

EAST CENTRAL EUROPE:  
BETWEEN THE BALTIC AND THE ADRIATIC

OSTMITTELEUROPA: ZWISCHEN OSTSEE UND ADRIA

VOLUME / BAND 1

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The University of Debrecen  
Faculty of Humanities  
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## Under the Shadow of Vendetta: Decision-making Situations in the Story of Anselmo and Angelica

### ABSTRACT

The factional struggles for position and influence were truly defining historical events in medieval Italian towns for decades. Families such as the Uberti, Donati and Cerchi of Florence or the Bentivogli and Marescotti of Bologna fought each other. The background and the cause of these struggles were recorded in the thirteenth–fifteenth-century Italian narrative sources. The chapters on revenge (*vendetta*) and other acts of violence are very important and valuable parts of the mentality of that age. The descriptions, which inform us about the resolution of conflicts and reconciliation provide essential information about the authors' views of the factional conflicts.

In medieval Siena, the Salimbeni were one of the most powerful families. During the fourteenth century they fought against the Tolomei, the Malavolti and the Piccolomini factions. In the meantime, the Senese *popolo* excluded these clans – the so called *casati* – from the main offices to insure the *pax urbana*. In my presentation, I will examine the fight between the Salimbeni and Montanini families as well as the turning-points in the story of the reconciliation of this struggle. According to the *Annali sanesi*, a bloody, factional conflict broke out between these two influential families in 1394. This chronicle describes that the struggle led to many casualties, leaving only one young man, Carlo, in the male line of the Montanini family. Instead of continuing to fight, the two sides made peace the following year. According to a fifteenth century author of the chronicle of Siena, the solution to the conflict was a marriage between the members of the opposing families, Anselmo Salimbeni and Carlo's sister Angelica Montanini. Anselmo's choice between vendetta and peace symbolised a turning point in the city's politics. In my article, I will examine how this case might be interpreted by analysing its particular features.

**Keywords:** vendetta, pax urbana, Siena, Salimbeni, Montanini

In my study, I will present a Siennese story, the Salimbeni–Montanini conflict and its resolution, and examine it from an unconventional perspective. We can read about the feud in 1394 in the pages of the *Annali sanesi*,<sup>1</sup> a historical

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<sup>1</sup> *Annali senesi*. Muratorius, Ludovico Antonio (ed.), *Rerum Italicarum scriptores ab anno aerae christianae quingentesimo ad millesimumquingentesimum* (...). Mediolani, 1731.

work that can be attributed to the unknown author, Anonimo Senese, who wrote in the second half of the fifteenth century. According to his description, the young men of the two influential Sieneese families, the Salimbeni and Montanini houses, went hunting together. However, while hunting a wild boar, a disagreement arose between them, as a result of which one of the Montaninis fatally wounded a Salimbeni. The aggrieved party, the Salimbeni family, subsequently took revenge, and according to the narrator, almost all the Montaninis were murdered, and their houses in the city and the countryside were destroyed. The conflict is also described almost verbatim in the later *Cronica* by Paolo di Tommaso di Montauri.<sup>2</sup> Both the *Annali senesi* and the *Cronica* write that the fight between the Salimbeni and Montanini families lasted for several years. This is contradicted by the fact that in the *Annali senesi*, as early as the following year, 1395, we can read about the process of reconciliation between the two families, that is, the resolution of the conflict.<sup>3</sup> According to the Anonimo Senese, until 1394 the Salimbeni and Montanini families lived in the countryside next to each other, their relationship was not poisoned by any conflict. In fact, it is not known at all that there was any relationship between the two families. The last surviving Montanini on the male line, Carlo, supported his sister, the angelic beauty Angelica, alone. The young male member of the Salimbeni family, Anselmo Salimbeni, was charmed by the beauty of Angelica Montanini from the enemy house and fell in love with her. However, the brother who raised her, Carlo Montanini, wanted to arrange for the marriage of the Montanini girl who was put up for sale, but he was unable to collect a dowry commensurate with the prestige of the family, as they had become quite impoverished by this time.

That is why he accepted the large loan offered to him by an unknown citizen of Siena. His lender had long desired to acquire the Montanini estate, but had tried in vain. This time, with feigned goodwill,<sup>4</sup> he tried to drive the good-faith head of the family into debt. During the financial maneuver, the young Montanini got into trouble: he could not repay the thousand forints within the thirty-day deadline. The indebted Carlo was imprisoned by the city of-

[hereinafter *Annali senesi*] 397–398.

<sup>2</sup> *Cronaca senese* conosciuta sotto il nome di Paolo di Tommaso Montauri. Lisini, Alessandro – Iacometti, Fabio (eds.), In. *Rerum italicarum scriptores: raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento, ordinata da L.A. Muratori (...)*. Bologna, 1900–1975. [hereinafter RIS] Vol. 117. 15/6b.

<sup>3</sup> *Annali senesi*, 397–398.

<sup>4</sup> “Cittadino simulando verso Carlo grandissima benevolenza [...]” *Annali senesi*, 398.



ficials and sentenced to death. It was then that Anselmo Salimbeni, riding home, passed by the Montanini estate, where he saw Angelica and her female relatives weeping and wailing, mourning Carlo. Anselmo, as an old enemy of the Montaninis, could not speak to them, so he went to the city to see the grief of Angelica, whom he admired. He learned that Carlo Montanini would be executed within a day. After a long struggle, Anselmo, who was considered wealthy, decided to pay his neighbour's punishment and debt anonymously. After the head of the Montanini family was released, he concluded that his unknown rescuer deserved a worthy reward and, if possible, to marry his sister. After a brief investigation, she discovered that her benefactor was an old enemy of their family. Although it initially seemed that she would not be able to repay Anselmo's kindness due to fundamental differences between the two parties and Angelica's initial opposition, the marriage eventually took place. At the end of the story, the newlyweds entered Siena and were greeted with cheers by the townspeople.<sup>5</sup>

## Sources of the Story

Although the short story presented can be read as one of the entries of the Anonimo Senese, it can still be stated that the length of the *caput* – on the one hand – much longer than the other descriptions recorded in the chronicle, and on the other hand, its historical-social background cannot be fully reconciled with the other entries of Anonimo Senese, therefore it is completely out of context. This should not be considered surprising, since the story of Angelica and Anselmo is a recurring theme in medieval and early modern Italian short story literature. Chronologically, the first author who has been proven to have recorded it was Pseudo Gentile Sermini, followed by Bernardo Lapini (also known as Bernardo Illicino). According to Cosimo Corso's conclusions, what is described by Anonimo Senese should be considered a modified adaptation of the latter version.<sup>6</sup> This point of view has also been supported by the research of Stefano Cracolici and Monica Marchi in recent times.<sup>7</sup> The unknown author did not change the plot of the story, but simplified the text in terms of

<sup>5</sup> Annali senesi, 383–428.

<sup>6</sup> Corso, Cosimo, "L'Illicino (Bernardo Lapini)", = *Bullettino senese di storia patria* 64, 1957, 3–108.

<sup>7</sup> Cracolici, Stefano, "Esemplarità ed emblematica", In: Carrai, Stefano – Cracolici, Stefano – Marchi, Monica (eds.), *La letteratura a Siena nel Quattrocento*. Pisa, 2009. 73–90.; Marchi,

language use and stylistic aspects. Since the identity of the him is not precisely known, the life of Lapini can provide a clue in dating the story. The latter was the author of several successful works: between 1469 and 1470 he wrote his story *Vita di Madonna Onorata*, and then in 1472 he wrote *Somnium*. It can be assumed that his work *La novella di Angelica Montanini* also took its final form in the 1470s.<sup>8</sup> Assuming that the Anonimo Senese knew this version, it can be concluded that the story inserted into the pages of the *Annali senesi* must have originated after this. Therefore, the story of Anselmo and Angelica should not be examined within the political and social events of Siena at the end of the fourteenth century, but in the context of the later, second half of the fifteenth century. However, before we delve into the detailed analysis of the story, it is worth briefly discussing considerations related to vendetta. Since the story – at least in part – reflects on the issue of revenge.

## Briefly about Vendettas

In addition to the fact that the love story of Angelica and Anselmo actually describes the path leading to the reconciliation of the two families, it also shows many similarities with Italian vendetta narratives. These are stories that present a violent response to personal insults, that is, revenge. Without presenting the complete literature on vendetta, it should be emphasized that two major trends in the considerations related to this can be observed. Andrea Zorzi formulated his ideas, characterized by the term vendetta culture, according to which revenge had a tacitly recognized social role. Decision-makers in Italian cities turned a blind eye to the commission of revenge within certain limits, which he believes is also supported by the fact that statutes usually did not sanction vendetta.<sup>9</sup> The trend associated with Trevor Dean, on the other hand, doubts the frequency of revenge and its implicit social/political role recognized in the era. Dean, citing legal historical sources, believes that this specific act of self-judgment was not as widespread as the narrative sources suggest. In addition, he believes that vendetta was recorded in court documents as a phys-

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Monica, *La storia di Angelica Montanini. Un topos della novellistica nel rinascimento senese*. Pisa, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Marchi, *La storia*, 2017. 15–16.

<sup>9</sup> Zorzi, Andrea, “Pace e conflitti nelle città comunali italiane” In: Sabaté, Flocel (ed.), *Idees de pau l’edat mijana reunió científica*. Lleida, 2010. 265–300.

ical assault rather than as a concept that could be evaluated independently.<sup>10</sup> Whichever school of thought we adopt, it is clear that the narrative materials of medieval Italian cities contain countless detailed descriptions of vendettas.

The narratives that appear again and again in the chronicles of urban history were usually written down by authors who discussed the individual cases as events that threatened the peace of the community. The parties involved, who were mostly from the ranks of the *grandi*, were condemned for their violent, reckless behavior.<sup>11</sup> Related to these, the individual vendetta stories were recorded in various historical works along similar structural elements. Usually, the offense that provoked revenge was committed, the murder/mutilation of the person who committed the offense – or a relative – and finally the presentation of the consequences of the revenge (and then in some cases the reconciliation that ended the conflict). Many vendetta narratives feature individual characters speaking,<sup>12</sup> or at least the authors have attributed sentences spoken to them. The passages highlighted in this way may have presented a decision situation: the dilemma of committing the initial offense, as well as how the avenger decides to pursue vendetta.<sup>13</sup> I consider these passages important because they allow us to examine the opinions of chroniclers or historians regarding certain political or social groups. In the descriptions, the authors could associate “opposite pairs” with decisions with different outcomes, with which they could express their disapproval or even sympathy. For example, the events could be characterized by the contrast between prudence and recklessness, between peaceful behavior and aggression, or between the behavior expected by the community and individual aspirations.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Dean, Trevor, “Marriage and Mutilation: Vendetta in Late Medieval Italy”, = *Past & Present* 45, 1997, 3–36.

<sup>11</sup> Diacciatti, Silvia, “Popolani e magnati. Società e politica nella Firenze del Duecento”, In: Tanzini, Lorenzo (ed.), *Pace e guerra nell' basso Medioevo*. Firenze, 2004. 271–313.

<sup>12</sup> Specifically about the orality inserted into the chronicles: Mabboux, Carole, “Trascrivere il discorso nelle cronache: rielaborazioni narrative dell’oralità (secoli XIII–XIV)”, In: Delle Donne, Fluvio – Garbini, Paolo – Zabbia, Marino (eds.), *Scrivere storia nel medioevo. Regolamentazione delle forme e delle pratiche nei secoli XII–XV*. Rome, 2021. 271–286.

<sup>13</sup> Szolnoki, Zoltán, “Jelmondatok és legendás szavak a 13–14. századi toszkán krónikákban. A bosszú mondatai egy 1215-ös példa alapján”, In: Pásztor, Katalin – Natkó, Anna – Fischer, Viktória – Dancs, Réka Rebeka – Berta András – Becz, Viktória Ildikó – Kőszegi, Margit (eds.), *MVH A múlt (vissz)hangjai, Dimenziók VII*. Budapest, 2024. 277–286.

<sup>14</sup> About the viewpoint of the popolo: Jones, Philip, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*. Oxford, 1997. 332.; A case study: Guarisco, Gabriele, “Il ‘popolo’ e le pratiche

In connection with our topic, it should also be noted that vendetta stories often appeared in medieval and early modern *novelle*. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*<sup>15</sup> or Franco Sacchetti's collection *Trecentonovelle*<sup>16</sup> also contain a number of writings that focus on the response to personal insults, or the lack thereof. Giovanni Sercambi's collection, the *Novelle*, also has a penchant for depicting conflicts that end in violent retaliation, in many cases related to Lucca politics. Sercambi built his message around conflicts that were real historical feuds: such were the Rossi-Pallavicini factional fights in Parma or the Mangiadori-Ciccioni factional fights in San Miniato al Tedesco.<sup>17</sup> Although I have already examined these earlier, it is worth mentioning that Sercambi provided the recorded narratives with lessons that could serve as an education for the supposed reader – in this case Paolo Guinigi, lord of Lucca – in resolving conflicts.<sup>18</sup> Sercambi saw the vendetta as a real threat that the Signore had to pay attention to. Emphasizing this, he included the “fables” he considered important among the chapters of the *Croniche di Lucca*. It can also be observed with other authors that some short stories were based on real historical events: the Florentine Matteo Bandello transformed the events of the 1215 Buondelmonte-Amidei vendetta into a literary work, using the chronicles' descriptions as a framework.<sup>19</sup> Without going into detail about sources from other areas, we can conclude that revenge was a topic of discussion in medieval Italian cities, which could be used to express political opinions, advice, sympathy or dislike. After this brief overview, it is worth returning to the story of Anselmo and Angelica. For a detailed analysis of the story, I will use the text edition published by Monica Marchi.<sup>20</sup>

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della vendetta a Parma”, In. Zorzi, Andrea (ed.), *Conflitti, paci e vendette nell'Italia comunale*. Firenze, 2009. 131–154.

<sup>15</sup> Boccaccio, Giovanni, *The Decameron*. Ed. McWilliam, G. H. New York–London, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Sacchetti, Franco, *Il Trecentonovelle*. Ed. Faccioli, E. Torino, 1970.

<sup>17</sup> Sercambi, Giovanni, *Novelle. Nuovo testo critico con studio introduttivo e note*. Ed. Sinicorpi, Giovanni. Firenze–Torino, 1995. 1107–1118.

<sup>18</sup> Szolnoki, Zoltán, “Giovanni Sercambi elmékedései a bosszúállásról”, In. Kis, Iván – Kozák-Kígyóssy, Szabolcs László – Veres, Kristóf György – Veszprémy, Márton (eds.) *Micae mediaevales VIII*. Budapest, 2019. 117–132.

<sup>19</sup> Bandello, Matteo, *Novelle*. Ed. Flora, Francesco. Milano, 1942. 8–14.

<sup>20</sup> Senese, Anonimo, “La storia di Angelica Montanini”, In. Marchi, Monica, *La storia di Angelica Montanini. Un topos della novellistica nel rinascimento senese*. Pisam 2017. [hereinafter Anonimo Senese] 181–198.

## Anselmo's Fencing and the Characters' Traits.

Returning to the history of my study, in the short story of Anselmo and Angelica, the possibility of revenge typical of vendettas could have arisen when Anselmo rode into the city to find out the reason for Angelica's grief. The young Salimbeni found himself in a decision-making situation after being informed about Carlo's case.<sup>21</sup> The city clerk who reported all this directly called Anselmo a very lucky man, since his mortal enemy, Carlo Montanini, had been sentenced to death, and thus he could take revenge for the previous wrongs inflicted on his family. His revenge could not only be fulfilled on Carlo, but also on his sister, since with the execution of her brother, Angelica's fate could also be in his hands.<sup>22</sup> The city clerk therefore acted as a propagator of the vendetta, a clearly negative character from the point of view of the story. Although Anselmo pondered the possibility of revenge, he was still ashamed.<sup>23</sup> He remembered the sad fate of Angelica, whom he admired: if he did nothing, he would allow the execution to proceed and he could actually take revenge without getting his hands dirty, but if he intervened, he would have the opportunity to save Carlo Montanini. The author formulates Anselmo's dilemmas as follows: "To follow the rules of noble behavior and avenge the wrongs suffered, or to ignore the vendettas that are constantly being renewed and to forgive."<sup>24</sup>

So, on the one hand, we can read Anselmo's struggle again, whether he should avenge the previous injuries in accordance with noble or *grandi* behavior, or on the other hand, it would be enough if he just watched the events passively, which would be a fortunate and simple solution for the fulfillment

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<sup>21</sup> "O Anselmo par pure che la fortuna sia più curiosa dell'honor tuo che tu medisimo havendo ordinato, che Carlo Montaini, col quale già longo tempo hai tenuto inimicizia mortale sia dalla quistizia pubblica condotto alla morte nella quale ti potrai sotisfar della vendetta di tutte l'ingiurie passate, desiderata da tutti del sangue tuo, e degna d'esser cercata e eseguita da te e non lasciarti prender vanamente da la fugace bellezza d'una fanciulla della fameglia inimicizia. E se pure questo desderio ti stimola, ecco che restando ella senza alcuno, e povera, haverai facil modo di possederla con poca spesa e minor fadiga a piacer tuo, essendo che tolta la vita a Carlo, a lei anco sarà levata la robba, però aspetta lieto, e godi di cosi desiderati e favoriti successi, i quali ti sono apparecchiati." Anonimo Senese, 184.

<sup>22</sup> Anonimo Senese, 184.

<sup>23</sup> Anonimo Senese, 184.

<sup>24</sup> "[...] essendo principalmente le prime parti degli animi nobili e gentili, vendicar da se per se stesso l'ingiurie quali esse siano, o disprezzando ogni vendetta quelle interamente rimettere e perdonare [...]." Anonimo Senese, 184.

of the vendetta. At this point, however, another thought arises, which points in the opposite direction to the previous one, and which this time appears as a question in Anselmo's internal struggle: "If you reject the first, why don't you want the second to come into operation?"<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Angelica is innocent and has suffered a lot,<sup>26</sup> which also speaks against the vendetta. At the end of the argument, the young Salimbeni asks himself another important question, if he were to choose revenge: "Have you degenerated so much from your noble ancestors?"<sup>27</sup> While the first question raises the possibility of a decision, the second one reveals the author's opinion about the old nobility, or at least the Salimbeni. According to Ilicino's argument, if Anselmo were to decide against the innocent Angelica, he would start a vendetta, thereby distancing himself greatly from his ancestors. So the author does not portray the Salimbeni, who belonged to the old nobility, in a bad light. Although in certain places the author clearly links the vendetta to noble behavior,<sup>28</sup> and thus appears to be in contradiction, at the same time the mention of Anselmo's noble ancestors (*nobilissimi antichi*) may also refer to a much older era. The era when the Salimbeni were not simple Siennese nobles, but were considered one of the most influential families in the city.<sup>29</sup> Seeing this, it is quite obvious that the author writes about them with considerable bias. While in some vendetta narratives it can be observed that characters who recklessly prioritize their individual interests have to face negative consequences after their actions,<sup>30</sup> in Ilicino's story the exact opposite happens to Anselmo Salimbeni. After he decides on a peaceful solution, he demonstrates several other positive character traits and qualities. Until then, we only get to know one important trait: his noble nature (*animo nobilissimo*), which is a fundamental quality of his, since at the beginning of the story he has not served him in any way, and moreover, it is placed between his wealth and

<sup>25</sup> "Tu che hai negletta la prima, non vorrai hor procurare d'operare la seconda?" Anonimo Senese, 184.

<sup>26</sup> "Non farai anco in grato, poiché dalla casa tua fon venute sopra Angelica innocente monte calamità per le perdite infinite, che l'hai riguardata, sempre t'ha mostro animo pacifico, el viso scarico d'ogn'odio." Anonimo Senese, 184.

<sup>27</sup> "Ahi, degenerato talmente da' tuoi nobilissimi antichi?" Anonimo Senese, 184.

<sup>28</sup> "[...] essendo principalmente le prime parti degli animi nobili e gentili, vendicar da fe per fe stesso l'ingiurie quali effe fiano [...]" Anonimo Senese, 184.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Waley characterizes the Salimbeni and the four other largest landowning/banking families as "super-magnates", indicating that they had more influence than simple nobility or magnates. Waley, Daniel, *Siena and the Siennese in the Thirteenth Century*. New York, 1991. 79.

<sup>30</sup> Dean, Marriage and Mutilation, 24–36.



the fact that he has no brother. The author tries to show this spirit in his battles: when Anselmo weighs between revenge and helping, in the case of vendetta he fears immense shame (*estreme vergona*), since by fulfilling it he would distance himself from his noble ancestors (*Hai degenerato talmente dai tuoi nobilissimi antichi?*). Otherwise, he would also behave rudely or uncouthly (*villano*). During his peaceful behavior and his final decision, he “acquires” the following character traits: noble spirit and morally noble (*animo nobile e gentile*), and peaceful spirit (*animo pacifico*). Following the deliberation situation, the author of the narrative endows Salimbeni with even more positive qualities.<sup>31</sup> Of course, we can read about Anselmo’s character traits in such detail. Carlo is first and foremost presented as innocent and honest, but when at one point in the story it seems that he cannot marry Angelica to Anselmo out of gratitude, as a reward, he thinks of himself as an ungrateful peasant (*ingratissimo villano*).<sup>32</sup> The short story also shows that he is a rather naive, easily misled person, as he quickly succumbs to the machinations of the unknown townsman who guarantees the loan and becomes a victim.<sup>33</sup> His sister Angelica seems to be a much stronger character. In addition to her angelic beauty, we learn about many other character traits through her relationships with other characters. In general, she is also noble-minded, honest, and moral, but she is unhappy because of her brother’s imprisonment and the initially forced marriage.<sup>34</sup> It is important that Illicino contrasts the impoverishment of the Montaninis with the wealth of the Salimbenis from his perspective. The author describes Carlo Montanini nine times, Angelica nineteen times,

<sup>31</sup> We can find that Anselmo is a gentleman (*gentilhuomo*), have noble qualities (*nobili qualità*), a good soul (*animo gentile*), kindness is evident in him (*gentilezza*), it can also be read that He is cordial (*cortesìa*), noble and generous (*animo nobile e generoso*), noble and rich, characteristics include noble birth and wealth (*nobilità e ricchezza*, pity and kindness (*pietà e gentilezza*), goodness (*bontà*). Anonimo Senese, 181–199.

<sup>32</sup> Villano, translated as peasant, can be interpreted both as a character trait, as a synonym for rudeness, and perhaps as a person who wields a hoe and the sharp opposite of a noble. Dante, *La Divina Commedia*. Ed. Emiliani-Giudici, Paolo. Firenze, 2013. 302.

<sup>33</sup> Anonimo Senese, 183.

<sup>34</sup> Anonimo Senese, 190–198. It is worth mentioning that Bernardo Lapini – whose work was used by the anonymous author – has presented situations in his other works where noble ladies have to make decisions against their own will. this issue was examined by the following: Badioli, Lorella, “Una ‘declamatio de liberalitate’: La novella di Angelica Montanini”, In. Battaglia Ricci, Lucia – Bessi, Rossella – Albanese, Gabriella (eds.), *Favole parabole istorie. La forme della scrittura novellistica dal Medioevo al Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno di Pisa 26–28 ottobre 1998*. Roma, 2000. 419–439.; Lapini, Bernardo detto l’Illicino, *La novella di Angelica Montanini con l’inedito discorso di Ginevra Luti*. Ed. Marchi, Monica. Pisa, 2023. 17–61.

and Anselmo Salimbeni twenty-six different times. From the arrangement of the characteristics as characters, we can conclude that Carlo is the least interesting of the three main characters. Overall, it can be stated that most of them present the descendants of the two Siense families in a positive light, so we can conclude that Bernardo Illicino had a basically good opinion of both the Salimbeni and the Montanini. We can also read a statement regarding the behavior of the secondary characters. At the beginning of the story, the anonymous Siense citizen (*N. N. Cittadino*) who lends money, becomes a clearly negative character, since it is through his financial scheming that Carlo finds himself in a difficult situation. Although we do not learn his name, the author writes the following about him: “[...] influential in the Reggimento and a member of the Popolo, envious, who desires Carlo’s possessions.”<sup>35</sup> The unknown citizen is not only a creditor who covets Carlo’s estate, but also an influential member of the Monte del Popolo and the city council. The clerk from whom Anselmo learns of Carlo Montanini’s plight cannot be called a positive character either, since he acts as an advocate of the behavior depicted in a bad light in the vendetta story.<sup>36</sup> In fact, it can be said that the author has a bad opinion of all the other people mentioned, except for the main characters belonging to the nobility. In other words, it is typical of the writing style of the Anonymous Siena that he expresses his opinion on the vendetta and the nobility through Anselmo’s thoughts and actions. The characteristics of the various characters already point to an underlying political-moral content in contemporary Siena. In order to form an idea of this, we need to briefly examine the role of the opposing families in the politics of the city.

## **The Struggle between the Montanini and Salimbeni Families?**

The history of the Salimbeni family has an extensive and very detailed literature, so we do not undertake a complete overview in this study, but it is worth highlighting the most important points – with particular regard to their role in vendettas and factional struggles. While the authors of the examined narrative endowed Anselmo, and ultimately his family, with positive, noble character traits, the relationship between the Salembenis and Siena was

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<sup>35</sup> “N. N. Cittadino potente nel Reggimento e Popolare, cupido delle possessione di Carlo [...]”. Anonimo Senese, 183.

<sup>36</sup> Anonimo Senese, 184.

not always cloudless. It is typical of the family's influence that from 1285 onwards we find their names among the largest taxpayers.<sup>37</sup> They earned a significant portion of their income through banking transactions, but they were among the five families that owned the most landholding in the Sienese *contado*. These factors provided a good basis for their political aspirations. Their strategy was to maximize their income and gain more and more influence within the city. Alessandra Carniani aptly described their aspirations with the phrase "almost Signore".<sup>38</sup> However, their plans and methods were not unique: the great rival Tolomei family also had similar objectives.<sup>39</sup> The financial rivalry between the Tolomei, the Bonsignori and the Salimbeni families was also manifested in factional fighting from 1314.<sup>40</sup> The inner-city clashes between the Salimbeni and the Tolomei, appear mostly as a series of vendettas and street fights. The most serious incident probably took place between 1321 and 1322. The starting point was when Balsino di Francesco Tolomei and a group of armed men attacked and killed Francesco di Vanni Sinibaldi of the Salimbeni family, after which revenge was not far behind. In April 1322, Giovanni Bottone (Salimbeni) attacked the Tolomei houses with a group of mercenaries.<sup>41</sup> The seriousness of the incident is also revealed by the fact that by deploying hired men from other cities within the Siena walls, the Salimbeni were taking a very high political risk.<sup>42</sup> The clashes were intermittent, but their scale is characterized by the fact that, – according to the Florentine writer Leonardo Bruni –, Castruccio Castracani was able to conquer Sienese territories in 1322, taking advantage of the confusion caused by the Salimbeni-Tolomei factional struggle.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the Tolomei clan requested help from Arezzo, which also threatened Siena's independence.<sup>44</sup> After the city government obliged them to make peace for the sake of

<sup>37</sup> Waley, Daniel, *Siena and the Sienese in the Thirteenth Century*. New York, 1991. 24, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Carniani, Alessandra, *I Salimbeni, quasi una signoria. Tentativi di affermazione politica nella Siena del '300*. Siena, 1995. 8–11.

<sup>39</sup> Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 56–57.; Waley, *Siena and the Sienese*, 1991. 79, 101.

<sup>40</sup> Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 56–57.

<sup>41</sup> *Cronaca senese*. In: RIS, 15/6a. 122.

<sup>42</sup> The possible intervention of foreign cities was considered a serious security risk in the cities. Those who hired mercenaries as private individuals could fall under the shadow of betrayal. At the same time, the government regularly hired mercenaries as law enforcers. Bowsky, William M, "The Medieval Commune and Internal Violence. Police Power and Public Safety in Siena, 1287–1355", = *The American Historical Review* 73:1, 1967, 1–17.

<sup>43</sup> Bruni, Leonardo, *Istoria Fiorentina*. Ed. Acciajuoli, Donato. 2004. 242.

<sup>44</sup> Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 193–194.

Siena, the fights flared up again between 1330 and 1333, when other families, including the Scotti, the Malavolti, the Piccolomini and the Saraceni, became involved. The clashes were reported in detail in various Siennese historical works. Although the factional struggle, which ended in 1337, brought no success to either side, the Salimbeni and their associates continued to strive for political dominance.<sup>45</sup> In the following decades, their armed actions were no longer directed only against a rival clan, but openly sought to gain control of the city. In 1355, for example, they joined forces with the Tolomei family in order to take control from the Nine,<sup>46</sup> only to compete with them again for the positions they had gained until 1368.<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting that although the Siennese chronicles reported in detail most of the clashes, the name of the Montanini family is not found in these descriptions.

Where were the Montanini at that time? Their ancestors were lords of a small castle called Bigozzo.<sup>48</sup> At the end of the thirteenth century, they were financial partners with the Bonsignori – the financial rivals of the Salimbeni. According to William Bowsky, they almost approached the weight of the *casati* families in terms of political/social influence, but fundamentally did not reach that level.<sup>49</sup> The difference is clearly illustrated by the fact that while, according to the chronicler Donato di Neri, the city obliged the Salimbeni to armour one hundred and twenty foot soldiers in the event of a campaign, the Montanini had to field only fifteen.<sup>50</sup> Most of the fourteenth century their names were not mentioned in connection with violent conflicts, with one exception: in 1326, during a city riot, Geri Montanini's son was wounded. So, until 1394, the supposed date of the Salimbeni-Montanini conflict,

<sup>45</sup> Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 195.

<sup>46</sup> This political system was named after the city government of the Nine. Between 1287 and 1355, with minor interruptions, the city was governed by nine leaders, reelected every two months, who officially held the title of governor and protector of the city. According to Bowsky's classical concept, the system can be characterized as an oligarchy, since the most influential magnate families most often obtained the positions. Bowsky, William M., "The Buon Governo of Siena (1287–1355). A Medieval Italian Oligarchy", = *Speculum* 37, 1962, 368–381. 368–381.; According to Waley's recent research, in addition to the largest families, smaller merchants also had significant influence in the governance of the city, but this did not reduce the influence of the magnates. Waley, Siena and the Siennese, 1991. 77–98.

<sup>47</sup> Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 197.

<sup>48</sup> Bowsky, William M., *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena Under the Nine, 1287–1355*. London, 1981. 17, 40, 41, 69, 72.

<sup>49</sup> Bowsky, A Medieval Italian Commune, 1981. 72.

<sup>50</sup> *Cronaca senese di Donato di Neri e di suo figlio Neri*. In: RIS, 15/6. 620.

we cannot read their names in connection with a serious factional fight or vendetta.

After the brief historical overviews of the family, it is worth mentioning another urban group and its political context, which can be read in the story of Anselmo and Angelica. According to the description, the unnamed citizen belonged to the *popolo* and was influential in the *Reggimento*. The latter referred to a special governmental structure in Siena. The *Reggimento* was based on political groups called *Monti*. These were political associations based on birth, which cannot be linked to the Italian parties of previous centuries. Membership in one of the *Monti* became the basis for participation in the government and in general for all political expression. In Siena, the following five *Monti* gained political influence: the *Monte dei Gentilhuomini*, the *Monte dei Dodici*, the *Monte dei Noveschi*, the *Monte dei Riformatori* and the *Monte del Popolo*. The *Noveschi* included the descendants of those who had governed the city under the *Nove*, while the *Riformatori* included those whose ancestors had sat on the councils during the first government of the *Monte del Popolo*. Those who could not be included in any of the other groups could participate in politics within the *Monte del Popolo*. Of the *Dodici* and the *Gentilhuomini*, the former included twelve wealthy merchant or banking families with great influence, and the latter included Sienese nobles.<sup>51</sup> The *monti*-based system, the *Reggimento*, was introduced in the mid- fourteenth century and for a surprisingly long time, until 1487, when the Petrucci family took control of the city, it determined the politics of Siena. Thus, the description of the Salimbeni–Montanini conflict and its resolution, as well as Bernardo Illicino's career, can be attributed to the long period of the *Reggimento*.

Returning to the topic of armed conflicts, we should mention that in 1369, the Salimbeni and several supporters of them, tried to remove the ruling group, the *Monte dei Riformatori*, although they failed spectacularly. The leader of their armed men, called Bartolomeo, was murdered by the *popo-*

<sup>51</sup> Shaw, Christine, *Popular Government and Oligarchy in Renaissance Italy*. Leiden–Boston, 2006. 4–5.; Isaacs, Ann Katherine Chiancone, “Popolo e monti nella Siena del primo Cinquecento”, = *Rivista Storica Italiana* 82:1, 1970, 32–80. According to Shaw, under the *Reggimento*, unlike most Italian cities, in Siena, belonging to the *monti* was a much more important identity determinant than neighborhood. However, unlike the latter, the *monti* did not have a well-defined structure or insignia. Indeed, unlike the parties, they did not even have a leader. Shaw, *Popular Government*, 2006. 5.

lo in street fighting.<sup>52</sup> Of course, the Salimbeni also had political allies among the Monti, and during their “attempt” they relied primarily on the Monte dei Dodici and the Monte dei Gentilhuomini.<sup>53</sup> They did not give up on gaining power even after the aforementioned failure. In 1403 they saw the time as ripe again to achieve their goals, which was to rule the city. With their supporters and the help of the Florentines, they tried again to overthrow the current city government and come to power. This time, their attempt failed, primarily because their main opponent, the *Monte del Popolo*, was supported by the Milanese. For their alliance with the Florentines, the Salimbeni and their supporters, the *Monte dei Dodici* and the *Monte dei Gentilhuomini*, were exiled from political life.<sup>54</sup> In this case, this did not mean expulsion from the city, but that from then on they could not hold political office under the Reggimento. Although this type of punishment allowed them to remain in the city, during politically significant events, such as when a high ecclesiastical or secular dignitary traveled through Siena, the city authorities could still temporarily order them to leave the city.<sup>55</sup>

The city government was so afraid of the Salimbeni and their supporters that, in addition to sanctions, they conducted separate operations to break their influence. Investigations were conducted against members of the *Monte dei Dodici* under the Reggimento. For example, in 1436, house searches were carried out to search for secretly stored weapons, and in 1441, they investigated how many times members of the *Dodici* were seen on the streets after dark.<sup>56</sup> It was also typical of the Salimbeni clan to try to interfere in city politics from their country estates.<sup>57</sup> This is actually supported by the story of Anselmo and Angelica, since the story mainly takes place on the country estates of the two families: Anselmo also has to go into the city for information and to be able to pay the fine. Despite being banned from direct politics and city offices, the Salimbeni clan did not give up their efforts to regain their influence, although they subsequently tried to “make amends” in other cities and the countryside. While in the Siennese narrative sources of the period before the 1403 reprisals we can hardly find any entries related to Siennese domestic politics that do not mention them, after that we can only read about

<sup>52</sup> *Cronaca senese* di Donato di Neri e di suo figlio Neri. In: RIS. 15/6. 629.

<sup>53</sup> Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 269–279.

<sup>54</sup> Shaw, *Popular Government*, 2006. 13.; Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 269–279.

<sup>55</sup> Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 269–279.

<sup>56</sup> Shaw, *Popular Government*, 2006. 13.

<sup>57</sup> Waley, *Siena and the Siennese*, 1991. 79.; Shaw, *Popular Government*, 2006. 40.



them occasionally, in connection with a single case, and even then usually in matters of areas located further away from Siena. For example, a Salimbeni, Lodovico, who is not mentioned anywhere else, is listed in the Sienese chronicle as “king” of Ragona according to an entry from 1441,<sup>58</sup> and in 1451 Bartolomeo di Salimbene was listed as podesta of Perugia.<sup>59</sup> It may have been an important step in their family politics that in 1439 a Salimbeni girl, Marietta, married Antonio Petrucci, who essentially established the future power of his family. The Petrucci clan had long-term goals, among others, to acquire Siena. Their alliance with the Salimbeni was further strengthened by the fact that Antonio Petrucci’s son, Bartolomeo, also married a Salimbeni girl.<sup>60</sup> The Petrucci clan also tried to win over other families who had been exiled or disfavored from Sienese politics.<sup>61</sup> In the 1450s and 1460s, their policy was primarily motivated by the promise of future office and wealth to gain supporters among them. This goal was achieved in 1487, when their family, through Pandolfo Petrucci, acquired Siena for decades.<sup>62</sup> It is no exaggeration to say that the Salimbeni’s goal may have been to return to Siena by approaching the Petruccis.<sup>63</sup> By examining their historical role, we can conclude that for decades they sought to gain greater influence and more advantageous positions, using weapons and establishing advantageous relationships, often to the detriment of the Sienese city government. Illicino’s short story, with its honest and morally noble protagonist, presents a significantly more peaceful picture of them.

## Conclusions

In the story, the main character, Anselmo, presents us with the image of the ideal urban nobleman. On the one hand, he comes from a distinguished, influential family. According to the story, he is both moral and modest, as

<sup>58</sup> *Cronaca senese di Tommaso Fecini*. In: RIS, 15/6b. 854.

<sup>59</sup> *Cronaca senese di Tommaso Fecini*. In: RIS, 15/6b. 861.

<sup>60</sup> Shaw, *Popular Government*, 2006. 19.

<sup>61</sup> Pertici, Petra, *Tra politica e cultura nel primo Quattrocento senese: le epistole di Andreuccio Petrucci (1426–1443)*. Siena, 1990. 28–47.; Pertici, Petra, “Una congiuratio del reggimento di Siena nel 1450”, = *Bullettino senese di storia patria* 99, 1992, 9–30.; Shaw, *Popular Government*, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Shaw, *Popular Government*, 21, 42.

<sup>63</sup> On the deliberate marriage policy of the Salimbeni see: Carniani, I Salimbeni, 1995. 197–202.

he paid the fine anonymously. When faced with a decision-making situation, he behaves in a peaceful manner instead of a vendetta. As can be seen from the thoughts put into the character's mouth, the author believes that revenge would distance Anselmo from his noble ancestors. It can therefore be stated that the writer is opposed to violent behavior, but in a way that he stands up for the Salimbeni family, which is considered as *casati*. He achieves this with a special rhetorical solution. He does not refer to relatives who lived in the recent past and led a violent lifestyle, but to those who lived in the distant past. The *grandi* Montanini family is also presented in a positive light, while other groups in urban society are associated with more negative thoughts. The anonymous citizen, as a member of the *Monte del Popolo*, prioritizes his own interests, wanting to take advantage of Carlo's desperate situation. The people of the city office encourage Anselmo to take revenge, and would even consider him lucky for it. The tone of the story therefore clearly favors the nobles, while criticizing the members of the *popolo* and, in fact, the *Reggimento*. On the one hand, the story, adopted and simplified by Anonimo Senese, reflects on the phenomenon of vendetta as a moral problem. On the other hand, its aim may be to clarify the names of the *grandi*, and especially the Salimbeni and Montanini, living in the second half of the fifteenth century, and to make them morally acceptable. This may have fit into the political objectives of the Salimbeni at the time, but further research is needed to substantiate this. Through the protagonist in this earlier story, they actually choose a more peaceful, "modern" path, more acceptable to the times, breaking with the aggressive political tools of the nobility.

# **EAST CENTRAL EUROPE: BETWEEN THE BALTIC AND THE ADRIATIC OSTMITTELEUROPA: ZWISCHEN OSTSEE UND ADRIA**

## **Aims and Scope**

The East Central Europe: Between the Baltic and the Adriatic (ECE) is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by the Institute of History at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Debrecen. As its title suggests, the journal focuses on the history of Central Europe, covering the region between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas. This region was for centuries a crossroads and meeting point where diverse ethnic groups, religions, traditions, and political entities interacted in unique ways. In addition to studies directly examining the history of the region, the editors welcome methodologically and/or theoretically relevant contributions for the analysis of historical processes.

The journal seeks to create an interdisciplinary platform to facilitate dialogue and disseminate new research on the region, whose findings are often limited in international scholarship due to language barriers and the influence of national narratives. To support this goal, ECE is an open-access journal, published at least once annually, available in both print and online formats.

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Die Zeitschrift möchte eine interdisziplinäre Plattform schaffen, um den Dialog zu fördern und neue Forschungsergebnisse über die Region zu verbreiten, deren Ergebnisse aufgrund von Sprachbarrieren und der Prägung durch nationale Narrative international nur begrenzt bekannt sind. Zur Unterstützung dieses Ziels ist ECE eine Open-Access-Zeitschrift, die mindestens einmal jährlich erscheint und sowohl in gedruckter als auch in digitaler Form verfügbar ist.

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