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VSEBINA / INDICE GENERALE / CONTENTS

Darja Mihelič: Korenine piranske družine Petrogna/Petronio (1257–1350) 757
Le radici della famiglia Petrogna/Petronio di Pirano (1257–1350)
The Roots of the Petrogna/Petronio Family of Piran (1257–1350)

Marijan Premovič: Banditry in Zeta in the Balšić Period (1360–1421) 799
Brigantaggio a Zeta nel periodo dei Balšić (1360–1421)
Razbojništvo v Zeti v času Balšićev (1360–1421)

Dušan Mlacović: Koper v poznem srednjem veku: opažanja o mestu in njegovih portah po pregledu knjig koprskih vicedominov s konca 14. stoletja 819
Capodistria nel tardo medioevo: osservazioni sulla città e le sue porte dopo una disamina dei quaderni dei vicedomini capodistriani della fine del XIV secolo
Late Medieval Koper: Observations about the Town and Its Portae from a Survey of the Books of the Koper Vicedomini from the End of the 14th Century

Darko Darovec: Knjiga koprskih kapetanov Slovanov (1587–1724) 855
Il libro di capitani degli Slavi di Capodistria (1587–1724)
The Book of the Koper Captains of the Slavs (1587–1724)

Lovorka Čoralič: Zadarski plemić Josip Antun Fanfonia – zapovjednik mletačkih prekomorskih pješačkih postrojbi u 18. stoljeću 909
Il nobile Giuseppe Antonio Fanfognia di Zara – comandante delle formazioni di fanteria oltremarina della serenissima nel settecento
Nobleman of Zadar Joseph Anthony Fanfognia – Commander of Venetian Overseas Infantry Units in the Eighteenth Century

Claudio Povoło: Violenza e inimicizie tra cinque e seicento. Due pratiche sociali nella loro dimensione antropologico-giuridica 933
Violence and Enmity between the 16th and 17th Centuries. Two Social Practices in their Legal Anthropological Dimensions
Nasilje in sovražnost v 16. in 17. stoletju. Družbeni praksi v pravno-antropološki dimenziji

Žiga Oman: Sosedje in sovražniki: reševanje sporov pred ljubljanskim mestnim svetom v zgodnjem novem veku (1521–1671) 973
Vicini e nemici: risoluzione dei conflitti davanti al consiglio comunale di Lubiana nella prima età moderna (1521–1671)
Neighbours and Enemies: Dispute Settlement before the Ljubljana Town Council in the Early Modern Period (1521–1671)

Tilen Glavina: »Lakomen volk in uničevalec Kristusove vere.«
 Vergerijane (1550): povod ali rezultat pregona
 Petra Pavla Vergerija? 1015
«L'avido lupo e distruggitore della fede di Christo». Le Vergeriane (1550): pretesto o conseguenza della persecuzione di Pier Paolo Vergerio?
“A Greedy Wolf and Destroyer of the Faith of Christ.” Le Vergeriane (1550): A Cause or a Result of the Persecution against Pier Paolo Vergerio?

Furio Bianco: Tra storia e stampe popolari in età moderna. *Perfetta, e veridica relatione, delli processi criminali, et essecutioni delli medesimi, fattasi contro li tre conti, Francesco Nadasdi, Pietro di Zrin, e Francesco Cristofforo Frangepani (1671)* 1039
Between History and Popular Print in the Modern Age. Perfetta, e veridica relatione, delli processi criminali, et essecutioni delli medesimi, fattasi contro li tre conti, Francesco Nadasdi, Pietro di Zrin, e Francesco Cristofforo Frangepani (1671)
Med zgodovino in ljudskim tiskom v novem veku. Perfetta, e veridica relatione, delli processi criminali, et essecutioni delli medesimi, fattasi contro li tre conti, Francesco Nadasdi, Pietro di Zrin, e Francesco Cristofforo Frangepani (1671)

Borut Klabjan: Za boga, narod in domovino! Katero? Vprašanje verskih, narodnih in državnih pripadnosti ter vloga češke in moravske duhovščine v Istri pred in po prvi svetovni vojni 1057
Per dio, nazione e patria! Quale? La questione delle affiliazioni religiose, nazionali e statuali e il ruolo del clero boemo e moravo in Istria prima e dopo la prima guerra mondiale
For God, Nation and Motherland! Which One? The Question of Religious, National and State Affiliation, and the Role of Czech and Moravian Priests in Istra before and after World War I

Andrej Rahten: Josip Vilfan v prvem desetletju panevropskega gibanja 1075
 Josip Vilfan nella prima decade del movimento paneuropeo
Josip Vilfan in the First Decade of the Paneuropean Movement

- Martin Bele:** Prispevek k podrobnejši osvetlitvi družinskih vezi in mladostnih let dr. Antona Korošca – družina in mladost Bižikovega Toneta 1095
Contributo a una delucidazione più dettagliata dei legami famigliari e degli anni giovanili del dott. Anton Korošec – la famiglia e la gioventù di Tone Bižik
Contribution to a More Detailed Exposure of Family Relations and Younger Years of Dr. Anton Korošec – Bižik Tone
- Urška Lampe:** Tajna misija Josipa Smodlake v Rim: prvi poskus neposrednega sporazuma med Jugoslavijo in Italijo, oktober 1945–januar 1946 1115
La missione segreta di Josip Smodlaka a Roma: il primo tentativo di accordo diretto tra la Jugoslavia e l'Italia, ottobre 1945-gennaio 1946
The Secret Mission of Josip Smodlaka to Rome: The First Attempt at a Direct Agreement between Yugoslavia and Italy, October 1945–January 1946
- Ana Šela:** Delovanje slovenske službe državne varnosti v osemdesetih letih 20. stoletja 1137
Il funzionamento del sloveno servizio di sicurezza nazionale negli anni ottanta
Functioning of the Slovenian State Security Service in the 1980s
- Aleš Maver:** Narod na preklic? Oblikovanje beloruske identitete v primerjavi s slovensko 1159
Una nazione a revoca? La formazione dell'identità bielorusa a confronto con quella slovena
A Nation to Recall? Formation of Belarusian Identity Compared to the Slovenian Case
- Marjan Horvat:** Uporabe ljudskih pravljič v legitimizaciji političnih ideologij 20. stoletja: nenavadni primer slovenske verzije pravljičice Repa velikanka in jugoslovanski samoupravni socializem 1185
L'uso dei racconti popolari nella legittimazione delle ideologie politiche del novecento: l'esempio insolito della versione slovena del racconto La rapa gigante e il socialismo di autogestione jugoslavo
The Use of Folktales in the Legitimization of Political Ideologies of the 20th Century: The Unusual Case of the Slovenian Version of the Folktale The Gigantic Turnip and Yugoslav Self-governing Socialism
- Polona Tratnik:** The Pre–Enlightenment Formation of the Emerging Modern Scientific Episteme and Building Community from Mythical Discourse 1215
La formazione pre-illuministica dell'emergente episteme scientifica moderna e la costruzione della comunità partendo da un discorso mitico
Predrazsvetljensko oblikovanje modernega znanstvenega epistema in grajenje skupnosti iz mitskega diskurza

BANDITRY IN ZETA IN THE BALŠIĆ PERIOD (1360–1421)

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to research and present banditry in Zeta against Dubrovnik merchants during the reign of the Balšići (1360–1421). The research has been mostly based upon analysis of documentation from the State Archives in Dubrovnik: Lamenta de foris (Note 1–4), Debita Notariae (Note 8), Diversa Cancellariae (Note 30) as well as upon some historical literature. In the first part of the work, land and sea routes between Dubrovnik and Zeta were presented as well as legislative regulations dealing with robbery and banditry prevention on the ground. In the second part, according to some separated and written documents (complaints), the banditry was presented chronologically, as a specific form of micro-history, describing the daily routines and destinies of merchants and ordinary people. Furthermore, names of bandits and victims were identified, as well as goods that were robbed on the territory of Zeta. In this paper, the author defines banditry, as well as all other illegal acts, that resulted in violence against merchants from Dubrovnik, by seizing their property by force.

Keywords: banditry, Zeta, Dubrovnik merchants, Balšići, Late Middle Ages

BRIGANTAGGIO A ZETA NEL PERIODO DEI BALŠIĆ (1360–1421)

SINTESI

L'articolo rappresenta il primo tentativo di indagare e presentare separatamente e in modo comprensivo il brigantaggio a Zeta, durante il regno di Balšić (1360–1421), secondo i mercanti di Dubrovnik. La ricerca si basa principalmente sull'analisi dei materiali provenienti dall'Archivio di Stato di Dubrovnik: Lamenta de foris (volumi 1–4), Debita Notariae (volume 8), Diversa Cancellariae (volume 30) e sulla letteratura storica. Nella prima parte del contributo vengono illustrate le rotte terrestri e marittime tra Dubrovnik e Zeta e vengono presentati i regolamenti legislativi su come reprimere le rapine e il brigantaggio a terra. Nella seconda parte, sulla traccia degli atti individuati e scritti (querelle), i casi di brigantaggio sono presentati cronologicamente, come una forma speciale di microstoria della vita quotidiana e del destino dei mercanti e del piccolo popolo. Sono stati individuati i nomi dei briganti e delle vittime, nonché le merci derubate nel territorio di Zeta. L'autore di quest'articolo definisce ed elenca tutti gli atti illegali, il cui risultato è la violenza contro i mercanti di Dubrovnik, con lo scopo di rubare la proprietà di altre persone con la forza.

Parole chiave: brigantaggio, Zeta, mercanti di Dubrovnik, Balšići, basso medioevo

INTRODUCTION

By taking power in Zeta in 1360, the Balšić dynasty became Dubrovnik's neighbour.¹ During the six decades of rule in Zeta (1360–1421), the territory of the Balšić family changed. With interruptions, their authority stretched from Dubrovnik to Himara, except for Kotor, while inland, it occasionally included Shkoder, Onogošt, Peć, Prizren, and Trebinje. For pragmatic political and trade reasons, the Dubrovnik representatives tried to demonstrate to the new rulers of Zeta that the city of St. Blaise cared about establishing good relations. Thus, in July 1361, they awarded Dubrovnik citizenship to the Balšić brothers (Stracimir, Đurđe I, and Balša II). On behalf of the City authorities, the envoy Kliment Tomin Dersa (around 1300–around 1376) then offered them an alliance in the fight against the Prince of Hum, Vojislav Vojinović (after 1355–1363), and Kotor. He also warned them that the Hum Prince was preparing to take Budva, which is why they should strongly militarise the fortress (Tadić, 1935, 57–58; Smičiklas, 1915, 161–162; Jelčić, 2010, 45–46). The award of the Dubrovnik citizenship to the Zeta rulers and the forging of a political partnership created more favourable conditions for the arrival of a larger number of Dubrovnik merchants to Zeta and safer trading activities. The daily traffic between Dubrovnik and Zeta in the late Middle Ages can be followed continuously only with support from Dubrovnik's archive records. Cooperation reflected the interdependence of close neighbours. In this context, Zeta's life necessities are impossible to comprehend without the influence of Dubrovnik.

Zeta was extremely important for the Dubrovnik merchants because it was an exit to their trade with continental Albania and Serbia. Dubrovnik supported economic development and trade in Zeta and acted as a mediator with the Balkan mainland and Apennine Peninsula (Ćirković, 1997, 49–53). All social strata operated in the trade between Dubrovnik and Zeta. The trade correlation between them resulted in a dynamic turnover and movement of merchants, travellers, and ordinary people who wanted to become rich or fought for survival. Security of road and sea routes was an important factor in trade. In such a situation, people with property become targets of attacks, and their goods, livestock, and possessions are taken from them. Merchants were most vulnerable to attacks because they were considered to have goods or money. The target of the bandits were also: envoys, craftsmen, sailors, and even ordinary people. The bandits teamed up on bloodline, and then they split the loot. Surely one of the biggest problems in dealing with the Middle Ages banditry phenomenon is terminology. The use of force is one of the segments that distinguish banditry from a common robbery (Sophoulis, 2020).

The study *Bandits* by Eric Hobsbawm is essential in understanding bandits and banditry. In his theory of social and societal robbery, a bandit fights oppression and injustice done by the ruling social groups. It is a form of class conflict and class resistance in

1 The Balšići were first mentioned in the sources on 29 September 1360, in a charter by which the Serbian Emperor Uroš provided the Dubrovnik authorities and merchants with a guarantee that they could freely "go to Zeta, to the Balšići" (Stojanović, 1929, 99).

agrarian and border societies toward the ruling class. Hobsbawm's bandits want to put right the injustice of the rich towards the poor and prevent the exploitation of the weak. Their violence is a form of protest against the social needs drivers (Hobsbawm, 1981). The Zeta bandits came from all walks of life, including the Balšići. Hobsbawm's model of social banditry is not suitable and applicable for the research on banditry in Zeta, as it is more applicable to modern times in Montenegro.² The closest thesis about brigandage in Zeta would be Braudel's thesis as a reaction of the poor classes to miseries and a reaction of the nobility to the loss of power and income (Braudel, 1998).

In the historiography of robberies committed against Dubrovnik merchants in Zeta, these are mentioned only in monographs (Ćirković, Božić, Bogdanović, Đurić, 1970; Jelčić, 2010; Šekularac, 2011; Rudić, 2021) and some papers on trade (Premović, 2018). Esad Kurtović (Kurtović, 2005; Kurtović 2021) provided some information about robberies against Dubrovnik merchants in Bosnia as well as Elmedina Duranović in her unpublished doctoral dissertation on highway robbery, according to Dubrovnik sources (Duranović, 2017). Panos Sophoulis thoroughly studied the Balkan bandit topic and expanded the knowledge of banditry and robbery and, in some aspects, proposed different solutions to the issue (Sophoulis, 2020).

In this paper, the term banditry encompasses all illegal activities resulting in violence against Dubrovnik merchants intending to take other people's property forcibly. Writing on this subject is extremely challenging because it depends on the number of sources and the content of the documents collected. The most important sources for the history of the banditry in Zeta are kept in the Dubrovnik Archives. In researching this topic, we used both unpublished and published documents from this Archive. The series *Lamenta de foris* (*Complaints concerning crimes committed outside the city*) of the State Archives in Dubrovnik is one of the rare series recording the minutes of the complaints on crimes and offences. Offences committed in the area of the Dubrovnik hinterland involving a citizen of Dubrovnik, either as a victim or perpetrator. The source records on a series of complaints provide an overview of the security in Zeta (Lonza, 2003, 51–55; Borožan, 2020, 157–164, 174–175, 193, 297, 309, 338). The paper analyses volumes 1–4 of the *Lamenta de foris* series. They cover the period from 1370 to 1422. Based on the separate written documents (complaints), we tried to identify as much information as possible (who were the bandits, the victims, places, and description of the attacks, the robbery method, goods taken, etc.). Although the data in the complaints were fragmented, a detailed analysis enables following the trail of information on banditry as a contribution to the microhistory of the medieval Zeta. In all the documents, Dubrovnik citizens were the prosecutors. Interestingly, the complaints records include much more information about the merchandise and items taken than provided by the notary office and the chancellery (cf. Premović, 2019; Premović, 2021a). The reason is that the plaintiffs accurately specified the goods taken and used the complaint to get back the misappropriated goods or their value in money.

2 Comparison to other banditry examples: Bertoša, 1989, 13–72; Povolo, 1997, 83, 118–125, 145–176; 291–297; Casals, 2019, 581–602.

On robberies in Zeta, there are fragments recorded in the series: *Debita Notariae*, *Diversa Notariae*, *Diversa Cancellariae* and *Lettere e commissioni di Levante* of the State Archives in Dubrovnik, as well as in collections of published sources,³ which, in several places, include information about the robberies and the mishaps of Dubrovnik merchants in Zeta.

The collected scattered and diverse shorter or larger records can shed light not only on the security, but also on various aspects of political, economic and social life in Zeta that had intensive contacts with Dubrovnik.

ROADS IN MEDIEVAL ZETA

Trade between Zeta and Dubrovnik took place by land and sea. Land routes can be divided into: coastal (*via de Zenta*), those leading from the coast to the continental part of the country, and the Balkan Peninsula (*via Jesera*). From Dubrovnik, *via de Zenta* road went via Cavtat and Novi to Risan, then to Kotor and Budva. Following the coastline, the road reached Ulcinj and then via Svač, along the Bojana River bank to Sveti Srđ, from which the caravans would travel to Skadar. The main route of the road was heading for Danj. A part of the road followed the Drim River to Lezhe. The second route stems from the Drim, along the slopes of the Miridit Mountains, along the Fandi River, and through the steep valley of the river Goska, passing by the Sakato village and reaching the Drim near Sveti Spas. The road continues further along the Drim River toward Prizren. To reach the continental part, the Lake road (*via Jesera*) was used, which started from Kotor and Risan via Grahovo to Onogošt. From Onogošt, the road passed through the Zeta River valley to Podgorica and then further to Shkoder. The horses, mules, and donkeys were used for transport, and the main carriers of goods were Vlachs shepherds. The roads from Zeta extended to neighbouring countries: Albania, Serbia, and Bosnia. In addition to these land routes, waterways were also used in the Middle Ages.⁴ Dubrovnik documents show that trade mostly took place via the Adriatic Sea. The maritime waterways of ships loaded with cargo went from Dubrovnik to the south of the Zeta coast, toward Novi, to Kotor, Budva, Bar, Ulcinj, and Sveti Srđ on the Bojana. Dubrovnik merchants sailed their ships further to the Albanian coast in search of grains and salt. On Zeta's coast, the most suitable natural landing place was the Port of Ulcinj. The Bojana River, flowing out of Lake Skadar was an important waterway, and the documents describe it as quite wide. Larger boats from the Adriatic entered the Bojana waterway to St. Sergius and Bacchus Monastery, where the port *portus Sancti Sergii* was. The merchandise was taken over from this square and transported by caravans to

3 MR II, 1882; MR III, 1895; Gelcich, 1896; Smičiklas, 1914; Thallóczy, Jireček & Sufflay, 1918; Smičiklas, 1934; Dinić, 1951.

4 More information on trade routes is available in: Jireček, 1959, 275–285; Škrivanić, 1971, 75–85; Škrivanić, 1974, 30, 62–77.

the inland Balkan region. It should be noted that the Bojana was navigable for smaller boats almost to the town of Shkoder (Spremić, 1963, 295–298; Pavić, 2003, 175–181; Mišić, 2014, 115).

Maritime transport of goods was the main form of transportation in this period because it was the simplest and the cheapest communication. Archive records show that most of the attacks happened on the sea along the Bojana River, as well as along the land roads in rural areas.

LEGAL PROTECTION AGAINST BANDITRY

The medieval authorities tried to prevent the emergence and spread of banditry by legislation, as it posed a danger to order and peace.⁵ Actions were taken through two measures: legislative and field responses to specific banditry phenomena. The 1272 Statute of the City of Dubrovnik included legislation that was supposed to curb robbery and banditry. With that legislation, the City authorities provided severe punishment for ordinary robbers, distinguishing between those who did it for the first time and recidivists. Thus, in volume VI Article 4, it was stated that the person who robs for the first time is to receive a fourfold penalty. If the person repeats the offence and commits another robbery, the penalty shall be eightfold. For the third robbery, the penalty is twelvefold, and for the fourth, twentyfold.⁶ A special item was included in the Statute (Vol. VI and Art. 5) for highwaymen. Also, in this case, the legislator aspired to punish the recidivists severely. The highwaymen were to be punished eightfold for the first robbery and for the second fourteenfold. If the perpetrator continues with criminal acts, the penalty is always doubled. The legislator also provided examples: if the bandit robs the value of up to one perper and cannot afford to pay, he shall be whipped and branded with hot iron. If the perpetrator robs from one to three perpers and cannot pay, one of his eyes shall be gouged out. If the value of the robbery is from three to six perpers, his right hand shall be cut off. With the increasing value of the robbery, for example, from six to ten perpers, the perpetrator's both eyes were to be gouged out. The capital punishment of hanging was foreseen when the robber took ten perpers or more (Šoljić, Šundrica & Veselić, 2002, 327, 329).

In 1360, when the Balšić brothers came to power in Zeta, the Code of Serbian Emperor Dušan (issued in 1349 and 1354) was in force, which included many articles dealing with issues concerning the curbing of banditry in order to protect merchants and ordinary people in the Serbian state.⁷ Using the Code's provisions, Emperor Dušan waged war against bandits, prescribing very severe sentences and providing for collective responsibility. The town or village was responsible if anything was taken away or

5 On ancient times banditry, please cf.: Blumell, 2008, 35–53.

6 Šoljić, Šundrica & Veselić, 2002, 329; Compare with the provisions against violence in the Poljice (and Split) Statute (Nazor, 2002, 53–57).

7 Dušan's Code as a legal act was passed in Skopje in 1349 (the first 135 Articles) and was amended by Articles 136 to 201 in Sérres in 1354 (Solovjev, 1928; Radojčić, 1960; Marković, 1986).

stolen on their land, so they were obliged to pay (Art. 126 and 159). The Krajišnici were frontiersmen guarding the border, preventing the bandits from crossing their territories (Art. 143). Article 145 explicitly stated the provision aimed at reducing the number of thieves and bandits throughout the empire. By strict legislative provisions, Emperor Dušan fought criminal acts. For example, if a bandit or a thief were caught in illegal acts, they were to be handed over by the parish, village, landlord, or master, to be blinded and hanged (Art. 149). Prefects – kefalija and villages were obliged to take care of the security of roads with guards, and in case of an act of robbery or banditry, they had to organise further the search for thieves and bandits (Articles 157 and 158). The subsequent Articles 159 and 160 guaranteed the security of merchants, guests and monks from thieves and bandits, and in case of damage inflicted, the emperor, kefalija and the guards paid the compensation.⁸

Once the Balšići gained independence from the Serbian state, Dubrovnik needed their relations to be regulated, as the government was unstable in the hinterland, and there was the fear of bandits. Issuing charters was the oldest way to protect the security of the merchants' property. In this way, Dubrovnik protected its interests, primarily its trade, and the Balšić enjoyed certain benefits from such a relationship. Seven charters were preserved, issued in the period from 1368 to 1395, by which members of the Balšići family regulated the relations with Dubrovnik. The first independent act of the Balšići towards Dubrovnik was recorded in the charter of 17 January 1368. The document states that brothers Stracimir, Đurađ, and Balša abolished the customs on Danj and guaranteed the citizens of Dubrovnik freedom of movement in their territory without paying customs and other barriers. The charter was issued at the time when Emperor Uroš was still alive but powerless to prevent the weakening of the central authority and independence (Rudić, 2010, 93–98). Five years later, in Dubrovnik, in 1373, Đurađ Balšić confirmed the old friendship his predecessors had with Dubrovnik but also pledged not to impose customs that had not existed during the emperor's rule. A promise was made that if someone lost something or suffered damage in his land, he would hand over his guilty subject, and if it did not happen, he would compensate them for the damage himself (Foretić, 1980, 155–156; Rudić, 2009a, 101–110). In the document issued in 1374–76, Đurađ I guaranteed Dubrovnik citizens that he would not interfere with the trade between them and Bosnia by allowing Bosnian Ban's subjects to freely enter and exit Dubrovnik (Rudić, 2009b, 111–117). In 1379, Balša II Balšić issued a charter to Dubrovnik stipulating that all damage made by Balša II or one of his subjects would be covered (Rudić, 2011, 103–107). On 24 April 1385 in Tuzi, Balša II issued a charter to Dubrovnik, confirming the charters of his brother Đurađ I and Emperor Dušan on the freedom of their merchants. The charter explicitly states that if someone took something from Dubrovnik by force (banditry), he will pay from its treasury and search for the perpetrators, and in case Dubrovnik's ship wrecks in

8 Cf. for more information in: Solovjev, 1928, 140–198; Radojčić, 1960, 67, 70–75; Marković, 1986, 75 (Art.129), 77 (Art.143 and 145), 78 (Art. 149), 79 (Art.157), 80 (Art. 158, 159 and 160).

Zeta, no one must take anything or disturb them. Whoever violates what is written shall pay 500 perpers and will be declared a traitor (Rudić, 2012, 101–106). With Đurađ II Stracimirović's ascend to Zeta's throne in late September 1385, Dubrovnik wanted confirmation of previous acts issued by the Balšići. On 27 January 1386, the new Zeta ruler confirmed the old trade privileges for Dubrovnik throughout the territory he ruled. Đurađ II laid down that if they suffered any damage, it would be covered by his treasury. They are also secured against robbery; the Zeta ruler wants to prevent his subjects from imposing illegal charges on merchants (Premović, 2016, 143–155). This charter stipulates that his subjects would not appropriate the items from the Dubrovnik ships wrecked along the Zeta coast and guarantees the security of the goods rescued in case of a shipwreck. If a person took something, the damage would be covered by Đurađ's treasury (Premović, 2016, 146–151; Porčić, 2022, 14, 18, 22). These provisions indicate the wilfulness of some of the Balšići subjects. Konstantin Balšić, a cousin of Đurađ II, was an Ottoman vassal who ruled the city of Danj with a custom house in 1395. In Uljari, near Shkoder, he issued the charter to Dubrovnik on 13 November 1395. The charter was issued because of the newly established custom house in Danj, which envisioned its abolition. The document was envisaged to resolve the disputes of Dubrovnik citizens *before Latini (the Venetians) and nowhere else in my country* (Premović, 2021b, 17–24). This item concerned the trials and guaranteed Dubrovnik citizens' security and legal certainty.

The content of the charters analysed testifies that the main goal of their issuing was the legal regulation of the position of Dubrovnik citizens in the Balšići state, notably the protection of their trade affairs. All of these charters concern provisions protecting the Dubrovnik citizens, guaranteeing security, inviolability of property, and freedom of movement and trade. In the Balšići charters, the issue of compensation for damage is mentioned in four documents (1373, 1379, 1385, 1386), and each guarantees compensation for damage to Dubrovnik citizens.

ATTACKS AND ROBBERIES AGAINST MERCHANTS IN ZETA

In addition to the legislative norms set by the Dušan Code, and in particular, the Charter in which Balšić regulated trade relations with Dubrovnik, trade did not always take place properly and in a spirit of compliance with legal regulations. This was most often the result of banditry and robberies inland, on the rivers and the sea. The robbers probably targeted a person in advance, prepared an ambush, or sought information for the banditry. That often led to shorter suspensions of trade and Dubrovnik authorities' interventions with the Zeta rulers to stop it.

After Dubrovnik fell under the supreme authority of the Hungarian king in 1358, the attacks on the city of St. Blaise began, as it was under the authority of the enemies of the Serbian state. The main opponent of Dubrovnik was the Hum Prince Vojislav Vojinović, ruler of the region in the Dubrovnik neighbourhood. Citizens of Budva took part in operations against Dubrovnik. Banditry and robberies were common at the time

of the weakening central authority of the Serbian emperor. Dubrovnik documents refer to citizens of Budva as pirates attacking Dubrovnik at sea. In the early spring of 1359, a Budva's vessel sailed out into the open sea and attacked a Dubrovnik merchant ship. Three Budva pirates were arrested (MR II, 1882, 273–274; Antonović, 2003, 38). The pirate attacks against the merchants were a sign of the weakening central authority of Emperor Uroš over Budva, as well as the full suppression of Venice and its battle fleet after the Zadar Peace in 1358.

On 2 July, the Major Council voted that pirates from Budva were to be punished; their eyes were to be gouged out for the crimes they committed against Dubrovnik citizens (MR II, 1882, 275). Volume six of the Dubrovnik Statute lays down that the person who committed the murder, except in self-defence, must die (Šoljić, Šundrica & Veselić, 2002, 325). The Major Council rarely acted in criminal cases, but since this was a particularly sensitive issue, they took part in the decision-making process (Lonza, 2002, 73). The decision was again discussed on 3 July 1359. The criminal proceedings were administered by the Minor Council, which had shared jurisdiction in criminal proceedings. The Minor Council members stated how the pirates from Budva should be punished. On that day, 76 delegates were present. Three sentences were proposed: to keep them in jail, to gouge out their eyes, or to hang them.

The second sentence, gouging their eyes out, received the highest number of votes (36 voting balls). The main reason for such a cruel punishment was that the pirates from Budva had gouged out the eyes of three Dubrovnik citizens, so they should be punished in the same way. The city authorities wanted revenge and equivalent retaliation, as it concerned honour and reputation. Soldier Mateo Menčetić and an executioner (whose name is not mentioned) were in charge of the execution of the sentence. The sentence was executed on 14 July in the presence of Francisco Placentio, the notary and vicar of the curia, and many people.⁹ This measure did not eradicate piracy, as a new attack on traders took place as soon as the following month. This pirate attack was reported to the Senate on 30 August. They informed the Doge that on 19 August, a large batela boat with 12 crew had sailed into the port of Budva to take some of the groceries (it was not specified which ones). The Budva men captured the crew and the batela. They freed the crew for a certain amount of money, but they did not want to give batela back, not even for money, because they intended to do harm with it (MR II, 1882, 278–286; Smičiklas, 1914, 614–615). Before long, Dubrovnik realised it was better to make a truce with the Budva commune than to wage war. On 6 May 1360, the Major Council decided to start peace-making negotiations (MR III, 1895, 33). On 21 May, the Senate confirmed the decision to make peace with Budva, provided they returned the boat and ordered their residents not to attack Dubrovnik citizens. If the attack did occur, the commune was obliged to hand over the criminals. The Zeta Metropolitan was to be a guarantor of peace (MR III, 1895, 35).

9 MR III, 1895, 2. Dubrovnik city authorities employed an executioner who regularly received a salary, but in the 14th century, the post was filled with some gaps (Lonza, 2016, 95).



*Fig. 1 Bandit Bajo Pivljanin (XVII century)
(Wikimedia Commons).*

During the Balšić dynasty rule in Zeta (1360–1421), several complaints were made by Dubrovnik merchants about the uncertainty of their travel and even the life-threatening situations they were exposed to. The bandits used uncertainty in the wars the Balšići fought with their neighbours (Karl Thopia, Nikola Altomanović, etc.), whether to expand or retain the territory taken previously. The mutiny of the noblemen (Nikola Zakarija, Radič Crnojević, and Konstantin Balšić) in the quest for independence also made the Balšići power unstable, and the struggle to retain the rule in such circumstances did not allow them to devote themselves to the internal affairs in the country. That was one of the causes of uncertainty in the country. The merchants did not only complain about the common Zeta citizens, they complained about the administration, even the Balšići.

On 18 October 1364, in Ulcinj, salt was taken from the Dubrovnik merchant Gruba Junijev Menče (around 1325–1371).¹⁰ Lovro Lamprin Menče (around 1320–around 1384) was sent to negotiate with Karl Thopia on this case (Gelcich, 1896, 32; Vekarić, 2012, 46). As a countermeasure, the assets of Ulcinj citizens living in Dubrovnik (Gelcich, 1896, 36; Thallóczy, Jireček & Sufflay, 1918, 46; Manken, 1960, 341) were confiscated the following month (15 November 25). In December of the same year, the salt was taken from the Dubrovnik merchant Bratislav Barkarolo (Gelcich, 1896, 38). The uncertainty of

¹⁰ Gelcich, 1896, 32; On Gruba Junijev Menča, please cf.: Vekarić, 2012, 49.

the roads was so great that we found references stating that merchants were placed under the protection of certain people who guaranteed their safety in exchange for a reward. The reason for that was to ensure the security and keep the goods undamaged, and guides were usually respectable and influential people from Zeta, who were familiar with the area, local people, and customs (Sophoulis, 2020, 47). Niko Lukin Cimo (Clime) from Ulcinj pledged in June 1365 to keep merchant Tankred from Durres and his men on board unharmed during the voyage on the Bojana River from Sveti Nikola to Sveti Srđ. For this security assistance, Niko was to give a reward *ducatis auri IIIC* (Thallóczy, Jireček & Sufflay, 1918, 48). In the second half of April 1368, the Bar notary Ivan Merula arranged with Jake Orton and his partners to secure their boat, which was used in trade, sailing to Bar and then back to Dubrovnik. Ivan promised that on that journey, no harm would be done to the boat or the crew by the subjects of Đurađ Balšić and his brothers (Thallóczy, Jireček & Sufflay, 1918, 55).

Banditry usually occurred in the vicinity of the bandits' towns or in neighbouring areas. By mid-August 1370, Prvoš and his nephew Slave attacked Živko Bogoeuich from Dubrovnik at sea near Ulcinj. During the attack, a sailor was wounded, and a sail was broken (DAD, 1). In early September, Palko filed a complaint on behalf of *Marini filii condam Lampredii de Mençe* against Bar judges for the seizure of three pieces of wool cloth worth 83 ducats (DAD, 2). On 15 October 1370, Marko Lucharus filed a complaint with Dubrovnik Rector Marin Mençe against the Ulcinj men who destroyed his vessel.¹¹ At the end of July 1372, Stanko, Hrvatin's brother, filed a complaint with the Dubrovnik Court against Đuro Balšić, who broke into his house and abducted Miloš, servant of Dživo Bunić (or killed him?), and misappropriated many things. Stanko brought four witnesses with the Rector. Witnesses Nikola Albanesis gave a statement, saying that he had heard of the robbery in Dubrovnik, and when he came to Shkoder, the Balšići capital, he asked why the robbery took place. Paško Colan said he did not know the reason, which was confirmed by Pribislav, brother of Matija Bobali. Pribo Chercsessich heard that Đurađ had ordered the seized silver to be brought to him, but only he knew the reason for the robbery.¹² Dubrovnik probably asked the Balšići to stop further banditry and harassment of its subjects, but violent behaviour continued. In the first half of April 1372, Maroje Lamprović Menčetić filed a complaint in Dubrovnik against a Domanja Dvornić, who broke into his house in Bar, took a load of salt and a pledge of goods, and who had the plaintiff imprisoned in the Archbishop's prison. When the Bar judges gave guarantees to Domanja, he released Maroje from prison, but as soon as he complained to the court, he again had him arrested (DAD, 5; Borozan, 2020, 157–159). On 2 June 1372, Pribiš Chitesich sued some Ulcinj men and the city of Ulcinj with the Dubrovnik Court because

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- 11 *Marcus de Lucharo coram domino rectore ser Marino de Mençe conqueritur supra Illos de Dulcino qui sunt nunc Ragusii cum vna barcha armata dicens quod ego inueni barcham predictorum Dulcinensium in portu intra firma ubi ego posueram et dmiseram quamdam meam barcham quam inueni proiectam in mari et totam fractam* (DAD, 3).
 - 12 *quod absque aliquo suo fallo Iura de Balsa cum violencia venit ad domum dicti Stanchi et uiolenter sibi accepit regatiam Milossii famuli Çiue de bona cum pluribus rebus dicti Stanchi...* (DAD, 4; Borozan, 2020, 162–164).

they took six centenarians of bacon from him by force.¹³ In September 1372, Junča, the sailor, filed a complaint to the city authorities against *Car Miraliam eius fratrem et Cuietam Stanç de Valona qui stant modo in Suaseno* for the theft of money, wine, fabrics, etc. (DAD, 7). Miljoje, the man of Petar Georgio, filed a complaint against Milan, the subject of Đurađ Balšić for seizing 12 perpers and stealing a sword.¹⁴ In the first half of June 1373, Marin Mençe complained against Bar judges because *unam peciam panni stameti* was taken from the home he had lived in the previous December. One of the witnesses said that the seized goods were taken to St. Peter's Church in Bar. The same witness, among other things, said that Marin yelled when his goods were seized but was told that he would be paid for it (Thallóczy, Jigek & Sufflay, 1918, 73). For these inconveniences, the Dubrovnik authorities intervened with Đurađ I asking for a new charter on freedom of movement and trade to be issued.

As regards the charters of Emperors Stefan Dušan of 1349 and Stefan Uroš of 1357, the Dubrovnik authorities must have asked for a provision on the compensation of damage done to their merchants, which should be done by the sovereign, who would then seek compensation from the real culprit. On 30 November 1373, Đurađ I Balšić issued a charter to the city of Dubrovnik on behalf of his brother Balša and nephew Đurađ. In the Charter, he promised to hand over those who harm the Dubrovnik merchants, or in case it would not be possible, he would compensate for the damage (Rudić, 2009, 101–110). At the time of the Balšić's rule in Trebinje, Konavlje, and Dračevica from 1373 to 1377, the Dubrovnik merchants were harassed and robbed more than once (Smičiklas, 1934, 96–97, 138–138). In the summer of 1375, Đurađ I issued an order to compensate for all damages (Glečić, 1896, 148–149). It is likely that the Zeta ruler then issued a new charter to Dubrovnik, dated 1374–1376. The document pledged protection for Dubrovnik citizens and no interference with trade with Bosnia (Rudić, 2009, 111–117).

The road insecurity was still high, despite the charters issued to Dubrovnik, so merchants sought to secure goods with the assistance of guides during transport from the Dubrovnik port to the Zeta coast. On 22 February 1377, Makaracije Angeli, the son of the late Simon from Artona, sold Domanja Duornich 80 litres of white wine, who was to make a payment in three instalments. The Makaracije was supposed to transport the goods to the port of Bar by mid-April that year. The seller arranged to secure goods on land and on the sea in the event of attacks by the men of Đurađ I Balšić.¹⁵ The wine was transported from Dubrovnik in open boats (*barca*

13 *Pribis Chitesich coram domino rectore ser Marino de Mençe appellavit contra homines et comunitatem Dulcignio, dicens, quod ipsi sibi acceperunt violenter centenaria VI lardi* (DAD, 6; Borozan, 2020, 160).

14 *Miglioe homo Petri de Georgio coram domino rectore Ragusii ser Blasio de Sorgo et sua curia conqueritur supra Milan hominem Iure de Balci dicens quod dictus Milan furatus fuit eidem yperperos XII et vnam spatam in ciuitate Ragusii atribus diebus citra* (DAD, 8).

15 *Macaracius Angeli quondam Simonis de Artona facit manifestum, quod ipse vendidit Domagne de Duornich personaliter volenti et ementi vasa vini octuaginta, quodlibet ea paritatis salmarum sex ad mensuram Artone de bono vino albo dicte civitatis Artone, quod vinum debet sibi dare et assignare exoneratum in terra ad portum Antibari... et promisit Illiut assecurare cum navigio et rebus in dicto portu Antibari tam in terra quam in mari, quod non fiat sibi aliqua offensus ab hominibus domini Georgii de Balsa...* (DAD, 9; Borozan, 2020, 174–175).

disco perta), and the carrying capacity of these boats was 80 to 220 litres (Vekarić, 1962/63, 36). In July 1380, the Major Council decided that the damage done *de rebus arnensium* to Džive Alexevich, the Dubrovnik syndic in Devol, when Đurađ Balšić had left, should be compensated (Dinić, 1951, 102). In 1380, the Dubrovnik authorities mentioned that the man of Đurađ Balšić, Radoslav Obugarich, attacked and robbed Dubrovnik citizens and instructed Miho Nikoličin Martinussio (around 1330-around 1388) to advocate for the punishment of the bandits and compensation for the loss (DAD, 10; Borožan, 2020, 193). In the summer of 1381, Dubrovnik merchants in the Vrego River (Škumba) region were attacked and robbed. That is why the city authorities sent an envoy, Domanja Duornich. He received 15 perpers, which he was to give as a gift to the Zeta ruler Balša II Balšić or whomever he deemed necessary. In both cases, the money was to appease the Zeta noblemen and guarantee the safety of trade because of frequent robberies (Dinić, 1951, 19, 22). On 1 April 1383, it was stated that Albanians, as the Balša II men, attacked the Dubrovnik merchant Pripko Zoranouich and his men. In this robbery, they took horses and fabrics, Pripko was wounded in the head in a fight, and Vlakota was hit in the arm (Thallóczy, Jireček & Sufflay, 1918, 92). In June of the same year, Obrad Bolisavich complained in Dubrovnik against Balša II and his nephew Đurađ II for the fabrics worth 24 ducats and 15 perpers, one shield, etc. taken away from him in Shkoder and Bar. (Thallóczy, Jireček & Sufflay, 1918, 94). We can see from these examples that members of the Balšić family, as well as their own men, did not comply with the legislation they adopted, but that the robbery was a kind of important revenue for them. These robberies probably induced Dubrovnik's reaction towards Balša II for the disrespect for the security guarantees from the 1379 Charter. That is why Balša II issued a new charter on 24 April 1385 in Tuzi, reiterating earlier promises and pledging to pay the existing debts to Dubrovnik merchants (Rudić, 2012, 101–106). On 31 March 1386, Dubrovnik complained to the city authorities of Ulcinj and Đurađ that grains were taken from their merchants from a ship in Ulcinj. The objection to security was addressed to the Ulcinj commune, not to Đurađ (Thallóczy, Jireček & Sufflay, 1918, 95). The document shows that the attack was an arbitrary outlaw activity of 'some' Ulcinj men and that it was done without the consent and knowledge of Đurađ II. Two months earlier, the Zeta ruler issued a charter to Dubrovnik on the freedom of trade, guaranteeing their protection against robbery. We do not have any information on the measures that Đurađ II took against his men for the breach of his measures. Based on the analysis of the archive material, we got the impression that the security situation became slightly more stable after 1386, although there were some cases of breaches.

At the end of November 1392, Dubrovnik merchants Pirko Andrijin, Dobro Binçola, Bratoslav Pridoevich, Marin Symonis, and Marin Stjepkov complained that their goods were stolen by a local ruler in Zeta, Radič Crnojević. The chancellery records in a document show that the damage done was compensated in due course (DAD, 11; Borožan, 2020, 297). In 1395, Radič Crnojević and his brother Stefan issued a charter to Dubrovnik promising friendship and freedom of trade on the territory under their rule (Budva,

Svetomiholjska Metohija), to defend and protect their goods and to assist them as their brothers (Rudić, 2008, 157–161). In addition to the robberies of Dubrovnik merchants, the soldiers of Đurađ II also abducted men and asked for their ransom. In mid-March 1395, the Bar commune took a loan of 450 ducats from the Dubrovnik Municipality. The Town of Bar took this loan to pay ransom for the Bar men, who were captured and incarcerated by Đurađ II during the siege of Bar (DAD, 12; Borožan, 2020, 309). In the sources of the State Archives in Dubrovnik, there was a lull as regards robberies of merchants in Zeta, but that does not mean there were none. The 1390s and in the first decade of the 15th century were marked by the instability of the Balšići rule, the intrusion of the Ottomans, and the conquest of a part of Albania, as well as the Venice's occupation of the Southern Adriatic (Schmitt, 2001, 27–58). All that created favourable grounds for the Zeta society to resort to banditry in the struggle to survive.

In the summer of 1411, the Bjelopavlići, Ozrinići, Maznice, and Malonšići gathered with their army and attacked Dubrovnik merchants who were returning from Serbia, took away their silver, leather, weapons, and all the goods they carried with them, and eventually, they stripped them down completely. The bandits must have been hidden in the woods, preparing an ambush. On 4 August 1411, Dubrovnik wrote to Jelena Balšić of this extremely unpleasant attack, noting that the bandits utterly dishonoured their merchants, something that should not be done to the worst of enemies. The city authorities referred to the respect for the freedom of movement and appeal to Jelena to order the return of the goods stolen from their merchants by her men Bjelopavlići, Ozrinići, Maznice, and Malonšići (Stojanović, 1929, 386–387). We have no information on whether or not the damage was compensated to the Dubrovnik merchants or whether anyone was held responsible. Interestingly, in this case, the bandits operated as a group, surely there must have been more than one, which means the loot had to be shared among more people.

At the end of the summer of 1411, Bogdan Dragoevich filed with Dubrovnik Rector Nikola Marin Ragnina (around 1368–1412) a complaint against Strjez Giurongiekovich for robbing his wife. Bogdan complains that about a year earlier, he took refuge in Dubrovnik and sent his wife to Zeta, under Balša's rule. The defendant, Strjez, stole 40 perpers in cash from his wife and at least 20 perpers in jewellery and clothing (DAD, 13; Borožan, 2020, 338). We were unable to find out from the document in what part of Zeta the robbery took place. A series of robberies against Dubrovnik citizens also continued the following year. At the end of the winter of 1412, Petko Bogdanovich, the man of Balša III, filed a complaint against sailor Dobrivoje with the Dubrovnik authorities. The defendant had promised Petko to transport him to Dubrovnik by boat, where he allegedly went to load the wood. But at the port of Mreža, he was attacked by four armed men hidden in a boat who took his money, clothes, and weapons, and then took him to Bar. Petko claimed that the loot ended up with the Bar captain, except for the 50 ducats the captain gave Dobrivoje as a reward for the robbery (DAD, 14; Borožan, 2020, 339). The robbers were connected and had a support network that provided information about the victim to be attacked and whose goods were to be taken. This information about the reward for Dobrivoje clearly shows that he was involved with the robbers and that he gave them information about when and where to attack Petko

while he was transporting him to Bar. According to complaints records, livestock was occasionally the target of robberies. Gojko and his brother Pribat filed a complaint with the Dubrovnik rector, on 22 September 1412, because of a stolen ox in Dračevica (DAD, 15). At the end of June 1413, a complaint was filed over a stolen horse that Balša had sent to Nikola Georgio (DAD, 16). In early November 1419, cobbler Dobrašin Radmilouich filed a complaint against the men of Balša III for robbing a boat on the Bojana River. The ship's commander and his sailors were charged with seizing money, clothes, wine, tools, etc. (Kurtović, 2020, 42–43). In March of that same year, the Dubrovnik authorities sent a diplomatic envoy to resolve the issue of theft of silver taken from Dubrovnik merchants (DAD, 17). We have no information on the outcome of the negotiations. Sometimes, a Dubrovnik citizen robbed another while traveling and trading together. In the early winter of 1419, a boat commander Dobrilo Pripcich filed a complaint with rector Andrija Volčo, against his seaman Simon Petar from Dubrovnik for the seizure of the boat and theft of certain goods in Ulcinj (Kurtović, 2020, 55). A month later, Balša III men were again recorded in the complaints records. In the second half of January 1420, three sailors complained to the Dubrovnik authorities against a priest from Sveti Srđ, that he and his men, who were the men of Balša III, robbed the boat with goods heading for Serbia (DAD, 18).

During the research on the banditry in Zeta, it is evident that the structure of the bandits mentioned in the documents varied. We can divide them into several categories: the Balšići family members, the Balšići soldiers, noblemen, and commoners. Prominent Balšić family members are mentioned as bandits more than once: Đurađ I, Balša II, Đurađ II. The Balšić men (their soldiers) are mentioned often, as the conditions of their military service were bad, and the lack of food or fee resulted in the lack of discipline. The fragmentary analysis shows the participation of small rulers in the raid attacks in Zeta (Radič Crnojević). Ulcinj merchants (Prvoš and Slave), sailors, as well as commoners took part in banditry. Who were the victims of the attacks? The documents show that, in most cases, the victims of the robbery were merchants, artisans, and sailors. The documents recorded the following loot: silver, salt, money, wine, fabrics, horses, grain, weapons, leather, clothing, etc. The bandits were rough on Dubrovnik citizens during attacks, and we have information that the victims were wounded during the robbery. Several records mentioned that the damage was compensated, but we have no records of the perpetrators being fined or imprisoned for the banditry. In order to understand this type of banditry, it is necessary to point out the weak legal and powerful framework in Balšić's country, which actually enabled bandit attacks on Dubrovnik merchants.

RAZBOJNIŠTVO V ZETI V ČASU BALŠIĆEV (1360–1421)

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POVZETEK

Razprava se dotika mikrozgodovinskega vprašanja razbojništva v Zeti v času vladanja dinastije Balšić (1360–1421) uperjenega proti dubrovniškim trgovcem. Trgovski promet med Dubrovnikom in Zeto se je odvijal tako po kopnem kot po morskimi poteh po Jadranskem morju. Po teh poteh so se gibali trgovci, popotniki in mali ljudje, ki so si želeli obogateti ali pa so se le borili za preživetje. Pomemben faktor pri trgovanju je bila varnost trgovskih poti. Razbojniki so se še posebej usmerjali proti trgovcem, saj so domnevali, da imajo pri sebi tako blago kot denar. Oblasti so poskušale s pomočjo predpisov (Statut mesta Dubrovnik, Dušanov zakonik) preprečiti obstoj in širjenje razbojništva, saj je le-to predstavljalo veliko nevarnost za red in mir. Med letoma 1368 in 1395 so Balšići izdali sedem listin v korist mesta Dubrovnik. S temi so zagotavljali zaščito meščanov Dubrovnika na ozemlju Zete in v njih zagotavljali nedotakljivost imetja, svobodo gibanja in trgovine. Ena najpomembnejših listin je zagotavljala povratek škode, ki bi jo utrpeli dubrovniški trgovci. Prav tako zagotavljajo, da nasedla in poškodovana ladja na zetski obali ne bo oropana. Kljub tem ukazom se trgovina v Zeti ni odvijala mirno, saj je bilo razbojništvo na kopnem, na reki Bojani in na Jadranskem morju. Roparji so najverjetneje že v naprej locirali tarčo, pripravili zasedo in bili dobro informirani. Iz časa dinastije Balšićev v Zeti obstaja ohranjenih vrsta tožb dubrovniških trgovcev, ki so ohranjene v arhivski seriji Lamenta de Foris, vezanih na nesigurnost potovanja ter izpričujejo tudi življenjsko nevarnost, ki je prežala na njih. Razbojništvo je bilo v Zeti stvar družin in razširjenih družinskih mrež (primer Prvoš in njegov nečak Slave, Balša II. in njegov bratranec Đurađa II). Znotraj družinske hierarhije je vodstvo pripadalo najstarejšemu članu. Običajno so štele družinske razbojniške skupine od enega do štiri člane. Poznamo le skupni napad na dubrovniške trgovce, ki so ga izvedli člani plemena Bjelopavlovići, Ožrinići, Maznice in Malonšići, ko moremo govoriti o večjem številu razbojnikov. Žrtve roparjev so ponavadi bili trgovci, obrtniki, mornarji in mali ljudje, ki so se znašli na tarči roparjev. Motivi za rop so želja za bogatenjem in eksistencialna želja po preživetju. Struktura razbojnikov, ki jih omenjajo viri je različna. Lahko jih razdelimo na nekaj kategorij: vladarska družina Balšić, njihovi vojaki, plemstvo in ostali prebivalci. Nekajkrat se omenjajo sami Balšići kot razbojniki: Đurđe I, Balša II, Đurađ II, pa tudi nižji zetski plemiči: Radić, Crnojević. Pogosto se omenjajo ljudje Balšićev kot roparji. Domnevamo, da so jih k ropanju spodbudili slabe razmere v družbi, pomanjkanje hrane oz. neredna denarna plačila. Analiza kaže na sodelovanje tako trgovcev, mornarjev kot drugega prebivalstva. Kot plen se v virih omenja: srebro, sol, denar, vino, tkanine, konji, žito,

orožje, oblačila itd. Razbojništvo kaže, da je bilo spoštovanje predpisov zelo slabo oz. ga skoraj ni, saj niti sami člani družine Balšić ne spoštujejo lastnih zakonov. Poročila govorijo o surovem ravnanju napadalcev, obstajajo pa tudi podatki, da so bile žrtve ropanja ranjene. Na nekaj mestih v virih najdemo tudi podatke o tem, da je bila škoda poravnana, ne obstajajo pa podatki, da bi bil kateri koli od napadalcev denarno ali kako drugače kaznovan.

Ključne besede: razbojništvo, Zeta, dubrovniški trgovci, Balšići, pozni srednji vek

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