

Knighthood in later medieval Italy

by Trevor Dean

Italian knighthood has not attracted much scholarly attention either in Italy or in the Anglo-Saxon academy. There was, for example, no article on Italy in the five volumes of annual conference proceedings entitled *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood*, which ranged over England, France and Germany¹. And there is no entry for “chivalry” or “knighthood” in *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*². That Italy could have anything significant or relevant to contribute to the study of knighthood seems not to be generally expected. There have been exceptions. Four out of thirteen chapters in Sidney Anglo’s edited volume, *Chivalry in the Renaissance*, were devoted to Italy, but only one of these, Cecil Clough’s *Chivalry and magnificence in the Golden Age of the Renaissance*, really seems to grasp the topic head-on; but even he admits that «chivalry in the Italian Renaissance has remained neglected», and devotes most of his essay to those «manifestations of chivalry... associated with combat, such as tournaments and jousts»³. Another exception is Maurice Keen, who fully acknowledges in an early chapter of his book *Chivalry* that the Italian nobility, though urban, was not alien to landowning, chivalry or the values of seigneurial aristocracy, that Italian knights went through «the same kinds of rituals as their northern compeers», and that chivalric literature was as readily taken up in Italy as in Germany⁴. These views are clearly dependent on the work of Philip Jones. Even Jones had first to clear the ground of lingering ideas that Italy and chivalry were incompatible: «for all the influence of... merchandising... it would be grossly wrong to visualize the nobility of communal Italy as somehow forming at any stage an alien species, a race apart, among the aristocracies of Europe»⁵. And he pro-

¹ *The Ideals and Practices of Medieval Knighthood*, ed. C. Harper-Bill, R. Harvey and S. Church, 5 vols, Woodbridge 1986-1995.

² *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, ed. C. Kleinhenz, London 2004.

³ *Chivalry in the Renaissance*, ed. S. Anglo, Woodbridge 1990, p. 33, 35. The other essays on Italy address sixteenth-century fencing and duelling (Anglo), Cornazzano’s book on military matters (D. Zancani) and fifteenth-century *imprese* (K. Lippincott).

⁴ M. Keen, *Chivalry*, New Haven 1984, p. 38-40.

⁵ «Per quanto potente fosse l’influenza della *civilitas*, della *mercatura* o degli altri *mores* regionali, sarebbe grossolanamente errato figurarsi che la nobiltà dell’Italia comunale formasse in qualche modo, in qualsiasi stadio, una specie diversa, una razza a parte fra le aristocrazie

ceeds, in a few very condensed pages, first to examine the vocabulary used to denote nobility and the accepted attributes or criteria of nobility, from birth, possessions and knighthood, to office, fiefs, ownership of castles and urban towers, and the practice of private war, then to argue for a progressive sharpening of class sensitivity and difference in twelfth and thirteenth century Italy, «as nobles and knights preserved all the pretensions and self-consciousness of a superior, separate caste». As regards the process of knighthood, Jones notes how from the thirteenth century it was surrounded by elaborate ceremonial (the bath and vigil, dubbing, golden spurs), how a clear distinction was maintained between true, dubbed knights and mere cavalrymen, how knighthood was sought in the most illustrious circumstances possible (from the emperor, in Rome or Jerusalem), and, contrary to some contemporary or later observers, such as Alvaro Pelagio, who remarked that many Italian knights were rustics or of peasant descent, that in practice knighthood remained «principally engrossed by nobles and ottimati». In these few pages, Jones refutes any suggestion that knighthood in communal Italy was diluted, or a pale, devalued version of its northern European counterpart, and argues for its continuing importance as a key part of the values and behaviour by which the nobility set itself apart. Jones was here countering the views of Salvemini, who in an influential essay of 1896 had argued that knighthood in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had been democratised and degenerated⁶. For Salvemini, a combination of factors – bourgeois acquisition of wealth undermining noble social exclusivity; use of mercenary armies removing the military rationale of chivalry – led to knighthood becoming a mere honorific title. The separation from values was made evident in the stress Salvemini gave to mercantile mentality as dominant: in a world of measuring and counting, bourgeois traders saw nothing serious in chivalric morality. The separation from military practice was stressed in Salvemini's use of evidence from the fourteenth century of knighthood being conferred on children, old men and the dead. Knighthood thus became no more than a necessary qualification for a job as judge. In addition Salvemini marshalled evidence of two sorts: one the one hand, literary denunciations of the social position, attitudes and behaviour of contemporary knights, from Dante to Sacchetti, and, on the other hand, factual evidence of the actions of knights such as the violent and ambitious Luca da Panzano. These two forms of evidence supported his conclusion that all that remained of late-medieval knighthood was the «poor ruins of a social status now vanished forever»⁷.

d'Europa»: P.J. Jones, *Economia e società nell'Italia medievale: il mito della borghesia*, in *Economia e società nell'Italia medievale*, Torino 1980, p. 66-67, and generally p. 66-93.

⁶ G. Salvemini, *La dignità cavalleresca nel comune di Firenze*, in G. Salvemini, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295*, Torino 1960, p. 355-360.

⁷ «Miseri ruderi di uno stato sociale scomparso per sempre»: Salvemini, *La dignità cavalleresca*, p. 395.

There is a clear reason for this general discounting of Italian knighthood in the later Middle Ages. The traditional focus of northern Italian historiography being cities and civic life, knighthood has struggled to find a place in the world of communes and city-states, merchants and markets. One of the few recent historians to devote attention to it is Franco Cardini, the focus of whose research has been on the intersection between chivalric literature and social behaviour, on chivalric “mentalities”. Even Cardini acknowledges that, though «the most recent historiography of the society of north and central Italy between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries shows a relative abundance of research on military institutions and on those who fought on horseback, it has not made much noticeable progress in the area of chivalric dignity»⁸. In an important article a decade earlier, another historian had concluded with the observation that, for Italy, the history of dubbing remains to be written, and deserves to be written, as «the heart of the problem» of knighthood, and «the key point of the ritual universe of knighthood»⁹. Yet the tendency to interpret knighthood from a mercantile point of view persists: a Genoese nobleman in Sardinia is said to have used the conferral of knighthood as «a sort of special currency»¹⁰.

More recently it has been argued that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the numbers of dubbed knights were very few («a handful»), and that the class of *milites* – those who owned warhorses and had a taste for mounted warfare, and had the resources, attitudes and values to match – was much larger¹¹. It was the Angevins, it seems, who spread the fashion for ceremonial dubbing, Charles d’Anjou himself knighting a number of Florentines¹². And it was from Angevin Naples, according to Cardini, that Florence drew its chivalric texts and practices in the fourteenth century¹³. In this paper, I pick up from this point and look specifically at dubbing of knights in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. If, as Cardini writes, dubbing, because of its increasingly sumptuous and solemn character, expresses the desire and tendency of knights to close themselves into a caste, it is important to examine who had access to dubbing and in what circumstances.

The main aim of this essay is to establish a typology of dubbing. Recently, the occasion and location of dubbings have been divided into the martial (before or after battle) and the non-martial (great feast days, major court

⁸ F. Cardini, *L'acciar de' cavalieri: studi sulla cavalleria nel mondo toscano e italico (secc. XII-XV)*, Firenze 1997, p. 133.

⁹ S. Gasparri, *Note per uno studio della cavalleria in Italia*, in «La cultura», 26 (1988), p. 38.

¹⁰ «Una sorta di moneta di scambio pregiata»: L. Gallinari, *Una società senza cavalleria? Il giudicato di Arborea e la corona di Aragona tra XIV e XV secolo*, in «Anuario de estudios medievales», 31 (2003), p. 858.

¹¹ J.-C. Maire Vigueur, *Flussi, circuiti e profili*, in *I podestà dell'Italia comunale*, ed. J.-C. Maire Vigueur, Roma 2000, II, p. 1047-1055.

¹² C. Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a medieval Commune*, Princeton 1991, p. 157. In addition to the references cited there: *I registri della cancelleria angioina*, ed. R. Filangieri, Naples 1950-, vol. 1, p. 117, 124, 208 (1268-1269).

¹³ Cardini, *L'acciar de' cavalieri*, p. 98.

occasions)¹⁴. In England most knighthoods were conferred during military campaigns or royal ceremonies, and the English military failure in France in the mid fifteenth century had the effect of drying up the supply of new knights¹⁵. In France, the most common occasion for the bestowal of knighthood was the eve of battle, and the rapid, battle-field rite also penetrated the most lavish of ceremonies, those held during royal festivities¹⁶. More generally in northern Europe it has been said that late-medieval sources mention three occasions for dubbing, namely a solemn royal or imperial court or coronation; a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; and the eve of battle¹⁷. Though all of these occasions of knighthood are present in Italy, they are expanded and supplemented: not just imperial courts and coronations¹⁸, but princely entrées generally and non-imperial courts; not just Holy Land pilgrimers, but Roman ones too. And one other occasion was found too: knightings associated with judicial office. In fact, this was the aspect of Italian knighthood stressed by historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as if this was all that was left once knighthood had been emptied of its significance by popular pressures to discipline and curtail the excesses of the knightly class. Knighthood was thus “reduced” to a “mere” qualification for office. But judicial office had always been associated with knighthood: the knight was dubbed with the sword of justice, and the exercise and upholding of justice was part of chivalric ideology.

Knighthood for judicial office can thus serve as the first type. It was expected that judges should be knights. A nobleman (*dominus*) of San Miniato, son of a man called Barone, due to set off for Reggio to act as Capitano del popolo, was knighted by his uncle¹⁹. Jacopo d’Appiano, made Capitano of Pisa in 1393, arranged for himself to be made a “knight of the popolo”, considering the nature of his office²⁰. In Bologna in 1366 it was thought noteworthy by the local chroniclers when a podestà was appointed who was not a knight²¹. More usually, when a non-knight was appointed, perhaps unexpectedly, a simple ceremony of knighthood would be rushed

¹⁴ F. Pilbrow, *The knights of the bath: dubbing to knighthood in Lancastrian and Yorkist England*, in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. P. Coss and M. Keen, Woodbridge 2002, p. 197-198.

¹⁵ B.M. Daw, *English knighthood in decline: the last years of the Hundred Years War, 1435-53*, in «Bulletin of the John Rylands Library», 83 (2001), p. 203-204, 213-214.

¹⁶ P. Contamine, *La chevalerie en France à la fin du Moyen Âge*, in «Francia», 4 (1976), p. 273-282.

¹⁷ Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 79.

¹⁸ For example, the controversial knighting of Castruccio Castracani in Rome 1328, at which many barons grumbled that his «veste di cremisi» was not appropriate: *Cronaca di Pisa di Ranieri Sardo*, ed. O. Banti, Rome 1963, p. 81; *Cronache senesi*, ed. A. Lisini and F. Iacometti, in *RIS* [Rerum Italicarum Scriptores], XV, pt 6, Bologna 1931-, p. 466.

¹⁹ *Diario di Ser Giovanni di Lemmo da Comugnori dal 1299 al 1320*, ed. L. Passerini, Firenze 1876, p. 171.

²⁰ *Cronaca di Pisa di Ranieri Sardo*, p. 259-260.

²¹ *Corpus chronicorum bononiensium*, ed. A. Sorbelli, in *RIS*, XVIII, pt 1, Città di Castello and Bologna 1906-1940, III, p. 209.

through. Thus in Siena in 1351 the podestà died in post, and the Siennese government decided to appoint his 25-year-old son in his place, and had him knighted at the commune's expense²². It was this practice that drew the acerbic criticism of Franco Sacchetti in a piece of social commentary inserted into one of his *novelle* concerning Dolcibene, an entertainer or "courtier-knight" (*cavaliere di corte*) of a type that conservatives scorned and that historians have taken as a sign of decadence²³. After inveighing against the giving of knighthood to «mechanicals, guildsmen, even bakers», or, worse, to «carders, usurers and *ribaldi*» – «shites not knights»²⁴ – Sacchetti also complains of judges and notaries receiving knighthood:

How apt it is for a judge to be made a knight so that he can serve as podestà! It's not that knowledge does not befit a knight, but it should be real knowledge, without pay, without issuing *consilia* from a lectern, without attending court as an attorney – that's good chivalric exercise. Even worse, notaries are made knights²⁵...

The second type of knighthood was more frequent: knighthood before battle or after a victory. Shortly before besieging the fort (*rocca*) in Orvieto in 1380, Rinaldo Orsini made several knights beside a fountain²⁶. During a Bolognese military expedition against the invading forces of the duke of Milan in 1391, twenty knights were made at one time, when it was thought that battle was about to be joined²⁷. Thirty years earlier, following joint Bolognese-papal defeat of Milanese forces, a horse-race had been held, with prizes consisting of captured armour, and then six knights had been created on the battle field: the papal commander, Galeotto Malatesta, first knighted the pope's political representative, and he in turn created the other five knights, members of the Bolognese urban elite²⁸. This sort of two-stage creation of knights was not uncommon. In Pisa in 1369, Giovanni d'Agnello first received knighthood from the emperor, and then granted it in turn to six Pisans²⁹. It obviously reflected or enacted local hierarchies.

²² *Cronache senesi*, p. 504.

²³ «Li cavalieri delle corti, come son questi buffoni, non sono nobili, perocché non sono accettati come cavalieri»: Lapo da Castiglionchio, quoted in F. Flamini, *La lirica toscana del Rinascimento anteriore al tempo del Magnifico*, Pisa 1891, p. 194-195; L. Ricciardi, *Col senno, col tesoro e colla lancia: riti e giochi cavallereschi nella Firenze del Magnifico Lorenzo*, Firenze 1992, p. 50.

²⁴ «Li meccanici, gli artieri, insino a' fornai... ancora più giù, gli scardassieri, gli usurai e' rubaldi barattieri... cacaleria non cavalleria»: Franco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. A. Lanza, Firenze 1984, p. 325.

²⁵ «Come risiede bene che uno giudice per poter andare rettore si faccia cavaliere! E non dico che la scienza non istea bene al cavaliere, ma scienza reale senza guadagno, senza stare al leggio a dare consigli, senza andare avvocatore a' palagi de' rettori. Ecco bello esercizio cavalleresco. Ma e' ci ha peggio: che li notai si fanno cavalieri»: Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, p. 325.

²⁶ *Cronaca del conte Francesco di Montemarte*, in *Ephemerides Urbevetanae*, ed. L. Fumi, *RIS*², XV, pt 5, vol. 2, Città di Castello and Bologna 1903-1929, p. 245.

²⁷ *Corpus chronicorum bononiensium*, III, p. 434.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 133-134.

²⁹ *Cronaca di Pisa di Ranieri Sardo*, p. 171-172.

It was important that knighthood received by members of the elite should be mediated by the papal governor or the local lord, and that the local elite should not have direct access to the source of chivalric dignity, whether a successful commander from an illustrious family or the emperor himself. Such attempts to channel and control what Maurice Keen called the chivalric line of «apostolic succession» was an important, but neglected, aspect of Italian government, of a piece with governments' efforts to ensure that land held in fief by the nobility directly from the emperor should be mediated through them (a controversial claim which many imperial feudatories objected to or ignored)³⁰. At Ferrara, those who are recorded as knights were all members of families important at the court of the ruling family – and whose position owed much to their military activities – while those families who were rarely present at court had few or no knights among their ranks³¹. Such mediation forces us to recognise the importance attached to the identity of the person dubbing the new knight. People remembered who had dubbed whom; if they record nothing else of the ceremony, chronicles specify the names of the participants³². In an amusing story told by Giovanni Gherardi da Prato in his *Paradiso degli Alberti*, a duel of honour is fought at the Visconti court in Milan between two court minstrels or jesters, who were both knights; the narrator establishes their chivalric credentials by claiming that one had been knighted by Emperor Charles V, the other by the lord of Padua. Sometimes this memory of dubbing was preserved in a change or addition to the new knight's name: one of the fourteenth-century Malatesta lords of Rimini, Malatesta Ungaro, was reportedly so called because he had been knighted by the king of Hungary³³; in Orvieto in 1315, Cinzio di Zaccaria was knighted by the podestà, who, according to the chronicle, «imposed on him his [own] name, and he was called "lord Benedetto"», and the square or campo where his house stood was changed from the «campo of pigs» to the «campo of flowers»³⁴. So knighthood could have a transforming effect on the names of recipients, and even of their properties, and should thus be ranked with other initiations that involved a change or transmission of name (baptism, conversion, religious profession, apprenticeship). As with these analogous initiations, new knight and dubber entered a relationship, of loyalty, gratitude and honour³⁵.

³⁰ G. Chittolini, *Infeudazioni e politica feudale nel ducato visconteo-sforzesco*, in G. Chittolini, *La formazione dello stato regionale e le istituzioni del contado*, Torino 1979, p. 59-65; J.W. Black, *Natura feudi haec est: lawyers and feudatories in the duchy of Milan*, in «English Historical Review», 109 (1994), p. 1155-1158.

³¹ T. Dean, *Land and Power in late medieval Ferrara: The Rule of the Este, 1350-1450*, Cambridge 1988, p. 146-147.

³² Ricciardi, *Col senno, col tesoro e colla lancia*, p. 36.

³³ F. Cardini, *Malatesta "Ungaro" al purgatorio di San Patrizio. Immaginario e realtà di un episodio italiano di cavalleria*, in *Das andere wahrnehmen: Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte*, ed. M. Kintzinger, W. Stürner and J. Zahlten, Köln 1991, p. 275.

³⁴ *Annales Urbevetani*, in *Ephemerides Urbevetanae*, p. 179.

³⁵ Pilbrow, *The knights of the bath*, p. 199.

The third type of knightly investiture is the formal and ceremonial. This takes various forms, but in all of these the religious aspects of knighthood are much more evident than in the previous two types. Maurice Keen observed that the religious element seldom reached as far as to allow a churchman to play the role of officiator, and when it did, the ecclesiastic involved was a prince-bishop; this seems to be the case in Friuli at least, where the patriarch of Aquileia in the late thirteenth century was apparently accustomed to dub knights: he did so for various Italian and German lords in 1297, and his refusal to do so for some other Italians in 1285 was seen as needing explanation by a local chronicler³⁶. More usually perhaps, as Keen suggested, religious belief and practice affected the timing and location of the investiture. Ceremonial knighting often took place on major dates in the Christian calendar: dates associated with Christ himself (Christmas, Easter) or with his mother (Assumption) or with his apostles³⁷. Azzo Visconti knighted two members of the Milanese nobility at Easter 1338³⁸. Chivalric ceremonies also took place in cathedral churches before the high altar, for example, in Milan in 1394 or in Pisa in 1393³⁹. Guglielmo Suardi and Niccolò Terzi were knighted in Pavia cathedral, on Ascension day, by Giangaleazzo Visconti in 1386⁴⁰. They might also take place at sites of Christian pilgrimage: in 1367 Niccolò II d'Este created twelve knights in Rome, «in the name and memory of the twelve apostles», and in 1413 Niccolò III, on pilgrimage to the Holy Land created five knights in the Holy Sepulchre, the whole occasion being marked by displays of piety (masses, vows, symbolic acts binding the new knights to Christ)⁴¹. Of these formal investitures there seem to have been two main types: knighthoods conferred by illustrious visiting dignitaries, such as the emperor, or conferred in locations of prestige; and (a much larger group) knighthoods conferred in order to bring legitimacy to new or unstable regimes, or to announce and exercise some new authority. This latter category is marked by variety of occasion and circumstance. Knighthood could accompany a pacification of factions and a return of exiles, as in Orvieto in 1330⁴². It could act as a supplementary legitimation: recently appointed doge of Pisa, Giovanni dell'Agnello sought from Emperor Charles IV confirmation of his title and knighthoods for members of his family: before his entry into Lucca, Charles IV knighted both Giovanni and his son, and Giovanni in turn, at the gate of the city, knighted six other men⁴³. The grant of knighthood by

³⁶ Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 74; Juliani canonici Civitatensis *Chronica*, ed. G. Tambara, in *RIS*², XXIV, pt 14, p. 18, 28.

³⁷ Ricciardi, *Col senno, col tesoro e colla lancia*, p. 26, 47.

³⁸ *Gualvanei de la Flamma... opusculum de rebus gestis ab Azone, Luchino et Johanne Vicecomitibus*, ed. C. Castiglioni, in *RIS*², XII, pt 4, Bologna 1938, p. 25.

³⁹ *Chronicon bergomense guelfo-ghibellinum*, ed. C. Capasso, in *RIS*², XVI, pt 2, Bologna 1928, p. 56; *Cronaca di Pisa di Ranieri Sardo*, p. 259-260.

⁴⁰ *Chronicon bergomense guelfo-ghibellinum*, p. 28.

⁴¹ Dean, *Land and Power*, p. 147.

⁴² *Annales Urbevetani*, p. 191.

⁴³ *Cronaca di Pisa di Ranieri Sardo*, p. 169, 171-172.

new rulers could be part of a search for consensus. In Bologna, knighthoods were conferred at the formal entry into the city of new papal legates or governors (e.g. 1360, 1424)⁴⁴. Every change of regime in Bologna in the early fifteenth century was marked by the creation of knights: when Giovanni Bentivoglio made himself lord of the city in 1401, he created many knights «for this occasion» as the chronicler says; in 1402, when there was a popular revolt against Giovanni Bentivoglio and political exiles were recalled, the first exile to arrive were knighted in the piazza; the following month, Bolognese envoys went to the duke of Milan to surrender the city to him, and he knighted one of their number⁴⁵. A more famous example of knighthoods conferred during a successful popular revolt came in Florence in 1378, when a large number of knights were created during the Ciompi tumult. This gave rise to a problem, however: the knighthoods had obviously been conferred at great haste in the heat of the insurrection, and many of the new knights reportedly refused to wear knightly robes or insignia, or to behave as knights, fearing that these knighthoods might be challenged on account of the absence of ceremony. The Florentine government had to stage another, formal ceremony for them a few weeks later⁴⁶.

Knighthood could also be a part of a long-standing relation of patronage and protection between major and minor city. In 1406, the Florentine Piazza della Signoria was the stage for a sequence of knightly rituals that seems to have had the import of establishing or confirming the Florentine commune as a source of chivalric status in Tuscany⁴⁷. The occasion was celebration of the Florentine capture of Pisa. First, of all, over several days in October, the Guelf Party of Florence organised a series of parades (*armeggiare*) by bands of youths. Then on the 28th, the Standard-bearer of Justice created as a knight Piero Gaetani, a Pisan, and presented him with gifts from the commune of a pendant and a cup bearing the arms of the Florentine popolo. The purpose of this knighting, however, was subsidiary to the main event, for Piero Gaetani then went to Santa Maria Novella, to meet the lord of Cortona, Francesco de' Casali. They returned to the Piazza with many other Florentine and Pisan knights, and Francesco and the Standard-bearer mounted a special platform, in front of the *ringhiera* where the Priors were sitting, and there Francesco was knighted: he was adorned, successively, with a golden belt, a sword, a garland and spurs, and, thus attired, he went with his company of knights and *armeggiatori* to make offerings at the altars of the cathedral and of Santa Maria Novella. Three days later, Francesco Casali held a joust on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, threw a dinner in the refectory for the government and

⁴⁴ *Corpus chronicorum bononiensium*, III, p. 119, 574.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 473, 483, 486.

⁴⁶ *Diario d'anonimo fiorentino dall'anno 1358 al 1389*, ed. A. Gherardi, in *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV*, Firenze 1876, p. 521-524.

⁴⁷ *Diario fiorentino di Bartolomeo di Michele del Corazza: anni 1405-1438*, ed. G.O. Corazzini, in «Archivio storico italiano», 53 (1894), p. 242-245; Ricciardi, *Col senna, col tesoro e colla lancia*, p. 40-41.

Florentine knights, and received further gifts from the Guelf Party. The Casali were already formal clients, *raccomandati*, of Florence – Florence promising them military and political protection, and the Casali owing an offering of silk cloth on the feast of the Florentine patronal saint – and this ceremonial knighthood further cemented the quasi-paternal relation between commune and lord⁴⁸.

The acquisition of cities could also be marked in the same way. When Cangrande della Scala, lord of Verona, acquired Padua in 1329, he organised a great public celebration in Verona, two major parts of which were, first, a marriage between his illegitimate son and the daughter of an important Paduan political figure, and, second, knighthoods awarded to many nobles from Verona, Padua and other cities of north-east Italy. According to a chronicler, Cangrande himself «adorned them with gold and purple garments, with gold belts, beautiful warhorses and palfreys»⁴⁹. Similarly, when Padua was conquered by Venice in 1405, the first thing that the commander of the Venetian army did was to march to the piazza and create some new knights⁵⁰. In this case, knighthood following victory and knighthood as a sign of new authority merged into each other. Knighthood could also accompany a city's territorial expansion without the need for military conflict. When the lord of Cortona submitted to Siena in 1359, he and his two sons were knighted by the commune of Siena, «with great honour, triumph and celebration», says the chronicler⁵¹. «Triumph and magnificence» were likewise the hallmarks of the dubbing of Antonio degli Atti by Sigismondo Malatesta in 1448: the key parts of the ceremony on this occasion were not just the placing of the spurs, the belting with a sword, and the conferment of gifts of silk-cloth, cups and bowls, but the administration of an oath «to be a good and loyal knight»⁵².

Conferring knighthood functioned as an exercise of authority by new regimes, but such knighthoods had advantages too for the recipients: in a formal, state occasion, the costs were borne by the state. Thus, when Siena knighted the lord of Cortona, the cost to Siena was 2,000 florins, which covered the cost of the celebrations and of gifts to each of the new knights (clothing, a silver-gilt belt, two horses and a lavish dinner). If the costs of knighthood were escalating, as is often claimed to be the case, it is worth recalling the early fourteenth-century poem by Folgore da San Gimignano, in which a young man becoming a knight mortgaged his lands to pay for the prepara-

⁴⁸ *I Capitoli del comune di Firenze. Inventario e regesto*, ed. C. Guasti, Firenze 1866-1893, 2 vols, I, p. 511-513, 515-516; G. Mancini, *Cortona nel Medio Evo*, Roma 1969, p. 259-260.

⁴⁹ Guillelmi de Cortusiis *Chronica de novitatibus Padue et Lombardie*, ed. B. Pagnin, *RIS*, XII, pt 5, Bologna 1941-1975, p. 55-56.

⁵⁰ Galeazzo e Bartolomeo Gatari, *Cronaca carrarese*, ed. A. Medin and G. Tolomei, in *RIS*, XVII, pt 1, Città di Castello and Bologna 1909-1920, p. 575.

⁵¹ *Cronache senesi*, p. 591.

⁵² *Cronache malatestiane dei secoli XIV e XV*, ed. A.F. Massera, in *RIS*, XV, pt 2, Bologna 1922-1924, p. 124-125; A. Campana, *Atti, Isotta degli*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Roma 1962-, vol. 4, p. 547-548.

tions, the food for all the guests, the servants and the musicians etc. If, under this sort of cost pressure, knighthood was becoming a dignity conferred by lords and city-governments, and if the identity of the source of knighthood was highly significant, then this raises important issues for the relation between governments and nobilities in Italy in this period.

A further way of looking at these formal knighthoods would be in terms of relations between fathers and sons. According to Gasparri, dubbing was a rite of male youths, sometimes linked in the sources to marriage. Cardini makes the link to marriage too, in his study of end-of-Carnival nocturnal jousting («armeggiar di notte») by a group of young Florentines males outside the house of their leader's possible bride-to-be (1464). The same author has also called attention to the importance of father-son relations in his study of the dubbing of Francesco Bandinelli in 1326, an occasion for which we have an extraordinarily detailed account in the Sienese chronicles, which include the guest lists, lists of what the guests had to eat, and lists of the gifts made both to and by the new knight⁵³. Cardini argues that, though Francesco's father had a role in the formal proceedings, their overall character was civic, through the principal roles given to the podestà and the Captain of the Popolo, and through the participation as guests of families from all the districts of the city: the union of the familial and the civic reflected the community value attached to this ceremony⁵⁴. This analysis compares Siena to Florence, where Salvemini too saw the knighting rituals as predominantly civic⁵⁵, and distinguishes them both from court societies such as Verona, where dubbing ceremonies served much more as focal points for the whole region. Just as courts drew their personnel widely from within and outside the lord's territories, so in turn chivalric dignity flowed from the court to the nobility of the region.

Gauging the relative frequency of these three types of dubbing – the military, the ceremonial, and the official – is not easy. One means of making this calculation is to classify all the knighthoods found in selected chronicles. Thus, in the Perugian compilation that goes under the name of the *Diario del Graziani*, there are eight occasions recorded for the conferral of knighthoods during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (to 1445). Three may be classed as ceremonial: the knights created by the King of Hungary on his entry into Foligno, and the knighthoods conferred by or on behalf of the pope, and by a Perugian nobleman⁵⁶. Three occasions were military, following successful Perugian campaigns⁵⁷. And two occasions were official, for the purposes of

⁵³ *Cronache senesi*, p. 442-451; Ricciardi, *Col senno, col tesoro e colla lancia*, p. 23-29.

⁵⁴ Cardini, *L'acciar de' cavalieri*, p. 90.

⁵⁵ Salvemini, *La dignità cavalleresca*, p. 427.

⁵⁶ *Cronaca della città di Perugia dal 1309 al 1491 nota col nome di Diario del Graziani*, ed. A. Fabretti, in «Archivio storico italiano», 16 (1850), p. 146 (1347), 368 (1433), p. 573 (1445).

⁵⁷ *Cronaca della città di Perugia*, p. 115-116 (1336), 186 (1358), 190 (1360).

serving as podestà in other cities⁵⁸. Sometimes these occasions blended into each other: in 1336, the commune knighted the podestà «in the army at San Lazzaro»; in 1360 the commune knighted four men from Montepulciano for their actions in the war against Siena, but the event took place not (apparently) on the battlefield, but later, «with all the trappings of chivalry», and making them gifts and grants of horses and property. Secondly, in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth-century section of Matteo Griffoni's Bolognese chronicle, the author records five knightings: three during or immediately after military action, and two during official ceremonies (the entry of the cardinal legate, the appointment of Giovanni Bentivoglio as lord)⁵⁹. Lastly, of the twenty-four knightings recorded in the *Cronache senesi* for the period 1281-1377, four were to enable men to take up office⁶⁰; six were associated with imperial or princely ceremonies (entrées, a coronation)⁶¹; and five with military feats, mostly after battle (including the knighting of Count Ranieri da Donoratico over the dead body of the prince of Taranto's son), but also in recognition and reward of long-term military service to the commune (Guido Riccio Fogliani)⁶². The conclusion to be drawn is that knighthood for judicial office was therefore a minor mode, and that the connection with military practice, and with individual and collective feats of arms, was still very much alive, along with the political use of knighting ceremonies for the consolidation of regimes and (though this is more suggested than yet demonstrated) of elites. Knighting ceremonies were thus far from being marginal in late medieval Italy, but could be central to the acquisition of new cities and territories, and to the installation of new regimes, both republican and signorial.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 319 (1426), 366 (1433).

⁵⁹ Matthaëi de Griffonibus *Memoriale historicum de rebus Bononiensium*, ed. L. Frati and A. Sorbelli, in *RIS*, XVIII, pt 2, Città di Castello 1902, p. 64, 67, 76, 90, 91.

⁶⁰ *Cronache senesi*, p. 225 (1281), 227 (1290), 504 (1331), 651 (1373).

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 345-346 (1314), 352 (1315), 364 (1316), 466 (1327), 579 (1355), 582 (1355).

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 352-353 (1315), 454 (1332), 530 (1342), 603 (1363), 630 (1369).