

THE TOOLS OF WAR IN THE CANCELLIERI VENDETTA

Summary. The Cancellieri vendetta, a conflict between members of the Cancellieri clan, took place in the 13th century, perhaps in the year 1300. In terms of narrative sources, we can identify two distinct groups of records: the Florentine tradition and the Pistoia chronicle. The vendetta determined the history of both Pistoia and the Tuscan region, as the antagonisms among the Pistoian elite caused similar factional strife in Florence as well when the leaders of the two Cancellieri factions moved to the nearby city. The so-called 'White' Cancellieri were linked with the Florentine White Guelphs; the other party were linked with the Florentine Black Guelphs. The leaders of the Florentine factions – the Donati (Blacks) and the Cerchi (Whites) – were opponents in everyday politics. The impulse of the Cancellieri clan members had a huge effect on the situation leading to violent factional wars in Florence that ended in 1308. In my study, I analyse the narrative sources of this period, both from Pistoia and from Florence, and examine the tools used in the fights: the 'tangible' weapons that were mentioned by the anonymous writer from Pistoia and the 'narrative' tools of the Florentine tradition.

Keywords: vendetta, Cancellieri, Pistoia, Florence, factional strives

Introduction

Giovanni Villani, one of the most famous Florentine chroniclers, wrote that Pistoia was a felicitous and pleasant city before the fights between the two branches of the Cancellieri family began.¹ From a historical viewpoint, we can suggest that the violent actions that shook the small Tuscan town of Pistoia were important events during the strife between the Florentine Black and White Guelphs. According to the literature on the subject and based on various narrative sources we can observe two different viewpoints of the chronology of the Cancellieri vendetta. The first suggests that the famous factional strife started in 1286 while

¹ G. VILLANI (hereinafter: VILLANI), *Nuova Cronica*, ed. G. PORTA, Parma 1991, IX, pp. 38–39.

the other dates the outbreak of the conflict to around the year 1300.² The earlier date (1286) could be derived from the work of Tolomeo da Lucca,³ while other Tuscan historical works place the famous vendetta close to the escalation of the conflict between the Florentine Blacks and Whites, i.e., around 1300. The latter idea could be based on the following nexus: according to the majority of the chroniclers, the Cancellieri had strong ties with Florence and their conflict caused the fights between the Black and the White Guelph parties. However, since in the archives of the nearby town of Prato there are records written between 1286 and 1292 that refer to the banished members of the Cancellieri family who were in exile from Pistoia because of the local factional conflicts,⁴ we can conclude that the Cancellieri vendetta may in fact have taken place much earlier than the outbreak of the Florentine conflict, preceding it by at least eight years.

In the case of the Cancellieri vendetta, we have to mention the existence of two narrative traditions: Florentine and Pistoiese. The first narrative tradition is made of the most important Florentine chronicles. In chronological order, the first of these sources is the *Nuova cronica* written by Giovanni Villani (1280–1348).⁵ Villani was the contemporary of Dino Compagni (1247–1324), the author of another prominent source, the *Cronica*.⁶ While both chroniclers came from the middle ranks of Florentine society, they had different occupations and experiences: Villani was primarily a banker and Compagni was an active politician. The historical tradition of writing local chronicles continued with the work of Marchionne di Coppo Stefani (1336–1385)⁷ titled *Cronaca* and ended with the work of Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444).⁸ The latter was,

² D. HERLIHY, *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia, The Social History of an Italian Town, 1200–1435*, New Haven 1967, pp. 201–202; G. CHERUBINI, *Storia di Pistoia 2, L'età del libero comune, Dal inizio del XII alla metà del XIV secolo*, Firenze 1998, p. 60.

³ *Ptolemaie Luccensis: Annales. Documenti di Storia Italiana*, vol. 6, Cronache dei Secoli XIII e XIV, Firenze 1876, p. 96.

⁴ R. PIATTOLI, *Vanni Fucci e Focaccia de' Cancellieri alla luce di nuovi documenti*, "Archivio Storico Italiano" 1934, vol. 92 (Serie 7, vol. 21), no. 1 (349), pp. 93–115.

⁵ VILLANI, IX, 38–39.

⁶ *Cronica di Dino Compagni* (hereinafter: COMPAGNI), introduzione e note di Gino Luzzatto, Torino 1968, I 25.

⁷ STEFANI DI MARCHIONNE DI COPPO (hereinafter: STEFANI) *Cronaca Fiorentina*, ed. N. RODO-LICO, [in:] *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 30, part I, ed. L.A. MURATORI, Città di Castello 1903, rubrica 216.

⁸ L. BRUNI, *Istoria Fiorentina*, trans. D. ACCIAJUOLI, intr. C. MONZANI, Firenze 1861 (Progetto Manuzio, E-text kiadás, 2004), pp. 192–193.

however, more a Renaissance writer than a medieval chronicler, as was Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) who also wrote about the Cancellieri vendetta.⁹ This reoccurrence of the vendetta topic in the works of various authors in the period of over 100 years signifies its importance for late medieval Florentine society and the nascent Renaissance era.¹⁰

In contrast, the other narrative tradition contains only one work: the *Storie pistoriensis* (Chronicle of Pistoia) attributed to an unknown writer called ‘Anonimo Pistoiese.’¹¹ The accurate details of the work suggest that the author was nearly contemporary to the events described in it, or at least used other sources that were written around the time of the Cancellieri vendetta. In the case of this work, we see one important difference: while the Florentine sources mentioned only one stage of the conflict, the so-called ‘origin’ of the vendetta, the Pistoia chronicler recorded the first years of the factional strife. For this reason, I will begin my analysis of the conflict with the Pistoia narrative.

⁹ N. MACHIAVELLI (hereinafter: MACHIAVELLI) *Istorie fiorentine*, Progetto Manuzio 1998, II 16.

¹⁰ It is important to know that the work of Giovanni Villani was well-known by later writers. Although Dino Compagni was a contemporary author, they didn’t know each other. Compagni’s *Cronica* was practically unknown until the end of the 19th century. The main part of Compagni’s work was dedicated to the inner city politics between 1290 and 1314, which was unique at that time (L. GREEN, *Chronicle into History. An essay on the interpretation of history in Florentine fourteenth-century chronicles*, Cambridge 1972, p. 11). The *Nuova cronica* became the most important narrative about the history of Florence during the Middle Ages. Therefore, Marchionne di Coppo Stefani used Villani’s work: in some cases he copied whole passages from *Nuova cronica* into his own historical work, the *Cronaca* (A. DE VINCENTIIS, *Scrittura e politica cittadina: la Cronaca fiorentina di Marchionne di Coppo Stefani*, “Rivista storica italiana” 1996, vol. 108, pp. 231–297). While the main goal of the above-mentioned chroniclers was to write down the history of the city, later authors, such as Leonardo Bruni, wanted to highlight the glory of Florence. It’s important that while Villani, Compagni, and Stefani wrote in Italian, Bruni returned to Latin (P. VITI, *Storia e storiografia in Leonardo Bruni*, “Archivio Storico Italiano” 1997, vol. 155, No. 1 (571), pp. 49–98). At the end of the Middle Ages, Niccolò Machiavelli tried to use the much earlier works to support his view on the events of the Medici era. He cited Poggio Braccolini and the earlier Giovanni Villani as proof of his own knowledge about the history of Florence, although his historical concept emphasised a ‘cyclical decline’ of the city (S. DI MARIA, *Machiavelli’s Ironic View of History: The Istorie Fiorentine*, “Renaissance Quarterly” 1992, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 248–263). For this reason, the Cancellieri vendetta played an important role in Machiavelli’s work: the author could present the continuous inner fights. Thus, *Istorie Fiorentine* shows us which historical events had important meaning at the beginning of the 16th century.

¹¹ *Storie pistoresi*, ed. S.A. BARBI, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 11, part 5, pp. 4–5.

The Cancellieri vendetta in the local chronicle

The origin

The Cancellieri family was one of the most powerful clans in Pistoia in the medieval history of the city. The Cancellieri often fought against other prominent families: first the Lazzari, then the Panciatichi.¹² Around the first half of the 13th century, the Cancellieri became divided into two branches: one named *Cancellieri neri* ('Cancellieri Blacks') and the other known as *Cancellieri bianchi* ('Cancellieri Whites'). The rift between the clan members increased further when an argument between drunken young men playing a game led to a serious fight. Carlino di Gualfredi from the Cancellieri Whites fought with Dore di Guiglielmo from the Cancellieri Blacks. When the latter was defeated he felt 'dishonoured.' That same night he tried to avenge this insult by attacking Carlino's brother, Vanni (who had not taken part in the tavern brawl). In the attack, Dore seriously injured him with a sword, causing Vanni to lose his arm.

These events had serious consequences. It seems that at the beginning the Blacks feared the Whites' potential vendetta – a few days after his attack on Vanni, Dore's brothers forced him to ask forgiveness of Gualfredo, Vanni's father. However, when Dore arrived at the Whites' house, Vanni's brothers attacked him and cut off his hand. This was, as the chronicler Anonimo Pistoiese wrote in the *Storie pistoriensis*,¹³ 'the point of no return.' It was now impossible to return to a peaceful conversation and amicable solution.

¹² These fights were examined by Vieri Mazzoni. *Vide*: V. MAZZONI, *Tra mito e realtà: le fazioni pistoiesi nel contesto Toscano*, [in:] *La Pistoia comunale nel contesto toscano ed europeo, secoli XIII–XIV*, ed. P. GUALTIERI, Pistoia 2008.

¹³ „essendo à una cella, dove si vendea vino, e havendo bevuto di soperchio, nacque scandolo in tra loro giocando; Onde vennero a parole, e percossonsi insieme, si che quello della parte Bianca sopraseo à quello della parte Nera: lo quale havea nome Dore di M. Guiglielmo, uno e maggiori di Casa sua, Cioè della parte Nera. Quello della parte Bianca, chel'havea battuto havea nome Carlino di M. Gualfredi pure de' maggiori della Casa della parte Bianca. Onde vedendosi Dore essere battuto, e oltraggiato, e vitoperato dal consorto suo, e non potendosi quivi vendicare, peroch'erano più fratelli à darli: partissi, e propuosesi di volersi vendicare. fratelli del detto Carlino, ch'havea offeso lui, ch'havea nome M. Vanni di M. Gualfredi, e era giudice, passando a cavallo in quel luogo, dove Dore stava in posta, Dore lo chiamo, e egli non sapendo quello, ch'el fratello gl'havea fatto andò à lui, e volendoli Dore dare d'una spada in su la testa a M. Vanni per riparare lo colpo, paro la mano; onde

The phases of the conflict

After the initial attacks, members of the opposing branches of the Cancellieri family started fighting with each other. I believe that the conflict may be divided into several stages, even if the factional strife was a continuous chain of events. For the sake of clarity, in the plate presented below I tried to draw the phases of the Cancellieri fights. I think that each battle or event during the vendetta had an initial point that, at the same time, was usually also the ending point of the previous clash. This approach is based on the logic and viewpoint of Anonimo Pistoiese, who described each step as a kind of revenge for the earlier events. I also think that the conflict became deeper after every battle since the culminating point was the flight of the *podestà* – the law enforcement officer – from the city, as he was intimidated by the factions and feared their retaliation. After this, the local community of Pistoia asked Florence for help. The readers will see in the next part of this paper that Anonimo Pistoiese's chronicle is a useful source in explaining the offences committed by the Cancellieri and their consequences, while its modern analysis is important for the understanding of the logical structure of vendetta narratives.

Based on our primary source, the *Storie pistoriensis*, I identified at least ten phases of the fights during the Cancellieri vendetta. The first phase consisted of a street fight after the initial mutilation of young Vanni – Detto di Sinibaldo of the Blacks was seriously wounded. Fighting in the streets became commonplace between the members of the feuding families and the Whites and the Blacks appeared to the locals as equal forces. In the second and third phases, the aggressors were the Blacks who, according to the *Storie pistoriensis*, always provoked the Whites aiming to avenge the wounds of Detto di Sinibaldo, who was not only a family member but the leader of the house. In the fourth phase, the initiative was still on the Blacks' side – in this case, they attacked a member of the Vergolesi family, not a direct member of the Cancellieri family but a relative of the wife of Focaccia, who was an infamous leader of the Whites and a well-known persona also in Florence (as evidenced by the fact that Focaccia's name can be found in

Dore menando gli taglio il volto, e la mano per modo, che non ve li si partio, (...) e M. Vanni andonne a casa sua e quando 'lo padre, e fratelli, e gl'altri consorti lo videro cosi fedito, n'hebbero grande dolore". *Storie pistoriensis*..., pp. 4–5.

Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*).¹⁴ With this action, the Blacks expanded the conflict further and what was initially a family feud started to spread to other families of Pistoia.

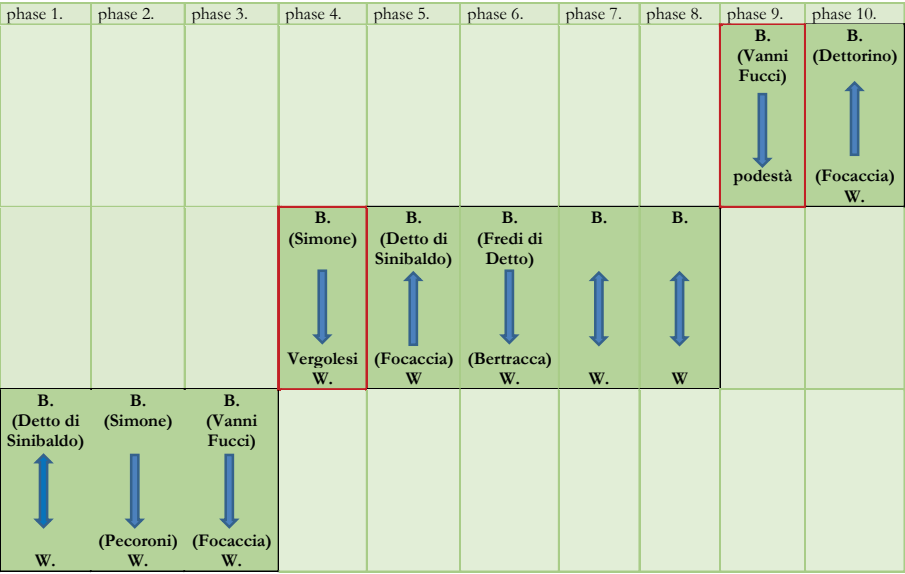


Fig. 1. The main interactions between the two Cancellieri branches The cascading construction symbolizes the increase of the fight. The red columns indicate the turning points. (Source: based on *Storie pistoresi*, ed. S.A. BARBI, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 11, part 5, pp. 4–11)

Up to this point only close Cancellieri family members and their men had been involved in the conflict; the attack against a member of the Vergolesi family took the conflict to the next level. According to the chronicler Anonimo Pistoiese, the Whites retaliated immediately: they killed Detto di Sinibaldo (the prominent leader of the Blacks mentioned above), which intensified hostilities even further. Now the main targets became the heads of the opposing houses. Soon Detto’s illegitimate son Fredi killed Focaccia’s father Bertracca.¹⁵ After this, the chronicler reported two street fights that took place at different

¹⁴ J. AHERN, *Apocalyptic onomastics: Focaccia* („*Inferno*” XXXII, 63), “Romance Notes” 1982, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 181–184. Francesco Brunì wrote a chapter about the effects of the factional strife on Dante. F. BRUNÌ, *La città divisa. Le parti e il bene comune da Dante a Guiccardini*, Bologna 2003, pp. 100–107.

¹⁵ *Storie pistoriensis...*, pp. 12–13.

houses and towers, in each case involving several participants. The aggravation of the fights led to what we can see as the ninth phase of the conflict, when the Blacks began to insult and attack the men of the *podestà*,¹⁶ the head of the city security forces at that time, whose main task was to maintain peace and enforce the law. Following the attack on his men, the *podestà* abandoned his position and fled to his home city. Thus, in reality, the government of Pistoia did not have many real tools to prevent the violence to begin with, and when the *podestà* left his post lost the last tools and resources to act against the feuding factions. In order to give the readers some idea of the course of the conflict below I include two passages from the *Storie pistoriensis* describing two attacks from the fourth and fifth phases of the vendetta, which in my opinion were typical of that conflict.

Phase 4. (Attack on the Vergolesi house)

On a late evening, they [the Blacks] went to Vergolesi house, who were prominent members of the White party. Focaccia was married to M. Lippo's daughter. They entered the garden of the house where they found just one knight, M. Bettino, who was the most noble and kind knight in Pistoia at that time. They immediately killed him, and then left the city. His death was a major incident. This was the moment when the factional strife became wider.¹⁷

Phase 5. (Revenge for the Vergolesi murder)

M. Detto di M. Sinibaldo from Black Cancellieri went to the Piazza Lazzari, and because he used to come here from time to time, he wasn't guarded by his men. He thought that nobody wanted to take vendetta against him (...) Focaccia and Freduccio with numerous men entered the 'bottega' and killed him. Then they left.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁷ „M. Simone Cancellieri, e con altri della parte Nera con buona brigata di fanti una sera al tardi andarono a casa de' Vergolesi, Il qual' erano grandi Caporali della parte Bianca. (...) El Focaccia havea per moglie la figliuola dl M. Lippo, entrarono nel cortile delle cale a quivi trovarono uno cavaliere, ch' avea nome M. Bettino, el quale era il più nobile, Più cortese Cavaliere, ch' a quel tempo haveva Pistoia; e subito l'uccisero, e partironsi della città; e della morte di cosui sue tenuto gran de danno.” *Storie pistoriensis...*, pp. 8–9.

¹⁸ „M. Detto di M. Sinibaldo de Canciglieri Neri venisse alla Piazza de' Lazzari, e perocche alcuna volta si volea venire non guardandosi da consorti suoi, che non credea, ch' eglino volessono fare le vendette altrui nel sangue loro medesimo. On de uno di venendo M. Detto alla detta Piazza, e entrando in una bottega d'uno, che li faceva un farletto di zendado presso à casa de' figliuoli di M. Rinieri: lo Focaccia, e Freduccio con certa quantità di fanti, entrarono nella detta bottega, e quivi l'uccisero, e partironsi.” *Storie pistoriensis...*, p. 10.

The tools of the fight

The Pistoia chronicle narrative provides details about the fights, including the names of the leading participants, the place and type of the attack, and the types of weapons used in the skirmishes.

	Numbers	Field	Special elements	Weapons
Phase 1.	two groups	street fights	houses	cavalier armour, stones
Phase 2.	<i>“gran brigata di fanti”</i>	Attack on a public square		
Phase 3.	three leaders with <i>“brigata di fanti”</i>			
Phase 4.	One leader with <i>“brigata di fanti”</i>	Rush against a house at night		
Phase 5.	Two leader with <i>“fanti”</i>	Raid on a pitch		
Phase 6.	One leader with <i>“fanti”</i>	Raid at night		
Phase 7.	two groups	street fights	houses and towers	spears, cross-bows, Stones, cavalier armour, heavy horses
Phase 8.	two leaders with <i>“compagni”</i>	conflict at a house		<i>spada</i> , pavese shield, heavy armour
Phase 9.	one leader with <i>“compagni”</i>	conflict at a loggia		<i>spada</i> , knights armour
Phase 10.	one leader with <i>“fanti”</i>	Raid at night in a tavern		heavy armour

Fig. 2. The main details of the fights Particular view about the tools used in the ten phases.(Source: based on *Storie pistoresi*, ed. S.A. BARBI, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 11, part 5, pp. 4–11)

I identified the so-called special elements such as, for example, the use of fortified houses or towers. Based on fig. 2 presented above, we can see that information about the weapons used by the attackers appears mostly in phases seventh, eighth, and ninth. These were stones, swords, spears, crossbows, and

a *pavise* shield. I also separated those cases in which we read about the ‘armour’ of the participants, although no specific details are mentioned by the author. In one case we get information about an equipped horse, which possibly could be a warhorse. Overall, the most common types of weapons were stones and swords. Stones, in particular, could be described as the standard tool used in the urban warfare. Another important observation is that the weapons used in the conflict became more serious over time: in addition to stones and swords, we see a cross-bow, a spear, and especially the *pavise*. This means that as the feud intensified the fighting men started using military-grade weapons. In terms of the form of the attacks, the most typical were night raids and battles fought in houses. It is almost impossible to determine the numbers of the participants – the chronicle uses the words ‘*compagni*’ and ‘*fanti*’ when referring to the groups, which do not give us clues about their number. ‘*Compagni*’ could mean ‘comrades’ and ‘*fanti*’ may refer to servants.¹⁹

We can conclude the analysis of the *Storie pistoriensis* by saying that this chronicle gives us an abundance of details about the Cancellieri vendetta. Therefore, we should turn to the Florentine historical tradition for comparison.

The Florentine version of the vendetta

Unlike the *Storie pistoriensis*, the Florentine narratives don’t include many details about the Cancellieri vendetta. The longest narratives about the conflict can be found in Giovanni Villani’s *Nuova cronica* and Marchionne di Coppo Stefani’s *Cronaca*, although both authors concentrated just on the initial conflict (the origin of the vendetta) and the mutilation of Vanni Cancellieri. On the pages of the *Nuova cronica* we read that the noble Cancellieri family was the most powerful house in Pistoia. Villani wrote that the members of that family were rich and well-known all over Tuscany. Moreover, he stated that they had one hundred armed men at their disposal. However, according to Villani, the ‘devil’s workings’ caused the growing antagonism between the members of the family. Somebody from the Blacks faction offended one of the Whites, which in turn led to the attack that ended with the mutilation in a melee.²⁰ What is

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²⁰ VILLANI 245–246 (9/38).

significant is that Villani didn't mention any names in his retelling of the story – this shows us that the specifics of the conflict were not particularly important for the Florentine writer; he was more interested in the 'logic' of the conflict. Villani ended the story by stating that the inhabitants of Pistoia finally had enough of it and forced the Cancellieri parties into exile to Florence.²¹

Dino Compagni, who in his *Cronica* provides almost no details on the events, wrote that the antagonism between the Cancellieri Blacks and Whites was one of the origins of the later fights between the Cerchi and the Donati (or the Whites Guelphs and Black Guelphs) in Florence.²²

Stefani, who lived in the second half of the 14th century, also stated that the Pistoia vendetta was the main cause of the Florentine factional strife. His version of the story shows parallels with the *Nuova cronica*. Stefani also recorded the legend according to which the Cancellieri Whites got their name from their ancestor's first wife named Bianca, while the descendants from his second marriage became the Blacks. This, supposedly, was at the root of the divide within the Cancellieri clan's ranks. Stefani's *Cronica fiorentina* includes many more details concerning the vendetta than the *Nuova cronica*. Stefani mentioned the main actors by name: Lore, a young man of the Cancellieri Blacks, son of Giulielmo; and Bertracca, the head of the opposing side of the family. According to *Cronica Fiorentina*, when Lore cut off the hand of Bertracca's son, Giulielmo wanted to resolve the matter amicably. A unique feature of Stefani's work is that he inserted his own thoughts in the narrative in the form of words spoken by the actors.²³ Thus, in *Cronica fiorentina* Giulielmo sent his son to the rival house with the following words: 'Go to messer Bertracca and ask for pardon, and ask forgiveness from his son, too.'²⁴ Bertracca's reaction was recorded in the next sentence: 'It wasn't a wise thought that you came here, and your father was not wise to have sent you.'²⁵ After Bertracca ordered his servants to mutilate Lore, he said: 'Bring the hand back to your father, who sent you here.'²⁶ Stefani said that the bloody fight between

²¹ VILLANI 245–246 (9/38).

²² COMPAGNI 18 (1/25).

²³ STEFANI 79 (rubrica 216).

²⁴ „Va a messer Bertacca e chiedigli perdono, e vuoglia pregare il figliuolo che ancora egli perdoni” STEFANI 79 (rubrica 216)

²⁵ „Tu fosti poco savio a venirci, e tuo padre a mandartici” STEFANI 79 (rubrica 216).

²⁶ „Porta la mano tuo padre che qua t'ha mandato” STEFANI 79 (rubrica 216).

the two parties was condemned by the people of Pistoia, so in the end, the Pistoiese *comune* sent them to Florence.²⁷

Leonardo Bruni, who lived much later than Compagni and Stefani, wrote that there was an inner conflict among the richest and most powerful families of Pistoia, the consequence of which was the fights between the two Cancellieri parties. In his version of the story, the conflict was not limited to Pistoia but also affected Florence. He didn't mention other details but emphasised the manner in which the conflict spread to Florence: the Florentines were fed up with the fights and they forced the Cancellieri to move to the nearby city in an attempt to restore peace.²⁸

In the second book of *Istorie fiorentine* Machiavelli gave a much more detailed description of the events of the Cancellieri vendetta.²⁹ In addition to Lore, he mentioned Bertracca's son Geri. In his version of the story, Lore's father wanted to resolve the situation amicably but inadvertently worsened it when he ordered Geri to go and ask for pardon from Lore's father, to which Bertracca responded: '*Go back to your father and tell him that wounds can't be healed with words, but with iron.*'³⁰ After this, the Black and White Cancellieri called their men to arms, and after some time they moved to Florence.³¹

The story of the Cancellieri vendetta as told in Florentine sources can be divided into two groups: the shorter versions (Compagni, Bruni) and the longer descriptions (Villani, Stefani, Machiavelli). The common points in all these versions are naturally the passages that emphasise that the conflict escalated and moved to Florence. In addition, both the *Nuova cronica* and Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine* condemn Bertracca's aggressive reaction to the peace offering from Giulielmo and his son and make this the focal point of the story.

As I already mentioned, we do not find many details about the Cancellieri factional strife in the Florentine versions and therefore we cannot establish the phases of the conflict on the basis of the Florentine tradition. However, the fact that well-known Florentine writers such as Villani or Compagni wrote about the effects of the Cancellieri family members' actions in Florence suggests

²⁷ STEFANI 79 (rubrica 216).

²⁸ BRUNI, pp. 192–193.

²⁹ MACHIAVELLI, p. 39 (2/16).

³⁰ „Torna a tuo padre, e digli che le ferite con il ferro e non con le parole si medicano” MACHIAVELLI, p. 39 (2/16).

³¹ MACHIAVELLI, p. 39 (2/16).

that the conflict did in fact spread from Pistoia to Florence and likely caused the feud between the Florentine Blacks and Whites, who took their names from the Cancellieri factions.

The Florentine expanse and Pistoia

In order to gather further details of the conflict we should examine the relations between the two cities, i.e. Pistoia and Florence, at that time. The larger and more powerful Florence had strong agendas and a very active foreign policy. As Pietro Gualtieri concluded, from a geopolitical view it was highly important for the city to stabilise its political and diplomatic influence over the smaller towns in Tuscany, primarily in the Valdelsa and Valdarno valleys.³² Several researchers have pointed out that the key subject matters for Florentine authorities were the control over main roads and ensuring the safety and uninterrupted operation of commercial routes. Florence wanted to secure the way grain and other products were transported from Romagna through the mountain passes in the north, which were partly located in Pistoia's territory.³³ After the Battle of Campaldino that took place between the Guelphs and Ghibellines in 1289, Florence showed her primacy in Tuscany over her former rivals, such as Siena or Arezzo.³⁴ [From this point onwards,] the Florentine's grip over the region intensified. We can name several different 'tools' with which Florence asserted its power. One was sending 'friendly' officers to the neighbouring cities to stabilise local politics, represent Florence's political agenda, and manipulate the local factions. Some good examples of this approach were the towns of Colle, Prato, and San Miniato, where around the year 1300 the Florentines introduced local officers representing Florence's interests – first *podestàs*, then *gonfaloniere* and *capitano*.³⁵ Although we can perceive these actions as unwelcome interference from a much

³² P. GUALTIERI, „Col caldo e furore di certi Fiorentini” *Espansione fiorentina e preminenza signorile a Prato, Pistoia e nei centri della Valdelsa e del Valdarno inferiore*, [in:] *Le signorie cittadine in Toscana Esperienze di potere e forme di governo personale (secoli XIII–XV)*, ed. A. ZORZI, Roma 2013, pp. 221–222.

³³ R. ZAGNONI, *Le controversie fra Pistoia e Bologna per il possesso per Pavana e Sambuca nel secolo XIV*, [in:] *Pistoiai e la Toscana nel Medioevo, Studi per Natale Rauty*, ed. E. VANUCCHI, Pistoia 1997, pp. 139–141; D. HERLIHY, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–22.

³⁴ P. GRILLO, *La falsa inimicizia. Guelfi e ghibellini nell'Italia del Duecento*, Roma 2018, pp. 92–97.

³⁵ P. GUALTIERI, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–222.

stronger neighbour, in reality the effects of such arrangements for local town or city governments could be useful as they often prevented the escalation of conflict between opposing factions that disturbed *pax urbana*. Nevertheless, in some cases, the governments did not have any choice or say in that matter, as they didn't want to upset Florence and get involved in a conflict with their powerful neighbour. The expansion of Florentine political influence soon caused Pistoia to fall within its sphere of interest. David Herlihy and Laura de Angelis conclude that the Florentines sent *podestàs* to Pistoia at least in 13 or 14 political cycles with the aim of strengthening their domination,³⁶ especially when there was an economic or political crisis in Pistoia. Florentine decision-makers carefully watched the course of events in the nearby cities and when they decided that a situation was becoming unstable they tried to remedy it.³⁷ In this way, Florence extended a 'helping hand' while expanding its political influence.

While Florence was developing its foreign policy and asserting its power in Tuscany, however, it was torn by internal conflicts and the struggle between various parties trying to gain control and banish their opponents from the city. As already mentioned, the two key Florentine factions of that time were the Cerchi, led by Messer Vieri Cerchi, and the Donati, led by Messer Corso Donati.³⁸ Although this particular feud and Florence's internal struggles are not the subject of this paper, it is important to note that, as Giovanni Cherubini and Andrea Zorzi have concluded, the Donati and the Cerchi tried to involve their kin from Pistoia in the conflict and sought allies within the local factions. Thus, the Cerchi had relations with the White Cancellieri and the Donati were linked to the Black Cancellieri.³⁹

As implied above, the effect of the Florentine parties' involvement on Pistoia is a complex topic. For instance, Laura De Angelis demonstrates that the *podestàs* that were sent by the Florentine government to Pistoia came from both the Black and the White factions. Furthermore, these officers were appointed for a limited period of time and usually changed every six months. De Angelis also noted that there was a specific key to these nominations: the men representing

³⁶ D. HERLIHY, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–227, L. DE ANGELIS, *I Podestà di Pistoia*, [in:] *La Pistoia comunale...*, pp. 149–168.

³⁷ D. HERLIHY, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–227.

³⁸ A. ZORZI, *Conflitti e sistemi giudiziari: La faida Cerchi-Donati*, [in:] *La trasformazione di un quadro politico: ricerche su politica e giustizia a Firenze dal comune allo stato territoriale*, ed. A. ZORZI, Firenze 2008, pp. 100–103; J.M. NAJEMY, *A History of Florence 1200–1575*, Malden 2006, pp. 88–95.

³⁹ G. CHERUBINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–63; A. ZORZI, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–118.

the Blacks and Whites were usually appointed alternately to prevent them from concentrating power in Pistoia.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Dino Compagni mentioned in his *Cronica* that the *podestàs* were usually corrupt and aided either the Cancellieri Blacks or the Cancellieri Whites. Compagni even recorded the names of the officers who supported one of the local factions, whether in sympathy or for money.⁴¹ Unfortunately, the chronicler didn't write about the exile of the Cancellieri to Florence or their role or their relations there, which is a bit surprising, since he must have known about these matters – he was an active politician at that time and in his work included quite a few details about the fights between the Black and White Guelphs. Unlike his contemporary Dino Compagni, Giovanni Villani wasn't involved in daily political events and perhaps was not as well informed. Since the most detailed source, the *Annales pistoriensis*, states that following the tenth phase of the conflict Pistoia's local government called for the Florentines who sent their people to help make peace in the town, we can conclude that Compagni's, and not Villani's, version was right about the political causes of the conflict. At the same time it is worth noting that from earlier studies we know that Villani's work did have a significant effect on later historical writers, including Stefani, Bruni, and Machiavelli.

In any case, we can summarise this analysis by stating that when the Florentine chroniclers wrote that the Cancellieri somehow 'moved' to the city, they meant that the animosities were brought to Florence. Therefore, the main goal of the simplified versions of the Cancellieri vendetta, as recorded by the Florentine authors, was to explain the internal struggles and feuds between various factions in Florence itself, and not to provide a detailed report on the actual conflict between the members of the Cancellieri family – the story of this particular vendetta was thus only a kind of a narrative tool.

Conclusion

We can summarise this discussion with the following thoughts. First of all, we can conclude that there are two different types of narrative sources and two different viewpoints referring to the events associated with the Cancellieri

⁴⁰ L. DE ANGELIS, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁴¹ COMPAGNI 18 (1/25).

vendetta. The Florentine tradition does not pay much attention to the exact course of the fighting but is focused on the initial conflict. The Pistoia chronicle – the local version of the story – provides much more information on the stages of the conflict, its participants and their weapons. In my opinion, this suggests that the fighting was much longer and the conflict much deeper than reported by the Florentine authors. Secondly, based on Anonimo Pistoiese's report, at the beginning the opponents fought only with swords and stones but in the later stages of the feud used military-grade weapons, such as spears, crossbows, and *pavise* shields, which shows the escalation of the conflict. This source also provides us with valuable information about the tactics of urban warfare: 'rush, raid, ambush.' Naturally, in this type of combat local knowledge and spying techniques must have been invaluable: the aggressors usually knew the target's position. Theoretically, Fredi's attack was successful because as a bastard he was less well-known in the city – and thus less visible – so he could quietly plan his ambush.

However, even though they are less detailed and shorter than *Storie pistoriensis*, the Florentine versions of the story also provide important information. They concentrated on the aggressive behaviour of the Cancellieri and its resultant effects on Florentine politics, which was a narrative tool of warfare. The Florentine chronicles emphasised the role that was played by the Cancellieri in the White Guelph – Black Guelph factional strife; this was perhaps an element of legitimising the subsequent Florentine expansion. This hypothesis should be verified through further research.

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NARZĘDZIA WOJNY W WENDETCIE CANCELLIERI

Streszczenie. Wendeta Cancellieri, konflikt pomiędzy członkami rodu Cancellieri, miał miejsce w XIII w., być może w roku 1300. Pod względem źródeł narracyjnych wyróżnić możemy dwie odrębne grupy przekazów: tradycję florencką oraz kronikę Pistoii. Wendeta zadecydowała o historii zarówno Pistoii, jak i regionu Toskanii, gdyż antagonizmy wśród elity Pistoiań wywołały podobne konflikty frakcyjne również we Florencji, gdy przywódcy dwóch frakcji Cancellieri przenieśli się do pobliskiego miasta. Tzw. „biali” Cancellieri byli powiązani z florenckimi białymi gwelfami; druga strona była powiązana z florenckimi czarnymi gwelfami. Przywódcy frakcji florenckich – Donati (Czarni) i Cerchi (Biali) – byli przeciwnikami w codziennej polityce. Działania członków klanu Cancellieri wywarły ogromny wpływ na sytuację, która doprowadziła do gwałtownych wojen frakcyjnych we Florencji, które zakończyły się w 1308 r. W swoim opracowaniu poddaję analizie źródła narracyjne tego okresu, zarówno z Pistoii, jak i Florencji, oraz badam narzędzia używane w walkach: broń „namacalna”, o której wspominał anonimowy pisarz z Pistoii, oraz narzędzia „narracyjne” tradycji florenckiej.

Słowa kluczowe: wendeta, Cancellieri, Pistoia, Florencja, dążenia frakcyjne