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Thriller of the Zadar nun Cattarina Marchi: true or false story?

In a paper on the nuns compelled to enter monastic life in the Venetian Republic, published in the *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Anne Jacobson Schutte cited, among others, the case of the Zadar nun Cattarina Marchi. Zadar archival sources offer new insights about the Zadar nun, provide answers to the questions posed by Schutte and shed new light on Marchi's petition for the annulment of monastic vows. The analysis and synthesis of archival sources in Zadar, as well as other archival sources, have changed the entire narrative surrounding the nun Marchi, justifying the doubt about the authenticity of the story (true story) regarding her forced entry into the monastery. It will be shown that her case must be considered in the context of economic, social and religious relations between the Zadar nobility and its middle class in the 16th-18th century, especially from the point of view of inalienable inheritance rights, known as *fedecompresso*.

Keywords: Venetian Republic, Zadar, nun Cattarina Marchi, 16th-18th century, *fedecompresso*

Introduction

In a paper published in the *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Anne Jacobson Schutte focused on the issue of forced or involuntary entry of girls into convents and the issue of court appeals for the annulment of monastic vows in the Venetian Republic.¹ Basing her research on Italian archival sources, Schutte critically examined five cases of nuns from the Venetian Republic between 1684 and 1732

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¹ Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice and Rome: The Dilemma of Involuntary Nuns", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 41 (2010), no. 2: 415-439.

– the Venetian women who did not feel a call to religious life but were forced to enter a convent.² One of them was the nun Cattarina Marchi from the Benedictine convent of St. Catherine in Zadar,³ which was part of the Venetian overseas possessions (so-called *Stato da Màr*) at the time.⁴ A certified copy of this trial record is kept in the Archives of the Benedictine convent of St. Mary in Zadar.⁵ Schutte approached the issue from the perspective of Venetian legislation, i.e. the legal obstacles placed before those monks and nuns whose vows were contracted under *per vim et metum*. Archival sources consulted by Schutte justify the historical classification of the case of the Zadar nun into forced religious vocations. Schutte's discussion of the forced monachization of Cattarina Marchi was a starting point in gaining further insights into this case through the prism of local archival sources. Zadar archival sources and other research sources call for a reinterpretation of her case. The paper will add to the historical facts, shed light on the context of events and strive to provide an answer to the fundamental question – is the case of the Zadar nun Marchi – *a true or false story?*

Who was Cattarina Marchi?

Nun Cattarina Marchi, whose real name was Antonia Zanetta,⁶ was born in Zadar in 1695, and baptized in the Zadar Cathedral of St. Anastasia on 27 June 1695.⁷ She was the third child in the family of Melchior (Marchio) Marchi and Cattarina, née Ponte. Her father was born into a socially and religiously influential and

² Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 416.

³ This was not *a house of Dominican Tertiaries*. Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 426. On the convent of St. Catherine see: Carlo Federico Bianchi, *Zara Cristiana*, vol. I (Zara: Tipografia Woditzka, 1877), 442-44.

⁴ See: Tomislav Raukar et al., *Zadar pod mletačkom upravom 1409-1797* (Zadar: Narodni list – Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 1987); Angelo de Benvenuti, *Storia di Zara dal 1409 al 1797* (Milano: Fratelli Bocca editori, 1944).

⁵ Croatia (hereinafter: HR) – The Archives of the convent of St. Mary in Zadar (hereinafter: AS-SMZD) – fond 62 – *Processo per nullità di professione di suor Cattarina Marchi, professa del Monastero di Santa Caterina in Zara. God. 1731.* (hereinafter *Processo*) – fols. 1r-181v. After the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797, Dalmatia became part of the Habsburg Monarchy. The first Austrian administration in Dalmatia (1797-1805) abolished the Benedictine convent of St. Catherine in Zadar by decree on 5 June 1802, and by the imperial decree from 24 May 1804 the nuns were transferred to the Benedictine convent of St. Mary, reserved for noblewomen. Following the fusion of the two Benedictine communities, their archival material was joined as well. Comp. Bianchi, *Zara Cristiana*, vol. I, 443-44.

⁶ Upon taking the veil, girls renounced their birth name and chose a religious name. See: Danielle Rives, "Taking the Veil: Clothing and the Transformation of Identity", *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 33 (2005): 465-486.

⁷ HR – Archives of the Archdiocese of Zadar (hereinafter: AZDN) – fond 43 – Collection of Parish Registers 1569-2010, Parish of St. Anastasia – Zadar (hereinafter: Zd), *Obituum, Liber XIII*, fol. 116v.

wealthy middle-class family.⁸ The Marchi family house was located opposite the bell tower of the Zadar cathedral, near the church of St. Mary,⁹ in which their family had a burial vault.¹⁰ Cattarina's mother was daughter of John the Baptist Ponte.¹¹ The Ponte family moved to Zadar from Bergamo, Italy, and during the 17th and 18th centuries had a prominent role in the political, military and cultural life of Zadar and Dalmatia.¹² Cattarina Ponte had three brothers: Sebastian, Valerio and Orazio.¹³ This research has brought to light close ties between the two families and frequent marriages between third- and fourth-degree cousins.¹⁴ According to the notes in parish registers referring to mental disorders of the Marchi sisters before death,¹⁵ Ellena's condition was attributed to her involuntary entry into the convent (Fig. 1).¹⁶

Initially, Cattarina Marchi's father sent her to study at the convent of St. Marcella and from there she transferred to the monastery of St. Catherine.¹⁷ There is a long history behind the connections of the Marchi family with the convent of St. Catherine in Zadar. The Marchi family belonged to the non-noble elite of the city of Zadar, which is why nuns bearing that last name appear in the convent's

⁸ Probably owing to their war effort contributions, the de Marchi family received from the Venetian government the Turanj settlement near Zadar, called Torretta de 'Marchi. Carlo Federico Bianchi, *Zara Cristiana*, vol. II (Zara: Tipografia Woditzka, 1877): 160.

⁹ HR – State Archives in Zadar (hereinafter: DAZD) – fond 31 –Zadar Notaries (hereinafter BZ), Francesco Bonicelli, b. I, fasc. I, br. 2, fols. 36r-37r.

¹⁰ Cattarina's father Melchior died at the age of 47 and was buried on 19 October 1708, in the family crypt in the church of St. Mary in Zadar. HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum, Liber VII*, fol. 63v. Schutte stated that Cattarina's father died around 1709. Schutte, "Between Venice", 426 (ref. 47).

¹¹ HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum, Liber IX*, fol. 67v.

¹² Certainly the most famous descendant of the Ponte family was the Zadar Archdeacon Valerius Ponte, the author of a famous work on the history of the Zadar Church *Historia ecclesiae Jadrensis*. See: Tomislav Raukar, "Zadarski dominikanski samostan u djelu Valerija Ponte", *Croatia Christiana periodica* 19 (1995) no. 36: 127-133. Ponte's work *Historia ecclesiae Jadrensis* is available in the Zadar Research Library. HR – Research Library of Zadar (hereinafter: ZKZD), sign. 11117, MS 112.

¹³ The Ponte brothers were admitted to the Zadar aristocratic council in 1694. On the Ponte family see: HR – ZKZD, *Carte che si riferiscono alla famiglia zaratina Ponte*, sign. 15695, MS 357/I-VI.

¹⁴ The first wife of Melchior's brother John the Baptist Marchi, Donata Ponte, was a niece of Cattarina Ponte. Melchior was the husband of Cattarina's daughter Lucrezia. Melchior's sister's son Sebastian Pasini, Mandallena Marchi's unintended fiancé, was a close relative of hers. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. I, fasc. I, br. 5, fol. 9r. See: Schutte, "Between Venice", 426 (ref. 45).

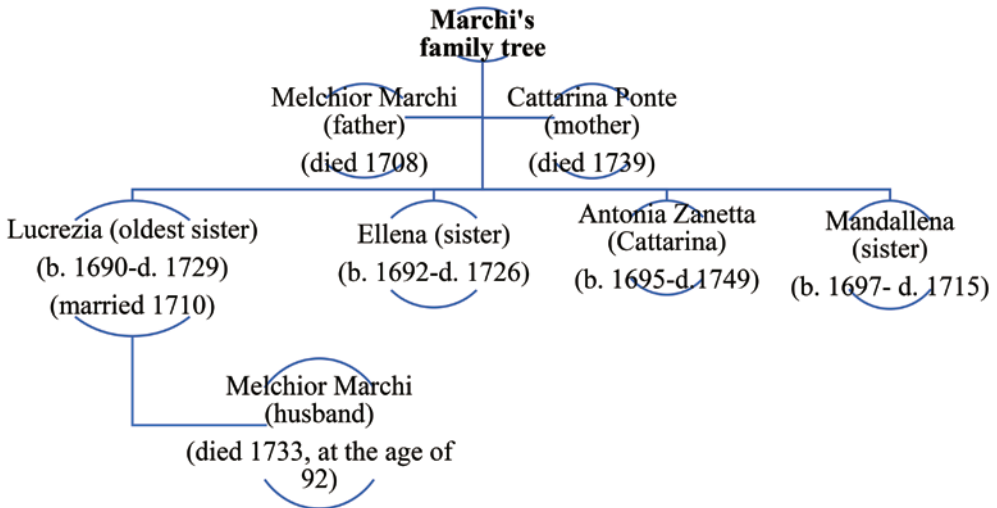
¹⁵ About Ellena Marchi see: HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum, Liber VIII*, fol. 95v. About Mandallena Marchi see: HR-AZDN-43-ZD, *Obituum, Liber VII*, fol. 143r.

¹⁶ According to Schutte, some witnesses claimed that Cattarina's sister Ellena was forced to enter the convent by her uncle Sebastian Ponte, but contrary claims were left out. Schutte, "Between Venice", 426 (ref. 46). See: HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fol. 33r.

¹⁷ HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fol. 18v.

records from the 16th and 17th centuries.¹⁸ In addition to personal connections, they were also bound by economic ties.¹⁹

Fig. 1 Cattarina Marchi's family tree



Women's Convents and Social and Religious Differentiation in Early-age Zadar

During the early modern age there were five nunneries in Zadar, three for noblewomen (St. Mary, St. Demetrius and St. Nicholas), and two (St. Catherine and St. Marcella) for girls from the middle class.²⁰ The paper focuses on St. Catherine's,

¹⁸ Stephan Karl Sander-Faes, *Urban elites of Zadar. Dalmatia and the Venetian Commonwealth (1540 – 1569)* (Roma: Viella, 2013), 192-193; HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Sorini, b. I, fasc. 3, fol. 19v; HR-ZKZD, *Documenti spettanti alla famiglia zaratina Marchi*, sign. 11158, MS 153 (hereinafter MS 153), fasc. II, fol. 1v.

¹⁹ The Marchi family and the convent of St. Catherine owned an estate on the island of Ugljan, and the division was finalized in 1656 by Cattarina's grandfather, Sea Captain Franjo Marchi. See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. II, fols. 20r-22v; HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Sorini, b. I, fasc. 3, fols. 33r-35r.

²⁰ In the 18th century the convents of St. Mary, St. Catherine and St. Marcella followed the Benedictine Rule, the convent of St. Demetrius observed the Dominican, and the St. Nicholas convent of the Poor Clares the Franciscan rule. Comp. Sander-Faes, *Urban elites of Zadar*, 116-126; Josip Kolanović, "Zadarska nadbiskupija prema izvješćima 'ad limina' 1599. – 1797.," in: *Sedamnaest stoljeća zadarske Crkve*, vol. I, ed. Livio Marijan (Zadar: Archdiocese of Zadar, 2009), 394-396.

a Benedictine convent for women, with a rich spiritual and cultural heritage.²¹ In accordance with the last will and testament of its patron and founder, the Zadar noblewoman Pelegrina Saladin from 1392,²² the convent accepted only middle-class girls.²³ Members of the lower classes could not become professed sisters.²⁴ They could enter a convent as maids,²⁵ *picokaras*²⁶ or converts.²⁷ Since living quarters in the convent were tight, the number of converts was proportionate to that of maids (*famula*),²⁸ which also contributed to the maintenance of strict cloister.²⁹ Cramped and located within the city walls, convent spaces could not be significantly expanded, so the cloister was frequently violated.³⁰ In addition, the nuns often used letters to communicate with the outside world, which was principally forbidden.³¹ Convent maids acted as mediators in this, which is also evident in the case of the nun Marchi.³² The convent prison was used to discipline

²¹ The first known work of church prose written in Croatian Latin alphabet, entitled *Život ili legenda sv. Katarine*, originated in the convent of St. Catherine in Zadar. See: Dunja Fališevac, "Sveta Katarina – prva učena žena u hrvatskoj književnoj kulturi", *Slovo: časopis Staroslavenskoga instituta u Zagrebu* 60 (2010): 255-277. There are records of literary activity of nuns in other Croatian regions as well. See: Minela Fulurija Vučić, "Zaboravljeni autori: Benedikta Glavić, redovnica dubrovačkoga samostana sv. Marije od Kaštela (1688. – 1771.)", in: *Ljudi 18. stoljeća na hrvatskom prostoru*, ed. Lovorka Čoralčić et al. (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, 2016), 274-277.

²² For a transcript of the Latin document mentioning the noblewoman Pelegrina Saladin as the patroness and founder of the convent see: Stjepan Gunjača, ed., *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. XVII (Zagreb, JAZU 1981): 431. On the Saladin family from Zadar see: Serdo Dokoza, Mladen Andreis, *Zadarsko plemstvo u srednjemu vijeku* (Zadar: University of Zadar, 2020), 489-496.

²³ Zdenko Dundović, "Posjedi samostana benediktinki sv. Katarine u Zadru (16. stoljeće)", *Croatica Christiana periodica* 45 (2021), br. 87: 56. In a special resolution from 1388, the Zadar Secret Council allowed Pelegrina Saladin to bequeath her possessions in Petrčani to the convent of St. Catherine in Zadar *pro victu montalium*. Tomislav Raukar, *Zadar u XV. stoljeću. Ekonomski razvoj i društveni odnosi* (Zagreb: University of Zagreb; Croatian Institute of History, 1977), 108 (ref. 22).

²⁴ Comp. Schutte, "Between Venice", 420 (ref. 21).

²⁵ HR-ASSMZD, *Libro del Capitolo del Monasterio di Santa Cattarina di Zara. God. 1722. – 1795.* (hereinafter *LC*), 27 September 1729.

²⁶ HR-ASSMZD-*LC*, 8 August 1723.

²⁷ HR-ASSMZD-*LC*, 11 November 1722.

²⁸ Each professed nun had her own maid. See: Kolanović, "Zadarska nadbiskupija", 396.

²⁹ See: Schutte, "Between Venice", 419 (ref. 16).

³⁰ Kolanović, "Zadarska nadbiskupija", 395.

³¹ Comp. Alberto Marani, *Atti pastorali di Minuccio Minucci arcivescovo di Zara (1596-1604)* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1970), 88. See: Gabriella Zarri, "La lettera monastica tra uso e abuso: tipologie ed esempi (secoli XV-XVII)", in: *Cartas-Lettres-Lettere. Discursos, prácticas y representaciones epistolares (Siglos XIV-XX)*, ed. Antonio Castillo and Verónica Sierra (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá, 2014): 259-272.

³² HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fols. 1v-2r.

the nuns.³³ St. Catherine's accepted *educandas* as well.³⁴ Education offered by the convent of St. Catherine was at an enviable level,³⁵ which is why some nobles chose to entrust their daughters to the nuns.³⁶ *Educandas* were divided into two groups: those who came to the convent for a certain period of time for the sole purpose of receiving instruction in reading, writing and good conduct (*in educazione*), and those who were admitted to receive instruction as candidates for monastic life (*in educazione per monacarsi*),³⁷ which the nuns would vote on.³⁸ Accepted monastic candidates paid a dowry to the convent.³⁹ Exceptionally, the nuns took in ailing sisters of professed nuns in order to care for them in the convent, apparently for the maximum period of one year.⁴⁰ The opposite cases were also recorded, when the nuns would fall seriously ill and leave the convent to be cared for by their families at home, with the permission of the local ordinary.⁴¹ The basic purpose and aim of convent communities – devotion to God and praying – considerably influenced the positive educational and humanitarian character of Zadar convents in the early modern age, especially after the Council of Trent.⁴² In the 17th century, there was abuse of convent spaces in the context of marriage contracts

³³ Italy (hereinafter: IT) – Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereinafter: ASVe) – Consultori in iure, b. 191, fols. 33r-35v.

³⁴ HR-ASSMZD-LC, 25 May 1724. On the convent life of *educandas* in general see: Marina Macchio, "Vita quotidiana delle fanciulle in clausura nell'età moderna. Il caso delle Educande del monastero fiorentino della Santissima Vergine Annunziata detto delle Murate", *Memorie Valdarensi* 185 (2019): 51-74; Gabriella Zarri, "Novizie ed educande nei monasteri italiani post-tridentini", *Via Spiritus* 18 (2011): 7-23.

³⁵ This is supported by the fact that girls from the nearby island of Pag were taking their lessons there, although there was a Benedictine convent on the island. HR-ASSMZD-LC, 2 November 1744. See: Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, sv. II (Split: Benediktinski priorat – Tkon, 1964), 92.

³⁶ For example, in 1730, Cornelia, the daughter of the Zadar nobleman Pietro Ljubavac, was accepted to the convent for instruction. HR-ASSMZD-LC, 16 May 1730. On the family Ljubavac from Zadar see: Branka Grbavac, "Zadarska plemićka obitelj Ljubavac u 14. stoljeću", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 33 (2015): 49-69.

³⁷ HR-ASSMZD-LC, 17 March 1723. On accepting *educandas* into Zadar convents see the conclusions of the Synod from 1598. Marani, *Atti pastorali*, 84-90.

³⁸ Marani, *Atti pastorali*, 89.

³⁹ The procurator fiscal and two conservators were in charge of the dowry collection. A dowry of 300 ducats was reported in one case, but it cannot be stated with certainty that this was a fixed amount. See: HR-ASSMZD-LC, 17 March 1723.

⁴⁰ HR-ASSMZD-LC, 26 June 1730.

⁴¹ Nun Anzola Stocco from St. Marcella's. 14 September 1678, HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum. Liber V*, fol. 93v.

⁴² On the spiritual life of nuns in the post-conciliar period see: Ezio Bolis, "Tra Concilio e Postconcilio: la vita religiosa femminile dopo Trento", in: *La sponsalità dai monasteri al secolo. La diffusione del carisma di Sant'Angela nel mondo*, ed. Gianpietro Belotti and Xenio Toscani (Brescia: Centro Mericiano, 2009), 159-181.

and dowry agreements,⁴³ most notably among the nobility.⁴⁴ The issue of dowry in Zadar, unlike in Venice, was, among other things, defined by the Venetian-Ottoman conflicts in the early modern age.⁴⁵ The main economic indicators for the Zadar society in that period display marked variability.⁴⁶ The majority of land holdings owned by church institutions, patricians and citizens were located on the Zadar mainland. With the loss of land and the departure of coloni caused by the conflicts, landowners lost a significant portion of their income, which was reflected in economic power, and consequently in marriage contracts and dowry amounts.⁴⁷ In the case of the Marchi family, relatively high dowry amounts during the early modern age are an indication of progressive economic growth,⁴⁸ which was mirrored in the hereditary rights of females, although male offspring was still favored. Consequently, the relative financial independence of female descendants, acquired by inheritance, impacted their freedom to choose a religious vocation.⁴⁹ The local socio-political aspirations of the nobility and the middle class under Venetian rule spilled into religious life, and consequently into the relations between secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the city, especially with

⁴³ The impoverished Zadar nobility maintained convents primarily as social institutions, and only then as places of devotion in which they tried to settle their daughters, who they could not provide with marital dowries owing to their reduced circumstances. So for the local elite convent beds turned into a battlefield where the most powerful noble families vied for dominance. Josip Vrandečić, *Zadarski nadbiskup Minuccio Minucci i njegova jadranska misija* (Zagreb; Split: Department of History of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split, 2017), 150.

⁴⁴ See: Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁴⁵ On the conflicts between the Venetian and Ottoman forces in the Zadar area in the early modern age see: Tea Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule. Contado di Zara 1645-1718* (Roma: Viella, 2008); Federico Moro, *Venezia e la guerra in Dalmazia (1644-1649)* (Gorizia: Leg edizioni Srl, 2018); Josip Vrandečić, *Borba za Jadran u ranom novom vijeku: mletačko-osmanski ratovi u venecijanskoj nuncijaturi* (Split: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split – Department of History, 2013).

⁴⁶ See: Raukar et al., *Zadar pod mletačkom upravom*, 175-268; 353-364; 369-391.

⁴⁷ On the economic differentiation of the nobility and the middle class in Zadar during the Venetian-Ottoman conflicts in the Candian War (1645-1669) see: Filip Novosel, "Social Circumstances and a daily Life in the City of Zadar in the Background of the War of Crete" (PhD dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2018), 76-125.

⁴⁸ See: Novosel, "Social Circumstances", 117.

⁴⁹ For instance, in his will from 1589 Simon Marchi named his sons the heirs of the estate, provided they supply their sisters with marital dowry, otherwise the sisters were entitled to a third of the family's inheritance, which they could enjoy until death. If one of the sisters decided to become a nun, she would receive the usual dowry. HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. II, fol. 1v.

regards to the issue of jurisdiction.⁵⁰ In the relations between Venice and Rome⁵¹ it was customary to reserve the chair of the archbishop of Zadar for Venetian nobles, who did not speak the Croatian language nor did they regularly reside in the city.⁵² This is evident in the request of the Zadar aristocratic council addressed to the Council of Ten in Venice in 1551, asking the archbishop to at least occasionally stay in Zadar for the profession of vows and veiling ceremony.⁵³ An important turning point in the history of Church in Zadar happened when its native son, the Bar Archbishop Vincenzo Zmajevich (1713–1745), was appointed the head of the Zadar Archdiocese.⁵⁴ Archbishop Zmajevich was one of the key protagonists in the case of the Zadar nun.

Cattarina Marchi – “I want to take Vows”

In the Zadar archival sources there has not been a single case of a nun’s petition for the annulment of religious vows in the 17th and 18th centuries, except for the case of Cattarina Marchi.⁵⁵ In fact, there is a record of the opposite case from

⁵⁰ A striking example of this is an event that happened in Zadar in 1597, when the Archbishop of Zadar, Minuccio Minucci, gave shelter to the fiancée of his vicar general, the lay nobleman Giovanni Grisogono, in the convent of St. Catherine, so as to enable her to make her own decision on whether she wished to marry him after she turned twelve. Minucci was anxious to protect the girl and her property, prevent the abuse of her disposition and settle debts of the local church, which is why he formally contacted the court of the Apostolic Nunciature in Venice. Given that the convent of St. Catherine was under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ten in Venice, the Council decided to return the girl to her mother, after which the representatives of Zadar authorities arrived at the convent, took the girl and brought her to her mother. The auditor of the Apostolic Nunciature ordered the Archbishop of Zadar to rule in the case, which forced him into a direct conflict with Venice. Since this was a secular and not a spiritual dispute, there was no reason for a church representative to get involved. The city rectors complained to the archbishop that the Church was interfering in matters that did not concern them. Vrandečić, *Zadarski nadbiskup Minuccio Minucci*, 170. On the Venetian understanding of the rule of law and its impact on the overseas possessions, especially in Dalmatia, see: Gaetano Cozzi, *Repubblica di Venezia e Stati Italiani. Politica e giustizia dal secolo XVI al secolo XVIII* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1982), 227-261.

⁵¹ On state and church policy in the Venetian Republic see: Filiberto Agostini, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e potere politico in area Veneta (1754-1866)* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2002).

⁵² On Zadar archbishops see: Zvezdan Strika, “Catalogus episcoporum et archiepiscoporum urbis Jadertinae’ arhidakona Valerija Ponteata”, *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* 48 (2006): 81-185.

⁵³ Dundović, “Posjedi benediktinki”, 60.

⁵⁴ On Zmajevich see: Vinko Kraljević, “Gli ortodossi negli scritti di Vincenzo Zmajevič (1670-1745)” (PhD dissertation, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1996); Vinko Kraljević, *Izabrana djela nadbiskupa Vicka Zmajevića* (Zagreb: Salesiana, 2015).

⁵⁵ Croatian historiography has only sporadically dealt with this issue. There is a lack of targeted research, although archival sources confirm that there were requests for the annulment of religious vows in other Dalmatian towns, such as Šibenik. It is important to emphasize that these were mainly monks, who did not seek to switch to laity, rather to transition from religious to diocesan clergy. Re-

the 17th century.⁵⁶ Zadar was a relatively small city on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, enclosed by ramparts, but geostrategically extremely important for the Venetian Republic, particularly because of its supremacy in the Adriatic Sea.⁵⁷ The population of Zadar in the 18th century varied between 3,000 and 5,000 souls.⁵⁸ In addition, the total number of nuns in Zadar was extremely low compared to Italian centers.⁵⁹ In the early 17th century the convent of St. Catherine in Zadar had 16 nuns,⁶⁰ a number which became fixed in accordance with the provisions of the Council of Trent.⁶¹ During the 18th century the number of professed nuns in the convent varied between 5 and 8 nuns,⁶² which represented an average of 0.13% of the urban population and 2.1% of the total number of middle-class women.⁶³ Demographic decadence of the Zadar nobility in the 18th century in relation to the more prolific and economically stronger middle-class,⁶⁴ impacted dowry agreements,⁶⁵ political supremacy and the culture and entertainment in

gardless of the petition's outcome, Venetian law prevented them from claiming or receiving a layman's inheritance. See: HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fol. 26r.

⁵⁶ Novice Giulia Maria Parenzi (age 16) from the convent of St. Marcella appealed to the Apostolic Nunciature because after she had completed her novitiate, the nuns wanted to change the way in which they would vote on allowing her to take the vows, even though she complied with all the requirements. After examining the case, the Apostolic Nuncio Angelo Cesi ordered the Archbishop of Zadar and the abess to allow the novice to take the vows. Records of this case can be found in: HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Zuanne Sorini, b. I, fasc. I, (13 August 1646; 21 August 1646; 10 September 1646; 19 September 1646). See: Novosel, "Social Circumstances", 30. On Angelo Cesi see: Patritium Gauchat, ed., *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris Aevi sive Summorum Pontificum, S.R.E. Cardinalium, Ecclesiarum Antistitum series e documentis tabularii praesertim vaticani collecta, digesta, edita* (hereafter: *HC*), vol. IV: 1592-1667 (Padua: "Il Messaggero di S. Antonio", 1960), 4: 95.

⁵⁷ It was a fortified city, for which the Serenissima gradually developed a fortification system, especially during the 16th century. See: Angelo de Benvenuti, *Zara nella cinta delle sue fortificazioni* (Milano: Fratelli Bocca editori, 1940).

⁵⁸ See: Vera Graovac, "Populacijski razvoj Zadra", *Geoadria*, 9 (2004), no. 1: 51-72 (here 58).

⁵⁹ For example, between 1500-1799 half of young girls from patrician families in Florence lived in seclusion in convents. Silvia Evangelisti, "We Do Not Have It, and We Do Not Want It", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34 (2003), no. 3: 679. See: Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic*, 244-245.

⁶⁰ IT - Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (hereafter AAV) - Visit. Eccles. Dalmat. - *Jadrensis, Miscellanea Armad. VII*, vol. 101 (hereinafter *Jadrensis*), fol. 766v.

⁶¹ IT-AAV-, Visit. Eccles. Dalmat.-*Jadrensis*, fol. 771r.

⁶² See: HR-ASSMZD-LC, 1722-1796.

⁶³ In comparison, 82 nuns were recorded in the Zadar census from 1695, and in the census from 1795 only 18 of them, which represents a drop of 82% in a 100-year interval. See: Graovac, "Populacijski razvoj Zadra", 57, 59.

⁶⁴ In the census from 1795 the nobility accounted for 1.2% of the population, and the middle class 13.5%. See: Graovac, "Populacijski razvoj Zadra", 59.

⁶⁵ For instance, Cattarina's great-grandfather Marchio di Marchi paid 2,150 ducats for his daughter's dowry in the mid-17th century, while at the same time the patrician Pelegrini family paid a dowry of 1,000 ducats. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Sorini, b. I, fasc. 3, fols. 14r-15v; fols. 45v-46r.

the city, with the middle class paving the way.⁶⁶ The new social and political constellation was reflected in the declining number of nuns.⁶⁷ As a result, in the 17th and 18th centuries young girls from Zadar, regardless of their class, entered monasteries mostly voluntarily and for religious reasons.⁶⁸ Archival originals provide an accurate dating of Cattarina's vestition in the convent of St. Catherine (1710) and her profession (1716).⁶⁹ The remark that the nuns tricked Cattarina into believing that after five or six years spent in the convent there was no choice for but to take vows,⁷⁰ finds no consistency in witness statements.⁷¹ Zadar's convents were not unfamiliar with the practice of extending postulancy over the period of several years.⁷² Following the provisions of the Council of Trent, before taking their vows, the nuns would renounce material wealth, i.e. family patrimony,⁷³ by signing contracts – always with fathers or close family members – that were witnessed by notaries public. The contract was preceded by a permission of the local bishop, which was granted after the legal age and the voluntary acceptance of monastic vows had been established. The form of the contract included a statement from the girls that they were entering the convent voluntarily, and a declaration of parental commitment to support them for as long as they live, in accordance with natural and state laws, with the option to enforce collection from family inheritance in case financial support, in variable amounts, was

⁶⁶ Raukar et al., *Zadar pod mletačkom upravom*, 519-532.

⁶⁷ See: Minela Fulurija, "Utemeljenje ženskoga samostana Sv. Katarine Sijenske u Dubrovniku", *Povijesni prilozi*, 32 (2013), no. 45: 115-133.

⁶⁸ The case of the nun Giacinta Civallesi reinforces this claim. Despite being persuaded to leave the convent, after her father's death she devoted herself to monastic life, to which her uncle, the Bishop of Skradin Gregorio Civallesi, attested in his will. She ceded all family property to her underage sisters. Her contract states: *To join the mark of aristocracy with that of religion is one of the wisest decisions that can be reached by someone who holds dear their own salvation; what Divine Providence had breathed into the souls chosen from on high to thus reap the fullness of the blessing.* HR-DAZD-31BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. II, fasc. II, br. 11, fol. 25v. On the patrician family Civallesi see: Dokoza, Andreis, *Zadarsko plemstvo*, 200-209. On Bishop Gregorio Civallesi see: Lovorka Čoralić, "Oporuka skradinskog biskupa Grgura Civallelija iz 1713. godine", *Croatica Christiana periodica* 15 (1991), no. 27: 136-143 (here 142).

⁶⁹ See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34r; Kraljević, *Izabrana djela*, 433.

⁷⁰ Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 426.

⁷¹ For example, one witness claimed that the nuns were also disgusted by the fact that Cattarina was in the convent against her will. HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 122v.

⁷² This is confirmed by the examination of the nuns in St. Catherine's during an apostolic visitation in 1603, when some of them felt compelled to emphasize that donning of a religious habit was their only pleasure. IT-AAV-Visit. Eccles. Dalmat.-Jadrensis, fol. 768r. The same was recorded in the 18th century. The nun Maria Cyprian Albinoni stayed in the convent of St. Catherine for a long time, before she took her vows in 1737. See: HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. II, fasc. II, br. 11, fol. 5r.

⁷³ See: Susanna Mantioni, "Monacazioni forzate e forme di resistenza al patriarcato nella Venezia della Controriforma" (PhD dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014), 77.

contested.⁷⁴ Although this was *de facto* a formality before taking religious vows,⁷⁵ the contract was not concluded before girls had been emancipated.⁷⁶ This was the key word under which the contracts were entered into notarial documents.⁷⁷ Emancipation implied that parents gave up legal authority over their daughters and that daughters had the right to freely and independently enter into legal contracts of any kind in the future,⁷⁸ which was perceived as freedom from *the shackles of paternal authority*.⁷⁹ According to Schutte, the “truth quotient” in the legal documents petitioning for annulment of vows was extremely high because judge delegates were able to apply the criterion of verisimilitude.⁸⁰ The same principle can be applied to notarial contracts regarding the freedom of nuns to renounce their inheritance in the 17th and 18th centuries in Zadar, especially since their quantitative values are inversely proportional to the number of lodged petitions.

The act of taking vows in the convent of St. Catherine was more modest in relation to lavish liturgical ceremonies in Venice.⁸¹ It was preceded by the bishop’s examination of the abbess and the candidates themselves about their physical, spiritual, intellectual and voluntary readiness to take vows.⁸² I want to take vows, said Cattarina Marchi on 3 August 1716, at the age of 21, in front of the Zadar Archbishop Zmajevich, and did so by making her solemn profession.⁸³

⁷⁴ In 1737 in Zadar the nun Maria Elisabetta Carrara signed a contract with her father about providing her means of subsistence in St. Catherine’s. It is stated in the contract that the nun had not been seduced, persuaded or deceived, and that she voluntarily renounced her father’s inheritance. The father, on the other hand, acting on his own and his heirs’ behalf, undertook to provide the nun with the annuity of 10 ducats for the rest of her life, as well as with medical care in case of illness. Should any of the heirs oppose this decision, it was specified the amount would be increased by 30 ducats, which in effect secured regular annual payments. The same was recorded for the nun Maria Cipriana Albinoni. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. II, fasc. II, br. 11, fols. 3v-5r; fol. 5r-v.

⁷⁵ See: Jacobson Schutte, “Between Venice”, 417.

⁷⁶ See: Juraj Balić, Lovorka Čoralić, Filip Novosel, ed., *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium. Fontes spectantes historiam Adriatici orientalis priscae aetatis recentioris*, vol. 57 (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts 2014) (hereinafter *Monumenta 57*) II, no. 37, 330-334.

⁷⁷ HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. I, fasc. II, br. 14, fols. 54r-55v.

⁷⁸ Like the nun Giacinta Sagich, one of the witnesses in the Marchi case, who, together with her sister, in 1706 gifted and as a sign of affection gave to her niece Chiara Soppe Fortezza clothes, goldware and silverware worth 3701 Dalmatian lira, with the aim of increasing her dowry. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Zuanne Emanuelli, b. II, fasc. II, contract from 20 April 1706.

⁷⁹ HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. I, fasc. I, br. 9, fols. 37v-38r.

⁸⁰ See: Jacobson Schutte, “Between Venice”, 437-438.

⁸¹ On the liturgical aspect of vows see: Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic*, 137-141. Comp. Mantioni, “Monacazioni forzate”, 18.

⁸² HR-ZKZD, *Carte spettanti alla famiglia Marchi – Pasini*, sign. 17377/II, MS 477 (hereinafter MS 477), fasc. XI, fols. 18r-19v.

⁸³ The formula for solemn profession included the vow of enclosure, acceptance of the three evangelical counsels (chastity, obedience and poverty) according to the Rule of St. Benedict, a declaration of

Church and state laws were in agreement on the issue of choosing a religious vocation.⁸⁴ The fundamental principle for considering the choice of religious life valid implied the free will of the individual.⁸⁵ It is not surprising, therefore, that the issue of petitions under *per vim et metum* was approached with great caution. Nuns or monks did not leave convents and monasteries while they were waiting for the ruling on the petition.⁸⁶ Venetian legislation did not oppose positive rulings on the annulment of religious vows.⁸⁷ The petition *per vim et metum* was reserved primarily for the court of the (arch)bishop whose diocese included the convent or monastery in which the monk or nun had worn the habit and taken vows.⁸⁸ In the case of the nun Marchi, the jurisdiction belonged to the archbishop of Zadar,⁸⁹ whose court was bypassed by her legal representatives.⁹⁰

A letter from the Archbishop of Zadar, Vincenzo Zmajevich, dated 30 June 1731, is filed in the archives of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome.⁹¹ Zmajevich testified that in 1716 Cattarina Marchi freely and voluntarily took her religious vows before him,⁹² six years after she took the veil,⁹³ which her relatives opposed.⁹⁴ He criticized the motion to annul the vows of the Zadar nun. He attributed the petition to an unnamed Zadar nobleman, who was trying to seduce the nun for her inheritance, with the consent of her mother.⁹⁵ He pointed to secret agreements between the protagonists in the matter, the intention to deceive the court of the Apostolic Nunciature, witness tampering, procedural errors and the circumvention of the first instance court – the local ordinary –

obedience to the archbishop and the abbess, touching and kissing the Scriptures. HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fols. 18v-19v.

⁸⁴ See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428 (ref. 48).

⁸⁵ IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 202, fol. 65v.

⁸⁶ IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 202, fol. 65v. See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 417.

⁸⁷ IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 202, fol. 66r.

⁸⁸ IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 202, fol. 66v. See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 429-430.

⁸⁹ IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 202, fol. 67r.

⁹⁰ It was suggested to the Venetian doge that the nun could not obtain justice from the Zadar archbishop Zmajevich. See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428.

⁹¹ He wrote the letter while witnesses were being questioned. The first witness was questioned on 27 June, and the record was concluded on 5 July 1731. HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 15r; fol. 181r.

⁹² See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34r.

⁹³ Zmajevich called the case *a scandalous design that could end in the worst possible way, being, to our misfortune, unparalleled in Dalmatia*. For Zmajevich this was primarily the matter of defending the Catholic faith, above all from heretics and schismatics, who would, as he put it, gloat over this. Kraljević, *Izabrana djela*, 433. Comp. Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428. On the issue see: Mile Bogović, *Katolička Crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1993).

⁹⁴ Kraljević, *Izabrana djela*, 433.

⁹⁵ On the seduction issue see: Giorgia Alessi, "Il gioco degli scambi: seduzione e risarcimento nella casistica cattolica del XVI e XVII secolo", *Quaderni storici* 25 (1990), no. 75: 805-831.

by assigning the case to the priests Antonio Vanni and Giuseppe Scarpi.⁹⁶ He brought up the bias and intimacy of the Zadar priests with the patrician family of the future fiancé.⁹⁷ According to Zmajevich, the auditor of the Nunciature was mistaken because money was the driving force behind the matter, which is why he pleaded with the Congregation to exert its authority over the Nunciature in Venice,⁹⁸ remove them from the case and entrust it to the independent judiciary,⁹⁹ which was what eventually happened.¹⁰⁰ Representatives of the Zadar nun quickly learned about this.¹⁰¹ The Archbishop of Zadar seems to have been closely monitored.¹⁰² The actions of legal representatives cast doubt on the credibility of the petition,¹⁰³ and the claim that they would not get justice in the first instance is contradicted by the protective attitude that the Archbishop of Zadar adopted towards the prerogatives of Zadar nuns,¹⁰⁴ although he was under pressure from influential social groups.¹⁰⁵ The personality of the Archbishop of Zadar and the reputation he enjoyed with the secular and ecclesiastical authorities¹⁰⁶ support his testimony before the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, whose trust and respect he indisputably enjoyed.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁶ Kraljević, *Izabrana djela*, 433. The Zadar archbishop Zmajevich and the priest Scarpi were involved in a lawsuit at the time. In the archives of the Venetian *consultori*, Scarpi is listed as the plaintiff against the Zadar archbishop, but also as a person who interfered in the affairs of secular judiciary. In 1659, Zuanne Giovini, a citizen of Zadar, bequeathed 50 ducats for the education of a young middle-class man from Zadar in Padua, providing that he obtain a doctoral law degree within five years and return to Zadar to take on the cases of the nuns from St. Catherine's and St. Marcella's *pro bono*. Since there were no young lay people from the middle class, it was decided to send the priest Scarpi to Padua, where he successfully completed his studies and returned to Zadar. However, Scarpi acted beyond the limits of temporary specific jurisdiction and intervened in secular litigation, which was prohibited by both church and state laws of the time. IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 202, fols. 126v-127r; fols. 261r-265r. The trial file kept in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Zadar: HR-AZDN – fond 16/2 – *Atti antichi*, kut. 2, br. 2.

⁹⁷ Kraljević, *Izabrana djela*, 433-434.

⁹⁸ IT – Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide (hereinafter: ASPF) – Scritture riferite nei Congressi (hereinafter: SC) – Dalmazia, sv. 7, fol. 510r-v.

⁹⁹ Kraljević, *Izabrana djela*, 433.

¹⁰⁰ See: IT-ASPF-SC-Dalmazia, sv. 7, fol. 516r; Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428.

¹⁰¹ See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428.

¹⁰² The correspondence mentions his brothers in this context. HR-ZKZD-MS 477, fasc. XI, fol. 23r.

¹⁰³ See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428-429.

¹⁰⁴ At the chapters nuns autonomously ruled on the admission of female candidates to the convent, in which bishops were not *de iure* allowed to interfere. This prerogative was jealously guarded by nuns. See: HR-ASSMZD-LC, unmarked folio.

¹⁰⁵ HR-ASSMZD-LC, 27 September 1729.

¹⁰⁶ See: Kraljević, "Gli ortodossi", 35-36.

¹⁰⁷ See: Kraljević, "Gli ortodossi", 22-25.

Commentary on Scarpi's Records of Witness Examination

The Apostolic Nunciature in Venice entrusted the case to the priest Vanni in March 1731,¹⁰⁸ without informing the archbishop.¹⁰⁹ Vanni appointed his nephew, the priest Scarpi, to act as a notary.¹¹⁰ Most of the witnesses answered the questions in the vernacular (Croatian) language (*vulgaris sermone*).¹¹¹ Scarpi was taking minutes in Italian, a language not spoken by most of the respondents, which leaves room for speculations about potentially fabricated answers.¹¹² Most of the witnesses were illiterate, so they certified the statement by marking it with a cross,¹¹³ which is easily falsified. The first witness, the nun Giacinta Sagich, was not firm enough to sign her own name, so her signature was provided by someone else.¹¹⁴ Francesco Scarpi signed the document by his own hand, but he did not know anything about the most important parts of the questionnaire, which concerned enforced vows.¹¹⁵ The skepticism about this witness is justified by the fact that he was the priest Scarpi's father.¹¹⁶

Based on the analysis of the Zadar case, it is possible to assume that legal representatives tampered with witnesses and that the transcript was subsequently fabricated, which calls into question the integrity of the trial itself, i.e. the credibility of the story (*true story*), as Schutte put it.¹¹⁷ The protagonists of the case are linked by kinship and interests, which is reason enough for skepticism. The remark of the archbishop of Zadar referring to plots and secret deals about the trial was not unfounded.¹¹⁸ In addition, Venetian consultants warned that it was necessary to

¹⁰⁸ See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428.

¹⁰⁹ The letters were delivered by the nun's maid. HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fol. 1v-2r.

¹¹⁰ HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fols. 1v-4v.

¹¹¹ HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fol. 12r.

¹¹² The question of credibility of the statements given during the trials was also raised by Schutte in a discussion regarding the activities of the Holy Office in Venice. She claimed that the chancellors had no reason to cover up the facts. In the Zadar case, it was the other way around. See: Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618-1750* (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 35.

¹¹³ See, e. g.: HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fol. 57v.

¹¹⁴ HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fol. 30r.

¹¹⁵ HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fols. 142v-47r.

¹¹⁶ The priest Scarpi was born in 1697 to father Francesco and mother Cattarina née Vanni, sister of the priest and examining magistrate Don Antonio Vanni. Scarpi's sister Cattarina was a nun at St. Marcella's. HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Baptizatorium. Liber XIV*, fol. 21v; HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. II, fasc. IV, br. 30, fol. 5r-v.

¹¹⁷ Schutte took the view that the criterion of credibility could be applied when considering the case and that the truth quotient was extremely high in the trials dealing with annulment of religious vows. A comparison of the transcript with archival originals in the Zadar case points in the opposite direction. See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 437-438.

¹¹⁸ See: Kraljević, *Izabrana djela*, 434.

exercise caution in petitions classified as *per vim et metum* until relevant facts had been established.¹¹⁹ Inconsistencies related to the circumstances of the nun's petition were discovered in the Zadar trial transcript. For instance, in answering certain questions the nun Giacinta Sagich invoked the time passed and her age,¹²⁰ whereas in addressing others she provided answers confidently; for example, to the 18th question of the procurator fiscal of the Apostolic Nunciature about the custody granted to the nun's maternal uncle after the death of the father of the family.¹²¹ The original trial transcript indicates that the cause of all Cattarina's troubles was her maternal uncle Sebastian Ponte, attributing this to the family's fear of economic and social adversities if they happened to oppose the uncle's plans.¹²² This is the abbess's full answer:

"It is not only true, it is certain that if the said Mr. Ponte had decided to deprive this family of his help, it would surely have suffered enormous losses, all the more so because after a while Madam Cattarina, the mother, left the house of Marchi and entered into a second marriage with the now deceased sir Zorzi Capogrosso. The family was left without sufficient means, except those provided by Uncle Ponte, and if these had also been revoked, the family's entire business would have collapsed."¹²³

Archival sources refute the abbess's affirmative claim. The remark about the nun's mother's second marriage is true.¹²⁴ This was probably a marriage of convenience with a nobleman, which guaranteed Cattarina Ponte protection, preservation and expansion of property, as well as a patrician addition to her last name – Capogrosso.¹²⁵

However, the abbess's claim that the mother Cattarina left the house *after* the marriage, so the family had only uncle Sebastian Ponte to rely on, and wouldn't be able to keep the business running without his help, is untenable because the marriage took place three years after his death.¹²⁶ Inconsistency can also be found in the abbess's claims about Cattarina's resistance to the cloister and the alleged

¹¹⁹ IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 202, fol. 65v.

¹²⁰ HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 20v; fol. 21v.

¹²¹ HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 14r.

¹²² On this see: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 426.

¹²³ HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 23r-v.

¹²⁴ The marriage took place on 10 February 1714. HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Matrimonium. Liber VII*, fol. 38v. The Venetian dowry law encouraged female citizens to marry nobles, provided the dowry was increased by 25%. Marrying up was in women's interest. Comp. Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic*, 6-7, 20, 23.

¹²⁵ The mother of Melchior Marchi, the husband of the nun's sister Lucrezia, came from the same family. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. I, fasc. I, br. 5, fol. 9r. On the patrician family Capogrosso from Split see: Arsen Duplančić, "A note on the Roman relief from Split depicting military gear", *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku* 108 (2015), no. 1: 285.

¹²⁶ Sebastian Ponte died in 1711, at the age of 44. HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum. Liber VII*, fol. 91v.

pressure from the nuns,¹²⁷ attributed to the nun Paola Bellodi,¹²⁸ which is questionable, since Sagić served as a nun in 1715,¹²⁹ a year before Cattarina Marchi took her vows. In 1716, the nun Sagić initiated the procedure necessary for the nun Marchi to take religious vows and, contrary to the transcript, ensured the archbishop how delighted the nuns were by Cattarina's vows, confirming that she chose monasticism freely.¹³⁰ All this challenges the integrity of Scarpi's transcript and gives further credibility to Archbishop Zmajevich's remarks.

The Marchi sisters (who took religious names Scholastica and Cattarina) renounced the right to their family inheritance in the contract signed on 21 December 1714 in the *parlatorio* of St. Catherine's in Zadar. After concluding a year-long postulancy and novitiate, they were *not seduced or deceived, but freely and voluntarily* renounced the family inheritance in favor of sisters Lucrezia and Mandallena, in the presence of Melchior Marchi and their maternal uncle Orazio Ponte.¹³¹ The Marchi and Ponte families undertook to provide them with a suitable lifelong support in the convent of St. Catherine.¹³² If uncle was indeed putting pressure on them,¹³³ the situation could have been favorably resolved after his death in 1711, before the vows were taken, which calls into question the alleged coercion of the sisters to religious life.¹³⁴

Given differing views on the management of family property after uncle's death,¹³⁵ it is certain that the widow Marchi took on this task.¹³⁶ In the early modern age, a widow in Zadar was perceived as a free woman; she could do business, manage her dowry and increase it,¹³⁷ a standard practice which the

¹²⁷ HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 18v.

¹²⁸ HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 26v.

¹²⁹ See the contract on the lease of the convent's land from 1715. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. I, fasc. I, br. 11, fols. 19v-20r.

¹³⁰ HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fol. 18r-v.

¹³¹ It must be pointed out that the nuns' mother was not present when the contract was signed. Legally, a widow who entered into a second marriage was considered absent, and could not act as a guardian. In such a case custody was transferred to ascendants on the father's side. Since Mandallena's father Melchior was the last in his line, the dowry law applied, stipulating that ascendants on the mother's side assume charge of the dowry, i.e. guardianship. See: Marco Ferro, *Dizionario del diritto comune e veneto*, vol. I (Venezia: Presso Andrea Santini e figlio, 1843), 643, 720; Marco Ferro, *Dizionario del diritto comune e Veneto*, vol. II (Venezia: Presso Andrea Santini e Figlio, 1847), 669-670.

¹³² HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. I, fasc. I, br. 4, fols. 24r-25r.

¹³³ HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 43v.

¹³⁴ By all accounts, Ellena Marchi entered the convent voluntarily. HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 33r.

¹³⁵ HR-ASSMZD-62-Processo, fol. 75r; fol. 155r.

¹³⁶ See the contract from 1729. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. I, fasc. I, br. 5, fols. 40r-41r.

¹³⁷ Comp. Balić, Čoralić, Novosel, *Monumenta* 57, I, no. 57, 115-21. See: Beatrice Moring, Richard Wall, *Widows in European Economy and Society, 1600-1920* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 81-118.

Zadar statutory regulations condoned ever since the Middle Ages.¹³⁸ After the death of her second husband in July 1715,¹³⁹ the widow Cattarina Ponte Capogrosso took over the family business, handling the finances as she saw fit.¹⁴⁰ Owing to the provisions of the Council of Trent regarding petitions for the annulment of vows,¹⁴¹ and to a favorable economic situation, the widowed mother was thus able to help her daughter.¹⁴² But there were witnesses who claimed that the mother, along with her daughter Lucrezia, hindered Cattarina in her intent to leave the convent.¹⁴³ Schutte stated that the nun was postponing the petition until the death of her sister who, for financial reasons, resolutely opposed her leaving the convent.¹⁴⁴ The petition was sent to the court of the Apostolic Nunciature in Venice a year and a half after the sister's death,¹⁴⁵ with the intention of challenging *the arbitrary, be it explicit or tacit, ratification of invalid religious vows*.¹⁴⁶ On 31 March 1731, Giovanni Pietro Canali¹⁴⁷ was authorized by the Zadar notary Antonio Guerrini to investigate the matter.¹⁴⁸ After the witnesses have been questioned from 27 June to 5 July 1731, the transcript was sent to Venice. Schutte stated that the papal nuncio sent a letter to the Zadar archbishop Vincenzo Zmajevich, probably asking him to annul the religious vows of Cattarina Marchi, which he refused. Schutte further claimed that by appealing directly to Rome, without a permission from the state authorities, the nun's legal representatives committed a procedural error which only made matters worse.¹⁴⁹ Contrary to Schutte's opinion, it seems that Zmajevich's letter from 18 September 1731 was not a response to the nuncio's letter, which is currently missing from the examined archival material. It is a protest voiced by the Zadar archbishop, whose

¹³⁸ See: Sabine Florenc Fabijanec, "Žensko upravljanje nekretninama u drugoj polovici 14. st. u Zadru", *Historijski zbornik* 59 (2006): 42-43.

¹³⁹ HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum. Liber VII*, fol. 130r.

¹⁴⁰ See: HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. II, fasc. II, br. 12, fols. 11v-13r. In a codicil from May 1739, Cattarina mentioned money earned through her own efforts while she was a widow. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. V, fasc. I, pos. 8, br. 200.

¹⁴¹ See: Mantioni, "Monacazioni forzate", 265.

¹⁴² See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 426.

¹⁴³ See: HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fol. 159r-v.

¹⁴⁴ Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428 (ref. 48).

¹⁴⁵ For further correspondence see: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428.

¹⁴⁶ HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. III, fasc III, 120.1.20, fols. 1v-2r.

¹⁴⁷ The matrimonial ties between the Marchi family from Zadar and the Canal family from Venice were recorded in the 16th-century originals. See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. II, fol. 4r.

¹⁴⁸ He was a syndic and procurator of the convent of St. Catherine, a witness in the trial and a relative of the nun. HR-ASSMZD-62-*Processo*, fols. 168v-175r. Cattarina's grandfather Francesco married Antonia Guerrini, the daughter of Anzolo, who brought him a dowry of 4,300 ducats in cash and movable and immovable property. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Sorini, b. I, fasc. 3, fols. 28v-30r.

¹⁴⁹ Comp. Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428.

court was completely bypassed by the legal representatives of the nun Marchi, which is evident from his letter to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Moreover, it seems that Rome played a significant role in circumventing the court of the archbishop of Zadar. The correspondence between the bishop of Pula Giovanni Andrea Balbi¹⁵⁰ and Archpriest Giorgio Giorgiceo,¹⁵¹ Zmajevich's commissioner in Rome, from 13 and 20 September 1732, provides interesting information about the case of the nun Marchi. After Zmajevich's protest, Rome ordered the nunciature in Venice to turn over the case to the Zadar archbishop, prompting the legal representatives of the nun Marchi to appeal to a secular court, which Bishop Balbi called *the devil's path (strada diabolica)*. Before this court they accused Archbishop Zmajevich of colluding with Rome to suspend the case of the Zadar nun, and thus violating the jurisdiction of the Venetian authorities to which the nunciature entrusted the ruling in the case.¹⁵² So the legal representatives asked that the archbishop of Zadar be recused, which, according to Balbi, was harmful to Zmajevich's reputation. Balbi obviously sided with the archbishop of Zadar, with whom he successfully cooperated while he served as a bishop in the neighboring Nin, and suggested that the case be transferred to the court of the archbishop of Split, Antonio Cadcich,¹⁵³ *a learned, prudent and practical prelate*.¹⁵⁴ In a letter from 20 September 1732, Balbi openly criticized Rome, which in the matter of the nun Marchi "was constantly changing its mind, delegating the case to the archbishop of Zadar in one brief, and to the Italian bishops in another". He believed that these actions on the part of Rome were tarnishing the reputation of the Zadar archbishop, and that the Zadar nun would undoubtedly leave the convent because of dubious legal practices in conducting the trial. Balbi concluded that Rome too would eventually realize its own mistake.¹⁵⁵

So the fundamental question here is why the legal representatives were so persistent in avoiding the court of the archbishop of Zadar, "the only judge with jurisdiction in the case, as the consultori" stated in a letter dated 22 December 1732.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ On Balbi see: Slaven Bertoša, "Prilog poznavanju crkvene povijesti grada Pule od XVII. do XIX. stoljeća", *Croatica Christiana periodica* 25 (2001), no. 47: 109-110.

¹⁵¹ On Archpriest Giorgiceo see: Josip Burić, "Kanonici hrvatskog kaptola sv. Jeronima u Rimu (1589-1901)", *Excerpt from the Book of Proceedings of the Croatian Institute of History in Rome*, vol. III-IV (Rome, 1971), 120-121.

¹⁵² IT-ASPF-SC-Dalmazia, sv. 7, fol. 510r.

¹⁵³ See: Marijan Valković, "Antun Kačić i njegovo 'Bogoslovlje diloredno'", *Bogoslovska smotra* 49 (1979), no. 4: 498-506.

¹⁵⁴ IT-ASPF-SC-Dalmazia, sv. 7, fol. 510v.

¹⁵⁵ IT-ASPF-SC-Dalmazia, sv. 7, fol. 516r.

¹⁵⁶ IT-ASVe-Consultori in iure, b. 201, fol. 67r.

Motivation behind the Petition and Mother's Testamentary Confession

Schutte concluded the discussion by stating that the silence of the archival sources made it impossible to learn how the nun's ordeal ended, and posed the question whether the Zadar archbishop had reconsidered his position and reached a favorable solution that would have allowed the nun, the sole heir to the family fortune, to return to secular society.¹⁵⁷ The Zadar sources provide an unambiguous answer to these questions. As far as the mental state of the widowed mother is concerned,¹⁵⁸ a degree of individual affective instability is palpable.¹⁵⁹ The mother's affective vulnerability and a large family inheritance attracted the attention of the Zadar nobleman Girolamo Fanfogna,¹⁶⁰ whose assets were at a standstill because of the war with the Ottomans.¹⁶¹ That is why the nun's petition was initiated,¹⁶² and Fanfogna, with the consent and financial support of the nun's mother, lobbied before the court of the Apostolic Nunciature and the ecclesiastical courts in Rome,¹⁶³ which the will of Cattarina Ponte Capogrosso from July 1739 confirms:

“Then, in order to ease my conscience and apprise the executors of the will, hereby I testify and with the greatest honesty state the truth that I had personally and through an intermediary on several occasions during 1729 or 1730, I do not remember exactly, paid 300 sequins to Count Girolamo Fanfogna, from the income belonging to my late husband Melchior Marchi, for

¹⁵⁷ Jacobson Schutte, “Between Venice”, 430.

¹⁵⁸ See: Jitendra Kumar Trivedi et al, “Psychological Aspects of Widowhood and Divorce”, *Mens Sana Monographs* 7 (2009), no. 1: 37-49. doi:10.4103/0973-1229.40648.

¹⁵⁹ See: HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fol. 24r.

¹⁶⁰ Angelo Maria Girolamo Fanfogna was born in 1701 in Zadar to father Angelo and mother Maria Civalelli, and died in 1764. He never married. HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Baptizatorum. Liber XIV*, fol. 77r; HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum. Liber X*, fol. 80r. He was a descendant of a Zadar patrician family whose roots date back to the 12th century, and which was awarded the title of Knights of St. Mark in the 17th century for their contribution to the war effort. See: Lovorka Čoralčić, “Zadrani – kavaljeri svetoga Marka (XVII. stoljeće)”, *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* 49 (2007): 339-354. On the patrician family Fanfogna from Zadar see: Dokoza, Andreis, *Zadarsko plemstvo*, 239-249.

¹⁶¹ The financial difficulties of the Fanfogna family are indicated in a document by which the nobleman Francesco Begna, a year and one month after his marriage to Girolamo's sister, confirms that the three Fanfogna brothers paid him a dowry in the amount of 2,800 ducats. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. I, fasc. I, br. 1, fol. 1r-v.

¹⁶² The letter from 14 December 1732, in which she writes to him that *his beautiful spirit can overcome all difficulties, even those that are impossible*, testifies to the affective relationship between the Zadar nobleman and the nun. This did not escape the attention of the public prosecutors in 1739, who commented that only God knew if this relationship had petered out. HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fol. 23r-v; HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34r-v.

¹⁶³ See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34v.

the special cause entrusted to him, to which I had been repeatedly urged and asked by my daughter Cattarina, a nun in the convent of St. Catherine. Since I subsequently ran out of money from the income of my late husband Melchior, I asked Canon Pietro Rado to write a letter to Conte Fanfogna to inform him that I would not be able to afford any expenditures and that henceforth he would not be receiving any more money, which, as it seems to me, he inequitably spent, without advocating the matter; to which Canon Pietro Rado replied that the aforementioned Count Fanfogna no longer resides in Venice to further the cause of my daughter the nun, but because of his personal affairs. If the man in question should die, Canon Pietro Rado can in all good conscience testify to what I have said.¹⁶⁴

The testamentary provisions of Cattarina Ponte Capogrosso resulted in two endowments. The first was set up with money from her dowry,¹⁶⁵ and the other under the will of her daughter Lucrezia. The income from both endowments was primarily intended to support the nun until her death, and afterwards for the maintenance of the real estate belonging to the Marchi endowment. After the nun Marchi died, the right to the dowry endowment passed to the convent of St. Catherine, under the stipulation to celebrate Mass on the anniversary of the death of the testator and her husband,¹⁶⁶ which could not be put off under the law.¹⁶⁷

The archbishop of Zadar was well acquainted with the case, which is why the nobleman and the legal representatives appealed directly to the court of the Apostolic Nunciature, and then to the Pope, entangling themselves in the web of Venetian legislation.¹⁶⁸ The death of Lucrezia's husband in 1733 delayed the petition process because it directly cut off the source of funding. Melchior was the last male descendant of the Marchi family, and the family estate was protected by the institute of inalienable inheritance law (*fedecompresso*);¹⁶⁹ in other words, it was transferred exclusively to male offspring.¹⁷⁰ In the absence of Melchior's

¹⁶⁴ HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. V, fasc. I, pos. 8, br. 200.

¹⁶⁵ The dowry was 2,550 ducats. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. V, fasc. I, pos. 8, br. 200.

¹⁶⁶ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34v; On wills benefiting the souls of the deceased see: Sergio Lavarda, *L'anima a Dio e il corpo alla terra. Scelte testamentarie nella terraferma Veneta (1575-1631)* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1998).

¹⁶⁷ See: HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fols. 9v-10r.

¹⁶⁸ See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 421-422.

¹⁶⁹ On the legal institute of *fedecompresso* see: Paola Lanaro, "Fedecommesi, doti, famiglia: la trasmissione della ricchezza nella Repubblica di Venezia (XV-XVIII secolo). Un approccio economico", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines*, 124-2 | 2012, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/mefrim.801>.

¹⁷⁰ The *fedecompresso* for the Marchi estate was introduced in 1439. HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 7r.

will, the legal practice of inheritance *ab intestato* was applied.¹⁷¹ By force of law and consanguinity,¹⁷² the only legitimate heir to Marchi's estate in that case was Sebastian Pasini,¹⁷³ which was contested by Cattarina Ponte Capogrosso. However, on the back of high trial costs and her wish to end the disputes, in June 1733 she negotiated a settlement with her unintended son-in-law, entitling her to half of the estate until her death.¹⁷⁴ After the death of the widow Ponte Capogrosso in 1739, the Marchi estate passed into Pasini's hands,¹⁷⁵ which the nun Marchi challenged. In June 1739, she filed a lawsuit against the executors of her mother's and sister's wills. The Count of Zadar, Bernardin Soderini, requested that he be recused from the trial,¹⁷⁶ on the grounds of deceitful actions of the nun's legal representatives.¹⁷⁷ The Providur General referred the case to the Count of Šibenik and Captain Domenico Pasqualigo, against which the executors of the will lodged an appeal in August 1740, citing increased costs caused by the change of jurisdiction.¹⁷⁸ The legal representatives of the Zadar nun filed an objection, claiming that the executors of the will were deliberately stalling for their own benefit.¹⁷⁹ However, the nun's legal representatives simultaneously appealed to

¹⁷¹ In principle, the term *ab intestato* refers to the inheritance right of male offspring from a matriline in the absence of direct male offspring. See: Ferro, *Dizionario del diritto*, vol. I, 705-706.

¹⁷² HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 17r.

¹⁷³ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 6v. See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 426 (ref. 45).

¹⁷⁴ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 35r.

¹⁷⁵ In June 1739, the Count of Zadar, Bernardo Soderini, proclaimed Pasini to be the rightful lord of the Turanj settlement (*Torretta de Marchi*). In the 15th century Simon Marchi bought the estate from the Croatian nobleman Francesco Drasmileo of the Jamomet family. HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 7r; 32p. About the Croatian nobility and Jamomet (Drasmileo) in general see: Ivan Majnarić, "Nobility of the Croatian Kingdom between Zadar and Its hinterland during the Late 14th and Early 15th Centuries", in: *Towns and Cities of the Croatian Middle Ages. Authority and Property*, ed. Irena Benyovsky Latin and Zrinka Pešorda Vardić (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, 2014); Ivan Majnarić, *Plemstvo zadarskog zaleđa u XIV. i XV. stoljeću* (Zadar: University of Zadar, 2018), 246-249.

¹⁷⁶ Before the dispute ended, Pasini took possession of the estate by force, confiscated the keys to Marchi's house in Turanj and appropriated agricultural yields, prompting the Providur General himself to respond in June 1739, ordering him to return the keys to the Providur's office. However, in early July of 1739 the Zadar Count Soderini ordered the coloni in Turanj to pay manorial dues to Pasini, causing tensions in the dispute. HR-DAZD-1-Providur General for Dalmatia and Albania, Marin Antonio Cavalli, kut. 118, fol. 74r; HR-DAZD-20-Municipality of Zadar. Count of Zadar, Bernardo Soderini, kut. 63, knj. I, fols. 8v-9r.

¹⁷⁷ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 36r-v.

¹⁷⁸ HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fols. 27r-28r; fols. 32r-33v.

¹⁷⁹ HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fols. 34r-35r.

the courts in Dalmatia¹⁸⁰ and Venice,¹⁸¹ which is why Venetian public prosecutors (*avogadori di comùn*) stepped in,¹⁸² contributing their legal opinion to the final outcome of the dispute.¹⁸³

Public prosecutors noticed a connection between two separate lawsuits against the executors of the will, which were filed simultaneously on 15 July 1739 by the nun and the Zadar nobleman.¹⁸⁴ The nobleman demanded compensation for the costs of lobbying in Venice, although in reality he wanted his debt to the testator expunged, and the nun wanted to gain possession of her father's estate by way of seizures and seals.¹⁸⁵ According to the *fedecompresso* principle, after the nun's father Melchior Marchi died without a will,¹⁸⁶ his half of the family estate passed to the Marchi brothers from the other family line, which prompted the endogamous relationship between Lucrezia and the elder Melchior.¹⁸⁷ By applying the

¹⁸⁰ In addition to the lawsuit against the executors of the will, in June 1739, the nun's legal representatives presented to the Criminal Court in Zadar (*Ofittio Prettorio al Criminale*) a petition for annulment of the vows, without the permission of the state authorities, breaking the law again, which is why the Providur General took over the case. At the same time, the nun's lawyer in Venice, Zorzi Bembo, appealed to the court of the Council of Forty (*Civil Vecchio*) in August of the same year. The case thus assumed the typology of a criminal offense, which fell under the jurisdiction of public prosecutors (*avogadori di comùn*). HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fols. 35v-36v.

¹⁸¹ See her appeal to the doge from 10 July 1739. HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 33r-v.

¹⁸² On the Venetian magistrate *Avogaria di Comun* see: Cristina Setti, "La terza parte a Venezia: L'Avogaria di Comun tra politica e prassi quotidiana (secoli XVI-XVIII)", *Acta Histriae* 22 (2014), no. 1: 127-144. On the jurisdiction of public prosecutors see: Ferro, *Dizionario del diritto*, vol. I, 213-220.

¹⁸³ According to the testamentary provisions from 1489, neither Sebastian Pasini nor Cattarina Marchi met the requirements for the legal institute of *fedecompresso*; she because she was a female descendant from the patriline, and he because he was a male descendant from the matriline. Since Zadar's statutory law did not provide a legal remedy for such a case, which confirms that Venetian legislation prioritized communal statutory law, the Venetian laws (*Corretioni di Venezia*) were applied, to the benefit of Sebastian Pasini in terms of inalienable inheritance law *ab intestato*. HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fols. 46r-47v. On the Statute of the City of Zadar see: Josip Kolanović, Mate Križman, pri., *Statuta Iadertina cum omnibud reformationibus usque ad annum MDLXIII factis* (Zadar: The Zadar branch of Matica Hrvatska; State Archives in Zagreb, 1997). On the Dalmatian statutory law in general see: Antun Cvitanić, *Iz dalmatinske pravne povijesti* (Split: Književni krug, 2002). On the Venetian legal system see: Ivone Cacciavillani, *La "giustizia" nell'ordinamento veneziano* (Venezia: Corbo e Fiore Editori, 2011).

¹⁸⁴ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34v.

¹⁸⁵ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34v. During the trial, the nun and the Zadar nobleman, i.e. their legal representatives, sided with each other, and the correspondence between the nun, her mother and the Zadar nobleman came to light. Dispute files are available at: HR-ZKZD, MS 477, fasc. XI, fols. 1r-35r.

¹⁸⁶ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 46r.

¹⁸⁷ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 35r. It was blatantly a marriage of convenience, connected with the complex issue of Venetian dowry and inalienable inheritance laws. Lucrezia was 20 and Melchior 69 when they were married. Since Lucrezia's father died without a will, and was the last in his line, she was left without a dowry, so under inheritance law she was entitled only to that part of her father's estate that was acquired through his own investments and was not considered part of the inheritance

institute of inalienable inheritance right to the Marchi estate, the option of transferring the inherited property to the Ponte family was *a priori* excluded, which is contrary to the witness statements.¹⁸⁸ If there had indeed been any coercion from the uncle,¹⁸⁹ once he died in 1711, Cattarina was under no obligation to accept monachization.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the findings of public prosecutors contradict the witnesses' claims that Lucrezia Marchi was opposed to her sister leaving the convent.¹⁹¹ Public prosecutors concluded that the representatives of the Zadar nun did make use of legal means, but also resorted to lies and deceptions.¹⁹²

The final reversal occurred on 23 May 1743, when the motion to dismiss the proceedings against the executors of the wills in question was submitted.¹⁹³ Voluntarily, freely and finally, the nun Marchi dropped all lawsuits filed in Zadar and Venice. She stated that she was "moved by the Holy Spirit, who never forsakes the souls of the faithful, and it even commands to the brides of Christ that which can ensure the salvation of the soul."¹⁹⁴ The draft of the renunciation document is an indirect admission of sorts and an expression of remorse of the Zadar nun, just as much as the will of her mother, who encouraged her to take perpetual vows (*consecratione*), and ordered the executors to present her with a diamond ring and accompany her in the religious vocation, for the advantage of her soul and to

protected by *fedecomesso*. See: Lanaro, "Fedecomessi, doti, famiglia", 16-28; Ferro, *Dizionario del diritto*, vol. I, 640-649; 704-716.

¹⁸⁸ See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 426.

¹⁸⁹ In a petition to the doge dated 10 July 1739, the nun accused her mother and uncle of forcing her to join the convent. She stated that the only fundamental reason for this act of coercion was the agreement in which she had renounced the right to inherit the family estate. The agreement, however, was made in 1714, three years after her uncle's death. See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 33r.

¹⁹⁰ The cases of female candidates freely departing from convents before taking vows were recorded in Venice as well. See: Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic*, 49.

¹⁹¹ Public prosecutors argued that the nun never challenged or considered challenging the will of her sister Lucrezia after her death. In 1729, Lucrezia bequeathed all her possessions to her mother to enjoy until her death, after which she instructed the executors of the will, Don Giovanni Preradovich and her uncle Orazio Ponte, to start an endowment for the souls of deceased family members *in perpetuo*. See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 34r; fol. 35v; HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. IV, fasc V, 120.2.2., br. 73. The nun failed to mention sister Lucrezia even in her second petition of the doge from July 1739. HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 33r. See: Jacobson Schutte, "Between Venice", 428 (ref. 48).

¹⁹² It is explicitly stated that the nun employed numerous exaggerations to effect the annulment her vows, which were far from the truth and the factual circumstances, and in this she was recklessly and even viciously supported by her defenders. HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fol. 36r.

¹⁹³ The nun authorized the procurator fiscal of the Apostolic Nunciature in Venice, Nicolò Dinaricich, to do so. HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. III, fasc III, 120.1.22, fol. 10r-v. Dinaricich was appointed Bishop of Osor in 1745, and Metropolitan of Split in 1757. See: Remigius Ritzler, Pirminus Sefrin, ed., *HC*, vol. VI.: 1733-1799, ed. Remigius Ritzler and Pirminus Sefrin (Padua: "Il Messaggero di S. Antonio", 1958), 6:109; 6:385.

¹⁹⁴ HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Antonio Guerrini, b. II, fasc. II, br. 15, fol. 12r-v.

the greater glory of God.¹⁹⁵ Finally, on 3 September 1743, the executors of the will signed an agreement with the nun Marchi, in which her support in the convent of St. Catherine was regulated per instructions in her mother's will.¹⁹⁶

Cattarina Marchi spent six more years in St. Catherine's, actively participating in chapter sessions. According to the records, after her motion to annul religious vows failed, on several occasions she avoided voting on the admission of female candidates to the convent.¹⁹⁷ The last time she was mentioned in the original was at the chapter from 16 July 1744, where she was prevented from (*per inabilità di votare*) voting on the vows of the novice Coltelli.¹⁹⁸ She was probably ill, because in the following years her presence at chapters was not recorded. The nun Cattarina Marchi died at the age of 54 in the Benedictine convent of St. Catherine in Zadar, and was buried on 16 October 1749 in the convent church,¹⁹⁹ ending her earthly ordeal.

Conclusion

Historically, there is no justification for enforced monachization *per vim et metum*. Based on the available archival material, women's religious vocations in Zadar during the 17th and 18th centuries were mostly spiritually motivated. Although the quantitative sample of Zadar nuns in the early modern period was extremely low compared to larger European cities, the qualitative sample of the chosen religious vocations is extremely high. Apart from the case of Cattarina Marchi, archival sources do not cite any other case of enforced vows. A review of the analysis of the case of the Zadar nun in the work of Anne Jacobson Schutte has shown that it is necessary to view the *per vim et metum* petition of nun Cattarina Marchi in the context of local socio-religious relations. Classification of the case of the Zadar nun under the heading of enforced vows, seems to be in contradiction with historical facts. The analysis and synthesis of the archival materials available for the case has shown that Cattarina Marchi accepted religious vows voluntarily. Two factors directly and indirectly influenced her to change her mind and consequently lodge her petition, after serving in the convent of St. Catherine in Zadar for 15 years. On one hand, unfavorable socio-economic family relations, and on the other hand, an affective connection with a Zadar nobleman. The researched archival material confirms that the relations within the immediate and extended Marchi family were shaped by a conflict of interest.

¹⁹⁵ HR-DAZD-31-BZ, Francesco Bonicelli, b. V, fasc. I, pos. 8, br. 200.

¹⁹⁶ HR-ZKZD, MS 153, fasc. VI, fols. 38r-39v.

¹⁹⁷ HR-ASSMZD-LC, 13 October 1734; 14 August 1743.

¹⁹⁸ HR-ASSMZD-LC, 16 July 1744.

¹⁹⁹ HR-AZDN-43-Zd, *Obituum, Liber IX*, fol. 141r.

Protection of family inheritance at all costs, which was actually the purpose of the institute of inalienable inheritance (*fedecommesso*), resulted in a high number of male descendants who did not marry, a high percentage of endogamous marriages, affecting the health of descendants, and in frequent litigation, which is evident from abundant trial transcripts preserved in the family archives.²⁰⁰ Eventually the mentality of this rigid inheritance law gradually but inexorably affected the reproduction and decadence in the direct Marchi lineage. The collusion of the protagonists in this process, especially in terms of witness tampering and fabrication of official reports, calls for caution in considering similar cases, and consulting local archives can clarify the cause-and-effect relationship between them. Since the remarks of the Zadar archbishop revealed the truth, corroborated in the testament of the nun's mother, it is justified to conclude that in the case of the nun Marchi's petition, the archbishop followed the church norms, i.e. performed the duty of oversight with which he was entrusted. In conclusion, the case of the Zadar nun is perhaps best described by the words of Vettor Sandi: "Taking religious vows and wearing a habit makes it easier to restrain passions by the grace of God, but it does not eliminate humanity or wicked disposition of a corrupt nature, nor does it makes them disappear."²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ See: HR-ZKZD, MS 153; HR-ZKZD, MS 477.

²⁰¹ Vettor Sandi, *Principi di storia civile della Repubblica di Venezia. Dall'anno di N.S. 1700. sino all'anno 1767.*, vol. III (Venezia: Preso Sebastian Coletti, 1772), 46.

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Zdenko Dundović*

Triler o zadarskoj časnoj sestri Cattarini Marchi: istinita ili lažna priča?

Sažetak

U radu koji je Anne Jacobson Schutte objavila u časopisu *Sixteenth Century Journal* o časnim sestrama koje su u Mletačkoj Republici prisiljavali na redovnički život, navodi se, između ostalih, slučaj zadarske opatice Cattarine Marchi. Zadarski arhivski izvori donose nove spoznaje o tom slučaju, daju odgovore na pitanja koja je postavila Jacobson Schutte i bacaju novo svjetlo na zamolbu redovnice Marchi da joj se poništi redovnički zavjet. Analiza i sinteza arhivskih izvora u Zadru, kao i drugih arhivskih izvora, promijenili su cijeli narativ oko časne sestre Marchi, opravdavajući sumnju u autentičnost priče (istinite priče) o njezinu prisilnom odlasku u samostan. Pokazat će se da njezin slučaj treba promatrati u kontekstu gospodarskih, društvenih i vjerskih odnosa zadarskog plemstva i građanstva u razdoblju od 16. do 18. stoljeća, posebice s obzirom na neotuđiva nasljedna prava, poznata kao *fedecommeso*.

Ključne riječi: Mletačka Republika, Zadar, opatica Cattarina Marchi, 16.-18. stoljeće, *fedecommeso*

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