Localising Collective Devotion: The Bianchi of 1399 at Lucca and Pistoia

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Declaration
I, Alexandra Rosalind Amelia Lee confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

The Bianchi of 1399, best described as a popular religious revival, spread throughout northern and central Italy in the second half of that year. Previous historiography has approached the movement as a unique and coherent phenomenon, generalising about the processions and practices of participants. This thesis challenges these presentations, demonstrating the importance of analysing local realisations of the collective devotion of the Bianchi. My focus on Lucca and Pistoia, two Tuscan hotbeds of Bianchi activity, indicates regional diversity within the Bianchi processions. Narrative, verse and visual sources are used in combination to discuss the brief but compulsive fervour of the Bianchi in 1399.

I review the context for each town from 1340 to 1415 to establish a baseline of activities against which to compare the Bianchi processions. I examine the three dominant contemporary narratives concerning the Bianchi movement’s origins, addressing the variation between them. I analyse the practices of the Bianchi, focussing on three problematic examples: wearing white, singing laude and self-flagellation. I investigate the communal response to the Bianchi, revealing the different roles undertaken by lay and clerical authorities in orchestrating the processions. Finally, I survey the legacy of the Bianchi, underscoring the importance of local considerations in commemorating the Bianchi in the period immediately afterwards (c.1400-1415).

My thesis challenges previous studies of the Bianchi, demonstrating the importance of understanding the processions at a local level. New insights are offered into the two different modes of participating in Bianchi devotions: intramural and itinerant processions, and the role of the authorities in managing this popular revival is revealed. I also address the plague of 1399-1400, exploring the interaction between the Bianchi and this outbreak. My study demonstrates that evaluating the local interpretations of the processions in each individual town is crucial in describing the collective devotions of the Bianchi.
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Introduction

Omnis quippe multitudo populi quae ubique erat vestes induit albas.¹

Fuit in Italia et alia quasi omnibus nationibus Christianis quidam mirabilis motus Cerimonarum et Religionis, quae dicebatur i Bianchi.²

Come in più luoghi del mondo cominciò una devozione, che le genti andavano tutti a procisione chiamando misericordia e pace a Dio, tutti vestiti di bianco.³

In general histories of Italy of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, brief mention is usually made of a procession in late 1399. The quotations above are indicative of these short references to the devotions, emphasising the white clothing participants wore. According to modern popular histories, this movement, called the Bianchi, dressed in white, self-flagellated and processed towards Rome where their leader was burnt as a heretic.⁴ These elements of the Bianchi processions have dominated historiography of the devotions until recently, but are problematic.

Individual studies of the Bianchi devotions have sought to dispel these myths, but it must be made more evident that the Bianchi were neither a movement aiming for Rome nor a group whose leader was burnt at the stake. This thesis will tease apart the reality of the processions, analysing the variations of Bianchi activities at a local level. The brief but convulsive rise of Bianchi fervour has been described in general terms by historians of the medieval Italian peninsula, and has been subject to further scrutiny in monographic analysis of the devotions. However, many aspects of the origins, nature and legacy of the Bianchi devotions are still poorly understood and there is a tendency in historiography to portray the popular religious revival as the unique, coherent whole promoted by chroniclers contemporary to the processions.

Taking a broad perspective, the Bianchi devotions began in Genoa and spread eastwards in the direction of Venice and southwards in the direction of Rome, with no set final destination. Participants in the nine-day processions would dress in white

³ Anonimo Fiorentino, Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV, ed.by Carlo Minutoli (Firenze: Tipi di M. Cellini, 1876), p. 240.
from head to toe, sing laude, shout pace and misericordia, and fast. Each procession would reach roughly four and a half days’ walk from the original location, and participants would proselytise other towns along the route, which would in turn begin their own circular, itinerant processions of nine days. These processions were organised in order to counteract the threat of a pestilential annihilation, which would obliterate a third of the world. Satisfactorily completing the various tasks required of participants in the devotions would ensure personal salvation. Consequently, the movement spread like wildfire through the northern and central Italian peninsula as people sought to protect themselves from the forthcoming epidemic.

In this study, I uncover important variation in the structure of the Bianchi devotions throughout the northern and central Italian peninsula. I will focus on Lucca and Pistoia, two hotbeds of Bianchi activities, to emphasise the importance of examining the Bianchi devotions at a local level and to highlight differences even on this small scale. I will also emphasise the difference between intramural and itinerant processions. Not everyone was able or permitted to leave their towns to participate in an itinerant devotion, and so activities were also orchestrated inside town walls. Comparing these two methods of performing the Bianchi devotions within the local contexts of Lucca and Pistoia will be crucial in my demonstration of the importance of pre-existing traditions and structures for the Bianchi processions.

Microhistories of the Bianchi devotions have gone some way to counteracting inaccurate claims about the devotions, usually adopting a broad overview of the whole geographical spread of the processions. My thesis will take this further, employing a narrower approach by focusing on two case study cities. My selection of Lucca and Pistoia will highlight diversity in the processions, problematizing the cohesion of the Bianchi movement. While these two cities will form the main focus of the thesis, I will also draw on other sources from the southward spread of the Bianchi processions from Genoa towards Rome to enrich my discussion. Rome was not the final destination of the Bianchi processions, which were considered complete for those participating after their nine day circle was over, it was simply the southernmost point reached by the devotions. My use of case studies will indicate the importance of situating the Bianchi processions in a local context.

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5 The words lauda and laude will not be italicised throughout this thesis due to their frequent occurrence.
context, demonstrating how the devotions changed from town to town, where they were shaped by local traditions and communal structures.

I have selected Lucca and Pistoia as case studies for this thesis as they provide an excellent base for comparison. Both towns are in Tuscany, and both can be considered as hubs of Bianchi activity, sending out numerous Bianchi processions as well as hosting processions within the town walls. Lucca and Pistoia are of a similar size, and both had endured decades of political upheaval leading up to the end of the fourteenth century. There is also ample source material for both towns in the form of lengthy chronicles and communal records, facilitating such a comparison.

My thesis will examine interrelated research questions to further the understanding of the brief but compulsive life of the Bianchi fervour. These will be taken as overarching themes addressed throughout the thesis, teased apart in each chapter to highlight the different effects local context had on the devotions. As stated above, the main issue is whether the Bianchi processions can be considered a unique, coherent movement, as has been the tendency in previous scholarship. Coherence will be tested by examining whether requirements which were expected of the Bianchi participants in one location can also be applied to processions elsewhere.

My two case studies will facilitate this discussion, exploring the variation between Bianchi activities in Lucca and Pistoia. Analysing the religious context in each town before the arrival of the devotions will create a baseline against which to assess the Bianchi activities in 1399. The diversity will also be problematized through the origin stories and legacy of the Bianchi devotions, taking a full chronological picture of the processions into account. One particular challenge to address is self-flagellation by participants in the processions. I reveal a more nuanced interpretation to contest general presentations of the Bianchi devotions as a flagellant revival.

Another key issue is the difference between intramural and itinerant processions, adding to this lack of coherence, as each town performed localised rites as part of the intramural devotions. The reasons for intramural devotions, their
content and the various features of each will be addressed. The discussion of these processions will demonstrate the degree of control exercised by local communal and ecclesiastical authorities. While aiding the propagation of the processions, these organisational structures manoeuvred in such a way as to call into question the spontaneous nature of this popular religious revival. Previous literature has focussed mainly on the itinerant aspect of the processions, on the spread of the movement from town to town. However, the sources for the intramural Bianchi activities are often richer, as the chroniclers recorded precise details of how the processions unfolded in their own home towns. Combining these perspectives will provide a more rounded view of the entire Bianchi devotions by taking the diverse forms of participation into account.

1. Sources
The cities of Lucca and Pistoia can be compared in a detailed manner due to the multitude of available source material. For Lucca, the chronicle of Giovanni Sercambi relates the events surrounding the Bianchi devotions in a significant portion of his magnificently illustrated codex.\(^6\) Luca Dominici’s chronicle account of Pistoia between 1399 and 1400 solely treats the Bianchi processions and the plague outbreak of these years, providing an excellent counterbalance to the Lucchese example.\(^7\) There are also numerous archival documents for the relevant period in each town, such as town meeting minutes, confraternities and hospitals.

The chronicle reports mediate the narratives of the Bianchi devotions, providing personal representations of the events in 1399. The accounts of Sercambi and Dominici are mostly in the vernacular, with the exception of a few prayers and quotations in Latin. While rich in detail, these sources will not be taken at face value, particularly when describing purportedly divine or miraculous events. The testimony put forward by each chronicler will be scrutinised and brought into comparison with

\(^6\) Giovanni Sercambi, *Le Croniche di Giovanni Sercambi, Lucchese*, ed. by Salvatore Bongi, 3 vols (Lucca: Tipografia Giusti, 1892); Lucca, Archivio di Stato, MS 107 (previously known as MS Q1348). Henceforth, where unambiguous, both the print and manuscript editions will respectively be referred to with in-text references. The second volume of Bongi’s edition will be referred to unless otherwise indicated.

\(^7\) Luca Dominici, *Cronache di ser Luca Dominici: cronaca della venuta dei Bianchi e della moria 1399-1400*, ed. by Carlo Gigliotti (Pistoia: Cav. Alberto Pacinotti, 1933). Henceforth, where unambiguous, this volume will be referred to with in-text references.
other relevant sources to contextualise the filtered perspective of the chronicle narratives.

This focussed approach will detail the activities of two towns which can be considered representative of others in Tuscany. Moreover, my findings will have implications for the rest of the Bianchi devotions, suggesting that the variety found in Lucca and Pistoia could easily be uncovered in other centres of Bianchi activities. Such a method has proved productive in confraternity studies, situating confraternities in their local communal and religious context, with broader implications applicable to the field elsewhere. These studies have demonstrated the importance of placing a confraternity within its local environment, and I will use a similar method in analysing Bianchi activities in Lucca and Pistoia. While the Bianchi devotions were not a religious confraternity, they must nevertheless be set against the communal and religious backdrop of the towns they visited along the way in order to fully understand the implications of the processions.

1.1 Sercambi
Sercambi’s chronicle reports events in and around Lucca, the first codex covering the period from 1164 to 1400, across 700 chapters and 355 folios. The second codex, much in the same vein, continues on until Sercambi’s death in 1424, and is shorter at 160 folios. The chronicler also occasionally details events further afield across the rest of Europe. Sercambi’s accounts are written in a matter-of-fact style, although he does offer some personal opinions throughout the text. Sercambi is ever present in his chronicle, frequently referencing himself. The numerous coloured illustrations are an important feature of this chronicle, complementing the textual narrative. Indeed, these could encourage a modulated reading of the chronicle, suggesting that the reader focusses first on the images and then reads the text.

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9 In the modern edition, this codex takes up first two volumes, and the second codex corresponds to the third modern volume.
10 Lucca, ASL, MS 108.
The majority of the chronicle is in prose, although there are some songs recorded throughout the text, possibly composed by the author.\textsuperscript{11}

The section on the Bianchi devotions demonstrates the chronicler’s magpie-like tendency to collect all available information on a topic, comprising not only Sercambi’s own narrative, but also letters, songs and prayers from other sources to create a full picture of the events occurring in and around Lucca. Forty chapters are dedicated to the Bianchi processions, the most space dedicated to any single set of events throughout Sercambi’s writing (pp. 291-371/fols. 299r-330r). This is particularly palpable while examining the codex, as the images which accompany the text create a visual break with the rest of the manuscript. The white-clad Bianchi participants contrast sharply with Sercambi’s use of colour throughout the rest of the volume. This section begins after an explanation of God’s anger due to a world torn by war and the Great Schism, setting out the Bianchi activities as a demonstration of the method by which humanity can redeem itself, as well as the necessity to do so. This combination of prose narrative, laude and images is a remarkable testament to the Bianchi devotions at Lucca, highlighting Sercambi’s largely positive perspective on the events.

Regarding textual transmission, the autograph copy still exists, and it is believed that Sercambi both wrote the text and drew the images.\textsuperscript{12} The careful correspondence between the two suggests at least some degree of authorial control in the creation of the illustrations. The codex was initially in the collection of Paolo Guinigi, lord of Lucca, for whom Sercambi most likely composed the chronicle (Vol I., p. XXIX). Once the Guinigi were deposed in 1430, the book was moved to the Cancelleria, before moving to Lucca’s Archivio di Stato in 1804 where it remains today. An edition was published by Salvatore Bongi in the 1890s, where Bongi transcribed the chronicle into three volumes with an explanatory preface.\textsuperscript{13} An edition of the images was produced in 1978 by Banti and Cristiani Testi, and most

\textsuperscript{11} For example ‘Chome fu prezentato uno romanzo a tucti i ciptadini di Lucca’ in Sercambi, \textit{Croniche}, I, pp. 190-202.


\textsuperscript{13} Sercambi, \textit{Croniche}.  

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recently, a new ‘translation’ into modern Italian was produced by Tori in 2016.\textsuperscript{14} This however is a testament to Sercambi’s chronicle as a whole rather than specifically to the Bianchi processions, although their history remains a part of all of these reproductions.

Briefly considering the chronicler himself, Sercambi was born in the plague year of 1348, and began his career as a druggist and a grocer. When his shop burnt down, he became a notary and was heavily involved in the political life of Lucca.\textsuperscript{15} Sercambi was an ardent supporter of the Guinigi faction; much of the second codex was written with a favourable view of Lucca’s new government after the coup. Sercambi died of plague on 27 March 1424, his chronicle ending on his entry about this outbreak of the disease. Sercambi wrote other works, including a series of Novelle in the style of Boccaccio’s Decameron.\textsuperscript{16} Sercambi’s chronicle offers a wealth of information not only about the Bianchi devotions, but also about the period in general in Lucca. While the author may have been biased politically, he nevertheless reported a broad spectrum of events, which provide a great deal of information to be compared with other sources.

1.2 Dominici
The first codex of Dominici’s chronicle is devoted entirely to the activities of the Bianchi and the plague in 1399 and 1400.\textsuperscript{17} The second, separate codex of the chronicle continues until 14 September 1402.\textsuperscript{18} The first codex will be the focus in this thesis, as the second does not describe the Bianchi devotions. The chronicle is written mostly in a prose style, and reads like a diary account, punctuated by reports of activities further afield or transcriptions of letters. Dominici frequently addresses the reader, and signals that he will later return to certain threads of his narrative,\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{14} Ottavio Banti and Maria Cristiani Testi, Le Illustrazioni delle croniche nel codice lucchese (Genova: Basile, 1978); Giorgio Tori, Le Croniche di Giovanni Sercambi (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi Editore, 2015).
\textsuperscript{16} These were written from the point of view of a group escaping the plague in 1374 in Lucca. It was most likely written later, especially as there was no plague in Lucca in 1374. Giovanni Sercambi, Il Novelliere, ed. by Luciano Rossi (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1984).
\textsuperscript{17} Dominici, Cronaca dei Bianchi. There is no consistency in the number of folios for the text in the different manuscript editions, as they are all different sizes.
\textsuperscript{18} Luca Dominici, Cronache di ser Luca Dominici: cronaca seconda, ed. by Carlo Gigliotti (Pistoia: Cav. Alberto Pacinotti, 1937).
\end{flushleft}
creating a sense of a complicated narrative patchwork as he leads the reader through the diverse chronology and topography of his account.

The length of the chronicle dedicated to the Bianchi devotions is significant; clearly Dominici believed that the processions were important enough to warrant such a large amount of space. Dominici interweaves accounts of Bianchi activities at Pistoia with Bianchi processions further afield, providing an overview of the devotions over a reasonably wide geographical area. He also includes transcriptions of letters and sermons which enrich his testimony.

Dominici’s autograph of the first codex, which deals with the Bianchi devotions, does not survive. Notwithstanding, Gigliotti postulates nine or ten copies of the text originally in existence, of which four survive. The earliest surviving remaining copy is a late fifteenth-century Florentine manuscript which contains numerous textual additions regarding Bianchi activities in Florence. The other manuscript copies were made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This codicological history is particularly interesting considering that only one manuscript of the second, politically focused codex survived at the time Gigliotti created his second volume of the chronicle: Dominici’s autograph. This codex has since been lost. However, neither of these is as widely available today as Sercambi’s chronicle, perhaps due to the broader chronology of the Lucchese chronicler’s writing and the splendid illustrations. Gigliotti’s edition of each codex is the only modern reproduction of Dominici’s texts.

Dominici was born c.1363, during the cycle of plague after the Black Death. He was an active political figure in Pistoia, serving in various positions between 1397 and his death in 1410. Dominici was a notary, producing twenty volumes of protocolli, and supported the Panciatichi faction in the city. The two codices of his chronicle offer a detailed snapshot of two years of Pistoiese history,

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19 For further details, see Gigliotti’s stemma: Dominici, Cronaca dei Bianchi p. 32.
20 Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Riccardiana 2049.
21 Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Ashburnham 1715; Pistoia, Biblioteca Forteguerriana, MS B.155; a manuscript Gigliotti describes as ‘MS. Marchetti di Pistoia’ and was in a private collection when he used it. Gigliotti used this ‘MS Marchetti’ as the basis for his edition of the Bianchi codex.
22 Dominici, Cronaca dei Bianchi p. 6.
from 1399 to 1401, including his overwhelmingly positive portrayal of the Bianchi devotions in the first codex.

1.3 Other Sources
Other chronicle sources will also be drawn on in this study from the rest of the spread of the Bianchi movement, to provide points of contrast. The Genoese chronicler Giorgio Stella’s Latin account of the processions records the beginning of the devotions in Genoa.\(^{23}\) Two chronicles from Città di Castello, Umbria, will also be used, one in Latin and one in the vernacular.\(^{24}\) These two sources provide rare occurrences of origin story narratives along the southern passage of the Bianchi processions and are therefore crucial points of comparison for the Tuscan sources. Ascani has attributed these chronicles respectively to Laurenzi and Cerboni. However, he himself admits that these attributions may be problematic, as there is no indication of authorship within the chronicles. Nevertheless, Ascani’s attributions will be used as a functional method to identify these two accounts. Finally, a source from the notary of the Roman papal palace, Dietrich de Nyem, offers a rare negative view of the Bianchi devotions.\(^{25}\)

Communal sources will form a focus, especially in the fourth chapter on the response of the authorities to the processions in Lucca and Pistoia. These include sources from the Archivio di Stato, Biblioteca Capitolare and Biblioteca Statale in Lucca and the Archivio di Stato and Biblioteca Capitolare in Pistoia. These documents include council records detailing minutes of meetings, confraternity records, hospital records and testaments of members of the Opera del Duomo for Lucca and Pistoia.

Bianchi laude will also be drawn on, using a rigid set of criteria to associate the songs with the devotions, as will be set out in Chapter Three. A lauda is a song

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with religious subject matter that is usually sung antiphonally.\textsuperscript{26} Both Sercambi and Dominici include transcriptions of laude in the vernacular and Latin.\textsuperscript{27} These will be considered alongside Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Chigiano L. VII.266 which includes 21 vernacular and Latin laude which can be associated with the Bianchi devotions.\textsuperscript{28} Two Florentine examples will provide further information about Tuscan practices: a scroll\textsuperscript{29} and a lauda composed by Andrea Stefani.\textsuperscript{30} The scroll contains a single lauda, and may have been used during the processions. The Marucelliana codex contains Stefani’s Bianchi lauda amidst a collection of other lyrics. I will use these laude to examine the Bianchi practice of singing, rather than engaging in linguistic or literary analysis of the texts. The content will be analysed to question the unique qualities usually ascribed to the Bianchi processions. My investigation will demonstrate regional variation, as well as a propensity to create new elements for the laude in the vernacular rather than Latin.

In terms of visual sources, I will broaden my source set from Tuscany to also include Umbria and Lazio. While richly illustrated, Sercambi’s manuscript is the only visual material connected to the Bianchi devotions in Tuscany. In these other two regions, there are examples of wall paintings in churches which have been connected to the Bianchi in Terni, Rieti, Leonessa, Vallo di Nera, Poggio Mirteto, Città di Castello, Montebugno, Orvieto and Assisi. These will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five, and will also inform the discussion elsewhere. Previous scholars have considered these images from an artistic perspective.\textsuperscript{31} I will examine the sources together, splitting them into three broad themes of processions, origin stories and the Madonna dell’Oliva,\textsuperscript{32} to examine the legacy of the Bianchi processions.

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\textsuperscript{27} Reproduced in the whole text editions.
\textsuperscript{28} Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigiano L. VII.266. Henceforth, where unambiguous, this manuscript will be referred to with in-text references. The vernacular laude are reproduced in Bernard Toscani, \textit{Le Laude dei Bianchi contenute nel Codice Vaticano Chigiano L. VII 266 Edizione Critica} (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1979).
\textsuperscript{29} Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, MS Nazionale II.XI.38.
\textsuperscript{30} Florence, Biblioteca Marucelliana, MS Marucelliana C.152.
\textsuperscript{32} A miracle which occurred during the processions. See Chapter Two Section 9.2 for the narrative.
2. Literature Review
The Bianchi are usually briefly mentioned in scholarly works regarding Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and are habitually presented as a penitent, flagellant group who swept the whole of the Italian peninsula, whose leader was burnt upon reaching Rome.\(^{33}\) Others add details such as the purported divine inspiration of the movement, and also link the *Stabat Mater* to the Bianchi processions.\(^{34}\) Oversimplifications of such a multifaceted movement must be interrogated, and while specific literature on the Bianchi devotions does so, my thesis will further highlight the problematic features of these generic descriptions.

There are three researchers whose book-length works specifically deal with the Bianchi devotions. These works are complemented by smaller contributions in the form of articles, as well as two collected volumes. The pervading outlook of these studies is the presentation of the Bianchi as an exceptional and coherent movement, although this becomes less pronounced across the later literature. These works create a chronology for the processions as well as presenting a collection of primary sources related to the Bianchi devotions. I will examine these contributions to Bianchi scholarship, taking the works in chronological order to consider the way that Bianchi studies evolved as a field.

Two articles in the 1960s created a new strand of Bianchi studies. Firstly, Frugoni’s article introduces some primary sources related to the devotions.\(^{35}\) Frugoni acknowledges the wide variety of origin stories, focussing particularly on Dominici’s chronicle, starting the trend of focussing on this version of the *tre pani* story as the origin of the processions, which I will challenge in Chapter Two. The second 1960s study, by Delaruelle, compares the Bianchi and the flagellant movement of 1349-50.\(^{36}\) I will use Delaruelle’s assessment of the Bianchi in relation to the flagellants as a starting point to compare the processions to other popular religious revivals. Both writers describe the Bianchi as a pilgrimage, a concept which I will challenge. While

\(^{33}\) N. Cohn, p. 145.  
narrow in focus, these articles opened the door to a new series of studies on the Bianchi and renewed interest in the devotions.

Tognetti’s book-length article offers a much richer overview of the Bianchi devotions. Tognetti identified numerous fourteenth-century sources for the Bianchi processions, providing a documentary basis for future research. He presents the Bianchi as a unique, unitary phenomenon, providing a comprehensive overview of the whole geographical spread of the movement. Tognetti includes the most common strands of the origin stories, focussing on Dominici’s account, as well as summarising various Bianchi practices. He also sets the Bianchi within the context of general religious life at the turn of the fifteenth century, suggesting that they were the last popular religious revival. Tognetti’s focus lies on the Bianchi and their activities, leaving the questions of origins and legacy open for future discussion. His most valuable contribution to Bianchi scholarship was his collection of primary sources relating to the movement.

Morton’s doctoral thesis built on Tognetti’s work to create a chronology for the Bianchi by collating published sources. He provided the first English-language contribution to Bianchi studies. Morton presented the Bianchi as a peace movement as an analogy to such movements in the 1970s. Throughout his chronology, Morton included small snapshots of the activities of the Bianchi participants. Morton sets the Bianchi devotions in the wider context of Herlihy’s notion of ‘civic Christianity’. Notwithstanding, Morton had a tendency to extrapolate from a single instance of a practice to the whole movement, such as the positioning of the red cross on the white robes. Morton’s main contribution to Bianchi scholarship was his exacting, detailed chronology of the movement, which he himself hoped would be a ‘scholarly tool for the further study of the movement.’

38 Ibid., p. 341.
40 Defined as an ‘active involvement in human society and a greater compassion for its ills.’ Ibid., p. 198.
41 Ibid., p. 1.
Bornstein’s monograph on the Bianchi also continued on from Tognetti to bring the Bianchi into English-language scholarship. He situates the Bianchi within the religious context of late medieval Italy, giving an overview of the whole geographical spread of the movement and portraying the Bianchi as a product of previous devotional movements. Bornstein also problematizes the dichotomy between lay and ecclesiastical piety, suggesting instead a contrast between urban and rural piety. He states that the Bianchi failed to be institutionalised, questioning previous reports which connected confraternities founded after 1450 to the Bianchi and suggesting that there was no major legacy. Bornstein postulates that the processions were co-managed by clergy and civic authorities, and that the movement temporarily overcame class boundaries. He addresses the problems that the movement had with the authorities, especially in his later article about the Bianchi at Venice. Bornstein’s main contribution was contextualising the Bianchi within their political setting as well as providing what he describes as a ‘model treatment of a popular religious movement.’

Around the sixth centenary of the Bianchi devotions in 1999, there was a small flurry of works in Italy, the first a volume on a crucifix at Borgo a Buggiano, Tuscany. This collection of essays examines the Bianchi processions through the lens of a miracle of a bleeding crucifix associated with the devotions in Borgo a Buggiano. While mainly dealing with the miracle in question, the volume also identifies further fourteenth-century chronicle sources for the Bianchi devotions. Santucci’s book on the Bianchi devotions at Assisi examines the processions in the city, focussing especially on local miracle narratives associated with the Bianchi.

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42 Daniel Bornstein, The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) This book will henceforth be referred to solely as ‘Bornstein’ in the notes; Daniel Bornstein, ‘The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion and Orthodoxy in Late Medieval Italy’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 1985). Bornstein’s monograph is very closely based on his PhD thesis. It appears that Bornstein was unaware of Morton’s work, as he does not make use of Morton’s chronology.
44 Bornstein, p. 6.
A third study, the volume *Sulle Orme dei Bianchi* presents the proceedings of a conference about the Bianchi processions, and reproduces much of the work from the Borgo a Buggiano volume, as well as including material from Santucci’s book.\(^{47}\) The new content features Lignani’s study of Città di Castello, Casagrande’s discussion of central Italy and Nessi’s presentation of sources from Spoleto. Art sources related to the Bianchi processions are also introduced and discussed in their local context by Bliersbach. These in-depth studies of the movement in single locations will inform my treatment of Lucca and Pistoia.

While these works constitute the backbone of existing Bianchi scholarship, there are also smaller relevant studies published at intervals since the 1970s. Diana Webb’s article focuses on peacemaking, describing the main function of the Bianchi devotions as pacification.\(^{48}\) My thesis will examine peacemaking within the context of the other activities of the Bianchi participants, to establish whether there was greater importance attached to certain aspects of the devotion. Byrne’s article on Francesco di Marco Datini’s involvement in Bianchi processions provides a method to consider the itinerant activities of the movement. Byrne discusses the penitential nature of the processions using Datini’s letters and diaries.\(^{49}\) He challenges Bornstein’s assertion that social class distinctions were put aside for the duration of the processions, while acknowledging that the world remained ‘out of joint’ after the brief interlude of togetherness provided by the Bianchi devotions. I will question Datini’s role in the processions, including his method of participation and provision of supplies for his entourage.

Bianchi studies has been reignited recently after over a decade of inactivity. Giraudo’s article builds on Webb’s analysis to consider pacification from a political standpoint.\(^{50}\) She presents the case for the necessity of intervention from urban authorities to coordinate the Bianchi processions. Her demonstration of how the


\(^{48}\) Diana Webb, 'Penitence and Peace-Making in City and Contado: The Bianchi of 1399’, *Studies in Church History*, 16 (1979), 243-56.


movement was shaped by the clergy challenges Bornstein’s assertion that it is impossible to unravel the respective influences of the state and the church. Giraudo emphasises the importance of considering intramural and itinerant Bianchi processions separately, suggesting a double movement firstly within each city and secondly moving from town to town.51 This distinction between intramural and itinerant processions will be a key focus in my thesis. Giraudo’s discussion of numerous cities examines the role of authorities in the processions using chronicle sources, which I will build on in Chapter Four, adding communal sources.

The 2015 edition of the journal of the Accademia Properziana del Subiaso has a section dedicated to the Bianchi devotions. Lignani and Guerri introduce a recently discovered Bianchi wall painting in a church in Città di Castello.52 Leggio discusses the Bianchi in a demographic and economic context in the Sabina area, Onori considers the Madonna dell’Oliva image at Montebuono, and Renzi gives a brief overview of his work on Perugian Bianchi laude.53 While indicating a renewed interest in the Bianchi processions, these articles demonstrate the continuing tendency not to offer comparisons between elements of the Bianchi devotions studied in isolation.

The importance of studying the regional variation of the Bianchi devotions is highlighted by Terpstra’s entry on the Bianchi in the Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity.54 He places the Bianchi in what he calls the ‘Misericordia tradition,’ connecting the movement with the image of the Madonna della Misericordia. This is tenable in Bologna, where the Bianchi devotions were connected to this particular trope; there is an image of Bianchi participants being protected by a Madonna della Misericordia which was commissioned and painted shortly after the processions (Figure 1). However, this trope is not visible in the Tuscan tradition connected to the

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51 Ibid., p. 178.  
Bianchi processions, highlighting how isolated studies of the Bianchi sometimes fail to take account of the bigger picture, and the necessity for comparison to understand local approaches to the devotions, especially here in terms of commemoration.

All of the studies discussed above present the Bianchi devotions as a unique, coherent movement, focussing either on the whole spread of the devotions, or one single aspect or location. My project will provide an in-depth analysis of two case study towns in order to challenge the usual presentation of the Bianchi devotions as a united movement with singular practices and goals. I will use this previous scholarship as a starting point, drawing especially on the ample source collections identified. I will build on these studies, drawing links between them to create connections between Bianchi activities in different locations.

3. Religious Context and Popular Religious Revivals

My thesis will situate the Bianchi devotions within the spiritual context of the end of the fourteenth century, considering the movement as a demonstration of popular piety. Piety can be described as a public manifestation of devotion, which can also

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encompass private devotional practices. I have chosen to use the phrase ‘popular piety’ to describe the Bianchi activities, to incorporate the popular nature of the devotions throughout various levels of society. The term ‘lay piety’ suggests a dichotomy between secular and ecclesiastical groups, which was not a strict boundary maintained by the Bianchi devotions.\textsuperscript{56} While particular clerical individuals played a key role in the processions, communal authorities performed equally important parts in facilitating the devotions. The term ‘popular piety’ is more fluid, and therefore more appropriate to describe the activities of the Bianchi participants.

There were elements of the religious landscape of medieval Italy which affected the whole peninsula. Peterson gives an overview of the relevant historiography, providing a broad context for this period in general in Italy.\textsuperscript{57} For example, ideas about eschatology, particularly connected to the end of a century, were increasingly prevalent as 1400 approached.\textsuperscript{58} The turn of the fifteenth century was a turbulent time for the Church, which was in the midst of the Great Schism.\textsuperscript{59} The Schism, like the plague, affected the whole of Christian Europe indiscriminately.\textsuperscript{60} There were two claims to papal supremacy, one in Rome and the other in Avignon, with no sign of reconciliation by 1399. This was a constant concern in Lucca and Pistoia, particularly as no resolution was in sight, although there was a sincere desire to put an end to the Schism and heal the Church. In 1399, both Lucca and Pistoia were loyal to the Roman papacy, although both were courted by ambassadors from Avignon.\textsuperscript{61} The Schism was therefore a constant backdrop to other events in each city.

Returning to popular religion, periods of increased spiritual awareness among the general lay population were a regular feature of the Middle Ages. These popular

\textsuperscript{58} N. Cohn; Roberto Rusconi, L’Attesa della fine: crisi della società, profezia ed Apocalisse in Italia al tempo del grande Scisma d’Occidente (Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1979).
\textsuperscript{59} Joëlle Rollo-Koster and Thomas M. Izbicki, A Companion to the Great Western Schism 1378-1417 (Boston: Brill, 2009).
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 89.
religious revivals were centred on collective devotion; Dickson refers to the crowd as 'the indispensable incubator of medieval revivals.' The term ‘revival’ highlights an episode of renewed religiosity, indeed, while the movements in question often provoked a significant fervour, they were usually short lived. The revivals particularly relevant in the build up to the Bianchi processions are the Children’s Crusade (1212), the Shepherd’s Crusades (1251; 1320), the Flagellants (1260; 1348-9) and the Great Hallelujah (1233). While much earlier chronologically, these revivals have much in common with the Bianchi devotions, such as purportedly divine origin stories and internal variation. I will consider the revivals thematically, beginning with the so-called crusades, then the flagellants, ending with the Hallelujah.

The Children’s Crusade of 1212 aimed to reclaim the Holy Land; where knights had failed, these pueri hoped to succeed. There are more than twenty different origin narratives from the thirteenth century alone and more still followed later. These narratives demonstrate significant variation and are connected to the numerous chronicled geographical realisations of the so-called crusade. One story tells how Christ, disguised as a pilgrim, appeared to a shepherd boy in France. He instructed the boy to preach and gave him a letter to take to the King of France as proof. In a later version of the story, the boy’s sheep fell to their knees before Christ. The boy supposedly became a figurehead for the movement, and this account maintains a connection between the initial ‘divine’ encounter and the processions. The narratives were all composed after the end of the crusade, and their purpose was to explain the failure to reach the Holy Land. Despite this diversity, numerous stories suggest written evidence offered during the initial holy encounter, which theoretically offered tangible proof. These stories introduce important

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63 See Chapter Four in William F. MacLehose, *"A Tender Age": Cultural Anxieties over the Child in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
themes, and highlight the Children’s Crusade as a revival with no sense of coherence.

Another ‘crusade’ began in 1251, this time involving ‘shepherds,’ although the groups involved were more diverse than those practicing this specific occupation. Again, a holy presence was cited in the origins of the movement. The Virgin appeared to a man in France, instructing him to assemble and lead the shepherds in order to take back the Holy Land, leaving him with a heavenly letter as proof.67 As with the Children’s Crusade, this purpose remained unfulfilled when the sea did not part once the crusaders had reached the coast, and upon reaching Paris, the participants turned to anticlerical violence.68 Nevertheless, the divine presence in the initiation of the movement and the letter as proof create a connection with the Children’s Crusade, coupled with the failure of the movement to recapture the Holy Land.

A second revival of ‘shepherds’ began in 1320, and while their overarching aim may have been to take the Holy Land, the processions were seen as a riot rather than a crusade.69 Beginning again in France, the leaders were clerical, and the whole movement had a different tone. One sixteenth-century source refers to a vision which initiated the movement, although contemporary sources are not so precise.70 The question of leadership is not unanimous among the chronicles, some referring to two leaders and others to none at all. The pope condemned the movement on account of the horrific violence, particularly against Jewish communities.71 Nirenberg presents the violence as a ‘revolt against the monarchy,’ coupled with a hatred of Jews, who the ‘shepherds’ believed to be agents of the king.72 Although this ‘crusade’ also failed to reach the Holy Land, it was of a different nature to the previous revivals. While referred to as the Shepherds’ Crusades, these revivals did not just involve shepherds.

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68 N. Cohn, p. 95.
72 Nirenberg, p. 48.
Rather the term was used as a generic collective term for the participants, as *pueri* was for the Children’s Crusade.

These ‘crusades’ demonstrate the impact of information supposedly conveyed as a divine instruction presented as the impetus which moved certain strands of the population. Moreover, the question of exclusivity remains pertinent, as those participating in the revivals were separate from society at large, identified as *pueri* and ‘shepherds.’ The divine vision with a heavenly presence and the letter presented as retrospective explanations of the origins are pervading parallels between the first two ‘crusades.’ However, the fact that all of these revivals failed to recapture the Holy Land meant that none of them left any positive legacy to speak of.

The first flagellant movement was also thought to have been inspired by a divine vision. One night in 1260 in Perugia, a Franciscan hermit claimed to have had two visions of the Virgin, who left a heavenly letter.\(^73\) She explained that Christ wanted to destroy the world, but thanks to her intercession, Christ had agreed that mankind could practice public *disciplina* to atone for their sins. The letter supposedly contained instructions to promote public self-flagellation, and is cited by contemporary chroniclers as the impetus for the processions.\(^74\) While the hermit was supposedly a figurehead at Perugia, he did not lead the movement across Europe, where different leaders were involved. The revival maintained a degree of exclusivity, like previous revivals, as there were spectators to the flagellant processions. The processions also spread peace, progressing through Italy into France and Germany. While the movement died out, a legacy of flagellant religious confraternities remained, although only in areas which had welcomed the processions.\(^75\) Overall, the aims of this movement seem more lucid, and indeed achievable, than those of the ‘crusades.’

The beginnings of the second flagellant revival of 1348-9 are hard to pinpoint, although sources tend to concur that it began in central Europe, before

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\(^{73}\) Emilio Ardu, ‘Frater Raynerius Faxanus de Perusio’, in *Il Movimento dei Disciplinati*, pp. 84-98.


spreading throughout the continent.\textsuperscript{76} This initial similarity with the second Shepherds’ Crusade in the lack of a purportedly divine vision is continued as the movement became anti-Semitic and was condemned by the pope. While the origins remain unclear, there is a link to the outbreak of the Black Death, thus the processions can be considered as an attempt to reduce the plague’s spread. There was no defined leader, and the notion of exclusivity from the general population remained.

The Great Hallelujah of 1233 began in Parma, with a lay preacher who inspired others to spread peace, and acted as the catalyst for disseminating the devotion throughout the Northern Italian peninsula. Those who took up the calling generated a ‘tempest of religious enthusiasm.’\textsuperscript{77} Rather than a supposedly divine encounter, this revival relied on the religiosity of the preachers as an impetus. Vauchez also notes a strong political undercurrent related specifically to the mendicant orders.\textsuperscript{78} There was a great deal of anxiety over lay preachers, and the mendicant profession of these preachers meant that the movement was not condemned.

An important point of comparison between these movements is the presence of a charismatic leader. Weber applies the term charisma to people with an ‘individual personality by virtue of which [they are] set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman […] powers.’\textsuperscript{79} Jansen and Rubin highlight this superhuman element, suggesting that such a leader would be inaccessible to ‘ordinary people,’ which is why they might be recognised as a leader and gain a following.\textsuperscript{80} Such individuals were instrumental in spreading many of these revivals, especially the ‘crusades.’ These leaders were usually also the

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\textsuperscript{78} André Vauchez, ‘Une Campagne de pacification en Lombardie autour de 1233: action politique des Ordres Mendians d’après la réforme des statuts communaux et les accords de paix’, \textit{Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire}, 78 (1966), 503-49.
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witnesses of the vision which was cited in contemporary chronicles as initiating the movement, ensuring continuity between the origins and realisation of these processions.

Many of the popular religious revivals were retrospectively explained through a divine origin story narrative, which was often reportedly reinforced with a letter offered as proof. However, this was not always the case, particularly with the Great Hallelujah, which did not rely on such an impetus. All the revivals were different in nature, and yet all aimed to spread their message throughout Christendom, either to free the Holy Land or to stop the impending destruction of mankind. Most fizzled out with little tangible legacy, although the 1260 flagellants inspired the foundation of numerous religious confraternities.

This treatment of these movements has provided context for the Bianchi processions, associating them with previous popular religious revivals, as well as introducing important themes and problems. Positioning the Bianchi devotions within this context demonstrates that while there may be unique facets to the movement, previous revivals had comparable origins and aims.

4. Nomenclature
The most universal requirement for joining the Bianchi processions was wearing white, and this is the only practice which features in all of the chronicles and images associated with the devotions. It is unsurprising therefore that the nomenclature used to refer to the movement takes this colour as a starting point. Most modern scholarship refers to the movement simply as ‘the Bianchi,’ although there have been some attempts to render this in English, such as Herlihy’s ‘Grand Company of the Whites.’

Chroniclers contemporary to the processions shared this preoccupation with the colour that participants wore. Sercambi refers to the devotions as ‘vestiti di biancho’ (e.g. p. 314) and later just vestiti. Dominici initially uses the phrase ‘moltitudine del popolo bianco,’ [multitude of people in white] (p. 149), and later Bianchi, and eventually just ‘B.’ It is clear that these epithets refer to the Bianchi devotions or participants from the context. The word brigata is also used by both

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chroniclers, often in combination with the colour white.\textsuperscript{82} Other vernacular chroniclers also use the term ‘Bianchi’, such as the Orvietan Montemarte and the Anonimo Fiorentino, Montemarte stating that the groups used this term to refer to themselves.\textsuperscript{83} These accounts refer to the processions by their common denominator: the white garments of the participants.

Chroniclers writing in Latin offer more specificity. While a reference to the colour white is still the norm, this was usually qualified either by an adjective meaning ‘wearing’ or the adjective white describes a noun such as \textit{agmen} or \textit{societas}. Cerboni uses \textit{Societas Candidatorum} in the first instance, and later just \textit{candidatis}, although this adjective has the specific sense of the colour applied to clothing.\textsuperscript{84} Stella uses the word \textit{devotione} and states that participants were \textit{albis induti}, but seems reluctant to use a more specific epithet.\textsuperscript{85} Bruni uses perhaps the simplest term, \textit{dealbatorum agmina} meaning a procession of people dressed in white.\textsuperscript{86} These examples demonstrate how the Latin nomenclature is usually more precise than the vernacular, but nevertheless still uses this colour characteristic to define the devotions.

The convenience of referring to the members of the devotions by the colour of their outfits is marred somewhat by the need for disambiguation, as ‘Bianchi’ had other meanings at the end of the fourteenth century in the Italian peninsula. For example, around 1300, the Guelph faction had split into the Whites and the Blacks, and this same nomenclature of ‘Bianchi,’ was used to refer to both this White faction and the processions in 1399. While this factional conflict was lessened by the turn of the fifteenth century, it was still a major problem for both Lucca and Pistoia, whether between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, or these two factions of the Guelph movement. The fact that ‘Bianchi’ could refer to both a political faction and these devotions in 1399 is, as Morton notes, somewhat problematic.\textsuperscript{87} Nevertheless, this

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Brigata} has a multitude of meanings, but most simply refers to an informal collective of disparate people.
\textsuperscript{83} 'Cronaca del Conte Francesco di Montemarte e Corbara', in \textit{Ephemerides urbevetanae}, ed. by Lodovico A. Muratori (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1903), pp. 211-68 (p. 266); Anonimo Fiorentino, p. 240.
\textsuperscript{84} Cerboni, pp. 15-16.
\textsuperscript{85} Stella, p. 240.
\textsuperscript{86} Bruni, p. 252.
\textsuperscript{87} Morton, p. 186.
synchronicity reinforces the importance of the colour white to the Bianchi in 1399 as a unifying and identifying factor.

Some holy orders, such as the Cistercians, also wore white, and there were other popular religious revivals who wore the colour, such as the flagellants of 1260. The most recent group who had worn the colour, and were also referred to as ‘Bianchi’, or ‘Columbini,’ were those who followed Venturino da Bergamo in 1335. This group marched to Rome, where enemies put their differences aside and shouted ‘misericordia, pace, penitenza.’ However, it is unlikely that the Bianchi of 1399 were deliberately trying to create a connection to a previous religious revival, or a specific religious order. The colour white was also imbued with significance, referring to purity and penitence. Moreover, the Bianchi participants often marked their white robes with a red cross, potentially suggesting a link with the crusades, but it is more likely that this just highlighted their Christian devotion. The attire of the Bianchi participants will be further explored in Chapter Three.

Another term used to refer to Bianchi participants was *pellegrino*, indicating that the devotions could be considered as a pilgrimage. Both Sercambi and Dominici use this term, along with numerous other chroniclers. As with the term ‘Bianchi,’ this is a simple solution to a multifaceted problem. As will be seen, the Bianchi devotions did involve many aspects of pilgrimage, but to consider the devotions solely as such underestimates their complexity. Thus, the nomenclature used to refer to these processions in 1399 is problematic, and will be challenged where relevant.

Convenience therefore seems to have been the most important factor when these chroniclers settled on a term for the devotions in 1399. This selection highlights white as a unifying factor of the groups, and potentially as the most important element for participants. The fact that there is parity among the chroniclers in describing the processions in this way suggests that it was a relatively consistent feature of the devotions. However, underneath this nomenclature, there was significant variation between methods of participation in different places. Indeed, the term ‘Bianchi’ alone will be avoided throughout this thesis due to the problems identified above. Furthermore, referring to the processions in 1399 as ‘the Bianchi’ is

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88 Tognetti, p. 338.
problematic, as it suggests that they can be considered as a coherent whole, which I
demonstrate is not the case. I will not be suggesting a new name for the devotions, as
this would be counterproductive in the face of Bianchi scholarship. However, I will
highlight the need for qualification of the term in every instance either by
‘devotions’ or ‘processions,’ or a toponym, such as the ‘Lucchese Bianchi.’ This is
an imperfect solution, but encompasses the definitions of previous scholars and is a
practical way to refer to the Bianchi devotions in 1399.

5. Thesis Outline

My thesis will situate the Bianchi devotions in their context, both broadly speaking
in the religious landscape at the end of the fourteenth century, and using a close
focus on Lucca and Pistoia. Previous studies often look to the future to contextualise
the Bianchi processions, such as Bornstein’s assessment of the Bianchi legacy which
goes into the sixteenth century. My study will concentrate more closely on the
years immediately around the devotions. My thesis is divided into five chapters,
setting the context for Bianchi activities in Lucca and Pistoia, looking at the origins
of the movement, examining the practices of participants, scrutinising the communal
response before finally turning to the legacy of the processions.

The first chapter presents Lucca and Pistoia, introducing the two case study
cities and elaborating on their situation between 1340 and 1415 to encompass the
period before and immediately after the Bianchi devotions. I briefly assess the
political situation of each town, then focus on religious traditions prior to the arrival
of the Bianchi processions. These encompass Jubilee, pilgrimage and confraternities,
as well as processional traditions for town feast days. I then analyse plague and
public health structures, to see how each town coped in times of crisis. This will
establish a base against which to compare the activities during the Bianchi devotions
and their impact on each town.

Chapter Two analyses the origin stories of the Bianchi devotions to unravel
the initial impetus behind the processions as understood by those who witnessed
them. Previous scholarship has tended to focus on Dominici’s account of the tre pani
story, or to amalgamate Sercambi and Dominici’s narratives. I explore the reasons

89 Bornstein pp. 209-212.
for this, and consider a broader source set, including visual and textual materials. This will create a more rounded picture of how the Bianchi participants perceived the origins of the processions, as well as demonstrating the diversity between the narratives. The impetus for the Bianchi devotions thereafter will also be considered, examining renewed visions as the devotions spread southwards towards Rome. This narrative diversity paved the way for later variation in the requirements participants were supposed to follow.

Chapter Three examines the practices of the participants in the processions and the implications of diversity on the processions as a whole. These practices are traced from the instructions presented in the origin story narratives to eye-witness accounts of Bianchi activities. Three particularly problematic practices are analysed in depth: attire, laude and self-flagellation. This analysis, focussing particularly on sources from Lucca and Pistoia, demonstrates areas where there was continuity in practice, as well as areas where practices were significantly divergent. Those engaging in the practices are also considered, addressing the supposed universality of the processions as some practices were reserved for particular groups of people.

The fourth chapter examines the communal response to the Bianchi devotions, again focussing specifically on Lucca and Pistoia. This demonstrates the varied reactions of these two towns towards the Bianchi processions on many different levels. The chapter focusses on areas of communal involvement such as peacemaking, processional order, provisions and the opening of prisons. This calls into question the seemingly spontaneous nature of the Bianchi processions as a popular religious revival, revealing a detailed orchestration behind the scenes during the devotions.

The final chapter follows the Bianchi devotions out of Lucca and Pistoia on to Rome, where the processions most likely ended. I consider the tail end of the Bianchi processions in relation to the Jubilee of 1400. The legacy of the Bianchi processions is then addressed, looking first at religious confraternities and Bianchi crucifixes before turning to wall paintings. This final section broadens the focus beyond Tuscany to also encompass Umbria and Lazio, as no frescoes survive in Tuscany. The paintings are crucial evidence of the afterlife of the Bianchi devotions.
Throughout the thesis, I will be comparing Lucca and Pistoia as well as highlighting the differences between intramural and itinerant processions. I will emphasise the importance of local context in shaping the Bianchi devotions and on the lasting impact of the processions. The purpose of my study is to establish whether the whole movement had a coherent structure and to discover how varied and different the individual towns’ processions really were. Drawing on source materials and chronologies identified by previous Bianchi scholars as well as newly uncovered sources, I will provide an in-depth analysis of Bianchi activities at Lucca and Pistoia. It is these instances of local context which shaped the Bianchi processions at a local level, each town fitting in as a unique cog in the machine of the processions as they spread across the northern and central Italian peninsula.
Chapter One: Lucca and Pistoia 1340-1415

1. Introduction
The Tuscan towns of Lucca and Pistoia can both be considered hubs of Bianchi activity. The towns hosted numerous Bianchi processions as well as sending forth groups of itinerant Bianchi participants who spread the devotions further afield. A wide variety of source material for each town survives for the transition from the late fourteenth to the early fifteenth century. These sources not only cover the Bianchi processions in great detail, but also create a broader picture of the situation of each town before the devotions and during the immediate aftermath. This chapter will focus on Lucca and Pistoia in the years surrounding the Bianchi processions.

The political situation of each town will be very briefly laid out to provide the contextual background for the thesis. Aspects of religious life will then be examined, including pilgrimage, Jubilee and confraternities. Finally, outbreaks of plague will be considered, examining the civic response as well as public health structures. I will also address the relationship between the Bianchi devotions and the plague. The period of 1340 to 1415 has been selected to include a number of outbreaks of plague starting with the Black Death, as well as a consideration of politics, popular religion and public health in each town before and after the Bianchi devotions. This will demonstrate how the processions in 1399 were moulded to local traditions and expectations, rather than requiring towns to adapt to a particular method of performing the devotions.

The source material available for Lucca and Pistoia for this period is atypical in its richness and abundance, particularly due to the lengthy, detailed chronicles of Sercambi and Dominici as detailed in the Introduction (pp. 12-6). These are supplemented with communal sources; while patchy in places, they provide a useful counterpoint to the longer, more personal chronicle narratives. Lucca and Pistoia can be considered representative of towns of their size in Tuscany during this period. Their similar size, political situation, religious frameworks and public health structures will be the subject of this chapter.
The medieval Italian peninsula was divided into city-states, which frequently won and lost territories.\textsuperscript{90} By the start of the fifteenth century, these city-states were becoming increasingly beholden to larger states.\textsuperscript{91} Florence was a controlling power in Tuscany. The Florentine population increased throughout the first half of the fourteenth century largely because of territorial expansion, with a population of roughly 100,000 in the second half of that century.\textsuperscript{92} The walls of Florence, completed by 1180, enclosed c.100 hectares, compared to Lucca’s 75 and Pistoia’s 117, although Pistoia’s land was not as populous.\textsuperscript{93} Lucca and Pistoia were dependent on other towns or states for their authority for large sections of the period in question.

Setting this backdrop for Lucca and Pistoia will provide the necessary base against which to compare Bianchi activities in each town. This analysis of the combination of popular piety and plague will emphasise areas which will be drawn on later in the thesis, such as the communal response to the Bianchi devotions in Chapter Four and the legacy of the processions in Chapter Five. This chapter will demonstrate the importance of considering local issues for the towns through which the Bianchi devotions passed. Analysing both towns using these varied sources will provide a new perspective on the religious life and public health structures of each.

\textbf{2. Summary of Political Situation of Lucca}

In 1399, Lucca was at a political tipping point. A brief exploration of the political context of Lucca before and immediately after the Bianchi devotions will set the background for the processions in the city. The latter half of the fourteenth century had been filled with turbulence, in part due to factional conflict within the city. This was initially between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, and the new factions of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} For an overview, see Daniel Waley and Trevor Dean, \textit{The Italian City Republics} (Longman: Edinburgh, 2010).
\item \textsuperscript{93} Duane J. Osheim, \textit{An Italian Lordship: The Bishopric of Lucca in the Late Middle Ages} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 3.
\end{itemize}
‘Bianchi’ and ‘Neri’ within the Guelphs exacerbated this further. These factional titles were entirely abandoned in Lucca in 1392, when the two main factions were referred to by the family names of those most prominent in each: Forteguerra (Guelph) and Guinigi (Ghibelline).

Lucca’s strategic geographical position meant that it was a constant target for invasion. Lucca regained its independence in 1369 for the first time since 1308, although the town remained subject to external forces. The government of this republic relied on various committees: the Anziani (nine members), a Gonfaloniere della Giustizia, a General Council (180 members) and a smaller council of Thirty-Six. There were various roles for individuals too, the most important of which was the Podestà, who had to be a ‘knight from a city at least sixty miles from Lucca’ theoretically to ensure impartiality. Control of these committees was gradually eroded as the Guinigi faction sought power, with reforms between 1397 and 1400 reducing the period of time between family members serving on the Anziani. The Guinigi faction staged a successful coup in 1400 and their leader Paolo ruled until the 1430s, dominating control of the city. This was a period of relative stability throughout the territory owned by Lucca. Paolo Guinigi abolished the ruling councils of Lucca, significantly reducing the number of citizens involved in the running of the state. Throughout this period, Lucca centralised its administrative and fiscal powers. Various taxes and gabelle [duties] were imposed, particularly on items like wine, bread and flour, and the city had a monopoly on salt. Lucca’s economy was highly dependent on the silk trade, which grew throughout the fourteenth century.

Demographic information for this period in Lucca is not abundant. The population of the town grew from the eleventh century before the beginning of a decline in the fourteenth century. This was at least partly due to a reduction in the size of its territories. Meek cites figures from 1383 and 1397, although notes that

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94 This ‘Bianchi’ faction is distinct from the Bianchi processions in 1399.
95 Meek, Lucca, 1369-1400, p. 8. See this section for further details about the various councils and their functions.
96 Ibid., p. 13.
neither set of data is complete, representing small cross sections of society.\textsuperscript{98} She estimates the population of the contado in 1383 at 30,000 and suggests a figure of 7,550 people living in the city in 1397.\textsuperscript{99} The frequent outbreaks of plague had a severely detrimental effect on the population of Lucca, and will be considered in section 6.1. Bratchel notes that there was a general demographic decline in the first decades of the fifteenth century in the contado around Lucca.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, while fragmentary, it would seem that these figures point to a gradual decline in the Lucchese population during this period due to the reduction in the size of its territory, as well as to outbreaks of plague.

The chronicle of Giovanni Sercambi is an enormously rich resource for the history of Lucca. The chronicle runs from 1164 until Sercambi’s death in 1424 and is splendidly illustrated, the images providing a complement to the textual material. Despite this wide chronological spread, a significant amount of space is devoted to the years around the turn of the fourteenth century and the Bianchi devotions in particular.\textsuperscript{101} Sercambi’s chronicle provides extensive information about Lucca before the arrival of the Bianchi devotions, as well as describing the processions and the subsequent Guinigi rule. Sercambi was in the employ of the Guinigi and consequently wrote favourably of the family and their control of Lucca after 1400. This lengthy source is complemented by resources from the town archives, which add depth and clarity to the chronicle narrative. These include communal records from the Anziani council and the General Council, and while neither set is complete, together they provide a useful counterpart to information found in Sercambi’s chronicle. Also relevant are confraternity records and the Opera di Santa Croce, connected with Lucca’s cathedral, which provide information about the lay religious culture in the town. These communal sources provide details such as town statutes, confraternal membership and testamentary bequests.

Considering more recent scholarship, Meek’s work on Lucca provides the minutiae about the politics in the town.\textsuperscript{102} Bratchel focuses on the finances of Lucca,

\textsuperscript{98} Meek, \textit{Lucca, 1369-1400}, p. 22. 
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., p. 25. 
\textsuperscript{100} Bratchel, p. 140. 
\textsuperscript{101} MS 107, fols. 299v-330r ; Sercambi, pp. 291-371. 
\textsuperscript{102} Meek, \textit{Lucca, 1369-1400}. 

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emphasising the importance of the silk trade for the town’s economy. Blomquist considers the banking structures of medieval Lucca, and Leverotti provides a detailed overview of life in the contado. Nicolai’s and Savigni’s work on Lucchese confraternities will be invaluable for considering these groups. However, a broader composite perspective on the religious history of the town is lacking, as is specific historiography on the plague in Lucca during this time. I will address this, adding to the discussion of popular religion in Lucca as well as analysing the impact of the plague on the town throughout the period from 1340 to 1415. This will set the scene for the arrival of the Bianchi processions, and suggest ways in which pre-existing traditions affected the organisation of the devotions.

3. Summary of Political Situation of Pistoia

Pistoia’s political situation at the end of the fourteenth century was not favourable. As with Lucca, this political examination will set a base against which the Bianchi devotions will be analysed. Factional conflict had torn Pistoia and its contado apart on various occasions in the same way as in Lucca. After numerous invasions by external forces, Florence took control of Pistoia in 1351, retaining this jurisdiction for almost four centuries. The Pistoiese governmental committees continued to meet, but under Florentine supervision. Like in Lucca, the political system in Pistoia was based around various councils: the Anziani (eight members), the Council of Forty-One and the General Council of the People (100 members). These were administered by the Gonfaloniere della Giustizia, the Capitano del Popolo and the Podestà. Economically speaking, Pistoia’s stable start to the fourteenth century diminished as better communication opened up trading routes and it became overshadowed by Florence. Similar gabelle to Lucca were in effect, particularly on

103 Bratchel, pp. 176-9.
common food items, providing a major source of income for the town. Factional violence between the Cancellieri and the Panciatichi families overshadowed the turn of the fifteenth century. This led to a bloody civil war between the families in 1401-3, before a general amnesty in October 1403.\footnote{Herlihy, p. 230.} Thereafter, Florence increased its control of Pistoia, creating a period of relative peace in the city.

As seen with Lucca, establishing an accurate picture of the population of Pistoia at the end of the fourteenth century is challenging. Early records from the thirteenth century suggest a population of 34,000 in the countryside, although no comparable records survive for the town.\footnote{Ibid., p. 62.} By 1392, Herlihy’s estimate for the countryside had dropped to 11,000, falling by another 1,000 to 10,000 by 1401.\footnote{Ibid., p. 69, Table 1.} Dominici suggests that the urban population in 1399 stood at around 8,000, half of which perished in the plague the following year (p. 233). The first surviving comprehensive survey of the town is not until 1415, recording 1,090 hearths, suggesting a total of 3,900 inhabitants.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 75-6.} Herlihy also suggests a general decline after the Black Death. These broad strokes do not account for the severe depletion which must have occurred during plague epidemics and other natural disasters throughout the period in question.

As Lucca has Sercambi, so Pistoia has Luca Dominici, whose eye-witness account of the Bianchi provides a detailed account of the processions.\footnote{Dominici, Cronaca dei Bianchi.} Indeed, the whole first codex of Dominici’s chronicle is dedicated to the devotions, after which the second codex returns to his first-hand account of political history until 1402.\footnote{Dominici, Cronaca seconda.} This source provides a focussed view of the Bianchi processions and what happened immediately after the devotions, although it offers little information about the preceding years. Communal sources will be used to enrich Dominici’s account, such as town council meetings, confraternity records and the Opera of the cathedral.
Herlihy’s seminal study of Pistoia provides much of the background for the town in the medieval period.\(^{114}\) Milner highlights the troubled political situation of the town.\(^{115}\) Rauty and Tempestini’s works on the religious aspects of the town will be useful in piecing together a picture of the manifestation of popular piety in Pistoia, particularly in correlation with Vannucchi’s work on confraternities.\(^{116}\) Coturri and Chiappelli remain the canonical voices on Pistoiese history, particularly focussing on aspects of the history of medicine.\(^{117}\) Bringing these historiographies together with the primary sources will create a wider picture of Pistoiese life during the time period in question.

Politically speaking, Lucca and Pistoia were in a similar position at the end of the fourteenth century. This section establishes the initial basis for comparison. Both towns offer rich sets of sources for this time period, including chronicles and other archival documents. These will provide a useful overview of the landscape of each town in terms of popular piety and plague leading up to 1399. The towns were also both host to numerous Bianchi processions and consequently offer a valuable perspective on the period in question including the Bianchi activities. Lucca and Pistoia thus provide a substantial base for the first two case studies of the Bianchi processions at a local level.

4. Pilgrimage, Jubilee and Processions

The religious landscapes of Lucca and Pistoia were shaped by various factors. Pilgrimage will be examined first, considering the role of pilgrims passing through towns as well as the role of the host towns. This is particularly relevant as the Bianchi participants are frequently referred to as pilgrims, and will thus establish a basis for comparison. Jubilee will then be considered, delineating practices in Holy Years from pilgrimage more generally. The impact of pilgrimage on Lucca and

\(^{114}\) Herlihy.

\(^{115}\) Milner, pp. 312-32.


\(^{117}\) Enrico Coturri, 'Medici e medicina a Pistoia nel medioevo', Incontri Pistoiesi di Storia Arte Cultura, 13 (1982), 1-16; Alberto Chiappelli, Pistoia (Florence: Litografia Artistica Cartografica, 1923).
Pistoia will then be examined, considering this manifestation of popular piety as well as other processional practices. This will demonstrate pre-existing similarities in popular devotional practices, as well as important differences at a more precise, local level.

4.1 Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage in the middle ages was something of an institution, and usually involved a physical journey to a site of religious importance. As will be further discussed below, Lucca and Pistoia were places of pilgrimage in their own right and also sent out pilgrims to more famous centres, such as Rome, Compostela and the Holy Land. Pilgrimage was a formal endeavour, as pilgrims had to get permission to go, and wore what can be considered a uniform, or signa peregrinationis of a staff and a scrip.\footnote{Debra Birch, Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), p. 76.} They would also have to carry letters of recommendation to distinguish them from other travellers, although this was more common for pilgrims travelling overseas.\footnote{Christine Meek, 'Lucca and Pilgrimage in the Later Middle Ages: Two-Way Traffic', in Pilgrims and Politics: Rediscovering the Power of the Pilgrimage, ed. by Antón Pazos (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 103-18 (p. 108).} Pilgrims would usually rely on alms and charity to survive throughout the duration of their pilgrimage, sleeping in xenodochia or hospitals specially established for the care of pilgrims.

The most common purpose of a pilgrimage was personal penance. Participation was usually voluntary, in order to practice devotion or sometimes to seek a cure. Pilgrimage could also be used as a form of punishment, to ensure the atonement of the soul of the accused.\footnote{Mario Sensi, 'Pellegrinaggi votivi e vicari alla fine del medioevo: l’esempio umbro', Bollettino Storico della Città di Foligno, 16 (1992), 7-108 (p. 7).} On their journey, pilgrims existed in a liminal state, and the way to the site of pilgrimage was expected to be more arduous than the journey home, emphasising the difficulty expected in such an endeavour.\footnote{Victor Turner, Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), p. 22.} It was also possible for people to nominate others to go on pilgrimage in their stead, a particularly common practice with testaments, whereby a pilgrimage would be undertaken after the death of the testator for the benefit of his soul.
While a physical pilgrimage to a holy site was the most common form of the practice, virtual pilgrimage became increasingly popular to allow those who could not physically participate to achieve the same spiritual benefits. This would be accomplished by reading a book detailing the journey to the desired site of pilgrimage, usually the Holy Land, as well as the places to be visited once there. An early example of this is Petrarch’s *Itinerarium*, and the trend became more prevalent moving towards the sixteenth century. Books were created specifically with virtual pilgrimage in mind, with a large number of images and vivid descriptions to encourage a multisensory devotion. For example, those undertaking such a pilgrimage were encouraged to feel seasick while imagining being at sea. Virtual pilgrimage was usually specifically restricted to women living in enclosed orders. Nevertheless, this demonstrates that full, physical participation in a pilgrimage was not necessary to gain the indulgence, as long as a person participated in a virtual way to the best of their abilities. This will be an important consideration when comparing the intramural and itinerant activities of the Bianchi processions.

Pilgrimage was a common way of expressing piety in the middle ages, but the method of practice was open to personal choice. A physical journey to a holy site was the most common form, which could be performed for the soul of the pilgrim, or they could act as a proxy for another person. Echoes of this physical engagement will be seen throughout the activities of the Bianchi participants. Indeed, Webb describes the Bianchi activities as a ‘mosaic of mini-pilgrimages.’ The concept of virtual pilgrimage is also crucial for demonstrating a different means to achieve the same ends as pilgrimage, without enduring the physical strains of the journey. This will have implications for considering the different ways Bianchi participants joined in the processions.

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4.2 Jubilee

During a Jubilee or Holy Year, Jubilee pilgrims would descend on Rome and complete certain devotional activities in order to receive a plenary indulgence. This kind of pilgrimage is particularly relevant when discussing the Bianchi devotions, given the proximity of the devotions to the likely Holy Year of 1400. Pilgrims had to visit certain churches a certain number of times, as well as crossing the threshold of the Porta Santa.\textsuperscript{126} Inhabitants of Rome were required to visit a greater number of churches to counterbalance the fact that they did not have to travel to the city, demonstrating the importance of physical exertion. Dickson characterises Jubilee as a papally instigated popular revival, as large crowds were moved to participate in the events.\textsuperscript{127} The majority of pilgrims was made up of the laity, although the clergy maintained a degree of regulatory control. Another crucial aspect of Jubilees was relics, which would be shown to Jubilee pilgrims. Indeed, such were the crowds in 1350 that people were killed in the crush to see the sudario.

The first Jubilee was announced for the year 1300, and thereafter Jubilees were to occur once a century. This was changed in 1343 as a Jubilee was announced for 1350 and the frequency increased to once every 50 years. Notwithstanding the Black Death outbreak, pilgrims came in their thousands to Rome. Indeed, Michaud argues that this provided a legitimate alternative to the movement of flagellants of the same period.\textsuperscript{128} This demonstrates a collective need to express piety after the Black Death, as seen in the fervour achieved by the flagellants in 1349-50, but the 1350 Jubilee offered an option legitimised by the church. Sercambi adds a degree of scepticism to the events; while the laity may have been moved by spiritual fervour, he believed that the church only increased the Jubilee frequency to ‘raunare denari et tezoro,’ [gather money and treasure] making 17 million florins that year (Vol I., p. 97).

Another Jubilee was called in 1390, when it was decided to alter the frequency to once every 33 years to mimic the life of Christ, but as the decision was

\textsuperscript{128} Francine Michaud, 'La Peste, la peur et l'espoir: le pèlerinage jubilaire de romeux marseillais en 1350', \textit{Moyen Âge: Revue d'histoire et de philologie}, 104 (1998), 399-434 (p. 401).
taken in 1389, the following year was declared a Holy Year. Sercambi only references this Jubilee in his account of the 1400 celebrations, implying that the 1400 Jubilee was an extension of the 1390 event, as no new Bull had been issued (pp. 421-2). Part of the confusion in 1390 was due to the Great Schism, and those following the Avignonese Antipope were not encouraged to go to Rome in that year, creating an expectation for a Jubilee in 1400 for them. Sercambi continues to lament the lack of religious intention behind the Jubilees, and the reduced actions required to gain a plenary indulgence, making it too easy. The confusion around the Jubilee in 1400 will be considered in Chapter Five, also addressing the actions of pilgrims heading to Rome in that year and the draw of the plenary indulgence.

As Michaud notes, there is a curious coincidence between occurrences of plague and years of Jubilee.\textsuperscript{129} It does however seem to be chance at work here rather than a deliberate conflation of the two, particularly as Jubilee years were usually for a single calendar year and the plague epidemics were never as neat in their duration. While these plagues did inspire acts of popular piety, these tended to be less coordinated than the Jubilees, as seen with the flagellants after the Black Death.

Jubilee pilgrims can be considered distinct from those undertaking pilgrimage more generally due to the Papal mandate and promise of a plenary indulgence.\textsuperscript{130} Otherwise, they engaged in many similar practices; while Jubilee pilgrims would complete certain actions within Rome, other pilgrims would visit certain sites at their chosen place of pilgrimage to achieve the indulgences offered there. Sercambi depicts both sets of pilgrims in the same manner.\textsuperscript{131} While his Jubilee pilgrims converge specifically on Rome, they are dressed in the same way as other pilgrims throughout his manuscript, wearing scrips and hats, and carrying staffs. The practice was important, with numerous sites available for pilgrimage, and a virtual alternative for those who were not physically capable of completing the journey. This analysis will shed light on how the Bianchi participants behaved, particularly in relation to the Holy Year of 1400. The proximity of the Jubilee Year

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 400.
\textsuperscript{131} Banti and Cristiani Testi, pp. 11 (Jubilee 1300), 19 (Jubilee 1350), 218 (Jubilee 1400), 219 (general pilgrims).
to the Bianchi devotions reveals a complicated relationship, which will be further addressed in Chapter Five.

4.3 Processions in Lucca

Lucca’s situation on the Via Francigena meant that the town was an important stop off point for pilgrims on their way to Rome. Lucca also housed an important religious artefact of its own: the Volto Santo, kept in the cathedral of San Martino. The Volto Santo or Holy Face of Lucca is a wooden sculpture of Christ on the cross, believed to have been made just after the crucifixion. The Volto Santo arrived in Lucca in around 780, and performed numerous miracles, making the town one of the largest pilgrimage centres in the Italian peninsula from the twelfth century onwards. Such was the draw of the Volto Santo that it became a strong symbol of Lucchese identity, as well as attracting a continuous stream of pilgrims. The majority of pilgrims, especially those travelling longer distances, were of a high social status. However, there were eleven hospitals within the walls of Lucca specifically for pilgrims, suggesting that poorer pilgrims made their way to the city too. Some of this pilgrim traffic was likely travellers stopping off on their way along the Via Francigena. Pilgrims also set off from Lucca, particularly on the bequest of someone who had died. Indeed, these records significantly outnumber those of Lucchese going on pilgrimage in person, although this could be because the testaments were, by definition, written down.

The Volto Santo was crucial to local traditions as it was commemorated annually in processions on 14 September. The populace would participate in a luminaria on the vigil of the feast, the regulations for which were codified as early as 1308. The procession was precisely orchestrated, and was announced a fortnight beforehand to ensure that there would be sufficient wax for candles. Participation was compulsory for Lucchese citizens between 14 and 70 years of age, except those

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134 Meek, Lucca, 1369-1400, p. 112.
135 These processions are depicted in Lucca, Archivio Capitolare, Codice Tucci-Tognetti, fols. 5v-6r. These images show first men, then women processing, and then a procession to the Volto Santo itself.

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who were infirm.\textsuperscript{136} If participation was not possible for another reason, a person was expected to send an offering in their stead, as those who missed the procession entirely were fined 40 soldi. Participants gathered outside the church of San Frediano and order was maintained during the processions as the penalty for any crimes committed during the processions was quintupled. A processional order was also followed: the clergy, then the laity organised according to where they lived, then those who governed the town. This was just one of the processions which formed part of the liturgical year in Lucca, but as the feast day of the town, it was a particularly extravagant affair.

Feast day processions throughout the liturgical year would set off from the cathedral of San Martino, such as for Christmas, Easter and Corpus Christi day.\textsuperscript{137} These processions would involve candles like those for the Volto Santo, and would also follow a specific route through the city, before returning to the cathedral for mass.\textsuperscript{138} The feast of the Holy Cross was a crucial feast for Lucca, and the ordinances of 1348 state how many candles and how much wax each area dependent on the city was to bring to the luminaria.\textsuperscript{139} Sercambi often uses these religious festivals as temporal reference points, and also specifically notes the liturgical practices for Palm Sunday (Vol. I, pp. 161-2). Peace was made between citizens, \textit{Te Deum laudiamo} [sic] was sung and there was a procession with blessed olive branches, creating the mind-set for the rest of Holy Week. These feasts were important temporal markers for the population, and provided an opportunity to publicly express piety.

The Volto Santo created a strong pull for pilgrims to come to Lucca, generating a steady traffic through the town. The holy object also had a processional tradition within the city, with a carefully managed celebration involving the whole population. While a manifestation of popular piety, the obligatory and codified nature of this procession indicates how order could be imposed on a popular

\textsuperscript{136} Almerico Guerra, \textit{Notizie storiche del Volto Santo di Lucca} (Lucca: Tipografia Archivio Santo Paolino, 1881), p. 121.
\textsuperscript{138} Martino Giusti, 'L'antica liturgia lucchese', in \textit{Lucca, il Volto Santo e la civiltà medioevale}, (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi Editore, 1984), pp. 21-44.
\textsuperscript{139} Lucca, ASL, MS Statuti del Comune di Lucca 5, fols. 46v-51r.
outpouring of faith in order to ensure the smooth running of the celebration. Other
religious festivals were celebrated with similar pomp, although the Volto Santo feast
bridged the gap between civic and religious piety through its role as the annual feast
of Lucca. Popular piety in Lucca was particularly made manifest through these
various devotions to the Volto Santo, whether by local residents or pilgrims from
further afield. These processions and traditions will form the basis of comparison
later in the thesis, particularly when considering the processional order of the
Bianchi devotions in Chapter Four.

4.4 Processions in Pistoia
Pistoia was not directly situated on any main pilgrimage routes, although it attracted
pilgrims due to the relic of St James held in the cathedral of San Zeno. This relic was
obtained from Compostela in the 1140s by the bishop of Pistoia, although the precise
nature of the object is unknown.140 Santiago de Compostela was the principal site of
pilgrimage for the saint, although Pistoia became an important stop off point for a
steady stream of pilgrims. Pilgrims coming to show their devotion to the saint would
often be marked with his symbol, a nicchio [cockleshell] sewn onto their clothes or
scrips.141 The pilgrim traffic was further encouraged in 1395, when the bishop of
Pistoia won a permanent indulgence attached to the Chapel of St James.142 Pistoia’s
economy gained sustainability from pilgrim donations to the cathedral.

A ceremony would take place for pilgrims leaving Pistoia, which after 1362
was usually on 2 February, the feast of the Purification of the Virgin. Pilgrims were
given their staffs, which were blessed, and would be given a small amount of money
as alms.143 The rate of alms could be significantly lower if pilgrims did not attend
this ceremony. Pilgrimage was also used as a punishment; Webb notes one particular
instance of a Pistoiese man being pardoned for stealing 22 florins, on condition that
he went on pilgrimage to Compostela.144

141 The cockleshell was the symbol of St James.
142 Herlihy, p. 255.
143 Webb, ‘St James’, p. 211.
144 Ibid., p. 215.
The Pistoiese cult of St James was begun in 1145, and gradually evolved into a processional tradition within the town on his feast day, 25 July. These festivities were as carefully organised as the processions for the Volto Santo in Lucca. The whole population participated in a compulsory vigil celebration, with a fine of 20 denari for those who did not attend, excepting ‘i bambini, i poveri, i malati e i vecchi.’ The processional order would be announced a week beforehand: firstly the clergy, followed by the magistrates, then those holding the banners, then the town officials and then the guilds, arranged one by one. Then, the rest of the laity would follow, arranged according to where they lived. This structure around guilds rather than, for example, religious confraternities, demonstrates the early codification of the processions, which retained a civic focus. Each group would carry a palio [decorative cloth] which was to be laid on the altar of St James once the procession reached the cathedral. Order was maintained during the processions by the forces of the Podestà and Capitano who patrolled throughout the crowds. Once the procession had reached the cathedral of San Zeno, mass would be said. After this, the celebrations would continue for a week, including the spectacle of the corsa del palio race, separating the initial religious ceremonies from the more profane entertainment enjoyed for the rest of the week. Another part of the festivities would be the opening of prisons, and a decision would be reached a fortnight beforehand on whom to release. Thus, these were not simply processions through the streets, but complicated, multifaceted celebrations which combined popular piety with civic ritual.

Other feast days were financed by the cathedral Opera, such as Easter and Christmas as well as Santa Croce [feast of the Holy Cross] and the festa della corona [feast of the crown of thorns]. The money was usually spent on wax, food and wine, usually including saffron and pepper at Easter, suggesting that the idea of a feast was taken literally. In 1398, ‘stoffa per una colomba’ was purchased for the feast of Pentecost, suggesting a visual focus was created for the celebrations. Rauty notes

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146 For further details see Gai, pp. 13-15.
147 Pistoia, Archivio Capitolare, MS M3, fol. 13v.
the importance of music for these festivities, which would involve singing and instruments, indicating that they were multisensory spectacles.\textsuperscript{148}

Pistoia was therefore the site of numerous codified rituals surrounding the celebrations for the feast of St. James. The fact that the town housed these relics meant that it was an important site not only for locals, but also pilgrims on their way to Rome or Compostela, leading to a steady traffic which was crucial to the town’s economy. This study of Pistoia also reveals an established processional and festival tradition, for celebrations throughout the church year, similar to Lucca. Moreover, it provides further material for comparison to the processional order of the Bianchi devotions at Pistoia, and their activities within the city.

Pilgrimage, Jubilee and processions were therefore key expressions of popular piety. While there are few records in Lucca and Pistoia regarding Jubilee years, with the exception of Sercambi’s moral comments, both towns sent out and received numerous pilgrims throughout the latter half of the fourteenth century and moving into the fifteenth century. Indeed, pilgrimage was important for both towns, and each had a religious object around which pilgrims would flock, and for which there was an established processional tradition. Lucca and Pistoia were therefore used to pilgrims passing through, and had a particular way of performing devotion throughout the liturgical year based on local traditions. The processions demonstrate a manifestation of popular piety, although one which did not evolve from its initial codification in both towns, maintaining civic divisions in the organisation. These elements can also be applied to Tuscany more generally, as the Via Francigena wound its way through the area. Many other Tuscan towns had relics which drew in pilgrims, such as the girdle of the Virgin at Prato. Pilgrim traffic went through numerous locations throughout the region, drawn in by these religious objects and as pilgrims stopped off on their way to bigger centres. These methods of expressing piety were applicable across a wide area, throughout what would become the route for the Bianchi processions. This section therefore illustrates the usual civic expressions of popular piety in each town, which will be compared to the activities of the Bianchi participants at Lucca and Pistoia in later chapters.

\textsuperscript{148} Rauty, p. 39.
5. Religious Confraternities

Itinerant forms of popular piety could be fleeting and not have a lasting impact. A more codified, fixed forum for expressing popular piety was found in religious confraternities. This exploration of confraternities will highlight the ways that this form of popular piety was realised in Lucca and Pistoia, and the differences in its manifestation. Examining confraternities will also provide a basis for comparison for Bianchi activities in each town, bearing in mind also that confraternities often formed part of the Bianchi processions in their own right. These confraternities will demonstrate a method of enacting popular piety which went beyond single feast days and processions and was more a way of life. Nevertheless, this examination will indicate a clear difference between the Bianchi devotions and religious confraternities.

Defining confraternities is notoriously difficult; it seems that each scholar has his own criteria and categories for the groups. Meersseman’s definition of a group which met periodically in the same place with a spiritual aim, governed by statutes is a useful starting point. 149 Black emphasises the voluntary aspect of joining confraternities, as well as the commonality of the religious life of the members. 150 Henderson identifies five main categories of confraternity: laudesi, flagellant and those devoted to hospitals, and later confraternities of fanciulli and artisans. 151 Overall, the main criterion for defining a confraternity is that it self-identified as such, and beyond that, there was a great deal of flexibility in terms of membership and practices for each group. While each confraternity might have had a main focus, such as self-flagellation, this was not exclusive, as confraternities could engage in a variety of different activities. Nevertheless, as Henderson points out, these distinctions were made by those in the confraternities, in their documents, demonstrating that such identification was a contemporary concern.

Generally considered lay organisations, confraternities relied on members of the clergy to perform rites such as masses and extreme unction for the dead. The

151 Henderson, Piety and Charity pp. 34-7. This list refers to the fifteenth century and the final two groups are not found before the Bianchi devotions.
majority of those in confraternities were adult males, but this was not an exclusive
distinction. Some confraternities were made up of men and women, although it is
likely that female members had limited roles and privileges in mixed groups, and
there were occasional female-only groups.\textsuperscript{152} Some flagellant confraternities did
have female members, but they were not permitted to participate in public self-
flagellation. Membership in confraternities often included a cross-section of society,
although there were certain groups with a select, elite membership, and others were
attached to a particular guild or profession.

Confraternities have usually been studied within a particular place such as
Henderson’s studies of Florence, Terpstra’s of Bolgona and Banker’s of Borgo San
Sepolcro.\textsuperscript{153} These studies demonstrate the role of a confraternity in the life of a
town, also focussing on the spiritual and religious activities of their members,
demonstrating how a study of the microcosm has larger implications. Terpstra in
particular highlights the importance of considering confraternities as part of the
religious tapestry of a town rather than an isolated curiosity, which I will be
continuing here.\textsuperscript{154} More recently, collaborative volumes on confraternities have
been published, such as Gazzini’s, although the chapters within continue this local
focus.\textsuperscript{155} Black’s overview of sixteenth-century confraternities takes a broader
geographical approach, examining a select few cities throughout the Italian
peninsula.\textsuperscript{156} Lazar notes that confraternities can be considered a ‘barometer’ of
popular piety and social change, and as such provide a useful insight into the running
of a town.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{152} Black, pp. 34-5. For example, female members of a confraternity in fifteenth-century Perugia had
to be married to a male member of the same group.
\textsuperscript{153} Henderson, \textit{Piety and Charity}; Nicholas Terpstra \textit{Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in
Renaissance Bologna} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); James Banker, \textit{Death in the
Community: Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages}
\textsuperscript{154} Nicholas Terpstra ‘Death and Dying in Renaissance Confraternities’, in \textit{Crossing the Boundaries:
Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities}, ed. by Konrad
Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 1991), pp. 179-200 (p. 195).
\textsuperscript{155} AAVV, \textit{Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze}, ed. by Maria Gazzini
(Florence: Firenze University Press, 2009).
\textsuperscript{156} Black.
\textsuperscript{157} Lance Lazar, ‘Belief, Devotion, and Memory in Early Modern Italian Confraternities’,
My study of confraternities will build on these existing works, looking at Lucca and Pistoia in detail, providing the first comparative study of confraternities in these towns. I will draw on confraternity sources to provide information about membership, as well as inventories and expenses lists for the groups. I will then use other sources that record bequests to confraternities, which will highlight the presence of the groups within the town. Using these documents in combination will reveal information about the confraternities and the way that they fitted into the life of the laity, who left bequests to them as an act of piety in their wills. Confraternities will only be considered until 1399, as the Bianchi devotions had a major impact on the groups in Lucca and Pistoia, which will be considered as part of the legacy of the movement in Chapter Five.

5.1 Confraternities in Lucca

The city of Lucca had confraternities long before the arrival of the Bianchi devotions. Nicolai counts thirteen confraternities in existence in Lucca before 1399, the oldest of which, the confraternity of San Bartolomeo delle Sette Arti, was founded in 1194. These confraternities performed numerous functions including self-flagellation, overseeing pilgrim hospitals and in the case of Sant’Apollonia, blood-letting, as the confraternity was made up of bassi chirurgi [equivalent to barber surgeons]. The groups were founded around a particular saint or holy object, and were sometimes sparked by a particular event, such as the miraculously bleeding crucifix of Santa Giulia. Therefore, while confraternities were founded in dedication to particular saints, particular events could also inspire their creation and subsequent activities throughout the liturgical year.

During the suppression of Lucchese confraternities during the Napoleonic period the groups were disbanded and many records were destroyed. As such, documentation pertaining to Lucchese confraternities is not abundant. Savigni, while generally looking beyond 1400, highlights the relationship between these lay groups and the church throughout their early development in Lucca. I will briefly focus

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158 Nicolai, pp. 1-10.
159 Ibid., p. 7.
160 Savigni, pp. 2-3.
on two Lucchese confraternities, the Compagnia della Croce and the Compagnia della Maddalena, to highlight the practices of such groups and their role in Lucca.

The flagellant Compagnia della Croce was founded in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. The presence of a laudario in this archive suggests that singing formed part of their devotional activities.\textsuperscript{161} The confraternity initially oversaw a hospital and took on a new remit in 1385 to visit those in prison and care for the poor.\textsuperscript{162} The religious activities of the confraternity are further indicated by a missal, which contains a calendar of saints’ days.\textsuperscript{163} The confraternity was governed by elected officials, although these roles were updated regularly, as the initial roles of priore, sopriore and discreti were later added to with sindichi, visitatori, a camerlingo and inviatori.\textsuperscript{164} This change in organisational structure hints at the change in outlook of the confraternity in the last quarter of the fourteenth century to overseeing care of prisoners and the poor.

There was usually at least one priest associated with the confraternity, whose function was presumably to perform the ecclesiastical rites. The expenses reveal that mass was said for the confraternity roughly once a month and non-attendance had to be formally requested, demonstrating obligatory participation in the rites of the group for members.\textsuperscript{165} In 1340, there were 22 members, and this number was relatively consistent until the 1370s. The effects of the Black Death are evident, as membership fell to 12 in 1348. The dead were replaced soon after, and crossed off the lists. The membership during this period was quite consistent, as most members, once their name was first mentioned, featured on the lists until their death, at which point a replacement was usually found. After Lucca became a republic in 1369, there was a small hiatus in membership, although the following years saw an enormous surge in participation, beginning with 30 members in 1370 and building to 100 in 1376, before returning to a more steady 22 in 1377. This unusual occurrence is difficult to explain- these names were not then crossed off the lists, and did not recur in later years. This was not a year of plague in Lucca, although it was a year of

\textsuperscript{161} Lucca, ASL, MS Compagnia della Croce 1.
\textsuperscript{162} Lucca, ASL, Diplomatico, MS Compagnia della Croce 27-03-1385, fol. 1r.
\textsuperscript{163} Lucca, ASL, MS Compagnia della Croce 2.
\textsuperscript{164} Lucca, ASL, MS Compagnia della Croce 7, fol. 69r.
\textsuperscript{165} Lucca, ASL, MS Compagnia della Croce 6, fol. 18r.
constant floods and severe weather. The city bell broke in this year, perhaps creating a demand for a place in which the population would be able to act collectively in an expression of popular piety.

The professions of some members are recorded, including carpenters, weavers, grain sellers and spinners, as well as more prestigious occupations like lawyers and a Podestà. This gives an indication of the diverse spectrum of society represented in the confraternity, although all members were male. The main expenses of the confraternity were for food and drink for feasts, echoing the cathedral’s spending in buying wine, pepper and saffron for Easter, the most expensive time of year for the group. They also later bought grain and took it to be milled, and usually baked into bread, to take to the prisons. In 1392, the confraternity hosted a cena dei poveri, buying the requisite food and drink for this, demonstrating another method for enacting their new task of care for the poor. Thus the activities of this confraternity demonstrate a cross section of society engaging in socially conscious activities alongside their religious devotions.

The Compagnia della Maddalena, another flagellant confraternity, was founded in 1336, and was linked to the Franciscans. In the fourteenth century, the confraternity was in charge of the hospital of San Francesco, which housed pilgrims and the homeless. The majority of the confraternity documents reveal bequests of property, but others indicate aspects of the devotion of the testators. A testament in 1348 notes that the confraternity met in San Francesco which was a ‘luogo della disciplina,’ and bequeathed candles, grain and a tovallia buona [large cloth] to the confraternity. This will also demonstrates the interesting issue of nomenclature for confraternities. Usually, they are referred to as a compagnia, but in one instance here, fraternita was initially written and then crossed out and replaced with compagnia. This could indicate that compagnia was a formal term for the groups, although the original emphasises the fraternal bond between the members.

While these two confraternities generally represent a cross section of society, some groups in Lucca were more restrictive. For instance, the confraternity of San

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166 Lucca, ASL, MS Compagnia della Croce 36, fol. 42r.
168 Lucca, ASL, Diplomatico, MS Compagnia della Maddalena 08-05-1348, fol. 1r.
Lorenzo, a flagellant group, only admitted elite citizens to its ranks.\textsuperscript{169} There was a wealth of confraternities in Lucca before the arrival of the Bianchi devotions. Their part in the religious tapestry of the town was important at particular points in the liturgical year, in participating in processions, as well as their weekly or monthly meetings and devotional activities. The confraternities took on a social dimension as part of their religious outlook, with some looking after hospitals or the poor. Thus, these confraternities provide a brief view into the popular piety of the laity in the town, and the broad variety of activities performed by such groups. Both of the groups discussed here are defined as flagellant confraternities, but also had a different secondary remit, demonstrating the difficulty in precisely defining a confraternity. Moreover, malleability over time is also significant, as the groups adapted to the needs of the town. The effects of natural disasters can also be seen in decreases in the membership of the first group. The Bianchi processions will also be seen to adapt to the local contexts in which the devotions were adopted.

\textbf{5.2 Confraternities in Pistoia}

Pistoia was also home to numerous religious confraternities, and Herlihy postulates that despite and perhaps because of the frequent factional violence between the Guelph factions within the city, the piety of the laity was ‘authentic and fervent.’\textsuperscript{170} Vannucchi observes the correlation between Holy Orders and confraternities in the town, counting roughly twenty confraternities in Pistoia by 1400.\textsuperscript{171} Some churches were home to more than one confraternity, for example the churches of San Francesco and San Lorenzo were each home to one \textit{laudesi} and one \textit{disciplinati} confraternity dedicated to the titular saint.

Further information about Pistoiese confraternities is found in the testamentary bequests to the Opera of St James. While sporadic in nature, these records reveal the existence and nature of some confraternities. It was relatively common for a testament to remember more than one confraternity, for example one Domina Bice left money to the \textit{laudesi} of San Francesco as well as a confraternity of

\textsuperscript{169} Savigni, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{170} Herlihy, p. 245.
\textsuperscript{171} Vannucchi, p. 143.
San Domenico in 1361.\textsuperscript{172} Also, it was more common to leave money to flagellant confraternities than to any other sort of group. Communal documentation reveals the blurring of lines between religious and civic authorities in instigating these acts of popular piety. For example the confraternity of Santa Lucia, founded in 1359, had to petition the General Council of the People to use the altar in the church of San Giovanni.\textsuperscript{173} The Ceppo confraternity was also responsible for the hospital of the Ceppo, which will be further discussed in section 6.2. I will now focus briefly on two confraternities: Santa Maria dei Servi and Santa Maria delle Porrine, two Pistoiese confraternities with different remits for which sources survive.

The flagellant confraternity of Santa Maria dei Servi indicated their remit with a design of two crossed whips on the front of their documents. The group had a small organisational structure, with a prior, two \textit{camarlinghi} [sic] and four \textit{consiglieri} as officers of the confraternity. The main expenditure of the confraternity was paying priests for the masses which occurred roughly once a month. Money was also spent on celebrations, particularly for Easter as well as for wine for the company ‘quando s’andava per li morti.’\textsuperscript{174} This implies that the confraternity was also involved in funerary rites, corroborated by the book for the office of the dead and an \textit{archa} [casket] in their inventory.

This inventory from the start of the fifteenth century contains other items of interest in its 68 entries.\textsuperscript{175} There were numerous \textit{libri}, such as missals, as well as confraternity statutes, testaments and expenses. There were also various \textit{tavole}, presumably images, including one to ‘dare le pace.’\textsuperscript{176} Finally, the confraternity owned three ostrich eggs, which were precious, rare items. While their purpose is not recorded, they may have been suspended from the ceiling of where the confraternity met, and used as candle holders.\textsuperscript{177} The presence of these items in the inventory suggests a generous bequest or gift to the confraternity. This confraternity therefore

\textsuperscript{172} Pistoia, Archivio di Stato, MS Opera di San Iacopo 33, fol. 19r.
\textsuperscript{173} Pistoia, ASP, MS Provvisioni Comune 12, fol. 38r.
\textsuperscript{174} Pistoia, ASP, MS Patrimonio Ecclesiatico B 376, fol. 4r.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., fols 1r-v.
\textsuperscript{176} This has Eucharistic overtones, signifying a connection with the peace made during mass before communion could be taken.
is similar to that of the Compagnia della Croce in Lucca, performing rites of self-flagellation as well as another, more civically minded charitable undertaking in caring for the dead. Again, while self-flagellation was the main identifying feature of the group, another endeavour, looking after the dead, was also crucial to the confraternity’s identity and function.

The confraternity of Santa Maria delle Porrine included men and women. Their statutes from 1293 indicate the sort of rules that members of a religious confraternity would be expected to follow. For example, they were not allowed to drink in a tavern in which there were ‘meretrices’ or ‘persone infames’ [sic]. The organisational structure of the confraternity included four captains, who had to carry torches in the processions, and at least two ceroferalii [candle bearers], who would carry candles before the bodies of dead confraternity members. These codified elements of confraternal belonging stretched beyond the bounds of the meetings of the group to also affect the daily life of members. While the record is from a century before the arrival of the Bianchi devotions in Lucca, this demonstrates an early example of confraternal activity in Pistoia, and the seriousness with which membership in such an organisation was taken. Furthermore, this is evidence of a mixed confraternity which did not self-flagellate, indicating an expression of popular piety open to both sexes.

There were numerous confraternities in Pistoia by the turn of the fifteenth century, and a large majority of them were flagellant. Different confraternities could meet in the same church and indeed be dedicated to the same saint. The groups were distinguishable by their defining practice of singing laude or self-flagellation. The specific requests of some testaments demonstrate the wider function of these confraternities, involving them more in the civic life of the town as well as their private meetings and rites. Confraternities were expected to participate in the life of the town, in public displays of popular piety, but also practiced private devotional rites just for their members. The secondary functions of these confraternities were generally civic-minded, in caring for the sick, travellers or the dead, thus providing a communal service as well as an outlet for the piety of the members of the groups.

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178 Pistoia, ASP, Documenti Vari, MS 7, fols. 40v-41r.
Moreover, membership in a confraternity was a serious commitment, which was expected to have an impact on the everyday life of a member, not only during religious ceremonies.

Thus, these religious confraternities in Lucca and Pistoia can be considered a barometer of the religious life in each town, at least as a demonstration of popular piety and its role in civic life. Both towns were home to similar religious confraternities, who were involved in various endeavours, suggesting that the idea of a confraternity was relatively consistent in both towns, although flexible depending on the remit of the group. Indeed, all of the confraternities discussed in more detail demonstrate a comparable organisational structure, and a civic outlook in addition to confraternal religious rites. The confraternities discussed here are just the tip of the iceberg for these towns, as a more complete study of their confraternities would be necessary to examine their practices and membership further. These groups demonstrate the way in which clergy and laity could work together in this expression of piety in a controlled environment, which was approved by the church and often the commune. Also, the membership could include people from many strands of society all united towards the same goal, which would be unusual in any another context, indicating the uniting effect of popular piety for these confraternities.

The membership numbers of the groups as well as the number of confraternities indicates a significant desire to express piety in this manner, which is often echoed in testamentary bequests to the groups. Membership in a confraternity was not simply a matter of attendance; a particular mode of living was to be adopted both during meetings as well as in daily life for the members. The public role of the confraternity was both civic and religious, publicly performing piety in the numerous liturgical processions throughout the year as well as overseeing hospitals and the like. These four confraternities discussed do not aid in a definition of a religious confraternity, as all have different functions, regulations and structures. Nevertheless, this variety is important, as all self-identified as confraternities, a crucial element in how these groups must be analysed. Their malleability over time is also significant, demonstrating how the groups could adapt to civic needs and pressures, as well as indicating the threat of natural disasters to their membership.
figures. These confraternities therefore demonstrate the popular expression of piety within a controlled environment, and subject to particular expectations. Each confraternity was a unit within itself, but it is difficult to compare confraternities, whether within the same town or between Lucca and Pistoia on a like for like basis as each was unique in its dedication, function and secondary civic remit. This will have an important impact on the way that the Bianchi devotions are considered, particularly as they changed from town to town.

6. Plague and Public Health

Plague was a constant threat throughout the second half of the fourteenth century, not only in Tuscany, but across Europe. The Black Death of 1348 has been the subject of most scholarly attention, although there were pestilential outbreaks at least once a decade thereafter, the most potent in 1362-3, 1373-4, 1383-4, 1390, 1397-1401 and 1410. Carmichael and Cohn have looked at fourteenth-century outbreaks in Bologna and Siena, but there is little other historiography for plagues in the Italian peninsula in the period up to 1415.\textsuperscript{179} Many studies have been devoted to the epidemiology of plague, but the emphasis here will be the medieval reaction to the outbreaks.\textsuperscript{180} It is unlikely that each outbreak was an episode of the same disease, and yet all were referred to as ‘plague’ by those who described the events. This section will focus on plague outbreaks in the period of 1340 to 1415 in Lucca and Pistoia, using chronicle accounts and town records. This will provide a broad background against which to compare the ‘moria dei Bianchi’ of 1399-1400.

The relationship between the Bianchi devotions and the plague is intrinsic to a study of the movement, but has been under-assessed by previous scholars. Corradi’s nineteenth-century correlation between the Bianchi processions and the plague is a useful tool, but many new sources have now come to light.\textsuperscript{181} The plague was a constant theme for the Bianchi participants, both theoretically in terms of the


origin stories and literally, as the disease struck before the end of the processions. The precise relationship between the Bianchi devotions and the plague is complicated, particularly taking the chronological and geographical spread of the disease into account. Plague had already begun in 1397 in the north of the Italian peninsula, although it seems that Sercambi and Dominici considered this a separate outbreak to the one simultaneous with the Bianchi devotions. In Genoa however, where there was plague in 1397, there was no recurrence in 1399-1400, and this is where the problems begin: trying to correlate the reality of plague at the end of the fourteenth century with the threat of plague the Bianchi participants were trying to combat. I will consider the spread of the plague in 1399 and 1400 and the reaction of chroniclers. This section will highlight the outbreak at the time of the Bianchi devotions in light of other plague epidemics throughout the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

Public health structures in each town and the governmental response will also be considered. The medieval hospital was not a straightforward establishment, as the term could refer to any number of organisations, caring for the sick and dying, or pilgrims stopping on their travels, although the focus here will be on caring for the sick. Henderson’s study of Florentine hospitals has demonstrated a significant increase in donations during the Black Death.\textsuperscript{182} Henderson also notes that these institutions fitted into a broader spectrum of public health, or what he terms a ‘medical marketplace’ including physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, wise women and miraculous shrines.\textsuperscript{183} It is also important to remember that while these institutions cared for the sick, they were not solely secular, but rather relied on a religious framework embedded in their methods of healing and caring for the sick and needy.

6.1 Lucca
A minor plague hit Lucca in 1340, swiftly followed by a famine in 1346. Sercambi noted that these ‘acts of God’ were due to the sins of the people, although rather than turning to penitence, mankind continued to do worse and worse deeds (Vol. I, p. 92).


\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., p. xxv.
The Black Death then struck in 1348, Sercambi blaming the lack of penitent response to the famine, although citing corrupt air as the reason for the disease, and indicating a death rate of 80% (Vol. I., pp. 95-6). The Anziani continued to meet regularly throughout the first half of 1348, and held elections as normal. The plague is first mentioned on 6 June, and by 11 July, the hospital was in great need. The town went into special measures, and began expanding cemeteries and building more hospitals to cope with the enormous demand. 184 The contado surrounding Lucca suffered too, and as with most European cities after the Black Death, there were problems with depopulation due to the high mortality and people moving to seek their fortune elsewhere. 1363 saw another large outbreak of plague, Sercambi reported it as another act of God, as punishment for cruel and bitter warfare (Vol. I. p. 117). He notes, in common with many other sources that this epidemic particularly struck children under 15. As such, the town councils were not overtly affected, and continued to meet as usual throughout the outbreak.

Sercambi places the next plague in 1371, specifically citing the start date as 8 September, the feast of the birth of the Virgin. While this dates the outbreak much earlier than sources for plague nearby, Sercambi’s assertion that the disease lasted for 25 months takes the epidemic into 1373, when other towns were also reporting plague (Vol. I, p. 206). The chronicler also mentions the contado for the first time in relation to the plague, indicating concern with the area surrounding Lucca. He also offers more information as to the nature of the disease, noting *anguinaie sossitelli*, *bolle* and *faoni* [groin swellings, blisters and pustules] as the cause of death. Sercambi’s *Novelle*, inspired by Boccaccio’s *Decameron* detail a group fleeing this particular plague and telling stories. 185 This work explains Sercambi’s particular interest in this outbreak, although interestingly, Sercambi avoids Boccaccio’s term to describe the disease symptoms, *gavoccioli* [swellings], although he does concur with Boccaccio that they occurred in the groin, ‘nella anguinaia’. 186

184 Leverotti, p. 79.
185 Sercambi, *Novelliere*. The Boccaccian influence in these stories is unmistakable. While Sercambi explicitly connects this work with the plague of 1374, it is likely that he composed it later, possibly during the plague in 1399-1400.
Sercambi notes that about half the population of Lucca died, but that many also fled to escape the disease, returning only at the close of 1372 (Vol. I. p. 208). The devastation of the disease is further indicated by an act passed in 1374, reinstating the right of a lay person to hear confession in case of necessity and lack of a priest.\(^{187}\) Such statutes were common at the time of the Black Death, and the recapitulation of this law during this plague suggests a similar degree of devastation, as well as a lack of clergy remaining in towns to perform this duty. Lucca was struck by famine in 1374, and as a result of this in combination with the plague outbreak, Lucca offered immunity from taxes to peasants coming to work as farmers to provide for the town for the subsequent two years.\(^{188}\)

The 1383 epidemic saw Sercambi continue his concern for the contado. Again, he notes the diversity in the diseases, stating that it was ‘una morìa d'anguinae e altre pestilenze’ and that it struck the whole population, lasting a full year (Vol. I., p. 243). He notes that those who could do so fled to other places to escape the disease. His final thought is to thank God for deciding to end the plague, which had left Lucca and the contado nudi di persone. 1390 is also mentioned as a plague year, Sercambi citing the reasons for the disease again as discord between people (Vol. I., p. 260). The symptoms of anguinae sosstelli, bolle and faoni are mentioned, as seen in the 1370s. People left Lucca in October for Pietrasanta, implying that this city was free of the disease at the time, although there was a severe mortality rate in Lucca. This is also the first time that Sercambi takes his report of the plague outside a brief section devoted entirely to an outbreak of the disease, this interweaving suggesting a more diaristic turn to his writing than before (Vol. I, p. 266). Extra defence costs during the plagues of 1383 and 1390, demonstrate the problem of depopulation, as the town was more open to attack.\(^{189}\)

Sercambi notes another plague in 1397 in Genoa and the surrounding area, which corresponds with Stella’s description of the disease (pp. 64-5).\(^{190}\) He again blames the sins of mankind for this disease, particularly citing the Great Schism and

\(^{187}\) AAVV, *Memorie e documenti per servire all'istoria del principato Lucchese* (Lucca: Francesco Bertini, 1813-1870), IV, p. 182.

\(^{188}\) Meek, *Lucca, 1369-1400*, p. 88.

\(^{189}\) Ibid., p. 69.

\(^{190}\) Stella, p. 215.
continuing war between Christians. The symptoms of the disease are described as *anguinae sossitelli*, striking men, women and children alike. As the epidemic was not present in Tuscany, those there were not motivated by the disease to stop sinning. Unusually for these plague sections, Sercambi finishes with a prayer to God to pardon those who do not understand the importance of living well, and imploring God that he will not visit the plague upon them. Sercambi also specifically recalls the plagues that God visited upon the Pharaoh, which concluded in death, adding a biblical dimension to the suffering. Thus, when plague struck, it was generally perceived to be the enactment of the wrath of God against the sins of mankind. Moreover, the main reaction appears to have been fleeing the disease, rather than any attempt at rectifying sinful behaviour.

The plague which broke out during the Bianchi processions began in Lucca in late 1399, and continued its hold throughout 1400. The Lucchese Bianchi processions began on 9 August 1399, and continued until the end of the year. Sercambi reports this plague twice, once at the end of the first manuscript codex, and again at the beginning of the second. The first report is centred on the plague outbreak itself, whereas the second has a much more political focus. Sercambi’s initial account of the plague in October 1399 begins at Bologna, with a population loss of between 50 and 200 each day, not only due to deaths, but also people fleeing (p. 391). He then places the outbreak of plague in Lucca and Tuscany in September, antedating the plague at Bologna. This chronological confusion could be explained as the Bolognese plague is recounted within an account of specific activities at Bologna, after which Sercambi returns to narrate the events at Lucca. The disease then spread from Tuscany to Lazio, although Sercambi does not make any connection between this outbreak of plague and the Bianchi processions. According to his dating of the devotions, the two were simultaneous, although the processions within Lucca were mostly complete by the time the disease struck (p. 397).

Sercambi’s second report on the disease is in relation to the Guinigi family, and the deaths of three of their number (Vol. III., pp. 4-5). This is a different sort of narrative compared to his other accounts of plague. He suggests here that the disease

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began in May 1400, and it is unclear whether this is the same outbreak as the one described in 1399, but this seems the most likely explanation, particularly as the disease was at its height during the summer months of 1400. Those who could afford to do so fled Lucca for Bologna, Genoa and Savona, leaving the town temporarily bereft of persone da facti. The Guinigi remained, using the opportunity to consolidate their power. Sercambi also offers figures for the first time, suggesting that 150 people were dying per day at the height of the disease, although without indicating how long this period lasted. More significantly, Sercambi also records a procession for the plague for the first time. This was led by the Podestà who asked God for misericordia, and the plague began to cease as a result. Crucially, there is no mention of the Bianchi devotions, despite their temporal proximity and promise to relieve the world of the threat of plague. Perhaps as there were no deaths from plague at Lucca during the Bianchi processions, he felt they had served their purpose.

Sercambi then only reports one further plague during the period in question, in 1410, and another two outbreaks before the end of his chronicle, in 1418 and 1424, the last of these taking Sercambi’s life (Vol. III., pp. 185; 239; 371-3). For 1410, Sercambi once again cites the cause as the constant warfare between mankind. He states that the plague began in Lucca in October of that year, spreading throughout Italy. As in 1400, processions were held, ordered by Paolo Guinigi. By 1 June 1411, few people had died of the disease in Lucca, and it seems that the town escaped relatively unscathed. Sercambi blames God for the disease as well as thanking him for being merciful. Politically speaking, it was significant that Lucca fared well during this plague, solidifying the power of the Guinigi as a result of the seeming efficacy of their plague processions.

Most of the instances of plague in Sercambi’s chronicle are accompanied by an image, except those found in the second codex. The six images depicting plague are all quite similar, with winged beings attacking a pile of dead bodies peppered with arrows, with their arms outstretched pleading for mercy. These winged beings vary in aspect from plague to plague. For example, those in the image

\[192\] Banti and Cristiani Testi, pp. 18 (1348), 26 (1363), 56 (1371), 78 (1383), 85 (1390), 154 (1397), 209 (1400).
for 1372 seem cupid-like, whereas the clawed talons of those accompanying the plague of 1363 suggest a demonic element. Whether angels or demons, these creatures are evidently engaged in the destruction of humanity. The instruments of destruction vary, between scythes, bows and arrows, and hot oil and yet the scene is always the same, representing a divine vengeance visited upon the people. This creates continuity between Sercambi’s various accounts of plague, highlighting his moral interpretation of the disease as well as linking the outbreaks visually.

Overall, these accounts of plague in Lucca match up reasonably well with general reports of plague in the Italian peninsula in this time period. Plague processions seem only have been instigated after the Bianchi devotions, or at least there are no records of processions preceding the Bianchi processions. Sercambi also does not mention the flagellant processions in 1348-9, although he must have relied on other testimony for this period, as he had been born during this plague outbreak. Sercambi’s focus throughout these episodes is the human cause of the disease: that fighting and war had wrought divine punishment in the form of disease. The lack of causal connection between the Bianchi processions and the plague which followed is significant; while the devotions were inextricably entangled with plague and plague prevention, it almost seems as though they were forgotten once the disease broke out.

Turning now to the communal response to the plague, there were public health structures in place in the city, with the first hospital founded in 1260. Unfortunately, few documents from the second half of the fourteenth century survive for this hospital, although there were frequent testamentary bequests to it during the Black Death. More information is available about some peripatetic doctors who spent some of their careers working in Lucca. For example, Antonio dal Silico was employed by the Guinigi in Lucca from about 1390. He had a good reputation as a doctor, but was criticised by his colleagues because instead of confronting the plague

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and curing those afflicted, as he freely admits: ‘fugi pestem cum tota familia’. In December 1399, he fled to the Garfagnana with his family, moving on to the Lunigiana, which he described as a locus sterillissimus. His expenses demonstrate a hiatus in his practice as well, spending more than 100 lire less than usual.

Meek notes that outbreaks of plague inevitably led to problems for the government. This is particularly traceable during the plague of 1399-1400 thanks to Sercambi’s account of governmental procedures in addition to the communal records. The surviving information for other years is not as detailed. The records show that there were replacements for dead officials during 1399, although they are not explicitly connected to the outbreak of plague, and there does not seem to be a sense of urgency, as months elapse between the deaths and the replacements. The plague was more keenly felt in 1400, as a balia was elected in July, of which all twelve members were Guinigi partisans. During this period, 65 of the 135 members of the General Council were replaced, and emergency measures were brought in. Attempts at maintaining population were also made, as those banished from the town were readmitted and various offences were pardoned. The measured response in 1400 suggests that there was probably some governmental precedent for how to act during an epidemic.

Collecting population figures for this period is notoriously difficult, and establishing the numbers of plague dead even more so. Nevertheless, some broad conclusions can be drawn from the surviving evidence. The records of the Compagnia della Croce discussed above demonstrate a dip in numbers in 1348, suggesting that the Black Death hit the confraternity hard. Moreover, the fact that Sercambi mentions people leaving the town suggests that depopulation was a problem during plague years. While accurate figures are elusive, the attempts at repopulation in welcoming back those who had been banished and issuing pardons

195 Lucca, ASL, MS Ospedale San Luca 184, fol. 46r. (This manuscript is unfoliated, and so foliation is by my count as guidance.)
196 Both are areas near Lucca.
197 Meek, Lucca, 1369-1400, p. 336.
198 Ibid., p. 292. A balia was a special council which superseded all other organisations for the period of its tenancy. This could also be applied to a single person, although in these instances, a balia was always a group.
199 Ibid., p. 336.
suggest that such measures were necessary to maintain a reasonable population within the town. Whatever the precise numbers, the effect on the population was devastating.

Thus, the plague struck Lucca numerous times over the period between 1340 and 1415, and the town seems to have fallen into a pattern of response. Those who were able to do so escaped the city in search of places where the plague had not yet struck, and the town councils carried on almost as if nothing had happened. This could be seen as avoidance of the threat of disease, or simply a pragmatic reaction. This appears particularly to be the case with later outbreaks, as Sercambi’s reports of the disease become similar. The lack of correlation by Sercambi between the disease in 1399-1400 and the Bianchi devotions is astonishing. The chronology of the outbreak probably meant that few Bianchi processions were occurring in Lucca by the time the outbreak took hold, particularly as it worsened into 1400. However, while Sercambi does connect the plague with the Bianchi devotions in the origin stories and laude he records, he does not connect the subsequent outbreak of disease to the processions.

6.2 Pistoia

Pistoia was struck by plague in roughly the same years as Lucca. The town was affected by the disease in 1340, and experienced the significant devastation of the Black Death in 1348. While there are no surviving chronicle records for this period, the town council published numerous ordinances in 1348, and a specific list of plague regulations were brought into effect. The communal records reveal the deaths of various committee members including two of the Anziani in May and the establishment of a balia of fifty men for the duration of the outbreak. Plague regulations in May 1348 prohibited movement of goods and people in or out of the city and butchers were permitted to slaughter only once a week. Additional regulations were clarified in June, limiting the ringing of the city bells, public shouting, crying and mourning, thus regulating the city’s soundscape.

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200 Herlihy, p. 105, Table 7.
201 Pistoia, ASP, MS Provvisioni Comune 9, fol. 166r.
regulations also addressed disposal of the dead, and a stipend of 16 denarii per body buried was offered. Those in the disciplinati confraternity were permitted to remove bodies for burial, as long as they were dressed ‘vestibus discipline’. This demonstrates a particular role for these flagellant confraternities during the Black Death, and the importance of their robes as an identifying feature of their members.

In 1363, the council met more frequently in the winter than during the summer months when the plague was at its height. Indeed, a record from 4 July 1363 notes that due to the difficulty in convening the councils, a balia was set up for the duration of the disease. Little is recorded for the plague in 1374, the council records simply noting the replacement of dead councillors. A balia of 40 was created during the plague in July 1383 for a year from 9 June 1383. The plague of 1390 appears to have begun early in Pistoia, with reports in spring 1389 and as the councils continued to meet as normal throughout 1390. During this outbreak, a procession was led by the bishop of Pistoia, Andrea Franchi, behind a miraculous crucifix. Participants in this procession had to first confess and communicate, and the records state that as a result, the plague died down.

The ‘moria dei Bianchi’ described by Dominici struck Pistoia in late autumn 1399, with the highest number of mortalities concentrated in the late spring and summer of 1400. The Bianchi processions began in Pistoia on 12 August 1399, and continued in some form into the spring of 1400. While the disease and the Bianchi devotions feature together in the modern title of Dominici’s chronicle: Cronaca della venuta dei Bianchi e della moria 1399-1400, the connection between the two is not explicit throughout the rest of the text. A great deal of space is dedicated to the disease, which is referenced as early as 17 August, as the Pistoiese Bianchi were adding guardaci di pestilenza to their cries of misericordia and pace, and Dominici notes that the plague struck Pistoia in September 1399 (pp. 71, 238). The plague worsened in Pistoia in May 1400, and had run its course by November, leaving

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204 The confraternity is not named.
205 MS Provvisioni Comune 12, fol. 126r.
206 Pistoia, ASP, MS Provvisioni Comune 16, fol. 65v.
207 Pistoia, ASP, MS Provvisioni Comune 25, fol. 43r.
208 Giuseppe M. Guidi, Vita del beato fra Andrea Franchi dell'ordine di S. Domenico (Pistoia: Tipografia Cino, 1839), pp. 43-5.
thousands dead in its wake. Dominici’s brother Paolo then took over the chronicle, recording the dead in Pistoia during the spring and summer of 1400, based on parishes, counting 3,234 dead and leaving behind a population of 4,000 (pp. 237-85). While incomplete, these entries provide a valuable picture of how Pistoia was affected by this outbreak. The dates of the plague however do not correlate with the dates Dominici offers for the Bianchi activities, as the plague was at its height in Pistoia between 1 May and 14 August 1400, when the Bianchi processions had long finished.

According to the chronicle, there was hardly anyone in Pistoia for the feast of St James (25 July) in 1400, and it is unclear whether the festival went ahead, but by the Assumption (15 August) the plague had begun to reduce its hold. Dominici reports a series of processions for the plague, which lasted for three days from 12 to 14 May 1400 and were organised by the bishop and town officials (p. 224). During the processions, laude were sung, and they were run come e usanza. It is unclear what this refers to, processions related to plague or natural disasters, or processions generally, as Dominici offers no other sets of three-day processions for comparison. The processional order is comparable to the St James processions, headed by the friars and clergy, followed by the town officials, and then the laity. The fact that neither guilds nor confraternities were nominally represented suggests the grave nature of the occasion, as well as the fact that there may not have been sufficient representatives of either group left in Pistoia. The final day of these processions is recorded in greater detail, highlighting the religious overtone of the proceedings.

This procession was different to those orchestrated for the Bianchi devotions, particularly as the populace was not dressed in white, and the focus was entirely on misericordia. The emphasis on Pistoiese relics rather than crucifixes too suggests a local focus for the processions, rather than adhering to the general regulations set out for the Bianchi devotions, where crucifixes would be carried. The curtailed nature of the proceedings, lasting just three days, indicates the level of emergency, fulfilling the perceived necessity to placate and pray to God, but not for an extended length of time, to prevent the spread of the disease. While referring to the disease as the ‘moria

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209 The reason for this is unclear, Luca Dominici was still alive, but perhaps was required to return to his notarial duties.
dei Bianchi,’ Dominici, like Sercambi, does not explicitly draw a correlation between Bianchi activities and the subsequent outbreak of disease. Indeed, this processional activity is separate from the practices of the Bianchi participants, as will be seen in Chapter Three.

In the fifteenth century, it seems that Pistoia, like Lucca, was struck by plague in 1410, but that there was only a ‘trace,’ suggesting that the disease was also not as devastating here.210 There was another outbreak just after the period in question in 1416, demonstrating that the epidemics continued on into the fifteenth century.

In terms of public health structures in Pistoia, the largest organisation was the Ospedale del Ceppo. There were a total of 70 beds, including 25 for permanently infirm patients. The confraternity of Santa Maria dei Poveri del Ceppo was associated with the hospital, and would care for the patients as well as performing religious rites.211 Bequests to the confraternity increased significantly after the Black Death in 1348, and became progressively more generous towards the end of the fourteenth century.212 This hospital would give a meal to the poor on the feast of All Saints and on Holy Thursday, as well as to prisoners on the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption, thus administering not only to the sick, but also to the poor.213 While Pistoia never had an abundance of doctors, those who worked in the city tended to gravitate around the Ceppo hospital. Such was the scarcity of doctors that the town councils frequently had to appoint them, and ensure their salaries.214 One such was Ugolino di Caccino da Montecatini, whose peripatetic career demonstrates the propensity of doctors not to remain in one city.

Statistics for those who died during the plague are hard to come by for Pistoia, although there are is a reasonable set of figures in Dominici’s chronicle for 1399-1400, compiled by his brother Paolo. These numbers are inherently flawed, as the chronicler himself notes that they are not a complete account, and different sorts

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210 Herlihy, p. 105.
211 Pistoia, ASP, MS Podestà 14.1 (appendix), fols. 211r-221v.
212 Coturri, p. 11; MS Opera di San Iacopo 33, passim.
213 Herlihy, p. 248.
214 For example, in 1383, the council voted to bring in a new doctor: Pistoia, ASP, MS Provisoni Comune 20, fol. 49r.
of information are collected for each parish, meaning that comparisons are difficult. Nevertheless, these records demonstrate some trends, and highlight the high mortality during the disease which struck Pistoia at this time. The job titles of some of the dead are recorded, with professions including gardeners, gravediggers, bakers and tailors. Generally speaking, more male deaths are recorded than female deaths, although this could be the choice of the person recording. Moreover, there are more children recorded than adults. From the dates recorded, it seems that the disease struck in earnest in May, peaking in July and lessening slightly throughout August. Overall, these figures point to a devastating epidemic which caused serious population depletion within the city of Pistoia, although it is difficult to draw precise conclusions from the numbers available. Indeed, while Dominici stated in his narrative that the disease struck indiscriminately, the figures presented suggest instead that children were more susceptible to this outbreak.

While an accurate picture is impossible to garner from the sources which survive from either Lucca or Pistoia, the chronicler evidence for the former corroborates the town edicts of the latter. Sercambi’s propensity to blame humanity for angering God demonstrates the explanation for the disease, and the usual response of government was to form an emergency balia for the duration of the outbreak, to facilitate the continuation of the town running and organisation. Both Lucca and Pistoia also had structures for public health in their hospitals, which catered for those who were ill as well as the permanently infirm. Nevertheless, doctors could do little in the face of the plague, and indeed many fled during the outbreaks. Thus, plague was a common event throughout the latter half of the fourteenth century which nevertheless caused significant and frequent devastation, requiring changes in governmental structures for the duration. Pistoia’s records show a particularly pragmatic response to the outbreaks of the plague, not only in terms of ensuring governmental representation during the epidemic but also in regulating the activities of the town to prevent the spread of the disease.

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216 Precisely identifying the children is a difficult task due to the variety of nomenclature used.

Nevertheless, those referred to as ‘fanculli/fanciulle/nipote/garzone/fante/giovane’ can be considered, as Herlihy says as of ‘tender years.’ Ibid., p. 110.
In terms of the Bianchi devotions, it appears that the outbreak of the disease occurred after the majority of processions in both Lucca and Pistoia. Indeed, according to the figures in Dominici’s chronicle, the disease reached its height in the summer of 1400, rather than during the year of the Bianchi processions. The description of the disease as the ‘moria dei Bianchi’ therefore might be pragmatic, in connecting the particular outbreak to a particular year, as this appears to be the only explicit correlation between the two in Dominici’s chronicle. The same is true for Sercambi, who draws no explicit link between Bianchi activities at Lucca and the outbreak of plague shortly after. While the Bianchi devotions aimed to prevent a pestilential annihilation, the arrival of the disease, seemingly rendering their efforts null and void, does not seem to have been taken into account. One could speculate that the Bianchi processions were perceived to have protected the population for the duration of 1399, but that the subsequent return to sin was to blame for the epidemic.

6.3 Other Locations
The comparison of Lucca and Pistoia demonstrates how the Tuscan towns reacted to various outbreaks of the plague, taking Sercambi’s personal account along with the regulations seen in Pistoia. A brief examination of the reaction to the disease elsewhere in the Italian peninsula at the turn of the fifteenth century will further contextualise the plague at the time of the Bianchi devotions.

Plague had hit the north of Italy in 1397, striking Genoa, where Stella noted that ships had brought the disease, although the usual divine influences could not be overlooked. A procession was held in the city using the relics of John the Baptist, and the plague died down briefly before coming back in 1398. During the plague of 1399-1400, in Città di Castello, 2,500 men were reported as dead in the town, and 5,000 in the surrounding area, a significant loss. Laruenzi clarifies that the majority of those killed by the disease were less than 20 years old.

Milan had escaped relatively unscathed from the Black Death, and the government continued to legislate ruthlessly during times of plague to protect its own interests. This was particularly the case during the Bianchi processions, where

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217 Stella, p. 222.
218 Cerboni, p. 17.
219 Cronaca dei Laurenzi, p. 95.
prohibitions were based on contact with other places. Indeed, the Bianchi participants were not the only group banned from entering Milan: Giangaleazzo Visconti also forbade *romei* [pilgrims directed at Rome] to enter during the following Jubilee year.\textsuperscript{220} The reason given for the stringent separation of the *quartieri* which were allowed to participate in the Bianchi processions in Milan was given on 19 August 1399: ‘per evitare i contagi della peste.’\textsuperscript{221} As there is no mention of the disease in Milan, these measures must have proven quite effective, coupled with the fact that the outbreak in 1399-1400 did not strike the north of Italy as hard as elsewhere, as there had already been plague there in 1397. Here, there appears to have been action taken as a result of the Bianchi devotions in relation to the plague, connecting the two, but only in terms of preventative legislation.

Thus these outbreaks of plague were significant for those living after the Black Death, who came face to face with an outbreak at least once a decade. The response to these epidemics seems largely pragmatic. While Sercambi blames divine anger for the disease, the communal response focussed on practical aspects such as burial of the dead. The idea of fleeing from the plague, as seen in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, remained a prevalent feature for those who could afford it, although this led in part to the Guinigi amassing power in 1400, as their faction remained within the city. However, the lack of correlation in the chronicles between the efforts of the Bianchi participants in 1399 and the plague outbreak shortly after is puzzling, and there is no satisfactory reason why the two are not linked.

7. Conclusion

This chapter has set the religious landscape for Lucca and Pistoia. Both towns had a steady traffic of pilgrims coming to see their religious artefacts, which also inspired local traditions. Pilgrimage in general was seen to be an institution in the middle ages, and both Lucca and Pistoia sent forth and received pilgrims. The discussion of Jubilee has proved more problematic than it might appear initially, calling into question whether or not 1400 can be considered a Holy Year, to be further explored.

in Chapter Five. The importance of the Via Francigena in funnelling pilgrims towards Lucca in particular has been noted, and Pistoia’s place not too far from this meant that a trip to the relics of St James was an easy detour for pilgrims on their way somewhere else, particularly after a permanent indulgence was attached to the chapel there in 1395.

The confraternities active in both towns throughout the latter half of the fourteenth century provide a reasonable barometer for popular piety within each city, particularly as they represented a cross section of society in their membership. The groups demonstrate some ways in which popular piety was enacted. For example, while a confraternity might be considered flagellant, this was not necessarily their only practice, as the Lucchese Compagnia della Croce also sang laude, a usual combination, as well as later expanding its remit to include looking after the poor and prisoners. The flexibility of confraternities to adapt over time is evident also in the changing organisational structures of this group, intimating that while confraternities generally can be considered reasonably fixed in their location, they were malleable in their activities as time wore on. This was particularly affected by the introduction of self-flagellation as a practice, which often excluded women from some previously mixed-sex confraternities. Confraternities in Pistoia also demonstrate this, particularly in the increasing numbers of testamentary bequests to the confraternity at the Ceppo hospital, indicating a consideration on the part of the testators in looking after the sick within a religious remit through the ministrations of this confraternity. This adds a charitable element to popular piety, which is not necessarily present in all manifestations, but which appears even in situations not necessarily to do with public health, such as the cena dei poveri and prison ministrations of the Lucchese confraternity.

Therefore, there were various methods of performing popular piety present in both Lucca and Pistoia throughout the period in question. These are important as they demonstrate the variety of methods employed by the laity in expressing piety, as well as the flexibility of confraternities compared to the rigidity of annual feast day processions. Nevertheless, confraternities were quite fixed to a particular location and were governed by statutes and committees which directed their members
throughout their affiliation, meaning that joining such a group was a serious commitment. These factors will be important considerations in later discussions of how the Bianchi processions were adapted to the local traditions in Lucca and Pistoia.

The overview of the plague and public health structures has demonstrated that both towns were afflicted regularly by plague, but that the response was reasonably pragmatic, addressing issues as they arose. The governmental bodies of Lucca and Pistoia were practical in the face of outbreaks, limiting movement between towns and providing for the disposal of the dead. The involvement of confraternities in this latter activity in Pistoia demonstrates that popular piety was not necessarily limited to particular rites, as disciplinati were required to wear their identifying robes in order to perform this function, suggesting that it was their membership in the confraternity which qualified them for such a task. In terms of the Bianchi devotions, the relationship with the plague is difficult to unpick, as the chroniclers report the Bianchi processions and the later plague as completely separate events.

Thus both Lucca and Pistoia were in relatively similar situations leading up to the arrival of the Bianchi processions in 1399. Each town had an important relic to draw in external pilgrims and as a focus of local devotion. Both had numerous religious confraternities and a strong tradition of popular piety expressed through them. The plague had wrought destruction on the populations of both towns, and both had reacted in a practical manner. Overall, this demonstrates that there was a strong feeling of popular piety in both towns, expressed particularly through pilgrimage and confraternities in each town. The elements brought together in this chapter will be crucial in demonstrating diversity in the Bianchi devotions as they spread from town to town, revealing malleability in the processions as they adapted to each location’s religious framework.
Chapter Two: Origin Stories of the Bianchi Devotions and Their Dissemination

1. Introduction

Genoa is generally considered the geographical starting point of the Bianchi fervour as the devotions gained a mass following there on 5 July 1399. The onward spread of the processions split, some heading eastwards in the direction of Venice and others southwards towards Rome, although none reached further than their itinerant journey of nine days’ travel. The Bianchi devotions arrived in Lucca on 9 August and in Pistoia on 12 August.

There are reports of devotional activities on a smaller scale in 1398 at Savona and Pinerolo, and in early 1399 at Chieri, but these cannot be considered part of the large scale Bianchi processions. There is no precise chronology linking the events in these three Ligurian towns to the mass outpouring of popular devotion beginning in the summer of 1399 at Genoa. Other sources for the initiation of the Bianchi devotions must therefore be sought, looking to chronicle narratives of purportedly divine visions, whose witnesses spread the devotions.

This chapter will focus on these origin story narratives, negotiating the nebulous chronological and geographical gap between these supposed points of origin and the reports of Bianchi processions. The variation uncovered will highlight the diversity throughout the Bianchi activities, while analysing the impact of this narrative variation on the processions. The reasons for these differences in accounting for the origins of the Bianchi devotions will also be addressed, considering local factors. This examination will go beyond the usual presentation of a single origin story for the Bianchi processions.

There are three origin narratives associated with the inception of the Bianchi devotions: the tre pani story, the book story and Capperledis’ tale. The various accounts of these stories will be analysed to clarify the initial impetus behind the Bianchi processions as it was understood by participants, as well as to examine the

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222 Stella, p. 238.
223 While some wore white, the message of these groups was unclear, and they were small compared to the universal participation inspired in most cities the Bianchi devotions reached. The groups were not referred to as ‘Bianchi’. For further discussion, see Mario Marrocchi, *Fonti e metodi di ricerca nello studio dei Bianchi*, in *Sulle Orme dei Bianchi*, ed. by F. Santucci, pp. 69-97 (pp. 85-90).
implications of narrative variation. These stories are presented by the chroniclers as factual accounts of the beginning of the Bianchi processions, to be believed and acted upon by participants in the devotions. All were purportedly divine in nature. The processions thereby account for their origins, although as will be seen, the significant diversity present in the stories does not suggest a single, clear point of initiation. Some of these stories also provide instructions for the Bianchi participants, which will be addressed in the following chapter.

The geographical settings for the stories will then be considered, also analysing chronicles which only provide a location for the inception of the Bianchi processions without narrating an origin story. This examination will demonstrate a wide range of variations between the different sources for the same stories. While the three origin stories are presented as the impetus behind the processions, they were added to with further reports of visions by the chroniclers. These later stories must be considered in a different light, as they were reported to be witnessed during the Bianchi processions, and were geographically close to those writing about them. These later occurrences will be compared to the three origin stories, and their role in continuing the momentum of the processions will be addressed. These later visions were presented by Bornstein as regional variations of the initial stories, whereas my analysis will consider them instead as separate entities which were crucial in continuing the devotions. 

This chapter will use a combination of written and visual sources to address the complicated issue of the origins of the Bianchi processions. Combining the sources in this manner will provide a new insight into the variety present across these three narratives. This variation will also have implications for the rest of the Bianchi devotions as they spread towards Lucca and Pistoia and for the later visions and recapitulations. This discussion will provide the first in-depth analysis and cross comparison of the origin stories of the Bianchi devotions. This will be crucial in understanding the nature of the Bianchi processions as well as in problematizing the presentation of Bianchi activities as unique, both by chroniclers contemporary to the devotions and by more modern Bianchi historians.

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224 Bornstein, p. 113.
2. Origin Story Sources

There are three distinct stories which describe how the Bianchi devotions began, which I will refer to as the tre pani story, the book story and Capperledis’ tale. The chronicles of Sercambi and Dominici account for all three tales, with varying degrees of clarity. Five of Sercambi’s forty chapters on the Bianchi processions are dedicated to the origin stories and are richly illustrated. The tre pani story is told first in prose and then as a lauda (Del segno), followed by the book tale, in prose (pp. 291-303). Dominici’s chronicle opens with prose accounts of the tre pani story and the book story (pp. 50-7). Capperledis’ tale follows later, included as a transcription of a sermon preached in Pistoia on 18 September 1399, and is the only source for this story (pp. 168-70).

These sources draw the focus onto Lucca and Pistoia, my two case study towns, although the narratives occur throughout the spread of the Bianchi devotions. Further chronicle evidence of these narratives is relatively rare for the processions as they progressed from Genoa to Rome, and thus two sources from Città di Castello, Umbria, which narrate the story of the tre pani will be used to supplement and problematize Sercambi and Dominici’s accounts. Cerboni, writing in Latin, includes two records about the Bianchi in his six chronicle entries for 1399, the first of which recounts the origin story. Of Laurenzi’s fifteen vernacular entries for that year, six pertain directly to the Bianchi devotions, and the origin story is told after an initial entry on the Bianchi devotions arriving in Città di Castello.

These chronicle narratives will be compared to two laude which tell the tre pani origin story: Venne Gesu and Del segno. Del segno, the lauda recounted by Sercambi, is included together with Venne Gesu as part of a collection of 21 Bianchi laude in MS Chigiano L.VII.266, whose contents will be discussed further in Chapter Three. The codex is of Florentine provenance, and was completed c.

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225 The tre pani story was previously referred to as the ‘miracle of Scotland’ (miracolo di scozia), but was renamed by Bliersbach due to the ambiguity of the geographical location of the story. Paolo Renzi, ‘La Devozione dei Bianchi a Terni negli affreschi di S. Maria del Monumento’, in Sulle Orme dei Bianchi, ed. by F. Santucci, pp. 273-306 (p. 282).
226 Cerboni, pp. 15-17; Cronaca dei Laurenzi, pp. 91-4.
227 Toscani, pp. 61-89, 101-11; MS Chigiano L.VII.266, fols. 18r-19v, 24v-25v.
228 The laude in question are linked to the Bianchi either by their rubrics, content or cross reference with laude from other sources such as Sercambi.
While the volume is bound with laude 695-70 at the start, it is most likely that this was done erroneously, as the manuscript is written in the same hand, thus it is likely that the scribe intended to start to the collection with lauda 1 (Del segno).

The relevant visual materials from Sercambi’s manuscript consist of illustrations for the three textual narratives (Figures 2-8, 12). These will be considered in relation to the texts they accompany as well as analysing the images in their own right. The origin story frescoes are found in the churches of San Paolo in Poggio Mirteto, Santa Maria al Monumento in Terni and San Eusanio in Rieti, and all depict the *tre pani* story (Figures 9-11). These sources will highlight consistencies and variation between different accounts of this narrative.

All of the narratives have been identified by previous scholarship on the Bianchi devotions. For example, Tognetti introduced Dominici, Sercambi and the laude as sources for the origins of the Bianchi processions, considering each in its separate geographical location. Lignani identified the Castello sources, and compared them to each other linguistically. The emphasis throughout Bianchi scholarship in general is on Dominici’s version of the *tre pani* story as the authoritative version of the Bianchi origins, beginning with Frugoni’s account of the processions and continuing through Tognetti and Bornstein’s accounts. Indeed, Bornstein goes so far as to present the *tre pani* story as the ‘story of origin of the Bianchi,’ only briefly acknowledging the other two tales. This is perhaps due to the detail and length of this version of the story, as well as the long list of regulations for participants to follow it includes. However, it is important to consider other sources for this story in order to understand how chroniclers contemporary to the processions accounted for the origins of the processions in which they participated.

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229 This date features in the manuscript. Frequent references to Florence place the manuscript in the city, as well as typical linguistic features.
230 Bliersbach; Ileana Tozzi, *La chiesa di San Paolo a Poggio Mirteto e il passaggio dei Bianchi* (Poggio Mirteto: Amici del Museo, 2015). These frescoes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.
231 Tognetti, pp. 258-69.
233 Frugoni, pp. 232-3.
234 Bornstein, p. 45.
Morton suggests that even the contemporary chroniclers accepted that the precise origins of the Bianchi devotions were unknowable.\textsuperscript{235} Nevertheless, scholarship has focussed almost entirely on the \textit{tre pani} story to explain the origins of the Bianchi devotions without analysing the variation between different versions of the story, or satisfactorily accounting for the other two origin narratives. Thus, the existing studies provide a collection of primary sources for further scrutiny, including transcriptions and summaries, but only limited sections of analysis.

Bringing together these accounts of the origin stories of the Bianchi processions, whether textual or visual, will demonstrate the lack of coherence at the root of the devotions, suggesting that there was no single, authoritative version of how the processions began. Notwithstanding, the processions spread throughout the northern and central Italian peninsula and consequently, addressing the general themes across the stories creating the impetus for the processions is crucial in understanding how the origins were perceived by participants. While this may seem contradictory, the tendency to seek narrative cohesion is a modern concern. Indeed, Dominici’s inclusion of three separate narratives as his explanation for the origins of the Bianchi processions highlights instead a desire to keep a record of the numerous stories in circulation. As such, analysing the commonalities between the stories is just as important as highlighting the differences. Using this larger textual source set as well as incorporating the visual sources will give a better understanding of the key features of the origins of the Bianchi devotions, but still retains the focus on the southern passage of the Bianchi processions moving through Lucca and Pistoia, as well as incorporating relevant elements from Umbria and Lazio. This will focus the discussion as well as demonstrating that even on this small scale, there is a great depth of variation between these narratives, which will have implications for versions of these origin stories from other locations.

The existence of three different narratives all purporting to explain the origins of the Bianchi devotions before the movement reached Genoa suggests that there was never a definitive idea of how the Bianchi processions began. The three

\textsuperscript{235} Morton, p. 37.
Figure 2. Lucca, Archivio di Stato, MS 107, fol. 299r: Christ appears to a man working the land

Figure 4. MS 107, fol. 300r: The Virgin gives the worker a *guancita* with her hand

Figure 3. MS 107, fol. 299v: The worker goes to put the bread into the fountain

Figure 5. MS 107, fol. 300r: The worker leaves with his *guancita* to spread the story
Figure 6. MS 107, fol. 300v: Lauda images 1-4

Figure 7. MS 107, fol. 301r: Lauda images 5-8
Figure 8. MS 107, fol. 301v: Lauda images 9-11

Figure 9. *Tre pani* fresco, Church of San Paolo, Poggio Mirteto (Lazio)

Figure 10. *Tre pani* fresco, Church of San Eusanio, Rieti (Umbria)

Figure 11. *Tre pani* fresco, Church of Santa Maria al Monumento, Terni (Umbria)
stories share common features, the most consistent being the location of the narrative outside the Italian peninsula, enhancing the reportedly divine nature of the tales. The purpose of the stories is at least twofold, explaining as well as legitimating the development of the devotions, highlighted by their usual placement at the beginning of accounts of the Bianchi devotions.\textsuperscript{236} I will consider each story separately in order to analyse the narrative variation, before analysing the stories together as the supposed origin of the Bianchi processions. I will separate the stories into three discrete narrative strands to consider differences within the same narrative, before bringing the stories together for analysis. The \textit{tre pani} story will be taken first, as it is present across such a wide source set: Sercambi, Dominici and the Città di Castello sources as well as laude and visual sources. A discussion of the book story, which appears in Sercambi and Dominici, will follow, concluding with Capperledis’ tale, which is told solely by Dominici.

\section*{3. The Tre Pani Story}

A man was working in the fields when Christ appeared, in disguise, and asked him for some bread. Having just eaten his lunch, the worker knew that he had no food left, so was amazed to find three pieces of bread when he looked in his bag. Christ told him to throw the bread into a nearby fountain. Knowing that there was no fountain but having found the bread, the worker went off and threw one piece of bread into the fountain he found. The Virgin Mary appeared and admonished him, explaining that a third of the world would perish as a result of his action. However, he could reduce the sentence by spreading the story of his vision and encouraging people to follow the rules of the devotion which the Virgin explained to him.\textsuperscript{237}

Sercambi’s chronicle is undoubtedly the richest source for this story, as it is told first in prose, then as a lauda, \textit{Del segno}. Both of these examples are accompanied by numerous illustrations and open Sercambi’s Bianchi narrative, comprising four chapters (Figures 2-8). Each chapter heading serves as a caption for the image accompanying the prose narrative, and the images accompanying the lauda are titled separately. Dominici’s chronicle provides the longest account of this story, which opens his narrative of the Bianchi devotions. The Castello chroniclers provide much shorter narratives, but nevertheless highlight important variant features. Pictorial

\textsuperscript{236} The exception is Capperledis’ tale, which appears halfway through Dominici’s chronicle.

\textsuperscript{237} This is my summary and translation of the key narrative elements of the \textit{tre pani} story, based on Sercambi, Dominici and the Città di Castello sources.
representations of this story as wall paintings can be found in the church of San Paolo in Poggio Mirteto (Figure 9), Santa Maria al Monumento in Terni (Figure 10) and San Eusanio in Rieti (Figure 11).

3.1 Protagonists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Witness</th>
<th>Christ</th>
<th>Virgin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sercambi</td>
<td>lavoratore</td>
<td>romeo</td>
<td>honesta donna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Del Segno</td>
<td>contadino</td>
<td>fantino, fanciullo</td>
<td>bella donna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominici</td>
<td>lavoratore</td>
<td>giovane</td>
<td>donna tutta lacrimosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerboni</td>
<td>rusticus...</td>
<td>in forma peregrini</td>
<td>mulier gemebunda et pulchris vestibus induta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurenzi</td>
<td>villano</td>
<td>pellegrino</td>
<td>bella et honorevole donna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venne Gesu</td>
<td>cholui/aratore</td>
<td>Signore</td>
<td>molto bella e risprendente</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Nomenclature for Protagonists in tre pani Origin Story

The varying terms used to describe the protagonists in this story often have implications for the entire Bianchi mentality. Turning first to the witness, he is referred to as a lavoratore, a contadino, a villano, a rusticus...bufulcus and in the final instance, firstly as cholui but later as an aratore. The first term, lavoratore, is defined as ‘l’huomo che lavora la terra.’ This definition is functional, reinforced as Dominici’s lavoratore has worked the fields for 20 years and through the rural backdrop of Sercambi’s illustrations of the story. The terms contadino and villano convey much the same sense, although with negative connotations of coarseness, highlighting the character’s subordinate social level. The Latin rusticus is more descriptive, specifying that the character is of a low social status, reinforced by bufulcus [ploughman] to underscore his vocation. Finally, in Venne Gesu, while the witness is first described as cholui, he is referred to as an aratore in the concluding rubric, clarifying his profession. This is reinforced visually as the initial ‘V’ is historiated with two oxen, establishing the rural setting of the story and profession of the witness. While only two of these words are identical, they nevertheless all indicate a farm worker of a low social status. This similarity is reinforced in the visual representations of the story, where the witness is consistently presented

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wearing simple clothes, with the tools of his labour, against a rural backdrop. The 
wall paintings all also show the oxen with which the witness is working, further 
highlighting his profession as a ploughman.

The social position of this character suggests that he is illiterate, implying an 
oral transmission for the story, as seen with many popular religious revivals in the 
Introduction. A peasant represented the Christian ideal of hard work, sustaining 
himself while also benefitting society through his work. The act of ploughing was 
considered a penitential act, and was often used as a metaphor for preaching, perhaps 
suggesting the evangelical role the witness was supposed to undertake.  
While there are often negative connotations to the words selected to describe the witness, 
the overall sense of the character is positive. A great deal of responsibility is 
accorded to the witness as he inadvertently condemns a third of mankind through his 
actions. He is also tasked with spreading the Bianchi devotions as the method by 
which humanity can redeem itself, although there are no chronicle reports in which 
he features after this narrative. Thus, despite the apparent variation, the character 
created by these various terms remains relatively consistent. 

Christ first appears in disguise, and is referred to by a serious of epithets. He 
is described as a *fantino*, a *fanciullo*, a *giovanе*, a *romeо*, a *pеrеgrіnus* and a 
*pеllegrіno*, of which the first three are relatively generic, and the latter three create a 
specific character profile. The first term, *fantino*, is difficult to unravel, as it can refer 
to a small child, a young person, or a member of the infantry in an army.  
Whatever the precise definition, the overarching sense seems to be youth, while 
nevertheless commanding sufficient authority to persuade the witness to do his 
bidding. The word *fanciullo*, used in the same source, poses a similar conundrum, 
but adds to the lack of specificity offered about the character, creating a persona 
behind which Christ can hide. Dominici’s term *giovanе* is reinforced with ‘di 
nobilissima figura e aspetto,’ but raises similar problems, as it simply means a youth 
(p. 51). The extra information about the character’s demeanour allows him to

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p. 223.  
240 Entry for ‘fantino’ in *Tesoro della lingua Italiana delle Origini* [http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/] 
[Accessed 11 July 2016].
maintain a suitable level of decorum, while maintaining his disguise. Christ is also referred to as Gesù fiorito in Del Segno, reinforcing his identity to the audience while maintaining the disguise for the witness in the narrative.

The description of Christ as a pilgrim by Sercambi and the Castello chroniclers identifies a specific character profile and has connotations for his physical appearance. There is a resonance with one of the Children’s Crusade stories, where Christ appeared as a pilgrim, although it is unlikely to be an intentional reference due to the chronological gap. Christ is consistently realised in all the images of the story as a pilgrim, staff in hand and carrying a scrip. In Sercambi’s manuscript, this is particularly reinforced as the items are identical to other depictions of pilgrims throughout the codex, suggesting that the outfit would immediately be recognisable.241 Throughout all of the images, Christ wears a halo, suggesting his divinity while concealing his identity behind his pilgrim costume. This continuity is particularly interesting with the lauda and Sercambi’s images, as there is no textual reference to a pilgrim, and yet the character is depicted as one, suggesting that whatever the textual referent for Christ, he was perceived to have been a pilgrim in this story. In the image cycle at Terni, the witness’ oxen kneel in Christ’s presence, most probably as a gesture of reverence, demonstrating his sanctity despite his disguise.242 This is another similarity with the Children’s Crusade story, where the sheep knelt before Christ, demonstrating how the animals were aware of the true nature of the character before he revealed himself to the witness.243

Returning to the texts, Laurenzi’s pellegrino qualifies his status as he asks for the bread as an elimosina. In the medieval definitions, both pellegrino and peregrinus had a secondary meaning of stranger, which suggests a play on words in this description of Christ. The words suggest a specific character image while simultaneously meaning stranger, when in fact, Christ is neither. Sercambi’s prose account adds an extra dimension, where Christ appears as a romeo, a pilgrim.

242 This is reinforced by laude texts from Assisi, to be further discussed in Chapter Three. Bliersbach, pp. 170-1.
243 Delalande, pp. 16-7.
directed at Rome. This tacitly indicates a final destination for the processions, and is the only version of the *tre pani* story with such a suggestion, as the other tales do not mention any specific location to which the devotion must be spread. However, there are no visual indicators of this difference in the images in Sercambi’s manuscript.

Christ in disguise was not an unusual biblical trope, particularly after the Resurrection. For example, on the road to Emmaus, Christ was taken for a pilgrim, and not recognised by his disciples, who were shocked by his sudden arrival. The resonance in the *tre pani* story is different, as Christ is angry and wanting to punish mankind, rather than full of redemption after the Resurrection. In sermons, Christ the pilgrim was presented as a figure who was cold, hungry and thirsty, which is particularly the case in the Castello sources as will be seen below. Furthermore, Bynum suggests that feeding Christ or a stranger was a ‘standard indication of heroic or saintly generosity’, suggesting a degree of agency on the part of the witness towards this character in need. These examples demonstrate precedent for the concealment of Christ’s true nature to a particular end, specifically as a pilgrim. All of the descriptions of Christ in the *tre pani* story create an alternative identity for him in order to disguise him from the witness. The pilgrim persona achieves this more readily than the non-specific descriptions, creating a particular character profile. Moreover, the pilgrim character espouses certain requirements of the Bianchi processions, particularly devotion and itineracy. Thus, while there is oscillation between two possibilities in the depiction of Christ across the sources, the most consistent and relevant form is that of the pilgrim.

Finally, the Virgin is usually described in a lengthier manner, focusing on what she is wearing. She appears almost always in white, a feature consistently reinforced by visual representations of the story. The Virgin wears a halo in these images, signalling her holy status to the onlooker while masking her identity from

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246 Henderson, *Piety and Charity* p. 245.
248 The Virgin is only not explicitly dressed in white in *Venne Gesu* and Cerboni’s narrative.
the witness. There are some variations on the white robes in the wall paintings, for example, there is a starry strip adorning her robes at Terni, and she wears a brown stole at Poggio Mirteto. However, this does not detract from the presentation of her character, and differentiates her from the rules that Bianchi participants were supposed to follow. In addition to these white robes, Laurenzi records that the Virgin wore a red cross on her shoulder, a feature also recreated in visual representations of the story. In the images accompanying Sercambi’s lauda, the red cross is added as an adornment to accompany the Virgin giving the instructions to the witness, appearing in the ninth picture (Figure 8). This red cross reinforces the Virgin’s position as an exemplar for participants in the processions, who were instructed to adorn their garments thus.249

Textually, the Virgin is usually presented as a donna, immediately denoting a high status, which is qualified by various adjectives: the vernacular honesta, bella, tutta lacrimosa, honorevole and risprendente and Latin gemebunda. The positive examples here are unremarkable in descriptions of the appearance of the Virgin. However, the terms tutta lacrimosa and gemebunda [wailing] convey a sense of suffering. The cult of the Mater Dolorosa was prevalent from the eleventh century, and the Virgin also wept in the visions sparking the 1260 flagellant revival. Furthermore, in the Bianchi context where the Stabat Mater was to be sung, similar to previous flagellant revivals, the Virgin appearing as a ‘figure of controlled sorrow’ was not uncommon.250

These descriptions of the Virgin are remarkably consistent. This is particularly the case when considering visual representations, where she is unfailingly dressed in white, marking a visual break from her traditional blue-robed iconography.251 As with Christ, she hides behind a non-specific persona while not wishing to reveal her identity to the witness, but commands his respect as he is torn between obeying her or Christ. The colour of her clothing presents her as an exemplar for Bianchi participants, the small discrepancies in the visual

249 The mechanics of this will be explored in the following chapter.
250 Rubin, Mother of God, p. 243.
251 The Virgin was consistently dressed in blue in Western painting since the twelfth century when it became one of her required attributes. Michel Pastoureau, Bleu: histoire d'une couleur (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2000), pp. 50-1.
representations elevating her above the general throng of Bianchi participants as well as marking slight regional variations. Therefore, while depictions of the Virgin are similar across all of these sources, small elements such as adjective choice or extra visual elements suggest small degrees of regional additions.

The three protagonists are therefore presented with relative consistency although there are variations in word choices and additions to the images. However, there does not appear to be a regional prevalence for a particular epithet. Whatever the reason for these changes, the broad strokes of the characters remain the same. Depictions of the witness and the Virgin are the most consistent throughout these sources, and while Christ is referred to differently, there is only oscillation between two possibilities which are not mutually exclusive. As demonstrated with the images in Sercambi’s manuscript, even where Christ is referred to as a fantino or fanciullo, he is still depicted as a pilgrim in the accompanying images. Moreover, the resonance of Christ disguised as a pilgrim is stronger for the Bianchi participants. Therefore, the same three characters are described in all of these versions of the tre pani story, allowing for the artistic licence of those recording them, but nevertheless broadly adhering to the same principles: a peasant witness, Christ disguised as a pilgrim and the Virgin dressed in white.

3.2 Direct Speech
Another revealing element of the stories is the modes of address used in the direct speech in the textual sources. This exposes the attitude of those transcribing the stories towards the protagonists. Considering the interactions between Christ and the witness, Christ consistently uses tu, suggesting that the witness is of an equal or lower status. The witness returns Christ’s tu in Dominici and Sercambi’s prose version, but uses voi in Laurenzi and does not directly address Christ in the other sources. Nevertheless, the majority of these interactions accord both characters the same status, as they both use the second person singular form of address. This pronoun was the usual form in prayers to address Christ, and so would not have been considered indecorous. The exception in Laurenzi’s chronicle could perhaps be explained if a pilgrim were to be accorded particular respect, although this minor
inconsistency most likely demonstrates the preference of the chronicler, being reverent towards Christ’s true identity despite his disguise.

The lauda *Venne Gesu* is more complicated, due to the substantial amount of dialogue. Christ addresses the witness using *tu*, as well as calling him *figliuol*. In return, the witness calls Christ *Signor mio* and uses *voi* to address him, similar to Laurenzi. The specific word choice of *Signor* and *figliuol* tacitly implies Christ’s identity, as these words are common in representing Christ’s relationship with the faithful. It also makes the narrative clearer to those hearing the lauda, perhaps exaggerating the characters more than in the prose versions in order to transmit the story in the clearest possible manner. While *Signor* is a common referent for Christ, it can also be used as a generic title of reverence, which allows the worker to address him fittingly, while also not recognising him. This use of language therefore allows the audience of the lauda to understand the nature of the characters while letting the witness remain ignorant of Christ’s true nature, as is crucial for the story.

Like Christ, the Virgin always uses *tu* to address the witness. However, the witness only directly addresses the Virgin in Sercambi’s prose version, using *voi*. As with Christ, the expected pronoun would be *tu*, as used in prayers. However, this demonstrates a general reluctance to directly address the Virgin, or the unknown woman dressed in white. The witness addresses her formally, or avoids addressing her directly, as if unsure how to do so. This also demonstrates the relationship dynamic, where the Virgin instructs the witness, who listens as she explains how he can undo the foretold detection of mankind.

Again, *Venne Gesu* provides more information about these interactions. The Virgin refers to the witness as *figliuolo mio* and uses *tu*. The witness is full of accolades for the Virgin, describing her to Christ as ‘vestita di sole/ e è di chandido colore,’ (ll. 93-4) a reference to the woman of the Apocalypse, who is often believed to be the Virgin, highlighting the impending pestilential destruction. The witness also states, ‘angliuol mi pare’ [she seemed to me to be an angel] (l. 96), suggesting that he is aware of the Virgin’s holiness but unable to recognise her. He does not use

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252 Revelation 12.1.
any pronouns until the Virgin’s identity is revealed, at which point he exclaims ‘o
dolcissima reina,’ and proceeds to use tu for the rest of their interaction (l. 141).

The differing status of interlocutors implies a different power dynamic, as the
witness is always either equal or inferior, and Christ and the Virgin are either equal
or superior to the witness. This highlights the efficacy of the disguises of Christ and
the Virgin, although the subtle differences between these accounts underscore the
possibility for each chronicler to set down their own version of events. The
additional information in Venne Gesu suggests that this lauda was a mode of
transmission of the story, as the characters’ roles are continually reinforced through
epithets to make the narrative clear to the audience. The ways that the three
protagonists are described and address each other demonstrates significant points of
difference between these versions of the tre pani story. However, this all seems
within the bounds of expected variation, particularly considering that the story was
often spread orally.

These minor differences suggest that there was no definitive version of the
story in circulation in 1399. Nevertheless, this draws the focus onto the broad strokes
of the story and the similarities, suggesting for example that the fact of Christ’s
disguise is more important than how he is dressed. Thus, attention is drawn to the
fact that neither Christ nor the Virgin reveal their identities during their initial
meetings with the witness. Despite this concealment, both Christ and the Virgin act
in a way that would be expected, the Virgin acting as mediatrix and Christ enacting
godly vengeance. Notwithstanding the differences between almost every version of
this story, these key points remain similar.

3.3 Narrative Variation
The narrative of the tre pani story is not consistent, particularly due to the different
lengths and styles used to convey the same story. For example, the to and fro
between the heavenly protagonists only occurs in the longer narratives, and is
therefore missing from both laude as well as from the visual sources. As such, the
witness does not return to Christ in these versions, and the Virgin only intervenes
once the bread has been thrown into the fountain. This difference significantly alters
the nature of the actions of the witness. In the laude and visual sources, the Virgin
appears after the first piece of bread has been thrown into the water, whereas in the longer textual narratives, a single piece of the bread being thrown in is carefully negotiated through the exchange between Christ and the Virgin, and the witness is a pawn in their interaction.

This is taken further in the Città di Castello sources, as the witness is persuaded by both Christ and the Virgin to throw in a single piece of bread. These sources also add a further variation, by providing a reason beyond Christ’s demand for the bread to be thrown into the water. In Laurenzi’s narrative, Christ explains that he cannot eat the bread as it is ‘molto duro’ [very hard] and he is ‘stanco e debole’ [tired and weak], so it needs it to be moistened first.\textsuperscript{253} This extra level of detail demonstrates how Christ cajoled the witness into doing his bidding. This variation does not detract from the overall end of the story, in which a third of the bread is thrown into the water, condemning a third of the world to pestilential annihilation. As a result, the witness must transmit the Bianchi devotions; however the bread eventually enters the fountain, each story is insistent on the final focus of spreading the devotions to counteract its effects.

The use of bread in this story has Eucharistic overtones. Bread was used during the Eucharist, and would be transformed into the body of Christ during transubstantiation. As such, the bread here can be considered in some ways representative of Christ. This is particularly the case in this Castello source where the bread must be suitably prepared before it can be consumed. Moreover, the division into thirds acts as a symbol of the Trinity. However, this is not a straightforward comparison, particularly due to the result of the submersion of the bread. The Eucharistic sacrifice leads to the salvation of mankind, whereas here, once the bread is in the water, this results in the potential destruction of mankind.

The submersion of a third of the bread is a focal point in most of the sources, whether textual or visual.\textsuperscript{254} This creates a strong image of the threat of plague, which devastated Europe at least once a decade throughout the second half of the fourteenth century. The disease was interpreted as ‘a divine chastisement for the

\begin{enumerate}
\item Cronaca dei Laurenzi, p. 92.
\item The Rieti image is damaged in the area which would have shown the stream.
\end{enumerate}
transgressions of a sinful world’, and it remained a constant threat after the Black Death of 1348.\(^{255}\) This warning therefore provided a serious motivation for the population to join the Bianchi processions, in an attempt to save themselves from the impending epidemic. The bread is represented differently across the versions of the story. \textit{Del segno} and Cerboni refer simply to three separate \textit{pani}. According to Dominici, some said that the witness found three pieces of bread and others say that he found one piece of bread divided into three. The suggestion that it was one piece divided into three mirrors more closely the division into thirds of the world population suggested by the threat. Dominici’s inclusion of this doubt indicates how he was writing his own interpretation of the story and his awareness of multiple narratives circulating at the time.

Sercambi describes \textit{tre pani bianchini} in his prose version, creating a resonance between the colour of the bread and the white robes of the Bianchi participants (p. 282). Laurenzi takes this further, precisely delineating between the different sorts of loaves: one of barley, one of wheat and one of spelt.\(^{256}\) Wheat was the most prestigious of these grains, and barley and spelt can be considered on a par with each other.\(^{257}\) Wheat made the best bread and was the only grain from which the Eucharist could be made.\(^{258}\) The significance of this differentiation is unclear; while Lignani suggests that they represent three \textit{flagelli} which could be inflicted on mankind, the only certainty is that one of them represents plague as this is explicitly stated as a threat by the Virgin, although it is not evident which loaf this is.\(^{259}\) According to \textit{Venne Gesu}, once the bread had been cast into the water, it became ‘pien di sangue e nverminato,’ strongly reinforcing the impending annihilation of the world (l. 147). \textit{Nverminato}, rhyming with \textit{gittato} and \textit{diventato} on the preceding two lines, emphasises both the action and its consequences in this lauda. There is generally visual continuity between representations of the bread, most images showing three individual pieces as round, brown loaves. This similarity of colour

\(^{255}\) N. Cohn, p. 129.
\(^{256}\) Cronaca dei Laurenzi, p. 92.
\(^{259}\) Lignani, p. 147.
loses the delineation of the different loaves suggested by Laurenzi, but nevertheless demonstrates consistency across the visual sources. Where the images have not been damaged, there is also a focal point of the bread in the water, emphasising this action, although the consequent destruction of humanity is not visually represented.

In Vene Gesu, the witness implores the Virgin for a solution to the pestilence, asking her: ‘dammi qualche medicina’ (l. 154). Medicina rhymes with the reina he used to address her, and with dottrina, completing the rhyme pattern in the stanza. This highlights the impending threat of pestilence, although the other two rhyming words suggest another dimension to the medicine. It could potentially be linked to a cure for the soul rather than something physical, and highlights the role of the Virgin in providing it. Indeed, the Virgin gives the witness the tools by which to physically atone for the sins of his soul, combining medicina and dottrina.

Proof is a common theme throughout the origin stories of previous popular religious revivals as seen in the Introduction. However, only two of these tre pani narratives offer any tangible proof of the purported divine encounter. In Sercambi’s prose narrative and Del Segno, once the witness has received the instructions, the Virgin touches his cheek in a guancita [slap or light tap on the cheek], leaving an imprint on his face.260 Both accounts state that in each finger of this handprint, a small image of the Virgin was visible. This guancita is reinforced in the illustrations, where the Virgin can be seen touching the cheek of the witness, leaving a visible mark (Figures 4-5).261 This action resonates with the sacrament of confirmation where the bishop would touch the cheek of the candidate to conclude the rite, and to encourage them to profess Christ’s name.262 By analogy therefore, the guancita could function to inspire the witness to spread the story. Providing physical proof reinforces the idea that the witness was probably illiterate as he is given a physical sign rather than a heavenly letter, for example. This emphasises the potential of the Bianchi devotions to be universal while also not providing anything written for the

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260 A guancita is a touch on the cheek by the hand, it can be gentle, or more like a slap, similar to the alapa or buffet from the sacrament of confirmation.

261 The corresponding lauda images (Figure 8 Images 10-11) have degraded such that it is impossible to tell whether there is a handprint on the witness’ face, although the caption ‘Come la Vergine gli diè una guanciata piano’ suggests it is most likely present.

authorities to negate. The witness of the encounter did not become a charismatic leader for the Bianchi, and does not appear in any of the chronicles after the initial events described above, marking a clear difference between the Bianchi and previous religious revivals.

Thus, the *tre pani* story establishes a realistic goal for the Bianchi participants of spreading the devotion while following a detailed set of guidelines. This origin story demonstrates internal variation throughout the textual and visual versions. The textual sources focus on the destruction of mankind and the importance of participating in the Bianchi processions in order to alleviate it, although there are significant divergences in the events leading up to this point. However, these two features are lacking in the majority of visual sources, suggesting that the focus of the story instead became the interaction between the three protagonists with the three pieces of bread. While these concepts may have been difficult to communicate visually, the Madonna dell’Oliva fresco from Terni (Figure 29) includes numerous figures in the background engaging in Bianchi practices, so it was not unusual to include small hints at how to participate in the devotions.

It is therefore more accurate to consider the *tre pani* ‘stories’ rather than ‘story’ in order to account for these variations. As for creating legitimate origins for the Bianchi processions, this was the most reported story, as it appears in numerous textual and visual sources. All of them succeed to some degree in communicating a similar general message, but it is difficult to ignore crucial points of difference between them. This variation is significant in demonstrating that there was no single version of this origin story circulating during the Bianchi processions, but that this did not hinder the communication of the main elements of the plot. These narratives were clearly an important part of the explanation given to participants in the Bianchi devotions for the reason behind the processions.
4. The Book Story

A man was ploughing a field with his ox when an angel appeared between the horns of the animal, holding a book. He explained that God was angry, and that the witness must therefore spread the Bianchi message. The witness was to take the book to the altar of St Peter in Rome, where an angel would open it if the people had been penitent enough. The book contained ineffable divine instructions.263

Figure 12. MS 107, fol. 302v: Book Story Image

The brief story of the book appears only in Sercambi and Dominici. Sercambi’s account appears just after the tre pani stories, but is much more succinct, and only told once (p. 303). The narrative takes place in Marseille where the protagonist is a lavoratore, embodying the characteristics discussed above, combining his profession with a low social status. The unopenable book provides proof of the divine event in which it is written ‘quello che Dio vorrà’ (p. 304). Later in Sercambi’s narrative, he suggests that only the true pope would be able to open the book on the altar of St Peter (p. 356). The witness of the encounter takes the story to the bishop of Marseille, where the people supposedly began to dress in white and start processions. This section is illustrated by a single image accompanying by the rubric, ‘Del secondo miracolo del bue che arava,’ inserted into the text rather than taking up a full page width (Figure 12). This chapter title differs from the table of contents in the manuscript, substituting bue for colui, although both could make sense in this context, and indeed both are rhyming words in the first stanza of Venne Gesu,

263 This is my translated summary of Sercambi’s narrative (pp. 302-3).
although Sercambi does not transcribe this particular lauda. This highlights the mutability of small elements of the story which do not have a large impact on the narrative but demonstrate choices on the part of the transcriber. The shorter length of the narrative suggests that Sercambi viewed this tale as secondary to the *tre pani* story, which takes up significantly more space.

Dominici’s version of the story is even shorter, and also follows on from his *tre pani* narrative. Dominici does not mention the ox, stating simply that a man of large stature had a divine book in which was stated what life would be like after 1400 (p. 56). Such an oblique reference could imply that the story was in circulation and Dominici did not feel the need to give further details, or that he only had a vague idea of the story himself. While reference is made to this book during the Bianchi processions, there is no report by either chronicler of having personally seen the book or the man carrying it. As there are no reports of the book reaching Rome, the precise contents were never revealed. Similar heavenly writings featured in previous popular revivals, such as the letter instrumental in beginning the flagellant movement of 1260.\textsuperscript{264} However, the fact that this book was not opened means that rather than representing the beginning of the movement, it suggested an end point, which was never realised. The fixation on Rome has implications for the movement more generally, focussing on the Roman papacy and potentially at a hope of ending the Great Schism. Nothing so concrete is expressed in the story however, and its brevity suggests that it was secondary to the *tre pani* story.

The witness of the divine encounter is very similar to the witness of the *tre pani* story. This is particularly the case in Sercambi’s illustrations, where he is almost identical, working in the fields with his ox. This similarity emphasises the lay, illiterate nature of the witness as well as suggesting a link between the two narratives. The landscape in the image is supposedly now Marseille, although it is not radically different to the background of the *tre pani* images, highlighting the importance of the action rather than its location. As with all of the other origin story images discussed, there is no explicit link to the Bianchi processions, although here there is not even a Virgin dressed in white to offer a visual clue.

\textsuperscript{264} Ardu, p. 97.
While this tale does not threaten the destruction of mankind, it has apocalyptic overtones. For example, the idea of sealed writings features in the Apocalypse, where the scroll with seven seals is opened by one who is worthy to do so; this idea of worthiness is retained with the unopenable book here.²⁶⁵ However, the Bianchi devotions cannot be considered eschatological, as the message is a warning rather than a foretelling of complete annihilation. Indeed, this warning is not explicit in either version of this book story, as there is no ultimatum for what would happen were the book not to be opened. This weakens the motivation for participation in the Bianchi devotions by not having death as the alternative to joining in. Indeed, it is only the chroniclers’ narration of these tales in their respective sections on origins that connects the book story to the Bianchi processions at all. Its inclusion by both Sercambi and Dominici nevertheless highlights the importance of the story, and consequently the book, to the devotions.

When Sercambi’s witness passed the tale to the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop in Marseille, he established a role for the clergy in spreading and coordinating the Bianchi processions.²⁶⁶ The possibility for the Church to play an active role denotes a break with many previous revivals. It also potentially explains the degree of success of the Bianchi processions as they included the Church rather than excluding it. This is a development from the tre pani story where the witness initiated the transmission of the story on his own. Nevertheless, the amount of variation between these two versions of the book story demonstrates a further lack of narrative cohesion in explaining the origins of the Bianchi devotions. This story barely explains the origins of the devotions at all, and does not highlight the connection between the processions and stopping the impending pestilence, as was underscored in the tre pani tale. However, the limited recording of this story, just in Sercambi and Dominici with no wall paintings, suggests a smaller diffusion and a secondary position in relation to the tre pani story. The book story therefore creates further variation around the reported point of origin of the Bianchi devotions, adding a specific objective with a connection to the Schism.

²⁶⁵ Revelation 5.
²⁶⁶ Giraudo, p. 172.
5. Capperledis’ Tale

In 1397, an Irish recluse named Capperledis was taken from her cell by an angel to a field of ‘Bianchi,’ who sang the Stabat Mater, pausing every so often to shout misericordia. Capperledis witnessed a discussion between God and the Virgin, who appeared in white. Christ was also present, on the cross, bleeding profusely from his various wounds. God explained that the Jews had crucified Christ once, but that Christians crucified him a thousand times every day. Therefore either Christ was to be crucified again, or the world would be destroyed. The Virgin promised that mankind would do penance in order to escape this fate. An angel then instructed Capperledis to find a priest, who could take her story to the local bishop. He then initiated Bianchi processions in Ireland.267

This third origin story is only told by Dominici, appearing halfway through his chronicle through the medium of a preacher at Pacciana, near Pistoia, on 18 September (pp. 168-9). Explicitly attributing the words of the story to another person creates an extra level of distance between the narrative and Bianchi activities, as the other two origin stories reported by Dominici are not mediated through another voice. Despite this placement, the story is set chronologically prior to the other origin narratives, Dominici explaining that the lack of transmission to the Italian peninsula triggered the tre pani miracle, as the Virgin’s instructions had not yet been followed. The preacher of the story is concerned with proof, citing letters from Ireland, England and Scotland which had transmitted the story to him. While not heavenly in origin, these letters demonstrate the distance the story had travelled, as well as underscoring a combination of written and oral diffusion of the story. This is different to the previous two origin stories which relied exclusively on an oral transmission.

The apocalyptic suggestions in this story are more overt than in the book story, as the horde dressed in white highlights the impending world destruction.268 Christ’s wounds are also presented graphically, creating a more extreme motivation for joining the processions: not only to atone for one’s own sins but to stop the continual crucifixion of Christ. This is the only story in which God the Father appears, reinforcing the message of the story as well as the purportedly divine nature of the origins of the devotions. Thus, Capperledis’ tale is more extreme in its

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267 This is my translation and summary of Dominici’s narrative (pp. 168-70).
268 Apocalypse 7.9.
presentation than the first two origin stories. The horde in the story is referred to as ‘Bianchi,’ which implies continuity between the story and the activities carried out by participants in the Bianchi processions. This represents the only attempt to bridge the distance between an origin story and the activities of the Bianchi participants within the Italian peninsula. The placement of the story halfway through the chronicle reinforces the nature and spread of the Bianchi devotions, attempting to legitimise the origins as well as providing explicit motivation for participation in the processions. This also hints at the continual repetition of origin stories throughout the processions, and preaching as a method of proselytisation.

The reported transmission of this story mimics the diffusion of the Bianchi devotions in Italy, like a relay race, as it was taken from one place to the next. The role of the priest and bishop further edify the role of the clergy in the processions.269 Moreover, the fact that it was a woman who witnessed the vision and yet a man had to spread it highlights the male transmission of all of these stories. While Capperledis’ role is similar to that of the male witnesses in the other two origin stories in terms of social standing and probable illiteracy, she does not have direct contact with the bishop. Dominici also focusses on proof, referring to the letters from the British Isles which allegedly confirmed the story, whereas similar written evidence was not mentioned in the other origin stories. This could point to the necessity of proof for the story of a woman, or reflect the way the bishop conveyed the information. While this written information legitimates Capperledis’ story, it is terrestrial, ecclesiastical evidence rather than the divine proof offered in the previous stories in the guancita and the book. This story adds another level of narrative variation to the reported origins of the Bianchi processions, suggesting another tale involved in their inception.

6. Three Origin Stories

All three of these accounts of the origins of the Bianchi devotions, the tre pani stories, the book story and the story of Capperledis, have important points in common. While there is an apocalyptic overtone in all three stories, only Capperledis’ tale can be considered eschatological as it points to total world

269 Giraudo, p. 73.
destruction. However, the foretold death toll of a third in the *tre pani* tale is perhaps more potent, recalling previous devastations from plague outbreaks and representing a tangible threat against which action could be taken, rather than the unavoidable threat of total annihilation. By 1399, chroniclers only tended to devote a few lines to outbreaks of plague, somewhat normalising the disease, but nevertheless acknowledging the unpredictable devastation it could bring.

The witnesses to these supposedly divine encounters were all of low social status. The witnesses described by Sercambi, whether in the *tre pani* stories or the book tale are referred to using the same word. This muddles the distinct features of the stories, making it harder to differentiate between them. All the witnesses have to take their story to others in order to spread the devotion. The witnesses of the *tre pani* story allegedly spread the devotion initially themselves, whereas Sercambi reports that the witness to the book story went to his bishop. In Dominici’s narrative, the female recluse, more drastically, has to break her vows of enclosure and then convince varying male clergy who then spread the story and begin the devotions. Where a bishop is involved, his role is to validate the story in much the same way as the *guancita* and the book, respectively in the first two stories, which provide evidence of the divine encounters. None of the witnesses became a figurehead for the Bianchi processions, as they are not reported as personally travelling throughout the Italian peninsula to spread the story. These ecclesiastical points of contact at this early stage in the processions paved the way for the positive role of the church throughout Bianchi devotions. The stories were spread orally and textually, as they were preached and sung, as well as being relayed in letters reported by the chroniclers.

Considering the style of reporting in the chronicles, it is most common for just one version of the *tre pani* story to be cited. This is the case in the Città di Castello sources and notably the laude and frescoes sources only tell this story. These sources create the most coherent contemporary picture of the start of the Bianchi devotions with this story, and the textual sources highlight its overall goal of spreading the devotion in order to avoid impending death. Indeed, this appears to be the most popular narrative. However, the crucial elements of impending death and
the instructions for participants are missing from the visual sources. These formed the motivation for Bianchi participants and the means by which the witness could undo his action of throwing the bread into the water.

Sercambi and Dominici tell the *tre pani* tale in combination with the book story in a section on the origins of the processions. Notwithstanding, the *tre pani* story is always told first, and at greater length. Both of these chroniclers link both of the stories to the beginning of the Bianchi devotions without explaining the connection between the two, or addressing the problematic idea of a double purpose for the processions: promoting the devotion and taking the book to Rome. While the latter could be considered a secondary purpose, it confuses the nature of the movement at this early stage in its evolution, and deprived the Bianchi participants of a single, focused objective.

Capperledis’ tale is somewhat anomalous as it appears in the midst of accounts of Bianchi activities rather than separated out at the beginning of the chronicle. While Dominici explains that the story preceded the events of the *tre pani* tale, he makes no mention of the book story at this juncture. This story therefore highlights the concern of legitimising the processions through their origins. By offering a story more removed in time and space than either of his other stories, Dominici underscores the importance of participation by the distance that the story had already travelled, and the fact that not heeding its instructions provoked a second miracle in the events with the *tre pani*.

The fact that two laude feature among the textual accounts of the *tre pani* story highlights this as a mode of transmission. The form of the lauda places formal restrictions on the narrative, streamlining it into verse form. Theatrical elements are added, as well as repeated references to the protagonists to ensure that the audience follows the story. The focus on the annihilation of mankind reinforces the driving force for universal participation in the Bianchi devotions. Therefore, despite further variation and additions in these laude, the underlying message remains the same as it did across the prose narratives.
The images depicting the *tre pani* story and the book story present a condensed version of the narratives. They provide visual representations of the characters, but no sense of the impending pestilence as a threat to be overcome. For the protagonists, this creates a degree of continuity, as they are dressed relatively similarly across all visual depictions. Christ’s portrayal as a pilgrim demonstrates a particular continuity with the majority of the written sources, and further suggests that when there is only a generic epithet, such as *fanciullo*, the audience would have been aware that Christ was dressed as a pilgrim. The depiction of the Virgin diverges slightly, as small additions are sometimes made to her robes. These do not detract from her role as exemplar for the Bianchi participants however, rather they emphasise her elevated position. Considering the frescoes and Sercambi’s manuscript together, there is a remarkable degree of similarity in form and content. This could indicate that the story also circulated in a pictorial form during the processions, as suggested by a *tavola* bearing the *tre pani* story cited by Dominici (p. 161). As with both sets of images in Sercambi’s manuscript, there is no suggestion in these frescoes of the regulations for Bianchi participants or the threat of plague.

In the case of the frescoes at Poggio Mirteto, Rieti and Terni, an onlooker would require prior knowledge of the origin stories in order to decode the images in terms of their narrative and overall message. The fact that the *tre pani* story is the only tale to exist in fresco form highlights its importance and diffusion as an explanation of the origins of the Bianchi devotions in Tuscany as well as in Lazio and Umbria. Even though the paintings were most likely created after the passage of the Bianchi processions through each town this demonstrates the potency of the subject matter which was commemorated in visual form.

Throughout all of the different origin stories, there is no suggestion of a single, ideal version of the origins of the Bianchi devotions as reported by those who witnessed the processions. Indeed, Sercambi’s inclusion of the *tre pani* tale told twice with different details embraces the diversity surrounding the story, and Dominici’s inclusion of all three variant narratives further acknowledges this. The different versions of the stories are most likely representative of the way that the tales were circulated, each chronicler writing down the version that they heard, while
also adding small embellishments of their own. Unless the story was read out each time, it would never be the same twice when it was recited aloud. It remains unclear how these stories come together, or even if they are supposed to. While all of the narratives emphasise the need for Bianchi devotions, they do not create a single explanation of the origins. This variation is evident between the three tales as well as between different versions of the same narrative. The general focus is on spreading and participating in the devotions, although the nature of these is not always fully explored. The visual sources emphasise specific points in the narratives rather than the devotions which they inspired. The variation is dependent on the individual style of those who wrote the stories down, rather than demonstrating any particular regional tendencies. Ultimately, these stories create a multifaceted view of the reportedly divine beginnings of the Bianchi devotions, and no clear sense of cohesion.

7. Location of Origins

A major inconsistency throughout the origin stories is the location of the narrative. These settings are more divergent than any narrative differences between these tales; some chroniclers even cite different locations for the same events within a few pages. The sources discussed above use locations as the settings for their narratives of the origin stories of the Bianchi devotions. Other sources simply cite a location as the point of origin of the devotions, without including any of the three origin narratives. These sources will be considered together, considering the link between specific stories and locations and common citations of a specific place. One consistent feature of these various locations is situating the point of initiation of the Bianchi processions outside the Italian peninsula, in a place far away from the writer of the chronicle. The accounts in question were all written contemporary to the processions. This variation will highlight the mythical quality of the origin stories; the lack of agreement in the sources suggests no single idea of how or where the devotions began.
Table 2: Origin Story Locations (Place names have been anglicised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Del Segno</em></td>
<td>tre pani</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurenzi</td>
<td>tre pani</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerboni</td>
<td>tre pani</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montemarte</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Nyem</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sercambi (prose)</td>
<td>tre pani</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominici</td>
<td>Capperledis</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sercambi</td>
<td>book story</td>
<td>Marseille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominici</td>
<td>tre pani</td>
<td>Dauphiné</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Venne Gesu</em></td>
<td>tre pani</td>
<td>Savoy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Provence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rinuccini</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Near Piedmont</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delayto</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Kingdom of Granada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bandini</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Orient</td>
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</table>

The most common location for the origins of the Bianchi processions is somewhere in the British Isles, specifically, Scotland, England or Ireland. Three of the six *tre pani* narratives situate the story in Scotland, and another in England, and Capperledis’ tale is situated in Ireland. Scotland is also cited by the Orvietan chronicler Montemarte.\(^{270}\) While not including an origin story narrative, Montemarte notes his scepticism about the veracity of the events which occurred in Scotland, despite a letter from the king. De Nyem, the Roman papal notary, also cites Scotland as the point of origin, although without any further comment.\(^{271}\) Despite all of these accounts pointing to the British Isles as the source of the Bianchi devotions, there are no British accounts to corroborate them. Indeed, the Englishman Thomas Walsingham reported that there were Bianchi processions in Rome, but mentioned no similar processions in England.\(^{272}\) The British Isles represent a significantly different place from where the chroniclers were writing, although one within the bounds of Christendom. The notion that the story of the devotions managed to cross

\(^{270}\) Cronaca del Conte Francesco di Montemarte, p. 266.
\(^{271}\) De Nyem, p. 168.
\(^{272}\) Cited in Morton, p. 58.
from the British Isles to the Italian peninsula highlights its importance and necessity, particularly as a linguistic boundary was crossed. It seems that at almost every stage of this origin story, the necessity for some kind of greater authority than the witness is required in order to facilitate its supposed transmission across seas and borders.

Southern France is the second most common place given as the origin of the Bianchi devotions. Sercambi situates his book story in Marseille, Dominici puts the *tre pani* story in the Dauphiné, the lauda *Venne Gesu* cites ‘Savoia,’ and Stella, the Genoese chronicler, suggests ‘Provintia.’\(^{273}\) No French chronicles have been found to corroborate these claims. Setting the story in France creates a reduced level of difference than setting it in the British Isles. Nevertheless, the implications of setting the story here could be a reference to the Avignonese papacy, and any potential the Bianchi devotions might have had to overcome the Great Schism. Dominici hints at this end to the Schism in his book story, saying that 1400 was supposed to be a year of peace throughout the world and that the Roman Church would have a new *pastore* (p. 56). The Florentine Rinuccini puts the origin ‘verso Piemonte,’ which performs a similar function to placing the story in France.\(^{274}\) Rinuccini was still removed from the point of origin, but close enough to make the transmission of the story believable. The use of France therefore sets the origins of the Bianchi devotions away from the processions in Genoa, but to a lesser extent than placing them in the British Isles. Travel between southern France and the north of Italy was easier, and the two regions can also be considered as within the same linguistic continuum, so this promotion of vernacular transmission encounters fewer problems as the stories were reportedly transmitted orally from one to the other.

The most radical placement of the origin story is by the Ferrarese chronicler Delayto: in ‘Regno Granatae Hispaniensis.’\(^{275}\) He reports that the processions then spread throughout Spain and ‘alias longinquas Christianorum Regiones.’ While Christianity, Judaism and Islam coexisted together in Granada, in 1399, the dominant religion was Islam by far. It is highly unlikely that a Christian devotion

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\(^{273}\) Stella, p. 236.

\(^{274}\) Filippo Rinuccini, *Ricordi storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini dal 1282 al 1460*, (Florence: Stamperia Piatti, 1840), p. XLIV.

\(^{275}\) Delayto, p. 956.
began in a Muslim kingdom. A potential Spanish connection to Vincent Ferrer cited by, for example Volker, was discounted by Tognetti, as chronologically impossible.\textsuperscript{276} A Spanish beginning to the Bianchi fervour is made more unlikely by the way that Spanish people are portrayed throughout the processions. For example, a Spaniard led a Bianchi procession to Orvieto behind a bleeding cross. Upon investigation by the authorities, it was discovered that the cross was in fact filled with \textit{cenaphrio} [cinnabar] and oil, and the man was taken to Rome and burnt.\textsuperscript{277} Placing the origin in Spain therefore continues the positioning of the origins of the Bianchi devotions away from their reported Ligurian beginnings, although the selection of Granada is much less believable than France or the British Isles. Moreover, this addition of a new place to the collection cited for the inception of the Bianchi processions further confuses their point of origin. It is possible that the Ferrarese chronicler was unaware of the negative connotations of Spain for the Bianchi devotions, as he presents the processions in a positive light. His selection of this specific location is nevertheless problematic.

Bandini, a Florentine writer, states that the Bianchi devotions began ‘ab Oriente.’\textsuperscript{278} This is even more anomalous than the Spanish citation, although suggesting such a distance between the origins and the Italian processions could be hyperbolic, especially as Bandini later reports the fervour reaching the entirety of the world. These more extreme locations of the origin story suggest an urgency to the devotion, as it had travelled such a great distance to reach the chroniclers reporting it. Thus, sources contemporary to the Bianchi processions tend to place the origins in one location, or in the case of Sercambi and Dominici, associate each story with one broad location.

A trend comes to light in sources later in the fifteenth century of citing four possible locations. Here, the origins are presented as hearsay rather than fact: ‘altri hanno detto havere havuto origine in Ispagna, altri in Ischotia, altri in Inghilterra, e


\textsuperscript{278} Dominico Bandini, ‘Ex libro \textit{De Viris Claris}', in \textit{Opere}, ed. by Cesare Guasti (Prato: Stefano Belli, 1894), pp. 360-1 (p. 360).
altri in Francia, ma per lo più si tenne di Schotia.’ [others said the origin was in Spain, others in Scotland, others in England and others still in France, but on the whole, Scotland is held to be the place]. 279 Other accounts are even less specific, simply stating that the devotions began *olttramonti*, continuing this idea of ineffable origins while maintaining this distance between chronicler and origin. 280 This distance helps to maintain the supposedly divine nature of the origins of the Bianchi devotions, making the stories harder to either prove or disprove. None of these, apart from Spain, is portrayed in a negative light, thus while there is an emphasis on creating a distance between the point of origin and the actual Bianchi processions, it is generally a positive sense of distance.

The chroniclers who do not narrate an origin story are largely more sceptical about the divine nature of the origins of the Bianchi processions, which is highlighted in the later sources that cite various possibilities for the location. While the purpose of the origin stories was to legitimise the Bianchi devotions, the variation in these locations moves even further away from the idea of a cohesive beginning. Moreover, a tension is created between these stories and the first reported Bianchi processions in Genoa, as the chronological interval is not addressed. Indeed, the chroniclers move seamlessly from reporting the origin stories either to discuss the Bianchi activities at Genoa or close to their own town.

The visual sources do not suggest a particular location, rather depicting a generic rural setting for the origin story they depict, whether the *tre pani* story or the book story. The gap between the rural setting for the origin story and the urban processions is bridged in the final image of both tales in Sercambi’s manuscript, as the witness spreads the story in a town. This demonstrates the initial stages of transmission, and while the town is typical of those depicted throughout the manuscript, it lacks the insignia usually present as a means of identification. The three fresco sources for this story reinforce the rural backdrop to the narrative,

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280 Cronaca del Conte Francesco di Montemarte, p. 266.
although without suggesting a specific location. These images therefore emphasise the generic, intangible sense of location suggested in the texts.

While these locations provide the devotions with a place of origin, in some ways validating them, any legitimisation is lessened due to the sheer amount of variation present between accounts. This demonstrates diversity at this embryonic stage of the Bianchi devotions, and suggests that the chroniclers did not have a clear notion of the geographical location of the origins, even if some did have a particular idea of the story or stories involved. However, there is no particular pattern to this variation, as chroniclers from the whole geographical spread of the Bianchi processions have been examined, and there is no regional tendency to place the origin in a particular location. Furthermore, the location of the stories of origin does not appear to have had any bearing on the realisation of the Bianchi processions. Nevertheless, these differences are indicative of the multifaceted Bianchi processions which were built on tales full of narrative diversity.

8. Origin Story Recapitulations
The three origin stories were presented by the chroniclers as the explanation for the impetus behind the Bianchi processions. In addition to these reportedly distant stories, both Sercambi and Dominici include further narratives related to the initial origin stories as a demonstration of the continuing momentum behind the processions. These stories, which are placed during the processions, add to the themes introduced by the initial narratives, which were reported to be chronologically prior to the Bianchi devotions. There is therefore a greater sense of proximity created with these new visions, and the chroniclers cite sources and locations closer to their home towns. To analyse these cases, the focus will be narrowed to Sercambi and Dominici’s accounts, which offer rich descriptions of these later holy encounters close to Lucca and Pistoia. The narrative features of these accounts will be considered, as well as their role in perpetuating the spread of the Bianchi processions. The initial emphasis will be later stories which recapitulate the initial three origin stories, before turning to later visions which also reportedly inspired the population to participate in the Bianchi devotions.

While Bliersbach asserts that the Terni frescoes depict Marmore as a backdrop due to the shape of the hills, this contradicts the textual tradition of setting the story outside Italy.
There are relatively few events which Dominici and Sercambi report later in their chronicle narratives which recall the initial origin stories, and the majority occur in Dominici’s chronicle. The first two examples recapitulate the book story. These instances are problematic, revealing details not present in Dominici’s original narrative of the tale, but suggest that further elements such as the worker and his oxen, as seen in Sercambi, were circulating during the processions. Thus, Dominici claims that in Bologna in August, 20,000 people gathered, carrying ‘quello libro che si de’ aprire a Roma’ (p. 118). This creates continuity between the book story and the processions, and shows how the fervour had progressed to Bologna. It is unusual for Dominici to address events so far from Pistoia, demonstrating the significance of this incident although he states that he will write more about the events once the group reached his own city. This suggests that the chronicler adopted a critical approach in reporting Bianchi activities which he had not personally witnessed.

Dominici does not mention the arrival of this group in Pistoia, and so no further information is given as to his opinion of the events. However, he does mention a man arriving in Pistoia from Scotland in October, referred to as the place where the miracle with the three breads happened (p. 200). This placement directly contradicts Dominici’s original location of the story in France, further highlighting the importance of the content of the origin story rather than its location. This Scottish man reported having seen ‘i buovi e il lavoratore e il libro,’ details which were not present in Dominici’s book story. These two incidents demonstrate the role of the book story in maintaining momentum for the Bianchi devotions, at least for Dominici. However, by October, the majority of the Pistoiese population would already have participated in at least one Bianchi procession, making the Scottish man’s story rather redundant. Nevertheless, this recapitulation legitimises and clarifies the book story, as well as highlighting the importance of universal participation in the processions. This incident also underscores the importance of oral transmission for these origin stories, and indicates the continued circulation of the stories three months after the initial Genoese processions. However, both men, travelling respectively from Bologna and Scotland, would have travelled further than a Bianchi novena in order to reach Pistoia, suggesting a different mode of
participation in the devotions, or that the men should be considered apart from the general Bianchi fervour.

Dominici recounts a recapitulation of the *tre pani* story just three days later on 23 October (p. 203). A man appeared in Pistoia dressed in white, singing *in rima* about ‘il miracolo de’ pani, della fonte e del lavoratore.’ This demonstrates the use of laude as a method of spreading the origin stories. However, no further particulars are recorded about this man, who was simply *vestito di bianco*. This reinforces the popularity of the *tre pani* tale, and is an example of how the story was spread from town to town. Again, this message was redundant in Pistoia, but the fact that these stories were still being spread reinforces the necessity of universal participation in the devotions.

Sercambi reports just one recapitulation, of the book story (p. 356). A man from Alessandria arrived in Lucca dressed in white, reporting that he had seen the man carrying the book to Rome, and that only the true pope would be able to open it. The Alessandrian reported that the people of Lombardy had participated in Bianchi processions. As with the examples from Dominici, this cannot be considered a rallying cry for the Bianchi devotions, as processions had already begun in Lucca. Furthermore, the man had travelled for more than the nine days stipulated for Bianchi participants. Thus, this episode reinforces the book story, adding further clarification in specifying Rome as an end point. The function of these recapitulations was to inspire new processions; while the continued repetition of these stories in different modes is significant, it is unlikely that each case inspired a renewed procession. These instances also indicate that the stories were still spreading throughout Italy while the devotions were happening in both Lucca and Pistoia.

One final recapitulation of a visual nature is recorded by Dominici (p. 161). A group from Galluzzo, near Florence, arrived in Pistoia halfway through September bearing a crucifix and a *tavola quadra*. This *tavola* depicted ‘il miracolo di Scozia, donde è proceduto questo fatto de’ B[ianchi].’282 This again contradicts Dominici’s original location of this story in France, but his recapitulations do agree amongst themselves. The stories may have been modified in order to reflect the most common

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282 Dominici refers to the Bianchi simply as ‘B.’ throughout his chronicle.
iteration of the story in circulation during the Bianchi processions. Moreover, the image demonstrates another mode of transmission for the story, although it is frustrating that more particulars of the *tavola* are not recorded.

These recapitulations serve as reminders from the chroniclers of the original stories, although they are separated chronologically and spatially from the initial telling of the stories in the narratives. This reinforces the impetus behind the processions, as presented by each chronicler. These examples also point to the continued spread of these stories throughout Tuscany even after the processions had begun. While Dominici cites different locations for the origin of the Bianchi devotions in this episode than he did in the origin stories, this draws the focus onto the events rather than their locations, although it does create further points of confusion. It is unsurprising that there are no recapitulations of Capperledis’ tale as it appears mid-way through Dominici’s chronicle rather than in his origin story section.

Throughout these recapitulations, there is an emphasis on male, oral transmission of the narratives continued from the origin stories in spreading the story from town to town. Unlike the original stories, these recapitulations are not the primary foci of their respective sections, and are placed in broader narratives about Bianchi activities. They therefore appear secondary to the origin stories, but play an important role in demonstrating the potency of the *tre pani* and book stories throughout the spread of the Bianchi devotions. While variation continued, it appears to be for practical reasons, emphasising the points of the stories which were most recognisable. Indeed, no threat of plague or instructions for the participants are mentioned, suggesting that these details may have been missing from these later forms of the origin narratives. The promotion of the origin stories was a constant concern throughout the Bianchi fervour, heightening the function of the stories in validating the devotions.

9. Secondary Visions

The continuing motivation behind the processions was not solely explained through the origin story narratives discussed above. Indeed, Sercambi and Dominici reported further occurrences of visions during the processions which the chroniclers described as reinvigorating the population and often inspiring renewed devotions. Bornstein
has suggested that these visions were simply regional alternatives to the origin stories, whereas my analysis will suggest instead that they were ‘top-up’ visions with a unique importance which reinvigorated or instigated the Bianchi processions in particular locations.\(^{283}\) For the chroniclers, these visions had a clear role in maintaining the fervour around the Bianchi devotions, and are mostly reported by Dominici.

Visions were described in Pisa and in Siena, reportedly initiating Bianchi activities in each city. In Pisa, the Virgin appeared to a small boy, banishing the demons that had been seen dancing on the Arno and telling the people of Pisa to process ‘come fanno l’altra città’ (p. 93). In Siena, a pregnant woman was told in a vision that the Bianchi participants must be allowed to enter, or Siena would pay a terrible debt (pp. 113-4). In both instances, Bianchi devotions were reportedly begun. This suggests that the Pisans and the Sienese were aware of the processions, but had chosen not to engage with them. Neither of the visions included an origin story, seeking to persuade rather than to inform the population in each town.

Dominici narrates how a man arrived in Pistoia dressed in Bianchi robes on 4 September (pp. 119-20). The man claimed that the Virgin had appeared to him, stating that Christ had partly revoked the pestilential sentence, and imploring those who had not yet participated to do so, so that ‘non arà questa pestilenza’. The Virgin blessed three pieces of bread as proof, and once the man left Pistoia, he was never seen again. There is a clear resonance of the tre pani story, in the reference to the original warning and presence of the three pieces of bread. This is similar to the Alessandrian man described above by Sercambi, in that a single person was spreading such a story separately from the nine-day Bianchi processions.

In a further story, a Florentine notary saw an image of the Virgin which began to bleed into a small box (pp. 154-5). In the box, the notary found a silver ring which he took to his priest. The priest ridiculed the man, but then also had a vision of the Virgin who told him that unless the Florentine people processed a questo modo for seven days, they would face Christ’s wrath. While the priest had proof in the form of blood and the ring, he was apparently imprisoned by the town priors when

\(^{283}\) Bornstein, p. 113.
he tried to spread the story, as he was believed to be ill. This tale reiterates the importance of reporting visions to ecclesiastical authorities, invoking the authority of the church. This is particularly significant as the notary would have been capable of personally transmitting the story and yet he went to a priest to validate his story. The fact that there were no instructions for the new processions beyond their length implies that those hearing the story would already be aware of what was involved. However, the imprisonment of this priest denotes the only negative reaction to these visions, perhaps implying the unworthiness of both men. The failure of the priest particularly highlights the importance of maintaining the popular element of the processions and the importance of lay people in perpetuating these stories at a local level.

*A buona fanciulla* at San Casciano also reportedly saw the Virgin, who explained the need for further repentance or Christ would send *maggiorre moria* (p. 174). The girl reported this to a priest, and when she was not believed, had a further vision of the Virgin who marked the girl with two crosses on her hands. This was considered sufficient proof to renew the Bianchi devotions in the town. This story demonstrates a concern with proof, as well as a vision directly inspiring renewed processions. The proof is similar to the *guancita* given to the witness in the *tre pani* origin story. There is also a resonance with the stigmata, although again it is less extreme as the crosses were not open wounds, rather white marks.

The next two recapitulations purportedly occurred in the Valdelsa (pp. 182-3; 184-5). The Virgin appeared to a girl on 20 September, instructing her to clean the church and ring the bell. The girl was then to command those who had not ‘fatto de' B[ianchi]' [done the Bianchi [processions]] to do so immediately, and go to Santa Maria a Cigoli in a candlelit procession. Initially, the girl was mocked, and the Virgin made the crucifix above the altar spin three times, which convinced the population. The girl, who had been *grossolana rozza e sozza* [coarse, uncouth and filthy] became *delicata bella e angelica* [gentle, beautiful and angelic] and gained a large following of Bianchi participants, inspiring renewed devotions. Webb describes this as a ‘fairy-tale touch,’ perhaps indicating how perfect the story seems.
as it inspired renewed devotions. While the girl participated in these processions, her face was covered and she was separated from the crowds by various echelons of clergy. One of these acted as her mouthpiece, through whom she was able to recount the sins of those around her. Dominici reports that this vision inspired renewed processions not only where the girl lived, but also wherever she went, in a similar fashion to the origin stories. The girl went as far as Florence, where she was entered into a monastery. Indeed, one could argue that she was more powerful than the original witnesses, as she participated in numerous processions rather than vanishing before the processions reached Genoa. While this girl can be considered a figurehead, she cannot be taken as a leader as it was not her voice alone which inspired the processions and she required an intermediary to communicate for her.

Bornstein suggests that this witness was a victim of overzealous clerics attempting to enhance the pilgrim traffic at the shrine of Cigoli. He accuses the clergy of making the girl a puppet and separates the incident from the rest of the Bianchi activities. Such an interpretation of Dominici’s account lessens the religiosity of the participants in these renewed processions. Taken in the context of Dominici’s chronicle as a whole, moreover, this attitude is not representative of the members of the church, and indeed does them some disservice, as they played a largely positive role in guiding other processions as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four. Therefore, while Bornstein may be correct in suggesting that efforts were made to promote certain locations along the way for the Bianchi participants to visit, it is difficult to single this example out, as there were other young girls who experienced similar visions which also inspired renewed processions elsewhere. Indeed, he notes that the following visionary also contributed to the promotion of the shrine, but only that the first girl was controlled by the clergy.

The second visionary in the Valdelsa was described as a 36-year-old married woman who had fasted piously over the preceding seven years (pp. 184-5). One evening, the Virgin, St Andrew and St John appeared to her. She stated ‘Io non sono degna di vedervi ne’ che vegnate a visitarmi’, [I am not worthy either to see you or for you to come and visit me] but the Virgin said that her fasting made her worthy.

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285 Bornstein, pp. 110-1.
She explained that the initial processions had partly revoked the pestilential sentence, but there would be ‘gran moria’ [sic] for those who had not participated. As proof, the woman was given crosses on both of her hands and like the girl, she was instructed to take candles to Santa Maria at Cigoli. The idea that this woman needed proof suggests that she might have been a less reliable witness, and the fact that it is identical to the proof offered at San Casciano indicates continuity between these secondary visions. The words with which this woman replied to the Virgin are similar to the concluding part of the Communion rite, ‘I am not worthy enough to see you,’ quantifying her feeling of unworthiness. The process of self-abasement through confession, as well as the ascetic qualities of various Bianchi regulations, suggests that this unworthiness merited divine mercy. This woman therefore not only reportedly spread the news of the necessity to participate in Bianchi processions but also provided a model for participants to emulate in her feeling of unworthiness and practice of fasting. Thus, this vision demonstrates the importance of universal participation, offering the witness an exemplar as well as highlighting the impending ‘moria’ as motivation.

These visions can be divided into two categories: those which reportedly initiated Bianchi processions (at Pisa and Siena), and those which stressed the importance of universal participation and renewed processions. These episodes are much more localised than the origin stories, purportedly tied to places in or near where the chroniclers were writing and where Bianchi processions occurred. This proximity heightens the threat of death promised in the visions, localising the warning from the origin stories. For the most part, the initial processions are presented as having revoked part of the sentence, thus the warning of annihilation remains for those who had not participated. A divine element is maintained by the presence of the Virgin in the majority of these visions. Narratively speaking, the stories are streamlined in a similar manner to the laude as they are never the main focus of a chapter, and are all quite concise. The witnesses of the visions are often offered proof, or sometimes a second encounter with the Virgin, in order to ratify these visions. While a physical sign, this proof is never as obvious as the guancita from the tre pani story. The purpose of these visions was not to convey the instructions for Bianchi participants to follow or indeed to transmit the origin stories.
explaining the devotions, suggesting that the towns were aware of how to participate. Therefore, these visions sought to instigate further processions in order to fully overcome the impending ‘moria’. Indeed, there is more of a focus on the plague in these new visions than in the recapitulations of the origin stories discussed above, suggesting a renewed emphasis on the motivation behind the Bianchi processions.

The visions were described as remarkably successful at inciting Bianchi fervour, as only one did not come to fruition. This is probably due to the nature of the witnesses. For the most part, the witnesses were female and of the three men, two had specific epithets: one was a fanciullo and one a notary. The third, the man who arrived in Pistoia, is reminiscent of the witness of the tre pani story as he offered three pieces of bread as proof. The notary is the only witness whose vision did not achieve its purpose, perhaps suggesting something about his character which excluded him from being an acceptable vessel for visions. He was the only witness of a significantly higher social standing, and his profession perhaps demonstrates his lack of sanctity and innocence. The childrens’ innocence can be construed due to their youth, and pains are taken to explain the sanctity of the women involved: the fasting of the woman from the Valdelsa is made explicit and the woman from Siena was pregnant. These children and women would also probably have been exempt from the itinerant Bianchi processions due to their age and gender. These witnesses were considered acceptable mouthpieces for the visions as they were more likely to deliver unadulterated accounts of their experiences, due to their innocent and in some cases holy natures. While they may also have been impressionable, and could have been manipulated into reporting a vision in order to spur on the processions, the fact that there were frequent renewed visions implies that they must have been believed to be genuine. Indeed, Dominici notes that some of the hundreds of miracles he reports were proved to be fake, but there is no suggestion that any of these visionaries were less than legitimate.

The overall purpose of these reported visions is ambiguous. The majority of them were reported in towns where there had already been numerous Bianchi processions, and the insistence on further devotions seems overzealous. The original motivation behind the devotions is reinforced throughout these visions, as death is
highlighted as the alternative to participation. These episodes did not seek to educate, rather to persuade. Their function was not to promote regional interpretations of the Bianchi processions, as there were no instructions given, so presumably the general template of regulations was to be followed. These visions must be taken as secondary in nature to the origin stories due to their function in renewing rather than initiating processions in most instances. Furthermore, endorsing a different interpretation of the devotion could affect its efficacy, thus any variation in practices cannot be attributed to these visions and the renewed processions they may have inspired, as there were no instructions conveyed. This points to the continued circulation of the origin stories and the rules that participants were supposed to adhere to after the initial wave of devotions. However, none of the visions sought to introduce individual regional features to the devotions, and so while there was variation between the stories, as most of the instances discussed here were unique, they can still be considered as spreading the general Bianchi message, particularly due to the renewed focus on the threat of plague.

9.1 Melica
The visions reported by Melica, a slave from near Genoa, are described by both Dominici and Stella. While the main focus is on Genoa, the effect of the story in Pistoia means that it is relevant here. Melica supposedly saw the Virgin while praying alone in a church, and was told to promote renewed processions in Genoa. She told her signore, who accompanied her, along with two other witnesses, to the church, where they all saw the same vision and the Bianchi processions were renewed. Stella concludes his section on the Bianchi devotions with the story:

Quedam a\textit{utem} Frederici de Vivaldis nobilis Ianuensis serva\ facta libera, bonorum mulier operum viteque sancte, inquit se\ gloriosam Dei Genitrice in somniis aspexit\textit{illi} dicentem\ quod Ianue non fuerat pure et devote facta processio\ quodque, ut vessaret furor Ihesu Christi nati eius irati, fieret\ secundo processio: ea igitur mulier hoc retulit intra gentem\ et, quia super eius somnio interrogata fuit et apprime\ perquista a quibusdam theologis et prudentibus viris, quod\ non vane loquebatur visum extitit, indixit ergo
archiepiscopus Iauensis ut ieinaretur per triduum, post per septem dies templar visitarentur. 286

[So then the freed slave of Federigo de’ Vivaldi, noble of Genoa, who led a good and holy life, said that she dreamed of the glorious Mother of God, who said that Genoa was not pure and had not devoutly done processions, and so to avoid the fury of Jesus Christ, they must do a second procession. Then the woman reported the story, and since she was extensively questioned about this dream by theologians and men of good standing, it seemed that her story was true. They therefore informed the archbishop of Genoa to fast for three days, and then visit churches for seven days afterwards.]

As various theologians had interrogated Melica to validate her story, it was consequently decided that the town would fast for three days and then process for seven, beginning on 28 August, 12 weeks after the initial processions in the city. Fewer people participated this time around, although Stella does note that the Pisans, on hearing this news, wanted to renew the devotions but were not allowed to by their town authorities. Coupled with the vision story from above, this suggests a certain reticence in Pisa towards the Bianchi devotions.

Dominici’s version of the story is more elaborate; Bornstein states that the story has been ‘transformed’ (pp. 125-7). 287

Egli è vero che una fante di Federigo de’ Vivaldi a nome Melica, [...] una domenica di luglio passato, dopo desinare, andò alla chiesa di S. Maria in Monte, alla lato Genova e, essendo inginocchiata dinanzi all’altare maggiore, pregò Iddio che mandasse pace in questa terra e disse il pater noster e riguardò la figura della vergine Maria, che era nel detto altare; e ivi sopra a questa figura appaì la nostra donna vergine Maria in forma d’una donna grande e bella vestita di panno cilestro chiaro [...]. E ivi apparve subito il nostro Signore Jesù Cristo, vestito di panno camellino e mostrava le mani delle piache, dalle quali usciva e cadeva sangue, e con lui un giovane vestito di quel medesimo colore e domandò la madre quello voleva. Ella disse: “Tante volte t’ho pregato per le creature e tu mai non ti sei voluto arrendere”. Elli rispose: “Come vi debbo udire, che non si vogliono correggere?”. E ella rispose: “Consenti a’ miei preghi e io farò che faranno bene e correggeransi: non vedi tu quanto hanno già cominciato a

286 Stella, p. 241.
287 Bornstein, p. 112.
fare?”. Ellì rispuose: “Ciò che hanno fatto, non l’hanno fatto per me e non sono contento per ciò che vanno mangiando, bevendo, godendo, sollazzando, e insieme si uccidono”. Ellì rispuose: “Lo farò che le creature digiune verranno tre di e poi andranno per tutte le chiese della città e a llato della città ove si canti la messa sette di”. E allora lo nostro Signore si partì e mostrò quasi essere contento, e allora questa Melica cominciò avere gran paura e tornò a casa e narrò questo fatto al Signore suo soprascritto; e elli essendone quasi incredulo lunedì mattina rivegente e andò a questa chiesa con questa Melica e andòva la donna di Federigo sopraddetto con uno, che ha nome Ruberto dell’Imperiali di Genova e fatto l’orazione veddeno il simile e l’altra mattina rivegente anco vi ritornorono ellino ed gli altri molti e fatta l’orazione viddono tutta la soprascritta visione e oltre a questo viddono il nostro Signore Idio col detto giovane, vestito come di sopra e con gli orecchi lunghi. E questo giovane aveva in mano un calice di ariento pieno di sangue e un sacchetto di pane; e Cristo li comandò che il gettasse in un pozzo e allora la vergine Maria tolse al detto giovane il calice e il sacchetto e messelo sotto. È Cristo la pregava le lì rendesse e ella li pregò lassasse fare a lei e che ella farebbe che i cristiani farebbero le soprascritte cose, le quale ti ho promesse e correggeransi, se non si te lo renderò. E Cristo allora fu contento e partissì; e subito la vergine Maria gridò forte misericordia tre volte e moltissimi angeli erano qui vi e risposero: amen amen amen. Questo udirono moltissime persone erano gli è stato esaminato da valentissimi uomini diversi modi e per questo tutti i Genovesi e poi gli altri si l’hanno fatto come di sopra si contiene.

[Melica, the servant of Federigo de’ Vivaldi, went to the church of Santa Maria in Monte after lunch one Sunday last July. There, she knelt before the main altar, praying for peace, saying the Our Father and looking at a statue of the Virgin Mary on the altar. The Virgin Mary appeared above this statue in the form of a tall woman in beautiful clothes of light blue cloth. Suddenly, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared, dressed in woollen cloth and showing the wounds in his hands, from which blood was flowing. He had with him a young man dressed in the same colour, and asked his mother what she wanted. She said, ‘I have prayed to you so many times for the creatures and you never want to help’. He responded, ‘how can I listen to you when they do not want to correct themselves?’ And she responded, ‘obey my prayers and I will make sure that they do good and improve, can you not see how much they have already started to do?’ He responded, ‘they have not done this for me, and I am not content with this way they go eating, drinking, enjoying themselves, entertaining and killing each other’. She responded, ‘I will make sure that the creatures fast for three days and then go through all the
churches in the city and beside the city, where they will sing a mass for seven days.’ And then our Lord left and seemed almost content, and then Melica started to be scared, went home and told her master the story. He was incredulous, and returned to the same church with Melica that Monday morning along with Ruberto of the Imperiale of Genoa. They prayed and saw the same vision, and coming back again another morning did the same prayers and saw it again as well as another vision. They saw our Lord with the aforementioned, ignorant young man, dressed as above. In his hand, this young man had a silver chalice full of blood and a bag of bread. Christ commanded that he threw it into a well. Melica looked around but could not see one, and then the Virgin Mary took the chalice and back from the youth and put it down. Christ asked for it back and she asked him to let her deal with it, saying that she would make sure that Christians did the aforementioned things, which she had promised, and was correct themselves. He could have them back if this did not happen. So, Christ was content and left, and the Virgin Mary shouted suddenly misericordia three times, and many Angels were there and responded amen, amen, amen. This was heard by many people who were there, and was examined by many great men in various ways, and therefore the Genoese and then many others did as they had been instructed.

The Virgin appears in cilestro claro [light, sky blue] and Christ in cammellino [cloth, usually made of wool], marking a clear break from the disguises in the origin stories. Dominici highlights the written transmission of the story, relayed by the archbishop of Genoa in a letter to the bishop of Luni, who in turn sent it to the bishops of Florence, Prato, Lucca and Pistoia, who recounted it in a sermon on 7 September, after the renewed Genoese processions had begun. This gives the events an episcopal seal of approval and resonates with the transmission of the origin stories, especially with Capperledis as the female witnesses must pass their stories over to male ecclesiastical authorities. An important difference here is that Melica’s vision was explicitly reported after the beginning of the processions whereas Capperledis’ purportedly occurred before they began, even preceding the tre pani story. The elaborate detail in Dominici’s account suggests a degree of transformation in order to heighten the need for renewed processions. Another similarity with Capperledis’ tale is the amount of letters described as being involved, highlighting the importance of textual proof and validation.

Melica and a member of the Imperiale of Genoa together reportedly received a further vision of Christ and a giovane. Christ held a silver chalice of blood and a
bag of bread, and commanded the giovane to throw the bread into a fountain. The Virgin appeared and confiscated the items, asking Christ to let her remedy the situation. This recalls the tre pani origin story without explicitly restating its events or the initial instructions. 288 This secondary vision added legitimacy to the initial purportedly divine encounter, demonstrated by the initiation of renewed Genoese processions. The geographical and chronological proximity is also significant, tempering the distance between Dominici’s initial narration of the tre pani story and the events here. Dominici also reports imitation of these seven-day devotions in Pistoia, also preceded by three days of fasting.

Tognetti and Bornstein propose that these later Genoese processions were different in nature, repeating the Bianchi devotions rather than aiming to achieve universal participation. 289 Indeed, Bornstein states that ‘participants sensed the difference’ in Genoa, and were more guarded in their participation. He likens this to the attitude towards the episode with the Florentine notary and priest. However, when considered within the whole gamut of examples presented, this could instead suggest a different attitude in Genoa to renewed processions rather than one applicable throughout the spread of the Bianchi devotions. There were frequent repetitions of processions in Lucca and Pistoia, including those inspired by Melica’s story in Pistoia. Therefore, this reticent attitude towards repeating the Bianchi processions may be applicable in Genoa, but the reduced participation in this second set of devotions could also be explained by the fact that the majority of people did not feel the need to participate again.

With all of these visions, there is more at work than regional differences. Indeed, only in Pisa and Siena did these reported visions initiate Bianchi devotions within towns which had previously shown resistance. The vision narratives contributed to the impetus of the Bianchi processions, encouraging those who had not yet participated to join in, and highlighting protection from the impending ‘moria’ as motivation. While the renewed processions were often shorter, they were nevertheless considered as an extension of the original Bianchi devotions rather than a separate event. A divine presence is described throughout all of the episodes, and

288 Tognetti, p. 222.
289 Tognetti, p. 219; Bornstein, p. 115.
the question of proof is retained, often necessitating a further vision to substantiate the instructions of the Virgin to someone other than the original witness. This continues the concern with legitimating the Bianchi at a local level, since the importance of the stories was no longer underscored by the distance they had travelled. Furthermore, the visions do not represent a break with the origin stories, rather a continuation of the overarching messages, especially of the *tre pani* narrative, which has explicit echoes in many of these new visions.

These events demonstrate the desire to universalise the Bianchi devotions and add some superficial cohesion, in continuing the united elements from the origin stories: impending destruction and the need for penitence. However, their promotion of renewed processions was understood in different ways, as demonstrated by the fasting preceding the Genoese processions, and the fact that most renewed processions were for seven days rather than the original nine. These recapitulations and purported visions therefore demonstrate a method by which fervour for the Bianchi activities was maintained after the initial spread of the origin stories, according to Sercambi and Dominici. Nevertheless, the new narratives all fed into the Bianchi fervour, rather than inspiring a different sort of devotion.

### 9.2 Madonna dell'Oliva

A miracle was reported in Assisi which shaped the Bianchi devotions from Umbria onwards. While beyond Tuscany, this miracle had implications for various aspects of participation in the Bianchi processions, underscoring an important regional difference in contrast to the examples discussed above. The story of this miracle inspired participation amongst those who had not yet been part of a Bianchi procession. In October 1399, a young boy reported a vision of the Virgin who appeared in an olive tree, wearing a white robe adorned with hosts. She told him that a plague would come if the population did not participate in the Bianchi processions, reinforcing the message of the origin stories. The lauda *Apparve la Vergen gloriosa* specifically recounts this narrative. Neither Sercambi nor Dominici includes this

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290 Santucci, p. 11.
291 Gemmaro M. Monti, *Un laudario umbro quattrocentista dei Bianchi* (Città di Castello: Società Tipografica "Leonardo da Vinci", 1920), pp. 92-5; Renzi and Mori, pp. 73-6. This will be further discussed in the following chapter.
tale in their lengthy discussions of Bianchi activities although Cerboni, the chronicler from Città di Castello, also includes a brief report of the story, dating the event to October 1399.\footnote{Cerboni, p. 17.} There are also five visual depictions solely of this miracle, two in Assisi, and one each in Orvieto, Leonessa and Montebuono, along with the two found respectively at Poggio Mirteto and Terni in combination with the *tre pani* story.\footnote{See Figures 24-9.}

This demonstrates a regional variation on the renewed vision narratives connected to the Bianchi devotions. In this instance, the renewed vision took on a life of its own, more so than any of the examples reported by Sercambi or Dominici, inspiring laude and images, just like the *tre pani* story. The importance of this story will be further explored throughout the remaining chapters. It demonstrates how a reported renewed vision inspired processions not only in the location where it occurred, but also throughout the region and beyond. Nevertheless, the devotions which it inspired can be considered as part of the broader Bianchi devotions throughout Umbria and Lazio.

\section*{10. Conclusion}

The three origin stories of the Bianchi devotions- of the *tre pani*, the book and Capperledis- demonstrate how the movement accounted for its inception. The stories are similar to those from previous popular religious revivals, including tropes such as divine figures, heavenly proof and the importance of spreading a message of peace. These Bianchi stories contain unique elements, providing the specific impetus behind the Bianchi devotions and the instructions for the participants to follow. Indeed, an examination of all of these stories has revealed a relatively common motivation for joining the Bianchi devotions in alleviating a forthcoming destruction of mankind, although this is not a feature of the book story. The degree of this annihilation also varies, as do the circumstances which brought it about.

Variation in the *tre pani* story occurs in numerous forms, in the descriptions of the protagonists, determining the agency of the witness and often adding theatricality, such as the bread becoming full of worms. The different writing styles,
laude or prose, are probably representative of how the story was transmitted in 1399, either narrated in a sermon, or sung in a lauda. While a persistent threat in the written stories, there is no suggestion of pestilential annihilation in the visual depictions of this narrative. This story is consistently reported by chroniclers as the main impetus behind the Bianchi devotions, despite narrative and geographical diversity.

The book tale does not provide a clear message, and is only connected to the Bianchi devotions due to its positioning in Sercambi and Dominici’s chronicles. The story provides another account of the initiation of the Bianchi devotions, moving away from a single reported point of origin. Capperledis’ tale takes this further, adding a third purportedly divine origin to the processions. More than the other stories, this tale establishes a role for the clergy in the Bianchi activities, in their transmission as well as initiating the processions. The variation in setting of all these stories highlights the mythical status of the narratives, as unknowable divine origins. As seen with the previous popular religious revivals in the Introduction, it was common for origin stories to be penned after the events in order to provide an explanation, and this may well be the case here. Indeed, this may account for much of the variation as well as the three separate narratives provided to legitimate the purportedly divine inception of the Bianchi processions.

The visions and stories reported later contributing to the impetus behind the processions maintained the spread of the initial narratives, focusing especially on the tre pani story. These events mostly renewed Bianchi activities, although were sometimes described as the initial motivation for a town to join the processions, as seen with Pisa and Siena. The later processions can be considered as an extension of the initial nine-day processions, particularly as the chroniclers still refer to the participants as ‘Bianchi.’ These episodes also demonstrate a sense of proximity, bringing the purportedly heavenly elements of the original stories to the towns which were participating in the devotions in order to maintain their momentum.

Thus, these origin stories do not present a united picture for the beginning of the Bianchi devotions, suggesting three narrative strands at the initial stage and various locations for the supposed point of origin. However, the variation in these origin stories and later visions does not account for the variation in the practices of
the Bianchi participants. These stories nevertheless served as the inspiration for people to don white robes and join the processions, and were successful in doing so, as the Bianchi processions gained a large following throughout northern and central Italy. While a specific point of origin cannot be tied down to one single story or indeed location, even within the same chronicle, the textual emphasis is on spreading the Bianchi processions to prevent some kind of destruction. Moreover, the variation does not seem to have impeded the message of the necessity to join in the devotions, and this is the only sense in which the stories represent some kind of cohesion: while disparate between themselves, together they represent the base for the Bianchi processions, and the reason why people joined them.
Chapter Three: Practices and Coherence of the Bianchi Devotions

1. Introduction

With the threat of pestilential annihilation looming, the populace donned white clothing and began to complete the instructions supposedly laid out by the Virgin from the origin stories. These regulations were to be followed in order to satisfy the wrath of Christ and halt the plague. However, it was not simply a case of each rule being followed precisely in order to complete the devotions; each town shaped the Bianchi processions according to local traditions. Even between Lucca and Pistoia there was significant variation in the activities carried out by Bianchi participants.

The practices will form the focus of this chapter, and the diversity will be analysed to assess the implications on the Bianchi processions more widely. This will continue to challenge the presentation of the Bianchi devotions as a unique, coherent movement, demonstrating how a local analysis is necessary to uncover this variation.

Focussing on sources from Lucca and Pistoia, the practices of Bianchi participants will be laid out, first considering how they were transmitted in the origin stories, before analysing the implications of the practices and how they were adopted. Three especially complex practices in terms of variation will be analysed in depth: wearing white, singing laude and self-flagellation. The laude will be defined and analysed, drawing on material from Sercambi and Dominici, as well as three Florentine sources: MS Chigiano L.VII.266, MS Nazionale II.XI.38 and MS Marucelliana C.152. This broadens the scope to within Tuscany, allowing a more comprehensive source set for comparison of activities in this area. While the sources vary in type, from chronicle to scroll, the laude they contain will be carefully connected to the Bianchi, maintaining a tight Tuscan focus.

Sercambi and Dominici describe Bianchi regulations throughout their treatment of the devotions. Sercambi also sets out regulations through the words of a preacher, whose sermon to Bianchi participants at Lucca he included in his chronicle (pp. 320-1). The visual materials from Sercambi’s manuscript will be particularly

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294 MS Chigiano L.VII.266; Toscani. Toscani’s edition will be used for the vernacular laude, but the manuscript will be cited for the Latin examples, which Toscani does not include.
295 MS Nazionale II.XI.38; MS Marucelliana C.152.
relevant; of the 52 images accompanying the Bianchi section, 16 pertain to the origin stories and of the remaining 36, 21 illustrate the laude and 15 portray Bianchi activities more generally. These images undoubtedly convey an idealised portrayal of the devotions, but nevertheless provide useful insights into the activities of participants in the Bianchi processions.

Previous Bianchi scholarship focused on creating a detailed chronology of the devotions taking into account the whole geographical scope of the Bianchi devotions. Morton’s compilation of a day in the life of a participant includes general remarks about Bianchi attire, singing and fasting practices. Morton’s account gives a sense of cohesion to the Bianchi activities. My analysis will demonstrate that even wearing white was not as simple as Morton indicates. Nevertheless, his overview is a useful tool for considering Bianchi activities, and a starting point to challenge the idea that it is possible to create a single idea of what might have been typical for a Bianchi participant across the geographical and chronological spread of the devotions.

This chapter will address variation across the practices of Bianchi participants, focussing on Lucca and Pistoia. I will move beyond chronicles which portray the Bianchi practices as universal and scholarship which has accepted this and presented a uniform set of Bianchi activities. The variety across the Bianchi processions will be revealed, as well as the reasons behind this diversity. These discussions will underscore the need for analysis of the movement at a local level in order to fully appreciate the diversity revealed by the sources.

2. Overview of Practices

Instructions are given on how to enact the Bianchi processions in the origin stories, where either the Virgin or an angel explains what must be done in order to counteract the forthcoming plague. With the exception of Capperledis’ tale, the origin stories precede the account of Bianchi activities in the chronicles, framing the processions with the initial regulations. These rules vary from account to account. The more straightforward instructions will now be considered, problematizing any areas of discrepancy.

296 Morton, pp. 198-200.
Before embarking on a Bianchi procession, participants were required to confess and receive communion. While these instructions do not feature in any of the origin stories, they are referred to later by both Dominici and Sercambi. These sacramental requirements were also prerequisites for pilgrims before they began their journey, which in part explains why the Bianchi devotions were often described as a *pellegrinaggio*.\(^{297}\) Communion was usually taken annually at Easter, and while the laity may have frequented mass more regularly, receiving the host on this occasion marked the Bianchi devotions as exceptional. Confession was required before communion could be taken, and would also ensure that participants were suitably prepared for the *penitenza* of the processions. Sercambi notes that there were so many people going to confession and communion that the clergy could barely keep up with the demand (p. 305). While this may be an exaggeration on the part of the chronicler, it highlights his desire to demonstrate the popularity of the devotions. Nevertheless, these requirements created an important role for the clergy in preparing the population for the devotions. They also created a rite of passage for participants in the processions; it wasn’t enough simply to don white, it was necessary first to engage in these acts of spiritual preparation. It is possible that other towns did not hold the participants to these pre-procession preparations, but they were necessary in both Lucca and Pistoia for those engaging in any kind of procession.

Mass was said daily during the processions, where *misericordia* and *pace* were to be shouted during the elevation of the Eucharist. These masses would be said at a different location each day, for the itinerant Bianchi processions in a different town and for the intramural equivalent, a different church in this area would be selected. Beginning the Bianchi processions with these ecclesiastical rites and continuing the role of the clergy grounded the processions in church rituals.

Participants were expected to go *scalzi*, either barefoot or in sandals. This creates an interesting connection between the Bianchi participants and wandering preachers, particularly the Franciscans. The Franciscans’ distinctive bare feet became ‘an emblem of evangelical poverty,’ although participants in the Bianchi

processions did not generally adopt Franciscan devotional practices. For example, despite this similarity to the wandering preachers, participants in the Bianchi processions were not all expected to preach, and this practice was reserved for figures such as Grazia di Santo Spirito, who were already known as preachers. Dominici’s *tre pani* story is the only tale to mention going barefoot at the outset, although it is frequently referenced in chronicle narratives of the procession; Bianchi participants were often referred to as *bianchi scalzi*. Going barefoot in the summer would not have been a particular hardship, and may in fact have been the norm. The images in Sercambi’s manuscript suggest that the instruction was interpreted as bare feet in Lucca: where the feet of participants are visible, they are bare. However, the application of this practice represented a relatively simple rule for participants to follow in order to fulfil the requirement of the devotions. The frequent textual and visual references suggest that it was relatively ubiquitous, and could easily have been adopted in both the intramural and extramural processions.

Sleeping arrangements for the Bianchi participants were also subject to regulation. In the origin stories, this is specified as not sleeping in a walled town or in a bed. In practice, this was realised as sleeping on the floors of churches outside town walls, or more rarely, sleeping in fields. Dominici further clarifies that men and women slept in different churches, which became a custom in Pistoia, as newly arriving participants slept ‘dove li altri’ [where the others had] (p. 102). He also suggests that provision was made so that this regulation could be followed, although some chose not to adhere to it. Those participating in the intramural processions simply went home at the end of each day, and so were not subject to the same sleeping regulations.

The careful segregation of the sexes is disputed by the Roman chronicler de Nyem, who suggests that everybody slept in the same place. The regulations may have been more lax in Rome due to the influx of thousands of Bianchi participants at once. Personal circumstances were also a factor: Datini slept in *alberghi*, one night

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299 E.g. Cronaca di Luca di Domenico Manenti, p. 407; Rinuccini p. xliv.
300 De Nyem, p. 169. De Nyem’s attitude to the Bianchi devotions is generally negative.
even sleeping in the house of the Podestà of Castelfranco, near Florence, although this was not the norm.\footnote{301 Melis, Aspetti, p. 102.} While undoubtedly uncomfortable, there were deeper implications to the instructions to sleep outside towns. It kept the devotions liminal; not allowing foreign Bianchi participants to mingle too closely with the inhabitants of any given town ensured that they would not gain too much sway. This would also limit the spread of the plague, by restricting contact between the incoming groups and local residents. This which was certainly the case around Milan, as demonstrated in Chapter One (p. 74). This suggests the potential for distrust throughout these processions which were supposed to promote peace. Overall, this practice was beneficial to both the Bianchi participants and the host town. The Bianchi groups could fulfil the regulations required to prevent the plague outbreak and the host town could control the impact of the devotions.

The origin stories unanimously stipulated a processional length of nine days, which seems to have been adopted for the first set of processions in each location. For later or renewed processions, the duration was often shorter, either five or seven days, probably to disrupt normal town life as little as possible. All of these numbers are imbued with significance, invoking biblical references, philosophy and mathematics, such as five representing the five wounds of Christ. Indeed, the Paduan chronicler da Ravenna lays out the significance of each number in turn, highlighting how odd and even numbers added together make perfection.\footnote{302 Giovanni da Ravenna, La Processione dei Bianchi nella città di Padova (1399) (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, Basilica del Santo, 1978), pp. 47-58.} However, these learned explanations were probably not the concern of the majority of participants, who simply accepted the number in question as the divine instruction to be followed. Nine also connected to the novena and the Trinity, thus creating ecclesiastical echoes. Whatever individual participants believed, the number nine was evidently important as this figure was adopted so widely.

The variation is also important: if nine days were initially necessary to see off the threat of plague, a reduced later procession seems contradictory. De Nyem portrays the numerical significance in a negative light, stating that the Bianchi participants processed for thirteen days \textit{continuo}, a number with negative
associations, rather than the positive numerological significance of nine, five or seven.\textsuperscript{303} Thus, procession length depended on the attitude towards the Bianchi devotions and whether a procession had already taken place in a particular location. Furthermore, Sundays were often not counted in the reckoning, and so in practice, a procession could last up to eleven days. This was especially the case for itinerant processions, as intramural processions were usually precisely nine days long so that the town could return to normal more quickly. Whatever the number, there was an overwhelmingly positive significance attached to it, and the duration meant that itinerant participants would be able to introduce a reasonable number of new towns to the devotions.

A further complication was the number of processions engaged in by each town. For example, three itinerant Bianchi processions left Lucca for periods of nine days, and there was an intramural procession of nine days, although processions after these initial four were shorter. Thus, it is likely that the initial procession in any given location was nine days long, and that the last Bianchi devotion was shorter, but each source must be consulted to discover the number and length of any processions in between. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two, the processions reportedly inspired by Melica and the Madonna dell’Oliva were for a shorter duration after the initial nine-day processions in Genoa and Assisi respectively. It appears that there was no standard number of processions a town had to engage in, simply that the whole population had to have taken part.

Maintaining order during the processions seems to have been relatively easy, as there is no mention of the sanctions which were implemented during the feast day processions in each town.\textsuperscript{304} Participants were encouraged to walk either two by two or three by three. This varied from location to location, Dominici advocating three by three whereas in Genoa, Stella described processions which went two by two. Dominici adds that some participants even went mano in mano (p. 76). This served a practical purpose by ensuring that the processions would be conducted in an orderly fashion, particularly during the intramural devotions. It may have been more difficult to enforce during itinerant devotions however, due to the sheer amount of walking.

\textsuperscript{303} De Nyem, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{304} See Chapter One (p. 49) for more details.
expected from participants. Nevertheless, there are no reports of bad behaviour during the Bianchi processions, and so it would appear that order was continually managed in some way, or that no misdeeds were recorded by the chroniclers.

Participants would process behind a devotional object, most often a crucifix or cross. Capperledis was reportedly told that participants must carry candles, but no other origin stories offer any guidance. The crosses taken up by the Bianchi participants usually predated the devotions, and were often taken from a local church or shrine that marked the beginning and end point of that procession. As such, each was likely to be unique; some were made of silver, and Dominici reports one from Pistoia that was decorated with cockleshells (p. 152). There were no specific requirements for the crucifixes, consequently any example carried during a Bianchi procession became a ‘Bianchi crucifix.’ Many of these crucifixes demonstrated thaumaturgical properties, performing numerous miracles of healing. These items reinforce the regional variation of the devotions, particularly as the crosses were not passed from group to group, rather each group took up a local cross which was a visual symbol of their place of origin. The crucifixes were also practical device to gather participants together each morning, and those who carried them were sometimes named, prominent citizens.

Some groups also carried items which had been painted or decorated. Dominici reports a group from Galuzzo who carried a beautiful cross with many scenes sculpted on it, as well as a tavola [panel] which depicted the ‘miracolo di Scozia,’ presumably the tre pani story (p. 161). Another group held a tenda quadra [square cloth] decorated with an image of the Virgin (p. 208) and a further group carried a figure of the Virgin and Christ (p. 220). Items of a temporal rather than religious significance could also be carried, as Dominici indicates that gonfalon [banners] were carried at Pistoia (p. 125). The choice of what to carry depended largely on availability, as participants had to select from items already present in the town which were not already being used in the Bianchi devotions. In Genoa, rather than a crucifix leading the processions, the bishop carried the relics of John the

305 These crucifixes will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.
306 Such as a cross from San Pavolo carried by Prete Fidede, Dominici, Cronaca dei Bianchi p. 158.
Relics were not carried in Bianchi processions in either Lucca or Pistoia, suggesting a different interpretation of the devotions than in Genoa. Practicality was a factor in selecting these crucifixes, as they were all carried by a single person and so were not too unwieldy. The lack of consistency implies that regional variation was important in differentiating groups of Bianchi participants from different locations. Such variation could be on a small scale, separating participants from different parishes as well as from neighbouring towns.

The visual sources further highlight the diversity of these items. While the broad category of crucifixes and crosses are represented, it is evident that local items were taken up as standards. In various illustrations in Sercambi’s manuscript, Bianchi participants carry candles, whether this is the whole group carrying similarly sized candles, or the procession being led by two large candles. Among Bianchi participants going to Florence, Sercambi depicts a man holding a pilgrim staff. This emphasises the connection between the Bianchi processions and pilgrimage in the physicality of the journey, as well as subtly connecting to the staff carried by Christ in the tre pani origin story earlier in the manuscript (Figure 2).

The lengthy tableau in the Vallo di Nera fresco indicates the different groups gathered around different items, with a crucifix, a painting of the Madonna or flowering lily (Figures 13-16). One of these crucifixes, to the right of the painting, is bleeding, an unusual feature in a fresco (Figure 15). Bliersbach states that this is a ‘photographic’ realisation of the processions as they were described in the chronicles, although there is no textual evidence for a bleeding crucifix in or near Vallo di Nera. This fresco indicates how these items would also act as rallying points for each individual group, identifying it and helping it remain together during itinerant processions. As the participants are dressed largely the same, it is difficult

\[\text{Bliersbach, p. 393.}\]
Figure 13. *La processione dei Bianchi* Fresco, Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Vallo di Nera (Umbria) (banner detail)

Figure 14. *La processione dei Bianchi* (lily detail)

Figure 15. *La processione dei Bianchi* (crucifix detail)

Figure 16. *La processione dei Bianchi* (laudario detail)
to ascertain any particular reason behind these groupings.

These practices demonstrate that the regulations for Bianchi participants were not fixed. Indeed, regional variation was paramount in evaluating what a particular group or individual was likely to do. Any idea of universality throughout the Bianchi processions on a supra-regional level is problematic, as the regulations could be interpreted differently at a local level: people could carry different items, wear shoes or sleep where they pleased. The significance of each practice adds layers of meaning to the activities expected of the Bianchi participants, confusing expectations of what was necessary to prevent the forthcoming plague. Notwithstanding, there seems to have been a relatively consistent idea of what participants were supposed to do at a basic level, transmitted in sermons, or by observing the arrival of itinerant Bianchi processions. The variation therefore demonstrates that while these rules might have been expected of participants, especially the prerequisites of confession and communion, most of the regulations were open to interpretation.

The practices analysed thus far have demonstrated variation at almost every point, but these differences have been relatively minor. As such, they cannot be considered to drastically alter the general understanding of the Bianchi devotions. Three more problematic practices will now be analysed now to demonstrate that in some areas, variation is particularly troubling in the presentation of the Bianchi processions as a united movement. The impact and application of wearing white, singing laude and self-flagellation for Bianchi participants will form the focus of this discussion.

3. Wearing White

Unsurprisingly, the sources are completely unanimous in stating that participants in the Bianchi processions were to wear white. It is the only instruction which occurs in all of the origin stories, and is frequently referenced in accounts of Bianchi activities. The colour bianco is repeated, coupled either to a noun denoting clothing such as abito, or with the reflexive verb vestirsi, emphasising that participants were actively to clothe themselves in this colour, making the choice to do so. Sercambi uses the phrase ‘si vestirono di bianco’ as a circumlocution for a town beginning to participate in the Bianchi processions, implying that the decision to wear white robes
was the clearest demonstration that a group had begun to join in the devotions. However, wearing white was not as simple as it might initially seem. This section will consider the interpretations of this regulation and the different kinds of acceptable attire for Bianchi participants. The significance of the colour itself will also be addressed, particularly evaluating other groups associated with white, as was addressed briefly in the nomenclature section in the Introduction (pp. 29-32). Morton provides a useful comparison with normal dress, stating that people generally wore brown, black or grey clothes made of rough materials. Dressing in white therefore marked a significant change from ordinary dress for the majority of participants in the Bianchi devotions, and created a sense of community as everybody was expected to do the same.

All of the origin stories instructed participants in the Bianchi processions to wear white. Some offer further clarification, for example in the lauda Venne Gesu the Virgin stipulates ‘panno lino come questa,’drawing an explicit connection between her own clothing and that of the Bianchi participants (l. 242). Dominici records that the Bianchi participants were to dress as the Virgin, or ‘a modo di Battuti,’ with their heads covered (p. 53). The robes were also not to be removed for the duration of the processions. Dominici’s instructions already demonstrate an acceptable variation in attire for participants in the Bianchi processions, as well as connecting them with the penitential mind-set of flagellant religious confraternities. All of the images of the tre pani origin story, whether in Sercambi’s manuscript or on church walls, reinforce the Virgin as an exemplar for Bianchi participants in how to dress. Adornments for the robes are also suggested. Laurenzi notes that participants should wear a red cross on their right shoulder and forehead, and Cerboni states that a white cross should be worn on the right shoulder. The white cross seems slightly superfluous, and was most likely a mistake on the part of the chronicler, particularly as Laurenzi and Cerboni were reporting on events in the same town. Dominici stipulated that a red cross should delineate the sex of participants, with women

311 Morton, p. 191.
312 See Chapter Two for further discussion of these images. (Figures 2-10)
313 Cronaca dei Laurenzi, p. 93; Cerboni, p. 16.
wearing one on their head and men on their shoulder. *Venne Gesu* presents the red cross rather as a choice: ‘nelle spalle o nella testa’ (l. 187). This red cross is realised visually on the Virgin’s robes in the images accompanying Sercambi’s *tre pani* stories.

The colour white created a sense of universality and equality across the Bianchi devotions, removing individuality and establishing one white, mass identity. White has links to purity and renewal, including a baptismal significance as those to be baptised would be dressed in the colour. This significance was also applied to conversion, as white was associated with turning away from sin to embrace the Christian mind-set, embracing penitence. The Bianchi devotions encapsulated the element of turning from sin, as confession was required before participation, although calling it a conversion is perhaps overzealous; participants embraced a new way of life within Christianity rather than a wholly new set of ideals.

The purity of white was important to writers contemporary to the Bianchi devotions. For example, in the lauda *Nuova lucie*, Sercambi notes: ‘tucti bianchi son di fuori/ perchè dentro sian li cuori’ [they are all white without, because their hearts are white within] (ll. 4-5). These lines are almost precisely replicated in the rubric of MS Chigiano lauda 317 *Misericordia O redentore* which states that mankind must dress ‘di biancha stola dentro nel core/ si come di fuore’ [in a white stole within their hearts/ just as without]. These lines connect to the notion of a sacrament as an outward sign of inward grace, implying that the Bianchi robes demonstrated an inner change outwardly. In his poem about the Bianchi processions, the Florentine writer Sacchetti noted that any other mark would show up on white, and he emphasises the pure state that participants in the processions were supposed to embody.

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315 Baptism usually occurred at Easter, so the connection to the Bianchi devotions is symbolic.
316 Toscani, pp. 115-32.
White was worn by some religious orders, such as the Cistercians, and others like the Dominicans wore a white robe covered with a dark cloak. However, it is difficult to establish a connection between the Bianchi devotions and any particular holy order. Indeed, regardless of the colour of their usual garments, holy orders frequently feature among the ranks of the Bianchi participants, dressed in white, and thus such an association is not likely. Participants in previous popular religious revivals had also worn white. Images of the flagellants of 1260 show them in white robes, covering the participants from the waist down, although it is unlikely that the Bianchi participants were deliberately mimicking these groups. Indeed, while Tognetti notes the presence of 'lo stesso impulso,' in the collective need for public repentance, this cannot be extended to the specific practices and attire adopted in previous revivals. Delaruelle suggests a certain degree of ritual around putting on the white robe for the Bianchi participants, although there are no records of mass robing ceremonies. However, the lack of such a ceremony at Lucca and Pistoia does not necessarily mean that this was not the case elsewhere. Tognetti suggests that the robe cannot be considered a uniform due to the lack of ritual in adopting it, a point of difference, he notes, between Bianchi participants and pilgrims. There was precedent for participants in such movements to wear white, thus the Bianchi participants were not unique in dressing in this manner.

The notion of the Bianchi robes as a uniform is further problematized in the variety of white cloth worn: participants wore anything white that they could get their hands on. The robes suggested in the origin stories would mean a monetary necessity in joining the Bianchi processions, which would exclude the poorer members of society. While Dominici records many participants wearing ‘la vesta del Bianco,’ he also describes people who wore ‘chi camici, chi cotte, chi lenzuola, chi cappe di Battuti’ [albs, cassoks, sheets, battuti robes] (p. 75). This is taken further still with others wearing ‘lenzuoli de’ famigli di bianco’ [white family bedsheets] and most extraordinarily ‘un tovagliuolo in testa’ [a handkerchief on their head] (pp. 151, 220). The final example of the handkerchief demonstrates the fervour of the

319 Tognetti, p. 339.
320 Delaruelle, p. 132.
Bianchi participants as people scrambled to fulfil the requirement of wearing white in whatever way they could. This emphasises the ideal of universal participation in the processions, and all participants were considered as part of the same processions rather than ridiculed for their lack of sartorial elegance. These concessions and variations also demonstrate that the whiteness of the garments overshadowed their shape, indicating that cohesion was maintained through the colour of the cloth rather than its style.

Notwithstanding, Sercambi notes that the more covered the Bianchi participants were, the better (p. 320). This suggests a hierarchy in Bianchi attire, implying that those who could not afford to wear full robes of white were considered less effective. However, this was most likely overlooked by the urgency of participation in the devotions. There seems to be a slight variation in Genoa, where all participants covered their faces. Such a requirement was not explicit at Lucca or Pistoia, suggesting that this might have been a regional variation, although some participants depicted in Sercambi’s manuscript do have their heads covered. Stella specifies that the Bianchi robes were to be made of linen, but again this instruction is not repeated at Lucca or Pistoia. The Genoese example probably represents an initial ideal of participation, which had been adapted to the reality of the processions by the time the devotions reached Tuscany.

Sercambi’s illustrations do not demonstrate the variety possible in the attire of participants in the processions, depicting all Bianchi participants in full length, white robes. A few different possibilities for modifying these robes are represented, for example the images for the laude Questo legnio and Pecchatori tutti piantete show holes cut in the back of the Bianchi participants’ robes to facilitate self-flagellation. The suggestion of battuti robes being worn seems to be taken up, as many participants in Pistoia were not ‘vestiti di rieto’ [did not have clothes covering their backs], although Dominici does not mention self-flagellation at this juncture, suggesting a sartorial choice rather than an ascetic one (p. 128). Other participants

321 Sercambi, p. 305.
322 Banti and Cristiani Testi, p. 199 (Image 470).
323 Stella, p. 236.
324 Banti and Cristiani Testi, pp. 196 (Image 468), 197 (Image 467).
are shown with their heads completely covered, with holes cut for their eyes.\(^{325}\) However, these variants represent a small minority of the Bianchi participants depicted in Sercambi’s manuscript, suggesting that the illustrator wished to indicate that the large majority of participants wore full white robes with the hoods lowered, depicting this as an ideal for the processions. These hooded robes were also emblematic of flagellant confraternities, potentially explaining why some were already in possession of such robes. Moreover, such variants in dress were minor, demonstrating that these were acceptable variations on the instruction to wear white clothing. The robes covering the participants’ faces cannot have been practical for a long journey due to the very limited visibility, and so these robes were more likely for the intramural processions. A small variation in the Vallo di Nera fresco suggests that participants in the Bianchi processions wore their white robes over ordinary clothes (Figure 14). Looking at the sleeves of the participants in the lengthy procession, blue or red material is visible. This does not detract from the universality of the white robes, but demonstrates the temporary nature of the Bianchi processions, and potentially an Umbrian variant.

Dominici notes specific groups who did not conform entirely to wearing pure white robes. The first is priests, who wore special robes ‘per essere conosciuti’ (p. 74). Such a difference does not seem to be confined to Pistoia as Dominici also reports that priests in Genoa wore their amice, albs, stoles and maniples (p. 221). This is reinforced by Sercambi’s image of a preacher who also wears a stole.\(^{326}\) Moreover, in the Vallo di Nera fresco, the priests are easily recognisable not only from their stoles but also from their tonsures, revealed by their lowered hoods (Figure 13). This highlights the distinctive dress of the clergy in the Bianchi processions, and their role will be further examined in Chapter Four.

Finally, the most challenging groups reported by Dominici were those who did not wear white but still participated in Bianchi processions within Pistoia. Dominici does not provide an explanation for this, and includes these people within the ranks of the Bianchi participants. These people are overlooking the most

\(^{325}\) E.g. Ibid. p. 199 (Image 469). While Dominici suggests that women should have their heads covered, Sercambi’s text does not mention this.

\(^{326}\) Ibid., p. 192 (Image 450).
ubiquitous requirement of the devotions, which makes it challenging to consider them as Bianchi participants. However, this could highlight the difficulty of procuring white garments, or simply demonstrate Bianchi fervour in action, as people were swept up in the processions as they went past. Nevertheless, it is problematic that these people did not fulfil this most basic requirement for participants.

The white garments were, by and large, the identifying feature of a participant in the Bianchi processions, a way of differentiating between participants and onlookers. This was particularly the case as the robe was not to be removed for the duration of the devotions. From a practical standpoint, Dominici notes that the robes of those returning from the itinerant processions were no longer white, but rather ‘sucide e imbrunite’ (p. 107). This demonstrates the physicality of the journey as well as the importance of the underlying colour of the robes, rather than any dirt which might have marred its perfection. Wearing white also unified the participants; people wore whatever was available in order to participate and neutralise the threat of pestilence. This was laid out in the origin stories: by following the regulations supposedly given by the Virgin, the population would prevent a forthcoming plague. The variations which demarcated the clergy were more problematic in terms of maintaining uniformity across participants in the processions. Nevertheless, this demonstrates their crucial role, suggesting that they needed to be recognisable so that each group could congregate around them. This variation therefore served a practical purpose. The same cannot be said of those who did not wear white. While Dominici includes them among the ranks of the Bianchi, it is difficult to consider them as Bianchi participants as they were not adhering to the most basic regulation expected of participants.

The white Bianchi robes were often marked by a red cross, which could be placed on the head or the shoulder of participants. Morton suggests this was a ‘fashion statement,’ and indeed it appears to have been a choice for some, as suggested by Laurenzi. In Sercambi’s images, most participants wear the cross on

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327 Morton, p. 187.
their shoulder, which could suggest that this was the norm.\textsuperscript{328} For Dominici however, it was a method of delineating sex, as women wore the cross on their heads and men on their shoulders. It is possible that Sercambi depicts this in an image of Bianchi participants where there are a few members of the group who have their heads covered and marked with a red cross, although he makes no textual reference to the red cross and what it might signify.\textsuperscript{329} Marking participants by their sex detracts from the universalising white robes, although it does emphasise that women were able to participate in the processions. However, such a marking might have been superfluous, as physical separation of the sexes was enforced in the processional order and at night.

The use and placement of the red cross seems mostly to have been a part of the Bianchi uniform, although its precise use depended on local factors, either everyone wore it in the same way or it was used to delineate sex. However, it would have been difficult to pinpoint whether a participant was wearing a cross on her head through choice or to mark her sex. Dominici’s suggestion that men and women were to place it differently would only have been read by those who adhered to the same particular variation, so those in Pistoia might assume that Bianchi participants with a red cross on their heads were women, but this might not have been the case for Bianchi from other cities. While Sercambi’s Bianchi participants are mostly marked on their shoulders, those in the processions depicted at Vallo di Nera are marked both on their heads and their shoulders. Stella also notes that this was the case in the Genoese processions, further suggesting that the instructions for the placement of the red cross were dependent on the location of the processions.\textsuperscript{330}

To the modern eye, a red cross on white robes, is reminiscent of the crusades and the Templars.\textsuperscript{331} These red crosses usually adorned the cloaks the crusaders wore over their darker undergarments. This is different from the Bianchi participants, who did not have cloaks, just one layer of white clothing, in whatever form that came. Bianchi garments also were not built to last, whereas the crusading uniforms would

\textsuperscript{328} E.g. Banti and Cristiani Testi, pp. 192-6 (Images 459-65).
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid., p. 199 (Image 469).
\textsuperscript{330} Stella, p. 238.
\textsuperscript{331} AAVV, \textit{La Sostanza dell'Effimero: Gli abitanti degli Ordini religiosi in Occidente} (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 2000), p. 94.
be worn for a much longer period of time. It is unlikely that the Bianchi devotions were trying to recall these military orders, however, as they promoted their message of peace and did not bear arms. Nevertheless, the clothes had a particular meaning to those who wore them, and to those who saw them, marking a difference with usual attire.

The white Bianchi garments could also be marked in other ways, often to express regional identity. For example, Dominici notes that participants from Pistoia had a cockleshell sewn onto the shoulders of their robes (p. 73). This symbol of St James was intrinsic to Pistoiese identity as demonstrated in Chapter One (p. 48) and demonstrates how the red cross of the Bianchi devotions was combined with a local symbol. According to Dominici, this enriched the devotions. Therefore, by entrenching the new devotion in something the participants understood, they were better able to embrace the new Bianchi processions. Dominici also reports a Lucchese group who had a *croce di stagno* sewn onto their shoulders (p. 163). The chronicler does not explain the symbolism, and so the precise purpose of these tin crosses is ambiguous, although it is likely that it was a local symbol, as Dominici can identify them as Lucchese without further explanation. Such additions were therefore not unique to a single location, but the modification might demonstrate a regional identity for the group wearing it. These small signs detract from the universality afforded by the white garments. Regional identity remained an important factor while participating in the processions. Dominici does not seem to have considered this problematic, instead commending the deep devotion of those Pistoiese participants who wore the cockleshell. Thus, incorporating local elements into the Bianchi processions seems to have ensured the devotion of participants, connecting the novel processions to something they could relate to. Indeed, these were not secular symbols, but rather symbols of a different devotion, in this case invoking St James as well as the intercession of the Virgin which the Bianchi participants aspired to.

Wearing white was intrinsic to the Bianchi devotions, although it was not as simple as putting on a white robe. Any kind of white cloth could be used, eliminating the monetary necessity of acquiring particular garments for the processions. The
differentiation of the clergy demonstrates their role in the processions and suggests that they needed to be identifiable. The use of a red cross enhanced the devotion of the participants, and while its placement varied on a regional or personal level, it can still be considered as something that was expected of the Bianchi participants. More challenging are the local additions of the cockleshell and tin cross, which were features of certain groups of Bianchi participants, identifying them among the throngs dressed just in white. Wearing white was not unique to the Bianchi devotions, but it was a significant factor of cohesion across most of the participants in the processions. It was a relatively simple rule to follow, and even handkerchiefs were used to *vestirsi di bianco*, meaning that it was accessible to a wide spectrum of the population. The variations are mostly not problematic in terms of cohesion, representing small pockets of regional differences which did not mark out particular groups, but rather local preferences. Therefore, wearing white was the most ubiquitous requirement of the Bianchi processions, but was interpreted in a variety of different ways to ensure universal, yet diverse, participation.

4. Singing and Praying
Singing and praying were intrinsic to the Bianchi devotions, both as a practice for participants and as a method of spreading the fervour. Singing was almost as ubiquitous as wearing the white robe, with most chronicles describing the practice in some way. The importance of singing is introduced in the origin story narratives, where the Virgin supposedly instructs participants in the processions to sing. Dominici and *Venne Gesu* specify in particular that the *Stabat Mater* was to be sung. Here, the laude will be used to demonstrate the variety of subject matter available to the Bianchi participants when they were selecting what to sing. I will consider the commonality of laude across different sources, seeking to establish whether there are specific areas of regional variation. I will examine the reasons for these differences and the impact of this on considering the Bianchi movement as a whole, incorporating Tuscan sources, as well as briefly considering two sources from Umbria.

In terms of sources, Dominici and Sercambi recreate a living moment in transcribing the laude they witnessed during the Bianchi processions. Dominici includes two laude: the *Stabat Mater* appears towards the end of the chronicle, and
the vernacular *Misericordia eterno Dio* immediately precedes the plague death figures (pp. 216-9; 234-7). Sercambi includes two origin story laude, *Del Segno* and *Nuova lucie è aparita* (pp. 294-302) and a further seven in a section dedicated to the songs of the participants. This section opens with the *Stabat Mater*, and then follow *Signum crucis factum est, Signor nostro omnipotente, Vergine Maria beata, Misericordia eterno Dio, Questo lengno della crocie and Pecchatori tucti piangete* (pp. 321-343). Sercambi’s statement that these form ‘parte delle laude’ indicates that he only includes a selection of the songs sung during the processions (p. 343). The Florentine scroll MS Nazionale also recreates a specific moment within the Bianchi processions in a single lauda: *Misericordia eterno Dio*.

MS Chigiano invokes an enactment of Bianchi practices. This manuscript contains laude and prayers transcribed in Florence, comprising 700 entries mostly in the vernacular. I will quote the vernacular laude from Toscani’s edition, but the Latin examples from the manuscript as Toscani does not include them. There are 21 laude that can be connected to the Bianchi devotions in this manuscript. The initial section of laude numbered 1-16 can be considered as devoted to the Bianchi processions, and the laude are interspersed with prayers. 12 of these 16 have textual references to the movement, whether in the song text or their rubrics. The remaining nine Bianchi laude are distributed throughout the manuscript, and will be referred to by number to indicate the position in the codex. Each lauda begins with a decorated initial, some more elaborate than others. There is no musical notation in the manuscript; there is evidence of the *cantasi come* tradition, although none of these examples are linked to the Bianchi devotions. This tradition set religious

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332 This lauda is transcribed in Appendix 2.
333 Toscani. These Latin examples are transcribed in Appendix 1.
334 The incipits of these laude are as follows: *Venne Gesu a colui, Stabat Mater, Signum crucis factum est, Verbum caro factum est (occurs twice), Vedete ho pecchatori, Pace pace signor mio, Jesu Cristo pace pace, Misericordia eterno Dio, Chi vorra nel ciel salire, Misericordia eterno Padre, Del segno ch’e aparito, Madre di pieta fontana, Misericordia O redentore, Misericordia creatore, Questo legno della croce, Peccatori tutti piangete (occurs twice), O Signor misericordia, Vergine Maria beata, Alto Iddio signore.*
335 The remaining four are three different versions of the creed (Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian) and a lauda entitled *Sette allegreze di nostra donna.*
336 For more on this see Blake Wilson, *Singing Poetry in Renaissance Florence: The "Cantasi Come" Tradition (1375-1550)* (Florence: Olschki, 2009).
texts to particular, well known tunes, avoiding the necessity to copy out musical notation frequently.  

The visual depictions of singing from the Vallo di Nera fresco will also be discussed (Figures 13 and 16). Analysing the content and rubrics of these laude in addition to the visual material will reveal much about the mentality of Bianchi participants. Unique elements will be examined, as well as common features between the sources, and commonalities with other traditions.

Connecting a lauda with the Bianchi devotions is a challenging process, and the criteria I will employ are rigorous. The laude to be discussed either have explicit content references to the devotions, references in the rubrication, or appear as part of a discrete section of Bianchi laude. Generic references to penitence and the Virgin, for example, will be discounted, looking instead for discussion of wearing white, processing for nine days or other specific facets of Bianchi activities. Sercambi includes some laude in his small section of seven which have no obvious textual connection to the Bianchi processions, but states clearly that they were sung during the processions. Iterations of these laude in other sources will therefore also be considered due to Sercambi’s clear association between these songs and the devotions.

Singing was a frequent feature of the medieval religious experience. Barr notes that the mendicant friars played an important role in the spread of laude, as they used them alongside popular sermons. While there are no written melodies which survive accompanying the Bianchi texts, it is likely that they were sung. This lack of notation is at least partly explained by a probable oral transmission during the processions. The melodies were most likely simple, with a strong musical link between the refrain and the melodic conclusion of each stanza which would have been conducive to antiphonal singing. Østrem and Petersen note the connection between earlier penitential processions such as those in 1260 and devotional singing.

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337 See for example MS Chigiano L.VII.266, fol. 29v.
but are wary of attaching the title ‘lauda’ to these songs.\textsuperscript{340} They create a dichotomy between laude sung during preaching or popular revivals and laude sung by confraternities. Such rigid boundaries were probably overcome by the Bianchi processions, particularly as Bianchi laude were sometimes recorded later in confraternal laudarii. It is likely that pre-existing laude were adapted during the devotions, as it may not have been practical to innovate at quickly enough to create new songs for the processions.

Previous scholarship has connected the laude under scrutiny here to the Bianchi devotions. Bornstein describes the laude as ‘conventional,’ and suggests that those who transcribed them could easily have adapted them.\textsuperscript{341} Bornstein’s chronology of laude, connecting certain songs with certain points within a procession is problematic as devotions were not always begun on the same day, and some groups would take Sundays off. Such a chronology is not a concern in the primary sources. In terms of specific laude, Banfi’s study of \textit{Misericordia eterno Dio} will be a particular focus in the discussion of that song.\textsuperscript{342}

Singing was an important method for the Bianchi participants to express their devotion. It is difficult to reconstruct with any degree of accuracy the way that the Bianchi participants performed laude, although according to Renzi’s definition, an antiphonal structure would be expected.\textsuperscript{343} Sercambi suggests that laude were indeed sung antiphonally, describing how the first three lines were sung by a leader or leading group, then copied by the congregation, then the first group would sing the next three lines and the congregation would repeat the refrain, and so on and so forth (p. 321). Many Bianchi laude are divided into stanzas of three or four lines, which would have facilitated this mode of singing. This is further suggested in Sercambi’s manuscript where stanzas are separated by brackets, either boxing off individual stanzas or suggesting stanzas of three lines with two lines bracketed to the left, and the third on the right.

Words like \textit{cantare} are used across the chronicles to refer to this practice, making the former more likely (e.g. Sercambi p. 321). Dominici notes that the singing was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{340} Ibid., p. 25.
\item \textsuperscript{341} Bornstein, p. 123.
\item \textsuperscript{343} Renzi and Mori, p. 33.
\end{itemize}
often beautiful, involving violas, *cantori* and *suonatori*. One such *cantatore* was part of a procession in Pistoia, who sang and played his viola (p. 129). The only hint at polyphony by Dominici is during a later procession in commemoration of the Bianchi devotions in 1401, where there were ‘molti canti e biscanti,’ (p. 289). Due to the spontaneous nature of the Bianchi processions, it is likely that the initial laude would have been monophonic, with the tune being copied by the congregation after it was sung by the leaders.

In Genoa, Stella notes that the *Stabat Mater* would be sung along with psalms, Bianchi laude and the *Anima Christi*. This demonstrates that a variety of hymns would have been used, as well as suggesting that many would already have been known by the participants, or at the very least, those leading the singing, creating continuity with previous singing traditions. Dominici also comments on the diversity, suggesting that one lauda was a *pietà* as it discussed the crucifixion as well as mentioning various examples of a *vespro* (p. 160). While many of these songs pre-dated the Bianchi processions, there was some degree of innovation, particularly including laude about certain events such as the *tre pani* story, and Dominici refers to ‘una bella lalda nuova’ (p. 198).

Images of Bianchi participants singing also shed light on the practice. The fresco at Vallo di Nera shows a group of priests leading the singing, reading from a manuscript bearing the text of the lauda (Figure 13). This reinforces the textual descriptions of antiphonal singing led by a particular group during the processions. An image of the Madonna dell’Oliva from Leonessa also represents singing, including the text of a few lines from a lauda from Assisi, connecting the events depicted with the town and the Bianchi processions (Figure 17). The purpose of this text is unclear, as it does not elucidate the whole story depicted, although it could point to the performance of this lauda in front of the painting.

Singing was not a straightforward issue for the Bianchi devotions, and the various witnesses, whether textual or pictorial, attest to the variety present in subject matter from place to place. This demonstrates how important it is to focus on local

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344 Stella, pp. 236-40.
345 Santucci, pp. 54-60. It is the twelfth stanza from the lauda *Apparve Vergen gloriosa*, which narrates the Madonna dell’Oliva tale. See also Bliersbach, pp. 377-9.
elements to understand how the Bianchi participants might have sung in a particular location. The most common laude, the *Stabat Mater* and *Misericordia eterno Dio*, will be examined individually before considering the rest of the Bianchi laude. Structure, performance and variation will be key emphases throughout the discussion, which will focus mainly on the Tuscan sources. A brief examination of Umbrian laude will then reveal important points of continuity and difference between local Bianchi practices.

### 4.1 *Stabat Mater*: The Bianchi ‘Theme Tune’

The *Stabat Mater* is the lauda most cited in contemporary chronicles in reference to the Bianchi devotions. Many chroniclers also transcribe a version of the hymn, beginning with Stella’s account of the Bianchi processions in Genoa.\(^{346}\) This continues through to Lucca and Pistoia, where Sercambi and Dominici both include their own transcriptions of the *Stabat Mater*, and another version is present in MS Chigiano. There is significant variation between these different accounts of the lauda, and Bornstein suggests that Stella gives the ‘best’ version.\(^{347}\) I will problematize this idea, instead looking at the significance of the differences between the various versions of what today is considered a fixed prayer, and the impact on the cohesion of the Bianchi processions.

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\(^{347}\) Bornstein, p. 138.
The *Stabat Mater* was not unique to the Bianchi devotions, and the use of such an established lauda was crucial in forming a singing base for the processions. The narrative focuses on the suffering of the Virgin at Christ’s crucifixion, as well as Christ’s own suffering. Many writing in 1399 connected the lauda to St Gregory (d. 604), and Pope Innocent III (d. 1216) was also cited as its author, although there is now a reluctant consensus that Jacopo da Todi (d. 1306) composed the hymn. The *Stabat Mater* has a strong connection to groups of flagellants, whether itinerant or in confraternities, particularly in a German context. It was sung by participants in the flagellant revivals in 1260 and 1348-9, as well as by onlookers of their rites in what Merback terms ‘compassionate spectatorship.’ The text was subject to variation, however, in terms of the placement of the stanzas and even occasional changes in word order, due to copying variation, or scribal changes to suit their tastes and needs. This variation is similar among the Bianchi records of the *Stabat Mater*, in which the stanzas were often rearranged. Renzi remarks on the different lengths of these versions of the *Stabat Mater*, noting that Sercambi and Dominici as well as MS Chigiano have stanzas which do not feature in Ermini’s standard reconstitution of the lauda. He also connects these two versions to other sources, whereas I will compare these texts with Dominici as well as Stella to highlight variation between versions of the *Stabat Mater* connected to the Bianchi devotions.

The four transcriptions of the *Stabat Mater* in Stella, Sercambi, Dominici and MS Chigiano demonstrate that there was no fixed version of the lauda for the Bianchi devotions. Sercambi’s and Dominici’s versions of the hymn are very similar, varying only on a few lexical points. The *Stabat Mater* opens Sercambi’s collection of Bianchi laude, but is not otherwise mentioned in his account of Bianchi activities (pp. 321-324). Nevertheless, its inclusion in full as one of the few Latin laude suggested for the Bianchi devotions highlights its significance. For Dominici, the

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348 Renzi and Mori, p. 34.
352 Renzi and Mori, pp. 124-6.
*Stabat Mater* is connected to the Capperledis origin story. In the preface to the hymn, he states that the *Stabat Mater* is a copy of the lauda sung by the spirits seen by Capperledis (pp. 216-219). Contextualising the hymn in this manner creates continuity between the origins of the Bianchi devotions and this practice. The placement of Capperledis’ tale halfway through the chronicle could also suggest that the song was included to reflect how participants were engaging with the devotions. This was clearly an important lauda for Dominici, as he refers to it as ‘la lauda usata’ (e.g. pp. 101; 109; 124). The Chigiano version of the *Stabat Mater* is introduced by a brief preface, stating that whoever should read or hear it would have seven years of pardon, and that it was sung by the Bianchi participants (fol. 20r). This preface already suggests multiple usage and a long history to the song. Stella’s *Stabat Mater* is transcribed in his section on the Bianchi processions at Genoa as an example of what the Bianchi participants sang, preceding his account of the processions within the city.

All versions of the *Stabat Mater* are followed by the *Oremus* prayer, and often a Paternoster, indicating a specific mode of practice. It is not clear however whether this was unique to the Bianchi devotions, since like the *Stabat Mater*, both texts pre-dated the movement. Considering these four examples together, the first three stanzas are the same across each version of the *Stabat Mater*. However, the rest of the strophic structure is different; while many stanzas are identical across these different transcriptions, they occur in a different order. The similarity between Sercambi and Dominici’s versions could suggest that there was a Tuscan version of this lauda sung by the Bianchi participants. However, the Chigiano version from Florence is significantly different, sharing some stanzas with Stella’s version, suggesting that the variation cannot be classed as regional.

The Chigiano version is the longest of the four examples and presents an interesting conundrum. It comprises 29 stanzas of which four do not occur in the other sources. The twenty-third stanza, *Universis pecchatores/scholares e dottores/la crucie configieant*, does not occur in any other recension of the *Stabat Mater*. This extra stanza maintains the tone of the lauda, and emphasises that people of higher

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353 The *Stabat Mater* and its preface are transcribed in Appendix 1. a).
354 Stella, pp. 236-7.
social status also gathered at the foot of the cross. The addition could have been made during the processions, and may be representative of what was sung in Florence, or it could have been included by the Chigiano scribe, reflecting instead the norm of fifty years later.

There is no textual reference to Bianchi practices within the *Stabat Mater* and yet it is the song most frequently connected to the processions in contemporary chronicles. A connection is drawn in the Sercambi manuscript, where Bianchi participants kneel in prayer to the left of a tableau of the crucifixion in the image accompanying the *Stabat Mater*. \(^{355}\) This could suggest that those singing or hearing the lauda were supposed to meditate on the images it invoked. This is problematic, as the lauda is in Latin, but could suggest that the contents were understood in a broad sense due to references to the Passion in other contexts.

Therefore even with these four examples, there is significant variation between different versions of the *Stabat Mater*. While Sercambi and Dominici’s versions are relatively similar to each other, the other Tuscan source Chigiano demonstrates that there was not a single version of the lauda in this linguistic area. While this could be due to the later composition of MS Chigiano, the variation underscored that the *Stabat Mater* was not fixed. This variation is also demonstrated in Stella’s version, suggesting that regional variation could be a factor, although personal preference on the part of the scribe is probably also important. Thus, the seemingly simple instruction to sing the *Stabat Mater* actually required those leading the singing to follow a particular method of singing, using the first three stanzas and then choosing from the others available to create the hymn. It is unlikely that this variation was specifically on account of the Bianchi devotions however, and it seems probable that even under ordinary circumstances, one would find variant versions of the *Stabat Mater* throughout the Italian peninsula.

### 4.2 Misericordia eterno Dio\(^ {356}\)

While the *Stabat Mater* was important to the Bianchi processions, much of the singing was done in the vernacular. The most popular vernacular lauda connected

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\(^{355}\) Banti and Cristiani Testi, p. 192 (Image 451).

\(^{356}\) This is the most common iteration of the first line of this lauda, but it is also realised: Miseric(h)ordia eterno Id(d)io.
with the Bianchi devotions appears to be *Misericordia eterno Dio*. While the *Stabat Mater* was subject to variation, it was mostly from a fixed pattern of possibilities. The variation with *Misericordia eterno Dio* is different, as the first line was sometimes realised as *Misericordia Virgine pia*, with much of the rest of the text remaining the same regardless of this changed incipit. It is likely that this variant mentioning the Virgin predated the Bianchi devotions and that the lauda was rewritten during the Bianchi processions to focus on God. The prevalence of this lauda among various sources suggests that it was sung frequently by the participants. After the initial stanza of three lines, the other stanzas are four lines each.

According to Banfi, there are no records of vernacular laude in sources on the Bianchi processions north of Tuscany; indeed only after the Bianchi devotions reached Lucca on 9 August 1399 was there a diversion from the *Stabat Mater* in the sources. The modification of a pre-existing lauda *Misericordia Virgo pia* to *Misericordia eterno Dio* fits with the idea that the Bianchi participants were not innovators, rather adapting pre-existing traditions. The content of the lauda is unexceptional, detailing a conversation between the speaker, God and the Virgin. The speaker asks for mercy and peace, requesting the intercession of the Virgin, who replies that sinners must repent. If they do not, God will send ‘morte, pestilenzia e guerra’ (l. 68). The reference to the plague is significant because it connects to the threat from the Bianchi origin stories. The triad of threats here could be indicative of the representation of each piece of bread in the *tre pani* story, although there is no explicit link. Moreover, the words *misericordia* and *pace* occur frequently; *misericordia* occurs nine times throughout and *pace* twice in the first stanza.

This lauda is included in numerous sources: Sercambi, Dominici, MS Chigiano, MS Nazionale and the Vallo di Nera painting. Sercambi’s *Misericordia eterno Dio* is the fifth song in his collection of seven Bianchi laude, meaning that it is not in a prominent position, especially compared to the *Stabat Mater* (pp. 335-9). The lauda is illustrated with five images, where Bianchi participants pray to a heavenly figure atop a blue starry strip. While the text makes no explicit mention of Bianchi activities, the images tie the devotions to the lauda. The arrangement of

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357 Banfi, p. 172.
358 Stella’s account mentions psalms, but not what language they were sung in.
359 Banti and Cristiani Testi, pp. 195-6 (Images 461-5).
the text into bracketed stanzas of four lines suggests that it would have been possible to sing it antiphonally.

Dominici’s *Misericordia ettero Dio* is introduced as ‘una lauda già cantata per placare Idio sopra la pestilenzia’ [a lauda already sung to placate God during times of plague] (p. 234-7).\(^{360}\) This heading begins the chronicle section written by Dominici’s brother Paolo, suggesting that it was not Dominici who chose to include this song, but his brother. The connection with plague is strong, as the rest of Paolo’s remit in the manuscript deals with those who died from the disease. This somewhat diminishes the specific connection to the Bianchi devotions, but the other sources suggest that it was indeed sung during the Bianchi processions. Notwithstanding, the connection between this lauda and the plague could be a practical reason why it was chosen for the Bianchi processions. This is a rare instance where an action of the Bianchi participants is connected to the tangible threat of plague.

*Misericordia ettero Dio* is the eighth lauda in MS Chigiano and forms part of the initial section devoted to the Bianchi devotions.\(^{361}\) The rubric introduces the lauda as one which ‘si canto pe bianchi e prima la canto in Firenze alcuni venuti da Pisa, circa 24 e poi per piu altri’ [was sung by the Bianchi, and was first sung in Florence by a group of 24 people from Pisa, and then by many others]. This preface suggests a specific location where this lauda was sung, tying its first iteration to Tuscany. Pisa, as we saw in the previous chapter, was reluctant to join in the Bianchi devotions, which could explain this relatively small group arriving in Florence from that city. This version of the lauda is almost identical to Sercambi’s, with one minor lexical change from ‘or m’intendete’ to ‘non dormite’ (l. 37), which does not significantly alter the meaning of the song. Thus, the lauda appears remarkably similarly in each of these Tuscan sources.

Another source which must come into consideration here is MS Nazionale II.XI.38, a Florentine scroll. The form of the parchment could suggest that it was used during a procession, as seen in the Vallo di Nera fresco. Indeed, each stanza begins with a large red letter, making them clearly distinguishable. Renzi and Mori describe this as the only original lauda of the Bianchi devotions, as this is the only

\(^{360}\) This rubric only occurs in MS Riccardiana 2049, fol. 157r. The other manuscripts do not introduce the lauda.

\(^{361}\) Toscani, pp. 96-101.
example of a scroll which may have actually been used in a procession, rather than
the rest of the sources which were written down later. The rubric, like the MS Chigiano preface, mentions Pisa: ‘Questa orazione disseno e’ Bianchi da Pisa. Questa lauda è d’Ugolino di Bernardo’ [The Bianchi from Pisa said this prayer. This lauda is from Ugolino di Bernardo]. It is unclear whether this Ugolino was the composer, scribe or owner of the parchment. The scroll is degraded in some areas, but it is possible to fill in many of the gaps from the three other examples of this lauda. The scroll is not a fair copy, compared to the chronicles and laudario discussed above, suggesting it might have been made quickly, and indeed used in the processions. Textually, this Florentine scroll is practically identical to the other versions of this lauda, varying only orthographically.

A visual consideration of this lauda is possible thanks to the Vallo di Nera fresco, where a priest holds a scroll similar to MS Nazionale, which reads, ‘Misericordia o Virgo Pia/ pace o vergine Maria…’ (Figure 13). Two Bianchi participants to the right of the image also hold a laudario, in which the first line is legible, ‘Misericordia o virgo…’. This is the lauda which Banfi postulated predated the Bianchi processions, and indeed the third line of this example, suggested by Bliersbach, is ‘non guardare al nostro errore,’ the third line of Misericordia eterno Dio. The pair carrying the laudario could indicate that existing copies of laudarii were carried by Bianchi participants as song sheets, and so groups would sing whatever laude they contained, most likely with local significance. The fact that the priest also carries this version could denote continuity, or suggest that at least in Vallo di Nera, or Umbria more widely, the unchanged version of the song was sung. Indeed, it is not clear what the rest of the text would have been, and so it is possible that it was only the initial verse that was rewritten for the Bianchi processions in Tuscany. This would only be a minor difference with the four Tuscan versions discussed above. This image also demonstrates how the singing would be led by people who read from scrolls or laudarii, examples of which both survive. It would have been cumbersome to take an entire laudario on an itinerant procession, thus perhaps they were more likely for intramural processions.

362 Renzi and Mori, p. 125.
363 Ibid., p. 126.
364 Bliersbach, p. 389.
Textually speaking, the examples of this lauda are much more consistent than the Stabat Mater discussed above. It is only the first stanza which demonstrates any significant variation between the sources, as the rest of the text varies only in terms of expected linguistic features. The Stabat Mater therefore gained a vernacular counterpart in Misericordia eterno dio, although it would appear that this innovation was not immediate, as Banfi suggests, only appearing once the Bianchi devotions had reached Tuscany. It would be worth seeing if there were other laudarii for the passage of the Bianchi processions in more northern regions to gather more conclusive data to examine whether this particular lauda was more widespread.

4.3 Vernacular laude
The majority of the laude associated with the Bianchi devotions are in the vernacular, as suggested by the incipits cited above. As the revival involved a wide cross section of society, this meant that everyone would have been able to understand the songs. These vernacular laude will now briefly be assessed, highlighting particular themes and diverse features. The origin story laude were addressed in Chapter Two, and other common themes for the Bianchi laude were the Passion and the Virgin. This discussion will highlight the diversity in subject matter, length and provenance of a selection of the songs.

The Passion lauda Pecchatori tucti piangete closes Sercambi’s collection (pp. 342-3), and occurs twice in MS Chigiano at numbers 383 and 696.\(^\text{365}\) While Sercambi’s version and Chigiano 383 are relatively similar, Chigiano 696 shares only the first stanza, and is significantly longer than the other two examples. The subject matter, a reflection on the crucifixion, remains the same, but is expressed differently. This could suggest that Bianchi laude relied on a known or popular refrain, which formed the first stanza, and thereafter those leading the singing could fill in the rest of the stanzas as they pleased, as long as they conformed to a reasonably similar structure and fitted the general themes associated with the processions, or that particular lauda.

\(^{365}\) Toscani, pp. 150-2, 170-1.
Madre di pieta fontana concludes the initial Chigiano section (16) and is introduced by the rubric ‘lauda ancora si canto pe Bianchi.’ Within the text, mankind asks the Virgin to pray to Christ:

Priga lui, tal pistolenza,
Che rivochi tal sentenza,
Chéd egli è nostra credenza
Che 'l farà per tuo amore.  

[Pray to him that this plague
He will revoke, and this sentence
As it is our belief
That he will do this through your love.]

This reference to the sentence and the plague together is unique among these laude and suggests that Madre di pieta was written or at least modified during the processions. Moreover, a later stanza states ‘Firenze, la tua cittade/ Madre piena di pietade/ Conserva con libertade,’ [Florence, your city/ Mother full of mercy/ preserve with freedom] explicitly connecting the lauda to Florence (ll. 61-2). This simple modification could easily have been made to adapt the lauda for other cities, demonstrating a method by which these songs could add a local element.

Chigiano 5, Vedete o pecchatori, is introduced by a rubric explaining that Grazia di Santo Spirito composed the lauda in August 1399. This was the same man who preached Capperledis’ origin story in Dominici’s chronicle, creating an important intertextual reference to this figure. This dating places the composition of the lauda during the Bianchi processions, and its contents further strengthen this connection. There is a peculiar reference to the participants dressing in a vesta scura, although the end of this line clarifies that it is ‘di bianchi colori.’ (l. 20). The word choice seems to be in order to maintain the rhyming pattern of the stanza, and the speed with which it was presumably written could explain this odd use of scura to describe the white Bianchi garments. The lauda incorporates details of numerous

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366 Ibid., pp. 112-4.
367 Ibid., pp. 113, ll. 31-4.
368 Ibid., pp. 82-5.
369 The word scuro could also mean pallido, but only usually in the sense of a face being pale. Entry for ‘scuro’ in Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca (1612) <http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/index.html> [accessed 29 July 2014].
other Bianchi activities and concludes by calling sinners to participate, suggesting it might have been used to spread the devotions.

Chigiano 317 *Misericordia O redentore* is connected to the Bianchi processions by its rubric.\(^{370}\) Throughout the lauda, the Virgin argues on behalf of mankind while Christ, through his anger, wishes to send ‘fame e guerra e pistolenza,’ a more extreme sentence than those in the origin stories (l. 325), but similar to the sentiment in *Misericordia eterno Dio* ‘morte, pestilenza e guerra’ (l. 68). The composer, Jacopo da messer Bertoldo dal Montepulciano, and year of composition of 1400 are also mentioned. Tenneroni suggests that the composer was Jacopo del Pecora, who had been imprisoned for helping the Visconti against Florence in 1390.\(^{371}\) While in prison, he wrote commissioned poems, including six laude, one of which he states was for the Bianchi devotions. This specific authorship is unusual, but then so is the lauda, as it is the lengthiest of these Bianchi texts at 400 lines long. Such a lauda would have been impractical for singing, requiring the leader to carry a significant amount of parchment with him just for this song. It is likely therefore that this lauda was an intellectual and penitential exercise. The composer could not participate in the processions, as he was incarcerated, and therefore sought another way to express his devotion. Notwithstanding, it seems the composer was well informed about the processions, but the text’s length and detail suggest that it could have been finished after the Bianchi participants had finished processing through Florence, reinforced by the dating to 1400. While the lauda could have been a commission, there is no patron mentioned.

A final example of a Bianchi lauda appears in a codex of miscellaneous verse. Beginning *Su tutti peccatori*, it was composed by Andrea Stefani, who identifies himself as *cantore dei Bianchi*.\(^{372}\) After a brief narrative detailing the processions in Florence, Stefani presents a lauda for the Bianchi processions.\(^{373}\) This is similar to Chigiano 383 in its length and as that it appears to be more an intellectual exercise than something practical for participants in the processions to sing. The lauda incites people to go *a processione* (l. 5), although only the first two

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\(^{370}\) Toscani. pp. 115-32.  
\(^{372}\) MS Marucelliana, fols. 54v-55v.  
\(^{373}\) The narrative and lauda are transcribed in Appendix 3.
stanzas are devoted to this purpose. The rest of the song is a meditation on death and the horrors of hell, presumably on the fate which awaited those who did not participate in the processions. There is no specific textual reference to the Bianchi devotions apart from Stefani’s initial rubric, so he might have suspected the fleeting nature of the Bianchi processions, and written something more permanent and adaptable to other situations.

It is surprising in some ways that there are so few laude with an explicit reference to the processions, but on the other hand, the space for innovation within the nine-day processions was limited. Moreover, the innovations which were recorded suggest that it is highly likely that modifications such as the one to include ‘Firenze’ could have occurred in other laude, or indeed another city could have been substituted. The Bianchi participants had a reasonable collection of vernacular laude from which to draw. Many of these laude begin with a stanza of three lines, after which the other stanzas are four lines long, suggesting a particular pattern to facilitate the singing. Connecting the majority of these laude to the Bianchi devotions is possible through their textual content or rubrics. However, the two lengthy examples with composers seem impractical in terms of their function as part of a Bianchi procession, and may have been more of a vanity project, as the laude seem too unwieldy for general use.

4.4 Latin Laude
Aside from the Stabat Mater, there are only two Tuscan examples of Bianchi laude in Latin, which do not appear to have been modified for the devotions. Signum crucis factum est is included by Sercambi (pp. 324-6) and is Chigiano 3 (fol. 20v). The text could be considered a complement to the Stabat Mater, focussing on Christ’s pain on the cross. The two texts differ only orthographically, suggesting a fixed form, unlike the Stabat Mater. This suggests that the lauda was already in existence, and that the Bianchi participants did not modify it for their use.

Verbum caro factum est is included twice in Chigiano, once within the Bianchi section (4) and again later (20) (fols. 20v-21r; 29r). Each stanza of each of these of this lauda ends with the phrase Virgine Maria, suggesting that it would be

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374 The Chigiano text is transcribed in Appendix 1. b).
375 Both examples are transcribed in the Appendix at 1. c) and 1. d).
particularly suitable for antiphonal singing. The texts praise Christ and the Virgin, and the second example has an additional seventeen verses, which continue this praise, focussing on Christ’s noble lineage. It is not surprising that the more compact version of the song is included in the Bianchi section of the manuscript, as it would have been easier to use for the processions. Indeed, this could suggest that shortened versions of other Latin laude were used during the Bianchi processions.

Both of these Latin examples begin with two lines, followed by stanzas of four lines each, and have a fixed rhythmic structure. They are more complicated than the vernacular laude in terms of this structure, but nevertheless convey similar themes which are relevant to the Bianchi devotions. The fact that there are only two Latin laude aside from the *Stabat Mater* suggests a strong focus on vernacular singing for Bianchi participants. Perhaps these two examples were selected as they embody themes relevant to Bianchi activities, or were particularly well known.

### 4.5 Laude from Assisi and Perugia

Small elements of diversity have been demonstrated throughout the Tuscan laude, with examples such as the *Stabat Mater* varying from location to location. Other laude from Assisi and Perugia will now briefly be considered to further highlight the impact of regional variation on what was sung. The Assisi laude, in MS Casanatense 4061, have been described and transcribed respectively by Santucci and Monti, providing the only written evidence of the Bianchi devotions in the town. The Perugian laude, while mentioned by Tognetti, have only recently been published by Renzi and Monti. This edition is freer with its definition of Bianchi laude, for example including songs which revere the Virgin, but nevertheless provides a useful collection of laude for comparison.

A feature of the Assisi codex reinforces the antiphonal structure of the singing. The songs are arranged in stanzas, and each initial stanza is to be repeated after each of those subsequent to it, signalled with the repetition of the first word, and often an ellipsis. This codex contains some of the laude already discussed, and many alternatives along the broader themes of the origin stories, the Passion and

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376 Monti; Santucci.
377 Renzi and Mori.
378 Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS Casanatense 4061, e.g. fol. 46v.
praise of the Virgin. In addition, local miracles are commemorated in lauda form: the Madonna dell’Oliva and a second miracle where the Virgin appeared on the outside wall of the church of Santa Chiara. It is unclear whether these songs would have been composed in time for the Bianchi in Assisi to sing them during the processions, but they nevertheless provide an important source for these narratives.

An interesting example is the origin story lauda *Misericordia pecchaturji*, where the roles of Christ and the Virgin are inverted: it is the Virgin who orders one piece of bread to be thrown into the water, and Christ who remonstrates with the witness. Christ also has to work hard to persuade the witness to look for the bread, so much so that it becomes almost farcical. This is a significant departure from the angry Christ across the rest of the Bianchi laude. Thus, these Assisian laude demonstrate that the concepts essential to the Bianchi participants were rewritten locally. Moreover, local stories were written into laude, and so it was not just a case of adaptation, but also innovation. These examples were both in the vernacular, suggesting that their purpose might have been to spread the stories they narrated.

The Perugian laude are similar to those seen already, with some repetition, such as the *Stabat Mater* and *Misericordia Vergine pia*. Also in this collection is a Latin version of a *tre pani* lauda: *Venit Christus una die*, demonstrating that innovation could occur in Latin, not just the vernacular. Renzi and Mori note important connections between the Perugia and Assisi codices, with numerous laude occurring solely in these manuscripts. There are also two laude with specific links to Perugia, with a single line or stanza mentioning the city. This demonstrates how laude could be adapted locally, as seen with Florentine embellishments in MS Chigiano.

Both of these Umbrian collections contain unique laude, as well as songs almost identical to those in the Tuscan codices. This demonstrates common themes throughout Bianchi laude, as well as the propensity to adapt particular elements to

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379 For example, there are three laude narrating the *tre pani* story.
380 Respectively 19 *Apparve la Vergen gloriosa* and 3 *Jhesu, figliuolo de Maria*. Monti, pp. 92-5, 67-70.
381 This *Stabat Mater* is different from those discussed in section 4.1, with the same first stanza, but varying thereafter. There are four stanzas in this version which do not feature in Stella or the Tuscan versions.
382 This lauda also occurs in MS Casanatense, and has only recently been identified by Renzi and Mori. It had previously presumably been overlooked because it was not in the vernacular.
the local context, or write laude about local events, as seen with the Assisi miracle laude. There also seems to be a degree of continuity between the Assisi and Perugia manuscripts, as well as the Vallo di Nera fresco, which suggests that regional variants were paramount in the way that the Bianchi devotions were shaped.

It is difficult to assess the longevity of these laude. Those which pre-existed the movement, especially the *Stabat Mater*, would have continued to be used, although this is a reflection on their previous popularity rather than their use during the Bianchi devotions. Monti traces some of the Bianchi laude to later manuscripts, where they feature in larger collections of religious poetry and songs, so they were sometimes copied at least into later collections. It is difficult to assert whether these laude were continuously connected with the Bianchi devotions after the processions however, particularly those examples with no textual connection to the devotions. Some of the songs may have lived on in confraternities, but it is most likely that these would have been the more generic laude, rather than those telling the origin stories or Assisi miracles.

4.6 Praying
The instruction to pray features prominently in the instructions laid out in the origin stories for Bianchi participants, along with the command to shout *misericordia* and *pace*. As seen above, it seems that this was often facilitated within the laude, and these songs were often followed by prayers or instructions to pray. The most common prayer cited is the *Oremus*, mentioned by Sercambi, Dominici and in Chigiano, usually followed by the Paternoster. This combination of singing and praying seems to have been intrinsic to the devotions, and was presumably also led by those who led the singing. The *Oremus*, a short Latin prayer, asks for forgiveness from God and the Virgin, and while common, varies from manuscript to manuscript, and so it seems that there was no fixed form, as seen with many of the laude above. The prayer itself does not refer to the Bianchi devotions, and so was presumably co-opted by the movement.

Certain laude are followed by specific prayers. This is particularly the case in MS Chigiano, where prayers are almost always transcribed after each Bianchi lauda.

383 Monti, pp. 20-6.
For example, Chigiano *Vedete ho pecchatori* is followed by a prayer in Latin (fol. 21r). This prayer amplifies the lauda it accompanies by providing a more focused discussion of Christ crucified. It is written in verse, which is unusual as the rest of the prayers associated with the Bianchi devotions do not follow a metrical structure. Chigiano *Giesu Cristo pace pace* is followed by an *oratio devotissima*, which is a compilation of various Psalms (fol. 22r). Moreover, there are reports of the Bianchi singing Psalms along with the laude, although it seems more likely that they would have sung full texts as the Psalms were often learnt by rote.

The Chigiano version of *Del segno* is followed by three versions of the creed, all in Latin: the Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, numbered 13, 14 and 15 (fols. 25r-v). The latter of these is lengthy, and it is unlikely that Bianchi participants would have been expected to recite it. Its inclusion is perhaps to demonstrate the possible variants of the Creed, but nevertheless suggests that this prayer, in any of these three versions, formed part of Bianchi devotions. Overall, there appears to be a general preference for prayers in Latin, but there were vernacular examples as well. Convenience seems to have been the driving force, encouraging participants to recite prayers they already knew in Latin, or innovating in the vernacular. Moreover, the placement of the prayers immediately following the songs suggests that the practice of singing was strongly connected to that of praying.

These laude and prayers are therefore a representation of what Bianchi participants sang and recited during the processions. The examples are by no means exhaustive; even Sercambi notes that his small collection of 9 laude just gives an idea of what was sung. Local elements in some of the texts demonstrate a desire to connect the Bianchi devotions to local places, such as the insertion of Florence or Perugia into the laude. Local preferences are also revealed in the choice of laude more broadly, in the examples with no textual connection to the Bianchi devotions which were nevertheless included among the laude sung by participants.

The subject matter of the laude varies, although there is a preponderance of laude about the crucifixion, or representing conversations between an angry Christ and the intercessory Virgin. The prominence of the Virgin throughout these laude demonstrates her importance not only to the Bianchi participants but throughout the
tradition more generally, as the majority of the laude were not new. The combination of the vernacular and Latin throughout the prayers and laude is interesting, meaning that the Bianchi devotions did not solely operate in the vernacular despite the popular appeal of the devotions. Few laude are attributed to specific writers, meaning that it is difficult to suggest a chronology for the composition of the new Bianchi laude. Of the composers who are mentioned, one was a key figure in the devotions, Grazia di Santo Spirito, and so the attribution could have been to demonstrate his importance to the processions. The other two, Stefani and Jacopo da messer Bertoldo dal Montepulciano created rhetorically sophisticated laude, which would not have been practical for singing. Thus, they commemorated the events in their own way, and using their particular skills.

There do not appear to be any particular rules about what could be sung by the Bianchi participants, or indeed how to sing it. However, the suggestions of antiphonal singing are stronger than any alternative. It is likely that the congregation would have joined in, having been instructed to do so by the origin stories and by local or travelling preachers. The various different laude are sometimes tied to a specific location, or were only sung after a specific location had been reached and passed. The laude narrating the Assisi miracles probably circulated south of Assisi, and the suggestion with *Misericordia eterno Dio* is that it was a Pisan innovation. It is interesting that there is no record of any laude travelling backwards, indicating that the Bianchi processions did not double back, but rather moved further southwards with each new iteration of the devotions. For example, *Misericordia eterno Dio* is only associated with the Bianchi devotions from Tuscany onwards. While some of the laude are relatively similar between sources, it is the most common example, the *Stabat Mater* which demonstrates the most variation, suggesting regional interpretations. It is clear that the instruction to sing was taken seriously and engaged with vigorously, but the precise method of application varied: there was no set of songs taken from place to place.

Participants in the Bianchi processions tended to sing a version of the *Stabat Mater* and *Misericordia eterno Dio*, but otherwise the laude used were open to interpretation. This demonstrates how difficult it is to define a Bianchi lauda without
explicit reference to the processions, as there is no single consistent feature of
identification, and as so many more examples, especially in the lengthy Chigiano
collection, may have been sung by participants in the processions. The variation can
be considered similar to the variation in the origin stories, as each chronicler wrote
down what he was hearing around him, adding his own embellishments. The use of
pre-existing texts and presumably melodies meant that the devotions would have
been accessible to a large amount of people, and perhaps explains the local features,
as local songs were used and perhaps adapted to suit the Bianchi devotions.

5. Self-flagellation

Self-flagellation is the most controversial of all the Bianchi activities. General
histories of Italy in this period cite it among the main practices of participants.
Indeed, the Enciclopedia Italiana calls the Bianchi a ‘movimento religioso popolare
dei flagellanti.’ A more nuanced approach is necessary, as highlighted by Bianchi
historians, who carefully delineate between Bianchi participants who did and did not
engage in the practice. I will take this further, examining how self-flagellation was
portrayed in the Bianchi origin stories, and then its specific application in Lucca and
Pistoia. The practice itself will also be problematized, questioning the role of
something which could not be done by all participants in the processions. The focus
here will be on self-flagellation, which is the only version of the practice suggested
for Bianchi participants; there is no indication that they would whip each other. I will
also consider how an action most likely practised by a select few came to be a
defining feature in general overviews of the Bianchi devotions.

The codification of self-flagellation in a monastic context is attributed to Peter
Damian, who created regulations for the practice. It was seen as Imitatio Christi,
although while suffering was important, it was not intended to be deadly.
Visualisation and singing were important too, and self-flagellation was closely
associated with reciting the Psalter. Self-flagellation in a public setting or
processional context was particularly brought to the fore by the flagellant movement

384 Gino Borghesio, Entry for ‘Bianchi’ in Enciclopedia Italiana (1930)
<http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bianchi_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/> [accessed 7 July
2015].
385 John Howe, ‘Voluntary Ascetic Flagellation: From Local to Learned Traditions’, Haskins Society
of 1260. Once the 1260 revival was over, flagellation was codified in some places in religious confraternities, although only male members of these groups were allowed to self-flagellate in public. While self-flagellation was important for these groups, it was only a ‘stage in their devotion,’ and the confraternities also engaged in other activities as seen in Chapter One, such as caring for the poor. In these confraternities, flagellation would often be performed in front of a devotional image while singing or reciting a prayer. For these confraternities, flagellation became something between the habitual action that it was for the holy orders and the spectacle that it was for the laity when they participated in popular religious revivals.

Another flagellant revival occurred after the Black Death in 1349-50, although it descended into violence. This revival was consequently condemned by the pope, and thereafter self-flagellation was only permitted as part of the regulated activities of flagellant confraternities. These revivals also often combined singing with flagellation, favouring songs for the Virgin, particularly the Stabat Mater. The revivals were seen as a threat by the church, which could not control them. The authorities were therefore wary of popular revivals which involved self-flagellation, and this extended to the Bianchi processions, even though it was only a minority who engaged in the practice. While some Bianchi participants did self-flagellate and even wear battuti robes, the majority did not. Consequently, the worries of the authorities were usually assuaged and the Bianchi participants were allowed to continue to spread their devotions.

Physical suffering was an important feature of self-flagellation, whereby an individual actively pursued pain in order to demonstrate spiritual devotion.
was diametrically opposed to pleasure in the medieval theological mind-set, and was consequently a useful tool to counteract ‘the pleasure of sin.’\textsuperscript{395} Moreover, by the fourteenth century, physical suffering had become a way of demonstrating living sanctity.\textsuperscript{396} Self-flagellation was therefore a method of performing sacred pain, making suffering a transformative experience of becoming closer to God. Leclercq postulates that self-flagellation was a literal interpretation of Psalm 50 ‘Laudate Domino in tympano’, whereby the human flesh became the drum.\textsuperscript{397} The strong connection between the Psalms and self-flagellation created a full body experience, extolling both the physical and spiritual connections of the practice.

Self-flagellation therefore had a troubled history, and requiring all Bianchi participants to self-flagellate in public would have been problematic, as all ages and sexes were supposed to join in the processions. Sources do mention self-flagellation, but it is usually applied to a specific group of people and a particular context. Participants in the Bianchi devotions were not actively encouraged to begin self-flagellating and it would appear that those who self-flagellated during the Bianchi processions were those who were already part of flagellant confraternities. Two of the origin story sources mention self-flagellation: Dominici states that participants were to go ‘battinsi e battandosi’ (p. 53) and Venne Gesu also stipulates self-flagellation \textit{colla corda} (l. 207). Neither of these origin stories suggests anything other than universal participation in the practice, which was not the case throughout the processions, as will now be demonstrated.

5.1 Sercambi

Sercambi makes a single textual reference to self-flagellation in the lauda \textit{Nuova lucie}, where Bianchi participants \textit{fanno freni} [whip themselves] (l. 38). This hardly explains what was expected of participants, but the images throughout Sercambi’s Bianchi section offer clues as to how self-flagellation might have been performed at Lucca. There are seventeen images which depict or suggest flagellation. Two images clearly depict the practice, accompanying the Passion laude \textit{Questo legno} and

\textsuperscript{396} Esther Cohen, \textit{The Modulated Scream} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 27.
\textsuperscript{397} Jean Leclercq, ‘La Flagellazione volontaria nella tradizione spirituale dell’occidente’, in \textit{Il Movimento dei Disciplinati}, pp. 73-83 (p. 79).
Here, kneeling Bianchi participants whip themselves before an image of Christ on the cross. They self-flagellate through holes in their robes with thin, straight whips. These images embody the ritual connection between self-flagellation and devotional images and are associated with a particular lauda, demonstrating the particular context for the practice. Aside from the holes in their robes, these Bianchi participants are no different to the other groups depicted throughout this section. This suggests that flagellation was practised by a subset of participants, and was confined to a specific ritual context in front of a devotional image. Thus those for whom self-flagellation was an important method of expressing devotion were allowed to do so during the Bianchi processions, but in a contained manner. Notwithstanding, it is interesting that these two laude are accompanied by visual representations of self-flagellation, whereas the *Stabat Mater* is not, despite its usual association with the practice as discussed above.

The fact that there are only two examples among Sercambi’s illustrations of overt self-flagellation separates the Bianchi devotions from previous flagellant revivas, such as the processions at the time of the Black Death in 1348-50, where participants self-flagellated indiscriminately. Nevertheless, there are other suggestions of the practice as other Bianchi participants depicted by Sercambi carry whips. For example, the first image of the Bianchi participants in the manuscript shows a group all bearing thick, knotted whips. However, these whips are not being used and the group kneels around a crucifix. The position of this image could suggest it as an exemplar for Bianchi participants, although there is no action to indicate whether the whips were to be used or not. Whips were also carried on the move, for example the short thin whips in the image of the Lucchese Bianchi arriving at San Miniato. Participants here carry an assortment of candles, torches, whips and the leader carries a crucifix. Some carry both a whip and a candle, although others just a candle, suggesting a degree of personal choice. In the image, the whips are draped over the shoulders of those who hold them, which could suggest a symbolic act of self-flagellation. While all self-flagellation is symbolic, this action was not the full, physical realisation of the practice, but rather the whip.

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398 Banti and Cristiani Testi, pp. 196 (Image 466), 197 (Image 467).
399 Ibid., p. 190 (Image 445).
400 Ibid., p. 201 (Image 477).
was carried or used with a particular meaning. The practicality of whipping oneself while carrying a lit candle would require quite a balancing act.

Other images of processions also show numerous whips being carried. The robes of these participants are closed at the back, suggesting no contact with the flesh underneath, as was the case in the images accompanying the Passion laude. This further establishes the notion of symbolic self-flagellation. Indeed, Frugoni notes that the whips may have been carried as a sign of penitence rather than as an instrument of ‘feroce espiazione.’ Moreover, Black notes that later, symbolic self-flagellation with black silk cords was a recognised practice of religious confraternities, and so this image could be an early example of this. Thus Sercambi’s images suggest a nuanced approach to self-flagellation, which could either be performed as part of a ritual, or performed symbolically during the itinerant processions. Both types were integrated into the illustrations, suggesting that this diversity was present, but that both forms were important to the Bianchi participants. However, the practical applications of the practice are not explained, nor the groups who engaged in it. It remains difficult to pinpoint precisely how flagellation was practised, but my analysis reinforces the idea that not everyone self-flagellated in public during the Bianchi processions, but that participants could carry a whip as a symbolic representation of the practice.

5.2 Dominici
Dominici is the only chronicler who indicates self-flagellation in an origin story at the beginning of his chronicle, although it is not clarified until later in his narrative of Bianchi activities. Dominici always maintains a clear difference between Bianchi participants who self-flagellated and those who did not, indicating that it was not adopted by all participants. For example, he notes a group of fanciulli in Pistoia self-flagellating and processing, limiting the practice to this specific group of people within the more general Bianchi activities (p. 67). Another instance of self-flagellation was by a single man, Lolo Buosi, who went nudo come nacque except for his arms and head, hitting himself as hard as he could (p. 87). Lolo had found

401 E.g. Ibid., pp. 198 (Image 468), 199 (Image 469).
402 Frugoni, p. 234.
403 Black, p. 2.
that his neighbours, instead of joining the devotions, had gone to work. A cloud of blood rained on them and Lolo discovered their bloodstained tools. He described a vision which told him to shout *misericordia* and *pace* and to spread the word of what had happened. Flagellation here is secondary to the message which Lolo was attempting to convey, therefore while this instance does include flagellation, it was not part of a procession and was an individual choice.

Dominici reports that at Rome, there were many people walking completely naked, while whipping themselves and shouting *misericordia* (p. 150). It is important to note here while *tutti* were carrying candles, it is only *molti* who were practising self-flagellation, separating out those who partook in this activity. The connection to the Bianchi devotions here is also ambiguous as the group was nude, rather than wearing white. A group of *battuti* also joined in a procession in Lucca ‘Scalzi e Ignudi con la vesta battendosi alle perdonanze’ (p. 204). Finally, Dominici reports that a group in Genoa included *battuti* as a part of the general processions, along with women, men, children, and various ranks of the clergy (p. 220). The robes and items of clothing that they wore were closed, so that it was impossible for them to *battere* (sic). This details how people who normally self-flagellated as part of religious processions could participate in Bianchi devotions without whipping themselves. Thus, even if members of flagellant confraternities participated in the processions, they did not necessarily self-flagellate while processing.

For Dominici, self-flagellation was an optional practice, either for specific individuals or for groups who already engaged in the practice. This clarification is reinforced in Dominici’s detailed processional order as will be seen in the following chapter, which includes a group of *battuti* as a constituent part, separate from other religious confraternities. Moreover, suggesting *battuti* dress as an acceptable alternative to white robes for Bianchi participants indicates a place for their inclusion within the ranks of the Bianchi processions as seen in section 3. While this means that one of the origin story instructions could not be applied to all participants in the devotions, it nevertheless clarifies how the practice was interpreted by various different groups. Furthermore, all of these examples describe flagellation occurring
during intramural processions, and there is no suggestion that it would have occurred
during the itinerant devotions.

Datini and Salutati, writing in Florence, also attest to some form of flagellation during the Bianchi processions. Datini describes all of the participants in the procession he joins as carrying a *ferza*, stating that they went ‘battendosi con essa.’ The notion of universal self-flagellation is problematic, and it is likely that this was a symbolic performance of the practice. Salutati describes a group of participants from Lucca carrying knotted scourges and whipping themselves during a procession in Florence. This suggests that those who self-flagellated as part of the Bianchi devotions were not confined to doing so only in their own town, and could also self-flagellate within the walls of other cities. Flagellation was also practiced further south in Umbria as attested by the Vallo di Nera fresco, but as seen with the Sercambi manuscript images, not all participants carried whips (Figure 18, see also Figures 14-16).

![Figure 18. La processione dei Bianchi (whip detail)](image)

From this evaluation of Lucca and Pistoia, it is apparent that the Bianchi participants had no clear instructions on how to engage with self-flagellation. Some people self-flagellated as part of their Bianchi devotions, but it does not appear to have been a ubiquitous concern. The decision on whether to self-flagellate was a

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personal one, and seems limited to those who were already members of flagellant confraternities. Lolo Buosi is likely an exception to this, but his self-flagellation occurred outside a processional context in any case, and was reported as the result of a specific vision. Self-flagellation, with a whip on bare skin, seems to have been relatively rare, and confined to processions or events within town walls. Sercambi’s images suggest that self-flagellation was practised in a specific devotional context, and that symbolic flagellation was an option. Numerous sources suggest that participants carried whips, although it is unclear how they used them. In terms of satisfactorily fulfilling the divine instructions in order to reduce the pestilential sentence threatened in the origin stories, this practice is problematic. It could seem that those who self-flagellated were not only better carrying out the initial instructions but were also engaging more devoutly with the devotions. However, this would suggest that self-flagellation was a necessity, which is not the impression given in the sources.

This is the only Bianchi practice which was not applicable to all participants. It seems to have been a focus in previous historiography as seen in the Introduction, due to the controversial nature of the practice, or a desire to closely associate the Bianchi devotions with previous popular religious revivals. Self-flagellation was not a required practice for those joining the Bianchi devotions; indeed it does not appear that they went from town to town engaging in the practice, and rarely performed rituals of flagellation. Where flagellation did occur, it seems to have been within city walls, in a controlled environment. The Bianchi processions therefore cannot be considered as a flagellant movement, particularly not on a par with the flagellants of 1260 or 1348-9. The application of self-flagellation among the Bianchi participants was nuanced.

6. Conclusion
My analysis of Bianchi practices has demonstrated that there was no single method for participation in the processions. Dominici’s assertion that participants would ‘fare come gli altri’ suggests that there was some general understanding of what was expected of Bianchi participants, and even perhaps of the other possible variations. There were no guarantees that the rules and regulations would have been interpreted
in the same way by each town, and then that these instructions would be understood in the same way by the individuals taking up the devotions in each location. Marocchi states neatly that the processions were ‘privo di un suo nerbo’ [without a backbone], implying that while there was a general underlying cause of preventing the plague and achieving penitence to unite participants in the Bianchi processions, there was no sustained idea beyond that.⁴⁰⁶ All of the variation discussed in this chapter appears to be within the bounds of what was expected of participants. Not all of the differences are problematic, as seen with the white garments, which meant that a large proportion of the population was able to participate.

It is likely that the first set of processions in each location would have been more rigorously policed than later processions, which were shorter and involved fewer people. Indeed, Bornstein asserts that these were ‘less inclusive and less cohesive than the original Bianchi processions.’⁴⁰⁷ His point about cohesion may be relevant, although it is unlikely that inclusivity was an issue, instead that the processions drew less interest the second or third time around. There is no evidence of any group being actively excluded from participating in any set of Bianchi processions. Furthermore, a probable factor in participating again in Bianchi processions was whether a participant could afford not to work for another period of up to nine days. There is little information about how specific practices may have been implemented in the later processions, although Dominici mentions fasting in connection with the processions inspired by Melica in Pistoia, suggesting that at least some of the original practices remained in place.⁴⁰⁸

The instruction to wear white was taken literally, as people wore whatever white cloth was available to them, regardless of its shape. This meant that there was no particular uniform beyond the colour worn, which may have seemed untidy but nevertheless united the participants. However, it would have been obvious who was not able to afford a full Bianchi robe, somewhat detracting from this equalising action. The placement and significance of the red cross on the white garments varied from location to location, either representing a personal choice or the sex of

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⁴⁰⁶ Marrocchi, p. 95.
⁴⁰⁷ Bornstein, p. 113.
⁴⁰⁸ See Chapter Two for more on this narrative.
participants. Local elements could also be incorporated into the Bianchi robes such as the cockleshell worn by some Pistoiese Bianchi. These variations in dress are significant in terms of the coherence of the movement, as there was no one, single acceptable style of dress. However, this meant that in practice, the goal of universal participation was more achievable, and that the processions were more accessible to people from various levels of society. The regional adornments, while detracting from universality, were a local way of expressing a deeper devotion, combining prayers to a local saint with the pleas of the Bianchi participants at large.

The laude reveal important local influences, especially seen at Assisi where two local miracle stories were integrated into new songs. The *Stabat Mater* was subject to significant variation, created by those who transcribed it or due to regional preferences. The same is true of the evolution of the lauda *Misericordia eterno dio*. These examples are key in demonstrating the way that the Bianchi participants co-opted pre-existing laude, relying on these rather than on innovation. Aside from the *Stabat Mater*, and later *Misericordia eterno dio*, it seems that the choice of what to sing was relatively open, as long as the lauda fitted the general requirements of the Bianchi devotions. The majority of the laude were in the vernacular, and indeed all Tuscan innovation was in the vernacular. Praying too was important for the Bianchi participants, whether in Latin or the vernacular, demonstrating the religiosity of the devotions.

Full self-flagellation among the Bianchi participants occurred only under specific circumstances, and was restricted to certain groups or individuals. It would appear that general histories of this period in the Italian peninsula reacted to the Bianchi devotions in the same way as towns sceptical to the devotions. In these towns there was a focus on the flagellant nature of the processions, which had been assumed due to the dress of participants, or communications about the processions. However, in reality, while Bianchi participants in general may have carried whips, only a small minority engaged fully in physical self-flagellation.

There was therefore great diversity of practice across the broad geographical spread of the Bianchi devotions, particularly highlighted through the variations present in the Tuscan processions. These differences did not lead to incoherence
however, creating instead regional interpretations of the devotions moulded to the expectations of each town. The focus in the chronicles on universality is emphasised in the way that the processions attempted to include all levels of society, who could wear whatever white cloth they had in order to participate. This is a key difference with previous popular revivals, where the participants were separate from society at large, whereas the Bianchi processions seem to have been relatively effective at moving towards universal participation. This could also explain the degree of success of the Bianchi devotions in involving town authorities and the Church; the inclusion of multiple levels of society meant that the devotions were more appealing and more widely and readily adopted. Following these rules would theoretically relieve the forthcoming epidemic of plague, and it is unsurprising that many people took up their white garments, adorned themselves with a red cross and went forth to participate in the Bianchi devotions.
Chapter Four: Urban Consequences: The Communal Response to the Bianchi Devotions

1. Introduction

When a Bianchi procession arrived in a new town, the reaction was varied, depending largely on the attitude of the communal authorities towards the devotions. This chapter will examine the response of the civic and ecclesiastical authorities in Lucca and Pistoia to the Bianchi devotions. This is important for considering the local elements present in Bianchi processions and the way that they were shaped in each town. The involvement of the town authorities dictated how the processions were orchestrated, whether or not they were accepted, and the way that the expectations of the participants were facilitated. Emphasis will be placed on the difference between intramural processions, where more control could be exercised, and itinerant processions away from the authorities which still relied on a multitude of communal structures. These elements will demonstrate the diversity in the way that Bianchi devotions were adopted in each town as well as the impact of local structures and traditions on the processions.

The organisation of processions in Lucca and Pistoia will be examined first, in particular the processional order. Reference will also be made to the physical route taken through each town for the intramural processions and the towns visited on itinerant processions. Civic authorities played a crucial role in providing food and drink for the Bianchi participants. The mechanisms for this will be examined for both Lucca and Pistoia, indicating how the items were paid for, gathered and distributed. Making peace was an important part of the Bianchi devotions, made clear by the cry of pace of the participants. The method of peacemaking will be examined and compared to earlier patterns of peacemaking apparatus, which will question the longevity of such arrangements. Within this context, the opening of prisons will be examined, demonstrating how peacemaking could be used to facilitate this action for which the Bianchi participants clamoured. The impact of the Bianchi processions on political structures in Lucca and Pistoia will be addressed, particularly considering the reticence towards the devotions. The leaders of the processions will also be examined, addressing the dual role of the clergy and the laity in this position. The particular expectations for members of the clergy in
Bianchi devotions will be evaluated, taking into account the importance of preaching in transmitting the devotions, as well as other actions performed by members of the Church.

The main sources for this chapter will be the chronicles of Sercambi and Dominici, which will be supplemented with communal records from Lucca and Pistoia to complement the narrative accounts of the chroniclers. The focus throughout this chapter will continue to be on Lucca and Pistoia, questioning the universality and uniformity of the processions as they moved from place to place. In fact, it will become clear that the town authorities were more interested in ensuring orderly, universal participation than in making their processions like those elsewhere. Moreover, the authorities tapped into pre-existing traditions and structures, shaping the Bianchi devotions to local expectations rather than preparing the inhabitants of their cities for entirely novel processions. There were unusual elements to the Bianchi devotions, compared with usual communal processional activities, but these were integrated into the framework created by the town authorities. The spontaneity one would expect in a popular religious revival will be teased apart to demonstrate the choreographed reality of the Bianchi devotions in Lucca and Pistoia.

2. Processional Order and Route
As seen in Chapter One, there were pre-existing traditions of processions, especially connected to the feasts of each town, respectively for the Volto Santo in Lucca and St James in Pistoia. While initially religious in focus, these processions had evolved to demonstrate civic pride, reflected in the inclusion of guilds and members of the town councils in the processional order. These processions are a useful point of comparison for the Bianchi devotions, to consider the different ways that the crowds were arranged. The Bianchi processional order will now be examined and compared to the town feast day processions. The discussion will then move to the route followed by the Bianchi participants within the towns, also considering itinerant routes.
2.1 Lucca

For Sercambi, processional order was not a primary concern. He does however provide information about the make-up of the processions, describing the participants in an intramural procession in Lucca: men, women, members of the Anziani and the bishop (p. 354). The involvement of the bishop suggests ecclesiastical endorsement of the Bianchi processions, at least within Lucca, although a distinction was maintained between bishop and participants in general. Sercambi also notes how the participants were old and young, rich and poor, male and female, hinting at the universal nature of the devotions, although suggesting that these divisions were not forgotten. Sercambi’s illustrations do not shed any further light on Bianchi processional order. Those leading the processions bear crucifixes and carry large candles, but are dressed in the same manner as the rest of the participants with their hoods raised.\footnote{409} Those behind the leader do not appear to be arranged in a particular order, and are all dressed alike. Thus, Sercambi highlights the diversity of the participants textually, but hints at the universality of the processions visually.

Sercambi carefully records the churches visited during the intramural processions (p. 353). This section of his chronicle is quite curtailed, especially compared to details of itinerant processions, suggesting that the intramural processions were less interesting. Initially, just a single day of processions occurred on 13 August, but this was not sufficient to appease the population constrained to remain within the city, and so a novena began on 15 August, combining the Bianchi devotions with the fervour this feast day would have incited. On each day of these intramural processions, Bianchi participants would meet at a designated church, process to the cathedral of San Martino to hear mass, and then return home. The first church was Santa Maria Forisportam, followed by San Frediano, San Salvatore, San Michele, San Francesco, San Romano, Santa Maria dei Servi and San Giovanni, with the final day’s event happening solely in San Martino. The processions finished on 23 August, and so no breaks were taken on the Saturdays as was sometimes the case with itinerant processions. The processions were therefore conducted in a full but swift manner meaning that the town could return to normal as soon as possible.

\footnote{409} Banti and Cristiani Testi, p. 199 (Image 470).
Physically speaking, some of the routes involved were very short indeed; for example, the cathedral can be seen almost immediately on exiting the church of San Giovanni. Sercambi does not indicate whether a more circuitous route would have been taken in order to make the processions more of a spectacle. Some of the churches, such as San Frediano, were the focus of other annual processions as seen in Chapter One (p. 47), thus their selection for the Bianchi processions could imply that they were particularly important, or already part of a route that had an established procession. Practical reasons were also crucial, as most of the churches had an ample piazza outside, meaning that Bianchi participants could overflow into the outside space if necessary.

Sercambi’s accounts of the itinerant processions are more vibrant, suggesting that he considered them more extraordinary than the intramural devotions. The focus here is on the distance covered rather than particular churches visited. A series of towns is named, for example one itinerant Lucchese group visited Castelfranco, San Miniato, Vico Pisano, Calci, Cigoli, Vorno, Vico, Buiti and Badia di Guamo before returning to Lucca. Sercambi also describes foreign itinerant Bianchi participants arriving in Lucca, noting that most groups visited the Volto Santo in San Martino, but they visited other churches than those selected for the intramural Bianchi processions within the city. This suggests that there was not a fixed set of churches to be visited by the Bianchi participants, and perhaps that different churches were chosen in order to manage the volume of people. Nevertheless, the size of the church and piazza space nearby were important considerations to facilitate the number of people participating in the Bianchi processions. Moreover, it is likely that there was some direction or plan, otherwise these Bianchi participants may have gone to an area where there was not enough space, or which was full of Bianchi participants from another location.

2.2 Pistoia
Dominici describes a very detailed processional order for the intramural processions at Pistoia. He notes the exceptions made for people who were not able to go abilmente, which is similar to those excused from the annual St James processions (p. 71). The first intramural procession began on 18 August, lasting nine consecutive
days. The participants included the bishop, priests, friars, prelates, men, women, children, battuti, ingesuati [a religious order founded by Giovanni Colombini] and ‘d’ogni maniera persone’ (p. 64). As in Sercambi, this was not a precise arrangement, but does suggest a degree of separation between the participants if these groups were identifiable, and the distinction between clergy and laity is maintained. The religious nature of the procession is highlighted by the presence of the clergy and the two confraternities. Unlike the St James processions, the Bianchi devotions were never explicitly compulsory, which perhaps explains why there was no similar military presence described during the devotions. It seems unlikely that Dominici would have left this detail out of his elaborate description of the processions.

Dominici notes in particular that both men and women were taking part. He reports some later processions solely of men arriving into Pistoia, but these are different to the broader context of mixed groups. Dominici is keen to highlight the calibre of specific individuals, noting that there were cavalieri and nobili, as well as particular named persons of high status, to demonstrate the validity of the processions as a suitable endeavour for the whole populace (e.g. p. 150).

A second Bianchi procession took place on 7 September, inspired by Melica’s vision (pp. 129-30). Dominici records a precise processional order:

*Tre guidatori, grandi cittadini... tutti li torchi de’ Battuti, poi molti altri vestiti di bianco... poi il crocifisso...di S. Maria a Ripalta: portollo il rettore di S. Maria...uno cantatore con una viola... uomini vestiti tutti di bianco, poi li preti, frati, prelati e abati, maestri in sacra teologia, lo generale de’ frati di S. Augustino e quanti preti, frati e calonaci e prelati vi erano... poi m. lo Vescovo, di rieto tutti li ufiziali, poi molta gente non vestita di bianco, poi certi Ingiesuati, Apostoli e simili, poi Battuti...*[3]  

[Three leaders, great citizens... all the torches of the Battuti, then many others dressed in white...then the crucifix...of Santa Maria a Ripalta: the rector of Santa Maria carried it...a singer with a viol...men dressed in white, then the priests, friars, prelates and abbots, masters]

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411 See Chapter Two section 9.1 for this narrative.
in holy theology, the general of the Augustinian friars and as many
priests, friars, canons and prelates as there were...then the bishop, and
behind him all of the officials, then many people not dressed in white,
then some Ingesuati, Apostoli and the like, then Battuti... Dominici does not stop there, also citing 14 Holy Orders and confraternities. The
majority of the groups were confraternities, giving an overview of the most
important examples in Pistoia at the turn of the fifteenth century. In light of the
confraternities discussed in Chapter One (pp. 51-60), each name here could stand for
more than one group, as there were two confraternities which met at some of these
locations. It is interesting that there is a separate group of battuti in the initial
section, as some of the confraternities in this list were exclusively flagellant groups.
Thus, the initial group of battuti might indicate a group of mixed flagellant
confraternities who engaged in self-flagellation during the processions, although this
is never explicit. After the confraternities came other groups of men, before a
penultimate group of women, and a final group of lay men dressed in white. There is
no explicit mention of children in this processional order.

This procession represents a varied cross-section of Pistoiese society,
although the order carefully segregates the groups, calling into question the idea of
universality. However, Dominici also includes participants not wearing white,
suggesting that ensuring universal participation was an important concern. While the
entire procession can be considered as made up of Bianchi participants, certain
individuals enjoyed a particular status and defined space, such as the leaders and
members of the clergy. This processional order demonstrates a connection with the
annual processions for the feast of St James. However, this model was adapted rather
than simply adopted, to focus here on the religious institutions within Pistoia. The
communal input suggested by the implementation of these processional orders
indicates careful organisation rather than spontaneity behind the Bianchi processions.

The route for the first intramural procession in Pistoia is comparable to that
in Lucca, as the churches were specified for each day: San Zeno, San Francesco,

412 All translations from Italian into English are my own.
413 San Jacopo, San Lorenzo, Maggiore di San Francesco, Ceppo, Servi, San Domenico, Minore di
San Francesco, San Paolo, San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, Sant’Antonio, Carmine, Armeni, Sant’Andrea
and Santa Maria a Ripalta.
Sant’Andrea, San Piero Maggiore, San Lorenzo, San Domenico, San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, San Paolo and San Bartolomeo. In contrast to Lucca, mass each day would be said at the designated church, the bishop would preach, and the crowd would process to the cathedral. The spread of churches here seems more considered, as they are all roughly equidistant from the cathedral, meaning that the procession would be a similar length each day. Some of these churches, for example San Piero Maggiore, do not have a piazza immediately outside, suggesting that there might have been fewer participants, although Dominici’s suggestion that there were 4,000 people joining in these devotions means that they may just have spilled outside the church into any available outdoor space.

In a similar fashion to Sercambi, Dominici describes the towns visited on the itinerant routes followed by the Bianchi processions. It is unlikely that the precise processional order described above would have been possible for itinerant devotions. However, few of the separate groups mentioned above would have participated in the itinerant processions, and fewer people still would have participated in both, resulting in a more limited participation in itinerant devotions. Dominici describes how the first itinerant Pistoiese Bianchi left on 17 August, visiting Quarrata, Tizzana, Carmignano, Signa, Fiesole, Florence, Peretola, Campi, Prato and Pacciana before arriving back in Pistoia on 25 August, nine days later. While no specific churches are mentioned, Dominici does note that the Bianchi participants were shown the cintola [girdle of the Virgin] at Prato, making the cathedral a likely stop off point. As Dominici personally participated in the intramural processions, his account of them is richer. Furthermore, unlike in Lucca, Pistoia coordinated the intramural and itinerant processions to begin on the same day, and as such did not encounter problems with inhabitants wishing to leave the town, as will be further explored in section 5.

Observance of a strict processional order seems to contradict the supposed spontaneity of the Bianchi devotions, perhaps suggesting a significant degree of control exercised by communal authorities, at least according to Dominici. Traditional processions were likely to have been adapted to fit the Bianchi requirements; unlike annual feast day processions, the Bianchi devotions were not
mandatory, although universal participation was an objective. While regulating participation would have been difficult, the different levels of society emphasised by Sercambi and Dominici indicate that large parts of the population were joining in. Voluntary participation is emphasised in the chronicles, suggesting that coercion might not yield the same spiritual results. The processional orders reveal the complicated nature of organising the Bianchi processions for a town. The intramural processions played an important role in facilitating participation for those who could not leave for itinerant devotions. The similarity with pre-existing processional traditions would have meant that the population would quickly have understood what was expected of them. However, less control could be exerted over those who left the town on itinerant Bianchi processions. The role of the authorities was therefore paramount in shaping the processions, particularly in an intramural capacity, bringing order to the popular revival.

3. Provision of Food and Drink

Participants in the Bianchi processions were supposed to fast for the duration, and this rule is particularly common throughout the origin story regulations. Dominici specifies that fasting meant that no meat could be eaten and Cerboni reiterates this, as well as introducing the Saturday fast that participants were supposed to observe, just consuming bread and water.\(^{414}\) While fasting periods took up more than a third of the medieval year, the time of year when the Bianchi devotions took place was not usually one of abstinence.\(^ {415}\) Excessive fasting for Bianchi participants would have been counterproductive, as they were expected to walk from town to town spreading the devotions. Therefore, not eating meat was a practical way to maintain a fast while also having enough energy to participate fully in the physical aspects of the devotions.

Fasting, was deemed ‘very good for the soul,’ and the practice was considered a penitential act.\(^ {416}\) It was possible to partake in a personal fast at any time, but the practice was expected at certain periods of the year specifically Lent, Advent and Pentecost. Also, in an ordinary week, one was to fast on the Ember

\(^ {414}\) Cerboni, p. 16.
Days: Friday (for the crucifixion), Wednesday (for Judas’s betrayal) and Saturday (consecrated to Mary in celebration of her virginity). This latter explains the special Saturday fast of the Bianchi participants. Exceptions were made for those who were too poor, young, old or infirm to be able follow the guidelines; these groups of people were also usually exempt from the Bianchi processions.

For itinerant Bianchi participants arriving into foreign towns, provisions were often facilitated by the host town. This was usually in the form of bread, wine and cheese, and frequently also included fruit. Considering this in the context of usual ceremonial expenditure, these items were much less lavish, particularly compared to the spices which would be purchased for annual Easter celebrations. In this section, I will consider the ways in which Lucca and Pistoia provided for the Bianchi groups arriving into the towns, as well as catering for their own inhabitants, whether at home or on itinerant processions.

### 3.1 Lucca

Sercambi makes frequent reference to *digiuni* [fasting], extending the fasting period to include the day that participants returned home from itinerant processions. There is no additional clarification however, suggesting that the expectation was readily understood. The General Council organised provisions for groups of Bianchi participants arriving from other cities. For example, one group was given ‘quello che alla vito loro era di bizogno’ as well as wine (p. 367). This suggests that wine was not a necessity, although it did become part of the usual offering. Indeed, bread, wine and cheese were given so frequently that these items became ‘prezentato al modo uzato’ (p. 354). A negative impact of this generosity was that the quality of grain and wine for the inhabitants of Lucca significantly decreased, as so much had been given away.

These offerings were usually reciprocated by the towns that the itinerant Lucchese Bianchi reached, even if they would not permit the group to enter. For example, Pescia sent out food to the Bianchi participants, but would not let them into the town (p. 350). The Lucchese Bianchi were not warmly welcomed into Florence, where bread was given, but not *in abondanzia*, suggesting a lack of generosity (p. 353). Lucca also supported its own itinerant Bianchi participants, sending out 20

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417 The council record does not state who paid for the provisions. MS Consiglio Generale 13, p. 263.
some of wine and thirty sacks of bread, as well as 100 lire of wax, so that they would have everything they needed (p. 366). The inclusion of wax demonstrates a preoccupation not only with providing for the physical health of the itinerant participants, but also in facilitating their spiritual health, as the wax could be used as an offering, or candles for the participants to carry. The fact that Lucca sent out provisions suggests that some towns were not willing or able to provide food and drink. Sercambi also reports Pistoia setting up a similar scheme, suggesting that this system was not unique to Lucca. The supplies provided to these Bianchi participants complied with the fasting requirements. However, Sercambi notes a negative impact on the town’s supplies alongside the positive effect of feeding the Bianchi participants in an act of almsgiving. For the duration of the Bianchi devotions, it would seem that Bianchi participants took precedence over the inhabitants of Lucca in terms of ensuring their physical wellbeing.

Another source also indicates how provisions may have been organised during the Bianchi processions at Lucca. The account book of the Compagnia della Croce shows that the confraternity bought a barrel of wine for the Compagnia del Corpo di Cristo from Pisa on 23 August 1399 ‘per far onore’. The confraternity also bought cheese on this day, although this was a usual expenditure. In this context however, these items could also have been part of their offering to the Pisan confraternity. This date was in the midst of the Bianchi processions, and it is likely that the Pisan confraternity did not come to Lucca alone, but rather as part of a larger procession from the town. This raises the possibility of reciprocal almsgiving on a smaller scale, although this is the only such example, and it is not explicit that the Pisan confraternity was arriving in Lucca as part of a Bianchi procession. Nevertheless, the timing of this offering does suggest that confraternities could perform part of the almsgiving necessary to feed the crowds of Bianchi participants arriving into Lucca.

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418 A *soma* was a unit of volume, roughly what could be carried by a pack animal; a *lira* was a unit of weight, corresponding roughly to a modern pound.
419 MS Compagnia della Croce 36, fol. 71r.
3.2 Pistoia

Pistoia too provided bread, cheese and wine in abundance for the arriving itinerant Bianchi participants. Dominici reports that extra items were sometimes added, to also include eggs, sugar, confetti [sweets], raisins, fruit and roba infinita [endless items] (p. 60). These items were all permitted for the fasting diet, provided that the roba infinita did not include meat. The Consiglio del Popolo of Pistoia made funds available for the purchase of these items, meeting on 14 August and designating just under 100 lire ‘per ornare e’ sopraddetti B[ianchi]). The motion specified that the money was to be spent on bread, wine and cheese, and was to be given without taxation. On 28 August, the council decided to spend a further 50 denari on the Bianchi participants and a further untaxable 300 denari were set aside to provide alms for incoming Bianchi groups. The marginalia in the communal record, ‘pro expensa alborum lucanorum’ indicates the specific purpose of these funds, and other marginalia, including manicules, mark these Bianchi entries as of particular note.

Pistoia also fed Pistoiese Bianchi participants on itinerant processions. Provisions would be gathered in the square outside the church of San Giovanni di Rotondo. On 18 August, for example, Dominici notes how 54 sacks of bread and 24 barrels of wine were gathered and the following day there were 70 sacks of bread and 30 barrels of wine (p. 83). Wax also featured among the items offered to the Bianchi participants, for candles and offerings. The communal support continued as the council decided to spend another 50 lire on the Bianchi participants on 29 August. The food collections continued into September, but became increasingly reduced; by 13 September, Dominici reports that only four baskets of bread and six barrels of wine were offered (p. 155). The Opera of San Jacopo was usually in charge of ceremonial wax, and so was given the task of providing and selling wax for the Bianchi processions, an endeavour which cost 400 denari.

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420 A precise amount of 99 denari and 5 soldi. Pistoia, ASP, MS Provisioin Comune 26, fol. 163r. For context, 100 lire was roughly ten times the amount Pistoia usually spent on ceremonial expenses for feast days such as San Zelone and the corona, see e.g. Pistoia, ACP, MS M6 fol. 15r.
421 MS Provisioin Comune 26, fol. 165v.
422 Ibid., fol. 170r.
423 Ibid., fol. 165r.
It was not only communal measures which provided for the itinerant Bianchi participants. Dominici notes one Vanni Castellani, a Florentine, who sent eight *some* of melons and other fruits to the Bianchi participants at Fiesole at the end of September (p. 95). This seems to have been a particularly Florentine endeavour, as other private Florentine citizens sent figs, grapes, melons and beans in addition to the bread, wine and cheese provided by the city. Dominici also records one example of Pistoiese Bianchi providing not for others but for themselves. A small group left in late September and spent their own money on their supplies, as well as giving monetary gifts throughout their journey (p. 128). This was an unusual method of participation, and strongly underscores the reliance of the majority of itinerant Bianchi participants on the alms offered by towns along the way. This sets the extensive provisions of Francesco Datini in a new light, that of a private Florentine individual wishing to provide alms rather than receiving them.\(^{424}\) Datini’s expenses included items such as biscuits, peaches and figs. Byrne had assessed Datini’s shopping list for the processions as ‘far from gourmet,’ but the other Florentine examples suggest that Datini was in line with other people of a similar social standing from his city.\(^{425}\) Moreover, comparing the items provided by Datini against those listed by Dominici, his provisions do not seem as extravagant as when they are considered in isolation.

In terms of the impact on Pistoia, Dominici describes how the frequency of markets was reduced during the processions, and butchery was limited (p. 72). Shops were shut too, with the exception of *speziale* [grocers] and *merciari* [haberdashers] which provided the items that the Bianchi participants needed. The shop closures were repeated when the processions were renewed on 3 and 15 September (pp. 117, 161). Dominici also notes that nobody worked in late August (p. 108). This might be an exaggeration, particularly considering the proximity to the harvest. Indeed, notaries were still working, and the councils were still meeting, so there was still some activity in the town apart from the Bianchi processions. Dominici likens the situation to Easter, a comparison which suggests that the town functioned at a lower capacity, although here over a more extended period of time.

\(^{425}\) Byrne, p. 228.
Different towns, and indeed individuals, took various approaches to providing sustenance for the Bianchi participants, either just providing for incoming itinerant Bianchi groups or for these arrivals as well as their own inhabitants while they were on the road. This was achieved through a communal structure, and also sometimes thanks to particular elite citizens. The Bianchi participants also made use of natural resources, Dominici reports that as the participants could only drink water when they were in Quarrata, they almost dried out a fountain (p. 81). This demonstrates the number of Bianchi participants in the area. De Nyem, the Roman notary, however presents the Bianchi participants like locusts who stripped the fruit from the trees in the places they passed through.426 While the groups did make an impact on the resources of each town they passed through, the orchestration behind the provisions suggests that they were not generally considered destructive.

There were various methods of providing food and drink for the Bianchi participants. Towns set aside money to feed both incoming itinerant Bianchi groups and their own Bianchi participants on the road. Almsgiving was an important consideration, as the term elemosina occurs frequently in both the town records and the chronicles, demonstrating that the money spent was considered an offering. The fasting diet was maintained through these provisions, as meat is never mentioned. The practice could be adopted equally by those participating in the intramural and itinerant processions, providing a rare moment of continuity between the two different modes of participation. Both Sercambi and Dominici hint at a negative effect on the towns as a result of this mass almsgiving, Sercambi notes a reduction in quality of the products which remained for the inhabitants of Lucca, and Dominici records frequent shop closures. While Dominici compares the closures to Easter, the way that the shops were shut for sustained periods during the Bianchi processions meant that trading ceased for a much longer duration. It is significant that the governments of Lucca and Pistoia took matters into their own hands in order to ensure that the Bianchi participants would have sufficient provisions on their journeys. This was often reciprocated, as Bianchi groups arriving in a new town would usually be provided for when they arrived. When this was not the case, the itinerant Bianchi participants would be provided for by their home town, or private

426 De Nyem, p. 169.
individuals. Thus, there was a mechanism established by the town authorities, to ensure that the Bianchi participants were fed throughout their penitential endeavour, which was supplemented by private almsgiving.

4. Peacemaking

Peacemaking was an important requirement for Bianchi participants; Webb goes so far as to describe it as the ‘major function’ of the devotions.\(^{427}\) Making peace could encompass actions from settling small disputes between neighbours to truces between warring cities. Large scale peaces were truces, formal agreements between two parties which were often warring factions or cities, but this was not the aim of the Bianchi devotions. Instead, they focussed on a smaller scale endeavour, involving two conflicting parties, a notary and sometimes a paciere. There was no sense of a widespread politicised motivation to the Bianchi peacemaking, which instead focussed on personal peaces. While some peaces were inevitably between political foes, peace had to be made between one person and another rather than on a large scale between families or groups as a whole. Emphasis was placed on the penitential nature of such an act, partly to ensure that neither party would lose face and also to avoid escalating the disagreement to a more formal setting. Peacemaking was a complement to the judicial system, making peace without resorting to going to court.\(^{428}\)

There were four stages to peacemaking: first the names of both parties were written down, then their oaths, then the sanctions to be enacted should peace be broken, and finally a record that the osculum pacis had taken place.\(^{429}\) This was a relatively standard formula, and would be drawn up in an instrumentum pacis, recorded by a notary in front of a number of witnesses.\(^{430}\) The kiss of peace was the final element, signalling the reconciliation between the two parties. Both men and women could participate in peacemaking, whether as the parties making peace, or those overseeing it. The process had to be voluntary, and was often employed to

reintegrate individuals that had been banished. The kiss was considered the most important feature, indicating to both participants and witnesses that peace had been made.

Peacemaking mechanisms often seem to have been dependent on local particularities. Palmer notes that in Rome, peacemaking was appropriated by the laity, and became their domain, rather than having to rely on ‘the sacramental confession and penance of university-trained theologians.’ He describes some fourteenth-century Roman examples of ritualized peacemaking, where the practice could be scripted beforehand, including the words and actions of both parties. Thus, while the basic structure of peacemaking remained roughly the same from town to town, there were also examples of particular localised methods of enacting peace, although this does not appear to be the case in Lucca or Pistoia.

Peacemaking had been a focus during previous popular religious revivals, notably the Great Hallelujah of 1233. It nevertheless always required a legal element which added enforceable consequences. However, in 1233, the procedure was relaxed to ensure easier pacification if a surety was offered. Thus, during a time of great peacemaking, the rules could be adapted, although in this instance, those seeking peace for debt still had to go through the formal procedures. Even during this popular religious revival, the legal requirements of peacemaking were still enforced, including the forfeit for peace breaking. This section will briefly consider methods of peacemaking before the arrival of the Bianchi processions and will then address the ways in which Bianchi participants engaged with the practice.

4.1 Lucca

Lucca was involved in numerous truces in the years leading up to the arrival of the Bianchi devotions, as was inevitable for a town which had been taken over so many times. However, once it had become a republic in 1369, numerous articles of peacemaking were reformed and codified in 1372, demonstrating a focus on maintaining peace within the city. Sercambi records a peace between Pisa and

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431 Ibid., p. 983.
432 Ibid., p. 978.
433 Thompson, p. 157.
434 AAVV, Memorie e documenti, IV, p. 58.
Lucca in 1272 (pp. 19-20). While much earlier than the Bianchi devotions, this is the only example of peacemaking that the chronicler records. It seems that this peace was administered by the church, as a tonsured man holds out a crucifix to a lay person, who kneels before witnesses in the accompanying image.\textsuperscript{435} The political situation in the town stabilised for a brief period before the Guinigi coup in 1400 making peace between the warring factions less necessary, although articles of peacemaking for smaller scale disagreements would have remained important. There were \textit{pacificatores} employed by the government, who settled disputes.\textsuperscript{436}

Sercambi addresses peacemaking numerous times in his account of the Bianchi devotions. Indeed, even before his narrative at Lucca begins, Sercambi reports how a man was miraculously reconciled with an enemy who had killed his son in Genoa (p. 306). The fact that the peacemaking is described as miraculous highlights the unlikelihood of such a peace being made under normal circumstances. Sercambi reports that the population in Pistoia was inspired to make peace when they saw a crucifix brought to their town by Lucchese Bianchi (p. 351). Peacemaking as a result of Bianchi crucifixes was often described as miraculous, for example a Lucchese crucifix at Nozzano which instigated a \textit{pacie mortale} (p. 361).\textsuperscript{437} The nature of the dispute and the participants in the peacemaking are not mentioned, but they did take up the Bianchi devotions once peace had been made.

There was sometimes a political overtone to peacemaking, such as when Bianchi participants from Pietrasanta passed through Camaiore in order to make peace for having slaughtered the people there (p. 318). This group from Pietrasanta also inspired a truce in Montemagno between enemies who had been at odds for more than three years and for whom the normal peacemaking mechanisms had not been sufficient (p. 319). This instance particularly recalls the formal process, as the two kissed on the mouth and renounced the injuries between them. While no sanctions are recorded, both participants then joined the Bianchi processions. Formal record was often made of Bianchi peaces: a \textit{pacie e perdono} in San Miniato was

\textsuperscript{435} Banti and Cristiani Testi, p. 88 (Image 207).
\textsuperscript{436} Meek, \textit{Lucca, 1369-1400}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{437} Sercambi offers no further explanation, but this is probably a terrestrial peace, as opposed to \textit{pace eterna}, an eternal, divine peace.
notarised, and since the relatives of both parties were not present, having already left on an itinerant Bianchi procession, their relatives had to promise to make them sign the ‘carti della pacie’ [sic] on their return (p. 365). This calls into question the longevity of any of the peaces made during the fervour of the Bianchi devotions if the fundamental action of peacemaking did not have to be witnessed, and could be performed later using a signature rather than the kiss of peace.

4.2 Pistoia

Webb states that the contado was the ‘major theatre of warfare’ for violence between the factions in Pistoia. While this meant that violence was kept out of the city, the state was involved in larger scale truces, for example when it was taken over by Florence in 1351. A similar pact was also made between Pistoia and Lucca in 1383, demonstrating the way that these takeovers aimed ultimately to promote a peaceful arrangement. Pistoia also had a strong desire for internal peace, as demonstrated by a document from 1349 when six men were elected ‘pro statu pacifico [civitatis pistorii] et conservatione libertatis ipsius.’ Peacemaking agreements between individuals were also sometimes recorded, such as one between Johannis dei Montemagi and Antonio dei Buoncoana in 1384. As seen in Chapter One, the confraternity of Santa Maria dei Servi owned a tavola to dare le pace, suggesting a lay religious contribution to peacemaking. The main peacemaking efforts of Pistoia were concentrated on creating truces with other towns, although pacts within the city were also sometimes formally recognised by the councils and could be facilitated by confraternities.

Dominici focuses on the names of those who made peace with each other during the Bianchi devotions. This adds a local aspect to the peacemaking, as the names recorded were from prominent families in Pistoia and each instance was also formally notarised. Like Sercambi, Dominici describes many of these peaces as miraculous. For example, a peace made between il Cigna with Checco di Batalone

439 Pistoia, ASP, MS Provisioin Comune 10, fols. 71r, 160r
440 MS Provisioin Comune 20, fols. 32r-33r, 69v.
441 MS Provisioin Comune 10, fol. 21r.
442 MS Provisioin Comune 20, fol. 69v.
443 MS Patrimonio Ecclesiastico B 376, fols. 1 r-v.
and Nannino dal Presto was a miracle, but the long list of peaces recorded on 15 August are not suggested to be so (pp. 59-60). Some elite families were involved in more than one instance of peacemaking, for example the Taviani made peace with individuals from the Imbarcati, Cancelleri and Simone families (pp. 68-9). This demonstrates the importance of making peace with all of one’s enemies during these devotions, and the fact that peacemaking was a public event which was also performed by people of a higher social status.

Pistoia employed five extra paciali eletti to cope with the additional administrative needs of notarising peacemaking during the Bianchi devotions. Initially, peaces which had been made were reported orally to the one paciale, necessitating the employment of more for the duration of the devotions (p. 71). The peaces were usually recorded at churches, continuing the public nature of pacification, further emphasised as the bishop selected citizens to make peace who had yet to do so (p. 84). Peacemaking in Pistoia continued into October, when the final peaces between the Lazzari and Panciatichi were made, ensuring a full reconciliation between the families (p. 179). The Provvisioni also note the intricacies of welcoming those who had been banished and condemned back into Pistoia. For these two groups, peace was granted for a probationary period of two months on payment of a fine, and so these peaces at least were not necessarily intended to be perpetual.

Dominici records peacemaking in other towns, as well as between citizens of different towns. Some Florentine citizens met in a chapel in order to make peace with people from Pistoia, and later, ambassadors came from Florence in order to make peaces which were still outstanding (pp. 95, 163). Dominici also makes reference to peaces occurring further away, in Rome, Perugia and Foligno, demonstrating that this aspect of the Bianchi devotions was important throughout Umbria and Lazio as well as his native Tuscany.

The evidence for Lucca and Pistoia therefore points to a formulaic structure for peacemaking during Bianchi processions. Sercambi highlights making peace as an important pre-requisite to joining the Bianchi processions. Peacemaking for the

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444 MS Provvisioni Comune 26, fols. 164v-65r.
Bianchi participants was a formalised process, although the lack of record of any penalties for breaking peace calls into question the longevity of any peacemaking achieved during the devotions. In Pistoia in particular, these peaces were short-lived as Dominici describes intense factional warfare in Pistoia throughout the second volume of his chronicle which describes events until 1403.

4.3 Images and Objects of Peacemaking
In addition to the chronicle evidence, two images of the Bianchi devotions provide more information about the physical act of making peace. Considering Sercambi’s illustrations, this is a rare instance where there is a lack of information: there are no Bianchi images in the manuscript which can be considered as a depiction of peacemaking. Instead, wall paintings at Vallo di Nera and Terni, Umbria, offer further insight into the way that this practice was performed by the Bianchi participants.

In both paintings, there is an instance of a kneeling pair poised to make the kiss of peace (Figures 19 and 20). This reiterates the public nature of peacemaking, and the fact that those engaged in peacemaking have lowered the hoods of their Bianchi robes makes them identifiable. This would mean that the peace could be reported orally to a notary, as there are none in sight in either image. Each act of peacemaking is surrounded by witnesses, and in each case, one of these seems to be a paciere facilitating the action. This was an action which took place between two individuals within the Bianchi processions as a whole. In both cases, the paciere stands just behind one of the peacemakers, touching their shoulder, suggesting that the process was more complicated than simply exchanging the osculum pacis. Another witness in the Vallo di Nera fresco is an angel, hovering above the heads of the pair about to make peace, sanctifying their action. According to Jansen, such a figure overseeing the kiss of peace was not uncommon.\(^{445}\)

While peacemaking is featured only once in the fresco at Terni, there are numerous instances in the Vallo di Nera fresco. The other examples are less elaborate, with no angel or witnesses, taking place in front of the church (Figure 21). This highlights peacemaking as an activity both within and without town walls,

\(^{445}\) Jansen, ‘Pro Bono Pacis’, p. 450, fig. 2.
Figure 19. *La processione dei Bianchi* (*osculum pacis* detail)

Figure 20. Madonna dell'Oliva fresco, Church of Santa Maria del Monumento, Terni (Umbria) (*osculum pacis* detail)

Figure 21. *La processione dei Bianchi* (Umbria) (kiss detail)

Figure 22. *La processione dei Bianchi* fresco
always in a public setting. No written records of this peacemaking can be seen in any of these examples, but the paintings provide a different method of commemoration of these acts of peace. All of those making peace are kneeling, which reinforces the focus on penitence for the Bianchi participants. Also crucial are the witnesses, whether terrestrial or heavenly.

Thus, peacemaking as practiced by participants in the Bianchi processions seems to have been a legally codified process which relied on notarial structures. While the permanence of these peaces is unlikely, the fact that there was a legal element suggests that this Bianchi regulation was taken particularly seriously. However, there are no sanctions mentioned when peaces were made during Bianchi processions. Furthermore, as no peace contracts from the processions have come to light, it is difficult to comment on the legal nature of the processes undertaken during the devotions. Examples reported in the chronicles are exclusively between men of high status, and it is therefore unclear whether people from all strata of society would have engaged with the practice in the same way. Nevertheless, the ubiquity of the practice throughout written and visual sources demonstrates its importance to the Bianchi devotions.

Peacemaking was also important beyond Lucca and Pistoia. Both Città di Castello chroniclers reported numerous instances of truces and peaces; Cerboni even adds his own act of peacemaking into his chronicle account of the Bianchi activities.446 These accounts also suggest that particular individuals would lead a group of Bianchi participants to another town in order to make peace with people there, as is the case with Gioachino da Monte d’Oglio who led a procession to Castello to make peace with Bartolomeo da Pietramala.447 Salutati describes how the Bianchi ‘pacem petunt, pacem orant, pacem replicant et omnes simul una voce pacem vociferant, pacem clamant’ [they ask for peace, pray for peace, repeat peace and all together with one voice they cry out for peace and shout for peace].448 All of the different verbs reinforce the persistence of the Bianchi in transmitting their message, asking, praying, repeating, crying out and shouting for peace. This, coupled with the information from the chronicles about the serious nature of peacemaking,

446 Cerboni, p. 17.
447 Cronaca dei Laurenzi, pp. 93-4.
448 Salutati, III, p. 359.
demonstrates the centrality of this practice for the Bianchi devotions. These examples demonstrate the religious aspect of peacemaking in reconciliation, alongside the secular, legislative aspect. While all instances of peacemaking connected to the Bianchi devotions lack an explicit forfeit for breaking a peace, the kiss of peace and notarisation of the events remain as a legitimisation of the Bianchi method of peacemaking.

4.4. Prisons

While the opening of prisons might not seem an obvious facet of peacemaking, the mechanism invoked to release prisoners, during the Bianchi processions at least, was often an act of peace. This is particularly the case where an individual was imprisoned for wronging another individual rather than for a crime against the state. The release of prisoners was common in medieval Italian cities, with regular amnesties at Christmas and Easter. For example, in Lucca for the feast of Santa Croce, the Consiglio Generale would identify those they wished to release.\(^{449}\) Therefore, releasing prisoners as part of a religious celebration was not unusual, although the methods employed here seem different to normal practice.

Prisons were frequently found in medieval towns, such as the famous example of the Stinche prison in Florence, which Geltner describes as the ‘flagship prison of late-medieval Italy’.\(^{450}\) The prison was an important tool in the way that justice was administered in Florence. While the prisons in Lucca and Pistoia cannot be considered on par with that of Florence, their existence nevertheless demonstrates that penal justice was important. As Geltner suggests, his snapshot of medieval prisons offers a ‘kaleidoscope’ rather than a complete picture of what medieval prison life was like, as it differed from town to town.\(^{451}\) He also testifies to the release of prisoners for particular events, notably the Assumption and Easter in Siena, suggesting that such a practice was common across Tuscany.

During the Bianchi processions, Sercambi records prisons being opened at Vezzano, Pistoia and Rome, this last city on the direct instruction of the pope (pp. 313, 351, 371). In Florence, prisons were opened after a priest was miraculously

\(^{449}\) Meek, *Lucca, 1369-1400*, p. 287. For example, entries from 1399 state how prisoners were released at Easter and Christmas. Two prisoners were freed for each of the three areas of the city, and peace was a condition of release. Lucca, ASL, MS Consiglio Generale 13, pp. 235, 277. (This manuscript is paginated, not foliated.)


\(^{451}\) Ibid., p. 27.
freed from a tabernacle, where his head had been stuck (p. 355). While Sercambi fails to mention any prisons being opened in Lucca, communal documents reveal the release of certain individuals. The *Consiglio Generale* met to discuss the matter on 22 August as a result of the Bianchi participants clamouring for the prisons to be opened. 452 Interestingly, while the initial part of the entry detailing that the quorum was met is in Latin, the discussion regarding the prisons is recorded in the vernacular, marking the occasion as unusual. These proceedings detail people imprisoned usually for an offence against another individual. The first is Nuctio Grasini da Limano, who had been imprisoned by the Capitano del Popolo, who made peace with him and freed him. Nuctio’s rather convoluted crime was that a banished relative had come to his house, stolen his arms and attempted to attack someone. This nevertheless indicates that Nuctio himself was not a particularly violent or dangerous criminal. Moreover, his sentence had only lasted a month and a half.

Debtors are the most common example here; various people who were imprisoned for their debts made peace with those who imprisoned them, presumably the people to whom they owed money. One of these was a woman, illustrating that both men and women could be involved in the acts of peacemaking facilitated by the Bianchi devotions. Peacemaking was the condition for this liberation, although it must have been beneficial to both parties. Those being freed were restored their liberty, and the other parties would have publicly performed an act of peacemaking required for joining the Bianchi processions. As such, it is particularly interesting that the first recorded instance was of the Capitano del Popolo, acting as an exemplar in how to achieve peacemaking through liberating people from prison.

These acts of liberation are different in nature from those usually undertaken at the specific points in the liturgical year. While peacemaking was mentioned in 1399, in October, four Lucchese prisoners were selected to be released for the feast of Christmas, as an offering to God, and there is no mention of peacemaking. 453 The Bianchi participants employed this mechanism of making peace in order to liberate prisoners as fulfilling not only the peacemaking requirement of the devotions, but also as a response to the call to open prisons in order to theoretically allow universal participation in the Bianchi devotions. However, no dangerous criminals were released, so the gesture towards universalisation appears to be a crucial aspect of this

452 MS Consiglio Generale 13, pp. 256-7.
453 Ibid., p. 277.
action. It is curious that Sercambi makes no mention of prisoners being released in Lucca, and it seems that rather than generally opening the prisons as may have been the case in other towns, Lucca just released a select few individuals with whom peace had been made. This allowed Lucca to open the prisons to a relatively small extent while also fulfilling the Bianchi requirement of pace.

Dominici is much more forthcoming with information about prisons being opened as part of the requirement for pace, not just in Pistoia but in other towns as well. Men and women were released from twelve prisons in and around Pistoia on 15 August, coinciding with the feast of the Assumption and the start of the Bianchi processions in the town (p. 71). While the number of prisoners freed is not recorded, there was a ceremony in the cathedral for those released, similar to the way that prisoners were freed for the feast of St James, although here it was arranged a day rather than a fortnight beforehand. This sense of urgency demonstrates that the authorities did not know how long the fervour might last, but that they were keen to demonstrate leniency as a result of the Bianchi devotions.

The opening of the prisons was most likely due to pressure from arriving foreign Bianchi participants, asking Pistoia to follow the example of other towns which had already released various prisoners. The Consiglio Generale discussed the issue in early August, noting a multitude of people dressed in white demanding that the prisons be opened. The opening of the prisons on the feast of the Assumption (15 August) was decided through a council vote, which cites the Bianchi as the cause.\(^{454}\) The report includes various iterations of misericordia, and the fact that the prisoners were to be absolute as well as freed suggests a penitential element, similar to the peacemaking discussed above. As in Lucca, no dangerous criminals were released, and the majority were debtors.

A decision was also taken to repatriate some who had been expelled by the town, on the condition that they made a peace notarised by the public cancellario, with all cases to be reviewed two months later.\(^{455}\) An initially generous offer therefore had significant limitations placed upon it, allowing repatriation most probably for the duration of the Bianchi processions, but not guaranteed beyond it. While peacemaking was not evident in the way that Pistoia opened its prisons, the method of repatriating those in exile did rely on it.

\(^{454}\) MS Provvisioni Comune 26, fol. 162r.
\(^{455}\) Ibid., fol. 164v.
Dominici also notes that prisoners were released from the Florentine prison of the Stinche on 16 November 1399, ma non tutti (p. 211). It is interesting that he makes this distinction; not all of the prisoners within the walls of the Stinche were considered worthy of being let out in order to complete the Bianchi processions. This is problematic, as it would have meant that not all of the Florentine population would have participated in the processions, although it is also possible that the sentences had begun after the Florentine Bianchi devotions, which began in August.

Thus, in both Lucca and Pistoia, the way that prisons were opened during the Bianchi devotions had much in common with peacemaking practices. This was not a case of every prisoner being released however, as certain criteria had to be met. The connection to peacemaking was evident in Lucca, but Pistoia also made use of peacemaking in order to repatriate people who had been banished. The fact that peacemaking required notarisation indicates that a record was maintained of these events, and that the prisons were not just freely opened. It was a calculated process in both towns intended to appease the clamouring Bianchi participants and encourage pacification without releasing any dangerous criminals. Each town also adhered to normal structures, rather than creating any special conditions for the Bianchi devotions beyond the peacemaking mechanism for opening prisons.

5. Politics and Leadership

Broadly speaking, the Bianchi participants were successful in entering the majority of towns that they reached on their itinerant processions. However, immediate or unhindered entry was never guaranteed, as some towns were initially hostile to the hordes of people dressed in white who were approaching their gates. Lucca, while welcoming incoming foreign Bianchi participants, placed restrictions on those who wished to leave the town on an itinerant procession. This section will address the political obstacles and implications of the Bianchi processions beyond the effects of pacification and providing nourishment for the Bianchi participants. Lucca and Pistoia will both be considered, as well as political events encountered in other locations visited by the Bianchi processions firstly by the Lucchese and Pistoiese Bianchi and then through examples beyond Tuscany. The named leaders of the processions will also briefly be discussed. The Bianchi devotions have usually been portrayed as having no leadership, and I aim to demonstrate that while there was no
continuous figurehead, each town appointed its own leaders for the duration of their own processions.

5.1 Lucca
While Sercambi’s report of the Bianchi processions at Lucca mainly focuses on the flourishing of devotional activities, the town was initially quite hostile to the Bianchi devotions. Lucca was not averse to foreign Bianchi processions entering the town. Instead, the town was wary of letting its inhabitants leave for fear of depopulation. Lucca initially permitted foreign Bianchi participants to enter, and encouraged Lucchese inhabitants to confess and communicate in preparation for their own participation. However, the Anziani had a change of heart and attempted to ban anybody from leaving Lucca to participate in the devotions on 11 August, two days after the devotions arrived in the town. This notwithstanding, numerous eager participants managed to get out of the city before the gates could be shut. A group of six venerabili ciptadini was quickly assembled to go after them and bring them home under pain of excommunication, but they had already reached Lunata, and could not be convinced to return (p. 349).

Intramural processions were soon organised by the commune for those who had not managed to leave with this itinerant Bianchi group, 'acciò che non si dinudasse la terra' [so that the land was not left bare] (p. 353). The initial single day of processions was quickly followed by a novena, as the authorities adapted to the demands of the population. Two more itinerant processions subsequently left Lucca unhindered; the town had given in to the fervour of the Bianchi devotions. The authorities evidently realised that opposing the Bianchi processions would have been drastically against public opinion and chose to regulate the processions rather than forbidding them. Apart from this initial opposition, there appear to be no other political effects on Lucca as a result of the Bianchi processions. The town councils proceeded to meet as usual, replacing dead members- with no mention of plague- and electing new Anziani at the relevant junctures.

Elsewhere, Sercambi notes that the vicario of San Miniato was hostile to the Bianchi processions, as the territory had never been amicable with Lucca (p. 364). No Lucchese Bianchi were allowed to sleep in any albergo within this territory, although practically speaking this should not have been a problem, as Bianchi participants were supposed to sleep outside or in churches. Nevertheless, Francesco
Datini reports sleeping in hostels rather than following the instructions, and so it is possible that Lucchese Bianchi who could afford to slept in *alberghi* rather than the prescribed churches, but were not permitted to do so here.

Sercambi does not provide a great deal of information about the leadership of the processions. While he mentions that the bishop and *Anziani* participated in an intramural procession in Lucca, he does not specify whether they had a particular role, apart from a blessing from the bishop (p. 361). Dominici, on the other hand, identifies some prominent Lucchese citizens as part of the Bianchi processions in Lucca: members of the Guinigi family and their female relatives, and a member of the Cancellieri family. This demonstrates that identifying particular individuals was more of a concern for Dominici than Sercambi, who preferred to focus on the fervour at large. The images from the Sercambi manuscript do not reveal much more about the leaders of the processions. The majority of those bearing the crucifixes at the front of the processions were male, as they wear beards, although this is not consistent in every case.\(^{456}\) Otherwise, in the depictions of processions, it is difficult to deduce much from the way that the participants were arranged. Indeed, the suggestion in the previous chapter that those with their heads fully covered might be women is problematic as those participants are in a group with people whose heads are not covered, some of whom are clearly male. This would go against provisions for the careful segregation of the sexes during the processions.

On one occasion, Sercambi notes the number of women in a procession: 1600, along with 1200 men during a devotion within Lucca (p. 354). However, as the only instance, where Sercambi offers figures, it is difficult to use this as a benchmark for the rest of Sercambi’s processions; indeed, it is unlikely that it was normal for women to outnumber men. The figures here refer to an intramural procession, which is the most likely cause of this discrepancy. Women would have been less likely to leave Lucca for the itinerant processions and so could have been in a majority in the processions within the town walls. Overall, Sercambi was not especially concerned with reporting how the processions were led, or indeed in the specific organisation of the processions. What is clear however is that there was no single, continuous leader, either for the processions as a whole, or at Lucca, who

\(^{456}\) Banti and Cristiani Testi, pp. 190 (Image 445), 195 (Image 461).
took control of each individual procession. Nevertheless, order was maintained in some way by the town authorities.

5.2 Pistoia

Pistoia seems to have immediately welcomed the Bianchi devotions, as Dominici does not report any reticence on the part of the authorities towards the processions. The initial decision to participate in the devotions was taken by not only the council, but also involved the bishop, canons, and numerous important citizens (pp. 66-7). As discussed above, the town councils met to make key decisions regarding the Bianchi processions, particularly almsgiving and opening the prisons. The councils also declared a fortnight of holiday to ensure that all inhabitants of Pistoia could participate in the devotions. The organisational role of the town was crucial as Dominici states how each set of processions was ‘bandito e publicato’ [announced and publicised] before they occurred (p. 125).

The councils continued to meet to perform their usual functions, electing new officials in September, as per the usual pattern. A piece of legislation was passed on 28 August against sodomy, perhaps an attempt to improve the moral standing of the town. The statute describes Pistoia as infecta with sodomy, and moved to punish anybody over the age of fifteen cuiuscumque status. Those caught engaging in the act of sodomy would be fined 200 lire to be paid within a fortnight of the offence. If the offender continued, they would first be castrated and then burnt. It is not clear whether this law was passed as a direct result of the Bianchi processions, although it fits with the penitential mind-set of the devotions. A smaller example of this is the fact that Dominici notes that chess was banned for the duration of the processions (p. 86). The church made frequent pronouncements against the game, although without much success. This was an attempt at moralisation, as the game was played with dice, and was considered gambling.

Dominici reports a cohesive organizational structure to the processions, with a group of people who were designated control of the brigate and ufizzi, who would ordinare, contare and perform various other jobs (p. 74). This group would carry vermene [thin canes] to identify their organisational role in the processions. Dominici identifies thirteen of this group by name, demonstrating that they were

457 MS Provvisioni Comune 26, fol. 166v; Dominici, Cronaca dei Bianchi p. 111.
persons of public standing, to indicate that the elite of the town actively participated in the Bianchi devotions, and to highlight how there was no one single Pistoiese leader. Indeed, the chronicler states that this latter reason was his justification for including this detail, and states too that elite women also participated, although he does not record any of their names. Particular individuals had specific tasks in the processions; Andrea di Bianco, a monk of San Bartolomeo carried a crucifix, and was described as forte and atante (p. 76). The maintenance of the usual social hierarchy is also evident, as once the procession reached the cathedral, the signori [elite citizens and town leaders] removed themselves to get the best vantage point for the mass (p. 77).

In terms of leaders, Dominici identifies numerous citizens of a high social standing who led processions. These included members of the Panciatichi family, in a list of thirteen procession leaders at Pistoia (pp. 94-5). This suggests that each part of the procession, perhaps each parish or grouping, may have had a leader, as these men were all named on the same day, 17 August. It could be that each led their own part of the city, as the groups were divided, or that each bore a crucifix. Whatever their precise role, the identification of these lay men as leaders during the processions highlights the local orchestration of the processions and involvement of the upper echelons of society in a prominent role.

5.3 Other Places

Processions were structured in a similar manner elsewhere, relying on the clergy, the town authorities, or both to organise and facilitate the processions. As seen in Chapter Two, towns which were initially reticent towards the Bianchi devotions were persuaded to open their doors to the devotions by various reported miracles and dream visions, such as at Siena. Members of the clergy often had a leading role; in Genoa, the Archbishop Giacomo de Flisco was heavily involved in leading the processions. Stella’s chronicle demonstrates the involvement of men and women, with the men first: ‘cives omnes, nobilis et vocati de populo’ followed by women (including virgins and widows) and children together, clarifying the diversity of the participants.459

The Città di Castello sources provide a great deal of information about particular individuals who led processions, noting their social status and origin. The first procession to arrive in Città di Castello on 4 September 1399 was led by the signore of Cortona and his nipote. They led a group of 1100, made up of 800 men and 300 women, thus significantly more men, suggesting that the preponderance of women noted at Lucca was indeed because the procession did not leave the city.\textsuperscript{460} Over the days that followed, more groups of Bianchi participants arrived in Città di Castello led by specific named lay men, and even clergymen. The number of each sex in these groups remains roughly consistent, with women never making up more than a third of any one party. The Castellani began processing on 17 September, and there are no specific reports of what happened during those processions, as the focus here is on the leaders from other towns. The numbers discussed can only be considered a rough guide, but the gender ratio remains important, demonstrating that women did participate in itinerant Bianchi processions, but that they were outnumbered by at least two to one. One final point from these sources is the curtailed procession of the itinerant Castellani Bianchi, who could not go further than their own contado due to a war with the Ubaldini. This represents a failure of the Bianchi participants to create peace in the area they were attempting to proselytise.

Montemarte, the Orvietan chronicler, in his report of the Bianchi processions, notes that there was such devotion that few men remained in some towns. Montemarte was at Corbara with an ally of his and they took over the town of Fichino, where only five women remained, as the other townspeople had left for the Bianchi processions.\textsuperscript{461} This is a rare indication that not everybody was caught up in the Bianchi fervour, or could suggest that the chronicler, having already participated in a Bianchi procession, had returned to his ordinary life, and used the absence of the population of this town to his advantage. It is unclear how long this takeover lasted however, although Montemarte did take 90 men with him to achieve his objective.

Briefly considering the more northerly Bianchi activities, more towns were hostile to the arrival of the devotions. Venice, for example, turned back Bianchi participants approaching the city, partly due to the involvement of the Dominican

\textsuperscript{460} Cronaca dei Laurenzi, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{461} Cronaca del Conte Francesco di Montemarte, p. 268.
Giovanni Dominici, who began processions despite the prohibition, and was exiled as a result.\textsuperscript{462} Foreign Bianchi participants were also barred from entering Milan, but once the effects of the pacification in the Visconti territories had been seen, Giangaleazzo Visconti permitted the Milanese to stage processions.\textsuperscript{463} There were however certain conditions to be fulfilled: the people from each of the four districts of Milan were not allowed to meet, and the devotions had to be completed by 5 September so that the grain harvest would not be delayed. Such practical concerns are not reported by Sercambi and Dominici for Lucca and Pistoia, which demonstrates a more calculated approach in Milan. This is not surprising in light of the pragmatic approach taken by Milan towards the plague as discussed in Chapter One.

Therefore, the seemingly spontaneous and leaderless Bianchi processions were actually subject to a great deal of organisation. The role of the authorities was one behind the scenes, carefully maintaining the processional order, appointing new officials and providing for the influx of Bianchi participants. The fact that individual citizens are so frequently mentioned as leaders by Dominici highlights the participation of a cross section of society, demonstrating the notional fulfilment of the universal participation requirement. The political implications of the Bianchi devotions are less obvious in Lucca and Pistoia, where the processions were almost immediately welcomed and facilitated. While politics may seem a background concern for Lucca and Pistoia, as the role of the authorities was generally to ensure the smooth running of the processions, the towns in the north of Italy exerted a greater degree of control over the movement of Bianchi participants. The Bianchi devotions therefore were not readily accepted in every place they reached. Moreover, the processions cannot be considered leaderless in the same way that previous popular religious revivals were. It is true that there was no one, continuous leader, but the role of leadership was taken up in each town and indeed sometimes for each day of each procession by a particular named citizen. This underscores the organisation undertaken to facilitate the Bianchi processions at a local level.

\textsuperscript{462} Bornstein, \textit{The Bianchi and Venice}.
\textsuperscript{463} Tognetti, pp. 304-6.
6. Preaching: The Role of the Church

Aside from the communal powers in each town, the church also played a significant role in organising the Bianchi devotions. Indeed, only the clergy could perform some of the roles required, and particular clerical individuals were crucial in processions in their respective towns. As seen in the previous chapter, Bianchi participants were required to confess and receive communion before they could join the processions. Preaching is the main example of clerical involvement, whereby preachers would instruct Bianchi participants and tell the origin stories, promoting and encouraging the devotions. This section will examine the roles that only the clergy could carry out, as well as those taken up by particular individual members of the church.

In Lucca, Sercambi makes frequent reference to the roles that the clergy and holy orders took in facilitating the processions. They preached, said mass and heard confessions, although all three of these tasks fell within their usual remit. Nevertheless, hearing confessions and saying mass were crucial in the preparation of the population for the Bianchi devotions. Preaching was important to the Bianchi processions on various levels, as it formed an important part of daily life during the devotions. Also, it was one of the methods by which the devotions were spread, as letters were reported as being read out in sermons, and preachers told the Bianchi origin stories and explained the regulations for participants (pp. 319-21). The other main subject matter for the preachers was the numerous miracles occurring in relation to the activities of the Bianchi participants. This demonstrates ecclesiastical endorsement of the processions, a feature that was lacking in many previous popular religious revivals, such as the flagellant processions of 1349-50. This in some ways explains how the Bianchi participants managed to convert so many towns so quickly to their devotions, as the support of the clergy legitimised their endeavours.

Notwithstanding, Sercambi’s description of the processions suggests that the clergy would have been particularly identifiable, and so while they did make up a part of the processions at large, they had a specific place within the order. Sercambi’s images do not suggest that they would always have been dressed differently however, as the only visible example is the preacher at Lucca.464 It seems Sercambi’s intention was to demonstrate universal participation in the processions and the fact that the clergy are not readily identifiable in his visual material strongly

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464 Banti and Cristiani Testi, p. 193 (Image 450).
reinforces this. This contradicts Sercambi’s assertion that the processions were uniform, if these individuals wore distinctive clothing.

Dominici also reports the clergy fulfilling traditional roles during the processions. While the population at large could simply participate, the members of the church had a crucial role in facilitating the processions. In addition to reporting preaching, he often names both the mass celebrant and the preacher in each instance, as these were often two different men. The first case of this is on 13 August, where one Giovanni di Simone Cibicci Cancellieri said mass and frate Giovanni da Carmignano preached. The bishop of Pistoia, Andrea Franchi, often said the mass and gave the sermon, for example during the intramural procession on 15 August, although he is the only individual reported to do so (p. 71). The subject of these sermons was similar to those reported in Sercambi, with the origin stories being retold, as well as commanding the participants to make peace with each other. The bishop also made announcements about the processions, to inform the intramural participants that the itinerant Pistoiese Bianchi would return on 25 August, and so he had a good idea of how all of the processions were playing out. Part of this at least must have been due to the fact that Pistoia sent food after the itinerant Bianchi participants, meaning that the town, by necessity, was always aware of their location.

The bishop was in fact the most frequent preacher throughout Dominici’s account, even if he did not always say the accompanying mass. There were also sermons delivered separately from masses to the assembled Bianchi participants, often outside, during the itinerant processions. These preachers were often members of prominent Pistoiese families, such as the Astesi and Armaleoni (pp. 116, 158), although local priests are also recorded as saying the mass (p. 171). The credentials of some preachers are mentioned explicitly, for example, maestro Antonio Cancellieri was a Dominican and a member of an important Pistoiese family, as well as being a doctor of theology. The majority of these men were from prominent families, which highlights the role of eminent Pistoiese citizens in facilitating the Bianchi devotions. Andrea Franchi, the bishop of Pistoia, was a crucial figure in the Bianchi processions. In addition to his role as a preacher and celebrant, he granted indulgences of 40 days to those visiting a particular crucifix or who went on an itinerant Bianchi procession (pp. 143; 162). Franchi also established a confraternity called the scalzati [bare feet], mentioned by Dominici in the processional order,
which was formed around a crucifix at Ripalta, just outside Pistoia’s walls.\textsuperscript{465}

However, Guidi reports that ‘tutto fu vano’ as almost the entire company perished of plague the following year.

There were also wandering preachers, and the most pertinent example is Grazia di Santo Spirito, who is mentioned by both Dominici and Sercambi, as well as being credited with writing one of the laude in MS Chigiano: \textit{Vedete, o peccatori}.\textsuperscript{466} His main sermon in Dominici’s chronicle tells the Capperledis origin story on 9 October 1399. His role as an itinerant preacher focused on spreading the Bianchi devotions, and his presence in these three textual sources suggests he played a crucial role, in Tuscany at least.

Francesco Datini mentions the bishop of Fiesole playing a crucial role in the itinerant procession in which he participated, in preaching and saying mass.\textsuperscript{467} This demonstrates that even bishops could become wandering preachers for the duration of the processions. Their role was to continue the Bianchi fervour beyond the geographical location to which they were usually tied, preaching to assembled groups of Bianchi participants and converting new recruits to the devotions.

The Vallo di Nera fresco of the lengthy Bianchi procession further suggests the instrumental role of the clergy, who appear throughout the fresco, for example, leading the singing of laude (Figure 13). Their role is evident from their dress; while wearing white robes, these men also wear coloured stoles. Their tonsures are also revealed by their lowered hoods. Their position at the start of the procession, in front of numerous other Bianchi participants highlights their leading role in coordinating the singing.

There are however two reports which provide a different perspective on preachers during the Bianchi processions. Dominici and an Orvietan chronicler both report a false preacher, who was eventually burnt at the stake at Rome. While the stories vary in terms of describing the preacher, the similarity of the message and gory end to the narrative suggest that the chroniclers may be reporting the same events. For Dominici, the man called himself John the Baptist and had a bleeding

\textsuperscript{466} Toscani, pp. 82-5.
\textsuperscript{467} Melis, \textit{Aspetti}, p. 102.
The crucifix was discovered to be fake, and the man confessed to being a Jew and having tricked his followers, and was burnt to death. In Orvieto, it was a Spanish man who arrived with a bleeding crucifix, which was also proved to be fake and filled with a mixture of cenabrio [a red pigment] and oil. This man was also burnt at Rome, where he was tried and condemned by the pope. This preacher is presented in line with many false purveyors of miracles and relics who were present during the Bianchi processions. This narrative is the reason for the early presentation of the Bianchi devotions in secondary literature as a movement led by false leaders, or whose leader was burnt at the stake. However, this chapter has demonstrated that this is not the case in the large majority of cases of Bianchi leadership.

Therefore, the church had a very visible role in the processions. Members of the clergy were instrumental in ensuring that participants were sufficiently prepared by hearing confessions and distributing communion. Members of the Church were also important in spreading the message of the Bianchi devotions through preaching, whether remaining in their own towns or wandering with the itinerant Bianchi processions. However, while the majority of preachers were legitimate in their endeavours, the presence of these two false preachers has tarnished the reputation of the Bianchi movement as a whole, shaping early scholarship on the processions.

7. Conclusion

The communal authorities in Lucca and Pistoia played a crucial role in orchestrating the Bianchi processions. Depending on the activity, these roles could be more or less prominent, but all contributed to the smooth running of the devotions. This chapter has demonstrated that while the Bianchi processions can be considered as a popular religious revival, the spontaneity of the fervour that the processions inspired was tempered by communal authorities to ensure that the devotions were achievable, and that certain individuals performed necessary roles. These considerations are all mainly applicable to the intramural processions, but there are some instances such as provisions and preaching which also are applicable to the itinerant processions.

The arrangement of participants into a processional order was a particular concern at Pistoia, where the annual processions of St James seem to have been used

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468 Cronaca del Conte Francesco di Montemarte, p. 267.
as a template to adapt for the Bianchi devotions. Both Sercambi and Dominici demonstrate diversity in the membership of the devotions, suggesting that men, women and children participated, as well as highlighting the involvement of elite members of each town, clergy and the populace and laity at large. The exceptions for participation are in line with those who could be excused from the annual feast day processions. These arrangements would not have been tenable for the lengthy itinerant processions, particularly those as complicated as those reported by Dominici in Pistoia, and this demonstrates a way in which order was maintained by the authorities during the intramural processions.

Food provisions cross the boundary between intramural and itinerant processions, as all of the participants needed sustenance. However, the inhabitants of Lucca and Pistoia were almost left by the wayside as the authorities clambered to feed Bianchi participants with supplies usually destined for them. Nevertheless, the various acts of almsgiving, either by communal authorities or private individuals, provided for Bianchi arriving into their towns from elsewhere, as well as for their own inhabitants by sending supplies to their final destination each day.

The town councils made arrangements to facilitate peacemaking for the Bianchi participants, although it is likely that the majority of peaces made during the devotions did not last a substantial amount of time. Powerful figures also led the way in peacemaking, providing an exemplar for the rest of the population. Dominici mentions for example the peaces between the Panciatichi and the Lazzàri, two important Pistoiese families (p. 67). The way that prisons were opened is linked to the act of peacemaking. Indeed, in Lucca, peacemaking was the only recorded method of releasing prisoners, compared to the more general release in Pistoia, which was still mediated by the town authorities. In Pistoia, peacemaking was used so that those who had been banished could return for an initial, probationary period of two months. Therefore, the Bianchi cry of pace was taken very seriously in both Lucca and Pistoia, where acts of peace were formally notarised and witnessed publicly, but were not necessarily lasting.

The towns reacted differently to the initial arrival of the Bianchi devotions. Lucca was hesitant, and tried to forbid participation in the itinerant processions, but was forced to concede and organise intramural processions to placate those left
behind. Pistoia seems to have been more welcoming, and the town councils frequently discussed measures connected to the Bianchi devotions. Leaders of individual processions are sometimes named, highlighting their elite social status. The frequent changes in personnel demonstrate the lack of an overarching leader for the whole movement, but show that individual sections of the processions were often guided by a particular person. While there was no continuous leader, the processions were not without leadership.

The Church played a crucial role in facilitating and endorsing the Bianchi devotions. Indeed, without the support of the clergy, participation in the processions would have been impossible, as the preparations of confession and communion required their involvement, as seen in the previous chapter. Preaching was another particular preserve of the clergy and holy orders, an essential method of spreading the Bianchi devotions and inspiring penitence in those who undertook the nine-day processions. The clergy also had a set place in processional orders, and performed tasks such as leading the singing of laude. It seems that members of the clergy would normally stay in their respective towns, to facilitate the preparation and participation of Bianchi leaving and arriving there, although there were some exceptions who joined the itinerant processions.

The reaction of the towns in managing the processions differently is not surprising, given the fractured state of the Italian peninsula. Thus, the theoretically supra-regional movement was moulded to fit in with the pre-existing traditions of each town it reached. While the processions were spread from town to town, there were no specific instructions for organisation at a communal level, allowing each town to do as it saw fit. There was no single principle of coherence which held the movement together, and the Bianchi processions could not overcome the deep political divides between towns and states.

The Bianchi processions were an extraordinary devotion, but the ways in which Lucca and Pistoia coped with the arrival of numerous Bianchi participants and the departure of their own inhabitants suggests that they were not unique. Indeed, the towns modified existing structures in order to manage the processions, rather than employ new initiatives. Despite the considerable control exercised by the communal and ecclesiastical authorities, it seems that coherence with previous iterations of
Bianchi processions elsewhere was not the primary concern. Instead, the focus was on universal participation, ensuring that every single inhabitant of the town, with a few exceptions, was able to participate in Bianchi processions. The authorities maintained the processions by supporting and legitimising the Bianchi devotions. Their support meant that the processions were sustainable, in terms of feeding the participants, and that there were administrative structures in place to support their practices. This control was not obvious however, and meant that the authorities could carefully organise the devotions without detracting from the religious fervour. This system may have been by design: these were religious processions, and order was maintained by the religious authorities, but with the support of the town councils, which was flexible to support both intramural and itinerant Bianchi processions.
Chapter Five: The Legacy of the Bianchi Devotions 1400-1415

1. Introduction

The legacy of the Bianchi processions demonstrates perhaps most acutely how important it is to examine the devotions of 1399 at a local level. This chapter will focus on the afterlife of the Bianchi devotions and methods of commemoration in Lucca and Pistoia immediately after the processions until c.1415. This will demonstrate that the variation within the Bianchi devotions was equally apparent in the commemoration of the processions, which was particularly dependent on local structures as well as the local iterations of the Bianchi processions.

I will begin by considering the final processions of the Bianchi devotions at Rome, the chronological end of the movement. The proximity of the Holy Year to the end of the Bianchi processions will be analysed, problematizing Rome as a final destination for the Bianchi participants and for Jubilee pilgrims. Methods of commemorating the Bianchi devotions in Lucca and Pistoia will then be addressed. Anniversary processions will be considered, as well as the role of confraternities and Bianchi crucifixes. No wall paintings connected to the Bianchi processions have been discovered in Tuscany, and so the geographical scope will be broadened to include Umbria and Lazio. This will allow an analysis of the representation of the Bianchi participants and their activities on church walls. These images demonstrate a further method of commemoration and will offer a point of comparison with the commemorative actions of Tuscany.

This chapter will therefore consider the immediate legacy of the Bianchi devotions, examining the initial response to preserving the fervour of the processions. This will demonstrate that as with the movement itself, the forms of remembering the Bianchi processions were shaped, by and large, by regional devotional practices, and so were highly dependent on local context and traditions. Previous scholarship suggested that there was little or no tangible legacy left by the Bianchi processions. While this may be true on a macroregional level across the processions, my analysis will demonstrate that just as the processions were adapted to local traditions, so too the legacy of the Bianchi was enacted in each location according to local expectations.
2. Rome: The End of the Devotions?

The Bianchi processions continued on from Lucca and Pistoia, as the groups from each town spread the devotions further and further south, continuing the relay effect. There was no sense of a final destination as the processions continued, as each group would walk roughly four and a half days’ travel from their town, and then home again. It was inevitable, however, that some Bianchi groups reached Rome, although it is important to stress that this was not the overall goal for the majority of participants; it would have been rare for Bianchi participants from Genoa to have made it to Rome. Some individuals did seem to make longer processions, but they were a minority. Giraudo highlights how the Bianchi devotions were not a composite movement heading for Rome, but rather tributaries, some of which reached the city. 469 Nevertheless, Rome is usually presented as the end point of the Bianchi processions. I will demonstrate that while Rome became a focal point for some Bianchi participants, it was not initially conceived as a final destination.

When the Bianchi processions reached Rome, they were not immediately welcomed by the pope, although he eventually endorsed the devotions. It is interesting that the Bianchi processions headed for Rome in this context of the Great Schism, and were endorsed by the Roman papacy, rather than attempting any connection with the Avignon papacy. As 1399 progressed, Rome became something of a specific goal for the Bianchi participants. While the nine-day tours had been the focus of the initial processions, participants still wanted to channel their fervour into some kind of action as the year continued, and so heading for Rome was one method through which this was realised, similar to the repeated processions seen in Lucca and Pistoia. The movement towards Rome will be considered in light of the initial requirements of Bianchi participants, as well as considering it as a change for participants, exchanging a physical end goal for the initial ideological one. Chronicle accounts of the Bianchi processions at Rome will now be considered, considering particularly the descriptions of Sercambi and Dominici.

2.1 Sercambi

Rome had been hinted at as a final destination for the Bianchi devotions by Sercambi in his origin stories, where Christ was a romeo in the prose version of the tre pani.

469 Giraudo, p. 194.
story (p. 292). The suggestion was made more tangible in the book story which explicitly cited Rome as a final destination for the book (p. 303). Nevertheless, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, it would seem that the book story was not widely diffused throughout Tuscany, as both Sercambi and Dominici refer to it perfunctorily compared to their lengthy accounts of the tre pani story. Moreover, Sercambi does not report any eye-witness accounts of the book. While he reports a recapitulation at Pistoia, the report is second hand, from a man who alleged that he saw the person bearing the book to Rome. The narrative also had a peculiar quality as Sercambi reports that the man in question hid his face and was never seen to eat or drink (p. 356). The man was able to specify the size of the book, and the group the man bearing it was leading was headed directly for Rome. This is not, however, emblematic of the large majority of processions that Sercambi describes throughout his chronicle account of Bianchi activities. Indeed, most participants would not go more than four and a half days’ travel from their home so that they could complete their itinerant journey in the requisite nine days.

Rome is then not mentioned again in this chronicle until Sercambi’s report of Bianchi activities in the eternal city (pp. 370-1). This is a relatively short section, concluding the chronicler’s discussion of the devotions. Sercambi details the arrival of 120,000 persone forestiere in the city, who clamoured for the pope to open the prisons and shouted pace and misericordia. The pope is presented as obliging, opening 42 prisons and then showing various relics to the assembled Bianchi participants. The diversity of the crowds at Rome is highlighted in the image for this section. Here, different groups are identifiable by their different crucifixes, and are seen to converge on Rome from different directions. The Roman population joined in the processions, and Sercambi takes this as a sign that the whole world had been commosso.

Sercambi closes his account of the Bianchi devotions with a prayer, a fitting finale for his narrative of Bianchi activities. The final word ‘Amen’ underscores the religious nature of the devotions, and is an unusual chapter ending. This suggests that his writings on the Bianchi processions should be considered in a different mode to the rest of his chronicle, perhaps as an offering as part of his devotional activities during the fervour. Thus for Sercambi, Rome was the geographical end point of the

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471 Sercambi includes many prayers which end with ‘Amen,’ but does not generally end chapters thus.
Bianchi processions and his Bianchi account, and his chronicle resumes a political narrative around Lucca in the following chapter. However, it must be emphasised that Rome was merely the chronological endpoint of the processions, rather than a final destination for all Bianchi participants, for whom going to Rome was not seen as a necessity.

2.2 Dominici

The end of the Bianchi processions is less clear cut for Dominici, who continues to report groups of what he refers to as ‘Bianchi’ until February 1400 (p. 216). The physical end point of the processions remains ambiguous, as a group arriving in Pistoia in December 1399 report having reached Puglia and Calabria, although there is no other evidence to support Bianchi processions south of Rome. The group arriving in Rome in February are most likely connected to the Jubilee, but this does suggest conflation between the two sorts of fervour, particularly as the group was dressed in white robes.

Dominici’s first mention of Rome is the arrival of Bianchi participants in that city in autumn 1399, in the midst of his larger narrative of Bianchi activities at Pistoia. He connects this to the initiation of the processions, suggesting that the initial 18 who allegedly began the processions in Genoa were the first to arrive in Rome, and were incarcerated, although the reason for this is not given (p. 114). This gradual movement towards Rome is reinforced in a letter Dominici transcribes dated 10 July from Genoa where the writer describes 18 people, 12 marchesì and six of their donne, heading to Rome (pp. 220). This group allegedly did not stop for food or rest on their journey, according them a supernatural status, although the letter writer does not comment on what happened once the 18 reached Rome. This is decidedly separate from the Bianchi activities at large which had an ideological goal rather than a physical one, and were usually composed of much larger groups.

These events establish Rome initially as a place where the Bianchi participants were not welcome, but a few pages later, Dominici includes a transcription of a letter he received from Rome, from a Florentine banker living there (pp. 147-50). This lengthy missive demonstrates a markedly positive attitude towards the Bianchi devotions. The writer notes the arrival of a large group of Bianchi participants on 7 September, bearing a bleeding crucifix, which was confirmed by the pope. The Romans took up the Bianchi fervour the following day,
coinciding with the feast of the birth of the Virgin. They made peace, prisoners were released, and the pope showed various relics and gave the crowds his blessing.

The group of Bianchi participants to which the writer belonged collected their Bianchi robes from the church of Sant’Orsola, suggesting an organised provision of clothing, although this is the only such reference. Indeed, it is unlikely that such a system was in place everywhere, as Dominici had previously reported others who wore bedsheets in order to adhere to the dress code. This Roman description adds an important point about the different Bianchi groups in the city—while they all wore white, it seems that the groups from different locations remained separate. This highlights the importance of studying the Bianchi devotions on a regional level as even when groups from various locations came together, they still appear to have remained in their local groups.

Dominici then returns to his own reporting, detailing more than 200,000 Bianchi participants converging on Rome from various locations during September 1399 (p. 175). Reiterating the showing of the relics, Dominici also notes that the pope issued an indulgence to those who participated in an itinerant Bianchi procession, which must have been a significant factor in Romans taking up the devotion (p. 178). Another letter Dominici received on 3 October demonstrates that the city was still supporting the Bianchi processions, and the sudario was still being shown daily, a month after the initial processions (p. 180). This was not unusual however; if we compare Rome to Lucca, the Bianchi activities lasted a similar length of time, as the city became a thoroughfare for Bianchi participants, as well as seeing off local Bianchi participants departing on itinerant processions.

Rome also served another purpose for the Bianchi devotions, as a place where miracles could be confirmed. Dominici alone records over 100 miracles associated with the Bianchi processions throughout his chronicle, the majority of which are not presented as problematic. However, one particular example at Chianti required papal approval. A man had murdered a six-year old boy sixteen years previously and was identified during the Bianchi processions as not being sufficiently penitent (p. 181). The murderer took the parents of the boy to his burial place and they disinterred him. When they reached the boy, he was found to be sitting, dressed in white and holding a candle. He proclaimed, ‘Babbo, gridiamo tutti misericordia!’ The parents, the murderer and a crowd of followers made their way to Rome in order to confirm what had happened. Dominici expressed his scepticism,
stating that ‘se il saprò di certo il dirò,’ marking this miracle as different from the others which are reported without such comment. Perhaps the fact that a child had supposedly been resurrected required a greater authority to give it credence. Indeed, Dominici retells the story a few pages later, adding more contextual details and noting that it had now been sufficiently authorised (p. 184). Dominici legitimises this miracle by demonstrating how the Roman authorities endorsed it.

As seen in the previous chapter (pp. 211-2), such validations were not always favourable, as discovered by the man who was burnt in Rome for using a false crucifix. The story, reported by Dominici (p. 204-5) and an Orvietan chronicler, highlights a degree of scepticism around such events. However, these are the only reports of an individual being punished as a result of the attempted confirmation of a Bianchi miracle, suggesting that the large majority of those leading the processions were perceived as legitimate. Nevertheless, not all those who went to Rome seeking papal endorsement were successful.

The different versions of this story suggest that this idea of a false preacher was in circulation, and that it was important to be wary of these false Bianchi leaders and fake bleeding crucifixes. In an environment where crucifixes were bleeding frequently, such a sceptical approach was to be commended, although it seems that this is the only example which was proved to be fake. For Dominici, this emphasises the veracity of the other miracles and crucifixes which he reports, whereas it reinforces the sceptical attitude of the Orvietan chronicler towards the Bianchi devotions. Historiographically speaking, this story has been crucial in how the Bianchi devotions have been written about, with their leader being taken to Rome to be burnt. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Bianchi processions did not have one single leader, and so it is just this one leader who was burnt, which is emphatically not representative of the movement and its leaders as a whole. Nevertheless, as with self-flagellation, it is the extreme elements which were more readily transmitted, rather than the relative normality of the processions at large.

The senator of Rome, Zaccaria Trevisan, was in correspondence with Coluccio Salutati. Trevisan was Venetian, and had accepted the post of Roman senator for a year starting in spring 1399, after previously serving as Podestà of Florence in 1398. Salutati wrote to him in effusive praise of the Bianchi processions,

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472 Cronaca del Conte Francesco di Montemarte, p. 267.
describing the situation at Florence and across Tuscany in a letter dated 8 September, just as the Bianchi devotions were reaching Rome. The Roman senator played a role in interrogating the John the Baptist figure, who had appeared in Orvieto, bearing a bleeding crucifix which was found to be fake. Trevisan was required to perform various functions during the devotions.\footnote{Percy Gothein, Zaccaria Trevisan il vecchio (Venice: La Reale Deputazione editrice, 1942), p. 35.} Gothein suggests that Trevisan’s Venetian heritage meant that he adopted the sceptical attitude of Venice towards the Bianchi processions and eventually banned the processions. While Trevisan demonstrated a negative attitude towards the Bianchi devotions, it is unlikely that his Venetian identity was the only reason for this; he reacted in much the same way as other civic authorities, with caution towards the popular revival.

For the Bianchi participants, Rome gradually became something of a final destination. While the initial nine day processions were not directed at the city, those who processed later in the year began to head to Rome, and miracles to be confirmed were also sent to the city, with a large processional following. The initial goal was therefore altered, although it does not seem that this was problematic in terms of completing the instructions of the Virgin as set out in the origin stories. Moreover, Dominici continues to refer to the people converging on Rome as ‘Bianchi,’ suggesting that the Bianchi devotions in the city were not perceived as different. Nevertheless, both Sercambi and Dominici note an eventual positive response in Rome to the Bianchi processions, which ultimately won the support of the pope.

The historian Giraudo cites the Bianchi devotions’ monopoly on peacemaking as the reason for the pope’s reticence towards the processions.\footnote{Giraudo, p. 104.} However, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, by the late fourteenth century peacemaking was in any case becoming less the preserve of the Church, as it relied simply on a notarial presence to record the process. Seeing the fervour of the population, the pope acquiesced to the participants in releasing prisoners, but maintained control by subtly guiding the processions by the showing of various relics, dictating where the Bianchi groups would be in the city. There must also have been some backstage organisation not recorded by the chroniclers, as seen in the orchestrations at Lucca and Pistoia, which is only hinted at here when the Bianchi participants from Florence took their robes from Sant’Orsola. However, these chronicle narratives do not satisfactorily demonstrate a finale to the Bianchi
processions, which spilled into the Jubilee year of 1400. While the origin story of the book suggested that once the book was opened on the altar of St Peter’s, the devotions would have fulfilled their purpose, this was never reportedly achieved. While Rome did become the end destination for some Bianchi participants, it cannot be considered the final location aimed at by all participants. This highlights the pluralistic nature of the devotions, adapting to the needs and demands of the population as they progressed, resulting in this eventual convergence on Rome.

3. Jubilee 1400

The Jubilee of 1400 is a disputed event not least due to the lack of a papal bull of proclamation. This has led historians to question whether the pope did indeed call a Jubilee, and a consensus that the proclamation of 1400 as a Holy Year was ambiguous.476 The years surrounding 1400 were a complicated period for the Church, during the Great Schism. The Roman papacy had declared a Jubilee in 1390, but there was no such celebration called by the Avignonese papacy that year. As such, there was an expectation for a Jubilee in 1400 for those in support of the French pope, although it seems that it was not just French pilgrims who descended on the holy city in 1400, but all of Christendom. Notwithstanding, all reports of Bianchi processions are contained within the Italian peninsula, and there are no reports of Bianchi devotions in France. A letter written by Datini in 1399 suggests that the merchant was unsure if there would be a Jubilee the following year.477 Whatever the papal stance on the Jubilee, great crowds descended on Rome in 1400. Indeed, as Bornstein puts it, we cannot be certain whether Boniface IX did call a Jubilee, but ‘people at the time had no such doubts’.478 This makes it seem almost like a Jubilee by popular acclamation as the population went to Rome in order to receive their plenary indulgences. Due to the amount of capital this would have brought into the city, the pope would have been remiss not to welcome the Jubilee pilgrims, show them the requisite relics and also perhaps grant the indulgence.

These events are chronologically close to the end of the Bianchi processions, indeed the fact that Dominici continues to record Bianchi participants heading for

478 Bornstein, p. 190.
Rome in 1400 means that separating the Bianchi activities from this Jubilee is challenging. Further confusion is added by the fact that many activities performed by the pope during the presence of Bianchi participants in Rome are similar to those expected during a Jubilee. This section will therefore explore chronicle accounts of the Jubilee in 1400 in light of the discussion on Jubilee in Chapter One (pp. 44-6) to see whether it is possible to completely separate Bianchi activities from Jubilee celebrations as well as to explore the relationship between the two.

3.1 Sercambi
Sercambi reports the Jubilee in 1400 in a completely different section to the Bianchi devotions, not connecting the two phenomena at all (p. 421). While both events are discussed in the same volume of his chronicle, this is due to temporal proximity rather than, it would seem, any conscious choice on the part of the chronicler. Sercambi describes the *perdono* in 1400, providing a brief history of Jubilee since 1300 and lamenting how easy it was to get a plenary indulgence. Sercambi does focus briefly on the fact that Pope Boniface IX did not announce a Jubilee in 1400, which the chronicler takes to mean that he did not want to, as the Jubilee in 1390 had been a success. Nevertheless, due to the crowds amassing in Rome in 1400, the pope felt compelled, according to Sercambi, to confirm the Holy Year. The image for this Jubilee is very similar to those for previous examples as discussed in Chapter One.479

Sercambi then provides ample advice to pilgrims heading for Rome in a *cansone morale* (pp. 423-7). The pilgrim protagonist in the *cansone* meets embodiments of various cardinal sins, which he shuns in turn. Finally, he meets Poverty, whose values he is supposed to espouse. This suggests that Sercambi accepted that 1400 was a Jubilee year, although he implies that the pope was coerced into granting the indulgence by the arrival of the hordes of people in the city. Nevertheless, he maintains a clear distinction between the Jubilee and the Bianchi processions.

3.2 Dominici
For Dominici, the barrier between the Jubilee and the Bianchi devotions is less clear, as he starts to mention groups bound for Rome in October 1399. Many of these were still described as being dressed in white, implying a conflation between the Bianchi

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479 Banti and Cristiani Testi, p. 209 (Image 490).
participants’ movement to Rome in 1399 and the general movement towards the city for the Jubilee the following year. For example, a group of romei arrived in Pistoia on 3 October 1399, dressed in white and carrying bordoni [pilgrim staffs] (p. 180). Calling the group romei rather than ‘Bianchi’ creates a distinction, but the fact that the group was dressed in white in the midst of the Bianchi processions suggests some confusion. Moreover, the distance from Pistoia to Rome was more than nine days’ travel, demonstrating that the group cannot have been adhering to the nine-day structure expected of Bianchi participants. The group is identified as pilgrims, especially due to their bordoni, marking a distinction, albeit not an entirely clear cut one, from the Bianchi participants. It is difficult to say however whether this group was heading to Rome for the Jubilee in 1400, or was making a general pilgrimage to the city. The fact that the group was dressed in white could have meant that they were taking advantage of the goodwill towards Bianchi participants passing through various towns to facilitate their journey to Rome.

More groups passed through Pistoia on their way to Rome throughout October, first in groups of up to four, and finally a group of sixteen from the Magna [Germany] on 30 October (pp. 208). The members of this larger group are referred to as a brigata of Bianchi, and were ‘molto da bene.’ They carried an image of the Madonna della Misericordia protecting figures dressed in white on a tenda quadra [square cloth]. This is a more complicated instance to unpick, as this is the only suggestion of a German group heading for Rome. Moreover, this group consisted exclusively of elite members of society and is not representative of the diversity of larger processions. The fact too that the group was heading for Rome rather than processing for nine days is problematic for completing the Bianchi devotions according to the regulations set out. However, this is most likely explained by the origin of the group, from beyond Italy, suggesting that despite their white attire, they were more likely Jubilee pilgrims, as there are no other suggestions of German Bianchi participants.

A group of Parisian romei who were also ‘molto da bene’ passed through Pistoia on 20 November, most likely emblematic of the French expectation for a Jubilee in 1400 (p. 210). It is interesting that the group are not described as ‘Bianchi,’ as French Bianchi participants would be particularly problematic; while many of the chroniclers situate the Bianchi origin stories in France, there are no French sources which corroborate this. This group seems to have been going quite
early for the Jubilee, which would begin on 25 December, as it would not take more than a month to reach Rome following a direct route. This could suggest a more circuitous route for these pilgrims, or a desire to establish a base in Rome before throngs of people arrived for the Jubilee.

A group of 60 Paduan ‘Bianchi’ arrived on 15 November heading for Rome, again described as ‘signori e gentildonne molto da bene’ (p. 211). This was peculiar, as the Paduan processions did not usually intersect the trajectory of Bianchi processions heading for Rome. Furthermore, this was a month after the processions had finished in Padua, and so this group could be indicative of a broader movement towards Rome from more northerly cities. The continual descriptor of ‘molto da bene’ being applied to groups heading for Rome suggests that only those of means would be able to make such a journey, diverging from the Bianchi nine-day routes and the promise of alms.

Towards the end of 1399, these groups of romei, peregrini and viandanti became increasingly frequent, arriving from various destinations and often dressed in white robes (p. 213). These terms are interesting, and it seems Dominici uses them interchangeably despite the diminishing specificity from romeo to viandante. Romeo has specific connotations of going to Rome, as discussed in Chapter Two and peregrini were specially pilgrims, whereas viandanti just signifies general travellers. This variation could be so that Dominici did not use the same word each time, or could suggest that there were different sorts of groups converging on Rome, with varying degrees of seriousness. Dominici does not use any of these words to refer to the Bianchi participants however, maintaining a linguistic distinction between the Bianchi participants and these other travellers. When these groups arrived in Rome, there must have been some confusion for those who were not Bianchi participants, particularly as the pope was engaging in normal Jubilee practices. Indeed, on 19 December, he was still showing the sudario daily to the assembled crowds (p. 215).

Dominici does not mention Rome again until April 1400, when he himself visited the city on a pilgrimage, most likely related to the Jubilee (p. 223). Dominici was part of a group of 30 who left Pistoia on 4 April, and arrived in Rome on Palm Sunday in time for Holy Week and Easter. Dominici reports that he received three papal benedictions, saw the sudario three times and the heads of Saints Peter and Paul twice. So far, these activities are not different to those undertaken by the Bianchi participants in Rome. However, Dominici also reports going through the
Porta Santa no less than sixteen times, an activity which is not associated with the Bianchi devotions in any of the reports of the devotions at Rome. This seems to be the defining feature of the Jubilee celebrations compared to the Bianchi activities in the city. This illustrates the continuity between the Bianchi activities in Rome and those performed by Jubilee pilgrims the following year, and how a clear cut distinction between the two is difficult to maintain. The intention of the individual is the most likely factor in determining whether the actions were completed as part of a Bianchi devotion or an attempt to get the Jubilee indulgence, but this is impossible to measure.

The line between the Bianchi devotions and the Jubilee was porous, as it is impossible to state, particularly using Dominici’s chronicle, where one ended and the other began. In his analysis, Bornstein states that the smaller groups of Bianchi participants ‘ceased to have a separate identity as Bianchi processions’ and became associated with the Jubilee.\(^480\) Indeed, groups began heading for Rome in October 1399, and some still dressed in white, making their intentions indecipherable. These groups were processing after the majority of Bianchi processions had taken place, and yet were still dressed in the characteristic white expected of participants. Furthermore, most of the features expected in Rome for a Jubilee were offered to the Bianchi participants: seeing various relics as well as receiving blessings from the pope. As such, it seems that the only separation between the two groups was going through the Porta Santa to get the plenary indulgence for Jubilee pilgrims. While various pardons of up to 40 days were granted to Bianchi participants, the indulgence at Rome also set the Jubilee apart.

Considering the 1400 Jubilee in relation to 1350, the earlier example has been described as an acceptable outpouring of piety after the Black Death, in contrast to the flagellant processions immediately beforehand.\(^481\) While the Jubilee in 1400 also followed a popular religious revival and occurred during a time of plague, the fact that the Bianchi devotions gained papal endorsement suggests a rather different situation. The Bianchi processions cannot be considered on a par with the anti-Jewish violence which resulted from the flagellant processions of 1349-50. It is for this reason that the Jubilee of 1400 has generally been considered as an extension of the Bianchi processions, as the fervour for the Bianchi devotions was believed to

\(^{480}\) Bornstein, p. 189.
\(^{481}\) Michaud, pp. 400-1.
have transformed into a movement for the Jubilee. As a result of this mingling of purpose towards the end of 1399, the Bianchi devotions are portrayed as having a limited legacy.482

While there is undoubtedly a connection between the Bianchi devotions and the Jubilee of 1400, the nature of this link remains nebulous. The aim of the Bianchi processions was to prevent a forthcoming outbreak of plague, whereas Jubilee pilgrims had a specific goal of reaching Rome and gaining an indulgence. While the chronology is difficult to unpick, it seems that Bianchi devotions and Jubilee activities can be considered as separate entities, particularly due to the self-identification of the groups, but it is now difficult to draw a line between the two as the sources report on both in such close proximity. This is in part due to a lack of Roman documentation both about the Bianchi processions and the Jubilee. However, contemporary writers such as Dominici seem to have had no doubt that they should head for Rome in 1400 in order to receive a plenary indulgence.

Whatever the papal attitude towards a Jubilee that year, crowds of people arrived in Rome expecting a celebration and performed the requisite actions to gain a plenary indulgence, including going through the Porta Santa. The fact that this door was opened suggests that the pope had conceded to the demands of the population to treat 1400 as a Jubilee year. The nominal distinction between the Bianchi participants and Jubilee pilgrims seems to be a question of self-identification as well as the word choices of the chroniclers when referring to the groups. Wearing white was not always enough, as Dominici does not refer to some such groups as Bianchi participants, suggesting that the identity of those participating in the processions was evident by more than their attire. Overall, it seems that the Bianchi fervour aided the enthusiasm for the Jubilee in 1400, particularly by inspiring a popular outpouring of faith. As such, it remains difficult to precisely distinguish between Bianchi devotions and Jubilee activities as the beginning of the Jubilee year drew closer. It seems likely that many of the Bianchi participants also combined their Bianchi devotions with a trip to Rome to gain the plenary indulgence, although it was not as simple as the Jubilee absorbing the remaining fervour incited by the Bianchi processions.

482 Morton, p. 179.
4. Commemorating the Bianchi: Early Stages

While the end of the Bianchi processions was dissipated by celebrations for the Jubilee of 1400, the memory of the devotions was not so easily dimmed. The remainder of this chapter will consider the legacy of the Bianchi devotions, in texts, images and devotional practices which were created or renewed as a result of the processions. While the forms of remembrance were not as wide-reaching as the initial Bianchi processions, various methods were employed to commemorate the events of 1399. These efforts were usually concentrated at a local level, highlighting the importance of considering the different towns the Bianchi processions passed through and their impact not only on the devotions, but also on the ways that the Bianchi devotions were remembered.

In Lucca, Sercambi makes little mention of any commemoration of the Bianchi processions in his chronicle, suggesting a lack of effort towards collectively remembering the devotions. Many of the immediate consequences for Lucca were addressed in Chapter Four, namely the food shortage for Lucchese citizens after the premium items were offered to incoming Bianchi participants. However, beyond this, Sercambi has little to say of any lasting effects of the processions, containing his account neatly within the forty chapters and not looking beyond the Bianchi activities at Rome. Yet Sercambi’s chronicle must itself be considered as part of the legacy of the Bianchi at Lucca, due to the significant amount of space the writer devotes to the processions. This significance is palpable while examining the chronicle, as no other event is accorded as much space or detail, or indeed as many images. These images, which accompany the text, provide another insight into the numerous and varied activities of the Bianchi participants. The visual contrast with the rest of the manuscript is significant, as a wide variety of colours is usually used for clothes. The white clothing of the Bianchi participants compared to these technicolour images further highlights the activities as a separate, important event. The combination of prose narrative, laude and images is a remarkable testament to the Bianchi processions in and around Lucca.

Dominici provides more information about the immediate commemoration of the Bianchi devotions. For example, the inauguration of a chapel built at Ripalta to commemorate the processions occurred on 2 May 1400 (p. 223). Later that year, Dominici also recorded a single day of anniversary processions for the start of the
Bianchi processions on 17 August 1400 (p. 286). Preparations for this event involved fasting, and those who participated would be rewarded with an indulgence of 40 days. News of the forthcoming procession was communicated throughout Pistoia and its contado to ensure participation comparable to the original Bianchi processions. Dominici reports a large attendance, and that most of those participating wore white. It was an extravagant affair, comparable to the original processions in the town. There was an elaborate processional order, involving various clergy members, and numerous confraternities as well as the Pistoiese population. A focal point for the procession was the church of Santa Maria a Ripalta, where a Bianchi crucifix was kept in the newly constructed chapel. After a circuitous route around the town, visiting numerous churches, the procession returned to the cathedral where mass was celebrated. At the moment of elevation, the congregation shouted *misericordia* and *pace* three times, ‘come l’anno passato,’ emphasising the connection to the Bianchi devotions for Dominici. The similarity continued as a debtor was released from prison, having made *certe promesse* with the person to whom he owed money. This procession is a testament to the locality of the commemoration, mirroring the way in which the original processions were performed in Pistoia. The materiality of Dominici’s chronicle also serves as a memorial to the Bianchi devotions, due to the amount of space he devotes to recording the progress of the devotions.

Thus, it seems that there was more organisation on the part of the communal authorities in Pistoia than in Lucca to commemorate the Bianchi devotions in an immediate sense. The processions organised a year after the Bianchi processions attempted to recapture the moment of unity and penitence achieved the previous year. Arguably, Pistoia was more in need of such a reminder, as factional warfare had broken out again in the city, whereas the political situation in Lucca was stabilising after the Guinigi coup. It is therefore in specific forms of commemoration that the Bianchi processions were remembered, rather than attempts at a communal level to memorialise the devotions.

5. Confraternities and Crucifixes
A more visible form of commemoration of the Bianchi devotions was in the confraternities formed around miraculous crucifixes. These crucifixes had been carried at the head of Bianchi processions, uniting groups from the same location, promoting peacemaking and often performing numerous miracles of healing. The
confraternities which were formed after the processions often served a dual purpose, with an initial focus on devotion connected to the Bianchi processions and a Bianchi crucifix, combined with a liturgical feast day celebration. Connecting confraternities directly with the Bianchi processions is challenging due to a lack of documentation. Bornstein notes that historians have been quick to link confraternities with the terms ‘Bianchi’ or ‘Crocifisso’ in their names to the Bianchi devotions in 1399.\textsuperscript{483} Strict criteria are necessary to determine this connection, as seen with the laude, based in documentary evidence.

Some of these confraternities existed before the Bianchi devotions, but changed their dedication after 1399 to reflect a new devotion inspired by a miraculous crucifix. As seen in Chapter One (pp. 51-60), confraternities were a popular method of expressing popular piety in Lucca and Pistoia, and thus such groups were already a part of the religious framework of each town. It is likely that confraternities in general saw an increase in membership after the devotions in 1399, but a paucity of documentation means that further analysis is difficult. Confraternities had previously been founded around miraculous crucifixes, such as the confraternity of the Santissimo Crocifisso di Santa Giulia in Lucca, and so the practice itself was not innovative.\textsuperscript{484} First, examples in Lucca and Pistoia will be considered, before another Tuscan example in Borgo a Buggiano, to demonstrate the variety of methods in which the Bianchi devotions were commemorated through devotion to crucifixes.

The crucifixes will be considered as devotional objects and as a physical form of commemoration of the Bianchi devotions. Jansen suggests that crucifixes began to substitute the cult of relics in the later middle ages, and indeed the Bianchi processions support this.\textsuperscript{485} While there were relics paraded in some processions, as seen at Genoa, those at Lucca and Pistoia focussed on crucifixes. This represents a decision taken not to use the relics; both the Volto Santo and the relics of St James were taken on processions at specific juctures in the liturgical year, as discussed in Chapter One. Holmes’s study of the materiality of fourteenth-century crucifixes,

\textsuperscript{483} Bornstein, p. 193. For example a confraternity was founded in Genoa in 1455.
\textsuperscript{484} Nicolai, p. 7.
including numerous Florentine Bianchi examples, suggests that the simplicity of the materials used to make them meant that they were accessible ‘without intimidating or overawing devotees’.\textsuperscript{486} Once they had demonstrated their miraculous powers, these objects underwent a phenomenological change, gaining a new ritual framework as well as a new physical environment which was often specially constructed. This redefinition of physical space had implications for the way that the object was perceived, and the images could be ‘activated,’ engaging its supposed thaumaturgical properties on feast days or in times of need, although always according to liturgical protocols, giving the clergy control.\textsuperscript{487}

De Nyem, the Roman papal notary, reiterated his general sceptical point of view of the Bianchi devotions, stating that crucifixes which miraculously bled were actually filled with red liquid, branding the leaders of the processions \textit{trufatores}.

\textsuperscript{488} While this was the case for the crucifix discussed above, whose bearer was burnt at Rome, there were numerous crucifixes which allegedly bled during the processions but were not investigated as fake miracles. The initial association of these crucifixes with the Bianchi devotions in 1399 is more straightforward as they were carried in the processions, but the modern identification of the objects is more problematic.

\textbf{5.1 Lucca}

One Bianchi procession leaving Lucca took a crucifix from San Romano, which was deposited in the Ospedale della Misericordia when they returned. The crucifix performed miracles, which continued once it had returned to Lucca.\textsuperscript{489} The Ospedale was the meeting place of the flagellant confraternity of San Paolo, whose dedication was modified by 1474 to reflect a new devotion to this Bianchi crucifix: the Compagnia del Santissimo Crocifisso dei Bianchi.\textsuperscript{490} While this change in nomenclature may have taken a significant period of time, the devotion to this crucifix was probably initiated closer to the time of the Bianchi processions to merit the formal change of the confraternity’s dedication seven decades later. The overshadowing of the apostle by the ‘Bianchi’ suggests that the group tapped into the


\textsuperscript{487} Ibid., p. 456.

\textsuperscript{488} De Nyem, p. 168.

\textsuperscript{489} Bornstein, p. 192. The crucifix has been dated to the early fourteenth century.

\textsuperscript{490} Tognetti, p. 232. The last reference to the confraternity as San Paolo is from 1410, and the next record is from 1474, bearing the new name.
Bianchi fervour. Moreover, the group gained a new meeting place in 1410, the church of San Benedetto in Palazzo, signalling this change.\textsuperscript{491} A formal record of the miracles performed both during the Bianchi processions and at Lucca was made in January 1400.\textsuperscript{492} Most of these are instances of physical healing, although there are two attestations of peacemaking attributed to this crucifix. The confraternity had a procession on the third Sunday of January every year, during which the \textit{Te Deum} was sung. After the Bianchi fervour died down, this confraternity and their crucifix seem to have enjoyed a continuous life. Indeed, the premises of the confraternity were enlarged in 1500 to accommodate their growing membership, and the church became known as the Chiesa del Santissimo Crocifisso dei Bianchi.\textsuperscript{493}

Thus, the confraternity seems to have been re-established relatively quickly after the Bianchi devotions finished, and took root in its new location in 1410. The confraternity continued after this, thus the initial legacy of the Bianchi devotions was fixed in a sustainable group. The crucifix became associated with natural disasters, and was taken on processions to prevent plague, drought, famine and torrential rains. A copper casing was painted to house the crucifix in 1681 by Giovanni Marracci, demonstrating the continuing importance of the object, representing a seventeenth-century procession of the confraternity.\textsuperscript{494} The last records of the confraternity are from the early twentieth century; while its remit was somewhat modified to a school, this demonstrates the solid foundation established in 1399.\textsuperscript{495} The confraternity did not mirror the Bianchi devotions in their practices, as confraternity members had ordinary jobs, but the use of the Bianchi crucifix kept the memory of 1399 alive. This legacy also stretched beyond the immediate aftermath of the Bianchi processions, well beyond the period addressed here up to 1415, continuing in some form until the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{491} Nicolai, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{492} Telesforo Bini, \textit{Storia della sacra effigie, chiesa e compagnia del SS. Crocifisso de' Bianchi} (Lucca: Giuseppe Giusti, 1855), pp. 83-94. The original document has been lost, but Bini includes a transcription of a later vernacularisation of the text. Even if this document never existed, this still demonstrates the desire to connect this confraternity directly with the miracles performed by this crucifix.
\textsuperscript{493} Ibid., p. 40.
\textsuperscript{494} Severina Russo, ed. \textit{Barocco e devozione} (Ospedaletto, Pisa: Pacini, 2000) p. 131.
\textsuperscript{495} The latest remaining document is from Lucca, ACL, MS Santissimo Crocifisso dei Bianchi ricevute delle chresce 1, doc. 06/02/1903.
5.2 Pistoia

In Pistoia, a confraternity was created as a result of the Bianchi fervour: the *scalzati* established by the bishop Andrea Franchi.\(^{496}\) This name reflected the bare feet of participants in the Bianchi processions, but this nomenclature did not remain fixed as *scalzati* was corrupted to *scacciati*, and the group was also referred to as the ‘Compagnia de’ Bianchi.’ As at Lucca, this confraternity was connected to a Bianchi crucifix, for which a chapel was created in the church of Santa Maria a Ripalta, just outside Pistoia’s town walls. The confraternity was initially established to comprise forty ‘principali cittadini’.\(^{497}\) The bishop was named as their leader and contributed financially to the group, meaning that they were able to construct a new altar.

One of the first activities of the confraternity was to participate in the anniversary processions for the Bianchi devotions 1400 as detailed above. They also took part in processions to prevent the plague that year, firmly establishing them as one of Pistoia’s confraternities.\(^{498}\) The following year, the population of Pistoia celebrated with the confraternity on the anniversary of the inauguration of the chapel on 2 May 1401.\(^{499}\) This date coincided with the feast of the *corona* [Crown of Thorns], meaning that the confraternity also became associated with this aspect of the Passion. Bornstein suggests that the confraternity’s remit was changed and they became a ‘Passion confraternity.’\(^{500}\) This is corroborated by the robes of the confraternity, which were white and decorated with a red cross ‘inghirlandata di spine’, combining the Bianchi white robes with the Passion symbolism.\(^{501}\) While the confraternity may have initially been founded due to the Bianchi fervour, this other remit for the group meant that it would have longevity due to a more traditional focus. The Bianchi participants were concerned with the Passion, as demonstrated by their emphasis on the *Stabat Mater* and other laude featuring the crucifixion, but there was no specific focus on the crown of thorns, underscoring the transformation of the group.

\(^{496}\) Franzese, Entry for ‘Andrea Franchi’ in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*.
\(^{497}\) Guidi, p. 91.
\(^{498}\) Dominici, *Cronaca dei Bianchi* p. 225.
\(^{499}\) Ibid., p. 289.
\(^{500}\) Bornstein, p. 192.
\(^{501}\) Guidi, p. 92.
2 May became the confraternity’s annual feast, and particular Latin *lezioni* composed in praise of the *corona* were to be recited during the festival.\(^{502}\) Franchi, its founder, left money in order that the feast be celebrated by eight canons and 26 chaplains every year. An identical text appears next to each annual entry for the feast, explaining the bishop’s wishes, although the amount spent varied from year to year, for example five *livre*, ten *soldi* and eight *denari* were spent in 1407, nine *livre* and eighteen *denari* were spent in 1408.\(^{503}\) Comparing these expenses to other feast days, it is interesting that money is only set aside for clerical involvement and not for other ceremonial expenses such as wine and food. For Corpus Christi day and the feast of San Zelone, Pistoia’s patron, money was spent on various provisions including craftspeople, food and drink. This could suggest that the confraternity covered these expenses, and it was just the clerical involvement which was paid for by the legacy of Franchi.

Thus, in both Lucca and Pistoia confraternities were formed in memory of the Bianchi devotions around a thaumaturgic crucifix. These confraternities enjoyed longevity beyond the Bianchi processions, especially the Lucchese example. Setting the confraternities within a pre-established tradition and ensuring they had a meeting place meant that they were integrated into the religious framework of the town. The presence of a Bianchi crucifix provided a focus for the devotions of the two confraternities discussed, and initially a strong connection with the Bianchi fervour of 1399. This link was probably eroded over time however, particularly given the dual focus of both groups, which each also celebrated a more traditional liturgical festival. The power of the object seems to have been more potent than the remembrance of the processions in 1399, as both crucifixes were still being taken on processions centuries later.

5.3 Other Tuscan Crucifixes
At Borgo a Buggiano, the church of San Pietro is now also known as the Santuario del Santissimo Crocifisso to reflect the presence of a Bianchi crucifix there.\(^{504}\) However, this example is slightly different from those already discussed, as it is too large to have been taken on processions. Miracles of peacemaking associated with

\(^{502}\) Ibid.

\(^{503}\) MS M6, fol. 35r; Pistoia, ACP, MS M7, fol. 17r.

\(^{504}\) Bornstein, p. 192.
this crucifix are mentioned during the processions by both Sercambi and Dominici, as well as various other sources, occurring in the church where it was situated. According to Spicciani, this was a two-stage miracle, the first involving the blood and the second peacemaking. A small cult grew around this crucifix, and a compulsory feast day procession was established in April 1400 for 18 August each year. This demonstrates another example of a Tuscan crucifix and confraternity which began as a result of the Bianchi processions, edifying the devotions in a more fixed format.

All of these crucifixes attest to the continuation of the Bianchi devotions in some form. However, the connection with the processions in 1399 was at least partly obscured in most cases, making way for a more conventional liturgical celebration, such as the corona in Pistoia. Establishing confraternities as a fixed form of devotion after a popular religious revival was also nothing new, as particularly demonstrated after the flagellant processions in 1260 which gave rise to numerous flagellant confraternities. There are further examples of confraternities connected to the processions in 1399, for example, around a miraculous crucifix at Sutri.

The formation of ‘Bianchi’ confraternities around a Bianchi crucifix seems to be a particularly Tuscan form of commemoration, highlighting this ‘distinctly local Tuscan variety of miracle-working image.’ As Spicciani reminds us, even those writing at the time of the Bianchi processions were often sceptical about these miracles performed by the crucifixes, which most likely had an impact on the way they were used in commemoration. However, it would seem that in Tuscany, these crucifixes were believed to have extraordinary powers, as the devotions to them continued. While few examples outside Tuscany have yet come to light, the fact remains that all Bianchi processions were supposed to be led by a crucifix, and so more examples may still exist across the rest of the passage of the movement, but have yet to be reconnected with the Bianchi devotions. Thus, these crucifixes and confraternities seem to be representative of the Tuscan method of commemorating

505 Spicciani, p. 68.
508 Holmes, p. 47. See Holmes for a discussion of Florentine Bianchi crucifixes.
509 Spicciani, p. 89.
the Bianchi devotions. While the individual groups remained localised and fitted into the religious framework of the town to which they belonged, the associations of confraternities and crucifixes from the Bianchi processions seems particularly prevalent in this area.

6. Frescoes: Commemorating the Bianchi Devotions outside Tuscany

No wall paintings commemorating the Bianchi processions survive in Tuscany, and so we must turn to neighbouring Umbria and Lazio to examine visual records of the Bianchi devotions preserved in churches. The majority of these images were identified over the course of the twentieth century and the Poggio Mirteto and Città di Castello examples have been identified more recently.\(^\text{510}\) The Bianchi processions are the only popular religious revival to be commemorated on such a scale on church walls. My analysis will address the whole range of pictorial evidence in remembering the Bianchi deviations. I will consider how to read the frescoes in the light of the small amount of context available in each location. Examining these frescoes as a pattern of commemoration of the Bianchi processions will demonstrate a different regional attitude, as well as the incorporation of specific local elements. While little documentation survives, it is likely that these frescoes would have been completed soon after the end of the Bianchi processions while the memory of them was still fresh.

These paintings are different to the other forms of commemoration already discussed, as the connection to the Bianchi devotions in 1399 is not always obvious. I will address these paintings thematically, first considering two examples of Bianchi practices in the images of processions at Vallo di Nera and Città di Castello. Next, depictions of the origin story of the \textit{tre pani} will be analysed, from churches in Rieti, Terni and Poggio Mirteto before finally turning to images of the Madonna dell'Oliva, found at Assisi, Orvieto, Leonessa and Montebuono, alongside the images of this miracle at Terni and Poggio Mirteto. These combined depictions of both the \textit{tre pani} and Madonna dell'Oliva narratives will also be considered in their own right as a composite form of memorialisation. The images have previously been examined in groups based on location or subject matter, and so bringing all of these frescoes

\(^{510}\) Bliersbach; Tozzi; Lignani and Guerri, pp. 380-2.
together will allow a deeper understanding of the diffusion of the Bianchi processions and their commemoration across central Italy.

6.1 Practices
There are two frescoes which record processions of Bianchi participants, the most spectacular of which is in the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Vallo di Nera, Umbria (Figure 22). The fresco depicts two groups of Bianchi participants meeting in Vallo di Nera. It is entitled *La processione dei Bianchi*, and signed by Cola di Pietro da Camerino and dated 1401 in a red section above the kiss of peace. As the fresco was painted so close to the end of the processions, it is likely that its Umbrian painter witnessed the processions passing through his native region. The fresco is situated on the right hand side of the nave, and while the lower half is now heavily damaged, the length of the fresco means that a wealth of information still remains. The scene is centred on a procession made up of inhabitants of the town welcoming an itinerant procession.

The overwhelming sense from the painting is the parity created by the white robes worn by each person depicted. Bianchi practices are included, highlighting the variety of activities performed during the processions. Crucifixes are carried, and blood can be seen spurting from one of them, demonstrating the prevalence of bleeding crucifixes during the processions (Figure 15). The singing of laude is recorded by including scrolls of parchment held by those leading the singing (Figure 13). There are also numerous instances of peacemaking, the most prominent being overseen by an angel, as well as other instances of the kiss of peace being performed. While no self-flagellation is practiced in the image, some participants carry whips, so there is a hint to further asceticism (Figure 18). The painting also demonstrates the laity and clergy participating together, the clergy wearing stoles and revealing their tonsured heads.

This painting is an important testament to the practices of the Bianchi processions, and even if one were unfamiliar with the context, it is clear that a religious procession is the subject. This is a rich source of information about activities of the Bianchi participants, suggesting how many practices may have been carried out in Umbria, as demonstrated by frequent references to this fresco.

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511 As discussed in Chapter Four.
throughout this thesis. The source is evidence of the passage of the Bianchi devotions through Vallo di Nera, explicitly depicting the church in which it is painted within the fresco. The fresco highlights regional variations in the placement of the red crosses on the white Bianchi garments, as well as the objects that are carried such as crucifixes, laudarii and flowers. This is a remarkable witness to the Bianchi processions in Umbria, demonstrating their spread and importance to this small town where this painting was created.

The fresco most recently connected with the Bianchi processions is in the Basilica Santuario Madonna del Transito near Città di Castello, Umbria (Figure 23). What remains of the painting was restored in 2012-13, and a few figures dressed in white with red crosses on their arms and heads are visible. The Castellani chroniclers Cerboni and Laurenzi make no mention of the painting, but do report numerous processions. As so little of the fresco remains, one can only speculate as to the rest of the contents. Nevertheless, this image attests to the passage of the Bianchi devotions through Umbria, highlighting the practice of wearing white, as well as having a red cross on both the head and shoulders and the fact that some participants carried rosaries. The discovery of this second fresco of a Bianchi procession could suggest that others existed throughout Umbria, but have not withstood the test of

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Figure 23. Bianchi procession fresco, Basilica Santuario Madonna del Transito, Città di Castello (Umbria) (detail)

Source: Lignani and Guerri, image plate between pp. 228-229

Lignani and Guerri, p. 231.
These two paintings of processions are undoubtedly stylised, depicting an ideal performance of the Bianchi devotions. However, the fact that both paintings focus on an orderly procession of participants dressed in white, adorned with a red cross on their heads and shoulders emphasises the key expectation of dress for the Bianchi participants. Moreover, the other practices they reveal highlight what was important for the patrons, as well as most likely local elements, such as carrying flowers and rosaries. These images of the practices of the Bianchi participants attest to the passage of the devotions through these two towns, and the pictorial commemoration suggests the enthusiasm for the Bianchi processions continued, at least for those involved in creating the paintings. There is no evidence about how the paintings might have been used in devotional practice after they were completed, but they stand today as a testament to the passage of the Bianchi devotions through each town, and this Umbrian method of commemorating the Bianchi processions.

6.2 Origin Stories

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the Bianchi origin stories were varied and disparate, and the popularity of the tre pani story is underscored by its reproduction on church walls. Frescoes depicting this story can be found at Rieti, Terni and Poggio Mirteto. The image in Rieti depicts solely the tre pani story, whereas those in Terni and Poggio Mirteto are also accompanied by depictions of the Madonna dell’Oliva. This conjunction will be considered below.

In Rieti, Lazio, there is a single image in the church of Sant’Eusanio which depicts the story of the tre pani (Figure 10). The fresco was damaged by an earthquake in 1979, but enough remains to be able to still make out the broad strokes of the story it represents. The witness and Christ interact to the left of the image, and the Virgin remonstrates with the witness to the right. Grandi connects the Bianchi image to the plague outbreak at the end of the fourteenth century, suggesting that it could have been painted as an ex voto after the town was saved from the pestilence due to participation in the Bianchi processions, although there is no visual

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suggestion of plague.⁵¹⁴ The town at the top of the fresco has now been identified as Rieti, but has been added to over the years, and so it is impossible to say whether it was initially meant to represent a foreign location for the story, or to connect it to the events happening locally. Nevertheless, this fresco demonstrates the diffusion and commemoration of this story in Lazio.

The church of Santa Maria del Monumento in Terni, Umbria, houses a Bianchi memorial (Figure 11).⁵¹⁵ Renzi argues that the construction of the church and the frescoes was connected to the plague in 1399-1400, as an *ex voto* to thank the Virgin for sparing Terni from the outbreak, although architectural records of the original structure do not survive.⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, this hypothesis would highlight the connection between the Bianchi devotions and the plague in the mind-set of those commissioning the church and the series of paintings. The Bianchi frescoes were most likely completed before the church was given over to the Compagnia of San Girolamo in 1474. The link between these frescoes and the Bianchi fervour was later forgotten, as Grassini suggested a narrative where he mistook the bread for three golden apples in the 1970s.⁵¹⁷ Bliersbach reconnected the frescoes to the Bianchi devotions two decades later.⁵¹⁸ The first four of the Bianchi images narrate the *tre pani* story. The first and third images in the *tre pani* cycle are heavily damaged, although it is possible to postulate their contents thanks to textual sources and comparison with other visual materials. In the first, heavily damaged quadrant, Christ most likely meets the witness, before finding the bread in the second. Christ likely instructs the witness in the deteriorated third image and the witness throws the bread into the water and speaks with the Virgin in the final quadrant.

This cycle of four images is the longest visual narrative of this story outside Sercambi’s manuscript, where there are similarly four images accompanying the prose narrative (Figures 2-5). However, the images are of different points in the story. Christ only appears in the first of Sercambi’s images, with the Virgin as the heavenly protagonist in the other three frames. The reverse is probably true of the Terni images, where the Virgin only appears in the final frame but Christ and the

⁵¹⁷ Grassini, p. 32.
⁵¹⁸ Bliersbach, pp. 370-75.
witness interact throughout the first three quadrants. This could suggest a different emphasis in the two locations on certain elements of the story. The images in Terni could be seen as corresponding with some of the eleven images accompanying Sercambi’s lauda narrative, but there is no sense of the guancita leaving the handprint of the Virgin, the visual focus at the end of the story. It is unclear why there is a focus on Christ in Terni, rather than the actions of the Virgin, as seen in Sercambi. Nevertheless, this change in focus may represent either a regional shift in the story to focus on Christ and encourage Imitatio Christi, or the attitude of the patron of this image. There is no suggestion of Bianchi activities or the plague in these tre pani frescoes, which do not indicate the progression from this story to the processions. Thus, the connection with the Bianchi devotions is not immediately apparent, but despite different foci depicted, the images still tell the tre pani story.

The final origin story example is found in the church of San Paolo in Poggio Mirteto, Lazio (Figure 9).\textsuperscript{519} The church has only been the focus of scholarly attention since 2000.\textsuperscript{520} There are three Bianchi paintings, the first two depicting the tre pani origin story and the third the Madonna dell’Oliva. Similarly to Rieti, the first image depicts Christ and the witness conversing, and the second the Virgin and the witness. This compact narrative does not provide much information for the viewer, particularly as the revelation of the three pieces of bread is absent, although one is placed in the water in the second image. There is also no suggestion of plague, or the necessity for the population to engage in devotion, and so the focus is entirely on the tre pani narrative.

These differing visual accounts of the same narrative are as disparate as the textual accounts of the story, which, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, is not surprising given their oral transmission. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the widespread knowledge of the tre pani story in Lazio and Umbria. These frescoes initially functioned as a commemoration of the origin stories which were reported to be the impetus behind the Bianchi processions. The identification of these frescoes with the Bianchi devotions by scholars over recent decades has been aided by drawing connections between these different examples of the same story. Returning

\textsuperscript{519} Romano, pp. 252-3.
\textsuperscript{520} Giulia Ammananti and Francesco Giancane, ‘Le due epigrafi poetiche in volgare della chiesa di San Paolo a Poggio Mirteto (inizio del secolo XIV),’ \textit{Filologia Italiana}, 11 (2014), 41-84; Tozzi.
to the textual sources for this story fills in the narrative gaps, such as the instructions for Bianchi participants and the threat of plague, but the images were created separately from any textual explanation. The examples in Rieti and Poggio Mirteto show a balance between Christ and the Virgin in their depictions, as each appears once, although the probable appearance of Christ three times across the Terni images highlights the varied interpretation of the tre pani narrative and imagery as it spread. These origin story frescoes are an important witness to the passage of the Bianchi processions through Rieti, Terni and Poggio Mirteto, where there is no written evidence to attest to the processions in these towns. The Bianchi devotions were evidently deemed significant enough to warrant the commission and painting of these images. The decision to depict this origin story rather than a Bianchi procession is interesting, although the story was held to be unique. As such, it would theoretically be able to stand alone as a testament to the processions with no further explanation. Indeed, the depiction of the Virgin in white is a key factor in identifying the frescoes with the Bianchi devotions. However, it is unclear how these frescoes would have functioned after their completion, as there is no report of a Bianchi confraternity in any of these locations.

6.3 Madonna dell’Oliva

The miracle of the Madonna dell’Oliva occurred in Assisi, Umbria, as discussed in Chapter Two. The Virgin reportedly appeared to a small boy, telling him that the initial nine-day processions had not been sufficient, and that the population was required to participate in renewed devotions. As a result, so the sources suggest, Bianchi processions were renewed in Assisi and throughout Umbria. This vision was commemorated numerous times in artwork on church walls in Umbria and Lazio. While associated with the Bianchi devotions, it is often depicted in its own right, meaning that its role in the commemoration of the Bianchi processions is problematic. There are two textual accounts of the miracle, the lauda Apparve la Vergen gloriosa and in Cerboni’s chronicle. Without these accounts, it would not be obvious that there was a connection between this miracle and the Bianchi devotions. However, these sources strongly suggest that this can be considered a Bianchi story, and that the subsequent devotions can be considered part of the

521 This can only be postulated due to the current degraded state of the fresco.
522 Santucci, p. 11; Monti, pp. 92-5; Cerboni, p. 17.
Bianchi devotions. This highlights the importance of regional apparatus in framing the devotions, showing how this miracle inspired renewed processions throughout Umbria and Lazio, as Melica’s vision inspired renewed processions in Genoa and Pistoia. There are five depictions solely of this miracle, found in Assisi, Orvieto, Leonessa and Montebuono, along with the two found respectively at Poggio Mirteto and Terni in combination with the tre pani story.

It is unsurprising that there are two images depicting this miracle in Assisi where it occurred. The first is in a small church specifically built to commemorate the miracle of the Madonna dell’Oliva, constructed by 1403 (Figure 24). It shows the Virgin conversing with the boy by an olive tree, and his father looking on, unable to see the Virgin. In the early fifteenth century, the church was in receipt of numerous bequests, demonstrating at least an initial function as a commemorative space for this miracle.523 The building was referred to in these testaments as a cappella, and money was also left to the altare of the Madonna dell’Oliva, where mass was celebrated annually on 2 July, which became known as the feast of the Madonna dell’Oliva.524 The image has recently been restored, but damage over the centuries, particularly by earthquakes, means that it remains quite obscured.

The second image was found in the church of Sant’Apollinare, and is now in the monastery of San Giuseppe (Figure 25). This image is almost identical to the first from the church of the Madonna dell’Oliva, suggesting that it might have been a copy, and just shows the Virgin and the boy conversing. It is likely that this fresco was a site of secondary devotion, compared to the church dedicated to the miracle. As seen with the tre pani images, there is no suggestion of how to participate in the Bianchi devotions, or of the pestilential consequences for not obeying the Virgin. Nevertheless, this miracle was inserted into the spiritual topography of Assisi, in the erection of the church and its location at the bottom of Via della Madonna.

523 These continue until at least 1418, see Cesare Cenci, Documentazione di vita assisana, 1300-1530, I, (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1874), pp. 280, 312, 77. 87.
524 This date is problematic. Had the miracle occurred in July, this would predate the majority of the Bianchi processions, and suggest a unique beginning to the Umbrian processions separate from Genoa. However, the testament of Cerboni placing the miracle in October seems more likely, especially as the lauda refers to the initial nine day processions and a further six days of devotions. Moreover, as with the confraternity in Pistoia, 2 July seems to have been selected to combine Bianchi devotions with the pre-existing feast of the Visitation.
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Figure 24. Madonna dell'Oliva fresco, Santuario della Madonna dell'Oliva, Assisi (Umbria)

Source: Bliersbach, p. 414

Figure 25. Madonna dell'Oliva fresco, Monastery of San Giuseppe, Assisi (Umbria)

Figure 26. Madonna dell'Oliva fresco, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Orvieto (Umbria)

Figure 27. Madonna dell’Oliva fresco, Church of San Francesco, Leonessa (Lazio)

Figure 28. Madonna dell'Oliva fresco, Church of San Pietro ad Centum Muros, Montebuono (Lazio)
dell’Olivo. As such, the story took root in the town and the church became a site of devotion.

Another example of this tradition is a fragment in Orvieto, Umbria, taken from the church of San Martino (Figure 26). The fragment had previously been identified as an unnamed female saint but has recently been reconnected with the Bianchi devotions based on the other Umbrian identifications of Bianchi images, due to the white discs, representative of the Eucharist, on the robes and the olive tree in the background. This example demonstrates the diffusion of this story further south in Umbria. None of the Orvietan textual sources mention this miracle however, as their focus is on explaining the initial set of processions in the town, which predated the Assisi miracle.

At Leonessa, Lazio, in the church of San Francesco, there is another example of the Madonna dell’Oliva, similar to the initial Assisi image depicting all three protagonists (Figure 27). This image is a multivalent source, including a stanza between the witness and the Virgin, just under the arms of the kneeling boy, from the lauda *Apparve la Vergen gloriosa* (Figure 17). This hints at the singing of laude in connection with this miracle, although in a much more subtle way than the

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526 Santucci, pp. 54-60.
depictions of singing in the Vallo di Nera fresco. The text is a stanza from the middle of the lauda, an instruction from the Virgin to dress in white. This provides a link between the miracle and the Bianchi processions. The Assisian context is reinforced by the portrait of the city at the top of the image. It is recognisable, although missing the basilica of San Francesco, which had been completed by 1253. This leads Onori to suggest that the artist may have been working from an incorrect or old map of Assisi when depicting the town. This image gives witness to the Bianchi devotions in Leonessa, as well as the specific miracle of the Madonna dell'Oliva being an important feature of the devotions.

A final example of a single image of the Madonna dell'Oliva is found in the church of San Pietro ad Centum Muros in Montebuono, Lazio (Figure 28). There are no written sources from the town which refer to the Bianchi devotions, but this painting suggests that it is likely that a Bianchi procession passed through the town, and also that the people of Montebuono took up the devotions. The image is very similar to that in Leonessa, showing the three protagonists below Assisi. Indeed, the figures are almost in identical positions, and the city of Assisi is depicted in a very similar manner, also missing the basilica of San Francesco. There is no text in this instance, but the similarity is nonetheless striking. A new feature however is the presence of figures at the top of the painting: two angels hover above Christ and the Virgin. The kneeling Virgin is most likely asking Christ for mercy, as she promised in the tre pani origin story if mankind participated in the Bianchi devotions.

At Terni, the Madonna dell'Oliva and the tre pani story are combined, with the Madonna dell'Oliva fresco on the far right (Figure 29). An important distinction between the two narratives is the height of the Virgin. In the fourth tre pani image, discussed above, she is the same height as the witness, emphasising her disguise, whereas in the Madonna dell'Oliva image, she is at least twice as large as the witness. These differences in stature make it easier to separate the narratives, while a connection to the Bianchi devotions is maintained in the white robes of the Virgin. A point of continuity is the dress of the witnesses to the miracles, who all wear different colours, but whose clothes are of a similar style. The two narratives also

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527 Bliersbach, p. 377.
528 Onori, p. 249.
529 Ibid.
indicate the change in witness from a peasant to a young boy. This is emblematic of the later miracles and recapitulations, whereby the sanctity and worthiness of the witnesses was more apparent through their young age or female gender. There is continuity with the other Madonna dell'Oliva frescos as the three protagonists can be seen underneath Assisi, with Christ and the Virgin at the very top of the image. This leads Onori to suggest that the Montebuono artist might have used the Terni painting as inspiration, particularly as the basilica of San Francesco is missing again. However, further details in this image set it apart from the rest. There are small figures of Bianchi participants in the background, walking in pairs up to the town of Assisi, highlighting the itinerant aspects of Bianchi devotions, as the participants are processing outside an urban environment. These figures engage in practices such as peacemaking, and carry whips and rosaries. These extra details reinforce the transition from miracle to procession, as well as the connection between the Madonna dell'Oliva and the Bianchi devotions.

The example at Poggio Mirteto provides a useful point of comparison, also depicting the Madonna dell'Oliva alongside the *tre pani* story (Figure 30). While the protagonists in the *tre pani* story are the same height, there is a relative difference in the image of the Madonna dell'Oliva, as the Virgin remains the same, whereas the other two protagonists are much smaller, like at Terni. The composition of the image is almost identical to that at Montebuono, depicting the miracle scene, Assisi and the figures at the top of the image. However, there is no suggestion of Bianchi practices. Comparing the Madonna dell'Oliva to the *tre pani* story, the Virgin is dressed identically in both narratives. Her attitude is slightly different however, as her expression is more menacing in the second image. Comparing this image with the others, it is very similar to those outside Assisi. The town of Assisi, similar to all the other depictions, is in the top left hand corner of the image. Christ and the Virgin also feature at the top of the image. While this image differs in style from the one at Terni, the formal similarities are undeniable, including the colour scheme used for the witness and his father. In Poggio Mirteto and Terni, the proximity of these two narratives demonstrates an attempt at a dual commemoration of the Bianchi stories devotions. The initial impetus is remembered, as well as the renewed motivation provided in Assisi during the spread of the devotions.

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530 Ibid.
This is a significant collection of images commemorating this specific miracle of the Madonna dell'Oliva, suggesting the passage of the Bianchi processions through the towns in question. However, with the exception of Terni and Poggio Mirteto, it is difficult always to connect the memorialisation of the Madonna dell'Oliva with commemoration of the Bianchi processions. While the Virgin is dressed in white, this was not sufficient to maintain a consistent connection to the Bianchi devotions. The iconographic similarity of the images outside Assisi suggests that a visual model was followed, as the witnesses and the Virgin are dressed and arranged in a similar fashion across all of the examples except the Orvietan fragment. The towns depicted throughout the images are remarkably similar, but it is perhaps the lack of the basilica of San Francesco in every instance that has made identifying the images particularly difficult. The different styles of the paintings suggests that they were all completed by different artists, but Onori postulates a network of artists between Tarano and Narni, who possibly shared a model for this image.531 The story was spread through the Bianchi processions and laude, as well as most likely in sermons by wandering preachers. The Madonna dell'Oliva can therefore be considered as a facet of Bianchi commemoration, and perhaps the most prolific subject for artistic output of the devotions in Umbria and Lazio.

These various pictorial representations commemorating the Bianchi devotions demonstrate various approaches to memorialisation in Umbria and Lazio. As no similar sources survive in Tuscany, their prevalence here suggests a regional tendency towards painting as commemoration compared to the Tuscan focus on crucifixes and confraternities. These frescoes highlight the importance of understanding the local impact of the Bianchi processions. The paintings of Bianchi processions provide rich examples of Bianchi activities in Umbria; the tre pani images depict the origins of the processions and the Madonna dell'Oliva paintings remember a local miracle. Considering the images together, it is difficult to view a common thread throughout them, except for the continual depiction of the Virgin or figures dressed in white. Indeed, while all of these images are connected to the Bianchi devotions, their method of commemoration is quite different, and each exists in a unique context.

531 Ibid., p. 250.
The most consistent iconography is found in the Madonna dell'Oliva paintings outside Assisi, which are all remarkably similar, even down to the depiction of the town of Assisi missing the basilica of San Francesco. These sources offer a different perspective on the Bianchi processions, and demonstrate the impact of the devotions in Lazio and Umbria. They indicate the local effort to commemorate the Bianchi devotions, and the important stories that were preserved as a result. Indeed, briefly considering an example from Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, the Bianchi devotions are commemorated in a painting of the Madre della Misericordia who shelters figures clad in white (Figure 1). This image was connected to a confraternity founded in 1399, demonstrating yet another mode of commemoration of the Bianchi processions as a wall painting connected to such a group. This example highlights that the choice of subject matter was very dependent on local circumstances. The images examined in this section also demonstrate a very different sort of commemoration compared to the Tuscan focus on Bianchi crucifixes. No such crucifixes have yet been discovered in Umbria or Lazio. Thus, while there is sometimes variation from one town to another, the differences here in commemorating the Bianchi devotions seem to be between regions as a whole. The significance of many of these paintings was lost in the passage of time after 1399, but today they are finally being reconnected to the Bianchi processions, providing fruitful sources for analysis of the legacy of the devotions.

7. Conclusion
According to Bornstein, the Bianchi processions were judged immediately afterwards as ‘extraordinary yet inconsequential.’ On a broad scale, it may seem that the processions had a limited impact, particularly as the peacemaking efforts did not have a lasting effect and the Jubilee swallowed the religious fervour of the populace. The Bianchi processions did not leave a legacy which can be applied to the whole geographical spread of the devotions. However, looking at the local level, the Bianchi processions left significant traces. This chapter has demonstrated various methods of commemorating the Bianchi devotions, all of which are particular to a certain location or group. As with the movement more generally, it is necessary to delve into the local aspects of Bianchi devotions to understand the impact of the legacy.

532 Bornstein, p. 196.
The relationship between the Bianchi devotions and the Jubilee of 1400 is
difficult to delineate, as the end of the Bianchi processions ran into the beginning of
the Jubilee celebrations. Even while in Rome, the Bianchi participants seem to have
remained in their local groups, as satellites of their local devotions, rather than
joining together. Nevertheless, until this point, Dominici does make a semantic
distinction between Bianchi participants and Jubilee pilgrims, particularly in their
styles of dress. While each event had distinct features, such as the regulations for
Bianchi participants and going through the Porta Santa for Jubilee pilgrims, the
similarity in mind-set and papal endorsement means that the elision of the two
devotions is not surprising. Moreover, other similarities at Rome, such as showing
the sudario and receiving indulgences could suggest that just as a usual processional
order was followed in Lucca and Pistoia, a Jubilee celebration could have been used
as a model for the Bianchi devotions in Rome.

In terms of confraternities, Bornstein suggests that there were a few ‘minor
cults of purely local interest’ and that the devotions vanished almost as suddenly as
they appeared.533 The legacy of the Bianchi processions was neither as prolific as the
processions as a whole, nor on as grand a scale, but the local forms of
commemoration should not be dismissed so quickly. While they may have
transformed over time (for instance, the confraternity in Lucca became a school), the
fact remains that the initial inspiration behind the group was in the Bianchi
processions in 1399. This was a constant presence for this confraternity in their
crucifix, which was kept in their church. The crucifixes also remain an important
testament to the Bianchi devotions. This is particularly evident as they were
continually taken on processions, their thaumaturgic powers were celebrated, and
some are still venerated today.

However, the Bianchi devotions were only immediately memorialised using
these methods, and the towns of Lucca and Pistoia soon returned to normal. Indeed,
the following year, as seen in the first chapter, the Guinigi faction staged a successful
coup in Lucca. In Pistoia, the civil war between the factions within the city was so
violent that it required Florentine intervention. Dominici himself commented that the
Bianchi participants ‘ora sono facto neri’ (Vol. II., p. 37). If the colour white

533 Ibid., p. 200.
represented purity, as discussed in Chapter Two, the colour black represented the opposite, suggesting darkness and sin. Thus while the legacy of the Bianchi processions was preserved in the various manners discussed throughout this chapter, the effect of this was not widespread throughout the towns in question. Therefore, although a large proportion of the population was moved during the Bianchi processions, it was not necessarily the whole population which was involved in commemorating the devotions.

The visual sources from Umbria and Lazio demonstrate a different method of commemoration. While still in an ecclesiastical setting, these paintings are different in purpose to the crucifixes, as it seems that few if any confraternities were formed specifically in dedication to the images. Indeed, the images themselves were never recorded to have miraculous properties, which could be the reason behind the loss of the association with the Bianchi stories over time. These frescoes further demonstrate regional diversity in commemorating the Bianchi devotions, particularly demonstrating the prevalence of a local miracle in the Madonna dell'Oliva. It is particularly interesting that the Bianchi devotions were not visually connected to the plague in any way. The plague was connected in a different manner however, as the Bianchi crucifixes were often taken on processions during outbreaks of the disease, and it has been suggested that some of the frescoes were ex votos for the plague. However, this unique purpose was transformed to encompass other natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, meaning that the method of protection from the plague through following the instructions for the Bianchi devotions was not continued.

The legacy of the Bianchi devotions is as diverse as the processions themselves, and was inherently shaped by each individual location. The initial forms of commemoration, whether textual sources, images, objects or groups, had a diverse history depending on their context. There are some general commonalities in that some form of commemoration occurred, but the form it took was dependent on local factors. Many of these groups and objects were used for centuries after 1399, although the initial dedication to the Bianchi devotions was often transformed into something which was already an established date in the liturgical calendar. This ensured an afterlife for these confraternities, but also diluted their initial dedication to an aspect of the Bianchi processions.
Conclusion

1. Introduction
This thesis has scrutinised the Bianchi devotions at a local level, focusing on the activities of Bianchi participants at Lucca and Pistoia, and in Central Italy more broadly. The Bianchi processions can be considered as a popular religious revival, as the population was moved with a religious purpose, and my analysis of the reality of the processions as they moved from town to town has yielded interesting results. The main issue has been the variation within the processions, and indeed a significant amount of diversity has been revealed along with numerous similarities. This demonstrates that expectations on participants in the Bianchi devotions were not universal across the spread of the processions, not only at a local level with each new group of Bianchi participants, but also as the itinerant processions spread from town to town. Numerous practices and communal interventions have indicated the local approach taken in many instances, making it difficult to generalise about the Bianchi devotions across the whole geographical spread of the processions.

My selection of Lucca and Pistoia as case studies has been instrumental in uncovering the local impact of the Bianchi processions. The rich chronicle sources combined with local communal records have been crucial in revealing differences in the Bianchi activities in each location. This has highlighted different approaches in the towns, as well as underscoring some areas of continuity between each set of Bianchi processions. While there was a spontaneous element to the processions in inciting the fervour of the population, I have also revealed the managing role of town authorities. The discussion has been focussed through maintaining the difference between itinerant and intramural processions, the two possibilities open to those who wished to participate in the Bianchi devotions. The most localised activities occurred during the intramural devotions, where town authorities could carefully direct the crowds. Such an influence was less tangible outside the city walls, although there were key figures of authority who left the towns to journey with the itinerant Bianchi participants in their nine-day circles. My consideration of the Bianchi legacy further emphasised the need for local analysis when considering this collective devotion.

The variant practices and approaches in each town towards the devotions were all considered as part of the Bianchi devotions by those recording the events.
The acceptance of diversity began with the divergent origin stories, and continued throughout the spread of the processions, where participants maintained an adherence to the group identity created by the name ‘Bianchi,’ while behaving as their local context demanded. This is significant because the goal of the devotions was not to change the outlook of each town on a fundamental level, rather to briefly alter the mind-set of the population. My thesis has demonstrated this variation at Lucca and Pistoia, where the processions were carefully orchestrated. This has built on the work of previous Bianchi scholars, to achieve more specific conclusions about the devotions in particular locations. I have also created more nuanced answers to misconceptions about the Bianchi in general works about this period in the Italian peninsula, particularly regarding self-flagellation and the Bianchi at Rome.

My thesis has addressed these interrelated research questions, creating a deeper understanding of the brief Bianchi fervour in 1399 and 1400 at a local level as well as challenging previous presentations of the processions. Studying the local context of the devotions has indicated that the processions did not have a precise form and set of expectations as they spread from town to town. Thus, a consideration of localised Bianchi movements may be more relevant than addressing the whole geographical spread of the processions at once. The choice of Lucca and Pistoia has been very productive, building on and challenging the work of previous Bianchi scholars to delve into the experience of those participating in the processions in these two towns. Using narrative, verse and visual sources in combination has placed the Bianchi devotions at Lucca and Pistoia within their local and regional context, and facilitated an analysis of particular facets of the movement which were not previously fully appreciated.

2. Lucca and Pistoia before the Bianchi Devotions

The first chapter established a baseline of religious and civic activities in Lucca and Pistoia between 1340 and 1415. Various aspects of life in each town were examined, focussing on pilgrimage and Jubilee. Both Lucca and Pistoia were important sites for pilgrims journeying to larger pilgrim centres, and their own religious artefacts also proved an important draw. The local processional traditions demonstrated that each town was a lively centre of religious activity, as would be expected in any medieval town in Tuscany. The specific ins and outs of each procession however had important implications for the way that the Bianchi processions were managed.
The period between 1340 and 1415 provided a wide range of information against which to compare the Bianchi activities. Even before the arrival of the Bianchi processions and continuing afterwards, Lucca and Pistoia had a rich popular religious framework intrinsic to town life. There were also public health institutions which played a key role during epidemics, and which were overseen by communal authorities.

Considering the Bianchi processions in the context of pilgrimage, the activities in 1399 and 1400 did encompass various facets which were expected of pilgrims. However, the lack of a single end goal, whether theoretical or physical, for the majority of Bianchi participants means that this is hard to apply unilaterally to the movement. While some of the processions did come to a conclusion in Rome, this was not the final destination for the majority of participants, who travelled at most four and a half days from their home, or indeed did not leave their town walls at all. Furthermore, those who participated in the intramural processions cannot be considered pilgrims in the same way as the itinerant Bianchi participants. Therefore, describing the Bianchi processions as a pilgrimage and the participants as pilgrims provides a useful frame of reference, but the use of these terms masks a more complicated reality.

My study of religious confraternities highlighted the variety of activities such groups could engage in. For example, the Compagnia della Croce in Lucca combined self-flagellation with a civic outlook in caring for the imprisoned. These were organisations where the populace could express their piety, under the supervision of an elected committee, and the clergy who performed various rites. Confraternities were also important in established processional traditions within each city, processing on their own feast days as well as participating in the larger processions for the towns’ feast days. These performances of popular piety indicated one way in which a section of the laity usually manifested their religion, as well as the malleability of these institutions across time. Considering these groups also demonstrated that the term confraternity does not adequately describe the Bianchi devotions, as they were not fixed in a particular location and most importantly, did not self-identify as such.

The plague was a central concern for the Bianchi participants, from the threat in the origin stories to the outbreak at the end of 1399, stretching into 1400. Dealing with the disease was clearly a difficult task for both Lucca and Pistoia, although the
records from the period in question are scanty. Nevertheless, the narrative records from Lucca complement the communal sources from Pistoia. The frequent epidemics of plague had a serious effect on both towns, and the record keeping of Paolo Dominici during the epidemic of 1399-1400 has proved an invaluable resource for studying that particular outbreak. This brief study of plague indicated the role of various groups in dealing with the epidemics from a practical point of view: hospitals, town authorities and religious confraternities. Despite the reaction of the Bianchi participants to the outbreak of plague so close to their preventative processions, there was little causal connection noted by the chroniclers between the devotions and the concurrent plague epidemic. This section also emphasised the importance of looking beyond 1348 and the Black Death when studying plague, taking in the wider gamut of epidemics occurring at least once a decade thereafter.

Overall, this first chapter demonstrated the importance of Lucca and Pistoia as case studies for the thesis, setting up the comparisons between them before the arrival of the Bianchi processions. Each town had a rich religious tradition realised in processions and confraternities, and employed various methods of dealing with epidemics each time the plague struck. They were both in a similar situation throughout the fourteenth century and as the fifteenth began. While Lucca had asserted its independence in 1369, power struggles still continued within the town between the various factions, resulting in a coup in 1400, and Pistoia was in the midst of factional violence. Therefore, the impact of the Bianchi devotions on these towns is better understood having placed them within a broader local context, as well as demonstrating how these local factors shaped the Bianchi processions.

3. Motivating the Bianchi Participants

The origins of the Bianchi devotions, as explored in the second chapter, have proven to be slippery to say the least. The attachment to Dominici’s tre pani story in modern historiography belies a desire to establish a single, detailed point of origin for the processions. However, those experiencing the processions were perhaps less affected by the ambiguity of three different stories and various locations than modern commentators. My analysis has demonstrated that there was no concept or indeed goal of a single, privileged origin story, rather that the focus was on promoting the processions. Thus, the origins of the Bianchi devotions remain obscure, but it is necessary to recognise the diversity present in the stories. A particular point of
variation between the stories was the location of events, which demonstrates a propensity to locate the narratives outside the Italian peninsula, highlighting the significance of the devotions in the distance they had travelled. These origin stories are separated from the first Bianchi processions in the Italian peninsula, and this chronological gap is not satisfactorily addressed in the sources. Thus, while the chroniclers offer these narratives as the explanation for the impetus behind the processions, the stories retain a mystical quality.

The *tre pani* narratives are the most common of the reported Bianchi origin stories, occurring across different types of media: prose, laude, manuscript illustrations and wall paintings. There are points of similarity across the narratives, such as the depiction of the Virgin in white. However, the different sources highlight variant narrative features, such as the pestilential threat or the to and fro between Christ and the Virgin. Whatever the disparate elements, the same result is achieved: the different versions all end once a third of the bread has been thrown into the water, meaning that the witness must begin the Bianchi devotions.

The book story demonstrated a point of divergence: a second origin story for the same processions. The story grounded the Bianchi devotions in another supposedly divine encounter and offered further proof of their holy mandate, while confusing the purpose of the devotions by giving them an end-point in Rome and the goal of ending the Schism. Capperledis’ tale introduced a third narrative, emphasising the threat of annihilation. This story also reinforced the role of the clergy, as it was transmitted as a sermon, and there were clergy involved after Capperledis’ vision in spreading the story. While there is only a single record of this third story, it nevertheless highlights the circulation of origin stories and their narrative variation as the devotion spread throughout the northern and central Italian peninsula.

The recapitulations of these stories and later visions contributed to maintaining the momentum behind the Bianchi processions, bridging the gap between the reportedly geographically distant origin stories and local devotions. These new, supposedly divine encounters encouraged participation in the processions, reinforcing a pestilential outbreak as the alternative. However, this was often superfluous in Lucca and Pistoia, where processions had already occurred.
Nevertheless, these events reinforced the local aspects of each Bianchi devotion, centred on a specific congruence of events, including at least one of the three origin stories and a combination of local miracle events.

There are important similarities between all of the origin stories. There are divine figures, heavenly proofs and a focus on spreading a message of peace, combined with the threat of annihilation. These elements were also common to many of the stories associated with previous popular religious revivals, such as the Children’s Crusade of 1212 and the Flagellants of 1260. However, there are features unique to the Bianchi processions, unsurprisingly those pertaining to the devotions, as well as the Virgin dressed in white. Therefore, the origin stories of the Bianchi processions, while plural and disparate, represented the impetus behind the processions for those chronicling the devotions. Moreover, while divergent, these stories do not account for the variation in Bianchi practices from town to town; other factors must be examined in order to understand this phenomenon. The renewed visions further highlighted this variation at a local level. The reasons for this diversity were unclear, but each chronicler’s interpretation suggests that the stories were narrated locally, and would have been subject to the personal embellishments of the narrator. Thus, a local interpretation of the narratives was cited as the impetus for the Bianchi activities in each city. Moreover, it is hardly surprising, with these small variations, that there were increasingly larger and more significant differences between realisations of the devotions in different locations.

4. Bianchi Practices
The third chapter addressed the questions of uniqueness and diversity by examining the practices of participants in the Bianchi processions. The focus on Lucca and Pistoia provided a useful point of comparison, establishing points of similarity and difference between these two towns in their interpretations of the Bianchi devotions. These had ramifications for the processions as a whole in their whole geographical spread in the nine-day circles throughout the northern and central Italian peninsula. The lack of coherence did not however necessarily point to incoherence, rather it underscored a more complicated reality of participation in the Bianchi processions.

Three practices were examined in detail: wearing white, singing laude and self-flagellation. Regional differences and group identity were important factors in
shaping the Bianchi processions. Any kind of white cloth was acceptable for use in dressing oneself in white, as even those who wore tablecloths and handkerchiefs were considered part of the processions. Universal participation was more important than ensuring that everyone had matching outfits. While some laude were used across the geographical spread of the processions, my analysis has demonstrated that some, such as the *Stabat Mater*, did not circulate in a fixed form. While there were a number of Latin examples, the majority of Bianchi laude were in the vernacular, fitting in with the popular nature of the revival, as well as encouraging collective devotion in making the songs accessible to all participants. Innovation was also most common in the vernacular, whether adding to pre-existing laude or writing new ones. The lack of notation does not suggest that the laude were not sung, instead that common, well-known melodies were used.

Self-flagellation was particularly problematic, but in fact only applied to a small minority of participants in its fully realised form. It is very unlikely that large numbers of Bianchi participants whipped themselves, particularly when participating in itinerant processions. Whips may have been carried as symbolic items, but self-flagellation with the intent to cause harm was usually undertaken within city walls, by those who were already initiated in the practice. Even pre-existing membership in a flagellant confraternity did not mean that one had to self-flagellate as part of a Bianchi procession: it remained an individual choice. Self-flagellation was not a pre-requisite to participation in the Bianchi devotions; rather those who wished to engage in their usual devotional activities were accommodated within the processions. It was therefore by no means a constant feature of the devotions. The focus on this aspect of the Bianchi processions in general literature on Italy in the fourteenth century is perhaps due to its controversial nature, but this is wrongly emphasised.

Even just addressing the variation between Lucca and Pistoia, it is difficult to consider the Bianchi devotions as a united, cohesive movement, as each separate group processing within or without each city was subject to its own particularities. These differences grew exponentially across the whole geographical spread of the devotions, and consequently each journey of nine days cannot be considered representative of typical Bianchi activities. This is even more the case with later processions in the same location, where many participants had already fulfilled the
requirements during their initial Bianchi procession, and so may not have completed each regulation again.

The processions have been described as transcending traditional boundaries, such as sex and social status. Inclusivity was indeed a concern, as the Bianchi participants aimed at involving the entirety of Christianity, and consequently had to make allowances to allow different groups of people to participate. For example, the intramural devotions allowed people who were not able to leave the city to participate. The processions were relatively diverse, involving people of both sexes and from a variety of social statuses. Nevertheless, certain individuals were identifiable during the processions, modifying the ideal of universality that the Bianchi participants were supposed to espouse. This could be realised in the red cross which delineated sex or the dress of clergy as they led the processions.

Diversity is to be expected across such a relatively wide geographical spread as that covered by the Bianchi processions. Considering Lucca and Pistoia, this is particularly clear when analysing the itinerant and intramural processions, which created different expectations for participants. While universal participation was encouraged, adherence to all of the regulations seems to have been secondary to a mass movement of the populace. These differences suggest that achieving a singular description of the Bianchi activities is not possible, due to important variations in the way that the processions were realised.

5. The Role of Town Authorities

The communal response to the Bianchi processions formed the focus of Chapter Four, considering lay and ecclesiastical authorities in Lucca and Pistoia. This demonstrated crucial points of difference between the ways these two cities managed the Bianchi devotions. The strong influence of pre-existing local institutions shaped the devotions, both intra- and extramurally. This communal control called into question the nature of the Bianchi processions, particularly in relation to previous popular religious revivals which were considered spontaneous. However, the population was indeed moved and a great fervour was created, even though it was micromanaged at a local level. Further investigation of other popular religious revivals at such a minute level might also yield similar results and would be a fruitful further line of enquiry.
Lucca and Pistoia both organised provisions for various groups of Bianchi participants, setting aside funds from the town councils. In Florence, contributions were made by individuals, which suggests that Datini’s shopping list of provisions was in line with someone of his status in giving alms to Bianchi participants. The peacemaking apparatus employed during the Bianchi devotions seems to have met the usual legal requirements with the exception of any mention of peace breaking. While the peaces were notarised, the lack of sanctions perhaps contributed to the quick descent into factional warfare in Pistoia the following year.

The reticence of some towns towards the Bianchi devotions, including Lucca, occurred for a variety of reasons. Depopulation was a significant threat, but the danger of spreading the plague also loomed. Nevertheless, even in these situations, processions were usually permitted, but were carefully managed. The clergy played a crucial role in the processions, saying masses and preaching as well as preparing participants by hearing confession and distributing communion. Their endorsement also meant that the processions spread more easily, particularly where travelling clergy members promoted the devotions as seen with Grazia di Santo Spirito.

Considering the intramural and itinerant processions as separate entities in terms of analysis is important. Much more control could be exerted by the authorities over participants who remained within city walls, whereas those leaving the city on the nine-day circuitous route would be less bound by such constrictions. While regulations were still followed by itinerant participants, it is unlikely, for example, that they would have maintained a strict processional order throughout their journey. Peacemaking on the other hand, may have been more effective during these longer processions, which spread this Bianchi message more widely. Ecclesiastical and communal authorities worked together in the majority of instances. There is evidence that the clergy formed the public face of the devotions, and the communal authorities worked behind the scenes. The leaders were usually distinguishable from the crowds of Bianchi participants at large, and had an important, elevated role in the processions. Both lay and clerical authorities contributed to the smooth running of the processions, the clergy with visible role of preaching and leadership and the town councils ensuring that participants would be fed and watered.
The ideal of universality throughout the processions was not entirely realised, as social boundaries were not forgotten, indicated by the strict processional order maintained during intramural processions. The existence of intramural processions demonstrates the role of the town authorities, who ensured that the restless population left behind was able to fulfil the requirements of the devotions within their own town walls. Indeed, while Lucca was initially hostile to letting its inhabitants leave on itinerant processions, it soon adopted a pragmatic approach, letting itinerant Bianchi participants continue to leave and hosting intramural processions for those left behind. My study indicates that normal town practices must be taken into account to see how they were adapted during times of upheaval such as过程ions and plagues. The effects of this popular revival on peacemaking and preaching in particular, especially on an itinerant level, open the door to further study of these elements during other times of crisis and fervour.

Analysing Bianchi activities in light of the usual liturgical practice of each town has demonstrated the influence of usual norms on the Bianchi processions. This is particularly noticeable in terms of processional order, and the ways in which the authorities mobilised to facilitate the devotions. Other elements, such as peacemaking, were managed by the employment of extra pacieri during the processions, although few of these peace seem to have been lasting. Both intramural and itinerant processions highlight input from town authorities to initiate the processions in preparing participants and organising food. Unsurprisingly, the authorities exercised most control over those remaining within the town walls. The clergy performed duties of preaching and saying mass, and some took this further to wander with the itinerant Bianchi and preach to them each day. The processions were sustainable and able to continue from town to town thanks to the careful intervention of these lay and ecclesiastical establishments, which ensured the transmission of the devotions and realisation of the processions in an orderly fashion.

6. Legacy of the Bianchi Devotions
The immediate legacy of the Bianchi devotions was most keenly felt at a local level, dependent on how the devotions were received in any given location by both the populace and the authorities. These factors mean that it is difficult to generalise about Bianchi legacy beyond saying that there was no single impact of the devotions across the northern and central Italian peninsula. The fact that the Jubilee of 1400
crossed over with the tail end of the Bianchi fervour is significant in the seeming lack of legacy, but the fleeting nature of the devotions in each town also played a crucial role.

Each procession lasted only nine days and involved such disparate sections of the population that it would have been difficult to codify such an event into the liturgical year, particularly as it was not fixed around a particular date or pre-existing feast. Each town began the processions as a foreign group arrived, and so they were staggered throughout the summer and autumn of 1399. Moreover, the efforts at peacemaking in particular were not long lasting. Indeed, Bornstein’s final assessment of the Bianchi devotions as a ‘dismal failure,’ with no major legacy is understandable when a broad view is taken of the movement. However, assessing the movement as such assumes that the Bianchi devotions had a single, fixed ideal of success. This does not seem to have been the case as there were various goals of proselytisation, pacification and sometimes reaching Rome, all in aid of preventing a plague. None of the chroniclers discuss the processions in terms of success or indeed failure, and so this does not seem to have been a contemporary concern.

Focusing on a local level, some efforts to commemorate the Bianchi processions are visible. The Bianchi legacy in Lucca and Pistoia, and indeed Tuscany more generally, was focussed around devotion to Bianchi crucifixes, and in the formation of religious confraternities. Connecting both these crucifixes and confraternities to the Bianchi devotions in each instance can be problematic. For the confraternities in Lucca and Pistoia, there is a link between the foundation of the confraternity or redesignation of a previously existing one and the processions in 1399, although this connection was not necessarily long lasting. Connecting these confraternities of the ‘Bianchi’ with traditional feast days was one method of ensuring that they withstood the test of time, which was successful at least initially. This institutionalisation of the Bianchi devotions at Lucca and Pistoia is significant, and bolstered by the focus around a Bianchi crucifix. The continued use of the Bianchi crucifixes is also important: they were used for processions and performed miracles, although the continuing connection to 1399 was not always evident.

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534 Bornstein, p. 196.
Looking beyond Tuscany, a different sort of commemoration of the Bianchi devotions is apparent, in the form of wall paintings in Lazio and Umbria, the most recent of which was discovered in 2015. The lack of written information about these sources means that they are challenging to approach, but nevertheless provide important testimony of the passage of the Bianchi processions in these towns. There is no evidence to suggest that confraternities were formed around these images. However, this suggests a regional tendency towards a method of commemorating the Bianchi processions for which evidence does not survive in Tuscany. These frescoes are significant in terms of the legacy of the processions, as a decision was made by the patron to represent the Bianchi devotions, in whatever form, on the walls of a church, rather than a more traditional image such as saints or biblical narratives.

Further work might uncover more images in these regions or indeed further afield, with implications for the disparate legacy of the Bianchi devotions. The preponderance among these images of the Assisian Madonna dell'Oliva is telling too of the local impact on the Bianchi devotions, as this miracle is depicted rather than any other facet of the processions. Furthermore, none of these images, even those of the *tre pani* story, suggest the threat of the annihilation of humanity, implying that this connection was lost after the processions, as is suggested by the chronicle accounts which report the plague of 1399-1400 with no reference to the attempt to forestall it by participation in the Bianchi processions.

The variation in the ways that the legacy of the Bianchi devotions was realised is emblematic of the diversity present in the interpretation of the Bianchi devotions from town to town but also from region to region. Broadly speaking, it might be possible to generalise about Bianchi legacy from a regional perspective. This holds for Tuscany, and for Umbria and Lazio, but further research on other hotbeds of Bianchi activity further north would be necessary to draw conclusions about the whole geographical spread of the processions. These patterns of localised confraternities, crucifixes and wall paintings demonstrate a commitment to the memory of the Bianchi devotions. This legacy may not have been long lasting, but there was at least an attempt to memorialise the processions. I have built on previous discussions of this material to consider it together as evidence for the commemoration of the Bianchi across Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio. My analysis has demonstrated particular regional tendencies and highlighted how different towns
commemorated the Bianchi processions in unique ways, and has joined the dots between different sites of commemoration. I have also highlighted that the Bianchi processions did have a varied and existing legacy, which was, like the processions, unique to each town which decided to engage with commemorating the devotions.

While the chapter looked at the immediate legacy of the Bianchi devotions up to 1415, echoes of the fervour are still being felt today in Umbria and Lazio, connecting the Bianchi activities with the Jubilee of 2016 declared by Pope Francis: the Holy Year of Mercy. All of the churches with Bianchi artwork are now the subject of restoration thanks to a new interest in the Bianchi processions in these regions. A new initiative supported by FAI (Fondo Ambiente Italiano) running in 2015 and 2016 seeks to establish a new cultural route, the ‘Percorso dei Bianchi,’ connecting these iconographic traces of the Bianchi processions.\footnote{Paola Cuzzocrea, ‘La collaborazione del FAI per un progetto artistico e turistico’, in Il percorso dei Bianchi, (Poggio Mirteto, April 2016).} While initially focussed on these two regions, the project aims to expand to the other regions the Bianchi participants passed through.

In Tuscany, while the connections to the Bianchi devotions in Lucca and Pistoia are not particularly prominent, Florentine examples still maintain a connection to the devotions.\footnote{For more on Florentine ‘Bianchi’ confraternites, see Ronald Weissman, Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence (London: Academic Press, 1982), p. 73 and Konrad Eisenbichler, The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785 (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 177. The associations between these confraternities and the Bianchi devotions in 1399 are problematic, and require further scholarly scrutiny.} In the church of Santo Spirito, a Bianchi crucifix is connected to a confraternity called the ‘Compagnia dei Bianchi di Santo Spirito,’ which was re-established on 11 February 2016. The confraternity has a civic emphasis, focusing on volunteer work, recently collecting supplies for those affected by the earthquake in August 2016, and has its own Facebook group.\footnote{Compagnia dei Bianchi di Santo Spirito [Facebook group]<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1685954998308972/> [Accessed 22 July 2016].} Thus, the legacy of the Bianchi processions is a complicated issue. Just as each town realised the devotions in an individual way, so too the remnants and rediscoveries of the devotions in each town are unique.
7. Future work
Investigating the Bianchi processions through the local case studies of Lucca and Pistoia has a proved useful and productive line of enquiry. My research has identified areas which would repay further investigation. For example, similar studies of the Bianchi could be undertaken for other towns across the spread of the devotions with comparable source material. Examples of these would be Padua, Ferrara and Genoa. Such endeavours would enrich the conclusions of my thesis, underscoring the influence of local factors on the Bianchi devotions before, during and after the processions. A similar approach could also be applied to previous popular religious revivals, to examine whether they too were as dependent on local factors as the Bianchi processions.

While I have referred to numerous miracles associated with the Bianchi processions throughout this thesis, a study of the phenomena in their own right would be worthwhile. There are more than 100 miracles reported by Dominici alone, and it would be worth investigating them further, contextualising them and analysing their importance to the Bianchi devotions. Within this discussion, religious artefacts and particularly thaumaturgic crucifixes would be focuses for study, as they performed a large proportion of the miracles during the devotions. In the context of the Bianchi devotions, which were supported by the communal and ecclesiastical authorities as well as purportedly divine origin stories, the purpose of such a significant quantity of miracles requires further investigation.

The study of religious confraternities in both Lucca and Pistoia would merit further inquiry. Sources are limited due to the suppression of confraternities in the early nineteenth century, leading to the destruction of significant amount of material. Nevertheless, there is still substantial remaining evidence which would profit from further scholarly attention. For example, work has been done on Florentine confraternities related to the Bianchi devotions in the sixteenth century, although further analysis is necessary to ascertain the connection to the processions in 1399. Such studies of confraternities would have implications for the legacy of the Bianchi processions, as well as the way that the devotions were realised. Understanding the relationship between confraternities and outbreaks of plague in terms of the popular

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538 Da Ravenna; Delayto; Stella.
religious response also reveals interesting correlations between membership and disease outbreaks, as I demonstrated for Orvieto in my MA dissertation.  

My examination of the plague has underscored that it is necessary to look beyond the Black Death of 1348 when considering the disease in the fourteenth century, building on the work of Carmichael and Cohn for this period, and Henderson looking to later centuries. Locating the plague within a religious and social context has proved a useful method; considering the disease at the time of the Bianchi devotions is crucial for contextualising the processions in Lucca and Pistoia.

8. Conclusion
Throughout this thesis I have highlighted the diversity of the Bianchi processions, demonstrating time and again that the situation in one city was not necessarily the case elsewhere. It is difficult therefore to discuss the Bianchi movement as a whole, as generalising statements can rarely be applied to all participants or locations across the devotions. The Bianchi devotions consisted of individually mobilised cities and towns which managed a particular response to the devotion which was spreading across northern and central Italy. This sense of devotion and the general expectations of peacemaking and wearing white were common to most instances of Bianchi processions. However, anything beyond this in terms of procession length, provisions for participants and processional order was dependent on the local environment. This shaped each Bianchi procession, whether within or without the town walls. The popular religious revival was carefully managed by the towns of Lucca and Pistoia during the Bianchi devotions.

Using two case study cities has been a useful method throughout this thesis, creating a manageable source set, but also providing comparison at every stage between the two Tuscan towns of Lucca and Pistoia. Analysing the situation in these towns before and after the Bianchi devotions has been instrumental in examining the passage of the processions themselves and the extent of their impact. The distinction between town and countryside is maintained; where previous studies have focussed


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on one or the other, my study of the differences between the two has revealed the
variety of modes of participation in the processions. While there are remnants of the
Bianchi devotions, these are localised phenomena in the religious confraternities,
crucifixes and wall paintings, and seem tied to a specific region.

Tognetti described the Bianchi processions as the last of their kind, in terms
of popular religious revivals, and indeed it seems that no similar movements of the
population occurred afterwards. This might have been due to a shift onto the
individual in terms of piety, and the increase of outlets for this mainly in charity and
almsgiving, as well as in the constant confraternities. Whatever their status, the
Bianchi devotions cannot be considered unique. While the processions were indeed
extraordinary, they must be set within the context of previous popular religious
revivals. Considering the Bianchi participants as pilgrims, there are many common
expectations, particularly considering the itinerant processions. However,
considering the whole gamut of Bianchi activities as a pilgrimage is problematic, due
to the nature of the itinerancy and plural aims. Pilgrims tended to head for one
particular location as a goal, whereas the itinerant Bianchi participants would process
from their town, walk in a circle and return on the ninth day, spreading the devotion
to other towns, which would continue this spread. Pilgrimage was rarely so
complicated, and relied on the particular expression of piety of an individual,
whereas for the Bianchi processions, there was a group mentality.

Previous conclusions about the Bianchi devotions as a whole suggested that
the movement aimed for universality, achieving a degree of anonymity for the
participants who could mask their identity in the general mass of white. This was
particularly the case for those who wore hoods. The focus on other binary opposites,
town or city, intra- or extramural, lay or clergy, low or high social status, male or
female and adult or child has also been key in these previous studies. My analysis
has shown that while participation in the Bianchi processions was supposed to blur
all of these social distinctions, in fact, the majority of these discriminating factors
would still have been evident throughout the processions. The clergy, for example,
were visible in the additions to their robes, seen most clearly in the images. This was
functional, as they led not only the processions but also the singing, providing a

541 Tognetti, p. 341.
useful visual clue to where to look to for the start of the next hymn. In terms of social distinctions, Datini’s sleeping in *alberghi* is emblematic of a way that those of means could make their Bianchi experience more comfortable. Moreover, within the processions at Pistoia, the local authorities were given pride of place in the processional order, and then also during the mass. Thus, this theoretical levelling of humanity in the face of a pestilential annihilation was not fully realised. This has been particularly remarkable at this level of local analysis where the support structures of each town had a role to play in the processions.

In addressing these interrelated questions in relation to the Bianchi devotions, I have drawn on several disciplines. I have contributed to the communal histories of Lucca and Pistoia, particularly drawing out elements of the religious framework of each town. This has implications beyond the focus on the Bianchi devotions, to consider the towns more broadly in this period, particularly in terms of confraternities. My work also fits in with studies on popular religion and popular piety, providing a snapshot of one particular instance, although the Bianchi processions were hardly unique in the medieval Italian context.

Using a broad set of sources and a variety of media, I have tackled hitherto under-studied aspects of the Bianchi processions. Focussing in on a local level has pinpointed this analysis, allowing for close reading of sources and comparisons between Lucca and Pistoia. This methodology would be equally valid for other towns across the spread of the devotions. Much like the plague they were trying to prevent, the Bianchi participants attempted to reach every town, and reach every man, woman and child throughout Christendom. While they only reached the boundaries of the northern and central Italian peninsula, they were nevertheless vocal and effective in spreading their message of peace, at least for the duration of the processions. The brief life of the Bianchi devotions left small, localised traces across the spread of the movement. The variety of practices performed by Bianchi participants in attempting to prevent the plague varied due to local and individual circumstances. This popular religious revival was carefully managed in Lucca and Pistoia, where the role of communal authorities shaped the experience of participants. This thesis has indicated the importance of looking at the local effects of the Bianchi processions and has demonstrated that each set of processions, whether intramural or itinerant, was moulded by those leading and participating in it.
Appendix

This appendix contains primary source material which has not been published and a map of the area reached by the Bianchi processions in Tuscany.

The transcriptions of primary source material are not intended as a diplomatic edition, solely as a presentation of unpublished material which is crucial to the understanding of this thesis.

I have transcribed it expanding abbreviations and transcribed ‘ç’ as ‘z’. All punctuation is editorial. I have retained line breaks in the laude, but not the rubrics and longer texts. In cases of syntactic doubling, I have retained the doubling, and attached it to the second word, to maintain spacing between separate words for sense. I have not corrected or modernised spelling.

1. MS Vaticano Chigiano L.VII.266

1. a). Stabat Mater Dolorosa and Oremus prayer (fol. 20r)

 Qui nella sechuente fama apresso scriverro il salmo overo lauda di san ghirighoro a honor e riverenza della vergine maria e diede di perdonanza a cchi la leggiesse o udisse le viiene sette anni di perdono e questa lauda si canto alla procieessione de bianchi et dicie cosi.

| Stabat mater dolorosa                              | Jesu vidit in tormentis                   |
| yusta crucie lacrimosa                             | e flagiellis subditum                    |
| dum pendebat filius                               | Vdit suum dulcem natum                   |
| Cuius animam giementem                             | morientem desolatum                      |
| contristare et dolentem                            | cum emisit spiritum                      |
| pertansivit gladius                               | Eya mater fons amoris                    |
| O quam tristis et afficta                          | Me sustorre inn doloris                  |
| fuit illa beneditta                               | Fac ut tecum lugieam                     |
| mater unigieniti                                   | Fac ut ardeat cor meum                   |
| Que merebat et dolebat                             | in amandum Christum Deum                 |
| e tremebat dum videbat                             | ut sibi conplacieam                      |
| nati penas incliti                                | Sancta mater istud aghas                 |
| Quis est homo qui non fleret                      | crucifisti figie plaghas                 |
| matrem Christi si videret                         | cordi meo valide                         |
| in tanto suplicio                                 | Fui nati vulnerati                       |
| Quis non potest contristari                        | ian digniati pro me pati                 |
| matrem Christi contemplari                        | penas mecum divide                       |
| dolentem cum filio                                |                                          |
| Pro pecchatis sue gientis                         |                                          |

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Fac mecum semper tecum flere
crucifissi chon dolere
Domec eggo vissero

Yusta crucie tecum stare
te libenter sotiare
cum plantu desidero

Virgo virginum pleclara
michi iam non sis amara
fac me tecum plangere

Fac ut portem Christi mortem
passionem eius fortem
et plagas reccollere

Fac me plagis vulnerari
cruciem ac innebriari
in amore filii

Inflamatis et acciensus
per te Virgo sum defensis
in die yudicii

Fac me crucie per custodiri
morte Christi premuniri
e confoveri gratia

Quando corpus morietur
fac ut anime donetur
paradisi gloria

Alma salus advocata
morte Christi desolata

miserere populi
Virgo clemens Virgo pia
Virgo dulcis o Maria
auldi preces servili

Universis pecchatores
scholares e dottores
a crucie configieant

Onness cruciem per amantes
at que illam venerantes
senper tibi serviat

In me sistat dolor tui
crocifissi fac me frui
dun sum in exilio

Huic dolori fac me mestum
ne et me facias in festum
isti desiderio

Ilud rore ilud ore
sempre feram cum dolore
e mentis martiria

Cristus in lingnio pependit
sanguine que nol defendit
ab ira diaboli

Per virtuten sancte crucis
salva nos ab inimicis
per eterna seculo

Oremus domine Jesu Christe filii dei vivi per merita omnipotentissime passionis tue ac intercession beatissime marie semper virginie tue dulcissime matris eorem santorum at que santarum pro omnibus pecchatoribus de omnibus peccatis petimus gratiam et piatosam miserichordiam pro dominum nostrum jesu Christo filium tuum qui terum vivit e regnat in numtatem spiritus santi deus per onnia sechula sechulorum amen.
1. b) Signum crucis factum est (fol. 20v)

Signum crucis factum est
de carne salvatoris
In locho Calvarie
est rex noster glorie
sublesatus impie
per mortem pecchatoris

Yesis flagiellatus est
Deus omo factus est
Patitut humanitas
Nichil tamen divinitas

Yesus spoliatus est
lancia foratus est
capud coronatus est
in lingnio passionis

Duo flagiellati sunt
simul e redentorum
malingni mortui sunt
in ipsa passione

Yesus vero loquitur
pater, parcie illis
nesciunt qui faciunt
nunc te rogho pro illis

Clare Yesus ochuli
viderunt piam matren
venire cun lacrimis
ad crucie ullulante

O Yesus vere bone
fons miserere mei
piene contumelia
cum in fletum doloris

Yesis nanque capite
ait inclinato
Marie vocie pia
noli flere Maria

Elevatre pater

consurgie Ierusalem
cholli solve vincula
in lignio passionis

Pura caro angni
purpura vestitur
nuda\textsuperscript{542} cuius sanguinis
in lignio deperitur

Nec fari valet
vlnere Magdalena
quare merore est piena
de carne salvatoris

Vinum cum acieto
bibere dederunt
una cum fele mixtum
et ori posuerunt

Vochat ipse eli eli
lamaza battani
abba pater dicitur
in libro paradisi

miserichordia pace
miserichordia pace
miserichordia pace

Paternoster

\textsuperscript{542} Sic- other versions have \textit{unda}.
1. c) *Verbum caro factum est* (fols. 20v-21r)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbum caro factum est</td>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In ochi anni circului</td>
<td>De semine abrame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vitadatur seculo</td>
<td>ex degali gienere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nato nobis parrulo</td>
<td>boritur de sidere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fon de suo Ribulo</td>
<td>In solis ar doribus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nascitur pro populo</td>
<td>grata fidelibus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fatto mortis vinculo</td>
<td>niveis chandoribus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quos vetustat sosoccat</td>
<td>In presepe ponitus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ic aduitor revochat</td>
<td>e abruts nascitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nam sedis collocat</td>
<td>matris velo tegitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in virgine maria</td>
<td>ad virgine maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella solim protulit</td>
<td>A vangyeli salitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sel salute chontulit</td>
<td>gloria pax diritur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nichil tamen astulit</td>
<td>pastoribus quietur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
<td>Cum virgine maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sine viri pecula</td>
<td>Ioseph nato fruitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>florem dedit virgula</td>
<td>natus latte pascitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qui manet in secula</td>
<td>plaudit plira regitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
<td>ad virgine maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O beata fenmina</td>
<td>Puer circum ciditur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cuius ventris saccina</td>
<td>sanghuis eius funditur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mindi lavit crimina</td>
<td>nomen Jesu ponitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de virgine maria</td>
<td>ad virgine maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex virgine regia</td>
<td>Ylli laus et gloria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sunmi rebis folia</td>
<td>de churs et vittoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pena datur gratia</td>
<td>honor virtu gratia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cun virgine maria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. d) Verbum caro factum est (fol. 29r-v)

Verbum caro factum est
de virgine maria
In hoc anni currulo
vitadatur seculo
nato nobis parvulo
de virgine maria
Fons de suo Rivulo
nascitur pro popolo
fatto mortis vinculo
de virgine maria
Quos vetustas sosoccat
hic adiutam revocat
nam sed deus colocat
in virgine maria
Stella solem protulit
sel salutem contulit
nicchil tamen astulit
de virgine maria
Sine viri copula
florem dedit virgula
qui manet in secula
de virgine maria
O beata femina
cuius ventris saccina
mundi lavit crimina
de virgine maria
In presepe ponitur
et abruts noscitur
volor matris tegitur
a virgine maria
A vangelis salitur
gloria pax dicitur
pastoribus queritur
cum virgine maria
O pastores currite
Prosando vulnere
deus suo munere
nascitur in tempore
de virgine maria
De semine abrao
rex regali genere
oritur desidere
de virgine maria

Ex vergine regia
summi regis filia
plena datur gratia
in virgine maria

Ex duomo flame
non humano seine
datur decus demine
in virgine maria

In solis ardoribus
niveis candoribus
gratue fidelibus
per virgine maria

Ardor santi spiritus
verbun patris exitus
se infundit cellitus
in virgine maria

In umano corpore
rex vestitur purpore
destendit cum robore

in virgine maria

A ponentibus Gieritur
e in templo sistutir
senis brachiis ponitur
a vergine maria
Decendit in nebula
apparet in gloria
peccator venia
cum virgine maria

In excelsis colocat
super astra jubilat
genetrice laudat
te virgine maria

O stupor in montibus
tam altum in artibus
ligatus in nilibus
de vergine maria

A quo modus regitur
uno saxo clauditur
se ipso e regitur
in virgine maria

Illi laus et gloria
decus et vittoria
honor virtu gratia
cum virgine maria
Amen
2. MS Nazionale

The manuscript is damaged, and I have added in suggestions based on the other manuscripts for this lauda in italics. The writing is solely on the face of the scroll.

2. a) Misericordia eterno Dio

Misericordia eterno ddio
pace pace singnor mio
non guardare al nostro errore

Misericordia andiamo gridando
misericordia non sia in bando
misericordia adiam chiamando
misericordia al peccatore

Misericordia Idio verace
misericordia manda pace
misericordia setti piace
misericordia alto singnore

O dolce vergine maria
di noi guardia e conpangnia
preghianti che in piacer ti sia
che preghi il nostro salvatore

Il tuo figluolo somma potentia
quando se con lui in presentia
che rivolgha tal sententia
preghando madre per tua amore

Tusse madre sempre stata
di noi miseri avvocata
madre nostra angelicata
fa levare questo furore

Se tu guardassii a gran pechat
per noi fatti e ordinati
noi saremo profondatii
ogniun di per nostro erore

Pechatori or mintendete

per voi pregho e vol sapere
el mio figluolo no chonscete
e non avete illui amore.

Preghato il singnor carisimo
mio figluolo tanto bellisimo
che ’l gudico crudelisimo
da voi levi tal dolore

Quante volte sonono andata
dinanti allui inginochiata
dettooglo vostra anbascata
conne auto poco onore

Quanto piu priego per voi
e voi fate peggio poi
se venir vole anni
al mio figluolo portate amore

Quanto piu nel mondo state
brigha ed dio sempre fate
ensieme non v’amate
e l’uno e ll’altro e traditore

Se voi fusti insieme uniti
non saresti a ta’ partiti
figluoli miei dolce fiorito
di voi porto fran dolore

Madre santa non guardare
ai gran pecati et al malfare
madre non ci abandonare
che di pieta se fonte et fiore

Priegha el tuo figluolo eterno
nostro re padre
che avolghi tal quaderno
e sia a noi perdonatore

Per amore di ghabriello
che ti fe el saluto bello
priega el figluolo verginello
che sia nostro guardatore
Perlla letizia che fue
quando naque el buon gesue
tra quel asinello e 'l bue
fe di notte gran chiarore

Per quelo sprendore e lume
che fe iddio in quel volume
chava noi del aspro fiume
che noi siamo in gran tremore

Vergine aulente rosa
del tuo figuolo madre e sposa
sempre se di noi pietosa
al tue figluolo ei mecti in chuore

Se voi non vi conoscete
de pecati che voi avete
freddo caldo fame e sete
manderavi el creatore

Morte pistolentia e guerra
mandera in ogni terra
se non tutti a una serra
non seguite el buon pastore

Pechatori non dormite
el mio figluolo ubidite
se voi tosto nol seguite
e' vi fara mutar colore

Pechatore sta svegliato
non dormire piu nel pechato
tosto ti sia confesato
chosi piace al creatore

Pechatore sta umile
a far bene de no sia vile
fa che seguita lo stile
di christo buon guidatore

Se quel ch’io ti dicho fai
mentre che nel mo stai
alla fine te n’andrai
nella gloria alta magore

Ad honore e lalde sia
della vergine maria
che questa sentencia ria
da noi levi onghi dolore
Dico gratias. Amen:

Questa oratione dissono e bianchi da
pisa
Questa lalda e d’Ugolino di
Bernardo$^{543}$
misericordia misericordia misericordia
pace pace pace

$^{543}$ These final letters are suggested by Renzi
and Mori p. 126
3. MS Marucelliana C.152

Words in italics are my best transcription based on damaged or smudged text.

3. a) Text (fols. 53v-54v)

Lauda fatta d’Andrea Stefani cantore al tempo de Bianchi.

Dovendo seguire la moria del MCCC’ d’aghosto a di XVI 1399 uscirono tutti et quattro et quartieri di Firenze vestiti tutti a bianco co’ crocifissi andar pel contado circa Sentino, Arezzo et nel Val d’Arno di sotto a fare peniziea et feciono fare moltissime pacie que che uscirono fuori Firenze fossono tra maschi et femmine trenta migliaia que chomme sono nella citta maschi et fezia fu ordinato pel vescovo nostro et per la signoria di Firenze s’andasse nove di.

Il primo a San Ghaggio, il secondo a Sancto Antonio a Ricorboli e salissi po su a sanimento, il terzo in Verzara, il quarto al tempio ˄ 544 il sexto a San Salus, il settimo a San Ghallo et al monistero di Monte Domini, l’ottavo in Sancto Giovanni Trallarcora, il nono a San Bartolo fuori della porta al prato. Questi nove di furono fatti con tanta devotione et con tanta reverentia che non si potrebbe dire ne contare che parve chelle menti fossan trate a ghustare la dolcezza dell’altra vita a quelle vennono tutte le coscientie con digiuni, iscalzi con ardentissimo amore di carita. Io Andrea sopradetto vedendo questi ordine dati fui con tutti i maestri delle scuole d’ordinare c’ongniuno avesse tutti suo fanciulli et gharzoni a veson tutti colle veste et che tutti fassono dopo il primo crocifisso et ghonfalone a brighata a brigata ordinatamente. Et che tutti fussono ordinati a quattro et a quattro accio ch’io si potesse annoverare agevolemente et con ordini a tutti gli uomini et donne et or tutti maschi et femine che ogni brighata avesse suo sengno o paternostri o benda o crocifisso o qualc’altra cosa et tutti pure a quattro a quattro et che in mezzo d’ogni brigata ave’ due cantatori de laude pretio, scolari o monache o scolare femmine et ordinai et tutti andassono da llui lato della via et tornassono dalla lato uccio che non vi fusse confusione de petto neggiare l’un l’altro. Et così fu fatto la prima mattina come dette fu a San Ghaggio Io mi puosi a sedere in fuor della porta et ferrimi dare

544 In manuscript, indicating that the fifth day is missing.
una canna monda di qual che cinque tra quelch’io annoverassi et quando giunsero qui dov’io era con quell’ordine che dato quea col nome di ddio comincia annoverare grando avea cento mani et di fatua un gregue in sanu mezzo foglio. E dicovi che gli e in la pia cosa et la piu divota et su piu pacifica sanza niuno iscandolo vider l’una brigata dall’un lato della via andare in su et dall’altro lato tornare in giui che ssine desse mai et ricordavami della scala che vide giu co’ b. de gli angeli che si siano. Et schendenno et ai cen Giacobi vide qui angeli et io vegno costoro che sono poco meno d’angoili. Giacobo vide la scala dal cielo alla tera et io vegho questo scala dalla citta al monte et dal monte alla citta.

Che bella cosa era a vedersi tutti a viso a viso vedersi tutti in una compatione in uno essercizio in una divotione et inn un tanto buono proponimento tutti pieni d’amore et di carita di dio che generava l’uno all’altro uno ardore et uno infiammamente che parta che cci ascannamente fosse piena di spirito sancto tutti questi nove di i non parso di poi. Che quando Pietro fu ebriacato et deva giorno detta bena co li et la visione spari e rimase il primo Pietro. Il ghusto di quassu dura poco di qua di la sempre et ritorno a quest’ochio contai et raccolsi ch’erano stati XLVI migliaia che fuorono i fanciulli et gharzon da XV anni in giu circa a XV migliaia questo numero de fanciulli fu rapportato al ducha a toccchio et feccene gran maraviglia. Accadde poi che ’l segno della moria apparve nel contado en Firenze et vedendo questo feci et vesto aviso in me medesimo et dissi veglio ch’en nella stata del quattrocento noi area mortalita dentro et di fuori et per tanto et ne v’era la quaresima che tempo di pentientia et di devotione et s’impiglie vanno le veste et andassì alluoghi divoti a Fiesole a Saminiato et in tutti gli altri et per tanto io vo fare una lauda al proposito di questa tempo chi vegho appare c’ochiato chagia n’avevo fatte dell’altre cose padre pien di clemenza madre del salvatore preghiam Christo Salvatore riguardandi pacemente.

Rinnovellanci in Christo tutte queste sono intonate a tre canti et figurate in su un quaderno di mia mano con tutte le parole et ancorvi poi per et questa ultima ch’i fea al detto proposito la quale mi piace di porlo qui per esempio delle cose che spesso possono tutto di.
3. b) Su tutti peccatori (fols. 54v-55v)

Incomincia la detta lauda et riverenza della santissima trinita et di tutta la corte di alta eterna nella quale sta lampa arice degli angeli et convocata de peccatori la qual lauda dice così:

Su tutti peccatori
a penitentia fuori
con pianti e con dolori
delli nostri peccati

Su tutti a processione
con diritta intentione
et co’ sante oratione
et chon canti beati

Et con questo pensiamo
quell che tornar doviamo
poi che non morti siamo
e della vita trapassati

Pero checco la morte
possente arbita et forte
dentro alle nostre porte
per menerci leghati

Guardian quante possente
et pel mondo scomente
per pigliar tutta gente
giocanni et atterni parti

Oime quante feroce
Il scorrente et veloce
et conternibil voce
et con devoti appuntati

Elle in mota magna e rea
il capeglinta et fera
et colla faccia altera
et con gli occhi soffornoti

O quanto elle ombrosa
crudele et furiosa
o scura et spaventosa
c0 capelli arricciati

Su tutti peccatori
Or chi fie quel sicuro
colo acerbo et duro
non tema giu sua a guati

Costei in sun da damo
al di d’oggi che ssiamo
chiaramente veggiamo
a tutti a sse chi amati

Questa mai non perdere
aver una persona
et mai non ci abbandona
in fin che ccia atterati

Ella ci fa cadere
e in terra giacere
ed avermi rodere
fin che ci an consumati

Papi emperidori
cardinali e dottori
prefati e signori
a sotterra cacciati

Duchi et granmarchesi
conti et tyrannesi
Da vei sostati presi
e per terra gittati

Et nonne lor valuto
postato c’anno avuto
pe ricchezze cantenuti
colla superbia infiati

Or dunque che faremo
or che noi avemo
al nostro punto stremo
gia essere arrivati
contra dimenti enghasui
usure et maguadangai
diedi furti et danni
ne qua sian si ostinati
fra nnoi et tutto ispento
l’amore et ‘l piacimento
et coll’animo attento
siamo avizi e peccati
superba i pathi
ci a presi per che strutti
no sian pe falli frutti
caren mali fangnati

Appresso gloria vana
checci giungo si piana
alla sua fahatana
con malitosi aguati
non taccio della invidia
ne ancor dell’accidia
che nnci tanto sannidia
checci fan conti stati
alla vanità astretta
con ghosa maladetta
calluz una et affretta
ben ci sian tutti dati
o lassiamo i dolenti
per che sian si struenti
a questi essi iscorrenti
vitti tanto e sciagruati
Te qua sarea puniti
quando saren portiti
dal corpo quindi usciti
e allon femo menati
Pal dove son tormenti
piscure fiamme arditi
congra fuon i rovati
ku sciebo gli entati

Ti vetro et olfie stangni
metalli e altri bagnghi
altri deiri et ballagni
per tutti i dannati
Qui son demoni
con sspiedi et rononi
et ratti con furoni
tutti quanti arrabbiati
Rossi bianchi e neri
is capegliati et fiori pieoli
bo mordieri
lo denti anotati
Qua sono spaventosi
crudeli et furiosi
ed tutti quanti crudiosi
con gli occhi sbarrati
An arava fiornaci
con serpentì mordaci
draghi malferati
putti avelenati
Freddi caldi e ghiacci
rameni con serpacci
scarpi emineracci
mordenti a tre lati
Aghuti uccui forì kello
pialle succelli seguello
dastoni mare aspetto
oro et argento colati
Maghi pianti lamenti
urla e striar dolente
tenebre et tormenti
donìgni ragion torchi
In queste pie staranno
quellammo andanno
pe’ peccati c’aranno
a queste giudicati

282
Dunque miseri anni checcivarrervi guidano ono omoi ne tornati contati

Du dunoro non tardiamo che or che vi viscimo di for boi non visiano et stiamo apparecchiati

Su contristitia e piani pe ara a noi tutti quanti et faccia nei davanti a que checcia creati

Accendo penitenza della nostra fallenza sicche con escellenza dassui no siamo arrati

Cheglie nostro singnore vi va fonte delmore sicche dal suo splendore no siamo alluminati

Accio che triumphanti nella sua gloria avanti vengnian con da peicanti fra gli angeli beati

Done somma dolcezza riposo e allegrezza con vivince certezza di tutti et benchi amati

l’aidentdo l’auto idio singnore dolce et pio con tutto buon disio checcia va gloriat

della sua madre pia dolce vergine maria che sempre tutta via ciuara come figliamati

Appresso et santi eletti che con buon cor perfetti per che sian benedetti saran ginocchioni stat

or preghiamo n amore et con perfetti core il nostro salvatore che cui fa cui beati.
4. Morton’s Map: ‘The Area Around the City of Pistoia- some of the Processions.’

Map of the areas in Tuscany the Bianchi processions passed through. Morton, p. 185
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