



## Marko Polo's Diary

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### On islands, on legends and on Glagolitic script

#### ***The History of Medicine Days:***

***Dr. Roman Jelić***

***Zadar, May 6-7, 2005***

On the initiative of the Croatian Society of the History of Medicine, ***The History of Medicine Days: Dr. Roman Jelić*** (1905-1993) were established this spring, enlivened with a short symposium taking place in Zadar on May 6. On the very next day it was continued in the picturesque village of Mali Iž, on the island of Iž, one of the smallest islands of the Zadar archipelago, where Roman Jelić was born. The symposium mostly discussed the issues related to the role and legacy of Dr. Roman Jelić, but also revealed interesting topics such as historical concepts on malaria prevention, Zadar public health efforts and health education, patron saints invoked in the history against snake bites, etc. The medico-historical journal *Acta Medico Historica Adriatica* was presented by Professor Ante Škrobonja. The event was held in the premises of Matica hrvatska, and was supported by the Croatian Medical Association – Zadar Branch. On the next day we were taken to the island of Iž. Welcomed by warm hospitality we enjoyed a marvellous walk through small paths, between stone houses, engulfed with magic of unforgettable spring flower scents and island scenery. The memorial plaque was erected on the old house of the Jelić family, followed by an impressive speech by a local poet. The islands touch our souls deeply for their magic and exposed solitude. Once one gets in touch with them, the magic starts to work

and it never ends. There was a bit of wind just to make the sea curly as well as to enable the flow of the local people's ancient song more emotional. On the islands one can look back properly, because the history still exists in the stone houses, the habits of the local people and their survival as well as in their wisdom and legends. There is an old maxim that I was told here by Dr Jelić's son Ivan. The proverb says that we should take special care of the carnations brought by fairies from the Velebit Mountain to the island of Jabuka. If we do not succeed in preserving those precious endemic flowers, all the sardines would go away. Although I could not comprehend the link between flowers and fish I was stunned knowing that really today there are neither endemic carnations on the island of Jabuka nor sardines in our sea. Obviously the legends represent centuries of wisdom and still have a lot to offer to our knowledge.

#### ***Book Presentation***

***Rijeka, June 1, 2005***

I was invited to Rijeka to promote a book by Darko Deković ***Zapisi misni kaptola riečkoga***, an interesting research about Rijeka Glagolitic heritage. Medieval and Early Modern Croatian writing is characterized by the openness specific to the cultural sphere of the Mediterranean. Therefore

oldest texts preserved from that period are written in Latin, the universal language of the church and of the learned. Liturgical books were written in the Croatian redaction of Church Slavonic language, which was a common well of literacy among Slavs, inherited from "the Slav Apostles" Saints Cyril and Methodius, while some texts were written in the living local Croatian idiom(s). The coexistence of three languages and of three different alphabets (the Latin, the Glagolitic and the Western Cyrillic) is a unique trait of the written tradition which is not well known beyond the borders of Croatia.

Texts preserved in Glagolitic monuments, although much smaller in their quantity, present an extraordinary treasure of Croatian culture. Deković's book, which brings an extensive transliteration and transcription of the early modern

Rijeka Kaptol annotations, is therefore another step in cherishing this heritage as well as the ancient roots of our identity. Medical information in the book (the mention of hospital – *špital*, votive churches and the rhythm of dying), although marginal in the context of the philological purpose of the book, are nevertheless a valuable source for reconstruction of the wholeness of medical tradition in the Rijeka area.

I came back from Rijeka filled with pride and in a good spirit indeed.

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The world is waiting, sretan vam put!  
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