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MARCO MERLO, FABIO ROMANONI E PETER SPOSATO



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Sigillo di Leszek I di Polonia detto il Bianco (Leszek Bialego)
Grafika pochodzi z książki: *Poczet królów i książąt polskich*, Czytelnik,
pod red. Andrzeja Garlickiego, Warszawa 1984.
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Campaldino 1289: a battle still misunderstood?

by FILIPPO NARDONE

ABSTRACT: This article reassesses the understanding of the Battle of Campaldino (June 11, 1289), a significant Guelph victory led by the Florentines against the Ghibellines from Arezzo, under Bishop Guglielmino degli Ubertini. While the battle has garnered considerable scholarly interest, the tactical aspects of this complex engagement remain inadequately reconstructed. This lack of tactical analysis has persisted despite extensive historiographical discourse focused on the political and cultural ramifications of the clash. This study highlights the narrative constructed by chroniclers, particularly Dante's involvement and the subsequent interpretations by humanist historians like Leonardo Bruni, which have often overshadowed the military details. By scrutinizing early 14th-century sources, including the accounts of Dino Compagni and Giovanni Villani, and comparing them to humanistic interpretations, I challenge prevailing misconceptions about the battle's tactics and formations. The article argues for a more nuanced understanding of the interconnected roles of cavalry and infantry within both the Florentine and Aretine armies, demonstrating that the tactical efficacy achieved at Campaldino reflects a pivotal moment in the evolution of medieval Italian military art. Ultimately, this piece seeks to rectify the historiographical oversight that has characterized the scholarship surrounding Campaldino, advocating for a comprehensive examination of the battle's tactics within the broader context of late Communal warfare.

KEYWORDS: CAMPALDINO, ITALIAN WARFARE, MEDIEVAL TACTICS, DANTE ALIGHIERI, LEONARDO BRUNI, GUELPHS, Ghibellines.

1. *Introduction*

Few Medieval Italian battles have captured the attention of scholars like the Battle of Campaldino (June 11, 1289). This famous Guelph victory, achieved by the Florentines and their allies under the command of Count Amalric II of Narbonne, was fought against the Ghibelline Aretines and their allies, led by the city bishop Guglielmino degli Ubertini, at the convent of Certomondo in Casentino. Here, we will not delve into the extensive bibliographic

discourse regarding the historical, political, and cultural significance of this renowned battle, which would only serve to further highlight the perplexing fact that, despite such attention, its tactics have yet to be adequately reconstructed. Paradoxically, the widespread interest in the rivalries among Communes and political factions vying for dominance over the prosperous Tuscany of the late 13th century has absurdly overshadowed the strictly military aspects of the clash. The battle itself was a profoundly bloody and complex military engagement that had significant implications for the history of both medieval Italian and European warfare.

The historical significance of Campaldino is primarily and unequivocally linked to Dante's participation in the battle as a member of the Florentine *feditori*¹. This connection is detailed in the *Historiae* of the Aretine humanist Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), whose account of the battle has profoundly influenced its interpretation for centuries, with few historians critiquing it or offering a comparative analysis of the most reliable and, above all, eloquent sources from the early 14th century². This lack of scrutiny is particularly astonishing given the many works that have sought to narrate Certomondo as a notable military engagement³—even within Anglo-American historiography, which

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- 1 *I.e. elite* cavalry for breakthrough, forming the front line: regarding the old error perpetuated by Dantism regarding the supposed “tightness” of the *feditori*, cfr., among others., Alessandro BARBERO, *Dante a Campaldino, fra vecchi e nuovi fraintendimenti*, in «Lecture Classensi», XLVIII (2020), pp. 50-51 and note 10 *ivi*, p. 51 (45-58).
 - 2 Regarding the battle cfr., in generale, DINO COMPAGNI, *Cronica*, Davide CAPPI (cur.), *Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale* (from now on FSIm). *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (from now on RIS³), I, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 2000, lib. 1, cap. 10, pp. 13-16, GIOVANNI VILLANI, *Nuova Cronica*, PORTA, Gabriele (cur.), *Biblioteca di scrittori italiani*, Parma, Fondazione Pietro Bembo/Guanda, 1991, cap. 131, PTOLEMAEUS LUCENSIS, *Gesta Lucanorum (752-1304)* in Bernhard, SCHMEIDLER (Hg.), «Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca in doppelter Fassung nebst Teilen der *Gesta Florentinorum* und *Gesta Lucanorum*», *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series*, tomo VIII, Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1930, *A and B*, pp. 217-218 (284-323), PAOLINO PIERI, *Croniche di Firenze*, in Andrea BEGO (cur.), *Tesi di Laurea magistrale*, Università degli Studi di Padova, AA. 2015/2016, pp. 59-60 (11-86) and *Chronicon Parmense ab anno 1308 usque ad annum 1338*, in Giuliano BONAZZI (cur.), in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, II serie (from now on RIS²), IX/IX, Città di Castello, coi tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi, 1902, p. 56.
 - 3 Cesare VERANI, «La battaglia di Campaldino», *Atti e memorie della Accademia Petrarca di Lettere, Arti e Scienze, Nuova Serie*, vol. XX/XXI (1936), pp. 97-122, Piero PIERI, «L'evoluzione delle fanterie comunali italiane», in *Id.*, *Scritti vari*, Torino, G. Giappichelli

has historically overlooked the significant battles of the Late Italian Communal period⁴. Throughout the 20th century and beyond, these works, with a few initial exceptions, have deliberately avoided a tactical reconstruction of the battle.

Certomondo is well-documented regarding its times and locations, thanks to the Florentine chroniclers Dino Compagni (1246/1247-1324) and Giovanni Villani (1280-1348). Both of these remarkable figures were prominent intellectuals and priors of Florence, with the former notably holding office in the same year as the battle. For these authors, who possessed a solid civic culture and were contemporaneous with the events they narrated, Campaldino represents a glorious homeland victory over the rival city of Arezzo. As such, it deserves a more in-depth recounting compared to other clashes, thereby contributing to the establishment of the Humanistic mythology and contemporary focus on the battle.

To date, there are still few, if any, contributions concerning the largest and best-documented battles in Tuscany from this period, such as Montecatini (1315), Altopascio (1325), and San Pietro a Vico (1341) — all of which were, in fact, defeats for Florence. This lack of attention can be partially attributed to the detachment and rationalization in Late Communal historiography from these more humiliating military events, as a powerful Florence struggled to assert itself as a regional authority, constrained militarily by Pisa and Lucca. As we shall see, publications on Certomondo inherit the triumphal civic sentiment of Florence

Editore, 1966, pp. 74-77 (original ed. *Alcune quistioni sopra la fanteria in Italia nel periodo comunale*, in «Rivista storica italiana», L [1933] pp. 563-614), Herbert L. OERTER, «Campaldino 1289», *Speculum*, XLIII, pp. 429-450, Luca GIANNELLI, Riccardo SEMPLICI (cur.), *Il sabato di San Barnaba: la Battaglia di Campaldino, 11 giugno 1289-1989*, Milano, Electa, 1989, Marco SCARDIGLI, *Le battaglie dei cavalieri: l'arte della guerra nell'Italia medievale*, Milano, Mondadori, 2012, pp. 433-439, Alessandro BARBERO, «1289: La battaglia di Campaldino», in ID (cur.), *Gli anni di Firenze*, Roma, Laterza, 2009, pp. 3-18, ID., *Dante a Campaldino, fra vecchi e nuovi fraintendimenti*, in «Lecture Classensi», XLVIII (2020), pp. 45-58 and Kelly DEVRIES, Niccolò CAPPONI, *Campaldino 1289: The battle that made Dante*, Oxford, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018 and Federico CANACCINI, *1289. La battaglia di Campaldino*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2021, particularly pp. 153-203.

4 The glaring omission of Ugucione della Faggiola and the Battle of Montecatini in Clifford J. ROGERS (Ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of medieval warfare and military technology*, Oxford-New, Oxford University Press, York 2010, is nothing short of outrageous. Sull'omissione cfr. Paolo GRILLO, *Dentro la battaglia: gli uomini, le tattiche militari, i comandanti*, in Giampaolo FRANCESCONI (cur.), *1315. La battaglia di Montecatini: una vittoria ghibellina*, Ospedaletto (Pisa), Pacini Editore, 2021, p. 37 (49-75) and note 10 *ivi*.

without addressing the concrete realities of warfare, as well as the diachronic and comparative study of military Art in Late Communal Tuscany or Italy.

The widespread and generalized indifference of past generations towards the subject has been caused both by the tenuous historiographical understanding of the pre-unification Italian wars and by the cultural perspectives inherited from the New Military History. Together with the so-called communist, anti-Western, and anti-military ‘protests’, these factors have contributed significantly to the issue at hand⁵. This pernicious attitude, moreover, immorally and unscientifically betrays the inseparable Clausewitzian subordination of war to politics, as well as the historical and Traditional significance of struggle and victory in arms as the highest demonstration of political, moral, and universal value on which the highly civilized Communal Italy was founded⁶. It is particularly surprising, highlighting the strictly methodological problem, that studies on the Battle of Campaldino have largely overlooked a crucial—and well-known—source: the bishop of Lucca, (Bar)Tolomeo Fiadoni (1236-1327). In his chronicle, he provides invaluable tactical information that is almost decisive regarding the outcome of the clash.

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- 5 P. GRILLO, Aldo Angelo SETTIA (cur.), *Guerre ed eserciti nel Medioevo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2018, pp. 17-18 illustrate how the commendable initiative of the significant Spoleto conference organized by the Cisam in 1967, titled *Gli ordinamenti militari in Occidente nell’alto Medioevo*, which featured some of the foremost specialists from across Europe, was not followed up due to the changed political climate of the subsequent year. As a result, «per un lungo periodo [...] gli argomenti di storia militare tornarono a essere tabù nell’accademia italiana, per la comprensibile frustrazione di chi si ostinava a tenere viva la ricerca».
- 6 Jean-Claude MAIRE VIGUEUR, *Progetti di trasformazione della società nei regimi di Popolo*, in *La ricerca del benessere individuale e sociale*, Atti del XXII Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Pistoia 15-18 maggio 2009, Pistoia, Viella, 2011, p. 285 (281-316) notes that in the political landscape of the mid-1200s, the ideal of *augmentum* for the city prioritized «la forza del suo esercito e dunque la sua capacità a estendere la sua dominazione e a inculcare rispetto e timore nelle altre città» over any other civil aspirations of the Commune. Cfr. Franco CARDINI, *La guerra nella Toscana bassomedievale*, in Mario SCALINI, Lionello Giorgio BOCCIA (cur.), *Guerre e assoldati in Toscana 1260-1364. Proposte e ricerche*, Firenze, S.P.E.S. Studio per edizioni scelte, 1982, p. 25 (23-35): «tra Duecento e Trecento, la guerra si respira con l’aria, entra in ogni attività e in ogni pensiero dell’uomo [...]. È difficile pensare a un’opera d’arte, a uno scritto letterario, perfino a una scoperta scientifica del tempo [...] senza che con ciò non ci si debba riferire in un modo o nell’altro alla guerra». Ugo BARZOLETTI, Marco GIULIANI, *La prassi guerresca in Toscana* in SCALINI, BOCCIA, *Guerre*, cit., p. 51 (51-61) reflect: «bisogna inoltre valutare come in questo periodo la guerra non sia nascosta, ma si faccia spettacolo, parata, inventando modi di vestire e di costruire proprio per la sua presenza e il suo ruolo. La società dell’Europa medioevale è stata talvolta descritta, con una formula sostanzialmente esatta, come soprattutto militare».

In contrast, Certomondo has enjoyed greater fortune with the “new” Brunian interpretation, which is humanistic in nature and, in spirit and intention, markedly distant from the Communal ideals of the early 14th century, even when compared to the dearly loved Dante. This version would have historically been similarly disregarded if it had not been indirectly connected to the testimony of Alighieri himself, as mediated by Bruni. We will focus on this point, elaborating and clarifying my explanation of the battle, which was previously presented alongside the discussion of the Italian military Art of the late Communal period⁷: the latter remains the only analysis on the topic today and illustrates how the forces of the time (from 1289 to at least the mid-14th century) typically engaged in battle with cavalry units that were arranged in depth, each flanked by wings of infantry poised to envelop the enemy’s flanks. Campaldino is the first clash for which this tactic is clearly documented in Italy—and indeed in the medieval context—where it would reach its highest development and systemic efficiency in Europe.

Since the ‘prehistory’ of this ‘wing’ configuration cannot be adequately studied due to a lack of documentation, Certomondo’s primacy lies not so much in the initial appearance of the formation, but rather in its full maturity and, especially, in the symmetry of the array on both sides. This theory, which has not been essentially considered in the reconstruction of Campaldino, has severely skewed its historical narrative, culminating in a considerable waste of discordant versions that are inconsistent both internally and with one another. This article reaffirms the most recent theory, even in the absence of incontrovertible certainty—and, more importantly, in light of the lack of any counter-evidence—grounding it, as always, in comparison with the broader context of late Communal military history in Italy and the military logic applicable to the only contemporary evidence regarding the battle.

Methodologically, I will proceed as follows: I will study contemporary sources as the foundation for the tactical reconstruction; analyze the Brunian account; evaluate and seek potential philological reconciliation regarding the actual course of the battle; and assess the historiographical approach to Certomondo. I do not believe it is necessary to provide an additional historical, political, and strategic introduction to the battle, not only due to the general familiarity with it but also

7 Filippo NARDONE, «Le ali di fanteria nelle osti tardo-comunali italiane (1289-1348)», *Nuova Antologia Militare*, 4, 3 (2023), pp. 139-216.

because this background is substantially irrelevant to the tactical reconstruction. The same holds true for the backgrounds of the authors, who are renowned and relatively objective, with the exception of Bruni, whose work and personal story help illuminate the motivations behind his version. The various pieces of information regarding morale, subunits, terrain, and especially formations and tactics are presented progressively, highlighting the historiographical inconsistencies with the few primary sources we possess, which are the only reasonably reliable accounts available on the clash.

2. *The battle according to the early 14th century sources*

Without further delay, let us briefly reconstruct the battle. At Campaldino, according to Villani, 1,900 knights and 10,000 Guelph infantry⁸ faced off against 800 knights and 8,000 Ghibelline infantry⁹. The same author states that the 150¹⁰ Guelph *feditori* were *fasciati* «di costa da ciascuna ala della schiera de' pavesari, e balestrieri, e di pedoni a lance lunghe, e la schiera grossa di dietro a' feditori ancora fasciata di pedoni»¹¹. Similarly, Compagni notes from the Florentine side that «i capitani della guerra misono i feditori alla fronte della schiera, e i palvesi

8 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 350.

9 Ivi, p. 351.

10 *Ibid.*.

11 *Ibid.*. Regarding the *pavese* shield: the term derives from the Latin *pavimentum*, which in turn comes from *pavire*, meaning “to beat or compact by beating”. This connection suggests a concept of thickness that is greater than average. A. A. SETTIA, «I mezzi della guerra. Balestre, pavesi e lance lunghe: la specializzazione delle fanterie comunali nel secolo XIII, in Pace e guerra nel basso medioevo, Atti del XL Convegno storico internazionale [Todi, 12-14 ottobre 2003], Spoleto, Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2004, p. 187 (153-200) identifies the same etymology and associates it more with the notion of an extensive covering. The same author demonstrates that the only precisely known dimensions of pavises from this period originate from two orders (from 1276 and 1281, respectively) issued by Charles of Anjou to artisans in Pisa. From these orders, modest dimensions of 135 x 94 cm and 121 x 81 cm for naval shields, and 162 x 108 cm, 135 x 90 cm, and 94 x 67 cm for terrestrial shields can be inferred, although larger types were also contemplated: *ivi*, pp. 188-190. This differs from the more commonly known and documented late medieval pavises which had an average width of 180 x 50 cm, leading some historians to classify the pavese as a larger shield for our era: *cfr. ibid.*. Additionally, *cfr. the pavesotto* used by Giovanni Colonna on horseback during the Battle of Porta Tiburtina in Rome in 1347: ANONIMO ROMANO, *Cronica*, in Giuseppe PORTA (cur.), Milano, Piccola biblioteca Adelphi, 1979, cap. 18, pp. 138-139.

col campo bianco e giglio vermiglio furono attelati dinanzi»¹² against the enemy¹³.

At the beginning of the battle, the 300¹⁴ Ghibelline *feditori* overwhelmed their Guelph counterparts, and, supported by the rest of their troops, they pushed back the “large” enemy line for a considerable distance. However, the Guelphs managed to regroup and withstand the Ghibelline onslaught¹⁵. According to Villani, in the fierce combat that followed, the «coll’ale ordinate da ciascuna parte de’ pedoni rinchiusiono tra loro i nemici, combattendo aspramente buona pezza»¹⁶.

The climax of the clash, as described by both Villani and Compagni, was the attack led by 200 knights and a contingent of Lucchese and Pistoiese infantry under Corso Donati against the flank of the Aretine forces—a reserve positioned on one side of the formation¹⁷. Despite the significance of Donati’s action in leading to the eventual collapse of the Ghibelline forces, the sources do not explicitly

12 COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 13.

13 Guglielmino degli Ubertini, «che avea corta vista, domandò: “Quelle, che mura sono?”. Fugli risposto: “I palvesi de’ nimici”»: *ibid.*.

14 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

15 *Ibid.*: «i feditori degli Aretini si mossono con grande baldanza a sproni battuti a fedire sopra l’oste de’ Fiorentini, e l’altra loro schiera conseguente appresso, salvo che ’l conte Guido Novello [...] non s’ardi di mettere alla battaglia, ma rimase [...]. E la mossa e assalire che feciono gli Aretini sopra i Fiorentini fu, stimandosi come valente gente d’arme, che per loro buona pugna di rompere alla prima affrontata i Fiorentini e metterli in volta; e fu sì forte la percorsa, che i più de’ feditori de’ Fiorentini furono scavallati, e la schiera grossa rinculò buon pezzo del campo, ma però non si smagarono nè ruppono, ma costanti e forti ricevettono i nemici»; COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 14: «gli Aretini assalirono il campo sì vigorosamente e con tanta forza, che la schiera de’ Fiorentini forte rinculò».

16 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

17 *Ibid.*: «e di fuori della detta schiera misono CC cavalieri e pedoni Lucchesi e Pistoiesi e altri forestieri, onde fu capitano messer Corso Donati, ch’allora era podestà de’ Pistoiesi, e ordinario, che se bisognasse, fedisse per costa sopra i nemici. [...] messer Corso Donati, ch’era di parte co’ Lucchesi e’ Pistoiesi, e avea comandamento di stare fermo, e non fedire sotto pena della testa, quando vide cominciata la battaglia, disse come valente uomo: Se noi perdiamo, io voglio morire nella battaglia co’ miei cittadini; e se noi vinciamo, chi vuole vegna a noi a Pistoia per la condannagione; e francamente mosse sua schiera, e fedì i nemici per costa, e fu grande cagione della loro rotta»; COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 14: «Messer Corso Donati con la brigata de’ Pistoiesi fedì i nemici per costa». Ivi, cap. 9, p. 13 seems to confirm the number of 200 under the command of the Pistoian podestà, listing the allies who came to aid Florence before the battle: «i Fiorentini accolsono l’amicizia, che furono i Bolognesi con .cc. cavalli, Lucchesi con .cc., Pistoiesi con .cc. . de’ quali fu capitano messer Corso Donati cavaliere fiorentino -, ...».

mention the decisive nature of his reserve¹⁸. Conversely, a similar Ghibelline reserve of 150 knights¹⁹ commanded by Count Guido Novello, prepared «per fedire di costa»²⁰, did not engage and withdrew before the battle concluded²¹.

As previously noted, studies on the Battle of Campaldino have overlooked the *Gesta Lucanorum* by Bishop Tolomeo di Lucca²², which states that «traditur [...] quod in dicto bello Florentini strenuissime se habuerunt, sed Lucani fregerunt aciem, quia percusserunt a latere et cum balistis gioldonerios verterunt ad fugam, qui sagiptas ferre non poterant»²³. This passage from the prelate, although brief, highlights the firing capabilities of the flanking reserves, which were undoubtedly employed in a combined arms tactic similar to that of other forces: cavalry at the center and infantry on the flanks, this time attacking the flank of the Florentine *gialdonieri*²⁴, who were required to maintain their formation against the charges,

18 According to VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352 it at least «fu grande cagione». Cfr. COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 14. No source explicitly indicates how the Ghibelline host collapsed.

19 There is no record of supplementary infantry, but it is likely that they existed, similar to the Guelphs.

20 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

21 COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, pp. 14-15, VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352. The sources do not explicitly state which side the two reserves are positioned on, but historiography is unanimous in indicating the left and right respectively for the Guelphs and Ghibellines, meaning on the opposite side of the Arno River: cfr., among others, VERANI, cit., p. 112.

22 OERTER, cit., GIANNELLI, SEMPLICI, cit. and DeVRIES, CAPPONI, cit., p. 93 even overlook this.

23 PTOLEMAEUS LUCENSIS, cit., *B*, pp. 217-218. This passage presents two versions because Tolomeo himself revised his text, resulting in two editions dating from the years 1263/1264 (ivi, p. 149) and 1294, p. 230. In this context, the second edition, *B*, is cut off mid-sentence due to the loss of pages in the manuscript (ivi, p. 230). I will, of course, cite the edition *B*. The edition *A* does not alter the substance but perhaps clarifies the phrase regarding the Florentines: «ferunt [...] quod in dicto bello Lucani primo fregerunt aciem, qui percusserunt a latere et cum balistis fregerunt hostes et precipue Gialdonerios; quamis Florentini strenuissime se habuerunt».

24 Lexical note: I identify the terms *gialdonieri*, *lancelunghes*, and *picchieri* as representative of typical Italian infantry armed with spears approximately 5-6 meters in length (cfr. SETTIA, *I mezzi*, cit., pp. 165-166): an equivalence that, although not fully confirmed, appears to be largely consistent with the sources. Regarding the last point, cfr. ALBERTINO MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum post Henricum VII Cesarem (Libri I-VII)*, Rino MODONUTTI (cur.), FSI, RIS³, XV, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 2018, Lib. V, rubr. 6, p. 252: «...lancierorum cum hastis longissimis, quas çaldas vocant Italici». SETTIA, *I mezzi*, cit., p. 162, while showing the prevailing tendency of the pike among Italian Communal infantry in the early 14th century (ivi, pp. 165-166), the author rejects the equivalence

thus becoming excellent targets for the shooters.

This reconstruction of the battle not only aligns with the synergy of the various weapons employed but also corresponds closely with the well-documented events of the Battle of Montecatini (August 29, 1315). This remarkable victory was achieved by Ugucione della Faggiola, the lord of Pisa and Lucca, against the Guelph-Angioinian forces of Prince Philip of Taranto, marking the pinnacle of the aforementioned winged tactics and, at a minimum, one of the most significant clashes in contemporary European history. At Montecatini, during the critical moment of engagement between the opposing *grosse* lines, the Ghibelline crossbowmen are brought into battle²⁵: the majority of Guelph archers are unprepared and disarmed due to the general negligence of their army²⁶. The

between the *gialda* and the *lancia lunga*. The specific references cited by the author in this regard are, Salvatore BATTAGLIA, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, 21 voll., Torino, UTET, 1970, vol. VI, p. 760, s.v. *Gialda*, Carlo BATTISTI, Giovanni ALESSIO, *Dizionario etimologico italiano*, 5 voll., Firenze, G. Barbera, 1968, vol. III, p. 1803, s.v. *Gialda*, and Pietro SELLA, *Glossario latino emiliano*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1937, p. 396, s.v. *Zaldone*, which do not provide conclusive data for either position (for example, no one cites Mussato) and of which, moreover, only the second fails to specify the considerable length as a characteristic of *gialda*. Settia's reservation is nonetheless valid and widely accepted, as it makes a more general reference to the semantic flexibility of pre-Linnaean vocabulary. Regarding the equivalence of *gialda*, *lancia lunga*, and *picca*, cfr. also P. PIERI, *La crisi militare italiana nel Rinascimento nelle relazioni con la crisi politica ed economica*, Napoli, Riccardo Ricciardi, 1934, pp. 215-216.

25 *Cronica di Pisa dal ms. Roncioni 338 dell'Archivio di Stato di Pisa*, Cecilia IANNELLA (cur.), Fsm., *Antiquitates*, XXII, Roma: Nella sede dell'Istituto, Palazzo Borromini, 2005, p. 79: «allora si misseno quatro bandiere oltramontane e acostaronsi colle tre ch'erano rinculate indirieto e lli balestrieri pisani, forse da cinquecento, 500»; *Monumenta Pisana Ab Anno MLXXXIX usque ad Annum MCCCLXXXIX auctore anonymo*, in Ludovico Antonio MURATORI (cur.), RIS, XIV, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1729, col. 995 (969-1088): «allora si misseno quattro bandiere oltramontane, e acostaronsi con le tre, che erano rinculate in dietro». BERNARDO MARANGONE, *Croniche della città di Pisa dall'anno della sua edificazione al 1406 di Bernardo Marangone pisano da un testo a penna di Vincenzo Coletti*, in Joseph Maria TARTINUS (cur.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores ab anno aerae Christianae millesimo ad millesimum sexcentisimum quorum potissima pars nunc primum in lucem prodit ex Florentinarum bibliothecarum codicibus*, 2 tomm., Florentiae, ex typographia Petri Cajetani Viviani, tomus I, 1748-1770, *Croniche*, col. 634 (307-846): «visto il bisogno Ugucione spinse innanzi quattro bandiere tedesche, e con quelle cinquecento balestrieri pisani e' quali tutti si strinsono addosso alli gialdonieri del principe, e nello scaricar di tante frecce furono forzati quelli del principe lassar cascare in terra le falde, che loro tenevono».

26 MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. V, rubr. 94, p. 288: «quacumque voluntas quemque trahebat, illac perambulabat: in siricis paludamentis pileati milites nullo armorum onere

continuous “row firing” by the Pisan crossbowmen—likely made more effective by their elevated positions on the hills of Buggiano²⁷—is explicitly aimed at disrupting the *gialdonieri* in the opposing flanks²⁸, which are simultaneously

pallabant sub concentu tubarum lituique melodiis, plurimorum cum parme ac toraces cum cassidibus locate per cophynos salmariarum vehebantur onagris, ut viaticum agentes assoletum ad fora venalia mercatores; tegmenta velitum impedimenta que cum ballistis tormentorumque generibus annexa vectoribus sub equorum mulorumque sarcinis nullis parata usibus, uti armenta per campus laxabantur; sicque ad vadum Borre ventum est»; GUILLIELMUS DE CORTUSIIS, Appendice, Beniamino PAGNIN (cur.), in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, II serie (from now on RIS²), XII/V, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1941, cap. 1, p. 151: «Deus autem principem occavit; quando enim dissentavit pro capiendo passum predictum, sui balisterii posuerunt super salmas eorum balistas; itaque ad pugnam ipsas non habebant»; *Chronicon Estense cum additamentis usque ad annum 1478*, Giulio BERTONI, Emilio Paolo VICINI (cur.), RIS², XV/III, Città di Castello, coi tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi, 1908, p. 85: «euntes super ripam inordinate, quia balistre et alii arnesii erant longe super somas»; *Corpus chronicorum Bononiensium*, Albano SORBELLI (cur.), RIS², XVIII/I, vol. I di 2, Città di Castello, Tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi; [poi] Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1910-1938, *Cron. Vill.*, p. 335: «multis sine armis euntibus et inimicos habentibus in despectu». Cfr. also VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 71, p. 172: «per la sùbita levata gran parte de' cavalieri non erano armati di tutte loro armi, e' pedoni male in ordine» e AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, *Cronaca Senese*, in Alessandro LISINI e Fabio IACOMETTI (cur.), *Cronache senesi*, RIS², XV/VI, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1931-1939, p. 353 (253-564), che lo segue. RANIERI SARDO, *Cronaca di Pisa*, Ottavio BANTI (cur.), Fonti per la Storia d'Italia (from now on FSII) pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano; [poi] pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, XCIX, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 1963, p. 71: «lo Principe [...] chon sua gente molta, schierata et ordinata»; the same *Cronica di Pisa*, cit., p. 74; SER GIOVANNI DI LEMMO ARMALIONI DA COMUGNORI, *Diario (1299-1319)*, Vieri MAZZONI (cur.), Deputazione di storia patria per la Toscana, Firenze, Olschki, 2008, p. 63: «[gens principis] in maiori quantitate valde erant non bene muniti nec ordinati ibant».

27 Cfr. *Cronaca senese*, cit., p. 107: «e' Pisani avevano el vantagio del tereno». For information on the position of the Pisan host in Buggiano cfr. anche CORTUSII, Appendice, cit., cap. 1, p. 150 and MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. V, rubr. 88-91, pp. 286-287 and rubr. 100, p. 290.

28 CORTUSII, Appendice, cit., cap. 1, p. 151: «dicti balisterii a lateribus lanciferorum principis, eos fortiter percusserunt. Ipsi autem sentientes sagittas et iam vulnerati cadebant et sic lanceas suas devalare relaxabant [...]. Quare et milites aciei prime principis videntes lanciferos suos conflictos, valde sunt perterriti»; *Cronica di Pisa*, cit., pp. 79-80: «allora si miseno quatro bandiere oltramontane e acostaronsi colle tre ch'erano rinculate indiriecto e lli balestrieri pisani, forse da cinquecento, 500, e' serarono tra lli gialdonieri del prinse, si che per le quadrella che lli punseno lassóno chadere le gialde»; SARDO, cit., p. 72: «et alla fine per li molti cholpi di balestra, tucti a un'ora, chaddono li gialdonieri». Based on the phrase *tucti a un'ora* from the ms. Roncioni, Andreas KIESEWETTER, «Die Schlacht von Montecatini (29. August 1315)», *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, 40 (1998), p. 322 (237-388) calculates that during this brief period, the Pisans unleashed 20,000 bolts upon the enemy *gialdonieri*.

compromised by the Ghibelline cavalry attacking from the side²⁹. The cavalry of the Guelph line holds its ground; however, deprived of infantry support and assaulted with spears and projectiles from the enemy on the flanks³⁰, they ultimately succumb to the mounting pressure³¹. This pattern—though it can be reconstructed entirely from the sources only for Montecatini—can be found in scattered yet consistent details throughout all major battles in Italy during the period, with no known exceptions³². An overlooked hypothesis in historiography posits that the collapse of the Ghibelline main force at Campaldino may have been triggered by the faltering of even a single wing of infantry due to an attack by the Guelph reserve: thus, two symmetric formations, where infantry wings engage frontally before exploiting the open enemy flank once the opposition has been broken.

At Certomondo, the Ghibellines demonstrate extraordinary moral strength,

29 It is unclear whether this refers to a reserve and/or “extravagant” knights from other lines. VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 72, p. 172: «e’ pedoni male in ordine, anzi al fedire che feciono i Tedeschi di costa, i gualdonieri lasciarono cadere le loro lance sopra i nostri cavalieri, e misonsi in fugga; la quale intra l’altre fu gran cagione della rotta dell’oste de’ Fiorentini»; AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 353; *Cronica di Pisa*, cit., pp. 79-80: «allora si misseno quatro bandiere oltramontane e acostaronsi colle tre ch’erano rinculate indrieto e lli balestrieri pisani, forse da cinquecento, 500, e’ serarono tra lli gualdonieri del prinse, sì che per le quadrella che lli punseno lassóno chadere le gialde. Allora li cavalieri percosseno, cioè le sette bandiere ch’erano da seciento cavalieri o meno, a la schiera del prinse e ruperli, ma veramente già erano l’altre loro schiere a’ bolognesi e perogini»; MARANGONE, cit., col. 634: «visto il bisogno Uguccione spinse innanzi quattro bandiere tedesche e con quelle cinquecento balestrieri pisani, e’ quali tutti si strinsono addosso alli gualdonieri del principe, e nello scaricar di tante frecce furono forzati quelli del principe lassar cascare in terra le falde [gialde], che loro tenevono. Accortasene la cavalleria pisana tirarono innanzi, e con grande’empito li messono in fuga, la quale fu la principal causa della rotta di loro esercito»; *Monumenta*, cit., col. 995. The confusion caused among the knights by the fall of the pikes from the foot soldiers appears to provide a mechanistic and elusive explanation both in the context of Villani’s account and in the subsequent chronicles that follow. Agnolo di Tura del Grasso omits the specific direction of “from the flank”.

30 MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. V, rubr. 104, pp. 291-292: «fit pugna ingens quatuor simul collidentium atierum, sed vires in pares, cum nullis fulciantur peditibus Karoli Petrique adiute militie, nudis corporibus balistarum tormentorumque partium Ugutionis et levis armature peditum lesiones ac mille generum mortes incutiant, meritumque accopit imprivse sibi sortis exitium principis gens credita fidutie atque socordie blandimentis».

31 Regarding the sequence, cfr., in general, VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 72, p. 172, MONTI, cit., p. 146, MARANGONE, cit., col. 634, *Monumenta*, cit., col. 995, GRANCHI, cit., lib. I, vv. 74-77, pp. 14-15, AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 353.

32 Cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit..

arguably the greatest of the entire late Communal warfare. Compagni writes: «furono rotti gli Aretini, non per viltà né per poca prodezza, ma per lo soperchio de' nimici»³³. This assertion remains valid, especially considering the severe numerical disadvantage faced by the Ghibellines, which is not observed in any of the major clashes of the era. Villani holds the Aretine army and its commanders in high regard, explaining that they, in contrast, did not think highly of the Florentines³⁴; the chronicler is equally clear about the quality of the Ghibelline formation: gli Aretini dalla loro parte ordinarono saviamente loro schiere, però che v'avea [...] buoni capitani di guerra»³⁵. The attack by Corso Donati at the critical moment of engagement, the heavy losses suffered by the Ghibellines—including among their finest commanders, such as Bishop Ubertini³⁶—and the Guelph disbelief in the face of enemy resistance³⁷ suggest the concerted effort of

33 COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 15.

34 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 351: «molto bella gente, e di molti savi capitani di guerra ch'avea tra'lloro, che v'era il fiore de' Ghibellini di Toscana, della Marca, e del Ducato, e di Romagna, e tutta gente costumati in arme e in guerra; sì richiesono di battaglia i Fiorentini, non temendo perché i Fiorentini fossono due cotanti cavalieri di loro, ma dispregiandogli, dicendo che ssi lasciavano come donne, e pettinavano le zazzere, e gli avevano a schifo e per niente». Cfr. anche quanto scritto dal cronista in merito all'imboscata di successo aretina sui Senesi a Pieve di Toppo, meno di un anno prima, ivi, cap. 120, p. 343: «i capitani di guerra della città d'Arezzo, che ve n'avea assai e buoni».

35 Ivi, cap. 131, p. 352.

36 Ivi, pp. 352-353: «gli Aretini furono rotti e sconfitti, e furono morti più di MDCC tra a cavallo e a piè, e presi più di MM, onde molti ne furono trabaldati pur de' migliori, chi per amistà, e chi per ricomperarsi per danari; ma in Firenze ne vennero legati VII^cXL. Intra' morti rimase messer Guiglielmino degli Ubertini vescovo di Arezzo, il quale fu uno grande guerriero, e messer Guiglielmino de' Pazzi di Valdarno e' suoi nipoti, il quale fu il migliore e 'l più avisato capitano di guerra che fosse in Italia al suo tempo, e morivvi Bonconte figliuolo del conte Guido da Montefeltro, e tre degli Uberti, e uno degli Abati, e due de' Griffoni da Feggine, e più altri usciti di Firenze, e Guiderello d'Allessandro d'Orbivieto, nominato capitano, che portava la 'nsegna imperiale, e più altri». Compagni does not specify the losses; however BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 340, doubles the estimate of the dead: «cecciderunt in ea pugna Arretinorum supra tria millia, et in his Guillieminus praesul et Bonus Feretranus et alii quidam insignes diversarum partium viri; capti insuper ad due millia». For comparison, PAOLINO PIERI, cit., p. 60 cites over 1,600 deaths and *Chronicon Parmense*, cit., p. 56 mentions over 1,000 fatalities.

37 COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 15: «[i Fiorentini] non corsono ad Arezzo con la vittoria, che si sperava con poca fatica l'arebon avuta. Al capitano e a' giovani cavalieri, che aveano bisogno di riposo, parve avere assai fatto di vincere, senza perseguitarli. Più insegne ebbono di loro nimici, e molti prigioni; e molti n'ucciseno, che ne fu danno per tutta Toscana».

the entire Aretine army in combat, which also aligns with the compliment paid by Tolomeo di Lucca to the Florentines³⁸. This information strengthens the theory of an Aretine array that was adequate and functional, whose structure absorbed all the forces of a superior enemy. The silence of Florentine chroniclers regarding the deployment of the enemy infantry likely assumes the symmetry of the two formations. Tolomeo di Lucca appears to describe exactly this scenario, detailing the attack by Corso Donati on the flank of the Aretine main force, shielded by the *gialdonieri*, during the climactic moment of the clash. The notion that the Ghibelline formation differed from that which was trained remains an unprovable hypothesis within the context of late Communal Italian warfare.

3. *The battle in Bruni's Historiae*

Thanks to the high quality of the accounts regarding the course of the battle, the tactical reconstruction of Campaldino could have been considered complete if not for the additional information provided by humanistic sources alongside the contemporary records. This addition is, in fact, quite rare, as humanistic historiography typically relies on the same early 14th-century chronicles, which are the most detailed and comprehensive. Even in cases where Renaissance authors are aware of other sources – generally lesser and narrative in nature – that have since been lost but were available at the time, the additional information often turns out to be secondary and does not significantly alter the preceding history. The most detailed account of the Battle of Campaldino is found in the *Historiae Florentini Populi*³⁹ (1429⁴⁰), a work that exemplifies the highest ideals of civic humanism, authored by Leonardo Bruni, also known as ‘*l’Aretino*’, who served as chancellor of the Republic of Florence. In this text, Certomondo is elevated to

38 PTOLEMAEUS LUCENSIS, cit., *B*, p. 217: «Florentini strenuissime se habuerunt», which would seem discordant for a victory resulting from a clear flaw in the enemy. The same applies *ivi*, *A*, p. 217.

39 Or, more accurately, *Historiarum Florentini populi libri XII et Rerum suo tempore gestarum commentarius*. LEONARDO BRUNI, *Historia Florentini populi*, James HANKINS (cur.), 3 voll., Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001, vol. I, Lib. IV, pp. 334-343. We will now analyze the account in detail.

40 Cesare VASOLI, «Leonardo Bruni, detto Leonardo Aretino», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (from now on DBI), vol. 14, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1972, pp. 339-374 (digital ed. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bruni-leonardo-detto-leonardo-aretino_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/, accessed on September 15, 2022, at 06:30).

a symbol of the Guelph triumph, which marked the beginning of Florence's rise in Tuscany—a significant theme for a Guelph who remained devoted to his adopted homeland, particularly as he extended his control over Arezzo following the decline that ensued after the battle. Notably, despite the renown of the *Historiae*, translated for the Medici lordship by Donato Acciaiuoli (1429-1478), the most crucial aspect concerning Certomondo is the exceptional information the *Aretino* derived from a now-lost autograph letter of Dante Alighieri. In this lost letter (or letters?⁴¹), the Poet elucidates, and perhaps even illustrates⁴², the battle, indicating that he participated in the clash among the Florentine *feditori*.

In light of the historiographical positivism regarding Bruni's account, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Dante autograph he described⁴³. Furthermore, I do not intend to entertain this hypothesis as part of my reconstruction of the battle. The reliability of the *Aretino* concerning the document is, in fact, quite high, due both to the vivid references in the Comedy to the Florentine campaigns of 1289⁴⁴ and to the humanist's translation of certain passages from the autograph, which were also known to Bruni's rival, Biondo Flavio (1392–1463)⁴⁵.

41 Cfr. BARBERO, *Dante*, cit., p. 48, Giorgio PETROCCHI, *Vita di Dante*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1983, p. 26.

42 Cfr. BARBERO, *Dante*, cit., p. 48, Giuseppina BRUNETTI, «Le letture fiorentine: i classici e la retorica», in Enrico MALATO e Andrea MAZZUCCHI (cur.), *Dante fra il settecentocinquantesimo della nascita (2015) e il settecentenario della morte (2021)*, 2 voll., Roma, Salerno Editrice, 2016, vol. I, p. 228 (225-253).

43 A. A. SETTIA, *Comuni in guerra. Armie ed eserciti nell'Italia delle città*, Bologna, Clueb, 1993, cit., p. 127 even speaks of the «pretesa» participation of Dante at Campaldino.

44 DANTE ALIGHIERI, *La Divina Commedia*, in Natalino SAPEGNO (cur.), 3 voll., Milano, La Nuova Italia, 2004, *Inferno*, Canto XXI, vv. 94-96, p. 229, relativo all'assedio del castello pisano di Caprona; Canto XXII, vv. 1-6, p. 233 summarizes the campaign and battle, as well as the devastation of the countryside of Arezzo carried out by the Guelphs after their victory. It also describes the tournaments and races held in derision under the walls of the besieged city: «io vidi già cavalier muover campo, / e cominciare stormo e far lor mostra, / e talvolta partir per loro scampo; / corridor vidi per la terra vostra, / o Aretini e vidi gir gualdane, / fedir torneamenti e correr giostra». This issue is well summarized by BARBERO, *Dante*, cit., pp. 47-49. Cfr. also Anna Maria CABRINI, «Leonardo Bruni e Dante», *Bollettino di italianistica. Rivista di critica, storia letteraria, filologia e linguistica*, XIII/2 (2016), pp. 31-45.

45 The most renowned translated passage is L. BRUNI, *Vita di Dante*, in Monica BERTÉ, Maurizio FIORILLA (cur.), *Le vite di Dante dal XIV al XVI secolo*, tomo IV, Roma, Salerno Editrice, 2017, §. 16, p. 229 (213-247): «...la battaglia di Campaldino, nella quale, nella quale la parte ghibellina fu quasi al tutto morta e disfatta; dove mi trovai non fanciullo nell'armi, dove ebbi temenza molta e nella fine grandissima allegrezza, per li varii casi di quella batta-

Therefore, it can be considered certain that Dante participated in the battle, and it is also plausible that the *Aretino* had access to an autograph of Alighieri that detailed his involvement in Campaldino. My critique is directed more toward the tactical logic in the narrative of the *Historiae*, which is briefly rephrased by Bruni in his *Vita di Dante* (1436)⁴⁶, and is both philologically and historically distant from the Italian military Art of the late Communal period.

Let us therefore compare the humanistic version with that of the chronicles from the 14th century. In Bruni's account, the two battle lines on either side consist respectively of only cavalry and only infantry, with the former also including the *feditori*⁴⁷. The "flower" of the Guelph infantry is positioned behind the cavalry, with extended flanks ready to envelop its sides if necessary⁴⁸. When the Aretine charge causes the Guelph line to falter, they seek refuge among the infantry, who resist the advancing enemy cavalry, fiercely attacking them from the unprotected flanks with spears and projectiles⁴⁹. The Aretine infantry, on the other

glia». FLAVIUS BLONDUS, *Historiarum ab inclinatione romani imperii decades*, Rosetta MIGLIORINI FISSI (cur.), in Guido DI PINO (cur.), *Dante e le città dell'esilio*, Ravenna, Longo, 1989, p. 118 (115-146) states that he refers to the same text. The issue is well summarized in BARBERO, *Dante*, cit., pp. 47-49. For further insights into the *Historiae* and the *Vita* cfr. also CABRINI, cit..

46 BRUNI, *Vita*, cit.: «[Dante] fu a Campaldino lui giovani e bene stimato si trovò nell'armi, combattendo vigorosamente a cavallo nella prima schiera, dove portò gravissimo pericolo, però che la prima battaglia fu delle schiere equestri, nella quale i cavalieri che erano dalla parte degli Arretini con tanta tempesta vinsono e soperchiarono la schiera de' cavalieri fiorentini che, sbarrati e rotti, bisognò fuggire alla schiera pedestre. Questa rotta fu quella che fé perdere la battaglia agli Arretini, però che i loro cavalieri vincitori, perseguitando quegli che fuggivano, per grande distanza lasciarono addietro la loro pedestre schiera, sì che da quindi innanzi in niuno luogo interi combatterono, ma i cavalieri soli e di per sé, senza sussidio de' pedoni, e i pedoni poi di per sé, senza sussidio de' cavalieri. E dalla parte de' Fiorentini adivenne il contrario: che, per essere fuggiti i loro cavalieri alla schiera pedestre, si fero tutti un corpo e agevolmente vinsono prima i cavalieri e poi i pedoni». The entire passage on the Battle of Campaldino can be found *ivi*, §§. 6-8, pp. 225-226.

47 *Id.*, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 335.

48 *Ivi*, p. 334: «Florentini prima fronte equitatum omnem [...]; post hunc peditum robur collocarunt, extenso longius utroque cornu, ut, si opus foret, equitatum complecterentur; scutatos vero et sagittarios per cornua ipsa ab utraque parte disposuere». *Robur* means the backbone or elite, but it is unclear why the infantry of the main formation should be of superior quality compared to the pikemen, crossbowmen, and archers mentioned by Villani.

49 *Ivi*, pp. 336-338: «hoc igitur prosperum antesignanorum certamen magno clamore prosecutus reliquus Arretinorum equitatus, in ipsam maiorem aciem delatus est tanto quidem ardore ut impetus eius sustineri nequiverit, pulsusque campo florentinus equitatus com-

hand, is detached from their cavalry after the latter's swift advance⁵⁰. Before their subsequent engagement turns the tide of battle in favor of the Ghibellines, Corso Donati charges the enemy knights from the side, thereby alleviating the pressure on the entire Guelph force⁵¹. Observing his cavalry enveloped by the enemy's flanks, Guido Novello retreats, while Guglielmino degli Ubertini chooses to fight to the death, engaging in close combat with the infantry, who are ultimately defeated due to the absence of their own cavalry⁵².

pelleretur ad peditem refugere. Ea res metum primo, mox victoriam peperit Florentinis [...]. Sustinuit enim florentinum equitatum acies peditum, quae dextro sinistroque, ut supra monstravimus, cornu refugientem equitem complexa, sagittis et hastis et omnifariam telorum genere apertis lateribus incessebat hostis. Acerrimum itaque certamen eo in loco excitatum est. Arretini enim primo in impetu victoriam reposuerant; quare, summa vi anixi, dissipare Florentinorum agmen nitebantur. Sed tubabatur pedes ad quem sese equitatus receperat, eratque fluctuatio quaedam et motus incertus prementium simul ac renitentium».

- 50 Ivi, p. 336: «dum enim cedentes persequitur Arretinorum equitatus, peditem suum longe dimisit. Itaque evenit posthac ut Arretinus nullo in loco integer pugnaret, sed alibi eques, alibi pedes, cum integro hoste congredetur».
- 51 Ivi, pp. 338-340: «et iam pedestris Arretinorum superveniebat acies, quae relicta ab equitibus suis, cum illi cedentis persequerentur, nondum sese pugnae miscuerat. Ea si equitibus suis coniungeretur, inclinare ad Arretinos victoria haud dubie videbatur. Inter haec Cursius Donatus, qui extraordinariae praeerat aciei, intellecto suorum periculo, etsi praeceptum fuerat ne iniussu ducis proelium iniret, tamen preciosum ratus ultra differre, “Adoriamur,” inquit, “commilitones, hostium equitatum, priusquam pedes eorum se immisceat pugnae. Neque vero me in tanto discrimine civium meorum aut praeceptum ducis aut poena deterret. Si enim vincimur in acie illa, morituro non ultra formidanda est poena. Sin, ut spero, vicerimus, tunc Pistorium veniat qui supplicium de nobis sumere volet.”. His dictis, cum aciem concitasset, ex transverso hostem invadit. Ad hac maxime acie victoria parva creditur Florentinis. Nam hostes a tergo violentius percussi, retro iam respicere coacti sunt; et qui primo aegre resistebant, remisso hostium impetu in illos incubuere, et interclusus a suo peditatu equitatus hostium perfacile opprimebatur».
- 52 Ivi, p. 340: «Novellus autem comes aciem cui praeerat non item in auxilium suorum adduxit, sed ubi implicatum vidit equitum agmen, princeps fugam arripuit. At Guilielminus praesul, cum ante peditum staret aciem multique suaderent ut, profligatis iam equitibus ac victoria ad hostes inclinante, ipse Bibienam se reciperet vitamque a periculo tutaretur, interrogasse dicitur num et peditem reducere tuto posset. Cum negaretur peditem servari posse, “Mors,” inquit, “communis mihi et pediti sit. Ego quos in periculum duxi, nunquam destituum.” Ita redintegrata pugna hostes acriter invadit, nec multo post proelians occiditur; peditesque nudati equitum praesidio tandem superantur, ac multa caede opprimuntur».

4. Critique of the Brunian version

Before addressing the differences between the *Historiae* and early 14th-century sources, it is essential to emphasize that it is far from clear what Bruni derived from the Poet's autograph. The work does not mention Dante by name, and his influence has been arbitrarily assumed—without any evidence—to have shaped the account of the battle. Another critical aspect is that Bruni's narrative is clearly modeled on Villani's work, which serves as the primary source for the *Historiae*. Although these texts are regarded as the first modern history of Florence⁵³, in which the author critically incorporates memories, memoirs, and unpublished sources, the *Aretino's* narration still adheres to the framework established by the *Nova Cronica*. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Bruni remains ambiguous regarding Villani's information, as if he seeks to avoid confronting the issues inherent in the chronicler's explanation. The "medieval" mindset is laden with meanings and often more opaque, whereas humanist reasoning is compelled to provide a succinct and technically oriented explanation of the battle's progression—an approach that ultimately results in significant omissions.

Bruni does not explain, for example, how the different types of troops interact on the battlefield: while mutual support is decisive in both offense and defense⁵⁴, the knights and Florentine foot soldiers are presented in the *Historiae* as two distinct *acies*⁵⁵, separated by a gap⁵⁶. The term *acies*, when referring to infantry, is nearly absent in late Communal sources⁵⁷, where it predominantly denotes

53 Emilio SANTINI, *Leonardo Bruni*, in DBI, vol. 7, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1930 (digital ed. [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leonardo-bruni_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leonardo-bruni_(Enciclopedia-Italiana))), accessed on June 20, 2024, at 7:00 PM).

54 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 336: «florentinus equitatus compelleretur ad peditem refugere. Ea res metum primo, mox victoriam peperit Florentinis»; *ivi*, p. 340: «peditesque nudati equitum praesidio tandem superantur, ac multa caede opprimuntur».

55 *Ivi*, p. 334: «sustinuit enim florentinum equitatum acies peditum»; *ivi*, p. 338: «iam pedestris Arretinorum superveniebat acies».

56 *Ibid.*, on the Aretines: «primam [aciem] equites; mox aliquo intervallo pedites».

57 I found mention of this only regarding the Padua infantry against the Scaligeri at Bassanello (1320): A. MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum post mortem Henrici VII Caesaris*, in Ludovico Antonio MURATORI (cur.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, serie I (from now on RIS), X, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1727, lib. X, col. 704 (561-801). The passage, written in verse, employs a more elevated style compared to the author's usual prose. He is also the primary source on winged formations in the late Communal warfare in Italy and does not, in fact, ever mention *acies peditum*.

cavalry or, more rarely, the cavalry along with infantry subordinate to it⁵⁸. Thus, the *Aretino* speaks anachronistically, describing the forces as two separate battle formations, whereas the tactical approach of late 13th-century Italy regarded them as united in a single line⁵⁹. The late Communal formations were spaced 500 meters apart, while knights and foot soldiers were required to remain in close contact with one another throughout all phases of the engagement within a single unit. Although two distinct units of knights and foot soldiers are the typical model from the Swabian era⁶⁰, it is the passage in the *Nova Cronica* that introduces a new array, which maintains a consistent continuity in the sources with the winged model up until the mid-14th century. If Bruni's "hybrid" were merely a transitional phase or a novelty—especially in the context of a significant victory—the sources would have suggested it. While it is undeniable that Villani pays particular attention to the Guelph deployment at Campaldino, the chronicler speaks of the wings with naturalness even in reference to other battles⁶¹. The same holds true for the numerous mentions made by other contemporary chroniclers who, despite referencing this formation, never express a need to place it in a historical context or to explain its origins.

The disarticulation of the Ghibelline forces in the *Historiae* is also questionable. While in the *Nova Cronica* the encircling of the Guelph wings on the enemy flank precedes the intervention of Corso Donati, Villani does not necessarily imply a chronological order for the two events, nor does he specify which units are attacked *per costa*⁶². The assault by the Aretine troops, on the other hand, runs

58 Cfr. le *acies militum et peditum* in PETRUS CANTINELLUS, *Chronicon [AA. 1228-1336]*, Francesco TORRACA (cur.), RIS², LXVI, Città di Castello, coi tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi, 1902, p. 88, which we will examine further along. Regarding the infantry within the *acies* alongside the cavalry, cfr. GUILLIELMUS DE CORTUSIUS, cit., cap. 1, p. 151 (147-164). BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 340 is imprecise when it varies the terminology, using the terms *acies* and *agmen* interchangeably for combat. In classical Latin, however, these terms denote formations respectively in order of battle and march.

59 Cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit..

60 Cfr. PIERI, *L'evoluzione*, cit., specie pp. 40-57.

61 Cfr., among others, VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151.

62 Cfr. *ivi*, vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352: «[i Fiorentini] da ciascuna parte de' pedoni rinchiusono tra'lloro i nemici, combattendo aspramente *buona pezza*. E messer Corso Donati [...] *quando vide cominciata* la battaglia» (the italics are mine to emphasize the temporal contrast). The account of the combat is rather concise.

parallel to the absence of action from Guido Novello⁶³, who should have—if only for spatial reasons—attacked the “bandaging” infantry on the Guelph flank, just as Corso Donati would have had the Ghibelline foot soldiers not been, as we hypothesize, supported by their cavalry. This interpretation is further validated by Tolomeo di Lucca, who attributes the breaking of the *acies* and the collapse of the enemy *gioldonerii* to his *Lucani* and the overwhelming fire of their crossbows, respectively⁶⁴. Although this could also align with the Brunian separation of cavalry and infantry, the action more likely describes a combined arms assault by Corso Donati’s reserve on the flank of one Aretine wing, aligning with what occurred at Montecatini. Compagni explicitly associates the exposure of the Aretine forces with the fire from their crossbowmen, confirming that at least part of the Ghibelline infantry was with their cavalry at the time of the attack: «Messer Corso Donati con la brigata de’ Pistolesi fedi i nemici per costa. Le quadrella⁶⁵ pioveano: gli Aretini n’aveano poche, ed erano fediti per costa, onde erano scoperti»⁶⁶. This lack of protection is consistent with an attack from the side, perhaps with the opposite Ghibelline wing still intact. While it can be argued that the crossbowmen, operating in loose formation, could have followed their cavalry into combat more swiftly⁶⁷, this remains a mere hypothesis. What remains clear, however, is that the disconnection of the heavy infantry from the cavalry is not supported by any source from the battle or by contemporary accounts of late Communal warfare.

As we have seen, for Villani, the clash extended over a considerable period⁶⁸:

63 *Ibid.*: «i feditori degli Aretini si mossono con grande baldanza a sproni battuti a fedire sopra l’oste de’ Fiorentini, e l’altra loro schiera conseguente appresso, salvo che ’l conte Guido Novello [...] non s’ardi di mettere alla battaglia, ma rimase».

64 PTOLEMAEUS LUCENSIS, cit., *B*, pp. 217-218. Cfr. Also *ivi*, *A*, p. 217: «in dicto bello Lucani primo fregerunt aciem, qui percusserunt a latere et cum balistis fregerunt hostes et precipue gialdonerios».

65 The quarrel is the most commonly used arrowhead for war bows and crossbows during the Middle Ages: elongated and slender, with a quadrangular cross-section, the quarrel is capable of penetrating between the steel rings of the hauberk.

66 COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 14 and, too: «i pedoni degli Aretini si metteano carpone sotto i ventri de’ cavalli con le coltella in mano e sbudellàvali». OERTER, cit., p. 447 interprets these soldiers as embodying a ‘special force’ lightly armed with daggers to be used against the horses of the Florentines.

67 Cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, pp. 190-191.

68 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

the *Historiae* offer hints regarding the unreliability of their own version. Bruni, for instance, suggests that the maximum depth of the battlefield was little more than a mile—an estimate that is plausible⁶⁹—indicating that it could be traversed entirely on foot in 20 minutes. This timeline makes it unlikely that a prolonged disconnection occurred between the various forces⁷⁰. The major battles of the late Communal era typically lasted for hours, and nothing suggests that Campaldino was a “lightning” engagement. The Aretine intention to defeat the enemy with a single charge⁷¹ remains consistent with the slow and orderly advance of the troops, with the cavalry charge conducted only in the final hundred meters⁷². Rushing across hundreds of meters—distances that could still be covered at a

69 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 334: «cum in conspectum venissent, nec fere plus mille quingentis passibus inter se castra distarent,...

70 Typically, a battle would last for hours, and there is no evidence to suggest that the Battle of Campaldino was particularly “brief” to the extent that the foot soldiers could not reach the knights. As previously noted, VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352 states that the clash between the large troops, prior to the intervention of Corso Donati, lasted a “buona pezza”. BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 338: «eratque fluctuatio quaedam et motus incertus prementium simul ac renitentium». It is also normal for such an engagement to extend for a lengthy period, featuring multiple charges, moving back and forth; this is corroborated by ALIGHIERI, cit., *Inferno*, Canto XXII, vv. 1-3, p. 233 as previously mentioned. COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 14 seems to allude to this notion as well, stating: «e de’ loro feditori [aretini] trascorsono tanto, che nel mezzo della schiera furono morti di ciascuna parte». A. A. SETTIA, *Battaglie medievali*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2020, pp. 34-35 associates the terms *storno* and *badalucco* with minor skirmishes; however, the tactics employed in these smaller confrontations are essentially the same as those in larger battles: cfr., per esempio, Frans VERBRUGGEN, *The art of warfare in Europe during the Middle Ages from the eighth century to 1340*, Stephen MORILLO (Ed. and trad.), Amsterdam (New York), The Boydell Press, 1997 (original ed. *De Krijgskunst in West-Europa in de Middeleeuwen*, Bruxelles, Paleis der Academiën, 1954) and Kelly DEVRIES, *Infantry Warfare in the Early Fourteenth Century: Discipline, Tactics, and Technology*, Rochester (New York), The Boydell Press, 1996, pp. 251-252 which discuss the cavalry at the Battle of Bouvines (1214). Furthermore, the difficulties faced by the Aretines due to the uneven terrain, as suggested by OERTER, cit., pp. 446-448, do not account for a significant delay in the infantry’s movement; at the beginning of the battle, the hosts were only a few hundred meters apart.

71 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352: «la mossa e assalire che feciono gli Aretini sopra i Fiorentini fu, stimandosi come valente gente d’arme, che per loro buona pugna di rompere alla prima affrontata i Fiorentini e mettergli in volta».

72 PIERI, *L’evoluzione*, cit., pp. 38-39. The statement made by GIANNELLI, SEMPLICI, cit., p. 45, that «subito dopo la prima ondata di cavalleria ghibellina parti al trotto la seconda, seguita a corsa dalle fanterie aretine [che] pur correndo, non riuscivano a tenere il passo ai cavalli», is unsubstantiated. Cfr. also CANACCINI, cit., p. 174.

walking pace in just a few minutes—simply to capitalize on the success of the *feditore* would have diminished the effectiveness of the charge, which we know was indeed powerful, and would have reduced the chances of overcoming an enemy that was significantly superior in numbers.

Historian narratives appear to have been influenced by Villani in imagining a rapid succession of battles lines in combat. However, we know very little about this aspect, even regarding other engagements. It is likely that there was a considerable gap between the attack of the *feditori* and the main body of troops, allowing for better coordination of the final forces against a compact target; without such an approach, the decisive potential of the cavalry could have been squandered. Ultimately, in the battle at Certomondo, we witness a conventional confrontation between the *feditori* and the larger groups of troops. Even if the *feditori* had pressed on against the main body after defeating their counterparts⁷³—an assertion not supported by the sources—it is probable they remained separated from the rest of their forces, if only for reasons of order and space, which are critical during a charge. When reading in the *Nova Cronica* that «i feditori degli Aretini si mossono con grande baldanza a sproni battuti a fedire sopra l’oste de’ Fiorentini, e l’altra loro schiera conseguente appresso, salvo che ’l conte Guido Novello [...] non s’ardi di mettere alla battaglia, ma rimase [...]»⁷⁴ the emphasis seems to be on the irregularity of the ghibelline reserve’s intervention compared to the normal succession of troops. Thus, no matter how well conducted and coherent the Aretines’ attack may have been, it was not necessarily faster than average.

Maintaining a close cooperation between knights and foot soldiers during this

73 It happened, for example, at Montecatini: *Cronica di Pisa ms. Roncioni*, p. 79. Carla Maria MONTI, «Ugucione della Faggiola, la battaglia di Montecatini e la *Commedia* di Dante», *Rivista di studi danteschi*, X (2010), p. 146 (127-159) [in precedenza anche da Pietro VIGO, «La battaglia di Montecatini descritta da Ugucione della Faggiola», *Rivista Storica Italiana*, VI (1889), pp. 36-39], MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. V, rubr. 101, pp. 290-291, *Corpus chronicorum Bononiensium*, cit. *Cronaca B*, p. 334, VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 71, p. 172, AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, cit., p. 352, MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. V, rubr. 101, p. 291, SER GIOVANNI DI LEMMO ARMALEONI DA COMUGNORI, cit., p. 63, MARAGONE, cit., col. 633, *Monumenta Pisana*, cit., col. 995 and RANIERI GRANCHI, *De Preliis Tuscie*, Michela DIANA (cur.), *Il ritorno dei classici nell’umanesimo*, IV. Edizione nazionale dei testi della storiografia umanistica, IV, Firenze, SISMEL, 2008, lib. I, vv. 66-73, p. 14.

74 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

phase was essential as a qualitative indicator of the late Communal armies. In comparison to their enemies, the Aretine forces at Campaldino, in fact, had a proportionately greater number of infantry, which they had to rely on heavily, especially considering their absolute numerical inferiority. Following the proportionality criterion for the ranks of infantrymen, the 150 Guelph knights⁷⁵ and 300 Ghibelline knights⁷⁶ would be respectively supported by 780 and 3,000 foot soldiers, with more than 1,000 additional troops from the Lucchese-Pistoiese reserve. The *Historiae*, which are notably attentive to tactical schematics, overlook the composition of the Aretine infantry and remain silent about the foot soldiers accompanying the Guelph forces, although these are described by Villani. Bruni specifies that Corso Donati attacks the enemy knights and likely provides clarification on the direction of the assault, writing that the Guelph reserve strikes both *ex transverso* and from *a tergo*⁷⁷. This serves as an indication of a possible humanistic awareness of the theoretical presence of Ghibelline wings, and therefore reflects the spatial necessity of a charge that is at least oblique rather than perpendicular.

Finally, the suicide attack by the infantry, lacking support from the cavalry, is documented only by Bruni⁷⁸ throughout the entirety of the late communal war in Italy. However, he does not clarify from which unit they would have been defeated⁷⁹. According to the structure of the *Historiae*, the use of Donati's reserve—the last fresh unit—against an enemy cavalry already surrounded on three sides appears to be decidedly wasteful, especially given the looming threat posed by a mass of enemy foot soldiers approaching. With the entire Guelph force exhausted, the strength of the Ghibelline infantry could theoretically have destabilized the entire enemy formation. Yet, paradoxically, it is the outcome of the clash that, even in the author's intent, denies the potential decisiveness of the Ghibelline infantry, which would have thus been of no real value.

75 Ivi, p. 351; BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 336.

76 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

77 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 338.

78 The only exception that confirms the rule that foot soldiers do not successfully attack cavalry occurred in 1315, when the Bergamasque infantry charged and defeated the fragmented Visconti cavalry as they approached: MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. VII, rubr. 6-7, p. 329.

79 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 340.

5. *The Bruni's 'artifice' about Campaldino*

The grand Renaissance narratives—of which Bruni is considered the initiator⁸⁰—often draw upon sources that are now lost, occasionally introducing atypical information that diverges from the original historiography, without adhering to its military logic⁸¹. Several examples illustrate this phenomenon. For instance, concerning the Battle of Vaprio (1324), fought between the forces of Milan and the Papacy, the Milanese humanist Bernardino Corio (1459-1519) mentions the presence of knights mingled with light infantry. Although this assertion is theoretically plausible, it is absent from any contemporary account. The scholar Giorgio Giulini (1714-1780) acknowledges that two 14th-century sources used by Corio have been lost, but he believes that they would have contributed little, if anything, new to the account of the battle⁸².

The humanistic attitude is also evident in other minor—and seemingly trivial—details. For example, Bruni claims that there were 900 Aretine knights at Campaldino rather than the 800 noted by Villani⁸³. Earlier histories based on the

80 The topic is discussed in Gary IANZITI, «Leonardo Bruni: First modern Historian?», Australian and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, XIV/2 (1997), pp. 85-99.

81 On the battle cfr. BERNARDINO CORIO, *Storia di Milano*, Anna MORISI GUERRA (cur.), 2 voll., Classici della storiografia. Sezione medievale, Torino, UTET, 1978, vol. I, pp. 694-696. Sulla battaglia di Vaprio cfr. VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 219, p. 258, JOHANNES DE CORNAZANIS, *Historiae Parmensis fragmenta Ab Anno MCCC I usque ad Annum MCCCLV*, in L. A. MURATORI (cur.), RIS, XII, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1728, col. 735 (725-756), BONINCONTRUS MORIGIA, *Chronicon Modoetiense ab origine Modoetiae usque ad Annum MCCCXLIX, auctore Bonincontro Morigia synchrono*, in L. A. MURATORI (cur.), RIS, XII, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1728, coll. 1134-1135 (1053-1184), *Annales Forolivienses ab origine urbis usque ad annum MCCCCLXXIII*, Giuseppe MAZZATINI (cur.), RIS², XXII/II, Città di Castello, coi tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi, 1903, p. 64, JOHANNES DE BAZANO, *Chronicon Mutinense [A.A. 1188-1363]*, Tommaso CASINI (cur.), RIS², XV/IV, Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1917-1919, p. 90, *Annales Mediolanenses ab anno MCCXXX usque ad annum MCCCCII*, in L. A. MURATORI (cur.), RIS, XVII, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1730, col. 702 (635-840), Francesco COGNASSO, *I Visconti*, cit., Varese, Dall'Oglio, 1966, p. 147, Scipione AMMIRATO, *Istorie fiorentine*, in Luciano SCARABELLI (cur.), 7 voll., Torino, Pomba, 1853, lib. VI, anno 1324, vol. I, p. 91 and Giorgio GIULINI, *Memorie spettanti alla storia al governo ed alla descrizione della città e campagna di Milano ne' secoli bassi*, 7 voll., Milano, Francesco Colombo, 1854-1857 (ed. orig. 1771), vol. IV, lib. LXIII, pp. 153-160.

82 Ivi, p. 159.

83 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 334.

Florentine chronicler (e.g., Agnolo di Tura del Grasso⁸⁴ or Marchionne di Coppo di Stefani⁸⁵) tend to “adjust” the numbers compared to the *Nova Cronica*, as a presumed mark of sophistication, while remaining fundamentally close to the original text. However, this disparity does not result in any military or historical consequences within their own works.

Although Bruni’s account of Certomondo aligns with certain aspects of Dante’s autograph (for example, the fear experienced by the Poet during combat is compatible with the *débâcle* of the Guelph forces⁸⁶), the philologically central issue remains the direct dependence of the *Historiae* on Villani. Indeed, nothing in Bruni’s account of Campaldino—even when elaborated upon by the author—deviates from the specific details and narrative framework established in the *Nova Cronica*. The absence of explanations regarding the interaction of lines and arms, given the precise framework otherwise outlined in the *Historiae*, could have been supplemented by any additional information sourced from Alighieri. However, such details are not discernible, which serves as further evidence of their absence. If the humanist had intended to focus on this account, he would certainly have emphasized it over that of Villani. Similarly, the valuable data from Tolomeo di Lucca and Compagni, although known to Bruni, are conspicuously absent, reinforcing the notion that the humanist was not engaging in a comparative and diachronic analysis of various sources to specifically reconstruct the battle. My distinct impression is that the humanist merely provided—though not without the insight and narrative *finesse* characteristic of his style—a “rationalizing” interpretation of Villani’s version, which is too vague and ambiguous regarding the crucial aspect of troop deployment, in order to positively explain the clash.

However, this does not explain *why* Bruni chose to depict the battle in this particular manner. Further clues suggest that the author intentionally shaped Certomondo’s tactics for reasons that extend beyond military concerns, which, as noted, were not particularly significant to him in themselves. Bruni’s historical-literary “artifice” can be attributed to the civic idealism of the Guelph-republican tradition, intertwined with a deep, albeit understandable, love for his native

84 AGNOLO DI TURA DEL GRASSO, *cit.*.

85 MARCHIONNE DI COPPO DI STEFANI, *Cronaca Fiorentina*, N. RODOLICO (cur.), RIS², XXX/I, Città di Castello, Tipi della casa editrice S. Lapi; [poi] Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli, 1903-1955.

86 BRUNI, *Vita*, *cit.*, §. 16, p. 229.

Arezzo. This affection finds expression particularly in the voluntary deaths of Bishop Guglielmino degli Ubertini and his people in a lost battle. Although this massacre proves tactically detrimental and is challenging to justify, its primary purpose seems to be to highlight the Aretine honor.

The Brunian memory of fellow citizens who left for Florence to fight at Campaldino, as depicted in Dante's *Vita*, clearly reflects the author's loyalty to his adopted homeland as well as pride in his native one⁸⁷. However, the humanist makes no mention of any Aretine exiles who joined the Florentines, unlike the Florentines who fought for Arezzo⁸⁸. Questioning the reason for this omission may be unproductive, but it certainly highlights Bruni's almost poignant dedication to celebrating Aretine valor alongside that of Florence. Similarly, the *Historiae* notes that in Florence, there was an inscription in Palazzo Vecchio dedicated to Campaldino (now lost), which specifically commemorated the victory over the Ghibellines rather than against Arezzo⁸⁹. In Bruni's work, the battle does not signify the triumph of one city over the other; rather, it underscores the commendable equality of both cities within the Guelph order that was established in Tuscany. The civic and literary role of the *Aretino* in Florence should also have been experienced and ideologically motivated, at least in part, in this light.

The Brunian version of the Battle of Certomondo allows for the redemption

87 Id., *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 338: «Dantes Alagherii poeta in epistola quidam scribit [...] ad extremum autem victoriam partam esse, tantamque inimicorum stragem in eo proelio factam ut paene eorum nomen ad interuicium deleretur». It is precisely to the concept of Guelph fidelity and civic duty attributed to Dante and Florence that we must relate Bruni's "innovation" not only regarding the Battle of Campaldino but also, more broadly, concerning the life of the Poet. For further details cfr. CABRINI, cit., particularly pp. 34-36, and p. 34: «[della lettera di Dante] Bruni si avvale come ulteriore testimonianza della drammaticità della battaglia, rappresentata in una chiave epico-eroica dallo storiografo, che in conclusione esalta l'esito glorioso e pubblicamente celebrato della vittoria dei guelfi, fiorentini e alleati».

88 For the latter, the humanist may have drawn upon the works of Villani, Compagni, and Francesco da Buti (1324-1406), the latter being a commentator on the *Inferno*: BRUNI, *Vita*, §. 8, p. 226 and commentary *ivi*.

89 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 344: «in publicis autem eius victoriae monumentis ita scriptum est, quod Gibellinos apud Campaldinus profligassent. Id ex eo adscriptum est, quod Arretini exules foederati et socii in eo bello adfuerant. Quae de causa honestius visum est Gibellinos superatos scribere quam Arretinos, ne pars quoque illa Arretinorum, quae socia et amica et studio partium coniuncta fuerat, notaretur», and note 15 *ivi*. Regarding this last point, there is no reason to doubt that Bruni spoke the truth.

of Arezzo's honor within Florentine historiography, emphasizing the strength and courage of its people. The *Historiae*, for instance, explicitly includes in the direct discourse of Corso Donati from the *Nova Cronica*—somewhat improbably derived from Dante's own manuscript—the original detail of the Aretine infantry approaching⁹⁰. This detail paraphrases the same phrase used by Villani⁹¹: on one hand, this device strengthens the narrative framework of the Brunian clash, while on the other, it enhances the reputation of Arezzo through the words of the prominent Florentine magnate. As Anna Maria Cabrini notes, this reference to Dante's manuscript in the *Historiae* «aveva [...] la funzione di sottolineare, come dato saliente, la paura dei Fiorentini di fronte alla superiorità iniziale dell'esercito aretino»⁹².

Probably for the same reason, Bruni omits the accusation of treachery that Villani directed at Guglielmino degli Ubertini: the prelate was said to have been disloyal to Arezzo itself and was therefore deported into battle by the Ghibelline leaders⁹³. The self-imposed sacrifice of the faithful bishop, along with his 'flock,' in the *Historiae* thus appears to be an attempt by Bruni to redeem the honor of the Aretine prelate from Florentine historiography, and in doing so, to reclaim the honor of his own homeland⁹⁴. The humanist therefore erases not only the slander concerning the highest spiritual authority of Arezzo with a stroke of the pen, but

90 Ivi, p. 338: «inter haec Cursius Donatus, qui extraordinariae praeerat aciei, intellecto suorum periculo, etsi praeceptum fuerat ne iniussu ducis proelium iniret, tamen prenciosum ratus ultra differre, "Adoriamur," inquit, "commilitones, hostium equitatum, priusquam pedes eorum se immisceat pugnae. Neque vero me in tanto discrimine civium meorum aut praeceptum ducis aut poena deterret».

91 Cfr. VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

92 CABRINI, cit., p. 39.

93 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 351: «bene ci fu cagione perché gli Aretini si missono a battaglia co' Fiorentini, essendo due cotanti cavalieri di loro, per tema d'uno trattato che 'l vescovo d'Arezzo avea tenuto co' Fiorentini, menato per messere Marsilio de' Vecchietti, di dare in guardia a' Fiorentini Bibbiena, Civitella, e tutte le castella del suo vescovado, avendo ogn'anno a sua vita V^m fiorini d'oro, sicuro in su la compagnia de' Cerchi. Il quale trattato messer Guiglielmino Pazzo suo nipote isturbò, perché il vescovo non fosse morto da' caporali ghibellini; e però avacciarono la battaglia, e menarvi il detto vescovo, ov'egli rimase morto cogli altri insieme; e così fu pulito del suo tradimento il vescovo, ch'a un'ora trattava di tradire i Fiorentini e' suoi Aretini».

94 The question of the veracity of Villani's accusation has little impact on the battle at hand; rather, what stands out here is Bruni's dissonance from the *Nova Cronica* as a reaction to this version, one that *Aretino* could likely be more reliable about, precisely due to his origins.

also a concrete aspect of late Communal politics from the historical narrative of the time. While Villani's account could not be overlooked in this context, Bruni believed that the death of Guglielmino degli Ubertini and his fellow citizens could redeem the image of Arezzo within the humanistic historiography of Florence.

It is well known that a literary mythology emerged from the Battle of Campaldino, following Dante, even before Bruni's time. For instance, Francesco da Imola (circa 1330/40-1388), in his commentary on the famous episode of Buonconte da Montefeltro's death in the fifth canto of the *Purgatorio*, transforms the Ghibelline attack into a "hellish cavalry charge." Buonconte, after conducting a reconnaissance to gauge the Guelph forces, advises Guglielmino against attacking the overwhelming enemy force. The bishop accuses him of cowardice and challenges him to march together toward the death that will seize them both. The *Historiae* may have drawn inspiration from similar legends; while Francesco da Imola's version is a narrative license, Bruni's work is nonetheless that of a historian⁹⁵.

As previously noted, the disarticulation of the proposed oste in the *Historiae* ultimately undermines rather than elevates the Aretine military quality. This is paradoxical, especially considering that the same Florentine chronicles praise it. This not only indicates that there appears to have been nothing wrong with the Ghibelline strategy but, more importantly, suggests that Bruni has made a significant and deliberate alteration to the historical and literary account of the most important and renowned record of the battle.

Bruni's innovation regarding Certomondo relies— even when considering the extreme hypothesis of the actual use of Dante's autograph as a source— on information that remains unknown to us, indistinguishable, and therefore unverifiable. It is noteworthy that the author does not employ similar methods for other significant battles in Florence during that period. For instance, the silence of

95 Sulla storia di Benvenuto da Imola cfr. F. CARDINI, *Quell'antica festa crudele. Guerra e cultura della guerra dal Medioevo alla Rivoluzione francese*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1982, p. 55. Il prestigio del vescovo Ubertini è rimarcato BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 344 che afferma, sul trionfo di Campaldino: «redeunti exercitui obviam effusa civitas nullum genus honoris praetermisit ducibus militibusque tribuere. Denique, triumphali pompa per urbem transmissi, parmam et galeam Guilliellini praesulis spectaculo civium praelatas, in antiquo Martis tempo quasi opima spolia suspenderunt; quae hodie quoque visuntur».

the *Historiae*⁹⁶ regarding the infantry's wings in the Battle of Montecatini seems to underscore that the complex tactical scheme outlined by Bruni for Campaldino serves no purpose other than to exalt the role of the Aretines. Although Villani also focuses solely on the collapse of the Florentine foot soldiers attacked by the Ghibelline cavalry on the flank during Montecatini, the *Historiae*, in this case, remain consistent with the *Nova Cronica*, without attempting to conceptualize the deployment of allies or enemies as is done for Certomondo. This appears to confirm that Villani's chronicle was the only source deliberately chosen by Bruni for the late Communal Italian tactics in the *Historiae*. In essence, one could say, echoing the great historian of medieval Italian warfare, Aldo Angelo Settia—who incidentally addressed a topic closely related to ours—that «una volta di più, la letteratura ha vinto sulla storia»⁹⁷. Beyond this aspect, *Vita* and *Historiae* must be understood within the context of the high Guelph-Florentine civic idealism, which is centuries away from the critical and analytical reconstruction of the battles compared and scrutinized based on all available sources. Nevertheless, the humanist deserves undeniable credit for addressing the tactical subject, albeit with more limited information but with intelligence and agility—an area that much of modern scholarship has yet to even examine.

6. *The historiographical mess*

As noted, the tactical issue raised by Campaldino is delicate but not overly complex: ultimately, the sources to reflect upon are few, and the only significant point of uncertainty lies in the unknowable content of the Dante manuscript, which allows for speculation but little else. Nevertheless, historiography has thus far provided vague and conflicting interpretations of the battle. It is hard not to notice, at times, a certain unchecked imagination in these attempts, as well as a marked insensitivity to logical and military reasoning. I should note that the following versions concerning Certomondo are presented—unless I specify otherwise—by their respective authors without a solid foundation, which also stems from the decidedly popular approach of most of these reviews.

Herbert Oerter, in the map included in his article *Campaldino 1289* (1968),

96 Ivi, vol. II, Lib. V, p. 33.

97 SETTIA, *Comuni*, cit., p. 127.

illustrates both sides with infantry wings deployed only on the flanks of the first line, while the Aretines are depicted without crossbowmen⁹⁸, overlooking at least Compagni. According to Oerter, the combined action of the Ghibelline knights and infantry on the wings disrupts the Guelph *schiera grossa*. However, behind this formation, near the baggage, there is a line of pikemen (not shown on the map) that makes a general rout impossible⁹⁹.

Luca Giannelli and Riccardo Semplici, in their book *Il sabato di San Barnaba* (1989), depict on a map the Ghibelline *feditori* positioned alongside their own wings of foot soldiers, which remain duly aligned during the charge. Meanwhile, the infantry of the *schiera grossa* breaks away during the advance, ultimately becoming encircled—though further back than the Aretine cavalry—by the extremities of the enemy wings and the reserve of Corso Donati¹⁰⁰. However, in the text¹⁰¹, this scenario is not fully described; rather, it is asserted that the Ghibelline foot soldiers, while pursuing their own cavalry, find the enemy cavalry in front of them (sic).

Michael Mallett, in his renowned work *Mercenaries and Their Masters* (1974), mentions the Ghibelline spearmen, placing them in the third line at the rear of the formation¹⁰².

Marco Scardigli, in *Le battaglie dei cavalieri* (2012)¹⁰³, does not discuss the Ghibelline infantry. However, in the two maps within the text¹⁰⁴, their wings can still be seen, positioned away from the cavalry, seemingly groping towards the outside during the attack, as if they are attempting to reach their enemy counterparts. In contrast, the enemy wings are staggered forward; this means that the large Guelph formation lacks wings, which are instead positioned alongside the crossbowmen, with another line of wings in front of them. The Aretine wings are also doubled, except that, unlike the Florentine formation, they do not include *feditori* in the cavalry, resulting in only one line of mounted troops. It

98 OERTER, cit., p. 442.

99 Ivi, p. 447.

100 GIANNELLI, SEMPLICI, cit., p. 46.

101 Ivi, p. 45.

102 Michael MALLETT, *Mercenaries and their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy*, London-Sydney-Toronto, The Bodley Head, 1974, p. 22.

103 SCARDIGLI, cit., pp. 433-439.

104 Ivi, pp. 436-437.

is also noteworthy that Guido Novello's reserve is depicted behind the Aretine formation, at a considerable distance, and not on the flank. Additionally, Corso Donati's reserve is somewhat set back as well, but at least it is on the opposite flank from the Arno and closer to the battle line.

Kelly DeVries and Niccolò Capponi, in their work *Campaldino 1289* (2018), present what is arguably one of the poorest reconstructions of the battle. They vainly attempt to reconcile the accounts of Villani and Bruni, asserting that both Guelph lines are flanked by infantry wings, despite the fact that the bulk of the foot soldiers is positioned in a separate formation, positioned behind the others without lateral extension¹⁰⁵. In the diagrams of this Osprey publication—compressed for “visual” purposes—¹⁰⁶ the Ghibelline cavalry is portrayed as being wedged between the enemy wings as a result of its own charge rather than due to a proactive maneuver of encirclement by the Guelph infantry. By the end of the battle, the formations have devolved into two formless masses, making it impossible to distinguish between the lines. This lack of clarity finds no place, role, or significance in the history of military Art.

The novel *La battaglia* by Riccardo Nencini (2015)¹⁰⁷ follows the Brunian interpretation.

Federico Canaccini, in his work *1289. La battaglia di Campaldino* (2021), despite being well-informed and knowledgeable about the historical context, does not reconstruct the clash through a comparative analysis of the sources. Instead, his narrative intertwines the data provided by chroniclers into a general description of the type of combat typical of the era, avoiding a critical interpretation of the battle's tactics¹⁰⁸.

Even Italy's foremost military historian, Piero Pieri, in *Alcune questioni sopra la fanteria in Italia nel periodo comunale* (1933), interprets Campaldino according to the “classic” schema inherited from the *Historiae*: he describes how the Florentine infantry wings encircle the Aretines, who lack lateral protection, while a reserve force attacks them from the flank¹⁰⁹.

105 DEVRIES, CAPPONI, cit., p. 53.

106 ivi, pp. 64-65, 68-69, 78-79.

107 RICCARDO NENCINI, *La battaglia*, Firenze, Mauro Pagliai Editore, 2015.

108 CANACCINI, cit., pp. 153-203.

109 PIERI, *L'evoluzione*, cit., pp. 74-77. Regarding the critique of the Communal military histo-

Moreover, Alessandro Barbero, in his contribution to *La battaglia di Campaldino* (2009)¹¹⁰ and in his classical readings on *Dante a Campaldino, fra vecchi e nuovi fraintendimenti* (2020), also does not address significant aspects of Certomondo's tactics¹¹¹.

Without delving further into the specifics of each historical work mentioned, it is rather perplexing that there are as many versions of the battle as there are authors who have attempted to reconstruct it, and that essentially no one has highlighted this issue or sought to reconcile them. Therefore, it would not be amiss to add my perspective to this list

7. *Campaldino reconsidered*

It is exceedingly paradoxical that, despite the numerous publications on the battle, the only true tactical analysis of the comparative sources can be traced back to Cesare Verani's article *La battaglia di Campaldino* (1936)¹¹². This study, which is relatively secondary in terms of historiographical significance, is nevertheless the most astute on the subject because of its specific aims. However, Verani too attempts to reconcile Villani with Bruni, using one to correct the other and automatically attributing an unquestionable authority to the humanist due to the Dante manuscript, which, it is worth noting, is not necessarily already known to Bruni in the "Historiae." Below, I will cite Verani to illustrate the major historiographical biases that have taken root in more recent publications concerning the tactical dynamics of Campaldino.

In particular, based on the rearguard *acies* of infantry and their *cornua* as described by Bruni, contemporary historiography has embraced the notion of a supposed predisposition of the Guelph infantry to form an arc that enveloped the entire Guelph cavalry from flank to flank. Verani himself translates the *Historiae* in a manner that may have significantly influenced subsequent historiography: «discendendo la fanteria dall'uno corno e dall'altro»¹¹³; «ali *discendenti*, vale

ry of Italy by Pieri, cfr. F. NARDONE, «Fanti lombardi e fanti toscani: Piero Pieri e la "nostra guisa" (1289 -1348)», *Nuova Antologia Militare*, 5, 4 (2024), pp. 321-382.

110 BARBERO, *1289*, cit..

111 ID., *Dante*, cit..

112 VERANI, cit..

113 Ivi, pp. 113-114.

a dire costituite da reparti scaglionati in schiere che, partendo dalle estremità del grosso appiedato e prendendo successivamente posizione, e precisamente, aprendosi sempre più, le une verso destra e le altre verso sinistra, appunto *discendevano*, cioè seguivano la natural pendenza del terreno, in direzione [...] del nemico»¹¹⁴; «...l'opera di accerchiamento affidata alla tenaglia delle ali di fanti a ciò predisposte»¹¹⁵.

Such a notion of “descending” does not appear in Brunī, yet the idea of wings arranged as pincers has persisted¹¹⁶. For instance, according to Pieri, the Guelph wings are positioned ahead of the cavalry «lievemente avanti, come i corni di una mezzaluna, coi palvesi avanti e dietro i balestrieri e parte almeno dei picchieri»¹¹⁷; Canaccini, while hypothesizing about the wings of infantry for both Ghibelline *acies*, even attributes the Guelph victory to the “modernity” resulting from the supposed imitation of Hannibal’s infantry wings at the Battle of Cannae, which were used to lure the enemy into a “trap”¹¹⁸.

The misunderstanding surrounding the “arc” seems to have arisen from Brunī’s “fusion” of two apparently distinct lines of “enveloping” wings in Villani¹¹⁹: «Florentini [...] scutatos vero et sagittarios per cornua ipsa ab utraque parte

114 Ivi, p. 114.

115 Ivi, p. 118.

116 The map by Verani (ivi, pp. 116-117) depicts the Aretine army without wings, while the Florentine forces feature a third line of infantry that splits into two to flank the cavalry of the second line during their charge (ivi, p. 118) che l'autore ipotizza inoltre accostata da ulteriori ali “di collegamento”. The author further suggests that these forces may also be supported by additional “connecting” wings. The model at the Battle of Campaldino Museum in the Castle of Poppi, along with the graphics of the battle found in GIANNELLI, SEMPLICI, cit., pp. 46-49 illustrates the arched formation of the Guelph wings. It even shows (ivi, p. 46) various wings of foot soldiers staggered laterally and in depth, which later reassemble into a single battle line, a scenario that seems implausible. The text states «i capitani di guerra guelfi fecero schierare le fanterie e il grosso della gente a cavallo a formare un vasto arco che partiva dalla sponda sinistra dell'Arno e sbarrava la piana di Campaldino»: ivi, p. 44.

117 PIERI, *L'evoluzione*, cit., p. 75.

118 CANACCINI, cit., pp. 170-171.

119 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 351: «fasciandogli di costa da ciascuna ala della schiera de' pavesari, e balestrieri, e di pedoni a lance lunghe, e la schiera grossa di dietro a' feditori ancora fasciata di pedoni». Although the last line is not explicitly wrapped *di costa*, which could support the notion of a delayed or misaligned *acies* with the knights, it is common for chronicles from the 14th century not to repeat themselves literally.

disposuere»¹²⁰. If the humanist correctly translates “wing” as *cornu*, the sources from the early Trecento use the term to refer to the units of cavalry into which the *acies* is divided¹²¹, rather than the infantry, even when they are positioned on the wings of the line¹²². In classical Latin, moreover, *cornu* is more closely related to the lateral position of a formation rather than its curvature, as is well established in medieval Latin literature.

In describing the Guelph formation, the humanist does not even specify the continuity of the infantry front, only remarking on «*extenso longius utroque cornu*»¹²³, thus weakening the idea of a large infantry formation enveloping the cavalry from behind even further. Finally, it is noteworthy that, apart from the single infantry line, the humanist never explicitly denies or contradicts the symmetry of the two arrays at Campaldino¹²⁴.

In the *Historiae*, following the attack by Corso Donati, the Guelph cavalry resumes the initiative, already supported by the infantry¹²⁵. This seems plausible if there had been a sufficiently wide gap between the infantry from the outset of

120 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 334.

121 Cfr., tra i tanti: A. MUSSATO, *De gestis Heinrici VII Caesaris Historia Augusta XVI Libris comprehensa*, in L. A. MURATORI (cur.), RIS, X, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1727, lib. XII, rubr. 7, col. 517 (10-568); FERRETUS VICENTINUS, *Historia rerum in Italia gestarum ab anno MCCL ad annum usque MCCCXVIII*, in Carlo CIPOLLA (cur.), *Le opere di Ferreto de' Ferreti vicentino*, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia (from now on Fsl) pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano; [poi] pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, XLII-XLIII.bis, vol. III, Roma, Tipografia del Senato – Palazzo Madama, 1908-1920, vol. II, lib. V, p. 51.

122 Cfr., for example, the battle formation of the hosts at the Battle of Gaggiano (1313): MUS-SATO, *De gestis Heinrici*, cit. lib. XII, rubr. 7, coll. 517-518.

123 BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 336.

124 Ivi, p. 334: «Arretini vero eodem modo tres et ipsi acies fecerunt»; ivi, p. 336: «victoriam peperit Florentinis. Dum enim cedentes persequitur Arretinorum equitatus, peditem suum longe dimisit. Itaque posthac ut Arretinus nullo in loco integer pugnaret, sed alibi eques, alibi pedes, cum integro hoste congregentur. Sustinuit enim florentinum equitatum acies peditum, ...»; ivi, p. 338: «ea si equitibus suis coniungeretur, inclinare ad Arretinos victoria haud dubie videbatur».

125 Ivi, pp: 336-338: «sustinuit enim florentinum equitatum acies peditum, quae dextro sinistroque, ut supra monstravimus, cornu refugientem equitem complexa, sagittis et hastis et omnifariam telorum genere apertis lateribus incessebat hostis. Acerrimum itaque certamen eo in loco excitatum est. [...] tutabatur pedes ad quem sese equitatus receperat, eratque fluctuatio quaedam et motus incertus prementium simul ac renitentium»; ivi, pp. 338-340: «et qui primo aegre resistebant, remisso hostium impetu in illos incubuere, et interclusus a suo peditatu equitatus hostium perfacile opprimebatur».

the battle to allow for the reformation of the cavalry. A continuous line behind them would have caused a disastrous domino effect, disorganizing the entire formation. Furthermore, Villani's assertion that behind the army was «tutta la salmeria raunata per ritenere la schiera grossa»¹²⁶ suggests that the cavalry were positioned alongside the infantry in the same line to avoid being trapped. In this way, neither would be forced against one another in two units that were too closely positioned. The distribution of the entire infantry on the flanks maximized its potential in combat while bolstering the stability of the cavalry in the central corridor¹²⁷. Not only could the cavalry and infantry support each other, but if the former were to be defeated, the latter would also likely surrender due to the decisive tactical advantage of mounted troops, making their isolation illogical. Moreover, in the context of late Communal warfare in Italy, there are only scant instances of infantry resistance—none of which were successful—once deprived of cavalry support¹²⁸, further affirming the synergy between the various arms.

The speech to the Guelphs before the Battle of Campaldino, recorded by Compagni, holds significant importance in the broader historiographical discourse. It is interpreted as an indication of innovation and tactical change: «messer Barone de' Mangiadori da San Miniato, franco et esperto cavaliere in fatti d'arme, raunato gli uomini d'arme, disse loro: "Signori, le guerre di Toscana si sogliano vincere per bene assalire; e non duravano, e pochi uomini vi moriano, che non era in uso l'ucciderli. Ora è mutato modo, e vinconsi per stare bene fermi. Il perché io vi consiglio, che voi siate forti, e lasciateli assalire". E così disponsono

126 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, pp. 351-352. Sull'argomento cfr. anche SETTIA, *Comuni*, cit., pp. 126-133, ID., *Battaglie*, cit., p. 193 and MALLETT, cit., p. 22.

127 An action similar to the Aretine breakthrough is observed during the Battle of Gaggiano, when the banner of the count of Saarbrücken and a few other elements of the Milanese host, having received no orders, charge of their own accord at galloping horses with lowered lances against the Guelph-Angevin army led by Tommaso di Marzano, count of Squilace, completely piercing through its front line. The Ghibelline knights who participated in the attack decide to turn against the remainder of the enemy host, ultimately ending up killed or captured: IOHANNES DE CERMENATE NOTARIUS MEDIOLANENSIS, *Historia de situ ambrosianae urbis et cultoribus ipsius et circumstantium locorum ab initio et per tempora successive et gestis imp. Henrici VII*, Luigi ALBERTO FERRAI (cur.), Roma, Forzani e C. tipografi del Senato – Palazzo Madama, 1889, cap. 66, pp. 137-139.

128 Cfr. the battles of Montaperti, Lucocisterna and Altopascio: Duccio BALESTRACCI, *La battaglia di Montaperti*, Bari-Roma, Editori La Terza, 2017, NARDONE, *Le ali*, cit..

di fare»¹²⁹. This exhortation has been understood as a reflection of the shift in late Communal Italian military Art toward a supposed tactical defensiveness among the knights¹³⁰. This interpretation is undoubtedly flawed, given the extraordinary advantage the Guelphs had in cavalry (more than 2:1) — the highest of all late Communal field battles in Italy — the unintended sacrifice of the «feditori de' migliori dell'oste»¹³¹, and the greater risk posed to the entire stability of the army by a potential feigned retreat or prearranged withdrawal of the main line. By definition, cavalry cannot defend; and since it was the decisive arm in Italian armies, this inherently relegated them exclusively to the offensive¹³².

According to Verani's intuition, the *mutato modo* of waging war—which differs from the old *bene assalire*, as noted by Mangiadori—is more accurately related to the collective discipline of the army¹³³, to which the Guelphs of Tuscany had been accustomed during significant “feudal” battles such as those at Benevento (1266) and Tagliacozzo (1268)¹³⁴. In those encounters, the orderly arrangement of fighting lines and the tactical use of reserves at the right moment proved crucial to the success of the clash. At Certomondo, even if the Guelphs had attempted to facilitate these maneuvers by luring the enemy forces into more favorable terrain for their own tactics, the Guelph cavalry would have charged

129 COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, pp. 13-14.

130 Cfr. DEVRIES, CAPPONI, cit., p. 57: «were any of the Guelph lines to move from defensive formations [...] they would be defeated by their much more experienced opponents». BARBERO, *I289*, cit., p. 11: «messer Barone [...] concludere che era meglio star fermi e lasciare che fosse il nemico a caricare; e in questo modo rischiò grosso, sottovalutando l'impatto materiale e morale della prima carica». VERANI, cit., p. 118 asserts that the recoil of the Guelph cavalry was 'evidently anticipated' by their commanders. The conclusions *ivi*, p. 121 express a strong anti-feudal bias from a nationalist and anti-imperial perspective.

131 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 351.

132 Cfr. BRUNI, *Historia*, cit., vol. I, Lib. IV, p. 334: «nec Florentini quidem detrectarunt certamen, sed proelio se impigre obtulerunt [...]. Florentini prima fronte equitatum omnem, quo admodum praevalerunt».

133 The issue may specifically pertain to the order imposed on the lateral reserve. Cfr. VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

134 VERANI, cit., pp. 102-104; Luigi SIMEONI (cur.), *Miscellanea di storia veneta edita per cura della Regia Deputazione di storia patria per le Venezie*, vol. V, Venezia, La R. Deputazione Editore, 1931, vol. I, p. 67. Under the command of the Guelph, Viscount Amaury II of Narbonne—who also reflects the 'transalpine' school—was described as a «grande gentile uomo, e prode e savio in guerra»: VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 130, p. 350.

nonetheless¹³⁵ and, of course, would have continued their advance in the event of a breakthrough—just as the victorious Ghibellines did at the beginning of the battle. Davide Cappelletti offers a more political critique that mitigates the defensive bias regarding Certomondo's tactics. He addresses the words of Compagni, who interprets the chronicler's notion of *stare bene fermi* as an accusation against the aggressive chivalric *ethos*, viewed as a disruptive element to Communal peace¹³⁶.

The hardness of Campaldino¹³⁷, predicted by Barone, is consistent with the increased synergy of arms¹³⁸, while Compagni's account demonstrates a full awareness of the evolution of Tuscan military art at the beginning of the 14th century, in contrast to that of previous generations. Villani is also eloquent on this matter: «si schierarono e affrontarono le due osti più ordinatamente per l'una parte e per l'altra, che mai s'affrontasse battaglia in Italia»¹³⁹. Thus, Campaldino reveals, even by the end of the 13th century, the development of a refined tactic of combined arms, with lines of cavalry in the center flanked by wings of infantry. This tactic reaches its fully documentable maturity: it is not a hybrid formation with a separate phalanx of infantry from the cavalry, as seen in the Swabian era, but rather a complete winged formation that would remain in use for a couple of generations. Although it is likely that this tactic originated from deploying infantry on the flanks from a rear position, there is no indication that the Ghibelline forces at Certomondo employed a tactic different from that of the Guelphs. In fact, some evidence suggests that the ability to deploy an army with multiple lines of cavalry in depth, supported by infantry, had already been accomplished in those same years, even in politically and socially more fragmented areas than Tuscany, such as Romagna, a region in which both Florence and Arezzo were heavily involved¹⁴⁰.

135 Another significant feudal clash during this period is the Battle of Marchfeld (1278): cfr. Andreas KUSTERNIG, «Die Kämpfe zwischen Rudolf und Ottokar», in *700 Jahre Schlacht bei Dürnkrut und Jedenspeigen: 1278-1978: Ausstellung im Schloss Jedenspeigen*, 13.5.-29.10.1978, Wien 1978, pp. 32-37.

136 Davide Cappelletti, *Dino Compagni tra Cicerone e Corso Donati*, in «Studi medievali», L (2009), s. 3, p. 651 (605-673), note 132.

137 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352, COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 15.

138 *Ibid.*, on the Ghibellines: «furono messi in caccia uccidendoli: i soldati fiorentini, che erano usi alle sconfitte, gli amazzavano; i villani non avevano pietà».

139 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 351.

140 On these regional differences and the 'Tuscan-Romagnol connection', cfr. NARDONE, *Fan-*

8. *The space of the lines on the field*

Another crucial aspect finally deserves separate attention: indeed, there has been no attempt in historiography to theorize the array by comparing the spatial layout on the battlefield with the numbers of the forces involved. The maps from various works are insufficient to provide a proportional representation of the troops, especially in the absence of explanations. A fundamental question remains: legitimately, no one can say for certain where the Battle of Campaldino was fought. There is consensus that the Guelph army was encamped at Borgo della Collina, from which it moved downhill with the intention of besieging the castle of the Guidi counts in Poppi; however, no further data regarding the exact location is available. Nevertheless, historians have reasonably identified the battlefield on the left bank of the Arno, the most level, narrow, and straight part of the area, extending along the west-east axis between the confluence with the Solano stream and the bridge at Poppi, as an ideal tournament field for the clash between the knights.

According to some authors, the width of the battlefield is precisely defined along the north-south axis by the several hundred meters between the Arno River and the main road that runs alongside it, connecting Florence and Arezzo. Oerter, DeVries, and Capponi, in their maps, outline the deployment of the clash within this space, with the latter only noting that the road was elevated¹⁴¹, but without specifying that this was a significant impediment. Other scholars have expanded the battlefield's boundaries; for instance, Verani sees no obstacles in the plain¹⁴², and Scardigli's map even depicts the battle fought entirely to the north of the road. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that the road or even the convent of Certomondo significantly influenced the deployment of such large forces: the left bank of the Arno is spacious and devoid of steep gradients. Furthermore, in addition to the flanks, there were also lateral reserves stationed somewhere in

ti, cit., pp. 354-363.

141 DEVRIES, CAPPONI, cit., p. 47.

142 VERANI, cit., pp. 106-107: «La piana, oggi, è percorsa dalla strada nazionale, intersecata da fossetti, interrotta da argini perpendicolari al fiume, piantata a viti e ad alberi oltre che coltivata, prevalentemente, a grano. Un tempo e, più precisamente, all'epoca della battaglia, doveva essere assai più libera, quasi spoglia di alberi o di viti, coltivata a biade, ma sostanzialmente, uniforme e scelta perciò dai due eserciti perché si prestava alle evoluzioni delle cavallerie e allo spiegameo delle schiere».

the hills to the north; in order to operate effectively as proper formations, these reserves would need to easily traverse much of the battlefield at an oblique angle to reach the enemy's flank.

Since the size of the two armies can be quantified, we can attempt to position these forces on the battlefield. Unfortunately, throughout the late Communal war, there are no indications regarding the depth of the ranks or the distinctions between infantry and cavalry. Furthermore, historiography has not substantially addressed this issue: only in the legend of the battle formation in DeVries and Capponi is it stated—without evidence or further references—that the depth of the Guelph cavalry was four to five ranks¹⁴³.

The matter, in fact, is simpler than it appears: considering a depth of four to five ranks for the knights, with a typical closed formation width of 1.2 meters for knights¹⁴⁴ and 0.9 meters for infantry—who were arranged in eight ranks—¹⁴⁵the armies at Campaldino would fit, with their wings “unfurled,” between the road and the Arno River. However, let us hypothesize that the knights were instead positioned at the maximum of three ranks¹⁴⁶ and calculate the space on the field, assuming that both armies were truly contained in the aforementioned area. The number of troops cited by Villani refers to the beginning of the campaign, from which we subtract 10% (since we do not know how many troops may have deserted prior to the battle and were actually combatants) and an additional 15% from the remaining infantry, given that the crossbowmen, operating in loose formation, do not count towards the overall size of the formations¹⁴⁷.

143 DEVRIES, CAPPONI, cit., p. 55. As we will see, the fact that the source does not comment on the Aretines is an indication that the issue concerning the size of the Guelph *schiera grossa*, which was the largest on the field, has been raised in relation to the space of the battle.

144 The cavalry typically maintained a very tight formation, to the extent that some medieval chroniclers wrote that an apple or a glove could not have fallen through the ranks: VERBRUGGEN, cit., p. 16.

145 Also the infantrymen were positioned shoulder to shoulder: Ivi, cit., p. 183, 187, etc..

146 Ivi, cit., p. 76. Even if there were only two, it is likely that, similar to the infantry, there existed a certain type of foot soldiers who operated in a loose formation, supporting the heavier cavalry from the rear ranks.

147 Cfr. Mario TROSO, *Le armi in asta delle fanterie europee (1000-1500)*, Novara, Istituto Grafico De Agostini, 1988, p. 61. The crossbowmen are typically positioned behind the heavy infantry, cfr. NARDONE, *Le ali*, specie pp. 184-185.

GUELPHS:

Feditori: 150 cavalry and 780 infantry = $\{(150/3 \times 1.2) + [(780/8 \times 0.9) \times 85\%]\}$
 $\times 90\% = 121$ meters

Schiera grossa: 1550 cavalry and 8060 infantry = $\{(1550/3 \times 1.2) + [(8060/8 \times 0.9) \times 85\%]\} \times 90\% = 1251$ meters

(Reserve: 200 cavalry and 1040 infantry)

GHIBELLINES:

Feditori: 300 cavalry and 3000 infantry = $\{(300/3 \times 1.2) + [(3000/8 \times 0.9) \times 85\%]\} \times 90\% = 366$ meters

Schiera grossa: 350 cavalry and 3500 infantry = $\{(350/3 \times 1.2) + [(3500/8 \times 0.9) \times 85\%]\} \times 90\% = 427$ meters

(Reserve: 150 cavalry and 1500 infantry)

The data is clear: while the Ghibelline army fully occupies the narrowest part of the corridor (450 meters) with its “spreading” wings, the large Guelph formation exceeds the limit of approximately 700 meters. This is crucial for reconstructing the battle, as it is the only line documented to close in on the enemy, thus certifying its deployment. In other words, regardless of any historiographical theory, and accepting the questionable boundaries of the battlefield and the depth of ranks, the Guelph *schiera grossa* does not fit into this corridor. How can this issue be resolved?

Although thousands of knights were arrayed in a single line in other battles of the late Communal period, what stands out at Campaldino—especially in comparison to the following period—is the alleged concentration of all Guelph forces into a single unit. Certainly, the *feditori* are separated, but they are even fewer in number than Corso Donati’s reserve. Compagni clearly states that the Guelphs stopped at Campaldino, where they formed *una* (and therefore unique) line, and then formed the *feditori*¹⁴⁸; for the engagement, the chronicler refers to *la* Florentine line. Similarly, Villani mentions only the Guelph *schiera grossa*,

¹⁴⁸ COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 13: «e [i Fiorentini] giunsono presso a Bibbiena, a uno luogo si chiama Campaldino, dove erano i nimici; e quivi si fermorono, e feciono una schiera: i capitani della guerra misono i feditori alla fronte della schiera».

referencing the reserve of Corso Donati that was positioned outside of it¹⁴⁹.

The general commendations in the sources for both formations should not detract from the fact that, as noted, the Guelph *schiera grossa* was nearly five times larger than that of the Ghibellines. None of the sources emphasize this data in relation to the combat, where the valor of the of the first Aretine *affrontata* in overwhelming and nearly destroying the enemy host takes precedence. Despite the last heroic aspect, it must be acknowledged that the Guelphs' numerical superiority was so significant that their *schiera grossa* would have been difficult to overcome, at least in principle, particularly after already committing forces to rout their feditori. The experienced Guelph military commanders surely considered deploying multiple lines to better absorb a potential enemy breakthrough and overpower it with the introduction of fresh reserves. Since the collapse of the *schiera grossa* generally led to the collapse of the entire host, making that unit even larger would not have made it more effective.

Where can one look to support the hypothesis of a third Guelph contingent? The ignorance of some unnamed Florentine *cavallata*¹⁵⁰ knights regarding the end of the battle, as narrated by Compagni, suggests a greater complexity within the Guelph forces: «molti popolani di Firenze, che avevano cavallate, stettono fermi; molti niente seppono, se non quando i nimici furon rotti»¹⁵¹. Although

149 VILLANI, cit., vol. I, lib. VIII, cap. 131, p. 352.

150 That is knights provided with warhorses by the wealthier members of the Communal society. P. GRILLO, *Cavalieri e popoli in armi. Le istituzioni militari nell'Italia medievale*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2008, p. 142: «a Firenze, negli anni delle guerre contro Federico II fu organizzato il sistema delle *cavallate*, che imponeva a tutti coloro che raggiungevano una certa ricchezza di mantenere uno o più cavalli per il servizio, ma anche che permettesse ai milites, previa autorizzazione del comune, di inviare sul campo un altro combattente al proprio posto». About the *cavallata*, cfr., among others, Cesare PAOLI, *Le cavallate fiorentine nei secoli 13. e 14.: saggio storico*, Firenze, coi tipi della Galileiana, 1865, Daniel Philip WALEY, «The Army of the Florentine Republic from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century», in Nicolai RUBINSTEIN (Ed.), *Florentine Studies. Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence*, London, Faber & Faber, 1968, pp. 70-108, BARBERO, 1289, cit., pp. 51-52, Philippe CONTAMINE, *La guerra nel medioevo*, Tuleri CAPRA (cur. and trad.), Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986 (ed. orig., *La guerre au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1980), p. 143 and Daniela DE ROSA, «Il controllo politico di un esercito durante il medioevo: l'esempio di Firenze», in F. CARDINI, Marco TANGHERONI (cur.), *Guerra e guerrieri nella Toscana medievale*, Ospedaletto (Pisa), Edifir, 1990, p. 102 (93-123).

151 COMPAGNI, cit., lib. I, cap. 10, p. 15. Cfr. anche *ibid.*: «messer Talano Adimari < e' suoi > si tornorono presto a loro stanza». Although the last passage precedes the Ghibellines' pursuit at the end of the battle, it likely refers to the conduct of Adimari and his men during the

this theory remains speculative, it is nonetheless common for chronicles not to list the exact number of lines in the army, even for significant battles. The Battle of Certomondo may have been reported in a summary form, with a more complex actual deployment. According to the Emilian chronicler Pietro Cantinelli, in 1297, the army of the captain of the people of Imola against the Bolognese at Castel San Pietro included an advance guard of *feditori* and three lines of cavalry supported by infantry¹⁵². This detailed deployment is consistent with that of the Pisans at Montecatini and similar to that of the Florentines at Altopascio (September 23, 1325)¹⁵³. Considering that the commander of this army is Maghinardo di Susinana—a black Guelph who was notably supported by Florence during these years—it is clear that by the end of the 13th century, the military culture of Florence was already aware of the possibility of deploying such complex formations. Furthermore, in the case of Imola and its allies, we are discussing forces that were likely smaller than the one at Certomondo. Even if the latter battle contributed to establishing familiarity, the battlefield distribution of forces of similar strength became nearly universal from this point onward in late Communal Italy, and Campaldino was likely not the first instance in which this occurred. Villani's assertion regarding the Ghibelline intent to defeat the Guelphs in a single *affrontata* may suggest that concentrating forces—also for reasons of numerical inferiority—into a single large line was an exception rather than the norm, indirectly implying a different deployment for the Florentine forces.

The information regarding the *cavallata* allows us to hypothesize further: during this period, Florence reached the peak of its cavalry strength in the field, which would later decline in favor of mercenaries. When examining the Florentine expeditions of these years, we notice a significant proportion of mounted forces among the total troops. In May 1288, Florence ravaged the

fight. OERTER, cit., p. 442 even considers a third contingent of Guelph cavalry. Cfr. VERANI, cit., p. 115: «forse [...] qualche altro reparto di cavalli».

152 PETRUS CANTINELLUS, cit., p. 88: «suprascripti domini capitanei, cum tota eorum gente in civitate Imole congregata, equitum, peditum et balisteriorum, exeuntes ipsam civitatem, perexerunt versus Castrum Sancti Petri, ubi erant populus et milites civitatis Bononie, fecerunt tres acies militum et peditum, et unam fortem et bonam aciem, quam antecedere fecerunt ad incipiendum».

153 VILLANI, cit., vol. II, lib. X, cap. 306, p. 291: This is composed of a vanguard, *feditori*, *schiera grossa*, and although there is no documentation of it, it is possible that there was also a rearguard.

Aretine countryside with 2,600 knights—of which 800 were *cavallate* and 300 were Florentine soldiers—alongside 12,000 infantry, including troops from the Guelph contingents of Tuscany and other allies. In August 1289, Florence dispatched 400 *cavallata* knights and 2,000 citizen infantry to devastate the Pisan territory for 25 days, besieging the castle of Caprona while failing to capture the castle of Vicopisano¹⁵⁴. During the first siege, Dante himself was present¹⁵⁵.

The expedition of 1288 reveals an even larger Florentine army than that of Campaldino, similarly mobilized with the aid of Guelph allies, highlighting the ratio of *cavallate* among the mounted troops. Remarkably, if we apply the same proportion to the Guelph forces at Certomondo under the assumption of a third line, the wingspan of that *schiera grossa* would reach 860 meters. This measurement precisely corresponds to the distance between the confluence of the Solano and the Arno rivers and the wooded foothills that rise to the north of the plain, north of the road.

Could the immobility of the Guelph *schiera grossa* near this natural lateral protection have hindered Guido Novello's attack? The *cavallata* is characterized as a strategic raiding force, which may have been tactically conserved in anticipation of further incursions into the Aretine territory and kept in reserve on the final line, far enough from the fighting that they could not follow the battle. Without significant visual obstructions, it remains unclear how anyone in the *schiera grossa* could have been unaware of the developments of the clash.

Regarding the position of this possible third line, we do not know where the Florentines crossed the Arno to align themselves for battle, but it is likely that this occurred at the confluence with the Solano stream, right near the camp and the position of the main line. The hypothesis of a third line gains further significance—perhaps even in an seemingly counterintuitive manner—due to the famous statement by Villani that, at Campaldino, the Guelphs placed «dietro tutta la salmeria raunata per ritenere la schiera grossa»¹⁵⁶. Upon examining the battlefield, it indeed appears that the Arno lies behind the Florentine host:

154 Ivi, cap. 137, p. 358.

155 DANTE ALIGHIERI, cit., *Inferno*, Canto XXI, vv. 94-96. Perhaps the editors could have also been chosen from among the *cavallata* knights, but we do not know if this was the case at Campaldino, nor does it make a practical difference.

156 VILLANI, cit., cap. 137, pp. 351-352. Cfr., tra gli altri, SETTIA, *Comuni*, cit., pp. 126-133, ID., *Battaglie*, cit., p. 193 and MALLETT, cit., p. 22.

the corridor of the field, which is quite broad near the confluence of the two watercourses to accommodate the main line, narrows to the northwest, constrained by the extensions of the aforementioned wooded area and the Arno, in the current vicinity of Porrena. This hamlet is located precisely 500 meters from the hypothesized position of the Guelph main line, which is the same distance that was typically maintained between battle lines. Here, a barrier of wagons may have been established between the natural obstacles to enclose the field and discourage the entire host—roughly referred to as the *schiera grossa* in the dry language of chroniclers—from retreating in any direction: an additional line of *cavallata* knights would have been stationed to guard the block, ready to intervene in case of disaster and compelled to fight or die, hindered by the baggage and/or drowned in the Arno. It would not be the last time a unit remained stationed in the field near the baggage, in reserve¹⁵⁷. Even in the last hypothesis, the wingspan of the formation is compatible with the lateral space. Particularly striking is the overlap in width between both *schiere grosse* and that of the battlefield in their respective positions: is it merely a coincidence? We find ourselves in the realm of speculation, but it is important to remember that supporting Bruni's version entails recognizing the existence of a third line.

Conclusion

The story of the Battle of Campaldino illustrates how, even in the face of presumably well-developed historiography, military art can be overlooked, particularly at the crucial moment of reconstructing the combat. It raises doubts about how military history, and history in general, is studied, as well as the level of reliability and accuracy that can be appreciated from it. There is no way to truly understand war without learning how it is conducted; and without understanding war, one cannot fully grasp either politics or the society that expresses it. To assume that military essence can be treated as a secondary or subordinate topic

¹⁵⁷ Cfr. VILLANI, cit., vol. III, lib. XII, cap. 134, p. 151 regarding the Battle of San Pietro a Vico (1341), in which the majority of the Florentine and allied forces are kept in reserve, assembled together with the infantry and supplies. Cfr. also the first Guelph-Angevin line at Montecatini, which advances into the field with its own supplies: MUSSATO, *De gestis italicorum*, cit., lib. V, rubr. 98, pp. 289-290. In the battle of Gaggiano, it is possible that the *apparatus* placed together with the infantry constituted the baggage for both armies: ivi, lib. I, rubr. 29, pp. 153-154.

reveals a serious defect in civic culture and only exacerbates the situation. Regardless of the reasons behind this issue—such as the enthusiasm for local history approached without a specialized military background, intellectual laziness rooted in an uncritical mechanism of copying an esteemed authority, or simple negligence stemming from the ease of commercializing an event as traditionally and archetypically captivating as a battle—one must strive to reconstruct the course of the engagement as objectively as possible, given that individuals were killing one another.

The Brunian question remains undoubtedly the most historically and literarily intriguing aspect of Campaldino, but perhaps it is precisely the inability to probe beyond this issue—especially concerning our seemingly irreparable ignorance regarding the content of Dante’s autograph—that has paradoxically diverted interest from tactical considerations. If, as is evident, the history of late 13th century Italian military Art has not been adequately assessed, there is no doubt that the understanding of Certomondo plays a crucial role in this context. The homogeneity and symmetry of the Florentine and Aretine armies demonstrate how Communal Italy was developing a uniform political, military, and social culture, best expressed in the broader trend toward the so-called *signoria di popolo*, which had transformed the previously separate phalanxes of cavalry and infantry into a single, cohesive, organic, and uniform entity, boasting exceptional identity cohesion and collective discipline, rivaling even the armies of the early modern period in scale. Neglecting the tactics of Campaldino means ignoring this process and distancing ourselves even further from an awareness of the primacy of medieval Italian military Art within the international historiographical landscape, a legacy that, similarly by the Italians themselves, has so far been largely overlooked; this aspect, it seems, is the least acceptable.

After Certomondo, at least during the period from 1289 to circa 1350, there are no Italian battles that have been so heavily tainted by historiographical commonplaces, nor can any boast a mythology as illustrious as that which has been created, more or less directly, by notable figures such as Dante Alighieri and Leonardo Bruni. Naturally, these authors continue to captivate those who seek to revive that lost world of arms, knights, and the individual stories of those who participated in the battle of Campaldino—the seed of a world that feels closer and more “modern” to us. While the early 14th-century authors, such as Compagni and Villani, can be seen as the initiators of this new perspective on remembrance,

storytelling, and writing, it remains perhaps overlooked that the most accurate and comprehensive way to understand this battle is to move beyond that very perspective, which, despite its progressive nature, is flawed unless accompanied by a diachronic and comparative study of military Art. I see no other reason why the tactics of the battle of Certomondo have yet to be critically analyzed until today. The same holds true for the international perspective: the significance of these military events transcends any local viewpoint, and the study of warfare achieves a universal dimension that demonstrates to researchers why, fundamentally, a people fights and dies: the pursuit of moral strength and its motivations can never be divorced from the study of history and political civilization.

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FsI = Fonti per la storia d'Italia. Pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano; [poi] pubblicate dall'Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo

FsIm = Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale

RIS = *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, I serie

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Florence, Chostro della SS Annunziata, high relief on the grave of Guillaume de Durfort, a French condottiero in the Ghibelline heavy cavalry fallen at Campaldino Battle and buried in Florence by the *Ordo Servorum Mariae*). Photo Saiko, 2023, licensed in GNU freed documentation, Wikimedia Commons.



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