BETWEEN HISTORY AND TOWN-PLANNING:
ROMANIAN, RUSSIANS, GREEKS, HUNGARIANS AND SARACENS IN TERRA DI LAVORO DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

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Abstract
This research fills up a historio-geographical gap about the importance of the presence of merchant and ethnic minorities in the area of Capua in the Middle Ages, trying to bring to life some more features of the environment, mentality every day life, society, town planning, toponymy, through documents which have rarely been published.

Keywords: urban, land use, planning

1. Introduction

This research fills up a historio-geographical gap about the importance of the presence of merchant and ethnic minorities in the area of Capua in the Middle Ages, trying to bring to life some more features of the environment, mentality, every day life, society, town planning, toponymy, through documents which have rarely been published. Apart from some previous studies of the author about the ethnic groups of Romanian, Jewish, Greek, Hungarian, Russian, Armenian people, present in Capua in the Middle Ages1, almost nothing has been written about this topic.

But we notice that according to the current studies, it’s impossible to value the substantial amount, not even approximately, both of ethnic groups just now mentioned, and of the foreign merchants present in the area, since our sources –mostly leasehold land documents from the

church of Capua, on payment of a moderate annual rent in cash or in kind – don’t allow to calculate that.

Generally speaking, we can state that among our documents a date is clear: only Jewish and Amalfitans were granted a rather large area in the town. In particular it seems that Amalfitans had a privileged place in the city, they took possession of a central rich area, whereas Jewish are placed in three *iudaicae*. The parchments of the Archiepiscopal Office in Capua mention a large crowd of *mercatores*, *campsores* (money-changers) and of *apothecarii* (shopkeepers), the other ethnic groups, with some foreign merchants, are documented mostly outside the city walls of Capua, in a very large often marshy, woody and waste area.

Since near the end of the XII century the relationships between Terra di Lavoro (the present province of Caserta) and Romania have been documented². There is a written witness dated 1196 from Aversa archives. In this year the *miles Matheus Peregrinus*, who must leave for Romania, makes his will, and gives his house to Saint Paul’s Congregation in Aversa: «Cum igitur Matheus cognomine Peregrinus, filius olim Mathei eiusdem cognominis, qui fuit unus ex feodatis militibus civitatis Averse, paratus esset cum regio yscolio apud Romanian transire, et domi sue disponeret testamentario iure»³.

In the first years of XIII century comes out, for the first time, in documents of Capua the family *de Romania*, its name provides documents about ancient commercial relationships with Byzantine Empire⁴. Professor Norbert Kamp, from Gottingen University, was the first scholar to provide precious news about it, by informing that in general we knew little about the family group *de Romania*, its surname is clearly referred to their traditional activity of international traders⁵. We highlight a *Matheus de Romania*, *secretus*, who from 1220 to 1229, as he works in Messina, gave a considerable continuity to the financial provincial administration in Calabria

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and in Eastern Sicily, so much that from 1229 to 1232 another relative of his, Iohannis de Romania, his supposed brother, succeeded him. Their administrative task appeared in 1239 as a whole entity without solution, since it is called in mandates of chancellery tempus Mathei et Iohannis de Romania⁶. During his task Iohannis de Romania appears to have enjoyed a particular trust from the imperator Frederick II. In September 1230, he belonged to a delegation of councillors at king’s retinue, when he went to Anagni for peace talks with the Pope. During the decision of Constitutions and of economic reforms in summer of 1231, he was present at court in Melfi. Afterwards it seems that he had been imprisoned owing to embezzlements and had to give back the estate. The procurator teacher of the time, however, allowed Iohannes de Romania to make up with profits of ius falangagii from the port of Naples. This profit research by Iohannes, that caused him another imperial reproach, shows clearly his conception of the office as commercial profit enterprise⁷. In 1259 one of Matteo’s sons lived in Capua, and he named himself, however, habitator civitatis Scala, while Iohannes was likely to have had in Naples the centre of his activities. A branch of the family at least resides in Capua, where two of de Romanga contributed in loans to the Crown in 1278. In Agerola dated 1273 a property was given to de ipsis de Romanis de Scala – to Scala, also in 1314 – to Purpure de Romania previously dead. In may 1295, after that the armistice in the war for the Sicily has fuelled new hopes, Andreas de Romania, miles civis Scala applied to Charles II to get the permission for a journey to Palermo pro recuperandis redditibus et proventibus bonorum suorum, that he had inherited from his ancestors of Palermo⁸.

The documents in Capua Historical Archbishop Archives allow to add some more news. In 1259 a Bartholomeus cognomine de Romania, filius quandom domini Mathei de Romania, habitator civitatis Scala is recorded⁹. In 1291 a Petrus de Romanga owned a land in Cauciano (near Marcianise)¹⁰. In 1298 in Carzano (near Marcianise) it is mentioned a land of Iohannes

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⁷ Io., Gli Amalfitani al servizio della monarchia, p. 23.
⁸ Io., Ascesa, funzione e fortuna, p. 39.
¹⁰ Capua Archepiscopal Historical Archive (= A.S.A.C.), parchment of the Diocesan Administration n. 463.
and Petrus de Romanga, perhaps brothers\textsuperscript{11}. Near Pignataro the selva Romagnana is well known, it is a huge reserve to obtain and sell timber to utilize for a lot of aims, from the building of ships, houses and furniture, to firewood. From a document of 1313, instead, we come to know clearly that a branch of the family is by now permanently in Capua; it deals, in fact, with a land with garden, in the city, \textit{quam tenuit quondam dompna Alexandra, uxor Nicolai de Romagna}\textsuperscript{12}. In 1320 our Nicolaus de Romangna and a Petrus de Romangna have estates in Capua, «in parrochia ecclesie sanctorum Cosme et Damiani»\textsuperscript{13}. In a document of 1351 it is mentioned a «curtis et domus quondam magistri Francisci de Romanga, sita in parrochia ecclesie S. Cosme de Porta Nova», in the same city\textsuperscript{14}. Subsequently we come to know that the family have properties also outside Capua: in 1344 Ioannoctus de Romania and his wife sell their piece of land, placed «in pertinenciis Caserte»\textsuperscript{15}.

What are the relationships, we wonder, between Capua and Romania? Certainly they were purely commercial and probably made for way especially the Genoese, that traded in the Black Sea. We know, in fact, that the coming in the Southern Italy of economic foreign operators, above all Genoese, Pisans and Venetians, had acquired a consistence starting more or less from the late XII century. The Romanians probably introduced into Terra di Lavoro the growing of hemp and gave more importance to the cult of the Saints Nicandro and Marciano, the two martyrs fallen at Tomi in Mesia on the Black Sea (III-IV century), to whom an ecclesia was dedicated in Capua, which was recalled in 1216\textsuperscript{16}. Not having direct news on the products traded between Capua and Romania, supposing that Amalfithans merchants had made for way, we can refer again briefly in this paper to the facts concerning the Genoese trades.

It is known that from 1204 the Venetian prevalence in the Byzantine empire is set up and from 1261 that of the Genoese prevalence in the Black Sea and in Caffa and La Tana, from where the caravans left for Katai and India. The Genoese ships, bigger and bigger in order to be able

\textsuperscript{11} Ibidem, parchment of the Diocesan Administration, envelope 37, n. 508.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibidem, parchment of the Cathedral Chapter n. 616.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibidem, n. 686.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibidem, parchment of the Diocesan Administration, envelope 44, n. 1362.
\textsuperscript{15} Gabriele Iannelli’s Regest.
to face the winter storms in the Black Sea, returned back by carrying at first to Trebisonda and Costantinopoli, then to the west, the corns of the plains, the salt of the coastal lagoons, the timber and particularly the precious furs of Russia, the salt fishes and the caviar of the great fishing centres of the Kuban (La Copa), in the Sea of Azov (La Tana); eventually the slaves that the Tartars sold to the Italian merchants. The Black Sea became very soon the main halting-place of the Asiatic trade. In Trebisonda Caravans made head from Persia, in La Tana those ones from Indian and from China. So for the Eastern trade there was so at the first place the Black Sea. This structure was already seriously compromised towards 1360 for the collapse of the Mongolian empire, that had guaranteed trade peace. From this reason serious difficulties came out for the trade of the Italians in the East; the trade for Romania was resumed only in 1383, to be broken off between 1400 and 1402, then in 1405. The merchants organized still their convoys for Romania till 1453, but on the Black Sea now their didn’t buy spices any more, only products of the regions: wax, fruits, fish, wheat and salt, sometimes together with a little silk of the Caspian regions. It is likely there were contacts also with China, thanks to the mediation of the Romanians, owing to the attention that Frederick II had reserved to the silk makers.

About the same period whene Rumenians appeared in Capua, also Armenians are documented, mainly already present in Calabria and in Bari since X century, but allocated also in the Salento region and at Benevento. So, in the month of January 1259 the above mentioned Bartholomeus de Romania, son of the dead Matheus, sold one of his land lots outside the city, «prope locum ubi dicitur ad S. Mariam de Cannellis, ad Criptam», a cinnamon plantation placed outside Capua, towards the village of S. Maria la Fossa. Between neighbouring people was mentioned the abbas Petrus de Armenia was mentioned. Besides very able in the minor arts, Armenians produced exceptional minated code of religious and

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17 J. HEERS, L’Occidente nel XIV e nel XV secolo. Aspetti economici e sociali, Milano 1978, p. 146.
18 Ibidem, p. 149.
20 G. BOVA, Tra Capua e l’Oriente, p. 137, note 1039.
23 J. MAZZOLENI, Le pergamente, p. 192.
secular subject – in the Capua’s parchments are often mentioned some *Evangeliaria*\(^{24}\) besides silver bindings, pastorals, jewels for brides from Van, potteries, clothes, decorations. In Capua Armenian clothes were certainly used, certainly the *cilicium*, exactly from Cilicia, a course bristly and prickly cloth of goat hair or horse hair. Exemplary is the event of clergyman *Robertus cognomine de Girardo*, who in the testamentary arrangements of May 1202 provides that three parts of one gold ounce might serve for his funeral (*pro cera et cilicio*)\(^{25}\). In this case the sackcloth assumes the function of a kind of shroud by which to wrap the body. The cult for the Forty Christians Martyrs, fallen at Sebaste, in Armenia was also spread under Licinio (307-23)\(^{26}\); as also the devoutness for the Saints Cosma and Damiano, doctors and martyrs in Cilicia between 297 and 303\(^{27}\); it was also documented the cult for St. Biagio, doctor and bishop of Sebaste in Armenia, who suffered perhaps the martyrdom under Licinio\(^{28}\). We don’t know any more on the Armenian presence in Capua.

Recently we have spoken of some Greek settlements in the territory of Capua, regarding to the medieval period, even if it can’t be excluded that they might be far older. In fact it isn’t possible to think that in the ancient times, at least the Greeks from the coast, hadn’t, somehow, traded with Capua and with other centres of the inland, exploiting for example the waterway of Volturno that, navigable in those times, flowed into the sea at intervals of nearly twenty-eight km. from the city. It is suitable to remember that the tradition remembers at least four Capua certainly Greeks bishops: S. Sinoto (66?-80?), S. Proterio (304?-26), S. Panfilo (385?-409) e Niceforo (1091-96).

Coming to the medieval sources, the Byzantines are called *Graeci*\(^{29}\). As it is well-know, during the x and xi centuries there was a heavy immigration of Greeks in Campania, coming from

\(^{24}\) G. BOVA, *Tra Capua e l’Oriente*, p. 140, note 1053.

\(^{25}\) Id., *Le pergamene sveve*, I, p. 87, 92.

\(^{26}\) *Breviarium Romanum, ex decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum, S. Pli v pontificis maximi iussu editum, Clementis viii, Urbani vii et Leonis xii aucoirete recognitum*, Ratibona, Rome, Ne Eboraci, Cincinnati 1903, die 10 martii, Ss. Quadraginta Martyrum.

\(^{27}\) F. CARAFFA, *Cosma e Damiano*, in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum (= B.S.),* IV, Roma 1964, p. 223ss.


Calabria and from Sicilia – among which we remember S. Nilo who, with sixteen Italian-Greek monks, went to Capua about in the 980 – because of the Saracen incursions.

In a document of 988 it is mentioned just outside Capua the scola Greca: «foras ponte Casulini [...] ipsa curte de sancto Stephano ad scola Greca»

The Greek language was probably taught there and the Greek medicine was practised, as it had been handed on for example from the study of Ippocrate’s and Galeno’s works. There were perhaps other immigrations to Capua territory from 1204 on, when in Byzantium broke out a rebellion in which were killed the emperor Isacco and his son Alessio iv, and was Alessio v as his successor. Crusaders conquered in those times Byzantium and, after they had sacked it, they founded the the Eastern Latin Empire headed by Baldovino from Flanders. As it is well-know, with the falling of Constantinople the Byzantium empire was shattered into many small kingdoms that fought one another to conquer the supremacy in the Balkan area. In the Swabian period we remember the presence in Capua in 1202 of a Berlengerius, filius quondam Pagani Greci, notarii et mulier, nomine Basilia; in 1207 is mentioned an Aldemoda, filia quondam Iordani de Presenciano, uxor quondam Leonis de Rigo, notari Greci, iure Romano vivens. At the end of XIII century as abbess of the S. Giovanni delle Monache monastery in Capua, a domina Galgana, dicta Greca was elected (1286-1339).

Huge Greek settlements were only just outside Capua, near S. Clemente and Bagnara villages, placed in terra Cancie on the right of the Volturno river, more exactly in the place called a li Grecki et ubi nominantur Nannariu (1284), near S. Maria la Fossa village. At S. Clemente a magister Philippus Grecus is remembered too: «petia terre modiorum sex, sita in pertinenciis S. Clementis, in loco qui dicitur Pluppatellis, iuxta terram magistri Philippi Greci»

31 G. BOVA, Le pergamene sveve, i, p. 84.
32 Ibidem, p. 78.
(1273)\textsuperscript{35}, the *magister* himself had got a land in Campocipro, near Marcianise: «finis terra magistri Philippi Greci» (1261)\textsuperscript{36}. At Cancello village a shrub land of a «Georgius Grecus» (1470) is quoted\textsuperscript{37}. Since just at S. Clemente a cinnamon plantation (a le Cannelle) is documented in 1469\textsuperscript{38}, we can suppose the inhabitants to be interested in the spices trade, thanks to the near Porto delle Femmine (1222).

Also the area outside Capua, beyond the Frederick II Towns (Porta Roma), was full of important Greek settlements. That’s why we report near Pantuliano the following toponimo: «in villa Cave, pertinenciarum dicte civitatis Capue, et ipsa pecia terre dicitur la corte de lo Greco» (1447)\textsuperscript{39}; near Vitulazio village was also quoted a «terra heredum quondam Antonii Bisanti, de Capua, que dicitur la starcza Greca» (1460)\textsuperscript{40}. By reading other sources, we also know that in Calvi diocese there were the *ecclesia S. Marie de Grecis* (1308-10)\textsuperscript{41} and the *ecclesia S. Marie de Paganis* (1274)\textsuperscript{42}, that we don’t have to confuse for the homonymous church placed in Marcianise, while in Teano diocese the *ecclesia S. Nicolai de Grecis* (1308-10)\textsuperscript{43} is documented. I also highlight the *ecclesia S. Panphili* in Capua, dedicated to the forementioned Greek bishop of the iv-v centuries, quoted by documents of 1255\textsuperscript{44} and of 1284\textsuperscript{45}, placed near Porta Nova (Porta Napoli); don’t forget an homonymous *ecclesia S. Pamphili*, near Carinola (1277)\textsuperscript{46}.

Finally we add that in the Middle Ages the surnames *de Todora* (1170), *de Stephania* (1196), *Greco* (1202), *de Bisanto* (1250), *Misilunno* (1252) were very widespread in the territory. The

\textsuperscript{35} I registri della Cancelleria angioina ricostruiti da Riccardo Filangieri con la collaborazione degli archivisti napoletani, ix (1272-1273), Napoli 1956, n. 121, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{36} A.S.A.C., parchment of the Diocesan Administration n. 110.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibidem, parchment of the Diocesan Administration, envelope 50, n. 1868.
\textsuperscript{38} «In pertinencis ville S. Clementis, in loco ubi dicitur a le Cannelle, iuxta aquam Vulturni fluminis» (A.S.A.C., parchment of the Cathedral Chapter n. 2294).
\textsuperscript{39} Ibidem, parchment of the Cathedral Chapter n. 2040.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibidem, parchment of the Cathedral Chapter n. 2208.
\textsuperscript{41} Rationes decimarum Italiae nei secoli xiii e xiv, Campania, edited by M. Inguanez, L. Mattei Cerasoli, P. Sella, Città del Vaticano 1942, n. 1557, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{42} «Pecia terre ubi dicitur li Carrari et dicitur ibi ad S. Mariam dili Pagani» (A.S.A.C., parchment of the Diocesan Administration n. 222 bis).
\textsuperscript{43} Rationes decimarum Italiae, n. 678, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{44} Museo Campano, ms. 392, n. 160.
\textsuperscript{45} M. MONACO, Sanctuarium, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{46} A.S.A.C., parchment of the Diocesan Administration n. 274.
surname Greco is still very widespread in the same place of Terra di Lavoro. Today the towns of Fontegreca (Caserta), Torre del Greco (Napoli) and Greci (Avellino) are very famous.

As regards the Russian presence in the territory, we report that in 1230, only just outside Capua, «extra pontem Casolini, iuxta flumen mortuum», a place called li Russi is documented⁴⁷, where in 1376 the concia grossa of Barbaro Strancione and the concia minuta seu subtilis of Antonio Grasso are quoted⁴⁸. Moreover there are many mills, vineyards, gardens and above all, a port, which represents a clear sign of trade activity. The Russians, we are talking about are probably Eastern Slaves, perhaps arrived after Gengis Khan’s Mongol invasion (1221), together with many Persians; but it’s also true that Russian mercenaries were used for example in two expeditions to Sicily, around 1020 and in 1038. They are also remembered in the Annales Barenses in 1027, in which an army composed by «Russorum, Guandalorum, Turcorum, Burgarorum, Vlachorum, Macedonum aliorumque» is named⁴⁹. Today the surnames Russo and Mosca are still widespread in the territory.

As regards the Hungarian presence in the area, we certainly know that in 937 the little Campogagliano village, not far from S. Clemente, was taken by them for twelve days⁵⁰. Then they gradually settled in the area, above all in Capua and S. Nicola la Strada village, even if they never founded a well definable community. Their names (Hungarus, de Hungaro, de Hungarecto) appear, above all, among the neighbouring of the lands, that’s why in this moment it’s impossible to established any else trade activities of theirs. The surname Dell’Ungaro (Dallongaro) today is documented in Alvignano, Caserta and Piedimonte Matese.

As regards the presence of the Saracens in the territory, we have to say that the term Saracenus is vague and the sources of the time gave it to all the present Moslems in the Southern Italy, without any particular ethnic characterizations⁵¹. In the whole area, it is not

⁴⁸ A.S.A.C., parchment of the Diocesan Administration, envelope 43, n. 1245.
⁵¹ S. PALMIERI, Mobilità etnica, p. 70.
possible to determine their commercial activities. So we stress only some place-names, that allow us to clarify some details on the attack by Saracens to the ancient Capua (the modern Santa Maria Capua Vetere City) in 841. A street de lu Saracchinu is for example signalled near Arnone village in 1244\textsuperscript{52}; this road can give us information on the route followed by the “infidels” in one of the numerous raids achieved in the territory of Capua. Between S. Andrea del Pizzone and Grazzanise villages the topographical maps point out still today a place denominated Saracino. Also near Triflisco there was a place denominated li Sarachini (1471)\textsuperscript{53}.

We finally remember that Frederick II assigned as serves to his Saracen friends, the eunuchi di Capua\textsuperscript{54}, city in which a Saracen military contingent was firmly present (1229)\textsuperscript{55}. The last name Saraceni is broadly still today widespread in the territory.

\textsuperscript{52} G. BOVA, Le pergamene sveve, V, p. 526.
\textsuperscript{53} Gabriele Iannelli’s Regest.
\textsuperscript{54} Ph. Labbeus - G. Cossartius, Sacrosancta Concilia, XIV, Venetiis 1728, p. 51.