Conference Report on *Violence and its Control in Early Modern Europe*,
4–5 July 2023, York

Under the influence of legal anthropology, historical research has, in the last few decades, begun to challenge the traditional interpretations of the role of interpersonal violence in early modern European society. Recent studies have shown that pre-modern society was not chaotic and 'irreparably' violent, as is often assumed. Instead, conflicts were often regulated by specific social 'rules' or customs. Violence has proven to be an ambivalent and complex phenomenon with no clear definition and a product of interactions between cultural, economic, social, political etc., factors, which vary according to time and place.

Therefore, it is not surprising that interest in researching the role of interpersonal violence and its control in early modern societies has increased in recent decades. This issue was, among others, the focus of the EU-funded research project *ViolenControl – Violence and its Control in early modern Venice, 1500–1797*, co-ordinated and led by Andrew Vidali, a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at the Department of History at the University of York (UK).

Between 4 and 5 July 2023, in the framework of his MSCA research project, a two-day conference entitled *Violence and its Control in Early Modern Europe* was organised and hosted at the University of York. The event also took place online for those who could not attend in person.

The opening address was given by Andrew Vidali, chair of the conference committee and head of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie research project. In the following two days, four panels were held in which thirteen research specialists from across Europe and the US presented their papers on the history of controlling interpersonal violence. Following the conference outline, however, not limited exclusively to these themes, they focused on: 1) the quantitative analysis of violence; 2) peacemaking, public order and policing; 3) interrelationships between criminal justice and violence; 4) factionalism, political and elite violence; 5) class, gender-based and collective violence; 6) minorities and violence; and 7) spatial patterns of violence.

The opening panel, *Gender and Spaces of Violence*, was moderated by Amanda Madden from the George Mason University (USA). The first paper, entitled *Controlling violence in the* Bagno de' Forzati *of Livorno (17th–18th centuries)*, was given by Benedetta Chizzolini from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Germany), in a cotutelle agreement with the University of Padua (Italy). She presented an analysis of the control of violence, the clash of jurisdictions and the exemplary punishments against specific crimes within the *Bagno*, a prison built between 1598 and 1604 under Ferdinando I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, in the heart of medieval Livorno. The prison was mainly used for 'Turks' captured and enslaved by the Order of Saint Stephen as well as Tuscan prisoners.

This was followed by a paper by Nere Jone Intxaustegi Jauregi from the University of Deusto (Spain). In her paper *Violence and Women in Early Modern Basque Territories*, she analysed physical mistreatment, verbal violence and mental abuse

against women and by women against other individuals, especially in the 'private' space of conflict, the family.

The first panel concluded with a presentation given by Sanne Muurling from the Radboud University (The Netherlands). In her paper entitled *Women, violence and the use of justice in early modern Bologna*, she refuted the traditional interpretations of women's 'passive' role and how, despite their so-called subordination, they participated in all categories of criminal offences as well as in (in)formal mechanisms of dispute settlement.

The second panel of the day, *Social Groups and Politics*, moderated by Stuart Carroll from the University of York, was opened by Ugo Muraca from the University of Messina (Italy). In his paper, entitled *«Faire tyranniser la majorité du peuple par une minorité factieuse»: the suppression of the federalist uprisings in Southern France in 1793*, he analysed an insurrectional movement, which occurred in the French provinces and countryside in the same year as the peasant uprisings in Vendée (1793). With it, several towns in the Midi opposed the capital's alleged 'centralism'.

The next presentation, entitled *Controlling the violence of servants: a pressure way in early modern diplomacy?*, was given by Amelie Balayre from the University of Arras (France). Predicated on ten incidents that occurred between French and English diplomatic staff in 1559–98, she showed that diplomacy, traditionally viewed as a dispute settlement practice that resolves issues between states through negotiation and compromise, also involved violence. While ambassadors were the public faces of their rulers, they were usually accompanied by a retinue of people and servants of varying ranks, who, in the context of war and strong religious tensions, used violence without much hesitation.

The final lecture of the second panel was presented by Sian Hibbert from the University of York. In her paper, *Violence and the Notability: Languedoc 1680–1720*, she questioned what constitutes notability in a community and outlined how violence and its control were treated when individuals of specific social statuses were involved. She suggested that the traditional notability concepts of status and 'power' (and therefore our understanding of the tensions underpinning incidents of violence) need to be located within the geographical locality of the individuals involved, because of the complex system of office holding and election specifics.

The first day of the conference was concluded with a talk by the keynote speaker, Amanda Madden. Her lecture titled *The history of violence between the micro and macro: notes from the field of early modern studies* discussed the importance of micro and macro studies, focusing on the history of violence and its control in the early modern period, based on Italian cities. In doing so, she specifically stressed the important role of spatial analysis of violence, e.g. GIS mapping. In her opinion, this methodological approach can bridge the micro and macro studies and deepen our understanding of patterns of violence and its control throughout history.

The second day of the conference began with the panel *Cultures of Violence, Peace, and the Law*, moderated by Paolo Broggio from the Roma Tre University (Italy). In the first paper, entitled '*Who is there?': the Violent Game of chivalì in the Republic of Venice (1576–1645c.)*, Andrea Toffolon from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy), gave a detailed analysis of *chivalì*, an ambush taunt or provocation considered a 'game', which developed into interpersonal violence. He placed the insufficiently researched phenomenon of the chosen time and space in a wider context of violence and called into question the randomness of the targets (i.e. victims). He also addressed the gendered aspects of this 'game', showing that despite being in the minority, women were also involved; however, solely as victims.

The second lecture of the panel was given by Povilas Andrius Stepavičius from Vilnius University (Lithuania). His paper *Attempts to live peacefully: violence and its control in the 17th century Vilnius* explored what kind of violence deterrence measures were used in seventeenth-century Vilnius. He focused 1) on inhabitants and their ways of dealing with violent outbursts and 2) on the attempt to identify how the city's institutions prepared for peacemaking and protecting the public order. He argued that the source material reveals a strong desire to control violence in the domestic and neighbourhood environment.

The panel ended with a presentation by Mattia Corso, an independent researcher from Italy. In his paper entitled *The Problem with Weapons: Arms Control Policies in Sixteenth Century Verona*, he examined the historical context of weapons control in sixteenth-century Verona, specifically focusing on the laws that governed the use and carrying of arms in public spaces. In his analysis, he combined archival records documenting the enforcement of laws with two unique and valuable sources, reports by judge Ermes Forcadura (1550–1607), focusing on factors that influenced the effectiveness of arms control measures.

The fourth and last panel of the conference, entitled *Looking East: Violence in Central Europe*, was moderated by Andrew Vidali. The session was opened by Žiga Oman from the Institute IRRIS (Slovenia) with the paper entitled *Dimensions of Enmity in Early Modern Inner Austria*. Predicated on cases from the provincial courts of Rothenfels in Styria and Bled in Carniola, as well as the town court of Ljubljana, the Carniolan capital, he addressed the use of violence and its control in dispute settlement among non-nobles to discern the dimensions of 'enmity' in early modern Inner Austria.

Next followed a presentation by Marta Raczyńska-Kruk from the University of Warsaw (Poland). In her paper '*You dog, Polish deaf German!'. The story about Deaf Germans in early modern Poland and the problem of symbolic violence*, she dealt with the concept and the cultural phenomenon of the so-called 'Deaf Germans' (*Taubdeutche* in German, *Głuchoniemcy* in Polish) ethnic group in early modern Poland and the history of research on this phenomenon in the context of symbolic violence. According to her paper, a

type of non-physical violence manifested in power differences between social and cultural groups, focusing especially on the expression of violence through language and how ethnic stereotypes build a linguistic and cultural image of the world.

The panel and the conference were concluded by the paper entitled *Protection from Violence: the Anabaptists in Moravia (1525–1621)*. It was given by Emese Bálint, an independent researcher from Romania, who focused on the protection from the violence of the Anabaptist minority in early modern Moravia. She challenged the traditional views which interpret the toleration of a religious minority solely as a cultural tradition and/or a legal guarantee. As Bálint illustrated, protection from violence was a complex variable depending on the outcomes of power struggles, economic gains, and political costs.

The conference *Violence and its Control in Early Modern Europe* successfully addressed the topic of interpersonal violence and its control in the early modern period from various points of view. The speakers and the moderators showed that this research topic is very complex and deserves further consideration. The organisers should be commended for the selection of compelling papers and the good organisation of the conference.

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