



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE LUPORUM LINEAGE

Origins: Between Legend and Tradition

Legend has it that the *Luporum lineage* originates from the Roman consul **Publio Rutilio Lupo**, a senator in 90 BC, from whom the Gallo-senatorial family of **San Lupo Franconio** descended, known in history for having stopped Attila at the gates of the city of Troyes (pron.: *truà*).

The 17th-century Parmese genealogist **Ippolito Calandrini** traces the **Lupis** family to a brother of **San Lupo, Sisulfo Franconio**, squire of King Meroveo, who, in honor of his brother's memory, changed his surname to **Lupo**.

An 8th-century parchment of **Re Liutprando** refers to the first Marquis of the **Lupis di Soragna** and is preserved in the archive of the Princes of Soragna.

Through the female line, **Ludovico Antonio Muratori** links the Luporum lineage to the **marchesi Obertenghi**, of Lombard origin. The first branches of the **casata Obertenga** were the **Pallavicino**, the **Este** (from whom the Kings of Hanover, who ascended to the throne of England, descended), the **Malaspina**, the **Cavalcabò**, and the **Lupi**.

The **Lupi** family held the lordship of Soragna starting in 1198. **Guido I Lupi**, the family's progenitor, bore the title of Marquis of Soragna.

By imperial diploma, on September 20, 1347, **Ugolotto Lupi** was invested with the marquisate of Soragna by Emperor **Carlo IV**.

As a consequence of loyalty to the Empire and due to the annexations carried out by the **Visconti**, Dukes of Milan, the family was exiled.

During his exile, Ugolotto's son, **Bonifacio Lupi**, distinguished himself as a captain commanding Florentine troops in the struggles against the Pisans. Having gone to Padua in 1372, he began the construction of the **Cappella di San Giacomo** within the **Basilica del Santo**, where he was buried in 1390.

A personal friend of **Petrarca**, in 1374 he covered the expenses for Petrarca's funeral.

On **Via San Gallo** in Florence, in 1377, he built the **Ospedale di San Giovanni Battista**, now the headquarters of the Police Department.

The family's loyalty to **Carlo IV** also led to **Raimondino Lupi** being stripped of his possessions. Refusing to swear allegiance to Archbishop **Giovanni Visconti**, Raimondino chose exile and in 1351 entered the service of the Florentines.

In 1353, after being appointed counselor to the King of Bohemia, Raimondino acted as the emperor's representative to forge alliances with the cities of the anti-Visconti league and to prepare the ground for the imminent coronations of **Carlo IV** as King of Italy and Holy Roman Emperor, which took place in 1355.



In 1370, he settled in Padua, where in 1376 he obtained citizenship from **Francesco Carrara**. The following year, Raimondino commissioned the erection of the **Oratorio di San Giorgio**. He entrusted the decoration of the oratory to the painter **Altichiero da Zevio**, who had already worked for his nephew in the **Cappella di San Giacomo** in the **Basilica del Santo**.

Raimondino was originally buried in the center of the oratory, under a large pyramid supported by columns and marble wolves. Due to the magnificence of this structure, the monument became an object of veneration, leading to the oratory's closure towards the end of the 15th century. When, in 1797, Napoleonic troops turned the **Oratorio di San Giorgio** into a prison, the urn was desecrated and the statues destroyed.

The oratory is notable for its stunning fresco decoration, considered Altichiero's challenge to Giotto. The frescoes depict scenes from the lives of **San Giorgio**, **Santa Caterina**, **Santa Lucia**, and episodes from the life of Jesus.

Another Lupi legacy in the **Basilica del Santo** in Padua is a silver reliquary preserved in the Basilica's treasury, which he donated to the friars along with a relic of a tooth of **San Giorgio**.

The Meli Lupi Family and the Imperial Investiture of the Holy Roman Emperor

In 1513, lacking direct heirs, **Diofebo I Lupi** chose his great-nephew **Giampaolo Meli**, nephew of his sister **Caterina**, as successor. Emperor **Carlo V** confirmed Giampaolo's feudal rights by diploma on April 10, 1530, granting him the rank of Noble of the Holy Roman Empire and authorizing him to include the imperial eagle in the family coat of arms. The **Meli** family thus adopted the name **Meli Lupi** and incorporated the **Lupi** arms.

By diploma of February 19, 1683, Emperor **Leopoldo I** granted **Giampaolo IV** the title of Palatine Count of the higher order.

With the decisive support of **Eugenio di Savoia**, on August 14, 1709, Emperor **Giuseppe I** granted the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, inheritable by primogeniture in the male line and, in case of extinction, by the nearest collateral branch, with the style of Serene Highness, and granting various privileges, including the right to mint coinage.

The diploma explicitly stated that Soragna was "*subject to no one except the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.*" This further confirmed Soragna's status as an autonomous state, free from Spanish domination and the hegemonic ambitions of the **Farnese**.

This new imperial dignity was a shrewd political move aimed at limiting Spanish influence in Italy. However, it was not welcomed by the Duke of Parma, **Francesco Farnese**, who unsuccessfully initiated legal actions to challenge the title. The elevation of Soragna to an Imperial Principality reaffirmed that the Duchy of Parma was not a papal fief but imperial territory.

To balance the imperial privileges, Giampaolo obtained in 1711 the title of Grandee of Spain from Emperor **Carlo VI d'Asburgo**, which, however, was lost in 1731 due to the Treaty of Vienna in favor of **Carlo III di Borbone**. The new Duke of Parma reconfirmed the princely title that same year to Giampaolo's successor, his brother **Nicolò I**. At the same time, Nicolò I obtained from Emperor **Carlo VI** the imperial right of succession to the fief and princely title.



As proof of the exceptional sovereign status granted by the Empire, the **Meli Lupi** exercised over the centuries the various rights associated with this condition, including the right to mint coinage: the gold **Scudo d'oro di Soragna** is today an authentic numismatic rarity. Only a few specimens are preserved in the **Museo della Rocca**.

The Last Feudal Lord of Soragna and the Birth of the Meli Lupi–Tarasconi Branch

Guido IV Meli Lupi – born in 1741 – paid particular attention to the administration of the fief, and under his rule, the town center saw considerable urban development. Guido IV was the last feudal lord of Soragna: with the abolition of feudal privileges, the principle of equality of all citizens before the law prevailed in Soragna. The French domination brought with it these new political ordinances.

It is very interesting to note how the fief of Soragna over the centuries continually received recognition of its status as an *Imperial Fief*, independent of the rulers of the Duchy of Parma; a theoretical independence that could even be invoked today against the Italian State, since Soragna was not included in the list of principalities suppressed by the Restoration at the Congress of Vienna.

In 1857, **Conte Luigi Tarasconi** named **Marchese Luigi Lupo Meli Lupi**, second son of **Diofebo V**, as his universal heir. By decree of February 12, 1858, **Duchessa Luisa Maria di Borbone**, acting as regent for her son **Roberto**, ordered the addition of the **Tarasconi** title and surname, with the obligation to combine the coats of arms of the two families, thus giving rise to the **Meli Lupi di Soragna Tarasconi** branch.

Along with the title, the inheritance included the **Villa di Vigatto**, considered one of the most beautiful aristocratic residences in the Province of Parma.