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In onore di Claudio Povoło
In honour of Claudio Povoło

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THE MODERN LEGACY OF A RENAISSANCE FEUD: 1511 AND 1945

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the apparent communality between two lists of surnames: those who participated in the Strumieri-Zambarlani feud in Friuli in the sixteenth century and the Fascist and Communist combatants in the region after the end of World War II. If the alignment of people in these antagonistic factions was something more than coincidental, then how can the 377-year gap between the two violent moments be explained? The essay explores four possible hypotheses to explain why it was that when civil order broke down as it did in the spring and early summer of 1945 combatants aligned themselves as had their ancestors many generations before.

Keywords: Friuli, feuding, World War II, ethnographic history, thick and thin trust

IL LASCITO MODERNO DI UNA FAIDA RINASCIMENTALE: 1511 E 1945

SINTESI

L'articolo analizza l'apparente somiglianza tra due elenchi di cognomi: quelli dei partecipanti alla faida tra gli Strumieri e gli Zambarlani nel Friuli del Cinquecento, e quelli dei combattenti fascisti e comunisti nella regione dopo la fine della Seconda guerra mondiale. Se lo schieramento delle persone in queste fazioni antagoniste era più che una coincidenza, come si spiega il divario di 377 anni tra i due momenti di violenza? Il saggio esplora quattro ipotesi possibili per spiegare come mai, quando l'ordine civile crollò nella primavera e prima dell'estate del 1945, i combattenti si allinearono nello stesso modo dei loro avi di molte generazioni prima.

Parole chiave: Friuli, faide, Seconda guerra mondiale, storia etnografica, fiducia nella buona e cattiva sorte

Some years ago, I wrote the history of a feud in the Renaissance Italy that lasted about two-hundred years and came to a definitive end, I thought, in 1568. In my tribute to Claudio Povolo, I want to explore a curious legacy of that feud and suggest that the end of the feud was not as definitive as I had thought (Muir, 1993).¹ That legacy creates some serious problems for how we are to understand the phenomenon of feuding and the role of states in snuffing out feuds. It appears that the apparent end of cyclical patterns of retaliatory violence was not really *the* end and that the very strategy employed for making a peace among feuding parties left a feud lurking in the peace, to invert Max Gluckman's famous aphorism (Gluckman, 1955). My argument about the modern legacy of a Renaissance feud challenges both the standard historical account of how feuding violence was suppressed in early modern Europe and the theoretical account of how contemporary outbreaks of violence can be explained by such weak concepts as ethnic identity, religion, or nationalism.

The Renaissance feud between two large factions, called the Strumieri and Zambarlani, each composed of dominant aristocratic clans and their followers, took place in Friuli, a province in northeastern Italy then subject to the Republic of Venice. The Strumieri–Zambarlani feud offered the opportunity to trace a feud (contemporaries used the term “vendetta”) from its murky origins to the imposition of peace under the authority of the Venetians. Generations of aristocratic feuding reached a violent climax in 1511 when, during the occupation of Friuli by German mercenaries fighting on behalf of Emperor Maximilian I against the Republic of Venice, the artisan and peasant followers of the Zambarlani attacked the Strumieri in Friuli's capital of Udine, murdered between twenty-five and fifty of them, mostly the aristocratic leaders, and burned or sacked twenty-two palaces. The violence spread to the countryside where forty castles were sacked. These are quite exceptional figures for the period, indicating a level of violence and destruction in a small region that came close to the mayhem of the German Peasants' Revolt of 1524–1525. Although much of the violence involved peasants attacking aristocrats, contemporaries were uniformly convinced that the violence was the product of the long-standing feud, and my own research confirmed this impression. From the detailed records of the 1511 massacres, I created a data base of names of who killed whom and who was related to whom that I used to analyze the sociological antecedents of the feud going back to the fourteenth century and to trace the legacy of the 1511 massacres through a series of retaliatory assaults and murders until the 1560s when the young hot-heads of the feuding clans began to engage in duels. Two of them fought a duel that was billed (literally “billed,” as it was announced on printed posters disseminated among the princely courts of Italy) as the duel to end all fighting. When both duelists died, the experts on courtly behavior called the decision a draw, which made the acceptance of a formal peace pact more likely because parity in deaths had been achieved. The

1 I drafted an early version of this paper while a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. Some of the same events are the subject of Bianco, 2018 (1995). Also see Muir, 2017 and on similar issues, Povolo, 1997, 2010 and 2011.

Friulans, like the French fighters studied by François Billaçois (1986, 315, 397) and Stuart Carroll (2003), considered feuding and dueling as intimately connected practices, and once ritualized dueling became widespread in Europe in the middle of the sixteenth century after the introduction of the rapier sword, it was deemed an appropriate means for pursuing vendetta obligations.²

The Venetian Council of Ten authorized a prominent Venetian patrician, Alvise Mocenigo, to draw up a peace agreement. During the two decades leading up to the 1568 peace, the memory of the 1511 atrocities and subsequent vendetta violence had been kept alive by a pamphlet war between the two sides. To end the feud, Mocenigo ordered silence:

For the greater confirmation and establishment of this holy peace, we wish and we declare that these writings shall not be published any more because one can truly say that when the writing of such material began, it quickened the passions and the spread of hatred more than anything else. However, all these noble families, the names of which are too numerous to repeat, must now follow peace and reconciliation. We attest and declare by the authority conceded to us that both sides must desire that everything said or written be forgotten, as if nothing had ever been written on this subject (Muir, 1993, 271).

As well as can be determined from the written historical record, silence *was* observed on the matter. No more pamphlets were published, and local histories barely mentioned the 1511 episode, despite the fact that it was perhaps the bloodiest vendetta in Renaissance Italy. The vendetta, nevertheless, has had a literary afterlife since William Shakespeare adapted an obscure *novella* titled, *Giulietta e Romeo*, written by one of the participants in the 1511 massacre in Udine, as a play reset in Verona. After 1568 violence was clearly understood as a form of criminal behavior, by both Friulans and the Venetian authorities, and murders did not lead to retaliatory obligations among the families. The feud came to an apparent end, but it was not snuffed out by a centralizing state. The feud faded away not so much because the Venetians had been able to extend their policing powers more effectively over the region, but because, I argued, the imposed silence on all talk of vendetta dispelled the historical memory of the obligations for revenge, and legal recourse for resolving disputes became more effective.³

But did the feud disappear as I had thought? Several years after I had committed myself to this argument in print, I was back in Udine working on another project. Late one afternoon as my eyes began to sting from too many hours reading Renais-

2 Their arguments contrast with Lawrence Stone's view that the rise of dueling ritualized and individualized violence, leading to an end of collective feuding (Stone, 1965, 25–26, 42–69). My position is less categorical than any of these. I argue that under certain circumstances dueling can greatly reduce vendetta violence, even if the concept of the feud does not disappear entirely.

3 The desire of rural communities to exploit the legal authority of Venice to defend themselves against local autocrats certainly did have an effect in reducing aristocratic violence. See Muir, 2000 and Povolò, 1997.

sance manuscripts, I wandered over to a section in the library devoted to the Resistance during World War II. I began to poke around and happened upon a report drawn up by an intelligence officer with the British 8th Army written soon after Friuli was liberated from the Wehrmacht in May 1945. A civil war in this frontier region was brewing that pitted remnants of the Fascist *squadristi* against the partisans, and then within a few weeks the principal anti-Fascist groups, the pro-Italian (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, the CLN) and the pro-Yugoslav (Tito's Osvobodilna Fronta, the OF), began to fight each other. Because the conflict between these two communist organizations had international implications, it received considerable attention at the time from British and New Zealander officials. During the forty-two days of partisan rule after liberation, thousands disappeared, especially in the environs of Trieste. It is still unclear who committed the killings, but some were certainly by Italians settling scores with their neighbors. It was rumored then and confirmed more recently by spelunkers and archeologists that victims were thrown into the *foibe*, deep limestone caves in the Karst plateau above Trieste. By the summer of 1945, British bobbies were patrolling the streets of Trieste, but civil unrest continued until international negotiations established the Italian–Yugoslav border in 1954. The complete history of that civil war has yet to be written, but several historians have recently suggested that it was far bloodier than previously thought, producing victims in the tens of thousands.⁴ Even after the violence faded, most Italian speakers abandoned Communist Yugoslavia in the face of property confiscations and the loss of civil rights so that there was no ethnic cleansing in Slovenia during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s because the ethnic minority there, the Italians, had already been cleansed at the end of World War II (Ballinger, 2002). At the time and still persisting in the historiography is the assumption that the principal motivation behind these massacres was ethnic conflict – the animosity between the urbanized Italians and the rural Slovenes and Croats who had suffered acute discrimination during twenty-three years of rule under Italian Fascism and mass internment during the war. Besides these presumably ethnic conflicts there was undoubtedly widespread fighting between ex- and anti-Fascist Italians during these terrible months.⁵

What caught my eye in that intelligence officer's report in the Udine library, however, was a list of the names of the Fascist *squadristi* and the Communist partisans. I had seen these surnames before. In fact, the two lists lined up very closely

4 The standard first-hand account of these conflicts, which were assumed to be based on ethnic animosities, is the memoir of Geoffrey Cox, an intelligence officer with the New Zealand 2nd Division of the British 8th Army, who was among the first detachments to liberate Friuli and Trieste (Cox, 1977). It was a manuscript of Cox's report that I discovered in the library in Udine. Also, see Sprigge, 1990. For a scholarly analysis of the evidence, Novak, 1970; Sluga, 1994; and Legovini, 2016. The standard Italian account of the events of May and June 1945 now appears to have greatly underestimated the number of deaths (Maserati, 1963). Estimates of greater numbers come from several active Italian and Slovene researchers who reported their findings at a conference on "Forms of Violence" held at the University of Primorska, Koper, Slovenia, in 2001.

5 On the refusal of many professional historians to investigate atrocities perpetrated by Italians during and after the war, see Walston, 1997. That failure has started to be redressed by Sullam, 2015, at least with respect to the Holocaust in Italy.

to my data base of surnames from the 1511 feuding massacre in Udine (Muir, 1993, 283–287). The surnames of families who in 1511 were in the Strumieri faction were Fascists in 1945; those who had been Zambarlani were Communists. The feud had not ended. It had just changed labels.

This apparent fact has been gnawing away in the back of my mind for years. If what the intelligence report suggests is correct, then when the time came, the Friulans knew who it was they were to kill, and their killing, at least at first, was rooted in something other than ethnic animosity between Italians and Slavs or rival national claims between Italy and Yugoslavia or ideological differences between capitalists and communists. Unlike Trieste, there were few Slovenes in Udine, and Yugoslavia made no attempt to seize it. Much of the killing must have been among Italo-Friulans.⁶ War and the presence of German soldiers had yet again, as in 1511, broken down the civil order making it possible for the feud to resume. But how did they know who it was they were to kill?

I want to explore four possible hypotheses: first, what might be called the sociology of dormant feuding hypothesis; second, feuding as the consequence of ecological scarcity; third, feuding as a product of story-telling; and fourth, feuding as an expression not of distrust, as one might assume, but of a very specific kind of trust.

My first hypothesis about a dormant feud is rooted in the extensive literature on the sociology of collective violence. In the case of feuding, research typically has tried to explain violence among gangs, clans, factions, or mafia-like organizations as the consequence of competition for territory, a struggle over resources, or ethnic rivalries. The sociological reasoning about feuding starts with a moment of confrontation when one group attacks another or a riot takes place. These studies then reason backward to some antecedent cause that stimulated a pre-existing group to take collective action. It is generally assumed that the group had already constituted itself before the violent action took place. In Roger V. Gould's summary, "Analysts of the event note that members of the two groups compete for material benefits, residential space, or some other valued resource. This preexisting competition (or mere hatred, or cultural misunderstanding, or whatever factor turns out to be the basis for hostility) therefore 'explains' the violent outburst" (Gould, 1999, 357).

One of the problems with this form of analysis is that competition for territory, struggles over resources, and ethnic rivalries can be found in all kinds of disputes and low-level conflicts. They are the stuff of much of social history. But seldom do these forms of competition actually lead to feuding and violent clashes. Thus, a generalized historical cause is used to explain a quite specific social phenomenon. I will discuss competition for territory and resources more fully below, but the category of ethnic rivalry produces especially weak explanations, despite the fact that many feuding groups represent their differences in these terms. The very

6 This is quite obviously the weak point in my argument because, unlike in 1511, I cannot demonstrate the identities of those killed – the bodies still lie at the bottom of the *foibe* or in mass graves – or of those who did the killing.

ubiquity of the idea of ethnicity has become a convenient short-hand for journalists and policy makers, but ethnicity in and of itself explains very little. Nothing is more constructed and frangible than an ethnic identity, which has no irreducible core in human experience. Even more important is that ethnicity can hardly explain the group solidarity necessary to pursue a feud. Ethnic identity is often a strategic choice because calling oneself an Italian or a Slovene, a Serb or a Bosniak, can be an effective way of obtaining money and weapons to pursue local conflicts, but I suspect these labels hide far more than they reveal.

The crucial issue that the sociology of feuding attempts to explain is one of timing. Why and when do feuds appear out of what are otherwise quite common social conditions? Based on his analysis of Corsican feuding, Gould argues that collective violence, feuds in particular, can best be understood as “demonstrations of solidarity by groups whose cohesiveness has been cast into doubt by their failure to persuade adversaries to back down” (Gould, 1999, 357). This argument suggests that groups in tension must display solidarity through the threat of force in order to prevent an escalation of violence. But if the threat fails, then violence must follow. Opponents in feuding societies play a delicate game of probe and counter probe, looking not so much for weakness in the other side as the opportunity to display solidarity within one’s own group (Davis, 1994). Individuals participate in such groups because they provide protection as well as other social and economic benefits. However, protection for individuals succeeds only in so far as the group publicly exhibits solidarity and opponents perceive the strength of that solidarity. From this point of view, there is always a feud lurking in the peace. Feuds appear when demonstrations of solidarity fail.

In the Friulan feud of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, collective violence clearly came in cycles, spaced about every twenty years, approximately matching generations. Gould’s approach finds considerable confirmation in the relatively tight cycles of violence of Friuli’s classic age of feuding. The changing of generations seems to have provoked displays of solidarity, which frequently escalated into sharp, quick, and deadly confrontations. These confrontations can often be correlated to some perceived external threat, either from the appearance of a foreign army, the conclusion of a judicial case in favor of one side or another, or news of an assault or murder of a member of one of the feuding clans in some distant place. However, how could this theory explain a hiatus in the feud that lasted 377 years? The sociology of displaying group solidarity through threats and violence can hardly have hibernated for that long.

Dismissing this sociological explanation, which is so useful in more limited temporal contexts, leads me to my second hypothesis: feuding was a consequence of competition over land or of ecological scarcity in a region that had significant continuity of families occupying land in the same place. In assembling a data base of fifteenth and sixteenth century feuding violence in Friuli, I drew up a topographical map of where violent episodes took place. It was not surprising to discover that most incidents occurred in the largest town, Udine, where each of the aristocratic families

maintained a palace and where the neighborhoods were segregated by the factions, which demarcated turf by blazons on wells and chains stretched across streets. In the countryside where the feuding violence was widely dispersed, there were pockets of extreme violence in some villages and others that remained completely peaceful. The most violent was a little village called Barbeano. Every time feuding broke out, it was particularly nasty in Barbeano. This fact was curious because unlike nearby Spilimbergo Barbeano lacked an aristocratic castle to which violence-prone bravos were drawn. In an attempt to figure out what had happened there half a millennium ago and finding no answer in the historical record, I went to Barbeano. I visited the local priest looking for a collection of Barbeano records, of which there were none, so I put my problem to him. He had a quick and ready answer. The community has long depended on an economy that mixed grain cultivation with husbandry. The problem is that the local river, the Meduna, crosses a highly porous plain near Barbeano and each year changes course or sometimes even disappears altogether into a sink. As a result, families recurrently fought over boundaries between pastures, the value of which was annually enhanced or diminished by the fickle Meduna. The priest told me that there had been ambushes over pasturage disputes as recently as the 1960s. Barbeano presented an ideal illustration of Jacob Black-Michaud's theory that feuding societies are those that suffer from the persistent scarcity of vital resources (Black-Michaud, 1975, 1986).

The least violent place on my topographical map was the town of Buia, which although at the geographical center of the most extreme feuding violence in 1511 remained completely untouched by it. Buia was hardly a peaceful utopia, but the violence there was not feuding violence. In fact, the most violent episode in Buia was a riot that took place in 1517 in defense of the town's notary and putative mayor when the bravos of a local lord attempted to arrest him. Buia freed itself from feuding because of community cohesion made possible by its communal statutes, which were quite unusual in Friuli. In this case institutions mattered, and the statutes that exempted the townspeople from the most onerous feudal dues and *corvée* labor gave the community's leaders a legal weapon for collective solidarity against the feudal lords and protected the town from entanglements in the lord's disputes. In 1511 Friulans knew that, and many sought refuge in Buia.

There are two kinds of scarcity here that help explain both feuding and its absence. The scarcity in Barbeano was ecological, and in most communities other than Buia there was a scarcity of legal-statutory protections from external coercion. By the twentieth century, however, Buia's privileged position no longer had any purchase because Napoleon had abrogated all communal statutes in Italy.⁷ The ecological scarcity in some places such as the Karsk near Trieste persisted and may have played a role in the revival of the feud under another name in 1945.

7 However, communities that enjoyed statutes during the late medieval and early modern period may have developed high levels of "social capital", which preserved community cohesion in moments of stress. Such is the argument in Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993. For criticisms of the argument, see Muir, 1999.

In fact, despite the migrations of the modern era, there is evidence of considerable residential continuity in Friuli, which remained the most agrarian and the poorest region in northern Italy until the 1976 earthquake destroyed many villages and brought development funds. Until then many people with the same surnames were still living on the same plots of land as their sixteenth-century ancestors – that was especially true of the aristocracy in 1945 – and during the struggle for survival in the waning days of World War II, some Friulans who still lived with ecological scarcity reverted to feuding.

The third hypothesis suggests that feuding constitutes a narrative genre. If one asks the question where in social space did feuds exist, the answer might be found in the stories families told themselves about themselves and their enemies. Feuds existed only in memories. After 1511 retaliatory violence quickened when Friulans from the principal feuding families began to publish accounts of past grievances, assaults, and murders suffered at the hands of the enemy faction. These accounts were examples of what might be called the “will to narrate”, which was certainly one of the most common responses to the massacres of 1511. Alvise Mocenigo, the Venetian who negotiated the peace among the Friulan factions, clearly recognized this to be the case. To bring an end to the vendetta he ordered “that both sides must desire that everything said or written be forgotten, as if nothing had ever been written on this subject.” If memory was the problem, then amnesia was the solution. However, even if they ceased to write about it, did the feuding families forget?

So complete was the legacy of this imposed silence that twenty-odd years ago when I gave a public lecture in Friuli, the president of the sponsoring association stated in his introduction that only a foreigner such as myself could speak about these matters because the topic was still too sensitive.⁸ My talk on the vendetta of 1511 had been announced in the local media, and I faced a dauntingly diverse audience. The first three rows were packed with beefy farmers, still wearing their muddy boots from their day’s labor. Behind them were elderly ladies in print dresses, jean-clad students, university professors, politicians, and reporters. Afterwards I was flooded with polite questions from people who wanted me to tell them whether or not their families’ oral stories were true. In fact, I still get the occasional email asking about what happened to particular families. What I had inadvertently uncovered were fragments of a private discourse, fragments of the stories families had passed down across the generations about distant ancestors. Across all these centuries had private revenge narratives survived through oral transmission?⁹ Friulans had certainly constructed the social spaces necessary to transmit such narratives. Until the modernization of housing in recent decades, houses in Friuli were built around a *fogolar*, a large freestanding hearth surrounded by benches on three sides and usually located in an alcove attached to the kitchen. The *fogolar* provided the locus for a rich oral culture that has attracted considerable attention from linguists and folklorists. One

8 On the strange legacy of Friulan history in contemporary Italian politics, see Muir, 2002.

9 On the capacity of oral narratives to transmit memories of violent injuries across centuries, see Price, 1983.

can imagine how during long sub-Alpine winter nights of story-telling, the revenge narratives of the family became companions to tales about gremlins and fairies, how the intimate, private character of the *fogolar*, restricted to family and close friends, undoubtedly contributed to the extreme cultural isolation and linguistic stratification of Friuli, the endemic distrust of strangers, the weakness of communal and public institutions, and the preservation of vendetta obligations. Unlike most other Italian towns, many in Friuli lacked a central piazza, which was elsewhere the locus of a public discourse, the nursery of the public sphere.

These narratives seem to have survived only in fragments, but such fragments can have great emotive power. My grandmother, whose father was a McKinnon from the Isle of Skye in Scotland, used to warn me sternly when I was little boy, “never trust a Campbell”. I had no idea then what a Campbell was, and until I became a professional historian did not figure out who she was talking about. But I remember the power of her warning. In Friuli a scion of the aristocratic Spilimbergo clan, a cardiologist practicing medicine in Venice, a highly-educated and thoroughly modern woman, normally calm and placid, once drove me to her family’s country estate so that I could study some of their papers. As she was driving along, she suddenly stopped the car, got out and walked into a field where there was an inconspicuous pile of rocks. Her face became red as she spat out that it was “here, here” that “they” had murdered one of her ancestors in 1383. She had not forgotten. I suspect her fellow Friulans in 1945 remembered something like “never trust X”, even if they, like me with the Campbells, did not really know why.

The fourth hypothesis suggests that the best way to understand feuding is as a manifestation of a specific form of trust. Although this hypothesis shares certain features with the sociological one, the emphasis here is on the competing forms of collective solidarity rather than the strategies for deploying them. One of the characteristics of late medieval and early modern Italy was that people inhabited several overlapping and often contradictory social identities. They were not just citizens of a city or town, but often members of a family, clan, tower society, confraternity, parish, pasture association, guild, and many of other kinds of corporate organizations and fictive kin- or neighborhood-based groups. In addition, there always lurked the destabilizing fault lines of what Giovanni Levi has called “continuous social tensions”, the tensions among families, factions, patronage networks, classes, competing institutions, and age groups and between men and women, clerics and the laity, citizens and non-citizens, insiders and outsiders (Levi, 1981).

Those fault lines point to the peculiar paradox of Italian history in which vital, successful communities, which have been the subject of the vast bulk of historical scholarship, cohabited with pervasive anti-community forms of behavior and ubiquitous mistrustfulness, especially mistrust of nearly everyone outside agnate and cognate relations, but often of them as well. This mistrust is usually associated with endemic vendettas. The mistrust found in so many hostile and violent interactions produced a certain style of behavior that my one-time collaborator, Ron Weissman, has aptly labeled, “the importance of being ambiguous”, that is the requirement that

you maintain a certain reserve in committing yourself to a cause or a group and keep as many people as possible thinking you are their friend while you remember that they are probably not yours (Weissman, 1989). From an individual's point of view, it was important not to manifest solidarity too solidly before it was absolutely necessary. The importance of being ambiguous, of course, increased the chances that a group might fail to demonstrate solidarity sufficiently or quickly enough, as discussed in the first hypothesis, and that failure could lead to more feuding.

The importance of being ambiguous was made even more important by the internal contradictions of family structures that made the core units for feuding solidarity – agnate and cognate groups – highly unstable. The ideology of Italian families celebrated agnate relationships, that is those descended through a male line from a common male ancestor, but as David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber argued forty-years ago for Tuscany, agnatic kinship was more a fiction than a living fact (Herlihy & Klapisch-Zuber, 1978). We do not have systematic demographic information for regions other than Tuscany, but impressionistic evidence from individual families suggests that the Tuscan demographic model was the norm, or close to it, for all of north-central Italy. In that model the age at first marriage for men was typically over thirty and for women at about eighteen. The age gap was significantly more exaggerated in the cities than the country, but everywhere it was greatest among the upper-class families, which possessed strong agnatic identities of honorable lineage. The consequence was that in the life-span of a marriage, older husbands were likely to die long before younger wives and therefore likely to disappear before the children reached maturity. In other words, this was a culture in which senior men were missing in families. Young men could hardly be taking orders from their fathers because by the time sons were old enough to participate in feuding their fathers were likely to be dead, whether from natural or unnatural causes. Thus, avenging an injured or murdered father may have been an inherited obligation for some young men, but it was more a theoretical than practical obligation. The time gap from the original injury to the retaliation was, perforce, a long one, and that time gap gave young men considerable latitude in deciding whether or not to act on the obligation. Many found perfectly honorable ways to ignore it.

The spread of patronymic surnames during the fifteenth century reveals the growing cultural significance of agnate relationships but also their fragility and the nervous anxiety of many fathers that their offspring will forget who begat them, let alone avenge their death (Klapisch-Zuber, 1990, 2000). Agnate relationships generated an influential prescriptive literature, exemplified by the humanist treatises on the family by Leon Battista Alberti and Francesco Barbaro, but there was often more smoke than substance in agnate bonds. Men engaged in feuds in Friuli and Liguria, for example, talked about loyalty to their forefathers more than they ever practiced it (Muir, 1994; Raggio, 1990).

Cognate relationships, i.e. those among siblings born of the same father, found their most powerful institutional expression in sons' collective inheritance of their father's patrimony and dowries for their sisters. Cognate relations and disputes

among cognates generated an enormous body of *consilia*, legislation, and cases (Kuehn, 1991; Chojnacki, 2000). In the absence of primogeniture, brothers were bound together *in fraterna*, which obliged them to collective ownership of their patrimony until a formal division was made. Governments often considered cognates as units of social discipline, which meant all brothers might have their property confiscated for the crimes of one of them. The threat of collective confiscations was one of the enforcement penalties signatories to the 1568 agreement bound themselves to respect. Brothers *in fraterna* were thus structurally prone to conflicts over property, but they also had an interest in protecting their property as a collectivity. Because inheritance laws bound them together whether they liked it or not, they often formed the core units of feuding groups.

The collective interests of siblings, including sisters, created mutual knowledge and reliance that social science calls “thick trust”. Thick trust was the primary asset of feuding groups when they were challenged or sought to challenge others. It would be unwise to assume that families possessed a permanent depository of thick trust. Thick trust had to be created through social action. “Thin trust”, in contrast, is based on a general community norm, the kind of fragile trust one might display toward those who one may not know at all but who live in the same neighborhood, village, or town. As Robert Putnam puts it, “thin trust is even more useful [for communities] than thick trust, because it extends the radius of trust beyond the roster of people whom we can know personally” (Putnam, 2000, 136). To put the distinction in Italian terms, thick trust binds personal patronage networks – it cemented factions together under the leadership of a dominant family or *padrone* and through the exchange of marriage partners – whereas thin trust unified the community, places such as non-feuding Buia, and bound together people who did not know one another very well or at all. The distinction between thick and thin trust is, of course, a heuristic procedure, a device for distinguishing between certain kinds of social organizations from family to the state.

How does the distinction between thick and thin trust help explain the 377-year gap in the Friulan feud? During the sixteenth century and dramatically after the 1568 peace, thick trust networks of family and clan solidarity infiltrated the thin trust institutions of the region, including civic councils, law courts, and the parliament. That process was an example of what Giorgio Chittolini identifies as “a sort of osmosis” through which the mechanisms of government “respond to significant private interests in this unavoidable reciprocal interaction.” The interpenetration of the commonweal with private interests, he argues, was the most significant and lasting political development in northern Italy during the early modern period and created a form of political stability that allowed the small states of Italy to survive the face of the burgeoning power of nation states. He explains that “when the private is present within the public, the mechanisms of governance and the political system are strengthened. This occurs, for instance, where instruments of consensus are employed to bind individual figures or groups to the authority of the prince and the power of his apparatus, through favors, pardons, and the practice of clientelism. This

can also happen on a more general level, when larger groups or entire orders are linked to the state by analogous means.” (Chittolini, 1995, 50–51). Such a process occurred when the rural aristocracy was incorporated into the military elites of the early modern Italian states, as certainly happened with many of the young nobles of Friuli who pursued military careers that took them out of the region (Hanlon, 1998). The Venetian government, in fact, had been pursuing such a policy since soon after the bloody Friulan episode in 1511 by creating dyadic bonds between Venetian patrician families and Friulan aristocrats and then guaranteeing that those favored families would have privileged access to public offices (Ventura, 1964). In other words, feuding was suppressed not through external force but by giving the feuding families a place in the institutional structures of the state so that their interests were better served by cooperating than by fighting. Those who refused to go along found themselves exiled, either from the institutions of power or from the territory.

If this argument is correct, then the osmosis of private family interests and public institutions helps explain why feuding and mutual enmities may not have been forgotten but could go into hibernation for centuries. When in the waning days of World War II and its immediate aftermath public institutions ceased to guarantee protection, old feuding patterns reasserted themselves, and Friulans knew who it was they had to kill. When the thin trust of community life frayed, reliance on thick trust was all that was left. To make such an argument is not to say that when the social contract breaks, humanity returns to a Hobbesian state of nature. My argument is quite different. It is that the very solution the Venetians employed to control feuding, a solution employed by many early modern Italian states, preserved private interests in the public sphere in a way that often looks like corruption to a modern observer. The point is that this solution worked precisely because it kept private interests and private solidarity groups in place. Thus, the reassertion of feuding in 1945 was, in fact, not so much an anomaly as a clue to the continued existence of a power arrangement that had been in place since at least the sixteenth century. The groups struggling for survival in 1945 were the same ones who cooperated in better times to solve collective problems without coercion or violence. In a scene in the Taviani brother’s great movie, *La notte di San Lorenzo* (*The Night of the Shooting Stars*, 1982), which is about the liberation of Tuscany in the summer of 1944, neighbors who were on opposite sides recognize one another while clandestinely harvesting a field of wheat and begin a desperate fight for survival among the stalks, Fascist against partisan.

There is much that still needs to be explained if this hypothesis is true, not the least how solidarity was mobilized in a moment of social crisis, but I want to suggest that this is a hypothesis worth exploring, not just for the Friulan case or other Italian ones, but for other episodes of extreme collective violence, especially the recent ones in the Balkans. I would not want to argue that what happened during the break-up of Yugoslavia was just a return to primordial Balkan feuding. That would be a silly form of reductionism, but I suspect that there was more feuding than the journalistic accounts that emphasize ethnic hatreds and nationalism have

recognized. Feuding would help to explain, for example, the puzzling contradictions of Muslims fighting on the side of the Serbs and visa-versa in the Bihać pocket of Bosnia. To answer these questions would require scholars to obtain access to the villages and to do the hard work of tracing names, keeping track of who lives where, and who owns what. It would require good ethnographic history, which may not yet be possible. Such a project, nevertheless, might start with the hypothesis that there is always a feud lurking somewhere, especially in the peace.

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POVZETEK

Kako je mogoče razložiti navidezno trajanje poznosrednjeveške fajde vse do 20. stoletja? Po priimkih sodeč se namreč zdi, da so bile v dveh rivalskih frakcijah v Furlaniji leta 1511 in 1945 udeležene zelo podobne družine. Da bi poskusili razložiti to kontinuiteto, se v prispevku preučujejo štiri hipoteze, temelječe na znanstvenih študijah o rodbinskih sporih: prvič, teza, ki bi jo lahko poimenovali sociologija speče fajde; drugič, fajda kot posledica ekološkega pomanjkanja; tretjič, fajda kot produkt pripovedovanja zgodb; in četrtič, hipoteza o fajdi ne kot izrazu nezaupanja, kot bi lahko domnevali, temveč znamenju zaupanja prav posebne vrste. Avtor sklene razpravo z inverzijo koncepta Maxa Gluckmana o »miru v sporu« v namig in opozorilo, da v miru vedno nekje preži tudi spor. Članek zagovarja stališče, da bi etnografska zgodovina lahko bila alternativa šibkim konceptom etnične, verske in ideološke identitete, ki se v strokovni literaturi in novinarskih poročilih pogosto navajajo kot razlaga za nedržavno nasilje.

Ključne besede: Furlanija, fajde, druga svetovna vojna, etnografska zgodovina, zaupanje v dobrem in slabem

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