

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

**Chronicles, Prophecies, and Communal Experiences:
The Crisis of Royal Power and Social Conflicts in the
Kingdom of Naples (1343–1350)**

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I. Objectives of the Dissertation and Definition of the Research Topic

This dissertation, drawing on the methodology of the history of emotions, investigates the experiences of communities in the Kingdom of Naples between 1343 and 1350, primarily through the chronicle of Domenico di Gravina, complemented by an analysis of contemporary chronicles and prophecies. Domenico's chronicle makes possible a close examination of the emotions of the Gravinian and Apulian communities, while prophetic writings allow for the study of vengeance and sin within a larger cosmological framework. Chronicles composed in both the Hungarian and Italian milieus contribute to a multifaceted analysis of the ways in which emotions, virtues, and vices shaped social relations. The term "communities" encompasses a wide range of entities - cities, villages, and smaller groups within them. Among the authors of the period, it is Domenico di Gravina, the notary and chronicler of Gravina, a small town in the Kingdom, who provided the most detailed account of the history of these communities.

Domenico offers above all a detailed description of events in his native Gravina. His narrative begins almost *in medias res* with an account of the factional conflicts within the town. Domenico himself was an active participant in these clashes as a member of the Hungarian faction, and from this perspective he depicts the treacheries committed by the rival faction, the internal divisions within the city, and the influence of external groups on the everyday life of the Gravinians. The Hungarian faction supported the Hungarian Angevins in the dynastic conflict of the Angevins (1347-1350), seeking their assistance in the urban struggle against the Neapolitan faction of Gravina, which was backed by the Neapolitan court. Ultimately, however, Domenico's faction was defeated. During their forced exile (1349-1350), they continued to cooperate with the Hungarians, and as a reward received compensation for their lost properties in Gravina.

The chronicle offers valuable opportunities for investigation in several respects. First, through the author's self-referential descriptions, it is possible to uncover how he experienced the internal conflicts of the town and how he reflected upon himself during these events. Second, through the depiction of urban divisions and protests, the text illustrates the role played by emotions expressed collectively by the community, such as cries for help, shouts of approval, or voices of protest. In addition, it sheds light on the Gravinians' - and more specifically his faction's - understanding of emotions: which emotions were accepted, and which were rejected,

how they were expressed in public space and in social interactions, and what forms of emotional expression were attributed to other groups.

The dissertation examines above all, through Domenico's chronicle, how the Hungarian faction experienced this war-torn period: how they regarded rulers, their virtues and vices; how they perceived companions and adversaries; how they confronted their own sins and shame; what the separation of family members meant to them; and what purposes were served by examples of cruelty, mercy, or humility.

In this dissertation my aim is to identify the modes of emotional expression found in the sources and the purposes behind their manifestation before others. I therefore consider, for example, the pleas and supplicatory expressions and gestures of *humilitas*, through which people sought to win the goodwill of others. These I examine across several chapters and through multiple examples, since beyond eliciting goodwill, supplication and humility could serve different ends: they might aim to provoke mercy and compassion when expressed in the face of injury, or they might contribute to the arousal of anger, so that it would be directed in a regulated way against those who disturbed order. Finally, it should be emphasized that medieval society rested fundamentally on orality, despite the presence of written culture in chronicles, letters, and charters. For this reason, gestures and various emotional practices adapted to specific situations played an essential role in everyday communication and interaction with others.

II. Sources and Methodology of the Dissertation

From a methodological perspective, I begin from the premise that emotions and experiences are not universal; they are bound to time, place, and community, and shaped by particular epochs, societies, and groups. For this reason, it is justified to commence the investigation through the study of a smaller unit of analysis - a single town or faction. In the dissertation I use the terms "emotions" and "experience" as "meta-concepts," or, as Barbara Rosenwein has put it, as "umbrella terms." This facilitates the designation of the object of study.

Recent scholarship on the history of emotions has highlighted that it is advisable to complement the study of emotions with the concept of experience. If we wish to understand how descriptions related to emotions found in the sources were produced, in what cultural milieu, and what they meant in each culture and society, we cannot underestimate the role of experience in these processes. For me, emotions and experience do not function as synonyms but as complementary notions. My point of departure in defining the concept is the dual individual and cultural dimension of experience. This includes both emotions expressed by individuals and emotions

performed and articulated during social interaction, which could be linked to an individual or to a group. Their effective expression before others is made possible by cultural acquisition.

At the same time, conceptions of emotions and modes of emotional expression may vary within a community and even within an individual. This variability is enabled by the brain and memory, with their capacity for change, forgetting, and the learning of new knowledge. The concept also extends to all those practices in which emotions made possible the functioning of social cohesion (rituals and other social practices). It encompasses the gestures revealed in emotional expression, the human imagination, and the cognitive and bodily dimensions of perception.

In Hungary no dissertation has yet undertaken the study of emotions through medieval chronicles, and even in international scholarship such work is rare. The scarcity of sources, together with several other factors (the author's level of education, or whether the texts he demonstrably used in his writing have been identified), makes it difficult to include works written by non-clerics in such an investigation. Nicole Demarchi, for instance, examined descriptions related to emotions in connection with *dolor* in the writings of the cleric Paulus Diaconus. Her research nonetheless provided a model for my own, in that I similarly concentrated on larger textual units and on the detailed analysis of individual examples.

Although emotions can indeed be extracted from work through a lexical method, in themselves they reveal little about the precise role they played in each context. Terms such as *ira*, *furor*, etc. primarily denote anger, wrath, or rage, yet depending on the situation they shifted and could acquire positive or negative connotations. To uncover these shifting nuances of meaning, one must focus on the broader context, often on the preceding narrative of an episode.

Domenico di Gravina's chronicle is complemented by the Florentine chronicle, the works of Giovanni and Matteo Villani, and from the Hungarian courtly milieu the writings of John of Küküllő, the Anonymous Minorite, and the *Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle*, as well as the *narrationes* of royal charters. To the theme of royal virtues and *passiones* I also draw on Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*. For the examination of questions I rely, among others, on the works of Cicero, Seneca, Cassiodorus, Augustine, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Thomas Aquinas, Matthew Paris, Orderic Vitalis, and Francesc Eiximenis. Among prophetic texts I incorporate the commentary of Gentile da Foligno and the writings of Jean de Roquetaillade.

III. Results of the Investigation

The first chapter follows the accounts of most contemporary authors and approaches the crisis of the Kingdom of Naples from the perspective of broader moral questions. Across several subsections I examine the sins of members of the Neapolitan court as they gradually unfold: first ostentation and pride, then the sin of *invidia* becomes decisive. These sins are compared through chronicles written in the Hungarian courtly milieu as well as certain Italian chronicles, to highlight similarities and differences, and to show that the sin of *luxuria* did not shape contemporary texts until 1345. Although the assessment of these sins and offenses varies among the authors, they share the explanation that they account for the conspiracy against Andrew of Hungary – to which Domenico di Gravina contributes his own distinctive interpretation. After the murder, I identify interpretative models of Louis the Great's anger and vengeance, setting these against the prophetic works, whose authors, by placing vengeance and the trials of the Kingdom of Naples within a larger cosmological framework, evaluated them in a manner distinct from that of the chroniclers.

From the second chapter onward, the analysis adopts a narrower perspective, focusing on the bonds of friendship within the Hungarian faction of Gravina and the emerging hostilities with their opponents. At the beginning of the chapter, I provide a fuller discussion of Domenico di Gravina's chronicle and his *causa scribendi*. My argument concerning these bonds is that *amicitia*, *fidelitas*, as well as courage and steadfast commitment were of central importance for Domenico, who presents himself in such narratives by emphasizing his own role. Yet, due to the debate over their flight from Gravina, he is also confronted with the reality that steadfastness could not always be maintained. Ultimately, he suffers humiliation, which he conveys through two modes of weeping – on the one hand in the context of separation from his family, and on the other as a penitential practice by which he sought to regain others' goodwill toward him.

The third chapter defines the interactions between the communities within Gravina – rivals, followers, and the populace. Here I examine, first, cries and shouts as emotional practices, and second, the manifestations of betrayal and of peace-making rituals accompanied by symbolic gestures. The entire chapter is structured around communication: malicious words and whispering, *rumor populi*, the Hungarians' performative appeal to the Gravinians and its delivery by one of their own, as well as the differences and similarities between hateful and manipulative speeches.

The fourth chapter is based on a comparative analysis of the cruelties and punishments inflicted upon the Apulian communities. Its aim is to show through which gestures and expressions of

emotion proud communities might obtain mercy, and how those narratives are to be understood that, by staging acts of torture, emphasize instead the absence of compassion.

The fifth chapter addresses the bonds between the exiled Gravinians and the Hungarians, and the ways in which these ties changed, primarily through *amicitia* and *fidelitas*. Here I also examine the *gratia* of Louis the Great, whose manifestation required not only the *fidelitas* of the Gravinians but also compliance with a “prescribed” order regulated by a complex chain of hierarchy, as well as the winning of favour from several intermediaries. At the same time, through the examples of the two Hungarian captains John Csúz and Thomas, son of Paul, I point out that the cooperation between the Gravinians and the Hungarians was marked by an asymmetrical form of *amicitia* and by differently interpreted notions of *fidelitas*.

The chapters dealing with the Gravinian communities demonstrate that Domenico’s emotional vocabulary contains several recurring expressions. When a word appears frequently in an author’s text, one must consider that it held particular significance for him. The chronicler employed many terms to describe different situations and contexts. For instance, *cor* could signify agreement; it could denote firm and resolute intention, which might be beneficial or detrimental for the community; and it could also refer to the corruption or malice of opponents. The broader usage of *cor* in the chronicle corresponded to the wide conceptual framework already outlined by Cassiodorus in his commentary on the Psalms.

Equally important was *fidelitas* and steadfast commitment, often combined with the expressions of brothers, friends, and love. It primarily served to denote the bonds between followers and companions, though it could also include the Hungarians. Yet their ties to the Gravinians were shaped by an asymmetrical form of *amicitia*, and they represented a different position regarding loyalty. Family and mutual solidarity gained greater value in exile, since Domenico and his companions fled while compelled to leave their families behind. After rescuing their relatives from Gravina, they still faced further uncertainty and danger until their settlement in Bitonto. This was the moment of despair that drove them to Altamura without the approval of their captains. Among the Hungarians, John Csúz received considerable recognition from the Gravinians, and especially from Angelo da Gravina. I would argue that a genuinely mutual and less hierarchical *amicitia* existed between Csúz and Angelo, one grounded in frequent interactions, encounters, and collaboration. This, in turn, points to the fact that despite linguistic and cultural differences, shared experiences and benevolent gestures made possible the formation of closer bonds.

Fidelitas also served as the measure of royal clemency, which the king displayed generously toward the communities and envoys loyal to him. Likewise, the opposition between *fideles* and *infideles* made it possible to distinguish between friends and enemies. *Infideles* became the explanation for acts of betrayal and for the wickedness of opponents. For the Hungarian faction and their followers, the gravest injury was betrayal, which forced them to flee their homes. Yet they applied the same vocabulary to their adversaries as those adversaries used against them. According to the chronicler, the only real difference lay in the valuation of family ties: Domenico and his companions were willing to undertake determined and risky actions for the sake of their families' safety, whereas their enemies, even for the sake of children held as hostages, did not desist from their wickedness.

The first chapter, based on the analysis of sins and offenses, showed that the morals of the Neapolitan court were not initially regarded as reprehensible either by Domenico di Gravina or by Francisc Eiximenis. Although their reasoning differed, both assumed that the virtues of Sancha of Majorca curbed ostentatious and arrogant behaviour. For Domenico it was important to idealize past peace in contrast to present trials, with Robert the Wise portrayed as the one who restrained the proud and the disorderly. In the system of sins he developed, the ostentatious were grouped together with the avaricious, whose abuses he described on several occasions. Yet avarice did not remain a lasting feature in this system, which was instead completed by the sins of pride (*superbia*) and envy (*invidia*). Domenico adopted a distinctive position on the evaluation of *superbia*, linking it with the *coniuratio* that led to Andrew's murder. Pride and envy, according to John of Küküllő and the Anonymous Minorite, were above all the sins of the Neapolitan queen, who through these vices became first the enemy and then the murderer of her husband. Apart from Giovanni Villani—who only after Andrew's death briefly summarized the sins of the Neapolitan court—contemporaries held that *luxuria* contributed little to the conspiracy against Andrew, characterizing instead only the accusations that followed. The possibility of resisting sins that presented themselves as temptations received no significant attention in any of the texts. Only in Chapter 206 of the Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle, in connection with Felician Záh, did I find an explanation through a reference to consent that belongs to a textual tradition concerning passions and sins which had long been present.

Nevertheless, a defining element of the Hungarian royal court's conception of vengeance was the sin of murder and betrayal, while to a lesser extent the injury to Andrew or to the dynasty also entered the repertoire of arguments in favour of retribution. Both the prologue of the

Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle and Giles of Rome drew attention to the virtues of moderation between punishment and mercy. Although these virtues were less characteristic of the Hungarian chronicles or the *narrationes* of charters, they nonetheless shaped the interpretation of vengeance so that it appeared as a just and legitimate response, applied only against traitors found guilty based on evidence. The Anonymous Minorite was exceptional in his conception of vengeance, for he grounded it not only in divine approval but also in new gifts from God concerning the virtues of the Hungarian king.

Italian chroniclers, by contrast, saw vengeance differently, being far more shocked by the execution of Charles of Durazzo, especially by the shifts between gestures of reconciliation and acts of retribution. Giovanni Villani and Domenico both observed that although the king adjusted punishment to his aims, his measures and cruel vengeance could easily have alienated public opinion. Only Domenico recorded the changing expressions of Louis the Great's anger and its regulation, producing a complex portrait of the king's emotions that encompassed both cruel punishments and acts of compassion.

The sins and Louis's vengeance appear in a different interpretative framework in the prophetic writings, most notably in Jean de Roquetaillade, who demonstrated the layered nature of sin through ancestral guilt, the envy of the Neapolitan barons, or the treachery of the *familiars*.

Most of the dissertation's chapters abandon this wide perspective, focusing instead on the emotions of the Gravinians and on the punishment of the Apulian communities together with the practice of mercy. In the second and third chapters, for the sake of thematic analysis, I separated the narratives concerning Gravina. Thus, in the second chapter I was able to examine more closely, starting from those passages of the chronicle, the bonds of friendship and brotherhood that Domenico repeatedly emphasized. Moreover, he highlights himself within these bonds, presenting the role he played in reinforcing his companions' commitment, in participating with them in acts of retaliation against their enemies, and finally in attempting to persuade them to continue the struggle. Through this analysis it becomes clear that he strove to present himself in a positive role, not only as loyal to his faction, but also as endowed with a measure of wisdom, foresight, and benevolence, qualities he wished to maintain in his relationship with the notary Roberto, even though he had been accused of treason.

Nevertheless, because of his consent to certain decisions he was tormented by guilt, yet he presented this not necessarily in terms of Christian penitential practice but partly based on his notarial knowledge. Regarding the death of the notary Roberto, he admits his own carelessness,

but in retrospect he reconstructs the account in such a way that he raises the responsibility of others as well. Indeed, in a manner akin to the apologetic strategies that characterize his chronicle, by justifying his actions he portrays himself as less guilty. Already after the murder he notes that not everyone approved of Roberto's killing, and it is likely that he had to reckon with this public opinion in anticipating the reception of his chronicle. For this reason, he deals, on the one hand, with the question of his responsibility, while on the other hand he reveals the emotions and intentions that motivate others in their collective action. He likewise needed to explain their sudden departure from Gravina, to set out his own position, and to express his repentance through weeping as an act of penance. This decision not only called into question their earlier brave and heroic deeds but, as he writes, placed their abandoned companions in danger. Their subsequent attempts to return to Gravina, however, again belong to the sequence of courage and heroic acts.

In the third chapter I first categorized the modes of appearance of shouting in social interactions among the Gravinian communities. Shouting enabled the factions vying for dominance in Gravina to provoke a response or an action from the group addressed. At the same time, the populace shouted even without being directly addressed, employing various emotional practices, whenever the situation required, to condemn an action they witnessed. Behind shouting and the actions associated with it lies a complex system of emotional expression, which I analysed in the context of a civic entry based on Monique Scheer's theory. Shouting acquires its meaning within social relations, especially in the case of *rumor populi*: its intensity, tone, rhythm, or indeed its pauses and accompanying gestures could express different emotions. This modulation enabled shouting to become an effective instrument of communication, conveying interpretable emotions and recognizable signals to others.

Domenico employs the stories depicting torture to draw a distinction between the perpetrators and the Gravinian community. This conclusion remains valid even considering the account examined in the third chapter concerning betrayal, according to which Domenico and his companions also tortured one of their Gravinian adversaries. That case, however, more closely resembled judicial torture, intended to extract a confession from the accused. This practice differed from the tortures carried out by mercenaries, which, according to Daniel Baraz's categories of cruelty, fit into perceptions of the cruelty of the "other." Although the executions by torture of Niuro and Martuccio were ordered by a court, Domenico integrates into his explanation of cruelty the wickedness of their enemies as well.

He developed the account of Martuccio's execution in greater detail, dwelling especially on its humiliating aspects, which could have served to provoke the indignation necessary for vengeance among Martuccio's relatives and followers. As the example of the Count of Trivento also shows, for Domenico chivalric virtues—and in particular mercy toward those in distress - could provide a positive model amid cruelties. Proud communities disloyal to the Hungarian king likewise suffered in order to break their cruel attacks and stubborn resistance. According to Domenico's narrative, however, Louis the Great was merciful toward those who swore loyalty to him. In this way Domenico not only legitimized the idea that it was worthwhile to pledge and maintain *fidelitas* to the Hungarian king, but also underscored the importance of humility and supplication, which could mitigate punishments or even eliminate them altogether.

The cooperation between the Gravinian exiles and the Hungarians manifested itself in varied forms depending on different speech situations. The use of speeches, gestures, and intermediaries presupposed a degree of deliberation on the part of those engaged in the discourse. Mastery of speech and gesture played a particularly important role, whether in the speech delivered by Angelo da Gravina while in captivity, or in the actions of figures occupying higher levels of the hierarchy, such as Louis the Great or Thomas, son of Paul. These manifestations clearly signalled their intentions while simultaneously seeking to elicit a particular response from the other party. Behind these strategies one can also discern a concern for effectiveness.

With respect to mediation, not only interpreters but also the intermediaries of Bitonto played a prominent role. The case of Stephen Lackfi is particularly noteworthy: through interpretation he ensured clarity of communication during occasions of official significance and for the purposes of military command. By contrast, the lack of understanding led to Angelo da Gravina's injury near Oppido, highlighting the consequences of communication failures. Gestures - such as blushing, facial expressions, and the display of compassion or anger - were decisive in speech situations, and it is evident that the Gravinians both recognized and understood their significance.

The study of the Gravinian communities, and particularly the analysis of chronicles undertaken in this dissertation, belongs to a still less explored direction in the history of emotions, the first substantial monograph-length treatment of which was produced by Nicole Demarchi. The bonds within the community - especially *amicitia* and its variant developed with the Hungarians - as well as the assemblies and shouts of the townspeople, constitute the most valuable parts of the chronicle. These have made it possible to apply not only the theory of emotional practices

but also three approaches to emotional bonds: emotional bonding, emotional communities, and collective emotions. More recently, scholarly attention has turned toward collective emotions. Although Domenico's chronicle provides few concrete examples of this, it may nonetheless contribute to a more nuanced use of this conceptual framework.



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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapters (2)

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In: Magyar zsoldosok kifizetési feljegyzései a Firenzei Állami Levéltárból (1361-1365) / Átírta, szerk. Virágh Ágnes; Visegrádi Renáta, HUN-REN-DE "Középkori Magyarország és Közép-Európa Hadtörténete Kutatócsoport", Debrecen, 85-100, 2024, (Fontes Memoriae Hungariae V: Militaria I, ISSN 2560-0281) ISBN: 9789634906490
2. **Virágh, Á.**: Bölcs Róbert nápolyi király "büntudata".
In: Metszéspontok: Tanulmányok a középkorról és a kora újkorról. Szerk.: Véber Zoltán; Virágh Ágnes, Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi és Néprajzi Doktori Iskola, Debrecen, 90-119, 2023. ISBN: 9789634905325

Foreign language Hungarian book chapters (1)

3. **Virágh, Á.**: Mercenary uprisings (1349, 1350) in Apulia during the dynastic war of the Angevins.
In: Mercenaries and Crusaders. Ed.: Attila Bárány, University of Debrecen "Hungary in Medieval Europe" : HUN-REN-UD "Military History of Medieval Hungary and Central Europe Research Group", Debrecen, 191-214, 2024, (Memoria Hungariae, ISSN 2498-7795 ; 15) ISBN: 9789634905547

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

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List of other publications

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5. **Virágh, Á.**: Egy itáliai krónika interpretációs lehetőségei: a magyar hadi vezetők Domenico da Gravina krónikájában.

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