

DE ORIGINE CIVITATIS. THE BUILDING OF CIVIC IDENTITY IN ITALIAN COMMUNAL CHRONICLES (12TH-14TH CENTURY)

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Date of receipt: 2nd of July, 2014

Final date of acceptance: 8th of October, 2015

ABSTRACT

One of the most striking expressions of political identity of the Italian medieval cities is the early creation of municipal myths of origin. Most communal cities could relate themselves to ancient heroes, saints or emperors who were claimed to be their first founders in past centuries. Such a legendary creation of the origin was obviously an ideological tool to improve the municipal sense of identity. This paper aims to study the changing attitudes of municipal elites towards the ancient history of the city, starting from the first municipal chronicles in 12th century, through the great universal narratives of the 13th, until the dawn of humanistic historiography in late 14th.¹

KEYWORDS

Communal Cities, Historiography, Sense of the Past, Municipal Origins, Political Identities.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Civitates, Communes, Historiographia, Praeteriti interpretatio, Municipii Origo, Identitas Politica.

1. Introduction

Political identities in central-northern Italy during the late Middle Ages are first and foremost municipal identities. In this paper I would like to outline the way in which civic memory in Italian city-states was able to draw a narrative of the origin of the city itself as an ideological image useful for its present. Sources for such a study are extremely rich. Since the 12th century, while chronicles and histories throughout Europe were devoted to kingdoms, feudal dynasties and churches, we find in Italy a typical municipal pattern of chronicles, in which municipal identities were the very subject of narration. There are, moreover, different kinds of narratives: biographies, contemporary chronicles, epic narrations, legendary and hagiographic works: with a huge tradition of historiographic discussion on it.²

Amidst such a huge amount of sources, my purpose is quite humble. My issue here is the subject of the origin of the city in municipal chronicles. What is the meaning of the origins for medieval chroniclers in an urban context? And what were they ready to try, and perhaps even create, in order to provide their city with a noble birth? The question concerns not only the different choices of the authors. Recent historiography about cultural memory has shown that collective memory is a step towards building a shared identity:³ our sources allow us to understand how this building was achieved in late medieval culture.

2. Incredible origins

Every medieval city has its own particular myth of its origins. It is a fact that affects not only cities, of course: the ‘incredible genealogies’ of the western aristocracies were conceived for the same purposes, and something similar can be seen in religious communities.⁴ In any case, Italian cities were a good context for the creation of an ancient past, above all because their material landscape was usually made of monumental relics of a great Roman past: too ancient to be really

1. I would like to thank Enrico Faini for his many bibliographical suggestions and the discussion of the subject of this paper.

2. As a general starting point see: *Il senso della storia nella cultura medievale italiana (1100-1350)*, *Atti del XIV Convegno di Studi (Pistoia, 14-17 maggio 1993)*. Pistoia: Centro italiano di Studi di storia e d'arte, 1995; Bartoli Langeli, Attilio; Chaix, Gérald, dirs. *La mémoire de la cité. Modèles antiques et réalisations renaissantes. Actes du colloque de Tours (28-30 septembre 1995)*. Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1997; Arnaldi, Girolamo. “Annali, cronache, storie”, *Lo spazio letterario del Medioevo. I. Il Medioevo latino. Vol. I. La produzione del testo*, Guglielmo Cavallo, Claudio Leonardi, Enrico Menestò, eds. Rome: Salerno, 1993: 463-513; other contributions will be quoted in next pages.

3. Assmann, Jan. *La memoria culturale. Scrittura, ricordo e identità politica nelle grandi civiltà antiche*. Turin: Einaudi, 1997 (the original version was published in German, Munich, 1992); Fentress, James J.; Wickham, Chris. *Social memory*. Oxford-Cambridge (Mass.): Blackwell, 1992.

4. Bizzocchi, Roberto. *Genealogie incredibili: scritti di storia nell'Europa moderna*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009; Ruiz Domenec, José Enrique. *La memoria dei feudali*. Naples: Guida, 1993.



understood in their historical frame, but familiar enough to give the city a sense of ancientness. As a consequence, most medieval narratives on the origin of the cities look back to a legendary past. Just to quote some of the most famous cases, the small city of Asti was claimed to have been built by the grandson of Jafet, Noah's son; the same biblical origin was recounted of Subres, the ancestor of Milan. Again in northern Italy, in Brescia and Ravenna, municipal legends spoke about a foundation by legendary sons of Noah after the great flood and the destruction of the tower of Babel.

Compared to these legends, the origins of Florence are in a sense much more modest. Municipal stories told of the foundation of Fiesole as a work of *Dardanus*, the first king of Troy: Florence was the Roman heir of the earlier Fiesole. In a similar way Padua, Perugia, Genoa aimed to connect their origin to the Trojan history and its heroes.⁵

We will discuss in detail some of these narratives, but as a first step we can stress that most of them refer to two different sets of legendary memories: the Bible and the Trojan War. There is here a literary reference to the general history of the municipal world provided by Isidoro's *Etymologiae*: first of all the *Hispalensis* put the origin of the cities within the uncertain field of the legend, and in any case he generally referred the most ancient foundation of the cities to biblical characters or Greek heroes.⁶ The case of biblical reference is much easier to understand: it was a clear attempt to make the memory of the city sacred; in this sense, a biblical foundation has the same role played by the holy relics in municipal ceremonies and public liturgies. When, on the contrary, cities were related to the Trojan legends, the meaning was more complex. First, it was a reference to the most celebrated author of Latin heritage, Virgil, the forerunner of the Christian faith; but at the same time, to have been founded by a Trojan hero put the city on a pair with Rome. A Trojan foundation was a cultural challenge to the role of Rome as unique *caput mundi*: this is the reason why such a legend was used by many cities, in order to suggest their freedom from a central power in Rome: the empire, the papacy. It is quite the same strategy used by the medieval historians of European kingdoms: the Trojan legend of the Frankish kingdom dates back to the 8th century, and English kings likewise claimed their remote origins from Trojan heroes arrived on the isle of Albion.⁷

In any case, despite this general aim of antiquity, the study of the single municipal chronicles since the 12th century shows that a narrative of the origins of the city did not exist in more ancient texts: it appears in the late 13th century, and usually not before. For communal cities, the creation itself of an ancient history has its own

5. A first sight on this subject (not very concerned about chronological differences) is: Villard, Renaud. "Le héros introuvable: les récits de fondation de cités en Italie: XIV-XVI siècles". *Histoire, Économie et Société*, 19/1 (2000): 5-24.

6. A collection of municipal origins is the first chapter of the XV book of the *Etymologiae*. Isidori Hispalensis. "Etymologiarum Sive Originum Liber XV". *The Latin Library*. 4 January 2014 <<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/isidore/15.shtml>>.

7. Beaune, Colette. *Naissance de la nation France*. Paris: Gallimard, 1985; the history of the early origins of the English kings from the Trojan Brutus was told by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century.



history: it is not a 'natural' attempt to project the present identity on the past, but rather a product of social and political context in a particular period of municipal history.

In order to follow this evolution, we will start from the earlier testimonies and go on to the period of the great chronicles of the 14th century. It is not possible, of course, given the peculiarity of each city, to find a perfectly coherent evolution. We will simply try to trace some general directions.

3. The history without origins

Many Italian city-states have their histories early in the 12th century. Usually the texts are composed in form of *Annales*, with basic local data in chronological order, with frequent references to the political regime of *consules* and *potestates* within the city. The impression of a very humble beginning depends also on the fact that usually the *Annales* are given in the 13th century manuscripts, or even later, without a clear reference to the author and the original circumstances of composition. Milan, a great political and religious centre long before the beginning of the communal history, has the most ancient chroniclers. Most of them simply chose to tell their contemporary history, as did Gerardo Maurisio at the beginning of the 13th century in March of Verona. Furthermore, such a contemporary history has a strong monographic subject: the internal struggles between the Milanese factions, or the growth of the Da Romano dynasty.⁸ The greatest chronicler of the first period of communal historiography, however, is Caffaro of Genoa. He wrote his *Annales Ianuenses*⁹ around 1160, as an official assignment by the city, when he was already an old man, after a long career in political life. Caffaro's history starts with the year 1099, when the Genoese ships (and Caffaro himself!) gave their help to the crusades to conquer Laodicea, a crucial step toward Jerusalem. After the first chapter, the *Annali* follow an annual narration up to the present. When Caffaro died, his work was continued by other chroniclers and notaries of the commune, throughout the whole 13th century, as an entire work of municipal history.

Even in this case, well known for its richness and detail, the chronicle lacks any reference to the ancient history of the city: on the contrary, it starts with a quite

8. Landulphi junioris sive de Sancto Paulo. *Historia Mediolanensis ab anno MXCV usque ad annum MCXXXVII*, ed. Carlo Castiglioni. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1934 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento, III*); Gerardi Maurisii. *Cronica dominorum Ecelini et Alberici fratrum de Romano (aa. 1183-1237)*, ed. Giovanni Soranzo. Città di Castello: Tipi dell'editore S. Lapi, 1914 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento, VIII.4*). The *Historiae Mediolanenses* of Landulfus Senior in late 11th century are an episcopal chronicle since the time of Ambrosius, very concerned about the recent religious and political events. Landulfus, Senior. *Historiae Mediolanenses*, ed. Alessandro Cutolo. Città di Castello: Tipi dell'editore S. Lapi, 1899 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento, IV.2*).

9. *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, ed. Luigi Tommaso Belgrano. Genoa: Sordo-muti, 1890 (*Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, I.11*).



contemporary event, which Caffaro recalled from his own personal memory. As a result, in Caffaro and his successors, Genoa appears already mature in its political identity: when its history starts, the city is already involved as an important player in the Mediterranean history. In this sense, Caffaro's narrative is much more the history of the commune than the history of the city. To follow the opinion of Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *l'histoire surgit en même temps que la commune*.¹⁰

The Pisan chronicler Bernardo Maragone, who died in 1190, was more or less contemporary of Caffaro. His *Annales Pisani* are nevertheless quite different from the former Genoese example. Pisan society during the 12th century had a very strong relationship with Roman culture: linguistic and literary knowledge of the classical world was profound and the commune itself tried to shape its laws according to the Roman *Corpus Iuris*.¹¹ Pisa, moreover, is one of the very few communal cities with a local epical tradition, written to celebrate the naval fights of the early century against Muslim pirates. The same classical allure led Maragone to write a chronicle that gave a relevant place to ancient history. The very first chapter of the *Annales* reports a short draft on human history since the Creation -taken from the Bible and the classical text of Eusebius and Orosius. No reference is attempted to the origin of the city. Pisa appears only with the medieval conflicts with Muslims and Tuscan neighbors: *871 fuerunt pisani in Calabria*, and a few lines above *1004 Pisani fecerunt bellum cum lucensibus, et vicerunt illos in Aqualonga*. Then, as the events of the 11th century begin to unfold, Maragone starts to tell a more detailed history of his city, usually with a great attention to military expeditions against *saraceni*.¹²

Caffaro and Maragone are the best known chroniclers of their century. Nevertheless, the general trend of communal historiography of the century is provided by the anonymous series of *Annales*, whose composition is testified in many different cities. It is quite difficult to seize their features because of the lack of authorship and the uncertain dating, and consequently their composition and contents must be considered in a broad range of chronology. Anyway, most of them show similar approach to the municipal past.

The *Annales* devote their narration to the contemporary history. Usually the beginning of the text focuses the events of the early 11th century, just before the birth of communal institutions: and even for that period the narrative usually consists of a very narrow line of events until the time that the author can directly remember.¹³

10. "The history emerged at the same time that the commune". Crouzet-Pavan, Élisabeth. "Gênes et Venise: discours historiques et imaginaires de la cité", *Le forme della propaganda politica nel Due e Trecento*, Paolo Cammarosano, ed. Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1994: 427-453 and especially 432.

11. Wickham, Chris. *Legge, pratiche e conflitti: tribunali e risoluzione delle dispute nella Toscana del XII secolo*. Rome: Viella, 2000.

12. Maragone, Bernardo. *Gli Annales Pisani di Bernardo Maragone*, ed. Michelle Lupo Gentile. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1936 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinequecento*, VI.2).

13. Faini, Enrico. "Alle origini della memoria comunale. Prime ricerche". *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 88 (2008): 61-81; Faini, Enrico. "Annali cittadini, memoria pubblica ed eloquenza civite in età comunale". *Storica*, 61-62 (2015): 109-142.



The *Chronicon Mutinense*, for example, is known in a 14th century re-elaboration of an earlier version. The beginnings of the alleged original text are very poor:

*In anno Christi MII Otto imperator obiit. MIII Henricus imperator ordinatus fuit. MXXIV Henricus imperator obiit. MXXV Conradus imperator ordinatur. MXXXVII Communitas et societas facta est in communi Parmae, scilicet Parmenses cum mutinensibus. Et tunc erat rex Conradus. MXLVII Henricus imperator ordinatus est. MLII Bonifacius marchio obiit. MLVII Henricus imperator obiit. MLXIX Bononia igne cremata est. MLXX Gotofredus dux obiit. MLXXVII Gregorius papa fuit in castro Carpi. MLXXXIV Castrum Nonantulae obsessum fuit a comitissima Mathelda. MLXXXV Fuit fames magna.*¹⁴

It is unclear whether these words were used by the main sources of the chronicle, but it seems possible that the passages on the 11th century were original. The author uses first of all a chronological list of emperors, as a common frame of Italian history, and then attaches short snippets of information about Modena and its relations with feudal or municipal powers. In this way, the *Annales* begin to be a history of the city only after a century of events.

War and internal conflicts are the main (usually the only) subject of the earlier accounts. The *Annales Mediolanenses breves*, whose compositions date to just after 1228, cannot avoid a preliminary quotation of Saint Ambrogius, Milan's patron, but the first political event is the war against Lodi in 1111;¹⁵ the *Annales florentini* use quite the same beginning—the war against the Cadolingi, feudal lords in val di Pesa, in 1110.¹⁶ The *Annales Cremonenses* can be considered a more complex example, very representative of such a typology of historical approach. This is the beginning of the work:

Quando peregrini ceperunt Hyerusalem et Antiochiam currebant 1096. In mense octobris iverunt, et eo tempore fuerunt Cremonae.

Quando prima guerra de Crema fuit 1098 infra Madium.

Quando Cremonenses, Laudenses et Papienses incenderunt burghum Derthone, 1107 in vigilia sancti Bartolomei.

Quando Bellum brixianorum fuit, 1110 infra iunium, in vigilia sancti Imerii. Et in eodem anno Henricus rex filius fuit Romae, papamque cepit Paschalem [...].

14. Bazano, Iohannis de. *Chronicon Mutinensein*, ed. Tommaso Casini. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1916: 555-638 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinqucento*, XV). See also: *Cronache modenese di Alessandro Tassoni, di Giovanni da Bazzano e di Bonifazio Morano*, ed. Luigi Vischi, Tommaso Sandonini, Odoardo Raselli. Modena: Soliani, 1888.

15. "Annales Mediolanenses breves", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1863: XVIII, 389-391. The *Annales Mediolanenses minores* (392-399), are a more complex composition of religious and civic accounts, from the age of Christ until 1280: but the first report related with municipal history dates to *1061 fuit bellum in Campo-mortuo prope Sedezanum inter Mediolanum et Papiam*. About the early Milanese chronicles see: Martini, Giuseppe. "Lo spirito cittadino e le origini della storiografia comunale lombarda". *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 54 (1970): 1-22.

16. In the early version of *Annales florentini*; a second ancient chronicle of the city (*Annales florentini II*) starts with 1107. See for both: *Quellen und Forschungen zur Ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz*, ed. Otto Hartwig. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1880: II, 3,40.



After 1180, the *Annales* begin to follow the series of cremonese *potestates* until the first decades of 13th century.¹⁷

Sometimes war and conflicts are considered as the remote origin of the political struggle of the present. In the *Annales placentini guelfi*, which Giovanni Codagnello composed around 1230 using an early anonymous chronicle of the 12th century, the first events reported are the death of the bishop Sigefredo in 1012, a great famine in 1085, the *prima guerra Creme* in 1088, and finally (1090) the *sedicio magna* [...] *inter populum et milites Placentie*, with the ensuing peace: a clear prefiguration of the *milites-populus* struggle of the following century.¹⁸

Incidentally, even though each chronicle was composed in different municipal contexts, for the earlier accounts many authors tended to emphasize the same events: the succession and the Italian passages of the emperors, the worst famines (in particular that of 1085)¹⁹ and the glorious deeds of the crusaders —whose passage is sometimes directly connected with the city, as already shown for the case of Cremona.

A second pattern of communal narrative is the chronological list of municipal officers. Since the *consules* and *potestates* were the most important institutions in 12th and early 13th century cities, it comes as no surprise that the chroniclers chose to follow the series of the annual officers as the backbone of municipal history. It must be stressed, however, that the use of series of officials is typical of the 13th century and not before. Here, much more than in other cases, the history of the city is perfectly the same of the history of its political regime. Among the most clear examples, the *Annales arretinorum maiores* since 1192,²⁰ or the *Chronica potestatum* of Orvieto (since 1194),²¹ or again the first draft of the earlier Chronicle of Todi, now lost, which started with a series of *potestates* since 1201.²² The *Chronica potestatum*

17. “*Annales Cremonenses*”, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1903: XXXI, 800-807.

18. “*Annales Placentini guelfi*”, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1863: XVIII, 411-457.

19. Even in *Annales veronenses breves* (late 12th century) (“*Annales veronenses breves*”, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1866: XIX, 1-4), the first account is *in anno 1095 fuit fames valida in universo*, then the death of *marchio* Bonifacius and *comitissa* Mathilde; from 1149 appear municipal events: *1149 combusta fuit porta sancti Zenonis, et captum fuit castrum sancti Petri de Verona* and *1151 hedificatum fuit castrum Hostilie a Veronensibus*.

20. *Annales arretinorum maiores et minores*, eds. Arturi Bini, Giovanni Grazzini. Città di Castello: Tipi dell’editore S. Lapi, 1909 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, XXIV.1).

21. *Ephemerides Urbevetanae dal cod. Vaticano Urbinatense 1745*, ed. Luigi Fumi. Città di Castello: Tipi dell’editore S. Lapi, 1903 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, XV.5); “*Cronica potestatum (1194-1322)*”, *Ephemerides Urbevetanae dal cod. Vaticano Urbinatense 1745*, ed. Luigi Fumi. Città di Castello: Tipi dell’editore S. Lapi, 1903: 137-182 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, XV.5).

22. *Le cronache di Todi (secoli XIII-XVI)*, eds. Giuliana Italiani, Claudio Leonardi, Franco Mancini, Enrico Menestò, Carlo Santini, Gina Scentoni. Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1979. Another example is the 13th century chronicle of Mantua: *In anno 1183 consul maior civitatis Mantue dominus Zachonus de Grossolanis. Et eo tempore interfectus fuit dominus Ugo linus de Oldevrandis. In 1184 in 1185 in 1186 episcopus Grasciuvinus fuit potestas Mantue; et in primo anno papa Lucius venit Veronam; et in secunda potestaria idem papa obiit, et in*



was a perfect pattern of annalistic narrative, and the author could use the same approach of a monastic, episcopal or dynastic chronicler. Moreover, it allowed the chronicler to emphasize the continuity of urban identity throughout the decades. For that reason, even in late 13th century, authors such as the anonymous Paduan of the *Annales* chose to use this kind of chronicle, just to draw the communal history as a coherent evolution, and to erase from the narrative the painful rupture of the seignorial tyranny of Ezzelino da Romano.²³

Considering the whole communal world of the 12th-13th century, there is a relevant exception in such a contemporary approach, that of Venice. While we cannot read anything about the origins of the city in any municipal chronicle, Venice has its original chronicles since the Early Middle Ages. Around 1008, a Venetian cleric called Giovanni Diacono wrote his *Historia*, telling the glorious story of the foundation of Venice upon the sea, and the translation of the relics of Saint Mark within the city.²⁴ There is no legend in Giovanni's narrative: on the contrary, the earlier *Chronicon Altinate* gathered a lot of fabulous histories about the ancient cities of *Venetia*, and many of them are related to a common Trojan origin:

*Totos namque prenomiatos antiquiores et nobiliores Venetiquos, quos singulatim nominatos habemus, fuerunt ab antiquis eorum progenie sicuti commemoratos abemus. Deinde vero recollerunt se in antiqua Venecia ex diversis provinciis; edificantes castra, manserunt ibi. Prima extitit Adres, qua huc mare ab illa civitate nomen accepit, quod a Adriatico sinu nominatur. Deinde Aquilegia, nobillissima et precipuam, et Concordiam, Antinopoli, Padua et Mantua, Verona, Gardisana, Ovederço et Altinense pulcherima civitate et Auxolum castellum pulcherimum, quia terra usque ad culmine mellorum a gradibus ascendebat, Tarvisana, Cormona, Freyna, Modena, vegla Vercellis, Plasencia, Crisopula, que Parma apellata est. Tote iste quas supra diximus civitates et cetere alie, que innumerande sunt, et eum castellum Auxolum mirabile edificaverunt ipsi Troiani, que cum Enea illorum princeps, quos antea gentiles fuerunt, venientes de illa antiqua magne Troie; que modo ab Enea nomine Andreatai Enetici nuncupantur. Enetici namque laudabiles dicuntur.*²⁵

tercia factum fuit concordium Suzarie, et ibi mortus et sepultus est. In 1187 et 1188 et 1189 domnus Atto Pagani de Pergamo fuit potestas Mantue; et in ipso anno capta fuit Fracta a Veronensibus, et multi Ferrarienses capti fuerunt et ducti Veronam; et dedicata est ecclesia maior Verone a papa Urbano. Et capta fuit terra de ultra marii a Saladino; et in secundo anno mantuani inceperunt facere pontem molendinorum, et in tercio anno comes Sotus interfectus est, et nobiles de Ripalta inceperunt pontem suprascriptum. "Annales Mantuani", Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores. Scriptores rerum germanicarum jn usum scolaticum, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1866: XIX, 19-31.

23. The chronicle is more detailed after 1260, but the most important gap in composition is about 1290. Bortolami, Sante. "Per la storia della storiografia comunale: il "Chronicon de potestatibus Padue". *Archivio Veneto*, 105 (1975) 69-121, and especially 86.

24. The author, who wrote after 1008, was an ambassador of the Doge Pietro II Orseolo to the Emperor Otto III. Diacono, Giovanni. *Istoria Veneticorum*, ed. Luigi Andrea Berto. Rome-Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli -Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 1999.

25. "Chronicon Venetum quod vulgo dicunt Altinate", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)*, ed. Henry Simonsfeld. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1883: XIV, 33.



Some of the stories that the *Chronica* reports refer to the famous text of Paolus Diaconus,²⁶ but most municipal cases in this passage are an original creation of the anonymous writer. There is here, undoubtedly, a Venetian originality. But at the same time these texts cannot be considered properly as a municipal history. Giovanni Diacono was the ambassador of the Doge Peter Orseolo by Otto III: his work grew in a byzantine context much more than in a communal city. Moreover, the author (or maybe the authors) of the *Chronicon Altinate* aimed to tell the history of the earlier bishopric of *Venetia* (*Altinum*, Aquileia, Grado, Torcello): therefore, their approach is much more similar to an episcopal history than to a municipal narratives. Even in Venice, 13th century *Annales* were a mere contemporary history.²⁷

In conclusion: For what reason were the earlier chronicles actually written? And above all, what were their authors seeking in the municipal past?

The contents of the *Annales* aim to emphasize the warrior ethics of the municipal *militēs*.²⁸ The ruling class of the earlier commune was composed of an urban aristocracy acquainted with the war as a social attitude.²⁹ By reading and writing the past, therefore, they were looking for proof for their central role in municipal identity. Sometimes it was a 'great' war, the sublime struggle against the enemies of the faith: it was the case of the maritime cities (Genoa, Pisa), or sometimes the cities along the *via romea*, the way to Rome used by pilgrims. But if such a noble enemy was not available in recent the past, this warrior memory could be composed of the never ending conflicts with the neighbours.³⁰

If considered within the general history of medieval Italy, the events that open most urban chronicles are not so relevant: fights of little account, probably so frequent that even the authors could mistake one for another. But from inside the city, they were important as the justification of the *militēs'* regime.

What we must stress here, is that the whole tradition of earlier chronicles gives no references to the origins of the city. The authors were proud of the military achievements of their cities, but they did not seem to be interested in their remote origins. The only origins they consider is the historical core of a ruling class based on war, but no more than this.³¹ Neither was the social memory of the city very

26. *Historia Langobardorum*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores. Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scolasticum*, ed. Georg Waitz. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1873: II, 14-23.

27. See the case of the *Annales venetici breves* and the *Historia ducum veneticorum*: "Annales Venetici breves", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)*, ed. Henry Simonsfeld. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1883: XIV, 70-73.

28. A recent and good consideration of the connection between the 12th century historiography and the role of *militēs* is: Faini, Enrico. "La memoria dei 'militēs'", *I comuni di Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur. Percorsi storiografici*, Maria Teresa Caciorgna, Sandro Carocci, Andrea Zorzi, eds. Rome: Viella, 2014: 113-133.

29. Gasparri, Stefano. *I "militēs" cittadini. Studi sulla cavalleria in Italia*. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1992; Maire Vigueur, Jean-Claude. *Cavalieri e cittadini. Guerra conflitti e società nell'Italia comunale*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004 (the original version was published in France, in Paris, 2003).

30. Maire Vigueur, Jean-Claude. *Cavalieri e cittadini...*: 38-63.

31. Wickham, Chris. "The Sense of the Past in Italian Communal Narratives", *The perception of the Past in twelfth-century Europe*, Paul Magdalino, ed. London-Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1992: 173-189; on this



interested in large scale history: even the *libri iurium* of the 12th-early 13th century pay very little attention to a general historical approach to the past.³²

To tell the truth, the 'real' origins, that is to say the remote antiquities of the city, were not completely ignored in urban culture. Many examples of antiquarian interest, however, can be found only outside the chronicles, and in rather different cultural contexts. First of all, cathedral schools and chapters produced, early in 12th and more often in the 13th century, important works of municipal religious antiquities.

In Florence, for example, the first narrative of the legendary foundation of the city, starting from the Trojan origin of Fiesole, was the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentie*. The text was probably written in 1205, by a cleric in Bishop Giovanni da Velletri's circle. In a striking opposition with the contemporary *Annales florentini*, the *Chronica* is very rich concerning the legend of Fiesole, but at the same time it pays no attention to the recent history.³³ This is the reason why the Chronicle was mainly ignored by later authors of Florentine history before Dante.³⁴

Such a distance of the clerical historians from the political history of their city can be verified much more clearly in hagiographic works. The municipal memory of the past was usually an hagiographic memory, concerning the first saint or the first bishop. In medieval Modena, the story of the invention of the relics of San Geminiano was one of the most famous sources for the growth of a civic identity; in Bononia the hagiographic texts on the relics of San Petronio played a similar role.³⁵ Their authors, however, did not compose a history of the city. The legendary or historical events of the life of the saints looked like flashes of an uncertain antiquity, with no direct connection with the annalistic history. Therefore, already during the first decades of 13th century, in most Italian cities local memory is composed by a historical narrative without origins, and a hagiographic antiquity without history.

subject see recently: Faini, Enrico. "Alle origini della memoria comunale...": 61-81; with a broad survey of many Italian chronicles of the 12th century.

32. Cammarosano, Paolo. "I 'Libri iurium' e la memoria storica delle città comunali", *Il senso della storia nella cultura medievale italiana (1100-1350)*, Atti del XIV Convegno di Studi (Pistoia, 14-17 maggio 1993). Pistoia: Centro italiano di Studi di storia e d'arte, 1995; Bartoli Langeli, Attilio; Chaix, Gérald, dirs. *La mémoire de la cité...*: 309-325; about the relations between history and public records see: Arnaldi, Girolamo. "Cronache con documenti, cronache 'autentiche' e pubblica storiografia", *Fonti medioevali e problematica storiografica*, Atti del Congresso tenutosi in occasione del 90° anniversario della fondazione dell'Istituto Storico Italiano (1883-1973) (Roma 22-27 ottobre 1973). Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, 1976: 351-374 (reprinted in: *Storici e storiografia del medioevo italiano: antologia di saggi*, ed. Gabriele Zanella. Bologna: Pàtron, 1984: 111-137); Faini, Enrico. "La memoria dei 'milites'...": 113-133.

33. *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae*, ed. Ricardo Chellini. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 2009.

34. "il silenzio dei cronisti attivi fra la seconda metà del XIII secolo e i primi decenni del XIV suggerisce che nei confronti dell'opuscolo sia prevalso un certo scetticismo e che ad esso fosse accordato un valore più letterario che storiografico". *Chronica de origine civitatis ...*: 147.

35. *Relatio translationis corporis Sancti Geminiani (MXCIX-MCVI)*, ed. Giulio Bertoni. Città di Castello: Tipi dell'editore S. Lapi, 1907 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, VI.1); Pini, Antonio Ivan. "Origini e testimonianze del sentimento civico bolognese", *La coscienza cittadina nei comuni italiani del Duecento, XI Convegno del Centro di studi sulla spiritualità medievale (11-14 ottobre 1970)*. Todi: Accademia Tudertina, 1972: 137-193.



4. The first steps of integration

The distance between the legendary origins and the memory of the historical past begins to be narrowed during the 13th century. The *Gesta florentinorum* of Sanzanome da Firenze were composed around 1231:³⁶ here the legend of the foundation of the city, that was derived from the former *Chronica de origine*, is a short introduction to the second part of the work, a history of Florence from 1125 to the present. It was quite a new choice in its composition. Nevertheless, Sanzanome wrote above all in order to provide his readers with a rhetorical model. The *Gesta* used very frequently to tell the history of Florence through the speeches of the most important characters: a kind of *oratio ficta* composed as a model of political speech. History, therefore, is not the central aim of the author, rather a useful frame for rhetorical purposes.³⁷

Quite similar to Sanzanome's work was the *Cronaca di Faenza di magister Tolosanus*, a secular cleric, which was devoted to the city's Roman past. Tolosano tells the story of the Roman origin of the city, and he does actually go forward in his narrative until his present time. In any case, the *Cronaca* pays very little attention to the political identity of the medieval commune, and his narrative follows the earlier examples of the chronicles *rhétorisantes*.³⁸

The best example of the evolution of historical attitudes in early 13th is maybe the *Chronicon* of Sicardus bishop of Cremona (death in 1215). The *Chronicon* is a very traditional history *ab origine mundi*; its sources are mainly Gerolamo, Orosius and Beda for the first part, that follows the standard partition of universal history in six eras.³⁹ With the 9th century and the post-carolingian period, Sicardo begins to add some reference to the succession of Cremonese bishops. For the 11th century this episcopal memory is mixed with the genuine communal history, that Sicardus would have been able to read in the early version of the *Annales Cremonenses*. For the last decades until 1212 the bishop uses above all his personal memory. Such an historical composition recalls the case of Bernardo Maragone. Sicardus, however, shows a deeper grade of integration of the different historical levels, from the universal history to the municipal scale: and even if he gives no accounts of

36. Faini, Enrico. "Una storia senza nomi. Storia e memoria a Firenze ai primi del Duecento". *Bullettino dell'istituto storico italiano per il medio evo*, 108 (2006): 39-81.

37. It is the recent interpretation of Enrico Faini (Faini, Enrico. "Lettere politiche nella storiografia comunale", *Cum verbis ut Italici solent ornatissimis*. *Funktionen der Beredsamkeit im kommunalen Italien / Funzioni dell'eloquenza nell'Italia comunale*, Florian Hartmann, ed. Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2011: 89-110). In this sense the case of Sanzanome can be compared with the *Liber de Obsidione Ancone* in which Buoncompagno da Signa speaks very shortly about the Roman origin of the city; the very centre of the works are the political speeches reported as a rhetoric model. See: *Boncompagni Liber de obsidione Ancone (a. 1173)*, ed. Giulio C. Zimolo. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1937 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinqucento*, VI.3).

38. See again: Faini, Enrico. "La memoria dei 'milites'...": 113-133; Magistri Tolosani. *Chronicon Faventinum*, ed. Giuseppe Rossini. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1937-1939 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinqucento*, XXVIII.1).

39. Falco, Giorgio. *La polemica sul Medioevo*. Naples: Guida, 1977: 31-42.



the ancient origins of his city, he uses a passage from the *Chronicon Altinate* on the ancient origins of Venetian cities.⁴⁰

As a last example, we can quote the case of Giovanni Codagnello.⁴¹ The Placentine chronicler composed an original collection of texts short after 1235: some of them were simply copied from earlier sources, some were written by Codagnello himself; in any case, his 13th century manuscript gathers a *storia favolosa* of the ancient origins of Milan and Piacenza, with a short history during the period of the Lombard kingdom, some stories about Costantin and the *translatio imperii*, a chronicle of the Frederick Barbarossa's wars in Italy and a copy of the *Annales placentini*, re-elaborated by Codagnello. The chronicler, in this case, aims to gather different texts, in which the ancient origins are placed beside the more recent narrative as a textual operation *ex post*.

4.1 A new history: between the 13th and 14th century

The turning point of the historiographical practice of communal Italy is the late 13th and early 14th century. Most municipal chronicles of this period start their narratives from a short introduction on the origin of the city, as an attempt to provide the municipal identity with a claim of antiquity. The ancient times are no more a generic frame of universal history, rather a legendary (but sometimes historical) foreword to the original history of the city.

A beautiful case in this sense is Genoa. During the 12th and mainly the 13th century Genoa told its own history as the official continuation of Caffaro's Annals, without any reference to the antiquity, before the starting point of 1099. In 1294 one of Caffaro's successors, the Genoese notary Jacopo Doria, was the first to compose a legendary foreword to his chapters of municipal history: the legendary story of the foundation of the city by the mythic hero *Ianus*.⁴² In the very same years, about 1298, the dominican friar and hagiograph Jacopo da Varagine, bishop of Genoa, wrote his *Historia Ianuensis*.⁴³ From the first lines of his work, Jacopo deplores the lack of attention towards the origin of the city in former chroniclers: in order to cross the obstacle of the sources, the bishop tells the story about *Ianus*. Because, he

40. Sicardi, Cremonensis episcopi. "Cronica", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)*, ed. Oswald Holder Egger. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1903: XXXI, 22-181 (especially 79).

41. For the problems of authorship of the different texts see: Arnaldi, Girolamo. "Codagnello, Giovanni", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1982: 26, 562-568.

42. For the very prudent prologue on the ancient mentions of the city: *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de'suoi continuatori dal MCLXXIV al MCCXXIV*, ed. Luigi Tomasso Belgrano. Genoa: Sordo-muti, 1890: V, 3-8; Zabbia, Marino. *I notai e la cronachistica cittadina italiana nel Trecento*. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 1999: 22; Beneš, Carrie E. *Urban Legends. Civic Identity and the Classical Past in Northern Italy, 1250-1350*. Pennsylvania University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011: 63-87.

43. On Iacopo da Varazze's philosophy of the history see: Farris, Giovanni; Delfino, Benedetto Tino, eds. *Iacopo da Varagine. Atti del I Convegno di Studi (Varazze, 13-14 aprile 1985)*. Cogoletto: SMA, 1987; Le Goff, Jacques. *À la recherche du temps sacré. Jacques de Varagine et la "Légende dorée"*. Paris: Perrin, 2011.



said, it is impossible to leave such an ancient and glorious city as Genoa without looking at its antiquities:

*Cogitantes igitur [...] quod multae civitates sunt in Ytalia, de quibus antiqui ystoriographi magnam faciunt mentionem, mirati sumus quod de civitate Ianuensi tam inclita, tam nobili, tam potenti, satis modica ab ipsis inveniuntur expressa. Causam hujus esse credimus, quia civitas Ianuensis, licet sit modo potens et maxima, ab antiquo fuit parva et modica [...]. Nos igitur ystorias communis Ianuae legentes, et diversas chronicas revolventes necnon et aliquorum auctorum dicta scrutantes, de civitate Ianue invenimus aliqua, quae presenti stilo iudicavimus adnotanda.*⁴⁴

At the same time, in the second ‘maritime city’ without an origin, Pisa, the whole 13th century passed without any attempt to cross the chronological limit posed by Maragone —the first accounts of Pisan maritime fights against the Muslims. The Dominican friar Bartolomeo di San Concordio was probably the first to tell in his *Liber de Orgine civitatis Pisanae* the legendary story of the origins of the city: Pisa was asserted to have been founded by Pelops, a Greek hero father of Atreus and ancestor of Agamemnon. Thus the ancient history of Pisa could reach the far antiquity: *vix reputo aliquam civitatem reperiri posse, quae magis ab antiquo constructa fuerit.*⁴⁵ But the invention of Bartolomeo was only a ‘monographic’ work. Around 1310, an anonymous chronicler decided to include the first chapter of Bartolomeo on the origin of Pisa in his global history of the city:⁴⁶ from that period onward, the chronicles of Pisa began to tell the municipal story from the story of its foundation until the present.⁴⁷

The Milanese Chronicler Giovanni da Cermetate wrote during the Italian expedition of Emperor Henry VII in Italy. His *History of Milan* follows above all the contemporary events, but with a legendary prologue on the origin of Milan, founded

44. *Iacopo da Varagine e la sua Cronaca di Genova dalle origini al MCCXCVII. Studio introduttivo e testo critico commentato*, ed. Giovanni Monleone. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 1941: II, 4-5 (*Fonti per la Storia d'Italia*, 84-86).

45. The text was edited by Ludovico Antonio Muratori. Da Vico Pisano, Michele. *Breviarium Pisanae Historiae*, ed. Ludovico Antonio Muratori. Bologna: Nicola Zanicheli, 1936 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, VI, 163-165).

46. Banti, Ottavio. “Studio sulla genesi dei testi cronistici pisani del secolo XIV”. *Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo*, 75 (1963): 259-319. The prologue reminds us the historical approach already seen in Jacopo da Varagine: *chome per alcune antiche scritture si trova le quali con pocho ordine e mal tenute, quale trattando d’una cosa e quale d’un’altra, che raccoltele insieme lo più che s’è potuto et ordinarle a’ tempi ch’elle seguitonno, cominciando dal suo primo origine, et chi la puose, et dove prima ebbe principio mi sento gentile opera fare* (“given that there were some ancient scriptures, with few order and badly maintained, mixing one and other thing together, it just was possible to get some order, starting from its first origin and following by who got it, reason why I feel kind work to do”). Banti, Ottavio. “Studio sulla genesi dei testi...”: 281 (footnote 2).

47. See an early example of the ‘global’ history of the city in: *Cronica di Pisa. Dal ms. Roncioni dell’Archivio di Stato di Pisa. Edizione e commento*, ed. Cecilia Iannella. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 2005: 3-10.



by the heirs of Noah.⁴⁸ A few years later, after 1324, Pietro da Villola included a lengthy introduction in his contemporary history of Bologna, in which he uses some of the traditional legend on Bononia's antiquity: the biography and miracles of Saint Petronius and the *Teodosianum*, the decree with which the Emperor Teodosio was claimed to have created the University of Bononia in 409.⁴⁹ These legends were not created by Pietro, rather they were transmitted by hagiographic and episcopal texts: here the chronicler was the first to put them into a global historical narrative about the city. A similar situation can be traced for Venice early around 1275, when Martino da Canal composed his history of Venice: using the ancient episcopal chronicle, Martino introduced his work with a first section on the foundation of the city, and then he quickly arrived at the point of telling his contemporary history.⁵⁰

The integration of the legends of foundation with the 'real' recent history in all these chronicles had many effects on the general aspects of the chronicles themselves. They did not trace a coherent evolution of the city from the beginning to the present, because the origin and the real history were separated by a gap of many centuries that remains obscure and unknown. Such a floating gap, to use the definition suggested by Jan Assmann, is a typical feature of the cultural memory: around the gap, written history, depending on living memory of the writer, could coexist with the foundation of a cultural identity, which was the aim of the legendary origins.⁵¹ In any case, it is the very beginning of the 'incredible origins' of Italian city-states.

What is the historical meaning of the new way of writing history in late medieval cities? Why this passage occurs exactly at the end of the Duecento in such different contexts of Italian culture? First of all, the communal regimes of late Duecento were very concerned about the strengthening of the civic identity.⁵² In 1293 the commune of Perugia, a popular regime, commissioned to a poet, Bonifacius de Verona, the composition of an epic poem on the ancient times of the city, in order to provide Perugia with a narrative of the origins that the city still lacked. As a result of the communal effort, the *Liber antiquitatum comunis Perusii*, usually known as the *Eulisteia*, composed a history of the city from 1150 to 1293, with a large prologue on the story of the Trojan Euliste, the legendary founder of the city.⁵³

48. Giovanni da Cermetate. *Historia*, ed. Luigi Alberto Ferrai. Rome: Forzani, 1889 (*Fonti per la Storia d'Italia*, 2).

49. Pini, Antonio Ivan. "Origini e testimonianze del sentimento civico bolognese", *La coscienza cittadina nei comuni italiani del Duecento, XI Convegno del Centro di studi sulla spiritualità medievale (11-14 ottobre 1970)*. Todi: Accademia Tudertina, 1972: 137-193.

50. The author was probably not a noble citizen, may be a clerk of a public officer: he wrote between 1267 and 1275, telling the story of the ancient Aquileia, the foundation of Venice and the translation of Saint Mark's relics (I, 3-12), until the more detailed section on 12th and 13th centuries. Martin da Canal. *Les estoires de Venise. Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275*, ed. Alberto Limentani. Florence: Olschki, 1975.

51. See: Assmann, Jan. *La memoria culturale...*

52. About the cases of Padua, Genoa, Siena and Perugia: Beneš, Carrie E. *Urban Legends...*

53. Galletti, Antonio Ivan. "Sant'Ercolano, il grifo e le lasche. Note sull'immaginario collettivo nell'età comunale, in *Forme e tecniche di potere nella città (secoli XIV-XVIII)*". *Annali della facoltà di Scienze*



In Perugia as well as in different Italian cities, there is a background of classicism in municipal society, and such communal classicism depends on the role of notarial culture. The notaries as a professional group brought into the institutions a broader knowledge and attention towards the classical world and, because of the relevant role played by notaries in many popular regimes, the claim of an antique face of the city enhanced it in new ways.⁵⁴

Besides the role of the notaries, there is another player in affecting the historical culture of the Italian city-states: the mendicant friars. Some of the chroniclers we have quoted in previous pages are friars: Jacopo da Voragine and Bartolomeo da San Concordio for example, and even the anonymous author of a 13th century chronicle from the church of Saint Fortunato of Todi, the first attempt to mix the ancient history of the city with the strange legends of its foundation.⁵⁵ Moreover, we must bear in mind that the early works of a 'global' history at the beginning of the century were composed in Cremona or Florence by clerics.

What is new in the late 13th century is that religious circles were now much more able to attract the attention of lay culture. Mendicant communities had a strong effect on urban society: their ability of communication allowed them to give a direction to the municipal culture. Many lay chroniclers lived in close contact with the mendicant communities of their city. Jacopo Doria with Jacopo da Varagine, Giovanni da Ceremate with the Dominican friar and historian Galvano Fiamma.⁵⁶ Alberto Milliolo was a notary of the commune of Reggio, close friend of Salimbene de Adam, who met at the Franciscan convent of Reggio. Around 1285 he wrote a *Liber de temporibus* following the series of popes since Saint Peter; from 1154 he starts a *memoriale omnium potestatum, consulum et rectorum civitatis regine* mixed with papal history, and for the 13th century the history of the city prevails on the short views of papal events.⁵⁷ Alberto did not use any reference to the origin of the city,

politiche dell'Università di Perugia, 16 (1979-1980): 203-216. The civic worship of Saint Ercolano was promoted in 13th century by the commune with a strong help of mendicant friars; *il tentativo del ceto dirigente di coprire un ultimo campo rimasto intatto* ("the willing of the ruling class in order to cover a last field remained intact") was concluded in 1293 when the commune committed to Bonifacio da Verona the *Liber antiquitatum comunis Perusii*, known as Eulisteia, composed with the purpose of *antiquitates reducere ad memoria pro honore comunis Perusii*. The poem is edited in: Bonifacii Veronensis. "De rebus a perusinis gestis Ann. MCL-MCCXCIII. Historia metrica quae vocatur Eulisteia ex Ms. Codice Perill Viri EQ. J. C. Contestable nunc prima edita". *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 16/1 (1850): 1-52.

54. The contribution of notaries to the municipal chronicles of 13th and 14th century has been studied (following the interpretation of Girolamo Arnaldi) by Marino Zabbia. Zabbia, Marino. *I notai e la cronachistica cittadina italiana...*; Beneš, Carrie E. *Urban Legends...*

55. *Le cronache di Todi...*

56. Zabbia, Marino. "Notariato e memoria storica. Le scritture storiografiche notarili nelle città dell'Italia settentrionale (secc. XII-XIV)". *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano*, 97 (1991): 75-122, especially, 76-85.

57. Alberti Millioli notarii regini. "Liber de temporibus et aetatibus et cronica imperatorum", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1903: XXXI, 336-668.



but his work is a clear witness of how a notary had already assumed the universal approach to history typical of religious authors.⁵⁸

More or less at the same time, the notary Riccobaldo da Ferrara devoted himself to several historical works based on classic tradition, usually composed in a universal imperial-papal frame. The *Chronica parva ferrarienses*, instead, follows the recent history of Riccobaldo's city, but the first section of the text traces a rich introduction to the Roman past of Ferrara: even if the author is not able to find a clear testimony for an ancient foundation of the city.⁵⁹

At the end of the 13th century the religious model of the municipal chroniclers was very clear. For the mendicant friars, history should be told as a great *Chronicon universale*, a history of human Salvation from the Creation to the present, looking for the last *Parousia*. Best examples of such a universal history were the *Speculum historiale* of Vincenzo di Beauvais and the *Chronicon* of Martino di Troppau (*Martinus Polonus*).⁶⁰

Once involved in a municipal context, the historical attitude of the friars turned into a deeper attention to local history. A simple composition of local and universal history, as already attempted by Maragone or Sicardus of Cremona was not enough, considering the grade of public involvement of friars and notaries. The aim was now to put the city into a universal history.⁶¹

Notaries were very able to adapt the universal history to the municipal context. Petrus Bonfante, a Florentine notary, translated the work of Martino Polono into vernacular: the translation, made in 1279, was the first Florentine historical work *in volgare*. Its importance, however, lies not only in its language, because Petrus Bonfante used the text as a universal frame where he put some explicit references to the particular history of Florence.⁶² The universalistic attitude of mendicant history was now converted into a municipal subject. A few years later, the dominican Tolomeus of Lucca wrote his *Annales lucenses*, following the Florentine and Lucchese

58. *L'uso in proprio della cronaca universale, diffusa del resto, ma non inventata dai Mendicanti...* ("The improper use of the universal chronic, widespread but not invented by mendicants"). See: Capo, Lidia. "Cronache mendicanti e cronache cittadine". *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps Modernes*, 89/2 (1977): 633-639, especially 635.

59. Riccobaldo da Ferrara. *Chronica parva ferrariensis*, ed. Gabriele Zanella. Ferrara: Deputazione provinciale ferrarese di storia patria, 1983.

60. Martinus Polonus. "Chronicon", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)*, ed. Ludwig Weiland. Hannover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1872: XXII, 377-482.

61. *La storia dell'incontro e dei complessi rapporti fra annalistica cittadina e manualistica enciclopedica dei frati mendicanti è praticamente tutta da fare* ("The history of the encounter and the complex relations between the town's annals and the mendicant's encyclopedic works is really all to be done"). Arnaldi, Girolama. "Andrea Dandolo doge-cronista", *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*, Agostino Pertusi, ed. Florence: Olschki, 1970: 127-268, especially, 179-180

62. Zabbia, Marino. "Prima del Villani. Note sulle cronache universali a Firenze tra l'ultimo quarto del Duecento e i primi anni del Trecento", *Le scritture della storia. Pagine offerte dalla Scuola nazionale di studi medievali a Massimo Miglio*, Fluvio Delle Donne, Giovanni Pesiri, eds. Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2012: 139-162 (142-149); Santini, Pietro. *Quesiti e ricerche di storiografia fiorentina*. Florence: B. Seeber, 1903: 27-35 and Appendix II (second edition: Rome, Multigrafica Editrice, 1972).



Annales on one side, and Martino Polono on the other.⁶³ The early 14th century chronicles of Pisa trace the same evolution.⁶⁴

In northern Italy, among the *signorie* of Lombardy and Veneto, the evolution was quite similar. Here, the major character is the notary Benzo d'Alessandria, famous for his great knowledge of the classics, who lived at the court of the Della Scala family. Benzo composed a huge *Chronicon* since the Creation of the world. It was a Chronicle similar to the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincentius of Beauvais: not properly a narrative, rather an Encyclopedia of the entire culture in the shape of history.⁶⁵ In other words, a perfect "mendicant" work: indeed some of the first scholars who read the manuscript in 20th century believed Benzo himself to be a cleric. His approach to history reminds us of Giovanni Colonna and his *Mare historiarum*, or the dominican Domenico di Bandino d'Arezzo, author of the *Fons memorabilium universi*. One of the sections of the *Chronicon*, the book XIV, is devoted to the Italian cities. Benzo's chapters, much more detailed for northern Italy centres—that he knew intimately—are small essays of the origin and remote antiquities of each city. Benzo is often critical of the strange legends usually included in municipal traditions: his classical culture is in a sense a shield against the more fabulous inventions of 'incredible origins'. But in any case, the *Chronicon* was a great repository of historical material, available for a 'global' municipal history,⁶⁶ as a collection of antiquities to be used in each case. Giovanni da Cermenate, and some years later the dominican Galvano Fiamma, followed this kind of use.

In conclusion, the great municipal history of the 14th century depends on the universalism of religious history, mixed with the classical culture of the notaries. The turning point of this new history marks the beginning of the flowering of municipal chronicles. The most famous case is the *Nova Cronica* of Giovanni Villani: a universal-Florentine chronicle written as a mixture of universal history, legends of origins and a detailed narrative of recent times.

But Giovanni Villani is only the most famous case. The *Annales Cesenatenses*, composed in 1334, were written as a copy of a 13th century *Cronica antiqua*; but the author of the *Annales* added to his source, as a prologue, some Latin verses *de situ et laude civitatis*.⁶⁷ A few years previously a similar addition can be seen for Ogerio Alfieri

63. Tolomeus de Lucca. "Annales lucenses", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series*. Berlin: Weidmannos, 1930: VIII.

64. Banti, Ottavio. "Studio sulla genesi...": 279-292.

65. The *Chronicon* has never been published as a whole. On the biography of the author see now: Petoletti, Marco. *Il "Chronicon di Benzo d'Alessandria e i classici latini all'inizio del XIV secolo. Edizione critica del libro XXIV: "De moribus et vita philosophorum"*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2000: 3-21.

66. Joseph Berrigan publishes a long section of the work concerning the Italian cities (Berrigan, Joseph R. "Benzo d'Alessandria and the cities of Northern Italy". *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 4 (1967): 127-192). Benzo had a large influence on the 14th century chroniclers in Lombardy, but he was forgotten in following century; his work was re-discovered many centuries later. Ferrai, Luigi Alberto. "Benzo d'Alessandria e i cronisti milanesi del secolo XIV". *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano*, 7 (1889): 97-137.

67. *Annales Cesenates*, ed. Enrico Angiolini. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 2003: 1-2 (*Fonti per la Storia d'Italia Medievale, Antiquitates*, 21).



(death in 1294) and his *History of Asti*. He probably used a communal chronicle since 1070, but with a few chapters as a foreword, on the origin of Asti in Celtic Italy in 372 *ab urbe condita*, on the life and death of the municipal patron Saint Secondo, and the destruction of the city after the Lombard conquest.⁶⁸ The prologue, therefore, composed the official history of the city with its origin and antiquities.

4.2 Humanistic beginnings

Our last question concerns the relevance of humanistic thought for the historical practice of municipal chronicles. What does humanism mean for municipal chroniclers? It depends, first of all, on what we mean by ‘humanism’. In a first sense, a general knowledge of classical works and a sharp interest for anything that was considered to be Roman, was probably present during the period of the great ‘global’ chronicles, from Lovato Lovati to Benzo d’Alessandria. In this sense, to broaden the range of ancient sources and texts did not implicate a radical change of approach towards the municipal origins and antiquities. On the contrary, it was a chance to find out new testimonies for a glorious past of the city itself. During the 15th century the anonymous author of the *Chronicum Forumlivii* used a former version of communal *Annales* (now lost): a typical communal narrative starting from the micro-local events of the 11th century. But the humanistic interest of the author forced him to go back to the classical sources, in search of the Roman origin of the earliest *Forum Livii*. The prologue gives a justification of such an antiquarian addition:

*Non inutile forte opus legentibus videbitur, cum porro rem pervetustam nequaquam omnino divulgatam agredi videar, que nec satis etiam ex monimentis litterarum priscorum auctorum, nec ex annalibus ab aliquibus iam pridem illustrata, vel aliis dignis memoriis per aliqua tempora recensita fore aperte dignoscitur; tanta namque fuit ignavia nostrorum veterum ingeniorum cum ingratitude patrie aliorum gestorum plura scribentium et sua silentio labi permitentium.*⁶⁹

Humanistic culture in this sense enhanced the need of an ancient past in municipal chronicles. Moreover, in the late 15th century, the strange works of Annus de Viterbo, a skillful creator of historical legends and pretended ancient sources, gave a new impulse to the creation of local legendary traditions. Many municipal legends of Italian cities date back exactly to the inventions of Annus.⁷⁰

68. *Gli antichi cronisti astesi Ogerio Alfieri, Guglielmo Ventura e Secondino Ventura*, eds. Natale Ferro, Elio Arlieri, Osvaldo Campassi, Giuseppe Tartaglino. Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1990: 1-5. The *Ystoria civitatis Astensis* was included in the *liber iurium* of the city during the 14th century: *Codex Astensis qui de Malabayla communiter nuncupatur*, ed. Quintino Sella. Rome: Salviucci, 1880-1887: II, 57-60.

69. *Annales Forolivienses ab origine urbis usque ad annum MCCCCLXXIII*, ed. Giuseppe Mazzatinti. Città di Castello: Tipi dell’editore S. Lapi, 1903 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores; raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, XXII.2).

70. Fubini, Riccardo. *Storiografia dell’umanesimo in Italia da Leonardo Bruni ad Annio da Viterbo*. Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 2003: 291-342. On the contribution of the Humanism to our subject, see now:



On the other side, the humanistic culture introduced in historical practice a critical attitude towards the sources and method of historical writings. This is true primarily for the Florentine humanists, such as the pupils of Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini. Bruni, for example, devoted many pages of his work to a severe revision of the legendary narratives about the origins of Florence.⁷¹ Through the humanistic analysis of the Roman sources, Bruni was able to reject the traditional images of the origins, and even their most important author, Giovanni Villani. At the same time in Genoa the humanist and chancellor Giovanni Stella followed the example of the early Florentine humanists; in his *History of Genoa*, Stella rejected the narratives of Jacopo da Varazze on the origins of the city as inventions devoid of any credibility.⁷²

But in a more general consideration, it would be a mistake to suppose that humanistic historical writings were going to build a 'modern' approach to history, based on a critical evaluation of the sources. Humanistic historians were no less involved in their political context than their medieval predecessors.

Coluccio Salutati himself, the father of the first generation of Florentine humanists, was the chancellor of the Florentine republic in 1375-1406. In his works and public letters, he very often used ancient examples to justify the Florentine politics against its enemies. During the war against the papacy in 1376-1378, he tried to gain the alliance of several cities of the papal state. In a letter to the commune of Ancona, he went back to the ancient sources on the origin of the city, founded by the Greek colons from Syracuse in 4th century BC:

*Momentote maiores vestros illos unquam, qui vobis urbem tam magnificam condiderunt, quod et olim inter nobiles totius Latii civitates fuit habita celebris et adhuc hodierno tempore non parvo lumine multas excedit, de Sicilia servitutem grecorum fugientes preparata classe viriliter aufugisse seu, ut quidam auctores non ignobiles volunt, de grecorum finibus advenisse solum libertatis studio servitutem simul cum patria relinquentes [...].*⁷³

In this case it was not an 'incredible origin': Ancona was really a Greek foundation. But the way Coluccio told the story was very far from being a neutral approach to the past. The sources were different, the skill of managing Latin texts was deeply improved, but the political use of the past remained the very centre of the question of origins in urban context. Humanism did not cancel, rather increased the importance of the past as the foundation of the political identities.

Callard, Caroline; Crouzet-Pavon, Élisabeth; Tallon, Alain, dirs. *La Politique de l'histoire en Italie. Arts et pratiques du réemploi (XIV-XVII^e siècle)*. Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2014.

71. On humanistic historiography see: Ianziti, Gary. *Writing History in Renaissance Italy. Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2012.

72. Villard, Renaud. "Le héros introuvable...": 5-24.

73. Langkabel, Hermann. *Die Staatsbriefe Coluccio Salutati. Untersuchungen zum Frühhumanismus in der Florentiner Staatskanzlei und Auswahlédition*. Köln-Wien: Böhlau, 1981: 112-113.

