

Political Conflict and Violence in Late Medieval Dalmatian Towns*

This paper explores the role of political violence by considering selected cases of social crises, specifically in Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir and Split, where the use of violence affected social and power relations. One case was chosen to represent each city, and each example provides specific insights into the “culture of violence” in late medieval Dalmatian towns, particularly in comparison to Italian communes. The article also incorporates theoretical observations and concepts regarding the influential role of violence in altering or maintaining social order, which is evident in direct interactions and confrontations.

Keywords: crisis; political conflict; violence; identity; late medieval Dalmatia

Introduction

In the context of medieval crises and catastrophes, the main goal of this paper is to reflect on selected cases of political conflict and violence in several late medieval Dalmatian towns. Although the original conference presentation focused mostly on the case of Trogir, this paper expands the scope of research to the cases from Zadar, Šibenik and Split.¹ Political conflicts, violence and unrest represent extreme manifestations of so-

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1 This article represents an expanded version of the conference presentation titled „Political Violence, Social Crisis and Communal Identity in Late Medieval Trogir“, given at the 5th *Triennale Towns and Cities of the Croatian Middle Ages: Crises and Catastrophes* in Zagreb, 2022.

cial crises, which crucially affected the process of social and institutional development in any past society. However, besides violence being an extreme manifestation of an ongoing social crisis, the outbreak of conflicts and political violence heavily influenced the forming of collective identities within each respective local community. The main antagonists and harbingers of social crises were more often than not the notorious local factions. However, they remained a crucial component of the social and political structure of the late medieval Dalmatian (and predominantly Mediterranean in general) communes.

One of the most researched and well-known urban areas in this regard is that of Northern and Central Italy. In the light of that, the paper will consider cases of political conflicts and violence in the Dalmatian towns of Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir and Split, whilst drawing upon a vast field of historiographical research about the politics of factions and the culture of violence, primarily in late medieval Italian cities. In that sense, the paper begins with the idea that internal conflicts are to be understood as an integral element of social and political life in late medieval urban communities.² Conflicts can manifest themselves in a latent or open manner. Namely, latent tensions have always been present in relations between divided groups that were competing for resources and social hegemony. However, in some cases these latent tensions could have burst into an open conflict and outright local factional wars.³

Accordingly, this paper will use the applied term “factions” for these kinds of political groups, due to the focus being put on conflicts which were centered around the seizure of political power and the subsequent control of material, symbolic and human resources that came along with it. Exactly in that sense, the paper will also utilize theoretical notions regarding the role of political violence as such from the field of political anthropology or sociology.⁴ In the subsequent sections of this paper the readers will find a more in-depth overview of the aforementioned historiographical literature and theoretical remarks. After that, selected cases of political turmoil in Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir and Split will be explored and shortly analyzed. At the end, the paper will provide some concluding remarks based on the insights presented throughout the discussion.

2 For that idea cf. Heers, *Parties and Political Life in the Medieval West*; Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities: Italy and the Southern Low Countries, 1370-1440*; Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe*; Valente, *The Theory and Practice of Revolt in Medieval England*.

3 For example, about the dynamics of factional conflicts in Italian cities, among other things, cf. Padgett, Ansell, „Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400 – 1434“, 1259-1319; Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates – Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune*; Martines, „Political Violence in the Thirteenth Century“, 331-353.

4 Cf. Schimdt, Schröder, „Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices“, 1-25; Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*; Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics*.

Historiography and theoretical framework

Out of the immense literature regarding factions or the culture of violence in Italy and other parts of the medieval West, it is possible to single out some of the most relevant studies. It would be useful to start from the studies that had a striving towards a synthetic understanding of the agency of political factions and the culture of violence. First of all, the studies of Jacques Heers can be understood as exemplary, namely his studies on the “family clans” and factional groups, with his primary research interest resting on the cities of northern Italy in the late middle ages.⁵ Relatively recently, a British historian Patrick Lantschner has in a way upgraded Heers’ work with his own comparative analysis of the “logic of political conflict” in selected cities of Northern Italy (Florence, Bologna, Verona) and Flanders (Tournai, Liege and Lille).⁶ However, we should also mention the pioneering book *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria* by Otto Brunner, which was important among other things for acknowledging the politics of feud and factions as important for truly understanding medieval societies.⁷

On the other hand, three selected books of conference proceedings also provide valuable and significant knowledge. The first one being the *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200-1500* (ed. Lauro Martines, 1972) with many pertinent insights on the role of violence and its social and even psychological roots.⁸ What is meant by psychological roots is in fact the emotional context and background of collective violence which, as it will be highlighted throughout this paper, influences the course of actions and motives for the outbreaks of violence and the induction of a vicious circle of vengeance and retaliation. Hence, the main objective of confronting one’s factional adversary in order to attain distinct political objectives can gradually devolve into a cycle of violent conflicts lacking any identifiable root cause, yet resulting in evident and devastating outcomes. Hence, the primary goal of tackling one’s factional opponent to achieve clear political goals can in time easily become a “ping-pong” of violent skirmishes with no discernible cause, but with clearly destructible consequences.⁹

The next title came out 40 years after the latter, namely *The Culture of Violence in Renaissance Italy* (ed. Samuel K. Cohn and Fabrizio Ricciardelli, 2012). This edition contributes by putting an emphasis on the idea that violence was not just commonplace, but basically an integral part of the world of the communes and its political practice. Besides that, some of the authors underlined that the conflict dynamics in the communes actually reflected the composite and poly-centric arrangement of power

5 Cf. Heers, *Parties and Political Life*; Heers, *Family Clans in the Middle Ages*.

6 Cf. Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict*; Lantschner, „Revolts and the Political Order of Cities in the Late Middle Ages“, 3-46.

7 Cf. Brunner, *Land and Lordship. Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*.

8 Cf. Martines, „Introduction: The Historical Approach to Violence“, 5-17.

9 About the emotional dimension of political conflict cf. Lansing, *Passion and Order. Restraint of Grief in the Medieval Italian Communes*.

relations. The more centers of power there are within the same community, the more conflicts are to be expected. The edition also sheds some new light on the *popolo* corporations and the commoners in general, reevaluating their agency as being much more important than thought before. Moreover, the edition clarifies that violence was not just the prerogative of the ruling groups, but rather it was necessary to consider the counter-use of violence by peasants, artisans, commoners and the like to enhance or retain their status and rights. Therefore, we need to think in terms of an ongoing process of compromise between the ruling and the ruled, in the context of which violence proved to be a “tool” for negotiation.¹⁰

Next in our scope is *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt* (ed. Justine Firnhaber-Baker, Dirk Schoenaers, 2017), which is important primarily due to its refined approach to methodology and the conceptualization of new research regarding medieval revolts and uprisings, which often entailed the use of violence in some form and degree. However, the edition brings in one place many research papers that deal with different historical regions, and not just with Italian cities, which makes it an excellent comparative material. It is evident that all the authors are showing much more interest in people themselves and their individual and collective agency than was the case before. Also, the edition advises us to be extra careful with the primary sources themselves because they are often biased in some way by their authors and their own agenda and interests. Besides all of that, the papers in this edition have exercised a profound interest in the status and position of the non-elites and the communicative strategies between the elites and the non-elites, in the context of which revolt and violence are understood as forms of communication and negotiation.¹¹

In the light of that, we can extract two additional monographs. In the *Theory and Practice of Revolt in Medieval England* (Ashgate, 2003) the author, Claire Valente, considered the perspective of the rebels and rioters against royal or local authorities in the late medieval period. In her analysis she came to the conclusion that political violence was not irrational, but rather it was very calculated. In other words, the rebels were in most cases aware of the social boundaries regarding legitimate and illegitimate usage of violence. Therefore, violence was an integral part of the political culture, not just in theory but also in the political practice of the day.¹²

On the other hand, one can read in much more detail about the role and agency of the non-elites in the works of Samuel K. Cohn, or more precisely in one of his books *Lust for Liberty. The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200-1450* and *Popular Protest in Late Medieval Europe. Italy, France and Flanders*.¹³ Cohn concluded, based on more than a thousand cases of revolts, upbringings, protests or outbreaks of

10 Cf. Cohn, Ricciardelli (ed.), *The Culture of Violence in Renaissance Italy*.

11 Cf. Firnhaber-Baker, Dirk Schoenaers (ed.), *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt*.

12 Cf. Valente, *The Theory and Practice of Revolt*.

13 Cohn, *Popular Protest in Late Medieval Europe. Italy, France and Flanders*; Cohn, *Lust for Liberty. The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200-1425*.

unrest in late medieval Europe, that in most of the cases the *casus belli* for the revolts was to be found in the introduction of new taxes or changes in the existing tax policy all over continental Europe. However, the situation in Northern Italy was much more complex, but still the notion of “moral economy” (introduced by E. P. Thompson) was prevalent there, as was in other parts of Europe. In other words, people revolted when their existing rights came into question. Therefore, the reasons for revolt are not being found purely in the economic sphere, but rather also in the symbolic one, due to which it is very useful to use the concept of “moral economy” in these kinds of research.

Regarding medieval violence as a topic of research by itself, we can also pinpoint some studies, starting with the study *Violence in Medieval Europe* by Warren Brown. The book explores the character of medieval violence, which is presented as something intrinsic to medieval society, but in most cases there was no real consensus about whether violence was good (legitimate) or bad (illegitimate). The author underlines that it depended on the situation and on the fact of who was using it against whom and for what purpose. In other words, the chronicle of medieval violence can be understood as the story of the norms that people used to either legitimize the use of violence by themselves and their allies or to denounce the use of violence by their opponents.¹⁴

On the other hand, we can also consider the book of proceedings “*A Great Effusion of Blood?*” *Interpreting Medieval Violence*. The contributors in this edition have emphasized some of the things that have been previously mentioned. Specifically, violence was integral to the processes by which social status was affirmed or challenged, and material resources distributed within communities, and intrinsically essential to the construction and upholding of social order. Violence is also crucial in the process of identity formation, in which the “us” is sacralized and juxtaposed against the “contamination” of “them” (the Other).¹⁵

All of these ideas and notions have been well implemented and thoroughly examined in an exemplary study *Mad Blood Stirring. Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* by Edward Muir. The author reconstructed a sequence of events from 1511 in which the two dominant Friuli factions clashed with extreme violence, until then basically unknown for the usual factional dynamics. The book shows us how the participants in factional conflicts mostly behaved according to traditional patterns and how the factions themselves served as an informal social institution which enabled collective action above the level of villages. However, factions were volatile and unstable social constructs, and therefore very fluid in their “membership”.¹⁶

On the other hand, we can examine selected studies of factionalism and the role of violence from a sociological or anthropological perspective, starting with the factional issue. We will pinpoint just two important authors in this respect – namely Jeremy Boissevain and Frederick Bailey. The first has authored the *Friends of Friends*.

¹⁴ Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe*.

¹⁵ Cf. Meyerson, Thiery, Falk (ed.), „*A Great Effusion of Blood?*“ *Interpreting Medieval Violence*.

¹⁶ Cf. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring. Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*.

Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions (New York, 1974), in which he provides us with a critique of the structuralist approach in sociology and anthropology by putting an emphasis on processes and interactions between individuals and informal groups – which truly represent social reality. In other words, where the structural model sees consensus and stability, the processual one reveals conflict and change. Boissevain explores various types of informal networks, and the patrons or brokers that lead them in their collective drive towards acquiring power and resources. The contestations between competing networks, more often than not, result in some kind of conflict which ultimately leads to short-term or even long-term changes in the overall structure and social relations in a given community.¹⁷

Following him is Frederick Bailey and his books *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics*, and the “sequel” *Treasons, Stratagems and Spoils: How Leaders make Practical Use of Beliefs and Values*.¹⁸ Bailey follows up closely with Boissevain, and in principle provides us with a comprehensive overview of what may be called simply the “political game”. Although his research is based on modern and contemporary events and political actors, the character of the “game” never truly changed. Therefore, regardless of the changes in historical conditions, theoretical notions and remarks about the social anthropology of politics are equally useful and vital for amplifying our capacity to fully comprehend and understand the politics of faction in medieval Mediterranean communes, or more precisely in this case in the selected late medieval Dalmatian towns. In short, in the first book Bailey distinguishes between the proclaimed norms and real practice in the “political arena” based on many modern examples. However, in the second book Bailey puts the focus more on the wider picture, thus underlining four main elements, namely political structure, historical context, actor’s agency and the subsequent set of actions and events which comprise the political processes. The factions compete over resources, whilst being limited by objective constraints and the feasibility of their political goals. The political arena proscribes normative rules for proper interaction, but in practice actors achieve victory by implementing strategic or pragmatic rules.

Having these general notions about the politics of factions and the “political game” in mind, our focus now turns to the topic of collective violence and conflict. First on the line is the collection of papers *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (ed. Bettina E. Schmidt, Ingo W. Schröder), which provides some fundamental insights about the transformative role of violence and violent conflicts. Conflicts and violence are never isolated from their historical context, and they are derived from the competitive relationship between divided and opposed political groups (factions). Besides that, violence is conditioned by the material infrastructure and prevalent cultural patterns of political behavior. Therefore, collective violence is never stripped from meaning, even

17 Boissevain, *Friends of Friends. Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*.

18 Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils. A Social Anthropology of Politics*; Bailey, *Treasons, Stratagems and Spoils: How Leaders make Practical Use of Beliefs and Values*.

when it really seems like a senseless act. In other words, society's cultural perspective induces conflicts by assigning a specific meaning to violent acts according to the experience of previous conflicts, which is subsequently preserved as objectified knowledge in a group's social memory. Therefore, acts of violence are in fact performative acts, which project specific and non-verbal messages to the targeted "audience". However, violence can be used as a tool for preserving the community and its existing social order, but also as a tool for deconstruction or transformation of the old social order into a new one according to the vision of the new power holders.¹⁹

These anthropological notions have been explored and implemented in the *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* by Max Bergholz. The author showed us that violence has a crucial role in creating and maintaining a certain stratification of power within a given social order. To paraphrase the author, intra-communal violence has the ability to swiftly alter the social and political identifications in ways that markedly differ from the conditions before a period of violent conflict. In that regard, each new wave of violent skirmishes facilitates and extremely accelerates the identity and boundary-making processes. Although destructive in nature, violence is at the same time a generative force which can uphold and transform existing identities or create new social identities and configurations of power. Therefore, violence can be understood not just as a form of behavior or a tool for maintaining or reconfiguring power relations, but also as the main catalyst for social change. Those that command and exercise violence in conflicts are able to create new sources and forms of power previously unknown.²⁰

At the same time, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the psychological dimension of this story. Violence implies injuries, murders, tortures, thefts etc., and all of that includes the negative emotion of pain, which manifests itself through mental and physical suffering – like in anger or anguish. In other words, the suffering contributes to the creation of a resilient and stern memory of the violent events, and the memory subsequently maintains the pain and bitterness of the past very much alive.²¹ The memory, a vengeance narrative in fact, also obliges new generations to avenge their predecessors, or in other words we can discern a fundamental connection between violence and memory. That connection generates necessary conditions for new outbreaks of collective violence in a vicious circle that goes beyond the "rational" interests or goals.²² Therefore, the repeated use of political violence over time contributed to the formation and longevity of a factional mentality (that is, a culture of violence), where even the most insignificant verbal insult could trigger a bloody factional war.

19 Cf. Schmidt, Schröder (ed.), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*.

20 Cf. Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community*.

21 Cf. Heers, *Parties and Political Life*, 197 and 255; Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates*, 164-166 and 183-191; Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty*, 63-75 and 93-94.

22 Cf. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring. Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*, 126.

The process of polarization which puts the emphasis on the boundaries and differences between opposed groups is understood as one of the main elements of political identities. Besides the boundaries which separate “us” from “them”, we need to underline also the shared stories about those boundaries, social relations across the boundaries, and social relations within the boundaries – to use some insights from Charles Tilly and his aforementioned book *The Politics of Collective Violence*.²³ Thus, violence affects memory and memory then amplifies the existing boundaries between the opposed groups, whilst widening the chasm of differences and reducing options for compromise or consensus. All these theoretical remarks cannot be implemented or actualized fully with the preserved primary sources for the late medieval Dalmatian cities, but nonetheless they enable us to conceptualize and comprehend much more clearly the political conflicts and collective violence in late medieval Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir and Split during the 14th, and the beginning of the 15th century.

Conflicts and Violence in Late Medieval Dalmatian Towns

First of all, we will examine two cases of conspiracies that occurred in Zadar in 1346, during the famous Venetian siege of the city. By examining these cases, we will touch upon not just the physical aspect of violence, but also upon its symbolic purpose and significance as a tool or medium for projecting messages that are supposed to, in this context, reinforce existing social hierarchies. In other words, we will explore the performativity of violent public spectacle on the example of Zadar. However, before venturing into the details of the riots and conspiracies, it is necessary to illustrate the historical context in which they came to pass. The Zaratins rebelled against Venetian rule in summer of 1345, encouraged by the young and ambitious Louis of Anjou, the king of Hungary. The Venetians tried to make the Zaratins think again about their rebellion by sending them several letters during June and July, but that did not change the Zaratins’ decision – thus the Venetians laid siege to Zadar on the 12th of August 1345.²⁴

The most important primary source which testifies about the siege is an extensive and unusual chronicle called *Obsidio Iadrensis*. The chronicle traces the events regarding the siege, meticulously and in much detail, from the summer of 1345 until January of 1347. But the authorship of the chronicle remains unknown to this day. Although it was previously speculated that it could be attributed to Nikola de

23 Again cf.: Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*, 32.

24 About the rebellion and the Venetian siege cf. Nikolić Jakus, „Vrijeme rata, kuge, zatočeništva. Zadar-ske plemićke obitelji i posljedice mletačke opsade 1345./1346. i Crne smrti“, 9-12; Begonja, „Sred-njovjekovno djelo Obsidio Iadrensis. Opsada Zadra kao povijesni izvor za prikaz vojnopomorske moći Venecije u 14. stoljeću“, 81-88; Kurelac, Karbić, „Uvod – Ljetopis Obsidionis Iadrensis libri duo, njegovo historiografsko i povijesno značenje“, 3-20. Klaić, Petricioli, *Zadar u srednjem vijeku do 1409.*, 242-244.

Matafaris, the then Zadar archbishop, who fled the city after the siege due to his resolute anti-Venetian attitude, it seems more likely that the author was some other Zadar cleric.

Although Zadar was a rich Dalmatian city, the Zaratins were ultimately no match for Venice without some serious external help and support. And in these circumstances, the Zaratins were in dire need of war galleys if they were to counter Venetian superiority on the sea. However, the Hungarian king Louis had no navy at his disposal to lift the Venetian siege. The fact that he came with an army and made camp in the vicinity of Zadar in the first half of November 1345 basically had no effect on the overall situation.²⁵ The king retreated from Zadar, but continued to encourage the Zaratins to maintain the rebellion, whilst promising to return again with his army. Although the king came back again in June 1346, the aftermath was the same due to the non-existence of any kind of fleet.²⁶ He was to enter Zadar in triumph only in 1358, when a much better planned war effort against Venice brought him victory and the acquisition of the entire Eastern Adriatic coast from Kvarner to Drač (Durrachium).²⁷

After several months the siege started to take its toll on the internal relations and attitudes within the city. Besides the frequent clashes between the Zaratins and the Venetian mercenaries and retainers, a great problem was the Venetian naval blockade (a standard tactic), by which it was forbidden for any ship to enter or exit the Zadar area. That subsequently led to problems with supply and food shortages, which became more obvious in January of 1346, when the first pro-Venetian conspiracy was discovered.²⁸ Although the chronicle does not reveal much about this situation, it provides us with the information about a small group of Zaratins who conspired with Venetians to deliver the city to them, with the help of a group of Venetian mercenaries. At the very same day, on the 23rd of January 1346, the Venetians tried to break through the defensive chain in the city harbor, counting on the conspirators to work for them from the inside. However, the Venetians did not succeed and the culprits were interrogated and tortured by the Zadar authorities, but the anonymous chronicle does not mention how these conspirators were punished.²⁹ The changed war-induced social and economic circumstances affected the radicalization of the political situation in the city – the longer the siege was to be maintained, the overall level of discontent among the Zadar population was to increase.

In that regard, the second conspiracy, from July 1346, had much more support and thus the chronicle dedicated an entire chapter just for the “plebeian sedition”, as he calls it.³⁰ This title obviously resonates the level of contempt a member of the political or ecclesiastic elite can harbor towards the “plebeians” who dare undermine the social

25 Glavičić et al., *Obsidio Iadrensis*, 25.

26 Glavičić et al., *Obsidio Iadrensis*, 29-30.

27 About that see in much more detail: Ančić, „Rat kao organizirani društveni poduhvat: Zadarski mir kao rezultat rata za Zadar“, 39-137.

28 Glavičić et al., *Obsidio Iadrensis*, 192-193.

29 *Ibid.*, 194-195.

30 *Ibid.*, 250-251.

order in the city – whilst having Venetian support. The commoners were growing restless during the summer of 1346, and the streets were becoming unsafe for the Zadar noblemen and the representatives of the city government, as they were the main targets for the commoners' insults. The commoners wanted to put an end to the siege, and to achieve some compromise with the Venetians, but the noblemen were strictly opposed to that. On the 19th of July 1346, an armed host of the city's commoners gathered on the main city square with the goal of delivering the city into Venetian hands, as they did not want to suffer any more under the Venetian siege, which by then lasted almost a year.³¹

The city authorities started to share large amounts of gold coins to the city commoners, but that did not solve anything. Moreover, and still on the same day, the armed groups of commoners started directly to demand Venetian rule over the city, and the noblemen apparently found themselves in an undesirable situation with no clear solution. Due to the fact that the governing rectors of the city refused to submit to Venetian rule, the commoners started to become even more audacious in their conduct and open support for the Venetian cause. The whole city found itself in a state of unrest and the defense of the city hanged by a thread. However, the main leader of the commoners' group, an unnamed but wealthy Zaratina citizen, for some reason escaped the city and joined the Venetian forces. That left the rest of the commoners without clear leadership, and the city rectors used that for their own advantage. With the help of commoners that stayed loyal to them, they succeeded in capturing some Zaratins who openly sided with the enemy. The prisoners confessed what they knew about the conspiracy and named the culprits. So, eleven of the most prominent rebels commoners were thrown into the dungeon, and among them was Bivald, son of Grgur de Botono, together with his own eldest son Grgur, who were in fact noblemen.³² The latter entirely changes the perspective of the situation, and the involvement of noblemen means that we are talking about a faction, and not about a "plebeian" uprising against the noblemen-led city government. Therefore, as in other medieval communes, the contestation between major powers over local communities exacerbated existing divisions within the political elite, which led to extreme polarization during times of social and political crises. And that is why situations of open conflict or crisis are useful in the context of understanding the dynamics of social and political processes, which are invisible in formal or ordinary primary sources. However, since we lack more relevant sources, it is also possible that the harsh conditions of the siege facilitated the development of a new social rupture, or at least extremely intensified latent and harmless divisions, which led to an open conflict.

According to the chronicler, two noblemen together with two commoners were executed for their involvement in the conspiracy. Four of the commoners were to be

31 *Ibid.*, 252-253.

32 *Ibid.*, 254-255 and 256-257.

blinded, and the rest locked in prison for eternity.³³ Although we do not know how the punishments were carried out, it is probable that the executions were public, especially given the fact how they executed noblemen together with commoners, which is a very rare case. It seems that the fiery anger of the commoners had to be extinguished with “noblemen’s blood”, but the guilty commoners had to be punished as well. However, we do not know if the punishments were really enforced in the way the chronicler narrates. Nonetheless, violence can also serve as a public spectacle or ritual that conveys clear messages to the rest of the populace about the “natural order” of things in the community.³⁴

We should also draw some attention to two further instances of political dissent that occurred in Zadar but are regrettably poorly documented. We are aware of them solely due to the *Memoriale* of the Zadar nobleman Pavao de Paulo, which tracks the history of Zadar and Dalmatia from the middle of the 14th until the beginning of the 15th century.³⁵ Specifically, we are talking about unsuccessful plans for uprisings in the years 1384 and 1401.³⁶ In the first case, Pavao writes that on the 8th of July 1384, a conspiracy in Zadar was discovered. Zaninus, the draper, his relative Dancarolus, Petar Franchalanca and Miscolo Milesich were identified as the main conspirators, and on the 11th of July they were all dragged (except Miscolo) around the city and subsequently decapitated on the main city square. Their decapitated bodies were kept on the square until the end of the day.³⁷ In the second case, Pavao mentions even more briefly that a tailor Antonio conspired with the shearer Angelo, son of Nikola, against the Zadar noblemen, with the goal of killing some of them. Antonio was decapitated on the 6th of December 1401 on the main city square.³⁸

It should be noted that the aforementioned professional designations, such as draper, tailor or shearer, do not imply that these individuals were mere workers. Indeed, it is much more likely that they were proprietors of artisan and craft workshops, or merchants in this kind of merchandise. But all in all, these two cases share obvious similarities with the situation from 1346, and the aspect of public humiliation and execution is even more pronounced. A violent and armed uprising in 1346, and two

33 *Ibid*, 256-257.

34 It is important to mention a recently discovered fragment of an inquisitional procedure against a Florentine mercenary in Venetian service by the name of Uguiccionus, who was brought to Zadar to achieve the capture of the city. The trial is documented between the 16th and 17th of September 1346, and the mercenary was sentenced to death by decapitation. His arrival was obviously a part of a new tactic after the failure of the uprising of commoners. Cf. Begonja, „Nervus belli, pecunia infinita – mletački plan o zauzeću Zadra u zapisniku inkvizicijskoga sudskog postupka iz 1346. godine“, 167-169. A certain „Tuscan“ with an „unjust conception“ and even „worse purpose“ is briefly mentioned in the chronicle, and obviously fits the description of the person of Uguiccionus. Cf. Glavičić et al., *Obsidio Iadrensis*, 272.

35 Cf. Šišić, „Ljetopis Pavla Pavlovića patricija zadarskoga“, 2-42.

36 Cf. Klaić, Petricioli, *Zadar u srednjem vijeku do 1409. godine*, 242-246.

37 Šišić, „Ljetopis Pavla Pavlovića patricija zadarskoga“, 8

38 *Ibid*, 33.

conspiracies to instigate violent uprisings in 1384 and 1401 were suppressed with violent retaliation and/or preemptive executions. In other words, “legitimate” violence is used to constrain “illegitimate” forms of violence, and thus violence basically always generates new violence. On the Zadar example we were considering cases in which violence in the service of maintaining the given social order triumphed over the violence which sought to make changes in that order and the existing power relations.

As it happens, we will now again scrutinize events induced by a Venetian siege – in this case in the city of Šibenik between October 1409 and October 1412. In other words, the focus will be on the commoner uprising, which happened in late August of 1409, and led to the banishment of the ruling noblemen group in the city and the establishment of several commoner captains. Not long after that, Venice started to encircle the city and launch a siege, which went poorly for them all the way until the middle of 1412, as was the case with their war efforts in Dalmatia in general. After the Venetians concluded an agreement with king Ladislaus of Naples, by which they acquired his rights and territory he controlled in Dalmatia, they immediately started to act upon it. Therefore, Venetian forces quickly established their rule in Zadar, its immediate surroundings and hinterland, in July, only days after the conclusion of the agreement. The Šibenik nobles were at the moment in favor of recognizing Venetian rule, but the commoners (or at least the organized part of them) staged the aforementioned coup in August 1409 to prevent such development.³⁹

However, the Venetian actions in Šibenik were not effective and quickly came to a halt. They probably had other priorities and the upcoming winter conditions were not assuring. Besides that, Sigismund, the king of Hungary, appointed a Czech knight, Pan Peter de Mislen, as his lieutenant and commander of the royal forces in Šibenik – placing there a detachment of troops. Together with him, the defense of the city was organized by the actual count of Šibenik Ivaniš Nelipić, the hereditary count of Cetina, who sent 300 men-at-arms to Šibenik.⁴⁰ It seems that the king tolerated the commoner captains and their acts against the Šibenik noblemen, as they were all united against Venice for the time being. However, some of the exiled Šibenik nobles actively engaged in Venetian interest by taking over the fortifications in the Šibenik surroundings early on and holding them basically as Venetian mercenaries.⁴¹

The most direct source regarding the commoner uprising stems basically from one page within the register of Šibenik’s council proceedings. On the 7th of May 1412, by the order of Pan Peter de Mislen and count Ivaniš Nelipić, who were exercising authority in the king’s name, the commoner leaders in Šibenik were seized and held captive.

39 About the early development of the situation in Zadar and Šibenik cf. Šunjić, *Dalmacija u XV. stoljeću*, 44-48; Lučić, *Povijesna svjedočanstva o Trogiru II*, 867-868.

40 Šunjić, *Dalmacija u XV. stoljeću*, 48-49; Lučić, *Povijesna svjedočanstva o Trogiru II*, 870; Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić i njegovo doba (1350. – 1416.)*, 217.

41 Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić i njegovo doba (1350. – 1416.)*, 213.

These were Grgur Draganić, Antonio Mavrov, Disman Slavogostov, Marko Radević, Ivan Radević and Ivan Sfistić. Four of them, namely Ivan Radević, Antonio Mavrov, Disman Slavogostov and Marko Radević were taken away and decapitated during the following night, and immediately buried in the Dominican monastery. Subsequently, Pan Peter and Ivaniš Nelipić brought back the exiled Šibenik nobles to the city and reinstated them to their former social and political status. Amongst them the new rectors of Šibenik were appointed, and these were *ser* Stjepan Dragojević, *ser* Stjepan Milatkov, *ser* Grgur Mexe and *ser* Luka Kožičić.⁴²

However, it seems that these actions were not viewed positively by a large part of the Šibenik population, which is evident from a confidential document of the Venetian Senate from 11th of July 1412. The Senate voted in favor of aiding an uprising in Šibenik targeted against Pan Petar and all the other king's men in the city. This decision was based upon a testimony of an unnamed Šibenik noble. He told the Venetian authorities that the majority of the population of Šibenik were not satisfied with the arbitrary governing of Pan Peter and the royal forces in Šibenik, due to their cruel conduct, which also meant decapitation or banishment of certain Šibenik citizens. The latter probably implied the execution of the leaders of the Šibenik commoners, but maybe there were other decapitations we do not know of. Therefore, the Šibenik nobleman assured the Venetians, that the Šibenik people were ready to kill Pan Peter and the rest of the king's men and to welcome Venetian rule over the city.⁴³ On the same day the Venetian authorities sent a letter to Šibenik, offering amnesty and benevolent rule if it would just submit to Venice.⁴⁴

We do not know what transpired truly in Šibenik all the way until the 30th of October 1412, when the city finally surrendered to Venice. Did the people of Šibenik engage against Pan Petar and the king's men as initially planned or not – it cannot be said for certain. However, we do know the conditions under which Šibenik agreed to accept Venetian rule, and there were in total 18 of them.⁴⁵ Venice mostly conceded and agreed to most of the conditions, but not to them all. However, some of these clauses can be used as mediatory or indirect information about the events in Šibenik. In practice, the people of Šibenik asked Venice to confirm the nobleman status to around 20 people from among the commoners, who became nobles during the siege, and Venice readily accepted that.⁴⁶

However, it is important to note that Šibenik was obviously a bit different in comparison to the majority of Dalmatian towns regarding the noblemen-commoner relations. It seems that the social differentiation between nobles and commoners in Šibenik was not as developed as in other Dalmatian cities, and that the idea of a formal transition from commoner to noblemen status was not perceived as abhorrently as it was by the noblemen elites in Zadar, Trogir, Split or Dubrovnik. Moreover, one of the

42 Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, vol. VI, doc. CCXXVI, 260.

43 *Ibid.*, doc. CCXXXVII, 272-273.

44 *Ibid.*, doc. CCXXXVIII, 273.

45 *Ibid.*, doc. CCLI, 288-293.

46 *Ibid.*, doc. CCLI, 289.

conditions for Venice was to confirm the established custom of accepting a commoner family in the ranks of the nobility every year on Saint Michael's feast. That formally implied permanent membership in the General council.⁴⁷ Moreover, in the city of Rab, the commoners and the noblemen shared participation in the General council during the 14th century, although the noblemen became a majority until the end of the 14th century and the commoner families *de consilio* lost their previous importance.⁴⁸

Venetian authorities acted swiftly to reconcile the opposed Šibenik factions, so they declared a mandatory conflict resolution on the 30th of December 1412, which obliged the ruling faction, as much as the exiled faction.⁴⁹ However, the real effect of this treaty remains in speculation. Due to a lack of direct sources between August 1409 and May 1412, there is unfortunately nothing more we can say about these commoner leaders functioning and coexisting with Pan Peter and count Ivaniš throughout that period. On the other hand, we can see that various noblemen or citizens of Šibenik acquired life-time pensions from the Venetian state as a reward for their involvement in favor of Venetian interests.⁵⁰

Yet, besides the material component, we could also say that these Šibenik nobles and other supporters of Venice acquired social capital as loyal Venetian subjects, based on their actions during the war. That had to imply also a somewhat privileged position in the new Venetian social order in Šibenik, and a disputable social position of the former royalist exiles – at least in the immediate period after 1412. Therefore, it is evident that political and war-like violence led to a redefinition of internal social and political relations in Šibenik, which changed the overall social stratification in the city to some degree after 1412. The introduction of some 20 commoners into noble status and the dominance of the pro-Venetian faction in the city represent the most apparent evidence for the transformative role of violence in power relations on the case of Šibenik in the early 15th century.

There is a multitude of information regarding factional conflicts in Trogir, but we will strive for brevity here. Thus, we will primarily focus on selected instances of factional violence in 14th century Trogir. Specifically, there are three documented occurrences of overt factional conflicts or skirmishes during this century: the period between 1310 and approximately 1330, the subsequent events in 1357 and 1358, and finally, the last episode spanning from 1386 to 1395. However, within this section of the paper, we will place particular emphasis on the initial period, which can be extensively traced both independently and in connection with other instances in 14th century Trogir.

47 *Ibid.*, doc. CCLI, 289.

48 Cf. Mlacović, *Građani plemići. Pad i uspon rapskoga plemstva*, 249-275.

49 Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, vol. VII, doc., 51-59.

50 For example, Ivan Mišić received his right for an annual stipend of 150 Venetian gold ducats on the 10th of May, 1413, whilst Radić Šižgorić received on the 30th of March 1419, a right for an annual stipend of 150 libras, which was around 50 or so gold ducats at the time, see: Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, vol. VII, docs. LII and CC, 117-118 and 280.

Concerning the primary sources, the study has utilized the written (not yet published) legacy of Ivan Lučić – Lucius, comprising thousands of documents with relevance to Trogir, and to some extent other Dalmatian towns too.⁵¹ Additionally, the research relies on municipal council records and legal documents from late Dalmatian sources, Dalmatian chronicles (specifically from Zadar and Split), as well as various missives from Venetian and royal Hungarian sources, among other primary materials.⁵²

Based on the aforementioned historical and theoretical literature, it is possible to identify with great certainty the political factions in Trogir during the 14th century. They consisted of nobles, commoners and other individuals or minor groups active in the city's social and political life. These factions engaged in political rivalry for control within the Trogir political community. The competition, as we will see, often led to the escalation of latent social conflicts into overt factional violence. The intensification of these conflicts was directly influenced by geopolitical shifts within the Hungarian Kingdom or Venice on the one hand, and by the dynamic of political relations between the Hungarian ruler or representatives of the Hungarian royal government in Croatia and Venice on the other. Within this framework, some of the Trogir's political actors can also be viewed as part of broader social networks led by influential figures or structures within the Kingdom of Hungary or the Venetian Republic. Despite the "global" political context influencing and intensifying local political dynamics, the essence of these dynamics stayed rooted in the social and political relationships within the local community.⁵³

In the first period, the factions of Marin son of Andrija (Andreis noble family), and that of Matej son of Zore (Cega noble family), clashed at one moment in 1310 or 1311. Marin as a protégé of the Croatian Bans Pavao I and Mladen II, together with his entourage violently confronted representatives of the city government, even killed one notary and wounded the city consuls. That consequently led to his expulsion from the city and the acclamation of Matej as the new rector and captain of the city. However, the situation within the city was in a constant and chaotic state of flux until 1322 and the recognition of Venetian rule over the city.⁵⁴

51 Cf. HR-NAS–OIL, vol. 542, 540, 535.

52 For example: Popić, Bećir, *Acta et reformationes consiliorum civitatis Tragurii (saec. XIII-XV)*.

53 Cf. for much more detail about this in recent historiography: Bećir, „Plemstvo kasnosrednjovjekovnoga Trogira“; Bećir, „Crkvene institucije u srednjovjekovnoj praksi. Trogirski kanonici i gradske prilike u 14. stoljeću“, 21-46; Bećir, „Između 'tiranije' i političkoga legitimiteta. Prilog poznavanju političke kulture kasnosrednjovjekovne Dalmacije i Hrvatske“, 83-104; Bećir, „Između političkog i kaznenog egzila – prisilne migracije u kasnosrednjovjekovnim dalmatinskim gradovima“, 1-31; Popić, Bećir, „Najstariji sačuvani sveščić srednjovjekovnih zapisnika komunalnih vijeća grada Trogira: pitanje datacije i kronologije“, 46-62; Popić, Bećir, „Vrijeme i okolnosti nastanka zapisnika papinske istrage u Trogiru 1319. godine“, 53-103; Popić, „Political Expressions of Pragmatic Literacy in Thirteenth Century Trogir: A Sketch for a Portrait“, 47-82; Popić, Bećir, „Politički poredak i zapisnici komunalnih vijeća srednjovjekovnog Trogira“, 1-87. Compare the literature cited in the aforementioned titles for further reading.

54 Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 64-65.

At first Matej's grip on the city was not so firm as it will be in later years, and that is visible primarily due to the fact that in 1312, Pilater, son of Rambert de Monte Luponis (Montelupone), as a new *podesta* of the city was appointed, together with his vicar Rainerius, son of Manfred de Ripa Transonis (Ripatransone) – both of them coming from the Marche region in Italy. It is probable that this was an attempt to reconcile the factions because Marin returned briefly to the city at some point in early 1312. The rule of Pilater is directly attested between March or April and August of 1312, but thanks to a unique primary source, the fragments of a papal investigation from June 1319, we can discern the background of the most important factional events between 1310 and 1317 – which includes an explanation for the departure of Pilater and Rainerius from the city.⁵⁵

The papal investigation was conducted primarily to establish the circumstances of the destruction of the Tragurin Franciscan monastery in May 1315, by order of then *podesta* and *capitaneus populi* Matej. However, the fragments of the register of the investigation are comprised of short written testimonies given mostly by Tragurins, which help us to reconstruct many events from the time of Matej's rule (1310-1317).⁵⁶ Therefore, it is mentioned that Pilater left the city and delegated authority to his vicar Rainerius, but Matej decided to use this situation and forcefully seize full power over the city in late summer of 1312.⁵⁷ In this context we must take into consideration the death of Ban Pavao I in May 1312, which surely influenced Matej's decision to organize a coup within the city. Pavao's son and successor first had to establish his rule, and therefore the events in Trogir were not a priority for him.⁵⁸ Once Mladen II consolidated his rule through peace negotiations with Venice, pacifying dissent among his vassals the Kurjakovići from the Lika and Krbava region and fighting off his rivals, the Slavonian magnates of the Babonići kindred in the northern parts of his dominion, he shifted his attention to Trogir at the beginning of 1315.⁵⁹

The relations between Matej and ban Mladen II and his Bribirski kindred deteriorated rapidly in February and March 1315, which led ultimately to an attempted siege of the city by the forces of Ban Mladen at the end of May 1315, in the context of which the destruction of the Franciscan monastery occurred. Although the primary goal of

55 Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 68-69.

56 The fragments are preserved thanks to Lučić's transcript from the 17th century in HR-NAS-OIL, vol. 542, fol. 70-73v. See more about that, as the published transcription of the fragmentary record of the papal investigation, in: Popić, Bećir, „Vrijeme i okolnosti“.

57 HR-NAS-OIL, vol. 542, fol. 70v. Pilater and Rainerius are attested between April and August in the judicial documents. Cf. Barada (ed.), *Monumenta Traguriensia. Acta Curiae comunis Tragurii. Ab 1310 usque 1331*, doc. 46, 138. (hereafter: Barada, *Monumenta* IV). Cf. Popić, Bećir, „Vrijeme i okolnosti“, 94.

58 About that cf. Karbić, „Šubići Bribirski do gubitka nasljedne banske časti (1322.)“, 18-22; Karbić, „Odnosi gradskoga plemstva i bribirskih knezova Šubića. Prilog poznavanju međusobnih odnosa hrvatskih velikaša i srednjovjekovnih dalmatinskih komuna“, 56-58.

59 The conflicts with the Kurjakovići and Babonići occurred at the end of 1314, and the beginning of 1315. Cf. Popić, Bećir, *Najstariji sačuvani*, 51.

Ban Mladen was to expel Matej and his group, and to install his “candidate” as the head of the city, namely Marin and his entourage which were still in exile – he was at the end satisfied with imposing a tribute to Matej of 10 000 libras.⁶⁰ In other words, the ban continued to tolerate Matej’s rule for a while, but he surely did not give up his original intent of banishing (and punishing) Matej and his accomplices.⁶¹

However, as it can be discerned from some of the testimonies in the fragments of the papal investigation, Matej was ousted by his own accomplices and followers under the circumstances of an attack on the city by joined forces of Marin’s faction and detachment from Šibenik.⁶² Although no one in the testimonies mentions when something really happened, we can still reasonably assume that Matej’s political fall went about in the autumn of 1317, but before the truce between Trogir and Split, as documented on the 30th of October 1317.⁶³ And now Matej found himself in exile, or on the other side of the medieval “wheel of fortune”, whilst Marin and his followers occupied positions in the government. However, they did introduce a foreigner for the *podesta*, which still marked a renewal of that practice before Matej’s ascension.

Bartholomeo Michieli served as the new *podesta* of Trogir between November 1317 and January 1319, after which a temporary rector, Almerico Bertoldini, administered the city until April 1319. From then on Corrado de Turrus acted as *podesta* until the beginning of 1320, when he was murdered – probably by the adherents of the former Matej’s faction.⁶⁴ The partisans of Marin’s faction found themselves subsequently again in exile, and they even went to Dubrovnik pleading the city authorities to appeal for them to Ban Mladen who was at the time in the city’s hinterland.⁶⁵ Therefore, the factional violence still continued, and we also know that the *podesta* of Trogir, a Venetian patrician Matteo Manolesso, was expelled from the city in late 1321, as he was accused of making deals with Ban Mladen II without the consent of the Tragurins.⁶⁶

There were some new winds blowing from the beginning of 1322, which hinted at a change of power relations to the detriment of Ban Mladen. More specifically, Šibenik and Trogir concluded together a secret alliance against Ban Mladen, and with the support of Venice. They subsequently recognized Venetian rule in March (Šibenik) and April (Trogir) of 1322, while the war against Ban Mladen waged by king Charles Robert and proxies started in July 1322.⁶⁷ It was only from 1322 on that we see a halt in the

60 Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 64; Popić, Bećir, *Vrijeme i okolnosti*, 58-59.

61 For example, on the 19th of November 1316, Ban Mladen requested Matej to recollect some debt a Tragurin had towards him, whilst stating that there is no alternative, and how he shall attack Matej if he doesn’t do as requested of him. Cf. Barada, *Monumenta* IV, doc. 134, 498-499.

62 Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 90; Popić, Bećir, *Vrijeme i okolnosti*, 75, 97; OIL, vol. 542, fol. 73v.

63 Cf. Smičiklas (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae* / Diplomatički zbornik kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije, vol. VIII, doc. 380, 462.

64 Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 88-89.

65 Cf. Gelčić, *Monumenta Ragusina. Liber Reformationum*, vol. IV, 172.

66 Cf. Šime Ljubić, *Listine o odnosajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, vol. I, doc. 507, 328.

67 Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 65-66.

open factional violence, but Marin's faction was still in exile, and that situation was to last all the way until the early 1330s. Venice instigated a conflict resolution between the Trogir factions in 1326, and again all over in late 1328.⁶⁸ In other words, the factional conflicts perpetuated themselves over two decades in Trogir. This first episode can also be understood as a formative period for the Tragurin factions in the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century because the factional cores remained stable during this long timespan.

The second episode occurred on the 5th of December 1357, when the Trogir archdeacon Jakov son of Petar (Vitturi noble family) launched an attack on his rivals, Josip son of Stjepan and Stjepan son of Mihovil (both from the Cega noble family). The first was a distinguished nobleman and the leader of one of the factions, whilst the latter was the acting bishop of Hvar and Brač, and a former canon of the Trogir cathedral chapter. The archdeacon succeeded in mobilizing a large group of the commoners, in a situation when Venice was apparently losing the war against the Hungarian king Louis.⁶⁹ Therefore, the conflict occurred during a political vacuum. As at the beginning of the 14th century, the conflict implied various forms of violence, such as attempts of murder, physical attacks, thefts, destructions of property, or exiles. However, the Ban of Dalmatia and Croatia, Ivan Chuz, came to the city in March 1358 to establish royal rule over the city and to order an investigation into the events that took place in December of 1357. The investigation was probably conducted in summer of 1358, whilst the final verdict with the names of the culprits and their designated punishments was declared in August 1358.⁷⁰

The third episode had its roots in a brief outbreak of unrest in Trogir in November of 1386, caused partially by the countship of the Zadar nobleman Pavao de Paulo. The immediate consequence of the unrest was the banishment of Pavao from the city and a short reconciliation mediated by Raymond, the general governor of the Dominican order, and Simon de Nespoli the bishop of Melfi.⁷¹

However, this only postponed a real escalation in factional relations, which happened on the 27th and 28th of December 1387. The faction led by the Vitturi and Andreis families, helped by a group of commoners, had the leaders of the opposing Cega faction put to death – these were Augustin son of Kažot (Casotis noble family), Stjepan son of Dujam and Petar son of Josip (both Cega). These acts yet again led to new cases of factional violence, exiles, confiscations of the property of those which escaped or were banished from the city, and the distribution or sale of their property.⁷² The victorious faction took over power and stayed in it all the way until July 1392, when the

68 *Ibid.*, 103-112.

69 Some information is available in the so-called *A Cutheis Tabula* chronicle. Cf. Lučić, *De regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae libri sex*, 384. Also cf. Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 137-139.

70 See the record of the investigation: HR-NAS-OIL, vol. 540, fol. 13-16v. For the official verdict cf. HR-NAS-OIL, vol. 540, fol. 20-24v. Cf. Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 138-140; Bećir, *Crkvene institucije*, 38.

71 Šišić, *Ljetopis*, 9-10; Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 175-180.

72 Šišić, *Ljetopis*, 12; Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 180-197.

exiles came back in secret and killed the leader of the ruling faction, i.e. Lompre son of Micacius on the city square.⁷³ This led to the reversal of roles, the exiles came to power, and the ruling group had to go to exile. However, in 1395 with the mediation and pressure from the royal authorities in the person of the Croatian Ban Nicholas of Gorjani/Gara, a conflict resolution was found, which truly did have an impact, as there was no open conflict in Trogir until the Venetian siege and seizure of the city in June 1420.⁷⁴

Although we do not have that kind of sources, it is still probable to assume that the factional violence led to the formation of a distinctive factional memory, or a narrative of vengeance which influenced the perpetuation of the factional tensions and hostilities. The more violent these confrontations happened to be, the more polarized the groups became through the century, and that manifested itself openly in the period of open conflicts. Therefore, we see a continuity of the original factional divides from the beginning of the 14th century, with visible roots in the second half of the 13th century, and their clear effect on the process of the institutional molding of the Trogir commune. But the factional *fortuna rota* stopped after the official agreement between the warring Trogir factions from January of 1395, which did stabilize the political situation by placing the whole blame on the commoners, whilst uniting the noblemen community.⁷⁵

Now we will examine probably the earliest known situation of open factional struggles in late medieval Dalmatia. The famous chronicle of the archdeacon Toma of Split is, as far as we are aware, the only surviving primary source which recounts what occurred in the first factional crisis in the 1230s.⁷⁶ Probably the main reason why Toma had the need to describe these events lies in the fact that it served to him as a proof for the introduction of the *regimen Latinorum* – his term for the *podesta* system of governance. Toma was very much personally involved with this effort, and he was probably the most ardent supporter of its introduction within Split. As a former student of the University of Bologna, Toma was well acquainted with the Italian political experiments at the beginning of the 13th century.⁷⁷ In other words, in 1239 Gargan de Arscindis from Ancona assumed the mantle of the first *podesta* of Split and brought about some important administrative changes and reforms in the functioning of the Split commune. Moreover, he was probably the first *podesta* in the original meaning in Dalmatia

73 Šišić, *Ljetopis*, 16; Bećir, *Plemstvo*, 197-198.

74 See the treaty in Smičiklas (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae* / Diplomatički zbornik kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije, vol. XVIII, doc. 3, 3-7.

75 About the situation in Trogir at the beginning of the 15th century, especially in the context of the Venetian-Hungarian war over Dalmatia (1409-1420), cf. Bećir, „Uspostava mletačke vlasti u Trogiru 1420. godine – između ‘lokalne’ dinamike i ‘globalnih’ procesa“ (in publication).

76 Cf. Katičić et al (ed.), *Historia Salonitana. Povijest salonitanskih i splitskih prvosvećenika*.

77 About archdeacon Toma cf. Katičić, „Toma arhidakon i njegovo doba“, 329-431; Matijević Sokol, „*Regimen Latinorum* arhidakona Tome u teoriji i praksi“, 17-32; Matijević Sokol, „Toma arhidakon Splitsčanin (1200. – 1268.). Nacrta za jedan portret“, 109-127.

in general.⁷⁸ Namely, a *podesta* had to be a foreigner with some level of law education, who had to administer city affairs for a short period of time as unbiasedly as possible.⁷⁹ In that sense, the factional events from the 1230s did in fact directly precede the introduction of the *podesta* system in Split and subsequently in other Dalmatian towns – and that is why they are important.

Let us now consider these events based on the story of archdeacon Toma. An old Spalatin citizen named Dujam son of Draža, together with his two sons, confronted one day the sons of Vitalis because he thought injustice had been done upon him and his family. He accused them of mistreating one of his servant girls and the confrontation soon escalated from mere verbal insults to a physical conflict, which was instigated by Dujam's sons at first. However, their fight attracted the attention of other Spalatins, who somehow entered the fray with their own weapons, but Toma does not specify who and why. The result of the conflict was the death of Dujam and his older son, whilst the younger one managed to survive. The sons of Vitalis were to experience the retaliation of the commune for their crimes, as they were sentenced to exile, and their houses were to be demolished.⁸⁰ The sons of Vitalis together with the sons of Gallona, mentioned now for the first time, left the city with their supporters and followers for Zadar.⁸¹

They came back to the city at one point and engaged again with the opposing faction of the late Dujam. The result of the fight was in fact the expulsion of the late Dujam's faction to Trogir. They attacked and killed some members of the Vitalis and Gallona faction, and because of that the "public opinion" in Split shifted against them. Their houses were demolished, and their goods distributed among the followers of the Vitalis and Gallona faction.⁸² The fact that the immovable property was handed over to the Vitalis and Gallona makes us double think about the role of the communal institutions or the "community" to which Toma projects authority. Although this is only a hypothesis based upon other more documented factional scenarios in Dalmatian or Italian communes, it seems that the factions held much greater sway on the Spalatin communal government than Toma allows us to speculate.⁸³

However, due to the proximity of Trogir to Split, the opposed factions clashed regularly and at some point, started to attack and plunder even those not involved in

78 Cf. Matijević Sokol, „Od kapitulara Gargana de Arcscindisa do Percevalova statuta“, 99-111.

79 Cf. Matijević Sokol, *Toma arhidakon Splitsčanin*, 114.

80 We will conveniently cite the English translation of Toma's chronicle in this paper. Cf. Karbić, Matijević Sokol, Sweeney, *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum / Archdeacon Thomas of Split. History of the bishops of Salona and Split*, 214-215.

81 *Ibid.*, 216-217.

82 *Ibid.*, 217-221.

83 On this cf. more: Karbić, „Tanka granica pravde i osvete, reda i nereda, Vražda i institucionalizirano nasilje u srednjovjekovnoj Hrvatskoj“, 65-82; Zrinka Nikolić Jakus, „Privately Owned Towers in Dalmatian Towns during the High and Central Middle Ages“, 273-293; Zrinka Nikolić Jakus, „The Use of Narrative Sources in Establishing the Genealogies of Dalmatian Urban Elites before the 14th Century“, 123-135.

the factional conflict, which caused great disturbances in the local communities. Unfortunately, Toma does not explain how this situation ended and when; instead, he just uses these factional conflicts as a proof of the bad state in which the city found itself. In other words, from his perspective the city was in dire need of a *podesta* and the *regimen Latinorum*, because the factions generated widespread fear and uncertainty.⁸⁴

Toma eagerly criticized factionalism as the harbinger of common ruin. The roots of the problem for him lay in the conflicts among Croatian magnates, precisely those between count Grgur of Bribir and count Domald in the 1220s and 1230s. Toma narates that count Grgur was appointed count of Split, but he rarely resided in Split, which led to an appearance of a power vacuum in the city, that could not be controlled by his (unnamed) deputies. That led yet to factionalism within Split and violent struggles for control. And because of that, as Toma writes, the city was “divided and torn” (*dissipata et lacerata erat civitas*), and no justice could be served by the court, except towards the poor and powerless.⁸⁵ Although Toma does not connect the Spalatin factions directly with the agency of the Croatian magnates, basic understanding of the “political game” necessarily leads us to such a conclusion. In other words, considering the relatively frequent changes of the count of Split, one can speculate that Spalatin factions were in fact under protection or patronage of either Grgur or Domald, and that the escalations of factional violence occurred exactly concurrently with changes in the lordship over the city.

Grgur was count of Split from 1227 until his death in 1235, after which Domald became count of Split, Grgur’s former and fierce rival, who stayed in position probably until late 1236.⁸⁶ Afterwards, Grgur’s son Marko is documented as the count of Split between January 1237 and January 1239.⁸⁷ We could go even further in assembling the contemporary political architecture and mention that the leading Croatian magnates were divided among themselves in their support either of the Hungarian King Andrew II or his son the future king Bela IV, at that moment the active duke of Croatia. Domald was favored by duke Bela, whilst Grgur of Bribir and his lineage retained loyalty to king Andrew II and that led to their political rise in Croatia during the 1220s and 1230s.⁸⁸ It is also important to recollect that Andrew died in 1235, the same year as Grgur passed away and duke Bela assumed the Hungarian throne. In question are important political changes that obviously resonated in Split and led to the outbreak of factional infighting.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the original conflict between Dujam son of Draža and the sons of Vitalis and Gallona occurred either in 1234 or 1235, in the context of Gregory’s death and the appointment of Domald as the new count of Split. Thus, if we

84 Karbić, Matijević Sokol, Sweeney, *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis Historia*, 220-221.

85 *Ibid.*, 210-213.

86 Cf. Karbić, *The Šubići of Bribir. A Case Study of a Croatian Medieval Kindred*, doctoral thesis, 36-38; Klaić, *Bribirski knezovi od plemena Šubić do god. 1347*, 29-32.

87 Karbić, *The Šubići*, 39.

88 Klaić, *Bribirski knezovi*, 28.

were to be precise, the subsequent factional events transpired between 1235 and 1239. In other words, factions appear openly only during times of a power vacuum, because their very existence revolves around how to acquire political power and seize control of the communal resources. If there is no power to be acquired, the factions have no reason to manifest or materialize, but under a power vacuum they immediately erupt. Therefore, as Toma himself mentioned, the physical absence of the Croatian magnates from Split probably facilitated the open outbreak of factional divides within the city, and the conflict between the faction of Dujam son of Draža and the faction of the sons of Vitalis and Gallona is just the only documented episode from that time. Toma demotes the Spalatins for their flickering behavior by often changing the city count, which for him threatened the fabric of the Spalatin society (*ceperunt in communem perniciem mutare dominia*). In other words, Toma was of the opinion that Spalatin society had to recover mainly from the “destructive factions” (*pestiferis factionibus*), and the solution he called for was the mentioned introduction of the *podesta* system of government.⁸⁹

The mistreatment of the servant girl was probably just the last straw in a sequence of previous hostile events we know absolutely nothing about. In other words, the mistreatment of one’s servant girl was in fact understood as an overtly direct attack on the whole family, household and faction of Dujam son of Draža. And, as is the case in most Mediterranean societies, such disgraceful provocation had to be punished so that the honor of the family could be restored. However, the outcome was probably far more destructive than expected from contemporary perspective. Overall, it should be noted that the Trogir and Split factional episodes represent “classic” examples of open factional struggles between clearly delineated factional groups, as evidenced in Italian cities in the 13th and 14th century.

Finally, it is evident that various Dalmatian chronicles represent indispensable primary sources. More concretely, without the chronicle of archdeacon Toma we would not know that the Split factional struggle even happened in the 1230s; without the anonymous Zadar chronicle *Obsidio Iadrensis* we would not know about the Zadar conspiracies in 1346; without the *Memoriale* from Pavao de Paulo we would not be able to fully comprehend the factional events in Trogir between 1386 and 1395; without the anonymous Spalatin *A Cutheis Tabula* we would be lacking information regarding the factional showdown from 1357/1358 in Trogir; without the fragments of the papal investigation from 1319 (which is not a chronicle, but we can consider it as a narrative source), the first open factional conflict in Trogir in the beginning of the 14th century would still be shrouded in fog and many crucial background information would be totally unknown to us. Thus, it is more than evident that the practice of writing chronicles, among other, to preserve the memory of factional events was also widespread in Dalmatian cities. That is similar to the situation in other medieval cities, especially the ones in Italy, whose factional past is being partially retraced based upon chronicles and other kinds of narrative sources of mostly local-communal provenance.

89 For the cited expressions see: Karbić, Matijević Sokol, Sweeney, *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis*, 212.

Concluding remarks

We have explored selected cases of political conflicts and violence in Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir and Split, with an emphasis being put on one case for each city respectively. More cases could be considered in more detail, but the goal of this paper was to assess only some situations of crisis in the aforementioned Dalmatian towns, and the crucial, generative or transformative role of violence in its physical and symbolic (emotional) manifestations. Although the case of Trogir is the most grateful one, it is necessary to strive for a wholesome and comparative understanding of the “culture of violence” in Dalmatian towns, especially in comparison and relation to Italian communes.

In this respect, we can pinpoint the cases from Split and Trogir as the “classic” type of factional political culture with the accompanying forms of political violence and social polarization, due to their overt cultural similarity to the factional dynamics in Italian communes. On the other hand, considered examples from Zadar provide a different perspective. The cases of imprisonment, torture or execution of alleged or real conspirators in Zadar in 1346, 1386 or 1401 show us the crucial role of violence in maintaining the existing social order in times of strife and crisis. These forms of violence served as performative spectacles that were intended to project a clear message to the public about their place in the social order, and what happens to those who dare to conspire against it.

The case of Šibenik is maybe more socially complex. In other words, the main conspirators in the Zadar cases were wealthy and influential merchants and citizens with some noblemen; and the social distinction between nobles and commoners was more or less clearly visible in the social reality of Zadar, Trogir and Split. However, in Šibenik, these social differences were obviously not so strong in practice, as the commoners could expel the noblemen and take their place (although only temporarily) in 1409. Or that the Šibenik noblemen accepted one commoner or citizen family into their ranks every year, solemnly, on Saint Michael’s day.

Therefore, factional violence in Split and Trogir affected the political and social processes in the city, influencing the adoption of new political practices (with the first *podesta* in Split), or ushering vibrant, dynamic or just chaotic social and political relations (which is more visible in Trogir from the sources). The case of Zadar is insightful because it enables us to recognize even the symbolic effects of violence, particularly for the preservation of the social order and existing power relations. And in the case of Šibenik, we can see basically all these aforementioned elements at work at the same time between 1409 and 1412.

In summary, this research sought to demonstrate the direct impact of the interplay of violence, emotion, memory, and identity on the restructuring of social and political dynamics. Simply put, violence that is used to either maintain or alter power dynamics contributes to the alienation between groups involved in the conflict. Violent interactions, which go beyond previously acceptable forms, can easily shatter the existing

symbolic barriers and subsequently reorganize the “symbolic order” of the given society, and even its forms and sources of power. Or to conveniently cite Pierre Bourdieu: “it is in the struggles which shape the history of the social world that the categories of perception of the social world, and the groups produced according to these categories, are simultaneously constructed”.⁹⁰

Tackling with these questions was difficult due to the limitations put before us by the preserved sources, but nonetheless the theoretical remarks from the beginning offer us new and bright venues for a more pronounced and comparative understanding of political conflicts and violence in late medieval Dalmatian towns.

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90 Cf. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 134.

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SAŽETAK

Politički sukobi i nasilje u kasnosrednjovjekovnim dalmatinskim gradovima

Ovaj rad istražuje ulogu političkog nasilja u kasnosrednjovjekovnim dalmatinskim komunama, s naglaskom na gradove Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir i Split. Tekst polazi od premise da je nasilje predstavljalo ključni element u društvenim krizama koje su oblikovale procese društvenog i institucionalnog razvoja. Nakon uvoda slijedi osvrt na relevantnu literaturu koja se bavi frakcijskim skupinama i “kulturom nasilja” na historiografski cjelovitije istraženim talijanskim primjerima. Potom se u radu raščlanjuju slučajevi političkog nasilja – zavjera, izbijanja i suzbijanja pobuna te otvorenih frakcijskih sukoba koja su nerijetko završavale progonstvom, na primjerima iz Zadra, Šibenika, Trogira i Splita. Naglašava se kako je nasilje oblikovalo kolektivne identitete unutar lokalnih zajednica te utjecalo na promjene u društvenim i političkim odnosima. Posebna pozornost posvećena je slučajevima poput mletačke opsade Zadra, protjerivanja vladajućih plemića iz Šibenika te otvorenih političkih sukoba u Splitu i Trogiru između frakcijskih skupina. Ti primjeri pokazuju kako je nasilje često služilo očuvanju ili promjeni postojećih odnosa moći, te kako je utjecalo na oblikovanje frakcijskih diskursa i osveta. Svi ti primjeri potvrđuju važnost političkog nasilja u kasnosrednjovjekovnim dalmatinskim gradovima u oblikovanju društvenih i političkih odnosa dovodeći ih u korelaciju s praksom u susjednim talijanskim komunama.

Ključne riječi: kriza; politički konflikt; nasilje; identitet; kasnosrednjovjekovna Dalmacija