

Pancio of Controne (1275 ca.-1340), a Tuscan physician at the courts of Edward II and Edward III of England

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Abstract. This article focuses on the figure of Pancio of Controne, a 14th-century Tuscan physician who played a major role as archiater at the courts of the king Edward II (1307-1327) and Edward III (1327-1377). Through documents preserved in the English and Italian archives, it is possible to trace the biography of this illustrious physician and to reconstruct his social ascent and his economic activities. What emerges is a multi-faceted figure who devotes himself as much to medicine as to political and above all economic affairs, a range of activities that can be understood if they are read in the light of late medieval society and the Italian commercial expansion of the 13th-14th centuries.

Key words: Medieval medicine, Lucca, Kingdom of England, Edward II, Edward III, court medicine

Introduction

The study of even one single figure, that of the lesser known Italian medieval physician Pancio of Controne from Lucca (†1340), can help understand the socio-cultural and economic aspects generally neglected by the more traditional forms of research into the late medieval history of Medicine.

In this paper, methodologically, we propose to investigate the biographical history of Pancio, as symptomatic of the condition of a successful 14th century physician, to develop the data obtained in a wider historical perspective and to reconstruct the socio-economic implications of the medical profession.

The historical sources of Pancio are not numerous but certainly important, above all to understand his economic activity during the English period of his life, when he became court physician under the reigns of King Edward II (1307-1327) and King Edward III (1327-1377).

The documents we analysed are stored in the Lucca State Archive (ASLu) – where there is an original

copy of Pancio's will (1, 2), an essential source to reconstruct the social organization of his family – and in the English National Archives of the Public Record Office at Kew, London. In particular, the Patent Rolls, the Close Rolls under Kings Edward II and Edward III, and the Gascon Rolls in the years 1327-1338, are fundamental to understand how he handled his economic activities (3).

Birth and origins of Pancio

Pancio was born around 1275 in a village of *Controne*, a small region of the Lucca Apennines to the north of Lucca, in the valley of the Lima river. This is a mountainous area close to the Apennine chain, where people lived in various scattered villages. A very marginal area today, in the late Middle Ages it was important for at least two reasons: for its direct political link with the city of Lucca, and for its strategic position between Tuscany and northern Italy. At the beginning of the 13th century, Controne was one of the

first mountain districts to fall under the direct control of the Commune of Lucca and to establish very close economic ties with the urban society. Furthermore, the position of the area, along the roads leading to Pistoia and to the Apennine passes, made it strategic for its connections with cities of the Emilia region, like Modena and Bologna (4).

Controne is also very close to Bagni di Corsena, a thermal bath that enjoyed a period of strong expansion in the 13th century, after the foundation in 1291 of a pilgrim hospital for thermal treatments, managed by a company of citizens from Lucca. From as early as 1299 the Hospital became direct property of the Commune of Lucca and, in 1347, the fatal year of the Plague, a dependency of the great urban Lucca Hospital of San Luca (5). This connection with thermal medicine, which developed strongly between the 13th and 14th centuries in Italy, may well have conditioned Pancio's choice of taking up medicine (6). Pancio is likely to have come into contact with medicine in the environment of local thermal baths, where it was certainly practised for the care of bathers; treatment was administered in the area of Val di Lima in stable manner starting from the late 1200s.

The family of Pancio was well rooted in this mountainous area. Pancio had probably been the richest member of his family and we may assume that his social position was truly remarkable, thanks to his studies and to the practice of the medical profession.

Education of Pancio

In the early Middle Ages Lucca already had an important local medical tradition, as can be inferred by some documents preserved in the Archiepiscopal Archive, where many physicians are recorded as witnesses in the Lombard, Carolingian and Ottonian parchments. In this period, the study of medicine was probably practised in the episcopal schools. After the year 1000 the medical tradition continued, and various physicians from Lucca were known: Rainerius, for example, was mentioned in a funerary epigraph of the 12th century housed in the Cathedral of Lucca (7). Bologna was the privileged university seat for the training of physicians from Tuscany, and from Lucca

in particular (8). In the 13th century many students from Lucca were in Bologna; the *Studium* had a very close relationship with the medical tradition of Lucca, so that many prominent professors of medicine teaching in Bologna came from the Tuscan city. At the beginning of the 13th century Ugo Borgognoni (1180-1258) left Lucca for Bologna, where he gave impetus to the medical studies by teaching, in particular, surgery. He became a supporter of the antiseptic treatment of wounds, which he dressed with wine and bandages, in contrast with the still dominant Galenic theories according to which suppuration (*pus bonum et laudabile*) was necessary to heal a wound (9). Thanks to the activity of Ugo Borgognoni, the *Studium* of Bologna set up a course in medicine, institutionalized by Pope Honorius III in 1219 (10). Borgognoni's teaching was conducted in Bologna by his children Veltro, Francesco (†1301) and Teodorico Borgognoni (1206-1298) (11). Teodorico, the most famous of the medical dynasty, was the author of a fundamental text (*Cyrurgia*), in which he collected information about the surgical discipline of his time (12, 13). Another physician from Lucca documented as teacher in Bologna was Pellegrino of Bonaventura, described in documents of the Bologna Commune as "*lucensis, doctor et lector (o rector) artis physichae seu medicinae*", and who died in 1276 (11, 14).

Considering the strong link between Lucca and Bologna, confirmed by the arrival in the prestigious institution of Bologna of prominent medical personalities who moved from the Tuscan city, Pancio is likely to have followed the example of his compatriots. The training of Pancio at the University of Bologna is also confirmed by a passage contained in his will, where the University is indicated as the seat of the college for students, to be realized with his legacy.

Pancio as medical science writer

Pancio also devoted himself to scientific studies in medicine. With regard to the medical studies of Pancio we have the testimony of a famous contemporary physician, Gentile from Foligno (1272? -1348), professor of medicine in Bologna and in Perugia. In his book "*De febribus*" (On Fevers), *Quaestio XI*, he states that "...if

fever derives from heart disease or if the heart only suffers fever" (*utrum febris sit passio cordis sive verum subiectum febris sit cor*). Gentile reports the opinion of Pancio from Lucca according to whom the level of fever depended on a "liver disease". Gentile concluded by rejecting this solution and confirmed that "fever moves from the heart as the first cause". From this testimony, it appears that Pancio took an interest in the medical theory on the origin of fever. At that time, some illustrious physicians investigated the question, generally in agreement with the Galenic theory that identified the pathogenesis of fever in heart alteration. The theory of Pancio, traded by Gentile da Foligno, was quite original: fever depended on liver and not on heart disease. Furthermore, in the Malatesta Library of Cesena, one codex mentioned another *questio* of "*magistri Pacini de Luca*": whether fever can derive from the blood that remains in its own form "*utrum ex sanguine manente in propria forma sanguinis possit fieri febris*". A further opinion of Pancio about the origins of fever is reported in this *quaestio*. The problem is related to the pathogenesis of fever but is different from the theme discussed by Gentile da Foligno.

On the basis of these evidences, it is likely that Pancio wrote a general treatise on the origin of fevers, as suggested by Augusto Mancini, who found this mention in the Malatesta Library (2, 15). The dissertation of Pancio has gone lost, but it seems to have been known by the 14th century physicians.

First steps in the career of Pancio and his arrival in England

In 1309, before the English period, Pancio was remembered in Lucca in a particular public act against the Commune of Milan, a sign showing that he actively participated in the politics of his city and that he had become a relevant figure in his community of origin (16).

Before arriving in England, Pancio has had various experiences in Europe. In 1312, he was in fact in France at the papal court of Avignon, where he was working as doctor for the Florentine Frescobaldi family dedicated to merchandising in the Provençal land (3). The Frescobaldi were already well established in

the London environment, where they probably introduced Pancio into the English scene.

At the beginning of the 14th century, the Lucca community in London was mainly composed by merchant-bankers. Lucca expanded its trade and financial services in Europe, especially in Rome, Sicily, Provence, France (Champagne), Flanders and England between the 12th and 13th centuries. In particular, Lucca had a monopoly for the production of silk fabrics in Western Europe during the 13th century. The production of luxury items in silk brought the merchants of Lucca into contact with the aristocratic elites, and the businessmen of the Tuscan city were easily introduced to the European courts. In 1284 Lucca was the seat of 22 merchant-finance companies constituted as lasting alliances between families, operating in international affairs (17, 18). Companies of Lucca had been present in London ever since the 13th century, and the Ricciardi bank was the most important in the English Kingdom at the time of Edward I (19, 20). In the first half of the 14th century, other important Florentine companies joined the Lucca companies, including the Frescobaldi, Peruzzi and Bardi companies, in which Pancio was also involved with business relations.

Pancio at the court of Edward II

Contacts of Pancio with the court of Edward II date back to 1317, when the king granted him a yearly sum of £25 (21: 57). The following year his salary quadrupled to £100, a sign confirming that his services had been highly appreciated (21: 199). In the following years Pancio received different forms of payment: in 1320 Queen Isabella granted him with a portion of the proceeds from the duty on wool, hides and woolfells collected at Southampton, the port on the English Channel from which exports for continental Europe departed, and he was also guaranteed the export rights on 80 wool sacks (22: 195). Pancio transferred the export privilege to the Florentine bank of the Bardi and raised money directing from them (22: 255). From the year 1322 Pancio obtained payments based on real estate and land income: the manors of Chiselborough in Somerset, Brambletye and Lavertye in Sussex, Plashes in Hertfordshire were granted to him for life, "as long

as he should remain in the realm, for the good service which he had rendered to the King”, and in place of the yearly grant of £100. If the income from these estates exceeded the yearly sum of £100, the balance had to be repaid to the Exchequer (23: 137). This way of managing the Archiater's payments from the King and Queen continued in the following years, and in 1326 he obtained confirmation of the grant deriving from the knights' fees pertaining to the same manors (23: 385).

The episode of Castruccio Castracani

Pancio of Controne never broke contacts with the Italian motherland and he was indeed a landmark for the Lucca population, which maintained commercial or political relations with London and with the English Royal Court. Among the businessmen of Lucca origin in England at the beginning of the 300s there were many political exiles, including Castruccio Castracani degli Antelminelli. During a brawl in London between 1301-1303 Castruccio, who was later to become one of the principal Ghibelline warlords in Italy and captain of the Lucca army, killed a compatriot, the merchant Ciato Ronzini. For this murder, Castruccio was forced to escape from England. In September 1325 he soundly defeated Florence in the battle of Altopascio and celebrated a Roman-style triumph in Lucca. He was named Duke of Lucca by the Emperor Ludovico the Bavarian and he was champion of the Italian Ghibellines and a leading international figure. Thanks to the intervention of Pancio on 12 December 1325, Castruccio obtained the “card of forgiveness” from King Edward II, and therefore the grace of penalty of banishment from the English domains (2, 24: 200). Pancio obtained a similar grace a few days later, on 27 December 1325, for another compatriot, Levino Denuso of Lucca, who had killed a certain Iohannes Cacheger, probably under the same circumstances as those of Castruccio (24: 203). However, it is above all the episode relating to Castruccio of 1325 that shows the important political-diplomatic role of Pancio. The rehabilitation of Castruccio at the English court thanks to Pancio takes on the features of a real political act. Pancio played a diplomatic role that had a dual

value, both for Lucca under Castruccio's dominion and for the English Kingdom. Pancio therefore exerted a strong influence on the king, and he firmly held his position at the royal court even after Edward III succeeded his father on the English throne in 1327.

Pancio at the court of Edward III

Starting from 1328 Pancio obtained a series of properties, partly deriving from those confiscated from Hugh le Despenser in 1326, such as the manor of Temple Guytyng in Gloucestershire. The properties were donated by King Edward III, at that time minor under the influence of his mother Isabella and her lover Sir Roger Mortimer (25: 95).

Pancio was involved in the management of the mint of Bordeaux in the years 1327-1332. Thanks to Pancio, in 1327 the king named his compatriot and partner Pellegrino of Controne “master of the King's mint in Bordeaux” (26: 39), and Giovanni Bonaguidi of Lucca “keeper of the dies of the king's mint” for five years (26: 39).

The name of another relative of Pancio first appears in the Gascon Rolls in 1331, when the king assigned Giovanni Nicola of Controne at the “office of assay of the king's money” (26: 43), and in 1332 at “the keepership of the dies of the king's mint” in Bordeaux, probably replacing Giovanni Bonaguidi (26: 44).

In the years 1336-1338 the King assigned to Pancio various responsibilities in Aquitaine, which he exercised through his agents, particularly in Agenais in 1336 as “keeper of the king's seal” (26: 48), and in Blaye in 1337-38 (26: 49).

In June 1333 the King granted to Pancio the farm of the city of Norwich (27: 50), and in March 1335 the custody of the manor of Brambletye in Sussex. The property already belonged to John de Seyntclere, who also had custody of the young heir of Seyntclere (25: 435).

A reference to a property held by Pancio in London, namely a tenement in the parish of Saint Maria Magdalen, Southwark, appears in 1336 (27: 678).


In 1338 Pancio went to the Low Countries, probably following the king during the very first phase of the Hundred Years' War; he then returned to England


and again to the king in November (28: 163). As real archiater, Pancio was probably with the king when Edward III was preparing the military raid in the kingdom of France from North in 1339 (29).

Pancio made huge profits thanks to his proximity to the king and queen. It is worth noting how Pancio, who had founded his wealth on the practice of the medical profession, became a leading protagonist of the English scene, reinvesting his fortunes and becoming a lender, in the same way as the large mercantile financial groups.

A change in the financial relations with the king began in 1337. The royal finances fell greatly with the start of the Hundred Years' War and therefore, after 1337, Pancio became a creditor of the king, who owed him the enormous sum of over £6465 (30: 192). In 1338 Pancio obtained permission to export 40 sacks of wool to Italy paying only fifty percent of the customs fees (30: 313), and receiving from the king another payment of £105 (30: 376), only a small proportion of the king's entire debt.

Pancio suffered the same failure to repay the debt suffered by the great Bardi and Peruzzi companies that failed in 1343 (only three years after Pancio's death) because of the debts contracted with King Edward III.

One of Pancio's last economic actions was the sale of the manor of uiting to William de Clinton, Earl of Huntingdon, which took place on 9 September 1340, about one month before his death (31: 623).

After that event nine sarplars of wool, which had been prepared by the physician, were sent to Brabant, Belgium, on 8 October 1340 by order of the King, who expressed his gratitude and appreciation for Pancio's service (31: 556). In 1374, the King appeared to no longer be bound to Pancio, and the debt was recorded as discharged (3). Someone who lived after the physician must have bought Pancio's bound managing to get back the sum. 

Death of Pancio and his will

Pancio died in the first days of October 1340. On 1 June, 1338, about two years before his death "*honorabilis et sapiens vir Magister Pancius de Controne, illustris domini Regis Anglie phisicus*" he wrote his will in

London, in the sacristy of the priory of "Austin Friars" before Uguccio Sensii de Ficulli, an Italian notary operating in England. A complete copy of the will is housed at the Fund of the Opera of S. Croce, at the State Archive of Lucca (1, 2). This fundamental document reconstructs the social environment of Pancio, on the basis of information about his family, the links with his town of origin near Lucca and, of course, his aspirations at the end of his life. Many of the legates of Pancio awaited the return of the huge sums, not explicitly defined but recorded in his will as "*duae magnae pecuniarum sumae*" that the King of England owed to Pancio. We know from Close Roll charts that the King's debt amounted to the incredible sum of £6465. Three hypotheses are made in the will: the first, according to which the king pays; the second, according to which the king does not pay so that the guarantee goods are sold; the third, according to which the king does not pay and the guarantee goods are not sold, and everything remains entrusted to the good will of the executors.

After having stated that he wants to be buried in the convent of the Franciscan Friars, the thought of Pancio goes to the king, to whom he wants to make a donation in gold, even though Edward III owed him a lot of money, and the credit would then affect all the legacies listed in his will. Information on Pancio's family can be evinced from this document: his father was a certain Pellegrino of Controne and his mother to a family of Rocca Mozzano, a little castle in the Serchio Valley, not far from the Controne region. He had a son called Gerardo, to whom he left his books, four brothers and a sister, called Agnese, with her daughter Bella. He left a sum of money as dowry for Bella and other grandchildren of marriageable age, and a long-term investment for his sister Agnese. More precisely, Pancio stated in his will that the executors should not award her with three hundred gold florins, but that the sum should be invested in a mercantile company so that the profit of the investment would be paid to the woman each year until her death, after which the sum was to pass to the other heirs of the testator. Pancio's nephew Iacopo, son of his brother Raimondo of Controne, was appointed executor of the will.

In the document, the Lucca physician, in addition to his relatives, appointed numerous people from Con-

trone and others who in various ways rotated around him in the English period. For example, he allocated fifty gold florins each year to Guidone of the Ciocia for the time he had served him, and a hundred if he accepted to be one of his executors, besides assuring him food and drink. Two hundred florins and the «stuff» – to which he was entitled according to Pancio's provisions for each year – were assigned to Damiano di Paulo from Controne, for the expenses incurred for his journeys to Florence. To his valet Hariotto he allocated fifteen marks sterling, in addition to his horse, his bed, his weapons and the doublet he was obliged to wear on his own order; he ordered that his chamberlain Filippo de Ibernia, should receive ten marks and two clothes; he assigned one hundred pounds to the «apothecary» Giovanni of Lucca. The people mentioned in Pancio's will belonged to his retinue and if Hariotto and Filippo of Ibernia were foreigners, probably hired during his travels, the others were compatriots. He had therefore organized a kind of court, a sort of extended family of non-noble coterie that he could trust.

Through his testamentary dispositions, he sorted out his businesses, and the outstanding debts he had with the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem in London, with the bank of Peruzzi and Bardi, and with others. From the documents of the Close Roll it results that Pancio at least since 1325 had entertained various businesses (32: 339, 33: 103), including some loans, generally with his partners Peregrino of Controne and Azzolino Simonetti, with the priors of the Hospital of San Giovanni in London (32: 564). The idea that Pancio had lent his services to the Hospital of Saint John in London, as hypothesized by Della Capanna (34), must be discarded, as there seems to have been only a financial-commercial business relationship. Pancio also appears as witness in an important document drawn up on 4 January, 1335, which guaranteed the prior of the Hospital of Saint John many assets previously fallen under the control of the king.

Azzolino Simonetti was one of the most accredited bankers of Lucca in London, while his countryman and partner Pellegrino of Controne in 1327 was appointed by the king «master of the King's mint in Bordeaux», thanks to Pancio (26: 39). Both figures are present in many business documents stored in the Public Record Office.

Pancio could not personally follow his properties and respective incomes abroad; therefore, he appointed prosecutors, including Giovanni Marsuppini, a Florentine who came to England with one of the Florentine companies, and whom he sent even to Ireland to treat his economic interests.

Pancio recognized the importance of study for young people and expressed his desire to create an institution for them. He arranged for a house destined to twelve students to be purchased in the city of Bologna, with the sum returned by the king. In the Bolognese Committee, goods of the value of two thousand five hundred pounds of Bologna silver coins (*piccioli*) were purchased, and the income was to serve to support the students: three in grammar and arts, three in medicine, three in law and three in canon law. Iacopo di Raimondo of Controne, his nephew, heir and executor, was supposed to assess the qualities of the candidates. If he did not find a sufficient number of young people, he would have to fall back on others closer to the specified requirements. The students considered suitable, could stay in the house for no longer than seven years. The project was conditioned by the king's conduct, but had to be implemented even in the case of non-return of the debt, so that the executors had to sell the guarantee goods. In the case of death of Iacopo and his heirs, Pancio ordered that the Bologna Archdeacon of the time should intervene and take responsibility in the matter.

The debt of Edward III was not paid before Pancio's death and became essential for the complete execution of his wills. However, Pancio had stated that some of his wills should be carried out independently of repayment of the real debt, in particular the institution of the Bologna College. With this legacy, Pancio demonstrated a philanthropic will for the development of studies, truly remarkable for those times.

Alongside Giovanni of Montechiaro and Azzolino Simonetti, the banker of Lucca, as executors of the will, Pancio wanted his nephew Iacopo di Raimondo and some of his heirs of the Controneria, who were granted maximum discretionary authority over all the decisions to be made «*both here and across the sea of England*».

As it was customary for wealthy people, after having settled some pending debts, Pancio ordered the

perpetual presence of a choir of four chaplains to celebrate Masses for the salvation of his soul and that of his relatives in the church of S. Martino in Lucca.

Conclusions

Pancio of Controne can certainly be considered a paradigmatic figure of a successful late medieval physician. He reached the pinnacle of success in the medical profession as English king's archiater, but it is difficult to explain his social ascent and his international success if we do not insert his figure in the business world of some Italian cities between the 13th and 14th centuries. Pancio of Controne is a son of the "13th century commercial revolution" (35). The Italian banking and commercial network allowed him to arrive at the English court, which had become the launching pad for the management of innumerable businesses alongside the profitable medical profession. In addition to his activity as king's physician in England, Pancio was engaged in numerous financial activities undertaken with some of the leading merchant bankers of the time, such as the Florentine Bards, or with Azzolino Simonetti, a well-known merchant and banker of Lucca.

His activities range from the medical art, which he practised for the Royal court (but probably also for other patients with high financial resources), and his commercial and money-lending businesses.

The Lucca medical tradition, started by Pancio in England, seemed to continue even after his death: in the 15th century Davino de' Nigarelli from Lucca also became archiater of the King of England Henry IV (7).

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