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NIKOLA (1673-1674), “THE CHILD OF THE COMMUNE”

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ABSTRACT: On the basis of the Criminal Court records, accounting records of *Hospitale misericordiae*, the Dubrovnik foundling home, and other sources kept at the State Archives in Dubrovnik, the circumstances surrounding the life and death of a ward of this home have been reconstructed. The infant’s violent death and the criminal proceedings that followed have been placed in the context of domestic violence and the demographic conditions that prevailed in the aftermath of the great earthquake. The article examines the relationship between the wet nurses and the foundlings placed in their care, as well as the reaction of the authorities towards crime committed against the members of this marginal group.

Key words: foundling, criminal court proceedings, domestic violence, child mortality, wetnurse, foundling hospital, Dubrovnik Republic, 17th century

Introduction

Probing into the past is a challenging task, particularly if it concerns the study of children, a social group “seldom seen and rarely heard in the documents, and for historians the most obscure”.¹ We can trace the short life of a boy named Nikola

¹ John Boswell, »*Expositio and Oblatio: The Abandonment of Children and the Ancient and Medieval Family*«, in: *Medieval families: perspectives on marriage, household, and children*, ed. Carol Neel. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press; The Medieval Academy of America, 2004: p. 234.

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owing to two tragic circumstances: the fact that he was abandoned and that he died a violent death. The parish registers—the sources indispensable for the study of historical demography, particularly of the ranks and individuals whose marginal position outcast them from the notary records either because they were propertyless or inherited nothing, or, because they belonged to the vast majority never mentioned by the Criminal Court records—fail to provide any information on the infant boy.² Apparently, Nikola was baptised, and his death was recorded in the hospital register of deaths. However, the registers for this period have not been preserved. As a foundling of the Dubrovnik *Hospitale misericordiae* at an early suckling age he was placed in the care of an external wet nurse. *Hospitale*'s accounting records contain several payments made in favour of his provision.³ Suspicious circumstances surrounding his death gave way to the criminal proceedings started *ex officio*.⁴ On account of the severity of the crime and special circumstances, the process was held before the bodies of higher penal jurisdiction, the Minor Council and later the Senate.⁵ The sentence was passed, and partly executed, to be followed by pardon.⁶ Nikola, or rather his case, since his name appears neither in the court records nor in the council decisions, was a much-disputed issue on the agenda of the highest bodies of the then Ragusan government.

The entries made on the infant in the wet nurse contract, the beginning of his short history, blend into hundreds of similar records. This part of his life-course

² On the early practice of keeping parish registers, their state and research in Croatia see: Vladimir Stipetić and Nenad Vekarić, *Povijesna demografija Hrvatske*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2004: pp. 28-32. On parish registers as historic sources especially in historical demography see: Miroslav Bertoša, »Matične knjige - arhivsko vrelo o demografskim previranjima predindustrijske Europe«. *Vjesnik državnog arhiva u Rijeci* 41-42 (2000): pp. 315-352. On the insights that meticulous analysis of the parish registers provides in the study of history in the case of Pula see: Slaven Bertoša, *Život i smrt u Puli. Starosjedioci i doseljenici od XVII. do početka XIX. stoljeća*. Pazin: Skupština udruga Matice hrvatske Istarske županije, 2002. On the parish registers in the Dubrovnik area see: Ivo Ficović, »Zbirka matičnih knjiga Historijskog arhiva u Dubrovniku«. *Arhivski vjesnik* 25 (1982): pp. 10-15; Vesna Čučić, »Dubrovačke matične knjige - dragocjen izvor za povijesna istraživanja«. *Arhivski vjesnik* 48 (2006): pp. 45-54. The parish registers from the Dubrovnik area have served as basis for exhaustive study, on which, in the context of historical demography, see: V. Stipetić - N. Vekarić, *Povijesna demografija Hrvatske*: pp. 201-215.

³ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 17 (State Archives in Dubrovnik, hereafter: SAD).

⁴ *Lamenta de Intus et Foris* (hereafter: *Lam. Int. For.*), ser. 53, vol. 72, ff. 89v-94v, 98v-108v, 110v-111v, 137-139v (SAD). Here I gratefully acknowledge the assistance given to me by Nella Lonza in the interpretation of the criminal proceedings and most useful suggestions during my research.

⁵ *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (hereafter: *Cons. Rog.*), ser. 3, vol. 121, ff. 7v- 8 (SAD).

⁶ *Acta Consilii Maioris* (hereafter: *Cons. Maius*), ser. 8, vol. 46, f. 186 (SAD).

may be described as typical of a foundling, one of the many. Given a relatively high infant mortality rate in pre-industrial societies, of foundlings in particular, his early death tends to fit into the demographic figures of the period. Had it not been for the suspicious circumstances of his death, his short and wretched life would never have entered the court records. Thanks to the reaction of the judiciary to a rarely witnessed case of violence, the details of his story have thus come to light. In the court proceedings seemingly irrelevant details gained in importance in establishing the course of events and ultimately the guilt. In a micro-historical manner, the story of Nikola affords valuable information on the everyday life of the wards of the foundling hospital, on domestic violence and the attitude of the authorities towards this form of violence, the aim of this article thus being to elucidate from the mentioned three perspectives the tragic reality of an abandoned child in Dubrovnik at the close of the seventeenth century.

A ward of the Hospitale misericordiae

Nikola entered a well developed system of communal care of the abandoned children, set up by the Ragusan state more than two centuries earlier.⁷ Foundling

⁷ On foundlings and the Dubrovnik foundling hospital see: Stjepan Skurla, *Ragusa, cenni storici*. Zagreb, 1876; Kosta Vojnović, »Sudbeni ustroj republike Dubrovačke«. *Rad JAZU* 108 (1892): pp. 99-181; Baldo Marinović, »Jedna važna ustanova starog Dubrovnika.« *Dubrovački liječnik* 19/1 (1933): pp. 23-28; Risto Jeremić and Jorjo Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, vol. II. Beograd: Biblioteka centralnog higijenskog zavoda, 1939; Vladimir Bazala, *Pregled povijesti zdravstvene kulture Dubrovačke Republike*. Zagreb: Dubrovački horizonti, 1972; Erich Rosenzweig, »Još o starom dubrovačkom nahodištu.« *Acta Historica Medicinae Pharmaciae Veterinae* 18/2 (1978): pp. 25-34; V. Čučić, »Dubrovačke matične knjige.« pp. 45-54; Petar Kačić and Zdravko Šundrica, »Zdravstvena služba u Dubrovniku po izvještaju apostolskog delegata Giovanni Francesco Sormani-a iz 1574. godine.« *Acta Historica Medicinae Pharmaciae Veterinae* 12/2 (1973): pp. 51-62; Ante Šupuk, »O matičnoj knjizi dubrovačkih nahoda i njihovim prezimenima (ab anno 1830-1852)«. *Anali Historijskog odjela Centra za znanstveni rad JAZU u Dubrovniku* 15/16 (1978): pp. 321-356; Ivan Mustać, »Briga za djecu u starom Dubrovniku: Dubrovačko nahodište.« *Dubrovački horizonti* 18/25 (1985): pp. 53-58; Ivan Perić, »Organizacija i djelovanje pokrajinske bolnice u Dubrovniku od izgradnje njene nove zgrade do prvog svjetskog rata.« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti JAZU u Dubrovniku* 23 (1985): pp. 175-222; Niko Kapetanić and Nenad Vekarić, *Stanovništvo Konavala*, vol. I. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1998; Petar Marija Radelj, »O dubrovačkom nahodištu.« *Dubrovnik* N. S. 19/4 (2008): pp. 199-291; Katica Šimunović, »Od dječjeg nahodišta do doma za djecu i mlade punoljetne osobe "Maslina": prilog povijesti socijalne skrbi za djecu u Dubrovniku.« *Ljetopis socijalnog rada* 15/3 (2008): pp. 499-512; Stanko Lasić, *Pravo na rođenje u učenju Crkve*, ed. Petar Marija Radelj. Zagreb: Centar za bioetiku; Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove, 2009.

homes were commonplace in urban environments, especially those of the Mediterranean.⁸ They were usually founded within the hospices for the poor, and later developed into separate institutions mainly governed by lay boards in association with the Church. By the sixteenth century, all Italian cities had an institution of the kind, this form of welfare being also common in France, Spain and Portugal.⁹ It was not until the eighteenth century and the spread of the ideas of the Enlightenment as well as the concern for the population decline that prompted the cities of north Europe into systematic dealing with this problem by setting up foundling homes.¹⁰ The system of care for the abandoned, usually illegitimate children varied in view of the funding sources. In England, for example, the father of a child born out of wedlock had to be established, primarily for reason of material responsibility, because otherwise the cost of childcare was covered by the parish. Parental participation in the cost of a foundling's upkeep, *lemozina* (alms), was regulated in Bologne, where from the late seventeenth to the nineteenth century the church authorities and the police interrogated thousands of women in order to find the child's father and compel him into paying *lemozina*.¹¹

Organized care for the abandoned children in Dubrovnik seems to have had its roots in the asylum which operated within the convent of St Clare, founded in 1290.¹² The Dubrovnik charity hospital or hospice was founded by the commune in 1432, and is probably the oldest foundling home on the eastern

⁸ On the phenomenon of child abandonment a most comprehensive work in Croatian has been written by Mislava Bertoša. Although this monograph is mainly concerned with anthroponomastics and traces the names and surnames of the wards of the Trieste foundling hospital in the nineteenth century, the author highlights the basic abandonment patterns and the phenomenon of foundling homes in general. See: Mislava Bertoša, *Djeca iz obrtaljke. Nametnuto ime i izgubljeni identitet*. Zagreb: Profil, 2005: pp. 21-66.

⁹ David I. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor. Italian Infant Abandonment and the Politics of Reproductive Control*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993: p. 10.

¹⁰ Alys Levene, *Childcare, health and mortality at the London Foundling Hospital 1741-1800. 'Left to the mercy of the world'*. Manchester-New York: Manchester University Press, 2007: p. 2.

¹¹ D. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor. Italian Infant Abandonment and the Politics of Reproductive Control*: pp. 58, 61.

¹² B. Marinović, »Jedna važna socijalna ustanova starog Dubrovnika«: pp. 23-28; V. Bazala, *Pregled povijesti zdravstvene kulture Dubrovačke Republike*: p. 23; Zdenka Janeković Römer, *Rod i grad*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku; Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu, 1994: p. 108; N. Kapetanić i N. Vekarić, *Stanovništvo Konavala 1*: p. 359. Despite thorough survey of the literature, this assumption is not supported by the primary sources.

coast of the Adriatic.¹³ It opened its doors some ten years prior to that in Florence, which was under construction at the time.¹⁴ The state had full control over the home's finances and administration.¹⁵ A combination of internal and external wet nurses, a short stay at the institution itself, a free and at least declaratively anonymous access to the 'wheel' (revolving device designed for leaving babies at the hospital), and, with time, admission of poor legitimate children as well as pregnant women helped consolidate a welfare system that suited the local demographic and cultural circumstances.

The foundling home was founded by *Ordo hospitalis misericordiae*, passed on the Major Council session of 9 February 1432.¹⁶ Its preamble is strewn with quotations from the Scriptures, thanksgiving for God's mercy and an awareness of the need for Christian charity.¹⁷ The framers of the text seem to have made special effort to underline the darker side of the Ragusan everyday life of the time. Thus it mentions "the little human beings abandoned throughout the City like mindless beasts" who "often die without the sacrament of baptism or meet an ill fate of some other kind." As the main reason underlying such behaviour

¹³ By citing older Zadar historians who associated the name of a tower and a quarter of Zadar ("Bablja kula" and "Babe") with the existence of a foundling home in that part of the city, Roman Jelić holds that Zadar had a foundling home at the end of the fourteenth century, and certainly before 1409, if the city quarter and the tower were named after it. The sources fail to confirm such an assumption. One foundling home was located in 1452 next to the Fort of St John. Apostolic visitation confirms the existence of a foundling home in Zadar in 1603. See: Roman Jelić, »Zadarsko nahodište«. *Radovi Instituta Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Zadru* 10 (1963): pp. 215-218. Besides Dubrovnik and Zadar, Šibenik also had a foundling home (1808, mentioned also around 1612), Split (1704), Kotor (1610) and Hvar (1579). See: Miloš Škarica, »Nahodišta i nahodi u Dalmaciji«. *Radovi Instituta Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Zadru* 8 (1961): p. 232; R. Jelić, »Zadarsko nahodište«: pp. 263-265.

¹⁴ The decision on the building of the Florentine foundling home was passed in 1419. It was designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, while the famous statues of the foundlings in swaddling clothes, *bambini*, are the work of Andrea della Robbia. See: Lawrence Kahn, »The "Ospedale degli Innocenti" and the "Bambino" of the American Academy of Pediatrics«. *Pediatrics* 110/1 (2002). <http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/cgi/content/full/110/1/175> (consulted on 26 January 2009).

¹⁵ Tatjana Buklijaš and Irena Benyovsky, »Domus Christi in Late-Medieval Dubrovnik: a Therapy for the Body and Soul«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 8 (2004): pp. 105-107.

¹⁶ *Cons. Maius*, vol. 4, ff. 180v- 182v. The decision was included in the collection of the Ragusan laws *Liber viridis* under *Ordo et providimentum hospitalis pro creaturis que abiciebantur inhumaniter. Liber Viridis*, caput 252, f. 103; *Liber Viridis*, ed. Branislav Nedeljković. [Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskog naroda III, 23]. Beograd: SANU, 1984: pp. 198-201.

¹⁷ Zdenka Janeković-Römer, »Nasilje zakona: Gradska vlast i privatni život u kasnosrednjovjekovnom i ranonovovojekovnom Dubrovniku«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 41 (2003): p. 31.

the decision sees in “great poverty”, along with a wide-ranging and fairly obscure group of “other grounds and reasons.” The state hospital, according to its accentuated religious function, operated on charitable basis so that “we earn charity by being charitable to others”. Were the legislators guided exclusively by Christian ideals or perhaps in the hospices they saw a means of achieving social harmony and a specific response to the demographic, economic and social pressures? The importance the government attached to the care of the abandoned children is also visible from the financing of the foundling hospital, as the home’s monthly expenditures were regularly on the agenda of the Senate’s first session of a month.¹⁸

Adverse circumstances may have led Nikola’s parents into abandoning the child, or his parents may have belonged to the marginal groups in which illegitimate births and child abandonment were commonplace.¹⁹ In Nikola’s case the sources afford no answer to this question.²⁰ Although the birth of an illegitimate child in Dubrovnik had no direct legal consequences either before the secular or ecclesiastical court, extramarital pregnancy was a threat to the woman’s social position, it marred the family’s good name, and challenged the hierarchy of the patriarchal family relations, in which the supervision of sexual behaviour of the subordinate members, notably women, was the responsibility of the male head.²¹ The mention of natural, that is, illegitimate birth and *spurjan* (bastard), which an unwed mother wanted to

¹⁸ R. Jeremić - J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika II*: p. 204. Baro Bettera, in his report to the Austrian general Milutinović underlined that great capital had been accumulated in *Opera Pia*, at a high annual interest, and given a fairly small population, it provided for all the poor. In this solidly organised charitable work one might seek the seeds of more tolerant relations between the members of different social strata, to which Bettera himself also drew attention. See: Bogdan Krizman, »Mémoire Bara Bettere austrijskom generalu T. Milutinoviću o Dubrovačkoj Republici iz 1815. godine«. *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 1 (1952): pp. 453, 460.

¹⁹ Peter Laslett describes ‘the *bastardy prone sub-society*’, consisting of a series of women, related at times, who, by living in the same area, had a series of illegitimate births over a number of generations. See: Peter Laslett, »The *bastardy prone sub-society*«, in: *Bastardy and its Comparative History. Studies in the history of illegitimacy and marital nonconformism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica and Japan*, ed. Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard Smith. London: Edward Arnold, 1980: p. 217.

²⁰ ‘Bastardy-prone women’ have been traced in Dubrovnik, too, as evidenced by the testimony of Stane nicknamed ‘*Beznoga*’ (Legless), a Vlach woman accused of infanticide, who claimed that she had previously given six births and paid each time to have the baby taken to the foundling home (*Lamenta del Criminale* /hereafter: *Lam. Crim.*, ser. 50.3, vol. 79, ff. 80v-81v, 82v-84, 85-90, 91-94v, SAD).

²¹ Nella Lonza, »”Two souls lost”: Infanticide in the Republic of Dubrovnik (1667-1808)«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 6 (2002): pp. 79, 84.

get rid of, were among the defamations commonly heard before the Criminal Court of Dubrovnik.²²

Young maids, peasant and ordinary women, particularly those without direct family protection, were most often the victims of the false pretences or abuse of their masters, male servants and soldiers.²³ Had such a relation resulted in pregnancy, the child may easily have found its way to the revolving wheel of the foundling hospital. Equally difficult was the position of the rejected pregnant fiancées. By taking the child to *ošpedo*, the man's parental responsibility was erased, yet the girl's honour remained forever marred by the illegitimate pregnancy.²⁴ Abandoned children were deprived of the support and care of family in both the emotional and material sense. They were outcast and stigmatised by the society, lived a life of poverty, and were limited in their choice of marriage partners.²⁵

In the summer of 1673, when Nikola was brought to the foundling home, its small staff consisted of the governess (*abadessa*) Marija Božova i.e., Marija, wife of Božo,²⁶ wet nurse Kata Petra Markova (Kata, wife of Petar, Marko's son),²⁷ and probably a maid, whose name cannot be distinguished from the countless female names recorded without occupation, most of whom were external wet nurses. At the time, the foundling home also had its chaplain, most likely Nikola Melei²⁸ and a barber-surgeon, possibly Petar Ferri.²⁹ Marija Božova from the City had two daughters, Paula and Marija, so that the term *abadessa* (abbess) was used to distinguish her as a superior, a governess, having the authority over a group of women, and not a nun.³⁰ The hospital staff exceeded the number regulated by the fifteenth-century law, which prescribed merely one woman, and approximated the number observed by the apostolic visitor Sormani a hundred years before Nikola's admission. In January 1574, the hospital was staffed by three wet nurses and two maids who cared for four babies and three children

²² Slavica Stojan, »Žene psovačice i psovanje žena«, in: *Žene u Hrvatskoj. Ženska i kulturna povijest*. Zagreb: Institut "Vlado Gotovac"; Ženska infoteka, 2004: p. 147.

²³ Slavica Stojan, *Vjerenice i nevjerenice*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2003: p. 25.

²⁴ For more detailed discussion on the abandoned fiancées and broken engagement vows see: S. Stojan, *Vjerenice i nevjerenice*: pp. 51-94.

²⁵ N. Kapetanić - N. Vekarić, *Stanovništvo Konavala* 1: p. 357.

²⁶ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 137 right.

²⁷ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 139.

²⁸ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 117.

²⁹ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 173 right.

³⁰ *Lam. Int. For.*, vol. 72, f. 90v.

aged around five.³¹ The exact number of wards when Nikola was admitted cannot be determined, although there may have been a few babies and several children above the age of three. The foundling home was run by the nobility, and that year two officials *alla scritta* and two *al pagamento* were appointed.³² The administrators of the foundling home did not assume their position at the beginning of the calendar year but rotated according to the circumstances, making certain that an official acquainted with the work of the hospice overlapped with the newly appointed one. Chosen to the duty *alla scritta* on 25 October 1673 were Stjepan Proculo and Mato Natali. Five days later they were joined by the officials *al pagamento* Ivan Klačić and Ivan Bosdari.³³ Having informed the judges of the Criminal Court of the suspicion of murder, Mato Natali initiated investigation on the circumstances of Nikola's death.³⁴ Ivan Klačić testified in the proceedings.³⁵

The hospital's daily business dealings included traders and craftsmen who sold cloth, shoes, kitchenware, medications, account books and everything necessary for its regular activity. Unlike the hospital *Domus Christi*, which provided care for the sick people with curable illnesses only within the walls of this institution, *Hospitale misericordiae* had a network of external wet nurses who fed and looked after the children in their own homes, most often in the surrounding rural areas, for which they were paid. The children's accommodation at the *Hospitale* was temporary. Infants stayed there until an adequate wet nurse outside the home was found, as well as the children aged three who were waiting to be given to a foster family or adopted. In terms of size, the Dubrovnik foundling home may be said to have suited the current demographic circumstances. The overall number of wards, including those placed in the care of the families in the outlying villages, like the hidden part of the floating iceberg largely exceeded the number of children

³¹ P. Kačić - Z. Šundrica, »Zdravstvena služba u Dubrovniku po izvještaju apostolskog delegata Giovanni Francesco Sormani-a iz 1574. godine«: 54. See Atanazije Matanić, »Apostolska vizitacija dubrovačke nadbiskupije god. 1573./4. prema spisima sačuvanim u Tajnome vatikanskom arhivu«, in: *Mandićev zbornik*, ed. I. Vitezović, B. Pandžić, A. Matanić. Rim: Hrvatski povijesni institut, 1965: pp. 193-209. Cf. Sergio Pagano. »Le visite apostoliche a Roma nei secoli XVI-XIX: repertorio delle fonti«. *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma. Studi, documenti, inventari* 4 (1980): pp. 317-464. On Sormani see also Irena Benyovsky, »"Parochiae dentro la Citta"- Beccadellijeva podjela Dubrovnika na župe«. *Istarski povijesni biennale* 2 (2007): pp. 159-167. I am indebted to Irena Benyovsky Latin for drawing my attention to the relevant bibliographical units.

³² The state hospital *Domus Christi* was run by procurators. Both institutions were set up by the state, yet their fields of work and the recipients differed.

³³ *Leges et instructiones*, ser. 21.1, vol. 3, ff. 370v, 372v (SAD).

³⁴ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, f. 89v.

³⁵ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 90v-91.

placed in the temporary care at the building itself. This should be kept in mind when evaluating the total expenditures of the hospital.

Nikola was admitted into the foundling home six years after the disastrous earthquake of 1667, in which the first hospital building was damaged and became unfit for use. Probably then adapted to house the foundling home was the building of the old hospital at Pile, next to the dying workshop, also known as *Ospedale ai sette scalini*.³⁶ The baby might have been placed in the 'wheel' with which the building within the City walls was equipped, and possibly that at Pile as well, or he might have been delivered in less anonymous circumstances by a woman with the likes of Jele Markova from Župa, who received a *perper* for this special delivery.³⁷ He might have been baptised by chaplain Melei upon his arrival at the foundling home or one of the parish priests from the extramural parishes. Had this been the case, the baby would have been tagged with a note containing basic information on his baptism, to be copied later into the hospital register of baptisms, as done in the case of Ivan, who was brought as baptised from Mljet on 12 March 1688.³⁸ In Nikola's case, however, the information of this kind is lacking. Alongside his name the words 'unknown' or 'of unknown parents' (*ignoto* or *ignotis parentibus*) were probably added, as it was written, for example, for Anica, baptised on 28 April 1675, for Klara, baptised on 6 May 1675 or Ilija, baptised on 15 July that same year.³⁹ If a baby was baptised upon its arrival at the hospital, one of the wet nurses on the staff presumably acted as its godmother. This practice was so common that in the hospital register of baptisms the godmother would often be recorded only by the duty she performed—*nutrice*. By being entered into the register of the baptised foundlings, Nikola was marked as an individual bereaved of parents, history and perspectives of creating a social network based on kinship.⁴⁰ The

³⁶ R. Jeremić - J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika* II: p. 204.

³⁷ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 145 left.

³⁸ *Libro del batesimo di pietà*, ser. 46, vol. 21 (index under letter "g") (SAD).

³⁹ *Libro del batesimo di pietà*, vol. 21 (index under letters "a", "c" and "e"). A similar system of entries has been traced in Kotor. In the earliest records of the Bishopric archives, in the parish registers of baptisms from the mid-seventeenth century, abandoned children were entered by name plus a note *infantus ex ignotis parentibus*. See Gracijela Čulić, »Sociolingvistički aspekti nominacija nahočadi u Kotoru od XVII do do kraja XIX vijeka«, in: *Hrvatsko-crnogorski dodiri/Crnogorsko-hrvatski dodiri: Identitet povijesne i kulturne baštine crnogorskog primorja*, ed. Lovorka Čoralić. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Matica hrvatska, 2009: p. 372.

⁴⁰ See: John Boswell, *L'abbandono dei bambini in Europa occidentale* [original title: *The kindness of strangers*]. Milano: Rizzoli, 1991: pp. 267-268.

surviving sources bring no evidence on the eventual branding of the wards, which was probably unnecessary due to their small number, relatively close residence of the external wet nurses and the system of supervision.⁴¹ The wards were most frequently referred to as *figliolo*, *creatura*, *bastardo*, *spurian* (*spurjanče*), *orfanello/a*, *izložnik*, *nahod*, *mulan*. For the judges of the Ragusan Criminal Court Nikola was a *figliolino bastardo*, for the foundling officials also a *putino*. The wet nurse and some of her family members referred to him as “communal child”.⁴²

Wrapped in swaddling clothes, he was fed by the internal wet nurse and laid into a cot at the hospital. There he might have been in the company of older children dressed in the characteristic red robes awaiting to be fostered, possibly sharing the nurse with a few other infants.⁴³ The presence of only one wet nurse would imply a small number of the newly admitted wards. In the last decade of the seventeenth century, the earliest period for which we have reliable data drawn from the register of baptisms, an average of twenty-two children were baptised per year or less than two children a month. This should be taken with reserve, because the average speaks nothing of the eventual peak months, when more than two children might have been admitted monthly. Also the question remains as to whether the names of the wards who died shortly after the baptism were actually entered into the register of baptisms, and thus the data on the number of the baptised wards should be treated with a certain amount of reservation.⁴⁴

⁴¹ In the late eighteenth century the wards of the Zadar foundling home had a letter ‘P’ branded on the soles of their feet. See: Ivan Pederin, *Mletačka uprava, privreda i politika u Dalmaciji (1409-1797)*. Dubrovnik: Časopis “Dubrovnik”, 1990: p. 78.

⁴² *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 89v, 90v, 100, 101v, 111.

⁴³ From seventeenth-century expenditures we learn that the cloth for the foundlings’ robes was dyed. The fact that it was dyed in red we glean from the evidence dating from the beginning of the eighteenth century. *Registro delle polize dell’Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol.17, f. 145 right; *Libro delle spese*, ser. 46, vol.14, f. 4 (SAD). Red as the colour of the foundlings’ robes was not regulated by the decision on the founding of the hospital in the fifteenth century, according to which the coarse linen robes were to be decorated with a dove as a symbol of charity. Red may have been used to signify state patronage of the wards, their status as ‘communal children’. Rector’s garment distinguished itself from those of the other patricians in its red colour. Of this grand colour, which in the medieval and early modern times was reserved for the royal heads and the highest dignitaries, was also the candle that the Rector carried in some processions. In Dubrovnik red garments were also worn by the Rector’s attendants. See: Nella Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti. Ceremonijal i državni blagdani Dubrovačke Republike u 17. i 18. stoljeću*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti u Dubrovniku, 2009: pp. 57-59.

⁴⁴ In the early nineteenth century some infant deaths shortly after baptism were recorded in the register of deaths and not in the register of baptisms. See, for instance, the Register of the foundling deaths 1812-1848, ff. 1, 5, 8, 12, 13 and the Register of the foundling baptisms 1808-1852, ff. 83, 94, 99, 102, 104, 105. This cannot be ascertained for the earlier period, because the registers of deaths, if kept, are not extant.

On the atmosphere at the Pile building one can merely speculate. Did the sombre and bleak rooms witness wretched lives and spiritual desolation, as at the Pula foundling home three centuries later? Were the wards clad in poorly sewn robes and did they look lost like the wretched creatures of the Pula foundling home who, seen through children's eyes, aroused compassion to such an extent that this nauseous and gloomy sight remained deeply stamped on the memory as a symbol of alienation?⁴⁵ Regardless of the conditions at the Dubrovnik *Hospitale misericordiae*, which might have served as a reflection of one of the state's, that is, patriciate's philanthropic public faces, it was to house the foundlings temporarily. Baro Bettera, one of the secretaries of the Dubrovnik Republic shortly before its fall, described the admission procedure of the children abandoned to this foundling hospital known as *Misericordia*. According to his report, before being placed with wet nurses in the countryside, the *bastardi* were baptised, wrapped in good clothes, and treated medically if necessary.⁴⁶ Good hygienic conditions of the building and that of the wet nurses, despite irregular payments, caught the eye of Emperor Francis I during his visit to Dubrovnik in 1818.⁴⁷ Mato Vodopić, bishop of Dubrovnik and eyewitness of how the foundling home functioned in the latter half of the nineteenth century, invited the readers to pay their greatest respect for the *Hospitale*. The small home "housed little children who, in their red smocks, would play around the yard". As observed by bishop Vodopić, the children would remain at the hospital for a couple of days, and were then sent to the wet nurses in the countryside.⁴⁸

This was probably the path that Nikola followed. In search of an external wet nurse a soldier was usually dispatched, and compensated accordingly.⁴⁹ Was it, perhaps, Nikola Ivanov or some other soldier, presumably the one who received a payment of 8 *perperi* in January 1675?⁵⁰ The fact that with the external wet

⁴⁵ Miroslav Bertoša, *Kruh, mašta & mast*. Zagreb: Durieux, 2007: pp. 33-35.

⁴⁶ B. Krizman, »Mémoire Bara Bettere austrijskom generalu T. Milutinoviću o Dubrovačkoj Republici iz 1815. godine«: p. 459.

⁴⁷ The poor house (*Hospitale Pauperum*) in the vicinity of the foundling home was, according to the emperor's statement, filthy and fetid. Ivan Pederin, »Putni dnevnik cara Franje I. o Dubrovniku (1818. godine)«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti istraživačkog centra JAZU u Dubrovniku* 18 (1979): p. 453.

⁴⁸ Mato Vodopić, *Đenevrija. Pilarska pripovijest*, ed. Luko Paljetak. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska Dubrovnik, 2004: p. 10.

⁴⁹ One *perper* was a regular payment received by various *soldati* who were dispatched to recruit wet nurses on 26 September 1672. *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 123.

⁵⁰ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 156.

nurse Nikola survived ten months suggests that he was relatively fit when admitted to the foundling home, the recruiting of a wet nurse being somewhat easier. Early signs of infant's physical weakness could deteriorate with his placement in the new environment of the wet nurses' home, and in combination with the different pathogens could easily have led to death. Nikola's presumably short stay at the hospital ended with his placement in the care of the wet nurse Kata Ivanova from Petrovo Selo. The usual initial payments of 5 *perperi* for the breastfeeding and 3 *perperi* for the swaddling clothes (*fascie*), Kata Ivanova received on 10 August 1673.⁵¹ On that same day Stane Đurova from Ombla was also paid for a little girl by the name of Marija, and Cvijeta Pavlova from Knežica for yet another ward named Marija.⁵² Nikola thus joined the wards who were placed in the care of the rural wet nurses, who, only in Petrovo Selo, numbered at least ten. The exact number is difficult to establish due to a relatively modest name pool, the children bearing no surnames. The possibility of error is even greater considering that the wards sometimes changed their wet nurses.

Nikola probably made his way to Petrovo Selo in the arms of a wet nurse, from Pile, along the Kono to Ombla, most likely along the same road later taken by Jela Gubica, a woman who brought his little corpse to be buried at the hospital, and which she described in her testimony at the court.⁵³ At Brodarica the river could be crossed in a boat, and then a small winding path climbed up the hill to Petrovo Selo. Nikola's journey probably took no longer than three hours. What may have been the instructions with which the foundling home official or governess accompanied the placement of the infant with the wet nurse and the disbursement of the state money? The foundling officials ought to have been acquainted with the mortality rates, and the 'in and out' ratio. Was Nikola's welfare placed in good hands?

Wet nurses and violence

Unlike the French scenarios, in which the infants on their long way to the wet nurses were known to freeze to death, die of undernutrition or happened to be run over by the pram wheels, the villages of the Dubrovnik area were far less remote.⁵⁴ Wet nurses were entrusted with the infants with an appropriate advance payment and swaddling clothes. Le Roy Ladurie draws attention to

⁵¹ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 142.

⁵² *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 142 right.

⁵³ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 98v, 103v.

the catastrophic breastfeeding conditions as cause of a significant mortality of the infants sent to wet nurses in France in the eighteenth century. "Hired breastfeeding is responsible for a gross massacre; viewed objectively, infanticide is here at work".⁵⁵ In the Kingdom of Naples abandoned children from quite remote places were sent to the central hospital *Annunziata*, founded in 1515, this journey having proved fatal for many of them. A lack of wet nurses contributed to an increasingly high mortality of the wards.⁵⁶ By the end of the seventeenth century only 15 per cent of the wards of the foundling home in Bologna, *Hospital San Procolo*, commonly known as *degli Esposti* or *dei Bastardini*, lived to their tenth birthday when they returned to the institution after the rural upbringing.⁵⁷

The wet nurse—ward relationship largely depended on the family conditions at the women's homes, varying from maternal affection, the new infant coming as replacement of the recently deceased own child, to an almost commercially-based relationship, in which the ward was viewed essentially as a source of income.⁵⁸ Breastfeeding, as Le Roy Ladurie argues, is one of the ways in which the city funds propagate the village.⁵⁹ Kata Ivanova, Nikola's wet nurse, lived with her husband, father-in-law Cvjetko Petrov Pršukat and mother-in-law Frana in a village house high above the Ombla River. She had an infant son of her own. Next to his cot, which stood by the parents' bed, an additional cot for Nikola was placed. A chest by the cots contained babies' clothes. Their household led a modest life. The money paid for the care of Nikola must have been a welcome addition to their family budget.

Among the villagers there lived Margarita Grgurova, Kata's married sister-in-law, daughter of Cvjetko Petrov Pršukat, then an external and subsequently an indoor wet nurse at the hospital.⁶⁰ The occupation of a wet nurse of "communal" children was apparently a popular one. Thus, in the course of 1673 the families of Petrovo Selo nursed the wards known as Jozo, Ivan, Antun, Lucija, Stjepan,

⁵⁴ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, »Najmljeno dojenje u Francuskoj u XVIII. stoljeću. Bio-sociokulturni fenomen.« *Gordogan* 12 (1991): p. 138.

⁵⁵ E. Le Roy Ladurie. »Najmljeno dojenje u Francuskoj u XVIII. stoljeću. Bio-sociokulturni fenomen.«: pp. 138-139.

⁵⁶ D. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor*: pp. 89-90.

⁵⁷ D. Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor*: pp. 84-86.

⁵⁸ A. Levene, *Childcare, health and mortality at the London Foundling Hospital 1741-1800*: p. 205.

⁵⁹ E. Le Roy Ladurie. »Najmljeno dojenje u Francuskoj u XVIII. stoljeću. Bio-sociokulturni fenomen«: p. 142.

⁶⁰ On 16 May 1674 the new wet nurse Margarita Grgurova was paid 13 *perperi* and 4 *grossi* (*Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 150 left).

Vica, Miho, Marija, and given that the names of Kata and Petar were entered twice beside different wet nurses, different children were probably in question. Recurrent payments made for Jozo, Ivan, Antun, Vica, Miho and Stjepan testify to their longer stay with the same wet nurses. Some ten women from Petrovo Selo earned their living by breastfeeding the infants of the *Hospitale misericordiae*. They were Marija Ivanova, Marija Matkova, Marija Lukina, Kata Tonkova, Marija Stjepanova, Frana Đurova, Anica Nikolina, Rada Ivanova, Frana Nikolina, along with the earlier mentioned Margarita Grgurova and Nikola's wet nurse, Kata Ivanova.⁶¹

According to the census carried out on the whole territory of the Dubrovnik Republic during the autumn and winter 1673/4, the parish priests being charged with this task, Petrovo Selo had 23 households, the membership of which consisted of 39 men, 37 women and 40 children.⁶² Three-quarters of the households had five or less members, and only one had ten members, six of whom were children. Five families had three children each, the same number having two and a single child. In six households there were no children. A note beside the name of the household head Cvjetko Petrov, containing an entry of only one child, implies that the parish priest did not make record of the foundlings. Regrettably, the census data for Petrovo Selo are scarce, in comparison with, for instance, a vast array of details from the Pridvorje parish in Konavle, where the priest recorded also surname and age. The scanty data cannot help establish how many of the recorded women were at their fertile age, which might have qualified them for wet nurses, yet breastfeeding was widespread, since more than a quarter of all the women turned to this activity as an extra source of income.⁶³ Nikola thus joined a small, vertically extended three-generational family in a place marked by a low biological potential of the Dubrovnik rural area, with some indications of the regressive phase of the long transitional process.⁶⁴ Epidemics, food shortages, Candian War (1645-1669), in which Dubrovnik did not take direct

⁶¹ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, ff. 130-150.

⁶² On census see: Zdravko Šundrica, »Popis stanovništva Dubrovačke Republike iz 1673/74. godine«. *Arhivski vjesnik* 2 (1959): pp. 419-456. On censuses in general and the sources providing data on population see: Alica Wertheimer Baletić, *Stanovništvo i razvoj*. Zagreb: Mate, 1999: pp. 46-49.

⁶³ *Diplomata et acta saec. XVII*, ser. 76, vol. 1809/14, for Petrovo Selo under no. 8, ff. 9v-11v, for Pridvorje under no. 4 (SAD).

⁶⁴ On the theory of demographic transition see A. Weltheimer-Baletić, *Stanovništvo i razvoj*: pp. 105-193. On the theory of demographic transition in Croatian context see: Jakov Gelo, *Demografske promjene Hrvatske od 1780. do 1981*. Zagreb: Globus, 1987. For the beginning of demographic transition in Croatia on the sample of 12 Croatian parishes, including four from the territory of the former Dubrovnik Republic, see: *Početak demografske tranzicije u Hrvatskoj*, ed. Nenad Vekarić and Božena Vranješ-Šoljan. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti u Dubrovniku; Sveučilište u Dubrovniku, 2009.

part but was subject to raids and plunder by the waging parties along the border areas, as well as the earthquake of 1667 had a lasting impact on a steady population decline. A total of 26,000 inhabitants, as estimated by the 1673/4 census, may prove not to have been the bottom figure.⁶⁵

The hardship and insecurity might have affected the wet nurses' treatment of the infants, for the worse, leading possibly to neglect, abuse, and violent behaviour. Abandoned children carried an eternal stigma by being separated from their parents and by breaking the ties with the community.

By keeping the foundling home authorities informed of the wards' welfare, the parish priests earned their role in the oversight of the wet nurses.⁶⁶ Not only did they supervise but they also tried to help their parishers, as suggested by a curious document written on 10 April 1750 by Nikola Koprivica, the parish priest of Gruda. It was penned eight months after the death of Ana, a foundling hospital ward, with an intent to certify that the wet nurse Mare Nikova from Radovčići in Konavle provided for the little girl with utmost care until she "departed from this world to another" because of *epidemico male di flusso*, dysentery presumably.⁶⁷ By using the word "epidemic", the priest probably wanted to emphasize that the wet nurse had no doing in the child's death. In Nikola's case, however, no priest is mentioned.

As to how one can differentiate intentional neglect from the generally poor treatment heightened by the absence of hygienic standards is a problem which, for example, the authorities of the London foundling hospital also faced.⁶⁸ The accounting records of the Dubrovnik foundling hospital contain rare entries which might lead to a host of different interpretations. The fact that the foundling hospital officials recorded any incidence of violence is a sign of welfare and

⁶⁵ Nenad Vekarić et al., *Vrijeme ženidbe i ritam poroda. Dubrovnik i njegova okolica od 17. do 19. stoljeća*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2000: pp. 11-12; Nenad Vekarić, »Broj stanovnika Dubrovačke Republike u 15., 16. i 17. stoljeću«. *Anali zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 29 (1991): p. 19; N. Kapetanić - N. Vekarić, *Stanovništvo Konavala I*: pp. 377-379. On unsettled circumstances along the Ragusan border and organized crime in the period between the earthquake and the end of the Morean War see: Vesna Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu. Osmansko-dubrovačka granica (1667.-1806.)*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1997: pp. 167-209.

⁶⁶ In the several short letters that have survived from the eighteenth century the priests record a ward's death or confirm his being alive. For example, a priest from Konavle informed the foundling hospital administration of the death of their ward Ivan on 29 October 1749. *Libro maestro in 1740*, ser. 46, vol. 9f, f. 214 (SAD).

⁶⁷ *Acta Consilii Minoris*, ser. 5, vol. 97 (SAD).

⁶⁸ A. Levene, *Childcare, health and mortality at the London Foundling Hospital 1741-1800*: p. 154.

supervision over the communal wards, and also of the state costs. A small number of the registered cases indicates either low incidence or selective recording of only the most obvious and most drastic cases. No data from Nikola's day is available, yet the main book of contracts made with the wet nurses spanning the 1680s has been preserved. On more than 170 contract leaves concerning around 250 wards, in merely two cases it is explicitly stated that the child was removed from the wet nurse's care.⁶⁹ An infant by the name of Kata was removed from the home of the wet nurse Stana Tonkova from Komolac after nine months of breastfeeding for reason of improper care.⁷⁰ A step further and an explicit mention of violence was recorded in the case of the ward Vlaho. After a year with the wet nurse Lukrecija, probably Picinova from Gruž, the boy was removed and placed in the care of another wet nurse, Stane Marinova from Komolac. Vlaho was a victim of maltreatment (*stato maltratato dalla Balia*). The boy died three months after having been given to another wet nurse.⁷¹

What was the relationship between wet nurse Kata Ivanova and her ward Nikola like? Was she merely keeping the tiny infant alive, whose emaciated body had little chances against the smallest onset of illness?

The death of an abandoned child

Cvjetko Pršukat had no doubts about the quality of care his daughter-in-law provided for the "communal child": there was not an ounce of flesh on the child and he died of malnutrition.⁷² The wards usually shared the milk with another child, the breastfeeding thus being below optimal, whereas artificial infant feeding might have proved fatal due to poor hygienic conditions and lack of knowledge about infant metabolism. Lack of vitamins and anaemia, as consequences of undernutrition, were associated with the occurrence of serious infectious diseases.⁷³ Within the context of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, Roy Porter concludes that more than 40 per cent of the European children may

⁶⁹ An accurate number of wards cannot be established, mainly because they were entered by name only. Also, they may have been given to another wet nurse or the latter may have breastfed an infant by the same name.

⁷⁰ *Libro maestro dell'anno 1683*, ser. 46, vol. 8b, f. 15 (SAD).

⁷¹ *Libro maestro dell'anno 1683*, vol. 8b, f. 16.

⁷² *Lam. Int. For.*, vol. 72, ff. 91v, 138.

⁷³ Mirko Dražen Grmek, *Bolesti u osvit zapadne civilizacije. Istraživanja patološke stvarnosti u grčkom prehistorijskom, arhajskom i klasičnom dobu* [original title: *Les maladies à l'aube de la civilisation occidentale*]. Zagreb: Globus, 1989: p. 8.

have died before their fifteenth birthday due to various *febra*.⁷⁴ In *Libro maestro*, the book of contracts made with the wet nurses employed by the Dubrovnik foundling hospital, as reason for the break of more than half of the contracts recorded from 1683 to 1689, out of the total of more than 250, the ward's death was cited. The most common cause of death was *febra*.⁷⁵ Like most of the foundlings a decade later, Nikola might have died of some infectious disease hidden behind the symptomatic diagnosis of *febra*. Had this been the case while the child was with the rural wet nurses, the small corpse would have been brought to the foundling hospital for burial. The records of the Criminal Court, however, provide evidence on a case involving the abandonment of an infant's lifeless body on a country road.⁷⁶ Of the 134 death records in the book of the wet nurse contracts between 1683 and 1689, with 92 entries, or more than two-thirds of all the cases, the body was brought to the hospital for burial.⁷⁷ Besides evasion of the burial expenses, one of the reasons for such behaviour should be sought in the procedure of registering the cause of death, which, like the information on the child's delivery for burial, was sometimes noted on the pages of the breastfeeding contract. In the decade following the earthquake, the earliest period for which the accounting records have survived, more than 20 children were, on average, buried a year, all referred to as *bastardi* or *spurjani*.⁷⁸ However, there were periods marked by an even higher annual average. For the burials of the hospital wards between April 1685 and April 1689 the gravedigger Nikola Leva received a total payment of 27 *perperi*.⁷⁹ Given

⁷⁴ Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind. A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present*. London: Fontana Press, 1999: pp. 236- 237.

⁷⁵ *Libro maestro dell'anno 1683*, vol. 8b.

⁷⁶ The Criminal Court in Dubrovnik received a letter from Župa on the discovery of an infant's dead body on the country road. The process was initiated on 21 March 1716. Given a lack of details surrounding the circumstances of the infant's discovery, the court wrote to the count of Župa in order to establish whether it was a case of violent death, and whether there was any corroborative evidence to support it. The body was of a two-month old baby girl, a foundling, placed in the care of wet nurse Vica Stjepanova from Zaraće (Soline). According to the testimony of Marija Marinova from Soline, the baby died of a natural cause while with wet nurse. Vica gave the infant's dead body to her husband, instructing him to leave it at the door of the parish priest, which he apparently failed to do. The wet nurse defended her innocence because she could not be responsible for her husband's actions, since "he is insane". The witness Marija Marinova knew that the deceased wards had to be taken to the authorities. She saw no signs of violence on the baby's body, merely two or three drops of blood round the mouth. Vica had "another bastard" in her care. The second witness, Nika Matkova from Plat, noticed some blood on the mouth "and that the skin of her buttocks and underarm was irritated with open sores throughout" (*Lam. Crim*, vol. 66, ff. 9-10, 11v-15).

⁷⁷ *Libro maestro dell'anno 1683*, vol. 8b.

⁷⁸ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17.

⁷⁹ *Libro in cui sono annotati i salari delle balie al servizio dell'Ospedale degli Esposti*, ser. 46, vol. 16, ff. 45, 68, 126 (SAD).

the price of 2 *grossi* per foundling burial, that period must have witnessed the burial of 162 children, or around 40 a year.⁸⁰ An average number of the baptised hardly exceeded the mean number of deaths, or was even smaller.

On Thursday, 5 March 1674, Jela Ilijina known as *Gubica* ('Gob') brought a dead child for burial.⁸¹ Could she have some other business at the hospital and delivered the child en passant? A certain Jela Ilijina from Petrovo Selo earned her living as an external wet nurse of the Dubrovnik foundling hospital at least since 1667.⁸² The two were probably one and the same person, although the suggestive nickname failed to be recorded in the hospital's accounting books. Marija, the hospital governess, checked the child upon delivery and saw bruises all over the body, as well as sore skin round the groins. Before burial, the child's corpse was also shown to the two foundling officials. The hospital wet nurse, Katarina Petrova, heard from Marija Lučina known as Jakšina, and the latter from the rumours circulating the city that the child was slain by Cvjetko Petrov. The same rumour had reached the ears of the governess Marija and her two daughters, Paula and Marija.⁸³ Wrapped in *tela* (coarse linen), Nikola's body was buried somewhere at Pile, possibly next to the church of St George.⁸⁴ His body was among 18 bastards that the gravedigger Antun Ivanov buried in the period from 16 November 1673 to 19 July 1674, receiving for his service a total payment of 3 *perperi*.⁸⁵

Nikola is likely to have passed his infancy days confined to the cot, tightly wrapped in swaddling clothes and waiting for the wet nurse to appear. This may be

⁸⁰ The information on individual burial price has been traced in an entry from 1681 (*Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 226).

⁸¹ On colourful nicknames of common women in the Ragusan society see: Slavica Stojan, »Ženski nadimci u starom Dubrovniku«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 41 (2003): 243-258.

⁸² In the period 1667-1672 payments for the following wards were recorded: Anica, Marija, Nikola, Stjepan, Vica and Petar (*Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, ff. 12, 37, 40, 45, 45v, 49, 92, 100, 112).

⁸³ *Lam. Int. For.*, vol. 72, ff. 89v, 90, 102v, 103.

⁸⁴ On 20 February 1695 Anka Ivankova from Pile received 5 *perperi* for 12 ells of *tela*, coarse linen, needed for wrapping the bodies of four children (*Libro in cui sono annotati i salari delle balie al servizio dell'Ospedale degli Esposti*, vol.16, f. 364). An entry on the baptism of Marija of 1 January 1712 is accompanied by a note on her death and burial a *S. Giorgio* (*Libro del batesimo di pietà*, vol. 21, f. 68). Stjepan, a foundling returned to the hospital after wet nursing on 25 January 1768, died on 11 May 1768, and was buried at the cemetery of St George at Pile. A similar entry was made for Frana, who died on 11 September 1771. For Terezija, who returned to the hospital after three years of breastfeeding and died there, a note on her burial accompanies the date of death, 25 July 1771: *sepolta nel cemetario di St. Giorgio alle Pile* (*Libro dei ragazzi che si trovano al ospedale della misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 22, f. 49 of the third foliation).

⁸⁵ *Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, f. 152 left.

assumed as an everyday life pattern of the infant foundlings, since, as a rule, the care for the ward was considered merely a side job to be attended on top of many others, in and out of doors. The child was probably often left unattended, as on that fatal day when Kata went to fetch some wood.⁸⁶ Death proved Nikola's first (and last) "statement". His suspicious death initiated the Criminal Court proceedings. The investigation focused on a crucial question: did the child die due to a series of unfavourable circumstances to which the foundlings were commonly exposed, their mortality thus being much higher in comparison with the non-foundlings, or was it a case of violent death, that is, murder? How often did the cases of domestic violence actually come to court, particularly if they involved the most serious offence, murder?

By including the murders of foundlings committed by a member of the foster or wet nurse family among domestic murders, as Nenad Vekarić meticulously analysed in his study, one is able to enquire into the position of the foundlings within a broader context of family violence in its most serious form. Basing his analysis on the period from the 1667 earthquake until the fall of the Dubrovnik Republic, the results on 185 murder cases among family members have been examined, which is 32.12 per cent of all the murders recorded in the archival series *Lamenta del Criminale*, *Lamenta de intus et de foris* and *Libro delle Sentenze Criminali*. Should the cases of murder ruled before the Senate be added (they concerned murder cases involving Ragusan subjects and foreigners), then the ratio of murders among family members would be slightly above 27 per cent.⁸⁷ Of the mentioned 185 cases 64 involve infanticide, therefore, nearly every third murder among family members had a mother as perpetrator and child as victim, or nearly every tenth murder in the period under analysis fell into the category of infanticide.⁸⁸ Three cases or less than 1 per cent of all the domestic murders involve murder of a child committed by a member of the wet nurse family.⁸⁹ Statistically, Nikola's case is rare.⁹⁰ It took place in a period of crisis, when the overall number of murders was extremely high.⁹¹

The reaction of the authorities was prompt and harsh, in compliance with the crime of which the offender was suspected.

⁸⁶ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, f. 99v.

⁸⁷ Nenad Vekarić, »Homicides among Relatives in the Republic of Dubrovnik (1667-1806)« *Dubrovnik Annals* 13 (2009): pp. 56-57.

⁸⁸ N. Vekarić, »Homicides among Relatives in the Republic of Dubrovnik (1667-1806)«: p.73.

⁸⁹ Nenad Vekarić, »Ubojstva među srodnicima u Dubrovačkoj Republici (1667.-1806.)« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 37 (1999): p. 127.

⁹⁰ In May and August of the same year two prosecutions for infanticide were conducted. In both cases the corpse of the newly-born baby was found in the sea (*Criminalia*, ser. 16, vol. 4 f. 253, SAD); *Lam. Int. For*, vol.73, ff. 42v-43, 45v-52, 92v, 93v-97v.

⁹¹ In the 1680s there was an average of 9 murders per 25,000 inhabitants (N. Vekarić. »Ubojstva među srodnicima u Dubrovačkoj Republici (1667.-1806.)«: p. 98).

Cvjetko Petrov Pršukat from Petrovo Selo before the court

The proceedings were initiated on 9 March 1674 *ex officio*, by virtue of duty, on the basis of information furnished by Mato Natali, one of the foundling home officials, that Cvjetko Petrov Pršukat from Petrovo Selo had beaten to death *un figliolino bastardo*, a foundling at Petrovo Selo.⁹² By the governing legal norms of the Dubrovnik Republic, suspicion of murder provided grounds for initiating the legal proceedings. Ragusan legal system ensured a network of rural oversight, gathering information on the eventual offences from the local counts, village confraternities, *kaznaci* (village heads), physicians and parish priests.⁹³ Among the persons liable to inform the court in case of a suspicious crime were also the officials of the *Hospitale misericordiae*. Four soldiers were dispatched to Petrovo Selo to seize and bring in the accused by force, who was then imprisoned.

On the next day the court hearing began. The testimonies consisted of the answers the witnesses gave to the questions enquired by the judges. They were recorded in Italian, except for the parts whose quoting in the original may have been deemed relevant. Hence the prevalence of the Italian language in the records of the Criminal Court, interspersed with Croatian in places, notably spicier details, which encapsulate a sample of the contemporary everyday speech of the inhabitants of Dubrovnik and its surroundings.

In addition to the accused, nine witnesses were heard—eight women and a man. Details about the victim were of little relevance to the course of the proceedings. Age was approximated, no name was recorded, only sex and group identity, a ward of the *Hospitale misericordiae*, were recorded correctly. The suspect was immediately thrown into the prison, and the first to witness was the person who received the infant's dead body at the hospital. The witnesses' testimonies were biased, aimed either at influencing the judges or at confirming their own non-involvement in the events. The hearing was opened by the questioning of the "neutral" persons holding state offices, to be broadened by the members of the wet nurse's family to those who were able to clarify, confirm or deny any details in the sequence of events that led to the child's death. Three witnesses and the accused were heard twice, because of the discrepancies between their testimonies and those given by the other witnesses. The defendant was confronted with the

⁹² *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, f. 89.

⁹³ Nella Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1997: pp. 209-212.

person who directly accused him of murder, and the examination was concluded by psychological pressure which was to extract his confession of the misdeed.

The reconstruction of the events commenced with the questioning of Katarina Petrova, wet nurse on duty at the *Hospitale misericordiae* at Pile, who testified on the circumstances surrounding the delivery of the dead infant at the hospital.⁹⁴ On the previous Thursday Jela Gubica from Petrovo Selo brought for burial a dead child aged between eight to ten months. When the body was unwrapped, she saw bruises as well as some suspicious traces of blood, also witnessed by governess Marija. Before burial, the body was shown to the two hospital officials. After the burial, the internal wet nurse heard from Marija Lučina known as Jakšina from Petrovo Selo that, according to the rumour circulating the city, Cvjetko Pršukatović attacked his daughter-in-law Katarina when she got back "from the woods". She freed herself but he then attacked the two children, his grandson and the infant taken in for breastfeeding, which he threw out of bed. Allegedly, Cvjetko took the little ward by the head, recurrently smashing his tiny body against the wall. The governess and her daughters were also familiar with this rumour.⁹⁵ The official Ivo Klašić confirmed the words of the internal wet nurse.⁹⁶ Marija Stjepanova,⁹⁷ external wet nurse from Petrovo Selo, heard Katarina Ivanova screaming that her father-in-law was going to slash her throat.⁹⁸

The testimony of Jela Ilijina known as Gubica from Petrovo Selo introduced some new moments. Jela had overheard Frana, Cvjetko's wife, saying to her son Ivan, "You are in trouble, save your wife from the raging father-in-law, he smashed the child against the stone fence" (*zo ti Božić, skapulaj ženu da je ne ubije svekar, ogrušio je djetetom o među*). The same was heard by Nika Paskojeva, Anica

⁹⁴ According to the research results available to date, it was not until 1687 that the foundling hospital moved from the old building in the City to the suburb of Pile, yet here it is evident that it had taken place somewhat earlier, or perhaps different changes of location are in question. Cf. B. Marinović. »Jedna važna socijalna ustanova starog Dubrovnika« p. 26; R. Jeremić - J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika* II: p. 204. Possibly, the foundling hospital may have been housed in two buildings over a certain period of time, as with the outbreak of plague in 1691 it is explicitly stated that the foundling hospital was located in the vicinity of the Franciscan monastery at Prijeko. See Giuseppe Gelchich, *Delle istituzioni marittime e sanitarie della Repubblica di Ragusa. Informazione storica documentata*. Trieste: Stab. Tipogr. di Lod. Herrmanstorfer, 1882: p. 59; *Sanitas*, ser. 55, vol. 7 (SAD).

⁹⁵ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 89-91.

⁹⁶ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 90-91.

⁹⁷ She breastfed two hospital wards—Vica and Petar (*Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, ff. 133 right, 141).

⁹⁸ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 101rv.

Mihočeva and Mara Ivanova.⁹⁹ The following Thursday, when Jela was passing above the house on her way to Mokošica, she was called to take the baby to the city, for which they said was found dead in the cot. Upon arrival at the hospital, Jela recounted to the governess and the officials what had happened. The latter immediately dispatched *barabanti* to Petrovo Selo. Marija Lučina, external wet nurse from Petrovo Selo, confirmed Jela's testimony as she described the events on her way to Dubrovnik.¹⁰⁰ She met Jela Gubica at Brodarica by the River Ombla when the latter was carrying the dead infant. Having overheard the conversation, Andrija, *barcariol*, refused to take Jela across the river because of the dead child, asking her what she had done with it. Jela replied that the child was slain by Cvjetko Pršukat and showed him the bruises, also witnessed by the said Marija. Together with Jela she arrived at the hospital and heard the said Jela tell the governess that the child did not die but was slain by Cvjetko Pršukat.¹⁰¹ All this she also recounted to Kate Petrova, the internal wet nurse.¹⁰²

The testimony of Nika Paskojeva from Petrovo Selo, who sold wine and bread, cast a new light on the events shortly preceding and following the child's death. Cvjetko and Ivan came to her place to buy two mugs of wine for two *grossi*. Ivan soon returned with an empty mug in his hand, saying that he had fled from the house because his wife and Cvjetko, his father, were having an argument. Frana, Ivan's mother, arrived looking for him, but he said that he would not fight with his father. Nika Paskojeva heard Frana the next morning calling her daughter-in-law because the child was dead, and that Nikola's wet nurse responded from the house of Grgur Jerkov that they would be held accountable for the child. Frana's words were also overheard by Nika's daughter-in-law, Anica Mihočeva.¹⁰³ Anica confirmed the testimony of her mother-in-law.¹⁰⁴

The hearing of Katarina Ivanova, Nikola's wet nurse and daughter-in-law of Cvjetko Pršukat, started with a question on the children she breastfed, her answer being that her own child was alive, but the one placed in her care, the *bastardo*, was killed. Upon her return from the hills, the minute she entered the house her father-in-law started insulting her, demanding corn that she had

⁹⁹ *Lam. Int. For*, sv. 72, ff. 102v-103v.

¹⁰⁰ Mentioned in connection with the wards Kata and Petar (*Registro delle polize dell'Ospedal della Misericordia*, vol. 17, ff. 131, 132 right).

¹⁰¹ Underlying such a formulation was probably the suspicion of violent death.

¹⁰² *Lam. Int. For*, 72, ff. 101v-102.

¹⁰³ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 108v, 110v-111.

¹⁰⁴ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 111rv.

brought. Katarina threatened to make complaints against him with the landlord. Cvjetko began to beat her, but she managed to free herself, after which her father-in-law went into the house, throwing out the chest, the small chest and the children's swaddling clothes (*cassa, cassetina et fascie degli figlioli*). Katarina complained about this to her landlord, nobleman Nikola Binciola, and found shelter at the house of Cvjetko's son-in-law, Grgur Jerkov. Margarita Grgurova, the married daughter of Cvjetko and Frana, confirmed that Katarina had spent the night at her place on the day of the child's death.¹⁰⁵ That same evening Katarina was called by her mother-in-law Frana, who told her that the child died, yet she feared to go back to Cvjetko's house before the following evening. In the cot she found the dead child, and Cvjetko was not in. She suspected that the child was killed by her father-in-law, because the previous day he threatened her with the words: "I'll throw your children outside like doves and kill them, what can the Lords do to me for the bastard" (*izvré ću ti djecu na dvor kako golubiće i pognjavit, a što će meni Gospoda za spurjančinje učini*). Their house stood isolated, and no one could testify to these words. Katarina cried out for help, so that she could have been heard as far as "the Čelopeci hamlet". Her father-in-law spent the night at the cottage of Tonko Uskokov, and the next morning, having calmed down, he went to the field. That he did, stated Nikola's wet nurse, for fear that the *barabanti* might arrest him because of the child.¹⁰⁶ In the second hearing she confirmed that her father-in-law had beaten her in front of the house, under the mulberry tree, that he also pulled out a knife and remained at the house with no one else but the children.¹⁰⁷

In compliance with the Ragusan enquiry practice, Cvjetko Petrov Pršukat was asked where he had come from, and if he knew what he had been accused of. He said that he was falsely imputed by his daughter-in-law, Kata Ivanova, that he had slain the child. Cvjetko tried to persuade the judges that the child died due to inadequate breastfeeding. When Kata Ivanova returned from the hills, where she had been gathering wood, Cvjetko stormed at her that she had taken "sixty *dinari* of corn from Rupe" (the city granary) and brought home nothing, for she should have brought some "to make porridge for the children", as she had no breast milk. Kata responded abruptly: "No, I shall do as I please". The judges enquired as to whether both children had been alive when the daughter-in-law returned from the woods, and if they were still alive. Then they enquired about the circumstances surrounding the foundling's death. The child died at three in

¹⁰⁵ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, f. 111v.

¹⁰⁶ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 99v-101.

¹⁰⁷ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 103v-105.

the morning, due to “hunger and not any illness”, Cvjetko claimed, and he had not seen the child dead. While arguing with the daughter-in-law, the children were sleeping in the house, after which he went to the vineyard. When the judges asked how he happened to go to the vineyard at three at night, Cvjetko corrected himself by saying that it was not until the morning that he made his way to the vineyard. At the moment of the child’s death he was at the house, in bed with his wife, and so were his daughter-in-law and son Ivan. He heard his son Ivan say: “Light the candle, that child is dying”. Cvjetko knew that the child was buried in the city, for he was told so by his wife. Asked as to why his daughter-in-law, if of good health, had not taken the child to the city herself, Cvjetko responded the following: “What do I know. She didn’t ask me.” Yet she did ask him why he was not feeding the children, and he answered that he had no food. During his quarrel with the daughter-in-law he was alone at the house, as his wife had gone to visit their daughter in Čelopeci, and his son was at church. The child’s murder was invented by his daughter-in-law.¹⁰⁸

Confronted with his daughter-in-law during the second hearing, Cvjetko admitted to having thrown out of the house the small chest and the swaddling clothes, but not to pulling out a knife. He claimed that he had hardly entered the house, although it was confirmed that the small chest and the children’s clothes were kept by the bed in the room. Therefore he must have entered the house. The enquiry confirmed that his daughter-in-law did not sleep at home that night, as he claimed. Cross-questioned by the judges and faced with his own previously given statements, Cvjetko repeatedly denied the witnesses’ testimonies and exhibited no counter-arguments. He was taken back to the prison, and the process continued.¹⁰⁹

The statement of the accused reveals some interesting details from everyday life. Cvjetko, the head of the household, was responsible for the children’s feeding during the absence of his daughter-in-law, and he saw nothing controversial about it. He did mind, however, that he had nothing to feed the children with. The children were fed with mush, which suits the feeding practice of an eight- or nine-month old infant, but might prove fatal for younger children, especially in poor hygienic conditions. The wet nurses received grain rations for feeding the foundlings placed in their care. The family of Nikola’s wet nurse was burdened with tensions, and the argument which resulted in Nikola’s death seemed to have been merely one of the many frictions in the father-in-law—daughter-in-law relationship.

¹⁰⁸ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 91-94v.

¹⁰⁹ *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 105-108v.

A month after the beginning of the trial and the testimonies of nine witnesses, the judges apparently had a clearer picture of the circumstances of Nikola's death. Inconsistency in the statements of Cvjetko Pršukat prompted the judges to apply torture in order to obtain the truth. The judges Nikola Resti, Andrija Benessa and Nikola Bona¹¹⁰ decided to put to torture the accused Cvjetko for three-quarters of an hour so as to extract the truth from him. The torture method employed in Dubrovnik was that of the manacles. Namely, with the wrists tied behind his back, the accused was drawn up with a rope carried over a pulley. In many cases it entailed dislocation of the joints without more serious consequences. A physician was allowed to attend the process. There were various stages in applying the torture, beginning with a display of the torture apparatus, wearing of the torture robe, tying up with the rope, to being hoisted.¹¹¹

Cvjetko was brought to the torture chamber dominated by the manacles (*fune tormentale*). Standing in front of the torture apparatus, the accused was first asked six questions, his answers being noted down. He was not explicitly asked whether he had murdered the child, that is, if he pleaded guilty, although denial of guilt for the child's death was incorporated into each of his answers. The judges focused on the details, such as why he at first denied having thrown out the chest and later admitted, as well as the interpretations of the cause of the child's death. Each discrepancy between the statements given by the witnesses and those of Cvjetko was questioned. The same line of questions was posed again, yet this time the accused was clad in the torture robe. Cvjetko persisted in his claim that he never said that he would throw the children out of the house nor did anything of the kind. "I fear a fly let alone honourable gentlemen" (*Ja se i muhe bojim nego li čestite Gospode*). The child died of hunger as "there was not an ounce of flesh on him" (*na njemu nije bila unča mesa*). His wife he considered biased against him, because she "can't bear the sight of him" and if she could, "she would roast him".

Deterrence, the psychological modes of torture designed to prepare the accused to the actual sensation of pain, was followed by physical torture. While Cvjetko's wrists were being tied and prepared for hoisting, he said that he was suffering from general weakness (*crepatura*). The judges stopped the process and summoned Giuliani, physician and surgeon, who established that

¹¹⁰ Nobleman and lawyer, Nikola (Nikolica) Ivanov Bona (c. 1635-1678), famous Ragusan *poklisar* (envoy), was thrown into a dungeon in Silistria (present-day Bulgaria) during his mission to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed IV, where he died.

the accused was unable to endure torture due to the lung oedema (*petto intriso*) and general weakness. Cvjetko was taken back to the prison. On the same day the judges decided to take this process before the Minor Council. A day later, on 10 April, having been read before the Minor Council, it was decided to take it before the Senate.¹¹²

From the moment the child's death was officially reported to the passing of the sentence before the Senate the proceedings lasted slightly less than two months. The court heard nine witnesses on the 10, 14 and 17 March. The witnesses Kata Ivanova, Kata Petrova and Jela Gubica gave their testimonies twice. The accused Cvjetko Pršukat and his daughter-in-law Kata Ivanova were interrogated face to face. Three days of enquiry sufficed for the judges to obtain evidence. A month from initiating the criminal procedure, investigation was completed by asking Cvjetko Pršukat six questions on three occasions. Throughout the procedure, the defendant remained in confinement.

On the session held on Friday, 4 May 1674, the Senate delivered the sentence for Cvjetko Pršukatović (Pršukat) The punishment included the disgracing procession through the city, exposure at the pillory (*berlina*), branding of the forehead with the state seal, 25 floggings and confinement. The first proposition on two years of dungeon was rejected, and the majority of the Senate decided that seven years of imprisonment was a proper penalty.¹¹³ In the disgracing procession the culprit was seated backwards on a donkey, escorted by the soldiers (*barabanti*) and a constable (*zđur*). Public degradation and shame was the basic idea of this procession, and as punishment it was commonplace throughout Europe of the time. By incorporating ceremonial elements aimed to enhance the ridicule effect, the mock procession fits into the *charivari* ritual pattern.¹¹⁴ In Dubrovnik culprits were exposed at Orlando's Column, a powerful symbol of the state's authority flying the Republic flag, the column was used for announcing government decisions and also marked the standard measure of length. Columns performing similar roles have been found throughout much of Europe. Shameful procession and *berlina* were punishments with serious social consequences for the family, and offenders often

¹¹¹ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: pp. 236-237.

¹¹² *Lam. Int. For*, vol. 72, ff. 137-139v.

¹¹³ *Cons. Rog*, vol. 121, ff. 7v-8.

¹¹⁴ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: pp. 159-160. On the ritual forms of showing disapproval, i.e., contempt towards individuals who violated some sensitive social norms in the context of the choice of marriage partners see: Miroslav Bertoša, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata: Lokalna povijest i sveopći modeli*. Zagreb: Izdanja Antibarbarus, 2002: p. 328.

tried to replace it with prison or banishment.¹¹⁵ Flogging to which Cvjetko Pršukat was punished usually consisted of a set of 25 beatings, inflicted by the executioner or soldiers using painted sticks.¹¹⁶ Branding of the forehead, apart from inflicting bodily pain as punishment, was designed to mark the culprit within the community and warn the court about the eventual recidivist.

A combination of punishments to which Cvjetko Pršukat was sentenced—shaming, corporal punishment and imprisonment—implies that the murder of a child was considered a most serious crime.¹¹⁷ A seven-year confinement was a long term sentence, especially if compared to the sentences passed during the eighteenth century.¹¹⁸ Having committed infanticide, in 1739 Luce Učović was in absence sentenced to the same punishments as Pršukat. When she was finally seized after almost ten years of hiding, the original sentence was replaced by six months of prison.¹¹⁹ Mara Sršen, who confessed to having committed infanticide and with solid proof against her, was sentenced to a combined punishment which included whipping, public exposure at the column, branding, two years of confinement and permanent banishment. In her petition she pleaded that flagellation and branding be replaced by ten years of imprisonment.¹²⁰

The Senate's verdict fails to mention the name of Pršukat's dungeon. Dubrovnik prisons were located within the complex of the Rector's Palace and the Council Hall, and differed in terms of the living conditions. Some dungeon cells were very damp, dark and less accessible than others. Most severe conditions prevailed at the so-called secret prison, in which the cells had no natural light.¹²¹ Cvjetko was flogged, and the expenditures of the Rector's Palace contain an entry on the payment made to the executioner, for flogging a culprit from Ombla.¹²² Mounting on *berlina* had a special fee, yet in the case of Cvjetko Pršukat it is not mentioned.¹²³ By a decision of the Major Council of 10 April 1675, with 65 votes for and one against Cvjetko Petrov Pršukatović was pardoned of imprisonment to a

¹¹⁵ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: pp. 161-162.

¹¹⁶ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: p. 151.

¹¹⁷ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: p. 150.

¹¹⁸ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: p. 167.

¹¹⁹ N. Lonza, »"Two souls lost": Infanticide in the Republic of Dubrovnik (1667-1808)«: p. 103.

¹²⁰ N. Lonza, »"Two souls lost": Infanticide in the Republic of Dubrovnik (1667-1808)«: p. 103-104.

¹²¹ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: pp. 169, 176.

¹²² *Detta*, ser. 6, vol. 16, f. 117v (SAD).

¹²³ In March 1675 a payment of 3 *perperi* was made for mounting a woman on *berlina* (*Detta*, vol. 16, f. 137v).

term of 5 years and 2 months to which he had been sentenced in addition to other punishments.¹²⁴ The last mention of his name is traced in the Rector's Palace expenditures for April 1675.¹²⁵ He was probably acquitted a year after the beginning of the proceedings.

Conclusion

Statistically, Nikola's short life-course was to be expected, yet the circumstances of his death and the reaction of the judicial and criminal apparatus are extremely rare. Although, like thousands of other foundlings of the Dubrovnik *Hospitale misericordiae*, Nikola was outcast to the very margins of the society, the whole criminal proceedings regarding his death were conducted with an utmost effort of the Ragusan authorities and with their undisputable wish to promote the idea of universal justice, an especially delicate task when the weakest members of the society were concerned.

In all likelihood Nikola was but a collateral victim of a family altercation which, fanned by the seasonal food shortage, general atmosphere of violence and insecurity as well as temporary absence of self-control, had a fatal outcome for the 'communal child'. He was buried at Pile according to Christian ritual together with countless other bodies of the wards of the Dubrovnik foundling hospital. He lived eight to ten months, had at least two wet nurses, and made a journey of some ten kilometres from the foundling hospital at Pile to the house of his external wet nurse at Petrovo Selo. He returned to the foundling hospital dead, in the arms of Jela Ilijina known as Gubica ('Gob'), external wet nurse bearing a colourful nickname.

¹²⁴ *Cons. Maius*, vol. 46, f. 186.

¹²⁵ *Detta*, vol. 16, f. 139v.