

Unacceptable Social Behaviour or False Accusations: Croats in the Investigations of the Venetian Inquisition

Lovorka Čoralić

General notes on the Venetian Inquisition and the types
of inquisitional processes

The beginnings of the Venetian Inquisition (*Santo Uffizio, Savi all' Eresia*) date to the first half of the thirteenth century when the Holy Office was founded as magistracy composed of three nobles. At the time when it was founded, as in the centuries thereafter, the Holy Office did not see substantial activity, and the institution was renewed and took on new authority only in the first half of the sixteenth century, when Protestantism spread on Venetian soil. As earlier, it consisted of three Venetian noblemen (*Tre Savi sopra eresia or assistenti*) as the representatives of lay authority, the papal nuncio as the representative of the Holy See, an inquisitor (first a member of the Gray Friars, and from the 1560s a Black Friar), and the Venetian patriarch or his general vicar as the representatives of diocesan authority. The Venetian Holy Office had jurisdiction over all individuals who were suspected of acting against the principles of the Catholic Church. The accused can be classified into several basic groups: Protestants, heretics accused of using magic, occult acts, superstition, and/or worshipping demonic forces, and a whole series of passive accomplices and helpers who showed a tendency or helped the followers of heretical teachings. It is important to note that the procedure in the Venetian Holy Office was different compared to the processes of inquisitions in other European Catholic countries (especially Spain). Torture was rarely applied, like the death penalty, which was most frequently replaced by the penalty of serving on the galleys or banishment from Venetian state territory. Most of the verdicts ended with sentencing to spiritual punishments with the formula of renunciation (*abiurazione*), by which the accused was permanently relieved of the guilt of heresy. Active participation by representatives of the lay authority contributed to the specifics of the Venetian Inquisition, which made state control over sensitive issues of heresy more efficient.¹

¹ There is extensive scholarship on the history of the Venetian Holy Office. The most important works are: Francesco Albanese, *L'Inquisizione religiosa nella Repubblica di Venezia* (Venice: Naratovich, 1875); Pio Paschini, *Venezia e l'Inquisizione Romana da Giulio III a Pio IV* (Padova: Herder, 1959); *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento*

The State Archive of Venice (*Archivio di Stato di Venezia*) holds the series of the Holy Office (*Santo Ufficio, Savi all'eresia*), which mostly consists of process reports of the inquisition from 1541 to 1794. In total, 150 bundles (*busta*) contain more than a thousand processes. On the basis of the indices (*Indici alfabetico, cronologico, e geografico dei Processi del Santo Uffizio 1541-1794*), in which all of the names of the accused, their origin, the type of accusation, the year the process started, and its course are listed alphabetically, so it is possible to determine the names of the accused that came from Croatian areas.

In the research that I have conducted over the last ten years I have paid particular attention (in this kind of material from the central Venetian Archive) to the records of the Venetian Inquisition which are connected with the processes of the Holy Office against individuals or groups originating from the eastern Adriatic coast, primarily from the Croatian ethnic area.² From among groups that were treated separately the following types of processes and their protagonists are analysed: Conversion to Islam (*maomettismo*), the Greek schism (*scisma greca*) and conversion to Islam (*scisma greca e turca*), Protestantism (*protestantesmo, luteranesmo*), magic and common beliefs (*magia, negromanzia, seduzione, sortilegio*), and other types of processes (scandalous behaviour of priests, bigamy, possession and distribution of forbidden books,

(Florence and Chicago: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974); Paul F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Achille Olivieri, "Fra collettività urbane e rurali e 'colonie' mediterranee: L'Eresia a Venezia," *Storia della cultura Veneta*, vol. 3/III (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1981), 468-512; Brian Pullan, *Gli Ebrei d'Europa e l'inquisizione a Venezia dal 1550 al 1670* (Rome: Veltro, 1985).

² Lovorka Čoralić, "Hrvati u procesima mletačke inkvizicije (prvi dio)" [Croats in the processes of the Venetian Inquisition (first part)], *Croatica Christiana periodica* (henceforth: *CCP*) 19 (1995) 36: 19-68; eadem, "Hrvati u procesima mletačke inkvizicije (drugi dio): protestantizam" [Croats in the processes of the Venetian Inquisition (second part): Protestantism], *CCP* 20 (1996) 37: 23-55; eadem, "Hrvati u procesima mletačke inkvizicije (treći dio): magija i ostali procesi" [Croats in the processes of the Venetian Inquisition (third part): magic and other processes], *CCP* 20 (1996) 38: 1-44; eadem, "Hrvati u procesima mletačke inkvizicije (četvrti dio): magija i ostali procesi" [Croats in the processes of the Venetian Inquisition (fourth part): magic and other processes], *CCP* 21 (1997) 39: 25-60; eadem, "Hrvati u procesima mletačke inkvizicije (peti dio): magija i svodništvo" [Croats in the processes of the Venetian Inquisition (fifth part): magic and procuring], *CCP* 22 (1998) 41: 71-116; eadem, "Hrvati u procesima mletačke inkvizicije (šesti dio): protestantizam, magija i ostali procesi" [Croats in the processes of the Venetian Inquisition (sixth part): Protestantism, magic and other cases], *CCP* 24 (2000) 45: 91-102; eadem, "Retorika optužbe, retorika obrane – protagonisti istražnih spisa mletačke inkvizicije zavičajem sa istočne obale Jadrana (rani novi vijek)" [Prosecution rhetoric, defence rhetoric: protagonists coming from the East Adriatic coast in investigation records of the Venetian Inquisition (the early modern period)], *Acta Histriae* 15 (2007) 2: 607-30; eadem, *Hrvati u procesima mletačke inkvizicije* (Croats in the processes of the Venetian Inquisition) (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2001). The citing in the following lines will be according to this work (henceforth: Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*).

and so on). The time framework of cases dates from the 1540s to the middle of the eighteenth century. The strongest presence of Croatian protagonists in the records of this Venetian magistracy is in the period from 1600 to the 1850s and from the 1850s to the 1870s. In the gender structure of the participants of inquisitorial processes men comprise about 80% in all categories of inquisitorial records; females are primarily represented in the processes which are connected with the use of magic. Speaking about the closer homeland origin of the participants in processes, in my research I have mostly dealt with the accused who came from Dalmatia, the Kingdom of Croatia, Venetian Albania (Boka, Budva, Bar and Ulcinj), Bosnia, and the east Adriatic hinterland (then mostly under Ottoman rule). Finally, considering the professional structure of those accused in these inquisitorial processes, the most frequent are ecclesiastical figures (priests and members of the regular clergy accused of behaviour inappropriate for their ecclesiastical vocation), sailors, artisans, and soldiers (although in relatively numerous examples the occupation is not explicitly noted). Individuals of middle or low economic status, primarily commoners, are the most numerous and individuals from the upper and lower margins of the social scene are rarely noted.

In this article, following the traces in the archival materials and particular data from other sources (in individual groups of processes chosen specifically for this topic), I shall concisely indicate several basic groups of the processes of the Venetian Inquisition in which Croats are mentioned as the main accused. These data, included in the large group of basic sources – inquisitorial processes – additionally depict religious and social circumstances along the east Adriatic coast and appearances of undesirable presence and residence among the “Schiavoni” immigrants in Venice and, finally, testify to contemporary social, ecclesiastical and moral norms, which – as the foundation of the legal system – directly or less directly dictated the attitude of the community, state, and authority towards potential violators of the system.

Conversion to Islam or about the people from the Croatian borderlands

In the first group of processes discussed in this research, conversion to Islam is the point in question; there are about a dozen processes from the period of the late sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century. The accused originated mainly from areas under Ottoman rule (the hinterland of Dalmatia and Boka, and Bosnia) or from areas in the Venetian-Ottoman borderlands. According to the occupations of the accused, soldiers were the leading group, but a few artisans and sailors are also noted. The cases which relate to this group of processes by various factors are a specific kind of inquisitorial process of the Venetian Inquisition. These were generally people who had spent part of their lives in an Ottoman environment, converted to Islam, and lived according to Islamic customs. After a number of years, depending on the circumstances, they managed to escape to Christian territory, where, primarily persuaded by their

confessors, they decided to reinstate themselves in the life of the Catholic Church by acquiring a pardon from the Venetian Inquisition. The inquisitorial process in these cases did not contain witness testimonies, but exclusively the testimonies of the penitent, that is, the person's motives for converting to Islam, the circumstances of life in the Islamic environment, and also the method by which he or she had escaped to Christian territory. Most of the penitents examined, almost without exception, emphasized their Christian origin (*nato di padre e madre cristiani*) and Christian upbringing before falling into Ottoman captivity. The record regularly mentions that they were taken by force and detained and frequently abused physically, which is why – in fear for their lives – they had converted to Islam. In their defence, they usually emphasized that, in spite of accepting Islam, they had still kept Christian customs and faith “in themselves,” and secretly, when the opportunity occurred, tried to maintain faith. Christian faith, in their testimonies, is always considered to be better and superior to Islam, which they accepted only for their own survival.³

Questions addressed by the Inquisitors of the Holy Office were usually standardised, more or less equivalent in all processes and only slightly modified according to the various types of cases. They aimed at determining the religious conditions and reflections of the interrogated person at the time when he had accepted the other religion and lived under Islamic customs, and they demanded precise reflection and declarations about both religions, emphasizing the religious background of the case. Examinees were not treated as accused, but primarily as penitents; the inquisitors tried to understand their position and encouraged them to answer in their own favour by inquiries into the examinee's life in the Islamic world. None of the men examined was punished by one of the more severe punishments (excommunication, exile, service on the galleys, corporal punishment), but were sentenced to spiritual punishments which consisted of the proselyte's obligation for a certain period (usually three to four years) to receive the sacrament of Communion at least four times a year, make confession, and regularly pray the rosary. The formula of the renunciation (*ab-*

³ Such examples are given in the processes against Božo of Perast [State Archive of Venice / *Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, henceforth: ASV, archival series of the Holy Office (*Santo Ufficio, Savi all'eresia*), henceforth: SU), b. 68, 1591], Andrew Michlini of Korčula (ASV, SU, b. 70, 1610), George Jurišić from the Bosnian village of Dolac (ASV, SU, b. 72, 1617), Rade Carli of Spič near Bar (ASV, SU, b. 73, 1619), John Giuguchi from Bosnia (ASV, SU, b. 87, 1634), John Tušepić of Podgora near Makarska (ASV, SU, b. 91, 1634), Stana of Brač (ASV, SU, b. 95, 1638.), Marin Zed of Banja Luka (ASV, SU, b. 98, 1642), Peter Adero of Šibenik (ASV, SU, b. 98, 1642), Martin Velinković of Koprivnica (ASV, SU, b. 98, 1642), Nicholas Vuk from the area of Kotor (ASV, SU, b. 98, 1642), George Mirković of Dugopolje near Klis (ASV, SU, b. 98, 1643), Magdalene of Knin (ASV, SU, b. 103, 1647), Anastasia Vigenić of Vrana (ASV, SU, b. 103, 1647), and Catharine from the village of Zimonić in Herzegovina (ASV, SU, b. 103, 1647).

iurazione) which the proselyte then pronounced was, with small and irrelevant discrepancies, the same for everyone.⁴

The entire course of the process, a brief investigation (two days of interrogation at most), sentencing to the most benign spiritual punishments, and regularly granting indulgences indicates that these offences were not considered fatal for the religious and state structures. The accused, who came to the court of the Inquisition without previous denunciations were people from border areas between Christian states and Ottoman acquisitions. Their position was well-known to all and their example of relinquishing religion was just part of a frequent phenomenon in those areas. The Venetian Holy Office was founded due to much more dangerous and pernicious forms of heresy. Processes against followers of Protestantism on Venetian territory, such as Mark Anthony de Dominis, Baldo Lupetina, Peter Paul Vergerius, and others, lasted for years, filled hundreds of pages of denunciations and statements, testimonies and confrontations, and by the scope of the problem affected dozens of people (the accused and witnesses) and interfered with the religious and ecclesiastical policies of other countries. It is not necessary to dwell further on processes of the Venetian Inquisition against a few *Schiavoni* from the Dalmatian hinterland and Bosnia. These cases were solved promptly – by formal interrogation, similar confessions, and regular granting of an indulgence and absolution. For the history of the wider eastern Adriatic coastal area, however, these processes are significant testimonies about the faith of ordinary common people from the time when hundred-year-long wars and the political interests of different states, people, and religions crossed paths on the horizon of their homeland.

Protestants, victims of false accusations by their own communities

Dozens of inquisitorial records have been analyzed in this research from the group of Venetian Inquisitorial processes which has the common name “Protestantism.”⁵ The time frame for these processes was from the mid-sixteenth century to the 1660s; the accused originated mainly from the cities in the area of Dalmatia and Boka. It is necessary to emphasize that some of the processes started in the homeland areas of the protagonists of the inquiry, from where a group of citizens or some distinguished individual sent a denunciation to Venice. Common to most of the accused, according to the statements, was consenting to the characteristic principles of Protestantism: accepting the theory of predestination; renouncing papal authority; denying the existence of purgatory and the importance of prayer, indulgences, the sinlessness of the Blessed Virgin Mary, worshiping saints and holy images, and advocating poverty against the luxury of current representatives of church hierarchy.

⁴ Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 29-54. Also cf. eadem, “Koprivničanin Martin Velinković u procesu mletačke inkvizicije (1642. god.)” (Martin Velinković of Koprivnica in the process of the Venetian Inquisition in 1642), *Podravski zbornik* 22 (1996): 71-74.

⁵ Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 61-86.

Major examples of this group of inquisitorial processes sent to the Venetian Inquisition played a central role in the denunciations. It is important to emphasize that some processes started in the homeland areas of the protagonists of the inquiry, from where a group of citizens, church or town authorities directed an accusation to Venice.⁶ The fact that a local community could decide about initiating a process, left – as is evident – substantial possibility for manipulation, slander, and false statements. Because quite a number of accusations were based on personal slander in which using Protestantism for denouncing an opponent had a powerful and alluring force, these “processes” mostly ended before they started without even initiating the inquiry. In the examples where Venetian Inquisition managed the process, that is, examined relevant witnesses in the presence or absence of the accused, attempts were made to learn more about the personal relations between the witnesses and the accused. There were two ways to handle the defence when the accused faced the magistracy of the Holy Office directly. In the first one, the accused acknowledged all parts of the indictment, complied and voluntarily engaged in an act of repentance.⁷ In other examples, the accused dismissed all the counts of the indictment and based his or her defence on broader circumstances, from which it becomes apparent that quite a number of accusations were the result of mutual conflicts and frictions inside small communities. A distinct example of this are the charges against Jerome Divnić, a respectable Gray Friar from Šibenik and a doctor of theology, which were submitted by his confrères (and also by some other priests from Šibenik) with the file of indictment forwarded to Venice by the archdeacon of the Diocese of Šibenik, John *Cheuscum*.⁸ Because of the importance of the case, as well as the reputation of the accused Divnić, the investigation was led by Tom of Vicenza, a Black Friar and the general inquisitor for the area of

⁶ Hence, for example, the allegation against Jerome Allegretto of Split was filed in Venice by the *potestas* and captain of Brescia (ASV, SU, b. 8, fasc. 99, 1550). Jerome Divnić, a Grey Friar from Šibenik, was sued by his confrères from the local convent (ASV, SU, b. 17, no. 5, 1563), and a similar case was recorded with the conventual from Kotor, John, where the main prosecutors were friars of the same province (ASV, SU, b. 20, 1564). In two cases, accusations against their fellow citizens were filed by the broader public: numerous members of the clergy from Split and Trogir wanted to bring Albert Fertili, a Black Friar (ASV, SU, b. 73, 1619) before the Court of Inquisition, and members of respectable Zaratín patrician families testified (as witnesses for the prosecution) before the Venetian Inquisition in the procedure against Peter Mauri of Šibenik, a doctor of law and resident of Zadar (ASV, SU, b. 98, 1642.).

⁷ Such an example was recorded in the process in which the main protagonist was Francis Regolo of Šibenik, a doctor of law residing in Venice. Inquisitorial records start by giving a general formula for the abandonment of heresy that Regolo was obliged to say, and special attention was given to the act of receiving forgiveness (ASV, SU, b. 11, 1553; Čoralčić, *Hrvati u procesima*, str. 65-66; eadem, *Šibenčani u Mlecima* (People from Šibenik in Venice) (Šibenik: Gradska knjižnica “Juraj Šižgorić,” 2003), 117-118.

⁸ Further information on Jerome Divnić, see in: *Hrvatskom biografskom leksikonu* (Croatian biographical lexicon), vol. 3 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1993), 414 (author: Nikola M. Roščić).

Venetian Dalmatia. In the responses directed to general inquisitor, every doubt in the lawfulness of his loyalty to the principles, laws, and canons of the Catholic Church was dismissed, doubts about his siding with Protestant teachings were discarded and some Gray Friars from Šibenik who had a personal feud with Divnić are pointed out as the culprits who initiated the process. After Tom of Vicenza had studied closely all the available records, as well as the arguments of the defence and prosecution, the Holy Office passed a sentence of acquittal for Divnić.⁹ Arranging false charges against John of Kotor, a Gray Friar conventual, by his confrères is a similar example submitted to the Venetian Inquisition. By questioning additional witnesses, as well as presenting arguments from Friar John himself, it was determined that the slander originated from his fellow, Friar John Peter Celso, previously known for many feuds and animosities within their own monastic community. Just as in the case of Divnić, the Holy Office dismissed these claims, regarding them as a result of malicious slander from personal narrow-minded interests. As in the previous case, the Holy Office, after relatively short hearings and getting insight into researched sources, concluded that no legal grounds existed for further action.¹⁰ Accusations of Protestantism seen in processes of the Venetian Inquisition may be considered a part (although peripheral) of the religious turmoil and reforms of the second half of sixteenth and the seventeenth century which were reflected to a greater or lesser extent in the broad area of the eastern Adriatic coast. These processes are surely not the best possible examples of the activities of the representatives of the Protestant heresy, as were those of Mark Anthony de Dominis, Baldo Lupetina, Matthias Flaccius (Vlačić) Ilyricus or an entire group of Protestant followers in Istrian cities. Although the content of the inquiries against the followers of Protestant doctrines indicates that some of them maintained a connection with more prominent and, for the Republic, more pernicious heretics, the fact is that the accused did not represent a substantial issue for the religious stability of the area where they lived and acted. Most of the accused and condemned were not severely penalized, but merely with common and mitigating spiritual obligations, penance, and prayer. Their cases can be counted in a series of similar processes which, over the past centuries, especially in the second half of sixteenth and seventeenth century, was led by Venetian Inquisition in the whole area of their acquisitions. However, for Croatian history these processes are important as documents which originally testify to some tendencies and movements in the religious life across the eastern Adriatic in this crucial time in the history of the Catholic Church.

⁹ ASV, SU, b. 17, br. 5, 1563; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 64-65; eadem, *Šibenčani u Mlecima*, 118-19.

¹⁰ ASV, SU, b. 20, 1564; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 66-67; eadem, "Tragom duhovnih osoba iz grada Kotora u Mlecima (kraj XIV. st.-XVIII. st.)" (Following the traces of the members of the clergy from the city of Kotor in Venice from the end of the fourteenth to the eighteenth century), *Godišnjak Pomorskog muzeja u Kotoru* 54 (2006): 137-39.

Occult actions and common superstition

Numerous examples of magic or occult actions, as well as (closely related to this) common superstition,¹¹ are a rich core in the research on the processes of the Venetian Inquisition. A few cases, mostly dating to the seventeenth century, are singled out here. People who originated from the Croatian coast of the Adriatic Sea were marked in these processes as directly accused parties or were witnesses who participated in various ways in forbidden practices and acts against the Church. In some processes these protagonists were the only participants in the investigative procedure and some processes also mention – besides the main accused – many other participants originating from various parts of the eastern Adriatic coast (more or less involved in the investigation). Regarding the gender of these participants in the investigative procedure of the Holy Office, women were more often present than men. In most cases, the accused were permanent or temporary residents of Venice; in social status they were mostly (especially women) from the lower strata of society (sometimes even marginal groups), and their dwellings areas were peripheral, poor areas and parishes of the City in the Lagoon (the city area east of the Castello, which was for centuries the central zone of residence of Croatian immigrants). In this group of processes, female immigrants from Dalmatian cities occupy an especially noticeable place; they were residents of Venice who were accused of carrying out various magical acts. The charges against them were based on reports and accusations from their neighbours and acquaintances. The magical procedures described in statements and testimonies closely resembled contemporary common superstition, where various instruments were used as the usual equipment, often also objects that are constituent parts of the liturgy (the rosary, holy water, blessed candles, and others). Descriptions of magical procedures are similar, and it was characteristic that in conducting magical rituals a substantial number of other individuals also participated, most commonly male or female members of the same social group to which the accused belonged. During the inquiry numerous examinations and multiple hearings of witnesses indicate that a considerable portion of the charges was usually the fruit of petty disputes, discord, and envy among residents of certain, mainly poor, city districts. The Holy Office, which consisted of people with substantial experience in recognizing truthful evidence, noteworthy information, and thorough investigation, usually managed to distinguish the usability of certain statements and accordingly, more attention was given to the parts of the examinee's replies in which were listed specific descriptions of offences. In the largest number of examples the point in question was the usage of magical procedures to achieve personal gain. Most of the processes, mainly those with a large number of pages, are not just testimonies about religious turns of contemporary participants. Thorough reading and analysis of their contents reveals numerous, seemingly

¹¹ Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 87-140.

minor, details from the living environment of various, mostly lower, parts of society. This kind of information brings one closer to understanding everyday life, habits, aspirations, and cognitive horizons of common people in past centuries, presenting specific examples and evidence which are difficult to find in any other types of archival sources. Several examples (in which the participants are exclusively females from the margins of the social scene), briefly presented here, testify to the usual rhetoric and procedures of this group of inquisitorial processes.

Thus, for instance, in a document from the year 1618, the accused was Andriana *Schiavona* from Zadar, a resident of the city district of the Castello (parish S. Martino).¹² The inquiry against Andriana started with the submission of two anonymous reports to representatives of the Holy Office. Andriana's acquaintances and neighbours (her sisters Lucietta and Andriana, Magdalene from Crete and her daughter Catina, Laura from Crete and her mother Agnes, Zanetta and her mother Vicenza), by their social status also individuals on the border of the marginal groups, are listed as witnesses who could corroborate the truthfulness of the report. The statements of these witnesses are the same when describing and presenting the "guilt" of the defendant, Andriana of Zadar, and accusation arguments can also be sorted into the customary rhetoric for this type of processes (summoning spirits with the aid of a "magical" ring, fortune-telling from vessels with water, lighting candles, and so on). In this example (as in many others) the Holy Office, most likely due to the lack of evidence, discredibility of the witnesses, and the absurdity of all the components of the charges, exculpated the accused Andriana and thus ended the process of the investigation. An almost identical social environment is noted for the accused and witnesses in the process against another Zaratina woman, Antonia.¹³ Similar to the previous example, the central participants of the charge and testimonies here are also Antonia's neighbours and acquaintances from the Venetian district of the S. Croce (parish S. Simeonc Grando). Antonia's magical procedures were also on the level of often-noted common superstition, but with more frequent uses of Christian rituals for occult purposes (prayers, use of liturgical objects, and so on). After several days of interrogating multiple witnesses, among whom were also those who advocated for the Zaratina immigrant, the Holy Office freed the accused of all charges and released her from custody. An example of confrontations with individuals from the nearest vicinity as the direct cause for submitting a complaint about magical procedures is noted in an inquisitorial process against a *Schiavona*, Olimpia Pontirolo.¹⁴ According to allegations stated in the indictment, on several occasions Olimpia came into conflict with her landlady, Clara Classer, whose husband, Antonio, had sometimes beaten Olimpia. After that, Olimpia, considering that she had received an unjust punishment, several times publicly and before multiple witnesses (neighbours),

¹² ASV, SU, b. 72, 1618; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 90-91.

¹³ ASV, SU, b. 87, 1630; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 92-94.

¹⁴ ASV, SU, b. 92, 1635; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 94-95.

threatened revenge on Clara Classer. Somewhat later, Clara (after eating a lunch which Olimpia had prepared for her) started to feel physical and spiritual weakness which she explained as the entry of an evil spirit into her body. She, on her own initiative, began to apply the method of exorcism, and after several days of unsuccessful attempts, she accepted the advice of her acquaintances and headed to Padua. There, in the basilica of Saint Anthony, she prayed for the healing of her ill soul. At the same time (simultaneously with her stay in Padua), similar signs of spiritual disturbance also began to be manifest in the behaviour of their servant, Bortolo. Strange movements and inarticulate speech inexplicably lasted even after Clara's return to Venice. Then Olimpia Pontirolo came to visit them and by her presence – according to the statements of members of the Classer family – she induced new disturbances among members of the household. The servant Bortolo was the most restless on that occasion, and for the first time Clara's fourteen-year old daughter became disturbed. After these strange and, for the family, troubling events, Francesco de Retino, a member of the Black Friars with from the Venetian monastery of S. Giuseppe was invited to their house. The Black Friar determined that the girl's strange behaviour was caused by the presence of three evil spirits in her body that had lasted for several months. Members of the family emphasized once more that all these previous events were connected with malicious intentions and magical acts which Olimpia applied against them. Members of the Holy Office received a denunciation against this *Schiavon* immigrant. However, the process never began, and the reasons for that may be Olimpia's escape from Venice or – what is more likely – insufficient credibility of the previous investigation. Therefore, as many other times in the inquisitorial processes of the Venetian Inquisitors, insufficient credibility of witnesses can be considered the predominant reason for which this process was dismissed even before it started officially.

The course of the inquisitorial process against Claire Pojanović from Split is also known in detail.¹⁵ Many of her neighbours, mainly immigrants from Dalmatia and the Venetian possessions in Greece (Crete), testified, with expressions characteristic for this type of process, about Claire's magical actions, which were carried out for the purpose of seducing a wealthy Venetian merchant. Along with the verbal testimonies, material "evidence" was also submitted to the representatives of the Holy Office – small notes with magical formulas and drawings – by means of which Claire hoped to achieve personal gain. This process, like most of those mentioned above, ended without reaching a final verdict.

An example of taking on a false identity when filing a denunciation is noted in the case of Anne de Franceschi, a *Schiavona* and inhabitant of Venice on the famous, Riva degli Schiavoni, which was especially associated with Croatians.¹⁶ The complaint was submitted to the Venetian Inquisition by a priest,

¹⁵ ASV, SU, b. 125, 1678; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 98-99.

¹⁶ ASV, SU, b. 108, 1656; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 97-98.

Peter Rossini of Zadar; the main points of the charges were related to Anne's relationship to the brothers Anthony and Geronimo Varizzo, Zaratín immigrants whom she – according to the accusation – seduced by means of magical procedures. The place where she prepared for her magical actions is said to have been the church of S. Giovanni in Bragora, from which she secretly took consecrated candles and spoke prayers used in the liturgy (“adapting” them to her magical acts). In relation to the religious life of Anne de Franceschi, the Zaratín priest Peter stated that he had never noticed her at masses or confession. He emphasized that her magical actions were well-known in the neighbourhood and explicitly lists names of multiple witnesses (almost exclusively residents of the city district east of the Castello), amongst whom were also a series of clergymen originating from the eastern Adriatic coast (a priest, Bernardin of Nin; Peter Gavala of Nin, a priest in the church SS. Apostoli; Bernardin of Pag, a chaplain at the church S. Fantino; Dominic the Dalmatian, a chaplain at the church of S. Giustina; Lukrecia *Schiavona*, a resident of Calle delle Rasse near the Riva degli Schiavoni; Domenico Bontrimoli, a resident of the parish of S. Antonino; Domenico Moro, a resident of the parish of S. Antonio di Palude; and others). After receiving the denunciation the representatives of the Venetian Inquisition summoned the priest, Peter Rossini, personally to testify and verify the statements in his complaint. Then, however, it was determined that the charge had been made by the false identification of an anonymous applicant. Namely, Peter Rossini, summoned to testify, stated that he had never come to the headquarters of the Venetian Inquisition and there reported denunciations. He denied any involvement in the case of Anne de Franceschi and stated that he was completely unfamiliar with the charges. Because the appearance and testimony of Peter Rossini was determined to have been a false representation which put his credibility in question, the charges against Anne de Franceschi were automatically dismissed.

The inquisitorial files of the Venetian Holy Office in which the central subject is accused of performing magical procedures are some of the best substantiated documentary source material. The inquisition and its representatives appear here as an institution which receives and judges the credibility and validity of charges and – according to its own assessment – decided to start or suspend the inquisitorial process. As in the example of Protestantism, the applicants of the charges were frequently people from the immediate proximity of the accused – their neighbours and acquaintances, occasionally even their friends. In the largest number of examples the course and termination of the investigation show that the points in question were false accusations reported to the committee of the Inquisition so that a person would be suspected and brought to court. The Inquisition received all the charges, summoned the witnesses, and occasionally began an investigation, but it is apparent that most of these examples, from the inquisitor's point of view, were not severe social problems. This primarily applies to processes in which the participants were Dalmatian immigrants, female commoners of the lowest living conditions,

whose environment and destiny indicate social marginalization. Common superstition always existed amongst this layer of the city-dwellers and was never completely rooted out, but certainly was not a serious social and religious problem for Venetian society and therefore also did not require more rigorous legal sanctions. That is why most of these processes ended without final verdicts, with only a simple interruption of the course of the investigation.

Priests on the wrong path or slanders within the church community

A final group of processes of the Venetian Inquisition is related to charges against clergymen (secular or regular) for inappropriate behaviour. In all the inquisitorial processes the accused were men, and most of processes started in their home environment, that is, in the places of their priestly service. In this group of processes it is evident that a substantial number of people from local public life (clergy, the representatives of city authorities) participated (as initiators of the inquiry and witnesses).

First, two examples refer to ecclesiastical life and activity of the priests on the island of Brač. Hence, in 1573 the claim against Francis Jarčić, at that time the priest of the parish Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the village of Nerežišće, was filed before the representatives of the Venetian Inquisition by Vincent Nižetić and Jerome Filippi, islanders from Brač.¹⁷ Jarčić is charged with a *gran scandallo*, but the detailed content of the charges against him was not listed in the statement. In the process, the name of a canon from Hvar, Vincent Pribojević,¹⁸ is mentioned, to whom the representatives of the Holy Office entrusted a more detailed inquiry into the dispute Jarčić's behaviour had generated in Nerežišće. The process was never finished and the final destiny of Francis Jarčić is unknown. Nerežišće was also connected to other inquisitorial processes on the island of Brač. The charges of inappropriate behaviour by the priest, Nicolas Pekasović, chaplain of the local church of St. Mary, were submitted to the Inquisition by numerous priests from the island of Brač.¹⁹ The charges contained the following allegations: illegal alienation of consecrated wafers, stored in the tabernacle, intended for festive processions; inappropriate prayers during the celebration of Holy Mass and avoiding mention of the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary and saints during the recitation of the creed; indecent movements and gestures during transubstantiation and a general disregard for prayers which was noted by all who had resided and lived in the parish house for some time. Considering that the inappropriate behaviour of Nicholas Pekasović endangered the religious life of the island of Brač and negatively reflected on the relationship between laymen, the Church, and the clergy, the islanders of

¹⁷ ASV, SU, b. 33, 1573; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 142.

¹⁸ Lovorka Čoralić, "Jedno novo saznanje o Vinku Pribojeviću" (A new finding on Vincent Pribojević), *CCP* 22 (1998) 42: 253-55; Joško Kovačić, "O podrijetlu Vicka Pribojevića" (On the origin of Vincent Pribojević), *CCP* 24 (2000) 45: 207-11.

¹⁹ ASV, SU, b. 73, 1619; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 143-44.

Brač demanded a penalty for the accused from the Holy Office. According to further information from the document the representatives of the Holy Office decided to initiate an investigation and collect data on Pekasović's *peissime operationi* and intended to carry out details of the investigation in collaboration of the archbishop of Split. It is neither known how the inquiry ended nor whether the chaplain of Brač ever came before the Court of the Inquisition.

In the example of the priest Bartol Juričević from Vodice, the inquisitorial process started in Šibenik.²⁰ Inquisitorial records contain testimonies of numerous witnesses from Vodice whose statements testify to scandalous behaviour by the parish priest, inappropriate to the priestly ministry and actions. A parish priest of Vodice and Tribunj, Juričević, according to his flock, during and after his priesthood in Vodice, had numerous illegitimate children with several local girls, some of whom also participated in the inquisitorial process. He was closely related to the neighbours on the Ottoman side of the border, and among the locals he was also known for his inclination towards card games. Representatives of the highest ecclesiastical (bishop) and secular (count and captain) authorities in Šibenik also took part in the inquisitorial procedure, and the results of the investigation were sent to the Holy Office in Venice. Bartol Juričević was, according to the content of the documents, at the demand of the community of Vodice itself, removed from the place and forbidden to practice his clerical duties; based on these records his later fate is not known.

The accusations which burdened against the priest John Ivanišević (*Gioannitio*, *Joannitio*), parish priest in the village of Dol on the island of Brač, also known in Croatian literature as the author of a highly "misogynist" literary collection of poems *Kitta cvitya razlikoua* [A Bouquet of Diverse Flowers], published in Venice in 1642, are also quite interesting.²¹ The complaints were submitted by priests and representatives of prominent families from Brač, and their content is amply expressed.²² In the allegations of the charge Ivanišević's propensity to preach on the religious principles of Islam is emphasized among

²⁰ Bartholomew Juričević was mentioned as a chaplain of the church of St Cross in Vodice from 1603 up to around 1623. In the court record from 1623 (23rd of October), in which Nicholas Ćorić in the name of his kindred made peace with Nicholas Juričević who murdered his son Stephan, is stated that the peace happened because of the priest Bartholomew, who was the mediator between the conflicted families. The murder of one of the members of the family Ćorić is also mentioned in the beginning of the process of the Holy Office against Bartholomew Juričević. According to these information, it arises that Juričević held the office of local parish priest two more years after starting a process in spite of the attempt of certain circles (averse to him) in the community of Vodice. Cf. ASV, SU, b. 75, 1620-1621; Krsto Stošić, *Sela šibenskog kotara* (The villages of the district of Šibenik) (Šibenik: "Kačić," 1941), 130, 133; Ćoralčić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 144.

²¹ For more of John Ivanišević, see: Andro Jutrović, "Vizitacije u Arhivu biskupske kurije u Hvaru" (Visitations in the archive of the bishop's curia in Hvar), *Starine Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 51 (1962): 113-221; *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 6, 146-47 (authors: Sanda Lucija Udier and redaction).

²² ASV, SU, b. 110, 1662; Ćoralčić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 146.

other things. It was resented that he considered that fornication was not a deadly sin, that it was acceptable to enjoy meat during the period of Lent and on other fast days, and that he illegally gave absolution and the sacraments, which he – contrary to Church laws and canons – regularly charged for by taking money and gifts in wine and bucks. He also charged for his mediation in solving various disputes and reconciling of opposed villagers in conflict, sought compensation from the confraternities, and for various illegal and inappropriate tasks for a priest; he was assisted by his brother, Nicholas, and his nephew, John Francis Gelineo. In the end, the signatories of the complaint concluded, Ivanišević publically bore arms (pistols), often cursed and proceeded in illegal affairs on the island. The accusations against John Ivanišević are typical, and, as in the previous groups of processes, include examples of the efforts of the wider community, especially the leading members, to degrade the activity of an individual who did not, for some reason (mainly personal), fit into the local environment. The Venetian office checked the truthfulness of these accusations and conducted preliminary research on the background of the case, which was terminated without further investigation or beginning the process. Like many other similar denunciations,²³ the accusations were mostly just regular slander and entirely unfounded accusations legally.

The analysis of the previously described cases of the Venetian Inquisition in which central protagonists were priests and members of the regular clergy from Dalmatia shows that in the largest number of examples denunciations were filed by the local community (representatives of the local clergy, authority or inhabitants). By presenting various accusations, the allegations, mainly try to degrade the accused as inadequate (because of his behaviour) to serve the church. In that sense, the statements of allegations which depict certain spiritual individuals as incompetent and/or inappropriate to conduct pastoral activity are composed with clear objectives as blasphemers and also as individuals inclined to religious teachings contrary to the doctrine of the Catholic Church (from Protestantism to Islam). All of the examples try to prove that such behaviour is “a great scandal” for both the local and wider social community, so thus suggest that (because of the negative reception of such behaviour within the population) the Venetian Inquisition impose firm and prompt punishment on the accused individual. The Holy Office here acted primarily as an institution taking accusations, and assessing their seriousness and grounds to determine if the investigation would proceed. Hence, it is evident that in this group of processes in which the protagonists were clergymen, the Office of the Inquisition transferred great authority to the local church communities or the courts of

²³ A similar type of denunciation is recorded in the case of Thomas Azzalini, a Pauline friar in the village of Sućurje on Hvar (ASV, SU, b. 111, 1664; Čoralić, *Hrvati u procesima*, 147-148). The accusation of the friar's immoral life (concubinage, usury, oppression of the peasants, disrespect of fellow confrères and local clergy, blasphemy, and so on) were filed by many people from Hvar – priests, nobles and commoners. The process was never continued by the Venetian Inquisition.

certain archbishoprics or bishoprics. In the largest number of examples investigations were not terminated, so with great certainty one can presume that some of the processes were stopped (probably by instructions from the Holy Office itself), but it is also possible that some processes continued in certain archbishoprics or bishoprics, so the continuation and their endings should be looked for in their archives.

* * *

Investigatory processes of the Venetian Inquisition in which the central protagonists were Croats from the wider area of the eastern Adriatic coast, are a worthwhile research topic that, among other things, testifies to certain social and religious movements in Croatian areas in the Early Modern period. In this article the emphasis has been directed towards presenting both the accusations initiated by the different factions which started the investigatory process and the Venetian Inquisition, which was the central institution in charge of these types of “offences” against the legitimate ecclesiastical and social order. In the same manner, as much the extant material allows, defences of the accused and their testimonies are also presented, including the way in which they tried to minimize or completely remove the denunciations. One of the problematic issues discussed here was also how to determine the justification for a starting process and to point out the circumstances and reasons that led to the investigation in the first place.

Researching archival documents (processes of the Venetian Inquisition) was based on an analysis of four groups of processes: conversion to Islam, Protestantism, magic and occult actions, and inappropriate behaviour by clergymen. Their course, participants, and circumstances were quite different, but also closely connected with current political, social, religious, and also – in the case of the group connected with conversion to Islam – military conditions. Therefore, in the latter group of processes, the Inquisition was the instance in which the penitent, originally a Christian and because of circumstances a member of an Islamic religious and social environment, addressed the desire to reincorporate himself in a life based on the principles of Christianity and the Catholic Church. There were no accusations here since the emphasis was on the penitent’s statement; at the core the statements are just plain rhetoric trying to justify life under Ottoman rule and asking to be accepted again under the “wing of the Holy Mother Church” in new circumstances of life. In this kind of process, the point is not actually the classical type of investigation (based on classical accusations), but on actions that led to the act of penance (relatively easily approved by the Church), and the contents of the processes are mostly worthwhile material on the general circumstances in the Croatian borderlands during the wars with the Ottomans.

The problem of ambiguity in starting a process is much more evident in the following groups of processes. In the example of Protestantism, and also in

accusations of magical actions or indecent behaviour of clergymen, most accusations were filed by persons who lived with the accused in the same (e.g., priestly or monastic community) or in close proximity (the same city, commune, or neighbourhood). The accusations were things that the Holy Office well knew how to determine, most commonly fruits of confrontations, personal hatreds, and intolerance within a small community. Protestantism, magic, and also, in the case of clergymen, moral deviations, were accusations that had attractive characteristics, were audible and easily filled with necessary rhetoric, thus sufficiently impressive to the accusers that they could go before the court of the Inquisition, usually without real evidence. Therefore, because of the unreality of the accusations, most of the denunciations ended with plain registration in the archive of the Holy Office, not with some other movement towards specific investigation and an official legal termination of the process.

At the end of this contribution it is possible to conclude that these processes, which are only part of the rich material on Croats as protagonists in the inquisitional records of the Holy Office in Venice, are valid sources for many components of the history of the eastern Adriatic coast in the Early Modern period. They are testimonies of wide social, ecclesiastical, and religious circumstances and they depict some aspects of the everyday life and mentality of local Croatian communities, including moral and legal ideas in that epoch. Most of these records, as is evident from this analysis, show that legal grounds were often just a cover (often loose and not convincing) for initiating accusations against individuals who had unresolved disputes in a local community. Hence, the outcome of a large number of the cases presented here was expected and a large number of processes were terminated by stopping investigation and probable liberation of the accused.

(Translated by Sanja Miljan)

AT THE EDGE OF THE LAW

MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM

SONDERBAND XXVIII

At the Edge of the Law:

**Socially Unacceptable and Illegal Behaviour
in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period**

Edited by

Suzana Miljan

and

Gerhard Jaritz

Krems 2012

MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG
DER ABTEILUNG KULTUR UND WISSENSCHAFT DES AMTES DER
NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

**KULTUR
NIEDERÖSTERREICH**



Copy editor: Judith Rasson

Cover illustration:

Iustitia: St Michael and the Virgin Mary
Pembroke College, Cambridge
(Photo: Mirko Sardelić)

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– ISBN 978-3-901094-30-X

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, 3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist.

Druck: KOPITU Ges. m. b. H., Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, 1050 Wien.

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Preface

This publication contains selected papers from a conference held in Zagreb (Centre for Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb) in 2009, dealing with the medieval and early modern period, and translated into English for this purpose.* The main goal was to gather papers on a topic that has not been researched enough amongst Croatian historians, that is, the socially unacceptable and illegal behaviour of individuals who were “walking at the edge of the law.” The general idea was also to present various research questions at the intersection of social and legal history, from the problem of feuding in medieval society to the various types of delinquency by pilgrims. The emphasis was put on the Croatian territory in the Middle Ages (from Slavonia to Istria and Dalmatia) and set in a broader (East) Central European context. The articles follow a chronological sequence, starting from the High Middle Ages, with a particular focus on the late medieval and early modern period.

The first paper is by Damir Karbić, who deals with the use of violence as a means of obtaining justice and re-establishing order, which was one of the peculiarities of the medieval legal system when compared with Roman law. After presenting different cases of feuds in Croatian sources, he discusses, how medieval communal legislation treated feuds as a separate legal institute, using the example of the city statutes of Split.

Marija Karbić concentrates on the ways in which women from the medieval urban settlements of the Sava and Drava *interamnium* came into conflict with the law by various criminal actions, from insults or brawls to abortion and murder. She connects those problems with the economic situation of these women, basing the analysis mainly on theft and prostitution cases. The women were sometimes punished severely, but sometimes pardoned or punished minimally.

The problem of gambling along the eastern Adriatic coast is the research subject of Sabine Florence Fabijanec. She analyses the urban statutory regulations stretching from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. She deals with the adoption of legal provisions against gambling and shows the diversity of approach to gambling from city to city.

Gerhard Jaritz analyses the interdependence between late medieval material culture, human behaviour, religious discourse, and legal culture using the example of actions connected with *superbia* that played a role in public

* The Croatian version of the conference proceedings is published as Suzana Miljan (ed.), *Narubu zakona: društveno i pravno neprihvatljiva ponašanja kroz povijest*, Biblioteka *Dies historiae*, vol. 3 (Zagreb: Hrvatski studiji, 2009).

urban arguments. The secular authorities emphasized moral, national, and religious components, highlighting the necessity of averting God's wrath.

The perception of the behaviour of pilgrims is the topic of Zoran Ladić's contribution. He shows, in contrast to the idealized vision of pilgrimages and pilgrims, that pilgrimages made by average medieval or early modern believers were also considered superstition and that the pilgrims often engaged in fights, robberies, prostitution, and other forms of delinquent behaviour.

Paul Freedman offers an article on late medieval and early modern public acts of torture and execution, which were carefully choreographed events whose solemnity and meticulous preparation made the infliction of mutilation and death horrifyingly impressive. He also concentrates on the various *topoi* of peasant rebellion as described by literate contemporaries, such as rape, murder, cannibalism, the roasting of victims, and so on.

Lovorka Čoralić deals with Croats accused in the records of the Venetian Inquisition. Four types of accusation can be recognized: conversion to Islam, Protestantism, the use of magic, and conduct considered improper for clergymen (priests and other members of religious orders).

The last article is by Slaven Bertosa, dealing with poor social conditions in Istria in the early modern period that led to hunger, poverty, depopulation, and general insecurity, which in turn provoked dangerous behaviour, robbery, and murder. Capital crimes were under the jurisdiction of the *Potestà* and Captain of Koper or, respectively, the Captain of Rašpor with his seat in Buzet. The village communities were also starting to organize themselves by introducing patrols, although in a modest way.

The collection of articles tries to popularise the topics for one plain purpose, that is, to erase the border between history and legal studies, since until now one cannot actually speak of "interdisciplinarity," but only of looking at many research problems from various reference points. Hopefully, this volume will be useful not only for historians dealing with this poorly researched topic of (Croatian) historiography, but also for a wider public generally interested in the functioning of the legal and social system in the past.

Finally, my special gratitude goes to Judith Rasson for copy editing the volume and to Gerhard Jaritz for offering the opportunity to publish it as a special issue of *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*, thus promoting this research on an international level.

Suzana Miljan