

“WINE-CONTAMINATION” OF THE ADRIATIC.
EXAMPLES OF PUNISHING WINE SMUGGLERS
FROM MEDIEVAL DUBROVNIK

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ABSTRACT

Strict import-export regulations of the medieval Dubrovnik (Ragusean) authorities included also a rather rigid control of the wine trade. Namely, since wine was considered as important nutrition sustenance, these regulations included not only wine import from foreign countries, but also control over the inner trade within the borders of Dubrovnik district (later The Republic of Dubrovnik). Each violation of these regulations was followed by high fines and shedding of the smuggled wine to the sea. However, during the 14th century these regulations had softened and spilling of the wine was substituted with some other forms of punishment.

Key words: wine trade, medieval Dubrovnik, contamination, social responsibility, wine consumption

“INQUINAMENTO DA VINO” DELL’ADRIATICO. ESEMPI DI PENE PER I
CONTRABBANDIERI DI VINO NELLA DUBROVNIK MEDIEVALE

SINTESI

Le rigide normative sulle importazioni e esportazioni imposte dalle autorità medievali di Dubrovnik (Ragusa) comprendevano anche un controllo piuttosto rigido del commercio di vino. Siccome il vino era considerato una sostanza nutritiva importante, tali regolamenti riguardavano non soltanto l’importazione di vino da paesi stranieri o d’oltremare, ma anche il controllo delle importazioni ed esportazioni di vino all’interno dei “confini” del distretto di Dubrovnik (successivamente la Repubblica di Dubrovnik/ Repubblica Ragusea). Qualunque violazione delle norme comportava pesanti sanzioni e il versamento del vino in mare. Nel corso del XIV secolo, però, queste norme furono ammorbidite e il versamento del vino fu sostituito con altri tipi di pene.

Parole chiave: commercio del vino, Dubrovnik (Ragusa) medievale, inquinamento, responsabilità sociale, consumo del vino

Questions and problems regarding medieval wine-trade on Mediterranean are rather well elaborated in the existing historiography.¹ Undoubtedly wine was quite an important commodity and – as far as regarding Mediterranean – it was not luxurious merchandise. Its importance was tightly connected with the fact that wine, and its production, were one of the foundations/basis of the daily life in the Mediterranean basin.

Pre-modern Dubrovnik in any sense was a part of this pre-modern Mediterranean world, and thus in medieval Dubrovnik situation regarding wine and its daily usage was not different than in any other pre-modern (medieval) city on the Adriatic coast.² Wine, its production and trade was an important part of Dubrovnik's economy which is quite obvious even from Dubrovnik's medieval statutes, since there are 26 ordinances regarding the treatment of grapes and vine, 9 ordinances regarding vintage, and 20 ordinances regarding wine-trade.³ In comparison to some other medieval cities on the eastern Adriatic coast like Split and Trogir which had far less ordinances regarding the wine-trade,⁴ one has to note that Dubrovnik authorities obviously considered wine and grapes very important for their city.

Moreover, as Major Council of Dubrovnik explicitly stated in one of their conclusions in 1415 wine was considered as one of the first and most necessary things for the health of the human body ("*vna de principalioribus et necessarioribus rebus requisitis sanitati corporum humanorum*"). (DAD, ACMai, s. 8, vol. 1, fol. 8). Such a statement reveals the fact that wine in medieval Dubrovnik was considered not only as food trading commodity but primarily as foodstuff with valuable nutritional sustenance. Such an opinion can be corroborated with many examples where wine was given as addition meal to the laborers who worked at communal (public) edifices (e.g. MR IV, 167). Still, the fact that wine contains alcohol could cause in daily life many "problems", since extensive drinking could lead to alcoholism and possibly to violence.

By the same token, wine and its usage left some trace in Dubrovnik's contemporary literature. Namely, famous tradesman and author of merchants' manual Benedetto Cotrugli in his study *Della mercatura e del mercante perfetto* wrote also about wine and its value in business and daily life.⁵ He states that any respectable merchant should have own vineyard and wine cellar (Kotruljević, 1985, 211, 228), but also that one should be careful with wine consumption since love towards wine drinking could damage his business (Kotruljević, 1985, 164–165). Moreover, Cotrugli reveals that extensive drinking

1 See e.g.: Rose, 2011; Gottardo, 1996; Unwin, 1996, 143–177; James, Veale, 1971; Rokai, 1995.

2 See e.g.: Dinić Knežević, 1966; Krekić, 1980; Krekić, 1978; Lučić, 1991; Ravančić, 2001; Darovec, 2009.

3 Ordinances regarding wine and wine trade: Statut Dubrovnika, Lib. I, cc. 2, 26, 27; Lib. II, cc. 4, 10, 28, 29; Lib. III, cc. 39, 40; Lib. V, c. 26; Lib. VI, cc. 17, 27, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 65, 68; Lib. VIII, cc. 54, 76, 80. To some of these ordinances I will refer in more detail later in the text.

4 Statut Splita, Lib. III, c. 55; Lib. IV, cc. 112, 113, Ref. 31, 32, 34; Statut Trogira, Lib. I, c. 6; Lib. II, cc. 47, 52, 53, Ref. I cc. 54, 68, Ref. II Privilegium. Of course these statutes contain also ordinances about vineyards since viticulture represented significant part of their economy. See: Statut Splita, Lib. III, cc. 97, 105, 106; Lib. IV, cc. 90, 114; Lib. V, c. 5, Ref. cc. 13, 53, 103, Nov. cc. 9, 19; Statut Trogira, Lib. I, cc. 29, 34, 57; Lib. II, cc. 31, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77; Lib. III, cc. 30, 33, 53.

5 Though there are several editions of Cotrugli study in this investigation I have used Kotruljević, 1985, 117–240.

can cause spiritual lethargy, impotence and various other diseases (Kotruljević, 1985, 164–165, 205–206).

Similarly, Nicola Vito Gozze in his study *Gouerno della famiglia* discussing the education of children, Gozze considers that drinking – that is, drunkenness – stirs up lust, looseness of moral and causes damage to the head (“*bere sprona alla lussuria, offende il capo, fà le persone scandalose [...]*”) (Gozze, 1589, 82–83). Furthermore, Gozze compares lack of moderation in drinking with gluttony and finds that guzzling is the worse. In addition, Gozze thinks that moderation is always worthy of praise, and as an example he quotes Lycurgus’ law (Gozze, 1589, 82–83). Finally, similarly to Cotrugli, Gozze also states that on the family table should not be too much wine (Gozze, 1589, 113), which is clear testimony that wine was usual part of a meal.

If we consider that these two writers had transferred public opinion one could conclude that wine was appreciated as a good daily sustenance, but only if it is moderately used. Yet, if a person guzzles, he or she will be intoxicated, and that will lead to lust and inappropriate scenes.

On the other hand, as it was previously mentioned, wine and its usage in daily life were regulated by the normative ordinances gathered in the statute and later reformations. Firstly I have to state that I will not discuss all the ordinances and entire legislation regarding the wine and viticulture in pre-modern Dubrovnik because this is rather extensively elaborated in the literature.⁶ However, I would like to examine and discuss some of these regulations and examples of their implementation.

Namely, in medieval Dubrovnik, as in other contemporary cities on the eastern Adriatic coast, wine-trade was rather precisely regulated. I do not intend to elaborate all the details and differences between such regulations in different communities, but I just would like to point out that basically in all these communes import of foreign wine was prohibited and all such import was strictly controlled. Still, it seems that Dubrovnik authorities had – at some point – the most “severe” rules regarding wine smuggling and wine modifications. And in this short article I would like to propose possible reasons and answers for such a situation.

Namely, in the Dubrovnik medieval statutes, i.e. in the Oath of wine supervisor, it is stated that any vessel that comes to Dubrovnik should not bring wine that was used as food on ship (Statut Dubrovnika, Lib. II, c. 18). This wine that was left after the voyage should be distributed among crew but not more than certain quantity (depending on the length of the voyage) and the rest had to be spilled/poured into the sea. Similarly, another statutory ordinance prescribed that without explicit rector’s permission residents of Dubrovnik could not bring foreign wine to Dubrovnik, and the penalty for smuggling foreign wine was confiscation of the wine which then had to be poured out. In addition, the smuggler, if he was from Dubrovnik, had to pay 25 *perperi* (Statut Dubrovnika, Lib. VI, c. 35; Lib. VIII, c. 80). At the same time foreigners did not have to pay fine and their wine could be given to the Dominican or Franciscan monks to be later distributed among the poor. Still this order was supplemented in 1320 and from that time even foreigners had

6 See e.g.: Čremošnik, 1933; Dinić Knežević, 1966; Ravančić, 2009; Orešković, 2009.

to pay fine and spill wine into the sea. If one now reconsider generally accepted notion that wine in the medieval Mediterranean was considered as a food, these regulations from Dubrovnik medieval statutes seem rather strange and rigid.

Moreover, these rigid ordinances included even wine-trade within the borders of the commune, because such trade was also strictly regulated. For example wine produced on the nearby islands (Šipán, Lopud and Koločep) could be sold only in the taverns on these islands, and the penalty for breach of this rule was 2 *perperi* (Statut Dubrovnika, Lib. VI, c. 41). By the same token, in 1358 Dubrovnik authorities decided that any person who brings wine from peninsula of Pelješac to Dubrovnik should lose his land on this peninsula or – If he would not have landed property there – to pay 500 *perperi* (Statut Dubrovnika, Lib. VI, c. 45).⁷ Moreover, such vessels carrying contraband had to be burned, and all the crew punished according to the law. Still, this ordinance allowed limited import of grapes and wine from Pelješac to the city of Dubrovnik: land owners from Pelješac could bring two baskets of grapes from each possession on the peninsula, and foreign merchants from far away could bring wine that represented food supplies for the ship crew.

Similarly, according to another ordinance each person involved in wine smuggling was to be fined – owner of ship with 25 *perperi*, captain and notary of the ship with 10 *perperi* equally, each sailor with 5 *perperi* and each carrier who carried such contraband with 3 *perperi* (Statut Dubrovnika, Lib. VIII, c. 80). Finally, in 1360 Minor Council decided that no member of Major Council may not even raise a question about wine import or otherwise would be fined with 100 *perperi* (LV, c. 14).

By the same token, one has to bear in mind that Dubrovnik authorities also took care about the quality of the wine within their jurisdiction and they prohibited any "contamination" or "pollution" of wine. Namely, according to the city Statute any mixture of wine with honey (mead) was not to be produced for selling but only for personal usage. The fine for offender was 2 *perperi* and all the mead was to be spilled (Statut Dubrovnika Lib. VI, c. 40). Similarly, all the wine within the city had to be stored within stone wine cellars, or otherwise offender would be fined with 2 *perperi* and such wine had to be spilled (Statut Dubrovnika, Lib. VI, c. 38).⁸

If one compares these regulations with similar ordinances in Split and Trogir it is obvious that in latter communities penalty of spilling wine (into the sea) was not practiced. Wine-trade was controlled and basically without explicit consent of the rector any import of foreign wine was not allowed. Fine for smuggling was between 20 and 100 libras, while wine was confiscated (Statut Splita, Lib. IV, cc. 112, 113; Statut Trogira, Lib. II, c. 47).

Still, as preserved sources witness, residents of Dubrovnik and foreigners often did not obey these regulations and in contrary they tried to smuggle wine within the city district. Namely, many of those who had obtained an explicit rector's consent for import

7 Even later Dubrovnik authorities prescribed similar rigid ordinances regarding punishment of wine smuggling. See: LV, cc. 14, 74, 144.

8 Reasons for such strict regulations might be interpreted also as kind of policy of protection of customers. Namely, conservation of wine in the Middle Ages was rather undeveloped and wine that was stored in cellars during the fall quite often was spoiled already in May or June. Because of this many wine traders tried to cover bad taste of spoiled wine mixing such wine with honey and some spices.

of certain quantity of wine have tried to hide and bring "a little more". The best known examples are related to Dominicans and Franciscans, who in Dubrovnik each year obtained a privilege to import a certain amount of wine. The quantity of this wine varied from year to year. For example in 1335, the Minor Council permitted them to import up to 100 *quinqui* of foreign wine, but only for their own consumption (MR I, 354). Although they had this consent, Dominicans often tried to illegally import more wine than they were allowed. For example in 1434, Petar the prior of the monastery of St. Dominic tried to smuggle 8 *quinqui*, but he was caught and sentenced to a year of exile or a fine of 49 *perperi*; he chose the latter, of course. In this case even the captain of the ship and the sailors were punished (DAD, ACMin, s. 5 vol. 6, fol. 141).

By the same token, some officials like communal physicians often tried to acquire import permission. For example in 1407 *magister Petrus Alberini de Camurata, phisicus de Veneciis* received permission to import a smaller quantity of malmsey, because he needed it for the preparation of some medications (Jeremić, Tadić, 1938, 24). Similarly, in 1455 another doctor requested such a permission but his reason was even more interesting – he stated that wine was essential for him to hip himself in good health (Jeremić, Tadić, 1938, 34). It is hard to say whether these two misused this privilege as above mentioned Dominican prior did, but such scenario was not entirely impossible because retail of good foreign wine could be quite a lucrative business. Namely, retail price at tavern could be 3 or 4 times higher than wholesale price (Dinić Knežević, 1966; Ravančić, 2001, 26–29).

In 1392 Dubrovnik authorities even decided to allow wine import to all the residents but only up to 2 *quinqui* (app. 44 liters) per person. However, next year this decision was abandoned and import was again allowed only with explicit consent of rector with a tax of 6 *grosso per quinquum* (LV, c. 74). It would be interesting to determine what caused this temporary and rather swift change regarding the wine import. Was it because of grape/wine production decrease in that year or this lifting of wine import ban was related with some other causes? Unfortunately, for this period Dubrovnik archival documents are not completely preserved and it is impossible to determine whether some this decision had some temporary political grounds (Lonza, 2008, 123). On the other hand, investigation of the prices of wine in Dubrovnik in that period does not reveal any significant change regarding wine production and wine consumption (Dinić Knežević, 1966, 58–62),⁹ and therefore this question has to stay unresolved.

However, such rather frequent modifications of wine-import rules and numerous repeating of wine-import prohibitions indirectly witness that smuggling of wine was a constant. Example of unsuccessful smuggling attempt in 1427 reveals a typical scenario. A ship that tried to smuggle wine from the island of Šipan to the city of Dubrovnik was captured and soon after burned *iuxta morem* and all the involved were fined. By the same

9 However, one has to note that political instability regularly affected wine prices and wine policy of Dubrovnik authorities, as it happened at the end of the fourteenth century (1399-1402). Namely, in that period price of wine decreased because of the political and war conflicts on the northern borders of Dubrovnik during the process of acquisition of the territory of *Terre Nove* (Dubrovačko primorje), which connected Dubrovnik with their possessions on peninsula of Pelješac.

token, confiscated wine was firstly brought to the rector's palace and then it was poured into the sea (*vinum fuit effuxum*). However, sometimes rector could do a grace and give a pardon to the law offenders as it happened a year earlier (1426) when state officials found a certain of wine on ship that transported salt from city of Brindisi. Since sailors immediately agreed to spill the wine into the sea rector was graceful and did not impose mulct on them.¹⁰

As it was demonstrated these strict rules about spilling of confiscated smuggled wine were frequently modified and changed mostly according to the will of rector and his minor council. Still in the first half of the fifteenth century a significant change occurred that became a rule of permanent nature. One of the previously mentioned examples clearly witnesses this change. Namely in the above mentioned case of Dominican prior Petar (1434) the punishment of pouring smuggled wine into the sea was not imposed. The reason why this wine was not spilled into the sea was an ordinance of the Major Council from 1432 according to which it was decided that the confiscated wine should not be poured out any more, but distributed to the sick and poor inhabitants of the town (LV, c. 253). This regulation proves that Dubrovnik government was concerned about standard of its subjects' life. Moreover, this regulation additionally reveals that in medieval Dubrovnik wine was considered part of the meal which had to be found "on the table" of each inhabitant of the Republic.

However, one has to ask whether there was any pattern in aforementioned regulations change. Namely, from the time of Statute (1272) these changes happened in some time intervals of 20 to 50 years. First significant change happened in 1320 when Dubrovnik was deeply involved in taxation argues with Venice regarding import of some hinterland goods in Venice. Thus this change regarding foreigners' involvement in wine import probably was reaction on the Venetian taxation restrictions. Similarly, ordinances against import from Pelješac (1358-1360) were caused by the fact that in 1333 Dubrovnik had acquired this peninsula that is even today well known wine-growing region and wine from Pelješac probably threatened wine market in Dubrovnik district. On the other hand, although documents for this period are not completely preserved, short termed liberating change that happened in 1390's probably was caused by Dubrovnik's attempts regarding the acquisition of the region of Primorje and the fact that in that time Dubrovnik's direct hinterland became politically quite unstable which caused some uncertainty in food supply, especially regarding wine since most of Dubrovnik district vineyards were placed on their northern borders. The fact that prices of wine on Dubrovnik market did not significantly change until 1398 might witness that Dubrovnik authorities with this ban lifting measure wanted to stabilize prices of wine by assuring wine supplies of the city through import since domestic production in the district of Dubrovnik was endangered. Similarly, some changes regarding the restriction of wine import from region of Konavle and surrounding areas that happened around 1415 were connected with the later Dubrovnik acquisition of Konavle region which became another wine-growing region incorporated into the Republic. Similarly, the "last" change in 1432 almost certainly was caused by

10 See: Krekić, 1956, 59–60 (footnote 10), 91–92.

the same effect of political instability in hinterland that brought many immigrants and newcomers into Dubrovnik, and all of them had to be fed and kept in good health in order to prevent any social turbulence.

At the end, when one reconsiders all these measures regarding prohibition of wine import and spilling wine into the sea, their change and final consequences, it seems that all of the actions of Dubrovnik authorities were guided by one simple rule: protection of their city and social order within the borders of commune (later Republic). Namely, all these "severe" ordinances had to protect domestic production of grapes and wine, and such protection included prohibition of any "contamination" of domestic market with foreign wine. However, when domestic production was not satisfactory, Dubrovnik authorities did not hesitate to find the best solution to provide enough wine for all the inhabitants even if this implied wine import.

"KONTAMINACIJA Z VINOM" JADRANSKEGA MORJA. PRIMERI
KAZNOVANJA TIHOTAPCEV VINA V SREDNJEVEŠKEM DUBROVNIKU

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POVZETEK

V članku so prikazani strogi uvozni/izvozni predpisi oblasti srednjeveškega Dubrovnika (Ragusa), ki so vključevali tudi precej tog nadzor nad trgovanjem z vinom. Ker so vino obravnavali kot pomembno hranilo, ti predpisi niso regulirali le uvoz vina iz tujine, temveč tudi nadzor nad trgovanjem z vinom znotraj meja okraja Dubrovnik (kasneje Dubrovniška republika). Vsaka kršitev teh predpisov se je kaznovala z visokimi kaznimi in zlivanjem tihotapljenega vina v morje. Vendar so v 14. stoletju te predpise omilili in namesto zlivanja vina uporabili drugačne oblike kaznovanja.

Ključne besede: trgovina z vinom, srednjeveški Dubrovnik, onesnaževanje, družbena odgovornost, poraba vina

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