# 1440: studies on giusto Giusti

Franco Pratesi, 09.07.2012

## INTRODUCTION

This note is my answer to a kind of challenge: to find further documents on Giusto Giusti. What has been written by and about him is still kept in Florence, or in towns not far from here. In the Florentine archives I have been carrying out researches for a long time: I could not remain indifferent to the recent news, and had to accept the task of improving my knowledge on this topic.

I have thus examined some of the documents and previous studies on the subject and have found a lot of authors involved, in various times; they names are worth to be reminded and will be used as subtitles here. The studies of the title thus include my own study, but this is just a minor part, compared with the studies previously carried out by other authors, which are discussed here.

The aim of this contribution is essentially that of providing the necessary preliminary information to anybody with interest enough for continuity these studies – in particular to avoid that they become disappointed with the first results of their research, especially if really new documents are not found.

As a reasonable corollary, I will not copy here the contributions on Giusti’s life and his *Giornali*, which can be retrieved easily in the references quoted in the following. For instance, under the title *The Life of Giusto Giusti* one will find some information on the authors who studied it, and where to find the corresponding accounts.

# 1. card history

## 1.1 Thierry Depaulis

Thierry Depaulis has been involved with the history of cards for a long time, at the highest levels of research, organisation, authorship, and editing. Among other charges, he is now the Chairman of the IPCS, and a connoisseur, whom public and private institutions call for advice. He has co-authored works with Michael Dummett, and after the death of the great philosopher he can be considered as the No. 1 of card historians in the world.

He has recently found the first mention known of Trionfi, a name for a card pack and a card game that appears to be tarot itself, introduced many years before the game became known under this name. (1)

It has been a very remarkable discovery, because it was an acknowledged statement by the specialists − as Ross Stewart Caldwell (2) − that the first mention of Trionfi (1442, in Ferrara) had already been reported by Campori in 1874 (3) and in the long time after that nobody could add any further quotation for earlier dates.

In this case, the source for his discovery has been the critical edition of Giusto Giusti’s *Giornali* by Nerida Newbigin, (4) which also will be discussed in the following.

## 1.2 Ross Stewart Caldwell and the forums

Ross Stewart Caldwell is one of the most active researchers on the early tarot history. His studies both on documents and iconography have induced him to suggest an origin of the tarot sequence in Bologna, with possibly Florence as a second choice.

He has published some works with Thierry Depaulis, and was asked by him to post the news of the 1440 discovery, being more familiar with the corresponding forums. This was done by Ross S. Caldwell on 2 February 2012. (5)

The news was of such importance for the history of tarot that I expected a remarkable outbreak in the discussion about the origins and early spread of tarot in this forum, which several experts consider as the most serious on the subject.

What happened is easy to outline. There have been only twenty-three posts up to now. People taking part in the discussion are five specialists with more than one post and two with just one. As easily expected by anybody who follows these discussions, the most active has been Lothar Teikemeier with seven posts, followed by Ross Stewart Caldwell with five, and Girolamo Zorli with four.

After the first post by Ross S. Caldwell, no less than six posts appeared on the following day, while all the remaining posts were inserted within the eight next days, except for the last three that appeared later on, up to a last contribution on 8 April by Lothar Teikemeier.

Was the news as trifling as to justify such a short discussion? I better suppose that it is instead the tarot community, which is not interested enough in the real history of their singular game, paying more attention to legends than to historical evidence.

It is not easy for me to summarise that discussion. Let me just remind a few points. Ross S. Caldwell announces that he now prefers Florence to Bologna as the origin of tarot (fine for me to read this), and answers to other posts. Bertrand comments on images painted in Rimini, which we will encounter again at the end of this note. Lothar Teikemeier comments on the price, and provides much additional detail, as usual for him. Girolamo Zorli calls attention to the particular social situation of Florence, not compatible with a noble court; he also questions the correct writing of Naibi a Trionfi.

Actually, one of the commonest point in the discussion concerns the exact spelling and meaning of the expression *Naibi a Trionfi*, if it really was written in that way; however, this has been indirectly confirmed later on by *Naibi di Trionfi*, dated 1452. (6)

To be complete, I have to add that a second forum was stimulated to discuss the news by an identical initial post of Ross Stewart Caldwell, (7) seemingly with no better results. I hope that some useful discussion has occurred in the meantime elsewhere: that I have not received any information about it would be negligible; essential is that the news does obtain due attention.

# 2. the Giornali

## 2.1 Giusto Giusti - The original version of his *Giornali*

I have made a few attempts to follow the fortune, or better to say the misfortune, of the twenty original notebooks, handwritten by Giusto Giusti (1406-1483). He compiled them day after day from the 1430s to 1483, the year of his death. Of course, finding all these notebooks is not a feasible task, because from three to five of them were already lost when the *Giornali* were copied in the form, in which we know part of them.

The original twenty notebooks have been reconstructed as follows in Staccioli’ dissertation, see below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| LETTER | YEARS | NOTES |
|  |  |  |
| A | - - | lost |
| B | 1437, 1438 |  |
| C | 1439, 1440 |  |
| D | 1441, 1442 |  |
| E | - - | lost |
| F | 1445, 1447 |  |
| G | 1448, 1449, 1450 |  |
| H | 1451, 1452 |  |
| I | - - | lost |
| K | 1456, 1457, 1458 |  |
| L | 1459, 1460 |  |
| M | 1461, 1462 | missing in Sangallo’s copy |
| N | 1463, 1464 | missing in Strozzi’s copy |
| O | 1465, 1466, 1467 |  |
| P | 1468, 1469 | missing in Strozzi’s copy |
| Q | 1470, 1471, 1472 |  |
| R | 1473, 1474 |  |
| S | 1475, 1476 |  |
| T | 1477, 1478, 1479 |  |
| U | 1480, 1481, 1482, 1483 |  |

All the copies known derive from some selection that each copyist made on the contents of the original, or of a previous copy, according to his specific interest.

## 2.2 Giuseppe Mazzatinti

Giuseppe Mazzatinti (1855-1906) completed his humanistic education in Pisa university, under renowned professors, to begin with Alessandro d’Ancona. He worked as a professor in high schools and at the same time as director of public libraries. For his enthusiasm and competence he was charged by the government to compile a catalogue of the Italian manuscripts in the French libraries.

His name, often combined with that of Sorbelli, is well known to any visitor of the manuscript sections of our public libraries, as author of the most used catalogues of the Italian manuscripts. His main work, (8) in thirteen volumes, is a classic reference: to mention Mazzatinti for manuscripts, is similar to mention Hoyle for game rules.

What is of particular interest for our study is his chapter on Anghiari, (9) also indicated in Staccioli’s dissertation, in a series dedicated to many minor public and private archives. After describing the statutes and some Taglieschi’s documents present in the civic archive at Anghiari, he adds a kind of appendix on a manuscript present there in the private collection of Paolo Ligi.

He states that this copy of Giusto Giusti’ *Giornali*, made by Taglieschi, had been used some time before by Cav. Magherini Graziani to extract information on local art works, in particular at Città di Castello; then Mazzatinti summarises all the information reported by Magherini Graziani.

Unfortunately, I could only read this chapter a few months after having found the article and the book by Magherini Graziani (where directly Giusto Giusti, and not Taglieschi, is mentioned as author).

Apart the fact that nobody can think here of the original notebooks, the question is not completely clear. I have never read the information that one of Taglieschi’s manuscripts − among the various ones kept in Anghiari, Sansepolcro, and Arezzo – contains a copy of the Giusto Giusti’s *Giornali*; he reportedly copied single paragraphs to insert in his historical compilations. In other words, we may have been here in the presence of another more or less complete, and independent, copy of the *Giornali*.

## 2.3 Bruno Migliorini – his encouragement

Bruno Migliorini (1896-1975) has been a prominent scholar of the Italian language. He was a professor in the University of Florence until 1967, the first ever to keep the new chair of History of the Italian language. He had been for fifteen years the President of the prestigious Accademia della Crusca.

It is a very revealing indication what we obtain from him. He actually imparted an extraordinary comment on the research of a young student (precisely Giuliano Staccioli, see below) who was investigating where he could find some residual notebook of the twenty original ones, written by Giusto Giusti.

This university professor and president of the Crusca Academy encouraged the young student, providing him with a trace to follow – something of this kind: *in my opinion, all of your notebooks have been used for wrapping sardines*.

This unexpected comment came from such an authoritative source that our pour student could only agree that this indeed was the *lectio facilior*, among all others that he had imagined and researched until then.

## 2.4 Nerida Newbigin – her wishes

This author will be found again in the following, as editor of the *Giornali*. The copies kept of them have some variations in their text; in particular, the name of their author is only indicated in some of them. Similarly, the local environment is more or less known to the various copyists. In the copy of the 19th century, see below, two family names, Mazzoni and Taglieschi, appear for two of the key personages of the diaries: apparently, both these family names were not present in the original text.

The first deduction of Nerida Newbigin is thus that this copy was made by someone who lived in Anghiari and personally knew the local community. She provides us with a second deduction too, less evident: *I cannot exclude the possibility that, with the publication* [namely, her own - FP] *of the Journals, the autograph notebooks will pop out, and other copies as well*.

To me, this wish seems to be rather optimistic, but when I once read it I did not yet know the “conclusive” expression by Bruno Migliorini; I also did not yet know that Staccioli had already carefully looked for them, without success. I thus assigned some plausibility to that wish, which implied some hope to find new documents.

As a result, I was subject to possible hallucinations. One will be indicated in the following under the name of Magherini-Graziani. A second one comes from a couple of sources with which I am not familiar enough. One source is a foreign country in which Italian publications are printed, without being regularly sent to our public libraries, and are thus not easy to find. A quotation containing something by or on Giusto Giusti I was finding now and then with the web searching tools (the other too little known source), but I was not able to find it in “my” libraries. (10)

This is evidently a hint with a poor basis; however, for any researcher more familiar with both sources mentioned, it may be a bit more promising than the advice once given by Prof. Migliorini. If they do not have some of the original notebooks by Giusto Giusti in their libraries, they may have a sixth copy of them. Even if no new document is kept, already a study on Giusto Giusti dated 1918 should have some interest – practically nobody is known who could have some information about him at the time.

# 3. PREVIOUS copies of the journals

## 3.1 Antonio da Sangallo

Antonio da Sangallo is the name of two renowned Florentine architects. Our Antonio da Sangallo (1551-1636) was their descendant and a Florentine too. He was fond of collecting and copying manuscripts of historical relevance. In 1606 he obtained from the Gran Duke of Tuscany a law that gave him the right of pre-emption on any manuscript on sale. (11) These books were then acquired, among others, by mercers and grocers, who used them just as wrapping paper − a practice, which evidently was well-known to Prof. Migliorini.

Antonio da Sangallo was appreciated by the Grand Duke who offered him a charge as subordinate in answering applications by the citizens. Later on, Antonio da Sangallo was incriminated for having granted favours against payment, to the point that in 1613 he was imprisoned for several months. His properties were confiscated, including his 150 manuscripts.

A copy that he had written of Giusto Giusti’s *Giornali* (12) was included in that collection. According to Staccioli, he had transcribed it from a previous copy of the *Giornali*, available then in Florence and unknown to us.

Afterwards he could resume his past activity and, in matters that are of interest for us, he made a second and reduced copy of the *Giornali*. (13) Later on, both these copies came into the Strozzi library, and from there into the Florence Biblioteca Nazionale. (It is possible, according to Staccioli, that Carlo Strozzi was motivated to make his own copy in Anghiari by his reading of Antonio da Sangallo’s copies.)

## 3.2 Lorenzo Taglieschi

Lorenzo Taglieschi (1598-1654) was a historian who more than anybody else used Giusti’s *Giornali* for his studies. As a matter of fact, he compiled a detailed history of Anghiari and the most renowned personages of that provenance. Several manuscripts with his works are still kept in Anghiari, Sansepolcro, and Arezzo, where they had been found by Staccioli.

He could avail himself of the largest part of the original notebooks in the original writing of Giusto Giusti. As a consequence, in his works we can find many quotations from the *Giornali*, which are not available anywhere else.

I did not verify the contents of these works, already described by Staccioli. The justification is simple. Unfortunately for us, Taglieschi’s interest was strictly limited to any news about Anghiari families and events, so that we cannot think of searching in his works any confirmation about Florentine playing cards, be they even the first occurrence known of a Trionfi pack.

However, I did check both printed editions of one of his major works: the first is a preliminary stencilled publication of the first part; (14) the second is the final and complete publication. (15) Interesting enough, this transcription has been made by the pupils of a local secondary school, in the course of several years. In particular, the second book is a high quality bound edition, but, understandably, both books are hard to find in the public libraries, except for Anghiari itself.

(This unusual method of teaching historical and literary topics should be, in my opinion, unbelievably efficient. Also the publisher is worth noting, being nothing else than the local association of blood donors.)

There is just one point that I have to add. When recording the birth of Giusto Giusti, Taglieschi includes some information about him and his *Giornali*. Mentioning them, he states *li quali sono letti con gusto da’ curiosi*. This makes clear that not only the notebooks were still in existence in the beginning of the 17th century, but they were known and appreciated by the community, and available for reading to any interested person.

## 3.3 Carlo Strozzi

Carlo Strozzi (1587-1670), a senator of the grand duchy of Tuscany, was named Count Palatine by the pope and was a leading member of Academia della Crusca. He was a renowned bibliophile and his personal library contained many books and more than 3000 manuscritps. (As it had occurred with Antonio da Sangallo, he too seems to have obtained from the Grand Duke the right of pre-emption for any manuscript on sale, but this information is uncertain.)

With the extinction of his family in the 18th century, his library was acquired by the Grand Duke, who then divided its books among the most important Florentine public archives, so that they now represent remarkable sections in Biblioteca Laurenziana, Biblioteca Nazionale, and Archivio di Stato.

What is of interest for us is another of his several charges: in the years 1621-22 he was a Florentine Vicary, precisely in Anghiari, the town of Giusto Giusti. (16) During his stay there he had all the time for copying the manuscripts of the *Giornali*, a task that he was accustomed to perform.

Except for Taglieschi, who mostly copied however different parts, his book (17) appears to be the only one to have been copied directly from Giusti’s notebooks, because the remaining copies seem to derive from a previous copy, kept then in Florence.

## 3.4 Anonymous

Staccioli also found another copy of the *Giornali* made by an unidentified copyist, seemingly in the first half of the 19th century. (18) The origin of this text seems to be the same hypothetical copy kept in Florence and available to Antonio da Sangallo for his two copies. This third copy is not only late, but it contains only a part of the book, up to 1441, in twenty-one loose sheets.

In spite of its reduced contents and late date, Staccioli considers that this copy is useful too, because it seems that in some parts this copyist could read the common source better than Antonio da Sangallo.

It is only here that we find the family names of a couple of personages; Nerida Newbigin has two suggestions for this: either they could have been taken from Taglieschi’s works, or they could prove the familiarity of the copyist with the community of Anghiari as discussed below. (4)

## 3.5 Giovanni Magherini Graziani

Several authors have read the *Giornali* and extracted from them just a few paragraphs of interest for their own aims. I will not try to quote all of them, but only a few that appeared more promising for my research. The first of them is without doubt Giovanni Magherini Graziani (1852-1924), who has been for me a misleading copyist.

I have found that in the late 19th century this local scholar could consult the *Giornali* in the house of their private owner, still in Anghiari. Information on this owner can be found first in a single issue of a local newspaper (19) and then repeated in a treatise on the art works of Città di Castello, compiled by the same author. (20) *Vedi i documenti da noi pubblicati nel fascicolo Anghiari (V Maggio MDCCCLXXXIX), tip. Tiberina, e copiati da certi Annuari di ser Giusto Giusti, posseduti dal signor Paolino Ligi di quel paese*.

The statement is clear enough, and encouraging. If Giusto Giusti’s *Giornali* were still in private hands in 1889, I concluded that there was some hope to retrieve them again, among the offspring of that owner, precisely as Nerida Newbigin had hoped. In the phone directory, I found three addresses with this family name in Anghiari and eighteen in Sansepolcro − too many for me to ask all of them about any ancient book kept in their families.

I restricted my activity to send an e-mail to Anghiari civic library, asking if some further documents had been discovered in the meantime. This has resulted in a (for me) hard to solve problem, whether they did not receive my message, or did not send any answer, or it had been lost in my mailbox.

On the other hand, we are informed by Staccioli that the Ligi family in the course of time became by far the richest of the town. Then in the beginning of the 20th century, they met great economic difficulties and had to sell all of their possessions, and even their library was thus dissolved.

Unfortunately, it is true that Magherini Graziani copied his paragraphs from a manuscript containing Giusto Giusti’s *Giornali*, but this actually was a manuscript compiled by Taglieschi in the 17th century with the parts that were of historical interest for Anghiari, and not at all the original notebooks. (How complete this copy could be, I have discussed before, and nobody knows.)

## 3.6 Renato Piattoli

This is a paragraph that I could have omitted, since this author did not personally contribute to the copies of Giusti’s *Giornali*, as far as I know. However, he was precisely the instigator of the whole research work made by Staccioli.

Renato Piattoli (1906-1974) was at the time an estimated professor in the Florence University. As sometimes occurs, he was also a keen collector of ancient books and manuscripts. It thus happened that he took part in an auction of parts of the library once belonged to the noble family Bargagli-Petrucci. What is of interest here is a manuscript that he thus acquired for his own collection: it contained the copy of Giusti’s *Giornali* once made and owned by Antonio da Sangallo.

Piattoli realized that this manuscript was more interesting than average and assigned its transcription as a task for their dissertation work to a couple of students. This initiative did not bring useful fruits, but a second assignment was more successful, thanks to the ability and enthusiasm of Giuliano Staccioli.

On the other hand, the book was acquired by the Soprintendenza bibliografica (thanks to its right of pre-emption), which added it to the Magliabechiana section of the Biblioteca Nazionale. (12)

## 3.7 Giuliano Staccioli (dissertation vol. II)

The first part of Staccioli’s dissertation work was precisely that of copying the manuscript, and this task was properly accomplished, so that we have in the second volume of the dissertation (193 pages) a full copy of the manuscript written by Antonio da Sangallo. (21)

The manuscript did not contain the name of Giusti, and thus the first problem was to find who had been the author of the *Giornali*. This could be obtained after finding a second manuscript (13) with a reduced version of the same *Giornali*, and the name of the author.

Once found the name of Giusto Giusti in the second copy, discovered in the same Biblioteca Nazionale, the research had still to begin: other works of him were not known, and data on his life were missing. Staccioli however found much more material: basically, everything that we know on the subject is due to his activity.

He searched in the main Florentine archives and libraries, where he found − in addition to the four manuscripts of the *Giornali* that he discovered in the course of time − a notary book and four letters, directly handwritten by Giusto Giusti himself, in addition to some declarations to Catasto by ser Giusto and other members of his family.

He then extended his research to smaller archives and libraries, in and around Anghiari, the place of origin of Giusto Giusti and where he lived his last years. He found all the interesting transcriptions from the *Giornali* copied by Taglieschi; this happened in the archives and libraries of Anghiari, Sansepolcro, and Arezzo.

The copy by Carlo Strozzi, (17) the only one of our major interest, he found the last. He had no time left for publishing a real critical edition of the *Giornali*, but cared for inserting the variants coming from the other manuscripts as footnotes in his copy of the manuscript written by Antonio da Sangallo.

In order to have a full text, also containing all the new paragraphs coming from the last manuscript, we had to wait for the edition by Newbigin. (4)

## 3.8 Richard C. Trexler

Before and after Staccioli’s fundamental research, several authors have examined the *Giornali*, but usually they only exploited small excerpts from them, just a few sentences who were of interest for their research.

Richard C. Trexler (1932-2007) used the *Giornali* for his popular book on the Florentine public life (22) and this was, according to the quotation by Nerida Newbigin, the occurrence that first opened to literati the opportunity to use the *Giornali* for their studies.

I am not fully convinced by that reconstruction of the events, but in any case I can agree that the *Giornali* became more accessible to researchers since then.

## 3.9 Lucia Ricciardi

It is known that much information can be found in the *Giornali* about the Florentine festival, celebrations, carnivals, and similar traditional events; therefore, they were studied in some detail, among others, by Lucia Ricciardi, who carried out a part of her dissertation work precisely on this manuscript.

She has then published an interesting book on the Florentine environment of the time, with special attention to the local festivals, tournaments, and other traditional public events of that kind. (23) It also contains a bibliographic guide, useful for further study.

## 3.10 Nerida Newbigin

Nerida Newbigin is an Australian professor, who has published many studies on the Italian literature of the Renaissance. She is responsible for the publication of the critical edition of the *Giornali* in 2002. (4)

As indicated above, we have to thank Thierry Depaulis for letting us know the first quotation of a Trionfi game, and moreover associated with the popular name of Naibi. However, this information could not arrive to us if the *Giornali* had not been published in a retrievable way.

To be complete, our thanks must also be extended to Sandra Pitronaci, the assistant of Prof. Newbigin, who reportedly compared the various versions of the Italian manuscripts kept in Florence.

What we have thus obtained can be considered as a final achievement, if no further document comes to light. Unfortunately, as already reminded, this publication of the *Giornali* could only occur on the basis of later transcriptions from the original diaries, lost in the meantime.

# 4. the life of giusto GIUSTI

## 4.1 Giuliano Staccioli (dissertation vol. I)

We have already encountered Staccioli’s dissertation, and in particular its second volume, containing the whole transcription of the *Giornali*. This was done on the basis of the first copy of Antonio da Sangallo, with additional notes from the other manuscripts.

Now we have to examine the first volume of his dissertation, 106 pages, typewritten. (24) Both volumes used the commonest sheets of paper of the time, somewhat shorter and wider than the now mostly employed A4 format, and were separately bound in blue cloth, which also was the commonest way at the time.

In the first volume we find everything of our interest, and also a description of the way in which this information gradually increased in the course of time. We have to remember the origin itself of this study: to investigate about a manuscript, written by nobody knew whom, which appeared more interesting than average − to the point that the Soprintendenza bibliografica had used its right of pre-emption and acquired it for a public library.

While transcribing the book (as inserted in the second volume of his dissertation), Staccioli began his researches in many archives and libraries and finally obtained… everything that we know on the subject. This happened in Archivio di Stato and Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, but also in local archives in Anghiari, Sansepolcro and Arezzo, nearer to the location in which the diaries were kept.

Now, an easier way to find the essential contents of this information is through the entry on Giusto Giusti in the *Dizionario Biografico*, indicated below.

## 4.2 Rita Maria Comanducci

This author had two advantages over other scholars involved in this matter. First of all, as reported by Nerida Newbigin, she is a native of Anghiari itself, and thus understandably interested in the local history. Second, she was completing her studies in the University of Florence, a condition that is not strictly necessary, in principle, in order to study Staccioli’s dissertation, but which in actual practice makes that study easier, see the appendix.

She studied the copies of the *Giornali* too. As a consequence, she reached a profuse knowledge of the subject and wrote the entry on Giusto Giusti in the renowned *Dizionario Biografico*. (25) Actually, the biographical information that is provided in the critical edition by Newbigin (4) directly derives from Rita Maria Comanducci.

She also informed Newbigin of the existence of a fifth manuscript of the *Giornali* that she had found in Kristeller’s work. (26) This is the two-leaves specimen kept in Paris and is practically useless, but seems to represent the only progress made, as for documents, after Staccioli’s researches.

What we find in the text written by Rita Maria Comanducci is uncomparably easier to retrieve and to read, with respect to Staccioli’s dissertation, and therefore she has the merit to have allowed us (and Newbigin) to become familiar with a lot of information, succinctly and accurately described.

# 5. further research on the relevant text

## 5.1 The Giusti’s notary book

Let me first insert some information on the notary book, handwritten by Ser Giusto Giusti, which was found by Staccioli in Archivio di Stato di Firenze. (27) This book of course provides us with a comprehensive outlook on the activity of Ser Giusto Giusti as a notary. In this case, it is not a copy, but the original autograph text.

It remains only to understand whether this book was the first of a whole series, or maybe of just two books of his notarial deeds. On this question I agree with the opinion of Staccioli, who suggested that our notary only compiled this one and only one book, because his activity in the following years changed completely and he was continuously involved in frenetic politic, diplomatic, and military actions.

As Staccioli indicated, even the contents of this book are not evenly distributed in the course of time; we have many deeds initially, with the last part of the book containing less deeds in a longer interval of time.

I have leafed through this book and indeed our notary appears here as a different character, in comparison with the active personage, whom we know from the chronicles of the time – his *Giornali* included.

Many deeds are related to marriage contracts, in which agreement is found on unbelievably detailed conditions and contents of the dowries, and so on. Also the places are of some interest; not only Anghiari, as expected, but also many minor locations nearby.

What we can deduce from this book is a quiet life, probably more compatible with a notary in his old age than with a young man, who had in view – as we know − much more exciting activities.

## 5.2 Checking the quotation

What we can do now is to verify if the part that we know thanks to Depaulis and Newbigin really corresponds to the text in the most ancient copy left. As already reminded, no less than five manuscripts have been found and used for the critical edition by Newbigin. Except one, they are all kept in Florence, three in Biblioteca Nazionale, one in Archivio di Stato.

All these manuscripts are not earlier than the 17th century; namely, no less than two centuries later than the original. Moreover, the sentence of our specific interest, in which the *Naibi a Trionfi* are mentioned, seems to be present in just one of the five manuscripts available. Except for the manuscript kept in Paris (which however appears to be the less relevant – not only it consists of two leaves, but it also does not deal with the time of our interest) I have verified all of them.

I can thus confirm that the text of our specific interest is only present in one of the manuscripts (28) used for the critical edition, the copy written in 1621-1622 by Carlo Strozzi in Anghiari, directly from the original notebooks of Giusto Giusti.

It must be said that this handwriting is uniform and easy to read. What I can read there is very slightly different from what I find in the printed version. *Venerdi adi 14 Settembre donai al Magnifico Signore Messer Gismondo un paio di Naibi a Trionfi che io avevo fatti fare a posta a Fiorenza con l’Armi sua belli, che mi costaro ducati quattro e mezzo*.

Most of the small differences can be explained by the conventions adopted for the transcription, which Newbigin has clearly stated at the beginning of her text.

## 5.3 Is the quotation reliable?

Of course, finding the autograph writing of Giusto Giusti could be much better than seeing his text copied after two centuries. In our case, the copyist was nobody less than Carlo Strozzi, an enthusiast bibliophile.

Can we absolutely trust in his expertise, so that we may assume that his copy exactly corresponds to the original? Here we possess many and obvious reasons for a positive answer; there is however a contrary indication too.

A general comment on all the transcriptions of the time, and especially those made by Carlo Strozzi himself, and scholars of his level, is that they did not have enough knowledge and respect for the language of the earlier centuries. (16) Local idioms and particular ways of writing were usually adapted in the transcription according to the Florentine-Italian language that these copyist themselves were at the time accurately studying with the aim to reach a language as perfect as possible.

Nevertheless, the idiom *Naibi a Trionfi* looks original to the point that it is demanding to conceive it as being still in use, or even understood, in the 17th century. As I had the opportunity to comment in another note, (6) in order to justify some doubts about the conformity to the original it may be better to select the word ducati. My suspect is that in the original text we only had the symbol for it, and that this did not correspond to Fiorino, but rather to Lira, *Lira di piccioli*. This change would reduce the actual price to 90 soldi, anyway leaving it well above what we know from other local trades of a few years later.

An indirect confirmation of the real presence of this expression in the original text comes from my discovery of a very similar idiom − *Naibi di Trionfi* instead of *Naibi a Trionfi* − in an account book written in 1452, only a dozen years later. (6)

## 5.4 Comments on the quotation

Here we find the name of Trionfi applied to playing cards for the first time ever and the location changes, very significantly in my opinion, from Ferrara to Florence. I have always suggested that any supposed trade of products from Ferrara to Florence in that time – before the import of Savonarola − had rather to be figured out in the contrary direction. (29)

Also the mention of Trionfi together with Naibi is important, indicating that they were only considered as a variation of common card packs; namely, the same playing cards, just produced in a particular version. This may appear as an obvious observation, but people still exist who think of some miraculous birth of tarot.

Unfortunately, no indication can be obtained about the composition of this pack, not even about the number of its cards. We only learn that the purchaser could obtain a pack made according to his requirement; in this case, provided with the coat of arms of the personage, Sigismondo Malatesta, who was the beneficiary of the pack. This clearly added to the price, which became remarkably higher than usual − even if we accept the correction from fiorino to lira.

No doubts can be put forward about the date of the delivery, 16 September 1440. It was inserted by Giusto Giusti in his diary. It is also easy to imagine that the pack could not have been produced long before. By the way, the diplomatic and military life of the author in those years was so active that he could not bring this special pack with him for months.

## 6. ON A WIDER HORIZON

All that has been discussed up to now concerns the studies on Giusto Giusti, as indicated in the title itself, because he ordered the pack and carried it to Sigismondo Malatesta. Let us briefly examine something about the previous and following situations too; namely, the production of the pack and its utilisation.

## 6.1 Card production in Florence around 1440

I would like to insert here a lot of information on the Florentine production of Trionfi in 1440, and possibly in previous years. Unfortunately, I am not (yet) able to do this, but something about the production of Florentine cards I can discuss.

It has been known for a long time that Naibi were documented in Florence already in 1377 and the names of a few cardmakers active in the town in early times have also been found. I could thus search for further information about these makers and their families (often the job passed from father to son).

In the last months, however, I found so many names of Florentine cardmakers that I had to postpone my research on their families, possessions, and so on. Maybe, it will be possible to complete this task before entering my second life.

The amount of makers, and especially the amount of their products was not comparable with any other Italian places − let me exclude here any comparison with the German and French productions of the time.

When we search in Milan or Ferrara, we find one or two makers who produced a few packs of cards. Usually, this was not their only job. They provided the court with many other paintings for the most various uses and events. I am not able to think of them as producers of packs that could be delivered to far places in a recurrent way. The Florentine production had instead well established destinations along the channels of the age-old trades of the Florentine merchants.

There was not only this quantitative aspect. It was possibly accompanied by an artistic level that could not find a valid competition anywhere else (except for the superior quality of the German woodblocks). Typical of the Florentine production, at the top level, were the gilded cards.

Even before the first mentions of Trionfi could be found, we read of special Florentine packs sent to Venice. I had already several opportunities to remind the known fact that valuable cards acquired for the Ferrara court actually came from Florence (exactly in the contrary direction to that suggested for the tarot spread).

My obvious task for future research is to find further and earlier data on the Florentine production of Trionfi. This is in my opinion the only reasonable source for their further spread. Independent of the possibility, which cannot be absolutely excluded, that the first idea or design of tarot occurred in the dark room of an isolated philosopher, or in the bright hall-room of a splendid palace, in any town.

## 6.2 Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta

What can we say about the receiver of the first Trionfi pack that we find mentioned (up to now)? Here the problem is not the usual one of searching and collecting suitable infomation. About Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417-1468) we rather run into the task of greatly reducing the huge amount of available information. To his life, character, events, women, family, wars, artistic interest, and so on, many works have been devoted, which span the whole domain of the literature, from scholarly essays, to poems, to historical chronicles, to novels, to monographies on single aspects.

I have seen on the Malatesta family, in particular, a recent series of more than twenty volumes; (20) there we can find any information that is searched. On the other hand, we can rely on single publications on every facet of his life, a text devoted to his wars, another to his mecenatism, another to the puzzle of the death of one of his wives, whether assassinated or not, another to his relationship with the pope, and so on.

Let us be satisfied with the concise information given in the “modern” sources (21), and go on searching for the aspect of his life that is of the greatest interest for us: his love for Trionfi. As a matter of fact, it is not the first time that we find Sigismondo Malatesta involved with Trionfi. It was already known that, a dozen years after the gift received by Giusto Giusti, he wrote letters to Milan and Cremona asking for Trionfi packs.

There should have been a real and continuous interest of him for Trionfi, worth to be investigated further.

## 6.3 Giovanni Rimondini

One can thus imagine my enthusiasm as soon as I discovered a recent article by Giovanni Remondini with the very promising title: *Le carte da trionfi di Sigismondo Malatesta*. (32) This exactly corresponded to the subject that I was looking for.

The article indeed begins in a very interesting way. We read there something of this kind: *The origin of Trionfi is currently attributed to the courts of Milan, Bologna, and Ferrara. In the middle of the 15th century there was certainly also the contribution of the Malatestian courts of Rimini-Fano-Senigallia, Cesena-Sarsina, and Pesaro-Fossombrone. Their Lords* [Signori, of course, to be exact. FP] *were at the time Sigismondo Pandolfo, Malatesta Novello, and Galeazzo dei Malatesti, who were cousins of the Visconti-Sforza, of the Este, and of the Bentivoglio*.

This multiplication of the courts cannot leave me cold. On the basis of my understanding of the situation, I cannot avoid to perceive it – once again – in the contrary direction. To be clear, let me use a bit of provocation: how much and how hard had our Florentine craftsmen to labour in producing Trionfi, in order to satisfy the needs of all the countless nobles who played with them, within so many courts!

Now, which actually were Sigismondo’s Trionfi indicated in the title? Two cards of the tarot sequence, Mondo and Imperatore, the author clearly observes in a fresco of 1451 by nobody less than Piero della Francesca in Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini. He adds that also art historians of the past had recognised there new exotic patterns (an observation that may be long-awaited by tarot fans).

The main part of the article is then dedicated to actual Malatestian tarot cards! Were they made for or used by Sigismondo? Not at all. The whole pack commented on and described − including the reproduction of some cards − is nothing else that a very recent production designed by a local artist and published in 2003, in less than 100 specimes. (33)

It is certainly a deficiency of mine not to be fascinated by the most recent achievements of tarot art, but just by its very beginning. Now, as for the ancient Trionfi − even those of Sigismondo Malatesta indicated in the title of the article − research has to go on.

# Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that there has been a remarkable endeavour by several scholars, Staccioli first of all, who allowed us to reach a satisfactory knowledge of the life of Giusto Giusti and the contents of his *Giornali*. Here their contributions have been briefly reviewed.

We are interested, after all, in a very small part of the *Giornali*, just one paragraph of a few lines, which has been copied from the original manuscript in one and only one extant copy of the 17th century. Hopefully, further copies can be found in the future, as Nerida Newbigin supposed to be possible. However, the search for finding the original notebooks of the 15th century (expected as possible by Newbigin herself) appears to be an impossible task, as already concluded years ago by a prestigious University professor in Florence.

Probably the most significant confirmation of this documentary evidence in Giusti’s *Giornali*, which represents a very important discovery for the history of playing cards, remains the finding of a very similar record, one entry in an account book, written only twelve years later on. (6)

# appendix - How to read a dissertation

Some authors had stated that further information on Giusto Giusti and his *Giornali* could be found in the dissertation of Giuliano Staccioli, discussed in 1969 in Florence University. (4,25) It must be difficult to find, since it had not been available, among others, either to Newbigin, or to Ricciardi. I have thus looked for it.

The first question that I have understood is why most of the authors who had mentioned the dissertation, had so done without actually reading it; the explanation has taken however several months.

For consulting the dissertation, I submitted my application form to the university library on 6 February 2012. This was intended as a trial to obtain by its author the authorisation to read his work. After about only three weeks, I got the answer that the author was no longer reachable by the secretariat.

Then, I had to submit a second and different application form to a University commission, the only authority which has the power to provide an allowance to read any dissertation in the absence of a permission by its author.

This commission holds its meetings without a fixed schedule and the problem here has been that, for my misfortune, they had had one just a few days before. As a consequence (with a couple of further misadventures that are not worth reminding) the commission could only give me its allowance in the meeting of 4 June 2012 (actually, the one immediately following that of February).

Then, some further bureaucratic steps had to be taken within the secretariat, until on June 21 the official communication arrived in my mailbox, and on June 27 I had the two volumes in my hand and could begin to read the dissertation.

One may well conclude to have run into an unfriendly environment. This must be referred however just to the typical bureaucratic systems. I can attest, on the contrary, that the couple of functionaries whom I met in person were more friendly and helpful than average.

## Notes

 (1) Thierry Depaulis, Personal Communication, 31.1.2012.

 (2) Ross Stewart Caldwell, *The Playing-Card*, Vol. 36 No 1 (2007) 51-62.

 (3) Giuseppe Campori, *Atti e memorie delle RR. Deputazioni di storia patria per le province modenesi e parmensi*, VII (1874) 123-132.

 (4) Nerida Newbigin, *Letteratura Italiana Antica*, III (2002) 41-246.

 (5) <http://forum.tarothistory.com/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=773>

 (6) <http://trionfi.com/naibi-trionfi-dozen>

 (7) <http://tarotforum.net/showthread.php?t=171059>

 (8) Giuseppe Mazzatinti, *Inventari dei manoscritti delle biblioteche d’Italia*. (1891-1906).

 (9) Giuseppe Mazzatinti, *Archivi della storia d’Italia, Vol. III, I serie*, Cappelli, Rocca San Casciano 1903.

(10) Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. *Studi e testi*, N. 32. (1918) ?

(11) Berta Maracchi Biagiarelli, *Antonio d’Orazio d’Antonio da Sangallo, 1551-1636, bibliofilo*. Olschki, Firenze 1957.

(12) BNCF, MS. *Nuove Accessioni* 982.

(13) BNCF, MS. II.III.88.

(14) Lorenzo Taglieschi, *Delle memorie storiche e annali della terra d’Anghiari*. S. l. : s. n., 1987?.

(15) Lorenzo Taglieschi, *Delle memorie historiche e annali della terra di Anghiari*. Fratres, Anghiari 1991.

(16) Isidoro del Lungo, *Nuova Antologia*, 53 (1880) 10-21.

(17) BNCF, MS. II.II.127.

(18) ASFI, MS. 161.5.

(19) *Anghiari : Numero unico (5 Maggio 1889) nel XXVII anniversario della società operaia*. Tip. Tiberina, Anghiari 1889. 4 p. (12).

(20) Giovanni Magherini Graziani, *L’arte a Città di Castello*. Lapi, Città di Castello 1897.

(21) Giuliano Staccioli, *Ser Giusto d’Anghiari e i suoi giornali, 1437-1483*. Università di Firenze, Tesi a.a. 1968-69. Vol. II.

(22) Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*. Academic Press New York, 1980.

(23) Lucia Ricciardi, *Col senno, col tesoro e colla lancia*. Le lettere, Firenze 1992.

(24) Giuliano Staccioli, *Ser Giusto d’Anghiari e i suoi giornali, 1437-1483*. Università di Firenze, tesi a.a. 1968-69. Vol. I.

(25) [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giusto-giusti\_(Dizionario-Biografico)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giusto-giusti_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/)

(26) Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter italicum. Vol. 3*, Warburg Institute, London 1983. (?)

(27) ASFI, *Notarile Antecosimiano*, 10017.

(28) BNCF, MS. II.II.127, c. 41v.

(29) <http://trionfi.com/fiorentini-alemanni>

(30) Centro Studi Malatestiani, *Storia delle signorie dei Malatesti*. Ghigi, Rimini 1998-2009.

(31) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigismondo_Pandolfo_Malatesta> ; [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sigismondo-pandolfo-malatesta\_(Dizionario\_Biografico)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sigismondo-pandolfo-malatesta_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/)

(32) Giovanni Rimondini, *La piè*, 75 No. 5 (2006) 217-220.

(33) Umberto Giovannini, *Tarocchi di Sigismondo*. Insegna del Fiore, Milano 2003.