

Lay Interventions and the Reshaping of Sacred Rituals and Space in 1520s Milan

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On an Adventide Sunday in 1523, a visitor to Milan's Duomo witnessed something unexpected. Lay congregants halted high mass by yelling at the priests, demanding that attention remain fixed on their favoured preacher. This and similar episodes are recounted in the Cronica Milanese by the shopkeeper Giovan Marco Burigozzo. Using Burigozzo's accounts alongside overlooked evidence from the Duomo's archives, this article traces moments when customary rituals broke down under lay intervention. Such episodes reveal how ordinary congregants experienced, contested and redirected the cathedral's functions, reshaping the church's sonic and liturgical space in ways that diverged from its intended purposes.

What makes a space sound sacred? Since Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti's seminal study on Renaissance Venetian churches, scholars have addressed this question by examining how the architecture of premodern religious venues affected worshippers' auditory experience. Several important studies have shown that interactions between liturgical sound and physical space provided spiritual enrichment through multisensory experiences, thereby reinforcing ecclesiastical and political hierarchies.¹

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All translations are my own.

¹ D. Howard and L. Moretti, *Sound and space in Renaissance Venice: architecture, music, acoustics*, New Haven 2009. Building on Howard and Moretti's methodology, Bissera

The focus of these studies has logically been those liturgical rituals for which we possess the most extensive documentation – rituals that took place around the high altar and the choir and that were typically reserved for religious and secular elites. Lay congregants in the nave, by contrast, were often separated from the action by a screen.² Activities that took place in the nave have been less well studied; and yet church naves were sites of not only devotional practices like singing, praying and preaching, but also of dance, commercial trade and judicial trials.³ Even a distinct spatial division, intended to safeguard the sanctity of the altar and choir, sometimes failed to shield sacred rituals from secular activities occurring in the nave.

This article examines three episodes from the sixteenth-century *Cronica Milanese* that blur the distinction between sacred and secular spaces and the types of activities we generally associate with them. The chronicle, written by the Milanese shopkeeper Giovan Marco Burigozzo, offers first-hand accounts of major events that occurred in Milan between 1500 and 1544. Burigozzo's text is unique in providing the perspective of an ordinary citizen; he records instances of everyday churchgoers disrupting liturgical celebrations in the Duomo with shouting and verbal

V. Pentcheva's study of Hagia Sophia explores worshippers' sensorial experiences inside Constantinople's most sacred building by combining the study of the church's material features with written accounts detailing the liturgical celebrations. Like Howard and Moretti, Pentcheva reveals that the musicians' physical position was driven by the search for the ideal acoustic, not for the musicians but for the rulers: B. Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia: sound, space, and spirit in Byzantium*, University Park, PA 2017. Acoustic studies conducted in several French royal residences by a team of researchers supported by the Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours have taken these approaches in analyses of secular spaces: V. Zara, 'Case study: experiencing sound: historical performance and digital technology in French royal residences', in J. Brooks, M. Stephens and W. Thormählen (eds), *Sound heritage: making music matters in historic houses*, Abingdon 2022, 236–46. For more global approaches to the study of worshippers' auditory experience see also C. Guillebaud and C. Lavandier (eds), *Worship sound spaces: architecture, acoustics and anthropology*, Abingdon 2020.

² R. Strohm, *The rise of European music, 1380–1500*, Cambridge 1993, 270–83; Giovanni Zanovello, "In the church and in the chapel": music and devotional spaces in the Florentine church of Santissima Annunziata', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* lxxvii (2014), 379–428. On liturgical schedules and varied use of sacred spaces in Milanese churches during the religious services between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries see D. Filippi, 'Where devotion and liturgy meet: reassessing the Milanese roots of the *motetti missales*', in D. Filippi and A. Pavanello (eds), *Motet cycles between devotion and liturgy*, Basel 2019, 74–80.

³ J. Allen, *Transforming the church interior: screens and choir spaces, from the Middle Ages to the Tridentine reform*, Cambridge 2022, 16, 296. See also C. Wright, *The maze and the warrior: symbols in architecture, theology, and music*, Cambridge, MA 2001, 138–52, and Giovanni Zanovello, "In oratorio nemo aliquid agat": Savonarola, lo spazio sacro e la musica', in M. J. Bloxam, G. Filocamo and L. Holford-Strevens (eds), *Uno gentile et subtile ingenio: studies in Renaissance music in honour of Bonnie J. Blackburn*, Turnhout 2009, 129–33.

aggression.⁴ These incidents, in combination with overlooked administrative documents from the cathedral's archive, reveal how the ordinary congregants' loud voices shaped the Duomo's liturgical practices during the tumultuous 1520s, as the ecclesiastical authorities struggled to maintain order and the church's physical boundaries were continually renegotiated.

Earlier studies have attributed these events to the social and political turmoil of the Italian Wars (1521–6).⁵ This article argues instead that the disruptions stemmed from broader, ongoing efforts by the Duomo's administrators during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to control noise and human activity in and around the cathedral, aiming to protect the liturgical space from disturbances originating in the adjacent square. The incidents reported by Burigozzo reveal how congregants' voices undermined all attempts to safeguard the interior of Milan's most important religious institution from external disturbances.

Inside the Duomo

At the time of Burigozzo's accounts, the duchy of Milan was ruled by Francesco II Sforza (r. 1521–35), the younger son of Ludovico il Moro (r. 1495–9). Ludovico had fled Milan in 1499 after the city was conquered by the French king Louis XII (r. 1498–1515). In 1512 Swiss mercenaries hired by the Holy League reclaimed Milan for Ludovico's elder son, Massimiliano Sforza (r. 1512–15), ending French control. In 1515, though, Francis I (r. 1515–47) retook the city, only to lose it again in 1522 after his defeat by Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–56). The emperor then restored the Sforza regime, appointing Francesco II as regent.⁶

⁴ 'Giovan Pietro Cagnola, Giovanni Andrea Prato and Giovan Marco Burigozzo, *Cronache milanesi*', in *Archivio storico italiano* 3, Florence 1842, 419–552. The original manuscript is now kept in Milan's Biblioteca Ambrosiana, *Fondo Trotti* 151. On Burigozzo see also G. de Caro, 'Burigozzo, Giovan Marco', in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, Rome, 1960–, at <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-marco-burigozzo_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/>, accessed 6 October 2025.

⁵ See F. Chabod, *Lo stato e la vita religiosa a Milano nell'epoca di Carlo V*, Turin 1971; O. Niccoli, *Profeti e popolo nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Bari 1987; and C. Getz, *Music in the collective experience in sixteenth-century Milan*, Aldershot 2005.

⁶ On the Italian Wars see M. Pellegrini, *Le guerre d'Italia (1494–1530)*, Bologna 2009; M. Mondini and M. Rospoche (eds), *Narrating war: early modern and contemporary perspectives*, Bologna–Berlin 2013; and C. Shaw and M. Mallett, *The Italian wars, 1494–1559: war, state and society in early modern Europe*, London–New York 2019. More specifically, on Milan's history between the 1499 and the 1520s, see *Storia di Milano*, Milan 1953–62, viii, and S. Duc (eds), *La Guerre de Milan: conquérir, gouverner, résister dans l'Europe de la Renaissance (1515–1530)*, Ceyzérieu 2019.

As recounted by Burigozzo, the most significant disruptions inside Milan's Duomo occurred in 1523. That year, the city was besieged by the troops of Francis I (r. 1515–47), who intended to reconquer the city one year after the defeat by the emperor. Amid fear of the enemy and the looming threat of a prolonged siege, preachers both inside the Duomo and across the city gained prominence as they focused more on inciting hostility toward the enemy than on offering comfort to the population.⁷

The growing prominence of preachers was by no means unique to Milan. Throughout the 1520s their influence expanded across the Italian peninsula. Preachers' popularity was bolstered by an increasing scepticism toward the Catholic Church, fuelled by the circulation of works by Erasmus, Huldrych Zwingli, Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon especially in Venice, Padua and Turin.⁸ Although Burigozzo never identifies reformed ideas as a factor in the Milanese preachers' popularity, the impact of their sermons and the dangerous consequences of their anticlericalism become evident in the first episode he recounts, where the protagonist is introduced as follows:

At that time ... a friar from the convent of San Marco preached in the city; everyone took him as a saint, especially because he comforted the Milanese people's soul during wartime against the French by saying that the murder of those Frenchmen would have gained merit in the eyes of Jesus Christ; and he said that [the French] were all pigs ... and he insulted them ... [The friar] took delight in fashioning himself as a prophet and claiming to be able to predict the events to come; but he predicted quite the exact opposite. None the less, he did not lack the love of a considerable number of people: petty men, women, and rascals ... He blabbered copiously about the war, taking pleasure from enchanting the populace, but did not care about God's judgement as was expected of him.⁹

⁷ For the popularity gained by charismatic preachers in Italian cities during the late Middle Ages see M. G. Muzzarelli, *Pescatori di uomini: predicatori e piazze nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Bologna 2005. On medieval preachers and rhetoric see S. Wenzel, *Medieval artes praedicandi: a synthesis of scholastic sermon structure*, Toronto 2015. Along with Niccoli, Letizia Arcangeli has also noticed that preachers gained even greater recognition in Milan during the Italian Wars, as they often engaged in the promotion of anti-French propaganda: 'Milano durante le guerre d'Italia (1499–1529): esperimenti di rappresentanza e identità cittadina', *Società e Storia civ* (2004), 12.

⁸ M. Firpo, *Riforma protestante ed eresie nell'Italia del Cinquecento: un profilo storico*, Rome 1993, 13–32.

⁹ 'In quei tempi ... predicò in questa Città uno Frate de Sancto Marco, qual dalla Città fudeva tenuto come uomo santo; tanto più che in questo tempo de guerra confortava l'animo de Milanesi contra Franzesi, dicendo ch'era merito presso a Iesu Cristo de amazzare questi Franzesi: et diceva ch'era porci ... et con sue maledicenze li malediceva ... Et veramente costui se delectava de voler parere profeta, a aver indovinare le cose che avevano a venire; ma veramente quaxi per el contrario era ogni cosa: ma non per questo mancavano de boni homenazzi, donazole e poltronaglia che ghe portassero amore ... Et veramente costui cianciava assai de guerra, delectandose de

Just a few days later, the Duomo's priests and the preacher's followers nearly engaged in physical conflict:

On a Sunday during Adventide in 1523, the Duomo's ordinaries and priests, who had to begin the celebration of high mass, were waiting for him, the friar [from the convent of] San Marco della barbassa, to finish his sermon. Disrespecting his superiors, the said friar kept preaching. Then the priests, seeing his lack of respect, gathered in the choir and started to celebrate mass at the main altar. Noticing that the priests had started to sing the introit, the said friar left the pulpit enraged. Then, some of those who came to hear the preacher started to yell a thousand insults at the ordinaries and the other priests ... Noticing that unrestrained mob's fury, [the priests], greatly fearing for their safety, left the choir and sheltered in the sacristy ... And I will not talk about the tumult that took place in that blessed church. Then, the friar went back to the pulpit where he kept comforting his followers and petty women (*femenuze*), who, among them, took pleasure in speaking ill of those venerable priests, our patriots.¹⁰

Scholars such as Federico Chabod, Ottavia Niccoli and Christine Getz have interpreted this episode in light of everyday tensions and social unrest in Milan. Chabod views the preacher's large following as a product of anti-clerical sentiment propagated by charismatic preachers and worsened by the hardships of war.¹¹ Niccoli builds on Chabod's work to argue that the outburst in the Duomo arose from friction between the Ambrosian clergy and mendicant orders involved in anti-French propaganda, suggesting that the priests' singing of the introit was an attempt to drown out the preacher and suppress his political indoctrination.¹² Getz similarly contextualises the crowd's shouting in terms of divisions between those who 'enthusiastically awaited liberation by the Spanish [and] others [who] preferred to deal with the French', thereby interpreting Burigozzo's passage as evidence

placare el vulgo, ma non de accostumarsi alli judizii de Dio, come era suo officio': Burigozzo, *Cronica Milanese*, 443–4. This passage has also been discussed and partially translated by John Gagné: *Milan undone: contested sovereignties in the Italian wars*, Cambridge, MA 2021, 223.

¹⁰ 'Et per questo accadette, che li Signori Ordinarij del Domo, una Domenica dell'Advento 1523, che aspettavano che costui, cioè questo Frate de Santo Marco della barbassa, livrasse la sua predica per volere celebrare la sua messa grande; et costui, senza rispetto delli suoi superiori, la teneva longhissima: dondeché la gieresia, vedendo costui senza discrezione, se miseno in coro comenzando la messa all'altare grande. Et vedendo questo Frate che li preti comenzorno a cantare lo introito della messa, se parti dal pulpito in furia; et alcuni de quella generazione che erano a quella udientia, se miseno a voce alta a impropere li Ordenarii et altri Sacerdoti, digandoghe mille ingiurie ... vedendo loro la furia di questa generazione senza freno ... con paura grande fugarono fora del coro, et andorno in sacrestia ... E del strepito che fu in quella benedetta giexia, non te ne parlo; e questo Frate tornò sul pulpito, confortando li soi satelliti e femenuze, che, infra loro, beato chi poteva dir male de questi venerandi sacerdoti, nostri patrioti': Burigozzo, *Cronica Milanese*, 444.

¹¹ Chabod, *Lo stato e la vita religiosa*, 231–2.

¹² Niccoli, *Profeti e popolo*, 150.

that not all Milanese citizens viewed the preacher's political ideas favourably.¹³

Although all three scholars are correct to note the presence of such hostilities in Milan during this period, records from the cathedral archives suggest that the priests' singing was not purely political. These records, grouped as *ordinazioni capitolari* – that is, official decrees issued by the Duomo's administration, or Fabbrica – reveal how the administrators regulated preaching within the cathedral. In 1439, the Fabbrica reserved a specific area of the church for preachers:

It was established that the wall adjoining the altar of St Ambrose, in the main church, should be ... completely removed, so that Fra' Alessandro of Bologna, recently chosen to preach during the upcoming Lent, might more easily sermonise there and more people might be able to stand around and stay to listen to his preaching.¹⁴

The cathedral further regulated preaching in 1442, when the Fabbrica allowed members of the mendicant orders to preach outside the apse on major feast days and Sundays. The only stipulation was that such preaching should not last for more than one hour, lest it delay the celebration of the divine offices.¹⁵

While the altar of St Ambrose was the usual location for delivering sermons, larger crowds during Lent and Advent likely prompted the administration to move the preaching site to the Camposanto, a graveyard

¹³ Getz, *Music in the collective experience*, 2.

¹⁴ 'Deliberaverunt quod debeat moveri prorsusque abjici murus contiguus altari sancti Ambrosii, esistenti in ecclesia majori, eo quod frater Alexander de Bononia, nuper electus ad praedicandum in futura quadragesima, valeat commodius tenere bancum versus partem illam, et possint plures gentes circumquaque superesse, et morari ad auditum praedicationis suae': Archivio della Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano (hereinafter cited as AVFDMi), *Ordinazioni capitolari* 33, fo. 127r, 26 July 1439. The same altar is mentioned again in 1461, when a fence was built to accommodate another preacher. See *Annali della Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano*, ii, Milan 1877, 204.

¹⁵ The original document was lost in 1906, when all the *ordinazioni* issued between 1442 and 1444 were destroyed by a fire. The text of the document survives thanks to a late nineteenth-century transcription made by the *Annali*'s authors (4 Jan. 1442, *Annali*, ii, 95). In 1447, the deputies established that a preacher from the convent of Casoretto should be sent to the cathedral to deliver sermons during the major holidays. Milanese convents sometimes requested the Fabbrica to grant them permission to preach in the Duomo; an example is the convent of Sant'Eustorgio, which in 1447 asked the deputies to allow one of their friars to preach in the Duomo during Lent. The deputies rejected the friars' proposal, replying that the church is not obliged to choose one of their friars and urging the convent not to 'meddle in the church's business': *Annali*, ii, 108, 111, respectively. A few years later, the deputies decided to appoint a renowned preacher for the coming Lenten season, implying that, by that date, this practice had become customary: AVFDMi, *Ordinazioni capitolari* 2, fo. 190v, 1 Feb. 1456. As early as 1465, the ducal family started to be involved in the nomination of the Lenten preachers, with Duchess Bianca Maria appointing a friar from the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie: *Annali*, ii, 243.

outside the Duomo's apse, most likely to accommodate more people. The *ordinazioni* again mention the altar of St Ambrose in 1461, when the construction of a wooden fence near the altar was approved to enable Fra' Girolamo de' Visconti to give his sermons.¹⁶

These documents reveal a longstanding tradition of preaching inside the Duomo, particularly during the weeks preceding Easter and Christmas, with mendicant preachers frequently selected from among Milan's monasteries. Given the proximity between the altar of St Ambrose and the main altar and choir, where high mass took place (see Figure 1), preaching and the celebration of the liturgical services soon required a coordinated schedule. It was therefore mandated that sermons had to last no more than one hour to avoid overlapping with high mass. Burigozzo's account suggests that this tradition was still in place in the 1520s.

Regardless of whether the anonymous preacher was officially appointed to sermonise during Adventide, he was expected to abide by the Duomo's customary timetable. As such, the 1442 decree limiting sermons to one hour was still observed in 1523, when priests and ordinaries patiently waited for the friar to finish rather than challenge his anti-French propaganda. The preacher's protracted sermon prompted the ordinaries to use their voice in unison to appropriate the space of the nave at a time when it should have rightfully been theirs.¹⁷

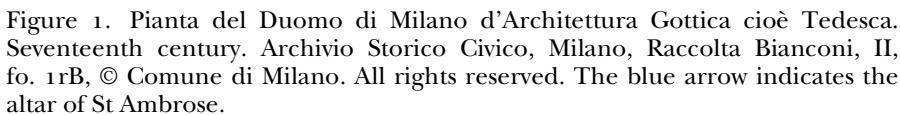
Further evidence of disruptive incidents in Milan's Duomo comes from an account dated two years earlier, in 1521:

[A] hermit named Geronimo from Siena arrived in Milan ... On 6 August, he appeared in the Duomo and started to preach ... His sermons gave him great confidence as he gathered a significant following, particularly among women, with the greatest inconvenience for the Duomo, since masses and vespers were no longer celebrated as scheduled because he preached whenever he wanted and pleased him, without any respect for his superiors ... He stayed in Milan until Christmas and was then expelled from the city against his will. On Christmas Day, neither mass nor vespers could be celebrated as the church was crowded with reckless people supporting him.¹⁸

¹⁶ G. Benati and A. M. Roda (eds), *Il Duomo di Milano: dizionario storico, artistico e religioso*, Milan 2001, 128; *Annali*, ii. 204.

¹⁷ The Duomo's documents attest to the creation of a music chapel as early as 1402: the members of the cathedral choir were required to embellish the divine office with polyphony (along with plainchant), while the ordinaries performed only plainchant: G. Cesari and F. Fano, *La cappella musicale del Duomo di Milano*, Milan 1956; C. Sartori, 'La cappella del Duomo dalle origini a Franchino Gaffurio', in *Storia di Milano*, Milan 1953–62, ix. 733–47; G. N. Vessia and G. de Florentis, *Sei secoli di musica nel Duomo di Milano*, Milan 1986.

¹⁸ 'In questo mezzo venne a Milano un remitero, qual aveva nome Hieronimo, et era de Sena ... el quale a dì 6 Augusto apparse nella ecclesia del Domo, et cominciò a predicare ... Et con quello suo predicare pigliò tanta audacia per el seguito grande



della gente, et maxime de donne, tantoche nella ecclesia maggior del Domo era gran ruina, perché non gh'era ora né de messa né de vespero, perché lui voleva predicare quando voleva e gli piaceva, senza reverentia delli soi maggiori ... et dimorò a Milano sino al giorno del Natal de Cristo, et poi fu mandato via contro sua voglia, perché in quello giorno de Natal non se celebrò messa né ancora vespero in el Domo, per esser pieno de gente senza rasoni in favore de costui: Burigozzo, *Cronica Milanese*, 431.

Burigozzo's account bears witness to the popularity of another preacher. Once more, crowds of ordinary churchgoers came to the Duomo loudly demanding to hear Fra' Geronimo, thereby impeding the celebration of the scheduled liturgical service. The story suggests that dynamics similar to the first episode were at play, with priests and ordinaries forced to wait or even cancel mass because of yelling.

Burigozzo's third episode again concerns a preacher, Tommaso Nieto, who had travelled from Spain to Milan near the end of the 1520s to campaign for the Spanish crown at a time when both Spain and France were vying for control over the city.¹⁹ In 1529 the preacher organised three days of processions to beseech intervention from God in response to the city's famine. The most grandiose and well-attended of the three processions occurred on the last day, when the host was carried in procession from the Duomo to the ancient church of St Ambrose and then back to the cathedral. Soon after the ostensory passed through the Duomo's main door

everybody shouted, 'Lord, have mercy!' When [the host] reached the centre of the church, again they shouted 'Lord, have mercy!' And it made its way to the main altar as the people cried 'Lord, have mercy!' At that point, the clergy, willing to recite the litanies, could not calm the crowd down, as they kept crying so loudly that it seemed they wanted to tear the church down ... Only when the clamour quieted down a little did they sing the litanies with the appropriate orations.²⁰

The crowd again disrupted and delayed expected celebrations, as the Milanese clergy found themselves compelled to yield to the populace's demands and to wait before proceeding with the service. Although the crowd's behaviour did not escalate into verbal aggression or full-fledged riot, it again demonstrates that worshippers asserted their agency over customary rituals, voicing their frustration with boisterous cries more suited to the streets the procession had just left than the interior of a church, where the scheduled liturgical celebration was about to be performed.

Around the Duomo

As the priests struggled to maintain order inside the Duomo, the cathedral's heavy-handed administrators sought to control noise and trade

¹⁹ Ibid. 486. On the procession see also Getz, *Music in the collective experience*, 126–7.

²⁰ 'Dondeché intrato ditto tabernaculo dentro della porta maggiore del Domo, tutto el mondo se mise a cridare "misericordia"; poi arivato al mezzo della chiesa, el medemo cridare "misericordia"; rivato all'altare, cridando "misericordia": tanto che el clero, volendo celebrare le litanie, non potevano fare restare li clamori, qual cridavano talmente ch'el pareva che la giexia volesse ruinare ... Quietado così un poco lo clamore, cantarono le litanie con quelle orazione che richiedeno a tal effetto': Burigozzo, *Cronica Milanese*, 488.

outside. The construction of Milan's new cathedral, which replaced the summer cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore, began around 1387. Located in the city centre, its construction site became a bustling trade hub despite the administration's efforts to prevent it from turning into an uncontrolled marketplace.²¹ As early as 1421 (see Figure 2), the Fabbrica banned all beggars from the church, owing to their vociferous requests for alms made during the liturgical services ('cum eorum crebris requisitionibus et importunis vociferationibus'). Thus, 'It was resolved and ordained by all and the said presiding council, with no one dissenting, to remove the aforementioned begging poor ... and that the same poor should not pass through the doors of the said church to avoid disturbances and indecencies as well as the annoyance of these poor people.'²²

More than twenty years later, the issue remained unresolved. In 1449, the authorities requested the Duomo's chaplains to include specific instructions in their homilies to prevent beggars from seeking alms inside the cathedral:

In regard to the proposal made by Father Martino of Vercelli on behalf of the two deputies responsible for supporting the poor ... requesting ... that the poor should no longer be able to wander around the Duomo, considering the disturbance and inconvenience caused by them ... [t]he aforementioned ... lords decreed that the venerable Lord Vicar of the Most Reverend Archbishop of Milan shall instruct and order the ... chaplains of the said church during the celebration of their Masses to admonish and urge everyone not to give any money to the beggars wandering in the said church, so that they are forced to stand at the doors.²³

²¹ On the Duomo's construction see E. S. Welch, *Art and authority in Renaissance Milan*, New Haven 1995, 49–69; M. Saltamacchia, *Costruire cattedrali: il popolo del Duomo di Milano*, Genoa 2011; and P. Grillo, *Nascita di una cattedrale, 1386–1418: la fondazione del Duomo di Milano*, Milan 2017.

²² 'deliberatum et ordinatum fuit per omnes ac dictum presidentes consilium nemine discrepante quod ... provideatur ut remotionem suprascriptorum pauperum mendicantium ... ipsi pauperes ... ne pretereant portas eiusdem ecclesie pro evitando enormia et inhonesta ac tedia ipsorum paruperum': AVFDMi, *Cassette Ratti*, c. 32, fo. 47r, 13 May 1421.

²³ 'Item ad expositionem factam per dominum presbiterum Martinum de Vercellis parte et nomine duorum deputatorum ad sustentationem pauperum et cetera requirientium quod per fabricam modus et talis ordo servaretur ex quo pauperes vagari per ecclesiam maiorem non possent attenta eorum turbatione ac molestia et cetera statuerunt prefati domini convocati quod venerabilis dominus vicarius reverendissimi domini archiepiscopi Mediolani perceperit et mandarit ... cappellanis dicte ecclesie qui in suorum celebratione missarum moneant et orent singulos quod dictis mendicantibus pauperibus errantibus per dictam ecclesiam nullas donent pecunias, ut ad portas dicte ecclesie stare cogantur': AVFDMi, *Ordinazioni capitolari*, ii, fo. 79r, 29 Apr. 1449.

C.32

F.47

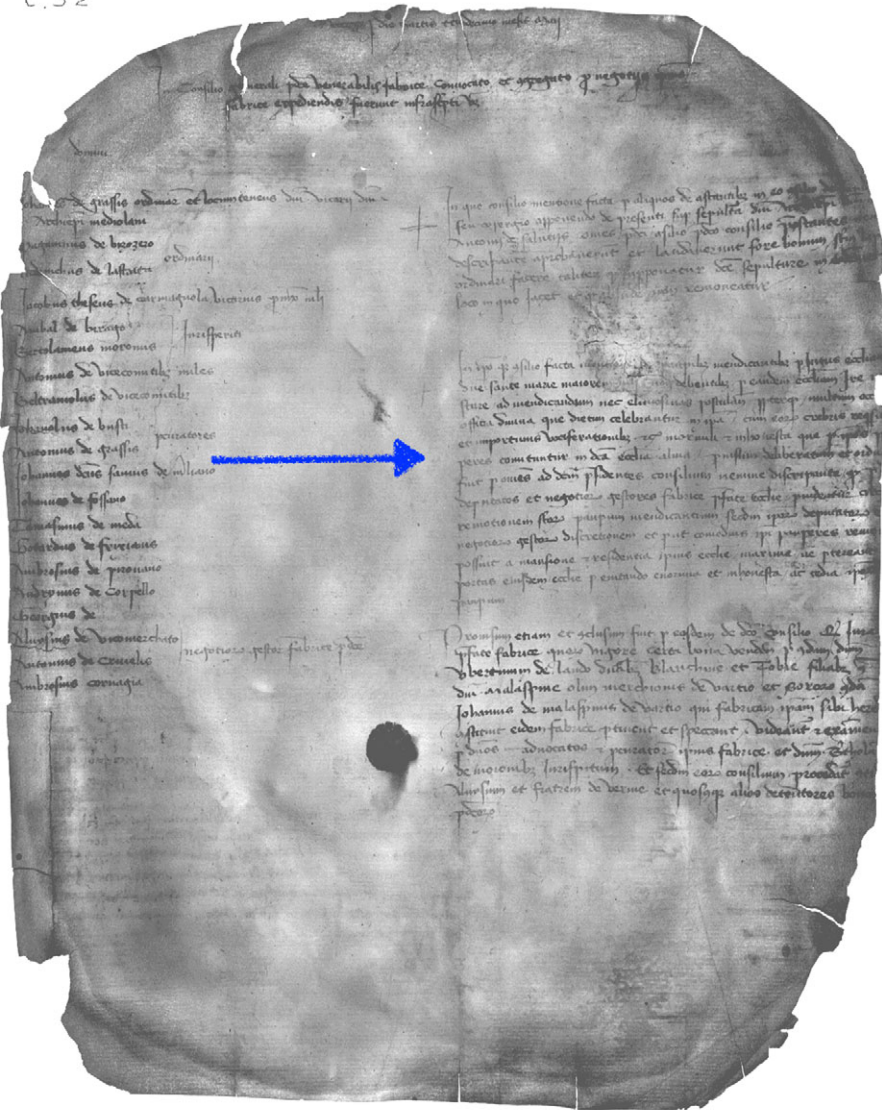


Figure 2. AVFDMi, Cassette Ratti 32, fo. 47r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Archivio Storico della Fabbrica del Duomo.

Peddlers also disturbed the atmosphere of the church, leading the Fabbrica to ban them from the Duomo and from using the cathedral as a shortcut to the public market:

[I]t was decided that no one should cross the church carrying baskets ... as they are something shameful to be seen at every hour of the day ... and [that] no one should sell and purchase anything on the Duomo's doors, facing the square ... and that no one should leave any garbage on the square ... and that no one ... should cross the church with baskets or horses loaded with goods.²⁴

Even the area surrounding the Duomo was subject to strict regulations forbidding specific activities. In 1457, the Fabbrica established that

selling goods near Milan's main church brings great shame and harm to the Fabbrica. It was ordered that all sellers located within a distance of four *brachia* from the said church are to be expelled and (their activities) prohibited by the Fabbrica's enforcers and that the said enforcer is allowed to get the help of any officials to enforce the aforementioned orders.²⁵

Although some vendors were allowed to operate within the construction site, a subsequent decision mandated the removal of all stands from the piazza in front of the Duomo, apparently in order to keep the area around the cathedral orderly, tidy and free of 'shameful' professions – that is, occupations involving the sale of food and other goods that would soil the square. In 1480, the Fabbrica allowed the building of 'small shops or booths ... around the temple ... on the condition that these shops must not be rented to squires, butchers, or cheesemakers, but only to honest and respectable craftsmen'.²⁶

Indeed, commercial activities around the Duomo led to consistent attempts to maintain precise demarcations between sacred and secular

²⁴ 'che niuna persona presumese passare per dicto domo con brente, zerli, ceste, cavagne cariche et altre tali cosse vergogniose da vedere d'ogni hora in dieta chiesa ... et che niuna persona presumese tenere deschi, banchi, ni alcune altre tale cosse per vendere e comprare sopra il solo de la porta grande del domo predicto, che tende per dricto verso la piazza ... item che in alcuno loco de la piazza del dicto domo, ni dintorno ad esso domo, presumesse metere ruto, ni ledame, ni altre immondicie ... che niuna persona ... presuma passare per dicto domo con brente, zerli, cavagne, zeste, banche, deschi, ni alcuni carichi, ni cavalli': *ibid.* fo. 322r, 21 Oct. 1463. See also in *Annali*, ii. 229.

²⁵ 'Expositum fuit quod pati teneri venalia apud ecclesiam majorem Mediolani, ex hoc sequitur magnum opprobrium et dampnum fabricae. Provisum et ordinatum fuit excumiari debere et licentiarum per exactorem fabricae omnes vendentes circumcirca ecclesiam praedictam per brachia quatuor, et quod dicto exactori liceat impetrare brachium famulorum quorumcumque pro observatione praedictorum': AVFDMi, *Ordinazioni capitolari*, il, fo. 225r, 30 Oct. 1457. See also in *Annali*, ii. 175.

²⁶ 'Item ordinauerunt quod fiant caxeloli, seu apothecae, circumcirca domicilium ... salvo quod dictae apothecae non affictentur armigeris, nec bechariis, nec formagiariis, sed solummodo artificibus honestis et laudabilibus': AVFDMi, *Ordinazioni capitolari*, iii, fo. 163v, 12 Mar. 1480. See also *Annali*, ii. 313. In 1492, it was decreed that bulky items should be removed from the square to preserve its order and dignity ('pro decore et ordine predictae maioris ecclesie et plate eiusdem'): AVFDMi, *Ordinazioni capitolari*, iv, fo. 57r.

affairs. Once banning all commerce around the church became impossible, only honourable activities were permitted, provided they did not soil the square with waste or attract beggars loudly seeking alms.

Efforts to protect church spaces from improper use were not exclusive to Milan. In fifteenth-century Siena, for instance, San Bernardino condemned dancing, business dealings and lovers' encounters in the nave. In Florence, Archbishop Antonio Pierozzi sought to forbid secular meetings, trials and performances in churches. These abuses are still lamented a century later, when the abbot of San Pancrazio and the vicar of Florence's archbishop appealed to Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici to suppress inopportune conduct, especially during the divine offices. Similar concerns persisted elsewhere: ordinances in Verona (1542) and Rome (1564) attempted to prevent laypeople from walking around during the celebrations.²⁷ Such disorderly activities were made possible precisely by the presence of the very screens intended to allow the clergy to celebrate the rites undisturbed. The ecclesiastical authority often lamented how these architectural elements concealed the laity from clerical oversight, enabling disruptive behaviour that hindered the regular course of the liturgical functions.

While complaints about disturbances mostly concerned activities inside the church, the case of Milan reveals that underlying these concerns was the aim of separating the church interior from the exterior – a goal never fully achieved. On the one hand, the archival evidence discussed demonstrate the Fabbrica's efforts to control the area around the cathedral and keep the chaos of the square outside the Duomo's nave; on the other hand, Burigozzo's accounts show how the crowd's yelling brought noise and disorder inside, turning the church into an extension of the piazza. As a result, the cathedral interior became a site of social interaction, political debate and everyday conflict.²⁸

²⁷ Allen, *Transforming the church interior*, 207, 290.

²⁸ Non-religious behaviour in medieval and Renaissance churches was not uncommon. Openly disruptive conduct during liturgical celebrations occurred especially in regions where Reformed and Catholic communities coexisted. See, for example, Alexander Fisher's discussion of how Protestants interrupted Catholic sermons in early modern Bavaria by singing German hymns: *Music, piety, and propaganda: the soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria*, Oxford 2014, 1–2. Other examples concern the use and stealing of bells to prevent rival religious communities from calling worshippers to prayer. See A. Graves Monroe, 'Soundscapes of the wars of religion: sensory crisis and the collective memory of violence', in D. LaGuardia and C. Yandell (eds), *Memory and community in sixteenth-century France*, Farnham 2015, 55–69, and D. van der Linden, 'The sound of memory: acoustic conflict and the legacy of the French Wars of Religion in seventeenth-century Montpellier', *Early Modern French Studies* xli/1 (2019), 7–20. On premodern riots and disruptions of regular urban soundscapes see N. Atkinson, *The noisy Renaissance: sound, architecture, and Florentine urban life*, University Park, PA 2016, 182–200.

Burigozzo's *Cronica* offers more than a glimpse into Milan's religious life during the Italian Wars. What makes it distinctive is both the vividness of its descriptions and the unusual perspective it provides. Unlike most accounts written from the standpoint of the political and ecclesiastical authority intent on contrasting disorder, Burigozzo writes as an ordinary layman, though one sympathetic to the clergy. His testimony not only confirms that disturbances broke out during liturgical rites but shows in detail how they unfolded and how far they could go, with the laity halting the celebrations and reframing the Duomo's customary rituals according to their own priorities.

The 1523 episode is especially telling. The crowd only turned on the priests after the friar fell silent, suggesting their earlier attempts to stop him through chanting either went unnoticed or carried little weight while he spoke. When the preacher stopped, however, his followers shouted down the clergy and halted the celebration of high mass, a rite that had been held at the same time and around the same altar every Sunday for decades. For Burigozzo, this scene revealed the perilous effects of popular preachers of dubious morality on religious life. For contemporary scholars, it exposes the fragility of liturgical order in the face of lay enthusiasm, shaped both by the tensions of war and by repeated uses of the Duomo's sacred space for practices that deviated from its intended purposes.

As scholars continue to investigate how liturgical sound and physical space shaped the auditory experiences of premodern worshippers, Burigozzo highlights the ways in which unruly conduct could overlap with, disrupt and even prevent the performance of religious rites. His vivid accounts of disruption within a prominent urban sacred space such as Milan's Duomo invite a reconsideration of the dynamics of communal worship, demonstrating that indifference, disorder and vocal interruption were not anomalies but integral aspects of the premodern churchgoing experience.