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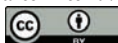
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VSEBINA / INDICE GENERALE / CONTENTS

Polona Tratnik: Saint George, the Dragon Slayer: Sacralized Violence and the Allegorical Union of Sacred and Secular Power	617
<i>San Giorgio, l'uccisore di draghi: violenza sacralizzata e unione allegorica di potere sacro e secolare</i>	
<i>Sveti Jurij, ubijalec zmaja: posvečeno nasilje in alegorična združitev posvetne in cerkvene oblasti</i>	
Jelena Đurišić: Criminal Offences Against Life, Limb, and Property in Kotor (Fifteenth to Seventeenth Century)	669
<i>Delitti contro la persona e il patrimonio commessi a Cattaro (XV–XVII secolo)</i>	
<i>Kazniva dejanja zoper življenje, telo in premoženje v Kotorju (15.–17. stoletje)</i>	
Erdal Çiftçi & Hakan Kaya: State-Making in the Ottoman Periphery: Tanzimat Reforms in the Sanjak of Bayezid in the Mid-Nineteenth Century	691
<i>La creazione dello stato nella periferia ottomana: le riforme del Tanzimat nel sangiacato di Bayezid a metà del XIX secolo</i>	
<i>Izgradnja države na osmanski periferiji: tanzimatske reforme v sandžaku Bajezid sredi 19. stoletja</i>	
Aleš Maver, Manica Godec Čizmarevič & Miro Hribernik: Jan Šedivý kot posrednik med slovensko in belorusko ter ukrajinsko kulturo	721
<i>Jan Šedivý come mediatore tra la cultura slovena e quella bielorusa e ucraina</i>	
<i>Jan Šedivý as a Mediator between Slovenian and Belarusian and Ukrainian Cultures</i>	
Gorazd Bajc & Veronika Mešič: Sodne obravnave mladoletnic, žrtev spolnih zlorab, pred okrožnimi sodišči Maribor, Murska Sobota in Celje v obdobju med letoma 1930 in 1941	741
<i>Processi per violenza sessuale sulle minorenni davanti ai tribunali distrettuali di Maribor, Murska Sobota e Celje, 1930–1941</i>	
<i>Court Hearings on Sexual Violence against Female Minors by the District Courts of Maribor, Murska Sobota, and Celje, 1930–1941</i>	

Kaja Mujdrica: *Le printemps slovène – vent de liberté sur la Slovénie.*

Francoski pogled na politične in družbene razmere
v Socialistični republiki Sloveniji, 1987–1988 767
Le printemps slovène – vent de liberté sur la Slovénie.
Il punto di vista francese sulla situazione politica e sociale
in Repubblica socialista di Slovenia, 1987–1988
Le Printemps Slovène – Vent de Liberté sur la Slovénie.
A French Perspective on the Political and Social Situation
in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, 1987–88

Janez Osojnik: Pogled britanske diplomacije na slovenske secesionistične
težnje ob koncu osemdesetih let in na slovenski plebiscit 793
Il punto di vista della diplomazia britannica sulle
aspirazioni secessioniste slovene alla fine
degli anni Ottanta e sul plebiscito sloveno
The Perception of British Diplomacy on Slovenian Secessionist T
endencies in the Late 1980s and on the Slovenian Plebiscite

POROČILA

RELAZIONI

REPORTS

Angelika Ergaver: Conference Report on International Symposium:
Justifying Interpersonal Violence in Early Modern Europe
(Online, 23 April 2025) 817

Veronika Kos: Conference Report on *12th Istrian History Biennale:*
International Scientific Conference: Violentia, conflictus, aggressio...
Violence in the History of the Adriatic, 22–24 May 2025, Poreč/Parenzo 821

Cecilia Furioso Cenci: Conference Report on the 23rd International
Oral History Association Conference *Re-Thinking Oral History*,
16–19 September 2025, Krakow 827

OCENE

RECENSIONI

REVIEWS

Štefan Hadalin: *Zajc, Marko, Smiljanić, Ivan & Meta Remec:*
SAMOMOR MED SIMPTOMOM IN METAFORO.
Ljubljana,: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino,
2025, 187 strani. 837

Conference Report on 12th Istrian History Biennale: International Scientific Conference: *Violentia, conflictus, aggressio...: Violence in the History of the Adriatic*, 22–24 May 2025, Poreč/Parenzo

From 22 to 24 May 2025, the Twelfth Istrian Historical Biennale (Croatian: *12. Istarski povijesni biennale*) was held in Poreč/Parenzo in Croatia, at the Istrian Assembly Hall. The international scientific conference was organised and hosted by the Regional Museum of Poreč, the State Archives in Pazin, as well as the Department of History and the Research Centre for the History of the North Adriatic Population at the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula.

This time, the biennale was entitled *Violentia, conflictus, aggressio...: Violence in the History of the Adriatic* (Croatian: *Violentia, conflictus, aggressio...: o nasilju u povijesti na jadranskom prostoru*) and brought together scholars to examine the complex phenomenon of violence in the Adriatic region from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Particular emphasis was placed on analysing the manifestations and consequences of violence, as well as its historical contexts and broader significance for the region's social and cultural development.

The conference comprised five sessions and included presentations by twenty researchers from Croatia, Slovenia and Spain. The official languages of the event were Croatian, Italian, Slovenian and English.

Following opening addresses, the conference was commenced with the presentation of the conference volume from the Eleventh Istrian History Biennale, entitled *Villae, rustici, agricolae...: The Village and the Peasantry in the History of the Adriatic* (Croatian: *Villae, rustici, agricolae...: o selu i seljaštvu u povijesti na jadranskom prostoru*). The volume was presented by Marija Mogorović Crljenko (Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Croatia), Urška Bratož (Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia) and Gaetano Benčić (Regional Museum of Poreč, Croatia).

The first session, chaired by Elena Uljančić (Regional Museum of Poreč), Neven Budak (University of Zagreb, Croatia) and Marija Mogorović Crljenko, featured the paper *Forms and Psychology of Violence in the Early Modern Period (Zadar – Nin – Pag)*, delivered by Zdenko Dundović and Zvezdan Penezić (University of Zadar, Croatia). Drawing on archival sources from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries preserved at the archives in Zadar, Venice and Rome, the authors examined varied expressions of violence in the wider Nin and Pag areas. They explored both individual and group violence, analysing motives and social context. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining historical and psychological methods, their paper illustrated the underlying causes and broader implications of early modern violence while highlighting some universal patterns in social behaviour.

The next paper, *Kidnappings, Murders and Vengeances. Albanian Crime in the Poreč Area (The Seventeenth Century)* was presented by Bruno Pomara (University of Valencia, Spain). Focusing on the multi-ethnic environment of early modern Istria, the paper analysed the settlement of Albanians in the rural Poreč area as part of Venetian colonisation. Predicated on criminal trial records from the Venetian Captain of Rašpor, Pomara employed a criminological lens to investigate tensions and conflicts between the indigenous Morlach population and Albanian newcomers, offering insight into the broader socio-ethnic dynamics of the region.

The final lecture of the first day, *Children Between the Family Haven and Criminal Responsibility in Selected Towns of Northern Istria in the Middle Ages*, was presented by Darja Mihelič (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Milko Kos Historical Institute, Slovenia). Addressing the historical role and legal status of children, the paper drew parallels with the contemporary issue of violence among children. Based on town statutes and legal records from mediaeval northern Istria, Mihelič examined family structure, inheritance and the threshold of criminal responsibility, showing how children appeared in judicial sources both as victims and as perpetrators.

The second day of the conference began with a session chaired by Neven Budak, Ivan Jurković (Juraj Dobrila University of Pula) and Urška Bratož. The first paper, *Violent Negotiations: Game Theory and Strategic Violence in Medieval Alpine-Adriatic Politics (Patriarchate of Aquileia, Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries)*, was given by Josip Banić (Science and Research Centre Koper). Banić explored the strategic use of violence by the Counts of Gorizia, particularly Albert I, as a negotiation tool and reputation-building mechanism, challenging the common view of mediaeval violence as irrational. Drawing on archival sources, he argued for a reconceptualisation of violence as political strategy.

Next followed the paper *Performative Role of Violence in the Medieval Context*, by Robert Kurelić (Juraj Dobrila University of Pula). Kurelić posited that violence functioned as a ritualised and symbolic act embedded in societal norms, rather than spontaneous aggression. While personal violence could stem from emotional impulses, collective violence was governed by custom and often had political or juridical significance.

Žiga Oman (Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment, Slovenia) concluded the session with his paper, *Elite Violence in the Early Modern Habsburg Adriatic and its Hinterlands*. Analysing intra-noble violence in cases from the Inner Austrian territories of Istria, Gorizia, Carniola and Styria, Oman argued that the elite continued to use violence in its disputes long after the prohibition of feuding, serving as a means to negotiate honour, power and social status. His paper situated these findings within a broader early modern European context.

The second session of the day, chaired by Robert Kurelić, Danijela Doblanović Šuran (Juraj Dobrila University of Pula) and Zdenko Dundović, began with a paper, entitled *With a Stick or a Stone – Violence and Violent Behaviour in the Kvarner*, by Kosana Jovanović (University of Rijeka, Croatia). Analysing mediaeval statutes from the Kvarner region, her paper examined how legal codes addressed violence, with particular attention to social status, gender and the severity of offences, as well as sanctioned forms of punitive violence.

The following presentation, *Amaza, amaza Resounded Through the Doge's Palace on 10 March 1514*, by Ivan Jurković, discussed the 1513 betrayal and capture of Marano by Count Krsto Frankopan. Through the case of a treacherous priest, Bartol, who betrayed Venetian defences under the pretext of an early morning hunt and was because of this tried before the Council of Ten, Jurković illustrated the complex entanglement of treason, warfare and Venetian justice during the War of the League of Cambrai.

In her paper *Violent Women and Violence Against Women – Early Modern Istrian Examples*, Marija Mogorović Crljenko analysed various forms of violence both committed by and inflicted upon women in early modern Istria. Drawing on ecclesiastical and secular sources, particularly marital disputes from the Diocesan Archives of Poreč, she challenged the simplistic victim-perpetrator dichotomy and showed that women were not merely passive victims but also active agents of violence, with their responses shaped primarily by power dynamics rather than gender alone.

Zrinka Blažević (University of Zagreb) concluded the session with *Vidi ego marmorea proiectum a mole cadaver: Desecration as a Cultural Sensation in Renaissance Rome*. Focusing on the accidental discovery of an ancient Roman marble sarcophagus with the completely preserved embalmed body of a young woman in 1485 along the Appian Way, the paper analysed the event through a praxeological lens, interpreting the desecration of the sarcophagus as an act of symbolic violence. Drawing on a Latin epigram by Ilija Crijević, an eyewitness and member of the Second Roman Academy, Blažević explored how humanist culture attributed complex iconic meanings to the body, highlighting broader tensions between antiquarian curiosity and moral anxiety in Renaissance Rome.

The afternoon session, following a guided tour of Poreč and the Euphrasian Basilica, was chaired by Zrinka Blažević, Dragica Čeč (Science and Research Centre Koper) and Neven Budak. Maja Ćutić Gorup (University of Rijeka) presented *Sanctions in the Counter-Reformation Records of the Habsburg Authorities*, analysing legal responses to Reformation sympathisers in the County of Pazin. Drawing on episcopal reports, she demonstrated how religious affiliation became entangled with issues of loyalty, influencing the enforcement of punitive measures.

The paper by Angelika Ergaver (Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment), titled *Regulating Violence in the Adriatic between the Fifteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, presented an analysis of customary legal mechanisms that regulated and prevented violence in early modern Adriatic societies. It challenged the dismissive attitudes of nineteenth-century legal historians towards feuding practices, demonstrating how these traditions were integral to social structures that effectively restrained violence. Ergaver compared these customary practices with criminal statutory law on corporal offences and prescribed penalties. Her paper endorsed the viewpoint of legal anthropologists and historians who advocate for a complementary relationship between written laws and oral legal traditions, emphasising instances of coexistence rather than opposition.

Ante Bećir (Croatian Institute of History, Croatia) presented *Ad concordiam inter partes. Factional Violence and Reconciliation Processes in Dalmatian Communes (The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)*. His paper explored instances of violent factional conflict within the mediaeval Dalmatian urban context and the role of external authorities, namely the central Venetian and royal Hungarian authorities, in facilitating reconciliation. Based on selected documents, Bećir examined efforts to reintegrate exiled factions in the communes of Trogir, Šibenik and Split during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These cases were situated within the broader discourse on reconciliation and conflict resolution in late mediaeval Europe, with particular attention to the limitations and prospects of achieving enduring peace among factions with a history of mutual violence.

The presentation that followed was given by Tomislav Popić (University of Rijeka). In his paper, *Medieval Records of Criminal Courts of Split and Zadar in the Study of the Historical Phenomenon of Violence*, Popić explored the significance of rare surviving criminal court records from mediaeval Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia. Although most records have been lost, the well-studied minutes of Dubrovnik's Criminal Court have survived, alongside lesser-known fragments from the Criminal Courts of Split (1345) and Zadar (1411–1413). Despite their limited scope and quantity, these documents provide valuable comparative material for the study of mediaeval violence. Popić's paper highlighted the importance of these 'remains of the remains' in illuminating legal practices and violence during the period.

Florence Fabijanec (Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Institute for Historical and Social Sciences, Croatia) concluded the session with *Korčula's Daily Dose of Fists and Hair Pulling in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*. She examined the collection of legal proceedings from the fund of the Korčulan Princes, revealing vivid accounts of everyday violence and social conflict. The cases portray dramatic reversals of guilt

through witness depositions and unfold across a range of settings and times. Alongside richly detailed narratives, the material illustrates the legal procedures of the Korčula court and highlights notable linguistic shifts from Latin to Italian dialect. Fabijanec proposed a comparative analysis with other Adriatic communes to better understand Korčula's socio-cultural specificity.

The final day began with a session moderated by Darja Mihelič, Marija Mogorović Crljenko and Elena Uljančić. Zrinka Novak (Institute for Historical and Social Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatia) opened the session with her paper, titled *Contra l'honor de Idio et contra tutte le leggi diuine et humane: About Verbal and Physical Violence in the Commune of Rab in the Mid-Sixteenth Century*. She examined criminal cases from the office of the Rab Prince Antun de Canale (1557–1559), revealing frequent verbal and physical violence within this diverse early modern community. Through court records analysis, the paper explored the social, legal and moral dimensions of offences, showing how statutes sought to restrain violence. Punishments were enforced not only to sanction perpetrators but also to deter further breaches of public order.

Matija Drandić (Historical Research Centre in Rovinj, Croatia) followed with *Infanticide in Istria Between 1500 and 1800: A Research Proposal Through Archival and Cultural Sources*. Given the lack of direct sources, Drandić analysed parish registers, pastoral visits, judiciary acts and city statutes. Furthermore, his paper explored the representation of infanticide in oral tradition and literature. Rather than offering conclusive findings, it proposed a nuanced approach to studying this complex and sensitive subject, reflecting on the challenges of reconstructing infanticide within the constraints of limited historical evidence.

Dragica Čeč addressed similar themes in *Attitudes Towards Violence Against Illegitimate Pregnant Women and Mothers During the Age of Enlightenment: Discourse and Practice*. She explored the mercantilist-populationist policies aimed at protecting illegitimate mothers and children, who were subject to social violence and neglect. Čeč examined legal, political and medical discourses of the Enlightenment era that advocated maternity and foundling homes as protective institutions. Drawing on archival materials from the Trieste foundling home, she analysed whether these measures genuinely safeguarded vulnerable women and children or perpetuated hidden violence.

The concluding paper, *Reporting Violence and Newspaper Discourse at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, was presented by Urška Bratož. Analysing press reports from Trieste and Istria at the turn of the twentieth century, she examined the newspaper coverage of violence, highlighting the dual role of the press in reporting and shaping public opinion. She noted that violent crime reports were often sensationalised, relying on detailed descriptions

and fictionalised dialogue to engage readers. The paper also addressed long-standing concerns about such reporting, considering how vivid portrayals of violence might incite aggression, encourage imitation, or violate victims' privacy.

The conference concluded with a trip to Kaštelir and Labinci, two villages near Poreč.

Veronika Kos