

Vesna Miović and Ivan Čerešnješ, *Research, Inventory and Cataloguing Documents of the Criminal Court Registers. 'Lamenta Criminalia post terraemotum', 'Diversi e possesso de Criminale' and 'Criminalia' in the State Archives of Dubrovnik Involving Jewish Litigants (1667–1808)*. Ljubljana: Research and Documentation Center JAS, 2016. E-Book (ePub): <http://dubrovnik.jas-center.eu>

State Archives of Dubrovnik is a treasure trove of most valuable sources for the history of Jews in the Dubrovnik Republic, in the Balkan Peninsula and the Mediterranean as a whole. Given the specific theme framework, these sources have been understudied and neglected to date, with the exception of Jorjo Tadić, Bernard Stulli and Vesna Miović—who have tackled this theme systematically.

This edition is the first to have chosen a different approach: publication of the original archival material, which allows a more systematic study of the history of Jews in the Dubrovnik Republic and its neighbourhood, also serves as a starting point of a much broader and comprehensive research of the history of Jews in the Mediterranean, as well as the history of everyday life.

The oldest documents preserved at the State Archives of Dubrovnik are dated to the eleventh and twelfth century, while the oldest archival book dates from 1278. The first mention of Jews in Ragusan archival material dates from 1281, and by the mid-fifteenth century we find a small number of Jewish merchants established in Dubrovnik. Their number increased over the centuries, reaching a peak of 227 Jews at the time of the Republic's fall, which represented around 4 per cent of the city population, or 0.7 per cent of the overall population of the Republic. Data on Jews in the Republic may be traced in archival series *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, *Acta Minoris Consilii*, in various notary records, in the briefs issued by the Ragusan government to its envoys in the East and West (*Lettere di Levante* and *Lettere di Ponente*), in Ottoman documents filed in the Archives (*Acta Turcarum*), and in the fonds of judicial institutions. Ivan Čerešnješ and Vesna Miović have narrowed their research down to three archival series resulting from the procedures of the Criminal Court – *Lamenta Criminalia post terraemotum*, *Diversi e possesso de Criminale* and *Criminalia*, in the period from the Great Earthquake (1667) to the fall of the Dubrovnik Republic (1808). The year of the Great Earthquake was chosen as initial point because from that date onwards the documents of the mentioned series have been fully preserved.

The goal of this research was to bring to light the primary sources enabling historiographic study of everyday life of the Jewish Community in Dubrovnik, as well as the relationship between Jews and the Republic authorities and non-Jews. The authors are aware of the book's much broader scope of significance, in terms of a newly-opened possibility of comparative approach in the study of the dynamics of Jewish Communities in the Christian Mediterranean, and contacts with the territories under Ottoman rule.

The contents include introduction, peer reviews, three chapters dealing with documents from the mentioned three archival fonds, index of Jewish names, index of non-Jewish names, topographical index, bibliography, summary and endnotes.

In introduction, following a short overview of the Republic's history and its Jewish Community, the authors analyse the court proceedings involving Jews and come to some revealing conclusions. Data analysis also included the cases of Jewish converts, as well as those pertaining to Jewish cemetery.

The data from the already mentioned three fonds are systematically presented in the next three chapters of the book. Meticulous examination of 297 volumes, i.e. some 180,000 pages, has resulted in 816 law suits and 59 verdicts mentioning Jews, either as claimants, respondents or witnesses. They have been catalogued according to relevant data: date of charge, name of claimant, name of respondent, type of crime, date and place of crime, witnesses, settlement or verdict, execution of verdict, and archives shelfmark.

Mentioned in the fonds are the members of 61 Jewish families. Thirteen have been mentioned only once, while eleven families dominate the history of Jews in Dubrovnik. The fonds clearly testify to the fact that in the eighteenth century merely one half of the Jews lived in the ghetto, and by the end of the same century the number dropped to one third. There is also evidence on their dwellings outside the ghetto, their occupations and the location of their business activities. The sources shed light on the role of the synagogue as a place where Jews often settled their internal disputes.

Out of 608 criminal trials, excluded from analysis are 60 cases in which Jews acted only as witnesses, 23 cases involving unknown perpetrator, 43 *ex officio* cases, along with those classified as 'other', and those in which they appear in the role of either claimant or respondent together with non-Jews. The remaining 469 law suits the authors have divided into three main categories by type of offence: physical, verbal (including religion motivated offences between Jews and non-Jews, and the Jews themselves) and property offences (from thefts and property destruction to a torn shirt). The category of physical offences tends to dominate, although the combination of physical and verbal violence has often been traced. These offences vary from single punches, brawls, assaults by means of different objects, several murder attempts, including a case of a Jew who suffered a snow ball attack by two Ragusans. Almost one third of all cases (144 cases, i.e. 30.7 per cent) is related to the violation of the Jewish Community customs and conduct in the synagogue, which indicates that the disputes which could not have been resolved within the Community ended up before the state court. Jews filed claims against non-Jews in 230 cases (49.04 per cent), and vice versa in 95 cases (20.25 per cent). Verdicts were rarely brought, and there is reason to assume that the majority of disputes ended in settlement.

Publication of sources or regesta is a laborious undertaking demanding countless hours for the finding, reading and classification of the archival material. The result is staggering, because, apart from concrete data on Jews in the Republic, or those to whom Dubrovnik was merely a stopover, their contacts with non-Jewish environment and the authorities, this research opens the door to the study of Jews in the eastern Adriatic in their natural, that is, wider context of Jewish networks, which do not necessarily overlap with the interest areas of the local histories. With regard to this goal, of immense value is the index of Jewish and non-Jewish names appended at the end of the volume.

It should be noted that Jewish history within the huge volume of archival material often remains undetected by the historian's eye. The number of archives and their geographical dispersion continues to be a major hindrance to the researchers in their attempt to trace and elucidate the broader scope of Jewish history of the 'inland sea' and the near-by regions. In this project the authors are following in the footsteps of the new and increasing number of similar projects that aim to map Jewish presence in the Mediterranean. The mentioned research puts forth new and astonishing results on the number and activity of Jewish Communities, their economic activities and family ties, which no doubt will challenge the hitherto undisputed interpretations of the Mediterranean Jewish history and its contacts with the wider (Jewish) world.

The last, yet not least important facts are the language (English) and the format of this book, and that is ePub, which tends to follow the trends of digitisation and publication of archival material, facilitating easy search through the rich content of the book.

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