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**A TALE OF TWO CHRONICLERS:
PTOLEMY OF LUCCA AND GIOVANNI SERCAMBI**

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INTRODUCTION

The following pages will show the results of an investigation conducted on two Italian medieval chroniclers. Evidence will be provided to demonstrate both the importance of their historical works and the extremely fertile cultural background in which they worked. As will be explained further, both texts had an adventurous and eventful editorial fortune; nevertheless, the importance of these two texts and the peculiar fact that both were thought of and written in the cultured city-state of Lucca could lead to other interesting considerations.

The texts that I have analysed are the *Annales* of Ptolemy of Lucca (c.1236-1327) and the *Croniche* of Giovanni Sercambi (c.1345-1424).¹ Basically, this study concentrates on the sources utilized by the authors and how they looked at these sources while they were compiling their own texts. First of all, before I start describing them, I would like to explain what it is meant here by the word “source”. In this context it means the public records or text from which the particular historical data or records have been transferred to another text. If we can deduce that this process was the usual way in which the historical facts were gathered and transmitted in the books, I am going to verify that this cultural transmission happened sometime during the XIVth – XVth century in Lucca.

¹ *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter Fassung, nebst Teilen der Gesta Florentinorum und Gesta Lucanorum. Herausgegeben von Bernhard Schmeidler*, Berlin, 1955; G. Sercambi, *Le croniche, pubblicate sui manoscritti originali*, S. Bongi (ed.), 3 vols., Rome, 1892-1893.

Italian medieval chronicles, and especially those written in Tuscany, have been accurately studied for a long time. In fact, because of their abundance as well as their relevance for the history of the Italian literature, several scholars have produced many studies and critical editions of these texts, not to mention the development of some interesting theories on this peculiar topic.

My interest in how the chroniclers used particular sources in their texts arose while I was studying the so-called religious movements known as the Bianchi in 1399 in Valdinievole (a land between Lucca and Pistoia, in Tuscany).² For this research I had to explore several communal archives while looking for records that testified to this historical event. While I was carrying out this work, I had cause to look at two little known Tuscan chroniclers: the Pistoiese notary Luca Dominici and the Lucchese merchant Giovanni Sercambi. The former started writing his *Cronica* during the year 1399, while the latter wrote his *Novelle* after he saw the processions of the Bianchi that habitually crossed his Lucca; probably Dominici and Sercambi even knew each other and their respective works, but we do not have any evidence in support of this hypothesis. What is important to note though, is that Sercambi in the second part of his *Croniche*, stopped his historical narration in order to describe in a very detailed way the numerous trips of the Bianchi in Lucca and in other Tuscan cities. He decided not only to bear witness to their religious fervour by describing their behaviour when they went out in their processions but he even added several religious songs which the Bianchi used to sing during their pilgrimage.

² F. Mari, 'I bianchi in Valdinievole. Testimonianze contemporanee e sviluppi storiografici', in A. Spicciati (ed.), *La devozione dei bianchi nel 1399. il miracolo del Crocifisso di Borgo a Buggiano*, Borgo a Buggiano, 1998, pp. 93-134.

In this collective work, my task was to investigate evidence of such peculiar religious movement both in the communal archives and in the historical texts compiled around the first decades of the XVth century. While I was doing this research, I discovered that a certain tavern-keeper called Parasacco was actually a protagonist of one of Sercambi's *novella*.³ Parasacco lived in the small town of Borgo a Buggiano, not too far from Lucca. When I discovered his name registered in one of the public records of the Commune of Borgo a Buggiano (in the year 1399) I found it very fascinating that Sercambi had used a real and living person as a protagonist of his *novella*. We can deduce that the Lucchese chronicler Giovanni Sercambi used the name of the real tavern-keeper called Parasacco in order to offer a more realistic and vivid scene to his *novella*. In this particular case, it is also probable that Sercambi derived this source directly from his own knowledge of Parasacco. This led me to take a deeper interest in this intriguing writer.

My interest in Sercambi led me to look at his predecessor and fellow Lucchese, Ptolemy. Both authors were born in Lucca albeit in different times. When Sercambi decided to start writing his *Croniche*, probably in 1369, Ptolemy had already been dead for forty-two years. Besides, while Sercambi writes in vernacular, Ptolemy uses Latin; the former was a merchant as well as a politician, while the latter was a fine theologian and an historian too. Finally, while Ptolemy wrote on the history of Lucca from 1063 to

³ G. Sercambi, *Novelle*, G. Sinicropi (ed.), 2 vols., Firenze, 1995, I, pp. 656-660. See Mari, *I bianchi in Valdinevole*, p. 118.

1303, Sercambi narrated it from 1164 to 1423 thus providing some sort of continual narrative.

Literarily speaking, Ptolemy's *Annales* are much more coherent; we can admire his strong effort to explain clearly the history of Lucca and its neighbouring city-states. Sercambi's *Croniche*, on the other hand, are much more than just an historical account about the important episodes that happened in Lucca. I would like to discuss this aspect briefly even though I am not going to talk about the whole text, because I am focusing my attention only on the first part. The *Croniche* are a miscellaneous texts compiled by Sercambi during his life in order to offer the best cross-section of the Lucchese society of his time. Sercambi not only wrote the history of his city-state but he also enriched it by adding others texts, such as a remarkable number of short stories written by himself and some poems composed by the Florentine author Niccolò Soldanieri. For this specific reason, reading some parts of the *Croniche* is a rather complex and difficult process.

The intention of this study is to compare the two chronicles by providing evidence of the similarities and the differences between them. I will illustrate the methodology used by Sercambi and Ptolemy while they were compiling their works. Obviously, due to their chronological difference, I have been forced to focus my analysis only on the period 1164-1303, that is the chronological time frame that both Sercambi and Ptolemy narrated about.

This has been an intellectually stimulating research firstly because of the abundance of untapped sources and secondly because, in spite of the fame of the authors, especially in Tuscany, no studies have been carried out on this specific aspect of their works to date. I wanted to understand better the methodology used by Sercambi

and Ptolemy in order to clarify if the former knew the text of the latter or if he did not know the *Annales*, whether he knew other possible historical sources. As I am going to prove, Ptolemy certainly knew about at least another two Tuscan chronicles written before he started compiling his *Annales*: the most recent editor of them, Bernhard Schmeidler, in XXth century called them *Gesta Lucanorum* and *Gesta Florentinorum*—as did Ptolemy when he quoted them in his text. Sercambi demonstrates that he was well aware of both these texts, even if he did not mention them in his *Croniche*. As well as these texts, he uses another work called *Fioretto di croniche degli imperatori*, which was a Ghibelline text written in Florence during the XIVth century.

There is also another aspect with which I am concerned; this is the different political ideology held by the chroniclers, Sercambi and Ptolemy. The former was loyal to and one of the most influential advisors of the Lord of Lucca Paolo Guinigi, while the latter was a brilliant and cultured theologian and friend of Thomas Aquinas while Sercambi was a political animal who helped a despot to reach power. Sercambi was responsible for brutally ending the Lucchese republican institutions. Ptolemy on the other hand, was one of the most refined republican thinkers of his times as well as a prolific scholar.

Given these important facts, I was curious to find out if their political beliefs influenced their works. Could a relationship exist between the beliefs of an author and his writing? In other words: did political thought influence historical text or alternatively can we suggest that it did not alter this work at all? Either Sercambi or Ptolemy could have modified the interpretation of the historical events that they were writing about if they had wanted to. But did they? Could Sercambi, for instance, alter

or maliciously modify some relevant Lucchese episodes in trying to justify, for example the rapid rise to the power of Paolo Guinigi? Would he thus emphasize the negative aspects of the Lucchese Commune, filtering the ideas that a Lordship was an ineluctable way to save Lucca, its citizens and even its prestige? On the other hand, could Ptolemy, being a fierce supporter of republics, have offered some suggestions to his readers in order to influence a particular view about Lucca's history? We know that Ptolemy died in 1327 during the Lordship of Castruccio Castracani who ruled Lucca from 1316 to his sudden death in 1328, but Ptolemy never mentions the rule of Castruccio.

So, this study will analyse in its complexity all these aspects, by offering some suggestions about the relationship between the Ptolemy's *Annales* and Sercambi's *Croniche* in the light of the political views of their authors. It is a research developed between two subjects: Italian literature and medieval history and this explains the content of its chapters. In the first section I am going to offer a detailed history of the city-state of Lucca from the last decades of XIIth century to the beginning of XIVth. This is important because the long period represents the years that both the chroniclers wrote about in their works. After this historical introduction, I will analyse the cultural impact and the great importance for Italian literature of the Tuscan chronicles written between XIVth and XVth centuries. In the following four chapters I am going to explore in detail about the life of Ptolemy and Sercambi respectively, and then offer a reflection on their political thoughts.

The penultimate chapter will be concerned with the effective core of this project: it will analyse that is possible to reach a better understanding of both the *Annales* and the *Croniche* if we can identify their textual relationships. I am not going to translate

neither the texts from the *Annales* from Latin into English nor the *Croniche* ones from Italian into English, but I will present them as they have been originally written. Finally, the last chapter will investigate the editorial fortune of these chronicles; basically, it will be shown the intricate events correlated with the printed editions during the century, very likely due to the complex figures and lives of the authors but also because of the political implications at the time. In the same paragraph, I am going to present some unknown public records that I have found mainly in the Archivio di Stato of Lucca. All these records show the reasons why the Lucchese government ordered that publications of both the chronicles should be stopped or delayed.

We should never forget that all we know about the first stages of the proud history of Lucca was remembered and transmitted to us by Ptolemy of Lucca and Giovanni Sercambi. We have to be grateful to these authors because in this little known period of history they were the first authors who took time to tell us about their city-state.

I. HISTORY OF A CITY-STATE:

LUCCA BETWEEN XIITH AND XIVTH CENTURY

With the ascension to the imperial throne of Frederick I called Barbarossa in 1152 there commenced in Italy a period of political instability due to the fierce rivalries, even if we consider only the Tuscan cities, between Pisa, Lucca and Florence.⁴ Aware of his dignity and power, Barbarossa considered that his main mission was to restore to its entirety the absolute sovereignty and majesty of the Empire. In the course of his reign he went to Italy no less than seven times, making it the principal objective of his policies. In the north and centre of Italy these periods corresponded to the steady

⁴ For this period I have especially looked at: G. Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, Firenze, 1847, pp. 26-36; G. Tabacco, 'Gli orientamenti feudali dell'impero in Italia', in *Structures féodales et féodalisme dans l'Occident méditerranéen (X^e-XIII^e)*. Bilan et perspectives des recherches: colloque international, Rome, 1980, pp. 219-237; V. Tirelli, 'Lucca nella seconda metà del secolo XII. Società e istituzioni', in *I ceti dirigenti dell'età comunale nei secoli XII e XIII*, Pisa, 1982, pp. 157-231; R. Manselli, *La repubblica di Lucca*, Turin, 1986, pp. 32-35; I. Lori Sanfilippo (ed.), *Federico I Barbarossa e l'Italia nell'ottocentesimo anniversario della sua morte. Atti del Convegno. Roma, 24-26 maggio 1990*, Rome, 1990; F. Giovannini, *Storia dello Stato di Lucca*, Lucca, 2003; G. Constable, G. Cracco, H. Keller, and D. Quaglioni (eds.), *Il secolo XII: la «renovatio» dell'Europa cristiana*, Bologna, 2003. See, more generally, G.L. Barni, 'La lotta contro il Barbarossa', in *Storia di Milano*, IV, Milan, 1954, pp. 1-112. For Florence, see now E. Faini, *Il gruppo dirigente fiorentino in età protocomunale (fine XI–inizio XIII secolo)*, Università degli studi di Firenze, Tesi di laurea in Istituzioni medievali, rel. Prof. Jean–Claude Maire Vigueur, aa. 1999–2000.

Ptolemy of Lucca and Giovanni Sercambi as well inserted in their chronicles some facts of Frederick I's life: Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, pp. 1, 4, 7-10; Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, pp. 55-57, 59, 61-68, 72-73, 75-78, 80, 85, 89. For further information on these years, see also B. Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300*, New York, 1964, pp. 97-109; E. Occhipinti, *L'Italia dei comuni. Secoli XI-XIII*, Rome, 2000 and G. Milani, *I comuni italiani. Secoli XII-XIV*, Rome-Bari, 2005.

growth of the communes and the tireless warfare against him, as he sought to impose his will on the Italian cities. It has been authoritatively affirmed that Italian communes «precociously achieved full autonomy with respect to any higher authority» while «municipalities north of the Alps, whatever their juridical base of self-government or their degree of autonomy, never became totally independent of their lords». ⁵ Strong or weak, the Empire, kingdoms, and principalities continued to constitute the territorial structures in which the cities north of the Alps found themselves embedded. In central and northern Italy, on the other hand, these structures did not succeed in imposing themselves or even in acquiring firm roots. Territorial principalities did not succeed because they were hampered and eroded in their consolidation by the smaller lordships that grew from the proliferation of castles and the formation of large domains, and by the rapid political growth of the urban centres. ⁶

Frederick I was the first emperor who attempted to establish real power in Italy. In 1154 he started to justify his claims to power by advocating imperial rule not only on the cities of Lombardy but also on other northern and central communes. Neither the emperor's actions, which were fiercely opposed by the growing communes, nor the election of two popes modified the attitude of the communes and of the Tuscan nobility. In almost all the cities there were popular uprisings causing frequent and unacceptable violence and abuses amongst citizens. For this reason Frederick decided to appoint his uncle Guelf of Bavaria Marquis of Tuscany and to have him on-site in control of the

⁵ N. Ottokar, 'Comune', in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, XI (1931), pp. 17-25 and *Ibidem*, *Studi comunali e fiorentini*, Florence 1948, p. 41.

⁶ G. Sergi, 'L'Europa carolingia e la sua dissoluzione', in N. Tranfaglia, M. Firpo (eds.), *La Storia II. Il Medioevo. Popoli e strutture politiche*, Turin 1986, pp. 231-262, especially pp. 250-258.

region. Guelf immediately decided to divide this area into separate counties, allotting them to local nobles. At the same time he was able to agree on an important peace treaty in 1158. It is interesting to note that communal Tuscan troops made a decisive contribution in helping the imperial forces to end the long siege of Milan, which on 7th September 1158 surrendered to their combined forces.⁷

Within this context of political instability, at least in Tuscany, Lucca supported the emperor in exchange for the right to mint its own money, as it had always done since the Lombard rule. In addition to this, in 1160 the Marquis Guelf granted Lucca administrative and political rights over the city and its surrounding countryside within six miles. This was an extraordinary move, because the marquisate had enjoyed these rights for a long time. The other Tuscan communes did not fail to support imperial power. When the Archbishop of Cologne, the emperor's ambassador in the region, called for a diet in San Genesio (1162), all these cities came to the side of the Empire again, although their communal rights were still firmly preserved.⁸ It is important to underline how the Tuscan communes continued to abstain from any anti-imperial political or economic action.

Lucca had decided to accept the imperial authority for better or for worse. One example of this is its participation in a military expedition in the 1260s against Rome and Ancona in conjunction with the imperial troops. Nevertheless, Lucca sometimes shows a measure of independence and veers from the emperor's policy in Tuscany, as

⁷ For a more general view see, R. Bordone, 'I comuni italiani nella prima Lega Lombarda: confronto di modelli istituzionali in un'esperienza politico-diplomatica', in H. Mauer, J. Thorbecke (eds.), *Kommunale Bündnisse Oberitaliens und Oberdeutschlands im Vergleich*, Siegmaringen, 1987, pp. 45-61.

⁸ See also Giovannini, *Storia dello Stato di Lucca*, pp. 42-44.

when the city formed an important alliance with Genoa against Pisa, which was becoming the predominant imperial city in the marquisate.

In the meantime, a schism that disrupted the internal balance of power among the Tuscan cities suddenly came to affect the Church.⁹ In 1159 Alexander III and the imperial anti-pope Victor IV were both elected as pope, but the Marquis Guelf and Pisa decided to support the former candidate. In Lucca the imperial party that supported Victor IV prevailed, all the more so when in 1164 Victor IV came to Lucca to end his days in the city and it was in Lucca that the new anti-pope Paschal III was elected. Three years later Frederick decided to return to Germany after his coronation by Paschal III in St Peter's. Despite the fact that Alexander III was able to rejoin his bishops and abbots, he never found a concrete and faithful support either in the Tuscan cities or among the local nobility. Petty local interests always took precedence over any other larger considerations and the relationship amongst these communes remained fluid and unstable.

Almost always, the horizon of the cities was dominated by problems other than the agitated and variable relations between the pope and the emperor. For instance, Lucca watched suspiciously as its neighbour Pisa developed as an important landmark for imperial expectations in Tuscany; in fact, Pisa had prominently contributed to the emperor's sack of Milan by supplying troops and financial aid. Once Frederick had returned to Germany, the city of Lucca, helped by Genoa, attacked Pisa in order to gain possession of part of the Tuscan coast, and of Port of Motrone with its strategic access

⁹ On this topic, see A. Spicciani, 'Pescia e la Valdinievole nella storia religiosa ed ecclesiastica del XII secolo', in C. Violante, A. Spicciani (eds.), *Pescia e la Valdinievole nell'età dei Comuni*, Pisa, 1995, especially pp. 152-155.

to the Tyrrhenian Sea.¹⁰ In an effort to make peace between Pisa and Lucca the emperor immediately sent some envoys to Tuscany, but all their endeavours failed pitifully. This was a situation that could only be resolved personally by the emperor, and in fact he organized a diet in Pavia in 1175 where the two cities signed an important peace treaty. The reconciliation prompted the emperor to devise a separate economic strategy for the two cities: Pisa would be granted the privilege of all sea trade, while Lucca would be offered control of the financial activities and the mainland trades in the region.¹¹ In the years immediately following, with the crushing imperial defeat of Legnano in 1176, a peace treaty was ratified in Venice in 1177 finally bringing an end to the Schism, so that the political uproars of this tumultuous land appeared to settle down. Further less important conflicts arose in Tuscany, such as the local struggle in Florence against the Uberti rebellion, the countless fights between Pisa and Lucca, Florence and Siena, and again of Florence against the counts Alberti.¹²

On the ecclesiastical front, it is relevant to point out the ascension in 1181 to the papal throne of the Lucchese Ubaldo Allucingoli, who took the name of Lucius III. This papal election should best be looked at in the context of the position of the city of Lucca during the schism when both the city and its clergy resolutely supported the emperor's

¹⁰ Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, p. 41 and Giovannini, *Storia dello Stato di Lucca*, p. 46. For the story of this important port, see P. Pelù, *Motrone di Versilia porto medievale (secc. XI-XV)*, Lucca, 1974. See also D. Corsi, *La pace di Lucca con Pisa e Firenze negli anni 1181 e 1184*, Lucca, 1980, p. 7.

¹¹ See R. Savigni, *Episcopato e società cittadina a Lucca da Anselmo II (+1086) a Roberto (+1225)*, Lucca, 1996.

¹² For the peace treaty between Lucca and some of these communes, see D. Corsi, *La pace di Lucca con Pisa e Firenze*; D. Gioffrè, 'L'attività economica dei lucchesi a Genova fra il 1190 ed il 1280', in *Lucca archivistica, storica, economica. Relazioni e comunicazioni al XV Congresso Nazionale Archivistico (Lucca, ottobre 1969)*, Rome, 1973, pp. 94-111.

cause. The date of death of this Lucchese pope, 1185, coincides with the starting point of a further phase in the imperial policy in Italy, mainly concerning the Tuscan communes again. Frederick came to Tuscany trying to subjugate the entire region. He found support from the local nobility, the bishops and the monasteries, all united against the communes. But when the emperor died in 1189, the cities could be said to have been the real and concrete winners of the fight, as they had been able to conquer the countryside, that is the lands of the nobility and of the ecclesiastical institutions. With the accession of his son, Henry VI, the imperial policy against the Italian communes was revived.¹³ This time the emperor needed money for conquering the domain of Sicily. Once again the Tuscan cities, which would have preferred not to counteract the emperor because of their local struggles, abstained from too rigid an opposition. Especially Pisa, which fostered high hopes of benefits from the impending Sicilian occupation, had a large number of pro-imperial citizens within its walls.

When Henry VI the son of Barbarossa died in 1197, the Tuscan cities immediately decided to act on their own account, without being dependent anymore on the emperor. The first act of this political determination took place in November of the same year, when Lucca, Florence, Prato, San Miniato, Siena, Arezzo and Volterra signed an alliance that could be interpreted as a move against the imperial ambitions. Pisa, the most Ghibelline city in Tuscany, was, together with Pistoia, a natural opponent of this alliance. Yet, the powerful noble families Guidi, Aldobrandeschi and Alberti joined the alliance almost immediately, especially because of the moral support given to the alliance by the pope Innocent III. Their presence in the Tuscan League was a means of

¹³ Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, p. 37.

stemming local disorders, which could not otherwise have been prevented had these families not participated, because they had a severe political control of their lands. In fact, the political lines already emerging during the XIIth century showed the noble families were not destroyed but were firmly limited in their individual actions. Although the appeal of the League was addressed to all Tuscan cities, either large or small, the hidden finality of it was to enable the larger communes to subdue the smaller ones. Florence, after taking Figline, subjugated Empoli, Certaldo and Semifonte; San Miniato attacked Borgo San Genesio; Siena took Asciano and, finally, Lucca destroyed the little castle of Buggiano in Valdinievole.¹⁴ Inevitably, these military operations conducted against small and often defenceless communes caused more rivalry amongst the big ones. For example, during the years 1230-1232 there were violent fights between Siena and Florence, with an important victory of Florence that marked the end of the Tuscan League.

The election of Otto IV in 1208 provoked another disturbance in Tuscan politics. After his coronation in St Peter's in Rome, he crossed the region hoping to subjugate the rebellious communes, but all his efforts to restore the imperial presence in Tuscany failed miserably.¹⁵ The definitive establishment of Pisa and Florence as the most powerful communes in the region contributed to a peaceful, though temporary, internal

¹⁴ R. Pescaglini Monti, 'Le vicende politiche istituzionali della Valdinievole tra il 1113 e il 1250', in *Pescia e la Valdinievole nell'età dei Comuni*, p. 80. More generally, see also E. Faini, 'Firenze al tempo di Semifonte', in *Semifonte in Val d'Elsa e i centri di nuova fondazione dell'Italia medievale*, Firenze, 2004, pp. 131-144.

¹⁵ F. Opll, 'Gli imperatori svevi e la Valdinievole', in *Pescia e la Valdinievole nell'età dei Comuni*, pp. 13-14. See also G. Matraia, *Lucca nel Milleduecento*, Lucca, 1843 and now C. Wickham, 'Rural Communes and the City of Lucca at the Beginning of the Thirteenth Century', in T.A. Dean, C. Wickham (eds.), *City and Countryside in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, London, 1990, pp. 1-12.

political situation.¹⁶ When Innocent III died in 1216, Henry's son Frederick had come of age and was ready to step on to the stage. He won the battle of Bouvines (1214) and managed to get himself crowned Emperor by Pope Honorius III in 1220: once again, the dignity of the Empire was united with that of the Kingdom of Sicily. Nevertheless, the first years of the new emperor did not bring any substantial innovation.¹⁷ When a new crusade was proclaimed, the pope and the emperor helped each other in creating together a new and stable peace. This delicate task of peace-maintenance was given to cardinal Ugolino bishop of Ostia, who was to become Pope Gregory IX in 1227. He started by pacifying Pisa and Genoa, then by sorting out some internal struggles that were poisoning Volterra, Lucca and Siena. At the end of this delicate work of pacification in Tuscany, he was rewarded by a significant numbers of Tuscan troops joining the crusade.

Unlike Frederick Barbarossa, whose descents on Italy had depended on the agreement of the feudal noblemen to follow him and to provide him with troops, his grandson Frederick had in his Kingdom of Sicily a strong base on Italian soil as well as a notably efficient and really modern and flexible political organization. The centralized edifice of the Sicilian monarchy was crowned in 1231 with the publication of its epoch-

¹⁶ See, for instance, the political pacts signed in 1220 between Florence and Pistoia published in Q. Santoli (ed.), *Il 'Liber Censuum' del comune di Pistoia*, Pistoia, 1915, pp. 79-81.

¹⁷ Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, pp. 40-43. See also P. Cammarosano, 'La Toscana nella politica imperiale', in A. Esch, N. Kamp (eds.), *Federico II. Convegno dell'Istituto storico germanico di Roma nell'VIII centenario*, Tübingen, 1996, pp. 336-380. For more details, not also in the Lucchese territory, see H. Keller, 'Federico II e le città. Esperienze e modelli fino all'incoronazione imperiale', in P. Toubert, A. Paravicini Bagliani (eds.), *Federico II e le città italiane*, Palermo, 1994, pp. 17-33. For some interesting aspects correlated with the papal interferences during these times, see D.P. Waley, 'Papal Armies in the Thirteenth Century', *The English Historical Review*, 282 (1957), pp. 1-30.

making edict, the so called *Constitutiones Melphitane*, inspired by the half-Roman and half-Byzantine idea of *imperium* as fullness of power, with the Emperor as the executor of God's will on earth. The Emperor himself, an educated man as well as a supporter of culture, wholly realized how important trained able administrators could and should be in the running of the state. Mainly for this reason, he founded in 1224 the University of Naples, with the precise idea of assuring his Kingdom a regular flow of very competent administrators.

After Frederick's coronation in 1197 when he was only three years old, the Tuscan cities started organizing a close, strong and independent policy in order that each could take control of their own *contado* or area of countryside surrounding and sustaining each city, which the empire viewed as its exclusive ownership. As is well known, the control of the *contado* had always proved the only power capable of stemming and controlling the vigorous expansion of the cities, thanks to the presence of the feudal landowning local families.¹⁸ The relationships between the young emperor and the Tuscan communes were therefore far from being idyllic, even if one must be ready to acknowledge the presence of different pretexts for their anti- or pro- emperor behaviour. In fact, most Tuscan communes were or were becoming in those years exceptionally rich and militarily strong; they could unite or separate on pure economic reasons, and not because of their more or less pronounced alliance to the emperor. The first result of this unstable situation was an alliance between Florence and Arezzo against the totality of the other communes. In the meantime, the ancient conflict between Pisa and Lucca

¹⁸ For an example of these Lucchese families, see T.W. Blomquist, 'Lineage, Land and Business in the Thirteenth Century: The Guidiccioni Family of Lucca', *Actum Luce*, 1-2, (1980), pp. 7-29.

induced Lucca to join the alliance with Florence and fight victoriously Pisa at the battle of Castedelbosco in 1222, the first fought by the Tuscan communes against each other.¹⁹

In the same year, the Lucchese conquered the castle of Montignoso, which held a strategic position controlling the *via francigena*.²⁰ In this battle, Florence was once again the ally of Lucca, while Pistoia and Siena fought with Pisa. The measure of the importance of the local conflicts in this area is given by the intervention of the pope himself, anxious to bring peace amongst the belligerent cities. Gregory IX, in fact, would not have tolerated a long war in the Lucchese territory because of his own unstable relationship with the emperor, who, around this time, was declining to organize the crusade to Jerusalem.²¹

Apart from powerful cities such as Florence and Lucca, there were others equally as militarily competitive, Pisa and Siena, among them. They were all fighting each other while the pope and the emperor were also in conflict, culminating in the pope excommunicating Frederick in 1227.²² The following year Florence attacked Pistoia after conquering the castles of Montefiore and Carmignano. Florence's allies included Lucca, Prato, Arezzo and Volterra. A further and bloodier conflict broke out the following year, once again between Florence and Siena for the control of Montepulciano,

¹⁹ Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, pp. 69-70.

²⁰ On the importance of the "via francigena", see S. Andreucci, 'La strada romea et peregrina in territorio lucchese', *La provincia di Lucca*, XI.3 (1971), pp. 73-82.

²¹ Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, p. 41.

²² See, for a clear example of the conflict between Pisa and Lucca, D. Corsi, 'La legazione del cardinale Giusfredo Castiglioni a Pisa ed a Lucca ed il giuramento dei lucchesi del 1228', *Bollettino Storico Pisano*, 44-45 (1975-1976), pp. 174-223.

with Lucca still on the side of the Florentines. In the same years, Lucca and Florence seized the opportunity to attack the Pisans in the Garfagnana but they were beaten back in 1232. This episode was regarded as an act of disobedience to the pope, who immediately excommunicated Lucca, although not Florence, and reduced the diocese of Lucca putting on its throne a Sienese bishop. In 1232 Siena conquered Montepulciano, while the pope and the emperor-this time with a common intent- tried to convince Florence to stop military actions in Tuscany, but to no avail. The following year Florence moved again against Siena; but when Lucca opted for non-intervention, Florence finally accepted the papal mediation, and a pact was ratified in 1235.²³

Thus, during the first decades of the XIIIth century only five communes-Florence, Pisa, Siena, Lucca and Arezzo- were sharing control of all Tuscany. Each of these communes had somehow established its own political border, which was going to remain unchanged for a century or more. For this reason, for the five communes new more difficult duties arose, and the complexity of each of their political structure increased dramatically. More lands meant more people to control and to govern, more offices and public places to manage, more opportunities to make money. In consideration of all these new problems, the civic factions and the opposing groups elaborated their political and economic claims, in order to qualify themselves with more precision. The basic line on which all factions made their claims was essentially twofold: concerning both the internal organization of the city-state and the international political situation. The former involves the origin of the struggle between noble and popular factions, while the latter helps explain the conflict between Guelfs and Ghibellines.

²³ Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, pp. 72-74.

Both aspects exercised a remarkable influence on international political events during the last years of the reign of Frederick II. Although the emperor defeated Milan in Cortenova in 1237, Tuscany did not suffer any perceptible change in the internal balance of power amongst the communes. On the contrary, the good relationship between the pope and the emperor prompted a city like Florence to take sides with the Empire.

The sudden death of emperor Frederick in 1250, came as a most unexpected twist of fate, for even though the emperor had just suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the communes, the fight was still far from being decided. The sudden imperial power vacuum created a dramatic new problem in the Tuscan cities including Lucca: this was the revenge of the Guelf cities. Frederick's son Manfred managed to gain control of the situation, for he tried to reorganize the Ghibelline forces and to win back many of the positions that had been lost in the meantime. Lucca organized a popular, that is mercantile form of government and the same happened in Florence and in other cities.²⁴ Lucca and Florence went for a mutual pact of friendship to prevent any hostile act from Pisa and Siena. This was regarded as a positive sign. Moreover, Lucca needed to be allied with Florence because of this city's ability to control both Pistoia and Prato, which were threatening Lucca's commercial roads to the south of Italy. As a result of this political alliance, two opposing coalitions emerged: Florence, Lucca, Genoa and Arezzo on one side, and Siena, Pisa and Pistoia on the other. A fight was inevitable. Florence and Lucca turned out to be successful on almost every front, with Lucca

²⁴ For Florence in these years is still useful S. Raveggi, M. Tarassi, D. Medici, and P. Parenti, *Ghibellini, Guelfi e popolo grasso. I detentori del potere politico a Firenze nella seconda metà del Duecento*, Firenze, 1978.

subtracting Pisan strategic positions such as the castle of Ripafratta, on the Pisan border, and many other lands which had been conquered before by Pisa at Lucca's expense. The most important of these was the already mentioned port of Motrone, a key access to the Tyrrhenian Sea.

This victorious political expansion undertaken by Florence and Lucca came to a halt when Manfred, after conquering the realm of Sicily, wanted to re-establish a Ghibelline party in Italy.²⁵ Both the cities of Pisa and Siena were loyal supporters of this ambitious idea. In this respect, 1260 marks a very relevant date for Tuscan history: in Montaperti, not far from Siena, the Tuscan Guelfs were tragically defeated and Florence was forced to readmit within its walls the Ghibelline political refugees.²⁶ Nevertheless, this term of surrender was not accepted by the Lucchese government, which continued to resist Manfred for almost five more years. While in Florence the internal situation did not suffer any dramatic change, the rest of Tuscany was shaken to its very political formulating. The Guelfs were expelled from all the cities that were under Florentine political control while Manfred together with loyal Siena, attempted to regain the influence that his father had exercised over the region. Only Lucca -together with Arezzo, where in the meantime the Guelfs had reorganized- resisted to the Ghibelline forces by trying to secure allies in the pope, in Frederick II's grandson, Corradino, and in the king of Cornwall, Richard.

In 1261 a new Ghibelline League was ratified in Siena. Only a few years later the cities of Florence, Pisa and Siena fiercely attacked Lucca and its countryside, but the

²⁵ Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, pp. 44-45.

²⁶ Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, pp. 90-91.

forces that represented the League had primarily one aim: to defeat the Tuscan Guelfs who had chosen Lucca as their refuge.²⁷ The Ghibelline triumph seemed absolute and definitive, but the following episodes would show that Tuscany was not able to subdue only one political part or faction. Urban IV's desire totally to eradicate Ghibelline presence in Tuscany found a strong ally in the king of France Charles, and even his successor, Clement IV, also a Frenchman, acted along the same lines. Charles came to Tuscany in the first months of 1265.²⁸ Immediately all the Ghibelline communes-Pisa, Siena, Pistoia, Florence and others small centres but not Lucca or Arezzo- formed another League. When 30.000 French soldiers descended to Rome and the Count of Provence was crowned there as King of Sicily, the League was preparing the battle against Charles and his troops.

The brief period of Tuscan Ghibelline power was moving towards its dramatic end. As is well known, the Angevin King defeated Manfred, who met his death in Benevento in 1266.²⁹ Once Charles d'Anjou, the vanquisher of Manfred, had installed himself on the throne that had belonged to Frederick II, his position and titles seemed to make him the political master of Italy; he was the brother of one of the most illustrious and pious kings of Western Christendom Louis IX, and the recognized leader of the Guelf party as well. As a consequence of the memorable battle of Benevento, Lucca made the Angevin King as its own municipal *potestà* for six years, as did all the other Tuscan communes. It is interesting to note that this long-term period was absolutely exceptional in medieval times, when one considers that a *potestà* could normally govern for only a few months at

²⁷ Giovannini, *Storia dello Stato di Lucca*, pp. 56-57.

²⁸ B. Schimmelpfennig, *The papacy*, New York, 1992, p. 174.

²⁹ Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, pp. 45-46.

the longest. And if we look more closely into the Lucchese political situation of these years, we realize that the importance of the consuls had become less politically relevant, although they continued to be present among the minor magistracies of this city-state. From 1264, in fact, the consuls were replaced by the *potestà* and as a result the General Parliament was left almost devoid of any effective power. The *Consiglio del Popolo*, which had been present during the first decades of the XIIIth century, grew into the *Collegio degli Anziani*, which was first under the leadership of the *Capitano*.

From the beginning of the 1270s, Lucca fought again against Pisa and defeated it, thanks to the decisive role of the new Guelf Alliance reconstructed round Florence. The devastating and disastrous defeat inflicted on Pisa by the Genoese fleet at Meloria in 1284 contributed to strengthen the power and wealth of Lucca, which was allied with Genoa.³⁰ Lucca, which still retained its faith in the strong alliance with the Guelf League, continued to batter the near city-state of Pisa, and its desire for revenge was not pacified even when the Pisan Guelf leader Ugolino della Gherardesca gave Lucca some crucially positioned castles situated between the two cities. Although Ghibelline centres still survived in Tuscany, the whole region was now under the Angevin influence. After the defeat of Pisa, both Florence and Lucca tried to reorganize their military forces to take advantage of their opponent's weak position: in this League Siena, Pistoia, and Prato also participated as well as other less powerful communes. Thus, Pisa was absolutely isolated, but the heterogeneous nature of the League prevented its total destruction. Pisa joined the Guelf League and the leader of this new order was the well-known Ugolino della Gherardesca and his nephew, Ugolino Visconti.

³⁰ Giovannini, *Storia dello Stato di Lucca*, p. 60.

Nevertheless, a new event arose to change the course of history: in 1285 all Guelf expectations ended because of the death of the king of France.³¹ It seemed that the Guelf faction could never restore its influence in the whole region. Yet, four years after the death of the Angevin king, one of the most epic Tuscan battles was fought in Campaldino, in the Casentine, in 1289. On that occasion, the Guelf troops overwhelmed the Ghibelline forces, lead by Arezzo. With the treaty of peace ratified in Fucecchio in 1293, Lucca became again the strongest Guelf city-state in Tuscany after Florence, which was becoming the leading commune in the whole region.

The following year, Boniface VIII became pope after the brief pontificate of Celestine V, who had appeared to embody the advent of the “angelic pope” prophesied by Joachim of Fiore. With the accession to the throne of Boniface, in many respects a rather enigmatical pope, the first group who managed to secure some personal advantage were the numerous banking families, especially those from Siena, Florence and Pisa. The pope needed huge amounts of money for his own personal feud with his implacable enemies, the Colonna family, against whom he even called a crusade in 1298.

In the last years of the XIVth century Lucca needed to defend itself from internal rather than external enemies. For instance, in 1295 the citizens in Lucca divided into two factions, the Bianchi and the Neri, as was the case in many other Tuscan cities.³² The leaders of the Neri party, that is Guelf, were members of the Obizzi family, while the Antelminelli family led the Bianchi, that is Ghibelline faction. With the violent death of the leader of the Guelf faction, who had economic ties with Florence, the

³¹ For an overview of these episodes, see Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, pp. 105-109.

³² Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, pp. 52-55.

opposite party wanted to show its strength to all Tuscan cities and first of all to Ghibelline Pisa. The secret purpose of this project was to establish a political agreement between this city and Lucca excluding Florence, just as had happened decades ago. But the Lucchese Guelf faction did not allow itself to be taken by surprise: the followers of the Obizzi family burnt all the Antelminelli houses, while the supposed murderer was publicly hanged.³³ Lucca then found itself dominated by the Neri faction and therefore ready to help Charles of Valois, the king's brother, and Florence against Pistoia, which was governed by the Bianchi party.

Charles came to Italy during the summer of 1301 and while Lucca promptly aligned itself with the papal forces, almost all the Ghibelline families had immediately to abandon the city. In the meantime, when in Anagni the pope appointed Charles as his Tuscan ambassador, all the communes except Florence hopefully supported him in his delicate new task.

From this particular angle we might be able to appreciate the highest point of the concurrence between the Lucchese and the Florentine Guelfs: evidence of this strong policy can be seen in the important conquest of the castle of Serravalle, nowadays in Valdinievole. The effective importance of this place, situated by the border between Lucca and Pistoia, was represented by its powerful control of the commercial roads in the fertile and rich Lucchese plain. The Cassia-Romea road, which since Roman times linked Florence to Lucca, runs right below this strategic castle.

³³ On the theme of "vendetta" in the Italian communal cities, see now A. Zorzi, 'La cultura della vendetta nel conflitto politico in età comunale', in R. Delle Donne, A. Zorzi (eds.), *Le storie e la memoria: in onore di Arnold Esch*, Firenze, 2002, pp. 307-369 and G. Milani, *L'esclusione dal Comune. Conflitti e bandi politici a Bologna e in altre città italiane tra XIII e XIV secolo*, Roma, 2003.

In 1303 the pope died and his successor, Benedict XI, marked immediately his Tuscan policy by helping the Guelfs Bianchi, the Florentine faction that Boniface VIII had crushed.³⁴ Amongst these people who were forced to leave Florence, in the first years of the century, was also Dante Alighieri. After a while, the pope died; in the meantime, all the Guelfs communes, and first of all Florence, Siena and Lucca, gathered in a League and declared the son of Charles II, Robert of Anjou, the future king of Naples, as their leader. In reaction to this alliance, the Bianchi and the Ghibelline communes, such as Pistoia, Arezzo and Pisa, decided to attack Florence in 1304 but all their military efforts failed dismally. The following year, Robert of Anjou went to Florence, and as became immediately clear, his presence in the region revived the tragedy of an irresolvable conflict. Again, opposing political forces were crossing the whole turbulent region and now the defence of Pistoia was the first task for the Ghibelline and the Bianchi. Although the pope, the French Clement V, who was endorsing the Guelf League as usual, had ordered to raise the siege of Pistoia, the rest of the communes did not obey him but only took orders from the Angevin. Finally, Pistoia capitulated in 1306.³⁵ There were Lucchese soldiers amongst the Guelfs troops. After this important battle fought not far from Lucca, the city of the Serchio reached its highest administrative and political point with the local mercantile class.³⁶ The Statute sanctioned in 1308, excluding the magnates and the followers of the Bianchi, is the best

³⁴ Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, pp. 120-122.

³⁵ Giovannini, *Storia dello Stato di Lucca*, p. 65.

³⁶ See C. Meek, 'Merchant Families, Banking and Money in Medieval Lucca', *English Historical Review*, 495 (2007), pp. 237-248.

evidence of this restrictive power.³⁷ And it is remarkable that in the same year a new emperor, Henry VII, decided to descend to Italy in an attempt to pacify the whole peninsula.³⁸ Unfortunately, he was to find an almost identical political situation as if nothing had ever changed. After a political agreement with the Pope that would finally bring peace to the Italian lands, the new Emperor wanted an alliance with the King of Sicily, Robert of Anjou, as well. The Emperor's project was clear: he wanted all the local struggles amongst the communes to end as soon as was possible. He believed the strong presence of the Empire would pacify all of Italy and Henry was willing to commit all his efforts in doing this. Unfortunately, he was to realize immediately how isolated he was between the quarrelsome communes and the foreign states that would not easily accepted his presence or his pretensions to power. The only Tuscan city that could see him in a very different light was the Ghibelline commune of Pisa, which planned to use Henry's military force against Lucca, its fierce enemy. Thus Lucca, in order to avoid a catastrophic battle, would have to move in an extremely cautious way. As Lucca rapidly understood, the high number of Lucchese Ghibelline families expelled from the city in recent years represented a main threat. Most of them naturally wished to return

³⁷ For a detailed analysis of the period of crisis around these years immediately before Castruccio, see V. Tirelli, 'Sulla crisi istituzionale del Comune a Lucca (1308-1312)', in *Studi per Enrico Fiumi*, Pisa, 1979, pp. 317-360. More generally, see L. Green, 'Society and Politics in Fourteenth Century Lucca', in C. Conde, R. Pesman Cooper (eds.), *Altro Polo. A Volume of Italian Renaissance Studies*, Sidney, 1982, pp. 29-50. See also, for the Lucchese Statute of 1308, written in Latin, G. Cherubini, *Città comunali di Toscana*, Bologna, 2003, pp. 71-145; Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, pp. 55-57 and Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, pp. 140-154.

³⁸ For the importance of his presence in Tuscan and notably in Florence, see W. Bowsky, 'Florence and Henry of Luxemburg, King of the Romans: The Rebirth of Guelfism', *Speculum*, 33.2 (1958), pp. 177-203.

to their beloved homes and had no desire to fan the flames against the Guelf power established in Lucca. With the death of the Emperor in 1313, however, all the Guelf expectations were deluded. But the following year Pisa was able to conquer Lucca, thanks to the extraordinary capacity of one of the most famous military leaders of his times, the Pisan captain Ugucione della Faggiola. He fought against Lucca with one brave merchant and Lucchese captain, Castruccio Castracani degli Antelminelli, who took control of the city in 1316.³⁹ He ruled his city-state as a despot, establishing a personal dictatorship, which lasted for twelve years until his death in 3rd September 1328.

³⁹ For these years, see also Manselli, *La Repubblica di Lucca*, pp. 57-63; Giovannini, *Storia dello Stato di Lucca*, pp. 65-74 and Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, pp. 165-168. For his Lordship and his life, see, first of all, M. Luzzati, 'Castracani degli Antelminelli, Castruccio', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XXII (1979), pp. 200-210; *Atti del primo convegno di studi Castrucciani*, Lucca, 1981; *Castruccio Castracani e il suo tempo*, *Atti del convegno internazionale di Lucca, 5-10 ottobre 1981*, *Actum Luce*, 1-2 (1984-1985); Baracchini C. (ed.), *Il secolo di Castruccio. Fonti e documenti di storia lucchese*, Lucca, 1983 and L. Green, *Castruccio Castracani: a study on the origins and character of a fourteenth-century Italian despotism*, Oxford, 1986. For the religious aspects in these times, see also G. Benedetto, 'I rapporti tra Castruccio Castracani e la Chiesa di Lucca', *Biblioteca Civica di Massa. Annuario 1980*, pp. 73-97; D.J. Osheim, 'I sentimenti religiosi dei lucchesi al tempo di Castruccio', *Actum Luce*, 1-2 (1984-1985), pp. 99-111 and L. Green, 'Il Capitolo della cattedrale di Lucca all'epoca di Castruccio Castracani', *ibidem*, pp. 125-141. For his family, see T.W. Blomquist, 'The Castracani Family of Thirteenth-Century Lucca', *Speculum*, 46 (1971), pp. 459-476. See also J.T. Schnapp, 'Machiavellian Foundlings: Castruccio Castracani and the Aphorism', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 45.4 (1992), pp. 653-676.

II. TUSCAN COMMUNAL CHRONICLES

BETWEEN XIVTH AND XVTH CENTURY

History has long been recognized as one of the more important disciplines that were reintroduced into European culture by the Italian humanists. Italian Humanism has traditionally been defined as a literary movement and Petrarch recognized as its chief founder. His famous letter, written in 1336, describing how he and his brother climbed a mountain at Vacluse, near Avignon, shows a new attitude toward nature, with its admiration of earthly things for their own sake rather than as manifestations of the divine.⁴⁰ This feeling for nature was fortified by the exciting rediscovery of qualities in the writings of the classical Greeks and Romans that seemed to provide a basis for a belief in the role of the individual in the shaping of events.

It is also known that in a large number of Italian towns the students versed in the *Studia Humanitatis* could go in their university where primarily they learnt about Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas' political texts, especially, to the work of the former, the *Politics*, which was taught and grounded in the concrete, bourgeois and mercantile medieval reality.⁴¹ It is clear that to appreciate the nature of Humanism, the principal

⁴⁰ F. Petrarca, *Epistole*, U. Dotti (ed.), Torino, 1983, pp. 118-135.

⁴¹ G. Olsen, 'Why and How to Study the Middle Ages', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 3.3 (2000), pp. 48-73. For the importance of Aristotle's texts, see E. MacPhail, 'The Plot of History from Antiquity to the Renaissance', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (2001), pp. 1-16 and particularly for the *Politics*, J.M. Blythe, 'Aristotle's *Politics* and Ptolemy of Lucca', *Vivarium*, 40 (2002), pp. 103-136. See also A. Arisi Rota, M. De Conca, *Aristotelismo e platonismo nella cultura del Medioevo*, Pavia, 1996 and C.S. Celenza, *The lost Italian Renaissance: humanists, historians, and Latin's legacy*, Baltimore, 2004.

intellectual movement concerned with rhetoric in the fourteenth-century, attention must be directed to the effect made on European thought by the recovery of Aristotle. Although his corpus was almost completely in circulation by the beginning of the thirteenth century, it required decades for Western thinkers to appreciate the implications of his ideas. This rediscovery of the Aristotelian corpus had enormous significance in many areas of ethics and especially politics. The older Augustinian view of temporal power was that its task was primarily negative, serving the faith by controlling overtly sinful acts. By contrast, the Greek philosopher considered service to the state to be the means by which the individual could develop his ethical capacity to the fullest. Indeed, the political thought elaborated by Aristotle suggested to some thinkers that the state also had a positive spiritual function.

We should not forget that Aristotle's *Politics*, which was conceived during the time of the ancient Greek city-states, was later interpreted in the light of a comparison between those lost cities and the existing medieval "communitas".⁴² Given the centrality of Christian religion to Medieval Latin thought, it was effectively impossible for Western thinkers to accept basic tenets of Aristotle's philosophy, such as, for instance, the nature of the soul and the source of ultimate human happiness. In view of the incompatibility of primary Aristotelian and Christian doctrines, no author in medieval Europe could faithfully or safely espouse an unalloyed Aristotelianism. The

⁴² For further information, see especially O. Capitani, 'Motivi e momenti di storiografia medievale italiana: secc. V-XIV', in *Nuove questioni di storia medievale*, Milan, 1964, pp. 729-800; M. Fuiano, *Studi di storiografia medievale ed umanistica*, Napoli, 1975; J.P. Genet, *Medieval lives and the historian: studies in medieval prosopography*, Michigan, 1986; O. Capitani, 'La storiografia medievale', in *La Storia. I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'Età contemporanea*, I.1, Turin, 1988, pp. 757-792; *I racconti di Clio. Tecniche narrative della storiografia, Atti del Convegno (Arezzo, 6-8 novembre 1986)*, Pisa, 1989.

Aristotelianism of the Middle Ages thus possesses something of a paradoxical quality: it is everywhere and yet nowhere. Many principal Aristotelian ideas about politics and political science were conveyed by subterranean or partial sources prior to the recovery of the full Latin text of the *Politics*. The existence of the *Politics* was already widely known, and many of its salient doctrines were already part of the common intellectual currency, long before the first Latin translation finished in 1260 circa. Besides, the very translation of the *Politics* compounded problems of reception; when Leonardo Bruni produced a new version of the text in the early fifteenth century, we can detect the emergence of radically novel readings of some passages.

Leaving now this issue aside, we are aware that, as numerous scholars have maintained, a new interpretation of the importance of the concept of humanity spread rapidly throughout Italy in the fourteenth century. Most of these scholars were no longer members of clerical orders but were mainly men of the rising bourgeois and enterprising commercial world.⁴³ In other words, even the places where these men lived had deeply changed: they mainly operated in a different and new cultural milieu, as the wealthy and densely-populated northern and central Italian towns for instance.⁴⁴

⁴³ See *Civiltà comunale: libro, scrittura, documento: atti del Convegno, Genova, 8-11 novembre 1988*, Genova, 1989.

⁴⁴ For Italian studies on the ‘nature’ and evolution of political systems during the early modern age, see G. Chittolini, *La formazione dello stato regionale e le istituzioni del contado*, Turin, 1979; Ph. Jones, *Comuni e signorie: la città-stato nell’Italia tardomedievale*, in *Ibidem, Economia e società nell’Italia medievale*, Turin, 1980, pp. 514-515; O. Capitani, *Dal Comune alla Signoria*, in G. Galasso (ed.), *Storia d’Italia*, Turin 1981, IV, pp. 147 ss.; E. Artifoni, *Tensioni sociali e istituzioni nel mondo comunale*, in *La storia. I grandi problemi dal medioevo all’età contemporanea*, II.2, Turin, 1986, pp. 482 ss.; G. Chittolini, ‘Cities, “City-States” and Regional States in North-Central Italy’, *Theory and Society*, 18. 5 (1989), pp. 689-706; E. Fasano Guarini, ‘Centro e periferia, accentrimento e particolarismi: dicotomia o sostanza

Mostly laymen, all these authors were caught up in the battle of the church with the empire and the associated parties, Guelphs and Ghibellines; most were Guelph or anti-imperialist, the far fewer Ghibelline jurists and thinkers: all lived in, or issued from, Italy's urban politics. It is also noticeable that the republican institutions they had a hand in creating were already influencing the clergy, the group that up to this time had been, and partly continued to be, Latin Europe's schoolteachers.

We might discuss, first of all, if it is possible even to call these people or at least some of them, "humanists" or "pre-humanists" or if we should describe them still as still heavily influenced by late medieval world, if we accept the notion of a very long middle age period. In any case, some of them began by writing tales, others preferred creating poems and, finally, some attempted to describe the history of their town: these were the chroniclers.

degli Stati in Età Moderna?' in G. Chittolini, A. Molho, and P. Schiera (eds.), *Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, Bologna, 1994, pp. 147-176 and Ph. Jones, *The Italian city-state. From commune to signoria*, Oxford, 1997. For Florence, see now D. De Rosa, *Alle origini della repubblica fiorentina Dai consoli al 'Primo Popolo' (1172 - 1260)*, Firenze, 1995. See also L. Martines, *Power and Imagination. City-states in Renaissance Italy*, New York, 1979 and R.H. Britnel, 'The Towns of England and Northern Italy in the Early Fourteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 44.1 (1991), pp. 21-35. See also S. Bertelli, *Il potere oligarchico nello stato-città medievale*, Firenze, 1978. For the importance of History in this period, see S. Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory*, 22 (1983), pp. 278-310; *Il senso della storia nella cultura medievale italiana, 1100-1350: quattordicesimo Convegno di studi: Pistoia, 14-17 maggio 1993*, Pistoia, 1994; C. Frova, G. Severino, and F. Simoni (eds.), *Storiografia e poesia nella cultura medioevale, Atti del Colloquio, Roma 21-23 febbraio 1990*, Rome, 1999; R. Fubini, *L'umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: origini rinascimentali, critica moderna*, Milan, 2001; N. Rubinstein, *Studies in Italian history in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Rome, 2004. See also E. Grendi, 'Del senso comune storiografico', in *Quaderni storici*, 41 (1979), pp. 698-707.

A second interesting point of discussion we should consider is that almost all these chroniclers had, at least for part of their lives, been involved in the political system of the town of which they wrote or were writing the history. So these chroniclers were political figures and they therefore knew all too well, for instance, how difficult and often hazardous the governing of the town could be. Fourteenth-century towns had an extremely vivid economic, social and cultural life; moreover, we should not forget that most of them had, as I mentioned, their own University, which was frequented by students who came from all over Europe.

The rapid and exuberant development of these small towns was accompanied by the upsurge and spread of a sort of civic patriotism, by the origin of rival urban factions and internal fighting and, finally, by the revival of the great republican Roman tradition.⁴⁵ Against this practical and theoretical background, there was on the civic scene the city governor, who had to assure a common peace that would become of real and beneficial value to all. This significant development would lead the scholars' political interpretation to focus on considering the Roman republican government as the best political solution possible for city government. So, if we recognize this Aristotelian internal framework which connected in an idealized way the classical world with the modern one, we should not be surprised if we discover that the first stylistic and literary source was another classical author, the Roman historiographer Livy, and for his

⁴⁵ E.M. Sanford, 'The study of Ancient History in the Middle Ages', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 5 (1944), pp. 21-43.

relevance here it may be sufficient to point out the letter in which Petrarch, in his *Familiars* wrote to Livy as if he knew him as a friend.⁴⁶

Having talked about the medieval annals and historiography, we have to recognize that often this style of historical writing, even if sometimes it appears as whimsical when compared to our historiographical standards, represented an absolutely new form of writing. Initially, as is known, there were the communal annals in which usually one public officer or sometimes a notary spontaneously started writing the history of his city.⁴⁷ These could be written either in Latin or in the vernacular and they normally reported the main episodes, almost always political and military, which had occurred in a given year.

From this simple definition we could infer that the chronicles could be divided into four main groups: a) short catalogues of dates, chronologically ordered with occasional comments about facts and people written by the author himself; b) institutional chronicles, in which is narrated the history of a certain institution or the life of the main protagonist who represents this organization; c) the universal histories, which explain and develop the history of humanity from its origin as well as, in some cases, the history

⁴⁶ See F. Petrarca, *Le familiari*, V. Rossi (ed.), IV, Firenze, 1942, pp. 243-245. See, more generally, *Il mondo antico nel Rinascimento: atti del Quinto Convegno internazionale di studi sul Rinascimento*, Firenze, 1958; G. Billanovich, *Tradizione e fortuna di Livio tra Medioevo e umanesimo*, Padova, 1981; M.T. Casella, *Tra Boccaccio e Petrarca: i volgarizzamenti di Tito Livio e di Valerio Massimo*, Padova, 1982 and G. Billanovich, *La tradizione del testo di Livio e le origini dell'Umanesimo*, Padova 1998.

⁴⁷ For a first survey on the Florentine historiography, see L. Green, *Chronicle into History. An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles*, Cambridge, 1972 and M. Phillips, 'The Disenchanted Witness: Participation and Alienation in Florentine Historiography', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44.2 (1983), pp. 191-206.

of the Popes and the Emperors; d) the civic chronicles, either the ones that narrate the mythical origin of a city or the ones that tell us only about the history of the city of the author. Both the texts I am going to analyze, that is Ptolemy's *Annales* and Sercambi's *Croniche*, are included in this last group.

It could therefore be stated that chronicles brought out most effectively both the tensions and inter-relations between tradition and innovation.⁴⁸ It is important to underline that these chroniclers apparently wrote with no intention of novelty, so that whatever changes of direction are perceptible in their interpretation of history issue from the need to adjust old values to new conditions. The chroniclers, apologizing for their lack of erudition, simply claimed to do no more than set down the facts that had come to their notice in the rigorous order of their occurrence. Almost all of them wrote in their vernacular language for an audience of readers, who were like themselves; that is merchants, bankers, notaries, experienced in the ways of the world but outside the world of learning.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ G. Arnaldi, 'Il notaio-cronista e le cronache cittadine in Italia', in *La storia del diritto nel quadro delle scienze storiche*, Firenze, 1966, pp. 293-309; E. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*, Chicago, 1981 and, more generally, G. Arnaldi, 'Annali, cronache, storie', in G. Cavallo, C. Leonardi, and E. Menestò (eds.), *Lo spazio letterario del Medioevo. I. Il Medioevo latino. 2. La produzione del testo*, Rome, 1992, pp. 463-513. See also R. Bordone, 'Memoria del tempo negli abitanti dei comuni italiani all'età del Barbarossa', in *Il tempo vissuto*, Bologna, 1988, pp. 63-75; Ch. Wickham, 'The Sense of the Past in Italian Communal Narratives', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, London-Rio Grande-Ohio, 1992, pp. 173-189 and A.I. Pini, 'Cronisti medievali e loro anno di nascita: un'ipotesi da verificare', in *Società, istituzioni, spiritualità. Studi in onore di Cinzio Violante*, II, Spoleto, 1994, pp. 677-706. See now R.G. Witt, 'The Early Communal Historians, Forerunners of the Italian Humanists', in K. Eisenbichler, N. Terpstra (eds.), *The Renaissance in the Streets, Schools, and Studies. Essays in Honour of Paul. F. Grendler*, Toronto, 2008, pp. 103-124.

⁴⁹ A. Saponi, *The Italian Merchant in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1960 and now see M. Zabbia, *I notai e la cronachistica italiana nel Trecento*, Rome, 1999. See also A.Ja. Gurevič, *Il mercante nel mondo*

These men were in fact quite sensitive to the moral message of the great writers, ancient and modern, from Cicero and Virgil and Seneca to Dante and Petrarch and Boccaccio; they were passionate readers and owners of their books. Besides, they even took up the Ciceronian and Petrarchan *topos* of the ‘free’, fruitful dialogue ‘between’ the reader and exemplary texts, in a sort of meditative as well as pedagogical sense. They not only had ‘ink-stained fingers’ on account of the annotations necessitated by their profession; they also often had the ambition and the talent to write in order to communicate the human implications of their most routine activities, albeit only to those who were close to them. This was a sign of a social and economic condition that had been achieved not simply by individuals but by an entire class of people. It was even a moral condition and a true literary special *koiné* for the most part devoid of personal artistic aspirations, but one that established a level of communication higher than that of spoken language. It is true, for instance, that the middle-class Florentine merchants of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries no longer had the open, adventurous spirit of their forefathers. But they were nourished by a spiritual and cultural experience, by a pondered human knowledge, which gave them a new awareness of the value of history. As we know, these chroniclers either were or had been involved in the political life of their city, an aspect that would have been useful when searching out documents while they were writing their histories.⁵⁰

medievale, in A. Giardina, A.Ja. Gurevič (eds.), *Il mercante dall'antichità al Medioevo*, Rome-Bari, 1994, pp. 61-127.

⁵⁰ See, for example, some suggestions present in C. Bastia, M. Bolognini (eds.), *La memoria e la città. Scritture storiche tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, Bologna, 1995. See also, for an interesting political point of view, E. Artifoni, *Retorica e organizzazione del linguaggio politico nel Duecento italiano*, in P.

If this aspect relating to the current or relatively faraway historical events might be understood, another relevant aspect emerges: how much did these medieval chroniclers know about ancient history? If we read how all these chroniclers described ancient facts we could easily disregard medieval summaries of ancient history as inaccurate accounts that add nothing to the classical writers on which they are based. But we know that every age marks its own character on the records of past events and just this is the work that each historian has to do.

From this point on, however, the relationship between these chronicles and their possible sources is much more doubtful and we have to recognize that this field is an extremely delicate one. For example, Italian fourteenth-century chroniclers and scholars in general did not know the works of Greek historians and writers who presumably did not have direct access to his text cited Livy as an authority. Any interest in or knowledge of Greek history was derived from Latin sources alone. Finally, although Petrarch briefly studied Greek, Greek studies truly took hold in Italy only in the late fourteenth century, with the arrival in Florence of the first Byzantine statesman, Emanuel Chrysoloras, who taught at the Florentine Studio in the last four years of the century.

The humanists looked to history for what it could tell them about their own experience: they fervently believed in the utility of historical studies, above all for students destined to be involved in political affairs. They believed that historians such as Livy, Sallust, Caesar and Plutarch taught everything from virtue to eloquence, from

Cammarosano (ed.), *Le forme della propaganda politica nel Due e nel Trecento* (Atti del Convegno, Trieste 2-5 marzo 1993), Rome 1994, pp. 157-182.

wisdom to practical worldliness: they made a constant point of associating the lessons of history with practical politics and government. As a result, they seemed at times to urge the study of history more on rulers and on citizens than on students and scholars. Finally, all humanists, whatever their stripe, made a candid and sometimes strong alliance with power: they opted for the ruling classes, empires, and luminaries of past civil times and we should not forget that they also wrote in unashamed praise of their own cities, rulers, and patrons. They had well learned the lesson from the ancient tradition: for instance, they really appreciated the fact that Aristotle was tutor to Alexander the Great, that Plato was teacher to the kings of Sicily and that Caesar wrote his *Commentaries* while he was fighting.

The moral vision of these historians-we might also include the humanists-remained clearly aristocratic; according to their particular view, the highest worldly good resided in scholarship and in a political activity. We can also add that this was the lot of the happy few, with those who had the political rank for the best action or the virtues and economic resources for leisurely study.

I would now like to offer a more detailed illustration of the Tuscan communal chronicles written between XIVth and XVth century.⁵¹ This crucial moment coincided with a period marked by a political, economical and even social European crisis. The degree of apparent political confusion was unique to Italy in these centuries; the

⁵¹ O. Banti, 'Di alcuni caratteri delle cronache medievali e in particolare di quelle toscane dei secoli XII-XIV', *Actum Luce*, 1-2 (1991), pp. 7-27. See, also, C. Bec, 'I mercanti scrittori', in A. Asor Rosa (ed.), *Letteratura italiana. Produzione e consumo*, II, Turin, 1983, pp. 269-297 e R. Mercuri, 'Genesi della tradizione letteraria italiana in Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio', in *Letteratura italiana. L'età medievale*, Turin, 1987, pp. 450-451.

creation of the *Signoria*, too often considered as an arbitrary tyranny of only one Lord, was indeed the natural development of a previous and less elaborate political system.⁵² This uncertain general climate was characterised by an exceptional intellectual and artistic growth. In the early fourteenth century Florence was at its zenith. According to Giovanni Villani it was a city of 100,000 inhabitants, with her forty banks handling enormous sums of money and embracing the whole of Christendom and the Levant in their field of action. Although we can find medieval or early modern chronicles in almost every Italian city-state, and we might assume a sort of homogeneous style of writing amongst them, I am going to concentrate my attention only on the Tuscan ones.⁵³

One interesting aspect of the early chronicles was their clear and strong sense of belonging to the vivid communal life they described. We might even suggest that this sense of community was the primary social cause of this exceptional production. Whoever decided to write the history of a city was always a citizen who lived in that same place customarily. He was not a foreigner; he was either a member of the legal profession or a merchant, more rarely a member of the clergy. Finally, it was necessary for him to know Latin and be able to write.

⁵² See especially Martines, *Power and Imagination*, pp. 94-110.

⁵³ It exists a rather conspicuous bibliography on this fundamental topic: see, for example, J.K. Hyde, 'Italian Social Chronicles of the Middle Ages', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 49 (1966-1967), pp. 107-132; C. Bec, *Les marchands écrivains affaires et humanisme à Florence (1375-1434)*, Paris, 1967; N. Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism*, Princeton, 1970; F. Pezzarossa, 'La memorialistica fiorentina tra Medioevo e Rinascimento', *Lettere Italiane*, 1 (1979), pp. 18-43; E. Artifoni, 'La consapevolezza di un nuovo assetto politico-sociale nella cronachistica italiana d'età avignonese: alcuni esempi fiorentini', in *Convegno del Centro di studi sulla spiritualità medievale*, XIX (Todi, 15-18 ottobre 1978), Todi, 1981, pp. 79-100.

All these historical writings were particularly abundant, even if their quality and importance were rather heterogeneous especially if we consider all the works produced in Tuscany during the fourteenth century. The Florentine chronicles of the XIVth century merit consideration firstly because in common with the more formal vernacular literature of the same period, it expresses the outlook of the merchant community out of which, in the following century, the civilization of the Florentine Renaissance was to emerge. Secondly, it supplies valuable indications of how that outlook was modified in a direction away from characteristically medieval to embryonic modern attitudes.

Some of these chronicles were published several times in the following centuries, but the major part of them remained totally or partially unpublished. As is known, amongst all the Tuscan city-states, it was Florence that had the most military, politic, artistic and economic influence on the whole region and it would maintain such priority for a really long time.⁵⁴ In fact, if we analyze the early Florentine chronicles, we have to admit that Dino Compagni (c.1246-1324), Giovanni Villani (c.1280-1348) with his successors, Buonaccorso Pitti (1354-after 1430) and Gregorio Dati (1362-1435), to

⁵⁴ For the relevance of these Florentine chronicles, see A. Del Monte, 'La storiografia fiorentina dei secoli XII e XIII', *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano*, 72 (1950), pp. 175-264; R. Morghen, 'La storiografia fiorentina del Trecento', in *Libera cattedra di storia fiorentina. Secoli vari*, Firenze, 1958, pp. 71-93; G. Aquilecchia, 'Dante and the Florentine Chroniclers', *Bullettin of the John Rylands Library*, XLVIII (1961), pp. 32-55; Ibidem, 'Aspetti e motivi della prosa trecentesca minore', *Italian Studies*, XXI (1966), pp. 1-15; L. Green, 'Historical Interpretation in Fourteenth-Century Florentine Chronicles', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28.2 (1967), pp. 161-178; G.M. Anselmi, F. Pezzarossa, and L. Avellini, *La memoria dei mercatores: tendenze ideologiche, ricordanze, artigianato in versi nella Firenze del Quattrocento*, Bologna, 1980 and C.T. Davis, 'Topographical and Historical Propaganda in Early Florentine Chronicles and in Villani', *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 2 (1988), pp. 33-51.

mention only the most representative authors, showed their city as rich and powerful as ever, even if this period coincided with a time of internal and endless struggles.

All these chroniclers who analyzed history of Florence from different points of view, even gave their personal impressions about its disorders. Pitti and Dati did not write a proper history of Florence, but their works were a sort of secret book (*libro segreto*), that is a book used by businessmen in which they recorded information of special significance for themselves and their heirs that they did not wish to be known to outsiders. So, for example, we can find also short references about Florentine or Tuscan historical episodes, mixed into their more detailed domestic notes, offering a more general context to the narration.⁵⁵ Owing to the private nature of these writings, they were only published in relatively recent times.

One aspect of these writings has to date been somewhat neglected by scholars; that is the influence of Roman republicanism on the writing of Florentine history. For example, when Dati wrote that Florence was founded under the Roman Republic and not by Caesar's soldiers, as Villani claimed, this meant that Dati acutely noticed and consequently recorded a different perception. It was clear that Caesar, the tyrant, for the sake of Florence's dignity, should not appear connected with the foundation of the effective capital-city of re-born Italian republicanism. This criticism of Caesar and of the imperial monarchy continued to play an essential role even beyond the works of

⁵⁵ For these kind of books, see A. Cicchetti, R. Mordenti, 'La scrittura dei libri di famiglia', in A. Asor Rosa (ed.), *Letteratura italiana, Le forme del testo*, II, *La prosa*, Turin, 1984, pp. 1117-1159.

Florentine writers, as in Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, for instance, where Caesar is depicted as a ruthless dictator extinguishing the old Republican orders.⁵⁶

There is another interesting piece of evidence about this 'censoring' attitude in municipal history. According to tradition, Charlemagne had rebuilt Florence after its destruction by Totila. Despite the fact that there were no records of this obscure episode, it is remarkable that chroniclers writing during the XIVth century deliberately inserted this legend into their histories. Yet there was a precise reason for this. The Carolingian Franks were seen as naturally French and in 1300 there was a strong movement in favour of an alliance between the Florentine Guelfs and Charles of Anjou, the French king. The idea that Florence owed its new foundation to Charlemagne, also the 'patron saint' of the Guelfs, appeared very exciting to the Florentine citizens of the time. They would have been shocked had they not found any reference to this episode in Leonardo Bruni's revolutionary *Historie Florentini Populi*.⁵⁷ Bruni was the same scholar who claimed Florence as the only real heir to the city-state freedom of the ancient world, more Roman than Greek, and as the only city possessing the virtues of the *Respublica Romana*. Bruni also added that, according to the ancient sources that he claimed to have seen and verified, Florence was founded by the Roman army under Sulla, whose veterans had settled in the area all around Florence. Once again, Caesar

⁵⁶ For an example, for these opposing political systems, see P.J. Jones, 'Communes and Despots: The City State in Late-Medieval Italy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 15 (1965), pp. 71-96.

⁵⁷ For this such important historical text, see now G. Ianziti, *Leonardo Bruni, the Medici, and the Florentine Histories*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 69.1 (2008), pp. 1-22. See also P. Viti (ed.), *Leonardo Bruni, cancelliere della repubblica di Firenze*, Florence, 1990 and R. Fubini, *Storiografia dell'umanesimo in Italia da Leonardo Bruni ad Annio da Viterbo*, Rome, 2003. For the British and American scholars is now available the collection *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, G. Griffiths, J. Hankins, and D. Thompson (eds.), Binghamton, 1987.

was no longer seen as the founder of Florence; from this point, on the birth of Florence was firmly to be connected with pre-imperial Rome. This apparently innocent annotation about who actually built Florence did not necessarily mean the author in question was advocating one form of government over another, but it represented very significant evidence that this may have been the case.⁵⁸ But Bruni was not the first historian to give an interpretation of Roman history with this particular emphasis on the Republic rather than on the Empire. Ptolemy of Lucca, some decades before Bruni wrote his *Historie*, had already voiced and argued the same notion.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ For this and other peculiar aspects correlated with the Florentine history, see now A. Benvenuti, “‘Secondo che raccontano le storie’: il mito delle origini cittadine nella Firenze comunale”, in *Il senso della storia nella cultura medievale italiana*, pp. 205-252.

⁵⁹ See further for the bibliography on this relevant figure in the field of the medieval philosophy.

III. PTOLEMY OF LUCCA (C.1236-1327):

A DOMINICAN FRIAR AND HIS TIME

According to some scholars who have recently studied the figure of Bartolomeo Fiadoni, more commonly known as Ptolemy of Lucca, historians have been ignorant of the exact year of his birth. By analyzing the records of the canonization process of St Thomas Aquinas in 1318, we find that Ptolemy, who was present, said that he was 82. So, this means that it is likely that he was born around 1236.⁶⁰

His father and his family were merchants in Lucca and we can deduce from other records that his family were members of the middle class.⁶¹ We know little about his early life before his entrance in the Lucchese Dominican monastery of San Romano.⁶² This important monastery, which was rebuilt at the end of the XIIIth century on the site of a pre-existent oratory, had an exceptionally well-stocked library that Ptolemy would have known about. As happened very frequently in those times, Dominican monasteries were extremely eager to receive into their order men who promised to

⁶⁰ For a first and almost complete biographical synthesis of his life, see I. Taurisano, *I domenicani in Lucca*, Lucca, 1914, pp. 59-76; Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, pp. VII-XXI; C. Pizzi, *La tradizione umanistica lucchese dal Fiadoni al Mansi*, Firenze, 1957, pp. 15-19; L. Schmugge, 'Fiadoni, Bartolomeo', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Rome, 47 (1997), pp. 317-320.

⁶¹ For a vivid description of the commercial attitude in the Lucchese citizens, see R. Mazzei, T. Fanfani (eds.), *Lucca e l'Europa degli affari, secoli XV-XVII*, Lucca, 1990.

⁶² For the monastery of San Romano in Lucca, see M.T. Filieri, *Chiesa di San Romano. Guida alla visita*, Lucca, 2003; for the extremely important library housed in the monastery is still useful D. Corsi, 'La biblioteca dei frati domenicani di S. Romano di Lucca nel sec. XV', in *Miscellanea di scritti vari in memoria di Alfonso Gallo*, Firenze, 1956, pp. 295-310.

become real protagonists in the cultural life of their city. This was certainly the case with Ptolemy. Certain isolated details of Ptolemy's whereabouts indicate that he was not just a friar who stayed in Lucca. We find that he accompanied Thomas Aquinas in 1271 when the provincial Chapter asked Thomas to organize and establish a Theological School in Naples. Probably Thomas chose Ptolemy because of his intelligence and education. Ptolemy was not with Thomas in Paris between 1268 and 1272 during the time when the latter was invited to the University of Paris, so he may well have been representing him in Naples at this time. As indicated by their correspondence, while Ptolemy was based in Naples he sealed a strong intellectual bond with his master Thomas while he was teaching in Paris; for this reason, Ptolemy could be considered the first biographer of Aquinas, especially during the latter's first years of teaching in Paris. There is another aspect that should be interesting while studying the connection between these two great figures: in these years Ptolemy was the only confessor and confidante of Thomas, and this shows how strong the relationship between them was.

We know that Ptolemy was in Tuscany and probably in his Lucchese monastery between 1274 and 1276, as he was not in Fossanova when Thomas died there on the 9th March 1274. Later in 1282, we find Ptolemy in Provence, and he lived there until the first months of 1285. He spent the rest of the year in his Lucchese monastery of San Romano as prior: two years later he prepared the General Chapter for his Order. We have many records that testify to his presence in Lucca until 1289. For example he appears as one of the witnesses in the will of a Lucchese citizen in the cloister of the monastery of St Michael in Guamo, near Lucca, on the 29th June 1289.⁶³ There is no

⁶³ This unknown record is in Archivio Arcivescovile of Lucca (=AAL), *Diplomatico*, * O 49.

information as to why he turns up in this important Lucchese monastery, and probably the fact does not have any bearing on his contemporaneous presence in his Dominican monastery of San Romano. We know little about the following years: he was, for instance, in 1294 in Perugia when the Pope Celestine V (Peter of Morrone) was elected; he was present when he was consecrated on the 29 August in L'Aquila and, finally, when the Pope resigned in Naples just a few months later.

In September 1299 Ptolemy was elected *definitior* of the General Chapter for the following year in Marseille. From July 1300 until July 1302 he was elected Prior of Santa Maria Novella in Florence and he was still in this Office when he went to Cologne for the Dominican General Chapter.⁶⁴ He was in Florence at the time when the dispute arose amongst the citizens that caused division between the Bianchi and Neri factions. This tragic Florentine episode features in Ptolemy's historical work, the *Annales*, which I will be analyzing later. It is probable that Ptolemy was actually elected as prior at Florence because he was a foreign friar; at this time Lucca and Florence were on quite friendly terms, due especially to the harmony of ideas between the Florentine and Lucchese Guelfs. After his Florentine priorate, Ptolemy returned to Lucca, where he assumed the rank of prior of San Romano; we may assume that at about this time, at some month during 1303, he started writing his *Annales*. In December Ptolemy is found in Perugia with other Lucchese citizens asking the Pope Benedict XI to suspend an interdict against the Lucchese clergy.⁶⁵ Following this special ambassadorship, Ptolemy stayed from 1309 to 1319 in the papal court of Clement V in Avignon. There he met

⁶⁴ Taurisano, *I domenicani in Lucca*, p. 63.

⁶⁵ The pope had inflicted this interdict to the secular and regular Lucchese clergy because they had paid the taxes to the Commune of Lucca against his prohibition.

Cardinal Leonardo from Guarcino known as Patrasso, and became his chaplain. Together they left Avignon to return to Italy, and joined the papal soldiers who fought against Venice in the contest for Ferrara. The cardinal died in Lucca in 1311, but appointed Ptolemy as his executor with another Lucchese friar, Ugo Borgognoni. By this time, Ptolemy was back again at the papal court in Avignon and it was here that he started writing his *Historia ecclesiastica*, arguably his historical masterpiece. In March 1318 Pope John XXII made Ptolemy bishop of Torcello; if we consider that he was born in 1236, he would have been almost 82 years old. It was exactly at this time, while he was bishop and in Avignon, that Ptolemy was one of the witnesses during the canonization process of St Thomas Aquinas.

The short episcopacy of Ptolemy in Torcello was marked by a quarrel with the Benedictine abbess Beriola, whose election he opposed for unknown reasons. As a result of this the Patriarch of Grado excommunicated Ptolemy, but he appealed to the pope who promptly invalidated it. On this occasion the patriarch complained to the pope that bishop Ptolemy was not a good administrator and was guilty of nepotism. The blame for this rested partly on his advanced age but also on the greed of his Lucchese relatives; nevertheless, neither his age nor this regrettable episode stopped Ptolemy; he went for the last time, to Avignon in the summer of 1323 where John XXII canonized his master Thomas Aquinas. We know very little of his life after this important episode. He died in 1327.

IV. REPUBLICANISM IN PTOLEMY OF LUCCA

The Italian Republican philosophy of XIVth and XVth centuries has its roots in the struggles between the communes and the Empire.⁶⁶ Even if on this occasion I will not analyze this phase, despite its relevance for Italian history, I will only remind my readers that the main purpose of these conflicts was to protect the citizens' interests against the rule of the legitimate authority of the emperor. *Libertas* was the word that lay in the mind of both scholars and citizens: it meant above all self-government and independence from the emperor.⁶⁷ Thus, on the one hand, the citizens opposed militarily the intrusiveness of the emperor's political ambitions, while on the other, the scholars debated on the best form of government. The unusual aspect was that even if Roman law, as it was set under the imperial rule, did not fit well with the new republican political system, during the XIIIth and the following century it would still have represented an excellent source for many scholars.⁶⁸ During this time, scholars would have talked in their works of Justice, Law and of the agreement of the majority of citizens as an important limitation to the government of the *potestà*. In this context, the word *Libertas* would have given a new and more specifically republican connotation to the whole concept. Simultaneously to the developing of these political ideas, scholars re-

⁶⁶ See N. Rubinstein, 'Le origini medievali del pensiero repubblicano del secolo XV', in S. Adorni Braccesi, M. Ascheri (eds.), *Politica e cultura nelle repubbliche italiane dal medioevo all'età moderna*. Firenze, Genova, Lucca, Siena, Venezia, Rome, 2001, p. 1.

⁶⁷ P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford, 1997. See also W.J. Connell, 'The Republican Idea', in Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, pp. 14-29.

⁶⁸ J.H. Mundy, 'In praise of Italy: The Italian republics', *Speculum*, 64.4 (1989), pp. 815-834.

discovered Aristotle's texts, thanks to the translation into Latin of the book of *Ethics* and later of *Politics* as well.⁶⁹ Probably it was not mere chance that the re-discovery of such relevant works should happen at the same time as the development of the *Signoria* in many Italian communes. This aspect marked forever the incredibly fast growth of the Republican political ideal in almost all the cities, involved in this process as the chronicles relating to these crucial years testify. In many of these important sources we can notice one remarkable aspect: the vivid contrasts between the emperor and the communes were finally over, and there was now a new value to which all these city-states should look: the keeping of the Republican constitution.

Ptolemy of Lucca, who completed Thomas Aquinas' *De regimine principum* after the death of his master in 1274, offered a decisive contribution to the discussion of the Republican political system within the Italian city-states.⁷⁰ Aquinas was a fierce royalist, but Ptolemy was a republican. He could be defined as the first Italian republican who was able theoretically to justify his political position, even if he was also a rigid and keen apologist for the papacy. He thought that the Pope had inherited from

⁶⁹ For the importance of Aristotle's philosophy during the Middle Ages, see C.J. Nederman, 'The Meaning of "Aristotelianism" in Medieval Moral and Political Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57.4 (1996), pp. 563-585.

⁷⁰ For Ptolemy of Lucca, who has been studied mainly by British and American scholars, see C.T. Davis, 'Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 118.1 (1974), pp. 30-50; Ibidem, *Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic*, Philadelphia, 1974; Ibidem, 'Roman Patriotism and Republican Propaganda: Ptolemy of Lucca and Pope Nicholas III', *Speculum*, 50 (1975), pp. 411-433; J.M. Blythe, 'Aristotle's Politics and Ptolemy of Lucca'; J.M. Blythe, J. La Salle, 'Was Ptolemy of Lucca a Civic Humanist? Reflections on a Newly-Discovered Manuscript of Hans Baron', *History of Political Thought*, 26 (2005), pp. 236-265. Forthcoming from James M. Blythe with Brepols Publishing in 2009 *The Life and Works of Tolomeo Fiadoni (Ptolemy of Lucca)* and *The Worldview and Thought of Tolomeo Fiadoni (Ptolemy of Lucca)*.

Christ royal as well as priestly authority and rejoiced at the thought that Christ's Vicar had Rome firmly in his grasp.⁷¹

His work shows that he was strongly influenced by the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Politics*. Ptolemy understood the Greek word *politia* used by Aristotle in his *Politics* (generally translated into Latin as 'government') to be a constitutional regime in which the citizens would elect governors for only a few months. We have to point out that these officers would not be able to rule the commune and govern the citizens as if they were dictators but they would have to strictly obey the communal laws. According to Ptolemy, during Roman times this form of government existed from the time of Tarquin's expulsion until Caesar's death; after the demise of the Empire, it flourished again mainly in the Italian cities and especially in the centre and the north. Ptolemy's view of Roman history was focused only on the republican and papal stages: if Julius Caesar was an usurper, Augustus, on the other hand, was seen as Christ's deputy while Christ and his appointed successors, that is the popes, were the true emperors.⁷² Unsurprisingly Ptolemy stated that the Pope and his cardinals had replaced the consuls and the Senate, as Constantine had implicitly recognized when he removed himself to the East. Even if Ptolemy was a republican in the political sphere, he was a monarchist in the ecclesiastical one, and he believed that the Pope was the pure font of law and the master of the world. To him, the Pope was the only legitimate direct successor of the Roman Republic.⁷³

⁷¹ Davis, *Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic*, p. 37.

⁷² *Ibidem*, pp. 38-39.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

According to Ptolemy's view, not all nations are capable of managing a Republican system: to some thinkers, for instance, barbarians and Asian people are not capable of ruling themselves because of their irrationality.⁷⁴ Ptolemy's particular vision of the Italian politic is affected by Aristotle's theory, according to which the geographic place where people lived could strongly mark their specific behaviour or other characteristics correlated with their private and public lives. Following Aristotle, the foolish should be ruled by the wise, and peasants or forest-dwelling savages should be ruled by town dwellers.⁷⁵ Ptolemy argued that officers could rule only certain people, while others could not be subjected to rule; in other words, some people could become similar to slaves while others could not. Yet he did not believe that monarchy always leaned toward despotism: he noted in fact that people ruled by a hereditary monarchy were not always servile, and they could rebel if their princes' power exceeded the constitutional limitations.

Despotism, like feudalism, in fact, tended to obscure the difference between public and private rights; for instance, the origins of the typical North Italian despot could frequently be traced back to a remote feudal lord of the *contado* who, while submitting to the authority of the commune in theory, was, in fact, able to retain certain of his most important Lordship prerogatives over men and property. The meaning of the concept of despotism was clear to the contemporaries citizens' eyes: traditional views of lordship looked to three or four thirteenth-century officials: the *potestà*, the captain of the people, the rector of the union of guilds, and the military captain general. If

⁷⁴ Mundy, *In Praise of Italy*, pp. 830-831.

⁷⁵ Blythe, *Aristotle's Politics and Ptolemy of Lucca*.

something went wrong, a general assembly or council of the commune might vote special powers to one of these dignitaries, at the same time renewing his term of office. Later, there would be additional allocations of power and another renewal, confirming the man in office for at least five years but more frequently even more, that is for ten years or even for life. It is important to point out that in the next generation, in real or alleged responses to continuing crisis, hereditary leadership advanced its claims: the office, with its dictatorial powers, passed into the man's family. His sons, brothers, or grandsons succeeded him. Besides this, additions were made to his patrimony through advantageous marriage alliances and grants of land from communes, popes and emperors.

In Tuscany, for instance, economic pressures were also a factor in the seizure of power by *signori*. Following Pisa's calamitous naval loss to Genoa at Meloria in 1284, the Pisan ruling group panicked and turned power over to two native *signori*, the Counts Ugolino della Gherardesca and Nino Visconti at a time when the whole Pisan economy lay in the shadow of disaster. The regime of the *popolo* was restored in 1288, but the nervousness persisted. In Florence the lordship of the French nobleman Walter of Brienne was brought about by a financial crisis, which had so frightened the mercantile and banking patricians that they invited Walter to the city and handed over power to him.

The conflict between republicanism and despotism began about the mid-thirteenth century, and in most places, sooner or later, it was settled in favour of despotism. As early as 1300, in fact, in purely territorial terms, the contest was becoming uneven: much of Lombardy with Piedmont, Emilia and Venetia, and most of Romagna and the

Marche, were under despotic rule; and already certain writers, like Albertino Mussato, were beginning to speak, with classical reminiscence, of a pre-determined cycle in the development of states. There was much to encourage such beliefs, even though in the congested political society of medieval Italy, the development of states was seldom wholly free.

For Ptolemy the Republican form of government is specifically suited to political entities that are neither too small nor too large and this could be seen throughout the world, although elsewhere, as in France for instance, laws imposed by princes limited a city's freedom. Looking at Ptolemy's supposition one could argue that great regions are best ruled by monarchy and villages by towns, but unsurprisingly there are two interesting exceptions: the ancient Romans and modern Italians. In this close connection between the Roman republic and the Italian city-states, Ptolemy could outline the specificity of both government systems. According to him, Italian republicanism was a somewhat gentle form of government because Italians naturally refused to bow their necks to their rulers, just like the Romans whose supremacy had had been secured by the influence of the planet Mars⁷⁶. Thus, the republican form of government could only flourish in Italy because its citizens were less submissive than others.

According to his political theory, Ptolemy condemns the lords and absolute monarchy, because they are seen as enemies of the citizens' freedom. The only place in which the citizens could live peacefully was under republican rule. One of monarchy's

⁷⁶ Davis, *Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic*.

few advantages was the way law was promulgated.⁷⁷ A prince finds laws in his mind fitting all occasions because he is free to impose laws on his subjects for their own good, but the same is not true if we consider republican leaders, who cannot go beyond old law except when the people choose to let them. Republican leaders and officers were elected only for short terms, a half-year to a year, and got paid for their service; Ptolemy saw problems in this practice. Being mercenary, these rulers did not govern for the advantage of the Republic but they desired quick profits; and, fearing they might lose their office, they misused the public funds to gain the support of various citizens. On the other hand, in spite of the danger of corruption, mercenary government could have its advantages: as Ptolemy claimed, hired magistrates treated citizens more gently than princes, just because their object was personal profit and not good government.⁷⁸

Officers elected and hired for six months to a year were supposed to be respected. To Ptolemy and to the other thinkers, any monarchy or long-term magistracy was defective. He believed that electing officers for a short term was advisable because incompetents could be replaced quickly. Monarchy or long-term offices offend ambitious citizens because the appetite for office and honour is innate in the people. To suppress this appetite would raise discord amongst the virile and passionate. Ptolemy thought of monarchy as a subdivision of despotism, which included any regime in which the ruler carried the law in his own breast; instead, political government was limited by popularly sanctioned statutes and its officials were elected temporarily and punishable.

⁷⁷ For this aspect, see, for example, K. Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1993. See, also, Mundy, *In Praise of Italy*, p. 826.

⁷⁸ Mundy, *In Praise of Italy*, pp. 828-829.

For Ptolemy, citizens also constituted a community, appointing magistrates and officers; similarly to Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, he distinguished the true constitutions from the corrupt ones according their relation with the common good. Discussing the advantage of the Spartan constitution over the Cretan, Ptolemy says that the Spartans chose their king from all the grades of the citizenry, as was usual in his day in Italian cities. This is indeed exactly what the word “city” means that is people bound by a certain bond of society.

To Ptolemy, God and history attest to the effective superiority of republican government: if we look back at the primitive state of innocence of the people, we have to admit that there was no monarchy, but only a republic where men obtained their status by merit or by personal disposition. After the fall of Rome, however, owing to the emergence of an immense crowd of foolish and perverse citizens, the monarchical form of government appeared to be more appropriate because it blocked the floods and tides of vice. If we consider, for instance, the virtuous Romans, even after the fall they imitated the original state of innocence, the integral or pure nature because they lived in a republic.⁷⁹

In Ptolemy’s eyes, the Roman Republic was the direct precursor of the Church. Christians retained some of the ancient Roman virtues, like austerity and humility, and these virtues were clearly reminiscent of the previous integral human condition just before the fall. This meant that it was as if a line of history ran from Eden directly through the Roman Republic to the figure of Christ. The Roman Republic recalled

⁷⁹ Ibidem, p. 824.

Eden and predicted the great virtues of the early Christians gathered in a humble but vigorous Church.⁸⁰

Ptolemy chooses to follow Aristotle and his *Politic* again when he talks about the functions of offices that ruled in a republican political system, that is the men involved in the executive command, legislative and judicial functions. Ptolemy argued that those fit to fill public office are the middle classes of the community. The very rich and powerful must be avoided, because they easily tyrannize others. On the other end of the social scale, the very poor could not rule either, because they always try to bring everybody down to their level.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Davis, *Ptolemy of Lucca and the Roman Republic*, p. 43.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

V. GIOVANNI SERCAMBI (c.1345-1424):

THE ADVENTURES OF A LUCCHESE MERCHANT-POLITICIAN

The exact date of birth of this Lucchese merchant, politician, chronicler and short-story teller is doubtful.⁸² According to him, he was born in Lucca on 18th February 1347 while in the whole city a fierce plague epidemic was dramatically killing thousands of his fellow citizens.⁸³ We know of this date from the first pages of his *Croniche*, which I am going to analyze in detail further on. Our doubts about this are prompted by the existence of a new document that has recently been found in the local Archivio di Stato.⁸⁴ This document, dated 15th September 1370, records that Giovanni, together with some of his relatives, bought some fields in a place not far from Lucca. The notable importance of this legal agreement is precisely this: Sercambi solemnly declares in front

⁸² All the scholars that have studied the life of Giovanni Sercambi have always indicated 1347 as the year in which he was born. A document in Archivio di Stato of Lucca (=Asl), *Notari*, 180, ser Conte Puccini, p. 414 and ss. (15th September 1370), instead, shows that he was over 25 years-old. This new document, as I say in the text, could antedate his date of birth to 1345 at least. See now S. Nelli, M. Trapani, 'Giovanni Sercambi: documenti e fatti della vita familiare', in *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo: catalogo della mostra, Lucca, 30 novembre 1991*, Lucca, 1991, p. 79.

⁸³ During the last decades of the XIX century, the Lucchese scholar Carlo Minutoli wrote the text of the plaque which was fixed on the façade of Sercambi's birthplace: «In queste case già di Falabrina, signori di Segromigno, nacque Giovanni Sercambi, novelliero e cronista del secolo XV, fautore di Principato, conculcando le libertà del Comune. MCCCXLVII-MCCCCXXIV».

⁸⁴ For the biographical facts of his life, see especially Sercambi, *Le croniche*, 1, pp. XI-XVI; R. Renier, *Novelle inedite di Giovanni Sercambi*, Torino 1889, pp. X-XXXIX; Nelli, Trapani, *Giovanni Sercambi: documenti e fatti della vita familiare*, pp. 35-100, with an exhaustive collection of documents.

of the notary that he is more than 25 years old, which antedates his date of birth to at least 1345.

Having noted this, we also observe that the Sercambi family came from the place called Massarosa, near the Tyrrhenian coast. His father was a respected apothecary in Lucca and before his death in 1370 he encouraged Giovanni to undertake the same profession. We can surmise that Sercambi received a private education, very probably by some Lucchese teacher because he knew Latin and even owned an interesting collection of books, which I am going to discuss further on. His first experience of an important Lucchese event occurred when the Emperor Charles IV came to Lucca invited by the government, which at that time was under Pisan rule. On that special occasion in 1369, Sercambi and a friend called Davino Castellani presented the emperor with a short poetical work, written by Castellani.⁸⁵ This text was also included in his *Croniche*. After the end of Pisan control in that same year, Lucca wanted to take again control of the strategic castle of Pontetetto, situated near the Pisan border. Sercambi on this occasion decided to join the Lucchese *balestrieri*; he would have been about 25 years old and it was exactly in this exhilarating period for Lucca, after the city had recovered its freedom, that he started writing his *Croniche*. Only a few years after this military episode, in March 1372 the *Anziani* and the *Vessillifero di Giustizia* elected Sercambi as one of the members of the *Consiglio Generale*, the most important deliberative Office of the Lucchese Republic. He held this Office, albeit not

⁸⁵ “O in ecelzo santissimo Carlo, / O creatura mandata da Dio, charo dilecto mio, / Misericordia chiamo et non iustitia. / Luccha i’ sono che a voi io parlo. / Vostra i’ sono, dolcie padre pio; et però con dizio / A voi ricorro co molta amicitia. / E dell’alta tristia / Ch’io ò sofferta, ch’è peggio che morte, però vi prego forte / Che a questo punto io sia diliberata ? Ed alla ecternità sempre salvata”, (Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 155).

continuously, until 1399, just one year before the ascension of Lord Paolo Guinigi, to whom Sercambi was one of the most influential advisors. In 1377, the *Anziani* and the *Vessillifero* again nominated Sercambi as one of the three men in charge of the payment for the hired soldiers and the lords of the castles. It was his first administrative task within the Republican Lucchese government, and even if it was not so politically relevant, however it is a good indication of his excellent public and political reputation. It is also worth pointing out that the origins of the Sercambi family were not as socially and politically significant as we might have expected from the brilliant political career of Giovanni. In 1382 Sercambi was given perhaps one of the most important tasks of his whole career: he was appointed by the *Anziani* to go to Arezzo as ambassador to plead with Lord Alberico da Barbiano who wanted to invade Lucca. Sercambi was able to conclude this delicate task successfully: he personally delivered to Alberico the considerable amount of 5.000 florins from the Republic of Lucca, hoping that he would not attack the city-state.

At the beginning of the last decade of the fourteenth century Sercambi's political career was marked by a decisive advancement. By becoming a key figure for the Guinigi family's uncontrolled ambition for power, his personal prestige was notably increased and not just locally. In these years Lucca was experiencing serious troubles because of the rivalry between two different factions represented by the families Forteguerra and Guinigi. Sercambi, supporting, as we know, the Guinigi family, in 1393 was appointed among the four Lucchese leaders who would help the Marquis of Ferrara against the local rebel Opizzo of Montegarullo. Finally, in 1397, just three years before the ascent to power of the Lord Paolo Guinigi, Sercambi became one of the three *Gonfalonieri di*

Giustizia, or Standard Bearers of Justice, the highest Office in the Republican Lucchese government. At this time he would have been about 51 years old. He was Gonfaloniere again during the crucial year 1400, when Paolo Guinigi finally obtained the whole power of the city from the Republican Offices.⁸⁶

In the meantime, the Republic-state of Lucca was going through a difficult moment: early in this year Lazzaro Guinigi, who had control of the city, was assassinated by his own brother Antonio and his brother-in-law Nicolao Sbarra for uncertain reasons. This violent and dramatic death could have given the families hostile to Guinigi an opportunity for revenge, mainly because it seemed that members of the Guinigi family had lost the effective control of the city. Lucca, with some other Tuscan cities in these afflicted years, had to defend their borders from a formidable enemy that was killing thousands of citizens: the plague. This epidemic also killed some members of the Guinigi family, including Bartolomeo, Paolo's young brother. As a result of this emergency situation, during the night between 13th and 14th October 1400, Paolo Guinigi gathered the members of the *Balia dei Dodici* and asked for absolute power over the city of Lucca. This new Office was created after the violent death of Lazzaro

⁸⁶ For the political relationship between Paolo Guinigi and Giovanni Sercambi see M. Brogi, 'Giovanni Sercambi e la Signoria di Paolo', in *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo*, pp. 137-189. There is not yet a complete and exhaustive work on the Lordship of Paolo Guinigi on the city-state of Lucca. In the meantime, is still useful to look at S. Bongi, *Di Paolo Guinigi e delle sue ricchezze*, Lucca, 1871; for the architectural context during his Lordship, see C. Altavista, *Lucca e Paolo Guinigi (1400-1430): la costruzione di una corte rinascimentale. Città, architettura, arte*, Pisa, 2005 and P.A. Andreuccetti, 'La cittadella di Paolo Guinigi e il suo palazzo signorile. Spazi fortificati e spazi domestici', *Actum Luce*, 2 (2005), pp. 49-104. Some interesting religious aspects in G. Benedetto, 'Potere dei chierici e potere dei laici nella Lucca del Quattrocento al tempo della Signoria di Paolo Guinigi (1400-1430): una simbiosi', *Annuario della Biblioteca Civica di Massa*, (1984), pp. 1-54.

Guinigi, in order to guarantee that the government of the city would function in hard times. Paolo Guinigi was appointed to this crucial Office. Sercambi himself, while he was Gonfaloniere during the two months of September and October 1400, personally gave Paolo the title of *Capitano del Popolo*, which entailed the effective military leadership.

After skilfully organizing this bloodless *coup d'état*, Sercambi lived under Guinigi's patronage, receiving even more important and delicate tasks, which he always discharged with great ability. In the local public records, we find his name almost every year among the members of the Privy Council of Lord Guinigi and, from 1407; he was always present until his death on the 27th March 1424.⁸⁷ With regard to this special and effective support given to the new lordship, Sercambi was rewarded by the monopoly of the supply of stationery to the government offices and of confectionery, groceries and drugs to the court of Paolo. Sercambi not only dealt in these goods but also in ink, wax, pens, parchments and manuscripts.⁸⁸ There is a strong indication that his shop handled and perhaps even produced various types of manuscripts. It will be important to remember this exceptional government franchise owned by him when I discuss the cultural climate in which Sercambi lived and wrote his *Croniche*. It is clear that

⁸⁷ For the numerous public nominations of Sercambi during the Lordship of Paolo, see Brogi, *Giovanni Sercambi e la Signoria di Paolo*, pp. 148-149. His last presence in the public records is dated 21 January 1424, three years before his death.

⁸⁸ «Iohanni ser Cambii spetiario pro infrascriptis rebus datis [...] pro libris, carta, cera, filsis, pennis et aliis quampluribus rebus necessariis et opportunis [...] libr. CCLXVII, sol. 12 [...]»; c. 94r: libr. CXLIV; c. 247r: libr. LXI, sol. 10; *ibid.*, 377, c. 79r: libr. CCXLIV, sol. VII and libr. 149, sol. I; c. 90r: libr. IIC, sol. XVI and libr. LXXIV, sol. IV, den. III». Asl, *Camarlingo Generale*, 376, c. 88r (25th January 1402).

Sercambi received this franchise because of his strong relationship with the Lord Guinigi and all the members of his powerful family.

Although Sercambi has often been condemned for his support of Paolo Guinigi's dictatorship, it should be pointed out that his political behaviour shows no ambiguity and that he always kept the city's best interests at heart. Moreover, Guinigi established a flourishing and elegant court where he gave patronage and hospitality to many Lucchese scholars and humanists.

Just one year after the ascension to power of Paolo Guinigi, Sercambi joined his narrow circle of advisers and became one of his most esteemed friends. In 1409 and 1410 Sercambi was appointed as *Condottiero*, one of the three men in charge of the payment for the hired soldiers, who were supposed to control the fortresses and their commanders, and was responsible for the distribution of weapons. Some years before, in 1405, he had been chosen to write the new Statute for the *Corte dei Mercanti*, while in 1420 he held a place within the Council in the hospital of San Luca, one of the eldest hospitals of Lucca.⁸⁹ Another Office in which the presence and experience of Sercambi was of importance was the *Consiglio dell'Abbondanza*, which was to determine, for instance, the price of grain. This Office had an extremely delicate and fundamental task in years afflicted by famine and plagues. Sercambi's appointment indicates the extent of Guinigi's trust in him.

From 1411 to 1422 Sercambi joined the *Officio sopra le Entrate*, the highest economic Office in Guinigi's lordship; this extraordinary long presence in the heart of

⁸⁹ On this Lucchese hospital, see now F. Ragone, *L'ospedale di San Luca nei secoli XIV-XV: i beni immobiliari in territorio urbano*, Lucca, 1993.

economic Lucchese life shows how his political capacity had grown rapidly. On 21st February 1424 he wrote his will in front of the notary ser Domenico Ciomucchi.⁹⁰ Having no children, he left to his wife Pina, and to his niece and nephew a considerable fortune made up of money, properties and residences in and outside Lucca. His wife survived him by just a few months. He wished to be buried either in St Matthew's in Lucca or, alternatively, in Santa Maria della Rosa: his sepulchre is still to be found in the former church. The Lord Guinigi decided to allocate 100 florins for the Sercambi's funeral and this was the last gesture whereby he showed his perennial recognition of his loyal services.

Because some of his nephews were quickly squandering Sercambi's inheritance, the *potestà* of Lucca decided to confiscate a part of it from them, primarily all his books and some furniture. Luckily, the list of books that was in the library in his palace has been preserved.⁹¹ This extraordinary Lucchese merchant and politician owned religious codices, three codices of Dante, some classical authors such as works of Seneca and Cicero and «*uno troiano in carte di bambace*», which may be a translation into vernacular language of the famous novel of the *Roman de Troie*. Even from this short and incomplete catalogue owned by Sercambi we can note that it was quite varied; nevertheless, it would not be unusual at all that a man like he would own a preponderant amount of religious and classical texts, while owning only one notable historical text: the translation of the *Roman de Troie*.

⁹⁰ The will of Sercambi is in Asl, *Notari*, Testamenti, n. 11, Ser Domenico Ciomucchi, 1398-1438, cc. 102r-105v. It has been published by Renier, *Novelle inedite*, pp. LXVII-LXXV.

⁹¹ M. Paoli, *Arte e committenza privata a Lucca nel Trecento e nel Quattrocento. Produzione artistica e cultura libraria*, Lucca 1986, pp. 110-112.

VI. THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF GIOVANNI SERCAMBI

We can easily affirm that Sercambi's *Croniche* is a genuine testimony of the political ideas of its author. If we consider that during his youth Pisa, the fierce enemy of Lucca, governed his city from 1342 to 1369, we can understand how Sercambi for all those years experienced the drama of the lost independence. We would not go too far if we were to say that the ideal of freedom was the principle reason why Sercambi decided to write his *Croniche*, the history of his city-state. Immediately after the freedom given to Lucca by the emperor Charles IV in 1369, Sercambi became a loyal friend of the family who had asked his services to fight against Pisa: the Guinigi family.⁹²

As I have already said, one of the most significant episodes in Sercambi's life happened during the rise to power of Paolo Guinigi in the year 1400. This fact would stimulate a stormy debate in the following centuries because some scholars of Lucca started considering Sercambi as the main instigator of the tyranny of Paolo. For this reason, all his works, and not just only the *Croniche*, were published several centuries later, during the XIXth century, about which I will say more in the last chapter.

In the *Croniche* Sercambi mentions three categories of writers: theologians, teachers and poets, and those «homini senza scienza aquisita, ma secondo l'uzo della natura experti e savi», who wrote in order to «dare dilecto alli homini simplici et materiali, e alcuna volta di notare alcune cose che appaiono in ne' paezi, secondo quello

⁹² La "*Libertas Lucensis*" del 1369, Carlo IV e la fine della dominazione pisana, Lucca, 1970. See also C. Meek, *Lucca 1369-1400 Politics and Society in an Early Renaissance City-state*, Oxford, 1968.

che può comprendere».⁹³ He places himself in the third category, as one writing «non amaestrato in scienza teologa, non in legge, non in filozofia, non in astrologia, né in medicina, né in alcuna delle septe arti liberali, ma como homo simplici e di pogo intellecto, materialmente».⁹⁴ This self-presentation places him within a specific social category, in which he identifies himself with his public of readers.

When he writes just at the beginning of his work that he wants «contare alquante cose delle molti che sono seguite a Luccha et in altri paezi, et di quelle che seguono et seguiranno, dal principio che Luccha perdeo suo stato, fino che sua libertà riebbe», we understand that the problem of the Lucchese freedom was at the centre of his mind. Besides, in writing in his *Croniche* the history of Lucca he wanted to show to his citizens how problematic could be to live in a city-state such as Lucca and be ruled by another city.⁹⁵ According to Sercambi, all the Lucchese citizens should be aware that a city oppressed by an enemy or governed by foreigners could not properly be called a city.⁹⁶ They should equally be aware of all the painful effort that the Lucchesi had made in past years to restore the legitimate government to their city. He aimed to tell his citizens of true facts as they had been observed by «testimoni veri e vivi», as well as by himself.⁹⁷ Thus, Lucchese citizens should be aware that the principal enemies of their city-state at that time were Milan and Lucca's neighbour Florence, and its wicked governors. His personal political view, primarily about recent or even contemporary events, could seem to us a narrow-minded ideological system, mainly focused on trade

⁹³ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 64.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁹⁶ O. Banti, 'Giovanni Sercambi cittadino e politico', *Actum Luce*, 1-2 (1989), pp. 7-24.

⁹⁷ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 65.

concerns, as one would expect from him, being the merchant in fact he was. For example, when he wrote on the cruel battle amongst crusaders and Turks and the subsequent fall of Nicopoli in the Turks' hands, he added that this episode «torna gran danno a' nostri mercanti di Luccha».⁹⁸ This means neither a narrow-minded or an exclusively merchant point of view but instead it shows a wider modern and political vision when it is taken in a more general and international context; thus, we might note a certain vocation for political and economical practice in his historical narration.⁹⁹ The *Croniche* can be grouped together with other municipal or communal histories with a strong and realistic internal character. This can be noted, for instance, when Sercambi puts his political observations and moral admonitions or practical and cynical advices all together in the same paragraph with, for example, well detailed descriptions of miracles. Finally, even if sometimes some of the advice he gave seems to herald the cruel and unscrupulous political ideals of Machiavelli, his world, his concepts and his intimate spirit are not altogether similar to the Florentine chancellor's.

In writing his *Croniche*, then, Sercambi wanted to present them to Lucchese citizens with a remarkable political and civic intention rather than personal; besides, we should not forget that these two aspects sometimes coincided with a moral one. If we read the *Croniche* considering this special function of the text, we may easily excuse all those parts that seem not properly close to the subject of the text, such as the numerous

⁹⁸ Ibidem, p. 328.

⁹⁹ G. Benedetto, 'Sulla faziosità del cronista Giovanni Sercambi: analisi di tre capitoli delle Croniche', *Bollettino Storico Pisano*, LXIII (1994), pp. 85-114. See also, R. Ambrosini, 'Su alcuni aspetti delle Croniche di Giovanni Sercambi', *Massana*, XII (1992), pp. 6-26.

historical and geographical digressions he uses in order to describe the cities and the regions of Italy.

Finally, there is another aspect that I would like to point out briefly: Sercambi divided his *Croniche* into two parts, which also corresponds to two different manuscripts.¹⁰⁰ The first codex is universally well known because it is decorated with more than six hundred coloured illustrations adorning the historical narration. Probably Sercambi instructed the unknown artist in some elements of the illustrations, in order to better coordinate the texts with the figures. I will not discuss these beautiful illustrations at length, as this digresses from my original object of study, but without any doubt they must be seen as having a political, didactic and even ideological intent.¹⁰¹ Sercambi, or another artist, created all these pictures in a way which allowed the history to be read solely through the images and their captions alone: they were drawn, in fact, using a full and clearly understandable political meaning, both realistic and symbolic at the same time. The function of all these pictures, which would deserve a specific study, is to reinforce the historical narrative by devoting an image of the action on each page. Sercambi wanted to offer concreteness to this historical narration: he wanted to put in the space of the page the episodes that he had already inserted. This was Sercambi's special brand of realism.

When Sercambi proposed to illustrate the first picture in the first page, certainly he already had in mind what kind of solemnity model he would use in writing his

¹⁰⁰ Asl, *Manoscritti*, 107 and, *Ibidem*, *Archivio Guinigi*, 266.

¹⁰¹ O. Banti, M.L. Testi Cristiani, *Le illustrazioni delle Croniche nel codice lucchese coi commenti storico e artistico*, 2 vols., Genova, 1978. See also V. Tirelli, *Attualità di Giovanni Sercambi. A proposito dell'edizione delle illustrazioni alle "Croniche"*, Lucca, 1979.

Croniche. It is in this first picture that Sercambi wanted to demonstrate unequivocally his religious and civil thought. In this exquisite picture we can see above all Christ in a triumph with angels and stars, then lower down a cross and finally, flanking the cross we find the figures of St Peter and St Paul, together with St Martin, who was the patron saint of Lucca and St Paolino, who was its first bishop. Near the figures of the apostles the emblems of the Papacy and Empire are prominent, while the insignias of the *Popolo* and *Commune di Lucca* are placed near the bishop and the Lucchese patron. Below these saints stand the kneeling figures of the pope, Urban V and of the emperor, Charles IV. It was as if Sercambi was advising his fellow citizens to offer obedience and loyalty the Pope and the Emperor as the benefactors of Lucca.

Sercambi started writing the *Croniche* because he primarily wanted to teach Lucchese citizens the importance of freedom for their city-state. He started in the year 1164, which in his mind would have represented a moment of freedom for the city because it was administered by Lucchese citizens and in particular by the Guelf faction. Freedom is at the heart of this historical narration. It is not by chance, for instance, that the first episode described by Sercambi is a famous military one: the Emperor Frederick I fighting with Lucchese troops against the Romans. The Lucchese standard, as Sercambi took care to emphasize immediately, was in front of all the others, an evident symbol for Lucca's freedom.

Sercambi was always a proud and loyal partisan of the Guinigi family like many other Lucchese citizens.¹⁰² Yet, he insisted on restricting personal interests when they

¹⁰² Banti, *Giovanni Sercambi cittadino e politico*, p. 22. See also R. Ambrosini, 'Concezioni politiche di Giovanni Sercambi in un capitolo trascurato delle Croniche', *Rivista di archeologia storia, costume*, 2 (1991), pp. 27-42.

were in contrast with the general welfare or they were against the Lucchese principals and laws and to allow the gathering together of all those citizens who had a similar political point of view. His friend and leader Paolo Guinigi, extremely cautious in his foreign policy, weak with his citizens, especially with his old enemies, surely could not be the politician who Sercambi really wanted for his Lucca.

As we know, the long and passionate political life of Sercambi shows rather clearly that he was a cunning and extremely practical politician; besides, it seems that he did not have much time for general political theories. According to him, the Papacy and the Empire represented the earthly institutions that ensured stability in society. Even if he could not probably imagine a world or the very city of Lucca without these two figures, he did not refrain from criticizing them. In his *Croniche* their uncontrolled and strong ambition for power is clearly exposed, yet at the same time he vehemently admonishes anyone who dares thinking of offending or threatening them.

His concept of history as an endless row of episodes correlated by a cause-effect reaction and guided partly by the reason or will man, and partly by rational laws, comes directly from medieval thought. In fact, sometimes the actions of men develop in a totally unexpected way, the consequence of which people were unprepared to confront. For this reason, the true and unique task of the politician is to govern the events that he himself has prepared, even if, not surprisingly, some of these episodes could slip out of his control. This may happen only because human nature, that firmly believes in operating for its own advantage, sometimes acts in a contrary way; however, more

often, another extremely strong and fierce force contrasts human actions and blocks all man's efforts: its name is Fortune.¹⁰³

It was well known by medieval minds that the Divine Providence had given Fortune all the necessary tools in order to govern the whole world according to incomprehensible principles of justice. To some people Fortune gave power and riches, but they should be aware that all these gifts wouldn't last forever, so they have to be as expert as good sailors. Even the sagacity and the cunning of all these people, and the medieval man was perfectly well aware of that, could not be sufficient to win against Fortune, which remained a formidable enemy of man, with its strong and erratic force. According to Sercambi, and others thinkers, there was only one chance of opposing Fortune: a good and well-balanced government. But even a wise and prudent leader could be defeated in any case by Fortune because, in the end, if it desired to overthrow a certain leader it would randomly sabotage his effort. It would seem that Sercambi tried to hide himself under a reassuring fatalism but we should be conscious that he believed also that Fortune, as well as human actions, is guided by Divine Providence and on this force even the planets can exercise their power either positively or negatively.¹⁰⁴

So, the task of the politician is to operate following Justice, according the law of that State, because in this way by his behaviour perhaps he could save his citizens from Fortune's punishment. To Sercambi, a politician is first of all a citizen, because he exercises a little portion of the public power, giving advice, working in the offices and by

¹⁰³ "Fortuna son che la mia rota giro, / Qual pongno in alto loco e qual giù tiro; / Molti a ragione e molti, com i' voglo, / Conducho a porto e fo ferire a schoglio. / Ma di girare mia rota i' son più vago / Contra chi fo più gratie e men s'apaga. / Chi viene in grande stato per ventura, / Di senno non dotato pogho dura. / O tu che reggi, or ci puon ben chura". (Sercambi, *Le croniche*, II, pp. 168-169).

¹⁰⁴ Banti, *Giovanni Sercambi cittadino e politico*, p. 21.

contributing with his own financial means and his properties to maintain freedom in his commune. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, he could even be a lord, as Paolo Guinigi, for instance, and in this case he would have had a sort of absolute power allowing him to govern either following the city laws or as a cruel tyrant.¹⁰⁵

In regard to this aspect, there is one consideration that I would like to point out before ending this section on the political thought of Giovanni Sercambi. The following argument is not strictly correlated with the pages of the *Croniche* that I am going to analyze because it refers to the years after the 1300s: nevertheless, I think it is important to mention it because it adds another facet to understanding his political view. I am referring to the period in which Castruccio Castracani, *Signore* of Lucca from 1317 to 1328 and principal exponent of that Lucchese Ghibelline family, held power almost twenty years before the birth of Sercambi himself.

Strangely enough, the chronicler quotes only briefly Castruccio's political adventure in Lucca, even if the latter was one of the most important military and political figures of his times in Tuscany. What does it mean this *damnatio memoriae* in referring to Castruccio in the Sercambi's *Croniche*?¹⁰⁶ Why does he omit, certainly deliberately, Castruccio's life and all his significant military episodes? I believe that these two questions only have one plausible answer: because he was a tyrant. If we suppose that Sercambi very probably intended to give his copy to Paolo Guinigi, we have to conclude that he believed it was politically inconvenient to write of Castruccio,

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, p. 23. More generally, see W. Parsons, 'The Mediaeval Theory of the Tyrant', *The Review of Politics*, 4.2 (1942), pp. 129-143.

¹⁰⁶ O. Banti, 'Castruccio Castracani nelle «Croniche» di Giovanni Sercambi', *Atti del primo convegno di studi Castrucciani*, pp. 47-50.

whether Sercambi wanted to criticize him or to praise him. On both counts, if Sercambi had spent too many words in analyzing the figure of the first tyrant of Lucca, the future reader of his *Croniche*, and second tyrant of the same city-state, could easily have misunderstood what the chronicler had written. Sercambi writes, as if he wanted to justify himself, that he did not want to talk of Castruccio in his *Croniche* because «a non fare troppo sermone di lui non si noteranno [cose avvenute]»; finally, he probably believed that the better choice was to minimize all the episodes in which Castruccio had been protagonist.¹⁰⁷

Sercambi deliberately narrated all the episodes of Castruccio's life in a vague and ambiguous way, delineating only the cities that had changed their political government because of him. Sercambi adopted this particular procedure as none other than a sort of censorship deliberately practiced in order to please Paolo Guinigi. After all, it would not be considered opportune politically to try to write too effusively about the *Signoria* of Castruccio exactly when Paolo Guinigi was becoming with the help of Sercambi himself the new Lord of Lucca. Besides, even if most of the Lucchese families had reached a certain economic power during the years in which Castruccio was the only political leader, they had not forgiven him for having permitted the Pisan tyranny over Lucca in the first place. Sercambi was undoubtedly hedging his political bets. Without this obstacle the chronicler would certainly have written in a more analytical way about episodes referring to Castruccio.

The antithesis of a tyrant, the good citizen, according to Sercambi, should look to the general interest of his commune because whoever damages his own commune, it is as

¹⁰⁷ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 85.

if he offends God. The citizen called to govern his commune must be honest, with strict moral principles and he must always to be like this, even in his private life. Besides, the politician who has power in his own hands should exercise it with wariness but also using severe decisions and strong vigour, and this is possible because of his conscience and his honest friends who work with him. Sercambi knows perfectly well that this kind of life is difficult for everyone to accept, partly because he has a substantial and strong mistrust in the human nature. Man, to Sercambi, is extremely easy to corrupt: the lord should be alert not only with his enemies but also with his former enemy because it is always a serious problem to fall asleep in the enemy's arms.

To sum up, there is no doubt that Sercambi was an exemplary Lucchese citizen, with strong and serious moral principles. Even the age-old view of his guilt in having been the man responsible for permitting the ascension to power of the Guinigi family in Lucca could be softened if we consider his strong aversion to tyranny. He very probably theoretically approved the idea of an oligarchy rather than a pure tyranny; but we might suppose that he reconsidered this because of the Lucchese political situation during his turbulent times. The fact that in Lucca, the ruling class was divided in many factions meant that it was exactly for this particular reason that Sercambi had to find one Lucchese family, that would be fair and impartial to all the other families: in his view this was the Guinigi family. Sercambi did not much like the idea of a *Signoria*, because he was well aware of its weaknesses, which were to be found in the same Lord himself.

In reading Sercambi's *Croniche* we can detect some regret because he helped Paolo Guinigi to reach power in Lucca. In this precise context, the thought that haunted

Sercambi was of being seen as complicit in any possible crimes committed by Paolo while he was governing. Speaking of this, I cannot neglect mentioning another of Sercambi's interesting little historical works called *Nota ai Guinigi*.¹⁰⁸ Sercambi wrote these few pages after 1392 when the Guinigi, defeated their rival family the Forteguerra, and became leaders in Lucca, and before 15th February 1400, when one of the four addressees of the letter, Lazzaro di Francesco Guinigi, died. This short essay puts together some important advice that Sercambi wanted to address to the members of this prominent family. While emphasizing the importance for the politician of the historical episodes (thanks to the written records of the historians), he also admonishes this family in order to teach its members to avoid the same perils that had happened to other leaders in the course of history.

Arriving at the end of his human political experience in the Lucchese polity, Sercambi admitted to himself that even if this kind of government was not as perfect as he had wished, it was the best model Lucca needed in those turbulent times.

¹⁰⁸ Asl, *Governo di Paolo Guinigi*, 38, cc. 1r-4r. See the particularly good edition edited by P. Vigo in Leghorn in 1889.

VII. HOW DOES HISTORY WORK? TEXTS, WORDS AND BOOKS

We know why and when Sercambi started writing his *Croniche*. When did he start thinking about writing his historical masterpiece? Most likely around 1369, when he was about 24 years old and Lucca was just in the process of shedding off Pisan rule, aided by the emperor Charles IV.

According to his own words, at the very beginning of the *Croniche*, he «voleva contare alquante cose delle molti che sono seguite a Luccha et in altri paezi»; in other words, he was just trying to recount remarkable episodes that had happened in Lucca as well as and in other cities.¹⁰⁹ He used, give or take, the same words that another famous chronicler, the Florentine Giovanni Villani, had written many decades before: «Questo libro si chiama la *Nuova cronica*, nel quale si tratta di più cose passate, e specialmente dell'origine e cominciamento della città di Firenze, poi di tutte le mutazioni ch'ha avute e avrà per gli tempi: cominciato a compilare nelli anni della incarnazione di Iesu Cristo MCCC».¹¹⁰

While Villani was inspired to write his *Croniche* in such a symbolic year as 1300, the year in which Boniface VIII had held the first jubilee in the history of the Church, Sercambi seemed to place himself in a more local and municipal setting: his first paragraph relates to the year 1164, when the Lucchese soldiers proudly fought as independent allies of the emperor Frederick I against Rome.

¹⁰⁹ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ G. Villani, *Cronica*, Firenze 1832, I, p. 7.

This merchant and politician was accused by his citizens of being a traitor as well as the slayer of the Lucchese Republic; as the man who permitted the Lordship of Paolo Guinigi from 1400 to 1430. Ironically, he adds in the first paragraphs of his *Croniche* that he would like to start writing «dal principio che Luccha perdeo suo stato [1313], fino che sua libertà riebbe [1369], et da poi fino che questo libro finirà [1400]». ¹¹¹ In fact, as we know, Sercambi died while still in the process of writing, as the plague raged in Lucca. He died in 1427, just three years before the end of the Guinigi's Lordship, which had started with the substantial help of Sercambi himself. After his death, the two precious manuscripts of the *Croniche* parted ways: the first part, which was also the first codex in which Sercambi outlined the history of Lucca between 1164-1400, was kept in the Palazzo Pubblico, while the second one, which he wrote until July 1423 was sequestered three years later by the government from Sercambi's nephew. Both manuscripts are now in the Archivio di Stato of Lucca.

«Conterò socto brevità quello che seguìo, secondo che io ho trovato in molti luoghi per scripto»: as I am going to say in the following pages, he wanted to look at previous historical books in order to narrate the history of Lucca. «E acciò che chi arà a venire possa sapere più avanti, mi par debito narrare dovere del tempo che Luccha era in sua libertà, vivendo a parte guelfa, fino a tanto che fu rioducta a parte ghibellina, et che perdeo sua libertà. E questo fu da l'anno di MCLXIII fine a l'anno di MCCCXIII». ¹¹² From this important statement inserted in the prologue of the first book of the *Croniche*

¹¹¹ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 3.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

we notice how Sercambi tries to establish an equivalence between “Guelfism” and “Freedom”, which gives us an interesting clue to better understand his political thought. Firstly, this means that Sercambi believed that from 1164 to 1313 the Guelf party governed Lucca, even if this aspect is not fully developed in the first part of his work. Besides, this particularly suggests to us that he probably wrote this prologue just after the end of the Ghibelline Pisan rule over Lucca in 1369.

Sercambi wrote his *Croniche* bearing well in mind this prime aspect: Lucca needed to stay at the centre of his historical narration. We also have to add that at least in the part of the *Croniche* that I have been analyzing, Sercambi does not seem to omit any unpleasant episodes. Because of the lack of public records for such early times we are not sure about the veracity of these facts, but luckily we can compare his version with Ptolemy’s *Gesta Lucanorum*, written some time before Sercambi’s *Croniche*.

Sercambi in his prologue writes that his intention is to narrate «segondo che io ò trovato in molti luoghi per scripto, contando di parte im parte segondo che fu», that is his inspiration was essentially based on searching other historical sources that would have helped him to write the first part of his chronicle.¹¹³ Then, he admonishes his reader: «delle quali parti a me non se ne de’ dar lodo se ordinate fussero, però che da altri ò avuto l’exemplo; e se alcuna cosa si trovasse corrocta, overo mal composta, la colpa sere’ mia», which was a way to underline again his necessity to construct his history with the help of historical texts.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, in the *Croniche*, there is not one single citation telling us from which sources Sercambi took that particular record, but we

¹¹³ Ibidem.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem.

know that he quoted mainly from the *Gesta Lucanorum*, the *Gesta Florentinorum* and from Ptolemy's *Annales*. So, conversely, while Ptolemy accurately references his historical sources, Sercambi never mentions them.

We also have to say that during the transmission of these historical records from one text to another, it could be that not all of them were accurately quoted because, for example, they were not mentioned or recorded as having been in existence. Moreover, and this is particularly true for both Ptolemy and Sercambi, it was possible that the chronicler had in front of him editions of different historical sources, possibly works on general history. Ptolemy in fact, in his *Annales*' prologue, like the distinguished historian that he was, correctly quoted the other historians, such as Richard of Cluny, Goctifredus of Viterbo, Martinus Polono etc., as well as the *Gesta*. With regard to this, we can add that Ptolemy's quotations are always extremely accurate, showing no sign of manipulation.

Besides, it is interesting that Ptolemy cited both the *Gesta* referring only to the title, which is still used nowadays, and not giving the authors; this indicates, first of all, that even during Ptolemy's time, historians did not always know who had written these important texts. Bernhard Schmeidler, the editor of Ptolemy's *Annales* has authoritatively affirmed that both *Gesta* were written probably during the central years of the XIIIth century--almost five decades before Ptolemy started writing his *Annales*. This means that between the anonymous chronicler who wrote the *Gesta Lucanorum* and the *Annales* there was presumably no other historical source, because otherwise Ptolemy would have mentioned it.

Ptolemy's narration is continuously punctuated by quotations from these works. Because of this notable characteristic, they respond to our idea of a modern book of history far better than Sercambi's *Croniche* can do. Ptolemy was a theologian and an historian and before he started writing the *Annales* he had already completed at least three other works, such as *De iurisdictione imperii et auctoritate summi pontificis*, *De operibus sex dierum* and *De regimine principum*.

In the following pages I am going to discuss the original works, showing directly the analogies and the differences amongst the already mentioned two texts. I will start by mentioning short paragraphs extracted from Ptolemy's *Annales*, followed by Sercambi's *Croniche* or from other texts, such as *Gesta Lucanorum* and *Gesta Florentinorum*. After this, I will highlight some passages in order to better explain the significance of the texts.

After the prologue of the first book of the *Croniche*, Sercambi writes his first record that he entitles "Come lo 'mperadore fe' guerra co' romani" and he continues saying: «Ora verremo a contare chome l'anno di MCLXIII Federigo imperatore et Ranaldo Christiani et Filippo Cancellieri fecero grande hoste con Romani e con Toscana. E funnone tra morti e presi de' romani VIII^m e i chavalieri di Luccha vinseno in quella bactaglia. E 'l gonfalone del comune di Luccha fu avanti tucti li altri gomfaloni». ¹¹⁵ In his *Annales*, Ptolemy wrote: «Anno Domini MCLXV. Fredericus descendit in Ytaliam, et totam Lombardiam vexat preter Papiam, que eidem favebat. Eodem anno venit Romam et cum eis durissimum habet bellum, ut Martinus dicit et in Gestis Lucanorum

¹¹⁵ Ibidem.

habetur; tandem devicti sunt Romani et multi capti et mortui; in quo bello strenuissime se habuit militia Lucanorum». ¹¹⁶

I will offer one further example. In referring to the year 1167 Sercambi writes: «L'anno di MCLXVII Federigo imperadore assediò Ancona e li Anconesi si rendeono a lui per persi et homini morti. E in quell'anno fu lo fuoco in Chaldoria et arse dalla casa delli Arnaldi infine a' Saggina e fine alla chieza di Santo Salvatore in Muro. [...]. E in quell'anno Melano si rificie, ché l'avea guasto e disfacto lo 'mperadore Federigo Barbarossa in MCLXII. E in questo anno si fecie la ciptà d'Allexandria in Lombardia». ¹¹⁷

Ptolemy writes: «Fredericus imperator obsidet Anchonam VII mensibus; qui se tradiderunt eidem pro mortuis et captivis. Eodem anno ignis accensus est in Caldoraria et combussit omnes domos filiorum Arnaldi usque ad angulos filiorum Sagine et usque ad Sanctum Salvatorem in Mustolio et in circuitu. Eodem anno Mediolanum reedificatur cum amicorum adiutorio, sicut in Gestis Lucanorum scribitur. Anno Domini MCLXVIII. Mediolanenses [...] in despectum Frederici et favorem Alexandri [...] civitatem edificaverunt [...] quam Alexandriam vocaverunt ob reverentiam Alexandri pape». ¹¹⁸

In the first paragraph, in which both chroniclers mention episodes occurred the years 1164 and 1165, we can easily observe how the two texts are quite similar. For example, the Latin words «multi capti et mortui», correspond to the Italian words «morti e presi», even if the order of words is changed. Besides, when Ptolemy writes «in

¹¹⁶ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 66.

¹¹⁷ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, pp. 67-68.

quo bello strenuissime se habuit militia Lucanorum», we recognize an equivalent sense in the following words used by Sercambi: «E 'l gonfalone del comune di Luccha fu avanti tucti li altri gomfalonì».

If we consider the other two short texts, we can recognize more than a pure coincidence between them. When Ptolemy writes: «Fredericus imperator obsidet Anchonam VII mensibus; qui se tradiderunt eidem pro mortuis et captivis», Sercambi writes: «[...] Federigo imperadore assediò Ancona e li Anconesi si rendeono a lui per persi et homini morti», that is more than a literal translation from Latin into Italian. So, if Ptolemy says «pro mortuis et captivis», Sercambi writes: «per persi et homini morti», using a different order of the verbs, as we have already said.

So, if we have established that Sercambi, while he was writing and looking at some history texts written previously, knew the *Annales* of Ptolemy, probably by now we are stating the obvious. As we know, the fact that both authors were from the same city and that Ptolemy's work had been written several years before the Sercambi's *Croniche*, it is clear that the latter saw or at least had some knowledge of the text of the former. Therefore, rather than affirming that Sercambi knew the *Annales* I would like to investigate how Sercambi used his sources-and Ptolemy's *Annales* among them - while he was compiling his chronicle; or, in other words, if he deliberately changed the general sense of one particular event, in order to give a sort of manipulated version of it, adjusted to suit his beliefs.

I have to say once more that there are no more historical records in the Archivio di Stato of Lucca referring to the first periods of the Lucchese political life, that is to say the last decades of the XIIIth century. Ptolemy, for example, quotes some texts that he,

rather generally, calls *Gesta Lucanorum* and *Gesta Florentinorum*, that is the deeds of the Lucchesi and Florentine, a very typical and common medieval genre of municipal chroniclers. Both those short texts represented nothing but the bare facts that described the main historical episodes that happened in those cities. We have to trust Ptolemy and really believe him when he claims that he is reporting a certain episode either from *Gesta Lucanorum* or *Gesta Florentinorum*.

Besides, we should not forget that he was at various times prior of the Lucchese monastery of San Romano and of the Florentine monastery of Santa Maria Novella; so, it would not have been difficult for him to own or to look at the copies of these precious texts. The editor Bernhard Schmeidler provided a critical edition of both *Gesta*, as well as Ptolemy's *Annales*, in the series *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series* of the prestigious *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* in 1955.

There are three surviving copies of the *Gesta Lucanorum* now: two were copied from a more ancient codex during the XVIIth century (they are now in the Biblioteca Governativa of Lucca), while a copy from the second half of the XIVth century is conserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence.¹¹⁹

Having established this, we can go further and try to analyze, for example, the first paragraphs of Sercambi's *Croniche*. He wants to start his *Croniche* with a military victory, a victory concluded with the standard of his city in the fore «avanti tucti li altri gomfaloni», as he proudly ends his first paragraph. It was not a prologue in which the chronicler started writing from biblical times and quickly continued until his time; this

¹¹⁹ Biblioteca Governativa of Lucca (=Bgl), *Manoscritti*, 873 and 927; Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence, Codice Palatino 571.

sort of *incipit* was anything but similar from the *Cronica* written by Giovanni Villani. In the *Croniche's* first short paragraph, his pride of being a Lucchese citizen is clear and vivid; «i chavalieri di Luccha vinseno in quella bactaglia»: here, municipal pride and military force go together. Lucca is in the centre of the Sercambi's particular world from the very first of his words.

If we go back to Ptolemy's text again, we can observe that the same episode is narrated more or less using the same words, even though in this particular case the stress on the Lucchese achievement is much less intense and the narration more objective. Sercambi knew the text of Ptolemy, even though it is not still clear if he knew the whole text or only an incomplete part of it. At least three surviving codices of the *Annales*, now conserved in the Archivio di Stato and the Biblioteca Governativa of Lucca, were written in the fourteenth century, probably immediately after Ptolemy's death.¹²⁰ These three codices were the ones used by Schmeidler when he had to prepare his critical edition of the *Annales*.¹²¹ Sercambi did not only know the *Annales* but he also owned or used a copy of the *Gesta Lucanorum*, written in the vernacular and not in Latin, and very likely the one reconstructed and critically edited by Schmeidler.¹²²

For example, in referring to the year 1154, instead of 1164 as in Sercambi's text, the *Gesta Lucanorum* has: «Rinaldo, Christiani et Filippo canciglieri dello inperadore fecieno grande oste et bataglie contra li Romani et con Toschanella, et funovi morti ben VIII^m Romani per bonta de' Luchesi, li quali funo li primi feritori col confalone di

¹²⁰ Asl, *Manoscritti*, 55 and Bgl, *Manoscritti*, 1638 and 2640.

¹²¹ Although there were also some copies of this text written during the following centuries, the German scholar did not consider them, basing his work only on the ancient codices.

¹²² Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, pp. 278-323.

Lucha». ¹²³ Or, at the year 1167: «Lo inperadore Federicho assedio Ancona, et li Anconesi si e s'arendeno per presi et per morti. Et in questo tempo fue in Lucha lo fuocho di Caldoria et del Parlascio. Et questo anno si rifecie Mellano per li Melanesi anno Domini MCLXVII». ¹²⁴

There is a strong similarity in the narration of these historical facts, at least until the year 1200. It is undoubtedly true that until this year there is a complete agreement in the historical events narrated by Sercambi, Ptolemy and the anonymous authors of the *Gesta Florentinorum* and *Lucanorum*. Evidence of this is based either on the very words used by the chroniclers or on the general context of the narrator.

In referring to 1188, the *Gesta Lucanorum* adnotes: «Lo imperadore Federigo passoe oltra mare, et in dello viaggio morio in dello fiume, che si chiama Ferro. Et in quello anno di giugno Lucca levò lo borgo San Giniegi contra la volontà di Sanmigniato; et in quello anno Alchieri fue consolo di Lucca [...]». ¹²⁵ Ptolemy writes: «Eodem tempore et anno factum est stolum sive pasagium magnum in Terram Sanctam pro recuperatione eiusdem, sed parum crucesignati profecerunt» ¹²⁶. Sercambi adnotes: «L'anno di MCLXXXVIII nel tempo di papa Grigorio octavo, lo 'mperadore Federigo Barbarossa passò con innumerabile gente oltre mare per ricomquistare lo Sepulcro. E giunto in Romania lo dicto imperadore morì in nel fiume del ferro». ¹²⁷ While Ptolemy mentioned the other two episodes relating to the death of the emperor and to the destruction of San Miniato, he placed them under different years.

¹²³ Ibidem, pp. 289-290.

¹²⁴ Ibidem, p. 290.

¹²⁵ Ibidem, p. 298.

¹²⁶ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 83.

¹²⁷ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 10.

The last episode that I would like to present happened in 1195. In *Gesta Lucanorum* we find: «1195. [...] Et in quello anno fue discordia tra porta San Friani et ello borgo et porta Sancti Donati dall'una parte, et porta Sancti Cervagij et porta Sancti Pieri fue dall'altra parte. Et fue lo stormo alla Fratta, et fue in dello tempo di Albertino Soffreducci». ¹²⁸ Ptolemy writes: «Eodem anno [1188, but 1195] fuit discordia inter portam Sancti Frediani et illos de burgo in Lucana civitate; porta autem Sancti Donati favebat uni parti, porta vero Sancti Gervasii et porta Sancti Petri favebant; alteri, et sturmmum maximum sive bellum factum est alla Fracta [...]». ¹²⁹ Finally, Sercambi writes: «E in quell'anno medesimo di MCLXXXV fu discordia in Luccha tra Porta san Frediani, Porta di Borgo e Porta san Donati dall'una parte, e dall'altra parte Porta san Cervagi e Porta san Pieri. E feceno stormo e combattèono insieme alla Fracta in nel tempo d'Albertino Sufreducci». ¹³⁰

The general meaning of this episode is the same in all the versions and even the words that the chroniclers used are very similar, as well as in the Latin text. From all these examples we can illustrate the way that these records were transmitted from one chronicler to another. The creator of this transmission of historical records was the anonymous author who compiled the *Gesta Lucanorum* during the middle of the fourteenth century. These records were copied by Ptolemy and, either directly or through Ptolemy, by Sercambi.

¹²⁸ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 299.

¹²⁹ Ibidem, pp. 83-84.

¹³⁰ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 11.

We could better understand the difference between all these texts if we consider the records that have been left out or only partially transmitted or even deleted or altered from the chronicler.

An interesting record is the one which records the birth of Frederick II in 1195: in the *Gesta Lucanorum* the anonymous chronicler writes: «nato fue Federigo imperadore di Roma, chondam Enrighi imperadore di Roma, et fue dinonsiato per tutte le ville et cittadi», and a text with the same tenor can be read in the Ptolemy's *Annales*.¹³¹ Sercambi, in addition to these words, wrote more, saying that the birth of Frederick was announced «in espesialità alla ciptà di Luccha; del quale nascimento in Luccha se ne fe' festa et allegrezza, come si de' fare di maggiore et signore».¹³²

We could interpret that this short and seemingly innocent addition about the birth of the emperor could go further than any other words in explaining, for example, the feeling and the attitude of Sercambi for the figure of the emperor. We know that he decided to start writing his *Croniche* after April 1369, that is, when the emperor Charles IV liberated Lucca from the Pisan control commenced in 1342. Besides, we already know that, on that occasion, Sercambi and a friend presented to the emperor, who was in Lucca at the time, a short poetical work. If we go forward with another suggestion, we may consider the first exquisite coloured illustration of the *Croniche*'s first codex.

Having established this, if Sercambi in his *Croniche*, even while showing gratitude to the figures who adorned his text, and wanting to remember all the citizens of Lucca who was the restorer of their freedom from Pisa, he does not forget who the emperor

¹³¹ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 299.

¹³² Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 10.

really is: Charles IV is, in Sercambi's eyes, an avaricious man who has been moved in helping Lucca because of its richness and not because his ideal of freedom: everybody has to know, Sercambi says, that «la libertà di Lucca costò di denari contanti a' ciptadini di Lucca più di fiorini 300.000 d'oro», while just 100.000 was the income of Lucca during one year and a half.¹³³

For a more convincing aspect correlated with how Sercambi understood the imperial power in Lucca, it could be useful to look at the picture in the *Croniche* which describes «chome lo 'mperadore liberò Luccha».¹³⁴ As I said, in fact, Charles IV, while he was staying in Lucca, the 6th of April 1369 gave the freedom to the Lucchese citizens. The place where this important assembly was held was the square in front of the church of St Michele. According to the written documents that testified to that episode, the emperor was with his dignitaries because the pact that was being ratified that day would represent an important episode in the diplomatic relations between the imperial court and Lucca. «Dum [...] serenissimus princeps et dominus in spectaculo publico populi circumfusa multitudine in trono resideret cesareo, coronatus imperial diademate et imperialibus indutus insignis» as this is specified in the record of a public register in the Archivio di Stato of Lucca.¹³⁵

I would like to comment now on how Sercambi saw the whole above-mentioned episode, not forgetting that he was present in that occasion. In 1369 Sercambi might have been almost 24 years old. In the beautifully coloured first picture that we can still see in the original codex of the *Croniche*, we notice on the left side only three dignitaries,

¹³³ Ibidem, p. 174.

¹³⁴ Ibidem, pp. 172-174.

¹³⁵ Asl, *Anziani avanti la Libertà*, 46, c. 12r-v.

that is the emperor on the right, the cardinal Guido of Boulogne (the imperial vicar) in the middle and the bishop of Lucca, Guglielmo on the left. Instead, civil Lucchese citizens occupy almost the whole space of the picture, and gaze at the three men with real joy and happiness. It seems as if the entire city wants to participate to the event: even women are looking on to the scene and participating from the windows of the palaces. There are heralds and trumpets that underline that particularly moment, but at the very centre of this imagine, right in the middle of the scene, a man who has a child upon his shoulders catches our attention. Thus, Sercambi and his illuminator seem to suggest that this public “*felicitas politica*” has been long desired by her citizens, as if Lucca wanted really and sincerely to join with the emperor.

To sum up: the figure and the importance of Charles IV, according to the juridical literature that had been written since then, his precise role and his place within the medieval society is not discussed or criticized by Sercambi. Like many other chroniclers of those times, he considered the presence and even the existence of the emperor as ineluctable as well as that of the pope.

Sercambi in this picture intentionally suggested to the artist to represent a carefree day of joy and celebration rather than representing Charles IV as the saviour of the city-state of Lucca. Sercambi, quite astutely, invokes through this illustration the image of the emperor as an old friend of the Lucchese citizens rather than their earthly *Salvator*. He is seen as the friendly emperor who permits them to celebrate the day of their freedom while he looks extremely pleased to join in their companionship. This particular concept, so vivid in the Sercambi’s consciousness, was not his originally but it was becoming increasingly elaborated at that time in the middle of the XIVth century.

Despite this, Ptolemy of Lucca, Egidio Romano (1243-c.1316) or Johannes Von Jandun (1285/1289-1328), for example, had already written something of this concept of *felicitas politica* or *perfecta politia*, that represents the real hidden meaning of the picture as we see it in Sercambi's *Croniche*.

The presence of the happy trumpets in this solemn public occasion, not to mention the women and girls who are all together looking at the whole scene in one of the most picturesque and beautiful squares of Lucca, represent the specific elements of the “first value” of the ideal city according to Egidio Romano and other political theorists. If we wanted to talk about this concept using a mathematical language we might show it as *Libertas = Felicitas = Perfecta Politia*.¹³⁶

Naturally, it is not in Sercambi's mind to contrast or to criticize the role of the emperor or to consider him as a useless or even dangerous presence in the general historical context. If Sercambi could have chosen between the authority of the emperor or the joyful freedom of his citizens, he would have chosen the latter, because his interest for Lucca, its civic and politic life was more intense and more important than the even figure of the emperor.

It seems that sometimes Sercambi, while he was finding sources for his *Croniche*, mainly from Ptolemy's *Annales* or from the *Gesta Lucanorum* and *Florentinorum*, had copied inaccurately. With regard to the *Croniche*, I have checked all the traces that could give me some elements in order to better understand if he had literally copied from his sources or instead if he had applied a strong and rational control on all his sources.

¹³⁶ M. Seidel, R. Silva, *Potere delle immagini, immagini del potere. Lucca città imperiale: iconografia politica*, Venezia, 2007, p. 38.

In other words, I wanted to understand how Sercambi worked while he was compiling his text. I was aware about the difficulty of this particular task, because I knew perfectly well how insidious it is making comparison between different chronicles.

We have already observed that Sercambi seems to follow rather literally the sources that we might hypothesize that he had with him. For example, he almost transcribed from the following paragraph extracted from the *Gesta Florentinorum* at the year 1268:

«Churradino si partì di Verona et ando a Pavia e di Pavia per terra andonne infino al Finale e quivi entro in mare e venne a Pisa colla forza del Genovese, e i suoi cavalieri vennero per terra da Pavia a Pisa. E di questo tenpo ando ad oste a Lucca ed istettevi X dì, e in Lucca era lo maliscalco del re Carlo colla compagnia di Toscana e uscio fuori, ma non combatteo. Et in questo anno Curradino si parti da Pisa e andonne a Siena, e il maliscalco del re Carlo colla sua gente si partio per andarne ad Arezzo e andando la gente di Churadino gli si fecie incontro et fugli dinanzi al ponte a Valle, e quivi fue isconfitto e preso il maliscalco del re Carlo e menato in Siena. E in questi dì Curradino si parti da Siena colla sua gente e con Ghibellini di Toscana ed andonne a Roma, e là era senatore don Arrigo, fratello del re di Castello; e in Roma stette parecchie dì per fare grande apparecchiamento di gente. E a dì X d'agosto usci di Roma per andare verso il regno di Puglia, perché le terre si rubellavan tutte dal re Carlo. E il re Carlo venia con tutta sua gente incontro a Curradino per combattere con lui. E il dì di san Bartolomeo si rincontro l'oste insieme a Tagliacozzo nelle contrade di Roma, e quivi fue la battaglia grande e la più della gente del re Carlo fu isconfitta e morta [...]».¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 268-269.

And this is the Sercambi's paragraph:

«L'anno di MCCLXVIII lo re Curadino si partio da Verona e andò a Pavia. E poi venne a Pisa, e venne sopra Luccha e arse Massa, Vorno et altre terre di Luccha, e vennero fine in nel prato. E poi andoron a Siena e sconfisse lo maliscalco de' re Carlo al Ponte a Valle, e lo dicto maliscalco fu preso con sua gente. E poi andò a Roma, e in quell'anno d'ogosto lo re Curadino uscio di Roma colla sua gente e andò in Pugla. E quine combacteo col re Carlo lo dì Sambartolomeo in luogo u' si dicie a Taglacosso. E quine fu preso lo re Curadino, e molta della sua gente morta e presa».¹³⁸

The general historical context is identical: shorter in Sercambi's text and less rich in details than in the *Gesta Florentinorum*. Even Ptolemy's *Annales* have an identical historical context and show the same sequence of the main episodes.

The following example shows, instead, how Sercambi was reliant on Ptolemy's *Annales*, and even in this case it seems that the former has literally translated and then copied from the original Latin text into the vernacular language.

As regard to the year 1266 Sercambi writes:

«L'anno di MCCLXVI del mese di novembre lo dì di sa Martino, si levò romore in Firenze tra 'l popolo e soldanieri. E 'l conte Guido Novello co' ghibellini et con V° chavalieri tedeschi volse rompere lo populo e andonno a chasa Tornaquinci, e di quine per tema si partiron di Firenze et andonno a Prato. Li guelfi confinati tornoro in Firenze».¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 39.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

A text that is without any doubt borrowed directly from this paragraph of the *Annales*:

«Anno eodem [MCCLXVI] in die autem beati Martini surrexerunt quidam de Florentia civitate et subito cum strepitu et clamoribus fecerunt populum. Comes autem Guido Novellus, ut in dictis scribitur Gestis [Florentinorum], cum VI^c militibus Theotonicis obviare voluit, sed non potuit. Inde timens cum sua militia recessit Pratum. Eodem tempore Guelfi confinati redierunt in propria». ¹⁴⁰

In this short text we can observe the way in which Ptolemy acknowledge his source, the *Gesta Florentinorum*, while Sercambi never quotes any particular book from which he took the records.

In the following examples I am going to present further cases to show Sercambi's approach to the *Gesta Lucanorum*.

For the year 1276 Sercambi writes:

«L'anno di MCCLXXVI li Luchesi e Firenze sconfisseno li Pisani al Fosso a Rinonicho e de' Pisani ne funno morti et presi molti. E quine l'uomo nudo prese l'armato, peroché li Luchesi si missero notando per Arno e preseno le barche armate pisane che fugivano». ¹⁴¹

For the same year, the anonymous author of the *Gesta Lucanorum* wrote:

«Li Luchesi et Fiorentini isconfiseno li Pisani al fosso Arinonicho, e fune presi et morti assai; et in questa bataglia l'omo nudo prese l'armato et fue guanco da Lucha, che natando per Arno prese le brache delli homini Pisani armati, che fugiano». ¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 155.

¹⁴¹ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 41.

¹⁴² Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 317.

The sentence «l'omo nudo prese l'armato» gives a vivid idea of the struggle in the river Arno between the Lucchese and the Pisan soldiers. Naturally, this strident contrast between naked Lucchese soldiers and armed Pisan soldiers provided, in the chroniclers' eyes, an image of the pure bravery of the Lucchese.

Even this first paragraph extracted from the *Croniche* is identical to the second one that I have extracted from the *Gesta Lucanorum*:

«E in quell'anno [1304], per inpronto de' ghibellini di Toschana, venne lo cardinale di Prato legato di papa in Toschana, per pacificare, et venne in Firenze socto chagione di pacie, tractando co' ghibellini volere prendere Firenze; unde li guelfi di Firenze mandonno per li Luchesi, e' Luchesi v'andonno con VII^c chavalieri et XX^m pedoni. Quando lo cardinale sentio la venuta de' Luchesi partisi di Firenze la nocte. Allora li guelfi di Firenze missero fuocho a casa delli Abati, e arseno MCC chase e diedeno ballia a' Lucchese che rifermassero la terra a loro piacere. E Lucha vi misse podestà et chapitano per due anni, e fecero li priori, e simile fecero di Prato». ¹⁴³

«E questo anno per inpronto de' Chibelini di Toschana vene lo cardinale da Prato, lecatto di papa in Toschana, per pacificare et vene in Firense sotto cagione di pacie tratando in Firense. Unde li Guelfi di Firense et li Luchesi vi andono con VII^c cavalieri et XX^m pedoni, unde lo cardinale sentio la venuta, si partio di notte di Firense. Allora li guelfi di Firense meseno lo fuocho in delle case delli Alberti et arseno MCC case. [...] diché lo comune di Firense diede ballia a' Luchesi, che rifermaseno la terra al loro

¹⁴³ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, pp. 51-52.

piacere. Allora Lucha vi messe podesta et capitano per due anni et feceno li priori in Firense, et similmente feceno in Pratto». ¹⁴⁴

It seems that Sercambi, in writing this first part of the *Croniche*, not only quoted from the historical sources that I mentioned, but very often limited himself to a mere translation (with Ptolemy's text) or to an almost identical copy (such as the two books of the *Gesta*).

Having said that Sercambi had always been a firm and loyal citizen of Lucca and of its political institutions, we might legitimately suppose that in his *Croniche* he had filtered some relevant episodes in order to emphasize, for example, the bravery of the Lucchese soldiers during the countless fights between the other Communes. In other words, when he puts the following title «Come tucte le terre di Toscana vennero adosso a Lucha con l'aiuto dello 'mperadore e tolseno molte chastella a' Luchesi» [1261] just before starting to write the paragraph, we might rightly suppose that he tried to alter the episode, for example, exaggerating the defence of the Lucchese soldiers. ¹⁴⁵ Naturally, for such an early date we do not have any public records that could help in verifying what Sercambi is saying, and we could also imagine that he is deliberately lying or modifying his narration. First of all, I am going to present Sercambi's text:

«L'anno di MCCLXI, essendo chacciati li guelfi di Firenze, ricoveronno a Luccha. Allora Fiorenza, Siena, Arezzo, Volterra, Pisa, Pistoia, Perugia, Sanminiato, Colle, Sangimignano, Prato fenno compagnia e hoste sopra a Luccha, avendo co' loro la

¹⁴⁴ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, pp. 322-323.

¹⁴⁵ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, pp. 36-37.

masnada tedescha. Allora i dicti preseno Sancta Maria a Monte, Montechalvoli, Santa Crocie, Castelfranco, Posso e altre terre di quelle di Luccha. E assai stectero a hoste sopra Ficecchio, con molti edifici da combactere. E Luccha, co' guelfi usciti di Firensa, stectero sempre alla difesa di Fucecchio, e comfortavano quelli di Fucecchio». ¹⁴⁶

I would like to point out two aspects, in this short but expressive narration of what happened after the battle of Montaperti, where the Tuscan Guelfs were dramatically beaten and Florence was forced to readmit the Ghibelline political refugees in its city.

First of all, as Sercambi rightly wrote, all the big and small Ghibelline Communes of central Italy decided all together to move their troops against Lucca, after they knew that many Guelfs, principally from Florence, had been promptly received there. Secondly, it is remarkable that the Lucchese soldiers «stectero sempre alla difesa di Ficecchio, e comfortavano quelli di Ficecchio», as if Sercambi wanted to underline the military power of his city and the bravery and loyalty of its citizens who were fighting against the Ghibelline Communes. Has this innocent record got an historical truthfulness, has it also been told in other chronicles, or has it been invented by the author?

The *Gesta Lucanorum* mention only the siege of Fucecchio, while the *Gesta Florentinorum* briefly says that the Ghibelline troops started fighting against Fucecchio but they did not conquer it. Ptolemy, within a correct description of the political context, adds that «solum castrum de Ficeclo munitum virili gente se defendit», and these few words seem to be closer to what Sercambi was to write some decades later. ¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁷ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 144.

But the editor of the *Annales*, Bernhard Schmeidler, points out that only in one manuscript is there this addition after the word *Ficeclo*: «Ficeclo resistit virtute Lotti de Chiatri et Bellomi Viviani de Lammare et aliorum».¹⁴⁸ To better understand this apparently anodyne annotation, I will say that those two brave soldiers who were defending in such way the castle of Fucecchio came from the Lucchese countryside, from the dwellings called Chiatri and Lammari; so, without any doubt, they were Lucchese soldiers. And, as the same Ptolemy says, they were not the only soldiers, because he adds «et aliorum».

So, it could be reasonably possible that Sercambi did not invent the Lucchese soldiers' bravery against the Ghibelline during the siege of the castle of Fucecchio, but more likely he had taken this record from Ptolemy's *Annales* only because it fitted well in his narration in order to better clarify the power of the Lucchese troops.

Having quoted from the three chronicles that I have studied most, I would like now to present a short paragraph, written by Giovanni Villani (c.1280-1348), the most famous Florentine chronicler, about this famous siege of the castle of Fucecchio. Just like Ptolemy and Sercambi, also the Florentine Villani knew the *Gesta Florentinorum* but probably not the so called *Gesta Lucanorum*. We could read now the text:

«Negli anni di Cristo MCCLXI il conte Guido Novello vicario per lo re Manfredi in Firenze, co la taglia di parte ghibellina di Toscana, feciono oste sopra il contado di Lucca del mese di settembre, e furono III^m cavalieri tra Toscani e Tedeschi, e popolo grandissimo. E ebbono Castello Franco, e Santa Croce, e puosono assedio a Santa Maria a Monte, e a quello stettono per tre mesi; e poi per difalta di vittuaglia s'arendero a

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

patti, salvi avere e persone. E poi ebbono Montecalvi, e 'l Pozzo; e poi tornarono all'assedio di Fucecchio, che v'erano dentro il fiore di tutti gli usciti guelfi di Toscana, e a quello stettono all'assedio, gittandovi più difici, e con molti ingegni e assalti, per XXX dì. *A la fine per la buona gente che dentro v'era, e bene guernito, ma maggiormente per grande acquazzone (che 'l terreno d'intorno, ch'è forte, per la piovà male si può osteggiare), convenne si partisse l'oste, e nol poterono avere; e sì vi fu intorno all'assedio le masnade de' Tedeschi ch'erano a la taglia de' Ghibellini di Toscana, ch'erano M cavalieri*.¹⁴⁹

The political context looks identical to that described in the other chronicles, apart from the record that I have put in Italic character: «*A la fine per la buona gente che dentro v'era, e bene guernito, ma maggiormente per grande acquazzone (che 'l terreno d'intorno, ch'è forte, per la piovà male si può osteggiare), convenne si partisse l'oste, e nol poterono avere*». So, the Florentine Guelf Giovanni Villani believed and wrote that the siege of the castle of Fucecchio between Guelfs and Ghibellines was not successful, even if the Guelfs were superior militarily, only because of the heavy rain that prevented the Ghibelline victory. We do not, of course, if Villani really narrated what happened that day in Fucecchio, but his addition is extremely curious, as if to claim that the heroic Guelf resistance and the final victory in Fucecchio was due only to favourable meteorological conditions.

So, according to the Sercambi's narration, I would not say that he stretched his imagination or modified the general context in his *Croniche* in order to emphasize the bravery of the Lucchese soldiers against the Ghibelline troops. He found this record

¹⁴⁹ Villani, *Cronica*, II, pp. 133-134.

already in the Ptolemy's *Annales* but unfortunately we cannot say anything more precise about whether he knew Villani's *Croniche*.

Without any doubt Sercambi knew another historical text, probably written by an anonymous Florentine Ghibelline in the first fifteen years of the fourteenth century, the so called *Fioretto di croniche degli imperatori*, published for the first time in Lucca in 1858 by Leone del Prete.¹⁵⁰ About this famous even if little known text, we can say little except that it is an historical text about the emperors' lives from Augustus to Henry VII of Luxemburg, chronologically incorrect but written in good Italian vernacular. Even if this text could not be considered as representative of a militant ideal of the Empire during the Middle Ages, it is important to say that the anonymous author borrowed from Brunetto Latini' masterpiece, *The Treasure*. The writer of the *Fioretto* probably had at hand a certain number of contemporary chronicles, almost all from Tuscany, while he was compiling his text, even if it is not always easy to understand from which text he copied, because most of them are irremediably lost.

Did Sercambi know this text? Perhaps from a copy in some Lucchese library, maybe even in the library of Paolo Guinigi, as the *Fioretto* is not present in the list of books that were confiscated after Sercambi's death by the Lucchese government.

I am now going to explain why Sercambi would have known the text called *Fioretto di croniche degli imperatori* and that he used it while he was writing his *Croniche*, especially when he talked about the episodes that happened to Charles, king of France,

¹⁵⁰ L. Del Prete (ed.), *Fioretto di croniche degli imperatori: testo di lingua del buon secolo ora per la prima volta pubblicato*, Lucca, 1858.

in the last decades of the thirteenth century. In support of this is an assessment by the editor of the *Croniche*, Salvatore Bongi, who underlined, for the first time, how some paragraphs of the two texts were similar.¹⁵¹

For example, Sercambi writes: «E quell'anno s'acordoro li dicti re insieme di volere avere C chavalieri per parte in una bactaglia a Bordella in Guascogna, e quelli che che 'l campo vincesse avesse la Cicilia di piano et di cheto».¹⁵² The anonymous chronicler of the *Fioretto* says: «Alla fine venne a tanto che ciascheduno promise d'andare a Bordella in Guascogna; e ciascuno potesse menare C cavalieri, e fussono in uno baraggio; e quale vincesse avesse l'isola di piano e di cheto».¹⁵³ I would like to emphasize the idiomatic expression «di piano et di cheto», used firstly by the unknown writer of the *Fioretto* and then adopted by Sercambi.

The above-mentioned short paragraphs are very similar, even if Sercambi's words seem to be much more fluent and the action narrated is much quicker. A few phrases later we can see again how, narrating this episode, both the texts are identical: in fact, while the *Fioretto* has «Infra questo tempo la Chiesa di Roma scomunicò lo re Piero di Ragona e simigliantemente lo privò dello Regno, e diede per sentenza che fosse scomunicato quale persona lo chiamasse o appellasse re [...] e diè allo re Carlo figliuolo dello re di Francia lo reame di Ragona, s'ello l'acquistava», Sercambi writes: «E quell'anno lo papa scomunicò lo re di Ragona e privolo de' reame».¹⁵⁴ E comandò che non

¹⁵¹ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 21.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 42.

¹⁵³ Del Prete (ed.), *Fioretto di croniche degli imperadori*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

fusse più chiamato re; e diede lo reame a messer Charlo figliuolo de' re di Francia se lui lo potesse guardare». ¹⁵⁵

By confronting the two above mentioned short paragraphs we notice that Sercambi very probably knew the *Fioretto di croniche degli imperatori*, in fact, it was a sort of historical best seller of his times. Finally, we might also add and suggest that the Lucchese merchant and politician while he was searching records and historical sources for this first part of his *Croniche*, had to have this book, and either the *Gesta Lucanorum and Florentinorum* and the *Annales*.

In an interesting essay published in 1994 in the «Bollettino Storico Pisano», Giuseppe Benedetto points his attention to three chapters of Sercambi's *Croniche*.¹⁵⁶ He analyzes the astonishing episode that happened in Lucca very probably the first of January 1301. In those troublesome days, while the different factions into which the city-state was divided were fighting in Lucca, the Ghibellines killed the Lucchese Guelf lawyer Obizo Obizi and because of this episode they were obliged to escape and try to find asylum in the Ghibelline city of Pisa. The title of the paragraph in which Sercambi speaks of this episode is the following: «Come i Pisani cerconno di mettere differenza in Lucca e venne loro facto». ¹⁵⁷

Sercambi, in referring to this so relevant an episode, says that some Pisan citizens tried to incite the Ghibellines who were in Lucca into killing the leader of the Guelf party, the lawyer Obizzo Obizzi. We may well be suspicious of Sercambi's rendition of

¹⁵⁵ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. 43.

¹⁵⁶ Benedetto, *Sulla faziosità del cronista Giovanni Sercambi*.

¹⁵⁷ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, pp. 49-50.

the episode: we could hypothesize that he wrote this because of his revulsion against Pisans. A particular question could have this tenor: is Sercambi telling the truth about this episode or is he trying to condemn Pisa because he did not like it even if he did not have any proof in making such an accusation? Answering this question we may consider that Sercambi started writing his *Croniche* just after the end of Pisan rule over Lucca in 1369, so at a time when Sercambi might have been an impressionable young man in his early twenties. Having in mind this particular political oppression, Sercambi could have been thinking of that dark period for his beloved city-state when he wrote critically about Pisa.

In order to investigate if Sercambi wrote faithfully or not about the presence of the Pisan citizens in that year in Lucca, Benedetto has found an important document in the Archivio Comunale of Volterra in which all the Ghibelline people banished from Lucca shortly after the violent death of Obizo were mentioned. In this document, there are also the names of the two Ghibelline Pisan citizens who were working in Lucca as merchants; this means that Sercambi very likely wrote truthfully, at least in this episode. So, after around seventy years, it is interesting that Sercambi remembered this episode in such a detailed way, annotating the importance of the presence of Pisans in Lucca during those years. Ptolemy of Lucca, who was Prior of Santa Maria Novella in Florence during that period was, on the contrary, extremely concise and he did not mention their presence in Lucca: «Eodem anno in kalendis Ianuarii occasione mortis domini Opiçonis iudicis de Opiçonibus de Luca facta est concitatio et turbatio in civitate Luce; unde multa mala sunt exorta ibidem, et scismata non modica, et confinati sunt

Anterminelli cum eorum sequacibus».¹⁵⁸ The *Gesta Lucanorum*, differs from Ptolemy and is rather more similar to the text of Sercambi, says: «Lo dì di chalende giennaio fu morto messer Opiso Iudici delli Opisi di Lucha a posta de' Pisani da Baciomeo Ciaparoni et da Bonucio Interminelli».¹⁵⁹

To sum up, Sercambi and the anonymous chronicler of the *Gesta Lucanorum* have used more or less the same words in order to describe a similar episode, even if the former writes in a much more detailed way; besides, both mention the guilty behaviour of the Ghibelline Pisans who were infiltrated in Lucca; Ptolemy, on the other hand, did not mention their presence and did not even allude to Pisa as a fierce enemy of Lucca.

I have noted that there was a particular reason why Sercambi ended his first part of the *Croniche* in 1400. He was principally responsible for endorsing Paolo Guinigi in his bid to become Lord of Lucca, swiftly ending a long period of republican life. And we also know that Sercambi decided to start writing his historical masterpiece in order to comment on the word “freedom”, that is the freedom for his Lucca after the Pisan occupation started in 1342 and finished in 1369.

We have another piece of evidence that firmly supports what I have just now stated: the manner in which Sercambi ended his first book. We well know that “freedom” was the word that he repeated many times in the first paragraphs of his first book and we know why he used that word with such intensity. We are going to see how he finished that own book: «E nota che questo libro è compiuto di scrivere per me

¹⁵⁸ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, p. 236.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

Iohanni Sercambi antedicto, corrente li anni della natività del nostro signore messer Yezù Christo in Mille quattro cento, a dì VI d'aprile, facendosi da noi festa della libertà di Lucha, che Idio per sua pietà e misericordia mantenga per infinita secula benedetta».¹⁶⁰ It is important to point out how symbolic the date of 6th of April was according the same chronicler: that day the city-State of Lucca celebrated its renewed freedom, remembering the Pisan occupation ended the 6th of April 1369. With this emblematic ending, Sercambi alludes again to that so relevant principle for him, freedom for Lucca from anyone, which has been the real reason that inspired him to start writing about Lucca. So, we might also add that it seems that Sercambi wants to give this first book of *Croniche* an internal circular structure, especially if we refer to the beginning and to the end of it.

¹⁶⁰ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, II, p. 433.

VIII. EDITORIAL VICISSITUDES OF THE TWO WORKS

Having discussed briefly these Lucchese chronicles, I would like to point out that except for Sercambi and Ptolemy's works, all the above-mentioned chronicles come to us through copies rather than originals. For this reason, it is difficult to decide about the reliability of their text, given their great distance from the original, but it could be a worse risk to discount them entirely and not say anything about the possible information made available to us through these major chronicles.

As I have already mentioned, both these works had to wait a long time before the corresponding manuscripts were published. In this section I am going to examine this delay because I am aware that this aspect is strictly correlated with the Lucchese people's feeling towards these authors. Naturally, there was a particular reason because, for instance, the *Annales* were published in Lyons in 1619 while the *Croniche* was even later, between 1892-1893.¹⁶¹ And we can easily understand that the principal reason of this impediment was due to the Lucchese desire not to compromise the political balance with the other city-states in publishing historical works, even if the works had been written several centuries before. For example, scholars had to wait almost three centuries for the first edition of Ptolemy's *Annales*.¹⁶² This story started with the forerunner of the Etruscan studies, the Scotsman Thomas Dempster (1570–1635), who

¹⁶¹ *Ptolemaei Lucensis, episcopi torcellensis, annales, ab anno salutis MLX ad MCCCIII nunc primo in lucem editi*, Lugduni, Roussin, MDCXIX.

¹⁶² For the interesting question correlated with the history of the first edition of this book, see C. Minutoli (ed.), *Documenti di storia italiana pubblicati a cura della R. Deputazione sugli studi di storia patria*, Rome 1878, vol. VI, pp. 5-34, especially pp. 25-34.

in April 1618 wrote to the Lucchese governors asking questions about some relevant episodes of the Lucchese history.¹⁶³ He was writing a book on the history of Italy for which he required details about the history of Lucca. The Republic tried immediately to help him by providing him with some notes about what he was looking for, and we might suppose that it was evidently on this occasion that Ptolemy's *Annales* attracted their attention.¹⁶⁴ Using the same censoring procedure that the Lucchese Republic was

¹⁶³ For further information about this scholar, see especially M. Cristofani, 'Sugli inizi dell'«Etruscheria»: la pubblicazione del *De Etruria regali* di Thomas Dempster', *Mélanges de L'École Française de Rome: Antiquité*, 90 (1978), pp. 577-625. See also F. Bregoli, 'Jewish Scholarship, Science, and the Republic of Letters: Joseph Attias in Eighteenth-Century Livorno', *Aleph*, 7 (2007) pp. 120-122.

«Tenore della scrittura del suddetto Tomaso Dempster scozzese:

- 1) De multiplici urbis post Romani Imperii declinationem, conditionem et regiminii mutatione.
- 2) De claris viris.
- 3) De familiis antiquorum.
- 4) De familiis hodiernis que honores supremos sortiuntur.
- 5) Territorii ac villanum nomenclatura.
- 6) Leges Politice.

Hec sibi transmitti vult at tante et tam gloriose Reipublice splendorem numquam inter monitum scriptis suis insererem qui comitatem Lucentium scribendi se dubitate et observantia compensare pro virili audibit Thomas Dempsterii I.C., scotus». Asl, *Consiglio Generale*, 495, p. 539.

¹⁶⁴ «[3rd April 1618?] Eccellentissimi Signori, Eccellentissimo Consiglio. È stato scritto così diversamente e con mal termine da alcuni storici delle cose di Lucca che con ragione l'Eccellentissimo Consiglio ha di avere gran gusto, che il dottor Tomaso Dempster scozzese, huomo così celebre come ciascuno sa, habbia intrapreso la fatica di scrivere le grandezze d'Italia, perché celebrando al vero lo splendore e conditione di questa città e republica, come si afferisce per la sua storia, resterà per l'autorità di tant'huomo scoperta la malvagità di quelli scrittori italiani, i quali guidati dalle proprie passioni et interessi hanno inventato e scritto di lei quello che li è parso et in conseguenza perderanno quella credenza e fede che appresso di molti haveranno acquistato e che col tempo senza dubio diverrebbe maggiore et indubitato. Però crediamo noi molto a proposito che l'Eccellentissimo Consiglio applichi l'animo a far somministrare a questo soggetto i particolari domandati da lui, con questa limitazione: che si lasci a parte il contenuto nel 3° e 4° capitolo perché non havendo mai l'Eccellentissimo Consiglio medesimo per consideratione di gran peso voluto far certa et assoluta dichiarazione delle famiglie da ammettersi al governo della

also to practice almost two centuries later while it was fiercely impeding the edition of Sercambi's *Croniche*, it elected six men among its officers for the task of discussing the *Annales*, as well as the possibility of publishing it. After having accurately examined it, this office stated that the manuscript could be published without any kind of preoccupation, but it also ordered that the text be printed not in Italy but in a foreign country. Finally, they chose the city of Lyon in France as the place of publication. During the first days of August 1619, 300 copies of the book arrived in Lucca and they were distributed to each member of the Senate.¹⁶⁵

This first edition was based on the only manuscript then known, and this was kept in the Secret Archive called the Tarpea, now in the Archivio di Stato of Lucca. But as some Lucchese history scholars pointed out, this edition of Ptolemy's *Annales* was incomplete because many pages in the manuscript were missing.¹⁶⁶ Besides this factor, there were such numerous lacunae in it that in many cases the whole sense of many phrases was irredeemably lost or severely damaged. For all these reasons, in 1870s the competent *Deputazione di Storia Patria* decided to provide a better edition of the text and it commissioned Carlo Minutoli to look at any manuscripts that he could find in the Archives and Libraries of Italy. Unfortunately, none of the consulted institutions had copy of the manuscripts; this situation forced Minutoli to prepare an edition based on the only Lucchese texts. He found in the local Biblioteca Governativa two copies of the manuscript, both written during the XIVth century and both mutilated at the same

Repubblica, non sapremmo noi vedere come si potesse hora formarne per questo effetto senza inciampare nelle medesime difficoltà. Che è quanto, etc., et tali facciamo humilissima reverenza. Di Cancelleria nostra. Devotissimi Servitori. Li tre dottori deputati». Ibidem, p. 538.

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem, 364, p. 734 (9 August 1619).

¹⁶⁶ Asl, *Manoscritti*, 55.

point.¹⁶⁷ Besides this, some pages were quite irretrievably damaged by humidity or by negligent handling. In any case, Minutoli decided to prepare his edition on the basis of the previous Lyon edition and to integrate the text with a certain number of improvements. This new edition appeared out in 1876 and it certainly resulted in a much better version than the previous ones, even if it could not claim to be a true critical edition of the text. It was the German scholar Bernhard Schmeidler who accomplished this task on behalf of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* in 1955; this impeccable edition of the Ptolemy's *Annales* is the latest one available.¹⁶⁸

Even if Schmeidler did not find any other manuscripts of the text, he decided correctly to prepare a new edition of the *Annales* by comparing and collating the surviving three copies that Minutoli had already found in the Lucchese Biblioteca Governativa: for this reason, we have to consider his work as the best edition ever published of the *Annales*. Schmeidler, after editing Ptolemy's *Annales*, also published the *Gesta Florentinorum* and the *Gesta Lucanorum*, which, as Schmeidler rightly observed, Ptolemy had consulted when writing his work.¹⁶⁹

Unfortunately, the original version of both these chronicles are lost but we have a version transcribed from the copies. The Biblioteca Governativa still keeps two different copies of a short vernacular chronicle probably compiled during the early thirteenth century: one copy has been preserved in its entirety, while the other is incomplete.¹⁷⁰ Both these precious and anonymous texts were reunited and put together by the famous

¹⁶⁷ Bgl, *Manoscritti*, 1638 and 2640.

¹⁶⁸ Schmeidler, *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*.

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem, pp. 243-277 and pp. 278-323.

¹⁷⁰ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. XX, note 1.

Lucchese scholar Francesco Maria Fiorentini, who lived during the seventeenth century. The first text begins with some very short episodes involved with the works at the cathedral of Lucca dedicated to St Martin and it ends with the year 1304. The second one, being incomplete begins with the year 1164 and finishes with the year 1260. Unfortunately, both these original chronicles were burnt during a fire that partially destroyed the library on the night of the 22nd January 1822, but it is providential that the Lucchese scholar Bernardino Baroni (1695-1781) had transcribed the texts, thus saving at least the substance of them. In fact, Baroni worked for many years of his life searching for all the historical texts he could find in order to prepare a collection of manuscripts that he called *Rerum lucensium scriptores*, now in the Biblioteca Governativa.¹⁷¹

Thus we note that it is possible that both Ptolemy and Sercambi may have read another Lucchese vernacular chronicle, which narrated episodes that happened in Pisa and Lucca until 1347.¹⁷² Of this important chronicle, a Lucchese scholar, father Giovan Domenico Mansi or, if we want to be more precise, the library of the convent of Santa Maria Corteorlandini, in which he lived, owned a codex compiled during the XIVth century, that is unfortunately now lost. We can study this text thanks to a fairly accurate transcription made during the XVIth century; besides, this manuscript was also transcribed and studied by Baroni in his *Rerum lucensium scriptores*, and this text is now owned by the Biblioteca Governativa.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Bgl, *Manoscritti*, 927.

¹⁷² For this codex, see Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. XXI, note 1.

¹⁷³ Bgl, *Manoscritti*, 873.

As for Sercambi's *Croniche* we can find another and even more serious political preoccupation. As we have already seen Sercambi was one of the politicians who strongly endorsed the rise to absolute power of Paolo Guinigi. After the collapse of the personal dictatorship of Guinigi in 1430, the governments that followed him tried to diminish the prestige of both his lordship and Sercambi's work. With the end of Guinigi's power, the two precious manuscripts of the *Croniche* parted ways even though they both stayed in Lucca: the first part, ended the 6th April 1400, in which Sercambi outlined the history of his city-state between 1164-1400 was kept in the Palazzo Pubblico, while he continued writing the second part until July 1423.¹⁷⁴

Sercambi's profession has not been mentioned, I believe, in connection with his literary works; indeed, Salvatori Bongi, the *Croniche's* editor, implied that Sercambi's commercial interests and writing activities were in no way related; this so far as I can tell, has been the tacit assumption of other scholars. Presumably this assumption stems from the fact that our only knowledge of the *libri* in Sercambi's shop derives from a record printed by Bongi, of his having sold *libri* and various writing materials to the city of Lucca. Certain further factors, however, have led me to believe that Sercambi's *spezeria* probably handled and perhaps even produced various types of manuscripts. If it did, we may then conclude that the stationer probably influenced the compiler in at least two ways: firstly, by allowing him ready access to a variety of writings; and secondly, by revealing to him literary fashions and demands. Looking at evidence from

¹⁷⁴ Asl, *Manoscritti*, 107 and *Archivio Guinigi*, 266. For their history before publication, see M. Paoli, 'I codici', *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo*, respectively, pp. 206-211 and 214-216. See also Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, pp. XXVIII-XLIII and, with new documents published, F. Ragone, 'Scelte editoriali e fortuna di un'edizione. Salvatore Bongi e le Croniche di Giovanni Sercambi', *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano*, 95 (1989), pp. 217-245.

other cities leads us to think this was likely. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Florentine merchants of the *Arte degli speziali* produced large quantities *di carte e di libri*, and these *libri* included books of medicine, law, grammar, and romances, old and new. Scholars know, for instance, the Laurenziano-Ashburnhamiano manuscript of Boccaccio's *Teseida* bears the words, «questo libro è scritto per me Gherardo di Nanni sanguingno spetiale et cittadino pisano finito adi 15 dicembre 1466». ¹⁷⁵ The evidence suggests that a similar situation may have occurred in Lucca. Finally, the autographed manuscript of Sercambi's *Croniche* is written in a clear, possibly professional hand. I am led to assume that Sercambi's shop probably handled and may have produced manuscripts such as those that he utilized in the course of his literary career. If this conclusion is acceptable, then Sercambi's use of the writings of others takes on a fresh significance and deserves to be briefly reviewed. He republished under his own name Jacopo della Lana's *Commentario on the Paradiso* and perhaps even a commentary on the rest of the *Commedia* as well. ¹⁷⁶ It seems reasonable therefore, to suppose that the inherited profession rather than any real literary taste or skill, was the fundamental cause of Sercambi's all-but-forgotten activity as a patchwork compiler.

We do not really know when this first part of the *Croniche* entered into the personal library of Paolo Guinigi before landing up in the Palazzo Pubblico after 1430. Nevertheless, there is an extremely well detailed inventory of all the properties of Paolo Guinigi, which was made just after the end of his Lordship. In the inventory of his

¹⁷⁵ Robert A. Pratt, 'Giovanni Sercambi, Speziale', *Italica*, 25.1 (1948), p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ This codex is situated in the Florentine Biblioteca Laurenziana as Mediceo Palatino 74. See now G. Sinicropi, 'Di un commento al Paradiso erroneamente attribuito al Sercambi', *Italica*, 42.1 (1965), pp. 132-134.

personal library is written: «Liber Chronicarum Lucane civitatis, factus per Ioannem Sercambi, in membranis, cum tabulellis corio rubeo foderatis et clausura et clavis ottonis».¹⁷⁷ This relevant annotation referred without doubt to the first part of Sercambi's *Croniche*. In order to avoid the dissolution of all the massive goods accumulated by Paolo Guinigi during his thirty-year period of power, the Government then saved the codex and decided to put it in a safe place in the Archivio Comunale of Lucca.

We also know that during 1530 this codex was lent out to the Lucchese scholar Gerardo Sergiusti, who kept the manuscript in his house for a few months; after this, another scholar, the already mentioned Bernardino Baroni, copied it entirely and another copy reached the personal library of the Lucchese nobleman Tomaso Gaetano Sergiusti.¹⁷⁸ So, in this way, Sercambi's precious but controversial text was circulated amongst a few people who could appreciate and understand its notable importance.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Bongi, *Di Paolo Guinigi e delle sue ricchezze*, p. 79. Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. XXIX

¹⁷⁸ Bgl, *Manoscritti*, 1572.

¹⁷⁹ «Quest'istoria, essendo stata ripassata da uno del nostro numero, è stata ritrovata così malamente scritta e malamente ordinata, così prolissa e confusa, ripiena di riflessioni e digressioni inutili e sciocche e che non hanno che fare co' fatti della medesima, che ben speriamo che quando il Muratori la vedesse così diffusa e difforme e niente proporzionata nella mole alla pretesa seconda parte, fosse per abbandonarne l'impresa, concentrandosi dell'Istoria del Tegrini». Asl, *Offizio sulle Differenze dei Confini*, 112, cc. 290r-290v.

«Che dal padre Mansi suddetto dovesse risponderci essersi ritrovata la prima parte dell'Istoria del Sercambi, ma questa così voluminosa e così mal composta che crederebbe per sua opinione che maggiore fosse il discapito che la gloria che ne potesse risultare alla sua patria e che quando egli la vedesse troverebbe forse la medesima poco confacente al resto dell'opera da essi intrapresa». Ibidem, c. 291r.

«Ma perché poco ci lusinghiamo che il Muratori sia per quietarsi a queste rimostranze, stimiamo necessario che l'Eccellentissimo Consiglio già d'ora dia la cura a quel numero di cittadini che stimerà proprio, di far copiare la prima parte dell'Istorie di Giovanni Sercambi da qualche letterato ed erudito

The second part of the *Croniche* was sequestered by the government in 1426 from Sercambi's nephew, Giannino of Bartolomeo, who was squandering away the inheritance of his uncle. After 1522 the second part of the *Croniche* went to enrich the already well-stocked library of the Guinigi family.¹⁸⁰ Both manuscripts are now in the Archivio di Stato of Lucca and they are unanimously and undoubtedly considered the handwritten originals of Sercambi's work.

His *Croniche*, on which he worked until his last days, remained absolutely unknown to all except the Lucchese scholars. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750), the most distinguished Italian scholar of his time, while researching unpublished manuscripts in the Italian libraries to print them, found a partial and inaccurate copy of the second part of the *Croniche* in the Milanese Biblioteca Ambrosiana.¹⁸¹ Muratori began his career at this important Catholic

nostro paesano, con levare quelle riflessioni ed espressioni che parranno pregiudiziali e che non possono alterare la verità dell'istoria e così ancora riformare la seconda parte, con tralasciare quelle cose che o non sono confacenti o che non meritano luogo, per esser esempi e racconti del tutto disparati e vili. Tutta detta trascrizione reformata nella maniera suddetta [...] si potrà [...] dar facoltà [...] di concedere al signore Muratori detta prima e seconda parte reformate, quando da esso ne venga fatta nuova istanza, acciò abbiano luogo nella raccolta che si fa in Milano, sicuri che così non si stamperà cosa che non sia stata avanti riveduta ed approvata da noi». Ibidem, cc. 291v-292r.

Muratori, in writing to the Lucchese scholar Giovan Domenico Mansi the 26th September 1727, adnoted: «Solamente Lucca non vuol somministrare neppure un foglio. Ho fatto chiedere una parte della *Cronaca* di Ser Cambi, avendo io l'altra. Non l'ho potuta ottenere. Si farà ben credere alla gente che cotesta sì antica e riguardevole città sia la più povera di tutte, e mancherà a lei quel lustro che tante altre minori avranno nella mia raccolta, perché vi si leggeranno le loro storie vecchie». F. Bonaini (ed.), *Lettere inedite di Lodovico Antonio Muratori scritte a Toscani dal 1695 al 1749*, Firenze 1854, p. 405.

¹⁸⁰ Bongi, *Di Paolo Guinigi e delle sue ricchezze*.

¹⁸¹ «Alle scritture stampate per promuovere le ragioni dell'imperio, e particolarmente della successione di Firenze [...] si aggiunge in oggi la grand'opera che ha intrapreso il celebre antiquario Lodovico Antonio Muratori, che sotto pretesto di illustrare i secoli oscuri, viene a mettere alla luce le ragioni più antiche e

Library and then held the position of court librarian at Modena for fifty years. It was mainly because of this long relationship between Muratori and the court of Modena that the Lucchese Republic always denied him permission to publish Sercambi's *Croniche*. Modena and Lucca were in fact neighbouring city-states and they had quarrelled many times especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Nevertheless, the Italian scholar transcribed the Milanese copy and decided to publish it in 1728 in the eighteenth tome of the collection denominated *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, even though he would have liked to have published the entire *Croniche*.¹⁸² It was for this reason that he started writing to the members of the Lucchese Republic for the legal authorization. The Republic always denied him the publishing licence because the Lucchese government thought that if Muratori published the *Croniche* in its entirety it could provoke some kind of discord with neighbouring more powerful states. As Salvatore Bongi who published the *Croniche* in the years 1892-1893, rightly noted, the republic feared displeasing the Estensi of Modena and the lords

già passate in dimenticanza dell'imperio sopra l'Italia». Asl, *Offizio sulle Differenze dei Confini*, 112, cc. 289r-289v.

«Non parendo che una persona privata come il Muratori avesse avuto cuore da intraprendere un'opera così grandiosa ed avesse avuto assai di credito per unire per detto effetto un'Accademia se non avesse avuto impulso superiore e fosse stato incalorito dalla speranza di maggior premio di quello possa sperarsi dall'utile delle dediche de' tomi e dallo spaccio dell'opera». Ibidem, cc. 289v-290r.

¹⁸² L.A. Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. XVIII, Milan, 1728, coll. 793-898; see now M.L. Moriconi, 'Le edizioni delle opere', *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo*, p. 258 and M. Paoli, *L'appannato specchio. L'autore e l'editoria italiana nel Settecento*, Lucca, 2004, p. 14.

Muratori wrote in his introduction: «Scripsit autem hanc historiam homo cetera rudis stilo tam humili et confuso, ut nullam umquam operam dedisse grammaticae videatu, quum syntaxis interdum in eius dictione et sensibus desideretur. Usus etiam fuit Lucensis urbis dialecto, cuius singulares loquendi formulas ego plerasque retinui». Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, col. 795.

of Massa who were the powerful Tuscan princes who replaced the Medici family during the first decades of the XIXth century.¹⁸³ In addition, the Lucchese Republic thought that Muratori was a scholar paid by the Austrian imperial court, and this, naturally could not be seen as positive by Lucca which was a free republic at that time. In fact, as the men of the Republic understand, in the first part of the *Croniche* «si sono notate espressioni pregiudiziali, e che verrebbero a comprovare la subordinazione continuata della città nostra all'Imperio», that they could see again in the Austrian court.¹⁸⁴

Another example of this negative opinion appears in 1724. In that year, the Lucchese ambassador in Vienna wrote to the officers of his Republic: «Volesse il cielo che non fossero mai capitate nelle mani del conte di Vumbrant né la vita della contessa Matilde scritta dal signor Fiorentini, né altri libri che parlano delle nostre cose, mentre da essi qui non si cercasse non ciò che può contribuire al loro intento del preteso continuato esercizio della giurisdizione imperiale, nel che il conte di Vumbrant fa ora un

¹⁸³ «[...] Dare alla stampa i privilegi della nostra Repubblica ed esserne già imminente la pubblicazione. E come che è certo che questa diligenza e attenzione di quei ministri non è diretta a favorir noi e l'interesse e decoro della nostra Repubblica, ma bensì a dare risalto e mettere in maggiore ostentazione e comparsa la pretesa nostra subordinazione all'imperio». Asl, *Offizio sulle Differenze dei Confini*, 109, cc. 18v-19r.

«È stata ne' tempi addietro massima sempre lodevole della nostra Repubblica di impedire per i mezzi più nascosti e sicuri la pubblicazione de' fatti ed istorie della nostra città, che senza una tale cautela sarebbensi forse a quest'ora pubblicati, giacché toltone le azioni e gloriose imprese di Castruccio, poco si trova da rendere di lustro alla nostra Repubblica e per contro molto forse di discapito al libero governo della medesima. Ma se è riuscito per l'addietro di sopprimere i libri che trattano dell'istorie di Lucca con divertirne la stampa, è moralmente impossibile nello stato presente d'Italia, in cui essendo prepotente la maestà dell'imperatore per l'ampiezza delli Stati che vi possiede, tutti cercano di adulare il genio della corte di Vienna, intenta a dilatare le ragioni dell'imperio e dell'imperatore sopra il resto delli Stati non anche ad esso soggetti». Ibidem, 112, cc. 287v-288r.

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, cc. 290v-291r.

particolare studio. In questo riflesso, avendomi egli più volte ricercato ch'io gli faccia venir copia delle storie manoscritte del Tucci e del Beverini, io mi son sempre tenuto lontano dall'impegnarmi a ciò, trovandoli ora una scusa ed ora un'altra». ¹⁸⁵

Trapped in this political maelstrom, Muratori was never able to publish the *Croniche*, but even without this situation another impediment blocked his cultural project: during those years, the Lucchese Republic could not in any way appreciate the figure of Giovanni Sercambi because he was considered the man more than any other who helped Guinigi to gain his despotic and tyrannical power. ¹⁸⁶ So, it would never have permitted publication because of embarrassment and abhorrence of the political views of the author.

A century later, when the times fortunately changed and the Lucchese Republic ceased to be afraid of a chronicle written during the XIVth century, the Archivio Storico Italiano decided to publish Sercambi's work. At this point, it gave this laborious task to Girolamo Tommasi, who was the director of the local Archivio di Stato at that time. Unfortunately, he died in 1846, when the work was not finished yet. Exactly twenty years later the Istituto Storico Italiano commissioned Salvatori Bongi, director of the Archive, to transcribe the *Croniche*, which were finally published in three books in the years 1892-1893.

¹⁸⁵ Sercambi, *Le croniche*, I, p. XXXVIII. See the still unpublished public records found in Asl, *Offizio sulle Differenze dei Confini*, 109, cc. 18v-21r (11th January 1724) and *Ibidem*, 112, cc. 115r-117r (4th June 1727), cc. 275v-277v (12th – 16th September 1727), cc. 287v-292v (4th October 1727) and c. 357r (9th December 1727).

¹⁸⁶ «Del qual fatto [Guinigi's Lordship] ne fu il principale fautore il detto Sercambi, nel tempo giusto che godeva la dignità di Gonfaloniere. Cosa che essendo oramai notoria e che per la Dio grazia presto finì, non avendo il Guinigi governato che lo spazio di anni 30, non troviamo che sia di alcun pregiudizio che si stampi, quando è stato stampato detto successo sopra altre istorie di quei tempi». *Ibidem*, 112, c. 290v.

IX. EPILOGUE

My intention has been to examine the difference the different ways in which two Lucchese chroniclers, Ptolemy of Lucca and Giovanni Sercambi, both born and raised in the city--though living at different times--wrote their history. This study has given me the opportunity to discover amongst other things, the richness and variety of their cultured world, and how they eventually reached high positions in their individual careers.

While I was researching their historical works by looking at the sources that they utilized, I included public records from the Lucchese Archives as well. Thus, my intention was to discover if the authors could have been commissioned by a public authority to write their chronicles, such as the Dominican Order for Ptolemy or the Lucchese government for Sercambi. None of the research I have carried out gave me any answer to this question; however, I firmly believe it very likely that both authors started writing their works autonomously, prompted to do this by the lack of historical accounts that referred to the history of their city.

I have shown that before Ptolemy's *Annales* were written, there were other no less important, even though shorter, texts on the history of Lucca, but Ptolemy's work is the first and best organized chronicle of this genre for Lucca. This proves that Lucca during the fourteenth century was a town where some of its citizens were actively thinking, organizing and writing historical texts.

As with other Tuscan and Italian city-states of that time, the little and fiercely independent city-state of Lucca had its cultural centers in which refined men developed their works. The personal history of Ptolemy and Sercambi's lives also exemplifies how these authors, far from living in a ivory tower, were deeply immersed in the real world. Especially the life of the latter shows us a very good example of a self-made man who took part in the strong and long term rivalries that occurred in Lucca. We might even go so far as to claim that Sercambi may well represent the typical figure of a cultured man of his times.

Another interesting aspect which I had been very careful to investigate has been the relationship between the personal beliefs of the two authors and their works. In other words, I wanted to verify if their political thought could have had an effect on their writing chronicles. The Republican Ptolemy and Sercambi, the close friend and a supporter of the tyrant Guinigi who abruptly suffocated the old Republican government, could not have been more different in their personal beliefs. Both authors came from various experiences that could affect or partially modify what they wrote. Nevertheless, I explained how according to my research, they did not insert overly their prejudices in their chronicles, at least not in the historical facts which they both wrote about, that is 1164-1303. Thus, I have not found any evidence that suggests a clear manipulation of the history of Lucca within these years.

While Ptolemy was always clear and precise in quoting his historical sources, Sercambi generally had a tendency to copy, even literally, not only from Ptolemy's *Annales* but also from other texts. I have shown which texts Sercambi plundered while he was compiling his *Croniche* and, if we accept a little comment written by the editor

Salvatore Bongi at the end of the XIXth, no scholars had previously clarified the usage of the sources in Sercambi's *Croniche*. Naturally, this aspect does not diminish Sercambi's achievement in writing his historical masterpiece and his place amongst the great chroniclers of Lucca. It just goes to prove that medieval writers felt justified in basing their histories on the work of former scholars.

I have included a little information on the editorial vicissitudes of the two books. I have found in the Archivio di Stato of Lucca some unknown and unpublished public records about this topic, which I have offered here because I was also curious about the interesting publishing history of the *Annales* and the *Croniche*.

This parallel history of both Ptolemy and Sercambi's lives has come together as a new analysis of their works on the history of Lucca and has shown some unexpected aspects to a little but fierce Tuscan city-state with its vivid cultural life and the passion and intelligence of two of its more interesting chroniclers.

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