

Original paper  
UDC: 37.018(497.5 Dubrovnik)“16”  
DOI: 10.21857/yk3jwhrk9  
Submitted: 16.10.2018  
Accepted: 23.1.2019

## FROM ASHES AND DUST: *HOSPITALE MISERICORDIAE* IN DUBROVNIK AND ITS OPERATION IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1667 EARTHQUAKE

RINA KRALJ-BRASSARD

**ABSTRACT:** Based mainly on the oldest ledger of the *Hospitale misericordiae* started in the immediate aftermath of the Great Earthquake of 1667, along with other sources, this article examines the impact of this natural disaster on the operation of the founding hospital located in the heavily devastated heart of the city of Dubrovnik. Analysis of the frequency of wet-nursing payment entries allows an insight into the normalisation of the functioning of this state-run charity institution in the time of crisis. The study of the restoration of the founding hospital in the aftermath contributes to a better understanding of the extraordinary vitality and perseverance of the Dubrovnik Republic institutions, as well as organisational capacity of the individuals, members of the elites, who headed them.

*Keywords:* earthquake, Dubrovnik, *Hospitale misericordiae*, founding hospital, seventeenth century, wet nurses, expenditures, crisis

### *Introduction*

The Great Earthquake of 6 April 1667, which struck Dubrovnik and the southern coast of the East Adriatic between eight and nine in the morning of the Wednesday of Holy Week, may rightly be considered a turning point in the

This article has already been published in Croatian under the following title: »Iz praha i pepela: organizacija rada Hospitala milosrđa nakon potresa 1667. godine.« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 55/1 (2017): pp. 189-210. Translated by Vesna Baće.

---

**Rina Kralj-Brassard, member of the Institute for Historical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Address: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, Lapadska obala 6, 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia. E-mail: rinafran@gmail.com**

---

history of the Dubrovnik Republic. The tiny aristocratic state stood at the verge of ruin. The earthquake of 10 degrees Mercalli scale caused disastrous devastation of the urban centre. The majority of buildings either collapsed or were damaged, and in the aftermath a fire burnt throughout the city for days.<sup>1</sup> Some 1,890 inhabitants were killed in the walled city area or around 42%. The republic lost almost one half of the representatives of its political elite, including the rector. The first week after the earthquake was marked by disorder and plunder of both private and state property. Order was soon restored by the establishment of provisional government and appointment of an able nobleman as military commander.<sup>2</sup>

On the disastrous 1667 earthquake in Dubrovnik much has been written from different perspectives—social, political to economic and psychological.<sup>3</sup> This article aims to elucidate the impact of the earthquake on the functioning

---

<sup>1</sup> J[elenko] Mihailović, *Seizmički karakter i trusne katastrofe našeg južnog primorja od Stona do Ulcinja* [Posebna izdanja, vol. CXL]. Beograd: SAN, 1947: pp. 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 1 - Korijeni, struktura i razvoj dubrovačkog plemstva*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2011: pp. 269-273.

<sup>3</sup> Vicko Adamović, *O trešnjama grada Dubrovnika*. Dubrovnik: Tiskarnica Joza Flori, 1883; Antonije Vučetić, »Sitnice iz dubrovačke prošlosti«. *Srđ* 3/12 (1904): pp. 550-560; Lujo Vojnović, »Prva smrt Dubrovnika (6 aprila 1667)«. *Letopis Matice srpske* 87/288 (1912): pp. 52-69; Đuro Körbler, *Pisma opata Stjepana Gradića Dubrovčanina Senatu Republike Dubrovačke od godine 1667. do 1683.* [Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, vol. 37]. Zagreb: Tisak dioničke tiskare, 1915; *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. III/2, ed. Jovan Radonić. Beograd: SKA, 1939; J. Mihailović, *Seizmički karakter i trusne katastrofe našeg južnog primorja od Stona do Ulcinja*; Lukša Beritić, »Ubikacija nestalih gradjevinskih spomenika u Dubrovniku«. *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 10 (1956): pp. 15-83; Lukša Beritić, *Urbanistički razvitak Dubrovnika*. Zagreb: Zavod za arhitekturu Instituta za likovne umjetnosti JAZU, 1958; Radovan Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak posle velikog zemljotresa 1667. g. Arhivska građa (1667-1670)* [Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskog naroda, ser. III, vol. 19]. Beograd: Izdavačka ustanova Naučno delo, 1960; Radovan Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*. Beograd: Prosveta, 1983; Stjepan Krasić, *Stjepan Gradić (1613-1683). Život i djelo*. Zagreb: JAZU, 1987; Nella Lonza »Ma niti je suda ni pravde. Kriminalitet i pravni poredak Dubrovačke Republike nakon Velike trešnje«. *Dubrovnik*, N.S., 4/2 (1993): pp. 257-261; Lovro Kunčević and Domagoj Madunić, »Venice and Dubrovnik During the Great Earthquake of 1667«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 19 (2015): pp. 7-56; Petrica Balija, »Sve se razgrabi ko je bolje mogo: krađe iz ruševina nakon dubrovačkog potresa 1667. godine«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 53/1 (2015): pp. 149-193; Slavica Stojan, »Poetika katastrofe – pjesnici o velikoj trešnji 1667. godine u Dubrovniku i okolici«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 53/1 (2015): pp. 113-148; Paola Albini, *The Great 1667 Dalmatia Earthquake. An In-Depth Case Study*. Cham: Springer, 2015.

of a special-purpose state institution.<sup>4</sup> The case study of the foundling hospital (*Hospitale misericordiae*), on the one hand, provides an insight into the organisation of this institution after the earthquake, and on the other, helps cast light on the hierarchy of state priorities in the time of crisis, and the community's ability to respond to challenges.

The foundling hospital is most suitable for a study of this kind for many reasons. The building itself was located in the city centre, in an area heavily devastated by the disaster, as well as fire. This charity institution was under direct state administration. The foundling hospital was managed by four noblemen who usually had some previous experience in holding public offices. The functioning of the foundling hospital after the earthquake and the time of its restoration largely depended on the sober reaction and ability of the members of the nobility, as well as on the network of hospital's business associates, from wet nurses to suppliers, and, of course, on the state priorities. As a special-purpose state institution, whose functioning was not essential for city life, its restoration may not have been expected among the government's top priorities.

#### *Foundling hospital in the pre-earthquake period*

Data on the operation of the foundling hospital before the earthquake are sparse. In addition to a decision of 1432 on the establishment of the foundling hospital and the description of the extension and remodelling of the building for the needs of a charity institution of this kind,<sup>5</sup> the bulk of data is provided by a visitation report from 1574. *Hospitale misericordiae* was considered an institution of religious character, and hence subject to visitorial inspection.<sup>6</sup> During his visit, apostolic visitor Giovanni Francesco Sormano found three wet nurses on the premises, two maids, a chaplain, four babies and three children

---

<sup>4</sup> For a succinct account on the Dubrovnik foundling hospital in English see: Rina Kralj-Brassard, »The Children of the Commune: Care of Abandoned Children in Early-Modern Dubrovnik«, in: *Orphans and Abandoned Children in European History. Sixteenth to Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Nicoleta Roman. London-New York: Routledge, 2017: pp. 201-218.

<sup>5</sup> *Acta Consilii Maioris*, ser. 8, vol. 4, ff. 180v-182v, State Archives of Dubrovnik (hereafter: SAD); *Liber Viridis*, ed. Branislav Nedeljković [Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskog naroda, ser. III, vol. 23]. Beograd: SANU, 1984: pp. 198-201.

<sup>6</sup> Visitation accounts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provide no information on the foundling hospital. See: Diocese of Dubrovnik Archives, ser. 3, *Vizitacije*, sig. 1, vol. 1-9.

aged around five.<sup>7</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, the building might have accommodated even more than twenty children.<sup>8</sup> The *Hospitale* wards usually remained in this building for a short period. The majority of children was cared for in the neighbouring villages, in the homes of wet nurses. That was common practice of many foundling hospitals throughout Europe of the day. Apart from the visitor's report, direct testament of the mentioned practice of the Dubrovnik foundling hospital in the sixteenth century may be traced in a decree implemented in 1513, which was designed to improve supervision of wards and wet nurses and to prevent fraudulent practice. The foundlings and wet nurses had to be registered, while the wards above three years of age were to be returned to the city building, after which they awaited to be sent to the homes of their foster or adoptive parents.<sup>9</sup>

A child could enter the foundling hospital through a revolving wheel, a wooden cylinder fixed in an opening similar to window. The hospital building had two wheels of this kind, one on the north front facing the Franciscan friary and the church of the Friars Minor, and the other in the street from the western side. Children without parental care were brought to the foundling home by the women who were always rewarded for that service. As soon as a new ward was admitted, a wet nurse was sought for the child. A confirmation of this admitting procedure in the sixteenth century, a period from which no foundling hospital ledgers have survived, may be found in the expenditure register of the Rector's Palace.<sup>10</sup> In Dubrovnik, wet nurses were recruited among married women, in the second half of the seventeenth century mostly from the villages in the city vicinity, in Rijeka and Župa dubrovačka. Wet nurses and children were under the surveillance of the local priests. Following a three-year care in the families of the external wet nurses in the outlying villages, the children were re-admitted to the foundling home in order to be delivered to their foster or adoptive parents.

---

<sup>7</sup> Petar Kačić and Zdravko Šundrica, »Zdravstvena služba u Dubrovniku po izvještaju apostolskog delegata Giovanni Francesco Sormani-a iz 1574. godine«. *Acta historica medicinae pharmaciae veterinae* 12/2 (1973): pp. 53-55.

<sup>8</sup> 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. 311.

<sup>9</sup> Rina Kralj-Brassard and Ivica Martinović, »Dojilje za nahočad - javna služba u Dubrovačkoj Republici«, in: *Bioetika i dijete. Moralne dileme u pedijatriji*, ed. Ante Čović and Marija Radonić. Zagreb: Pergamena and Hrvatsko društvo za preventivnu i socijalnu pedijatriju, 2011: p. 172; R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: p. 172.

<sup>10</sup> *Detta*, ser. 6, vol. 5, ff. 8v, 12, 21 (SAD).

Although the care for abandoned children was well designed, mortality rate among the foundlings was higher as compared to the children raised in biological families.

In the foundling hospital building on the southern side of the Placa, opposite the monastery and church of the Friars Minor, on that fatal day of 6 April 1667 there were, in all likelihood, at least three women<sup>11</sup> and several children, from babies to children of three years of age and above. Some of the external wet nurses who came to pick up their salary or a new ward may also have been on the premises. Regular hospital suppliers of cloths, shoes, medicaments and other provisions may also have been in the building on that fatal day. The local gravedigger may also have been among those who frequented the hospital daily, for he buried the children who died at the hospital itself, as well as those delivered by the wet nurses. The foundling hospital pay list also included the barber and chaplain, who occasionally came to the hospital for the purpose of baptism or medical treatment of the wards. Foundling hospital was overseen by the *Hospitale misericordiae* officials, noblemen who most probably paid visits to the institution from time to time.<sup>12</sup>

### *Earthquake victims in the foundling hospital*

The effects of the 1667 earthquake on the buildings such as that of the *Hospitale misericordiae*, which had already undergone two great earthquakes of 1520 and 1639, and a series of minor earthquakes and tremors, must have been serious.<sup>13</sup> With regard to the estimated scale of damage of the city blocks on the southern side of the Placa,<sup>14</sup> it is hardly likely that any person in the multi-storey building of the foundling hospital survived the great quake. Buried in stones and rubble, with no valuable and precious items to attract the predatory rescuers, the wards and the staff probably died from injuries or thirst. The city

---

<sup>11</sup> This was the number of women employed by the hospital (Rina Kralj-Brassard, »Nikola (1673-1674), «The Child of the Commune»«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 15 (2011): p. 125).

<sup>12</sup> R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: pp. 77-78.

<sup>13</sup> L. Beritić, *Urbanistički razvitak Dubrovnika*: p. 27. The foundling hospital also experienced the quakes of 1451, 1481, 1482, 1516 and 1631. For a series of earthquakes that hit the Dubrovnik area from 1451 to 1667 see: J. Mihailović, *Seizmički karakter i trusne katastrofe našeg južnog primorja od Stona do Ulcinja*: pp. 12-16, 18.

<sup>14</sup> J. Mihailović, *Seizmički karakter i trusne katastrofe našeg južnog primorja od Stona do Ulcinja*: Appendix 12, Figure 19.

rubble hid many survivors, and the choice of the persons to be rescued rested upon the diggers alone, who were not governed by charity but by gain. The service had to be paid in advance, that is, a solid solvency warrant had to be submitted beforehand. Hardin, a Frenchman who travelled together with the Dutch envoy and eyewitness, was rescued from the rubble thanks to his servant who engaged the diggers. He remained three days under the rubble, most likely in a residential block south of the Placa, and was dug out when, through a small slot, he exhibited two diamond rings as a warrant for the rescuers' service.<sup>15</sup> This episode testifies to the fallen moral barriers, best displayed, for example, in robbing the dead. The analysis of Criminal Court records shows that the persons who stole jewellery from the corpses did not see anything wrong in so doing. In the times marked by uncertainty, they tried to benefit from the situation and obtain some security for themselves.<sup>16</sup> Labour price was high, and an extra opportunity for earning some money, which could have made a change in the life of the lowest orders, was not to be missed.<sup>17</sup>

The earthquake also took its toll among the children, the foundlings included. Dubrovnik Republic lost a significant number of children from the elite strata. Having lost his wife, daughters, a son and many relatives, nobleman Frano Jakovljević Bobali dreaded for the fate of his only son alive, Damjan. In Frano's emotional letter to his nephew Marko Tomin Bassegli, commenting on the news of the boy's eight-day feverish state with the wet nurse, the nobleman clearly admitted that he was unable to raise the boy himself, yet was longing to see him. He envisaged the boy's death as a departure to a better place, among his kin who awaited his arrival on the other side.<sup>18</sup> Curiously, that day a whole

---

<sup>15</sup> R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak posle velikog zemljotresa 1667 g. Arhivska građa (1667-1670)*: pp. 20-21.

<sup>16</sup> P. Balija, »Sve se razgrabi ko je bolje mogo: krađe iz ruševina nakon dubrovačkog potresa 1667. godine«: p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> On 17 June, two months after the earthquake, the Senate decided on a salary raise of 5 grossi daily to encourage the labourers in public works (R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak*: pp. 119).

<sup>18</sup> R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak*: pp. 96, 260. Damjan Bobali, who at the time of the earthquake was slightly above the age of one, was rescued from the rubble, survived fever, and lived to settle down and start his own family. See Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 7 - Genealogije (A-L)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2016: pp. 34-35.

generation of students of the Jesuit College met their end under the rubble, young men who were preparing for important private and government affairs.<sup>19</sup>

The foundling hospital had virtually lost its entire administration staff in the disaster.<sup>20</sup> Of the four noblemen chosen as overseers of the hospital, three were killed. Among the latter were both officials responsible for payments, Junije Lampričin Cerva<sup>21</sup> and Savin Marinov Menze, along with Serafin Kristov Caboga,<sup>22</sup> one of the officials in charge of the records. Orsat Savinov Ragnina was the sole survivor, official who had assumed duty at the hospital less than a month before the earthquake.<sup>23</sup> Absence of management best mirrored the situation in other state institutions which had also lost the bulk of their administration. The rector was also killed in the earthquake, all members of the Minor Council, almost all judges and a half of the Senate and Major Council membership.<sup>24</sup>

The foundling hospital housed a fairly small number of wards. The majority, probably more than one hundred according to the estimates from a later period,<sup>25</sup> were most commonly sent to the surrounding villages which, apparently, were not so severely hit by the earthquake. Several dozen foundlings remained in the care of the rural families after the earthquake, whose upkeep the hospital had to pay. Wet nurses did not earn much, one grosso per child per day, yet in the given circumstances every income was welcome. Also, it was important that an “extra mouth” did not overburden the already meagre budget of a rural family often living on the verge of poverty.

### *Earthquake in the hospital ledgers*

Only one ledger from the hospital’s pre-earthquake period has survived. A volume entitled *Oblighi delli figlioli che si distribuiscono dall’Ospital della Misericordia*, in which the contracts concerning adoption of foundlings or their

<sup>19</sup> R. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: pp. 243-244.

<sup>20</sup> *Leges et instructiones*, ser. 21.1, vol. 3, ff. 369, 372, SAD.

<sup>21</sup> N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 7 - Genealogije (A-L)*: p. 245.

<sup>22</sup> N. Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 7 - Genealogije (A-L)*: p. 210.

<sup>23</sup> *Leges et instructiones*, vol. 3, f. 369.

<sup>24</sup> P. Balija, »Sve se razgrabi ko je bolje mogo: krađe iz ruševina nakon dubrovačkog potresa 1667. godine«: p. 171.

<sup>25</sup> R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: pp. 312-313.

admission to service were entered, was most likely kept at the chancery of the Rector's Palace and not in the hospital building itself, which might explain its survival and intact state.<sup>26</sup> In a formula-based record, the adopters or foster parents agreed before the *Hospitale misericordiae* officials to treat the ward properly. An evident absence of entries in the *Oblighi* volume after the earthquake may lead to a conclusion that the adoption of wards in the mentioned period was highly unpopular.<sup>27</sup> Side remarks in the books containing wet-nursing contracts, as well as those in the oldest book of expenditures point to the fact that children were adopted after all, but the contracts were registered in some other book or even books which have not been preserved.<sup>28</sup>

The hospital chaplain must have kept the baptism register,<sup>29</sup> and presumably, also the register of deaths, since the burials of the foundlings had to be registered, among other things, for the payment of the gravedigger. Both registers, in all likelihood, did not survive the earthquake.<sup>30</sup> The same may also be said of the other business books, journal and the general ledger, in which the expenditures, that is, payments to the wet nurses and other hospital business associates were entered, along with the wet-nursing contracts.

Nearly nine weeks after the earthquake, on 15 June 1667, a book entitled *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667* was established.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Enclosed with f. 303 is one half of the paper from 1759 containing record on the adoption of Marija, a four-year-old little girl, signed by Testi, with reference to f. 95 from the *Oblighi* volume. Books of adoption were filed in the chancery, and were kept by the same persons that kept the chancery documents. See: *Maestro del 1740 in 1758*, ser. 46, vol. 9f, SAD. It appears likely that the *Diversa Notariae* documents were also kept there, in which the first entry after the earthquake is dated 22 June 1667 (f. 81), and the last before the disaster was entered on 30 March 1667 (f. 80), without discontinuity. See: *Diversa Notariae*, ser. 26, vol. 140, SAD.

<sup>27</sup> *Oblighi delli figlioli che si distribuiscono dall' Ospital della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 24, f. [18], SAD.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example: *Libro Maestro dell'anno 1683*, ser. 46, vol. 8b, f. 9, SAD; *Libro dell'Hospitale Della Misericordia 1690*, ser. 46, vol. 8c, f. 69, SAD; *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, ser. 46, vol. 17, f. 69, SAD.

<sup>29</sup> On the foundling hospital baptism registers and the choice of the wards' godparents see: Rina Kralj-Brassard, Irena Ipšić and Ivana Lazarević, »Godparents Network of the Dubrovnik Foundlings (17th-19th centuries)«. *Annales de démographie historique* 130/2 (2015): pp. 161-185.

<sup>30</sup> Apart from performing baptism and burial rituals for the wards, for which he was remunerated, Nikola Melei, foundling hospital chaplain, at least once in the early 1668 procured books for the *Hospitale misericordiae*. It is quite possible that he made them himself (*Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, f. 13).

<sup>31</sup> *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17.



Recorded chronologically over a period of fifteen years are the payments made to wet nurses and other business associates of the hospital. Judging by the nature of the records, the register may be said to resemble a journal (*Giornale*).<sup>32</sup> Valuable records from this book are by far the most significant testament of the hospital's organisation in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.

The first entry in the new book refers to an external wet nurse Frana Lukina from Čelopeci, who on 15 June 1667 received two payments of 4 perpers and 2 grossi each.<sup>33</sup> With the first payment, the name of the child was not been entered, while with the second payment the same wet nurse was recorded, along with the boy's name, Mato. Given that the same amount is recorded twice, they probably concern wet-nursing payments. Twenty-four payments were recorded on that same day, and all but one concerned wet-nursing, or caring for the foundling. In one case the payment was made for the delivery of the child.<sup>34</sup> In the first three days, 55 payments were recorded in a neat and legible handwriting.<sup>35</sup> Sequenced in numerical order, each entry included information on the wet nurse in a triple formula—name, name of husband or, far less frequently, nickname of the wet nurse, and residence. Also entered was the name of the child, spelt out payment sum, and remarks.

The wet nurses usually received round amounts for their work, most commonly a two-month amount of 5 perpers. External wet nurses usually earned one grosso a day. Among the first wet-nursing payments after the earthquake, the amounts of 4 perpers and 2 grossi prevail, with an explanation that they are actually additions or complements (*compimento*) of the wet-nursing compensation for the period from 1 May to 15 June, the payment day. Information on the addition is vital, because it shows that by 1 May a larger group of external wet nurses had already received salary or the so-called *poliza*, a receipt on the basis of which they received salary for breastfeeding the foundlings. Only three weeks after the earthquake, possibly the only survived foundling hospital official organised the payment for the external wet nurses and had it recorded, most likely on a provisional piece of paper. That paper was later used for the calculation of the wet nurses' payment additions once the proper book of payments was established in journal form. The books of wet nurses' salaries were properly kept since 1 May at the latest.

---

<sup>32</sup> On this type of books see: R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrda*: p. 94.

<sup>33</sup> One perper was equivalent to 12 grossi.

<sup>34</sup> *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, ff. 1-1v.

<sup>35</sup> *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, ff. 1-3.

In the dramatic period following the earthquake, shortly after a twenty-day fire had been extinguished while the earth still trembled until 23 April,<sup>36</sup> a certain form of administration was established in the foundling hospital.<sup>37</sup> Care of the foundlings was not among the issues that called for urgent action because, judging by the decisions of the patrician assembly of 20 April, state priorities included the sale of salt, aquaduct and water supply, grain supply and repairs of mills, supply of bread, beans, and other food produce, customs office, supervision of the treasury and general health measures aimed at the protection against epidemic diseases.<sup>38</sup>

Three days prior to the multiple wet-nursing payment entries, the Senate appointed the city overseers (*provisores civitatis*) to propose the ways how to clear the city from rubble and the number of labourers to be hired for it, and also to come forward with a solution for the relocation of the treasury and offices in the Sponza. On 16 June, the day after the first wet-nursing payment entry, the same state body decided that 500 ducats be secured for the provision of the necessary building material: steel and wood.<sup>39</sup> Between these two important decisions, most likely under the scrutiny of the foundling hospital administrator, a precise record was carefully kept of the payments that wet nurses received from the city funds, the poor women from Dubrovnik's countryside. The crisis notwithstanding, the city managed to maintain indirect links with its outlying district area.

### *Restoration and organisation after the earthquake*

On 16 June 1667, for the first time after the earthquake, the Senate decided that a regular monthly amount of 300 perpers be secured for the operation of the *Hospitale misericordiae*.<sup>40</sup> This decision may be considered pivotal in terms

---

<sup>36</sup> R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak*: p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> An equally prompt reaction to the establishment of essential structures in the services that did not fall within state priorities may be seen in the conduct of the members of the Dubrovnik clergy. By the start of May, the Church restored its services. As the chancellor of the curia was killed in the earthquake, on 4 May 1667 general vicar Bernard Georgi named Vlaho Squadri as chancellor instead of Archbishop Torres. K[onstantin] Vojnović, *Prilozi k arhivalnijem pabircima Dubrovačkijem*. Zagreb: Tisak Dioničke tiskare, 1896: p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak*: pp. 56-57.

<sup>39</sup> R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak*: pp. 119.

<sup>40</sup> *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (hereafter: *Cons. Rog.*) ser. 3, vol. 115, f. 65v, SAD.

of the hospital's full normalisation.<sup>41</sup> The mentioned decision was passed thirteen days following the recording of the Senate's first regular decisions after the earthquake.<sup>42</sup> The funding was to be secured by the customs officers from petty revenues and taxes imposed on the sale of wax. From the same sources the *Hospitale misericordiae* was to receive 300 perpers for its operation in August, September, October and November 1667 respectively.<sup>43</sup>

As the hospital building was damaged in the earthquake, by decision of the Senate of 1 August 1667 a provisional structure had to be found in the city or in the suburbs. Appointed for this task were the rector and the members of the Minor Council.<sup>44</sup> Apparently, the Senators deemed that a building for this purpose and in a relatively good condition might have been found within the city walls. From the Senate decisions of the early 1668, it is clear that such a building was found at Pile.<sup>45</sup> Shortly after the earthquake, the *Hospitale misericordiae* admitted abandoned children, as documented by a usual payment for the child's delivery entered on 15 June 1667.<sup>46</sup> Also, payments related to new wet-nursing contracts were entered on 15 June, 3 and 5 July.<sup>47</sup> In less than two months after the earthquake, a place for children's delivery was already secured. We can merely speculate on the location, whether it was the original hospital building, still habitable to certain extent despite the earthquake, or some other structure, perhaps the home of a wet nurse at some convenient city location. The search for a suitable provisional accommodation of the foundling hospital was not assigned to the hospital officials, although they had assumed that office on the previous day. This decision may be accounted by their youth and inexperience.

---

<sup>41</sup> Termination of the emergency state was also noted by the Church authorities, when on 20 June 1667 the general vicar revoked the emergency confession authorisation previously issued to the priests (K. Vojnović, *Prilozi k arhivalnijem pabircima Dubrovačkijem*: p. 46).

<sup>42</sup> *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 115, f. 55.

<sup>43</sup> *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 115, ff. 103, 124-124v, 144v, 147v.

<sup>44</sup> *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 115, f. 103.

<sup>45</sup> R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: p. 51. The first explicit mention of the building of the *Hospitale misericordiae* as a place to which a foundling was delivered dates from 5 August 1668 (*Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, f. 27v).

<sup>46</sup> Lukrecija Franova from Brgat brought a baptised girl by the name of Marija (*Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, f. 1).

<sup>47</sup> Vica Nikolina from Ombla took foundling Đuro in care on 1 June, whilst the first wet-nursing payment of 2 perpers and 6 grossi was entered on 15 June (*Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, f. 1v). Marija Lukina from Petrovo Selo took Pera on 3 July, while Marija Markova from Konavle took Marija on 5 July (*Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, f. 3v).

The newly-chosen administrators were between twenty and twenty-five years of age. On 30 July, chosen to hold the office of paymaster (*de pagamento*) was Rado Vladislavov Gozze, and Miho Martoličin Cerva and Orsat Marinov Sorgo as recorders (*de scritta*).<sup>48</sup> Due to great human losses, on 1 December 1667 the Major Council brought special decisions concerning the filling of state offices.<sup>49</sup> These decisions made no explicit reference to the office of the administrator of the *Hospitale misericordiae*.

The foundling hospital was provisionally located in a building at Pile, probably at the old hospital *ai sette scalini*.<sup>50</sup> As evidenced by the sources, it did not remain at this address for long, for in 1691, during the “Plague of the Maidservants”, the *Hospitale misericordiae* was located within the city walls.<sup>51</sup> For the reconstruction of the foundling hospital after the earthquake the means could also have been secured from the funds intended for the restoration of religious buildings. Falling within *fabbriche sacre*, the same category as *Hospitale misericordiae*, was also the poor house at Pile.<sup>52</sup> The new building of the foundling hospital at Pile was completed in 1699, in which the *Hospitale misericordiae* operated until 1888, when the two state hospitals—*Domus Christi* and *Hospitale misericordiae*—merged under the roof of the new hospital at Boninovo.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> *Leges et instructiones*, vol. 3, ff. 369, 372. Miho Martoličin Cerva (1642-1675) entered the Major Council in 1662, Rado Vladislav Gozze (1647-1707) in 1665, and Orsat Marinov Sorgo (1643-1712) only in 1667. See: Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 5 - Odabrane biografije (E-Pe)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2014: pp. 351-352; idem, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 6 - Odabrane biografije (Pi-Z)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2015: pp. 175-176; idem, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika, 7 - Genealogije (A-L)*: p. 246.

<sup>49</sup> R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak*: p. 242.

<sup>50</sup> Risto Jeremić and Jorjo Tadić, *Prilozi za istoriju zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika*, vol. II. Beograd: Centralni higijenski zavod, 1939: p. 204.

<sup>51</sup> Rina Kralj-Brassard, »A City Facing the Plague: Dubrovnik«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 20 (2016): p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> A sum of 2,196 scudas and 32 grossi was spent for the new foundling hospital, and for the poor house a round sum of 500 scudas. See: Đ. Körbler, *Pisma opata Stjepana Gradića Dubrovčanina Senatu Republike Dubrovačke od godine 1667. do 1683.*: pp. 138-139.

<sup>53</sup> R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: pp. 54-55. For a more extensive account see: Rina Kralj-Brassard, »Pozornice milosrđa: smještaj zgrada dubrovačkog nahodišta (1432-1927)«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 50 (2012): pp. 39-62.

*Wet nurses and home wards in the second half of 1667*

On the basis of the payment entries in the first hospital ledger started after the earthquake, certain details on wet nurses, wards and the hospital expenditures come to light. Here analysed are the payments made in the period from June to December 1667.

The manner in which the names of wet nurses were entered—name, name of husband, and residence—enables a reliable establishment of the number of hired wet nurses and their residences in the latter half of 1667. The hospital's scribes meticulously recorded the names of wet nurses, rarely changing only the residence entry.<sup>54</sup> In the second half of 1667, the wet-nursing network included 104 women.<sup>55</sup> The majority, more than three quarters of them, lived in Župa and Rijeka dubrovačka (Table 1, Graph 1). This result does not come as a surprise considering that wet-nursing of the foundlings represented a welcome addition to the meagre home budget of the women in rural areas. Noble families recruited wet nurses from the same countryside areas.<sup>56</sup> Located within ten kilometres from Dubrovnik, these well-populated rural areas were at a three- to four-hour walking distance from the city. The wet nurses could thus relatively quickly come to pick up their wages or a new foundling. Petrovo Selo topped the list in terms of the number of women recruited as wet nurses, since as many as fourteen received wet-nursing payment from the foundling hospital. The popularity of wet-nursing among the local women of Petrovo Selo continued over a longer period, as evidenced by a larger number of wet nurses also hired later by the *Hospitale misericordiae*.<sup>57</sup> Large representation of wet nurses from Rijeka and Župa dubrovačka has also been confirmed in the one-year contract samples from 1674 and 1679.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> For example, as residence of Jakuša Vlahušina, who breastfed foundling Antun for a number of years, Mokošica was entered in several cases, yet Ombla prevailed (*Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, ff. 2v, 5, 9, 12v).

<sup>55</sup> One woman was entered solely as a person who delivered a child, and therefore was not counted among the wet nurses (*Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia 1667*, vol. 17, f. 1v).

<sup>56</sup> Wet nurse of Damjan Bobali came from the area of Rijeka dubrovačka (R. Samardžić, *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak*: p. 96). Four children of the nobleman Andrija Pozza, born in the second half of the sixteenth century, were breastfed by wet nurses from Župa dubrovačka (R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: p. 171).

<sup>57</sup> Fourteen women, more than one quarter of the women listed as residents of Petrovo Selo in 1674, were employed by the foundling hospital (R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: p. 186).

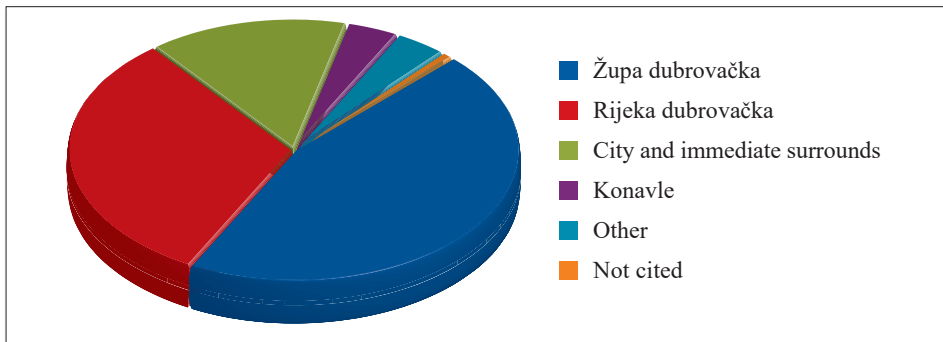
<sup>58</sup> R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: p. 186.

Table 1. Residence of wet nurses according to wet-nursing contracts for the *Hospitale misericordiae* wards recorded from 15 June to 31 December 1667

Residence of wet nurse	Number of wet nurses	Proportion of the number of wet nurses (%)
Župa dubrovačka	47	45.19
Rijeka dubrovačka	33	31.73
City and immediate surrounds	15	14.42
Konavle	4	3.85
Other	4	3.85
Not cited	1	0.96
<i>Total</i>	104	100.00

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 17.

Graph 1. Residence of wet nurses according to wet-nursing contracts for the *Hospitale misericordiae* wards recorded from 15 June to 31 December 1667



The exact number of foundlings, as opposed to wet nurses, cannot be easily determined, because the children were recorded by the name only. The hospital journal, unlike the general ledger,<sup>59</sup> does not contain information on the foundling's eventual change of wet nurse. Hence, we cannot exclude cases of a single foundling reappearing in several contracts with different wet nurses who all breastfed him at some point.<sup>60</sup> By rearranging chronologically the payment entries of a specific

<sup>59</sup> The general ledger contains wet-nursing contracts, each of which includes the name of wet nurse, foundling and date from which the child was breastfed, as well as all payments to the wet nurse, along with additional remarks on the fate of the foundling or wet nurse. For more on general ledgers of the foundling hospital see: R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: pp. 94-95.

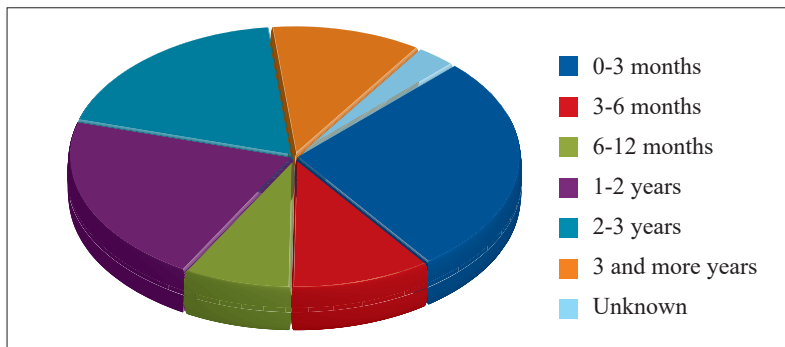
<sup>60</sup> For an example of this practice see R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa*: pp. 192-193.

Table 2. Term of payment for breastfeeding the wards of the *Hospitale misericordiae* according to contracts recorded from 15 June to 31 December 1667

Duration of wet-nursing payment	Number of wet-nursing contracts	Proportion of wet-nursing contracts (%)
0-3 months	35	27.56
3-6 months	13	10.24
6-12 months	10	7.87
1-2 years	27	21.26
2-3 years	24	18.90
3 and more years	14	11.02
Unknown	4	3.15
<i>Total</i>	127	100.00

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 17.

Graph 2. Term of payment for breastfeeding the wards of the *Hospitale misericordiae* according to contracts recorded from 15 June to 31 December 1667



wet nurse in the journal, it is possible to reconstruct the entries as they are usually encountered in the general ledger. By doing so, only rarely can we obtain information on the foundling's fate. Yet, having in mind the abovementioned limitations, it is possible to establish the time period during which the wet nurses received payments for a particular foundling. Thus obtained information can be used as a fairly rough indicator of the foundling mortality rate. Traced for the purpose of this investigation are the wet-nursing payments until the end of 1670, so that the longest possible contract term was somewhat above three and a half years. It should be noted that in order to calculate the term of contract, taken as the first payment entry was that which appears first in the ledger, although many contracts were of an earlier initial date. The actual term of

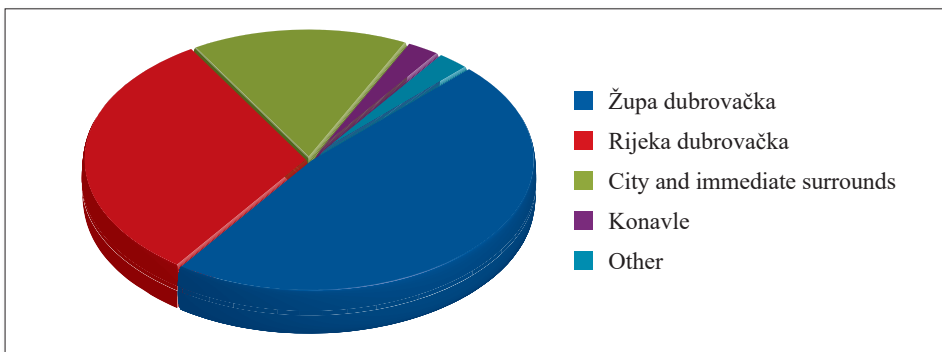
contract may be longer than that calculated on the basis of payment entries. Also, it ought to be taken into consideration that the contracts could have been terminated not only due to the foundling's death but also due to the completed breastfeeding period. For more than one half of the contracts, the payments were made over a period of one year at least, while approximately every tenth contract lasted three years and more (Table 2, Graph 2). One half of the wards lived at least one year with the same wet nurse. By analysing the wet nurses' residences on the basis of contracts by which the payments lasted two years and longer, no significant discrepancies with regard to the wet nurses' residence pattern in other contracts have been established (Table 3, Graph 3).

Table 3. Residence of wet nurses according to wet-nursing contracts for the *Hospitale misericordiae* wards recorded from 15 June to 31 December 1667, with payments that lasted more than two years

Residence of wet nurse	Number of wet-nursing contracts	Proportion of wet-nursing contracts (%)
Župa dubrovačka	18	47.37
Rijeka dubrovačka	12	31.58
City and immediate surrounds	6	15.79
Konavle	1	2.63
Other	1	2.63
<i>Total</i>	38	100.00

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 17

Graph 3. Residence of wet nurses according to wet-nursing contracts for the *Hospitale misericordiae* wards recorded from 15 June to 31 December 1667, with payments that lasted more than two years





Thirteen wet nurses, or 12.5% of the total number, cared for several wards at the same time. Among the parallel wet-nursing contracts, approximately one half concern contracts with payments made over two or more years. To some extent, this result does not come as a surprise, because another ward was usually taken into care once the previous had been nurtured.

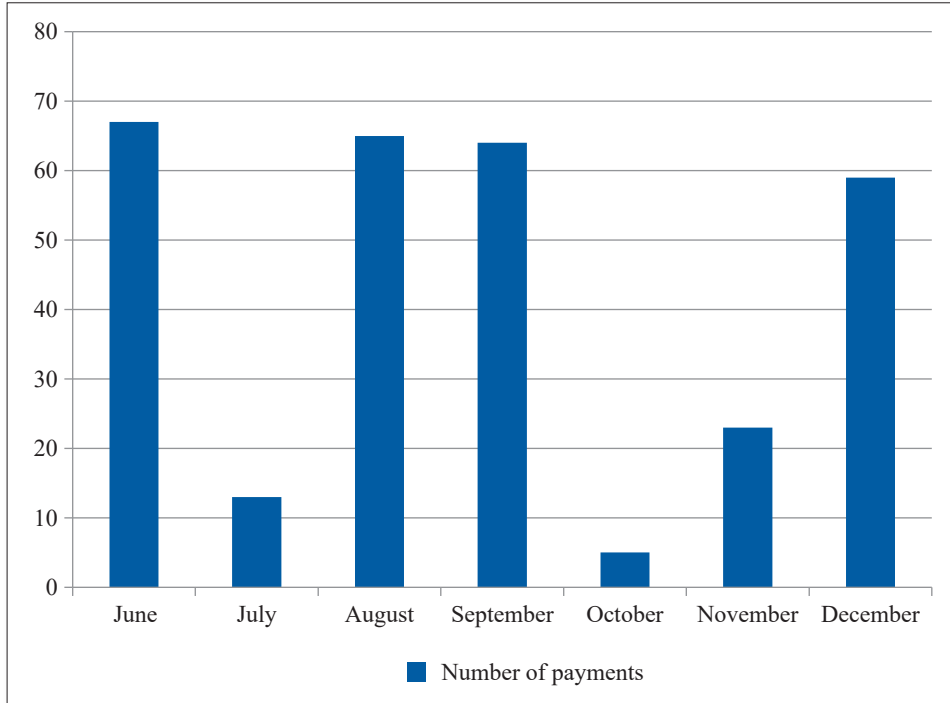
*The rhythm of payments and the Hospitale misericordiae expenditures*

Table 4. Number of payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* from 15 June to 31 December 1667 by month

	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Number of payments	67	13	65	64	5	23	59	296
Proportion (%)	22.63	4.39	21.96	21.62	1.69	7.77	19.93	100.00

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 17, ff. 1-13v.

Graph 4. Number of payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* from 15 June to 31 December 1667 by month



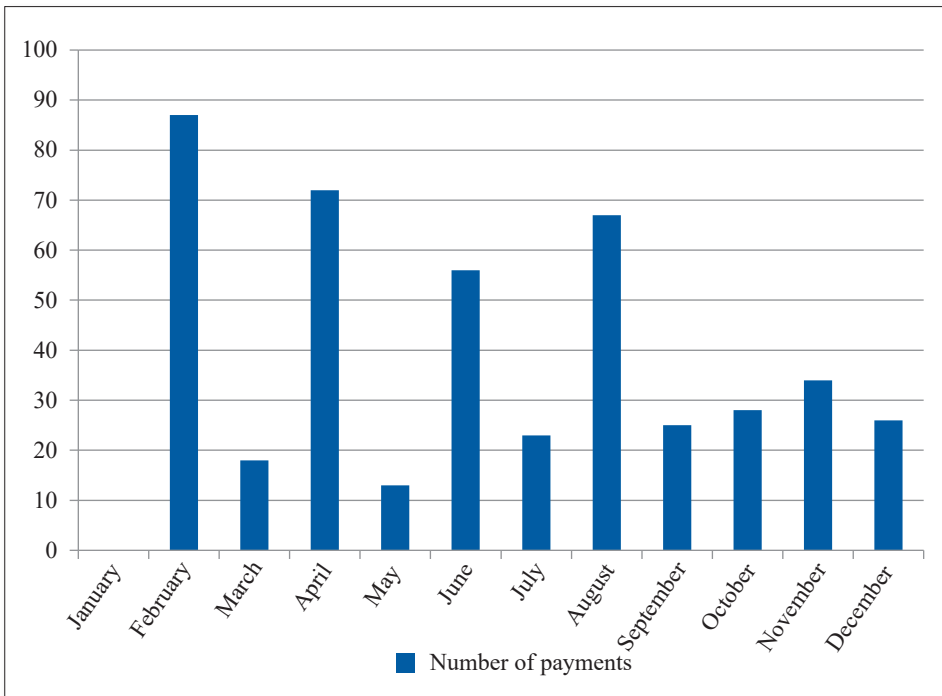
As confirmation that the foundling hospital had restored its usual activity soon after the earthquake is the regular rhythm in which the wet nurses were paid (Table 4, Graph 4). A large number of payments in June was followed by a gap in July. A similar drop in payments has also been observed in October. July is a hot summer month marked by busy farm work, which might explain why the wet nurses perhaps avoided coming to the city. The number of newly-admitted wards cannot seriously impact the total number of payments, considering that in the seventeenth century two to three children were admitted monthly on average.

Table 5. Number of payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* in 1668 by month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Number of payments	0	87	18	72	13	56	23	67	25	28	34	26	449
Proportion (%)	0	19.38	4.01	16.04	2.90	12.47	5.12	14.92	5.57	6.24	7.57	5.79	100.00

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 17.

Graph 5. Number of payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* in 1668 by month



A comparison with the rhythm of payments in 1668 (Table 5, Graph 5) also exhibits a characteristic July gap. A sporadic, “sharply peaked” diagram, in which a month with numerous payments interchanges with a month with sparse payments, is probably a consequence of two-month payments. A larger group of wet nurses who received their payment in the first month came to collect their salary after approximately sixty days. The peaks resulting from a larger number of payments tended to ebb with time.

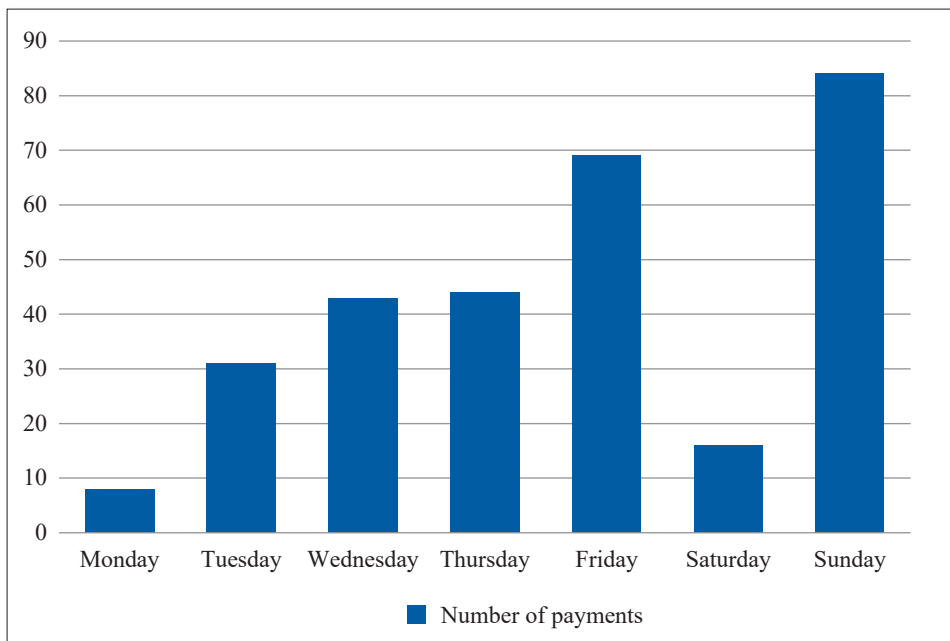
Table 6. Payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* from 15 June to 15 December 1667 by days of the week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Number of payments	8	31	43	44	69	16	84	295
Proportion (%)	2.71	10.51	14.58	14.92	23.39	5.42	28.47	100.00

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia*, ser. 46, vol. 17

Note: In one case the day of the week could not be established, hence that payment entry was omitted from calculation

Graph 6. Payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* from 15 June to 15 December 1667 by days of the week



It is noteworthy that of all weekdays Sunday, a day of rest, features a relatively largest number of payment entries in the second half of 1667 (Table 6, Graph 6) and during 1668 (Table 7, Graph 7).

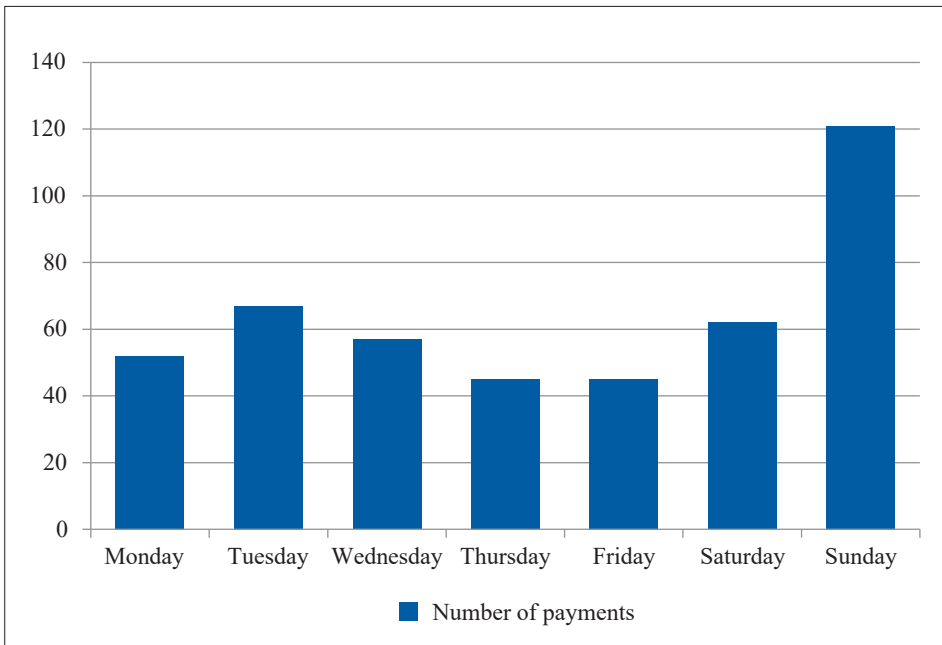
Table 7. Payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* in 1668 by days of the week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Number of payments	52	67	57	45	45	62	121	449
Proportion (%)	11.58	14.92	12.69	10.02	10.02	13.81	26.95	100.00

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia* ser. 46, vol. 17.

Note: In one case the day of the week could not be established, hence that payment entry was omitted from calculation

Graph 7. Payment entries at the *Hospitale misericordiae* in 1668 by days of the week



The usual and regular monthly support of the foundling hospital approved by the Senate was 300 perpers. This amount usually sufficed for the current costs of the hospital's operation. The bulk went for the wet-nursing payments. A comparison between the hospital's funding from June to December 1667 and

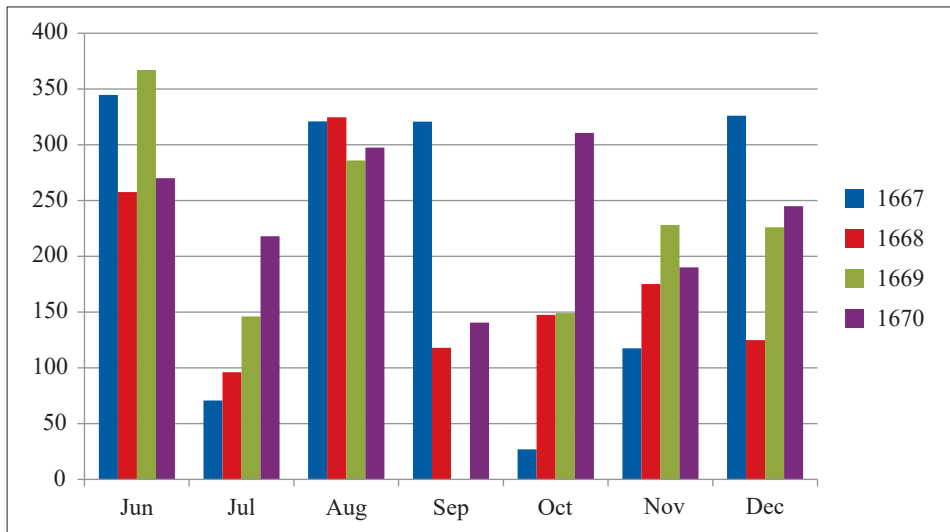
the seven-month periods in the next three years leads to a conclusion that the hospital's expenditures in the period immediately after the earthquake did not deviate considerably from those in 1668, 1669 and 1670 (Table 8, Graph 8). A similar conclusion may be made on the basis of comparison with the annual expenditures of *Hospitale misericordiae* in 1674, which amounted to 1,937.16 perpers.<sup>61</sup>

Table 8. Monthly payments for breastfeeding and care of the *Hospitale misericordiae* wards from 1667 to 1670

Year	Month							Total
	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1667	344.64	70.85	321	320.67	27	117.5	326	1,527.66
1668	257.67	96	324.67	118	147.50	175	125	1,243.84
1669	367	146	286	0	149	228	226	1,402
1670	270	218	297.5	140.66	310.66	190	244.83	1,671.65

Source: *Registro delle Polize dell'Ospidal della Misericordia* ser. 46, vol. 17

Graph 8. Monthly payments for breastfeeding and care of the *Hospitale misericordiae* wards from 1667 to 1670



<sup>61</sup> R. Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrda*: p. 72.

### *Conclusion*

The study of the operation of the *Hospitale misericordiae* in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake has shown that extraordinary vitality of the Dubrovnik Republic state institutions was not merely confined to the domains that may be considered of vital importance for the survival of a destroyed city, such as the defence system, for example. The fact that three out of four administrators of the foundling hospital were killed in the earthquake and that the building itself was most certainly heavily damaged proved no obstacle to the restoration of this institution and its functioning, for as early as 1 May, less than a month from the earthquake, first wet-nursing payments were recorded, on 15 June the journal, book of business records, was established, and new foundlings were admitted.

Lack of sources unables detailed comparison of the operation of the foundling hospital before and after the earthquake. The entries in the hospital's ledgers over a period of seven months after the earthquake provide sufficient data for drawing an outline of the network of wet nurses and foundlings. The bulk of one hundred and four wet nurses were recruited from the area of Rijeka and Župa dubrovačka, more densely populated city surrounds, the oldest parts of the Dubrovnik district. The number of wet-nursing contracts (127) is bigger than that of wet nurses, because some wet nurses received payments for several foundlings. With regard to residence distribution, no difference has been established between wet nurses with parallel contracts, along with those with long-term contracts, and the rest of wet nurses. Therefore, on the basis of payment entries, it is not possible to determine whether a certain area of the Dubrovnik district distinguished itself in terms of a larger number of wet nurses with parallel contracts or wet nurses with long-term contracts. Parallel contracts and long-term contracts point to more agile wet nurses, whose wards had better survival prospects. At least one half of all contracts lasted one year or longer, which may serve as a rough indicator of the ward mortality. It is certain that at least one half of all foundlings survived one year of breastfeeding.

The financial "bloodstream" of the state foundling hospital was appropriately restored soon after the earthquake. The means approved by the Senate, the usual sum of 300 perpers, on monthly basis most commonly, proved sufficient for the operation of the foundling hospital. The hospital costs in the aftermath of the earthquake did not deviate significantly in relation to the costs of the next three years.

An unusually speedy restoration of the state foundling hospital is a testimony of the elite's efforts to bring back to normal conditions even those institutions whose role in society may have been marginal, yet was of symbolic value as a "stage of charity".