

Reviews

Esad Kurtović, *Vlasi Bobani* [The Bobani Vlachs]. Sarajevo: Društvo za proučavanje srednjovjekovne bosanske historije, 2012. Pages 162.

Following on the heels of shorter and longer studies on various Vlach communities of medieval Bosnia (Mirilović, Predojević, Nenković, Dubravčić, Pliščić and others) comes this comprehensive monograph on *Vlasi Bobani* (the Bobani Vlachs) by Esad Kurtović, professor at History Department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. This book also marks the first edition of the recently-founded *Stanak*—Society for the Study of Medieval Bosnian History of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The monograph is divided into seven interrelated sections. Following the introduction, the author draws attention to the sources containing information on this Vlach group and their references in the historiographic works published to date (pp. 9-10). Like most studies of Professor Kurtović, this monograph is based on unpublished data scattered throughout the series of the State Archives in Dubrovnik. The data vary in character. *Vlasi Bobani* are most frequently mentioned in the claims filed against them before the court, but also in different types of contracts, loans and other forms of virtually daily communication with Dubrovnik, a city towards which all their activities gravitated.

The second chapter is devoted to the origin and settlement of *Vlasi Bobani* (pp. 11-22). Kurtović warns that the origin of this group's name has not yet been elucidated, but probably derives from a nickname of their common ancestor, a certain Boban. With regard to settlement, *Vlasi Bobani* could be found in several villages, together forming an area today known as Bobani, formerly Površ, located south of Popovo polje, west of Trebinjska šuma and north of Dubrovačko primorje. The fact that they have left such a marked trace in the toponymy of Herzegovina speaks of the relevance this group had in the history of the microspace they once inhabited.

The next two chapters explore the earliest data on *Vlasi Bobani* (pp. 23-24) and the most

prominent families among them (pp. 25-51). By discarding the assumption that the earliest information on Bobani dates back to 1284 (simply because in this period any trace of the Vlach *katuni* would be beyond consideration), Kurtović pinpoints the contract of 22 August 1393 as the first mention of Bobani, by which *Dobril Raditich Obobana* sold a mare to Tvrtko Bursić for 18 perpers. The first known chief (*katunar*) of Bobani was Vukota Nenčić, whose name in the period 1404-1423 appears in the sources in variant forms such as *Volchotta Nenčich*, *Vochotta de Buban*, *Vocota Nincich*, behind which, no doubt, is one and the same person. Ragusan sources mention robberies which he himself or his inferiors had committed. Viewed chronologically, Miljen Bogavčić (1446) was the next *katunar* of Bobani, to be succeeded by his two sons, Ivan and Pokrajac Miljenović (1465). The earlier mentioned Vukota Nenčić had two sons, Dobrilo, engaged in credit trade, and Viganj Vukotić. Their grave was marked by a massive tombstone (*stećak*), with an inscription: *A se leži D(o)brilo Boban i brat mu Viganj sin Ivanišem. Iovo legosmo na soi baštinoi*. Today, the *stećak* is lost yet its photograph taken by Marko Vego remains an eloquent witness. Most distinguished among Dobrilo's seven sons was Dragić Dobrilović, a *katunar* of Bobani for a certain term, and he can be traced in the sources over a long span of time from 1449 to 1491. The last notable family of the Bobani Vlach community is the line descended from Vukmir Milatković, including two generations of his descendants in the period 1408-1469.

As a component of feudal organisation of the medieval Bosnian kingdom, *Vlasi Bobani* were vassals of various magnate families as discussed in the chapter »Seniori Vlaha Bobana« (»The Seniors of *Vlasi Bobani*«, pp. 53-59). By assuming that they were first the vassals of the Bosnian king or the Sanković nobility, the author focuses on the information from 1411 that mentions Vukota Nenčić, his son Dobrilo and some other *Vlasi Bobani* as men of Duke Sandalj Hranić Kosača. Fealty to this noble family continued in the ensuing years. Thus, during the Konavle War in 1430, *Vlasi Bobani* took part in the famous

Vlach attack on the military camp near Trebinje. Apparently, in 1419 *Vlasi Bobani* divided their vassalage between the Nikolić and Kosača, but once Stjepan Vukčić became head of the Kosača family, Bobani are mentioned as his vassals only until the fall of Herzegovina under Ottoman control, when they entered a new feudal (*timar*) system of lordship.

One of the most important chapters of the monograph deals with the economy of *Vlasi Bobani* (pp. 61-87). Similar to most Vlach communities, Bobani were oriented towards migratory transhumance (of cattle, horses, etc.). Animal produce were the main items in trading with the neighbours, Dubrovnik in particular. Farming was developed to suffice the basic needs, and what distinguished *Vlasi Bobani* from other Vlach groups was that they carried wood to Dubrovnik and avoided caravan transport. The latter may be accounted by Dubrovnik's vicinity but also lack of knowledge about the routes leading inland in the earlier period. A full list of archival documents which Kurtović systematically provides for each information cited bears witness to the scope of the economic dynamics between this Vlach tribe and the city of Dubrovnik. In times of crisis, *Vlasi Bobani* often resorted to highway robberies of Ragusan merchants and other travellers. Appended in table form are the data on the robberies committed by the Bobani, and the fact that it includes 25 pages of text (pp. 102-127) clearly indicates how commonly they took to this practice. The chapter entitled »Elementi duhovne nadgradnje među Vlasima Bobanima« (»The Elements of Spirituality among *Vlasi Bobani*«, pp. 89-91) is particularly insightful. Everyday contacts with Dubrovnik encouraged the development of literacy and calculation among the Vlachs, as basis for trade dealings. According to evidence, *katunar* Miljen Bogavčić replied to a Ragusan letter in the same manner by using Slavic language (*littera sclava*). Yet another way of spreading literacy among the Bobani was to have their children apprenticed to craftsmen in Ragusa, on condition that they be taught to read and write.

The monograph rounds off with a conclusion (pp. 93-96), a summary in English (pp. 97-100), the mentioned breakdown of robberies, bibliography,

along with an index of names and place names. In sum, this book emerges as a first scientifically-based monograph addressing one of the Vlach communities, a true collection of sources drawn from diverse series of Dubrovnik's archives. Deserved prominence should be given to the author's wide-angle methodological approach to the Vlach topic. Owing greatly to the State Archives in Dubrovnik, this book testifies to its remarkable significance for the study of medieval history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, indispensable to any researcher in this field.

Dženan Dautović

Nada Grujić, *Kuća u Gradu: studije o dubrovačkoj stambenoj arhitekturi 15. i 16. stoljeća* [The House in the City: Studies of Dubrovnik Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Houses]. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska – Ogranak Dubrovnik, 2013. Pages 476.

The book represents an outstanding scientific achievement and is a significant contribution to Croatian history of art and culture with its most recent finds and original interpretations in a field in which Nada Grujić is a renowned expert and authority. Related logically and organically, twelve extensive studies cover the great theme of Dubrovnik medieval urban development and residential architecture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from diverse angles. But the basic premise points to a much broader dimension than that of residential architecture, from which the author departs, and that is an indivisible connection of the house and the city. On several levels and multiple examples she demonstrates how and to what extent the urban matrix influenced the ground plans as well as the layout and the morphology of the house facades. The thesis on the indivisibility of the city's spatial structure and the shaping of the house, well argued and proved, is one of the novelties introduced by this book.