy Land.<sup>107</sup> Cautious lawyer that he was, Dubois did not advocate any

<sup>105</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 222-25 (§§104-105 / cap. LXIII) and in the Abbreviation pp. 396-99 (fol. 9<sup>r-v</sup>); see also below fn. 121. Dubois' strategy to recover the Eastern Empire's crown in the Abbreviation is more convoluted. GALERAN, pp. 243-44.

<sup>106</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 40-47 (§§17-25 / cap. X-XI); FORCADET, « Conseiller », p. 224; *idem*, « Prétex-te de croisade », p. 78.

<sup>107</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 80-113 (§§40-57 / cap. XXIII-XXXV).

changes to the ownership of ecclesiastical holdings.

Nor did he base his argument on any Biblical injunction on Church or clerical poverty – at the time an issue of immense brisance, where one could easily tangle with the Inquisition.<sup>108</sup> His framing here is interesting. His proposal, he baldly asserted, was in line with the Word of God.<sup>109</sup> Quoting from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, he then averred that it proceeded with inescapable logic from general principles.<sup>110</sup> He finally challenged his putative opponents to demonstrate on the basis of Scripture why his proposal fell foul of Biblical injunctions and should *not* be implemented.<sup>111</sup> To those arguing that a legal framework once established should not be changed, he countered that Averroes himself opined that the Arabs had suffered much grief from their insistence on the universality and immutability of laws.<sup>112</sup>

### *Education, Especially of Women*

Dubois’ advocacy of education in languages, including of women, has been seen as enlightened and modern; on closer inspection, here too Dubois’ policies are very much means to an end.

Dubois’ plan called for scouts to identify four- to five-year-old boys and girls

108 See e.g. the 1302 disputation between John Quidort of Paris with his *Tractatus de potestate regia et papali* and Giles of Rome’s pro-papal answer *De potestate ecclesiastica*: BRIGUGLIA, pp. 19-22 and *passim*. To recall, Giles wrote his main *opus*, the *De regimine principum*, for Philipp the Fair while he was still dauphin; GALERAN, pp. 240-41

109 DUBOIS, pp. 90 (§47 / cap. XXVIII): “Quod hoc provisio sit optima secundum Dei omnipotentis ordinationem, cuius actio, secundum Apostolum, *nostra debet esse instructio*, videtur inconvicibiliter probari posse.” (That this provision is the best in accordance with what God the omnipotent has ordered can incontrovertibly be proven by reference to [the words of] the Apostle [Paul]: His actions must be [understood as] teachings for us.) The quotation attributed to Paul is in fact Dubois’ interpretation of passages in several of Paul’s letters – *ibid.* p. 91 fn. 69.

110 DUBOIS, pp. 92 (§48 / cap. XXVIII): “...Philosophu[s] mera ratione uten[s] scripsi[t]: *Eum qui felicitari debet felicitate contemplativa, oportet habere victum et vestitum et alia necessaria ad procurationem vite, licet non expediat quod sit dominus terre et maris.*” (The Philosopher on the basis of pure reason wrote: He who must find joy in the pleasures of contemplation must have food, clothing, and the other necessities of life; however, it is not meet that he should be the master of land or sea.)

111 DUBOIS, pp. 94-97 (§48 / cap. XXIX).

112 DUBOIS, pp. 96-101 (§48 / cap. XXX); FORCADET, « Prétex de croisade », p. 74.

likely to be able to absorb the education; these should then be completely separated from their families and taught in specialised schools. The curriculum should focus on medicine, surgery, hippiatry, Latin, Greek, and Arabic. The boys should then in the Holy Land primarily function as clerics. Their language skills would enable the Pope to deploy them to bring back into the Roman fold the Christians in the Holy Land, who spoke mainly local languages and did not follow the Roman Church's precepts.<sup>113</sup>

The most beautiful girls should be selected for this programme. Like their male counterparts, they should be instructed in Latin, logic, foreign languages, medicine, and surgery, though the curriculum would necessarily have to be dumbed down on account of the fragility of their sex (*propter sexus fragilitatem*). Those physically robust enough for life in the Holy Land should also be instructed in religion. They would be married off to local princes and magnates in the Holy Land (taking care that their husbands would repay the cost of their education so that the programme would remain funded). As mothers, they would raise their children in the Roman faith, and as prominent and skilled individuals, they would become influencers toward their peers – the monogamy of Christianity being particularly attractive.<sup>114</sup>

The education programme outlined by Dubois was extensive; it was obviously important to him and takes up considerable space in his work, about 25% of the text.<sup>115</sup> It was an intense education, and he was prescriptive about the academic curriculum and its phasing. He also stressed the need for practical instruction, especially in arms as well as smithing and carpentry, which were important for the war effort;<sup>116</sup> in contrast to his specificity on the academic curriculum, he was hazy about the practicalities of this side of the education.

Evidently, his proposals were not rooted in an enlightened view, intended to benefit the pupil's personal development, but sought to instrumentalise the chil-

113 DUBOIS, pp. 118-21 (§60 / cap. XXXVII) and following *passim*.

114 DUBOIS, pp. 120-25 (§§61-62 / cap. XXXVII-XXXVIII); pp. 176-81 (§§85-87 / cap. LIII-LIV); quotation on p. 178 (§85 / cap. LIII). ANTONY, p. 101.

115 DUBOIS, pp. 170-77 (§84 / cap. LII); the section on education transitions into chapters on imparting legal education, which then continues with a plan to provide a simplified legal system for the Holy Land. FORCADET, « Conseiller », p. 224; *idem*, « Prétexte de croisade », pp. 73-74, 78-80.

116 DUBOIS, pp. 114-83 (§§58-90 / cap. XXXV-LV).

dren for the “greater good”. Having said that, he saw children from all backgrounds, boys and girls, as amenable to education.

Academic research on how common literacy actually was in the Central Middle Ages is currently in flux. The traditional concept of literacy, concentrating on reading and writing fluency in Latin and clerical contexts, is facing finer differentiation. In addition to fluency in the vernacular rather than Latin, there is also a growing recognition of differences in active and passive literacy and of situational, pragmatic literacy. An individual might struggle to write a coherent text but be perfectly fluent in reading. An accountant might be able to read and write out ledger entries with ease but would be baffled by a literary narrative. Some of these differentiations may have been influenced by gender roles.<sup>117</sup>

#### *Debasement of the Currency*

Dubois sharply criticised the King’s debasement of the currency. The “reform”, he said, caused such inflation that the benefit initially won was soon lost. He urged a return to sound money.<sup>118</sup>

#### *War as Solution*

The calling of a Crusade, Dubois argued, presented the opportunity to resolve all the ills he had listed, and it would provide the urgency and common cause to implement the programme he had sketched out. A forgiveness of debts would provide a much-needed economic boost.<sup>119</sup>

117 Sylvie DUVAL, « La littéracie des femmes à la fin du Moyen Âge », *Médiévales* 75 (2018), pp. 227-48, esp. pp. 230-32.

118 DUBOIS, pp. 306-11 (§135 / cap. LXXXI); for background, see Yves COATIVY, « Les monnaies de Philippe le Bel et leurs avatars », in *Monnaie, fiscalité et finances au temps de Philippe le Bel*, in CONTAMINE, Philippe, KERHERVÉ, Jean, RIGAUDIÈRE, Albert (eds. – Vincennes, Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, Comité pour l’histoire économique et financière de la France, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.igp-de.10333>; open access online); Ignacio DE LA TORRE, « The Monetary Fluctuations in Philip IV’s Kingdom of France and the Their Relevance to the Arrest of the Templars », in *The Debate on the Trial of the Templars (1307-1314)*, BURGTORF, Jochen, CRAWFORD, Paul F, NICHOLSON, Helen J. (eds. – London / New York NY, Routledge, 2010), pp. 57-68, at pp. 59-63.

119 FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 5-7; *idem*, « Prétexte de croisade », pp. 72-73, 84-85, argues that Dubois was a pacifist – based on Dubois’ advocacy of war as an opportunity to change society and his eagerness to wage war on the Saracens (and Emperor Andronicus II), I cannot follow that argument.

On the international plane, the Aragonese Frederick III (1272-1337) could be deprived of Sicily and Sardinia and the respective crowns settled on their rightful kings.<sup>120</sup> The Crusader army could, once the campaign for the Holy Land was won, be repurposed to oust Andronicus II Palaiologos as Emperor of the Eastern Empire and install Charles of Valois. That would finally give him the crown he was so desperately seeking, and it would secure the newly reconquered Catholic possessions in Outremer.<sup>121</sup>

### *Subsequent Events*

The Crusade advocated by Dubois of course never materialised. Philipp moved against the Templars in 1307 – this event happened before Dubois handed his tract to the King, but it is not specifically addressed by Dubois.

The years between the Abbreviation and the Recuperation were militarily eventful for France, but Dubois makes no mention. 1302 saw the humiliating defeat at the hands of Flemish infantry at the Battle of the Golden Spurs outside Courtrai/Kortrijk, in which a great number of French knights, including several prominent peers of France, were killed. The Battle of Arques the following year was technically a draw; the French cavalry were unable to overcome the Flemish infantry on open ground. Since France needed a victory, the outcome favoured the Flemish.<sup>122</sup>

French arms redeemed themselves in 1304. First, the French navy defeated the Flemish at Ziekerzee. The decisive Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle later the same year was a close-run thing; the Flemish nearly succeeded in breaking the French army and came close to killing Philipp himself. It was Philipp's personal intervention to rally the French infantry that swung the battle in France's favour. The

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120 DUBOIS, pp. 220-23 (§103 / cap. LXII *in fine*), 260-61 (§113 / cap. LXI), 266-67 (§116 / cap. LXXI *in fine*); FORCADET, « Prétexte de croisade », p. 85; see also fn 97. Frederick was the third son of Peter III of Aragon, who had dispossessed Charles I of Anjou of the island of Sicily in the Sicilian Vespers 1282 (see fn 68). Sardinia was claimed by the papacy as a fief following the demise of Byzantine rule, and Pope Boniface VIII granted the island to James II of Aragon in 1297. However, *de facto* Aragonese rule was not established until 1324. On Sardinia's particular constitutional history and the *giudicati* DEMONTIS, pp. 16-24.

121 DUBOIS, pp. 250-77 (§§111-118 / cap. LXX-LXXIII).

122 Kelly DEVRIES, *Infantry Warfare in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, Boydell, 1996), pp. 9-31.



Fig. 4 – Battle of the Golden Spurs (Courtrai/Kortrijk)  
*Grandes Chroniques de France*, BNF Français 2813, fol. 326<sup>r</sup> (1375-80)  
gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, public domain

subsequent peace secured the lucrative Flemish wool manufacturing towns for the French crown.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup> DE VRIES, pp. 32-48. On the catastrophic impact of the Flanders rebellion on the French crown's fiscal position DE LA TORRE, pp. 64-65.

There are several ironies here; Dubois' vaunted knightly cavalry performed disastrously at Courtrai and were ineffectual at Arques. The successes at Ziekerzee and Mons-en-Pévèle were to the credit of the French navy (which Dubois does not even mention) and infantry respectively. And the victory at Mons-en-Pévèle was in no small measure due to the king being present at the battle – incidentally the only battle in which Philipp was personally involved while he was king. Not only was he present, he risked his life in the thick of the fighting and turned defeat into victory through his personal intervention. Had he stayed at home in safety, as Dubois advised, the battle would likely have been lost, and with it the income from the Flemish towns.

Another event absent from Dubois' tract is the expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306. Since this was a measure which the King (vainly) hoped would aid in stabilising the kingdom's currency,<sup>124</sup> and Dubois specifically made an issue of the crown's monetary practices, it is noteworthy that Dubois did not even mention Jews or the event.

Philipp the Fair died in 1314, to be followed in rapid succession by his three sons Louis X, Philipp V, and Charles IV. In 1337 then, the Capetian line ended with Charles IV's death. The French crown passed to Philipp VI of Valois (1293-1350), son of the ever-crownless Charles of Valois, and the event that provided the *casus belli* for the Hundred Years' War.

### *Summary, Conclusions, and Outlook*

Toward the end of the first part of the Recuperation, Dubois commits his tract to the confidential attention of the King and the Pope, mentioning that he had made enemies in compiling his plans.<sup>125</sup> Dubois' elevation and – by equating his authority to that of the Holy Roman Emperor – sacralisation of the king implied a complete submission of the nobility to the crown, a precursor of absolutism. At the same time, he advocated the secularisation of all ecclesiastical property. It is therefore scarcely surprising that the broad nobility and the ecclesiastical hierarchy would be displeased.

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<sup>124</sup> DE LA TORRE, pp. 65-66.

<sup>125</sup> DUBOIS, pp. 228-29 (§106 / cap. LXIV), pp. 312-13 (§136 / cap. LXXXII); FORCADET, « Prétex-te de croisade », p. 72; GALERAN, pp. 213-15.



Fig. 5 – Philipp IV and his Family  
 Raimon Gaucelm de Bézier, BNF Latin 8504, fol. 1<sup>v</sup> (1313)  
 gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, public domain

As a person, Dubois (to me at least) remains opaque.<sup>126</sup> His argument on the celibacy of the clergy shows a flash of humanity. His plans for the hothousing of likely ideological child soldiers for deployment as clergy and marriage material in the Holy Land point in the opposite direction. He is unequivocal in his dehumanisation of his intended Saracen adversaries, even though both of his intellectual mentors, St Thomas Aquinas and Siger of Brabant, never mind their narrow ideological differences, were both pioneers in humanising the ideological other. Even though he upholds Aristotle's qualification of war as inherently evil, he extolls war against Saracens as falling outside the injunction and hails a renewed Crusade as the opportunity to overturn established law and institute a new world order.

In the matter of practical strategies for the curtailment of wars, let alone the reconquest of the Holy Land, Dubois' proposals are quite thin, especially when

<sup>126</sup> See also GALERAN'S speculations on Dubois' motivations and character (pp. 245-49).

compared to the geographic detail and tactical as well as strategic thoughts his contemporaries in the recuperation genre put into their treatises.<sup>127</sup> Most of the text of the *Recuperation* revolves around measures for ensuring the preservation of Catholic control of the Holy Land once it has been reconquered, and here Dubois' advice, while ambitious, is solution-oriented. As mentioned, the scheme to educate boys and girls to function as society-penetrating purveyors of Catholic faith and rule takes up roughly a quarter of the *Recuperation*. The other topic taking up considerable space in both the *Recuperation* and the *Abbreviation* is the integration of the clergy into the secular power structures of the kingdom. It is of course a partisan project, and Dubois argues his master's case forcefully.

Regardless, there is a clear red thread of continuity from his earlier tract to the *Recuperation* treatise. With compelling, stringent logic, Dubois combines so many elements from the intellectual ferment of his day into his proposals that giving all of them their proper due is a formidable task. This article could only scratch the surface.

Having said that, Dubois did not advance any new theories or intellectually engage with the controversies. Neither his biography nor the references he adduces suggest that he was familiar with the writings of prominent exponents of royal sovereignty; he probably gathered his knowledge on these elements through his social and professional circle. He accepted as given such matters the sovereignty (within the conceptual categories of his time) of the French king or the circumscribed extent of the Holy Roman Empire, and with that the narrow secular authority of the Holy Roman Emperor. Combined with the limited circulation of his tracts, it seems unlikely that Dubois had any effect or resonance among his contemporaries and immediate successors. His texts are interesting as a reflection of the discussion in his time at the intellectual consumer level, so to say.<sup>128</sup>

The line of argument developed in favour of the sovereignty of royal crowns as against both Pope and Emperor however bore the seed of another idea that was to flower centuries later: That of popular sovereignty. Already discussed by intel-

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127 Compare the literature referenced by the editors: DUBOIS, pp. XXXVI-XLI; Emmanuelle VAGNON, « Géographie et stratégies dans les projets de croisade, XIII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle », in *Les projets de croisade*, PAVIOT, Jacques, BALOUP, Daniel, JOUDIQU, Benoît (eds. – Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2014), pp. 125-50. ANTONY, *passim*.

128 FORCADET, « Conseiller », pp. 211-12.

lectuals in the thirteenth century and famously propounded by Marsilius of Padua in his *Defensor pacis* in 1324,<sup>129</sup> its practical political relevance can be seen in Philipp IV's decision in 1302 to bolster his position against Boniface VIII by obtaining buy-in from the French Estates General. Philipp IV won the argument that France was sovereign, but at the "cost" of locating that sovereignty in a structured body of the populace, not the person of the king.<sup>130</sup>

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129 See LATHAM, *passim*; collective decision-making was living political practice, supported by legal doctrine – for Italy DEMONTIS, p. 6 and *passim*; Gianmarco DE ANGELIS, « Between Legal Tradition and Political Practice », in *Comparing Two Italies*, MAINONI, Patrizia, BARILE, Nicola Lorenzo (eds. – Turnhout, Brepols, 2020), pp. 27-60.

130 Less pronounced in the Recuperation, it is a view clearly expressed by Dubois in the Abbreviation: Non debet ergo rex querere que sunt propria commoda sed que rei publice expediunt alioquin non regere sed tyrannizare diceretur (Therefore a king should pursue not what is of benefit to himself but rather what is advantageous to the public good, or he would be said to not be ruling, but to be tyrannising); DUBOIS, *Abbreviation*, p. 364 (fol. 3<sup>v</sup>); the same again on p. 396 (fol. 9<sup>v</sup>) and p. 506 (fol. 31<sup>v</sup>).

Having imported the classical Roman law notions of *princeps a legibus solutus* and *plenitudo potestatis* into medieval law, medieval lawyers were keen to balance the notions by differentiating good rule from degenerated forms of rule, fully in line with both Christian doctrine and Aristotelian concepts: QUAGLIONI, pp. 32-35.

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Pasquale Massacra (1819-1849), La madre di Ricciardino Langosco in traccia del cadavere del figlio (episodio dell'assedio di Pavia, 1315). Wikipedia Commons.

# Guerra e racconto: l'assedio di Pavia del 1315 nelle cronache del primo Trecento

di FABIO ROMANONI

**ABSTRACT.** The siege of Pavia in 1315 constitutes an unusual case within the framework of medieval warfare, as it ended with the rapid capture of the city through a surprise night attack rather than by means of a prolonged siege. This article examines the military and political dynamics that led to Pavia's fall, focusing on the internal divisions of the urban community, the role played by Ghibelline exiles, and the coordinated use of land and river forces by the Visconti. Particular attention is devoted to Albertino Mussato's narrative, critically compared with other contemporary chronicles in order to distinguish historically plausible elements from possible literary constructions influenced by the classical tradition of military stratagems. The Pavia episode is finally placed within a broader analysis of nocturnal surprise assaults in the later Middle Ages, assessing both their actual use in military practice and their treatment in contemporary military theory.

**KEYWORDS:** MEDIEVAL SIEGE WARFARE, NIGHT ASSAULT TACTICS, Visconti lordship and Lombard politics, Factional conflict in late medieval Italian cities, Historiography and classical military models

## *Introduzione*

**A**lmeno fino alla metà del XVIII secolo, l'assedio costituì una delle manifestazioni più caratteristiche, costanti e significative della guerra. Non era affatto raro che intere generazioni di cittadini si trovassero, nel corso della propria vita, ad affrontare ripetutamente esperienze di carattere ossidionale<sup>1</sup>. La frequenza e la centralità di tali opera-

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<sup>1</sup> GUIDO ALFANI, MARIO RIZZO, *Introduzione: la guerra e il militare fra eventi e strutture, "ordinario" e "straordinario"*, in Guido Alfani, Mario Rizzo (cur.), *Nella morsa della guerra. Assedi, occupazioni militari e saccheggi in età preindustriale*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2013, pp. 7-12.

zioni nel contesto medievale furono tali che Jim Bradbury, con evidente iperbole, poté affermare che la guerra medievale consistette «per il 99% di assedi»<sup>2</sup>.

Fino allo sviluppo e alla diffusione delle armi da fuoco tra la fine del Quattrocento e il Cinquecento, l'assedio rappresentò una tipologia di operazione militare estremamente complessa. Gli assediati, potendo generalmente contare su strutture difensive consolidate, godevano infatti di vantaggi tattici non trascurabili. È stato ipotizzato, a questo proposito, che le probabilità di successo in un assedio erano proporzionali a un algoritmo «che vede un rapporto fra difensori e assalitori sbilanciato di oltre 1 a 10 a favore dei secondi»<sup>3</sup>.

Non deve dunque sorprendere che, in assenza di un successo immediato ottenuto mediante un colpo di mano o un assalto frontale, la strategia più diffusa consistesse nel circondare ermeticamente la città o il castello nemico, interrompendone le linee di approvvigionamento e di comunicazione, in attesa che la popolazione, stremata dalla fame o dalla sete, fosse costretta alla resa<sup>4</sup>.

Da questo punto di vista, l'assedio di Pavia del 1315 rappresenta un caso peculiare. Come attestano le fonti coeve, diversamente dai lunghi e logoranti assedi che la città dovette subire nel 1356 e nel 1359 ad opera dei Visconti<sup>5</sup>, in quell'occasione Pavia fu conquistata dalle truppe dei signori di Milano, sostenute dai fuoriusciti pavesi di parte ghibellina, mediante un'azione notturna a sorpresa.

Si trattava di una modalità d'attacco non inedita, ma di difficile esecuzione: l'oscurità, se da un lato garantiva l'effetto sorpresa, dall'altro limitava

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2 JIM BRADBURY, *The Medieval siege*, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2004, p. 71.

3 DUCCIO BALESTRACCI, *Stato d'assedio. Assediati e assediati dal Medioevo all'età moderna*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2021, pp. 11-12.

4 EKAITZ ETXEBBERIA GALLASTEGI, *Fazer la guerra. Estrategia y táctica en la Castilla del siglo XV*, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, 2022, pp. 214-215; DARIO CANZIAN, *Castelli, fortezze e guerra d'assedio*, in Paolo Grillo, Aldo A. Settia (cur.), *Guerre ed eserciti nel medioevo*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2018, pp. 142-147.

5 FABIO ROMANONI, «Come i Visconti asediavano Pavia». *Assedi e operazioni militari intorno a Pavia dal 1356 al 1359*, in *Reti Medievali-Rivista*, VIII, 2007, <http://www.retimedievali.it>, ultimo accesso 18 dicembre 2025.

la manovrabilità dei contingenti e complicava il coordinamento tra i reparti, rendendo arduo per i comandanti valutare l'andamento complessivo delle operazioni<sup>6</sup>.

Il presente studio intende quindi analizzare l'assedio di Pavia del 1315 non solo per ricostruirne la dinamica militare, ma anche per verificare in quale misura azioni notturne di sorpresa di questo tipo trovassero effettiva applicazione nella prassi bellica e nella trattativa militare del basso medioevo.



Fig. 1: Sigillo di Goffredo di Langosco, 1310 circa, Firenze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

### *Tra lotte di fazioni e conflitti regionali: Pavia prima dell'assedio*

Nonostante la tradizionale fedeltà di Pavia alla causa imperiale, testimoniata dal costante appoggio offerto agli Svevi durante le campagne di Federico I Barbarossa e del nipote Federico II contro i comuni della Lega lombarda, all'inizio del XIV secolo la città conobbe un profondo mutamento negli equilibri politici interni<sup>7</sup>. Nel 1300, infatti, la fazione guelfa, guidata dai Langosco, conti palatini di Lomello, riuscì a sopraffare il partito ghibellino rappresentato dai Beccaria, assumendo il controllo del governo cittadino.

Il regime instaurato dai Langosco si caratterizzò per un marcato orientamento

6 ALDO A. SETTIA, *Tecniche e spazi della guerra medievale*, Viella, Roma, 2006, pp. 198-200; JAMES TITTERTON, *Deception in Medieval warfare. Trickery and cunning in the central Middle Ages*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2022, p. 69.

7 PIETRO VACCARI, *Pavia nell'età comunale*, in Emilio Gabba (cur.), *Soria di Pavia*, III/1, *Dal libero comune alla fine del principato indipendente 1024-1535*, Banca del Monte di Lombardia, Milano, 1992, pp. 28-54.

a favore degli interessi dell'aristocrazia (in particolare di quella rurale) e per un progressivo allineamento alla politica angioina, nella cui orbita Pavia fu inserita a partire dal 1313. Tale indirizzo segnò una cesura rispetto al precedente governo ghibellino, più sensibile alle istanze dei ceti popolari e mercantili della città<sup>8</sup>.

Ciononostante, i Langosco vantavano antichi rapporti di collaborazione con i Visconti, signori di Milano e capofila del partito ghibellino lombardo. Già nel 1277 Riccardo di Langosco aveva guidato il contingente pavese che, congiuntamente alle truppe dell'arcivescovo Ottone Visconti, sconfisse i della Torre nella battaglia di Desio, restituendo Milano al controllo visconteo<sup>9</sup>. Tali legami si incrinarono tuttavia poco dopo la presa del potere a Pavia, forse in seguito al fallimento di un progetto matrimoniale tra membri delle due casate, fino a degenerare in aperta ostilità<sup>10</sup>.

Nel 1302 Galeazzo I Visconti tentò una rapida azione militare per impadronirsi della città, ma l'operazione fallì<sup>11</sup>. Nello stesso anno la momentanea restaurazione dei della Torre a Milano, guidata da Guido della Torre, costrinse i Visconti all'esilio, dal quale sarebbero rientrati solo nel 1311 grazie all'intervento imperiale<sup>12</sup>. In tale frangente gli esuli pavesi di parte ghibellina, e in particolare i Beccaria, intensificarono i rapporti con i Visconti, destinati a rivelarsi decisivi nell'assedio del 1315<sup>13</sup>.

La spaccatura non investiva soltanto la società cittadina, ma anche l'ambito ecclesiastico. Nel 1311, dopo la morte del vescovo guelfo Guido Langosco, i ghibellini riuscirono a imporre la nomina di un loro sostenitore, il pavese Isnardo Tacconi, legato sia ai Beccaria sia ai Visconti. Papa Clemente V gli attribuì la ca-

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8 RICCARDO RAO, *Il sistema politico pavese durante la signoria dei Beccaria (1315-1356): «élite e pluralismo»*, in *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome*, CXIX, 2007, pp. 151-187 e in particolare alle pp. 151-154.

9 GIANCARLO ANDENNA, *Langosco Riccardo di*, in *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, LXIII, 2004, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/riccardo-di-langosco\\_\(dizionario-biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/riccardo-di-langosco_(dizionario-biografico)/) ultimo accesso 18 dicembre 2025.

10 GIANCARLO ANDENNA, *Langosco Filippone di*, in *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, LXIII, 2004, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/filippone-di-langosco\\_\(dizionario-biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/filippone-di-langosco_(dizionario-biografico)/) ultimo accesso 18 dicembre 2025.

11 BERNARDINO CORIO, *Storia di Milano*, Anna Morisi Guerra (cur.), I, UTET, Torino, 1978, p. 567.

12 PAOLO GRILLO, *Milano guelfa (1302-1310)*, Viella, Roma, 2013, pp. 203-209.

13 RAO, *Il sistema politico*, cit., pp. 151-154.



Fig. 2: Anonimo membra della famiglia dei Beccaria, 1330-1340 circa, Santuario di Santa Maria di Pontasso, Codevilla (PV)

rica di patriarca di Antiochia e di amministratore della chiesa pavese, ma non gli conferì il titolo vescovile, anche a causa dei persistenti dissidi con la parte ghibellina pavese. Isnardo Tacconi, che verosimilmente nel 1314 dovette abbandonare la città, rappresentò una minaccia per il governo guelfo anche sul piano militare: reclutò un piccolo esercito, conquistò alcuni castelli del contado e, secondo gli inquisitori che lo processarono nel 1319, era noto per il grido di battaglia «moriantur Guelfi! Moriantur Guelfi!»<sup>14</sup>.

È plausibile che, in questi anni, il governo guelfo avesse perso il controllo di porzioni non marginali del distretto cittadino, sebbene non sia possibile quantificarne l'estensione. Le informazioni sulle operazioni che precedettero

<sup>14</sup> PIERO MAJOCCHI, *Cronotassi dei vescovi di Pavia nei secoli XIV e XV*, in Piero Majocchi, Mirella Montanari (cur.), *I vescovi dell'Italia settentrionale nel basso medioevo. Cronotassi per le diocesi di Cremona, Pavia e Tortona nei secoli XIV e XV*, Università degli Studi di Pavia, Pavia, 2002, pp. 47-50.

l'assedio restano frammentarie; sappiamo tuttavia che nel corso del 1314 le forze viscontee invasero la Lomellina, dove i Langosco possedevano i principali castelli, riuscendo a conquistare diversi luoghi fortificati<sup>15</sup>.

All'offensiva viscontea in Lomellina risposero i pavesi nell'aprile del 1315, quando la loro flotta distrusse il ponte di barche fortificato che gli uomini dei Visconti avevano gettato sul Ticino a Vigevano, struttura essenziale per le comunicazioni tra Milano e la Lomellina<sup>16</sup>. L'importanza strategica di tale azione risulta evidente se si considera che, fino al XIX secolo, l'unico ponte stabile e in muratura sul Ticino, dal lago Maggiore alla confluenza nel Po, rimase quello di Pavia<sup>17</sup>.

Parallelamente agivano i fuoriusciti pavesi. Isnardo Tacconi, Manfredo Beccaria e altri *extrinseci*, su ordine di Galeazzo I Visconti e con l'appoggio dei piacentini, allestirono una flottiglia composta da sette ganzerre e otto sandoni, che iniziò a operare nelle acque del Po e del Ticino contro Pavia<sup>18</sup>. Si tratta di due tipologie di imbarcazioni largamente impiegate nella guerra fluviale dell'Italia settentrionale trecentesca: le ganzerre erano legni di notevole sviluppo longitudinale (mediamente intorno ai venti metri), dotati di opere difensive in legno e cuoio, tanto da essere talora paragonati nelle cronache a veri e propri "castelli galleggianti"; i sandoni, invece, erano imbarcazioni di stazza minore<sup>19</sup>.

La centralità delle vie d'acqua emerge anche dal tentativo visconteo di realizzare un castello, detto Ghibellino, alle foci dello Scrivia nel Po, a circa quindici miglia dalla città. L'opera era probabilmente concepita per limitare il traffico navale pavese, isolando Pavia dai centri allora sotto controllo angioino (Alessandria, Vercelli, Valenza e Asti), e per assicurare un passaggio sicuro sul Po funzionale alle comunicazioni con Tortona, conquistata da Marco Visconti nel dicembre dell'anno precedente.

Nel luglio 1315 l'esercito e la flotta pavese mossero contro tale fortificazione insieme al siniscalco angioino Ugone Del Balzo, ai fuoriusciti milanesi guidati

15 CORIO, *Storia di Milano*, cit., p. 629.

16 FABIO ROMANONI, *Guerra e navi sui fiumi dell'Italia settentrionale (secoli XII-XIV)*, in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, CXXXIV, 2008, p. 15.

17 FABIO ROMANONI, *La guerra d'acqua dolce. Navi e conflitti medievali nell'Italia settentrionale*, Clueb, Bologna, 2023, p. 83.

18 GUERINO, *Chronica Placentina ab anno MCCLXXXIX ad annum MCCCXXII*, in Bernardo Pallastrelli (cur.), *Chronica tria placentina*, Typis Petri Fiaccadori, Parma, 1859, p. 395.

19 ROMANONI, *La guerra d'acqua*, cit., pp. 34-41.

dai della Torre e a contingenti giunti da Alessandria, Asti, Valenza e Vercelli<sup>20</sup>. L'azione fallì: i guelfi dovettero ritirarsi lasciando sul campo circa 160 caduti (tra cui Goffredo della Torre), centinaia di prigionieri (fra i quali il genero e il nipote del siniscalco) e perdendo due insegne. Più contenute, ma non trascurabili, risultarono secondo Albertino Mussato le perdite viscontee (circa 70 cavalieri e 40 fanti)<sup>21</sup>. A prescindere dalla precisione di tali cifre, lo scontro e soprattutto l'esistenza del castello Ghibellino contribuirono a isolare Pavia dal resto del fronte angioino, impedendo al siniscalco di far giungere rinforzi con facilità.

Almeno secondo il cronista piacentino Guerino, la situazione non era tuttavia del tutto compromessa e la flotta pavese restava operativa. La notte del 15 agosto rientrò a Piacenza una squadra di 19 ganzerre comandata da Filippino *de Cario* (il cui stipendio era versato dal vescovo di Pavia) che aveva operato contro i pavesi dal primo luglio, apparentemente con scarsi risultati, se lo stesso Guerino riferisce che molti *navaroli* e soldati imbarcati erano stati uccisi o catturati dagli avversari<sup>22</sup>.

Pochi giorni dopo, il 22 agosto, furono i pavesi a passare all'attacco: con una rischiosa navigazione notturna (dato che, generalmente, nelle acque interne non si navigava durante l'oscurità<sup>23</sup>), 14 tra ganzerre e sandoni assalirono il ponte che i piacentini stavano gettando sul Po, tagliarono le funi che ancoravano i mulini natanti, catturarono tredici uomini incaricati di custodire il legname necessario a terminare l'opera e ne uccisero altri quattro<sup>24</sup>.

In risposta, Galeazzo I Visconti inviò una flotta piacentina guidata da Guglielmino *de Carnelevario* in aiuto ai fuoriusciti pavesi stanziati in una località detta *Mota*, sulla riva del Po. L'azione fu però scoordinata: le navi non riuscirono a raggiungere gli *extrinseci* e vagarono a vuoto. Con ogni probabilità, le imbarcazioni pavesi che avevano condotto l'incursione notturna vennero a conoscenza della

20 FERDINANDO GABOTTO, *Asti nella politica sabauda in Italia al tempo di Guglielmo Ventura*, Tipografia Chiantore-Mascarelli, Pinerolo, 1903, pp. 334-335; GENNARO MARIA MONTI, *La dominazione angioina in Piemonte*, Miglietta, Torino, 1930, p. 140.

21 ALBERTINO MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum post Henricum VIII caesarem*, in Ludovico Antonio Muratori (cur.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, X, Ex Typographia Societatis Palatinae, Mediolani, 1727, coll. 667-668.

22 GUERINO, *Chronica Placentina*, cit., p. 396.

23 ROMANONI, *La guerra d'acqua.*, cit. p. 29.

24 GUERINO, *Chronica Placentina*, cit., pp. 396-397.

squadra nemica e decisero di attaccarla: catturarono due grandi navi piacentine e le ganzerre avversarie, mentre gli equipaggi, secondo Guerino, riuscirono a salvarsi con la fuga, forse anche a nuoto<sup>25</sup>.

In sintesi, se il castello alle foci dello Scrivia e le località controllate dai Visconti e dai fuoriusciti ghibellini pavese contribuirono a isolare la città dal sistema angioino, la flotta pavese appare ancora in grado di opporsi alle operazioni avversarie e, verosimilmente, di mantenere aperti almeno alcuni canali di rifornimento.

### *La presa di Pavia (ottobre 1315)*

Come già sperimentato da Galeazzo I Visconti nel fallito tentativo del 1302, Pavia non era una città facilmente conquistabile. Il centro, che allora contava circa 25.000 abitanti<sup>26</sup>, era posto in area pianeggiante, ma godeva di difese naturali e artificiali rilevanti. A sud il Ticino proteggeva l'abitato; oltre il fiume si trovava un sobborgo collegato da un ponte, non incluso nel perimetro della cinta urbana ma difeso da un ramo del Ticino (il Gravellone), allora navigabile. Nei pressi di Pavia lo stesso Ticino si articolava in meandri intercalati da boschi, lanche e zone umide. Ulteriori elementi difensivi erano offerti da corsi d'acqua minori (Navigliaccio e le due Vernavole), originati da risorgive e caratterizzati da acque perenni, che scavavano avvallamenti marcati a est e a ovest della città<sup>27</sup>.

Alle difese naturali si sommavano solide opere fortificate dotate di fossati, ampliate nell'ultimo decennio del XII secolo<sup>28</sup>. Una tradizionale operazione assediata avrebbe richiesto non soltanto un contingente numeroso, ma anche una consistente componente navale, necessaria a impedire l'arrivo di rifornimenti e soccorsi via fiume. Nel 1315, tuttavia, Pavia risultava indebolita: era stata isolata dagli alleati angioini a ovest e gran parte del suo territorio era occupato dai Visconti o controllato dagli esuli ghibellini capeggiati dai Beccaria.

25 GUERINO, *Chronica Placentina*, cit., p. 397.

26 DANTE ZANETTI, *La popolazione dal XII al XVIII secolo*, in *Storia di Pavia*, IV/1, *L'età spagnola e austriaca*, Banca Regionale Europea, Milano, 1995, p. 114.

27 BRUNA RECOCIATI, *Pavia capitale dei longobardi. Note geografiche*, in *Bollettino della Società Pavese di Storia Patria*, LVI, 1957, pp. 73-75.

28 DONATA VICINI, *Lineamenti urbanistici del XII secolo all'età sforzesca*, in Rossana Bossaglia (cur.), *Storia di Pavia*, III/3, *L'arte dall'XI al XVI secolo*, Banca Regionale Europea, Milano, 1996, pp. 10-18.



Fig. 3: veduta da volo d'uccello di Pavia (1522), Chiesa di San Teodoro, Pavia.  
L'immagine, pur essendo realizzata duecento anni dopo l'assedio del 1315,  
ci da modo di vedere come doveva apparire la città nel XIV secolo.

Proprio per evitare un assedio lungo e dall'esito incerto, i Visconti sembrano aver privilegiato una soluzione diversa: la conquista mediante un'azione a sorpresa.

Le informazioni disponibili sull'assedio restano limitate e sono affidate soprattutto alle cronache coeve. La narrazione più articolata proviene da Albertino Mussato; notizie complementari, ma più stringate, si trovano in Guglielmo Ventura, Bonincontro Morigia e nel piacentino Guerino.

Secondo Mussato, la città soffriva una scarsità di vettovaglie, circostanza plausibile se si considera la perdita, almeno parziale, del controllo sul distretto, e molti "popolani" l'avrebbero abbandonata; al contempo, abitanti di comunità



Fig. 4: Grosso d'argento coniato dalla zecca di Pavia, 1299-1359

Contemporaneamente, un secondo contingente fu inviato a sud della città, presso la porta del ponte, dotato di cento lanterne issate su aste. L'insieme di tali disposizioni suggerisce che i Visconti non disponessero, in quel momento, di forze tali da tentare un accerchiamento completo: puntarono invece su due azioni convergenti, una in prossimità del ponte sul Ticino e una lungo il settore orientale.

Sempre secondo Mussato, dopo vari tentativi Matteo Visconti avrebbe infine trovato un traditore, Marchetto Salerno, di famiglia popolare, disposto a introdurre le truppe in città. Nella notte del 6 ottobre un contingente (verosimilmente composto in prevalenza da fanti) si schierò presso la porta del ponte: accese le lanterne, fece rumore e intonò cori, con ogni probabilità per attirare i difensori e, al tempo stesso, ingannarli sull'entità delle forze impiegate. La manovra riuscì: Riccardino di Langosco si diresse verso quel punto con trenta cavalieri, fanti e cittadini armati.

Il presunto attacco al ponte avrebbe però avuto funzione di diversivo. L'irruzione decisiva, sempre secondo Mussato, avvenne presso porta Santa Giustina (dove giungeva la strada per Piacenza): Marchetto Salerno e altri congiurati

in prossimità delle mura si sarebbero rifugiati entro la cinta per timore di saccheggi. Altrettanto verosimile appare l'esistenza di un canale di comunicazione aperto da Matteo Visconti con gli *extrinseci* ghibellini pavesi e con alcuni "faziosi" all'interno delle mura: simpatizzanti ghibellini rimasti in città o guelfi delusi dal regime dei Langosco.

Mussato riferisce che, nell'ottobre 1315, Matteo Visconti, informato da alcune spie dell'invio di 50 cavalieri da Cremona in soccorso di Pavia, ordinò al figlio Stefano e a Francesco da Garbagnate di portarsi con 500 *milites* nell'area suburbana orientale, lungo la strada che conduceva a Piacenza e a Cremona.

permisero l'ingresso delle forze viscontee. Qui la narrazione del cronista presenta elementi problematici: egli parla di un *vallum* costituito da una palizzata che il traditore avrebbe spezzato a colpi di scure, e aggiunge che i congiurati ebbero il tempo, nel buio, di colmare parte del fossato per consentire anche l'ingresso dei cavalieri.



Pur ammettendo che tratti esterni delle difese potessero essere rafforzati con opere lignee, Pavia era principalmente protetta da una robusta cinta muraria, con fossati nei quali nel settore orientale scorreva la Carona, un corso d'acqua alimentato da risorgive. Ne consegue che, anche qualora Marchetto avesse abbattuto una palizzata esterna, il passaggio decisivo avrebbe richiesto l'apertura di una porta o un varco praticabile nella muraglia<sup>29</sup>. Su questo punto Mussato non è esplicito; diversamente, Guerino afferma che i mercenari tedeschi di Matteo Visconti entrarono in città perché, “per tradimento”, fu aperta loro una porta<sup>30</sup>.

Una volta penetrati entro le mura, le truppe viscontee, in condizioni di oscurità quasi totale, si sarebbero dirette verso la vicina piazza della chiesa di San Giovanni in Borgo (odierna piazza Borromeo), dove si radunarono in particolare i cavalieri mercenari tedeschi, menzionati anche da Guerino.

Accortisi dell'incursione, i difensori tentarono una reazione. Mussato riferisce che Simone della Torre<sup>31</sup>, esule milanese e uomo di esperienza militare<sup>32</sup>, mosse contro i nemici con trenta cavalieri, riuscendo a respingerli fin oltre le mura; i mercenari tedeschi, tuttavia, grazie alla luce di una fiaccola, avrebbero compreso l'esiguità del contingente e rinnovato l'attacco, mettendo in fuga i difensori.

29 ALBERTINO MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., coll. 668-670.

30 GUERINO, *Chronica Placentina*, cit., pp. 397-398.

31 ALBERTINO MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., coll. 668-670

32 GRILLO, *Milano guelfa*, cit., p. 186.

Sopraggiunse allora Riccardino di Langosco con altri cavalieri, ma, circondato da forze numericamente superiori, venne sconfitto e ucciso. Simone della Torre riuscì invece a raggiungere il Ticino e, con ogni probabilità via nave, abbandonò la città riparando a Bassignana. In poche ore, secondo l'impianto complessivo del racconto, i Visconti presero Pavia: un esito eccezionalmente rapido per un centro urbano di tali dimensioni.

Mussato riduce tuttavia l'entità delle perdite in combattimento, sostenendo che i pavesi ebbero soltanto una ventina di morti; sottolinea invece il saccheggio, attribuito in particolare ai mercenari tedeschi<sup>33</sup>.

Gli altri cronisti confermano la presa notturna, ma divergono su dettagli cronologici e interpretativi. Bonincontro Morigia riferisce che Pavia fu presa il 6 ottobre grazie a un attacco notturno condotto a sorpresa da Stefano Visconti con Francesco da Garbagnate e 500 cavalieri, "dal lato verso il Ticino", dunque in prossimità del ponte. Conferma la morte di Riccardino di Langosco, «valorosamente impegnato nella difesa», e aggiunge la cattura di Amorato e Guidetto della Torre, fratelli di Simone; sottolinea inoltre che, dopo la conquista, la parte guelfa fu espulsa e Musso Beccaria con gli altri ghibellini poté rientrare in città<sup>34</sup>.

Guglielmo Ventura colloca erroneamente l'episodio in novembre: le truppe viscontee sarebbero entrate furtivamente "all'alba", avrebbero ucciso Riccardino e altri quindici pavesi e liberato i ghibellini incarcerati. Diversamente da Mussato, Ventura non insiste sul saccheggio, anzi sostiene che i vincitori non causarono danni rilevanti<sup>35</sup>.

Guerino colloca la presa all'8 ottobre e la descrive come avvenuta «per tractatum per vim», formula ambigua che potrebbe alludere a un accordo estorto o a patti stipulati con traditori interni. Egli menziona esplicitamente i mercenari tedeschi e l'apertura di una porta; registra inoltre il saccheggio, concentrandosi sul destino del Regisole<sup>36</sup>, un'antica statua equestre bronzea raffigurante un so-

33 ALBERTINO MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., coll. 668-670.

34 BONINCONTRO MORIGIA, *Chronicon Modoetiense ab origine Modoetie ad annum 1359*, in Ludovico Antonio Muratori (cur.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XII, Ex Typographia Societatis Palatinae, Mediolani, 1728, coll. 1110-1111.

35 GUGLIELMO VENTURA, *Memoriale de rebus gestis civium astensium et plurium aliorum*, in *Historiae Patriae Monumenta*, V, *Scriptores*, III, Regio Typographeo, Augustae Taurinorum, 1848, coll. 791.

36 GUERINO, *Chronica Placentina*, cit., pp. 397-398.



Cinque miniature tratte dal *Tristan*, 1320-1330 circa, Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Français 755. Questo codice fu realizzato in Lombardia, forse a Milano, e appartenne prima ai Visconti e poi gli Sforza, fu custodito nella biblioteca Ducale del castello di Pavia fino al 1499 quando venne portato in Francia insieme a quasi tutti i manoscritti della biblioteca da re Luigi XII.

vano, probabilmente portata a Pavia in età longobarda come bottino di guerra da Ravenna, opera divenuta poi uno dei simboli di Pavia<sup>37</sup>: Matteo Visconti la fece abbattere e la statua rischiò la distruzione.

Galvano Fiamma, infine, colloca l'evento al 7 ottobre e, in modo telegrafico, ricorda la morte di Riccardino, la fuga di Simone della Torre, la cattura dei fratelli, il giuramento di fedeltà dei cittadini a Matteo Visconti e il rientro del vescovo Isnardo Tacconi; riferisce anch'egli l'abbattimento del Regisole<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> CARLO FERRARI, *The Imperial Image of Theoderic: the Case of the Regisole of Pavia*, in Fabrizio Oppedisano (cur.), *Between Ostrogothic and Carolingian Italy. Survivals, revivals, ruptures*, Firenze University Press, Firenze, 2022, pp. 59-80.

<sup>38</sup> GALVANO FIAMMA, *Chronicon extravagans*, in Antonio Ceruti (cur.), *Miscellanea Storica*

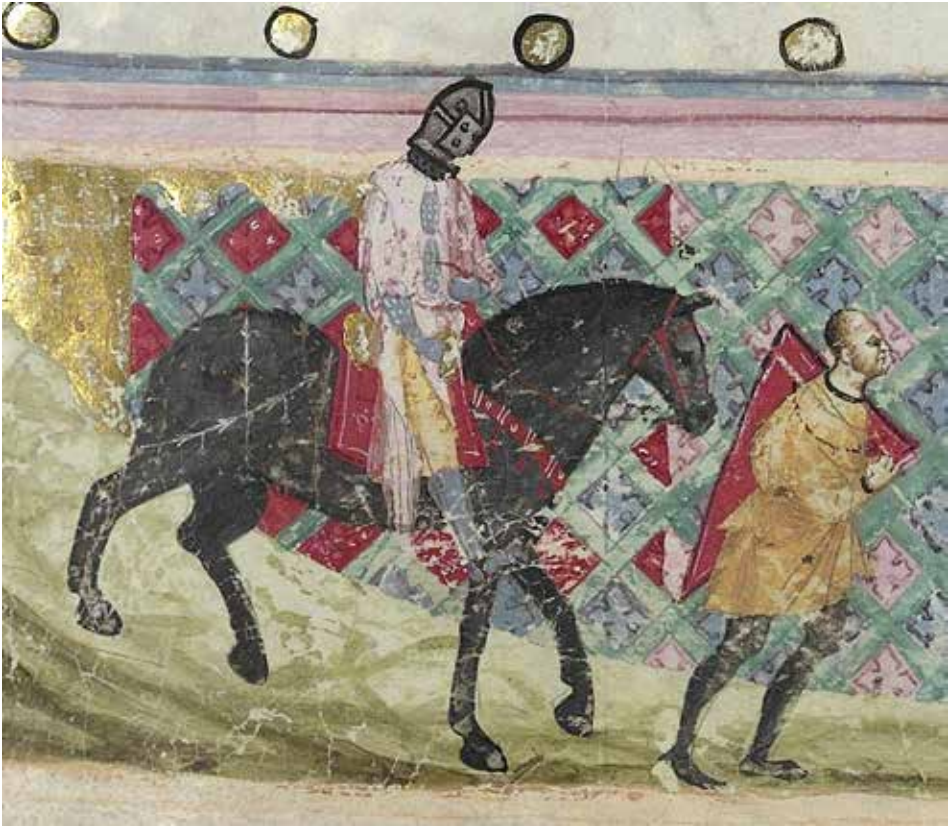


Nel complesso, la convergenza tra le cronache consente di affermare con buon grado di certezza che Pavia fu conquistata di notte e di sorpresa, verosimilmente grazie a complicità interne, prevedibili in una città lacerata da anni di conflitto di parte. Più incerta è invece la reale portata del saccheggio: la sua enfattizzazione potrebbe risentire di topoi narrativi, soprattutto nel resoconto del Mussato<sup>39</sup>.

Un possibile indizio indiretto di devastazioni proviene da un registro contabile del monastero di San Pietro in Verzolo, compilato nel 1315 (senza indicazione del

*Italiana*, VII, 1869, pp. 501-502.

39 PAOLO GRILLO, *Cavaliere e popoli in armi. Le istituzioni militari nell'Italia medievale*, Laterza, Bari, 2008, pp. 148-149; GIAN MARIA VARANINI, *Il mercenariato*, in Paolo Grillo, Aldo A. Settia (cur.), *Guerre ed eserciti nel medioevo*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2018, pp. 263-265.



giorno esatto). Il monastero sorgeva nell'area suburbana orientale, lungo la strada per Piacenza e Cremona, ossia in una zona verosimilmente interessata dai movimenti viscontei. Attorno al complesso era sorto già nel XIII secolo un borgo che negli estimi del 1250 contava circa 200-250 abitanti, con case in muratura e in legno, forni, mulini, fornaci e osterie. Dal registro apprendiamo che il monastero possedeva 49 sedimi nel borgo, dei quali 10 risultavano sgombri al momento della compilazione: spazi che in precedenza ospitavano case in legno con tetto di paglia<sup>40</sup>. La fonte non consente di stabilire con certezza tempi e cause della scomparsa di tali abitazioni; nondimeno, non è inverosimile ipotizzare che alcune siano andate distrutte nel contesto delle operazioni militari.

<sup>40</sup> FABIO ROMANONI, *Il libro dei censi del monastero di San Pietro in Verzolo di Pavia (1315). Insiadamenti, economia e società tra città e campagna nella tarda età comunale*, Guardamagna, Varzi, 2013, pp. 34-40.



### *Colpi di mano notturni tra prassi e trattatistica*

Ciò che domina la narrazione di Mussato, al di là dei singoli dettagli, è un dato strutturale: il buio che caratterizzava ogni centro abitato prima dell'illuminazione elettrica e che rendeva particolarmente arduo il coordinamento in combattimento. Da qui la domanda di fondo: colpi di mano notturni contro città o presidi fortificati, spesso resi possibili da complicità interne e dall'apertura di porte, costituivano una pratica diffusa nel medioevo europeo? E in che misura furono oggetto di riflessione teorica?

Il ricorso a tali azioni, sebbene talora giudicato un espediente “poco convenzionale”, appare tutt'altro che infrequente nella guerra del Duecento e sembra trovare un impiego crescente nei primi decenni del Trecento<sup>41</sup>. Le difficoltà erano evidenti, sia sul piano pratico sia su quello psicologico: l'oscurità impediva di mantenere l'ordinata disposizione delle schiere e ostacolava la comunicazione<sup>42</sup>; inoltre l'agire notturno era spesso associato a forze oscure e percepito come intrinsecamente rischioso sul piano morale<sup>43</sup>.

In questo contesto si colloca il trattato (*Insegnamenti*) redatto da Teodoro I di Monferrato tra il secondo e il terzo decennio del XIV secolo. L'autore raccomandava di sfruttare i movimenti notturni, sia per liberare piazzeforti assediate

41 ALDO A. SETTIA, *Tecniche e spazi*, cit., pp. 198-200.

42 JAMES TITTERTON, *Deception in Medieval warfare*, cit., p. 69.

43 FRÉDÉRIQUE VERRIER, *Armes de Minerve. L'humanisme militaire dans l'Italie du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, [Éditions de l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 1997, pp. 183-223.

cogliendo di sorpresa il nemico allo spuntar del giorno, sia, in alternativa, per impadronirsi di un centro fortificato quando le truppe disponibili fossero troppo esigue per tentare un assalto diurno. In tale eventualità suggeriva di suddividere le forze in due reparti: il primo avrebbe attaccato nel cuore della notte, in coincidenza con il cambio delle sentinelle (momento ritenuto favorevole perché la vigilanza tendeva ad allentarsi); il secondo, muovendo da lato opposto, avrebbe contribuito allo scompiglio mediante l'uso di strumenti musicali<sup>44</sup>.

Teodoro attribuiva grande importanza ai segnali acustici: il fragore avrebbe indotto gli avversari a sovrastimare la forza degli attaccanti e, nell'impossibilità di contare sulla vista, avrebbe costituito un mezzo per mantenere coesione e ordine tra le proprie file.

Lo stesso Teodoro I realizzò azioni notturne: nell'ottobre 1306 a Moncalvo e nel dicembre dello stesso anno a Chivasso, dove riuscì a impadronirsi del castello con un'azione furtiva<sup>45</sup>.

Episodi analoghi non mancano in Italia negli stessi decenni: nel 1317 Cangrande della Scala riuscì a stroncare con un colpo di mano notturno il tentativo dei fuoriusciti vicentini di riconquistare la città con l'appoggio dei padovani<sup>46</sup>; nel 1312 i bresciani tentarono di impadronirsi di Casalmaggiore con modalità simili<sup>47</sup>; nel 1316 i fuoriusciti di Cuneo entrarono a Mondovì «in aurora», mentre quelli di Asti presero Montegrosso «circa ortum solis»<sup>48</sup>.

Analoghe operazioni sono attestabili anche in altre aree europee. Roberto I di Scozia, privo sia di contingenti numerosi sia di adeguate macchine d'assedio, tra il 1310 e il 1314 strappò agli inglesi diversi castelli e città conquistati sul suolo scozzese, tra cui l'importante castello di Edimburgo, con fulminee scalate notturne delle difese<sup>49</sup>. Più tardi, nel 1350, i francesi tentarono di riconquista-

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44 ALDO A. SETTIA, *Gli "Insegnamenti" di Teodoro di Monferrato e la prassi bellica in Italia all'inizio del Trecento*, in Mario Del Treppo (cur.), *Condottieri e uomini d'arme nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Liguori Editore, Napoli, 2001, pp. 21-22.

45 ALDO A. SETTIA, *Tecniche e spazi*, cit., p. 200.

46 ALBERTINO MUSSATO, *Sette libri inediti del «De gestis Italicorum post Henricum VII» di Albertino Mussato*, Luigi Padrin (cur.), Regia Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria, Venezia, 1903, pp. 19-21.

47 ALDO A. SETTIA, *Gli "Insegnamenti" di Teodoro*, cit., p. 21.

48 ALDO A. SETTIA, *Tecniche e spazi*, cit., p. 213.

49 MICHAEL PRESTWICH, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages, The English experience*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1996, pp. 298-299.

re Calais (presa dagli inglesi nel 1347) mediante un'azione notturna confidando nella complicità del comandante di galea e custode di una torre munita di porta della cittadella, Aimerico da Pavia, che dietro ricompensa si era impegnato a far penetrare gli assalitori<sup>50</sup>.

Tra i resoconti sull'episodio del 1315, quello di Mussato si distingue non tanto per la presa notturna in sé, che, come si è visto, trova riscontri in molteplici contesti, quanto per il modello operativo: una manovra diversiva (presso il ponte sul Ticino) combinata con un'irruzione decisiva altrove (sette sud-orientale), cioè un'azione coordinata in condizioni di buio totale tra due contingenti distanti più di un chilometro.

È vero che i Visconti potevano contare su sostegni interni: gli esuli ghibellini (Beccaria, il vescovo Isnardo Tacconi) e simpatizzanti rimasti in città, in grado di fornire conoscenza del terreno e informazioni sulla disposizione dei difensori. Tuttavia, senza negare la possibilità che un simile piano sia stato effettivamente concepito e realizzato, occorre riconoscere che esso avrebbe comportato seri problemi di coordinamento anche contro un castello o un piccolo borgo; in misura maggiore tali problemi si sarebbero ripresentati in uno scenario urbano, che occupava una superficie di circa 150 ettari<sup>51</sup>.

Sul piano della trasmissione delle notizie, va inoltre ricordato che i cronisti potevano attingere a lettere, resoconti orali e altre cronache<sup>52</sup>. Sempre per l'assedio del 1315, il cronista modenese Giovanni de Bazano informa che già l'11 ottobre era giunta a Modena, tramite *litterae et nova* (lettere e informazioni orali trasmesse da corrieri), la notizia che il figlio di Manfredino Beccaria aveva conquistato Pavia e ucciso molti guelfi, tra cui Riccardino di Langosco<sup>53</sup>. È quindi certo che la circolazione delle informazioni fu rapida; ma ciò non implica, automaticamente, che la narrazione del Mussato restituisca una descrizione "fotografica" degli eventi.

Occorre infatti considerare la dimensione letteraria della storiografia medie-

50 YUVAL NOAH HARARI, *Special Operations in the Age of Chivalry, 1100-1550*, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2007, pp. 109-124.

51 PETER HUDSON, *Archeologia urbana e programmazione della ricerca: l'esempio di Pavia, All'Insegna del Giglio, Firenze, 1981*, pp. 33-35.

52 JAMES TITERTON, *Deception in Medieval warfare*, cit., p. 24.

53 GIOVANNI DA BAZANO, *Chronicon Mutinense*, in Tommaso Casini (cur.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*<sup>2</sup>, XV/4, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1917-1919, p. 74.



G. C. Bascapé, "I sigilli dei conti del sacro Palazzo di Lomello", *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Serie 8, Vol. 5, 1954-55, pp. 375-378.

vale. Già nel Duecento Giraldo Cambrense sosteneva che il vero storico, a differenza dell'annalista, dovesse scrivere con eleganza<sup>54</sup>. Nel racconto di episodi militari, tale istanza formale poteva tradursi in schemi narrativi derivati da modelli classici, in ambito bellico soprattutto Vegezio e Frontino<sup>55</sup>. Mussato, autore ormai preumanista, non era verosimilmente estraneo a tali influenze.

In particolare, nel III libro degli *Stratagemmi* Frontino riferisce che Pericle, dovendo espugnare una città ben difesa, la attaccò di notte disponendo che una parte dei suoi uomini si collocasse lungo il tratto di mura prospiciente il mare, attirando i difensori con suoni e grida, mentre un secondo contingente penetrò in città da un altro lato. Analogamente, sempre secondo Frontino, Alcibiade conquistò Cizico adottando la medesima tecnica: un reparto, grazie ai trombettieri, simulò un attacco notturno per attirare i difensori verso un punto delle mura, mentre l'azione decisiva si svolse altrove<sup>56</sup>.

Le analogie con l'impianto del cronista padovano sono evidenti: diversivo notturno, impiego del suono per ingannare e un elemento acqueo che rafforza le difese (mare in Frontino; Ticino nel caso pavese). Tali parallelismi non dimostrano di per sé che Mussato abbia "inventato" l'episodio; suggeriscono però che la descrizione del diversivo e del coordinamento a distanza potrebbe essere stata modellata, o almeno rifinita, entro una tradizione retorica degli stratagemmi.

Alla luce delle fonti esaminate, è possibile affermare con buona sicurezza che Pavia fu conquistata dai Visconti con un'azione notturna di sorpresa, favorita dall'appoggio dei fuoriusciti ghibellini e, quasi certamente, dalla complicità di dissidenti interni al regime guelfo-angioino dei Langosco. Restano invece meno solidi i dettagli relativi alla dinamica operativa così come la trasmette Mussato: la complessa coordinazione di un attacco diversivo presso il ponte sul Ticino, mentre l'irruzione decisiva avveniva altrove, potrebbe essere stata amplificata o strutturata secondo modelli letterari di matrice classica.

In mancanza di ulteriori dati, il caso pavese invita quindi a tenere insieme due livelli: da un lato la realtà storica della presa notturna (ampiamente attestata e

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54 JUSTIN LAKE, *Authorial Intention in Medieval Historiography*, in *History Compass*, XII, 2014, pp. 345-347.

55 JAMES TITERTON, *Deception in Medieval warfare*, cit., pp. 15-16.

56 FRONTINO, *Stratagemmi*, Immacolata Eramo (cur.), Rusconi Libri, Santarcangelo di Romagna, 2023, p. 160.

coerente con la prassi militare del tempo), dall'altro le modalità della sua rappresentazione, che in un autore come Mussato possono riflettere l'intreccio tra informazione, elaborazione retorica e memoria dei classici. In questo senso, l'assedio del 1315 non è soltanto un episodio di storia militare, ma anche un osservatorio privilegiato per indagare il rapporto tra guerra, comunicazione e scrittura storica nel basso medioevo.

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Siege of Lucca, 1341-42, from *Le chroniche di Giovanni Sercambi* 1368-1424  
(ASL MS.107, Manuscript Miniatures, online. Public Domain)

# San Pietro a Vico (Lucca), 2 October 1341

## “La battaglia più crudele e aspra che fosse per grandi tempi inanzi in Italia”

di FILIPPO NARDONE

**ABSTRACT.** This article reevaluates the historiographical treatment of the Battle of San Pietro a Vico (October 2, 1341), a major yet underrecognized clash between Pisan and Florentine forces during the siege of Lucca, as analyzed by scholars like Louis Ferdinand Green (1929–2008) and Luigi Simeoni (1875–1952). Despite its scale and tactical sophistication, the battle remains largely overlooked, often without a name in historical records, reflecting a broader neglect of late Italian communal warfare. This study challenges the marginalization of the battle in traditional historiography, particularly the oversights of scholars like Piero Pieri, who failed to acknowledge its tactical significance. It highlights the battle’s role as a pinnacle of Pisan military prowess, driven by a disciplined citizen infantry and advanced fortifications, and its broader impact on the power dynamics of 14th-century central-northern Italy. Drawing on primary sources such as Giovanni Villani’s *Nuova Cronica*, the Anonimo Pisano, and Bentino di Auxigliano’s letter, the article underscores the battle’s exceptional scale, innovative tactics—particularly the impacting use of crossbowmen—and its reflection of the cohesive, state-oriented communal military system. It argues for a reassessment of San Pietro a Vico as one of the most significant battles of medieval Europe, emphasizing its interregional importance and the superiority of Italian communal armies over their European counterparts.

**KEYWORDS:** BATTLE OF SAN PIETRO A VICO, ITALIAN COMMUNAL WARFARE, PISAN INFANTRY, MEDIEVAL TACTICS, EUROPEAN MILITARY HISTORY.

### 1. The “anonymous” clash

**T**he Battle of San Pietro a Vico, fought on October 2, 1341, pitted the Pisan army, led by Count Nolfo di Montefeltro during the siege of Lucca, against the Florentine forces under Matteo da Ponte Carradi, who arrived to lift the siege of the city, which was held by an allied Scaliger garrison. This battle stands as one of the most significant, advanced, and important military en-

agements of 14th-century Europe, yet it remains a striking and regrettably common example of the deplorable undervaluation of late Italian communal warfare. This neglect renders historiographical introductions to the subject invariably dry.

As noted by the Australian historian of medieval and Renaissance Italy, Louis Ferdinand Green (1929–2008), in his work *Lucca Under Many Masters: A Fourteenth-Century Italian Commune in Crisis, 1328–1342* (1995)<sup>1</sup>—alongside *Castruccio Castracani: A Study on the Origins and Character of a Fourteenth-Century Italian Despotism* (1986)<sup>2</sup>, one of the most significant works of traditional yet effective event-based history of late communal Italy—«in terms of the number of men involved, its duration, and ferocity, this military engagement [San Pietro a Vico] deserved to be considered a major battle. Yet, curiously, *it has gone down in history without even a name* [emphasis mine]. Together with the routs of Montecatini (1315) and Altopascio (1325), it ranks as one of the great defeats suffered by the Florentines in the early 14th century. But unlike those more dramatic armed encounters, it did not lead to the near-total destruction of the commune’s forces and thus was not followed by politically decisive consequences»<sup>3</sup>.

However, even Green’s observation does not fully capture the scale of the historiographical gap surrounding the battle or the reasons for what appears to be a deliberate oversight, likely tied to deep-seated issues in assessing the military history of the period. While this is not the place to delve further into the myriad reasons for the silence—both Italian and foreign—regarding the remarkable military culture of late communal Italy, arguably the most advanced of the Middle Ages, we will treat San Pietro a Vico as a standalone military event to highlight its objective importance as one of the era’s major battles and the need for its reassessment, particularly from a tactical perspective.

The context and consequences of the Lucca campaign and battle, as outlined by Green, are also more profound and complex. Indeed, neither Montecatini nor Altopascio had *politically decisive consequences*—a somewhat ambiguous concept given the densely interconnected Italian political landscape and its vast human and material resources—although Florence was forced to halt its campai-

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1 LOUIS GREEN, *Lucca under Many Masters, a fourteenth-century commune in crisis (1328–1342)*, Firenze, Olschki, 1995.

2 ID., *Castruccio Castracani*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986.

3 GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., p. 146.



Fig. 1 Map showing Italy around 1300, illustrating the political context of the Lucca campaign, Touring Club Italiano, CC BY-SA 4.0 (Wikimedia Commons).

gns after these two defeats, unlike the persistent, albeit ineffective, harassment of Lucca's besiegers until 1342.

As evident from the synthesis of the great scholar of Italian lordships, Luigi Simeoni (1875–1952), San Pietro a Vico served, in any case, as a catalyst for much of the power dynamics in central-northern Italy in the early 1340s. In 1341, Italy was fragmented into rival states following the Veronese, Bavarian, and Bohemian crises, which ended large coalitions and gave way to localized conflicts. In this context, Florence and Pisa competed for Lucca, a city of strategic and economic importance, until recently under Scaliger rule.

The rebellion in Parma on May 22, 1341, led by Azzo da Correggio with support from Florence, Luchino Visconti, and King Robert of Anjou, weakened Mastino II della Scala, already strained by the Scaliger war against Florence and Venice, which had devastated his finances and dominion. The loss of Parma, a Scaliger city, further depleted Mastino's resources, forcing him to negotiate the

sale of Lucca to Florence for 250,000 florins in July 1341, as he could no longer defend multiple fronts.

Florence saw Lucca as an opportunity to consolidate Tuscan hegemony and curb Pisa's influence, while Pisa, determined to block Florentine expansion and preserve its strategic role, prepared to respond. Luchino Visconti, adopting a cautious strategy to avoid direct confrontations after the Scaliger collapse, aligned with Pisa, leveraging local rivalries to balance power. The alignments saw Florence backed by Mastino, the Este family, and Taddeo Pepoli of Bologna, while Pisa was supported by Visconti, Gonzaga, Correggio, and Carrara, with King Robert offering only nominal support, despite his ambitions for Lucca rooted in Angevin tradition<sup>4</sup>.

This context of competition and alliances led to Pisa's occupation of the castles of Cerruglio and Montechiari by late July 1341, marking the start of the siege of the city<sup>5</sup>.

Paradoxically, even in the detailed account of the matter, Simeoni—though implicitly referring to the clash—does not explicitly mention the Battle of San Pietro a Vico in his narrative of the Lucca siege and the final defeat of the Florentines, which is surely no coincidence but rather a confirmation of the near-invisibility of the battle's tactical significance in historiography. Even Pietro Silva's (1887–1954) *La guerra tra Pisa e Firenze per il possesso di Lucca e una fonte delle "Istorie Pisane" di R. Roncioni* (1911)<sup>6</sup>, written as a prelude to editing a key source on the war, similarly neglects the battle itself.

This lack of attention to San Pietro a Vico is not an isolated case and represents an even greater disservice to the pinnacle of military tradition that Pisa embodied in the late communal period. For instance, the significant Pisan victory at Pontetetto (1313), achieved under Uguccone della Faggiuola against Guelph Lucca and a political precursor to the joint Pisan-Lucchese military efforts against Florence, culminating in the triumphs at Montecatini and Altopascio, has been studied only in the nine brief pages of Mario Bertolani's *La battaglia di Ponte-*

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4 The commune had been staunchly Black Guelph until 1313.

5 Luigi SIMEONI, *Le signorie (1313-1559)*, 2 voll., Milano, Vallardi, 1950, vol. I, pp. 130-131.

6 Pietro SILVA, «La guerra tra Pisa e Firenze per il possesso di Lucca e una fonte delle "Istorie Pisane" di R. Roncioni», *Studi Storici*, 20 (1911), pp. 197-209.

*tetto nella storia e nella poesia* (1979)<sup>7</sup>, which focused more on Carducci's lofty verses than on reconstructing the battle as a military event.

Even Piero Pieri (1893–1979), the foremost Italian scholar of military history, in his *L'evoluzione delle fanterie comunali italiane* (1966)<sup>8</sup>, overlooked the tactically sophisticated battles of San Pietro a Vico and Pontetetto, hastily and erroneously identifying Altopascio as the supposed “end” of Italian communal infantry history. There is also complete historiographical silence regarding the defeat at Lucofisterna (1324), which is equally significant for understanding the Pisan army, despite its unfortunate overseas outcome, and marks a truer point of decline for Pisa than the historically overstated Battle of Meloria<sup>9</sup>.

The aforementioned series of Pisan battlefield victories unequivocally constitutes the greatest success of late communal Italian military history<sup>10</sup>. Its causes can be traced to the political quality of the Pisan republic, the most functional and balanced “signoria di popolo” in Italy<sup>11</sup>, and to the communal military reforms led by the renowned podestà and captain of the people, Guido da Montefeltro (1220/5–1298)<sup>12</sup>.

According to the synthesis of the Montefeltro scholar Gino Franceschini

7 Mario BERTOLANI, «La battaglia di Pontetetto nella storia e nella poesia», *Rivista di Archeologia, Storia e Costume*, 7, 2 (1979), pp. 21-30. Another case of attention to a battle due to literary references developed in later periods, cf. for example the Brunian mythology on Dante at the Battle of Campaldino (Silvia DACCIAI, «Dante a Campaldino», *Le Tre Corone. Rivista internazionale di studi su Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio*, 6 (2019) and NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit., especially pp. 175-190) or *La secchia rapita* di Alessandro Tassoni (1565-1635) for the Battle of Zappolino (1325). As Aldo Angelo SETTIA, puts it in *Comuni in guerra. Armi ed eserciti nell'Italia delle città*, Bologna, CLUEB, 1993, p. 127: «una volta di più, la letteratura ha vinto sulla storia».

8 Piero PIERI, «L'evoluzione delle fanterie comunali italiane», in ID., *Scritti vari*, Torino, G. Giappichelli Editore, 1966, pp. 74-77 (original ed. *Alcune quistioni sopra la fanteria in Italia nel periodo comunale*, in «*Rivista storica italiana*», L [1933] pp. 563-614). For a critique of Pieri's important but now dated insights, which nonetheless remain an essential starting point and reference for Italian communal warfare: cfr. NARDONE, *Fanti*, cit..

9 Cfr. Alma POLONI, «Gli uomini d'affari pisani e la perdita della Sardegna. Qualche spunto di riflessioni sul commercio pisano nel XIV secolo», in Cecilia IANNELLA (cur.), *Per Marco Tangheroni: studi su Pisa e sul Mediterraneo medievale offerti dai suoi ultimi allievi*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2006, pp. 157-184.

10 Cfr., in general, NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit. and ID., *Fanti*, cit..

11 Giampaolo FRANCESCONI, «I signori, quale potere?», in J.-C. Maire Vigueur (cur.), *Signorie cittadine nell'Italia comunale*, Roma, Viella Libreria Editrice, 2013, p. 343 (327-346).

12 Cfr. NARDONE, *Fanti*, cit., pp. 357-360.

(1890–1974), he endowed Pisa with «milizie particolarmente addestrate, [...] di professione, di fanterie tenute assieme da una dura disciplina, addestrate al combattimento ravvicinato, e di grossi corpi di arcieri capaci con la loro massa di armi da getto, di scompaginare i consueti corpi di cavalleria»<sup>13</sup>. From this moment onward, Pisan crossbowmen, in particular, gained renown as elite troops<sup>14</sup>, distinguishing themselves on multiple occasions in the aforementioned clashes. The triumph of Pisa's army at San Pietro a Vico must thus be placed within a broader military context and viewed through the lens of a civic institution with deep republican roots, fully aware of the instrumental and subordinate relationship of warfare to politics—a concept as Clausewitzian as it is rooted in Palladian archetypes.

For the reconstruction of San Pietro a Vico, we adopt a simple but direct method—as is customary for battle analysis<sup>15</sup>—relying on primary sources. These include the *Nuova Cronica* of Giovanni Villani, the most authoritative and comprehensive narrative voice, characterized by a positive interpretation of the clash; the letter from the notary Bentino di Auxigliano to Giacomo and Giovanni Pepoli, governors of Bologna, a highly detailed and rare document among military sources of the period; the *Storie Pistoiesi*, highly original and concrete in their description of the fighting; and, not least, the authoritative Pisan chronicle tradition, precise in its military details and relatively underappreciated as a reflection of Pisa's strategic-tactical capabilities.

Despite some gaps, these accounts, though following different narrative structures, provide a clear and coherent picture, as the information about these events must have been to their contemporary recipients. Unless otherwise specified, the sources are contemporary: the Anonimo Pisano of the Roncioni manuscript, edited and commented on by Cecilia Iannella (2005), the pulsating heart and cornerstone of the battle's historiography, though part of a collection “concluded” in the early 15th century, is an excerpt from an earlier, contemporary author, deeply informed within the vibrant civic tradition of the Tuscan maritime republic<sup>16</sup>.

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13 Gino FRANCESCHINI, *I Montefeltro*, Varese, Dall'Oglio, 1970, p. 141.

14 Robert DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze*, 8 voll., Giovanni Battista KLEIN (trad.), Firenze 1972 (ed. orig. *Geschichte von Florenz*, Berlin 1896-1927, first trans. Firenze 1956), vol. III, cit., vol. III, p. 801.

15 A model in NARDONE, *Campaldino*, cit. and Andreas KIESEWETTER, «Die Schlacht von Montecatini (29. August 1315)», *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, 40 (1998).

16 On the battle, in general, cfr. GIOVANNI VILLANI, *Nuova Cronica*, Gabriele PORTA (cur.), Biblioteca di scrittori italiani, Parma, Fondazione Pietro Bembo/Guanda, 1991, vol. III, lib.

## 2. The start of the campaign

The strategic framework of San Pietro a Vico is clear: the Pisans occupied Cerruglio and Montechiari, strategically positioned castles to the east and southeast of Lucca, controlling the main access routes, particularly the Lucca-Florence road via the lower Valdarno, thereby blocking Florentine supplies and reinforcements, supported by Luchino Visconti and the Este family, advancing from the east.

According to Villani, the Pisan army besieged Lucca with an extensive and well-planned system of fortifications, exploiting the Lucca plain and the Serchio River to completely isolate the city. The fortifications consisted of two main lines of ditches and palisades, reinforced with wooden towers («bertesche»), encircling

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XII, capp. 131-134, pp. 144-153, AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, *Cronaca Senese*, in Alessandro LISINI e Fabio IACOMETTI (cur.), *Cronache senesi*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, II serie (from now on RIS<sup>2</sup>), XV/VI, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1931-1939, pp. 528-529 (253-564), *Cronica di Pisa dal ms. Roncioni 338 dell'Archivio di Stato di Pisa*, Cecilia IANNELLA (cur.), *Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale* (from now on FsIm), *Antiquitates*, XXII, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo (from now on ISIME), 2005, pp. 113-118, Niccolò RODOLICO, *Dal comune alla signoria. Saggio sul governo di Taddeo Pepoli in Bologna*, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1898, doc. 76, pp. 275-278, RANIERI SARDO, *Cronaca di Pisa*, Ottavio BANTI (cur.), FsIm, XCIX, Roma, ISIME, 1963, pp. 91-94, *Storie Pistoresi [MCCC-MCCCXLVIII]*, Silvio Adrasto BARBI (cur.), RIS<sup>2</sup>, XI/V, Città di Castello, Tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi; [poi] Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1907-1927, pp. 168-170, *Corpus chronicorum Bononiensium*, Albano SORBELLI (cur.), RIS<sup>2</sup>, XVIII/I, vol. I di 2, Città di Castello, Tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi; [poi] Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1910-1938, *Cronaca A*, pp. 500-502, *ivi*, *Cronaca B*, p. 500, *ivi*, *Cr. Vill.*, p. 501-502, JOHANNES DE CORNAZANIS, *Historiae Parmensis fragmenta Ab Anno MCCC I usque ad Annum MCCCCLV*, in Ludovico Antonio MURATORI (cur.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (from now on RIS), XII, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1728, col. 743 (725-756), IOHANNES DE BAZANO, *Chronicon Mutinense [A.A. 1188-1363]*, Tommaso CASINI (cur.), RIS<sup>2</sup>, XV/IV, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1917-1919, *Chronicon*, pp. 120-121, *Annales Arretinorum Maiores*, in Arturo BINI, Giovanni GRAZZINI (cur.), RIS<sup>2</sup>, XXIV/I, *Annales Arretinorum Maiores et Minores [AA. 1192-1343]*, Città di Castello, coi tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi, 1909-1912, pp. 33-34 (11-38). Cfr. anche GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., pp. 144-147; Egidio ROSSINI, *La signoria scaligera dopo Cangrande*, in *Verona e il suo territorio*, vol. III, Verona, Istituto per gli Studi Veronesi, 1975, pp. 640-642 (453-725), MAFFEI, *Storia volterrana*, Annibale CINCI (cur.), Volterra, Tipografia Sborgi, 1887, p. 462, Giovanni Vincenzio COPPI, *Annali, memorie ed huomini illustri di Sangimignano*, Firenze, nella Stamperia di Cesare e Francesco Bindi, 1695, p. 255, Giuseppe ROSSI SABATINI, *Pisa al tempo dei Donoratico, 1316-1347: studio sulla crisi costituzionale del Comune*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1938, pp. 221-222, Giambattista VERCI, *Storia della Marca Trevigiana e Veronese*, 20 tomm., Venezia, Girolamo Dorigoni, 1786-1791, tomo XI, pp. 107-114, GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., p. 146.

Lucca for over ten kilometers. The first line ran from Guscianella, a marshy area southwest of Lucca near Pontetetto, to the Serchio River in the northwest, blocking northern and western access. A second, equally long or longer line extended from Guscianella to the upper Serchio in the east, sealing off the eastern side. An inner ditch near Lucca's walls completed the encirclement, making entry or exit from the city extremely dangerous.

Between the two lines, the Pisans established three camps on leveled terrain, leveraging proximity to the Serchio and elevated ground for strategic control: the rotation of two or three Pisan militia quarters ensures constant surveillance, maintaining an effective blockade against the Florentines, who, caught unprepared by their rival's swift move, were unable to respond immediately, while Lucca, defended by only 150 knights and 500 Scaliger infantrymen, remained isolated under siege<sup>17</sup>.

In September 1341, the Florentine army, led by a captain with two war advisors per district, set out from the lower Valdarno toward Lucca along two routes: Altopascio to the southeast and Valdinievole to the east, converging on the city. It encamped at Gagnano and Colle delle Donne, 11 km northeast of Lucca, controlling the routes from Florence, and secures Pietrasanta and Barga from Mastino, strengthening control over the Lucca territory.

The Pisans, concentrated in one camp, besieged Pontetetto, which hindered their supplies. The Florentines, with 300 knights and 500 Scaliger infantrymen, including Ciupo degli Scolari and Lucchese Ghibellines, coordinated a joint action: using fire signals, the forces inside Lucca sallied out while the Florentines and Mastino's troops, with 10,000 gold florins for the mercenaries, advanced, breaking through Pisan palisades and filling ditches. Facing minimal opposition, as the Pisans had only 500 knights, they enter Lucca, greeted with enthusiasm.

The Florentine syndics, Giovanni Bernardini de' Medici, Naddo di Cenni di Naddo, and Rosso di Ricciardo de' Ricci, took the castle of Agosta and the city through Arriguccio Pegolotti, Mastino's representative, by late September. Giovanni de' Medici became captain, while Naddo and Rosso managed finances and logistics, ensuring supplies and payments. The Florentines penetrated Lucca, but the Pisan siege persisted and strengthened with the capture of Pontetetto<sup>18</sup>.

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17 Almost *verbatim* da VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 131, p. 145.

18 Almost *verbatim* da *ivi*, cap. 133, pp. 149-150.



Fig. 2 Giovanni Baronzio, *Stories of Saint Colomba* c. 1345–50. Detail showing knights. CC BY-SA 4.0. Wikimedia Commons

Faced with a strategic stalemate and high costs, the Florentine army opted for a pitched battle. On the night of October 1, 1341, it descended from Gragnano to the Lucca plain, encamping at San Pietro a Vico on the Ghiaia, on the shore of the Serchio, less than a mile from the Pisan camp<sup>19</sup>, directly challenging the Pisans. The latter prepared a leveled area, dismantling part of their palisade to invite battle, which the Florentines accepted for the following day<sup>20</sup>.

19 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «al luogo detto la Ghiaia e greto di Serchio». San Pietro a Vico is identified by *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 169 as «uno miglio picciolo» from the Florentine camp. AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529 identifies the position of the Florentine camp as «su la chiara del Serchio nel vado de le Pulcelle a Cantaglio»; the ford of the «Pulccielle» is also mentioned by *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 113, which also confirms the *gura*, i.e. the *Ghiaia*. JOHANNES DE CORNAZANIS, cit., col. 743: «fu la battaglia circa Lucca da Cinegio a Pistoja».

20 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «ell'una parte ell'altra feciono la spianata; e que' del campo di Pisa battero verso la spianata una parte dello stecato, e richiesono la battaglia, e' nostri l'accettarono lietamente per lo giorno apresso»; in contrast, according to *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., pp. 113-114 the Florentines are unaware that the Pisans are ready to attack them: «a di due d'ottobre anno preditto, lo martedì mattina sulla ora de levare del sole, l'oste delli fiorentini si calonno giù a la gura, al guado delle Pucciel-

Despite Lucca's supplies lasting over eight months<sup>21</sup>, the decision of the Florentine regents exposed the army to a tactical disadvantage: the fortified and well-positioned Pisan camp favors the Pisans, while the Florentines risked a battle in unfavorable conditions on open, vulnerable terrain.

### 3. *The armies of the battle*

On Tuesday, October 2<sup>22</sup>, at dawn<sup>23</sup>, the two hosts armed themselves and deployed in battle formation<sup>24</sup>. The Florentine army, numbering between 2,500–4,000 knights and 30,000 infantrymen<sup>25</sup>—among them at least 3,000 crossbowmen<sup>26</sup>—was organized into two divisions: 1,200 *feditori*<sup>27</sup> from Florence, Siena, Romagna, and Scaliger forces<sup>28</sup>, protected on the flanks by 3,000 crossbowmen. The

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le, dove era per li pisani fatta la spianata, non credendo che li pisani li aspettasseno». The mile is approximately 1,700-1,900 meters in contemporary sources from Central-Northern Italy, cfr. Ronald Edward ZUPKO, *Italian weights and measures from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century*, Memoirs of the American philosophical society, CXLV, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society Press, 1981, pp. 152-154.

- 21 On the entire context cfr. almost *verbatim* VILLANI, vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, pp. 150-151.
- 22 Ivi, p. 151; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 113; *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170; *Corpus*, cit., *Cronaca A*, p. 502; SARDO, cit., pp. 92-93; JOHANNES DE CORNAZANIS, cit., col. 743; *Anales Arretinorum Maiores*, cit., p. 34; AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529.
- 23 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 113: «sulla ora de levar del sole»; *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170.
- 24 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «fatte le dette schiere delle due osti, s'af-frontaro insieme».
- 25 GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., p. 144 based on the estimates respectively of SARDO, cit., p. 94 e di VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151. Ivi, p. 150 attributes a clear numerical advantage to the Pisans: «nonn-erano meno ma più gente di nostri a ccavallo e a piè» and mentions 2,800 knights and many infantry remaining in the Florentine army at the start of the battle; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 116 claims the Florentine knights number 5,000. SARDO, cit., p. 94 speaks of 4,000 knights and 30,000 infantry.
- 26 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 133, p. 151.
- 27 *I.e.* elite breakthrough cavalry, constituting the first line: cfr., among others, BARBERO, «Dante a Campaldino, fra vecchi e nuovi fraintendimenti», *Lecture Classensi*, XLVIII (2020), (45-58), note 10 *ivi*, p. 51.
- 28 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «MCC cavalieri per feditori, la qual [schiera] conducea il nostro capitano messer Maffeo con quelli Fiorentini che v'erano, con iscelta delle migliori masnade ch'avessono e co' Sanesi, che più donzelli delle case di Siena guelfe si feciono il di cavalieri, e portarsi francamente. E in quella schiera fu mesere Ghiberto da Fogliano, e Frignano da Sesso, e uno conte d'Alamagna, e meser Bonetto tedesco colla gente di meser Mastino, che in quella giornata cogli altri feditori insieme feciono maraviglie d'arme, essendo fasciati di costa con più di III<sup>m</sup> balestrieri». RODOLICO, cit., doc.

cavalry included Matteo da Ponte Carradi himself, Giberto da Fogliano, Frignano da Sesso, and the valiant Scaliger commander Benedetto Tedesco<sup>29</sup>. The bulk of the host, however, remained in reserve, massed together with the infantry and baggage train<sup>30</sup>. The Scaliger garrison in Lucca (approximately 300 knights and 500 infantrymen<sup>31</sup>) was tasked with sallying out from the city to attack the Pisans from the rear during the clash<sup>32</sup>.

The Pisan army consisted of 3,000–3,600 knights and over 10,000 infantrymen<sup>33</sup>, 2,000 of whom were citizen crossbowmen<sup>34</sup>, arranged in three successive battle lines: the first, with 800 *feditori*, commanded by Nolfo di Montefeltro and protected on the flanks by Genoese and Pisan crossbowmen<sup>35</sup>; the second,

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76, p. 276 speaks instead of Scaliger-Romagnol troops in the first line: «in primo [prelio] gens d.ni Mastini et illorum de Romandiola».

29 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151 calls him Bonetto; RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 276.

30 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «la schiera grossa con tutta l'altra cavalleria e popolo e colla salmeria caricata che ffu follia, guidavano gli altri capitani. E messer Gian della Vallina borgognone avea la 'nsegna reale, che per bontà de' nostri cittadini nullo la richiese di portare».

31 Ivi, cap. 133, p. 149.

32 GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., pp. 144-145.

33 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 132, p. 147 speaks of 3,600 knights, reduced to 3,000 knights at the start of the battle and ivi, cap. 134, p. 151 to 2,500 at the start of the battle. SARDO, cit., pp. 92-93 speaks of 2,000 Pisan knights and 1,000 sent by Luchino Visconti, for a total of 3,100 knights and 20,000 infantry. According to *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 116 the Pisan host counts 2,500 knights and fewer infantry than the Florentines; ivi, p. 117: «delli quatro quartieri di Pisa vi funno due quartieri, cioè lo quartieri di Ponte e di Fuoriporta. E fuvvi tutte le cierge del contado e fòrse e distretto di Pisa, e di loro amici e benvoglienti isciti ghibellini di Lucha cinquecento buoni cavalieri e altri soldati, come ditto è». The letter in RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 277 states that «in exercitu Pissanorum erant duo quarteria pissanorum peditum et equitum et plures erant ipsorum pedites et equites quam ex parte florentina», though it is unclear whether this compares the total numbers of the two armies or only the contribution of the popular forces of the two communes. *Corpus*, cit., *Cronaca A*, p. 501 e ivi, *Cr. Vill.*, p. 501 claim that all 3,000 Pisan knights were Visconti reinforcements.

34 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 117: «e sapiate che della ditta battaglia della parte delli pisani vi fue gienneralmente della città di Pisa dumigla balestrieri pisani». Cfr. also GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., p. 144.

35 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «i Pisani, ch'erano da III<sup>m</sup> cavalieri, feciono III schiere; l'una di feditori da DCCC cavalieri, la quale conducea... fasciata con molti balestrieri genovesi e pisani, che nn'avieno più di noi e migliori». According to GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., p. 144 among them were also some archers recruited by the Pisans from Lombardy in August.

with 1,800<sup>36</sup> Visconti knights and other northern Italians<sup>37</sup>, led by Ajoletto Mazzoloni da Recanati and Giovanni Visconti d'Oleggio<sup>38</sup>; and the third, composed of 400 exiled Lucchese knights under Ciupo degli Scolari and Francesco Castracani, positioned at the palisade entrances<sup>39</sup>, held in reserve and guarding against potential Scaliger sorties from Lucca<sup>40</sup>.

The hosts at San Pietro a Vico reflect the typical late communal Italian tactic: multiple battle lines of cavalry deployed in depth, released gradually into combat. Protecting the flanks of these units are infantry wings that—combining close-quarters combat with crossbow fire—engaged their counterparts in the enemy formation and, if successful, poured onto the exposed flanks of the opposing cavalry, overwhelming them<sup>41</sup>.

The Battle of Lucca was perhaps the largest in Italian communal history: the only comparable engagement is the more famous Montecatini, with approximately 3,000 knights and 20,000 infantrymen on the Pisan side<sup>42</sup> and 3,200 knights

36 Calculated by subtracting the other knights enumerated in the Pisan host by VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, pp. 150-151.

37 Ivi, p. 151: «l'altra grossa schiera co' cavalieri del signore di Milano guidava messer Giovanni Visconti colla insegna della vipera»; GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., pp. 144-145.

38 Ivi, p. 144.

39 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «un'altra schiera di cccc cavalieri riposta adietro presso alla bocca de' loro steccati e a quella guardia, perché li nostri di Lucca ch'erano usciti della città non assalissono il campo. Quella terza schiera di Pisani guidava messer Ciupo delli Scolari, che 'l di si fece cavaliere, e meser Francesco Castracane»; GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., p. 141. Cfr. also VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 150 which sees in this element a substantial advantage for the Pisans: «l'altro gran fallo, ma pazzia, fu andare a combattere a posta e vantaggio del nimico, ch'erano dentro alla fortezza del fosso e steccati di loro campo, e poteno prendere e lasciare la battaglia, e rinfrescarsi alloro posta e vantaggio»; AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 528: «li Pisani e sua gente si [s]chierarono, e parte di loro esciro de li stechati e parte ne rimasero dentro a li stechati».

40 The Pisans left troops to guard the camp, as stated by *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., pp. 114-115: «e parte ne rimaseno a guardare li chanpi perché lli luchesi non vvi metteseno fuoco [...]. E voglio che voi sappiate che se li anziani non havesseno havuto a guardare lo campo che era intorno a Luca harebbono seguito la giente delli fiorentini e n'harebbono assai più morti e presi».

41 Cfr., in particular, NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit..

42 GUILLIELMUS DE CORTUSIIS, Appendice, in Beniamino PAGNIN (cur.), RIS<sup>2</sup>, XII/V, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1941, cap. 1, p. 150 (147-164); for ALBERTINO MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum post Henricum VII Cesarem (Libri I-VII)*, Rino MODONUTTI (cur.), Fslm, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, III serie (from now on RIS<sup>3</sup>), XV, Roma, ISIME, 2018, lib. V, rubr. 64, pp. 275-276 Uguccone has: 1,300 mercenary "Gallic" knights, 600 among exiled Ghibellines and White Guelphs of Italy, 500 Pisans and Lucchese, 100 from the Ubertini and

and 30,000 infantrymen on the Guelph-Angevin side<sup>43</sup>. Even the better-known

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Pazzi (so-called noble exiles of Florence), 100 from the counts of Santa Fiora with another 100 “accomplices” from the Patrimony, 50 Modenese, 100 Mantuan and Veronese (for a total of 2,850 knights) and 20,000 between light-armored infantry and peasants «quorum copiam lucana civitas per populosa rura semper habuit». According to *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 80 the Pisan-Lucchese army with the Tuscan Ghibellines counts 2,700 knights and 20,000 infantry. Per VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 71, p. 171 Ugucione has 2,500 knights and *popolo grandissimo*. The letter from Cristiano Spinola addressed to the King of Aragon in Heinrich FINKE, *Acta Aragonensia, Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen, zur Kirchund Kulturgeschichte, aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II. 1291-1327*, 3 voll., Berlin-Leipzig, Dr. Walter Rothschild, 1908-1922, vol. III, doc. 131, p. 292 speaks of 2-3,000 knights, of which 1,400 Germans. FERRETUS VICENTINUS, *Historia rerum in Italia gestarum ab anno MCCL ad annum usque MCCCXVIII*, in Carlo CIPOLLA (cur.), *Le opere di Ferreto de' Ferreti vicentino*, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano; [poi] pubblicate dall'ISIME, XLII-XLIII.bis, vol. III, Roma, Tipografia del Senato – Palazzo Madama, 1908-1920, vol. II, lib. V, p. 200 speaks of more than 3,000 knights and 70,000 infantry; according to PIETRO DELLA GAZZATA, *Chronicon Regiense. La Cronaca di Pietro della Gazzata nella tradizione del codice Crispi*, Laura ARTIOLI, Corrado CORRADINI, Clementina SANTI (cur.), Reggio Emilia, Fond. Giulia Maramotti, 2000, p. 128 Ugucione has 4,000 knights and 40,000 infantry; according to; per GUILIEMUS VENTURA, *Memoriale de gestis civium Astensium et plurium aliorum*, in Luigi CIBRARIO (cur.), *Historiae Patriae Monumenta*, cap. 65, col. 784 (701-816) Ugucione has 3,000 knights and 40,000 infantry; according to AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 351 Ugucione gathers 2,500 knights and 2,000 infantry; according to RANIERI GRANCHI, *De Preliis Tuscie*, Michela DIANA (cur.), Il ritorno dei classici nell'umanesimo, IV. Edizione nazionale dei testi della storiografia umanistica, IV, Firenze, SISMEL, 2008, lib. I, vv. 47-49, p. 13 Ugucione ha 3.500 cavalieri (3.000 tedeschi e 500 toscani) e 40.000 fanti. DAVIDSOHN, cit., vol. III, p. 798 follows Cortusi. On the troop count cfr. anche GREEN, *Castruccio*, cit., pp. 62-63.

- 43 CORTUSII, Appendice, cit., cap. 1, p. 150; for MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. V, rubr. 67-71, pp. 277-279 the Prince of Taranto has 900 Angevin knights, organized under various nobles; from Florence 700 citizen knights and 200 mercenaries, 200 from Lucchese exiles, 400 knights and 5,000 infantry from Siena, 200 knights and 400 infantry from Bologna, 250 knights from Perugia, 100 from Orvieto, Malia from Grosseto with 50, 70 from Pistoia, 80 from San Miniato, 50 from Montepulciano, 50 from Volterra, 100 from San Gimignano and Colle Val d'Elsa, and another 140 knights, totaling 3,190 knights and, from the contributions of Bologna and Siena alone, 9,000 infantry, although sources from these two cities provide lower numbers. G. VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 71, p. 171 speaks of 3,200 knights and *gente a piè grandissima*; FINKE, cit., vol. III, doc. 131, p. 292 speaks of 3-5,000 knights on the Guelph side. According to AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 351 the Guelph host has 4,900 knights and 20,000 infantry, of which 400 knights and 3,000 infantry from the masses and countryside of Siena; according to *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 74 the Guelph knights numbered 4,000, with an additional 10,000 pikemen and 40,000 infantry and SARDO, cit., p. 72 confirms the number of knights; FERRETUS VICENTINUS, cit., vol. II, lib. V, pp. 199-200 speaks of 3,000 knights and 60,000 infantry. Per *Chronicon Estense cum additamentis usque ad annum 1478*, Giulio BERTONI, Emilio Paolo VICINI (cur.), RIS<sup>2</sup>, XV/III, Città di Castello, coi tipi della casa editrice S.

and studied pitched battles of Altopascio and Campaldino (1289) did not exceed a total of 30,000 combatants<sup>44</sup>. If Green's estimate of 20,000 or more Pisan infantrymen at San Pietro a Vico is accurate—as I believe is likely, given the customary complement of “wing” infantry in major clashes—<sup>45</sup>the battle rivals the largest engagement in Italian medieval history and stands as a true giant in European medieval warfare.

According to the renowned Flemish expert on medieval warfare, Jan Frans Verbruggen (1920–2013), 2,500–3,000 knights represented the conventional peak of monarchical-national efforts in France and England<sup>46</sup>, where the ability to field more than 15,000 infantrymen alongside mounted forces was considered extreme. The total infantry of the largest Flemish communes at the Battle of the Golden Spurs (1302) would numerically equate to the infantry wings typically deployed by a single line of the great Italian armies<sup>47</sup>, and without any interaction between different arms.

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Lapi, 1908, p. 85 the Florentines alone have 60,000 infantry, of which 16,000 were already available before the campaign, these latter «omnes cum lanceis longis sine balistrariis, et postea balistrarios habebant in maxima quantitate»; CORTUSII, Appendice, cit., cap. 1, p. 150 speaks of 4,000 knights and 30,000 infantry; according to IOHANNES DE BAZANO, cit., p. 73 the Guelphs have 60,000 armed men; according to *Chronicon Parmense ab anno 1308 usque ad annum 1338*, Giuliano BONAZZI (cur.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, II serie (from now on RIS<sup>2</sup>), IX/IX, Città di Castello, coi tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi, 1902, p. 142 the Guelphs are 5,000 knights and 60,000 infantry; according to MAFFEI, cit., p. 378 the Guelphs have 3,200 knights and a vast number of infantry; according to VENTURA, cit., cap. 65, col. 784 the Guelphs have 4,000 knights and 40,000 infantry; according to *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 78 on August 16, the Prince of Taranto's army counts 4,000 knights, 10,000 pikemen, and «altro pupulo infinito, piò di quaranta miglaia»; according to *Una continuazione*, pp. 133-134 the Prince of Taranto has 3,300 knights and 100,000 infantry (sic); 5 5,000 high-born knights according to GRANCHI, cit., lib. I, v. 30, p. 11. DAVIDSOHN, cit., vol. III, p. 798 follows Cortusi; on the troop count cfr. also GREEN, *Castruccio*, cit., pp. 62-63.

44 On the two battles cfr. respectively NARDONE, *Campaldino*, cit. and ID., *Fanti*, cit..

45 GREEN, *Lucca*, cit., p. 144.

46 Jan Frans VERBRUGGEN, *The art of warfare in Europe during the Middle Ages from the eighth century to 1340*, Stephen MORILLO (Ed. and Trans.), Amsterdam (New York), The Boydell Press, 1997 (original ed. *De Krijgskunst in West-Europa in de Middeleeuwen*, Bruxelles, Paleis der Academiën, 1954), p. 169.

47 8,500-11,000, ID., *The battle of the Golden Spurs. Courtrai, 11 July 1302*, Kelly DEVRIES (Ed.), David Richard FERGUSON (trad.), Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2002 (ed. orig. *De Slag der Guldensporen Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van Vlaanderens Vrijheidsoorlog. 1297-1305*, Amsterdam, Standaard-Boekhandel, 1952), p. 161.



Fig. 3. Francesco and Niccolò di Segna, attr. Pietro Lorenzetti. Detail showing knights from Massacre of the Innocent. Foto Saiko, CC BY-SA 4.0 (wikimedia Commons)

The most recent Anglo-Saxon historiography considers the estimate of 20,000 men per side at the famous Battle of Crécy (1346) excessive and improbable<sup>48</sup>. On the primacy of Italian military efforts, Paolo Grillo, an expert on communal warfare, notes in his *Cavalieri e popoli in armi: le istituzioni militari nell'Italia medievale* (2008) that as early as 1291, the Tuscan Guelph League could muster 2,500 knights and 20,000 infantrymen against Pisa, while in the same period, the King of France could theoretically rely on a levy of 2,750 knights and 12,000 infantrymen<sup>49</sup>.

Given the absence of the Battle of San Pietro a Vico from the roster of major medieval battles such as Montecatini or Zappolino (1325) in introductory texts

48 Andrew AYTON, Philip PRESTON, *The battle of Crécy, 1346*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2005, p. 162.

49 Paolo GRILLO, *Cavalieri e popoli in armi. Le istituzioni militari nell'Italia medievale*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2008, p. 116.

such as the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare* (2010)<sup>50</sup>, one must question the heuristic value of current medieval military historiography, which lacks awareness of the scale of military efforts by major Western European countries and—particularly in a substantially homogeneous and “symmetric” context—the deeper cultural significance of this distinction.

This questioning is prompted by the fact that general conclusions about the scale, character, and limits of fourteenth-century European warfare have often been drawn without fully considering the series of unusually large and tactically sophisticated Italian communal battles. Historically neglected in scholarship, these engagements demonstrate that conventional assessments rest on an incomplete evidentiary foundation and thus merit careful re-evaluation<sup>51</sup>.

#### 4. *The course of the battle*

Resuming the thread of the campaign, let’s provide a brief analysis of the “fixed” lines of the San Pietro a Vico clash as the foundational structure for a comprehensive reconstruction. After dawn<sup>52</sup>, the Scaliger *feditori* in the Florentine host, commanded by Guglielmo da Fogliano, descended in disorder to the Pulcelle ford in the leveled area to engage in battle. The Pisans, seeing them, exited their camp and, with the cry of “San Giorgio,” ordered their *feditori* to charge: these achieved an initial success due to the enemy cavalry’s disarray, after which both lines withdraw<sup>53</sup>.

50 Clifford J. ROGERS (Ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of medieval warfare and military technology*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2010.

51 The argument that the figures from San Pietro a Vico would merely signal the importance of the clash is unsustainable. Late communal Italian chronicles were produced for audiences directly involved in the wars, where numerical credibility was essential. When independent accounts—opposing or neutral—converge on the same order of magnitude, consistent with evidence that single armies often numbered tens of thousands across a couple of generations, their reliability is strong. To question them requires demonstrating, not assuming, deliberate falsification. In the absence of such evidence, the figures should be accepted.

52 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 113: «sulla ora del levar del sole». VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151 says at 9: «in sull’ora della terza».

53 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., pp. 113-114: «l’oste delli fiorentini si calonno giù a la gura, al guado delle Pulcielle, dove era per li pisani fatta la spianata, non credendo che lli pisani li aspettaseno. Ai quali li pisani vedendoli venire valorosamente s’armonno e andonno verso loro incontra. E parte ne rimaseno a guardare li chanpi perché lli luchesi non vvi metteseno fuoco, e dato lo nome per li pisani che ffu Santo Giorggio cavaliere. E lo Ca-

At 9 a.m., the *feditori* lines clashed again in full force, and the Florentines managed to repel the Pisan line, breaking it<sup>54</sup>. Exploiting the disorder in the enemy army, the Florentine *feditori* pressed forward, attacking en masse the line of Giovanni Visconti and the bulk of the Pisan host<sup>55</sup>.

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pitano dell'oste delli fiorentini [...], fece uno drappello e tornòsi un pogo indiriato, alli quali li pisani forte li sgridonno. E poi li pisani si ritornonno al campo loro di prima a dizarmare, e questo faciendo a grande malitia». VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «prima i feditori dall'una parte e dall'altra. La battaglia fu aspra e forte, però che da ciascuna parte di feditori era il fiore della cavalleria dell'oste; e per la forte percossa di feditori di Pisani, tutto fossono meno gente di nostri, feciono assai rimpignere adietro la nostra schiera de' feditori»; *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., pp. 169-170: «messer Guglielmo da Fogliano, il quale era capitano della gente di messer Mastino, no aspettò che la gente fosse acconcia, e senza alcuno ordine di combattere andò con la sua gente a combattere co nimici, con grande ardire e franchezza; e li nimici percossano lui»; SARDO, cit., p. 93: «quegli de' Pisani [...] inhominciorono la scharamuccia, et del primo asalto n'ebbe il peggio et molto si tirono indietro spingniendo [i Fiorentini] suo forte alla battaglia»; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114 states that the Florentine *feditori* withdraw at the command of Jacopo Gabrielli da Gubbio, who, according to RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 276 is not the Florentine commander and is instead placed in the second line.

54 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114: «e di po' questo stando un pogo all'ora della tersa, ed ecco la ditta oste delli fiorentini venire giù da capo, e oltra li quali li pisani andonno loro incontra valorosamente col nome dato di San Giorggio. E come aringhón l'una parte coll'otra e inel primo asalto li pisani funno incalciati di una gittata e mezza di pietra, e fortemente la battaglia si faciea l'uno coll'altro, quine si gittavano lanccie, guerrettoni e pietre e ognuno stavan forte e combattendo l'una parte e ll'otra»; SARDO, cit., p. 93: «quegli de' Pisani [...] inhominciorono la scharamuccia, et del primo asalto n'ebbe il peggio et molto si tirono indietro spingniendo [i Fiorentini] suo forte alla battaglia; in tanto fu preso misser Giovanni da Oleggio, nipote di misser Luchino da Milano». On the Scaliger troops, RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 275: «in primo [prelio] gens d.ni Mastini et illorum de Romandiola optime se gesserunt sub infrascriptis banderiis levatis videlicet ad insigniam d.norum Mastini comitus Vertutis et penonis d. Guiglelmi de Fogliano et rebeles fecerunt retrocedere cum auxilio aliorum de exercitu et in isto prelio multa varia et diversa fuerunt hinc inde»; the *alii* who aid the Scaligers in defeating the first Pisan line in the source are likely the crossbowmen positioned on the flanks; VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «ma poco apresso i feditori di Pisani furono rotti e sconfitti; e fuggendo parte si tornarono dentro alli steccati e parte alla loro schiera grossa»; cfr. also *ibid.*, «in quella schiera fu mesere Ghiberto da Fogliano, e Frignano da Sesso, e uno conte d'Alamagna, e meser Bonetto tedesco colla gente di meser Mastino, che in quella giornata cogli altri feditori insieme feciono maraviglie d'arme, essendo fasciati di costa con più di III<sup>m</sup> balestrieri». *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170: «la battaglia si cominciò forte: e durò un pezzo che li Fiorentini n'ebbono lo migliore, perché missono per terra quasi tutti li migliori uomini della gente nemica e presono molti prigionii in quello primo assalto».

55 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, pp. 151-152 states that during the attack of the *feditori*, the Florentine main line does not move: «i nostri feditori avendo avuta la vittoria de' feditori di Pisani, francamente asaliro la loro schiera grossa; e quella fu una ritenuta e aspra

After six hours<sup>56</sup> of grueling battle<sup>57</sup>—and aided by the surprise attack of the Lucchese garrison on the Pisan rear<sup>58</sup>—Giovanni Visconti was finally captured by the Florentines, along with the Visconti serpent banner<sup>59</sup>, as was Arrigo, one of Castruccio Castracani's sons. In the ensuing rout, over 400 Pisan knights<sup>60</sup> were taken prisoner, and many were killed<sup>61</sup>.

The Florentine *feditori* then pursued the fugitives in disarray<sup>62</sup>, but the Milanese cavalry that escaped rallies under another Visconti banner and regrouped with Ciupo degli Scolari's troops at the Pisan camp<sup>63</sup>. Here, the infantry, favored by their

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battaglia, e durò infino dopo nona, e gran mortalità v'ebbe di cavalli, e abattuta di cavalieri per li molti balestrieri dell'una e dell'altra, e fu abattuta la 'nsegna di meser Luchino, e preso messer Giovanni Visconti capitano della sua gente, e Arrigo di Castruccio, e messer Bardo Frescobaldi, e più di migliori Pisani da cavallo e d'altri nostri usciti, e quasi rotta e sbarrata detta schiera, con tutto rilevassono un'altra insegna della vipera di Milano, parte di loro si rannodaro colla schiera di meser Ciupo delli Scolari che stava ferma. E con tutto che' nostri feditori combattessono e cacciassono i nimici, la nostra ischiera grossa non si mosse né pinse inanzi a favorire i nostri feditori, cheffu gran fallo e mala capitaneria; ma dissesi fu per difetto di meser Gianni della Vallina, ch'avea la 'nsegna reale, che non volle andare contro alla 'nsegna di Luchino per saramento fatto essendo suo prigionio in Lombardia. Ma maggior fallo fu de' nostri rettori a darli la 'nsegna reale, e che sì grande oste non capitanaro di sufficienti duce, e non vi furono di nobili cittadini accui ne calesse». Cfr. also RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, pp. 275-277

56 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «s'affrontaro insieme in sull'ora della terza [...]. [La] battaglia [...] durò insino dopo nona»; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114: «e durò la battaglia da presso a tersa sine al vespro»; *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170: «senza riposo si combatteo dalla mattina per tempo infine a nona».

57 *Ibid.*: «la battaglia fue la più crudele e la più aspra che fosse per grandi tempi inanzi in Italia».

58 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114: «ecoti iscire della città di Lucha lo Capitano di messer Mastino de la Schala, che ssi chiamava lo Frignano, cavalieri e con pedoni assai, li quali dirieto percosseno alli pisani e venneno con un'a<n>segna d'aquila nera colli piè rossi. Allora la battaglia fu grandissima e molti pregioni»; SARDO, cit., p. 92: «Lucchesi uscirono fuori e direrono dirieto alle reni alli Pisani».

59 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 276: «ibi fuit insignia bissonis d.ni Luchini statem prostrata et detemptus fuit quidam quem asseruit nepotem prefati d.ni Luchini, et hodie detemptus est in civitate Florencie et multi alii... inimicorum»; AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529: «de' Pisani vi fu preso misser Giovanni da Milano, nipote di misser Luchino, capitano de le genti di misser Luchino, le quali avea mandate in aiuto de' Pisani, e lo detto misser Giovanni fu menato preso a Firenze».

60 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 276.

61 *Ibid.*; VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 153.

62 Ivi, pp. 151-152: «i nostri della prima schiera credendosi avere la vittoria, si partiro di qua e di là seguendo prigioni».

63 Ivi, p. 152: «e quasi rotta e sbarrata la detta schiera, con tutto rilevassono un'altra insegna

advantageous position<sup>64</sup>, mounted a fierce resistance against the Florentines, wearing down their knights in close combat from the flanks and with crossbow fire<sup>65</sup>.

The bulk of the Florentine army watched the battle passively and did not join the fray, even when its *feditori* were exhausted and disordered<sup>66</sup>, and the enemy was outnumbered. According to Villani, who perhaps sought to rationalize the defeat, Ciupo degli Scolari cunningly sends *ribaldi*<sup>67</sup> among the Florentine baggage train to spread false news that their *feditori* are fleeing: the infantry believed the rumor and began to scatter<sup>68</sup>.

The Florentine knights of the main division, seeing Ciupo and his men holding firm with raised banners, their own knights chaotically pursuing in the open field, and their baggage train infantry fleeing, believed the day was lost for Florence. They turned their horses and flee ignominiously, as did the infantrymen<sup>69</sup>.

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della vipera di Melano, parte di loro si rannodaro colla schiera di meser Ciupo delli Scolari che stava ferma».

64 Cfr. *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 117-118.

65 Ivi, p. 114: «Allora la battaglia fu grandissima e molti pregiati. La gente delli pisani incomincionno a menare di quelli delli fiorentini e lli pedoni di Pisa incomincionno a dare per li fianchi dimolte lancie alli cavalli de la gente delli fiorentini. E poi li fiorentini incomincionno a perdere dimolte ensegne e omini, molti si arendeano a pregiati e quasi a una ora delli cavalli delli fiorentini ne caddero morti ben presso di due migliaia di cavalli»; *Storie Pistoresi*, p. 170: «al secondo assalto li balestrieri de' Pisani, li quali erano grandissima quantità, si trassero inanzi; e tanti saettavano spesso che nessuno della gente de' Fiorentini non si potea apressare alla loro gente e quasi la maggior parte de' cavalli de' Fiorentini furono fediti e morti»; e poco dopo «e' Fiorentini vi furono sconfitti, per virtù e gagliardi de' balestrieri e pedoni pisani».

66 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 152: «i nostri sciolti di schiera alla caccia de' nimici e mischiati tra lloro... [...]. Messer Ciupo colla sua riposata schiera veggendo in fuga la nostra schiera grossa, percosse a' nostri feditori stati prima a due battaglie vincitori, ch'erano sparti e ricogliendo prigionieri senza ordine o ritegno alcuno, fedito tra lloro, e ruppogli e sconfissoli di presente, e ricoveraro i loro prigionieri, salvo messere Giovanni Visconti, ch'era menato alla schiera grossa, e più altri».

67 *I.e.* rogues.

68 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, pp. 276-278. VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 152: «dissi che mesere Ciupo delli Scolari, che stava colla schiera disparte a vedere le contenenze della battaglia, e raccogliendo a ssua schiera que' che fuggivano, usò una maestria di guerra, che mandò più ribaldi alla nostra schiera grossa e tra lla nostra salmeria, gridando e dando boce che' nostri feditori erano sconfitti, onde la salmeria si cominciò tutta a partire».

69 *Ibid.*: «dissi che mesere Ciupo delli Scolari, che stava colla schiera disparte a vedere le contenenze della battaglia, e raccogliendo a ssua schiera que' che fuggivano, usò una maestria di guerra, che mandò più ribaldi alla nostra schiera grossa e tra lla nostra salmeria, gridando e dando boce che' nostri feditori erano sconfitti; onde la salmeria si cominciò tut-

Messer Ciupo then attacked the scattered Florentine *feditori* in the plain, killing and capturing them, and freed all the prisoners they had taken, except for Giovanni Visconti d'Oleggio, who was carried off with the bulk of the Florentines<sup>70</sup>.

The casualties were numerous<sup>71</sup>: among them Frignano da Sesso<sup>72</sup> and several valiant Scaliger and Este constables<sup>73</sup>. Many were also taken prisoner, including numerous nobles, Scaliger constables, Este and Bolognese troops, and 800 Siene-*se donzelli*<sup>74</sup> captured in combat<sup>75</sup>. Many from the defeated host found refuge in

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ta a partire. Quelli della nostra schiera, ch'erano di lungi, ov'era la battaglia e caccia per uno terzo di miglio, tra per la detta falsa voce, e veggendo i nostri di sciolti di schiera alla caccia de' nimici e mischiati tra l'loro, e veggendo fuggire la salmeria, e lla schiera di meser Ciupo ferma e cresciuta colle 'nsegne levate, credettono a'ccerto che' nostri fossero rotti, e senza rotta o caccia di nimici si ruppono tra l'loro e missonsi in fuga; e simile i pedoni».

70 *Ibid.*.

71 *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170: «tutta la buona gente dell'una parte e dell'altra fue tra presa e morta [...]. Della buona gente pochi morirono: ma morirono: ma morivi messer Federigo da Sessa da Reggio, uno figliuolo di messer Testa Tornaquinci da Firenze, messer Bartro-  
meo di Truffa de' Ricciardi da Pistoia, il quale andò a quella battaglia per farsi cavaliere, e Mazzeo di ser Asta de' Panciatichi da Pistoia e altri assai di piccola condizione»; JOHANNES DE CORNAZANIS, cit., col. 743 speaks of 1,000 deaths on the Florentine side: «[Fiorentini] venuti a battaglia con grande strage, mortalità, e preda senza numero, furono vinti i Fiorentini, e vincitori i Pisani [...]... mille ne furono del perditore morti, talchè o morti furono, o presi tutti dell'esercito»; AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529: «la battaglia fu grande aspra e crudele, e in fine i Fiorentini con tutta loro gente furono rotti e sconfitti e quasi tutti o morti o presi, chè pochi ne camparo»; *ibid.*: «fuvi morta molta gente del campo de' Fiorentini de la loro lega di parte guelfa, e molti tramontani di loro soldo e Toscani e molti soldati di misser Mastino tramontani e Toscani, de' quali non contarò, chè troppo longo sarebbe lo scrivere». VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 153, on the other hand, probably minimizes: «in questa battaglia non moriro di nostri oltre a CCC uomini tra cavallo e a piè, e niuno uomo di nome salvo Frignano da Sesso, e certi conestabili di meser Mastino e di marchesi, ch'alla battaglia si portaro valentamente».

72 Per *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114 he is captured.

73 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 153: «in questa battaglia non moriro di nostri oltre a CCC uomini tra cavallo e a piè, e niuno uomo di nome salvo Frignano da Sesso, e certi conestabili di meser Mastino e di marchesi, ch'alla battaglia si portaro valentamente».

74 *I. e. squires*.

75 JOHANNES DE CORNAZANIS, cit., col. 743: «furono in questa battaglia quasi tutti i cavalieri fatti prigionieri, e di loro molti feriti». *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114-115: «molti caporali rimaseno pregioni e lli loro Capitani della guerra, e dimolti fiorentini cittadini e gentili homini e di Siena e di Perogia e lonbardi assai e oltramontani si rendettno alla fede. E rimaseno prigionieri lo Frignano e lo conte di Siena, e altri grandi gentili homini rimaseno morti nella ditta battaglia [...]. E delli detti pregioni ne funno messi alcuni nella pregione del comune a San Sisto, e altri, di non troppo grande affare che funno grandissima quantità, funno messi nella torre de' Famigliati in via Santa Maria»; SARDO, cit., p. 94: «li Fio-

Lucca<sup>76</sup>. Marco Macaluffo, an Este commander, was killed and buried in Pistoia, where 150 Este mercenaries and many Romagnols<sup>77</sup> also took shelter. Giovanni Visconti d'Oleggio, distinguished in battle, was taken to Florence, escorted by 500 knights<sup>78</sup>. Most of the German mercenaries fighting for Florence were captured: the Siense chronicler Agnolo di Tura del Grasso, likely exaggerating, claimed there were 1,200<sup>79</sup>.

The Pisans, in reality, suffered more casualties than the Florentines, but they held the field and the honor of the battle<sup>80</sup>: they also had the privilege of sa-

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rentini [...] presi e lleghati a una fune vennono a Pisa octo chaporali et molti fanti stettono in prigioni in detta torre de li Famigliati di Pisa tanto che ssi morirono et portavansi cholla charretta alla fossa»; AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529, with some exaggeration: «e molti ne furo menati presi in prigione a Pisa, de' quali conteremo i principali, cioè: Misser Maffeo da Poncarara da Brescia, el quale era capitano de le genti de' Fiorentini, con 42 caporali Toscani e Lonbardi; tutti furono menati prigioni a Pisa. El gran conte Tramontano, capitano de la gente di misser Mastino, con molti gentili omini e grandi popolari di Firenze; tutti furono menati prigioni a Pisa e circa 1200 oltramontani, rimasero prigioni e furono lassati a la fede, e andorsene a piè co' li speroni a cintura e fuvi el conte Zeno co' molti caporali. E non conto gli altri di piccola natione assai, che v'era d'ogni maniera, chè troppo sarebe lo scrivere [...]. Tutti costoro furono menati prigioni a Pisa con molti altri de' nobili di Siena e de' popolari d'ogni maniera, de' quali non fo mentione»; RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 277: «omnes vero caporales et conestabiles vestre dominationis et Marchionum sunt de tempi aut mortui exceptis infrascriptis, videlicet Guidone Amani et d. Deatuchie qui sunt in civitate Lucane cum aliquibus suis consociis et Passarotus et Bossetus multas receperunt percussiones ut expresse dicitur statim arripuerunt fugam et sunt in civitate Florencie et multum redarguuntur per ser Nicholaum notarium d.norum Marchionum asserendo ipsos fuisse primos quos vidit in terra Pissie. Quibus omnibus». Also here VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 153 gives low numbers: «prigioni non vi rimasono de' nostri che da DCCC a M tra a cavallo e a piè, però che lla nostra schiera grossa si parti salva per lo modo detto». Also captured are the general captain Matteo da Ponte Carradi, the son of the lord of Volterra, many Siense nobles (from the Tolomei, Piccolomini, Saracini, Malavolti, Salimbeni families), as well as many constables of Mastino and the Este: a total of 42 officers: AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529.

76 Jacopo Gabrielli is captured while trying to take refuge in Lucca: VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 153. Many knights manage to enter the besieged city, including Pietro Tarlati, *Annales Arretinorum Maiores*, cit., p. 34: «tamen dominus Tarlatus cum aliquibus militibus et peditibus intraverunt Lucam». Also the lord of Pietramala, Tarlato Tarlati, who fought on the side of Florence, finds refuge in Lucca, while Giovanni Visconti d'Oleggio, distinguished in battle, is taken to Florence, escorted by 500 knights: *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 115; AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529.

77 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 276: «in civitate vero Pistorii bene sunt 150 eques illorum stipendiariorum d.norum Marchionum et multi illorum de Romandiola».

78 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 115.

79 AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529.

80 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 153: «e se non che a' Pisani rimase il campo e

cking the enemy camp, massacring those who sought refuge there<sup>81</sup>. The German knights in Pisan service were given double pay<sup>82</sup>.

The loss of horses in the battle was particularly high: over 2,000 mounts were killed in the clash<sup>83</sup>, of which 550 belong to the Sienese contingent alone<sup>84</sup>.

### 5. Critical analysis of the battle

Given the high level of documentation for the clash, let's briefly summarize the accounts of the main sources on the battle, starting with Villani, whom we have extensively used as the basis for the above synthesis: his approach is relatively positivistic in terms of causation but not consequence, aligning with other accounts in the characteristic objectivity of late communal Italian historiography, directed toward the citizens who witnessed the events<sup>85</sup>.

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l'onore, per lo giudicio e volere d'Iddio e per lo nostro male provvedimento, più di Pisani vi morirono assai che di nostre genti; e il costo a'loro innumerabile per le paghe doppie e mende de' cavalli. Ma pure la nostra mla guidata oste fu sconfitta con nostro danno e vergogna e disonore, sventuramente»; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114: «li pisani rimaseno vettoriosi della ditta battaglia e li fiorentini soperbi sconfitti e messi in fugha». GREEN, cit., p. 146 writes that the losses of the two hosts are likely similar.

81 AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 529; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 116.

82 SARDO, cit., p. 94 parla dei Tedeschi: «i Pisani [...] aut la vectoria et paghati tucti li Tedeschi a paghe doppie et mese compiuto et la menda de' chavagli furono morti in chanpo»; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 116: «lli cavalieri pisani da Pisa ebenno paga doppia e mese compiuto e le mende dei loro cavalli. Per la qual cosa molti denari convenne che lli pisani pagasseno»; Cfr. anche RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 277: «et pro parte Pissanorum preconizatum fuit stipendium peditum et equitum et firma unius anni. Omnes vero conestabiles et caporales aut sunt mortui aut detempti et pauci evaserunt».

83 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, pp. 152-153: «cavalli vi moriro più di II<sup>m</sup> tra dall'una parte e dall'altra per le molte balestre e per lo modo della battaglia, che ffu quasi com'uno torniamento con più riprese»; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114: «quasi a una ora delli cavalli deli fiorentini ne caddeno morti ben presso di due miglia cavalli»; *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170: «trovaronsi morti sul campo più di MMV<sup>c</sup> cavalli».

84 AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., pp. 529-530: «Sanesi, i quali scamparo, tornoro a Siena male in ordine robati e parte de' fanti, cosi de' nobili cosi de' popolari d'ogni ragione de la città e de' contadini de la Massa e del contado, e così li soldati del comuno di Siena che scamparo, e qualli che furo lassati robati e de' feriti, i quali sol'dati perdero molti cavalli, i quali parte furo morti a la battaglia e parte tolti; e così a li nobili di Siena e a molti grandi popolari: i quali cavalli tutti furono pagati e mendati dal comuno di Siena, che furono 550 cavallieri; e così el comuno di Siena li pagò a ognuno che li perdè».

85 Cfr., in generale, *Dentro la battaglia: gli uomini, le tattiche militari, i comandanti*, in G. FRANCESCONI (cur.), 1315. *La battaglia di Montecatini: una vittoria ghibellina*, Ospedaletto (Pisa), Pacini Editore, 2021, cit., p. 36 (49-75), on the chronicles of the time of Monteca-

The renowned Tuscan chronicler writes that, shortly after dawn, the Florentine *feditori* suffered a heavy blow from the Pisan ones, after which both sides disengaged; around 9 a.m., the clash resumed with the Florentine *feditori* breaking the enemy's first line and then the second. The latter regrouped with the third line under Ciupo degli Scolari, which remained stationary near the Pisan camp.

The main Florentine line did not support the *feditori* because its commander, Gianni della Vallina, refrained from attacking Luchino Visconti's banner due to an oath made when he was Visconti's prisoner in Lombardy (a *topos* reminiscent of Villani's account of messer Bornio leading the Florentine *feditori* at Altopascio<sup>86</sup>). Ciupo spread rumors among the Florentine baggage train that their *feditori* were fleeing; the main Florentine line, abandoned by its supplies and seeing the intact third enemy line, withdrew from the field; the Florentine *feditori* were finally routed by Ciupo's line<sup>87</sup>. According to Villani, the Guelphs thus squandered an easy victory through sheer cowardice and poor leadership: given the dynamics outlined by the chronicler, it is not surprising that the reported losses were limited<sup>88</sup>.

For Villani, the battle resembled a knightly encounter: «cavalli vi moriro più di II<sup>m</sup> tra dall'una parte e dall'altra per le molte balestre e per lo modo della battaglia, che ffu quasi com'uno torniamento con più riprese»<sup>89</sup>. Nonetheless, he noted that crossbowmen inflict casualties on the cavalry of both armies: «abattuta

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tini: «queste narrazioni, va segnalato sin dall'inizio, sono eccezionalmente coerenti. Con maggiore o minor grado di dettaglio e con maggior o minor ricercatezza stilistica, esse concordano praticamente su tutte le modalità di svolgimento della battaglia e, in linea di massima, anche sulla consistenza delle forze in campo». On the fundamental necessity of chronicles for the study of medieval warfare, cfr. also Cfr. Philippe CONTAMINE, *La guerra nel medioevo*, Tukei CAPRA (cur. and trad.), Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986 (ed. orig., *La guerre au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1980), p. 109.

86 VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 306, p. 291: «gli altri feditori ch'erano ordinati, ch'erano da VII<sup>c</sup>, onde guidatore messer Bornio maliscalco di messer Ramondo, veggendo cominciata la battaglia, non resse, ma incontanente volse la sua bandiera»; *ibid.* motiva la ritirata di messer Bormio, considerata come la causa della disfatta fiorentina, in tal modo: «la quale sconfitta di certo si disse, che 'l detto Bornio maliscalco per tradimento ordinato si mise prima a fuggire che a fferire; e ciò si trovò ch'egli era stato cavaliere per mano di messer Galeasso Visconti padre del detto Azzo, e stato lungamente a' suoi soldi; e come tornò in Firenze, mai non si lasciò trovare, anzi si partì di nascoso».

87 *Ivi*, vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 152.

88 *Ivi*, p. 153.

89 *Ibid.*.

di cavalieri per li molti balestrieri dell'una e dell'altra»<sup>90</sup>; the Florentine *feditori* performed feats thanks to the support of crossbowmen on the flanks, though Villani claims the Genoese and Pisan crossbowmen on the flanks of Pisa's *feditori* were more numerous and superior to those of Florence<sup>91</sup>.

Let's turn now to the Anonimo Pisano from the Roncioni manuscript, a chronicle from the second half of the 14th century. According to this source, the Florentines were unaware before the battle that the Pisans were ready to meet them<sup>92</sup>, which may align with Villani's account of the initial impetus of the Pisan *feditori* against the Florentines; however, Villani also states that the Pisans requested the battle<sup>93</sup>. The Anonimo Pisano likely exaggerates the Florentine numerical superiority in both cavalry and infantry: the Pisans, «con dumiglacinqueciento, 2.500, cavalieri e con meno pedoni di loro e con pogo danno di morte sconffisseno ben cinquemigla, 5.000, cavalieri, senza quelli che andonno col ditto messer Giovanni Veschonte»<sup>94</sup>. Villani disagrees, likely also exaggerating: «nonn-erano meno ma più gente di nostri a c cavallo e a piè»<sup>95</sup>.

The Anonimo Pisano somewhat contradicts itself by attributing the Pisans' "escape" to the withdrawal of only 500 enemy knights escorting the captured Giovanni Visconti to Florence<sup>96</sup>—too few to make a difference given the claimed 2,500-unit disadvantage. According to the same chronicler, Giovanni Visconti is captured by the Florentines while among the *primi feditori*<sup>97</sup>, not commanding

90 Ivi, pp. 151-152.

91 *Ibid.*: «i Pisani, ch'erano da III<sup>m</sup> cavalieri, feciono III schiere; l'una di feditori da DCCC cavalieri, la quale conducea... fasciata con molti balestrieri genovesi e pisani, che nn'avieno più di noi e migliori».

92 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 113.

93 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151.

94 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 116.

95 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, *Cronica*, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 150.

96 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 116: «messer Giovanni Vesconte di Melano rimase pregione a Firenze. La qual cosa fu fattura d'Idio per iscampo delli pisani, che quando lo ditto messer Giovanni percosse alla battaglia, che fu de' primi feridori, elli si portò molto bene. Ed essendo elli preso, lo capitano delli fiorentini lo mandò subitamente a Fiorenza accompagnato con cinquecento cavalieri delli loro, credendo ellino esser altutto vincitori della battaglia quando li pisani rinculorno arieto. E questo fu la loro structione grazia a Idio e alla sua madre Madonna santa Maria, la qual è senpre avvocata delli pisani».

97 *Ibid.*.

the second line as Villani states<sup>98</sup>; it is possible, however, that the *feditori* were selected just before the clash from among the knights of the main line<sup>99</sup>.

The Anonimo Pisano's version is generally consistent with Villani's, describing the initial attack on the Florentine *feditori* at dawn, the renewed clash between the first lines at 9 a.m., and the collapse of the second Pisan line following the Scaliger garrison's sortie from Lucca. The chronicle does not mention the fighting near the Pisan camp but implies the critical moment, resolved by a counter-attack involving the infantry on the flanks: «la gente delli pisani incomiccionno a menare di quelli delli fiorentini e lli pedoni di Pisa incomincionno a dare per li fianchi dimolte lance alle cavalli de la gente delli fiorentini. E poi li fiorentini incomincionno a perdere dimolte ensegne e omini, molti si arendeano a pregiioni e quasi a una ora delli cavalli deli fiorentini ne caddeno morti ben presso di due miglia cavalli»<sup>100</sup>. This testimony highlights the presence of Pisan infantry on the flanks of the cavalry, consistent with the era's tactics<sup>101</sup>. According to the same chronicle, the disposition of the Pisan *popolo* intimidated the Florentines and contributes to the victory<sup>102</sup>, demonstrating the effectiveness of well-positioned and disciplined infantry in the field.

The Anonimo Pisano's account is more violent than Villani's and focuses on the Pisans' fierce resistance. The Florentine chronicler also notes the advantage provided to the Pisans by the ditches and palisades of their camp, from where «poteno prendere e lasciare la battaglia, e rinfrescarsi a lloro posta e vantaggio»<sup>103</sup>.

An extraordinary and valuable source on the Battle of San Pietro a Vico is the letter<sup>104</sup> sent on October 8 by Bentino di Auxigliano to Giacomo and Giovanni Pepoli in Bologna, based on the testimonies of those who fought in the

98 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151.

99 As, for example, the Florentines at Campaldino in 1289: *ivi*, vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 351; DINO COMPAGNI, *Cronica*, Davide CAPPI (cur.), FSI, RIS<sup>3</sup>, 1, Roma, ISIME, 2000, lib. I, cap. 10, p. 13. On the critical analysis of the battle cfr. NARDONE, *Campaldino*, cit..

100 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114.

101 Sull'argomento cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit..

102 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., pp. 117-118.

103 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 150.

104 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, pp. 275-278.

Florentine host<sup>105</sup>. The letter distinguishes two clashes in the battle:<sup>106</sup> in the first, the Scaliger-Romagnol *feditori*, supported by others from the Florentine army, fought valiantly and force the Pisans to retreat<sup>107</sup>; a second attack, launched by the captains of the Florentine host with Florentine-Sienese-Aretine troops, inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, pushing them back to the palisade<sup>108</sup>; here, the Pisan infantry resisted the attackers, and the Florentine one withdrew<sup>109</sup>. This likely aligns with the moment Villani attributes to the flight caused by Ciupo's spread rumors: it is the culminating moment of the clash when the main Florentine force failed to intervene<sup>110</sup>.

According to Bentino, the Bolognese, Scaliger, Este, Romagnol, and Florentine knights fought very well<sup>111</sup>, seemingly confirming Villani's account of the

105 Ivi, p. 275: «per ea que investigare potui ab illis qui fuerunt in presentium exercitu significare possum vestre dominationi infrascripta».

106 *Ibid.*: «quod duo fuerunt prelia».

107 *Ibid.*: «in primo gens d.ni Mastini et illorum de Romandiola optime se gesserunt sub infrascriptis banderiis levatis videlicet ad insigniam d.norum Mastini comitis Vertutis et penonis d. Guiglelmi de Fogliano et rebeles fecerunt retrocedere cum auxilio aliorum de exercitu et in isto prelio multa varia et diversa fuerunt hinc inde».

108 Ivi, pp. 275-276: «secundum vero prelium conductum per d.nos capitaneus comunis Florencie Tarlatum de Arecio Ghucium et Tavonocium de Tolomeis et Iacobum Gabrielis caporales sub infrascriptis insignia videlicet d.ni regis Roberti d.ni Guicii comunis Florencie comunis Senarum d.ni Tarlati de Arezio et Marchi Machalufi caporales d.norum marchionum. Et isti omnes de secundo prelio valde bene se gesserunt, et inimicos fecerunt retrahi. Et de ipsis ceperunt usque ad qnantitatem 400 equitum et ultra et multos interfecerunt. Et ibi fuit quidam quem asseruit nepotem prefati d.ni Luchini, et hodie detemptus est in civitate Florencie et multi alii...inimicorum. Et ipsis inimicis sic conductis et repulsis usque in ipsorum stechato...».

109 Ivi, p. 276.

110 The Florentine-Sienese-Aretine contingent substantially aligns with that described by VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p.151 for the *feditori* of the army.

111 *Ibid.*: «et quod omnes milites scilicet vestre dominationis, d.ni Mastini et d.norum marchionum, illorum de Romandiola et Florentie optime se gesserunt». Cfr. also *Annalres Aretinorum, Miores*, p. 34: «tunc bene se gesserunt milites domini Mastini et aliqui Senenses». According to AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., pp. 529-530 the Sienese also suffer heavy losses, which seems consistent with their position as *feditori* and their valor according to VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151: «i nostri ch'erano rimasi II<sup>m</sup>DCCC cavalieri e popolo grandissimo feciono due schiere, l'una di MCC cavalieri per feditori, la qual conducea il nostro capitano messer Maffeo con quelli Fiorentini che v'erano, con iscelta delle migliori masnade ch'avessono e co' Sanesi, che più donzelli delle case di Siena guelfe si feciono il di cavalieri, e portarsi francamente [...]. E rimasonvi presi da VIII tra cavalieri e donzelli di Siena, e 'l figliuolo del signore di Volterra; tutti questi furono presi nel mezzo del campo combattendo tra' nimici».

Florentine *feditori*<sup>112</sup>, which, for the Tuscan chronicler, included Scaligeri but not Bolognese or Este troops. Despite differing details, Bentino's letter is substantially consistent with both Villani and the Anonimo Pisano, confirming the reliability of all three accounts.

Particularly noteworthy is Bentino's report on the Pisan infantry, fully equipped, repelling the enemy attack and putting them to flight; the Pisan crossbowmen, in particular, distinguished themselves by targeting the enemy from the camp's earthworks, while the Florentine infantry was cowardly and retreats<sup>113</sup>. The connection between the Pisan crossbowmen's elevated fire and the flight of the Florentine infantry—likely from the wings—recalls the tactic used by the Pisans at Montecatini, where the Guelph pikemen were routed under a hail of enemy projectiles from the Buggiano hills, allowing the Ghibellines to overwhelm the exposed Guelph cavalry flanks<sup>114</sup>. Bentino repeatedly emphasizes the valor of the Pisan infantry in contrast to the quality of Florence's cavalry in battle<sup>115</sup>, and again at the letter's conclusion<sup>116</sup>. These passages are particularly significant, as they demonstrate, regardless of the sides: 1) the ability of infantry positioned on favorable terrain to repel cavalry assaults; 2) the necessity of infantry support for cavalry, both in attack and defense.

The tactically most singular testimony, perhaps among all the battles mentioned so far, comes from the *Storie Pistoresi*, which, confirming the role of Pisan infantry and crossbowmen, explicitly states that the latter executed a true barrage capable of halting the Florentine cavalry: «al secondo assalti li balestrieri de' Pisani, li quali erano grandissima quantità, si trassero inanzi; e tanto saettavano spesso che nessuno della gente de' Fiorentini non si potea apressare alla loro gente e quasi la maggior parte de' cavalli de' Fiorentini furono fediti e morti»<sup>117</sup>. This statement is unique, as the crossbow fire appears literally capable of stopping the Florentine cavalry's charge, an unprecedented feat in medieval warfare—especially in such a large pitched battle—where light missile infantry is typically una-

112 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151.

113 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, pp. 276-278.

114 Cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit., pp. 169-170.

115 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 276.

116 Ivi, p. 278. On the positioning of crossbowmen in a rear position relative to the rest of the line, cf., also in open field, the deployment at the Battle of Quattordio (1313), in NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit., pp. 163-165.

117 *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170.

ble to hold the field against knights. Although the source does not specify, this result of the crossbowmen is likely achieved in cooperation with cavalry and heavy infantry and—as we will see better later—thanks to the help of field fortifications.

The *Storie Pistoresi*'s *trassero inanzi* unequivocally recalls the advance of the Pisan crossbowmen at Montecatini, necessary to target the Florentine pikemen<sup>118</sup>. Perhaps at San Pietro a Vico, the partially entrenched Pisan army facilitated the concealment of crossbowmen behind the formation and their surprise deployment at the battle's climax. Indeed, while the Anonimo Pisano states that the Florentines were aware of the Pisan *popolo*'s advantageous position, Bentino di Auxigliano mentions crossbowmen operating from the camp's embankment, likely only a portion of those held in reserve, not necessarily within it. Although there is no mention of "volley fire" by the crossbowmen, as at Montecatini<sup>119</sup>, it is plausible that the Pisan crossbowmen were positioned to execute an orderly yet devastating "volley fire"<sup>120</sup>.

The *Storie Pistoresi* have no doubt about the reasons for the battle's outcome: «e' Fiorentini vi furono sconfitti, per virtù e gagliardia de' balestrieri e pedoni pisani»<sup>121</sup>. This statement definitively confirms the high quality of the Pisan infantry. The Pistoian chronicler concludes: «la battaglia fue la più crudele e la più aspra che fosse per grandi tempi inanzi in Italia»<sup>122</sup>. It is hard not to sense in this conclusion the sheer intensity of the infantry's halting of the cavalry charge.

Notable for the Battle of San Pietro a Vico is also the Scaliger attack from Lucca on the Pisan rear, which likely explains the collapse of the Milanese main line, as well as the emergency role assumed by the Pisan infantry at the entrance

118 NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit., p. 178.

119 Cfr. *ivi*, p. 169.

120 Cfr. CORTUSII, Appendice, cit., cap. 1, p. 151 su Montecatini: «Ugutio misit pro balisteriis Pisanis, qui erant numero quatuor mille et eos sagaciter ordinavit in hunc modum quod eorum tertia pars sagittet in lanciferos dicti principis, alia tertia pars immediate balistas suas ponderet cum muschettis et quod telis etiam sagittet; alia vero tertia pars postmodum iam ponderatis balistis recuat et frequentando sagittare non cesset, et omnes inspiciant primo in lanciferos sagittare et postea in equos militum principis, et sic fecerunt». On this tactic cfr. anche PIERI, *L'evoluzione*, cit., p. 80, especially in relation to the already similar role played by the Pisans at the Battle of Jaffa (1192) under Richard I of England during the Third Crusade.

121 *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 170.

122 *Ibid.*.

to their camp, well-guarded precisely to counter attacks from the city during the battle. For San Pietro a Vico, it is plausible—as at Campaldino<sup>123</sup> and Montecatini—that the flank attack was typically combined with cavalry and crossbow fire concentrated primarily on the enemy infantry wings, supported by Bentino di Auxigliano’s account of the Florentine infantry’s cowardice in combat: the final collapse of the enemy *feditori* line would have been caused by the advance of the Pisan infantry on the now-exposed flanks of the Florentine knights, already engaged frontally against the last Pisan line.

The Anonimo Pisano mentions an unspecified *malizia* by the Pisan *feditori* who withdraw after initial contact with the enemy<sup>124</sup>: a “planned” rout is thus plausible, much like the “feigned” retreat of the Pisan *feditori* at Montecatini for the early lines<sup>125</sup>. Although the defeat in the initial lines was likely not intentional, the battle demonstrates a profound insight by the Pisan command regarding their infantry’s potential, which cannot be considered accidental and must have been adequately planned.

In line with the precursors of the great 14th-century crisis and the consequent re-feudalization of late medieval warfare, San Pietro a Vico—like Altopascio and Zappolino<sup>126</sup>—shows the significant contribution of the 1,000 Milanese knights on the Pisan side, requested and feared by the Pisans<sup>127</sup>. The mercenary caval-

123 Cfr. the new and corrected reconstruction of the battle in NARDONE, *Campaldino*, cit., compared to the disorder of pre-existing historiography.

124 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114.

125 Cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit., pp. 171-172.

126 Cfr. Vittorio LENZI, *La battaglia di Zappolino e La secchia rapita*, Modena, Il Fiorino, 1994 e NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit., pp. 182-183.

127 VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 131, p. 145: «e meser Luchino mandò loro M cavalieri colle sue insegne a soldo di Pisani, e capitano meser Giovanni Visconti suo nipote»; ivi, cap. 134, p. 150: «si seppe che, ndugiandosi pure XV dì, meser Giovanni Visconti si partia con tutta la cavalleria del capitano di Milano, perché i Pisani non gli oseravano i patti promessi; e ceïò disse poi in Firenze, quando vi fu prigionero, palesamente»; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 112: «molti cavalieri di diverse parte veneno al soldo di Pisa e mandonno a messer Luchino di Milano el quale, credendosi guadagnare d’essere signore di Pisa, mandò inn aiuto a’ pisani al soldo di Pisa ben mille cavalieri, de li quali fu capitano messer Giovanni da Uleggio Veschonte e nipote del ditto messer Luchino. E giunti al’ antiporto dello Parlascio, per lo buono provvedimento delli pisani, no’ lli lassò intrare in Pisa, dicendo loro che lla battaglia era di fare e che piacesse loro di cavarcare presti»; SARDO, cit., p. 92: «et giungniendo questa brigghata di Lombardia alla porta al Parlascio non fu lasciata entrare in Pisa perché i Pisani ebbono paura della ciptà. Dicendo: “questa si è mol-

ry of the Visconti and other Po Valley lordships (Scaligeri, Este) had decisively entered Tuscan warfare, with local hosts appearing heavily reliant on it: in particular, it allowed the Pisans to continue depending on German mercenaries as a key breakthrough element in their army. Alongside the Pisan entrenchment, this demonstrates that the cavalry-fortification dichotomy was not oppositional but synergistic<sup>128</sup>, though within a strategy that ceded the initiative to an enemy perceived as strategically superior.

In a more local context, Florence's failure once again highlights the vulnerability of the largest Tuscan commune's host against more politically cohesive and militarily organized enemies. Beyond the more pronounced coalition nature of the armies and the apparently greater proportion of professionals, the Florentine host, following a trend already evident at Montecatini and Altopascio, appeared less cohesive<sup>129</sup>, with its infantry more fragile than that of the enemy<sup>130</sup>.

## 6. *The site of the battle*

The exact location of the battlefield is not directly specified in the sources, but by cross-referencing them with the topography, it can be reconstructed with

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ta gente et noi non sappiamo loro volere". E cusi, temendo, andorono alla porta diciendo: "andatene a Luccha a cchanpo cho' Pisani perchè domattina si de' dare la battaglia"; ivi, p. 93: «miser Luchino da Milano, lo quale era venuto chon li mille chavagli da Milano in nostro aiuto».

128 NARDONE, *Fanti*, cit., pp. 330-336.

129 On Altopascio, cfr. what is stated by VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 306, p. 291.

130 On the stun of the infantry at Altopascio, cfr., in particular, among others, *ibid.*: «gli altri dell'oste [...] prima furono da' nimici assaliti che dessonno colpo, ma parvono storditi e amaliati; ma il popolo a piè cominciaro a sostenere francamente, che la cavalleria non rese quasi niente e, e così in poca d'ora che durò l'assalto furono rotti e sconfitti». Regarding the last point, we do not know how long the Pisan infantry's resistance on the riverbed lasted, but it was a fiercer, effective fight thanks to the final intervention of Ciupo degli Scolari's line. On Montecatini, among others, the same Pisan sources of San Pietro a Vico on the Florentine pikemen in the Prince of Taranto's host; *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., pp. 79-80: «allora si misseno quatro bandiere oltramontane e acostaronsi colle tre ch'erano rinculate indiriato e lli balestrieri pisani, forse da cinquecento, 500, e' serarono tra lli gialdonieri del prinse, sì che per le quadrella che lli punseno lassòno chadere le gialde»; SARDO, cit., p. 72: «et alla fine per li molti cholpi di balestra, tucti a un'ora, chaddono li gialdonieri». Cfr. VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 72, p. 172: «e' pedoni male in ordine, anzi al fedire che feciono i Tedeschi di costa, i gialdonieri lasciarono cadere le loro lance sopra i nostri cavalieri, e misoni in fugga; la quale intra l'altre fu gran cagione della rotta dell'oste de' Fiorentini».



*Fig. 4* Giovanni Baronzio, c. 1345–50. Detail of infantryman from *Stories of Saint Colomba*, Francesco Bini, CC BY-SA 4.0 (Wikimedia Commons).

reasonable certainty. Naturally, beyond the more precise references, much of the issue revolves around the fixed position of Lucca, the besieging camp, and the direction of the Florentine advance. The Anonimo Pisano describes the Pisan fortifications at the start of the campaign: «E puosenovi tre chanpi. Lo primo, che ss'incomincciava da Pontetetto, si chiamavano campo del Duga, cioè funno li figliuoli di messer Castruccio. Lo secondo campo si chiamava lo Capitano de la guerra. Lo terso campo si chiamava lo campo de li Melanesi. E duravano questi tre chanpi dal ditto Pontetetto insine al Serchio incontra lo monte San Quilici; e 'l ditto monte v'aforsanno li pisani di fossi e di bertesche. E facciendo ben guardare e a' ditti tre canpi dinansi ad essi, fénno li pisani due fossi grandissimi con istechati e fortesse, cioè bertesche, a li quali facieano grandissime guardie per non essere assagliati da' luchezi»<sup>131</sup>. However, the same source does not specify

<sup>131</sup> *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., pp. 112-113. Later in the course of the campaign, after the defeat of the Florentine army, it is added, *ivi*, p. 118: «e lo campo da la parte [...] verso Firense, si durava intorno a Lucha più di due m<i>gla e per larghessa si era più di vinti

which camp the battle takes place in front of. Given the direction of the Florentine advance from the northeast, the reference to the Guado delle Pulzelle and the Ghiaia di Serchio, and the position of the Florentine camp at San Pietro a Vico as noted by the *Storie Pistoresi*<sup>132</sup>, it is clear that the battle was fought north of Lucca, with the armies' flanks protected by the Serchio River's bank. All spatial clues regarding the battle's progression confirm a north-south tactical axis, on a flat, straight corridor ideal for the deep formations of cavalry lines at the peak of medieval military civilization.

The attack by Frignano da Sesso on the flank of the Pisan *feditori*, though described by sources as coming from the rear<sup>133</sup> rather than the flank, suggests that Lucca was positioned behind the enemy's front. The leveling of part of the Pisan palisade necessarily faced north, not along the extensive east-west siege perimeter around the city, which was characterized by sturdy fortifications that would have been detrimental to dismantle. The Florentines likely intended to breach the Pisan defenses between the city and the river, cutting off the retreat of the other camps and causing the collapse of the entire besieging force. Conversely, the Pisans accept battle with their camp at their backs, maximizing their potential along their final, fortified line of defense.

The Pisan decision to deploy a significant portion of the infantry toward the last line is articulated in a lengthy and deliberate passage by the Anonimo Pisano: «quando lo capitano della guerra delli pisani fecie le schiere ordinatamente per conbattere colla gente delli fiorentini sie aveano messo lo popolo di Pisa da una parte, dallato al Serchio. Di che messer Francesco Chastracani, ch'era de li quatro l'uno de' maggiori dell'oste e ll'altro si era messer Dino de la Rocha pisano e ll'autro messer Ciupo delli Scolari, insieme col ditto Capitano della guerra, di che lo ditto messer Francescho si disse: “Questo popolo di Pisa none sta bene qui, però li nimici li metteranno a petto di cavallo e mandralli al fiome, e per forza convverrà siano morti la maggior parte o anegati, per questo noi potremo esser i<s>confitti”. Allora li fecieno partire, e puosensi in su laudi, da la parte di verso 'l monte. Allora lo Capitano dell'oste delli fiorentini vedendo questo sie se ne sghomenttò forte, diciendo: “Noi siamo perdenti, però che 'l popolo di Pisa sono

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perliche, tutto afossato e con bertesche e stechati, era presso a Lucha a due balestrate».

132 *Storie Pistoresi*, cit., p. 169.

133 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114, SARDO, cit., p. 92.

in luogo che cci faranno troppo danno”. E così avvenne loro, ch’ellino funno sconfitti, come ditto è»<sup>134</sup>. This passage is detached from the battle narrative and added ex post to highlight the importance of this decision for the battle’s outcome.

The spatial sense of the Anonimo Pisano’s account is not immediately clear, but natural obstacles certainly dictate its meaning, as would have been obvious to those familiar with the battle and campaign. The mountain mentioned in the chronicle is San Quirico, fortified by the Pisans and connected to the Milanese camp by a bridge over the river<sup>135</sup>. As noted, the Pisan camp extended around Lucca from Pontetetto *inssine al Serchio incontra (i.e. facing) lo monte San Quilici*, which dominates the river plain below by about fifty meters. The chronicle thus clearly indicates that the infantry was not moved to the other side of the river<sup>136</sup> but along its course, closer to San Quirico, i.e., near the Milanese camp<sup>137</sup>. Francesco Castracani likely recognized that this position could enhance the defensive-

134 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., pp. 117-118.

135 Cfr. VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 140, pp. 161-162, per il maggio 1342: «... sil colle di San Quirico, ov’era un forte battifolle guernito per li Pisani alla guardia del poggio e del ponte a San Quirico». It is unthinkable that with the fortification of San Quirico and the bridge, it did not already exist at the start of the campaign.

136 The following year, the Florentines had to make significant efforts to cross the river, and thus it was not possible to cross it during a battle, nor for the Pisans to coordinate their forces between the two banks under their control in combat. On the episode cfr. G. VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 140, p. 163, ANONIMO ROMANO, *Cronica*, in G. PORTA (cur.), Milano, Piccola biblioteca Adelphi, 1979, cap. 12, p. 61 – very detailed at the operational level – and, especially – from a tactical perspective –, the same *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 121: «messer Malatesta [il comandante fiorentino] incominciò a voler passare lo Serchio sotto lo monte San Quilici e quine stettero di diecie, x, e spesse volte ciete brigate dell’una parte e dell’altra si assagliano similmente, badaluchandosi insieme, e mai non potèno passar lo Serchio; tuttavia la nostra gente li era a petto. E a la fine, vedendo lo ditto messer Malatesta ch’elli non poteano acquistare niente, passòe lo Serchio con una buona schiera di cavalieri e di pedoni per volere fornire Lucha. Li cavalieri lli pedoni pisani si misseno al Serchio al petto di loro, quine fue grande diserrare di balestra e gittare lanccie e pietre. E veggendo il ditto messer Malatesta di non potere passare, cioè per li fossi e per li spicciati che v’erano fatti per li pisani, che se fusseno stati tutti li cavalieri del mondo non vi sarebeno mai passati, ellino si partitteno, e andonnone al castello di Marti a oste. E quine stettero alcuno di e fénnovi danno assai, e ppoi si ritornonno a Firensa senza aver fatto niente a Luch».

137 *A petto di cavallo* does not imply a perpendicular crushing of the infantry against the river, but rather a simple diversionary option of throwing themselves into the waters to escape the enemy’s impetus otherwise following the axis of the field. The same happened to the Florentines at the end of the battle: cfr. *Annales Arretinorum Maiores*, cit., p. 34: «et multi in flumine Serchij perierunt».

counteroffensive potential of the Pisan infantry near the fortifications<sup>138</sup>.

Crucial in this passage is the expression *in su laudi*: the term, if not referring to praises, is unknown in medieval Latin and singular within the source itself. Beyond the “false friend” *lati*<sup>139</sup>, the relevant root is likely *lapides*, from the Gallo-Iberian *lausiae*, referring specifically to flat slate stones—i.e., river pebbles—possibly borrowed by the Pisans during their maritime ventures in the West<sup>140</sup>. If this etymology is correct, it can be assumed that the Pisan infantry was repositioned on the riverbed. However, this interpretation is flawed, as the riverbed, even in its widest southern stretch, is narrow, rugged, and unsuitable for any formation, not to mention the lack of indication that the infantry wings were positioned on one side or another of the formation, suggesting instead the usual symmetry in the deployment of infantry on both flanks of the cavalry<sup>141</sup>.

An additional and valuable piece of information on the position of the Pisan infantry comes from Bentino di Auxigliano’s letter: «et ipsis inimicis sic conductis et repulsis usque in ipsorum stechato, pedites ipsorum inimicorum bene muniti et armati omnibus armis et specialiter balistris positi super quodam argele quibus aliquo modo non poterant offendi fecerunt partem istam arripere fugam. Quod quidem accidit propter villes pedites florentinos qui incontinenti fugam inceperunt [...]. Breviter vobis pateat evidenter quod equites obtime se gesserunt pro parte florentina et pedites totum oppositum, qua de causa predicta conflictum

138 Piero Pieri’s focus on the offensive-counteroffensive role of infantry, praising the Lombard infantry defending field ditches at Legnano (1176), overlooks the Battle of San Pietro a Vico, despite its significance for infantry tactics: cfr. PIERI, *L’evoluzione*, cit., p. 34 and pp. 49-53 e NARDONE, *Fanti*, cit., pp. 326-350.

139 A term that, moreover, *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., does not seem to ever use. Cfr. also the term *laudi*, which appears masculine, as in SARDO, cit., p. 61’s *le latora*.

140 Alfred ERNOUT, Alfred MEILLET, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots*, Paris, C. Klincksieck, 2001 (ed. orig. 1932) s.v. *lausiae*, p. 346. Cfr. *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 190, t the siege of Florence of Marti (May 1364), the defense carried out by launching *bugni pieni di lape*: although the term seems to differ phonetically from the root of *laudi*, it is possible that these were conceptualized in a more particular way compared to mere stones.

141 The Piagge of the Serchio, in Lucca, besides being located along the course of the river exactly at the same height as the Milanese camp and the rest of the Pisan fortifications that would have precluded their advance to the north, are just 70 meters wide and – besides the stretches of water that cross them, which were probably swollen in October – are insufficient to deploy even only a wing of 3,000 men (at minimum for the Pisan host), let alone a more reinforced one. In short, every hypothesis regarding a deployment on the riverbed is spatially impossible, even before being militarily illogical.

habuerunt et maxima propter inimicos bravos et bene munitos et armatos pedites quibus aliquo modo non poterat offendi [...]. Et predicta omnia obvenerunt propter malam conductam pro parte florentinorum et diversos bravos et bonos et sufficientes pedites et bene armatos et munitos ex parte inimicorum et viles et malle armatos pedites florentinorum qui incontinenti aripuerunt fugam»<sup>142</sup>. The term *argele* is also obsolete, absent in medieval Latin literature. Given that the left bank of the Serchio is essentially flat, the term might indicate a riverbank<sup>143</sup>, particularly a transverse one, perpendicular to the riverbed and possibly integrated into the Pisan fortification perimeter. However, *argele* is more simply interpretable as a corruption of *agger*, referring, in military terminology, to the earthwork of the Pisan camp. It is likely that the *laudi* of the Anonimo Pisano were the same river gravel and rubble used to construct the embankment of the Milanese camp. It is unknown whether the Pisan ditches were filled with Serchio water; I only note that such hydraulic expertise was common in major late communal Italian sieges, where canals could even be diverted *ad hoc*<sup>144</sup>.

No more precise information exists on the Pisan rampart at the Battle of San Pietro a Vico, but deductions can be made by analogy from other sources and contexts. Late communal Italian military engineering had reached such heights that Villani considered the Florentine field fortifications of the time superior to

142 RODOLICO, cit., doc. 76, p. 276.

143 Cfr., for example, the etymology of San Martino in Argine (*Argele/Argelle*), fraction of Molinella, moreover the site of the battle of 1467, which however probably refers to a natural watercourse.

144 The principal example is in 1319 when Cangrande della Scala, preparing for the siege of Padua, makes build near Bassanello a castle surrounded by 3 concentric ditches filled with water of the Bacchiglione. The lord of Verona makes divert, through an appropriate *rosta*, the branch of the artificial river in the direction of Monselice, thus depriving Padua of large part of its water supply and the force of the mills. On this occasion, Cangrande also had trees cut down and fields leveled so as to dominate visually the surroundings of the fortress up to a distance of 500 paces. DARIO CANZIAN, *Società e storia*, 157 (2007), pp. 437-438 (429-458) provides an excellent description: «Cangrande alle porte. Gli “assedi” di Padova del 1318-1320», drawing from G. DE CORTUSIUS, *Chronica de novitatibus Padue et Lombardie*, B. PAGNIN (cur.), RIS<sup>2</sup>, XII/V, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1941, lib. II, cap. 7, p. 29 and A. MUSSATO, *Sette libri inediti del De Gestis italicorum post Henricum VII*, Luigi PADRIN (cur.), R. Deputazione veneta di storia patria, III serie, Cronache e Diarii, vol. III, Venezia, a spese della società, 1903, lib. 12, § 2, p. 58. Cfr. anche COMPAGNI, cit., lib. III, cap. 13, pp. 104-105 on the fortifications of Pistoia, which in 1304 resisted the blockade of the Florentines and their allies for months: «la città era nel piano, piccioletta, e ben murata e merlata, con fortezze e con porti da guerra, e con gran fossi d’acqua, sì che per forza avere non si potea».



Fig. 5. Pietro Lorenzetti, c. 1320–30. Detail showing knights and infantry from Crucifixion. San Martino Chapel, Saint Martin Renounces his Weapons (4). WGA21375.

those of the ancient Romans<sup>145</sup>. This surpassing of classical siegecraft («poliorcetica classica») is reiterated by the *Annales Arretinorum* for the Pisan camp at

145 These new fortifications were achieved simultaneously, at least in Tuscany, precisely with the expansion of Florence and Pisa towards Lucca, following the political vacuum left by the death of Castruccio Castracani (1329). Cfr. the description of the imposing fortifications built by the Florentines during the siege of the Luccan castle of Montecatini in April 1330, VILLANI, cit., vol. III, cap. 152, pp. 433-434: «e nota lettore che da piè di Serravalle infino a Buggiano per gli Fiorentini era affossato e steccato e imbertescato spesso tutta la detta bastita, il campo e l'assedio de' Fiorentini con guardie per tutto, e i detti fossi pieni d'acqua e accozzati insieme, e messi in quegli il fiume della Nievola e quello della Borra; la quale bastita tenea più di sei miglia nel piano; e da la parte del monte tra le castelletta d'intorno e altri battifolli per gli poggi e tagliate fatte e barre di legnami messi, dove stavano di di e di notte guardie con grossa gente a piè, erano più di XII poste di battifolli, sì che di Montecatini non potea uscire né entrare gente né vittuaglia, se non quello che si prendeano in preda nelle pendici e circostanze del poggio. E girava la detta impresa e guardia de' Fiorentini da XIII miglia; che fu tenuta grande cosa e ricca impresa a chi la vide, che fummo noi di quegli. Che certo la bastitia e la cinta de' fossi e di steccati che si legge fece Giulio Cesare al castello d'Aliso in Borgogna, ch'ancora si vede il porpreso, non fu maggiore né così grande, come quello de' Fiorentini fecino intorno a Montecatini». *Porpreso* is a Frenchism and means enclosure or fence.

Lucca in 1341–1342<sup>146</sup>, highlighting the advancement of field fortifications as a point of competition among major Italian communes.

Taking these chroniclers at their word, it is possible to hypothesize that the height difference between the Pisan ditch and earthwork exceeded 5 meters<sup>147</sup>, not accounting for additional superstructures like *bertesche* (*i.e.* wooden towers). The heavy infantry was likely deployed in front of this perimeter, as it was involved in the pitched battle<sup>148</sup> and required a compact formation in advance, incompatible with redeployment outside the palisade during the battle. As noted, the crossbowmen positioned on the earthwork also advance into the field, moving to the cavalry's flank once the enemy infantry collapses<sup>149</sup>: this is feasible because the missile troops operate in loose formation and can be redeployed without significant loss of tactical efficiency.

This interpretation is decisive, as it not only reveals the position and consequent effectiveness of the Pisan infantry but also shows that the crossbowmen, protected by the rampart and ditch, were nearly invulnerable to the Florentine cavalry, especially with Ciupo degli Scolari's fresh line held in reserve at the camp's entrance. In this sense, the cooperation of knights at the center and infantry on the flanks was maintained by the third Pisan line, integrating the fortification into the formation.

Castracani thus identified the optimal situation to guard against a potential attack from Lucca and maximize the infantry's strength: if most of the infantry—in this case, the citizenry of Pisa, one of Italy's finest infantry forces and the bulk of the host—had been concentrated on the wings of the main line, as was customary in the late communal period<sup>150</sup>, the Scaliger flank attack could have irreparably shifted the balance in favor of the Florentines. On one hand, this revalues the infantry; on the other, it sacrifices initiative and a more complex tactic, a dynamic

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146 *Annales Arretinorum Maiores*, cit., pp. 33-34: «Pisani [...] posuerunt campum cum filiis Castrucci in prato Luce, quod campum erat per miliaria v et bene vallatum cum boschettis et fossatis plenis aqua circum circa. In quo campo, in uno capite, erat campus comitis Nolfi de Urbino, capitanei dicti exercitus; in medio, campus filiorum Castrucij; in alio capite erat populus Pisanorum cum illis de Genua; et non legitur in historiis romanis ita pulchra edificia tam bene gesta et facta, sicut apparebant ista».

147 Cfr. VEGETIUS, I, 24.

148 *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, cit., p. 114.

149 Cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit., p. 182.

150 Ivi, pp. 183-184.

avored by the Pisan strategic defense and the “closure” of two sides of the camp by the river and fortifications.

Drawing on a fitting quote from Grillo, just as the Battle of Gamenario (1345) «costituisce il canto del cigno dell’esercito comunale milanese»<sup>151</sup>, we can say not only that the same holds true for all of Lombardy<sup>152</sup>, but that—likewise, in the same period—the Battle of San Pietro a Vico was the swan song of the Tuscan communal army. Indeed, in the following generations, characterized by the full-fledged “phase” of mercenary companies, no Italian military power developed beyond strengthening heavy “condottieri” cavalry, mirroring the decline of communal popular infantry amid the contraction of the great medieval civilization during the 14th-century crisis. Similarly, field and urban fortifications gained greater prominence as hosts shrank, making terrain less exploitable offensively but offering more defensive opportunities. A certain weariness thus crept into the political, moral, and cultural fabric of the Italian communes: Pisa itself, once the pride of the late communal Italian army, regressed during the crisis decades into a spiral of decline culminating in its fall to the hated Florence in 1406.

On July 6, 1342, despite Florence’s efforts and the enormous cost of the war, Lucca was forced to surrender to Pisa and remained under its control until 1368, when it was liberated by Emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg. The disaster caused severe internal turmoil in Florence, leading to the short-lived but ruinous Signoria of the Duke of Athens, detrimental to Florentine expansion in Tuscany: a demonstration that even in the commune with the strongest republican tendencies, autocratic rule followed military defeat, as it did elsewhere in Italy. Ironically, despite their territorial expansion in subsequent centuries, the Florentines never managed to seize Lucca, always protected against Medici ambitions by its strategic importance to the states of northern Italy<sup>153</sup>.

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151 P. GRILLO, «“12.000 uomini, di cui 6.000 con lance lunghe e 3.000 con pancere e mannaie”. L’esercito milanese agli inizi del Trecento», *Società e storia*, CXVI (2007), p. 249 (233-253).

152 Cfr., in general, NARDONE, *Fanti*, cit..

153 SIMEONI, cit., p. 131.

## 7. Conclusion

The Battle of San Pietro a Vico, passed down in historiography without even a name, was instead and by far one of the most significant and well-documented clashes in 14th-century Europe. It showcased the sophisticated continuity of Pisan synergy among arms on favorable terrain chosen for an ambush, as seen previously at Montecatini. The complexity of the terrain combined fortification elements, waterways, and a seemingly deliberate positioning of infantry to bolster the defensive line of the camp on the flanks of the last cavalry line. The Pisan chronicle tradition, consistent with the general recognition of the effectiveness of the maritime republic's citizen infantry, contains the rare (perhaps unique?) mention of a cavalry charge halted by missile troops, in this case supported by mounted forces ready for a counterattack and positioned on the camp's ramparts. This strength of the infantry, naturally including heavy infantry, aligns with the standards of collective training and competent command of the late communal Italian host, with the Pisan army representing its pinnacle.

Conversely, the battle also reveals the overall, already underway decline of the late communal host in the field, less focused on cohesion and control of formations despite numerical strength. Within this strength, specialized units such as *feditori* and crossbowmen increasingly shine, in line with a general reduction in tactical specialties and their combined effectiveness on a large scale. Both the Pisan reliance on field fortifications and the failure of the Florentine main line to engage in combat reflect the tendency toward the re-feudalization of late communal Italian warfare, converging on a more cautious and "entrenched" system.

In subsequent generations, this would often lead men-at-arms to fight on foot in a less "deep" and more fortified field, unlike the large "corridors" for heavy cavalry designed to maximize their breakthrough capability. In this sense, the extraordinary effectiveness of the infantry on the Pisan camp's rampart appears as a notable and exceptional "last gasp" compared to the more aggressive participation of infantry in the pitched battles of previous decades. Also pronounced on both sides is the reliance on foreign men-at-arms, typical of medieval coalition armies (cfr. the Florentine *feditori*, the Scaliger garrison, and the Visconti main line): an increasingly elitist, professional pattern, far from the old way of waging war between neighboring communes, where participation of citizens and rural militias was more frequent and substantial.

Noteworthy, too, beyond the reliance of the battle's reconstruction on unique and partly ambiguous lexical terms, is that the chronicle narratives—once compared and reconciled—consistently fit into a logical, reliable, and coherent framework, finding, for instance, in topography the irrefutability of the homogeneous yet advanced late communal Italian military practice, only recently unveiled by historiography. The habitual ease of the sources in conveying the complexity of the clash through a few references, evidently clear to the logic of those who witnessed such hosts in action, poses a conceptual challenge for the modern reader unaccustomed to the semantic richness but also the difficult simplicity of warfare, which, especially in major clashes, offers few but fundamental combat dynamics.

All indicators, including the size of the armies—between 20,000 and 30,000 men—point to San Pietro a Vico as a clash of striking tactical and strategic significance for its time and place, unfortunately not surprisingly absent from the historiographical roster of the millennium's most important battles. Beyond the impending shift of the times—toward the Black Death—the clash at Lucca reveals the typical levels of discipline, command, training, and collective armament of the late communal Italian military Art, as seen at Campaldino, Gaggiano (1313), Pontetetto, Montecatini, Zappolino, Gamenario, and other great battles of the grand communal military civilization.

The historiographical neglect, both Italian and foreign, of this episode is alarming, not only for the battle's high profile but also for the habitual lack of analysis of the true practice of warfare—not sporadic or anecdotal but organic and integrated into international academia. In particular, the neglect of the immediate subordination of warfare to politics indicates a lack of true civic, strategic, and cultural awareness as the triadic foundation of our traditional identity, often dissolved in hyperspecialization, self-referentiality, and a lack of foresight regarding polemology as much as any other field. This is a deficiency that a truly preeminent, united, and leading Europe in the world has no right to afford.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

FsIm = Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale

ISIME = Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo.

RIS = *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, I serie

RIS<sup>2</sup> = *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, II serie

RIS<sup>3</sup> = *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, III serie

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# Richard Musard and the Origins of the Savoyard Crusade

by TAMÁS ÖLBEI

**ABSTRACT.** After the Treaty of Brétigny, thousands of long-serving mercenaries suddenly found themselves without employment and moved south, occupying Pont-Saint-Esprit near Avignon. These multiethnic great companies—already active in Italy and emerging in France around 1360—posed a direct threat to the papal court, and one such force was led by the Englishman Richard Musard. The papacy attempted to contain the crisis through excommunication and even by proclaiming a crusade against the companies, but ultimately was compelled to negotiate, allowing many mercenaries, including Albert Sterz, John Hawkwood, and Richard Musard, to enter Italy. By the mid-1360s Pope Urban V sought a different solution: to redirect the companies toward a holy war against the infidels, promising salvation in exchange for military service. Between 1362 and 1365 four crusading expeditions were prepared in this spirit, among them the Balkan campaign of Amadeus VI of Savoy. Musard—first excommunicated, then targeted by a crusade, later reconciled—distinguished himself as the Green Count’s body-guard during the campaign. His career illustrates the process by which the small Savoyard crusading force ultimately sailed from Venice.

**KEYWORDS.** HUNDRED YEARS WAR, LATE MEDIEVAL CRUSADES, MERCENARIES, GREAT COMPANIES, AMADEUS VI, SAVOY, PONT-SAINT-ESPRIT, TREATY OF BRÉTIGNY

## *Introduction*

**R**ichard Musard was a bastard, and like many illegitimate nobles in the mid-fourteenth century,<sup>1</sup> a career as a mercenary offered an obvious path to advancement.<sup>2</sup> The French even had a specific term for such

1 Bastards were common among noble families of the time. Among the noble families of Savoy in the 14th century, for example, there were some where 40% of the children born were illegitimate. see: Luisa Clotilde Gentile, «Les bâtards princiers piémontais et savoyards» *Revue du Nord*, N. 31. Hors serie collection histoire, 2015. p. 390.

2 The reasons why someone became a mercenary and what motivated them can be found in

men: bourc. Numerous mercenary captains active during the Hundred Years' War appear under this designation in chronicles and archival sources. Dimanche de Vitel of Dijon, for example, lists several bourcs among the captains who joined Arnaud de Cervole's crusade: bourc Camus, bourc d'Aussin, and bourc de la Rouque.<sup>3</sup> Ernest Petit cites further examples from the 1350s and 1360s, including Bourc de Lamit and Bourc de Breteuil.<sup>4</sup> These men ranked among the most influential routiers of their age, many commanding companies of several hundred or even several thousand soldiers. Bourc de Breteuil, for instance, entered Auvergne in late 1364 with 2,000 men,<sup>5</sup> while Bourc Camus, together with Naudon de Baugeran and Bérard d'Albret, led the vanguard of a force of 4,800 mercenaries and 30,000 looters and camp followers during their attack on Bourbonnais and Nivernais in December 1367.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the size of the forces they commanded, most bastards among the first generation of great-company captains met violent ends. Bourc Camus and Bourc de Breteuil were executed in 1369, and Bourc Lamit fell in battle in 1364. Only a few died peacefully, among them Bertucat d'Albret, who passed away in 1383 after a long and eventful career, and Richard Musard.<sup>7</sup> Yet the trajectories of Musard and Bertucat d'Albret diverged sharply. Bertucat d'Albret, following the usual pattern of mercenary captains, continued to lead his own company—either independently or in coalition—until his death. Musard, by contrast, left the great company he had helped command and entered the service of Amadeus VI, the Green Count of Savoy, without bringing a substantial retinue. In this respect, his career was unique among mid-fourteenth-century mercenary leaders. Some

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Guilhem Pépin's excellent study. Guilhem Pépin, «Les routiers ganscons, basques, agenais et périgourdin du parti anglais: motivations, origines et la perception de leurs présence (v. 1360-1440)» Guilhem Pépin, Françoise Lainé et Frédéric Botoulle (eds.) in: *Routiers et mercenaires pendant la guerre de Cent ans. Hommage à Jonathan Sumption. Actes du colloque de Berbiguières (13-14 septembre 2013)*, Bordeaux, Ausonius, 2016. pp. 25-29.

3 Archives départementales de Côte d'Or (ADCO) B. 1423 f. 31v

4 Ernest Petit, *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne de la race capétienne avec des documents inédits et des pièces justificatives, IX: Règne de Philippe de Rouvre, 1349-1361. La Bourgogne sous le roi Jean II, 1361-1363*, Dijon, Imprimerie Daranière, 1905. p. 180.

5 Kenneth Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries, vol. I: The Great Companies*, Oxford, Blackwell Press, Massachusetts, 2001. p. 83.

6 Nicolas Savy, *Bertrucat d'Albret ou le destin d'un capitaine gascon du roi d'Angleterre pendant la guerre de Cent Ans*, Archeodrom, 2007. p. 18.

7 Savy, *Bertrucat d'Albret*, pp. 423-424.

captains, like the Italian Bertrand Gasc, did serve a single lord for decades, but they always did so at the head of their own companies. Even Gasc's force—twelve horsemen and 182 foot soldiers in 1359—was modest compared to the great companies that seized Pont-Saint-Esprit, where Musard served as one of the connestables.<sup>8</sup> Musard's decision is therefore striking and difficult to explain. Yet it ultimately proved successful: after joining Amadeus VI, he endured numerous dangers, enjoyed a long and prosperous career, acquired an estate and castle, married a noblewoman, and outlived his lord and friend by several months following Amadeus VI's death in 1383.<sup>9</sup>

This study examines a crucial period in Richard Musard's life, which offers insight into the processes and motivations behind the four crusades of the mid-1360s—campaigns that affected hundreds of thousands of people from Portugal to Bulgaria and from Alexandria to Strasbourg. During these expeditions, Arnaud de Cervole's unprecedentedly large mercenary army devastated the borderlands of the French kingdom and the Holy Roman Empire; Peter of Lusignan plundered Alexandria, the jewel of the Mamluk Sultanate; Hugh Calveley and Bertrand du Guesclin's intervention in Iberia enabled Enrique of Trastámara to seize the Castilian throne; and Amadeus VI, after capturing Gallipoli, ravaged the frontiers of the Second Bulgarian Empire.

Although the literature still treats these campaigns separately, they shared a common origin, preparation, planning, and personnel. One such participant was Richard Musard. Pope Urban V organised the four crusades between 1362 and 1365 specifically to remove the great companies that were crippling Italy and the kingdom of France. Since the mercenaries could neither be excommunicated nor defeated by force, the papacy sought instead to persuade them to seek spiritual salvation by joining crusades to Europe's peripheries or to Africa. Musard himself was excommunicated, a crusade was proclaimed against his company, and he ultimately took part in the Savoyard crusade as Amadeus VI's bodyguard and standard-bearer.

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8 Bertrand Schnerb, «Un capitaine Italien au service de Jean sans Peur: Castellain Vasc», *Annales de Bourgogne*, LXXIV, 1992, 5-27. p. 6.

9 Eugene L. Cox, *The Green Count of Savoy, Amadeus VI and Transalpine Savoy in the Fourteenth-Century*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1967. p. 338.

*Bastardum Musardi, Armigero Nigro*

No trustworthy details were identified in my research about Richard Musard's origins or about the years prior to the creation of his great company in Champagne. His illegitimacy is confirmed by a letter written by Bernabò Visconti in Milan on 27 September 1380 and sent to Amadeus VI:

«Audivimus ambasciatam vestram portatam illustri filio nostro carissimo domino comiti virtutum per egregios milites dominos Gasparem de Montemajori et Bastardum Musardi.»<sup>10</sup>

Contemporaries rarely erred in such matters. His English identity is likewise clear: Servion calls him a «vaillant chiuallier d'Engleterre»,<sup>11</sup> and this is also evident from his oath of loyalty to Amadeus VI.<sup>12</sup> His noble background is suggested by a letter of Pope Innocent VI, who addressed him as «Ricardo Mussato, armigero nigro.»<sup>13</sup> The lack of sources prevents firmer conclusions, but this aligns with the genealogy of the noble Staveley Musard family, in which Richard does not appear in the fourteenth century, as shown in the nineteenth-century *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*. According to Kathryn Warner, who studies the thirteenth-century Musards, Richard may have been the natural son of Malcolm Musard, born in the 1270s and dead around 1344. Malcolm, a younger son of Nicholas Musard, Lord of Staveley, did not inherit Staveley. If this assumption is correct, Malcolm's heir—Richard's half-brother John Musard—was

10 Francois Mugnier, *Lettres des Visconti de Milan et de divers Autres Personnages aux Comtes de Savoie Amédée VI, Amédée VII, et Amédée VIII (1360-1415)* Paris:H. Champion, Libraire, 1896 pp. 42-43.

11 Federico Emanuele Bollati di Saint-Pierre, (ed.), Jean Servion, *Geste et croniques de la mayson de Savoye*, II, Turin, F. Casanova, 1879. p. 115.

12 «Richardus Musardi anglicus domicellus» - Fidelitas Ricardi Musardi Anglici. Gaudenzio Claretta, «Sulla vera patria e sulle principali geste di Riccardo Musard uno dei primi Cavalieri dell'Ordine Savoio del Collare.» in: *Atti della R. Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, XIX, Torino, 1888 p. 958. n. 1.

13 Epistola XLVII «Ad Walterum militem, Johannem Scakaik et Ricardum Mussatum.» *The-saurus Novus Anecdorum*, II Lutetiae Parisiorum, Bibliopolarum Parisiensium, 1712. Col. 882-883. Regarding his noble origins, there is a similar opinion: Claretta, *Sulla vera patria* p. 957, Dino Muratore, «Les origines de l'ordre du collier de Savoie dit de l'Annonciade» in: *Archives héraldiques suisses = Schweizerisches Archiv für Heraldik = Archivio araldico Svizzero*, XXIV, 1910. p. 15. Ferdinando GABOTTO, «L'età del Conte Verde in Piemonte, secondo nuovi documenti (1350-1383)» in: *Miscellanea di Storia Italiana, Terza Serie*, II. (XXXIII della Raccolta), Torino, 1895, «Lettera del conte Verde al Musard» Appendice n. CVIII. p. 226.

appointed sheriff of Staffordshire in April 1361 and died before May 1362.<sup>14</sup>

In his letter, Pope Innocent VI also mentions Walterum Militem, who appears alongside Richard Musard and John Hawkwood. He may have been Sir Walter Leslie, whom Froissart refers to as «Scottish» or «Hagre.»<sup>15</sup> Leslie commanded the German-Anglo great company that set out from Champagne and captured Pont-Saint-Esprit, while Musard served as its constable-general, a senior rank within a great company commanding several lances or even an entire company.<sup>16</sup>

### *En route to Pont-Saint-Esprit*

Following the Peace of Brétigny, dated May 8, 1360, which ended the first phase of the Hundred Years' War, both Edward III and John Good freed themselves from unnecessary mercenaries. Frédéric Boutoulle and Guilhem Pépin refer to these years as a low-intensity war, in which the number of “officially” participating belligerents was limited.<sup>17</sup> The extent of this is evidenced by Edward III's letter, which is preserved in the Lille archives. In his letter dated October 24, 1360, the king, referring to the Treaty of Brétigny, informs the captains of the garrisons to be handed over to the French king.<sup>18</sup> Froissart notes that one such force gathered in Champagne in May 1360, under the the captaincy of «Hagre, or l'Escot.»<sup>19</sup> in which Richard Musard also served. The companies dispersed across Champagne, aided by the fact that several English strongholds still held out in June.<sup>20</sup>

14 I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kathryn Warner for her selfless and much appreciated assistance in preparing this study.

15 Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries*, v p. 36.

16 Kenneth Fowler, «Great Companies, Condottieri and Stipendiary soldiers. Foreign Mercenaries in the Service of the State: France, Italy and Spain in the Fourteenth Century», in Miguel Ángel and Ladero Quesada (eds.), *Guerra y diplomacia en la Europa Occidental*, Pamplona, 2005, p.143.

17 Frédéric Boutoulle, Guilhem Pépin, «Avant-propos» Guilhelm Pépin, Françoise Lainé et Frédéric Botoulle (eds.) in: *Routiers et mercenaires pendant la guerre de Cent ans. Hommage à Jonathan Sumption. Actes du colloque de Berbiguières (13-14 septembre 2013)*, Bordeaux, Ausonius, 2016. p. 10.

18 Archives du Nord (ADN), B. 268. n. 8497.

19 Siméon Luce, (ed.), *Chroniques de J. Froissart 1360-1366*, VI, Paris, Librairie de la société de l'histoire de France, 1876. p. 61.

20 Copie de la response faicte par les habitans de Reims à monsieur le duc [Philippe] d'Or-

They ravaged the regions around Toul and Verdun before reaching Joinville and Saint-Nicolas-de-Port in the Duchy of Bar, spreading «*great fear*.»<sup>21</sup> Robert, Duke of Bar, and the border lords of France and the Empire anticipated such consequences, especially after English captains remaining in Burgundy attacked the duchy earlier that year. On 4 May 1360, shortly before the treaty was signed, Robert formed an alliance in Metz with the Duke of Luxembourg, the city of Metz, and the Bishop of Metz to defend the Meuse Valley with sixty armed men until 11 November. The force was to remain constantly alert, and all contact with mercenaries was forbidden.<sup>22</sup>

The alliance proved insufficient against the Tard-Venus companies led by Walter Leslie, Richard Musard, John Hawkwood, Albert Sterz, and others, numbering several thousand. From late May to late June 1360, records describe widespread atrocities. The Tard-Venus effectively occupied the Duchy of Bar. Travel became dangerous; people hid in fortified towns. Travellers risked the fate of Jean de Flirey, Henri de Bar's tax collector, robbed of his horse, weapons, money, and collected taxes.<sup>23</sup> Village leaders were executed, populations displaced, and looting was extensive.<sup>24</sup> The companies reached Ische, rested briefly, then moved to Montigny in Burgundy.

Advancing towards Pont-Saint-Espirit, the companies spread across the plains of the Ain and Beaujolais.<sup>25</sup> Local forces achieved little. On 8 June, the Duke warned the lords of Mirebel and Saint-Georges of the approach of some 4,000 men. Meanwhile, he attempted to retake Pierre-Perthuis and Lormes. On 1 August, the troops amassed at Semur and laid siege to Pierre-Perthuis. However, it

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léans [oncle du roi Jean], sur la demande qu'il faisoit auxdits habitans pour racheter la forteresse de Ouchy, tenue par les Anglois en l'année mil trois cent soixante et un. DCCXXXIII., Pierre Varin (ed.), *Archives administratives de la ville de Riems*, III, Paris, De L'imprimerie de Chapelet, 1868. pp. 177-178.

21 Lettre des habitants de Joinville à ceux de Troyes, vers 1361. H. d'Arbois Jubainville, *Voyage paléographique dans le département de l'Aube*, II, Troyes, 1855. Pièces justificatives I. pp. 134-135.

22 Archives municipales du Metz (AMM) AA 49. f. 15.

23 Archives départementales de la Meuse (ADM) B 1511 f. 21v

24 Victor Servais, *Annales historique du Barrois de 1352 à 1411 ou historique, politique, militaire et ecclésiastique du duché de Bar sous le règne de Robert, duc de Bar*, Bar-le-Duc, Contant-Laguerre et Cie, 1865. p. 102.

25 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne*, p. 200.

was Nicolas Tamworth,<sup>26</sup> one of the two great winners of the 1360s,<sup>27</sup> who saved the defenders. Due to his intervention, the duke of Burgundy eventually bought back the besieged fortress not by force but rather for 4500 florins. Guillaume de Clugny, bailiff of Auxois, was entrusted with the responsibility of collecting the funds expeditiously and delivering them to the fortress. «His own grey horse, in a frenzy, carried the ransom demanded for Pierre-Perthuis»<sup>28</sup>

Richard Musard was not the only Englishman employed by the border lords to liaise with the mercenaries. Border lords also employed English intermediaries to negotiate with the companies. Philippe of Rouvres, the last Capetian Duke of Burgundy, instructed his interpreters on 24 June to contact the marching forces while he concentrated troops on the northern frontier. Newly hired mercenaries under Bertrand Gasc of Alexandria joined him in July. Negotiations succeeded: on 23 July, near Heulley-sur-Saône, the captains swore on the Bible to refrain from further aggression, though they reserved the right to join other companies.<sup>29</sup> Their troops then left Burgundy and moved south.

The bailiff of Auxois, Guillaume de Clugny, the's accounts from summer 1360 record numerous English atrocities and local collaborators.<sup>30</sup> The companies devastated the countryside from north to south, as was typical of fourteenth-century armies. Edward III's military operation in the border region during the years 1359-1360 and Arnaud de Cervole's crusade exhibited a similar pattern: a strip of land measuring approximately 30-40 km in width was required to provision an army of 10-20,000 men. The companies heading towards Pont-Saint-Esprit numbered close to 10,000. By 31 May 1360, their vanguard had occupied Beaujeu, south of Mâcon, and besieged the castle.<sup>31</sup> Their route is traceable through

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26 First as an interpreter, then as a broker between the English mercenaries and the Duke, and later as an adviser to Phillip of Rouvres, he not only managed to save a considerable sum of money, but also acquired valuable estates in Burgundy.

27 The other was Guillaume de Granson.

28 ADCO B. 2748, f. 18r

29 Promesses et serments faits par par les Officiers Anglois a ceux du Duc de Bourgogne, de ne faire aucun acte d'hostilité durant la Trêve, et de vuidier incessamment le Pays du Bourgogne, etc. Urbain Plancher, *Histoire générale et particulière de Bourgogne, avec des notes, des dissertations et les preuves justificatives*, II, Dijon, 1741. N. 300. p. CCLVIII.

30 ADCO B 2748 f. 13r-v, 14r-v

31 Georges Guigue, *Les Tard-Venus de Lyonnais, Forez et Beaujolais, 1356-1369*, Lyon, Aug. Brun, Libraire de la société Littéraire, 1886. p. 46.

the towns they plundered. In the County of Burgundy, part of the Holy Roman Empire, they seized garrisons around Besançon, Dijon, and Beaune, including Vergy and Gevrey-en-Beaunois.<sup>32</sup>

Tension increased in August 1360 when the mercenaries captured Jean de Rye, Marshal of Burgundy, during the fall of Chariez near Vesoul.<sup>33</sup> All of this took place during the capture of Chariez, a stronghold located near Vesoul and north of Dijon.<sup>34</sup> In mid-August, successive companies occupied Montsaugéon, Dole, and Auxonne. Guillaume Granson and Nicolas Tamworth again negotiated with the companies, securing peaceful passage in exchange for payment.<sup>35</sup> Yet the influx continued: even in September, new companies arrived.<sup>36</sup> Life in both Burgundies came to a halt. Travel ceased; those who ventured out were robbed, ransomed, or killed.<sup>37</sup> In November, Montcenis was burned. The threat peaked when a company of 6,000 horsemen camped near Villaines-en-Duesmois, devastating the region.<sup>38</sup> Shortly before the capture of Pont-Saint-Esprit, several companies abandoned the castles they held in Burgundy and moved south on Edward III's orders, surrendering Beaufort, Ligny, Regennes, and Bragelogne.<sup>39</sup>

A foothold north of Lyon was secured by capturing Gratedoz and Oliberne.<sup>40</sup> The companies continued their violence in the Lyonnais, storming and burning Albigny.<sup>41</sup> Companies arrived lately followed the Tard-Venus vanguard southwards, devastating Saint-Symphorien-le-Châtel, Forez, and Estivareilles.<sup>42</sup> The destruction was so severe that communities sought tax relief years later.<sup>43</sup> By

32 ADCO B 5498 16r

33 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne*, p. 209.

34 ADCO B 11925 f. 22v

35 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne*, p. 214.

36 ADCO B 1408 f. 47v

37 ADCO 1410 f. 66r-v

38 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne*, p. 220.

39 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne*, p. 223.

40 Jules-Joseph Vernier, «Le duché de Bourgogne et les Compagnies dans la seconde moitié du XIVe siècle» *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, Arts, et Belles-Lettres de Dijon*, 1901-1902, 4th series, VIII, p. 235.

41 «fut attaqué, bruslé, et ruiné en partye par les Anglois» *Thesaurus Novus Anecdorum*, vol II. col. 848-853.

42 Guigue, *Les Tard-Venus de Lyonnais*, pp. 50-53.

43 «propter focagia et alia onera per vos et predecessores vestros eisdem indicta et alia que propter inimicos qui fuerunt in partibus habuerunt sustinere in corporibus et in bonis et

then, some companies had already taken Pont-Saint-Esprit and sent reinforcements to those ravaging the Lyonnais. The concentration of companies in the town enabled raids in all directions, in the direction of Montpellier, Toulouse, Narbonne, and Carcassonne.<sup>44</sup>

Pont-Saint-Esprit, north of Avignon, was seized after spies learned that 46.5 kilograms of gold—part of John the Good's ransom<sup>45</sup> from Languedoc—was expected there at the end of December 1360.<sup>46</sup> The companies attacked prematurely, unaware of the shipment's delay.<sup>47</sup> Though they failed to capture the gold, they terrorised the Holy See for months by plundering the surrounding region.<sup>48</sup>

The capture of Pont-Saint-Esprit followed the companies' strategy of advancing along rivers and seizing small bridge towns to control both banks. As one of the four Rhône crossings, Pont-Saint-Esprit gave them command of the main supply routes to the papal residence.<sup>49</sup>

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de die in diem sustinent, sunt adeo oppressi et gravati quod dictas expensas non possent sine magna penuria sustinere.» Supplique au roi des habitants de Condrieu, d'Anse et de Saint-Symphorien-le-Chatel, demandant décharge de l'imposition pour l'entretien des otages. — Vers 1366 - Pièces Justificatives XXIII. Guigue, *Les Tard-Venus*, pp. 266-267.

44 «et non solum illam urbem, sed alias villas et fortalia patriae supradictae usque ad Montempessulanum et Tholosam, Narbonam, Carcassonam et caeteras partes illas.» Géraud, H. (ed.), *Chronique de Guillaume de Nangis et de ses continueurs* Vol II. Paris: L'imprimerie de Crapelet, 1863, p. 316.

45 Géraud, (ed.), *Chronique de Guillaume de Nangis et de ses continueurs*, p. 317.

46 Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries*, p. 134.

47 Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries*, p. 134.

48 «Item, aquel meteys an LX, la nuog dels Innocens, fo pres lo luoc de Sant Esperit sus lo Roze per una companha d'Engleyes et de fals Fran cezes et era dedens mossen Johan Sovanh[1], cavalier, senescal de Belcayre, am certas gens d'armas et, en lo com- batement, lo senescal tombet d'un cadafalc de fusta | ont era et rompet se la cuyssa ; et puoys prezeron Codolet et fero mot de mals ; e adoncs nostres' lo i[m] papa los fés amonestar que layssesson los luocs ; e car non o volian far, el fes sos processs contra els coma obstinatx en lur malicia et[n] donet la crozad" Équipe projet Thalamus, «Les annales occitanes (800-1426) : année 1362», dans Édition critique numérique du manuscrit AA9 des Archives municipales de Montpellier dit Le Petit Thalamus. Université Paul Valéry Montpellier-III, Online

49 Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries*, p. 32.

### *The Papal Response to the Pont-Saint-Esprit Crisis*

Innocent VI's correspondence on the occupation of Pont-Saint-Esprit shows the papal response to the rise of the great companies. The first measure was excommunication, repeatedly expressed in early 1360 letters with the formula:

« Otherwise, we would take care to proceed against them and their followers and accomplices, both spiritually and temporally, just as all these matters are more fully contained in the process drawn up thereafter.»<sup>50</sup>

The excommunication had no effect. In letters to the Duke of Normandy,<sup>51</sup> Emperor Charles IV,<sup>52</sup> Peter the Ceremonious of Aragon, and Queen Eleanor, Innocent VI stated that the mercenaries feared neither God's punishment nor the judgement of the Apostolic See.<sup>53</sup> Innocent VI organised the defence of Avignon, appointing Canon Petrus Sicardi to levy special taxes for strengthening the city walls.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, the Holy Roman Empire, France, Aragon, and Italy issued letters recruiting crusaders.<sup>55</sup> The Crusaders could be redeemed by fighting against mercenaries and giving their lives in battle.<sup>56</sup> From 8 January 1361, those taking up the cross against the excommunicated companies occupying Pont-Saint-Esprit received the same indulgence as participants in the liberation of the Holy Land.<sup>57</sup> Sermons were preached across Europe, giving Cardinal Pierre Bertrand a large crusading force.<sup>58</sup> Aragon alone sent 600 men-at-arms and 1,000 infan-

50 «alioquin contra eos et eorum sequaces et complices spiritualiter et temporaliter procedere curaremus, prout haec omnia in processu exinde confecto plenius continentur.» Epistola VIII, XII, XIV Thesaurus Novus Anecdorum, Col. 848-854.

51 «nec districti iudicis vereri sententiam, nec deferre sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae et sedi apostolicae» Epistola XII. Thesaurus Novus Anecdorum, Col. 851.

52 «nec districti iudicis verendo sententiam, nec sedi apostolicae deferendo...» Epistola XIII. Thesaurus Novus Anecdorum. Col. 853.

53 «Deum offendere, et nostras ac sedis apostolicae incurrisse sententias non verentur» Epistola XXVIII. Thesaurus Novus Anecdorum, Col. 868.

54 «super constructione moeniorum seu murorum clausura civitatis nostrae Avinionensis provisorem & praesidentem duximus deputandum...» Epistola XXIX. Thesaurus Novus Anecdorum, Col. 869.

55 Epistola XII-XXIII Thesaurus Novus Anecdorum, Col. 851-864.

56 Odorico Raynaldi, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, XVI, Cologne, 1691. p. 412.

57 Germain Butaud, «L'Excommunication des Agresseurs des terres de l'église (Avignon, Comtat Venaissin) aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles.» in: DESSI, Rosa, Maria (ed.), *Prêcher la paix et discipliner la société Italie, France, Angleterre (XIIIe-XVe siècles) (Collection d'Études Médiévales de Nice, 5.)* Turnhout, 2005. p. 229.

58 Butaud, L'Excommunication, p. 229.

try.<sup>59</sup> Contingents from Languedoc, Beaucaire, Gévaudan, Velay, and Vivrais also joined or contributed financially.<sup>60</sup> Aymon de Cossonay, bishop of Lausanne, following papal instructions of 17 January 1361, imposed a tax on all clergy and monasteries of his diocese.<sup>61</sup> The Pope appointed the Cardinal Legate of Ostia to lead the campaign,<sup>62</sup> and between January and 13 February 1361 crusaders gathered at Carpentras on the Rhône, led among others by Marshal Arnoul d'Audrehem.<sup>63</sup>

Difficulties soon appeared. The Pope believed the crusaders should serve at their own expense, without papal pay, which affected the campaign.<sup>64</sup> The Cardinal Legate struggled with a constant shortage of funds, and many left the crusade to return home. Others chose a more lucrative worldly solution instead of saving their souls: they defected to the companies.<sup>65</sup> The plague spreading through the Rhône Valley further complicated matters. A peaceful solution was preferred, so the collected funds were used to pay the companies to depart.<sup>66</sup> The legate likely judged his force's limited combat value correctly and avoided open battle. The Pope negotiated individually with the captains, offering payment in return for evacuating Pont-Saint-Esprit. Many English and German mercenaries then went to Italy to fight against Visconti-ruled Milan in the service of the Marquis of Monferrat, including Albert Sterz and Sir John Hawkwood. Richard Musard was hired for a private war in Italy, not by the Marquis of Monferrat but by Amadeus VI.

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59 Émile Molinier, *Étude sur la vie d'Arnoul d'Audrehem, maréchal de France 130-1370*, Paris, 1883. p. 89.

60 Molinier, *Étude*, p. 90.

61 Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern (SKB), SCB Fontes 8. 409, 1084.

62 Fowler, *Medieval mercenaries*, p. 34.

63 Guigue, *Les Tard-Venus* p. 56. FOWLER, Kenneth, *Medieval mercenaries*, p. 35.

64 Fowler, *Medieval mercenaries*, p. 35.

65 «et retenoit toutes manières de gens et de saudoiers qui venoient devers li et qui voloient sauver leurs ames et acquerre les pardons de le croisierie, Pluseur s'en alèrent celle part, chevaliers et escuiers et aultres, qui cudoient avoir grans bienfais dou pape, avoeh les pardons desure dis, mès on ne leur voloit riens donner...Li autre retournoient en leurs pays, et li aultre se mettoient en le mauvaise compagnies qui toutdis accroissoit de jour en jour.» Siméon Luce, (ed.), *Chroniques de J. Froissart 1360-1366*, VI, Paris, 1876. VI, p. 74.

66 Stephan Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento*, Tübingen, 2001. p. 369.

### *Richard Musard, Our Beloved Knight*

Richard Musard next appears as the representative of the companies occupying Pont-Saint-Esprit and threatening Avignon. During the negotiations for the town's surrender, he, John Hawkwood and Walter Leslie received a letter from Pope Innocent VI.<sup>67</sup> Marco Merlo showed how Musard reached Italy and entered the service of Amadeus VI after Pont-Saint-Esprit. A group of English mercenaries—part of Hanneken von Baumgarten's company, which included Hungarian light cavalry—were hired by Amadeus VI to fight his relative Giacomo of Savoy-Achaea.<sup>68</sup> Amadeus VI frequently employed the German condottiere in the 1360s,<sup>69</sup> this explains Musard's participation in the siege of Carignano in 1361.<sup>70</sup> He thus entered Savoyard service before Albert Sterz and John Hawkwood.<sup>71</sup> Musard likely first met Hungarian mercenaries in Italy during the Trecento, and he had a lasting relationship with Hungarians also joined Amadeus VI's crusade.<sup>72</sup>

Why he left his influential position at the head of a great company to pledge loyalty to Amadeus VI is unclear, but mutual sympathy likely played a role, as they remained close throughout their lives.<sup>73</sup> More than ten years later, in 1373, Amadeus VI addressed him as «*A Mos. Ricard Moysard nostre feal et bien ame chivalier.*»<sup>74</sup> After Musard's oath of 17 September 1361, the Green Count entrusted him with important tasks, using his origins and connections with English arrivals. Musard often mediated between Amadeus VI and English mercenaries,

67 Epistola XLVII «Ad Walterum militem, Johannem Scaikaik et Ricardum Mussatum.» *The-saurus Novus Anecdorum*. Vol. 2. Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1712. Col. 882-883.

68 Marco Merlo, «Il castello di Baratonia e le strutture difensive del XIV secolo» in: *Baratonia. Dinastia e castello*, a cura di CHIARLE, G., Borgone di Susa, 2012, p. 66.

69 Robert Biolzi, «*A J'ay grand envie de veoir assallir*» *Guerre, guerriers et finances dans les États de Savoie à la fin du Moyen Âge (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)* Rennes, 2024. p. 242.

70 Gaudenzio Claretta, «Sulla vera patria e sulle principali geste di Riccardo Musard uno dei primi Cavalieri dell'Ordine Savoiano del Collare.» in: *Atti della R. Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, XIX, Torino, 1888, p. 959.

71 Merlo, *Il castello di Baratonia*, p. 66. n. 59.

72 Federico Emanuele Bollati di Saint-Pierre, (ed.), *Illustrazioni della spedizione in Oriente di Amedeo VI. (Il Conte Verde)*, Turin, 1900. p. 151. n. 629, 630, 631.

73 I would also like to thank Florian Chamorel for his invaluable assistance in preparing this study. Florian Chamorel, *Un Destin Méditerranée: Les Princes de la Maison de Savoie en Méditerranée Orientale (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> Siècle) Études d'Histoire médiévale 18*. Paris, Honoré Champion, 2023. p. 220.

74 Ferdinando Gabotto, *L'età del Conte Verde in Piemonte*, pp. 300-301.

including before the failed banquet in Lanzo, when he was tasked with persuading the English to leave the county.<sup>75</sup> Amadeus VI gave him the same mission after the 1368 crusade, when routiers from Lyon and Forez threatened the region,<sup>76</sup> including a company led by his old comrade Bernard de la Sale,<sup>77</sup> with whom he had travelled from Champagne to Pont-Saint-Esprit.<sup>78</sup> The people of Lyon sought Amadeus VI's help after two companies disguised as peasants and craftsmen attempted to seize the port of Thoissey.<sup>79</sup> Musard's English origins and language skills were again used when Amadeus VI sent him to Duke Lionel—son of Edward III—after Lionel's marriage to Violante Visconti,<sup>80</sup> hoping Lionel's presence at the duel site with Filippo of Savoy-Achaea would aid his plans.<sup>81</sup> During the crusade, Amadeus VI also used Armigero Nigro's background, with

75 Ferdinando Gabotto, «Contrabuti alla Storia del Conte Verde negli anni 1361-1362» in: *Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, XXXIV, 1898-199. Torino, 1898, p. 233.

76 «Liberavit die XVI mensis Februarii Johanni Manissonis, qui ducit quendam famulum, quem dictus Richardus Musardi mittebat domino pro notificando nova de dictis societatibus, ubi dominus ipsum miserat, et allocantur dicto nuncio de mandato dicti domini Humberti vin den. parvi.» ADCO, B 8554, Montluel, 1368-1369, peau 11, Guigue, *Les Tard-Venus de Lyonnais*, p. 172.

77 See details about Bernard de la Sale. Armand Jamme, «Routiers et distinction sociale: Bernard de la Sale, l'Angleterre et le pape» Guilhelm Pépin, Françoise Lainé et Frédéric Boutillet (eds.) in: *Routiers et mercenaires pendant la guerre de Cent ans. Hommage à Jonathan Sumption. Actes du colloque de Berbiguières (13-14 septembre 2013)*, Bordeaux, Ausonius, 2016. p. 63.

78 Luce, (ed.), *Chroniques de J. Froissart* p. 62.

79 «Liberavit die xvii mensis Februarii dicto Belcol, pro portando quandam litteram dicto domino nostro comiti apud Acquianum, pro notificando dicto domino nostro comiti quod duo de societatibus indutis pannis de lucratoribus seu agricolis crediderunt capere portum de Toissia, et plures alia nova sibi notificavit.» ADCO B. 8554. Guigue, *Les Tard-Venus*, p. 171.

80 Cox, *The Green Count*, p. 252.

81 During the wedding, the Green Count provoked the young Filippo of Savoy-Achaea so much that he lost his cool and challenged him to a duel. Amadeus VI apparently agreed, but arranged for Galeazzo Visconti to forbid Filippo from participating in the duel. To emphasize the prohibition, Edward III's son appeared at the scene of the duel. After this, it is no wonder that Filippo did not dare to appear at the agreed time. Shortly afterwards, on the basis of partly fabricated and partly real accusations, Amadeus VI condemned and then executed Filippo, thus uniting Piedmont and Savoy under his own rule. See: DATTA, Pietro Luigi (ed), *Storia dei principi di Savoia del ramo d'Acaia : signori del Piemonte dal 1294 al 1418. Documenti*, II, Torino, 1832. Documenti N. XI. Supplica di Margarita principessa d'Acaia al conte di Savoia contro Filippo d'Acaia. pp. 244-248. Cox, *The Green Count*, p. 257.

Musard arranging payments for the «poor» Englishmen hired for the campaign.<sup>82</sup>

Before the crusade, Musard served not only as interpreter but also took part in Amadeus VI's campaigns. He proved an exceptional duelist and highly skilled fighter in tournaments, battles, and sieges.<sup>83</sup> By 1362 he was the Green Count's bodyguard and later his standard-bearer during the crusade, raising the Green Count's flag on the tower of Sozopol Castle.<sup>84</sup>

Although Avignon temporarily rid itself of the Tard-Venus, the situation in Italy worsened with the arrival of the English and thousands of Hungarian mercenaries, who appeared after Innocent VI sought help from King Louis I of Hungary.<sup>85</sup> Amadeus VI experienced this at Lanzo, where he awaited his army to confront Robin du Pin's company<sup>86</sup> while hosting a party.<sup>87</sup> Feeling secure in Lanzo, which lacked defensive walls except around the castle,<sup>88</sup> he and his followers were surprised by the companies.<sup>89</sup> Many nobles sought refuge in fortified houses, which the companies preferred to negotiate over due to ransom potential. Antoine, lord of Beaujeau, secured release by exchanging a palfrey and a warhorse worth 120 florins.<sup>90</sup> Amadeus VI was less fortunate: the castle lacked food and water, forcing surrender, and he may have paid a ransom of 180,000 florins.<sup>91</sup> His escort later

82 «Libravit ibidem, dicte die, de mandato Domini, Guillelmo Finarii, englico, quos Dominus sibi donavit manu domini Richardi Musardi XX parperos auri, dicti Ponderis.» Federico Emanuele Bollati di Saint-Pierre, (ed.), *Illustrazioni* p.134. n. 559, Florian Chamorel, «*Ad partes infidelium*»: *la croisade d'Amedée VI de Savoie, juin 1366 - juillet 1367*, Lausanne, 2016. p. 99. n. 308.

83 Bollati (ed.), Jean Servion, *Geste et croniques* p. 137.

84 Chamorel, *Un Destin Méditerranée*, p. 83. n. 78.

85 Tamás Ölbei, «Hungarian mercenaries in the service of the Signoria Fiorentina (1360-1365)» in: Attila Bárány (ed.), *Mercenaries and Crusaders, HUN-REN-DE Középkori Magyarország és Közép-Európa Hadtörténete Kutatócsoport*, Debrecen, 2024. pp. 209-238.

86 <sup>111</sup> Cox, *The Green Count*, p. 158.

87 Bollati (ed.), Jean Servion, *Geste et croniques* p. 119.

88 ADCO B. 1412. fol. 40r

89 «la compagnia bianca, la quale era vicina a quelli paesi, si mosse una notte facendo molto lungo e disordinato cammino, e soprese il conte e' baroni» MOUTIER, Ignazio (ed.), *Cronica di Matteo Villani*, V, Firenze, 1826. Libro Decimo, Cap. LXXXIV.

90 Guigue, *Les Tard-Venus*, Pièces justificatives XLII.

91 This amount appears in Villani's chronicle, but it is important to note that there is no archival evidence of such a large sum being paid.

held him responsible for their own ransom.<sup>92</sup> Musard likely escaped, as sources do not mention him. By 1362 he had amassed wealth, evidenced by a loan of 100 Florentine florins to Georgius Palestorti on 10 February 1362.<sup>93</sup>

Amadeus VI formally recognised Musard's service, making him the only foreign member of the Order of the Collar.<sup>94</sup> Before the crusade, Amadeus VI entrusted him with the castle of Aiguebelle (1364–1365).<sup>95</sup> Although details of his service before the crusade are scarce, Amadeus VI—and probably Musard—faced mercenary problems on the French side of the Alps. In 1364 Seguin de Badefol occupied Anse, and chevauchées struck both Savoyard and French territory.<sup>96</sup> The severity of the great companies' threat is shown by Pope Urban V's attempt in early 1364 to form a league against them, hoping for Amadeus VI's participation.<sup>97</sup>

### *From «Pestifera Societas» to Soldiers of God*

Innocent VI's measures against mercenaries failed: excommunication, defensive alliances and the crusade at Pont-Saint-Esprit proved ineffective. Urban V therefore adopted a third option in 1363: using mercenaries' military experience against the infidels. From the moment the cross was taken up in Avignon Cathedral on 31 March 1363,<sup>98</sup> their participation was treated as certain. On 25 May 1363, Avignon wrote to captains in France and neighbouring regions urging them to join.<sup>99</sup> Urban V's letter outlined the plan: crusaders led by John the Good and

92 Archivio di Stato di Torino (AST), Gonans prt. 23 fol. 42v

93 Claretta, *Sulla vera patria*, p. 960.

94 Dino Muratore, «Les origines de l'ordre du collier de Savoie dit de l'Annonciade» in: *Archives héraldiques suisses = Schweizerisches Archiv für Heraldik = Archivio araldico Svizzero*, XXIV, 1910 I p. 14.

95 Fréd.-Th. Dubois, «Les chevaliers de l'Annonciade du Pays de Vaud» in: *Archives héraldiques suisses = Schweizerisches Archiv für Heraldik = Archivio araldico Svizzero* XXV, 1911. 2. p. 86.

96 Tamás Ölbei, «The Importance of River Valleys in the Overall Strategy of the Mercenary Companies 1357-1366», *British Journal for Military History*, 2022, VIII, n° 3, pp. 28-32.

97 Carlo Ciucciiovino, *La Cronaca del Trecento Italiano*, vol. III, 1351-1375, Rome, 2019. p. 551.

98 Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571). The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1976. p. 245.

99 Norman Housley «The mercenary companies, the papacy, and the crusades 1356-1378,»

Peter I would be joined by mercenary companies.<sup>100</sup> The Pope named «*Turks and Saracens*»<sup>101</sup> as targets but focused on the eastern Mediterranean, analysing the plight of Christians in the Armenian kingdom.<sup>102</sup> He summarised earlier successes and Peter I's journey, showing that the *passagium generale* followed Peter's strategic aims.<sup>103</sup> Captains were asked to prepare for departure on 13 March 1365 and inform Brother Nicholas Brohom of the Order of St Augustine. Full absolution was offered.<sup>104</sup> Another letter confirmed that mercenaries would serve under the French and Cypriot kings,<sup>105</sup> with an army of 200 French knights, 2,000 other knights and 6,000 infantry.<sup>106</sup> Norman Housley noted that without the companies the crusade would fail, since nobles could not leave their lands undefended.<sup>107</sup> In August 1363, John the Good summoned Juan Fernández de Heredia, the Hospitaller Castellan of Amposta, to his court in Paris for advice on the upcoming Crusade.<sup>108</sup> However, Urban V refused this journey, insisting Heredia remain to fight companies amid rumours of Catalan and Spanish arrivals.<sup>109</sup>

The Pope's initiative was poorly received in France, but the first positive response came in April 1364 from Italy, from Albert Sterz's company. Sterz had entered northern Italy in 1361 and fought for Pisa in 1363.<sup>110</sup> Pisa replaced him with John Hawkwood, whom the company soon elected captain. In 1365, Sterz founded the Company of the Star with Hanneken von Baumgarten.<sup>111</sup> But in April

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in: Norman Housley, *Crusading and Warfare in the Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2001, p. 272.

100 Lecacheux, Paul, Mollat, Guillaume (eds.), *Lettres secrètes et curiales du pape Urbain V (1362-1370) se rapportant a la France. Extraites des registres d'Avignon et du Vatican*, Paris, 1965. (LSCU) pp. 63-64. n. 487.

101 LSCU pp. 63-64. n. 487.

102 LSCU pp. 63-64. n. 487.

103 LSCU pp. 63-64. n. 487.

104 «dicto penitenciaro absolventi illos ex vobis, qui humiliter a suis reatibus absolvi petierint et ab eo voluerint signum crucis recipere ac sponte transfretare, certam dedimus potestatem» LSCU pp. 63-64. n. 487.

105 LSCU p. 65. n. 488.

106 LSCU p. 65. n. 488.

107 Housley, *The mercenary companies*, p. 272.

108 Housley, *The mercenary companies*, p. 272.

109 LSCU p. 80. n. 596.

110 Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner*, p. 371.

111 Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner*, p. 371.

1364, during the Pisa–Florence war, the English mercenaries of the White Company held direct talks with Urban V.<sup>112</sup> Albert Sterz expressed an interest in participating in the crusade.<sup>113</sup> On 18 April 1364, Robert Wodhavos<sup>114</sup> informed the Pope that the company was ready to join the crusade for the salvation of their souls.<sup>115</sup> From his letter to Gil de Albornoz, it seems that the Pope welcomed the news of the White Company's envoy after receiving the bad news from France. After all, it was in April 1364 that John the Good died, making the idea of a crusade increasingly unlikely due to a lack of interest from the companies. He informed Gil de Albornoz that he would seek out other companies in Tuscany:

«We, therefore, noting that other companies, which are in those regions, will likely be induced by this to act similarly or at least will be so weakened that effective resistance can be offered to them, and desiring with full wishes that the safety and liberation of the Italy Itself and the aforementioned company through a general passage ...»<sup>116</sup>

Sterz had a close relationship with Urban V, with envoys and letters exchanged since at least summer 1363. On 5 September 1363, the Pope wrote:

«And he [Gil de Albornoz] knows that neither you nor the said companies have offended the same Church, but rather you are devoted to it and intend to be faithful and valiant defenders.»<sup>117</sup>

Within a month of Wodhavos's visit, concrete plans emerged. With English nobles such as William de la Pole and Thomas Ufford, the Pope sought broad participation of the companies.<sup>118</sup> A letter to Ufford of 17 April 1364 stated:

112 Caferro, William, *John Hawkwood, An English Mercenary in Fourteenth-Century Italy*, Baltimore, 2006. p. 108.

113 Caferro, William, *John Hawkwood*, p. 108.

114 «Dilectus filius nobilis vir Robertus Wodhavos» LSCU p. 133. n. 886.

115 LSCU p. 133. n. 887.

116 «Nos igitur, attendentes quod alie societates, que sunt in partibus illis, ad simile agendum per hoc verisimiliter inducentur vel saltem adeo debilitabuntur quod eis fieri poterit resistentia oportuna, dictamque salutem ac liberationem ejusdem Italie et prefate societatis magnum auxilium adici generali passagio plenis desideris cupientes» LSCU p. 133. n. 886.

117 «et novit tu quod et dicta societas eandem non offendistis ecclesiam sed potius estis eius devoti ac esse intenditis fideles et strenui defensores» 5. september 1363. Letter to Albert Sterz, Capitaneo societatis Anglicorum. Albert Sautier, *Papst Urban V und die Söldnerkompagnien in Italien in den Jahren 1362–1367*, Zürich, 1911. Urkunlicher Anhang. pp. 104-105, n. 2.

118 Caferro, William, *John Hawkwood*, p. 117.

«Recently your nobility explained to us that you, inflamed with zeal for devotion, intend to cross the sea for the recovery of the Holy Land and otherwise for the attack upon the infidels of the eastern regions, and that you hope to persuade to this purpose the company of Englishmen residing in the parts of Italy, and in this matter you propose to do what lies within your power.»<sup>119</sup>

William de la Pole received the cross in Avignon. On 9 May 1364, Urban informed Queen Joanna I that he intended to bring many English mercenaries from Tuscany, planning to pass through Otranto if she granted permission and provisions.<sup>120</sup> The English crusaders needed to cross the Mediterranean, and so a request was made to Doge Lorenzo Celsi on 15 May 1364 to provide galleys for the mercenaries recruited in Tuscany for the crusade.<sup>121</sup> Four days after the visit of Robert Wodhавos, on 18 April,<sup>122</sup> Urban issued a bull thanking the White Company:

«Indeed, no one seems to fulfill these things more perfectly than he who, for the love of God, having renounced earthly pleasures, forsakes father, mother, sister, children, friends, and homeland, and taking up the cross of weariness, danger, and toil, fearlessly follows Christ, serving as a soldier in his orthodox faith, dedicating his own resources, and shedding blood for Him who, not fearing the shedding of His own blood, redeemed him.»<sup>123</sup>

Penances were remitted, full indulgence granted, participants protected from extraordinary levies, and creditors required to refund sums previously forced

119 «Nuper vestra nobilitas nobis exposuit quod vos, zelo devotionis accensi, pro recuperatione terre Sancte et alias ad impugnationem infidelium orientalium partium intenditis transfretare ac speratis ad hoc inducere comitivam Anglicorum, in partibus Italie consistentem.» LSCU pp. 134-135. n. 890.

120 Regesta 246: 1363-1364', in: *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating To Great Britain and Ireland: Volume 4, 1362-1404*, ed. W H BLISS and J A TWEMLOW (London, 1902) 5-13. British History Online

121 Regesta 246: 1363-1364', in: *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating To Great Britain and Ireland: Volume 4, 1362-1404*, ed. W H BLISS and J A TWEMLOW (London, 1902) 5-13. British History Online

122 Sautier, *Papst Urban V und die Söldnerkompagnien*, p. 42.

123 «Hec profecto nemo perfectius videtur implere quam qui pro Dei amore, terrenis delectationibus abdicatis, patrem, at matrem, sororem et filios ac amicos et patriam derelinquens, crucemque tedii periculi et laboris assumens, Christum intrepide sequitur, in ejus sueque orthodoxe fidei servicio militando, proprias facultates impendere et cruorem effundere pro illo qui eum redemit sui sparsione sanguinis non formidans.» LSCU pp. 134-135. n. 891.

from mercenaries.<sup>124</sup> Participants in the Crusade are protected from extraordinary collections or levies from the time they depart until they return or die. They are placed under the protection of the Church and its appointed leaders. Anyone who transgresses against them will face ecclesiastical censure.<sup>125</sup> On 20 April, another letter allowed nobles of the White Company to carry a portable altar and choose their confessor.<sup>126</sup>

On 25 June 1364, Urban informed Bernabò Visconti that Hanneken von Baumgarten's company also wished to join, describing them as

«That same Anechinus and his associates, who fight against God and justice and against the salvation and honor of their own souls, and who wage war for the destruction of almost all Italy, assail the Roman Church just as they did before, and would wickedly wish to carry out the treachery of hostility.»<sup>127</sup>

Baumgarten's ties to Sterz likely influenced his decision. Nine months remained until the planned departure in March 1365, but the deaths of John the Good and Cardinal Talleyrand delayed the crusade,<sup>128</sup> which eventually split into four separate expeditions. Charles IV's visit to Avignon marked a new phase: Urban sought to send companies from eastern France and Italy simultaneously. By then, Amadeus VI and Peter I had separated their plans into two crusades. On 9 June 1365,<sup>129</sup> Urban wrote to Florence to arrange for Italian mercenaries

124 LSCU pp. 134-135. n. 891.

125 LSCU pp. 134-135. n. 891.

126 Sautier, *Papst Urban V und die Söldnerkompagnien*, p. 43.

127 «idem Anechinus et socii qui contra Deum et iustitiam ac suarum animarum salutem et honorem ad destructionem totius fere Italie militant grassantur contra Romanam Ecclesiam sicut aliud fecerunt, vellent inique hostilitatis perfidiam exercere...» Sautier, *Papst Urban V und die Söldnerkompagnien*, pp. 113-114. n. 9.

128 Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries*, p. 120.

129 «Urbanus episcopus servus servorum dei dilectis filiis prioribus artium ac vexillifero iusticie necnon regimini ac communi civitatis Florentinensis salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Sicut iam venit in publicam notionem carissimus in Christo filius Carolus Romanorum imperator semper augustus et Boemie rex, tanquam princeps Christianissimus, nuper ad apostolicam sedem accedens nobis sui sancti propositi quod habet ad pacem et tranquillitatem totius populi Christiani et ad depressionem infidelium, exaltationemque Catholice fidei archana detexit nosque cum ipso super hiis, votis ardentibus concurrentes et pluries conferentes, communi voluntate decrevimus, ut ad pravaram comitivarum devastantium nonnullas partes ecclesie et imperii Romani totalem exterminationem prius efficaciter intendatur, ita quod voluntarie pergant vel cogantur invite ad partes Turcharum vel

to march against the Turks and requested Florence's legates attend a meeting in Bologna to optimise overseas departure,<sup>130</sup> linking Italian companies with Arnaud de Cervole's crusade.<sup>131</sup>

The mercenaries were to cross the Rhine at Strasbourg and continue to Hungary; if not, Arnaud de Cervole's crusaders would march south to meet Amadeus VI in Venice and sail for the Balkans. The Pope therefore asked Florence to send envoys to the White Company under John Hawkwood.<sup>132</sup> Meanwhile, Sterz had left the company, casting doubt on their participation. In his book on John Hawkwood, William Caferro provides a detailed account of the envoys. One of them was Doffo di Bardi, the son of the founder of the renowned Bardi banking house. He had resided in London for an extended period, had a personal acquaintance with Edward III, and was proficient in English.<sup>133</sup> Their task was to negotiate the lowest possible sum to persuade Hawkwood.<sup>134</sup> Hawkwood considered but declined participation.<sup>135</sup> Others joined: Walter Leslie, Richard Musard's former comrade, took the cross and joined Peter I in Alexandria with his brother, where Norman likely died.<sup>136</sup>

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aliorum infidelium poficisci, et ad hoc nos et prefatus imperator mutuum fecimus unionem. Igitur cum tantum tamque pium et necessarium negocium civitatem vestram Florentinensem non parum contingat tam nos quam idem imperator scribimus dilecto filio Andrayno tt. sancti Marcelli presbytero cardinali apostolice sedis legato, quod nos et alios nobiles communia civitatum ac magnates et gubernatores terrarum partium Italie, ex parte utriusque nostrum requirat, ad certum super hoc habendum in civitate Bononiensi colloquium, in quo per rpm legatum, nomine ecclesie, ac per nuncios vestros, et aliorum requirendorum ad hoc mandatum habentes, fiat colligatio contra societates easdem, idemque [im]perator in hoc negotio, presertim si dicte comitive ire voluerint extra mare, tale obtulit auxilium, quod congruum extimamus. Quare sinceritatem vestram requirimus et roga[mus] attente quatinus cum per dictum legatum ad hoc fueritis requisiti, vestros nuntios, cum sufficienti mandato, ad huiusmodi colloquium, pro dicta facienda colligatione transmittere [facia]tis. Datum Avinioni V Idus Junii pontificatus nostri anno tertio» Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Diplomatico, Riformagioni atti pubblici, 1365 Giugno 9.

130 ASF Diplomatico, Riformagioni atti pubblici, 9 Giugno 1365

131 The details of Arnaud de Cervole's crusade preparations are described in the chapter Crusade of the Great Companies towards Hungary.

132 Caferro, William, *John Hawkwood*, p. 118.

133 Caferro, William, *John Hawkwood*, p. 118.

134 ASF, Missive I Cancellaria, 13. f. 50v

135 Caferro, William, *John Hawkwood*, p. 118.

136 Caferro, William, *John Hawkwood*, p. 119.

*One equals four: the origin of the four crusades*

Peter I, King of Cyprus, was the catalyst for the whole process from the start, and who, travelling through the courts of Europe from England to Poland, championed the initiative of the crusades. Two letters reveal his attitude: one to Florence, invoking the fall of Jerusalem under Henry II and expressing «*his desire and fervent will*»<sup>137</sup> to recover the holy city,<sup>138</sup> another to Niccolò Acciaiuoli (15 September 1362), thanking him and promising to use the bank-financed ships against the infidels.<sup>139</sup> Peter needed allies, and found them in John II of France and the newly elected Urban V. On 29 March 1363, Good Friday, Urban proclaimed the *passagium generale* in Avignon and appointed John II «*rector and captain-general*».<sup>140</sup> Peter then travelled through Europe seeking support for the planned departure on 1 March 1365.<sup>141</sup> On 31 March 1363, Urban wrote to the archbishops of Zara, Spalato, Ragusa, Esztergom and Kalocsa to assist Peter against the Turks and the Holy Land, granting pardon to participants.<sup>142</sup> On 15 April 1363, he sent Master Simon of the Dominican Order to Buda to inform Louis of Hungary of the Church's situation and discuss the *passagium ultramarinum*.<sup>143</sup>

When a crusade was announced in the spring of 1363, the idea at first seemed to fit into the traditional Avignon line of thought, at least as far as the organisation of French-led crusades was concerned. Its direct antecedents go back to the initiative of Philip VI to retake Jerusalem, which direct consequence was the preaching in France ordered by Pope John XXII. However, enthusiasm quickly dried up due to lack of adequate financial backing.<sup>144</sup> Urban V adapted the goal to Realpolitik,

137 «ad desiderii et ferventis voluntatis» Le Roi I engage la seigneurie de Florence à seconder ses armements pour le recouvrement du saint Sépulcre. MAS LATTRIE, *Histoire de L'Ile de Chypre sous le Règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*. Paris, 1852. pp. 236-237

138 Peter Edbury and Chris Schabel, «The Papacy and King Peter I of Cyprus» *Crusading, Society, and Politics in the Eastern Mediterranean in the age of King Peter of Cyprus*. (ed.) Alexander D. Beihammer, NICOLAOU-KONNARI Turnhout, Angel 2022. p. 189.

139 Edbury and Schabel, *The Papacy and King Peter I of Cyprus*, p. 189.

140 Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*. *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, vol. I, Philadelphia, 1976. p. 245.

141 Nicolae Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières, 1327-1405 et la croisade au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1896. p. 167.

142 Piti, Ferenc (ed.), *Anjou-kori oklevéltár 1363*. (AO63), XLVII, Budapest-Szeged, 2017. 103. n. 152.

143 AO63. p. 115. n. 173.

144 Alexander D. Beihammer, «The sack of Alexandria.» *Crusading, Society, and Politics in*

shifting the target from Jerusalem to the eastern Mediterranean. To send Italian companies, peace with Milan was essential. In a letter to Gil de Albornoz on 1 May 1363, Urban reported that Bernabò Visconti was willing to make peace; the Pope agreed to suspend excommunication.<sup>145</sup> On the same day he noted that John the Good and Peter I were sending envoys to Milan to persuade reconciliation, emphasising the need to surrender castles around Bologna, especially the «*castrum Lugi*».<sup>146</sup> Pierre Thomas eventually negotiated peace, announced on 20 January 1364. Bernabò received 500,000 florins for vacating the Bologna area, paid in annual instalments of 62,500 florins over eight years, removing a major obstacle to the crusade.<sup>147</sup>

In a letter of 25 May 1363 to the Hungarian king, Urban wrote:

«the other day King Peter of Cyprus, whose country is near these infidels, came to the western territories and finally to the Apostolic See, and showed the Pope, the cardinals, the Christian princes and nobles how to destroy the power of the Saracens and Turks and to reconquer the Holy Land.»<sup>148</sup>

Since the Pope

«is informed that Louis [ of Hungary] has long desired such a task, he asks him to join it with his strength as the most Christian and powerful prince, setting a glorious example to other Christian princes and nobles, and the Pope will assist him in undertaking and carrying it out.»<sup>149</sup>.

The Pope asks From the Hungarian king «to give his support to Peter, his nuncios and the people of his own country who wish to go with Peter.»<sup>150</sup>

This means that I Peter and Louis of Hungary exchanged letters a year after the Crusade was proclaimed. The Pope wrote another letter to Louis in December, again asking Louis to help the campaign as much as he could. In the letter, Urban V reports that Peter «will soon be in Venice with a multitude of nobles», and therefore the Holy See asks the king to support Peter «in the matter of the

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*the Eastern Mediterranean in the age of King Peter of Cyprus*. Alexander D. Beihammer, Angel Nicolaou-Konnari, (eds.), Turnhout, 2022. p. 86.

145 LSCU pp. 53-53. n. 386.

146 LSCU p. 53. n. 387.

147 Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, p. 245.

148 AO63. p. 146. n. 240.

149 AO63. p. 146. n. 240.

150 AO63. p. 146. n. 240.

galleys or other things». <sup>151</sup> This letter is also reported by Odorico Raynaldi, who adds, however, that the Pope has not received any reply to the letter from Louis of Hungary. <sup>152</sup> Kenneth Setton highlighted two letters showing Urban's distrust of Peter's participation. <sup>153</sup> During Peter's European journey, a letter sent by Urban V on 28 November 1363 reveals that the Pope had been informed that the Turks were planning to attack Cyprus and Antalya, which Peter had conquered in August 1361: «and pray you that not delay your return any longer and may God help make it fruitful return» <sup>154</sup> Cyprus indeed suffered Turkish raids in spring 1363 amid plague, followed by Cypriot retaliations on the Anatolian coast. <sup>155</sup> Urban believed Peter would return in spring 1364. Peter's letter to the Florentines set his departure for 1 March 1364, one year before John II's crusade. <sup>156</sup> Thus by late 1363 the original crusade had already split in two, with Peter planning an independent campaign. As Peter Edbury and Chris Schabel note, Peter's likely targets were Smyrna or Antalya to halt Turkish expansion; Palestine or Egypt were less plausible, as they posed no direct threat at the time. <sup>157</sup>

### *Amadeus VI and the prelude to the Savoyard Crusade*

This, of course, also influenced the purpose of the Amadeus VI's crusade. The emergence of Amadeus VI in the preparatory phase of the crusades, however, is closely linked to a new phenomenon, the involvement of the great companies in the crusades. After consolidating power and crushing rebellions by 1362, his attention turned to crusading, <sup>158</sup> initially through Urban V's efforts to build an alliance against the companies. <sup>159</sup> When these anti-mercenary campaigns in France

<sup>151</sup> AO63. p. 352. n. 616. THEINER, Augustin (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta Historica Hungaricam Sacram illustrantia, 1352-1526*, vol. II, Rome, 1860. p. 58. n. CV.

<sup>152</sup> Raynaldi, Odorico, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, p. 431.

<sup>153</sup> Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, p. 246.

<sup>154</sup> Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, p. 246. n. 108.

<sup>155</sup> Angel Nicolau-Konnari, «The life and reign of Peter I of Lusignan (1329-69, crowned 1359). Chronology. Crusading» *Crusading, Society, and Politics in the Eastern Mediterranean in the age of King Peter of Cyprus*. Alexander D. Beihammer, Angel Nicolau-Konnari, (eds.), Turnhout, 2022. p. 19.

<sup>156</sup> Edbury and Schabel, *The Papacy and King Peter I of Cyprus*, p. 193.

<sup>157</sup> Edbury and Schabel, *The Papacy and King Peter I of Cyprus*, p. 193.

<sup>158</sup> Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 76.

<sup>159</sup> Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 77.

and Italy failed, papal policy shifted: excommunicated mercenaries became soldiers of Christ, to be used in a crusade led by the kings of France and Cyprus.<sup>160</sup> Amadeus VI probably received the cross in January 1364 in Avignon.<sup>161</sup> These troops were to take part in a crusade led by the kings of France and Cyprus.<sup>162</sup> The initial plan envisaged a joint expedition of John II of France, Peter I of Lusignan and the Count of Savoy towards the Holy Land.<sup>163</sup> On this occasion, Amadeus VI founded the Order of the Collar.<sup>164</sup> On 1 April 1364 Urban sent ten letters to him about the crusade, eight of which refer to Peter. The letters reveal that Amadeus was originally supposed to have fought with the crusaders led by John the Good.<sup>165</sup> Amadeus VI was in Avignon on 1 January 1364 at a meeting about a planned crusade against the mercenaries, where he agreed with the Pope to take up the cross shortly before Peter's planned departure.<sup>166</sup> In a letter of 2 March 1364 to Louis of Hungary, Urban reported:

«The king of Cyprus will visit Louis, to whom he will give a detailed account of this and other matters, but the archbishop and the chancellor will also inform Louis of all this in advance, so that the armies of this expedition may be able to find food on his land and waters in exchange for money.»<sup>167</sup>

On 30 June 1364 Urban urged Amadeus VI to fulfil his commitments.<sup>168</sup> However, a rebellion broke out in Venetian Crete in early August 1363, and until Venice suppressed it, no major crusade was possible, as all available galleys were needed for Crete. Venice wrote to Louis I, Genoa and Joanna of Naples to break off relations with the rebels. On 11 October 1363 Doge Lorenzo Celsi informed Peter of Lusignan that a strong Venetian fleet was blockading Crete<sup>169</sup>, asked him

160 Edbury and Schabel, *The Papacy and King Peter I of Cyprus*, p. 192.

161 Bruno Galland, «Les papes d'Avignon et la Maison de Savoie (1309-1409)» *École française de Rome*, 1998, 247 1. p.55.

162 Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 77.

163 Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 77.

164 Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 77.

165 Edbury and Schabel, *The Papacy and King Peter I of Cyprus*, p. 194.

166 Chamorel, «*Ad partes infidelium*» p. 19.

167 Anjou-kori Oklevéltár (AO64), PITI Ferenc (ed.), Budapest-Szeged, 2018. vol. XLVIII. 1364. p. 89. n. 148.

168 LSCU p. 164. n. 1058.

169 COUREAS, Nicholas, *King Peter of Cyprus and the Rebellion of 1363 on Crete*. in: *Praktika tou tritou diethnous Kyprilogikou Synedriou* (Nicosia 16-20 april 1996), Acts of the Third International Congress of Cypriot Studies, vol. 2, ed. Athanasios Papageorgiou Nic-

to forbid his subjects to aid the rebels, and warned that the revolt would delay the crusade.<sup>170</sup> Urban V threw himself into resolving the rebellion, seeing it as a direct threat to the expedition.<sup>171</sup> Amadeus VI was in contact with Philippe de Mézières from January 1364 and thus kept informed of preparations.<sup>172</sup> Philippe wrote from Cremona to Venice in January 1364, telling the Doge that he and the Green Count were ready to sail in March 1364 as agreed. The Doge replied to Peter and Louis that, since he needed ships to quell the revolt, he could transport crusaders only if they first stopped in Crete to help.<sup>173</sup> When Philippe reached Venice in early February, he found that the Venetians had made a deal with Luchino dal Verme, and a joint Cypriot-Savoyard crusade was off the table.<sup>174</sup> Although Amadeus VI showed willingness to help suppress the revolt, Philippe failed to persuade the Doge and negotiations stalled.<sup>175</sup> Luchino dal Verme's army, including Hungarian mercenaries, only sailed from Venice on 7 April 1364 and reached Crete on 7 May.<sup>176</sup> Meanwhile, in April 1364 the great companies appeared on Savoy's western frontier, forcing Amadeus VI to focus on defence and delaying crusade preparations.<sup>177</sup> The Cretan revolt delayed both Peter's and Amadeus's crusades by several months. Peter resumed his European journey; Amadeus VI sought new targets for an independent crusade. From autumn 1364 at the earliest, the Balkans and Asia Minor came into view.<sup>178</sup> A chronicle from 1418, the *Chronique de Cabaret*, explains his choice of the Balkans, presenting a message from "King Andrew" of Hungary to the Green Count:

«Sire, King Andrew of Hungary informs you that the Emperor Alexius of Constantinople, your relative, has lost a large part of his empire to the Turks. When seeking help from the kings of Hungary, France, and you, his relative, he was captured on the way by his vassal, the Emperor of Bulgaria, who now holds him prisoner. Therefore, if you, being his relative, wish

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osia, 2001. p. 520.

170 Coureas, Nicholas, *King Peter of Cyprus*, p. 520.

171 Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 233.

172 Cox, *The Green Count*, p. 204.

173 Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 234.

174 Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 235.

175 Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 235.

176 Marco Tabarini, *Francesco Petrarca e Luchino dal Verme condottiero dei veneziani nella guerra di Candia*, Rome, Voghera, 1892. VII.

177 Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 238.

178 Cox, *The Green Count*, p. 207.

to aid him and travel to Greece by sea, the King of Hungary will go by land accompanied by sixty thousand warriors. And if it pleases God that you both join forces, you will free the Emperor of Greece from prison and drive the Turks back to Turkey.»<sup>179</sup>

Hungarian influence over parts of Serbia, Bosnia and Bulgaria brought Louis I into closer contact with the Ottomans;<sup>180</sup> recognising the danger, he signalled his intention to join the forthcoming crusades. The Byzantine emperor visited Buda, promising to accept papal directives over the ecclesiastical province in return for help.<sup>181</sup> Urban V nonetheless regarded him as unreliable and asked Louis not to support Byzantium.<sup>182</sup> Another Savoyard chronicle confirms the Hungarian–Savoyard link, reporting envoys between the Green Count and Louis: «Thus, he sent a knight to the Count of Savoy, informing him that his relative, the Emperor Alexius of Constantinople, was captured and had lost a large part of Greece.»<sup>183</sup> The chronicle suggests several exchanges, since as early as September 1365 a Hungarian envoy reached Amadeus VI,<sup>184</sup> according to Nicolae Iorga, the envoy received a gift.<sup>185</sup> Amadeus VI finally resolved to act when he learned that the Byzantine emperor had been refused passage through the territories of Bulgarian King Shishman III.<sup>186</sup> The embassy mentioned by Servion may have taken place

179 «Sire, le roy Andrieu d’Ongrie vous notiffie comme l’empereur Alexe de Constantinople vestre parent a perdu une grande partie de son empire par les Turs et en venant demander secours au roy d’Ongrie, de France et à vous son parent, a esté prins en la voye par son vassal l’empereur de Bugarie, qui le destient prisonnier ; pourquoy se vous, qu’estes son parent, le voulés secourir et aller en la Grece par la mer, le roy d’Ongrie yra par terre en compaigniez de sexante mille combatans ; et se a Dieu plait que vous deux vous joynes ensamble, vous osterés l’empereur de Grece de prison et chacerés les Turs en Turquie» CHAUBET, Daniel (ed.), *La Chronique de Savoye de Cabaret. Texte intégral*, Chambéry, 2006. p. 196. mentioned by Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 78.

180 Gábor Ágoston, *Az Oszmán hódítás és Európa*, Budapest, 2022. Hampshire, 2001. p. 34.

181 Ágoston, *Az Oszmán hódítás és Európa*, p. 35.

182 Ágoston, *Az Oszmán hódítás és Európa*, p. 35.

183 «sy manda vng chiuallier au conte de Sauoye, par le quel il lymanda & escriuyst comme son parant lempereur Alexius de Constantinopoly estoit prins & quil lauoit perdu une grant partye de la Grece» Bollati (ed.), Jean Servion, *Geste et croniques* p. 125.

184 Norman Housley, « King Louis the Great of Hungary and the crusades 1342-1382 » in: Norman Housley, *Crusading and Warfare in the Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2001, p. 202.

185 «messengerio regis d’Ongrie» Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 332. n. 3.

186 Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 335.

in May 1366.<sup>187</sup> This is crucial, because during both exchanges—between September 1365 and May 1366,<sup>188</sup> when preparations were advanced, and in spring 1366, when Amadeus VI was travelling through Italy to Venice—he proceeded knowing he would be followed by crusaders under Arnaud de Cervole and would lead a mercenary army of at least ten thousand into the Balkans. Only in June 1366, after hearing of Arnaud's death, did he recruit mercenaries before sailing from Venice.<sup>189</sup>

Amadeus VI had ample reason to expect support: in spring 1366 Arnaud de Cervole worked vigorously to ensure that troops who had returned to the County and Duchy of Burgundy in late summer 1365 would continue south towards Avignon and join the Savoy contingent. Amadeus VI prepared Savoy for their passage with a series of orders. Sources reveal intense correspondence between the Archpriest, Dijon and the savoyard authorities, in which the former urged increasingly hesitant companies to undertake the journey and tried to persuade the most reluctant groups in the duchy.<sup>190</sup> Humbert de Corgenon's accounts as bailiff of Bresse record several entries in spring 1366 about Arnaud's arrival and troop movements towards Saint-Trivier and Cuiseaux.<sup>191</sup> Since everyone wanted rid of the routiers, the Archpriest could organise their departure peacefully. This did not mean Savoy welcomed them: Amadeus VI ordered towns and castles along the route to strengthen guards and move populations in from unprotected villages. Several ships were requisitioned to transport the troops.<sup>192</sup> Thanks to his warnings, garrisons in Bresse and Bugey were reinforced; Saint-André de Briord and Lhuis were put on alert.<sup>193</sup> Pont-de-Veyle, a natural crossing on the Veyle river, was warned of the arrival of Bernard de la Sale and Gaillart de la Motte's men

187 Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières*, p. 332. n. 3. 335.

188 Chamorel, «*Ad partes infidelium*», pp. 66-67.

189 Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 79.

190 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois, d'après des documents inédits. Philippe le Hardi 1363-1380*, I, Paris, 1909. p. 200.

191 It is worth noting here that Arnaud de Cervole organized the marching army to keep the distance between them at the distance of about 30 km, as previously noted. ADCO B. 7117. roller 13,8 m long.

192 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 190.

193 ADCO B 9509, roller 27m long, mentioned by Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 200, footnote 2.

heading for the Saône. Bardet de Roussillon travelled farthest south,<sup>194</sup> reaching the abbey of Maizières to embark for Avignon.<sup>195</sup> Girard de Longchamp, bailiff of Chalon, coordinated a fleet of four large ships and 120 sailors for the transport.<sup>196</sup> At this time the companies were about 330 km north of Avignon. Their approach caused panic there;<sup>197</sup> one company, on reaching Comtat Venaissin, began looting.<sup>198</sup>

In this context, Arnaud de Cervole was murdered near Mâcon on 25 May 1366.<sup>199</sup> His death was a premeditated plot rather than an accident or sudden quarrel.<sup>200</sup> The instigators are unknown, apart from Petit Derby, the Archpriest's cousin.<sup>201</sup> Guillaume de Clugny's account shows that the killer came from Arnaud's own company. Before the news spread, Petit Derby seized Arnaud's widow in her castle at Thil and offered to release her for 3,500 florins.<sup>202</sup> The conspirators ensured that the news reached Dijon only after a delay by intercepting the mail from Mâcon, thus gaining a crucial 24 hours. Philip the Bold sent an envoy only on 1 June 1366 to search for Arnaud, Bourc Camus, Bernard Donat and Berteran de Montprivat.<sup>203</sup> There is no proof, but it is striking that Frère Darre and Bertrucat d'Albret—both opposed to continuing the crusade—were near the scene; Bertrucat appeared two days later with 40 lances, reportedly ready to plunder Burgundy.<sup>204</sup> Arnaud's death created great uncertainty among both companies and authorities.<sup>205</sup> The bailiff of Chalon wondered whether the companies moving south would embark as planned.<sup>206</sup> Those who adhered to the original plan agreed by the Emperor and the Pope did not continue south, but returned to the duchy

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194 ADCO B 9292, roller 12m long, mentioned by Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 200, footnote 2.

195 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 201.

196 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, 202.

197 Raynaldi, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, p. 460.

198 Chérest, *L'Archiprêtre*, p. 352.

199 Chérest, *L'Archiprêtre*, p. 351.

200 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 205.

201 ADCO B 2752, f. 16r

202 ADCO B 2752, f. 12r

203 ADCO B 11875 ; Aimé Chérest, *L'Archiprêtre*, 351, pp. 404-405.

204 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 205.

205 Chérest, *L'Archiprêtre*, p. 352.

206 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 204.

or went west after Bertrand du Guesclin. Meanwhile, the army remaining in the duchy was split; the smaller groups that chose to return were hunted down by Philip the Bold in summer and autumn 1366.<sup>207</sup>

### *Conclusion*

When the mercenaries hired by the crusaders failed to arrive, Amadeus VI sailed from Venice with a small group of mercenaries and the county's nobility.<sup>208</sup> This army was by far the smallest in terms of the number of participants in the four crusades, numbering only 1,500-1,800 men.<sup>209</sup> However, the Green Count set out on his journey hoping that a large Hungarian army would be waiting for him. He was bitterly disappointed. Richard Musard also left Venice on galleys decorated with the count's colors.<sup>210</sup>

Although the Savoyard crusade ultimately sailed with only a fraction of the forces originally envisaged, the participation of men such as Richard Musard in Amadeus VI campaign and Walter Leslie in the Alexandrian crusade, reveals an often overlooked dimension of the mercenary world. These were soldiers who had spent decades in the moral grey zones of the Hundred Years War and the Italian conflicts, men for whom the papal promise of absolution was not merely a diplomatic instrument but a deeply personal offer. The crusade thus became, for some of them, not only a military enterprise but also a rare opportunity to confront the spiritual consequences of a lifetime spent in violence. It is possible to get an accurate picture of what thoughts may have tormented the mercenaries fighting in Trecento Italy or in the Hundred Years' War from the account of a Hungarian who visited St. Patrick's Cave and fought in southern Italy in the middle of the century. The cave, which was visited by Malatesta Ungaro and other mercenaries in the 14th century to save their souls, is located in the southern tip of County Donegal, on one of 40 islands in the middle of a lake surrounded by mountains.<sup>211</sup> According to legend, it was here that Jesus showed St. Patrick

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207 Petit, *Ducs de Bourgogne (1363-1380)*, p. 199.

208 Chamorel, *Un destin méditerranée*, p. 79.

209 Cox, *The Green Count*, p. 208. n.12.

210 Bollati, (ed.), Jean Servion, *Geste et croniques* pp. 129-130.

211 St. John D. Seymour, *St. Patrick's Purgatory. A Medieval Pilgrimage in Ireland*. Dunkalk, 1918. p. 7.

the cave where a sinful soul was willing to descend and spend a day and a night locked away from everyone, and was then completely cleansed of sin.<sup>212</sup> The strongly built Becsei Vesszős György belonged to the Hungarian Angevin elite,<sup>213</sup> was the *comes* of Bars County, and was a member of the royal guard of Louis I. He took part in Louis's first Neapolitan campaign, where the king appointed him governor of occupied Apulia. By his own admission, he was responsible for the deaths of 250 innocent people.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, he was the one who, on the king's orders, beheaded Prince Charles of Durazzo on January 23, 1348.<sup>215</sup> He made several pilgrimages to atone for his crimes committed during the war. First, he sought absolution in Compostela, but when he still felt uneasy, he ended up in St. Patrick's purgatory.<sup>216</sup>

All three instruments of papal policy toward great companies—excommunication, crusades against mercenaries, and crusades organized for mercenaries—had very little effect. The example of Pont-Saint-Espirit, along with the route leading there from Champagne, clearly shows that mercenaries struggling with a change of conscience, such as Becsei Vesszős György, were generally only interested in the afterlife to a limited extent. When they had the opportunity, they took advantage of it. Seguin de Badefol asked and obtained forgiveness from the pope twice for the occupation of Brioude and Anse. On both occasions, he made a special effort for lifting the excommunication.<sup>217</sup> Notwithstanding the prevailing

212 Leardo Mascanzoni, «Il pellegrinaggio di Malatesta “Ungaro” al cosiddetto “Purgatorio di S. Patrizio” (Irlanda, a. 1358).» in: *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province di Romagna*, LI, 2000, p. 243.

213 «Georgius, iuvenis homo et robustus» Ferenc Toldy - «Egy XIV. századbeli magyar vezeklő Irlandban sz. patrik purgatóriumában. Adalékul a középkori erkölcstörténethez.» *Századok*, V, (1871), 4. sz. p. 231. n. 2.

214 «Georgius in officio sibi commisso ultra modum persecutus et insecutus est partem adversam. In qua quidem persecucione tam ipse, quam per alios, multa dampna et innumerabiles videlicet depredaciones quam per alios, multa dampna et innumerabiles videlicet depredaciones quam plurimas, et homicidia adminus CC et L personarum iniuste et contra christianam iustitiam perpetravit.» Ferenc Toldy, *Egy XIV. századbeli magyar vezeklő Irlandban* p. 232. n. 6.

215 Florianus (ed.), *Chronicon Dubnicense, Historae Hungaricae Fontes Domestici Pars Prima* III, Leipzig, 1884. p. 151.

216 István Lengvári, «Becsei Vesszős György pokoljárása és különitélete» *Honismeret*, XXV, 1997 n°4 p. 67.

217 *Traité conclu par la médiation d'Arnaud Amanieu, seigneur d'Albret, entre les gouverneurs du duc de Berry et d'Auvergne, le comte de Boulogne et d'Auvergne, le dauphin*

circumstances, a singular occurrence in the 14th century stands out as a notable exception, wherein mercenaries were successfully motivated to embark on a collective journey into the unknown, engaging in combat against the infidels. The case of Arnaud de Celvole demonstrates that enthusiasm was limited in this instance, and that those who pursued the crusade with excessive fervour ultimately met a similar fate to that of the Archpriest.

The events of the three years preceding Savoy's crusade clearly demonstrate how complicated it was to organize crusades for mercenaries and how difficult it was to persuade great companies to participate. So when it did succeed, how many unpredictable factors played a role, such as the removal of Albert Sterz from the leadership of the White Company, or the deaths of John the Good and Talleyrand of Périgord, which determined the fate of the crusades. In a similar fashion, the death of Arnaud de Cervole had a fundamental influence on the course of the Savoyard Crusade. Furthermore, the refusal of the Byzantine Emperor to cross the territories controlled by Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria also had a significant impact.<sup>218</sup> Finally, Louis of Hungary abandoned the crusade he had planned with the Green Count, after being influenced by Urban V.

Nevertheless, preparations for the four crusades between 1363 and 1365 were successful in that mercenaries took part in the crusades for the only time in the 14th century, with far-reaching consequences. The most important legacy of this is the *Via Veritatis* fresco cycle by Andrea di Bonaiuto in the magnificent Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. This cycle heralded the resurgence of the crusading idea in the mid-14th century and preserved the portrait of Amadeus VI.

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d'Auvergne, et les gens de pays d'Auvergne, d'une part, et Séguin de Badefol, Bérard d'albert et autres capitaines des compagnies de Brioude et de Varennes, près Monlet, d'autre part, pour que lesdites compagnies évacuent le pays et crescent tote hostalitié dans les montages d'Auvergne et de Velay et dans la party du Gévaudan dependant du dauphins d'Auvergne, ensemble la ratification de ce traité par les deputies des bonnes villas d'Auvergne 4 30 avril 1364 in: Augustine CHASSAING, *Spicilegium brivatense*, p. 367. Lyon, ADR 10G1931.

<sup>218</sup> Chassaing, *Spicilegium brivatense*, p. 367.

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SCB Fontes 8. 409.

ADCO - Archives départementales de Côte d'Or,

B. 1408, B.1410, B. 1412, B. 1423, B 1511, B 2748, B 2752, B 5498, B. 7117, B. 8554,  
B 9292, B 9509, B 11875, B 11925.

ASF - Archivio di Stato di Firenze,

Diplomatico, Riformagioni atti pubblici, 9 Giugno 1365, Missive I Cancellaria, 13

ADN - Archives du Nord,

B. 268.

ADRML - Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon

10G1931

AMM - Archives municipales du Metz,

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ADM - Archives départementales de la Meuse

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# Charles VII et Louis XI en Bourgogne : mutations du renseignement et construction de l'autorité royale

par BENOÎT LÉTHENET

**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the intelligence activities conducted by the kings of France within ducal Burgundy during the fifteenth century. Drawing on judicial records, financial accounts and narrative sources, it analyses the structures, practices and political uses of royal intelligence in a context marked by civil war and Anglo-Burgundian alliance. Rather than assuming the existence of a centralized and modern intelligence system, the study highlights flexible networks of agents whose missions ranged from information gathering to destabilization attempts. Particular attention is paid to the financial mechanisms that sustained these operations, the ideological motivations that underpinned individual engagement, and the judicial repression deployed against captured spies. By placing clandestine action within the broader framework of royal government, the article argues that intelligence was not marginal but integral to political strategy. Even when operations failed, their very existence contributed to deterrence, negotiation leverage and the gradual reconfiguration of power relations between the French crown and the Burgundian principality.

**KEYWORDS :** LATE MEDIEVAL FRANCE; ROYAL INTELLIGENCE; POLITICAL ESPIONAGE; STATE FORMATION; BURGUNDIAN–FRENCH CONFLICT; CLANDESTINE NETWORKS; MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC INTELLIGENCE; POWER AND NORM VIOLATION

## *Introduction*

**T**out au long du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans leurs entreprises contre le duché de Bourgogne, les rois de France se sont révélés :

« Parfaitement capables d'identifier leurs ennemis, d'en estimer le nombre ainsi que le type de danger qu'ils représentent et, sur la base de leurs propres ressources, capacités et effectifs, de développer une stratégie visant à supprimer ou à contenir la menace, par la force des armes mais également par la diplomatie ou la dissuasion.<sup>1</sup> »

1 Michaël VANNESE, *La défense de l'Occident romain pendant l'Antiquité tardive*, Bruxelles,

Ces aptitudes, déjà décrites par Végèce, sont reprises et systématisées dans les miroirs aux princes de la fin du Moyen Âge, qui définissent le souverain comme un chef de guerre guidé par la prudence et éclairé par le conseil. Dans cette perspective, plusieurs textes insistent sur la nécessité d'un gouvernement fondé sur l'information et le secret<sup>2</sup>. *Le Songe du Vieil Pèlerin*<sup>3</sup> de Philippe de Mézières, l'*Avis à Yolande d'Aragon*<sup>4</sup> ou encore le *Rosier des guerres*<sup>5</sup> soulignent l'importance de connaître les intentions des princes voisins, d'entretenir des réseaux d'informateurs et d'agir avec subtilité pour déjouer les plans de l'ennemi. Dans les faits, Charles VII et Louis XI mettent en pratique ces principes. Philippe de Commines écrit dans ses *Mémoires* que Louis XI « avoit maints espies et messagers par pays<sup>6</sup> ». Le conseiller de Charles le Téméraire souligne par-là que le roi dispose de services de renseignement suffisamment développés pour avoir une vision stratégique capable de mettre en œuvre un programme d'action cohérent, appuyé sur les facteurs classiques de la puissance ; c'est-à-dire la pression diplomatique, l'usage de la force, le dynamisme de l'industrie médiévale, les positions commerciales, la cohésion politique et l'attrait idéologique.

Les pratiques de renseignement en Bourgogne ducal violent, par nature, les normes juridiques, diplomatiques et morales de leur temps. Espionner, intercepter des courriers, corrompre des conseillers, tenter d'enlever un chancelier ou infiltrer une ville ennemie constituent autant d'actes susceptibles d'être qualifiés de trahison lorsqu'ils sont subis, mais de nécessité politique lorsqu'ils sont ordonnés. Ce paradoxe – l'illégalité assumée au nom de la sauvegarde du royaume

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Latomus, 2010, pp. 23-24.

- 2 Jean-Baptiste SANTAMARIA, *Le secret du prince. Gouverner par le secret, France-Bourgogne XIII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Ceyzérieu, Champ Vallon, 2018 ; Bastian WALTER, « Transmettre des secrets en temps de guerre. L'importance des *cedulae inclusae* pendant les guerres de Bourgogne (1468-1477) », *Revue d'Alsace*, 138 (2012), pp. 7-25.
- 3 Philippe de MÉZIÈRES, *Songe du vieil pèlerin*, éd. Joël BLANCHARD, Antoine CLAVET, Didier KAHN, Genève, Droz, 2015.
- 4 Jean-Patrice BOUDET, Elsa SENÉ, « L'Avis à Yolande d'Aragon : un miroir au prince du temps de Charles VII », *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 24 (2012), pp. 51-84.
- 5 Pierre CHOISNET, *Le Rosier des guerres. Enseignements de Louis XI, roy de France pour le dauphin son fils*, Bibliothèque municipale de Rouen, ms. 996 ; 328 x 235 mm, parchemin, 79 folios.
- 6 Philippe DE COMMYNES, *Mémoires*, éd. Joël BLANCHARD, Paris, Pocket, 2004 ; Valentin BARICAULT, *L'espionnage au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Passés Composés, 2023. L'auteur revient sur le parcours de Philippe de Commines.

– place le renseignement au cœur d’une tension essentielle : celle qui oppose la norme à la souveraineté. La rivalité entre la monarchie française et le duché de Bourgogne offre, à cet égard, un observatoire privilégié. Entre le traumatisme d’Azincourt (1415) et les affrontements décisifs des années 1460-1470, la Bourgogne constitue à la fois un espace frontalier, un théâtre d’opérations militaires et un champ de compétition politique entre deux constructions étatiques concurrentes<sup>7</sup>. Dans cet espace disputé, l’information devient une ressource stratégique majeure et conditionne la survie même du pouvoir.

L’historiographie a depuis longtemps mis en lumière l’existence d’espions, de messagers et de réseaux clandestins dans le contexte de la guerre de Cent Ans<sup>8</sup> et des conflits franco-bourguignons<sup>9</sup>. Les historiens ont identifié les profils des agents<sup>10</sup>, analysé les procédures judiciaires<sup>11</sup> et étudié les pratiques du secret<sup>12</sup>.

7 Élodie LECUPPRE-DESJARDIN, *Le royaume inachevé des ducs de Bourgogne*, Paris, Belin, 2016.

8 Léon MIROT, « Le procès de Maître Jean Fusoris, Chanoine de Notre-Dame de Paris (1415-1416). Episode des Négociations Franco-Anglaises durant la Guerre de Cent Ans », *Mémoire de la Société de l’Histoire de Paris et de l’Ile de France*, 27 (1900), pp. 137-287 ; Christopher ALLMAND, « Intelligence in the Hundred Years War », in Keith NEILSON et B. J. C. MCKERCHER (dir.), *Go spy the land : military intelligence in history*, Westport, Praeger, 1992, pp. 31-47 ; -, et J. R. ALBAN, « Spies and Spying in the Fourteenth Century », in Christopher ALLMAND et George William COPLAND (dir.), *War, literature, and politics in the late Middle Ages*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1976, pp. 73-101.

9 Rudi BEAULANT, « Deux espions armagnacs jugés à Dijon en 1430 », *Criminocorpus* [en ligne], Les sources de la recherche, 2021 ; -, « Guerre, espionnage, torture. À propos d’une entreprise contre Dijon en 1432 », *Francia*, 43 (2016), pp. 87-104 ; -, « L’espionnage armagnac vu par les autorités dijonnaises durant le conflit franco-bourguignon (1419-1435) », *Annales de Bourgogne*, 86, 4 (2014), pp. 21-38 ; Benoît LÉTHENET, « « Par aguets et espiements ». Espionner aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles », *Annales de Bourgogne*, 86, 4 (2014), pp. 5-18 ; -, « Le Renseignement. Une communauté au service des ducs de Bourgogne (1407-1435) », *Publications du Centre Européen d’Etudes Bourguignonnes*, 57 (2017), pp. 77-87 ; -, *Espions et pratiques du renseignement : les élites mâconnaises au début du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Strasbourg, Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2019 ; Bastian WALTER, *Informationen, Wissen und Macht : Akteure und Techniken städtischer Aussenpolitik : Bern, Strassburg und Basel im Kontext der Burgunderkriege (1468-1477)*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012.

10 Nicole GONTHIER, « À propos d’un complot pro-bourguignon à Lyon : les révélations et les méthodes d’un cordelier espion (1423-1424) », *Cahiers d’histoire : Lyon, Grenoble, Clermont, Saint-Etienne, Chambéry*, 38, 2 (1993), pp. 139-151 ; André LEGUAI « Espions et propagandistes de Louis XI arrêtés à Dijon », *Annales de Bourgogne*, 23 (1952), pp. 50-55.

11 BEAULANT, Rudi, *Criminalité et justice échevinale à Dijon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle (1433-1441)*, Dijon, Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2020.

12 Jean-Baptiste SANTAMARIA, *Le secret*, cit. ; -, « Secrets, Diplomats, and Spies in Late

Toutefois, si l'on connaît désormais mieux les acteurs et les techniques, l'évolution stratégique de ces pratiques entre le règne de Charles VII et celui de Louis XI demeure insuffisamment interrogée. Le renseignement apparaît souvent comme un outil parmi d'autres de la conduite de la guerre ; il est plus rarement envisagé comme un révélateur des transformations de la souveraineté monarchique. Or, entre 1415 et 1483, la situation du pouvoir royal change radicalement. Sous Charles VII, le renseignement s'inscrit d'abord dans un contexte de vulnérabilité extrême : double monarchie, légitimité contestée, alliances anglo-bourguignonnes, désorganisation militaire. Il répond à une logique de survie dynastique et de reconquête territoriale. Sous Louis XI, en revanche, dans un royaume restauré et administrativement consolidé, les pratiques de renseignement participent d'une stratégie d'encercllement et de désarticulation de la puissance bourguignonne. Elles ne visent plus seulement à prévenir le danger, mais à produire de l'incertitude chez l'adversaire, à exploiter ses divisions et à l'isoler économiquement et diplomatiquement.

Dès lors, la question n'est pas seulement de savoir comment les rois de France espionnent la Bourgogne, mais de comprendre ce que ces pratiques révèlent de l'évolution du pouvoir monarchique. Le renseignement constitue-t-il un simple instrument conjoncturel adapté aux crises successives, ou bien devient-il, entre Charles VII et Louis XI, un mode de gouvernement fondé sur la maîtrise stratégique de l'information et sur la légitimation d'une transgression souveraine des normes ?

Cette étude s'appuie principalement sur les sources judiciaires dijonnaises<sup>13</sup> et sur les documents bourguignons conservés aux Archives départementales de la Côte-d'Or<sup>14</sup>, complétés par les registres urbains de Châlons-en-Champagne<sup>15</sup>,

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Medieval France and in the Burgundian State : Parallel Practices and Undercover Operations », in Maurits Alexander EBBEN et Louis SICKING (dir.), *Beyond ambassadors : consuls, missionaries, and spies in premodern diplomacy*, Leiden, Brill, 2021.

13 Les procès et enquêtes instruits par la mairie de Dijon conservés aux archives départementales de la Côte d'Or (ADCO) : B II 360/1 ; B II 360/2 ; B II 360/10 ; B II 360/12.

14 ADCO, Comptes du receveur du Châlonnais : B 3643 ; B 3664 ; B 3701 ; B 3974. ADCO, Compte du châtelain fermier de Chalon : B 3665. Comptes du receveur du Mâconnais : B 5080 ; B 5081 ; B 5090. Affaires militaires : B 11890.

15 *Registre de délibérations du Conseil de ville de Châlons-en-Champagne, 1417-1421*, Sylvette GUILBERT (éd.), Châlons-en-Champagne, 2001.

Lyon<sup>16</sup> et Mâcon<sup>17</sup>. Elle mobilise également un registre de la principauté d'Orange<sup>18</sup> conservé aux Archives départementales de l'Isère, ainsi que les chroniques et traités politiques contemporains<sup>19</sup>, afin d'analyser les structures, les agents et les usages du renseignement français en Bourgogne ducale. Elle montre qu'entre la phase de reconquête monarchique et celle de l'affirmation hégémonique, le renseignement change de fonction stratégique : d'outil de survie, il devient instrument d'emprise et d'intimidation. Sans donner naissance à une institution spécialisée comparable à la chancellerie ou à l'hôtel du roi, ces pratiques s'intègrent progressivement au cœur même de la décision politique, révélant une souveraineté capable d'assumer publiquement la transgression lorsqu'elle est jugée nécessaire à la défense et au gouvernement du royaume.

### Le renseignement, instrument de survie et de restauration monarchique

Le roi de France dispose dès le xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, par ses agents de renseignement, d'un outil adéquat pour prévenir les dangers et protéger le royaume. Comme le rappellent les sources urbaines, les espions sont envoyés « pour mieulx savoir des nouvelles au vray<sup>20</sup> », « afin de savoir tousjour comme l'on se devra gouverner<sup>21</sup> » et « de mieulx prouveoir au besognes<sup>22</sup> ». Les activités qu'ils mènent ont leur place dans l'appareil de l'État monarchique puisqu'elles participent au processus de décision. S'il doit trouver les moyens d'affaiblir l'adversaire, un bon système de renseignement a aussi pour mission de protéger le roi, l'État monarchique et ses intérêts fondamentaux par des méthodes non conventionnelles contre les menaces intérieures et extérieures. Ces activités de renseignement offrent une

16 Archives municipales de Lyon (AML), registre de délibération : BB 1. Ce registre est édité *Registres consulaires de la ville de Lyon*, 2 vol., Marie-Claude GUIGUE (éd.), Lyon, Publication de la Commission municipale du Vieux Lyon, 1926.

17 Archives municipales de Mâcon, registres de délibérations : BB 12 ; BB 13 ; BB 14.

18 Archives départementales de l'Isère : registre *Principatus Aurayce* B 3811.

19 Philippe de MÉZIÈRES, cit. ; Pierre CHOISNET, cit. ; Christine DE PIZAN, *Le Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*, Lucien DUGAZ (éd.), Classiques Garnier, 2021 ; Jean DE BUEIL, *Le Jouvencel*, Michelle SZKILNIK (éd.), Paris, Honoré Champion, 2013.

20 AML, BB 1 (1421, septembre 15).

21 *Ibid.*, (1417, décembre 26).

22 *Ibid.*, (1421, septembre 15).

appréciation autonome des situations, un appui aux opérations militaires et une anticipation de l'évolution des menaces à long terme. La permanence du travail des espions, leur loyalisme, est un élément rassurant de stabilité.

### *Le traumatisme d'Azincourt et la faillite informationnelle*

Il est certain que les effectifs augmentent au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle ; en partie à cause de la catastrophe qu'ont été l'invasion puis la défaite militaire d'Azincourt (25 octobre 1415)<sup>23</sup>. Ces déconvenues résultent sans doute du traitement par Charles VI et ses conseillers des estimations fournies par leurs espions. C'est un échec du Renseignement français. Alors que l'ambassade anglaise menée par Richard Courtenay, l'évêque de Norwich, loge à l'hôtel de Bourbon, le chanoine Jean Fusoris, maître en médecine et constructeur d'astrolabes, rencontre l'ambassadeur qui est au nombre de ses clients<sup>24</sup>. Le 6 septembre 1415, le chanoine est arrêté. Un messager de l'évêque a été intercepté porteur d'une lettre de son maître à son ami Jean Fusoris. Celui-ci aurait trahi le roi de France. Lors de son procès un second homme, le médecin Pierre de Milan probable espion à la solde de l'Angleterre, est mentionné. Il réside à Londres et rencontre à plusieurs reprises Henri V. Tous les témoins se sont interrogés sur sa présence ; il évite soigneusement de cheminer avec les ambassadeurs français menés par l'archevêque de Bourges et se rend en Angleterre sans licence ni sauf-conduit. L'affaire est grave car le meilleur de la chevalerie française est décimé ou capturé à Azincourt. Assuré par l'évêque de Norwich et ses contacts français de la persistance des divisions nées de la guerre civile, Henri V peut adopter une ligne diplomatique dure et lancer l'invasion à l'été 1415. Autour de l'ambassadeur anglais, c'est tout un réseau d'émissaires et d'agents secrets qui prend forme afin de préparer l'invasion. Sur le point d'embarquer pour la France, Henri V ordonne l'arrestation et l'emprisonnement des envoyés français qui avaient assisté aux préparatifs militaires et s'apprêtaient à en rendre compte à Charles VI.

Le traité de Troyes (21 mai 1420) et le sacre de Charles VII à Reims (17 juillet 1429) changent la physionomie des missions de renseignement. Le tournant qu'a

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23 Valérie TOUREILLE, *Le Drame d'Azincourt : histoire d'une étrange défaite*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2015.

24 Léon MIROT, pp. 137-287.

Source / Date	Identité	Statut social / fonction	Mode opératoire	Accès et intérêt stratégique
ADCO, B 11890, n° 4 (1433)	G. 1 <sup>er</sup> de La Trémoille	Grand chambellan	Ambassade, négociation, retournement d'agent	Accès très élevé – Tête de réseau, direction, coordination
ADCO, B II 360/2, liasse 9, n° 5 (1432)	Guyenne	Héraut d'armes	Immunité héraldique, entretiens ciblés	Accès très élevé – Agent à haute valeur ajoutée
ADCO, B 3664, f° 48v <sup>o</sup> -49r <sup>o</sup> (1433)	J. Bourges G. de Betain	Châtelain, Écuyer	Réseaux nobiliaires	Accès élevé – Capteurs régionaux
ADCO, B 11890, n° 4 (1431) ; <i>id.</i> , B II 360/1, liasse 8, n° 5 (1430) ; B. WALTER, pp. 179 sq (1468-1477)	G. de Rochefort J. Regnard C. Riffé	Officier ducal Serveur seigneurial Officier urbain	Rouage administratif Correspondance secrète	Accès élevé – Relais institutionnels
L. MIROT, pp. 137 sq (1415-1416)	J. Foussier P. de Véronc P. de Milan	Chanoine, Libraire, Médecin	Sociabilité savante	Accès élevé – Agents à haut niveau d'accès, érudition
ADCO, B 11890, n° 5 (1424)	E. Charlot É. Monestier	Franciscains	Réseaux monastiques, circulation de l'information	Accès moyen – Capteurs discrets, circulation
M.-C. GUIGUE, p. 65 (1417) ; ADCO, B II 360/2, liasse 9, n° 5 (1432)	Fr. Loup N. Bouclote C. de Paris	Épicier Mercier	Réseaux marchands, informations bancaires	Accès moyen – Surveillance régionale
Ph. de COMMYNES, pp. 226 sq (1480)	—	Hommes d'armes	Guetteurs, déguisements, faux malades etc.	Accès moyen à faible – Reconnaissance ponctuelle
ADCO, B II 360/1 (1419)	P. Le Jandelet	Femme	Messagerie, observation, agitation publique	Accès faible – Agent de liaison, capteur discret
S. GUILBERT, pp. 58 sq (1418)	P. Contet J. Christofle	Valets, Serveur	Déguisement	Accès faible – Surveillance locale
ADCO, B 3665, f° 8r <sup>o</sup> (1432-1433)	H. Boussot	Enfant	Déguisement religieux	Accès très faible – Surveillance locale, capteur discret
ADCO, B 5090, f° 20r <sup>o</sup> (1443)	P. Reynaut	Pauvre	Déguisement de « fol »	Accès variable – Surveillance locale, capteur discret
AML, AA 78/10 (1418)	Anonyme	Partisan pro-français	Délations écrites	Accès variable – Informateur local

Tableau n° 1 : Typologie des espions français envoyés en Bourgogne.

été la mise en place de la double monarchie, avec le soutien du pouvoir ducal, fait basculer Philippe le Bon dans le camp de l'adversaire. Il devient vital pour Charles VII de connaître les projets de son cousin et ses capacités de violence. Dans le but de gagner en efficacité, les besoins du Renseignement ont été plus importants.

Une augmentation et une diversification des effectifs s'est imposée après 1429. Certains types d'individus sont particulièrement recherchés mais seule la réalité du terrain imposera son choix : lequel des espions sera le meilleur capteur ou le plus à même d'agir dans la profondeur ? Avec des exemples désormais abondants, il est possible de tirer des sources et des publications une typologie des espions français envoyés en Bourgogne. Ils sont répartis en trois groupes :

- le premier, est composé des individus cultivés ayant accès aux cercles du

pouvoir. Ils peuvent par la conversation, l'observation et la manipulation accéder aux informations de première importance. Connus de leurs pairs, leur identité est une clé d'accès au renseignement ;

- le second groupe est formé des plus humbles qui n'ont pas accès aux mêmes cercles mais, par l'observation statique ou mobile, ils renseignent les Français. Pour un accès facilité à l'information, certains n'hésitent pas à se travestir.
- Marchands et religieux forment une sorte d'entre-deux jouant et de leur identité et de leurs réseaux, de même que la catégorie des prisonniers ne pouvant payer leur rançon qui sont envoyés espionner.

Ces capteurs ne sont pas les seuls utilisés par les souverains français qui peuvent aussi compter sur des informateurs étrangers. Les grands réseaux marchands européens disposent d'appareils épistolaires structurés, capables de concurrencer l'information princière<sup>25</sup>.

### *Un renseignement militarisé et frontalier*

Les réseaux de renseignement sont-ils pour autant suffisamment dimensionnés pour faire face aux crises qui sont imprévisibles par nature ? Le xv<sup>e</sup> siècle est émaillé par de très nombreuses crises qui obligent les rois à prioriser leurs besoins en renseignement et à les orienter au risque de baisser la garde sur d'autres zones d'opérations. Jusqu'à l'assassinat de Jean sans Peur les plans de recherche engageaient ponctuellement un individu chargé de reconnaître les concentrations de troupes et de surveiller les mouvements bourguignons à la frontière. De simples mesures de prévention même si les ducs de Bourgogne ne sont pas encore des ennemis désignés. Les sources laissent entrevoir la présence d'un renseignement militaire propre aux troupes en opération. Dans le *Jouvence*<sup>26</sup>, Jean de Bueil évoque guetteurs, guides et espions. Les guetteurs, soldats camouflés, observent discrètement des points stratégiques — ponts, carrefours, accès — et assurent une surveillance durable en zone d'insécurité. Légèrement équipés, dissimulés sous la végétation, ils écoutent, comptent et confirment visuellement les mouvements

25 Francesco di Marco Datini envoie à ses facteurs et reçoit, sur l'ensemble des grandes places marchandes, entre 1364 et 1410, 125 549 lettres dont les deux-tiers pour la seule période 1395-1405. Le volume des lettres expédiées par les grands marchands florentins avoisine les 10 000 par an.

26 Jean DE BUEIL, cit., p. 67

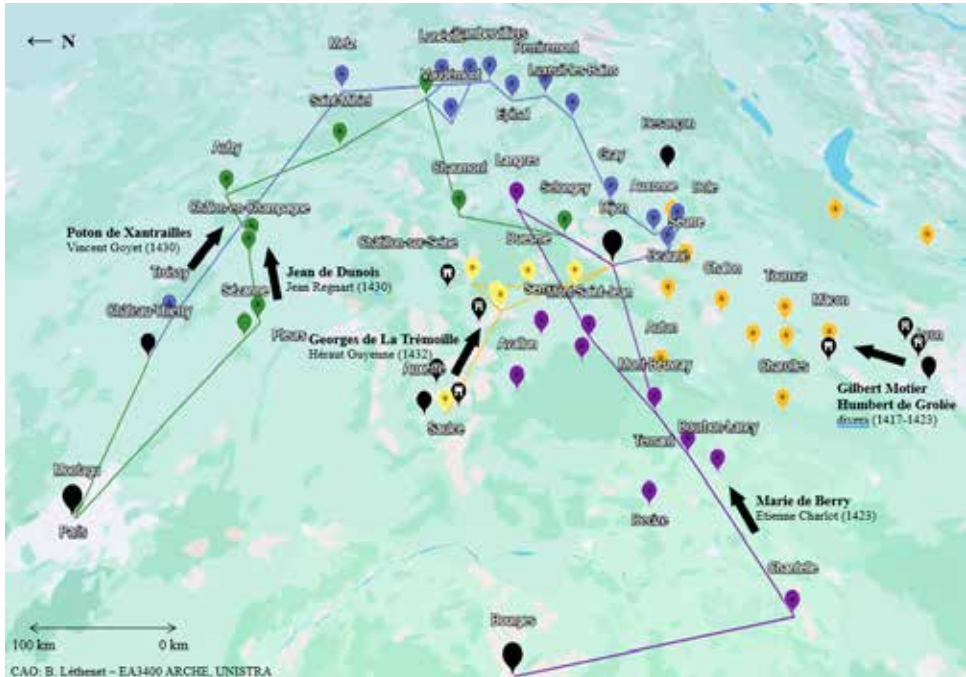


fig. n°1 : Les opérations françaises de renseignement en Bourgogne ducal (xv<sup>e</sup> s.)

Légende : Les lignes colorées figurent les axes de déplacement et les sphères d'action des principaux espions : vert (Jean Regnart), bleu (Vincent Gayet), violet (Étienne Charlot), jaune (Héraut Guyenne et son équipe). Les marqueurs orange signalent des liaisons ponctuelles depuis Lyon ; les autres marqueurs colorés renvoient aux localités mentionnées dans les sources et intégrées au réseau de chaque acteur. Les points noirs désignent les principaux lieux de résidence ou d'action politique et militaire. Les flèches noires identifient les donneurs d'ordres nommés.

ennemis : « j'ai entendu passer sur le pont des gens à pied et à cheval [...] et j'en ai vu, dans un chemin creux, plus de quarante ». Les guides, envoyés en avant de l'armée, explorent la profondeur du théâtre d'opérations. Devant les colonnes de plusieurs jours, ils renseignent sur les positions et les effets des actions militaires. « Ces guides sont vraies *espies* » écrit le Jouvenel : leur efficacité repose sur la discrétion et l'évitement du combat, condition même de la survie et de la transmission de l'information.

Les sources dijonnaises nous permettent d'attester et de suivre plusieurs trajectoires. Reportés sur une carte, les itinéraires suivis par les espions de Charles VII impressionnent à plus d'un titre. Ils témoignent d'une politique cohérente et suivie du renseignement français en Bourgogne avec une activité accrue dans les années

qui suivent le sacre (1430-1432). Les opérations sont initiées sur l'ensemble des frontières du duché à partir de points d'appuis fermement tenus par les Français. Ces positions de départ sont : Château-Thierry au nord ; les garnisons de Chablis, Mussy-sur-Seyne, Cravant et Jully à l'ouest ; les possessions de la duchesse de Bourbon au sud-ouest et Lyon au sud. Le maillage couvre l'ensemble des territoires ducaux jusque dans la profondeur stratégique avec des observations dans les Vosges, la Comté ou à la foire de Genève. Les chevauchements et les recouplements assurent la permanence de l'observation particulièrement au cœur du duché et dans sa capitale Dijon. La ville est au point de rencontre de nombreuses missions venant de toutes les directions. Afin d'assurer cette couverture des territoires bourguignons, quatre modes opératoires au moins semblent utilisés : des missions ponctuelles en un lieu donné, des trajets planifiés et bien suivis, une correspondance clandestine avec des sources pro-françaises<sup>27</sup>, la surveillance des conversations de tavernes.

### *Des réseaux instables dépendants des capitaines*

Sous couvert de l'autorité de Charles VII, les collectes de l'information sont ordonnées par des chefs de guerre éprouvés, comme Poton de Xaintrilles, Jean de Dunois, Gilbert III Motier ou Tanneguy III du Chastel, de hauts nobles telle la duchesse de Bourbon, de grands officiers de l'État. Ils vont jusqu'à envisager la décapitation du pouvoir bourguignon par l'assassinat ou l'enlèvement. Dans leurs ouvrages, Christine de Pizan et Pierre Choynet listent des éléments auxquels les espions doivent être attentifs<sup>28</sup>. Ces listes font apparaître deux familles d'éléments à prendre en compte. Les observations portent d'abord sur les soldats adverses : le nombre, l'endurance physique, la détermination, le moral et les habitudes de guerre ; d'autres critères examinent la stratégie globale, au service de la victoire finale, comme la maîtrise du terrain, les approvisionnements et les capacités de renforts. En cas de capture, le roi ne revendiquera ni n'assumera l'espionnage. Un capitaine un peu habile entretient un réseau de renseignement (marchands, enfants, valets ou aubergistes, curés). C'est à un groupe de six espions, auquel appartient Vincent Gayet, que Poton de Xaintrilles confie une mission en 1430 et, en 1432, Georges I<sup>er</sup> de la Trémoille diligente une opération impliquant plus

27 AML, AA 78/10 (1418, mars 23).

28 Benoît LÉTHENET, *Les espions au Moyen Âge*, Quintin, Paris, 2021, pp. 68-72.

d'une dizaine de personnes.

À ne prendre qu'un exemple apparaissant sur la figure 1, Humbert de Grolée et Gilbert III Motier reçoivent de Charles VII des lettres de créances pour mener les opérations de guerre depuis le Lyonnais<sup>29</sup>. Avec le soutien des places fortes dans la région, ils commandent des opérations de renseignement. L'agent est envoyé « savoir et enquêter des nouvelles », « sentir » ou « regarder » la conduite des ennemis. Entre le 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 1417 et le 22 mars 1422 on observe un plan de recherche développé en trois axes. Le premier axe est orienté au nord en direction de la Bourgogne et de la ligne de front. En juillet 1417, les bourgeois de Mâcon entrent dans l'orbite ducal et acceptent une garnison bourguignonne qui menace directement le Lyonnais. La frontière, dans son épaisseur, est placée sous surveillance. La rumeur court que des gens d'armes se rassemblent à Autun. Le prieur des Carmes s'y rend afin de connaître « leur estre ». Saisir l'information le plus tôt possible sur les forces et les faiblesses de l'adversaire, ses provisions, la qualité de son commandement, de ses troupes, est primordial. Les chefs de guerre surveillent également la Bresse. Les liens de parenté entre la maison de Bourgogne et la maison de Savoie font d'Amédée VIII un voisin dangereux pour les partisans de Charles VII. De mai 1418 à septembre 1421, des reconnaissances armées sont conduites en Bresse depuis Lyon.

### *Renseignement intérieur*

Les besoins en renseignement sont aussi tournés vers la lutte contre les « menées hostiles » à la survie de leurs États. Les lieux propices à la conversation sont étroitement surveillés. Les tavernes, auberges, hôtelleries, débits de boisson et étuves forment un maillage où se nouent des connexions difficiles à saisir. Ces lieux, au cœur de la circulation de la parole et de la contestation, voient se croiser buveurs, observateurs, agents d'autorité et informateurs. Les autorités y prennent le pouls de l'opinion<sup>30</sup> ; les habitués y expriment avis politiques et intérêts pour

29 AML, AA 26/21 (1418).

30 Philippe CONTAMINE, « Naissance médiévale de l'opinion publique », in François d'ORCIVAL, *Opinion publique et crise de la démocratie*, Paris, PUF, 2019, pp.59-72 ; Collette BEAUNE, « La rumeur dans le *Journal* du bourgeois de Paris », *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994, pp. 191-203 ; Claude GAUVARD, « Rumeur et stéréotypes à la fin du Moyen Âge », *La circulation*, cit., pp. 157-177 ; Bernard GUENÉE, *L'opinion publique au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Perrin, 2002.

les affaires publiques. Le renseignement intérieur n'y requiert guère d'actions secrètes : sonder l'opinion et suivre les troubles relève de l'information générale ; le contestataire, une fois repéré, est écarté. Certaines adresses sont incontournables. À Mâcon, en 1417, le chevaucheur porteur de lettres de Marguerite de Bavière et d'une copie de celles d'Hesdin est logé, aux frais de la ville, à la Tête noire<sup>31</sup>. Le receveur de Bourgogne Jean Fraignot y séjourne en août, septembre et octobre 1418, puis en février 1419. En septembre 1419, le bailli de Chalon-sur-Saône et un maître des requêtes y sont logés ; le maréchal de France y demeure trois jours en 1422. L'année suivante, un écuyer du duc de Savoie, le bouteiller d'Amédée VIII et trois messagers y trouvent encore refuge. La réputation de l'enseigne attire les agents armagnacs en quête d'informations. Le messenger Thévenin Guio-teau, dit Concierge, originaire de Troyes, la fréquente dès 1419. Bien informé, il peut se présenter devant le bailli de Mâcon, les ouvriers de la monnaie ou les receveurs des greniers à sel d'Auxerre, de La Charité-sur-Loire, de Mâcon et de Reims. C'est l'homme à écouter, sinon à désinformer pour étendre les rumeurs favorables au parti français.

L'information obtenue par la conversation doit être recueillie avec prudence. Lors de l'opération menée par Georges I<sup>er</sup> de La Trémoille contre Dijon en 1432, le choix du héraut Guyenne est né du besoin de disposer sur le terrain d'un agent français capable d'avoir une vue d'ensemble sur la situation du conflit et des relations entre Philippe le Bon et Charles VII. Guyenne participe habituellement au Conseil royal. Capturé, il obtient de parler seul à seul avec le chancelier Nicolas Rolin le 10 octobre 1432. C'est la preuve qu'il est considéré comme une prise à « haute valeur ajoutée ». L'intelligence de la relation « source – capteur » (Guyenne – Rolin) est ici essentielle : tout un chacun n'est pas apte à communiquer, recueillir des informations d'un individu consentant et *a fortiori* non consentant, faire le tri dans un flot d'informations orales, imparfaites, incomplètes ou fausses. Les informations acquises doivent être orientées, recoupées et mises en doute. À la logique du vrai, Nicolas Rolin doit accepter de substituer une logique du vraisemblable, du raisonnable ou du probable. D'emblée l'entretien est biaisé, les détails donnés par le héraut Guyenne sont-ils la réalité ou la réalité que le parti français veut montrer au chancelier ? Le mensonge est un enjeu de sécurité d'état. En 1417–1419, l'interception des courriers devient un instrument

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31 Benoît LÉTHENET, *Espions et pratiques*, cit., pp. 115-120.

politique assumé. Il permet de dissiper les doutes. En juillet 1417, un messager bourguignon porteur de lettres d'Hesdin est arrêté, exécuté à Paris, et ses lettres publiquement brûlées comme criminelles<sup>32</sup>. Deux ans plus tard, à Lyon, des autorités urbaines saisissent à plusieurs reprises des correspondances en circulation : un chevaucheur royal est détenu quatorze semaines pour avoir transporté des lettres destinées à publier la paix<sup>33</sup>, puis un messager bourguignon annonçant l'assassinat de Jean sans Peur est arrêté et torturé<sup>34</sup>. Ces épisodes illustrent la criminalisation croissante du transport d'information ou de l'expression d'opinion en contexte de guerre civile.

Entre 1415 et 1435, la nasse mise en place par les Français, qui fait coopérer des agents civils et militaires, dans les tavernes, sur les routes ou des points stratégiques, éclaire la fonction du renseignement comme un outil d'urgence et de survie autant que de pilotage. Il n'est pas encore structuré politiquement mais il est déjà assumé souverainement.

## Stabilisation et intégration politique du secret

Après la paix d'Arras (1435) et la fin de la guerre ouverte avec la Bourgogne, l'espionnage reste une activité qui n'est ni autorisée ni interdite par les normes morales et juridiques du Moyen Âge. Les réseaux sont maintenus mais ils connaissent une série de changements.

### *Structuration hiérarchique des réseaux*

La représentation du réseau français œuvrant à Dijon (fig. 2) confirme l'intérêt de la justice dijonnaise pour le héraut Guyenne. La matrice élaborée pour le logiciel Pajek<sup>35</sup> permet, par la mesure des relations « entrantes » et « sortantes », de

32 *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys, contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*, vol. 6, Louis-François BELLAGUET (trad.), Paris, Crapelet, 1839-1852, p. 87.

33 AML, AA 82/91 (1419, janvier 10).

34 *Ibid.*, AA 82/81 (1419).

35 Wouter DE NOOY, Andrej MRVAR, Vladimir BATAGELJ, *Exploratory Social Network Analysis with Pajek*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011 (2<sup>e</sup> éd.). Cette analyse repose sur un traitement de réseau réalisé à l'aide de Pajek. Les visualisations et mesures mobilisent notamment les degrés d'entrée et de sortie (*partition>degree*), la centralité des acteurs (*vector>centrality*) et l'analyse des voisinages hiérarchiques (*partition>k-neighbours*), permettant d'identifier les niveaux fonctionnels du réseau. La taille des nœuds, dans la fig-

distinguer sept groupes : les cercles du pouvoir français et bourguignon, la famille de La Trémoille ; les interactions du héraut Guyenne, celles de Colinet de Paris et de Nicolas Bouclote ; ensuite, les capitaines des garnisons françaises en alerte et enfin des acteurs aux rôles divers. Les deux principaux suspects (Guyenne et Colinet de Paris) sont en contact avec davantage de personnes que Nicolas Bouclote, raison pour laquelle celui-ci sera rapidement éliminé. On remarquera également qu'il est difficile d'établir des liens entre la majorité des individus mentionnés par nos suspects. Ils ont des rôles complémentaires : espionner le guet, trouver des failles dans les remparts ou porter des lettres à des contacts ; tandis que les membres du pouvoir ne sont mentionnés que comme décideurs ou cibles de l'opération. À partir de Charles VII, on observe trois niveaux hiérarchiques. Le roi autorise son conseil à organiser une opération confiée à Guyenne (rang 1), en coordination avec les garnisons françaises dans la zone, l'établissement tenu par Boussicault, le dernier point de regroupement du groupe, Colinet de Paris et Nicolas Bouclote activant localement le réseau français sous l'autorité de Guyenne (rang 2). Les membres, qui constituent à l'échelle locale ce réseau, n'ont qu'une connaissance limitée de l'architecture d'ensemble et n'entretiennent que peu de contacts entre-eux (rang 3). Une hiérarchisation claire à trois niveaux : le roi, les coordinateurs et les agents locaux, s'est mise en place.

Les sources montrent que Charles VII est en mesure, par ses réseaux, de mener des actions politiques secrètes. Au-delà des manipulations et des actions coercitives, jusqu'à l'enlèvement ou à l'assassinat, les activités de renseignement sont avant tout un facteur de paix en vue de la stabilité dans l'équilibre des puissances. Le coordinateur sur place de l'opération est le héraut Guyenne (rang 1). Rois d'armes et hérauts d'armes<sup>36</sup> sont des messagers et des ambassadeurs impliqués dans les négociations en vue des traités de paix. Ils interviennent sur le champ de la guerre. L'immunité dont ils bénéficient généralement leur permet de naviguer entre les forces ennemies et d'intervenir à moindre risque dans les relations entre les souverains. Reconnus pour leur qualité d'analyse des situations, ils sont indispensables lorsqu'un défi est lancé par un souverain à un autre. Le

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ure 2, correspond au nombre de relations attestées (*input* et *output*). Toutefois, l'ensemble du dossier n'est pas totalement conservé ; ces données sont à interpréter avec prudence.

36 Sébastien NADOT, « Des voyageurs de l'ombre : le rôle des hérauts d'armes dans les combats chevaleresques du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle », *Les voyageurs au Moyen Âge*, La Rochelle, 2008, pp. 50-60.

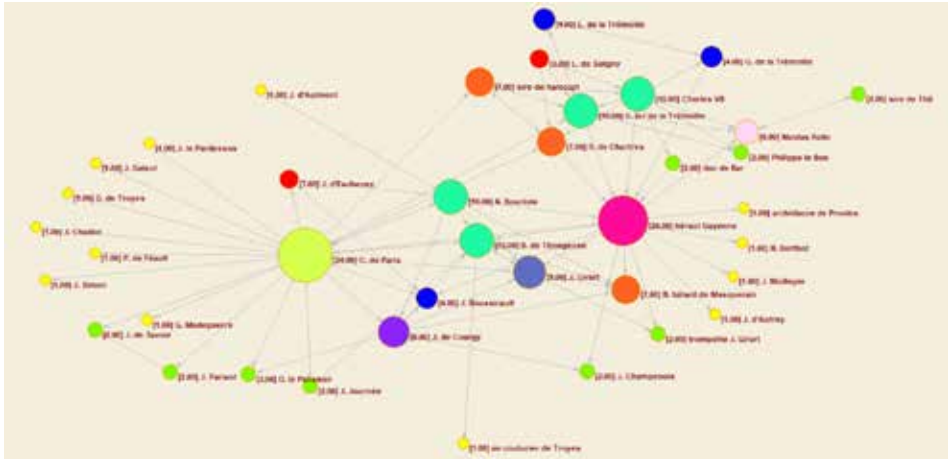


fig. n° 2 : Le réseau de renseignement français à Dijon (1432)

hérald Guyenne, protégé par son héralderie, obtient un entretien avec le chancelier Nicolas Rolin. Par la seule présence de son officier d'armes, Charles VII tient en alerte son cousin Philippe le Bon : la soumission de l'État bourguignon ou sa destruction pourrait-on résumer. Guyenne dispose de plus d'informations sur l'organisation de la mission et les personnes impliquées que ses deux complices. Il indique notamment qu'il a dû rencontrer le Bourg bâtard de Masquerain, Bertrand de Thongouse et Jean Girart afin que ceux-ci préparent leurs capitaines à marcher sur Dijon. Le héraut révèle que des seigneurs bourguignons sont prêts à se rallier au parti du roi, afin de pouvoir conserver leurs terres, comme cela semble être le cas du seigneur de Thil en dépit d'une alliance matrimoniale avec la famille Rolin, de Lourdin de Saligny, du comte de Joigny (Guy de la Trémoille) ou du seigneur de Jonvelle (Georges II de la Trémoille), dont plusieurs hommes tels que son fils bâtard et quelques serviteurs transmettent des informations au roi sur la situation du duché. Ces seigneurs ont aussi, pour la plupart, obtenu des accords ou des abstinences de guerre afin de ne pas être attaqués par les troupes de Charles VII en cas d'offensive contre le duché. Le commandeur de l'hôpital Saint-Antoine d'Etas, Jean Bossicault, est soupçonné de sentiments pro-français ; il loge le groupe avant son arrivée à Dijon. Des marchands, Jean de Courgy et Jean d'Eschenez, ainsi que Jeannin Chaillot et Gillequin de Troyes, trempent dans l'affaire. Les hôtes dijonnais susceptibles de participer à l'entreprise sont interrogés : Jean Gaisot, Jean Parisot, Jean d'Autrey ou encore Jean Moillepie. Le réseau français n'a pas de frontières précises et joue d'acteurs dont les rôles sont

multiples. Si l'orientation globale est pro-française, la cohérence de l'ensemble ne suppose pas la subordination absolue à Charles VII, ces individus sont mis en relation par un jeu d'interdépendances qui résulte de causes diffuses et multiples : serments, solidarités seigneuriales, liens socio-économiques, peur de tout perdre ou de ne rien avoir. Pour les décideurs, toute mise au point obtenue par les espions ou les juges n'est qu'éphémère. Les réseaux d'influence français restent flous et insaisissables, sans cesse défigurés par les arrestations et recomposés, multipliés.

### *Financement et monopole royal de la transgression*

Au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'État ne dispose pas d'un budget prévisionnel. L'espionnage est financé sur les finances extraordinaires par les receveurs et contrôleurs généraux, qui mettent à disposition du roi et de ses capitaines les fonds nécessaires. La célèbre formule de Philippe de Mézières souvent prêtée à Louis XI : « Un prince doit mettre la tierce partie de sa dépense en espions<sup>37</sup> » traduit la conscience de besoins croissants. Christine de Pizan rappelle, en 1410, que le prince « donnera de l'argent et promettra une grande récompense<sup>38</sup> ». L'espion doit être payé et récompensé. Les capitaines recrutent, avancent les frais et négocient les gratifications, souvent sous forme d'offices, vecteurs d'ascension sociale. Les sommes versées couvrent d'abord les dépenses de mission ; la véritable récompense réside dans la promotion promise et confirmée par le roi. Ainsi, les capitaines Poton de Xaintrailles et Jean de Dunois, le grand chambellan, Georges 1<sup>er</sup> de la Trémoille, recrutent leurs espions, payent les frais de la mission sur les fonds envoyés par les officiers des finances. Ils négocient les récompenses une fois la mission achevée. En 1430, Jean Regnart, trompette à Sézanne, reçoit 5 francs d'or pour aller s'enquérir de l'état des troupes bourguignonnes<sup>39</sup>. Son commanditaire, Jean de Dunois, lui promet à son retour l'obtention d'un office à Sézanne. En l'absence de fonds spéciaux, l'office promis lui assurera une promotion sociale gratifiante<sup>40</sup>.

37 Philippe DE MÉZIÈRES, pp. 511-512 : « C'est assavoir que par le chevetaine la tierce partie de la despence ou equipolant en finance, par le moyen de ma suer tresamee Discretion, soit despendue et mise en plusieurs et diverses et loyalles espies. »

38 Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms fr. 23997, Christine DE PIZAN, *Livre des faiz d'armes et de chevalerie*, f<sup>o</sup> 36v<sup>o</sup>-38v<sup>o</sup> : le prince « donra argent et promettra grant guerdon ».

39 ADCO, B II 360/1, liasse 9, n<sup>o</sup>4.

40 Archives départementales de l'Isère, B 3 811, f<sup>o</sup> 92r<sup>o</sup>-99r<sup>o</sup> (1478). L'apothicaire Jean Renon se voit proposé par Jean IV de Chalon-Arly d'empoisonner Louis XI. On lui promet

Toutefois, la seule logique comptable ne suffit pas à expliquer l'engagement des acteurs : à côté de l'argent, des ressorts idéologiques et religieux motivent les engagements individuels. L'antagonisme des valeurs<sup>41</sup> religieuses, morales, politiques ou économiques produit de nouvelles valeurs. La conquête du pouvoir par Jean sans Peur, l'alliance anglo-bourguignonne, le dauphin déshérité, heurtent profondément les individus et apparaissent comme des freins à la politique ducal. Certains individus comme Jeannin Million affichent leur fidélité au lys<sup>42</sup>. D'autres prêtent serment à Charles VII tel Jean Regnard. Bastonné dans sa ville, on le surnomme « bourguignon renié ». À l'exemple de l'épouse d'un dénommé le Loup qui profère que « le duc de Bourgogne cuide entrer à Paris. Il entrera ses fourches en son senglent col<sup>43</sup> », plusieurs mentionnent des propos hostiles au duc. Ces engagements révèlent une conscience politique nourrie d'antagonismes religieux et moraux. Ils attestent des effets inattendus de l'antagonisme entre les valeurs portées par ces individus et l'action politique ducal : l'engagement auprès du parti français. Le frère Étienne Charlot<sup>44</sup> formé dans l'entourage de sainte Colette de Corbie († 1447)<sup>45</sup>, proche des milieux princiers, ne reçoit ni or, ni argent. S'il accepte d'aller vers la duchesse de Bourbon, Marie de Berry, c'est pour éventer le projet anglo-bourguignon de s'emparer de Lyon et sauver les vies menacées. La charité fonde l'action droite de ce religieux devenu espion. Il incarne une motivation spirituelle du renseignement.

Le renseignement ne se limite pas à la collecte d'informations : il peut devenir un instrument d'action directe, visant à désorganiser l'adversaire ou à infléchir ses décisions. Georges I<sup>er</sup> de La Trémoille cherche à faire capturer Nicolas Rolin et à retourner Guillaume de Rochefort, au nom de la défense des intérêts

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de le mettre à la tête des Salines de Salins d'une valeur de 2 400 fr. par an. Si l'issue devait être contraire, sa veuve et ses enfants auraient 300 fr. de rentes annuelles ainsi qu'une maison.

41 Shalom H. SCHWARTZ, « Les valeurs de base de la personne : théorie, mesures et applications. », *Revue française de sociologie*, 47, 4 (2006), pp. 929-968 ; Monique WACH, Béatrice HAMMER, *La structure des valeurs est-elle universelle ? Genèse et validation du modèle compréhensif de Schwartz*, Paris, Harmattan, 2003.

42 ADCO, B II 360/1 (1419, février).

43 Sylvette GUILBERT, p. 6.

44 Nicole GONTHIER, pp. 139-151.

45 Pierre DE VAUX, *Vie de sœur Colette, 1450*, Élisabeth LOPEZ (éd.), Saint-Étienne, université Jean-Monnet C.E.R.C.O.R., 1994.

de Charles VII et d'une paix accélérée. Le 18 avril 1433, à la prison de Chalon-sur-Saône, devant Nicolas Rolin et Pierre de Bauffremont, il rapporte plusieurs tentatives d'enlèvement<sup>46</sup> organisées contre le chancelier. Les opérations, confiées à un écuyer à la tête d'une petite troupe, Georget, ont échoué à Semuren-Auxois et Dijon. Elles sont justifiées par la nécessité de préserver les positions de Charles VII afin d'accélérer la paix avec Philippe le Bon. Un an auparavant, à l'occasion d'une ambassade préparatoire à l'assemblée d'Auxerre, qui le conduit à Dijon, Georges I<sup>er</sup> approche Guillaume de Rochefort. Il fait valoir à Guillaume « qu'il était pauvre et qu'il avait longuement servi monseigneur de Bourgogne, mais que le duc ne faisait de bien à personne, pourquoi il lui était besoin de gagner plus<sup>47</sup> ». Concrètement, le grand chambellan du roi propose d'envoyer des hommes capables, une semaine avant l'enlèvement, que Guillaume renseignerait et superviserait, puis de conduire le chancelier capturé en lieu sûr. Guillaume refuse, prétextant être malade. Denisot François et Lonbat, serviteurs de Georges I<sup>er</sup> de La Trémoille, travaillent Guillaume pour faire avancer l'affaire. En parallèle, débute l'opération supervisée par Guyenne. Rochefort est de nouveau approché par le seigneur de Joigny. Beaune, où le chancelier se rend régulièrement, est désigné comme lieu de l'enlèvement. Bien renseigné sur place, La Trémoille connaît l'ensemble de ses déplacements. Le parti français se proposait d'enlever ou de tuer le chancelier par la main du seigneur de Chastellux. La décapitation politique du duché de Bourgogne, par la suppression de Nicolas Rolin, amènerait Philippe le Bon à se soumettre au roi.

D'autres opérations visent des alliés du duc<sup>48</sup> ou relèvent de l'espionnage clandestin, parfois jusqu'au projet d'empoisonnement<sup>49</sup>. Le résultat final de l'action politique secrète répond rarement à l'intention de départ. « On peut même affirmer qu'en règle générale il n'y répond jamais et que très souvent le rapport entre le résultat final et l'intention originale est tout simplement paradoxal.<sup>50</sup> » Sou-

46 Eugène FYOT, « Complot de la Trémoille contre le chancelier Rolin », *Mémoires de la Commission des Antiquités du Département de la Côte-d'Or*, 14 (1901-1905), pp. 103-112 ; Bertrand SCHNERB, *Les Armagnacs et les Bourguignons : la maudite guerre*, Paris, Perrin, 1988, p. 279.

47 ADCO, B 11890 (1433, avril).

48 BEAUREGARD, *Souvenirs d'Amédée VIII, premier duc de Savoie*, Chambéry, 1859, pp. 236-237.

49 ADCO, B 3701, f° 55r°-v° (1442, avril-mai).

50 Max WEBER, *Le savant et la politique*, Paris, Plon, 1959, p. 137.

vent décevantes, ces manœuvres élargissent néanmoins la gamme stratégique du pouvoir royal. Par un calcul « risque / récompense », le souverain accepte l'échec possible. Il mesure l'équilibre entre l'investissement dans un savoir-faire exigeant (la totale clandestinité) et un état final recherché : la démonstration de capacité et la pression exercée contribuent à l'issue politique, notamment à la paix de 1435.

### *Justice extraordinaire*

L'espionnage est toujours une prise de risque ; que ce risque soit politique, juridique ou diplomatique. L'acte d'espionnage est commis en violation du territoire bourguignon sur lequel s'exerce la souveraineté des puissants ducs de Bourgogne. L'opportunité des poursuites pénales revient au parti victime de tels actes. Des mesures extraordinaires de répression sont pleinement justifiées sur le plan juridique, l'espionnage constituant un crime de lèse-majesté<sup>51</sup>. Le sort de l'espion capturé relève autant de sa responsabilité individuelle que de la responsabilité du parti français. Jugés, ils sont condamnés à être traînés sur une claie puis livrés à l'exécuteur de la haute justice qui décapite les coupables, les corps découpés en quartiers sont pendus aux portes des villes, les têtes mises sur des piques et le tronc exposé aux fourches patibulaires. C'est le supplice, réservé au traîtres<sup>52</sup>, enduré par Denis Montbéliard, originaire de France, « homme » du duc de Bourgogne mais « *espie* et traître<sup>53</sup> » envers son seigneur. Néanmoins les hommes et les femmes qui espionnent sous la contrainte bénéficient souvent d'une lettre de rémission<sup>54</sup>. Le déroulement des investigations montre qu'il s'agit d'affaires extraordinaires traitées selon une procédure inquisitoire elle aussi extraordinaire. Plusieurs affaires le montrent. D'abord celles des suspects Jean Regnart, originaire de Sézanne, et Vincent Gayet, qui vient de Lyon<sup>55</sup>. Ces individus

51 Vincent CHALLET, « La lèse-majesté ou l'impossible récit », *Récit et justice*, Lucien FAGGION et Christophe RÉGINA (dir.), Presses universitaires de Provence, 2014, pp. 53-66. L'auteur montre que la lèse-majesté n'existe pas comme un fait évident, mais comme une qualification juridique imposée par le pouvoir princier.

52 Rudi BEAULANT, *Criminalité et justice*, cit., p. 122.

53 ADCO, B 3665, f° 8r° (1432, février).

54 *Choix de pièces inédites relatives au règne de Charles VI*, vol. 1, éd. Louis DOUËT D'ARCO, Paris, 1864, pp. 348-349, pièce CLIII (1412, mai 20).

55 Rudi BEAULANT, « Espionnage, Torture », cit., pp. 87-104.

sans envergure sont rapidement passés à la question : Vincent Gayet est torturé le jour de son arrestation après avoir nier toute mission d'espionnage. Jean Regnard, d'abord relâché sans torture à la demande de son ancien maître, Charles de Vergy, reste suspect. Son statut social et ses liens avec un puissant seigneur expliquent la prudence initiale de la mairie de Dijon. Une enquête menée à Sézanne par Jehanne Lesquarrie établit qu'il sert les Armagnacs ; arrêté de nouveau, il avoue espionner pour le parti de Charles VII. Les deux espions sont finalement exécutés<sup>56</sup>. Une troisième affaire se déroule à l'automne 1432, alors qu'une entrevue de paix est prévue à Auxerre<sup>57</sup>. Début octobre, plusieurs hommes sont arrêtés à Dijon, soupçonnés de préparer la prise de la ville pour le roi. Parmi eux figurent Nicolas Bouclote, Colinet de Paris et le héraut Guyenne, nous l'avons vu, l'un des hérauts de Charles VII. Le procès de Nicolas Bouclote (2-8 octobre 1432) est expéditif : il subit quatre séances de torture en moins de six jours afin de briser son silence. Il admet avoir menti en raison du serment prêté à ses complices et à ses commanditaires, engagement rompu sous la contrainte. Colinet de Paris et Guyenne sont torturés deux fois chacun ; une procédure légèrement moins hâtive s'explique en raison de la valeur plus haute de ces deux derniers agents français. Il est finalement décidé que Nicolas Bouclote et Colinet de Paris doivent être condamnés à mort.

Le renseignement devient une pratique intégrée à la souveraineté. Le roi monopolise l'illégalité légitime. Ce que Charles VII stabilise, Louis XI va l'exploiter stratégiquement.

## Le renseignement comme arme d'hégémonie

Lorsque Louis XI accède au pouvoir, l'appareil existe déjà ; il change de nature. Le renseignement n'est plus seulement un outil de guerre, mais un instrument de gouvernement. Interceptions, qualifications judiciaires, diffamations héraldiques et répressions exemplaires montrent que l'information devient un levier de domination politique. Le secret, la trahison et la lèse-majesté sont intégrés à une stratégie de contrôle des fidélités. Ainsi se dessine le passage d'un renseignement de survie monarchique à un renseignement d'État.

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<sup>56</sup> ADCO, B II 360/1, liasse 9, n°4 (1432, octobre 8) ; *ibid.*, n°5 (1432, octobre 15).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

### *D'un renseignement défensif à un renseignement d'encerclement*

Ce changement de paradigme est visible dans la guerre économique que livrent les rois de France contre la Bourgogne à Genève. Il est ordonné dès mars 1422, à un certain Jean de Gou, de se rendre à la foire de Genève une importante place marchande pour la maison de Bourgogne, notamment dans ses relations avec l'Italie. L'observation des marchands qui la fréquentent, des marchandises exposées et de leurs provenances, traduit l'activité derrière la frontière et reste un soutien à l'économie. Affaiblir la foire de Genève, c'est porter un coup sérieux à son ennemi. Louis XI y parviendra en déclenchant une guerre économique contre la foire de Genève en 1462<sup>58</sup>. Les marchands de Lyon sont idéalement placés et les sites miniers des Alpes sont fortement sollicités. Ce coup de force renforce la place lyonnaise au point que certains banquiers italiens relocalisent leur succursale de Genève à Lyon entre 1462 et 1466. Venise fait aussi l'objet du boycott royal. Les actions de renseignement peuvent être des missions de médiation avec les autorités locales. Les contacts noués dans la discrétion garantissent des marchés si les dépenses de modernisation et d'équipements suivent. Effectivement Charles VII et Louis XI modernisent leurs armées. La poudre à canon et les armes à feu font la réputation de la place de Tours où Allemands et Lombards se sont installés sous Charles VII. Louis XI profite de la réputation de la place. On y passe des commandes ou on y importe depuis la Lombardie et l'Empire. Lyon s'affirme comme un pivot dans le remu des hommes et des marchandises sur le chemin en direction de l'Italie et de la Méditerranée.

### *Systématisation de l'interception des courriers et de la surveillance des ambassades*

Le texte *Le Rosier des guerres* insiste sur la nécessité d'une veille permanente, par des espions sûrs dans les rangs de l'ennemi, laquelle garantit au prince la capacité de nuire à son adversaire et à se garder de ses coups :

« Il est nécessaire au prince de veiller à toute heure à ce qu'il doit faire. Il ne doit pas être ignorant de connaître la condition de ceux qui sont près et

58 Ali LAÏDI, « Louis XI : un stratège économique », *Histoire mondiale de la guerre économique*, Paris, Tempus, 2004, pp. 187-199 ; Henri DUBOIS, « Le commerce de la France au temps de Louis XI. Expansion ou défensive ? », in Bernard CHEVALIER et Philippe CONTAMINE, *La France de la fin du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Renouveau et apogée*, Paris, CNRS, 1985, pp. 13-30.

de ceux qui sont loin, tant des siens que des ennemis, et quand ils sont en nombre, et quels gens ils ont, et d'envoyer des espions sûrs et loyaux dans l'armée de ses ennemis.<sup>59</sup> »

Le meilleur moyen ajoute-t-il pour se renseigner sur l'ennemi, ou le désinformer, est d'envoyer un espion sûr et loyal jouant le rôle du fuyard ou du traître, bien qu'il reconnaisse que le risque est grand de voir cet agent démasqué et interrogé. L'incertitude politique conduit à violer consciemment les usages en vigueur. Décider d'espionner, de franchir les frontières sous une fausse identité, de voler des documents ou de réaliser des entraves physiques se pratique nécessairement dans l'illégalité. Supprimer les messagers de l'ennemi désorganise les lignes de communication et entrave ses capacités de commandement. Les Bourguignons font de même ; le 5 mars 1470, Jean Symon, châtelain de Bos, conduit de Charolles à Dijon un prisonnier porteur de lettres closes adressées à la dame de La Clayette par le sénéchal de Beaucaire pour le roi. Le duc de Bourgogne avait ordonné d'arrêter quiconque serait trouvé porteur de lettres de la part des sujets du roi aux sujets du duc. Il défend

« à tous les habitants du Charollais d'estre si hardys de recevoir lettres de nulles gens des pays du roy, ne avoir créance à aucun d'eulx, sous peine de confiscation de corps et de bien<sup>60</sup>. »

Ces interceptions révèlent des interactions, la géographie et le contenu des réseaux. Cette pratique révèle à Louis XI les intrigues du cardinal Jean de la Balue, conseiller d'État, avec le duc de Bourgogne. Le cardinal sera enchaîné aux célèbres « fillettes du roi » pendant onze ans, de 1469 à 1480<sup>61</sup>. Philippe de Commines, au livre III chapitre 8 de ses *Mémoires*, « Manœuvres des princes », confirme le rôle volontairement flou du messenger comme de l'ambassadeur :

« Et pour un messenger ou une ambassade qu'ils m'enverraient, je leur en enverrais deux. Et même s'ils se lassaient et me demandaient de ne plus en renvoyer, je continuerais à leur en envoyer quand l'opportunité et le moyen s'en présenteraient, car vous ne sauriez envoyer un seul espion si bon ni si sûr qu'il eût l'occasion de voir et d'entendre. Mais si vos gens sont deux ou trois, il est impossible qu'on puisse exercer une si bonne surveillance sans

59 Pierre CHOISNET, f° 27r°.

60 ADCO, B 3974 (1470, février 28).

61 Eugène DÉPREZ, « La trahison du Cardinal Balue (1469) (Chanson et ballades inédites) », *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, 19 (1899), pp. 259-296 ; Joël BLANCHARD et Pierre-Anne FORCADET (éd.), *Procès politiques au temps de Louis XI : le cardinal Balue, lèse-majesté en débat*, Genève, Droz, 2022.

que l'un ou l'autre ne recueille quelques propos ou n'obtienne quelques renseignements de quelqu'un en secret.<sup>62</sup> »

Le roi de France est bien conscient de ces ambiguïtés. La diplomatie et le renseignement sont à la fois concurrents et collaborateurs. Philippe de Commynes conclut que le messenger, l'espion et l'ambassadeur sont identiques dans leur fonction puisqu'ils participent pleinement au couple fondamental « *timor / amor* ». Les envoyés des princes alliés sont toujours suspects car l'amitié des princes ne dure pas. Les plénipotentiaires ennemis doivent être étroitement surveillés et renvoyés chez eux après audience. Jean v de Bueil faisait déjà la remarque que l'envoyé est « en ambassade devant les adversaires pour les espier ». La transparence audacieuse de ces attaques pose question. Lorsque Charles VII ou Louis XI ne respectent pas les normes, ils agissent publiquement et sans honte ou malaise. C'est une façon très efficace de détruire l'efficacité de la loi et des normes. L'espionnage politique avec ses pratiques illégales d'interception et d'ouverture du courrier, de corruption de conseillers, entretient un flou qui devient le symptôme d'une époque troublée. Le roi, qui agit souvent avec ruse, selon les diplomates italiens, donne le change à ses interlocuteurs. Il rend difficile toute interprétation de ses faits et gestes.

### *Publicisation assumée de la transgression*

Il est difficile d'évaluer les opérations de propagande<sup>63</sup> et de déstabilisation visant à exercer une influence secrète sur les décisions du duché de Bourgogne. Ces actions laissent peu de traces. En juillet 1413, au temps de la révolte cabochienne soutenue par Jean sans Peur, le capitaine de Melun arrête un certain Etienne Artuis. On découvre sur lui « une balade qui parlait contre ceux de Paris ». Il propagait une chanson hostile aux Bourguignons. Torturé, il avoua venir d'Orléans et servir l'archevêque de Sens qui l'avait chargé de passer par Paris, Corbeil et Melun pour collecter des renseignements sur les garnisons. Les documents révèlent des actions de propagande en faveur de la cause française en Bourgogne. De « très malvaises paroles [...] contre l'onneur de Monseigneur de Charrolois<sup>64</sup> » sont prononcées ou encore, après la guerre du Bien Public, un individu venu de

62 Philippe DE COMMYNES, p. 227.

63 André LEGUAI, « Espions et propagandistes », cit., pp. 50-55.

64 ADCO, B II 360/10 (1466, août 24).

France est signalé pour ces propos :

« Le Charolois a fait faulsement et traitreusement de venir assaillir le Roy au plus profond de son royaume, qui ne lui demandoit riens, mais le Roy avoit entencion et bien entrepris que dedans brief temps il l'en pugniroit et paieroit bien<sup>65</sup> »

Chansons et ballades moquent le cardinal Jean de la Balue<sup>66</sup> traître à la cause française, en 1469, en faveur de Charles le Téméraire. En 1475, Guillaume Grosbois provoque la panique dans le village d'Orgeux, voisin de Dijon, en criant : « Vive le Roy et Saint-Denis !<sup>67</sup> ». Son interrogatoire révèle que sa mission est bien de fournir aux capitaines du roi des renseignements précis sur la situation militaire du Dijonnais visé par les plans d'offensive de l'armée royale. Les agents et propagandistes du roi ne sont ni l'alpha ni l'oméga de la politique extérieure du royaume ; ils ne sont pas les seuls acteurs et les souverains ne peuvent pas tout attendre de leurs espions. Le cas des agents subalternes éclaire les marges du système ; celui des grands princes révèle, à une autre échelle, les mêmes tensions entre fidélité, intérêt et contrainte.

L'usage de la trahison devient un outil de contrôle. Jean IV de Chalon-Arlay, prince d'Orange incarne l'instabilité politique des grands princes à la fin du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>68</sup>. Héritier d'une famille solidement implantée en Franche-Comté, allié par mariage aux Bourbons et apparenté au duc de Bretagne, il occupe une position stratégique entre Empire, royaume de France et duché de Bourgogne. D'abord fidèle aux ducs de Bourgogne – il participe notamment à l'entrevue de Péronne en 1468 –, il rompt avec Charles le Téméraire en 1470 à la suite de conflits successoraux et choisit de se rallier à Louis XI. Récompensé par le roi, il reçoit en 1477 le commandement de l'armée chargée de reprendre la Bourgogne<sup>69</sup>. Il entre à Dijon

65 *Ibid.*, depuis la ligue du Bien public et le traité de Conflans (1465), le duc de Bourgogne est de nouveau le principal adversaire du roi de France encourageant les grands princes hostiles à Louis XI et recherchant des alliances étrangères.

66 Eugène DÉPREZ, pp. 259-296.

67 ADCO, B II 360/12 (1475, juin 19).

68 Dominique LE PAGE, « Jean IV de Chalon-Arlay, un prince frontalier en révolte (v. 1470-v. 1490) », *La noblesse des marches de Bourgogne et d'ailleurs au temps de Marguerite d'Autriche (xv<sup>e</sup>-xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Bourg-en-Bresse, 2016 ; Georges BISCHOFF, « « Le prince des trente deniers ». Jean IV de Chalon-Arlay, prince d'Orange, entre France et Bourgogne (1468-1482) », *Publications du centre européen d'études bourguignonnes*, 2017, pp. 15-23.

69 André LEGUAL, « La conquête de la Bourgogne par Louis XI », *Annales de Bourgogne*, 49 (1977), pp. 7-12.

en février. Mais, frustré de ne pas obtenir le gouvernement de la Comté et privé de ses terres par Georges II de La Trémoille, il opère un spectaculaire revirement : dès la fin février 1477, il rejoint Marie de Bourgogne et devient l'un des chefs de la résistance comtoise contre l'occupation française. Son prestige entraîne dans la révolte une partie importante de la noblesse locale et provoque une série de soulèvements (mutemaque de Dijon, reprises de Gray et Dole, agitation en Auxois et en Charolais)<sup>70</sup>. Louis XI réagit par une stratégie mêlant isolement diplomatique et réorganisation militaire. En 1479, l'avantage revient aux Français. La répression qui suit est exemplaire. Jugé par contumace par le Parlement de Paris, le prince est banni et symboliquement exécuté par effigie. Ses armes sont renversées (*subversio armorum*), ses images pendues et brûlées publiquement dans plusieurs villes du royaume (Paris, Dijon, Mâcon, Bourges), son hôtel détruit et ses terres confisquées<sup>71</sup>. Une intense campagne de proclamations dans les bailliages présente Jean IV comme traître aux allures quasi diabolique, Louis XI allant jusqu'à le qualifier de « prince des trente deniers », assimilé à Judas. Ce cas spectaculaire révèle la dimension politique de la justice royale. La condamnation ne vise pas seulement à punir un rebelle, mais à produire un effet public d'intimidation. Par la mise en scène de la déchéance héraldique et la diffusion orchestrée de l'infamie, le pouvoir monarchique affirme son monopole de la qualification de la trahison et transforme la sanction en instrument de gouvernement.

Sous Louis XI le renseignement ne sert plus seulement à connaître. Il sert à désarticuler l'adversaire, à produire de l'incertitude et à imposer un rapport de force permanent.

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70 Jean DEVAUX, « Les soulèvements urbains de 1477 sous le regard des chroniqueurs du temps », *51<sup>e</sup> Congrès de la Fédération des Cercles d'archéologie et d'histoire de Belgique*, vol. 2 (1994), pp. 391-411 ; Adrien CARBONNET et Rudi BEAULANT, « La Mutemaque de Dijon. Nouveau regard sur une conspiration contre Louis XI en 1477 », *Revue historique*, 716, 4 (2025), pp.653-695.

71 Laurent HABLLOT, « « Sens dessus dessous ». Le Blason de la trahison au Moyen Age », in Maïté BILLORÉ et Myriam SORIA (dir.), *La trahison au Moyen Age. De la monstruosité au crime politique* (V<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle), Rennes, 2009, pp. 331-347 ; -, « Corps ravagés, emblèmes outragés. L'utilisation de l'emblématique dans les châtiments à la fin du Moyen Age », in Maïté BILLORÉ et Myriam SORIA (dir.), *Corps outragés, corps ravagés*, Rennes, 2010, pp. 139-154.

## Conclusion

L'étude des activités de renseignement menées par les rois de France en Bourgogne ducale au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle révèle bien davantage qu'un ensemble de pratiques clandestines liées aux circonstances de la guerre. Entre 1415 et 1483, ces opérations – surveillance des frontières, infiltration des villes, tentatives d'enlèvement, interception des courriers, manipulation de réseaux marchands ou diplomatiques – accompagnent et traduisent les mutations profondes du pouvoir monarchique. Sous Charles VII, le renseignement répond d'abord à une situation d'extrême vulnérabilité. Confrontée à la double monarchie issue du traité de Troyes, à l'alliance anglo-bourguignonne et à la contestation de sa légitimité, la couronne recourt à des réseaux souvent fragiles, dépendants de capitaines entreprenants et financés par des moyens extraordinaires. Il s'agit alors de prévenir les surprises stratégiques, de mesurer les forces adverses et, parfois, de tenter des coups décisifs destinés à briser l'encerclement politique. Le renseignement est un instrument de survie dynastique et de restauration territoriale. Avec Louis XI, sans rupture institutionnelle spectaculaire mais par une transformation progressive des usages, le renseignement change d'échelle et de finalité. Dans un royaume consolidé, il devient un outil d'encerclement et de désarticulation de la puissance bourguignonne. La guerre économique menée contre la foire de Genève, la systématisation des interceptions de correspondance, l'exploitation des rivalités internes au camp adverse ou encore l'imbrication étroite entre diplomatie et espionnage témoignent d'une stratégie plus offensive. Il ne s'agit plus seulement de savoir pour se défendre, mais d'agir pour affaiblir, isoler et contraindre.

Cette évolution met en lumière un point essentiel : le renseignement constitue l'un des lieux privilégiés où s'expérimente le monopole royal de la transgression légitime. Espionner, corrompre, intercepter, juger et exécuter pour crime de lèse-majesté relèvent d'une même logique souveraine. Les rois de France ne cherchent pas à institutionnaliser un « service » spécialisé comparable aux organes administratifs permanents du royaume ; ils intègrent plutôt le secret et l'illégalité maîtrisée au cœur même de la décision politique. Le caractère formellement extra juridique de ces pratiques n'en fait pas des anomalies : il révèle au contraire la capacité du pouvoir monarchique à suspendre ou contourner la norme au nom de la sauvegarde du royaume. En Bourgogne ducale, le renseignement apparaît ainsi comme un laboratoire de la souveraineté au bas Moyen Âge. D'outil de survie dans un contexte de guerre civile et de crise dynastique, il devient, à

la fin du siècle, un instrument de gouvernement et d'intimidation stratégique. Par sa permanence, sa plasticité et son efficacité relative, il contribue moins à créer une institution nouvelle qu'à affermir une compétence : celle d'un roi capable de gouverner par l'information, mais aussi par l'incertitude qu'il impose à ses adversaires. C'est bien cette fonction que Louis XI, dans la dédicace du *Rosier des guerres*, invitait son fils à méditer lorsqu'il évoquait les œuvres « servans à la garde, défense et gouvernement d'ung royaume<sup>72</sup> ».

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# The Black Ethiopian: Crusader King Ferdinand of Aragon and the Heraldry of Wallachia and Moldavia

by ALEXANDRU SIMON

**ABSTRACT.** The usage of human figures, “from head to toe”, coloured black continues to represent a delicate and controversial matter. In the cases of medieval Wallachia and Moldavia, the colour black seems to have been “genetically embedded” in their history, from the founding voivode of Wallachia (the “Black Voivode”), according to tradition, to the oriental name of Moldavia (*Carabogdan*), also rooted in the name of its first official ruler (Bogdan). The discovery of grant of arms made by King Ferdinand I of Aragon, in Perpignan (1415), to two brothers of Wallachian origin, in King Sigismund of Luxemburg’s retinue, allows us to readdress the issue in a larger framework. The said brothers, George and Valentin, the sons of Peter (*Petrusian?*) of Wallachia, had requested and received a standing armed “Black Ethiopian” from the Iberian monarch. They came from the extremities of the anti-Ottoman crusader front to those of the anti-Moorish crusader front. Nevertheless, the “Black person” on their coat of arms was not reduced to a decapitated head, but was depicted in a most dignified manner.

**KEYWORDS:** Ferdinand I of Aragon, Sigismund of Luxemburg, George and Valentin, sons of Peter of Wallachia, crusading, heraldry, “Black people” in the Middle Ages.

**T**he symbolism of “Black people” representations in medieval Christian visual – political and social – arts, that is in various coats of arms (from the Archbishops of Freising to Thomas More<sup>1</sup>), continues to pose numerous questions.<sup>2</sup> To them we add one coming from parts unknown for their me-

1 In More’s case, the black head however was on top of the helmet crest and not on the blazon.

2 E.g. Michael F. Schlamp, *Der Mohrenkopf im Wappen der Bischöfe von Freising* (offprint *Frigisinga*, 7) (Freising, 1930); Lorenz Seelig, “Christoph Jamnitzer’s ‘Moor’s Head’: A Late Renaissance Drinking Vessel,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, eds. T[homas]. F[oster]. Earle, K[atherine]. J. P. Lowe (Cambridge, 2005), 181-212; Joaneath

dieval interactions with “black people”, i.e., Wallachia, but for which the word “black” was rather often employed (e.g. *Negru Vodă* / “the Black Voivode”, that is the mythical founder of Wallachia, or *Carabogdan* / “Black Bogdan” for the ruler of Moldavia, called also *Bogdania*, after its first ruler).<sup>3</sup> Explanations for the use of “black” rank, in the Wallachian case, from geography (in the chromatic geography of Eastern origins, black stands for the north) to status (black equals subjected/vassal).<sup>4</sup> Considering also the altogether delicate nature of the topic, our focus will thus be quite narrow: on a coat of arms granted by Ferdinand I of Aragon to noblemen in Sigismund of Luxemburg’s entourage.<sup>5</sup>

### *Aragonese coats of arms granted to lords from the East of Europe in 1415*

In autumn 1415, Ferdinand met with Sigismund in Perpignan, in the aim of accelerating the end of the Western Schism by determining Pope Benedict XIII to resign and therefore enable the election of one single pope.<sup>6</sup> Even though Ferdinand and Sigismund bonded at summit in Perpignan, the Iberian born Benedict, also present at the gathering, refused to step down.<sup>7</sup> Soon after, Ferdinand passed

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Spicer, “Free Men and Women of African Ancestry in Renaissance Europe,” in *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe*, ed. J. Spicer (Baltimore, MD, 2013<sup>3</sup>), 81-98, at 93 (note 19).

- 3 Adolf Ambruster, “Terminologia politico-geografică și etnică a Țărilor Române în epoca constituirii statale,” in *Constituirea statelor feudale românești. Studii*, ed. Nicolae Stoicescu (Bucharest, 1980), 251-260.
- 4 Tasin Gemil, “Cumano-tătarii și începuturile statelor românești,” in *Istoria ca datorie. Omagiu profesorului Ioan-Aurel Pop la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani*, eds. Ioan Bolovan, Ovidiu Ghitta (Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 333-342.
- 5 We have first addressed the matter in “Un negru pe blazon: cavalerii din Valahia ai regelui Sigismund de Luxemburg la curtea regelui Ferdinand I de Aragon (1415)”, în “Multum laboravistis propter nos et propter bonum pacis et unionis: *episoade și reverberații ale Evului Mediu. Profesorului Ioan-Aurel Pop, în al șaptezecilea an al vieții*, eds. Adinel C. Dincă, A. Simon, I (Cluj-Napoca, 2025), 19-36.
- 6 Gerald Schwedler, *Herrschartreffen des Spätmittelalters. Formen – Rituale – Wirkungen* (=Mittelalter-Forschungen, 21) (Ostfildern, 2008), 459-460; *Perpignan 1415. Un sommet européen à l’époque du Grand Schisme d’Occident* (=Geschichte und Kultur der iberischen Welt, 15), eds. Aymat Catafau, Nikolas Jaspert, Thomas Wetzstein (Zürich, 2018).
- 7 Antal Áldásy, *Zsigmond király és Spanyolország* (Budapest 1927), 34-37; N. Jaspert, “Das aragonische Dilemma. Die Heimat Benedikts XIII. zwischen Obödienzstreit, herrschaftlichem Umbruch und internationaler Verflechtung,” in *Das Konstanzer Konzil als europäisches Ereignis* (=Vorträge und Forschungen, 79), eds. Gabriela Signori, Brigit Studt (Ostfildern, 2014), 107-141.



„Herzog dispott in der meren Walachy”

„Herzog von Ascholott hider der Walachye”

„Thebemur aus der Walachei”

### Wallachian related coats of arms in Ulrich von Richental’s chronicle

(open access)

away (spring 1416), and Sigismund had to resume his imperial quest for Christian unity, not only in the West, but also between East and West, in view of yet another anti-Ottoman crusade.<sup>8</sup>

In this respect, Ferdinand’s death can be regarded as an important blow to Sigismund’s designs.<sup>9</sup> The Aragonese monarch had also proven to be a generous host in relation to a select few members of Sigismund’s, as usual, most colourful retinue.<sup>10</sup> The count-palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary, Nicholas II Gorjanski (Garai), was inducted by Ferdinand into the Order of the Jar and Stole he had established.<sup>11</sup> Peter Cech (Cseh), master of the horse (and a member of Sigis-

8 Attila Bárány, “Zsigmond király 1416-os angliai kísérete,” *Aetas*, 19, no. 3 (2004): 5-30, at 8-12; *Causa unionis, causa fidei, causa reformationis in capite et membris. Tanulmányok a konstanzi zsinat 600. évfordulója alkalmából*, eds. A. Bárány, László Pósan (Debrecen, 2014).

9 See also Ádám Anderle, “Az aragón kapcsolat (V. Alfonz, el Magnánimo és a magyar trón),” *Történelmi Szemle*, 38, no. 4 (1996): 401-411, at 409-410.

10 Cf. Francisca Vendrell Gallostra, “Caballeros centroeuropeos en la Corte Aragonesa,” *Miscellanea Barcinonensia*, 10 (1971): 19-43 (republished under the same title in *Magyar Történelmi Szemle*, 2, no. 2 (1971): 217-241).

11 Archivo de la Corona de Aragon, Barcelona (ACA), Real Cancilleria, Registros, *Ferran I*, reg. 2391. 1415-1416 [=Comune Sigilii Secreti, <reg.>11], f. 61<sup>r</sup> (20 December 1415; Vendrell Gallostra, “Caballeros centroeuropeos,” no. 7, p. 239; at that time, Garai had already left Perpignan, together with Sigismund, heading for Avignon and then Paris, where, on 26 March 1416, the palatine was granted a coat of arms, featuring a serpent, by King

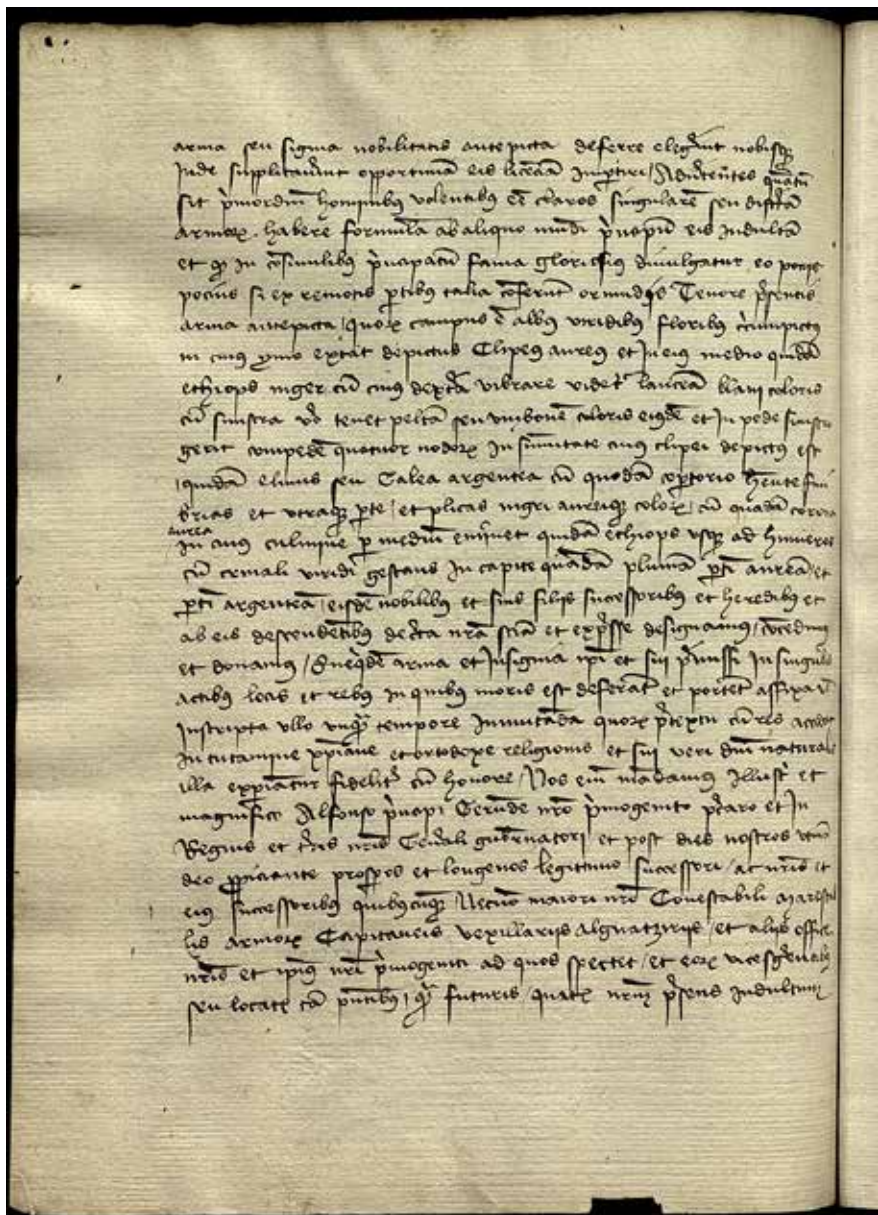
mund's Order of the Dragon), and his kindred were granted a coat of arms.<sup>12</sup> The recipients of the other coat of arms issued in Perpignan, on the same day, were the brothers George and Valentin, Peter of Wallachia's sons.<sup>13</sup>

*Nos FFerdinandus etc. Regalem decet excellenciam ex innexa potestate illis quj armorum insignia preter propria gestare desiderant si ea deuote postantur libenti animo et munifico licenciam elargiri. Cum igitur nobiles Georgius et Valentinus Petri de Valquja<sup>14</sup> fratres oriundi Regni Hungarie certis respectibus et motiuis honorem ipsorum dilatantibus arma seu signia nobilitatis ante picta deferre elegerint nobisque inde supplicauerint opportunam eis licenciam impartiri, Aduertentes quantum sit primordium hominibus volentibus esse claros singularem seu discretam armorum habere formulam ab aliquo mundi principum eis indultam et quod in consimilibus principatum fama gloriosius diuulgatur eo potius si ex remotis partibus talia conferunt oriundis. Tenore presentis arma antepicta quorum campus est albus viridibus floribus circumpictus in cuius ymo extat depictus Cli-*

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Charles VI of Valois; Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (MNL), Országos Levéltár (OL), Budapest, Diplomataikai Fényképgyűjtemény (DF), [no.] 283583; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár, V. 1415-1416* (=A Magyar Országos Levéltár kiadványai, II, 27), eds. Elemer Mályusz, Iván Borsa (Budapest, 1997), no. 1694, p. 466). On the order (established in 1403): Angus MacKay, "Ferdinand of Antequera and the Virgin Mary," in *Love, Religion and Politics in Fifteenth Century Spain*, eds. Ian Macpherson, A. MacKay (Leiden – Boston – Cologne, 1998), 132-139; Emir O. Filipović, "O aragonskom viteškom redu Stole i vaze u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni," *Radovi: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest*, 52, no. 3 (2020): 69-99. According to his tombstone (but not according to any known document), Stephen, the brother of chancellor John Perényi, was also inducted into the Order of the Jar and Stove by King Ferdinand (A. Bárány, "English Chivalric Insignia in Hungary," in *Műveltség és társadalmi szerepek: arisztokraták Magyarországon és Európában. Learning, Intellect and Social Roles: Aristocrats in Hungary and Europe* (=Speculum Historiae Debreceniense, 18), eds. A. Bárány, István Orosz, Klára Papp, Bálint Vinkler (Debrecen, 2014), 73-96, at 83).

- 12 Cf. László Fejérpataky, "A Hettyey család Aragoniai czimere," *Turul*, 15 (1897): 187-189. For the coat of arms (with a crowned leopard holding a bleeding hare between its teeth): MNL-OL, DF 283583 (20 October 1415). A coeval copy of the charter can be found in ACA, Real Cancilleria, Registros, *Ferran I, reg. 2394. 1413-1416* [=Gratiarium, reg. III. 1413-1416, and *Gratiarium Sicilie, reg. I. 1413-1414*], ff. 104<sup>v</sup>-105<sup>r</sup> (partially edited in Vendrell Gallostra, "Caballeros centroeuropeos," no. 5, pp. 237-238). Previously, on 29 September 1415, while still in Perpignan, Sigismund of Luxemburg had granted a coat of arms to Blasius Buzlai and his relatives. The coat of arms featured a griffon (MNL, Diplomataikai Levéltár (DL), [no.] 71753; Zs. Okl., V, no. 1091, p. 313).
- 13 ACA, Real Cancilleria, Registros, *Ferran I, reg. 2395. 1414-1416* [=Gratiarium, reg. IV. 1415, mayo-1416, marzo, and *Donacionum, I. 1414, agosto-1415, noviembre*], ff. 147<sup>r</sup>-148<sup>r</sup> (the document, mentioned in Hungarian historiography solely by Anderle, was partially edited in Vendrell Gallostra, "Caballeros centroeuropeos," no. 6, p. 239).
- 14 Written above. In the text (erased): *Vallria, Valliria* or *Vallocia*.



The description of the coat of arms granted to the George and Valentin, the sons of Peter of Wallachia, by King Ferdinand I of Aragon, in Perpignan, on 20 October 1415

(Archivo de la Corona de Aragon, Barcelona, Real Cancilleria, Registros, *Ferran I*, reg. 2395. 1414-1416 [=Gratiarum, reg. IV. 1415, mayo-1416, marzo, și Donacionum, I. 1414, agosto-1415, noviembre], f. 147<sup>v</sup>)

*peus aureus et in eius medio quidam ethiops niger cum eius dextera vibrare videtur lanceam blauj coloris, cum sinistra vero tenet peltam seu vmbonem coloris eiusdem [...] (Perpignan, 20 October 1415).<sup>15</sup>*

Their coat of arms had a black Ethiopian at its centre, depicted holding a lance and a shield, in almost majestic manner.<sup>16</sup> This had been the request of the brothers granted to them by Ferdinand I of Aragon.<sup>17</sup> Given that little is known about Wallachian/Wallachian related heraldry and chivalric culture (we are informed only that the members of the ruling elites had an eye for Western fashion,<sup>18</sup> that Wallachians participated in jousts in Buda in 1412,<sup>19</sup> and that Mircea I, officially still the ruler of Wallachia in 1415, had knighted a Moravian nobleman some two decades earlier<sup>20</sup>), the choice of the brothers seems odd. Additionally, previously, the oldest documented coats of arms received by Wallachians/Wallachian related figures dated to John Hunyadi's time as governor of Hungary.<sup>21</sup>

15 ACA, Real Cancilleria, Registros, *Ferran I*, reg. 2395, f. 147<sup>r-v</sup>. For the charter: Simon, "Un negru pe blazon," 29-32.

16 We advise much caution in relation to the "reconstructions" of the coat of arms granted by Ferdinand of Aragon on 20 October 1415, appended at the end of Vendrell Gallostra's study "Caballeros centroeuropeos," (drawings by Susana María Alkarovits). A comparison with Peter Cech's preserved coat of arms (in MNL-OL, DF 283583; of which the first editor of the documents was seemingly unaware) reveals very few common elements.

17 The text of the charter is more than explicit in this respect.

18 For an overview (in relation to both Wallachia and Moldavia): Adrian Ioniță, Beatrice Kelemen, A. Simon, AL WA: prințul negru al Vlahiei și vremurile sale (= *Minerva*, III, 14) (Cluj-Napoca, 2017), 47-63, 456-461.

19 Jan Długosz, *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae* (= *Jan Długosii Senioris Canonici Cracoviensis Opera omnia*, 10-14), ed. Alexander Przedziecki, IV (Krakow, 1877), 140-141. On the source: P[etre]. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (Bucharest, 1944<sup>1</sup>), 133-134.

20 For the ring: Heinz Rohlik, "Rohlik," *Deutsches Geschlechtsbuch*, 219 (2007): 155-174, at 166. On the context: A. Simon, "At the Turn of the Fourteenth Century: Notes on Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Wallachian Princely *Stars* of the Fifteenth Century," *Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis*, 19 (2020): 135-155, at 149 (note 82).

21 Dénes Radocsay, "Gotische Wappenbilder auf ungarischen Adelsbriefen," *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 5 (1958): 317-358, at 356; Ioan Drăgan, *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania între anii 1440-1514* (Bucharest, 2000), 198-202.

“Blackheads” and Turks in the 1410s

The summit in Perpignan was held after the beginning of the Council of Constance (1414-1418).<sup>22</sup> Based on Ulrich von Richental’s posthumously published drawings,<sup>23</sup> the council witnessed also the emergence of “blackheads” on coats of arms associated with either *Walachia Maior* (Wallachia, whose official insignia was an aquila) or *Walachia Minor* (Moldavia, whose coat of arms had an auroch at its centre).<sup>24</sup> With one exception dating from precisely 1415 (the coat of arms for John Baróc Mellétei and his relatives, granted in March, and in Constance, by Sigismund),<sup>25</sup> no “blacks” can be encountered in medieval Hungarian heraldry,<sup>26</sup> to which the brothers George and Valentin, explicitly mentioned as *oriundi Regni Hungarie*<sup>27</sup> in Ferdinand’s charter, should have related their image choices. Amidst the controversies generated by the “unofficial” Wallachian state coats of

22 Philip H. Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance (1414-1418)* (=Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 53) (Leiden – New York – Cologne, 1994); Sebastian Kolditz, “Byzanz und das Konstanzer Konzil (1414-1418). Beobachtungen zur griechischen Präsenz und zur vorkonziliaren Korrespondenz Sigismunds und Manuels II.,” *Jahrbücher der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 67 (2017): 43-64.

23 Ulrich Richental, *Die Chronik des Konzils von Konstanz* (=Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Digitale Editionen, I), ed. Thomas Martin Buck (Munich, 2019) (at <https://edition.mgh.de/001/html/>); Gisela Wacker, *Ulrich Richentals Chronik des Konstanzer Konzils und ihre Funktionalisierung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert. Aspekte zur Rekonstruktion der Ur-schrift und zu den Wirkungsabsichten der überlieferten Handschriften und Drucke* [PhD Thesis (Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen)], I (Tübingen, 2002), 10-28. Futile to say perhaps that there is no consensus on Richental’s text(s) and images.

24 G[eorghe]. M. Ionescu, *Etiopienii în Dacia preistorică* (Bucharest, 1926), 47-50; Constantin Karadja, “Delegații din țara noastră la Conciliul de la Constanța (în Baden) în anul 1415,” *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 5 (1927): 59-91, at 66, 81; Dan Cernovodeanu, *Știința și arta heraldică în România* (Bucharest, 1977), 77-78.

25 MNL-OL, DL 50512 (26 March 1415). We return below to his grant of coat of arms (first published by Albert Nyáry, “A Mellétei Baróczy-család armálisa 1415-ből,” *Turul*, 1 (1883): 26-29).

26 For an overview: Iván Nagy, *Magyarország családai: czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, I-XIII (Pest, 1857-1868); Iván Bertényi, *Magyar címertan* (Budapest, 2003). With focus on Sigismund: Szidonia Weisz, *The Price of Fidelity. Donations of Coats of Arms for Nobles from Transylvania during the Reign of Sigismund of Luxemburg* [MA Thesis (Central European University)] (Budapest, 2007). Apparently, Hungarian medieval heraldry was predominantly animal related.

27 The same wording was used in the charter for Peter Cech and no mention of Sigismund was made in either charter.

arms featuring between one and three “blackheads”,<sup>28</sup> the choice of black (head/person) could be regarded as a “Wallachian one”.

The safest explanation for the presence of the black Ethiopian on the brothers’ coat of arms would have been their participation in Ferdinand of Aragon’s much celebrated anti-Moorish actions of 1410 (the conquest of Antequera).<sup>29</sup> Nothing of the sort was recorded in the king’s charter for the sons of Peter of Wallachia. Furthermore, the standing black Ethiopian conflicts the symbolism of the four – decapitated/severed – Moorish heads, attached to the so-called Cross of Alcoraz, on the coat of arms of Aragon.<sup>30</sup> These four heads stood for the four Moorish kings that had allegedly lost their lives to Pedro I of Aragon in 1096, during/after the battle of Alcoraz.<sup>31</sup> In comparison to the House of Aragon, the crusader “track-record” of Sigismund of Luxemburg was, in spite of his propaganda, debatable at best, if one chose to look away from the anti-Ottoman disaster at Nicopolis in 1396.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, as duly noticed by the contemporaries, a key part of Sigismund’s entry into Perpignan was a ‘Turkish king’/‘king of Turkey’, who opened the procession, not as a prisoner of war, but as the sword-bearer of the king of the Romans.<sup>33</sup> The paraded king had been defeated by Sigismund and had consequently

28 For an altogether excessively critical review of historiography: Constantin Rezachevici, “Stema cu «capete de negri»: înlăturarea unei legende din heraldica românească nord-dunăreană,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A. D. Xenopol*, 24 (1987): 71-98. Not much has been contributed to the topic over the past four decades.

29 Pascual Martínez Sopena, “La conquista de Antequera (1410). Reflexiones sobre la construcción de la memoria en la Castilla bajomedieval,” *Boletín de Literatura Oral*, 6, suppl. 2 (2019): 295-310.

30 Maribel Fierro, “Decapitation of Christians and Muslims in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula: Narratives, Images, Contemporary Perceptions,” *Comparative Literature Studies*, 45, no. 2 (2008): 137-164, at 137-140.

31 Bernard F. Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla under King Alfonso VI, 1065-1109* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 282-283.

32 Mark Whelan, *Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Imperial Response to the Ottoman Turkish Threat, c. 1410-1437* [PhD Thesis (Royal Holloway, University of London)] (London, 2014), 79-81; Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389-1526* (= *The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage*, 63) (Leiden – Boston, 2018), 67-68.

33 G. Schwedler, “Perpignan 1415. Union of Monarchs for the Union of the Church. Diplomatic ceremony between politics and protocol,” in *Perpignan*, 443-482.



**The coat of arms of the Hettyey family, i.e., of Peter Cech of Levice (Lévai Cseh) and his relatives, received from King Ferdinand I of Aragon, in Perpignan, on 20 October 1415**

(Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltár, Budapest, Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény, [no.] 283583)

embraced Christianity.<sup>34</sup> It was recently claimed that this all was just an act and that a famous errant poet, Oswald von Wolkenstein, one of Sigismund's interpreters,<sup>35</sup> played the part of the 'Turkish king'.<sup>36</sup> At any rate, a proper 'Turkish king'

34 Álvaro Garcíá de Santa María, *Crónica del Rey don Juan, segundo Rey deste nombre en Castilla y en Leon*, in *Crónicas de los Reyes de Castilla*, ed. Cayetano Rosell, II (Madrid, 1877), 277-696, at 365; *Crónica incompleta del reinado de Fernando I de Aragón* (= *Textos Medievales*, 69), ed. Luis Vela Gormedino (Zaragoza, 1985), 63.

35 *Die Lieder Oswalds von Wolkenstein* (= *Altdeutsche Textbibliothek*, 55), ed. Karl Kurt Klein (Berlin – Boston, 2015<sup>4</sup>), no. 18, p. 48; no. 44, pp. 138-139.

36 See N. Jaspert, "Courtly and Commercial Mobility: The Meeting of Perpignan (1415)

had come in June 1415 to the court of Mircea I of Wallachia, still Sigismund's vassal, namely Mustafa Çelebi, Bayezid I' son.<sup>37</sup> Mircea had (unsuccessfully) attempted to be a sultan-maker during the Ottoman civil war (1402-1413)<sup>38</sup>.

*“Black knight” vs “blackhead”*

Under the circumstances, connecting the black Ethiopian on the coat of arms of the brothers George and Valentin, the sons of Peter of Wallachia, to the ‘Turkish king’ in Sigismund of Luxemburg’s entourage that accompanied him to Perpignan (September-November 1415), and/or to the ‘Turkish king’ who was indeed the guest of Mircea I of Wallachia, earlier, in the summer of the same year, provides the most plausible explanation for the distinctive heraldic feature of the coat of arms granted by King Ferdinand of Aragon in Perpignan in October 1415. The latter connection, i.e., to Mustafa Çelebi, the (defeated) ally of Mircea, has to be considered also because, Peter of Wallachia (an uncommon name for Wallachia at that time), George and’s Valentin’s father, can be identified only (for the time being) with the mysterious *Petrusian*, the associate of Mircea († 1418), at the end of the voivode’s rule (from c. 1412 onwards).<sup>39</sup>

The dignified manner in which the “black warrior” was featured – by the chancery of Ferdinand of Aragon<sup>40</sup> – on the coat of arms of the brothers bears no resemblance to the depictions of the defeated and beheaded Moors on Aragon’s

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and its Effects,” and Sieglinde Hartmann, “Oswald von Wolkenstein à Perpignan: Le chanteur courtois et son seigneur le roi Sigismond,” in *Perpignan*, 260-274, at 272-273 (and note 91), and 389-411, at 400-403. Hence, other attempts at identifying that king were not made.

37 *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, B. Țara Românească, I. 1250-1500, eds. P. P. Panaitescu, Damaschin Mioc, (Bucharest, 1966), no. 38, p. 82.

38 Șerban Papacostea, “La Valachie et la crise de structure de l’Empire Ottoman. (1402-1413),” *Revue Romaine d’Histoire*, 25 (1986), no. 1-2: 23-33; Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid. Empire building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-1413 (=The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage, 38)* (Leiden – Boston – Cologne, 2007), 2-3, 133.

39 Mircea and *Petrusian* issued together ducats (e.g. László Réthy, “Adalékok a havaselvi vajdaság numismatikájához”, *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 12, no. 5 (1892): 433-436; Octavian Iliescu, *Monetele lui Mircea cel Bătrân*, eds. Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Ionel Cădea (Brăila, 2008), 111-112). Mircea already had an associate, his son and successor Michael.

40 The charter was inserted in the register by Pablo Nicolás, the best-known among Ferdinand’s secretaries (Francisco Sevillano Colon, “Cancillerías de Fernando de Antequera y de Alfonso el Magnánimo,” *Anuario Historico del Derecho Español*, [12] (1965): 169-216, at 193-194).



Duke Witold of Lithuania's coat of arms in Ulrich von Richental's chronicle  
(open access)

coat of arms<sup>41</sup>. It also differs significantly from the mentioned coat of arms confirmed – it must be emphasized<sup>42</sup> – only a few months earlier by King Sigismund to John Baróc Mellétei (of Meliata) and his relatives,<sup>43</sup> in which two “blackheads” were placed one above the other (one on the shield and the other on top of the helmet of the shield).<sup>44</sup> The latter charter is important chiefly because it shows that heraldic usage of “blackheads” in the Kingdom of Hungary predated spring 1415 and Sigismund’s major diplomatic journey to the West.<sup>45</sup> This possibility must be also taken into account for the coat of arms of brothers George and Valentin, of ostensibly higher social standing than the Baróc Mellétei (members of the county

41 See also Tamás Szálkai, who, in “Mórabrázolások a heraldikában,” in *Interdiszciplinaritás a régió kutatásban*, III, eds. A. Bárány, T. Szálkai (Debrecen, 2013), 7-20, related the “Moorish head” to Saint Maurice, in the case of settlements. On a “grander scale”, the image on the coat of arms of George and Valentin can be also placed in relation to the late medieval (post 1350) image of two of the Three Magi: Balthazar and also Caspar, deemed and depicted as a *Ethiops niger* chiefly in German-speaking environments (Kristen Collins, Bryan C. Keene, “An African King in Art and Legend,” in *Balthazar: A Black African King in Medieval and Renaissance Art*, eds. K. Collins, B. C. Keene (Los Angeles, 2019), 1-33, at 13).

42 [...] *arma seu nobilitatis insignia in praesentium litterarum nostrarum capite depicta maiestati nostrae exhibendo, ab eadem maiestate nostra eadem arma seu nobilitatis insignia sibi, et per eum annotato patri necnon Georgio, Emerico et Frank carnalibus, item Dominico dicto Rez filio Nicolai et Emerico filio Pauli similiter Barocz dicti de eadem Melleite patruelibus fratribus suis ac haeredibus et posteritatibus ipsorum universis ex liberalitate nostra dari et conferri humiliter et devote supplicavit [...]* (MNL-OL, DL 50512; 26 March 1415).

43 István Kádas, “The Society of the Noble Judges in Northeastern Hungary during the Reign of King Sigismund (1387-1437),” in *Secular Power and Sacral Authority in Medieval East-Central Europe* (= *Central European Medieval Studies*, 2), eds. Kosana Jovanović, Suzana Miljan (Amsterdam, 2018), 97-110, at 101, 103.

44 The head on the shield belonged to a bearded elderly man. The one on top of the helmet was younger and shaved. Both had kerchiefs around their foreheads. Yet the charter did not describe the duly featured coat of arms in its text, which only read: [...] *praescripta arma seu nobilitatis insignia hic depicta ac pictoris magisterio distincte descripta virtute praesentium conferimus [...]* (MNL-OL, DL 50512). The separate description of the coat of arms is nowhere to be found. Additionally, John Baróc Mellétei was apparently not a member of Sigismund’s retinue and had travelled to Constance to meet the monarch.

45 Sigismund was absent from Hungary from late 1412 to early 1419 (Pál Engel, Norbert C. Tóth, *Itineraria regum et reginarum Hungariae (1382-1438)* (= *Subsidia ad Historiam Medii Aevi Hungariae Inquirendam*, 1) (Budapest, 2005), 95-103). The wording of the charter for John Baróc Mellétei and his relatives however does not allow us to consider that the coat of arms of the family from modern-day Slovakia predated Sigismund’s Hungarian reign (i.e., the year 1387).



**The coat of arms granted by King Sigismund of Luxemburg to John Baróc Mellétei and his relatives, in Constance, on 20 March 1415**

(Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltár, Budapest, Diplomatikai Levéltár, [no.] 50512)

nobility),<sup>46</sup> and who (unlike said nobles) can be linked to the “black” anti-Ottoman front, also through their father, Peter of Wallachia.<sup>47</sup> The difference between the (severed) blackhead and the standing black Ethiopian was in fact manifest.

Ferdinand of Aragon was not completely unaware of Eastern habits. Some three years earlier, he had sent Alfonso Mudarra, officially on pilgrimage, to East-Central Europe (1411-1412).<sup>48</sup> After, the knight met with Sigismund, he also stopped at the courts of Witold/Vytautas (Alexander) of Lithuania and Alexander I of Moldavia, but not, apparently, at that of Mircea I of Wallachia.<sup>49</sup> At the Council of Constance, or only in Ulrich von Richental’s posthumously spread drawings, the traditional mounted knight on Witold’s coat of arms was accompanied by a “black person”/a “Moor”, with sword and shield<sup>50</sup> (in comparison, Mircea’s personal coat of arms, both at Constance and on the seal appended to his treaty of 1411 with Władysław II Jagiełło of Poland, Witold’s unwanted Lithuanian “associate”, was a lion, much similar to that of House of Luxemburg<sup>51</sup>). Witold’s (German) armed, and ready to fight, “Moor” is the closest analogy we have for the (Aragonese) Ethiopian, with shield and lance, of George and Valentin, Peter of Wallachia’s sons.<sup>52</sup> Aside from legends that station either a Moor or a Tartar (*Kara/Black Mırza*) as Witold’s “bodyguard”,<sup>53</sup> this in fact returns us to

46 Bálint Ila, *Gömör megye, I. A megye története 1773-ig* (Budapest, 1976), 88.

47 Anti-Ottoman warfare had recommenced in 1414 in Sigismund’s absence (Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 66).

48 Werner Paravicini, “*Fürschriften und Testimonia. Der Dokumentationskreislauf der spätmittelalterlichen Adelsreise am Beispiel des kastilischen Ritters Alfonso Mudarra, 1411-1412*,” in *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Erich Meuthen*, eds. Johannes Helmuth, Heribert Müller, II (Munich, 1994), 903-936.

49 On this strange journey, see also S[tephen]. C. Rowell, “Du Europos pakraščiai: Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės ir ispanų karalysčių ryšiai 1411-1412 ir 1434 m. tekstuose,” *Lietuvos Istorijos Metraštis*, [33], no. 1 (2003): 149-188.

50 E.g. *Arms and people in Ulrich Richental’s Chronik des Konzils zu Konstanz, 1414-1418*, ed. Steen Clemmensen (Farum, 2011), 87 (no. 217), 148 (no. 620), 248 (no. 8742), 371 (no. 896), 404 (no. 742), 406 (no. 779).

51 Ovidiu Cristea, “Stema cu leu a voievodului Țării Românești. O ipoteză,” *Revista Istorică*, 5, nos. 3-4 (1994): 303-307.

52 A potential connection of the brothers to Moldavia (where Peter was a princely name) remains therefore to be explored.

53 E.g. Emilian Żernicki-Szeliga, *Die polnischen Stammwappen: ihre Geschichte und ihre Sagen* (Hamburg, 1904), 147; Giedrė Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler: Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania* (Budapest – New York, 2006), 195.

Sigismund's network, because the (grand) duke of Lithuania, was the personal troublesome ally of the king of the Romans.<sup>54</sup>

*Personal initiative – hegemonic designator*

In essence, blackheads and black warriors defined in the days of the Council of Constance the men of Roman emperor-to-be Sigismund.<sup>55</sup> In particular, the relation between the two shielded and armed “blacks” (the “Lithuanian Moor” and the “Wallachian Ethiopian”) enables a handful of speculations (from the Tartar history of the East<sup>56</sup> to the Roman or only Italian roots of the Wallachians<sup>57</sup> and of the Lithuanians<sup>58</sup> that were being “discovered” in the early 1400s in the name of Latin Christianity<sup>59</sup>). Such connections certainly befit the shows put on by Sigismund during his European tour, but, due to the same tour and its highly practical and immediate purposes,<sup>60</sup> more simple explanations must (also) be looked-up, explanations that are not necessarily valid simultaneously in all “black cases”.<sup>61</sup>

54 Chiefly in relation to Witold's much desired royal crown, see Přemysl Bar, “Der Krönungssturm König Sigismund von Luxemburg, Großfürst Witold von Litauen und das gescheiterte politische Bündnis zwischen beiden Herrschern,” *Roczniki Historyczne*, 83 (2017): 65-101.

55 This sounds otherwise like a far-fetched overstatement, considering the widespread usage of “Black/Moorish” insignia.

56 For instance: Virgil Ciociltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (=East-Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450, 20)* (Leiden – Boston – Cologne, 2012), 221-222, 276-278.

57 E.g. Armando Nuzzo, “Coluccio Salutati e l’Ungheria,” *Verbum*, 7, no. 2 (2005): 341-371, at 350-351.

58 An overview: Rimvydas Petrauskas, “Palemon und die vier Sippen. Die römische Abstammungstheorie der Litauer,” in *Abstammungsmythen und Völkergenealogien im frühneuzeitlichen Ostseeraum (=Studien zur Geschichte der Ostseeregion, 2)*, ed. Stefan Donecker (Greifswald, 2020), 195-209, at 197-198

59 We therefore add that in two variants of Richental's chronicle, Mage Melchior (of Arabia), neither Caspar, nor Balthasar, has a moor (blackamoor), holding a shield and a banner, on his coat of arms, similar (with the exception of the shield) to the moor on the coat of arms of Johannes (III) Flemming, abbot of Austrian Melk (*Arms and people*, 83, 132, nos. 192, 504).

60 Franz-Reiner Erkens, “...Und wil ein grosse Reise do tun. Überlegungen zur Balkan-und Orientpolitik Sigismunds von Luxemburg,” in *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert*, II, 739-762, at 742, 751, 758-760.

61 By this we mean above-all the “blackheads” on the Hungarian (one) and on the “Richental-Constance” coat of arms.

The “Turkish king” of Sigismund in Perpignan (September-November 1415) and the Turkish prince of Mircea I in Argeş (June 1415) therefore remain the main explanatory coordinates for the Ethiopian of George and Valentin in Perpignan (October 1415). However, no mention was made of Sigismund in Ferdinand of Aragon’s charter for the two brothers, who, although Hungarian subjects, were, as the sons of Peter of Wallachia, not automatically profoundly bound to either Sigismund or Mircea. The above-outlined limitations should reconcentrate our attention on the motif of the *Ethiops niger*.<sup>62</sup> From the text of the Aragonese grant of a coat of arms we can infer that for some, for the two brothers and also for the anti-Moorish king Ferdinand, there was no shame in having a mighty black warrior as insignia. This was valid on both anti-Muslim crusader fronts: in the Iberian Peninsula<sup>63</sup> and at the limit of the Balkan Peninsula. This lack of “racial bias/constraints”<sup>64</sup> might prove useful in explaining the Turkish arrangements of both Sigismund and of Wallachian figures over the coming decades,<sup>65</sup>

62 The topic may prove far more complex (I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out the findings mentioned below). Archaeological excavations in Budapest, both in the area of the royal palace (from the period of Sigismund of Luxemburg; post 1400) and in the Szentpétermártir (Saint Peter the Martyr) suburb of Buda (from the period of Louis I of Anjou; post 1370), have revealed the existence of stove tiles featuring the head of a moor on top of helmet (Imre Holl, “Középkori kályhacsempék Magyarországon (IV),” *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, 117 (1990): 58-95, at 82-83, fig. 30; András Végh, “Anjou-kori kályhacsempé lelet a budai Szentpétermártir külvárosból,” *Budapest Régiségei*, 35, no. 2 (2002): 617-632, at 620, 629, fig. 5). Both findings were interpreted in relation to the previously mentioned coat of arms of John Baróc Mellétei (1415). In our opinion however, the noticeable differences between the Baróc Mellétei coat of arms and the images on the tiles (that derived from one and the same coat of arms), the tiles in question point towards a previously unknown bearer of a “Moor/Saracen insignia”. The “Angevine roots” of the motif and its “Sigismundian presence” make the topic worth further analysis.

63 See also Norman Housely, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580: From Lyons to Alcazar* (Oxford, 1992), 82-83, 283-286.

64 We believe, erroneously perhaps, that in such 15<sup>th</sup> century cases race (“aspect”) took precedence over religion (“faith”), because it was more explicit (visual) than implicit (spiritual). See, for instance, in the post-crusader context of the battle of Belgrade, the “Kusturica type images” in the letter sent by Niccolò Lisci, the protonotary of Ladislas V of Habsburg, king of Hungary and Bohemia, to Enea Silvio Piccolomini, on 21 November 1456 (Fabio Forner, “Enea Silvio Piccolomini e la congiura contro Ulrich von Cilli,” in *Margarita amicorum. Studi di cultura europea per Agostino Sottili*, eds. F. Forner, Carla Maria Monti, Paul Gerhard Schmidt (Milan, 2005), 351-376, at 368).

65 On Christmas eve 1433, at Council of Basel, [...] *venit alter dux Walachiae, Turcorum frater* [...]. The [...] *quidan dux ex parte regis Turcorum* [...] came [...] *cum maximis*

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## Florentine Military Men in the Age of the 1427 Catasto: A Preliminary Examination

by PETER SPOSATO

**T**he Florentine war with Visconti Milan (1423-1428), one in a series of wars starting in 1390 and continuing until 1454, required the city of Florence to maintain a significant number of soldiers under contract and in the field for extended periods of time, as campaigns were fought across central and northern Italy.<sup>1</sup> The significant costs associated with this type of military undertaking necessitated new forms of taxation, including those made possible by the Catasto of 1427-30, a comprehensive assessment of Florentine citizens and their assets and occupations.<sup>2</sup> While the decision to institute the Catasto was closely connected to the financial exigencies of war, its value as a source for

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- 1 There is a large body of scholarship on the Florentine-Visconti Wars: William Caferro, *John Hawkwood: An English Mercenary in Fourteenth-Century Italy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2006), 271-309; Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), especially chapters 3, 4, 6-8; John Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 189-200; Giorgio Chittolini, *La formazione dello Stato regionale e le istituzioni del contado. Secoli XIV e XV* (Torino: Einaudi, 1979); Andrea Zorzi, "The 'Material Constitution' of the Florentine Dominion," in *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power*, eds. W.J. Connell and A. Zorzi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6-31; and Antonio Lanza, *Firenze contro Milano: gli intellettuali fiorentini nelle guerre con i Visconti (1390-1440)* (Rome: De Rubéis, 1991).
- 2 David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) remains the primary study of the Catasto in English. See also Anthony Molho, *Florentine Public Finances in the Early Renaissance, 1400-1433* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Elio Conti, *L'imposta diretta a Firenze nel Quattrocento (1427-1494)* (Roma, 1984); and G. Petralia, "Imposizione diretta e dominio territoriale nella repubblica fiorentina del Quattrocento", in *Società, istituzioni, spiritualità. Studi in onore di Cinzio Violante* (Spoleto, 1994), 639-652.

studying Florentine military men in the first quarter of the fifteenth century is rather less clear.

Indeed, few military historians to date have utilized the rich data contained in the 1427 Catasto. Simone Picchianti's study is one recent exception, examining how periods of intense warfare impacted vectors of social mobility and choice of profession in fifteenth century Florence. By comparing the 1427 Catasto with the *condotte* (contracts) registered in the Florentine cameral budget records in 1430, he revealed that many non-elite Florentines who had declared a variety of different occupations in the Catasto records were, three years later, listed in the budgets as soldiers contracted to serve in the Florentine army.<sup>3</sup> Picchianti argues convincingly that this change was opportunistic, as Florentines in comparatively large numbers left their trades to become soldiers, an occupation that offered more lucrative remuneration during the prolonged wars with Visconti Milan.<sup>4</sup>

While Picchianti's study demonstrates the Catasto's utility for examining the activities of non-elite Florentines who subsequently became soldiers in the years following the census, its value is far more limited when used exclusively to identify elite men who performed military service for pay. This includes those who served as captains, corporals or ordinary soldiers in the decades surrounding the Catasto. The reason is that with very few exceptions elite Florentine men who regularly served in a number of different military roles did not claim the occupation of soldier in their Catasto declarations. In fact, most heads of households, as well as all adult men who resided in a relative's household and were counted as dependents (*bocche*), did not provide any occupation data at all. This reflects the fluid nature of the notions of profession/occupation during this period.<sup>5</sup> In-

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3 For a discussion of Florentine infantry captains in the mid-fourteenth century who were not professional soldiers, see Caferro, *Petrarch's War: Florence and the Black Death in Context* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 73ff.

4 Simone Picchianti, "L'esercito ordinario fiorentino a inizio Quattrocento. Una prima ricerca", *Nuova Antologia Militare: Rivista interdisciplinare della società italiana di storia militare* 5.17 (February 2024), 511-32, and idem, "Changing Craft in the Early Renaissance: Florentine Citizens and the Profession of Arms (1427-1430)", *Faces of War* 1 (2024), 27-44.

5 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families*, 115, 122, 123-24: 43.5% of family heads in Florence did not declare an occupation. That most of these men were actively employed by the Florentine government is clear from Laura De Angelis and Vicki Whittaker, trans., "Florence's Ruling Class at the turn of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", *Revue française de science politique* 64.6 (2014): 1123-37, which offers a use-

deed, an investigation of the declarations made by the heads of elite households, specifically lineages that are considered by Anthony Molho to be “high status” for the period, reveals that members of this group in general did not declare an occupation; only 190 heads of the 778 total households did so.<sup>6</sup> And only five of those 190 heads of household declared soldier as their occupation: Ferretto Giano Albizzi, Rinieri Ridolfo Lotti, Iacopo Giovanni Medici, Nanno di Jacopo Nerli, and Pagolo d’Andrea Rossi.

The current essay argues that far more heads of elite households and dependents within those elite households performed military service for pay than this short list suggests. Indeed, the occupation data recorded in the Catasto obscures the important and continuous role many elite men played in the military affairs of the city of Florence in the early Quattrocento. By focusing on elite Florentine men—specifically men from traditional martial lineages who found themselves increasingly pushed to the margins of the political, social, and economic elite by the early fifteenth century—this study makes an original contribution to a growing body of scholarship that emphasizes the continued presence and importance of a sizeable native element in the Florentine armies of the fourteenth and early fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Like other Italian nobles, members of the traditional martial

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ful overview of the varied “professional” activities that elite Florentine men carried out on behalf of the government. As with the occupation of soldier, very few members of the Florentine elite declared government employee as their occupation in the Catasto. For notions of career and professionalism in the military context, see the important discussion in Caferro, *Petrarch’s War* and idem, “Shadow Bureaucrats and Bureaucracy in Trecento Florence,” in S. Bowd, S. Cockram, and J. Gagné, eds., *Shadow Agents of Renaissance War: Suffering, Supporting, and Supplying Conflict in Italy and Beyond* (Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 123–46. See also Paolo Grillo, “Carriere militari e mobilità sociale nel dominio visconteo (1329–1402),” in A. Gamberini, ed., *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano, II- Stato e istituzioni, secoli XIV–XV* (Rome: Viella, 2017), 237–56; Alessio Fiore, “L’attività militare come vettore di mobilità sociale (1250–1350),” in Sandro Carocci, *La mobilità sociale nel medioevo* (Collection de l’École Française de Rome, 436) (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2010), 381–407; and Suzanne Sutherland, *The Rise of the Military Entrepreneur: War, Diplomacy, and Knowledge in Habsburg Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).

6 Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chapter 5 defines the categories of “high status”, “status”, and “low status”, while Appendix 3 lists the lineages and their status.

7 Peter Sposato has studied this group’s military activities in the period c.1250–1362 in his *Forged in the Shadow of Mars: Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Florence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022), 143–188. See also C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Ritorno alla politica: I magnati fiorentini, 1340–1440*, trans. Isabelle Chabot and Paolo Pirillo (Rome: Viel-

elite held contracts to command soldiers or served as men-at-arms (mounted or on foot) during this period, selling their specialized labor in a robust market for mercenaries in which Florence was only one of many potential employers.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, this military service was opportunistic or in response to economic exigencies—it was, as Picchianti observes, a relatively inexpensive and easy task to become a *provvigionato*—but even in these cases it continued martial family traditions dating back to at least the late thirteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The lineages of the traditional martial elite had their origins either in the consular aristocracy which ruled Florence in the late-twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century or among certain lineages of the *popolo grasso*, coming together in

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la, 2009), 377-99. Caferro, “Toward an Understanding of Florentine Infantry in the Age of Companies of Adventure”, *Nuova Antologia Militare* 4.13 (2023): 119-38, especially 126ff, discusses the continued importance of Florentine infantry captains like Giovanni Visdomini; idem, *Petrarch’s War*, in particular 49-83; idem, “Comparative Economy and Martial Corporatism: Toward an Understanding of Florentine City Leagues, 1332-1392”, *Speculum* 97.4 (October 2022), 1073-1100, and idem, “The Florentine Army in the Age of the Companies of Adventure”, *Millars* 43.2 (2017): 129-50, likewise stress the continued importance of a native element in the Florentine armies of the fourteenth century.

- 8 The literature on mercenaries in late medieval Italy is extensive, see in particular Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2009); idem, “Preparations for War in Florence et Venice in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century,” in S. Bertelli, N. Rubinstein, and C.H. Smyth, eds., *Florence et Venice: Comparisons and Relations* (Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1979), 49- 64; M.N. Covini, “Condottieri ed eserciti permanenti negli stati italiani del XV secolo in alcuni studi recenti”, *Nuova rivista storica* 69 (1985): 329-352; Christine Shaw, *Barons and Castellans: The Military Nobility of Renaissance Italy* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015); G.M. Varanini, “Il mercenariato,” in P. Grillo, A.A. Settia, eds., *Guerre ed eserciti nel Medioevo* (Bologna: 2018), 249-82; the essays in Mario Del Treppo, ed., *Condottieri e uomini d’arme nell’Italia del Rinascimento* (Naples, 2002); F. Ansani, “Oltre i signori, dopo i mercenari per una rilettura del rapporto tra istituzioni militari e stato rinascimentale”, *Annali dell’Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici* 33 (2021): 29-101; Duccio Balestracci, “The Metamorphosis of the Condottiere: From Brigand to Renaissance Hero,” in *Condottieri: War and Society in Central Italy during the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Stefania Zucchini (Perugia: Ugucione Ranieri di Sorbello Foundation, 2006), 22-39; A.A. Settia, “‘Viriliter et competeter’: l’uomo di guerra,” in *Ceti, modelli, compromenti nella società medievale (secoli XIII-metà XIV)* (Rome: Viella, 2001), 99-122; and the many studies of William Caferro cited throughout this essay.
- 9 Picchianti, “Changing Craft in the Early Renaissance”, 42. For family traditions of military service in the Duecento and first-half of the Trecento, see Sposato, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars*, 143-50. Balestracci, “The Metamorphosis of the Condottiere”, 27 and Shaw, *Barons and Castellans*, 100-47 make similar arguments for the larger Italian context in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to form what Silvia Diacciati has termed the *milizia*.<sup>10</sup> Recently, Peter Sposato has defined this group as a chivalric elite, a cultural community of elite men and lineages united by a chivalric lifestyle and ethos constituted in large part by the cultivation of the life of arms.<sup>11</sup> Although membership in this cultural community fluctuated over time, a core group of lineages remained pillars of the martial lifestyle through our period. This essay will utilize the chivalric elite terminology and will focus on a representative group of these lineages: the Adimari-Cavicciuli, Agli, Bardi, Buondelmonti, Cavalcanti, Donati, Frescobaldi, Galli, Gherardini, Gianfigliuzzi, Nerli, Pazzi, Pigli, Rossi, Soldanieri, Squarcialupi, Tornaquinci, and Della Tosa. The members of these lineages were not homogenous in their martial activity—some regularly went to war, others served occasionally for pay alternating between the sword and accounting book during their careers, others did not serve—nevertheless each lineage included men for whom the life of arms was a constitutive feature of their identity.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, this service is not, for the most part, reflected in the Catasto.

### *Military Service: A Preliminary Overview*

It is possible to trace the military activities of individual men across this period thanks to detailed records kept by the late medieval Florentine government. Cameral budgets, specifically the expenditures (*uscita*) and stipends (*stipendiari*), document war-time expenses, including *condotte*—contracts with very specific terms of service, including a starting date, duration of service, type of service, unit size, and pay—agreed between the Florentine government and military

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10 For the consular aristocracy, see Enrico Faini, *Firenze nell'età romanica (1000-1211): L'espansione urbana, lo sviluppo istituzionale, il rapporto con il territorio* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2010); Maria Elena Cortese, *Signori, castelli, città: L'aristocrazia del territorio fiorentino tra X e XII secolo* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2007); Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri e cittadini: Guerra, conflitti e società nell'Italia comunale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004) offers important general observations about the larger "Italian" knightly class to which the consular aristocracy belonged; and Carol Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 89-93. For the *milizia*, see Silvia Diacciati, *Popolani e magnate. Società e politica nella Firenze del Duecento* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 2011), 20.

11 Sposato, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars*, 6-16.

12 Balestracci, "The Metamorphosis of the Condottiere", 24 and Shaw observes similar patterns among the "military nobility" of Renaissance Italy: *Barons and Castellans*, 147.

captains. The voluminous and varied documents produced by the Dieci di Balìa, a semi-permanent council created in 1384 and charged with managing military affairs, record additional contracts with and payments made to military captains, including native Florentines.

These records are particularly rich for the Quattrocento; the documentary basis for this essay alone comprises around 100 volumes. A preliminary examination of the detailed records found in these volumes allows for the identification of over 800 Florentine military men and around 75-100 members of the chivalric lineages in question who performed military service across the first three decades of the fifteenth century, although more examples are likely to emerge after the documentary evidence is examined in its entirety. In general, these men enjoyed contracts ranging in length from one month to one year, with four- and six-month contracts the most common duration of service. The contracts stipulate various kinds of service, including as captains or constables (*connestabili*) and corporals (*caporali*) who led units of various sizes and composition, with some men commanding two or three soldiers and others commanding several hundred.<sup>13</sup> Others

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13 Fabrizio Ansani, "Military Archives of Renaissance Florence: Resolutions and Book-keeping of the Dieci di Balìa and the Otto di Pratica", *European History Quarterly* 48.3 (2018): 409-34, discusses the archival sources and relevant terminology. See also Picchianti, "Changing Craft", 29-30 and idem, "L'esercito ordinario Fiorentino a inizio Quattrocento", 514-16. Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters* remains the most comprehensive treatment of warfare in late medieval and Renaissance Italy. William Caferro has published extensively on both the Florentine and the larger Italian contexts: see the works mentioned in previous footnotes, plus "Continuity, Long-Term Service, and Permanent Forces: A Reassessment of the Florentine Army in the Fourteenth Century", *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (June 2008): 219-51. For Visconti Milan, see: Maria Nadia Covini, "Per la storia delle milizie viscontee: i famigliari armigeri di Filippo Maria Visconti," in L. Chiappa Mauri, L. De Angelis Cappabianca, Patrizia Mainoni, eds., *L'età dei Visconti. Il dominio di Milano fra XIII e XV secolo* (Milan: La Storia, 1993), 35-63; Fabio Romanoni, "Balestrieri, pavesari e lance lunghe: la tripartizione funzionale delle cernite di Gian Galeazzo Visconti del 1397," in "*Castrum paene in mundo singulare*". *Scritti per Aldo Settia in occasione del novantesimo compleanno*, eds. Simone Caldano, Gianmarco De Angelis, Cristina La Rocca (Genoa: Sagep Editori, 2023), 214-19; idem, "Familiarità e servizio. I nobiles provixionati viscontei", *Nuova Rivista Storica* 106.3 (September-December 2022): 1155-84; Alessandra Dattero, "Towards a New Social Category: The Military," in Andrea Gamberini, ed., *A Companion to Late Medieval and Early Modern Milan: The Distinctive Features of an Italian State* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 454-76; Paolo Grillo, "12.000 uomini, di cui 6.000 con lance lunghe e 3.000 con pancere e mannaie'. L'esercito milanese agli inizi del Trecento", *Società e Storia* 116 (2007): 233-53; and relevant essays in Federica Cengarle and Maria Nadia Covini, eds., *Il ducato di Filippo Maria Visconti, 1412-1447. Economia, politica, cultura* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2015).

served as individual soldiers (*provvigionati*): crossbowmen, shield-bearing soldiers, mounted men-at-arms, and knights.

### *Captains and Corporals*

Several members of the chivalric lineages at the center of this study held contracts to serve as captains or corporals a decade or more before the Florentine-Visconti war that led to the Catasto. For example, Francesco di Filippo Adimari held over the period 1413-1416 contracts ranging in length from six months to one year to command sizeable contingents of soldiers: 20 lances (each lance unit consisted of three men: a man-at-arms supported by a squire and a page, each with his own horse) for one year starting 6 September 1413, fourteen lances for six months starting 26 September 1414, ten lances for six months starting 1 April 1415, and a contract for the same terms beginning 1 Oct. 1415.<sup>14</sup> Months after completing this last contract, Francesco di Filippo took his services to Siena, where in July of 1416 he agreed to a contract to command twenty lances in that city's army for the remainder of the year.<sup>15</sup> Francesco once again appears in the Florentine *cameral* budgets in 1424 where he is listed as commanding fifty-five lances for six months starting on 11 August of that year.<sup>16</sup> These commands are substantial and suggest that Francesco di Filippo was a well-regarded and experienced military man, a "professional" captain, a fact substantiated by the continued role he played in Florentine military affairs well into the 1440s.<sup>17</sup>

Piero di Francesco Squarcialupi agreed periodic military contracts to command units of various sizes and compositions across an even greater stretch of time, 1415-1438. In 1415, Piero di Francesco is listed among the Florentine stipendiaries as a corporal commanding one lance for six months starting on April

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14 Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Stipendiati del comune 5, 3r, 23r, 27r, 29v. [NB: All archival sources are from the ASF unless otherwise noted].

15 Archivio di Stato di Siena (ASSi), Biccherna, Condotte 641, 51r.

16 Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 13, 131r.

17 Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 15, 121r. Tratte 984, 16r: Francesco is listed in the Tratte registers as castellan of Castiglione della Pescaia in September 1445. He held similar offices several times during the 1440s. For discussions of "professional" military captains in the Trecento Florentine context, see Caferro, *Petrarch's War*, 70-3 and the studies listed above.

9 of that year.<sup>18</sup> After more than a decade, Piero di Francesco reappears in the autumn of 1427, this time in command of six infantry, including four crossbowmen, and charged with guarding Pianetto castle (approximately fifty kilometers north-east of Florence) for four months.<sup>19</sup> In March 1428 he agreed a new contract with the same terms for a further four months, followed by an additional six month contract to guard a different fortress, the castle of Montanina (south of Arezzo).<sup>20</sup> The cameral budgets for 1437-8 contain Piero di Francesco's final contract, this time to guard the "piazza [sic] di signori" from 16 October 1437 through the end of April 1438.<sup>21</sup>

Zaccaria di Jacopo Frescobaldi entered into contracts with Florence over an even longer period of time, beginning in the late 1390s and then after a prolonged break, starting again in the 1420s. Zaccaria's first contract dates to December 1397, when he secured a four-month contract as a corporal in command of a small force of mixed infantry.<sup>22</sup> A similar contract was agreed in December 1398 that kept him in the employ of the Florentine government through April 1399.<sup>23</sup> Zaccaria subsequently disappears from the Florentine records for more than two decades before reappearing in April 1421, when he secured a six-month contract to command a mixed unit of six infantry, including three crossbowmen.<sup>24</sup> This was followed in January 1423 by a series of four and six month contracts to command the same number of men that carried through the fall of 1425.<sup>25</sup>

Although the duration of the military service these men provided was likely exceptional in length, the kinds of service undertaken, specifically leading units of infantry of various sizes and composition, was in line with the contracts for shorter durations held by many other members of the Florentine chivalric elite.

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18 Stipendiati del comune 5, 27v

19 Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 15, 231v, 269v, 273v, 275r; Stipendiati del comune 5, 231r.

20 Stipendiati del comune, 5, 242v; Camera del comune, Scrivano di uscita duplicato 206, 21v and 209, 8r.

21 Scrivano di uscita duplicato 259, 101r.

22 Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 7, 195v.

23 Camarlinghi Uscita 322, 14v.

24 Stipendiati del comune, 5, 71r.

25 Stipendiati del comune, 5, 77r, 79r, 81r, 89r, 103v, 119r, 133v; Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 12, 14r & 13, 119v & 14, 41v; Camarlinghi Uscita 379, 83v, 87v, 305r & 381, 83v; Camera del comune, Scrivano di uscita duplicato 189, 34r.

For example, Lupo di Squarcia Squarcialupi, Piero di Francesco's kinsman, held multiple contracts in the second half of the 1420s. In late May 1425 he was in the employ of the Florentine government on a four-month contract to command twelve crossbowmen stationed at the fortress of Montevecchio.<sup>26</sup> Additional four-month contracts with Lupo in command of the same number of men followed: 31 December 1425-April 1426, 30 April-August, 31 August-December 1426.<sup>27</sup> A one-month contract beginning 31 December to serve as a captain ("conestabole") in the same fortress meant that this service continued into 1427.<sup>28</sup> Gino di Marente Buondelmonti, whose lineage was among the most ancient and militaristic, likewise held a series of four-month contracts to serve as captain of sixteen crossbowmen which kept him continuously in the employ of the Florentine government during the period 1424-1426: 30 November 1424-30 March 1425, 9 April-8 August 1425, 8 August-8 December 1425, and 8 December 1425-8 April 1426.<sup>29</sup>

Sinibaldo di Sinibaldo Donati entered into comparable contracts, beginning in March 1425 when he was captain of a band of nine crossbowmen for four months at the castle of Piancaldoli (located about 50km northeast of Florence).<sup>30</sup> This was followed by consecutive four-month contracts with the same terms lasting until March 1426.<sup>31</sup> He reappears in September 1430 in the registers of soldiers and other military officials kept by the treasury officials where he is listed as a captain ("chonestabile") but the entry does not specify the terms or duration of the service and a related contract does not appear in contemporary budget records.<sup>32</sup>

Andrea di Soldo Nerli likewise was contracted to command infantry in the service of the Florentine government almost continuously from March 1424 to March 1426. His first contract dates to 7 March 1424 when he is listed in the

26 Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 15, 37r; Stipendiati del comune 5, 165r.

27 Stipendiati del comune 5, 191r, 196v, 206r.

28 Dieci di Balia, Ricordanze 4, 11v.

29 Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 15, 2v, 22r, 42v, 57v; Stipendiati del comune 5, 142v, 155v, 168v, 177v, 201v. His monthly salary fluctuated between 13-15 florins across all of these contracts, suggesting he was a captain, although this is not made explicit in the records.

30 Stipendiati del comune 5, 155v.

31 Stipendiati del comune 5, 171v, 177v; Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 15, 22r, 47v.

32 Camera del comune, Provveditori e ufficiali di Banco, spese per condotte 41, 202v.

register of stipendiaries as a corporal in command of fourteen crossbowmen for four months.<sup>33</sup> The number of crossbowmen increased to twenty in the subsequent four month contract, which began on 27 July 1424.<sup>34</sup> On 23 January 1425 he appears under contract as captain (“chonestabole”) of an even larger force of fifty crossbowmen for four months, although the number of soldiers was reduced a week later to ten (six crossbowmen and four shield-bearing soldiers).<sup>35</sup> Andrea began a new four month contract in July 1425, once again serving as captain of thirty crossbowmen.<sup>36</sup> A final four month contract with similar terms dates to 9 November 1425, meaning that he remained employed by the Florentine government until at least March 1426.<sup>37</sup> Much like Andrea di Soldo, Baldassare d’Aparodo Donati seems to have advanced within the hierarchy of Florentine infantry during the 1420s. He first appears as *provvigionato* in the citadel of Pisa in 1424 where he served for four months.<sup>38</sup> His next contract, which began in August 1427, lists him as a captain of five mixed infantry, including three crossbowmen, for six months.<sup>39</sup> His kinsman, Donato di Giovanni Donati, in contrast, moved in the opposite direction in the hierarchy. Donato’s first contract listed him as a corporal in command of eight infantry for four months from July-October 1424 and then again from May-August 1426.<sup>40</sup> A decade later, he appears as a crossbowman serving a six month contract in Livorno in 1437-38.<sup>41</sup> In this way Andrea, Baldassare, and Donato align with the observations Caferro made about the fluid hierarchy and room for advancement within the Florentine infantry in the Trecento.<sup>42</sup>

Rosso del Boneca Rossi ostensibly began serving the Florentine government

33 Stipendiati del comune 5, 106v: his monthly salary of four florins suggests he was a corporal, not a captain.

34 Stipendiati del comune 5, 123r.

35 Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 15, 12r, 14r; Stipendiati del comune 5, 149r, 150r; Scrivano di uscita duplicato 187, 79v.

36 Stipendiati del comune 5, 167r; Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 15, 40r, 42r: The details of this particular contract seem to have changed a week later when the thirty crossbowmen became twenty-nine crossbowmen and one horse.

37 Stipendiati del comune 5, 177r.

38 Stipendiati del comune 5, 126r.

39 Camarlinghi Uscita 381 ters., 21r.

40 Stipendiati del comune 5, 123r, 200r.

41 Scrivano di uscita duplicato 259, 44v.

42 Caferro, *Petrarch’s War*, 73.

in September 1424 with a four-month contract to captain one lance and fifty-five infantry.<sup>43</sup> Two consecutive four-month contracts with the same terms followed: 22 January-22 May 1425 and 23 May-22 September.<sup>44</sup> Rosso continued to hold four-month contracts but the composition of the band he captained changed with each new contract: the first, 23 September 1425-22 January 1426, stipulated that Rosso captain twenty infantry, including thirteen crossbowmen; the second, 23 January-22 May 1426, recorded a significant increase to one lance and 100 infantry, including sixty-six crossbowmen; and the third, 23 May-22 September, reduced the number of infantry to eighty.<sup>45</sup> Although the subsequent four-month contract (23 September 1426-22 January 1427) retained these terms, the one that followed (27 February-26 June 1427) involved further changes to the band; this time Rosso captained one lance and fifty-five infantry, including thirty-three crossbowmen.<sup>46</sup> After several years of loyal service to the Florentine government, however, Rosso met an ignominious end. Giovanni Cavalcanti recounts in his *Istorie fiorentine* that Rosso turned rebel in 1431, handing over to the mercenary captain Niccolò Piccinino several Pisan castles in his charge. Cavalcanti describes Rosso as a “spiteful and bestial man” (“uomo dispettoso e bestiale”) who betrayed Florence out of “bestial enmity” (“bestiale nimistà”), resulting in the imprisonment of his young family and his eventual death at the hands of his nephews.<sup>47</sup>

For other members of the chivalric elite, military service as captains and corporals began years before the Catasto and continued into the 1430s. Illustrative of this are Carlo d’Agnolo Rossi’s contracts, which record his captaincy of comparatively large bands of soldiers. Carlo’s first contract began in late December 1423 and stipulates that he was to captain a band of 100 soldiers, including sixty-six crossbowmen, for four months.<sup>48</sup> The terms of Carlo’s second contract, 27 May-27 September 1424, include the addition of three lances to the aforementioned

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43 *Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti* 13, 139r; *Stipendiati del comune* 5, 132r.

44 *Stipendiati del comune* 5, 149r, 163v.

45 *Stipendiati del comune* 5, 176v, 185v, 198v.

46 *Stipendiati del comune* 5, 207v, 216v.

47 Giovanni Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine*, vol. 1 (Florence, 1838), 425-26.

48 *Stipendiati del comune* 5, 95v; *Camarlinghi Uscita* 380, 58v; *Scrivano di uscita duplicato* 187, 92r.

band of 100 soldiers.<sup>49</sup> Carlo continued to captain fairly large bands in the years after the Catasto, as when he held a contract to lead forty-four crossbowmen for four months beginning in November 1431.<sup>50</sup>

The captains and corporals discussed above confirm the continuity of military service among members of the chivalric elite into the early Quattrocento, traditions which stretched back for some lineages to the mid-Duecento. Table 1, which lists the captains and corporals for whom contracts and other evidence of military service survives, suggests that they were not exceptional in their cultivation of the life of arms but rather were joined by many of their kinsmen. There is a remarkable consistency in the duration of the contracts listed in the table, with most set at four to six months. Likewise, most of the captains and corporals led small bands of crossbowmen or mixed infantry (crossbowmen and shield-bearing soldiers); only a few commanded large bands of lances or infantry.

SEE TABLE 1 1 *Captains and Corporals*

Men from chivalric lineages continued to serve as captains and corporals into the 1430s and 1440s. As table 2 below makes clear, the contracts show a certain stability across the two periods, both in terms of the composition of the units and the duration of contracts. For example, they continued to lead relatively small bands of infantry, mostly crossbowmen, with a few listed as captains of large forces: Ranieri di Giovanni Montebuoni (Buondelmonti) captained 100 lances and sixty-six infantry and Carlo d'Agnolo Rossi led three lances and 100 infantry.<sup>51</sup> They also continued to hold contracts that were four and six months in length. Evidence of fluidity within the hierarchy appears in this period as well with Bartolomeo Donati serving first as a crossbowman in the citadel of Pisa in 1431 before holding contracts as a captain of between six and nine infantry in 1437 and 1438.<sup>52</sup>

SEE TABLE 2 *Captains and Corporals with contracts in the 1430s and 1440s*

49 Stipendiati del comune 5, 113r; Camarlinghi Uscita 380, 63r; Scrivano di uscita duplicato 187, 102r.

50 Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 16, 20r.

51 Deliberazioni, Condotte, e Stanziamenti 16, 101v. For Carlo's earlier contracts, see footnotes 48-50 above.

52 Camarlinghi Uscita 382, 38v; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 259, 98v & 266, 13r.

*Provvigionati*

Other members of the chivalric lineages in question held contracts to serve as ordinary soldiers (*provvigionati*), usually crossbowmen (*balestrieri*) or shield-bearing soldiers (*palvesari*).<sup>53</sup> The choice to serve as an ordinary crossbowman or shield-bearing soldier might, at first glance, seem beneath the dignity of the scion of a chivalric lineage. However, this practice turns out to be relatively common and can likely be explained by financial exigency or by the limited opportunities open to the younger sons of elite households.<sup>54</sup> Occasionally an individual served as a mounted man-at-arms or a cavalryman, as was the case with Niccolò d'Antonio Cavalcanti.<sup>55</sup>

The most common length for the contracts *provvigionati* held during this period was six months, with the occasional shorter contract appearing in the records. Most held consecutive contracts lasting over several years, confirming a pattern that emerged during the examination of the captains and corporals above. For example, Nanni di Jacopo Nerli initially enjoyed a series of four- and six-month contracts to command Florentine crossbowmen in the territory and fortresses of Pisa from the summer of 1423 to 1425 and again in 1428.<sup>56</sup> This service was followed by contracts to serve as a crossbowman for six months in Pisa (July-December 1434) and then possibly six months in Arezzo (May-October 1436).<sup>57</sup> His kinsman, Nanni di Nerlo Nerli, was similarly a crossbowman employed by the Florentine government in a series of contracts stipulating he serve in various parts of the Florentine *distretto*: March-August 1422, November 1423 (Pisa), 21 December 1423-20 June 1424 (Livorno), 21 June-20 December 1424 (Livorno).<sup>58</sup>

53 For an overview of the scholarship on Florentine and "Italian" infantry during this period, see Caferro, "Toward an Understanding of Florentine Infantry" and the studies cited therein.

54 Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates*, 21, 45, 161-63. Caferro, *Petarch's War* offers an extensive discussion of the intersection of war and the economy in late medieval Italy. See also Sposato, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars*, 143-50, and Picchianti, "L'esercito ordinario Fiorentino a inizio Quattrocento", 511-32, and idem, "Changing Craft in the Early Renaissance", 27-44, which explore economic exigency and military service among ordinary Florentines during the early Quattrocento.

55 Entrata e uscita 3, 2r, 51v, 52v, 67v.

56 Camarlinghi Uscita 379, 156r, 216r, 219r & 380, 30r, 67v & 381, 63v & 381-bis, 43r, 90r; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 184, 75v & 187, 49r.

57 Camarlinghi Uscita 386, 18v; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 252, 49v.

58 Stipendiati del comune 5, 68r; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 172, 71v & 184, 43v, 72v, 78r;

Piero di Lapo Pigli secured a series of two and six month contracts to serve as a shield-bearing soldier in the citadel of Pisa almost continuously from 1425 through mid-1428: two six-month contracts in 1425 (29 January to 20 June and 21 June to 21 December);<sup>59</sup> two-month contracts to perform the same service from 21 April-21 June 1426 and 17 October-20 December 1426; six-month contracts on the same terms lasting from 21 December 1426 to June 1427,<sup>60</sup> June to December 1427, and finally December 1427 until June 1428.<sup>61</sup> Stefano di Niccolò Rossi, kinsman of the previously discussed Rossi men, entered Florentine service in the early 1420s. His first contract stipulated that he serve as a crossbowman from 8 February through the end of April 1422.<sup>62</sup> This was followed by a contract to perform the same service in the citadel of Pisa for six months beginning 1 June 1423.<sup>63</sup> Continuous six-month contracts followed to perform the same service through June 1428.<sup>64</sup> After a nearly three-year absence, Stefano agreed two consecutive six-month contracts on the same terms beginning 1 January 1431 which kept him in the employ of the Florentine government until 1432.<sup>65</sup>

Four Frescobaldi brothers—Albano, Bardo, Jacopo, and Lamberto—also served in the Florentine infantry during this period. The sons of Tommaso di Messer Castellano Frescobaldi, the head of the Medici bank in Naples who had died in 1400, lived together in Florence at the time of the Catasto. Their presence in the Florentine army two decades after their father's death reinforces recent scholarship on the significant circulation of military men across the Italian peninsula during this century. Albano held consecutive six-month contracts to serve as a crossbowman in the citadel of Pisa from June 1424-December 1425 and June 1426-June 1428.<sup>66</sup> Bardo, Jacopo, and Lamberto served in the same location

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187, 65r bis & 187, 114r.

59 Camarlinghi Uscita 381, 84v, 86r, 108v & 381 bis, 65r, 87v; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 189, 35r, 38r & 190, 35v.

60 Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 194, 35r & 200, 53r & 205, 27v.

61 Stipendiati del comune 8, 75v, 190r; Camarlinghi Uscita 381 ters., 109v.

62 Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 172, 58v.

63 Camarlinghi Uscita 379, 156r.

64 Camarlinghi Uscita 379, 162r, 215v, 219r & 380, 30r, 67v & 381, 56v; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 184, 73r, 75v & 187, 49r, 58v, 109r & 192, 46r & 195, 53r & 198, 40r; Stipendiati del comune 8, 44r, 160r.

65 Camarlinghi Uscita 384, 6v.

66 Camarlinghi Uscita 380, 20r & 381-ters, 195v, 196r; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 187, 37r, 73r & 192, 46r & 193, 60r & 199, 29v & 203, 23r; Stipendiati del comune 8, 2v, 116v.

and capacity: Bardo held contracts covering March-December 1424 and December 1425-December 1427, Jacopo's contracts spanned March-December 1424 and July 1427-January 1428, and Lamberto's from June-December 1424 and June-December 1425.<sup>67</sup> Three Pazzi brothers—Benedetto, Bernardo, and Pazzino di Messer Uberto—likewise served six-month contracts as crossbowmen and shield-bearing soldiers in the Citadel of Pisa in 1427-28.<sup>68</sup>

A few changed roles during the course of their service, suggesting a similar fluidity among the *provvigionati* as with the captains and corporals. For example, Stagio di Piero Rossi's contracts reveal a change in role during his more than four years in the Florentine army. He first appears in the Florentine records in February 1422 on a three-month contract to serve as a crossbowman in the citadel of Pisa.<sup>69</sup> Stagio remained in Florentine employment on a series of six-month contracts serving in the same location from June 1423-December 1426, during which the nature of his service changed to that of a shield-bearing soldier.<sup>70</sup> Panocchia di Luca Buondelmonti also enjoyed six-month contracts, spanning the period February 1424-April 1426, to serve first as a shield-bearing soldier and then as a crossbowman in Cortona.<sup>71</sup>

An analysis of this military service confirms that *provvigionati* contracts were largely consistent both in terms of the length and nature of the service. This consistency is reinforced by the additional examples that appear in table 3 below, which also suggest that *provvigionati*, like the captains and corporals discussed previously, continued to serve into the 1430s.

SEE TABLE 3 *Provvigionati*

The *provvigionati* discussed above and featured in Table 3 confirm many of Caferro's findings about Florentine infantry in the previous century, namely con-

67 Camarlinghi Uscita 379, 237v & 380, 30v, 42v & 381-bis, 65r & 381-ters, 97r, 113r; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 187, 40v, 59v, 60v, 73r & 192, 37v & 193, 60v & 199, 29v & 205, 31r; Stipendiati del comune 8, 7v, 25v.

68 Stipendiati del comune 8, 56v, 76r, 170v, 190v; Camarlinghi Uscita 380 ters., 97v, 98r, 194r, 196v, 197r; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 187, 65r bis & 207, 75v & 208, 51v, 52r.

69 Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 172, 53v.

70 Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 183, 47r & 184, 73v & 187, 48r & 195, 59v; Camarlinghi Uscita 379, 140v, 160r, 217v, 221r, 286v & 380, 26v & 381-bis, 13v & 381-tres, 117r.

71 Camarlinghi Uscita 379, 168r, 200v, 297r & 380, 16v, 24r & 381, 37r & 381 bis, 56v; Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 184, 54v, 58v & 185, 42r & 187, 32r & 190, 40v & 193, 40v.

sistent employment over multiple years and in strategically important areas of the Florentine *distretto*, suggesting a level of professionalism that challenges traditional views on infantry in late medieval Italy.<sup>72</sup> Unlike in the Trecento, however, when elite men like Giovanni Visdomini were remarkable because they served as captains of infantry, the evidence suggests that in the Quattrocento elite men regularly served as crossbowmen and shield-bearing soldiers. Somewhat surprisingly given the nature of service by earlier generations of military men from these chivalric lineages, only one was a cavalryman or mounted man-at-arms.

### *Other Military Men: Avenues for Future Research*

Given the inconsistent and often incomplete manner with which names were recorded in the cameral budgets and related records—the author’s database contains over 800 Florentine military men for whom only given names and patronyms are provided, some of whom have been subsequently identified as belonging to elite lineages—there is a high probability not only that the men discussed in this essay performed additional military service but also that a greater number of men from these elite lineages served in the Florentine wars with Visconti Milan. The total number increases if consideration is given to civilian officials who were embedded in armies as commissaries (*commissarii*).<sup>73</sup>

The commissary was a much-maligned figure in the late Trecento, as exemplified in novella forty-one of Franco Sacchetti’s *Trecentonovelle* (c.1390), which supplies a satirical vignette about the interaction between two Florentine commissaries and a famous mercenary captain. In this novella, Sacchetti recounts how two cloth merchants were sent by the Florentine government to advise Messer Ridolfo da Camerino, the commander of the city’s army during its war with Pisa in 1362. When the Florentine wool merchants questioned the position of the military camp, Messer Ridolfo responded with derision: “Go, go, go to your shops and sell cloth!”<sup>74</sup> Sacchetti seems to conclude that if the story is true Messer Ridolfo acted wisely because “it must be plain to every man how little trade

72 Caferro, “Toward an Understanding of Florentine Infantry” and idem, *Petrarch’s War*, 65-73, offer an important discussion of the topic.

73 W.J. Connell, “Il ‘Commissario’ e lo stato territoriale fiorentino”, *Ricerche storiche* 18 (1988): 591-617; Caferro, *John Hawkwood*, 80-6.

74 Franco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. E. Faccioli (Torino: Einaudi, 1970), 88: “Iate, iate, iate sì alle beotteghe a vennere i panni”.

or merchandise have to do with the business of war".<sup>75</sup> In other words, the Florentine commissary was an interloper on battlefields and in military camps alike.

This view is challenged, however, by the examples of Tommaso di Lionardo Frescobaldi, Lorenzo di Pigello Adimari, Ludovico di Niccolò Rossi, Francesco Tornabuoni, and Piero di Cavalcante Cavalcanti, which confirm that at least some of these civilian officials had martial bona fides. Tommaso's service began more than two decades before the Catasto when he served in the Florentine army that besieged Pisa in 1405.<sup>76</sup> After two decades during which he held various political offices and participated in the diplomatic affairs of the Florentine state, Tommaso was elected in early 1426 as commissary and sent to the castle of Caprese in the Valle del Sigerna (near Arezzo), which was threatened by the Visconti mercenary captains Guido Torello and Angolo della Pergola.<sup>77</sup> Although his vigorous efforts to defend the Florentine position in the Aretine brought him into conflict with members of the Dieci di Balìa, he was entrusted in early 1427 with leadership of the Florentine supported efforts of Genoese exiles to overthrow Visconti rule in Genoa.<sup>78</sup> Giovanni Cavalcanti makes clear that this was a military command and that Tommaso led troops into battle on several occasions in 1427, albeit not successfully. He was eventually captured in late 1427 while besieging the city of Genoa and died in early 1428 after being imprisoned and tortured.<sup>79</sup> In recognition of Tommaso's service and sacrifice the Florentine government gave his daughter 400 *fiorini* to use for her dowry.<sup>80</sup>

While Tommaso's experiences are almost certainly exceptional as far as commissaries are concerned, the other examples confirm that many commissaries were military men. Giovanni Cavalcanti likewise recognizes the military prowess of commissaries Ludovico di Niccolò Rossi, who successfully defended the for-

75 *Il Trecentonovelle*, 88: "Se dicea il vero ogni uomo il pensi, quello che ha a fare la mercanzia o l'arte meccanica con la industria militare".

76 For an overview of Tommaso's life, see Gabriella Bartolini, "Frescobaldi, Tommaso," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 50 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1998) ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tommaso-frescobaldi\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tommaso-frescobaldi_(Dizionario-Biografico))).

77 Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine*, vol. 1, 169-72; Camera del comune, Provveditori e ufficiali di Banco, spese per condotte 21, 180r, 254v, 255r.

78 For the dispute, see Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine*, vol. 1, 170-72. Cavalcanti discusses the appointment at 175-76.

79 Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine*, vol. 1, 176-78; vol. 2, 476-79.

80 Bartolini, "Frescobaldi, Tommaso".

tress of Mucciano in 1426, and Francesco Tornabuoni, who fought in the Florentine defeat at the battle of Zagonara, where he was captured.<sup>81</sup> Lorenzo di Pigello, meanwhile, first appears in the records as a commissary sent to Castiglione and the Garfagnana region in July and August of 1431, where he likely stayed until at least 1432.<sup>82</sup> He then held several six-month contracts to serve as a captain of twenty infantry in 1434 and 1435.<sup>83</sup> Piero di Cavalcante Cavalcanti likewise was a commissary who commanded seventeen lances in 1423.<sup>84</sup> These examples make clear that not all commissaries were trespassers in the community of military men who served in Florence's wars against the Visconti during this period.

Finally, the military activities of Chirico di Piero Tornaquinci, Brunellescho d'Alderotto Brunelleschi, and Giovanni Donati, all of whom took up military service in the pay of other cities, suggest that many more elite Florentine men may have performed military service during this period than appear in the Florentine sources. The activities of these men begin to come into focus upon preliminary examination of the significant body of documentary evidence that survives for the cities of Siena and Bologna. Chirico, for example, served as a mounted man-at-arms in the Siennese army in August 1427.<sup>85</sup> Brunellescho served Siena in the same capacity and at the same time as Chirico, appearing in a *mostra* of the Siennese army in September 1427.<sup>86</sup> Giovanni (Nanni) Donati meanwhile served in the Bolognese army in 1419, appearing in the records of the Ufficio per la condotta degli stipendiari, the office charged with negotiating military contracts.<sup>87</sup> He subsequently served the city of Siena as a mounted man-at-arms beginning in the summer of 1426 through at least early 1428.<sup>88</sup> It is clear based on these examples that Florentine elite men served in the armies of other cities, but much work remains to be done on the topic.

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81 For Francesco, see Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 184, 61r, 71v and Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine*, vol. 1, 459-60 mentions Francesco's honorable conduct during battle. Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine*, vol. 2, 68-70 discusses Ludovico's defense of Mucciano.

82 Dieci di Balìa, Entrata e Uscita 2, 60v & 4, 16r, 18r, 53r, 53v, 55v;

83 Scrivano di Uscita Duplicato 253, 92r.

84 Camarlinghi Uscita 380, 4r.

85 ASSi, Biccherna, Condotte 614, 36r, 63v, 64v.

86 Biccherna, Condotte 614, 38r.

87 ASBo (Bologna), Ufficio per la condotta degli stipendiari, Libri Defectum, B2 (Mazzo 1) (1419), 48v.

88 Biccherna, Condotte 613, 107r, 140v, 155r & 614, 91r & 615, 20v: Nanni is described as a "homo juvenis magne stature" (613, 107r).

### *The Catasto as a Source for Military History*

There can be little doubt, based on the number and duration of these contracts and the nature of the service stipulated in them, that most of these men were not casual or amateur soldiers. Many of the men whose careers began during the Florentine-Visconti war immediately preceding the imposition of the Catasto dedicated entire years without interruption to military service. Thus, when the Catasto was instituted in 1427 and officials came to collect demographic, economic, and occupation data from the households belonging to these lineages many of the declarers and adult male dependents were at that time or had recently been military men, commanding soldiers or serving as individual soldiers on the battlefields of late medieval Italy. As mentioned earlier, this service is not reflected in the occupation data recorded by the clerks of the 1427 Catasto.

This is particularly true of the declarations made by the military men discussed thus far. As Table 4 makes clear only five of the identifiable twenty-four heads of household declared an occupation and of the four, only two claimed to be a soldier: Nanni di Jacopo Nerli and Pagolo d'Andrea Rossi. The rest of the heads of household did not declare an occupation and the clerks of the Catasto did not record any occupation data for dependents (*bocche*). In addition, twenty-seven of the men listed in the table below could not be connected to a Catasto declaration because of insufficient information in the extant records or because the volume which contains their declaration is not digitized.

#### SEE TABLE 4 Captains, Corporals, and *Provvigionati* with 1427 Catasto Data

For the men who can be definitively identified in the 1427 Catasto as the head of their household, the census provides important data that shines light on two aspects of the lives of Florentine military men generally: their overall personal wealth and their investments. This economic data (presented in Table 4 above) makes it possible to determine if Florentine soldiers continued to invest in the Monte and thus in Florence's wars, as Caferro observed for the Trecento.<sup>89</sup> An analysis of the data suggests only a limited connection between levels of wealth and the nature of the service undertaken by declarers: wealthier men served as

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<sup>89</sup> Caferro, *Petrarch's War*, 71ff and idem, "Warfare and Economy in Renaissance Italy, 1350-1450", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39.2 (Autumn 2008): 167-209, at 205-6.

captains and corporals, as well as *provvigionati*. The wealthiest *provvigionati* for whom there is data were the Frescobaldi brothers (Albano, Bardo, Jacopo, Lamberto), whose total and taxable wealth is recorded in the Catasto as 1322 total wealth/977 taxable wealth (in florins), while the wealthiest individual *provvigionato* was Alberto d'Antonio Bardi, at 1066/1011 florins. Jacobo di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi (883/563 florins) and Benedetto di Lorenzo Gherardini (670/360 florins) also boasted a degree of wealth that matched and even eclipsed some of those who served as captains and corporals. The total wealth of the rest of the *provvigionati* fell somewhere between 261 and 64 florins.

SEE TABLE 5 Wealth of the *Provvigionati*

Excluding Francesco d'Alessandro Nerli, the wealthiest man by far (26939/26939), the economic data for the men who served as captains and corporals indicates a range of total wealth from 445 florins (Aparado d'Aparado Donati) to 3642 florins (Beltrame di Niccolò Della Tosa). The data also suggests a minimal correlation between an individual's wealth and the size of the band that served under his command. For example, Gino di Manente Buondelmonti (2424/1737 florins) and the aforementioned Beltrame di Niccolò Della Tosa (3642/2660 florins), among the wealthier men on the list, commanded small units: sixteen and three crossbowmen, respectively. In contrast, the two Rossi men, Rosso (3019/2107 florins) and Carlo (2074/1415 florins), whose wealth was comparable to that of Gino and Beltrame, commanded much larger units: Rosso's bands ranged from twenty crossbowmen to one lance and 100 mixed infantry, while Carlo's ranged from forty-four crossbowmen to three lances and 100 mixed infantry. The size and composition of the bands differed among captains with more modest levels of wealth as well. For example, Zanobio di Cocco Donati (1016/934 florins) was far wealthier than Antonio di Ballerino Nerli (483/333 florins), but the latter commanded a significantly larger band: Zanobio's band consisted of six mixed infantry, while Antonio's band numbered thirty crossbowmen.

SEE TABLE 6 *Wealth of the Captains and Corporals*

The data provided by the Catasto suggests that Florentine military men, at least members of the chivalric lineages examined in this paper, did not widely or heavily invest in the Monte. Francesco d'Alessandro Nerli (26939 florins) not surprisingly invested the most (2637 florins) in the Monte and thus the city's war

efforts. The next largest investment belonged to Beltrame di Niccolò Della Tosa, who invested only nineteen florins despite his considerable wealth (3642 florins). Neither of the two remaining investments exceed twenty florins. Although this suggests a change in investment strategy on the part of Florentine soldiers, such an interpretation should be qualified by the fact that members of chivalric lineages were not representative of Florentine soldiers generally and some elite Florentines utilized clever strategies to disguise their wealth and thus limit their tax liabilities.<sup>90</sup>

SEE TABLE 7 Investment in the Monte

### *Declared Occupation vs Identity*

Given the discrepancy between the extensive military service performed by Florentine men from chivalric lineages and the occupations they claimed, or didn't claim, in their declarations to the 1427 Catasto, there seems to be little connection between the stated occupation of soldier and the martial identity these men cultivated. Despite this apparent disconnect, most of the elite men who served in the Florentine army on a contract basis—in particular the captains and corporals discussed above—were professional soldiers, not ad-hoc groups of amateur soldiers who came together *only* to exploit the economic opportunities introduced by periods of intense warfare.<sup>91</sup> And while professionalization in the military sphere did not prohibit these men from engaging in other economic activities, the life of arms continued to be important to chivalric lineages in particular.<sup>92</sup> Whether or not they claimed soldier as their occupation was beside the point, particularly because the notion of an occupation continued to be fluid in the Quattrocento.

As a result, it seems more appropriate to consider the military service per-

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90 Caferro, "The silk business of Tommaso Spinelli, fifteenth-century Florentine merchant and papal banker", *Renaissance Studies* 10.4 (1996): 417-39 and idem, "Tommaso Spinelli: The Soul of a Banker", *The Journal of the Historical Society* 8.2 (June 2008): 303-22.

91 See Caferro's studies referenced throughout the study.

92 Caferro's discussion of Niccolò Acciaiuoli is particularly relevant here: "Niccolò Acciaiuoli and the Certosa at the Intersection of Faith, Politics, Economy and Warfare in Trecento Italy," in *Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Boccaccio e la Certosa del Galluzzo. Politica, religione ed economia nell'Italia del Trecento*, eds. A. Andreini, S. Barsella, E. Filosa, J. Houston, and S. Tognetti (Rome: Viella, 2020), 11-36. See also the general discussion in Sposato, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars*, particularly the introduction and chapters 3-5.

formed by members of the Florentine chivalric elite in terms of a cultivated martial identity and the function traditionally associated by contemporaries with that identity rather than assessing how many claimed the occupation of soldier in the Catasto. In the case of the members of chivalric lineages, the life of arms had long been the main function associated in late medieval Florence with their brand of elite identity, and this continued to be true in the early Quattrocento. For these men, military service provided not only economic returns but also reinforced their continued claims to social superiority—even if these were disputed on economic or political grounds—and engaged them in the honorable and ennobling business of war, perpetuating venerable family traditions. In this way, members of chivalric lineages who habitually performed military service reinforced connections to the pan-European chivalric community—nobles, knights, and other elite men—who were definitively professional warriors and distinguished themselves from the artisans-turned-soldiers whom Picchianti studied, men who sought to maximize the compensation they received for their labor.

### *Conclusion*

This essay is a preliminary assessment of the continuous military service performed in the first half of the Quattrocento by men belonging to Florentine chivalric lineages. By tracing military contracts and other forms of evidence in the cameral budgets and Dieci di Balìa records, this study demonstrates that members of this elite group—whether serving as captains, corporals, or ordinary *provigionati*—were, in fact, professional soldiers who often dedicated entire years without interruption to the life of arms. In other words, war remained a constitutive feature, an ennobling and honorable function, of their traditional brand of elite identity.

The evidence of their extensive service highlights a secondary, but important finding of this study: the 1427 Catasto is a problematic source for identifying professional military men among the Florentine elite. With very few exceptions, the heads of elite households who performed military service consistently did not declare an occupation, and the clerks of the Catasto did not record occupation data for adult male dependents (*bocche*) who were also serving. Despite these limitations, the 1427 Catasto does provide important economic data that allows for a more nuanced understanding of these men, including total and taxable wealth

and investments in the Monte. This economic data reveals that individual wealth did not always determine the nature of the service performed, although greater wealth usually corresponded with a larger band size. The data also suggests that Florentine soldiers, at least members of chivalric lineages, did not invest in the Monte in the same way as did their predecessors in the Trecento.

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Table 1 *Captains and Corporals*

NAME	TYPE OF SERVICE	DATES OF SERVICE	BAND SIZE & COMPOSITION	DURATION OF CONTRACTS	SOURCES
Francesco di Filippo Adimari	captain	1413-16, 1424-25	10-55 lances	6 months, 1 year	ASF: ST 5, 3r, 23r, 27r, 29v; DCS, 13, 131r ASSI: BC 641, 54r
Piero d'Adovardo Agli	captain	1427-28	9 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 213v; RI 3, 54r
Benedetto di Niccolò Bardi	captain	1425	9 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: DCS 15, 24r; ST 5, 157r
Michele di Niccolò Bardi	not specified	1427	6 mixed infantry	6 months	ASF: DCS 15, 286r
Gino di Manente Buondelmonti	captain	1424-26	16 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: DCS 2v, 22r, 42v, 57v; ST 5, 142v, 155v, 168v, 177v, 201v
Niccolò di Manente Buondelmonti	captain	1424	not specified	6 months	ASF: SUD 189, 32r
Zenobio di Cocchi Donati	captain	1425-26	6 crossbowmen	6 months	ASF: DCS 15, 30v; ST 5, 161r, 185v, 194v; SPC 21, 139r, 153v, 154r, 243v, 250v; CU 381-bis, 69v
Aparido d'Aparido Donati	captain	1426	9 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 191r; SPC 21, 139r, 152v
Baldassare d'Aparido Donati	crossbowman, captain	1424, 1427	5 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 126r; CU 381 ters., 21r.
Donato di Giovanni Donati	corporal, crossbowman	1424, 1426, 1437-38	8 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	ASF: ST 5, 123r, 200r; SUD 259, 44v
Jacopo Donati	captain	1425, 1427	4 mixed infantry, 9 crossbowmen	4, 6 months	ASF: CU 381, 81r; ST 5, 238v
Sinibaldo di Sinibaldo Donati	captain	1424-26, 1430	9 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 155v, 171v, 177v; DCS 15, 22r, 47v; SPC 41, 202v
Zaccaria di Jacopo Frescobaldi	corporal	1397-99, 1421, 1423-25	6 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	ASF: ST 5, 71r, 77r, 79r, 81r, 89r, 103v, 119r, 133v; DCS 7, 195v & 12, 14r & 13, 119v & 14, 41v; CU 189, 34r & 322, 14v & 379, 83v, 87v, 305r & 381, 83v
Antonio Galli	corporal	1424-25	7 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 143r

Jacopo di Gallo Galli	corporal	1427, 1432	8 mixed infantry-12 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: SPC 21, 139v; ST 5, 214r, 221v; DCS 15, 294r; MRP 120.12, 207v
Broccardio Gherardini	captain	1426	14 lances	6 months	ASF: DCS 15, 20v
Giovanni di Luigi Gherardini	captain	1429-30	12 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: SPC 41, 84v, 85r; EU 2, 30v, 96v
Romolo di Lorenzo Gherardini	captain	1424	7 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: DCS 13, 125v; ST 5, 123r
Andrea di Soldo Nerli	corporal, captain	1424-26	10-50 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 106v, 123r, 149r, 150r, 167r, 177r; DCS 15, 12r, 14r, 40r, 42r; SUD 187, 79v
Antonio di Bandino Nerli	captain	1425	30 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: DCS 15, 12r, 14r; ST 5, 149r, 150r
Carlo d'Agnolo Rossi	captain	1423-25, 1431-32	44 crossbowmen-3 lances & 100 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 95v, 113r; CU 380, 58v, 63r; SUD 187, 92r, 102r; DCS 16, 20r
Rosso del Boneca Rossi	captain	1424-25	20 mixed infantry-1 lance & 100 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: DCS 13, 139r; ST 5, 132r, 149r, 163v, 176v, 185v, 198v, 207v, 216v
Francesco di Gabriele Soldanieri	captain	1425	2 lances & 55 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: DCS 15, 37r; ST 5, 181v
Lupo di Squarcia Squarcialupi	captain	1425-27	12 crossbowmen	1, 4 months	ASF: DCS 15, 37r; ST 5, 165r, 191r, 196v, 206r; RI 4, 11v
Piero di Francesco Squarcialupi	corporal	1415, 1427-29, 1437-38	1 lance; 6 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	ASF: ST 5, 27v, 231r, 242v; DCS 15, 231v, 269v, 273v, 275r; SUD 206, 21v & 209, 8r & 259, 101r

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Table 2 *Captains and Corporals with contracts in the 1430s and 1440s*

NAME	TYPE OF SERVICE	DATES OF SERVICE	BAND SIZE & COMPOSITION	DURATION OF CONTRACTS	SOURCES
Jacopo di Luigi Adimari	captain	1440-41	4 crossbowmen	6 months	ASF: DCS 18, 26r, 43r, 53r, 59r; SUD 279, 20v
Lorenzo di Piggello Adimari	commissary, captain	1431-32, 1434-35	20 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	ASF: EU 2, 60v, 67r & 4, 16r, 18r, 53r, 53v, 55v; SPC 31, 170r-v; SUD 253, 92r
Luigi di Jacopo Adimari	captain	1440-42	8-12 crossbowmen	4, 6 months	ASF: DCS 18, 40r, 53r, 59r
Bernardo di Cipriano Bardi	captain <sup>a</sup>	1433	not specified	not specified	ASF: EU 3, 68v
Gherardo di Gherardo Buondelmonti	captain	1435, 1436	40 mixed infantry	6 months	ASF: SUD 253, 92v
Rainieri di Giovanni Montebuoni <sup>b</sup>	captain	1430	100 lances & 66 mixed infantry	not specified	ASF: DCS 16, 101v
Giannozzo di Giovanni Cavalcanti	captain	1431-32	12 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: DCS 16, 15v; EU 2, 25r
Guasparre di Giovanni Cocchi Donati	captain	1440-42	8-12 crossbowmen	4, 6 months	ASF: SUD 253, 96r & 254, 86v & 255, 87v; DCS 18, 40r, 53r, 59r
Bartolomeo Donati	crossbowman, captain	1431, 1437, 1438	6-9 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	ASF: CU 382, 38v; SUD 259, 98v & 266, 13r
Donato di Giovanni Donati	corporal, crossbowman	1424, 1426, 1437-38	8 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	ASF: ST 5, 123r, 200r; SUD 259, 44v
Sinibaldo di Sinibaldo Donati	captain	1424-26, 1430	9 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 155v, 171v, 177v; DCS 15, 22r, 47v; SPC 41, 202v
Jacopo di Gallo Galli	corporal	1427, 1432	8 mixed infantry- 12 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: SPC 21, 139v; ST 5, 214r, 221v; DCS 15, 294r; MRP 120.12, 207v

Gherardino d'Andrea Gherardini	captain	1431	11 crossbowmen	4 months	ASF: DCS 16, 15v
Giovanni di Luigi Gherardini	captain	1429-30	12 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: SPC 41, 84v, 85r; EU 2, 30v, 96v
Francesco d'Alessandro Nerli	captain	1430	not specified	not specified	ASF: SPC 41, 190v
Carlo d'Agnolo Rossi	captain	1423-25, 1431-32	44 crossbowmen-3 lances & 100 mixed infantry	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 95v, 113r; CU 380, 58v, 63r; SUD 187, 92r, 102r; DCS 16, 20r
Piero di Francesco Squarcialupi	corporal	1415, 1427-29, 1437-38	1 lance; 6 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	ASF: ST 5, 27v, 231r, 242v; DCS 15, 231v, 269v, 273v, 275r; SUD 206, 21v & 209, 8r & 259, 101r
Beltramone di Niccolò Della Tosa	not specified	1436-37	3 infantry	6 months	ASF: SUD 259, 92r

<sup>a</sup> elected captain of the “destroyers” (“ghuastare”) near Lucca / <sup>b</sup>Montebuoni is a branch of the Buondelmonti lineage

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Table 3 *Provvigionati*

NAME	TYPE OF SERVICE	DATES OF SERVICE	LOCATION OF SERVICE	DURATION OF CONTRACTS	SOURCES
Jacopo di Chiaro Adimari	crossbowman	1422	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	ASF: SUD 172, 54r
Giovanni di Bindo Aleis	crossbowman	1426-27	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: CU 381-bis, 43v; SUD 198, 52r
Alberto d'Antonio Bardi	crossbowman	1423-25	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno	6 months	ASF: SUD 184, 78r; CU 380, 29v, 70r
Andrea Bardi	shield-bearing soldier	1425	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	ASF: CU 381-bis, 87r, 90v
Attaviano di Michele Bardi	shield-bearing soldier	1423-24	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	ASF: SUD 184, 54r
Panocchia di Luca Buondelmonti	shield-bearing soldier, crossbowman	1424-26	Cortona	6 months	ASF: CU 379, 168r, 200v, 297r & 380, 16v, 24r & 381, 37r & 381-bis, 56v; SUD 184, 54v, 58v & 185, 42r & 187, 32r & 190, 40v & 193, 40v
Niccolò d'Antonio Cavalcanti	cavalryman	1433	not specified	not specified	ASF: EU 3, 2r, 51v, 52v, 67v
Baldassare d'Apardo Donati	crossbowman, captain	1424, 1427	Citadel of Pisa	4 months	ASF: ST 5, 126r; SPC 21, 139r, 152v; CU 381-ter, 21r
Piero Donati	crossbowman	1426	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	ASF: CU 381-bis, 35r, 82v
Albano, Bardo, Jacopo, & Lamberto di Tommaso di M. Castellano Frescobaldi	crossbowmen	1424-28	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: CU 379, 237v & 380, 20r, 30v, 42v & 381-ter, 97r, 113r, 195v, 196r; ST 8, 2v, 25v, 116v, 140r; SUD 187, 37r, 40v, 59v, 60v, 73r, 111v & 199, 29v & 203, 23r; SPC 21, 180r, 254v, 255r
Bartolo di Jacopo Galli	crossbowman	1426-27	towers of Porto Pisano	6 months	ASF: CU 380, 24v, 26v & 381-bis, 53r-53v & 381-ter, 143r; ST 8, 88r, 203r; SUD 195, 61v & 199, 30r
Antonio di Piero Gherardini	crossbowman	1422	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	ASF: SUD 172, 51v
Benedetto di Laurentio Gherardini	crossbowman	1424	Cortona	6 months	ASF: CU 379, 73v

Bindo di Lorenzo Gherardini	crossbowman	1422-26	Cortona	6 months	ASF: CU 379, 155r, 209v, 249v, 256v, 257r & 380, 17v, 20r & 381, 37v, 111v & 381-bis, 57r; SUD 184, 64r & 187, 33r, 37r & 190, 40r & 193, 40r, 66v
Niccolò Gherardini	crossbowman	1424-25	Citadel of Pisa	3, 6 months	ASF: CU 380, 50r, 63r & 381-bis, 76v
Antonio di Tommaso Gianfigliuzzi	crossbowman	1422-26	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: CU 379, 156r, 162r, 197v, 218v & 380, 26v, 28r, 29v, 67r & 381, 56r & 381-bis, 77v; SUD 172, 51v & 187, 48r, 58r, 108v & 195, 53r, 59v
Jacobo di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi	crossbowman, commissary	1424-29, 1436-37	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno, Cortona	6 months	ASF: CU 380, 27v; SUD 195, 59v & 198, 39v & 208, 34v, 43v & 252, 52r & 254, 33r; ST 8, 24r
Bartolomeo Nerli	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	1423-24	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: SUD 183, 40v & 187, 50v
Nanni di Jacopo Nerli	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	1422-25, 1428, 1434-36	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno, Arezzo	4, 6 months	ASF: ST 5, 68r & 8, 151r; CU 379, 156r, 216r, 219r & 380, 29r, 30r, 35v, 67v, 70r & 381, 63r, 63v & 381-bis, 43r, 88v, 90r & 386, 18v; SUD 184, 75v & 187, 49r & 192, 51v & 193, 64v
Nanni di Nerlo Nerli	crossbowman	1422-24	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno	6 months	ASF: ST 5, 68r; SUD 172, 71v & 184, 43v, 72v, 78r & 187, 114r
Benedetto, Bernardo, & Pazzino di Messer Uberto Pazzi	crossbowmen, shield-bearing soldiers	1427-28	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: CU 381-ter, 97v, 98r, 194r, 196v, 197r; ST 8, 56v, 76r, 190v, 170v; SUD 187, 65r-bis, 207, 75v & 208, 51v, 52r
Marco di Domenico Pigli	not specified	1429	towers of Porto Pisano	3 months	ASF: SUD 208, 67v

Piero di Lapo Pigli	shield-bearing soldier	1425-28	Citadel of Pisa	3, 6 months	ASF: CU 381, 84v, 86r, 108v & 381-bis, 65r, 87v & 381-ter, 41r, 109v, 179v, 180r, 202v; ST 8, 75v, 190r; EU 2, 24v; SUD 189, 35r, 38r & 190, 3
Bartolomeo di Francesco Rossi	crossbowman	1424	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: CU 380, 47r
Pagolo d'Andrea Rossi	shield-bearing soldier	1422-23	Citadel of Pisa	3, 6 months	ASF: SUD 172, 62r; CU 379, 25v
Stagio di Piero Rossi	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	1422-26	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: SUD 172, 53v & 183, 47r & 184, 73v, 76v & 187, 48r; CU 379, 140v, 160v, 217v, 221r, 245r, 286v & 380, 26v, 69v & 381-bis, 13v & 381-ter, 117r
Stefano di Niccolò Rossi	crossbowman	1423-28, 1431-32	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	ASF: CU 379, 156r, 162r, 216v, 219r & 380, 30r, 67v & 381, 56v & 381-bis, 35r & 384, 6v, 39v; ST 8, 44r, 160r; SUD 172, 58v & 184, 73r, 75v & 185, 73r & 187, 49r, 58v, 109r & 192, 46r & 195, 53r, 59v & 198, 40r

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Table 4 Captains, Corporals, and *Provvisionati* with 1427 Catasto Data

NAME	TYPE OF SERVICE	DATES OF SERVICE	BAND SIZE & COMPOSITION/ LOCATION OF SERVICE	DURATION OF CONTRACTS	WEALTH (Total, Taxable, Investment in Monte in florins) & OCCUPATION <sup>a</sup>	SOURCES (Catasto)
Francesco di Filippo Adimari	captain	1413-16, 1424-25	10-55 lances	6 months, 1 year	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Jacopo di Chiaro Adimari	crossbowman	1422	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Jacopo di Luigi Adimari	captain	1440-41	4 crossbowmen	6 months	474/384/0; no occupation	v.80, 405
Lorenzo di Pigello Adimari	commissary, captain	1431-32, 1434-35	20 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	1532/1298/8; no occupation	v.81, 473
Luigi di Jacopo Adimari	captain	1440-42	8-12 crossbowmen	4, 6 months	<i>bocca</i>	v.80, 405
Giovanni di Bindo Agli (Aleis)	crossbowman	1426-27	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Piero d'Adovardo Agli	captain	1427-28	9 crossbowmen	4 months	598/400/0; no occupation	v.69, 408
Alberto d'Antonio Bardi	crossbowman	1423-25	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno	6 months	1066/1011/0; no occupation	v.64, 278
Andrea Bardi	shield-bearing soldier	1425	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Attaviano di Michele Bardi	shield-bearing soldier	1423-24	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Benedetto di Niccolò Bardi	captain	1425	9 crossbowmen	4 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Bernardo di Ciriaco Bardi	captain <sup>d</sup>	1433	not specified	not specified	884/498/0; goldsmith	v.64, 58
Michele di Niccolò Bardi	not specified	1427	6 mixed infantry	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Gherardo di Gherardo Buondelmonti	captain	1435, 1436	40 mixed infantry	6 months	<i>bocca</i>	v.74, 63
Gino di Manente Buondelmonti	captain	1424-26	16 crossbowmen	4 months	2424/1737/0; no occupation	v.80, 174
Niccolò di Manente Buondelmonti	captain	1424	not specified	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Panocchia di Luca Buondelmonti	shield-bearing soldier, crossbowman	1424-26	Cortona	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Rainieri di Giovanni Buondelmonti <sup>b</sup>	captain	1430	100 lances & 66 mixed infantry	not specified	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-

Giannozzo di Vanni Cavalcanti	captain	1431-32	12 crossbowmen	4 months	1264/1151/0; no occupation	v.68, 214
Niccolò d'Antonio Cavalcanti	cavalryman	1433	not specified	not specified	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Guasparre di Giovanni Cocchi Donati	captain	1440-42	8-12 crossbowmen	4, 6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Zanobio di Cocchi Donati	captain	1425-26	6 crossbowmen	6 months	1016/934/0; no occupation	v.69, 455
Aparido d'Aparido Donati	captain	1426	9 crossbowmen	4 months	445/287/0; no occupation	v.80, 231
Baldassare d'Aparido Donati	crossbowman, captain	1424, 1427	5 mixed infantry	4 months	<i>bocca</i>	v.80, 231
Bartolomeo Donati	crossbowman, captain	1431, 1437, 1438	6-9 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Donato di Giovanni Donati	corporal, crossbowman	1424, 1426, 1437-38	8 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Jacopo Donati	captain	1425, 1427	4 mixed infantry, 9 crossbowmen	4, 6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Piero Donati	crossbowman	1426	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Sinibaldo di Sinibaldo Donati	captain	1424-26, 1430	9 crossbowmen	4 months	524/355/0; no occupation	v.80, 528
Albano, Bardo, Jacopo, & Lamberto di Tommaso di Castellano Frescobaldi <sup>c</sup>	crossbowmen	1424-28	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	1322/977/0; no occupations	v.76, 259
Zaccaria di Jacopo Frescobaldi	corporal	1397-99, 1421, 1423-25	6 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	594/514/0; no occupation	v.65, 457
Antonio Galli	corporal	1424-25	7 mixed infantry	4 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Bartolo di Jacopo Galli	crossbowman	1426-27	towers of Porto Pisano	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Jacopo di Gallo Galli	corporal	1427, 1432	8 mixed infantry-12 crossbowmen	4 months	589/367/0; carpenter	v.79, 485
Antonio di Piero Gherardini	crossbowman	1422	Citadel of Pisa	3 months	<i>bocca</i>	v.68, 58
Benedetto di Lorenzo Gherardini	crossbowman	1424	Cortona	6 months	670/360/0; no occupation <sup>g</sup>	v.68, 301
Bindo di Lorenzo Gherardini	crossbowman	1422-26	Cortona	6 months	<i>bocca</i>	v.68, 301
Broccardio Gherardini	captain	1426	14 lances	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Giovanni di Luigi Gherardini	captain	1429-30	12 mixed infantry	4 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-

Niccolò Gherardini	crossbowman	1424-25	Citadel of Pisa	3, 6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Romolo di Lorenzo Gherardini	captain	1424	7 crossbowmen	4 months	<i>bocca</i>	v.68, 301
Antonio di Tommaso Gianfigliuzzi	crossbowman	1422-26	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	126/76/0; no occupation	v.75, 2
Jacobo di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi	crossbowman, commissary	1424-29, 1436-37	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno, Cortona	6 months	883/563/347; no occupation <sup>e</sup>	v.75, 111
Andrea di Soldo Nerli	corporal, captain	1424-26	10-50 crossbowmen	4 months	996/900/0; no occupation	v.78, 234
Antonio di Ballerino Nerli	captain	1425	30 crossbowmen	4 months	483/333/0; govt. official	v.67, 492
Bartolomeo Nerli	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	1423-24	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	dead	-
Francesco d'Alessandro Nerli	captain	1430	not specified	not specified	26939/26939/2637; no occupation	v.65, 477
Nanni di Jacopo Nerli	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	1422-25, 1428, 1434-36	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno, Arezzo	4, 6 months	163/145/0; soldier <sup>e</sup>	v.76, 328
Nanni di Nerlo Nerli	crossbowman	1422-24	Citadel of Pisa, Livorno	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Benedetto, Bernardo, & Pazzino di Messer Uberto Pazzi	crossbowmen, shield-bearing soldiers	1427-28	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Marco di Domenico Pigli	not specified	1429	towers of Porto Pisano	3 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Piero di Lapo Pigli	shield-bearing soldier	1425-28	Citadel of Pisa	3, 6 months	64/44/0; no occupation	v.76, 365
Bartolomeo di Francisco Rossi	crossbowman	1424	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Carlo d'Agnolo Rossi	captain	1423-25, 1431-32	44 crossbowmen-3 lances & 100 mixed infantry	4 months	2074/1415/0; no occupation	v.65, 308
Pagolo d'Andrea Rossi	shield-bearing soldier	1422-23	Citadel of Pisa	3, 6 months	144/117/0; soldier	v.72, 386
Rosso del Boneca Rossi	captain	1424-25	20 mixed infantry-1 lance & 100 mixed infantry	4 months	3019/2107/0; no occupation	v.65, 235
Stefano di Niccolò Rossi	crossbowman	1423-28, 1431-32	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	261/218/0; no occupation	v.65, 493

Stagio di Piero Rossi	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	1422-26	Citadel of Pisa	6 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Francesco di Gabriello Soldanieri	captain	1425	2 lances & 55 mixed infantry	4 months	N/A <sup>f</sup>	-
Lupo di Squarcia Squarcialupi	captain	1425-27	12 crossbowmen	1, 4 months	646/565/0; no occupation	v.65, 380
Piero di Francesco Squarcialupi	corporal	1415, 1427-29, 1437-38	1 lance; 6 mixed infantry	4, 6 months	593/593/0; no occupation	v.311, 172
Beltramone di Niccolò Della Tosa	not specified	1436-37	3 infantry	6 months	3642/2660/19; no occupation	v.79, 170

### Key

<sup>a</sup> total wealth/taxable wealth; dependents (*bocche*) did not declare their occupation or wealth; <sup>b</sup> Montebuoni; <sup>c</sup> joint declaration; <sup>d</sup> elected captain of the “destroyers” (“ghuastare”) near Lucca; <sup>e</sup> the identification of the individual with this declaration is not definitive; <sup>f</sup> insufficient information to identify the individual or the individual cannot be located in the Catasto or the individual appears in a volume that has not yet been digitized; <sup>g</sup> part of a joint declaration

Table 5 Wealth of the *Provvigionati*

NAME	TYPE OF SERVICE	TOTAL WEALTH (in Florins)	TAXABLE WEALTH (in Florins)
Albano, Bardo, Jacopo, & Lamberto di Tommaso di M. Castellano Frescobaldi	crossbowmen	1322	977
Alberto d'Antonio Bardi	crossbowman	1066	1011
Jacobo di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi	crossbowman, commissary	883	563
Benedetto di Laurentio Gherardini	crossbowman	670	360
Stefano di Niccolò Rossi	crossbowman	261	218
Nanni di Jacopo Nerli	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	163	145
Pagolo d'Andrea Rossi	shield-bearing soldier	144	117
Antonio di Tommaso Gianfigliuzzi	crossbowman	126	76
Piero di Lapo Pigi	shield-bearing soldier	64	44
Baldassare d'Apardo Donati	crossbowman, captain	<i>bocca</i>	<i>bocca</i>
Antonio di Piero Gherardini	crossbowman	<i>bocca</i>	<i>bocca</i>
Bindo di Lorenzo Gherardini	crossbowman	<i>bocca</i>	<i>bocca</i>
Jacopo di Chiaro Adimari	crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Giovanni di Bindo Aleis	crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Andrea Bardi	shield-bearing soldier	N/A	N/A
Attaviano di Michele Bardi	shield-bearing soldier	N/A	N/A
Panocchia di Luca Buondelmonti	shield-bearing soldier, crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Niccolò d'Antonio Cavalcanti	cavalryman	N/A	N/A
Piero Donati	crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Bartolo di Jacopo Galli	crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Niccolò Gherardini	crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Nanni di Nerlo Nerli	crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Benedetto, Bernardo, & Pazzino di Messer Uberto Pazzi	crossbowmen, shield-bearing soldiers	N/A	N/A
Marco di Domenico Pigi	not specified	N/A	N/A
Bartolomeo di Francisco Rossi	crossbowman	N/A	N/A
Stagio di Piero Rossi	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	N/A	N/A
Bartolomeo Nerli	crossbowman, shield-bearing soldier	dead	dead

Table 6 *Wealth of the Captains and Corporals*

NAME	TYPE OF SERVICE	BAND SIZE & COMPOSITION	TOTAL WEALTH (in Florins)	TAXABLE WEALTH (in Florins)
Francesco d' Alessandro Nerli	captain	not specified	26939	26939
Beltramone di Niccolò Della Tosa	not specified	3 infantry	3642	2660
Rosso del Boneca Rossi	captain	20 mixed infantry-1 lance & 100 mixed infantry	3019	2107
Gino di Manente Buondelmonti	captain	16 crossbowmen	2424	1737
Carlo d' Agnolo Rossi	captain	44 crossbowmen-3 lances & 100 mixed infantry	2074	1415
Lorenzo di Pigello Adimari	commissary, captain	20 mixed infantry	1532	1298
Giannozzo di Vanni Cavalcanti	captain	12 crossbowmen	1264	1151
Zanobio di Cocchi Donati	captain	6 crossbowmen	1016	934
Andrea di Soldo Nerli	corporal, captain	10-50 crossbowmen	996	900
Bernardo di Cipriano Bardi	captain	not specified	884	498
Lupo di Squarcia Squarcialupi	captain	12 crossbowmen	646	565
Piero d' Adovardo Agli	captain	9 crossbowmen	598	400
Zaccaria di Jacopo Frescobaldi	corporal	6 mixed infantry	594	514
Piero di Francesco Squarcialupi	corporal	1 lance; 6 mixed infantry	593	593
Jacopo di Gallo Galli	corporal	8 mixed infantry-12 crossbowmen	589	367
Sinibaldo di Sinibaldo Donati	captain	9 crossbowmen	524	355
Jacopo di Luigi Adimari	captain	4 crossbowmen	474	384
Antonio di Ballerino Nerli	captain	30 crossbowmen	483	333
Apardo d' Apardo Donati	captain	9 crossbowmen	445	287
Stefano di Niccolò Rossi	crossbowman	Citadel of Pisa	261	218
Luigi di Jacopo Adimari	captain	8-12 crossbowmen	<i>bocca</i>	<i>bocca</i>
Gherardo di Gherardo Buondelmonti	captain	40 mixed infantry	<i>bocca</i>	<i>bocca</i>
Baldassare d' Apardo Donati	crossbowman, captain	5 mixed infantry	<i>bocca</i>	<i>bocca</i>
Romolo di Lorenzo Gherardini	captain	7 crossbowmen	<i>bocca</i>	<i>bocca</i>
Francesco di Filippo Adimari	captain	10-55 lances	N/A	N/A

Benedetto di Niccolò Bardi	captain	9 crossbowmen	N/A	N/A
Michele di Niccolò Bardi	not specified	6 mixed infantry	N/A	N/A
Niccolò di Manente Buondelmonti	captain	not specified	N/A	N/A
Rainieri di Giovanni Buondelmonti <sup>b</sup>	captain	100 lances & 66 mixed infantry	N/A	N/A
Niccolò d'Antonio Cavalcanti	cavalryman	not specified	N/A	N/A
Guasparre di Giovanni Cocchi Donati	captain	8-12 crossbowmen	N/A	N/A
Bartolomeo Donati	crossbowman, captain	6-9 mixed infantry	N/A	N/A
Donato di Giovanni Donati	corporal, crossbowman	8 mixed infantry	N/A	N/A
Jacopo Donati	captain	4 mixed infantry, 9 crossbowmen	N/A	N/A
Antonio Galli	corporal	7 mixed infantry	N/A	N/A
Broccardio Gherardini	captain	14 lances	N/A	N/A
Giovanni di Luigi Gherardini	captain	12 mixed infantry	N/A	N/A
Francesco di Gabriello Soldanieri	captain	2 lances & 55 mixed infantry	N/A	N/A

Table 7 Investment in the Monte

NAME	TYPE OF SERVICE	TOTAL/TAXABLE WEALTH (in Florins)	INVESTMENT IN THE MONTE (in Florins)
Francesco d' Alessandro Nerli	captain	26939/26939	2637
Jacobo di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi	crossbowman, commissary	883/563	347
Beltramone di Niccolò Della Tosa	not specified	3642/2660	19
Lorenzo di Pigello Adimari	commissary, captain	1532/1298	8

Disamina di una disfatta:  
la *pars* ghibellina bresciana  
tra Milano, Pandolfo Malatesta e Venezia  
(1402-1454)

di PAOLO DE MONTIS

ABSTRACT: After the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti on September 3rd, 1402, the Duchy of Milan faced a period of political fragmentation and civil conflict. Brescia and its contado were deeply affected by this crisis, which saw an intensified Guelf–Ghibelline strife and frequent regime change. In 1454, the final settlement marked Brescia’s annexation to the Republic of Venice, resulting in the victory of the Guelf faction aligned with the Serenissima. This paper analyses political, diplomatic, and military factors behind the defeat of the Ghibelline party loyal to the Visconti, a faction that, despite its strong military traditions, proved itself unable to counter emerging anti-ducal powers as Pandolfo Malatesta’s and Venice’s.

KEYWORDS: DUCHY OF MILAN; MILANESE DUCAL ARMY; POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION OF THE DUCHY OF MILAN; BRESCIA; TERRITORIAL CONTROL AND STRONGHOLDS IN THE BRESCIA AREA; MILITARY POWER OF LOCAL ELITES; GUELF AND Ghibellines; VENETIAN CONQUEST OF *TERRAFERMA*, IMPERIAL POLITICS IN NORTHERN ITALY; HOUSE OF LUXEMBOURG.

*Introduzione*

L’evoluzione della *pars* ghibellina bresciana tra il periodo del dominio visconteo e il passaggio definitivo alla Repubblica di Venezia offre una prospettiva peculiare sull’indagine delle trasformazioni del ruolo militare e politico di una parte della nobiltà locale nel primo Quattrocento.

Con il progressivo passaggio delle famiglie filo-viscontee da un impegno diretto nella guerra a funzioni di natura logistica e diplomatica, si sollevano interrogativi sulle cause di tale mutamento e sulle conseguenti implicazioni sugli equilibri di potere territoriali.

Le fonti superstiti non consentono una ricostruzione quantitativa sistematica

delle capacità militari delle famiglie ghibelline bresciane; tuttavia una serie di indizi convergenti - la frammentazione delle basi giurisdizionali, la crescente difficoltà nel coordinare azioni armate comuni e il ricorso sempre più frequente alla mediazione diplomatica - suggerisce una trasformazione profonda del loro ruolo politico e militare.

La storiografia recente e meno recente ha posto l'accento sui processi di costruzione statale e sulla trasformazione delle élite lombarda tra tardo Medioevo e primo Rinascimento<sup>1</sup>.

Gli studi sull'area milanese - tra gli altri quelli di Gamberini<sup>2</sup> e Del Tredici<sup>3</sup> - hanno evidenziato come l'espansione del controllo ducale, visconteo e poi sforzesco, abbia progressivamente ridotto l'autonomia dei signori locali e ridefinito la gestione del territorio.

Il rapporto problematico tra le élite della Lombardia orientale e Venezia è stato affrontato in opere come quelle di Zamperetti<sup>4</sup> e nel volume collettaneo curato da Knapton e Cracco<sup>5</sup>. Questi studi mettono in luce un processo di accentramento lento, diseguale e spesso negoziato, avviato nell'area della Lombardia veneziana già nel Quattrocento, sebbene diversi casati e istituzioni fedeli alla Serenissima

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- 1 Per una visione d'insieme sul tema: Giorgio CHITTOLINI, Anthony MOLHO, Pierangelo SCHIERA (cur.), *Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1994.
  - 2 Andrea GAMBERINI (cur.), *A Companion to Late Medieval and Early Modern Milan, The distinctive features of an Italian State*, Brill, Leiden, 2014; Andrea GAMBERINI, *The Clash of Legitimacies: The State-Building Process in Late Medieval Lombardy*, Oxford, OUP Oxford, 2018, in particolare «The Territorial Aristocracies: Pressure from Below, Organization from Above», pp. 158-165.
  - 3 Si vedano le opere citate, che trattano, secondo diverse sfumature, i rapporti sempre più stretti tra la nobiltà feudale e lo Stato signorile: Federico DEL TREDICI, «Nobility in Lombardy between the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age», in GAMBERINI (cur.), *A Companion to Late Medieval and Early Modern Milan*, pp. 477-498; Id., «My desire would be to list them all: lists of nobility in the cities of central and northern Italy (late middle ages-early modern period)», in *Nuova Serie*, vol. 55, no. 163 (1), aprile 2020, pp. 139-158; Id., «Signorie rurali e poteri superiori in Italia settentrionale (secoli XIV-XV)», in Sandro CAROCCI (cur.), *La signoria rurale nell'Italia del tardo medioevo. 4. Quadri di sintesi e nuove prospettive di ricerca*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2023, pp. 317-341.
  - 4 Sergio ZAMPERETTI, *I piccoli principi: signorie locali, feudi e comunità soggette nello Stato regionale veneto dall'espansione territoriale ai primi decenni del '600*, Venezia, Il Cardo, 1991.
  - 5 Giorgio CRACCO, Michael KNAPTON (cur.), *Dentro lo "Stado Italico". Venezia e la Terraferma fra Quattro e Seicento*, Trento, Cívís, 1994.

continuassero a godere di ampie autonomie.

Non meno importanti, per la struttura di questo saggio, sono i contributi a cura o a firma di Gentile<sup>6</sup> sulla continuità delle identità di fazione guelfa-ghibellina nell'Italia del Quattrocento e del Cinquecento, e sull'uso politico di tali etichette da parte dei principali potentati dell'epoca. A Brescia, così come in altre città dell'area italiana settentrionale, la causa ghibellina si identificò completamente con quella viscontea.

Proprio in questo contesto, il caso bresciano risulta particolarmente utile per entrambi i filoni di studio citati, poiché permette di osservare sia le dinamiche di accentramento politico, sia i conflitti di fazione in relazione alle guerre tra signorie e potentati.

Fatte queste premesse metodologiche, lo scopo del saggio mira ad analizzare le strategie adottate dalle principali famiglie ghibelline bresciane nel periodo che va dalla morte di Gian Galeazzo Visconti alla pace di Lodi. In particolare, si intendono mettere in relazione le basi territoriali, la capacità di reclutamento e le scelte diplomatiche di ciascuna famiglia. L'obiettivo non è soltanto ricostruire una sequenza di eventi, ma comprendere le modalità con cui la *pars* filo-viscontea cercò di adattarsi a un contesto politico in rapida trasformazione.

La prima parte del lavoro esamina la struttura militare e territoriale della nobiltà ghibellina bresciana durante la prima fase del dominio visconteo. Verranno illustrate le famiglie più influenti, il loro potenziale militare e il modo in cui conflitti e tensioni con i guelfi nelle zone di frontiera - in particolare nelle valli bresciane e bergamasche - ne condizionarono le fortune.

La seconda parte si concentra sul periodo che, dalla morte di Gian Galeazzo Visconti, conduce al ritiro di Pandolfo Malatesta da Brescia. In questa sezione vengono analizzate le strategie adottate da alcune tra le principali famiglie ghibelline - in particolare Gambara, Isei e Federici - chiamate a operare in un contesto politico complesso, segnato da rivalità interne e da pressioni esercitate tanto dagli attori locali quanto dalle potenze regionali.

La terza parte prende in esame il periodo compreso tra il ritorno dei Visconti in città (1421) e la morte del duca Filippo Maria nel 1447. In questi anni si collo-

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6 Marco GENTILE (cur), *Guelfi e ghibellini nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Roma, Viella, 2005. Per un caso studio specifico, ovvero quello della città di Parma: Marco GENTILE, *Fazioni al governo. Politica e società a Parma nel Quattrocento*, Roma, Viella, 2009.

cano l'effimera riconquista viscontea di Brescia e il rapido passaggio della città alla Repubblica di Venezia, eventi che mettono in luce la crescente fragilità della *pars* ghibellina, sempre meno capace di formulare strategie comuni e di rispondere militarmente alle iniziative avversarie.

In questo frangente emerge la figura di Giacomino da Iseo. Uomo d'armi in gioventù, divenne poi ambasciatore di Filippo Maria Visconti presso la corte del re dei Romani Sigismondo di Lussemburgo e favorì la discesa di Sigismondo in Italia, voluta dal duca sia come intervento contro la potenza veneziana sia come tentativo di riconquistare la Lombardia orientale. Tuttavia, tanto l'azione diplomatica quanto quella militare - culminata nell'offensiva del 1438-1439 - si risolsero in un fallimento: Giacomino prima, e Filippo Maria poco dopo, morirono senza vedere Brescia tornare sotto il biscione.

L'ultima sezione segue le residue fedeltà ducali durante le guerre sforzesche, chiudendo così l'arco del progressivo declino politico e militare della *pars* ghibellina bresciana, avviato nei primi decenni del secolo.

### *1 Le famiglie ghibelline bresciane sotto i Visconti*

La presente sezione prende le mosse dalle ricerche sistematiche di Pagnoni<sup>7</sup> sulla prima dominazione viscontea a Brescia, le quali costituiscono il riferimento metodologico imprescindibile per l'analisi degli eventi successivi.

Sul piano cronologico, l'inizio dell'età viscontea<sup>8</sup> si colloca in un contesto di

7 Fabrizio PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea (1337-1403). Organizzazione territoriale, identità cittadina e politiche di governo negli anni della prima dominazione milanese*, Milano, Edizioni Unicopli, 2013.

8 In merito al ducato visconteo: Andrea GAMBERINI, *Lo Stato Visconteo. Linguaggi politici e dinamiche costituzionali*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2005. Sulla storia ducato nel periodo oggetto della trattazione: Francesco COGNASSO, «Il ducato visconteo da Gian Galeazzo a Filippo Maria», in *Storia di Milano*, vol. VI, Milano, Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la storia di Milano, 1955, pp. 1-383. Sull'organizzazione militare dell'esercito visconteo nel Trecento: Fabio ROMANONI, «Tra sperimentazione e continuità: gli obblighi militari nello Stato Visconteo trecentesco», in *Società e Storia*, 2015/148, pp. 205-213; Paolo GRILLO, «Carriere militari e mobilità sociale nel dominio visconteo (1329-1402)», in Andrea GAMBERINI (cur.), *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano. 2. Stato e istituzioni (secoli XIV-XV)*, Roma, Viella, 2017, pp. 237-256; Giulia ARRIGHETTI, «Una fonte per la storia dell'esercito visconteo nel Trecento: un registro inedito con prestiti a mercenari tra il 1340 e il 1388», in *Studi di storia medioevale e di diplomatica - Nuova Serie*, n. s IV (2020), pp. 205-218; Fabio ROMANONI, «Pane, vino e carri: logistica e vettovagliamento nello sta-

turbolenze politiche derivanti dal crollo della signoria dei Maggi.

Questa casata, associata al partito ghibellino e legata ai Visconti fin dalla fine del Duecento, manteneva un'importante presenza politica e residenziale in città, con una vera e propria *cort* tra i quartieri di San Faustino e di San Giovanni<sup>9</sup>. Nel 1298 i Maggi si insignorirono di Brescia e del suo contado attraverso la figura di Berardo, già vescovo, poi divenuto “marchese, duca e conte”<sup>10</sup>.

Il progetto di signoria dei Maggi ebbe vita breve: in seguito alla morte di Berardo (1308), il potere temporale e quello religioso passarono rispettivamente al fratello Maffeo e al cugino Federico, che furono tuttavia cacciati nei mesi successivi dal partito guelfo, capeggiato da Tebaldo Brusati<sup>11</sup>. Solo l'intervento dell'imperatore Enrico VII, che fece capitolare Brescia nel 1311, consentì il ritorno della

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to visconteo trecentesco», in *Nuova Antologia Militare – Storia Militare Medievale*, fasc. 5, anno II, 2021, pp. 73-192. Sulla guerra, sugli eserciti e sulle figure professionali impegnate nell'ambito militare nell'Italia del Trecento e Quattrocento: Mario DEL TREPPO, «Gli aspetti organizzativi economici e sociali di una compagnia di ventura italiana», in *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXXXV (1973), pp. 24-27; Duccio BALESTRACCI, *Le armi, i cavalli, l'oro. Giovanni Acuto e i condottieri nell'Italia del Trecento*, Roma, Laterza, 2009; Michael E. MALLETT, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy*, Barnsley, Pen & Sword Books, 2013; Paolo GRILLO, Aldo SETTIA (cur.), *Guerre ed eserciti nel Medioevo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2018. Infine, si segnala un saggio recente sulla battaglia di Brescia (1401), decisiva per l'epoca di Gian Galeazzo Visconti e strettamente legata al territorio bresciano: Raffaele Piero GALLI, Alberto FOSSADRI, Andrea CACCAVERI, *La grande battaglia di Brescia del 1401*, Brescia, Agnetti Editore, 2023.

9 PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, p. 132.

10 Sulla figura di Berardo Maggi si rimanda a Gabriele ARCHETTI, *Berardo Maggi, vescovo e signore di Brescia. Studi sulle istituzioni ecclesiastiche e sociali della Lombardia orientale tra XIII e XIV secolo*, Brescia, Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana, 1994. Il volume è utile anche per comprendere il *cursus* del casato prima dell'ascesa del vescovo-principe.

11 Sulle figure di Maffeo e Federico Maggi: Gian Mario VARANINI, «Federico Maggi» e «Maffeo Maggi», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 67 (2006), *ad vocem*. L'acquisizione da parte dei Visconti della signoria di Milano e il più limitato tentativo dei Maggi a Brescia presentano alcuni elementi in comune. In entrambi i casi, il primo detentore di un potere signorile fu un vescovo: Ottone, arcivescovo di Milano, per i Visconti; Berardo, vescovo di Brescia, per i Maggi. A differenza di Ottone, che ottenne il potere dopo la vittoriosa battaglia di Desio contro i guelfi milanesi (1277), la signoria di Berardo nacque da un accordo tra le parti guelfa e ghibellina. Alla sua morte, tuttavia, il passaggio del potere fu contestato dai guelfi bresciani guidati da Tebaldo Brusati, che finirono per prevalere sui rivali. La successione di Berardo non ottenne inoltre alcun riconoscimento imperiale: nel 1311 Enrico VII nominò Alberto Castelbarco di Roverbella vicario per Brescia, sancendo la conclusione formale del dominio dei Maggi sulla città. Nello stesso anno, al contrario, Matteo, nipote di Ottone Visconti, ottenne dall'imperatore il titolo di vicario di Milano.

famiglia, ormai privata delle prerogative signorili<sup>12</sup>.

Nonostante ciò, il casato riuscì a mantenere un ruolo politico di rilievo negli anni successivi, grazie a un'accurata strategia di acquisizioni fondiarie e a solidi legami diplomatici con i principali potentati dell'epoca. Protagonista di questo nuovo corso della famiglia fu Galeotto, figlio di Francesco, che, nel 1319, acquisì per via ereditaria l'intero patrimonio della cugina Franceschina, figlia del sopracitato Maffeo, già signore di Brescia<sup>13</sup>.

Un altro importante traguardo raggiunto da Galeotto fu l'investitura del 31 maggio 1331, con cui Giovanni di Boemia, allora signore di Brescia, gli concedeva in feudo tutte le possessioni di Mussiga sull'Oglio (fig. 1), eccettuati torre e fortilizi<sup>14</sup>. In seguito, anche Carlo di Lussemburgo, figlio di Giovanni e imperatore del Sacro Romano Impero, confermò e completò la concessione, attribuendo ai Maggi anche le torri e i fortilizi di detta località<sup>15</sup>.

Con l'arrivo dei Visconti, la famiglia rafforzò ulteriormente la propria potenza e il proprio prestigio, assicurandosi la guida della *pars* ghibellina. Il sostegno ai nuovi signori di Brescia, di natura soprattutto politica ed economica<sup>16</sup>, non mancò tuttavia di includere anche servizi militari.

Ne è testimonianza una supplica di Carlo Maggi, figlio di Galeotto, indirizzata a Gian Galeazzo Visconti e sicuramente posteriore al 1395, nella quale il primo chiede di poter entrare in possesso dell'eredità del giustiziatore Gerardo Brusati<sup>17</sup>. In cambio, si offre di custodire a proprie spese l'importante rocca di Rovato, uno dei presidi strategici dell'ovest bresciano.

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12 Per i suddetti fatti si veda Gabriele ARCHETTI (cur.), *Le cronache medievali di Giacomo Malvezzi*, Brescia, Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana, 2016, pp. 390-408.

13 ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 4, *Annali Maggi de quali fu erede casa Gambara*, f. 25; PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, p. 133.

14 ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 4, *Annali Maggi de quali fu erede casa Gambara*, f. 25.

15 ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 4, *Annali Maggi de quali fu erede casa Gambara*, f. 25. L'investitura feudale fu rinnovata, il 17 ottobre 1392, da Gian Galeazzo Visconti: *Ivi*, f. 31.

16 Il 18 ottobre 1390, Carlo e i consorti Maggi ottennero da Gian Galeazzo Visconti il permesso di agire come creditori nei confronti dei loro debitori, poiché avevano prestato al duca 2.000 fiorini a garanzia della conservazione dello Stato: ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 4, *Annali Maggi de quali fu erede casa Gambara*, f. 30.

17 ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 123, fasc. 1; PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 189-190.

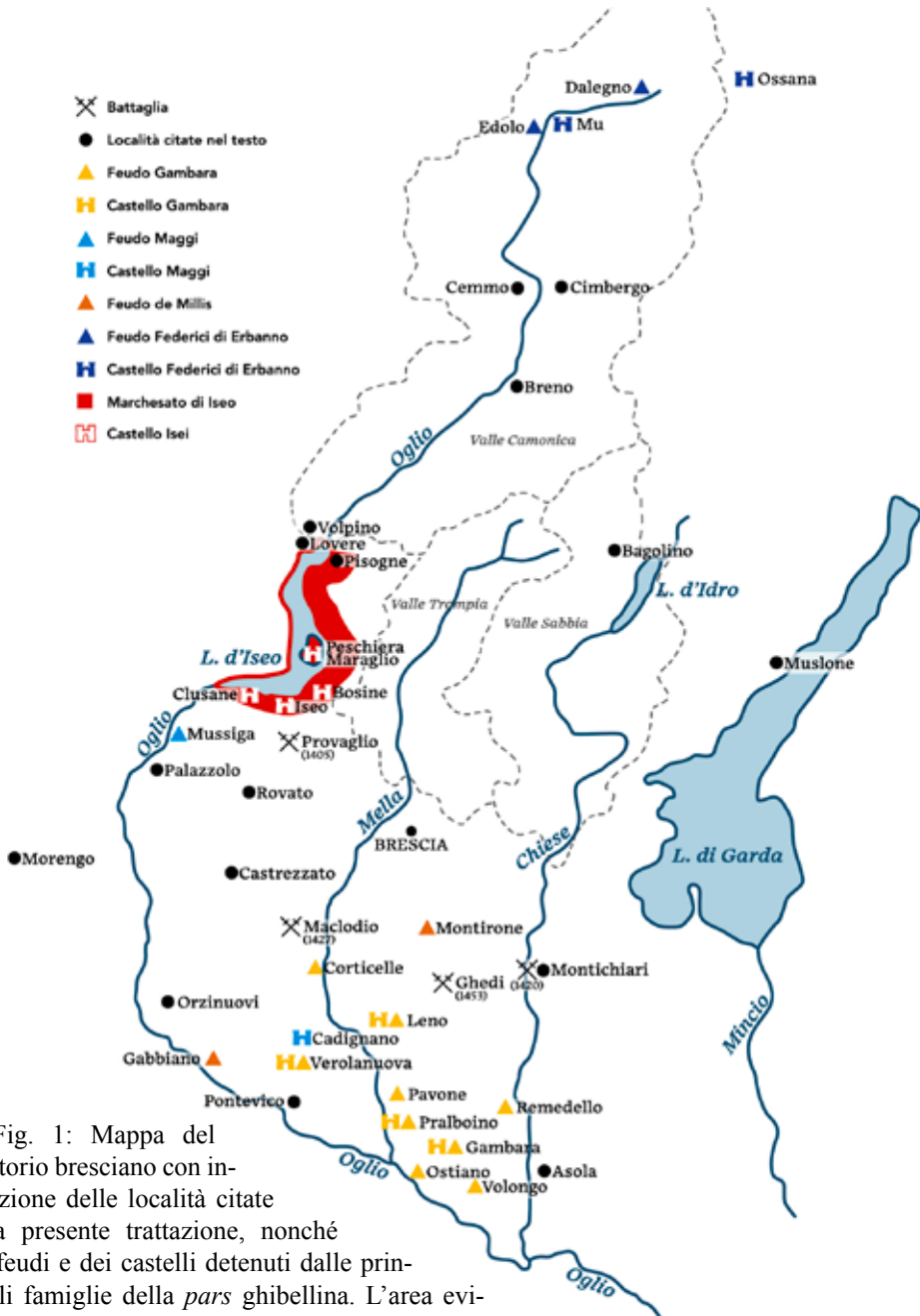


Fig. 1: Mappa del territorio bresciano con indicazione delle località citate nella presente trattazione, nonché dei feudi e dei castelli detenuti dalle principali famiglie della *pars* ghibellina. L'area evidenziata in rosso corrisponde verosimilmente ai confini del marchesato di Iseo, come desumibile dall'acquisto - poi invalidato - dei territori iseani da parte di Giacomino nel 1439.

Mentre a Rovato i Maggi erano presenti solo come custodi della rocca viscontea, il vero fulcro del loro potere - almeno per il ramo più influente - si trovava a Cadignano (fig. 1), borgo del sud-ovest bresciano dove la famiglia manteneva un fortilizio<sup>18</sup>. Quest'ultimo ottenne un importante riconoscimento da Gian Galeazzo Visconti, che concesse a Carlo Maggi di edificare una torre sopra la motta; già allora erano presenti il *pons levator*, il *palenchatum* e la *fovea*<sup>19</sup>.

Il castello subì ulteriori rinnovamenti già in epoca malatestiana: negli *Annali* del fondo Maggi si parla addirittura di una costruzione *ex novo*, realizzata quando Folco Maggi, figlio di Carlo, versò a Pandolfo Malatesta cento ducati d'oro per ottenere l'autorizzazione<sup>20</sup>.

A ridosso del confine con il Cremonese, Cadignano si presentava come una località di notevole interesse strategico. Pur non essendo considerata, almeno ufficialmente, come una struttura adatta alla difesa o all'offesa<sup>21</sup>, è assai probabile che il fortilizio avesse comunque una funzione militare, offrendo ai Maggi - e, di riflesso, ai Visconti - un caposaldo nel settore occidentale della pianura padana bresciana

Sempre in questa zona si trovava il centro di potere di un'altra eminente famiglia ghibellina bresciana: i Gambara (fig. 2)<sup>22</sup>. In quel periodo, il casato occupava una posizione di rilievo sia nelle gerarchie cittadine sia in quelle della corte viscontea, anche grazie ai servizi militari prestati ai Visconti. Esempio, in tal

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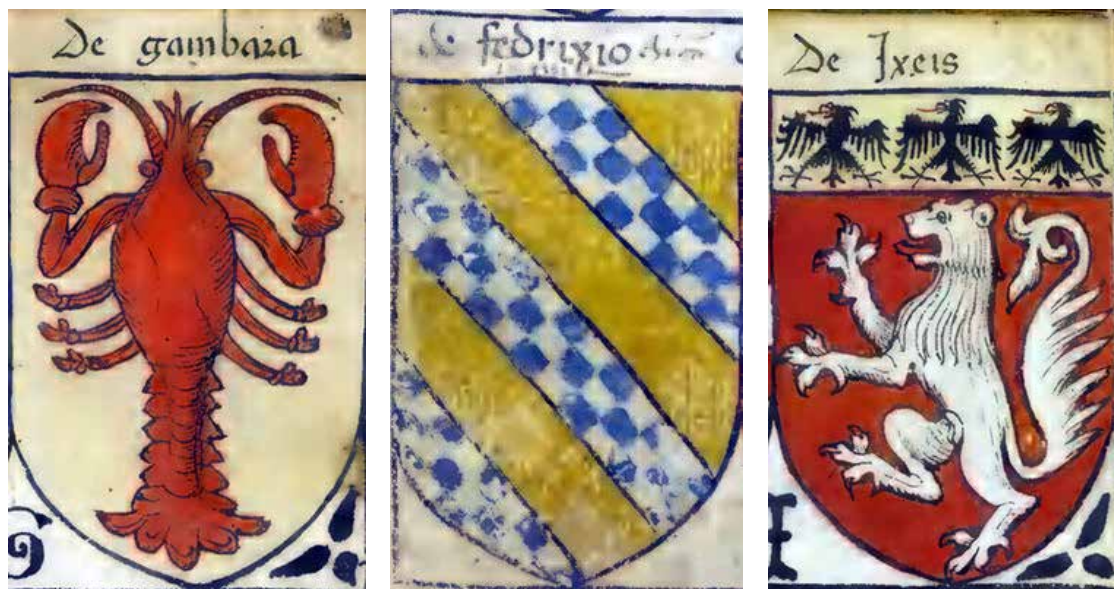
18 Sul castello di Cadignano: Fausto LECHI, *Le dimore bresciane in cinque secoli di storia. Volume primo, I castelli*, Brescia, Edizioni di storia bresciana, 1973, p. 30.

19 PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 190-191. Le vicende che avevano portato all'edificazione del fortilizio sono riportate in una supplica di Folco Maggi al duca Filippo Maria Visconti, conservata in due copie di diversa mano presso l'ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 128, mazzo 6, n. 9.

20 ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 4, *Annali Maggi de quali fu erede casa Gambara*, f. 37.

21 Ciò è quanto scrive Folco Maggi a Filippo Maria Visconti nella già citata supplica in ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 128, mazzo 6, n. 9: «[...] et quod non esta in aliqua fortilicia ne capta ad offensam aliquam nec defensam, sed est sicut domus».

22 Sui Gambara: Fabrizio PAGNONI, «Gambara», in Federico DEL TREDICI (cur.), *La signoria rurale nell'Italia del tardo Medioevo. 5. Censimento e quadri regionali*, Roma, Univeritalia, 2021, pp. 287-296. Diverse informazioni sulla storia della famiglia Gambara nel Medioevo sono riportate in Gabriele ARCHETTI, Angelo BARONIO (cur.), *La corte del mito. Gambara antico feudo della bassa*, Brescia, Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana, 2009.



Figg. 2, 3 e 4: stemmi delle famiglie Gambara, Federici e Isei dallo Stemmario Trivulziano, 1465 c., Archivio Storico Civico Biblioteca Trivulziana, © Comune di Milano – tutti i diritti riservati.

senso, è la figura di Pietro Gambara († 1404), uomo d'arme di Gian Galeazzo Visconti, che entrò in parentela con la dinastia milanese attraverso il matrimonio con Beatrice di Vercellino Visconti<sup>23</sup>.

Il prestigio dei Gambara come uomini d'arme e signori feudali fu riconosciuto nel 1354, quando l'imperatore Carlo IV infeudò Maffeo, padre di Pietro, delle terre di Gambara, Pralboino, Leno, Remedello Inferiore, Pavone, Volongo con Corticelle, Ostiano e Verolanuova (fig. 1), concedendogli *mero et mixto imperio*, *gladii potestas* e ogni giurisdizione sulle persone di quei luoghi<sup>24</sup>.

23 Pietro Gambara, insieme a Giovanni da Palazzo e ai Mezzani, fu tra i capitani dell'esercito visconteo, che contava più di 5.000 uomini, incaricati di sedare una rilevante rivolta in Valle Trompia nel 1401. Per la biografia di Pietro Gambara v. Gabriele ARCHETTI, «Pietro Gambara», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 52 (1999), *ad vocem*; per la vicenda militare v. Carlo CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronicon Bergomense guelpho-ghibellinum ab anno 1378 usque ad annum 1407*, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1928, p. 103.

24 Johann Friedrich BÖHMER, *Regesta Imperii VIII. Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter Karl IV, 1346-78*, Innsbruck, Verlag der Wagner'schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1877 (da ora in poi citato come «Charles IV - RI VIII»), p. 157, n. 1961; PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, p. 68. Nel documento riportato nei *Regesta* il soggetto dell'investitura è Gerardo

Nel 1398, inoltre, Gian Galeazzo Visconti autorizzò Federico Gambara a riattare il castello di Leno<sup>25</sup>, fortilizio che andava ad aggiungersi a quelli di Gambara, Pralboino e Verolanuova (fig. 1), assicurando così al casato un notevole sistema difensivo e un saldo dominio nella parte meridionale del territorio bresciano.

La politica di investiture feudali della casa di Lussemburgo, avviata con Carlo IV, non premiò sempre gli alleati dei Visconti, come nel caso dei Gambara. Talvolta, anzi, essa garantì pretese su territori viscontei a reggenti di potentati vicini e generalmente ostili. È il caso, ad esempio, dell'investitura con cui Carlo IV, il 6 marzo 1349, conferì ai Gonzaga, signori di Mantova, diversi vicariati, comprendenti Asola e, per quanto riguarda il territorio bresciano, anche Montichiari<sup>26</sup>. Tale situazione non mancò di generare attriti e scontri tra i Visconti e i Gonzaga<sup>27</sup>.

Strettamente connessa ai rapporti con i Visconti fu l'investitura a conti palatini dei De Milis (o Emili), conferita dal re dei Romani Venceslao nel 1404<sup>28</sup>, poi rinnovata dal fratellastro Sigismondo nel 1420<sup>29</sup> e, ancora, dall'imperatore Federico III d'Asburgo nel 1469 e nel 1489<sup>30</sup>.

Questo riconoscimento imperiale sancì l'ascesa del casato, che nell'ultima fase del dominio visconteo raggiunse una posizione di rilievo grazie all'attività

Gambara, padre di Maffeo, il quale però risulterebbe già defunto nel 1346.

25 PAGNONI, *Gambara cit.*, p. 290.

26 *Charles IV - RI VIII*, p. 72, n. 882; *Regg. Charles IV* n. 1002, in *Regesta Imperii Online*. Un problema analogo riguardava i confini con la signoria scaligera, alla quale Carlo IV aveva concesso in feudo, nel 1350, la Riviera del Garda: PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 67-68. Per quanto concerne i rapporti tra la casa di Lussemburgo e l'Italia, si vedano: ELEN WIDDER, *Itinerar und Politik: Studien zur Reiseherrschaft Karls IV. südlich der Alpen*, Köln, Böhlau, 1993; DANIELA RANDO, EVA SCHLOTHEUBER (cur.), *Carlo IV nell'Italia del Trecento. Il 'savio signore' e la riformulazione del potere imperiale*, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2022; SOLAL ABÈLÈS, MICHEL MARGUE, TIMOTHY SALEMME (cur.), *I Lussemburgo in Italia nel Trecento. Forme e ripercussioni di un nuovo tentativo di dominio imperiale*, Roma, Viella, 2025.

27 Il contributo di Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, capitano dell'esercito veneziano, risultò determinante, nel 1426, per la conquista del Bresciano da parte della Serenissima.

28 BQBs, Fondo Emili, M.fl.5, perg. 92, Pavia, 12 luglio 1397.

29 Wilhelm ALTMANN, *Regesta Imperii XI. Die Urkunden Kaiser Sigmunds (1410-1437)*, 2 voll., vol. I, Innsbruck, Verlag der Wagner'schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1896-1898 (da ora in poi citato come "*Sigmund - RI XI*"), p. 281, n. 4006.

30 BQBs, Fondo Emili, M.fl.6-7, perg. 142, Venezia, 6 gennaio 1469; perg. 150, Verona, 26 giugno 1489.

di Filippino De Milis, *iuris doctor* e cancelliere ducale<sup>31</sup>. Proprio i servigi prestati a quest'ultimo gli valsero non solo il titolo comitale palatino, ma anche l'investitura feudale della mensa vescovile di Montirone (fig. 1) nel 1396<sup>32</sup>.

Nel successivo periodo malatestiano, il favore accordatogli dal nuovo signore di Brescia, Pandolfo Malatesta, si tradusse nell'investitura di Gabbiano (fig. 1)<sup>33</sup>, località del sud-ovest bresciano, e nella concessione del diritto di erigere fortificazioni ad Acqualunga, compresa nello stesso feudo<sup>34</sup>.

I De Milis, nella personalità di Filippino, si distinsero per un ruolo di rilievo nel quadro politico del tempo: a differenza degli altri casati ghibellini bresciani, infatti, ascesero nelle gerarchie della corte viscontea grazie a servigi di natura prettamente burocratica e cancelleresca, una sorta di "nobiltà di toga" *ante litteram*.

Estremamente diversi dal caso dei De Milis sono quelli dei Federici (fig. 3) e degli Isei (fig. 4), casati che acquisirono enorme potere in epoca viscontea anche grazie all'esercizio delle armi.

I rapporti tra i Federici, potente famiglia della Valle Camonica, e i Visconti sono di antica data: già nel 1292 il capitano di Milano Matteo Visconti intervenne come arbitro nella disputa tra Brescia e i Federici, ponendo fine a un conflitto che aveva coinvolto l'intera valle<sup>35</sup>.

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31 Sull'ascesa di Filippino e, più in generale, dei De Milis: Angelo CAPILUPI, «Filippino Emigli: nota storico-genealogica», in *Commentari dell'Ateneo di Brescia*, 90 (1891), pp. 33-48; PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 194-199; Fabrizio PAGNONI, «Notariato, fazione. Canali di mobilità a Brescia tra XIV e XV secolo», in GAMBERINI (cur.), *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo cit.*, pp. 165-187; 182-183.

32 L'investitura fu infatti concessa da Tommaso Visconti, vescovo di Brescia e parente di Gian Galeazzo. Essa poggiava originariamente su Visano, ma fu poi scambiata, nel 1396, con Montirone: BQBs, Fondo Emili, M.fl.3, perg. 2, Roma, 27 dicembre 1396; M.fl.8, perg. 175, Pavia, 6 dicembre 1396.

33 BQBs, Fondo Emili, M.fl.5, perg. 105, Brescia, 19 giugno 1408. La concessione era vincolata alla consegna, a ogni Natale, di una «spata pulcra». L'anno successivo, fu inoltre concesso il luogo e il *castrum* di Casirate d'Adda nella Bergamasca: BQBs, Fondo Emili, M.fl.6-7, perg. 110, Brescia, 19 giugno 1409.

34 BQBs, Fondo Emili, M.fl.5, perg. 107, Brescia, 19 giugno 1408. Si veda in merito: Floriana MAFFEIS, Gian Mario ANDRICO, *L'aquila d'argilla, 2. Le fortificazioni e gli Emili di Acqualunga*, Roccafranca (BS), La Compagnia della Stampa, 1999.

35 Si vedano in merito: ARCHETTI (cur.), *Le cronache medievali cit.*, p. 180; Camillo FEDERICI (aut.), Luca GIARELLI (cur.), *Codice Federiciano. Memorie antiche e moderne della famiglia Federici*, Lecce, Youcanprint, 2020, pp. 28-75.

In una Valle Camonica che già agli inizi del Trecento era saldamente nell'orbita viscontea, i Federici avviarono un'intensa politica di acquisizione fondiaria e di conflitto contro le famiglie guelfe delle valli bresciane e bergamasche<sup>36</sup>.

Questi scontri, ampiamente descritti nella *Chronica Bergomense*, si configuravano come vere e proprie incursioni e razzie nei territori nemici e potevano coinvolgere anche centinaia di uomini<sup>37</sup>. Dalle testimonianze riportate si ricava, infatti, che Giovanni di Erbanno, insignito conte nel 1411, e i suoi figli potevano contare su una compagnia formata da circa 240 fanti e una quarantina di cavalieri<sup>38</sup>.

L'epoca viscontea vide un deciso rafforzamento del casato ghibellino nell'alta Valle Camonica, area di grande importanza strategica, collegata alla Valtellina e, attraverso di essa, ai territori svizzeri e tedeschi. Oltre al rilievo militare, la valle assunse anche un ruolo economico di primo piano: le sue fucine producevano semilavorati d'acciaio destinati a Milano, dove venivano rifiniti in parti di armatura a piastre, la cui manifattura rese celebri le botteghe milanesi dalla seconda metà del Trecento<sup>39</sup>.

Di origine incerta, gli Isei entrarono prepotentemente nella storia tra la fine del

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36 Sui Federici: Tebaldo SINISTRI, *I Federici di Valle Camonica*, Cividate Camuno (BS), San Marco, 1971; FEDERICI, *Codice Federiciano cit.*; Fabrizio PAGNONI, «Federici», in DEL TREDDICI (cur.), *La signoria rurale cit.*, pp. 281-286; Jacopo SASSERA, «Un patrimonio signorile: il caso dei Federici di Valcamonica (secc. XIV-XV)», in Federico TROLETTI (cur.), *Storia, arte e archeologia in Valcamonica, Sebino e Franciacorta. Studi in onore di don Romolo Putelli*, atti di convegno (Museo Camus, Breno, 15-16 maggio 2021), Capo di Ponte (BS); Edizioni del Centro, 2021, pp. 35-44. Un contributo di grande rilievo per l'analisi dei fatti avvenuti in Valle Camonica in quegli anni è offerto da Romolo PUTELLI, *Intorno al castello di Breno. Storia di Valcamonica, lago d'Iseo e vicinanze da Federico Barbarossa a S. Carlo Borromeo*, Breno (BS), Associazione "Pro Valle Camonica" Editrice, 1935.

37 Per esempi di scontri nella Cronaca, v. CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, pp. 44-45, 50, 70, 79, 126-127 e 151.

38 PAGNONI, *Federici cit.*, p. 283.

39 V. Paolo DE MONTIS, Carolina MORI, «Ferro indistruttibile: la produzione camuna di armature per Brescia e Milano tra Quattrocento e Seicento», in TROLETTI (cur.), *Storia, arte e archeologia cit.*, pp. 147-155. Gli stessi Federici avevano un ruolo di primo piano nel mercato delle ferrarezze, in particolare dei semilavorati d'acciaio. Essi controllavano fucine almeno ad Artogne, Demo ed Edolo (oltre che in Val di Sole, al di là del Tonale) e, agli inizi del Quattrocento, risultano in affari con alcuni esponenti delle principali aristocrazie bergamasche per la fornitura di acciai: PAGNONI, *Federici cit.*, p. 284.

Duecento e l'inizio del Trecento<sup>40</sup>. Come si deduce dal nome, il casato mantenne la propria preminenza e il proprio potere a Iseo (fig. 1), centro affacciato sull'omonimo lago. Nei periodi di maggiore forza esercitò probabilmente la propria influenza su tutta la riviera e su parte della Franciacorta orientale, nel territorio bresciano. Tuttavia, non è sempre agevole attribuire con certezza il possesso di fortificazioni a questa famiglia, sia per la mutevole situazione geopolitica, sia per la scarsità delle fonti.

Dall'iscrizione funebre del *miles* Giacomo da Iseo († 1325)<sup>41</sup> si apprende che egli fece edificare le mura, comprendenti verosimilmente anche il castello (fig. 5)<sup>42</sup>, di Iseo, nonché il fortilizio di Bosine (fig. 1), località a poca distanza dal centro iseano.

Il casato possedeva inoltre il castello di Clusane, in prossimità dell'Oglio, e quello di Peschiera Maraglio a Montisola (fig. 1); soltanto in via congetturale gli si può attribuire il complesso fortificato di Sensole, anch'esso a Montisola, passato in seguito ai Martinengo<sup>43</sup>.

La presenza di più rocche dislocate lungo la riviera del lago, dalle quali era possibile esercitare un efficace controllo sul transito di uomini e merci tra la sponda bergamasca e quella bresciana, assicurava agli Isei un dominio pressoché integrale su uno dei versanti di un confine strategico, la cui rilevanza rimase costante per i signori e per le istituzioni preposte al governo di Brescia.

Ferventi sostenitori della causa imperiale, gli Isei mantennero stretti legami prima con gli Scaligeri e poi con i Visconti. Durante la dominazione viscontea scalarono rapidamente le gerarchie, divenendo uno dei casati più potenti del territorio bresciano e della stessa corte milanese.

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40 Sugli Isei: Attilio Alfredo ZANI, *I da Iseo Oldofredi (secoli XIV-XV)*, in Gabriele ARCHETTI (cur.), *Famiglie di Franciacorta nel Medioevo*, atti della VI biennale di Franciacorta (Cocaglio, Villa Calini, 25 settembre 1999), Brescia, Centro culturale artistico della Franciacorta e del Sebino – Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana, 2000, pp. 151-166; PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 134-140; Simone SESTITO, «Per un'archeologia del potere in Franciacorta (Italia): gli Oldofredi di Iseo (XIV-XV secolo)», in *Roda da Fortuna. Revista electrónica sobre Antiguidade e Medioevo*, 2 (2014), pp. 210-230.

41 V. Paolo GUERRINI, «La pieve di S. Andrea di Iseo», in *Memorie storiche della diocesi di Brescia*, vol. 5 (1934), pp. 157-256.

42 Sul castello di Iseo: LECHI, *Le dimore bresciane cit.*, pp. 114-121.

43 *Ivi*, pp. 396-400 e 407-412.



Fig. 5. Blasono della famiglia Oldofredi in una targa apposta nel 1996 all'ingresso del castello di Iseo. Foto Luca Giarelli 2009 CC BY SA 3.0 Wikimedia Commons.

Il successo degli Isei può essere ricondotto ad almeno due motivi, di cui uno è già stato illustrato: l'importanza strategica dei loro possedimenti tra il Bresciano e il Bergamasco. In secondo luogo, va ricordata la spiccata attitudine militare del casato, che si distinse in diversi scontri contro la fazione guelfa. Nella *Chronica Bergomense*, ad esempio, vengono narrate varie imprese di Giovanni da Iseo, che nell'agosto del 1393 razziò la Valtellina<sup>44</sup>. Nel settembre dello stesso anno, il nipote Cristoforo riportò una schiacciante vittoria sui guelfi bresciani lungo l'Oglio, al confine tra Bergamasco e Bresciano<sup>45</sup>.

Un aspetto interessante di questi scontri è il grande numero di uomini coinvolti: riferendosi alla battaglia dell'Oglio, la *Chronica* parla addirittura di un «numero plusquam MM»<sup>46</sup>. Tale abbondanza di forze era dovuta in parte alla capacità degli Isei di reclutare milizie, ma ancor più alla loro abilità nel tessere alleanze, soprattutto con le famiglie ghibelline bergamasche. Esemplare, in questo senso, fu l'intesa con i Suardi, tra i più eminenti casati di Bergamo, consolidata attraverso diversi matrimoni tra membri delle due famiglie<sup>47</sup>.

44 CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, pp. 44-45.

45 *Ivi*, p. 50.

46 Un'ulteriore evidenza dell'importante numero di uomini arruolabili dagli Isei si riscontra in una spedizione del 1380. Giovanni da Iseo, insieme al luogotenente di Bernabò Visconti, Giovanni *de Lasicha*, pose il campo a Scanzo, alle porte di Bergamo, per poi spingersi nelle valli bergamasche e assaltare anche i borghi collinari. In questo caso, la *Chronica* riferisce di un esercito composto da 800 fanti e 500 cavalieri: CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, p. 15.

47 Si veda in merito CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, pp. 16, 29 e 111.

La crescente influenza degli Isei presso la corte viscontea accrebbe la rivalità tra la loro famiglia e i Maggi, un conflitto riconducibile anche a ragioni di ordine economico e giudiziario<sup>48</sup>. La tensione culminò, nel 1396, nell'uccisione di Tempesta Maggi, figlio di Carlo, per mano di Vinciguerra di Giovanni e di Giacomino di Giacomo da Iseo. Il procedimento giudiziario che ne derivò offrì a Carlo Maggi l'occasione di screditare la casata, rappresentata in primo luogo da Giovanni, padre di Vinciguerra<sup>49</sup>.

Secondo l'atto d'accusa di Carlo Maggi, al nobile veniva contestato di aver alimentato divisioni all'interno della *pars* ghibellina bresciana e di aver intrattenuto rapporti riservati con l'imperatore in funzione anti-viscontea, con l'obiettivo di ottenere il controllo dell'intera area del lago d'Iseo.

Nell'accusa sono inoltre citati presunti accordi con Giovanni Acuto e gli Scalligeri, a testimonianza del rilievo militare che i contemporanei attribuivano alla famiglia. Appare evidente, sul piano interpretativo, che Carlo e i suoi parenti - il cui potere si fondava soprattutto sulle estese proprietà e sul controllo del territorio - percepissero come una minaccia le cospicue risorse militari messe in campo da Giovanni e dai suoi congiunti in quegli anni.

La rivalità tra gli Isei e i Maggi generò rapidamente ulteriori contrasti. In particolare, i primi si trovarono in conflitto con un casato strettamente legato ai secondi: i Mezzani. Originaria del sud-est bresciano, la suddetta famiglia acquisì notevole rilievo nell'ultima fase dell'epoca viscontea grazie a una politica mirata di acquisizioni fondiarie, che interessò soprattutto Castrezzato e Montichiari, località di grande importanza strategica<sup>50</sup>.

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48 Una complessa trafila giudiziaria, protrattasi dal 1357 al 1374, contrappose Giacomo da Iseo ai fratelli Francesco e Carlo Maggi, figli di Galeotto. La controversia riguardava la restituzione di un deposito di 4.000 fiorini che Giacomo aveva affidato a Teodora Rossi, moglie di Francesco Maggi. Il credito venne estinto attraverso la cessione, da parte dei Maggi, di alcuni beni situati in diverse località del Bresciano e della Bergamasco (ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, *Annali Maggi de quali fu erede casa Gambara*, f. 27). Uno degli ultimi atti di questa trafila fu la rinuncia, da parte di Teodora, ad alcuni diritti relativi a Castenedolo in favore di Giacomo da Iseo (ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 13, filza 15, Brescia, 21 aprile 1374).

49 Il fascicolo del procedimento giudiziario è reperibile in ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 129, mazzo M7 n. 5. Il documento è privo di numerazione, ma tutte le informazioni riportate nei paragrafi successivi sono ricavate dalle sue pagine. Si veda anche PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 139-140.

50 Sui Mezzani: Angelo CHIARINI, *Montechiaro 1404. L'eccidio dei Mezzani. Una tragica pa-*

Altri due importanti casati ghibellini furono i Palazzi e i Boccaci<sup>51</sup>. Queste famiglie condividevano una posizione eminente nelle gerarchie cittadine e avevano mutato schieramento politico, dopo un passato significativo nelle file guelfe. Tra i protagonisti della *pars* ghibellina, alle soglie dell'intermezzo malatestiano, spiccava Giovanni da Palazzo, condottiero in aperto contrasto con il già citato Pietro Gambarà<sup>52</sup>.

Le rivalità tra questi casati, insieme agli altri dissidi locali, contribuirono a impedire una risposta unitaria della *pars* ghibellina in seguito al parziale collasso dello stato visconteo, portando a una prima significativa sconfitta, culminata con l'acquisizione di Brescia da parte di Pandolfo Malatesta.

## 2 Il periodo malatestiano

La morte di Gian Galeazzo Visconti, primo duca di Milano, nel settembre del 1402, segnò l'inizio della crisi del potentato visconteo, accompagnata dalla disgregazione dei suoi vasti possedimenti<sup>53</sup>. Il governo del ducato era stato affidato a Caterina Visconti, madre dell'erede di Gian Galeazzo, Giovanni Maria, ma altri membri della famiglia reclamarono per sé il controllo del dominio.

La mancanza di una forte autorità centrale favorì anche l'emergere dei condottieri viscontei, quali Facino Cane, Pandolfo Malatesta e Ottoboni Terzi, che

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*gina di storia*, Montichiari (BS), Pennati, 1997.

51 Nel 1359 i Boccaci, nella persona di Guidone, ottennero da Carlo IV il titolo comitale palatino, che fu poi riconfermato nel 1366. Nel 1386 Gian Galeazzo Visconti avocò a sé il diritto di confermarne la concessione: dopo una prima revoca, la rinnovò ma limitatamente alla terra di Venzago, oggi frazione di Lonato del Garda: PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 180-181.

52 L'importanza dei due condottieri, insieme al credito da essi maturato alla corte viscontea, emerge dalla loro presenza, tra gli *scuderii*, al funerale di Gian Galeazzo Visconti: «Ordo funeris domini d. Johannis Galeaz Vicecomitis», in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores ab anno aerae christianae quingentesimo ad millesimumquingentesimum*, tomo XV, Milano, Ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1729, pp. 1021-1054; 1027.

53 In questa parte del saggio si è scelto di considerare esclusivamente i fatti e le dinamiche della crisi che interessarono Brescia e il suo contado, al fine di evitare digressioni dall'argomento principale. Per una ricostruzione delle varie fasi e dei personaggi coinvolti nella crisi seguita alla morte di Gian Galeazzo, si rimanda a FEDERICO DEL TREDICI, «Il partito dello Stato. Crisi e ricostruzione del ducato visconteo nelle vicende di Milano e del suo contado (1402-1417)», in FEDERICA CENGARLE, MARIA NADIA COVINI (cur.), *Il ducato di Filippo Maria Visconti, 1412-1447. Economia, politica, cultura*, Firenze, Reti Medievali, 2015, pp. 27-69.

si appropriarono, più o meno legittimamente, di parte dei territori del ducato<sup>54</sup>.

Fu questo anche il caso di Brescia e del suo contado, dove nel 1404 si insediò Pandolfo Malatesta. La signoria del condottiero riminese, inizialmente formalizzata dalla duchessa Caterina, fu oggetto di atteggiamenti oscillanti di riconoscimento e contestazione da parte dei diversi reggenti che si succedettero alla guida del ducato in quegli anni. Tali tensioni durarono fino all'attacco risolutivo promosso da Filippo Maria Visconti tra il 1420 e il 1421<sup>55</sup>.

Nonostante la brevità dell'esperienza di governo malatestiana, essa rivestì un ruolo di significativa importanza per la storia di Brescia, assumendo una funzione di continuità tra l'epoca viscontea e quella veneziana, come sottolineato, ad esempio, nei volumi collettanei curati da Chittolini, Conti e Covini<sup>56</sup> e da Bonfiglio-Dosio e Falcioni<sup>57</sup>.

Analogamente, come già osservato da Pagnoni<sup>58</sup>, il periodo turbolento precedente all'instaurazione di Pandolfo Malatesta evidenziò le difficoltà strutturali e le profonde fratture interne della *pars* ghibellina bresciana. Pur comprendendo famiglie in grado di mobilitare consistenti risorse militari, come i Gambarà e gli Isei, la fazione risentì in modo decisivo della mancanza di una strategia politica condivisa. In questo periodo, molti casati subirono un significativo ridimensionamento del proprio peso, nonostante l'atteggiamento imparziale di Pandolfo Malatesta.

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54 Per un confronto sulle figure di Pandolfo e Facino: Maria Nadia COVINI, «Condottieri *sanza stato* e condottieri principi. Un confronto tra Pandolfo Malatesta e Facino Cane», in Giorgio CHITTOLOI, Elisabetta CONTI, Maria Nadia COVINI (cur.), *Nell'età di Pandolfo Malatesta, signore a Bergamo, Brescia e Fano agli inizi del Quattrocento*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2012, pp. 221-240. In merito alla figura di Facino Cane: Beatrice DEL BO, Aldo SETTIA (cur.), *Facino Cane. Predone, condottiero e politico*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2014.

55 Sui Malatesta: Philip James JONES, *The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974. In merito alla signoria malatestiana su Brescia: Fausto BOSELLI, «Documenti per la storia della dominazione di Pandolfo Malatesta a Brescia (1404-1421)», in *Commentari dell'Ateneo di Brescia*, CXXIX, 1930, pp. 250-269; Agostino ZANELLI, «La Signoria di Pandolfo Malatesta in Brescia secondo i registri dell'Archivio Malatestiano di Fano (a proposito di una recente pubblicazione)», in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, LVIII, 1931, pp. 126-141.

56 CHITTOLOI, CONTI, COVINI (cur.), *Nell'età di Pandolfo Malatesta cit.*

57 Giorgetta BONFIGLIO-DOSIO, Anna FALCIONI (cur.), *La signoria di Pandolfo III Malatesta a Brescia, Bergamo e Lecco*, Rimini, Bruno Ghigi Editore, 2000.

58 V. Fabrizio PAGNONI, «La difficile eredità ducale. Popolo e fazioni in Lombardia e nella Brescia malatestiana (1404-1421)», in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 176, no. 4 (658) (ottobre-dicembre 2018), pp. 645-676.

Il fenomeno fu ancora più radicale nel caso dei Mezzani. Infatti, la parabola politico-fondiarie di questo casato si concluse nel 1404 con la quasi integrale eliminazione ad opera degli *homines* di Montichiari e Carpenedolo<sup>59</sup>.

Già nell'intermezzo che precedette l'insediamento di Pandolfo a Brescia si delinearono almeno due linee strategiche tra i casati ghibellini. Una parte seguì Pietro Gambara nel tentativo di ottenere la signoria della città, come fecero i Suardi a Bergamo. Altre famiglie, spesso agendo in autonomia, si unirono invece agli eserciti viscontei in lotta. È il caso degli Isei, che si schierarono con Estorre Visconti († 1413), figlio illegittimo di Bernabò e alleato di Francesco e Antonio Visconti di Somma nella lotta contro la duchessa Caterina<sup>60</sup>.

I casati che scelsero la prima strategia, volta a porre Brescia e il suo contado sotto la protezione di Pietro Gambara, si trovarono ben presto coinvolti nei combattimenti contro i guelfi, guidati dalla famiglia triumplina degli Avogadro<sup>61</sup>. Questi avevano conquistato l'egemonia in città e potevano contare sul sostegno diretto di Francesco Novello da Carrara, signore di Padova.

Nel 1403 l'esercito di Pietro Gambara disponeva di forze considerevoli: nell'agosto di quell'anno tentò la conquista di Cremona con 2.000 uomini e operò a lungo nel territorio bresciano. I combattimenti furono continui e la città di Brescia passò più volte di mano tra assedi e contrassedi, senza che la *pars* ghibellina riuscisse a imporsi stabilmente. Nonostante alcuni successi - come la presa di Asola e il ritiro delle truppe carraresi che assediavano Brescia - il disegno di Gambara fallì definitivamente dopo un ultimo tentativo infruttuoso<sup>62</sup>.

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59 V. CHIARINI, *Montechiaro 1404 cit.* Nel testo l'autore riconduce l'eccidio a un conflitto di fazione. Occorre tuttavia rilevare che nel documento che descrive l'episodio - una supplica indirizzata a Filippo Maria Visconti dagli unici due Mezzani superstiti, Corradino e Bonaventura, per ottenere la restituzione dei loro beni - non figura alcun riferimento alla fazione guelfa (*Ivi*, pp. 21-22). Vi si menzionano, in forma del tutto generica, gli *homines* di Montichiari e Carpenedolo. La causa dell'eccidio - come, peraltro, lo stesso autore ammette - deve con ogni probabilità essere ricondotta alla politica di appropriazioni fondiarie, ritenuta illecita, perseguita dal casato.

60 In merito alla figura di Estorre Visconti: Fabrizio PAGNONI, «Estorre Visconti», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 99 (2020), *ad vocem*.

61 Sugli Avogadro e, più nello specifico sulla figura di Pietro Avogadro, capo della fazione guelfa negli anni in esame: Simone SIGNAROLI, Enrico VALSERIATI (cur.), «*Patron di tanta alta ventura*»: *Pietro Avogadro tra Pandolfo Malatesta e la dedizione di Brescia a Venezia*, atti della giornata di studi (Brescia, 2 giugno 2011), Travagliato (BS), Torre d'Ercole, 2013.

62 Sul fallito tentativo da parte di Pietro Gambara di insignorirsi di Brescia: Ottavio ROSSI,

Alla sconfitta di Pietro contribuirono in modo decisivo le divisioni interne alla sua stessa fazione. In particolare, i contrasti con il già citato Giovanni da Palazzo, poco incline ad accettare l'egemonia dei Gambara su Brescia, minarono la coesione del fronte.

La fallita impresa e la morte in battaglia di Pietro, nel 1404, indebolirono profondamente il casato. Negli anni seguenti i Gambara continuarono comunque a recitare un ruolo importante negli eventi bellici che interessarono il territorio bresciano, senza tuttavia riuscire a riconquistare una posizione di *leadership*.

Tra i casati più importanti che sostennero militarmente i Visconti durante la crisi del ducato seguita alla morte di Gian Galeazzo vi furono gli Isei, allora rappresentati soprattutto dai fratelli Giacomino e Giovanni, figli del già citato Giovanni. Il 29 ottobre 1403 i due prestarono solenne giuramento al nuovo duca Giovanni Maria, impegnandosi a difendere la terra e il castello di Iseo in suo nome<sup>63</sup>.

Nonostante il giuramento, il destino di Iseo rimase incerto nei mesi successivi: nel gennaio 1404 Arrighino da Iseo, parente dei fratelli, tentò di consegnare il paese ai guelfi bresciani e di impadronirsi del castello e della rocca<sup>64</sup>. Come osservato da Pagnoni, questo gesto potrebbe riflettere diverse strategie politiche maturate all'interno dello stesso casato<sup>65</sup>.

Tra il 1404 e il 1405 Giacomino e Giovanni risultano documentati al servizio di Estorre Visconti, il cui esercito ottenne diversi successi significativi contro i guelfi<sup>66</sup>.

Nel 1405 il contado bresciano si trovava diviso in due. La parte settentrionale

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*Elogi storici di Bresciani illustri*, Brescia, per Bartolomeo Fontana, 1620, p. 149; Federico ODORICI, *Storie bresciane dai primi tempi sino all'età nostra. VII, Brescia signoreggiata dai principi italiani*, Brescia, Del Moretto, 1857, pp. 263-265; ARCHETTI, *Pietro Gambara cit.*; PAGNONI, *La difficile eredità ducale cit.*, p. 652.

63 Caterina SANTORO (cur.), *Il registro di Giovannolo Besozzi, cancelliere di Giovanni Maria Visconti*, Milano, Castello Sforzesco, 1937, p. 48.

64 CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, p. 135. Arrighino fu il personaggio più eminente degli Isei nell'epoca di Gian Galeazzo, probabilmente anche a causa della parziale caduta in disgrazia di Giovanni e dei suoi figli dopo l'omicidio di Tempesta Maggi: PAGNONI, *Brescia Viscontea cit.*, pp. 191-194. Il 25 luglio 1395 venne insignito del titolo di cavaliere dallo stesso Gian Galeazzo, insieme a Francesco Scotti, Berardo Maggi e *Bobius*, figlio di Baldo degli Ubaldi, durante una fastosa cerimonia tenutasi nel Duomo Nuovo di Milano: CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, pp. 56-57.

65 PAGNONI, *La difficile eredità ducale cit.*, p. 653, nota 22.

66 *Ivi*, p. 653.

era sotto il controllo di Pandolfo Malatesta, già padrone di Brescia. Alcune località di quella meridionale, invece, obbedivano agli ordini di Estorre Visconti, procuratore di Giovanni Carlo Visconti, al quale il duca Giovanni Maria aveva assegnato il territorio bresciano<sup>67</sup>. È significativo che le basi operative di Estorre fossero Morengo e Palazzolo, località estremamente vicine ai domini degli Isei.

La parabola ascendente di Estorre, almeno nel Bresciano, si concluse nel luglio 1405, quando fu sconfitto e catturato dall'esercito di Pandolfo Malatesta nei pressi di Provaglio, non lontano da Iseo<sup>68</sup>. Allo scontro prese parte anche Giacomino da Iseo, «cum sua brigata equestri et pedestri», che riuscì a evitare la cattura. Tuttavia, i risvolti diplomatici seguiti alla battaglia determinarono un cambio di orizzonte per il nobile bresciano. La liberazione di Estorre, mediata da Giovanni Carlo, aveva portato quest'ultimo ad avvicinarsi a Pandolfo Malatesta, con l'obiettivo di deporre il duca Giovanni Maria<sup>69</sup>.

Nel settembre dello stesso anno Giacomino è segnalato insieme a Giovanni Carlo e a Pandolfo in un'incursione a Spirano, nella Bergamasca, «cum una maxima equestrium circa CCC»<sup>70</sup>. Nei mesi successivi si legò definitivamente al signore di Brescia, forse anche a causa della caduta in disgrazia di Estorre presso la corte ducale e del suo successivo arresto<sup>71</sup>.

Vi sono alcune significative evidenze della stima e della rilevanza che le figure di Giacomino e, in parte, di Giovanni da Iseo acquisirono presso Pandolfo dopo il 1405. Anzitutto, il signore di Brescia non si limitò a confermare i possedimenti dei due fratelli, ma concesse loro anche l'esenzione totale sui beni di Borgonato e Mezzane, così come per tutti i loro coloni e lavoratori<sup>72</sup>.

Negli stessi anni, Giacomino si distinse come condottiero, al quale Pandolfo affidò compiti di particolare delicatezza. Il Registro Malatestiano n. 42, databile

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67 Questa situazione geopolitica è documentata dalla corrispondenza con il comune di Montichiari (BQBs, ms. H.IV.7, f. 2r, 4 maggio 1404, Pandolfo al comune di Montichiari). Tale documento, che comprende le corrispondenze dal 1404 al 1424, costituisce una fonte di notevole rilevanza per la comprensione del periodo della dominazione malatestiana su Brescia.

68 CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, p. 168.

69 PAGNONI, *La difficile eredità ducale cit.*, p. 656.

70 CAPASSO (cur.), *Chronica Bergomense cit.*, p. 172.

71 PAGNONI, *La difficile eredità ducale cit.*, p. 656.

72 Una copia del documento si trova in ASBs, Ospedale Maggiore, b. 605, f. 70 (1411, febbraio 12).

tra il 1406 e il 1409, segnala ad esempio un pagamento in favore di Giacomino per il recupero della rocca di Montefelcino, fortilizio strategico nelle Marche, tra Pesaro e Urbino<sup>73</sup>. La sua attività militare in un territorio di frontiera dei domini dell'Italia centrale di Pandolfo evidenzia l'importanza che il nobile bresciano aveva ormai assunto come uomo d'armi.

Giacomino non fu solo uomo di guerra, ma anche di diplomazia: nel 1408 favorì l'acquisto di Bergamo da parte di Pandolfo Malatesta da Giovanni Suardi<sup>74</sup>, grazie agli stretti rapporti che il casato bresciano manteneva con quello bergamasco. L'idillio tra i due fratelli Isei e Pandolfo Malatesta costituisce uno degli esempi più significativi della politica *super partes* adottata dal signore di Brescia, volta a fidelizzare la nobiltà dei territori acquisiti a prescindere dall'appartenenza alla fazione guelfa o ghibellina<sup>75</sup>.

Tuttavia, la concordia instaurata sotto la signoria malatestiana ebbe vita breve. Nel 1411 una congiura, probabilmente sobillata da Facino Cane e organizzata dai Boccacci, costrinse Pandolfo a intervenire con la forza. La repressione comportò la confisca delle terre e la condanna a morte di alcuni membri delle famiglie coinvolte: oltre ai già citati Boccacci, anche gli Isei, i De Milis e i Maggi<sup>76</sup>. Molti dei nobili implicati - tra cui gli stessi Giacomino e Giovanni - fuggirono dal Bresciano, riparando nei territori viscontei<sup>77</sup>.

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73 SASFA, Registri Malatestiani, reg. 42, c. 15r. Per la documentazione militare rinvenuta nei Registri: Anna FALCIONI (cur.), *I registri malatestiani e l'arte militare del primo Rinascimento*. Catalogo della mostra storico-documentaria (Fano, 16 dicembre 2022-31 gennaio 2023), Ancona, Deputazione di storia patria per le Marche, 2022.

74 ZANI, *I Da Iseo Oldofredi cit.*, p. 160.

75 PAGNONI, *La difficile eredità ducale cit.*, p. 661.

76 Tuttavia, almeno un documento conservato nel fondo Maggi, oggi confluito nell'Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, lascia intravedere una parziale riabilitazione di questo casato già durante il dominio malatestiano. Si tratta di un mandato di Matteo Petrucci da Fano, vicario di Brescia per Pandolfo Malatesta, rivolto ai consoli e al comune di Coccaglio (località in Franciacorta), con cui si ordinava la restituzione a Folco Maggi di alcune proprietà indebitamente occupate: ASBs, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 128, mazzo 6, n. 10.

77 V. Agostino ZANELLI, «La congiura dei Boccacci contro il Malatesta», in *Ateneo Veneto*, S. XVI, 1 (1892), pp. 130-136; CONTI, *La corte bresciana cit.*, pp. 49-50; PAGNONI, *La difficile eredità ducale cit.*, pp. 666-667. Una testimonianza significativa della rivolta è offerta dal già citato registro delle lettere indirizzate al capitano e al comune di Montichiari (BQBs, ms. H.IV.7), località allora fortemente legata ai ghibellini. In una missiva del 4 giugno 1411 (f. 46v), Pandolfo richiese al capitano del luogo il reclutamento di soldati co-

Un'importante testimonianza del riuso delle proprietà confiscate da Pandolfo Malatesta emerge dal registro relativo al castello di Clusane, probabilmente sottratto ai fratelli Isei, e compilato tra il 1414 e il 1416<sup>78</sup>. Si tratta di un partitario di dare e avere redatto da Lanfranco di Tagliuno, che, insieme a Lorenzo de' Gambi, amministrava per conto di Pandolfo Malatesta l'azienda imperniata sul castello. Sebbene la maggior parte delle entrate derivasse dall'attività produttiva del complesso, alcune voci contabili rivelano che il fortilizio manteneva ancora una funzione militare: si registrano spese per la ricarica delle bombarde a Iseo<sup>79</sup>, per la confisca dei beni dei ribelli di Pisogne<sup>80</sup> e per i compensi dei soldati in transito verso la Valle Camonica, diretti a Gorzone<sup>81</sup>.

Tali elementi restituiscono chiaramente il ruolo del castello come presidio territoriale, un ruolo che può essere considerato presumibilmente analogo anche durante il dominio degli Isei. Nel periodo oggetto del registro, invece, il fortilizio era funzionale alla progressiva conquista malatestiana del territorio camuno, avviata nel 1407. In quell'anno, infatti, Pandolfo Malatesta fece costruire navi armate sul lago d'Iseo, probabilmente destinate all'assedio di Lovere, nodo di cerniera tra la riviera iseana e la Valle Camonica<sup>82</sup>.

La valle era rimasta estranea agli stravolgimenti militari e politici che avevano interessato Brescia e il suo contado tra il 1402 e il 1407. L'indebolimento del controllo ducale sul territorio camuno, seguito alla morte di Gian Galeazzo, non aveva tuttavia impedito la recrudescenza dei conflitti tra la fazione guelfa e quella ghibellina.

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si suddivisi: un terzo armati con targhoni, celate e altre armi; un terzo con celate, balestre e ulteriori equipaggiamenti; e l'ultimo terzo dotato di «lanceas longas» (le antenate delle picche) e «coratias» con panziera e bracciali. Nel settembre dello stesso anno (f. 48r), il signore di Brescia nominò un monteclarese a lui fedele, *Tabarino de Tabaris*, all'ufficio di designatore dei beni confiscati ai ribelli del comune.

78 ASDBs, Mensa Vescovile, reg. 111 (ex 74). Si vedano in merito: PUTELLI, *Intorno al castello di Breno cit.*, pp. 267-268; Elisabetta CONTI (cur.), *Un inedito registro di Pandolfo Malatesta (sec. XV)*, Brescia, Tipo-lito Fratelli Geroldi, Supplemento ai commentari dell'Ateneo di Brescia, 1991; Elisabetta CONTI, «La corte bresciana di Pandolfo Malatesta», in CHITTOLINI, CONTI, COVINI (cur.), *Nell'età di Pandolfo Malatesta cit.*, pp. 47-58; 54-57.

79 ASDBs, Mensa Vescovile, reg. 111 (ex 74), f. 33v; CONTI (cur.), *Un inedito registro cit.*, p. 51.

80 *Ibidem*.

81 ASDBs, Mensa Vescovile, reg. 111 (ex 74), f. 59r; CONTI (cur.), *Un inedito registro cit.*, p. 79.

82 SASFa, Registri Malatestiani, reg. 42, c. 133v.



Fig. 6: Particolare del diploma di Giovanni Maria Visconti con cui viene conferito a Giovanni Federici e ai suoi figli il titolo comitale sui territori di Edolo e Dalegno, Archivio di Stato di Brescia, Fondo Federici, busta 1, perg. 221, 27 giugno 1411. Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e le Attività Culturali.

In questo contesto emerse con forza la potenza militare e politica dei Federici, signori della fazione ghibellina camuna, mentre i guelfi mantenevano ancora diversi capisaldi nella valle e supportarono con decisione il tentativo del signore di Brescia di impadronirsene. Pur avendo occupato le strategiche rocche di Volpino e Montecchio, le truppe malatestiane non riuscirono mai a penetrare l'alta Valle Camonica e a sottomettere l'intero territorio, anche a causa della tenace resistenza della maggior parte dei Federici e dei loro alleati<sup>83</sup>.

Probabilmente proprio per ricompensare le numerose benemerienze del casato camuno, il 21 giugno 1411 il duca Giovanni Maria Visconti concesse – nel diploma (fig. 6) si parla di conferma – a Giovanni Federici il titolo di conte di Edolo

83 Sulla Valle Camonica contesa tra i Visconti e il Malatesta: PUTEELLI, *Intorno al castello di Breno cit.*, pp. 248-271.

e Dalegno (fig. 1)<sup>84</sup>. L'investitura fu ribadita nel 1439<sup>85</sup> e nel 1441<sup>86</sup> anche dal fratello, Filippo Maria. Tale concessione deve essere letta non soltanto in chiave politico-diplomatica, ma anche strategica: le località elevate a contea costituivano infatti uno dei principali punti d'accesso alla Valle Camonica dalla Valtellina, rappresentando di conseguenza una via privilegiata per raggiungere il Bresciano da territori sottoposti ai Visconti.

La presenza di un fortilizio - la rocca di Mù (fig. 1) - un tempo castello vescovile e allora in mano ai Federici, garantiva un saldo controllo sul territorio circostante e sul passo dell'Aprica, che metteva in comunicazione la Valtellina con la Valle Camonica<sup>87</sup>. L'importanza strategica della località, e anche del sito della rocca, è confermata dal suo parziale riutilizzo tra il 1620 e il 1637, quando la Repubblica di Venezia, allora padrona del Bresciano, fu coinvolta attivamente nel conflitto valtellino<sup>88</sup>.

A questo quadro di progressiva proiezione territoriale si affiancò, a breve distanza, un ulteriore e rilevante avanzamento sul piano politico-diplomatico. Nel 1412, infatti, Giacomino, figlio di Giovanni Federici, dichiarava il possesso del castello di Ossana (fig. 1), nella Valle del Sole trentina, a nome del duca Federico d'Asburgo del Tirolo, cui professava fedeltà e obbedienza<sup>89</sup>.

La Valle del Sole, collocata al di là del passo del Tonale, rappresentava anch'essa uno snodo strategico di primaria importanza, tanto per i collegamenti

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84 ASBs, Archivio Federici, b. 1, perg. 221, 27 giugno 1411. L'investitura fu confermata nel 1413: Federica CENGARLE, *Immagine di potere e prassi di governo. La politica feudale di Filippo Maria Visconti*, Roma, Viella, 2006, p. 137, app. 15. Questa non fu l'unica concessione del duca al casato: il 13 maggio 1413 egli ratificò l'infuedazione delle terre di Borno e Ossimo, separate dalla giurisdizione di Brescia, a favore dei figli del defunto Mascarino Federici: CENGARLE, *Immagine di potere cit.*, p. 138, app. 19.

85 ASBs, Archivio Federici, b. 2, perg. 411, Milano, 2 aprile 1439.

86 ASBs, Archivio Federici, b. 2, perg. 420, Milano, 15 maggio 1441.

87 V. LECHI, *Le dimore bresciane cit.*, pp. 239-241; Alberto BIANCHI, Fausto SIMONOTTI, *La rocca di Mù ad Edolo. Archeologia e storia*, Edolo (BS), Comune di Edolo, 2021.

88 Giulio ONGARO, Simone SIGNAROLI, *I cannoni di Guspessa. I comuni di Edolo, Cortenedolo e Mu alle soglie della Guerra dei Trent'anni, 1624-1625*, Breno (BS), Servizio archivistico comprensoriale di Valle Camonica, 2016; BIANCHI, SIMONOTTI, *La rocca di Mù cit.*, pp. 63-76.

89 V. Alberto MOSCA, *Eco Jacobinus. I de Federicis a Ossana. Trento, Tirolo e Lombardia: una storia al di qua e al di là del Tonale (XIV-XVII secolo)*, Cles (TN), Nitida Immagine, 2019.

tra Trentino e Valle Camonica quanto per le attività di produzione e di smercio del ferro. Il controllo di uno dei fortilizi vallivi assicurava ai Federici - almeno al ramo destinato a fare capo a Giacomino - il presidio di uno dei principali corridoi di transito alpino. Al tempo stesso, esso contribuiva ad accrescere il prestigio del casato, inserendolo stabilmente, tramite il duca del Tirolo, nell'orbita dell'autorità imperiale.

Fedeli alleati dei Federici nella lotta contro i guelfi e i malatestiani - almeno in questa fase - furono i fratelli Boccaccino e Bartolomeo Della Torre da Cemmo. Il 24 gennaio 1413 Boccaccino, anche per conto del fratello, stipulò una lega con Antonio da Iseo, Cominzolino Suardi, Tonino da Paratico e altri esponenti locali, al fine di tutelare gli interessi del duca di Milano<sup>90</sup>. La loro decisa adesione alla causa viscontea, probabilmente sostenuta negli anni successivi anche sul piano militare, appare riconducibile al recente rinnovo dell'investitura comitale sulle terre di Cemmo e Cimbergo, concesso ai due fratelli dall'autorità ducale appena due giorni prima, il 21 gennaio<sup>91</sup>.

Tale azione rientrava nel più ampio disegno politico di Filippo Maria Visconti (fig. 7), come evidenziato dagli studi in tema di Cengarle sulle investiture feudali del duca<sup>92</sup>, e mirava a consolidare il suo controllo sulla Lombardia. Egli era giunto a esercitare una forma di potere pressoché assoluto in seguito alla morte, avvenuta il 16 maggio 1412, sia di Facino Cane - governatore del ducato e signore di Pavia - sia del fratello Giovanni Maria. Il matrimonio con Beatrice, figlia di Facino, gli consentì inoltre di riunificare sotto un'unica autorità gran parte dei territori lombardi<sup>93</sup>. Negli anni successivi, Filippo Maria poté così rivendicare i territori di Brescia, Bergamo e Lecco, con i rispettivi contadi, allora governati da Pandolfo Malatesta.

Dopo aver perso Lecco e Bergamo, Pandolfo fu costretto a ritirarsi anche da Brescia in seguito alla battaglia di Montichiari (8 ottobre 1420), che vide la vit-

90 PUTELLI, *Intorno al castello di Breno cit.*, p. 262.

91 CENGARLE, *Immagine di potere cit.*, p. 137, app. 12. La data dell'infeudazione originaria non è nota. La riconferma veneziana del 1430 menziona genericamente la concessione da parte del «Ducem mediolansem», ma Putelli ritiene che la contea di Cemmo fosse già esistente nel 1319: *Intorno al castello di Breno cit.*, p. 263.

92 CENGARLE, *Immagine di potere cit.*

93 In merito al ducato di Filippo Maria Visconti: CENGARLE, *Immagine di potere cit.*; CENGARLE, COVINI (cur.), *Il ducato di Filippo Maria Visconti cit.*

toria dell'esercito visconteo del Carmagnola su quello malatestiano, comandato da Ludovico Migliorati. Agli inizi del 1421 l'esperienza malatestiana a Brescia poté dirsi definitivamente conclusa e, con la restaurazione del dominio visconteo, rientrarono in città anche le famiglie ghibelline che vi si erano allontanate durante la signoria di Pandolfo.

### 3 *Dai Visconti a Venezia*

Quasi un secolo dopo gli avvenimenti, il cronista bresciano filoveneziano Elia Capriolo offriva una descrizione del ritorno di Brescia sotto il dominio visconteo, soffermandosi su un episodio particolarmente significativo che ebbe per protagonista Giacomino da Iseo:

«Caeterum, quum civis quidam imprudenter forte de Philippo locutus esset, a Jacobino de Iseo, cive nostro inter Philippi proceres praestantissimo, laqueo suspensus perhibetur, hoc titulo ei superimposito: quia contra ventum mingere volui, cruci suspendor»<sup>94</sup>.

Il *regime change* in favore dei Visconti costituì una rilevante occasione di rivalsa per la fazione ghibellina bresciana, uscita profondamente indebolita dal dominio malatestiano. Il duca di Milano si adoperò infatti per reintegrare i casati a lui fedeli, come attesta un documento del 4 luglio 1421, contenente disposizioni rivolte al podestà di Brescia in merito alla restituzione dei beni confiscati ai ghibellini durante il precedente governo malatestiano<sup>95</sup>.

Le famiglie maggiormente colpite dalla repressione di Pandolfo presentarono pertanto istanze volte a ottenere concessioni e restaurare le proprie prerogative. Tra queste si annovera la richiesta di Folco Maggi, figlio di Carlo, volta a ottenere l'autorizzazione alla ricostruzione del fortilizio di Cadignano, spianato dal Malatesta in seguito al fallito tentativo di congiura cui avevano preso parte anche i Maggi<sup>96</sup>.

Questa congiuntura politicamente favorevole ai casati ghibellini ebbe, tuttavia, durata assai breve, così come risultò effimero il rinnovato dominio visconteo su Brescia e sul suo territorio.

94 Elia CAPRIOLO, *Chronica de rebus Brixianorum*, Brescia, per Arundum de Arundis, 1505 c., IX, LII.

95 QBBS, Fondo Emili, L.f.2, perg. 69, Milano, 4 luglio 1421.

96 ASBS, Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, b. 128, mazzo 6, n. 9.

Nel marzo del 1426 una congiura organizzata dalla fazione guelfa, guidata dagli Avogadro, favorì l'ingresso delle truppe veneziane in città. L'assedio che ne seguì si protrasse per quasi un anno e si concluse, tra gli atti finali, con la dedizione di Brescia alla Repubblica di Venezia.

Trincerati nelle quadre più interne - le due cittadelle - e all'interno del castello, i membri della fazione ghibellina combatterono insieme alle truppe viscontee, ma il lungo assedio finì per fiaccarne le forze. È significativo, infatti, che nell'atto di dedizione, compilato in seguito alla conquista veneziana della città, compaiano le firme di diversi membri delle famiglie Maggi e De Milis<sup>97</sup>, a testimonianza di un'accettazione del nuovo dominio, a prescindere dall'appartenenza di fazione.

Questo fatto d'arme rappresentò uno dei primi episodi delle Guerre di Lombardia, che si sarebbero concluse in via definitiva soltanto nel 1454<sup>98</sup>. In seguito



Fig. 7: Rovescio della medaglia di Filippo Maria Visconti realizzata da Antonio Pisano, detto "Pisanello", intorno al 1441: il duca in armatura a cavallo, con l'elmo sormontato dal cimiero della vipera viscontea. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. 2023.569.1. Su gentile concessione del MET.

97 Alessandro Augusto MONTI DELLA CORTE, *Le famiglie del patriziato bresciano*, Brescia, Tipo-lito Fratelli Geroldi, 1960, pp. 135-138.

98 Sul conflitto tra la Repubblica di Venezia e il ducato di Milano per il possesso di Brescia si vedano, tra gli studi generali e militari: Carlo PASERO, «Il dominio veneto fino all'incendio della Loggia», in Giovanni TRECCANI DEGLI ALFIERI (cur.), *Storia di Brescia*, vol. II, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1963, pp. 1-396; 1-109; Michael E. MALLETT, «La conquista della Ter-

alla conquista della città, le operazioni militari si spostarono nel contado, dove i Visconti mantenevano ancora diversi presidi sostenuti dalle famiglie loro rimaste fedeli. In questa prima fase del conflitto, il comando della *pars* ghibellina bresciana era nelle mani di Cesare Martinengo.

Egli, diversamente da altri membri del suo casato, schierati con la fazione guelfa<sup>99</sup>, rimase fedele ai Visconti e partecipò attivamente alla difesa della città nel 1426. Nei mesi successivi continuò a servire il duca Filippo Maria, diventando uno dei condottieri più stimati da quest'ultimo<sup>100</sup>.

Il 12 ottobre 1427 figurava tra i capitani dell'esercito visconteo che affrontarono quello veneziano, comandato dal Carmagnola, a Maclodio, come documentato da una lettera dei suoi parenti Antonio e Leonardo (schierati invece con i veneziani)<sup>101</sup>.

A incrinare la fedeltà di Cesare verso Filippo Maria non furono soltanto le vittorie della Serenissima - tra cui quella schiacciante di Maclodio - ma anche la politica di concessioni attuata da Venezia. Nel 1432 il doge Francesco Foscari gli concesse in feudo, per sé e per i suoi discendenti, la terra di Orzivecchi, località strategica posta a pochi chilometri dal confine con il territorio cremonese di Soncino<sup>102</sup>. Nonostante il duca avesse formalizzato la stessa concessione qualche

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raferma», in Alberto TENENTI, Ugo TUCCI (cur.), *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, vol. IV *Il Rinascimento: politica e cultura*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1996, pp. 181-244; Michael E. MALLETT, John R. HALE, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice, C. 1400 to 1617*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006 (prima ed.: 1984), pp. 1-210; Carlo Alberto BRIGNOLI, *Guerre fluviali. Le lotte fra Venezia e Milano nel XV secolo*, Milano, Mursia, 2013; Fabio ROMANONI, *La guerra d'acqua dolce. Navi e conflitti medievali nell'Italia settentrionale*, Bologna, CLUEB, 2023. Da segnalare è anche la cronaca bresciana di Cristoforo da Soldo, che ripercorre gli eventi cittadini e del contado dal 1434 al 1468: Giuseppe BRIZZOLARA (cur.), *La cronaca di Cristoforo da Soldo*, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores. Raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1938.

99 Si veda in merito Paolo DE MONTIS, «I Martinengo nella storia militare veneziana», in *Nuova Antologia Militare – Storia Militare Moderna*, fasc. 23, anno VI, 2025, pp. 99-156.

100 In merito alla figura di Cesare: Gabriele ARCHETTI, «Cesare Martinengo», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 71 (2008), *ad vocem*.

101 V. Germano POLI, *La battaglia di Maclodio secondo un nuovo documento*, Trento, Tipografia del comitato diocesano, 1903.

102 V. Augusto GOLETTI et alii, «Fortunato Martinengo: informazioni tratte dall'Archivio Storico della famiglia», in Marco BIZZARINI, Elisabetta SELMI (cur.), *Fortunato Martinengo. Un gentiluomo del Rinascimento fra arti, lettere e musica*, Brescia, Morcelliana, Annali di



Fig. 8: Ambito lombardo, *Battaglia di cavalieri*, 1452 c., Museo Diocesano Tridentino, Trento, inv. 2255, [www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/benistorici/bene/1000012422/](http://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/benistorici/bene/1000012422/) Unico frammento superstite di un ampio ciclo cavalleresco, commissionato ca. nel 1452 dai Lodrone a un ignoto pittore, probabilmente bresciano, per la decorazione di Castel Romano, in Valle del Chiese.

anno più tardi<sup>103</sup>, Cesare finì per abbracciare la causa veneziana, entrando al servizio dell'armata della Serenissima.

Un caso del tutto analogo è quello dei Gambara, in particolare di Marsilio e del nipote Brunoro, che dopo la sottomissione a Venezia ottennero la conferma dell'investitura feudale su Verolanuova, Pralboino e Milzano<sup>104</sup>, ciò che restava dell'ampia concessione ricevuta dall'imperatore Carlo IV nel 1354.

La politica di concessioni feudali perseguita dalla Repubblica di Venezia, trattata in termini generali da Zamperetti<sup>105</sup>, assicurò alla sua causa il sostegno non

Storia Bresciana/6, 2018, p. 21, nota 15.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>104</sup> PAGNONI, *Gambara cit.*, p. 290. In merito alle figure di Marsilio e Brunoro: Gabriele ARCHETTI, «Brunoro Gambara» e «Marsilio Gambara», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 52 (1999), *ad vocem*.

<sup>105</sup> Si rimanda al già citato ZAMPERETTI, *I piccoli principi cit.*

solo dei principali lignaggi bresciani, ma anche di famiglie in rapporto diretto con l'istituzione imperiale. Tra queste si annoverano i Lodrone (fig. 8), casato trentino che esercitava il controllo su un articolato complesso di territori posti lungo la linea di confine fra il Bresciano e il principato vescovile di Trento.

I rilevanti servizi militari prestati da Paride Lodrone († 1438)<sup>106</sup> alla Repubblica determinarono, per i suoi discendenti, la concessione di alcuni feudi in area bresciana, ovvero il castello di Cimbergo, il comitato di Bagolino - poi revocato - e la villa di Muslone<sup>107</sup>.

Diversamente si configurò il rapporto con Venezia in Valle Camonica, la cui conquista fu avviata nel 1427. Nonostante la conferma delle esenzioni e di alcuni privilegi concessi dalla Serenissima<sup>108</sup> - ma non del titolo comitale al ramo di Erbanno<sup>109</sup> - molti membri della famiglia Federici continuarono a combattere per Filippo Maria. Proprio un Federici, Bettinzona, è ricordato come proprietario della rocca di Mù, ultimo caposaldo visconteo nella valle, che cadde il 10 gennaio 1428<sup>110</sup>.

La nuova situazione geopolitica indusse già alcuni membri della famiglia Federici a scegliere la via dell'esilio. Un esempio significativo è rappresentato dal caso del già citato Giacomino, figlio di Giovanni, che abbandonò la valle in una fase precoce. Egli ottenne tuttavia l'autorizzazione a continuare la gestione dei propri possedimenti nell'alta valle, con la facoltà di trasferirne i "redditi e frutti" alla propria residenza presso il castello di Ossana nel Trentino<sup>111</sup>.

Negli anni successivi alla conquista veneziana, anche altri esponenti del ramo

106 V. Tiziana BARBAVARA, «Paride Lodrone», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 65 (2005), *ad vocem*.

107 ZAMPERETTI, *Piccoli principi cit.*, pp. 170-172.

108 ASBs, Archivio Federici, b. 2, perg. 319, Venezia, 26 giugno 1428; perg. 320, Venezia, 5 luglio 1428.

109 Pur essendo definiti «comes» nei diplomi sopraccitati, i membri di questo ramo non ottennero mai una reale riconferma del titolo comitale, a differenza dei Della Torre, la cui investitura su Cemmo e Cimbergo venne invece rinnovata dai veneziani nel 1430: PUTELLI, *Intorno al castello di Breno cit.*, p. 314.

110 CAPRIOLO, *Chronica de rebus Brixianorum cit.*, IX, LIIII.

111 ASBs, Archivio Federici, b. 2, perg. 320, Venezia, 5 luglio 1428; BIANCHI, SIMONOTTI, *La rocca di Mù cit.*, p. 53. Il ramo che fece capo a Giacomino, signori del castello di Ossana, prosperò fino alla morte senza progenie maschile del nobile Giovanni Giacomo († 1567): MOSCA, *Ego Jacobinus cit.*, pp. 143-147.

di Erbanno optarono per l'esilio. Essi si stabilirono a Teglio, in Valtellina, territorio che all'epoca risultava ancora soggetto al dominio visconteo<sup>112</sup>.

La presenza del passo dell'Aprica, porta d'accesso alla Valle Camonica dalla Valtellina, unita alla fedeltà intermittente dei Federici rimasti nei territori ora veneziani, continuò a rappresentare una costante minaccia per la Serenissima, che pure aveva ormai completato la conquista del Bresciano.

Nel 1432 l'esercito visconteo - inizialmente comandato da Niccolò Piccinino e sostenuto dai Federici - penetrò nuovamente in valle e pose sotto assedio la rocca di Mù con l'impiego di diverse bombarde<sup>113</sup>. L'assedio fallì, ma tra il 1438 e il 1440 i Visconti riuscirono a prevalere ancora una volta in Valle Camonica, spingendosi ad assediare Breno<sup>114</sup>.

Di poco successivo è un diploma di Filippo Maria con il quale venivano rinnovati ai Federici vari privilegi, compreso quello comitale del 1411<sup>115</sup>. Il ritorno della valle sotto la sfera veneziana, negli anni immediatamente seguenti, riportò tuttavia il casato camuno all'obbedienza.

Quasi in contemporanea, nel 1438, l'esercito visconteo agli ordini di Niccolò Piccinino riuscì a porre sotto assedio Brescia, ma anche questo tentativo fallì per la tenace resistenza dei bresciani<sup>116</sup>.

Nel medesimo frangente in cui si verificavano gli eventi bellici sfavorevoli ai Visconti, il duca Filippo Maria si adoperò per ampliare la rete delle proprie alleanze. La scelta non poteva che ricadere su Sigismondo di Lussemburgo, fratello del già citato Venceslao, re d'Ungheria per nascita, re di Boemia dal 1419 e, soprattutto, re dei Romani dal 1411<sup>117</sup>. Pur non essendo ancora stato incoronato im-

112 PAGNONI, *Federici cit.*, p. 283; BIANCHI, SIMONOTTI, *La rocca di Mù cit.*, p. 53.

113 Angelo ANGELUCCI, *Documenti inediti per la storia delle armi da fuoco italiane*, vol. I, Torino, Tipografia G. Cassone e comp., 1869, pp. 139-144; BIANCHI, SIMONOTTI, *La rocca di Mù cit.*, pp. 54-55.

114 BIANCHI, SIMONOTTI, *La rocca di Mù cit.*, p. 57.

115 ASBs, Archivio Federici, b. 2, perg. 411, Milano, 2 aprile 1439; perg. 420, Milano, 15 maggio 1441.

116 I fatti dell'assedio sono descritti nel dettaglio da Cristoforo da Soldo, testimone diretto degli eventi: BRIZZOLARA (cur.), *La cronaca di Cristoforo da Soldo cit.*, pp. 16-27 (per la narrazione del momento culminante del fatto d'arme).

117 In merito alla figura di Sigismondo: Jörg K. HOENSCH, *Kaiser Sigismund. Herrscher an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit, 1368-1437*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1996; Michel PAULY, François REINERT (cur.), *Sigismundus von Luxemburg. Ein Kaiser in Europa*, Tagungsband Des Interna-

peratore, Sigismondo rappresentava, *de facto*, la massima autorità dell'istituzione imperiale, alla quale la dinastia viscontea era tradizionalmente e strettamente legata. Si aggiunga che, in quanto re d'Ungheria, egli aveva già sostenuto conflitti con Venezia per il controllo della Dalmazia, motivo per cui il suo coinvolgimento nella politica italiana si rivelava particolarmente promettente per Milano<sup>118</sup>.

La prevista discesa di Sigismondo in Italia - connessa anche al progetto dell'incoronazione imperiale - appariva dunque come un'occasione potenzialmente favorevole per un intervento congiunto con i Visconti contro Venezia. Quest'ultima, infatti, aveva da poco acquisito territori in Lombardia orientale che, almeno formalmente, ricadevano nell'ambito giurisdizionale dell'Impero. In tale contesto si colloca lo sforzo diplomatico promosso da Filippo Maria.

A svolgere un ruolo decisivo in questa rinnovata stagione diplomatica fu Giacomino da Iseo. Come altri ghibellini bresciani, egli pagò la propria duratura fedeltà ai Visconti con la confisca dei suoi territori. Fra di essi figurava anche il già menzionato castello di Clusane, che Filippo Maria Visconti gli aveva in precedenza restituito<sup>119</sup>.

Negli anni successivi Giacomino risulta soprattutto attestato come diplomatico del duca di Milano, piuttosto che come uomo d'arme: non è infatti documentato il suo coinvolgimento in scontri militari nel periodo in questione. Si può ritenere che la perdita dei suoi castelli e delle località di controllo lo avesse privato di un fondamentale bacino di reclutamento e, di conseguenza, della possibilità di partecipare direttamente al conflitto. Nel 1428 tentò, senza successo, di arruolare in Francia o comunque di ottenere dalla corte francese un contingente di 6.000 cavalieri<sup>120</sup>.

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tionalen Historischen und Kunsthistorischen Kongresses in Luxemburg, 8.-10, Juni 2005, Mainz, Philipp von Zabern, 2006.

118 Sui rapporti diplomatici tra Sigismondo e Filippo Maria: Francesco SOMAINI, «Les relations complexes between Sigismond de Luxembourg and les Visconti, ducs de Milan», in PAULY, REINERT (cur.), *Sigismundus von Luxemburg cit.*, pp. 157-197. Su quelli invece di natura ostile, anche di natura commerciale, con la Repubblica di Venezia: Martin STEFANIČ, «Guerra commerciale. Il blocco economico del Re Sigismondo contro Venezia. Il ruolo delle città e dei mercanti nella lotta fra gli stati», in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* [Online], 127-2 | 2015.

119 PUTELLI, *Intorno al castello di Breno cit.*, pp. 304 e 313-314.

120 «De Billiis rerum Mediolanensium historiae», in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores ab anno aerae christianae quingentesimo ad millesimumquingentesimum*, tomo XIX, Milano, Ex

Questa iniziativa rimase tuttavia un episodio isolato. Il principale riferimento dell'attività diplomatica di Giacomino era Sigismondo di Lussemburgo, con il quale i rapporti risultano attestati già durante il dominio malatestiano su Brescia. Emblematica, in questo senso, è l'investitura del 10 aprile 1415, quando Sigismondo, nella sua qualità di re dei Romani, conferì a Giacomino e al fratello Giovanni il titolo marchionale su Iseo e sui territori circostanti<sup>121</sup>.

Sebbene tale titolo non fosse mai stato riconosciuto dalle autorità che esercitavano il potere effettivo su quelle terre - prima il ducato visconteo, poi Venezia - esso manteneva un valore altamente prestigioso. Nessun altro casato bresciano poteva, in quel periodo, vantare un titolo marchionale conferito direttamente dall'autorità imperiale. La circostanza contribuì a consolidare la posizione degli Isei presso la corte di Sigismondo e a rendere Giacomino una figura idonea a rappresentare gli interessi viscontei in un momento di particolare delicatezza politica.

La prima evidenza dell'attività diplomatica di Giacomino presso la corte cesarea risale al 30 luglio 1417. A tale data è infatti una lettera in cui Sigismondo informa Filippo Maria di aver ricevuto i suoi ambasciatori - fra i quali lo stesso da Iseo - ed esorta il duca a rimanere leale alla sua persona<sup>122</sup>. Un anno più tardi, il 17 luglio 1418, Sigismondo, alla presenza di Giacomino, promise a Filippo Maria, in segno di amicizia, che qualora fosse sceso in Lombardia non sarebbe entrato in alcuna città o fortilizio con un seguito superiore a 500 cavalieri<sup>123</sup>.

Nonostante ciò, la calata programmata da Sigismondo non ebbe modo di realizzarsi negli anni successivi. A sollecitarla - ciò è documentato almeno dal 1428<sup>124</sup> - fu lo stesso duca di Milano, evidentemente preoccupato dalla grave piega che avevano preso gli eventi nella Lombardia orientale.

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typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1731, pp. 10-158; 106.

121 *Sigmund* - RI XI, 1, p. 102, n. 1592.

122 *Sigmund* - RI XI, 1, p. 175, n. 2491.

123 Luigi Osio, *Documenti diplomatici tratti dagli archivi milanesi*, 3 voll., vol. II, Milano, Tipografia di Giuseppe Bernardoni di Giovanni, 1864-1872, pp. 64-65, XLIII; *Sigmund* - RI XI, 1, p. 287, n. 3336.

124 Una delle prime evidenze è costituita da una lettera del 3 marzo 1428, nella quale Filippo Maria Visconti manifesta a re Sigismondo la grande gioia che gli ha recato la notizia del suo prossimo arrivo in Italia. Gli indica Giacomino da Iseo come ottimo conoscitore delle vie adatte al passaggio e mostra di non sospettare alcun abbandono, benché i veneziani, nemici comuni, abbiano nuovamente inviato oratori al re dei Romani: Osio, *Documenti diplomatici cit.*, vol. II, pp. 362-363, CCXL.

Alle varie richieste del re dei Romani sono associate anche informazioni sullo stato degli eventi in Italia. In una lettera del 29 gennaio 1430, ad esempio, il duca incarica Giacomino di informare Sigismondo che nei territori occupati di Brescia e Bergamo i guelfi stavano uccidendo i ghibellini; il caso addotto è quello di Apollonio Suardi, passato a fil di spada a Bergamo<sup>125</sup>. Il duca esorta dunque il re dei Romani a scendere in Italia per contrastare la potenza dei nemici suoi e dell'Impero, in particolare Venezia e Firenze.

In diverse missive si segnala, ad esempio, la superiorità delle due rivali, legata alla loro maggiore disponibilità economica e, di conseguenza, alla capacità di arruolare più uomini. Il 26 settembre 1430 il duca sollecitava nuovamente, tramite Giacomino, la discesa di Sigismondo in Italia, o quantomeno l'invio di un contingente<sup>126</sup>. Le repubbliche di Venezia e Firenze avevano infatti ripreso la guerra contro di lui e potevano contare, almeno secondo quanto riferito da Filippo, su 12.000 cavalieri e 8.000 fanti di buona esperienza. Al contrario, i viscontei disponevano di un numero decisamente inferiore di truppe, per di più demotivate anche a causa del trattamento meno favorevole ricevuto nel pagamento degli stipendi.

Le richieste del duca si protrassero nei mesi successivi. Emblematica, in tal senso, è la lettera del 20 aprile 1431, indirizzata direttamente a Giacomino:

«Et vere, Jacobine, si dominus noster rex guerram non ruperit contra eos, poterunt campizare pro libito, cum nobis tante non sint vires, ut valcamus obsisters quantum esset expediens. Enitaris ergo et des quameumque operam apud prefatum dominum nostrum regem, ut omnino statim guerram moveat contra Venetos, et insuper ipse veniat ad has partes, nec aliquialiter permoretur [...]»<sup>127</sup>.

Il 1° settembre 1431, Filippo Maria riferì a Giacomino della disfatta subita dalla flotta genovese per mano di quella veneziana presso Portofino<sup>128</sup>. In tale occasione, il duca richiese un suo intervento affinché accelerasse la discesa di Sigismondo. Egli sosteneva infatti che insuccessi come quello dei genovesi fossero la diretta conseguenza della mancata iniziativa del sovrano.

Il documento in questione è di notevole interesse, poiché offre un quadro significativo del piano strategico elaborato dal duca per muovere contro Venezia.

125 OSIO, *Documenti diplomatici cit.*, vol. II, pp. 429-430, CCXCVIII.

126 *Ivi*, pp. 464-465, CCCXXXV.

127 OSIO, *Documenti diplomatici cit.*, vol. III, pp. 15-16, XVI.

128 *Ivi*, p. 28, XXXIII.

Accanto alla prevista calata di Sigismondo in Italia, egli auspicava l'apertura di un ulteriore fronte nel Friuli, affidato alle truppe ungheresi del re dei Romani. Nei mesi precedenti, proprio in vista di tale progetto, aveva inoltre cercato di ottenere l'appoggio dei nobili del regno di Ungheria<sup>129</sup>.

L'idea di una lega antiveneziana e di un duplice assalto ai territori della Serenissima, da oriente e da occidente - cioè dalle posizioni milanesi - anticipa, in modo significativo, la strategia che sarà poi adottata da re Luigi XII di Francia e dall'imperatore Massimiliano nella Guerra della Lega di Cambrai (1508-1516)<sup>130</sup>.

Forse anche in risposta ai continui solleciti di Filippo Maria, Sigismondo calò in Italia nell'autunno del 1431. Attraverso la Svizzera, passando per Bellinzona, raggiunse i territori viscontei e da lì si diresse verso il Centro Italia. La sua discesa, però, fu molto diversa da quanto auspicato dal duca di Milano. Fin da subito si distinse per l'assenza di azioni ostili contro i veneziani, dovuta anche alla scarsità di uomini (qualche centinaio o poche migliaia di cavalieri) e risorse<sup>131</sup>.

Non meno significativo fu il progressivo deterioramento dei rapporti tra i due sovrani, maturato proprio in quei mesi. Il 3 ottobre 1431 Filippo Maria incaricò Giacomino di riferire a Sigismondo le ragioni che gli avrebbero impedito un incontro personale<sup>132</sup>, benché il sovrano, negli anni precedenti, gli avesse già concesso la facoltà di non comparire al suo cospetto qualora fosse sceso in Italia<sup>133</sup>. È possibile che il re dei Romani abbia percepito il mancato incontro come un vero affronto<sup>134</sup>, nonostante le motivazioni addotte dal duca - legate alla sua indole collerica e alla difficoltà di assumere decisioni o intraprendere azioni, come calcolare, nei momenti di forte agitazione.

Già dalla fine del 1432 Sigismondo considerava l'eventualità di un'alleanza con Venezia. Tale intesa, o comunque un atto di non belligeranza, si concretizzò nel 1433, quando papa Eugenio IV, veneziano, costrinse il re dei Romani a giun-

129 OSIO, *Documenti diplomatici cit.*, vol. II, pp. 357-358, CCXXXIV; pp. 439-440, CCCIX.

130 Si veda in merito Robert FINLAY, *Venice Besieged. Politics and Diplomacy in the Italian Wars, 1494-1534*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2008.

131 Sulla discesa di Sigismondo in Italia: Veronika PROSKE, *Der Romzug Kaiser Sigismunds (1431-1433). Politische kommunikation, herrschaftsrepräsentation und -rezeption*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co, 2019.

132 OSIO, *Documenti diplomatici cit.*, vol. III, pp. 29-30, XXXV.

133 *Sigmund – RI XI*, 1, p. 272, n. 3889.

134 STEFANIK, *Guerra commerciale cit.*, par. 37.

gere a patti con la Serenissima in cambio della sua incoronazione, avvenuta il 31 maggio dello stesso anno<sup>135</sup>.

È possibile che il fallimento del progetto politico di Filippo Maria abbia avuto ripercussioni dirette su Giacomino, come suggerisce la mancanza di sue ambasciate a Sigismondo dopo il 1428. Esso potrebbe essere collegato anche alla mancata conferma di un'importante investitura ai fratelli Isei.

Nel 1439 Giacomino approfittò del momento favorevole per l'esercito visconteo, che aveva da poco riconquistato varie località bresciane, e acquistò dalla camera ducale Iseo e la sua riviera fino a Pisogne per 10.000 fiorini<sup>136</sup>. Questo acquisto, che di fatto avrebbe concretizzato il titolo marchionale concessogli da Sigismondo, fu tuttavia osteggiato e infine annullato dallo stesso duca di Milano, fino alla definitiva riconquista veneziana dei territori sopracitati<sup>137</sup>.

È ipotizzabile che, dietro il comportamento di Filippo Maria, oltre alle incertezze legate all'evoluzione delle vicende militari, si celasse il timore di una eccessiva vicinanza di Giacomino all'istituzione imperiale. Del resto, già il padre di Giacomino, Giovanni, era stato accusato alla fine del Trecento di intrattenere rapporti personali con l'imperatore a discapito degli interessi viscontei. Non è quindi inverosimile che il medesimo sospetto abbia influito anche sul giudizio di Filippo Maria.

Tramontata ogni aspirazione a divenire giurisdicente feudale di Iseo, Giacomino, pur essendo documentato come ancora in vita nel 1453, sembra uscire dalla scena politico-diplomatica. Negli anni successivi al suo probabile ritiro, il fratello Giovanni ne raccolse l'eredità, assumendo il ruolo di ambasciatore visconteo presso la corte imperiale.

La presenza di Giovanni in questo ruolo è documentata per la prima volta in una lettera del 14 maggio 1447 che Filippo Maria Visconti gli indirizza personalmente<sup>138</sup>. In essa, il duca indica il nome dell'ambasciatore che desidera gli venga

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135 STEFANIK, *Guerra commerciale cit.*, par. 37. Sulle relazioni e sugli accordi tra Sigismondo e papa Eugenio IV - nel contesto fondamentale del Concilio di Basilea - si veda Silvio Enea PICCOLOMINI (aut.), Michele CATALANI (cur.), *De rebus Basileae gestis stante vel dissoluto concilio commentarius, primitus*, Roma, apud Jos. Alexandum Paccasassium, 1803.

136 Carlo MANARESI (cur.), *Registri Viscontei*, vol. I, Milano, Tip. M. Marsili, 1915, 10 ottobre 1439.

137 ZANI, *I Da Iseo Oldofredi cit.*, p. 161.

138 OSIO, *Documenti diplomatici cit.*, vol. III, pp. 557-558, CCCCXXXVIII.

inviato dal re dei Romani, Federico III d'Asburgo, incoronato nel 1440. Comunica inoltre di aver fatto realizzare per il sovrano un'armatura con barda da «corsero» (fig. 9).

Questa lettera è una delle numerose testimonianze degli sforzi diplomatici di Filippo Maria verso l'istituzione imperiale, che, in seguito alla morte di Sigismondo, nel 1437, aveva intrapreso un nuovo corso. La nomina a re dei Romani prima di Alberto II d'Asburgo e poi del cugino Federico (1440), divenuto imperatore nel 1452, sancì il passaggio del trono imperiale dalla dinastia dei Lussemburgo a quella degli Asburgo<sup>139</sup>.

Fu proprio Federico che, il 4 settembre 1447, rinnovò a Gio-



Fig. 9: Barda (armatura da cavallo), 1450 c., Milano (Pier Innocenzo da Faerno), Wien Museum Inv. 127151, CC BY 4.0, Foto: Birgit und Peter Kainz, <https://sammlung.wienmuseum.at/en/object/319920/>. Questa barda, il cui possesso è stato talvolta ipotizzato in alcuni testi come riferibile a Federico III d'Asburgo o al fratello Alberto, è un tipico esempio di produzione lombarda della metà del Cinquecento.

<sup>139</sup> Sulla figura di Federico III d'Asburgo: Paul-Joachim HEINIG, *Friedrich III (1440–1493). Hof, regierung und politik*, Köln, Böhlau, 1997. Sui rapporti tra Federico e l'Italia: Riccardo PALLOTTI, «Federico III d'Asburgo in Italia tra politica e retorica», in Anne HUIJBERS (cur.), *Emperors and Imperial Discourse in Italy, c. 1300–1500. New Perspectives*, Roma, Ecole française de Rome, 2022, pp. 157–198.

vanni e ai suoi eredi l'investitura marchionale poggiata su Iseo<sup>140</sup>.

Il rinnovo dell'investitura, pur estremamente significativo sul piano simbolico, rimase tuttavia privo di effetti concreti. Il territorio su cui essa insisteva era infatti già saldamente in mano veneziana.

Il 13 agosto 1447, a Milano, si spense Filippo Maria Visconti, segnando la conclusione definitiva del lungo dominio dei Visconti su Milano. Dopo un periodo di profonde turbolenze politiche, il potere passò a Francesco Sforza<sup>141</sup>, già condottiero del ducato e marito dell'unica erede di Filippo Maria, Bianca Visconti. Sotto la sua guida si compì l'ultimo significativo tentativo del ducato milanese di sottrarre alla Repubblica di Venezia i territori contesi della Lombardia orientale<sup>142</sup>.

#### 4 *L'offensiva di Francesco Sforza*

La fallita offensiva viscontea del 1438-1439 costituì, di fatto, uno spartiacque per la *pars* ghibellina bresciana. Alcune famiglie - come i Gambara e i rami dei Martinengo più vicini ai Visconti - accettarono la nuova situazione geopolitica, anche grazie alle onerose concessioni con cui Venezia volle assicurarsi la loro fedeltà. Altre, come i Maggi, persero una parte significativa della loro capacità di proiezione politica, pur continuando a esercitare un ruolo rilevante nella città e nel territorio.

La morte di Giacomino da Iseo, il rappresentante più intransigente del ghibellinismo locale, contribuì a stabilizzare ulteriormente il quadro politico, almeno all'interno della nobiltà bresciana.

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140 *Chmel* n. 2317, in *Regesta Imperii Online*.

141 In merito alla figura di Francesco Sforza, come condottiero e duca di Milano: Carlo CIUCOVINO, *Muzio Attendolo e Francesco Sforza. Guerra e politica nell'Italia dello scisma e del primo Rinascimento*, vol. 1, Roma, Universitalia, 2022. Sull'organizzazione militare del ducato nella prima epoca sforzesca: Maria Nadia COVINI, *L'esercito del duca. Organizzazione militare e istituzioni al tempo degli Sforza (1450-1480)*, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1998.

142 Già nel 1447-1448 Francesco Sforza, allora capitano della Repubblica Ambrosiana, aveva ottenuto importanti successi contro i Veneziani. La battaglia di Caravaggio (15 settembre 1448), conclusasi con una pesante disfatta per la Serenissima, aveva lasciato pericolosamente scoperte le posizioni di Brescia e Bergamo. Tuttavia, proprio in seguito a questo evento, Sforza si alleò con Venezia per rivendicare per sé il ducato di Milano, che ottenne poi nel marzo del 1450. Sulla battaglia di Caravaggio, si veda Massimo PREDONZANI, *Caravaggio 1448. L'assedio, le battaglie, l'araldica*, Milano, Acies Edizioni, 2014.

Le uniche famiglie che conservarono un ruolo nell'ultima offensiva sforzesca - seppure non di primo piano - furono quelle riparate a Milano (o in altri territori viscontei) e quelle situate in aree di confine, come i Federici.

Giovanni da Iseo, fratello di Giacomino, era ancora vivo quando Francesco Sforza assunse il ducato. L'ultima carica per cui è documentato è quella di capitano del Divieto a Parma<sup>143</sup>, un incarico peraltro poco legato alla sfera militare. Anche i suoi figli, così come quelli di Giacomino, continuarono a servire gli Sforza, ma solo come podestà di località di secondaria importanza<sup>144</sup>.

I Federici trasferiti in Valtellina si trovavano in una posizione diversa, conservando un ruolo importante nello scacchiere geopolitico sforzesco<sup>145</sup>, anche grazie ai legami territoriali e matrimoniali con la Valle Camonica.

Proprio da questa valle partì una delle principali direttrici dell'offensiva del 1453<sup>146</sup>. Il conflitto, scoppiato nel 1452, non riguardava solo le pretese su quel territorio, ma anche i contrasti commerciali tra Firenze, allora alleata del duca, e Venezia.

In questo contesto, l'esercito sforzesco, appoggiato da diversi membri della famiglia Federici, penetrò in Valle Camonica e cinse d'assedio Breno. L'avanzata favorevole spinse i nipoti di Giovanni, cioè il ramo dei Federici investito del titolo comitale, a riunirsi e a nominare procuratori incaricati di rappresentare gli interessi familiari presso Francesco Sforza, allora vicino alla conquista dell'intero territorio camuno<sup>147</sup>.

143 ZANI, *I Da Iseo Oldofredi cit.*, p. 162. Il rapporto stretto tra il nuovo duca e il nobile bresciano è documentato anche da alcune lettere del carteggio sforzesco. Il 15 dicembre 1450 Francesco scriveva a Giovanni chiedendogli di recarsi a Parma per assumere la nuova carica (ASMi, Registri delle missive [1447-1538], reg. 2, n. 1883). Il 7 marzo 1453 lo convocava invece a Milano per «conferire [...] di certe cose non de piccola importantia» (ASMi, Registri delle missive [1447-1538], reg. 14, n. 1472).

144 ZANI, *I Da Iseo Oldofredi cit.*, p. 162.

145 Per alcune notizie sui Federici riparati in Valtellina: FEDERICI, *Codice federiciano cit.*, pp. 106-109 e 115-119. Diversi membri del ramo valtellinese della famiglia ottennero podesterie di una certa importanza, soprattutto nelle località della valle. Ad esempio, nel 1466, un Antonio de' Federici risulta documentato come podestà di Tirano: COVINI, *L'esercito del duca cit.*, p. 176, nota 14.

146 Si vedano in merito BRIZZOLARA (cur.), *La cronaca di Cristoforo da Soldo cit.*, pp. 107-132; MALLETT, HALE, *The Military Organization cit.*, pp. 42-43.

147 BIANCHI, SIMONOTTI, *La rocca di Mù cit.*, p. 59.

L'altra direttrice dell'offensiva interessò la zona sud-occidentale del Bresciano. In un primo momento l'esercito ducale si trovò sulla difensiva, soprattutto dopo l'avanzata veneziana fino ai pressi di Lodi; tuttavia, tra l'autunno e l'estate del 1453, le forze sforzesche riuscirono a invertire l'inerzia del conflitto. Due passaggi decisivi furono la vittoria di Ghedi (15 agosto 1453) e la riconquista di Pontevico (ottobre 1453), fortilizio strategico tra il Cremonese e il Bresciano.

Nonostante questi successi, la grave situazione economica e sociale che affliggeva entrambi gli stati impose l'apertura di trattative per giungere a una soluzione negoziata. L'accordo definitivo venne raggiunto il 9 aprile 1454, con la stipula della Pace di Lodi.

Il trattato, che prevedeva la riconsegna ai veneziani di tutti i territori temporaneamente conquistati, pose fine alle aspirazioni milanesi sulla Lombardia orientale. Segnò inoltre il definitivo tramonto delle ambizioni dei casati appartenenti alla *pars* ghibellina di tornare sotto un dominio a loro più favorevole. La stabilizzazione dei confini comportò anche – talvolta in modo forzato – l'accettazione del dominio veneziano, che non sarebbe più stato seriamente messo in discussione per almeno cinquant'anni.

### *Conclusioni*

Nella presente trattazione, attraverso l'analisi dei principali episodi politici e militari, sono stati presi in esame gli elementi che contribuirono al progressivo sfaldamento e alla consecutiva sconfitta della fazione ghibellina filo-viscontea bresciana.

Tra questi emerge con particolare evidenza la disunione tra i casati, già percepibile alla fine del periodo di Gian Galeazzo Visconti. Tale frammentazione sembra aver limitato la possibilità di un coordinamento efficace delle forze familiari, queste talvolta consistenti e talvolta più modeste, e di un sostegno continuativo alle armate viscontee.

A questo si aggiunge un ulteriore elemento, più difficile da misurare, ovvero la possibile perdita di controllo sul territorio e sul bacino di reclutamento a seguito dei disordini scatenati dalla morte di Gian Galeazzo. Oltre alla precarietà delle giurisdizioni feudali, il rapido susseguirsi dei diversi domini nella città potrebbe aver ridotto in maniera significativa la capacità dei casati di mobilitare le risorse locali.

Inoltre, anche le roccaforti signorili, pur situate in posizioni strategiche, raramente garantirono una difesa duratura del territorio: carenze di risorse e difficoltà di cooperazione inter-familiare sembrano aver inciso in modo rilevante sulla loro efficacia militare.

Se le fortificazioni dell'alta Valle Camonica, già in mano ai Federici, continuarono a rivestire un ruolo importante seppur in maniera intermittente, lo stesso non si può dire dei territori iseani. La crescente stabilizzazione dei confini veneziani a Bergamo e nella Bergamasca spostò l'attenzione strategica sul settore sud-occidentale della pianura bresciana, al confine diretto con il Cremonese ducale. Tale cambio di orizzonte strategico è evidenziato dalla costruzione o dall'ammmodernamento di ben due fortezze di fondamentale importanza nella zona, Orzinuovi e Pontevico, avvenuto nel Cinquecento a fronte dell'assenza di centri analoghi nell'area della riviera di Iseo. Sebbene successivi cronologicamente, questi interventi difensivi sembrano riflettere uno spostamento del fronte strategico già avviato nel Quattrocento.

Un ulteriore elemento da considerare nell'analisi delle cause del progressivo declino della *pars* ghibellina bresciana è la crescente difficoltà del ducato visconteo, e successivamente sforzesco, sia sul piano militare sia su quello diplomatico. L'incapacità di Filippo Maria di riorganizzare una campagna risolutiva per la riconquista del Bresciano, come quella progettata nel 1438–1439, può aver influito sulla scelta di diversi casati di accettare la dominazione veneziana. Analogamente, il raffreddamento dei rapporti con Sigismondo di Lussemburgo privò il ducato di un potenziale interlocutore per la costruzione di un fronte anti-veneziano.

Considerati nel loro insieme, tali fattori contribuirono a ridurre la capacità della fazione ghibellina di opporre una resistenza coordinata tanto alla fazione guelfa quanto, soprattutto, all'esercito veneziano.

Come già osservato negli studi di Gentile, il concetto di fazione non scomparve né nel Quattrocento né nel Cinquecento, e neppure la conquista veneziana di Brescia pose fine alla *pars* ghibellina cittadina. La sua sopravvivenza è documentata in modo significativo nell'opera di Valseriati sul dissenso e il conflitto politico nell'età di Carlo V<sup>148</sup>.

Dopo il 1454, i casati ghibellini seguirono destini diversi: molte famiglie che

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148 Enrico VALSERIATI, *Tra Venezia e l'Impero. Dissenso e conflitto politico a Brescia nell'età di Carlo V*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016.

avevano accettato il dominio veneziano continuarono a prosperare, tra cui i Maggi e i Gambarà, i casi più rappresentativi.

I Maggi, articolati in più rami, rimasero tra i casati più eminenti della città e del territorio anche in età veneta<sup>149</sup>. Un ramo dei Maggi continuò la tradizionale inclinazione filoimperiale della casata. Il suo esponente più illustre fu Onofrio Maggi, affermato giurista, che a metà Cinquecento mantenne rapporti stabili con il ducato di Milano, ormai sotto dominazione spagnola<sup>150</sup>. I meriti suoi e dei suoi discendenti furono premiati nel 1667 con l'acquisizione del feudo di Gradella nel Cremonese, cui si aggiunse, nel 1692, il titolo comitale<sup>151</sup>.

L'altro importante ramo dei Maggi, uno di quelli discendenti dai personaggi citati nella presente trattazione, si estinse nel 1558 con la morte di Scipione, privo di eredi maschi (fig. 10). La sua vasta eredità - patrimoniale e simbolica - passò ai Gambarà, tramite i matrimoni dei conti Niccolò e Lucrezio con la primogenita e la secondogenita del defunto<sup>152</sup>.

Tale evento sancì solo di fatto un passaggio di consegne che era avvenuto da decenni: già dal primo Cinquecento, infatti, i Gambarà avevano assunto il ruolo di capifazione della *pars* ghibellina.

Questo casato fu protagonista delle complesse vicende politiche e militari che attraversarono Brescia e l'Italia nella prima metà del Cinquecento. Ebbe un ruolo decisivo nei ripetuti cambi di mano della città durante la Guerra della Lega di Cambrai (1508–1516)<sup>153</sup>. Dopo il definitivo ritorno dei veneziani, i Gambarà mantennero un'influenza rilevante anche nelle successive guerre d'Italia, continuando a pesare sugli equilibri cittadini e regionali. Numerosi membri della

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149 Si veda in merito l'appendice in Maurizio PEGRARI, *Le metamorfosi di un'economia urbana tra Medioevo ed Età moderna. Il caso di Brescia*, Brescia, Grafo, 2001, pp. 228-275, nella quale i Maggi figurano tra i principali casati delle gerarchie cittadine in età veneziana, tanto per la consistenza economica quanto per il numero di seggi detenute nel Consiglio municipale.

150 V. Enrico VALSERIATI, *Tra Venezia e l'Impero cit.*, pp. 87-89. Onofrio è considerato da Valseriati, nel libro sopracitato, uno degli autori della fallita congiura antiveneziana del 1547, che mirava a consegnare la città di Brescia all'esercito imperiale.

151 MONTI DELLA CORTE, *Le famiglie del patriziato bresciano cit.*, p. 50.

152 Paolo DE MONTIS, *Tutta Brescia addosso: armi, armaioli e nobili bresciani in età veneta*, Brescia, Marco Serra Tarantola, 2025, pp. 97-98.

153 V. Carlo PASERO, *Francia, Spagna, Impero a Brescia, 1509-1516*, Brescia, Tipo-Lito Fratelli Geroldi, Supplemento ai commentari dell'Ateneo di Brescia, 1958.

famiglia prestarono inoltre servizio all'Impero e alla Corona spagnola, ricevendo prestigiose benemeranze<sup>154</sup>.

Meno favorevole fu la sorte di altri casati rimasti fedeli alla causa viscontea. I Federici, dopo il ritiro degli Sforza dalla Valcamonica, conservarono alcuni privilegi, ma smarrirono la posizione dominante goduta in età viscontea. Almeno una linea familiare si trasferì definitivamente a Brescia, dove ottenne l'ingresso nel patriziato cittadino.

È significativo che nella supplica presentata nel 1548 al Consiglio cittadino, Abraham Federici, chiedendo il riconoscimento del patriziato, dichiarasse che il suo avo Girardo era stato privato di tutti i beni dal conte Giovanni Federici, «huomo terribile, et potente, et molto favorito dal duca Gio. Maria, et duca Filippo Maria»<sup>155</sup>. Una precisazione dal tono quasi giustificativo, volta a mitigare il peso della precedente militanza viscontea degli avi.

Particolarmente emblematica è infine la vicenda degli Isei - o, secondo la denominazione più attestata dal Cinquecento in poi, degli Oldofredi. Dei discendenti di Giacomino e Giovanni si perdono presto le tracce. Altri rami rimasti nel Bresciano, come quello di Manerbio, declinarono irreversibilmente tra Seicento e Settecento<sup>156</sup>. Solo la linea insulare di Montisola conservò prosperità, ottenendo nel Settecento, per via ereditaria, nome e beni della potente famiglia cremasca dei Tadini<sup>157</sup>.

Tuttavia, l'antico ricordo degli Isei, signori di Iseo fino alla rovina della prima metà del Quattrocento, continuò a riemergere nella memoria locale. Significative, in tal senso, sono le parole scritte sul finire del Seicento dal frate Fulgenzio Rinaldi in una stanza del castello di Iseo, allora divenuto convento ma ancora carico di memoria simbolica per il casato:

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154 Si vedano in merito: Dezio PAOLETTI (cur.), *Fasti e splendori dei Gambara. L'apice della potente famiglia bresciana in età rinascimentale e barocca*, Brescia, Grafo, 2010; Barbara BETTONI (cur.), *I Gambara e Brescia nell'Italia del tardo Rinascimento*, Milano, Franco-Angeli, 2019.

155 ASBs, Archivio Federici, busta 11, doc. 6, Brescia, 4 gennaio 1548.

156 Per il caso del ramo di Manerbio, decaduto allo stato di contadini, si veda Attilio Alfredo ZANI, «L'albero ruinato: gli Oldofredi di Manerbio da nobili cittadini a rustici villani (secoli XIII-XVIII)», in *Atlante della Bassa. 1: Uomini, vicende, paesi dall'Oglio al Mella*, Grafo, Brescia, 1984, pp. 115-119.

157 ZANI, *Gli Isei Oldofredi cit.*, pp. 164-165.

«Non v'è dubbio alcuno, che quanto più gli Alberi si alzano in grandezza, tanto maggiormente vanno moltiplicando gli proprii Rami in Latitudine; sì che al pari di questa crescendo, accrescono parimente riguardevole Pompa a loro medesimi. Erano gli Oldofredi in elevata Grandezza, del tutto Imperiali, fedelissimi a' Visconti, e di fattione Gibellina, e di assai Potenza...»<sup>158</sup>

Le parole di Fulgenzio Rinaldi, cariche di nostalgia per la grandezza perduta degli Isei-Oldofredi, testimoniano non solo la persistenza del ricordo, ma anche il bisogno tipico dell'età moderna di ricondurre la storia locale entro narrazioni coerenti di ascesa e declino. In esse si riflette l'immagine di una nobiltà che, pur trasformata e in parte annientata, continuava a vivere nella memoria collettiva come elemento fondante dell'identità territoriale.

A ben vedere, la parabola degli Isei-Oldofredi non rappresenta un caso isolato, ma può essere letta come la manifestazione più evidente di un processo più ampio: la ridefinizione dei poteri locali dopo il 1426 e la progressiva integrazione delle élites bresciane nel sistema veneziano. La capacità di adattamento - più ancora della forza militare o della fedeltà politica - sembra aver costituito il principale discrimine tra le famiglie in grado di prosperare e quelle destinate alla marginalizzazione.

Questo progressivo ridimensionamento di gran parte della nobiltà ghibellina bresciana non fu soltanto contingente, ma rispose a condizioni strutturali: la crescente perdita di controllo territoriale e la frammentazione delle giurisdizioni signorili limitarono sempre più la capacità tradizionale di mobilitazione armata, spingendo le famiglie verso funzioni diplomatiche e logistiche.

Da una parte, questo fenomeno riflette i tentativi - più o meno riusciti - di accentramento nell'area lombarda del Quattrocento; dall'altra, evidenzia il forte legame tra fazione e potentato, in questo caso tra la *pars* ghibellina bresciana e il ducato di Milano. L'esito fu il quasi completo annientamento, almeno sul piano politico, della fazione legata al potentato sconfitto.

Il caso bresciano mostra così, in scala locale, come la ridefinizione del rapporto tra aristocrazia, fazione, guerra e potere territoriale nella Lombardia del primo Quattrocento fosse strettamente legata alle trasformazioni strutturali del potere stesso e alla sua distribuzione sul territorio.

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<sup>158</sup> Fulgenzio RINALDI, *Monimenti historiali dell'antico, e nobile castello d'Iseo*, Brescia, Per Gio. Maria Rizzardi, 1685, p. 33. Il passo è citato in ZANI, *I Da Iseo Oldofredi cit.*, p. 151.

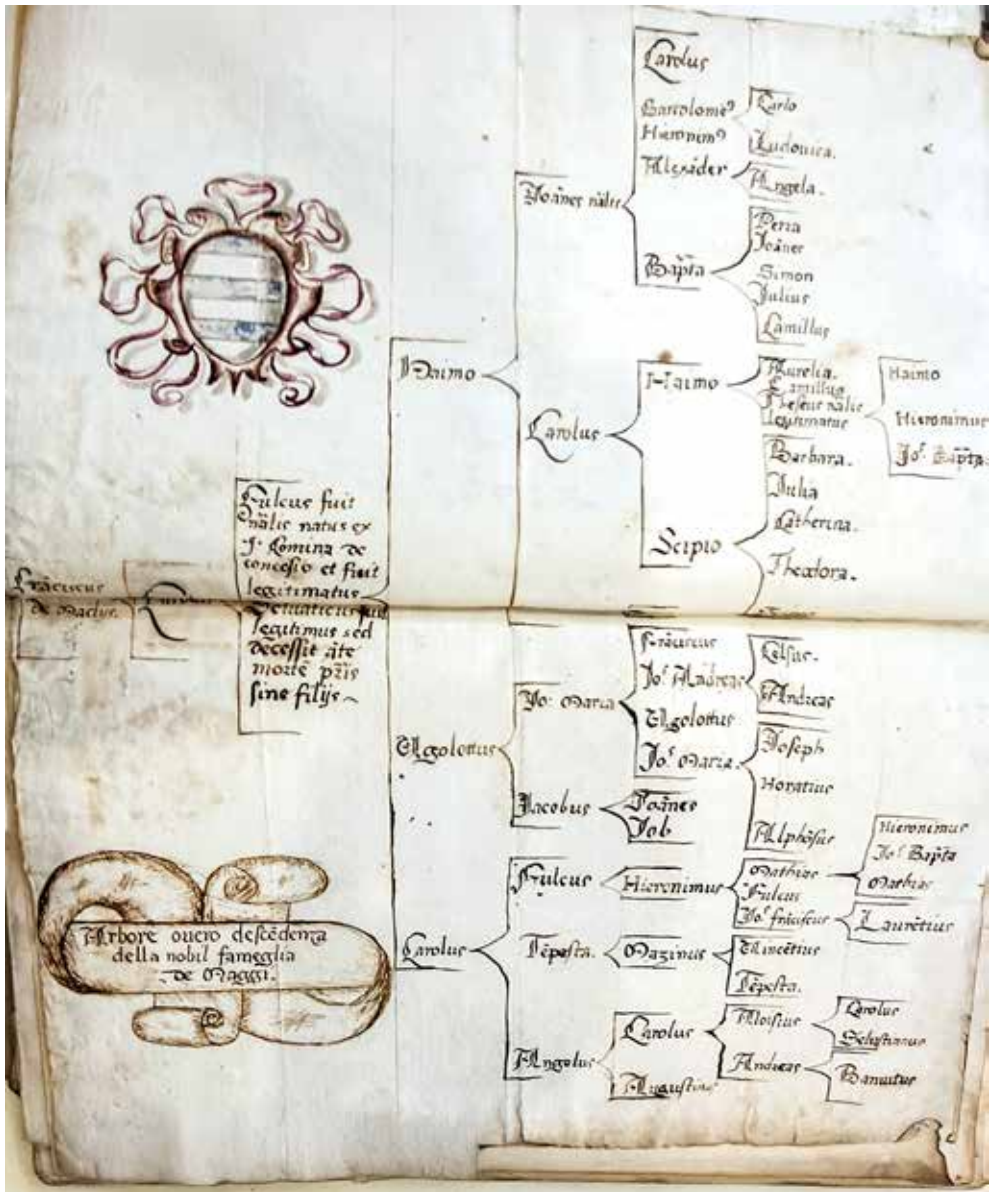


Fig. 10: Albero genealogico della famiglia Maggi, QBQs, Ms. P. II. 22. Per gentile concessione della Biblioteca Queriniana di Brescia. Sono vietate ulteriori riproduzioni dell'immagine. I rami si dipartono da Francesco, figlio di Galeotto, e sembrano interrompersi nel Seicento. Sulla destra si nota l'estinzione del ramo di Scipione (morto nel 1557), le cui vaste proprietà passarono, tramite i matrimoni delle figlie, alle famiglie Gambara, Martinengo Colleoni e Avogadro.

## FONTI ARCHIVISTICHE

ASDBs (=Archivio Storico Diocesano di Brescia):

- Mensa Vescovile, reg. 111 (ex 74).

ASBs (=Archivio di Stato di Brescia):

- Archivio Federici, buste 1, 2 e 11.
- Archivio Gambara di Verolanuova, Fondo già Maggi, buste 4 (*Annali Maggi de quali fu erede casa Gambara*), 13, 123, 128 e 129.
- Ospedale Maggiore, busta 605.

ASMi (=Archivio di Stato di Milano):

- Registri delle missive (1447-1538), registri 2 e 14.

BQBs (Biblioteca Queriniana, Brescia):

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# History and Development of the Sabre in the Middle Ages

by CHRISTOPHER SZABÓ

**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to describe the development of the cavalry sabre on the steppe from a single-edged sword following incremental changes from this form to the eventual curved grip, curved blade and reverse edge and follow its development as different empires and peoples adopted it. Historical, linguistic, archaeological and iconographical material is investigated to define; describe and follow the spread of the weapon, notably in a cavalry context, as well as a link to the invention of the stirrup by Asian nomads. Some widespread false beliefs are also addressed, including the Arab/Persian invention of the sabre, or that this type of curved sword only came to prominence in the eighteenth century.

**KEYWORDS:** SABRE, CAVALRY, NOMADS, STIRRUP, EURASIA.

## *Introduction*

Many Western works hold to the outdated idea that sabres came to Europe from the Ottoman Empire, or even India. This has been common in French, German and English works, an example of which is the *Martini A-Z of Fencing*. Regarding the sabre, it states: “It became known to western Europe as a result of contact with the Hungarian light horsemen (*housas* or Hussars) who had themselves adopted the weapon from the Turks.”<sup>1</sup> The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has the following entry: “sabre, heavy military sword with a long cutting edge and, often, a curved blade. Most commonly a cavalry weapon, the sabre was derived from a Hungarian cavalry sword introduced from the Orient in the eighteenth century.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Edward D. Morton. *A-Z of Fencing*. Martini, Queen Anne Press, London, (1988), p.155. (It is not clear what a ‘housa’ is, nor what language it is supposed to be in.)

2 *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Sabre,” accessed, 6 June 2025.

### *Definition of the sabre*

Unlike straight swords, there are very few definitions or typologies of medieval sabres. One of the first to create a typology of swords was Jan Petersen's work on Viking swords in Norway in 1919.<sup>3</sup> A better known, and more complete, typology was published by Ewart Oakeshott in 1960<sup>4</sup> While Oakeshott's book is still considered a standard work, others have added to this literature. Unfortunately, beside a few brief references to the sabre, there are no seminal typologies in Western languages. An interesting, but for the purposes of this article, frustrating work, is that of bladesmith James Elmslie, who, while unpublished, has attended numerous conferences and has attempted to describe single-edged European swords. Like Oakeshott, he does not consider Hungary, Poland or Croatia to be part of the West, and leaves sabres out of his typology. Other, more local works, such as that of Alfred Geibig on Medieval Swords in Germany, and, for example Jří Kořta and Jiří Hošek in the Czech Republic deal with sword types in those countries but not sabres.<sup>5</sup> These typologies describe the blade types, as well as the cross-guards and hilts of these respective sword types. For the purposes of the present article, these will not be described in detail for the sabre.

Hungarian, Ukrainian, Russian and other scholars have published wide-ranging materials on the sabre, and Gergely Csiki in his Ph.D thesis listed Svetlana Pletneva and Umar Kočkarov on their definitions of early sabres, as well as, among others, Hungarian archaeologists József Hampel, Nándor Fettich and Gyula László, giving his own definition as: "Cutting weapons, that have a single-edged blade, a *fokél* ground back from the point and has a pentagonal or triangular cross-section."<sup>6</sup> Here the *fokél* (literally 'point-edge' in Hungarian), is often given as *elman*, which is Turkish.<sup>7</sup>

3 Jan Petersen. *De norske vikingesverd. En typologisk-kronologisk studie over Vikingetidens vaaben*. Videnskapsels kapets s kru'ter, Kristiana/Oslo. (1919).

4 Ewart Oakeshott. *Arms and Armour from Prehistory to the Age of Chivalry*. The Boydell Press. Woodbridge, U.K. (1960.)

5 Alfred Gebig, *Beiträge zur morphologischen Entwicklung des Schwertes im Mittelalter eine Analyse des Fundmaterials vom ausgehenden 8. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert aus Sammlungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wachholtz, Neumünster. (1991).

6 Gergely Csiki. "Az avar kori szúró- és vágófégyverek. Osztályozás – tipológia – kronológia – technológia." (Ph. D Dissertation, Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest. (2009), p. 130.

7 There seems to be no point in using a Turkish expression for part of a blade that is not

Csíki does not consider the direction of the grip, normally bent opposite to the curve of the blade, to be significant, however, others do.<sup>8</sup> László Simon defines the sabre thus: ‘According to the literature the sabre is a type of close-combat cutting weapon, with a greater or lesser curved blade, of which the back-edge is ground double-edged, the grip is slightly bent towards the longer cutting edge.’<sup>9</sup>

Before moving away from definitions, Oakeshott’s brief mention of the sabre should be included. He says of the curved blade: ‘The curved “scimitar” is based on the eastern European sabres, such as those found in Hungary like the Charlemagne sword in Vienna.’<sup>10</sup>

He adds, of a type of falchion: ‘It may have developed under an Eastern European influence, for it is very closely akin to the Sword of Charlemagne—the Hungarian one—in Vienna (see fig. 74), a type which had been in use in Eastern Europe since the ninth century.’<sup>11</sup>

Strangely, while he admits that the falchion’s point owes something to ‘Eastern Europe’, he fails to find the origin of the European sabre there. Instead, he attempts to trace its origins back to the ‘seax’ and further: ‘This sword type (it was called the Sax, and we shall hear more about it) remained almost unchanged in the north until the end of the Viking period, and survived throughout the Middle Ages as the falchion, and on into modern times under the guise of the sabre.’<sup>12</sup>

### *What the sabre is not*

It is important to note that swords found in Europe in the Middle Ages (from c. 1250) known as ‘falchions’ or ‘messer’ (or *langmessser* or *kriegsmesser*) are not sabres. While there is debate about their origins, they appear many centuries after the sabre does and none originated on the steppe. Some, like Oakeshott and Żabiński et al point to a possible Nordic origin. The other influence is listed as that of Hungary.

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known to be Turkish.

8 Csíki, cit. p. 130.

9 László Simon. ‘Adatok a szablyák kialakulásáról.’ A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve 30.30/2, (Miskolc, 1993), p.177.

10 Oakeshott, E. *Arms and Armour* p. 328.

11 Oakeshott, cit., p.169.

12 Oakeshott cit., p.59.

An important weaponry tradition which may have had considerable influence on the development of late medieval falchions was that of bladed weapons in Hungary. Its impact may have been especially strong due to close relations between Hungary and German speaking countries in the Late Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup>

There remains the *dusack*. A German source says it developed from a side arm used by the Hussite army of the fourteenth century and adopted by German-speaking regions as the *düssagge*, *dusack* etc. Later, it would be used as a training weapon by German fencers.<sup>14</sup>

### *Origin of the word, 'sabre'*

While dealing with etymology, it might be useful to look at the word often used for sabre or sabre-like weapons, namely, the 'scimitar'. Most English dictionaries, including the Oxford English Dictionary or the American Heritage Dictionary have essentially the same entry:<sup>15</sup>

Scimitar. n A curved oriental sword. [Ital. scimitarra].

Other dictionaries, including the Oxford Dictionary, cite both Italian '*scimitarra*' and French '*cimiterre*' or similar words as the source.<sup>16</sup> The word itself, however, is not found in any of the languages of people who used such weapons, such as Turks, Persians, Hungarians, East and South Slavs and Arabs. Speculation to the Persian word for sword, *shamshir* exists, but the OED finds it 'unsatisfactory'. Given that the term is a non-specific one and does not add to the understanding of the sabre, it will not be used in this article, except in quotations.

The origin of the word 'sabre', until the twentieth century, was considered to

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13 Grzegorz Żabiński Russell A. Mitchell Falko Fritz. *A Falchion / Langes Messer Fencing Treatise by Johannes Lecktüchner (1482)*. (Silesia, Texas, Hamburg, c. The Authors, 2012), p. 23.

14 Waffensammlung Carl Beck. *Säbel, «Dusägge», deutsch Ende 16.Jahrhundert. Klinge mit unbekannter Meistermarke und originaler Wolfsmarke, Passau*. (Museum Sankturbanhof. Stiftung Sankturbanhof Sursee, 2018).Online. <https://www.waffensammlung-beck.ch/waffe2.html>

15 Boyer, M, et al. *The American Heritage Dictionary*. (Dell Publishing, New York, 1985), p 612.

16 Branford, William. *The South Africa Pocket Oxford Dictionary*. (Oxford University Press, Cape Town) 1987, p. 685

be well established, namely that it came from the Hungarian word *szablya*, primarily through contact with Polish cavalry and through the spread of Hungarian light cavalry, the *huszárok* or in English, 'Hussars'.

The verb *szab* dates from 1211 in its first written form and means something similar to 'define', but its noun form dates from the same century as in *szabó* or 'tailor' and these words strongly imply some kind of cutting. However, the linguists are not satisfied as to its Hungarian origin.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, an interesting linguistic study was done by a Polish scholar who argued that the word was Hungarian after all, but the origin of this word harked back to the Far East.<sup>18</sup> He states: 'Thus the conception of the Hungarian origin of the word for sabre is probably correct but simplified.'

The author, Marek Stachowski, maps out the linguistic connections he found, going all the way to the Pacific Ocean linking speakers of the Tungusic language group (the best-known of whom are the Manchus) all the way to Europe. He says:

'As can be seen, some details of the routes of borrowing taken by the word for sabre in Europe still remain difficult to settle. Notwithstanding, four evolutional centres can be found: [11] Tungusic, where the word *seleme* was originally formed; [12] Kipchak, where the *l – m > m – l* metathesis, the *m > b* change, and a syncopy have probably occurred; [13] Hungarian, where contamination with the verb *szab* 'to cut' could have taken place; [14] Polish, where the word-initial *s-* was changed into *š-*.'<sup>19</sup>

There are two problems with this very interesting etymology:

1. A number of links are speculative, such as Manchu/Mongolian to Avar and Kipchak (a Turkic language) and proto-Hungarian, where *selebe* became *\*seb(e)le* and from proto-Hungarian to Old Hungarian *\*szeble* (? ↔ *szab*) (ca. 10<sup>th</sup> c.?) In linguistic notation, the asterisk \* refers to a word that is not attested in the given language.<sup>20</sup>
2. The author argues that the Kipchak-Cuman word *selebe*, meaning 'sabre', is attested, but he also states it is found in Kirgiz. The Cumans, who did speak a Kipchak Türk language, entered Hungary in the thirteenth century, but the Hungarians already had the sabre from at least

17 Branford, cit, p.674, under Sz.

18 Stachowski, Marek. 'The Origin Of The European Word For Sabre.' *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* vol. 9 (Kraków University, 2004), pp. 133-141.

19 Stachowski, cit., p.137.

20 Stachowski, cit., p.135.

the ninth century. However, even giving Professor Stachowski the benefit of the doubt, there remains a linguistic problem he appears not to notice. If *selebe* entered Hungarian, then surely it would not have been 'contaminated' by the word *szab* (cut) but rather the Old Hungarian *szel*, (slice). The word, according to the etymological dictionary is attested since 1138 in Hungarian, and is considered to be an 'ancient Finno-Ugric period' word.<sup>21</sup> If the Cuman word *sele-be* or something similar was heard by Hungarians, and they adopted perhaps a new version of the sabre, they would most likely called it a *szell-ő*' or 'slicer', rather than adopt the form *sel-be*, which does not work emically in the language.

Therefore, while the origin of the word *szablya* is not firmly established, the Hungarian form strongly influenced the other European languages.

This leaves the question of what the Hungarians called their sabres in the ninth and tenth centuries? Given that the word *kard* means generic 'sword', and that the word 'kard' is considered to be a loan word from an Iranian language, possibly Alan, it is likely they would have simply called their type of sword *kard*.<sup>22</sup>

### *Origin and development of the sabre, single-edged swords*

An investigation of the literature dealing with early sabres reveals that the development of the weapon is linked to Eurasian nomad peoples, as Khazanov has pointed out. He dates the invention of the sabre proper to the ninth century, but admits it could be earlier, linking the early spread of the sabre in Europe to the Avars, Khazars and the Magyars.<sup>23</sup> Csíky states, in a similar vein: 'The research into sabres is coincident with the history of the research into nomadic weapons.'<sup>24</sup>

Current understanding of sabre development goes back to the seventh century, with the geographical spread separated by some four thousand kilometres: Hungary and Uzbekistan. There is no consensus on where the sabre originated within this vast area.

21 Gábor Zaicz (Ed.). *Etimológiai Szótár Magyar szavak és toldalékok eredete*. Tinta, Budapest. (2006), p.689.

22 Zaicz cit., p.349.

23 Khazanov, Anatoly. 'The Eurasian Steppe Nomads in Eurasian History.' *Nomad Aristocrats in a World of Empires*. (Ed. Jürgen, Paul Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag. Wiesbaden, 2013), p. 201.

24 Csiky. cit..125.

It is important to note that archaeologists have found that before the curved blade developed, the *fokél* (Hungarian: Meaning 'point-edge' or *elman* was seen on straight single-edged blades.<sup>25</sup> This will be referred to further as the 'reverse or back edge', because the single-edged blade, while suitable for cutting, did not present an effective point without it.<sup>26</sup>

The first known straight single-edged swords with a reverse edge originate from the sixth and seventh centuries, from sites such as Üç Tepe in Azerbaijan and a ring-pommel sword from the Mala Pereščepino site in Ukraine. Csíky considers these weapons to be proto sabres.<sup>27</sup> These also have their contemporary parallels in the Avar material found in Hungary.<sup>28</sup>

Another example of these early Avar weapons can be found in the Csákberény-Orondpuszta site in Western Hungary, which was first opened in 1935 and was finally published in 2017. Among other periods, the site contains a large Early Avar Age cemetery (c. 560-630) where two relatively well-preserved swords were found. These were both single-edged, one of them (grave 150) was decorated with silver and the blade had a slight curve, so could be seen as a proto-sabre.<sup>29</sup>

An illustration of some of these swords can be seen in the Ukrainian East European Archaeological Journal, which the authors attributed to the Khazar Khaganate.<sup>30</sup> Another early proto-sabre can be found in the Szegvár-Oromdűlő dig.<sup>31</sup>

25 The term 'false edge' is often used for this part of the blade, but it seems rather a strange term, as the edge is very real for anyone who touches it! It also does not make much sense to use a Turkic or Hungarian term. While some English-speakers do use the Turkic '*elman*', the people who first invented and used the proto-sabre and sabre were not by any means uniformly Turkic-speaking. The Avar ruling class likely spoke a Tungusic language, Alans spoke an Iranian language, Magyars spoke a Uralic one. The term 'Turco-Mongol' sabre is also misleading, as the Mongols only started using these weapons in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

26 Csíky.cit. p. 214.

27 Csíki. Cit.

28 Csíki. Cit., p.217.

29 Éva Garam - Tivadar Tivadar (Eds), *A Csákberény-Orondpusztai Avar Kori Temető* (Szent István Király Múzeum, Székesfehérvár, 2017), p. 170, 234.

30 It is worth noting that these periodisations are not absolute. Slightly curved single-edged blades are found in the mid-seventh century, as are such blades in the eighth and ninth, merely becoming more common in the later centuries.

31 Gábor Lőrinczy, Balázs Major, Attila Türk. *The Szegvár-Oromdűlő Cemetery and the Avar Period in the Trans-Tisza Region* (Martin Optiz, Budapest), 2022). p. 604.



Fig. 1. *Zhibeidao*. The Met Collection. Arms and Armor. Gallery 377. Sword with Scabbard Mounts, c.600. Object number 30.65.2. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2025. (c. 600.A.D.) Online.

It appears that due to the continuous population of the Carpathian Basin by nomadic peoples and polities, notably in the Avar Age (c.650-820) a development can be seen from double-edged swords to single-edged ones; to single-edged swords with a reverse-edge about a third back from the point; to curved-bladed sabres. Simon created a typology for these proto sabres:

The earliest Avar swords, according to Simon, are of Asian origin and look for all intents and purposes like the contemporary Chinese *zhibeidao* swords of the Sui and Tang Dynasties.<sup>32</sup> Chinese swords are generally divided into *dao* and *jian* where the former is single-edged (regardless of curvature) and the latter is double-edged.<sup>33</sup> A well-known example of a Sui Dynasty *dao* can be seen at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.<sup>34</sup>

Recent DNA studies have shown that the Early Avars were closely related to the people of the Rouran Khaganate which ruled part of China and the steppe from 380 to 555 A.D. One of the studies states that: ‘Our data are compatible with the Rouran origin of the Avar elite.’<sup>35</sup>

Another DNA study is more certain:

32 Avar swords found in Hungary are shown next to Sui Dynasty Chinese swords and appear almost identical. Also, Simon, Cit. p.172

33 Shen-yang Song, Wei Qian et al. ‘Ironmaking and steelmaking process research on Chinese long ring pommel Dao in Han dynasty.’ *Scientific Reports* (Springer Nature, London, 2025), p.1 and 11.

34 The Met Collection. Arms and Armor. Gallery 377. Sword with Scabbard Mounts, c.600. Object number 30.65.2. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2025.

35 Zoldán Maróti, Endre Neparáczki, Oszkár Schütz et al. ‘The genetic origin of Huns, Avars, and conquering Hungarians.’ *Current Biology* 32, Elsevier, Cambridge, MA USA, (2022), p 2867.



Fig. 2. Munkácsi Mihály Múzeum, Békéscsaba. „utazás TÉRben és I DŐben” Békéscsaba az évezredek itóvonalán [Traveling in Space and Time. Békéscsaba on the timeline of the millenia.] A Kunágota arany avarkori kard. [The Golden Avar Period Sword from Kunágota] (Online.)

Our results provide robust genetic support for the Northeast Asian ancestry of the Avar-period elite in the core region of the Avar empire (DTI) from the middle third of the 7th CE to the early 8th CE Carpathian Basin (early to middle Avar period). We show a striking genetic match with a Rouran-period individual as well as with ancient individuals from Xiongnu and especially Xianbei periods from the eastern Asian steppe.<sup>36</sup>

It is therefore no surprise that the Early Avar swords and Chinese swords from the same period look much the same. Of the 193 Avar swords known from grave-finds known in 1993, some were captured Germanic or Byzantine double-edged weapons; Simon studied 120 were single-edged.<sup>37</sup>

Curved blades are seen in the Middle Avar period (second half of the seventh C to the first half of the eighth.) Some seven exemplars are known in Hungary from this period.<sup>38</sup> Further examples are found in the late seventh century, as Vida points out: ‘In 670–80, the Onogurs, a population fleeing the Khazars, arrived in the Carpathian Basin.’ He links their arrival with: ‘The appearance of new weapon types, such as the sabre ....’<sup>39</sup>

Artistic depictions of swords, seen as sabres or proto sabres, are found on

36 Guido Alberto Gnechi-Ruscione, Anna Szécsényi-Nagy, István Koncz et al. ‘Ancient genomes reveal origin and rapid trans-Eurasian migration of 7th century Avar elites.’ *Cell* 185, Elsevier Inc., Cambridge, MA. (2022), p. 1408.

37 Simon, cit. p.172

38 Gábor Lőrinczy, Balázs Major, Attila Türk. Lőrinczy, Gábor. Cit. p. 627.

39 Tivadar, Vida. ‘The Early And Middle Avar Period’ (568–turn of the 7th–8th centuries). In: Visy, Zsolt (Ed). *The Migration Period. Hungarian Archaeology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Budapest 2003), pp. 302, 306.



Fig. 3. *Zhibeidao* type swords from China. The Met Collection. Arms and Armor. Gallery 377. Sword with Scabbard Mounts, c.600. Object number 30.65.2. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2025. (c. 600.A.D.) Online.

murals in the Sogdian archaeological sites of Afrasiab (Samarkand) and Penjikent, where the swords are suspended from belts using two points, much like the nomad weapons, as well as having, in some cases, a slightly curved grip. The proceedings of a conference dealing with these murals states:

A close examination of the original painting has shown the two of the figures mentioned by the said specialists, namely figures 39 and 40, are equipped with perfectly straight swords, while in the two other cases, i.e. figures 37 and 38, the visual impression of the curvature of blades is due to numerous local losses of paint coat.<sup>40</sup>

With some exceptions, the curved sabre blade appears in the archaeological record in the eighth century, and the increasing number of these finds shows the quick spread of this technology from the Caucasus to the Volga region in a relatively short period.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time as the proto-sabre appears in the Avar Khaganate (and possibly the Rouran Empire before it) the Early Turk Khaganates they appear to have

40 Irina Arzhantsev Olga Inevatkina. Afrasiab Wall-paintings Revisited: 'New Discoveries Twenty-Five Years Old. Royal Nauruz in Samarkand.' *Proceedings Of the Conference Held in Venice On The Pre-Islamic Paintings At Afrasiab.* (Supplement Number 1. Rivista degli studi Orientali Nuova Serie Volume LXXVIII. Sapienza University, Rome, 2006), p.190.

41 Oleksii Komar, Oleg Sukhobokov. Vooruzheniye i voyennoye delo Khazarского kaganata 'Armament and military affairs of the Khazar Khaganate' *Essays of Military history of Old Ukraine.* (Kiev, 2005) (In translation), p. 230.



Fig. 4. 1 The Visegrad sword and its scabbard. 2. The Kunszentmiklós-Bábony gold-plated sword. 3. The silver plated Szalkaszentmárton sword. *Mátyás Király Múzeum, Visegrad. Műtárgyak a Múzeumban.* (Online)

used the proto-sabre and sabre early on. Historian Vadim Gorbunov of Barnaul University wrote: 'Long blade weapons (swords and sabers) were an indispensable tool for close-in-action of Turkic horsemen.'<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Gorbunov V. 'Klinkovoe oruzhie tjurskoj' ['Long-bladed Weapons of the Turkic Cavalry']. *Istoricheskoe oruzhievedenie* [Weapons History Journal], Online № 2, p.3.

He argues that the Turkic word ‘kilij’ refers to both sword and sabre. He states: ‘Turkic word with the meaning «long blade weapons for melee» – kilich, translated by linguists as a sword [Ancient Turkic dictionary, 1969: 442-443], but it is likely that it also meant the sabre because there is no separate term for this type of weapon in early Turkic written monuments.’<sup>43</sup>

Gorbunov lists a number of Turkic swords and sabres from the First Turkic Khaganate (552-657 AD) and the development of the true sabre, with a curved blade and offset grip, point and reverse edge can be traced to the Turgesh Khanate (699-756) in Central Asia.<sup>44</sup>

Khazanov says: ‘In the Eurasian steppes, sabers became quite a common weapon in the ninth to twelfth centuries, and perhaps even earlier.’<sup>45</sup>

According to Professor Csaba Hidán, a specialist in Hungarian, Balkan and nomad military history and re-enactment:

The sabre was formed in areas where they used high-pommel saddles, stirrup irons and rode in the nomad style. The time of its appearance was probably the end of the seventh century, beginning of the eighth and appeared approximately at the same time in the Carpathian Basin, Eastern Europe and the Western zone of Central Asia, as well as the territory north of the Caucasus.<sup>46</sup>

The reference to the ‘nomad style’ of riding needs some explanation. A renowned expert on equestrianism and especially saddlery, and well-known author, Elwyn Hartley Edwards, wrote:

The light horsemen, exemplified by successive waves of horse-peoples from Asia and the East, were individually better riders than those of Europe. They used a shortened stirrup, sat with a bent leg and inclined the body *forward* – a seat virtually identical to that which we are encouraged to adopt today when riding across country.<sup>47</sup>

Edwards continues: ‘Mongols of the thirteenth century adopted this seat and there are numerous depictions of Hungarians (themselves descendants of the steppe horsemen) and Polish horseman from the fifteenth century riding in a for-

43 Gorbunov. cit.

44 Gorbunov. cit. p.15.

45 Khazanov. cit. p. 201.

46 Csaba Hidán. *Emlékezzünk Régiokről IX. - Csaták Villáma, A Szablya* 0:58-1:20 Magyarországi Kutató Intézet MKI, Online.

47 Elwyn Hartley Edwards. *The Saddle. In Theory and Practice*. J.A. Allen, London. (1990), p.7.

ward position with a shortened leather.<sup>48</sup> The author contrasted this with the Western heavy cavalry:

The medieval knight braced himself between the cantle and the stirrup, with leg straight and extended to the front, the better to withstand the shock of violent contact. To help him maintain this optimum position, the stirrup leathers were fastened to the front of the saddle, compelling him to adopt a straight, forward thrust leg.<sup>49</sup>

It appears that not only the sabre, but also the modern, 'frame' or 'tree saddle', was introduced to Europe by the Avars. Archaeological finds from the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries in today's Mongolia (in what was likely the Rouran Khaganate) show complete frame saddles and stirrups.

It further appears that the development of the sabre is linked to the invention of the high-pommel saddle (which Edwards called a 'high-peaked, dipped-seat saddle' and stirrups, both of which first appear in the archaeological record on the steppe during the Rouran Khaganate. (Fourth to fifth Centuries.) Scholars point out that 'the possibility that the Eastern Steppe played a key role in the early development and spread of the frame saddle and stirrup.'<sup>50</sup>

Also, as was shown above, a group of Rouran migrated very rapidly across Eurasia to form the Avar elite, therefore the connection appears to be well-founded (Fig. 5).

An Avar saddle found near Tiszafüred is dated to the middle of the seventh century by the archaeologists.<sup>51</sup> The burial, which featured the saddle remains, a spear point, a set of belt fittings including a buckle, stirrups, and a straight single-edged sword without a cross-piece.<sup>52</sup> The saddle, as described in the article is very similar to that found in Mongolia and later, tenth century Magyar saddles, such as the Soltszentimre or Koroncó saddles described by Gyula László.<sup>53</sup> (Fig. 6).

48 Edwards, cit.

49 Edwards, cit., p.5.

50 Jamsranjav Bayarsaikhan, Tsagaan Turbat, Chinbold Bayandelger 'The origins of saddles and riding technology in East Asia: discoveries from the Mongolian Altai.' *Antiquity*, Volume 98 - Issue 397 (Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 7-13.

51 Éva Garam. 'Avar nyereg Tiszafüdről.' *Archaeologiai Értesítő*. 96.1. (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1969) p.90.

52 Garam. Cit., pp. 83-90.

53 Gyula László. *A Honfoglaló Magyar Nép Élete*. 1944. (Facsimile Edition, Múzsák Kiadó,(1988), p.346.

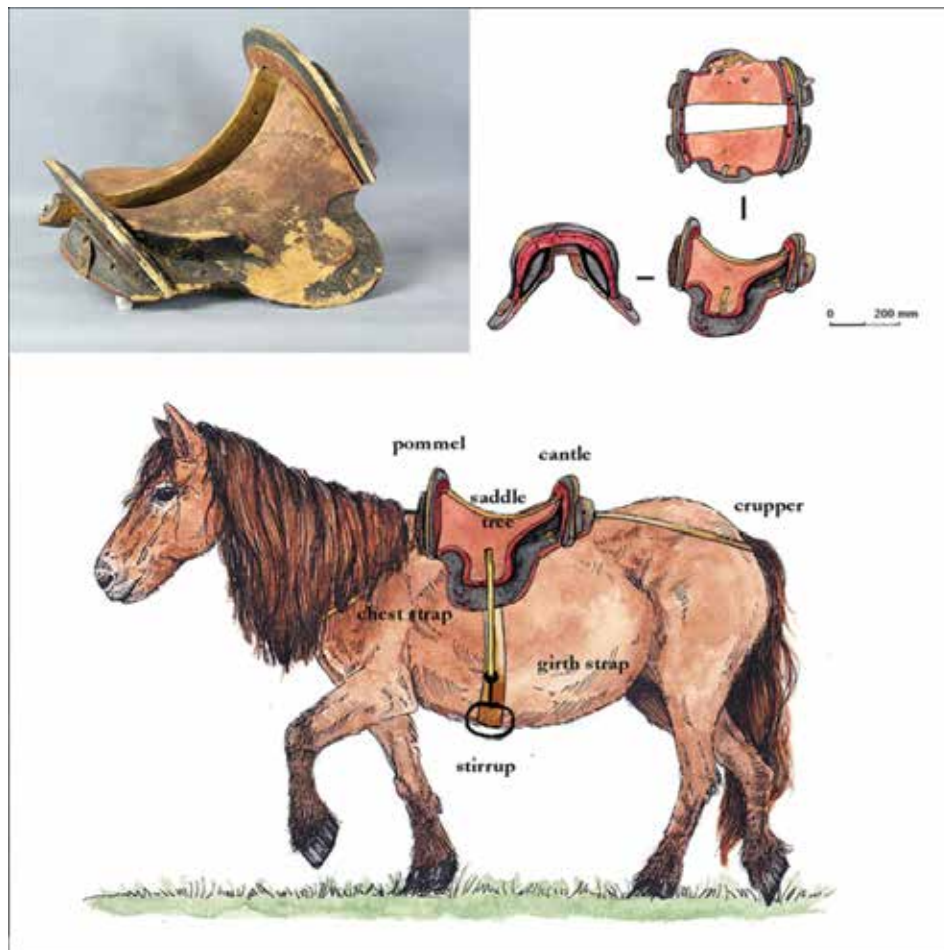


Fig. 5. Birch composite frame saddle from Urd Ulaan Uneet (top left) and artist's reconstruction (figure by P. Lopez Calle). *The origins of saddles and riding technology in East Asia*. (Early years of the fifth C)

### *The sabre in its final form*

Returning to László Simon's definition of the sabre: 'The sabre is a type of close-combat cutting weapon, with a greater or lesser curved blade, of which the back-edge is ground double-edged, the grip is slightly bent towards the longer cutting edge.'<sup>54</sup> This form of the single-edged cavalry weapon found its final

<sup>54</sup> László Simon. 'Adatok a szablyák kialakulásáról.' A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve

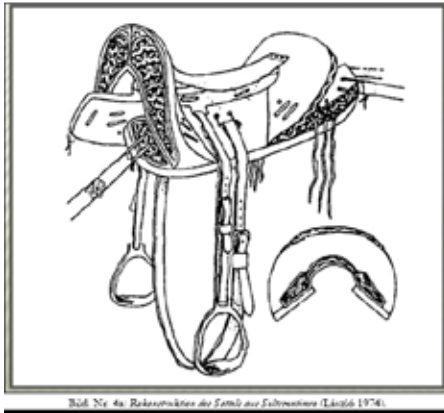


Fig. 6. László, Gy. *A Honfoglaló Magyar Nép Élete*. 1944. (Facsimile Edition, Múzsák Kiadó, 1988), p.346. Reconstruction of the saddle from Koroncó. Subsequent saddles were of this type across the steppe, in Hungary and Byzantium.



Fig. 7 Reconstruction of the Saddle from Soltszentimre, by Attila Pánczél Márta Lobmajer

form in the ninth century. Before the curved blade was invented, Khazanov noted: ‘In principle, blades with only one cutting edge are well-suited for hacking and slashing from horseback. The best use of this advantage became possible after the invention of metal stirrups, because the saber blow is most effective when a horseman is thrusting upon them.’<sup>55</sup>

In this period, the Western Türk Khaganate was disintegrating, and new powers rose in the Western Steppe, including Bulgaria (632-665) and Khazaria. All these peoples are recorded as using the sabre. Ziemann says of the Early Bulgars: ‘Kubrat, the ruler of the Unnogundurs (most likely a sub-group of the Bulgarians), expelled the Avars and concluded peace with the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610–641).’<sup>56</sup> The ‘Magna Bulgaria, or Old, Great Bulgaria, north of the Black Sea, split up after the death of Kubrat, who had five sons and with one

30.30/2, (Miskolc, 1993), p.177.

<sup>55</sup> Khazanov, A. ‘The Eurasian Steppe Nomads in Eurasian History,’ p.200.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Ziemann. ‘From the Eurasian Steppes to Christian Europe: Bulgarians and Magyars in the Early Middle Ages.’ In: Michael Gehler, Robert Rollinger. *Empires to be remembered: Ancient Worlds through Modern Times*. (Springer, Wiesbaden, 2022), p.159.

exception, they all took their people and moved elsewhere.<sup>57</sup> One likely founded Volga Bulgaria in the seventh century, although its origins are unclear. Danube Bulgaria, or the First Bulgarian Empire, would eventually control much of the southern Balkans and parts of Transylvania and the Great Hungarian Plain.

Tomáš Vlasatý reports a ‘Bulgarian Type’ sabre in the Czech Republic and mentions an early Bulgar sabre from the turn of the ninth to the tenth century at Stará Břeclav near the border with Slovakia and Austria and another at Nemilany, further north. Both these weapons are characterised by a curving blade but a straight tang and pommel, which separates them from the ‘Magyar/Hungarian’ or Khazar type sabres.<sup>58</sup>

The Bulgarian-type sabre appears to be a simpler version of the ‘true sabre’, with a slightly curved edge, reverse edge at the point and in some cases, the grip bent forward toward the cutting edge. The biggest difference between these sabres and later Khazar and Magyar ones is the attachment method of the hilt. The Bulgar sabres seem to have a pommel holding the tang, grip and guard together, while the later Khazar and Magyar sabres use a pin through the tang. Another difference is the guard, which in the others are bent towards the point, whereas the Bulgarian ones are also small but straight.<sup>59</sup>

Sir Richard Burton, the Victorian soldier, diplomat, and author, in his 1884 work *The Book of the Sword*, compared the usefulness in cavalry combat of the curved blade in comparison to the straight blade. As a soldier who used swords in combat in an age when they were widely used, his insights are valuable:

The straight Sword is hard to handle when the horse moves swiftly; and the broad steel blade loses its value by the length of the plane along which it has to travel. On the other hand, the bent blade collects all the momentum where the curve is greatest. Lastly, the ‘drawing cut’ would be easier to the mounted man and would most injure his enemy.

He adds:

It is this drawing motion, which added to the curve of the weapon and its oblique presentation, increases the trenchant power. The ‘Talwar’, or half-curved sabre of Hindustan, cuts as though it were four times as broad and only one-fourth the thickness of the straight blade. But the ‘drawing

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57 Ziemann. cit., p.159.

58 Tomáš Vlasatý. Bulgarian type sabre from Stará Břeclav. Project Forlog. Online.

59 Tomáš Vlasatý. Cit. 7/25.

cut' has the additional advantage of deepening the wound and cutting into the bone. Hence men of inferior strength and stature used their blades in a manner that not a little astonished and disgusted our soldiers in the Sind and Sikh campaigns.<sup>60</sup>

### *Khazar sabre, the earliest 'true sabre'?*

David Nicolle says the Khazars began adopting what he calls the 'true sabre', i.e., a single-edged, curved blade, with a sharp point, reverse edge and an angled grip, in the mid-eighth century.<sup>61</sup>

As the Khazar sabres are the earliest known form of the 'true sabre', it is reasonable to date the earliest occurrence of the true sabre to the mid-eighth century, in an area from the Altai Mountains in the East to the Volga River in the West and the Caucasus Mountains in the South. The sabre was clearly used as a cavalry weapon by various steppe peoples, some nomadic and others semi-nomadic.

Starting in the seventh century, the Khazars ruled a large territory from Kiev in the West to Volga Bulgaria in the North and the Caucasus mountains in the South. The empire or kingdom was a multi-ethnic state that began as a steppe state and became a settled, trading empire. Khazar finds are subsequently widespread in this region and later burials and urban centres provide numerous examples of true sabres. The Khazar material mirrors the development of the sabre elsewhere, such as the proto-sabres of the Saltovo archaeological site and the development of true sabres in find sites such as Severskij Donec or Krasna Gorka and others.<sup>62</sup>

Given that the Khazars were a powerful trading empire, it is likely that they spread the true sabre into the areas mentioned above, as well as further afield.

### *Sabres in the Rus*

One of the first states to adopt sabres (in the tenth century) was the Kievan Rus. From the tenth century, princes of Kiev, Oleg and Igor began to hire Pecheneg

60 Richard F. Burton. *The Book of the Sword*. (Dover Publications, 1987), p. 127 and 131.

61 Mikhail Zirohiv and David Nicolle. *The Khazars. A Judeo-Turkish Empire on the Steppes. 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.* (Osprey, Men-at Arms New York, 2019), p. 24.

62 Attila Türk. *A Magyar őstörténet és a szaltovói régészeti kultúrkör*. Ph. D thesis. University of Szeged, (2011), pp. 98-99.

mercenaries, who were equipped with bows and sabres, among other weapons.<sup>63</sup>

The Rus military was organised in the following way: There was the prince, supported by a personal retinue, or *druzhina*; hired mercenaries and then common people who were likely deployed to do menial labour, such as digging ditches or cutting down trees. Dmytryshyn says before the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, many of the *druzhina* members were Scandinavians, while after 1054, they were more likely to be Slavs and Pechenegs.<sup>64</sup>

### *Magyars and the sabre*

The Magyars entered the Carpathian Basin in a migration in the ninth century and were armed in a similar fashion to other steppe peoples, they appeared as horsemen with sabres; high saddles; stirrups; composite bows and lances. Some wore helmets and armour, while others wore more rudimentary body protection. Their main close-in weapon was the sabre.<sup>65</sup>

The best-known Magyar-type sabre from this period is the Vienna sabre, known as 'The Sabre of Charlemagne' or 'Attila's Sword.' Neither is correct, the weapon has all the hallmarks of a ninth or tenth century Magyar or Khazar sabre.

This sabre is unique in that it has probably never been buried and therefore has been the focus of much study and speculation. Certain scholars have doubted its Hungarian provenance, including such early ones as Christoph Gottlieb von Murr, who suggested in 1801 that it could have been sent to Charlemagne (r. 768-814) by the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (r.763-809).<sup>66</sup> While the two did send embassies to one another, there is no mention of a sabre and the Arabs did not use sabres, but straight swords.

These Magyar sabres are better documented than other ninth and tenth century sabres for the simple reason that most of them are found in graves in Hungary, both on its present territory and that of the Historical Hungary, as opposed to in different countries and territories, each with different approaches to archaeology.

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63 Basil Dmytryshyn. *A History of Russia*. (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1977), pp. 62-6

64 Dmytryshyn, cit., p.64.

65 Zsolt Petkes and Balázs Sudár. *Honfoglalók fegyverben. M.Ő. 3*. Helikon Kiadó Budapest, 2015, pp. 68-142.

66 Christoph Gottlieb von Murr, *Beschreibung der ehemals zu Aachen aufbewahrten drey kaiserlichen Krönungs-Zierden* (1801), p.22.



Fig. 8. This sabre is kept in Vienna. Unfortunately, the museum does not allow downloads, so this photo was obtained from: *Világunk* Blog, Juhász Balázs -Juhász-Kiss Regina, August 2020 in Vienna. (Online). Der “Säbel Karls des Großen” (Sabre of Charlemagne) Kaiserliche Schatzkammer, (Treasury Kunsthistorische Museum, Hofburg, Wien).

Whatever the provenance of ‘Attila’s’ or ‘Charlemagne’s Sabre’, it has very close correspondences with the many sabres found in Hungary. Márk Haramza, in his doctoral thesis, considering all previous information, reported the existence of some 147 sabre finds from the tenth century. These came from confirmed grave finds (71), verifiable stray finds (36), uncertain data (28), finds dated to the tenth century, but demonstrably from different periods.

Some remarkable examples of sabres have emerged from this period, perhaps best demonstrated by the Geszteréd ‘Golden’ Sabre. Lajos Kiss, writing in the National Museum’s archaeological journal in 1938 said: ‘The Geszteréd find is the greatest and most excellent find in the country.’ He wrote that it only stood comparison with the Vienna Sabre.<sup>67</sup> The sabre was found near the village of Geszteréd, in Szabolcs County in northeastern Hungary, on May 4, 1927, by János Balázs, a swineherd, who noticed his pigs had dug up sparkling materials. This was reported to the museum in Nyíregyháza, where the abovementioned Lajos Kiss, the curator, investigated the finds. The grave turned out to be that of a high-ranking male, complete with typical accoutrements.<sup>68</sup> The sabre remains the richest find of its type in Hungary.<sup>69</sup>

67 Lajos Kiss. *A Geszterédi honfoglaláskori sírlelet*. Volume 24 of *Archaeologia Hungarica*, ISSN 0066-5916. (Budapest, Csaba and Co., 1938), p.9.

68 Kiss. cit. Pp. 11-16.

69 Ádám Bíró. ‘Helyzetkép a honfoglalás kori magyar szabalyák kutatásáról. Megjegyzések a

At a conference held in the village in question, Ádám Bíró said of the archaeological material, naturally including sabres:

The available weapons find material is unique in Eurasia for the period: The vast amount and the outstanding quality (in other words coming from mostly from well-documented digs, having undergone detailed examination and comparatively well dateable) finds – and here we are not only talking about sabres – would predestine the Hungarian – research to a leading role in the international weaponry research of the early Middle Ages.<sup>70</sup>

Other examples of such richly decorated sabres have been found in: Rakamaz, Tarcsl, the region of Tiszafüred, Tiszasüly, three in the Karos cemeteries, and outside the present borders of Hungary: Arad (Romania), Gnadendorf (Austria) and the region around Kosice (Slovakia).<sup>71</sup>



Following the rapid Christianisation of the Hungarian Kingdom by Grand Duke Geza and King Stephen I (Saint Stephen) in the period circa 970-1040, the country's nobles and upper classes began to use Western European swords and armour and fought as knights, and the old Magyar type of sabre disappears from the archaeological record. This was not the end of the sabre in the Kingdom of Hungary, however.

Fig. 9 reconstruction of the Gesteréd golden saber from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Hungarian National Museum.

geszterédi szablya jelentősége kapcsán.' (IN: Conference at Geszteréd, The Historical Significance of the Golden Sabre of Geszteréd. Geszterédi Aranyszablya Társaság, 2019 ) p. 64

70 Bíró. cit. p. 64

71 Bíró, cit. p.73.

*Sabres in Hungary and the Steppe between 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

Sabres of a different type have been found from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries, in regions associated with nomadic peoples like the Pechenegs and Cumans who were brought into the kingdom and acted as military auxiliaries, using sabres, composite bows and other 'Eastern' materials. These sabres are longer, wider and have more curved blades than the ninth and tenth century Hungarian weapons. An example of such larger sabres could be the village of Kana as well as Sárbogárd–Tinód. These sabres have been linked to the Pechenegs as they are too early for the arrival of the Cumans.<sup>72</sup> Examples of Cuman sabres and other weapons, such as maces, have also been found.<sup>73</sup>

Other peoples of the kingdom to use light cavalry tactics, which included the sabre, were the Jász or Iazyges, an Iranian people, and the Székely, a Hungarian-speaking people. The Székely continued using light cavalry tactics, composite bows and sabres.<sup>74</sup> Sófalvi says the reason they did this is their role as border guards in the south-east corner of the Hungarian kingdom and later the Transylvanian Principality. He believes that the need to cross the Carpathian Mountains while chasing or counter-attacking Cumans, Mongols of the Golden Horde, Ottoman Turks and Crimean Tatars (as Ottoman vassals) led to their keeping their light cavalry style of warfare.<sup>75</sup> The sabres reflect developments on the steppe.

*Curved swords in the Islamic World*

Although many have associated curved blades with the world of Islam and the Middle East, and these weapons are found in the region in occasional mentions in the eighth century, only in the 11th do the Seljuk Turks introduce them in larger numbers. Iran is considered the first Muslim region to have curved blades, but even there they do not become widespread as they are on the steppe, Hungary

72 Hatházi Gábor – Pálóczi Horváth András. 'Besenyő és kun régészeti emlékek Magyarországon'. In: *Török nyelvű népek a középkori Magyar Királyságban*. (Altaistics Department, Szeged University, 2016), pp. 35-116.

73 Hatházi – Pálóczi Horváth. Cit-

74 László Szabó. 'A jászok hazánkban.' In: *Magyarrá lett keleti népek*. Ed. Szombathy Viktor, László Gyula. (Panoráma, Budapest, 1988), pp. 176-179.

75 András Sófalvi. 'A székelység szerepe a középkori és a fejedelemség kori határvédelemben.' Erdélyi Múzeum. LXXIV Kötet 2012. 3. Füzet. (Erdélyi Múzeum, 2012, Kolozsvár), p. 4.

and the Rus. It does not help that the native names of the Arabs, Persians and the Turks are all generic words for ‘sword.’ Thus, the Arabic *sayf*, the Persian ‘shamshir’ and the Turkic kilich/kilij are all generic words for ‘sword.’

Nicole says: ‘Quite when curved sabres were adopted by Muslim horseman remains uncertain. It remained more characteristic of Turkish troops than their Persian, Kurdish or Arab comrades for several centuries.’<sup>76</sup>

Moshtagh Khorasani, adds: ‘Curved swords were not native to the Middle East. Lebedynsky rightfully challenges the conventional association of the curved sword with the Middle East. He contends that the birthplace of this weapon is not this region.’<sup>77</sup>

He continues: ‘It is noteworthy that straight swords continued to be prevalent until the 14th and 15th centuries was only after this period that curved swords began to emerge in significant quantities.’<sup>78</sup>

Alexander adds: ‘During the time of the Prophet the Arabs used swords, not sabers. This is confirmed by both textual evidence and material survivals’.<sup>79</sup>

While some curved swords (proto sabres or early sabres) are found in Iran and the Middle East in the Abbasid Period (750-1258) these appear to be limited to Turkic soldiers and found mainly in the Khorasan region of Iran. This is perhaps not surprising, as Iran is adjacent to the steppe region.<sup>80</sup>

Many propose that the curved sword did not appear suddenly but rather developed gradually over time. This theory suggests that the curvature of Persian swords became more pronounced as centuries passed. Allan and Gilmour have noted this continuum in the development of Persian swords. They distinguish between the Saber, which has a slight curve, and the shamshir, which boasts a more pronounced curve.<sup>81</sup>

It is interesting to note that while curved swords were found in the Islamic

76 David Nicolle. *Saracen Farris 1150=1250 AD*. (Osprey Publishing, London, 1994), p.32 and p.45.

77 Moshtagh Khorasani, M., “The Evolution of Curved Swords: A Comparative Study of China and Iran” *Parseh J Archaeol Stud.*, 9(31), (Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, Tehran, 2025), p. 42.

78 Moshtagh. Cit. pp. 43-44.

79 David Alexander. ‘Swords and Sabers during the Early Islamic Period.’ *Gladius XXI*, (Center for Humana and Social Studies, Madrid, 2001), p. 193.

80 Moshtagh Khorasani. Cit., p.42.

81 Moshtagh Khorasani .Cit. p.44.

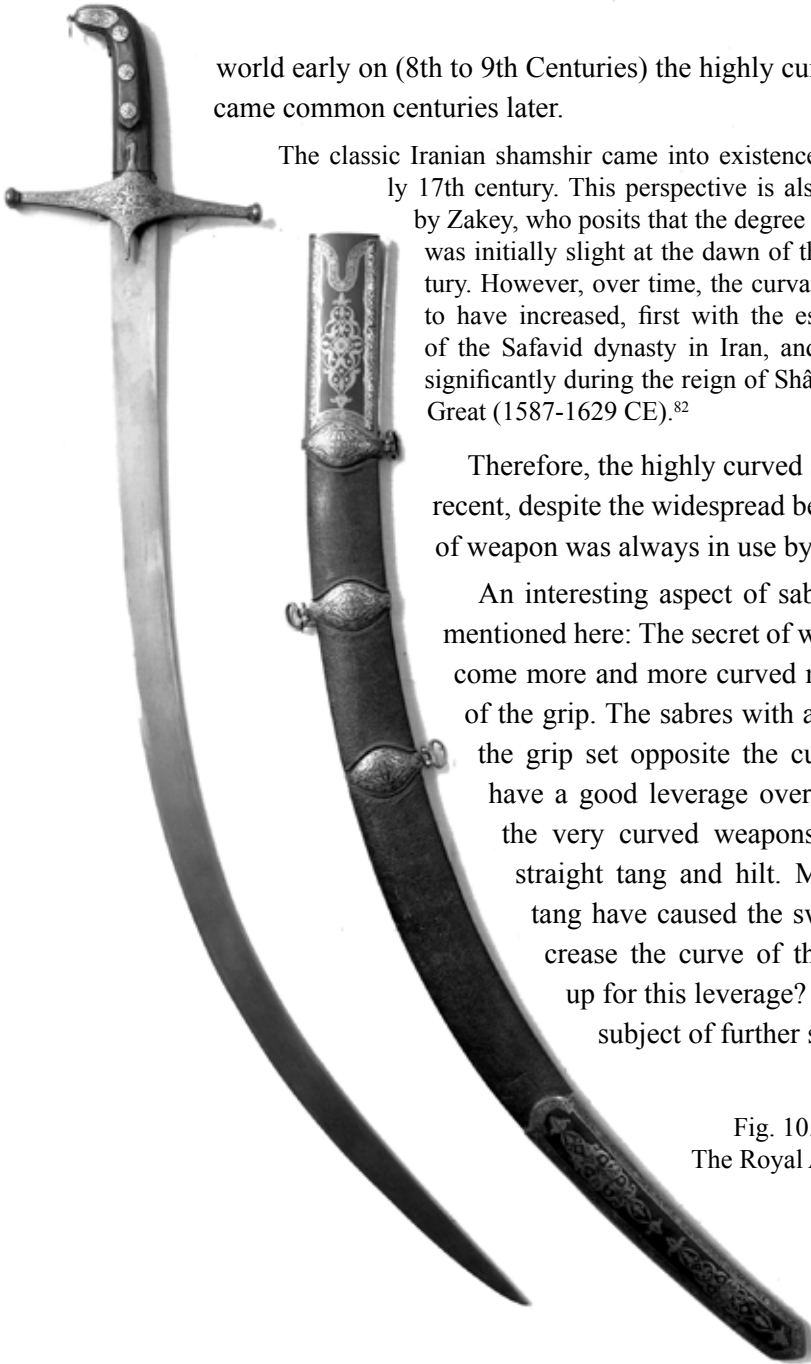
world early on (8th to 9th Centuries) the highly curved weapons became common centuries later.

The classic Iranian shamshir came into existence in the early 17th century. This perspective is also supported by Zakey, who posits that the degree of curvature was initially slight at the dawn of the 15th century. However, over time, the curvature appears to have increased, first with the establishment of the Safavid dynasty in Iran, and then more significantly during the reign of Shâh Abbâs the Great (1587-1629 CE).<sup>82</sup>

Therefore, the highly curved sabre is relatively recent, despite the widespread belief that this type of weapon was always in use by Muslim armies.

An interesting aspect of sabre design can be mentioned here: The secret of why the blades become more and more curved might lie in angle of the grip. The sabres with a lesser curve and the grip set opposite the curve of the blade have a good leverage over the blade, while the very curved weapons tend to have a straight tang and hilt. Might the straight tang have caused the swordsmiths to increase the curve of the blade to make up for this leverage? This could be the subject of further study.

Fig. 10. Syrian Shamshir.  
The Royal Armoury, Sweden.



<sup>82</sup> Moshtagh Khorasani. cit.

### *Paramerion*

An interesting addition to the history of curved swords would be the Byzantine *paramerion*, translated as meaning: ‘beside the thigh’ a reference to the way the sword was suspended, usually from two points, like a sabre. To make the parallel complete, it was also single-edged. It is thought that these weapons were suspended from a belt, much like the steppe sabres, while the main sword of the Medieval Romans, the *spathion* was double-edged and usually hung from a baldric.<sup>83</sup> Haldon says the *paramerion* ‘seems to be the sabre’.<sup>84</sup> Salmon, quoting the tenth century military treatise, *Sylloge Tacticorum*, states: ‘*They should indeed be girded with parameria, namely single-edged swords, which measure four spans including the hilt* (*Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38, 5).<sup>5</sup> “Paramerion” then clearly designated a single-edged sword, or more precisely a category of swords of the Middle Byzantine Period<sup>85</sup>

While scholars are not certain that the Byzantine weapon was indeed the sabre, it would not be surprising given their long-standing contacts with the steppe peoples, whom they both influenced and who influenced them in return.

### *Mongols*

With the sudden expansion of the Mongol Empire (1206-1294) sabres spread to China and, while they were already in widespread use on the Eurasian steppe, they influenced non-steppe civilisations, but only gradually. According to Moshtagh Khorasani, the Chinese kept the ‘straight backed knife’ for many centuries, ‘losing popularity only after the end of the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty in 1368 CE.’<sup>86</sup>

There is very little concrete material on the Mongol sabre. Their strategy, operations and tactics have been studied, as has their armour, bows and much else,

83 Timothy Dawson, *Byzantine Infantryman. Eastern Roman Empire, c.900-1204*. (Osprey, Oxford, 2007), p. 25.

84 John F. Haldon. ‘Some Aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries.’ *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*. (Cambridge University Press, Volume 1, 1975), p. 31.

85 Thomas Salmon. ‘New Perspectives on the Byzantine “paramerion”’. *Acta Militaria Mediaevalia XVI*. (Kraków–Sanok–Wrocław 2020), p. 9.

86 Moshtagh. Khorasani. Cit., p.35.

but very little has been written about their sabres specifically. What is known is known from archaeology. One example would be three sabres found in modern Kazakhstan:

It seems that the sabres were forged by masters in Southern Siberia and were then brought to Northern and Central Kazakhstan by the Chingizid troops. The small number of long-bladed weapons of the 13th – 14th Centuries found on the territory of Kazakhstan determines high scientific value of the considered sabres.<sup>87</sup>

Other, later depictions of Mongols are found in Hungary, such as the fourteenth century *Chronicum Pictum*, or Illustrated Chronicle, showing a Mongol soldier with a sabre.<sup>88</sup>

The thirteenth century Mongol invasions and the rise of the Il-Khans (1256 to 1394) increased the number of sabres in Iran, although the famous highly-curved Persian sabre developed later.<sup>89</sup> It seems that the Mongol-influenced sabres spread in areas directly conquered by the Mongols, including China, Russia and Iran.

In summary, it can be said that the Mongols spread sabres to China, Iran and later, through Mongol dynasties, to India, but these did not spread very fast and did not spread to areas in Europe except Russia and Hungary, both of which were already familiar with them, as were the Persians.



Fig. 11. Bobrov L. A., Kushkumbaev A. K., Kairmagambetov A. M., Ismailov D. 'Three Sabres of the Mongol Empire Times from the Territory of Kazakhstan, p.248.

87 Bobrov L. A., Kushkumbaev A. K., Kairmagambetov A. M., Ismailov D. 'Three Sabres of the Mongol Empire Times from the Territory of Kazakhstan.' *Vestnik NSU. Series: History and Philology*, 2020, vol. 19, no. 7: Archaeology and Ethnography, p. 245–256. (In Russ), p. 246.

88 *Chronicon Pictum*. [Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Cod. Lat. 404.](#)

89 Bobrov., Kushkumbaev et al, cit. p. 48.

### *Sabres in India*

Empires often stretched into northern India, and Persia was no different. From the time of Darius the Great (522-486 B.C.) to Arab invasions in the sixth century A.D. Later, Turkic conquerors established a Muslim state in the thirteenth century and Persian cultural influence and cultural exchange continued. The Persian Safavid Empire (1501-1736) continued this trend, notably in fighting arts and weaponry.<sup>90</sup>

While India has a plethora of indigenous weapons types, the most widespread of the sabre-derived weapons is the *talwar* thought to be influenced by the Persian shamshir and became widespread during the time of the Mughal Empire. (1526–1857). As regards the use of the *talwar*, the authors state:

Indians threw the whole force of their body into the blow. The sword techniques were executed with a bent elbow holding the sword and the arm was never completely straightened. The hand holding the stick or the saber is kept tightly but at the same time allowing the weapon to move freely while transmitting the power to the weapon in hand. The technique resulted in a types of strike known as “draw cut” or a “slicing cut”.<sup>91</sup>

It might be interesting to note that Hungarian hussars used a similar cut which was quite deadly, known simply as a *huszárvágás* or ‘hussar cut’, which also used on a very loose wrist and a whipping motion, and relied on the angled grip for its success.<sup>92</sup>

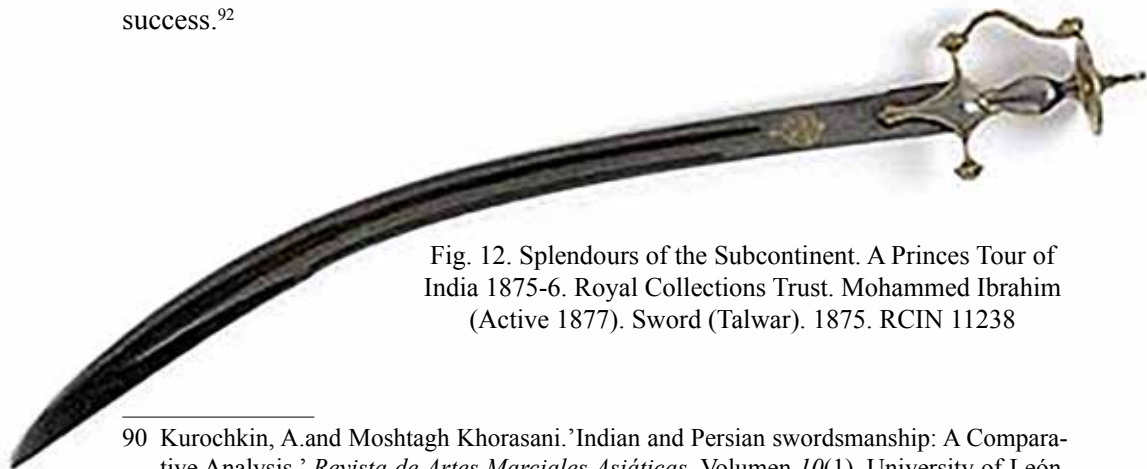


Fig. 12. Splendours of the Subcontinent. A Princes Tour of India 1875-6. Royal Collections Trust. Mohammed Ibrahim (Active 1877). Sword (Talwar). 1875. RCIN 11238

<sup>90</sup> Kurochkin, A. and Moshtagh Khorasani. 'Indian and Persian swordsmanship: A Comparative Analysis.' *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas*, Volumen 10(1). University of León. (2015). pp. 42-67.

<sup>91</sup> Cit.

<sup>92</sup> Conversation with author's father, former Royal Hungarian Army tank lieutenant, trained in sabre by Hungarian hussars. (Germiston, South Africa, c.1999.)

### *Ottoman Empire and the sabre*

First the Seljuk Empire (1037-1194), then the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) spread the sabre and other curved swords throughout the Middle East, Anatolia, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Central Europe, as well North Africa.<sup>93</sup>

For the Byzantines, the Balkan peoples and Hungary, a looming threat was the expansion of the highly-organised (by the standards of the time) and militarily effective and innovative, Ottoman Empire.



Fig. 13 From top to bottom: \*Execution sword or parade sword; \*Late, short form of the kilij; \*Archaic, standard form of the kilij; \*European-made saber-kilij hybrid. Imperial Armoury at Topkapi, Istanbul

The Turkish empire used three main cavalry forces, all equipped with sabres of various curvatures, namely: The *akindjis*, usually equipped with the Turkish sabre, or *kiliç*, the *sipahis*, heavier, armoured cavalry equipped with either the sabre or *şimşir*, which refers to the heavily curved Iranian sword. Some used the *palyoş* as short sabre that could be double edged and the famous *yatağan* a short, forward-curving sword used by infantry, notably the Janissary Corps.<sup>94</sup>

93 Selcuk Aksin Somel. *The A to Z of the Ottoman Empire*. (Scarecrow Press, Plymouth, 2003), pp.xvi-lxx. By 'Eastern Europe, the author refers to geographical East Europe, namely, Moldova, the Black Sea region, Crimea and the Caucasus.

94 David Nicolle, *Armies of the Ottoman Turks, 1300-1774*. (Osprey Military, Oxford, 1983), p.20.

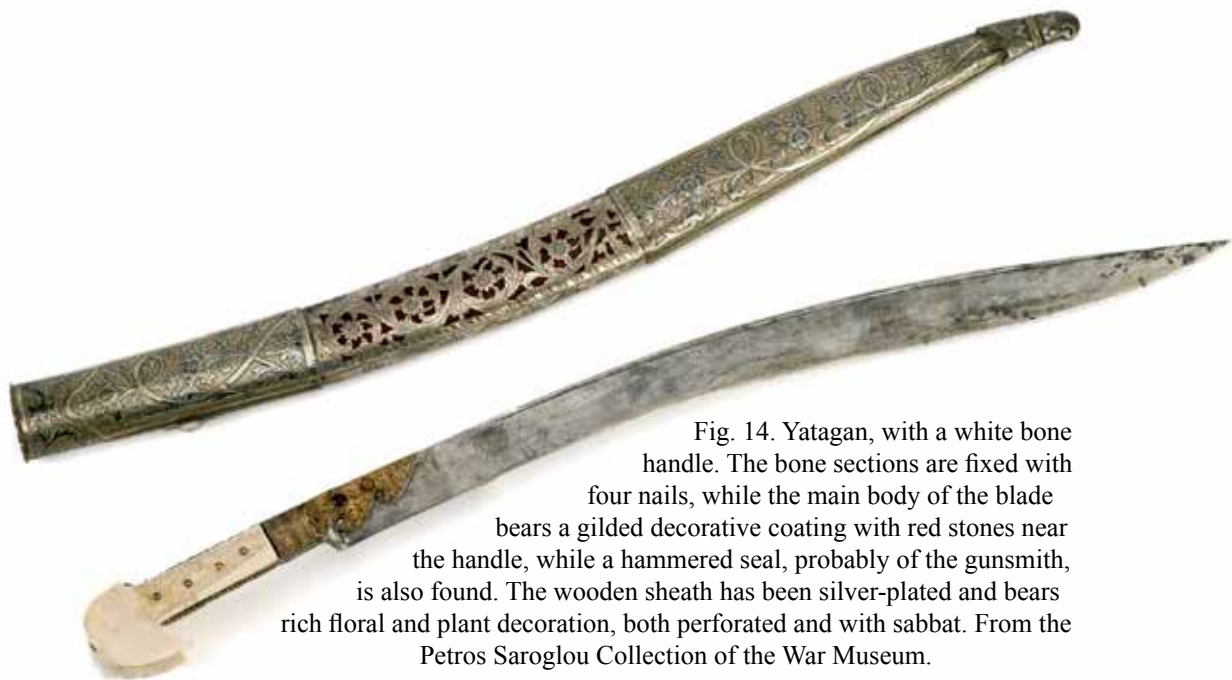


Fig. 14. Yatagan, with a white bone handle. The bone sections are fixed with four nails, while the main body of the blade bears a gilded decorative coating with red stones near the handle, while a hammered seal, probably of the gunsmith, is also found. The wooden sheath has been silver-plated and bears rich floral and plant decoration, both perforated and with sabbat. From the Petros Saroglou Collection of the War Museum.

Schmitt and Kiprovskaja have argued, that a key element in the Ottoman military in this period were the *akıncıs*, light cavalry units originating from *Türkmen* warriors. They were infamous for their plunder, burning and slave-raiding:

Focusing on the raiders and their plundering activities, we will assert that the *akıncıs* played a crucial role in the early Ottoman slave economy, as slave hunting was arguably the main economic driving force behind the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans in the late Middle Ages.<sup>95</sup>

János B. Szabó has pointed out, many peoples fleeing the Balkans found employment as mercenaries and became known as 'stradiots'. Many were Greeks or Albanians, and their fighting style mirrored that of the *akıncıs* and *sipahis*. He writes that it is likely that:

<sup>95</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt and Mariya Kiprovskaja. 'Ottoman Raiders (*Akıncıs*) as a Driving Force of Early Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and the Slavery-Based Economy.' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 65. (Brill, Leiden, 2022), pp. 504, 505.

As a result of the Ottoman conquest the military culture of the various emigrating Balkan groups showed many similar aspects with one another. This counted as a novelty in Western Europe and appeared to be greatly exotic.<sup>96</sup>

Pappas says of their weapons: ‘The majority of sources indicate that they were armed with sabres, or one-edged swords.’<sup>97</sup>

### *Rise of the hussars: the sabre spreads*

In response to the Turkish expansion of the Balkans, King Matthias I of Hungary raised a disciplined force of hussars from largely Balkan soldiers.

He wrote to Bishop Gabriel of Verona in Rome: ‘The ranks of the armed men among us are divided into three orders, the first of which is made up of armigeri ... The second order is the light cavalry, which we call hussars.’ (‘Armigeri’ were the heavily armoured knights.)<sup>98</sup> This is the first mention of the hussars as a separate unit of cavalry. Matthias wrote they *were equitum levis armature, quos hussarones appellamus.*<sup>99</sup> Thus armoured, but lightly.

The early hussars rode in the ‘Eastern’ style (as described above) and are described as having helmets, mail shirts, sabres, shields and a light lance.<sup>100</sup> In addition, the csákány (or horseman’s pick) or war hammers and maces were also used.

In the early sixteenth century, the traditional light cavalry archers disappeared, while the hussars continued to flourish among the Hungarian and Croatian cavalry. These cavalry adapted to the use of firearms (while keeping the old lances, sabres etc.)<sup>101</sup> A heavier, armoured version would appear in Poland. At this time, the sabre tended to become wider and heavier, with a broader reverse edge.<sup>102</sup>

96 János B. Szabó. *A középkor magyar könnyűlovassága. X-XVI. század.* (Attraktor, Budapest, 2017), 193. (Author translation.)

97 Nicholas C.J. Pappas. ‘Stradioti: Balkan mercenaries in fifteenth and sixteenth Century Italy’, (Sam Houston State University, 2008), Introduction.

98 Vilmos Fraknói. *Mátyás király Levelei. Második kötet. 1480-0490* (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1895), p. 107.

99 Fraknói.cit.

100 Attila Zarnóczki. ‘Fegyverzet, katonai felszerelés, hadsereg Magyarországon Hunyadi Mátyás korában.’ *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 103. évf. 1. sz. (Budapest, 1990). pp.49-50.

101 B. Szabó.cit. pp. 248-257.

102 Hidán Csaba. *Emlékezzünk Régiokről IX. - Csaták Villáma, A Szablya* 4:09-4:20.



Fig. 15 King Stefan Batory's Hungarian sabre, known as the *Batorówka*. (1576-1586).  
Photo: Janet Szabó, Polish Army Museum, Warsaw. (2025).

### *The sabre in Poland*

The Poles were familiar with the sabre, through centuries of warfare against the Russians, Mongols, and Tatar khanates.

When Stefan Batory, Duke of Transylvania, was elected Polish king, the sabre became popular. Batory used the experiences of Transylvania and of Hungary to reorganise the Polish cavalry, which were organised into 'hussar' and 'cossack' units, of which 85 per cent were hussars. The Poles adopted Batory's sabre as the *batórowka* and the Polish hussars evolved into the heavy, winged *husaria*, winning many famous battles, the best-known at Vienna in 1683.<sup>103</sup>

### *Summary*

The sabre has a very long history indeed. Starting as a single-edged sword likely adopted from China in the Eastern Steppes in the fifth century, to the single-edged sword with the reverse edge at the point in the seventh, to the forward-bent grip and eventual curved blade in the eighth century. Following the rise and fall of the Turkic Khaganates, the Avar Empire and the Khazars, and followed by the vast Mongol Empire, the sabre spread from Manchuria to Hungary. After the end of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) a version known as *peidao* in China and variations of it became widespread there. Persian swords became more

103 Jan Ostrowski with Wojciech Bochnak. 'Polish Sabres: Their Origins and Evolution.' In: *Art. Arms and Armour: An international anthology. Vol I.* (Acqafresca, (Chiasso, Switzerland.1979-80), p. p. 221.

curved following the Mongol Empire's conquest and the curved sword spread to the world of Islam as the *sayf* or the *shamshir*. A version spread to India as the *talwar*. The sabre and other curved swords spread further during the Ottoman invasions of Byzantium, the Balkans, Hungary and regional powers. In this context the sabre became widespread in Poland. Following the Hungarian War of Independence (1703-17011), Hungarian and other émigrés took the sabre to all parts of Europe and thence to North America. The widespread use of sabres in the nineteenth century completes a history of 1,500 years of development of this versatile weapon.

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# Dall'usbergo all'armatura.

## Note sull'evoluzione degli armamenti difensivi medievali

by MARCO MERLO

**ABSTRACT:** The evolution of armor in Western Europe during the Middle Ages is still a little-known topic. Although this process occurred at different times depending on the geographical area, the article identifies three key moments that affected all of Europe: a) From early medieval armor to the hauberks of the 11th century and the standardization of armaments, also thanks to the Norman invasions; b) The years between the 13th and 14th centuries, with the introduction of new helmets and the first protections made of boiled leather and metal elements; c) The birth of metal plate armor.

Through this periodization, the written, material, and iconographic sources can be better interpreted.

**KEYWORD:** HAUBERK, SHIELDS, HELMETS, BRIGANTINE, PLATE ARMOR.

### L'USBERGO E LE PROTEZIONI AD ANELLI DI FERRO

**L**a storia dell'armatura è antica quasi quanto la guerra stessa, ma i secoli tra il Basso Medioevo e l'inizio dell'Età Moderna furono cruciali per l'evoluzione degli armamenti difensivi. In queste poche pagine non si vuole delineare con precisione e in modo esauriente ogni fase dello sviluppo delle armature, ma illustrare alcuni dei passaggi salienti di questa storia, spesso ignorati o poco noti.

In questi secoli l'evoluzione degli armamenti difensivi è strettamente legata alle dinamiche sociali, politiche ed economiche delle società in cui furono prodotti. Spesso, in una prospettiva evolucionista, si è tentato di tracciare una linea diretta tra l'armamento del cavaliere basso medievale e quello dei catafratti per-

siani o delle popolazioni delle steppe<sup>1</sup>, d'altro canto, è stata ipotizzata una diretta dipendenza dell'armamento bizantino degli anni precedenti al Mille, nei confronti delle armature occidentali del XII e XIII secolo, così come alcuni armamenti del tardo Medioevo sono stati visti in continuità con gli armenti greci del VI-V secolo a.C.<sup>2</sup>, e da questi presupposti vederne l'evoluzione, fino all'armatura tardo cinquecentesca e al suo disuso all'inizio del Seicento, causato da una pretesa, ma mai dimostrata, supremazia dell'arma da fuoco. Chiaramente così non fu, e se ci furono delle forti similitudini tra armamenti di epoche e luoghi lontani tra loro, queste furono dovute a tutto un insieme di ragioni di differente natura, che portarono quasi casualmente a un medesimo risultato, quantomeno in apparenza. Tuttavia, una reale omologazione degli armamenti europei verso elementi difensivi comuni iniziò a concretizzarsi intorno agli anni Sessanta del Mille, quasi sicuramente veicolati dalle invasioni normanne. A quest'epoca esistevano ancora elementi propri di alcune etnie, influenzati da usi locali e ragioni climatiche, talvolta declinazioni locali di modelli Alto Medievali, ma si trattava «più di tipi e si configurano quasi solo nell'eventuale componente decorativa, che assume così il carattere di versione in lingua»<sup>3</sup>. Fu verso la fine dell'XI secolo che si inizia a riscontrare quella che può essere definita una *koiné* di armamenti<sup>4</sup>, un'omologazione tecnico-formale dei modelli, ma anche delle simbologie a essi legate, diffusa e condivisa in tutto il continente.

Se nell'Alto Medioevo erano in uso una pluralità di difese per il corpo, come le armature a scaglie, apprezzate nel mondo franco, o a lamelle, molto usate dai Longobardi, poco dopo la metà del Mille l'usbergo ad anelli di maglia di ferro divenne la principale protezione per il corpo. Chiaramente l'introduzione e la diffusione di un nuovo armamento non significa il repentino abbandono di quelli più

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- 1 Per una sintesi storiografica: Franco CARDINI, *Quella antica festa crudele. Guerra e cultura della guerra dal Medioevo alla Rivoluzione francese*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1982, pp. 10-12; Franco CARDINI, *Alle radici della cavalleria medievale*, Firenze, La nuova Italia, 1982.
  - 2 SCALINI, Mario, *Armi e armature*, in Enrico CASTELNUOVO, Giuseppe SERGI (cur.), *Arti e storia nel Medioevo. Del costruire: tecniche, artisti, artigiani, committenti*, vol. II, Torino, Einaudi, 2006, pp. 446, 449.
  - 3 Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, Edoardo T. COELHO, *Armi bianche italiane*, Milano, Bramante, 1975, p. 12.
  - 4 Mario SCALINI, *Novità e tradizione nell'armamento bassomedievale toscano*, in Franco CARDINI, Marco TANGHERONI (ed.), *Guerra e guerrieri nella Toscana Medievale*, Firenze, EDIFIR, 1990, p. 157.



Beato de Liébana, *Commentaria in Apocalypsin* *Commentaria in Apocalypsin*, copia precedente al 1072. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Lat 8878, c. 193r. Si osservano gli scudi a mandorla capovolti, segno che erano sostenuti solo con la maniglia interna all'umbone.

vecchi, anzi molti modelli furono usati ancora per generazioni, in una coesistenza di armamenti moderni e più antichi qualora fossero ancora funzionali.

Dall'XI al XII secolo, l'usbergo in ferro poteva avere fino a diecimila anelli che si estendevano fin sotto il polpaccio, con una spaccatura al cavallo che permetteva di cavalcare e muovere le gambe con disinvoltura. Poteva includere guanti, cappuccio e bavero per una protezione completa. Generalmente, come si osserva nell'arazzo di Bayeux - dove peraltro compare ancora qualche usbergo in scaglie di cuoio - sul fianco sinistro si trovava un'apertura per far uscire il fornimento della spada con il fodero sotto l'usbergo, per evitare che cinturoni e lacci esterni potessero intralciare i movimenti. Le maniche erano lunghe fino al polso e, nel Millecento, potevano includere guanti di maglia che, se sfilati, rimanevano appesi al polso. Le più complete possedevano un cappuccio e, in molti casi, un



Dettaglio dell’Arazzo di Bayeux (Bayeux, Musée de la Tapisserie). Si osservano gli usberghi, alcuni ancora in cuoio, gli elmi con nasale, ma soprattutto l’interno degli scudi.

bavero che, se slacciato, pendeva sul petto, ma allacciato circondava la parte bassa del viso, coprendo bocca e mascella.

Tra la seconda metà dell’XI secolo e la prima del XII si assiste anche all’omologazione degli scudi. Nell’Alto Medioevo era diffuso il voluminoso scudo tondo, impugnato tramite la maniglia interna all’umbone, che gravava significativamente sul polso del combattente. Alla metà del Mille iniziò a diffondersi lo scudo a mandorla, ma da alcune fonti iconografiche, come nella copia dei commentari dell’*Apocalisse* di Beatus de Liébana<sup>5</sup>, intuimmo che era ancora sostenuto tramite la maniglia dell’umbone; invece l’arazzo di Bayeux testimonia l’introduzione di uno scudo a mandorla al cui interno è fissata una maniglia, formata da due corregge intrecciate, e un’imbracciatura, che fissa lo scudo all’avambraccio, in modo tale che il peso dell’oggetto fosse ben distribuito su tutto il braccio. A questi due elementi si aggiunse una lunga correggia che serviva per portarlo a tracolla. In questo modo, passando intorno al collo, il peso dello scudo era ulteriormente alleggerito e, in caso fosse scivolato dal braccio, sarebbe rimasto appeso sul fianco e non sarebbe andato perso. Inoltre, poteva essere portato sulla schiena, continuando a proteggere il cavaliere. Questo nuovo modo di portare lo scudo divenne

<sup>5</sup> Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Lat 8878, c. 193r.



Bassorilievi di Porta Romana, Milano, Castello Sforzesco, Museo d'arte antica. Il primo cavaliere porta un usbergo a maglie di ferro, il secondo ancora a scaglie, probabilmente di cuoio. Gli scudi sono ancora voluminosi modelli a mandorla avvolgenti e calzano in testa elmi conici con nasale.

talmente diffuso, e quindi iconico, da divenire una figura letteraria per indicare i cavalieri armati pronti per lo scontro, come a titolo di esempio nella celebre *Chanson de Roland* dove, prima del duello tra Pinabello e Teodorico, i due cavalieri sono presentati pronti al combattimento con la frase «appendendo al collo lo scudo»<sup>6</sup>, oppure nel *Lancillotto* di Chrétien de Troyes in cui, per indicare Lancillotto completamente armato, si dice «lo scudo portava al collo»<sup>7</sup>. Questa tipologia di scudo rimase per tutto il XII secolo il principale modello per la cavalleria.

A quest'epoca gli scudi erano anche l'unico elemento difensivo a ospitare una vera decorazione: intorno alla fine del Mille erano dipinti con colori apotropaici e possedevano elementi di rinforzo come doghe metalliche fissate con borchie, fasciature e bendature in cuoio o tessuto. Questi elementi strutturali definirono ben presto un singolo combattente o la sua famiglia, dando origine all'araldica.

Fino alla seconda metà del XII secolo, la testa era protetta da un casco generalmente conico, indipendentemente dal fatto che fosse formato da una lastra unica o da spicchi rivettati intorno a uno scheletro metallico. Tra questi erano frequenti i caschi con nasale. Gli elmi potevano recare pitture o piccole incisioni, e sui modelli a spicchi, le borchie, i rivetti o lo scheletro in ferro che teneva uniti gli spicchi stessi potevano essere usati come elementi decorativi, forgiandoli con

6 *Chansons de Roland*, Mario BENSI (cur.), Milano, Rizzoli, 1985, v. 3867, p. 480: «*En lur cols pendent lur escuz de quarters*».

7 CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, *Lancillotto*, Giovanni AGRATI, Maria Luisa MAGINI (cur.), Milano, Mondadori, 1983, p. 15.



Dettaglio delle *Strage degli innocenti*, chiesa di Bochum, 1180 c. Nonostante ormai la larga diffusione dell'usbergo in anelli di maglia, era ancora usato quello in scaglie di cuoio.

forme lobate, dipingendoli o incidendoli a bulino.

Con il cristallizzarsi del sistema feudale, venne a crearsi una società ai cui vertici vi erano i *milites*, la classe dirigente: i vasti possedimenti fondiari erano tenuti da coloro che sapevano difenderli, i cavalieri, che dalle rendite delle loro terre ricavano ricchezze. Questo permise loro di mantenere un armamento idoneo, addestrarsi quotidianamente e sostenere intensi sforzi fisici. Divennero quindi una classe sociale eterogenea ma coesa, che si riconosceva prima di tutto nel diritto di portare armi e combattere, soprattutto a cavallo<sup>8</sup>. Ciò favorì la diffusione in tutta Europa di alcuni modelli d'armatura che, divenuti vere e proprie mode presso la classe dei *milites*, assunsero a simbolo del potere ed elemento distintivo della classe cavalleresca, motivo per cui le fonti, soprattutto quelle iconografiche, riservano loro grande attenzione.

Per quasi tutto il Millecento, gli usberghi continuarono a essere lunghi in anelli di maglia, ma come mostra il bassorilievo dell'arco di Porta Romana a Milano<sup>9</sup>, erano ancora usati modelli a sca-



Bassorilievo, Padova, Chiesa di Santa Giustina, secolo XII. L'usbergo si è accorciato alla coscia e le gambe sono protette da calze in maglia di ferro, e l'elmo copre il volto con una piastra facciale.

8 Sull'argomento si veda: Marc BLOCH, *La società feudale*, Torino, Einaudi, 1965; George DUBY, *Guglielmo il maresciallo. L'avventura del cavaliere*, Roma Bari, Laterza, 1995; Jean FLORI, *Cavalieri e cavalleria nel medioevo*, Torino, Einaudi, 1999; Renato BORDONE, *L'aristocrazia: ricambi e convergenze ai vertici della scala sociale*, in Nicola TRANFAGLIA, Massimo FIRPO (cur.), *La storia. I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'Età Contemporanea*, a cura di, vol. I, Torino 1992, pp. 145-175.

9 Milano, Castello Sforzesco, Museo d'arte antica, inv. 770.

glie, probabilmente in cuoio; mentre nella stessa opera, i fanti sono protetti solo dallo scudo e dagli elmi: sia cervelliere crestate formate da due valve, sia elmi con nasale. L'unico aspetto formale rilevante nell'evoluzione dell'armatura del XII secolo è un lento accorciamento dell'usbergo poco sotto il ginocchio, accompagnato dall'introduzione di calze di maglia di ferro che potevano proteggere tutta la gamba o solo la parte frontale, allacciate nella parte posteriore. Inoltre, nei decenni a cavallo tra XII e XIII secolo, fu introdotta la sorcotta d'arme, una veste smanicata da indossare sopra l'armatura con impressi i segni distintivi del guerriero, veicolando ulteriormente il linguaggio araldico.

Verso la fine del secolo, si assistette a importanti cambiamenti nelle protezioni per la testa. Al fianco dei caschi conici iniziarono a diffondersene altri con il coppedo piatto e, soprattutto in questi ultimi, il nasale subì una significativa innovazione: fu allargato a destra e a sinistra, creando una piastra che copriva tutto il volto, con fori per gli occhi e per la ventilazione. In pochi decenni, in particolare in area germanica, questa visiera iniziò a curvarsi sotto la mascella, proteggendola, e venne allungato il casco anche posteriormente a protezione della nuca; da questi modelli, coprendo completamente la testa con piastre rivettate tra loro, nasceva il cilindrico elmo a staro. Nei primi decenni del XIII secolo, anche lo scudo diminuì di dimensioni, divenendo triangolare. La *Bibbia Maciejowski*<sup>10</sup>, datata intorno al 1250, documenta usberghi lunghi solo fino alla coscia, calze di maglia di ferro e scudi triangolari. I copricapi sono per la maggior parte elmi a staro, ma sono presenti ancora numerosi caschi conici con nasale ed è testimoniata la diffusione dei cappelli di ferro anche per i cavalieri. Questi ultimi non coprivano il viso, permettendo un'eccellente visibilità e respirazione, ma esponevano eccessivamente il volto, rischiando di essere colpiti, come in effetti accade a un cavaliere italiano in una miniatura del Codice Manesse<sup>11</sup>.

#### CUOIO E METALLO: L'ARMATURA DI TRANSIZIONE

La prima metà del Duecento vide anche l'introduzione delle prime protezioni rigide in cuoio cotto, come gli spillacci ad alette e, poco dopo la metà del secolo,

<sup>10</sup> New York, Pierpont Morgan Libray, M. 638. 86.

<sup>11</sup> Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Pal. Germ. 848, c. 43v. Il cavaliere con il cappello di ferro è ritratto nel momento in cui ha ricevuto un colpo di taglio all'altezza del setto nasale.



Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, inv. SBB MS. Germ. 2°282 Eneit, c. 53r. 1210-1220. Gli scudi sono più piccoli rispetto a quelli dei decenni precedenti, e si osservano elmi con piastra facciale e gronda pronunciata, un modello embrionale di elmo a staro.

gli schinieri<sup>12</sup>. Già nel 1202, tra le armi catturate dall'esercito pavese alla guarnigione vercellese del castello di Robbio, compaiono sei *gamberias de radice*<sup>13</sup>, un materiale insolito per la fabbricazione di armi difensive, noto solo da questo documento, che potrebbe indicare l'uso di protezioni per gli arti inferiori ben radicato nella produzione armiera, quantomeno locale<sup>14</sup>, anche con materiali di natura vegetale per ottenere una protezione rigida. Alla metà del XIII secolo gli elementi difensivi per gli arti, composti da piastre o lamine di metallo, erano una grande rarità, come le due paia di *caligarum ferri* appartenute nel 1230 al fiorentino Adimaro Catelani, podestà di Orvieto<sup>15</sup>, o i ginocchielli di ferro commissionati da Federico II agli armaioli fiorentini nel 1240 alle porte di Faenza<sup>16</sup>, che trovano riscontro iconografico certo solo in una miniatura della Bibbia Maciejowski<sup>17</sup>.

Tra il Duecento e il Trecento *lamerias* e *coraczas* divennero le protezioni principali per il corpo del combattente, soprattutto montato. Le fonti scritte dimostrano una sostanziale differenza tra i due armamenti, ma su quali siano queste diversità sussiste una certa ambiguità e le fonti iconografiche sono molto vaghe per venirci in soccorso. Sebbene il lessico tecnico medievale potesse variare enormemente anche in aree geografiche non troppo distanti tra loro, e indicare con lo stesso nome due oggetti differenti, così come un medesimo manufatto poteva essere chiamato con nomi diversi in altrettante località, si può tentare di fornire una descrizione, almeno di massima, delle due diverse tipologie di armature. L'etimologia dei due nomi tradisce quantomeno il principale materiale con cui erano fabbricate: le prime, *lamerias*, lamiere intese di metallo, erano protezioni con lamine metalliche, rivettate a uno scheletro in cuoio o tessuto; le seconde, da *corium*, erano prodotte in cuoio bollito, sia in un unico pezzo sia a scaglie fissate

12 Si veda la copia del Tristano di Rustichello da Pisa appartenuta al futuro Edoardo I, re d'Inghilterra. Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. Fr. 1463.

13 Angelo ANGELUCCI, *Documenti inediti per la storia delle armi da fuoco italiane*, Torino, Tipografia G. Cassone e Comp., 1869, p. 8 e nota 24.

14 A Vercelli esisteva una lunga tradizione armiera, documentata dal 1167: MERLO 2012, p. 525.

15 Luigi FUMI (cur.), *Codice diplomatico della città d'Orvieto. Documenti e registi dal secolo XI al XV e Carta del popolo*, Firenze, G.P. Vieusseux coi tipi di S. Cellini, 1884, pp. 125-127.

16 Robert DAVIDSOHN, *Forschungen, zur älteren Geschichte von Florenz*, 4 voll., Berlino, Mittler und Sohn, 1896-1908, vol. II, Reg. 19.

17 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 638. 86, c. 27v. Golia è rappresentato con degli schinieri in metallo.



Dettaglio della *Bibbia Maciejowski*, New York, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 638. 86, c. 10r. Si osserva una pluralità di elmi per i cavalieri (a storo, con nasale, cappelli di ferro e semplici cervelliere). Testimonia l'ampio uso di calze di maglia di ferro a causa dell'accorciamento dell'usbergo, e gli scudi sono ormai triangolari. I fanti sono protetti da giubbotti imbottiti ed elmi che lasciano ampie aperture facciali (cappelli di ferro e cervelliere).

a uno scheletro, come quelle vendute dai Gianfigliuzzi nel 1286 a Carlo II d'Angiò<sup>18</sup> o che vediamo indosso a uno dei cavalieri della *Communion du chevalier* sulla facciata occidentale della cattedrale di Reims (1265-1285) oppure, ancora nei primi del Trecento, indossata da un cavaliere in una delle formelle della facciata del Palazzo del Bargello di Firenze<sup>19</sup>. Probabilmente erano sempre in cuo-

<sup>18</sup> Robert DAVIDSOHN, *Forschungen* cit., Reg. 196.

<sup>19</sup> Sul lato che si affaccia su via Vigna Vecchia. Secondo Boccia potrebbe trattarsi di un ghiizzerino con scaglie metalliche, esattamente come i guanti che indossa: Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, *Hic iacet miles. Immagini guerriere da sepolcri toscani del Due e Trecento*, in Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, Mario SCALINI, (cur.), *Guerre e assoldati. In Toscana 1260-1364*, Firenze 1982, pp. 81-99. L'idea invece che questa protezione fosse originariamente in cuoio, nasce dal fatto che sotto è indossato l'usbergo in maglia di ferro. Se fosse stato



Dettaglio della *Bibbia Maciejowski*, New York, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 638. 86, c. 28v. Il gigante Golia calza dei modernissimi schinieri in metallo.

io le protezioni a scaglie indossate da un guerriero della *Weltchronik* di Berlino<sup>20</sup> datata tra il 1410-1415, e del resto vediamo una corazza dello stesso modello indossata dal gigante Sigenot nella miniatura dell'omonimo manoscritto, copiato intorno al 1470, che raffigura il duello giudiziario contro Dietrich von Bern,<sup>21</sup>: sebbene sotto la protezione in cuoio il gigante porti, come l'eroe Dietrich, una tipica armatura gotica a piastre in stile tedesco ormai matura, le corazze in scaglie di cuoio erano ancora di una certa utilità.

Compare spesso anche il nome corsetto, che però deriva da *corpus*, quindi nelle fonti indica una protezione per il busto che, a volte, sembra essere di

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in metallo, si sarebbe creata una ridondanza di protezioni, che avrebbe appesantito eccessivamente il combattente e sicuramente avrebbe impacciato i movimenti. Invece bisogna concordare con Boccia quando ipotizza che i guanti invece fossero in scaglie metalliche.

- 20 Berlino, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. germ. fol. 1416, c. 308v. Si deduce che in questa miniatura le scaglie possano essere di cuoio, perché il combattente indossa queste scaglie sotto un petto a piastre, ormai maturo: se fossero state in metallo, oltre che aumentare notevolmente il peso della protezione, che sarebbe divenuto difficilmente sostenibile, lo sfregamento del metallo sul metallo avrebbe reso inefficiente il sistema protettivo, rischiando di bloccare i movimenti.
- 21 Ludwig Henfflin, Sigenot, Monaco, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Codex Germanicus Monacensis 67, c. 50r.

San Maurizio, Cattedrale di Magdeburgo, post 1250. La scultura, caratterizzata da una minuziosa cura di ogni dettaglio, testimonia un armamento in ferro e cuoio piuttosto precoce, probabilmente un modello di *lameria* ampiamente documentato nelle fonti scritte.





Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Pal. Germ. 848, c. 43v, post 1320. Wernher von Homberg combatte alle porte di una città italiana. I cavalieri tedeschi sono caratterizzati dagli elmi a stavo sormontati da eleganti cimieri, mentre quelli italiani da copricapi che consentivano di lasciare libero il volto, come un elmo con visiera rialzabile e un cappello di ferro. Si osserva come quest'ultima difesa rendesse il viso vulnerabile.

dimensioni più ridotte delle altre, ma il materiale non è praticamente mai specificato, inducendo a pensare che il termine sia generico anche per i materiali di fabbricazione.

La fonte più antica oggi nota, in cui sono citate le *lamerie* è del 1237, come protezione indossata dai cavalieri della Marca Trevigiana di Ezzelino da Romano e nel 1241 il padovano Lemizo di Menighini Ardenghi lasciò in eredità due *lamerie*<sup>22</sup>. Nel 1263 gli statuti trevigiani stabilivano che fosse obbligatoria, tra le altre parti dell'armatura, *panceriam vel coraciam*, la prima protezione in maglia di ferro, la seconda in cuoio, e che non avesse elementi metallici è dimostrato nello stesso documento, poiché era previsto che chi volesse svolgere alcuni servizi comunali, dovesse possedere *panceriam vel coraciam sive lamam*, evidentemente tre oggetti molto diversi tra loro<sup>23</sup>. Lo statuto della Società dei Lombardi di Bologna prescrive: *Item statuimus et ordinamus quod quilibet de societate Armorum debeat habere scutum seu scrimetum, elmum vel caçetam, cubam vel guayferiam vel lameriam cum insignia societates intus, et eama portare in dorso in omni exercitu et cavalcata et strenuta*<sup>24</sup>. Nello stesso statuto si obbliga *quod quilibet sotius de societate Aquille habeat gayferiam vel lameriam et alia arma ad insignia Aquille*<sup>25</sup>. Negli statuti di Bologna<sup>26</sup> o nel contratto d'ingaggio della prima compagnia di mercenari transalpini documentata a Firenze nel 1277<sup>27</sup> le *lamerias* dovevano essere portate in alternativa all'usbergo.

Armature a lamelle quadrangolari di metallo sono abbondanti nell'iconografia trecentesca, solo per portare qualche esempio, si segnalano alcune miniature

22 Aldo A. SETTIA, *Comuni e guerra. Aspetti di vita militare nell'Italia comunale*, Bologna, CLUEB, 1993, p. 149.

23 Giuseppe LIBERALI (cur.), *Gli Statuti del Comune di Treviso (degli anni 1207-1218, 1231-33, 1263)*, vol. III, Venezia, Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie, 1955, rubr. 161.

24 Augusto GAUDENZI (cur.), *Statuti delle Società del Popolo di Bologna*, vol I, Roma, nella sede dell'Istituto Palazzo dei Lincei, già Corsini, 1889, rubr. XXXXVI, p.17.

25 Op. cit., rubr. XXVIII, p. 245.

26 Negli statuti di Bologna del 1250 è stabilito che chi era stimato per più di 200 lire dovesse possedere un *hosbergum*, mentre chi era stimato in somme che oscillavano tra le 100 e le 200 lire dovesse almeno procurarsi una *pancera*: Luigi FRATI (ed), *Statuti di Bologna dall'anno 1245 all'anno 1267*, 3 voll., Padova, Regia Tipografia, 1869-1880, vol. I, p. 319; vol. II, p. 83.

27 ASFi, *Diplomatico, adesposte, coperte di libri*, 1277, 5 maggio. Trascrizione in MERLO 2022, p. 231.



Dettaglio degli affreschi nella chiesa di Sant'Abbondio di Como, 1315 c. Si osservano corazze in cuoi sopra gli usberghi in maglia di ferro e diversi modelli di elmo, tra cui spiccano barbute, molte delle quali con nasale e a ribalta e una con visiera.

della *Vita et Passio Beati Dionysii* datata al 1317<sup>28</sup>, l'allegoria di Marte nel *Liber astrologiae* di Georgius Fendulus, composto tra il 1325 e il 1327<sup>29</sup>, l'effigie della lastra tombale di Walram von Sponheim († 1382) nella chiesa di San Nicola a Bad Kreuznach, oppure il cavaliere dietro Gesù nella *Cattura di Cristo* nella *Karlsruhe Passion* del 1440. Dalla prima metà del XIV secolo sono molto documentate anche armature composte da lamine metalliche strette e lunghe, unite tra loro orizzontalmente e rivettate su una struttura in cuoio, a volte decorata, come nel monumento funebre di Rudolf von Hürnheim († 1335), nella chiesa del convento di Zimmern, nella lastra tombale di Walter von Bopfingen († 1336) nella chiesa di St. Blasius a Bopfingen, in cui si apprezzano ancora le decorazioni floreali su fondo verde, in quella di Ottone VI di Weimar-Orlamünde († 1340) nel monastero di Himmelkron, indossate dal centurione romano Longino e da un soldato ebreo sui bassorilievi del portale della chiesa dei Minoriti di Vienna (1350 c.), nei bassorilievi che riproducono le allegorie delle città assoggettate sul-

28 Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 2092, cc. 121r, 123r, 129r.

29 Londra, British Library, Sloane 3983, c. 37r.

la tomba di Azzone Visconti<sup>30</sup>, indosso al Golia intagliato intorno al 1370 nel coro della chiesa di Sharnebeck ad Hannover o, ancora a inizio XV secolo, indossata dal gigantesco generale romano abbattuto da re Artù in una miniatura delle *Histoires* del Maestro di Boucicaut<sup>31</sup>.

Dal tardo Trecento sono abbondantemente documentati anche elmi a lamelle, composti da uno scheletro a cui sono fissate piccole lamelle metalliche quadrangolari, spesso indossati da fanti, come in una celebre miniatura che rappresenta una scena di saccheggio delle *Chroniques de France ou de St Denis*<sup>32</sup>, copiato tra il 1381 e il 1399, ma a volte anche da cavalieri, ad esempio nella raffigurazione di Luigi I d'Ungheria contro i turchi ottomani sulla Pala votiva di San Lambrecht, datata tra il 1425 e il 1430<sup>33</sup>, in cui non solo compare questa tipologia di elmo, ma anche altri modelli che possiedono protezioni a lamelle. Ancora nella miniatura che illustra il *Combat de Gauvain à la Chauciee Norgaloise* nel *Lancelot du Lac*, opera datata intorno al 1405<sup>34</sup>. Probabilmente per la sua spiccata vocazione



Celata, San Gimignano, Palazzo Pubblico, 1390 circa. Usata per secoli come bacile di un pozzo, componeva una barbuta con camaglio allacciato ai fori dei bordi inferiori e possedeva una visiera imperniata a i lati estraibile, di cui rimangono solo le cerniere laterali.

30 Opera di Giovanni di Balduccio, 1339 c. Milano, S. Gottardo in Corte.

31 Datata tra il 1400 e il 1425. Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. Français 5077, 298r.

32 London. British Library, Royal MS 20 CVII, c.41v.

33 Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum, inv. 21877/355603.

34 Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 118 253v.



Dettagli degli affreschi di San Gimignano, Palazzo Pubblico, 1290 c. L'armamento in cuoio bollito per gli arti è già maturo, con ricche decorazioni. Gli elmi sono con la visiera imperniata ai lati.

popolare, lo si vede di frequente indossato da grotteschi fanti nelle scene della Passione di Cristo, come ne' *Cavalieri e soldati che giocano a dadi per la tunica di Cristo* dipinta da Derick Baegert tra il 1477 e il 1478<sup>35</sup>, nell'*Arresto di Gesù* di Bernhard Strigel al Walters Art Museum di Baltimora, realizzato intorno al 1495, o ancora all'inizio del XVI secolo, nel pannello commissionato per l'altare maggiore della Chiesa di San Nicola a Grimma<sup>36</sup>.

Che le *lamerias* fossero una protezione differente dalle corazze, lo palesa il *Libro di Montaperti*, obbligando i cavalieri a indossare *panzeriam sive asbergum* [...] e sopra l'usbergo *lamerias vel coraczas*<sup>37</sup>: evidentemente le protezioni lamellari erano indossate sopra le panziere, mentre le corazze in cuoio sopra gli usberghi, e sono sempre in alternativa l'una all'altra nel contattato d'arruolamento dei mercenari del 1277<sup>38</sup>.

Le corazze erano protezioni in cuoio bollito a paia, petto e schiena, allacciati tra loro sopra le spalle come si vede negli armati degli affreschi di Sant'Abbondio a Como. Sembrano essere particolarmente diffuse in tutta Italia, se ne trovano spesso acquisti nelle fonti contabili senesi, ad esempio nel 1230 il senese *magistro* Gualtiero di Gualtiero servì il comune come balestriere a cavallo insieme a dei berrovieri in Val d'Arbia, protetto da *unius corecti et unius barbute et corazzarie de corio*<sup>39</sup>. Nel 1259 il comune di Siena acquistò *quattuor paribus amorum de corio* e undici cappelli, sempre in cuoio, per i pavesari<sup>40</sup>. Come detto, si tratta di un armamento a paia, per il petto e per la schiena, come le *paribus corazzarum* che nei primi anni del Trecento i *Capitula carte populi* di Orvieto imponevano

35 Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, inv. 26 (1934.46).

36 Realizzato dal Maestro della Pietà di Saint-Germain-des-Près e oggi conservato al Musée des Beaux-Arts di Lione.

37 L'elenco completo comprende *panzeriam sive asbergum, caligas sive stivalettos de ferro, cappellum de acciario, lamerias vel coraczas, lanceam, scutum sive targiam vel tabolaccium amplum*: Cesare PAOLI (cur.), *Il libro di Montaperti (An. MCCLX)*, Firenze, G.P. Vieusseux, 1889, p. 373-374. Cfr. Marco MERLO, *Produzione, commercio e modelli di armi nella Toscana duecentesca*, in «Nuova Antologia Militare», III, fasc. 9, 2022, pp. 234-235.

38 MERLO, *Produzione, commercio e modelli di armi* cit, p. 231.

39 *I libri dell'entrata e dell'uscita della repubblica di Siena detti del Camarlingo e dei quattro provveditori della Biccherna. Libro Terzo (anno 1230)*, Siena, Archivio di Stato di Siena, 1917, p. 361.

40 Giuliano CATONI (cur.), *I libri dell'entrata e dell'uscita della repubblica di Siena detti del Camarlingo e dei quattro provveditori della Biccherna. Registro 30° (1259 secondo semestre)*, Roma, Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 1970, p. 74.

per i balestrieri<sup>41</sup>, così come le *corace* che a inizio Trecento indossavano i fanti delle galee genovesi sul Mar Nero<sup>42</sup>, armamento più adatto alla guerra navale rispetto a quelli metallici, così come le ritroviamo dalla metà del Trecento, sempre a paia, in molti casseri maremmani controllati da Siena<sup>43</sup>. Tuttavia uno di questi inventari chiarisce che, almeno dal XIV secolo, anche le corazze potevano avere piastre metalliche, infatti nel cassero di Sassoforte sono elencate *Piastre di corazze di tre paia*<sup>44</sup>.

D'altra parte all'inizio del Trecento compaiono anche le protezioni a piastre a paia. Nel volgare francese compare il neologismo *paires de plates*<sup>45</sup> per la prima volta nell'inventario delle armi redatto alla morte del Connestabile di Francia, Raoul de Nesle, caduto nella battaglia di Courtrai nel 1302, in cui sono contate anche *II gorgeretes de plates* e *Item, I autre bacinet, Item II paires de plates // Item, III paires de plates toutes garnies pour son cors j* e altri armamenti interessanti come le gorgiere dette pisane e una piastra con le armi araldiche dei Nesle<sup>46</sup>. Qualche decennio dopo, tra gli oggetti catturati da Roberto d'Artois durante la presa del castello di Hesdin il 9 maggio 1321, ci sono *unes plates couvertes de jaune samit*<sup>47</sup>. Mentre il conte di Fiandra Robert de Bèthune alla sua morte nel 1322 lasciava numerosi armamenti in piastra, come *une paire de manches de*

41 Hannelore ZUG-TUCCI, «Guerra e armi a Orvieto nel Duecento», in della Fina, Giuseppe, Corrado FRATINI (cur.), *Storia di Orvieto*, vol. II, Orvieto, Orvieto Arte - Cultura - Sviluppo S.r.l., 2007, p. 142.

42 Giovanni FORCHERI, *Navi e navigazione a Genova nel Trecento. Il "Liber Gazarie"*, Bordighera, Istituto internazionale di studi liguri, 1974, pp. 113-114.

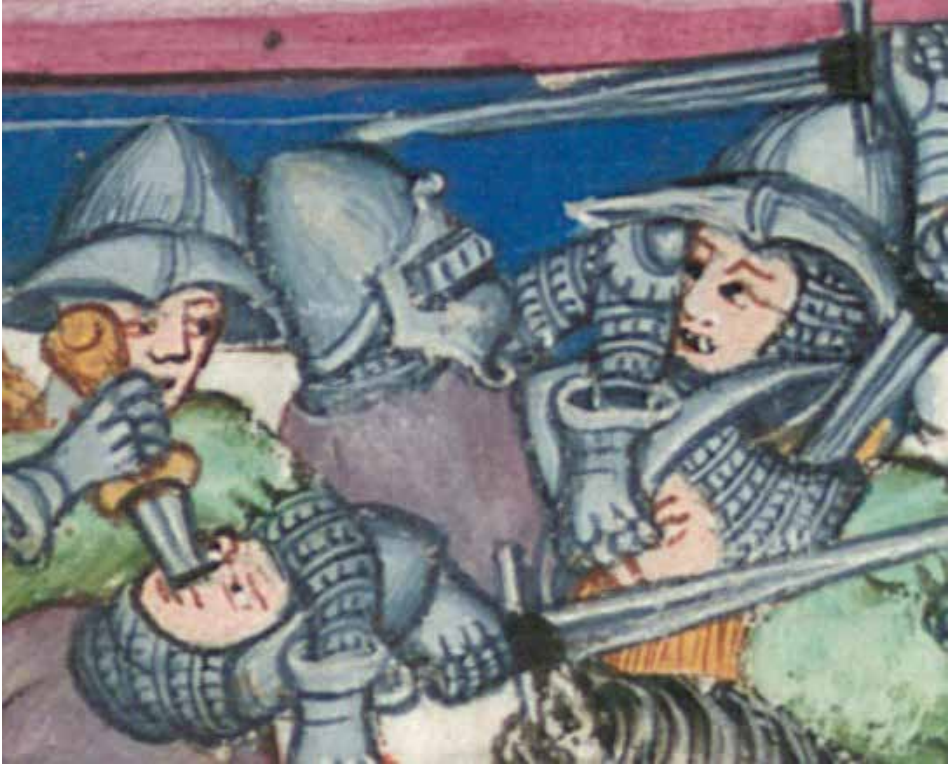
43 Daniele DE LUCA, Roberto FARINELLI, «Archi e balestre. Un approccio storico-archeologico alle armi da tiro nella Toscana meridionale (secc. XIII-XIV)», in *Archeologia Medievale*, XXIX, 2002, pp. 481-483.

44 Op. cit., p. 483.

45 BOCCIA, *L'armamento difensivo in Toscana dal Millecento al Trecento*, p. 199.

46 *Item I gazaraut et I camail de maisme // Item III pieches de flanchieres // Item II bras et uns gousses // Item II gorgerete pisaines // Item unes plates vermeilles // Item unes autres plates des armes de Neele // Item III bazines // Item III paires de cuirs a bras et uns gantelés // Item couvertures de plates et banieres // Item II paires de gans des armes de Neele // Item VIII que capiaus , que hiaumes , et I bacin // Item II gorgeretes de plates [...] Item, I autre bacinet, Item II paires de plates // Item, III paires de plates toutes garnies pour son cors j.* Chretien Cesar Auguste DEHAISNES, *Documents et extraits divers concernant l'histoire de l'art dans la Flandre, l'Artois & le Hainaut avant le XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lille, Imprimerie L. Danel, 1886, pp. 144-145.

47 Op. cit., p. 236.



München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 5 *Weltchronik in Versen*, c. 85v, 1370.  
Tra i cappelli di ferro, al centro, si osserva un bacinetto con visiera a ribalta.

*Lombardie a plates e un noef auketon de plates, de rouge cendal al endroit, de vert al enviers. Item, un auketon de plates*<sup>48</sup>. È evidente che queste piastre fossero rivettate su strutture di cuoio e tessuto, probabilmente non troppo dissimili dalle corazze con piastre del *cassero* di Paganico, e ricoperte di tessuti, anche preziosi, come dimostra senza ombra di dubbio un pagamento, del 1327 della tesoreria di Edoardo “il Liberale”, conte di Savoia, di 3 lire e 10 soldi per *Unius paris plattarum que erant fracte cooperiendis de novo de quodam zamelloto pro clavis deauratis*.<sup>49</sup> Armamenti difensivi molto apprezzati anche in sud Italia, come documentano i pagamenti ai corazzai fiorentini Enrico Dini e Bartolo di Pietro, effettuati il 6 maggio 1321, quando cedettero in acconto tre once d’oro al

<sup>48</sup> Op. cit., pp. 246-247.

<sup>49</sup> Luigi CIBALDI, *L’armamento difensivo piemontese nel XIV secolo attraverso i conti della Tesoreria Sabauda*, in «Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino», LVI, 1958, p. 328.

napoletano Michele Campana per l'acquisto di 100 *plattas*<sup>50</sup>, ma a che tipo di armamento difensivo faccia riferimento questo termine emerge chiaramente da un documento del 31 gennaio 1327: a Napoli è segnata la spesa per la riparazione di *unius pari plactarum [...] in quo refecte fuerent pecie septem de aczaro*<sup>51</sup>.

Nel 1250, secondo le indicazioni del *The King's Mirror*, bisognava indossare, tra il *gambeson* e l'usbergo, una protezione metallica che coprisse il corpo dai capezzoli alla cintura, che sembrerebbe quindi essere una singola piastra di metallo, probabilmente rivettata a uno scheletro in cuoio<sup>52</sup>. Un'oggetto praticamente coevo, che sembra avere una piastra di queste dimensioni, corrisponde all'armatura della celebre statua di San Maurizio nella cattedrale di Magdeburgo, un modello indossato anche dai tre guardiani dormienti della *Mauritiusrotunde* nella cattedrale di Costanza, datati intorno al 1260. Nel 1297 Edoardo I d'Inghilterra ordinò che i custodi delle porte urbane di Londra fossero armati con un giubbotto imbottito, detto in questa fonte *haketon*, e *gambeson*, oppure con *haketon* e corsetto, oppure con *haketon* e piastre<sup>53</sup>. L'inventario del 1322 di Roger de Mortimer al castello di Wigmore è ancora più chiaro sulle differenze tra questi armamenti: *ij. paribus de plates // j. quirre // ij. paribus lameriorum*.

Le armature rinvenute a Visby tra i caduti della battaglia combattuta il 27 luglio 1361<sup>54</sup>, sono normalmente ritenute appartenenti alla categoria delle *plattas*<sup>55</sup>, ma queste presentano numerose differenze tra loro. Certamente sono afferenti a diverse tipologie e, sebbene anche Thordeman le suddivida in quattro categorie, distinte per numero e dimensioni delle lame metalliche, le chiama tutte *coat of plate*. Sicuramente quelle con meno piastre ma di maggiori dimensioni, sebbene siano a loro volta differenti tra loro, fanno parte delle *plattas*<sup>56</sup>, ma tutte quelle con

50 Angelo ANGELUCCI, *Documenti inediti per la storia delle armi da fuoco italiane*, part. II, Torino 1870, documenti napoletani alla data 6 maggio 1321.

51 Op. cit., alla data 31 gennaio 1327.

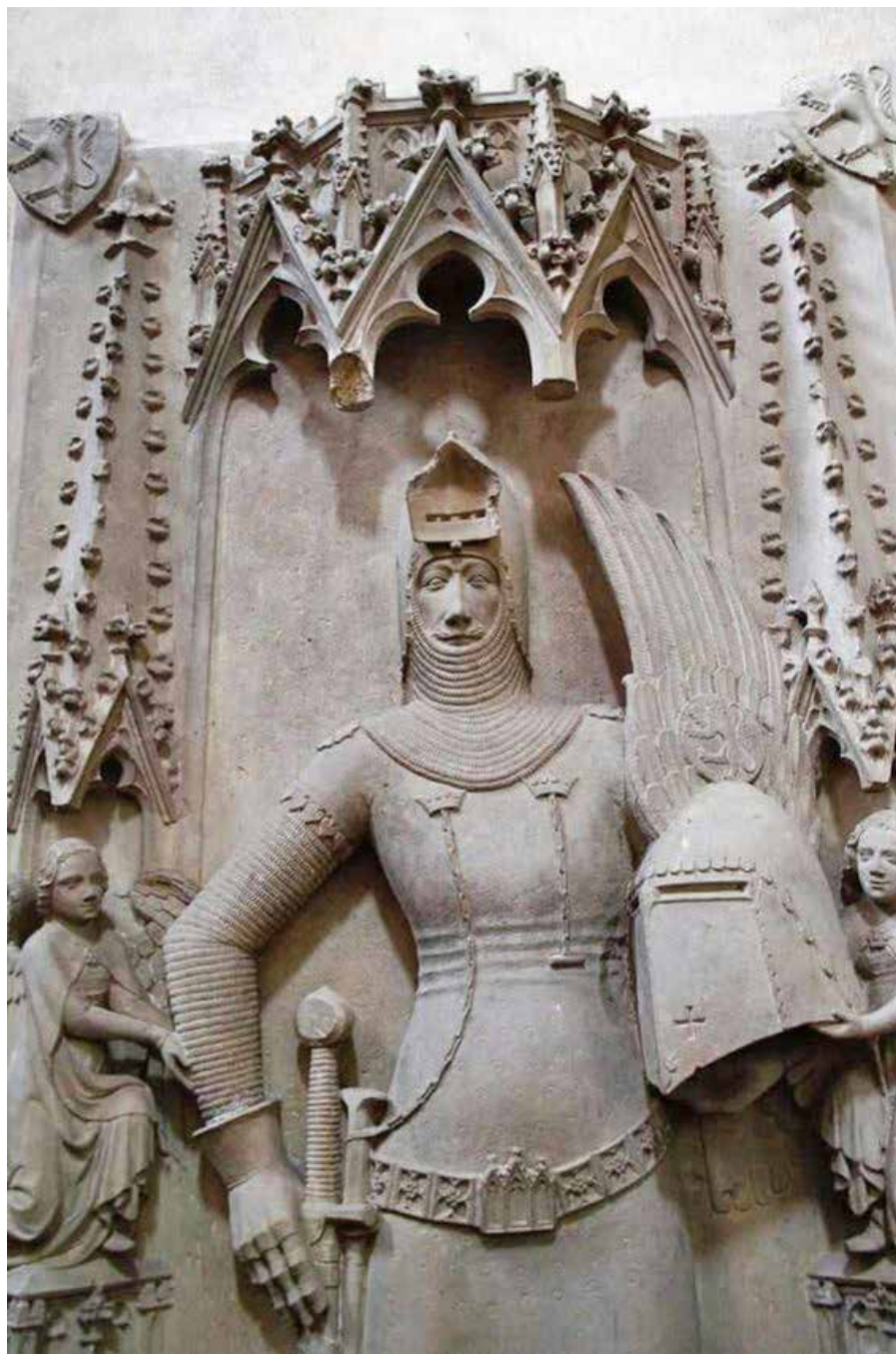
52 Lauren Marcellus LARSON (ed.), *The King's Mirror (Speculum regale – Konungs Skuggsjá)*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1917, p. 219.

53 Londra, British Library, Edward I. 1297. Letter-Book B. fol. XXXIII. old numeration.

54 Bengt THORDEMAN, *Armour from the Battle of Wisby*, 2 voll., Stoccolma, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1939.

55 Probabilmente anche per la traduzione dall'inglese, che chiama tutte queste protezioni metalliche, *coat of plate*.

56 Dalla 1 alla 15, secondo la numerazione di Thordeman, sebbene la 8 e la 9 possiedano piastre molto più piccole delle altre armature. THORDEMAN, *Armour from the Battle of Wisby*, vol. II, cit., PL 2-68.



Cenotafio di Johann II von Katzenelnbogen († 1357). Si osserva la visiera rialzata.



piccole lamine sono da considerare delle *lamerias*, benché anche questo gruppo sia abbastanza eterogeneo per numero, dimensione e forma delle lamelle<sup>57</sup>, tipologie di armature che trovano riscontro iconografico negli esempi fatti poco sopra.

Effettivamente, dal Trecento, quando sono citati armamenti difensivi in metallo, il materiale è generalmente specificato, come le *armaturas ferreas* delle milizie torinesi nel 1333<sup>58</sup>. Come osservato da Blair<sup>59</sup>,

57 Dalla 16 alla 25. Op. cit., PL 69-145.

58 Maura BAIMA (cur.), *Libri Consiliorum 1333-1339. Trascrizione e regesto degli Ordinati comunali*, Torino, Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, 1997, p. 94.

59 Claude BLAIR, *European Armour: circa 1066 to circa 1700*, London, B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1958, p. 53:

«Another early body defence which should probably be included under the heading of plate armour was the cuirie. This term first appears in texts of the third quarter of the 12th century and occurs frequently until the middle of the 14th. It was almost certainly synonymous with cuirass (also curate, quiret), a word first recorded as *paires de cuiraces* in an inventory of the effects of Eudes, Comte de Nevers, drawn up after his death in 1266 and one that remained in

Lastra tombale di Giacotto Provana, dalla hiesa di Santa Chiara di Carignano.

Musei Reali di Torino – Galleria Sabauda. Indossa una raffinata armatura in cuoi con stecche metalliche per proteggere gli arti e calza una barbuta con nasale a camaglio.

la corazza in cuoio è da considerarsi come una difesa rigida, ed è facile che nelle fonti possa essere confusa con una protezione a piastra metallica, come poi, a partire dal tardo Trecento, avverrà a Milano, probabilmente città natale dell'armatura a piastre, in cui i primi esemplari sono chiamati nelle fonti corazze appunto, probabilmente per un'affinità morfologica delle due difese, per divenire in breve tempo il termine più diffuso per indicare la protezione in piastra d'acciaio. D'altra parte, sporadicamente, l'archeologia porta alla luce elementi a piastre metalliche databili anche al XII secolo, come il ritrovamento di Rügen, datato proprio al tardo Millecento, e letto da Berlekamp come una piastra protettiva per il petto<sup>60</sup>; del resto anche qual-



Capitello del Palazzo Dicale di Venezia, 1350-1370. La testa di guerriero indossa una barbuto con nasale a camaglio.

che rara fonte scritta ci testimonia armature metalliche, come narra Giraldo del Galles dopo il 1184, quando raccontò che gli uomini di tale *Wode*, *quod Latine sonat Insano vel Vehementi, viri bellicosi, Danico more undique ferro vestiti, alii loiricis longis, alii laminis ferreis arte consutis*<sup>61</sup>, ma queste tuttavia sono da considerarsi eccezioni, ingegnose soluzioni per la difesa dalle armi bianche, e non elementi in linea evolutiva con l'armatura a piastre.

use as long as armour did».

60 Hans-Dieter BERLEKAMP, «Die Funde aus den Grabungen von Arkona auf Rügen in den Jahren 1969-1971», in *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, VIII, 1974, pp. 211-254.

61 GIRALDUS CAMBRENSIS, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, James F. DIMOCK (ed.), lib. I, cap. XXI, p. 264

In altri documenti, come nel contratto di arruolamento dei mercenari transalpini a Firenze del 1277, era possibile indossare in alternativa alla corazza un semplice giubbotto imbottito - fatto che confermerebbe ulteriormente essere le corazze protezione non metiliche<sup>62</sup> - come quelli indossati dai fanti nella *Bibbia Maciejowski*, che trovano riscontri documentari precisi, come il *perpunto grosso* del *Libro di Montaperti*, consigliati ancora da Teodoro Paleologo nel suo trattato, soprattutto a coloro che montano cavalli piccoli<sup>63</sup>, ancora usati sotto le armature in ferro, come ordinato dal principe d'Acacia nel 1328<sup>64</sup>. L'iconografia li documenta spesso come unica difesa dei fanti, ma non è insolito vederli indossati anche dai cavalieri<sup>65</sup>, in alcune circostanze sembrano essere addirittura portati sopra le protezioni in ferro<sup>66</sup> o perfino da sole<sup>67</sup>.

Fu con la fine del XIII secolo che vennero introdotte importanti novità anche per le protezioni della testa. Nonostante oltre la metà del secolo fossero ancora usati elmi di antica concezione o molto semplici come le cervelliere, verso la metà del Duecento si diffusero nuove tipologie come il bacinetto<sup>68</sup>. Questo era un elmo con un coppo generalmente acuto e privo di tesa, ma contrariamente al cappello di ferro, offriva protezione anche per la nuca. I guerrieri appiedati dei fregi di Casa Gennaioli a San Sepolcro, datati al 1240, ne portano degli esemplari dotati anche di un'innovativa visiera fissa a grate che completava la protezione

62 Cfr. MERLO, *Produzione, commercio e modelli di armi* cit., pp. 232-235.

63 KNOWLES, Christine (ed.), *Les Enseignemens ou Ordenances pour un Siegneur qui a Guerres et Grans Gouvernemens a Faire*, Londra, Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA), 1983, p. 58

64 Maura BAIMA (cur.), *Libri consiliorum 1325-1329. Trascrizione e regesto degli Ordinati comunali*, Torino, Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, 1996, p. 158

65 Solo a titolo di esempio, si veda uno dei cavalieri in primo piano nella *Crocifissione* nell'Oratorio di Santo Stefano a Lentate sul Seveso, commissionata da Stefano Porro nel 1369.

66 Ad esempio Giles de Brugg nella sua lastra funebre (1370 c.) porta un fine *perpunto* sopra le protezioni metalliche. Lorch, chiesa di San Martino.

67 Si vedano i *pourpoint* grossi e finemente decorati di Charles de Blois del 1364 circa (Musée des Tissus di Lione), quello di Carlo VI di Francia, datato tra il 1370 e il 1380 (Musée des Beaux-Arts di Chartres), oppure il modello, più leggero, del Principe Nero nella Cattedrale di Canterbury datato al 1376.

68 Così chiamato per la somiglianza con il bacile, tanto che alcuni esemplari sono stati usati per secoli come secchi per i pozzi, come l'esemplare conservato a San Gimignano e molti altri. Mario SCALINI, *From Helmets to Buckets. Bascinets and hand Artillery of the Aldobrandesco Fortress of Piancastagnaio*, in Donald J. LA ROCCA (ed.), *Armorer's Art: Essays in Honor of Stuart Pyhrr*, Woonsocket 2014, pp. 43-53.



Lastra tombale anonima, seconda metà del XIV secolo. Brescia, Museo delle Armi “Luigi Marzoli”. Si osserva la visiera rialzabile, con i perni di metallo per rimuoverla. I gomiti e gli avambracci sono protetti con cubitiere e cannoni in metallo.

del viso. È proprio in questi anni che si diffonde la barbata, una difesa per la testa che consisteva nell'applicare al bacinetto, tramite dei fori praticati lungo i bordi inferiori, una maglia di ferro, detta camaglio, per avvolgere mento e guance come una barba, da cui il nome, e la sua più antica menzione è tra le armi possedute dal cavaliere senese Piero Treduti al momento della sua morte, avvenuta in battaglia nel 1230<sup>69</sup>.

Un'innovazione introdotta alla fine del Duecento, ampiamente sviluppata nel corso del Trecento, è l'elmo chiuso con visiera imperniata sui lati, all'altezza delle tempie, in modo da essere rialzata. Le testimonianze iconografiche più precoci in Europa sono visibili negli affreschi del Palazzo Comunale di San Gimignano, databili agli anni Novanta del XIII secolo. L'elmo con visiera rialzabile era adatto ai climi caldi e negli anni a cavallo tra Due e Trecento fu protezione tipicamente mediterranea: ancora nei primi decenni del XIV secolo, la differenza tra i copricapi italiani e quelli germanici è esemplificata nel Codice Manesse<sup>70</sup>.

Il vero mutamento verso quella che diventerà l'armatura propriamente detta consistette nell'applicazione di protezioni rigide in cuoio cotto. Le più antiche testimonianze di queste protezioni si trovano nel monumento funebre di Guglielmo di Durfort Firenze, SS. Annunziata e negli affreschi del Palazzo Comunale di San Gimignano. Le protezioni in cuoio bollito sono particolarmente significative per la storia degli armamenti medievali anche sotto il punto di vista formale: si tratta delle prime difese per il corpo del guerriero su cui vengono apposti elementi decorativi. Fino a questo momento, le armi dei cavalieri erano state concepite con il principale parametro dell'efficacia in combattimento, mentre le nuove difese in cuoio rispondevano anche a esigenze estetiche e rappresentative, recando ornamenti a fogliami o girali, sia impressi sia sbalzati oppure, in alcune circostanze, simboli araldici, come la commissione del 1269 di Carlo di Calabria agli armaioli fiorentini di bracciali, schinieri, cosciali e guanti in cuoio bollito con impressi fregi e raffigurazioni delle sue insegne personali (la cui natura non è però specificata nel documento di allogazione), foderati di velluto rosso e di seta verde<sup>71</sup>, una delle più antiche menzioni scritte di armature decorate.

Queste novità concorsero alla creazione di quella che, tra la fine del Duecen-

69 *I libri dell'entrata e dell'uscita della repubblica di Siena* cit., p. 30.

70 Vedi Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Pal. Germ. 848, c. 43v.

71 DAVIDSOHN, *Forschungen* cit., reg. 21, p. 325.

to e i primi decenni del Trecento, può senz'altro essere definita come un'armatura di transizione, in cui usbergo ed elementi in maglia di ferro andavano a completarsi con pezzi in cuoio cotto e lamine di metallo<sup>72</sup>. Questi modelli di passaggio procedevano nel solco della sperimentazione tecnica verso la creazione di un armamento difensivo in grado di proteggere completamente il corpo del combattente e allo stesso tempo permettere il libero movimento degli arti sia a cavallo sia a piedi, ulteriormente perfezionati nel corso della prima metà del Trecento.



Bitino da Bologna, lastra tombale di Colaccio Beccadelli, Imola, chiesa dei Santi Nicolò e Domenico, 1341 c.

In Italia, negli anni a cavallo tra Due e Trecento, i centri rinomati per gli armamenti difensivi erano due: Milano e Firenze. Milano si era imposta come uno dei principali poli di produzione armiera d'Europa. Grazie alla sua precoce espansione verso le valli ricche di miniere ferrose, si era assicurata il controllo dell'estrazione metallifera; le guerre contro città e signori vicini, ma soprattutto quelle contro il Barbarossa e Federico II, avevano incrementato la domanda di armi. Alla fine del XIII secolo, Bovesin della Riva de-

<sup>72</sup> Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, Edoardo T. COELHO, «L'armamento di cuoio e ferro nel Trecento italiano», in *L'illustrazione italiana*, II, 1974, pp. 24-37.



scriveva l'esercito milanese come ben dotato di armi di ferro, con cavalieri e fanti equipaggiati con armature splendenti<sup>73</sup>. Firenze dal canto suo, grazie al metallo estratto e lavorato in Toscana, ma anche grazie a mirati acquisti di semilavorati sui mercati europei, unito alle abilità tecniche degli armaioli e all'intraprendenza di mercanti e banchieri, che avevano largo credito in gran parte dell'Europa, divenne un importante centro per il commercio di armi. L'economia bancaria e mercantile fiorentina supportava una produzione armiera di alta qualità, spesso commissionata da nobili e sovrani. Gli armaioli fiorentini erano

73 BOVESIN DE LA RIVA, *Le meraviglie di Milano*, Paolo CHIESA (cur.), Milano 2009, p. 124.

Bottega di Andrea Orcagna, lastra tombale di Lorenzo di Niccolò Acciaiuoli († 1353), certosa di Valdemera. Il cavaliere di casa Acciaiuoli porta un'armatura in ferro e cuoio particolarmente raffinata, con elementi d'avanguardia come le scarpe e lame metalliche.



Alcuni dettagli del dossale di Leonardo di Ser Jacopo nella cattedrale di Pistoia, 1367-1371. Si osservano petti ormai in piastra metallica, allacciati dietro la schiena, ma ancora numerosi cavalieri indossano armature con corazze in cuoio bollito.

noti per la loro abilità tecnica e per l'uso di materiali di alta qualità e il commercio delle armi a Firenze era ben organizzato, con una netta distinzione tra chi le produceva e chi le vendeva<sup>74</sup>.

Le innovazioni continuarono, portando alla nascita di protezioni per mani, gomiti, avambracci, ginocchia e piedi in metallo. L'adozione di protezioni per gli arti, come manopole, ginocchielli, schinieri e scarpe migliorò significativamente la difesa del guerriero; a seguito di numerose sperimentazioni come per gli spallacci, che dalle ampie forme a mandorla passarono a quelli dalle dimensioni più contenute semicircolari a protezione del solo omero, si giunse a forme che divennero la norma. Vennero sperimentate inoltre soluzioni per le protezioni del ginocchio, dal semplice ginocchiello in ferro semisferico, allacciato solamente da due corregge incrociate dietro l'arto, a modelli più complessi come quelli dell'effigie del Pianeta Marte in una formella Campanile di Giotto a Firenze, montati sopra una protezione di tessuto imbottito che avvolge il ginocchio, oppure i mo-

<sup>74</sup> Marco MERLO, *Le armi difensive nell'affresco di "Bruno" in Santa Maria Novella: proposte di lettura e datazione*, in Anna BISCEGLIA (cur.), *Ricerche a Santa Maria Novella: gli affreschi ritrovati*, Firenze, Mandragora, 2016, pp. 128-132. Marco MERLO, «Produzione, commercio e modelli di armi nella Toscana duecentesca», in *Nuova Antologia Militare, Storia Medievale*, n. 3, fascicolo 9, 2022, pp. 185-274.



*Gisant* del Principe Nero nella cattedrale di Canterbury. 1376-1380. La figura è scolpita in rame, un materiale che ha consentito all'artista di raffigurare i più minuti dettagli.

delli indossati da Guidoriccio da Fogliano<sup>75</sup>, formati da uno scheletro in metallo e completati da due valve in cuoio cotto. Anche i piedi iniziavano a essere protetti da lamelle metalliche sovrapposte, come si osserva nelle effigi di cavalieri nelle lastre tombali trecentesche<sup>76</sup>. Iniziarono a diffondersi anche protezioni per il go-

<sup>75</sup> Siena, Palazzo Pubblico, Sala del Mappamondo.

<sup>76</sup> BOCCIA, *Hic iacet miles* cit., pp. 81-99.

mito in metallo, forgiate in un'unica piastra, come si vede in numerose pitture e lastre tombali, come quella conservata al Museo delle Armi "Luigi Marzoli" di Brescia, databile alla seconda metà del Trecento<sup>77</sup>. Ma soprattutto furono introdotte innovazioni per la protezione dell'avambraccio, protezioni avvolgenti in cuoio cotto rinforzate per mezzo di borchie<sup>78</sup> o doghe metalliche inserite verticalmente all'interno del cuoio stesso. Quest'ultima soluzione fu quella più praticata ed è la prima vera innovazione nel processo che condurrà all'armatura a piastre. Questi elementi avvolgevano completamente l'arto e la loro diffusione è cronologicamente disomogenea. Dapprima furono usate, all'inizio del Trecento, per la difesa delle cosce fino al ginocchio, le parti anatomiche del combattente a cavallo più esposte ai colpi avversari. Dalla metà del secolo furono allungate fino al polpaccio e furono introdotti pezzi analoghi per difen-



Lastra tombale di Walter von Hohenklingen († 1386), oggi conservata nel Kantonale Historische Sammlung di Lenzburg, Svizzera.

<sup>77</sup> La scritta lungo la cornice è ormai troppo compromessa per essere letta correttamente, ma si tratta di un'opera eseguita localmente poiché è in pietra di Botticino, in anni in cui le fonti bresciane iniziano a documentare una florida produzione di armature. Vedi Marco MERLO, *Alla scoperta delle testimonianze trecentesche del Castello di Brescia e alcune note sull'origine della produzione armiera bresciana*, in Stefania BUGANZA (cur.), *Il Leone e la Vipera: le arti a Brescia nel Trecento*, atti del convegno (Brescia, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 22-23 maggio 2025), Milano, Skira, 2026, pp. 77-84.

<sup>78</sup> In realtà si tratta di spessi rivetti che fissano delle stecche metalliche nella parte interna della protezione.



Armeria di Castel Coira, l'armatura in primio piano è la S 13, 1370 c. Gli elemetti più antichi hanno la viesiera a becco di passero.

dere braccio e avambraccio.

Le protezioni per la testa, come il bacinetto e la barbata, si evolsero ulteriormente, offrendo maggiore protezione senza compromettere la visibilità o la respirazione. In origine erano elmi pensati per essere indossati sotto l'elmo a storo, ma alcune evoluzioni consentirono di usarli da soli nei combattimenti più feroci. Alcuni esemplari di barbata furono dotati di una cerniera all'altezza della fronte su cui veniva incernierato un nasale o una visiera detta a ribalta, proprio perché era possibile sollevarla per scoprire l'intera apertura facciale. Si trattava di una

soluzione molto diffusa, testimoniata da numerose fonti iconografiche e scritte, così come il nasale a camaglio: un nasale fissato alla parte inferiore del camaglio, con un occhiello sulla punta; quando il viso era scoperto, il nasale pendeva sul petto, ma poteva essere sollevato e l'occhiello fissato a un gancio saldato sulla fronte, proteggendo così bocca, naso e guance<sup>79</sup>. Si tratta di un'altra soluzione tecnica che consentiva di usare la barbata in ogni situazione, che osserviamo nella lastra tombale di Giacotto Provana datata al 1382<sup>80</sup>, in quella di Galeotto Malaspina (†1367)<sup>81</sup>, oppure



Dettaglio dell'armatura S 13 di Castel Coira (1370 c.): si osservano le piastre sovrapposte che compongono il petto.

in un capitello, a forma di testa di guerriero, del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia. Negli affreschi della Camera delle Guardie del Castello di Sabbionara di Avio, databile intorno agli anni Settanta del Trecento, i cavalieri, che si distinguono per eccellenti armature con arti protetti da difese in cuoio rinforzate da borchie e stecche metalliche, portano elmi a staro, barbute sia con visiera rialzabile sia con nasale a camaglio.

79 Marco MERLO, «Le armi del marchese. Gli armamenti negli Enseignements di Teodoro Paleologo tra teoria e pratica della guerra», in *Bollettino Storico Bibliografico Subalpino*, CX, 2012, pp. 532-535.

80 Originariamente nella chiesa di Santa Chiara di Carignano, oggi ai Musei Reali di Torino – Galleria Sabauda.

81 Chiesa di San Remigio a Fosdinovo.



Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3062 *Kriegsbuch*, 1437, c. 82r. In questa e nell'immagine seguente si osserva una delle rare testimonianze iconografiche di petto d'armatura composto da più piastre sovrapposte, come il modello S 13 di Castel Coira.

Due effigi di lastre tombali ci aiutano a visualizzare la situazione degli armamenti difensivi alla metà del XIV secolo: quella di Colaccio Beccadelli († 1340) nella chiesa di San Nicola e Domenico a Imola e quella di Lorenzo di Niccolò Acciaiuoli († 1353) nella Certosa di Valdema a Firenze. Si tratta di due armamenti particolarmente “alla moda”, ma che permettono di analizzare l'armatura “di transizione” trecentesca.

Se nell'effigie di Lorenzo Acciaiuoli non è raffigurato l'elmo, in quella di Colaccio Beccadelli il cavaliere indossa una barbuta semplice, ma porta riverso sulla schiena, allacciato tramite una catena d'arme, un l'emo a staro, che poteva essere calzato alla bisogna, poco prima dello scontro, esattamente come nell'effigie

funebre di Cangrande della Scala († 1329)<sup>82</sup>. L'armamento di Colaccio è ancora legato alla prima metà del secolo, più funzionale che lussuoso<sup>83</sup>: il camaglio cade sulle spalle, al di sotto del quale si osservano gli spillacci in cuoio cotto a forma di mandorla dalle dimensioni piuttosto contenute con impressa l'arme del *miles*; le braccia sono protette solo dalle maniche in maglia di ferro, non si osser-

82 Verona, Arche Scaligere.

83 Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, Edoardo T. COELHO, «Colaccio Beccadelli: an Emilian Knight of about 1340», in *Arms and Armor Annual*, I, 1973, pp. 10–27.

vano protezioni per l'avambraccio (che potrebbe aver portato sotto le maniche), ma si distingue per un paio di manopole, già a clessidra, ma molto voluminose. La sorcotta d'arme non consente di apprezzare eventuali protezioni per il tronco, ma si vede il bordo inferiore della maglia di ferro, che arriva poco sotto l'inguine. Porta delle braghe imbottite protette da cosciali, forse metallici; i ginocchieri sono in ferro allacciati con una correggia, mentre gli stinchi sono coperti da schinieri in cuoio cotto. Sembra invece calzare delle scarpe borchiate a protezione dei piedi.

Lorenzo Acciuoli, figlio del potente Niccolò, porta invece un armamento di grande lusso, in cui l'armatura "di transizione" tocca il suo culmine in raffinatezza. Le spalle sono protette da spallacci in cuoio a forma di testa di leone con le fauci spalancate. Il corpo è protetto dalla maglia di ferro, ma sopra porta una corazza in cuoio



Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3062 *Kreigsbuch*, 1437, c. 108r.

finemente decorata a fogliami che termina con dei raffinati pendenti di chiara ispirazione classica. Le maniche di maglia di ferro sono corte agli avambracci, che però sono avvolti da cannoni a doghe metalliche su una struttura in cuoio. Anche le cosce sono protette da cosciali in cuoio a doghe di ferro e i ginocchieri, riprendendo gli spallacci, sono a forma di teste di leone, probabilmente anch'essi in cuoio. Al di sotto si vedono i calzoni in maglia di ferro, e gli schinieri in cuoio sono decorati con gli stessi motivi della corazza. Porta delle manopole a clessidra, un modello ormai maturo che sarà in auge ancora per tutta la prima metà del



Quattrocento, mentre ai piedi calza delle scarpe in lamina di ferro.

Lo sviluppo di armi difensive anche per i fanti dimostra l'importanza della protezione in battaglia e il pavese ne è un celebre esempio.

Questa era un'arma difensiva che vide le sue origini nei mantelletti e tavolacci, di più grosse dimensioni, che permettevano agli assaltatori, tiratori, guastatori e genieri di avvicinarsi con relativa sicurezza alle mura di castelli e città. Il pavese venne menzionato per la prima volta nei registri del comune di San Gimignano del 1223<sup>84</sup>. Si tratta di uno scudo, dalle dimensioni intorno al metro e venti, dietro il quale trovavano protezione la fanteria e i tiratori. Presto si diffuse in tutti gli eserciti comunali italiani, particolarmente presso le repubbliche marinare (Genova per prima), ed è quasi certo che i pavesi siano stati impiegati come armi di bordo solo dopo che il loro impiego fu perfezionato sulla terraferma (come sembra essere successo a Venezia)<sup>85</sup>, e solo in un secondo momento furono impiegati per la guerra navale, come la denominazione della murata esterna delle navi, pavese appunto, ricorda. Permetteva nuovi schieramenti

84 Fabio BARGIGIA, *Gli eserciti nell'Italia comunale. Organizzazione e logistica (1180-1320)*, Milano, Unicopoli, 2010, p. 180.

85 Aldo A. SETTIA, *De re militari. Pratica e teoria nella guerra medievale*, Roma, Laterza, 2008, pp. 225-226.

Armatura composita ritrovata a Cahleis, 1400-1410, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 29.154.3.

tattici in combinazione con altre specialità<sup>86</sup>.

Non fu una coincidenza che, proprio a partire dal XIII secolo, le fanterie comunali sperimentarono sul campo la combinazione tra differenti reparti specializzati nel maneggio di alcune armi, quella che Settia ha efficacemente definito «tripartizione funzionale» della fanteria<sup>87</sup>, ascrivibile all'interno di quel fenomeno di portata continentale, in cui le fanterie assumevano sempre più un ruolo determinante nelle tattiche<sup>88</sup>, che ha portato la storiografia anglosassone a interrogarsi su una *Medieval Military Revolution*, che potrebbe avere il suo inizio proprio nei primi decenni del Trecento, con le nuove formazioni di specialisti appiedati<sup>89</sup>. In queste nuove tattiche un ruolo determinante fu ricoperto dai pavesari<sup>90</sup>. Costoro avevano il compito di creare solide barricate mobili con i pavesi, dietro ai quali potevano operare al sicuro i balestrieri e gli uomini armati con lance lunghe, tanto che, come tramandato dal Compagni, negli istanti precedenti alla battaglia di Campaldino, combattuta l'11 giugno 1289, il vescovo di Arezzo, evidentemente miope, chiese che mura fossero quelle che vedeva innanzi al suo esercito, e «fugli risposto: “i palvesari dei nimici”»<sup>91</sup>.

L'organizzazione militare delle fanterie comunali era il riflesso dell'organizza-

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86 Aldo A. SETTIA, *I mezzi della guerra. Balestre, pavesi e lance lunghe: la specializzazione delle fanterie comunali nel secolo XIII*, in *Pace e guerra nel basso medioevo*, atti del XL Convegno storico internazionale (Todi, 12-14 ottobre 2003), Spoleto, Fondazione CI-SAM, 2004, pp. 153-200; Fabio ROMANONI, «Balestrieri, pavesari e lance lunghe: la tripartizione funzionale delle cernite di Gian Galeazzo Visconti del 1397», in Simone CALDANO, Gianmarco DE ANGELIS, Cristina LA ROCCA (cur.), «*Castrum paene in mundo singulare*». *Scritti per Aldo Settia in occasione del novantesimo compleanno*, Genova, Sagep, 2022, pp. 214-220.

87 SETTIA, *De re militari* cit., pp. 207-246.

88 Il fenomeno di rivalorizzazione delle fanterie sul piano tattico nella prima metà del Trecento è stato messo in evidenza dalla storiografia anglosassone con l'esempio della battaglia di Crécy. Sull'argomento si vedano i contributi raccolti in Andrew AYTON, Philip PRESTON (eds.), *The Battle of Crécy, 1346*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2007, in modo particolare i saggi di Andrew Ayton (*The Battle: Context and Significance*, p. 11 sgg.; *The English Army at Crécy*, pp. 224-229).

89 Andrew AYTON, J.L. PRICE (eds.), *The Medieval Military Revolution. State, Society and Military change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, London, Tauris Academic Studies, 1995; Michael PRESTWICH, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages. The English Experience*, London, Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 334-346.

90 SETTIA, *I mezzi della guerra* cit., pp. 172-198.

91 Dino COMPAGNI, *Cronica delle cose occorrenti ne' tempi suoi*, Gino LUZZATTO Torino, Einaudi, 1968, I, 10, pp. 21-22.

zione politica del Popolo cittadino, coeso sia all'interno delle *vicinie*, sia all'interno delle società di popolo o di mestiere. In guerra erano chiamate a formare unità militari proprio su base rionale o delle *societates*. I pavesari divennero quindi una delle élites militari del comune, e i pavesi assunsero a simbolo della coesione del Popolo. Per questa ragione i pavesi dovevano essere finemente decorati e ricchissimi di iscrizioni solenni: così come l'aristocrazia militare cittadina apponeva i propri blasoni sugli scudi da cavaliere, i fanti li apponevano sui pavesi.

Una novella di Franco Sacchetti racconta proprio di un personaggio di basso lignaggio che commissionò la pittura del proprio pavese nientemeno che a Giotto. L'artista fiorentino si sentì offeso per una commissione che di norma era indirizzata a pittori di minor spessore<sup>92</sup>. Questa novella, dai chiari intenti comici, scaturita o meno della fantasia dell'autore, testimonia la diffusione della prassi decorativa pittorica dei pavesi «che davano fior di lavoro a legioni di pittori in genere meno accreditati di Giotto, ma con le dovute eccezioni»<sup>93</sup>, di cui troviamo tracce documentarie sia archivistiche sia materiali. Nel settembre 1241 a San Gimignano vennero acquistati 22 pavesi da inviare a Pandolfo da Fasanella per essere usati nell'assedio di Selvena, ma prima sarebbero dovuti essere dipinti<sup>94</sup>. A Siena, nel 1264, venne multato per l'ingente somma di 25 lire il pittore Ventura Gualtieri, del popolo di Sant'Egidio, per aver dipinto su un pavese un motivo satirico: un leone, simbolo del Popolo senese, che faceva sanguinare il muso di una lupa, emblema cittadino<sup>95</sup>. Per questa città sappiamo anche che i pavesi delle società di popolo dovevano essere dipinti con l'emblema della società stessa<sup>96</sup>. Nello statuto di Lucca è vietato usare, oltre ai vessilli e alle bandiere, scudi, targhe e rotelle con disegnati i simboli del comune, che poteva campeggiare solo sui pavesi<sup>97</sup>. A Firenze invece nel 1281 mille uomini del partito popolare furono obbligati a procurarsi e far dipingere pavesi, scudi, targhe e tavolacci grandi, men-

92 Francesco SACCHETTI, *Il Trecentonovelle*, Dino PUCCINI (cur.), Torino, UTET, 2008, pp. 196-198.

93 Fulvio CERVINI, *Lame benedette. Qualche riflessione per studiare le armi e i loro committenti*, in Arturo Carlo QUINTAVALLE (cur.), *Medioevo: i committenti*, Milano 2011, p. 376.

94 Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *San Gimignano, Carte 34*, c. 17r.

95 Lodovico ZDEKAUER, *La vita privata dei senesi nel Dugento*, Firenze, Lazzeri, 1896, p. 57.

96 Giovanni MAZZINI, *L'esercito senese nel sabato di Montaperti*, in Ettore PELLEGRINI (cur.), *Alla ricerca di Montaperti. Mito, fonti documentarie e storiografia*, Siena 2009, p. 188.

97 Salvatore BONGI (cur.), *Statuto del comune di Lucca dell'anno MCCCVIII*, Lucca, Tip. Canovetti, 1867, p. 231.

tre, secondo gli *Ordinamenti di Giustizia* del luglio 1295, ogni sesto di Firenze avrebbe dovuto dotarsi di cento pavesi con dipinto l'emblema del vessillo di giustizia<sup>98</sup>; sempre Firenze, lo *Statuto del capitano del popolo* nel 1325, alla rubrica CVIII del Libro V, regolamentava la pittura dei simboli delle società di popolo sulle armi difensive, tra le quali in testa figurano pavesi e scudi, seguiti da elmi e cappelli di ferro, bacineti e cervelliere<sup>99</sup>. Nel 1361 un banchiere di Pinerolo, Rostagneto Falletti, lasciò in eredità, insieme ad altre tipologie di scudi, sette pavesi *de parva forma* e altri tre definiti *parvos*, ma tutti dipinti<sup>100</sup>. I pavesi



98 Rispettivamente: Gaetano SALVEMINI, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295*, Firenze, Carnesecchi, 1899, pp. 342, 393.

99 Romolo CAGGESE (cur.), *Statuti della Repubblica Fiorentina. Statuto del capitano del popolo degli anni 1322-25*, vol. I, Firenze 1910, pp. 309-310.

100 SETTIA, *De re militari* cit., p. 165. So-

Armatura S 18 di Castel Coira (1400 c.), uno delle più antiche armature a piastre oggi note.

rappresentati nel ciclo della Camera delle Guardie del castello di Sabbionara di Avio non solo sono dipinti, ma alcuni recano delle lettere e altri il motto *Siachepò* (“sia quel che sia”). Mentre sui pavese dell’esercito di Federico da Montefeltro campeggiava l’arme dei Montefeltro e il monogramma *Federicus Dux* in caratteri gotici. Sono sopravvissuti due raffinati esemplari di pavese toscani dei primi anni del XV secolo, oggi conservati al museo Bardini di Firenze, che ci permettono di avere un’idea sulla loro forma: il primo è un pavese con dipinto il gonfalone del Leon Bianco del Sesto di San Pancrazio di Firenze, e quindi appartenuto ai pavesari del Sesto<sup>101</sup>; il secondo reca le armi della famiglia senese dei Bonamici: l’immagine di questo pavese è attribuita a Taddeo di Bartolo, eseguita sopra un precedente disegno geometrico<sup>102</sup>. Quest’ultimo si segnala per possedere intorno al bordo un’iscrizione in una maiuscola gotica, dai tratti morbidi e tondeggianti, con le M di ispirazione onciale. Furono costruiti anche piccoli pavese da pugno, come quello funebre seppellito con il feretro del re d’Ungheria Mattia Corvino, che nelle forme ricalcano i pavese normali e sono anch’essi accompagnati da un testo lungo il bordo<sup>103</sup>. I pavese erano arrivati in Ungheria, come narra il cronista polacco Jan Dlugoz, dalla Boemia alla Moravia con l’esercito di George Poděbrady e usati contro le truppe ungheresi di Mattia Corvino, in seguito adottati anche da quest’ultime<sup>104</sup>. Durante le guerre Hussite, in cui i pavesari trovarono importanti impieghi tattici, nelle città boeme il gruppo sociale popolare ogni anno sceglieva una bottega per dipingere esclusivamente i pavese destinati alle fanterie urbane, per «la necessità, l’onore e la bellezza della città» come specifica lo statuto della Corporazione dei pittori di Praga. Nel 1441 la città di Zwickau commissionò quaranta pavese alla città di Chomutov. Di questi quaranta sono arrivati fino

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no indicati come pavese piccoli di norma quegli scudi destinati a ospitare decorazioni ed emblemi araldici da esibire sui muri dei palazzi e delle case, arma squisitamente decorativa e priva di funzioni militari.

101 Marco MERLO, *Pavese del Gonfalone del Leon Bianco*, in Maria Monica DONATO, Daniela PARENTI, (cur.) *Dal giglio al David. Arte civica a Firenze tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, catalogo della mostra, Firenze, Galleria dell’Accademia di Firenze, 14 maggio-8 dicembre 2013, Firenze 2013, p. 21.

102 Rispettivamente: Firenze, Museo Bardini, inv. 308; 310.

103 Bruno THOMAS, Ortwin GAMBER, Hans SCHEDELMANN, *Armi e armature europee*, Milano; Electa, 1965, scheda e fig. 23.

104 Roberto FARINELLI, Marco MERLO, *La Camera del Comune: miniere, metallurgia, armi*, in Petra PERTICI (cur.), *L’età dei Petrucci: cultura e tecnologia a Siena nel Rinascimento*, Siena, Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 2016, pp. 223-224.

a noi solo undici, tutti finemente dipinti, e solo due non hanno iscrizioni. Uno di essi è conservato in Armeria Reale a Torino<sup>105</sup> e reca sul bordo delle invocazioni sacre in boemo tratte dalla fraseologia comune nei canti e nei manifesti ussiti<sup>106</sup>.

Alla metà del Trecento quindi, le armature erano una combinazione di maglia di ferro, cuoio cotto e piastre metalliche, e le protezioni rigide, come spallacci e schinieri, divennero più comuni, mentre le protezioni per il busto, come le armature a lamelle o a piastre, offrivano una difesa ottimale. Tuttavia la diffusione di nuove armi offensive, come gli stocchi, richiese difese più efficaci per il tronco, portando all'introduzione delle brigantine. La brigantina era un'armatura costituita da piccole placchette metalliche quadrangolari sovrapposte a scaglie, rivettate all'interno di



Antoine, conte de Vaudémont († 1458), già nella collegiata di Saint-Jean-Baptiste di Vaudémont, oggi nella chiesa dei Cordeliers a Nancy. Porta un'armamento quasi identico all'insieme S 18 di Castel Coira: cubitere, cannoni di avambraccio e girello sono pressoché uguali, mentre il petto differisce per un dettaglio: nell'effigie funebre il petto e la schiena sono incernierati tra loro sulle spalle, un modello evidentemente più evoluto.

<sup>105</sup> Inv. F 1.

<sup>106</sup> Vladimir DENKENSTEIN, «The Boemian Pavise in Turin Armeria Reale», in *Armi Antiche*, 1965, pp. 37-55.

un'anima in pelle o lino, che offriva flessibilità e protezione. Sembra essere un oggetto che unisce in sé la struttura in cuoio delle corazze, ma avere all'interno delle lamine simili alle *lamerias*, però mediamente molto più piccole. La più antica attestazione sull'uso del termine brigantina compare negli inventari delle armi esportate dal mercante pratese Francesco Datini, che nel 1367 vendeva ad Avignone *chorazine brigantine* verniciate o stagnate<sup>107</sup>. L'iconografia Tre e Quattrocentesca ne offre abbondanti e dettagliate raffigurazioni, confrontabili con alcuni reperti giunti fino a noi<sup>108</sup>. Si segnalano, per i dettagli particolarmente realistici, alcune opere come la *Crocifissione* attribuita a Giotto durante il suo periodo napoletano (1328-1333), oggi al Louvre. Nella scena sono presenti alcuni cavalieri che portano diverse tipologie di armature della prima metà del Trecento, tra cui si distingue un'armatura in cuoio finemente decorata, ma il cavaliere di spalle indossa quella che sembrerebbe già essere una brigantina, con un sistema di allacciatura posteriore molto simile alla corazza del San Maurizio di Magdeburgo. Del tutto identica è la brigantina addosso al cavaliere intagliato nel coro ligneo della cattedrale di Verden, che è di straordinario interesse poiché si può apprezzare sia la visione frontale sia quella posteriore, con il caratteristico sistema di allaccio.

#### L'ARMATURA A PIASTRE

Dalle difese a lame all'armatura a piastre, che offriva una protezione completa del corpo, il passo fu breve. È datato tra il 1367 e il 1371 il dossale d'argento di Leonardo di Ser Jacopo nella cattedrale di Pistoia, in cui si possono osservare alcuni petti ricavati da un'unica lastra metallica. L'effigie del Principe Nero († 1376), nel suo cenotafio nella cattedrale di Canterbury, mostra un'armatura a piastre di modello già evoluto, fatto confermato dagli elementi superstiti, come le manopole a clessidra con tutte le falangi delle dita dotate di spuntoni, così come un modello maturo sembra essere quello di Jacopo Cavalli († 1384) nella sua lastra tombale in SS. Giovanni Paolo a Venezia, in particolare per quanto riguarda braccia e gambe. La lastra funebre di Walter von Hohenklingen († 1386),

107 Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, *L'armamento difensivo in Toscana dal Millecento al Trecento*, in *Civiltà delle arti minori in Toscana*, Atti del I Convegno, Arezzo 11-15 maggio 1971, Firenze, EDAM, 1973, p. 207.

108 Daniele DIOTALLEVI, *Per una storia della Brigantina*, in Maria Grazia BARBERINI (cur.) *Un vestito da battaglia. Una brigantina del '500*, Roma, Campisano Editore, 2008, pp. 22-27.

oggi conservata nel Kantonale Historische Sammlung di Lenzburg in Svizzera, mostra l'effigie del cavaliere indossare un petto a piastra, privo di falde sotto la vita, coperto dal tessuto, probabilmente formato da due piastre che si chiudevano sul davanti, dotato della resta vicino all'ascella destra. Fu disputato il 24 giugno 1399 il duello pubblico tra il cavaliere tedesco Sirano e Giovannino di Badagio da Milano, allenato per l'occasione dal celeberrimo Fiore dei Liberi, svolto a Pavia e raccontato da un anonimo osservatore, il quale scrisse al duca di Urbino stupefatto perché, grazie alle nuove armature a piastre, evidentemente ancora una novità, i duellanti si scambiarono colpi violenti, sferrati con armi pesanti e acuminatae, ma nessuno riportò ferite<sup>109</sup>. È datata tra il 1370 e il 1380 la più antica armatura a piastre giunta ai giorni nostri, conservata nell'armeria di Castel Coira<sup>110</sup>, con il marchio della bottega di Pietro Negroni da Ello, detto Missaglia<sup>111</sup>, che può essere



109 Trascrizione in Antonio G.G. MERENDONI, *L'arma e il cavaliere. L'arte della scherma medievale*, Rimini, Il Cerchio, 1999, pp. 29-34.

110 Inv. S 13. TRAPP, Oswald, *The Armoury of the Castle of Churburg*, vol. II, Udine, Magnus Fagagna, 1996, pp. 19-22.

111 Lo stesso marchio che si riscontra nel bacinetto, datato tra il 1390 e il 1400, ritrovato in un pozzo, oggi esposto nel Palazzo Comunale di San Gimignano.

Giovanni Corio (?), Armatura Avant, Milano, 1438-1440, Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, inv. E.1939.65. Armatura in tipico stile lombardo, con le morbide rontondità e la spiccata asimmetria delle difese per spalle e braccia.

considerata l'anello di congiunzione tra le protezioni a lame e l'armatura a piastre propriamente detta: il petto, rigonfio, è formato da nove piastre verticali con la quinta sopra le altre; la quarta e la sesta sono unite in alto a quella centrale tramite un ribattino che scorre all'interno di un foro rettangolare che consente un po' di gioco. In questo modo si chiudeva sul busto del cavaliere grazie all'articolazione delle lame laterali, concettualmente ancora come una brigantina. Una tipologia di armatura documentata ancora negli anni Trenta del Quattrocento in un paio di miniature del *Kreigsbuch*, un trattato militare datato al 1437<sup>112</sup>. Altri modelli primitivi, come uno rinvenuto a Calkis, erano formati da alcune piastre molto ampie, il petto era composto da due piastre simmetriche che si aprivano sul davanti, ancora concettualmente simile ad alcuni modelli di Visby<sup>113</sup>, una soluzione fino allora legata alla brigantina<sup>114</sup>.

Un dato di particolare rilevanza riguardo l'armatura S 13 di Castel Coira, è che ha i bordi in ottone dorato, una decorazione comune ad altri esemplari giunti fino a noi, e come in questi presenta delle incisioni a bulino. Ma, mentre negli altri casi noti si tratta di cornici geometriche, qui vi è ripetuto all'infinito il testo *Jesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat* in gotica minuscola, citazione dal Vangelo di Luca (IV, 30), particolarmente adatta per un'armatura, che si ritrova anche sul bordo di due manopole a clessidra del 1380 al Bargello<sup>115</sup>; mentre su una manopola a clessidra della Wallace Collection<sup>116</sup>, sempre nel bordo dorato, si legge la parola AMOR<sup>117</sup>. Nell'arte figurativa, la scrittura sui bordi delle armature, è testimoniata su quella del monumento equestre di Bernabò Visconti, al Museo di Arte Antica di Milano. Un lessico decorativo incentrato sulla scrittura, che sulle armature riscuoterà enorme successo, con significati importanti, per tutto il Quattro, il Cinque e il Seicento<sup>118</sup>.

112 Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3062 Kreigsbuch, cc. 82r., 108r.

113 THORDEMAN, *Armour from the Battle of Wisby*, vol. II, cit., PL 61-63.

114 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, invv. 29.150.91a-f, i-o. Si veda Charles John FOULKES, «On Italian armour from Chalcis in the Ethnological Museum at Athens», in *Archaeologia: Or Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity*, 1911, LXII, part. 2, pp. 381-390; Carl Otto Kretzschmar VON KIENBUSCH, *The Bashford Dean Collection of Arms and armor in the Metropolitan Museum of art*, Portland, Southmoor Press, 1934.

115 Inv. Re 12.

116 Inv. A 251.

117 Come su uno sperone del Bargello (inv. Re 49).

118 Marco MERLO, «Funzione di modelli grafici sulle armi tra XVI e XVII secolo», in *Armi*

È dall'inizio del XV secolo che si diffonderanno in tutta Europa i petti a un'unica piastra, come il busto dell'armatura S 18, sempre Castel Coira, datata al 1400 circa, il più antico conservatosi integro, eseguito con le nuove ed evolute forme, composto da un petto ricavato da un'unica piastra, con uno scollo rialzato, il risalto d'arresto a V e la resta; la schiena è formata da tre lame messe in verticale e leggermente scorrevoli tra loro. Petto e schiena sono corti alla vita, e il resto della protezione del busto è affidato da un sistema composto da panziera e guardarene, sovrapposto nella parte al di sotto della pancia, accompagnato da un girello a tre lame, il tutto fissato all'insieme petto-schiena da coietti rivettati che consentono un po' gioco nei movimenti. Questo



*antiche* 2009, pp. 7-40; Marco MERLO, *Inscrizioni su armi e armature nel Tardo Medioevo*, in *Fay ce que voudras. Mélange en l'honneur d'Alessandro Vitale-Brovarone*, Parigi, Classique Garnier, 2018, pp. 407-421; Marco MERLO, *Il libro e l'armatura. Tradizioni testuali su armi e armature tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, in *Il racconto delle Armi*, a cura di Tommaso DI CARPEGNA FALCONIERI, Salvatore RITROVATO, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2021, pp. 229-246.

Elmetto da uomo d'arme, Maestro Leonardo, Milano (?), 1420-1440. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 42.50.2. Composto da soli tre elementi (coppo e due paragnatidi) con una visiera e la rotellina sulla nuca. Si tratta di uno dei più antichi modelli di elmetto da uomo d'arme. Questi rivoluzionarono le difese per la testa, formati da più lamine d'acciaio, garantivano comodità e protezione.

modello rimarrà all'avanguardia, non solo sotto un profilo tecnico-funzionale, per tutto il secolo. Le affinità tra l'armatura S 13 e la S 18 sono solo nei rialzi del petto, per il resto vediamo come le protezioni del petto siano in un caso ancora a lamine e nell'altro già ad un'unica piastra. L'aggiunta del girello integra le nuove protezioni rigide, laddove nell'esemplare più antico erano in maglia di ferro. Del resto è datato alla fine degli anni Novanta del Trecento il San Giorgio di Jacques di Saint George inciso su legno, oggi al Musée des Beaux-Arts di Digione, in cui l'armatura a piastre è ormai matura: non è apprezzabile il petto, perché coperto dall'ampio camicione, ma si vede la resta e si intuisce essere completato da un girello; le manopole a clessidra, il bacinetto con visiera a becco di passero e le gambiere completamente in metallo testimoniano l'ormai avvenuta evoluzione dall'armamento in cuoio e ferro a quello totalmente metallico. Un petto praticamente identico all'esemplare S 18 di Castel Coira è indossato dal *gisant* di Antoine, conte de Vaudémont († 1458)<sup>119</sup>, ma nella scultura di pietra il petto e la schiena sono fissati tra loro attraverso delle cerniere poste sulle spalle. Se prendiamo in esame l'armatura del Metropolitan rinvenuta nei sotterranei del castello di Chalcis sull'isola di Eubea, datata tra il 1400 e il 1410<sup>120</sup>, che, sebbene composita<sup>121</sup>, è uno dei modelli più antichi che si conosca, e la confrontiamo con l'armatura di transizione in metallo e cuoio della metà del Trecento, ci accorgiamo che gli elementi che ancora alla metà del XIV secolo erano di cuoio (soprattutto le protezioni per spalle, braccia e gambe), all'inizio del XV secolo vengono sostituiti con omologhi metallici; invece le manopole sono sempre a clessidra e il bacinetto con visiera si staziona su modelli a becco di passero, che divenne il più comune, anche se non l'unico. È da questo momento che nasce l'armatura da uomo d'arme, che è stata probabilmente la protezione per il corpo migliore che sia mai stata ideata, versatile per ogni tipologia di combattimento, a piedi e a cavallo, in guerra e in torneo, come dimostrano anche i trattati di scherma<sup>122</sup>.

119 Nancy, chiesa dei Cordeliers, già nella collegiata di Saint-Jean-Baptiste di Vaudémont.

120 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 29.154.3.

121 Alcuni pezzi risalgono al 1470 e altri non sono pertinenti, rimontati dopo il rinvenimento. Per una descrizione precisa: Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, Edoardo T. COELHO, *L'arte dell'armatura in Italia*, Milano, Bramante, 1967, p. 131.

122 Ad esempio si vedano le copie del trattato quattrocentesco di FIORE DEI LIBERI DA PREMARIACCO, *Il fior di battaglia di maestro Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco*, Francesco NOVATI (cur.), Bergamo, Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1902.

Con queste nuove ed efficaci difese, scudi e targhe divennero sul piano pratico sempre più obsoleti, in particolar modo per chi combatteva a piedi; assumevano invece maggiore importanza per il loro valore simbolico ed estetico, grazie alle decorazioni apposte su di essi, che acquisirono quindi maggiore rilevanza, soprattutto araldica. Alcuni esempi illuminanti sono il targone del XV secolo che porta l'arme della famiglia fiorentina Villani<sup>123</sup>, e quello del Bargello, appartenuto all'inizio del Quattrocento a Pannocchia Riccomanni<sup>124</sup>, entrambi con la copertura esterna in cuoio lavorata a pastiglia e dipinta. Invece, decorati con raffinate pitture dal valore però apotropaico, possiamo citare un magnifico targone bolognese del 1488<sup>125</sup>, con San Giorgio che uccide il drago e una lunga scritta che contiene la solita citazione evangelica *Jesus autem transiens per medium illorum*

123 Londra, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. 3-1865.

124 Firenze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. AM 784.

125 Bologna, Museo Civico Medioevale, inv. 173.

Augsburg, Lorenz Helmschmied, armatura dell'arciduca Sigismondo del Tirolo, 1484-1485, Vienna, Hofjagd- und Rüstammer, inv. A 62. Raffinato modello di armatura in stile tedesco, caratterizzata dalle superfici scanalate, bordi riccamente cordonati e le estremità appuntite. L'asimmetria è limitata agli spillacci.



*ibat*, e quello borgognone con il cavaliere inginocchiato davanti alla sua dama, dichiarando *Vous ou la Mort*, che è proprio dietro di lui pronta ad afferrarlo nel caso di rifiuto della dama<sup>126</sup>; mentre al Louvre è conservato lo scudo dipinto da Antonio Pollaiuolo, che rappresenta Milo di Crotone incastrato nel tronco d'albero, scena accompagnata da un'iscrizione<sup>127</sup>. Le targhe da giostra o da carriera erano ancora utili per parare i violenti colpi sferrati con la lancia in resta, ma anche per questi l'importanza maggiore risiedeva nelle decorazioni e nei motivi araldici apposti sulla parte frontale, come nell'inventario del 1308 del palazzo dei Tolomei nel castello di Prata, in cui è contato un targone dipinto, probabilmente con l'arme di famiglia come esplicitato per i vessilli descritti nel medesimo inventario<sup>128</sup>; continuarono ad avere una certa praticità ancora alla fine del XV secolo, epoca a cui risalgono alcuni interessanti reperti, come la targa datata al 1480 con l'arme della famiglia Eglauer e un motto particolarmente adatto allo scontro<sup>129</sup>.

Alla metà del Quattrocento si erano create due importanti stili, quello italiano e quello tedesco.

In Italia, in particolare in Lombardia dove il principale centro di produzione rimaneva Milano, si studiarono forme in grado di deviare i colpi avversari facendoli scivolare su piastre lisce, piuttosto spesse, dalle linee tondeggianti, caratteristica principale dell'armatura da uomo d'arme milanese, ma non solo. Gli armaioli lombardi della seconda metà del XV secolo avevano ideato armature che coniugavano la maggiore protezione al massimo della comodità. Influenzati profondamente dalle ricerche culturali del primo Rinascimento, dalle arti figurative alle scoperte in campo medico, gli armorari lombardi posero al centro delle loro ricerche e sperimentazioni il rapporto tra l'armamento difensivo da indossare e la realtà anatomica nelle sue caratteristiche morfologiche e dinamiche. Essendo destinate ai cavalieri, la loro ideazione proviene dall'osservazione delle diverse funzioni degli arti. Nel combattimento a cavallo il braccio destro maneggia l'arma, richiedendo libertà nei movimenti; il sinistro tiene le redini, rendendosi più vulnerabile ai colpi avversari: non è necessario dunque che l'armamento

126 Londra, British Museum, inv. 1863,0501.1.

127 Gabriele CANTELLI, *La vita sociale e la nuova dimensione dell'arte*, in Amerigo RESTUCCI (cur.), *L'architettura civile in Toscana. Il Rinascimento*, Siena, Polistampa, 1997, p. 333.

128 DE LUCA, FARINELLI, «Archi e balestre cit.», p. 475.

129 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 30.101. È ripetuto *io harr* (attendi) e al centro *las vber gan* (sarai battuto).



Firenze, Uffizi, Paolo Uccello, *Disarcionamento di Bernardino della Carda*, dal trittico della *Battaglia di San Romano*, c.1456. Si apprezzano i dettagli dell'armatura lombarda, in modo particolare si vede come si incrociavano posteriormente gli ampi spallacci, sovrapponendosi.

difensivo protegga entrambi gli arti egualmente. Da queste differenti necessità funzionali al combattimento si determinò la forma asimmetrica che caratterizzerà l'armatura italiana a partire dalla metà del XV secolo<sup>130</sup>. Le protezioni sono studiate per proteggere efficacemente tutta la persona: il corpo è protetto da due piastre che si sovrappongono, busto superiore, che protegge il torace fino al collo, e busto inferiore, che va indossato sopra a quello superiore e protegge dalla pancia alla vita. Lo stesso principio si applica nella protezione della schiena. La vita e i fianchi sono ben protetti da scarselle e fiancali, lamine d'acciaio che si articolavano sopra l'inguine e le cosce; anche le gambe sono difese da una serie di protezioni che compongono la gambiera, che va dalla coscia al piede. Le mani erano protette principalmente da manopole a mittene e per la testa si adoperarono per tutto il secolo una gran varietà di modelli: celate all'italiana, con l'apertura per il viso di diverse forme e ampiezze; gli elmetti da cavallo, in genere dotati di baviera, con visiera rialzabile e gran bacinetti per giostre e tornei. Di particolare rilevanza è l'evoluzione dell'elmetto da uomo d'arme, esclusivamente usato per

<sup>130</sup> Giorgio DONDI, *Il guerriero è asimmetrico*, in Dario LANZARDO (cur.), *Il convitato di ferro*, Torino, Il quadrante Edizioni, 1987, pp. 169-180.

questa tipologia d'armatura: se alla fine del Trecento era prevalentemente in soli tre pezzi<sup>131</sup>, dopo il 1420 acquisì un frontale che doppia la parte anteriore del coppo, e dietro una rotellina a migliore protezione della nuca e del collo, posta al termine di un breve gambo fissato al guardanuca; inoltre venne completato da una protezione del volto incernierata e girevole sulle bande mediante una visiera sana con fessure oculari - secondo la soluzione milanese - o da una semplice ventaglia - la variante toscana, preferita nella seconda metà del Quattrocento- che lasciava libero solo un sottile spazio tra essa e il frontale per consentire la vista. I modelli più antichi, come quello di Castel Coira S 18, datato intorno al 1420, hanno ancora forme arcaiche, ma le linee sono ormai scivolanti, e alla metà del secolo iniziò a comparire una cresta in sostituzione della eventuale costola mediana e venne quasi sempre completato, almeno in Italia, da una baviera volante, assicurata da un coietto affibbiato dietro il collo e protetto dalla rotellina, che doppiava le guance e il viso fino al naso. Da ognuno dei due guanciali, per lo più fissato a una lamina aggiuntiva, pendeva un lembo di maglia di ferro ad anelli, il cosiddetto gorzarino, ma talvolta si usò un semplice guardacollo volante di una o due lame.

Dall'altra parte lo stile tedesco, con i centri di produzione in Tirolo e Baviera, in particolare nelle città di Innsbruck, Augusta e Norimberga, favorì linee spezzate, molto spigolose e appuntite, come in architettura e nella produzione libraria coeva. Tutte le parti più esposte ai colpi sono percorse da scanalature che, grazie all'azione elastica che esercitano, servono a "rompere" la forza d'urto disperdendola su tutta la piastra, la quale, per contro, è più sottile delle omologhe milanesi. Il profilo generale delle armature tedesche del Quattrocento, proprio per l'uso delle scanalature, è più simmetrico, particolarmente adatto al combattimento appiedato, ma utile anche in quello a cavallo, tranne che per le giostre e i tornei. Gli spallacci hanno in genere il braccio articolato, che ne permette un agile movimento, e uno dei pochi elementi asimmetrici consiste in una guardagoletta sullo spallaccio destro, assente, o in alcuni casi notevolmente più piccola, sul destro; le manopole sono prevalentemente a dita separate, sovente con punte sulle nocche. La testa normalmente è protetta dalla celata alla tedesca, spesso abbinato al barbozzo per proteggere la parte inferiore del viso e il collo.

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131 Un coppo tondeggiante, poco o per nulla costolato in mezzeria, e provvisto di un'appendice che scendeva dietro il collo, detto guardanuca, e due guanciali incernierati lateralmente, sagomati in modo da lasciare liberi gli occhi e chiusi dinanzi al mento mediante un fermo o chiave in modo da organizzare una barbozza apribile.



Vittore Carpaccio, *Arrivo di Sant'Orsola a Colonia*, parte del ciclo delle *Storie di Sant'Orsola*, 1490-1495, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venezia. Gli uomini d'arme portano armature in stile tedesco, e uno di indossa una brigantina foderata di tessuti rosso.

Tuttavia l'abilità dei maestri milanesi era tale da poter imitare alla perfezione gli altri stili, cosicché arrivarono a Milano committenti dalla Francia o dalla Germania, che richiedevano armature forgiate con i criteri stilistici della propria regione d'origine: sono note numerose armature in stile tedesco che riportano i marchi di fabbrica di maestri milanesi<sup>132</sup>; nel 1458 furono commissionate a Pier Innocenzo da Faerno dodici armature di tipo francese<sup>133</sup>; mentre nel 1480 le botteghe di Cristoforo Capelli e di Antonio degli Armaroli dovettero rifornire di *armi more teutonico fabricata* il commerciante Tommaso da Danzica, proprio per essere immesse nel mercato tedesco<sup>134</sup>. Possiamo altresì essere certi che anche gli armorari tedeschi fossero in grado di forgiare armature imitando altri stili. Senza ombra di dubbio ci furono contaminazioni reciproche che portarono a lenti, ma significativi sviluppi.

Nonostante le innovazioni tecnologiche, alcune protezioni di antica concezione continuavano a trovare utilità. Sotto le piastre era portato un farsetto in cuoio e stoffa imbottita<sup>135</sup>, con elementi di maglia di ferro laddove l'armatura non offriva protezione, come alle braccia, alle ascelle, dietro al ginocchio<sup>136</sup>, ed elementi di maglia venivano aggiunti dove le piastre non erano presenti, ad esempio intorno al bacino o sui piedi<sup>137</sup>, ma in alcuni casi si usavano ancora elementi a piastre metalliche a scaglie, come per i girelli alla vita<sup>138</sup>, interessante a tale proposito è esaminare il trattato anonimo di scherma *Gladiatoria*, datato intorno al 1430, in cui si osservano diversi elementi ancora a scaglie metalliche, come i girelli della

132 Vedi Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA, *Le Armature di Santa Maria delle Grazie di Curtatone di Mantova e l'Armatura Lombarda del '400*, Milano, Bramante, 1982, pp. 25-28.

133 Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Missive*, 52, c. 18r.

134 THOMAS, Bruno, GAMBER, Ortwin, *L'arte milanese dell'armatura*, in *Storia di Milano*, vol. XI, Milano, Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la storia di Milano, 1958, p. 715.

135 Cfr. Tobias CAPWELL, «A Depiction of an Italian Arming Doublet», c. 1435-45, in *Waffen-und Kostümkunde*, 2002, pp. 2-20.

136 Si veda la miniatura New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 55, cc. 122v-123v

137 Tobias CAPWELL, «Mail and the Knight in Renaissance Italy», part. 1, in *Armi Antiche* 2017, pp. 9-84.

138 Si veda ad esempio l'armatura indossata da Johann I Von Wertheim († 1407) nella sua lastra funebre, oppure quella del gigante Golia nella miniatura della *Bible historiale* (Parigi, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms-5057, c. 32r) realizzata tra il 1400 e il 1420, che ha anche degli elementi a scaglie metalliche, o quella di Troilo in una miniatura nell'*Historia Troiana* di Guido de Columnis, datata al 1450 circa (Monaco, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 61, c. 110v).

vita e le protezioni per i piedi<sup>139</sup>.

L'evoluzione dell'armatura medievale, dalle sue semplici origini fino alle complesse armature del Rinascimento, è una storia di innovazione tecnologica, adattamento sociale e maestria artistica. Le armature non solo proteggevano i guerrieri sul campo di battaglia, ma erano anche simboli di potere, *status* e identità culturale che trova centralità nella produzione iconografica. I ricchi centri di produzione svolsero un ruolo fondamentale nello sviluppo delle tecnologie metallurgiche, influenzando le tendenze regionali e internazionali, testimonianze dell'ingegno umano e della capacità di adattarsi alle esigenze mutevoli del combattimento. La loro evoluzione riflette non solo i cambiamenti nelle tattiche militari, ma anche le trasformazioni sociali, politiche e soprattutto tecniche ed economiche delle società medievali. Le armature continuarono a evolversi nel XVI secolo, adattandosi alle nuove sfide poste dalle armi da fuoco e dalle nuove e dinamiche tattiche di guerra. Le armature a piastre divennero lo standard, offrendo una protezione completa e articolata che combinava efficacia e comodità. Gli armaioli continuarono a innovare, incorporando elementi decorativi complessi, riflettendo e influenzando le più raffinate correnti artistiche con soluzioni di grande eleganza.

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# La panoplia cavalleresca nei resoconti dell'*Inquisitio Baronum et Feudatariorum* *Aprutii* del 1279

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**ABSTRACT.** This article investigates the composition of the knightly panoply in the Angevin Kingdom during the reign of Charles I of Anjou, based on an arms inspection conducted in the provinces of Abruzzo in 1279. The surviving records from this survey include three inventories detailing the military equipment of Gentile de Sangro, Guillaume de Cadenet, and a squire in the service of the former. The study offers a lexicological analysis of the listed weaponry, considered in relation to contextual iconographic sources and archaeological evidence.

**KEYWORDS:** ANGEVIN CAVALRY; ARMOUR INVENTORIES; KNIGHTLY PANOPLY; KINGDOM OF SICILY.

## INTRODUZIONE

**N**ei documenti superstiti dell'ottavo fascicolo dei *Registri della Cancelleria Angioina* (RCA) sono riportate tre liste d'armamenti, resoconti dell'*Inquisitio Baronum et Feudatariorum* che Carlo I d'Angiò ordinò nella primavera del 1279 nelle province d'Abruzzo. Tali liste rappresentano oggi una fonte di grande valore per lo studio dei sistemi d'arma individuali del XIII secolo nell'Italia meridionale, sia per la generale scarsità di testimonianze dirette relative a questo ambito e periodo storico, sia per il loro carattere marcatamente oggettivo. Le *monstrae feudatariorum*, le grandi rassegne dei feudatari del regno, prevedevano che ciascun cavaliere o barone convocato presentasse le proprie armi, i cavalli e gli uomini d'arme a sua disposizione dinanzi a una commissione d'inchiesta presieduta da un alto ufficiale della corona, secondo i termini stabili-

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ti dal *servitium debitum*<sup>2</sup>.

Alla *monstra* del 1279 fu incaricato di presiedere il giustiziere d'Abruzzo Guillaume Brunel, che convocò i feudatari a Sulmona tra il 25 e il 29 aprile e a Penne tra il 6 e il 14 maggio, due città che, già in epoca sveva, avevano rivestito il ruolo di centri amministrativi del giustizierato d'Abruzzo, allora suddiviso in *citra* e *ultra flumen Piscariae*. Una copia degli atti ufficiali dell'inchiesta conflui, come di norma, all'interno dei registri della Cancelleria Regia di Napoli, distrutti tuttavia a Nola nel 1943 dalle truppe tedesche in ritirata. Berardo Pio ha proposto una ricostruzione dell'incartamento originale, che doveva estendersi dal foglio 80 *recto* al 135 *verso* del fascicolo, per un totale di circa cinquantacinque carte, contenenti, quindi, oltre cinquanta elenchi di armi, equipaggiamenti e altre dotazioni<sup>3</sup>. Di queste, sopravvivono oggi soltanto tre liste: quelle relative a Gentile de Sangro, a Guillaume de Cadenet e a uno scudiero al servizio del primo<sup>4</sup>.

Il valore di queste testimonianze risiede anzitutto nel loro carattere ricognitivo, che le distingue dalle fonti commerciali, cronachistiche o iconografiche solitamente impiegate per la ricostruzione dei sistemi d'armamento medievali. Esse offrono una documentazione diretta delle dotazioni effettivamente presentate dai *militēs* del Regno in occasione della mostra, consentendo di individuare elementi ricorrenti e varianti, tanto sul piano lessicale quanto nella composizione materiale della panoplia. Di particolare interesse risulta il confronto tra l'equipaggiamento di Gentile de Sangro, esponente di un'aristocrazia regnicola di radice normanno-sveva, e quello di Guillaume de Cadenet, barone provenzale insediato dagli Angioini: un raffronto che sollecita interrogativi sulla persistenza o sul possibile rinnovamento delle modalità di armamento tra i cavalieri del Regno e quelli d'Oltralpe.

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2 Philippe CONTAMINE, *La guerra nel Medioevo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2017, pp. 117–134.

3 Berardo PIO, «Il *Registrum Feudatariorum* del 1279», *Deputazione abruzzese di Storia Patria. Incontri culturali dei soci XIV – Supplemento del Bullettino*, Caramanico 13 maggio 2007, L'Aquila 2007, pp. 27–29.

4 Si rimanda al lavoro di Pio anche per la trascrizione del documento originale, la cui sopravvivenza è dovuta a diverse copie e riassunti redatti da studiosi tra il XVII e il XVIII secolo.

LE ARMI NEL *REGISTRUM FEUDATARIORUM*

Gentile de Sangro apparteneva a una delle principali dinastie baronali del Regno, con giurisdizione su numerosi castelli e terre nelle due provincie abruzzesi<sup>5</sup>. Dai frammenti superstiti del registro emerge che alla *monstra* presero parte anche altri membri della casata, tra cui Berardo, signore di Valva e Scanno, e Gualtiero, signore di Bugnara e Rocca Intramonti, dei quali, tuttavia, non si sono conservati resoconti. L'unica rubrica integralmente pervenuta è quella relativa all'armamento di Gentile, che si presenta come segue:

*Dominus Gentilis de Sangro presentavit se pro feudalibus infrascriptis que tenet videlicet [...] arma militis: juppam unam, panseriam unam cum manipulis, camisonum unum rubeum cum signis dicti Gentilis, caputium unum de ferro, cerbelleriam unam, par unum calcarium de ferro, gambercas de ferro cum genulgeriis, ense unum cum cultello feritorio, cappellum unum de ferro, clipeus unus, par unum de lameriis et lanceam unam*<sup>6</sup>.

Guillaume de Cadenet (nel documento *Guilelmus de Catinetto*) era signore di *Castro Cornu* e *Castellionis*<sup>7</sup>. Assente al momento dell'ispezione, fu rappresentato alla *monstra* dal notaio *Petrus de Corno*, incaricato di presenziare in sua vece. L'armamento del provenzale risulta così descritto:

*[...] juppam unam, panseriam cum manipolis, caputium unum de ferro, cerbelleriam unam, gorgeriam unam de ferro, cambisonem unum album de Buccirano, par unum calcarium de ferro, par unum de gammeriis, par unum de genulgeriis, ense unum, cultellum unum feritorium, cum cappello unum de ferro, clipeum unum*<sup>8</sup>.

La terza rubrica annota le armi dello *scutifer* di Gentile de Sangro, il cui armamento differisce solo marginalmente da quello dei due *militis*:

*[...] juppam unam, panseriam unam cum manipulis, camisonum unum album, caputium unum de ferro et par unum de genulgeriis, cerbelleriam unam et par unum de calgis ferreis, cappellum unum de ferro et par unum de gammeriis, ense unum cum cultello feritorio et lanza una*<sup>9</sup>.

5 «[...] *castro Averse* (Anversa degli Abruzzi), *medietate Barigij et Biscurri, quarta parte castris Sangri, Villa de Lacu, Pesculo Abrujino, Rocchetta, Castilento et tertia parte Sancti Georgii*».

6 Pio cit., p. 29.

7 Rocca di Corno, frazione del comune di Antrodoto (Rieti) e il castello di "Castiglione" di Tornimparte (L'Aquila).

8 Pio cit., p. 31.

9 *Ivi*, p. 30. Giovanni Amatuccio nota come l'equipaggiamento di uno scudiero nel *Regnum*

Il primo aspetto da rilevare riguarda l'ordine di trascrizione delle dotazioni, che non appare casuale. La sequenza riflette verosimilmente l'ordine con cui le armi furono presentate alla commissione d'inchiesta e al tempo stesso coincide con la progressione fisica seguita nella fase di vestizione. L'elenco si apre con la *juppa*, tunica imbottita che costituiva lo strato più interno dell'armamento difensivo, sopra la quale si sovrapponevano gradualmente le altre protezioni<sup>10</sup>. Seguiva la cotta di maglia (*panseria cum manipulis*), con maniche lunghe e muf-fole integrate, configurazione tipica del periodo, cui si aggiungeva il *caputium de ferro*<sup>11</sup>. Solo Guillaume de Cadenet risulta dotato anche di una *gorgeria*, ossia una protezione autonoma per il collo, da portare sopra al resto delle difese elencate. A ciò si aggiungeva il *camisonum cum signis*, la sopravveste da guerra recante colori e insegne araldiche. Sopra il cappuccio di maglia, tutti i soggetti portavano la *cerbelleria*, un copricapo metallico aderente, usato di norma come protezione sussidiaria sotto l'elmo principale. Infine erano previste le calze di maglia (*calcaria*<sup>12</sup>), cui si applicavano ginocchiere e gambiere di cuoio o ferro (*gambercas/gamberias cum genulgeriis*).

Nella seconda parte delle liste compaiono invece le armi mobili, a partire da quelle portate alla cintura: *ensem cum cultello feritorio*, cioè la spada e il pugnale, indossati alla vita con i rispettivi foderi. Seguiva il *cappellum de ferro*, copricapo da guerra dotato di tesa continua, probabilmente da sovrapporre alla cervelliera. Infine, solo Gentile de Sangro risulta possessore di un *par de lamerias*, cioè una corazza a piastre, curiosamente collocata nell'elenco tra lo scudo (*clipeus*) e la lancia (*lancea*).

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del Duecento non fosse tanto diverso da quello di un *miles*, essendo che svolgevano grossomodo lo stesso ruolo tattico sul campo di battaglia. Cfr. Giovanni AMATUCCIO, *La guerra dei vent'anni (1282–1302). Gli eserciti, le flotte, le armi della Guerra del Vespro*, s.l., CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017, pp. 199–200.

- 10 Claude BLAIR, *European Armour circa 1066 to circa 1700*, London, B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1958, pp. 32–33.
- 11 Fabio ROMANONI, «Armi, equipaggiamenti, tecnologie», in Paolo Grillo e Aldo A. Settia (cur.), *Guerra ed eserciti nel Medioevo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2018, p. 185.
- 12 Nei registri angioini era consuetudine definire le calze di maglia con termini attinenti alla “calzatura” del piede (*calcarii, caligae*), distinguendole in *angitorie, cingitorie* e *ad bracciale*, in riferimento al diverso sistema di sospensione alla gamba (AMATUCCIO, *La guerra* cit., p. 208). Sulla tipologia delle “calze di maglia” cfr. Lionello G. BOCCIA (cur.), *Armi difensive dal Medioevo all'Età Moderna* (Dizionari terminologici, 2), Firenze, Centro Di, 1982, p. 19.

Tabella 1: Liste degli armamenti nell'ordine originale.

Gentile de Sangro	Guillaume de Cadenet	<i>Scutifer</i>
<i>Juppam unam</i>	<i>Juppam unam</i>	<i>Juppam unam</i>
<i>Panseriam unam cum manipulis</i>	<i>Panseriam cum manipolis</i>	<i>Panseriam unam cum manipulis</i>
<i>Camisonum unum</i>	<i>Caputium unum de ferro</i>	<i>Camisonum unum album</i>
<i>Caputium unum de ferro</i>	<i>Cerbelleriam unam</i>	<i>Caputium unum de ferro</i>
<i>Cerbelleriam unam</i>	<i>Gorgeriam unam de ferro</i>	<i>Par unum de genulgeriis</i>
<i>Par unum calcarium de ferro</i>	<i>Cambisonem unum</i>	<i>Cerbelleriam unam</i>
<i>Gambercas de ferro cum genulgeriis</i>	<i>Par unum calcarium de ferro</i>	<i>Par unum de calgis ferreis</i>
<i>Ensem unum cum cultello feritorio</i>	<i>Par unum de gammeriis</i>	<i>Cappellum unum de ferro</i>
<i>Cappellum unum de ferro</i>	<i>Par unum de genulgeriis</i>	<i>Par unum de gammeriis</i>
<i>Clipeus unus</i>	<i>Ensem unum</i>	<i>Ensem unum</i>
<i>Par unum de lameriis</i>	<i>Cultellum unum feritorium</i>	<i>Cultellum feritorium unum</i>
<i>Lanceam unam</i>	<i>Cum cappello unum de ferro</i>	<i>Lanza una</i>
-	<i>Clipeum unum</i>	-

Tabella 2: Distribuzione degli armamenti nelle tre panoplie esaminate.

Arma/Armamento	Gentile de Sangro	Guillaume de Cadenet	<i>Scutifer</i>
<i>Juppa</i>	×	×	×
<i>Panseria cum manipulis</i>	×	×	×
<i>Camisonum</i>	×	×	×
<i>Caputium de ferro</i>	×	×	×
<i>Gorgeria de ferro</i>	-	×	-
<i>Calcaria de ferro</i>	×	×	×
<i>Lameriae</i>	×	-	-
<i>Gambercae de ferro</i>	×	-	-
<i>Gamberiae</i>	-	×	×
<i>Genulgeria</i>	×	×	×
<i>Cerbelleria</i>	×	×	×
<i>Cappellum de ferro</i>	×	×	×
<i>Ensis</i>	×	×	×

<i>Cultellus feritorius</i>	×	×	×
<i>Lancea</i>	×	-	×
<i>Clipeus</i>	×	×	-

## COMMENTO

Nella seconda metà del XIII secolo, l'armamento difensivo dei cavalieri occidentali si basava in larga misura sulla sovrapposizione di indumenti in maglia di ferro — tuniche, cappucci e calze — il cui intreccio serrato di anelli garantiva una protezione efficace contro i colpi da taglio, riducendo il rischio di lacerazioni e smembramenti. Questa tipologia di difesa mostrava, tuttavia, limiti significativi di fronte ad armi a elevata capacità di penetrazione, come le lance, particolarmente efficaci nelle cariche montate, o i proiettili delle armi da tiro più avanzate. Furono in particolare le balestre, “*armes du diable*”, a mettere in crisi la tenuta della maglia di ferro, sia per il progressivo aumento della potenza meccanica dei dispositivi di scocco, sia per l'introduzione di nuove tipologie di dardi, via via più pesanti e penetranti<sup>13</sup>.

Per colmare il divario crescente tra offesa e difesa, a partire dalla metà del secolo si diffusero nuove soluzioni protettive concepite come integrazione alla maglia di ferro. Accanto a quest'ultima, cominciarono a comparire rinforzi rigidi per arti e articolazioni, insieme a corazze in cuoio o tessuto irrigidite da placche metalliche interne<sup>14</sup>. Tali dispositivi compaiono anche nelle liste della *monstra*

13 Per uno studio completo sulle balestre si rimanda a Valérie SERDON, *Armes du diable. Arcs et arbalètes au Moyen Âge*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005. Sul contesto italiano: Daniele DE LUCA, Roberto FARINELLI, «Archi e balestre. Un approccio storico-archeologico alle armi da tiro nella Toscana meridionale (secc. XIII–XIV)», *Archeologia Medievale*, 29 (2002), pp. 455–487.

14 Per una trattazione completa sullo sviluppo degli armamenti tra Duecento e Trecento in Italia si vedano: Lionello G. BOCCIA, «L'armamento in Toscana dal Millecento al Trecento», in *Civiltà delle arti minori in Toscana. Atti del I convegno (Arezzo, 11–15 maggio 1971)*, Firenze, EDAM, 1973, pp. 193–212; Lionello G. BOCCIA, Eduardo T. COELHO, «L'armamento in cuoio e ferro nel Trecento italiano», *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 1, 2 (1974), pp. 24–37; Lionello G. BOCCIA, «*Hic iacet miles*. Immagini guerriere da sepolcri toscani del Due e Trecento», in Lionello G. Boccia e Mario Scalini (cur.), *Guerre e assoldati in Toscana 1260–1364*, Firenze, Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1982, pp. 81–99; Mario SCALINI, «Novità e tradizione nell'armamento bassomedievale toscano», in Franco Cardini e Marco Tangheroni (cur.), *Guerra e guerrieri nella Toscana medievale*, Firenze, Edifir, 1990, pp. 157–182; Marco VIGNOLA, «Armi e armature tra Duecento e Trecento», in Marco Sanna-

abruzzese, sebbene in un numero inferiore rispetto a quanto ci si potrebbe attendere da equipaggiamenti della seconda metà avanzata del XIII secolo.

Un primo elemento utile a valutare l'assetto concreto dell'armamento difensivo di questi individui è rappresentato dalla sequenza con cui i diversi strati venivano indossati, così come attestata nelle rubriche superstiti. Sopra la *juppa* i due *militēs* e lo *scutifer* indossavano una *panserìa cum manipulis*, versione accorciata dell'usbergo, più breve sulle gambe e priva del cappuccio di maglia, qui previsto a parte. Nella lista di Gentile de Sangro il *caputium* compare dopo il *camisone cum signis*, indizio che fosse portato sopra quest'ultimo; in quella di Guillaume de Cadenet è invece menzionato prima, suggerendo l'opposto. Testimonianze iconografiche di quest'ultima configurazione si ritrovano in numerose effigi funerarie di cavalieri regnicoli che, sebbene risalenti al primo ventennio del XIV secolo, raffigurano un tipo di armamento ancora pienamente duecentesco<sup>15</sup>.

Nella lista di Guillaume de Cadenet compare, inoltre, una protezione supplementare per il collo, da indossare sopra la *panserìa* e il *caputium*, ma sotto il *camisone*: la *gorgeria*. In questo periodo, le difese indicate con tale lemma potevano essere di due tipi: in maglia metallica oppure in piastra. Questa seconda variante, costituita da un ampio collare ottenuto da una lamina di ferro, sembra affermarsi verso la fine del XIII secolo in ambito iberico e francese, ed è significativamente associata, nell'iconografia coeva, al cappello d'arme. Lo attestano sia alcune effigi francesi e spagnole dei primi decenni del XIV secolo, sia fonti inventariali che menzionano esemplari di "*gorgeres de plate*"<sup>16</sup>.

La collocazione nell'elenco induce a ritenere più probabile la prima variante, poiché adatta a essere portata sotto la tunica. Questa consisteva in un colletto rigido di tessuto trapuntato o di cuoio indurito, rivestito da un fitto strato di maglia, analogo a quello del cappuccio e della tunica, o di diametro leggermente

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zaro, Silvia LUSUARDI Siena, Caterina GIOSTRA (cur.), *1287 e dintorni. Ricerche su Castelseprio a 730 anni dalla distruzione. Atti della giornata di studi (Milano, 27 novembre 2017)*, Quingentole (MN), SAP Società Archeologica, 2017, pp. 51–65.

15 Shirley BRIDGES, John W. PERKINS, «Some Fourteenth-Century Neapolitan Military Effigies, with Notes on the Families Represented», *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 24 (1956), pp. 158–173 (vd. pp. 158–173); Guido IORIO, *Il giglio e la spada. Istituzioni e strutture militari nel meridione angioino*, Rimini, Il Cerchio, 2014, pp. 267–268.

16 BLAIR cit., p. 42.

inferiore<sup>17</sup>. L'insieme offriva a collo e clavicole un triplice livello di protezione, rinforzando una delle zone più vulnerabili ai colpi dei dardi e alle stoccate.

Subito dopo compare la *cerbelleria* (cervelliera), elemento comune in tutti gli elenchi. Secondo la terminologia convenzionale si tratterebbe di una semplice calotta, ricavata da un'unica piastra di acciaio, modellata per aderire bene al cranio<sup>18</sup>. Nell'elenco dello *scutifer*, tale elemento figura in posizione anomala, collocato tra il *par de genulgeriis* (ginocchiere) e il *par de calgis ferreis* (calze in maglia metallica): una sequenza che va attribuita verosimilmente a un errore di trascrizione, più che a un criterio consapevole nell'ordine di esposizione delle armi.

Le cervelliere si diffusero nell'equipaggiamento militare europeo a partire dagli inizi del XIII secolo. Il loro impiego originario è ben documentato dalla celebre "Bibbia Morgan", codice miniato francese redatto tra il 1244 e il 1254, considerato una delle principali testimonianze figurative sull'armamento occidentale del tempo. In numerose tavole del manoscritto, i cavalieri indossano un casco metallico emisferico aderente al capo, portato sopra una semplice *infula* (cuffia di tela) e sotto il cappuccio di maglia, fissato sotto il mento mediante cinghie di cuoio (*fig. 1*).

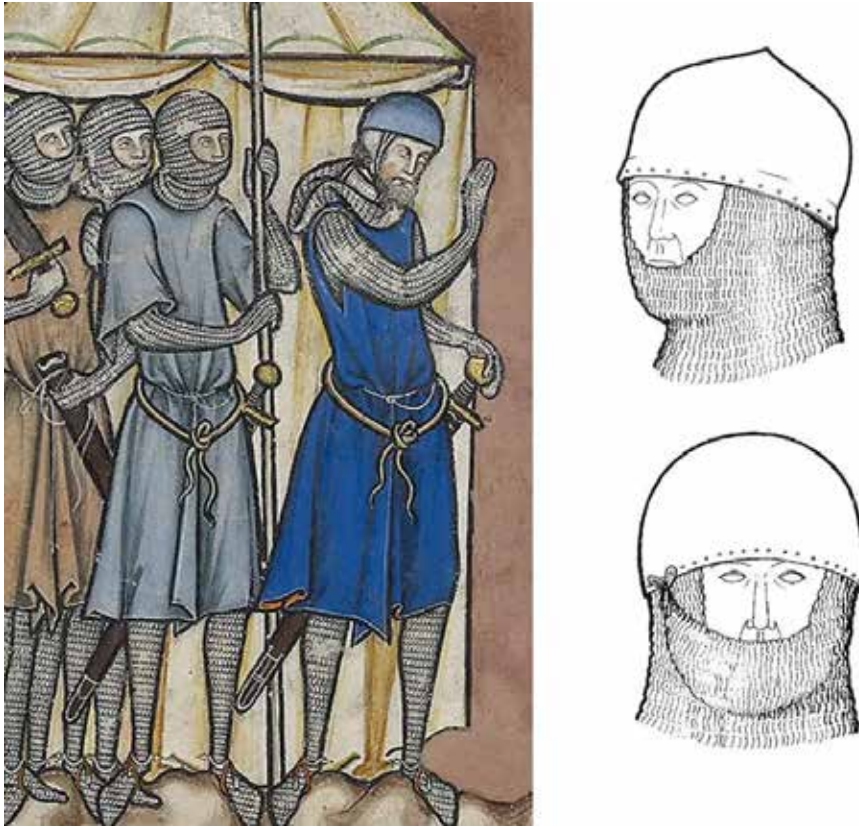
Dall'ordine degli elenchi si desume che i cavalieri della *monstra* indossassero le cervelliere sopra il cappuccio di maglia, utilizzandole dunque come protezione esterna anziché interna. Un atto angioino dei primi decenni del Trecento, oggi perduto e trascritto da Camillo Minieri Riccio<sup>19</sup>, documenta la fornitura di 1.800 cervelliere, con la specifica che fossero "ben guarnite" di lino e bambagia e del peso di sei libbre ciascuna (circa 2,5 kg). Tale dato, insieme alla presenza di imbottiture tessili integrate nel copricapo, suggerisce che si trattasse di esemplari più evoluti rispetto alle cervelliere concepite come "segrete" da portare sotto il cappuccio, e che fossero pensate come principali protezioni per il capo piuttosto che come dispositivi sussidiari.

Non è escluso, tuttavia, che i documenti si riferissero in realtà a bacinetti, tipologie di casco compatibili con la descrizione contenuta nell'atto di pagamento, e che nelle fonti francesi coeve compaiono talvolta ancora indicate con il termine

17 "Gorgiera di maglia" in BOCCIA, *Armi difensive* cit., p. 18.

18 "Cervelliera" in BOCCIA, *Armi difensive* cit., p. 29.

19 Camillo MINIERI RICCIO, *Studi storici fatti sopra 84 registri angioini dell'Archivio di Stato di Napoli*, Napoli, Tipografia di R. Rinaldi e G. Sellitto, 1876, p. 47.



**Fig. 1** – New York, Morgan Library, MS M.638 (Francia, ca. 1244–1254), f. 10v: dettaglio di cavaliere con cervelliera. A destra, esempi di “segrete” a bacinetto e cappellina, da BOCCIA, *Armi difensive*, cit., tav. 31.

cervelliera<sup>20</sup>. Si trattava in effetti di «armature del cranio molto raccolte, ridotte al solo coppo, da indossare su una imbottitura e, o su un cappuccio di maglia di ferro»<sup>21</sup>, sulle quali poteva essere portato un ulteriore copricapo, di norma un elmo, ma non necessariamente.

L’armamento principale per la testa, attestato in tutte le rubriche, è il *cappel-lum de ferro*. Tale denominazione corrisponde a una tipologia ampia di copricapi, accomunati dalla medesima struttura di base: una calotta robusta di varia forma, sormontata da una tesa continua lungo l’intera circonferenza<sup>22</sup>. Le varianti pote-

<sup>20</sup> BLAIR cit., pp. 51–52.

<sup>21</sup> “Bacinetto” in BOCCIA, *Armi difensive* cit., p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> “Cappelli d’arme”, “cappelli da campagna”, “cappelline”, “crestute” in BOCCIA, *Armi di-*

vano differire per dimensioni, morfologia e tecnica costruttiva: i modelli più antichi erano in genere composti da più elementi assemblati, mentre dal XIV secolo si diffusero esemplari ricavati da un unico pezzo di metallo<sup>23</sup>. Poiché la cervelliera ricorre in tutte le panoplie esaminate, è plausibile che il *cappellum de ferro* dei cavalieri abruzzesi fosse indossato al di sopra di essa, secondo la consuetudine raffigurata nelle miniature della Bibbia Morgan, dove la cervelliera appare sotto o sopra il cappuccio di maglia, ma sempre al di sotto di un copricapo principale.

Sorprende invece l'assenza dell'elmo integrale, comune nell'iconografia coeva e mai menzionato nelle liste della *monstra*. Tale dispositivo si sviluppò dal casco con nasale derivato dallo *Spangenhelme* germanico, perfezionato nel corso del XII secolo per garantire una maggiore protezione nel combattimento a cavallo con le lance. La barra nasale venne progressivamente estesa a coprire zigomi e bocca, fino a trasformarsi, negli ultimi decenni del Millecento, in una visiera completa: una piastra di ferro traforata per la vista e l'aerazione. La sperimentazione diretta, in battaglia come nei tornei e nei giochi d'armi, portò in breve all'aggiornamento di tali modelli, che nell'arco di una generazione evolsero nei primi prototipi di elmo integrale, detto "a bigoncia"<sup>24</sup>.

Un esempio significativo delle tipologie diffuse negli ambienti militari del *Regnum* durante la prima dominazione angioina è rappresentato dall'esemplare rinvenuto nel 1987 in una torre perimetrale del castello di Lucera<sup>25</sup> (fig. 2). La morfologia del reperto, molto vicina ai modelli raffigurati nella Bibbia Morgan, ne suggerisce la fabbricazione non oltre la seconda metà del XIII secolo. È plausibile che si tratti di un manufatto francese — o di una sua imitazione regnicola — introdotto nella fortezza solo dopo l'assedio condotto da Carlo I d'Angiò negli anni 1268–1269, poiché la torre in cui l'elmo fu rinvenuto venne edificata successivamente a tale evento<sup>26</sup>. Per il momento dell'interramento si può indicare come possibile *terminus ante quem* il 15 agosto 1300, data della parziale distru-

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*fensive* cit., p. 26.

23 BLAIR cit., pp. 31–32, 52.

24 VIGNOLA, *Armi e armature* cit., p. 52.

25 Per lo studio completo del pezzo si veda Raffaele D'AMATO, Andrey E. NEGIN, «A Neglected Medieval Helmet from Lucera in Italy», *Studia Ceranea*, 12 (2022), pp. 351–398.

26 Sull'evento storico si veda Guido IORIO, «Note sulla conduzione militare dell'assedio angioino di Lucera saracena del 1268–69», *Nuova Antologia Militare*, 6, 21 (marzo 2025), pp. 139–162.

zione della fortezza ordinata da Carlo II “lo Zoppo”, benché non vi siano prove certe che le torri siano state effettivamente abbattute. Non si esclude, tuttavia, che l’elmo sia rimasto in uso anche nel XIV secolo e che il suo seppellimento sia avvenuto più tardi, in concomitanza con eventi distruttivi successivi, quali terremoti o conflitti armati.

In sintesi, le difese del tronco e degli arti menzionate nelle rubriche del *regi-strum* erano articolate in due strati: la tunica imbottita (*juppa*), portata sopra la biancheria, e la maglia metallica, costituita da *panserìa cum manipulis*, *caputium de ferro* e *gorgeria* (nel solo caso del cavaliere provenzale). Su questi si indossavano la *cerbelleria* e, se necessario, il *cappellum de ferro*. Al di sopra degli strati di maglia, i *militēs* e lo *scutifer* portavano il *camisone/cambisone*, indumento generalmente smanicato, ma talvolta provvisto di maniche. Quello di Gentile de Sangro era rosso e ornato con le insegne araldiche della casata, mentre quello di Guillaume de Cadenet era confezionato in un pregiato tessuto bianco di Buccirano.

Come terzo e ultimo strato di protezione del tronco, solo Gentile de Sangro indossava un *par de lamieris*, ossia un “paio di lamieri”. Nonostante il plurale ricorrente nelle fonti, si trattava in realtà di un’unica corazza, composta da robuste piastre di ferro rivettate all’interno di un corpetto in cuoio o tessuto. Il plurale si giustifica con la struttura bivalve del manufatto, articolato in due metà, una anteriore e una posteriore, che venivano chiuse posteriormente o lateralmente tramite sistemi di cinghie<sup>27</sup>.

Nel *Regnum*, l’introduzione di corazze a piastre è spesso associata alla battaglia di Benevento (1266), dove un contingente di cavalieri ultramontani al servizio di Manfredi di Svevia avrebbe portato tali armamenti, spiazzando gli avversari sul campo di battaglia<sup>28</sup>. Le cronache descrivono i *militēs teutonici* come *duplice tegmine loricati*, cioè protetti da una doppia corazza che li rendeva quasi invulnerabili ai colpi di spada degli Angioini<sup>29</sup>. Si tratta tuttavia di testimonianze

27 “Lamiere” in BOCCIA, *Armi difensive* cit., p. 19. Per uno studio specifico si rimanda a Marco VIGNOLA, «Armamenti corazzati e Archeologia: spunti per uno studio interdisciplinare. Il caso dell’Italia e dei contesti friulani», *Quaderni Cividalesi*, 30 (2009), pp. 136–161.

28 Aldo A. SETTIA, *Battaglie medievali*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2020, pp. 230–231.

29 Walter KOLLER, August NITSCHKE (cur.), *Saba Malaspina, Chronik*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, vol. XXXV, Hannover, Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1999, p. 173; Fulvio DELLE DONNE (cur.), ANDREAS UNGARUS, *Descriptio victoriae Beneventi*, edi-

da leggere con cautela, poiché fortemente condizionate da retoriche celebrative e propagandistiche. L'immagine dei cavalieri teutonici "invulnerabili" risponde più alla costruzione di un mito militare, funzionale all'esaltazione delle qualità marziali del sovrano angioino e delle sue truppe, anziché a una rappresentazione attendibile degli eventi. Le prime attestazioni documentate di corazze a piastre in Occidente risalgono infatti alla prima metà del XIII secolo, attestate tanto nelle fonti artistiche quanto nei testi letterari dell'area nord-europea<sup>30</sup>. Un esempio emblematico è la statua di san Maurizio nella cattedrale di Magdeburgo, databile alla metà del secolo, che raffigura il santo come un *miles* contemporaneo, con una vistosa corazza indossata sopra la cotta di maglia, composta da piastre rettangolari affiancate e fissate all'interno del tessuto tramite grossi ribattini emisferici (fig. 3).

In Italia la prima menzione documentaria di *lamerias* risale al 1237, nelle liste di armamenti di alcuni cavalieri della Marca Trevigiana al servizio di Ezzelino da Romano<sup>31</sup>. A partire dalla metà del Duecento, questa stessa tipologia risulta ormai ampiamente diffusa a tutti i livelli della società in armi della Penisola: dai membri del ceto cavalleresco fino ai soldati semplici (*pedites*, *servientes*). In questo stesso periodo le fonti attestano anche varianti delle *lamerias*, indicate come *coracias* o *plactas*, differenziate per la conformazione e la qualità delle parti metalliche interne<sup>32</sup>.

In Italia meridionale, la stessa terminologia ricorre nei Registri della Cancelleria angioina, che dal 1267 comprendono inventari di armi redatti per diversi scopi: confische di beni a ribelli (*proditores*), controlli nelle armerie castrali e sugli equipaggiamenti baronali (come l'*inquisitio* del 1279), oppure donazioni alla

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*zione critica, introduzione, note e traduzione*, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2014, pp. 59–60. Per il quadro storico e un commento delle fonti cfr. Paolo GRILLO, *L'aquila e il giglio. 1266: la battaglia di Benevento*, Roma, Salerno Editrice, 2015, pp. 78 ss.; Guido IORIO, «La battaglia di Benevento (26 Febbraio 1266) nei cronisti coevi», *Schola Salernitana – Annali*, 21 (2016), pp. 9–34.

30 Fabian BRENNER, «The Emergence of the Coat of Plates in the 13th Century On the Significance of Written Sources for the Study of the Material Culture of the High Middle Age», in Tobias Schönauer, Ansgar Reiß (Eds.), *Coat of Plates, Buckler and Conquistador. Items from the Treasure Chamber of the Bavarian Army Museum* (Catalogues of the Bavarian Army Museum, 20), München, Allitera Verlag, 2022, pp. 47–67, spec. pp. 49–50.

31 Aldo A. SETTIA, *Comuni in guerra. Armi ed eserciti nell'Italia delle città*, Bologna, CLUEB, 1993, p. 182, nota 139. Altri esempi coevi sono riportati in SETTIA, *Battaglie* cit., p. 230.

32 VIGNOLA, *Armamenti corazzati* cit., pp. 136–161.



**Fig. 3** – Cattedrale di Magdeburgo (Sassonia-Anhalt), statua di San Maurizio (ca. 1250–1300). Foto dell'autore.

Corona da parte di nobili defunti. Le prime menzioni di *paia di lamerias* compaiono tra aprile e giugno 1273, durante una serie di verifiche condotte in Sicilia nelle principali fortezze del *Regnum ultra Pharum*. In tutti i casi, le citazioni sono accompagnate da aggettivi quali *fractas*, *veteres*, *devastatas*, o dal sostantivo *immunitas*, che ne indicano lo stato o la condizione al momento delle ispezioni<sup>33</sup>.

Tali fonti confermano che si trattava di corazze composte da piastre di ferro, conteggiate a paia e rivestite esternamente di tessuto: «*lamerias tres de ferro fractas cum faldis, quarum una habet pannum veterem*»<sup>34</sup>. Inoltre, le *lamerias* potevano includere una *falda de ferro*, elemento non meglio definito, talvolta registrato separatamente (*faldam unam de ferro pro lamerias*<sup>35</sup>), probabilmente riferibile alla protezione della parte inferiore del tronco. L'aspetto esteriore di questi armamenti rimane tuttavia incerto, in assenza di testimonianze materiali e di fonti iconografiche riferite a cavalieri dell'Italia meridionale.

Gli esemplari più arcaici finora documentati in ambito archeologico sono corazze a placche della prima metà del XIV secolo, provenienti da alcuni contesti della Spagna mediterranea<sup>36</sup>, mentre i ritrovamenti più antichi e completi, rife-

33 Eduard STHAMER, *L'amministrazione dei castelli nel Regno di Sicilia sotto Federico II e Carlo I d'Angiò*, Bari, Mario Adda Editore, 1995, pp. 78–79.

34 RCA 50, pp. 179–180.

35 RCA 44 (1), p. 394.

36 Ad es. Eulàlia MORRAL, Josep CANAL I ARIAS I DOMÉNECH M., «La cuirassa del castell de

ribili alle *lameriae* delle fonti, provengono invece dal celebre contesto baltico di Wisby (Gotland), dove furono recuperate oltre quaranta corazze dalle fosse comuni della battaglia<sup>37</sup> (fig. 4). In Italia, piastre affini sono state rinvenute negli scavi del castello della Motta di Savorgnano, in provincia di Udine, che restano al momento l'unico riferimento certo nella Penisola<sup>38</sup>.

Un documento utile, coerente per contesto e cronologia, è offerto da uno degli affreschi superstiti nell'ipogeo della chiesa del SS. Crocifisso a Salerno (già S. Maria della Pietà), attribuito a un pittore meridionale e datato su base stilistica all'ultima decade del XIII secolo<sup>39</sup> (fig. 5). La scena ritrae la Crocifissione di Cristo, ai lati del quale campeggiano due soldati, rappresentati come cavalieri del tempo, armati come segue: il capo protetto da un cappuccio di maglia, il tronco e le braccia da una tunica di maglia con maniche lunghe e muffole integrate (come le *panserie* del *registrum*). Sulla cotta entrambi indossano una corazza di colore ocre, smanicata e leggermente più corta, sulla cui superficie spiccano i ribattini di fissaggio delle piastre interne.

Mentre i soldati dell'affresco salernitano non mostrano alcuna protezione per gli arti inferiori, i cavalieri del *registrum* né esibiscono di due tipi: le calze di maglia metallica munite di piede (*calcaria*) e le gambiere (*gamberias*), sempre abbinata alle ginocchiere (*genulgeria*). Queste andavano sovrapposte alle calze ad anelli, formando l'apparato rigido a protezione della coscia, del ginocchio e dello stinco. Nella panoplia di Gentile de Sangro, è indicato che le *gamberias* erano fatte di ferro, mentre in quella di Guillaume de Cadenet non è specificato. Un interessante riferimento al materiale di realizzazione di queste protezioni compare in uno degli inventari siciliani del 1273, in cui viene menzionato un paio di *gamberias ligneas depictas*<sup>40</sup>. Ciò attesterebbe l'esistenza di gambiere realizzate in legno, verosimilmente rivestito con uno strato di cuoio o pergamena, permettendo così di essere decorato, analogamente a quanto avveniva con gli scudi.

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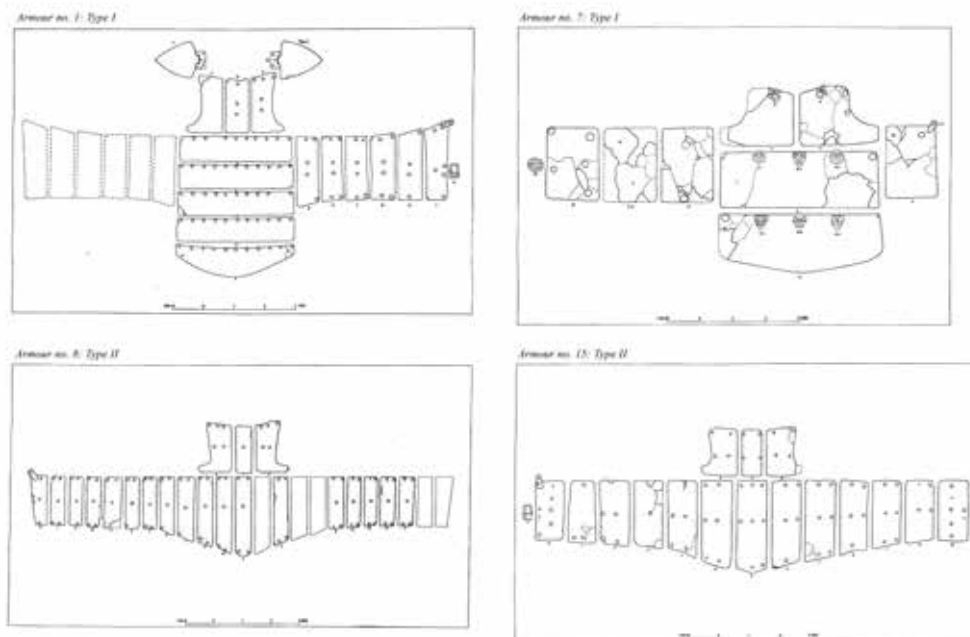
Llivia», *Empúries*, 48–50, II (1986–1989), pp. 142–151.

37 Bengt THORDEMAN, *Armour from the Battle of Wisby, 1361*, 2 voll., Stockholm, Kungl. Viterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1939–1940.

38 Marco VIGNOLA, «Armi e armamento difensivo», in Fabio Piuze (cur.), *Progetto Castello della Motta di Savorgnano*, Firenze, All'Insegna del Giglio, 2003, pp. 182–199.

39 Maria C. DE CARO, «La chiesa di “S. Maria della Pietà” ed il suo affresco», *Bollettino Storico di Salerno e Principato Citra*, II, anno V (1987), pp. 5–22.

40 RCA 50, p. 181.



**Fig. 4** – Esempi di corazze da Wisby. Rielaborazione da tavole in THORDEMAN, cit., vol. 2.

Per farci un'idea di come potevano apparire le *gamberias* dei cavalieri abruzzesi occorre rivolgere nuovamente l'attenzione all'iconografia del periodo. Nella effigie funeraria di Guglielmo di Durfort, sita a Firenze nella Basilica della SS. Annunziata, è presente una delle più antiche raffigurazioni di gambiere in cuoio cotto e istoriato ad oggi note<sup>41</sup>. Il Durfort perse la vita nel 1289 durante la battaglia di Campaldino, trafitto a un occhio da un dardo di balestra mentre combatteva nello schieramento dei guelfi fiorentini. A occuparsi della realizzazione dell'arca funeraria fu Amalrico di Narbona, compagno d'armi al quale il Durfort affidò il proprio testamento<sup>42</sup>. Se l'effigie fosse una genuina raffigurazione della panoplia del cavaliere francese, potremmo innanzitutto notare alcune somiglianze con le armi dei *milites* abruzzesi: il capo è difeso da un massiccio casco emisferico, una cervelliera o forse un primitivo bacinetto, indossato rigorosamente sopra al

41 SCALINI, *Novità e tradizione* cit., p. 163.

42 Raffaele TAUCI, «Guglielmo di Durfort e la battaglia di Campaldino», *Studi storici sull'Ordine dei Servi di Maria*, 1 (1933), pp. 93–108.



**Fig. 5** – Salerno, chiesa del SS. Crocifisso, ipogeo. Affresco di maestro dell’Italia meridionale (ca. 1290–1300). Foto dell’autore.

cappuccio di maglia. Sotto le falde della sopravveste, insignita con i fiordalisi angioini, si intravedono le calze di maglia integrali, probabilmente sostenute in vita da tiranti, su cui sono applicate le protezioni in cuoio cotto e istoriato: cosciali, ginocchielli e stincali, connessi tra loro in modo da risultare un apparato unitario, da corrispondere alle *gamberias cum genulgeriis* della lista del De’ Sangro (fig. 6).

Nella scultura di Dürfort si osservano anche due armi d’offesa: la spada e il pugnale, che facevano la coppia ai cinturoni anche dei *milites* e dello *scutifer* della *monstra* abruzzese (*ensis cum cultello feritorio*). La prima era portata sul fianco sinistro all’interno di un fodero di legno rivestito di cuoio, in genere decorato e dotato di un cinturone di sospensione dedicato. Il pugnale, posizionato sul lato opposto, fungeva da arma sussidiaria sul campo di battaglia e da strumento principale per la difesa personale in ambito civile.

Con la nascita dell’istituzione cavalleresca nel X secolo, la spada assunse un significato simbolico di grande rilievo, superando la lancia, che per tutto l’Alto Medioevo aveva rappresentato l’attributo principale del comando militare<sup>43</sup>. Le

43 Carlo CITTER, «Le armi simboliche, i corredi funebri e il rango. I re e i guerrieri. Goti e



**Fig. 6** – Firenze, basilica della SS. Annunziata. Arca sepolcrale di Guglielmo di Durfort (ca. 1289–1290). Foto dell'autore. A destra, disegno delle gambiere di Durfort, da Boccia, *Armi difensive*, cit., tav. 59.

spade dei primi *milites* erano armi prevalentemente da taglio, che tuttavia non disdegnavano i colpi di punta se indirizzati contro bersagli armati alla leggera. La loro forma, caratterizzata da una punta ogivale poco pronunciata, talvolta persino smussata, dipendeva in larga misura dal metodo di lavorazione impiegato in questo periodo, che si basava ancora su precetti empirici e sull'utilizzo di fornaci a bassa intensità<sup>44</sup>. Per questo motivo, le spade di queste cronologie, realizzate col

Longobardi nel contesto dell'Europa merovingia», in Mario Scalini (cur.), *A bon droyt. Spade di uomini liberi, cavalieri e santi*, Milano, Silvana Editoriale, 2007, pp. 25–29; Mario SCALINI, «La cristianizzazione e la santificazione della spada, simbolo dell'imperium e della giustizia; iconografia medievale del potere civile e religioso», in Mario Scalini (cur.), *A bon droyt. Spade di uomini liberi, cavalieri e santi*, Milano, Silvana Editoriale, 2007, pp. 39–47.

44 ROMANONI cit., pp. 166–169.

metodo della damaschinatura, raramente superavano i 90–95 centimetri, oltre i quali aumentava il rischio di difetti strutturali.

Rispetto ai modelli carolingi, goti e longobardi, le spade dei cavalieri basso-medievali si distinguevano per qualità ed estetica. Già nell'XI secolo presentavano guardie con bracci dritti, talvolta allungati fino a raggiungere, nel XII, la lunghezza dell'impugnatura, sebbene non fosse una regola costante. Anche i pomi mutarono forma: dalla fine del X secolo i più diffusi erano a disco o trilobati, derivati da modelli germanici; nel XII si imposero i pomi “a noce brasiliana”, con profilo fusiforme disposto orizzontalmente. L'ornato quasi scomparve, sostituito da epigrafi incise o in agemina sulla lama o sulla guardia, per lo più benedicti, o riportanti il nome del proprietario. Nella seconda metà del XIII secolo la spada iniziò a mutare forma. Il progresso nella lavorazione dell'acciaio consentì lame più lunghe e rastremate in punta, senza comprometterne la resistenza. Nel XIV secolo comparvero anche lame a sezione romboidale, gli “stocchi”, la cui costolatura centrale permetteva di infliggere colpi di punta potenti senza rischio di rottura, soprattutto contro avversari protetti da piastre<sup>45</sup>.

Testimonianze scultoree delle tipologie di spada diffuse negli ambienti del *Regnum* si conservano nelle numerose effigi funerarie cavalleresche dell'Italia meridionale. Le più antiche note sono quelle dei Lagonissa (ca. 1303), oggi esposte nel Museo Abbaziale. Le due figure, identiche nelle fattezze, appartengono ai monumenti funerari di padre e figlio, riuniti dopo la morte di entrambi<sup>46</sup>. I giacenti mostrano un armamento molto vicino a quello descritto nel documento della *monstra* abruzzese: cappuccio di maglia separato dalla cotta, quest'ultima provvista di muffole integrate e ricoperta da una voluminosa sopravveste a maniche lunghe. La resa degli stinchi lascia intuire la presenza di gambali, ma l'assenza della policromia, che in origine doveva dettagliare l'intera scultura, non consente di definirne con precisione la tipologia. Il largo fodero, probabilmente decorato

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45 “Spada da stocco”, “stocco” e “mezzo stocco” in Carlo DE VITA (cur.), *Armi bianche dal Medioevo all'Età Moderna* (Dizionari terminologici, 3), Firenze, Centro Di, 1983, p. 14. La tradizione storiografica vuole gli stocchi introdotti in Italia dagli Angioini nella metà avanzata del Duecento, ma tale nozione è da superare a favore di un'ipotesi autonomistica, da relazionare ai progressi della siderurgia e alla diffusione su larga scala degli armamenti corazzati (cfr. SETTIA, *Battaglie* cit., pp. 230–231).

46 Francesco GANDOLFO, Giuseppe MUOLLO, *Arte medievale in Irpinia*, Roma, Gangemi Editore, 2013, pp. 223–226.

con scudetti araldici, forse in pasta vitrea, suggerisce una lama larga e triangolare. L'impugnatura, conservata fino al pomo, purtroppo mutilo in entrambe le effigi, presenta una guardia con bracci incurvati e appiattiti, con le estremità arrotondate, e un manico guarnito da laccetti di cuoio intrecciati nella mezzeria (fig. 7).

Questa tipologia richiama da vicino un ritrovamento avvenuto in un punto imprecisato dei Piani Palentini, nella Marsica (Abruzzo), teatro reale della battaglia di Tagliacozzo del 1268<sup>47</sup>. La spada, oggi esposta in riproduzione a Scurcola Marsicana (L'Aquila), nella sala conferenze del palazzo municipale, presenta le caratteristiche del tipo XIIIb della classificazione di Ewart Oakeshott, con lama a tagli paralleli e punta smussata<sup>48</sup>. I fornimenti comprendono un pomo del tipo T, detto "a dattero", in una variante intermedia tra la I e la III, e una guardia riconducibile al tipo VII, con bracci arcuati, appiattiti e arrotondati alle estremità, analoghi a quelli raffigurati nelle effigi dei Lagonissa di Montevergine. Si tratta di modelli generalmente databili tra l'ultimo quarto del XIII secolo e i primi decenni del XIV<sup>49</sup>.

Per quanto riguarda i *cultellos feritorios* citati nel *registrum*, non è semplice individuare un modello univoco e diffuso prima dell'affermarsi della scultura aulica senese a Napoli. Dagli anni Trenta del XIV secolo si impose un modello ricorrente per la raffigurazione dei cavalieri regnicoli, secondo lo stile inaugurato da Tino da Camaino con l'arca funeraria di Caterina d'Austria (1323–1324) e, poco dopo, con quella di Carlo di Calabria in Santa Chiara (c. 1329). Nei *gisants* regnicoli di questo periodo si distinguono due principali tipologie di pugnali. La prima riprende in scala ridotta la forma della spada, con manico a codolo, pomo a disco (o a crescente) ed elsi brevi, dritti o ricurvi, come nell'effigie di Guglielmo di Durfort. La seconda è rappresentata dalle cosiddette "basilarde", di tipo *scale-tang*, caratterizzate dall'impugnatura a forma di "I" maiuscola, con pomo e guardia resi da due barrette parallele<sup>50</sup>.

Esemplari archeologici di quest'ultima tipologia sono ben documentati

47 Guido IORIO, «Benevento e Campi Palentini. Documenti e cronache delle due battaglie che decisero la conquista angioina del Mezzogiorno», *Nuova Antologia Militare*, 5, 17 (febbraio 2024), pp. 295–320.

48 Ewart OAKESHOTT, *Records of the Medieval Sword*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 1991.

49 Ewart OAKESHOTT, *Sword in the Age of Chivalry*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 1997, pp. 47–55.

50 DE VITA cit., p. 18.



**Fig. 7** – Museo Abbaziale di Montevergine (Avellino), dettaglio di uno dei giacenti Lagonissa. Foto dell'autore.

in diversi contesti dell'Italia centrale e settentrionale<sup>51</sup>, mentre nei territori del *Regnum Siciliae* risultano attestati soprattutto attraverso l'iconografia del Trecento<sup>52</sup>. Le evidenze materiali sono limitate a pochi esemplari, tra cui spicca quello rinvenuto nel lago Fucino, oggi conservato nella collezione Torlonia del Castello Piccolomini di Celano<sup>53</sup>. Il cattivo stato di conservazione non consente di ricostruirne con precisione la conformazione; è ben leggibile soltanto il manico, dotato di tre fori per il fissaggio delle guancette e una laminetta di ottone incisa a motivi geometrici applicata alla base del pomo (*fig. 8*).

Tra le armi mobili dei cavalieri del *registrum* figurano infine i due strumenti più rappresentativi della panoplia: la lancia e lo scudo. L'impiego di queste armi

51 Marco VIGNOLA, *Riflessioni sulla basilarda. Analisi tipologiche e spunti ricostruttivi*, Bokokstones Edizioni, 2016, pp. 37–39.

52 Ad esempio, nei *gisants* di Giovanni e Nicola Barrile a San Lorenzo Maggiore di Napoli, illustrati in BRIDGES, PERKINS cit., pl. XXIV, pp. 163 ss.

53 Adele CAMPANELLI (cur.), *Il tesoro del Lago. L'Archeologia del Fucino e la collezione Torlonia. Catalogo della mostra*, Pescara, CARSA Edizioni, 2001.

a cavallo precede di molto la nascita della cavalleria come istituzione sociale. Le culture romano-barbariche ne mutuarono l'uso dai popoli delle steppe — Alani, Unni, Avari — con cui erano entrate in contatto durante il periodo delle migrazioni (IV–V secolo). Già gli eserciti goti e bizantini del tardoantico schieravano reparti di cavalleria pesante, come i *cataphracti* e i *clibanarii*, armati di *kontos* (lat. *contus*), una lunga lancia da impiegare a due mani<sup>54</sup>. Nei provvedimenti emanati da Pipino il Breve dopo la vittoria di Poitiers (732) si riconosce il tentativo di strutturare una casta di guerrieri addestrati al combattimento a cavallo. Questo modello, tuttavia, non riuscì ancora a imporsi come forza determinante negli scenari bellici dell'epoca<sup>55</sup>. Solo dopo l'anno Mille la lancia brandita a cavallo divenne davvero centrale sui campi di battaglia, affermandosi dal nord Europa con l'ascesa della cavalleria franco-normanna. A favorire tale sviluppo contribuirono anche innovazioni negli equipaggiamenti equestri, in particolare l'introduzione di staffe più robuste e di selle specializzate<sup>56</sup>.

Nell'XI secolo la lancia utilizzata dalla cavalleria non si distingueva in modo sostanziale da quella in dotazione alla fanteria, se non per una maggiore lunghezza dell'asta. Gli esemplari impiegati dai Normanni alla battaglia di Hastings (1066) avevano dimensioni

54 Franco CARDINI, *Quell'antica festa crudele. Guerra e cultura della guerra dal Medioevo alla Rivoluzione francese*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2020, p. 20; Valerii P. NIKONOROV, «*Cataphracti, Catafractarii and Clibanarii: Another Look at the old problem of their Identifications*», in *Military Archaeology: Weaponry and Warfare in the Historical and Social Perspective* (Materials of the International Conference, St. Petersburg, 2–5 September 1998), St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum – Institute for the History of Material Culture, RAS, 1998, pp. 131–138.

55 CARDINI, *Quell'antica* cit., pp. 29 ss.

56 Franco CARDINI, «Cavalleria medievale: le sue “origini” come problema di cultura materiale», *Archeologia Medievale*, 2 (1975), pp. 433–439. Sul problema della staffa si vedano anche CONTAMINE cit., pp. 252–257; Jean FLORI, *La cavalleria medievale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2016, pp. 54–56; Fabio BARGIGIA, «VI. Teoria e cultura della guerra», in Paolo Grillo e Aldo A. Settia (cur.), *Guerra ed eserciti nel Medioevo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2018, pp. 193–219, spec. p. 194.

**Fig. 8** – Castello Piccolomini di Celano (L'Aquila), Collezione Torlonia. Basilarda dal prosciugamento del lago Fucino. Foto rielaborata su concessione della direzione del Castello Piccolomini di Celano.



stimate tra i 3 e i 3,7 metri, misura che rimase sostanzialmente stabile fino alla fine del XII secolo<sup>57</sup>. A mutare, nel tempo, furono invece le cuspidi, che si ridussero in lunghezza, assumendo forme più compatte, robuste e acuminate, meglio adattate al combattimento d'urto tra cavallerie<sup>58</sup>.

Nel corso del XIII secolo subì modifiche anche la struttura dell'asta: si diffusero fusti rastremati, più spessi in corrispondenza dell'impugnatura e progressivamente assottigliati verso la punta. Il calcio, più pesante dell'estremità anteriore, fungeva da contrappeso, migliorandone il bilanciamento. Verso la fine del Quattrocento, le aste raggiunsero lunghezze superiori ai 4 metri, con diametri prossimi ai quindici centimetri in corrispondenza del manico, assumendo proporzioni imponenti che rendevano necessario l'impiego di dispositivi appositi per la gestione in sella. A questo scopo servivano la resta e la controresta: listelli metallici fissati alla corazza in corrispondenza delle sezioni anteriore e laterale, nei quali il calcio e il fusto della lancia venivano incastrati. È verosimile che le lance brandite dai *milites del registrum* corrispondessero al modello attestato ad Hastings, la cui semplicità continua a ricorrere con frequenza nell'iconografia italiana ancora nel pieno XIV secolo, a testimonianza della lunga persistenza di queste forme anche dopo l'introduzione di tipologie più specializzate.

Riguardo agli scudi menzionati nel *registrum*, desta interesse l'uso del termine *clipeus*, che sembra alludere a una tipologia circolare. Tale parola non ricorre in nessun altro dei registri angioini coevi, nei quali per designare lo scudo si utilizza invece sempre *scutum* o *targa*. Le fonti iconografiche relative alla cavalleria del periodo attestano come tipologia prevalente lo scudo triangolare "scapezzato", derivato dal grande scudo a mandorla o a goccia utilizzato nei secoli precedenti<sup>59</sup>. Si trattava in origine di imbracciature di grandi dimensioni, ottenute da robuste tavole di legno incurvate. Nel corso del XIII secolo furono "scapezzati", ossia dotati di margine superiore diritto, soluzione che migliorava visibilità e maneggevolezza nel combattimento a cavallo, in particolare mentre si indossava l'elmo chiuso. Gli esemplari più avanzati erano di dimensioni ridotte, con forma triangolare quasi equilatera, così da agevolare i movimenti in sella, dove l'arcione e il collo del cavallo limitavano la mobilità del tronco. L'intera superficie era

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57 David EDGE, John M. PADDOCK, *Arms and Armour of the Medieval Knight. An Illustrated History of Weaponry in the Middle Ages*, London, Saturn Books, 1996, p. 33.

58 Ivi, p. 46.

59 BLAIR cit., pp. 181–183.

rinforzata con strati di pergamena indurita, applicati su una preparazione di gesso e acqua, e dipinta con l'insegna araldica del cavaliere.

La scelta dei compilatori di utilizzare il termine *clipeus* anziché *scutum* o *targa* non sembra dunque riferirsi a un aspetto tecnico o morfologico, ma rimandare al valore simbolico dello scudo. Come rilevato nel *Glossarium* di Du Cange, il termine compare soprattutto in contesti ufficiali, assumendo connotazioni giuridiche<sup>60</sup>. Nello *Speculum Saxonicum* (1220–1235), ad esempio, il *clypeus* è qualificato come prerogativa di rango, trasmissibile per via ereditaria<sup>61</sup>, mentre negli *Annales Pegavienses* — redatti nell'abbazia benedettina di Pegau, in Sassonia — si ricorda la concessione di una prefettura dotata di *mille clipeis*, dove il termine designa direttamente i vassalli armati soggetti a servizio feudale<sup>62</sup>. Ne consegue che i *clipei* esibiti alla *monstra* dai feudatari abruzzesi fossero soprattutto scudi araldici, probabilmente dipinti con l'insegna familiare, in abbinamento al *camisone cum signis*. A conferma di ciò, è significativo che lo scudiero non possedesse alcun *clipeus*, poiché nel contesto della *monstra feudatariorum* spettava unicamente al *dominus* esibirlo.

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61 *Speculum Saxonicum*, lib. I, art. 3, § 2 (riportato nel DU CANGE): «*Clypeus seu cingulus militaris in septimo terminatur : et primum habet Rex Romanorum, secundum Episcopi, Abbates et Abbatissæ, qui et Superillustres dicuntur : tertium laici Principes, ex quo facti sunt Episcoporum subditi et vassalli, qui illustres nuncupantur ; quartum nobiles et liberi Domini : quintum prædictorum Nobilium vassalli, et etiam Banniti : ipsorumque ulterius vassalli tenent sextum*».

62 *Ivi*, p. 253 (anno 1117): «*Eodem tempore ab Adelgoto archiepiscopo Magdaburgense præfecturam mille clipeis et 500 talentis præditam in beneficium accepit*».

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## Giornate di studio Guerre del Regno. Dai Durazzeschi agli Asburgo (1381-1516)

Lecce, ex Monastero degli Olivetani, padiglione Chirico

13 e 14 febbraio 2025

di GIULIA GRIMALDI<sup>1</sup>

**I**l 13 e il 14 febbraio 2025 si sono svolte le giornate di studio sul tema “Guerre nel Regno. Guerre del Regno. Dai Durazzeschi agli Asburgo (1381-1516)”, a conclusione delle attività del progetto Prin 2020 dal titolo “Per (ri)scrivere la storia del Mezzogiorno basso medievale. Forme testuali del potere (secoli XIV-XV)”. Tale progetto è coordinato a livello nazionale dal professor Francesco Senatore dell’Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II. L’unità locale dell’Università del Salento è coordinata, invece, dal professor Francesco Somaini, docente di Storia medievale e direttore del Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Medievali presso lo stesso ateneo.

L’incontro ha rappresentato un’importante occasione di confronto tra studiosi, ciascuno dei quali ha analizzato specifici aspetti del tema proposto al fine di evidenziarne le diverse sfaccettature e offrirne una visione complessiva. I lavori sono stati introdotti da Fabio Pollice, rettore dell’Università del Salento, Mariano Longo, direttore del Dipartimento di Scienze Umane e Sociali, e Francesco Senatore, professore dell’università degli Studi di Napoli “Federico II”, che hanno posto l’accento sull’attualità del tema della guerra, considerandone il ruolo centrale che ha avuto come elemento di trasformazione delle istituzioni e delle strutture politiche.

Francesco Somaini ha proseguito queste considerazioni introduttive, approfondendo le diverse prospettive attraverso cui il tema della guerra può essere analizzato, in quanto strumento di indagine per esplorare questioni legate alla cultura, alla mentalità, alle relazioni diplomatiche, alla storia delle potenze italiane. Il

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Mezzogiorno, protagonista degli interventi proposti in questa sede, non si è mai configurato come una realtà isolata, ma come un'area strettamente interconnessa con le dinamiche europee: le numerose guerre, di varia entità e natura, si sono inserite infatti in un più ampio processo di costruzione statale e nella definizione di un sistema di alleanze tra attori politici diversificati. Gli estremi cronologici considerati delineano, infine, una fase di profonda trasformazione politica e militare, segnata dal progressivo passaggio dall'impiego dei capitani di ventura all'affermazione degli eserciti permanenti. Si tratta, inoltre, di secoli durante i quali si assistette non soltanto all'affermazione delle forze spagnole, ma anche ad una ridefinizione del rapporto tra il potere regio e la feudalità. Questa riflessione è stata sviluppata a partire dall'intervento di Serena Morelli, che ha esaminato la posizione politica e militare di Maria d'Enghien, contessa di Lecce e principessa di Taranto, nel contesto del conflitto tra Luigi II d'Angiò e Ladislao di Durazzo per il controllo del Regno di Napoli.

Con l'ausilio di un registro conservato a Marsiglia, testimonianza degli accordi stipulati tra Luigi II e Maria d'Enghien, sono state evidenziate le abilità diplomatiche di quest'ultima, che emerge come un'attrice politica autonoma, capace di negoziare alleanze, gestire risorse militari e giocare un ruolo chiave nelle dinamiche internazionali, inasprite dalle controversie legate allo scisma della chiesa d'Occidente. Giuseppina Giordano ha proposto nuove interpretazioni, basate sul *Registrum Ludovicii Tercii*, del conflitto del 1421-23 tra Carlo III d'Angiò e Alfonso V d'Aragona, re di Sicilia, per la successione della regina Giovanna nel regno angioino di Napoli.

Sotto il profilo delle relazioni diplomatiche, la relazione ha cercato di individuare le ragioni del coinvolgimento di Alfonso V d'Aragona e la successiva revoca della sua adozione da parte della regina: un cambio di alleanza, questo, che suscitò giudizi discordanti tra i cronisti contemporanei. Dal punto di vista militare, invece, ha posto l'attenzione sulle strategie dei condottieri Muzio Attendolo Sforza e Braccio da Montone, schierati rispettivamente con Giovanna II e Luigi III. Infine, la prima mattinata del convegno si è chiusa con la riflessione di Simone Callegaro, che ha illustrato la ribellione guidata da Antonio Centelles contro Alfonso d'Aragona tra il 1444 e il 1445. Nel dettaglio, l'intervento ha descritto le diverse tappe dell'itinerario percorso dall'Aragonese, a partire dal settembre 1444, nel tentativo di riconquistare i territori calabresi che al seguito del Centelles si erano sollevati contro la corona. L'episodio ha evidenziato il delicato equilibrio

tra repressione e integrazione della nobiltà locale nella strategia aragonese di consolidamento del potere nel Mezzogiorno.

La sessione pomeridiana è stata affidata a Luciano Candita, Maria Rosaria Vassallo, Kristjan Toomaspoeg, Sandra Dall'Oco e Corinna Bottiglieri, che hanno contribuito ad arricchire la riflessione delineata fino a questo punto fornendo ulteriori prospettive metodologiche attraverso cui è possibile approfondire ed affrontare il tema oggetto del convegno. I relatori hanno offerto uno sguardo sulle scelte militari strategiche, sul potenziale bellico presente nel Principato di Taranto nel corso del XV secolo, sulla difesa delle zone di confine e sull'importanza della costruzione di una specifica cintura di fortificazioni in queste aree. È stata inoltre messa in evidenza la stretta sinergia tra la produzione letteraria e la disciplina militare. Luciano Candita ha proposto una meticolosa analisi di tre esempi di fortificazione del Principato di Taranto, realizzati tra il 1430 e il 1460: il castello di Acquarica del Capo, il castello di Acerra e il complesso fortificato di Oritano. L'intervento si è concentrato in parte sugli aspetti architettonici, per poi focalizzarsi sulle loro funzioni strategiche.

La fortezza di Acquarica del Capo, ristrutturata nel 1432 per volere di Giovanni Antonio Orsini del Balzo, era adibita al controllo del territorio e al monitoraggio costante delle coste; la contea di Acerra, invece, era parte di un sistema logistico essenziale per l'approvvigionamento di Napoli; infine, il sistema fortificato di Oritano, situato tra Taranto e Brindisi, assolveva alle funzioni di controllo dei punti di accesso alla regione e di supporto logistico terrestre. Il potenziale bellico di Giovanni Antonio Orsini del Balzo è stato descritto da Maria Rosaria Vassallo attraverso documenti contabili aragonesi e orsiniani. Questa analisi ha evidenziato l'evoluzione dell'esercito quattrocentesco, con il crescente ruolo della fanteria e delle armi da fuoco. Il continuo stato di guerra, l'esigenza di difendere i confini e il mantenimento di truppe regolari concorsero con ogni probabilità alla formazione di una cavalleria pesante permanente, sostenuta da una solida organizzazione amministrativa e finanziaria. Il tema delle strutture difensive nell'Italia meridionale è stato analizzato anche sul versante del confine tra il Regno di Napoli e lo Stato della Chiesa.

Da questo punto di vista, Kristjan Toomaspoeg ha ripercorso alcune vicende belliche svoltesi tra il XIV e il XV secolo lungo questa articolata area di demarcazione, costituita da circa trecentocinquanta siti. Tali vicissitudini, esaminate

attraverso l'ausilio di documenti inediti, tratti dall'archivio Colonna e confrontati con fonti regnicole, sono state indagate soprattutto in relazione alle trasformazioni e alle ripercussioni che esse hanno avuto sulla società e sul territorio. La guerra al confine si inserisce, infatti, all'interno di una problematica più generale, da tempo oggetto di riflessione da parte della storiografia, che implica la presenza di una pluralità ed eterogeneità di attori. Tra essi si annoveravano esponenti delle corti italiane ed europee, rappresentanti della Santa Sede, ma anche esuli, banditi e briganti, i quali sfruttavano le difficoltà del controllo statale in queste aree per perseguire i propri interessi. Come si è detto, Sandra dall'Oco e Corinna Bottiglieri hanno tracciato, infine, un ritratto di Alfonso d'Aragona attraverso le opere di umanisti regnicoli: Giovanni Albino, testimone oculare delle imprese dell'Aragonese, ne celebrò le doti guerriere fin dalla giovane età, la grandezza d'animo, la disciplina militare, il senso della giustizia, la liberalità; Antonio De Ferraris, detto il Galateo, ne difese le scelte politiche nell'orazione funebre pronunciata in occasione della sua morte; Bartolomeo Sibilla, dedicò al duca di Calabria l'opera intitolata *Speculum peregrinarum quaestionum*, una riflessione filosofica su temi come la natura e l'immortalità dell'anima e l'inferno, che si distaccava dalla tradizione umanistica per riallacciarsi all'enciclopedismo medievale.

Nel corso della seconda giornata la potenza politica, economica, militare e sociale del Principato di Taranto è stata esplorata all'interno del più ampio contesto geopolitico italiano della seconda metà del XV secolo, caratterizzato da rivalità e conseguenti scontri tra le potenze italiane e dall'espansione ottomana nel Mediterraneo. Questa fase storica è stata animata anche dalla politica di Ferrante d'Aragona, la cui figura è stata indagata da molteplici prospettive nel corso delle giornate di studio. Il sovrano è emerso come protagonista di rilevanti scontri armati, quali la guerra di Toscana e quella di Ferrara, che influenzarono le sue scelte di governo, orientate ad estendere la propria influenza all'interno del territorio italiano. In questo contesto, Ferrante fu celebrato dagli umanisti del suo tempo per le sue virtù culturali e militari, che emersero con decisione nell'opera di rafforzamento dell'apparato militare.

Il discorso è stato inaugurato da Armida Toraldo con un'analisi della guerra di Toscana, che fu combattuta dal 1478 al 1480 tra la Repubblica di Firenze e il Regno di Napoli, con il coinvolgimento dello Stato della Chiesa e della popolazione senese. La relazione ha indagato questo conflitto attraverso una prospettiva napoletana, in base alla quale, lo stesso, collocandosi in un quadro complesso,

caratterizzato da tentativi di instaurare delle alleanze tra gli stati della penisola italiana e garantire un equilibrio, ha rappresentato il momento risolutivo della crisi attraverso le armi. La guerra ha infatti segnato la conclusione definitiva di un lungo periodo di tensioni politiche e militari tra i suddetti stati. Questo conflitto è stato menzionato all'interno dell'*Oratio de rei militaris litterarumque dignitate affinitate et laudibus*, redatta da Aurelio Lippo Brandolini, e ha consentito, in questo modo, di fissarne la cronologia. L'umanista fiorentino, al centro dell'intervento proposto da Luca Ruggio, fu una figura chiave del panorama culturale napoletano durante il governo di Ferrante d'Aragona, che celebrò ripetutamente nelle sue opere.

Nell'*Oratio*, Brandolini affrontò la questione dell'interdipendenza delle opere letterarie e della disciplina militare, sostenendo che il conflitto rappresentasse un banco di prova per le virtù del sovrano, mentre le opere letterarie fossero essenziali per orientare l'azione militare secondo principi morali. L'instabilità italiana causata dagli scontri nel contesto della guerra di Toscana fu incrementata dall'occupazione e dal massacro della popolazione di Otranto ad opera degli Ottomani nel 1480 che, guidati da Gedik Ahmed Pasha, miravano a stabilire una base in Italia e minacciare il Regno di Napoli. Le dinamiche di questo conflitto sono state delineate da Simone Lombardo attraverso il punto di vista di Genova, di cui ha messo in luce il tentativo di riconquistare un'influenza mediterranea dopo la perdita delle sue colonie orientali. La crisi di Otranto fu vista come un'opportunità strategica, sebbene Genova non disponesse più dei mezzi per sostenere politiche espansionistiche su larga scala. Francesco Storti e Sandro Sublimi Saponetti hanno, infine, illustrato i risultati del lavoro svolto su un cimitero basso-medievale, rinvenuto nell'area portuale di Otranto, attraverso un approccio interdisciplinare concernente l'indagine antropologica sui resti scheletrici del cimitero, sulle fonti documentarie, sulla geolocalizzazione e sulla georeferenziazione del cimitero. Questo studio ha rivelato un gruppo eterogeneo di individui, che si ipotizza fossero soldati dell'esercito ottomano di Gedik Ahmed Pascià caduti durante il contro-assedio napoletano tra maggio e luglio 1481.

Gli interventi della sessione mattutina hanno evidenziato come la frammentazione politica e i conflitti del XV secolo abbiano inciso profondamente sugli equilibri italiani, coinvolgendo una pluralità di attori e influenzando le strategie di potere dei principali stati della penisola. La sessione pomeridiana ha proseguito questa riflessione, ponendo l'attenzione su aspetti strategici, militari e diplo-

matici che contribuirono a ridefinire i rapporti di forza nel contesto italiano ed europeo tra il 1458 e il 1494.

Alessio Russo ha aperto i lavori con un'analisi della flotta aragonese, di cui ha messo in evidenza lo sviluppo sotto Ferrante d'Aragona, da una condizione iniziale di debolezza a un rafforzamento significativo tra gli anni Settanta e Novanta del Quattrocento. Il sovrano investì infatti nel potenziamento quantitativo e qualitativo della marina, composta da galee sottili, navi da guerra e imbarcazioni ausiliarie per operazioni logistiche e azioni anfibie, ma anche nell'aggiornamento e nell'innovazione tecnologica della stessa. Sulla scia degli instabili equilibri e della rivalità tra gli stati italiani, accentuata dalla sopra menzionata guerra di Toscana, si posero anche le conseguenze della guerra di Ferrara, nella quale Francesca De Pinto ha delineato il contributo aragonese. Da questo punto di vista, si ritiene che Ferdinando I d'Aragona abbia colto il conflitto come un'opportunità per limitare l'espansione veneziana nell'Italia centrale e settentrionale. Napoli, infatti, si schierò con il papato e Ferrara, contribuendo alla vittoria del fronte antiflorentino e antiveneziano e consolidando così la propria influenza politica sulla penisola.

Claudia Bischetti ha esaminato le fasi della guerra dei Baroni (1485-1486), con particolare attenzione ai risvolti politici e alle operazioni militari nel Lazio. In principio nata come una ribellione interna al Regno di Napoli contro Ferrante d'Aragona, la rivolta si estese con rapidità al contesto italiano, coinvolgendo il papato e le potenti famiglie baronali romane. La vasta rete di terre e castelli in loro possesso permise ai baroni di esercitare una costante pressione su Roma, contribuendo all'instabilità politica dell'area. Ha chiuso il ricco scambio di riflessioni Gianclaudio Civale, che ha tracciato un quadro complessivo delle trasformazioni militari e politiche dell'Italia tra la discesa di Carlo VIII (1494) e la vittoria spagnola al Garigliano (1503). L'intervento ha posto l'accento sugli elementi di continuità e i punti di rottura che determinarono il passaggio da un fragile equilibrio tra le potenze italiane alla supremazia spagnola e asburgica. L'analisi ha evidenziato, infine, il ruolo chiave della monarchia aragonese e del generale Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba (Consalvo di Cordova), la cui strategia militare culminò nella fulminea conquista di Napoli nel 1503 e aprì la strada al dominio spagnolo in Italia, che si sarebbe consolidato nei secoli successivi.

In conclusione, le giornate di studio hanno rappresentato un'occasione di ri-

flessione sul tema della guerra in un'ottica pluridisciplinare. L'analisi non si è limitata agli aspetti militari, ma ha evidenziato le ripercussioni politiche, sociali ed economiche che i diversi conflitti hanno avuto nel Mezzogiorno italiano. Gli interventi proposti, coprendo un arco cronologico compreso tra il 1381 e il 1516, hanno ricostruito un quadro complesso in cui si sono intrecciate non soltanto guerre di grande portata, ma anche scorrerie, insurrezioni, ribellioni baronali, conflitti dinastici e progetti espansionistici. Tali vicissitudini hanno coinvolto una pluralità di attori, appartenenti a diversi contesti sociali e geografici, delineando un panorama dinamico di alleanze e contrapposizioni.

Il convegno ha infine stimolato la riflessione sull'importanza della riscrittura della storia, intesa come un processo di rilettura critica delle fonti. La documentazione storica, infatti, non è mai del tutto neutrale, dunque, anche testimonianze in apparenza oggettive, come quaderni contabili o atti giuridici, possono contenere elementi narrativi e ideologici che necessitano di un'attenta contestualizzazione.



*Recensioni / Reviews*  
*Storia Militare Medievale*



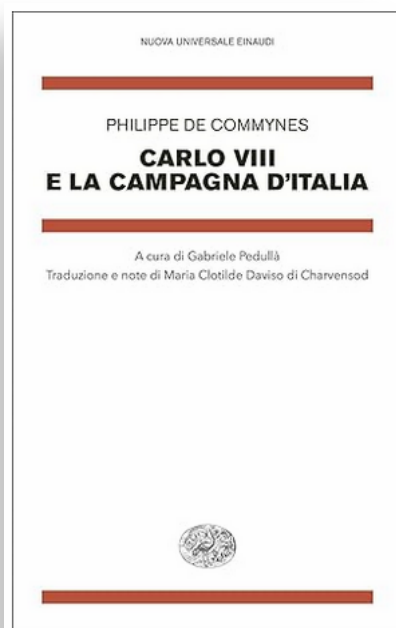


PHILIPPE DE COMMYNES,

## *Carlo VIII e la campagna d'Italia*

a cura di GABRIELE PEDULLÀ.

Traduzione e note di Maria Clotilde Daviso di Charvensod,  
Nuova Universale Einaudi, Torino 2025, pp. V-CXXIX, pp. 271



**N**ella collana Nuova Universale della casa editrice Einaudi è uscito il volume che racchiude i due libri dei *Mémoires* di Philippe de Comynes dedicati alla campagna d'Italia di Carlo VIII. L'opera è stata curata da Gabriele Pedullà, al quale si deve anche una ricca nota bibliografica ed un importante saggio introduttivo dal titolo, piuttosto esplicativo, *Le Italie di Philippe de Comynes, l'uomo che non vide il Rinascimento*, che aiuta il lettore a storicizzare la stesura dell'opera e a prendere le distanze da quanti hanno volu-

to vedere nel diplomatico borgognone il Machiavelli francese.

Dico subito che non per questo l'opera ne esce sminuita, anzi, la lettura delle acute pagine di Pedullà consente di apprezzare, senza soverchie aspettative, le descrizioni, le osservazioni e i motti che hanno reso famoso ed intramontabile il lavoro di un ufficiale che servì prima il duca di Borgogna, poi tre sovrani francesi: Luigi XI, Carlo VIII e Luigi XII. Il volume esce nella traduzione italiana di Maria Clotilde Daviso di Charvensod, curatrice anche delle note in margine al testo, che se ne occupò già nella prima versione integrale pubblicata dalla casa editrice nel 1960.

Il racconto della impresa di Carlo VIII, che segnò la fine del regno aragonese di Napoli e l'inizio della ingerenza di potenze straniere nella penisola italiana, è contenuto nel VII e nell'VIII libro dell'intera opera. Il VII libro, diviso in 20 capitoli, descrive la discesa del sovrano, spiega i diritti della casa d'Angiò sul Regno di Napoli, le ragioni delle perplessità di Commynes in merito all'impresa, i motivi del suo successo. L'VIII libro descrive invece, in 27 capitoli, l'abbandono della capitale del Regno, la risalita del sovrano lungo la penisola, le tappe e le vicende che lo accompagnarono fino a ritorno in Francia. L'opera termina con la morte di Carlo VIII e l'ascesa al trono, con il nome di Luigi XII, di quel duca d'Orleans per il quale Commynes aveva parteggiato nella lotta per la successione che si era aperta dopo la morte di Luigi XI e che, pur ammettendolo a corte, non gli offrì i vantaggi e le ricompense nelle quali egli aveva sperato in virtù della sua antica dedizione.

Nonostante la manifesta volontà di mostrare le competenze, la lealtà e l'*ethos* dell'autore, l'opera costituisce una testimonianza storica imprescindibile perché è un grandioso affresco delle condizioni socio-culturali e politiche della penisola italiana. Non è un trattato di scienza della politica, né un manuale di arte militare o della diplomazia. Attraverso l'impresa di Carlo VIII, i *Memoires* illustrano assetti politici, pratiche di governo, tattiche diplomatiche, organizzazioni degli eserciti, dando vita ad una descrizione suggestiva, ricca di spunti, animata dai signori e dalle personalità del tempo. L'attenzione per i trattati e le paci, per le battaglie (l'edizione offre anche un interessante disegno dello spiegamento delle forze della battaglia di Fornovo), per la composizione degli eserciti, la provenienza dei mercenari, offre uno spaccato dell'arte della guerra nel tardo medioevo. Le distanze tra le roccaforti, gli itinerari seguiti dal sovrano in discesa e in salita lungo la penisola, l'attenta descrizione di castelli e luoghi muniti ci lasciano conoscere le postazioni strategiche del tempo.

Molto interessanti sono i capitoli relativi al Regno di Napoli, che raccontano la convulsa fine del regno aragonese e l'avvicendamento di tre sovrani fino alla morte di Ferrandino. Essi consentono di conoscere la redistribuzione dei poteri stabilita da Carlo VIII ed avvicinano il lettore ad un periodo che ancora oggi è tra i meno conosciuti della storia del Mezzogiorno. Pur non essendosi spinto fino al Regno, Comynnes non si risparmia in commenti e riflessioni sulle logiche del potere, sulle scelte strategiche, sulle personalità dei sovrani o sull'atteggiamento delle popolazioni e sempre, quando non può essere testimone oculare, racconta di aver fatto ricerche e di essersi informato sui fatti per offrire descrizioni quanto più veritiere possibile.

Egli dà così inizio ad un vero e proprio genere storiografico, che ebbe grande seguito nei secoli successivi e che suggerì un nuovo modo di fare storia, attraverso l'uso di testimonianze autorevoli oltre alla propria, e l'adozione di uno stile più asciutto e sintetico, apparentemente più neutrale di quella retorica umanistica che pervadeva ancora la letteratura di argomento storico dell'epoca. E' un genere, quello dei memoriali, che rispondeva alle esigenze di un pubblico sempre più numeroso e diversificato, per il quale furono pubblicate ben 120 edizioni dell'opera tra il 1524 ed il 1643.

Tra i meriti di Comynnes, inoltre, c'è senz'altro anche l'aver individuato con l'acume e la competenza che gli provenivano dalla sua posizione, l'inestricabile rete di relazioni nella quale si trovarono gli stati italiani alla fine del Quattrocento. Non è un caso se fu Federico Chabod a proporre alla casa editrice la prima pubblicazione dei *Memoires*. Oggi però, in un clima storiografico forte di un cinquantennio almeno di studi sulle trasformazioni politico istituzionali alla fine del medioevo, sulle pratiche diplomatiche e sulla nascita degli stati di antico regime, il prodotto di un intellettuale che servì i sovrani francesi assume un valore ben diverso da quello che gli è stato attribuito da una letteratura che è stata a lungo centrata sull'idea di uno stato moderno forte ed accentrato. Se la sua posizione nei confronti dell'oggetto da trattare, il metodo e lo stile lo collocano in posizioni d'avanguardia rispetto alla cultura dominante, le sue vicende biografiche e le interpretazioni degli eventi che narra restituiscono al diplomatico la piena appartenenza al mondo aristocratico delle corti europee quattrocentesche.

Comynnes era nato e si era formato nel ducato borgognone, che godeva fin dalle sue origini di una peculiare condizione giuridica nei confronti del sovrano francese e si era sempre distinto per le forti tendenze centrifughe. Fu quindi un uomo profondamente legato ad ideali feudali ed aristocratici che lasciavano am-

pio spazio alle immunità ed ai privilegi di quanti, pur accettando la presenza di un sovrano, ne rivendicavano autonomia e indipendenze. Cresciuto alla corte di Carlo, conte di Charolais, ne fu lo scudiero. Egli abbandonò il suo signore nel 1472 per passare alle dipendenze di Luigi XI, alla cui morte cadde in disgrazia e fu arrestato per aver parteggiato per il duca d'Orleans. Grazie alle sue doti diplomatiche fu quindi ammesso a corte dal nuovo sovrano Carlo VIII che decise di utilizzarlo, proprio per le grandi competenze acquisite in passato, nella spedizione italiana. Senza voler cadere nella tentazione di accogliere il parere di Voltaire, che scagliò i suoi strali contro il diplomatico, bollandolo come cortigiano, sicuramente egli scrisse un'opera che rispecchiava principi e aspirazioni degli ambienti di corte di fine secolo. Laddove questi costituivano le households del principe, i centri del potere e al tempo stesso i luoghi dell'umanesimo e delle produzioni artistiche e culturali.

Così, accanto ai pregi di un'opera che offre una miriade di informazioni, in uno stile nuovo ed efficace, occorre ricordare anche la straordinaria rappresentazione dei valori e della cultura umanistica di cui Philippe de Commines fu il portavoce. La migliore chiave per comprendere la vicinanza dell'autore con una parte di questa cultura è il suo ricorrere alla volontà di Dio per spiegare le ragioni del successo dell'impresa di Carlo VIII, altrimenti incomprensibili vista la giovinezza e la scarsa attitudine del sovrano. La volontà divina è presente sempre nei *Mémoires* e la tremenda acquisizione che il disordine e il fato, inaccettabili per lo spirito del Rinascimento, possano interferire nella vita di un uomo, gli consentono di comprendere anche le ragioni del suo destino. Molto opportunamente Gabriele Pedullà nel suo saggio introduttivo ricorda la relazione strettissima di collaborazione e condivisione che il barone d'Argenton intrattene con Angelo Catone, l'umanista astrologo, lettore di medicina nello Studio Napoletano, al quale lo univano anche alcuni aspetti delle vicende biografiche. Angelo Catone accompagnò il principe di Taranto Federico, figlio di Ferrante, in Borgogna, per le nozze che questi avrebbe dovuto contrarre con la figlia di Carlo il Temerario. L'incontro fu determinante per entrambi perché erano accomunati da interessi e principi simili, anche nei confronti delle esigenze di narrare i fatti storici con nuovo metodo. Philippe de Commines inviò il materiale da lui raccolto all'amico affinché questi, diventato arcivescovo di Vienne, potesse scrivere a sua volta delle vicende di Luigi XI. Angelo Catone, dal canto suo, fu autore di un celebrato trattato *De cometa* nel quale attribuiva agli astri, mossi dalla volontà di Dio, il potere di influenzare le vicende degli uomini. Nello scorcio del medioevo il

suo collega Matteo dell'Aquila scrisse il *De cometa atque terremotu*, nel quale il pensiero aristotelico lasciava il posto ad interpretazioni di natura astrologica anche per spiegare gli eventi sismici. Si trattava di umanisti che, nonostante alcune posizioni di retroguardia, diedero il formidabile e ben noto impulso al progresso degli studi del quale anche Philippe de Commines era ben consapevole. Non a caso nel 25° capitolo, che descrive la fine del regno di Carlo VIII, il barone di Argenton ricorda che il sovrano “aveva fatto venire da Napoli molti eccellenti maestri in ogni sorta di lavori, quali scultori e pittori” (p. 215). I mali della penisola italiana provenivano dalla incapacità mostrata dai signori nel governo delle popolazioni, ma l'arte, la letteratura, la scienza e la nuova storia che vi proliferavano costituivano un'imprescindibile ragione di crescita e di lustro per tutti i sovrani che ne accoglievano i rappresentanti.

Fonte storica di primaria importanza, testimonianza di vicende di cui in altre maniere non si potrebbe avere notizia, pietra miliare di un genere storiografico, i *Mémoires* raccontano l'inizio delle “guerre d'Italia” (1494-1559) e delle trasformazioni politiche e culturali che nella periodizzazione classica chiamiamo “età moderna”, un'età che portava con sé tanti aspetti della fase precedente.

SERENA MORELLI

Università della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”



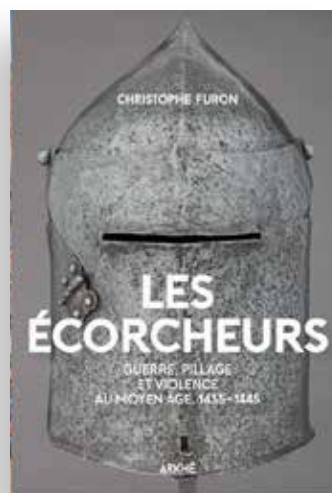
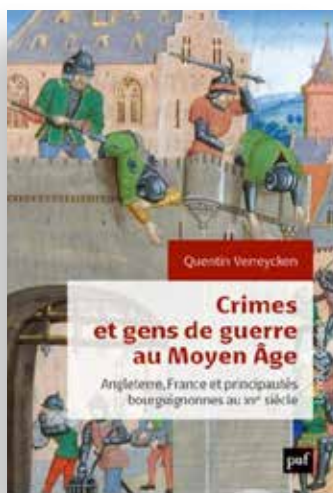
Buste en orant de Philippe de Commines, faisant paire avec celui de son épouse,  
Hélène de Chambes-Montsoreau

Musée du Louvre. © Foto Jebulon 2012. Wikimedia Commons

## *Deux ouvrages récents sur guerre et crime au Moyen Âge*

QUENTIN VERREYCKEN,  
*Crimes et gens de guerre au Moyen Âge. Angleterre, France et principautés  
bourguignonnes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle;*  
Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2023, 277 p ;

CHRISTOPHE FURON,  
*Les Ecorcheurs. Violence et Pillage au Moyen Âge, 1435-1445 ;*  
Editions Arkhé, 2023, 236 p.



**V**oici deux ouvrages parus peu de temps l'un après l'autre sur la thématique du déroulement de la guerre au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle et notamment sur les violences commises. Ces deux livres sont complémentaires, même s'ils sont écrits chez deux maisons d'éditions et avec deux styles différents, avec des focales et optiques différentes.

Quentin Verreycken analyse la violence des hommes de guerre, mais pas que, au travers de fonds originaux, des lettres de remissions, dans trois états différents : le royaume de France, le duché de Bourgogne et le royaume d'Angleterre.

Ce aspect comparatif offre une vision très intéressante sur la pratique de la violence au cours du XVe siècle dans ces territoires, ainsi que des relations entre les différents acteurs que ce soient les coupables où les victimes ainsi que les différents souverains. Pour ces derniers, la période est à un contrôle de l'armée et d'encadrer, discipliner ces forces armées. La politique d'octroi de pardon et de rémission apparaît ici non pas comme une preuve de laxisme, mais un outil de régulation de ces actes de violence. Au travers de ce mécanisme de demande de pardon et de rémission, l'auteur nous offre une fenêtre sur les conditions de vie des soldats, l'omniprésence de la violence sous ses différentes formes ainsi que sur les possibilités d'en obtenir grâce. C'est une époque où sévissent plusieurs groupes fameux connus sous le nom des Ecorcheurs. Ces bandes d'hommes armés sont le sujet de l'ouvrage de Christophe Furon. Ces personnes ont principalement sévis dans le royaume de France et le duché de Bourgogne, d'où est justement tiré leur nom. Après avoir évoqué la pratique du pillage dans les guerres médiévales, l'auteur nous offre une description de ces opérations menées par ces groupes de pilleurs au beau milieu du XVe siècle durant une dizaine d'année. Il y évoque les figures de certains de ces hommes, mais aussi les possibilités existant de pouvoir se sortir de ces compagnies notamment au travers des mesures politiques prises par les différents princes pour faire cesser les pillages.

Ces deux ouvrages sont forts intéressants même pour celui qui n'est pas familier avec ces phénomènes. Très bien écrit et documenté, ils sont, hasard des choses, complémentaires par les sources auxquels les auteurs ont eu recours.

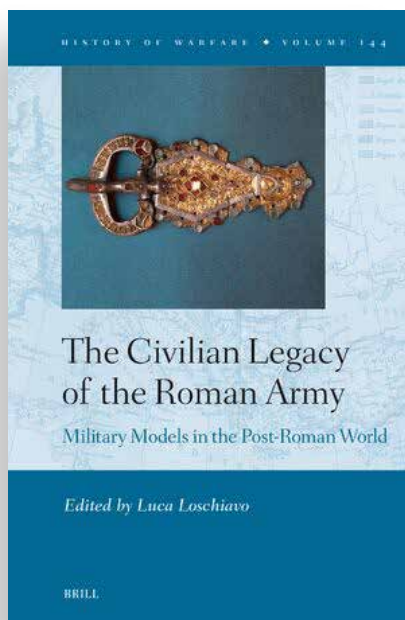
Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Constantinople 1453*, Perrin, Paris, 2024, 360 p.

Constantinople, l'ancienne Byzance est prise par les Ottomans le 29 mai 1453. La chute de cette ville serait pour certains historiens la référence dans le cadre de la périodisation de l'histoire pour séparer le monde médiéval de l'époque dit moderne. En quoi est-elle capitale pour l'histoire européenne ? Sylvain Gouguenheim en fin connaisseur de cette période, n'a pas forcément trouver de nouvelles archives. Il a su juste s'appuyer sur l'abondante recherche de ces dernières décennies pour nous offrir un panorama de la chute de cette capitale de l'Empire Romain. Le récit fait suit l'expansion des Ottomans, explicitant les raisons tant militaire, sociale et économique de leur succès jusqu'à la veille du Siècle. Un siège décrit sous toutes ses coutures et pour lequel on appréciera les riches cartes jointes à l'ouvrage. La chute et de l'histoire de cette chute font l'objet du dernier chapitre et notamment de l'utilisation qui en a été faite par différents courants politiques, ce qui permet de mieux comprendre les événements récents concernant cette métropole.

LUCA LOSCHIAVO (ED.),

*The Civilian Legacy of the Roman Army*  
*Military Models in the Post-Roman World*

Brill, Leiden-Boston 2024.



**N**ella prestigiosa collana *History of Warfare* (volume 144), la casa editrice Brill di Leiden e Boston ha pubblicato nel 2024 un'opera destinata a lasciare il segno negli studi sulla tarda antichità e sull'alto medioevo; si tratta dell'opera collectanea curata da Luca Loschiavo (Ordinario nell'Univ. di Teramo), intitolata: *The Civilian Legacy of the Roman Army. Military Models in the Post-Roman World*.

Un titolo che subito incuriosisce, perché sposta l'attenzione dall'aspetto più ovvio dell'esercito romano – la forza militare, le conquiste, la pax armata – verso un orizzonte più sottile ma forse ancora più influente: la capacità dell'esercito di trasmettere modelli civili e istituzionali che sopravvissero al crollo dell'impero e

plasmarono le società barbariche e romano-barbariche tra IV e VII secolo.

Come scrive Loschiavo nella prefazione, il libro nasce da un progetto di ricerca iniziato nel 2012 a Cagliari e sviluppatosi in una serie di incontri internazionali che hanno messo a confronto storici del diritto, filologi, linguisti, storici della religione e dell'iconografia. L'idea di fondo è semplice e innovativa al tempo stesso: se è noto il ruolo dell'esercito romano come strumento di romanizzazione e come garante della *pax* imperiale, meno noto è l'effetto che le sue strutture organizzative – gerarchie, amministrazione, logistica, giustizia, reclutamento, fiscalità – ebbero sui popoli che andarono a sostituire Roma. In altre parole, il crollo politico dell'Impero non cancellò le forme militari romane: anzi, queste divennero l'ossatura nascosta dei nuovi regni d'Occidente.

La struttura dell'opera è in quattro grandi sezioni, che accompagnano il lettore dalle parole dei soldati fino alle geometrie del potere e alla giustizia militare. Si ritiene opportuno offrire al lettore una brevissima, e perciò non esaustiva, sintesi di ciascuna parte per far cogliere l'importanza di tale corale lavoro, come segue. Occorre infine premettere che L'obiettivo del volume non è chiudere un dibattito, ma offrire nuove piste interdisciplinari, in particolare sulla dimensione giuridica e lessicale dell'eredità militare.

Il valore di questo corposo volume non sta solo nei risultati specifici, ma nel metodo: un approccio multidisciplinare (che unisce diritto, linguistica, storia militare, antropologia). Il lettore troverà un mosaico complesso, dove ogni tassello – dal lessico gotico al decreto di Childeberto, dal simbolo del *cingulum* alla figura dei *laeti* – illumina un aspetto della transizione tra antichità e medioevo.

In conclusione, *The Civilian Legacy of the Roman Army* si distingue per ricchezza interdisciplinare (diritto, linguistica, storia militare, antropologia); attenzione al linguaggio come specchio delle trasformazioni istituzionali; analisi puntuale delle fonti giuridiche e letterarie, spesso rilette in chiave innovativa. È un testo chiaramente “specialistico”, di rilevante valore per gli studiosi. La varietà dei contributi rende la lettura stimolante e permette di cogliere la complessità della transizione tra mondo romano e regni barbarici. In sintesi questo è un libro adatto per chi voglia capire come il mondo romano sia sopravvissuto nei regni barbarici e come l'Europa medievale abbia ereditato istituzioni, simboli e pratiche dall'esercito imperiale, è un testo imprescindibile. Un volume che dimostra come la vera eredità di Roma non sia solo nelle strade, negli acquedotti o nelle legioni vittoriose, ma in una più sottile e duratura grammatica del potere.

Prefazione di Luca Loschiavo (curatore), i.

Parte I – *The Words of the Soldiers*. Questa prima sezione è dedicata al linguaggio e alle categorie concettuali ovvero “le parole dei soldati” con i contributi dei seguenti Autori.

- Andrea Trisciunglio – *Hospitalitas I: The Munus Hospitalitatis and Its Limit*. Egli analizza la pratica della distribuzione di terre ai soldati o ai barbari insediati, mostrando come il *munus hospitalitatis* fosse uno strumento di integrazione, ma anche un limite alla sovranità delle popolazioni locali. Dunque *hospitalitas* non è semplice ospitalità, bensì un istituto giuridico attraverso cui i barbari venivano insediati nei territori imperiali con diritti e doveri precisi.
- Pierfrancesco Porena – *Hospitalitas II: The Changing Meaning of Hospitalitas*. Egli ripercorre l’evoluzione semantica e giuridica del termine, dal contesto romano a quello visigoto e ostrogoto, mettendo in luce come un istituto amministrativo diventi fondamento di un nuovo diritto territoriale.
- Wolfgang Haubrichs – *Warrior Names and Military Language of the Westgermanic Peoples*. Egli approfondisce la lingua dei Franchi e dei Longobardi, con attenzione all’onomastica guerriera e al lessico militare, mostrando il legame tra identità linguistica e ideologia marziale.
- Carla Falluomini – *The Gothic Language of Warfare*. Egli indaga la terminologia militare in gotico, evidenziando come l’assimilazione di concetti romani si rifletta nella lingua, rivelando un incontro culturale e giuridico oltre che militare.

Parte II – *Social and Juridical Structures*. In questa “sezione” sembra emergere con chiarezza l’idea centrale del volume: l’esercito romano non sparì, ma “entrò” nella società, ridisegnando rapporti familiari, patrimoniali e comunitari.

- Valerio Marotta – *Militia and Civitas between Third and Sixth Century CE*. Egli analizza il rapporto tra servizio militare e cittadinanza, sottolineando la progressiva erosione della distinzione tra *civis* e *miles*, che porterà a una società dove “ogni uomo è un potenziale guerriero”.
- Stefan Esders – *Persecuting Latrones...*; egli studia il decreto di Childeberto II sul ruolo della centena franca, dove giustizia militare e disciplina pubblica si intrecciano. Mostra la continuità con il diritto militare romano.
- Francesco Castagnino – *Soldiers’ Marriages*. Egli esamina i matrimoni militari prima e dopo la caduta dell’Impero, illustrando il passaggio da privilegi eccezionali a una regolamentazione stabile nei regni barbarici.
- Iolanda Ruggiero – *Soldiers’ Inheritance*. Egli tratta il *testamentum militis* e altri privilegi successori, evidenziando la persistenza delle norme imperiali nelle *leges barbarorum*.

Parte III – *Symbols, Rituals and Identity Models*. In queste pagine gli Autori si sono concentrati sulla dimensione simbolica evidenziando come il militare diventi non solo funzione pratica, ma linguaggio di potere, mito e memoria.

- ANDREA A. VERARDI – *The Cingulum Militiae in the Early Middle Ages*. Nel saggio s'illustra il simbolo del cingolo (cintura) militare, distintivo di status e identità, che viene seguito nella sua transizione dall'Impero ai regni barbarici, fino a diventare emblema di potere nei Longobardi e poi, per la cronaca, sarà simbolo di ordine cavalleresco in alcune monarchie nazionali.
- Esperanza Osaba – *Answering the Call to Arms: Lex Visigothorum 9.2*. Ella analizza le leggi visigote sul rifiuto del servizio militare, mostrando come l'obbligo bellico diventi cardine della fedeltà al re.
- Francesco Borri – *Traditionskern*», «*Gefolgschaft*». Egli offre una riflessione critica sulla nozione di *ethnogenesis*, sottolineando più le domande aperte che le risposte definitive: l'identità militare come costruzione culturale più che realtà etnica.
- Stefano Gasparri – *The Lombard Army between Myth and Reality*. Egli Analizza il ruolo delle *faerae* e delle *arimanniae*, smontando alcuni miti storiografici sull'esercito longobardo e proponendo una visione più aderente alle fonti.

Parte IV – *Geometries of Power and Military Justice*, s'incentra sul rapporto tra insediamenti, diritto e giustizia.

- Jean-Pierre Poly – *Laeti and Gentiles*. Egli studia gli insediamenti militari germanici in Gallia, evidenziando la funzione integrativa dei *laeti* e dei *gentiles* nell'economia e nella difesa locale.
- Luca Loschiavo – *Personality of Law or Ius Speciale Militum?*. Egli discute le origini delle *leges barbarorum*, mettendo a fuoco il ruolo del diritto militare romano come matrice dei nuovi ordinamenti giuridici.
- Soazick Kerneis – *Late Roman Military Justice and the Birth of Ordeal*. Esamina il passaggio dai processi militari romani alle forme di giudizio divino, individuando una linea di continuità tra disciplina militare e pratiche ordaliche.
- Fabio Botta – *Collective Criminal Responsibility and Comrades' Solidarity*. Analizza la responsabilità penale collettiva, mostrando come la solidarietà tra commilitoni passi dall'esercito romano alle bande barbariche.
- Walter Pohl – *From the Roman Army to the Laws of the Kingdoms*. Conclude con una sintesi storiografica: i regni post-romani non nascono da un vuoto, ma da un "riuso creativo" delle strutture militari e giuridiche romane.

GIOVANNI AMATUCCIO,

## *I Templari e la guerra*

*“Primi in progrediendo, in regrediendo postremi”*

Youcanprint 2025 ISBN 9791224035237



**I** Templari sono forse il tema più abusato del panorama medievistico. Questo ennesimo volume, edito in autopubblicazione e con una copertina a dir poco insignificante, ci sarebbe certo sfuggito, se non avessimo notato l'Autore. Gli studi di Giovanni Amatuccio sulla guerra medievale sono infatti tra i pochi contributi italiani che combinano la prospettiva e il metodo propriamente storico-militari col rigore scientifico nell'uso delle fonti primarie (testuali e materiali) e nella discussione della letteratura secondaria. Con rare eccezioni, come quella per antonomasia di Aldo Settia, la storiografia italiana sulle guerre medievali affronta il tema della guerra prevalentemente nella prospettiva e coi metodi della storia sociale e istituzionale, con l'effetto di respingere le vocazioni propriamente

storico-militari negli specialismi collaterali (oplologia, archeologia, architettura, iconologia) oppure nel fiume (alquanto lutulento anche se ricco di pagliuzze d'oro) della letteratura amatoriale, che grazie al successo mediatico e all'autopubblicazione (non a caso usata da uno storico di riconosciuto profilo accademico come Amatuccio, dottore di ricerca e abilitato per la docenza di II fascia) finisce per oscurare e screditare anche la storia militare scientifica.

La storia militare vera e propria, come quella coltivata da Amatuccio, è invece proprio il contrario della storia delle battaglie e della *histoire-bataille*, concetto meno dispregiativo di quanto non suoni nell'uso corrente, e che la scuola delle *Annales* usò (senza averlo inventato) per denunciare il limite "sovrastrutturale" della storia politica incentrata sulle nazioni (occidentali) e sulle loro gesta e relazioni e finita nella tragedia del 1914 da cui sembriamo non esser mai veramente usciti. La storia militare è invece l'individuazione, metodologicamente precisa e necessariamente interdisciplinare e diacronica, dei fattori e degli elementi realmente significativi che spiegano la genesi, le caratteristiche intrinseche, l'impiego e gli effetti del potenziale e delle capacità belliche (non solo tecnico-militari, ma anche geografiche, sociali, economiche, psicologiche). Sfrondate di tutto il "colore", che invece è la ragion d'essere della storia delle battaglie e più o meno rilevante per la storia sociale, culturale, di genere, religiosa e così via.

Come emerge anche dal sottotitolo, tratto dall'*Historia Orientalis* di De Vitry, Amatuccio ha voluto colmare la lacuna più vistosa nella straripante storiografia sugli ordini militari e in particolare sui Templari, riportando l'attenzione sulla loro originale e primaria funzione militare e analizzando il Tempio come macchina bellica, capace di operare in modo sistemico all'interno di un teatro di guerra complesso come la Terra Santa, senza cedere né alla fascinazione simbolica né a letture apologetiche. Gli insediamenti nell'Occidente latino vengono presi in considerazione solo come strumento autonomo, indipendente dai governi, di supporto finanziario e logistico del fronte orientale. Proprio per evitare di confondere la guerra con la sua retorica o con le strutture che la alimentavano, Amatuccio limita il campo d'indagine quasi esclusivamente alla Terra Santa, riservando a Europa e Penisola Iberica il ruolo di sfondo comparativo e di necessario riferimento. L'obiettivo dichiarato è comprendere in che modo l'Ordine templare operò come attore militare pienamente attivo all'interno del contesto levantino, e come la disciplina monastica si sia progressivamente fusa con esigenze di efficienza strategica, dando vita a una delle strutture militari più originali e complesse del Medioevo.

Ovviamente il libro tratta sommariamente anche la genesi dell'Ordine, la sua doppia natura monastica e militare e la Regola di Bernardo di Chiaravalle, solo però in quanto rilevante per comprendere l'ordinamento, con le attribuzioni e correlazioni fra i vari organi, i metodi di addestramento e i meccanismi disciplinari. Viene poi analizzata l'evoluzione dell'armamento individuale e collettivo e di conseguenza della tipologia e delle modalità di impiego operativo nel corso della presenza cristiana in Terrasanta. Capitoli speciali vengono dedicati alle fortificazioni (storia delle principali fortezze, evoluzione dell'architettura difensiva, aspetti logistici e simbolismo dei sistemi fortificati) e al potere marittimo (porti, arsenali e squadre navali dell'Ordine e collaborazioni con le principali città marinare europee). Infine, l'Autore analizza il declino, con le ultime campagne, la caduta di Acri, e la soppressione dell'Ordine, ma anche i tratti templari ereditati dalle istituzioni militari europee. E che interessano per analogia anche il fenomeno odierno, non meno inquietante, della Compagnie Militari Private (PMC), con il caso clamoroso del parziale ammutinamento della Wagner russa, o dell'uso militare e sovversivo del sistema satellitare Starlink .

Spada, lancia, scudo triangolare, cavallo da guerra, cotta di maglia: l'iconografia ormai canonica del templare trova qui un solido riscontro filologico e tecnico, mai abbandonato alle suggestioni dell'immaginario. L'autore ricostruisce con precisione la dotazione tipica del fratello combattente, sottolineando come l'Ordine riservasse grande attenzione alla qualità degli equipaggiamenti, chiamati a essere efficienti e funzionali, ma mai sfarzosi, in piena coerenza con i precetti spirituali.

L'autore sottolinea l'importanza dell'addestramento e degli accorgimenti diretti a mantenere la compattezza della formazione durante la carica, preparata e protetta da schermagliatori e arcieri, e in grado di assumere all'occorrenza una formazione appiedata e difensiva, soprattutto in prossimità delle proprie fortificazioni. La battaglia di Montgisard (1177), richiamata nel testo, rappresenta uno degli esempi più chiari di come l'intervento templare potesse risultare decisivo anche in condizioni di netta inferiorità numerica.

Un'ultima osservazione riguarda l'etica del combattimento. Per i Templari, la morte in battaglia assumeva il valore di un vero e proprio martirio, conferendo all'azione militare una determinazione straordinaria. Tuttavia, come sottolinea l'Autore, il fattore spirituale poteva incidere anche negativamente, come ad Hat-

tin (1187) dove valore e disciplina non compensarono l'incapacità di adattarsi alle circostanze.

Gli insediamenti fortificati templari sono oggetto di una vastissima letteratura internazionale, che l'autore padroneggia pienamente e da cui estrae gli aspetti più rilevanti, tanto di architettura difensiva, quanto geostrategici e logistici, per interpretare funzioni e vicende delle principali piazzeforti templari in Terra Santa (da Tortosa a Safed, da Chastellet a Atlit). Al tempo stesso centri operativi e spirituali: luoghi di preghiera, di comando e di logistica, con architetture rigorosamente funzionali, fatte di cinte murarie articolate, piani concentrici, torri quadrate o poligonali, cisterne, magazzini e sale capitolari. In alcuni casi, come ad Atlit, si trattava di veri e propri complessi fortificati di scala quasi urbana, in grado di ospitare centinaia di persone e sostenere assedi prolungati. Ne deriva un quadro estremamente preciso, ma il limite editoriale scelto dall'autore (e che esprime un'aprioristica e scontrosa rinuncia ad avvalersi di migliori opportunità di far conoscere e riconoscere il proprio lavoro scientifico, atteggiamento psicologico purtroppo comune a moltissimi tra i migliori ricercatori indipendenti) non gli ha consentito di corredare il testo del necessario supporto cartografico.

Meno nota, ma non per questo meno rilevante, è il Seapower dell'Ordine, a cui Amatuccio dedica il capitolo forse più originale del libro, analizzando i punti di origine e arrivo delle linee di comunicazione (LOC) marittime, controllati in modo autonomo con propri arsenali, magazzini, cantieri e squadre navali basati principalmente ad Acri, Cipro e La Rochelle e potenziati mediante una attenta cooperazione con Genova, Marsiglia e altri centri portuali mediterranei, che rendevano l'Ordine un attore capace di muoversi simultaneamente su più piani: terrestre, navale, economico e spirituale. È forse in questa dimensione integrata che il modello templare appare più vicino a forme di organizzazione "moderna". Se le fortezze rappresentavano il volto stabile e visibile del Tempio, la flotta ne costituiva il complemento dinamico e spesso invisibile: lo strumento che permetteva all'Ordine di superare i limiti dello spazio e di sostenere la guerra ben oltre il campo di battaglia.

La parte finale del volume è dedicata al declino militare e politico dell'Ordine del Tempio. La caduta di Acri nel 1291 segna la fine definitiva della presenza templare in Terra Santa e l'inizio di una lenta agonia. Rientrati in Europa, i Templari perdono progressivamente la loro funzione originaria: non combattono più,

non proteggono i pellegrini, non amministrano territori di frontiera. Rimangono tuttavia ricchi, solidamente organizzati e influenti — una condizione che, in assenza di una funzione militare attiva, li rende inevitabilmente vulnerabili.

L'arresto del 1307, voluto da Filippo il Bello, rappresenta l'atto decisivo di questa parabola. Amatuccio ne ricostruisce le dinamiche con equilibrio, evitando ogni deriva complottistica: si trattò di un'operazione politica mirata contro un Ordine ormai scomodo, divenuto una preda ideale per un potere monarchico impegnato in un processo di progressiva centralizzazione. Il processo e la soppressione del 1312, sancita da papa Clemente V, chiudono la vicenda storica del Tempio, senza tuttavia esaurirne l'eredità simbolica.

Ed è proprio sul piano militare che emerge uno degli aspetti più significativi messi in luce dal volume. Al momento della sua soppressione, il Tempio non era un'istituzione in declino: le sue strutture funzionavano, la disciplina era mantenuta, la rete organizzativa restava attiva. La fine dell'Ordine non fu dunque il risultato di un fallimento bellico o operativo, ma la conseguenza di dinamiche politiche estranee alla guerra. È forse questo il dato più amaro — e al tempo stesso più eloquente — che l'opera restituisce: la distruzione di una forza ancora vitale, travolta non dall'inefficienza, ma dal mutamento degli equilibri di potere.

Sul piano stilistico, *I Templari e la guerra* si presenta come un testo chiaro, ben costruito e accessibile anche a un pubblico non accademico, pur restando solidamente fondato sul piano scientifico. L'assenza di note a piè di pagina, sostituite da una narrazione continua, potrebbe far storcere il naso agli specialisti, ma contribuisce in modo evidente all'efficacia divulgativa dell'opera. Le fonti, in ogni caso, sono presenti e correttamente richiamate all'interno del testo.

Amatuccio evita con decisione tanto il sensazionalismo quanto il linguaggio opaco della monografia accademica. La scrittura è asciutta, ma mai impersonale; precisa, senza risultare arida. L'autore si sofferma dove è necessario e procede con rapidità quando il dettaglio non aggiunge valore interpretativo. Questa capacità di sintesi rappresenta uno dei punti di forza del volume, soprattutto per un lettore interessato agli aspetti tecnici e militari più che alla costruzione leggendaria dell'Ordine.

Nel panorama storiografico italiano, spesso dominato da opere generaliste o da saggi di taglio narrativo e "di colore", il lavoro di Amatuccio si distingue come un contributo raro e prezioso. A differenza di studiosi come Malcolm Barber o

Helen Nicholson, che adottano prospettive ampie e comparative, *I Templari e la guerra* sceglie consapevolmente di concentrarsi su un ambito specifico, approfondendolo con coerenza e rigore.

La decisione di limitare l'analisi alla Terra Santa, escludendo l'area iberica, risponde a precise ragioni metodologiche: la documentazione per la Penisola Iberica risulta più frammentaria e il ruolo militare templare meno chiaramente definito. Un confronto avrebbe certamente ampliato l'orizzonte dell'indagine, ma avrebbe anche rischiato di diluirne l'efficacia e la compattezza interpretativa. La scelta dell'autore appare dunque non come una rinuncia, ma come un atto di controllo consapevole del campo di ricerca.

Amatuccio riesce là dove molti falliscono: spiegare i Templari senza tradirli. Li restituisce per ciò che furono realmente — soldati organizzati, monaci disciplinati, costruttori di fortezze e protagonisti di una complessa macchina logistica — e non per ciò che divennero nella sedimentazione mitologica successiva. Il volume invita a tornare alle fonti, alla pietra, agli uomini e agli strumenti della guerra, per comprendere un'istituzione che ha inciso profondamente sull'immaginario occidentale, ma che fu innanzitutto una presenza concreta, attiva e temuta.

Nel loro insieme, le diverse sezioni del volume mostrano con particolare chiarezza la cifra metodologica dell'opera. *I Templari e la guerra* non affronta il fatto bellico come un semplice ambito tematico, ma come un campo di studio unitario, nel quale storia dell'Ordine, tecnica militare, contesto strategico, architettura difensiva e cultura materiale risultano inscindibili. L'analisi procede costantemente dal generale allo specifico — dalla struttura dell'istituzione fino agli strumenti concreti del combattimento — senza mai perdere coerenza o profondità. Ne emerge il profilo di uno studioso che maneggia la guerra non come oggetto occasionale di ricerca, ma come disciplina pienamente interiorizzata, restituita nella sua complessità senza semplificazioni né scorciatoie interpretative.

Per chi si occupa di storia militare, di Ordini religioso-militari o di crociate, questo libro offre strumenti solidi, spunti di confronto e una scrittura efficace. Per chi, invece, ha sempre guardato ai Templari con curiosità mista a scetticismo, *I Templari e la guerra* può rappresentare una chiave d'accesso a un Medioevo reale, fatto di rigore, organizzazione e decisione — spesso molto più affascinante delle ombre che, nei secoli, hanno continuato a prolungarne il nome.



Pietro l'Eremita predica la prima crociata, dal codice occitano *Abreujamen de las estorias* (epitome storica), Avignone ca 1321 (BL, Egerton MS 1500, f. 45 v)

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