

## Reviews

Filip de Diversis, *Opis slavnoga grada Dubrovnika* [Description of the Famous City of Dubrovnik]. Preface, transcription and translation from Latin by **Zdenka Janeković Römer**. Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2004, pages 216.

Philip Diversi (Philippus de Diversis), Dubrovnik's renowned schoolmaster between 1434 and 1441, was born in Lucca, where his family rose to wealth after the establishment of the Republic in 1368. However, during the political turmoil of 1400 the Diversi family fled to Venice. That was probably where young Philip attended school, and later worked as a teacher. In 1434 the Ragusan government offered him a rector's post at the Dubrovnik school, which he readily assumed, attracted primarily by a substantial salary which, by far, exceeded that of his fellow colleagues.

Diversi's teaching career in Dubrovnik was marred by incidents. Wrangles over financial matters and lack of teaching assistants marked most of his Dubrovnik days. In addition, Ragusan authorities were not happy with his frequent and long leaves which he had spent in Venice, and during which a substitute had to be employed. Expectedly, in 1440 his salary was reduced as a result of tutorial negligence. Apart from constant grumbling about the conditions at work and inappropriate valuation of his contribution to the city, Diversi decided to redeem himself by writing an account entitled *Situs aedificorum, politiae et laudabilium consuetudinum inclytae civitatis Ragusii* [Description of the buildings, political administration and commendable customs of the City of Dubrovnik].

Despite his efforts to soothe the situation, in 1441 the Major Council recruited a new master in Venice, and by 1444 Diversi was no longer in Dubrovnik. According to a most recent discovery, he has been traced in Venice in 1455, where he studied and copied the epistles of St Jerome, St Augustine and the orations of Origen.

Diversi's "Description of Dubrovnik" has survived in a number of copies, mostly dating

from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. After a transcription then kept in Zadar, the text was first published by Vitaliano Brunelli in 1882; it was translated by Ivan Božić in 1983. The present edition is based on the oldest copy preserved, which, until now, has not been consulted in the study of Diversi's work. It is kept at the State Archives of Dubrovnik, as part of the Bizzaro legacy.

Diversi's work is now edited and translated by Zdenka Janeković Römer according to the highest quality standards. This bilingual volume contains the editor's preface, transcription of the Dubrovnik manuscript and Croatian translation which captures successfully Diversi's flamboyant and eloquent style, syntax and wordage. The edition contains a short summary in English, and indexes of persons and places.

In the first part of the preface (»The city of merchants bearing noble title: Philip Diversi and his praise of Dubrovnik«) Zdenka Janeković Römer affords not only data on Diversi's life and the textual tradition of his *Description*, but also his perception of Dubrovnik. In so doing, she unravels its significance: »Seemingly simple, Diversi's work reveals a wealth of genres. It is a documentary, literary and personal account, all in one. As a foreigner, Diversi observes from the outside, sometimes even more insightfully than the Ragusans themselves... His evocative descriptions bring to life Dubrovnik of the fifteenth century in its vivid colouring, voices and atmosphere... Ragusans, commoners and patricians, the sumptuous appearance of their wives, friars, government office-holders, domestics and servants, peasants from the surrounding villages and their livestock, merchants from afar, Turks, Morlacs and pilgrims unroll before us. He tells of Hungarian kings, renowned preachers, archbishops, famous people whom he had seen or heard of, but also of desperate individuals in search of their beloved ones, enslaved by the Turks. He surveys this human spectrum with as much care as he describes the city sites and artefacts, guiding the reader through the beauty and magnificence

of the town and its surroundings, particular buildings, providing useful tips for merchants, travellers or for those who will content themselves with merely reading about Dubrovnik...«. A short survey of Dubrovnik's economic development illustrated by Diversi's comments constitutes the second part of the preface (»Dubrovnik's 15th century: striving for prosperity«).

The translation and transcription follow, *Description of Dubrovnik* being divided into fifty chapters arranged in four major sections. In the section »On the good location of Dubrovnik« (*De bono situ Ragusii*) Diversi elaborates on Dubrovnik's favourable geographical position with respect to both sea and land, natural advantages and ample water resources. »On buildings« (*De hedificiis*) is a section in which Diversi lauds the civic, public and ecclesiastical buildings, singling out the cathedral, the churches of St Stephen the Protomartyr, SS. Petar, Lovro and Andrija, St Dominic and St Francis, and the Rector's Palace. Accordingly, a special chapter is devoted to the description of the school. With equal detail, Diversi describes the fortifications of Dubrovnik, city walls and forts, gates and streets, fountains and mills. »On the political organisation of Dubrovnik« (*De politia Ragusina*) is a section in which Diversi describes the organisation of the city government, local administration and their jurisdiction, organisation of health care, maintenance of peace and order, grain and wheat supply. »On the praiseworthy customs of Dubrovnik« (*De laudabilibus consuetudinibus Ragusinis, caeteris preaestantior*) or the "last, more excellent part", consists of twenty-two chapters in which Diversi lauds Ragusan customs such as religious devotion, loyalty to the Hungarian king, modest demeanour of the Ragusan office-holders, their hospitality towards foreign visitors, and a commendable patrician custom to merry their equals.

Diversi's work resembles the pattern of the medieval *laudes civitatum*, a genre which flourished in the cities with an accentuated

classical or early-medieval tradition such as Dubrovnik. No other Croatian town has earned a similar praise.

Following the tenets of *laudes*, Diversi enthuses over a perfect city with the perfect government, carefully avoiding criticism of any kind: "Even if Dubrovnik harboured ills of any sort, I do not wish to write about them because my narrative goal is to speak and describe the good and the truth, towards which I myself am naturally inclined".

Vesna Miović

Benedikt Kotruljević, *De navigatione / O plovidbi*, edited by **Damir Salopek**, in: *Hrvatska književna baština*, bk. 2. Zagreb: Ex libris, 2003: pp. 15-129.

Born in Dubrovnik in 1416, Benedikt Kotruljević died in Italy, probably in 1469. His book *On the Art of Trade (Dell'arte di mercatura)*, a must for anyone interested in economy and its history, was completed in 1458 and in the second half of the fifteenth century circulated mainly in manuscripts, only to be published some 115 years later by the Cress-born Croatian philosopher Frane Petrić as "On Trade and on the Perfect Merchant" (*Della mercatura et del mercante perfetto*, Venezia, 1573). At the time, the book was a hit: it saw four editions in Italian and a translation into French in 1602. It soon fell into oblivion, only to be excavated by the end of the nineteenth century by Professor Kheil of Prague, who drew attention to the value of this neglected work. Thanks to this "discovery", the work of Benedikt Kotruljević became the focus of both Croatian and international scholarly concern. Numerous studies have been produced, followed by a reprint of his book published in Venice in 1573 (The Association of Accounting and Financial Professionals of Croatia in Zagreb, 1975, ed. V. Franc); then came a Croatian translation *O trgovini i savršenoj trgovcu* by