

Reviews

Bariša Krekić, *Dubrovnik: A Mediterranean Urban Society, 1300-1600*. Variorum Collected Studies Series, CS581, Aldershot-Brookfield: Variorum, 1997. XVIII + 360 pp.

For the second time a book by Bariša Krekić, professor emeritus at the University of California (UCLA), has been published in the distinguished *Variorum* series, in which are reprinted collected studies of eminent historians. In 1980 *Dubrovnik, Italy, and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages*, a collection of studies from the '70s and '80s, had seen light. The present book is a selection of his work over the last fifteen years.

Although these studies have already been published in eminent historical journals and proceedings, and are therefore familiar to the scholarly readership, their being reprinted in the *Variorum* series makes them present in any larger academic library worldwide. In addition, the main theses and key elements of Krekić's work become more accentuated in a concentrated sequence, thus gaining additional consistency.

Eleven out of the book's seventeen essays are written in English (four of these are translated especially for this edition), four are written in French, and two in Italian. In the introduction, the reader is provided with very useful bibliographical information on medieval Dubrovnik, including works published between 1971 and 1996. The first section of the book is principally devoted to Dubrovnik's internal life, while the second deals with Dubrovnik's relatedness to the Mediterranean world. The book is supplemented with a very handy index of personal and geographic proper names, which enables the reader to find his way easily to every pertinent subject.

The introductory studies trace the economic and political rise of the patrician class in Dubrovnik and the cities of Dalmatia. In the article »Influence politique et pouvoir économique à Dubrovnik (Raguse) du XIIIe au XVIe siècle« (I), by means of an innovative methodological approach, Krekić aims at "measuring" the economic strength, as well as the political power of different Dubrovnik's patrician families. He draws the conclusion that these two clusters partly overlapped, and that throughout the period political élite was restricted to seven noble families. In his intent to clarify the causes of this phenomenon, the author indulges in broader questions related to the structure of Ragusan society from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century.

On the basis of his own results and historiographic contributions, in the comparative study »Developed Autonomy: the Patricians in Dubrovnik and Dalmatian Cities« (II), Krekić inquires about the force of the patriciate and the respective degree of autonomy in the main cities of the eastern Adriatic. Difference observable in various fields (from geopolitical position to political history) influence the process of the rise of a patrician class, its internal stability, economic and political power, and hence, the degree of autonomy a community attains. Having analyzed the essentials of autonomy and examined their (non-)existence, Krekić infers that Dubrovnik set out on its own road to development as early as the twelfth century, acquiring complete autonomy in 1358, while other Dalmatian cities managed to experience but a few attributes of autonomy.

After having traced the origin of the Basilio patrician family and the basis of their power at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in his study »Ser Basilius de Basilio - a less than Commendable Ragusan Patrician (1361?-1413)« (III), Kre-

kić reconstitutes the life story of a nobleman whose conduct was far from exemplary. Founded on the author's masterly examination of various archival sources, the article portrays Basilius and his nephew and antidote, Frano, illustrating the former as a reckless brawler and troublemaker. The gallery of Ragusan patricians, which generally included quite praiseworthy figures, should also, without hesitation, be completed with the portraits of the less seemly members of the aristocracy. Having singled out and depicted a character such as this, Krekić's account has shattered one of the buttresses of the "myth of the Ragusan patriciate".

In »L'abolition de l'esclavage à Dubrovnik (Raguse) au XV^e siècle - mythe ou réalité?« (IV) Krekić questions another myth woven into Dubrovnik historiography - the abolition of slavery in the year 1416. The author sifts through the matter on several levels. He sets out with a most perceptive critical analysis of the preamble and the very text of the act, and continues with a survey of earlier regulations pertaining to affiliated subject matter. He concludes with examples of enslavement and individual slave stories gathered from the archives. Krekić's analysis deserves to be recommended in terms of its methodological approach, for it draws attention to the fact that the past cannot be reconstructed reliably upon the basis of a legal document alone, but that it needs to be interpreted by means of closely knit research methods and sources.

In »Images of Urban Life: Contributions to the Study of Daily Life in Dubrovnik at the Time of Humanism and the Renaissance« (V), Krekić highlights some of the basic features of social reality: attitudes towards the poor, children, and the aged, workers' salaries, as well as problems with how the state institutions functioned. Each of these frag-

ments encourages Krekić to combine the data culled not only from statutes and treatises, but from wills and lawsuits, too. By glean- ing diverse topics and elucidating them from various perspectives, the author recreates a vivid picture of the Dubrovnik's daily life in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The study entitled »Dubrovnik's Struggle against Fires (13th to 15th Centuries)« (VI) discusses systematic fire-fighting measures, from those regulated by the Ragusan statutes of 1272, to additional measures adopted after the conflagration of 1296, to a detailed decree from the beginning of the fifteenth century concerning the gradual replacement of wooden houses by ones built of stone. The author documents his research with the chronicles and records of the great city fires, and the consequences of gunpowder explosions at the Rector's Palace. In addition, Krekić broadens the general theme introduced by the title to the great concern the City showed for all matters in conjunction with fire. He examines the regulations dealing with the igniting and extinguishing of fires in fireplaces, the legal protection a person could seek in the event of smoke emission, collective responsibility for outbreaks of fire outside the city area, and also the elaborate system of fire signals used for preventive purposes.

In his survey »Abominandum Crimen: Punishment of Homosexuals in Renaissance Dubrovnik« (VII) Krekić traces the attitude of the Dubrovnik society towards homosexuals in the late medieval period and early modern times. Provided with no evidence in the archival records other than the recurrence of laws and decrees from 1474, the author infers that the mere existence of these regulations speaks of the grave concern the Ragusan government displayed in order to prevent such a social phenomenon, common-

place in the cities of the Apennine peninsula (notably in Florence and Venice), was not to take roots in Dubrovnik.

»The Attitude of Fifteenth-Century Ragusans towards Literacy« (VIII) covers the establishment of the school system in medieval Dubrovnik, as well as the practice of copying manuscripts. The author points to the acquisitions of books (not only religious writings and manuals, but also works of philosophy and literature), with particular emphasis on Gazulić's bequests of books, which may be considered to be the embryo of the public library. Krekić draws attention to the advocates of literacy and education of the time (De Diversis, Kotruljić). He further inquires into Ragusan government regulations, which prevented illiterate patricians from taking place in the Major Council, that is, they were denied access to political power.

Krekić's paper entitled »Miscellanea from the Cultural Life of Renaissance Dubrovnik« (IX) resumes with some of the topics originally examined in the previous study, broadens them, and casts more general light on educational issues, "cultural policy", and the role of public registers in government administration. This study is amply illustrated with Renaissance examples of governmental subsidies for young patricians (or the few non-patricians who prepared for administrative service) studying at universities abroad. Krekić inquires into the acquisition and circulation of books whether they were bequeathed, purchased, borrowed, or pawned as objects of value. The list of titles provided reveals classical works as well as specialized literature. Learned men and books as a means of disseminating knowledge and ideas play an important part in understanding the Late Medieval and Renaissance Dubrovnik.

The study »Gli ebrei a Ragusa nel Cin-

quecento« (X) provides insight into the oldest evidence pertaining to the relationship between the Dubrovnik community and Jews, the first permanent Jewish settlers, and their residence at Ploče. The author further concentrates on the turn of the fifteenth century which witnessed the migration of a group of Sephardim from Spain and Portugal across the Mediterranean as far as Dubrovnik. Official immigration policy was ambivalent and inconsistent—ranging from isolation, and the denial of residence to tolerance—and at any particular moment would depend upon the interests of the community, fear of economic competition, and the standpoint of the Catholic Church. This fragment from the centuries-old history of the Jews in Dubrovnik has been presented most dynamically and multifariously.

In his extensive research »Venetians in Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and Ragusans in Venice as Real Estate Owners in the Fourteenth Century« (XI), Krekić examines relations between Dubrovnik and Venice during a crucial period in terms of real estate ownership. His results show major differences in the dynamics and size of these legal relations, as well as in the way property was acquired. Venetians would gain possession of real estate in Dubrovnik through credit and mortgage, and would hold it until the final payment of the debt. The number of such cases was impressive, and exhibited a slight decline in the 1360s. On the other hand, Ragusans in Venice acquired their property in more familiar ways (purchase, dowry, legacy), and real estate was transmitted down through the generations of one family. The examples show that in the majority of cases the owners were patricians, and among the Ragusan proprietors in Venice in the fourteenth century the most illustrious were the families Gozze and Bona, as well as Philippa de Menze, a noteworthy lady who occupied

a distinguished position in Dubrovnik business circles. Focussing on economic and legal phenomena, the author views political relations as a relative matter, an approach that deserves attention. These contacts and business links proved to be immune from the upheavals of the mid-fourteenth century and the termination of Venetian dominance over Dubrovnik.

Krekić's contribution to the history of Ragusan seamanship commences with the study »Le rôle de Dubrovnik (Raguse) dans la navigation des "mudae" vénitiennes au XIVe siècle« (XII), which treats the role of Dubrovnik in the passage of Venetian convoys in the Adriatic during the fourteenth century. On the sea route to Levant, Dubrovnik served as a transit port for food and water supply, ship maintenance, and the changing of crews. It was for this reason that Venice insisted upon those activities which it considered expedient (e.g., the arsenal was expanded in 1329), while at the same time, it was striving hard to obstruct the endeavors of Ragusan merchants to join Venetian convoys, and participate in the most profitable sea-borne ventures.

The essay »La navigation ragusaine entre Venise et la Méditerranée orientale aux XIVe et XVe siècles« (XIII) brings to light the political events on the Adriatic and in the Balkan inland, and their impact on Ragusan economic orientation. While until the mid-fourteenth century Ragusan economic prosperity depended mostly on its network of hinterland trade routes, the years to follow saw the rise of maritime commerce with eastern Mediterranean lands in particular. A century later, political matters again began to interfere with economic welfare; this time it was the westward expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Krekić's analyses, however, imply that under the influence of

the political ferment taking place in the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries, economic trends adjusted to new patterns and reorganized themselves to a certain extent, but knew no standstill.

The city port of Dubrovnik is the subject matter covered by the paper entitled »Le port de Dubrovnik (Raguse), entreprise d'Etat, plaque tournante du commerce de la ville (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)« (XIV). The author presents the policy and measures undertaken by the Ragusan government—the establishment of technical, financial, and organizational foundations—for the development of Dubrovnik's city port (i.e. St. John's Fort, Kaše Breakwater, the expansion of the Arsenal, the chain used to close the port, the city gates that closed for safety reasons, the ability to put ships to sail most expeditiously in case of emergency, etc.).

The final work in the "maritime" section is »Ragusa (Dubrovnik) e il mare: aspetti e problemi (XIV-XVI secolo)« (XV). This work contains cumulative insights into Ragusan maritime affairs, starting with treaties made with Mediterranean coastal cities and statutory provisions. Here, Krekić supplies an array of arguments in support of his view that the period from 1540 to 1585 deserves to be considered the peak of Ragusan sea-borne commerce: trade interests expanded westwards to the Atlantic (England), larger vessels were employed, shipping acts determining seamen's allotment were established, and marine insurance was developed. However, the changes taking place in the Mediterranean and the decline of the Ottoman Empire as a "great power" in political and market terms induced a negative trend for Dubrovnik, which continued to deteriorate until the eve of the Republic's fall.

The article »"Death in Crete: a Ragusan Will from 1475 and Its Aftermath"« (XVI) is

based upon Krekić's analysis of the will of the Ragusan commoner-merchant Antun Bratosalić, and other supplementary documents. Conflicts and court proceedings concerning his legacy reveal the directions of the shipping capital investments. This enabled the author to reconstruct Bratosalić's trade links and business ventures between Florence, Dubrovnik, and the Black Sea. It is more than evident that this will, whose author, in accordance with the prevailing custom, bequeathed certain amounts to charitable causes, can help illuminate the Cretan ecclesiastical situation at the time, including the location of church buildings. This example draws our attention, once again, to the potential value of the information filed at the Dubrovnik Archives for the study of Mediterranean history.

»Dubrovnik as a Pole of Attraction and a Point of Transition for the Hinterland Population in the Late Middle Ages« (XVII) is a comprehensive presentation of Dubrovnik as a popular destination and crossroads of migratory movements towards the end of the Middle Ages. In need of cheap labor, Dubrovnik was able to accommodate part of the impoverished population from the hinterland. The Ragusan community could not absorb a larger number of immigrants, and resolved the pressure by deporting them to Puglia. The Ragusan "immigration policy", as envisaged by Krekić, is not uniform in its meaning and reacts to changes, relying upon the assessment of its own needs and resources.

The closing study, »On the Latino-Slavic Cultural Symbiosis in the Late Medieval and Renaissance Dalmatia and Dubrovnik« (XVIII), deals with the very intricate subject of Latino-Slavic symbiosis in the eastern Adriatic area. After a brief presentation of general trends, Krekić focuses on the

Ragusan state of affairs. By an array of linguistic and cultural phenomena (toponyms, onomastic fund, official administrative languages, citations in documents, etc.), the author traces the intertwined and complementary relations with regard to official and colloquial use in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries among four idioms: Latin, Old Ragusan, Italian, and "Slavic".

The value of a historian's work is reflected in the historiography, as a rule, over a longer period of time and on several levels: the established facts are used and incorporated in future research, the selection of topics is re-considered, results and interpretations are discussed. Krekić's work is highly authoritative and inspirational on all three levels. The information he gathers from the sources is exhaustive and extremely reliable, although other historians who do research on Dubrovnik might at times be dissatisfied with his occasional practice to omit the names (as in articles VIII and IX of this volume). Krekić's views are clearly formulated, and his conclusions are thorough; his statements are thus open to critical debate. Finally, Krekić's essays have made a refreshing contribution to the historiography of Dubrovnik: they have brought to light some new issues (and follow thus contemporary scientific trends), introduced a modern mosaic composition, directed historical inquiry towards neglected series of the Dubrovnik Archives (e.g., court records), and systematically presented Dubrovnik history to the international scholarly circles. The edition of the collected studies sets the basis for a more extensive reception of Krekić's work (especially of the articles, which have been translated for the first time now), but will most surely launch new discussions in Croatian historiography as well.

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