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## THE FIGHT FOR NOCERA CONSPIRACY AND VENDETTA AGAINST THE TRINCI BROTHERS IN *CRONICHE DI LUCCA*

**Summary.** Giovanni Sercambi (1348–1424) wrote on several acts of violence in his main work, entitled *Croniche di Lucca*. On the pages of his chronicle we can often read about vendettas, factional fights and the guilty of traitors. As regards to the latter category, the most important ones were probably the killing of Lazzaro Guinigi, Lord of Lucca in 1400, and the conspiracy against the Trinci brothers. Nicolaò and Bartolomeo Trinci were killed in 1421 by Pedro de Argillaia *castellano*, in the fortress of Nocera, which was the property of them. The third brother Corrado Trinci and his allied troops immediately moved to Nocera. Braccio da Montone, *signore* of Perugia (and famous *condottiero*) participated in the campaign. The army recaptured Nocera and the conspirators died. Giovanni Sercambi wrote one of the longest chapters of his historical work about the death of Niccolò and Bartolomeo Trinci. The interest of the Luchese writer is unquestionable. In contrast to the other Tuscan writers, none of whom mentions the bloody events of 1421. In my present paper, I examine the motives behind Sercambi's account. Jean-Baptist Delzant wrote about it recently, but I approach the context differently. With the comparing analysis and the research of the contemporary political circumstances and family relations I conclude that Sercambi's personal interest in violent events and his teaching will was only one reason. On the other hand the writer was sensible to the Guinigi's external politics. He knew the difficult situation in external politics: the Guinigi had marriage relations with the Varani of Camerino and the Trinci of Foligno. Giovanni Sercambi could get information from the Trinci wife of Paolo Guinigi. In the light of this, I examine the special elements of the Sercambi-kind storytelling.

**Keywords:** vendetta, *Croniche di Lucca*, Lucca, Nocera, Italy, Middle Ages, Italy

Giovanni Sercambi (1348–1424), the well-known luchese chronicler, was the author of a lot of special urban history sources. The *Croniche di Lucca*<sup>1</sup> which covers the history of Lucca between 1168 and 1424 (until the death of writer)

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<sup>1</sup> *Le croniche di Giovanni Sercambi*, [in:] *Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, vol. 19–21, ed. S. BONGI, Lucca 1892 (hereinafter: SERCAMBI).

is probably the most important. The chronicle was contemporary with *Istoria di Firenze* by Goro Gati, and the extends of the work could be placed parallel with the writings of Giovanni Villani and Marchionne di Coppo Stefani. Sercambi lived and worked in the period when the *ricordi* or *ricodanze* – which were personal diaries of merchants – distinct from the city chronicles. Huge difference from the Florentine writers that the *Croniche di Lucca* was not part of a history writing tradition, but a substantive work.<sup>2</sup> Other important works of Sercambi were the *Novelle* and *Nota ai Guinigi*. The first is a collection of short stories in several topics; the latter is an advisory lesson for the Guinigi younglings how to govern the city.<sup>3</sup> On the pages of *Croniche* we can read about violent acts, such as vendetta, factional strives and treason too. Sercambi wrote about the latter category in three different contexts: (1) volte-face on battle field (2) intrigues in great politics and (3) conspiracies against *signore*. For Sercambi, maybe the third one was the most important. We can observe this viewpoint on the pages of Lucca chronicle. He wrote plenty of chapters about the murder of Lazzaro Guinigi (1400) and the conspiracy against the Trinci brothers (1421) too. The author participated by himself in the aftermath of the first event. About the revenge against the murders of Lazzaro, Sercambi wrote that the injuries should be health not by cry but sword.<sup>4</sup> The later tragically death of Nicolò and Bartolomeo Trinci had similar weight on Sercambi's pages.<sup>5</sup>

The Trinci was the ruler family of the Umbrian<sup>6</sup> city, Foligno. They were one of the well-known *signore* families of those ages. They governed their territories with shorter breaks from 1226 to the fall of Corrado Trinci in 1439. From this view we can't say that the thoughtfulness of Sercambi about the 1421 murder

<sup>2</sup> L. GREEN, *Chronicle Into History: An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles*. Cambridge 1972, pp. 88–90, 112; D. OSHEIM, *Chronicles and Civic Life in Giovanni Sercambi's Lucca*, [in:] *Chronicling history: chroniclers and historians in medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds. S. DALE, A.W. LEWIN, D.J. OSHEIM, Pennsylvania 2007, pp. 145–149.

<sup>3</sup> CH. MEEK, *Il tempo di Giovanni Sercambi*, [in:] *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo. Catalogo della mostra. Lucca, 30 Novembre 1991*, Lucca 1991, p. 3; S. NELLI, M. TRAPPANI, *La vita familiare e sociale*, [in:] *Ibidem*, pp. 37–47; *Nota ai Guinigi, Le croniche di Giovanni Sercambi, Lucchese*, ed. S. BONGI, [in:] *Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, vol. 19–21, Lucca 1892.

<sup>4</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 1, p. 677.

<sup>5</sup> J.B. DELZANT, *Les Trinci à nocera. mise en scène et construction de la violence dans une seigneurie italienne du premier Quattrocento*, “*Questes. Revue pluridisciplinaire d'études médiévales*” 2008, vol. 14, pp. 64–75; A. PICUTI, *La strage di Nocera. La vendetta dei Trinci*, Foligno 2004.

<sup>6</sup> *Medieval Italy. An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1–2, ed. CH. KLEINHENZ, New York–London 2004, pp. 173, 360.

was irregular. Although the long of the regarding chapter in *Croniche di Lucca* suggest it had a significant and special role: it's almost seven pages long in the relevant printed edition from 1892. It's similar long as the longest stories from *Novelle*. Secondly, the murder of the Trinci brothers wasn't mentioned in any other Tuscan writings, neither in the level of notes. The lords of Foligno was well known, although the murders were unmentioned in Tuscany, just in in Umbria. From this viewpoint the chapter of Sercambi is important not only because of its lengths but its special in its kind. We can ask that which cogitation motivated the luchese writer and politician to write in this length about the Trinci murders? In my current article I try to answer this question. Before the analysis of the relevant caput, it's worthy to introduce Sercambi's career.

### Giovanni Sercambi as a politician

Giovanni Sercambi, the author of *Croniche di Lucca* had a colourful career not only as history writer, but as a politician and – as the *Nota ai Guinigi* shows – as a political advisor too. He was holder a lot of city positions from his young ages to his death. As Giorgio Tori phrased, Sercambi's carrier was started after the liberate of Lucca from the Pisan rule in 1372.<sup>7</sup> First he introduced into the bigger city councils, than placed in positions which needed more specific knowledge and responsibility. Sercambi was many times in *anziani* and in 1391 he was nominee to *Gonfaloniere nel Consiglio nel Trentasei*,<sup>8</sup> in 1393 he was *Capitano delle Milizie del Comune*,<sup>9</sup> and in 1404 became *Condottiero*.<sup>10</sup> We can conclude that the Guinigi leaded city government trusted in Sercambi: he got military and law enforcement positions. In a case of riot he commanded his troops, as *gonfaloniere*.<sup>11</sup> The importance of it shown by the fact that in many periods the Guinigi family members or their entrusted followers (*amici*) held this position.<sup>12</sup> Beyond these Sercambi was the *vicar* of Casiglione, which

<sup>7</sup> G. TORI, *La carriera politica*, [in:] *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo...*, p. 109.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 110.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> M. BROGI, *Sercambi e Paolo Guinigi*, [in:] *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo...*, p. 148.

<sup>11</sup> It is possible that Sercambi underlined his own role in the events and wrote with distortions. About this topic: D. OSHEIM, *Chronicles and Civic Life in Giovanni Sercambi's Lucca*, pp. 145–170.

<sup>12</sup> C. MEEK, *Lucca 1369–1400. Politics and society in an Early Renaissance City-State*, Oxford 1978, p. 281.

means he was delegated governor of some *contado* parts near Lucca.<sup>13</sup> In the councils he was a determining member in *Consiglio nel Trentasei*, *Consiglio Generale*, and the *Quindici*. Sercambi could hold these as the mentored friend of the Guinigi.<sup>14</sup> This family was the most important political power of luchese politics in those times. The leader was Francesco until 1384, he followed by his son Lazzaro (1392–1400), than Paolo, until 1430. The latter was the not just the head of his clan, but the first *signore* from the Guinigi family. As we know from the pages of *Croniche di Lucca*, Paolo Guinigi's rule in 1400 was depended from the unswerving appearance of the *amici*, and within that, Giovanni Sercambi. They made pressure upon the *Consiglio Generale* to elect Paolo ruler. From this excel the relevant opinion is that Sercambi participated of the inner circle of the Guinigi family. We can say that the writer knew the political environment in first hand, and he had a good sight upon the Guinigi's relations. In the following analysis of the Trinci murder chapter we have to keep in mind these facts.

### The murder of Nicolò Trinci in Sercambi's work

We can read the antecedents of the Trinci murders as the following in *Croniche di Lucca*.<sup>15</sup> Ugolino Trinci, who was the *signore* of the Umbrian Foligno,<sup>16</sup> gave properties and offices to a man, named Pasquale di Argilaia. As it turns out from the chronicle pages, he did it despite Pasquale's bad reputation: it was a surmise that he was a notorious ruthless man who done dishonoured things.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> G. TORI, *La carriera politica*, p. 110.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> Sercambi wrote a short teaching-kind part as an introduction to the caput. In this he wrote about the importance of distinguish the friendly relations from the false friendships. Jean-Baptist Delzant reviewed this part carefully. I don't analyse this in my current study, but I reflect to Delzant's words when is' necessary, J.B. DELZANT, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–74.

<sup>16</sup> About the role of Foligno within the Umbrian *signorie* vide: Ch.F. BLACK, *La grande politica e le politiche locali: il problema di una signoria umbra*, [in:] *Signoria in Umbria tra medioevo e Rinascimento. L'esperienza dei Trinci Foligno. 10–13 dicembre 1986*, vol. 1–2, Perugia 1989, p. 91; J.C. MAIRE VIGUEUR, *Comuni e signorie in Umbria, Marche e Lazio*, Torino 1987, p. 252; M. SENSI, *I Trinci*, [in:] *Signoria in Umbria tra medioevo e Rinascimento. L'esperienza dei Trinci Foligno. 10–13 dicembre 1986*, vol. 1–2, Perugia 1989, p. 177.

<sup>17</sup> "Si narra che essendo gran tempo fa in ella città di Fuligno uno signore nomato Ugolino Trinci, avendo preso alcuna domestichezza con uno suo soctoposto nomato ser Pasquale da Argil-

Although Ugolino not just gave preferences to him, but in his deathbed mandatory gave order to his oldest son, Nicolò to attend with Pasquale and his adherents similarly. In the Sercambi-kind story Ugolino talk over his oldest son with smooth words (*con melato parlare*). Nicolò listened to his father and gave properties and offices to Pasquale's children. Pedro di Argiliai became the *castellano* of Nocera,<sup>18</sup> Nanni di Argiliaia became the *cubiculario* of Nicolò.<sup>19</sup> After this, in 1421,<sup>20</sup> Nicolò Trinci organised a hunting event in the woods near Nocera with the present of his *amici*, his escort and Berardo di Rodolfo da Camerino, who was the son and heir of Rodolfo Varani, *signore* of Camerino. During the hunting they decided that they should get a rest in the castello of Nocera. Sercambi wrote that Nicolò thought he was in a secured place as in his own house – of course it was a property of Foligno, so the Trinci.<sup>21</sup> At the night, Nanni di Argiliai who supposedly was in the bedroom with his lord – opened the door inside and let in his brother Pedro. He entered the place with a nude sword, went to Nicolò's bed and immediately killed the awoken *signore*.<sup>22</sup> Thinkable that Sercambi underlined the nudity of the victim to make a symbolical parallel with words “nude sword” to emphasise the defenceless situation of the ruler, detailing the terrifying act.

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laia, e datoli alcuno officio, cognoscendolo crudele et disprietatolo predicto ser Pasquale essendo a tali officii”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

<sup>18</sup> Nocera was captured by Ugolino Trinci in the first decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Pope John XXIII accepted the Trinci as vicars of Nocera in 1412, so we can conclude it was a fresh property, M. SENSI, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>19</sup> “E facto l' essequio del dicto Ugolino, fu suplicato per alchuni di mézzo al predicto Nicolò maggiore figliuolo che li piacesse rimettere il dicto ser Pasquale e figliuoli, con melato parlare; intanto che, prima che del dicto Ugolino fusse facto il settimo, il predicto Nicolò rimisse il dicto ser Pasquale e' figliuoli con restituire a loro mete le possessioni et beni”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

<sup>20</sup> M. SENSI, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>21</sup> “E apparecchiato molta vivanda da vivere con molti chani et cacciatori e con alquanta compagnia, si dirissono a Nocera, (...) pensando esser securi come in casa loro, senza alcuno suspecto dormendo”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

<sup>22</sup> “Nanni soprascripto uscio del lecto e aprio la cammera, et entrato dentro il dicto ser Pedro con una spada nuda in mano, il predicto ragassino vedendo il dicto ser Pedro colla spada nuda volse gridare. Il dicto ser Pedro quello uccise, e andatosene a letto dando a Nicolò signore, essendo nudo, più colpi, quello uccise”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

## The trap by the Argiliai and the revenge

After the death of Nicolò the conspirators decided to kill the two other Trinci brothers, Bartolomeo and Corrado too. They sent a letter in the name of Nicolò to Bartolomeo, to invite him to Nocera for have a nice time with the others. When he entered the Nocera gates, he was killed immediately. This is a turning point in our story: one friendly servant of Pedro, who wasn't involved the plan saw the murder and terrified by this.<sup>23</sup> Later when Pedro gave some orders to him, he abolished these and ran to Madonna Costanza, who was the mother of the Trinci brothers, and described the acts the murders done, and told her the conspirators plan to kill Corrado. Costanza immediately alarmed her son, who started the collect man against Nocera.<sup>24</sup>

At this point a new character, Braccio da Montone involved the tale. He also heard what happened, and immediately attacked Nocera with two hundred men.<sup>25</sup> It's maybe important to say that, Corrado although planned to attack the castello, but Braccio rushed it first. The traitors, so Pedro and Nanni and few men of them died during the attack and a lot of them get imprisoned. In the last part of the chapter we can read some startling moments. A father recognized his son in the line of the imprisoned friends of the traitors, when they marched towards Foligno. How could you participate in the murder of our rulers? – He asked to him. Then the father killed his own son with a sword.<sup>26</sup> Finally the remains of Pasquale di Argiliaia had to be thrown for the dogs and mangled.<sup>27</sup> In the Middle and North Italian vendetta tales the hunting motives and the role

<sup>23</sup> “E vedendo uno contadino amico et parente del dicto ser Pedro, (...) Il predicto contadino, vedendo tal cosa, non sapendo la chagione, volse gridare”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

<sup>24</sup> “Et narrò a madonna Gostanza madre de' dicti signori la morte loro, e che li piacesse mandare a Trievi a dire che Currado suo mezzano figliuolo si partisse et venisse a Fuligno prima che quel fante giunto fusse; però che li era scripto che andasse a Nocera e giunto sere' morto”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

<sup>25</sup> “E avuto Braccio tale imbasciata, montato a chavallo &c: con.ce. cavalli, chaminò a Fuligno, avendo lassato che l' altra brigata, così da cavallo come da pie, seguisseno lui”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

<sup>26</sup> “Funno i dicti. xxxm. a inpeto et romore da quelli di Nocera tagliati a pessi et morti; e più si narra che di quelli. xm. presi di quelli del castellano, essendovi uno di Nocera tra essi, come il padre lo vidde, subito tracto a lui con uno coltello, il padre uccise il figliuolo, dicendo: chome ài consentito che abbi morto il nostro signore?”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

<sup>27</sup> “ditto del padre di ser Pedro che da' cani fu mangiato”, SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

of the dogs were symbolical elements, which ones objective was to emphasise the terrible primal act and the dehumanisation of the aggressors.<sup>28</sup> At the end the Trinci men killed and sliced the inhabitants of Nocera. Sercambi said this was part of the lawful revenge. As I said, no other Tuscan chronicles wrote about the event, but we should examine the works from other regions – especially from Umbria.

### The antecedents of the murders in other chronicles

In the Spoleto chronicle linked to the name Paruccio Zampaolini – as Jean-Baptist Delzant already concluded<sup>29</sup> – we can read different antecedents of the events. In this Pasquale di Rasiglia done a lot of bloody things and homicides indulge the rulers of Foligno. Zampaolini said, these could be hired assassinations.<sup>30</sup> Thus Ugolino should give offices to Pasquale to honouring these duties. The role in the *Croniche di Lucca* effect that Ugolino patronized Pasquale because the lack of intelligent but this seems to be darkens in the Spoleto chronicle. The Trinci leader as the procurer of the cruel acts is specifically a negative character in the story which leads to the dead of his sons. Above this we can read another great addition: Pedro killed Nicolò because the latter had a relation with Pedro's beautiful wife.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> D. TREVOR, *Marriage and Mutilation*, "Past & Present" Noveber 1997, No. 157, pp. 3–36, 82.

<sup>29</sup> J.B. DELZANT, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–70, 72.

<sup>30</sup> "ser Pasquale da Rasiglia, lu venne tanto in gratia delli Signiuri per suoe executioni martorij, asasinamenti, homicidia et altru malfare per piacere delli Signiuri". *Frammenti degli Annali di Spoleto di Parruccio Zampaolini dal 1305 al 1425*, [in:] *Documenti storici inediti in sussidio allo studio delle memorie umbre*, ed. A. SANZI, I. FOLIGNO 1879, pp. 159–160.

<sup>31</sup> "ser Pietri pigliò per moglie la figliuola de Nicola de Catagnione dalla fratta de Trievi gintil-donna et bellissima jovene, et habitavanu in Fuligne, pocu in gratia delli Signuri (...) Ecco delle cose occulte non se potè bene iudicare fo crisu per alcuni che Nicolò signiore rechedesse la dicta donna de ser Pietri de fornicatione per bellezza", *Frammenti degli Annali di Spoleto di Parruccio Zampaolini*, p. 160; J.B. DELZANT, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–70, 72.

Table 1

## Elements of the story (Sercambi and the others)

Source	Pedro's wife	Pasquale's work	Nudity	Father and son	Terrified friend	The fate of Pasquale	"Lawful" vendetta
Cron. Gubbio <sup>32</sup>	Yes	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅
Vite di Braccio Fortebracci <sup>33</sup>	Yes	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅
Cron. Spol. <sup>34</sup>	Yes	Yes	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅
Sercambi	∅	∅	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stor. Camer. <sup>35</sup>	Yes	∅	∅	∅		∅	∅
Cron. Fermo <sup>36</sup>	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	Yes	∅
Cron. Urbino <sup>37</sup>	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅

Thus while Sercambi wrote that the conspiracy motivated by crazy unkindness, the Zampaolini-kind tale review a vendetta which indicated by the defence of personal honour. This thickens by the pages of the Gubbio chronicle.<sup>38</sup> In this the author wrote Nicolò or Bartolomeo done dishonoured things with Pedro's

<sup>32</sup> Cronica di Ser Guerriero da Gubbio.

<sup>33</sup> *L'histoire et vite di Braccio Fortebracci detto da Montone et di Nicolo Piccino perugini*, Vinegia 1571.

<sup>34</sup> Frammenti degli Annali di Spoleto di Parruccio Zampaolini, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> *Storia di Camerino di Camillo Lili*. Parte Seconda, Libri Quinto, 1652, p. 163.

<sup>36</sup> ANTONIO DI NICOLÒ, *Cronica della città di Fermo*, edizione critica e annotazioni G. DE MINICIS, introduzione e traduzione P. PETRUZZI, Fermo 2008, pp. 176–177.

<sup>37</sup> *Cronachetta di Urbino 1404–1444*, lettura e note di G. SCUTENA, Urbino 1995, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> *Cronica di Ser Guerriero da Gubbio*, ed. G. MAZZATINI, [in:] *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores. Raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, Ordinata da L.A. Muratori, vol. 21, part 4, Città di Castello 1902.



wife, and the husband killed them as revenge.<sup>39</sup> With further examinations we can say that other works from this region also say similar points. The Perugia chronicle, entitled *Vite di Braccio Fortebracci*<sup>40</sup> review that one from the three Trinci brothers tempted Pedro's wife to misconduct and the *castellano* revenged this on Nicolò. On the pages of the *Vite* we can find that the unnamed Trinci brother first started with overtures, than the words followed by acts.<sup>41</sup>

Special Perugian part that the *Vite* is the only source that suggest that the *castellano* invited the Trinci brothers for the hunting event to make the trap for them. The consciousness of the conspiracy underlined by the author when he used the word vendetta for the murder. Which suggest heavy wound in honour. On the following chart I summarized the special elements of the story in the other analysed sources.

We can see that the nudity of the *signore* and the sword, the treason of Pedro's servant, the drama of father and son and the summarize of the acts as lawful revenge only exist in Sercambi's work. Although the role of Pasquale's work, and the relation between the Trinci and Pedro's wife doesn't. I think that the special Sercambi-kind element suggests the unkindness of the Argilaia, while the skip of the others allusion that the luchese writer didn't want to write about the liability of the Trinci in the events.

## The external politics of Lucca in the 14<sup>th</sup> century

Lucca had expansive foreign politics at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Castruccio Castracani, who elected to *signore* in 1320, threatened Florence with military expeditions.<sup>42</sup> Although the sweep of Lucca successively narrowed in time. After the death of the *signore* in 1328 the city leaders made wrong

<sup>39</sup> "Nicolo et Bartolomeo Trinci signori da Fuligne et de Nociera foro morti da uno loro castelano da Nociera, cetadino da Fuligne: fo dicto l'avea facto perché uno di quelli signori usava con la moglie", *Cronica di Ser Guerriero da Gubbio*, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> *L'histoire et vite di Braccio Fortebracci detto da Montone et di Nicolo Piccinino perugini*, Vinegia 1571.

<sup>41</sup> "Erano Signori di Foligno, e di Nocera tre fratelli uno de quali andando spese molte a Nocera, e alloggiando nella Rocca, cominciò per aventura alquanto lasciamente à riguardare la moglie del Castellano, di maniera che in breve tempo si venne dalle parole a fatti", *ibidem*, p. 102.

<sup>42</sup> M.E. BRATCHEL, *Medieval Lucca and the Evolution of the Renaissance State*, Oxford 2008, pp. 48–50.

decisions, which tendency caused the Pisan occupation in 1342.<sup>43</sup> Florence wanted to get the city to counteract the Pisan expansion – in this time unsuccessful, which was a sign for the future. Lucca got back the liberty in 1368 with the help of Charles IV.<sup>44</sup> After this, Lucca had independent politics until 1429, but demonstrably had to moderate in both internal and foreign relations.<sup>45</sup>

The first and the primal reason was the active expansion of the Florentine Republic from the South. The Arno sided city, slowly but precisely tried to get the smaller towns beyond the luchese *contado*. Their tools were many: they gave Florentine citizenship to leader families, sent *podestà* or started military campaigns. In that time the main goal of the Florentine government was to reach the coastal area for the possibility of a naval base. They not just made pressing upon the coastal towns, but on the cities nearby this region, because of the potential danger.<sup>46</sup> From the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century from the Northern territories the expansion of the Visconti led cities frightened the luchese elite.<sup>47</sup> Although the Guinigi tried to utilize the rivals between the Visconti and Florence, but the situation didn't changed.<sup>48</sup> Paolo Guinigi tried to associate with the Visconti against Florence and supported the anti-Florentine movement in the coastal naval town Barga and obsessed the Florentine merchants from Motrone docks. But after the death of Giovanni Galeazzo Visconti in 1402, they lost the weight of the actions.<sup>49</sup> The geopolitical situation was hardened with a small Florentine enclave in North-East, while from North-West the Visconti friendly Malaspina territory caused problems.<sup>50</sup> MEEK and the other researchers of history of Lucca conclude that the luchese factions didn't opened towards factional strives in this time because they frightened by the potential abroad interventions.<sup>51</sup> The political fights

<sup>43</sup> LOUIS GREEN, *Lucca under many masters. A Fourteenth-Century Italian commune in crisis (1328–1342)*, Città di Castello 1995, pp. 74–77.

<sup>44</sup> C. MEEK, *Il tempo di Giovanni Sercambi*, [in:] *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo...*, pp. 1–33.

<sup>45</sup> C. MEEK, *Lucca 1369–1400. Politics and Society in an Early Renaissance City-State*, Oxford 1978, pp. 235–256.

<sup>46</sup> P. GUALTIERI, “*Col caldo e furore di certi Fiorentini*” *Espansione fiorentina e preminenza signorile a Prato, Pistoia e nei centri della Valdesa e del Valdarni inferior*, [in:] *Le signorie cittadine in Toscana. Esperienze di potere e forme di governo personale (secoli XIII–XV)*, ed. A. ZORZI, Roma 2013; A. MANCINI, *Storia di Lucca*, Firenze 1950, pp. 187–189.

<sup>47</sup> M.E. BRATCHEL, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.

<sup>48</sup> C. MEEK, *Lucca...*, pp. 301–332.

<sup>49</sup> A. MANCINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 186–188.

<sup>50</sup> M.E. BRATCHEL, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.

<sup>51</sup> C. MEEK, *Lucca...*, pp. 235–260.

could make space for the aggressive neighbours to intervene in Lucca politics. This tendency shown by the fact that the Florentines wanted to give citizenship to Paolo Guinigi's son Lancilao,<sup>52</sup> and after it didn't work, they led a campaign against the city in 1429 which ended the Guinigi rule.<sup>53</sup> The government of Paolo from 1400 had to face against continually hardening pressure from rival cities. The almost perpetual endemics and the starvation were made the situation wronged and caused instability in the *contado* around Lucca.<sup>54</sup>

Although the urban elite and the Guinigi clan's goal was to strengthen the liberty of the city and its properties.<sup>55</sup> The political statement became harder at the end of the 1410<sup>th</sup> years. Braccio da Montone, the ruler of Perugia, one of the greatest *condottiero* of that age<sup>56</sup> in 1418 entered with his troops into Lucca's territory where they robbed and destroyed. As Sercambi wrote it was possible that the rush of the *contado* was happened by Florentine inspiration – Braccio's men arrived from the territories of Florence.<sup>57</sup> The wealth of the Lucca elite shown by the act that they collected money for Braccio and paid ransom to return with his army. The Perugino *condottiero* also gave back the robbed value to the people.<sup>58</sup> The hysterical step of the Guinigi was successful, but the relation between Braccio and Florence gave goal to vexation. In 1420 the pope changed up the Spini family from the papal banker position and this important status with a lot of diplomatic and political values got by the Medici family which governed Florence indirectly.<sup>59</sup> This event was important for Braccio da Montone too: his aim was to legitimate his *signoria* upon Perugia. The Umbrian city was in nominal papal property and the pope didn't want to recognize his rule, but with the Florentine relations the *condottiero* had hope to make the correspondence.<sup>60</sup> What was the strategy of Lucca in these hard times? I think it's important to examine the marriage politics of the Guinigi.

<sup>52</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 359.

<sup>53</sup> M.E. BRATCHEL, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 123–143.

<sup>55</sup> C. MEEK, *Lucca...*, pp. 300–332.

<sup>56</sup> *I capitani di ventura. Guerra e società nell'Italia centrale del Trecento. Atti del convegno I capitani di ventura. Guerra e società nell'Italia centrale del Trecento, Perugia 5 maggio 2006*, ed. S. ZUCCHINI, Perugia [2006], pp. 40–50.

<sup>57</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 271.

<sup>58</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 271.

<sup>59</sup> J.M. NAJEMY, *A History of Florence*, Malden–Oxford 2006, pp. 263–264.

<sup>60</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, pp. 281–282.

We don't know the exact birth date of Paolo Guinigi, but from his status in the family and from the older brother's age we can suggest that he could be his early 30<sup>th</sup> when he got the rule over the city.<sup>61</sup> Paolo was probably bachelor but as *signore* he had a lot of opportunities to find a perfect wife. Although he and his advisors should calculate with several options. Naturally the marriage was an obligation for him as the first man in the city. He got his first wife, Ilaria Careto after the stabilization of the new government in 1403.<sup>62</sup> A Sercambi wrote in short, the choose of the wife was motivated by the advisors.<sup>63</sup> Interesting plus information that – although the chronicler didn't say it, from the length of the caput and from the fact that he didn't suggest his own part, this couldn't be Sercambi's advise. Ilaria died in 1405, so the marriage didn't last long time.<sup>64</sup> The importance of the marriages shown by that Lucca's ruler get his new wife almost immediately in 1407: Piagentina, the daughter of Rodolfo Varani, ruler of Camerino.<sup>65</sup> She was the sister of Berardo Varani, who participated in hunting event in our story. The new relation lasted longer time than the earlier, but the new marriage ended in 1419, when Piagentina died too.<sup>66</sup> After this tragedy the choose of the new ara was no longer than one year. Paolo got his new wife also from Umbria: married with Jacopa Trinci, daughter of Ugolino Trinci. Important to underline that she was the sister of Nicolò and Bartolomeo Trinci.<sup>67</sup> This step towards Foligno, didn't mean that the Guinigi neglected the relations with Camerino. Paolo's only son, Lancilao (or Ladislao) married in 1420 also, with Maria di Rodolfo Varani.<sup>68</sup> So from Lucca's ruler family not just Paolo but his heir too became the brother in law of Berardo Varani. The marriage politics of Paolo Guinigi, which concentrated on define regions were not special but not average too. Rodolfo Varano got wives for his son from 14 different cities, from Padova to Rome,<sup>69</sup> the Trinci had relation with Este, Orsini and such dynasties.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>61</sup> C. MEEK, *Lucca...*, p. 341.

<sup>62</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 48.

<sup>63</sup> "il magnifico signore Paulo Guinigii senza donna, fu per alcuni amici tractato di darli per donna madonna Ylaria figluola di messer Charlo marcheze del Carretto", SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 74.

<sup>66</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 74.

<sup>67</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 292.

<sup>68</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 296.

<sup>69</sup> A. ESCH, *Bonifaz IX. und der Kirchenstaat*, Tübingen 1969, pp. 551–552.

<sup>70</sup> J.C. MAIRE VIGUEUR, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

Mancini's opinion that the marriages of the Guinigi had no political effects in use,<sup>71</sup> but I think that we can examine the political strategy of the Guinigi purposely. For the city circumnubated by aggressive neighbours had a possibility to build relations in the rival's backside: above Florence and the Visconti. First they could build relations this way, secondly but not last, they could avoid the uncomfortable family relations with the neighbour rivals. We can observe the same motivation in Paolo's first marriage, because the links with the Genovese elite could be useful. The Varani wife in 1407 had similar goals: Lucca could get relations in the back of Florence. In Umbria not just the Guinigi but Braccio da Montone also had plans which emphasised in marriage relations. In 1420 the famous *condottiero* married with Nicola di Rodolfo Varani, sister of Berardo Varani.<sup>72</sup> In the same year his son Oddo got a wife from Foligno: a daughter of the Trinci ruler.<sup>73</sup> Although Braccio had Perugia he couldn't legitimate his rule even with Florentine help either.<sup>74</sup>

We can conclude that Braccio da Montone's – similar as Paolo Guinigi – aim was to build good relations with the cities near Perugia (with the Trinci and the Varani). This could be highly important because the leaders of Camerino and Foligno were in traditionally good relations; they were in one interest-group and in one family web. This underlined by the hunting event near Nocera: all of our sources suggest that Berardo da Camerino and Nicolò Trinci hunted together.<sup>75</sup>

Above the goals I underlined earlier, the marriages made the opportunity for the Guinigi to build links towards the papal state. Paolo could do this because Camerino and Foligno were under nominal papal rule. These steps had the possibility to counterpoint the Florentines good papal relations. The luchese *signore* introduced in the circle which included the dangerous *condottiero* Braccio da Montone too, which had positive sense. The Lucca government wasn't in bad relations with the ruler of Perugia, this could be emphasise by Sercambi when

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<sup>71</sup> A. MANCINI, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>72</sup> *Storia di Camerino*, p. 162.

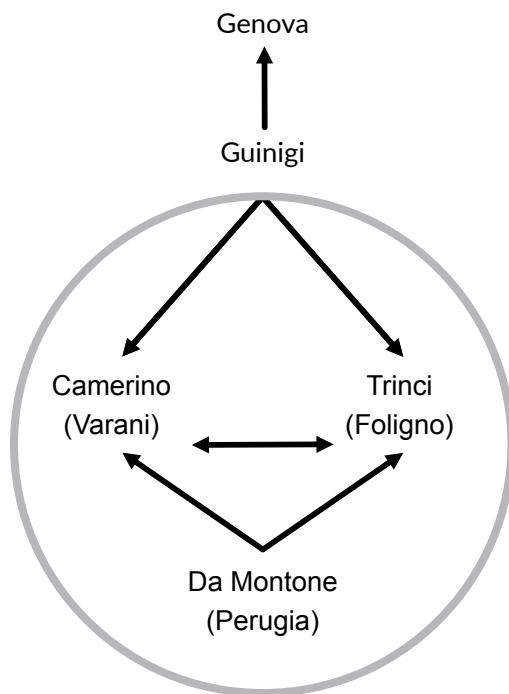
<sup>73</sup> “Volle, che un figliuolo suo naturale chiamato Oddo prendesse per consorte una figliuola di Signore di Foligno, e ricetene da Ambasciatori degli Ariminesi, condescese, ch' a Roberto figliuolo di Pandolfo Malatesto si sposisse un'altro figliuola di lui parimente illegimente”, *Storia di Camerino*, pp. 161–162.

<sup>74</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 271.

<sup>75</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 308.

he wrote about the 1418 events: Braccio was typified as a person who arrived as a foe but finally done good thing for the luchese people.<sup>76</sup> We can read some other words about the important relations in the chapter of *Croniche* about the 1420 wedding. Sercambi wrote that on the celebration they were Nicolò Trinci, Rodolfo Varani's son and "Pietro", Pasquale de Argillaia's son, and twenty more people participated.<sup>77</sup> There are some additions in *Storia di Camerino*, which said that on Braccio da Montone's wedding the *signori* of Foligno, Fabriano and Matelica also appeared.<sup>78</sup>

#### Relations between the *signore* families



<sup>76</sup> SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 271.

<sup>77</sup> "E fèsi la festa principale delle diete due spoze a di. vii. agosto in. mccccxx. In e borghi al palagio nuovo, solo di cena; alla quale cena fu lo signore Nicolò da Fulingno e uno figliuolo di Rodolfo da Chamerino e uno ser Pietro di ser Pasquale d' Argillaia, con circha. xx. in loro compagnia", SERCAMBI, vol. 2, p. 297.

<sup>78</sup> "Braccio si se incontro alla sposa nella chiesa di S. Maria de gl'Angioli, e quiui presenti i Signori di Foligno, di Fabriano, di Matelica, et altra nobilità di conto", *Storia di Camerino*, p. 162.

We can conclude that the participators of the Trinci murder story were not just in the some family circle, but at the primal year wedding celebrations, in 1420, they were in the same desk society. It is surprising in the case of Pedro di Argiliaia who wasn't the relative of the underlined lords, although he participated in the described chapter by Sercambi. Naturally it is possible that Giovanni Sercambi wrote him into the caput to emphasise the brutality of the later murder. The opinion of Jean-Baptist Delzant is that Sercambi didn't write about the role of Pedro's wife and Pasquale's works because these points didn't fit the advisory goals: don't trust in the enemies but in the closer friends.<sup>79</sup> I think by the introduced relations and strategical aims, that Delzant's publication is logically good, but the motivations of Sercambi could be find in other options.

## Conclusions

Giovanni Sercambi as a chronicler had special attention on violent topics. The author of *Croniche di Lucca* did not just mention the murders, factional strives or vendetta, but he wrote in details about these. His viewpoint can be described by the literature background, the active political participations, and the advisory viewpoint of the author. He underlined the startling parts as rhetorical tools to emphasise the teaching will. This could be the basic motivation for the description of the Trinci murder.

Further context could be the political viewpoint of Giovanni Sercambi. For the researchers it's obvious that he was inner friend of the Guinigi. The reviewed parts in the *Croniche* and the audience of *Nota ai Guinigi*, and the continously repeated invocation of Paolo Guinigi also suggest that Sercambi was not just a Guinigi friendly politician but a man in the inner advisory circle. Accordingly I think that he knew the hard situation in external politics and the importance of the Foligno relations. The murders happened just after the year 1420, which was the date of big weddings. The participants of the events were in close family and fresh diplomatic relation. These points made the topic very sensible both for Lucca and Foligno. The feature of Pedro di Argiliaia in the wedding society table suggest that not just the victims of the conspiracy but the conspirators were also well known in this circle.

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<sup>79</sup> J.B. DELZANT, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–74.

The dark works of Pasquale in the submission of Ugolino Trinci could mean such elements in the story that could be throw shadow on the fresh strategical relations with the heirs of Ugolino. The basic violent nature of Pasquale had at least two goals in the Sercambi-kind story: first the author took down the responsibility from the father of the Trinci brothers; secondly he could underline the aggressive nature of the conspirators. The motif of the cruel Pasquale and his cruel traitor son fit in the other mentions of *Croniche di Lucca*: by Sercambi the traitor mentality descend from father to the son. The violent relation of Nicolò or Bartolomeo with Pedro's wife should be an answer about the antecedents of the murder, but these skipped from the luchese chapter because of the topics sensibility.

Although the heirs of the Foligno became written as virgin and passive actors of the story. The relation of Paolo Guinigi with Corrado Trinci, the Varani and the Montone didn't made it possible to write about the important and dishonoured role of the Trinci brothers in the story.

It's also important that the events happened in 1421 and Sercambi died in 1424, so he wrote the chapter shortly immediately after the events happened. Thus he got information in person or through mediators. Jacopa Trinci and her servants could be in Lucca at the end of year 1420, so they could attend with news. We can't exclude that the Sercambi-kind story was told for the author by the Trinci wife or her servants/guardians, which unfold the distortions.

As a final conclusion I think that the three possible points, such as the special interest of Sercambi for violent topics, the political sensibility of him and the Guinigi-Trinci relations could motivated the author for the story writing this way.

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