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A CITY FACING THE PLAGUE: DUBROVNIK, 1691*

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ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the circumstances surrounding the outbreak and spreading of the last urban plague that struck the area of Dubrovnik in 1691. Attention is given to the main sources of the disease in the city, adoption of plague control measures, as well as the persons who took part in the defence against plague. Some plague victims have been identified, and their social networks reconstructed. Noble families who were isolated on suspicion of the disease have been identified. Also examined are the conflict situations that occurred as consequence of the implementation of the plague control measures in the city. Lastly, government expenditures related to the anti-epidemic measures are analysed, along with the representation of the epidemic conditions in the several letters of the Senate.

Keywords: Dubrovnik, plague, 17th century, plague control measures, government expenditure, maidservants, nobility, social networks, urban history

Introduction

The 1691 epidemic known as *peste delle serve* (“plague of the maidservants”) was the last pestilence on the territory of the Dubrovnik Republic that spread

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within the walls of the urban centre of the small East Adriatic state.¹ Outbreaks of plague in the area of Dubrovnik with a severe outcome have also been recorded later, the last being in 1815-1816,² on the eve of the famine pandemic in 1817, but they always hit smaller rural communities on the periphery. The outbreaks of this dangerous disease were particularly heavy and frequent on the Ragusan territory bordering the Ottoman Empire.

Although the tiny aristocratic state of the East Adriatic paid tribute to the Ottoman Empire, in practice it managed to maintain political and economic independence, and it built its economic strength on intermediary trade and shipping. Over the centuries, Dubrovnik Republic had developed a sophisticated anti-epidemic system which, thanks to good organisation, broad-based public engagement on this task, as well as substantial government support, succeeded in coping with the waves of this contagious disease.

The fact that Baro Bettera, member of the citizen elite, dedicated almost one-fifth of his short description of the abolished Dubrovnik Republic to the plague control measures is an eloquent testimony of the importance attached to the protection against this disease. His report was to brief the Austrian General Todor Milutinović, governor of the Ragusan district which, after the abolition of the Republic in 1808 and French occupation, became part of the Habsburg Monarchy

¹ I am grateful to Tatjana Buklijaš for her useful comments and suggestions on the final version of this article. The aim of this article is not to discuss the nature of the disease to which the sources refer as plague. Ragusan *peste delle serve* would fall within the second of the three great pandemic waves that reached Europe. The second pandemic wave of the past started with the Black Death in 1347. For discussion whether all plague epidemics of the past were actually the same disease, and whether they were all caused by *Yersinia pestis* see: Samuel Cohn, »Epidemiology of the Black Death and Successive Waves of Plague«. *Medical History* 52, Supplement S27 (2008): pp. 74-100; for controversial views, see also: Ole J. Benedictow, *What Disease was Plague? On the Controversy over the Microbiological Identity of Plague Epidemics of the Past*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010. Bibliography on plague is extremely voluminous. For a succinct introduction to the social history of plague in Italian, English, French and Spanish literature and sources, see: Paul Slack, *Plague: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. For a bibliographical listing on plague in Croatian, see: Rina Kralj-Brassard, »Grad i kuga: Dubrovnik 1691. godine«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 54 (2016): note 1, pp. 115-116.

² Within one month and a half, the plague killed 34 people in the villages of Kuna, Podrožje and Pijavičino on the Pelješac Peninsula, while a total of some 100 people died as victims of plague in Čepikuće, Slano and Župa dubrovačka, settlements in the surroundings of Dubrovnik. See Nenad Vekarić, »Kuga u Čepikućama 1815/6. godine«. *Zbornik Dubrovačkog primorja i otoka* 2 (1988): pp. 135, 138. See also the report of the contemporary physician on this plague: Luca Stulli, *De peste quae in exitu anni MDCCCXV. in circulum Rhacusanum irrepserat*. Bononiae: ex Typographo Annesii Nobilii et Soc., 1828: pp. 5-25.

in 1815. In his text, Bettera fails to mention any possibility of the epidemic spreading into the city. The anti-epidemic system was represented as impenetrable.³

Ragusan response to plague developed as a compromise between two practices: complete traffic halt of the people and goods, initially widely adopted in West Europe, as contrasted to free traffic of people and goods irrespective of pestilence, a practice mainly adopted in the Ottoman Empire. The Ragusans were not the first to impose temporary prohibition of entry of persons from the disease-stricken areas. This measure was first adopted in Milan and Mantua in 1374. The Ragusans did not set up the first sanitary cordon either. It was introduced in Milan in 1400. Nor did the Ragusans set up the first lazaretto, as it was originally founded in Venice in 1423.⁴ Yet, the Ragusans proved highly advanced in setting up the structures for efficient implementation of plague control measures designed to secure a fragile balance between profit-making and the risk of great mortality. In Dubrovnik, the first regulation on quarantine was passed in 1377, and the first permanent health office was established in 1390.⁵

With plague epidemics constantly raging in the immediate neighbourhood, the Ragusans, with time, considerably improved the system of measures aimed at confronting plague. During the epidemic of 1691, the system was carefully developed and applied to the smallest of detail in order to rule out any kind of surprise in fighting against this deadly disease. On the Ragusan territory of

³ Bogdan Krizman, »Mémoire Bara Bettere austrijskom generalu T. Milutinoviću o Dubrovačkoj Republici iz 1815. godine«. *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 1 (1952): pp. 423-464; Slobodan Đorđević and Katarina Carić, »Podaci o radu i organizaciji zdravstvene službe u Dubrovačkoj Republici prema zapisima Bara Bettere«. *Acta historica medicinae pharmaciae veterinae* 3/1-2 (1963): pp. 110-124.

⁴ Zlata Blažina Tomić and Vesna Blažina, *Expelling the Plague. The Health Office and the Implementation of Quarantine in Dubrovnik 1377-1533*. Montreal-Kingston-London-Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015: pp. 134-135.

⁵ On quarantine and the founding of health office in Dubrovnik see: Giuseppe Gelcich, *Delle istituzioni marittime e sanitarie della Repubblica di Ragusa. Informazione storica documentata*. Trieste: Stab. Tipogr. Di Lod. Herrmanstorfer, 1882; Risto Jeremić and Jorjo Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, vol. I. Beograd: Centralni higijenski zavod, 1938: pp. 104-111; Vladimir Bazala, *Pregled povijesti zdravstvene kulture Dubrovačke Republike*. Zagreb: Dubrovački horizonti, 1972: pp. 30-42; Mirko Dražen Grmek, »Le concept d'infection dans l'antiquité et au Moyen-Age, les anciennes mesures sociales contre les maladies contagieuses et la fondation de la première quarantaine à Dubrovnik (1377)«. *Rad JAZU* 384 (1980): pp. 9-54; Pero Savin, »Dubrovački lazareti i karantena«. *Acta historiae medicinae stomatologiae pharmaciae medicinae veterinae* 23/1-2 (1983): pp. 5-11; Zlata Blažina-Tomić, *Kacamorti i kuga. Utemeljenje i razvoj zdravstvene službe u Dubrovniku*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2007: pp. 81-111; Z. Blažina Tomić and V. Blažina, *Expelling the Plague*: pp. 105-137, 238.

the time plague was not endemic and there were no local sources of infection. But if the epidemic spread in Dubrovnik from other areas, the Ragusans learnt how to be a step ahead of the plague. Archival material on the *peste delle serve* testifies to the implementation of a mature and accomplished system of protection against plague which the Dubrovnik Republic developed over a period of more than three centuries on the densely populated urban area. The sources reveal, among others, the people who were in charge of the protection against plague, the identity of those who were infected and the facilities in which they were isolated, the size of basic expenditures disbursed for the plague control measures. The purpose of most records related to anti-epidemic measures was of purely practical nature—to provide expenditure records of the health officials, *cazamorti* and their countless assistants. It was necessary to keep accurate record of the decisions and follow their implementation, and above all, oversee with utmost scrutiny the spending of the government money. The authors of these records have left behind an unexpected additional value, as the records of plague control measures uncover the data on the urban space and the population of Dubrovnik some twenty years after the disastrous earthquake of 1667 that greatly altered the city's face. Hence the twofold objective of this research. On the one hand, it examines the organisation and operation of the protective system against plague and the restoration of its consequences, and on the other, brings to the fore the observations of the city and its inhabitants through the prism of plague control measures.

Years of pestilence

The entire land border of the Dubrovnik Republic was at the same time a frontier between a territory well-governed in terms of anti-epidemic measures and a space in which these measures were not systematically adopted. Beginning with the Black Death of 1347, the pestilence of the second pandemic wave continuously recurred on the territory of the Ottoman Empire across a period of at least five centuries. From European perspective, the Ottoman Empire was considered a major exporter of plague, and highly ineffective in dealing with the public health issues.⁶ Yet, the population of the Ragusan hinterland had

⁶ Nükhet Varlik, »New science and old sources: Why Ottoman experience of plague matters«. *The Medieval Globe* 1 (2014): pp. 204-205.

some basic knowledge in the protection against disease.⁷ Sanitary measures, such as airing or burning of the potentially infectious garments, more frequent change of clothes and regular personal hygiene, resettlement to the areas with fresh air were resorted to once the plague had broken out, however, they proved insufficient to stop the spreading of the disease.⁸ The Ragusans tried to anticipate the potential source and direction of the spreading of the epidemic, and for that purpose the health office received updated reports on the sanitary conditions in the neighbourhood, but also in the remote areas, e.g. North Africa. The authors of these briefings were Ragusan envoys, dragomans (interpreters), parish priests of the Trebinje-Mrkan bishopric, messengers, foreign and domestic merchants, soldiers and frontier guards. This broad intelligence network included all Ragusan citizens of confidence, while the health officials and *cazamorti* reported the news to the Senate.⁹ Each plague that reached the land border through the daily traffic of people and goods would have simply spilt over into Ragusan territory had it not been for the systematic anti-epidemic measures.¹⁰

Ottoman cities had become major sources of plague, as they were incessantly exposed to new epidemics. In some urban centres, great populations of rodents probably represented an independent and continuous infectious pool. On the other hand, land and sea connection of the early-modern Ottoman cities with the immediate and remote inland contributed to continuous contacts between the rural and urban areas affected by plague. A plausible link between those two potential sources of plague may have been the semi-nomadic herdsmen and their goods. The nomads whose cattle pastured on the mountain slopes,

⁷ For examples of plague control measures undertaken in the mid-seventeenth century on the Ottoman territory in Ragusan hinterland see: Đuro Orlić, »Kuga u Herceg-Novom 1648 godine.« *Srpski arhiv za celokupno lekarstvo* 83 (1955): pp. 118-120. There were even attempts at expelling the plague by means of sorcery, or rather at diverting its wave to the neighbouring territory of Dubrovnik. Ragusan agent in Herceg Novi (nowadays Montenegro), Miho Kuvelić, warned about the cases of infected goods being planted in a kerchief in the vicinity of the villages of Duba and Stravča in Konavle (Đ. Orlić, »Kuga u Herceg-Novom 1648 godine«: pp. 121-122). For the study of the occurrence of plague in Hercegovina on the basis of church sources see: Robert Jolić, »Zarazne bolesti u Hercegovini u doba turske vladavine.« *Hercegovina. Časopis za kulturno i povijesno naslijeđe* 1 (2015): pp. 191-203.

⁸ Vesna Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu. Osmansko-dubrovačka granica (1667-1806)*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1997: pp. 118-119; Z. Blažina-Tomić, *Kacamorti i kuga*: p. 42.

⁹ V. Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu*: p. 119; Z. Blažina-Tomić, *Kacamorti i kuga*: pp. 113-114; Z. Blažina-Tomić and V. Blažina, *Expelling the Plague*: p. 140.

¹⁰ R. Kralj-Brassard, »Grad i kuga: Dubrovnik 1691. godine«: Table 1.

the natural reservoirs of the disease, came into contact with the urban population, especially that of the poor outskirts, either as merchants, seasonal labourers or part-time soldiers. They supplied the city textile and leather manufacturers with wool, skins and dyes. They provided also donkeys, horses, mules, oxen, bulls and camels, animals known as transmitters of plague. Istanbul had witnessed at least 230 outbreaks of plague during the second pandemic, or one nearly every 2.2 years. In Thessalonica the plague broke out 143 times, or an epidemic every 3.5 years. Plague is also known to have recurrently hit other great urban centres, such as Alexandria, Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus and Trabzon.¹¹

Plague spread into the Ottoman-governed hinterland of Dubrovnik along the caravan routes from other provinces of the Empire, via Sandžak (nowadays Eastern Bosnia and Western Serbia) or Albania. The sea routes most responsible for the spread of plague led to the Greek and Albanian ports under the Ottoman rule. Outbreaks of plague went hand in hand with the massive military movements,¹² famine, droughts, floods and wars. The causes of plague were hidden in infected goods, hides, wool, fleece, blankets, carpets, furs, furcoats and raincoats brought by soldiers or merchants. Aiding the plague to spread were also irregular armed gangs of uskocs and hajducs (brigands), who seized contaminated goods and men. Pilgrims from Alexandria or Syria also carried the disease. Plague accompanied Ottoman dignitaries who arrived from large cities, in which the disease was constantly present. In terms of season, plague commonly broke out in the latter half of the year. During favourable climatic conditions the diseases proved less fatal. In times of famine and war, deadly plague epidemics occurred in three-year cycles. Plague was usually followed by famine as a consequence of untilled land after the first year of pestilence. Weakened immune system of the undernourished people created perfect conditions for the recurrence of the disease. The great Ottoman Empire that stretched from the Middle East, North Africa to Central Europe suffered from severe plague epidemics in the seventeenth century: in 1626, 1636, 1643, 1660 and 1698. Bubonic plague raged

¹¹ N. Varlik, »New science and old sources«: pp. 206-207, 210.

¹² The Ragusans did their best to prevent the passage of the infected Ottoman troops through Konavle, fully aware of the potential spreading of the disease in this way. If the pasha was dissatisfied with the Ragusan argument that the people of Konavle were impoverished and unable to provide for him and his entourage, a bribe had to be offered. At the same time, the movements of the local population were strictly monitored and heavy fines were imposed for the offenders (Djuro Orlić, »Dubrovačke vijesti o epidemijama u Bosni i Hercegovini u XVII vijeku«, in: *Gradja Naučnog društva NR Bosne i Hercegovine* 2 (1956): pp. 59-60). The passage of the Ottoman troops across the neutral territory of Dubrovnik was just as unacceptable from the political point of view, yet the plague was submitted as argument.

in 1613, 1615, 1648, 1649, 1690 and 1691. Every single of these epidemics had reached the borders of Dubrovnik.¹³ The “plague of the maidservants” was the only epidemic that managed to bypass Dubrovnik’s sanitary cordon and spread into the urban fabric of the Republic.

Worthy of note is a parallel between the territory of the Dubrovnik Republic and that of the Dalmatian cities, especially in the seventeenth century, when Dalmatian urban centres experienced at least ten plague waves, and the city of Dubrovnik only one. Ottoman inland, part of the huge Empire that included areas in which plague is an endemic disease even today, was apparently unable and reluctant, though not exclusively due to internal state needs, to undertake effective isolation measures. Apart from wars, climatic conditions, notably drought in Herzegovina as in the last decade of the seventeenth century, gave way to famine, making the war-exhausted population less immune to the disease.¹⁴ In terms of climate, Dalmatian cities slightly differed from the Dubrovnik area, having at their disposal all the “devices” of the developed anti-epidemic system of Venice. Protection against epidemics on the territory of Venetian Dalmatia was the responsibility of the Health Commission (*Collegium*) in Venice. At the incidence of plague, that office would dispatch a special health overseer whose duty was to undertake certain protective measures.¹⁵

When a severe outbreak of plague struck Zadar in the autumn of 1630, Antonio Civran, *provveditore generale* of Venetian Dalmatia, was in charge of the plague control measures from a galley anchored in the city port. By his order, a Health Commission of ten officials was established. Supervision of the implementation of these measures was dispersed to every village, in which an official had been appointed for that specific purpose. Certain island and mainland villages were isolated, while the city was guarded by armed boats. By the wooden fences (*stangate*) posted at the city gates, a priest controlled the persons entering the city from the inland. Bill of health (*Fede di sanità*) was mandatory, and the movement was restricted. Ottoman subjects were allowed to trade only at the entrepôt of St Marc. City paupers, who were obviously considered more

¹³ Bogumil Hrabak, »Talasi kuge na bosanskohercegovačkom upravnom prostoru 1463-1800«. *Acta historica medicinae stomatologiae pharmaciae medicinae veterinae* 29/1 (1989): pp. 19, 31; Dj. Orlić, »Dubrovačke vijesti o epidemijama u Bosni i Hercegovini u XVII vijeku«. p. 48; V. Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu*: p. 119.

¹⁴ B. Hrabak, »Talasi kuge na bosanskohercegovačkom upravnom prostoru 1463-1800.«: p. 27.

¹⁵ Duško Kečkemet, »Zaštita od epidemija u Splitu i okolici u prošlosti«, in: *Sanitarni kordon nekad i danas*, ed. Janko Vodopija. Zagreb: Zbor liječnika Hrvatske and Zavod za zaštitu zdravlja grada Zagreba, 1978: p. 75.

susceptible to the disease and could easily transmit it to others, were relocated to the islands, where the local judges provided for their appropriate shelter. The sick and the persons suspected of being infected were isolated into a lazaretto on a small island near the coast. The persons who had to abandon their homes under suspicion of plague received relief from the lazaretto bursary in bread and money. Plague victims were buried into special pits, and the corpses were covered with quicklime. In order to prevent any contact between healthy individuals and those who died of plague or with infected goods carried out of the city, the funeral procession was headed by a person armed with a stick who made sure that the streets were cleared from people. A stick was also used to clear the way for the grieving procession of those who were forced to leave the city either because of their illness or suspicion of it.¹⁶

Judging by the frequent recurrence of plague in the Dalmatian cities in the seventeenth century, anti-epidemic measures were evidently ineffective. The plague broke out more often than in the area of Dubrovnik. Plague control measures applied in the eighteenth century proved just as inadequate. Physician Juraj Bajamonti, disheartened by the plague that swept away every fourth citizen of Split, in 1786 published a book on that traumatic event. In his opinion, despite all the protective measures undertaken by the government, it was simply impossible to prevent the devastating epidemic from spreading into Dalmatia from the Ottoman inland. Bajamonti quotes a couple of reasons. The lazaretto of Split, for example, was situated too far from the border, since it was built when the Veneto-Ottoman frontier was much closer to Split. Protective measures were carried out negligently and unprofessionally, and the population in the hinterland showed a marked lack of discipline. For reasons of concealment, reports on the occurrence of plague in Bosnia were deliberately delayed. Major problem according to Bajamonti were the hajducs, "who show most brazen despise towards consideration for public health". Bajamonti holds that the homogeneous population, notably the Christians on either side of the Veneto-Ottoman frontier, in which foreigners could not be easily distinguished, also proved a hindrance to a consistent implementation of the plague control measures.¹⁷

The reasons underlying the ineffectiveness of anti-epidemic measures in the surroundings of the Dalmatian cities may also be sought in the (un)stable demarcation

¹⁶ Roman Jelić, »Zadarske kuge i lazareti u prošlosti«, in: *Sanitarni kordon nekad i danas*, ed. Janko Vodopija. Zagreb: Zbor liječnika Hrvatske and Zavod za zaštitu zdravlja grada Zagreba, 1978: pp. 93-94.

¹⁷ D. Kečkemet, »Zaštita od epidemija u Splitu i okolici u prošlosti«: pp. 80-83.

line and the relevant issues concerning the lack of education and cooperation on behalf of the local population unaccustomed to the application of quarantine measures. In the seventeenth century, for the cities of Dalmatia the border line with the Ottoman Empire was at the same time the first line of the battle front.

Implementation of anti-epidemic measures in the Dubrovnik area, according to Grmek, owes its effectiveness to the interwoven economic and political interests of the business-minded Ragusan nobility.¹⁸ In a city of merchants who bear the noble title,¹⁹ the measures of public hygiene were established at a fairly early date,²⁰ good organisation being also observed in the continuous work of the Ragusan hospitals, unlike those in the Dalmatian cities.²¹ Therefore, successful application of anti-epidemic measures in the Dubrovnik area should be viewed within a broader context, taking into account its small size of population and small territory, long-term political stability under local government,²² economic prosperity,²³ along with accentuated charity and a sophisticated ability of the elites to resolve conflict situations in a tactful and prudent manner.

The challenges of the second half of the seventeenth century

Peste delle serve was to crown a series of misfortunes that befell the population of the Dubrovnik Republic in the extremely difficult five decades marked by demographic decline, violence, brigandage and famine. The state had less than

¹⁸ M. D. Grmek, »Le concept d'infection«: p. 49.

¹⁹ Filip de Diversis, *Opis slavnoga grada Dubrovnika*, ed. and transl. Zdenka Janeković Römer. Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2004: p. 65; Zdenka Janeković Römer, »Grad trgovaca koji nose naslov plemića: Filip de Diversis i njegova pohvala Dubrovniku«, in: Filip de Diversis, *Opis slavnoga grada Dubrovnika*, ed. and transl. Zdenka Janeković-Römer. Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2004: p. 15.

²⁰ M. D. Grmek, »Le concept d'infection«: p. 48.

²¹ Tatjana Buklijaš, »Medicine and Society in the Medieval Hospital«. *Croatian Medical Journal* 49/2 (2008): pp.152-153; Irena Benyovsky and Tatjana Buklijaš, »Bratovština i hospital sv. Duha u Splitu u srednjem i ranom novom vijeku«, in: *Raukarov zbornik. Zbornik u čast Tomislava Raukara*, ed. Neven Budak. Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, FF-press, 2005: pp. 646-647; Rina Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa. Napuštena djeca u Dubrovniku od 17. do 19. stoljeća*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2013: p. 37.

²² On stability, see: Lovro Kunčević, »O stabilnosti Dubrovačke Republike (14.-17. stoljeće): geopolitički i socijalni faktori«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 53 (2016): 1-38.

²³ On thriving Ragusan economy see: Vladimir Stipetić, »Population and Gross Domestic Product of Croatia (1500-1913) in the Light of Angus Maddison's Book The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 8 (2004): pp. 163-166; Oleh Havrylyshyn and Nora Srzentić, *Economy of Ragusa, 1300 – 1800. The Tiger of the Medieval Mediterranean*. Zagreb: Croatian National Bank, 2014: pp. 33-48.

26,000 inhabitants.²⁴ This grim period of violence, which mirrored in the domestic circumstances,²⁵ and the anxiety on the Ragusan borders spanned from the beginning of the War of Candia in 1645 to the end of the Morean War in 1699.²⁶ Following the disastrous earthquake in 1667 and conflict with the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa between 1677 and 1682, the Ragusans were to face serious difficulties as result of the war between the Habsburg Monarchy and Poland against the Ottoman Empire (1683-1699). The Republic of Venice also joined the allies.²⁷ The Venetians soon advanced into Dubrovnik's immediate hinterland. As the threatening pressure of Venice mounted, the Ragusans were preparing themselves for the worst, in hope of the Habsburg protection.²⁸

Although the territory of Dubrovnik was not implicitly the scene of war operations, the population was exposed to constant hostilities which included raids and plunder that was incited or at least tolerated by one of the warring states. This made the implementation of the quarantine measures a truly challenging task.²⁹

In 1690, the *provveditore generale* of Dalmatia dispatched warships to Ragusan ports at Gruž and Slano in order to block the food supply. Hajducs were to cut the supply of grain from Dubrovnik to the Ottoman territory. Blockades on land and sea threatened to halt trade or seriously increase its costs. The Venetians imposed transit fees for Ragusan vessels. Underlying the blockade of Dubrovnik's territory was the obstruction of food supply of the Ottoman inland, that is, the war tactic of famishing the enemy to surrender. A

²⁴ Nenad Vekarić, »The Population of the Dubrovnik Republic in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 2 (1999): p. 26.

²⁵ 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; R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: pp. 267-268.

²⁶ On most extreme circumstances on the Ragusan frontier and organised crime see: V. Miović Perić, *Na razmeđu*: pp. 167-209.

²⁷ Vinko Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*, vol. II. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod MH, 1980: pp. 151, 174; Robin Harris, *Dubrovnik. A History*. London: SAQI, 2003: pp. 341-345. On conflict with Kara Mustafa see: Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2003: pp. 141-167.

²⁸ In the summer of 1688, all men fit to carry arms were enlisted and a flag with the coat of arms of the Dubrovnik Republic on one side and the imperial eagle crest of the Habsburgs on the other was commissioned for this purpose (Grga Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu 1683-1699«. *Rad JAZU* 253 (1935): pp. 28, 34, 45).

²⁹ V. Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu*: p. 131. For detailed discussion see: Vesna Miović-Perić, »Brigandage on the Ragusan Frontier During the Morean War (1684-1699)«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 3 (1999): pp. 41-54.

hidden target, or at least a welcome side effect, was the destruction of Ragusan autonomous trade so that all east-Adriatic ports would fall under the unique control of the Republic of Venice.³⁰

In the late summer of 1690, hajducs and soldiers on the borders of the Dubrovnik Republic violated the quarantine regulations, the Senate informed the Imperial Court of Vienna through Mato Lucijanov Pozza. The Venetians behaved irresponsibly and could easily transmit plague from Bosnia to Dubrovnik. Ragusan warning issued to the Austrian authorities particularly concerned the potential danger from the infected prisoners from Bosnia.³¹ The Senate also directly appealed to Alessandro Molino, Venetian *provveditore generale* of Dalmatia and Albania, about the increasing irresponsibility of the Venetian subjects.³² Lack of regard for the quarantine measures on behalf of the hajducs was also criticised by Bajamonti a century later. As the petitions had little effect on the change of hajducs' conduct along the Ragusan border, those among them who acted contrary to the quarantine measures and raided houses contaminated by plague were forbidden access to the Dubrovnik Republic.³³

The "plague of the maidservants"

In a series of adverse conditions, the outbreak of plague in the Ottoman-governed hinterland of Dubrovnik in 1690 seemed but the final straw. War was raging, accompanied by famine. Franciscan Nikola Lavšanin testified to severe hunger in Bosnia in 1690. In Sarajevo people ate the bark off the trees, vine leaves, cats and dogs. Cases of cannibalism were recorded.³⁴ Hajducs continued their raids along and across the borders. In June, plague broke out in the village of Trnovica, in the borderland of the Dubrovnik Republic, some thirty kilometres west of Dubrovnik. Isolation of the village prevented the spreading of plague further into the territory of the Dubrovnik Republic.³⁵ At the beginning of June 1690, the bey of Trebinje fell victim of plague, while in early August, Trebinje

³⁰ V. Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*, II: p. 189.

³¹ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. IV/2, ed. Jovan Radonić. Belgrade: SKA, 1942: pp. 29-30, 40-42.

³² *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. IV/2: pp. 44-46.

³³ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. IV/2: pp. 73-74.

³⁴ Vladimir Bazala, »Calendarium pestis (II)«. *Acta historica medicinae pharmaciae veterinae* 2/2 (1962): p. 76.

³⁵ R. Jeremić and J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, I: p. 100.

in southern Herzegovina saw approximately 14 deaths from plague a day. In the first seven months of the year 1690, the plague killed around three thousand people in the Ottoman hinterland, mostly Muslims who lived in urban areas, and to a lesser degree, the chiefly rural Christian population. In August the disease crossed the Veneto-Ottoman frontier and occurred in Knin, Drniš and Šibenik in central Dalmatia. In September it spread to Carina, important trade centre in the Neretva valley. In November of 1690 the epidemic was raging in Mostar, Čitluk, Gabela, Ljubuški, Stolac, Dubrava. Venetian health official suspected the incidence of plague in Makarska and in Opuzen. By the end of October and early November the epidemic devastated the village of Orahovac, located between Perast and Dobrota in the Ottoman part of Boka Kotorska.³⁶

Anti-epidemic regime aimed at the defence against plague outside the state borders was also in effect on the territory of the Dubrovnik Republic. It was soon superseded by the highest degree of epidemic defence when the deadly disease had already crossed the frontier. A description of the protective system has been provided by Baro Bettera, who at the end of the eighteenth century personally testified to its implementation. The whole Republic territory was at first divided into smaller units. Appointed into each of the plague defence centres was the head sanitary assistant, a nobleman aided by the health assistants, citizens posted in the villages. Head assistant (*kacamorat veliki*), was inferior to the city health office, composed of five to seven senators. It was the duty of the *cazamorti* to inspect the villages. The roll-call of all members of households was conducted several times a day, and if any person was missing, the house was sealed off and an investigation was carried out. In doing this, the health assistant used the list of household members. *Cazamorto* had the authority to punish the offenders.³⁷ He issued permissions by which the villagers could leave the village. Together with two *soldati* and the village guards, he controlled all entries into the village. Cross-border trade was permitted under surveillance twice a week in the district centres, in the areas designated for this particular purpose. Goods less susceptible to infection were exchanged under precautionary measures. Food items were washed or treated thermally. Butter was melted,

³⁶ B. Hrabak, »Talasi kuge na bosanskohercegovačkom upravnom prostoru 1463-1800«: pp. 26-27; Bogumil Hrabak, »Kužne rednje u Bosni i Hercegovini 1463-1800«. *Istorijski zbornik* 2 (1981): pp. 22-24, 37.

³⁷ On penal authority of the *cazamorti* see: Nella Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde. Kaznenopravni sustav Dubrovačke Republike u XVIII. stoljeću*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1997: p. 71.

poultry, eggs, meat, green vegetables, fruit and vegetables were waterwashed. Beans had to be baked on embers, while the cheese cut into small pieces had to be singed. Wood and items made of metal were shortly exposed to fire. Plague susceptible goods, such as wool, cloth and cotton were sent to the lazaretto at Ploče for disinfection, a process that may have taken from 45 to 60 days. During the *peste delle serve* an example of an 80-day disinfection of goods has been traced.³⁸ Of course, no direct physical contact with the Ottoman subjects was allowed. The authorities were fully aware that trade was essential for the inhabitants' needs without which famine would be inevitable. This prompted the ration of food from the state warehouses, which helped curb the need for smuggling. Successful application of the sanitary measures largely relied on the cooperation of the population on either side of the frontier. Compliance with the Ragusan quarantine measures was also secured through the central authority in the Ottoman Empire.³⁹ Bettera's description of the plague control measures, for the most part, corresponds to the measures adopted at the close of the seventeenth century.

Ragusan authorities kept a vigilant eye for the epidemic wave that was approaching the Republic borders, of which they also informed their neighbours. Information on plague was always collected from several sources. Thus the news on the spreading of plague in Bosnia and Herzegovina reached Dubrovnik also via the Ragusan consul to Ancona. In a letter of 29 July 1690, Giuseppe Storani informed the Senate of having received bad news from the nunciature and from the Health Office of Venice. In the summer of 1690, the Republic strived against the spreading of plague on its territory. Despite considerable costs, maximum surveillance of the land border and ports was organised. All accesses were sealed. The Senate informed Rome on the measures undertaken. Dubrovnik Republic acted according to good customs, exchanging information and fully cooperating as, for example, was the practice widely adopted in the Italian states. When the plague managed to spread in the Republic, of this the Senate informed "all states with which the Ragusans traded".⁴⁰

³⁸ *Ordini e terminazione sulla peste 1691-1712* (henceforth: *Ordini*), *Sanitas*, ser. 55, vol. 7, f. 39v.

³⁹ B. Krizman, »Mémoire Bara Bettere«: pp. 438-443; S. Đorđević and K. Carić, »Podaci o radu i organizaciji zdravstvene službe u Dubrovačkoj Republici«: pp. 113-118; V. Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu*: pp. 120-122.

⁴⁰ Dj. Orlić, »Dubrovačke vijesti o epidemijama u Bosni i Hercegovini u XVII vijeku.«: pp. 61-62. On 11 January 1691, the Senate instructed the Minor Council to inform Venice, Rome and the Kingdom of Naples of the occurrence of plague in the suburb. See: *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (henceforth: *Cons. Rog.*), ser. 3, vol. 131, f. 86r (SAD).

The first victim of plague entered in the register of the health officials was a small novice, son of the governess of the *Hospital misericordiae*. He died on Tuesday, 9 January 1691, at the *Hospital misericordiae* near the Church of St Francis.⁴¹ Recorded as the first source of infection was the building of the *Hospital misericordiae*, state foundling hospital, which, judging by the mention of the Franciscan church, was again using the property within the city walls, the second source being a house in the Pile suburb, in which a maidservant fell ill.⁴² A link between these two sources of infection was established subsequently. A third source has been traced in the suburb of Ploče.⁴³ The Senate reacted promptly by appointing five senators among fifteen candidates as additional *cazamorti*. Three hundred ducats were disbursed to cover the costs of these offices. Two of the five sanitary officials, Frano Sigismundov Gradi and Vladislav Sekundov Buchia, accompanied by the chancellor who kept record, immediately launched an inquest. Physicians and a surgeon were dispatched to Pile to examine the maidservant. The symptoms of plague were confirmed in her case. Chosen to the duty of the additional (*della sopragionta*) *cazamorti* were the patricians Mato Marinov Bona and Rado Lukin Gozze.⁴⁴ On 12 January, *cazamorti* Orsat Sorgo and Mato Bona tried in vain to avoid the burden of this demanding office.⁴⁵

With each new case, a similar procedure was applied. Following the report on a suspicious disease or death, an inquest was carried out which, besides the *cazamorti*, included medical experts—physicians and surgeons. It was of essential importance to question all those who had communicated with the infected, since that was the only way to prevent the disease from spreading. In order to establish the source of infection and foresee the possible spread of the disease, the social network of the sick person was reconstructed. The principle of caution was applied. The circle of suspects was rather large, as it did not only include those who had come into contact with the infected, and were thus potentially exposed to the disease, but also all those who had communicated or in any way came close to the persons who were in contact with the infected, although without discernible signs of illness. Greatest caution was taken when handling the belongings

⁴¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 2r. The outbreak of plague was also recorded by the Jesuit chronicle, stressing that the plague (*peste*) broke out in the city (*dentro la città*) with the death of a boy in the foundling home (*nell'ospedale de Bastardelli*). See: *Ljetopis dubrovačkog kolegija (1559-1764)*. ed. Miroslav Vanino [Vrela i prinosi, vol. VII]. Sarajevo: Nova tiskara, 1937: p. 39 .

⁴² On location of the foundling homes see: R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: pp. 45-59.

⁴³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13v.

⁴⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 1r.

⁴⁵ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 7, f. 87r-87v.

of the persons who were suspected of infection. *Cazamorti* carried out isolation measures, bearing the worst scenario in mind, as if the disease was widespread, and it was not until a certain period of time that gradual admission to the healthy community was allowed. An infected house was promptly isolated, along with all the persons who came into contact with the infected and the persons who came into contact with them. Centuries-old experience in the suppression of plague has shaped the measures that clearly show how knowledgeable people were about the infectious nature of this disease.

Investigation had to be carried out without delay, so as to prevent any further contact with the infected and the quick spread of the disease. Early diagnosis was essential because, as testified by Bajamonti, if the infection escalated from several sources, its suppression was virtually impossible. This lesson was well absorbed over the centuries of the anti-plague practice. With the epidemics from the earlier periods, it usually took several weeks to identify the infectious disease with certainty.⁴⁶ Indeed, it was not an easy task, since the first symptoms of plague, fever and indisposition, may have been ascribed to any other illness, e.g. various fevers which, like today, were widespread among the population in winter. Another potential difficulty in the early diagnosis of plague was the concealment of the infected. It was not easy to sacrifice oneself for the welfare of the community, as the isolation measures were all but comfortable.⁴⁷ In addition, the stigma carried by the potentially infected person was deeply rooted. The persons who survived plague were also stigmatised and aroused suspicion in the healthy community due to the adopted resistance, if temporary, to the disease. The survivors could not transmit the disease through personal contact, yet their infected clothes may still have been a potential source of infection. According to a sixteenth-century record, *resanati* (the recuperated) wore a scarf around the neck as a sign of warning.⁴⁸

In a densely populated urban area it was difficult to hide the infected, as for the lack of privacy any suspicious absence would have been immediately detected, and through well established channels that information would soon reach the authorities. True, a suspicious disease could easily be detected, yet

⁴⁶ B. M. Nedeljković, »Pravna organizacija Dubrovačke Republike za vreme morije iz 1437. godine«: pp. 47-48.

⁴⁷ On account of several plague victims at Ploče, confined dwellers were threatened with the shots from arquebus if they dared leave the house or garden (*Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13v).

⁴⁸ Z. Blažina Tomić and V. Blažina, *Expelling the Plague*: pp.190.

its spreading proved an enormous challenge because the urban space was relatively undersized considering the number of inhabitants, and the bustle of city life produced a multitude of social contacts, especially during feast days. The “plague of the maidservants” broke out in the festive atmosphere starting with Christmas Eve on 24 December to the Holy Innocents on 27 December, and a series of solemn masses during which the pious received massive communion in the crowded churches. The time of lively social contacts and communication continued through the month of January, in which the feast of Circumcision was celebrated on the 1 January, and Epiphany on the 6 January. The winter feast days ended with the solemn celebration of St Blaise, protector of the city.⁴⁹ Plague disrupted this festive sequence, so that in 1691, instead of in February, St Blaise was celebrated on 5 July, feast day of the Arm of St Blaise.⁵⁰ For reason of the spread of plague in the city, public ceremonies were postponed and massive gatherings were avoided.⁵¹ The solemn funeral of Rector Junije Cerva was postponed to a later date, his body being immediately buried. Commemoration of the catastrophic earthquake that struck Dubrovnik on 6 April 1667 was postponed to the second day of the Pentecost.⁵²

The circle of suspects at the Hospital misericordiae

The staff and wards of the *Hospital misericordiae* were instantly taken to the lazaretto at Ploče, as they had been in immediate contact with the infected novice. The latter was not identified by name in any document, but by family affiliation and by status of the novice in divinity. The registers of the *cazamorti* make no record of the boy’s mother, only her occupation, *abadessa dei spurii*. The governess’s identity is known from the accounting records of the foundling home. Anica Andrijina Luketić,⁵³ governess of the *Hospital misericordiae*,

⁴⁹ Nella Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti. Ceremonijal i državni blagdani Dubrovačke Republike u 17. i 18. stoljeću*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2009: pp. 335-337.

⁵⁰ R. Jeremić and J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, I: p. 101; N. Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti*: pp. 291-292.

⁵¹ The work of the Jesuit Collegium was discontinued on 10 January 1691, only to be reactivated on 11 June 1691. See: Miroslav Vanino, *Isusovci i hrvatski narod*, II. Zagreb: Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove u Zagrebu, 1987: p. 99; *Ljetopis dubrovačkog kolegija (1559-1764)*: p. 39.

⁵² N. Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti*: pp. 291-292.

⁵³ *Libro Maestro dell'anno 1683*, ser. 46, vol. 8b, f. 1r (SAD).

together with two internal wetnurses who lived in the foundling home—Nika Andrijina from Ston and Vica Božova from Plat—cared for the abandoned children of various age, from infants to children aged three and above. The number of children cared for at the foundling home cannot be accurately established. According to later data, the building might have accommodated between less than ten and more than twenty children.⁵⁴ On 2 January 1691, the wetnurses received their usual salary of 7:6 perpers.⁵⁵ The last pay out to warden Anica Andrijina was dated 6 January 1691.⁵⁶ As the names of the warden and internal wetnurses do not subsequently appear in the registers of the foundling home, it is possible that they fell victim to plague.

Apart from the governess and wetnurses, the list of suspects extended to other persons who frequented the foundling home during the illness of the small novice. Their names were recorded in a separate note which is not extant.⁵⁷ One of the persons from this list is the maidservant from the *Domus Christi* hospital. She bought meat at 3 grossi for the governess that very morning when her son died from plague, because of which the *Domus Christi* was sealed off.⁵⁸

On Epiphany (6 January), three days before the novice's death, entered chronologically into the ledger of the foundling home were many payments.⁵⁹ All persons whom these reimbursements concerned may have been included on the list of suspects. The occurrence of plague in the *Hospital misericordiae* and isolation of the entire staff who resided in the building did not stop the foundling home from operating. External wetnurses, who cared for the foundlings at their own homes most commonly in the outlying villages, continued to receive payment for their service.⁶⁰ The Senate provided regular monthly support of 300 perpers for the foundling home.⁶¹ New breastfeeding contracts were

⁵⁴ R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: p. 311.

⁵⁵ *Libro in cui sono annotati i salarii delle balie al servizio dell'Ospedale degli esposti del 1683 fin al 1703, Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 16, f. 174r (SAD). The colon is followed by grossi. One perper had 12 grossi.

⁵⁶ *Libro in cui sono annotati i salarii*, vol. 16, f. 178r.

⁵⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 2r.

⁵⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13r.

⁵⁹ *Libro in cui sono annotati i salarii*, vol. 16, ff. 176r-178r. For the list of persons see: R. Kralj-Brassard, »Grad i kuga: Dubrovnik 1691. godine«: Table 2, p. 139.

⁶⁰ See for example: *Libro Maestro dell'anno 1683*, vol. 8b, ff. 124r, 138r, 140r-154r, 158r-159r, 161r, 164r.

⁶¹ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, ff. 82r, 99r, 110v, 123v, 141r, 156v, 170v.

also entered.⁶² A certain halt in the activities may be discerned in the delayed entry of the death of a foundling in the breastfeeding contract, where the incidence of plague is mentioned.⁶³ No baptismal records have been preserved in the register of the baptised foundlings of the first half of 1691.⁶⁴

The little novice was diagnosed with plague by the physicians Ottavio Camilli and Santanicollo, and surgeon Đuro Miscoschi. They measured the boy's pulse and used the *ventose* (cupping glass) to draw the blood to the surface of the skin by means of vacuum. *Cazamorti* deemed that the procedure was dangerous in terms of the disease transmission, and thus ordered the preventive sealing of the doctors' houses. Public health measures of isolation, that is, assessment of the transmission risk, were imposed by the government officials and not by medical experts. Quarantine was lifted on 20 February 1691, following the law-regulated forty days of isolation.⁶⁵ The circle of the potentially infected persons also included the priest who heard the dying-boy's confession. Priest Ivan was to remain confined in his house at Pile until the end of February.⁶⁶ The investigation showed that a certain Rade from Pile washed the clothes formerly used by the novice, as result of which her house was sealed off but not earlier than 12 January.⁶⁷ The boy's body was washed by another poor woman, Marija Šumanova, who lived at the *Antunini* hospice. She was given boy's clothes which she stored in her room at the hospice. On 14 January she was at the lazaretto, where she died.⁶⁸ Nobleman Rafael Lukin Gozze was at the foundling home on the morning when the little novice died, his home being sealed off, too. That same day, isolation was decreed for the house of the noblewoman Jelena Palmota, maiden name Sorgo, because she happened to be at the house of Rafael Gozze, as well as the homes of the patricians Marko Tomin Bassegli and Ivan Gozze.

Investigation tried to establish how the little novice picked up the disease. A witness testified that the boy's mother, hospital governess, suspected her son to have become infected by a blanket previously used by the maidservant of a certain Trumbene. The mentioned woman used to bring various things to the *Hospital misericordiae*. Her death was associated with herb and wine trade with the Vlachs

⁶² *Libro dell'Hospitale Della Misericordia 1690*, ser. 46, vol. 8c, ff. 39r-55r (SAD).

⁶³ *Libro dell'Hospitale Della Misericordia 1690*, vol. 8c, f. 35r.

⁶⁴ R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrda*: pp. 284-286.

⁶⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 2r.

⁶⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 14r.

⁶⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 14r.

⁶⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 14v.

from the Ottoman hinterland.⁶⁹ The maid died of plague, so that on 13 January quarantine was imposed on four houses in the suburb of Gruž, whose dwellers carried her in the funeral. As none of those persons fell ill, household members were allowed free movement as of 20 February 1691.⁷⁰ Apparently, as proven in the weeks to come, the cause of the novice's disease led to the maidservant. The epidemic was rightly termed the "plague of the maidservants" because in the records of the *cazamorti* they dominate among the victims.

Maidservants the victims of plague

Maidservants may have been more susceptible to plague due to undernutrition and greater exposure to the disease. Namely, the nature of their occupation required daily communication in the public spaces, where they could easily come into contact with infected persons and goods. They often visited each other, ran errands and exchanged things.⁷¹ The plague simply followed their communication network, which the *cazamorti* tried to reconstruct in their inquest. The maids' social contacts often dictated the rhythm of the isolation of patrician households. Maid's disease caused for preventive isolation of all the household members who shared the common space regardless of the rank, the nobility and the servants alike.

In all likelihood, the physicians who on 9 January 1691 examined the son of the *Hospital misericordiae* governess also examined the domestic of Ivan Findela, who showed signs of the deadly disease. On Wednesday evening of 10 January, the domestic died. Ivan Conerdeli, a guard posted in front of Findela's house, immediately informed the sanitary officials of her death.⁷² That same day, the whole quarter in the western suburb of Pile was sealed off, from the house of Ivan Findela to the Pile Gates.⁷³ Full isolation of all households

⁶⁹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 27v-28r.

⁷⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 14r.

⁷¹ On Ragusan maidservants see: Slavica Stojan, *Vjerenice i nevjernice: Žene u svakodnevnici Dubrovnika (1600-1815)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Prometej; Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2003: pp. 95-131.

⁷² *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 2r, 13v.

⁷³ Although the dwellings of the sick or of the persons suspected of being infected by plague are repeatedly mentioned in the sources, the mapping of the disease (a standard in historical epidemiology) is not possible due to inaccurate description of the dwellings. On use of maps as a new tool in the study of disease see: Tom Koch, *Disease Maps. Epidemics on the Ground*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011. For an example of graphic representation of the disease outbreak see the historic map of cholera in Broad Street (Soho, London) of 1854, charted by John Snow: http://johnsnow.matrix.msu.edu/images/online_companion/chapter_images/fig12-5.jpg (accessed on 7 August 2015)

was decreed until 28 January, to be subsequently reduced to only four households whose members had come into direct contact with the infected persons.⁷⁴

Among the first to die, on 14 January 1691, in a *stranj* (wine cellar), was Katarina, domestic of the priest Luka Zeko who lived below the Minčeta Tower, near the northern city walls. Her death prompted the isolation of the entire quarter below the Minčeta Tower to the street leading to the church of Our Lady of Sigurata.⁷⁵ On the following day, two maidservants (*mazare*), one in the household of Andrija the tailor, and the other in the household of Petar Baletin, fell ill.⁷⁶ Two days later, domestic of the nobleman Marko Bassegli died of plague.⁷⁷ The house was placed in long-term isolation. It was not until 7 March that the items from the nobleman's household were taken to the lazaretto for disinfection. Noblemen Mato Jakovljević Natali and Junije Nikolin Gozze were appointed to supervise the transport of the belongings. The noblemen were to be assisted by the commoners Ivo Benevoli and Frano Bogašini.⁷⁸ The items were being aired for two whole weeks.⁷⁹

Probably from the middle of January onwards, the *cazamorti* tended to confine all the members of one household upon the slightest suspicion of the disease. Thus by reason of the maid's illness, on 14 January they sealed the house and inn of the nobleman Miho Giorgi Bona. Isolation of the houses may have been repeated if the circumstances required. For example, the house of nobleman Miho Antunov Giorgi Bona was sealed on 17 January because of the maid's illness.⁸⁰ As she recuperated seven days later, the members of the household were no longer confined.⁸¹ On 29 January 1691 the house was again placed in isolation because the live-in wetnurse took a piece of *raša*, coarse woollen cloth, a highly infectious material, from a potentially infected person.⁸² In January, the *mazara* also fell ill, maidservant of Nikola Pavlov Saraca, and the isolation of this noble household ensued. She recuperated on 25 January 1691, as confirmed by the surgeon Petar Bogašini, which marked the end of isolation.⁸³

⁷⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13v.

⁷⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13r.

⁷⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13v.

⁷⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 11v.

⁷⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 34r.

⁷⁹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 37v.

⁸⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13v.

⁸¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 24r.

⁸² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 26v.

⁸³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 24r.

An increasing number of the sick was accompanied by stricter isolation measures. Underlying the isolation of the noble household of Luka Nikolin Gozze from the end of January to the end of February 1691 was a visit of a young woman from another house, in which the disease later manifested. On 29 January isolation was imposed on the noble household of Nikola and Sigismund Vladislavov Menze on account of the maid's falling ill. Also sealed off were the houses of the noblemen Sigismund Marinov Tudisi and Marin Jerolimov Natali.⁸⁴ Indirect data reveal that the pestilence also manifested in the home of the noblewoman Marija, widow of Vladislav Menze, as the items from that household were burnt on 25 June 1691. Engaged for that unpleasant task were the persons who disinfected wool at the lazaretto.⁸⁵ It was not until 11 July that the maidsevents from the Menze household were allowed free movement.⁸⁶

The undertaken measures notwithstanding, the *cazamorti* failed to prevent the spread of plague. A new wave of infected maidservants was recorded in February 1691. Physician Cardini, together with other doctors, on 11 February 1691 informed the authorities that an unnamed domestic of the nobleman Antun Martoličin Cerva died of plague.⁸⁷ Potentially infected items from the household were taken to the lazaretto. Before being returned, they were thoroughly aired. Three young men were appointed for this task, yet not before June 1691.⁸⁸

The reconstruction of the social network of the deceased maid of the Cerva family took some while. An entry of 21 february 1691 notes that the house and family of the nobleman Klement Ivanov Menze was sealed because their maidservant visited another fellow maid who died later. On that very day the home of the noblewoman Marija, widow of Luka Franov Bona, as well as that of the noblewoman Lukrecija Bosdari, family friends of the Bona widow, were sealed.⁸⁹ This isolation cycle also included the house of Ivan Petrov Metković from Risan, as his maid fell ill from plague.⁹⁰ Items from Metković's household were taken to the lazaretto, to be disinfected some twenty days later.⁹¹ Items susceptible to infection from the home of the Bona widow were taken to the

⁸⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 26v.

⁸⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 37v, 39r.

⁸⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 39v.

⁸⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 28v.

⁸⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 37r.

⁸⁹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 29v.

⁹⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 30r.

⁹¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 34v.

lazaretto. Permission to reclaim the belongings was issued on 11 July.⁹² The family of Marija Bona was isolated in Bosanka, a village overlooking Dubrovnik on Mount Srđ. The nunnery of St Peter, damaged during the earthquake of 1667, served as a quarantine station for the persons suspected of the disease. The wetnurse of the family of Klement Marinov Menze was also sheltered there, whose isolation continued well after 5 March 1691.⁹³ Isolated in the nunnery were many persons, on account of whom from the beginning of February to the beginning of March Luka Tudisi received a financial support of 10 ducats per month.⁹⁴

March saw new cases of plague. Infection of the servants was the reason for the sealing of the noble households of Frano Savinov Ragnina and Mare, widow of Sekundo Jerolimov Gozze.⁹⁵ By 20 April 1691, the plague had taken 18 lives in the city and around 70 in the lazaretto, notably the lives of the lowest poor ranks (*gente povera e della plebe*).⁹⁶

Members of patrician households under suspicion of the disease

Members of the nobility were appointed to oversee the isolated patrician households within the city walls. By order of the authorities, Frano Sorgo Bobali was to supervise four quarantined patrician houses, for the purpose of which a list of the persons who happened to find themselves in confinement was made. This list probably helped Bobali in the several roll-calls that he performed daily. His duty was to establish the number and the health conditions of the household members, of which he was to inform the *cazamorti*. According to Bettera's description, a similar procedure was applied in the villages of the Dubrovnik Republic in the eighteenth century. A detailed list of household members such as this was to be compiled for all the city parts in which the plague broke out, because only on the basis of these lists the nobility and citizens stationed throughout the city quarters could obtain an accurate number of persons and their health condition, as required by the health officials in a decision of 14 January 1691.⁹⁷

⁹² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 39v.

⁹³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 32v.

⁹⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 21r-22v.

⁹⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 33v.

⁹⁶ M. Vanino, *Isusovci i hrvatski narod*, II: p. 99; *Ljetopis dubrovačkog kolegija (1559-1764)*: p. 39.

⁹⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 15v.

The inventories thus included all household members—nobility and servants, guests and callers. Infants were also listed. Each family from this sample had at least three servants, in that the number of servants always exceeded the number of household members of the patrician rank. Maids largely outnumbered their male counterparts. The number of household members entered on the list reflects a point in time when the house was placed under isolation. It fails to include other family members or servants that happened to be temporarily absent at the time.

The household of the noblewoman Jelena Palmota was the smallest in size. Besides the Lady of the house, three unnamed maids are mentioned.⁹⁸ A total of six persons happened to find themselves at the house of Rafael Lukin Gozze. Besides Rado Gozze, also recorded were Ivan Cortois and his servant Luka, along with three maids from the Gozze household, Pera Vlahušina, from Mrcine (Dubravka) in Konavle, Stanula and Katarina Terza.⁹⁹ Rafael Gozze was elected for the office of *cazamorti*, but considering that his house was isolated, he was replaced by Stjepan Vlahov Tudisi, who also held the office of *proveditore*.¹⁰⁰ The three-member household of Marko Tomin Bassegli, consisting of the spouses Marko and Marija and their daughter Marija, presumably of infant age, was attended to by four servants: Petar, Marija Benediktova, Marija's daughter Nika, Điva Vlahušina and wetnurse Margarita Petrova. The servants were separated from the masters, probably because Điva Vlahušina was sick and died of plague on 17 January.¹⁰¹ By permission of the *cazamorti* and according to the decision of the Senate, the family of Marko Bassegli, after several days of confinement in the house within the city walls, moved to the house of Ivan Petrov from Risan, a member of the *Lazarini* Confraternity, located in the western suburb of Pile, in the vicinity of the chapel of the Holy Cross. The house was guarded by two unnamed *soldati* (soldiers) and Marketo Gudelj.¹⁰² The list of persons found at the household of Ivan Rafaelov Gozze is the longest. Apart from the spouses Ivan and Veća, another three patricians were entered: Mara, wife of Rafael Lukin Gozze, Slava, daughter of Marko Tomin Bassegli and her uncle Ivan Tomin Bassegli. Four persons were noted as servants, Nikola, Milica, Nikoleta and Jeluša. Marko, peasant from Brgat, was most likely a

⁹⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 15v.

⁹⁹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 15r.

¹⁰⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 1r.

¹⁰¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 11v, 14v.

¹⁰² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 15v.

villein who happened to be in the patrician household at the time. Three women were entered without citing their occupation: Anuhla Ivanova, Katarina Ivičina and Anuhla Novačica. Katarina was accompanied by her infant daughter.¹⁰³

Human resources at the disposal of the cazamorti

The implementation of plague control measures called for the engagement of many people. The duty was not without risk, and had to be performed with utmost care. Most important decisions were in the jurisdiction of the Senate, yet the operative section of the defensive sanitary system was headed by the *cazamorti* with a fairly broad authority. Judging by the profile of the *cazamorti* chosen in 1690 and 1691, this challenging post was entrusted to most experienced persons eligible for the office of rector. Junije Gabrijelov Cerva was chosen to the office of *cazamorto* on 20 February 1690. In April 1691 he was elected rector and died on duty on 22 April 1691.¹⁰⁴ Rafael Vladislavov Gozze assumed the duty of *cazamorti* on 23 February 1690, and the office of rector in September 1688 and November 1690.¹⁰⁵ Mato Marinov Bona, was elected *cazamorto* on 26 August 1690, while in October that same year he assumed rector's office.¹⁰⁶ Two *cazamorti*, elected to this difficult post in March 1691, while the city was still being ridden by plague, bore the honour of rectorship. Pavao Vladislavov Gozze was elected rector in December 1690,¹⁰⁷ while Stjepan Božov Proculo assumed the office in August 1695.¹⁰⁸ These examples clearly show that a responsible duty of a health official paved the way to higher positions.¹⁰⁹ The regularly chosen *cazamorti* during plague epidemics were assisted by additionally posted sanitary officials from the nobility ranks.

Cazamorti needed reliable men who would carry out concrete plague control measures. The planning of human resources proved difficult, since the spread of the disease could not be predicted, nor the exact number of persons necessary for the implementation of the anti-epidemic measures, as it varied due to the circumstances. Unexpected halts caused by the shortage of staff represented

¹⁰³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 15r.

¹⁰⁴ *Leges et instructiones*, vol. 3, f. VIII.

¹⁰⁵ *Leges et instructiones*, vol. 3, ff. IVv, VIII.

¹⁰⁶ *Leges et instructiones*, vol. 3, f. VIII.

¹⁰⁷ *Leges et instructiones*, vol. 3, f. VIII.

¹⁰⁸ *Leges et instructiones*, vol. 3, f. IX.

¹⁰⁹ Z. Blažina-Tomić, *Kacamorti i kuga*: pp. 104-105; Z. Blažina Tomić and V. Blažina, *Expelling the Plague*: p. 119.

a particularly serious problem. At no cost could this interfere with the regular functioning of other government services. In order to avoid eventual gaps, stand-by lists of men who would be placed at the *cazamorti's* disposal were made. A list of this kind was compiled during the *peste delle serve*, most likely after 19 January 1691. For an effective defence against plague the Republic used all its human potentials. The list was arranged by rank into the nobility, Confraternity of St Anthony, Confraternity of St Lazarus (elite citizen confraternities), commoners (*popolani*), and by an additional professional criterion, as the barbers were given special attention. Priority was given to the members of the Major Council, adult noblemen, and further down the hierarchy. At their disposal, the health officials had a total of 108 persons: 40 members of the nobility, 10 *Antunini*, 18 *Lazarini*, 20 commoners and 20 barbers.¹¹⁰

This list is probably based on a similar previously arranged recruitment list from which men were selected to carry out the anti-epidemic measures. Enumerated by status and occupation was a part of the city's male population during the census of 1673-4.¹¹¹ The source from which such a list might have been drawn during the *peste delle serve* is the *Specchio* with regard to the nobility, and various registers of the religious and professional confraternities with regard to the members of citizen ranks and craftsmen. The bulk of persons whose name stood on the list was actually engaged in the protection against plague, since their names reappear in relation to the implementation of various decisions and in the expenditure records of the Health Office Register.

The Health Office also engaged persons whose name was not on the list. Jew Abraham Abuaf assumed his post at Ploče, on 14 January 1691, in order to visit and cure the sick from contagious diseases (*per visitare e curare gl'infermi del mal contagio*) on a very high salary of 3 ducats a day.¹¹² Four special gravediggers (*pizigamorti*) were responsible for the disposal of the infected bodies. This difficult and odious work at Ploče was carried out by the recently arrived 'outsiders', Karlo Francuz (Karlo the Frenchman), Santo Siciljanac (Santo the Sicilian) and the Vlachs Petar and Stjepan.¹¹³ The system of anti-epidemic measures included many others who were rewarded for their service, which will be dealt with in the section pertaining to the expenditures.

¹¹⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 16-18; R. Kralj-Brassard, »Grad i kuga: Dubrovnik 1691. godine«: Appendix 1, pp. 168-169.

¹¹¹ *Isprave i akti*, ser. 76, n. 1809.

¹¹² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 12r.

¹¹³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 5v, a tergo.

Lazarettos

Lazarettos were the most common quarantine stations. At the east city entrance, merchants, their goods and other travellers arriving from the areas suspected of being infested were isolated for a limited period. During the *peste delle serve*, isolation measures were imposed on a large number of city dwellers, which resulted in the overcrowding of the lazaretto at Ploče. Bettera writes that all suspects from one household had to be isolated in separate shelters. This measure aimed at the prevention of the disease transmission was relatively easily applied in the rural areas. The persons could be isolated individually into farm buildings, such as sheds or warehouses. If there were no more vacancies in the buildings, a simple shelter of hay¹¹⁴ or of any other available material was constructed in the yard, garden or a nearby field. As the city could not provide sufficient free space for the erection of provisional shelters, camps were built at Ploče, Pile¹¹⁵ and Peskarija in the city port.¹¹⁶ By permission of the health officials, the families occasioning suspicious deaths were allowed to move outside the city, to Gruž, Rijeka dubrovačka, Bosanka or the space of the eastern suburb of St James.¹¹⁷ These families probably accommodated in the country villas. Utilized as a quarantine was the monastery of St Peter, wine cellars (*stranjevi*),¹¹⁸ family houses¹¹⁹ and palaces, Benedictine monastery on the island of Lokrum, as well as the lazaretto¹²⁰ on that island.

By the end of January 1691, a large group of people arrived at Lokrum. All those suspected of the infection were forcibly relocated from the lazaretto at Ploče to the island, along with the residents of several houses at Ploče. In order to avoid contact between the healthy members of the ship's crew and the potentially infected passengers, the transport was carried out by two boats. One boat was used to tow the other, aboard which were the potentially "dangerous" passengers. The persons isolated on Lokrum received regular rations of food and drink, which included wine,¹²¹ flour, vegetables and beans, oil, salt and

¹¹⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 31r.

¹¹⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 3r.

¹¹⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 3v.

¹¹⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 1r, a tergo.

¹¹⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 30v.

¹¹⁹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 32v.

¹²⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 6r, a tergo.

¹²¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 22r.

occasionally meat. The island was to be supervised by a patrician¹²² at a salary of 2 ducats a day, a citizen, member of the elite merchant confraternities (*Antunin* or *Lazarin*) at a salary of 2 perpers a day, and 4 *soldati* at 4 grossi a day each. For the delivery of letters to the island and other needs two smaller boats were hired, driven by two men at one perper a day.¹²³ Equal concern was given to the spiritual needs of the isolated persons.¹²⁴

Prior to being reclaimed by the Benedictines, the monastery building was thoroughly whitewashed. Among others, the glass on the windows was repaired and new keys were made. Whitewashing of the walls was a standard disinfection procedure, while the repair of the windows and keys perhaps tells of the turbulent events that ended with the apprehension of three persons. Provisional shelters on the island of Lokrum were built from wooden boards, and once the plague receded were relocated to Danče.¹²⁵ The lazaretto of Lokrum remained in use well after the solemn three-day celebration in the middle of June that marked the cessation of plague. In July, at least 15 persons,¹²⁶ and in September 10 were isolated there.¹²⁷ At the end of May, with the plague still raging, 26 people were isolated on Lokrum.¹²⁸

Conflict situations

With time, *cazamorti* were given considerable authority. In order to avoid concentration of power, the noblemen elected to this office descended from different patrician lineages.¹²⁹ Permanent anti-epidemic office, the first of its kind in the world, was established in 1390, while from 1457 *cazamorti* were salaried officials. To this demanding and often not only unpleasant but also dangerous duty middle-aged patricians were chosen. The Senate appointed the *cazamorti* to a term of one year, and most commonly two newly-elected officials

¹²² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 27v.

¹²³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 25v.

¹²⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 19v.

¹²⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, separate leaf.

¹²⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 10r, a tergo.

¹²⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 18v, a tergo.

¹²⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, separate leaf.

¹²⁹ On clan affiliation and dissent among the noble lineages see: Stjepan Ćosić and Nenad Vekarić, *Dubrovačka vlastela između roda i države*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2005; Nenad Vekarić, *Nevidljive pukotine. Dubrovački vlasteoski klanovi*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2009; N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, I: pp. 159-204.

would begin their term of office six months prior to their predecessors' end of office term. This secured the continuity of office and enabled smooth transition, as the previously chosen officials could instruct their successors.¹³⁰ Health officials, like the officials in charge of wine inspection and sea customs, were given penal authority and could impose high punishments.¹³¹ During the *peste delle serve*, they were specially authorised by the Senate to pass a severe physical punishment of up to three squassations.¹³² They were authorised to restrict the movement of persons and order destruction of property. The decisions of irresponsible *cazamorti* might easily not only put a person's property at stake but his reputation as well. Office abuse of this kind was behind the claim filed by Ivan Findela, textile merchant. Due to the maid's death from plague, Findela's house at Pile, along with the houses of two fabric dyers, were placed under long-term isolation.¹³³ An inquest was carried out so as to determine the source of the disease. Apparently, the maid's master became the prime suspect.

Besides a house at Pile, Ivan Findela had a house in Bosanka, where he stored his goods. Following the inquest into the maid's death, *cazamorti* ordered that Findela's house in Bosanka be burnt together with all the goods stored in it. Suspected as the source of disease were the infectious goods, either wool or cloths. The state compensated the loss of goods of poorer inhabitants, but Findela was not among them. According to his own evaluation, the house and goods in Bosanka came to a damage of more than 1,000 ducats. In a claim filed to the rector, Minor Council and later also to the Senate, the merchant complained about *cazamorti*'s actions, moreover on two occasions, on 10 and 20 March 1691. He claims to be unjustly accused of trading illegally and that he has suffered great damage. In his words, he observed all quarantine regulations, burned whatever was suspicious, and aired the rest of goods according to the law. He was unjustly accused and he feared of being further falsely accused in case any person fell ill, or would claim to have fallen ill from the goods he had given to be woven or spinned.¹³⁴ Nobleman Ivan Markov Sorgo was chosen as the health official in Bosanka, and the merchant's claim was addressed to

¹³⁰ Z. Blažina-Tomić, *Kacamorti i kuga*: pp. 104-105, 126; V. Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu*: p. 125; Z. Blažina Tomić and V. Blažina, *Expelling the Plague*: p. 123.

¹³¹ N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: p. 71.

¹³² *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 87. On punishment of squassation see: N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: pp. 148-149.

¹³³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 13v, 30v.

¹³⁴ V. Miović-Perić, *Na razmeđu*: pp. 121, 324.

him.¹³⁵ Findela's claim implies a possible abuse of the *cazamorti's* wide authority, who, for instance, by a single decision to burn the property could impoverish a merchant overnight and at the same time ruin his business reputation. Despite Findela's status, the damage on the merchant's house and goods was compensated by decision of the Senate in May 1691. Following an expert assessment of damage, an amount of 656 ducats was to be paid, disbursed to Findela by Ivan Markov Sorgo.¹³⁶

Conflict may also have risen from situations in which plague control measures interfered with the noble pride. Isolation of noble families did not pass without resistance. Nobleman Antun Martoličin Cerva hesitated for more than a week before calling at the house of the late Vlaho Bosdari in Bosanka, as ordered by the Senate. The son of the late Luka Bona was to remain in isolation on pain of one-year imprisonment under locked doors and the key deposited at the notary if he dared leave the house before the isolation period expired.¹³⁷ In-class solidarity was also taken into account, as in the case of a nobleman who surveilled the noble families of Cerva and Bona. He was threatened with loss of salary and prison if he acted contrary to regulations. Also established was a fine for the *soldati* who disobeyed the decrees. Additional supervision of the observance of Senate's decision was enacted by a provision according to which a person who denounced the offenders would receive a reward of 50 ducats.¹³⁸

Restriction of movement was one of the measures that effectively prevented the transmission of the disease but also gave way to major resistance, because it interfered with business and daily life. This measure was implemented to a drastic degree by decision of Senate of 11 February, when the *cazamorti* were ordered to seal off all the houses in the city. The entire city population was also confined to their homes at the end of April.¹³⁹ The households suspected of plague were already under special epidemic regime. Permitted to move freely in the Placa, main street, were the members of the Major Council only and one member from the households of the lower ranks. Also, one servant from the patrician and elite citizen (*Antunini* and *Lazarini*) household was allowed unrestricted movement for the purpose of household supply.¹⁴⁰ Offenders from

¹³⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 3r.

¹³⁶ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, ff. 142v-143v.

¹³⁷ On prison sentences and various forms of imprisonment see: N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: pp. 165-182.

¹³⁸ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, ff. 105v-106v.

¹³⁹ R. Jeremić and J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, I: p. 101.

¹⁴⁰ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, ff. 104-104v.

the highest ranks were to be fined with 50 ducats and a month's confinement at the Dominican Monastery or home confinement for female offenders. A punishment of a month's prison awaited the offenders from the lower orders.¹⁴¹

Isolation implied non-attendance of religious services, in a time of crisis when spiritual consolation and invocation of saints protectors was much needed. In the first days of plague, the authorities did not forbid people to attend church service, though under certain precautionary measures, that is, the persons were to avoid direct contact with each other and avoid crowds. Several points in the city were determined as places of worship. The members of the highest ranks, including their servants, could attend service at any city church except for the two largest ones. The churches of St Francis and St Dominic were reserved for the lower orders. The authorities made certain that a sufficient number of confessioners was at the disposal of the faithful day and night. Confessions were heard under the usual precautionary measures.¹⁴²

A week after the first death from plague, when the gravity of the situation became quite evident, the Senate resorted to an enhanced spiritual "device" in the struggle against plague—penitence, prayer and solemn vows. As a sign of penitence, female members of the highest ranks were to dress themselves in simple clothes made of home-spun *raša*.¹⁴³ The Senate decided to set up a solemn votive procession on 9 January, on the day when the young novice died of plague. Holy Mass was to be followed by a procession, in which the holy relics of St Blaise and the Venerable Wood of the Cross would be carried, accompanied by the Rector and members of the Minor Council carrying double candles (*duplijeri*). Modelled after the spiritual defence from plague back in 1527, two services were to be held at the church of St Blaise and one at the church of St Rock during the whole epidemic interval. The Senate also looked ahead and pre-defined the celebration of the plague's cessation when it came. A three-day celebration was decreed, starting with prayers, forty hours of the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament and a most solemn Ragusan procession, like that held on the feast of Corpus Christi. All members of the Major Council were to participate in the procession. On the second day, the relics of St Blaise, city protector, Venerable Wood of the Cross, image of Our Lady *od Porata* and the miraculous reliquary of St Filippo Benizzi were to be accompanied by the senators only. On the third day, members of the Minor Council were to take

¹⁴¹ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, ff. 104v-105.

¹⁴² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 12r-12v.

¹⁴³ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 90v.

part in the procession, in which Our Lady *od Porata* was carried. The triduum was to be concluded with a liturgy and the solemn Te Deum.¹⁴⁴ The official cessation of plague was celebrated on 10, 11 and 12 June 1691.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, many prayers were said in the sombre plague-ridden atmosphere of Dubrovnik, yet the persons in need of greatest spiritual consolation, since they were suspected of plague, were not allowed to attend church service. This prohibition proved especially discomfoting to the women from the elite ranks, whose regular church attendance not only satisfied their spiritual needs but was virtually a unique form of their social life.¹⁴⁶ On Ash Wednesday, by a narrow majority of 9:8 in the fourth round of voting, the Senate decided that the health officials permit the members of the elite ranks attendance of the Holy Sunday Mass.¹⁴⁷ However, a new decree on the ban of free movement of noblewomen, female members of the *Antunini* and *Lazarini* on pain of 25 perpers was issued on 27 March 1691, during Lent. The money from the collected fines was to be used to cover the expenses of the sanitary office.¹⁴⁸ Ten days later, shortly before Palm Sunday, the ban was partly lifted, and the female members of the highest ranks could still attend service.¹⁴⁹ They were again deprived of this right in the second week upon Easter—unlike the *cazamorti*, they were not allowed to attend the Holy Mass nor procession.¹⁵⁰

The smouldering conflicts, fanned by the special sanitary measures during plague, in one case mounted to open revolt. The scene of this conflict was Lokrum, to which persons from the lazaretto at Ploče were relocated, presumably due the overcrowded conditions. Men from Lastovo transported the Benedictine friars from Lokrum to the island of Šipan.¹⁵¹ Their departure was soon followed by a rebellion. By decision of Senate, two health officials were to go to Lokrum in order to carry out an investigation. A proposition by which twenty soldiers should be sent to the island that very evening in order to arrest the rebels against Captain Miho and the *soldati* was rejected by a narrow majority of 9:8.¹⁵² By

¹⁴⁴ N. Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti*: p. 292. On feast days commemorating the thanksgiving for the cessation of plague see: N. Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti*: pp. 267-295.

¹⁴⁵ R. Jeremić i J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, I: p. 101.

¹⁴⁶ Zdenka Janeković-Römer, *Maruša ili suđenje ljubavi. Bračno-ljubavna priča iz srednjovjekovnog Dubrovnika*. Zagreb: Algoritam, 2007: p. 48.

¹⁴⁷ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 109r-109v.

¹⁴⁸ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 122r.

¹⁴⁹ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 125r.

¹⁵⁰ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 142.

¹⁵¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 22r.

¹⁵² *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 112.

order of *cazamorti* and with permission of the Order of St Mary's Monastery on Lokrum, on 6 March 1691 the *soldati* conducted the priest Tomo Pocalela, the trumpet-player Dominik Bonhomo and barber Nikola Budman. The first was locked in a prison called "camara", while the other two in the dungeon known as "dragon". The prison keys were deposited in the office.¹⁵³ The rebels demanded archbishop's intervention, while the Senat concluded that the archbishop could not interfere into the matters of the state.¹⁵⁴ By decision of Senate, Nikola Budman was sentenced to four months of prison, and Dominik Bonhomo to one month of imprisonment. Both had to pay the judicial costs at a total of 20 ducats. Although both offenders had already served more than one month in prison, it was not deduced from their sentence. A proposition to petition archbishop for the punishment of Tomo Pocalela was rejected.¹⁵⁵

The expenses of the defence against plague

Direct and indirect expenses of the defence against plague were extremely high. There is reason to assume that the profit losses, either individual or of the state, due to the drastically reduced volume of trade and ban on craft manufacture were considerable. The stigma of a plague-stricken port gravely affected the economy well after the cessation of the disease. An exact amount of direct expenses cannot be ascertained, since the bookkeeping of the expenditures varied in method. The expenses of anti-epidemic measures, as recorded by nobleman Vladislav Sekundov Buchia from 10 January to 19 March, amounted to 1,713:31 ducats.¹⁵⁶ A sum of around 7,900 ducats entered into the account records in early March should also be added, the money being given to various persons in order to cover the requirements of the Health Office on the entire territory of the Dubrovnik Republic.¹⁵⁷ *Peste delle serve* burdened the bursary by approximately 10,000 ducats, ten times the expenditure of the *Hospital misericordiae*.¹⁵⁸ A comparison with the overall state expenditure in 1691 would best show the true and paramount size of the costs pertaining to plague, yet this analysis remains to be investigated in the future. If compared with the state expenditure from the second decade of

¹⁵³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 22v, 33.

¹⁵⁴ V. Bazala, »Calendarium pestis (II)«: pp. 77-78; R. Jeremić and J. Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, I: p. 100.

¹⁵⁵ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, f. 135r-135v.

¹⁵⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 23r.

¹⁵⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 32v-33.

¹⁵⁸ For the expenditures of the foundling home the usual amount of 3,600 perpers was decreed (*Cons. Rog.* vol. 131, ff. 82r, 99r, 110v, 123v, 141r, 156v, 170v, 193v, 205r, 209r, 217r, 239r).

the seventeenth century, the costs of the “plague of the maidservants” fall within one-seventh of the budget expenditures.¹⁵⁹ The sum is equally significant if compared with the estimated Ragusan revenue for the year 1624.¹⁶⁰

Plague control measures proved just as devastating for the treasury in the previous centuries. Government expenses pertaining to plague which spread from Rome in May 1500 amounted to 1,500 ducats.¹⁶¹ During the great epidemic of 1526, when the number of deaths reached more than two thousand and when the government retired to the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Gruž, the costs approximated to 40,000 ducats. This enormous sum¹⁶² was spent on guards, supply and charity.¹⁶³ A similarly structured expenditure has also been observed at the end of the seventeenth century.

Direct expenses of the defence against plague included the salaries of those who implemented the anti-epidemic measures, medical treatment of the sick,¹⁶⁴ construction, equipment and furnishing of the shelters,¹⁶⁵ camps and lazarettos,¹⁶⁶ food and drink for the confined persons and the sick,¹⁶⁷ clothing,¹⁶⁸ heating,¹⁶⁹ illumination,¹⁷⁰ burning of infected goods,¹⁷¹ cleaning,¹⁷² burial,¹⁷³ messenger,¹⁷⁴ transport,¹⁷⁵ religious service¹⁷⁶ and other.¹⁷⁷

¹⁵⁹ Antonio Di Vittorio, *Finanze e moneta a Ragusa nell'età delle crisi*. Napoli: Giannini, 1983: pp. 47-50.

¹⁶⁰ Grga Novak, »O Dubrovačkoj Republici god. 1624.« *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 13-14 (1976): pp. 14-15.

¹⁶¹ Serafino Razzi, *La Storia di Ragusa*. Ragusa: Editrice Tipographia Serbo-Ragusea A. Pasarić, 1903: p. 113.

¹⁶² The cannon-equipped state galley known as *bastarda* was built in 1527 at a cost of 12,000 ducats (S. Razzi, *La Storia di Ragusa*: p. 122).

¹⁶³ S. Razzi, *La Storia di Ragusa*: p. 122.

¹⁶⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 7v, a tergo.

¹⁶⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 5r, a tergo.

¹⁶⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 20v.

¹⁶⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 23r.

¹⁶⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 10v, a tergo.

¹⁶⁹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 3v, a tergo.

¹⁷⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, separate leaf.

¹⁷¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 9v, a tergo.

¹⁷² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 13v, a tergo.

¹⁷³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 4r, a tergo.

¹⁷⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 22v.

¹⁷⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 21r.

¹⁷⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 20v.

¹⁷⁷ The costs of the defence against plague included the reconstruction of the street leading to Bosanka (*Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 21v).

The salaries differed with respect to social status and the degree of responsibility. The salaries of the health officials were very high. For example, a nobleman whose duty was to control the persons confined on Lokrum received a daily remuneration of 2 ducats.¹⁷⁸ Secundo Đurov Buchia received 100 grossi per day (2 and a half ducats or 8:4 perpers) for surveilling the family of Antun Martoličin Cerva, who remained confined in their house in Bosanka after the death of their maid.¹⁷⁹ The time of epidemics proved lucrative for the otherwise modestly paid occupations. The salary of gravedigger during the epidemic was 20 grossi per day, while with the ebb of the disease it decreased to 3 ducats per month or 4 grossi per day.¹⁸⁰ A daily fee of the guard controlling an infected household was one perper.¹⁸¹ The registers of the health officials also mention the women who attended to the sick and quarantined.¹⁸² For his six-month service at Ploče, or 184 days to be precise, Ragusan Jew Abraham Abuaf received a considerable sum of 552 ducats.¹⁸³

The state paid 3 grossi for the daily provision of a confined person. Regular supplies of fresh water and wood for the fire and disinfection were sent to Lokrum.¹⁸⁴ Food for the sick represented a separate expenditure item.¹⁸⁵ With the epidemic over, the person attending to the sick had to change into new clothes. At the cost of state, the constable was given a new uniform as a token, while the cost of the gravedigger's uniform was deducted from his salary.¹⁸⁶

The decisions fail to specify the sources from which the costs of anti-epidemic measures would be defrayed.¹⁸⁷ During the "plague of the maidservants", the bursary of the Rector's Palace was not used to meet any larger expenses of the defence against epidemic.¹⁸⁸ However, the expenditure records of the Rector's

¹⁷⁸ *Ordini*, vol. 7, separate leaf.

¹⁷⁹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 29r.

¹⁸⁰ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 2v, separate leaf.

¹⁸¹ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 3r.

¹⁸² *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 16v, a tergo.

¹⁸³ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 11v, a tergo.

¹⁸⁴ *Ordini*, vol. 7, separate leaf.

¹⁸⁵ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 5r, a tergo.

¹⁸⁶ *Ordini*, vol. 7, f. 42v.

¹⁸⁷ In order to meet the high expenses of the defence against plague in 1631, the Venetian *provveditore generale* resorted to the budget of the lepers and the lazaretto, special taxes being raised on the sale of various commodities, oil and meat (R. Jelić, »Zadarske kuge i lazareti u prošlosti«: pp. 93-94).

¹⁸⁸ Contrary to the case from the eighteenth century, when by order of the Senate of 30 October 1791, a considerable sum of 1,666:8 perpers was disbursed to the sanitary officials from the expenditures of the Rector's Palace (Rina Kralj-Brassard, »*Detta* presvijetlog i preuzvišenog gospodina kneza: troškovi Dvora u Dubrovniku od 16. do 19. stoljeća.« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 52/1 (2014): p. 143).

Palace during the plague of 1691 contain several entries related to the courier dispatches for the requirements of the Sanitary Office, *per sanità*. Also, the Health Office received stationary supplies, such as paper and pens.¹⁸⁹ Some of the expenses pertaining to spiritual “devices” for the protection against plague, display of the Most Blessed Sacrament, penitence and votive processions for the protection against plague were met by the budget of the Rector’s Palace.¹⁹⁰ Expenses such as these, not solely related to the Health Office, always fell within the expenditures of the Rector’s Palace.

Intelligence management

In the seventeenth century, the city authorities on both shores of the Adriatic often prohibited Ragusan ships from free passage and trade, justifying that decision with the outbreak of pestilence in the Ottoman-controlled hinterland of Dubrovnik. The Senate reacted to such a measure by explaining that Ragusan maritime trade thrived despite the constant presence of various epidemics in the Ottoman Empire, which proved the traffic ban groundless. Simultaneously, strict anti-epidemic measures were applied to all travellers and goods arriving in Dubrovnik from the Levant. Envoys, consuls and other persons who travelled across the Ottoman Empire were obliged to inform the Ragusan government of the occurrence of contagious diseases in that area. The Senate then proceeded the information concerning health conditions to Kotor, and sometimes also to Zadar. The news on the outbreak of plague also travelled vice versa, in that, for example, the authorities of Kotor informed the Ragusans on the epidemic conditions on the Montenegrin and Albanian territory.¹⁹¹

Ragusan authorities were determined to show that the port of Dubrovnik was safe and protected from disease, and that Ragusan ships and port authorities applied most strict protective and precautionary measures. The ships which arrived from plague-stricken areas to all ports of the Adriatic and elsewhere in Europe were subject to quarantine, this period being even doubled at times, which interfered with the trade and resulted in great shipping and merchandise losses. Shipping companies lost valuable weekly transports, while the owners of goods had their capital in merchandise brought to a standstill instead of

¹⁸⁹ *Detta*, ser. 6, vol. 20, ff. 45r, 45v, 47v (SAD).

¹⁹⁰ *Detta*, vol. 20, ff. 53v, 56v.

¹⁹¹ Dj. Orlić, »Dubrovačke vijesti o epidemijama u Bosni i Hercegovini u XVII vijeku«: p. 47.

turning it over and making profit. That was the price that had to be paid for the protection of the local population against the disease, in the short run, in direct contradiction to the interests of merchants and shipping companies, yet in the long run, to the benefit of all.

The government not only aimed to protect its own territory from plague, but also to uphold the reputation of a safe and healthy community. Port authorities exchanged information on sanitary conditions and did not hesitate to proclaim strict precautionary measures even at the slightest suspicion of infection. Rumours on the outbreak of the disease may have seriously threatened Ragusan economic interests, since in that case merchant ships would avoid landing in the Ragusan port. A drop of traffic had a most direct impact on the state revenue. The success of Ragusan economy largely rested on the neutrality and security of the state.

A couple of months prior to the outbreak of the “plague of the maidservants”, while the epidemic was already raging in the Ottoman-controlled hinterland, in a letter of 6 August 1690, the Senate appealed to Marquis San Lauro (don Francesco Ardia) to intervene with the Viceroy of Naples not to ban trade with the Dubrovnik Republic. The territory of the Dubrovnik Republic was free from the disease, the Senators emphasised, and there was no danger of its transmission either, since most strict protective measures were implemented. All goods and people arriving from the Levant were quarantined to a double period.¹⁹² This diplomatic action gave no fruit, because in its letter addressed to the Viceroy of Naples of 26 September 1690, Ragusan government repeated its appeal for free passage of the Ragusan ships.¹⁹³

Ragusan diplomacy was determined to prove that the government-issued information on the sanitary conditions was reliable, that for centuries disease had not been transmitted from Dubrovnik, and above all, that the port of Dubrovnik deserved at least an equal treatment as the other ports of the East Adriatic, under Venetian rule at the time. On occasion, for the confirmation of such status the intervention of the papal nuncio had to be sought.¹⁹⁴ An illustrative example of the government’s reaction to the attempts aimed to jeopardise the vital interests of the state was the 1676 execution of Gaspar Crivelari, a Paduan employed as the Ragusan city physician, because in his correspondence with the Venetian *provveditore generale* of Dalmatia and

¹⁹² *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: pp. 25-28.

¹⁹³ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: pp. 50-51.

¹⁹⁴ G. Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu 1683-1699.«: p. 113.

Albania he mentioned the outbreak of plague on the territory of Dubrovnik, in consequence of which Ragusan ships lost the privilege of free trade with the Italian ports for a number of years.¹⁹⁵

The records kept by the health officials during the *peste delle serve* provide the basis for comparison between the factual state and the description given in diplomatic correspondence. The Senate kept a most lively correspondence during the epidemic, focusing on securing the privileges of free passage for the Ragusan ships and food supply. In a letter of 1 March 1691, addressed to Marquis San Lauro in Naples, in which the Senate petitioned for the import of goods by Ragusan ships, the Senate claimed that as of 11 February not a single new case of plague had occurred in the city.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, no entries on the new cases of plague were recorded in the register of the Health Office from 11 February, when the maid of nobleman Antuna Martolica Cerva died, to 1 March, when the letter was written, as the Senate cautiously formulated. Yet, an entry dated 23 February concerns the sick state of the maid of Ivan Petrov from Risan. One of his houses stood at Pile, in the vicinity of the suburban church of the Holy Cross.¹⁹⁷ In any case, urban plague was only temporarily suppressed, because by the middle of March several people within the city walls died from it. The Lokrum lazaretto, camps at Pile, Ploče and Peskarija were filled to capacity, and many houses were sealed off.

On 26 March 1691, Ragusan government sent a detailed report to Rome, to Paolo Francesco Pierizzi, on the prevailing sanitary conditions in Dubrovnik and its surroundings. The Senate stated that the *Antunini* hospital for poor women, which cared for twenty-two inmates, was sealed off to prevent the wretched women from wandering around the city, immediately upon the death of the son of the *Hospital misericordiae* governess (9 January). By reason of prevention, all the women from this poor house were relocated to the lazarettos. Another three women died there. A bubon was observed on the body of one woman, while the inquest carried out by the health officials showed that the infection was transmitted by a woman who visited the *Hospital misericordiae*. The letter fails to mention a couple of deaths among the maidservants in mid-January, one of which occurred in a patrician household. The second victim of plague described

¹⁹⁵ Dj. Orlić, »Dubrovačke vijesti o epidemijama u Bosni i Hercegovini u XVII vijeku«: pp. 60-61. The physician reported on two Ragusan merchants who died of plague. The trial was conducted swiftly and in secret. Death sentence by strangling was carried out in prison on the same day as the verdict. See: V. Bazala, »Calendarium pestis (II)«: p. 75.

¹⁹⁶ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: pp. 90-91.

¹⁹⁷ *Ordini*, vol. 7, ff. 15v, 30r.

in the letter was a fourteen-year-old boy, who died on 16 March 1691, two days after the onset of the disease. Description of the symptoms is accompanied by an account of the applied anti-epidemic measures— isolation of the house and neighbourhood, and detention of the boy’s parents in the lazaretto. Optimistically overtone, “all is well” was the Senate’s definition of the situation in the city and its surroundings. Only in Plat, a village east of Dubrovnik, there remained an infected house, while the information from Venice according to which the plague broke out on the islands of Lopud and Šipan was false.¹⁹⁸

An equally optimistic tone characterises the letter of 10 April 1691, in which the Senate informs nobleman Mato Lucijanov Pozza in Vienna, to his consolation (*per vostra consolazione*), that in Dubrovnik there have been several weeks now (*sono settimane*) that not a single case of plague has occurred.¹⁹⁹ The epidemic continued into April, while the verity of this statement lies on verbal dexterity, or rather, on a hazy distinction between an old and new case of the disease. The Senate seemed to have been preoccupied with famine and the lethal pressure of Venice rather than with plague.²⁰⁰

Careful formulation of the sanitary conditions—by which the Dubrovnik Republic is “seemingly free from the contagion” (*quasi libero dalla contagione*)²⁰¹ unless for a new case that had occurred a week before and which, one may rightfully claim, had vanished²⁰²—allowed plenty of manoeuvre space for the Senate’s various interpretations in the letters sent to Naples on 18 April, so as to obtain permission for the import of food for the hunger-stricken Ragusans. It was not until the middle of June that the actual cessation of plague was celebrated.

Conclusion

Over the centuries, Dubrovnik Republic developed a sophisticated anti-epidemic system that the contemporaries deemed impenetrable. In the seventeenth century, when the outbreaks of this dangerous disease severely and almost continuously swept the Ragusan borderland with the Ottoman Empire, anti-epidemic measures succeeded in confining the spread of plague to the state

¹⁹⁸ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: pp. 94-96.

¹⁹⁹ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: p. 101.

²⁰⁰ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: p. 98.

²⁰¹ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: p. 105.

²⁰² *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, IV/2: p. 104.

periphery. The stability of the frontier, a developed and well-organised system which relied on broad public engagement in the application of the plague control measures, daily monitoring of the epidemic conditions, sufficient financial support and relative cooperation of the inhabitants may be viewed as the reasons for a somewhat better implementation of the anti-epidemic system on the Ragusan territory as compared to that adopted in Venetian Dalmatia. In all likelihood, all these elements contributed to a relatively shorter epidemic interval and lesser number of deaths in the last urban plague that hit the territory of Dubrovnik.

The “plague of the maidservants”, which managed to bypass the sanitary cordon and spread into the urban centre of the state by the beginning of January 1691, marked the end of a series of adversities that had befallen the population of the Dubrovnik Republic at the close of the seventeenth century. Famine, wars raging in the immediate neighbourhood, *hajducs* crossing the Ragusan border with infected goods, coupled by Venetian determined attempts to disrupt Ragusan trade and the supply of food. Given the suitable, almost ideal, conditions for the spread of plague, the epidemic spilt over from the Ottoman-controlled hinterland into the Ragusan territory.

The last plague that hit the city found its victims mostly among the weakest dwellers. Detected as initial source of plague was the state foundling hospital, Pile and Ploče. The pestilence then spread to other parts of the city, suburb and the outskirts. All victims of plague mentioned in the registers of the health officials came from the lowest social ranks. Maids proved more susceptible to the disease, probably due to malnutrition and the fact that they were more often exposed to the infection: the transmission of plague followed the pattern of social contacts of the infected domestics.

In addition to the principle of caution, according to which the circle of suspects was very widely drawn, the key of the success of the plague control measures probably lay in the procedure of the reconstruction of the social network of the person suspected of the disease, in order to establish the source, foresee and prevent the possible spread of the infection. Isolation as a plague control measure was also imposed on patrician households in which maidservants were those who fell ill, yet the lists of households, as rare insights into the household membership of several patrician homes, contain all members, nobility and servants alike. As a rule, the latter outnumbered their noble masters. A considerable number of suspected infections within the crowded city area resulted in the construction of several isolation stations at Ploče, Pile and

Peskarija, in addition to the Lokrum lazaretto and the Benedictine Monastery. Prompt and effective reaction in setting up quarantine facilities and their furnishing for the care of the isolated persons shows how adaptable and truly able Ragusan government was in readily coping with every new situation.

The organisation of the defence against plague has revealed a core of some hundred loyal men, mainly, though not exclusively, from the highest ranks, expectedly with the greatest proportion of the nobility, who were to bear the burden of the implementation of the anti-epidemic measures. Members of the elite citizen ranks, *Antunini* and *Lazarini*, acted alongside the patricians, assuming their portion of responsibility. To some, participation in the protection against plague proved a profitable opportunity, since more risky positions were rewarded accordingly. Imposition of unpopular measures, such as restricted movement, did not always go smoothly, and a rebellion, a serious conflict situation which took place on Lokrum, was promptly dealt with. Direct expenses of the “plague of the maidservants” roughly amounted to a high sum of 10,000 ducats. Accentuated optimism with which the Senate described the health conditions in Dubrovnik in several of its letters sent to Rome, Naples and Vienna in March and April that year, was to serve the purpose of securing free passage of Ragusan ships and to help minimise indirect costs due to the epidemic of plague.