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## OLIVE OIL, TAXES AND SMUGGLING IN VENETIAN ISTRIA IN MODERN AGE

*Darko DAROVEC*

University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre of Koper, SI-6000 Koper, Garibaldijska 1

e-mail: darko.darovec@zrs.upr.si

### ABSTRACT

*Throughout the period of the Venetian Republic, olive oil production was, together with salt making, wine growing, wine production and fishery, one of the main branches of the Istrian economy. Its importance grew considerably from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on when olive oil was increasingly used for the illumination of expanding towns, in particular Trieste, and as a raw material for semi-industrial products. Not surprisingly, the increase in olive oil demand and trade led to an increase in taxes, which in turn spurred contraband. The paper sheds light on the olive oil production, trade, sale, taxation and smuggling, the volume of which could be even six times higher than that of legal trade. The quantitative historical data available give us a fairly reliable picture of the olive oil prices, trade, production volume and tax rates in Venetian Istria.*

**Key words:** economic history, oil production, olive oil, tax policy, smuggling, Istria, the modern era

### OLIO D'OLIVA, DAZI E CONTRABBANDO NELL'ISTRIA SLOVENA IN ETA' MODERNA

#### SINTESI

*La produzione dell'olio d'oliva figurava accanto all'industria salifera, alla vitivinicoltura e alla pesca come uno dei principali settori economici dell'Istria durante l'intero periodo della Repubblica di Venezia. La sua importanza crebbe in modo considerevole a partire dal XVI sec., quando l'olio d'oliva venne utilizzato sempre più per illuminare le città in fase di espansione, in particolare Trieste, e come materia prima per altri lavorati semi-industriali. L'incremento della domanda e del commercio di olio d'oliva dettò al "Dominio" veneziano un aumento della tassazione che si tradusse inevitabilmente nella pratica sempre più diffusa del contrabbando. Nel presente articolo sono descritti la produzione, il commercio, la vendita, la tassazione e il contrabbando dell'olio d'oliva, che finì per superare fino a sei volte il mercato legale. Con l'aiuto della metrologia il contributo fissa una fotografia abbastanza fedele dei prezzi, del traffico, della quantità prodotta e dei gradi di tassazione applicati sull'olio d'oliva nel contesto dell'Istria veneta.*

**Parole chiave:** storia economica, produzione olearia, olio d'oliva, politica daziaria, misure, contrabbando, Istria, epoca moderna

## INTRODUCTION

Istria is the most northern Mediterranean country where olive trees grow, and, according to the latest research, abound in polyphenol, olives' active substance (cf. Bandelj, 2004). The country is also unique from the historical point of view, since, in the course of centuries, political, economic, and cultural flows and streams characteristic of Central Europe and the Mediterranean, as well as Romanic, Slavic and Germanic and Ottoman milieus, converged and intertwined in this very area. Simultaneously, the area represents both the line of separation and the line of connection between Eastern and Western Europe, and has been a frequent site of confrontations in the course of history. Through centuries, Istria has constituted a distinct borderland, as the presence of borders has been a constant, taking account also of the fact that its borderness should be defined as multilayered. Namely, said borderness was reflected (and still is; cf. Rožac Darovec, 2006, 57–68) at the political (different citizenship), as well as the institutional, economic, social, cultural and ethnic levels. In the period as of the end of the Middle Ages to the beginning of the Modern Age, national borders were relatively steady and stable, dividing Istria between the Mediterranean Republic of Venice and the Central European Habsburg Monarchy (13<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century).

On the other hand, another feature of the borderness of Istria is the fact that in this region Mediterranean and Central European social and economic forms and institutions, as established by the end of the Middle Ages, meet and partially overlap. During the entire Modern Age, this fact was reflected in different organization of maritime towns and relationships between urban and rural areas, as, for instance, in Venetian forms of social and production relations in Istrian rural areas (share-cropping system) in comparison to the Austrian forms of feudalism in Karst and Goriško regions and "Austrian" Istria (Pazin). In relation hereof, one has to emphasize, in particular, the role of trade middleman assumed through the centuries by the Istrian region and its population. From the point of view of long-distance trade, Istria is situated on the passage between the Julian Alps and the Adriatic Sea, which connects, through the Ljubljana Gate, the Pannonian and Po River (Val Padana) regions, i.e. Slovenian, Austrian, Croatian and

Hungarian provinces with Italian provinces or with the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. All social strata, from aristocracy to peasants, were actively engaged in the area of trade. Rural population participated in international trade flows in the form of freighting, transport, re-grating and contrabanding, and also transported its produce and products via "legal and illegal routes" to town boroughs and markets, in particular, to Trieste, Venice, Koper, Piran, Rijeka, Gorica and even Udine (cf. Darovec, 2004). On the basis thereof, traditional lines of trade traffic were formed and forms of social relationships established between the town and the countryside, the coast and the hinterland, in which (legal or illegal) trade in olive oil played an important role, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## OLIVE OIL PRODUCTION, EXPORT TAXES AND SMUGGLING

There is hardly a report written by a Koper *Podestà e Capitano*<sup>1</sup> to the Venetian authorities at the end of his term of office in Istria that does not mention olive oil, which is not at all surprising since in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries olive oil accounted for not only the most important, but also the highest income from taxes levied by the Venetian rulers in Istria (REL 4, 1740, 55; 1784, 317; 1795, 335). Consequently, the production and the sale of olive oil were kept under strict control. At that time, olive oil was not primarily a foodstuff, rather a durable industrial material used for the illumination of towns (cf. SMi, 3, 53, 58) and as the main ingredient in soap making.<sup>2</sup>

Olive oil production and export were reported as early as during the Roman era in Istria (Degrassi, 1956; Zalin, 1976). The Venetians began regulating olive oil production and trade quite early. The oldest extant decrees date to 1383, whereas individual provisions can be traced back to 1281: a provision of March 24, 1281, reads that olive oil should not be loaded onto any ship without a certificate issued by the Office of *Ternaria* ("senza bolletta della Ternaria.") (ASV 2, 16, 64 sq.).<sup>3</sup> clearly indicating that it was as early as during that period that the authorities strove to control sea trade in olive oil and, consequently, its taxation.

Among the first to adhere to the new regulations were the inhabitants of the northwestern Istrian town of Piran.

1 Podestà and Captain, the head of the commune of Koper and, in some respects, the most important official in Istria. As regards the heads of other Istrian communes, their titles varied: they could be called the Podestà, the Captain or even the Count. In the article, the term Podestà will be used.

2 Cf. ASV 1, 9.

3 The holdings of the Olive Oil Inspectorate (PSO) kept by the Venetian State Archives (ASV) comprise a fairly rich collection of data on olive oil production that largely refer to the Inspectorate itself and only to a lesser extent to individual offices or excisemen in Venetian provinces. Nevertheless, a considerable bulk of the materials refers to the town of Koper and to Istria; the documents are kept in boxes (*busta*) 213–216 for Koper and boxes 60–71 and 211 for Istria, whereas the material related to Trieste is kept in box 203.

The 1307 amendments to the town's Statute stipulated that no one was allowed to export more than 3 urns of wine or olive oil outside the territory of Piran without the approval of the Podestà (STPI, 44, 706–7). In the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, they further protected olive oil production by prohibiting the Podestà from issuing licences to import olive oil to the town of Piran or its hinterland, since such activity could be a great detriment to the town (STPI, 619), suggesting that olive oil production was fairly prevalent.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century on, stricter tax collection control was imposed and increased taxes were levied not only on traffic and trade in olive oil, but also on its production. The latter was usually supervised by individual Istrian communes, which stipulated not only the manner of production – in large stone oil-mills, i.e., *torklja* in Slovene (*torchio* in Italian), and/or in small stone oil-mills, i.e., *torkola* (*torcolo*)<sup>4</sup> – but also the tax rates in the town's statute and later on in special collections of towns' tax provisions. Interestingly, the statutes also prohibited the harvest of olives prior to the stipulated date (e.g., the October feast of St. Lucia in the area of Koper [STKP, 3, 21]) in order to prevent the harvest of unripe olives.

### Olive oil production

A thorough description of the procedures related to olive oil production is provided in the Statute of Koper; more precisely, in statutory provisions adopted in 1301, during the fourth term of office of the *Podestà e Capitano* Marino Baduari. *Torkljarji*, renters of oil-mills, had to take care that the olives brought to the oil press were not damaged. Once arrived, the olives had to be washed thoroughly. When they were pressed, water was added to them in the ratio one *meçena* (also *mesena*, *mezena* or *mezzena*) of olives to one bucket (*situla*) of water, with 4 buckets of water equalling an urn. All measures had to bear the *justiciar's* seal as proof of authenticity.

All these activities, including the decanting of olive oil into vessels, had to be supervised by olive owners or a person authorized by them. The renters of oil-mills or their assistants earned 1 soldo for each decanted *meçena* of olive oil that had been measured and sealed (*cum rodulo et bullatam*) by the *justiciar*, a town official dealing with legal matters. In addition, the olive owner gave them 7 librae per 100 librae of olive oil (*libras VII oley pro centenario*) for their work, food and heating. Olive skins (*polpamine*), which were used as heating material and as watertight material in the fortification of town piers (as determined by archaeological excavations in

Koper<sup>5</sup>), remained the property of the olive owner (STKP, 3, 50).

Though of a later date, the Piran statutory provisions related to the operations of oil-mills are much more revealing. The initial provisions of 1384 (STPI, 660/1) were amended in 1522, 1527 (STPI, 662/3), 1557, 1572, 1588, 1596, 1600 and 1646 (PAK 1). The oil-mills were owned by the commune, which put them up for auction and initially leased them for a period of 4 years; from 1600 on, the leasing period was 2 years. Each year, the authorities also put up for auction the service of tax collector and two excisemen were appointed for the 4 oil-mills that existed at the time, located close to the seashore so that seawater could be used for cleaning mill-stones.

The auction lasted from the first to the last Sunday in March, when the highest bidder was announced. According to the 1384 version of the Statute, the bidder had to pledge a guarantee in the amount of 100 liras per oil-mill, whereas from 1527 on, he had to lodge a deposit (*bone et sufficiente piezarie*) that satisfied the Podestà and his judges. In other words, the exciseman's guarantee depended on the offers presented at the auction, as well as on the supply of and demand for olive oil. Only one person could rent each oil-mill and he was not allowed to form a consortium with the other oil-mill renters. He was also prohibited from performing the duties of exciseman under threat of a pecuniary penalty of 100 liras, the highest as regards excisemen. The penalty for forming a consortium with other renters amounted to 50 liras, whereas the fine for other minor offences was 25 liras. This money was evenly divided between the Podestà, the commune and the informer.

Initially, the excisemen settled their liabilities towards the commune thrice a year. Later they did it only twice, on January First and Easter. In 1557, the three oil-mill renters were obliged to open at least one oil-mill on St. Martin's Day, "*con homini, cavalli, et altri ordegni necessarj per masenar*", which had to stay open daily until St. Andrew's Day, while after 1588 the four renters had to open two oil-mills (one in the Piran quarter of Marčana and the other wherever they found it most suitable) on All Saints' Day. The oil-mills had to operate until St. Andrew's Day, with the provision that on feast days olives could not be brought in before the afternoon mass was over (*se non finito vespero*). On the aforementioned days, the oil-mills stayed open day and night. According to the provisions of 1527, they could perform a maximum of 10 rounds of grinding or pressing olives (*masena*) per 24 hours, while from 1527 on only 8 rounds were allowed since each *masena* had to settle for 3 hours before being decanted.

4 It is important to distinguish between *torklja* and *torkola*. Though the two terms are phonetically similar and both denote stone oil-mills, the former was much larger than the latter, and was mainly used in towns, while the latter was used in the countryside. In 1734, a provision was passed stipulating that a *torklja* always had to be accompanied by a *torkola* (comp. Leggi, 1757, 3, 166–172).

5 Comp. the excavations conducted at Prešeren Square in Koper; documentation is kept in the Regional Museum of Koper – PMK.

The rules also prescribed the amount of olives for each pressing, 24 *quartas*. A similar provision was also included in the 1384 version of the Statute: 8 *meçenas* of olives could be pressed per round, with 1 *meçena* equalling 3 *quartas*. The exact measure had to be established and confirmed with a seal by the *justiciar* (STPI, 661).

According to the regulations, the responsibility for the transfer of olives from the owners living in the hinterland to the town oil-mill was conferred on village mayors who could authorize the so-called fetchers or "*bastasi*".<sup>6</sup> The village mayors were also in charge of measuring the amount of olives intended for pressing, a task they performed at the owner's home and in accordance with the stipulated measures (*quartas*). The statutory amendment of 1588 stipulated that the *torkljarji*, the renters of large oil-mills, were in charge of not only the transfer of the clean and stoned fruit (the olives had to be prepared by the owner) to the oil-mill, but also of the transfer of olive oil back to the owner (...*siano in obbligo i torchiari andar a' tuor l'olive, che doveranno desfàr* [cf. Boerio, note by D. D.] *alle proprie case detti patroni, sicome fanno a masena, et parimente portarli l'oglio fino a casa...*) (PAK 1, 5). The necessity of this mediating role played by village mayors is much more obvious if one considers the state of affairs in the territory of Koper, which boasted a considerably greater number of *torkljas* and *torkolas* located in the countryside. Olive oil production was largely supervised by village mayors, who, as a rule, acted also as *torkolarji* during their term of office.

The procedure of olive pressing was attended by olive owners or persons whom they had authorized. Olives could be pressed in any Piran oil press; but if the owner used an oil-mill located outside the territory of Piran, the olives or the oil was confiscated and the owner fined 50 liras. Individual owner's set up a stake to mark their turns, and they could press olives as long as they wanted; the others were required to wait their turn without disturbing them. However, the amendments passed in 1572 determined that an individual owner or family was not allowed to press more than 3 *masenas* at a time. Throughout the pressing, there had to be two large urns for collecting oil set at the renter's disposal. The oil poured into the first urn was left until the second was ready; only then could the amounts in the two containers be measured. In 1572, the rules stipulated that each oil-mill must use 5 urns, whereas, according to the rules of 1588, there had to be 3 urns for each of the two outlets of oil, 6 urns altogether, which could indicate that in the meantime the oil-mills had been modernized. Before the urns were set in the mills, they had to be measured by the communal supervisor of oil-mills (*sopratorchi*); in case of disagreement, the

judges had the last word. During the process of olive pressing, other containers and devices were used as well. The small wooden channel along which the oil ran from the oil-mill was called a *gorna* (STPI, 663; comp. Boerio, 1856). Beneath it, a specific vessel (*cesta*) had to be kept, which had been procured by communal supervisors in order that the oil would not spill around the mill and along the town's streets. In addition, each oil-mill renter had to possess at least 16 filters (*sportas*), which were made "*de brula<sup>7</sup> et non de altra sorte*" (STPI, 663). According to an explanation from 1646, the filters or small bags were made of hemp (*s'habbi ad uso li sacchi di Cannà*).

Several provisions of the Piran Statute and regulations on olive oil production of a later date related to *polpamine*, the skins of pressed olives. Just as in Koper, they remained the property of the olive owner. If he needed them, he had the right to two *brentas* per each round of olive pressing (*masena*), while neither the village mayors nor *bastasi* nor olive mill renters had the right to appropriate or sell them. They were also prohibited from using them as fuel to heat clean water necessary during pressing. Only wood could be used for such a purpose. It is also interesting to note the provision stipulating that all olives had to be carefully pressed and that their skins should not be further pressed nor crushed nor processed in any other way so as to obtain additional quantities of oil. Such activities would hamper communal control over the production volume—such a prohibition was likely a necessity precisely because of the tendency of producers to increase their output in this manner.

The Piran oil-mill renters earned 6 soldi for each *brenta* of oil or for 1 libra of oil. The olive owner could decide whether he would pay in cash or in kind. In any case, the oil-mill renter was not allowed to use the owner's oil for the illumination of the mill, but had to use his own oil instead.

On the basis of available data, a *brenta* of olive oil equalled half a barrel or urn (Herkov, 1971, 37), and the tax imposed on the Piran oil-mill renters amounted to 2% of all pressed oil. According to the same source, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a libra of oil was worth 6 soldi, which means that the price of a barrel or urn – as is called the basic unit of oil in various sources – measuring 100 librae (Herkov, 1971, 45; 1978, 387) amounted to 600 soldi or 30 liras. Another unit of oil that was also often used was *centenario*, which, as the name suggests, also measured 100 librae; yet in this case the basic unit of oil (*libbra di peso grosso d'oglio*) had a volume of 0.52 l (Mihelič, 1989, 23), while in the case of a barrel or an urn, a libra (*libbra mensurale d'oglio*) had a larger volume, 0.649 l (Herkov, 1985, 475).

6 *Bastasia*, from Ancient Greek: the act of carrying, transfer, delivery (LLMAI).

7 LLMAI describes *brugolus*, *brugulus* as a type of basket. According to Pahor, a *brula* was a filter made of interwoven plants (Pahor, 1972, 62).

Thus, if one takes into account both the Piran and Koper provisions and the units of measure used, the following questions arise: how many litres did a *meçena* measure, how many kilograms were produced by a round of olive pressing, what was the daily capacity of an oil-mill, and extrapolating from taxes collected, approximately how much oil was produced annually. When trying to calculate the volume of daily production, one has to pay particular attention to the olive *meçena*. Both Herkov (1978, 373, 389) and Mihelič (1985, 28; 1989, 25) classified *meçena* under units of measure for cereals and salt, and both regard it as half a *star*. According to the former (1978, 371, 390), a *meçena* equalled 41.66 l or 38.2 kg of cereals and 32 l or 33.38 kg of salt, whereas according to the latter, who, when writing about the territory of Piran in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, used a dry olive unit of 0.52 l as the common denominator of both the cereal and the salt *meçenas*, a cereal *meçena* equalled 74 librae, or, to put it in today's units, 38.48 l, whereas a salt *meçena* measured 60 librae or 31.2 l.

When describing units of measure used by tradespeople, the Koper Statute prescribed that *meçenas*, *quartas* and *bacharios* had to be used for weighing cereals and legumes, with a *quarta* equalling 40 librae (*ponderare ad libras quadraginta pro quarta*) (STKP, 3, 34). On the basis of these measures, which were used in Istria up to and including during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it can be concluded that in Piran an olive *meçena* – weighing 3 *quartas* or 120 librae, which speaks in favour of the same ratio between an Istrian *star* of cereals and a libra (Herkov, 1978, 371) – was much larger than a cereal or salt *meçena*. If one takes into account the fact that a libra equalled 0.52 l, than an olive *meçena* measured:

$$120 \times 0.52 \text{ l} = 62.4 \text{ l},$$

which comes very close to the volume of an urn. Such a volume of the basic unit for weighing olives is also confirmed by the ordinance issued by the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* Gabriel Badoer in 1747, which explicitly demanded that oil-mill renters could accept only olives brought in *mastelli* (tubs) which were the size of two *brentas* and, in accordance with an old Istrian custom, could retain only a tenth of the olives (Leggi, 1757, 3, 172).

If expressed in dry units of measure, the following volume of olives was pressed during a round of pressing (*masena*):

$$8 \times 62.4 \text{ l} (8 \text{ meçenas} \times 3 \text{ quartas} = 24 \times 40 \text{ librae}) = 499.8 \text{ l},$$

which means that up to 3,998.4 l of olives could be pressed daily in an oil-mill.

**Table 1: Units of measure for olives.**

**Tabela 1: Merske enote za olive.**

<i>masena</i>	<i>meçena</i>	<i>brenta</i>	<i>quarta</i>	<i>quar-tarola</i>	libra	litre
1	8	16	24	96	960	499.8
	1	2	3	12	120	62.4
		1	1.5	6	60	31.2
			1	4	40	20.8
				1	10	5.2
					1	0.52

Domestic traffic and trade in olive oil, as well as in dry meat and fat products, mostly used the abovementioned unit *centenario*, which equalled 100 librae (a libra = 0.52 l), whereas foreign trade and in particular the fiscal policy adhered to the Venetian rules according to which products were measured in urns or barrels, with the basic unit being a libra that equalled 0.649 l. Thus the ratio between an urn and a *centenario* was 100 : 124.

When calculating the approximate volume of annual oil production in the Piran oil-mills, one can proceed from the data of 1604 on the tax collected from the lease of the oil-mills (Mihelič, 1991, 94), when the oil-mills "di Marzana", "di sopra", "di mezzo" and "piculo" contributed to the communal cash box a total of 2160 liras, or 43200 soldi, which – considering that the tax rate amounted to 12 soldi per urn of oil (or 6 soldi per *brenta*, which equalled half an urn) – accounted for approximately 3600 urns or 233640 l of oil, with an urn measuring 64.9 l. Adding to the abovementioned sum the 10% income of oil-mill renters, one realizes that the period witnessed considerably good harvests that can be compared with those of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, regarding which there are much more data available about the volume of oil produced in individual towns of Venetian Istria, reported to the central Venetian office (comp. Table 2). Relatively good harvests before 1604 were also reported by Koper *Podestà e Capitani*, whereas in 1604 Istria suffered a period of severe storms and frost that destroyed more than a quarter of all olive trees, so that the communal income from taxes on olive oil must have dropped considerably in the following years. The *Podestà e Capitano* declared pessimistically that in the ensuing 20 years the olive trees would yield much less than they had used to.

As for the territory of Koper, which was several times larger than that of Piran, the data available from the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century show that the area produced roughly the same or even a lower quantity of olive oil than that of Piran, which is supported by the official estimation of the yield in the whole Venetian Istria. Thus one could conclude that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century production capacity reached its maxi-

mum; however, this may not be quite true, in particular if one takes into account the fact that in the following centuries smuggling grew considerably as a result of increasingly higher export taxes. It also must be admitted that, on the one hand, the period from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was marked by numerous demographic fluctuations and the arrival of new inhabitants who were not as extensively engaged in olive growing, though the Venetians strove to introduce them to it as soon as possible (RR 1, 1638; SR, 27. 12. 1704), and that, on the other hand, the 18<sup>th</sup> century production of olive oil was considerably increased by the oil produced in the southwestern Istrian town of Rovinj. It also seems, judging by formal measures taken by the Venetian rulers, that a great deal of oil remained undeclared.

Prohibitions repeatedly issued by Venetian chiefs in Istria, in particular between 1734 and 1747 (Leggi, 1757, 3, 159–174), attest to the fact that the laws regulating oil production were persistently violated and that the authorities did not manage to repress undeclared oil production (REL 4, 1756, 97). In 1741, the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* Paolo Condulmer reported that the inhabitants of Rovinj had declared only 550 urns of oil, while according to his estimation the production had amounted to at least 3000 urns. Three decades later, in 1773, the Rovinj *Podestà* Piero Antonio Bolini issued a similar report: allegedly, only 4439 urns of oil had been declared, though that year's harvest had been enormous, yielding at least 10000 urns (Prov., 1019). Quite often the town's oil-mill renters and in particular village mayors, who were obliged to note down (in the *vacchette*) the names of all olive pickers and the quantity of the oil produced by individual owners, made a deal with olive owners and registered much lower quantities of oil so that the rest could circulate freely. "Owing to the fact that taxes are imposed on the basis of production volume registered in oil-mills, the locals have thought up this accursed custom of using boiling water and crushing olives by hand, thus avoiding the oil-mills," the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* put it clearly in 1788.

Although individual olive owners were caught red-handed, they would exculpate themselves by saying that their yield was much too small to be pressed in *torkljas*. As a result, a new provision was introduced stipulating that each *torklja* had to be accompanied by a *torkola* so that even fairly small quantities of olives could be processed. Obviously, it did not help much since the adoption of new measures against smuggling was almost always followed by an increase in taxes and by even more complicated control procedures, which eventually resulted in the lawbreakers finding it much easier to avoid penalties, in particular when exporting oil (with export trade being most heavily taxed).

Fluctuations in the quantities of oil produced in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which were usually

caused by severe weather conditions, are shown in Table 2, while the data reported by Koper *Podestà e Capitani* give a picture of the situation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Around 1581, "the area of Koper produced roughly 3000 urns of oil, while in 1587 the production grew to 4000 urns and could have been even higher had it not been for a spell of bad weather", was Thomaso Contarini's assessment. In 1583, Alvise Morosini stated that Venetian Istria produced an average of 16000 urns of oil per year. According to Alessandro Zorzi, in 1581 there were 153288 olive trees planted in the territory of Koper and approximately the same number in the commune of Piran.

**Table 2: Oil-mills operating in 1776 and the volume of oil production (M/1088e, 192).**

**Tabela 2: Oljčni mlini v obratovanju leta 1776 in količina pridelanega olja (M/1088e, 192).**

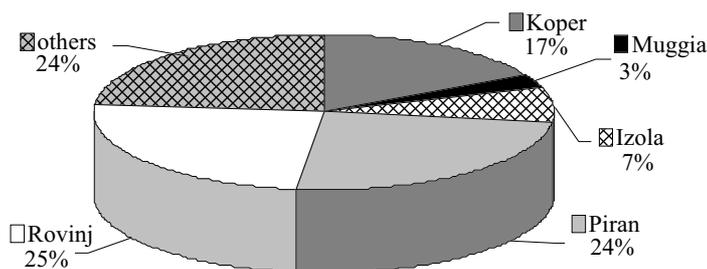
Location	Number of oil-mills	urns : li-brae	Total number of oil-mills (PROV., 1039)
Koper – town	9	2634:66	9
Koper – territory	49	1243:46	57
Muggia – town	4	521:26	4
Muggia – territory	5	83:62	7
Izola – town	3	1236:2	3
Izola – territory	2	69:54	2
Piran – town	6	3580:29	7
Piran – territory	1	30:4	1
Buje – town	3	1001:33	3
Buje – territory	2	177:52	3
Grožnjan – town	2	62:42"	3
Grožnjan – territory	5	131:70"	5
Oprtalj – town	3	71:82	4
Oprtalj – territory	10	114:39	11
Motovun – town	4	200:5	5
Motovun – territory	11	287:69	16
Pula – town	1	176:75	1
Pula – territory	6	535:30	6
Poreč – town	1	404:78	2
Poreč – territory	5	1228:16	5
Novigrad – town	2	370:62	3
Novigrad – territory	4	567:92	5
Umag – town	1	120:77	1
Umag – territory	1	172:31	2
Momjan	1	61:98	1
Vodnjan	2	425:88	2
Rovinj	5	5261:60	5
Petrpilosa			9
Others			6
TOTAL	149	20803:28	188

If one takes into account approximately the same production volume, it is possible to calculate that there were around 800000 olive trees planted in Venetian Istria (comp. REL, *ad a.*; PROV., 1421). The percentage of Venetian Istria's surface area of 2600 km<sup>2</sup> covered by olive trees can be inferred from the decision of the Senate of July 1, 1666, (SM) that ordered all Istrian Podestàs to adhere to the rather forgotten decision of the Senate of November 25, 1623, stipulating that each field located on terrain suitable for olive growing that could be sown by a *star* of seeds should be planted with 8 well cultivated olive trees.

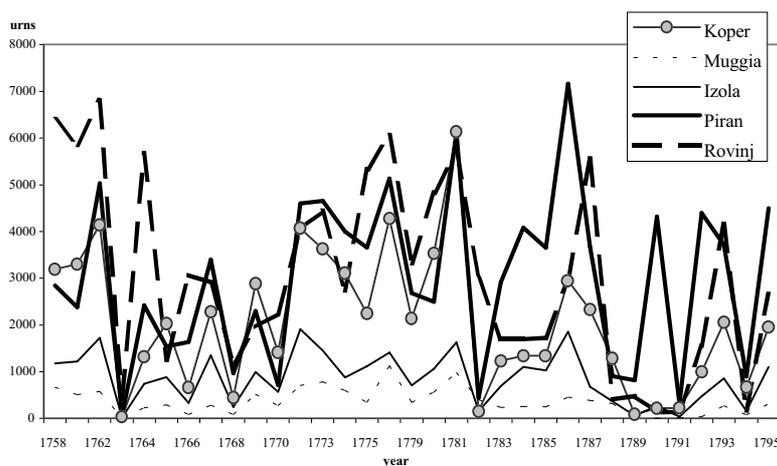
Considering that the hinterland of Rovinj witnessed rapid development as late as during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, one can observe that in the previous periods the lion's share of olive oil had been produced in the northern Istrian towns of Muggia, Koper, Izola and Piran and their hinterlands, which remained the case in the 18<sup>th</sup> century despite the oil manufactured in Rovinj. Nonetheless since from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, in particular from the 1720s (comp. REL and SM), Rovinj oil production began increasing dramatically and soared from an average of 500 to more than 5000 urns per year in the second half of the

18<sup>th</sup> century one may be justified in surmising that it is the Rovinj production surplus that accounts for the share that stands out from the average volume of olive oil produced in the whole of Venetian Istria in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, it can be regarded as part of the undeclared yield; additional support for this notion is provided by the report written by the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* in 1784, estimating that the oil produced in Istria amounted to an average of 20000 barrels (REL 4, 317), while the official data suggested that the output barely surpassed 11000 barrels.

In 1762, the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* Vincenzo Gritti (REL 4, 106) claimed that "according to the accurate data related to the past decade, an average of 13195 barrels of olive oil is produced annually in the Province". As evident from the graphs and the table showing official volumes of olive oil produced in Venetian Istria, from 1787 to 1795 the production was low in almost all places that traditionally manufactured the largest quantities of oil. The only exception was the territory of Piran, which not only managed to maintain a relatively stable level of production, but also out produced all other Istrian towns in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



**Graph 1: Shares of olive oil produced in selected locations between 1758 and 1795.**  
**Graf 1: Delež oljčnega olja pridelanega na izbranih lokacijah med 1758 in 1795.**



**Graph 2: Olive oil production between 1758 and 1795.**  
**Graf 2: Pridelava oljčnega olja med 1758 in 1795.**

**Table 3: Olive oil production in selected locations in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (PROV., 1027–1052).**  
**Tabela 3: Pridelava oljčnega olja na izbranih lokacijah v drugi polovici 18. stol. (PROV., 1027–1052).**

location/year	1758	1761	1762	1763	1764	1765	1766	1767	1768	1769	1770	1771	1773	1774	1775
Koper	3194	3303	4139	32	1317	2024	654	2282	439	2880	1411	4069	3625	3102	2243
Muggia	667	509	572	8	230	295	85	282	84	514	275	702	785	593	343
Izola	1179	1217	1724	16	736	886	329	1348	242	997	566	1902	1444	875	1114
Piran	2846	2379	5036	58	2420	1535	1641	3397	966	2300	717	4598	4658	4000	3658
Rovinj	6399	5859	6806	428	5674	1252	3069	2904	1187	1949	2237	4044	4439	2736	5337
Ven. Istria	17089	16416	24038	1033	14161	7669	8729	13452	4315	11622	6580	20468	20529	10727	16425

location/year	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782	1783	1784	1785	1786	1787	1788	1789	1791
Koper	4281	2136	3527	6133	153	1231	1338	1341	2944	2328	1277	84	221
Muggia	1130	345	556	981	1	236	256	247	452	384	313	6	10
Izola	1402	703	1055	1630	156	689	1107	1030	1856	673	365	61	36
Piran	5140	2683	2490	6129	441	2911	4076	3651	7157	3676	904	809	314
Rovinj	6070	3319	4830	5734	1	1692	1692	1720	2938	5555	403	479	7
Ven. Istria	23221	16653	15523	23184	845	7929	11020	11403	17850	16441	5636	2321	1050

location/year	1792	1793	1794	1795	TOTAL
Koper	998	2053	665	1948	<b>67588</b>
Muggia	35	269	74	308	<b>11548</b>
Izola	477	853	164	1105	<b>28208</b>
Piran	4394	3707	899	4493	<b>98397</b>
Rovinj	1556	4156	166	2664	<b>97435</b>
Ven. Istra	10215	14798	3068	15316	<b>396982</b>
				<b>Others:</b>	<b>93806</b>

### The sale of olive oil

The sale of oil was conducted at several levels and through several middlemen, who, as a rule, also performed the duties of excisemen. Time brought changes to individual forms and methods of sale, as well as taxation. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish between the following four forms of olive oil sale:

- Sale of oil in local shops,
- Export of oil to Venice,
- Export of oil to Furlania (i.e., export by sea),
- Export of oil by land.

In Piran, the purchase of oil from producers and retailers was in the hands of middlemen or *messeti* (comp. Boerio, 1856), which is why the retail trade tax was called *Datio della Messettaria* (PAK 1, 6 v.); in Koper it was named after the *ternieri* (*Datio della Ternaria*; M/1115, f. 62), whom the locals also called *bottegari*, sellers of oil, dried meat products, cheese, fat products and pastries; the shop was thus called *Ternaria* (comp. Boerio, 1856). In Venice, the term denoted two different offices for tax collection that had been introduced relatively early. One was in charge of collecting general taxes from trade middlemen, while the other – just as that in Koper – collected only taxes imposed on fat products. In Piran, the tax imposed on the *messeti* included taxes on all liquids; i.e., wine, vinegar, spirits,

and oil. The term *messetarie* was also generally used for different types of merchandise.

According to the Piran regulation on taxes imposed on middlemen, another general name for such types of shop was cellar (*caneva*), to which tradespeople and other sellers supplied the abovementioned liquids and where everybody could buy them without restriction. A synonym of *caneva* was *tana*, which also denoted a dark, covered room (comp. Boerio, 1856).

In Koper, anyone who wanted to sell oil, cheese, salted pork meat, lard, sausages (*salcizzoni*, *luganege*; comp. Boerio, 1856) and other types of salted meat, salted cheese and pastries in such a shop (*bottega*) or retail these products in any other manner was imposed a tax of 16 soldi per each hundredth (*centenar de lire del...*) of the product sold, on which the seller had to reach an agreement with the exciseman in advance or be fined 25 liras. In cases violating this stipulation the products were confiscated and evenly divided between the informer and the Fiscal Chamber. In Piran, other units of measure were used as regards sales taxes. Their basic unit of measure was the *secchio*, with four copper *secchios* forming the basis of taxation. In the case of olive oil, the tax amounted to 4 soldi and 6 denari, with 3 soldi and a half having to be paid by the purchaser, and the rest by the seller. These dry measures were used for taxation in domestic retail trade.

As for the wholesale of olive oil or, more precisely, for

the export of oil by sea and by land, the rules stipulated other units of measure and bases of taxation based on the larger, i.e., Venetian, libra. Similar differentiation in measures used in retail trade and wholesale is also evident from the historical sources and literature (Herkov, 1985, 471) as regards the sale of wine. Both in Koper and Piran, the tax imposed on wine and oil was called the tax on measures (*Datio delle Misure* or *measure*, M/1115, f. 60, or *Dacio delle Misure*, PAK 1, 18). In Piran, it was also imposed on mulberry leaves and bread; the Piran tax book referred to it as "the so-called minor tax" (*detto Dacio Picolo*). Later on, the same term can also be found in sources related to Koper, whereas during the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was used in the whole of Venetian Istria. The two regulations mentioned above date to the first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century: that of Koper must have been introduced around 1610, while that of Piran was written in 1612. Undoubtedly, similar provisions had been in force even earlier, when taxes on olive oil were collected by communal clerks. In Koper, they were called *sprochanus* (STKP, 3, 26), and in Piran the clerks for urns (*officialium super urnas*) or, as stated in the 1384 version of the town's Statute (STPI, 134–138), the measurers of wine and oil (*mensuratorum vini et olei*). At that time, the Piran clerks earned 8 denari per urn of oil, the tax paid by the purchaser. According to the 17<sup>th</sup> century provisions, the Piran exciseman of the tax on measures had to obtain two adequate guarantees and like the exciseman of the retail trade tax had to pay within eight days of the day of his public announcement; he was given 1 soldo per measure, which was at the time called a *mira*, and 6 denari per half a *mira*. Both measuring vessels were made of copper and were owned by the commune that – judging from similar provisions – must have leased them to each exciseman of the minor tax. In addition, when taking up office, the exciseman of the tax on measures also had to buy two urns for wine and two for oil and hand them over to the exciseman of the retail trade tax who owed him 1 soldo per each urn of oil.

In Koper, the calculation of the tax on olive measures only seemed less complex. Anyone who wanted to export oil from the town had to pay the exciseman 2 soldi per urn of oil and 20 soldi for a *miaro* of oil. One soldo had to be paid by the buyer, the other by the seller, which the exciseman recorded conscientiously.

Despite the fact that taxation was fairly complex and that several taxes were interdependent, two principal characteristics can be observed. Firstly, both in Koper and Piran, the great weight libra (*libbra di peso grosso*) with a volume of 0.524 l was used as the basis of taxes imposed on the retail trade of oil, and, secondly, the Venetian measuring libra (*libbra mensurale d'oglio*), with a volume of 0.64976 l, was used for wholesale or the export of oil. The ratio between the two measures was 1 : 1.25 (0.65 : 0.52) or 4 : 5 as calculated by Mihelič (1989, 25; 26 note 8), who studied measures used in 14<sup>th</sup> century Piran. The bases of taxation are evident both from provisions related to the Koper retail

trade tax (*ternaria*), where the *centenario* equalling 100 great dry librae (52 l) was adopted as the basic unit of taxation, and from Piran provisions (*messetaria*), where 4 *secchios* were used as the basic taxation unit.

As early as around 1650, Tommasini stated that throughout Venetian Istria *libbra veneziana* (Herkov, 1978, 387) was used as the basic unit of oil. Consequently, the Venetian barrel or urn was also used in Istria, which makes perfect sense if one takes into account that this unit of measure was used in export and wholesale and that the majority of Istrian towns were allowed to export their products only to Venice. In 1423, the Koper Statute stipulated that uniform units of measure, i.e., the same as in Venice, had to be used in business transactions (STKP, 3, 33). Benussi (1928, 236), however, pointed out that an urn was further divided into smaller units that did not equal those of Venice. For instance, Kandler (1855, 198) was right in asserting that in Piran an urn was divided into 5 and not 6 *secchios* as in Venice. If a Venetian urn is divided by 5 *secchios*, one gets the following result:

$$100 \times 0.65 = 65 : 5 = 13 \text{ l.}$$

Consequently, an Istrian or a Piran *secchio* measured exactly 13 l. If they are multiplied by 4, one gets 52 l, which equals the volume of a *centenario* and confirms that, even if expressed in *secchios*, the basic ratio between the measures used in export and wholesale of oil on the one hand and those used in local retail trade on the other hand was 5 : 4. In other words, an urn measured 5 and a *centenario* 4 *secchios*. In the field of taxation, this specifically Istrian subdivision of units of measure is also evident from taxes imposed on wine exported to Carniola. According to the data available, during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the Istrian towns of Koper, Izola and Buje 2 soldi had to be paid per *secchio* of wine or 10 soldi per urn, which confirms that in export trade the ratio between an urn and a *secchio* was 1 : 5. Herkov (1978, 363) cites a source from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that mentions a different ratio, but that instance might have been related strictly to local retail trade.

When assessing and calculating the tax on oil intended for export, both communes also used Venetian ratios and measures for internal business transactions, which must have been the case throughout Istria and the Croatian Littoral (Herkov, 1971, 40). In Koper, the calculation of the tax on measures was based on an (Venetian) urn or a *miaro*, which equalled 10 urns or 1000 Venetian librae, after which it was called, while in Piran, a *miro* was used as the basis of taxation (PAK 1, 18). In the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the latter measured 40 olive librae (Mihelič, 1989, 25), whereas in 1773 (according to Scottoni; cited in: Herkov, 1971, 40) it equalled a quarter of a Venetian urn. A survey of the units of measure for olive oil used in Koper and Piran is given in Table 4.

**Table 4: Units of measure for olive oil (comp. Herkov, 1971, 40; 1978, 388; 1985, 475; Mihelič, 1989, 24–25).**  
**Tabela 4: Merske enote za oljčno olje (prim. Herkov, 1971, 40; 1978, 388; 1985, 475; Mihelič, 1989, 24–25).**

<i>botta</i>	<i>miaro</i>	<i>mastel-lo</i>	olive barrel/urn	<i>centenario</i>	<i>quarta</i>	<i>miro</i>	<i>secchio</i>	<i>quar-tarol-la</i>	<i>bozza</i>	Ven-etian li-bra	olive libra (large)	litre
1	2	10	20	25	50	80	100	200	500	2000	2500	1300
	1	5	10	12.5	25	40	50	100	250	1000	1250	650
		1	2	2.5	5	8	10	20	50	200	250	130
			1	1.25	2,5	4	5	10	25	100	125	65
				1	2	3.2	4	8	20	80	100	52
					1	1.6	2	4	10	40	50	26
						1	1.25	2.5	6.25	25	31	16.25
							1	2	5	20	25	13
								1	2.5	10	12.5	6.5
									1	4	5	2.6
										1	1.25	0.65
											1	0.52

### Export taxes and olive oil smuggling

During the period discussed, the inhabitants of the territory of Koper also had to pay a specific tax on oil (*Datio del oglio*; M/1115, f. 65), which the Statute of Koper mentioned for the first time in 1562 (STKP, 5, 27, 148) as the new tax *delle tre per mier*, though it had filled the cash box of the Fiscal Chamber since 1548, while all the other abovementioned Koper taxes imposed on olive oil production and trade flowed into the communal cash box. When the Statute mentioned the oil tax for the first time, the relevant provision exempted all inhabitants of Koper from the tax on oil sold to inhabitants of Carniola (*Cranzi*), as well as oil transported by land to other places under Venetian rule. During the following centuries, the inhabitants of Koper would often appeal to this "privilege", as they called it. Interestingly, the exemption was associated with another "privilege", that related to the export of oil to Furlania, which was in fact a privilege of the inhabitants of not only Koper, but also Izola and Piran (SM, 13, 129) and all other places in Venetian Istria from 1624 and 1626 on, since during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century only 3 ducats had to be paid per each *miaro* of exported oil since the legislation of the Venetian Republic stipulated that all olive oil intended for export must first be transported to Venice and only from there could it

be sold. With the Venetians having monopolized the oil trade, the buying and selling prices and the sale itself being in the hands of Venetian merchants, all oil transferred to Venice was initially exempt from taxation, which was explicitly stated in the statutory chapter on the Koper oil tax. Naturally, the exemption did not relate to all taxes mentioned above.

And how did the Venetians manage to carry out such a measure considering the fact that the capacious open sea made it possible to circumvent the standard route to the capital, as was often the case? Prior to each export of oil to Venice, the transporter had to obtain a written permit (*fedè*) from the chancellor, which had to bear the stamp of the Podestà. If a transporter was caught without a permit, not only were his vessel and cargo confiscated, he was fined 200 liras and exiled for at least two years. And as if that were not enough, he could be sentenced to other punishments at the discretion of the Podestà. The same punishment could also be inflicted upon an exporter who had not presented himself to the exciseman within 20 days of his return. The tax collector, who conscientiously registered all sea trade in oil with Venice or Furlania,<sup>8</sup> was obliged to submit a report on all exported oil to the chancellor within 8 days, which meant that control over both the production and sale of olive oil was exerted from the same vantage point.

8 On the Venetian tax system cf. also Romano-Spooner-Tucci, 1961 and Knapton, 1989.

**Table 5: Average price of a litre of olive oil in Koper and Piran from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>**  
**Tabela 5: Povprečna cena za liter oljčnega olja v Kopru in Piranu od 14. do 18. stol.<sup>10</sup>**

	around 1325	around 1550	around 1650	around 1700	around 1795
A litre of oil in denari	22	110	140	148	461

Upon the economic rise of Furlania,<sup>11</sup> the trade in Istrian olive oil witnessed a rapid increase in that region. Not surprisingly, the Venetians did not remain idle. In 1623, the Venetian Senate passed an ordinance according to which all oil transferred to Furlania was subject to taxation. Thus 1 soldo had to be paid per each libra of oil, which represented an enormous increase in taxation. Prior to that, the exporters were obliged to pay 3 ducats per *miaro* of oil, which equalled slightly more than 37 soldi or almost 2 liras per urn,<sup>12</sup> while from then on the tax amounted to 100 soldi, or 5 liras per urn exported to Furlania, an increase of more than 168%. Moreover, the Senate prohibited the export of Istrian oil to other places than Venice and Furlania, and it was only after severe struggles engaged in by the inhabitants of Koper that in 1626 the Venetians allowed them to export 400 urns of untaxed oil to Carniola, with the amount being based on the calculation of the annual average. In 1634, a similar privilege was once again bestowed upon the inhabitants of Muggia, allowing them to export 100 urns of untaxed oil to Carniola and Trieste. Yet another radical change took place that same year: the tax imposed on oil exported to Furlania rose to 2 soldi per libra. Around 1642,<sup>13</sup> it amounted to 3 soldi (REL 2, 311), whereas in 1656, the same tax, though still called "the tax of 3 soldi" (*delle tre per mior*), reached as many as 5 soldi per libra (Leggi, 1683, 41–50). From 1642 on, the tax was temporarily lowered to 2 soldi per libra of oil during the time when a fair (*Fiera Franca*) was held in Koper (STKP, 5, 127).

Each new ordinance governing the export of oil to Furlania brought about stricter control. Thus the ordinance of 1632, resurrecting several provisions written in the ordinances of 19 December, 1586, April 24, 1625, 18 July, 1625, and May, 1626, determined that a permit (*boletta*) had to be obtained for the transport of all oil from Venice and Istria to Furlania, on which there had to be written a number, the name of the olive oil owner, the name of the ship's owner, the quantities of loaded oil and jugs, the place of origin, and the place of destination, with all the data accurately capitalized. The oil could only be transported to those places in Furlania

where state officials, i.e., Podestàs, were employed, otherwise each transport was regarded as an act of smuggling, and the violators punished in accordance with the relevant regulations. The ordinance also stipulated that, at the end of the year, oil-mill owners and/or village mayors had to submit a report to the legal authorities of their domicile on the oil produced. Olive-mill renters were not allowed to produce olive oil free of charge unless they had been granted a written permit. In addition, a *boletta* had to be obtained for the transport of oil or else the oil, carts, animals, ships or any other means of transport would be confiscated, and the spoils evenly divided between the informer or discloser and the representative of the jurisdiction where the cargo had been discovered. It was the duty of village mayors and priests to report each cargo of oil lacking written permits to the local authorities within three days or else the court sent them to jail or exile. The purchasers of smuggled oil had to pay double for the oil and were sentenced to permanent exile. They were also disarmed, which must have been regarded as a severe punishment at that time.

Istrian oil could be transported only to Venice and Furlania. In 1632, the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* boasted that the tax brought the commune 20000 liras or 3225 ducats (REL 5, 304). The above-mentioned ordinance re-established the exceptional privilege, annulled between 1623 and 1626, which allowed the commune of Koper to sell 400 urns of untaxed oil to Carniola. The ordinance, explaining that such a tax exemption was *in accordance with the ancient tradition*, also stipulated that whoever wanted to exercise the right to tax-free export had to report the volume of oil produced each year (M/1115B, 222). On February 10, 1626, the province of Istria was granted another "tax relief". The Venetian Senate determined that the tax of 1 soldo per libra of oil should be collected throughout Venetian Istria and that the inhabitants of Istria were not obliged to pay fees related to internal trade because of the poverty that plagued the province (SM 5, 139).

In accordance with the ordinance passed by the Senate on March 16, 1626, each month Istrian chiefs had to

9 Comp. Mihelič, 1985; Benussi, 1928; APP, 20; M/545; M/569; M/1062; M/1064; M/1115B; M/1117.

10 Prim. Mihelič, 1985; Benussi, 1928; APP, 20; M/545; M/569; M/1062; M/1064; M/1115B; M/1117.

11 On the rises and falls of Venetian economy in 16th and 17th century cf. Braudel, 1959 and also Zannini, 1996.

12 A ducat was worth 6.2 liras x 3 = 18.6 liras : 10 (1 *miaro* = 10 urns) = 1.86 x 20 (1 lira = 20 soldi) = 37.2 soldi; on prices cf. Braudel-Spooner, 1975.

13 According to AMSI (7, 309), the relevant report was written after 1633. Owing to the fact that the report mentioned not only the tax of 3 soldi per libra of oil, but also the renewed permission to hold a free fair (*Fiera franca*) granted by the Venetian Senate on December 17, 1641, (SR, 217; STKP, 5, 127, 231), it can be concluded that the report was written in 1642.

hand over the income from the tax of 1 soldo per libra of oil to the Koper Fiscal Chamber, which forwarded it to the Venetian office *Conservati del Deposito in Cecca*. Thus the duty of collecting taxes was imposed on Podestàs of Istrian towns. Consequently, they, too, were subject to a control measure. At the end of their term of office, they had to submit all *bolette* issued for oil transported to Furlania, as well as the statement (*fedede*) of their predecessors related to oil matters, or else the Venetian Oil Office (*Magistrato dei Ogli*) did not issue them a certificate on the basis of which the Venetian Election Commission relieved them of duty, a paper that served as a prerequisite for a new state job. The same procedure also applied to chiefs of Furlania, who had to submit all receipts for all oil imported to the province. The Podestàs of both Istria and Furlania had to obtain a certificate of the relevant ordinance, printed by the state printing house, in their offices and display it at appropriate places.

Considering the fact that state service provided the main source of income to the majority of members of the aristocratic Venetian Great Council, such a position must have been quite important for them unless they had derived substantial income from more risky activities, in particular if they were involved in the trade of contraband of Istrian oil. The ordinance of 1634 that raised taxation by another 100% must have further stimulated illegal activities despite the fact that it also prescribed control measures to curb illegal trade. The exporters not only had to obtain the usual *bolette*, but also had to pledge appropriate guarantees for the tax in their place of residence. The tax was paid by the merchants (*bottegari*) in Furlania after they or their Podestà had issued a certificate confirming the receipt of oil to the exporter. Any transporter or exporter lacking the certificate, which had to be submitted to the local Podestà's office within two months, was considered to be a smuggler. If he was not caught, his guarantors, usually his close relatives or friends, were held responsible. The control over the execution of rules was imposed on Istrian supervisors (*Proveditori in Istria*), who had to inspect each office in the province and pay particular attention to the matters related to olive oil. If they were unable to fulfil their duties, the inspection had to be performed by the Koper *Podestà e Capitano*. Thus this ordinance and that related to salt smuggling gradually passed control over contraband into the hands of the Koper *Podestà e Capitano*, who received, in addition to his regular wage, 200 ducats per year, financed by the income from fines and confiscated goods.

Yet from then on, the income from the tax collected by the chiefs of Furlania no longer flowed into the Koper Fiscal Chamber, but to that of Padua, which forwarded it to the state treasury (*Cecca*). Stricter control was also imposed on those 400 and 100 urns of oil that Koper and Muggia, respectively, were allowed to export free of tax. Austrian transporters had to submit export certifi-

cates within two months or else they, as well as their guarantors, were fined 10% more than usual, whereas the Podestàs of Koper and Muggia had to submit annual reports to Venetian oil supervisors (*Magistrato de Proveditori alli Ogli*) confirming that the amount of oil exported did not exceed the quantity stipulated.

Up to the passage of the decree of 1623 that considerably increased the tax on the oil exported to Furlania, salt had been the most important smuggling item, with citizens of Piran leading the way (SM 5, 120 sq.), while in the following years and decades illegal trade in olive oil gained ground, in particular in northwestern Istria. 1638, the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* pointed out that the newly introduced oil tax would have brought considerable income to the state cash box if there had been no cases of fraud, which were quite common in Pula and Piran where the officials did not issue *bolette*. The guilty were fined or sent into exile; the fines brought 4711 liras to Piran and 2266 to Pula (REL 2, 318). Two years later, the *Podestà e Capitano*, Giacomo Contarini, stated that owing to the tacit consent of previous Istrian Podestàs, dateless *bolette* were being issued to transporters, who then used the same permit several times. If they ran into state control, they quickly wrote down the relevant date. Otherwise they returned the *boletta* to the local office and received it back before they embarked on a new journey. With almost no taxes being levied on trade in olive oil, the *Podestà e Capitano* suggested that the tax should be collected in individual Istrian towns and not in Furlania as the existing system did not allow for the Istrian chiefs to determine where and how the tax had been paid, and the state cash box remained empty. Moreover, smugglers cunningly conceived the plan of transporting the oil from Istria to Furlania by themselves, and if Podestàs of Furlania caught them red handed, they could not determine the origin of the oil and could only impose a fine amounting to 10% of the value of the smuggled oil (REL 2, 320). Thus in 1644, after having discovered similar loopholes, the *Podestà e Capitano* Francesco Tron proposed that the tax on oil exported to Furlania should flow again into the Koper Fiscal Chamber as it had in the past. Another reason lying behind his proposal was the fact that each year the Chamber was running a large deficit (REL 2, 332).

Around 1642, the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* reported that the province produced from 16000 to 18000 urns of oil (around 11000 hl) per year, which however brought little income to the state cash box (REL 2, 311). Having compared the volume of oil produced and the quantity of oil exported, he discovered great discrepancies, yet when he asked the local population for an explanation, he was told that they either kept or used oil at home or sold it to buyers from their village. In reality, much of it was traded illegally. As evident also from reports by other Istrian chiefs, Istria was an ideal place for smuggling, since, given the natural contour of its coast, nu-

merous small bays made for perfect hiding places (e.g., REL 4, 1773, 306). Furthermore, many Istrian towns were no longer effectively surrounded by town walls, which from the Modern Age on, when efficient firearms were discovered, no longer served as a means of defence, but rather as a means of internal control of the population, as admitted by several Venetian chiefs (e.g., REL 4, 1781, 311) serving in Koper, where the town walls were in bad condition – not only owing to poor maintenance resulting from a shortage of money, but also because they were damaged by the inhabitants themselves who wanted to smuggle goods by night (REL 3, 103; SM 5, 342, 346). For all these reasons, the *Podestà e Capitano* also proposed that the tax on oil should be paid at the oil-mills themselves (REL 2, 311).

The above-mentioned proposals for restricting contraband activities were also supported by the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* Pietro Basadona in 1650, who also provided interesting data on the oil trade in Istria, cited by several authors (Benussi, 1924, 386; Darovec, 1996, 123). According to Basadona, the Venetian Republic could have earned as much as 30000 ducats annually from the oil trade, whereas in fact it managed to obtain only from 5000 to 6000 ducats per year (REL 2, 335). In other words, the "grey" economy exceeded the legal one by five to six times – an estimation which might appear too subjective, but only at first sight. If one takes into account the fact that at that time the tax rate equalled 3 soldi per libra of oil or 15 liras per urn of oil, legal, and to a greater extent illegal, exports of Istrian olive oil to Furlania and its hinterland amounted to around 12400 urns of oil per year,<sup>14</sup> of which only 2273 urns of oil (the lowest known instance for this time period) was exported legally. By contrast, in 1632, when the tax was still 1 soldo per libra of oil, the income from taxation reached 20000 liras and legal exports amounted to 4000 urns of oil (REL 5, 304).

The situation became even worse after 1656. In addition to the 3 soldi per libra of oil, taxation also included the Furlania import tax, as well as special fees (*aggiunti*), so that the tax on Istrian oil totalled more than 5 soldi per libra of oil (Leggi, 1683, 47–50). As evident from an explanation given by the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* to Venetian supervisors of oil, after 1656 the fees further complicated tax procedures. The exporters first had to pay the import tax (*Dazio d'Entrada*) of 11 ducats and 20 groschen per *miaro* of oil, and then 3 soldi per libra of oil, which altogether totalled 30 ducats per *miaro* of oil. Of the 3 soldi, 2 remained to the exciseman, while one went directly to the state cash

box (*per conto publico*), so that the tax collectors earned 16 ducats and 3 groschen, and the treasury 14 ducats and 3 groschen (fees included). In order to prevent the inflow of foreign olive oil, in 1657 the Venetian Senate passed a decree allowing the export of Istrian oil to Bergamo, Brescia, Crema and Verona and their territories, as well as to the region of Polesine and the town of Adria in the Po valley, on condition that the oil was transported via Furlania. Owing to the fact that all income from the tax on Istrian oil, 3 soldi per libra of oil, remained with the exciseman, the sellers were also obliged to pay the tax imposed on middlemen amounting to 12 groschen per *miaro* of oil. Not surprisingly, the calculation of taxes became even more complicated, so that in 1662 the measure was abolished and from then on Istrian oil could be exported to Venetian regions outside Furlania only via the capital (ASV 1, 6).

Regarding the increasing tax on oil exported to Furlania, it is also interesting to note the complaint formulated by the Koper Greater Council on August 20, 1673. The document states that initially there were no fees to pay for the export of oil to Furlania, while the tax amounted to 32 soldi per urn of oil. From 1626 on, the tax was on the increase, reaching 3 soldi per libra of oil in 1651. If one also takes into account the fees (*d'aggiunti*) amounting to 6 soldi, the tax totalled 19 liras and 10 soldi per urn. Moreover, the contribution of 32 soldi per urn, which still had to be paid, was raised to 3 liras, and the inhabitants of Koper were wondering whether the increase had been publicly decreed at all or just reflected the greed of the excisemen. Thus, altogether 22 liras and 10 soldi per urn of oil had to be paid in tax. And as if that were not enough, on June 14, 1657, the Senate passed a decision that the tax imposed on the oil exported from Venice to Furlania should be decreased by 1 soldo, which meant that the inhabitants of Koper earned less than 40 liras for an urn of oil sold or, to cite the complaint, "if one deducts the costs of work, maintenance and harvesting even during the most severe winters, olive owners remain with practically nothing. Not surprisingly, they have lost all satisfaction (*l'amore*) derived from olive growing and no longer take proper care of the trees nor plant new ones." In view of that, the Senate decided that a delegation should pay a visit to the Venetian Doge in order to "*applicare qualche rimedio a' tante nostre miserie*"... and to help the inhabitants of Koper earn a decent living from olives (M/570, 108–109).

Judging from the fact that the sum of the import tax and of the 3 soldi tax amounted to around 5 soldi per libra of oil,<sup>15</sup> as is also evident from item 3 of the afore-mentioned decree of 28 October, 1656, (Leggi, 1683, 47),<sup>16</sup> one

14 30000 ducats x 6.2 liras = 186000 liras : 15 = 12400.

15 The tax totalled 42 ducats and 2 groschen (1 ducat = 24 groschen; 1 groschen = 0.0416 ducat); if expressed in liras = 260.91 liras per *miaro* : 10 (urn) = 26.1 liras per urn; the tax of 5 soldi per libra of oil equalled 25 liras per urn.

16 "*Che il Conduttore di esso Datio, & Piaggio, secondo la summa sarà stato deliberato esso Datio, sia formato debitore, & più per l'i mportar delli soldi cinque per lira sopra di quello, così che quanto detto Conduttur cauerà di detto Datio, & aggiunti, sarà tutto per suo conto.*"

could conclude that the Furlania import tax had to be paid to Istrian excisemen. In 1671, a temporary decision was adopted, which in 1736 became permanent, stipulating that taxation should also include the so-called minor tax for measuring oil, so that the tax rate per urn of Istrian oil exported to Furlania first totalled 27 and then 28 liras (PROV., 1040; 1020).

The taxation rules also related to special permits (*bolette*) issued to exporters and printed by the state printing house of St. Marco in Venice; those issued by the excisemen had to be black, whereas *bolettas* filled in by chancellors of the communes presided by a Venetian Podestà were red. The exciseman had to write down the consecutive number, the name and surname of the transporter, the quantity of the loaded and measured oil and the place of destination in Furlania that was presided over by a Venetian Podestà. The chancellor copied the data from the black to the red *boletta* and filled in the same number. Each permit issued brought him 4 soldi. The ordinance differed from the previous ones in that it stipulated that from then on the tax had to be leased to that exciseman who presented the best offer at public auction. As evident from the decrees in force in Koper, Pula, Poreč, Piran and other places (Leggi, 1683, 47), the tax had to be collected from each town separately, with the income flowing into the Koper Fiscal Chamber. Initially, tax collection was leased for a period of two years, from September 1, 1656, to August 31, 1658, whereas after 1695 the period was prolonged to 4 years. Yet as early as 1658 it was not collected for each town separately, but for the whole province (PROV., 1040). The Venetian Senate advised such a procedure on December 9, 1656, heedless of the new rules adopted previously that year (SM 8, 11). Interestingly, the data referring to the two-year lease of tax have been preserved, which makes it possible to compare the quantities of oil exported to Furlania by individual Istrian towns during the 1656–1658 period (PROV., 1040)(Table 6).

In 1582, the oil tax brought 291 ducats to the Koper Fiscal Chamber, while two years later it fell to 253 ducats. In 1632, after the tax had risen to 1 soldo per libra of oil exported to Furlania, the income increased to 3226 ducats. In 1650, after taxation had reached 2 soldi and later on 3 soldi per libra of exported oil, the Chamber acquired 5500 ducats, while in 1658, following the 1656 raise to 5 soldi per libra of oil, the income from the oil tax grew to 7250 ducats (all REL).

In the ensuing years or, more precisely, century, the tax imposed on Istrian oil yielded the following annual incomes (the tax was not collected between 1675–1676, 1683–1684, 1701–1705 as the authorities had not managed to employ an appropriate exciseman)(Table 7).<sup>17</sup>

**Table 6: The tax on oil exported to Furlania collected during the two-year lease (1656–1658).**

**Tabela 6: Davek na olje, ki se je izvažalo v Furlanijo, pobran v obdobju dvoletnega zakupa (1656–1658).**

Location	ducats
Koper with its territory	2185
Izola with its territory	2800
Buje with its territory	730
Muggia with its territory	420
Piran with its territory	3310
Umag	185
Novigrad	325
Towns of Poreč and Rovinj	950
Town of Pula together with Vodnjan	205
Motovun, Grožnjan, Oprtalj and Završje	310
Total	11420

The increasing taxes brought about a proportional decrease in the legal export of Istrian oil, which was clearly evident whenever the taxes went up. In 1582, when only the commune of Koper was allowed to export oil to Furlania, the income from the tax contributed 291 ducats to the commune's cash box. Considering that at that time the tax rate equalled 3 ducats per *miaro* of oil, the export totalled 970 urns, while in 1632, when the oil could be exported from all places in Istria and the tax rate equalled 1 soldo per libra of oil, it amounted to 4000 urns. In 1650, after the tax had been increased twice, the export fell to 2273 urns, while after 1656 a low of 900 to 2000 urns of oil was exported per year. Similar volumes are evident from the preserved registers on the export of oil to Furlania that had to be kept by the excisemen and the chancellors of the Koper *Podestà e Capitano*. From November 19, 1732, to November 18, 1733, a total of 994 urns and 92 librae of oil were exported to Furlania, from November 19, 1733, to April 2, 1734, the export totalled 540 urns, from April 2 to October 7 1734, it rose to 990 urns and 93 librae, and from December 3, 1734, to May 25, 1735, a total of 564 urns and 45 librae was exported from Koper, 368 urns and 75 librae from Piran and 394 urns from Rovinj (PROV., 1020), with the relatively low export in 1732/1733 resulting from severe storms in 1732 (REL 3, 175). On the basis of the data on the legal export and the relevant tax rates, it can be calculated that the average annual amount of Istrian oil legally exported to Furlania ranged between 1300 and 1800 urns. If one adds to that around 3000 urns of oil intended for home use (REL 4, 317),<sup>18</sup> it can be established that on average more than 10000 urns of the annual yield were traded illegally.

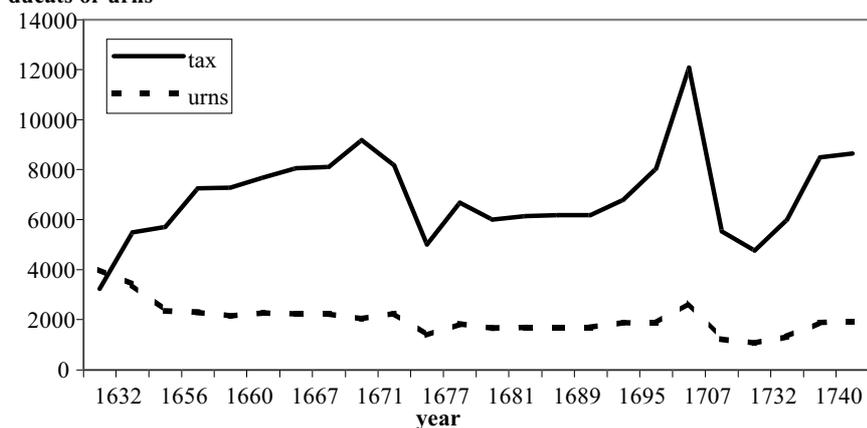
17 La Provincia, p. 1040, the table also includes the data cited in the text.

18 According to Vlajinac (1964, 147), in 1773, the Senate of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) determined that 500 barrels of oil should be purchased for the town and that each oil owner was allowed to keep 4 barrels of oil for home use.

**Table 7: Income from the tax on oil exported to Furlania and the amounts of oil exported.**  
**Tabela 7: Dohodek od davka na olje, ki se je izvažalo v Furlanijo, in količina izvažanega olja.**

Year	Income from the tax in ducats	Exported urns	Tax rate (liras/urn)
1582 <sup>19</sup>	291	970	1:17:2
1584 <sup>20</sup>	253	843	1:17:2
1632	3226	4000	5
1650	5500	3410	10
1656	5710	2360	15
1658	7250	2305	19:10
1660	7275	2148	21
1664	7675	2266	21
1667	8067 <sup>21</sup>	2223	22:10
1670	8108 <sup>22</sup>	2234	22:10
1671	9177 <sup>23</sup>	2032	28
1673	8180	2254	22:10
1677	5000	1377	22:10
1679	6690	1843	22:10
1681	6000	1653	22:10
1685	6150	1695	22:10
1689	6165	1699	22:10
1693	6175	1701	22:10
1695	6800	1874	22:10
1705	8050	1848	27
1707	12075 <sup>24</sup>	2674	28
1730	5537	1226	28
1732	4761	1054	28
1736	6000	1329	28
1740	8500	1882	28
1744	8630	1911	28

ducats or urns



**Graph 3: Tax and olive urns exported to Furlania.**

**Graf 3: Davek in amfore olja, ki so se izvažale v Furlanijo.**

19 Data referring to Koper only (REL).

20 Data referring to Koper only (REL).

21 SM 8, 55.

22 Rel. 1670. Pietro Loredan.

23 For the first time, the taxation also included the minor tax of 2 soldi per urn of oil (cf. PROV., 1040).

24 Including all fees for 4 years.

The diagram illustrates the hypothesis that the increasing tax rate on the oil exported to Furlania raised the income of the state cash box on the one hand and lowered the amount of oil legally exported from Venetian Istria on the other. Consequently, by the end of the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the amount was as low as at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when only Koper was allowed to export oil to Furlania. The demand for oil was undoubtedly greater than during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, since as early as in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the legal purchase of oil increased by four times, largely as a result of an increase in demand. The devaluation of the lira in relation to the ducat had almost no effect on the market because the tax of 6 liras and 4 soldi had to be paid in ducat counter value, though it has to be admitted that the increasing tax rate had an impact on the price and, in turn, on the tax as well.

The issue of taxes was on the agenda of several Koper *Podestà e Capitani*. In 1729, Daniel Renier suggested that reforms be introduced in the field of oil tax collection because it was hard to find an appropriate exciseman. The term of office of the last tax collector, Giuseppe Fabriso, ended in November and since then the authorities had not managed to employ a new one. According to Renier, special attention also needed to be paid to the increasing production of olive oil, while the income from taxes was decreasing (REL 3, 174). This was confirmed in 1741 by *Podestà e Capitano* Paulo Condulmer, who added that "it seems that the inhabitants of Istria developed a liking for olives (...*tuttavia annualmente si vedono novelli impianti e deve sperarsi che il suddito sempre più s'inamori...*), yet olive oil production does not yield adequate income from taxes despite the fact that the tax on oil exported to Furlania is fairly low", which could indicate that the taxation in force in other provinces of the Venetian Republic could have been even higher. "The cause of such a low income lies above all in smuggling. It is true that a military ship (*galeotta*) has been employed to prevent it, yet it has proved useless since it can be spotted from a great distance and, consequently, avoided." (REL 4, 57). Olive oil was smuggled not only by the inhabitants of Istria, but also by numerous small ships that came to Rovinj, Vrsar and Piran from as far as Puglia. After having loaded the oil, they left for Trieste and other destinations. "They could be caught by surprise in places where they land, that is in the harbours of Tagliamento in Livanzo and Piava and in particular in Buso and Lignano," the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* suggested. Austrian subjects participated in the smuggling of Istrian oil by sea (cf. Panjek, 2005, 93–111), as evident from the trial against the ship owner Mattia Bramurso that took place

in 1775 in Koper (SR 5, 281). In order to avoid any taxation, the inhabitants of Piran went so far as to smuggle olives to Trieste and produce the oil there; though not only the export, but also the sale of olives to foreigners had been prohibited from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century on (SM 7, 339). As early as 1659, the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* recommended that the crew of the military ship should be replaced every 6 months in order to prevent them from forming friendships and taking bribes; "believe me," he added, "that I speak from experience and that similar measures should be taken to prevent salt contraband as well" (REL 2, 346–347).

The smuggling of Istrian oil was related not only to Furlania and Trieste, "where they can hardly await to catch people red handed" (REL 4, 305), but also to other places located along the northern Adriatic coast. As a result, in 1747, the Venetians stipulated (REL 4, 318) that the most profitable tax, that imposed on the oil exported to Furlania, would no longer be collected in Istria, but only in Venice, whereas from 1763<sup>25</sup> on, all oil intended for sale had to be transported to Venice first and only from there could it be exported to Furlania and other destinations, including, paradoxically, back to Venetian Istria. The first steps preceding the introduction of this measure had been taken as early as 1753, when two military ships had been sent to Istria in order to ensure that all oil was transported directly to Venice (SR 5, 270).

Despite the fact that olive oil was one of the most important and abundant Istrian products, it often happened, in particular when the harvest was poor, that shops in Istrian towns ran short as a result of the demand of the neighbouring provinces and "the greed of a few sellers who kept raising the price, thus making the oil inaccessible to the local population", so that the *Podestàs* were compelled to order it at more attractive prices from elsewhere for "the needs of the poor" (REL 4, 64, 303).

Despite the new rules, the situation remained the same. In his letter of March 24, 1773, (ASV 3), the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* explained to the Venetian Senate that in Istria the contraband of oil in fact became a common right (*diritto*) of the inhabitants, while a year later his successor pointed out that "he strove hard to prevent the transport of oil from Rovinj, as well as Piran, Izola and Muggia, to Trieste. Yet it has to be said that the two state '*Filuchi*,'<sup>26</sup> one captained by Alfier Pietro Alessich, the other by Alfier Polo Scuttoni, are already worn out and cannot control the traffic along 50 miles of coast. Until the Venetian market offers the same benefits as that of Trieste, it is no use expecting the situation to improve" (REL 4, 310). Perhaps the Venetian Senate followed his advice when it determined in 1775 that each Istrian sailor who transported more than 10 *miaros* of oil to Venetian mer

25 According to the ordinance issued by the Venetian Doge on May 7, 1763, all oil that was not intended for use in Istria had to "*far scala in codesta Ser.ma Dominante*". (ASV 3 229).

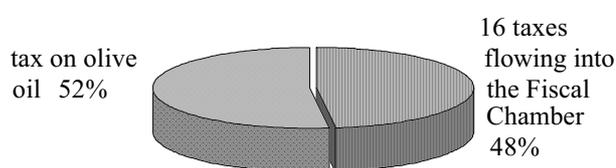
26 Boerio: *Feluca, specie di Schialuppa o picciol legno di mare che va a vele ed a remi*.

chants should be granted a reward (SR 5, 281). On the other hand, the Venetians rejected any innovations related to oil production procedures. In 1780, the Senate, following the advice of the Venetian Monetary Office, did not approve the project by Marco Merlo proposing that Istrian and Dalmatian olives be bought with public (state) money and pressed in oil-mills in accordance with a new procedure (SM 9, 250; cf. PAK.PA. Inventar 24).

As evident from the report written by the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* Lodovico Morosini in 1784, the above-mentioned incentive that introduced a new manner of collecting the tax on exported Istrian oil did not help much. "The largest income of this province comes from olive oil. If the trees suffer from no disease, which is their regular companion, they yield around 20000 barrels of oil per year. Olive oil is associated with a very important source of public income related to the Hapsburg monarchy that can be obtained only if it is channelled via Venice since both old and new rules tend to concentrate it at the same point. And it is at this point that the law is violated since the inhabitants of Istria are prone to smuggle oil, in particular to Trieste. Thus it is often the case that oil is first exported to Austrian Furlania and from there back to our province, and so we suffer double loss. Its extent can be calculated on the basis of the books kept by the *Magistrato sopra ogli*; in doing so, one should disregard around 3000 barrels intended for home use. Up to 1747, the tax had been collected in Istria, in particular that imposed on oil exported to Furlania, and it had flowed into communal cash boxes. As a result, everybody was more interested in it and tax evasion was less common. It is not my wish to predetermine or propose any measures nor to interfere with your business, I would just like to remind you of this old tradition" (REL 4, 317).

Despite this and similar proposals or even complaints resulting from the fact that the income from the tax on oil no longer flowed into the Koper Fiscal Chamber and that the expenses to cover public needs were accumulating, in particular as regards the border and ensuing health control, so that – as Giuseppe Michiel put it in 1766 (REL 4, 295) – "we have to beg for our wages each month," the Venetian Republic introduced no further changes in the field of tax collection. The inhabitants of Istria grew weary of constant quarrels with the Venetian and local authorities, so that in 1795 the Koper *Podestà e Capitano* Marin Badoer realized that in those days olive trees, which provided the most important product of the province, "are in poor condition owing to new saplings that are being introduced, as well as poor care for the existing trees. Fortunately, the Koper Academy of Regenerators (*Accademia dei Risorti*; cf. Žitko, 1997) works hard to inform and advise olive growers how to obtain better produce" (REL 4, 335).

Perhaps the best way to comprehend the importance of the income from the tax on oil and (at least legal) production for the economy of Venetian Istria is to juxtapose the income from 16 provincial taxes flowing into the Koper Fiscal Chamber (i.e., taxes imposed on town inns, village inns, fat products, town butcher's shops, village butcher's shops, mills, fish market, bread, salt, notary services, income of Vodnjan, income of Grožnjan called *Cornaria Grožnjan*, spirits, tanned hide, wine and wine exported to Carniola) and the income from the tax imposed on the exported olive oil. In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the latter brought from 7000 to 8000 ducats to the Fiscal Chamber per year, which equalled around 46500 liras, whereas in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century all other taxes mentioned above (excluding the tax on olive oil) contributed around 43000 liras (Darovec, 2002, 295).



**Graph 4: Income from the tax on olive oil vs. income from other taxes.**

**Graf 4: Davek od davka na oljčno olje v primerjavi z dohodkom od drugih davkov.**

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and in particular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, olive oil replaced salt (cf. Hocquet, 1990, 224–234) as the most important Istrian export, bringing substantial income not only to the Venetian treasury, but also to local producers, largely because of the extremely widespread smuggling, which exceeded legal trade by as much as six times. Thus in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, salt smuggling by sea, which used to be a traditional activity of northwestern Istrian towns, was completely replaced by olive oil smuggling (cf. REL., 13, 228/9), its only rival being the contraband of salted fish and only to a minor extent the smuggling of salt and wine.

When gaslight was introduced to Trieste in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the demand for Istrian olive oil fell considerably. In addition, the quality of Istrian oil lagged behind that of French and Italian oil because the former was produced with simple devices. Before being pressed, olives were left for a fairly long period of time in tubs filled with fresh water or seawater that was changed several times. During that time they usually started to rot and, consequently, the oil lost its scent, absorbed other unpleasant smells and became sour. The procedure, however, remained in use as the producers believed that it yielded a larger volume of oil and that the oil contained more fat (Titl, 1998, 101).

## CONCLUSION

While relatively favourable economic trends were characteristic of the Istrian peninsula in the period of Venetian supremacy from the mid-thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries, a stagnation and even decline in economic development were prevalent – at least in comparison with neighbouring Italy and hinterlands of today's Slovenia and Croatia – from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries in northern and especially the remaining parts of Venetian Istria.

There were a number of causes for the events which played an important part in the creation of the economic structure of the Istrian society. One of the major ones was no doubt linked to the general historical development of the world, which followed the discovery of America and thus the transfer of the main European trade currents from the Mediterranean to the shores of the Atlantic. The incessant threats of military encounters, Turkish invasions and especially of frequent epidemic diseases, all of which combined to make of the Istrian people paupers, shaped the Istrian economic and demographic trends. At this time, the Austrian monarchy increasingly favoured its Trieste port and to some degree the port of Rijeka, primarily through the introduction of compulsory routes and high taxes, due to which the traditional trade routes of the hinterland Austrian population shifted elsewhere.

But responsibility for the state of the Istrian economy

must also be attributed to the Venetian taxation policy. Not only did all products intended for overseas trading have to be sent first to Venice, where various taxes had to be paid, the insatiable treasury which lacked extensive European markets began, especially from the end of the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, to impose increasingly higher taxes not only on almost all products which brought their owners even the smallest amount of income, but also on products intended for home use. In this procedure, the treasury was faithfully emulated by local authorities, which was in the case of the Koper region most evident in the production of wine and in the Piran region in the production of salt and olive oil. The response to these measures by the local inhabitants was more or less expected, given precedents in the development of traditional trade; which is to say that smuggling, an activity which could not even be stopped by the most intimidating penal laws, became more prevalent. On the contrary, the higher the taxes, the greater the number of smugglers. This, however, affected not only the treasury, which could no doubt easily do without the extremely small Istrian contribution compared with tax receipts from other regions of the Venetian republic, but also the income of home communes, which had no chance of getting any kind of infrastructural support or implementing projects which could have contributed significantly towards the revival of various economic activities.

## OLJČNO OLJE, DAVKI IN TIHOTAPSTVO V BENEŠKI ISTRI V NOVEM VEKU

Darko DAROVEC

Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper, Slovenija, 6000 Koper, Garibaldijska 1  
e-mail: darko.darovec@zrs.upr.si

## POVZETEK

*Proizvodnja oljčnega olja je bila poleg solarstva, vinogradništva in vinarstva ter ribištva ena osrednjih gospodarskih panog v Istri v vsem obdobju Beneške republike. Na pomenu je pridobila še zlasti od 16. stoletja dalje, ko so oljčno olje vse več uporabljali za razsvetljavo rastočih mest, še posebno Trsta, ter kot surovina za druge polindustrijske izdelke. Večje povpraševanje in promet z istrskim oljem pa je beneški "Dominanti" narekovalo tudi višje obdavčevanje, kar je na drugi strani privedlo tudi do vse večjega "kontrabanta". V prispevku so opisani način proizvodnje, prometa in prodaje, obdavčevanja ter tihotapstva, ki je tudi do šestkrat presevalo legalno trgovino, kar nam s pomočjo dognanj meroslovja podaja razmeroma verno sliko o cenah, prometu, višini proizvodnje in stopnjah obdavčitve oljčnega olja v beneški Istri.*

*Benečani so področje proizvodnje in trgovine z oljčnim oljem začeli urejevati razmeroma zgodaj, saj posameznim davčnim odredbam lahko sledimo vsaj v leto 1281, kmalu nato pa so v svoje mestne statute začeli zapisovati tovrstna določila tudi istrski komuni. Če je bil sprva obdavčen le promet oziroma trgovina z oljem, so se temu kmalu pridružile še obdavčitve pridelave oljk, proizvodnje oljčnega olja, grosistične in maloprodajne trgovine, in sicer z različnimi predpisi in po različnih davčnih stopnjah, kar je pomenilo, da so bili za posamezen dac izbrani tudi različni davčni izterjevalci – dacarji, ki so si to pravico pridobili z najugodnejšo ponudbo na javni dražbi. Od začetka 17. stoletja*

dalje, ko se je začel povečevati izvoz istrskega olja zlasti v Furlanijo, pa je stopnja obdavčitve predvsem za promet z oljem po morju začela strmo naraščati, od približno 7 na skoraj 18 odstotkov v letu 1623, in se nato še vsaj dvakrat povečala na skoraj 50-odstotno obdavčitev v drugi polovici 17. stoletja.

Že tako so morali vsi izdelki, namenjeni prekomorskemu trgovanju, najprej v Benetke, kjer so plačevali razne dajatve, nenasitna državna blagajna, ki so ji izostali obširni evropski trgi, pa je še zlasti od konca prve polovice 17. stoletja nalažala vse višje davke ne samo na skoraj vse proizvode, ki so prinašali kakršenkoli dohodek, temveč tudi na pridelke za domačo uporabo. Pri tem so jo zvesto posnemale lokalne oblasti. Odziv na te ukrepe je bil pri prebivalstvu precej pričakovan, še zlasti, če upoštevamo dogajanje v trgovanju s tradicionalnimi proizvodi v prejšnjih obdobjih. Še bolj se je namreč razvilo tihotapstvo, ki ga nobena še tako ustrahovalna kazenska politika ni mogla zaježiti. Nasprotno, višji ko so bili davki, več je bilo tihotapstva in posledično manj dohodka za istrske občinske blagajne ter s tem manj možnosti za kakršnokoli načrtno spodbujanje gospodarskega razvoja, ki je v tem obdobju na vseh področjih beležilo naglo upadanje.

Kljub temu pa je prav oljčno olje, ki so ga največ pridelali na območju Pirana, Rovinja in Kopra, poleg soljenih rib edina tradicionalna gospodarska panoga, ki je v 17., še zlasti pa v 18. stoletju doživelo razmeroma veliko povpraševanje, tako da je povsem prevzelo nekdanjo vlogo soli kot temeljnega istrskega proizvodnega in izvoznega pridelka, saj je prinašalo razmeroma lepe prihodke predvsem državni blagajni pa tudi pridelovalcem, zlasti na račun izjemno razširjenega tihotapstva. Tihotapstvo s soljo po morju, ki je bilo prej značilno predvsem za severozahodna istrska mesta, je v zadnjem stoletju povsem nadomestilo tihotapstvo z oljčnim oljem, ki ima svojega pravega konkurenta le še v kontrabantu s slanimi ribami, precej manj pa s soljo in vinom.

**Ključne besede:** gospodarska zgodovina, oljarstvo, oljčno olje, davčna politika, mere, tihotapstvo, Istra, novi vek.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

**AMSI** – Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria. Poreč 1884–.

**ASV. PSO** – Archivio di Stato di Venezia. Proveditori sopra Olii.

**ASV. SM** – Archivio di Stato di Venezia. Senato Mare.

**BCT** – Biblioteca Civica di Trieste (City Library of Trieste).

**M/** – Determination of archival units follows the Inventory of F. Majer (1904) and the number of the microfilm copy. In: Archivio di Stato di Trieste (AST). Antico archivio municipale di Capodistria (Ancient Municipal Archives of Koper).

**PAK. PA** – Pokrajinski arhiv Koper. Piranski arhiv / Regional archives of Koper. Archives of Piran.

**PMK** – Pokrajinski muzej Koper / Regional museum of Koper.

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**PAK, 1** – Pokrajinski arhiv Koper (PAK). Piranski arhiv (PA). Kodeksi, XIV. Liber daciae, 1588–1791. / Regional archives of Koper (PAK). Archives of Piran (PA). Codices, XIV. Liber daciae, 1588–1791.

**PROV.** – La Provincia dell'Istria. 1867–1894. Koper.

**REL, 1** – Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria (REL). AMSI, 6/1890.

**REL, 2** – REL. AMSI, 7/1891.

**REL, 3** – REL. AMSI, 8/1892.

**REL, 4** – REL. AMSI, 10/1894.

**REL, 5** – REL. AMSI, 13/1897.

**RR, 1** – Relazioni dei Capitani di Raspo (RR). AMSI, 4, 1889.

**SM, 1** – Senato Mare (SM) (1440–1797). AMSI, 7/1891.

**SM, 2** – SM. AMSI, 9/1893.

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**SM, 4** – SM. AMSI, 12/1896.

**SM, 5** – SM. AMSI, 13/1897.

**SM, 6** – SM. AMSI, 14/1898.

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**SMi, 1** – Senato Misti (SMi) (1332–1440). AMSI, 3/1887.

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**SR, 1** – Senato Rettori (SR) (1630–1797). AMSI, 18/1902.

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**SR, 3** – SR. AMSI, 20/1904.

**SR, 4** – SR. AMSI, 22/1906.

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SR, 5 – SR. AMSI, 23/1907.

**STKP** – Statute of Koper, published in: Margetić, L. (ed.) (1993): Statut Koprškega komuna iz leta 1423 z dodatki do leta 1668 (Lo statuto del comune di Capodistria del 1423 con le aggiunte fino al 1668). Koper – Rovinj, Pokrajinski arhiv Koper – Center za zgodovinske raziskave Rovinj.

**STPI** – Statute of Piran, published in: Pahor, M., Šumrada, J. (1987): Statut piranskega komuna od 13. do 17. stoletja. Ljubljana, SAZU.

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