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Matthew TAYLOR

M. TAYLOR

Matteo Palmieri (1406-1475):

Florentine humanist and politician.

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining  
the Degree of Doctor of the European University Institute

Volume I & Vol. II

Text

Florence, September 1986.

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European University Institute



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## ABSTRACT

Matteo Palmieri was born in 1406 into a family with a record of political participation, and he devoted the major part of his life to serving the Florentine republic as a politician, holding most of the senior offices during his lifetime. In addition to the highest post of Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, Matteo also acted as ambassador on several occasions, and held numerous governorships in subject towns and territories. He was noted for his wisdom, integrity and eloquence and, in 1453, he was asked to give the funeral oration for Carlo Marsuppini, the Chancellor of Florence. Early in his political career, Matteo wrote the Della Vita Civile, a work which discusses the education of a citizen and the nature of his duties to the republic. He also wrote four historical works, two of which, the Annales and the De Temporibus are chronicles. The third historical work, the Vita N. Acciajoli, is a biography, and the fourth, the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber, is an account of the capture of Pisa by Florence in 1406. His last work, the Citta di Vita, is a long neo-Platonic poem which examines the moral choices facing the soul during its earthly life. On his death, in 1475, in recognition of his services to the Florentine republic, Palmieri was honoured with a public funeral, a mark of respect which was seldom awarded to men who had not held the exalted post of Chancellor of Florence. Yet after his death, the Citta di Vita was suspected of containing unorthodox religious ideas and rumours circulated that Palmieri had been a heretic and had been burned at the stake.





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Acknowledgements

The idea of working on Matteo Palmieri was first suggested to me as an undergraduate by Kenneth Hyde, and I am grateful to him for introducing me both to the many facets of the Renaissance, and to the many sided Palmieri. When starting my postgraduate studies, Anthony Pagden kindly offered assistance and direction. I was in Florence for most of the gestation period of the thesis and I specially wish to thank those friends who helped me in first coming to grips with the archival material. They include John Brackett, Michael Rocke, Emmanuela Porta and, in particular, Paula Clarke. I am grateful to Pat Smith who discussed with me the first draft of the first chapter. For also undertaking this task, and for their companionship, I should like to thank Nick and Kate Eckstein and Peter van den Bossche. I am also indebted to Carlo Poni, Franco Angiolini and especially Stuart Woolf who at the EUI actively supported my work and progress. Others, too, have shared their friendship and knowledge with me, and I am grateful to them; in this respect, I should like to convey my thanks to Jim Banker, Gene Brucker, Richard Goldthwaite and Bill Kent.

I am grateful to the Department of Education and Science for the scholarship which enabled me to spend three years in Italy, and without which this work could not have been begun, and to the History Department at the EUI for defraying the cost of research trips to Milan. To the President of the EUI, Professor Maihofer, for generously supporting some of my research with financial aid I am no less indebted.

I have received assistance from numerous institutions. In Florence these include the libraries and staff of The Kunsthistorisches Institut, The Biblioteca Marciana, The Biblioteca Nazionale, and The European University Institute and, in London, The Warburg Institute, The Institute for Historical Research and The British Library. My thanks and appreciation go to them all. In addition, I owe a special debt of gratitude to the staff of the Archivio di Stato in Florence and of the Archivio di Stato in Milan.

I have also enjoyed and learned from the companionship of Nicky Nijsten, Ulrich Nötges and Martha Preveza, to all of whom I am most grateful for their forbearance. For their many kindnesses, and for their patience and hospitality, I am very much indebted to Renaud Dehousse and Annette Merlan. I greatly appreciated the vital technical assistance given me by Ellen Taylor and by Ken Tan. I wish too to express my deep thanks to my parents for their tolerance, support and encouragement throughout.

One person in particular has taken a special interest in the progress and completion of this work. Nicolai Rubinstein has been a constant source of help and advice, generous both with his time and knowledge, and a patient, perceptive, and constructive critic of my writing. To him my debt is very great, and my thanks are correspondingly profuse.

## ABBREVIATIONS

*a) Unpublished sources*Archivio di Stato, Firenze:

Cat.	Catasto
CP	Consulte e Pratiche
DBDCS	Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, Condotti e Stanziamenti
DBLC	Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie
DBMI	Dieci di Balìa, Missive Interne
MAP	Mediceo avanti il Principato
NA	Notarile Antecosimiano
SLC	Signoria, Legazioni e Commissarie
SCRC	Signoria, Carteggi, Responsive Copiari
SSDSA	Signori e Collegi, Deliberazioni, Speciale Autorità

Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence:

BNF	Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence
BNF Magl.	Magliabechiana

Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence:

Laur.	Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence
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Archivio di Stato, Milano:

ASMi SPE	Archivio Visconteo-Sforzesco, Potenze Estere
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All archival references are to the Archivio di Stato, Florence, unless otherwise stated.

All dates are new style.





Introduction

In recent years, there have been numerous studies of individuals and families in fifteenth century Florence (1). In part, this corresponds to a more profound interest in social history and to the realisation that the Florentine records can be used to answer a very wide variety of questions put to them. Accordingly, attempts have been made not just to research individuals and their families, but to examine more broadly the social milieu of the city, above all, but not exclusively, with a view to elucidating how the ties of *parentela*, *amicizia* and *vicinanza* functioned and to what ends they were employed (2). Although this work is principally concerned with Palmieri the politician and the writer, reference to this research is not only helpful and complementary; it is essential if an understanding of the world in which Palmieri lived is to be gained. As will be rapidly be obvious, one other book underpins this study, and that is the work of Rubinstein on the government of Florence from 1434-1494 (3). Without it, the portrait of Palmieri the politician would have been very different and vastly inferior.

Palmieri was not an outstanding figure of the Florentine Renaissance. He was very much imbued with the ideas and attitudes of his time, and in many ways was a follower and not a leader. Born a generation after Bruni (1370) and Poggio (1380), Palmieri was part of the circle of so-called civic humanists, and his work, the Della Vita Civile, is most usually cited as one of the examples of the culmination of Florentine civic minded literature. His long poem, the Citta di Vita, is sometimes

cited as an example of neo-Platonism, and Matteo himself is also held up to show how literary interests in Florence changed during the century, of how the insistence on political action in the Della Vita Civile was transmuted into contemplation of the spirit in the Città di Vita. Little attention has recently been paid to the specific political activity of Palmieri, or to his writing of history, in both of which fields Matteo was engaged for many years of his life. The last historian to make direct use of archival sources in order to examine Palmieri's political contribution was Messeri in 1894, and the only historian to study any of Palmieri's diplomatic missions was Zanelli in 1904 (4). Palmieri the historian has not fared much better; Scaramella, in editing Matteo's historical texts, wrote good introductions to them, but, with a couple of exceptions, the historical works have mainly been ignored (5).

Different aspects of Palmieri's activities have, however, recently stimulated a flurry of scholarly work. A new edition of the Della Vita Civile appeared in 1982, and Conti in 1984 published the only text of Matteo's not previously available in print, his Ricordi, and this edition is accompanied by a volume which makes use of the Ricordi as a basis for understanding Florentine fiscal policy in the fifteenth century (6). A stimulating article by Martelli treating different sides of the Della Vita Civile and the Città di Vita followed another by Palermino on the Città di Vita in 1982 (7). A monograph on Palmieri by Finzi appeared as this work was being written (8). Concentrating above all on the Della Vita Civile, Finzi also updates knowledge of Matteo's political activities by culling information from printed sources. He has besides discovered valuable new material. On many points, our judgements on Palmieri

coincide; yet there are notable differences. Where Finzi's approach is to analyse the implications of Palmieri's political thought, my aim has often been to set Matteo's views in the context of the political circumstances of the moment and, when necessary, to make use of archival material not previously published. The interpretation of Palmieri the politician offered here is not, therefore, always compatible with that suggested by Finzi, and some of the inferences I have drawn from Palmieri's political activities influence, too, my understanding of Palmieri the writer. Usually, I have not indicated where our two interpretations differ, or where they are the same; some of the more important or interesting divergences are, however, noted and discussed.

Matteo Palmieri was born on 13 January, 1406 into a family which possessed a number of valuable traditions (9). According to the outline Matteo wrote in 1428 or 1429, the family traced its origins to the village of Rascio in the Mugello, to the northeast of Florence (10). The earliest documents which Matteo was able to find recorded, among other financial transactions made about the year 1200, tax payments made to the Florentine republic by one of his forebears, Palmieri da Rascio (11). It may be that in order to enhance his family's social status Matteo wished to claim distant ancestors and long standing connections with the Florentine republic, for the earliest surviving record of a member of the Palmieri family paying taxes in Florence dates from 1352 and concerns Simone di Lapo da Rascio (12). Simone di Lapo does not, however, feature in the genealogical description provided by Matteo, but it is, as Matteo admitted, incomplete. The earliest direct ancestors of Matteo documented as living in Florence were the brothers Agnolo and

Antonio di Palmieri, cousins of Simone, who are recorded in 1359 as contributing taxes to the tune of 3 florins (13). Yet these three members of the Palmieri family did not remain in the city, and it is known that they lived outside the city walls during the 1360s and 1370s (14). By 1379, Antonio had moved back into the city, and was residing in Via degli Scarpentieri in the gonfalone of Chiavi, the street where Matteo was to live during his life (15). Antonio, Matteo's grandfather, was a *speziale*, a spice merchant or apothecary and had been matriculated in the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* in 1377 (16). Two of Matteo's uncles, Matteo and Francesco, and his father, Marco, were also matriculated in the spice merchants' guild (17).

Marco Palmieri married Tommasa Sassolini, the daughter of a politically active silk merchant, Antonio di Marignano Sassolini, who lived in the Oltrarno gonfalone of Scala (18). Antonio Sassolini participated both in guild and communal politics, holding the important office of guild consul on many occasions, and receiving many prestigious posts in the city. He was twice a Prior, once a member of the *Dodici Buonuomini* and sat three times among the *Sedici Gonfalonieri di Compagnia* (19). In all, he held about 70 communal offices during his lifetime (20). Antonio Sassolini was not, however, as wealthy as Marco's father, who was one of the top 13% of taxpayers in the city in 1403 (21). It seems likely that Marco attached himself to a family of higher social standing with this marriage, since the first member of the Sassolini family to hold the office of Prior had done so in 1302, indicating their long political tradition which, in Florence, also conferred social esteem (22). By contrast, Marco's brother, Francesco, became the first member of

the Palmieri family to sit as Prior when he held the office in 1404 (23). Thus through his maternal kin, if not through his male ancestors, Matteo could claim a distinguished political and social descent.

To his contemporaries, Matteo's family history was something of a puzzle. Alamanno Rinuccini in his funeral oration for Matteo described his family's origins as Germanic, thought that he was born to "honestis parentibus" and, owing to the meagre patrimony left by his parents, that he was obliged to dedicate himself to service of the republic (24). Leonardo Dati on the other hand in a fanciful account gives Palmieri noble origins, affirming that the name derived from the occasion when pope Agapitus II (946-955) sent a palm to emperor, Otto I (25). The emperor, according to Dati, wished to display the palm, and the person called upon to do so henceforth called himself Palmieri, and he also received a castle, a gift from Otto, in the Mugello. Vespasiano da Bisticci ventured only that Matteo was born of parents "di mediocre condizione" and held that he "dette principio alla casa sua, e nobilitolla per le sua singolari virtù" (26). The present work examines the nature of Palmieri's "singolari virtù" and how he put them to use.

Political activity 1406-1450

Wealth, pedigree and a record of communal participation assisted entry into the political life of fifteenth century Florence. Membership of a patrician family smoothed progress, for respect and honour no longer had to be earned, but were assumed. In Venice, a political caste of two hundred families had arisen, and all other families were excluded, creating a closed ruling group. By contrast, in Florence it was still relatively straightforward for a new man, a "nuovo uomo", to become a member of the "reggimento". The success of another privileged group, those with a legal training, in gaining access to the inner processes of government has been studied elsewhere (1).

Palmieri belonged neither to a patrician family, nor had he received a legal training. He did, however, possess two advantages over the new men. His immediate forebears, his father Marco and his uncle Francesco, were both reasonably wealthy and had both engaged themselves energetically in the republic's affairs, albeit as new men. Hence as the son and nephew of politically successful new men Matteo will already have had several obstacles to his political initiation removed.

These two sons of Antonio Palmieri were remarkably skillful in building up a position of worth in Florentine society. Being the elder of them, Francesco found that the political burden fell on him more heavily than on his brother, but he did not show any signs of regretting it. Quite the contrary, his record of political participation is so impressive

that he must both have relished the thought of holding office, and been thought to perform well. Between 1400 and 1430, he was three times a Prior and twice one of the Dodici Buonuomini. He also sat as one of the Sedici Gonfalonieri di Compagnia. As the first member of the Palmieri family to take office, this represented an outstanding personal achievement. His brother Marco did not figure quite so prominently among those drawn for the Tre Maggiori, though he served during this period once as a Prior, twice as one of the Dodici and once as one of the Sedici (2). Nonetheless, it was an unlikely combination of circumstances which led to Matteo inheriting this flourishing political patrimony. Normally the eldest son of the eldest son was expected to participate fully in political life, with the other members of the family playing a less active political role. Marco's first son Bartolomeo died a few years after being married, and Matteo took on the responsibility of looking after his three children. As a result, when Matteo's father died in 1428, Matteo became both the head of the household, and had the job of continuing to uphold that part of the family's political position (3). Meanwhile his uncle Francesco was still active, and indeed sat as one of the Priors in 1431, a few months before Matteo held his first office as one of the Otto Sindaci del Podestà, a committee charged with ensuring that the Podestà during his term of office had not transgressed the limits of his duty (4).

Even by this stage it seemed likely that Matteo would achieve higher political office, for in 1430 he had been drawn as one of the Priors (5). Unable to take up the post because he was too young, this procedure of having been "veduto" indicated that his name was included in

the bags from which the Priors were drawn. The year before, a ticket ("polizza") with the name of his cousin, Giovanni, had been drawn for the office of the Dodici, but he too had been forbidden from accepting the post, owing to his young age (6). In fact, although Francesco was four years older than his brother Marco, Matteo was six years older than his cousin. Combined with Matteo's position as head of household, and probably a more engaging personality, this may explain why Matteo obtained more votes in the 1433 scrutiny than his cousin (7). Francesco received still more than Matteo, indicative of his status as head of the family and his long political experience. Nonetheless, all three qualified, marking an auspicious start for the second generation.

The exile of Cosimo de' Medici in 1433 does not appear to have affected the political fortunes of either Francesco or Matteo, although both during 1433 followed paths which could conceivably later have caused them problems. Francesco was a member of the Balìa of 1433 which was responsible for exiling Cosimo, and while this need not identify him as an anti-Medicean, it clearly raises questions about which way he voted (8). Individual records were never made, so the secret voting remains secret. It should be noted, however, that the Balìa of 1433 contained a large number of men uncommitted to either the Albizzi or the Medici cause, besides supporters of both groups. In the scrutiny of 1434, no grudge was borne, and Francesco's name went forward as eligible for the Tre Maggiori. Even though the scrutiny lists do not survive from 1434, this can be presupposed, thanks to the simple fact of him sitting as one of the Dodici Buonuomini in 1435 (9). In 1440 he was again declared eligible in the scrutiny lists and, what is more, in 1444, he was listed



as one accepted in 1434 and 1440, so it is clear that he remained *persona grata* to the Medici regime (10).

During the summer of 1433, Matteo had married Niccolosa, daughter of the banker Niccolò d'Agnolo Serragli, who lived in the Oltrarno gonfalone of Scala. This marriage certainly took place in June, July or August that year, but to be more precise than this the evidence does not allow. For the *catasto* of 1433, Matteo put the date on his return as May 30, 1433, and did not mention Niccolosa as one of the people in the house (11). Indeed, she is listed on Niccolò Serragli's return (12). But at the foot of the page in Matteo's *campione*, the *catasto* officials added the information that on August 28, 1433, 700 florins for the dowry had been transferred to Matteo (13). This is, at any rate, enough to indicate that the wedding took place before the political crisis reached a head in September 1433, giving rise to the formation of the Balìa and to the subsequent exile of Cosimo de' Medici. It is important to establish this, for some branches of the Serragli were, if nothing more, disposed to assist those promoting the interests of the Albizzi faction, and through his marriage Matteo might have come to be identified with them (14). Although no members of the Serragli family were actually exiled, of the nine male heads of households featuring in the 1433 *catasto*, most were deprived of their political rights by the Balìa in 1444, which renewed some of the 1434 sentences and also punished for the first time some families of suspect loyalty (15). As a result, only one member of the Serragli and his two sons was eligible for the bags of the Tre Maggiori in 1444 (16). As it turned out, allying with this family brought Matteo no obvious political disadvantages, and possibly his

social position was considered more elevated as a result of this connection to one of the long established and formerly well respected Florentine families. The bankruptcy in 1427 of the Serragli certainly reduced the economic strength of the family; in the *catasto* of that year, Niccolò claimed debts and allowances of 7,000 florins, a sum equal to the value of his entire landed possessions, which effectively meant that he paid no tax (17). This bankruptcy may also have diminished to some extent the social standing of the family, but their traditional social preeminence and their large network of friends, relations and neighbours would probably have meant that overall this was an advantageous marriage for Palmieri.

Proof that Matteo's own political position, such as it was, had not been damaged emerges from the fact that he obtained one seat among the 385 on the *Balia* of 1434, formed to welcome back the exiled Medici (18). Further proof, too, that the particular branch of the Serragli to which Matteo was attached was viewed as being acceptable lies in the fact that Matteo's father in law also sat on this *Balia*, together with the other non Albizzi partisan of the Serragli family, Giorgio di Piero Serragli (19). As only 4 votes were cast against inviting the Medici back from exile, the probability is that they were not cast by either Niccolò Serragli or Matteo (20). Exactly why Matteo should have been made a member of this *Balia* is not clear, but it is probable that he was being invited to continue the family's political tradition. His uncle Francesco had been a member of the *Balia* in 1433. For the next three years, Matteo did not hold political office. This was to be the longest period during his active political life that he did not occupy a communal office. During

this time, he almost certainly devoted himself to writing, composing at least a first draft of the Dalla Vita Civile (21). Unfortunately, no evidence exists which sheds light on whether he was acquainted personally with the Medici at this stage. Nothing in the Dalla Vita Civile suggests that he approved or disapproved of them, for he does not mention them at all. However, in the pages of his Annales which deal with these years, Palmieri explicitly expresses his approval of the return of Cosimo de' Medici and the whole Medici family as well as Angelo Acciaiuoli and others because "multa preterea ab his utiliter provisata et ordinata sunt". It may also be significant that he wrote nothing at all for the year 1433, and his first comment in 1434 dated from September 1, the day when a pro-Medici Signoria entered office (22).

Matteo was drawn as one of the sixteen Gonfalonieri di Compagnia for the last four months of 1437. Coming so soon after he became eligible for the post at the age of thirty, considerable honour will have been due to him. Furthermore, as a holder of that office he delivered a speech to the Priors and colleges on the merits of justice (23). This was an impressive tribute to his oratory, and was all the more remarkable because of his comparative youth.

He was drawn for this post, electoral controls being applied only to the Priors and Gonfaloniere di Giustizia (24). Thereafter he held communal office at least once almost every year until he died in 1475 (25). A number of observations may be made to highlight the key positions held by Matteo during the first few years of his political career. During the 1440s Matteo sat in several important offices,

including his first term as one of the Dodici, and also a second term as one of the Sedici. In 1445, he was additionally drawn "a mano" to become one of the Priors, a further notable political distinction (26). Matteo held some of these positions through good fortune, and some because of his support for the regime. As a result of his support for the Medici faction, he was rewarded with a large number of *polizze* with his name on being placed in the bags. While there could be no certainty in these matters, the probability of his name being drawn for one of the Tre Maggiori offices was thereby definitely increased. His good fortune lay in that the tickets with his name on actually were drawn, offering him a term of office in each of the Sedici, the Dodici and the Priorate during the 1440s. He was besides in this same decade once a Monte official and twice one of the Conservatori delle Leggi, while also holding the elective post of one of the Secretaries of the scrutiny as well as being drawn as one of the Otto di Guardia in 1449, these last two both being key positions in the Medici regime (27). In 1445, he was drawn as Captain of Livorno for four months, a senior and lucrative post (28). The short duration of such positions, none lasted longer than one year, certainly enabled a large number of posts to be held in a short space of time, and so for experience to be gained rapidly in a wide variety of fields. It also reveals how far and how fast Matteo had acceded towards the inner circles of the Medici government, since his ability was being rewarded at the same time as his commitment was being deepened. While the strictest control was only exercised over the Signoria, the tenure of these offices, combined with Matteo's election to the post of Scrutiny Secretary indicated Palmieri's rising status. To some extent, he was fortunate in being drawn for the other offices; though again his name had to be placed

in the bags before he could be drawn - which both represented a significant step forward, and which augured well for the future.

One of the distinct advantages of belonging to the *gente nuova* was the ability to take up a large number of positions in government one after the other without ever suffering the blow of prohibition because a near relative was either holding or had just vacated a similar post. A member of a numerous family - the Strozzi or the Albizzi for example - might not only find difficulty in qualifying in a scrutiny, but might also find his way forward blocked because other members of his clan had been drawn first for certain positions (29). It is interesting to see what happened to Francesco and Giovanni Palmieri as Matteo held office with increasing frequency.

Giovanni's name was picked out as one of the Dodici Buonucmini in 1438, but because he was still under age he was prevented from accepting the post (30). All the same, he did hold a number of minor offices in 1436, 1437, 1444, 1445 and 1448, but he was left somewhat in the background (31). For reasons unknown, Giovanni was declared ineligible when the names for the 1444 scrutiny for the Tre Maggiori were being prepared (32). As a result of the death of Francesco in the period between 1440 and 1444, and the disqualification of Giovanni, that side of the Palmieri family suffered a severe setback in its political status and activity. On the other hand, there was now no possibility of Matteo receiving a prohibition (*divieto*) because a relative was holding office, thus the probability of him holding office theoretically increased. Out of a maximum of four *polizze* for each of the Tre Maggiori in 1440, Giovanni

had two for each, while Francesco possessed four for the Priorate and the Sedici and three for the Dodici. Matteo himself had one ticket for the post of Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, and three others for the Priorate; he additionally possessed three for the Sedici and four for the Dodici (33). There is no obvious reason for Giovanni's disqualification, but whatever it was, it did not affect adversely his cousin's political career for, following his appearance on the Balla of 1434, Matteo received a place on that of 1438 and also that of 1444, a clear sign that he was much in demand (34). Giovanni did not hold office after 1448, and did so in that year only because he had been drawn from the bags prepared in 1439 which were being used alternately with those of 1444 after 1445 in the Ufficiali della Camera (35). He died soon after 1448, and Matteo duly became guardian for his four children (36).

One further aspect of holding many offices frequently was that Matteo would have had the opportunity not only of meeting and becoming acquainted with a large number of the members of the *reggimento*, but also of working alongside experienced office holders. It is hard to believe that he did not already know a great deal - Florentine citizens were highly politically aware in any case - from his father and uncle, but this gave him the opportunity of gaining first hand experience. Owing to the absence in this period of letters written by Matteo, the complete circle of his friends cannot be defined with any precision. Nonetheless, a few can be listed without any difficulty. Of especial note is that Matteo sat on the Balìa of 1438 not just with the person to whom he dedicated the Della Vita Civile, Alessandro d'Ugo degli Alesandri, who also lived in the same gonfalone as Matteo, but with all the supposed participants as

well (37). Likewise from the gonfalone of Chiavi in the quarter of San Giovanni, and on the Balia, was Agnolo di Filippo Pandolfini, the major narrator of the work. In addition, Luigi Guicciardini and Franco Sacchetti, the two inquisitive young citizens of the dialogue, were to be found on this Balia. None of these was a member of the 1434 Balia, and the coincidence of these four sitting together with Palmieri in 1438 may indicate that Matteo was putting the finishing touches (such as the names of the interlocutors) to the Della Vita Civile only after the Balia had started its work. On a number of occasions Matteo sat on executive committees with Tommaso Soderini, and the two forged a close friendship. The first time they came together in office was in 1444 when they were both among the ten officials responsible for collecting new taxes (38). Yet they must have known each other even before this, because Tommaso was one of the debtors Matteo listed in his *catasto* return of 1430, owing a sum of 12 pounds (39). On another occasion, in October 1440, Matteo undertook a vigil for Tommaso's wife (40). Later on, Tommaso gave financial assistance to Matteo when he needed it for his spice trade, and Matteo in due course was asked to act as one of the executors of Tommaso's will (41). Doubtless this mutual support was carried over into political life, too; that no evidence for such a connection survives need not deny the existence of simple and informal exchanges.

While Palmieri did not possess a large group of clients, it should be pointed out that by holding office often, and through his contacts in the spice trade, and as a result of friends and acquaintances made in his gonfalone and quarter, Matteo was not politically isolated. It

is possible, too, that he inherited in some sense some of the goodwill that in particular had been shown to his uncle.

It is beyond the scope of this work to chart Matteo's trading practices and the efficiency with which he ran his "bottega d'arte di spezieria in su Canto alle Rondini" (42). Nonetheless, the records he presented in his *catasto* returns can also be made to yield completely different information. Of outstanding interest is his list of "debitori d'ogni ragione di detta bottega e altri" given in his *catasto* return of 1430 (43). An updated list is given in his return of 1433 (44). These lists simply state who owed money to Matteo, and the amount. It is noticeable that members of some of the most politically and socially eminent families in Florence frequented Palmieri's shop. It is similarly noticeable that the particular members concerned were almost never, at least in this period, among the most politically and socially eminent individuals in Florence. For example, Ser Piero d'Ugo degli Alessandri and Niccolò d'Ugo degli Alessandri featured in these lists, but not their brother Alessandro, to whom Matteo dedicated the Della Vita Civile. It is still possible that Alessandro patronised the shop, the difference being that he paid his bills. In the 1458 *catasto*, Niccolò d'Ugo degli Alessandri was the sixth richest citizen in the gonfalone of Chiavi in the quarter of San Giovanni; his father Ugo di Bartolomeo was eleventh, and one of his grandsons, Franco di Niccolò d'Ugo was twelfth. Matteo was 17th richest citizen at this date (45). Piero di Filippo degli Albizzi and Gintata di Mariano degli Albizzi were similarly minor members of a major family who bought goods from Palmieri. There were in addition members of the well established Tanaglia and della Rena families, as well as some of



the da Filichaia clan - one of whom, Ser Piero di Berto, lived next to Palmieri in Via degli Scarpentieri (46). His father, Berto da Filichaia, spoke in some meetings of the *pratiche* in the early 1430s (47). Bartolomeo di Ser Benedetto Fortini was another included as owing money; although from a more minor family, he later sat on the *Balia* of 1434 for the quarter of San Giovanni (48). Although Palmieri's customers included members from the well established and, on the whole, well respected families of the Florentine patriciate, it seems unlikely that Palmieri would have derived much significant political help or influence as a result of his connections with this particular group. Indeed, two items of information relating to these customers suggest with peculiar clarity that this might have been the case.

Matteo claimed that Jacopo di Ser Lapo da Rasoio, who was probably a distant relative since the Palmieri family name, usually omitted, was da Rasoio, owed him 7 pounds (49). In his return, Jacopo did not list Matteo among his creditors, but then none of his creditors are listed who were seeking less than 15 pounds (50). Presumably, he either thought it was not worth including in his return, or else he had forgotten about it. On the other hand, Tommaso Soderini, already mentioned as a debtor in 1430, not only had remembered that he owed Matteo money, but had even thought to include it among his debts. This is all the more surprising since he could not recall the sum involved (51). If these two debtors are representative of the rest, and if they behaved in politics as they did here, remembering that one was probably a relative and the other certainly a friend, Matteo was hardly likely to have profited, in any sense, from their patronage.

Palmieri's political career at this stage is well reflected in his repeated selection for the Balie that were formed every few years in order to tackle the chief problems besetting the city. The competence of the Balie extended over the most important of the republic's functions, handling matters concerning taxation, scrutinies and the elections to the principal magistracies besides internal security and foreign relations (52). In 1434, the Balia carried out a new scrutiny, as it was also to do in 1438 (53). In deciding whose name was to be eligible for the bags, the members of the Balia were clearly expected to possess a certain integrity and loyalty to the Medici. To be sure of obtaining faithful citizens, in 1438 the number of citizens who qualified *ex officio* for the Balia was raised from 46 out of 385 (the 1434 figure) to 124 out of 348. Since Matteo was included in 1438 as one of the 224 citizens elected, and in 1444 as one of the 100 elected out of a total of 258, it is obvious that his presence on the Balia was thought desirable (54). In 1438 and 1444, the elections to the Balie were undertaken by some or all of the *ex officio* members, so that his presence indicated already a high degree of acceptance among the ruling group (55). Moreover, Palmieri was one of only 38 *arroti*, or elected members, who had served in 1434 and 1438 besides 1444 (56). Among the 17 *arroti* from the quarter of San Giovanni in 1444 were Dietisalvi Neroni, Piero di Cosimo de' Medici and Ugolino di Niccolò Martelli, all men with significant stakes in the regime (57). Two points arise from Matteo's activity in the Balie; the first concerns the consistency with which he sat, testifying once more and unmistakeably to a disposition favourable to the Medici. The second is that he was elected each time - he had not at this stage been lucky enough to have been drawn for the highest offices which would have qualified him

automatically for the Balie. But by this stage, even if it is not possible to be certain that he could be numbered among the inner circle of the 150 most influential citizens, he was certainly among the 250 most influential citizens.

In 1444, Palmieri was elected by the Balia to act as one of the Secretaries for the scrutiny. This meant that he was one of the officials whose responsibility it was to put into the bags the name tickets of those citizens previously selected as eligible to hold posts less important than those of the Tre Maggiori (58). As a result of holding this post, in 1448, he was appointed automatically to the Balia that was being formed (59). Thus by 1448, he had a political position somewhat closer to the heart of government.

Although more junior than the crucial post of Accoppiatore, this job as Secretary demonstrated Palmieri's continued political progress to ever more important posts. For not only had he first been a member of the Balia by virtue of being elected, itself an indication of his political ability and loyalty, but now he had been elected again by the Balia to an office which was still more politically demanding. Thus the unreliable impression of Matteo's importance to the regime gained from examining the Tratte records is corroborated and confirmed by finding that they concur with those of the Balia, because Matteo was elected and not drawn for his posts there. Given his increasingly important role in government circles, it is perhaps not surprising to find that in 1446 he announced in his *catasto* return that he had handed over the running of his apothecary's business to his nephew Agnolo (60). Evidently by this stage, Palmieri had

decided to place the republic's interests before those of his family business.

During this period there is ample evidence of trust being placed in him by the Medici and their supporters but, apart from his presence on the Balìa, there is little to indicate directly his support for them. No mention was made of them in the Della Vita Civile, no letters survive between Palmieri and the Medici from this period, and there is nothing beyond that already quoted in his Annales that gives an inkling of his attitude towards them. But any doubts which remain about Palmieri's personal commitment to the Medici regime disappear when a list containing 64 names supporting Cosimo de' Medici is examined. Matteo's signature was 14th on this petition drawn up at a time when the Medici partisans were failing to convince other citizens of the need to preserve the constitutional controls which had so far ensured the survival of the regime. On 10th May 1449, the 64 signatories declared under oath that they would work for "la conservazione et accrescimento di questo presente stato et reggimento", and that they would "confortare tutti gli (amici del) reggimento al buono (proposito)..." (61). While no mention was made in the pact of the constitutional difficulties, it is hard to believe that the timing was other than entirely deliberate. In March 1449, the Balìa had refused to extend the accoppiatori's power of electing "a mano", and the Balìa itself was due to end its term of office in May that year (62). Likewise in May that year, the Accoppiatori were due to close the bags (63). Thus the Medici and their followers no longer exercised such tight control over the tenure of the Tre Maggiori, and one of the other key means of control, the Balìa, had actually taken this decision. A pact

sworn at this juncture by the principal Medici supporters, such as Giovanozzo Pitti, Otto Niccolini, Angelo della Stufa, Luca Pitti and Luigi Guicciardini can only have been the result of the threat to the security of the Medici regime. And because not even the normally loyal Balia would accept the reasons proposed by a committee (which included Cosimo de' Medici, Otto Niccolini, Giovanozzo Pitti, Angelo Acciaiuoli and Neri Capponi) for continuing the controls, this list is an especially reliable guide to the most committed Medici supporters (64). As a result, no doubt need remain about Palmieri's steadfast dedication to the Medici regime, even at this moment of difficulty.

At this point in Matteo's political career, it is interesting to reflect on his political advancement. The crucial questions concern the reasons behind his rise within the regime, and more specifically his own ambitions and the degree of assistance he received from others. No clear statement by him regarding his own ambition at any time survives, nor anything about it for that matter by anyone else. But it seems barely credible that he would have continued to engage in the affairs of the republic with such intensity had he not derived some reward, tangible or otherwise, or satisfaction from it. While a certain amount of luck and coincidence was responsible for him holding some of the major offices (not only in the *sorteggio*, but also in the absence of other eligible members of his family), there can be no doubt that he had presented himself a willing servant of the republic given his repeated service on the Balie and, as we shall see, in the *pratiche*. Somebody less disposed to participating in government would not have found themselves among the 38 citizens elected for both the 1438 and 1444 Balie, having previously sat

on the 1434 Balìa. In itself this is not a reliable means of judging future political performance, for there were also a number of minor political figures who were present in all three Balie. For example, the practically unknown trio of Antonio di Lotto Boverelli, Lutozo Nasi and Mariotto di Franco Segni likewise achieved the distinction of sitting on all three Balie (65). A more rigorous test is to compare the names of those elected to all three Balie with the names of those speaking in the meetings of the *pratiche* in these years. Immediately the names become much better known, and include Gianozzo Manetti and Dietisalvi Neroni (66). Normally those chosen to speak in the *pratiche* would be picked for their expertise in the running of the republic. That Matteo abandoned his shop for the "vita politica" similarly seems a good indication of his enthusiasm for and ambition in the political world.

Moreover, it is scarcely believable that someone who had failed to impress the Medici would be aided in their political enterprise. Key offices were so keenly disputed that receipt of them was a clear indication of seniority in the regime. Usually only a handful of important and influential men in Florence would sit in the offices of greatest responsibility, such as the Otto di Guardia or the Accoppiatori, with any frequency. This was especially true for the Tre Maggiori, and for much of the period under discussion (12 of the 16 years from 1434 to 1450), the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia and Priors at least were drawn from bags containing very few names (67). For Matteo's name to be included among this select handful of Florentines bears witness to the high esteem in which he was held by the inner ruling group. In Palmieri's case, his election by the Balìa of 1444 to the post of Scrutiny Secretary

illustrates the faith that the followers closest to the Medici had in him. And having been elected to this post, his loyalty being assured, it is probable that other offices will have fallen to him with greater ease. Despite the recurrence of this date of 1444, it is not so much that it highlights the start of Matteo's allegiance to the Medici, but more that it provides sound evidence of this attachment. The link was almost certainly forged at an earlier date.

Pratiche, 1446-1450.

Only quite recently have the *pratiche* records been analysed to provide a solid base for the study of Florentine government. In his two seminal works treating the political and social history of Florence from the expulsion of the Duke of Athens to the coup d'état by the Medici, Gene Brucker relies heavily for his interpretation on this source (68). Offering a masterly and finely detailed account of the constitutional processes by which Florence was governed from the return of Cosimo de' Medici to the expulsion of the family 60 years later in 1494, Nicolai Rubinstein draws on these documents to show how the city's leading statesmen perceived the political realities of the day (69). The *pratiche* are particularly valuable because they record the speeches made by an invited group of key citizens as they grappled with the everyday problems of the city. Decisions reached in these debates had practically acquired a moral imperative, almost ensuring their implementation, whether in matters of legislation, finance or diplomacy or other areas of government concern. Occasionally the outcome was overridden, but this was the exception rather than the rule.

As a Florentine with a share in government, Palmieri was called from time to time to give advice in a meeting of the *pratica*. He was not among those summoned most frequently up to 1450, but nonetheless he attended a considerable number of sessions during the almost 30 years that he was eligible and for which reasonably complete records exist,



that is, from 1446 to 1475. Matteo's involvement in these debates will be examined next.

One of the questions usually raised in conjunction with the humanists concerns their sincerity. How was it possible for them to reconcile writing, for instance, at one moment a treatise extolling the virtues of republican government, and then later to proclaim the delights of monarchical rule? Given these opposing and exaggerated stances, what were their real beliefs on the subject? Normally, the answer involves asserting either a fundamental shift in the outlook of the writer, or else involves stressing the rhetorical nature of the work, by explaining that it was more a show piece to reveal the literary talents of the author, or composed to order, than a heartfelt defence of his viewpoint (70). This charge of insincerity is seldom made against Palmieri, not least because his major work, the Della Vita Civile, though ostensibly written in the form of a dialogue, is rather more a monologue with very occasional stilted promptings from an otherwise silent audience. As a result, unlike certain other more balanced dialogues, the position that Matteo wished to postulate is clear from the start. Nor did Matteo later write a blatantly contradictory work - indeed, the Citta di Vita confirms rather than opposes the propositions found in the Della Vita Civile. Thus for these purposes, the records of the debates in the *Consulte e Pratiche* registers do not shed any light. Where they can help, however, is in examining Palmieri's thought after his entry into politics. Since the Della Vita Civile was written so early in his political career, many of the contentions contained in it must have been based on informal discussion and reflection rather than on first hand experience (71). An investigation

of the records of the *pratiche*, therefore, permits comparisons to be made between his earlier and his later thought. More significantly, it enables differences in emphasis and opinion, as a result of practical experience, to be traced. Because these were political ideas being expressed in a political forum, they were influenced by political exigencies and not every topic present in the *Della Vita Civile* was discussed. It will also be interesting to see whether on certain occasions it was prudent for Palmieri to adopt a particular line in order to curry favour with his patrons and seniors. Moreover, the manner in which the debates were recorded obscures rather than clarifies the issue of Palmieri's political thought, and some space needs to be devoted to it.

For these important debates of the *pratica*, the Florentine chancellor was present and made records of the proceedings. Each chancellor interpreted his duty in a different way, and so the records are not consistent from one chancellor to the next; moreover, the nature of the meetings themselves also underwent changes during the course of the century. In trying to derive Palmieri's political thought from these documents, the chief question concerns their accuracy: how near to the original debates do these records bring us? Both Brucker and Rubinstein tacitly assume that the records are an extremely accurate representation of the meeting, and that if they are not actually correct word for word, then they are still very close indeed to the original sentiment, and probably also the formulation, of the speaker. Palmieri had his speeches in the *pratiche* noted by four chancellors.

During Carlo Marsuppini's term of office as chancellor, the surviving debates are written with a regular hand in simple Latin (72). On the whole, the speeches are short, or at least to the point, and as such appear to be a summary rather than an unedited piece. Consequently, the Latin used tends to be precise, and concrete in its images. Since the speakers were dealing with concrete, everyday matters, this evinces a ring of authenticity. One product of this style is that Palmieri's speeches are somewhat terse, and often just a list of names is presented of those who actually attended a meeting, below an outline of the principal issue.

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While Poggio Bracciolini was chancellor, the script became more slapdash, larger and untidy, becoming difficult to read in places (73). Little effort was made to turn the Italian of the original debate into fine classical Latin. It, too, may be a summary of the debate rather than a precise transcription, yet it also conveys the immediacy of the speakers. In general, more space is devoted to recording the speeches.

Under Accolti's chancellorship, the matter becomes more complicated (74). It has been argued that he was eager to present the debates in a different light. Desiring to show off his skills in Latin composition, it appears that he may have elaborated on the simple minutes made at the meeting, rather than merely translating these into Latin, as Marsuppini and Poggio most probably did. By comparing the rough copy of one debate with its extant neat version, it is possible to see Accolti at work expanding the minutes into a polished and longer final draft (75). Whether this expansion consisted of humanistic embellishment, as

Accolti's biographer believes, or whether it consisted of items and arguments remembered later from the meeting, but not recorded in the first draft, is a moot point (76). As the evidence for Accolti's humanistic embellishment and invention consists of just one debate, it is not possible to be certain whether this practice was normal or exceptional, though it should be said that the debates are written in a neat hand, suggesting that they were fair copies. The evidence is circumstantial, but some tentative conclusions can be drawn.

Part of the chancellor's duty was, presumably, to record accurately what was said in these meetings; even if this were not a duty, a tradition of doing so had established itself (77). That certain changes in vocabulary or grammatical structure were made for the neat copy seems likely; indeed, these must have been almost unavoidable when translating from the Italian of the original debate into the Latin of the records. But it seems improbable that normally the vast majority of the alterations went beyond this. It is improbable because these were minutes of a meeting, available perhaps for consultation by senior members of the *reggimento*, who wished to remind themselves of the issue or about the debate, but otherwise serving no immediate purpose. Neri Capponi referred in his Commentari di Cose Seguite in Italia to the records of the debates made by Leonardo Bruni as offering proof of what he had maintained in order to counter rumours that he had said the opposite (78). Hence embellishment would serve little practical purpose. The use of these debates later as a source of ideas for inclusion in the republic's correspondence, where literary imagination was encouraged and linguistic excellence appreciated, was not therefore necessarily incompatible with a

faithful rendering of the debates themselves. Other examples of both rough and neat copies of the same debate survive from before and after Accolti's term as Chancellor, and the differences which can be noted between the two copies are rare and minimal. In short, there can be no certainty that the literary activities of Accolti consistently interfered with the conventional political reasons for keeping a just representation of the meetings. One result of Accolti's expansiveness was to increase the amount of space devoted to noting the speeches, so that the speeches are very much longer than those kept by the preceding chancellors.

Scala's term as chancellor presents different but no less intriguing questions with regard to the accuracy of the records (79). For there survives both a rough copy and a neat copy of one volume of the *pratiche* meetings (80). In most cases, the neat copy is very close to the rough, and it is plain that Scala had no intention of embellishing these rough notes. Even if Accolti had chosen consistently to expand the minutes using the humanist canons, it is obvious that Scala had no desire to follow his predecessor's literary pretensions in recording the *pratiche*. Indeed, he soon gave up the extra work of producing a neat copy of the debates (81). Moreover, he tended to write less and less in his summaries, so that his later minutes are not so helpful in trying to reconstruct an individual's political thought.

In the period before 1437, Matteo probably did not attend any of the secret meetings of the *pratiche*. If he did attend them, then he has not been recorded as doing so. But given his lowly political status in 1437, it is by far more likely that he was not invited to participate

in the debates. For the period from 1437 to 1447, no registers have survived which contain discussions of the *pratiche*. The next register begins in December 1446, and Palmieri's presence at these meetings is documented from March 1447 (82). Yet he does not appear very often, being recorded as being present at only 15 meetings over a 3 year period (83). And once present, he usually did not make a significant impact. The meetings of the *pratiche* were arranged in such a way that either Palmieri probably felt constrained from contributing, or else he was being called upon simply to show his approval for a certain policy. From the organisation of the records it seems that, broadly speaking, the debates took two different forms. In one, discussion of a matter took place, with each person present speaking just once, and speaking in turn according to their seniority. All the knights and lawyers spoke first, and the precise order was normally determined by age, the oldest citizens being given priority. Consequently, the comparatively young Palmieri as a rule had to wait a considerable time before being able to offer his advice or opinion. Thus he had less opportunity to influence the path taken, and it is also possible that the view he wished to put forward had already been proposed. Vespasiano da Bisticci recounts how, in a different setting, Palmieri was reluctant to speak against Gianozzo Manetti "per riverenzia di chi aveva parlato" (84). In these formal surroundings, it may also have been the case that Palmieri was content to defer to men of greater experience and of greater authority within the regime. In the other general type of *pratica*, a proposal was read out, and those present agreed unanimously without any discussion at all taking place. The combination of these two types thus limits the evidence available for reconstructing Matteo's thought. All the same, some themes do recur in

Palmieri's speeches and his willingness to support certain proposals may indicate his more general support for the Medici regime.

On September 6th 1447, a meeting was held to discuss whether to recognise the men holding the town of Cennina. There were probably about 20 or 25 citizens present at this practice, which was recorded in an extremely summary fashion. Giovanozzo Pitti opened the debate by asserting that "fidem publicam" would be useful to those occupying the town (85). Guglielmo Tanaglia thought that the Signoria and colleges should decide whether the "fides" had been given legitimately, but he thought it to be useful (86). Speaking third, Tommaso Salvetti agreed (87). Otto Niccolini put forward the contrary point of view, claiming that those occupying the town were not a just enemy, but thieves (88). Tommaso Deti agreed with Otto (89). These five were all either knights or lawyers, and had contributed three different ways of handling the matter. Incensed by the issue, but making a suggestion far removed from the actual problem, was Francesco di Niccolò del Benino, who thought that the insurgents should be put in prison "per decenium aut viginti aut XXV annos" (90). Others sitting on the same bench as Francesco agreed with him, while Neri di Domenico di Bartolini, and others sitting near him, supported Otto (91). Matteo spoke next, and as those who spoke after him all agreed with the stance he adopted, it may be that he spoke with particular force or eloquence, or that he had grasped the essentials of the affair with special sensitivity. He suggested that if "fides" were given, it would be useful; however, he considered that the decision should be left to the Signoria and colleges (92). Others near him supported this approach, and the citizens representing the Otto di Guardia, the Captains

of the Parte Guelfa, and the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia similarly followed suit (93). Whether Matteo's contribution was decisive in encouraging this unanimity of opinion among those who spoke after him is not clear from the debate - his name was not mentioned by those agreeing with his position. In any case, in his hands, Guglielmo Tanaglia's opinion had undergone only a minor modification in that he had expressed himself in favour of recognition, and the others speaking against Guglielmo's view were so strongly opposed that it was unlikely that they would have been placated merely by referring the issue to the Signoria and colleges. While Matteo emerges in a positive light from this debate, there is so little evidence that few conclusions can be drawn. His other recorded contributions at this stage where he was simply agreeing to a proposal already formulated tend to be even less dynamic, and so less revealing of his political thought.

Eighteen months later, on 28th March 1449, a large number of citizens attended a meeting of the *pratica* to discuss whether to keep the electoral controls that were guarding and consolidating the security of the Medici regime (94). Once more, Matteo was not among the first to speak, and his speech is interesting less for any influence that it may have had, than for the justification offered. Many before and after him declared themselves in favour of electoral controls, and did so for a variety of reasons, ranging from fear of plague to the need to maintain civic concord. In his later speeches, Matteo often made use of a few words which acted as important touchstones for him. Here he introduced two - prudence and security. As a rhetorical device, he also liked to



offer two distinct contrasts, explaining why one was preferable to the other, and this is also contained in this short speech:

"nec dubium esse securius fore marsupia esse aperta quam clausa. Et quamvis videatur magis populare ut claudantur, tandem illi popularitati securitatem anteponendam ...tandem securitati dixit esse prospiciendum" (95).

And this was all justified by a reference to prudence which he had placed at the start of his speech: "nihil imprudentius esse...". Matteo was not the only speaker to refer to prudence or security; they were both used very commonly. But these words for Matteo possessed a special weight in the expression of his opinions; they appear time and again, and reveal Matteo's cautious and conservative political views.

As for his use of contrasts, here he balanced security against popularity, and decided that it would be more farsighted to opt for security. This trick of presenting two ideas and contrasting them seems to have been a favourite of Palmieri's, and although used by others as well, it occurs with great frequency in his speeches, and rather more frequently than in the speeches of others. In this debate, the only other speaker to present the decision in quite such a polarised way was Gianozzo Manetti. He suggested that the Signoria and colleges should decide whether to continue the controls or to ignore the advice of the *pratiche*: "...consulerent utrum inceptum sequendum an deserendum eorum que consilio standum" (96). Others spoke in favour of or against controls by trying to combat the opposing arguments; but while they always made clear from the start the stance that they had adopted, they did not reveal the assumption that their argument was founded on.

It is noticeable that on five of the 15 occasions that Palmieri was present at the meetings of the *pratiche* in the period up to 1450, taxes were discussed. Taxes were always a very sensitive issue in Florence, and normally lengthy discussion took place before deciding whether to impose them. For one third of Matteo's attendances to have been devoted to this issue indicates the important position that taxes occupied in the city's politics. It may also have been that Matteo showed a particular interest or flair in this matter, having once sat as one of the Monte officials, and once as a collector of new taxes. On another occasion Palmieri supported giving special powers to the Otto di Guardia, a recurrent and controversial problem in Florence (97). As seen in his advocacy of the retention of electoral controls, it seems that Matteo favoured the concentration of authority in the hands of the republic. He was drawn for the office of the Otto himself in 1449 (98).

From Matteo's attendance at these meetings where important decisions were debated or announced, it would appear that he was valued as a loyal supporter, probably because of his increasing political experience. Considerable trust was placed in Palmieri, as can be seen in particular from the key office of Scrutiny Secretary which he held. Although Matteo did not make many appearances in the *pratiche*, there were occasions on which the sentiments he expressed met with the approval of the other citizens present, but as he did not speak very often, he did not have much opportunity for influencing Florentine policy. Nevertheless, by 1450, Palmieri had held senior magistracies in the regime, and simply by being invited to the debates he effectively joined the ruling group. He was not, however, exerting a great deal of influence over either the

formulation of policy or over deciding which policy was to be followed. Thus in Palmieri's case, a distinction should be made between occupying some of the most important executive offices, and exerting influence in the secret debates. He was at this stage more a supporter than a leader.

Political Activity 1450-1465

After 1450, Palmieri continued to consolidate his position in the regime. In 1451, he was drawn as Vicar of the Valdinievole, a six month term of office (99). To appreciate the importance of this office, it is worth recalling that Palmieri's household consisted of a judge, two notaries and four assistants. Moreover, Palmieri received the sum of 2,000 lire for six months, a very considerable salary (100). The following year, Palmieri was elected for the first time to undertake an embassy to Perugia (101). Although this was not a crucial mission, it did possess a certain military importance and because the Signoria and colleges had to approve the choice of Matteo as ambassador, it denoted an appreciation of Palmieri's talents as a politician and diplomat among a significant section of the Florentine ruling group.

In June 1452, Alfonso, King of Naples, had started to move his troops through southern Tuscany, a military development which worried the Florentines. To be sure of the continued friendship of Perugia, a papal possession in league with Florence, the Dieci di Balia proposed Matteo Palmieri as ambassador. As two Venetian ambassadors had just passed through Perugia, Florence was particularly anxious to ensure that Perugia did not renege on its commitment to the city.

After his embassy to Perugia in 1452, Matteo was drawn for a third time for the much coveted position of Gonfaloniere di Compagnia, and also sat as one of the 6 Sea Consuls responsible for the city of

Pisa, a post of major importance. In the Balia of 1452 he was again elected as one of the Secretaries for the new scrutiny (102). Besides these posts, he also started to take part in official ceremonies on behalf of the republic, such as greeting the emperor as he passed through Florence in 1452. For this occasion, twenty ambassadors were elected by the Signoria to welcome and celebrate the arrival of Frederick III, on his way south to be crowned by the pope. Naturally many of the leading citizens were included among these, such as Gianozzo Manetti, Alessandro degli Alessandri, Manno Temperani, Giovanni Bartoli, Orlando de' Medici, Ugolino Martelli, Niccolò Soderini and also Matteo Palmieri (103). These elective duties indicate, like being sent on an embassy, the esteem in which Palmieri was held by other members of the reggimento. He was clearly thought to be a worthy representative of the republic. As a result of these posts, Matteo must have been occupying the limelight on the political scene, becoming known to a wider audience than just his fellow office holders, and demonstrating considerable political proficiency.

This process will have continued when he was chosen by the Signoria, when Luigi Guicciardini was the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, to give the funeral oration in memory of Carlo Marsuppini, his former teacher, and the Florentine chancellor (104). According to one chronicler, the others competing for this honour in April 1453 were Gianozzo Manetti, another humanist participating in politics, Cosimo de' Medici's son, Piero, Ugolino Martelli, a strong Medici supporter and very close to the Medici family, and Niccolò Soderini, the brother of Tommaso (105). In terms of humanist eloquence and skill in composition, Manetti was probably more able than Matteo. Indeed, he had given Bruni's funeral oration, but he had

not been Marsuppini's pupil, and he was falling from favour with the Medici (106). As Palmieri had used Luigi Guicciardini's name as one of the interlocutors in the Bella Vita Civile without doubt the two were good friends, and this bond of friendship, combined with Matteo's other recent achievements, probably helped to make the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia favourably disposed to him.

The funeral itself was described as "magnificentissima", with rich displays of munificence provided by a procession of representatives from the King of France, the pope, the Duke of Milan, the Parte Guelfa, the Florentines themselves, and the city of Arezzo, besides "tutti le regole di frati con molta cera in mano" (107). After the pomp of this procession, "in sul panchetto sali Matteo Palmieri e quivi fece una bella diceria" (108). Matteo then crowned Marsuppini with a garland to honour him. From the descriptions of the event, it would seem that Palmieri just as much as Marsuppini was the focus of attention. The whole event constituted a marvellous spectacle; "dicono che si spese fl.1500 o circa...", and Matteo must have derived much honour and prestige for having been the central living figure, and for having performed in a thoroughly fitting manner (109).

Just a few months later, for September and October 1453, Matteo himself was drawn "a mano" to be the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, the city's highest political honour (110). If the faith of the Medici regime towards Palmieri were ever in doubt, and from 1444 onwards when Matteo was elected Scrutiny Secretary, that was most unlikely, here their faith was fully demonstrated. This post could not be held by anyone under

the age of 45, and once Matteo had become eligible in 1451, he was not kept waiting for long for the republic's highest honour, an indication of his intimate connections with the Medici regime. It is interesting to note in this respect the Medici influence over the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, and in particular Matteo's position towards Cosimo. Both emerge strikingly during Matteo's two month term of office.

In his Annales, Palmieri gives what appears at first sight to be an adequate summary of an event which took place during his term of office (111). In July 1453, Florence and the Duke of Milan were negotiating to ally with the King of Hungary; together they would send 12,000 cavalry to attack the Friuli "a danno de' Veneziani". Florence and the Duke of Milan were to pay 10,000 florins each before the mercenaries under John Hunyadi left, and then 10,000 more when they had arrived in the Friuli. After that, they would contribute 10,000 florins per month up to a total of 80,000 florins. Somewhat disingenuously, to say the least, Palmieri added "per la perdita di Costanopoli non si segui" (112). For his history, this was the end of the affair. But for himself, as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, this was the start.

Even as Palmieri was being drawn for this post, Sforza's ambassador in Florence was reporting the good news:

"...de la subventionne Vostra se strengherà ormay la conclusione de farli contanti, Cosimo... confidassi farlo bene e presto perche ha ottenuto el Gonfalenero de la iusticia ad suo modo, cise Matheo Palmero, qual dice non poria essere più apto ad questo mestiere; el resto de la Signoria è ancora ben a suo modo" (113).

From the way this news was written, it appears that the Signoria and the Gonfaloniere could be manipulated to suit Cosimo's will, though this was

probably the impression that Cosimo wanted to give rather than describing how matters actually were. Moreover, it is evident from the positions that he had already held that Palmieri was a close and loyal supporter of Cosimo, and hence also of Milan; doubtless this was one of the reasons for his inclusion among those eligible for the post. It seems too that Cosimo wanted Palmieri as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, and judged him to be entirely suited to holding this office. But decisions were not taken by Cosimo alone in Florence, and it turned out that the Dieci di Balìa, who had started their six month term of office in June 1453, were prepared to take decisions independently (114). It happened that in this case there was a difference of opinion, and probably not a little friction, between on one side Cosimo and the Signoria, and the Dieci on the other. Cosimo's view, communicated to the Milanese ambassador, regarding the subsidy was that the Dieci "nè per loro vogli se haverie soccorso de uno soldo" (115). Piero de' Medici was one of the Dieci, so he was ideally placed to pass on to Cosimo their attitude. By this time, Matteo as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia had already convened four *pratiche* to discuss the matter, and those attending saw no alternative but to raise taxes in order to pay for the subsidy (116). As a result, the Milanese ambassador was advised by Cosimo and Piero to address his request to the Signoria "havendo però già loro edificato il Gonfalonero in questa cosa" (117). He was not disappointed, for the Signoria gave "buonissima risposta" (118). Doubtless the Signoria were most amenable to following the views of the *pratiche*, and of Matteo as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia.

Since the Signoria were keen to retain friendly relations with Milan, this represented considerable progress, especially as a *pratica*



held on the afternoon of the 17 September apparently showed itself to be very optimistic about obtaining both men and the subsidy (119). But the issue did not proceed as quickly as the Milanese wanted, and both the Milanese ambassadors in Florence took letters to Cosimo from the Duke of Milan, hoping to speed up the affair. Cosimo then advised showing the letters to the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia so that the matter could be settled more hastily. Palmieri continued to demonstrate his eagerness to assist, giving the Milanese ambassadors "bonissima riposta, & in vero luy gliè bene disposto..." (120). Indeed, six *pratiche* had been held between September 18 and 22, and it had been agreed to send two *condottieri* with their men to Lombardy to assist the Duke of Milan, and they were determined "circa il pagamento" that "si farà tutto il possibile" (121).

Yet the matter dragged on with very little being resolved. At the end of September, Cosimo retired to bed for six days, extremely ill with gout, and things were no better when he had recovered (122). The Dieci sought in every way possible to prevent soldiers going to Lombardy, and both Cosimo and Matteo were elusive about the money while promising it soon (123). By now, there was little purpose in continuing to pledge the faith of the leading citizens meeting in *pratiche*, and no more were recorded on this subject between October 3 and 16. More time passed and the money still showed no signs of materialising. Indeed, now Cosimo and Matteo took different standpoints. While Matteo held that "non ne crede havere honore se non ne fa nova pratica", Cosimo thought "po fare senza più pratica" (124). In this instance, Matteo's view prevailed and a *pratica* was held; however, the tide of opinion had turned, and the *pratica* apparently chose to commit the money to the Dieci.

Lest it be thought that Matteo was simply a pawn in the hands of Cosimo, it should be pointed out that Matteo was working separately to find a solution. Since the document is apparently in his hand, it would seem that at about this time, he drew up, or at least assisted in the process, three different methods of levying taxes, presumably so that the money for the subsidy could be raised with as little disturbance as possible. Two of these three methods were presented as bills to the Balìa, which twice rejected each one between October 10 and 20 (125). The degree of opposition in Florence even among the normally loyal Balìa was evidently very great, and helps to explain why matters dragged on so slowly.

The Dieci were still proving very obstinate and Cosimo was led to say "brute parole" to Alamanno Salviati, one of the Dieci (126). Then the Dieci explained that they could not grant a subsidy, because they had spent their budget, and that therefore the Signoria should be called upon to introduce new taxes (127). As always the Signoria replied "molto gratamente", and in due course summoned the Dieci and "diotegli assai" (128). But the Dieci did not waver, and told the Milanese ambassadors that it was the Signoria alone who had the necessary competence to introduce new money provisions (129). And again the Signoria showed itself keen to help: "hebi de loro le migliore parole del mondo", wrote the Milanese ambassador, but no money (130). Sweet words from the Signoria clearly pacified the Milanese ambassadors, even though no money was forthcoming.

By now Matteo's two month term of office was almost over, and the problem had still not been resolved. With the election of Luca Pitti to the post of Gonfaloniere di Giustizia in the offing, the Milanese hopes rose again, just as they had two months previously when Matteo had been elected. Luca promised to obtain the subsidy for the Duke (131). The Dieci eventually managed to find the money before Palmieri's term finished, and the ever obliging Signoria agreed to pay the money in cash via the Monte officials (132). Luca Pitti was duly drawn "a mano" and renewed his promises, while the Monte officials claimed that they were having difficulty in raising the sum in cash (133). On 14 November, Nicodemo Tranchedini departed for Milan with the cash and the episode was finally settled (134).

Throughout the affair, Palmieri was obviously keen to pay the Milanese, and had the full support of a like minded Signoria. Yet, even though supported by Cosimo, he was not able to persuade the Dieci to make the money available, and this despite the presence of Piero de' Medici among the Dieci. But then, if Cosimo was not able to reap success in this matter, it is hardly surprising to discover that Matteo also had his plans frustrated. They both showed themselves willing to grant the subsidy and, apart from the minor disagreement over whether to hold a *pratica*, acted together to achieve this end. Palmieri's attempts to introduce new methods of taxation were defeated, indicating both his initiative, and the strength of opposition to the measure. Whether Palmieri reached the same conclusions as Cosimo from a deeply held conviction, or only after having conferred with Cosimo, is not documented. Being a convinced Medici supporter, he was probably at least broadly in

agreement with the idea of granting a subsidy, and probably differed only over what steps were required in order to obtain the money. In brief, the episode illustrates well, in at least one respect, Palmieri's proximity in thought and deed to Cosimo de' Medici. From the evidence of Matteo's position as Gonfaloniere and his earlier record of office holding, this was already established, but after examining closely Matteo's chief undertaking, it is now defined with greater precision and amplitude.

The combination of good fortune, political circumstance and the subtle Florentine dynamic of introducing promising politicians to new experience resulted in 1454 likewise being a busy year for Palmeri. Drawn as one of the Sgravatori, responsible for assessing taxes, in February 1454, Matteo sat in this office with his friend and colleague, Tommaso Soderini (135). Later that year, he appeared once more as one of the office holders of the Tre Maggiori this time as one of the Dodici Buonomini (136). While these positions maintained Palmieri in the forefront of Florentine politics, they did not represent much of an advance for him. In the same year, he was drawn by lot to sit in the magistracy of the Otto di Guardia (137). He had sat in this key office in 1449, when his name had likewise been drawn (138). Although appointed for two months from October 8, 1454, in the volume recording this, there is a note in the margin "cassi per consilia die 28 novembris", suggesting that the Otto in office had acted improperly. To support this notion, instead of the next incumbents being drawn by lot as was to be expected, they were "electi per dominos et collegia pro a die 28 novembris usque ad per totium mensem decembris 54" (139). There is no evidence in the volume

to indicate the reason for this measure (140). None of the first eight was elected to the new Otto.

This slight against the Otto did not seem to damage Matteo's reputation, for in April 1455 he was elected by the Signoria and colleges to go to Naples as an ambassador (141). This was a mark of considerable respect, not least because on his way to Naples, Palmieri was also to stop briefly in Rome, the first Florentine officially mandated to send greetings on behalf of the Florentine republic to the newly elected pope. Once in Naples, Palmieri had the job of convincing Alfonso of the friendly disposition of Florence, and of presenting the documents for the Italian league to him to be signed. In addition, Palmieri had to explain to the King why the Signoria did not wish to allow back into Florence the rebels of 1434, and why taxes were levied on goods emanating from the Neapolitan kingdom. During this embassy, Matteo was impressed by the King's willingness to observe both the peace and the conditions of the league. However, Palmieri did not realise that Alfonso was simultaneously paying the *condottiere* Jacopo Piccinini to make attacks in southern Tuscany which rendered worthless the progress that Palmieri seemed to have been making in Florentine-Neapolitan relations.

In other ways too Palmieri was being given greater responsibilities. In September 1456, contrary to the wishes of the ruling group, Poggio did not have his position as Chancellor renewed (142). During his term, the chancery had ceased to function in an organised manner, and anxiety was voiced in *pratiche*. The issue of the chancellor in Florence was extremely sensitive because of the high reputation that

the office had acquired and maintained through the influential figures of Salutati, Bruni and Marsuppini. The matter was made more complex by the clash of conflicting interests. Despite Foggio's incompetence in office, he was still valued as a figurehead, and as a learned and famous scholar by the Mediceans, while opposition to the Mediceans focussed on removing him from the chancery. After several *pratiche* had been held on the matter in the autumn of 1456, Franco Sacchetti, Otto Niccolini, Dietisalvi Veroni and Matteo Palmieri were delegated to search for a solution. These four soon found that some changes in the organisation of the chancery were called for, but that there were no grounds for dismissing Foggio. For Matteo to be involved in trying to find a way to reelect Foggio as chancellor illustrates once more his proximity to the Medicean regime, and the extent to which his own humanist talents were appreciated in the city's political life.

When he was in Naples, Palmieri had recommended a young friend of his, Antonio de' Rossi, for a teaching post in the Florentine Studio (143). Addressed to Piero de' Medici, who apparently was one of the Studio officials, the request indicates that Palmieri was concerned to help his friends, and that he knew Piero well. Antonio de' Rossi was not successful in obtaining the post. Palmieri's recommendations seem to have been based on friendship, on obligation or on a sense of neighbourhood ("vicinanza"). One example of the latter is a letter Matteo wrote, again to Piero, in July 1459, recommending for the office of Notary of the Riformagioni Gabriele Lioni, brother of a former notary there, Lione Lioni (144). Such recommendations were commonplace in Florence (145). The interest lies in that Lione Lioni had been elected as Notary of the

Riformagioni in January 1457 after contesting the election with the Medicean Bartolomeo Guidi (146). However, Lione was ousted from his post after one day there because of his anti-Medicean sympathies (147). To recommend the brother of an anti-Medicean dismissed from the chancery after just one day to Piero de' Medici seems to constitute an act either of folly or of gross naivety, and in any case might require lengthy explanation. Yet Palmieri's justification for recommending Gabriele is remarkably straightforward: "perche e di mio gonfalone, me interesso raccomandartelo" (148). For such an important appointment, and for a man with a claim weakened by the sympathies of his brother, Matteo's support is feeble. Nevertheless, Matteo affirms that Gabriele is "di buoni costumi", which may be shorthand for pro-Medicean. Indeed, as Matteo had become an Accoppiatore during 1458, and had defended Poggio against the anti-Mediceans in 1456-7, it scarcely seems probable that in 1459 he would have willingly and openly recommended an anti-Medicean for one of the key posts in the chancery. The tie of *vicinanza* only begins to account for this puzzling letter; it does not explain it fully. Doubtless there were further ties, as yet uncovered, between Gabriele and Matteo which could be conveniently subsumed under the concept of *gonfalone*.

Immediately on his return from Naples, Palmieri was drawn as Vicar in the Mugello for 6 months from August 1455. This post was, like the other important external positions, well remunerated, and Palmieri received 2,000 lire for his term of office (149). In 1456, Palmieri sat in the important office of the Sei di Mercanzia, and in 1457 was drawn as one of the Ufficiali di Notte and as one of the Conservatori delle Leggi (150). His luck continued in 1458 when he was drawn as one of the Sea

Consuls (151). In this year, too, he was twice elected by the Signoria, indicative of his continued high standing in the republic. The first time he was elected by the Signoria and colleges to act as ambassador to the Lunigiana to settle a dispute over the border with the Marchese Malaspini (152). Administrative reasons probably explain the choice of Matteo for this mission; because he was already based at Pisa, it was probably simpler to send an ambassador from Pisa to the Lunigiana than from Florence. But clearly Palmieri would not have been sent if he were not thought capable of performing the task. His second elected post in this year was far more important, and took him once again to the heart of government. His job as Accoppiatore was to decide which citizens were eligible to sit in the most important offices in the republic, a function which was considered essential for the survival of the Medici regime (153). After the opposition in 1458 to the regime, it is indicative of Matteo's position as one of the Medici's most loyal supporters that he was appointed to this crucial post. The ten Accoppiatori elected in 1458 stayed in office until 1465, working in groups of five or seven (154). As companions in this elevated office, Matteo had Luigi Guicciardini and Alessandro degli Alessandri, both notable supporters of the Medici and friends of Matteo's.

Twice during 1459, Matteo played a prominent role in entertaining eminent guests visiting Florence (155). In the celebrations organised to welcome Francesco Sforza's son Galeazzo Maria to Florence in April 1459, Matteo was greatly honoured, being seated in one of the four carriages which accompanied Galeazzo Maria to Careggi. Matteo's importance in the regime was obviously recognised; the others in the



carriages were the men guiding the affairs in Florence, men such as Otto Niccolini, Antonio Ridolfi, Guiglielmo Tanaglia, Franco Schetti, Niccolò Martelli and Jacomo Ventura. Matteo was similarly honoured in the celebrations arranged for the visit of Pius II to Florence in 1459. According to an anonymous poet who describes the event, Matteo was one of four citizens whom the pope permitted to ride on a warhorse, though some of the other office holders were also present. The other three men were all highly regarded citizens of Florence, Antonio Ridolfi, Giovenco della Stufa and Giovanni Canigiani.

In September 1459, Palmieri served again as one of the Conservatori delle Leggi, this time being elected to the post by the Council of One Hundred (156). But before the office had finished, he was drawn to act in 1460 as Captain of Pistoia, yet another senior post, combining both prestige and responsibility (157). Meanwhile in December 1460, Palmieri's links with Pisa were maintained when he was drawn together with Tommaso Soderini as one of the tax officials (Provveditore delle Gabelle di Pisa) for the town. As this was seen to be a post requiring considerable tact and expertise, the appointment had to be ratified by the Council of One Hundred (158).

At this point, Palmieri's run of good fortune in holding senior positions came to an end. He was drawn in 1463 for the office of the Abbondanza, which distributed grain to the needy in Florence in times of shortage, but was drawn for no major post until after Cosimo's death in August 1464 (159). But the absence of good fortune need not be taken to imply that Palmieri had fallen from favour. For in August 1462, he was

elected for six months by the Council of One Hundred to the Otto di Guardia, the chief magistracy responsible both for law and order in Florence, and for maintaining the security of Florence against the other states on the Italian peninsula (160). Tenure of this important position was always highly valued, and Matteo's election indicates how highly he was regarded by the Council of One Hundred.

During the fifteen years from 1450 to 1465, Palmieri played an increasingly significant role in the Medici regime. The development was not entirely linear; in particular after his two embassies in 1452 and 1455 it is surprising to find that he was only elected once more in this period to represent the republic on another similar occasion, and that was a comparatively minor affair. One of the reasons for this somewhat variegated career was the use of sortition, which made a politician of Palmieri's stature Gonfaloniere di Giustizia one year, and the next charged him with the more minor duty of organising the city's celebrations for the feast of San Giovanni Battista (161). Accordingly, it is difficult to draw many conclusions from this evidence regarding the standing of such a man within the regime. It is nonetheless obvious that to have been included in the bags from which the names were drawn was already a very major distinction, especially in the case of the republic's highest post, that of the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia. The scrutinies were fundamental in this, for they established who was eligible for these offices. Thus the election of Palmieri as Scrutiny Secretary by the Balìa in 1444, and then as Accoppiatore by the Signoria in 1458, epitomizes his gradual ascent within the regime to the positions of highest trust and

responsibility, until he himself was one of those who judged whose name was to be included as eligible for office.

Election to office thus acts as a more accurate guide to status in the regime, though this, too, was subject to unpredictable variations. Ambassadorial missions had no set period of duration and might arise at any moment, being dependent on the diplomatic situation. Palmieri's election in 1452, 1455 and 1458 owed at least something to the military and political problems of the Italian peninsula. While he was drawn as a member of the Conservatore delle Leggi in 1457, the regulations surrounding this office had been changed by 1459, when he was elected to this same position. Similarly, in 1462, the Otto were elected, yet Matteo had sat on this magistracy twice before when members were drawn. The point is that there was no fixed number of jobs which required staffing; and as the numbers changed, so did the demands for responsible citizens. As a result, the act of election tended to indicate the immediate attraction of a particular candidate, rather than either the scrutinies, which indicated more broadly which candidates were acceptable for office, or the next stage of actually being drawn for office. This is the real significance of Palmieri's repeated election in these years, that he was considered by the ruling group of citizens to be the best candidate available for the senior positions that arose. As a result, Matteo's election by the Signoria twice in 1458, and by the Council of One Hundred in 1459, again in 1460 and yet again in 1462 indicates his highly elevated position in the regime.

Pratiche, 1450-1465

Having observed in the early part of Palmieri's career that the importance of the contributions he made in the *pratiche* tended not to correspond with the important offices he was holding, it will be interesting to examine how this situation altered as Palmieri increasingly occupied key magistracies, and was seen to be one of the leading figures in the regime.

The speeches to be examined are those in which Palmieri put forward some definite idea, and at some length. This enables his thought to be both followed and compared with that of the other leading citizens. On numerous occasions, as already remarked, Palmieri agreed with a proposition moved by someone else; and while an examination of these might show Palmieri's political allegiance, it would not show his own thought and terms of reference, which above all shed light on him as a politician and humanist. The dangers of concentrating on long speeches, lest these simply be an "accident" of recording, have already been tackled.

In May 1453, a *pratica* was called to debate whether to introduce taxation. While Matteo's speech was not in itself particularly distinctive - it made no novel contribution to the discussion - it is worth drawing attention to his continued interest in taxation, and to his readiness to support the arguments adopted by the politically most influential citizens who governed Florence. Orlando de' Medici opened the

discussion by observing that the government had brought order and "status" to the citizens (162). He went on to say that taxation was irksome, but that public utility should be put before private convenience, and advised that some members of the colleges and some citizens should meet to decide how best to raise money. He concluded by saying that the citizens were to be preserved in union because in that way the republic would be preserved. Angelo Acciaiuoli then urged the citizens to remain constant in times of adversity, assuring them that taxation was unpleasant, but reminding them that the means for obtaining peace did not lie in Florentine hands (163). Thus taxation was the lesser of two evils ("minus malem est") and that fair ways of levying it were to be investigated so that liberty would be upheld. Five other speakers then commended these words of Angelo Acciaiuoli, and suggested that everyone should contribute to the taxation (164). Palmieri then interwove various of these strands, commenting that it was most necessary for all citizens to pay the tax, and that they should work to preserve liberty (165). On a different note, he observed that every care should be taken for the men at arms to be in top condition, so that the Florentines would emerge victorious in war, and so that peace could be reached more honorably and more speedily. He said he agreed with Angelo and suggested that a method of taxation should be devised whereby the purses of the citizens would yield as much as possible. Matteo was the first to raise the point about the condition of the soldiers and the reaching of peace, which linked very closely liberty and taxation. To pay for the soldiers it was necessary to levy taxes; the soldiers would then fight to preserve Florence from foreign rule - that is, to preserve liberty in Florence. In this debate nobody disagreed, or even suggested any alternative, so that Palmieri's support of Angelo and

Orlando was hardly revealing of his political preferences. After all, freedom from foreign interference was so fundamental to the independence and political life in Florence that taxes could not be denied if this liberty were threatened.

Matteo's next major political speech occurred almost a year later in March 1454. His time as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia therefore passed without him delivering a prolix oration in the *pratica*; or if he did so, it was not recorded. This time, the discussion was centred on the diplomatic and military relations with both Naples and Rome. King Alfonso of Naples had advanced into Tuscany. The leading Florentine citizens did not want war, and sought to avoid it as best they could; yet they were not prepared to settle for peace while Alfonso retained the castles that he had captured. Ambassadors had been sent to Rome to negotiate, but had been rebuffed in such a way that it seemed most improbable that peace would be found through that channel. In a previous debate, many of the *principalii* had eventually agreed that the decision whether to conclude peace should be left to the Dieci (166). Matteo was not present at that debate. The second debate started from a different position; it was less a question of whether to make peace, but more of whether to recall the ambassadors sent to Rome. Speaking first, Domenico di Leonardo Boninsegni proposed that one of the two ambassadors in Rome should stay in Rome, and the other be recalled, for they were neither useful nor brought honour to the republic (167). Next to offer his opinion was Mariotto Lippi, who suggested that provisions for war should be made without delay, because the peace talks were nothing but a deception (168). Franco Sasseti then observed that it was essential for the honour and utility

of the republic that the ambassadors be recalled as soon as possible, unless the Neapolitans wanted peace, in which case, they should stay, for peace would quickly be agreed (159). Matteo spoke next, and began by outlining the acceptable conditions for peace (170). He declared that no peace should be made unless the castles that had been taken were handed back to the Florentines. And if this were not done, then this constituted not a state of peace, but one of war. In this case, the ambassadors should return, so that no deceit could be practised on the city. Meanwhile, letters should be written to them to inform the pope that Florence was seeking either a just, honourable and secure peace or else open war. However, the above mentioned matters should be put to the Dieci for them to judge and decide. This summed up appositely the feelings of everyone there, including the most senior members of the reggimento, who had not hitherto spoken. Among these were Luigi di Lorenzo Ridolfi, Giovanni Bartoli and Antonio Lenzi, but more significantly, Cosimo and Piero de' Medici, Angelo Acciaiuoli, Luca Pitti and Dietisalvi Neroni (171).

Having seen from the offices that he held that Matteo carried favour with these key figures, it is eloquent proof to find this deduction substantiated by a speech in the *pratica*. What Palmieri had to say in itself was not novel; he adopted neither a radical new position, nor made a brilliant compromise or selection. He simply restated the case in a lucid manner, pointing out the need to know whether the republic was to face war or peace. In addition, the speech provides another example of Palmieri's debating technique of presenting starkly two alternatives, thus focussing attention on the advantages and disadvantages of each, and

eventually requiring a decision to be taken. Presumably these were some of the qualities which were valued in Matteo by the leading citizens, and which led to Matteo's frequent tenure of high office. It is also interesting to note that, as on a previous occasion, Matteo wanted the decision to be taken by a more formally constituted body than a *pratica*. Here it is noticeable that Matteo does not indicate openly which path he prefers, thus giving complete competence and responsibility to the Dieci. Although they were elected to cope with such situations, they might legitimately have expected a *pratica* to have offered advice.

As it happened, this speech did not cause the Florentine republic too much heart searching. Two days later, it was related in a *pratica* that the peace talks had failed, and that now it was merely a question of how to raise money in order to continue the war (172). Agreeing with others, Matteo thought that the Dieci should oversee this matter. Despite this important speech, Palmieri did not feel sufficiently encouraged, or was not encouraged, to offer his opinion so freely on other occasions. He often attended the meetings, though was not present at every single one (very few, if any, citizens were). Owing to his ambassadorial mission to Naples, and to his Vicariate in the Mugello, Matteo was less in evidence during 1455, but reappeared late in 1456.

In a debate on September 2, 1456, the citizens present were united in their opinion that it was necessary to introduce new measures and possibly a *Balia* to cope with the terrible disorder in the city. Considerable differences in attitude were, however, expressed, ranging from Giovanni Bartoli who said "*auctoritas limitata*" should be granted to



a Balia, and then only for a short period of four months (173). Tommaso Soderini on the other hand felt that "non solum balia, sed omnia facienda sunt pro conservatione libertatis et status ...et laborare debemus pro conservatione libertatis ..." (174). Giovanozzo Pitti displayed his concern over the use of Balie, but recognised that there was little else to be done: "exosum est populo naturam balie, tamen omnia facienda sunt pro conservatione libertatis. Et necesse est eam facere, quia nisi provideatur, per malum viam vadamus..." (175). Palmieri likewise saw that the continued well being of the republic necessitated unpopular measures. Without extrapolating too much, it is clear that he, too, saw the good of the state as possessing a higher priority than pleasing the people:

"hortor ne loquamur de balie, sed de auctoritatis, qua omnibus provideatur. Naturam balie exosum est, detur auctoritas salutaris rei p. quod est necessarium propter tempora quae incurrunt" (176).

In effect, this is a reflection, in different circumstances, of the attitude he adopted to electoral controls in 1449; that is, that nothing should detract from the authority of the state, not even if the measures to protect it were unpopular. It is curious to note that Matteo was not so forceful in his demands as Tommaso Soderini; curious because as a humanist, Matteo might have been expected to adopt an attitude favouring the preservation of "libertas" at all costs. While he certainly did not make concessions, it is equally obvious that neither did he manifest his concern in such an urgent fashion as Tommaso. But then Tommaso had probably deliberately chosen to phrase his words forcefully, given the still less demanding speeches of those preceding him. Giovanni Bartoli's moderate speech has already been summarised, and he was followed by Giuliano Partiano, who thought "baliam populus non recipiet, maxime cum sumus in tempore pacis ...pecuniis provideatur per viam honestam et

iustam" (177). His disapproval of the use of Balie was therefore made quite plain. Moreover, it sets in sharp relief the strength of Palmieri's beliefs about the need to uphold order in the city through a centralised public authority.

Palmieri's support for a strong central authority over and above that of the wishes of the Medici regime emerges strikingly in the debates held over the future of the Parte Guelfa and the funding of the Five of Pisa in the summer of 1459. Two basic and separate points were at issue, and the leading citizens had linked them in a fashion which caused them major difficulties. The Five of Pisa had never received an adequate, continual source of finance, and lurched from one makeshift measure to another (178). Quite independently, in 1459, a plan had been developed to abolish the Parte Guelfa, now an anomaly in the Medicean system of government. This project had been most unpopular and had failed to pass the Council of the People. Still anxious to reduce its importance, a new formula had been proposed whereby the Parte's income would be taken to pay for the expenses incurred by the office of the Five in Pisa. Thus the Parte would be shorn of its honour and status, and at the same time the Five would be satisfactorily financed (179). By rejecting this measure, too, the Council of the People stimulated the leading citizens to debate further in a *pratica* of June 9, 1459.

As a result of his experience as a Sea Consul, Matteo had emphasized in the two previous debates the need to equip the triremes satisfactorily, and the necessity of finding the money to do so (180). Both these points had been accepted, and Matteo was now concerned to

enable this provision to pass through the Council of the People. While other citizens generally expressed themselves in favour of maintaining the boats, none tackled the problem of how to ensure the passage of the bill. Palmieri saw three obstacles standing in its way. The first was that it was feared that an old and revered institution of the city, that is, the Parte Guelfa, would be removed; the second was that hitherto sailing had not been well provided for; and third was the fear that the Parte Guelfa captains would be elected by the Council, and so drawing by lot in the traditional manner would disappear for them as it had for the Sea Consuls. Matteo then went on to suggest that either the will of the majority should be followed, or else the office should be disbanded. To follow the majority would cost more, but this should be done rather than abolishing the Sea Consuls. He concluded by saying that he thought that the money could be found (181). Thus he never considered a solution that would have acted to the detriment of the Parte Guelfa; this is to say, he supported implicitly the stance adopted by the Council of the People, and disagreed with the Medici position.

This speech shows no sign of having influenced those who followed him in the debate. Both Leonardo Bartolini and Giovanni del Barberia referred to Francesco Ventura's exposition of the previous day. Meanwhile Francesco Ventura had changed his mind, and was no longer certain that it was a good idea to take 1,000 florins from the Parte Guelfa when the Sea Consuls needed 3,000 florins (182). As a result the discussion shifted to cover the Parte Guelfa in order to establish whether it was sensible to take some of its revenue. While nobody actually disputed Palmieri's premises, the others present simply focussed

their attention on another aspect of the problem. Presumably they did so because they thought that an adequate solution had been found, or else, which is more likely, because they considered the Parte Guelfa to be a more major concern.

The next debate on the matter is undated, and probably did not take place immediately after the previous one. Not only is there no mention of any earlier discussion, but in addition the perspective adopted by the majority of the participants is quite different from the earlier meeting (183). A broad consensus had been reached that the Canal Officials would lend at least part of the money needed to pay for the city's shipping ventures. Part too would come from taxes, and part from auctions (184). Interest in the future of the Parte Guelfa had meanwhile dwindled considerably. The soundness of Palmieri's judgement can be seen in this result. He had never supported the Mediceans in desiring to close down the Parte Guelfa, stressing instead the need to equip the city's boats. He was similarly certain that somehow the money could be found to do this. There is no evidence to suggest that his view was deliberately followed, or that it directly influenced the citizens present at the debates. Much more probable was that he had simply spotted what was essential, practical and justified, and that in the end this was all that could be achieved. All the same, it highlights the political wisdom which could be found from time to time in Palmieri's political contributions.

Palmieri's next recorded participation in a debate was on November 1, and the issue was once again the need to find money, this time to finance Livorno as well as Pisa. Palmieri's attitude had not

changed. He still thought that the citizens should bear the cost of supporting Pisa and Livorno (185). Never keen to interfere in the affairs of the Parte Guelfa, Palmieri certainly did not offer part of their finances to assist in this programme. Others were distinctly less enthusiastic about raising taxes in peacetime. Guglielmo Tanaglia explained the situation: "*difficultatem exoriri improvidendo, quoniam cum sumus in pace existimant cives nullas impensas fieri oportere*" (186). A compromise was suggested by Carlo Pandolfini, who agreed with the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia Giovanni Canigiani that "*non nullis civibus prudentibus una cum magnificis dominis omnia examinent*" (187). This was the approach adopted by most of those present; matters of taxation were not to be rushed. Once again, Palmieri's eagerness to support the Pisan and Livornese officials was manifest, and surprisingly he omitted to consider the tension that would arise in the city as a result of his enthusiasm for taxation.

Nonetheless, Palmieri's judgement was proved correct by later events, and in a debate on November 7, 1459, most of the discussion dwelt on the issue of taxation. Still more significantly, and surprisingly, all present declared themselves in favour of levying further taxes; the differences in opinion were merely over the quantity of money required, and the best means of raising it. Guglielmo Tanaglia felt that one *catasto* should be enough, and stipulated that everybody should be made to pay it, with punishments for those who did not (188). Carlo Pandolfini again stated his preference for further reflection, asking that some citizens, together with the colleges and the Ufficiali della Camera should consider the matter further (189). Giovanozzo Pitti thought that there

were three issues to be dealt with. The first was the debt of the commune, and the second was the business of the Five of Pisa, and the third was the question of how to raise money (190). On the second topic he felt that taxation was "incomodo et molestia", and that there were already many who had not paid old tax debts. The old debts ought to be demanded so that the way would be clear for obtaining payment of the new (191). At this point, Matteo entered the debate, claiming that in this sort of issue, action was needed, not words. Therefore a law should be made, establishing that one *catasto* had to be paid, and inviting those who had not paid, to pay. He added that it was necessary, useful, and honourable for the city to engage in overseas trade, and that both wealth and benefits accrued to the city as a result. Despite stressing the need for action, he stated his desire for a committee of citizens to find some long term solution, and admitted that he felt ashamed that at present there was none (192). Most citizens from then on announced their agreement with the idea of levying a single *catasto*, though their reasons for doing so varied. A few also favoured the introduction of sanctions or incentives to encourage prompt payment (193). But it was not the speech of Matteo which caught the attention of those speaking later, but the opinions of citizens such as Giovanni Bartoli and Dietisalvi Veroni who both spoke after Palmieri, and who advised imposing taxation of one *catasto*. Matteo's contribution added strength to the position finally accepted, but was not seen to have been directly responsible for postulating the final position. None of the later speakers mentioned Matteo's position, though their own stances were close developments of it.

Matteo's final thoughts on the matter were recorded on November 24, 1459. The Five of Pisa who had just finished their term of office were to draw up laws as they saw fit regarding Pisa and Livorno. These were also to cover sailing, and the whole would be sent for approval to the Council of One Hundred, after discussion by several citizens, who would decide whether to amend their provisions (194). Apart from hoping that the Five would work well so that their suggestions would be the more easily accepted, Matteo agreed that a few citizens should examine the recommendations of the Five. Others agreed with this arrangement; evidently Palmieri's views were not always different from or ignored by the other citizens (195).

It is noticeable throughout these debates on the finances and future of the Five that Matteo acted in a very responsible and conscientious way towards the office of which he had been a member. As he no longer traded actively himself, he had no vested interest in promoting the affairs of the Five beyond the satisfaction of seeing Florence's maritime business set in order. The cost of doing so would be borne by him as much as by other citizens, it must be presumed. Yet this was precisely how the short term of office was intended to function, that each official pursued the tasks in hand to the best of his abilities without shirking the difficult decisions which that entailed. Nor yet was Palmieri over zealous. He probably did not see the transferral of the Parte Guelfa's income as a satisfactory solution for the Five, and withheld from expressing an opinion on this delicate issue. After all, he probably revered the Parte Guelfa as an ancient and much valued Florentine institution. The wisdom of this policy can be seen in that

Matteo did indeed hold the office of Captain in the Parte Guelfa some 12 years later in 1471 (196). The blend of dedication with a moderate outlook was well suited to, and possibly cultivated by, the system of rapid rotation of office holding.

This loyalty to office extended also to a loyalty of a more personal nature, even beyond the confines of the republic. In early January 1460, a Perugian ambassador came to Florence seeking the renewal of a military contract. The Perugian Carlo de' Oddi had been a *condottiere* in the service of Florence, and now that he had died Florence was being asked to employ his son in his place. Although the demand sounds uncomplicated, it aroused numerous doubts in the minds of the Florentine ruling group, and a *pratica* was summoned. To some, the major point to consider was cost, and since the republic was trying to reduce its payments, it should not sign a new contract with a *condottiere*, least of all in a period of peace. Manno Temperani and Otto Niccolini were the chief exponents of this view (197). Others felt that certain valuable benefits had been received from Perugia in the past, especially in the war against the King of Naples, and that it made sense to preserve the friendship both of the Oddi family and of the city of Perugia. In this case the cost of 150 florins per month could easily be borne, and the contract should be renewed. Giovanozzo Pitti and Giovanni Bartoli supported this stance (198). Others again tried to find a compromise, suggesting that less should be paid, or that Carlo had been employed as a means of honouring Perugia rather than out of necessity, and so there was no obligation on Florence to renew the contract. But the compromise



proposed did not find any support, and the *principali* were clearly divided (199).

At this point, Matteo spoke, and he obviously felt torn between the two camps. First of all, he stated his understanding of the problem: "*utrum ne prestat utilitati cedere an potius honestati*" (200). Once more, his method of classifying by opposites was at work, as he presented the alternatives. He then commented without very much conviction: "*sepius accidere ut utilitate quam honori consulatur, et quia videt maiorem partem ita sentire, cum ea se concordam esse dixit*". Thus because a majority felt that the cost was more significant than maintaining the bond of friendship, Palmieri sided with them; or at least this is the justification that he offered for joining the majority. Yet given the way he continued his speech, he himself certainly was not convinced. He proceeded by reminding those present that he had acted as ambassador to Perugia, and went on to recount stories testifying to the loyalty and bravery of the Perugians. "*Videvit cives omnes ita animatos ad honorem et utilitatem civitatis Florentie ut magis esse non posset*". And when the King of Naples asked for his army to be allowed to pass over Perugian land:

*"Perugini domini omnino transitum denegarunt et detrimenta multa in eorum agris passi sunt quia transitum non concesserunt, et inter ceteros Guido de Oddis et Nellus Baglionius claudi fecerunt portus urbis ut milites regii excluderentur"*.

Finally Matteo explained that this was "*ut fidem faciat veritatis ...et ideo gratam rem esse si absque magno dispendio civitatis illis placeretur*". In effect, this counters his earlier remarks, either placing him in the other camp, or at least leaves him voting both ways at once. However strongly

Matteo felt his duty was to reduce costs, he was convinced that there was another side to the question, that the Perugians had proved constant in time of need, and that no less a person than Guido de' Dotti had himself acted to fend off the Neapolitans. That he might have been acting from self interest was not an interpretation considered by Palmieri. The portrayal of the Perugians is also redolent with personal reminiscences rather than with rational argument. But doubtless if this speech were expanded a little, and placed in the hands of a more than competent orator, the message would be communicated most powerfully.

The next speaker, Luigi Guicciardini, thought that the contract should be signed in order to avoid upsetting the Perugians. Recognising himself to be among a minority favouring this course of action, he proposed that a committee be set up to decide the matter (201). Antonio Lenzi agreed with him (202). Guglielmo Rucellai was not impressed by Luigi's arguments, and declared that the contract should not be signed, claiming that it would create an awkward precedent if hereditary contracts were introduced. He accepted, however, the idea that a committee should review the matter (203).

It is interesting to observe that in this debate Palmieri met some difficulty in reconciling the various demands made on his political acumen. He initially considered his loyalty to the majority to be his first priority, and probably supported them because of the attractiveness of cutting costs. Yet the thought of denying a contract to the *condottiere* who had acted so bravely on Florence's behalf and, more importantly, of breaking the close bond of friendship with Perugia for him acted as a

strong incentive to spend money and not to save it. Hence neither the majority nor the reduction in spending in the end proved powerful enough reasons for refusing the contract. Nor, presumably, did he consider it appropriate to refer the matter to the Signoria. Moreover, it is interesting to see that he was bold enough to remain faithful to his convictions, despite recognising that the majority of the citizens present were opposed to his view.

Palmieri was present at an important debate two months later where it was discussed whether to pay to the pope the levy that he had demanded in order to wage war against the Turks. A second question was also raised of how to respond to the Genoese who claimed that some Florentines had captured and pillaged some of their boats. Besides seeking compensation, they wanted to be assured that these Florentine bandits would be brought to justice (204). It is striking that on this occasion a number of the *principali* felt that the pope's demand amounted to an intrusion on the city's liberty, and that therefore the tax should not be paid or, at least, not immediately. What particularly irritated the citizens was that no other city had been asked to raise money via this tax of one tenth on the clergy, and so they felt that it was a deliberate move to fleece the republic. Palmieri's attitude conformed exactly with that of other leading citizens such as Manno Temperani, Carlo Pandolfini, Giovanozzo Pitti and Otto Niccolini (205). Indeed, there was very little variance on this point, because they were all so enraged by the pope's request, and were determined to withhold payment in the first instance.

On the other issue, that of the Genoese boats, Matteo adopted a much more radical stance, and he did so probably as a result of his experience in the Five of Pisa. Where most of the other citizens present had carefully managed to avoid taking too firm a position, either by suggesting that they write a letter to the Genoese telling them that justice would be done, or else by writing to the Five of Pisa and asking them for further information about the incident, Manno Temperani had started the debate by declaring that if the Genoese boats had landed on Florentine soil, then it was perfectly legitimate for the Florentine men to have pillaged them (206). Nevertheless, he thought it better to find out what had happened first, so as not to cause a scandal. Matteo, too, followed this line: "quando aliqua navis ad terram fertur in tempestatis, vel alio casu, res quo navi sunt ad eos pertinent in quorum agro navis adhesit ..." (207). But this was not the approach favoured by those who spoke after him. Instead the need to involve the Five of Pisa was stressed. Dietisalvi Neroni, for example, wanted to entrust the matter entirely to the Five: "committendum hoc negotium esse quinque vires Pisane civitati" (208). Although Palmieri was simply stating the custom that was normally followed, his attitude did not reveal great political sensitivity, or else he might have urged more caution in the Florentine attitude to the Genoese. Manno Temperani did at least suggest that further inquiries be made before taking a decision, while there is no evidence to show that Matteo said the same. (He may have done so, but it was not recorded; or he may have assumed that this would be understood in any case by his audience). This was one occasion when Palmieri's forthright vision of what had to be done was manifestly different from the other leading citizens, who were more far sighted. If carried through,

his plan would surely have only angered the Genoese all the more, however correct it might have appeared to the Florentines. His desire to uphold the republic's rights in the short term outstripped an awareness of Florence's interests in the longer term. Visible from time to time, this lack of perspicuity contrasted sharply with the more cautious approach that he usually adopted.

Palmieri certainly spoke more often during the debates in the period after the year 1450 than he had done in the period preceding it. Not only did he speak more frequently, but he repeatedly succeeded in winning support among the citizens present for his point of view. Nevertheless, his opinion did not always prevail, even when supported, and occasionally he found himself alone in maintaining a particular stance. Moreover, Palmieri's views oscillated between support for the Medici - as during his period as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, and over the diplomacy with Naples and Rome in 1454 - and implicit opposition to their policies, as over the Parte Guelfa. Even when based on experience, Matteo's advice was not consistently reliable. While his support for the Five of Pisa turned out to be well founded, his approach to the problem of the Genoese boats was not. Yet despite the occasional variation, Palmieri's advice was usually restrained and practicable.

Not until the summer of 1465 was Palmieri recorded as making any very significant contribution to the *pratiche*. As Captain of Pistoia in 1460, he was not physically able to attend many debates in Florence, and late in 1460 he was appointed again as one of the Five of Pisa. While a few meetings from 1462 are recorded, one volume finishes in

May that year, and then there is a three year gap until May 1465, when the next volume starts (209).

Palmeri, Activity 1465-1475

After Cosimo's death in August 1464, Matteo's political fortunes changed quite dramatically, and he suddenly became far more active again in the city's affairs. During the last two years of Cosimo's life, Palmieri had held only one office, and that was one of little repute, as one of the *Ufficiali dell'Abbondanza* (210). It was purely an executive office, responsible for the distribution of grain within the city. It was probably during this period that Matteo wrote a large part of the *Città di Vita*, a first draft of which was finished by September 1464 (211). Just before Cosimo's death, Matteo was elected by the Council of One Hundred as one of the *Conservatori delle Leggi* to hold office for three months from September, and then in December 1464, he was drawn for the important and prestigious post of Vicar of Firenzuola (212). Although Piero de' Medici's friendship with Matteo is well attested, it is unlikely that Matteo benefitted from it in receiving this post, because he was drawn for it.

In view of the offices that were to fall to Matteo during the latter half of the 1460s, it is worth drawing attention to the links between Piero and Matteo. Evidence for the friendship comes from several different sources over more than a decade. Probably in the early 1450s, Palmieri dedicated his book the *De Temporibus* to Piero as a token of his friendship (213). In 1455, when he wrote to Piero from Naples, he addressed Piero as "amico singularissimo" (214). Four years later, in 1459, he had asked Piero to ensure that the name of Gabriele Lioni was

included in the bags for the Tre Maggiori (215). Since requests for favours such as this were more usually addressed to Cosimo at this date, Matteo's choice of Piero most probably signifies their close ties. Less direct, but indicative all the same, was the fact that both Piero and Matteo were executors for the will drawn up by Tommaso Soderini in March 1461 (216). Doubtless there were many further connections, too, but no concrete signs of them remain.

In September 1465, that is, a year after the death of Cosimo in August 1464, opposition had begun to manifest itself to the Medici's system of governing, and had taken the electoral controls as the point of departure for this opposition. These controls had been the lynchpin of the Medici's success in vetting the membership of the Florentine *reggimento*. The opposition had continued slowly, but with ever increasing intensity, and first reached a peak in November and December 1465, when Niccolò Soderini was Gonfaloniere di Giustizia. In September, it had been agreed that the names for the Tre Maggiori were to be drawn from the bags by lot, marking a partial return to the republican practices of before 1434 (217). But this was to win only part of the battle, for the names themselves had been selected for the bags by pro-Mediceans. Thus a new scrutiny of the Florentine citizens would have to take place if all vestiges of Medici influence over the screening of citizens for the Tre Maggiori was to be removed. This had already been agreed in November 1465, and was started in December (218).

That this anti-Medicean feeling remained a powerful force in the city was revealed when the news of Sforza's death reached Florence in



March 1466. Money which had been granted in previous years to Milan to help maintain their armed forces and friendship was held to be an unjustified expense, seeing that Milan was no longer threatened, and in mid May, a decision was taken not to grant the subsidy (219). An initial conciliatory measure of reducing the sum from 60,000 to 40,000 florins was hence overturned. The denial of this money to the Medici's closest foreign ally represented a severe blow, particularly following as it did the attempts to undermine the electoral controls. In an effort to contain the opposition, a pact had earlier been sworn on May 8 in the chapel of Palazzo Vecchio; whereby 150 citizens, all either highly regarded in the regime, or else "veduti o seduti" for the Tre Maggiori pledged their allegiance to the republic over and above that to factions (220). While this would constitute an impressive display of loyalty if no other document existed, it rather lost its impact when an anti-Medicean pact was underwritten less than three weeks later (May 27) by some 400 signatories (221). The scrutiny had been finished by this date, and became law on May 31, the latest in a line of actions directed against the Medici.

At the beginning of May 1466 Matteo took office in the magistracy of the Otto di Guardia, having been elected by lot (222). Yet after only a month in this office, he was elected by the Council of One Hundred to a still more senior post, this time to act as Florentine ambassador to Rome (223). As ambassadors had to receive the approbation of the Cento before being permitted to undertake their diplomatic mission, there was evidently broad support for him within the *reggimento*.

In Rome, Palmieri had the unenviable task of trying to persuade the pope to repay some of the debts owed by his predecessors to Florentine bankers. He also had to ask the pope to lift the ban he had imposed on Florentine merchants; this ban prevented merchants who traded with the Turks from receiving communion. Although Piero wanted money in order to subsidize Galeazzo Maria of Milan, the money he wanted to obtain from Rome probably was not directly linked to this plan, for Piero had lost his position as banker to the papacy thanks to Pius' preference for dealing with Sieneese bankers. It seems more likely that at this time of unrest in Florence Piero wanted to try to pacify the merchants, and to reduce the scale of the opposition to the Medici regime. For Matteo to have been chosen to undertake this embassy indicates quite how much Piero trusted in his friend at a time when it was essential for Piero to find a loyal supporter to accomplish this diplomatic mission (224).

Palmieri returned from Rome in early August 1466. Piero was still troubled by the opposition of Niccolò Soderini, Dietisalvi Neroni and Angelo Acciaiuoli and by the threat posed by the soldiers of the Marchese of Ferrara. He eventually succeeded in overcoming the internal opposition in September 1466, and exiled the leaders, subsequently choosing Palmieri as one of the ambassadors whose task it was to impart the news to the various Italian city states. Thus in late September 1466 Matteo was elected by the Cento to go to Bologna (225). Matteo's record of holding office over the first two years of Piero's leadership was most impressive. While for some of these positions luck did play a role, it is significant that on two occasions during 1466 Matteo was elected by the

Council of One Hundred to the honourable and prestigious role of ambassador.

As some of the formerly influential citizens were now in exile, Palmieri's standing within the ruling group seems to have risen noticeably, and he continued to receive high political office. In January 1467, he was elected as ambassador again, this time to go to Milan but, because of a combination of bad weather and ill health, he declined the commission (226). However, he was shortly afterwards elected by the Cento to the Otto, and accepted this job (227). During the year, the Otto, with the approval of the Cento, were augmented by two members, and received extra powers, becoming the Dieci. Indeed, it was while he was a member of this magistracy that he was sent a year later in February 1468 as an ambassador to Rome to assist with the negotiations for the renewal of the Italian league (228). Although unable to achieve a breakthrough in the stalemate that obtained in Rome, he was not esteemed any the less by his colleagues as a result. This can be deduced from the election in June 1468 of Matteo to perform again as an ambassador (229). On this occasion, he was asked to resolve some territorial differences in the Lunigiana, but he refused the embassy on grounds of ill health. He was suffering from gout, and could ride a horse only with difficulty and pain (230). It is likely that his illness and unwillingness made him a less attractive candidate for office, and he did not hold another of these senior ambassadorial posts while Piero lived.

From the receipt of these offices it might appear that Matteo was close to the centre of government in Florence yet,

surprisingly, there is remarkably little indication of the role that he played there. In the correspondence from the Milanese ambassador in Florence to the Duke of Milan, a list or sometimes a mention was made of the most influential citizens. Matteo did not normally feature among those named, though without doubt he knew many of them well and mixed with them in government. For example, in February 1465 when Matteo was Vicar at Firenzuola, the ambassador, Nicodemo Tranchedini, wrote:

"questa sera se adunarono in palagio M(esser). Angelo Azaioli, M. Carlo (Pandolfini), M. Otto (Niccolini), M. Bernardo (Corbinelli), M. Johanozo (Pitti), M. Luysi (Guicciardini), Francho Sachetti, Johan Canigiani, Angelo de Stufa, M. Marmo (Tomacello, the Neapolitan ambassador), et Antonio de Puzo, per ordine del Magnifico Piero; et mandarono per me ..." (231).

This was clearly an informal meeting of the sort that guided politics in Florence, and the key participants were there. Of these, Matteo probably knew well and was friendly with Franco Sachetti, Luigi Guicciardini and Carlo Pandolfini, in addition to Piero.

Indications that Palmieri was close to the ruling group come not only from the offices to which he was elected, but also from his occasional appearance in these lists. He was, for instance, one of the Dieci di Balìa, who together with "dignissimi cittadini" met and accompanied Galeazzo Maria Sforza on his visit to Florence in July 1467. According to one testimony, Palmieri attended a "parlamento" with about 40 other citizens at Piero's home, while Galeazzo Maria Sforza was present, where doubtless affairs of state were openly discussed (232). But it must be said that notice of Palmieri's inclusion was the exception and not the rule; he was probably not a member of the inner ruling circle. The absence of Palmieri's name from similar evidence available for the

earlier period likewise suggests that he was not one of the most influential citizens.

After refusing the embassy to the Lunigiana in July 1468, Matteo was drawn "a mano" to be Prior for November and December 1468 (233). In November 1468, while sitting as a Prior, Matteo was elected as one of the 20 tax officials. His colleagues in this latter office were not, by and large, politicians of the first rank, although the job clearly carried a certain responsibility with it. Of the 20, 8 later sat on the Balìa of 1471, and three more belonged to families who had members on this Balìa (234). In addition, Matteo was drawn, and then approved by the Council of One Hundred, as one of the officials on the *catasto* committee in August 1469 (235). If these financial offices were not among the most prized or demanding in Florence, they were still counted as senior and important posts, whose deliberations would affect the political and economic life of the city in an obvious manner.

In 1472, Benedetto Dei put Matteo among the "terza ischuada de rriposarsi", which suggests that Matteo may have been withdrawing gradually from the ruling group (236). The ill health that had caused Matteo to refuse two embassies may have led Dei to believe this. Leonardo Dati, a long standing friend of Palmieri's who, at some stage in the late 1460s or early 1470s, wrote an outline of Matteo's life, observed "valitudine firma usque ad senectutis principium; postea vero interdum feбри vexatus usque ad mortis periculum laboravit" (237). In July 1469, Matteo composed a new draft of his will (238). An earlier version had been drawn up in June 1467, to update a still earlier copy of May 1458

(239). It seems, therefore, that Matteo in these years was suffering from inconsistent health, and certainly he did not accept ambassadorial office so readily as before. The drafts of his will hint that Palmieri had started to turn his mind towards his own mortality, which could well have been a consequence of poor health. Yet there are no other signs that he was participating less actively in the republic's offices.

On the death of Piero, it was feared that the stability of the Florentine republic would be threatened again, though this time none of the key politicians was so bold as to try to snatch control from the Medici (240). According to one keen observer of Florentine politics, Tommaso Soderini, the most able of the leading citizens, did not have popular support, while Luigi Guicciardini, the man whose reputation stood highest in the city, lacked the intelligence (241). Moreover, the precedents of Piero's succession, and the failure of the determined opposition in 1466 will have served to discourage rather than to stimulate any potential coup. Sacramento Sacramori, the Milanese ambassador in Florence, described the people most likely to take Piero's place in Florence, and came to the conclusion that for various reasons, none was in a suitably strong position:

"questi altri," he continued, "como è Agnolo de la Stuffa, Bernardo Corbinello, et de quella conditione, che sono insanguinato nel stato (che sono assai), vanno a bon camino e de la Excellentia Vostra et d'esso Lorenzo" (242).

Matteo could probably be counted among this group, for he was certainly "insanguinato nel stato" and had demonstrated his loyalty to Piero and Cosimo, with never a shadow of doubt being cast on his allegiance. But he lacked popular support, probably the ambition, and possibly also the

political intelligence to make a bid for the foremost political power. His inconsistent state of health may additionally have made it difficult for him.

Nonetheless, it is clear that Matteo's views were thought desirable, not only by Lorenzo and by the other members of the ruling group, but also by Galeazzo Maria Sforza. In March 1470, as a result of the King of Naples' refusal to accept the proposals for peace forwarded by the Duke of Milan, Galeazzo Maria wrote to his ambassadors in Florence, and instructed them to discuss the matter with numerous of the influential citizens. He wrote:

"volemo che ritrovatevi con quella Signoria et con li infrascripti cittadini, cioè Lorenzo de' Medici, d.Aloyso Guizardino, Jacomo Guizardino, d.Thomaso Soderino, d.Carlo Pandolfino, Matheo Palmeri, Johanne Canigiano, Angelo de la Stufa, Bernardo Corbinelli, BonJohanne Gianfigliazo et Jacobo di Pazi..." (243).

However, the ambassadors reacted by calling together Lorenzo de' Medici, Luigi Guociardini and Tommaso Soderini as "boni amici et servidori" of the Duke, and as the most influential citizens in Florence. Of the other citizens "che scrive Vostra Signoria" not all were considered "tutta volta" friends of the Duke. Given Matteo's loyal support for the Medici regime, he was probably favourably disposed to Milan (244). It is interesting to observe that here Palmieri is placed together with Angelo della Stufa and Bernardo Corbinelli, confirming that he was one of those who was "insaguinato nel stato".

Matteo's proximity to Lorenzo appears again shortly afterwards. This time, he is mentioned as one of the members of the *pratica* who, in the opinion of Sacramoro Sacramori, the Milanese ambassador, besides

supporting Milanese interests, and Lorenzo, also acts as a leader, influencing others with his views. Together with Luigi and Jacomo Guicciardini, Giovanni Canigiani, Giovenco della Stufa and Bernardo Buongirolamo, Matteo is named as one who unreservedly supports Milan, and who not only guides the opinions of others, but who also reproves those with different views (245). It appears that Palmieri was one of Lorenzo's most loyal and senior supporters, and was concerned to ensure that he succeeded in maintaining political control of the city.

Moreover, while Lorenzo was consolidating his place in the republic, Matteo was elected one of 40 citizens (ten from each quarter) who would form the core of a new Balìa of 240, and who would choose another 200 citizens to sit on the council (246). Likewise from San Giovanni were Lorenzo and Pierfranco de' Medici (247). According to the Milanese ambassador, these forty citizens were "designati per Lorenzo" (248). Lorenzo had so much faith in the strength and integrity of character of these 40 that in the other 200 he included some of the opposition to avoid "schandolo" (249). This caused the Milanese ambassador Sacramento Sacramori a certain amount of anxiety knowing "la astucia et mala volontà de molti", and Lorenzo had to explain to him "questi tali sono così pochi in tanto numero, che non potranno, et tanto mancho quando l'auctorità se redurrà in quelli primi quaranta et li cinque accoppiatori ..." (250). Whatever the practicalities of the situation were, Lorenzo obviously appreciated, among others, the talents and the air of experience and distinction that were seen to belong to Matteo.



Besides this duty, Palmieri became one of the Parte Guelfa captains later in the year, a position of ceremonial importance and dignity even if no longer of great political stature (251). A job requiring rather more political acumen was that of Vicar in a subject town, and Matteo was drawn for his second term as Vicar of the Valdinievole in December 1471, a position both prestigious and lucrative (252). It is from Pescia in the Valdinievole that in March 1472 the first surviving letter of Matteo's to Lorenzo was written (253). Lorenzo had written to Palmieri, asking him to reinstate an outlaw. With considerable tact, Palmieri explains his unwillingness to obey Lorenzo's instructions. In the first place, an outlaw should not be reinstated on the authority of the city's governor when others have decreed the sentence. Besides, the man still had enemies in Pescia, and Palmieri wished to avoid "scandolo". Furthermore, Matteo pointed out that the Otto in Florence were competent to revoke the sentence, and that before taking the step of revoking the sentence himself which, in the last resort, he was prepared to do, he wished to have further confirmation of Lorenzo's decision. Palmieri, the experienced elder statesman, is cautioning the young and inexperienced Lorenzo against any rash action but, at the same time, he is disposed to carry out whatever Lorenzo instructs him to do. It has already been observed that Matteo's unstinting support and "savissimo consiglio" were valuable to and appreciated by Lorenzo, and this letter provides a concrete example of these qualities (254).

Matteo's intimacy with Lorenzo resulted in him being asked on numerous occasions to secure favours from Lorenzo. As a consul of the Merchants' guild which had a benefice to bestow, Luca Capponi was seeking

to give the benefice to a priest who was currently a member of his own household. To improve the likelihood of him being successful, Capponi asked Matteo in June 1472 to recommend the priest to Lorenzo, who would then be in a position to make the name of his preferred candidate known to the consuls of the Merchants' guild. In an effort to exploit personal ties with Lorenzo still further, Matteo's letter of recommendation was to be carried by the priest's brother, Andrea di Comuccio, who himself worked for Lorenzo (255). The line of recommendation was not the most direct - from the letter, it is not certain that Matteo knew the priest - and Matteo's involvement in this everyday episode illustrates how influential a figure he was thought to be by his fellow citizens.

A further example of Matteo addressing requests to Lorenzo dates from this year. It is interesting mainly for demonstrating the loyalty that Matteo retained for his guild, and also for showing the use the guild made of well placed individuals for furthering its cause. The case at issue was whether the Pisan guild of Medici and Speziali should recognise as its superior the Florentine guild of the same name. The Florentine guild thought that they should, and the Pisan not. Owing to this difference of opinion, the matter was due to come before the Florentine Signoria. In order to advance their case, the Pisans had asked Lorenzo for help. The Florentine guild had meanwhile become aware of the Pisan approach to Lorenzo, with the result that Matteo was writing to Lorenzo to ask that he should not favour the Pisans "oltre al debito della ragione", while assuring him that "ogni cosa farai in favore d'essa arte (i.e. the Florentine) riputerò facci a me proprio ..." (256). Success in such an enterprise would not only have confirmed the esteem that the

guild had for Lorenzo, but also caused Matteo to appear as an important person, as someone who had access to the mind and ear of Lorenzo.

By now, the ill health that had earlier been troubling Matteo had either gone, or else he had come to terms with it in such a way that it no longer interfered with his political activities. In 1472, he sat again as an Accoppiatore, and doubtless his experience proved most useful in this office (257). Similarly, his experience will have been valued during his term as one of the Dodici Buonuomini, likewise in 1472 (258). In fact, Matteo seems to have received as many prestigious offices in these years as at any other time. The following year, he was elected by the Council of One Hundred as one of the Conservatori delle Leggi once more, and at the end of the year was specifically requested by the pope to represent Florence in Rome in an attempt to renew the Italian league (259).

In March 1474, Matteo returned to Florence from Rome. The negotiations for renewing the Italian league had not been successful but, more importantly, Matteo had played a major role in ensuring that Lorenzo de' Medici's brother in law, Rainaldo Orsini, succeeded Pietro Riario as the Archbishop of Florence (260). Palmieri left Rome specifically to take up the post of Captain of Volterra, which, as has been noted, was one of the most senior appointments on Florentine territory, equalled only by the Captains at Arezzo and Pistoia, and which was, with them, the best remunerated (261). Following the brutal suppression of the revolt in 1472 in Volterra, the need to find someone capable of governing soundly without stirring up another rebellion must have been felt especially

keenly. Following the bitter conflict between Volterra and Florence, which arose from a dispute between rival factions in Volterra over the distribution of the benefits to be had from the Alum mines, the autonomous status of Volterra was withdrawn and its communal income was stopped, and the town became part of the Florentine *contado*. 76 Volterran citizens were exiled, while those supporting Lorenzo de' Medici were rewarded by being exempted from paying taxes for 20 years and by being given permission to carry arms (262). After 1473, the alum that was discovered in 1470 was no longer mined, denying the town any future prospect of wealth (263). As a result of the trouble in Volterra, the Captaincy was probably the most senior post in Florentine territory at the time, and there was probably considerable relief in Florence that Palmieri had been drawn to act as Captain, given his skilled handling of demanding affairs in Rome.

A number of letters survive from Palmieri's period as Captain of Volterra. Two of them are reports that Matteo made to Lorenzo, informing him of events in and near Volterra (264). A third recommends the renewal of the mercenary Niccolò di Minghione da Marradi's contract (265). A fourth is addressed to the scientist Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli, and relates the peculiar tale of a creature born half lion and half girl. Luca Landucci records the arrival of this letter in Florence, and notes that it aroused considerable interest (266). There exists too a letter sent to Palmieri in Volterra by Marsilio Ficino (267). In addition to providing evidence that the two men were acquainted, the letter is interesting for two other reasons. Firstly, Ficino calls Matteo "theologus", from which it may be inferred that he had read Palmieri's

neo-Platonic poem the Citta di Vita. The significance of this will be explored in a later chapter. Secondly, Ficino is seeking a favour from Matteo, asking him to find employment for his former teacher of grammar, Luca da San Gimignano, who had fallen on hard times. Clearly, Palmieri was viewed not just as an intermediary, but also as a potential patron in his own right.

Early in 1475, the Signoria and colleges debated the reforms proposed for Volterra in the wake of the rebellion in 1472. The Captain of Volterra and 8 "reformatori" had been elected as governors and were charged with reorganising Volterra (268). Matteo may have been involved in these discussions, but his term of office had finished in October 1474 and no mention of the part he played has survived.

Palmieri was elected by the Council of One Hundred to the Otto di Custodia for four months from January 1, 1475 (269). He did not live to complete this term of office, dying in April 1475. His heirs applied to the Priors for special permission to hold a funeral service which would exceed the customary sumptuary regulations (270). This was not a common request, but the Signoria decided immediately to permit an elaborate public funeral, and Alamanno Rinuccini gave a lengthy oration praising Matteo (271). Public funerals had been given for the Chancellors who had died in office, including, therefore, Leonardo Bruni and Carlo Marsuppini. Poggio did not die in office and was denied the honour of a public funeral, while at the time of Accolti's death it seems that attention was focussed on political problems which were seen to be more pressing, and he too was denied a public funeral (272). For Matteo to

have been honoured in this fashion is thus an indication of the extremely high esteem in which he was held in the city for both his political and humanist endeavours; apart from the Chancellors Bruni and Marsuppini no other humanist was honoured in this way, and with the exception of Cosimo de' Medici, no other politician received a public funeral.

Pratiche 1465-1475

Four volumes of the *pratiche* have survived for this ten year period and, as with earlier years, the coverage is somewhat uneven (273). During the first 18 months of recording, two volumes document a number of debates in common, one being a rough copy and the other being the neat copy. The debates in each volume do not correspond precisely, some appearing in only one of the two volumes, and others being summarised in one volume and being reproduced at greater length in the other. Because of the attempts to introduce political reforms in late 1465 and 1466, extensive political discussions took place, and many debates were recorded in the two registers which cover the period from May 1465 to December 1466. Fewer debates were recorded from January 1467 to August 1467 in these registers. By way of contrast, the other two volumes contain relatively little. One is exceptionally short, containing only five debates, and the other records the debates in a peremptory fashion, more or less noting a proposal, and the citizens present who agreed or disagreed with it.

Difficulties first arose when the citizens debated whether to renew the special powers of the Otto di Guardia. In June 1465, the Council of One Hundred had voted against renewing the powers, and in September the matter was aired again in a *pratica* (274). Piero de' Medici had expressed his desire for the powers to be renewed, and Palmieri in September declared himself in favour of the Otto retaining their powers: "potestatem sibi videri necessariam esse" (275). His close political

allegiance with Tommaso Soderini emerges here, for he continued "propter eas rationes quas eleganter Dominus Thomasius de Soderinis explicavit". He was clearly offering his support to the Medici regime. Before delivering his own speech, Matteo had agreed with Franco Sachetti, another of his friends, who had thought that the issue should be presented to a larger group of citizens (276). Both Manno Temperani and Angelo Acciaiuoli considered the powers of the Otto to be excessive, and a number of others either agreed with them or restrained from committing themselves. Few actually wanted to renew the powers of the Otto (277).

The following day, Manno Temperani claimed that the people objected to the name *balia*, and that the Otto should have special powers, but without the name *balia* (278). As most of the citizens agreed with his interpretation, or at least were prepared to accept it, a major confrontation seems to have been averted. Provided that the Otto would still be able to carry out their functions, Matteo was not concerned with the name of their authority: "eam (potestatem) dandam octo viris que sufficiat puniendis reis sine balie nomine" (279). The day before, it had been the function of the Otto that Manno had taken exception to, but now he switched his attention solely to the name, admitting that the (pre 1458) function was acceptable. Palmieri reiterated his support for the Otto's special powers, again confirming his belief in the need for strong authority.

Five days later on September 10, Manno again introduced a debate on the same matter. In addition to repeating his views on the unacceptability of the name *balia*, and his desire to return to the pre



1458 situation, he claimed that the popolo no longer enjoyed liberty because: "marsupia sortium non libera sunt, et hi in quorum sunt manibus omnia habere in sua potestate" (280). To restore liberty, he then called upon the Accoppiatori to resign their posts. In his speech, Palmieri acknowledged that the existing state of affairs regarding the bags was unsatisfactory, but admitted that he did not know how to act for the best: "se non intelligere quid optimum sit". Either the Accoppiatori should be changed or the bags should be closed (281). He was not the only devoted Medici supporter to consider the abandonment of elections "a mano" as the most sensible course. In this, though, he differed from Tommaso Soderini, who reserved judgement (282). From the other speakers in the debate it was clear that both the Accoppiatori themselves and the elections "a mano" had become most unpopular (283). Matteo maintained his support for the power of *balia*, "dandam esse potestatem sine balie nomine" (284). Moreover, he managed to introduce two of his favourite touchstones into the speech. The first was reminiscent of his writings in the Della Vita Civile, and he used it to open his speech, observing that "consilia omnia ad utilitatem publicam referri oportere". This approach based on "utilita" underpins many of Palmieri's political utterances; the only difficulty lies in interpreting it for any given situation. He went on to explain: "...et utile esse ut quam primum provisio expensarum proferatur". Economic considerations were never far away in a city beset by financial problems. A distinct contrast can be found in Francesco Dini's justification. Speaking as an official of the Monte, he advised "propter evitanda pericula provisionem pecuniarum necessariam censuit" (285). While Dini saw the danger to be avoided, Palmieri saw "utilitas publica" as the good to be served; the end result happened to be

identical, but the motivation was different. The second was religious in nature. Palmieri considered "deo autem agendas gratias" because the republic was spending less than it ever would in the future. Whatever the internal problems of the Florentine republic were, for Palmieri God was always watching over and protecting the republic in a broader field of action.

In November, the idea of returning to drawing all offices by lot was debated again, as were numerous other matters affecting the daily running of the city. The stimulus for this was Niccolò Soderini, who had been drawn as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, and who pressed strongly for the reintroduction of the traditional, pre 1434 methods of republican government. Thus in a debate of November 4, 1465, the issues under discussion ranged over drawing the key magistracies by lot, reducing taxation and the abolition of the practice of allowing the Signoria and Otto to judge extraordinary legal cases. Of these three measures, Matteo favoured the introduction of two. Most of those present similarly desired the restitution of elections by lot, and nobody opposed the reduction of taxation. The only other opinion to be recorded on the use of the Otto and Signoria as extraordinary courts was that of Domenico de' Martelli, and he, like Matteo, preferred their retention (286).

At this point, then, it appears that Matteo was disposed to introducing reforms, and did not display either a desire to try extremes, or to abandon the old practices. On the other hand such notable Medici supporters as Tommaso Soderini and Otto Niccolini were rather more circumspect in their approaches, tending to prefer further discussion,

where Palmieri offered advice so that the issue might be resolved more quickly. Regarding the Monte, which faced difficulties in paving, Tommaso Soderini made a non committal statement, noting only that "interea res Montis diligentissime intellecta modum et remedium ostendet ad res ceteras", and Otto Niccolini and Franco Sacchetti thought that the matters should be discussed on another occasion (287). Meanwhile Palmieri suggested at least a starting point for discussion by observing:

"exactiones tributorum relaxandas et remittendas, exactiones ipsas de Monte vix adduci posse ut si tantum reliqui solutis dotibus et pagis ut remitti possint tributa aut ceterae res, quae solutionem adiuvant; tamen si id esset, non esse difficilem aut electionem aut deliberationem" (288).

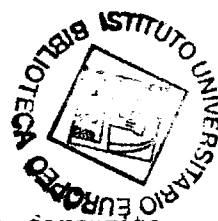
As on other occasions, Palmieri made up his mind according to his assessment of the value of the proposals, and did not stick rigidly to a plan of action that would automatically favour the Medici regime.

The use of rhetorical commonplaces in this debate should perhaps be noted. Domenico Martelli offered the view that "imitari convenire maiores nostros romanos, qui, ut ait Salustius, tribus rebus rem p. auxerunt ..." (289). Dietisalvi Neroni had previously observed "nihil videri, dixit, utilius quam consulere utilitati civium, id contineri tribus rebus ...", which had perhaps triggered off the recollection of this Sallustian quotation by Domenico. Palmieri would surely have agreed wholeheartedly with Dietisalvi, "utilitas civium" being one of his major preoccupations. He himself, however, preferred to rely on a sententious comment:

"benedicere et bene agere due sunt precipue hominum laudes: ex benedictis laudandos qui ante dixerunt quod, si factis quoque constantes erunt multo magis laudandi videbuntur" (290).

But his concluding phrase hardly sits at ease with this opening sentence. For here he commented "prudentiam que ante factum est, laudavit, et penitentiam que est post factum vituperit". His initial exhortation to act in a manner worthy of praise has now been tempered by the demands of "prudentia", requiring some reflection before undertaking an act. To attribute too much importance to these somewhat proverbial utterances would not be wise, yet all the same in Palmieri's case they do bear witness to the desire for a cautious, reflective and morally correct approach to the republic's affairs.

Niccolò Soderini's proposal on 13 November 1465 to introduce a new scrutiny and to admit to the bags all the names of those who had qualified in any one of the scrutinies since 1444 was a far reaching attempt to destroy the electoral system underpinning the Medicean regime (291). It was greeted with considerable reserve, the majority of those present wishing to think the matter over and to discuss it again at a later date. This, too, was Palmieri's attitude. He declared "quoniam autem res nova est et maximi ponderis, mature discutienda, quoniam id imutat quod iam antiquum est" (292). Lest it be imagined that Palmieri had a monopoly on references to God, or the strongest claims to a rhetorical style, it should be pointed out that in this debate Niccolò Soderini rapidly sketched 120 years of Florentine history in order to make his case seem the more powerful. Domenico de' Martelli revealed more of his classical education, this time citing Aristotle. God was invoked by both Antonio Pucci and Mariotto Lippi, while Giovanni Lorini thought the biblical example of Zachariah to be relevant (293). No similar rhetorical touchstone was employed by Matteo in his speech or, at least, none was



recorded. Matteo did, however, make reference to one of his favourite themes, which had lain at the heart of Niccolò Soderini's speech. This was the need to obtain and to preserve civic concord. Perhaps as a result of the stress Niccolò had placed on this concept, Matteo, too, emphasised its importance; indeed, he claimed it was the essential characteristic which maintained and strengthened the republic: "cognovistis autem vos Magnifici Domini concordiam eam esse rem que conservare et augere rem publicam possit" (294). And the means of achieving this "concordia" could be found in Niccolò's proposals, for Matteo continued "quod quidem commodissime id facere posse videtur quod introductum est". He then went on to qualify this with his desire to discuss the matter at a later date - a sure sign that "prudentia" was at work.

Palmieri's reflections on these matters escape us, for he did not attend any of the next four recorded meetings of the *pratica*; and his appearance on November 29 was not distinguished by any notable contribution. Matteo started to adopt a more restrained position, either saying little in the discussions, or else urging caution. Moreover, he attended these meetings less frequently. Whether this was a politically motivated decision, that he considered it a wiser policy to say little and then to join the winning side after the battle, or whether this was a stance taken up out of principle, that he had no wish to contribute to civic discord, is not easy to say. It is also possible that for some unknown reason he was not invited to participate in the debates. During this period, he held no external office, and no evidence has come to light regarding any illness of his, though the evidence for this sort of personal misfortune is hard to find at the best of times.

Absent from the three debates in December, Palmieri reappeared for three meetings early in January 1466, and then vanished again, not being present at any of the other nine *pratiche* held in January. His contributions remained cautious in their content and laconic in their delivery. In the first discussion, on January 2, he thought that even the mention of discord could be harmful to the city, and that the "periculum tempestatis" should be averted, just as Jesus had stilled the waves (295). He did not suggest how this might best be managed, nor did he turn his attention to the need to stimulate commerce and the guilds, identified by Giovanozzo Pitti as the other major concern of the city, and likewise a subject of discussion (296).

Having missed the debates of January 3 and 4, Matteo limited his contribution on January 8 to agreement with Manno Temperani that the scrutiny should be pursued (297). Only Angelo Acciaiuoli voiced any contrary opinion, and that was merely to raise momentarily the doubt that to continue the work for a scrutiny might cause more disruption in the city than to abandon it (298). The following day, Palmieri urged caution in dealing with the scrutiny: "nunc cum intelligam tractari de immutatione aliqua laudare se inquit omnem deliberationem..." (299). In particular, he feared the consequences of including automatically in the new scrutiny all those who had qualified in the last one in 1458. "Nam obtinuerunt de his civibus in 1458, qui postea ob eorum mores et facinora indigni sunt reputati honorum publicorum". He shared this view with Francesco del Benino, who additionally perceived that this law might not be accepted by the Council of the People (300). Both Manno Temperani and Luca Pitti supported unreservedly this clause, which also received backing from

Tommaso Soderini and Luigi Guicciardini (301). In due course, this bill was accepted (302).

Matteo's attendance, though, continued to be sporadic. A debate held on April 1 discussed sending a subsidy of 40,000 florins to Milan. All 44 citizens present agreed to this move, including Manno Temperani, Carlo Pandolfini, Angelo Acciaiuoli, Giovanozzo Pitti, Dietisalvi Neroni and Otto Niccolini. Palmieri, meanwhile, was not present (303). When the issue was debated again on April 9, Palmieri prefaced his speech with view that "io credo che debito a ogni vostro servidore cittadino tractandosi di cosa d'importanza venire a dire suo parere" (304). It accords well with his ideas expressed earlier in the Della Vita Civile and in the *pratiche* relating to the moral duty of participation by citizens in the affairs of state. Palmieri advised that it was wiser to grant the subsidy, not only out of obligation to the Milanese, but also because the failure to do so might embolden the Venetians to undertake some warlike venture. He also thought that Florence was a city rich enough to be able to afford this subsidy: "la citta è ricca, che appare ne' servi, negli edifici privati, ne' vestiti, nelle possessioni" (305). His reasons for wishing to pay the subsidy were based on a more acute political analysis of the situation than that offered by anyone else. Earlier in the debate, vague mention had been made of ties of friendship with Milan, but neither obligation nor the opportunism of Venice had entered the discussion. Matteo's understanding of the city's wealth ran completely against the opinions already expressed by the other citizens present, who considered that there would be major difficulties in raising the necessary sum. Within the group here favouring the grant, and hence

also supporting the Medici regime, it is clear that Matteo valued especially dearly the friendship of Sforza. Indeed, in this case, he esteemed it over and above the other hardships and possible discord that would be caused by the need for taxation. Others speaking after Matteo in the debate followed Matteo's analysis, including Giovanni Lorini, who commented "io non sono senza sospetto de' Veneziani", and Angelo della Stufa, a firm friend of Milan, who averred "non dubbio che disponendoci a volere subvenire nunc è nostro debito. Non dubito che a molti maggior cosa si provederebbe" (306). Evidently, Matteo was not alone in his perception of the Florentine position, and in his support for Milan.

Whatever sympathy Palmieri may have had for the reforms earlier in the year, even though they weakened the grip that the Medici regime had on the system of government, he had abandoned it by this point. As an Accoppiatore, he must have realised the significance of the proposals, but certainly also remembered that no scrutiny had been held for 7 years, while the old Florentine constitution laid down that they were due every 5 years (307). The issue of the subsidy on the other hand dealt explicitly with the friendship of Florence's closest ally. No constitutional question was involved for Palmieri; it was simply a matter of diplomatic sensitivity and of ability to pay. It was also a question which laid bare support for and opposition to the Medici. Even more than the discussions over the scrutiny, Matteo's stance here was not in doubt; perhaps he had realised how determined the opposition was to reduce the influence of the Medici family to at least pre 1434 levels.



There can be little doubt that Matteo was strongly attached to the Medici regime throughout this period. As shown in the debate of April 9, his appraisal of the political situation and of the necessary steps to take was shared by other leading citizens. In another debate on May 12, the same sort of support manifested itself for Matteo's perception of the best move to make. While the issue under discussion was still that of the subsidy, the problem was of a totally different nature. Now the burning question was of how to inform the Florentine ambassadors in Milan that the decision to grant a subsidy had not yet been taken. It appeared probable to all that the decision in the end would be not to grant it, and so there was also some discussion of whether it would not be wiser to recall the ambassadors at this point (308). Opinions ranged from that of Franco Sachetti, who felt that the ambassadors' commission should be prolonged by at least 20 days, and that the subsidy should not be mentioned, to that of Tommaso Soderini, who felt that as the money had been promised, ideally it should be sent, but that the problems encountered in reaching a decision meant that actually the ambassadors should be recalled (309). Matteo adopted a still more finite position, proposing that the money should not be discussed further, that the ambassadors should apologise for the refusal to grant the subsidy, and that they should then return to Florence if Sforza agreed (310). Given his earlier desire to grant the money, this does indeed look like a volte face. Perhaps he saw that by this stage of the discussions there was little hope left of the subsidy being paid, and that it would reflect better on Florence if this were communicated rapidly to Milan. It was tantamount to capitulating to the opposition. Yet his proposals were accepted in full by other Medici partisans such as Ugolino Martelli,

Giovanni Canigiani, Bernardo Antinori, Antonio Taddei and Andrea Guardi (311).

Palmieri received immediately afterwards a demanding embassy to Rome, and made his next appearance in a *pratica* only in September. Nevertheless, he was absent on September 2 when a large number of the leading citizens pledged to refrain from causing "perturbacione della citta" (312). Signing this oath more or less put an official end to the political friction in the city caused by opposition to Piero de' Medici.

Although Matteo continued to attend many of the debates in the years following 1466, his contributions rarely consist of more than a word of agreement. While the *Consulte e Pratiche* registers record Palmieri's continued participation in the highest government circles, they do not record what that participation was. Instead of reproducing the dynamics of the debates with the various speakers and the disagreements between them, the registers often contain a short statement at the start which, besides indicating the subject to be treated, also gives the conclusion reached. This recording was all performed in a very summary fashion, and below this text were recorded simply the names of those agreeing to the measure proposed. Disagreement was rarely noted. Nor did this change at all after Piero's death as Lorenzo took over the reins of government. Indeed, if anything, the tendency accelerated, so that not a single debate was recorded between 30 April 1472 and June 2 1473. In 1468, Palmieri is recorded at five debates which took place within five days in September, but his presence is not recorded at any of the other meetings during the rest of the year (313). The five debates discussed

whether ambassadors should be sent to each member of the Italian league in order to try to preserve the friendship of the members of the league. Palmieri felt that ambassadors should be sent, and introduced his advice with the observation that God said he was working continually to preserve what he had created (314). None of the others present mentioned God. In 1469, Palmieri attended for the first time only in July, whereas in 1470 he was present at 17 debates held on 16 different occasions in 9 different months (315). In 1471, Matteo attended 11 meetings (316). However, he did not attend any in 1472, and just 2 in 1473 (317). His presence is not recorded in 1474 when he was absent from Florence for most of the year, and the arrangements for his public funeral were not discussed in 1475.

From these debates, it is difficult to establish exactly what position Palmieri occupied in the regime. He often seems to have exercised a distinctive independence of thought and expression, and sometimes his views commanded considerable influence among the ruling group. He did not necessarily tailor his speeches either to fit the aims of the Medici regime, or to fit those of any other individual or clique. If he agreed with his colleagues and friends such as Tommaso Soderini, Luigi Guicciardini or Franco Sachetti, it seems as much by chance as by design, and he also expressed his disagreement with them from time to time. Although independent in his alignment, he does seem to have possessed a powerful sense of "utilitas publica", and on numerous occasions, it is clear that he justified his approach by pointing out the advantages to the republic of such a course of action. With the notable exception of the incident concerning the ransacking of the Genoese boat,

Matteo usually showed himself to be at his most sensitive and understanding when basing his speech on his own experience. His attendance was not regular, but then that of very few citizens was.

The crucial point about Palmieri's participation in the political sphere is that he was immensely active. Although fortunate in being drawn for some offices, it should be recalled that his name was placed in the bags solely because of the merit he was seen to possess. Moreover, between 1459 and 1475, he was elected to, or confirmed in, office on no fewer than 15 occasions by the Council of One Hundred. As a result of these elections, he was called upon to fulfil diplomatic missions, and to oversee the security of Florence as a member of the Otto di Guardia or of the Conservatori delle Leggi. It is thus obvious that as a politician in his own right Matteo was much valued by the leading citizens; Finzi's supposition that Palmieri remained a humanist to the politicians does not, therefore, seem correct, whatever the value of his concomitant speculation that he was perceived as a politician by the humanists (318).

More than anything else, Palmieri was appreciated as a stalwart supporter of the Medici regime. For this reason, combined with his friendship with Piero, it would appear that he was brought into the innermost group of politicians. In addition, as Vespasiano noted, Matteo's wise counsel was welcomed - it was not enough simply to be trustworthy. Echoing sentiments expressed by Rinuccini in his funeral speech, Vespasiano declared that Matteo was "uomo posato e grave", one of those who "consigliava la sua repubblica con grande maturita" (319). Rinuccini

explicitly referred to Matteo's integrity (320). At a time when the regime was being challenged from within, a reliable, experienced and loyal politician was of enormous value, and after 1465 Matteo was accordingly given some of the most senior posts in the republic. For Palmieri to have been recognised not only by the ruling group as a key politician, but also by the Milanese, is a unmistakeable sign of his ability and importance in Florentine politics. Yet while Cosimo was alive, Palmieri had also held the highest offices, including the posts of Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, and of Accoppiatore. Although holding positions of the greatest prominence more often later in his life, Matteo was no stranger to the top posts. While Palmieri's success in the last 20 years of his life was due to his merits, his initial entry into politics was secured by the highly respectable position established in particular by his uncle, and consolidated by his own talents and his friends.

Palmieri's embassies

Resident ambassadors were still far from the norm in the 1450s. As a rule, ambassadors were sent to treat with a foreign power over a particular problem or set of problems. Their commission was defined, and they possessed no authority to go beyond it. To send an ambassador, therefore, was an indication that there existed an issue upon which agreement, or an expression of an opinion, was sought by one of the two states concerned. And because an ambassador represented the whole republic, only someone thought capable of demonstrating the republic's dignity would be chosen. As a result, it was counted a considerable honour to undertake an embassy.

Perugia, 1452

Palmieri received his first embassy in June 1452 against a background of intense military and diplomatic activity. Once Francesco Sforza was acclaimed Duke of Milan and, at the instigation of Cosimo de' Medici, had acquired the support of Florence, the prevailing system of alliances terminated abruptly. Fearful of a powerful rival, Venice moved against Sforza and so revealed her animosity towards Florence, her erstwhile ally. In opposing Florence, Venice found that she shared a common interest with Alfonso, King of Naples, who was already occupied in trying to build a bridgehead in Tuscany, and promptly the two joined forces against the new combination of Milan and Florence. Although this took place during 1451, it was not until May 1452 that the weapons of

engagement changed from the use of provocative incidents to those of military combat. Venetian soldiers attacked some castles in Lombardy, and a month later, in June 1452, Neapolitan troops renewed their efforts in the southernmost parts of Tuscany.

These events were watched with a wary eye from Florence, and in anticipation of war, the Dieci di Balìa were formed in June 1451. Frightened by the advance of the Neapolitan forces, they wanted to be certain of the friendship and assistance of Perugia, owned by the papacy but in league with Florence. To this end, they elected Palmieri as their ambassador. Whether he was elected in response to the letter received on 21st June 1452 from Alfonso, a letter in which the Neapolitan king declared war on Florence, or whether before, is not entirely clear, but in any case did not alter the contents of his commission (1). If war had already been declared, then the pressure on Palmieri to obtain a favourable reply will have been that much greater.

No evidence survives which throws light directly on why Matteo was thought suitable for this task. He had been one of the 20 more senior men from the *reggimento* chosen to welcome the emperor Frederick III as he passed through Florence on his way to Rome in January 1452, and he had been holding numerous political offices in an indefatigable progression. His oratorical and literary skills were certainly well known; but this was the first occasion on which he was called upon to display them specifically for the benefit of the republic. Moreover, Palmieri had by now reached the respectable age of 46, and in a republic where the

foremost office, that of Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, could not be held by someone less than 45 years old, this was not without its significance.

Matteo left Florence on 23 June, and arrived in Perugia on July 1 (2). It was his duty to make known to the Signoria there the unjust war being waged by the King of Naples, and to ask them "per la buona amicitia et lega" that the enemy "non possino de' loro terreni avere ricepto, passo, vettovaglie, nè comodità o favore alcuno" (3). It would seem that the Perugians had always intended to abide by the league already signed with the Florentines, and by July 4 they had decided to spend up to 1,500 florins for their own defence (4). Florentine concern that the ambassadors of Venice and Naples might have won over the Perugians was thus proved unfounded (5). How far this enthusiasm to ally with Florence was due to the influence of Palmieri is hard to judge, seeing that the two cities were already in league. But it does seem certain that he, in his capacity as a Florentine ambassador, did cause them to act with speed. In addition, the proximity of Neapolitan soldiers will doubtless have stimulated the Perugians to act quickly. In pursuance of his commission, Matteo met with some Perugian citizens, and together they suggested to the Governor that it should be prohibited to give or to sell any food or arms to any soldier or foreigner. This was agreed, and was already in force when the Neapolitan Duke of Sora tried to obtain supplies of food from Perugia on July 13 (6). Not wishing to antagonize unduly the Duke, who was accompanied by 200 horsemen, the Perugians thought it wiser to offer him some provisions. Palmieri's good work suffered a severe setback as pragmatism got the better of principle in this affair. By giving provisions to the Neapolitans, the Perugians were flouting the law they



had just made, and simultaneously revealed how fragile was their link with Florence. Palmieri's embassy was intended to prevent just such an action from occurring and yet, because there were no Florentine soldiers to oppose the Neapolitans, the Perugians found that they had little choice but to help the enemy. In times of war, an ambassador was manifestly no match for 200 horsemen.

In his Annales, Palmieri tried to put the episode in a better light, saying no more than that the Perugians promised "di non dare vettuvaglie", but that "passo non potevano tenere a tante gente" (7). He did not mention that they did in fact give provisions, nor did he see the contradiction in his representation of the Perugian attitude. It seems logical that if they were not able to prevent the enemy's troops from passing, then they could scarcely have been in a position to have withheld provisions from them either. It would appear that the shortsightedness of the Florentine policy was responsible for this state of affairs, and it would not be correct to blame Matteo's inability to galvanise the Perugians into defensive action, or to blame the Perugians themselves. Possibly the Dieci recognised their error, because a few days before Matteo left Perugia, they sent him a bill of exchange for 220 ducats to be paid to the *condottiere* Leone de Terni for his services, and those of 60 foot soldiers (8). By this stage it was too late; Florentine diplomacy had been defeated. The Perugians had given the Aragonese exactly what the Florentines had hoped that they would deny them.

Before they had heard of this incident, the Dieci in Florence were well pleased with the stance adopted by the Perugians, that is, the

one given by Palmieri in his *Annali*. This can be seen from the instructions given to Antonio Ridolfi, who was going to Siena as an ambassador, where they used Perugia as an example to be followed. They wrote "non dubitavamo punto che se facessero (the Sienese) come fanno e Signori Perugini in denegare a quelle genti transito et victovaglie..." (9). Doubtless in Florence some honour reflected onto Palmieri as a result of the Perugians doing as requested, regardless of whether it was really his achievement. In Perugia the matter was viewed rather differently. For there, the Perugians were delighted with Palmieri's embassy, and in addition to a banquet costing no less than 12 florins, they presented him with gifts to the value of a further 49 lire (about 12 florins) (10). By way of comparison, the Duke of Sora had himself received produce worth 10 florins, and provisions for Prince Ferdinando, Alfonso's son in charge of the campaign, had been worth 100 florins (11). Presumably this generosity towards Palmieri had a double significance. In part, it was to symbolize the friendship between Perugia and Florence, and in part it was to show the Perugian appreciation of Matteo's efforts. If nothing else, this was an auspicious start for Matteo.

The military outcome of the mission was not entirely successful, because the Neapolitan army, instead of taking papal Perugia, pushed further north, and took the Florentine Cortona, a much harsher blow altogether (12). Obviously this was a much more sensible course of action for Naples to pursue; to have attacked a papal possession would not have been prudent. From Florentine evidence, there is not the slightest hint of any acclaim or criticism for Matteo after his return on August 8. Only by noting that he continued to hold ever more prestigious

and honourable offices can it be supposed that he was thought to have performed well.

Naples, 1455

In his Annales, Palmieri writes modestly little on his embassies. For the embassy he undertook to Naples, he summed up his mission in a single sentence:

"del mese d'aprile 1455 fu mandato l'ambasciatore a detto papa Calisto et al Re di Raona, per rappresentare la ratificazione della pace et lega sopradette et per altre ragione occorrevono, Matteo di Marco Palmieri" (13).

While accurate as far as it goes, it is a particularly condensed version of affairs, glossing over the numerous problems that were inherent even in this apparently straightforward task. Earlier, in June 1452, Naples had declared war on Florence, and only after lengthy negotiations had peace been agreed at Lodi by Milan, Florence, and Naples' ally Venice in August 1454. Alfonso had refused to join with them unless certain conditions were met. Acceptable terms were finally found in January 1455. This treaty was duly ratified in February, and eventually promulgated in March 1455. The conditions were that Genoa and Rimini were excluded from the treaty because of previous and as yet unforgiven differences. Thus the recent hostility between Florence and Naples had by and large been suspended when Palmieri was sent there in April 1455. Yet Alfonso continued to harbour designs on Genoa, and it was one of Matteo's key duties to persuade the king "con humane parole" to allow the Genoese to go unmolested for the universal peace of Italy (14).

Given the impressive military strength of Naples, that Alfonso was not satisfied with the peace, and that he still wished to advance into Tuscany, it was obvious that this was going to be an awkward

mission to undertake. By 1453, Palmieri had held all the most important posts in the city and had established himself as one of the leading citizens. In 1452, he had been sent as an ambassador to Perugia, and was to visit there again now on his way south. As a result of his powers of oratory, in 1453, he had been asked to give the funeral speech for the Florentine chancellor and man of letters Carlo Marsuppini. This will have brought Matteo considerable esteem, not least because he occupied a position of utmost prominence in this lavish spectacle. Later that year, for September and October, he was chosen "a manc" to be Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, Florence's most coveted political post. It can safely be surmised from Matteo's receipt of these favours that he had earned himself a name in the regime, and now, after terms in the Otto di Guardia in 1453 and as one of the Dodici Buonomini in 1454, he was being favoured again. It is also likely that his humanistic interests and his oratorical ability will have marked him out as a particularly suitable ambassador to send to the appreciative Neapolitan court. The testimony of Vespasiano supports this interpretation, for he noted that the wisdom of Matteo's advice and his literary fame were both highly valued by the ruling group:

"vedutosi nella città quanto valeva ne' sua consigli, avendo a mandare ambasciatori al re Alfonso, mandorno Matheo. Fu assai onorato per la sua fama et delle lettere et dell'essere istimato uomo savio. Et a Napoli in questo tempo erano molti uomini litterati, che avevano buona notizia di Matheo, per avere veduto l'opere sua" (15).

In addition, since Matteo would pass through Rome on his way to Naples, he would become the first Florentine deputed to meet the new pope Calixtus III. This was a special honour, and probably for this reason Matteo wrote of the duties of the embassy as being to visit equally Naples and Rome, which was not actually the case.

It is notable that the five ambassadors sent by Florence formally to greet and to congratulate the new pope were all longer established politically and socially than Palmieri, suggesting that either Matteo had been especially fortunate to be elected as ambassador, or else, which is more likely, showing how far he had advanced within the traditional system of Florentine political and social values (16).

Palmieri was given a number of tasks to accomplish in Naples. Presenting the documents already signed by the Signoria agreeing to peace and to the Italian league for Alfonso to countersign cannot have been taxing, although of great importance. The job of outlining Florence's position on the rebels of 1434, whom the king wanted reinstated in Florence, must have been reasonably straightforward too, for Palmieri would have been familiar with the various arguments. Similarly, setting out the Signoria's case for imposing duties on goods coming from the Neapolitan kingdom cannot have been overburdensome. Far more difficult than these, and at the heart of Palmieri's mission, was the need to strike up good relations with Alfonso, and to convince him of Florence's friendly disposition. Moreover, this was made much harder by the refusal of the Signoria to countenance Alfonso's requests to rehabilitate the rebels or to lift the discriminatory gabelles. Admittedly Alfonso had already shown his willingness to contemplate and to encourage friendship by writing to the Signoria two months before. "*speramus cum universa Italia et vestra presentim re publice amicitiam nostrum sempiternam fore...*" (17). But because of the Florentine desire to restrict Alfonso's territorial aims, it was difficult to demonstrate the Signoria's amicable attitude in any very concrete manner. While the instructions given to

Palmieri provided the basis for him to construct a speech, most of it was diplomatic and oratorical commonplace, and rings false in the aftermath of a war (18).

How Palmieri coped with the situation is not known in any detail. No letters of his to the Signoria for this period survive, and only the briefest of indications in letters sent to him by the Signoria reveal how his letters were received. From the few phrases that reflect on him, it seems that Matteo handled his mission well. "Commendiamo", wrote the Signoria to Palmieri, "il modo dato per te d'avere la fede della presentagione della nostra ratificatione della pace et lega" (19). In addition, it was noted that "la risposta data alla tua expositione ci è suta gratissima" (20). This satisfaction was doubtless due to Alfonso being or, at least, appearing "optimamente" disposed to observing the conditions of both the league and the peace. Indeed, the Signoria must have been well pleased with Palmieri, for a perpetual truce was signed between the Genoese and the king shortly afterwards (21). Possibly it was this news which led them to write to Palmieri the same day that this information had reached Florence, in response to his request to return, that "ti diciamo che noi siamo contenti, et preso buona licentia dalla Maestà del re, quando ti parrà, tene tornerai" (22). The sole extant expression of Alfonso's opinion concerning Matteo's mission sounds apocryphal and started to circulate only some years after Matteo's death. He is supposed to have admired Matteo's learning and refinement and to have been astonished to discover that Matteo was an apothecary by trade and background. With a sense of humour that surely sounds better after

several glasses of wine, he exclaimed "pensa quel che sono a Firenze i Medici, se gli speciali vi son cossiratti!" (23).

One letter of Palmieri's does survive from this embassy, and it bears rather on Florence than on Naples (24). Addressed to Piero de' Medici, Matteo recommends in it a friend, Antonio de' Rossi, for a post in the Studio. At this time Piero was one of the Ufficiali di Studio, and thus the letter sheds rather more light on Palmieri's involvement in the Studio and on his relations with Piero, "amico singularissimo", than on his embassy to Naples. Apart from the brief entry in the Annales, no other piece of writing of Palmieri's is extant describing this embassy.

At the same time, there was one major development on the Italian peninsula which should not be omitted from an account of this embassy. While Palmieri was in Naples, the principal Italian states were becoming increasingly concerned about the future peace of Italy. This was because of the departure of the *condottiere* Jacopo Piccinini from Venetian territory. He was making his way slowly south with his army, and nobody was quite sure where he was heading. Before Palmieri was elected as ambassador, the Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza, wrote to the Signoria that he was sending some troops to defend Bologna from Piccinini (25). Later he wrote to announce that Piccinini had passed by Bologna without disturbing either the league or the Church State (26). When Matteo left Florence on April 17 the matter was still unresolved. Once in Naples, the letters which arrived from the Florentine Signoria kept him abreast of developments. War seemed imminent towards the end of May, at which point Palmieri was told that the pope had sent an envoy to talk with Piccinini



in the Romagna (27). Although no satisfactory outcome was reached, war was averted. A month later still, Piccinini was menacingly close to Siena from where he also threatened papal territory north of Rome. Calixtus III was naturally worried in case he should attack either Siena or papal lands (28). The crucial point was that Alfonso was secretly supporting Piccinini with money and supplies in order to gratify his territorial ambition in Tuscany, but Palmieri showed himself completely unaware of this development at the time, despite the almost over-friendly stance Alfonso had adopted towards Florence and his recent record of warlike incursions. In due course, Piccinini took some Sienese castles in the Maremma. When Palmieri came to write his Annales, he certainly knew what the king's plans had been. He wrote:

"Iacopo Piccini avea circa persone 5,000, ...stando pero assai con disagio e con pochi danari, eccetto scio dal Re di Raona avea vettuvaglie per mare e anche ebbe de' denari, benche non gran somma" (29).

Nobody in Florence was any more alert to Alfonso's aggressive manoeuvres; there Naples had acquired a new respect. A Milanese ambassador passing through Florence, writing to Sforza, remarked that the staunch supporter of Milan, Angelo (Acciaiuoli), "lauda la andata mia a Neapoli a visitare la Maystà del re per continuare la amicitia contrata per la liga" (30). This ambassador noted too that Cosimo was well disposed, "commendando la andata mia" (31). As the Florentine closest physically to the king, it is perhaps surprising that Palmieri did not suspect him, though obviously Alfonso would have been doing all he could to deceive him in this respect.

Despite Vespasiano's enthusiastic appreciation of Matteo's humanist talents and his suitability as an ambassador, Palmieri received only one minor embassy during the next 11 years. As he continued to hold high office in the republic, being elected on several occasions by the Signoria and the Council of one Hundred, and being appointed to the senior and influential position of Accoppiatore in 1458, it is certain that he was not deliberately excluded from key posts. Yet it is unclear why Palmieri was not elected for other diplomatic missions, unless either the unfortunate outcome of this embassy or Alfonso's deception was held against him.

Lunigiana, 1458

It was largely by chance that Palmieri received his next embassy. He was one of the Sea Consuls in Pisa in 1458 when a "differentia non piccola" happened to break out further north in the Lunigiana (32). The dispute involved the Florentine men of Nicola and those of the Marchese Spinetta Malaspina. At that time, there were six Sea Consuls, three of whom were based in Pisa, and the other three in Florence (33). As colleagues in Pisa, Matteo had Tuccio di Leonardo Ferrucci and Niccolò di Zanobi di Bonvanni. The latter in particular had gained political experience at the highest levels, having been an Accoppiatore in 1444 and, by virtue of this, he had also been a member of the Balìa earlier in 1458 (34). But Matteo had also been made an Accoppiatore in 1458, and had undertaken diplomatic missions on other occasions, and it was he who was chosen by the the Signoria and colleges to find a solution to the dispute.

The reasons for choosing an ambassador who was already based at Pisa were probably administrative. First of all, he was much nearer to the border which was at the heart of the dispute, and thus he would not have so far to travel. In addition, since the Signoria had decided not to pay the ambassadorial expenses of four and a half florins per day to Palmieri, he was to receive only his normal salary, and extra costs were to be met from the extraordinary account of the Sea Consuls (35). Undoubtedly this was a cheaper way of sending an ambassador. Of course, it would have been possible to send someone from Florence, but as an

experienced diplomat was already present in Pisa, it made more sense to allocate this embassy to Palmieri.

According to the commission given to Palmieri, the matter chiefly concerned the definition of the frontier between the Florentine lands in the Lunigiana and those of the Marchese Malaspini. In addition, there were also "altre cose" causing trouble, but these were not specified (36). For the Florentines, this appears to have been a case where prevention was thought better than cure. Although words and phrases such as "scandolo assai grave" and "discordia" were used to describe the incidents, Matteo was given just ten days from the day he left Pisa to settle the issue (37). This suggests that the differences between the two sides were not actually so very great, even though the dispute had lasted "più mesi" (38). It is not known when Matteo set out from Pisa, but the "istruzioni" are dated October 4. An agreement made formal by notarial act was signed on October 20 between the Marchese Malaspini and Palmieri, so that it seems that the pair quickly reached some compromise. Unfortunately the notary's documents for this year have not survived, so what the agreement was cannot be known (39). The speed with which the settlement was attained indicates again that the fracas was simply a matter for definition; it was not the start of a campaign between implacable enemies. Without knowing more about the situation before and after, it is impossible to say whether Palmieri's solution was satisfactory, or whether he conceded too much in order to reach a rapid agreement (40). In any case, such rapidity suggests that Palmieri was an able negotiator; with a feeble intermediary, it might have taken much longer to bring the affair to an end.

No further evidence exists pertaining to this embassy, and Matteo continued after it much as he had before, that is, holding offices of major executive importance. The success of this embassy, therefore, did not advance noticeably Palmieri's diplomatic career. This may have been because the embassy was not considered especially important by the Signoria.

Rome, 1466

In May 1466, a time of considerable political unrest in Florence, the Signoria decided to elect an ambassador to go to Rome whose main purpose would be to urge the pope to repay money owing to Florentine merchants. Given the political uncertainty, it appears at first sight a peculiar decision, being almost completely unrelated to the political situation. A brief résumé of the major events will, perhaps, help to throw some light on the relationship between the state of play in Florence and the republic's external policy.

Opposition to the Medicean electoral controls was led by Niccolò Soderini, Dietisalvi Neroni and Angelo Acciaiuoli, who wanted all candidates for communal office to be drawn by lot as had occurred before 1434 (41). Not only had this idea been accepted in September 1465 but, in November, it was agreed to carry out a new scrutiny, which was begun in December 1465. The death of Francesco Sforza in March 1466 provided an excuse for the ruling group to refuse to grant a subsidy of 60,000 florins previously used by the Milanese to maintain an army in the field. Thus by mid May, both the Medicean methods of governing in Florence and the Medici ties with their closest foreign ally were being strongly challenged from within Florence. By the end of the month, the situation had deteriorated further. On 27 May, an anti-Medicean pact had been signed by 400 citizens, while the new scrutiny had been completed and became law on 31 May.

On the same day, May 31, Falmeri was elected as the Florentine ambassador to Rome with the task of persuading the pope to repay some Florentine merchants whom the papacy owed 35,000 ducats. He also had to encourage the pope to lift the ban he had placed on Florentine merchants which prevented those who traded with the Turks in the east from receiving communion (42). Therefore, it seems that at this hour of crisis in Florence, an ambassador loyal to Piero de' Medici was sent to the pope with the specific duty of improving the lot of the city's merchants. And since the immediate political situation is not capable of explaining why, it is necessary to widen the field of enquiry.

A chronicle written by Fra Giovanni di Carlo suggests that as part of a ruse by Dietisalvi Neroni, Piero was encouraged to call in a number of credits owed to him by various merchants in Florence. Ostensibly this was designed to strengthen the foundations of the Medici bank, but much more importantly Dietisalvi realised that it would also provoke much ill feeling against Piero as a result of the financial difficulties it would cause. And, according to Fra Giovanni di Carlo, this is what happened (43). Writing much later, Machiavelli concurred with this interpretation, and his own narrative was greatly influenced by Fra Giovanni di Carlo (44). It seems that this chronicle was written either at the time of the events or shortly afterwards and, according to one modern historian,

"has throughout the ring of the 'official' version, in which unfortunate events are explained away and the necessary scapegoats found. Hence the responsibility of the treacherous Dietisalvi Neroni for the banking crisis ..." (45).

If this were an accurate representation of what actually took place, it might well be that Piero would have wanted to reassure the merchants of his continued goodwill towards them by sending an ambassador to Rome in an attempt to recover the loans made by them to Pius II. Modern scholarship does not, however, entirely uphold this thesis, preferring to put a greater emphasis on a more general economic downturn closely linked to the start of war in the Levant. Florentine merchants certainly went bankrupt in 1464 and 1465, but Piero was not the cause. On the contrary, he apparently did his best to alleviate the matter (46). It may have been that in this period of political crisis the prevailing rumours were different, and it may have been these rumours that Giovanni di Carlo was reflecting, and these rumours that Piero was responding to. In this case, it may be more important to bear in mind perceived reality than to establish precisely what happened. Simply the existence of a financial crisis in Florence at this time, whatever its causes, explains adequately why it was thought necessary to send an ambassador to Rome to recover money owed by the Apostolic See. Moreover, it is doubtful that Piero himself was owed money by Pius II because the Medici had been ousted from their position as the pope's bankers, thanks to Pius' preference for dealing with Siennese bankers.

Palmieri had not been chosen as an ambassador for eight years, and it was eleven years since his last major embassy. He had been taking part in the debate on the city's future, speaking a few times in the *pratiche*, and he was also due to take up office as one of the *Otto di Guardia* (47). His position in the ruling group was well established. Matteo's longstanding friendship with Piero was probably important too at



a time when Piero faced considerable opposition in the city to the policies favoured by the Mediceans (48). As Matteo does not mention this embassy in his *Annales*, no light is shed on the matter from that direction. It may also have made sense to the Florentines to send a merchant to Rome in order to deal with the affairs of their merchants there. In addition, it appears from other sources that Matteo either had an interest in finance or else was thought to be good at handling money, for he often held offices which were concerned primarily with finance. That a less eminent member of the *reggimento* was sent may indicate both the reduced importance attached to the embassy, or reflect the desire of more senior members to stay in Florence if possible until the political crisis had either abated or resolved itself.

Giovanni Tornabuoni was already in Rome, but he was managing the branch of the Medici bank rather than being officially delegated by the Florentine Signoria. What is more, he did not report anything to his brother in law Piero concerning the embassy; he did not even mention the arrival or departure of Palmieri. No letters from the pope to the Signoria survive in Florence for this period, if any were written, and none of Palmieri's survives either. Some information can be deduced from the Signoria's letters to Matteo, and better still, the Milanese ambassadors who were in Rome wrote full letters to Galeazzo Maria explaining the situation. Indeed, it is from these letters addressed to the Duke of Milan that most can be learned about Palmieri's embassy.

There was no equivocation over the reasons for the embassy. Agostino da Rimini, the Milanese ambassador in Rome, noted Palmieri's

arrival on June 20, adding that the purpose of his mission was "principalmente per confortare il papa ad satisfare a molti de quisti bancheri Fiorentini, che debbeno havere grande summa de dinari de la camera apostolica". His chances of success were conveyed, too:

"questo papa presente non ha mai voluto fin a qui ni mostra volerne restituire un dinaro, con dire che'l non vole pagare veruno de li debiti de papa Pio, ni quisti, ni altri. Il che quando fusse seria gran botta a dicti fiorentini" (49).

If the ruling group already knew this, then it must be assumed that the mission was to placate the merchants so far as possible, simply by trying to appear concerned for their money. If, on the other hand, the ruling group was not already aware that the matter stood thus, then it would indeed have been a great blow, "una gran botta", to them. In either case, the prospects remained discouragingly low. Without doubt Piero knew that the likelihood of success was slim, for simultaneously the pope was seeking money from the Florentines to finance a venture against the Turks in Albania. Timoteo Maffei had written to him on May 15 to express the pope's latest wish: "tunc dolorem tuasque lachrymas, quas pro irruptione Turcorum in Albania emisisti, gratias habuit: sed gratiorem oblationem quam illi tuo nomine tuoque iussu feci..." (50). So for Piero it cannot have been altogether unexpected that the pope took a hard line and demonstrated his reluctance to pay for the extravagances of his predecessor.

Once he had arrived in Rome, the Signoria increased their demands on Palmieri and wrote him frequent letters, urging him to recommend various people and benefices, and to beg the pope to send grain (51). At the same time that they were pressing him to act, the Signoria

praised Matteo's conscientious correspondence, and his dedication to his task (52). Yet not everyone succumbed to Palmieri's charm; the pope was particularly recalcitrant. "Videmus ex postremis litteris tuis frustra ad id tempus labcrasse ut te summus pontifex audiret", wrote the Signoria (53). In the next letter Matteo was told that he was being given an additional ten days to pursue the unfinished business (54). Matteo must have used the time well, because the ban on the Florentine merchants who traded with the Turks, preventing them from taking communion, was lifted soon after. But the chief issue of the merchants' claim remained unresolved, and the Signoria once again exhorted Matteo to do his utmost (55).

Pope Paul II was not an easy man to deal with owing to his stubborn nature and to his love of tinkering in political affairs. For Palmieri to have wrung any concession from him was a major achievement, and having accomplished what he sought in the question of communion for Florentine merchants, little more could have been expected. Besides, success in the matter of the Florentine merchants' debts would certainly have constituted a coup, since Paul had already forcefully and explicitly declared himself unprepared to pay back the sums due. As a consequence, it is no surprise to discover that Palmieri failed to persuade Paul to pay the debts of Pius II, nor does any discredit reflect on him for having been rebuffed. Recording the ambassador's departure from Rome at the end of his stay, Agostino explained the situation with some sympathy to Sforza:

"similiter a quisti di ancora partire de qui d. Mattheo Palmero oratore fiorentino, senza conclusione alcuna de cosa avesse ad fare, maxime intorno a la satisfacione de quilli loro bancheri dovevano havere dinari da la sancta memoria de Papa Pio spesi in beneficio de

la camera apostolica. Et questo dico acio intendiate che la natura del papa e de fare così con tutti..." 36 .

Evidently no blame was attached to Palmieri for his lack of success.

Owing to the paucity of material, it cannot be said when, or even how frequently, Matteo talked with Paul II. He certainly saw the pope immediately on his arrival, but there are no secure indications after this (57). From the Milanese reports, it is clear that the pope did talk with the ambassadors reasonably often and, moreover, that the problems in Florence were discussed (58). Unfortunately this is hardly conclusive proof of Matteo's presence, still less of his influence, as the solution to the Florentine troubles was being debated both before Palmieri arrived in Rome and after he left. And if Matteo's influence at Rome is hard to gauge, so too is the effect that Rome had on him. Judging by his omission of this episode in his *Annales*, it is probably best imagined that the effect was not especially pleasing. All of which gives him an elusive character, and makes it difficult to pin him down at any given moment. By focussing on how he was treated afterwards in Florence, a Florentine appreciation at least of Palmieri's work is revealed; more than this the material will not yield.

According to the Florentine records, Matteo arrived back in Florence on August 5 (59). During his absence, the internal struggle for power within the city had been continuing. It reached a climax on September 2 when a Signoria favourable to Piero allowed a *parlamento* to be called. With Piazza della Signoria surrounded by soldiers in Piero's pay, the crowd realized that the most sensible course of action was to

agree to the request to institute a *Balia* for four months. This signified a victory for the Mediceans, and it was not long before it was decided to send to each of the major Italian states ambassadors who would explain the recent events in Florence, and report the news of a Medici triumph. For Matteo to have been chosen as one of these ambassadors suggests that it was thought that he had performed well in Rome. He was not, however, given one of the most important embassies to undertake. These went to the more experienced Tommaso Soderini, Jacomo Guicciardini, Antonio Ridolfi and Giovanni Canigiani. It should also be pointed out that the choice was more limited in September than in May because of the ban of exile imposed on several former *principali*. All the same, this was an indication of a new found respect for Matteo's abilities as an ambassador.

Bologna, 1466

Palmieri's rise within the regime was confirmed and consolidated immediately by receiving an embassy to go to Bologna. The Milanese ambassador in Florence, Niccolò Tranchedini, described to Galeazzo Maria Sforza in a letter of September 20, 1466 how the decision was reached to send ambassadors to the various states:

"fo poy rasónato, de mandare doy (ambasciatori) a Bologna et Ferrara perchè lo Illustrissimo Duca de Modena richiede a Piero uno a luy ben fidato, etiam perchè a costoro pare essere molto obligati a Bolognesi in questo loro caso, et (lo) sono veramente ..." (60).

Three days later, Palmieri was elected by the Council of One Hundred to undertake this embassy to Bologna, indicating a broad acceptance of his increased status. Piero's support will doubtless have been instrumental in promoting Matteo's candidacy for the considerable honour of thanking the Bolognese for their help. There could hardly have been a clearer demonstration of Medicean faith in Palmieri's loyalty.

In his Annales, Matteo himself made much of the Bolognese contribution to the safety of the Medicean regime in Florence. It was the Bolognese who warned the Signoria that:

"nelle terre del Duca di Modena s'era ragunato molta gente per venire a Firenze per certe novità *que parabantur in perniciem libertatis*. La qual novità non sendo nota, nostri Signori ..." (61).

Perhaps because it ties in with the main stream of the narrative rather more neatly than the trip to Rome, he also mentions that he was sent to Bologna as an ambassador "ad significandum quietem et pacem civitatis et civium" (62). The official brief for Palmieri similarly makes plain the immense gratitude that Florence felt for the timely assistance and

friendship so freely offered to them in their hour of need. And it was this message that Palmieri had to convey to the papal legate in Bologna. "Gli renderai infiniti grazie ...de grandissimi favori che in questi nostri pericoli et tumulti habiamo havuti da quella magnifica città ..." (63). Nor was this simply empty rhetoric, as can be judged from a letter sent by Nicodemo to Sforza in October. While dealing chiefly with the whereabouts and intentions of Piero's adversaries, Nicodemo had also discussed with Piero the future of Bologna, stressing that the city "importi molto a le cose de Vostra Celsitudine, et de esso Piero" (64). All of which serves to emphasize the key role being played by Palmieri.

Since the embassy was so straightforward, Matteo was given just a fortnight to complete it, and he left Florence on September 30, 1466 (65). There is no further correspondence in the republic's records, and it can be safely assumed that he returned in the time allowed, his mission successfully accomplished. In any case, his next recorded presence in Florence was on November 3, when he spoke in a meeting of the *pratica*, so if he exceeded his time limit it cannot have been by much (66). None of the most readily available Bolognese chronicles records this embassy, despite recounting the help offered by Bologna and the efforts of the exiles to continue their fight (67).

As an interesting and connected episode, it is perhaps worth pointing out that while Palmieri was in Bologna thanking the papal legate for past actions, Piero and Nicodemo were interviewing Giovanni Bentivoglio's chancellor with the aim of discovering the intentions of the Bolognese (68). Medicean diplomacy was based on personal contact as much

as on formal ambassadorial missions. It was simpler for Piero to write to Bentivoglio and for him to send his chancellor to talk directly, than to go through the lengthy rigmarole of appointing formally and briefing ambassadors. As a consequence, it need not be understood as showing a lack of confidence in Palmieri; rather, it was just a quicker means of communicating confidentially and informally when no resident ambassador was on hand.

Once more, with so little evidence to go on, the success of Matteo's mission can best be estimated by how he himself fared in the period following the embassy. Only three months later, in January 1467, he was elected as ambassador to Milan, so it seems reasonable to suppose that he was again judged to have fulfilled his task admirably.



Milan, 1467

Although Piero's adversaries had left the city, either through exile or flight, their opposition to the regime did not cease. Consequently, instead of combating the enemy within the city's confines, Piero was obliged to shift his attention abroad. Even before the ambassadors had left at the end of September to reassure the various powers in Italy that all was settled in Florence, plots were being hatched by the exiles to rout Piero. Writing to Pigello Portinari, factor of the Medici Bank in Milan and a close friend of Piero, Antonio Secho thought it wise to pass on what he had learned: "intendo che messer Dietisalvi (Neroni) et esso Niccolò (Soderini) fanno molto proferte al capitano Bartholomeo (Colleoni), confortandolo a torre la impresa contra Fiorenza" (69). Nothing resulted immediately from this initiative, but it remained close to the hearts of Dietisalvi Neroni and Niccolò Soderini, and Piero was told directly of their continuing efforts in a letter of November 20, 1466 (70). All that had been done, it seemed, was to distance the threat to the Medici regime; the threat itself had not been completely suppressed.

Quite the contrary, in fact, because according to Francesco Guicciardini the number and strength of those desiring to oust Piero was increasing, and the Venetians, Borso d'Este and the pope were all interested in supporting Bartolomeo Colleoni against Florence (71). Confronted with such a show of force, Piero wanted to resuscitate the alliance of Milan, Naples and Florence in order to demonstrate that the Medici grip on Florence was not so weak as her enemies wanted to believe.

As Nicodemo Tranchedini commented later, "chi ha compagnia, ha signoria" (72). Agreed by the Florentine *principali* on January 18, 1467, it was decided to send ambassadors to Naples and Milan a day later. Elected by the Council of One Hundred, Matteo was chosen as the ambassador to go to Milan (73). His increased ambassadorial experience and his higher status in the regime qualified him to receive such a crucial embassy. For this embassy was of greater value to the republic than those to Rome and Bologna had been, being this time concerned with no less significant a matter than arranging for the security of the city with Florence's closest ally, the Duke of Milan. Unfortunately, there is nothing that sheds light on why Palmieri was thought suitable for this embassy. Nonetheless, as it was his third embassy in eight months, presumably his friendship with, and certain loyalty to, Piero were highly significant.

Yet Matteo did not relish the prospect of the journey to Milan, and decided in his prudent way that it would be more sensible not to go. It is from Nicodemo that we learn his reasons for refusing: "Matteo ha renuntiato, credo perchè el temporale è pur freddo, et fangoso, etiam lui è grave de la persona, et anche antiquo" (74). Palmieri was 61 years old, and this is the first occasion on which he expressed his worry about his health. A year later, he was to complain of his health again after returning from one embassy, and he then refused another embassy because of his poor health. In his place as ambassador to Milan was elected Luigi Guicciardini, who had last gone to Milan as ambassador to offer Florence's condolences on the death of Francesco Sforza. Besides being a good friend of Palmieri's, Luigi was probably one of the two most influential men in Florence after Piero. In the same letter that Nicodemo

told Bianca and Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Palmieri's refusal, Nicodemo described a meeting that took place. "questa sera sono venuti a me messer Thomaso Goderino et messer Loyse Guicardino per parte de loro compagni de la pratica ..." (75). That Matteo should have been given preference over Luigi again highlights his new found prominence in the regime. However, Palmieri was elected at the end of January as one of the Otto di Guardia, so he stayed very much at the centre of the city's politics (76).

Rome, 1468

Matteo's term of office as one of the Otto turned out to be rather longer than he could have foreseen. In May 1467, the threat of war caused the Otto to be transformed into the Dieci. Accompanying the increase in membership was an increase in the powers the office was permitted to wield. As a result of its greater authority, candidates for the office of the Dieci had to be proposed by the Signoria and colleges and then confirmed by the Council of One Hundred before they could take up their positions (77). Thus membership of the Dieci necessitated and indicated a fairly broad acceptance within the *reggimento*.

Matteo's colleagues on the Dieci included Tommaso Soderini and Piero de' Medici (78). Despite the close ties between Tommaso and Matteo, in his appointment as ambassador Matteo will not been supported by Tommaso because he had been sent as an ambassador to Milan in October 1467, and was only to return in May 1468 (79). Of the members of the Dieci, probably only the reputation of Bernardo Corbinelli stood as high as that of Matteo. As on other occasions, Palmieri's oratory and experience, combined with his loyalty to Piero made him the most suitable candidate, and he was elected by the Cento in late February to go to Rome as the Florentine ambassador (80).

The diplomatic circumstances surrounding this embassy deserve a brief explanation. A year before, Bartolomeo Colleoni, the *condottiere*, had joined with some of the exiles from Florence, and had started to move his troops against Florence, with the secret assistance of Venice. It was

this development that was considered sufficiently serious in Florence to warrant the creation of the office of the Dieci. To counter this threat, some members of the Italian league formed an army which met Colleoni's army in an indecisive battle. A truce was agreed after this, and peace talks were initiated. These took place in Rome, where Otto Niccolini had been sent in July 1467 to discuss the terms on behalf of the republic. But progress was so slow that the pope, Paul II, became impatient and on February 2, 1468 issued a bull containing a general peace without consulting the powers concerned. This peace renewed the earlier Italian league, and arranged for the contracting powers to pay fixed amounts to Colleoni, who would go to Albania to take up the struggle against the Turks. Piero de' Medici had no desire to pay sums of money to Colleoni, who would be acting principally for the Venetians and the pope, and not for the league, and he also feared that the peace would not last (81). The Duke of Milan was vehemently opposed to the bull, and he suggested that Naples, Florence and Milan should present an alternative peace plan to the pope. New ambassadors were to be sent to Rome in order to pursue this approach. Apparently it was thought that the "primi non fossero ben apti et bastanti ad esprimere la intentione (dei signori principali)" (82).

It was in the light of these developments that on 24 February 1468 Matteo was elected ambassador to Rome, with the specific aim of acting jointly with Otto Niccolini to reach a satisfactory agreement (83). It is interesting to note that two days before the Signoria proposed Matteo, Lorenzo da Pesaro, the Milanese ambassador on his way to Rome, was able to inform Galeazzo Maria Sforza, from Florence, of the Florentine

choice. Lorenzo approved of the selection: "io trovo qua essera homo ben disposto di volere la pace quando le conditione siano honeste e degne, altramente non lo comporteranno", he wrote (84). In the absence of any other reasons on why Palmieri was chosen, these seem entirely satisfactory, hinting as they do at his moral and political integrity. The two ambassadors left Florence together on February 24, and Matteo arrived in Rome on February 29, a day after Lorenzo (85).

Having arrived in Rome, the ambassadors from Florence, Milan and Naples realised that the only way forward was by presenting a united front, and so they met together on March 2 to discuss their joint plan of action. This approach was exactly what Piero had been urging on Otto all along. He had written to him on February 6 "noi, come la minore Potentia della lega, attenderemo il parere et volontà della Maesta del Re e dello Illustrissimo Duca, et con essi ci confermeremo ..." (86). This had been reiterated in the latest letter the Dieci sent on February 26 to Matteo and Otto: "ricordate in ogni cosa cogli ambasciatori de nostri collegati et secondo e pareri loro in nome della communita in ogni cosa seguitate" (87). The upshot was a decision "de parlare largamente in revocatione de le conditione attribuite ad Bartholomeo Coleone principalmente", which was the major stumbling block (88). Having then gained an audience with Paul II, the three new ambassadors in turn laid their case before the pope, Matteo being the last to speak (89). Since their proposals were rejected by Paul, both sides agreed to meet the day after to discuss the matter more fully.

In the subsequent talks it emerged that the Florentine desire for immediate peace was stronger than that of Naples and Milan, who were prepared to use their greater strength to bargain for more favourable conditions. The talks were lengthy and rather confused. Palmieri, in his *Annales*, simply referred to "longas disceptationes" and revealed no more (90). Dissonance soon crept into the united approach. According to Lorenzo da Pesaro, it was Paul II who "ha cercato di alienari li fiorentini dalla mente de Vostra Illustra Signoria" (91). But his colleague Giovanni Bianchi was not so sure, claiming the Neapolitan ambassadors "hano sempre facto più caso de queste altre cose ch'a del facto de Bartolomeo, et del medesimo parere e sempre stato l'ambaxatore fiorentino". As a consequence, he felt that "el facto de Bartolomeo veniva ad restare più debile nel animo de soa Sanctità" (92). This was probably a means of avoiding the stalemate over the payment and departure of Colleoni, simply a way of keeping the pope negotiating, and at the same time restricting the diplomatic scope by settling related points first, before trying to settle the major issue later.

Pursuing this approach, Collantonio da Capua, the Neapolitan ambassador who had been chosen as spokesman, asked for the restitution of the lands taken by Bartolomeo, and the return of those which by law should be returned (93). This must temporarily have thrown Paul off balance because he wrote to the King of Naples declaring that Bartolomeo "debia andar prima che'l tocha denaro" (94). It was a major concession, for once Bartolomeo was abroad, it would not be possible to exert so much pressure on the signatories, so that Florence, Milan and Naples might renege on their payments. Letters to this effect had apparently also been

sent to Milan and Florence. Realising his error, Paul quickly changed his mind. "Tamen, qua a nuy, sua Sanctita dice aliteramente ut superscriptum est", wrote Agostino Rosso to the Duke of Milan (95). Faced with sudden changes of direction the diplomacy was exceptionally convoluted, with Paul first of all insisting on the acceptance of his bull, and later on the payment of money in stages to Bartolomeo. Otto Niccolini wrote to Piero on March 10 expressing his hope that a settlement would be reached soon (96). Piero passed on this letter to the Dieci di Balia, and both wrote similar replies. Desperately keen for peace, both urged a quick deal. Addressed to both ambassadors, the Dieci announced "noi saremo d'opinione che non si dovesse guardare in piccole cose", and that the king's plan for peace should be followed (97). Piero wrote to Otto that "vorremmo la pace, et non guarderemmo in piccole cose di fummo quando le altre d'importanza fussono acconche" (100). Two days later, this optimism had vanished. Having received a letter from Otto and Matteo dated March 12, the Dieci began to lose patience. "Intendiamo la speranza de la pace costi diventare vana per la obstinatione del sancto Padre" they said, and if no agreement were reached by the end of March, they would recall the ambassadors, and war would inevitably follow (99).

It cannot be said that at this moment Matteo and Otto pulled off a brilliant diplomatic coup. Indeed, they were totally powerless, partly because of the obstinacy of the pope, and partly because they represented the weakest power, and they were quite unable to obtain the slightest concession. Despite the Dieci wanting an end to "queste vane pratiche", no end was in sight (100). The claim made by the Dieci that the conditions were just and honest was far fetched, and neither Milan



nor Naples had the least intention of accepting the terms offered to date. That such a stance should be taken by the Florentines worried Marino Tomacello, the Neapolitan ambassador in Florence, and he shared his concern with the Milanese ambassador there. His major fear was that Florence would agree terms with Venice and then that only one of Naples and Milan would be prepared to sign too (101). As Florence had sent an ambassador to Venice for this purpose, this remained a possibility.

When Matteo wrote to Piero on 19 March he was quite despondent about the chance of peace. Paul was preventing the talks from progressing by insisting on the acceptance of his bull first, though he was weakening a little on Bartolomeo. But his weakening was still of such a nature that the terms remained unacceptable to the ambassadors. In what is surely more than a commonplace, Matteo's unease and helplessness shine through in his letter to Piero:

"sonc materie grandi, le quali non si possono fare senza qualche pericolo; et l'avenire è incerto ...Io per me veggo pochissimo in queste cose grandissime, ma sono in tuto ben disposto per quanto potrò seguire el parere et consiglio della nostra republica intervendovi quello della tua sapientia" (102).

In contrast, on the same day in Florence, Piero was writing an encouraging letter to his two ambassadors in Rome. Of the long delay he noted "io la ripiglio in buona parte, non potendo credere che le cose leggieri guastino le grandi et importanti ..." (103). All the same, the message had struck home in Florence, and two days later, after a meeting of the Dieci, it was again decided to recall both ambassadors if a peace settlement had not been reached by the end of the month (104). It was hoped that this step would oblige the pope to show his colours, to decide for war or peace. It was also hoped that Milan and Naples would join in

this action, thus ending the disruptive uncertainty. Nicodemo informed the Duke that "perseveravano in parere de revocare li loro ambaxatori da Roma al fin del presente mese, quando maxime el Signore Re et voi ve contentassino revocare li vostri" (105).

Meanwhile, in Rome, the pope was not impressed with the efforts of the Florentines to reach an agreement with the Venetians. Having been given a copy of a letter from Antonio Martelli to the Venetian ambassador setting out a preliminary framework for peace, Paul II started to ridicule the Florentines. "Son gagliardi de parole e stretti in spendere", he quipped (106). Evidently the standing of the Florentines in the papal court was extremely low. Before the Dieci could be told of the incident, they again insisted that both Matteo and Otto return at the end of the month, if peace had not been agreed (107). As the end of the month approached, and war loomed all the closer, both the pope and the ambassadors, notably the Milanese, were more disposed to finding some workable compromise. By reminding the pope that peace would bring honour and glory to him and war the opposite, the various ambassadors hoped to make him more amenable to an acceptable solution. But to keep the ambassadors in a conciliatory mood, Paul needed to make the spectre of war appear as a likely alternative. All of which resulted in the pope offering concessions over Bartolomeo, while the ambassadors came close to accepting the bull (108). Concerned that these might be the best conditions available, and that a later settlement might not achieve even these terms, the yearning for peace in Florence grew stronger. On the other hand, provided that both Naples and Milan maintained an ambassador in Rome, Florence would keep Otto Niccolini there too, allowing Matteo to

return (109). By this point, it seems that the Dieci had become exhausted and simply wanted to finish the discussions. It seems as if they would have preferred the certainty of preparing for war to these unpredictable negotiations. Yet it was Milan and Naples who controlled the response of the ambassadors; Florence could only follow and never lead. It is noticeable, perhaps as a result of this phenomenon, that throughout they attach no blame to their ambassadors for failing to reach a settlement, even though they had become thoroughly frustrated:

"...benchè noi costi di bene alcuno non abbiamo più speranza. Et crediamo che il maggiore bene che possiamo avere costi sia il partirvi, et spetialmente avendo voi scripto che voi vi state con vergogna ..." (110).

Given the intransigency of Paul, the Dieci would have been mistaken if they had held Matteo and Otto responsible. Nevertheless, it would have been very easy to imagine them culpable as virtually no progress had been made in the month since talks started afresh in earnest.

In a letter of March 29 to Piero, Matteo apparently "mostra desperarsi in tucto de la pace" (111). Matteo was clearly downcast, for here was a dedicated servant of the Florentine republic anxiously seeking peace, but totally incapable of altering the situation. The Milanese ambassador Lorenzo da Pesaro was equally gloomy: "or noi tenemo la cosa per disperata", he reported to Galeazzo Maria; of the pope he added "ni mai più ci fidarimo in sue parole ..." (112). Yet it was obvious that the pope wanted peace, and he continued to make minor concessions. While there was so much as the faintest hope of peace, the ambassadors stayed, wanting to avert war at all costs. Patience and persistence of this order won the admiration of the Dieci, but they were also somewhat surprised by

this tenaciousness when no hope remained. To the Dieci, therefore, Matteo and Otto showed every sign of staying, despite being told to leave. The Dieci wrote:

"noi abbiamo bene di voi grandissima meraviglia, che non solamente ve ne lasciate, ma voi stessi ve ne menate; quando non avete altro modo voi chiedete uditori, che Dio il sa non potiamo intendere a che fine, ma sia stato a che fine si vuole che stimiamo sia stato buono il vostro, l'effetto il quale ne scrivete non e buono" (113).

In Rome, on the contrary, it appeared that they were quite likely to leave at any moment. The Milanese ambassador Lorenzo da Pesaro commented on their attitude: "quisti oratori del Re e delli fiorentini sollicitano al partire, ma più quilli delli fiorentini ..." (114). By acting in this way, they managed to command the maximum of attention in Rome and Florence. Even Piero's optimistic appreciation of the talks could no longer sustain much hope of peace, and he began to write about war for the first time: "secondo il vostro scrivere poca speranza si può avere nella pace, io simile n'ho pochissima ..." (115). As ever, though, he was optimistic about the forthcoming war "saremo alla guerra et, perlectendolo Dio, ho buona speranza nella victoria perchè habbiamo ragione ..." By April 7 all the ambassadors had, at last, received letters instructing them to return. Armed with these, they met the pope, but were unable to get the concessions they wanted (116). It was also rumoured that the Florentine Signoria were complaining about their ambassadors because they had repeatedly asked them to leave Rome, and they had not yet left (117).

Capitalizing on these circumstances, Matteo and Otto astutely announced the following day that they had to return to their native city, because preparations for war could not be made while in Florence hope of peace still existed. This argument was certainly not contained in the

latest letter they had received, and failed to convince Paul. They can only have said this in an effort to increase diplomatic pressure on the pope. Unfortunately for them, it had no effect whatsoever. Once again the pope had called their bluff and found them wanting (118). Piero's next letter to the pair included rather more discussion about peace terms, and he seemed quietly optimistic of a settlement again, although he also assured that if war came, the fellow members of the league would play their part, just as surely as Florence would play hers (119). Perhaps the next letter sent by the Dieci. They wanted Matteo to return immediately, and they made this abundantly clear:

"vogliamo che Matteo Palmieri all'avuta di questi monti a cavallo e ritornise, et cosi imponiamo a te Matteo che subito avuta la presente ti parta di costi et venghine in Firenze" (120).

Instead of stating that this was for diplomatic reasons, that there was no longer any need to keep two ambassadors in Rome, and that withdrawing one would put renewed pressure on the pope to conclude a settlement, the Dieci emphasized internal reasons, explaining that the term of office for the Dieci was nearing its end, and so Matteo was required in Florence. Otto was to remain with the other ambassadors, and to leave only if the ambassadors from Milan and Naples were leaving together. In any case the negotiations probably would not have advanced much as a result of Matteo's departure. For before this letter could have reached the Florentine ambassadors in Rome, all the ambassadors together had met the pope in an inconclusive audience. One of the Neapolitan ambassadors had asked if all the ambassadors might leave, and the Milanese Lorenzo da Pesaro read out a letter from the Duke of Milan commanding him to leave when no hope of peace was left. Then "l'ambaxatore fiorentino non voise leggere le soe (lettere) per non tenere ad tedio la brigata, ma dixè che

"I'havea sey littere l'una dreto ad altra de la medesima substantia ..." (121). Unmoved by this pitiful scene and entirely true to form, the pope declared that it was to nobody's honour to leave. What is more, not one of the ambassadors did leave, not least perhaps because the pope had offered further concessions over Colleoni. Where he had initially insisted that he go to Albania, he had then relented a little and offered to contribute 18,000 of the 100,000 florins needed to pay for Colleoni, and then he wanted to give Colleoni permanent quarters in papal territory (122).

In a discussion the next day with all the ambassadors and three cardinals this point caused either Matteo or Otto to protest. They would have preferred Colleoni to remain the other side of the Po, and they feared the military threat posed by him moving south. Despite protesting they eventually agreed to leave the matter in the hands of the pope, after much persuasion from the others there (123). While this protest doubtless arose from the best of motives, it says little for their powers of persuasion that their colleagues overrode them. Another indication of their inferior powers of eloquence was surely that neither was ever asked to act as spokesman for the six ambassadors. On the other hand, this also says much for the quality of the other ambassadors present. In addition, this may have reflected the status of Florence as the weakest of the three powers.

In spite of the strong desire for peace expressed by the Dieci and Piero, it seems that they were not as flexible in their bargaining as the Milanese. Right from the start, Galeazzo Maria Sforza had

communicated to the Dieci his violent disagreement with the pope's terms issued in the bull of February 2. The peace, he had written:

"saria cosa ignominiosa, vergognosa et di perpetua infamia, et saria uno giustificare el facto de' Vinitiani et quello di Bartolomeo, li quali hanno turbata et violata la pace, et calunniare et deshonestare il facto della nostra lega ..." (124).

No doubt this attitude fuelled the Milanese ambassadors' persistence when both Naples and Florence would have withdrawn from the discussions. On the other hand, the Neapolitan and Florentine ambassadors apparently condemned Galeazzo Maria's willingness to continue to plead for peace.

Giovanni Bianchi reported to Sforza on April 14 that:

"questi oratori regii et fiorentini ve dannano de troppo appetito de pace, con dire che questa vostra demonstratione de pace ha tirato et tira li loro principali ad condescendere ad dese cose che non seriano condescesi ..." (125).

Certainly it is surprising to hear this of Otto and Matteo after learning what the Dieci had written to them, but it indicates again the differing perception of the importance of the talks, and of the method of approach to be used.

The talks carried on and, in the absence of other evidence, it must be assumed that Matteo left before the bargaining got much further. Finding that neither Otto nor Matteo responded to requests to return for diplomatic reasons, the Dieci succeeded in recalling Palmieri with its appeal to internal procedure. On April 15 Lorenzo da Pesaro explained Matteo's departure in a letter to Sforza:

"advise Vostra Illustrissima Signoria che Mateo Palmeri oratore fiorentino è rivotato, e va domatina a Fiorenza, e questo perchè lui è de i deci della guerra, e l'offitio finisce, nè se po provedere in fare li altri senza lui ..." (126).

By now Palmieri must have received the Dieci's letter of April 10. But interestingly in the meantime the Dieci had discovered that it could manage without him, and on April 18 wrote to Otto and Matteo to the effect that "se Matteo Palmieri non fusse partito ...non vogliamo parta" (127). The explanation was diplomatic: "abbiamo la vostra de 14 et le due notule che benchè per ancora l'abbiamo poco examinate, nientedimeno ci paiono assai d'importanza" (128). In turn this sheds doubt on their earlier argument of necessity because the office was drawing to a close. All the same, it was this argument that Matteo finally accepted, having previously refused to comply with requests to return based on diplomatic reasons.

Terms for peace were eventually agreed scarcely a week after Palmieri had returned to Florence on 24 April. In the end, it had not been the pope who had submitted under pressure, but the Venetians who agreed that Colleoni should hand back the territory he had taken, and that they alone should pay for his services. Both the Dieci and Piero sent exuberant messages to Otto and described the joyful festivities in Florence when the news was received: "qui hieri continuamente insino a molte notte s'è fatto ogni dimonstracione d'allegreza, con fuochi, campane, bombarde, trombe ..." (129). There is no mention of how Matteo was welcomed in Florence in this correspondence.

From the reports available, Matteo's performance during this embassy was solid. He was hardly a flamboyant character, yet nor did he commit any obvious errors. He worked for peace enthusiastically, but in unrewarding circumstances. It does not appear that his influence was



decisive in promoting or in retarding the peace; he contributed to the whole. At any rate, his reputation in Florence was not harmed. Although Piero decided that he wanted new members for the Dieci when the office was due to be renewed, this cannot be taken to mean that Matteo was out of favour (130). For on June 27 1468 Matteo was chosen as ambassador again, this time to heal the rift in Florentine-Milanese relations over the Lunigiana. Later that year, he was drawn "a mano" for the Priorate (131). Clearly Matteo's standing in the city was enhanced rather than reduced by his embassy to Rome, notwithstanding his relatively small impact there. That peace was eventually agreed, regardless of how it was reached, was probably significant in this.

Magliana, 1468

After his embassy to Rome, Matteo was not allowed to rest for long before being called to perform once more for the republic. The task allotted to him in June 1468 was a delicate one, requiring him to reaccommodate Florence and Milan after some rather petty squabble had turned sour. The incidents themselves were a source of no little frustration to Florence, and put considerable strain on their tie of friendship with Milan.

In May 1468 a boat carrying salt was taken under the orders of the Milanese commissar at La Spezia, and kept in custody. Since the boat was owned and manned by Florentines, the Dieci di Balia was understandably concerned, and pressed for the release of the vessel, cargo and men. Failing this, an explanation of the Milanese action was to be furnished. This much they communicated to the Milanese ambassador in Florence on May 22, who promptly informed the Duke of Milan (132). No reply was immediately forthcoming, and four days later Nicodemo was summoned before the Dieci di Balia and Piero, and was told of another incident which had further aggravated the position. Another boat had been taken, rendering the situation intolerable. In response, Piero and the Dieci presented an ultimatum: that either this boat be returned at once, or else fighting ships, "legno grosso", would be sent to recapture it; and if this did not work, then infantry would set out from Genoese territory, with the permission of the Genoese, to regain possession of the boat (133). A day later, it transpired that the boat had been burned, and the

crew imprisoned. It was "come se fossimo nella guerra et non in lega", wrote Piero to his bank's factor in Milan, Sigello Fortinari (134).

From one of Nicodemo's letters to Galeazzo Maria, it would seem that this was intended to show Milanese dissatisfaction with the Florentine purchase of the Sercana earlier in 1468. Relating the reply he made to the Dieci and Piero, Nicodemo explained:

"per non haverne dati debiti avisi a vostra Sublimità per non commettere male, ma principalmente perche non oresi mai facessero quella compra senza vostra saputa, et quando queste loro barche fossero arestate de vostro commandamento, non possono extinare fosse per altro rispetto ..." (135).

Whether by design or by coincidence is not known, but at the same time Nicodemo's behaviour in Florence was prompting a good deal of ill feeling because he was giving succour to a merchant who owed Piero's brother in law, Guglielmo Pazzi, 3,200 ducats (136). This naturally made Florentine-Milanese relations still more difficult. And there was yet more to come. Piero noted that matters went "di male in pegio", for now one of the boats' crew had been killed and more insults had been hurled at the Florentines (137). Despite these grave provocations and strongly worded warnings, the Dieci could not bring itself to retaliate. They wrote on June 10 to Galeazzo Maria Sforza "la conservatione della amicitia nostra sarebbe al tutto impossibile perseverando tali inconvenienti" (138). Nonetheless the breaking point was rapidly being approached: "habbiamo avuto patientia infino a qui", they continued, "ma se fusse altrimenti che nollo possiamo credere, noi non potremo sostenere il carico del nostro popolo".

As time passed, and as no new grievance was added to the old, the strength of feeling subsided in Florence, and the decision was taken to send a delegate to talk the matter over with the Milanese, and more particularly, with the governor in the Lunigiana. Noting this decision, Nicodemo wrote that the Signoria would elect "un loro cittadino non passionato, che si conduca in su le differenze fra li vostri, et li loro in Lunisana" (139). Presumably it was thought by the Florentines that a calm approach would yield greater results than their hysterical writing of recent. Perhaps, too, they managed to see the importance of this event with greater maturity - that it represented a severe jolt to Milanese-Florentine relations, but that it was still more important to maintain those relations than to break them over such an incident.

In any case, the Florentines chose to elect Palmieri as their ambassador a week later on June 27. Informing the Duke of this choice, Nicodemo observed with some satisfaction that Matteo was a "bon cittadino, e non cavilloso, né scandaloso" (140). Realising that this could only be good for Milanese interests, Nicodemo encouraged Matteo to accept this mission, while Matteo himself expressed doubts as to his physical strength: "persiste pur in dire che non po a verun modo, allegando che per volersi sforzare quando fu mandato a Roma pochi mesi fa, se hebe a morire" (141). Shortly afterwards, Matteo reached the conclusion that he could not undertake the embassy, and three days later a replacement for him was elected.

To have been chosen to resolve this awkward situation must have been a considerable honour for Palmieri, and indicates something of

his reputation. For here, as for the embassies to Naples, to the Lunigiana ten years earlier, and to Rome in 1466 and 1468, he was to establish good relations without making any concessions, scarcely a welcome prospect. By now he must have been recognized as a calm negotiator, "non passionato", and as someone likely to uphold Florentine interests in a just manner - "non scandaloso, ne cavilloso". That Milanese friendship was involved increased the importance of being successful. Indeed, Nicodemo made it plain that he did not think so highly of Bernardo Buongirolamo, the replacement for Matteo. Bernardo "secondo me dice Nicodemo è molto cavilloso" wrote Z. Olduino to Galeazzo Maria (142). This correspondent remembered that Palmieri had been sent to the Lunigiana in 1458 in order to deal with the problem of the borders: "d. Matteo Palmiero secondo me havevano mandato a dire per essere altre fiate mandato per la differentie d'esse confine ...". But like Nicodemo, his opinion of Palmieri was high: "è gentilhommo molto acostumato et pieno de ogni bontate". As a result, he felt distinctly unsympathetic to Matteo's reluctance to leave Florence, saying "fa excusatione de essere vecchio ingotato, et che mal durare a la fatica del cavalcare" (143). Whatever other differences there were between Piero and Nicodemo, it would appear that they were united in their choice of Florentine ambassador.

After this refusal, Palmieri did not receive another embassy while Piero lived. Although after his first refusal in January 1467 a year passed before he was elected again, this time his decision had a certain finality to it, as if he did not wish to undertake any further embassies, not even during the summer months. There were limits even to Palmieri's devotion to the republic and to his "bontate".

Rome, 1473

The pope was responsible for bringing Palmieri to Rome for his third embassy there. Owing to the shift in diplomatic relations in Italy, which Sixtus IV felt threatened the papacy, he decided it would be wise to summon to Rome representatives of the signatories of the Italian league, for them to reaffirm their allegiance to the league (144). Naively, he envisaged that this process would be simplified if the same ambassadors were employed as had been on the last occasion. But he had not allowed for the change in attitude among the major Italian states. Venice, Milan and Florence had joined together in an informal triangular partnership, and it was this combination that caused Sixtus to feel uneasy. A succession of incidents between the papacy and Florence had strained relations between the two powers and meant that Lorenzo was scarcely disposed to fall in with the pope's wishes. These incidents included the purchase by Sixtus of Imola, a town of strategic importance to Florence. Not only did Lorenzo now feel that Florence was threatened, but he also felt irritated because he had denied money from the Medici bank to help Sixtus in this enterprise. Thus it was all the more aggravating for him to discover that rivals and fellow Florentines, the Pazzi, had supplied the necessary funds. Sixtus, too, could feel annoyed with good reason, for the Medici were, after all, still the pope's bankers. Moreover, Lorenzo had given aid to rebels in Città di Castello; this was papal territory, but bordered on Florentine lands. This action had antagonised the pope, and it was with little enthusiasm that Lorenzo and the leading Florentine citizens greeted the pope's request to send ambassadors to renew the Italian league in November 1473.

A *pratica* was held in Florence on November 11, 1478, and the ruling group displayed their indifference. "Unitamente è stato consigliato ...che quello che faranno gl'altri collegati, quello si fara per noi", explained Angelo della Stufa in a letter to Galeazzo Maria Sforza (145). As the other members of the league decided to participate in the talks, this meant sending an ambassador. Filippo Sacramori, the Milanese ambassador in Florence, understood that an ambassador would be sent "piu presto" (146). As it happened, it took a long time to decide who was to be sent, and as there was no obvious reason why it should have taken so long, it is best supposed that this was designed to delay the start of the talks, in order to demonstrate Florence's reluctance to take part. In the meantime, Florence was not any disadvantage in Rome, because Giovanni Tornabuoni had only just left for there, "credo per certi interessi importanti, secondo me ha decto Lorenzo", wrote Filippo Sacramori (147).

In the letter sent by Sixtus, each state had been asked to send the ambassador who had helped draw up the league under pope Niccolò, almost 20 years before. Filippo realised that this was an error of the letter writer, and that pope Paul was meant, who had last renewed the league barely five years previously: "el breve fa mentione de Nicola, benchè io creda che'l scriptore haverà erato de Nicola a Paulo" (148). It seems that the Signoria thought the same, and remembered too that Palmieri had performed the duty. Palmieri's colleague on that occasion, Otto Niccolini, had died in the intervening period. Indeed, a *pratica* expressed itself quite willing to send Palmieri in preference to using Giovanni Tornabuoni, who was already in Rome. Filippo explained this to the Duke: "dicono che l'ho fanno essere per loro honore, perchè non li pare

che glii sia honorevole che uno mercatante (i.e. Tornabuoni) rappresentasse la la loro signoria" (149). Yet it had not been decided finally whether to send Matteo, or whether to send someone else instead. This time the Milanese ambassador informed Sforza "ricordo però a Lorenzo che'l guardi bene a chi faccia eleggere, che vada a proposito" (150). Evidently the successful candidate would have to meet with Lorenzo's approval.

Probably the reluctance to send any ambassador meant that the election did not take place immediately. In his letter of November 27, Filippo Sacramori observed that thought had been given to the matter of choosing an envoy, and that there were now rival candidates. Initially, Donato Acciaiuoli was favoured, but "ora se extima de messer Bernardo Bongliroymo da Gubio, pur non sono fermi anchora" (151). In the event, neither of these two were chosen. Instead, as the pope had requested, Palmieri was elected, presumably because he was the ambassador who had been present at the last talks concerning the renewal of the league. No description of the reasons for his election survive, and the next extant letter from Filippo dates from one month later, while Palmieri was elected on December 13, just a fortnight later. That Donato Acciaiuoli had recently completed a mission to France made it unlikely that he would have been chosen to dash off to Rome on another demanding embassy.

In the "istruzioni" given to Matteo, the negotiations for peace were the main issue, and the only one for which he had a "lettera di credenza" addressed to the pope (152). Other issues included stopping in Siena on the way in order to ask the Sieneese to release a student from prison, and to beg them to send to Florence whatever grain they could



spare without suffering any inconvenience (153). Once in Rome, Palmieri had additionally to assist Florentine merchants in recovering money owed to them by the bankrupt Lorenzo Harioni (154). Matteo set out for Rome on December 14.

Having arrived in Rome, Palmieri received a number of letters which enlarged his commission considerably. The first asked him to win back the possession of an ecclesiastical benefice which, contrary to custom, had been adjudicated not to belong to Tommaso Soderini. Moreover, this letter noted that the Sienese had complied with the requests made by Matteo, and had sent some grain and had released the student from prison (155). Further letters followed, with those of December 23 and 24 urging Palmieri to act, telling him to beseech the pope that benefices in Florence be conferred on Florentine citizens, or at least on men under Florentine jurisdiction (156). No more was communicated about the peace talks during December. Their importance had suddenly diminished, while the significance of these other matters had grown quite noticeably.

Palmieri was initially unable to make much progress in his tasks because of the pope's ill health. The Milanese ambassador Sacramoro Sacramori, who had been talking with him recorded that "per la gotta et affanno ha nostro Signore (Matteo) non ha possuto havere odientia" (157). Instead of talking to the pope as was normal, Matteo wrote to him, and was consequently commended by the Signoria for his initiative. They wrote "ci piace la vostra diligentia della polizia non avendo potuto altrimenti parlare" (158). Nonetheless, the pope's indisposition slowed down the talks, and clearly made Palmieri's task all the harder. A month later,

Angelo della Stufa, writing from Florence, noted in a letter to the Duke of Milan: "da Roma non c'è nulla. Il papa pare che havea male di gotta e d'altro ..." (159). So if events in Rome appeared to unfold at a snail's pace, it was not always the deliberate policy of one of the parties concerned.

Sacramoro went on to describe Matteo as a "buono cittadino fiorentino" and also noted that he "mi ha dimostro amore paterno" (160). The reasons for this appreciation are not specified. Hindered in his ambassadorial duties, Palmieri was directing his social skills to other ends. On a number of occasions it was recorded by a variety of correspondents that they had conversed with Palmieri. He was obviously a talkative and friendly man. Indeed, Sacramoro commented on Matteo's departure "l'ambasciatore fiorentino, col quale, me intendo così bene ..." (161). His observations on Matteo's embassy are therefore especially valuable.

With the death on January 5, 1474 of Florence's archbishop Pietro Riario, who was the nephew of Sixtus IV, the nature of Palmieri's embassy changed drastically. No longer was it aimed primarily at renewing the league, but instead it was to focus on ensuring that Rainaldo Orsini, Lorenzo de' Medici's brother in law, became the new archbishop of Florence. The appointment would reward one of Lorenzo's relatives, reduce the influence of Rome in Florence, and increase the strength of Florence's representation in the papal court. Moreover, to the Florentines, the selection of a new archbishop was more important than renewing the league. Palmieri was told "la nostra imbasciata paia di piu

scima", and he was given a new "lettera di credenza" (163). In writing to Matteo, the Signoria made quite certain that he understood the significance of the task ahead of him. "Vogliamo", they wrote, "che facciate ogni opera che messer Rinaldo Orsino sia nostro arcivescovo. ...questo caso non può essere di maggior importanza" (163). Four days later, they repeated the instructions in even stronger terms:

"nessun altra persona potrebbe essere accepto; anche come vi scriveremmo qui si farebbe resistenza et nascerebbe inconveniente... Perchè non c'è cosa nella città nostra al presente che più importi et che fassi di maggiore pericolo non venendo secondo si desidera" (164).

It was in response to this increased pressure from the Signoria that Matteo did not wait until the pope gave an audience but that, as noted above, he sent a letter: "quanto alla parte del nuovo arcivescovo ci piace la vostra diligenza..." (165). Palmieri's previous experience of the practices of the papal court were evidently paying off.

Orsini's official status at Rome was that of a subdeacon. More importantly, however, he was Lorenzo de' Medici's brother in law, and he came from a long established aristocratic family which over many generations had occupied numerous senior positions in the Church hierarchy, and had supplied two popes, Celestine III and Nicholas III. One of the other contenders was Francesco Salviati, who was supported by the Milanese. He later became Archbishop of Fisa, and played an important part in the Fazzi conspiracy. At this time, there was some criticism of lay political interference with the clergy regarding both taxation and appointments. Indeed, Matteo had been sent to Rome with the specific instruction "per havere aiuto da preti nostri ne' bisogni pubblici" (166). The nomination of a cardinal closely related to Lorenzo would clearly

have added to this controversy. Sixtus therefore faced a dilemma of whether to reject Orsini and so offend Lorenzo, and probably make the signing of the league more difficult, or whether to concede on this point in the hope of encouraging a conciliatory attitude from Lorenzo over the league. Given this situation, it was essential for Matteo to make the strongest representations possible to the pope, to urge Sixtus to give the archbishopric to Orsini. Owing to the dearth of extant letters from Matteo, it is not known what obstacles there were, or what steps he took to surmount them; but because of the background of strained relations between Florence and Rome, the outcome was by no means certain.

Replying to a letter sent by Palmieri on January 8, the Signoria expressed its satisfaction with what had been achieved, and also its expectation that more would be done in this matter of the archbishopric. In particular, they stressed:

"doverrete di havere havuto audientia et havere facto le nostre commissioni et col Sancto Padre et con altri... ma abbiamo fede et nella vostra prudentia et diligentia et nella humanita et sapientia del Sommo Pontefice" (167).

Their faith was justified, for in a letter of January 15 to the Signoria, Matteo was able to relate that the pope had approved the appointment of Orsini as archbishop of Florence (168). But the appointment was not confirmed decisively, giving rise to anxiety in Florence, and leading the Milanese to continue to press for Salviati (169). In his next letter Sacramoro pointed out Salviati was not much liked by his fellow cardinals owing to his "mala fama" (170). Meanwhile both Palmieri and Lorenzo had continued to work for the advancement of Orsini, and Sacramoro reluctantly informed Sforza of the archbishopric "et cosi credo sera suo

"Orsini's)" (171). Palmieri's diligence and prudence were clearly reaping their rewards.

The letters that Matteo sent to the Signoria have not survived, but the one extant letter, written to Lorenzo, is of some interest. Dated February 18, it contains the startling information that Sixtus had told Matteo, and had announced in writing to the Signoria, that Giuliano della Rovere, the pope's nephew, and a cardinal, was to be the next archbishop of Florence. Palmieri was obviously somewhat taken aback to hear this piece of news, and was uncertain how to welcome it. Indeed, he left the response to be made by Lorenzo: "seguì hora tu quelle intendi che più sia per la nostra città con più piacere di detto Signore (i.e. the pope)" (172). But Palmieri then implied that so far as he was concerned the cardinal possessed considerable merit, and would be acceptable as archbishop in place in of Orsini. He continued:

"perchè a me è paruto che ne' fatti dell'arcivescovado lui inanzi a qualunque altro sia adoperato seconda il desiderio di cotesto Signore et de' cittadini principali di cotesto reggimento".

The interest lies in that Palmieri did not spot the incongruity of the pope appointing his nephew to the archbishopric when the same nephew had been campaigning ardently on behalf of another candidate, that is, Orsini. For the whole of the previous month the papal court had been led to believe that Orsini would be nominated, and then suddenly the pope had changed his mind, and chosen his relative instead. Clearly this was not impossible given the rapid switches that occurred in papal thinking from time to time. But with hindsight, it emerges that this ploy was a less than subtle ruse to mislead Lorenzo, in order to encourage him to agree to the appointment of Giuliano della Rovere, who, if Lorenzo were to

agree, would then be appointed. For a week later, on February 25, Sixtus announced formally his decision to bestow the Florentine see on Orsini (173). Thus it would appear that the ploy to instate della Rovere was a diplomatic feint carried out at the last minute by Sixtus, who never really imagined that he would be able to hand the archbishopric to his nephew. In a week, there was barely time for an exchange of letters between Rome and Florence. At the time, however, the issue had a different perspective. Palmieri was taken in by the bluff, while in his letter supplying the evidence which made it seem improbable.

Despite this momentary lapse, Palmieri's efforts to obtain the post for Orsini did not go unnoticed. Sacramoro remarked: "quello arcivescovato de Firenze fo dato al cognato de Lorenzo, perche cosi ha supplichato l'ambasciatore fiorentino che de cio havea comissione doi soi excellentissimi Signori" (174). Yet this was not Palmieri's doing alone. The ambassador added "et Lorenzo et Ursino ne hanno fatto impresa". Nevertheless, some of the credit for this success must belong to Matteo who had been in contact with Sixtus on several occasions to present the Florentine case.

Negotiations to renew the league had started in the middle of January after Sixtus had recovered from his gout. The signs were not favourable. From Florence, Angelo della Stufa gave his opinion to Sforza in a letter of January 20: "io credo che la sua Maestà sia venuta o abbi a venire a questa lega comunale per cerchar di romper ogni et qualunque altra lega ci fussi per parerli restare il maestro degli altri..." (175). He observed that in like manner Florence was not receptive to the plan,

fearing "spesa senza poterne havere alcuno acquisto" (176). As on other occasions, the talks became heated, with Lorenzo afraid that "una grave guerra" might break out between Milan and Naples (177). There was very little optimism in Florence that a settlement would be reached quickly. Lorenzo told Filippo Sacramori, the Milanese ambassador in Florence, "qui non se ha opinione alcuna che questa lega habia havere loco per adesso", and Filippo added "et anche lui nolo crede" (178). Milan and Venice were also proving awkward, while "il papa dimandava decime et dimostrandovasi per operarle contro al Turcho, et qui si conosce molto chiaramente gli vuole spendere pure in altro... et a noi qui non piace punto" (179). As a result, Palmieri found himself in an exceptionally weak position at Rome, discovering that most of the issues were being discussed outside Rome, in marked contrast to 1468 when the ambassadors as a group were themselves exercising pressure on the pope alone to change his mind. Nonetheless, the attitude of the Signoria remained appreciative and, referring to the matters of the league, wrote to Palmieri "vi siate governato con prudentia" (180). Despite this consolation, Matteo's resolve to contribute to a solution of this diplomatic conundrum was not strengthened. In 1474, there probably seemed even less likelihood of a settlement being reached than there had been in 1468, and Matteo surely would have recognised this.

Compounded by illness, the desire to be elsewhere stimulated Palmieri in early February to ask the Signoria if he might return. They prevaricated in their reply, understanding, they said, his reasons, yet saying too "dobbiamo avere cura di voi per publico interesse" (181). It is worth remembering that at this stage the matter of the archbishopric

still had not been definitively settled. On February 12, the Signoria told Matteo "iel vostro impedimento habiamo dispiacere et provederemo al bisogno vostro, et aviseretevi altra volta quello habiate a fare" (182). In saying this, the Signoria were being not entirely honest, because the same day they officially proclamed the embassy until the end of the month. Finally, on February 15, Matteo was told "insino da hora havete licentia di ritornarvi libera" (183). Even this was still a week before the appointment of Orsini was confirmed.

In any event, Palmieri chose to stay until the end of the month and, when he left on February 28, it appears that ill health formed only one part of his desire to leave. According to Sacramoro, Matteo "a domando licentia a nostro Signore che non posseria soprastare per non perdere el suo offitio de Volterra, dove ha ad andare al primo de marzo" (184). Sixtus agreed to the request, provided that Giovanni Tornabuoni were given at least provisionally the authority that Matteo possessed, and on the condition that later another ambassador would be sent to take Matteo's place. Sixtus acquiesced, continued Sacramoro:

"vedendo lo vecchio infermo et quasi morto che è stato male, non glie l'ha voluta denegare; et cosi partirà domane che ne haverà parichii di in via cosi è debile et conquassato dal male havuto et de la gotta" (185).

Whatever the combination of reasons for Palmieri's return, ill health, the Captaincy at Volterra, disenchantment with Rome, he must have felt them keenly, thinking the journey worthwhile even in his weakened state. The ambassadorial register noted Palmieri's return on March 9, while Filippo Sacramori mentioned it in a letter of March 12 (186).



To continue Palmieri's work in Rome, the Signoria sent the new archbishop, Rainaldo Orsini. It would seem an indication of the importance accorded to Palmieri's embassy by the Florentines that the man Matteo had helped to gain the prestigious and senior post of archbishop should himself be chosen to follow in his footsteps as an ambassador. In Vespasiano's view, this was certainly the case. He wrote of Matteo:

"andò nell'ultima sua legatione, che già era decrepito, ambasciadore a papa Pagolo, per cose di grandissima importanza, et in questa legatione sodisfece assai al pontefice et alla città che l'aveva mandato" (187).

In the "istruzioni" given to Orsini, Matteo's lack of achievement in the negotiations for peace was spelled out clearly: "Matteo Palmieri tornò senza havere pure ragionato di quello fu richiesto et mandato" (188). With regard to the renewal of the league, Matteo's embassy was not a success. But as Florence did not want to sign the renewal in the first place, this can be perhaps be seen as satisfying the spirit in which he was sent, even if not the precise instructions he was supposed to obey. Through no fault of his own, Rainaldo could do no better. Quite simply, the ambitions and suspicions of the various states precluded any agreement among the former signatories. An Italian league was no longer feasible (189).

Apart from his success with the Sienese over matters of comparatively minor importance, Matteo's chief accomplishment in this embassy was the nomination of Orsini as archbishop, despite the precarious nature of the relationship between Florence and Rome, and in the face of opposition from the supporters of Salviati. His success on this occasion and in these difficult circumstances perhaps sheds light on

the reasons why he was chosen on other occasions when he met with rather less success.

### Conclusions

Having examined the embassies that Palmieri undertook, a few general remarks might be made on some of the more salient points. First of all, it should be said that the sources do not reveal, and cannot be made to reveal, a great deal of information on Matteo's behaviour. Little of the evidence bears directly on the man, and none of these embassies appears to bear an indelible stamp that marks it out as being characteristic of Palmieri's work. The problem is not only the result of an almost complete lack of letters written by Matteo during his embassies. It is also connected to the difficulty of distinguishing between the official tasks that any ambassador would be expected to perform, and the personal initiatives of a particular ambassador. Even so, it is likely that Matteo's character, "non passionato, nè cavilloso", further obscures the issue. If he had been more dynamic and forceful, surely he would have provoked more comment, and then this would have been recorded (190). With this hypothesis in mind, it is pertinent to recall that in 1474 Cioco Simonetta, the Milanese chancellor, asked the Florentines to choose different ambassadors after hearing the names of the two proposed. According to him, the two were "persone apassionate" and therefore not suited to the task in hand (191). On the other hand, it could be argued from this that precisely because Matteo was patient and quiet his embassies have no recognisably consistent features, and that he was fulfilling his function as an ambassador perfectly. This was certainly the view of Vespasiano, the only contemporary writer to comment explicitly on Matteo's embassies. According to him, Matteo had won praise from the Neapolitan ambassadors for his wise counsel (192). In addition,

he wrote more fulsomely of Palmieri "andò ambasciadore in più luoghi, et d'ogni luogo riportò onore, et sodisfece benissimo alla sua comessionioni". Yet Vespasiano's account flatters Matteo; as it was, it seems that events often happened around him, and that he was almost powerless to cause them to take a violently different direction.

The lack of continuity in his embassies makes it difficult to identify a common denominator. If Palmieri had established a stable relationship with one of the cities to which he was sent, and if he had returned there, a known rather than an unknown quantity, it might have been possible to uncover more about him. By visiting five different places in his seven embassies, he acquired a breadth rather than a depth of experience. He was not sufficiently privileged, or talented, to become the resident Florentine representative in one of these cities, unlike, say, Otto Niccolini at Rome, or Tommaso Soderini at Milan. But it is doubtful whether in Matteo's case this was a conscious policy of the Signoria. On the contrary, a number of links can be seen between the different tasks assigned to Palmieri. Sent to confirm Perugian friendship in 1452, he was then instructed to strike up good relations with Alfonso in 1455, besides consolidating his acquaintance with the Perugians on his way south. It seems that in 1468, he was selected to go to the Lunigiana as a result of the role he had played there ten years earlier. In 1473, he was nominated to go to Rome because of his experience in obtaining the renewal of the league in 1468. Yet just as the destinations to which Palmieri was sent altered, so the reasons for which he was sent changed. The absence of continuity in one mirrors the different reasons of the other.

All the same, glimpses of Matteo's character can be seen. His efficient settlement of the Lunigiana dispute in 1458, his frustration in Rome on all three occasions, and his obstinate refusal to go to the Lunigiana in 1468 stand out. His diligence and friendliness appear above all in the material for the embassies in Rome in 1468 and 1473-4, but must always have been present. The general impression is of an ambassador working quietly in the background. Palmieri thus avoided being labelled "scandaloso", but also went without attracting notice. His requests to return in 1455 and 1474, and the frustration he experienced in Rome may indicate that he was not content in this role. On a still more negative note, there seems to have been an element of gullibility or naivety in Matteo which meant that he was not suited to all diplomatic missions. In particular, the events at Naples in 1455 and Sixtus IV's attempt to mislead him are susceptible to such an interpretation. The omission in his Annales of some of these embassies, and the rapid treatment of the others, again may hint at a dissatisfaction felt. It should also be mentioned, though, that Palmieri failed to recount in his Annales important episodes befalling him in Florence; an example is that he was a party to the celebrations surrounding the arrival Galeazzo Maria in Florence in 1459. The point is reinforced by, and his determination is shown in, the tremendous exertions he made to leave Rome in order to take up the Captaincy of Volterra in 1474. There seems no doubt that he preferred the life of Captain of Volterra to that of an ambassador in Rome.

The lack of drive visible in his embassies reflected to some extent Palmieri's position in the ruling group. It is noteworthy that five

of the nine embassies conferred on him came during the years 1466-68. It may have been that the dissidence among the *principalii* caused the faithful, but hardly thrusting, Palmieri to be singled out for higher office. Matteo was only elected to his first embassy after the unrest of 1465-66 had begun; and the other four all came within a short two year period. It seems probable that Piero preferred to rely on a trusted friend at this troubled time, rather than experimenting with men of unproven loyalty. Yet Palmieri should not necessarily be seen as a weak candidate. After all, he was elected as an ambassador on no fewer than five occasions by the Council of One Hundred in these years. Writing to Milan on June 29, 1466, the Signoria noted that they had sent an ambassador to Rome, a "persona bene prudente et d'auctorità nella città nostra" (193). It was probably during this period that Palmieri was closest to the ruling group, and his election as ambassador serves as an illustration of this.

On the other hand, it appears that Cosimo was less inclined to make use of Matteo's talents for diplomacy. This may have been due to a difference of age or character or, more likely, it may have been due to the disappointing circumstances surrounding the first two embassies that Palmieri undertook. During the late 1450s and early 1460s Palmieri was elected to other senior offices in the republic, including the elective posts of Accoppiatore and the Otto di Guardia; the explanation cannot be therefore that he fell from favour. Although Matteo refused two of the commissions that he was elected to undertake for Piero, he repaid the trust placed in him with a greater degree of success in the other three. It is true that the successes did not arrive strictly as a consequence of his efforts, but then neither was he by any means to be held wholly

responsible for the unfortunate outcome of his two embassies in 1452 and 1455. Thus while he was more fortunate in the later years, in the final analysis, Matteo's friendship with Piero during a period when strong opposition was being mounted to the Medicean policies is probably sufficient to account for his repeated selection.

Della Vita Civile

Although Palmieri is known to have participated fully in the political life of his city, he is more usually viewed as a humanist. The first literary production of Palmieri's in which he sought to capitalise on his knowledge of the ancient writers was the Della Vita Civile (1). Palmieri's avowed aim, stated in the preface to the work, is to provide excerpts of classical wisdom in the vernacular, so that those citizens who were not familiar with the ancient languages should not be deprived of classical learning (2). As the title of the treatise suggests, the work discusses the citizen's relationship to the republic, a relationship that Palmieri considers should take precedence over all others (3). The theme is developed through the books, with Palmieri praising the "bene comune", and urging citizens to copy the ancient Romans precepts and to govern the city with foresight and moral probity.

The first of the four books into which the Della Vita Civile is divided derives largely from the Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, and instructs parents on how to raise their sons for them to be able to participate fully in the governing of the republic (4). Poggio had found a complete copy of Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria in 1417, and its emphasis on the education and training suitable for classical Roman statesmen was greeted eagerly by the humanists in Florence (5). Good health and games were encouraged besides music and oratorical training. Books two and three take their inspiration from Cicero's De Officiis, and describe the benefits of the application of the four cardinal virtues by



citizens in a republic, supported with a multiplicity of sententious classical *exempla*. Book three is entirely devoted to the application of justice. It seems that book four, with its own short preface, may have been written slightly later than the other books, and concentrates on "l'utile", covering a wide range of subjects of topical interest in a republic, including mercenaries, trade, agriculture and architecture, and it ends with a vision.

The work was dedicated to Alessandro degli Alessandri, a citizen from a renowned family, who lived in the same gonfalone as Palmieri. Alessandro had been one of Roberto de' Rossi's best students, and had served as a Prior in 1431. The Alessandri was a very wealthy family owning two family palazzi, seven other houses and 25 farms (6). Even more distinguished was Agnolo Pandolfini, the principal character in the dialogue, who also lived in the same gonfalone as Matteo. He had been on numerous ambassadorial missions, visiting the papacy in 1425 and the emperor in 1432. In 1430, he had sat on the Dieci di Balìa, and had been Gonfaloniere di Giustizia three times, the last occasion being in 1431 (7). Agnolo was well liked by humanists, and later featured in the dialogue "Della Tranquillità dell'Animo" written by Alberti. According to Vespasiano di Bisticci, Bruni submitted all his works to Agnolo before allowing anybody else to read them. Vespasiano held that Agnolo, a man of great integrity, "in all his advice always counselled the universal good of his republic" (8). The two young citizens, Franco Saccetti and Luigi Gulciardini, to whom Agnolo was addressing his instruction, were also from eminent Florentine families, though they themselves had not yet established individual reputations. By the prevailing Florentine criteria,

the qualifications of these men to enter into a discussion on the nature of civic life were impeccable.

The decision to write the treatise in the form of a dialogue reveals a desire to embrace in the Della Vita Civile the successful characteristics of other dialogues. Both Plato and Cicero had written works as dialogues, and the form had been employed by several humanists, including Bruni and Poggio and latterly by Alberti. Indeed, the latest examination of the autograph of the Della Vita Civile shows that it was not initially Palmieri's intention to write a dialogue, but that he attempted somewhat hurriedly to change the structure of his treatise, already written, into that form (9). Evidently Palmieri gave considerable thought to the presentation of his ideas, and wished to relate them closely to the latest literary trends; although the anecdotal style is well suited to the dialogue form, Matteo does not take full advantage of it, and the dialogue still bears more than a passing resemblance to a treatise. There is for instance no disagreement among the characters, the elderly and experienced Pandolfini being permitted to develop his ideas without any rigorous questioning by his young audience.

Like Boccaccio, Matteo sets the dialogue in the Mugello and explains that an outbreak of plague in Florence has caused Pandolfini, Sacketti and Guicciardini to flee the city. He chose the date as 1430, a year in which the plague recurred in Florence (10). In the discussions, there are oblique references to matters of topical interest in the city, but none seem manifestly to post date 1430. For this reason, most of the political background provided in this chapter to the Della Vita Civile is

drawn from the circumstances in Florence in the late 1420s and, because the references are only oblique, and the situation did not change fundamentally, up to 1433.

It is difficult to establish precisely when Matteo wrote the work. Yet the likelihood that the Della Vita Civile was written in the three or four years immediately after 1430 seems faint. The soundest evidence for a later date comes from a manuscript dated 1440, which was copied from the undated autograph version of the Della Vita Civile (11). According to one scholar, Palmieri's handwriting changes in one particular after 1436, and the autograph of the Della Vita Civile is written entirely in the new style (12). Moreover, the choice of characters, admittedly one of the later additions to the work, seems to have had its inspiration in Matteo's membership of the Balìa in 1438. Alessandro degli Alessandri, Pandolfini, Sachetti and Guicciardini all sat on this Balìa, too, and none of them sat on the Balìa of 1434 (13). While coincidence cannot *a priori* be ruled out, it does seem most probable that Matteo added the names of his fellow citizens to his treatise only after the Balìa of 1438 had started its work. It is likely that the last book of the Della Vita Civile was written after the first three books had been circulated among friends, allowing Palmieri to change whatever his friends advised before releasing the work publicly (14). A protracted period of composition occupying all or part of the years between 1436 and 1439 is therefore suggested.

Palmieri's links with the humanist circle in Florence are hard to establish for any period during his life. For whatever reasons, his

was not a name that was frequently noted down as one who attended or participated in the discussions of the humanist group. A few references are made to Palmieri's presence, but often his name is sought in vain. At a later stage of his career, his political commitments may have made it difficult for him to attend. Vespasiano mentions that Franco Sacchetti gave parties twice a year to which he invited humanists, and he provides a list of names of those present. Despite Matteo's inclusion of Franco as a character in the Della Vita Civile, and the fact that they attended the *pratiche* together, Palmieri's name does not appear among them (15). It is possible that Vespasiano did not recall all the names of those who were present at these meetings. Yet from other references to Matteo, such as his name being used in a Foggio dialogue in the mid 1440s, and the choice of Matteo to give the funeral oration to Marsuppini in 1453, it is plain that he must have been an important figure among the humanists (16).

Palmieri's teachers were Sozomeno, Ambrogio Traversari and Carlo Marsuppini (17). According to Leonardo Dati, Sozomeno was Matteo's earliest teacher, and taught him "grammatica et rhetorica" (18). According to Vespasiano da Bisticci, Sozomeno taught a number of the sons of leading Florentine families, including Pandolfo di messer Gianozzo Pandolfini, Bartolomeo di messer Palla di Nofri Strozzi and Francesco di Paolo Vettori; which, if any, of these were taught at the same time as Matteo is not recorded. It is not clear when he received his education, but by the time that the Della Vita Civile was written, Sozomeno was no longer teaching Matteo, since the reference made to him in the work is in the past tense (19). Dati also mentions that Matteo later learned Latin and Greek from Traversari and Marsuppini. Yet Matteo's knowledge of

Greek was at best hazy and there is no evidence that he ever read classical works in Greek. In all probability, Palmieri attended the humanist discussions which took place in the cloisters of Santa Maria degli Angeli, the convent of the Camaldulensians, of which Traversari was first a monk and since 1431 the general (20). Ties between Palmieri and Traversari are equally obscure; the copious correspondence of Traversari does not contain a single letter to or from Matteo (21). Franco Sachetti was also a pupil of Marsuppini, who was on the Studio's board of governors in 1431. In 1434, Marsuppini presented his Consolatoria to Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici on the death of their mother, an act indicative of his close friendship with the brothers (22). Traversari was also close to Cosimo de' Medici (23). Other links are equally difficult to trace; there is likewise no surviving correspondence between Matteo and Poggio (24). But Vespasiano does record one instance of Palmieri being present at a debate where he preferred to stay silent rather than to join in the spirit of humanist disputation, "per reverentia di chi avea parlato" (25). It seems that Palmieri may have preferred courtesy to discussion.

Nevertheless, by the late 1430s, there is adequate evidence of Matteo's interest in humanism and the literary world. Possibly the duty of raising his brothers' children - his brother Bartolomeo had died in 1424 - caused him to value the importance of a good education, and the difficulties of teaching children. In 1429 Matteo himself copied a text by Plautus, only to sell it reluctantly afterwards to a member of the chancery of the Duke of Ferrara, indicating that by 1429 he had developed more than a passing interest in Roman literature (26). In 1431, two years

after Bruni had finished the first six books of his Florentine history, Matteo started to write a chronicle, the Annales, to which he added entries every few months. Obviously both Matteo's passive and active interest in literature had been stimulated by the the early 1430s.

Additional evidence of Matteo's interest in classical reading and contemporary political problems is contained in his Annales, for at the back of the Annales, quite separate, but bound together with the history, there is a collection of aphorisms and moral advice, taken from classical writers (27). Most come from Livy's history or <sup>Cicero's</sup> letters, but Seneca, Aristotle and Sallust are also quoted, all with precise references. One saying attributed to Plato is given without its provenance: "Platonis sententia est florere civitates si aut philosophi imperarent, aut imperantes philosopharentur" (28). The maxims are all written in Latin, and are entitled "Sententie ad Civilitatem". They occupy both sides of a single sheet of paper, and deal with numerous aspects of interest to a moralist living in a troubled republic. None of the maxims seems to have been used in writing the Della Vita Civile, though they deal with topics and themes familiar to Florentines. The subjects of the aphorisms include power, war and peace, sedition, the public good, concord and friendship (29). One of Livy's *dicta*, present in this collection, that "melior tutiorque est certa pax quam sperata victoria", was also used by Giovanni di Messer Donato Barbadori in a debate on the war against the Visconti in December 1423, indicating perhaps the sort of use to which Matteo might have been able to put these maxims (30). The date of composition is uncertain. The appearance of maxims on war and peace under two separate but identical headings suggests that Matteo probably jotted them down as

he was reading, and that therefore the maxims were not all written at the same time. After 1434, these topics were not so fiercely debated, suggesting a date in the early 1430s. The writing of a contemporary chronicle and the collection of political and moral aphorisms indicates once more Palmieri's inquisitiveness about the political aspects of humanism and about the contemporary political scene.

One further event will have focussed Palmieri's mind on at least one of the subjects dealt with in the Della Vita Civile, and that was his term as Gonfaloniere di Compagnia in 1437. On that occasion, he gave a *protesto*, a speech on justice before the Signoria and foreign justice officials (31). In itself, the delivery of a *protesto* was a regular event, and many of the speeches survive, among them those given by Matteo and his father (32). That many of the same phrases occur Matteo's *protesto* and in the Della Vita Civile, confirms that by 1437 Palmieri's thoughts had already turned to the problems later tackled in the Della Vita Civile (33).

So far as Matteo's political awareness is concerned, the participation of his father and uncle in communal office was perhaps the most important aspect of these years. Marco, Matteo's father, sat in the Priorate in 1427, having been drawn for the Otto di Guardia in 1424 (34). Francesco, Matteo's uncle, was more successful, sitting among the Priors in 1431, among the Dodici Duonoomini in 1435, and in 1432 he was a Gonfaloniere di Compagnia. Twice in the latter half of the 1420s he held external posts of great importance - as Podestà of Prato in 1427, and as Captain of Volterra in 1429 (35). In addition, Marco and Francesco were

extremely active in the Medici and Speciale guild, which was one of the prestigious major guilds. There were 6 guild consuls at any one time, and a term of office lasted four months, giving 18 positions to be filled during the course of a single year. From 1414, one or other of the two brothers held office as consul of the guild every year until 1429, with the sole exception of 1421, an achievement unrivalled within the guild. Matteo was consul for the first time in 1436, and sat again in 1439 (36). Thus Matteo's family background was one of political and guild participation. Matteo himself held his first communal office in 1432, and his second in 1433, before sitting on the Balie of 1434 and 1438. In 1437, as noted, he was drawn as one of the Gonfalonieri di Compagnia (37). Although Matteo's own experience of politics may not have been very great when he wrote the Della Vita Civile, it is evident that his family was fully involved in Florentine political life and gave dedicated service to the republic.

In other ways, too, Matteo had come into contact with the republic's administration. When his father Marco died in 1428, Matteo became the head of the household. As a consequence, he was responsible not only for running the apothecary's shop that had belonged to Marco, but also for paying taxes. Judging by his *catasto* returns for these years, he was paying enormous sums in dues. Between November 1428 and December 1435, Palmieri paid a gross total of 3466 florins in taxes, of which 1254 florins were notionally or actually repaid to him by the republic in the same period (38). As one of the top 4% of all Florentine taxpayers in 1427, Matteo will have been well aware of the problems of maintaining the family patrimony intact, and equally conscious of the



reasons for antipathy to the regime (39). In his *Ricordi*, Matteo noted not only the sums that he was paying to the republic, but also the total amount of revenue that the republic was trying to raise with each particular measure; there is no other extant source, either public or private, which consistently provides this information, and it testifies once more to Palmieri's remarkable interest in matters involving the republic.

Nor was Matteo untouched by the factionalism present in Florentine politics. Indeed, in August 1433 he married into a family, the Serragli, that was probably more sympathetic to the Albizzi cause than to the Medici. Matteo's own allegiance is not easily determined, for the evidence is circumstantial rather than direct. The Palmieri lived in the gonfalone of Chiavi, the gonfalone in the Medicean quarter of San Giovanni containing the palace of the Albizzi. "There appear to have been few obviously neutral families in San Giovanni; as both parties by 1434 had their focus in that quarter, its residents probably felt the need to manifest a decided allegiance to one group or the other" writes the most recent and authoritative scholar of the struggle for power in Florence in 1434 (40). It is suggestive that Matteo married into the the Oltrarno banking family of the Serragli, which had close links with many of the exiles (41). Niccolò d'Agnolo Serragli, the father of Niccolosa, Matteo's bride, had himself married Lisa, who happened to be the daughter of Messer Jacopo Gianfigliuzzi, one of the most prominent Albizzi supporters (42). Yet none of the Serragli family was exiled in 1434, though most members were deprived of their political rights in 1444 (43). On the other hand, as another of the Serragli clan, a daughter of Francesco di

Vanozzo Serragli, was married in 1433 to the staunch Medicean Ugolino di Niccolò Martelli, the situation is not altogether clear (44). Turning to other evidence, the chronicle kept by Matteo, the Annales, has five blank pages left for the year 1433, and Matteo recommences the narrative in September 1434 with the drawing of a Signoria favourable to the Medici (45). While nothing conclusive can be deduced from this blank space, in all probability the decision not to write anything about the exile of the Medici and the Albizzi was motivated by strong political allegiance. One Albizzi supporter, having recorded the exile of the Medici and his aristocratic sympathies in his *ricordi*, seems later to have cancelled his entry for 1433, perhaps out of fear of being incriminated by this evidence on the return of the Medici in 1434 (46). Matteo's decision might have been motivated by similar considerations. At all events, Matteo cannot have been ignorant of the difficult choices being forced upon the inhabitants of Florence by the strength of factions; indeed, on the contrary, it seems as though he himself was caught up on the outer edges of factionalism.

All the main issues discussed in the Della Vita Civile had arisen before 1430, and the idea itself of discussing how best to govern the republic was debated openly and fully in the period before 1434. By relating the political background in Florence to aspects of the Della Vita Civile, it is hoped that a broad account of the circumstances surrounding the genesis of the work will be provided.

War broke out against Milan in 1423 and 36,000 florins in forced loans were immediately sought to pay for the army (4). There was

scant enthusiasm for the measure and it passed the councils only after several rejections. Soon the costs of the war had risen from 30,000 florins each month to 50,000, and Giovanni de' Medici predicted that the victor would be "whoever obtains the most money" (48). Opposition to the expensive war was widespread, and many Florentines were bitter about the inadequate leadership provided. In spring 1425, there was an ill-conceived conspiracy to kill any members of the *reggimento* who happened to be in the Mercato Nuovo (49). Later in the year, damning evidence of the inadequacy of the leadership appeared as Florentine mercenaries were defeated in six successive battles against Milan. The treaty with Venice brought concern in Florence about how the cash necessary to fulfill the Florentine obligations under the treaty was to be raised (50). Despite the introduction of the more equitable *catasto* in 1427, and the ratification of a peace treaty with Filippo Maria Visconti in April 1428, the city did not regain its former tranquillity. Indeed, the disruptive effects of the war only served to intensify the rivalry for office with its accompanying benefits since, as taxation was heavy and there were few opportunities for financial enterprise, tenure of office constituted both a key means of retaining prestige and of possibly acquiring some financial benefit ("utile"). It additionally provided a means for some citizens of exercising a degree of control over the direction of the war (51). It is all the more surprising, therefore, that war was declared on Lucca in late 1429, a war which lasted until 1433.

In the Della Vita Civile, Palmieri condemned war as "bestiale e crudo", saying that it was only to be waged as a last resort (52). Every effort should be made to preserve peace, and only after every

procedure has been exhausted should war be declared. When waging war, the aim should always be to use it as a tool for winning peace. Moreover, Matteo holds that wars should be waged with the same regard to justice as the republic is governed (53). Palmieri's reluctance to initiate a warlike campaign is very much emphasised, though he does concede that war is permissible if it is used to recapture what an enemy has taken, or if used in defence of or to avenge violent injury so that public dignity may be preserved (54). Although Palmieri makes no reference to recent events, it is hard to avoid drawing the inference that he is criticizing implicitly the recent wars waged by Florence. The likelihood that Palmieri's views result from his experience of living through the ten year period of war is increased by an allusion he makes to the Roman custom of declaring war. He observes that the Roman Senate declared war using a particular formula and that peace was also agreed according to a special formula. It was thus forbidden for a single soldier to fight the enemy if war had not been formally declared, and offenders were punished much more severely than those who refused to fight the enemy (55). As in 1429 Florence's *condottiere*, Niccolò Fortebraccio, attacked Lucca without the express support of the Florentine government, and thus precipitated the war against Lucca, Palmieri may well have had this incident in mind (56). As a result of the inclusion of this Roman custom, it seems highly probable that Palmieri was in fact critical of the wars waged by Florence.

The key aspect of waging war was the enormous sums of money that it required. For the salaries of mercenaries alone, the Florentine fisc was disbursing over 400,000 florins in 1424, 550,000 florins in 1426

and almost 450,000 florins in 1427 (57). In 1380 the public debt stood at about 1,000,000 florins, yet by the mid 1420s, it had grown to 2,500,000 florins, necessitating interest payments of over 150,000 florins each year (58). Most of the money to defray the costs of war was raised from direct taxation in the form of *prestanze*, since gabelles failed to cover even the peacetime running costs of the republic (59). As taxes were demanded with ever greater frequency, the ability and willingness of the Florentines to pay decreased. In 1423-4, taxes yielded about 80% of their expected income, but by 1427, despite the *catasto*, which represented an attempt to distribute the burden of taxation more fairly, this figure had dropped to about 50 or 60% (60). Thus during this period, the Florentine republic was in great need of finance.

Matteo sees taxation as a necessary evil, where the chief problem concerns its fair imposition, a problem made all the more difficult since citizens do not reveal the true value of their possessions (61). As in the waging of war, it is the issue of justice which most influences Palmieri's consideration. Unable to devise a method which is scrupulously fair, Matteo proposes that the least unjust criteria be applied because fair taxation is the one of the key methods of preserving civic unity (62). Without referring to recent events in Florence, Matteo announces that "*sia insomma quello ordine in distribuire graveze sopra qualunque altro lodato, il quale le particolari sustanze de' cittadini parimente consuma*" (63). In effect, this is how the *catasto* worked; that is, after the deduction of certain allowances, a percentage of the value of every household's possessions was demanded. Palmieri was thus endorsing the method of raising taxes adopted by the Florentines in 1427.

Given the large sums that he was paying in taxes in these years, this is rather surprising, but bears witness to the strength of Palmieri's beliefs that the republic should come before private interests.

Yet Palmieri does not link money raised through taxation to payment for wars. On the contrary, he suggests that a system of public subsidies be established, which would make payments to the infirm, the young and the elderly. Those claiming fraudulently would be expelled from the city, while citizens who made their wealth honestly were to be praised and encouraged (64). At this date, charitable organisations provided some relief for the old and sick, but Palmieri's proposal of continual public subsidies goes further than other schemes and constitutes one of the most original suggestions in the work (65). It is innovative in being open to everyone who is either infirm or of an age which makes work impossible, and in desiring action by the republic beyond regulating the activities of and defending its inhabitants, and in seeking to give long term assistance to its weaker members. Palmieri includes this section in the book on justice, and he expects that in the future the republic will benefit from the young, and he recalls that the elderly have passed the prosperous stage of life and because of their age can no longer support themselves. Yet in this paragraph, Palmieri does not allude to the concept of justice, or to God, or to any written authority. He does, however, refer to the "bene civile", to the "patria", to the "città", and uses the adjective "publico", all of which suggests that Matteo saw the pragmatic good, and also the responsibility, of the republic as the justification, or inspiration, for his proposal, rather than religion, or an abstract concept of justice, or a classical writer.

The stress that Matteo laid on the supreme importance of the republic's interests recurs frequently throughout the work.

Conscious of the threat posed by factions to the existing political life of the city, citizens were united in trying formally to prevent their spread. On several occasions oaths were sworn protesting allegiance to the republic, and in 1429 a law was passed forbidding actions which had arisen from partisanship (66). A new magistracy, the Conservatori delle Leggi, had also been established in 1429 to investigate allegations concerning membership of secret societies; if proved, the citizen was denied access to civic office (67). As the accusations could be made anonymously, this office served to increase the divisions between the citizens, rather than removing them (68). In one case, allegations were investigated regarding Tommaso Soderini who was accused of plotting to murder Niccolò da Uzzano (69). Blame for the war and its consequences was laid on the Medici party. No denials were publicly forthcoming, possibly because the war was popular in some quarters, and possibly because it was thought that the war would not last long (70). Yet the political situation grew steadily worse. In 1429, Volterra revolted over demands for money, and other Florentine subject territories also rebelled (71). With the death of Niccolò da Uzzano early in 1432, the conservative faction lost an experienced politician and a voice of moderation, thus bestowing greater responsibility on the impulsive Rinaldo degli Albizzi (72). While dissatisfaction mounted, the calls for civic union were disregarded, and the single-minded pursuit of overall authority eventually resulted in the exiling of the Medici, shortly after peace with Lucca had been agreed in May 1433.

The presence of factions in the city was particularly perturbing because it recalled past incidents in Florentine history which had been resolved in a brutal and violent manner. The *dugento* battles between Guelfs and Ghibellines, and between Blacks and Whites had caused deaths, and had led to penalties of exile, and to the destruction and sequestration of family property. More recently, the *ammonizioni* delivered by the Parte Guelfa in the 1370s before the war of the Eight Saints were remembered, as was the Ciompi revolt which occurred subsequently. For the most part, factions did not develop around differences of approach to the crucial matters of taxation and war, but developed rather through the insidious corruption of those exercising power and influence while legitimately holding office. Giovanni Cavalcanti noted bitterly that "the comune was governed more over meals and in private than in the Palazzo della Signoria; many were elected to office and few to government. It seemed to me clear that this was the case, and from such abominable arrogance there followed great evil in the republic" (73). Matteo too wished for honest government, demanding that magistrates should follow the laws, that citizens should put the good of the republic before their own, and considered that unjust government was the prime cause of discord and sedition (74).

One of Palmieri's key concerns in the *Della Vita Civile* is to stress the supremacy of the state over personal, family and partisan interests. He recalls "la detestabile et crudele divisione de' Guelfi et Ghibellini fu quella che anticamente submerse il popolo che abundantemente fioriva", and conveys his disdain of those who "provocorono in loro difesa nelle parti d'Italia, disiderando più tosto



servire alle barbare et sfrenate generationi che vivere in ella propria città dove regissino i loro medesimi cittadini" (75). He fears that "la libertà, lo stato et publica maiestà" would be given to foreigners, as when Charles of Valois had arrived in Florence, and as when Walter, Duke of Athens, was invited to govern Florence (76). More recent examples are not given, and are not needed; without touching on more recent divisions in Florence, Palmieri signals his anxiety. Matteo's answer to the problem is that whoever occupies public office should set to one side his own interests, and should "difendere la dignità et sommo honore della publica maiestà, servare la legge, di buoni ordini provvedere, tutta la città conservare..." (77). It was the duty of the office holder to display impartiality, and the ordinary citizen should always seek "pace et cose tranquille et honeste" and "sempre preporre l'honore, l'utile, et bene della patria alle commodità proprie" (78). In this way, the republic would never be commandeered for private gain, but would retain its own identity and integrity. Palmieri went beyond passive obedience to the republic, and stressed the value of participation. "S'aferma di tutte l'opere humane niuna n'essere più prestante, maggiore, nè più degna, che quella se exercita per acrescimento et salute della patria" (79). The abstract concept of the republic is replaced by the qualities possessed by the men who govern it:

"alla conservatione delle quali (repubbliche) maximamente sono atti gl'huomini virtuosi. Et sopra ogni altra virtù a si facta conservatione è necessaria iustitia, senza la quale niuna città nè alcuno stato o publico reggimento può perdurare" (80).

Justice consists of two precepts - the first is that nobody should be harmed, and the second is that "cose publice" should be communal, and used by all, and "le private (cose)" the owner should use as his own (81).

If pursued these beliefs of Palmieri would leave no place for factions in the republic, and would prevent them from recurring.

Yet both sides had a vested interest in failing to control the spread and the deepening of factionalism as each hoped to derive substantial benefits from it. These benefits had been increasing over the years because of a tendency to bring under communal jurisdiction a number of functions which previously the republic had not executed. Gradually some offices of the republic were acquiring powers which they did not formerly possess. Probably the main reason for this was the need to find money to pay for war, but the result was that new powers were introduced, and old ones augmented, which increasingly gave officials an option or duty of intervening in the citizens' lives. The compilation of *catasto* returns provides a ready, but not the sole, example. In 1421, the office of Sea Consuls had been set up to promote Florentine trade and shipping; in 1422, it drew up a list ~~a list~~ of all the trades and businesses on Florentine territory to discover why they were not flourishing (82). In 1424, a team of special accountants commissioned by the commune revealed that 100,000 florins worth of communal property was in private hands (83). In its search for resources and for more efficient use of them, the government sought both more information about the holdings and behaviour of its citizens, and to regulate many aspects of their life. That the measures taken were not only financial is borne out by new laws regarding homosexuality and sumptuary legislation (84).

As their fortunes became more tightly linked to those of the city, citizens took a greater interest in the republic. Institutions such

as the Monte delle Doti, founded in 1424, encouraged financial investment in the republic, and meant that the citizens were able to identify even more with the republic (85). In an effort to put an end to the unrest in Florence and to stimulate patriotism in the citizens, a large number of civic celebrations were organised or promoted in the city from 1426 to 1429 (86).

The Della Vita Civile contains ideas for the present and practices from the past. The section on taxation in the Della Vita Civile which approves of the taxation which "parimente consuma" the wealth of the citizens assumes that there is a means of calculating the value of a citizen's belongings. It does not, however, outline the existing Florentine practice of a citizen completing a declaration of his holdings, and it does not suggest any other method of investigating a citizen's wealth. While Palmieri emphasises strongly the important role of justice and the law, he often assumes that every citizen possesses a high degree of self discipline and an awareness of the city's needs. He does not therefore suggest that the republic's administration should investigate its citizens.

On the other hand, Matteo expects citizens to devote themselves selflessly to the republic. When discussing marriage and children, he comments "utile cosa è avere generato figliuoli, cresciuto il popolo et dato cittadini alla patria" (87). Nowhere does Palmieri suggest that citizens should consciously contribute to the glory of the city by building magnificent palaces or by other shows of extravagance. Nevertheless, he is aware that "tali cose sono attissime all'universale

ornamento della città et fanno la bellezza civile, della quale seguira grandezza, stima et utile civile" (88). All the citizens actions take place within the wider context of the community, and their value is primarily dependent on their usefulness to the community:

"...né liberale né magnifico può essere colui che non ha da spendere, iusto né forte non sarà mai chi in solitudine vivera, non experimentato né exercitato in cose che importino et in governi et facti appartenenti a' più. La virtù non è mai perfecta dove ella non è richista..." (89).

The implication is that if the citizens volunteer their labour, talents and wealth, the republic will not be required to examine the value of their belongings. There do not appear to be even oblique references in the Della Vita Civile either to the Monte delle Doti or to civic celebrations. Palmieri concentrates on the citizen's obligations to the republic and not the responsibilities of a republic towards its citizens.

While a study of some of the significant political events in Florence may shed light on some of the topics that Palmieri wrote about in the Della Vita Civile, it does not explain the choices he made regarding the presentation of his ideas. In an effort to tackle this tricky area, firstly the nature of the strictly political discourse in Florence will be examined, and then aspects of contemporary humanist writing will be discussed.

The transcriptions of the debates held in the *pratiche* provide a detailed record of the political discussions that took place in Florence in the late 1420s and early 1430s. In order to establish the backdrop against which the Della Vita Civile is to be viewed, both the manner of presentation and the contents of these speeches are valuable. Political

poems and literature help to supplement and to broaden the field of inquiry, and will also be under scrutiny.

The political development with the most serious internal implications in Florence in the latter half of the 1420s was that of factionalism. Although its causes were perceived in different ways, it came to dominate the Florentine political scene. In his istorie Fiorentine, Cavalcanti related a speech purportedly given by Rinaldo degli Albizzi in 1426 in the church of Santo Stefano (90). While it is questionable whether the meeting actually took place, the content of the speech reflects so faithfully the viewpoint of the aristocratic faction as revealed in other documents that it may be used as a convenient starting place (91). By stressing many of the traditional rallying cries of the aristocrats, Rinaldo expresses his contempt for the *gente nuova* and the artisans. They participated in communal politics, but were unworthy to do so, since they were former serfs from outside Florence, were ignorant and uncivilised, and sought to overthrow their former masters. Besides their low social status, their behaviour, once admitted to the *reggimento*, was intolerable to the aristocrats since they voted in favour of wars to which they contributed little by way of taxes, and voted against bills introducing tax relief, leaving the aristocracy to bear the brunt of the costs. Thus the presence of the *gente nuova* was not only unwarranted but also detrimental. Rinaldo continued by telling the meeting that the aristocrats were "the commune, the glory and the wisdom" of Florence, and that they were experienced in government, which belonged to them and which they had inherited from their ancestors.

Tenure of office by the *gente nuova* angered the aristocrats and there was considerable competition between the two groups to sit in the republic's magistracies. An anonymous poem found affixed to the door of the Palazzo della Signoria in 1426 warned of the threat posed by the *gente nuova* who already controlled almost all the important decisions with their votes. In the words of the poem, thought to be written by Niccolò d'Uzzano, the *gente nuova*:

"... son già tanto forti su nel coro  
 Del bel Palagio con le bianche e nere,  
 Che poco men che tutto il cerchio è loro" (92).

The issue of competition for office was raised several times in the *pratiche* in the late 1420s and early 1430s. Galileo Galilei diagnosed the problem thus in February 1431: "the tax burden has now been shared out well by the *catasta*; the problem lies in distributing offices" (93). It was recognised that the factions split precisely on the subject of which group was to dominate in government. In January 1429, Dino di Messer Guccio Gucci had offered his analysis of the problem in a *pratica*, saying "the difference lies between those who in attempting to regain their former position suffer harm, and they who seek the promotion of those who occasioned this harm" (94). Numerous changes were rung on this theme of the distribution of offices, ranging through questions of competition, ambition, profit, honour and suspicion. In a debate in February 1431 Rinaldo degli Albizzi proclaimed "the real cause is the ambition for office because everyone wants to lend support; other causes are the suspicious people and the gainsayers", while Luca degli Albizzi considered that profit and honour were the two causes of factionalism (95). Diagnosis of the condition did not, however, help the citizens in their search for a remedy.

Different solutions were proposed by various citizens. The problem was always viewed as one affecting the whole city; consequently institutions that pertained only to certain groups of citizens were not seen to be relevant. Thus the guilds, the Parte Guelfa, the quarters and the gonfaloni were not seen to be agencies through which civic concord could be obtained, while hope was placed in the binding quality of obligations incurred by law. The citizens had realised the gravity of the political circumstances and, sensing that Florentine experience was inadequate, they started to look beyond Florentine history. The solutions proposed can be divided into four separate groups.

One solution was to outlaw secret societies and to introduce a new scrutiny. When the new scrutiny was undertaken in 1428, it was feared that too many new men would be included in the bags, and traditional aspects of citizens' qualifications were exalted by some of the more conservative speakers in the *pratiche*. In particular, Giovanni Morelli urged that attention should be paid to the Guelfs and the "populares" and Marcello Strozzi desired that all those who had previously enjoyed civic office should be included (96). Yet even after the scrutiny, discontent remained and was voiced in the *pratiche* that sortition was being abandoned for some offices. Indeed, Morelli felt that it was demeaning "that this issue of scrutinies is so frequently debated" (97). Because the scrutiny had not curbed the activities of the factions, other methods were sought, and in January 1429, an oath was proposed and sworn that hatreds and past injuries would be forgotten, that partisanship would be laid aside, and that only the welfare and honour and greatness of the Republic and of the Parte Guelfa and of the Signoria would be considered

(98). Almost 700 citizens signed the oath, which again favoured the maintenance of the *status quo*.

A fortnight later, there was another discussion over the composition of the electoral bags, and in the same month (February 1429) it was decided to establish a new magistracy that would be responsible for investigating the links with factions of the citizens who were due to take up a communal office (99). The discussion on the bags, the swearing of the oath and the setting up of the Conservatori delle Leggi reveals the desire to overcome factions by using legislation. But it was recognised that it was not enough simply to introduce a new law; the law had to be obeyed and applied. Luca degli Albizzi considered "observentur leges, et fiat iustitia inter et extra ..." and all would be well (100).

Palmieri in the Della Vita Civile emphasises the importance of both laws and justice, devoting the whole of book three to justice. Indeed, he calls justice the "empress" of the virtues, and held that without justice "no city or state or public regime could last", and that every stable community was founded on it (101). Like Luca degli Albizzi, he also holds that observance of the law is of fundamental importance: "l'observare delle leggi in ciascuna città è la prima utilità et fermo stabilimento di qualunque stato" (102). Although Palmieri is here drawing on Cicero's De Officiis, it is evident that the sentiment attuned well with the Florentines' legalistic approach to constitutional problems. There is no explicit reference to the problems posed by scrutinies in the Della Vita Civile, but Palmieri does say, like Aristotle, that citizens should be chosen for government on the basis of their "virtù"; thus he



thinks wise men should hold office, and not necessarily those of noble birth. The impression gained from his exposition is that noble birth is irrelevant; Matteo states quite clearly at one point "non sia alcuno che sdegni essere governato da' virtuosi benchè sieno in infirmo luogo et di stirpe ignota nati" (103). A belief of this nature was not likely to be found among those supporting the Albizzi faction, but Palmieri indicates elsewhere in the Della Vita Civile that only men suited to government should be permitted to govern and that he did not consider that shoemakers were fit to participate in government (104). Such a view might have been found among the aristocratic supporters of the Albizzi faction. On this matter, Matteo's views are not entirely consistent.

In the second type of solution, faith was proclaimed in the spontaneous ability of the citizens to find a way of settling their differences, rather than just regulating them. On several occasions, it was suggested in a *pratica* that a group of citizens should examine the appropriate issue so that a suitable cure could be prescribed. In January 1429, Giovanni di Luigi Guicciardini counselled "in order fully to understand the matter, several citizens together with the major offices should be chosen to examine and consider the matter, and once they have understood it, they will be able to apply suitable remedies" (105). Two years later in February 1431 Galileo Galilei suggested "good citizens should be elected to discuss and prepare, because the matter is dangerous" (106). To delegate citizens to examine the problem was a common response in times of danger, and indicates how seriously the Florentines regarded the situation; later in the century, they saw themselves as powerless to influence events and often decided that they

would allow time to take its course in the hope that with the passage of time the problem would diminish or disappear (107). Moreover, it indicates that the Florentines perceived problems as being capable of solution if thought were given to the correct response.

On the other hand, there were occasions when the solution proposed was far from concrete, and the name of God or Christ was invoked to provide a point of reference. The aim was still to achieve civic concord. In the *pratica* of 25 January 1429, Lorenzo de' Ridolfi considered that greater respect for the Priors would help to diminish factionalism, and thus he urged "as one God is to be adored, so you Lord Priors are to be venerated by all citizens: and whoever pays respect to others is taking an idol; and is to be damned ..." (108). In the same debate, Giovanni Morelli suggested a Biblical parallel "Christ stood in the middle of his disciples and said 'Peace be with you!' Thus you, Lord Priors etc" (109). Often God himself was linked directly to a key abstract quality, such as unity or justice. In July 1431, one of the speakers declared "God is the republic, and who governs the republic governs God. Similarly, God is justice, and whoever administers justice, does God's work" (110). It was seen that Christian behaviour by the citizens would cause the current difficulties to vanish, and it was felt that inadequate respect was being shown to the city's magistrates; Morelli seems to be suggesting too that the Priors should take more positive action. God was also seen to participate indirectly in the city's affairs even if he himself did not represent an abstract concept. Giuliano Davanzati remarked on his suggestion that a few worthy citizens should discuss the divisions in the city and find a remedy: "if this is done

honestly and without passion, union and concord will follow, with the help of God" (111). While these comparisons were to some extent a debating device, employed to reinforce the point being made, they also provided inspiration for Florentine citizens in their adversity, and gave them hope and strength of purpose. Galileo Galilei observed as much in 1424, noting "and we, as Job taught us, must have hope and bold hearts" (112). The comparisons are also revealing of the high standards that the Florentine citizens set for themselves in office.

But the search for comparisons which might offer some valuable insights into how best to tackle the problems besetting the citizens went further still. In their effort to harness as much experience as possible, to draw maximum advantage for the city, the Florentine politicians also referred to examples from Roman history. During the second decade of the fifteenth century, the Florentine statesmen had begun to adopt this facet of eloquence (113). Galileo Galilei noted in 1424:

"among other great and praiseworthy sayings written about the Roman Populus, two are memorable: that in adversity souls are not made smaller and in prosperity are not exalted; and that the magnanimous were greater in adversity than in prosperity" (114).

More practical in his parallel drawn from Roman history was Galileo Mangioni, who considered that the way to drive away factionalism was for the "populares", "both good and old, to observe each other in turn and to strike at those who do not want to acquiesce to justice, as was done in Rome with the urban gangs" (115). Use of historical *exempla* to illustrate a political argument can be found outside the debating chamber; in itself, this is not particularly remarkable since, after all, the fashion for it had not started there. In a political poem, the "rimolatio di Messer

Antonio di Palagio", written after the Florentine military defeat at Zagonara in 1424, one quatrain reads:

"Brenno, Pirro, Annibale, o chi venne  
 Più fier, per tór stato,  
 Mai gli fu adomandato  
 Concordia, in qual fu maggior stretta" (116).

Other examples of references to ancient Roman literature or heroes could also be cited from the poem. The reply to this poem by Domenico da Prato likewise includes classical references (117). Thus there appears to have been an awareness by Florentines that classical references were appropriate when they discussed their own political views and circumstances. To try to derive some benefit from the vicarious experience was one reason for seeking out the parallels. Another was to place the Florentine circumstances in perspective. By seeing that others had endured and survived similar tests, the Florentines themselves were inspired to overcome their immediate difficulties. It is possible, too, that this broader vision enabled the Florentines to assess their own position more accurately, as they attempted to match their circumstances with the most pertinent experience of the ancient Romans, in the hope of finding a practicable and acceptable solution.

There was a further reason too for using *exempla* drawn from the ancients, and that was to strengthen their arguments when debating. From the records of the *pratiche*, it appears that persuasive and exhortative techniques were commonly used to enhance the presentation of the arguments. Signs of such oratorical efforts crop up time and again, with phrases such as "et alios exhortans ad unitatem" or "et hortatus est ut unio perficiatur" (118). Cavalcanti described Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi's

speech the *pratica* of August 3, 1424 as a "bella diceria", and on another occasion, high praise was lavished by the scribe of the *pratiche* on Piero di Iacopo Canacci (119). The minutes of Piero's speech note "exordium ornatissimum fecit" at the start, and ended with the observation "hoc consilium splendidissima eloquentia a principio, medio et fine narratum et conclusum fuit". In addition to a persuasive technique, a captivating style of delivery was evidently appreciated. It is worth noting that many of the references were sententious and/or anecdotal in content, an aspect of style which as we shall see also appealed to the humanists in their writing.

Political discourse of the nature described was not an innovation of the 1420s, but had developed during the preceding decade. By the late 1420s and early 1430s, the references in the debates to Roman history and to the Bible were, therefore, already an accepted part of political discussion; the novelty of these debates was the more sophisticated analysis of the political problems confronting Florence and in particular the attention they focussed on the growth of factions. In the *pratiche*, political discourse had adopted certain features at least ten years earlier.

The underlying rationale of the Della Vita Civile seems in many ways more significant than its actual contents. While in the later Citta di Vita, the cornerstone of the work is neo-Platonic spirituality and Christian faith, in the Della Vita Civile Palmieri was eager to use Platonic ideas that had not yet been fully explored, though many were known through Cicero and the patristic literature. As a result, the accent

was placed not on neo-Platonism, but on reason, and the Della Vita Civile is a hymn of praise to the wisdom and rationality of the ancients, with an implicit message for the Florentines.

To Palmieri, reason is the outstanding quality that marks the difference between man and beast, since man alone can communicate (120). The distinction is highly significant, and led Palmieri to find reprehensible all behaviour reminiscent of animals. He attacked Boccaccio in the introduction because he wrote about "lascivia", a purely animal instinct, and other dissolute matters; yet he also admitted that the *trecento* author's moral examples made him worthy of the name John of Chrysostom (121). More positively, it is from reason that the links of friendship and marriage are forged. From these, cities were begun, and to preserve them securely laws were devised (122). Using reason, man is able to examine the past, judge the present and foresee risks, as a result of which he knows how to govern (123). Thus Palmieri establishes a connection between reason and the foundation and running of a city.

Reason also leads Palmieri in two other directions. By contending that man outstrips the beasts because of his power of speech, it follows that the man who speaks elegantly outstrips by equal distance the man who does not (124). But eloquent speech-alone is not adequate; the content of it must also be of a high level, and this can only be achieved through philosophy, which instructs man how to live. According to Mattec, this philosophy counselled "ordine diritto" and certainty in life, and excluded utterly chance which, because it disturbed man's rational predictions, treated men like beasts (125). Palmieri's yearning

for "ordine diritto" based on "ragione" led him to desire a framework so that life could be organised on known principles, and preparations taken. Consequently, he praised justice as a manifestation of "ragione", and also laws (126). Similarly, organised trade and agriculture, where decisions had to be taken, were extolled, while work based on labour but where no intellectual judgement was involved, was seen to be vile (127). *Ragione* thus led to oratory and rhetoric, which in turn supposed a framework of law, and an exaltation of the use of reason in work.

Matteo extends the use of reason and rhetoric to apply to the appearance of the city. In particular, he shows himself to have been fascinated by the rhetorical terms of "amplitudine" and "hornamento". In rhetoric, *amplificatio* involves the expansion of simple words or phrases into longer or grander expressions, either through the use of euphemism, or by using periphrasis (128). Probably because of its decorative effect, periphrasis was called "hornamento" by Matteo. Praising the productions of Brunni for their rhetorical splendour, as well as admiring Giotto's art and the recent work by sculptors and architects working in Florence, Palmieri seeks to transfer the rules governing elegance in literature to govern also magnificence in architecture (129). He declares in book two that once the demands of "necessita" in the republic have been satisfied, "ragione" must then attend to "amplitudine" and "hornamento" (130). In book four he returns to the idea when discussing the lines along which the architectural beauty of the city should develop, referring to the notions of "amplitudine", of "ornamento" and of "magnificentia" (131). The use of the same vocabulary is striking, and suggests that Palmieri considered that just as *ragione* leads to speech and its embellishment, so

it leads too to the formation of cities and thence to their beautification.

Reason also leads Palmieri towards morality. As hinted above, whatever is not rational is not morally acceptable. Man was divided into parts; one was rational and the other was animal, and it was part of man's moral training to learn to restrain his animal passions. Already in this chapter, mention has been made of war as "bestiale", so labelled because it is suitable only for the unthinking; negotiations are to be preferred unless they have already been exhausted (132). The examples of Palmieri claiming moral superiority for some action that has its basis in rationality could be multiplied (133). Both the citizen and the republic are included in this morality; it is both individual and corporate: "l'onore, l'utilità et la gloria publica non debbe mai essere postposta pe' privati commodi, nè mai sarà utile quello che, giovando a pochi, nocera all'universale corpo della città" (134). In reaffirming that priority should be given to the wider interests of the republic rather than to private interests, Palmieri is pitting himself against factions and trying to restore peace (135).

In addition to reason, Palmieri relies heavily on the vicarious experience he has acquired through reading the ancient authors. At all stages of the Della Vita Civile he uses their writings to support his ideas as he teaches by presenting exempla. For almost every point that Palmieri makes there is a reference to the classical world which testifies to the wisdom of following the course of action proposed by Matteo. His reading of ancient authors goes far beyond the extracts from



Livy, Aristotle, Sallust, Seneca and Plato of his "Sententie", though with the exception of Seneca, he does refer to these authors in the Della Vita Civile. Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria and Cicero's De Officiis form the basis for much of the work, in terms of both inspiration and anecdotes, but Palmieri also draws on works by Marcus Varro, Aulus Gellius, Valerius Maximus, Macrobius, Terence, Virgil and Homer (136). Although he wishes to pass on knowledge of the ancients in the *volgare*, Matteo aims equally to draw benefit from the examples of the ancients in setting down his ideas on how life should be led in a republic. The examples of others were not only valuable but were essential if a morally upright life was to be followed (137). Experience enabled future perils to be avoided, and showed how difficulties could be overcome and how ends could be achieved. Palmieri holds that because of the problems of transporting merchandise, it was almost impossible for a city to become outstanding unless it had access to a port. Unable in this case to support his argument with an allusion to a classical writer or event, he refers directly to experience: "la sperientia, madre di tutte le cose, in multiplicata lunghezza di tempo ha dimostrato che mai non fu nobilissima alcuna città dove non fussi porto vicino" (138). Experience was just as capable as a classical writer was of demonstrating the correct path to be taken. In bowing to these authorities, Palmieri was no different either from other humanist authors or from the speakers in the *pratiche*, even though it does sometimes appear that he esteems the ancients more highly, looking to them not solely for guidance, but as an infallible model. Answering his critics at the start of book 4, Palmieri notes that the content of the Della Vita Civile is not his alone, in which case he could understand better the attacks made on it, but that the contents has been said and approved "dai

sommi ingegni degli antichi philosophi" (139), and it is implicit that they, at least, are beyond reprehension.

By choosing to set the dialogue in 1430, Matteo deliberately avoids referring to the changes in the administration of the republic, and the exile of first Cosimo de' Medici and then Rinaldo degli Albizzi. It is noticeable, too, that all the major issues discussed in the Della Vita Civile had arisen before 1430; in this Matteo was consistent. Several factors help to explain why Palmieri averted his gaze from the administration of the republic after 1434. One is that the means used by the Medici regime were experimental and of uncertain future. The changes were exceptional and were intended to be provisional. The Balìa of 1434 remained in power for just three months, from September 28 to December 31 and while it, contrary to the Statutes, ordained a new scrutiny, it laid down that the next scrutiny was to take place when the Statutes decreed that it should, that is in five years time, in 1440 (140). Similarly, in a series of temporary and ad hoc measures, renewed on several occasions, the Accoppiatori were empowered to elect a *mano* the Signoria from November 1434 until 1439 (141). On the one hand, this slow development explains why nobody foresaw that the Medici would retain control of the reins of power; on the other, it explains why Palmieri, who was concerned to base actions on firm precedent and lengthy experience, might have felt uneasy about committing thoughts on these new and untried methods to paper. It is not that Matteo necessarily objects in principle to innovation; he admits that it is often required by the circumstances:

"ver è che a' governatori delle repubbliche non solo basta secondo quelle (leggi) ministrare ragione, però che spesse volte adviene che

la conditione de' tempi, l'attitudini et siti de' luoghi et le popolari consuetudini abbiano bisogno di particolari ragioni" (142).

Besides, the issue of how best to govern the republic was discussed openly and fully in the period before 1434; after that date, the stronger and more purposeful leadership and the exile of the leaders of the Albizzi faction both acted to make such debate unnecessary. Many matters which had been open to change before 1434 had now been decided in one direction or another.

But Palmieri was not alone in ignoring the changes in the Florentine republic. Bruni, who wrote his work on the Florentine constitution in Greek in 1439, treats the republic as though it were still governed according to the Statutes of 1415 (143). It might be suggested that by ignoring what was happening in Florence, Palmieri and Bruni were nonetheless expressing a political opinion, an opinion, moreover, that was more likely to be hostile to the evolution of the constitution than sympathetic. If their opinion had been favourable, the argument might run, they would have been able to communicate it, but it would have been more difficult for them to criticize openly the new regime. Other indications point to a contrary conclusion. Alberti, in his Della Pittura which was finished in 1436, does not name, apart from in the prologue, a single contemporary painter, referring only to figures from the ancient world, and that despite the paucity of extant examples of classical painting (144). The convention of mentioning only to events far in the past, therefore, was not confined to political treatises, and suggests that Palmieri's and Bruni's motives were not political. Furthermore, there is

every sign that the pair fully supported the Medici, and no evidence that they sought to express even muted criticism.

In spite of all his arguments, Matteo was aware that his citations and explanations alone would not be sufficiently compelling for all his compatriots to adopt the tenets of *ragione*. Accordingly, he sought a different kind of compulsion, one that would be irresistible. He found two contrasting solutions. The first was to assert that God valued above all others those who had followed the precepts outlined in the Della Vita Civile, and that they would receive eternal beatitude in heaven (145). Palmieri thought that his precepts were sound advice not only for the citizens, but were also theologically incontrovertible. Like the speakers in the *pratiche*, Matteo perceived God as taking a keen interest in seeing that the republic was governed with justice. Yet at the same time, Palmieri did not wish to abandon the wisdom of the ancients on which he had based the whole of the Della Vita Civile. Following the model of Plato in his "quasi divina" Repubblica and of "el nostro Tullio" in the De Republica, he introduced a vision of the afterlife, narrated by Dante, the Florentine equal of Plato and Cicero in literary, moral and political fields. In both cases, Palmieri hoped that awareness of a later judgement would encourage good behaviour on earth (146). Fascinated by visions, Palmieri later wrote the Città di Vita, an imitation of Dante's Divina Commedia, in which he examined the nature of souls, and of heaven and hell.

Alamanno Rinuccini in his funeral oration for Matteo Palmieri showed himself appreciative of the Della Vita Civile, seeing it primarily

as offering moral guidance. He considered that "omnia publicae privataque vitae laudabiliter degendae praecepta ex morali philosophia deprompta complexus est" (147). Honest opinions are not necessarily given in funeral orations, and it is therefore instructive to find that Cristoforo Landino, writing in 1467, was equally fulsome in his praise. In his Prolusione Petrarquesca, Landino referred briefly but with admiration to Palmieri's work: "Palmieri ne' suoi Dialoghi può non solamente per la gravità delle sentenzie, ma per ordinata disposizione e per ornata e florida elocuzione ritenere gl'auditori..." (148). Palmieri's rhetorical style was valued as highly as the content of the work, and no criticism was made of the choice of the vernacular. Vesapasiano da Bisticci was also enthusiastic, noting of Matteo that "fece un libro volgare, opera molto degna et necessaria, dove insegna governare la republica et la famiglia" (149). Appreciation of the work was widespread, and seventeen fifteenth century manuscripts of the Della Vita Civile still exist, testifying to its broad popularity (150). The work was printed twice during the sixteenth century, and was also translated into French (151).

The only contemporary author to record at length the conflict between the factions and the subjugation of the *res publica* to the private interests of faction was Cavalcanti (152). An imprisoned magnate with scarcely any direct experience of participating in political office, he painted in the Istorie Fiorentine a complex picture of the political and social tensions in Florence in the latter half of the 1420s and the first half of the 1430s. Excluded from government - because of his magnate status, he had been ineligible for some posts, and because he was in prison for not paying his tax dues, he was prohibited by law from the

rest - his analysis rests in equal measure on shrewd political observation and on a profound understanding of the social bases of power in Florence.

Equally dismissive of his fellow prisoners as of the "stolta e pazza plebe", Cavalcanti wrote not to enlighten his audience, but to condemn the "insatiable avarice and repugnant arrogance" of the citizens, and to help him to forget his jailed companions, whom he castigated as "perverse e si malvage genti" (63). Receiving information from a variety of sources, he outlined the "divisioni de' nostri cittadini", unleashing invective and abusive moral judgements on those who failed to live up to his aristocratic and republican expectations (64). He was notably bitter about the start of the war against Lucca in 1429, complaining that:

"questa pertinacia e questa stabilita della condizione de' nostri cittadini è stata la cagione delle tante sventure della nostra Repubblica (e non fu per mancamento di ricchezze; ma per la scarsità della ragione, mischiatamente colla detta perversità de' cittadini): al tutto vergogna acquistammo, e riputazione scemammo, a la impresa perdemmo" (65).

Despite his background, Cavalcanti's judgements did not always express sympathy for the aristocrats; indeed, it seems he favoured the Medicean faction (66). All the same, when either faction adopted a policy with which he could not agree, he was ready enough to put forward his own point of view, as for instance in the case of the war against Lucca. That he detests factions, the subject of the work, explains his attitude. Thus his work is essentially pragmatic; he does not restrict his view to an aristocratic interpretation of Florentine society and politics.

Although Cavalcanti uses classical allusions sparingly, these can be found in the speeches which Cavalcanti allots to various historical characters as his narrative demands. When Barzo makes a speech for the Seravezzesi to the Florentine commissar Astorre Gianni, he envisages the welcome that would be given to Astorre for having put an end to hostilities: "you are worthy to return to your country in a gilded carriage, crowned with laurel leaves, just as Scipio returned to Rome" (67). Reporting the "bella diceria" of Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi in a *pratica*, Cavalcanti chooses to include a reference to Roman history: "the virtues of men are recognised by the magnitude of adverse events. The Romans were much more glorious after Brennus fought for the Campidoglio than before he entered Rome" (68) Thus he seems to have been aware of the value politicians placed on classical references and consequently imitates them in his representations of their speeches. When purporting to express his own views, he uses such rhetorical devices much less frequently. By not including more classical references, and by writing in Italian, Cavalcanti was closer to the vernacular traditions of Florentine literature, rather than the humanist authors.

Like Palmieri, Cavalcanti saw the republic as a framework for impartial government, and vented his spleen on those interfering with the legal and constitutional processes through faction and through putting private profit before the public good. Observing that Florence was being governed not from the Palazzo della Signoria but over private meals and in studies, he condemned the practice as "tirannesco e non politico vivere" (69). His opinions tended to be negative, critical of the leaders because "the powerful men who run the comune do not appreciate the words

of the plebs", and berating the "disensata e svergognata plebe", demanding of them "from where have you got such unjust and brazen audacity that you transgress the sacred and well established laws of the just empire, which the whole monarchy of the Roman people was obliged to obey?" (70). Cavalcanti does not suggest an ideal state, but makes his criticisms of the current political practices quite clear. In emphasising the importance of the rule of law, Cavalcanti shows that he shares some of the same values as the speakers in the *pratiche*.

Owing to Cavalcanti's imprisonment, Palmieri would not have been aware of the existence of the Istoria Fiorentina, and therefore could not have been influenced in any way by the work. The significance of the Istoria Fiorentina in this context is simply to indicate that a detailed and incisive political history of the period was written, providing further evidence of the breadth of political expression in Florence. The detestation of faction and the concern for the well being of the Florentine republic shine through the work, again revealing the anxiety displayed by Florentines over the contemporary unrest and the future of their city.

Born in 1404, Leon Battista Alberti was of Palmieri's generation, yet came from a very different background. He was raised in a famous, powerful and wealthy Florentine banking family which had been exiled before his birth. Alberti had studied canon and civil law at the University in Bologna, and had afterwards become a member of the papal chancery. He was fascinated by ancient Greek and Roman authors, and had read extensively. Arriving in Florence in 1434 as a member of Pope



Eugenius' entourage, he cannot have been influenced by the precise combination of circumstances that stimulated Matteo to write, since most of his book, the Della Famiglia, was written in Rome between late 1432 and early 1434. Nonetheless, several broad similarities and differences can be perceived, and they help to shed light on the Della Vita Civile.

Most striking of all is that Alberti wrote his treatise, the Della Famiglia, in Italian. The decision to write a treatise in the vernacular was bold; previously works of this type had always been written in Latin. However, Alberti defended himself with the reasoning that he was writing so that "ciascuno m'intenda", and that he aimed rather to "giovare a molti che piacere a pochi" (71). It seems most probable that Palmieri was writing the Della Vita Civile after 1434, and therefore could have been aware of Alberti's work. Matteo's desire was similarly to reach a larger audience than only those who could read Latin (73). Likewise, Palmieri's decision to structure the Della Vita Civile as a dialogue, the crucial part of the redrafting, may have partly found its inspiration in the work of Alberti. No concrete evidence has yet been found to link directly the two works, but as both described the raising and educating of children so that they would become good citizens, and as both authors wrote with classical ideas very much in mind, the affinity of interests and influences clearly extends beyond the outward appearance of the texts to the contents themselves.

Palmieri overtly sought to introduce his readers to the wisdom of the ancients by translating and presenting many of their sayings, and gave this plan as one of his major aims. On the other hand, while Alberti

of the plebs", and berating the "disensata e svergognata plebe", demanding of them "from where have you got such unjust and brazen audacity that you transgress the sacred and well established laws of the just empire, which the whole monarchy of the Roman people was obliged to obey?" (70). Cavalcanti does not suggest an ideal state, but makes his criticisms of the current political practices quite clear. In emphasising the importance of the rule of law, Cavalcanti shows that he shares some of the same values as the speakers in the *pratiche*.

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did not offer his thoughts so clearly on the matter, he was eager to display his wide classical knowledge and reading. Each classical author mentioned in the dialogue has an explanatory tag attached to his name to enable readers to gain an idea of the significance of the author being cited. Thus Plato is described as the prince of philosophers, Socrates as the father of philosophers, Herodotus as the father of history, and Cicero as the prince of orators (74). The learning might be more lightly worn, but there was an equal desire to display it and to impart it. The ideal of an orator citizen, rich in experience and scholarship, was shared by the two men, who presumably had drawn on classical literature, notably Cicero and Quintilian, for the model. Lionardo enthused thus:

"niuna è sì premiata fatica, se fatica si chiama più tosto che spesso è ricreamento d'animo e d'intelletto, quanto quella di leggere e rivedere buone cose assai. Tu n'esci abundante d'esempi, copioso di sentenze, ricco di persuasioni, forte d'argumenti e ragioni; fai ascoltarti, stai tra i cittadini udito volentieri, miranoti, lodanoti, amanoti" (75).

The Della Famiglia, like the Della Vita Civile, is a moral treatise, promulgating the classical learning and aimed at a wider section of the city's inhabitants than previous written tracts, which had been in Latin. But unlike Palmieri, Alberti refers also to the experiences of his own family, which creates a more intimate atmosphere, and his extended treatment of somewhat mundane domestic subjects such as the raising of children, marriage and household economy is reminiscent of the personal *ricordi*, where the performance of household chores gives rise to and is ensured by moral regulations (76).

In all probability, Alberti's concentration on the family as the fundamental social grouping stemmed from his experience in an exiled

family. The city of his ancestors had turned against his family, which contributed to the strong sense of cohesion and family identity. In the preface to the first book, Alberti outlines the focus of his concern:

"... la nostra famiglia Alberti, la quale sempre meritò essere pregiata e onorata, e per cui ogni mio studio, ogni mia industria, ogni pensiero, animo e volontà ebbi sempre e arò a suo nome è dedicato" (77).

Such single minded devotion to the family's interests presents a sharp contrast with Palmieri's assertion that civic life, understood principally as the individual's duties towards the comune, ought to take precedence over all other commitments (78). It is telling that the beliefs of one had been nurtured by the republic, while the beliefs of the other had been nurtured by exile from the same republic. Indeed, one of the characters in the Della Famiglia advises that state office should be shunned (79). Although Alberti's own views may not be synonymous with those of his characters, the very title and content of the treatise give more than a clue to Alberti's beliefs; even his competent portrayal of personalities and the provocative stances embodied in them do not hide his deep rooted sympathy and support for the family as the basic social unit.

In effect, the Della Vita Civile constitutes a reply or at least another contribution to the debate begun by the Della Famiglia of Alberti. With its emphasis firmly on serving the republic as the prime duty of every citizen, the Della Vita Civile countermands the imperative issued by Alberti to serve the family above all else. It also acts to dispel the threat posed by factions, which placed individual and family concerns before those of the republic. In Matteo's list of priorities the republic comes first: "innanzi siamo obligati alla patria, poi al padre et alla

madre, dopo sono i figliuoli e la propria famiglia..." (143). It is a plea by Palmieri to the Florentines to put factionalism behind them, and to grasp the new tool of reason which proved so profitable to the ancients; from the *pratiche*, it would seem that reason was not a common point of reference for political discourse in early fifteenth century Florence.

Brief mention should also be made of other contemporary writings to show the range of interests displayed by Florentine humanists. In 1428 Bruni had composed the funeral oration to Nanno Strozzi, and he took the opportunity to praise republican government, claiming that citizens both liked and benefitted from "libertas" and "equalitas", where "libertas" meant freedom from tyranny, and "equalitas" meant equality before the law (80). In another gesture intended to glorify the city, Bruni presented to the Signoria in 1429 the first six books of his history of Florence. Poggio's dialogue the De Avaritia which discussed the morality of making and possessing wealth, also saw light in 1429 (81). Set in Rome, the debate ranged over theological and secular issues, with quotations from the Bible, the patristic authors and the ancients to support the arguments advanced. Although one character, Antonio Loschi, does advocate the benefits brought by riches to the city, observing that "No one would build churches or colonnades; all artistic activity would cease, and confusion would result in our lives and in public affairs if everyone were satisfied with only enough for himself", the matter is left unresolved at the end of the dialogue (82). In 1436 Alberti wrote a short treatise on painting (83). Although no painters from *trecento* or *quattrocento* Florence are mentioned, the work was presumably inspired by the artistic achievements in the city; indeed, the Italian version was

dedicated to Brunelleschi, Donatello, Luca della Robbia, Ghiberti and Masaccio (84). Della Pittura was replete with examples taken from classical literature and again illustrated the pleasure that Florentine citizens gained from the beautification of their city. By writing the lives of Dante and Petrarch in the mid 1430s, Bruni once more focussed attention on the city's most famous authors (85).

The accent on the achievements of Florence was most noticeable in Bruni's works, while the Istorie Fiorentine of Cavalcanti was more critical of the republic's political life. Alberti's Della Pittura was born out of the flourishing of the arts in Florence. The two other works considered here, Alberti's Della Famiglia and Poggio's De Avaritia, tackle civic aspects of the topics chosen for discussion, yet neither enthusiastically and unequivocally recommends the advantages of civic life; it perhaps is more than a coincidence that neither was written in Florence at a time when the Florentines were keenly searching for solutions to their city's unrest, solutions, moreover, which would take account both of the difficulties of living in a republic and of the wisdom of the ancient Romans and Greeks.

Some historians have viewed the Della Vita Civile as a political programme to be implemented by the new Medicean republic. The appearance of the work shortly before 1440, the concentration of its contents on aspects of a republic, and its insistence that public interests predominate over private, besides the wider diffusion that was ensured by writing in the vernacular, these are all features which give rise to and support such an interpretation (151). Nevertheless, these

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characteristics need not lead to the conclusion that the Della Vita Civile is "the manifesto of the kingdom of Cosimo" (176).

Without doubt, there are a number of innovative touches in the Della Vita Civile which place Palmieri in the vanguard of humanist thought. His use of the *volgare*, his stress on the primacy of the republic over the individual and family, his delight in wealth and magnificence and above all his emphasis on reason as the foundation of all the praiseworthy features of civil life belong to this category. These facets are significant, not only as signs of Palmieri's own thought at this time, but also because some of them are shared by other citizens, who either participated in the humanist circle or else who were members of the *reggimento*. These new features are perhaps seen as a parallel to the arrival of new developments in Florentine politics.

In other ways, Palmieri's writing was not so very different from the contemporary political and moral discourse in Florence. His interest in the ancients was, by 1430, a commonplace, and his use of their *exempla* to demonstrate political arguments merely copied the current Florentine debating practice. Bruni had devoted a great deal of time to making Latin translations of Plato in the early 1420s, and Foggio had searched for more complete versions of Quintilian and Cicero; here, too, Palmieri had been preceded in his attraction to these works. The emphasis placed by Cicero and Plato on the republic attuned well with the celebration by the Florentines of their republic in the late 1420s, and parallels between the Florentine city state and the city states of the ancient world were easily seen. The lively political discussions of the



1420s and early 1430s meant that Palmieri was only one among many to examine the political troubles of Florence. He was different though in writing about them in the form of a treatise; the only other Florentine writer to record the problems in depth was Cavalcanti, and he wrote a history. Yet in writing a treatise, Matteo did not present a coherent and consistent view of the citizens duties, or of the role of the republic. He discusses a selection of the problems that had taxed the minds of Florentine citizens and proposes dogmatically that whatever contributes to the tranquillity and well-being of the republic is morally praiseworthy. With few exceptions, the moral value of an act is judged by its value to the republic and not by its inherent moral worth. Concern over the roles of justice and the law was and continued to be a preoccupation of politically minded Florentines in the fifteenth century. The choice of the setting in the Mugello, of a dialogue, of the *volgare*, and of a vision were all taken from other current or popular authors.

Palmieri himself saw the Della Vita Civile as a compendium of classical wisdom to enable citizens to "vivere bene"; he did not see it as a political handbook. Although Matteo claims to make a distinction between what is moral and what is expedient ("honesto" and "utile"), he only supplies examples of morality that is useful, and an act is useful if it furthers the interests of the republic (177). That Palmieri, unlike Cicero who in De Officiis does make a distinction between the moral and the expedient, did not distinguish between moral and political questions makes it hard to say whether the Della Vita Civile is primarily a political work, as those favouring the interpretation of the Della Vita Civile as a political manifesto have claimed. The choice of Agnolo

Pandolfini to instruct the two young Florentines hints strongly at a work designed primarily to be political, as does the presentation to Alessandro degli Alessandri; that both these and Palmieri as well as Franco Sachetti and Luigi Guicciardini all sat on the same political body in 1438 is still more convincing. Yet if Matteo had really been interested in ingratiating himself with Cosimo, and had wanted to offer the Della Vita Civile as a textbook for the new regime, it would have been possible for him to have presented the work directly to Cosimo. The strong ties of Ambrogio Traversari and Carlo Marsuppini with Cosimo, and Matteo's residence in the quarter of San Giovanni would have encouraged such a dedication. Moreover, there are further problems with seeing the Della Vita Civile as a programme for the new regime. First of all, it is not certain how far Florentines were aware of the role played by Cosimo in the government of the city in the first years after 1434; by all accounts, he was careful not to appear predominant. Even more significantly, the republican traditions of Florence meant that a prolonged period of influence by the Medici family was probably not foreseen. Palmieri had very little experience of government; he was the same age as Franco Sachetti and Luigi Guicciardini, and needed to learn about the practice of government before he would have been in a suitable position to draw up a programme. If the Della Vita Civile were written for a political purpose, and on the evidence presented it seems more suited to fitting into the humanist mould of reflective literature on moral, political or religious issues than into any prescriptive political tradition, it was more probably intended to prevent the republic from being subverted in the future by private interests.

In writing the Della Vita Civile, Palmieri was conscious of the significance of the past in determining the present; he saw too that knowledge of the past would enable preparations to be made for the future. After the Della Vita Civile, Matteo turned to write historical works. In 1431 he had started to make entries in his Annales, but the work he completed first after the Della Vita Civile was a biography of Niccolò Acciaiuoli, with whose descendant, Adouardo Acciaiuoli, he had shared office when both men were drawn as Gonfalonieri di Compagnia in 1437.

Palmieri's writing of history

Palmieri's historical works do not form a homogenous group, and as a result pose problems of interpretation. Three of the four works, the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, the De Captivitate Pisanarum Liber, and the De Temporibus, were written entirely in Latin, and the other, the Annales, a chronicle, was written in Latin for some years, and in Italian for the rest (1). The De Temporibus is a universal history, which begins with the creation story of Adam and Eve, and in which data are organised in columns, so that each date reveals at a glance the reigning emperor, the pope, and the major occurrences. The Annales is a more limited chronicle, kept by Matteo throughout his life, with entries made being made for the years from 1429 to 1474. A third work, the De Captivitate Pisanarum Liber, records the capture of Pisa by the Florentines in 1406. The fourth, the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, is a biography of Niccolò Acciaiuoli, the Grand Seneschal of Naples in the second half of the fourteenth century. The diversity of production, reflected in the structure, content and purpose of each work, can best be understood by referring to the historical and literary traditions in Florence, on which Palmieri drew in varying measure in writing his historical works. Each work will be examined in turn.

It is possible to identify two separate traditions of historical writing in Florence before Palmieri, and it is worthwhile outlining their principal characteristics in order to be able establish how much Palmieri relied on them. Without doubt, the most familiar to Matteo and the most widely read was the chronicle. This genre flourished

particularly during the fourteenth century, not least because of the enormous success and consequent impact of Giovanni Villani's *Cronica*, which recounts the history of Florence before 1300, and thereafter gave a year by year account of events (2). There is no need here to enter into an analysis of the work; it suffices simply to note its most prominent characteristics (3). Its most poignant features were imitated, but as the century passed, these tended to become less prominent, giving way to more urgent designs which satisfied better the needs of the late fourteenth century.

Villani believed that even handed justice would be meted out to all according to the moral value of actions performed. Thus there is an exceptionally strong religious and moral interpretation of the events of history. His attitude can be summarised succinctly, to the point of caricature, in his observation "e nota, chi è crudele, crudelmente more, dixit Dominus" (4). He was interested in everything and recorded it because everything had value, even if that value were not immediately visible or intelligible. Later on, the significance of an event would be realised, and it would be seen to reveal the truth of a morally righteous or divine interpretation.

After the Black Death in 1348, which killed Giovanni, Matteo Villani continued his brother's chronicle, but his outlook was different (5). He was less disposed to see a correspondence between a divine plan and life on earth, and saw instead the self-indulgent side of man's character rise to the surface, a side which he considered ignored the presence of God, even though God would surely discipline man.

In the later fourteenth century, Marchionne di Coppo Stefani wrote a chronicle documenting the political strife in Florence, in which he concentrates very much on presenting a critical appraisal of events (6). He emphasises the workings of the Florentine political system, the leadership and factionalism that were to be found among the *Grandi*, and the deference and lack of political interest of the artisans and lower classes. Rarely does he see a divine plan unfolding, but rather sees human greed which fuels faction and strife as the motivating force in politics. For instance, the astrological signs that Giovanni Villani had interpreted as a foreboding of events were still recorded often by Stefani, but they are systematically deprived of such an interpretation. He records, however, that others gave meaning to these symbols.

A further step in the same direction was taken by the anonymous "Minerbetti" chronicler (7). He refrains from making moral judgements and exhortations in his writing, preferring simply to record what had happened without drawing moral lessons. In the same vein, he too has little regard for astrological signs and their interpretation. The practice of politics was based solely on grounds of expediency, and was not influenced by outside events.

This process of making historical events self sufficient was developed further by Goro Dati, writing at the start of the fifteenth century (8). He organizes his material to a very great extent on intention and rationality. Accordingly, he simplifies and distorts events. Man is central to the narrative and controls historical forces. On the other hand, it is perceived that the divine forces of good triumph over evil,

and these are confirmed by an interpretation of the astrological signs. It is important to note that the historical tradition did not develop in a linear path; each writer seems aware of the work of his predecessors and yet felt at liberty to alter what he had inherited in order to suit his own wishes. Dati, for instance, innovated by writing his history as a dialogue. Experimentation was thus an integral part of writing - there was no fossilized pattern which had to be followed, only a malleable material which each author shaped as he saw fit.

But the writing of chronicles was only one of the ways in which Florentines wrote about the past; a way of relating episodes of an essentially personal nature had also developed. This was a much more private form of writing, partly because it was not initially intended for a public audience, but also because it recorded primarily events that were important to the family. Thus names and the dates of births, marriages and deaths were recorded, in addition to that expression of civic pride, the recording of when the post of Prior or other key communal posts had been held by members of the family. Property transactions and business dealings were also noted in these books of *ricordi* or *ricordanze* (9). Initially a bare record, these data were frequently expanded and elaborated on, so that Donato Velluti, for example, in 1369 furnished an account of all his relatives and ancestors known to him and, so far as he was able, he recounted something too of their character or stature, by means of a rapidly sketched vignette, or by telling of their contribution to the family history (10). Moreover, he related the events that befell him while he held communal office.

Writing a generation later, Giovanni Morelli writes about not only his family and its origins, but gives practical advice on how to cope with the peculiarities of Florentine life, and a description of the countryside in the Mugello (11). Rather than a record of just the events that took place while he held office, he includes, too, a chronicle of political events. On the whole the sections are kept separate, but there was clearly a sense in which knowledge of the city's history would be useful, and that it was also a part of Morelli's experience as much as the birth or death of his own children.

These *ricordanze* usually covered events only during the lifetime of the writer, though occasionally a son would continue a chronicle begun by his father, as in the case of the Rinuccini (12). Often they were written for the personal satisfaction of the author, but Morelli was stimulated to write in order to defend his family from charges of Ghibellinism, and to pass on his hard won experience. In any case, an appreciative audience was not a major consideration. Since they were so personal, these *ricordanze* often contain information of little use to anyone but their author or his immediate family; some contain solely the lists from which the genre started, as can be seen in the case of Dei's *Cronica* (13). Here again, there was little linear development, and the type of work produced depended very much on its author, and not on the strict following of a given model. Another major difference between the *ricordanze* and the chronicles was that in the *ricordanze*, the political aspect of the work formed only part of the contents of the book. In describing his book that was a mixture of facts and advice, and included



a chronicle for the years 1400 to 1457, Giovanni Rucellai correctly deemed it "un insalata di più erbe" (14).

The dates of completion for two of Palmieri's works are easy to establish. The Annales was begun in 1432, and Palmieri added to it at intervals throughout his life, the last entry being made in 1474. Of the other three works, the De Temporibus was finished in 1448, according to the dedication of one copy to Leonardo Dati (15). Matteo records in it events before October 1448, confirming that the dedication was contemporary with the completion of the work (16). No secure dates exist for the other two works. Dati and Rinuccini, the earliest of Palmieri's biographers, list Palmieri's works in the same order, which very probably corresponds to the order of composition, while the jumbled order given by Vespasiano da Bisticci appears to lack coherence (17). Thus the Vita N. Acciaiolii follows the Della Vita Civile, and the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber follows the Vita N. Acciaiolii. The De Temporibus follows the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber. As the Della Vita Civile dates from 1439, and the De Temporibus was finished by 1448, Palmieri wrote three works, the Vita N. Acciaiolii, the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber, and the De Temporibus in the nine years between 1439 and 1448. Lacking further guidance, it seems reasonable to assume that Palmieri took approximately three years to write each work, giving provisional dates of completion of 1442 for the Vita N. Acciaiolii, and of 1445 for the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber. The Annales and the De Temporibus are both written in the format of chronicles, and will be considered together, while the Vita N. Acciaiolii and the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber are written as narrative histories, and will be considered together.

The Vita N. Acciaiuoli

In writing the biography of Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Palmieri took Plutarch as his model. Plutarch tended to order the content of his Lives in a fixed pattern, writing first about the family background and early career of his subject, followed by his military and civil accomplishments. Plutarch was also concerned to recount incidents which revealed the character and the morality of his subject. In so far as it had a bearing on the subject's political life, the private life was also recounted. Palmieri, in the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, structured his biography in a similar way, beginning with the origins and occupation of the Acciaiuoli family and the early career of Niccolò. There follows an exposition of Niccolò's later exploits as Seneschal of the kingdom of Naples, and a portrait of his character is given in the final pages.

In the introduction to his edition of the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, Gino Scaramella outlined the sources on which Palmieri drew. These included the Villani chronicles and a life of Niccolò Acciaiuoli by Filippo Villani (18). In addition, Matteo seems to have had access to Acciaiuoli family documents, judging by the inclusion of a letter written by Niccolò, and his will. It is also probable that stories passed down within the family from one generation to the next were made available to him, because some of the material in the Vita N. Acciaiuoli rings true, and cannot be found in other sources. One point of interest is that Palmieri seemed explicitly concerned to refute the aspersions cast on Niccolò's character by Boccaccio in a letter (19). For removing the stain from Niccolò, Matteo's

work would be useful, and he might further ingratiate himself with the powerful Acciaiuoli family.

In his preface to the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, Palmieri explained man's innate desire to seek glory in order to win lasting fame among following generations (20). But man did not seek glory only for himself; he wished to glorify his *patria* also. Matteo continued by elaborating on this theme, introducing the notion of the soul and heaven. Yet it was not adequate simply to carry out great deeds; they had to be properly ("probe") recorded for lasting glory to redound to the author of the acts, otherwise the memory of the deeds just faded away. Thus it can be inferred that the purpose of writing the Vita N. Acciaiuoli was to provide glory for Niccolò Acciaiuoli and for the *patria*. It is likely that Palmieri also thought that glory would be due to him for recording these memorable deeds (21). Much of Palmieri's justification for writing was taken from Cicero, and was repeated in Palmieri's other historical works.

Matteo went on to recount that he had held the office of Gonfaloniere di Compagnia with Adoardo Acciaiuoli, who became "in parentis loco" to Palmieri and a good friend (22). On hearing Adoardo tell stories about the sayings and deeds of his illustrious forebear, Matteo decided to write a biography of Niccolò, thinking the outcome would be "iocunda, sane et utilissima" to citizens (23). It appears Palmieri did not have any further contact with Adoardo or, at least, no evidence of such contact has yet come to light, though he must have known another member of the Acciaiuoli clan, Donato Acciaiuoli, who was also a humanist and an eminent politician (30). A later member of the

Acciaiuoli family, another Donato Acciaiuoli, was proud of Niccolò, and was impressed by Matteo's work, with the result that in 1552 he arranged for the Vita N. Acciaiuoli to be translated into Italian, by Ser Bendetto da Monteverchi, and in 1588, this translation was published (31).

The choice of subject matter, a biography of a great man, a *vir illustris*, similarly indicates Palmieri's imitation of the ancients. The use of Plutarch's Lives as a model has already been mentioned. But other Florentines, too, had written biographies. For instance, Boccaccio had composed a life of Dante, and Bruni wrote lives of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch (26). In the late fourteenth century, Filippo Villani had written about a number of the famous Florentines, including Niccolò Acciaiuoli, in his Le Vite degli Uomini Illustri (27). Thus both in his selection of topic and in his desire to write in Latin Palmieri was most probably influenced by both classical Roman and Florentine usage.

By beginning with a fanciful tale of the Acciaiuoli's long and noble family pedigree, Matteo set the scene for the arrival of the biography's protagonist. The steel ("acciaio") dug out of the mountains near the Acciaiuoli's original home town of Brescia was apparently responsible for the derivation of the family name (28). From Brescia, the family, trading in steel, moved to Florence and earned great riches, held all the magistracies in Florence, and received many and various honours throughout Italy. Members of the family travelled widely. Palmieri thus constructs an aristocratic lineage for his subject, ending with the precise date of Niccolò's birth in September 1310 (36). In contrast to Filippo Villani, Matteo did not mention that Niccolò's father was "un poco

meno che legittimo", but stressed instead the many dignities that he had held in Florence (30).

Matteo describes the physical appearance of Niccolò only towards the end of the work, and relies for it heavily on the outline provided by Filippo Villani in his Vite. Niccolò had made visits to Florence on several occasions and it is possible that Villani had either seen him or had heard descriptions of him from eye witnesses (31). Where Villani portrays Niccolò as being of fairly average build, Palmieri is tempted to mild exaggeration. "Fu di mediocre statura, petto largo, ampia faccia, lineamenti virili, e membra convenientissimamente proporzionate, di bello aspetto ..." wrote Villani (32). In his attempt to make the physical bulk of his subject match his achievements, Palmieri noted of Niccolò:

"statura paululum mediocritatem excedens, corpore amplo atque robusto, capillo subflavo, rotundis oculis ac nitore quodam perfusis, tranquillo ac sereno vultu, pectore lato, et ceteris quibuscumque membris ad pedes usque equalis et congruens, validis brachiis et manibus pari agilitate dextris" (33).

Villani's additional observation that Niccolò "essendo senza lettere fu di facondia maravigliosa" was omitted by Palmieri (34). The portrait of Niccolò drawn by Matteo is intended to flatter him, and consistently in the Vita N. Acciaiuoli Palmieri altered or omitted details found in his sources to glorify his subject.

In Matteo Villani's account of the capture of Messina, Niccolò is successful because he brought six ships loaded with grain to the port at a time when it was suffering from a shortage (35). In gratitude, the citizens gave him control of their town. The concept of "fortuna" is not

mentioned. For Palmieri this account was too dull, and did not display Niccolò's abilities to the best. In the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, Niccolò arms boats, sets fire to the enemy fleet, and occupies the town before dawn (36). The whole event is on a grander scale, with Niccolò facing greater dangers and requiring more courage, ingenuity and skill. Palmieri did not, however, attribute these qualities to Niccolò but, on the contrary, considered that this was an example of the working of *fortuna*: "*hac itaque fortuna maximam insule partem incunctanter sibi adiunxit*" (37). To concede that it was *fortuna* rather than skill and daring which brought Niccolò success is to make Palmieri's expansion of Villani's account redundant, for with *fortuna* on his side, Niccolò would in any case have been equally successful in his effort to take Messina. While the episode shows that Niccolò was favoured by fortune, the next event recounted by Palmieri provides an example of *fortuna* working contrary to Niccolò's advantage.

Once again, it is interesting to compare Palmieri's account of the incident with that of Matteo Villani, his principal source. Without detracting too much from the artfulness of the pirates who, with a cunning ruse, put two of Niccolò's four ships to flight, and frightened the army which consequently scattered, Palmieri was anxious to present the actions of the King's ships in a significantly better light, which he achieved by placing himself in their position and imagining the emotions that they must have felt (38). Like Villani, he admitted that it was chance that brought the Catalan pirates to Sicily, but where Villani underlined the native cunning and experience of the pirates, calling them "old hands at playing tricks at sea", Palmieri preferred to see deliberate

rationality: "seeing themselves unequal to a set battle, and that the operation to be done with calculated skill ..." (39). Villani saw great daring ("gran baldanza") in the pirates' plan to arm with bugles and cymbals rather than soldiers, but Palmieri recounted only the plan to take musical instruments, and did not express any view on it. He did however point out that the King's men were not expecting the enemy to approach by sea, and that their boats were secured and some of the sailors on land. Villani omitted this point, continuing his breathless narrative with the assault by the pirates on the King's boats, under the cover of darkness, but assisted by a great din. Palmieri stressed that it was the dead of night, and that the King's men did not know at first whether to fight or to flee, but they did fight and did so with great courage. At this stage, Palmieri continued, the two ships making the noise, hitherto stationed outside the port, entered, and two of the King's ships, before they could see the enemy, fled, and the other two ships belonging to the King were eventually captured. Villani credited the King's ships with far less courage - without attempting defence, they left the port, leaving two Genoese ships in the King's employ to defend themselves.

Palmieri thus altered the balance of the incident, presenting the misfortune of the Neapolitans in the face of an unexpected attack by pirates very much as if he were a Neapolitan. Villani, by contrast, had seen a clever trick and weaker forces snatch the advantage from numerically superior forces, and was interested in the incident for this reason. Palmieri had to include it as one of Niccolò's failures, and has therefore done his best to render a faithful account of the incident,

while empathizing with the King's men, by presenting their rational and emotional response to the unexpected enemy intrusion. The breakneck speed of Villani's narrative, well suited to the impetuous nature of the pirates, is not repeated in Palmieri's more measured Latin prose, which alternates between describing the pirates' action and that of the King's men.

Just as Niccolò's victories could not always be attributed to his skill, equally his defeats could not always be ascribed to his incompetence. As a narrative technique, Palmieri's use of chance adds variety to the nature of causation, and places limits on the abilities of even such a great man as Niccolò. As these are the only events in the Vita N. Acciaicli explained by *fortuna* it is possible that Palmieri was attracted to *fortuna* as the ultimate explanation by a sense of balance - one outcome favoured Niccolò, and the other did not. Yet in both episodes, Palmieri had expanded his account considerably from that given by Villani, and on both occasions had made it more favourable to Niccolò. To use *fortuna* as an explanation deprives Niccolò of responsibility for his actions. Accordingly, the didactic value of the episode must be reduced if chance interferes so forcibly with a rational approach. It is also noticeable that eclipses of the sun and meteors do not form part of Palmieri's craft - though *fortuna* may influence the outcome of events, it is essentially secular in nature and does not connote divine or supernatural intervention. Matteo's restricted use of *fortuna* is a sign of the sophistication of his narrative, being able to integrate successfully chronology, causation and chance events.



Two notable events included by Matteo Villani in his *Cronica* and omitted by Palmieri concern Niccolò's behaviour in Florence. The first notes that Niccolò arrived with his retinue in Florence and held feasts and dancing with "giovani donne" (40). This conduct shocked the Florentines with the result that "le quali femminili mollezze molto nella patria indebolirono la sua fama" (41). The other account concerned the fear in Florence that Niccolò had ambitions to act as *Signore* of Florence. Acciaiuoli had arrived in Florence seeking help for King Louis of Taranto against Anichino di Bongardo, and had been promised 300 cavalry by the Florentines (42). A scrutiny was due to take place in the near future, which meant that nearly all the *polizze* for Prior had been used; but those of Niccolò remained in the bags, because he was continually absent from Florence. It was therefore feared that his name would be drawn while he was present in the city, that he would become Prior, manipulate the Signoria and, with the 300 cavalry, control the city. Acciaiuoli held that "se necessario caso, l'avesse ritenuto di rinunziare l'ufficio" (43), but the Florentines were nonetheless suspicious of him. Palmieri's decision to omit these episodes shows again his aim of presenting only the acceptable side of Niccolò's character and not those that threatened to cast aspersions on his upright bearing.

One of the favourite means of explaining behaviour adopted by fourteenth century chroniclers was to devise a pithy apophthegm concerning human nature. For example, Dino Compagni writing at the start of the fourteenth century, offered a general observation as an insight into particular behaviour: "perchè i giovani è più agevole a ingannare che i vecchi, il diavolo, accrescitore de' mali, si fece da una brigata di

giovani che cavalcavano insieme ..." (44). Despite the attractions of such explanations - almost any occurrence could be explained if attached to the correct aphorism - this technique tended to be employed less often in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Commonly found much later in Machiavelli's writings, it was a device only used once, and then in a limited way, by Matteo in the Vita N. Acciaiuoli. He cleverly wove together the general observation with a specific episode, noting that since by nature men, and especially princes, wish to indulge in sensual pleasures, both the Queen and her husband, having given themselves over to these delights of mind and body, asked Niccolò to govern (45). The next sentence explains that they considered Niccolò to be completely trustworthy and highly competent, thus endowing their choice of Niccolò with a rational basis, even if the circumstances depended on more fundamental human nature. Palmieri offered no direct moral comment on the style of government that such indulgence produced, but noted soon afterwards that the "flourishing government" was shattered by the arrival of the King of Hungary. It is implicit that government ought not to be managed as the Neapolitan court desired, but Palmieri refrained from stating this explicitly. The mere juxtaposition of events was enough to indicate the foolhardy position adopted by the irresponsible Queen and her consort. By normally omitting generalisations in the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, Matteo was distancing himself from the older method of explanation, and concentrating instead on individual circumstances and the responses to them, rather than using received folk wisdom as an analytical tool.

The last section of the Life is devoted by Matteo to the pious acts and gifts of Niccolò (46). These included the building of a

monastery at Galluzzo, near Florence, for the Carthusian monks, and the provision of expensive garments for the priests. Matteo gained the information from the will of Niccolò, thus breaking with his otherwise considerable reliance on the Villani accounts. It is interesting to note that in the Della Vita Civile Palmieri had expressed his approval over furnishing the priests with rich clothes to elevate their presence and the status of religion (47). Evidently Palmieri felt strongly that it was the duty of a wealthy man to give to religious institutions and charity, and in his own will, he made similar bequests (48).

In the light of his introductory sentences to the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, Palmieri's consistent exaggeration of Niccolò's actions, and the suppression of other acts that might be detrimental to his reputation, hardly comes as a surprise. The use of rhetorical embellishment and invention was commonplace among humanist writers and served two purposes (49). The first was to glorify the subject and the patria, by making them seem most worthy of praise and admiration because of their acts of skill, courage, endurance or magnanimity. That Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Seneschal of the Kingdom of Naples, diplomat and military leader, was a man of this calibre Palmieri indicates in his preface and through the account of his life. The second purpose is made less explicit by Matteo in the preface to the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, but it appears in the introductions to his other historical works. In presenting this model citizen, Palmieri aimed to instruct the reader in history, and in valuable examples of laudable action, thereby to stimulate the reader to emulate or surpass himself the brilliance of the acts described. Since Palmieri's aim

was to instruct, as well as to inform, rhetoric was an essential tool for enhancing the response of the reader.

It is striking therefore that the only direct fifteenth century comment about the Vita N. Acciaiuoli reflected interest not in the content of the work, but in the quality of the presentation. Expressing his delight, Vespasiano called it "ornatissimo"; on the other hand, Alamanno Rinuccini in his funeral oration could find no praise at all for the work, merely observing "tum latine clarissimi viri Nicolae Acciaiuoli Vitam composuit ..." (50). Cristoforo Landino, who commented on the Della Vita Civile, the Città di Vita and the De Temporibus in the course of different lectures, completely fails to mention it (51). Three fifteenth century manuscripts still exist, and there were almost certainly at least two others as well, because neither Matteo's own copy nor the dedication copy given to Adcardo Acciaiuoli are among these (52). The number of manuscripts indicate that the work possessed some interest even if not a great deal; that the interest was only passing, moreover, is revealed by its publication, in Italian, and bound at the back of another text, only in 1588 (53).

The De Captivitate Pisanum Liber

In his introduction to the work, Scaramella saw Palmieri as indebted above all to Gino Capponi for the content, and to Sallust for his style (54). In his article on the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber, Wilcox viewed Palmieri instead as influenced especially by the style of Leonardo Bruni, and as attempting, and failing, to reproduce it for himself (55). Evidence for both points is readily found, though probably is not sufficiently conclusive to enable the overriding influence to be determined. Wilcox himself explained why he did not consider Sallust to be the chief influence - he thought that the examples provided by Sallust could only be applied in a very general and random fashion, and that the De Captivitate does not include as an analytical tool the growth and effect of moral decay that characterised Sallust's work (56). According to Wilcox, Palmieri revealed historical interests similar to those of Bruni, such as the desire to convey moral judgements, to teach, and to emphasize the political and psychological appreciation of a given situation, besides other features found more generally in the humanists' writing of history (57).

The interpretative work of both authors is valuable for identifying and relating similarities found in the De Captivitate with classical and classicizing histories. There can be no doubt that Palmieri was well acquainted with the work of Sallust, and the Jugurthine Wars in particular. It is equally certain that Palmieri was directly influenced by Bruni's writing of history. Yet this does not tell the whole story (58). Wilcox pointed out that one of the major differences between Palmieri and

Bruni was that Matteo lacked a clear frame of reference against which he could set the events. Palmieri was not consistent in his attitude towards the civilian control of military operations, favouring it on one occasion and criticizing it strongly on another (59). In addition, Palmieri, according to Wilcox, lacked an ability to interrelate the various elements recounted by him in his history. In these two areas, he could not therefore be considered similar to Bruni (60).

Recent historiography has emphasized that there is an important distinction to be made between the vernacular and the humanist histories, and since the De Captivitate derived largely from the vernacular work by Capponi, it is interesting to see how far Palmieri incorporated essentially vernacular elements into his Latin work (61). Both Scaramella and Wilcox establish Palmieri's reliance on Capponi's text, and it is unnecessary to run through all the arguments again (62). The dependence is shown most explicitly. The events in each account follow the same order, and Palmieri followed very closely Capponi's structure. Capponi in his account left gaps in the text for correct numbers or dates or names to be inserted later. None of these gaps can be found in Palmieri's account; either he traced the correct information and included it in his history, or else he overcame the problem by using a vague phrase intended to disguise his ignorance of the details. Where Capponi notes that the Pisans had attacked the Florentine camp on Ascension Day 1406, Palmieri prefers not only to render the date in classical Roman style, but also to cover up his ignorance of the precise date. He writes therefore that the attack took place "circiter kalendas iunii" knowing that Ascension Day would never fall far from June 1st

(63). It is equally obvious from this example that Capponi's account did not depend on Palmieri's work.

In general, Matteo tends to amplify Capponi's material rather than reduce it. What he omits from Capponi's narrative concerns Gino himself above all; thus he places more emphasis on events and somewhat less on an individual. This was very different from the historical technique used in writing the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, and illustrates well Palmieri's desire to experiment with different forms of historical writing. The effect is the more noticeable because Matteo also added or expanded upon some of the military and diplomatic events which in his version makes the capture of Pisa seem more like a long running campaign than a simple siege. In doing this, it may have been Palmieri's aim to reflect classical Roman writing, where a war rather than a single battle formed the central theme of a work. Far greater resources, organisation and determination were required to pursue a campaign, and it doubtless reflected well on the military might of Florence that such an enterprise could be undertaken. Although he used different means to reinforce the idea of Florence's martial strength, and the glory due to the *patria* as a result of the victory, Palmieri consistently stressed the point.

In his introduction to the De Captivitate, Matteo explains in some detail what he considers to be the background to the conflict by relating the history of Florence since the fall of the Roman Empire. Capponi on the other hand provides only a brief description of the relevant events from June 1405 which led up to the outbreak of the hostilities (64). The technique of linking latter-day Florence to the

Roman Empire by skillful use of historical narrative had been employed by Giovanni Villani in his Cronica and more recently by Bruni in his Historiarum Florentini Populi Libri, the first part of which had been finished in 1429 (65). And by writing in Latin, Palmieri raises the status of the events, making them appear a continuation of the prestigious triumphs of ancient Rome. Thus Matteo demonstrates that he had understood the value of this particular narrative device, besides showing off the extent of his own knowledge.

Of especial interest is the moral approach of Palmieri, which differed from that of other chroniclers. It can perhaps best be seen by comparing the description of a number of instances of great hardship and cruelty which took place during the war. Palmieri's treatment of these events is distinctive; he mentions two that were not recorded by other chroniclers of the war, and he plays down the importance of others, or omits them completely. One of the most striking of these episodes was the Pisan attempt to reduce the number of people in the city, so that the foodstuffs remaining would enable the soldiers to hold out for longer against the Florentines (66). The plan adopted therefore was to send out of the city "la gente disutile" (67). The Florentines meanwhile realised the significance of what was afoot and, according to the Acquisto di Pisa, killed some of the people who had been thrust outside the city walls, and let the others starve, the victims of war caught between two hostile camps. The Florentine "commissari di campo" were not prepared to permit the expelled Pisans to escape, because that would be to play into the hands of the Pisans and they ordered that "qualunche uscendo di Pisa, e fusse preso dal nostro, fusse subito impiccato" (68). For Capponi,



judging by his matter of fact account, this episode is simply an unfortunate part of besieging a town, and needs no special apology or justification; in any case, when he recounts the story, he expresses no regrets about the event. The Anonymous Chronicler, like Capponi, felt no qualms, and stated baldly that the ends justified the means: "le quali cose sappiendo li Fiorentini, e dispiacendo loro che le persone disutili uscissono della città, deliberarono che niuna persona fosse lasciata uscire di Pisa" (69). Clearly Capponi was not alone in considering that military demands outweighed compassion.

But the idea that such actions should have been undertaken by Florentines disturbed Matteo, and he attempts to portray the Florentines more sympathetically. Thus he claims that the Florentines, not wishing to be cruel even to the enemy, soon softened their treatment, and punished those who fell into their clutches but did not inflict further deaths (70). Moreover, he makes it evident that those Pisans who remained outside the city walls chose to do so themselves: "...si qui pertinaces remanserant, onustis ex illis ratibus per superiorem fluvium demittebant, qui, ripis civitatis appliciti, potius cuncta substinere parati erant, quam in hostium manus redire" (71). All the same, Matteo had noted the Florentine cruelty: "quorum nonnullos primo locis editioribus in conspectu civitatis palam suspenderunt laqueo" (72). But Palmieri sees cruelty when deliberately practised by Florentines as an anathema to the high standards he seeks for Florentine behaviour, even when at war. Having previously emphasized the Florentine determination to capture Pisa, this somewhat pious sentiment sits ill at ease with the rest of the narrative. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see that Matteo relates the event; in

the De Captivitate Pisarum Liber he includes episodes which do not glorify the Florentines, even if he feels it necessary to modify them in order to put the victors in a better light. It was probably the affront to Florentine pride and to the civilised nature of the Florentines that Matteo found difficult to accept.

One episode unique to Palmieri is the arrival of plagues which beset the Florentine camp (73). Palmieri himself does not see these plagues as moral retribution, or as a bad augury; he simply relates their presence without drawing any conclusions. Scaramella thought the plagues were Matteo's way of livening up his narrative (74). Whatever Palmieri's intention, the effect is to accentuate the harsh conditions facing the Florentine troops. Since this episode is placed shortly before the Pisans expelled "la gente disutile", it shows that the Florentines, too, suffered hardship during the siege and gives proof of their tenacity of purpose, rendering them still more worthy of honour and glory.

The other major episode inserted by Matteo which is not corroborated by other historians, concerns the Pisan reaction to famine in the city. He wrote:

"...equos preterea ceteraque iumenta horrendaque humano victui animalia usque ad sordidos comederant mures et, quod nefarium esset sed tamen historie lege meminisse licet, pro certo creditur nonnullos humana membra eorum, qui fame perierant, glutisse" (75).

While expressing his strong objection to the eating of human flesh ("quod nefarium esset"), there is a sense in which Palmieri is almost proud of his city's achievements in reducing its age-old adversary to this level of depravity, and as such considers it worthy of remembrance ("historie

lege meminisse licet"). After Palmieri's reluctance to admit Florentine cruelty to the Pisans, his pride is somewhat inconsistent, particularly when it is recalled that the whole episode is most probably his invention in any case. By contrast, Scaramella considers that this episode, inspired by Sallust's description of Catiline's fellow conspirators drinking blood to prove their loyalty, adds vitality to the narrative (76). It is interesting that on this occasion Matteo did not express regret either in religious terms or in any other. The effect once again is of making the Florentine soldiers seem civilised and honourable in comparison to their barbaric adversaries the Pisans.

The question inevitably arises of Palmieri's historical integrity when he includes inventions of this kind. It is clearly not a matter of whether he embellishes a phrase or a sentence in a rhetorical fashion, but rather a case of whether he can still be believable as a historical source when he inserts imaginary episodes. The mere inclusion of these two episodes reveals that Palmieri is not interested above all else in maintaining an accurate narrative. Vernacular narratives written by other chroniclers outlined what had happened, including Capponi's own account. Matteo is more concerned to write something new about the capture of Pisa, a work which would preserve in Latin the glory of the event, and which would stimulate the generations which followed to emulate and to surpass the brave and valiant efforts of the men involved. For Matteo, history is a literary genre of a didactic nature; from it lessons could be learned and wisdom distilled. He states as much in his introduction: "qui igitur temporum et rerum gestarum cognitionem habent, facile veritatem intelligunt ... et consilio atque sententia gubernare

republicam possunt" (77). Indeed, he chose specifically to write about the capture of Pisa because it was a great and memorable event, and because men imitate eagerly good reputations and great nobility (78). Thus for Palmieri, a memorable presentation of events and the conveying of a moral message are at times more important than recounting the truth. History was a form of literature, and it was perfectly legitimate to add events to the story in order to strengthen the message.

In Capponi's work, there are two final orations - one is a triumphal speech pronounced by Capponi himself, and the other a reply on behalf of the Pisans by Bartolomeo Piombino (79). Matteo expanded upon the oration given by Gino, and appreciably altered its tone (80). Capponi's version is much more practical in its implications, advising the Pisans that Florence was determined to retain its new acquisition and warned that death would follow for those inclined to seek freedom for Pisa: "siamo disposti, l'acquistato con ogni sollecitudine conservare, con morte, e con perpetuo sterminio di chi tentasse il contrario ..." (81). Palmieri on the other hand was more unctuous and concerned with abstractions and honour: "attamen postquam Deo placuit nos urbem vestram adquisisse, omnino intendimus, quod acquisitum cum dedecore amittere" (82). Yet in the Acquisto di Pisa, Capponi was able to promise the Pisans that any bad behaviour by Florentines would be punished severely, indicating his desire for the law to apply equally to citizens of both towns (83). Matteo saw no need to include a reference to such a statement, perhaps preferring not to draw attention to illegal acts perpetrated by Florentines. Instead, he made Capponi announce an amnesty for all offences committed by Pisans against the Florentines, a

declaration of forgiveness perhaps equivalent to that of the classical Romans who extended their citizenship to the vanquished enemy (84). Evidently the Florentines were superior to the Pisans not only in military might, but also in moral behaviour, partly because their citizens did not commit crimes, and partly because of their generosity of spirit in victory. Palmieri thus contrasts upright Florentine conduct with Pisan immorality, and again diverged from the vernacular accounts.

Palmieri had also shown in the oration how the Pisans had been an adversary of Florence during every war that Florence had waged since the city had been founded, as if to indicate that Pisa could expect no magnanimity from Florence (85). Another of the effects is to make the Pisans seem an eminently redoubtable opponent, serving to increase the glory due to the Florentines for their victory. Indeed, at one point in his narrative, Matteo refers to the Pisans as being "validos et pertinaces hostes" (86). The corresponding oration in the Acquisto di Pisa includes a much shorter list of animosity between the two cities, and mentions only that Pisa sided with the English mercenaries and the Visconti of Milan (87). Indeed, Capponi makes it clear that he has no desire to rehearse the list of injuries received (88). Palmieri's impressive knowledge of history and his desire to embroider the Acquisto di Pisa clearly demonstrates the difference between a humanist and a vernacular writer. Having catalogued the evils of the Pisans over the years, and thus justified the action taken by Florence against her treacherous neighbour, Matteo pointed out that no more than reasonable force had been used: "non enim vult florentinus populus urbem vestram delere, sed in omnibus, ut cernitis, conservare" (89). He then makes Capponi announce that friendship

often develops as a result of war (90). Consequently, Florence's tolerance of Pisa is seen to be superhuman, and her capacity to forgive is no less astonishing. It was obviously Palmieri's intention that the reader should be amazed by the magnanimity of the city's government in the face of a millenium of aggravation from Pisa.

Similar orations are not found in other accounts of the war, though the sentiments of Morelli are very close to those expressed by Capponi in the Acquisto di Pisa at the start of his oration. Morelli declared:

"non sapemmo o non volemmo conoscere quello ci era e d'oncre e d'utile: avemmola (Pisa) pure con grande costo di ricompere e di speso si soldo: *omnia pro meliori!* I peccati nostri e loro hanno fatto patire disagio a loro e a noi, ma Iddio ci ha più assauditi per la sua grazia ..." (91).

Palmieri did not exclude the hand of God from the Florentine victory; if anything, he elaborated on Capponi's version in the Acquisto di Pisa. There Capponi had announced:

"noi non sappiamo se pe' vostri peccati o pe' nostri meriti Iddio vi ha condotti sotto la Signoria del nostro Comune: il quale con grandissimi spendii e grandissima sollecitudine v'ha acquistati" (92).

Before he translated the first part of this phrase into Latin, Matteo commented: "ex facto igitur non incertum habemus Deum florentinum populum Pisas vincere voluisse" (93). No similar statement can be found in the Acquisto di Pisa. The expense mentioned by Morelli and in the Acquisto di Pisa is ignored by Matteo, as is the "disagio" (Morelli) and "sollecitudine" (Capponi) felt by the Florentines. Doubtless Matteo considered the hardship entirely justified by the gain of Pisa and, following classical models, did not view expense as a worthy topic of

discussion. Once more, it is possible to see Palmieri, insensitive to the Pisan viewpoint, and self assured to the point of arrogance, glorifying the civic achievements of the Florentines and elevating them to a level well beyond that found in his principal vernacular source, or even in other vernacular accounts. As the capture of Pisa was one of the military exploits of which Florence was most proud, this should come as no surprise. After all, Palmieri chose not to portray the ventures against Volterra, or the unsuccessful campaign against Lucca, both undertaken more than 20 years after the war against Pisa, and of which Palmieri himself would have had personal recollections.

Given Palmieri's choice of describing a successful and possibly even an ideal war, and one in which there was scope for a humanists' talents to turn a vernacular account of it into an event worthy of memory, it is easy to see it as an exercise, an experiment in writing a certain kind of history (94). It differed both from the Annales, which he was writing in these years, and also from his previous work the Vita M. Acciaiuoli in its subject. Neither a biography nor a chronicle, the De Captivitate concentrated on a single military enterprise. Even so, Matteo still saw men as the moving force in historical action, and viewed history as a "celebratio virorum illustrium" (95). But even if an exercise, Palmieri considered that history should be useful: "historia, que est rerum gestarum magistra, exponit atque demonstrat alacrioresque nos ad rempublicam defendendam et magnas res gerendas facit et ad res improbas segniores" (96). The moral and didactic elements of writing history were very closely linked, and like other humanist writers, Palmieri saw the writing of history not as a passive activity, simply as a record of the

great deeds of the past, but as a moral activity designed to stimulate men to undertake still greater acts.

The De Captivitate Pisarum Liber was not a hugely successful work. It exists in four fifteenth century manuscript copies, of which three are still in Florence (97). All the same, the work did have its admirers. In 1576, Matteo Brunozzi wrote to the Grand Duke because he was concerned that there was not a copy of De Captivitate Pisarum Liber in the library at San Lorenzo, nor had the work been published. He therefore wished to rectify the situation by giving his own copy to the library (98). It was printed twice in the eighteenth century, once by Muratori, and has never been translated from the Latin. By way of comparison, Capponi's Acquista di Pisa was likewise published by Muratori, and has been published since then on two other occasions (99).

There is no record of why Matteo turned from writing humanist history; perhaps he did not feel that it was valued by his friends; but this view lacks substantiation. Revealing his versatility, and continued enthusiasm for the historical genre, he turned to a more traditional style of recording events. This was the De Temporibus, a chronicle which provided a great deal of very simple information. Before examining that text, however, the Annales will be studied.



The Annales

The Annales of Palmieri is sometimes also referred to as the Historia Fiorentina. This latter name was not chosen by Palmieri, but by a later owner of the manuscript (100). Palmieri himself preferred to call his work by the name of Annales, as he explains in one of his introductory sentences: "quod antiqua licentia annales vocitabo" (101). Indeed, Matteo continues by making it plain that he is not writing a history "nam nimium quidem prolixum esset, si vellem omnia que ad historiam pertinet persequi. Non igitur regiones describam, non consilia contentionesque enarrabo, non quod sapienter temerarieve gestum sit iudicabo" (102). Instead it is Palmieri's aim to report contemporary deeds in a much simpler form, "ut satis per hec scire quid factum sit et quomodo" (103). Thus the work was to be essentially for reference, rather than an elegant disquisition bound by strict rules governing its structure and content (104). As for the subject matter, Palmieri explains his intention to relate "que bello paceve vel domi vel extra urbem gesta erunt" (105). There are a number of noteworthy features in Matteo's claims.

By choosing to structure his work along the lines of annals, Palmieri was following the tradition established by many earlier chroniclers. In annals, the year is the main division used for organizing material, and Palmieri in his Annales wrote the year at the top of every sheet of paper and put headings in the margin. Livy was the best known ancient exponent of the annalistic style of writing history, using the election of consuls to separate the events of one year from the next, but

the concept was in widespread use, being employed by most chroniclers in the medieval period. In his Historiarum Florentini Populi Libri, Bruni had tried to diminish the significance of the division of history into periods a year long by using circumlocutions for the advent of a new year whenever he could. Thus the Annales did not represent an attempt by Matteo to imitate Bruni; on the contrary, Matteo was attracted to precisely the format that Bruni had tried to eschew.

At the same time, Palmieri's decision to specify what his work would and would not contain has no precise parallel in the chronicle tradition. Classical historians, such as Polybius or Livy, prefaced their work with an outline of their intentions, and this aspect of their style had been adopted by Bruni. It is clear that in his first attempt at writing history, Matteo had been strongly influenced by reading either classical histories or by reading histories written in a classical style. By his own admission, a combination of motives prompted Palmieri to write the Annales. Like the classical Roman historians, he was keen to record "facta digna" for the sake of posterity (106). In addition, he had a didactic purpose, considering that the knowledge of past deeds would enable precautions to be taken in the future: "ut... dignoscere ac providere possimus" (107). At the same time, writing the work would have more personal benefits. It would be useful as an aide-mémoire of recent Florentine deeds for the author, as well as enabling him to practice writing (108). Clearly, Palmieri thought that he would in the future wish to possess a record of Florentine events, and that he would be assisted by practicing his writing. An autograph copy of the Annales exists, so

that it is possible to see exactly how Palmieri interpreted these various aims and motives (109).

It is ironic that having begun his chronicle in 1432, and filled in information from 1429, Palmieri felt unable to write anything at all for the year 1433. In the autograph copy, there are five blank pages for the year 1433, presumably left so that he could complete the account at a later date (110). That the explanation is almost certainly political is borne out by the first entry for 1434. It concerns September, and begins with a phrase expressing Matteo's relief at the change in political regime: "tandem Priores kalendis septembris accepto magistratu ..." (111). Palmieri wrote his description of the events soon after they occurred, his next entry dating from the beginning of 1435 (112). His welcoming of the Medici so soon after their return surely indicates his heart felt preference for them. As Matteo had married Niccolosa Serragli in the summer of 1433, and as members of the Serragli family had links with both supporters of the Albizzi and the Medici factions, he may have thought it prudent not to record the emotive events of that year. Until 1475, the year of his death, on only one other occasion did Matteo leave a year blank, and that was 1444, when he was extremely busy, holding three different political posts during the year (113).

Palmieri departs almost immediately from his aim of presenting internal events of the city. While the Annales admittedly begins by referring to the revolt in the subject town of Volterra, the focus of attention was rapidly switched to the war with Lucca, to battles with Milanese troops, and to the complicated diplomacy on the Italian

peninsula (114). Even after the return of the Medici and their supporters ("multa preterea ab his utiliter provisum et ordinata sunt"), Matteo preferred to record the diplomatic and military occurrences outside Florence, rather than the political developments within (115). Accordingly, he chose to note Florentine friendship with Perugia and Venice, and the Milanese friendship with the papacy and the death of the Queen of Naples (116). From this point, the success of the joint Milanese and Genoese fleets in overcoming the Catalans is recounted; as is the death of Niccolò Fortebracci, and the Bolognese expulsion of Batista Cannelano and the homage paid by them consequently to the pope (117). In 1438, the Milanese attempt to capture Brescia is narrated, as is the decision of pope Eugenius to move from Ferrara to Florence (118).

Given Palmieri's stated intention of recording contemporary events inside the city as well as outside, it is perhaps surprising that there is no mention in the Annales of the Medici's consolidation of their power and status, especially as it was Matteo's wish to set down memorable events. Matteo was not hostile to the Medici, and would have had nothing to fear from them in recording their manipulation of the Florentine constitutional processes. As will be seen, he was kept fully informed about diplomatic developments beyond Tuscany, and it is certain that he would also have been aware of the political manoeuvres within the city. In view of these circumstances, how can Matteo's silence on one of the most noteworthy of internal Florentine events best be explained?

Probably one of the best means of understanding the absence of the Medici from the pages of the Annales lies in an examination of the

manner in which the Medici faction consolidated itself in office. In the first years after 1434, the measures which ensured that they were not overthrown were introduced both piecemeal and temporarily, and were seen to be justified by the prevailing political circumstances. Thus although the Accoppiatori elected the Signoria *a mano* for five years from November 1434 to 1439, this power was conceded to them only on a short term basis which, during the five year period, was renewed on several occasions (119). What is more, this method of electing the Signoria was abandoned in 1440 (120). The Florentine republic did not overnight become a Medici dominion; the process was gradual and slow, and suffered setbacks. It seems therefore most likely that Palmieri did not see the measures which were introduced in the republic after 1434 to secure the foundations of the regime as being any different in nature from the measures which were introduced before that date, which were intended to end factionalism.

Machiavelli's judgement that internal politics were avoided by those writing histories of Florence in the years before him in order to protect the families of those involved in dishonourable episodes does not seem entirely correct, or at any rate, not in the case of Palmieri (121). After recounting Piero's victory in 1466, Matteo provides a list of those exiled, revealing his willingness to identify members of families involved in dishonourable episodes (122). It is more likely that Palmieri's choice of what to include in his chronicle was also strongly influenced by the classical notion that reading about diplomacy and wars provided a useful training for future statesmen. Matteo thus did not attempt to record everything that happened in Florence, but wanted to note principally diplomatic and military occurrences so that his work might be valuable as

a didactic piece of work. Poggio Bracciolini, writing a historical work in the mid 1450s, decided to describe only the diplomatic and military history of the Italian peninsula, and yet still felt justified in calling the work the Historia Fiorentina (123). It has been noted in a previous chapter how Brunii's description of the Florentine constitution in 1439 was based on an outmoded appreciation of the functioning of the republic (124). It was not therefore that these historians of Florence were wilfully blind or politically naive; it was rather that their perception of the literary model which they aspired to reproduce contained no place for a portrayal of contemporary political practice. Cavalcanti writing the Istorie Fiorentine at the same time felt no such constraints, and discussed openly and with vehemence the struggle between factions in Florence (125). Yet his chronicle adhered to a different tradition. Cavalcanti had no humanist aspirations or background, and was writing a vernacular work not for an appreciative audience but to occupy himself in prison (126). Possibly his position well away from government also made him less concerned to project a good image of it.

The years passed, and Palmieri did not waver in his decision to recount principally the external events. In other ways, though, the nature of his writing did change. He described the events of 1440 in seven sides of writing, but summed up 1441 in less than one (127). 1442 filled only half a side, and 1443 consisted of one sentence about the King of Naples' military exploits, while nothing at all was recorded for 1444. In 1445, Palmieri wrote very little, less than half a side, and altered after June of that year to writing in the vernacular. At the same time, his enthusiasm for writing his Annales received a new boost, and he

wrote more than four sides on the events of 1446. In these years he probably was not able to find the time necessary to write; or rather, he was already fully engaged in writing the Vita N. Acciajoli and the De Captivitate Pisarum Liber, in addition perhaps to collecting material for the De Temporibus. Besides, he was very much occupied in the political life of the city, sitting in numerous key posts (128). In 1446, he told the Catasto officials that he had withdrawn from the management of the family spice shop at Canto alle Rondine, delegating that responsibility to his nephews Angelo and Antonio (129). It is likely that being short of time, Matteo wished to make a record of events in Italian and intended at a later stage to translate the vernacular passages into Latin. The change in language did not lead to any perceptible changes in the topics he wrote about, or to any change in his historical approach.

One interesting feature of the Annales is that parts of the narrative are clearly based on documents, nearly all letters, which belonged to the Florentine republic. Since these documents were confidential, only those officials handling the matter concerned, or the chancery staff, would have had access to them. Yet when Palmieri recounts the events of August 1466, he is able to state:

"in detto anno a di 27 di settembre (sic) venne lettere dalla signoria di Bologna, come nelle terre del Duca di Modena s'era ragunato molta gente per venire a Firenze per certe novita que *parabantur in pernitium libertatis*" (130).

As a matter of style Palmieri does not introduce short passages in Latin in the part of the Annales which is written in Italian, and it is revealing to compare this passage with a letter from the Bolognese. The letter, dated 26 August 1466, reads: "cum nuper intelleximus motu quosdam

in ista vestra incolyta civitate fieri, qui fortasse tendere in perniciem vestre *libertatis* possent,..." (131). Palmieri's choice of Latin words was not therefore fortuitous; he had read the relevant letter. As he acted as ambassador to Bologna in September and October 1466, he would doubtless have had access to the pertinent correspondence (132). In this case, it is easy enough to account for the quotation of official documents.

Yet in the Annales there are several other occasions, spread over a number of years, when Matteo is able to refer to letters received by the republic, even though he did not hold an official position which would have guaranteed him access to the current diplomatic correspondence. In 1447, Palmieri was aware that letters arrived in Florence on 15, 17 and 18 August (133). These contained first news of the Duke of Milan's illness, and then of his death. The summaries are brief, and it is possible that Palmieri heard the news from citizens holding an official post; he himself held none at this time. Two years later, in 1449, Palmieri recounts the details of how a peace treaty with the Venetians was agreed, noting in particular the Venetian reply made through Florentine ambassadors (134). During 1449, Matteo was elected to the office of the Operai delle Monasteri delle Convertite, but this office would hardly confer, as of right, access to such sensitive information (135). In his account, Palmieri notes "*praticossi questa materia*", and this provides the clue in this case to Palmieri's knowledge, for he was present at a well attended *pratica* in November 1449 (136). However, there are other cases where his presence at *pratiche* is not recorded, and where he did not hold an office which brought him into direct contact with the documents (137). Presumably Matteo's special knowledge on these occasions



was gained by him talking to friends and colleagues. It is worth recalling that Cavalcanti, writing from prison about factions in Florence, had no difficulty in discovering what was happening in the city (138).

Like other Florentine chroniclers, Palmieri was fascinated by different natural phenomena, such as unusual weather, comets or earthquakes. Although he describes their occurrence most vividly, recalling a precise image, he does not link directly their appearance to a political or military disaster. On the whole, it was clearly the unusual aspect of the sight which caught Matteo's imagination. In the spring of 1456, Palmieri recounts that flames were seen in the sky accompanied by claps of thunder (139). Other, more mundane episodes were recorded too. Heavy rains and strong winds in August 1456, noted also by Rucellai, were recorded together with their effects (140). While adding variety and interest to the narrative, these sporadic interjections are not used to explain events. By narrating the sighting of a small comet just before he described the death of Bianca Maria Sforza, the wife of Francesco Sforza in October 1468, Palmieri evidently associated the two events (141). Often the appearance of a comet was thought to foretell death, and Palmieri probably had this interpretation in mind. Certainly the link he made between the two events is in this instance probably best understood as causal and not just temporal: "cometes circa kalendis octobris apparuit crinibus non multum insignibus, et circa hora noctis tertiam occidebat sub estivo occidente, et statim secuta est mors Blance Maria". But on no other occasion in the Annales did he relate a natural phenomenon of this kind to human disaster. The deaths of famous and influential people are recorded in the Annales, but no other death is preceded by such an

obvious augury (142). Palmieri's preoccupation with the weather is best illustrated by his descriptions in the pages bound at the back of the Annales. As no inferences about the influence of the weather on men's affairs were drawn by Palmieri, his interest probably sprung from curiosity, or from a simple desire to record. It cannot be discounted that there may have been practical benefits to be drawn from recording the weather regarding the best times to plant or harvest crops. Thus it would seem that unusual meteorological events were for Matteo a source of interest, and were worthy of record, but did not necessarily influence openly human events, or even consistently provide auguries.

Palmieri was not invariably interested in relating events in which he had been involved. He did not say much about, for example, the celebrations arranged for Giangaleazzo on his visit to Florence in 1459, even though he was one of the most prominent participants in it (143). He omitted, too, the part he played in the arrival in Florence of Pope Pius, also in April 1459 (144). By contrast, he expressed a notable desire to record the festival of San Giovanni in 1454 (145). Elsewhere in the Annales, Palmieri showed little concern for festivals, using San Giovanni as a method for dating other events, rather than as an occurrence worthy of record in itself (146). Not only did Palmieri devote a good deal of space to recording the 1454 festival in detail, but his most lively piece of writing in the Annales is contained in his description. Matteo listed the different groups which performed short religious dramas in Piazza della Signoria before the Priors. It is in describing a madman who intervened in one of these dramas, much to the amusement of the crowd, that Palmieri's narrative jerks into life with a vivid portrayal of the

scene (147). Simply from Palmieri's account, the reason for his interest in the festival is not revealed, in spite of his outline of the changes in organization which had taken place that year. But the *Tratte* records indicate that Palmieri was a member of the organizing committee that year, and given his political eminence and experience, and his loving account, it is not improbable that he was responsible for much of the organisation and for many of the changes (148). Since Palmieri did not necessarily reveal in the *Annales* when he had been elected to undertake an embassy, one of the most senior civic honours, and even then said little, he was presumably very proud of the results of his term of office. Similarly, it is not from the *Annales* that information about Palmieri's term as *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia* can be gleaned, in stark contrast to his term of office for the San Giovanni festival. His account of the San Giovanni celebrations in 1454 is thus almost the only detailed autobiographical testimony of Palmieri's participation in public office, and constitutes one of his rare deviations from recording political or diplomatic or military episodes. Palmieri's reluctance to refer to his own involvement in events in the *Annales* was probably based on his perception of annals as a record of matters of public rather than private interest.

The recording of natural phenomena and autobiographical details was frequent in the vernacular chronicles and *ricordanze* and very rare in humanist histories. In addition to these features, Palmieri also recorded one or two events of a local nature, unconnected with celebrations, the weather or diplomacy. For instance, he mentioned the burning of the church of Santo Spirito in 1470, ascribing the outbreak of

the fire to negligence (149). He also recorded the canonization of San Bernadino in 1450, and in 1470 Matteo noted the death of Otto Niccolini, his companion on his embassy to Rome in 1468 (150). While similar features can be found in vernacular chronicles, they are more commonly found in *ricordanze*. In private accounts events of civic rather than political importance were often recorded, together with matters of key personal importance, such as the dates of births, marriages and deaths, or of commercial transactions or contracts. While in the main the Annales is written as though intended for public circulation, recording therefore military and diplomatic occurrences, there are also elements in it which correspond more closely to the personal tradition of the *ricordanze*. In essence, this is simply a reflection of Matteo's dual purpose in committing the events to paper, that the work should note "facta digna" as well as others "quibus non digna celebratione videantur" (151). He was evidently torn between following a classical model, and recording only matters of military and diplomatic importance, and between writing an account which would include events which were personally significant to him.

The Annales is interesting as an intermediate step between a humanist inspired chronicle, such as the Historia Fiorentina which Poggio was later to write, and the traditional annals format, which included any notable events which had taken place during the year. As a result, the Annales combines aspects of a humanist history, particularly in its emphasis on military and diplomatic events, with aspects of the vernacular Florentine tradition, such as the recording of comets, of deaths of famous people, and of contemporary events of largely civic or

personal interest. Palmieri's sustained interest in writing the Annales, to which periodically he added matters of note, reveals the strength of his belief in its worth and his continuing commitment to values other than those acquired from classical literature.

The De Temporibus

Abounding with surprises and contradictions, the De Temporibus is the least congruous of Matteo's histories. Although written after the humanist histories of the Vita N. Acciaiuoli and the De Captivitate Pisarum Liber, it embraces the most primitive historical structure of all Palmieri's works. Having divided the page into 4 columns, Matteo places the date in the left hand column, the name of the current pope in the second column, and a piece of historical information in the third. In the right hand column, Matteo writes the name of the reigning emperor. A typical entry thus reads:

1301	Sonifattus VIII [7]	Santes Aligherius agnoscitur	Albertus [3]
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(152).

By presenting his history in this manner, Matteo was adopting a historical style which had been used by St. Jerome, and which had been used throughout the Middle Ages. Moreover, Palmieri enjoined future scribes to copy his red and black colour scheme which highlighted the text (153). Only the barest minimum of information could be conveyed, and the real importance of the work lay in its ability to establish the correct order and dates for a wide range of events, dating from Adam to 1448 (154).

Not content with the existing works, Matteo had set about the task of drawing up a list of dates, popes and emperors. As a considerable amount of study by the work's editor, Scaramella, has already been devoted to the sources Matteo that exploited, I shall do no more than summarize briefly his findings (155). For the years 1 to 1394 A.D.,

Palmieri was heavily dependent on the work of his former teacher Sozomeno (156). Despite the great similarity in their products - Sozomeno was concurrently labouring on a huge universal history - their aims were different. Matteo wished to compose a work of reference which was to include events of outstanding interest, explaining: "verum cum intentionis meae nequaquam sit historiam conscribere, quod immensum quippe foret opus, sed tempora rerum solum annotare, ut manifestius singula cognoscantur" (157). Sozomeno had earlier determined to write an "immensum opus", announcing "scripturus ab orbe condito usque ad nostra tempora quaeque mihi digna memoratu videbantur" (158). It seems certain that at the time when Palmieri was writing the De Temporibus, that is, most probably in the years immediately before 1449, Sozomeno had prepared his manuscript only up to 1294 A.D., though at the time of his death in 1458, he had reached 1455 (159). Thus Palmieri was only able to consult the part of his teacher's work then available.

For the material after 1294, Matteo turned gratefully to the chronicles of the Villani, and drew almost exclusively on their work for the period to 1363 (160). Since Matteo Villani's chronicle stopped in 1364, at this point Palmieri was obliged to look elsewhere. He turned to the scholarship of Bruni, and proceeded to take much of his material from the Historiarum Florentini Libri XII and the Rerum in Italia suo tempore gestarum commentarius (161). That Palmieri, a fellow humanist, should raid these highly esteemed works of Bruni's in order to wrench the dates and events out of context, and to destroy the causal relationships that Bruni had striven so hard to create, shows with remarkable clarity the different tastes and aims of the humanists. As Palmieri is often

cited as one of the humanists closest in thought to Bruni, his pillaging of Bruni's texts for such basic information is all the more surprising (162). On the other hand, it does indicate the respect that Palmieri paid to the accuracy of Bruni's historical work, and his tacit acceptance of the validity of Bruni's historical method. Matteo also drew on epigraphical inscriptions recorded by Foggio, indicating his openness to borrowing from the works of his colleagues, and to experimenting with new historical techniques (163).

For the section of De Temporibus treating the dates from 1410 to 1448, Matteo bases his text on a wider selection of sources, including Bruni, Boninsegni, Buonincontri and others (164). For the years 1411 to 1430, Palmieri is content to rely almost entirely on translating the account given by Buoninsegni, incorporating exceptionally an item on the council of Constance in 1414 from Bruni (165). After 1430, Palmieri draws on his own De Temporibus, and on other sources known to him but not now traceable. Somewhat ironically, by the time that Sozomeno came to write the more recent parts of his *magnum opus* (1410 - 1448), he was actually able to benefit from Palmieri's efforts, thus reversing the normal dependence of pupil on master.

Given Palmieri's general willingness to accept the dates proposed by others, even though he did add some details for which Scaramella was not able to trace the source, the De Temporibus, as Scaramella was eager to point out, has no value as an original historical source (166). In itself, it may provide a clue as to why another later



historian made a mistake over a particular date but, unlike the Annales, it will not help to establish the accuracy of a specific date.

Many of the features of Palmieri's other historical works can be found in the De Temporibus, but they are often found only in an exaggerated form thanks to the concision that the structure, as a straightforward work of reference, required. As a consequence of its structure, subtleties of interpretation were hardly called for, and were rarely furnished. Far more openly than in his Annales, Palmieri offered an opinion on most of the major recent events in Florentine history. For example, his entry for 1342 reads "Gualterius gallus, falsis titulis Athenarum dux, Florentiae tyrannidem decem menses obtinuit", which leaves little room for misunderstanding Matteo's view of the Duke (167). One of the items for 1378 reads "infima et mercennaria plebs per discordias maiorum civium Florentiae sublevata honores civitatis sibi comedi postulavit, quibus seditionibus civitas varie quassata maximum detrimentum suscepit", and again Matteo's attitude is obvious (168).

Teaching by extended moral example simply was not possible with a work of this kind, though Matteo, in his letter dedicating the volume to Piero de' Medici, did try to urge Piero to imitate the "exempla" and "praecepta" contained in the work (169). Incidentally, this is the earliest evidence of Matteo's friendship with Piero, whom he addresses as "peramicus", testifying to the strength of the relationship even at its earliest recorded appearance. The De Temporibus includes one other characteristic seen in Matteo's earlier historical writings. Once again, Palmieri reaffirms his interest in comets, and by juxtaposition hints that

it could not be coincidence that the deaths of Duke Galeazzo of Milan and Tamberlaine, "incredibilis potentiae imperator", occurred at the same time as a comet was seen (170).

The appearance of the De Temporibus and Sozomeno's Chronicon within a few years of each other bears witness to a continuing interest even among humanists in the older, more traditional ways of writing history. But it was not just teacher and former pupil who wished to write history in a traditional style. For instance, the humanist who wrote Palmieri's funeral oration, Alamanno Rinuccini, continued the vernacular chronicle begun by his father, an account of civic events accompanying a list of the Priors of the city (171). It would be easy to see these examples as exceptions, yet there are other indications, too, that the traditional style remained popular. Another Florentine with humanist connections, Marco Parenti, wrote a vernacular chronicle and the history written by the Archbishop of Florence, St. Antoninus, in the 1450s, was based on the medieval scheme of four monarchies and six ages (172). Although he made use of new historical methods in his history, Matteo was not alone in preferring the more traditional format.

It has been suggested that the vernacular chronicle in these years represented a vehicle for protests to be made against the governing clique (173). There survived also a traditional form of writing history in Latin where the prime fascination was simply in recording and listing, not in writing a historical narrative. For although much innovation and experimentation took place, there was a strong and abiding desire to retain some traditional elements, and to continue to use habitual forms of

presentation. Palmieri's choice of format indicates that he believed in, among other things, the importance and power of the Pope and the Emperor, in divine influence over events on earth, and in the significance, even if not readily intelligible, of comets. For someone frequently viewed as a leading humanist to display such beliefs demonstrates that humanism did not fully supplant the vernacular culture; it was grafted on to it, but never really succeeded in displacing it. Despite a keen fascination with humanist literature, Matteo showed, too, a deep respect for the traditional approaches to historical writing, and while eager enough to experiment with the new humanist methods, he was most reluctant to abandon all the older tenets.

In addition, it may be that mercantile habits encouraged the survival of the chronicle and the universal history. For a merchant, the cataloguing of historical stock may have seemed a valuable exercise in itself; it was not, therefore, necessary to make links between the disparate items of information in order to be able to understand their significance - it was enough that they existed, and that the list be accurate. Benedetto Dei is the supreme example of such a mentality, though it can also be seen in Giovanni Rucellai, and earlier in Gregorio Dati and in Giovanni Villani (174). It is nonetheless striking that a man such as Palmieri, who was respected for his humanist learning and culture, was responsible for compiling a work such as the De Temporibus in view of the fact that humanists prized the power of eloquence and persuasion, and of moral teaching, and valued highly the importance of examples drawn from classical antiquity in order to inspire and stimulate men to greater actions.

Yet whatever else may be said, De Temporibus satisfied a need keenly felt. Even before presenting the work to Piero de Medici, Matteo had offered a copy to Leonardo Dati as soon as he had finished it in 1448 (175). Alamanno Rinuccini in his funeral speech described the De Temporibus as both "accuratissime" and "praeclarum opus"; nor was this simply a panegyric - others readily concurred (176). Bartolomeo Scala in his Historia Florentinorum referred to Palmieri as "scriptorem accuratissimum temporum" (177). The Pisan Mattia Palmieri enthusiastically continued Matteo's De Temporibus to 1482 (178). In 1480, Cristoforo Landino said of the De Temporibus that it was a "volume perspicuo e molto utile" (179). Giovanni Manetti owned a copy of the work, and Nicodemo Tranchedini, the Milanese ambassador in Florence, himself made a summary of the chronicle (180). Sixtus IV commissioned a copy, and Antonio, Count of Marsciano, had a copy of the work in his library (181). The large number of fifteenth century manuscripts, ten in all, in the Biblioteca Nazionale and in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence, likewise testifies to the phenomenal success of the work (182). Further evidence of the work's popularity was its frequent republication. The De Temporibus was first printed in Milan about 1475, but the edition contained only the events after 475, those before this date being related by Eusebio (183). According to the British Library catalogue, there were further editions of the book in 1483, 1512, 1513, 1529 and 1536, with another in 1579. By far the most appreciated of Palmieri's works, it is ironic that its success was probably due not to its humanist merits, but to its very traditional format; due in fact to a complete absence of similarity to other humanist productions.

To conclude this brief treatment of each of Palmieri's historical works, the point that requires most stress is not the versatility of Palmieri. It is rather that the texts, instead of following what is seen as the "normal" development from chronicle into humanist history, were written in more or less the reverse order. The work begun the earliest, the Annales, catalogues occurrences, and includes comets and meteorological observations in a manner not unlike some of the fourteenth century chroniclers. At the same time, it omits all account of internal civic conflict, which was observed with considerable passion by many of the fourteenth and fifteenth century chroniclers. Lifelike physical descriptions of people, so often found in these chronicles, and seldom found in the humanist writings, are absent. While continuing to write the Annales, Palmieri produced the Vita M. Acciajoli and the De Captivitate Pisarum Liber, works explicitly designed to emphasize Florentine civic glory and to elaborate on and to amplify vernacular accounts. These two Latin works were also intended to stimulate Florentine citizens to emulate and if possible to surpass the marvellous deeds performed by great men in the past. They may perhaps best be seen as essays in humanist history writing, possibly constituting a reply, more or less conscious, to the taunts Palmieri suffered for having written the Bella Vita Civile in Italian. It does not necessarily follow that Matteo's approach was insincere in these two Latin works simply because he was experimenting with a new style; on the contrary, these two efforts bear witness to a continuing and profound interest of his in grappling with the issues raised by a study of the literature of antiquity.

To view the Vita N. Acciaiuoli and the De Captivitate Etrurum Liber as experiments in writing humanist history makes it easier to explain Matteo's reversion to cataloguing facts in the De Temporibus. The extraordinary success of this work indicates, too, that humanist history was not the only style in demand, and Palmieri's desire to reach a wide audience, expressed in the introduction to the Bella Vita Civile, may have been partly responsible for him adopting the readily understandable structure of a universal history. As pointed out at the start of the chapter, experimentation flourished, and traditional ideas vied with newer ones. It seems as though Palmieri in the Annales and the De Temporibus ended up half way; that is, writing in a traditional style, but quite prepared to incorporate aspects of the humanist approach. Yet he was not alone in his stance; Parenti, Rinuccini, Sozomeno and Domenico Buoninsegni represent other examples of humanists writing in a traditional and non-humanist fashion. Their existence adds weight to an interpretation of fifteenth century history writing which admits the survival of older methods alongside the newer, and which stresses the non-linear development of humanism.

The neglect by modern historians of Palmieri as a historian, apart from his mediocre quality, may have been due simply to an inability to place him satisfactorily within an established pattern. Many of the principal features of the humanists' mode of writing history can be found in his Latin works, notably the glorification of Florence and the Florentines, his embellishment of vernacular works, his desire to stimulate other Florentines to greater deeds, and to teach by precept. On the other hand, the Annales and the De Temporibus share many of the

features found in traditional history writing, the cataloguing of events and the absence of a coherent interpretation of events. The lack of homogeneity in Palmieri's works makes it difficult to classify them. But consistent development is not always found within a particular field of interest, and often it appears that classifications are devised which take account solely of the evidence which accords with them; whatever does not is ignored. Once a certain degree of heterogeneity is accepted, and once an amount of irrationality and individuality is permitted in a scheme, it becomes easier to include the unusual and idiosyncratic. Matteo's historical productions seem understandable once a looser framework obtains. Like other Florentines, he wrote a chronicle; he also tried his hand at writing humanist histories, and he wrote a universal history; experimentation was as much part of the historical tradition as diversity. Circumstances did not dictate that Matteo should have been attracted only to writing humanist history, or that in being attracted he should then despise the older historical approaches; yet this was certainly the prevalent tradition. Nonetheless, a certain catholicity of taste and interest is scarcely surprising in a man who at different times in his life exerted himself as a spice merchant, as an ambassador, as an historian, orator, biographer, politician and theological poet; indeed, any classification is bound to collapse under the weight of such a variety of interests so vigourously pursued. As a historian, Palmieri was versatile, but probably no less versatile than many other humanists who turned their hand to numerous different literary forms. The variety of Matteo's historical production is certainly striking, but Palmieri was no less a product of his times for that.

Given Palmieri's political involvement, something should also be said about the relation of his history writing to his political attitudes and to the social and political situation of fifteenth century Florence. How does the history that Matteo wrote reflect the political realities of his day, and what are the bases on which he built, perhaps for which he built, his history? One motive was absolutely fundamental to Palmieri's historical works, and that was his pride in Florence, and in things Florentine. Above all else, this motive is what stimulated him to write, to provide a record of the things which had inspired his admiration and reverence; indeed, he says as much in the first sentence of his Annales, and similar sentiments are repeated in the Vita N. Acciaiuoli and in the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber (184). Beyond this stimulus, Matteo wanted to glorify and to propagate the deeds of Florence, his native city, which he felt to be a new Rome, entering a new golden age of literature and art. His modification of a number of embarrassing actions by Florence in the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber, and the unblemished manner in which he portrayed Niccolò Acciaiuoli, is indicative of his desire to highlight only the most worthy of Florentine exploits. Likewise, the subjects about which he wrote suggest that he valued especially highly Florence's military and diplomatic skills, and that he was extremely proud not only of Florence's famous sons, such as Niccolò Acciaiuoli, but also of her conquests, as in the De Captivitate Pisanum Liber, and of the negotiations which preserved her independence, as in the Annales. By recounting these events, Matteo wished to teach citizens moral precepts and examples which he hoped they would use in governing the republic. He wished too to stimulate others to emulate and surpass the outstanding deeds of the past, in order to enhance the renown



of Florence. The picture was not necessarily wholly accurate; after all, for his instruction, Palmieri only wanted to present helpful and valuable examples.

One further point should perhaps be made about Palmieri's writing. From 1439 to 1448, he wrote three works in their entirety and continued to add to two more, his Annales and his Ricordi. From 1448 to his death in 1475, he produced the Città di Vita, a very long religious poem, but completed no other work. What reasons can be adduced for his failure to carry on writing at the same pace? Above all, it seems probable that Matteo's political involvement will have taken up a major part of his time, especially as he increasingly held offices of greater responsibility, and had to participate in taking more decisions in government. Moreover, it is probable that from about 1455 he was considering writing the Città di Vita, and probably began writing after 1460 (135). Then, after 1465, the date when the Città di Vita first appeared publicly, Matteo was much concerned to defend his creation, and was simultaneously more active in the city's politics than at any time previously. The very favourable reception of the De Temporibus would surely have encouraged Matteo to continue writing histories had he been able to devote time to it; as it was, he gave up his time to experiment with another literary format, which was the poem the Città di Vita.

Citta di Vita

Palmieri's lengthy poem the Citta di Vita was written in the style of a vision (1). A guide, Sibyl, leads Matteo as though in a dream through heaven and hell, and explains to him the various sights that they encounter. Much of the outward structure of the poem resembles Dante's Divina Commedia, and the similarity was not accidental. Not only were there numerous imitations of Dante's great work produced in the fifteenth century, but Palmieri himself had already confessed to considerable admiration of Dante in the Della Vita Civile (2). In writing the Della Vita Civile, he had copied the idea given most prominence by Boccaccio in the Decameron of placing the setting for his work in a house outside Florence during a time of plague. Clearly then, Matteo was not averse to borrowing the good ideas of others in an attempt to improve the appearance and authority of his own writings.

At the end of The Republic, Plato had introduced a vision, the dream of Er the Armenian. Both Chrysoloras and Bruni had translated The Republic, and Matteo had referred to the work in the Della Vita Civile (3). In the De Republica, Cicero had included the Somnio Scipionis, which was likewise a vision of the afterlife, and from his citation of the work in the Della Vita Civile, it is again certain that Palmieri was familiar with this example (4). Thus as precedents Matteo was able to draw not only on the very popular work by Dante, but also on the presentation of visions by two of the outstanding political and moral authors and thinkers of classical antiquity. The choice of a classical figure as a

guide resembles Dante's choice of Virgil, and emphasizes Matteo's close identification with classical mythology and literature.

Visions, too, had been incorporated by fifteenth century authors in Florence. For instance, Giovanni Morelli in his Ricordi recounts most movingly his feelings on the anniversary of the death of his favourite son, and records vividly that a vision appeared to him at the same time (5). In like manner, Giovanni Cavalcanti in the Istoria Fiorentina describes a vision that came to him as the catasto was being introduced in Florence (6). In the Della Vita Civile, Palmieri employed the formula of a vision, using a ghost who appeared to no less a character than Dante himself at the battle of Campaldino (7). The presence of the vision as the climax to Palmieri's earlier work, and the literary popularity of visions should both be borne in mind as the more immediate stimuli to write are being examined.

While he was putting the finishing touches to the Città di Vita, Palmieri wrote letters to his friend Leonardo Dati, a canon of Santa Maria del Fiore, who was a papal secretary in Rome. The friendship was an old one, dating back perhaps 20 years judging by the dedication to Dati of a copy of Palmieri's the De Temporibus in 1448 (8). Some of their correspondence has survived and will be examined. For the moment what is important is that Dati was obviously able to discuss the poem with Palmieri - by letter before it was finished, and perhaps in person in June 1466 when Matteo was sent to Rome as the Florentine ambassador (9). It is worth establishing this point, because Dati wrote not just a long commentary to accompany the poem, but also an introduction to it (10). In

the introduction, Dati related how Palmieri had told him about the circumstances surrounding the composition of the poem (11). From Dati's account, it seems that when Matteo was Vicar of Pescia in August 1451, he had visited the church of San Brigida in the monastery known as Paradiso. There in a dream he saw dressed in white the figure of his friend Cipriano Rucellai. Palmieri and Rucellai had previously studied together under Carlo Marsuppini, but Rucellai had since died (12). In the dream, Cipriano told Matteo that he had been sent from heaven to teach him about the way in which God will observe man there, knowledge that could only be acquired after reaching heaven. It was in this same vision of 1451 that Matteo was told by Cipriano about the division among the angels. In the beginning, God was accompanied by an infinite number of angels, but these later disagreed among themselves, and divided. Some followed Satan to hell, some allied with the archangel Michael in heaven, and a third group found themselves unable to make up their minds which group to join. Accordingly, they were sent down to earth as the souls of men, and there they had to choose between good and evil; as a result of their choice, they would either ascend to heaven, or else be condemned to hell. The charges of heresy later levelled against Matteo focussed largely on his adherence to this scheme. These charges will be investigated in some detail further on (13). Although Palmieri apparently noted down his vision faithfully, he did not at this stage develop it as a literary work. Possibly his burdensome political involvement in these years precluded him from spending much time on it, or possibly he did not feel immediately the desire to turn his dream into writing.

Yet the idea of a confrontation between the heavenly forces of good and evil seems to have been popular in mid fifteenth century Florence, and it is possible that Palmieri assimilated the notion from a source other than his dream. In 1454, Palmieri was nominated as one of the committee responsible for organising the annual celebration of San Giovanni Battista, the patron saint of the city of Florence (14). As part of the festivities arranged each year around June 21 to 23, there were processions through the city and games. In his Annalas, Matteo recorded with particular interest the "rapresentagioni" or plays performed by various of the "edifici" or groups of players in this year (15). Two of them treated themes or characters to which Palmieri gave great prominence in the Città di Vita. The first he described thus:

"l'edificio di San Michele Agnolo, al quale soprastava Iddio padre in una nugola, e in piazza al dirimpetto a Signori feceno rapresentazione della battaglia angelica, quando Lucifero fu co' sua agnoli maladetti cacciato di cielo" (16).

All the scenes presented were religious, even if not strictly biblical in origin; the second which Matteo noted indicates also the wide interest in classical motifs:

"Optaviano imperadore con molta cavalleria e con Sibilla, per fare rapresentazione, quando la Sibilla gli predisse dovea nascere Xristo e monstrògli la Vergine in aria con Xristo in braccio" (17).

It is notable that Matteo was not the only Florentine fascinated by these ideas at this time. Admittedly he developed them and presented them in a much more permanent and stylised fashion, but he cannot be dismissed out of hand as an eccentric, influenced by a peculiar dream concerning a dead friend. These scenes reveal that there was a current of interest in the fusion of classical literature with biblical stories and that this resulted in unorthodox religious beliefs. It is also worthy of note that

these beliefs were not made the object of theological intolerance. The impact of such a visual and tangible presentation of the ideas about which Palmieri had been dreaming may have exercised a strong influence on him and encouraged him in his work.

A second equally vivid dream was necessary before Matteo started writing. Leonardo Dati's introduction to the poem continues with the story of its creation, without referring to the events of 1454, and tells how in 1455, when Matteo was present as Florentine ambassador at the Neapolitan court, and when he had almost forgotten the previous incident, Cipriano again appeared to him in a dream (18). This time Cipriano reproved Matteo for having been lazy and for having done nothing about his earlier vision. He told Palmieri that God's angels had sent him, and repeated the description of how souls came down to earth from the Elysian fields and how they made their choice to go to either heaven or hell. Cipriano then instructed Matteo to write all this down, using *terza rima* exactly like Dante had done in his Divina Commedia. Matteo objected that he was not capable of this, but Cipriano insisted. Dati finished by noting that these two visions furnished the reason for writing and also the material of the work. From this account of Dati's, it would seem that Palmieri's role in the choice of subject matter and structure were somewhat limited. Yet it was Matteo who had to turn the rather rapidly sketched ideas into words, and who was ultimately responsible for producing the work. There is no corroboratory evidence available to suggest either that the visions were merely a literary invention intended to throw part of the responsibility for the heterodox

ideas in the poem onto another person, or to confirm that the author actually had the dreams.

As the Citta di Vita is a work of 100 chapters with 150 lines in each chapter, producing a total of 15,000 lines of poetry, it is beyond doubt that Matteo spent a considerable length of time writing it. It is not known when Palmieri began to work seriously on the Citta di Vita, though the date must have been after 1455 because of a reference Palmieri makes in the poem to his embassy in Naples that year (19). The first draft was certainly finished by autumn 1464, according to a letter written by Dati to Palmieri referring to "tuum novum opus" (20).

Given the later storm that arose over the Citta di Vita when accusations of heresy were made, the surviving correspondence between Palmieri and Dati, written as the work was being composed, repays close scrutiny. There seem to be two points to bear in mind. The first concerns Matteo's own position: was he aware that to perceive human souls as embodiments of undecided angels was an heretical view? And if he was aware of this, then why did he persist in expressing this belief? The second point concerns Dati's reading of the text: was he aware of the heresy that Palmieri was committing, and if so, what did he do to warn him against it? Three letters from Dati have survived, the first being dated September 12, 1464, in which besides mentioning Palmieri's "novum opus pene divinum", he said that he would write a commentary for the whole poem (21). He additionally indicated that there might be some criticism of the work, writing:

"solent interdum aemuli malignari veritatem ac sententias bonas facile adulterare. Quod ne accidat commento quodam hoc tuum opus

explicavi putans ut facilius omnes & plerique promptius mea legentes libros tuos amplectantur".

Thus he indicated not only an awareness that the contents might be badly received, but also that by writing a commentary he was prepared to try to protect Palmieri from such criticism. A letter written four months later, in January 1465, was more explicit, and suggested that some changes should be made to the Citta di Vita. Dati did not, however, pinpoint precisely the passages which caused him difficulties:

"libros civitatis vitae tuum praeclarissimum opus ut accurate relegas hortor et emendes etiam commentum meum: quod ideo ad te mitto quia occupatio otio corrigendi tempus non datur et ipse melius tua iudicabis in his praesertim locis quae vel dubia vel obscura difficilia fore videantur et ita fiet ut quame mendatissimi hi libri in manus hominus publicentur et opere castigato atque commento poema magis illustrabitur et non male ab invidis vel indoctis interpretabitur" (22).

It is clear that Dati was not referring to superficial matters, but was conveying that he was not entirely happy with the contents and foresaw dangers ahead. All the same, Dati thought the work was of great merit and should be continued.

Matteo took the criticism to heart, and set about rewriting parts of the Citta di Vita. Having completed the revised version, he sent a copy to Dati requesting his opinion, writing in the spring of 1466:

"libros civitatis vitae quos novissime edidi ad te mitto tanquam ad censorem veridicum. Commendasti illos quondam mihi quasi prope divinum opus cum non adhuc emendassem hortatusque es, ut reviserem castigaremque. Nunc veri illos revisos & quoad decuit digestos castigatosque remitto cognoscens tamen quod infinitum pene esset eliminandi censura quia quod semel placet & id desiderarem quod certe assequi non possem" (23).

No copies of the earlier draft survive. Three of the manuscript copies extant which were produced during or soon after Palmieri's lifetime are, apart from differences in spelling, practically identical in content and



are based on this revised version (24). The earliest of them dates from the spring of 1466, just before Palmieri wrote to Dati. This copy is now in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, and ends with the words "copiato di mia mano oggi questo di primo di marzo 1465 di mano di me Nicchoio di Francesco Corsi di su quello di Macteo Palmieri e decto Macteo mello corresse poi" (25). Whatever corrections were made, the heretical verses were not omitted. Judging by Dati's earlier two letters, Palmieri must have been aware that his ideas were not wholly acceptable. In addition to making changes (though what they were it is impossible even to guess), he also tried in the poem to defend himself. Palmieri's assertion that human souls are angelic occurs in Book 1, chapter 5. He devotes Book 1, chapter 10 to the theme that "l'openione gia decta non è contraria alla chiesa christiana":

Hor può veder non è credere errato  
credendo coll'altre opere divine  
esser da prima el numero ordinato.

Di tutte l'alme ch'esser den decline  
per incarnarsi giù ne' corpi umani;  
erro sare disordinar lor fine".

To support this stance, he quotes the Bible:

"Trovasi scripto nelle sacre charte  
huomini tanti su nei ciel sarranno  
quanti angeli salvo lo primo marte" (26).

Thus it is apparent that Palmieri is aware that the verses might be construed as containing a heresy, but he tries to show that the ideas are orthodox, rather than omitting them. Possibly Matteo was greatly influenced by the second vision of Cipriano, and not wishing to disobey him, took a decision to persist in this belief.

In his reply to Matteo, Dati did not repeat his criticism of the work; on the contrary, he praised it highly. Yet he certainly understood the meaning contained in these verses. It may be that he considered these views to be protected by the notion of literary license, but he was quite prepared in his commentary on Book 1, chapter 10 to support Matteo:

"quia haec opinio esset sive posset quibusdam videri extra catholicam christianorum ecclesiam sequitur auctor presentem capitulum in quo auctoritate sanctorum doctorum monstrare intendit predictam opinionem non esse christianis contrarium sed pluribus in locis a sanctissimis christi theologis sacratissimis dictis manifeste concessa: quae ut magis vera esse credamus Sybillam facit loquentem et incipit" (27).

At all events, in his letter to Palmieri, he declared the Citta di Vita to be "praeclarum sane opus" (28). Indeed, his praise went further still. He continued "neque enim video quid melius quid mihi tandem quod me magis in hac mea adventante senecta delectaret mittere potuisses". After such praise from a person of authority within the Church Matteo presumably felt that his work would meet with no obstacle from the Church hierarchy, since the passage most likely to be accused of suspect orthodoxy was well defended.

The Citta di Vita existed in a number of manuscript copies, of which five are still extant. The one now in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence was probably not the copy sent to Dati; this copy is rather plain in its decoration, containing three miniatures, one at the start of each book, and each with a gold surround. It is written on paper, and a more ornate version would probably have been presented by Palmieri to his friend and critic. Palmieri must have owned a copy himself - presumably the one that the scribe of the Biblioteca Nazionale used. A

fourth manuscript was presented by Palmieri to the Notaries' guild and this copy is now in the Biblioteca Laurenziana (29). In his funeral oration, Alamanno Rinuccini referred to a copy of the Città di Vita which lay on Palmieri's chest during the funeral ceremony (30). It is not easy to match the remaining manuscripts with these details. A third fifteenth century manuscript, undated, exists in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, while a fourth is in the Biblioteca Estense at Modena, and a fifth is in the Vatican Library at Rome (31). However, it is clear that at least five copies of the Città di Vita were circulating by the time of Palmieri's death in 1475 or shortly afterwards.

The Laurenzian manuscript, made of parchment, is richly decorated with miniatures and three full page illustrations in gold and colours. On each page opposite the poem is Dati's commentary. In addition, two of the letters that Dati wrote to Matteo are included as a preface, besides the introduction that Dati wrote for the poem. It seems likely that this was done at Matteo's insistence in order to show that Dati, a papal secretary and, from 1467, Bishop of Massa, had already approved the work, and he hoped, therefore, that this would protect him against accusations of heresy. It is not without significance that this copy was completed within a year of Dati's death in 1472, when Dati himself would no longer have been present in person to defend Matteo. Other evidence, to be investigated later, shows that Matteo by this stage probably already suspected that his poem might be misinterpreted and took steps to protect himself.

Palmieri took as his starting point for the poem the idea that came to him in the first of his dreams. Thus he conveyed the picture of God in heaven with his angels at the beginning of the world, and described the subsequent division among the angels when Lucifer rebelled and took some of the angels with him. Others of the angels remained faithful to God, but a third group were uncertain which path to follow. In order to make them decide, these angels were sent down to earth where they became the souls of human beings and passed a lifetime choosing between good and evil. As a result of their choices, they would eventually either return to heaven or else be sent to hell. Thanks to his guide, Sibyl, the persona of Palmieri is shown the various tribulations leading to hell that the soul is subjected to on its journey, and the virtues to be practiced in order to reach heaven. In Book 6 of Virgil's Aeneid, Sibyl of Cumae explains to Aeneas how to enter the Underworld, and it is doubtless because of the numerous associations stemming from Sibyl - with Virgil, used by Dante in the Divina Commedia, with Cumae, near Naples where he had the vision, and with someone with knowledge of the Underworld - that Palmieri decided to use the figure of Sibyl in his poem. The excerpt from Palmieri's Annales shows that Sibyl was also seen as a prophetess, predicting the birth of Christ, and this too was undoubtedly in Palmieri's mind.

The route is exceptionally complicated, and the complication serves no obvious purpose. First the angels are portrayed as they leave the Elysian fields. As they descend, they cross the planets and, according to their nature, adopt animal forms. Each planet represents a stage on

the journey, and there is a door to each. Palmieri's plan involved 40 stages or mansions for which number he gives elaborate justification:

"... mostrando l'antica scriptura  
tutta la piova di quaranta giorni  
fa che nell'arca ogni animal pastura.

Prima 'srael d'Egypto esca & ritorni  
al bel paese ad la promessa terra  
per quaranta mansion fa che soggiorni.

Poi che levato sopra 'l monte s'era  
prima parlasse Moyse con Dio  
stato digiuno di quaranta egli era" (32).

There is also a wealth of astrological and astronomical detail. Thus the descent starts during the winter solstice when the sun enters Capricorn. During the descent, the souls are travelling towards the East, and the whole descent takes a year to complete. Once the souls have arrived on earth they meet in the elements, where they are endowed with a human shape, and so become humans.

In Book II Palmieri and Sibyl are led by the bad angel, Calogenius, down the left hand road to hell, so that they can see the temptations which beset the human soul. En route, 18 stops are made at the various mansions of vice and sin. Among these evils, Palmieri places poverty and sloth besides the more sensual passions of desire and luxury, and the material passions of anger and envy. Heretics and sodomites are also to be found. These 18 mansions are visited during the course of a single night, that of the the longest night of the year. Once all the evils have been observed, Palmieri is led up a staircase bathed in bright light to the mansion of the blessed. This marks the end of Book II and the start of Book III. Here, in the course of a single day, that of the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, the soul returns from hell

and takes the right hand road leading towards heaven and the remaining 12 mansions. The first four of these contain the cardinal virtues, and Plato can be found as the wisest of the philosophers. In the third order, the final and most holy, can be found the "anime fortunate", which include the Virgin and the Holy Spirit.

The poem is closely modelled on the Divina Commedia by Dante. Its aim, like the Divina Commedia, is to teach the way to salvation by pointing out the good and the evil to be found respectively in heaven and hell. Like Dante, Palmieri presents his ideas through allegorical figures, choosing personifications of the allegory rather than abstract allegorical names. Yet unlike Dante Palmieri does not use any contemporary historical characters and, influenced by neo-Platonism, classical personalities preponderate. Moreover, instead of a book on Purgatory, Palmieri tackled the neo-Platonic notion of the pre-existence of souls. In the Citta di Vita the rhyme scheme is similar to, but not identical with, Dante's *terza rima*. One commentator has recently shown that Matteo had problems writing hendeca syllable lines and, on 40 occasions, he includes an extra syllable (33). What is more, in Book II, Palmieri wrote chapters of 50 triplets, unlike the first and third books where the chapters contain 49 triplets and finish with a quatrain. As a result, while, so far as content is concerned, Book II consists of 33 chapters of 150 lines each, so far as the rhyme scheme is concerned, it consists of 4951 lines of rhyming triplets, broken only by the quatrain at the end of the book. Thus Palmieri also introduces several new elements into Dante's structure.

Falmieri's aim was to provide a vision of Christian theology which was wholly compatible with the Platonic or neo-Platonic interests. Thus the Citta di Vita focusses on souls, on pre-existence and on the after life, on essence, and on moral perfection, while setting these ideas within a traditional Christian framework of heaven and hell. One of the most striking features of this work is the fusion, or confusion, of the classical and Christian myths, traditions and history. It is striking first of all because the poem is intended to show the reader the way to Christian salvation, by distinguishing between good and evil. As a result it is not a little strange to discover, for example, that souls rest in the Elysian fields rather than in heaven:

"Son quivi e campi delle liete cose  
chiamati elysii dove in contemplare  
sol vuole Idio lo spirto si ripose" (34).

Nor is this the only case. The whole poem is suffused with these mixed images of, for instance, the descending angels who must first cross the river of Lethe in order to forget their former heavenly existence:

"La vostra sapienza & vero lume  
riman di là da Lethe in su la riva  
nectar divide dal mondane barlume.

L'anima che prima era pura e viva  
sinombra & qui la prima morte face  
nè sa nè può ridire onde veniva" (35).

Some of the characters from Greek myths and history are placed in hell, including Minos and Clytemnestra, and also Agamemnon and Menelaus. Others are to be found in heaven, notably the lawgivers Draco, Solon and Lycurgus, and the philosophers Socrates and Plato. In fact, Plato is given the place of honour, an award which is emblematic of the neo-Platonic approach to Christianity; in the Divina Commedia Dante had installed Plato in hell. Even so, Elijah and Moses are placed much nearer to God

than the Greek lawgivers and philosophers, arriving only in canto 32 of the 34 cantos in the last book (36). Boccaccio in his Della Genealogia degli Dei had used pagan stories in order to teach Christian precepts, and in the same way Palmieri uses both mythological and historical personalities to teach Christian morality (37).

The message conveyed by this mixture of Platonic and Christian thought is one (was that) readily understandable by and entirely acceptable to Palmieri's audience. In effect, Palmieri was concerned to demonstrate the existence of free will and the need for faith. Having sketched the contents of heaven and hell, it is the responsibility of the reader to choose whether to follow the right hand path to paradise or the left hand path to perdition. Above all, it is the concepts of wisdom and knowledge, concepts so much loved by the Platonists, that enabled the soul to reach heaven, and it was on these precepts that true religion was founded:

"La sapienza ciascedun cercava  
sta nella fede adora un vero Idio  
& quello nel saper che lo insegnava" (38).

Nor was any other religion equal to Christianity in this respect:

"Maumetto intendi & chiunque va con lui  
& certo sappi nessun mai salvo fu  
né mai sarà di que' che son de' sui" (39).

Indeed, Palmieri considered that cerebral and spiritual activity was the key to heaven, while bodily indulgence was sinful. Heaven could be attained by exercising rational thought over strong passions, for these led to hell. Heaven was thus ordered around the cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice, besides the rule of law, whereas the chapter headings for hell included those "infuriati dal lascivio amore" and those "passionati nella gloria & fama del mondo" (40).



Since man contains elements of both rationality and irrationality, he has the option of choosing which path to take:

"Perfecto Idio & huomo credere sia  
d'anima rationale & carne humana  
unite con un nodo che s'india" (41).

In the Citta di Vita contemplation alone is capable of ensuring entry to heaven, whereas in the Della Vita Civile actions carried out for the good of the republic were praised above others.

Much of the poem rests on observation and description; the precepts have to be drawn by the reader. Nonetheless, Palmieri did give some concrete indications about the future of merchants, who probably made up a large section of the Florentine readership. He considered that merchants would be treated favourably if they remained loyal to the Church, and if they work hard:

"Marcatanti verran di molta cura  
solleciti & segreti si nel fare  
la nostra fede sia sempre sicura

Tutti sapren ricevere & donare  
& con industria exercitare le mani  
& bene è nostri amici conservare" (42).

Bearing in mind his own merchant background, Matteo would thus have been fairly certain of his own salvation.

For guidance of a more general sort, Palmieri at one level clearly indicates the moral value of certain actions and whether these are to be found in heaven or hell, and who were the classical personifications of these sins or virtues. At another level, he supplied a number of religious and moral platitudes, besides common adages. With regard to glory, Palmieri announces:

"La vera gloria stabile & sovrana  
solo è da Dio & sol da Dio procede  
& chi la cerca altro la cerca vana" (43).

And on another occasion, he provides this sententious comment:

"O speranza quanto sarien sancte  
le tue dimonstration se tu venisse  
ad nostre operation sempre davante" (44).

Palmieri's preoccupation with the themes of civic life and the cardinal virtues, seen earlier in the Della Vita Civile, reappear in the Citta di Vita. The title of the work itself is telling, and the virtue of prudence is found in heaven, and is closely linked to civic government and to domestic affairs. References to moral perfection, to justice and to God also abound:

"Quella prudenza che discerne e sensi  
di tutto quel che lo intellecto apprende  
& fa sien gli acti più migliori apprensi

Tanto di vero in questo luogo intende  
quanto consente la virtù civile  
al non errar nel suo governo attende.

& non uscendo del dirieto stile  
governo se sua casa & la cittade  
con util vero & ben giusto & virilie.

Et non lasciando viemaggior bontade  
volto ad Dio col suo timor governa  
pel qual respecto fuor del ver non cade" (45).

There often seems to be little difference between the sentiments expressed here, and those in the Della Vita Civile. Matteo expects his readers both to turn to God, so that they "fuor del ver non cade", and he also expects them to develop their intellectual powers so that they will know how to govern home and city with profit and justice. Education and learning in particular are stressed:

Con loro andando più compagno elle (anime) hanno  
prima ragione & poi scienza & arte

che l'Intellecto più discreto fanno" (46).

Nevertheless, where in the Della Vita Civile the republic was viewed as the end which was to be served, and where pressure to carry out good acts came only in the last resort from religion, in the poem Palmieri has taken the city from its secular context, and made it a framework for God's work. The poem is replete with theological significance; actions are measured in moral and eschatological terms, and not in the pragmatic terms of whether they advance the welfare of the republic. In fact, the concept of a city hardly appears in the Citta di Vita; the city of life is itself an image for the eternal life that God grants to those who follow the correct path.

For many readers, however, the most interesting aspect of the poem was not its sententious or religious message, or its fusion of Christian and neo-Platonic imagery, but the more sensational matter of heresy. This was quite the opposite of what both Palmieri and Dati intended. By making neutral angels inhabit human souls, Matteo was clearly committing a heresy, the heresy of Origen. A third century Church father, Origen had studied Plato, the later Platonists, the Pythagorians and the Stoics and wrote several books of scriptural criticism and religious philosophy (47). Influenced above all by Plato and the Stoics, he believed that when Lucifer rebelled, the angels had divided into three groups. One group followed Lucifer, and became devils, while another group remained faithful to God. The final group showed themselves uncertain which path to follow, and were made into the souls of men, so that during their life on earth they could decide whom to follow. The Church's attitude to Origen was ambiguous; although he was condemned as a heretic,

there had been support for him from several influential figures, including St. Jerome who, besides condemning Origen, had also considered that Origen was "the first after the Apostles and to be placed above all other mortals" (48). Nevertheless,

"the definition of man as an undecided angel temporarily exiled into a body, his creation conceived as a fall from grace to which he is destined to return, these were doctrinal points more easy to reconcile with the views of Plato on preexistence than with the Biblical account of the creation" (49).

Evidently Palmieri had erred towards Platonism rather than following strictly the Bible, for Origen's doctrine had been closely copied in the Città di Vita. Yet it seems unlikely that Matteo himself had read Origen directly, even though he was probably acquainted with the doctrine no later than 1451, the time of his first vision. Origen's name is not mentioned at all in the Città di Vita. The circumstances surrounding the charges of heresy made against Palmieri are rather muddled, and caused much confusion among fifteenth and sixteenth century writers.

At the time of Palmieri's death in 1475, there was little sign of hostility towards the Città di Vita. Matteo himself was given the honour of a public funeral, and a copy of the poem was placed on his chest as he lay on the bier which formed part of the funeral procession (50). In 1473, Marsilio Ficino had addressed a letter to Palmieri as "poeta theologicus" which, since Matteo had written no other religious work, presumably meant that he was already aware of the existence, at least, of the Città di Vita (51). In 1474 Ficino called Origen a "Platonicus nobilissimus", and in 1475, he was lecturing in Florence on the immortality of the soul and the question of man's reward after death, both of which enquiries were stimulated by Platonic thought (52).

Leonardo Benino, a member of the literary circle which gathered around Lorenzo de' Medici, wrote a "chapitolo di cento versi fatte l'anno 1475 in laulde di Matteo Palmieri poeta fiorentino" in which he shows his acquaintance with the Città di Vita. Part of the hundred verses reads:

"La parte terza bene e mal non fe  
Questa ne' chorpi nostri inchiuse dentro  
Chome dispensa la divina sorte ..."

But Benino does not accuse Palmieri openly of heresy, for the poem continues:

"Beato tu che sali chon Beatrice  
Verso le stelle nel più alto polo  
Quanto fortuna t'a fatto felice" (53).

All the same, it appears that there was already a suspicion that the poem contained heretical matter.

In one version of the funeral speech written by Alamanno Rinuccini for recitation over the corpse of Matteo, there is a phrase referring to the Città di Vita which reads:

"in quo, si qui poetice fortasse nimis dicta quedam accusant, quasi a Christiane fidei veritate dissonantia, meminisse debent pictoribus atque poetis quidlibet audendi semper fuit potestas, nec tamen inde licet arguere eos ut scripserint, ita sensisse, sed voluptatis aut docendi gratia ab eis multa narrari" (54).

This version was not in fact recited, but suggests nevertheless that some people were already aware at the time of Palmieri's death that the poem contained heretical ideas. A recently discovered document reveals that Palmieri himself had realised that his ideas were likely to be considered unorthodox, and that shortly before his death he was eager to distance himself from heresy and from accusations of heresy. It is a fifteenth century poem, written in the first person as though by Palmieri himself, and it probably was written by him, in which he retracts his errors:

"Conobbi l'error mio alla partita  
dal terreno habitocol presso a morte,  
quando al pentire Dio mio core invita.

Volendo entrar nella celeste corte,  
constrecto fui a rivochar mie errori  
col core in tempo breve et hore corte" (55).

He recognises that he had caused "angustia tanta", and hoped that while the heretical parts of the poem would be suppressed, the rest might be left intact. Although the retraction is explicit, it seems to have been unknown in the quattrocento, being cited for the first time only by modern historians. Matteo's contemporaries, however, soon began to spread rumours about his heresy.

The first widely disseminated evidence that Matteo was suspected of heresy dates from 1480-1, and is presented in such a casual, matter of fact fashion that it appears to have been more in the way of common knowledge than a scandalous accusation. What is more, the statement was made by Cristoforo Landino, who knew Palmieri well. Both Cristoforo and Matteo attended Ficino's lectures, and Landino's friendship with Alamanno Rinuccini, who gave the funeral oration for Matteo, is well attested (56). In his work, Il commento sopra la Commedia, which appeared in Florence in 1481, but which was written for a series of lectures which he gave at the Studio in Florence in the latter part of 1480, Landino wrote of Palmieri "e di tale invenzione nel suo poema scritto in versi toscani ad imitazione di Dante che se non fussi caduto in alcuna eresia, potea facilmente vivere" (57). Interpretation of the last three words is difficult; Landino may have considered that Palmieri's death was due to divine retribution, or perhaps he was referring to the poem Citta di Vita rather than to Matteo himself. But in any case, it is obvious that Landino

thought that Palmieri was guilty of heresy. It is not clear either why Cristoforo should have wanted to attack Palmieri in this manner, unless out of jealousy or dislike, or perhaps disapproval, of the Citta di Vita. In other works, he had expressed appreciation of Matteo's writings (58). It seems that Dati had judged correctly that there might be some opposition to the poem.

Shortly afterwards mention was made of the heresy by another Florentine, this time by Luigi Pulci (59). Given Pulci's scurrilous jibes against certain key figures of the Accademia, it is scarcely remarkable if Palmieri later acquired a reputation for heresy. Pulci had caused a scandal in 1475 when he had attacked the Florentine neo-Platonists' views on the immortality of the soul by denying that such immortality existed, and dismissing also therefore the neo-Platonist discussions of divine rewards after death. Above all, his attack in 1475 represented a broadside against Marsilio Ficino who was currently lecturing on these themes. Somewhat ironically, Pulci charged Matteo with metempsychosis, of which, although a heresy, he was not guilty. Pulci's attempt to inculcate Palmieri hardly comes as a great surprise; probably more surprising was his delay and the feebleness of the effort.

There is, furthermore, a manuscript history in Arezzo written by Marco Attilio Alessi, who took an interest in the Tuscan humanists and who made a list of them with spaces left for the dates of their deaths (60). According to the scholar who has studied the manuscript, notes by an unknown author were added, probably in the 1480s. One entry reads "Carolus Marsiopinus arretinus poeta obiit Florentie 1452, a Mattheus

Palmerius choronatus, cuius lauream coronam manibus servi; Matteus Palmerius Florentie patronus meus obiit <...> et pro heretico habitus" (61). Numerous questions are posed by the document, but most of the significant ones cannot be answered; for instance, the identity of the annotator is not known, nor is any work for which the anonymous Aretine might have been responsible, and nor is his relationship with the humanists. Nonetheless, the entry reveals that the accusations of heresy were known beyond Florence.

When Filippo da Bergamo came to write a chronicle in 1483, he included a much distorted picture of Palmieri's activities. The entry for Palmieri reads "deinde cum de angelis librum conscripsisset erroribus plenum tanquam hereticus condemnatus apud coronam exustus est" (62). Once again, interpretation is tricky, since we know that Palmieri was not burned, least of all in Cortona ("coronam" was changed in the second edition to read "Cortonam"), but it is possible that the chronicler used his imagination and knowledge of the ultimate punishment for heresy in order to arrive at this conclusion (63). It is equally possible that Filippo was not referring to the burning of Palmieri, but just to his work, the Citta di Vita. There is no other evidence from this period to corroborate the burning of the Citta di Vita. Filippo's chronicle, the Supplementum Chronicarum, proved very popular. First published in 1483, a second edition appeared in 1485, a third in 1486, a fourth in 1490 and a fifth in 1492, which meant that an incorrect and unfounded version of Palmieri's fate was widely disseminated and it rapidly gained credence (64).



No official condemnation of either Palmieri or of the Città di Vita had been issued by the Church. However, Pico della Mirandola, had his 900 Theses banned on heretical grounds in 1487 by Pope Innocent VIII, and he was forced to flee to France (65). One of Pico's heretical beliefs was to suggest that it was more reasonable to suppose that Origen was saved than to imagine that he was damned (66). Thus it is possible that Palmieri's heresy was seen to be analogous, and it may have been assumed by contemporaries that, at the very least, his work had been destroyed. In any event, another chronicler, John Trithem, followed the account supplied by Filippo da Bergamo, writing in 1494 that Palmieri "scripsit plenum erroris de angelis librum quem pertinaciter defendens tanquam hereticus condemnatus apud Cornam civitatem exustus est" (67). The addition of the phrase "pertinaciter defendens" supplies the motive for the burning of Palmieri; John Trithem was aware that simple heresy was not an adequate reason for burning Palmieri, but that a heretic had to persist with his beliefs. He also thought that it was in fact Palmieri who was burned, and not just the poem. Meanwhile in Florence opposition to the Città di Vita seemed to be growing.

Vespasiano, the humanist bookseller, describes what happened in Florence after Palmieri's death (68). Vespasiano doubtless knew Matteo well, because his bookshop was near the Bargello, close to Via degli Scarpentieri where Palmieri lived, and because Cosimo de' Medici made him responsible for stocking the library at the Badia Fiesolana with humanist works. He states that Matteo had erred, but had done so unintentionally, since Matteo had remained faithful to the Church. Vespasiano also alleges that Matteo had not let anyone else see the work, considering that if he

had, then Matteo would not have erred. He recounts, too, how Matteo had handed a sealed copy of the Citta di Vita to the Notaries' guild with the instruction that the book should not be opened until after his death. However:

"morto che fu, subito apersono questo libro, et veduto questi errori ebbono, a più uomini dotti in teologia, et mostrarono questo libro fine che vi fussino cose contro alla fede il libro non si publicassi... Il libro per questo s'è stato al proconsole, ch'è l'arte de' notai, e non s'è publicato" (69).

Thus according to Vespasiano, the Citta di Vita was checked immediately after Palmieri's death, and was withheld from circulation. Yet other evidence does not fully support his view. Matteo clearly had discussed his work with at least one other person, and it was obvious that this was the case since Dati's commentary was included in the volume supposedly handed to the notaries' guild. It is equally certain from the comments by Cristoforo Landino, Luigi Pulci and Leonardo Benino that the poem had been read; not all the copies therefore were immediately withheld. The assertion that the Citta di Vita was given to the guild is corroborated by Bandini who observed that Matteo had attached a note to this effect to the cover of the copy of the poem in the Laurenzian library (70).

Vespasiano wrote most of his Vita in the 1480s, revising the text a little in the 1490s (71). His is a contemporary voice, and is usually held to be credible. It seems here though that he cannot fully be relied upon. Interestingly, he does not mention anything about an official condemnation by the Church, mentioning only that men well versed in theology had examined the poem. Indeed, none of the fifteenth century

documents speak of a condemnation by the Church, but relate only lay reactions. As Pope Alexander VI pardoned Pico in 1493, it does not appear very probable that the Church would at this point have been concerned to pursue either the dead Palmieri or his heretical poem (72). The small number of fifteenth manuscripts of the Citta di Vita surviving, five, suggest that the poem was not widely diffused, and consequently it cannot have presented much of a threat to the official dogma. To argue the contrary, that the Church was successful in limiting the diffusion of the Citta di Vita so that just five copies remain, does not seem correct, chiefly because there is no evidence of any action by the Church against Palmieri at this stage.

Support for Palmieri came from an unexpected source when, in 1502, the work of Filippo da Bergamo was published in a new edition. On page one Filippo explained the reasons for a new version: "iudici in eo (i.e. previous editions) plurima fuisse mendosa... Ita ut novum opus me edidisset quam alius emendasset confitear" (73). One of the corrections he made regarded Palmieri. That entry was altered to read:

"librum pergrandem ternario carminio carmine composuit quem vitae civitatem appellavit quod animam terreni corporis mole libertatem varia multipliciaque loca peragrantem ad supernam tandem patriam civitatemque perducit" (74).

Filippo took this summary from the funeral speech pronounced by Alamanno Ricuccini; evidently he was being extremely cautious in what he now wrote concerning Matteo (75). No longer, therefore, did Filippo da Bergamo consider that Matteo was a heretic, or that he had been burned. Yet his was not the argument that prevailed.

By this stage, the notion that Palmieri was a heretic and that he and sometimes also his writings had been condemned as such had become widely diffused. In the face of these accusations, Palmieri's innocence was hardly likely to be vigorously asserted, for the charge of heresy was difficult to repudiate, and the attempt would not have been without danger, given that to do so might involve being charged with the same sin.

In the event, it was not Palmieri's innocence that was asserted, but his guilt. Rather, the guilt was not so much asserted as made official. Piero Parenti relates how, in December 1515, when the Medici pope Leo X was in Bologna, the preaching of Franco da Melegnano was thought to be of suspect orthodoxy. He wrote:

"finalmente, credendosi sopita la materia, difacto venne ordine da Bologna, che queste scripture fussino giudicate et finalmente fu determinato, che fussino heretiche insieme coll'opera di Matteo Palmieri scripte in versi Toscani più tempo fa. Così fu proibito a qualunque christiano el leggerle et dannaronsi publicamente" (76).

Yet Parenti did not think that the Città di Vita was a dangerous work; instead, he saw the machinations of international diplomacy, not a corrupting heresy. He continued his narrative by observing that the condemnation aroused amazement, and that it was thought that Leo X was trying either to impress Francis I with his Christian zeal, or to spur him to wage war on the Turks rather than against Christians, or both (77). As up to this moment Leo had been allying himself with the Spanish against the French, there can be no questioning his need to impress Francis I, who had just taken Milan. The heretical nature of the Città di Vita was not seen to enter into consideration.

Although considerations of international diplomacy certainly influenced Leo, there existed other motives for wishing to condemn the poem at this time. Leo X had granted a charter to the Medici Academy in April 1515, and had additionally undertaken to pay 50 florins each year to enable the Academy to rent a property where it could meet (78). The Academy "held regular meetings with recitals of poetry, with musical performances, and with lectures on Dante and other old poets" (79). What doubtless disturbed Leo, and what surely prompted him to act, was that an expurgated version of Palmieri's Città di Vita had been commissioned by the Academy from Maestro Antonio da Cortona, a San Dominican monk at Santa Maria Novella (80). The work was completed in November 1515. Furthermore, in April 1515, Leo had written to the Archbishop and the chapter of Florence requesting action against heretics, having been made aware of the political and religious threat posed by the Piagnoni (81). By December, Leo had presumably heard about the finished manuscript and, afraid of being too closely identified with the Academy which had commissioned the work, felt compelled to pronounce the work heretical. The Florentine synod in 1517 condemned the works of Franco da Meleto, which suggests that Parenti's account, even if not yet fully corroborated, is most probably accurate (82).

But this conclusive blow to Palmieri's reputation went unnoticed by later writers. As a result of the absence of interest taken by sixteenth century chroniclers and authors in this piece of information, the knowledge and certainly the effect of the ban seems to have been minimal. Nevertheless, rumours continued to be spread about the heretical work and its author. The editor of the Parenti chronicles did

not link Parenti's observations with the Città di Vita, and even though Cantimori knew of the account, neither did he connect it with the Città di Vita (83).

In the 1540s G.B.Gelli claimed that Palmieri's bones had been disinterred as a result of his heretical beliefs. Yet this to Gelli does not seem to have been a recent event, but rather an occurrence which took place fairly soon after Palmieri's death. In a dialogue, one character announces, with reference to Palmieri:

"Oh tu mi fai ricordar ora qui del vicin nostro ... e questa opinione (concerning the angelic provenance of human souls) non si seppe giamai che e' la tenesse in vita, ma fu ritrovata dopo la morte sua ne' suoi libri; per il che furono disotterrate l'ossa sue, e sepolte fuor di sagrato" (84).

Since no other evidence has come to light to substantiate this opinion of Gelli's, it is probable that Gelli supposed the disinterring of Palmieri's remains to have taken place once it was discovered that Matteo was a heretic. As a recent historian has remarked, it would be surprising if such an event had occurred without others chronicling it (85). It does suggest in any case that Gelli did not believe that Palmieri was burned.

In another book, written a few years later in 1551, Gelli added a further twist to the chaos by noting that the Città di Vita "ci sia stato tolto e proibito" (86). It seems that Gelli thinks that this was a new development and not the decision related by Vespasiano to withhold the poem from publication. As a result, it is hard to discern whether Gelli is recording a new move made as part of a deliberate policy designed to prevent the diffusion of Palmieri's beliefs, or whether this, too, was the product of imagination and rumour. The matter is complicated

further because Gelli himself was able to read a copy of the Città di Vita, evidence that it had not always been banned or, at any rate, was not unobtainable, and had favourable comments to make on it. He observed:

"imperò che se bene vi è questa opinione tenuta eretica, e' ve ne sono tante altre buone, e tanti altri ammaestramenti e precetti cristiani e salutiferi che secondo me arrecherebbero agli uomini molto più utile che non farebbe questa danno mandandolo in luce" (87).

Gelli seems to be arguing that the poem should be published, rather than saying that it should be withheld on heretical grounds. It might be easier to believe that the Città di Vita was no longer available to interested readers if Gelli's were the only voice. In a book published just a year later in Florence, Giovio asserted that the Città di Vita had been both condemned and burned, and in 1553 a chronicle published in Venice supported this suggestion (88). Without further evidence, it is hard to be certain, but it is possible that these two authors were basing themselves on early versions of Filippo da Bergamo's chronicle since neither mentions action by the papacy.

In 1557, the manuscript that had been given to the Notaries' guild was damaged by flood water, and was transferred to the Biblioteca Laurenziana. It was not possible to read the book there because it was not catalogued, and because it was locked out of sight in a cupboard, both of which problems were overcome only in the eighteenth century (89). This may have been the continuation of the policy to withhold the manuscript, noted by Gelli, which possibly had already started at the Casa del Proconsolo, the home of the Notaries' guild. In any case, attempts in the meantime to read the manuscript in the Laurenziana were probably thwarted. Doubtless this action only enlarged the stock of

rumours and half truths which were already circulating about Palmieri and his heretical poem.

Nevertheless, it was still possible to read the Città di Vita. In 1601, Giulio Libri wrote six letters about the poem, and from both the length and the content of the letters, it is obvious that Libri had been able to read attentively a copy of the poem (90). He had probably not read the copy in the Laurenziana, however, because when he quotes from the text, the spelling is different (91). Thus it is clear that at least one copy of the Città di Vita was still accessible in Florence. Furthermore, instead of railing against Palmieri's heterodox views, Libri, like Gelli, seems content enough to accept their presence without being unduly shocked. He concludes his sixth and final letter with the following observation:

"io scrivo per difesa di questo poeta che egli come poeta può in qualche parte allontanarsi da quello che vien determinato da Teologi ...; il che non so come si potesse difendere se non con la licenza e privilegio de' poeti, e di queste così fatte cose se ne potrebbe trovare molti ai nostri tempi moderni, chi le volessi notare" (92).

Indeed, like Gelli, Libri does not see the errors as sufficiently dangerous to warrant prohibition for this work in particular. The availability of this copy of the Città di Vita sheds doubt on the story of condemnation and burning related by Giovio and Guazzo 50 years earlier. Equally, this testimony seems to shed doubt on Gelli's claim that the work was universally banned by the ecclesiastical authorities since the Church would not have relaxed its attitude towards the poem in the intervening period; on the contrary, it would normally be expected that the pious reforms stimulated by the Council of Trent would have made it even more difficult to procure a copy of a poem of suspect orthodoxy. The



decision of the librarians in the Laurenziana to withhold their copy of the work thus seems to have been taken independently.

Richa in 1754 knew that Palmieri had given a copy of the Città di Vita to the Notaries' guild, and that this copy had been transferred to the Laurenziana and locked away in a cupboard (93). Bandini did not publish his catalogue of books in the Laurenziana until 1778, some 25 years later (94). Richa had, however, seen another copy, because he was able to quote the final sentence of the poem. Once more, the different spelling makes it plain that this was not the Laurenzian copy (95). Based on somewhat more circumstantial evidence, Richa quotes only from the last two letters of the series of four extant between Dati and Palmieri. Copies of the first two of these letters were in the Laurenzian manuscript, and if he had seen this version, he might have cited those as well, or instead of, these two. Coming to the defence of Matteo, the Torinese Jesuit concludes:

"e per conseguente possiamo stabilire senza tema di sbaglio che se Mattec cantò nella sua Città di Vita la falsa opinione di Origine, o fu finzione poetica, come quella dei Campi Elisi, o pure errore materiale" (96).

Even so, he holds that the poem "fu giustamente dalla Chiesa proibito", though it appears that here he is following the account given by Gelli, rather than the more accurate one given by Parenti. It seems most probable that he took it from Gelli, because he is concerned to refute Gelli on another point, which was that he refuses to believe that Matteo's bones had been dug up as Gelli had stated. His reasons are as follows. If the picture, the Assumption of the Virgin, which was commissioned by Palmieri and which included portraits of Matteo and his wife, had not

been physically removed from the altar of the Palmieri family chapel in the church of San Pier Maggiore, and he thereby implies that it had not been, then it is hard to believe that the Church had disinterred Palmieri's bones, since the picture was surely more offensive in the eyes of the faithful than the bones of Palmieri. However, he introduces a new gloss on the existing story of the Palmieri heresy, which at the same time weakens the argument he has just put forward. Richa discloses that the Assumption of the Virgin had been covered by a veil for many years, and that the chapel had been laid under an interdict. According to him, therefore, the faithful had not been able to see the offending picture. Nonetheless, he continues by observing that the chapel "fosse restuita alle adorazioni" by "ministri ecclesiastici", while the picture "fu coperta per molti anni", thus leaving it to be inferred that it was no longer covered up (97). According to Richa, therefore, the Church had acted forcefully against Palmieri's heresy; but whether covering the picture was really a tougher measure than digging up the bones of Palmieri seems debatable. The allegations surrounding the picture will be investigated in due course.

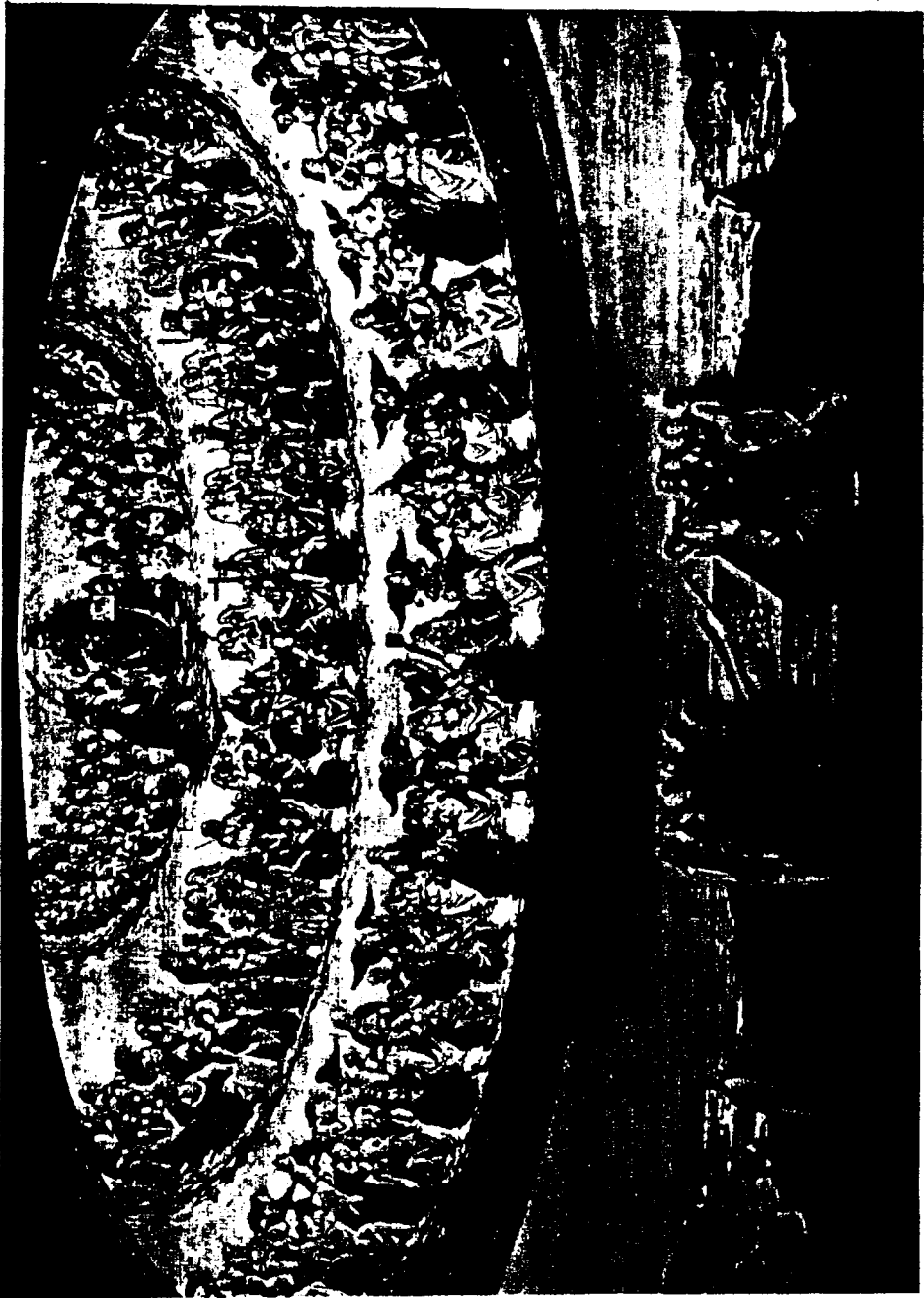
150 years later, Boffito rejected Richa's verdict concerning the fate of Palmieri, and held that Richa did not know enough about the history of the Inquisition (98). In so doing, he proclaims his own preference for the first version of Filippo da Bergamo, or else that of Gelli:

"delle due l'una: o il corpo fu dissotterato e com'era consuetudine, bruciato e le ceneri disperse al vento; oppure mantenendo intatto l'asserto del Gelli, il corpo fu disseppellito bensì e sepolto fuor di sagrato ..." (99).

Boffito is of the opinion, too, that the Città di Vita was certainly condemned by the Church, and again he relies on the words of Gelli; yet at the same time, he considers that the Città di Vita had probably not been burned since he knew that three fifteenth century manuscripts still existed. Not least because of Boffito's wide reading and semblance of erudition, this article has been very influential in maintaining the now traditional view of Matteo as a heretic, whose remains were either burned or else reburied in unconsecrated land, and whose poem was condemned by the Church. In her introduction to the poem in 1927-8, Roche followed Boffito in almost all his judgements concerning the history of the work (100).

Sarri wrote an article intending to correct the errors of Boffito (101). He points out that in fact neither the early work of Filippo da Bergamo nor that of Gelli inspires much confidence. He quotes from the 1502 version of the Supplementum Chronicarum, which effectively demolishes all confidence in Boffito's reliance on Filippo da Bergamo as a source, and then supposes that an event such as the digging up of the body of Palmieri would have roused more writers to record it than just Gelli. Forcing the point home, he adds that he thinks that both Filippo da Bergamo and Gelli were victims of false rumours. As for the condemnation of the poem by the Church, he suggests most plausibly that a "private" condemnation had unconsciously led to a "public" condemnation. But he was not aware of the poem in which Matteo had retracted his heretical views or that Leo X had in fact prohibited the Città di Vita.

Intimately connected with the fortunes of the Città di Vita is a painting that Palmieri commissioned, and which has already been mentioned (102). Until the church was destroyed in 1785, it formed the altarpiece for the Palmieri family chapel in the church of San Pier Maggiore. Vasari suggested that it was the work of Botticelli, but it is now attributed to Francesco Botticini (103). Vasari likewise suggested that Palmieri was responsible for planning the composition shown in the painting, and this statement has been universally accepted in the absence of evidence to the contrary. Depicted is the Assumption of the Virgin, but this is not the chief subject. In the upper section of the painting, there are three horizontal bands filled with human and angelic countenances, representing heaven. On the uppermost of these is seated God in the act of blessing the Virgin Mary. The rest of the band is full of cherubs who, according to the scheme given in the Città di Vita, probably never abandoned God. The other two bands contain humans and angels, presumably those who have died and who have arrived in heaven after leading a virtuous life on earth. These three bands together occupy about two thirds of the tableau. In the centre beneath them is a small group of people standing on both sides of a tomb the lid of which has been opened to reveal inside it a large number of flowers. These may represent human souls which were sent to hell. Thus heaven is portrayed with human and angelic souls in it, as well as hell and life on earth. To the left hand side of this central lower scene is a view of the city of Florence. On either side of the group round the tomb, Palmieri and his wife are also shown kneeling.



The Assumption of the Virgin by Francesco Botticini.

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Palmieri is wearing red robes which almost certainly signify the rank of one of the communal offices that he held. One possibility is that the clothes are those of the highest office that he held either while or just before the picture was painted. In this case, the clothes would probably be those worn by the Dodici Buonomini, or possibly of the Otto di Guardia, posts which he held respectively in 1472 and 1475 (104). The other possibility is that the clothes represent the highest office that Palmieri held during his life, in which case he is depicted as the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, a post which he held in 1453 (105). As little work has been carried out on the robes of office worn by Florentine officials, a secure answer cannot be given. The portrait shows a man in middle age which, unless Botticini were flattering Matteo, suggests that Botticini may have wished to imply the earliest date. In addition, vanity may have led Matteo to prefer the robes of Gonfaloniere di Giustizia. Other evidence for Matteo's vanity exists in the form of a bust of himself, which he commissioned in 1463 from Antonio Rossellino. If the traditional account is true, the bust was displayed outside Palmieri's spice shop in the Via degli Scarpentieri until the nineteenth century (106). Cosa, his wife, is dressed in black, which may be a sign of mourning, or of a minor religious order. If either of these last two suppositions be correct, then the picture can only have been completed after the death of Palmieri in 1475. Given the death of Cosa before 1480, it is highly likely that the picture was finished before 1480, and in all probability fairly soon after Palmieri's death - possibly even during 1476 (107).





Matteo's nephew, Antonio, and Cosa had made arrangements for purchasing a site for a chapel in San Pier Maggiore, and the picture was surely intended for the new chapel (108). It was to occupy a place on the north side of the church, while the existing chapel was on the south side. But the efforts of Matteo's wife and nephew came to nothing, for in April 1476 the della Rena family were able to prove before the Archbishop of Florence that they had a prior claim to the new site being offered between the Alessandri and the Fioravanti family chapels. Nonetheless, it appears that the della Rena family, who owned the existing chapel next to that of the Palmieri, did not build a new chapel on that site and nor did anyone else.

For the period 1476 to 1550, I have not found any reference of any sort to the painting; the earliest description of the painting is thus provided by Vasari, who noted that Botticelli:

"fece una tavola per Matteo Palmieri, con infinito numero di figure; cioè l'Assunzione di Nostra Donna, con le zone de' cieli come son figurate, i Patriarchi, i Profeti, gli Apostoli, gli Evangelisti, i Martiri, i Confessori, i Dottori, le Vergini e le Gerarchie; e tutto col disegno datogli da Matteo, ch'era litterato et valent'uomo; la quale opera egli con maestra e finitissima diligenza dipinse. Evvi ritratto a piè Matteo inginocchiato, e la sua moglie ancora ..." (109).

It is interesting to observe that Vasari was writing at about the same time as Gelli, and that there was clearly an awareness in the city that accusations of heresy had been made against Palmieri. Yet Vasari was reluctant to believe that Matteo was a heretic, continuing:

"ma con tutto che questa opera sia bellissima e ch'ella dovesse vincere lo invidia, furono però alcuni malevoli e detrattori, che non potendo dannerla in altro dissero che e Matteo e Sandro gravamente vi avevano peccato in eresia; il che se è vero o non vero, non se ne aspetta il giudizio a me ..." (110).

In view of later allegations, it is likewise interesting to note that Vasari says nothing about the picture being veiled, or about an interdict being laid on the chapel.

When Rooke sought to investigate the painting, she was intrigued by references to it made by Stefano Rosselli in 1657 (111). In particular, she was struck by Rosselli's account that the picture was covered up for many years. Further investigations on her part did not elucidate the matter, and my own research in the records of San Pier Maggiore has failed to reveal any documents relating to this episode. The issue is important because it sheds further light on the way in which Palmieri and his views were perceived by the Church and citizens in Florence. In his book, Rosselli notes:

"questa tavola è stata molto tempo coperta per cagione (dicono) d'essere stata dipinta secondo una certa opinione che aveva detto Matteo intorno alle anime nostre alla natura degli Angeli, la quale insieme con un'opera da lui composta fu damnata, e lui dopo morto disotterrato ed arso. Ma io crederò più che detta Tavola fosse fatta coprire per malevolgenza o invidia o pure per ignoranza, non mi parendo di riconoscere in quella (che pure s'è scoperta a' giorni nostri) vestigio alcuno di quelle opinione" (112).

This passage raises a number of key points. First of all, of especial significance is Roselli's assertion that the painting was covered for a long time. The late appearance of the assertions sheds doubt on their veracity - 180 years had passed since the painting was first placed in the chapel, and Vasari makes no mention of the painting being or having been covered. Corroboratory evidence from before 1657 is therefore required in order to show that Rosselli's account is based on fact rather than rumour. While an argument from silence can often be dangerous, it would be surprising if the fact that the picture was covered went

unrecorded. As the painting was visible when Vasari wrote the first edition of his book in 1550, perhaps it was covered only after the Council of Trent. In the second edition of *Le Vite*, published in 1568, that is, after the Council of Trent had ended its sessions in 1564, Vasari saw no reason to change what he had written earlier (113). Borghini in 1584 provided a description of The Assumption, but it is very condensed and heavily reliant on Vasari's version. He wrote:

"in San Pier Maggiore per Matteo Palmieri (Botticelli fece) una tavola dell'Assuntione della Nostradonna con infinito numero di figure con le Zone de' Cieli, come son figurate con gli ordine de' santi distinti, e vi è ritratto detto Matteo ginocchioni con la moglie" (114).

As a result, it is not at all certain whether Borghini actually saw the painting. He makes no comment on Matteo's heretical beliefs, and while this raises numerous questions, in the end, no conclusions can be drawn from this omission as to whether the painting was or was not covered.

A book published a few years later in 1591 similarly fails to shed light on the problem. Bocchi describes five of the family chapels in San Pier Maggiore, but omits all reference to the Palmieri family chapel and to its contents (115). The second edition of Bocchi's work, published in 1677, that is, 20 years after Rosselli wrote, contains material added by Cinelli, and this time includes a description of the painting (116). But like Borghini one hundred years before, he limits himself to a description of the picture and does not comment at all on the heretical aspects purported to lie therein. Yet it is plain from his description that he saw the work, even if he attributes it to the wrong Palmieri:

"evvi dipinto ginocchioni dall'una bada M. Antonio di Marco Palmieri che fece far quest'opera, e dall'altra la moglie; in una vaga distanza è ritratto la Città di Firenze prima dell'ultimo ingrandimento,

toltone il disegno dalla parte di Camerata ove M. Antonio avea la villa ..." (117).

Given the silence of these authors on the matter, it cannot be categorically stated that the picture was covered during this period; on the contrary, the lack of interest shown by these authors in the Assumption of the Virgin and its accompanying history suggests that it was perceived, and visible, just like any other painting.

It is clear that Rosselli believed that the Assumption of the Virgin should be considered separately from the Citta di Vita. For him, the condemnation of the picture did not constitute sufficient grounds for covering it since he could see no heresy in it. The absence of comments critical of the painting in the interval between Vasari and Rosselli may suggest that this was a common stance. It is worth recalling that neither Gelli or Libri could see anything harmful in the Citta di Vita. Although a strict equation cannot be made here between the attitudes to the Citta di Vita and the attitudes to the Assumption of the Virgin, it is revealing that Gelli and Libri found nothing particularly objectionable in the poem and that the poem, even though condemned by Leo X, could still be read in Florence. It is therefore quite possible that if Vasari and Rosselli could not see the heterodoxy in the picture, then the Church might not have been offended to the point of wanting to condemn or cover it.

What is more, although a veil would have protected the faithful from catching sight of the scheme of the painting, and from seeing the portrait of the heretic Palmieri, it would not have been adequate to have prevented God from seeing the picture placed on an altar. It is much more

likely that if the picture were condemned, it would have been removed completely, but Rosselli is silent on this. Here it is ~~poignant to~~ relate that, according to Vasari, members of a congregation confessed to having impure thoughts as a result of viewing a painting of Saint Sebastian by Fra Bartolomeo, and in due course the picture was removed and sold (118). This episode occurred in 1516, just one year after Parenti recounts the condemnation of the Città di Vita by Leo X. Surely, then, if the Assumption of the Virgin had formally been condemned by the Church as heretical, or unsuitable, it would have been removed. There is no evidence at all to suggest that the picture was removed before the collapse of San Pier Maggiore in the late eighteenth century.

On the other hand, in 1754, Richa did suggest that the chapel had been laid under an interdict (119). This was the first time that such an allegation had been made, and therefore occurs almost a century after Rosselli's assertion that the Assumption had been uncovered. Once more, the long passage of time since the previous allegation against the painting arouses doubts about the validity of the account. Since the painting had supposedly been uncovered shortly before 1657, indicative of a more relaxed attitude towards pictorial representations by the Church, the interdiction presumably occurred between 1657 and 1754. Yet it may have been thought that if the chapel and the altar were no longer devoted to the service of God, then there was no need to remove the heretical picture. Hence Richa's supposition that there was an interdict serves to explain why the picture was not removed. But as an explanation this, too, has its limitations. For God would still have been able to see the heretical picture in a church dedicated to his glory, and might therefore

still have had reason to take offence. In the end, removal was surely the only theologically acceptable solution. But perhaps one should not expect too much rationality in these issues. Once again, the weight of the argument makes it appear unlikely that action was taken by the Church against the Assumption of the Virgin.

It should also be borne in mind that it was exceptionally unusual for the Church to denounce a picture as heretical. Indeed, if Botticini's Assumption were declared heretical, and it seems extremely improbable that it was, then it would have been the only fifteenth century painting to suffer that fate (120). Despite the absence of completely conclusive evidence, all the indications are that whatever interpretation is given to Rosselli's assertion that the picture was "uncovered in our days", this phrase does not seem worthy of credence in view of the evidence and reasons marshalled above. Similarly, Richa appears to have been misled by rumours circulating in Florence.

Having seen how Palmieri laid down the guidelines for others to follow during life, and his ideas on the after life, it is interesting to see how he ordained that his own material belongings should be disposed of after his death. Three versions of Palmieri's wills are extant, and these were drawn up between 1458 and 1469, each one being slightly different (121). That Palmieri drew up the first version in 1458 indicates that by that year he had already started to consider seriously his own mortality; there is no evidence to clarify whether this consideration acted as a stimulus to write the Citta di Vita or whether it came as a result of writing it. The last version of his will, made on

31 July 1469 contains the most clauses, and it was this will that proved to be his last. In bequeathing most of his moveables to his nephews and to the sons of his cousin, Matteo was following customary practice in passing on his property to his nearest family (122). Similarly, in permitting his wife to enjoy the usufruct of the estate while she lived, he was quite traditional (123). Concerning his own future, Matteo desired first that God look not at his sins, but "*faccia al testatore secondo la sua infinita misericordia*" (124). It was standard practice to put such a phrase at the beginning of a will. Secondly, Matteo wanted to be buried in San Pier Maggiore if he died in Florence, and otherwise in "*qualunche sacro luogo*" as his friends and heirs deemed fitting (125). He liberated his servant Margherita on his death, and also released the workers on his lands from their debts with him (126). In the 1469 draft of his will, Palmieri mentioned explicitly for the first time that he wanted to leave to his heirs "*tutti et ciaschuni suoi libri, cosi da studio come da ragione et conti ordinati*" (127). In the earlier drafts it was understood that this would be the case, for he had provided that everything was to be left to his nephews Antonio and Angelo, including goods, merchandise and corn, weapons, and both debts and credits which belonged to Matteo at the time of his death (128). It is possible that in this draft he wished to clarify the position.

It is the substitution clauses and the legacies made outside his family circle that make Matteo's will unusual. As an instance of the latter, Palmieri ordained that the clothes of his that "*lui non habbia mai usati*" should be given to San Pier Maggiore to serve as altar cloths or else should be used for priests' clothes, provided that either the abess

or the "operai" of the church agreed to this (129). These clothes could also be sold in order to raise the money to buy these items. After a lifetime of close links with San Pier Maggiore, it does not seem a particularly generous gesture. It did, however, conform to the ideas that he had expressed in the Della Vita Civile about the importance of rich finery in ecclesiastical ceremonies:

"la religione rende la città più magnifica quando con mirabile observantia è solememente celebrata. Questa richiede la veneranda auctorità de' sacerdoti continenti et inanzi agli altri prestanti et buoni, e vestiti et sacri ornamenti di porpore varie, di gemmi et oro pretiosi et splendidi, in modo che non solo magnifici, ma quanto più gl'uomini possano, celesti et divini appariscono" (130).

From the other bequests that Matteo made, it seems that he did not relish the thought of leaving his belongings to institutions of any sort.

If Palmieri had no male heirs, or if all the persons to whom he would bequeath his property and all their heirs should die before Palmieri, which was not in fact the case, then the Medici and Speziali guild was bound to sell all his moveables and immoveables (131). The guild would be entitled to keep one tenth of the money it received, but the rest was to be distributed to the poor, at the rate of five lire per person. Matteo stated that his justification for giving his property to the poor was to conform to the teachings of the evangelists (132). The clause is reminiscent of both his father's will, and of an episode in his Ricordi. Marco Palmieri in his will asked that 300 lire be distributed to poor girls in order for them to receive an adequate dowry (133). In his Ricordi, Matteo noted an incident in 1447 when he looked after 14 children left parentless by the death of one of his "consorti", Piero di Latino da Rasoio. There he observed "there remained of Piero 14 young



children, among whom were 9 girls, barefoot and unclothed and facing hardship, so that it appeared a disgrace to take the bread from their mouths" (134). Evidently, Palmieri was sensitive to the privations brought about by poverty and wished to offer help.

The further substitution clauses that Matteo included in his will reveal all the more forcefully his suspicion of institutions, even those he had worked with throughout his life, and to whom he was entrusting his goods in the last resort. If the consuls of the Medici and Speziali guild had not finished this distribution within five years of the death of the last male descendant, then the guild of the Por San Maria was to take responsibility for the distribution, after half the existing property and money had been given to the Ospedale of San Maria degli Innocenti. And if the Por San Maria failed to comply with any of these conditions, or if they had not distributed the remainder within a further three years, then everything was to go to the convent of San Pier Maggiore (135). By making these stipulations, Matteo wanted to ensure that his property would be distributed as he wished to the poor, for each of these institutions would have lost prestige if they had been obliged to relinquish their position as executors.

No evidence has yet come to light indicating that Matteo was a member of a confraternity, and in his will, he made no bequests to confraternities. Yet the will was unusual in that Matteo made no pious requests, which meant that no masses would be said for his soul, and the date of his death would not be made into an anniversary to be celebrated.

There is nothing heretical about this will; it conforms in many ways to the Florentine norm of the fifteenth century. In other areas, it does contain some distinctive characteristics, notably the distribution of goods without an intermediary, except in the case of substitution. It is unusual, too, in making no legacies to hospitals and confraternities, and in making no pious bequests. But these characteristics are still insufficient to distinguish Matteo's views here as heterodox, especially as he commits himself unreservedly to God's will.

The Città di Vita contains a number of paradoxes. Although Palmieri was aware that his views in the poem were not theologically orthodox, he still made them the basis of his pious religious work, and even tried to defend them himself. In other religious matters, including his will, it seems that Palmieri was entirely orthodox. In his heterodoxy, he was fully supported by the papal secretary and later bishop of Massa, Leonardo Dati, who wrote a commentary to defend Palmieri from any accusations that might arise from misunderstanding or malice. But then, shortly before he died, Matteo had second thoughts, and decided that it would be more prudent to retract his heterodoxy than to defend it. In spite of the retraction, within five years of his death, the literary circle around Ficino, and most notably Cristoforo Landino, became aware that some of his views were not orthodox. Rumours abounded as a result of misunderstanding, and the belief that Matteo had been convicted of heresy by the Church became widespread. Condemnations of both man and work were invented and gained a powerful foothold. Thus the attempted defence had failed. Given the minor significance of the heresy, and the small number of manuscripts available, such a response was hardly

justified on theological grounds. When it arrived, the condemnation by Leo X was considered more as a political manoeuvre than as an act of religious purification by Piero Parenti, its only chronicler, and in any case passed unnoticed. Later writers admitted that they could see no harm in the Città di Vita, but continued to spread and elaborate on the story of burning both man and book, of the disinterring of Palmieri's remains, of the condemning and banning of the poem. While librarians in the Biblioteca Laurenziana seem to have withdrawn the Città di Vita from public circulation after 1557, and it may also have been withdrawn earlier in the Casa del Proconsulo, another copy was still available for Florentine readers as is shown by Libri's letters and citations in 1601, and Richa's citations in 1741. It is possible that a copy of the Città di Vita was burned, but in the climate of unsubstantiated rumours, it seems more probable that this was not the case.

Accusations of heresy were levelled against the picture of the Assumption of the Virgin in the Palmieri chapel, and again it was claimed that the Church had taken action against Palmieri, and had ordered the picture to be covered, and later the chapel to be placed under an interdict. The absence of such assertions from 1475 to 1550, the period most critical of Palmieri, suggests that they are not well founded. Even if these charges cannot be shown in an utterly convincing manner to be false, in order for them to be shown to be correct they must be substantiated in a much more persuasive way. The whole is an excellent example of how important a role unwitting misunderstanding, rumour and probably malice can play in the perception of not only personal reputation, but also in the assessment of literature and painting by

subsequent generations. Dati was thus quite correct in warning Palmieri that the Città di Vita ran the risk of being wrongly interpreted, but he evidently erred greatly in thinking that his commentary would prevent this from occurring.

Conclusion

The public funeral granted for Palmieri in 1475 reveals the high regard in which he was held by the Florentine people. It is puzzling just the same that he should have been revered so greatly, for his literary works, while undoubtedly popular, were scarcely as influential as those of Bruni, nor had his example been so stimulating as that of Poggio. As Palmieri had not been Chancellor, he could not have expected to receive such a lavish funeral. In the political sphere, it is true that Palmieri served the republic with dedication over a period of more than forty years, but from the *pratiche* records it is clear that while occasionally influential, his was not one of the most decisive voices and, from the correspondence of the Milanese ambassadors, it is clear that although Palmieri was one of the leading politicians, he usually was not present when the innermost cabal met to take the most important decisions. Doubtless his caution and eloquence when expressing his views were valued, besides his literary accomplishments. Indeed, Vespasiano suggests that it was Matteo's learning which enabled him to participate in the affairs of state, and it is highly probable that Matteo's writings did attract attention to him as a suitable candidate for high office (1). A solid family background, a reasonable amount of wealth, influential friends and colleagues and, later on, his long experience will all have served to buttress and promote Matteo's rise within the Florentine political hierarchy. Friendship, especially with Piero de' Medici, and allegiance to the Medici faction at times of tension must also have

played a part in Palmieri's continued prominence in the political affairs of the republic.

It is striking that in much the same way as Palmieri appears on the outer edges of the innermost circle of politicians, so he was just outside the group of very well known literary figures. Judging by the existence of seventeen fifteenth century manuscripts, the Della Vita Civile was much read and widely circulated, as was also the De Temporibus, which survives in ten fifteenth century manuscripts in Florence, and was published twice in that century. It is not therefore the case that these works of Matteo were not appreciated, for they evidently were. It is more probable that the reasons for the scarcity of literary references to Palmieri had more to do with his constant involvement in politics, and possibly also with his personality which did not seek publicity. From internal evidence in the Della Vita Civile and from a wide variety of sources relating to the Città di Vita spanning many years, it is obvious that Palmieri was not afraid in his writings of undertaking daring innovations, and normally it might be expected that these would have aroused some comment; all the same, it remains something of a mystery why during his lifetime Palmieri did not attract more comment as an author.

In his book, Finzi finds it difficult to recognize in the older Palmieri many of the traits present in the younger. To him, Palmieri has almost become a different person, still participating in politics, but whose literary interests have shifted almost completely from urging activity on behalf of the state to contemplation of the soul (2).

Certainly in his early career, the links between Palmieri's activity and writings were very much closer: both were political. In writing the Citta di Vita, there is a much greater divergence between not just Matteo's activity and his writings, but also between his experience and his writing. It is not possible to account fully for the change, but the gradual increase in awareness of Plato's works in Florence during the fifteenth century, and Palmieri's own attraction to them, as evinced by the vision which concludes the Della Vita Civile, may well shed some light on the matter. Moreover, given Palmieri's continued writing of his Annales, and his greater involvement in Florentine politics in these later years, he obviously did not abandon his love of the republic or of politics. Rather than neglecting his concern for the state, Palmieri was taking up an additional interest in neo-Platonism and the soul.

The view has sometimes been proposed that Palmieri was in some manner representative of the elite culture pursued by Florentines in the fifteenth century. Various assumptions underlie this premise; one is that there was a group of citizens either less articulate in expressing its opinions or less noticed, and that Palmieri acted, consciously or otherwise, as a spokesman for them in presenting their ideas. Another is that his outlook was shared by other members of the literary group, but that once he had committed it to paper, the others no longer felt the need to write in similar vein. Another of the assumptions is that while Palmieri succeeded in linking writing with a political career, there were many other citizens who would have liked to have been able to do the same, but who, for one reason or another, were not able to do so. Some of Palmieri's views, as expressed in the Della Vita Civile and in the

*pratiche*, were shared by other citizens in the *reggimento*. It is possible, but not verifiable, that they were also shared by a larger circle of citizens. In participating fully in both political and literary fields, Palmieri was one of a very small number of men which in addition to the chancellors of Florence includes Gianozzo Manetti, Donato Acciaiuoli and Lorenzo de' Medici. Perhaps rather than representative, it would be more correct to say that Palmieri was illustrative of the close connections between politics and literature, and of the range and variety of activities in which some Florentines indulged. While there existed other politicians who could and did undertake the tasks allotted to Matteo, and while there were other literary figures interested in the same problems as him, there were very few men indeed who could match the breadth of interests, the ability and the experience of Matteo.

The relationship between experience and ideas is never easy to unravel. The key text is the *Della Vita Civile*, written early in Palmieri's career, when he had already begun to serve, but had advanced little. Matteo's decision to set the dialogue in 1430 suggests that he may have acquired his beliefs about the role of the citizen and of the state from the political and literary ambience in Florence during the tense years of war after 1423, when the republic was engaged in battle with first Milan and then Lucca, and when factions threatened the internal stability of the republic. During the decade of war, patriotic civic rhetoric, often repeated, and the festivities celebrating the victories of Florence's allies and of the republic itself, undoubtedly must have influenced the young citizen, an influence made all the greater because of the contrast with the preceding decade of peace, prosperity and unity in Florence.



Palmieri's insistence in the Della Vita Civile on the primacy of the republic over the interests of private citizens, his fear of factions and his desire to glorify the republic, is in all probability related to the political atmosphere in Florence during the third decade of the fifteenth century. Thus the message of the need for unstinting service to the republic, free of partisanship, which was reinforced by events in and outside Florence, may well have been the most significant influence during Matteo's formative years in determining the later development of his character and interests. That Palmieri himself succeeded in following the advice he gave in the Della Vita Civile can best be deduced from the Milanese ambassador's assessment of him in 1468 as a "bon cittadino, et non cavilloso nè scandaloso" (3).

Excursus on Palmieri's finances

One question that is often posed by historians is that of the benefits received by partisans of the Medici regime. Owing to Matteo's book of Ricordi, and more particularly to the study of the work by Conti, it is possible to calculate the sums that Matteo paid to the republic in taxes during his lifetime (1). From figures which Matteo also gives it is possible too to establish what proportion of the total tax burden of Florence Palmieri was shouldering at a given moment. The analysis of Palmieri's accounts by Conti raises a number of points of interest.

The most telling point is that where a degree of discretion was permitted in levying taxes, "gravezze per arbitrio". Palmieri received favourable assessments of his wealth, and was therefore required to pay less than would be expected for a man of his wealth (2). Conti calculates that while Matteo's assessment was unduly high in 1434, when he was paying 0.0015% of the city's taxes, in the years 1437-40, this dropped to 0.0007%, and by 1440-1 had fallen still lower to 0.00035%, the approximate level at which it remained for the next decade (3). During the 1450s, 1460s and early 1470s, the rate demanded of Palmieri rose to between 0.47% and 1.24% (4). Part of Conti's explanation for this phenomenon is that Matteo was being treated favourably by the officials responsible for assessing how much tax each citizen should pay. To support this theory, Conti notes that in 1437, when Matteo's uncle, Francesco, was a member of the group of tax officials for the Ventina, Matteo's assessment fell by 56.3% to fl. 10. 17. 1. (5). Alessandro degli Alessandri

sat on this body and Matteo remarked "gli chiesi non mi toccassi, e costi fe" (6). In March 1440, Matteo was assessed at fl. 5. 19. 3., which was revised upwards by the Monte Officials to fl. 7. 8. 7. (7). Yet two months later, in May 1440, Palmieri himself was a member of the body which oversaw tax assessments in his gonfalone, and his own assessment was reduced to fl. 5. 9. 11. (8). Another instance of him benefitting from the system occurred in 1444. The year before, Matteo had paid fl. 2. 9. 1. out of a total of 8,000 florins levied; in 1444, as a member of the relevant tax body, he paid only fl. 2. 10. 0. out of a total of 15,000 florins levied (9). There are other examples too of Palmieri's tax assessment being reduced, notably in 1468, when he was again an official, when it fell by 35% (10).

Yet low assessments were not necessarily linked to high political office; they seem to have resulted from the presence on the tax body of either Matteo or his uncle. In 1447, when Matteo was not a tax official, his assessment rose dramatically by 118% to fl. 5. 9. 5. (11). It would thus appear that Palmieri's frequent tenure as a tax official was more important than his wider status in the regime or of his membership of the Balie (12). For the taxes in which discretion did not form an integral part of the assessment, such as the catasto, there is no sign that Matteo received favourable consideration from the tax officials.

But reduced assessments and paying a smaller proportion of the city's taxation is not the whole story. In times of general hardship, the wealthy citizens paid a greater percentage of the total tax burden, for they were the only people able to increase their contributions; the poor

could not. During the decade 1440-9, the city sought about half as much revenue through direct taxation of its citizens as during the following decade 1450-9, and the proportion paid by Palmieri in the latter decade duly increased (13). To discover to what extent he was benefitting from favourable treatment, it would be necessary to compare the fluctuations in Matteo's percentages with those of other Florentines with similar wealth, both partisans and non partisans of the Medici. At present, however, no accounts of taxes paid comparable to those of Palmieri are known to exist, and the comparison cannot be made.

For all his love of the republic and his desire to serve it faithfully and his insistence on moral probity, Matteo's own tax payments and declarations take place in the penumbra of Florentine financial honesty, and range from uncompromising astuteness, through sharp practice to outright fraud. In a systematic investigation of Palmieri's accounts with the republic, Conti has uncovered a different Palmieri - the man who tirelessly took steps to avoid and to evade paying his taxes. In 1449, the year in which he swore his allegiance to Cosimo de' Medici and the republic, he was also elected as one of the Ufficiali delle Grazie, and he had the duty of reducing the tax assessments of citizens who had been unable to pay the sums demanded of them (14). Included among these was Matteo's own mother, who had fallen behind with her payments. The Ufficiali reduced her assessment from fl. 1. 7. 1. to six soldi. Although the payments were made in the name of Tommasa, it was Matteo who managed her accounts; and despite this reduction in her assessment, of the 29 payments due, only 21 were paid (15). In 1469, Matteo made his nephews include in their catasto declaration the lands formerly belonging

to Tommasa, and which now after her death belonged to Matteo (16). If Matteo himself had declared the lands, he would have been liable to pay tax on them, but as his nephews had allowances worth 1400 florins, this meant that neither they nor he would pay tax on this property. A still more blatant example of Palmieri's reluctance to pay his taxes comes from his return of 1442 for the Decima Graziosa. As a result of several inaccuracies in his account, his assessment was 3 florins instead of fl. 6. 4. 10. and meant that he paid on this tax only 150 florins instead of 250 florins, leaving him with a net gain in his financial dealings with the republic during the year of 80 florins, when he might otherwise have expected a loss of 20 florins (17). Generally, once an assessment had been made, Palmieri himself always paid his taxes as soon as he could, in order to benefit from the discounts offered for rapid payment, and to ensure that his name would not be placed on the *specchio*, which would have denied him access to political office.

What light do these revelations shed on Matteo's character? How can they best be interpreted in view of what is known about the rest of his beliefs? Given that these attempts to defraud fall within a financial framework, and that no similar instances of Palmieri's deception have been unearthed in other of his activities, it is probably easiest to set them in the context of Florentine citizens' attitudes towards the republic's levying of taxes. At any time, taxation is unwelcome, and Florentines adopted every trick to escape paying. Morelli advises:

"rammaricati sempre della gravezza: che tu non meriteresti la metà, che tu abbi debito, che tu hai le spese grandi, gl'incarichi de' lasci di tuo padre, che tu abbi perduto nella mercantia, che tu abbi poco raccolto... E guarti come dal fuoco di non usare bugie se non in quest'atto" (18).

In matters of taxation the norms of morality were suspended to preserve the family wealth. To deceive was permissible, Morelli argued, "perchè tu non lo fai per torre quello di persona, ma fai perchè e' non ti sia tolto il tuo contra il dovere" (19). It was common practice for Florentine citizens to underestimate the value of their belongings and to try to deceive the state in financial matters (20). Thus although Matteo's dishonesty in his tax dealings may not have been consistent with his expressed political beliefs, it was not uncommon Florentine practice. A letter exists from Bernardo di Zanobi to Bartolomeo Caderni concerning taxation, written in March 1447, in which Bernardo asks "m'aviserai come Paolo e tu avete fatto con Matteo Palmieri e s'io sono allo specchio e ingegniatevi ch'io non vi vada" (21). Matteo was not in this instance a member of the relevant tax body, though he had been one of the officials in 1444 when the Diecina Nuova was levied (22). Indeed, it appears likely that if he did intervene for Bernardo di Zanobi, he was most probably unsuccessful, for in 1447 as noted above Matteo's own tax assessment rose by 113%. No other evidence regarding this incident has been found, but it appears likely that there will have been a deal of some kind (23). Bernardo repeats "vedi con Paolo ogni modo ch'io non abi per questo a andare allo specchio". That others lied and cheated and manipulated does not exonerate Palmieri; but it does make his behaviour easier to understand as a commonplace of Florentine society.

The question arises of how Palmieri had access to cash which enabled him to pay a net total of 2,200 florins in the seven years between 1428 and 1435 (24). According to figures calculated by Conti, Matteo's patrimony during these years actually increased, albeit by a

marginal amount (25). His *catasto* returns give no inkling of any additional resources, and it may be that they did not provide an accurate picture of the wealth of his shop. A forced loan levied on Matteo's grandfather Antonio in 1403 placed him outside the top 300 taxpayers in the quarter (26). The business was split in 1413 between Matteo's father and uncle, and in 1427, according to their *catasto* declarations, Francesco was the 99th highest taxpayer in the quarter, and Marco was the 118th, which suggests that the spice trade was highly lucrative (27). Thus it is possible that Matteo was earning, or had saved, considerable sums of money.

Overall, Conti claims that Palmieri, because of his payment of taxes on or before time, and because of his holdings in the Monte, paid a net total of only 777 florins to the state during his lifetime, and that he was profiting from his close association with the Florentine republic (28). An examination of Palmieri's declared wealth shows that lands worth just over 1300 florins in 1433 were supplemented by new plots so that by 1469 his lands were worth just over 2000 florins (29). The actual value of his Monte shares, and not their nominal value, rose from 1300 florins in 1430 to 1500 florins in 1469 (30). Matteo claimed that he personally had stopped trading in 1446, and it is clear from his declarations that his wealth did not increase by an abnormally large degree. But it is not certain how accurate the declarations are, and the *Ricordi* do not present a complete picture of Matteo's financial position; equally, because it is not possible to know how much income Palmieri derived from his nephews' shop, it is difficult to say how far the small increase in Matteo's wealth was due to his involvement in politics, and how far to good business in

the spice trade. Nonetheless, it is an indication of his prosperity that his wealth should continue to increase despite the heavy taxation.

It was open to all Florentines in similar financial circumstances to draw advantage from paying taxes early and to receive interest on Monte shares. Matteo did not speculate in the shares, which some Florentines did; had he done so, his wealth might have increased further. It would not, though, have been possible for all Florentine citizens to have been granted tax assessments below the norm. Here it seems that Palmieri did benefit, but only sometimes, depending largely on whether he sat on the body or not. Because of the absence of a comparative study, it is hard to determine whether Palmieri really did gain any significant financial benefit from his involvement in politics. In any case, he certainly was not harmed by his political links. The figures available suggest that it was Matteo's ability to pay his taxes promptly that, in the long run, brought him financial rewards. In turn, his promptness seems to have rested principally on his ability to safeguard his Monte holdings, rather than on his lower assessments or on deception.







Matthew TAYLOR

Matteo Palmieri (1406-1475):

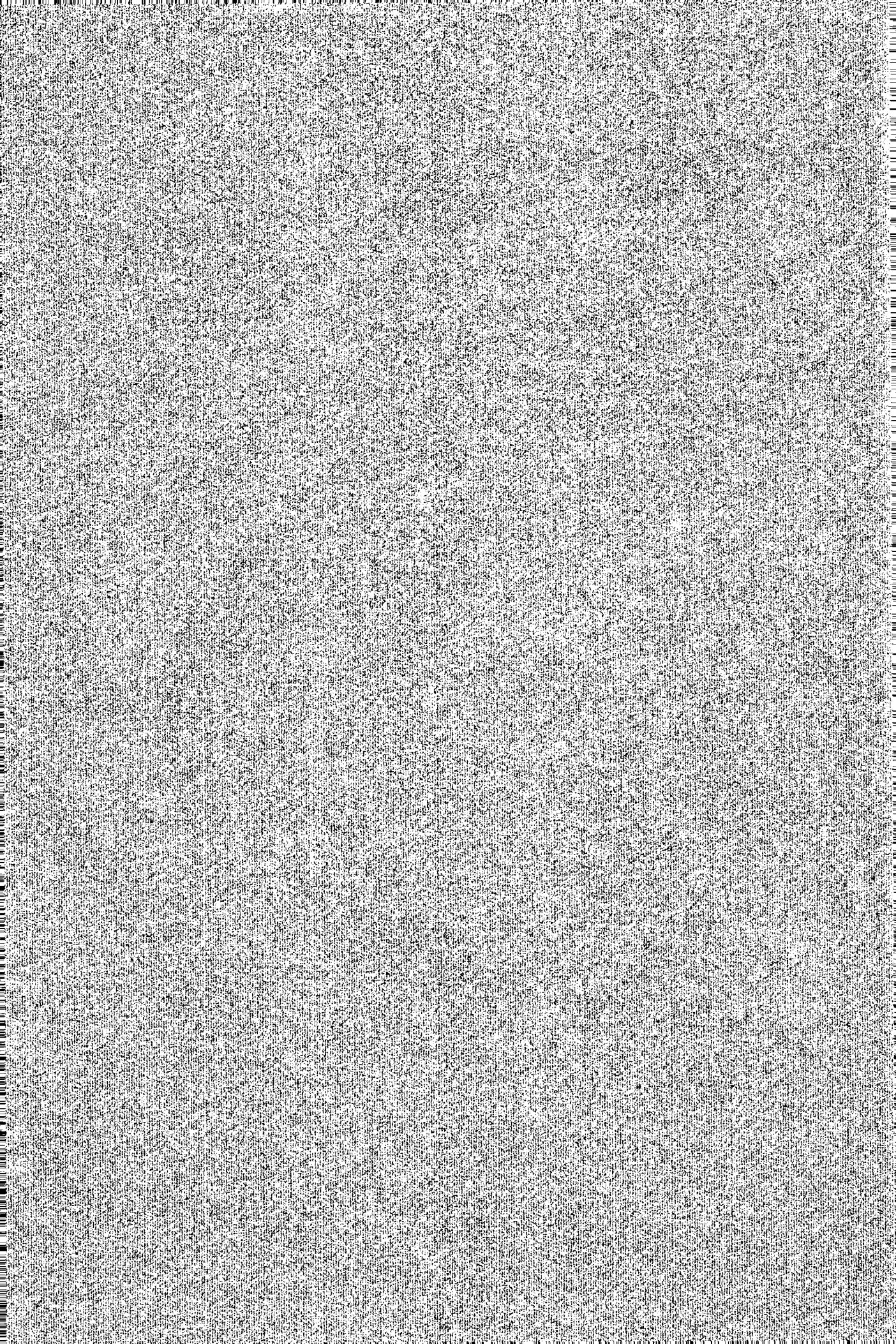
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8. C.Finzi, Matteo Palmieri dalla Vita Civile alla Città di Vita, Roma, 1984.
9. Messori, "Palmieri", p. 260.
10. Ricordi, p. 212.
11. Ibid.
12. E.Conti, introduction to Ricordi, p. xxi.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. xxii.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. xxiii.
17. Ibid.
18. Martines, Social World, p. 197.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 198.
21. Ibid., pp. 138, 197.

22. D.Kent, "The Florentine reggimento in the fifteenth century", Renaissance Quarterly, 28, 1975, pp. 575-638; p. 631.
23. Ibid., p. 630; Martines, Social World, p. 195.
24. Rinuccini, Lettere, pp. 80-1.
25. L.Dati, "Praefatio", in A.M.Bandini, Catalogus Codicum Latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae: et Codicum Italianorum, 5 vols., Firenze, 1778, vol. 5, cols. 74ff.
26. Vespasiano, Le Vite, vol. 1, p. 563.

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1. See L.Martines, Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance, Florence, Princeton, 1966.
2. Manoscritti 253, fol. 1288r for Prior; for Sedici and Dodici, Manoscritti 266, fols. 78v-79r. See also Martines, Social World, pp. 194-5.
3. In his *catasto* return of 1427, Marco noted the death of Bartolomeo in December 1423, and that his children lived with him; Cat. 58, fols. 266v, 268v. Matteo noted the death of Marco in his Ricordi, p. 212.
4. Tratte 80, fol. 130v; Manoscritti 253, fol. 1288r for Francesco Palmieri as Prior.
5. Tratte 11, fol. 185v. The regulations concerning age limits are in Statuta populi et communis Florentiae, Friburgi, 1778-83, 3 vols.; vol II, pp. 833-4. A citizen had to be over 25 years old to hold most offices, over 30 for the Dodici, the Otto, Priors, Captain, Podestà and Vicar, and over 45 to be Gonfaloniere di Giustizia.
6. Tratte 11, fol. 182v.
7. Tratte 47, fol. 128r. Matteo received 252 votes and Giovanni 234. Francesco received 260 votes (fol. 127r). The respective ages can be calculated from the *catasto* returns. In 1427, Marco was 62 and Matteo 22; Cat. 58, fol. 268v. In 1430 Francesco was 72, and Giovanni 23; Cat. 499, fol. 280r.
8. Balie 24, fol. 5r.
9. Manoscritti 266, fol. 78v.
10. Tratte 48, fol. 18r.
11. Cat. 479, fol. 198v. Martines, Social World, describes the marriage, pp. 229-237.
12. Cat. 490, fol. 315r.
13. Cat. 499, fol. 524v.
14. Kent, Rise, p. 138, n.7.
15. For the nine households, see Cat. 490 *passim*. For punishments, see Kent, Rise, p.188, and Rubinstein, Il Governo, p. 23, n.98. Otto di Guardia 224, fol. 69v records that Piero di Pagolo Serragli was forbidden from holding office for ten years from February 1435.
16. Tratte 49, fols. 10v-11r; this was Giorgio di Piero d'Alessandro Serragli and his sons Piero and Giuliano.
17. Cat. 490, fols. 311v-315r. Martines, Social World, pp. 232-3 examines Niccolò's bankruptcy in some detail.
18. Balie 25, fol. 5v. Appendix II in Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 297-306; p. 306.
19. Ibid., p. 300.
20. Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 256-340; p. 274.
21. See chapter on the Della Vita Civile and its dating.
22. Annales, p. 139. On the gap in the Annales for 1433-4, see below pp. 186, 256.
23. Manoscritti 266, fol. 79r; for the institution of the *protesto*, see E.Santini, "La 'Protestatio de Iustitia' nella Firenze Medicea del secolo XV", in Rinascimento, 1959, pp. 33-106; p. 35. For text, see C.Guasti, Una Prosa Inedita di Matteo Palmieri, Prato, 1850, pp. 13-24; also G.Belloni, "Il *Protesto* di Matteo Palmieri", Studi e

- Problemi di Critica Testuale, 16, 1978, pp. 27-48. For comparison with the Della Vita Civile, see chapter on the Della Vita Civile.
24. Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 16-19.
  25. Messeri, "Palmieri" is particularly valuable, for he lists accurately every office that Matteo held. Each year there were about 3,000 positions to be filled in Florentine government; see A. Molho, "Politics and the Ruling Class", Nuova Rivista Storica, 1963, pp. 401-420; p. 407.
  26. Manoscritti 266, fols. 78v-79r. Prior 1445, see Tratte 11, fol. 226v. Drawn "a mano"; see Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 23-24.
  27. Tratte 80; Monte official, fol. 274r; Conservatori delle Leggi fols. 273r and 319r; Otto fol. 25v. Rubinstein, Il Governo, appendix V, p. 332 for Scrutiny Secretary. A. Molho, "Three Documents regarding Filippo Brunelleschi". Burlington Magazine, 119, 1977, pp. 851-2 observes that Palmieri was one of the Monte officials who drew up an inventory of Brunelleschi's goods after his death in 1446.
  28. Tratte 67, fol. 12v.
  29. On this point, see, in particular, D.V. Kent, "The Florentine Reggimento in the Fifteenth Century", Renaissance Quarterly, 1975, pp. 575-638; pp. 591-2.
  30. Tratte 11, fol. 204v; Giovanni was born in 1410 or 1411, and therefore was 27 or 28 in 1438.
  31. Tratte 80, fols. 15v, 45r, 54r, 59v, 172r; Tratte 67, fol. 74v. These refer respectively to the offices of the Camera del Comune, Dieci di Libertà, Condotta, Defectuum, Provisore delle Regole and to the office of the Podestà of Monte San Sevrini.
  32. Tratte 48, fol. 18r. Both Giovanni and Francesco Palmieri are included in a list entitled "imborsato in 1439 e non in 1444"; Francesco has the word "merto" against his name.
  33. Tratte 1150. 18 people in the gonfalone of Chiave were "imborsato" for the post of Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, of whom 7 had more than one ticket.
  34. Rubinstein, Il Governo, appendices III and IV, pp. 307-326.
  35. Tratte 80, fol. 18v.
  36. Cat. 718 (1451), fols. 517r-v; Giovanni's youngest child was two years old in 1451, so he himself must have died during or shortly after 1448. His wife had already collected her dowry and left by August 1451.
  37. On the importance of the gonfalone in Florentine life, see F.W. and D.V. Kent, The Gonfalone of the Lion Rosso, Locust Valley, 1982; see especially Chapter 1, section 3, entitled "The atmosphere of neighbourhood", pp. 48-74. For a full list of members of this Balìa, see Rubinstein, Il Governo, Appendix III, pp. 307-317.
  38. Tratte 80, fol. 343r.
  39. Cat. 386, fol. 260r.
  40. Compagnie Religiose Soppresse, Compagnia di S. Maria delle Laudi detta S. Agnese 24, fol. 11r. I should like to thank Nicholas Eckstein for this reference.
  41. Soderini loaned money to Matteo's nephews and when, because of bad debts, this could not be repaid, he was given half a house; Cat. 829 (1458), fol. 10r. Matteo was also named as executor of Tommaso's will in 1461; NA X 570 (Ser Piero Miglicirelli), fol. 90v. I should like to thank Dr. Paula Clarke for this reference.
  42. Cat. 386, fol. 259r.

43. Ibid., fols. 259v-261r.
44. Cat. 479, fols. 195v-196v.
45. Cat. 837; Niccolò d'Ugo fol. 132r; Ugo di Bartolomeo fol. 142v; Franco di Niccolò d'Ugo fol. 117r; Matteo fol. 128r.
46. See Cat. 58, fol. 266r for confines of his property.
47. See CP 50, fols. 1v, 151r, 204r.
48. Balia reference in Rubinstein, I Governo, p. 305. Moreover, Bartolomeo di Ser Benedetto Fortini was exiled in 1444; Otto di Guardia 224, fol. 78r.
49. Cat. 386, fol. 260v. For evidence concerning the relationship between Jacopo di Ser Lapo and Matteo, see Palmieri's Ricordi, p. 269.
50. Cat. 388, fols. 5r-6r.
51. Cat. 345, fol. 687v; "Matteo di Marco Palmieri speciale ... non so che, perchè non'ò la ragione)". I should like to thank Dr. Paula Clarke for this reference.
52. Rubinstein, I Governo, p. 96.
53. Ibid., p. 87.
54. Ibid., p. 98 for figures; apps. III and IV for membership.
55. Ibid., p. 98.
56. Ibid., p. 101.
57. Ibid., app. IV.
58. Ibid., p. 100.
59. Ibid., p. 98.
60. Cat. 682, fol. 180v; "fo fare a Agnolo mio nipote un pocho di bottega di speciale al Canto alle Rondine".
61. Printed in A.Sapori, "Cosimo de' Medici e un patto giurato a Firenze nel 1449", Eventail de l'histoire vivante - Hommage a Lucien Febvre, Paris, 1953, Livre II, pp. 115-132; p. 124.
62. Rubinstein, I Governo, pp. 24-5.
63. Ibid., p. 25.
64. Ibid., p. 32.
65. Ibid., Apps. II, III and IV.
66. See CP 52.
67. Rubinstein, I Governo, p. 16 for drawing from 74 names instead of 2000 in 1434.
68. G.Brucker, Florentine Society and Politics, 1343-78, Princeton, 1961; The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence, Princeton, 1977.
69. Rubinstein, I Governo.
70. For this debate, see J. Seigel "Civic Humanism or Ciceronian Rhetoric?", Past and Present, 34, 1966, pp. 3-48, and the reply of H. Baron, "Leonardo Bruni: 'Professional Rhetorician' or 'Civic Humanist'?", ibid., 36, 1967, pp. 21-37.
71. The chapter on the Della Vita Civile will examine this point.
72. CP 52 and 53.
73. CP 54.
74. CP 55 and 56.
75. CP 56, fols. 141r-v and 161r-v.
76. See R.Black, Benedetto Accolti and the Italian Renaissance, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 159-163.
77. In CP 50, there is an identical rough and a neat copy of the same debate; fols. 78r-81r; 3/7/1433.
78. Neri Capponi, Commentari di cose seguite in Italia dal 1419 al 1456, ed. A.Muratori, RIS, 18, Milano, 1731, cols. 1157-1216; col.

- 1166 "e cosi appare a' libri de' Consigli scritto per Messer Leonardo d'Arezzo".
79. CP 57, 58, 59 and 60.
  80. CP 57 and 58.
  81. After 1468; see A. Brown, Bartolomeo Scala, 1430-97, Chancellor of Florence, Princeton, 1979, p. 146, n.32.
  82. CP 52, fol. 10r; 11/3/1447.
  83. *Ibid.*, fols. 10r, 16v, 24r, 24v, 27v, 28r, 32v, 33r, 52r, 71r, 73v, 76r, 88r, 89r and 95v.
  84. Vespasiano da Bisticci, Le Vite, vol. 1. pp. 312-313.
  85. Giovannozzo Pitti "dixit fidem publicam illis qui oppidum Cenninam occuparunt esse servandam"; CP 52, fol. 24r.
  86. Guglielmo Tanaglia "dixit quod domini et college viderent si fides legitime data est, et esse servandam"; *ibid.*
  87. Tommaso Salvetti is recorded as saying "idem"; *ibid.*
  88. Otto Niccolini "dixit non servandam fidem cum non sint iusti hostes, sed latrones"; *ibid.*
  89. Tommaso Deti said "idem quod d. Otto"; *ibid.*
  90. Franco del Benino "dixit in carcerem illos conciendos per decennium aut viginti aut XXV annos"; *ibid.*
  91. Neri di Domenico di Bartolini "pro se et aliis consilium domini Octonis probavit"; *ibid.*
  92. Matteo Palmieri "dixit si fides data est, servetur. Id dominorum et sui collegii iudicio iudicandum reliquit"; *ibid.*
  93. These citizens were Angelo Taddei for the Captains of the Parte Guelfa, Adoardo di Giachinotti for the new Gonfaloniere and Nerone Nisi for the Otto di Guardia. *Ibid.*
  94. CP 52, fols. 75r-77r.
  95. *Ibid.*, fol. 76r.
  96. *Ibid.*, fol. 76v.
  97. *Ibid.*, fol. 24v.
  98. *Tratte* 80, fol. 25v.
  99. *Tratte* 67, fol. 25v.
  100. *Ibid.*, fol. 25r.
  101. DBLC 4, fol. 23r.
  102. For Gonfaloniere di Compagnia, see *Manoscritti* 266, fol. 79r; for Sea Consul, see *Tratte* 80, fol. 260r; for Balìa, see Rubinstein, Il Governo, app. V, p. 332.
  103. Annales, pp. 162-3.
  104. BNF. Magl. VII, 1008, fol. 77v; "olim discipulus" says Matteo of himself in the funeral speech he gave.
  105. *Diario di Goro di Giovanni Donrello in Carte Stroziane*, 3 serie, 91, fol. 89r; *Messeri "Palmieri"*, p. 288.
  106. Manetti was, however, later a member of the Dieci di Balìa; see Annales, p. 167.
  107. *Chronicle of Francesco di Tommaso di Giovanni in BNF Magl. XXV*, 595, fol. 60; ASF, *Carte Stroziane*, Serie 3, 91, fol. 89r.
  108. BNF Magl. XXV, 595, fol. 61.
  109. *Ibid.*
  110. *Manoscritti* 253, fol. 1288r.
  111. Annales, p. 168.
  112. Ibid.
  113. ASMi SPE 266, Firenze, Nicodemo Tranchedini to the Duke of Milan, 30/8/1453; postscript.

114. Annales, p. 167.
115. ASMi SPE 266, Firenze, Boccaccio Alamanno, Francesco de Cusano and Nicodemo Tranchedini to the Duke of Milan, 14/9/1453.
116. *Pratiche* had been held on September 3, 4, 5 and 11. CP 53, fols. 24r-30r.
117. ASMi SPE 266, Firenze, Francesco de Cusano to Duke, 17/9/1453.
118. *Ibid.*
119. The *pratica* was held, and "tuti loro, ho la più parte, se mostrano essere benissimo disposti, cioè, che sia exeguito quanto la Vostra Signoria richiede. Et disputato questa materia uno bono pezo per questa sera, non hanno facto conclusione veruna, nè circa al facto de le gente, nè del denaro; ma per questo me habiano dicto Neri de Gini Caponi, Diotesalvi, M.Johanozzo Pitti, M.Otto Nicolini et alcuni altri che gli sono stati, hanno deliberato aspectare che Cosimo torni de villa, che debe tornare domane". *Ibid.* The *pratica* was not recorded in CP 53.
120. *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno, Francesco de Cusano and Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 22/9/1453.
121. Two *pratiche* were held on September 18, three on September 19, and one on September 21. CP 53, fols. 30v-37r. It was decided on 19/9 to send the two condottieri to Lombardy (fol. 34v). The quotation comes from fol. 37r (21/9).
122. Cosimo was "in lecto da sey di" and "amalato terribilmente". ASMi SPE 266, Firenze, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 27/9/1453.
123. *Ibid.*, Francesco de Cusano to Duke, 5/10/1453.
124. *Ibid.*, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 9/10/1453.
125. E.Centi, L'Imposta Diretta a Firenze nel Quattrocento, Roma, 1984, pp. 239-41; Libri Fabarum 63, fol. 27v, October 10 and 13; fol. 28r, October 19 and 20.
126. ASMi SPE 266, Firenze, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 19/10/1453.
127. *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno and Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 20/10/1453.
128. *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno and Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 20/10/1453; and *ibid.*, 23/10/1453.
129. *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno and Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 23/10/1453.
130. *Ibid.*
131. Luca Pitti was confident of being drawn as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, so much so that Boccaccio wrote "a di 29 sarà fatto". *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno to Cioco Simonetta, 24/10/1453.
132. "Questi Magnifici Dece de Balia finalmente ce hanno pur hogi stanciati". *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno and Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 26/10/1453.
133. *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno to Duke, 29/10/1453; and Boccaccio Alamanno and Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, 29/10/1453.
134. *Ibid.*, Boccaccio Alamanno to Duke, 14/11/1453.
135. *Tratte* 80, fol. 268r.
136. *Manoscritti* 266, fol. 78v.
137. *Tratte* 80, fol. 28r.
138. *Ibid.*, fol. 25v. For election to the Otto by lot, see Rubinstein, Il Governo, p. 63.
139. *Tratte* 80, fol. 28r.
140. *Provvisioni* 145, fols. 245v-246r notes the dismissal, but gives no reasons for it. Such a dismissal was not unique, eight other

- similar cases between 1433 and 1462 being known. See G. Antonelli, "Gli Otto di Guardia a Firenze", ASI, 112, 1954, pp. 3-39; p. 10, n.33. The volume mentioned by Antonelli which records these cases, Otto 2723 bis, was lost in the flood in 1966.
141. SLC 13, fol. 131v; see chapter on Palmieri's embassies.
142. For the transcriptions of the *pratiche*, see E. Walser, Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke, Leipzig, Berlin, 1914, pp. 404-406; R. Black, Benedetto Accolti and the Florentine Renaissance, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 340-1. For a fuller discussion of the episode, see Black, *Ibid.*, pp. 92-5.
143. MAP CXXXVII, 65; printed in Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 334-5.
144. The letter is printed in Finzi, Palmieri, p. 38.
145. An analysis of the 1230 extant letters that were sent to Cosimo de' Medici shows that 70% asked favours; see A. Molho, "Cosimo de' Medici: Pater Patriae or Padrino?", Stanford Italian Review, 1, 1979, pp. 5-34, p. 28.
146. Black, Accolti, p. 97.
147. Ibid., p. 100.
148. Finzi, Palmieri, p. 38.
149. Tratte 67, fol. 19v;
150. Respectively, Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 294; Tratte 81, fol. 76r, and fol. 40v.
151. Ibid., fol. 64r.
152. SLC 15, fol. 7v; see chapter on Palmieri's embassies.
153. Rubinstein, Il Governo, p. 341. On being elected by the Signoria, see ibid., pp. 35-6.
154. Ibid., pp. 126, 291.
155. On the visit of Galeazzo Maria, Archivio di Stato, Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga, 1099, fasc. 76, Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Duchess of Milan, 17/4/1459. For the visit of the pope, see the anonymous Ricordi di Firenze 1459, ed. G. Volpi, RIS, 27:1, Città di Castello, 1907, p. 45, lines 1910-1918:  
 "Gli uffici e magistrati ancor si vede  
 Che 'n coppia ne venien con ordin belli  
 Parati degnamente tutti a piede.
- Quattro papali e vermigli cappelli  
 Portavan quattro civi in su destrieri  
 Come concesso fu del papa a quelli.
- E nomi lor: l'un fu Matteo Palmieri,  
 Antonio Ridolfi e Giovan Canigiani  
 Giovenco della Stufa era 'l quartieri".
156. Tratte 81, fol. 40v.
157. Tratte 68, fol. 6r.
158. Tratte 81, fol. 166r. On the Cento electing the Sea Consuls, see Rubinstein, Il Governo, p. 138.
159. Ibid., fol. 38v.
160. Ibid., fol. 5r.
161. Tratte 80, fol. 276r.
162. "Dominacionem dignam esse maximis laudabus, que cum tanta diligentia et caritate et sollicitudine dat operam ut cives omnes ordinem ac statum intelligant. Onerosum videre possit multis ac molestum tot tributa solvere, tamen cum multa utilitates publici



- sunt privatorum commodo anteponendum. Deputarentur aliqui de collegiis et alii cives qui teneant practicam et cogitent malis ordinariis ac extraordinariis quibus pecunie comodior. Et cives conservari debent in unione quia sic conservetur res p.". CP 53, fol. 11r; 24/5/1453.
163. "Dixit quod debent animi civium esse constantes in rebus adversus. Non consistit pax in manibus nostris ut multi existimant". Ibid., fols. 11v-12r.
164. These five were Guglielmo Tanaglia, Niccolò Berardi, Lorenzo della Stufa, Giovanni Paretiri and Giovanni Lorini. Ibid., fols. 12r-13r.
165. "Dixit esse valde necessarium ut omnes cives solvant tributa et faciant onera pro conservatione libertatis. Videndum est omni diligentia ut in ordine optimo sunt gentes armorum et quod superiores sumus in bello. Nam sic pax honorabiliore ac citius haberi poterit. Dixit in eandem sententiam quam Dominus Angelus de Acciaciolis. Et quod cogitandis est modus quo pecunia haberi possit unde cumque, ut marsupiiis civium pareantur quantum fieri possent". Ibid., fol. 13r.
166. CP 53, fols. 56v-60r.
167. "Tenere Rome oratores tam evidenter non est honorarium neque utile. Ideo si tollerabile est capiatur medium est ut unus ex oratoribus nostris Rome remaneat et ceteri revocentur". Ibid., fol. 60r; 5/3/1454.
168. "Decem balie ad omniam preparamenta re provisiones per agendas que ad bellum expedire videntur ne tempus amittatur et sub pratticis deludamur". Ibid., fol. 60v.
169. "Necessarium videtur ad honorem et utilitatem rei p. nostre ut oratores quam primus revocentur. Si pacem volent, utili erit ut oratores remaneant". Ibid.
170. Matteo: "Dixit nullo pacto esse consentiendum pari nisi recstituantur nobis castella per regem Aragonia ablata. Nam si aliter fieret non in pace essemus sed potius in bello. Optimum esset ut oratores nostri ad nos venire ...ut preparemus nos ad bellum ne dolis opprimamur. Si dominationi placet et decem balie, scribere oratoribus nostris ut modum re apertam faciant Summo Pontefici intentionem nostram, que est ut pacem iustam et honorificam et securam habeamus, aut manifestum bellum. Et tamen predicta sunt ad arbitrium ac iudicium dominorum et decem balie". Ibid., fols. 60v-61r.
171. The names are listed at the end of the debate. Ibid., fols. 61v-62r.
172. Ibid., fol. 62v; 7/3/1454.
173. CP 54, fol. 25v.
174. Ibid., fol. 26r.
175. Ibid., fol. 27r.
176. Ibid., fol. 28r.
177. Ibid., fols. 25v-26r.
178. M. Mallett, "The Sea Consuls of Florence in the Fifteenth Century", Papers of the British School at Rome, 27, 1959, pp. 156-169; see especially pp. 167-8.
179. A. Brown, "The Guelf Party in Fifteenth Century Florence", Rinascimento, 20, 1980, pp. 41-86; see pp. 55-7.
180. Matteo commented: "quia preterito anno Pisis in magistratu fuit, iccirco velut istarum rerum informatum non nulla dicturus est. Cum eundem ibi esset cum sociis provisum extitit per dominos ut

- navigatio fieret, et ut quinque triremes instructe essent in tempore debito ad navigationem". CP 55, fol. 103r.
181. Matteo said: "intellexisse autem se tria obstare quominus provisio obtineretur. Primum ne signum vetustum et honoratum in civitate auferatur. Secundum, quia per eam viam adhuc navigationi bene fiende non videtur bene provisum esse... Tertium, ne deinceps ipsi capitanei per consilium eligendi sint et sors extractionis omnino auferatur... Ex hoc eandem duo eventura esse, unum que ex bursa officium extraheretur sicut maxime populus cupit sed quod maior pecunia haberi poterit pro futura navigatione, officio altero remoto quam navigationem omnes prudentissimi homines saluberrimam et honorificam huic civitati semper esse censent... Nec videri sibi difficilem viam inveniendis pecuniis esse". Ibid., fols. 125v-126r.
182. Ibid., fols. 126v-127v.
183. Ibid., fols. 128v-130r.
184. Palmieri advised "ab officialibus canalís et ex incantis". Ibid., fol. 128v.
185. Palmieri said "...circa exactionem habendos aliquos officiales sit precipuum ut et hortentur et compellant cives ad solvendum". CP 56, fols. 3r-3v.
186. Ibid., fol. 2r.
187. Ibid.
188. Guglielmo Tanaglia said "sufficere unum catasti onus existimat ...et imponendam esse penam non solventibus". Ibid., fol. 4v.
189. Carlo Pandolfini: "videndum num aliquis modis sit habendis pecuniis absque impositione onerum deputandos ergo cives et collegas qui una cum officialibus camere mature considerent". Ibid., fol. 5r.
190. Giovanozzo Pitti said "proposita per dominos duas partes habuisse; primam circa debita communis et camere, secundam circa negotium quinque Pisarum", tertiam de exigendo". Ibid.
191. He continued "et audivisse se multos iam esse qui veterum debitorum gratiam querant. Quod si ita est, facile fore ut etiam nova onera non solvantur. Igitur laborundem esse ut debita vetera omnio exigantur ut aditus novis ad solutiouem pateat". Ibid., fol. 5v.
192. Matteo said "legam aliquam fieri ex qua non solventes ad solventum invitarentur... dixit necessarium et utile fore et cum honore civitati ut navigatio exerteatur. Ex qua lucrum et commodum resultat civitati ...suadere se ut deputentur quedam college cum paucis civibus qui intellecto assignamento ipsorum, quinque et quod extrahi possit ex incantis futuris provideant ...addere etiam se verecundiam esse civitati quae camera communis nullum assignamentum habeat ...num aliquis modus sit ut certum et perpetuum assignamentum illi tribuatur secundum veterem consuetudinem". Ibid., fol. 6r.
193. For example, Giovanni Bartoli, *ibid.*, fols. -7r-v, Dietisalvi Nerconi, fols. 8r-v and Francesco degli Orlandi, fol. 9r.
194. CP 56, fol. 11v; 24/11/1459; see the Confaloniere di Giustizia's introduction to the debate, which begins: "coram cunctis civibus dixit veteres quinque officiales Pisarum qui nuper officium dimiserunt ordinasse leges plurimas sicut eis visum est salubres et oportunas civitati Pisarum et Liburni oppido. Nec non exercitio navagandi qua cum in consilio centum aprobande sint, statunt domini ut prius leges ipse inter cives prudentes examinarentur ut quid vel addendum vel detrahendum esset ex illis iudicaretur".

195. Matteo started his speech by saying: "idem professus verum esse quod alii dixerunt, sperari debere que per illos quinque cives statuta sunt optima et salubria esse ut tunc ea facilius aprobarentur". Ibid., fol. 13v.
196. Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 313.
197. Manno expressed his view thus: "reliquum est ut quoniam civitas multis in angustiis est videretur potius minuendas impensas esse quam augendas. Et ita cives plurimos disservisse qui si vel ex fortuna vel ex prudentia civium civitas pacem habet absurdum existimaret si ispe consuleret ut nove conducte militum fierent". CP 56, fol. 22r; 3/1/1460.
198. Giovannozzo Pitti observed: "ob beneficia a Peruginis recepta presentum tempore belli Aragonum regis istum conducendum esse esertim cum impensa non sit ultra centum quinquaginta florini quolibet mente, ut conservetur amicitia illius civitatis et etiam illius familie". Ibid., fol. 22r.
199. Donato Cocchi wanted to pay less, and Bernardo de' Medici thought that there was no obligation on Florence to renew the contract; ibid., fols. 22v-23r.
200. Ibid., fol. 23v.
201. Luigi Guicciardini commented: "sed quoniam ob varietatem loquentium res in ambiguo est, existimaret utile fore ut alii prudentes cives civitatis super hoc ispe consulerentur". Ibid., fols. 23v-24r.
202. Antonio Lenzone said: "videri tunc sibi sex vel otto eligendos cives qui super hac re deliberent". Ibid., fol. 24r.
203. Guglielmo Rucellai advised: "videre sibi rem mali exempli istam esse videlicet consuetudinem inducere ut conducte militum hereditarie relinquuntur. . . . se tandem concludere quod d. Mannus et d. Otto consulunt . . . addendum preterea consilium cum aliis sapientibus civibus cum quorum prudentia et auctoritate res ista tandem meliorem et honestiorem exitum habere poterit". Ibid., fol. 24r.
204. Ibid., fol. 58r.
205. Ibid., fols. 58r-60v.
206. Ibid., fol. 58r.
207. Ibid., fol. 60v.
208. Ibid., fol. 62r.
209. CP 56 ends 10 May 1462, and CP 57 begins 20 May 1465.
210. *Tratte* 81, fol. 33v.
211. See chapter on Citta di Vita, p. 283.
212. *Tratte* 81, fol. 41r; *tratte* 68, fol. 26r.
213. De Temporibus, p. 1.
214. MAP CXXXVII, 65.
215. The letter is printed in Finzi, Palmieri, p. 38; see also above, pp. 54-55.
216. NA M 570 (Ser Piero Migliorelli), fol. 90v.
217. Il Governo, p. 172.
218. Ibid., pp. 179 and 181.
219. Ibid., p. 188.
220. For the text of the pact, see A. Municchi, La fazione antimedicca detta del Poggio, Firenze, 1911, appendix IV. See also G. Pampaloni, "Il giuramento pubblico in Palazzo Vecchio a Firenze e un patto giurato degli anti-Medicei, Maggio 1466", Bulletino Senese di Storia Patria, 71, 1964, pp. 212-238.

221. For the text, see BNF II, 1, 106, fols. 60r-61v.
222. *Tratte* 31, fol. 6r.
223. SLC 16, fol. 28r.
224. On this embassy, see embassies chapter, pp. 126-133.
225. SLC 16, fol. 46v.
226. *Ibid.*, fol. 112r.
227. *Tratte* 81, fol. 6r; 29/1/1467. A marginal note adds "electi p(er) de C(ento), die 29 Jan 1466" (old style). In September 1466, the Balia had decided that the Priors and colleges, or just the Priors, should elect the new Otto; *Balia* 30, fol. 13r.
228. On the formation of the Dieci, see *Lettere di Lorenzo*, p. 31, n2. The Dieci entered office on 6/5/1467 for six months, and their term was renewed for a further six months on 23/9/1467. The election is recorded in *Tratte* 81, fol. 154r. On Palmieri's election as ambassador to Rome, see SLC 16, fol. 153v.
229. *Ibid.*, fol. 101r; 27/6/1468.
230. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, Z.Olduino to Duke, "... mal poteria durare a la fatica del cavalcare"; 30/6/1468.
231. ASMi SPE 272, Firenze, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, postscript, 2/2/1465.
232. Galeazzo Maria provides the list of the dozen "dignissimi cittadini" who accompanied him; these were Piero de' Medici, Luca Pitti, Carlo Pandolfini, Luigi Guicciardini, Tommaso Soderini, Otto Niccolini, Bernardo de' Ridolfi, Matteo Palmieri, Franco Sasseti, Bartolomeo Lenzi, Niccolò Giugni, and Antonio Lenzoni. ASMi SPE 273, Firenze, Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Duchess, 24/7/1467. On the citizens attending the "parlamento", see *Dei Cronaca*, p. 72.
233. *Manoscritti* 253, fol. 1288r; see Rubinstein, *Il Governo*, p. 204, for drawing "a mano".
234. ASMi SPE 281, Firenze, Filippo Sacramoro to Nicodemo Tranchedini; 9/7/1471; for membership of the Balia of 1471, see Rubinstein, *Il Governo*, app. 3, pp. 359-366.
235. *Tratte* 81, fol. 159v.
236. *Dei Cronaca*, p. 38.
237. Dati's outline is published in A.M.Bandini, *Catalogus Codicum Latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae: at Codicum Italianorum*, vol. 5, Firenze, 1778, column 81.
238. NA B 1184 (Ser Girolamo Beltramini), unfoliated.
239. These versions are also in NA B 1184.
240. *Ricordi Storici di Filippo Rinuccini*, ed. G. Aiazzi, Firenze, 1840, p. CXII; "dubitossi non partorisce novità o scandolo nella città: il che in vero non seguitò". On this topic, see G.Soranzo, "Lorenzo il Magnifico alla morte del padre", ASI, 111, 1953, pp. 42-77.
241. "Credo per cervello M.Thomaso Soderino li pare forse potere saltare li, e non dubio che'l cervello gli basteria, ma ei non se ha mo de luy cossi nel vulgo oppenione de bono; como de savio et per questo non credo che'l possa fare che le specie se vendano tucte a casa sua. Messere Loise forse per conoscersi essere amato dal populo ce pensa, ma non so como l'habia astutia da tanto fasso". ASMi SPE 277, Firenze, Sacramoro Sacramori to Duke, 1/12/1469.
242. *Ibid.*
243. ASMi SPE 278, Firenze, Ciccio Simonetta to Filippo Sacramoro, Lorenzo da Pesaro and Giovanni Arcimboldo, 3/3/1470.

244. Ibid., Filippo Sacramoro, Lorenzo da Pesaro and Giovanni Arcimboldo to Duke, 10/3/1470.
245. These six citizens are described as "chi senza barbazale ha dimostro amare cordialmente (Galeazzo Maria) et habbia havuto animo rembecharla a chi non l'ama... Sonno poy tanti più chaldi et invitano altri". Next to the list of their names, Scaramoro adds "et li amici loro de più bassa mano che seguitano li soy pareri". ASMi SPE 279, Firenze, Sacramoro Sacramori to Duke, postscript, 3/6/1470.
246. A list is supplied in the letter. ASMi SPE 281, Firenze, Sacramoro Sacramori to Nicodemo Tranchedini, 5/7/1471.
247. Ibid. On Pierfrancesco de' Medici, see also Sacramoro to Duke, 1/5/1471; "quella bestia de Pierfrancesco de' Medici". See A.Brown, "Pierfrancesco de' Medici, 1430-1476: A Radical Alternative to Elder Medicean Supremacy", *JWCI*, 42, 1979, pp. 81-103.
248. Ibid., Sacramoro Sacramori to Nicodemo, 5/7/1471.
249. Ibid., Sacramoro Sacramori to Duke of Milan, 9/7/1471.
250. Ibid. On Lorenzo's selection of politicians, see F.Guicciardini, *Storie Italiane*, ed. R.Palmarocchi, Bari, 1931, pp. 78-9.
251. Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 313. On the Parte Guelfa, see A.Brown, "The Guelf Party in Fifteenth Century Florence", *Rinascimento*, 20, 1980, pp. 41-86.
252. Tratte 68, fol. 20r.
253. MAP XXVII, 141; 3/3/1472; published in Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 337. See, too, Finzi, *Palmieri*, pp. 172-174.
254. The quotation is from Vespasiano, *La Vita*, vol. 1, p. 564.
255. MAP XXIII, 469; 19/6/1472; Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 337.
256. MAP XXVI, 84; 9/2/1473; Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 338.
257. Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 313.
258. Manoscritti 266, fol. 78v.
259. For Conservatore delle Leggi, see Tratte 82, fol. 42r. For embassy, see SLC 17, fol. 170v. The pope's request is in SCRC 2, fol. 57r; 7/11/1473.
260. See embassies chapter, pp. 158-170.
261. ASMi SPE 74, Roma, Sacramoro Sacramori to Duke of Milan, 27/2/1474: Matteo "a domando licentia a nostro Signore che non posseria soprastare per non perdere el suo offitio de Volterra, dove ha ad andare el primo de marzo...". The post was due to begin on 5/4/1474; Tratte 68, fol. 5v. The Captain of Arezzo received a salary of 2,500 lire, that of Volterra 2,600 lire and that of Pistoia 3,000 lire; *ibid.*, fols. 4r, 5v and 6r respectively.
262. E.Fiumi, *L'impresa di Lorenzo de' Medici contro Volterra*, Firenze, 1948, pp. 154-5. On the political and diplomatic circumstances, see *Lettere di Lorenzo*, vol. 1, Excursus II, pp. 547-553.
263. Fiumi, *L'impresa*, p. 163.
264. MAP XXX, 259; 9/4/1474. MAP XXX, 881, 13/9/1474; Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 340.
265. Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 339-340.
266. Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 339. L.Landucci, *Diario Fiorentino*, ed. I del Badia, Firenze, 1883; pp. 13-14.
267. The letter is published in A. della Torre, *Accademia Platonica*, Firenze, 1902, pp. 492-3.
268. SSDSA 33, fol. 84r; 7/1/1475.
269. Tratte 82, fol. 1v.
270. SSDSA 34, fol. 153r; 14/4/1475.

271. For text, see Rinuccini, Lettere, pp. 78-85.
272. Black, Accolti, p. 335, n45.
273. CP 57, 58, 59 and 60.
274. Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 170-1.
275. Ibid., p. 170; CP 57, fol. 37v; 4/9/1465.
276. Franco Sachetti counselled "de provisione referendum ad maiorem numerum". It is then recorded "in eius assensi sunt sententiam Mattheus Palmieri, Leonardus Bartholini, Ugolinus Martellus". CP 57, fol. 37r.
277. CP 57, fol. 36r.
278. Ibid., fol. 38v; 5/9/1465; "nunc restituere octo viris que tanta (potesta) esse solet ut satis sit sine balie nomine quam populus odio habet".
279. Ibid., fol. 39v.
280. Ibid., fol. 40v; Rubinstein, Il Governo, p. 171.
281. CP 57, fol. 43v; "se existimare aut immutandos cives qui sortibus presunt, aut penitus libera marsupia esse reddenda".
282. Tommaso Soderini declared "quoniam res sit magni ponderis ut recte et mature intelligatur et deferenda omnia in consultationem ad sapientiores cives simul cum collegis". Ibid., fol. 42r.
283. Rubinstein, Il Governo, p. 171.
284. CP 57, fol. 43v.
285. Ibid., fol. 44r.
286. Debates published by G. Pampaloni "Fermenti di riforme democratiche nella Firenze medicea del Quattrocento", ASI, 119, 1961, pp. 241-281; pp. 251-255.
287. Ibid., p. 253.
288. Ibid.
289. Ibid.
290. Ibid.
291. Ibid., pp. 256-7; Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 177-8.
292. Pampaloni "Fermenti", p. 259.
293. Ibid.; respectively, Niccolò Soderini pp. 256-7; Domenico Martelli p. 258; Antonio Pucci, Mariotto Lippi and Giovanni Lorini p. 259.
294. Ibid., p. 259.
295. Published by G.Pampaloni, "Nuovi tentativi di riforme alla costituzione fiorentina visti attraverso le consulte", ASI, 120, 1962, pp. 521-581; p. 525.
296. Ibid., p. 523.
297. Ibid., p. 537.
298. Ibid., p. 536.
299. Ibid., p. 539.
300. Ibid.
301. Ibid., pp. 537-8.
302. Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 183-4.
303. CP 58, fols. 124v-125r.
304. Ibid., fol. 133r.
305. Ibid.
306. Ibid., fols. 134r-v.
307. Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 177-8, 181, 184.
308. CP 58, fols. 158v-160v; 12/5/1466.
309. Franco Sachetti commented "prorogandum igitur censuit unius mensis aut diem saltem XX tempus. De XL millibus nihil dicere se aliud propter ea quae audivit de difficultate deliberationis". Tommaso

- Soderini by contrast had noted: "etsi ex dignitate fuit populi Florentini prestare quod promissum erat: tamen propter difficultatem unitati consulendum et scribendum legatis ut cum bona gratia illorum principum redeant". Ibid., fol. 159r.
310. Matteo Palmieri advised: "propter difficultatem deliberandi iuit in sententiam eorum qui dixerunt de subventionem amplius non tractandum, sed scribendum legatis ut denegationem excusent et redeant si ita illis principibus videatur". Ibid., fol. 160r.
311. For instance, Ugolino Martelli considered: "legatos non revocandos sed id probavit quod dixit Math. Palmerius". Ibid., fol. 160r.
312. Ibid., fol. 182v.
313. The debates took place between 10/9/1468 and 14/9/1468. Ibid., fols. 29r-37r.
314. Ibid., fol. 34v.
315. Palmieri was present twice in July, once in August and three times in September 1469; *ibid.*, fols. 78v-86r. For 1470, *ibid.*, fols. 92r-115v.
316. Ibid., fols. 116r-137r.
317. Ibid., fols. 142r (2/6/1473) and 143v (28/10/1473).
318. Finzi, *Palmieri*, pp. 51-59.
319. Vespasiano, *Le Vite*, vol. 1, p. 564. Rinuccini, *Lettere*, p. 84: "...consilio prudentiaque plurimum reipublicae profuit".
320. Rinuccini, *Lettere*, p. 83: "...summam in agendo constantiam, fidem, prudentiam, integritatemque servaret".

Notes to embassies

1. In one volume of the Dieci's deliberations it is recorded that Palmieri was elected on June 14, while the "istruzioni" suggest June 27. Yet the entry dated June 14 was not a scribal error, and the entries related to the days immediately following June 14 are found immediately after this entry (DBDCS 20, fol. 50v). No reference to this earlier election is made in the "istruzioni" (DBLC 4, fol. 23r).
2. A.Zanelli, "L'ambasceria di Matteo Palmieri a Perugia (1452)", ASI, 1904, ser. 5, 23, pp. 171-177; p. 172.
3. DBLC 4, fol. 23r. Published by Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 326-331; p. 327.
4. Zanelli, "L'ambasceria", p. 172.
5. Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 328.
6. Zanelli, "L'ambasceria", pp. 173-4.
7. Annales, p. 164.
8. DBDCS 20, 25/7/1452, fol. 61v. It seems that the Florentines lacked the military strength to oppose the Neapolitans. Writing to Francesco Sforza in July, 1452, the Dieci related that the King's men had passed through Perugia, and that they were now heading for the Valdarno and the Valdambra. "Attendiamo approvedere il meglio che possiamo con queste genti che habbiamo, et con altre che c'ingegneremo di condocere di per di ...". ASMi SPE, 266, Firenze, Dieci to Francesco Sforza, 22/7/1452.
9. DBLC 4, 15/7/1452, fol. 28r.
10. Zanelli, "L'ambasceria", p. 175.
11. Ibid., p. 174.
12. Annales, p. 164.
13. Ibid., p. 175.
14. SLC 13, fol. 132v. "Istruzioni" published in Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 331-334.
15. Vespasiano, Le Vite, vol. 1, p. 564.
16. Annales, p. 175. The five ambassadors were Antonio Pieruzzi, Archbishop of Florence, messer Giannozzo d'Agnolo Pandolfini, messer Otto Niccolini, Antonio di Lorenzo Ridolfi, and Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici.
17. SCRC 1, 10/2/1455, fol. 15v.
18. SLC 13, fols. 131v-134v; Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 331-334.
19. SLC 13, 23/5/1455, fol. 142r.
20. Ibid.
21. ASMi SPE, 268, Firenze, 14/6/1455, Tomaso Reale, Neapolitan ambassador in Florence, to Duke of Milan.
22. SLC 13, 14/6/1455, fol. 146v.
23. G.B.Gelli, I Capricci del Bottaino, rag. 3, in I Trattatisti del Cinquecento, ed. M.Pozzi, Milano, 1978, p. 928.
24. MAP, CXXXVII, 65.
25. SCRC 1, 14/3/1455, fol. 17r.
26. Ibid., 10/4/1455, fol. 18v.
27. SLC 13, 23/5/1455, fol. 144r.
28. SCRC 1, 21/6/1455, fols. 19v-20r.
29. Annales, p. 176.
30. ASMi SPE 268, Firenze, 27/6/1455, Albrico Mailleta to Duke of Milan.
31. Ibid.



32. SLC 15, fol. 7v.
33. Incidentally, Messeri, "Palmieri" p. 295 is somewhat confused about the changes occurring in this magistracy. The new office of the Cinque di Pisa was due to start from November 21, 1458, that is, after the embassy had taken place. See M.Mallett, "The Sea Consuls of Florence in the fifteenth century", Papers of the British School at Rome, 27, 1959, pp. 156-169.
34. Rubinstein, Il Governo, p. 340.
35. SLC 15, fol. 8r.
36. Ibid., fol. 7v.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. The act was rogated by Ser Clemente di Tarato di Paulo da Pistoia; see SLC 15, fol. 8r.
40. E.Branchi, Lunigiana Feudale, Pistoia, 1898, unfortunately does not discuss this episode.
41. See political activity chapter pp. 80-81.
42. SLC 16, 6/6/1466, fol. 28r.
43. Fra Giovanni di Carlo, Libri de temporibus suis, Biblioteca Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 5878; read on microfilm. On this chronicle, see R.Hatfield, "A Source for Machiavelli's Account of the Regime of Piero de' Medici", Studies on Machiavelli, ed. M.P.Gilmore, Firenze, 1972, pp. 317-333, who prints an extract from the chronicle on pp. 328-330.
44. N.Machiavelli, Istoria Fiorentina, ed. F.Gaeta, Milano 1962, ch. 7, pp. 468-9.
45. R.Hatfield, "The compagnia de' Magi", JWCI, 33, 1970, pp. 106-161; p. 115, n. 42.
46. R.de Roover, The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, New York, 1966, p. 360. See B.Dei, Cronaca, ed. R.Barducci, Firenze, 1984, p. 130 for a fifteenth century view that war in the Levant was responsible for the banking failures in Florence.
47. Tratte 81, fol. 6r.
48. See political activity chapter, pp. 79-80.
49. ASMI SPE 59, Roma, 23/6/1466/ to Duchess Biancamaria and Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan.
50. The letter is printed in L.Pastor, Storia dei Papi, vol. 2, Roma, 1961, appendix 79, p. 738.
51. SLC 16, 10/6/1466, and 15/6/1466, fols. 28v-29r.
52. Ibid., 5/7/1466, fol. 31r.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 9/7/1466, fol. 31v.
55. Ibid., 18/7/1466, fol. 32r.
56. ASMI SPE 60, Roma, 6/8/1466, to Duchess and Duke of Milan.
57. ASMI SPE 59, Roma, 24/6/1466, Cardinal of Siena to Duke of Milan.
58. In letters of June 6, 11, 17, 23 and 24 Agostino da Rimini mentions meetings with the pope. ASMI SPE 59, Roma.
59. SLC 16, fol. 33r.
60. ASMI SPE 272, Firenze, 20/9/1466.
61. Annales, p. 183.
62. Ibid., p. 184.
63. SLC 16, 30/9/1466, fol. 46v. Palmieri's election by the Cento is on fol. 37r.
64. ASMI SPE 272, Firenze, 13/10/1466.

65. SLC 16, fol. 37r.
66. CP 58, fol. 189v.
67. Chronicles consulted were: Corpus Chronicarum Bononiensium, ed. A.Sorbelli, RIS, 18:1, Bologna, 1924. P.Cherubino Gherardacci, Historia di Bologna, ed. A.Sorbelli, RIS, 33:1, Citta di Castello, 1912. G.Borselli, Chronica Gestorum ad Factorum Memorabiliu Civitatis Bononia, ed. A.Sorbelli, RIS, 23:2, Bologna, 1929.
68. ASMi SPE 272, Firenze, 13/10/1466, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke of Milan.
69. The letter is printed in Muniochi, La Fazione antimedicca, appendix 23, p. 142; 23/9/1466.
70. Ibid., app. 29, from Felice Cancellieri, Podesta at San Martino.
71. F.Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, ed. R.Palmarocchi, Bari, 1932, p. 17.
72. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 20/1/1467, to Duke and Duchess of Milan.
73. SLC 16, fol. 112r.
74. ASMi SPE 273, Firenze, 20/1/1467, to Duke and Duchess of Milan.
75. Ibid. In June 1467, Nicodemo reported of Tommaso Soderini, Bernardo Corbinelli, Angelo della Stufa and Luigi Guicciardini that "dicti quatro cittadini sono de tale autorità che'l Signore per lo mezo loro se deverà potere ben aiutare de le cose de qui a questa empresa"; ibid., 2/6/1467, to Duchess Bianca.
76. Tratte 81, fol. 6r. See political activity chapter, p. 83.
77. See Lettere di Lorenzo de' Medici 1460-1474, ed. R.Fubini, vol. 1, Florence, 1977, p. 31, n2.
78. Tratte 81, fol. 6r.
79. Dieci di Balìa, Entrate e Uscite 7, fol. 527v. Tommaso left Florence on 6/10/1467 and returned there 6/5/1468.
30. SLC 16, fol. 153v.
31. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 5/2/1468, Nicodemo to Duke. The papal bull of February 2, 1468 is published in La Vita di Paolo II, ed. G.Zippel, R.I.S., 3:16, Città di Castello, 1904, appendix VI, pp. 196-7. On the league, see R.Cessi "La 'lega italica' e la sua funzione storica nella seconda metà del sec. XV", Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, CII, 1942-3; G.Pillinini, Il sistema degli stati italiani, 1454-1494, Venezia, 1970; E.W.Nelson, "The origins of modern balance-of-power politics", Medievalia et Humanistica, 1, 1943, pp. 124-142; B.Barbadoro, "Il problema dell'equilibrio e la crisi della libertà italiana", in Questioni di Storia Medievale, ed. E.Rota, Milano, 1946, pp. 455-473; and M.Mallett, "Diplomacy and War in later fifteenth-century Italy", Proceedings of the British Academy, 69, 1983, pp. 267-288.
82. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 29/2/1468, Giovanni Bianchi to Duke.
83. SLC 16, fol. 153v.
84. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 22/2/1468, to Duke.
85. Ibid., 23/2/1468, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke: "Matheo Palmiere ...partirà domane"; and ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 28/2/1468, Giovanni Bianchi to Duke: "domane giongerà qua el novo ambaxatore fiorentino".
86. G.Niccolini (ed.), "Lettere di Piero di Cosimo de' Medici a Otto Niccolini, 1467-1469", ASI, ser. 5, 16, 1897, pp. 33-59; p. 45.
87. DBMI 3, fol. 183v.
88. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 3/3/1468, Giovanni Bianchi to Duke.
39. Ibid.

90. Annales, p. 188.
91. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 4/3/1468, to Duke.
92. Ibid., 4/3/1468, Giovanni Bianchi to Duke.
93. Ibid., 5/3/1468, Giovanni Bianchi to Duke.
94. Ibid., P.S. 9/3/1468, Agostino Rossi to Duke.
95. Ibid., 9/3/1468.
96. Niccolini, "Lettere", p. 49.
97. DBMI 3, 13/3/1468, fol. 188v.
98. Niccolini, "Lettere", 13/3/1468, pp. 49-50.
99. DBMI 3, 15/3/1468, fol. 189r.
100. Ibid.
101. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, P.S. 13/3/1468, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke. Nicodemo's reply was that if this should happen, "sariumo poco savii".
102. MAP XVI, 219; printed in Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 335-6.
103. Niccolini, "Lettere", 19/3/1468, p. 50.
104. DBMI 3, 21/3/1468, fol. 191r.
105. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 21/3/1468.
106. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 21/3/1468, Agostino Rosso and Lorenzo da Pesaro to Sforza.
107. DEMI 3, 23/3/1468, fols. 193r-v.
108. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, Agostino Rosso, Lorenzo da Pesaro and Giovanni Bianchi to Sforza, 27/3/1468 and 28/3/1468; Agostino Rosso to Sforza, 29/3/1468.
109. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 31/3/1468, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke.
110. DEMI 3, 1/4/1468, fol. 195r.
111. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 2/4/1468, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke, second PS.
112. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 1/4/1468.
113. DBMI 3, 4/4/1468, to Matteo and Otto, fol. 196v.
114. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 4/4/1468, to Sforza.
115. Niccolini, "Lettere", 2/4/1468, to Otto and Matteo, p. 51.
116. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 7/4/1468, Lorenzo da Pesaro to Duke.
117. Ibid., another letter 7/4/1468.
118. Ibid., 8/4/1468, Lorenzo da Pesaro to Duke.
119. Niccolini, "Lettere", 7/4/1468, pp. 51-2.
120. DBMI 3, 10/4/1468, to Matteo and Otto, fol. 198v.
121. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 12/4/1468, Lorenzo da Pesaro and Giovanni Bianchi to Duke.
122. Ibid., 27/3/1468, Lorenzo da Pesaro, Giovanni Bianchi and Agostino Rosso to Duke; 12/4/1468, Lorenzo da Pesaro to Duke.
123. Ibid., 13/4/1468, Lorenzo da Pesaro and Giovanni Bianchi to Duke.
124. Quoted in B. Belotti, La vita di Bartolomeo Colleoni, Bergamo, no date (1929), p. 407; 8/2/1468, from Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Dieci.
125. ASMi SPE 64, Roma, 14/4/1468.
126. Ibid., 15/4/1468, Lorenzo da Pesaro to Duke.
127. DBMI 3, 18/4/1468, fol. 200v.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid., 28/4/1468, fol. 204r.
130. See Lettere di Lorenzo, vol. 1, letter 14, pp. 31-2; Lorenzo de' Medici to the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, Cipriano Cernigi, 21/3/1468: "per ubidire la Signoria vstra, parlai con Piero ... Et perche intendiate meglio, vi replicherò el suo parere, che è questo: fare nuovi Dieci ...".

131. Manoscritti 253, fol. 1288r; Il Governo, p. 204.
132. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 22/5/1468, Nicodemo to Duke.
133. Ibid., PPS, 25/5/1468.
134. Ibid., 27/5/1468, Piero to Pigello Portinari.
135. Ibid., 26/5/1468, Nicodemo to Duke, PPS. On the purchase, see Ricordi Storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini dal 1282 al 1460 colla continuazione di i suoi figli fino al 1506, ed. G.Aizzi, Firenze, 1840, pCX: "...Serrazzana e Serezzanella e Castelnuovo di Lunigiana, le quali terre si comperorono per il comune di Firenze, ... e costorono le dette castelle fiorini 30,000, e fu tenuta utile e buona spesa per il comune di Firenze". The ratification of the purchase appears in DBMI 3, 17/3/1468, fols. 190v-191r.
136. ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 28/5/1468, Guglielmo Pazzi to Portinari.
137. Ibid., 4/6/1468, Piero to Portinari.
138. Ibid., 10/6/1468, Dieci to Duke.
139. Ibid., 22/6/1468, Nicodemo Tranchedini to Duke.
140. The election is recorded in SLC 16, fol. 101r. Nicodemo's letter is in ASMi SPE 274, Firenze, 27/6/1468.
141. The quotation comes from the same letter. In SLC 16, fol. 101r, there is a note in the margin to the effect that Matteo declined the embassy on June 30, and that Bernardo Buongirolamo was elected in place of him.
142. Ibid., 30/6/1468, Z.Olduino to Duke. Nicodemo Tranchedini wrote on 27/6/1468 "non se fidano de luy" of Bernardo.
143. Ibid., 30/6/1468, Z.Olduino to Duke.
144. SCRC 2, 7/11/1473, fol. 57r. An outline of the diplomatic situation is given in Lettere di Lorenzo de' Medici, vol. 2, ed. R.Fubini, Firenze, 1981, Excursus I, "La spedizione ecclesiastica contro Citta di Castello nell'estate 1474 e i suoi presupposti diplomatici", pp. 475-484.
145. ASMi SPE 285, Firenze, 11/11/1473, Angelo della Stufa to Sforza.
146. Ibid., 11/11/1473, Filippo Sacramori to Sforza.
147. Ibid., 10/11/1473, Filippo Sacramori to Sforza.
148. Ibid., 11/11/1473, Filippo Sacramori to Sforza.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid., 27/11/1473, Filippo Sacramori to Sforza.
152. SLC 17, fol. 170v.
153. Ibid., fols. 170v-171r.
154. Ibid., fol. 170v. The Harioni was one of the families that went bankrupt as a result of the financial crisis in 1464-5, according to Benedetto Dei; Cronaca, p. 130.
155. Ibid., 22/12/1473, fol. 172r.
156. Ibid., fol. 172.
157. ASMi SPE 74, Roma, 2/1/1474. Only a copy of the original letter survives, and although not signed, on the basis of handwriting it is attributable to Sacramoro Sacramori. It was addressed to "Magnifico Agnolo" - presumably Angelo della Stufa.
158. SLC 17, 14/1/1474, fol. 174r.
159. ASMi SPE 286, Firenze, 9/2/1474.
160. ASMi SPE 74, Roma, 2/1/1474, Sacramoro Sacramori to Duke.
161. Ibid., 29/2/1474, to Duke.
162. SLC 17, 7/1/1474, fol. 173r.
163. Ibid.

164. Ibid., 11/1/1474, fols. 173v-r.
165. Ibid., 14/1/1474, fol. 174r.
166. Ibid., fol. 170r. On friction between Florence and Rome in matters ecclesiastical, see Lettere di Lorenzo, vol. 1, p. 498, and also C.M.Ady, Lorenzo de' Medici and Renaissance Italy, London, 1965, pp. 61-2.
167. SLC 17, 14/1/1474, fol. 174r.
168. Ibid., 21/1/1474, fol. 174v.
169. Ibid., 1/2/1474 and 4/2/1474, fols. 174v-175r; ASMi SPE 74, Roma, 3/2/1474, Milanese chancery to Girolamo Malleta.
170. ASMi SPE 74, Roma, 8/2/1474, Sacramoro Sacramori to Sforza.
171. Ibid.
172. MAP XXIX, 110; printed by Messeri, "Palmieri", pp. 328-9.
173. SCRC 2, 25/2/1474, fol. 59v.
174. ASMi SPE 74, Roma, 27/2/1474, Sacramoro Sacramori to Sforza.
175. ASMi SPE 276, Firenze, 20/1/1474, Angelo della Stufa to Sforza.
176. Ibid.
177. Ibid., 9/2/1474, Filippo Sacramori to Sforza.
178. Ibid., 13/2/1474, Filippo Sacramori to Sforza.
179. Ibid., 11/2/1474, Angelo della Stufa to Sforza.
180. SLC 17, 4/2/1474, fol. 175r.
181. Ibid., 4/2/1474, fols. 174v-175r.
182. Ibid., fol. 175r.
183. Ibid., fol. 175v.
184. ASMi SPE 74, Roma, 27/2/1474, Sacramoro Sacramori to Sforza. In fact, Matteo was drawn for this office only on April 5, 1474, according to the official register; Tratte 68, fol. 5v.
185. Ibid.
186. SLC 17, fol. 170r; ASMi SPE 286, Firenze, 12/3/1474, Filippo Sacramori to Sforza.
187. Vespasiano, La Vita, vol. 1, p. 564.
188. SLC 18, 28/3/1474, fol. 3r.
189. A triangular league was formed in November 1474 with Milan, Florence and Venice as its members. The papacy and Naples were invited to join, but chose not to do so. On the Italian league being unworkable, see R.Cessi, "La 'lega italica'", p. 168: "la lega era ormai morta". On the triangular league, see Lettere di Lorenzo, vol. 2, Excursus II, "La lega del 2 novembre 1474 tra Venezia, Milano e Firenze e i suoi preliminari", pp. 485-490.
190. For instance, Otto Niccolini in Rome in 1468 seems to have attracted attention to himself rather more than Palmieri did. The Pope was asked informally whether each ambassador might confess to whichever priest they chose. Paul agreed, and Lorenzo da Pesaro, one of the Milanese ambassadors there, then joked "pater sancte, ad nuy altri basta bene uno confessare per homo, ma ad d. Otto Niccolini gli ne bisognano duy, perchè 'l è el più cativo de tutti'. Tunc soa Sanctità dixit 'el è fiorentino, non ne dico altro'" (ASMi SPE.64, 14/4/1468, Giovanni Bianchi to Sforza). Otto seems to have enjoyed a particularly bad reputation. Writing in 1472, Sacramoro Sacramori commented on the opposition to Lorenzo de' Medici, among whom was to be found "uno fiolo de d. Otto Niccolini, el quale serra peggior che non fo el padre, che è un gran dire ..." (ASMi SPE 283, Firenze, to Ciocco Simonetta, 15/11/1472).

191. ASMi SPE 286, Firenze, 13/2/1474, to Filippo Sacramori. Cicco Simonetta tried to explain what he meant: "ma questi doy ambassatori voriano essere persone intendente et da bene, quale non fossero apassionate, ma solum amature de la loro republica. Avisandovi che nè l'uno nè l'altro de li doy electi non ne piaceno per le passione hanc ...". The two Florentines were Antonio Ridolfi, who was to be sent to Naples, and Luigi Guicciardini, who was to go to Milan. Cicco feared that Antonio was too friendly towards the king, and Luigi too well disposed towards Venice (9/2/1474, Filippo Sacramori to Duke).
192. Vespasiano, La Vita, vol. 1, p. 564; the "ambasciadori di re, li quali ebono a praticare collui, lo lodavano assai ne' sua consigli". From the context, it is not clear whether Vespasiano is referring to Palmieri's embassy to Naples in 1455, or to the negotiations for the Italian league in Rome in 1468.
193. CP 58, fol. 166r.

Notes to Della Vita Civile

1. The autograph of the Della Vita Civile is in BNF, II, IV, 81. For different approaches to the Della Vita Civile, see C.Finzi, Palmieri, pp. 63-225; and A.Buck, "Matteo Palmieri (1406-75) als Repräsentant des Florentiner Bürgerhumanismus", Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 47, 1965, pp. 77-95.
2. "Rivolto verso i mia carissimi cittadini, in me medesimo mi doisi, molti vedendone che, disiderosi di bene et virtucosamente vivere, senza loro colpa, solo per non avere notitia della lingua latina, mancavano d'numerabili precepti..."; Della Vita Civile, proemio, p. 5.
3. "Di tutte l'opere humane niuna n'essere più prestante, magiore, nè più degna, che quella se exercita per acrescimento et salute della patria et optimo stato d'alcuna bene ordinata republica..."; ibid., pp. 104-5.
4. D.Bassi, "Il primo libro della Vita Civile di Matteo Palmieri e l'Institutio oratoria di Quintiliano", Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana, 23, 1894, pp. 182-207.
5. G.Holmes, The Florentine Enlightenment, London, 1969, p. 20.
6. Martines, Social World, pp. 329-30.
7. There is a brief portrait of Pandolfini in Martines, Social World, pp. 313-4; and a considerably longer one in Vespasiano La Vita, vol. 2, pp. 258-273. S.Ammirato, Istorie Fiorentine, 3 vols., Florence, 1641-7, notes in vol. 2 that Pandolfini was sent to the papacy in 1425 (col. 1023), and to the emperdr in 1432 (col. 1085), besides recording his position as the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia in 1431 (col. 1077), and his seat on the Dieci di Balla in 1430 (col. 1070). G.Brucker, The Civic World of early Renaissance Florence, Princeton, 1977, p. 286, records praise of Pandolfini's oratorical ability.
8. "In tutti i sua consigli, sempre consigliava l'universal bene della sua republica"; Vespasiano, La Vita, vol. 2, p. 262.
9. M.Martelli, "Palmeriana", Intrepres, 5, 1983-4, pp. 277-301; see especially pp. 277-287.
10. Evidence of the plague can be found in a letter from Cosimo de' Medici to Averardo de' Medici, who was staying at Cafaggiolo: "veggho chome fosti affirenze, et chosi chomprendo vi debbi esser ritornato; masse la moria faciesse danno, mi pare da lassarne indrieto ogni faccienda et ingiegnarsi champare la persona". Quoted in F.C.Pellegrini, Sulla repubblica fiorentina ai tempi di Cosimo il vecchio, Pisa, 1880, appendici, p. 17; 21/10/1430.
11. Laur. Antinori 92 ends "finito in questo di viii di febbraio MCCCCXXXVIII"; cited by G.Scaramella, Vita N.Acciaicli, introduction, p. v, n.12.
12. L.Rainaldi, "Notizie dell'autografo della Vita Civile", Rinascimento, 5, 1954, pp. 132-136; p. 136. See also G.Belloni, "Intorno alla datazione della Vita Civile di M.Palmieri", Studi e Problemi di Critica Testuale, 16, 1978, pp. 49-62.
13. See Rubinstein, Il Governo, appendices II (Balla of 1434) and III (Balla of 1438).
14. "Deliberai con certi studiosi, stimando molto dovermi giovare il loro iudicio et, secondo quello, ogni nostro detto emendare prima che questi libri si dessino in publico"; Della Vita Civile, p. 149.

15. Vespasiano, Le Vita, vol. 2, pp. 215-7.
16. Palmieri was a character in Poggio's "De miseria humanae conditionis"; Opera omnia, 4 vols., ed. R.Fubini, Torino, 1964-9; vol. 1, pp. 38-131. For Matteo's part in Marsuppini's funeral, see political activity chapter, pp. 45-6.
17. Dati wrote a brief outline of Palmieri's life; this is published in A.M.Bandini, Catalogus Codicum Latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae; et Codicum Italianorum, 5 vols., Firenze, 1778; vol. 5, col. 80. In it, Dati notes that Marsuppini, Sczomeno and Traversari taught Matteo; col. 80.
18. Ibid.
19. Vespasiano, Le Vita, vol. 1, p. 561; Della Vita Civile, p. 37.
20. Vespasiano observes that Traversari "lesse in Firenze a molti lettere greche, et nel convento a più frati lesse latino, et le greche a frate Iacopo Tornaquinci, a frate Michele Secolari, a meser Gianozo Manetti et più altri cittadini"; ibid., vol. 1, p. 452.
21. F.P.Luiso (ed.), Riordinamento dell'epistolario di Ambrogio Traversari con lettere inedite e note storico-cronologiche, 3 vols., Firenze, 1898-1903.
22. The Consolatoria is edited by P.G.Ricci, "Una consolatoria inedita del Marsuppini", La Rinascita, 3, 1940, pp. 363-433. Vespasiano also records Marsuppini's friendship with the Medici brothers. He "ebbe grandissima amicitia con Cosimo de' Medici, et spesso andava in casa sua, perché Lorenzo, suo fratello, nollo amò meno che si facessi Cosimo"; Le Vita, vol. 1, p. 592.
23. Traversari protested after the exile of Cosimo de' Medici in 1433; Kent, Rise, p. 335. A remarkably good indication of the intimate connections of Sachetti, Marsuppini, Cosimo de' Medici, Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini is that in 1430 they were all trustees for the will of Niccolò Niccoli, a will which bequeathed his library to the Camaldulensian monastery of S. Maria degli Angeli in Florence. A later version of the will (1437) additionally includes Traversari and Manetti as trustees, but left the choice of venue for the library to the trustees; B.L.Ullman and P.A.Stadter, The Public Library of Renaissance Florence, Padua, 1972, pp. 8-9.
24. Poggio Bracciolini, Epistolae and Epistolae Miscellanae in Opera Omnia, vols. 3 and 4.
25. Vespasiano, Le Vita, vol. 1, pp. 312-313.
26. Ricordi, p. 214.
27. BNF Magl. XXV, 511, fols. 79r-v.
28. Ibid., fol. 79v.
29. The Latin titles are: De potentia, de pace et bello, de seditione, de bono publico, de concordia and de amicitia.
30. The debate is printed in C.Guasti, Le Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi, 3 vols., Firenze, 1867-73; vol. 2, p. 4; 3/12/1423.
31. The protesto is published by G.Belloni, "Il Protesto di Matteo Palmieri", Studi e Problemi di Critica Testuale, 16, 1978, pp. 27-48; and also in C.Guasti, Una Prosa Inedita di Matteo Palmieri, Prato, 1850.
32. The protesto of Marco Palmieri is in the BNF, Magl. XXV, 343.
33. Two such phrases are justice "imperatrice d'ogni altra virtù" and "senza giustizia non solo le città, ma una piccola compagnia non può perdurare"; Guasti, Una Prosa, p. 18 and p. 21; Della Vita



- Civile, p. 104. In the *protesto*, Palmieri gives an account of the beginnings and benefits of justice.
34. Martines, Social World, p. 194.
  35. Ibid., p. 195.
  36. Arte dei Medici e Speciali 46, fols. 38r-50v.
  37. See political activity chapter, pp. 15, 18, 19 and 23. In July 1433, Mattec was drawn as one of the Ufficiali delle Torri; *Tratte* 80, fol. 99r.
  38. E.Conti, Imposta Diretta a Firenze nel Quattrocento, Roma, 1984, p. 360.
  39. Martines, Social World, p. 138.
  40. Kent, Rise, p. 170.
  41. Ibid., p. 139, n.7. See also political activity chapter, pp. 17-18.
  42. Martines, Social World, p. 236. Jacopo Gianfigliuzzi features among those punished or exiled in 1434; see Kent, Rise, p. 356.
  43. See political activity chapter, p. 17.
  44. Martines, Social World, p. 234.
  45. Annales, p. 158. The text is broken off on fol. 17r and begins again on fol. 20r.
  46. Kent, Rise, p. 246.
  47. Brucker, Civic World, p. 450.
  48. Ibid., pp. 454-5.
  49. Ibid., p. 468.
  50. Ibid., pp. 468-71.
  51. Ibid., p. 486.
  52. "... Quando con armi si combatte... è in tutto bestiale et crudo; necessario è però ricorrere all'ultimo (guerra) quando non si può usare il primo (disputazione"; Della Vita Civile, p. 115.
  53. Ibid., p. 115.
  54. Ibid., pp. 115-6.
  55. Ibid., pp. 116-8.
  56. Brucker, Civic World, pp. 496-7.
  57. A.Molho, Florentine Public Finances in the Early Renaissance, 1400-1433, Cambridge (Mass.), 1971, p. 11.
  58. Ibid., p. 20.
  59. Ibid., p. 61, table 4.
  60. Ibid., pp. 100-1.
  61. Della Vita Civile, p.139.
  62. Ibid.
  63. Ibid., pp. 141-2.
  64. Ibid., p. 141.
  65. Ibid., p. 146; G.Brucker, The Society of Renaissance Florence, New York, 1971, pp. 229-231.
  66. CP 48, fols. 55-60; Kent, Rise, p. 248.
  67. Kent, Rise, p. 244.
  68. Ibid., pp. 244-6.
  69. Brucker, Civic World, pp. 492-4.
  70. Ibid., pp. 496-500.
  71. Ibid., p. 505.
  72. Kent, Rise, p. 256.
  73. "Il comune era più governato alle cene e negli scrittoi che nel Palagio; e che molti erano eletti agli uffici e pochi al governo. La qual cosa mi parve assai chiara che così fosse, e che ne seguisse

- grandissimi mali nella Repubblica di si abominevole audacia"; G.Cavalcanti, Istoria Fiorentina, ed. G. di Pino, Milano, 1944, p. 30.
74. "Niuna cosa e tanto ragione delle discordie et seditioni civili quanto gl'ingiusti governi"; Della Vita Civile, p. 135.
75. Ibid., pp. 134-5.
76. Ibid., p. 135.
77. Ibid., p. 98.
78. Ibid., pp. 95, 93-99.
79. Ibid., pp. 103-4.
80. Ibid., p.104.
81. Ibid., pp. 105-6.
82. Brucker, Civic World, p. 465.
83. Ibid.
84. Extracts from the relevant *provisioni* are translated in Brucker, The Society of Renaissance Florence, respectively on pp. 202-203, and p. 130.
85. This area is explored by M.B.Becker, "The Florentine Territorial State and Civic Humanism in the Early Renaissance" in Florentine Studies, ed. N.Rubinstein, London, 1963, pp. 109-140.
86. Brucker, Civic World, pp. 481-3.
87. Della Vita Civile, p. 161.
88. Ibid., p. 133.
89. Ibid., pp. 153-4.
90. Cavalcanti, Istoria, pp. 46-54.
91. On whether the meeting actually took place, see Brucker, Civic World, p. 473, and Kent, Risa, p. 218.
92. G.Canestrini (ed.), "Versi fatti da Niccolò da Uzzano", ASI, 4, 1843, pp. 297-300; p. 298.
93. "Onera nunc sunt bene distributa per catastum; restat ut defectus sit in honoribus distribuendis"; Pellegrini, Sulla repubblica, appendici, pp. 36-7.
94. Quoted in Kent, Risa, p. 243.
95. Rinaldo degli Albizzi's speech is in Pellegrini, Sulla repubblica, appendici, p. 33: "causa vero est ambitio officiorum quia unusquisque vult adivari; alia causa sunt suspiciores et oblocutores". Luca degli Albizzi is cited in Brucker, Civic World, p. 486.
96. Brucker, Civic World, pp. 486-7.
97. Ibid., p. 487.
98. Kent, Risa, p. 243.
99. Ibid., p. 244.
100. Guasti, Le Commissioni, vol. 3, p. 165; 25/1/1429.
101. "Sopra ogni altra virtù a si facta conservatione e necessaria iustitia, senza la quale niuna città ne alcuno stato o publico reggimento puo perdurare, et ella sola ha tanta forza che si truova ferma per stabile fondamento in su il qualè sicurissimamente si puo fondare ogni gravissimo imperio"; Della Vita Civile, p. 104.
102. Ibid., p. 139.
103. Ibid., pp. 137-8.
104. "Coloro che nella città aranno a distribuire gl'honori, seguitando il più approvato consiglio, quegli sempre ne' più virtuosi conferischino, però che, dovendo con quegli alla dignità corrispondere"; ibid., p. 136. "Scioca cosa e certo che il calcolato consigli in che modo si diano le leggi civili"; ibid., p. 68.

- Aristotle discusses virtue in a good citizen in The Politics, III, iv.
105. "Ut bene intelligatur res, deputetur numerus civium cum officiis principalibus, qui examinent et considerent et intellecta re, poterunt adhiberi remedia opportuna"; CP 48, fol. 51r.
106. "Eligantur cives boni qui praticent et provideant, quia materia est periculosa"; Pellegrini, Sulla repubblica, appendici, p. 37.
107. See F.Gilbert, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, Princeton, 1965, p. 33.
108. "Ut unus Deus est adorandus, sic vos domini priores venerandi estis ab omnibus civibus: et qui alios respiciunt, idola inducunt: et sunt damnandi"; Guasti, Le Commissioni, vol. 3, p. 164.
109. "Stetit Dominus in medio discipulorum suorum, et dixit 'Pax vobis' Ita vos, domini priores etc."; *ibid.*
110. Cederno Cederni: "Deus est Respublica, et qui gubernat Rempublicam gubernat Deum. Item Deum est iustitia, et qui facit iustitiam, facit Deum"; Pellegrini, Sulla repubblica, appendici, p. 133.
111. "Et si hoc fiet sincere et sine passione, sequetur unio et concordia, cum auxilio Dei"; *ibid.*, appendici, p. 36.
112. "Et nos, ut docemur per Iob, spem habere debemus et animum virilem"; Guasti, Le Commissioni, vol. 2, p. 149; 3/8/1424.
113. See G.B.Brucker, "Humanism, Politics and Social Order in Early Renaissance Florence", Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations, ed. S.Bertelli, vol. 1. Il Quattrocento, Firenze, 1979, pp. 3-11.
114. "Quod inter cetera magna et laudabilia, que de Populo Romano scribuntur, duo memorantur: quod de aversis animum non minuerunt, et ex prosperis non sunt elatis; et magnanimes fuerunt magis in adversis, quam prosperis"; Guasti, Le Commissioni, vol. 2, p. 149.
115. "Remedium esset quod populares boni et antiqui se intelligerent invicem et percuterent alicui qui non volunt iustitie acquiescere, ut Rome factum fuit per societatem urbanum"; Pellegrini, Sulla repubblica, appendici, p. 36.
116. Guasti, Le Commissioni, vol. 2, p. 77.
117. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 80-5.
118. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 164 and p. 166.
119. Cavalcanti, Istoria, pp. 40-1. Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi's speech is in Guasti, Le Commissioni, vol. 2, p. 144. Piero Canacci's speech is in *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 510.
120. "Quello in che poi gl'huomini maximamente avanzano tutte le bestie e la ragione dello intelletto et la potenza del potere esprimere ogni concepto, delle quali cose niuna bestia participa"; Della Vita Civile, p. 62.
121. "Volesse Idio che i suoi libri volgari non fussino ripieni di tanta lascivia et dissoluti exempli d'amore, chè certo credo che, avendo così attamente scripto cose morali et precepti di ben vivere, non meriterebbe essere chiamato Boccaccio ma più tosto Crisostomo"; *ibid.*, p. 6.
122. "Da così facta commodità nascono le conjunctioni dell'amicitie, le parentele et unioni degl'huomini"; *ibid.*, p. 62. "Quinci hanno avuto principio le città... per conservatione et fermo stabilimento delle quali cose sanctamente sono poi state costituite et ferme le divine et humane leggi..."; *ibid.*

123. "L'huomo ha seco la ragione, colla quale ripetendo le cose passate examina et iudica le presenti et le venture prevede, onde conosce... a reggere et governare quella apparecchia le cose necessarie"; *ibid.*
124. Cf rhetoric "al quale a' buoni dicono essere tanto bello avanzare gli altri huomini quanto è bello agli huomini avanzare gli animali che non parlono"; *ibid.*, p. 29. The phrase derives from Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, II, xvi, 17.
125. "Philosophia è tutta nostra, dalla quale none a caso come le bestie, ma con ordine diritto nel vero fine s'impara a vivere"; Della Vita Civile, pp. 29-30.
126. "Ver e che a' governatori delle republiche non solo basta secondo quelle (le leggi) ministrare ragione, pero che spesse volte adviene che la conditione de' tempi, l'attitudini et siti de' luoghi et le popolari consuetudini abbiano bisogno di particolari ragioni; per questo è necessario in utilità della propria città provvedere di statuti et ordini civili"; *ibid.*, p. 139. It is interesting to observe that here Matteo uses the word "ragione" first to mean justice, and then to mean laws, revealing how closely he associated these concepts.
127. Martines, Social World, pp. 31-38, contains a good discussion of the way in which trade and industry were perceived by the Florentines. "Servili sono tutte le arti mercennarie di chi vende l'opera et non la industria dell'arte... Ma sopra tutte l'arti sono lodate quelle dove la industria, la prudentia, et acume sono maximamente operate... sopra tutte l'arti delle quali si cava alcuno fructo niuna n'è più naturale, più necessaria né migliore che l'agricoltura"; Della Vita Civile, p. 187.
128. E.R.Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, New York, 1953; pp. 275-7.
129. In the proemio Giotto is cited as the standard by which all artists are judged; Della Vita Civile, p. 5. Palmieri refers to Bruni as an "ornamento delle lettere" and a "splendido lume della eleganzia latina"; *ibid.*, p. 44.
130. "Si subministra prima alla necessità, poi all'amplitudine et hornamento di nostro vivere"; *ibid.*, p. 62.
131. "Le cose che in nella città sono meno necessarie, ma contengono apparato magiore et amplitudine splendida degli ornamenti civili. Di queste, parte ne sono poste nella insigne magnificentia degli spaziosi edifici, ...parte ancora in negli ornamenti particolari et nello splendido vivere de' privati cittadini"; *ibid.*, p. 194.
132. *ibid.*, p. 115.
133. The trades and professions preferred by Matteo are medicine, law, architecture, sculpture and large scale commerce, while those he reproves include cooks, tax collectors, usurers, purchasers of Monte stock and spies; *ibid.*, p. 187.
134. *ibid.*, p. 124.
135. "Chi provvede alla salute de particolari cittadini et gli altri abandona, semina nella città scandali et discordie gravissime, donde, spesso divisi i cittadini, nascono divisioni et guerre intrinseche"; *ibid.*, pp. 132-3.
136. These authors have been culled from the footnotes to the text in Belloni's edition of the Della Vita Civile.
137. Della Vita Civile, p. 13.
138. *ibid.*, p. 184.

139. Ibid., pp. 150-1.
140. Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 3 and 11.
141. Ibid., pp. 14-19.
142. Della Vita Civile, p. 189.
143. L.Bruni, De Florentina Republica, übersetzt von Carl Neumann, Frankfurt am Main, 1822, gives the Greek text and a German translation.
144. L.B.Alberti, Della Pittura, in Opere Volgari, 3 vols., ed. C.Grayson, Bari, 1960-1973; vol. 3. The prologue is pp. 7-8, the text pp. 10-107.
145. "Per certo tenga ciascuno fedele che in e facti privati et publici viverà secondo la vita discripta... dovere in cielo ricevere eterna beatitudine"; Della Vita Civile, p. 199.
146. Ibid., pp. 199-200.
147. Rinuccini, Lettere, p. 32.
148. C.Landino, Scritti critici e teorici, 2 vols., ed. R.Cardini, Roma, 1973, vol. 1, p. 36. Cardini suggests the date of 1467 on p. 32.
149. Vespasiano, Le Vita, vol. 1, p. 565.
150. G.Belloni, introduzione to Della Vita Civile, p. ix.
151. The first edition was probably published in 1529, by the "eredi di Filippo Giunta", and a second, anonymous, edition followed very soon afterwards (in 1530, according to the British Library catalogue). The French translation was published in Paris in 1557.
152. On Cavalcanti, see M.T.Grendler, introduction to The Trattato politico-morale of Giovanni Cavalcanti, Geneva, 1973; C.Varese, Storia e Politica nella Prosa del Quattrocento, Torino, 1961, pp. 93-133; D.Kent, "The importance of being eccentric: Giovanni Cavalcanti's view of Cosimo de' Medici's Florence", Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 9, 1979, pp. 101-131.
153. Cavalcanti, Istoria, p. 175 and p. 3.
154. Ibid., p. 3.
155. Ibid., p. 159.
156. D.Kent, "Cavalcanti", p. 108.
157. "Tu meriterai di tornare alla tua patria in su carro d'oro, incoronato di fronde di lauro, non altrimenti che tornasse Scipione in Roma"; Cavalcanti, Istoria, p. 169.
158. "Le virtù degli uomini si conoscono per le grandezze delle cose avverse. Molto più gloriosi furono i Romani poi che Brenno co' Francesi combatte il Campidoglio, che prima che egli entrasse in Roma"; ibid., pp. 40-1.
159. Ibid., p. 20.
160. "I potenti uomini che le cose del Comune avevano nelle mani non prezzavano le parole della plebe"; ibid., p. 153. "D'onde hai tu sì ingiusta e sfacciata audacia, che tu faccia contro le sacre e bene esaminate leggi del giusto imperio, alle quali tutta la monarchia del romano popolo fu soggetta ad ubbidire?"; ibid., p. 319.
161. L.B.Alberti, I Libri della Famiglia, in Opere Volgari, vol. 1, p. 155.
162. Palmieri wrote for those citizens who did not have "notitia" of Latin; Della Vita Civile, p. 5.
163. Alberti, Della Famiglia, pp. 41, 49, 50 and 55.
164. Ibid., p. 70.
165. The Ricordi of Giovanni Morelli (ed. V.Branca, Firenze, 1956) are a good example. See, too, P.J.Jones, "Florentine Families and

- Florentine Diaries in the fourteenth century", Papers of the British School at Rome, 24, 1956, pp. 183-205.
166. Alberti, Della Famiglia, p. 12.
167. "Niuna cosa sarà mai più degna fra gl'huomini che la virtù di chi per publica utilità se exercita"; Della Vita Civile, p. 136.
168. Gianozzo announces "niuna cosa a me pare in uno uomo meno degna di riputarsela ad onore che ritrovarsi in questi stati"; Della Famiglia, p. 218.
169. Della Vita Civile, p. 143.
170. Bruni's funeral oration is in G.D.Mansi, Stephani Baluzii Tutalensis, vol. 4, Lucca, 1764, p. 2-7. H. Baron discusses the funeral oration and its implications for Florentine civic humanism in The Crisis of the Early Renaissance, Princeton, 1966 (2nd ed.), pp. 412-425.
171. Poggio Bracciolini, De Avaritia, in Opera Omnia, vol. 1, pp. 2-31. English translation in The Earthly Republic, ed. B.G.Kohl and R.G.Witt, Manchester, 1979, pp. 241-289.
172. The Earthly Republic, p. 260.
173. Alberti, Della Pittura.
174. L.B. Alberti, On Painting, translated with an introduction by J.R. Spencer, New Haven, 1956; introduction, p. 28.
175. L. Bruni, Le Vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio, ed. A. Solerti, Milano, 1904.
176. Finzi, Palmieri, pp. 160-3.
177. Ibid., p. 161.
178. Della Vita Civile, pp. 151-2.

Notes to Palmieri's writing of history

1. Vita N. Acciaiuoli, ed. G. Scaramella, RIS, 13:2, Bologna, 1918-34. De Captivitate Pisarum Liber, ed. G. Scaramella, RIS, 19:1, Città di Castello, 1894. De Temporibus, ed. G. Scaramella, RIS, 26:1, Città di Castello, 1905-16. Annales, ed. G. Scaramella, RIS, 26:1, Città di Castello, 1905-16. For a different approach to these works, see the two chapters by Finzi in Palmieri, pp. 195-257.
2. G. Villani, Cronica, 4 vols., ed. F. Dragomani, Firenze, 1845.
3. For a recent and more complete analysis of Trecento chroniclers and chronicles, see, for example, L. Green, Chronicle into History, Cambridge, 1972.
4. G. Villani, Cronica, vol. 4, p. 36.
5. M. Villani, Cronica, 2 vols., ed. F. Dragomani, Firenze, 1846.
6. Marchionne Coppo di Stefano, Cronica, ed. N. Rodolico, RIS, 30:1, Città di Castello, 1903-55.
7. The Anonymous Chronicler (formerly "Minerbetti"), Cronica Volgare di Anonimo Fiorentino, ed. E. Bellondi, RIS, 27:2, Città di Castello, 1915.
8. G. Dati, L'istoria di Firenze dal 1380-1405, ed. L. Fratesi, Norcia, 1904.
9. For a survey of the field, see the article by P. J. Jones, "Florentine families and Florentine diaries in the Fourteenth Century", Papers of the British School at Rome, 24, 1956, pp. 133-205.
10. D. Velluti, La Cronica Domestica di Messer Donato de' Velluti, ed. I. del Lungo and G. Volpi, Firenze, 1914.
11. P. Morelli, Ricordi, ed. V. Branca, Firenze, 1956.
12. Ricordi Storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini dal 1383 al 1460 colla continuazione di Alamanno e Neri suoi figli fino al 1505, ed. G. Aiazzi, Firenze, 1840.
13. B. Dei, Cronaca, ed. R. Barducci, Firenze, 1984.
14. G. Rucellai, Il Zibaldone Guaresimale, vol. 1, ed. A. Ferosa, London, 1960, p. 2.
15. Laur. LXV, 46 contains the dedication "exaravit Leonardus Dathus manu propria ab exemplari primo atque originali anno 1443"; quoted in Roche, Introduction, p. xv.
16. The last entry in the De Temporibus is after the middle of September 1443. Matteo recounts the capture of Amoro Donato as Sforza defeats the Venetian army; pp. 126-7. In the Annales, the capture of Amoro Donato is dated 14 September, and peace is agreed with the Venetians on 11 October; pp. 157-8.
17. See Rinuccini, Lettere, p. 82; Dati, Praefatio, in Catalogus Codicum Latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae: et codicum Italianorum, 5 vols., ed. A. M. Bandini, Firenze, 1774-8; vol. 5, p. 81; Vespasiano's order certainly is not chronological: he mentions first the De Temporibus, then the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, the De Captivitate Pisarum Liber, the Della Vita Civile and the Citta di Vita; La Vita, vol. 1, pp. 564-5.
18. See Scaramella, Vita N. Acciaiuoli, introduction, p. ix.
19. Ibid., p. x. See too E. Penoncini, "Una fonte della Vita Nicolai Acciaiuolo del Palmieri", Buletino dell'istituto storico italiano per il medioevo e archivio muratoriano, 88, 1970, pp. 379-391.

20. Vita N. Acciaiuoli, p. 3: "hominum generi est a natura tributum, ut virtutum et rerum gestarum gloriam apud posteros appetant, et quanto magis ingenio et viribus prestant, tanto magis id affectare videantur; nec solum sibi, sed civitati et patrie amplissime dilatari gloriam optent".
21. Palmieri emphasizes that glorious deeds are only remembered by posterity when they have been recorded: "non enim qui res magnas fecere, sed quorum facta probe scripta sunt, gloriam habent"; ibid., p. 4.
22. Ibid., p. 4. Adoardo Acciaiuoli and Matteo Palmieri held office together as Gonfalonieri di Compagnia in 1437; see Messeri, "Palmieri", p. 257.
23. Ibid., p. 4.
24. On Donato Acciaiuoli, see E. Garin, "La giovinezza di Donato Acciaiuoli, 1428-56", Rinascimento, 1, 1950, pp. 43-70; and M. Ganz, "Donato Acciaiuoli and the Medici: a strategy for survival in '400 Florence", Rinascimento, 34, 1983, pp. 33-73.
25. Vita di Niccola Acciaiuoli fatta volgare da Donato Acciaiuoli, in Istoria della casa degli Ubaldini, G.B. Ubaldini, Firenze, 1588.
26. L. Bruni, Le Vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio, ed. A. Solerti, Milano, 1904.
27. F. Villani, Le vite d'uomini illustri fiorentini, ed. F. Dragomani, Firenze, 1847.
28. "Et calibs, quem patrio sermone acciaium vocamus, unde huius familie nomen derivatum esse videtur, ab eminentibus Brixiae montibus effossus, ...", Vita N. Acciaiuoli, p. 5. Incidentally, Palmieri's spelling of "calibs", normally transliterated "chalybs", and derived from the Greek "χαλυβ", suggests that his knowledge of Greek may have been slight. Admittedly the evidence is circumstantial, but it tends to hint at ignorance and not fluency.
29. Ibid., p. 6.
30. F. Villani, Le Vita, p. 52; Vita N. Acciaiuoli, p. 6.
31. M. Villani, Cronica, vol. 2, 4:91, and 10:23.
32. F. Villani, Le Vite, p. 53.
33. Vita N. Acciaiuoli, p. 27.
34. F. Villani, Le Vite, p. 53.
35. M. Villani, Cronica, vol. 2, 7:29, pp. 35-6.
36. Vita N. Acciaiuoli, p. 21: "Acciaiuolus armat naves, ... Messanam regia classe appropinquat editusque ab illo ex composito ignis est... Tunc Acciaiuolus ad urbem navigat et sub silentio ad portam ducit... Luce prima armatorum cuneos per urbem mittit, forum occupat...".
37. Ibid., p. 22.
38. Ibid., pp. 22-3.
39. "Grandi maestri de' baratti del mare" writes Villani of the pirates. The quotations drawn from M. Villani's account come from Cronica, vol. 2, 6:73, p. 64. Palmieri notes that the pirates "se impares ad apertum certamen videntes, arte opus esse rate, ...", Vita N. Acciaiuoli, p. 22. The remaining quotations come from the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, pp. 22-3. Palmieri noted that the pirates arrived by chance: "cum forte accidit"; p. 22.
40. M. Villani, Cronica, vol. 1, 4:91, pp. 391-2; p. 392.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., vol. 2, 10:23, pp. 321-2; p. 321.
43. Ibid.



44. D.Compagni, Cronaca, ed. I. del Lungo, RIS, 9:2, pp. 66-67.
45. Vita N.Acciaicoli, p. 9: "nam uti est hominum natura, et maxime principum, proclivis advoluptatem, ambo, tantum animi atque corporis perquirebant, omnem vero gubernandi curam, tanquam sue voluptatis documento datam, Nicolao demandabant. Cui tantam adhibuerant fidem, ut ab eo nihil non recte fieri posse arbitarentur".
46. Ibid., pp. 28-30: "per omnem vitam satis admodum pie religionis erga Deus fuit".
47. Della Vita Civile, p. 195: "la religione ... richiede ... e uestiti et sacri ornamenti di purpure varia ...".
48. Matteo's testament (Medici e Speziali 201, fols. 61r-65v) will be considered in the chapter on Citta di Vita, pp. 315-318.
50. Rinuccini, Lettere, p. 82.
51. Cristoforo Landino, Scritti Critici e Teorici, 2 vols., ed. R.Cardini, Roma, 1974, vol. 1, p. 36 and pp. 120-1.
52. See Scaramella, Vita N.Acciaicoli, introduction, pp. xii-xiii.
53. Vita di Niccola Acciaicoli fatta volgare da Donato Acciaicoli, in Istoria della casa degli Ubalдини, G.B.Ubalдини, Firenze, 1588.
54. See Scaramella, De Captivitate Pesarum Liber, introduction, pp. x-xii.
55. Wilcox, "Matteo Palmieri and the De Captivitate Pesarum Liber", pp. 267-281, in Renaissance Studies in Honor of H.Baron, eds. A.Molho and J.Tedeschi, Florence, 1971; pp. 273-281.
56. Ibid., pp. 270-1.
57. Ibid., pp. 273-277.
58. Ibid., p. 281. The unpublished Ph.D. thesis of D.M.Webb, "Tuscan historiography c1400-c1450 and the problem of Florentine hegemony in Tuscany", University of London, 1977, contains a useful discussion of the De Captivitate Pesarum Liber and its relation to G.Capponi's Commentari dell'acquisto ovvero presa di Pisa l'anno 1406, ed. A.Muratori, RIS, vol. 18, Milano, 1731, cols. 1127-1147. Capponi's work will henceforth be cited as the Acquisto di Pisa.
59. Wilcox, "Matteo Palmieri", pp. 280.
60. Ibid., p. 281.
61. See, for example, M.Philipps, "Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and the Tradition of Vernacular Historiography in Florence", American Historical Review, 84, 1979, pp. 86-105.
62. Scaramella, De Captivitate Pesarum Liber, introduction, pp. xii-xvii; Wilcox, "Matteo Palmieri", pp. 268-9.
63. De Captivitate Pesarum Liber, introduction, p. xv; text p. 20.
64. De Captivitate Pesarum Liber, pp. 4-6. Acquisto di Pisa, cols. 1127ff.
65. G.Villani, Cronica; L.Bruni, Historia Florentinarum Populi Libri XII, ed. E.Santini, RIS, 19:3, Bologna, 1926.
66. De Captivitate Pesarum Liber, pp. 23-24.
67. Capponi, Acquisto di Pisa, col. 1137.
68. Ibid.
69. Cronica di Anonimo Fiorentino, p. 351.
70. De Captivitate Pesarum Liber, p. 23; "Florentini tamen, etiam in hostes nolentes crudeles esse, mitigarunt numero penam ..." and "nec amplius morte illos, qui in potestatem veniebant, persequabantur".
71. Ibid., pp. 23-4.
72. Ibid., p. 23.

73. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
74. Scaramella, De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, introduction, p. xxxi.
75. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 30.
76. Scaramella, De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, introduction, p. xxxi.
77. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 4.
78. Ibid., p. 4: Palmieri wrote of the capture of Pisa "quia magnum et memorabile fuit". He prefaced the remark with "exemplis certe honoris cupido incenditur, et bonam famam magnamque nobilitatem enixius homines imitantur".
79. Acquisto di Pisa, Capponi's speech begins col. 1142, Piombino's col. 1144.
80. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 30.
81. Acquisto di Pisa, col. 1142.
82. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 30.
84. Acquisto di Pisa, col. 1143: "e se da alcuno fusse fatta alcuna cosa non dovuta, venga sicuramente a dolersene; e cosi vi comandiamo, e per effetto vedrete se ne farà tal punizione, che sia esempio a ognuno. E non fia sì piccola ingiuria". Palmieri made Capponi declare: "ideoque delictorum impunitatem omnibus Pisanis usque in presentem diem esse volumus et licentiam remeandi in urbem cunctis concedimus", De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 32.
85. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, pp. 30-31.
86. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 24.
87. Acquisto di Pisa, col. 1143.
88. Ibid.; "e molte altre offese & ingiurie, le quali si potrebbono raccontare, ma perchè vi sono note, le trapassero".
89. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 31.
90. Ibid., p. 32.
91. Morelli, Ricordi, p. 464.
92. Acquisto di Pisa, col. 1142.
93. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 30.
94. Scaramella concluded his introduction by making this point: "lo scritto del Palmieri è più che altro un esercizio rettorico"; De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, introduction, p. xxi.
95. De Captivitate Pisanorum Liber, p. 3.
96. Ibid., p. 4.
97. One is in the BNF, Manoscritti Gino Capponi 97; the other two are in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, LXV, 42 and LXV, 43.
98. ASF Medici 691, fol. 116. I am grateful to Suzy Butters for this reference.
99. De Captivitate Pisanorum, sive de bello gesto a Florentinis anno MCCCCVI, ed. A. Muratori, RIS, vol. 19, Milano, 1731. The Acquisto di Pisa was edited by Muratori in 1731; see note 58 above. The Acquisto di Pisa was also published in an edition by Manni, Chronichette antiche, Florence, 1733, and reissued in Milan in 1844, and in Florence in 1858.
100. See Scaramella, Annales, introduction, p. xxvi.
101. Annales, p. 131.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Palmieri decided he wanted to record "quid factum sit et quomodo"; ibid. The Anonymous Chronicler, "Minerbetti", started to write his account as a work of reference on finding that his memory failed him; Cronica Volgare, p. 4.

105. Annales, p. 131.
106. Palmieri wrote that he wanted to snatch events from oblivion. "oblivioni preripere", because "non indignum michi videtur meorum tempora facta"; ibid., p. 131.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. BNF, Magl. XXV, 511.
110. Annales, p. 138; see especially Scaramella's note to line 27.
111. Ibid., p. 138.
112. See Scaramella, Annales, introduction, p. xxix.
113. Annales, p. 151; see note to line 6. In 1444, Matteo was elected Scrutiny Secretary, and held the offices of Provisore delle Torri and of Ufficiale impositore di nuovi balzelli e gravanze; respectively, Rubinstein, Il Governo, appendix 4, p. 326 and appendix 5, p.332; Tratte 80, fol. 177r; and ibid., fol. 343r.
114. Ibid., pp. 131-138.
115. Ibid., p. 139.
116. Ibid., p. 141. Scaramella noted that Matteo's account was the sole evidence for the Florentine friendship with Venice; ibid., introduction, p. xxix.
117. Annales, p. 142.
118. Ibid., pp. 144-5.
119. Rubinstein, Il Governo, pp. 14-19.
120. Ibid., p. 21.
121. Machiavelli, Istoria Fiorentina, proemio; Opere, ed. G. Getto, Milano, 1966, p. 463: "... delle civili discordie e delle intrinseche inimicizie e degli effetti che da quelle sono nati, (Poggio and Bruni) averne una parte al tutto taciuta e quell'altra in modo brevemente descritta, che ai leggenti non puote arrecare utile o piacere alcuno ..."
122. Annales, p. 184: "Di poi furono per detta balia confinati: Messere Agnolo Acciaiuoli et Neri suo figliuolo a Barletta ...; messere Dietisalvi, Francesco et Agnolo di Nerone di Nigi in Sicilia, Niccolò di Lorenzo Soderini et messere Geri suo figliuolo in Provenza... Erano sottoscritti cinque cittadini cavalieri de' principali della città, e quali nominò essere stati: messere Luca Pitti, messere Giovanozzo Pitti, messere Agnolo Acciaiuoli, messere Dietisalvi di Nerone di Nigi e messere Manno Temperani".
123. Poggio Bracciolini, Historia Fiorentina, in Opera omnia, 4 vols., ed. R. Fubini, Torino, 1964-9; vol. 1, pp. 31-495.
124. L. Bruni, De Florentina Republica, übersetzt von Carl Neumann, Frankfurt am Main, 1822; see chapter on the Della Vita Civile, p. 211.
125. G. Cavalcanti, Istorie Fiorentine, ed. G. di Pino, Milano, 1944, "elessi di scrivere della divisione de' nostri cittadini"; p. 3. On Cavalcanti, see chapter on the Della Vita Civile, pp. 213-216.
126. One of the reasons Cavalcanti gives for writing was to escape the company of other prisoners: "per obliare le perverse e si malvage genti e le loro conversazioni"; Istoria, p. 3.
127. Annales, pp. 146-150.
128. Ibid., pp. 151-154. See chapter on political activity, p. 20.
129. Cat. 682, fol. 180v; "fo fare a Agnolo mio nipote un pocho di bottega di speciale al Canto alle Rondine".
130. Annales, p. 133.

131. Signoria, Carteggi, Responsive, Originali, 3. fol. 266.
132. SLD 16, fol. 37r; see embassies chapter, pp. 134-136.
133. Annales, pp. 154-5.
134. Ibid., pp. 158-9.
135. Tratte 80, fol. 315v.
136. Annales, p. 159; CP 52, fol. 88r.
137. Palmieri records the arrival of letters addressed to the Signoria in August 1454 and August 1456; Annales, pp. 174, 176. In 1454, he was not present at *pratiche* after 1/8/1454 until 12/10/1454.; CP 53, fol. 113r and fol. 131v. For one year from February 1456, Matteo was a member of a tax body, the *Decem Officiales deputati super introitibus Montis et Gabellarum*; Tratte 30, fol. 279r. He is not however recorded as attending *pratiche* during August 1456; CP 54, fol. 18v for attendance on 12/7/1456 and fol. 26v for next attendance on 2/9/1456.
138. See D.Kent, "The importance of being eccentric: Giovanni Cavalcanti's view of Cosimo de' Medici's Florence", Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 9, 1979, pp. 101-131; "he (Cavalcanti) clearly had no real difficulty in keeping abreast of new developments in the city from his cell in the Stinche", p. 106.
139. Annales, p. 176.
140. Rucellai, L'Zibaldone, p. 55.
141. Annales, p. 183.
142. Matteo recorded the deaths of Pope Paul and Borso d'Este in summer 1471; ibid., p. 191.
143. Ibid., p. 179: "venne a di 17 di detto mese in Firenze el conte Galeazzo, conte di Pavia et figliuolo del Duca di Milano et fugli fatto grandissimo honore, et fu gratiosamente veduto da cittadini et da tutto el popolo, et fessi giostra, ballo in Mercato Nuovo, armergeria et una caccia di lioni in su la Piazza de' Signori".
144. See political activity chapter, pp. 56-57.
145. Annales, pp. 172-4.
146. Ibid., pp. 154, 182.
147. Ibid., p. 173: "sopragiunse un Tedesco pazo, che avea solo indosso una camicia molle, e a piè dell'edificio domando: Dov'è el Re di Raona? Fu chi rispcse: Vedilo quivi, e mostroglì Ottaviano. Lui sali sull'edificio, multi credeano fusse di quegli avea a intervenire alla festa, e però non fu impedito. Lui prima prese l'idolo ere in dicto tempio e scagliollo in piazza, e rivolto a Ottaviano, ch'era vestito d'un velluto paonazzo broccato d'oro, ricchissimo vestire, el prese et fello capolevare sopra 'l popolo in piazza, poi s'appiccò supra una colonna del tempio...".
148. Tratte 80, fol. 276r.
149. Annales, p. 191; candles had been left burning "que, neglegentia curatorum non penitus extincte...".
150. Ibid., pp. 159, 190.
151. Ibid., p. 131.
152. De Temporibus, p. 109.
153. Ibid., p. 6: "rogo igitur illum qui aliquando hunc librum transcribat, ut diligenter eodem servato ordine transcribat".
154. On other authors using the same format, see Scaramella, De Temporibus, introduction, p. iii. The death of St. John is recorded on p. 18, that of Bruni on p. 125.
155. See Scaramella, De Temporibus, introduction, pp. vi-xxi.

156. Ibid., p. x.
157. Ibid., p. vii.
158. Ibid., p. viii.
159. Ibid., p. ix.
160. Ibid., p. xvii.
161. Ibid., p. xi.
162. In particular, H. Baron, "Franciscan Poverty and Civic Wealth", Speculum, 13, 1938, p. 22: "Matteo Palmieri, the citizen closest to Bruni in thought and feeling ...".
163. See Scaramella, De Temporibus, introduction, pp. xv-xvi.
164. Ibid., p. xii.
165. Ibid., pp. xviii-xix.
166. Ibid., pp. xix-xxi. Many of the dates given by Matteo for events before 1100 are two or three years out.
167. De Temporibus, p. 114. In the Vita N. Acciaiuoli, Matteo had expressed much the same view: "a Gualterio, falso Atheniensium duce, Florentie occupata tyrannide civilibus..."; p. 6.
168. De Temporibus, p. 118.
169. Ibid., p. 3.
170. Ibid., p. 120: "1402: Cometes in caelo est visus. Galeactius Mediolanensium dux, continuans adhuc per suos duces in Florentinos bellum, apud Marignanum, mediolensis agri opidum, moritur. Tamberlanus, incredibilis potentiae imperator, moritur".
171. Filippo di Cino Rinuccini, Ricordi Storici.
172. See M. Philips, "A Newly Discovered Chronicle by Marco Parenti", Renaissance Quarterly, 1973, pp. 153-160.
173. M. Philips, "Machiavelli", p. 104.
174. B. Dei, Oronaca; G. Rucellai, Il Zibaldone; G. Davi, Iscria Fiorentina; G. Villani, Oronaca.
175. See note 15 above.
176. Rinuccini, Lettere, p. 82.
177. B. Scala, Historia Florentinorum, Roma, 1677, p. 114.
178. Mattia Palmieri, Opus de Temporibus suis, ed. J.M. Tartini, RIS, vol. 1, 1748.
179. Landino, Scritti critici, vol. 1, p. 120.
180. P.O. Kristeller, Iter italicum, 2 vols., Leiden, 1963-7; vol. 2, p. 391 and vol. 1, p. 438 respectively.
181. E. Lee, Sixtus IV. Man of Letters, p. 54; M.E. Mallett "A fifteenth century condottiere", in Cultural Aspects of the Renaissance, ed. C.H. Clough, Manchester, 1976, pp. 202-215; p. 212.
182. The manuscripts are listed in Scaramella, De Temporibus, introduction, pp. xxi-xxii.
183. Ibid., p. xxii.
184. Annales, p. 131: Palmieri wished to record the "facta que memoratu digna videbuntur"; Vita N. Acciaiuoli, p. 4; De Captivitate Pisarum Liber, p. 4: Palmieri is writing about the war "quia magnum et memorabile fuit".
185. During the period 1460-65, Palmieri wrote little in his Annales, and held few political offices; Annales, pp. 181-2.

Notes to the *Città di Vita* and the heresy of Palmieri

1. M.Rooke (ed.), "*Città di Vita*", Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, 8-9, 1927-8.
2. On imitations, see for example A.Altamura, Imitazioni dantesche di quattrocenteschi meridionali, Napoli, 1976. On Palmieri's admiration for Dante, see Della Vita Civile, pp. 5-6: "il primo et sopra ogni altro degnissimo è il nostro Dante poeta".
3. Della Vita Civile, p. 200.
4. Ibid., pp. 199-200.
5. Giovanni Morelli, Ricordi (ed. V.Branca), Firenze, 1956; pp. 503-516.
6. G.Cavalcanti, Istorie Fiorentine, ed. G. di Pino, Firenze, 1944; p. 110.
7. Della Vita Civile, pp. 199-202.
8. The manuscript copy of De Temporibus in the Biblioteca Laurenziana (Laur. LXV, 46) contains the dedication "exaravit Leonardus Dathus manu propria ab exemplari primo atque originali anno 1448"; quoted in Rooke, Introduction, p. xv.
9. SLC 16, fol. 28r; 6/6/1466.
10. The introduction was printed by A.M.Bandini, Catalogus Codicum Latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae; et Codicum Italianorum, 5 vols., Firenze, 1774-8; vol. 5. It was reprinted by Rooke, *Città di Vita*, vol. 9, pp. 261-2. Dati's commentary is in Laur. Plut. XL, 53.
11. Rooke, *Città di Vita*, vol. 9, pp. 261-2.
12. Vespasiano, La Vita, gives a brief description of Cipriano Rucellai; vol. 2, p. 369.
13. See below, pp. 295ff.
14. Tratte 80, fol. 276r.
15. Annales, pp. 172-3.
16. Ibid., p. 172.
17. Ibid., p. 173.
18. *Città di Vita*, vol. 9, p. 262
19. *Città di Vita*, Book I, chapter 1, line 16: "Ad Napoli orator mi trovava io". Henceforth to be cited as 1:1:16 etc.
20. The letter is printed in Rooke, Introduction, p. xxi; 12/9/1464.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., pp. xxi-xxii.
23. Ibid., p. xxii.
24. The three manuscripts are BNF II.ii.41; Laur. XL, 53; and Ambrosiano F. 139 Sup.
25. BNF II.ii.41, fol. 268v.
26. *Città di Vita*, 1:10:31-36, 52-54.
27. Cited in Boffito, "Eresia", p. 34, n2.
28. Rooke, Introduction, p. xxii.
29. Laur. Plut. XL, 53. The manuscript ends with the words "anno salutis MCCCCLXIII ii junii hoc celeberrimum opus consummatum est"; Rooke, Introduction, p. xii.
30. Rinuccini, Lettere, p. 82; "quem suo pectori impositum cernitis".
31. The Laurenzian manuscript is described by Rooke, *Città di Vita*, vol. 9, p. 263. P.O.Kristeller in his Iter Italicum, 2 vols., Leiden, 1963-7, records the location of two other manuscripts of the *Città di Vita*. One is in the Biblioteca Estense, Modena, Fondo Campori, 211

- (Gamma S5, 28); vol. 1, p. 389. The other, Vaticana Barberini Lat. 4109, will be discussed below, p. 303; vol. 2, p. 464.
32. Città di Vita, 1:18:91-96, 104-6.
  33. M.Martelli, "Palmeriana", Interpres, 5, 1983-4, pp. 277-301; pp. 289-290.
  34. Città di Vita, 1:4:143-5.
  35. Ibid., 1:9:40-45.
  36. Ibid., 2:12:82-4 for Minos, 2:12:139-141 for Agamemnon, Clitemnestra and Menelaus. The law givers are in 3:14 and 3:18. For Plato and Socrates in hell, see Dante, Divina Commedia, Inferno, canto 4.
  37. Della Genealogia degli Dei di M.Giovanni Boccaccio, translated G.Valentini, Venezia, 1627. See J.Seznec, The Survival of Pagan Gods, New York, 1953, p. 224.
  38. Città di Vita, 1:23:121-3.
  39. Ibid., 2:30:145-7.
  40. Ibid., 2:12 and 2:23.
  41. Ibid., 1:25:100-102.
  42. Ibid., 1:26:119-124.
  43. Ibid., 2:23:25-27.
  44. Ibid., 2:9:19-21.
  45. Ibid., 3:5:46-57.
  46. Ibid., 3:5:61-3.
  47. See E.Wind, "The Revival of Origen", Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene, ed. D.Miner, Princeton, 1954, pp. 412-424.
  48. St.Jerome is quoted in Ibid., pp. 416-7.
  49. Ibid., p. 414.
  50. Rinuccini, Lettere, p. 82.
  51. The letter is published in A. della Torre, Storia della Accademia Platonica, Firenze, 1902, pp. 492-3; it is dated 10/4/1474, being sent while Matteo was Captain of Volterra. See political activity chapter, p. 90.
  52. E.A.Lebano, "L.Pulci and late 15th Century Humanism in Florence", Renaissance Quarterly, 27, 1974, pp. 489-498; p. 493.
  53. BNF, II.1.18, fols. 253r-v. Rooke, Introduction, pp. xviii-xx publishes a version of the poem from the Biblioteca Laurenziana; the merit of the BNF version is that it contains the date of composition in the title.
  54. Rinuccini, Lettere, p. 83; cited in Martelli, "Palmeriana", p. 293.
  55. The poem was first noted by R.J.Palermينو, "Palmieri's Città di Vita: More Evidence of Renaissance Platonism", Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de la Renaissance, 44, 1982, pp. 601-4. Palermينو thinks that the poem is most probably ("as best I can determine") in Palmieri's hand; p. 603. It is published in full in Finzi, Palmieri, pp. 75-76. Finzi cautiously refers to the author as "l'anonimo estensore"; p. 74. The quotation is from Finzi, Palmieri, p. 75.
  56. For attendance at lectures, see the list in a letter from Ficino to Martino Uranio, published in N.A.Robb, Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance, London, 1935, pp. 57-8. Palmieri, Landino and Rinuccini are all included. For friendship, see M.Lentzen, Reden Cristoforo Landinos, Munchen, 1974, p. 38; in a letter of 9/11/1456 to Donato Acciaiuoli, Alamanno referred to "Landinum nostrum", saying he had been unable to attend a lecture given by Landino.

57. C.Landino, Scritti Critici e Teorici, 2 vols., ed. R.Cardini, Roma, 1974, vol. 1, p. 97.
58. See chapter on Della Vita Civile and on Palmieri's histories.
59. The mention comes in the 24th canto of Pulci's Morgante, in the revised version of 1484:  
 "Vanno per l'aer come uccel vagando  
 altre spezie di spiriti folletti  
 che non furon fedel nè rei già quando  
 fu stabilito il numer de gli eletti:  
 Non so se'l mio Palmier qui venne errando  
 che par di corpo in corpo ancor gli metti".  
 Quoted in Rooke, Introduction, p. ix.
60. See W.A.Simpson, "Cardinal Giordano Orsini as a Prince of the Church and a Patron of the Arts", JWCI, 29, 1966, pp. 135-159.
61. Ibid., p. 139.
62. Filippo da Bergamo, Supplementum Chronicarum, Novaria, fol. 275r; cited in Boffito, "Eresia", p. 44, n1.
63. Boffito, "Eresia", p. 50, n.3.
64. Ibid., p. 44, n.1.
65. Della Torre, Storia, pp. 760-1.
66. Wind, "Origen", p. 412.
67. J.Tritheim, De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis, Basilaee, 1494, fol. 112v.
68. Vespasiano, Le Vite, vol. 1, pp. 565-567.
69. Ibid., p. 566.
70. Bandini, Catalogus, vol. 5, column 96: "In tegmine codicis chartula quaedam adglutinata est in qua Palmerii manu haec sunt exscripta: 'opus Matthaei palmerii, quod sigillatum Notaricrum Arti Florentiae donavit, conditione adposita, ut non aperiatur dum in suo religatus corpusculo vivet. Ego Matthaeus'". See also Martelli, "Palmeriana", p. 294.
71. For the date of the text of Vespasiano, see the introduction to the Le Vite by A.Greco, vol. 1, pp. v-vii. The lives of the popes and cardinals had been finished by 1484.
72. Della Torre, Storia, p. 766.
73. Cited in F.Sarri, "La Religione di Matteo Palmieri", Città di Vita, 1, 1946, pp. 310-323; pp. 319-320.
74. Ibid.
75. The passage is identical to that in Rinuccini, Lettere, pp. 82-3.
76. Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte Savonarolas, 4 vols., ed. J.Schnitzer, Leipzig, 1910; vol. 4, Savonarola nach den Aufzeichnungen des Florentiners Piero Parenti, p. 309.
77. Ibid.: "il che non passò senza admiratione. Credesi, servissi a qualche proposito del pontefice con il re di Francia, o per mostrarsi zelante della fede o per ispignere quello alla impresa contro alli infideli et levarlo dalle guerre de christiani o per tutta dua insieme le predecete prima cause".
78. P.O.Kristeller, "Francesco da Diacceto and Florentine Platonism in the Sixteenth Century", Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters, Roma, 1956, pp. 287-336; p. 330.
79. Ibid., p. 302.
80. Ibid., p. 328. Kristeller describes the beautiful, fifteenth century, parchment manuscript (Vaticana Barberini Lat. 4109), noting an entry in a sixteenth century hand: "io Maestro Antonio da Cortona



irate di S.Domenico al presente reggente in S.Maria Novella di Fiorenza per commissione della Achademia Fiorentina ho rivista et correcta la presente opera da li errori inche l'auctore era immerso come apare inpiu chapitoli cominciando al quinto, anno domini MDXV de mense novembris".

81. The letter is published in D.Moreni (ed.), Continuazione delle Memorie Istoriche dell'Ambrosiana R. Basilica di S.Lorenzo, 2 vols., Firenze, 1816-7; vol. 2, pp. 511-515. Leo X wrote "concedimus vobis omnimodam facultatem contra istos"; p. 514. My attention was brought to this letter by L.Polizotto, "The Piagnoni and Religious Reform 1494-1530", unpublished University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1975, pp. 192-3.
82. S.Bongi, "Francesco da Meleto, un profeto fiorentino a' tempi del Machiavelli", ASI, ser. V, 3, 1939, pp. 62-70; p. 69. I should like to thank the Reverend Peter Howard who on my behalf searched briefly but unsuccessfully in the Archivio di Stato, Florence, for confirmation of Pope Leo's action.
83. D.Cantimori, Eretici Italiani del Cinquecento, Firenze, 1939, p. 14, n.3.
84. G.B.Gelli, Trattatisti del Cinquecento, Capricci del Bottai, rag. vi. ed. M.Fozzi, Milano, 1978, pp. 985-6. That Gelli did not consider the disinterment to be recent is revealed as the dialogue continues: "non vuoi dire che cosi come il corpo fu disotterato per commandamento di che reggeva allora la Chiesa fiorentina?", (my emphasis) p. 987.
85. Sarri, "La Religione", p. 321.
86. Gelli, Lettura Fantasche, cited in Boffito, "Eresia", p. 49, n.1.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., p. 48, n.11. P.Giovio, La Isorizzanti, Firenze, 1552, p. 220; M.Guazzo, Cronica, Venezia, 1553, fol. 306r.
89. "Giunte al Vossio", Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia, X and XI, Venice, 1712; cited in Rooke, Introduction, p. xiii.
90. Extracts from Libri's six letters are published as an appendix in Boffito, "Eresia", pp. 51-69.
91. Libri quotes Citta di Vita, 3:5:46-48. His version reads:  
 "Quella prudenza che discerni i sensi  
 di tutto quel che l'intelletto apprende  
 e fa sien gl'atti piu migliori apprensi";  
Ibid., p. 65. In the Laurenzian version edited by Rooke, this reads:  
 "Quella prudenza che diserni e sensi  
 di tutto quel che lo intellecto apprende  
 e fa sien gli acti piu migliori apprensi".  
 The BNF version is different again:  
 "Quella prudenzia discerne e sensi  
 di tucto quel che l'ontellecto apprende  
 e fa sian gli acti apprensi".  
 It is possible that either Libri altered the spelling, or that a different manuscript was available in Florence.
92. Boffito, "Eresia", pp. 68-9.
93. G.Richa, Notizia Storiche delle Chiesa Fiorentina, Firenze, 1754, vol. 1, parte 1, p. 154.
94. Bandini, Catalogua, was published in 1774-8.
95. Richa quotes "laus honor imperium & gloria sit Omnipotenti Yesu Christo per infinita saecularum saecula. Amen." Ibid., p. 158. In

- Rooke, this reads "laus honor imperium & gloria sit omnipotenti Yheso Cristo per infinita seculorum secula. Amen." Città di Vita, vol. 9, p. 260. The phrase is not included in the BNF version.
96. Richa, Notizia, p. 160.
  97. Ibid., pp. 155, 158 and 161.
  98. Boffito, "Eresia", p. 51.
  99. Ibid., p. 50.
  100. Rooke, Introduction, pp. vii-xvii.
  101. Sarri, "La Religione", pp. 319-321.
  102. The picture is now in the National Gallery, London, no. 1126. On the picture, see M.Davies, The Early Italian Schools, London, 1951, pp. 94-98. See, too, J.Cartwright, "A Heretic Picture", The Magazine of Art, 6, 1883, pp. 330-332; and D.Angeli, "Per un quadro eretico", Archivio Storico dell'Arte, ser. 2, 2, 1896, pp. 58-71. B.Berenson, Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: The Florentine School, 2 vols., London, 1963, publishes two details from the picture; vol. 1, plates 1060-1.
  103. G.Vasari, Le Vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori, ed. G.Innamorati, 4 vols., Milano, 1978; vol. 2, p. 434. Davies, Early Italian Schools, p. 94.
  104. Manoscritti 266, fol. 78v.; Tratte 82, fol. 1v.
  105. Manoscritti 253, fol. 1288r.
  106. The bust is now in the Museo Nazionale, Florence. It has an inscription inside "Mattheo Palmerio, SAL. AN. MCCCCLXVIII: OPUS ANTONII GHAMBERELLI". The inscription is quoted in I.Larvin, "On the Sources and Meaning of the Renaissance Portrait Bust", Art Quarterly, 33, 1970, pp. 207-226; p. 216, n.10. The bust was displayed outside Matteo's house until 1832; however, it is not clear when it was first placed there; L.Planiscig, Bernardo und Antonio Rossellino, Wien, 1942, p. 56. See ibid., plate 65 for a photograph of the bust. In 1469, Antonio Rossellino was living in Via Fiesolana, adjoining Via degli Scarpentieri where Matteo's house was situated; A.M.Schulz, The sculpture of Bernardo Rossellino and his workshop, Princeton, 1977, appendix 3, document 5, p. 141 (Antonio's catasto return for 1469).
  107. Matteo's heirs, Marco and Bartolomeo, reported in their catasto return of 1480 that they had rented out a farm in order to repay Cosa's dowry to her heirs, indicating that she had died before 1480; Ricordi, p. 274.
  108. San Pier Maggiore 6, item 556, dated 17/4/1476. For the positions of the chapels in San Pier Maggiore, see Richa, Notizia, vol. 1, parte 1, pp. 141-145 and W. and E.Paatz, Die Kirchen von Florenz, 4 vols., Frankfurt, 1952; vol. 4, p. 635 for plan and pp. 637-641 for ownership.
  109. Vasari, Le Vite, p. 434.
  110. Ibid.
  111. Rooke, Città di Vita, vol. 9, editor's afterword.
  112. Quoted in Ibid.
  113. Le Vite 5 vols., ed. R.Bettarini, Firenze, 1966-84, contains parallel texts of the 1550 and 1568 editions; see vol. 3, pp. 514-5.
  114. R.Borghini, Il riposo, in cui della pittura e della scultura si favella ecc., Firenze, 1584, pp. 351-2.
  115. F.Bocchi, Bellezze della città di Firenze, Firenze, 1591. For San Pier Maggiore, see pp. 173-177.

116. F. Bocchi, Bellezze della città di Firenze, ed ora da M. Giovanni Cinelli Ampliate, ed Accresciute, Firenze, 1677, p. 354.
117. Ibid.
118. Vasari, Le Vite, vol. 2, p. 689. Recounting the life of Fra Bartolomeo di S. Marco, Vasari observes: "per prova fece in un quadro un San Sebastiano ignudo, con colorito molto alla carne simile... Dicesi che, stando in chiesa per mostra questa figura, avevano trovati i frati nelle confessioni, donne che nel guardarlo avevano peccato per la leggiadria e lasciva imitazione del vivo; per il che, levatolo di chiesa, lo misero nel capitolo...". Innamorati as editor of Le Vite noted that the picture was painted in 1514 and removed in 1516.
119. Richa, Notizie, p. 161: "fu d'uopo ai Ministri Ecclesiatici interdire la Cappella".
120. A. Blunt, Artistic theory in Italy, 1450-1600, Oxford, 1940, p. 109.
121. The three wills are in NA B 1184 (Ser Girolamo Beltramini), unfoliated. I am grateful to Dr. John Henderson for indicating to me the Italian version of the final draft in Arte dei Medici e Speciali, 201, fols. 61r-65v. It was from this version that I was able to find NA B 1184. I should also like to thank Frank Dabell who pointed out to me an incomplete version of Matteo's will in the Diplomatico, Acquisti Salari, 31/7/1469. Codicils added to the will are to be found in NA P 497 (Ser Simone Poggini), fols. 5r-6r.
122. Arte dei Medici e Speciali, 201, fol. 62v. For a brief discussion of wills, see F.W. Kent, Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence, Princeton, 1977, pp. 72-76. See too the case study by L. Pandimiglio, "Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli e la continuità familiare", Studi Medievali, ser. 3, 22:1, 1981, pp. 129-131.
123. Ibid., fol. 61v.
124. Ibid., fol. 61r.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid., fol. 62v.
127. Ibid., fol. 62r.
128. NA B 1184, 8/5/1458, paragraph 22; 8/6/1467, paragraph 15.
129. Arte dei Medici e Speciali, 201, fol. 62r.
130. Della Vita Civile, p. 195.
131. Arte dei Medici e Speciali, 201, fol. 64r.
132. Ibid., fols. 62v-63r.
133. Ricordi, p. 40n.
134. Ibid., p. 124.
135. Arte dei Medici e Speciali, 201, fol. 64v.

Notes to Conclusion

1. "Mediante lo studio delle lettere latine acquistò lo stato nella sua città"; Vespasiano, La Vita, vol. 1, p. 563. Vespasiano gives as an example the choice of Matteo to be ambassador to Naples in 1455; quoted in embassies chapter, p. 117.
2. Finzi, Palmieri, pp. 282-291.
3. See embassies chapter, p. 156.

Notes to Excursus on Palmieri's finances

1. E.Conti, L'imposta diretta a Firenze nel quattrocento, Roma, 1984, p. 353.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 354. Following Conti's practice, and to make it clearer, Palmieri's percentage contributions to the republic will be henceforth be multiplied by 1,000, so that 0.0015% becomes 1.5%.
4. Ibid., pp. 357-8.
5. Ibid., pp. 104, 187.
6. Ibid., p. 187.
7. Ibid., p. 191.
8. Ibid., pp. 191-2.
9. Ibid., pp. 207-8.
10. Ibid., p. 265.
11. Ibid., p. 217.
12. Cf. Ibid., p. 353.
13. In the decade 1440-9, 195,000 florins were sought, while 429,000 florins were levied in the following decade. Figures calculated from Ibid., pp. 366-8. See pp. 354-7 for increase in Palmieri's assessments.
14. Ibid., p. 355.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 357.
17. Ibid., pp. 206, 329.
18. G.Morelli, Ricordi, ed. V.Branca, Roma, 1956, pp. 252-3.
19. Ibid., p. 253.
20. R.Barducci notes that within ten years of the Monte being established in 1343, the officials discovered that 13 different frauds had been practiced on them; "Politica e speculazione finanziaria a Firenze dopo la crisi del primo Trecento (1343-1358)", ASI, 137, 1979, pp. 178-219; p. 200.
21. Conventi Soppressi 78, 314, item no. 279. Bernardo di Zanobi to Bartolomeo Cederni, 24/3/1447. I should like to thank Dr. William Kent for this reference.
22. Conti, L'imposta, p. 113.
23. Evidence of such a deal exists in another letter, this time written by Bono Boni to Bartolomeo Cederni. The level of taxation was to be reduced, and new assessments made. Boni assures Cederni that he will benefit from the new assessment: "il mio isgravatore è Jacopo di Nicholo di Giorgio Betti Berlinghieri, e chome fu tratto gli parlai del bisogno tuo. Io sono anche isgravatore nel gonfalone mio, e dissi al tuo isgravatore che se egli voleva niente disgravo nel mio gonfalone che chiedesse che disgravo io volevo la posta tua, e promisssemela"; ibid., item no. 334, 23/11/1447.
24. Conti, L'imposta, p. 360. In these years he paid a total of 3466.5 florins in tax, and received as interest or repayment 1254 florins, leaving Palmieri to pay a net total of 2212.5 florins.
25. Ibid., p. 172. In 1427, Marco Palmieri declared 4611 florins worth of patrimony, and in 1433, Matteo declared 1731 florins worth.
26. Martines, Social World, p. 138, n.197.
27. Ibid., p. 138 for split, p. 397 for positions in quarter in 1427.
28. Conti, L'imposta, pp. 353, 360.

29. Ibid., pp. 218, 274.
30. Martines, Social World, pp. 139, 141.

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B 1184-6 Girolamo Beltramini

C 320, F 488 Francesco Ciuto da Prato

C 574 Clemente da Tarato

F 40 Rigoglio di Bartolo

G 518 Girolamo di Bartolomeo di Paolo

L 129 Leonardo di Francesco

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