

*Thesis*

**Role of vendetta in narrative sources**  
*Idology of politics/society and family strategy in*  
*Tuscany between*  
*1289 and 1424*

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**Szeged**

**2021**

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**1. Methodes and sources**

In my thesis I primarily examined the motivations and the aims of the authors of the vendetta stories. I also examined the political/cultural background in which the chroniclers worked. In my research I focused the circle of the primer sources as regards on the region of historical Tuscany. I also sorted them out chronologically narrowing to the period between 1289 and 1424. It was an important criterion element within each part, to mirror the historiographical diversity of the examined medieval cities. My aim was to observe not just the special conclusions about each topics and sources, but to draw general ones too. In the dissertation, the different topics followed as: the Florentine vendetta stories, the revenges from Pistoia, the fights of the Senese clans, the lessons from the ricordanze and the luchese sources which born in the end of the period.

### **I examined the following vendettas:**

Buondelmonte - Amidei	1215 Florence
Ruzza d'Arrigo di Luchese di Bonavia de'Sirigati - Scolari	1260 Florence (contado)
Mannelli - Velluti	1267/1295 Florence
Dore (Cancellieri) – Vanni (Cancellieri)	1300 Pistoia
Simone (Cancellieri) – Pero Pecoroni	1300 Pistoia
Dettorino, Vanni Fucci, Zazzara – Bertino Vergolesi	1300 Pistoia
Focaccia, Freduccio di Lippo – Detto di Sinibaldo	1300 Pistoia
Fredi (di Detto di Sinibaldo) - Bertracca	1300 Pistoia
Focaccia - Dettorino di Re di Rossi	1300 Pistoia
Giovanni Berignalle - Lorenzo di Dietaiuti de' Velluti, Velluto	1310 Florence
son of Boccaccio Adimari - Gherardo Bordoni	1307 Florence
young Donati – Betto Brunelleschi	1310 Florence
Paffiera Cavalcanti - Pazzino Pazzi	1311 Florence
Balsino di Francesco Tolomei - Francesco di Vanni Sinibaldi (Salimbeni)	1321 Siena
Giovanni Bottone - Tolomei	1322 Siena
Francesco Tolomei - Salimbeni	1322 Siena
Pietro di Mino Mellone, Tavenazzo di Meo Cristofani, Francesco (Tolomei) - Benuccio, Alessandro (Salimbeni)	1330 Siena
Salimbeni - Tolomei	1331 Siena
Agnolino Bottone, Stricha di Giovanni, Meio di Cione (Salimbeni) - Francesco Toso Tolomei, Carluccio di Francesco Tolomei, Bonaventura Tolomei, Pietro di Francesco Ughi de' Piccolomini	1331 Siena

Meo di Nicola, Ranieri di Guccio (Malavolti), Neri d'Agnolo di Neri Radolfini - Naddo di Benuccio de' Piccolomini	1332 Siena
Vanuccio di Guiduccio de' Saraceni – Salinbene Scotti	1333 Siena
Deo di Pierozzo, Amerigo di Rigolo de' Malavolti - Nicolò di Salamone de' Piccolomini	1333 Siena
Nuccio di Guido (Saraceni) - Francesco di Filippo (Scotti)	1340 Siena
Piovano, Charllo, Charsilio Gherardini - Antonio di Totto Rinaldo (Panzani)	1344 Florence
Luca di Totto, Antonio - Carlo Gherardini	1350 Florence
Antonio Guinigi, Nicolao Sbarra - Lazzaro Guinigi	1392 Lucca
Giovanni Ciecie, Michele Bianchi – Matteo Firodolfi	1399 Florence
Luca da Panzano – Giovanni Ciecie	1420 Florence
Pedro di Argillaia - Nicolao Trinci, Bartolomeo Trinci	1421 (Nocera)

## 2. Vendetta and game-theory

In the research I analysed the structural buildings, the logic and storytelling structures of vendetta tales. Some cases I observed the differences or similarities between the chronicler's mentality. I paid distinctive attention to the game-theory analyses of the vendettas, which is a new wave in the international violence-history researches, also an absolute novelty in publications concerning medieval themes. This viewpoint helped to understand the edification of the vendetta stories in several cases. In the scientific literature the main topic is about the legal status and the questions about the legitimacy of vendetta in the medieval urban environment. There are two main viewpoints in the literature about the legitimacy of vendetta. The first say that revenge confers for a quasi-legitimated status, but the second opinion thinks that in the examined period in overall circumstances

the revenge was obligated by the medieval city governments. The first is mainly the Zorzi-kind functional theory and the latter is the opinion which confers for by Trevor Dean. I think that both of them convey real recognise: the two approaches also existed in the Tuscan city societies. From the game theory viewpoint the vendetta was a useful behaviour in a micro society. The implication of the vendetta phenomena was a sort of terrifying communication tool against the users of the aggressive strategy, it was useful for city too. Although the vendetta was easily become harmful too, because when the opposite parties started to use it in reality, as the tool of revenge, it could result in great harms for the society.

The thoughts about vendetta could be enrolled into groups on the basis of viewpoints of the individuals/micro societies and the viewpoint of the bigger groups/cities. As long as the vendetta didn't became an experience of the whole society, only the viewpoints of participators could be observed in the sources. We can conclude that the thoughts about the vendetta term were had a hardly observed border. Than, the vendetta developed to an ideology from a conflict resolution strategy.

Kinds of approaches to vendetta could be changed in source types, so I start the introduction of the overall observations and comparison of the different types of sources. The examined sources in the current composition could be enrolled in three general types: the main city chronicles, the family history work (or *ricordanze/ricordi*) and novels which inserted in the city chronicles. The special viewpoints about the vendetta could be determined from the differences of each works. For most of the chroniclers and history writers, the writing glory and decline of the cities was the leading topic. Those authors who wrote about the Tuscan city republic history, viewed the factional strives and the linked vendettas as a danger for the stability. The *popolo simpatisant*

authors, such as Compagni or Villani, consisted the hindering of internal separation politics, as the security for the glory of the city. Those whose works followed this line, the strategic side of vendetta was just symbolically presented. Although, this allow us to examine the stories from the view of game theory. The basic model in these cases meant the comune expected behaviour pattern against individual ones. This could be explained with the opposition of sum maximalized hawk-, and the conflict avoiding pigeon strategies. Because of the different narrative viewpoints we can conclude that the interactions are mainly distorted: the authors are usually didn't mention the sum (or minimalized it) what can be reached by the hawks. These could be observed in the case of great numbers of the Florentine chroniclers. This can be observing in the popularity of the Buondelmonte-Amidei vendetta story, which was written down over hundreds of years in a similar form. Stefani, Bruni or Machiavelli wrote almost the same about this as the early 14<sup>th</sup> century writers. Accordingly in the viewpoint, that the vendetta is dangerous for the city, wasn't changed in the Middle Ages.

### **3. Ricordi**

The ricordanze or ricordi show the micro society viewpoint. In these we can observe different dimensions in time and tér. The periods, which wrote down by the chroniclers are much shorter, in some cases it could be only a few days (for example the work of Luca di Panzano). The experiencies from the past which is the inner history of the micro societies are much shorter than in the city chronicles, but also much direct. The experiences which affected the different groups were more treat-like. The authors such as Luca di Panzano or Donato Velluti were involved in vendettas directly. In those cases when the family chroniclers weren't participated personal in the conflicts, we can speak about more direct memory rather than the city chronicles. The active

family memory conveyance between the older and younger generations and the important family/group identity caused a more personal viewpoint (for example Lapo Niccolini). Because of this, it was possible for them not to write down the vendetta tales, but to analyse the reasons and the succeeding events too. They can incorporate the experiences into the actual family strategy of their own age. The ricordanze authors knew the weight, the preferences and the drawbacks of vendetta, which were demonstrated by their own experiences. It's important to emphasise that the possible sum or the possible drawbacks were always phrased with the knowledge of the overall urban politics. Although, the reflexion about vendetta in these cases was corresponded to the familiar strategy and not for the comune's ideology. Neither of the authors wrote that the family revenge was a mistake because of moral or spiritual issues. In all sources the occurrent negative opinions were framed because the family facilities or the external politics of the city.

These observations shows that the vendetta wasn't an abstract notion on the floor of the micro societies but a real strategical tool (for example the obligation of Velluto or the rush against the Gherardini). Thus the city chronicles shown the game theory cogitations as theoretical models which are wilfully heavily disfigured, the edification of the ricordanze are based on real expediencies, which shown by the colourful of them. Although this not means that caputs of the familiar history writings don't have game theory relations: for the avengers the vendetta was a tool to keep honour and prevent further offences. They tried to attack the hostiles at the optimal time and place. These were not just spontaneous ad hoc cases but demonstrably conscious actions as well. We can conclude that the Velluti or the Panzani ponder their possibilities and they just decided on the vendetta when the city politics and their family powers gave opportunity to do it. The mentality of ricordanze vendetta stories are in a sharp contrast with the urban chronicles

tales. The examined sources are involved in the family identity too. We can say that the aim of the ricordi is not only marginalisation of the communal goals, but to define the commune notion: it is confined to the inner family, and the city is just the background which indicates the movement borders. The examined cases of vendetta tales from the familiar writings point out that the attacks were not against the viewpoints of the comune but these parallel with each other: the Scolari and the Mannelli were well-known banned ghibellines, the Gherardini brothers and Ciecie were outlaw people. The examples examined in the dissertation don't refute the peaceful mentality of the urban chronicles, but show on the differences between the narrative genres. The personal and the communal viewpoints, as I wrote above, were present side by side at the same time, but with different rhetorical tools and ideological backgrounds in the medieval Tuscany. These observations support the Zorzi-kind functionalist theory: the use of different rhetorical elements in different genres shows that the vendetta stories had cultural and linguistic frames.

#### **4. Short novels**

The examined novels showed similar structures to the vendetta stories from the chronicles: the introduction of the hostile families, the introduction of the initial offense and the decision making situation which potentially leads to revenge. The points which were thought to be important by the authors – similarly to other sources- always could be derived from the last two structural parts. The decision-making situations could be stood parallel with the similar points of the chronicles. This is also underpinned by that the authors usually gave sentences into the actors' mouth (for example the Buondelmonte-Amidei or the Cancellieri-vendettas). These usually linked to those logical elements when the actors are in a dilemma and they speak about



their decisions. In my opinion this indicates that the elements that could be read in the history works should be well-known, by creating the interpretation context of the novels. This implication is strengthened by the fact that characters of Sercambi's four novels could be stood in parallel with real people and signorial families.

Although, we can observe important differences. In the novels, the dilemma does not refer to the difference between the personal and communal decisions, but it means usually something more special. In the case of Sercambi the main goal is the teaching-will towards the signore, Paolo Guinigi. In his works the aggressor, who carried out offenses to others, generated his own failure (for example Hectore Pallavicino or Orlando Rossi).

## **5. Legends of vendetta**

The examined vendetta stories could be sorted by the way of information delivery: quality and quantity too. Based on these thoughts I distinct the greater vendetta legends, the smaller vendetta legends, and the basic revenge records. The greater legends could deliver information in broader circle.

A good example is the Buondelmonte-Amidei vendetta and the Cancellieri-vendetta, which were written down in other city's chronicles. Because of the reception of these we can conclude that for the several different authors these could be important information as a message function over a few generations. The smaller legends were such events which were written down in one or two different works, although weren't well-known as the greater ones. These were usually born in one-two generations after the event. Their main points were dramatic elements, for example the mutilation of Gherardo Bordonni or the chess game of Betto Brunelleschi. The type of memory is a tell-tale: only

the sensational parts remained important. Simone della Tosa wrote about the death of Betto, but gave just two pieces of information: the fact of the murder and the chess game. I think that these points could be startling for some reason, so these were parts of the narrative (or oral) memory for a few decades. In spite of this, these points didn't have resultant signification, accordingly they didn't become parts of a greater/broader historical tradition. Those violent acts – vendettas – which were written down as basic historical records could show specialities in each chronicles. The Senese authors jotted down the exact events with real dates, but the Anonimo Pistoiese just mentioned the year of the actions. The overall historical notes didn't show symbolic elements, neither moral lesson.

Namely, the chroniclers usually play off the confrontations, they didn't write about the qualities of the participators, nor their decisions they made. This viewpoint can be read out from the descriptions of the reconciliation acts (for example the *Cronaca senese*).

In other cases (Pistoia) the narrative event records described the structure of the conflicts and the vendettas step by step. The latter is a good example of that how the factional fights caused real danger to the commune. The sources examined in the dissertation introduced firstly in chronological order, secondly in narrative types. However, it is also important that we should started from the authors of city republics (Compagni, Villani or Velluti), than continued through the restricted-oligarchy (Bruni, Lapo Niccolini or Panzano) to the ministerial of the Signoria (Sercambi).

## **6. Particular observations**

In the stories of Buondelmonte-Amidei vendetta, those structural elements which had important role for several authors over a lot of centuries can be

differentiated. Enrico Faini and Gordon already observed that some elements of the vendetta tale are always show up. I think that these perpetual elements and the symbolic turning points were not just rhetorical, but the tools which emphasised the decision points. These were the statue of Mars, the date of the murder were constant elements, and the sentences which the characters said in the story had the most importance.

Compagni and Villani thought that the cause of the oath breaking was just the beauty of the Donati girl. Stefani and Bruni catered a more widely moving circle for Buondelmonte, since according to their opinions; the motivation was not just the beauty of the girl, but other features too. My opinion is that emphasising the noble roots and the virtues of the Donati girl were tools which criticised not just the grandi, but most precisely the leading families of the restricted oligarchy. The overall teaching conclusion might be the controversy of the personal advantage and the communal goods.

The croniclers who wrote about the the Cancellieri-vendetta could be separated into two main groups: florentine and pistoia works. The first category shows that we can observ important differencies within one historical tradition. The aim of the story from Villani to Machiavelli was to simplify the interregional relations. By examining of the story structure we can conclude that the turining-points of the story had a similar role such as the Buondelmonte-Amidei case.

Although we can observe a logic paradox. While the vendetta of 1215 teaches the reader the communal values, the white Cancellieri's peaceful negotiation attempt caused a violent answer. Among the thoughts of the communal peace this could be named as a teaching-tale paradox: the peaceful acts didn't lead to peace in every cases, so the players in the 13th-14th century society could lose without aggression.

The factional strife events by the Anonimo Pistoiese, show greatly the route, on which a less powerful comune achieved the phase of powerlessness within only 1-2 years. This ended in the Florentine beavatkozás. The source is highly important because it shows for the researcher that in which mode the Cancellieri-vendetta match into a conflict chain of about ten vendettas. By the caputs of the pistoiese chronicle I think that the author, who overall had negative opinion about factional strives, to some degree sympathized with the white Cancellieri. I conclude that the stories of Cancellieri-vendetta can be enrolled into the group of the larger vendetta legends.

The vendettas wrote down primarily by Dino Compagni, linked to the fall of the black guelf party-leaders. The violent events are good examples to those cases which had a huge reflection in the first half of the 14th century, but in longer dimensions it didn't become the part of the Florentine historiographical memory. I think that the reason was that the Pazzi, Brunelleschi and Bordonni murders were just at the endpoint of a long factional conflict, and not at the starting point. After the white-black factional strives, the events weren't so special. These were terrifying and interesting, but in a longer view, these didn't effect the internal politics so much.

In Siena, under the Nove, the conflicts of the Salimbeni, the Tolomei, the Malavolti and the Piccolomini were dominant. We can also underline the role of the Saraceni and Rossi too in the vendettas too. On the pages of cronaca senese and the history works of the anonym authors, the factional strives from 1320 to 1344, were primarily shown as chains of vendettas. The sources, differently from the pistoiese one, describe a more equal system. The value of the conflict descriptions lies in the rapport between the peace of ideology – which preferred by the government – and the fights of the casati. We can observe the relations of the grandi and the Nove. The government

couldn't stop the fights, but they didn't want to do it really. As the literature pointing out, the families found the mediator power between themselves.

The ricordanze cater an insight into the main motivations of vendetta accomplished by micro societies. As I mentioned in the overall points, the family chronicles provide a view into the strategical side of revenges. In such viewpoints we can observe five different, but similar pattern of behaviour. The first is the mentality in which the vendetta is the primary aim. This can be observed mainly in the Panzani chronicle. It's important to emphasise, that the Panzani look like the most violent family from our sources, even in their cases, it is to detect that in other cases, which were possibly less important ones, they preferred peace tools. We can say that the cases finished with revenge primarily mirror the viewpoint of the writer, in which the death of the authors's father by a violent murder could be an important keypoint.

The second mentality shown by the chronicle of Donato Velluti. The Velluti put an end to a conflict with the Mannelli family in 1295 with a vendetta. In the chroniclers family it has an important identity defining a role against the ghibellin rivals. Although at the time of the author the Florentine inner politics created a different background context. For the chronicler it was not possibly to continue the aggressive conflict resolutions. Donato Velluti definitely were obligated to take revenge on the offence from rival clans, in the circle of his family. Similar to the Panzani family members, they used the vendetta as a decision making tool. This underlines the fact that for the urban micro groups, the revenge was not a tool of honour but a tool of strategy.

Lapo Niccolini's family history preserved such a story, on the basis which the identity forming role of family vendetta can be observed. The victory over the ghibellin Scolari, could a part of the Sirigati's familiar memory, which was the proof of entail, the civilvaric mentality and the militant type

heritage of the family. Although the pages wrote by Lapo Niccolini didn't mention any later conflicts from the time of the chronicler, in which the family members could use or refuse very much earlier experiment. In their cases the above points mentioned were necessary for the place finding in the Florentine political web. Since the family of Lapo Niccolini was officeholder in the restricted oligarchy system at the end of 14th century.

The Neri Strinati-kind family history had a special mentality. Thus the family members could be involved in violent conflicts; the writer didn't mention any of it. Although in the chronicle the presence of the peace making acts shows that the Strinati got involved in some conflicts, maybe in vendetta too. The author, who was banished from Florence might have known that the memory of peaceful, diplomatic conflict resolution is more useful for them, as the aggressive ones.

This viewpoint emphasise a conscious relationship towards the family's strategic tools: without political moving circle the violent act which linked to the ghibellin – guelf factional strives, didn't make a positive sense in Neri Strinatis ages. The research of the authors of ricordanze shows that the vendetta can provide several different opinions, within one or two generations too. We can say that from time to time and place several different tools are formed.

The last thematically topic in the dissertation is the luchese politician and writer, Giovanni Sercambi. We can read valuable thoughts about what problems could occur after the government changed to Signoria from faction ruled comune. By the opinion of the cronicler the leader of the city was in danger from the old enemies and the old party allies too. Sercambi, unique mode in his time, wrote that the best defence against vendetta is not the peaceful mentality, but the full destroy of the enemies.

Although Sercambi was not against the peaceful thinking, he knew that from strategic points it couldn't be optimal. The vendetta was a real danger in his opinion, and the written thinkings of his emphasise that far away from other city chronicles, he pleaded not an ideological but a strategic viewpoint. In my opinion his teachings about vendetta could be lined back to the experiences of the period and fall of Lazzaro Guinigi. For the author Lazzaro was the negative example of the wrong ruler's mentality, because he left his internal enemies to strengthen behind his back and in the end they took weapons against him.

The dangers of vendetta exists in one other important case in Sercambi's works: the vendetta murder against the Trinci-brothers. The unexpected lengths of the caput could be paralleled by other chroniclers similar words. I observed that the caput of the luchese author is heavily distorted. I think that Sercambi missed some elements of the story and he also wrote unique parts, which ones didn't exist in any other works. The luchese writer, I conclude, changed or missed these elements because the Trinci and the Guinigi, who ruled Lucca get involved in important marriage relations. They formed a relation circle in which – as I examined in the chapters of my dissertation-umbrian families such as Varani or da Montone also evolved. So the topic of the Trinci murders was a sensible theme in Sercambi's view, and this is the primarily cause of the distortions which we can read.

Giovanni Sercambi defined the group of the outer and inner friends and in a few cases a medium type: the lesser friends. The latter is a category which has good relations with the ruler but couldn't be used by the leading clan. This can be a new description of the communal good, but from the view of a political party. Sercambi wrote about that the good signores attribute is to look for the inner friends advice lessons. Although when the party leader or

signore look for the outer friend or lesser friends, could cause inner conflicts in the advisory group. The ruler gives offices and properties for the supporters. If it is not fulfilled the inner friends could be became the enemy of the ruler.

The research of vendetta stories, from the beginning of the period to the luchese writer hold experiences which are necessary to understand the period. The context of the vendetta and the interpretation possibilities usually changed from time to time. But the revenge itself and its basic thoughts were perpetual. The vendettas of the city parties from the 13th century to the beginning of the 1400th years were similarly dangerous events both for the participants and the outsiders too. The magnates and the popolo ruled cities became tyrannical states, in which the vendetta were not dangers against peace, but conspiracies against the signores.



## 7. Related publications:

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2. Szolnoki Zoltán: Logical paradox in medieval vendetta  
  
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3. Szolnoki Zoltán: Erőszak, igazságszolgáltatás és városi politika a középkori és a kora újkorban Bolognában (review)  
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6. Szolnoki Zoltán: Városok közötti kapcsolat és politikai intrika a Cancellieri-vendetta leírásaiban  
  
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# Nyilatkozat

Alulírott Szolnoki Zoltán, az SZTE-BTK-TDI Medievisztikai Programjának doktori hallgatója nyilatkozom és aláírással igazolom, hogy jelen doktori disszertáció a saját, önálló munkám. Az abban hivatkozott nyomtatott és elektronikus szakirodalom felhasználása a szerzői jogok nemzetközi szabályainak megfelelően készült.

Szeged, 2021. február 15.

Szolnoki Zoltán