

ELECTION PROCEDURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF DUBROVNIK

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ABSTRACT: The article traces the development of the electoral process in the Republic of Dubrovnik from the Middle Ages to the final reforms of the mid-eighteenth century. It analyses the procedure, from electoral preparations and nominations to balloting and the election results, as well as the measures aimed at preventing electoral corruption. The Ragusan election system is compared to similar electoral patterns and models, proving that despite striking formal parallels, Ragusan electoral practice was essentially different from that of Venice.

1. Introduction

Constructed in the Middle Ages, the Ragusan election system exhibited a centuries-long structural continuity as it followed the established governmental framework which, after essential institutional reforms that marked the termination of the Venetian rule in 1358, maintained a steady course over the centuries. The Major Council (*Consilium Maius*), a body of all adult male patricians, was the legislative assembly with the right to elect all major bodies and other office-holders of the state. The Senate, or *Consilium Rogatorum*, gradually extended its responsibilities to all the important matters of domestic and especially foreign policy. The Rector (*rector*) headed the

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Minor Council and represented the Ragusan state in terms of protocol. The fifteenth century witnessed a marked development of the institutional framework by the introduction of new political control mechanisms, the restructuring of the local administrative units, the organisation of the judiciary, etc.¹ Also, the functioning of the governmental apparatus was affected by long-term political processes, i.e., the growing political influence of the Senate, and the political polarisation of the patrician rank peaking in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Notwithstanding, the basic institutional framework was maintained until the fall of the Republic in 1808.

The institutional system of Dubrovnik was marked by relatively short terms of office. The members of all the central and local government institutions were elected for a term of one year and could not hold consecutive terms of office. The Rector was elected to a one-month mandate in order to prevent his ceremonial function from becoming a political one. It is clear that a thorough knowledge of the election process and its most significant features is indispensable for the understanding of the constitutional structure of any political system, especially one based on the short-term rotation of office-holders like the Ragusan system. Obscure knowledge of the electoral 'technology' may lead to 'misreading' and misinterpretation of the voting results. Ignorance of the voting mechanism may cause the historian to jump to misleading conclusions about the broader political and social phenomena.² For example, the difficulty in filling the vacancies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may, to some extent, be accounted for by the patrician demographic decline but factional disputes, often resulting in inconclusive ballots, should also be taken into account. Interestingly, Major Council minutes from the fifteenth century, a period marked by the patriciate's demographic growth and

¹ On fifteenth-century institutional organisation and politics in Dubrovnik, the following books are a valuable contribution: Zdenka Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode: dubrovačka vlastela između srednjovjekovlja i humanizma*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1999 and David Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage, and Politics in Fifteenth-Century Ragusa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

² M. Dinić, for example, erroneously concludes that the zero entered by the side of the candidate's name meant no votes (*Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike I*, ed. M. Dinić. [Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskog naroda /hereafter cited as: ZIJKSN/, III.15.] Beograd: SANU, 1951: pp. 32-33). Also, D. Rheubottom wrongly asserts that the third number in the election results referred to the abstainers (D. Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage, and Politics*: pp. 139 and 153), while in fact it denoted those who were excluded from voting on the basis of kinship.

strong class solidarity, testify to obstructions in the electoral practice, too.³ In fact, both periods were known to witness time-consuming and tedious reballoting, following which expeditious and flawless elections often took place.⁴ Irrespective of the significant social processes within the patrician rank, this points to the fact that the success or failure of elections should partly be attributed to the voting mechanism itself.

The sources for the study of the Ragusan election system are manifold. The provisions of the Ragusan legislation showed concern for electoral issues (such as the definition of a quorum or the qualifications attached to a certain post), but the procedure itself was never legally defined in full. It seemed unnecessary, as the procedure was well established and familiar to both those running the elections and the participants. The election ritual, stemming from the Middle Ages, has been described in detail by some of the later sources: by the report of G.P. Luccari in the sixteenth century,⁵ and an official account in the Book of Ceremonies (*Cerimoniale*), probably penned around the year 1700.⁶ The minutes of the Major Council, however, record the election results, demonstrating how the pattern functioned in the institutional reality.

The aim of this study is to reconstruct the entire course of the Ragusan election procedure and its historical development on the basis of the sources mentioned, and to highlight its principal features with the help of comparative data, particularly that of the Venetian election system.

³ In 1450 it took 30 meetings of the Major Council and 65 ballots to fill the four seats of the justices (D. Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage, and Politics*: p. 46).

⁴ At the end of July 1478, the Rector was elected in the twelfth ballot (State Archives of Dubrovnik (hereafter cited as: SAD), *Acta Maioris Consilii*, ser. 8, vol. 14, ff. 90r-91v), whereas in the following month he was elected in the first ballot (*ibid.*, f. 94); the meetings in October and November of 1553 witnessed eleven ballots, while in December the Rector was elected in the first ballot (*Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 23, ff. 64v-65v, 67r-68).

⁵ Giacomo Pietro Luccari, *Copioso ristretto degli annali di Ragusa*. Ragusa, 1790 (reprint Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1978): pp. 257-260.

⁶ SAD, *Cerimoniale*, series 21.1 *Manuali pratici del Cancelliere: Leggi e Istruzioni*, vol. 8, ff. 36v-45v.

2. Electoral preparations

2.1. Yearly distribution of elections

As far back as the end of the fourteenth century, the governmental year in Dubrovnik began with Michaelmas (29 September),⁷ the same as in Venice.⁸ The rotation of office-holders and the most important elections were held under the protection of St Michael, the epitome of justice.⁹ The reasons underlying such a practice were not only symbolic but also quite pragmatic. The responsibilities of the harvest season in August and September kept the patricians busy on their country estates and away from the city, the functioning of the major government bodies being limited to emergency only.¹⁰ According to the vintage calendar, the harvest was usually completed by Michaelmas by which time the state mechanism was not only reactivated but already in full swing. Elections for all major posts in the coming year were held, and thus most office-holders ended their term of office by the end of September.

The termination of the Venetian rule in 1358 saw no radical shifts in the official calendar.¹¹ Yet, in 1391 the administrative year was scheduled in accordance with the liturgical calendar. The holding of the most important

⁷ Cf. *Libri reformationum*, passim; *Odluke I and II*, passim.

⁸ Giorgio Zordan, *L'ordinamento giuridico veneziano: lezioni di storia del diritto veneziano con una nota bibliografica*. Padova: CLEUP, 2. edition, 1984: p. 70; Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*. London: Ernest Benn, 1980: pp. 29 and 64. In English towns, Michaelmas Day was also the favourite feast for the election of mayor, see Peter Borsay, »'All the town's a stage': Urban Ritual and Ceremony 1660-1800«, in: *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns*, ed. Peter Clark. London: Hutchinson, 1984: p. 232.

⁹ On the archangel Michael as a symbol of justice see Staal Sinding-Larsen: *Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic*. [Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia Instituti Romani Norvegiae, 5]. Roma: L'Erma, 1974: p. 173. On account of this meaning, St. Michael featured in the iconography of the Ducal Palace in Venice, and in that of the government building of Dubrovnik as well. A relief depicting St. Michael slaying a dragon used to decorate the main entrance lunette of the Ragusan Council Hall. See Cvito Fisković, »Nekoliko dokumenata o našim starim majstorima«. *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku* 52 (1949): p. 204.

¹⁰ Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, »Trgovina vinom u Dubrovniku u XIV. veku«. *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu* 9 (1966): p. 49; Z. Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode*: pp. 168-169.

¹¹ *Liber statutorum Civitatis Ragusii compositus anno 1272*, ed. V. Bogišić and C. Jireček. [Monumenta historico-juridica Slavorum Meridionalium, IX]. Zagreb: JAZU: I, 3 (Version C of 1358).

elections for the major institutions was shifted to December,¹² and the newly elected started their term of office in the first days of January.¹³

Although concentrated in December, electoral activity also took place outside the end-of-the-year period. The Rector was regularly elected towards the end of the month preceding his monthly term of office.¹⁴ This same regulation, however, carried the risk of failing to fill the post on time, and, for the reasons already mentioned pertaining to the agrarian cycle, September sessions tended to face the difficulty of securing the necessary quorum;¹⁵ on the other hand, the system of successive monthly rectorial elections was permeated with unpredictability, limiting the possibilities for political manoeuvre should a prospective candidate, aware of his future rectorship, be inclined to replace his representative function with something more lucrative. In addition, outside the peak month of December the Major Council elected the office-holders in the local units¹⁶ and filled all the vacancies which may have arisen unexpectedly. Yet the first day of December marked the beginning of the greatest electoral activity when a large number of vacancies had to be filled and the elections for the major bodies were held.¹⁷ The elections were conducted according to the rank of office, so that the most important offices would be filled first. Only when elections for a certain office were successfully completed could elections for the next body be

¹² *Liber statutorum Civitatis Ragusii*, I, 3, amendment from 1391. On Lastovo, however, an island under Ragusan authority, elections of the local officials continued to be organised on Michaelmas (Josip Lučić, »Prošlost otoka Lastova u doba Dubrovačke Republike«, in: *Lastovski statut*. Split: Književni krug, 1994: pp. 53-54).

¹³ On the investiture of new incumbents, see *Cerimoniale* II, ff. 24r-27r. Processions for the newly-established government took place on 3, 4, and 5 January (*Cerimoniale* II, ff. 29v-30r), to be reduced in 1781 to only one with a three day offering of the Holy Sacrament (SAD, *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, ser. 3, vol. 189, f. 50v).

¹⁴ *Cerimoniale* I, ff. 95v-96v.

¹⁵ For instance, despite the Senate in 1736 increased the fine for non-attendance of the meeting at which the Rector for October was elected (*Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, vol. 157, f. 164r), practically all the September ballots were fruitless (cf. *Specchio*, ser. 21.1, vol. 4.1). The legislative from the second half of the eighteenth century took this into account and thus decreed that rectorial duties in October were to be the responsibility of the eldest member of the Minor Council (*Liber croceus*, ed. B. Nedeljković. [ZIJKSN, III.24]. Beograd: SANU, 1997, cc. 396 and 440).

¹⁶ In 1636 it was decreed that the elections for the seats of the local officials (counts, captains, castellans) were to be held beginning with the first day of March, so that the term of office commenced on 1 May, with the exception of the Count of Ston, traditionally elected in November but who took office on 1 January (*Liber croceus*, cc. 313 and 440).

¹⁷ "... Il mese di decembre deputato per la creatione del nuovo magistrato e degli offitii della città..." (*Liber croceus*, c. 313).

conducted. Such priority in filling the vacant offices was not only logical, but it also prevented someone from being excluded from elections to a more important office by being elected to a minor office;¹⁸ the disadvantage was that the formation of a “bottleneck” at one election would also block all other elections, leaving some parts of the institutional apparatus unfilled.

2.2. *The composition of the Major Council*

Prior to the December elections, the Minor Council revised the membership of the Major Council,¹⁹ listed in the so-called *Specchio*, or register of public functions.²⁰ The updating consisted of additions to and eliminations from the total membership which varied from year to year. The patricians whose age qualified them to sit on the council were entered,²¹ the deceased were crossed out, as were those who had retreated from secular life, and also those who had been deprived of the noble title.²² Also excluded from membership, though temporarily, were the patrician state debtors.²³

¹⁸ D. Rheubottom’s contrary assumption is groundless (*Age, Marriage, and Politics*: p. 50).

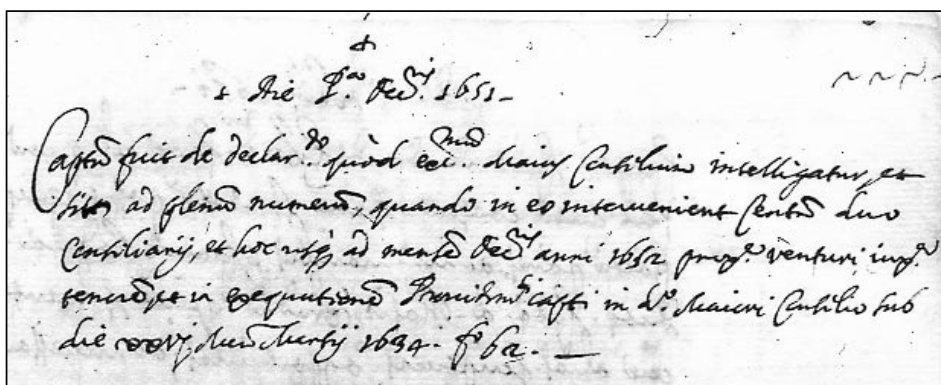
¹⁹ The clauses from 1634 refer to such a procedure as “agiustare il vero numero di tutti quei nobili che sono scritti in Specchio del gran consiglio” (*Liber croceus*, c. 310). In 1666 it was decreed that the list be updated twice a year (*Liber croceus*, c. 327).

²⁰ This sort of register was initiated by the Ragusan chancellor Johannes de Arimino in 1440, officially naming it *Speculum officialium*. (SAD, ser. 21.1, vol. 1, f. 1rv.). In the eighteenth century it was always referred to as *Specchio del Maggior Consiglio*.

²¹ The age of 20 generally qualified the male patricians to sit on the Major Council, but in a particular historical situation it was lowered to 18. The reasons for such a decision were of a pragmatic nature because by lowering the age criterion the membership of the Major Council increased, leading, it was hoped, to efficient sessions with a quorum. The first attempt at lowering the eligible age was noted in 1348 (*Libri reformationum*, II, ed. I. Tkalčić. [Monumenta Ragusina: Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum Meridionalium /hereafter cited as: MSHSM/, XIII.] Zagreb: JAZU, 1882: p. 25), and this was repeated in periods following population loss caused, for example, by disease or earthquakes. For the most concise survey on the lowering of the age criterion, see Kosto Vojnović, »O državnom ustrojstvu republike Dubrovačke«. *Rad JAZU* 103 (1891): p. 46, note 3. Also, literacy was a qualification required of a future councilman (see Bariša Krekić, »Miscellanea from the Cultural Life of Renaissance Dubrovnik«. *Byzantinische Forschungen* 20 (1994): pp. 133-134; reprinted in: idem, *Dubrovnik: A Mediterranean Urban Society, 1300-1600*. Aldershot-Brookfield: Variorum, 1997, IX), and from 1777 an official certificate was required as proof of the patrician’s schooling until the age of 18 (*Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, vol. 186, f. 56v).

²² On the deprivation of noble benefices, see Nella Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde: Kaznenopravni sustav Dubrovačke Republike u XVIII. stoljeću*. Dubrovnik 1997: p. 158. Cases such as this were quite rare.

²³ *Liber croceus*, c. 86, § 44. A book of debtors was kept in the Major Council (*libro de debitori che se tiene in mazor consiglio*).



Photograph 1 The required attendance (quorum) of the members of the Major Council in 1652, recorded in the minute of the Minor Council on 1 December 1651 (*Acta Consilii Minoris*, ser. 5, vol. 79, f. 222r, State Archives of Dubrovnik).

The long-established practice of determining the Major Council election quorum in absolute numbers²⁴ tended to cause insurmountable problems with each reduction in the size of the patriciate. This, again, required legislative reforms. In 1634, a more elastic and realistic approach was introduced by determining a quorum in proportion to the number of members of the Major Council: the Minor Council omitted those listed in the *Specchio* who were on duty abroad, further subtracting one third on account of the nobles serving their term of office outside the city in one of the local administrative units.²⁵ The rest were carefully recorded in the Minor Council minutes, and this figure represented a quorum for a year's term (from 1666 on a half-year term).²⁶ In certain exceptional cases the Major Council could decide on matters of state with a quorum smaller than the one mentioned.²⁷

²⁴ See, for example, *Liber viridis*, ed. B. Nedeljković. [ZIJKSN, III.23]. Beograd: SANU, 1984: c. 83 (60 members); *Liber croceus*, cc. 86, 39, 239, 305, 310.

²⁵ *Liber croceus*, c. 310 and *Cerimoniale* II, ff. 36v-37.

²⁶ For example, during the session of the Minor Council held on 1 December 1651, a quorum of 102 members of the Major Council was established (SAD, *Acta Minoris Consilii*, ser. 5, vol. 79, f. 222r); see photograph 1.

²⁷ The Major Council sitting without a quorum was called *consiglio diminuto*; see *Liber croceus*, cc. 322, 340, 374.

2.3. Meetings of the Major Council

The hours of the Council session varied according to the season. Its members were summoned by three chimes of a special bell,²⁸ reminding the councillors of their duties but also signalling to the public that the supreme government body was in session. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the patricians who wanted to attend the change of Rectors or had some private matter to settle could profit by the additional fifteen or thirty-minute interval before taking their place in the council hall.²⁹ At the end of the interval the chamber doors were closed and the council attendance established.

From the 1340s on, the Major Council met in its own chamber, the decoration of which was commissioned by the Ragusan government.³⁰ In the latter half of the fifteenth century a new council hall was constructed.³¹ It stood next to the Rector's Palace until the nineteenth century, with which it formed a complex of government buildings.

The benches in the Major Council were situated in the middle of the hall, which reminded the Italian canon Pietro Casola of a Venetian hall.³² The members of the Major Council sat in eight rows of benches, occupying the seats in order of age.³³ Once the patricians were seated, the officials took their special positions: the Rector sat up front, surrounded by the Minor Council, while the *provisores* and the advocates of the commune were seated at the opposite end of the hall.

²⁸ *Liber croceus*, cc. 304 and 305 from 1624.

²⁹ There was no such practice in the fourteenth century (*Liber viridis*, c. 48), but in the fifteenth it seemed to have taken root ("transcursus unius quartarole post sonum... campane"; *Liber croceus*, c. 19). A fifteen-minute break was also mentioned in the seventeenth century (*Liber croceus*, cc. 304 and 305), and in 1772 it was increased to half an hour ("mezza ora di respiro"; *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, vol. 182, f. 52v). The quarters were measured by an hourglass (*Liber viridis*, c. 48).

³⁰ *Libri reformationum*, I, ed. I. Tkalčić. [MSHSM, X]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1879: p. 164. Master Bernard was commissioned to paint *storie et picture* according to the instructions of the Rector and the Minor Council (*Libri reformationum* I: pp. 171-172).

³¹ C. Fisković, »Nekoliko dokumenata«: 199-203 and 215-216.

³² »Ragusa nel 1494.«. *L'Epidauritano, lunazio raguseo per l'anno 1908*. Ragusa: Gabinetto di lettura, 1907: 59.

³³ G.P. Luccari, *Copioso ristretto*: 257. As a rule, older patricians were seated in the first rows, closer to the Minor Council, while the younger councilmen occupied the back benches. Cf. the case from 1687 pertaining to a conflict over the voting order (SAD, *Diplomata et acta saec. XVII*, ser. 76, file 65.2052, doc. 25). On the making of benches at the end of the fifteenth century, see C. Fisković, »Nekoliko dokumenata«: p. 216.

2.4. The solemn oath

In accordance with protocol, the Rector opened December meetings by addressing the Major Council with a carefully worded speech designed to



Photographs 2 and 3: The text of the solemn oath sworn by the members of the Major Council. Statute of Dubrovnik, II, 5, Version C (*Leggi e istruzioni*, ser. 21.1, vol. 9a, f. 18v, State Archives of Dubrovnik).

encourage the councilmen in their electoral duties.³⁴ The councillors took an oath,³⁵ the contents of which had been defined by the Ragusan statute as early as the fourteenth century.³⁶ Although elections were not implicitly mentioned in the oath,³⁷ it placed emphasis on the basic values important for the electoral procedure such as loyalty to the state, law-abidingness, impartiality, and confidentiality. In the last hundred years of the Republic the oath was sworn in Italian, for by then Latin had been completely abandoned as the official language of the state apparatus.³⁸ The official copy of the statute was then taken round the hall, so that each member swore upon an open page of the oath.³⁹

In 1726 it was decreed that the oath was also to be taken during council meetings in March and November when the seats of the local officials had to be filled.⁴⁰ By taking the solemn oath, the councillors swore to their fair electoral judgement, pledging to elect in good conscience those they considered most fit for a particular magistracy.

³⁴ *Cerimoniale* II, f. 39v. K. Vojnović (»O državnom ustrojstvu«: p. 49, note 1) cites the prayer which was supposedly said at the Cathedral before the election, where God is requested to bestow power upon the God-fearing and truly merciful. In fact, this text prefaced the *Specchio* of the Major Council in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (SAD, ser. 21.1, vol. 3 and 4.1), but there are no grounds to believe that it was said on the occasion cited by Vojnović.

³⁵ By the end of the fourteenth century the councillors gave their oaths during the meeting in December, because that was when the candidates were elected for the following year's Minor Council, that is, *novum regimen* (*Liber viridis*, c. 83).

³⁶ The original version from 1272 was revised after the end of the Venetian domination in 1358 (*Liber statutorum Civitatis Ragusii*, II, 5, Version C).

³⁷ A closer examination of the oath reveals that it was originally written for the members of the Minor Council and was later extended to the membership of the Major Council. In fact, it does not seem appropriate to the authority of the latter body. During the revision of the statute in 1358, the competence of the Major Council was still not defined, which might account for the failure to draft a new oath on that occasion. The revisional committee, however, was not in charge of making additions, but of 'cleansing' the statute from any reference to the supreme Venetian government (this, too, was done with considerable inconsistency). The reason for not drafting a new oath later on probably lies in the fact that after 1358 the Ragusan government made no attempt whatsoever to make any changes in the statutory legislation. In any case, the ritual and the symbolic meaning of the act weighed far more than the words uttered.

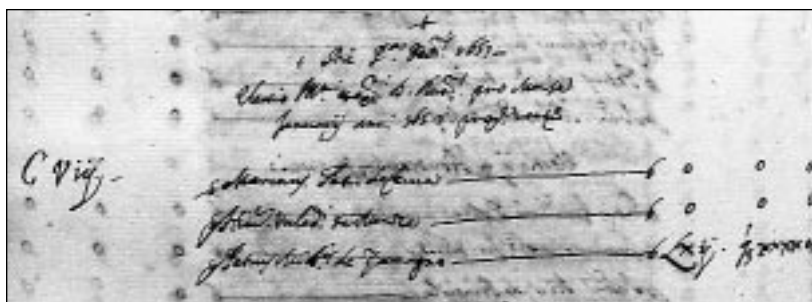
³⁸ The Italian version of the oath was recorded in *Cerimoniale* II, ff. 99v-100.

³⁹ On the official copy of the statute (*Codex Reipublicae*) dating from the fifteenth century, see Nella Lonza, »Dubrovački statut, temeljna sastavnica pravnog poretka i biljeg političkog identiteta«, in: *Statut grada Dubrovnika sastavljen godine 1272*. Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku, 2002: p. 27. The code is filed at the State Archives in Dubrovnik and classified under ser. 21.1, vol. 9a. The part of the text where each councillor laid his hand (f. 18v) is worn out. See photographs 2 and 3.

⁴⁰ *Liber croceus*, c. 366; also *Cerimoniale* II, f. 99rv.

2.5. Ballot sessions and the establishment of a quorum

The Major Council opened its electoral meeting by establishing whether the number required for a quorum was present, and imposing a fine on those absent without a legitimate excuse. In order to avoid error, the counting was done twice and to prevent any irregularities, it was done in public. Two chancellors traversed each side of the hall, calling out the councillor's number and handing him a small globule to be deposited in the urn. A respective number of globules was distributed to the Rector, members of the Minor Council, *provisores*, and advocates of the commune. Having completed the round, the urns were emptied and the ballots carefully counted. If their number matched the number counted by the chancellors the exact attendance was established and the secretary made a note of it in the margin of the Major Council minutes.⁴¹



Photograph 4: Attendance of the Major Council on 1 December 1751, noted in the margin of its minutes (*Acta Consilii Maioris*, ser. 8, vol. 40, f. 107v, State Archives of Dubrovnik).

Late arrival into the chamber was not allowed nor could a councillor leave prior to the closing of the session, except with special permission from the Rector or the Minor Council.⁴² In order to avoid confusing interpretations, in the seventeenth century it was legislated that if a councillor, due to ill health and with the Rector's permission, had to leave the meeting during balloting, his absence would not interfere with a quorum and his vote would be added to those excluded from elections.⁴³

⁴¹ On this point, see the Major Council minutes of 1 December 1651 shown in photograph 4 (*Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 40, f. 107v). The Minor Council had previously established a quorum of 102 participants, but the session was attended by 108 councillors.

⁴² *Acta Minoris Consilii*, vol. 14, ff. 185v and 263; *Liber croceus*, c. 212 from 1510.

⁴³ *Liber croceus*, c. 324.

If there was no quorum, the roll was taken in order to fine the absent councillors.⁴⁴ Given the considerable size of the fine,⁴⁵ the procedure was carried out most carefully and under the constant supervision of two members of the Minor Council. First a list was made of all the patricians who did not stand up during the roll call.⁴⁶ This was followed by a revision in which the names of those having a legitimate excuse were crossed out.⁴⁷ There was a marked inconsistency in the approach to non-attendance of the council meetings in the eighteenth century: on the one hand, the fines were increased so as to maintain discipline and to allow a quorum to be reached, but on the other hand, excuses were accepted with the utmost benevolence, and cases of individual or even general pardon of already imposed fines were not rare. The evidence of those fined in the mid-eighteenth century testifies to a great number of absences, most of which were excused.⁴⁸

3. *The nominating procedure*

3.1. *Indirect nomination of candidates by means of chambers (electio)*

3.1.1. *Historical background*

The chambers (*camare*) were ad hoc committees of the Major Council, constituted to nominate candidates for office.⁴⁹ They were named after the special premises in which they originally presided,⁵⁰ but were later to have

⁴⁴ *Liber croceus*, c. 304 from 1623.

⁴⁵ In 1366 persons not attending the meeting of the Major Council were fined 6 groschen (*Libri reformationum* IV, ed. J. Gelcich. [MSHSM, XXVIII]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1896: p. 59), the same amount being imposed a century later (*Liber viridis*, c. 465). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it amounted to 25 perpers or 7.5 ducats (*Liber croceus*, c. 304; *Cerimoniale* II, f. 38v).

⁴⁶ The obligation to stand during the roll call was introduced as early as 1401 so that the Minor Council could make certain that the person called was present (*Liber viridis*, c. 102).

⁴⁷ *Cerimoniale* II, f. 39. The councillors were given a period of five days to account for their absence (*Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, vol. 182, f. 52 from 1772). For example, on 15 April 1774, the Senate accepted the physician's report on the poor health of Đivo Bona, allowing him to be excused from participating in the sessions of the Major Council and the Senate (*ibidem*, f. 123v).

⁴⁸ In December 1741, for example, 38 councillors were absent, 22 of whom managed to be excused (*Acta et diplomata saec. XVIII*, file 3193/I, doc. 47)); see photograph 5. Three years later, 10 out of 28 patricians absent from the meeting were excused from paying the fine (*ibid.*, doc. 70). In the cases mentioned, all fines were collected and handed to the treasurers.

⁴⁹ This role of the committee is well defined by the clause diction of *Libri reformationum* II: 212.

⁵⁰ In 1363 there is mention of one chamber *in sala veteri* and the other *in teratia* (*Liber viridis*, c. 26; *Libri reformationum*, III, ed. J. Gelcich. [MSHSM, XXVII]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1895: pp. 249-250).

their own benches in the council hall itself.⁵¹

There is reason to believe that they first appeared in the Ragusan election procedure of 1334 during the nominations for the Count of Ston⁵² which at the same time represented the first genuine electoral responsibility of the Major Council. The nominating procedure by means of committees thus dates from the period when Dubrovnik was under the rule of Venice, and was under the direct influence of the Venetian electoral system.⁵³ In the watershed year of 1358, when Venetian domination ceased and the Ragusan Major Council assumed full electoral competence, the previously established nominating procedure was not abandoned.⁵⁴

The members of the Minor Council, the judges, the vicar (the Rector's assistant) and the *procuratores* of the Cathedral of St Mary were nominated by two chambers with the Minor Council functioning as a third nominating committee. Further institutionalisation tended to recruit the nominees for the most important elections through chambers.⁵⁵ From 1358, in addition to the Count of Ston, the Count of the island of Lastovo was also nominated through the mentioned procedure,⁵⁶ but by 1400 this model had been abandoned in the elections of local counts in favour of direct candidature (*scrutinium*).

Yet, in the long-established constitutional practice of the Republic of Dubrovnik, nomination of candidates by means of committees prevailed as a standard step in elections to the more important and prestigious offices. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century and the period of electoral experimentation that the role of the committees began to lose significance, so that during the last reform of 1791 they remained as mere relics of the old constitutional framework.⁵⁷

⁵¹ *Cerimoniale* II, f. 40v.

⁵² *Libri reformationum* II: p. 352, in relation to *Libri reformationum* I: pp. 180 and 253.

⁵³ On this point, see Ch. 7.

⁵⁴ *Liber statutorum Civitatis Ragusii*, I, 3; the same in *Libri reformationum* II: pp. 238-239. Cf. also the 1358 provisions of the Major Council on the election of three counts (*Libri reformationum* II: pp. 209, 221).

⁵⁵ In 1358 the committees were already engaged in nominating persons who were to compose the instructions for the diplomatic mission to King Louis II of Anjou, which was of great importance for the future of Dubrovnik (*Libri reformationum* II: pp. 211-212). Shortly afterwards, it was decreed that the justices of the Major Court were also to be nominated by the committees (*Liber statutorum Civitatis Ragusii*, I, 3, Version C).

⁵⁶ *Libri reformationum* II: p. 230.

⁵⁷ *Liber croceus*, c. 440.

3.1.2. Procedure

The initial step of the nominating procedure was the selection of the members of the Major Council for the nominating committees.⁵⁸ For this purpose silver tokens (*segni d'argento*, *pezzetti d'argento*) inscribed with Roman numerals were used to draw up by lot two benches, which acquired the right to form the committees.⁵⁹ Each patrician from these benches drew a ball from a copper urn (*concha di rame*) placed high above his head. The six patricians who were fortunate enough to draw gilded balls were appointed electors (*elettori*) and thus became members of the committee, while the patricians drawing a silver or black ball simply returned to their seats.⁶⁰ Prior to the Great Earthquake of 1667, this procedure had the purpose of limiting the number of electors, but later persisted as a mere ritual (*mera cerimonia*). The practice of drawing balls continued, but only gilded balls were used since, as the size of the patriciate dropped, selection became unnecessary. At first, this was looked upon as a transitory state, but the patriciate showed no signs of demographic recovery, and this part of the procedure was retained for the sake of tradition.

The members of the committees, in descending order of age, were seated on two separate rows of benches in order to prevent any communication until the nominating procedure was completed.⁶¹ The members of each committee drew a lot for the nominator who would thus have the right to offer his candidate to the office. In earlier practice, the membership of each committee voted on a nominee, and if he failed to receive the required number of affirmative votes from the committee, the same elector proceeded with nominating a different candidate for the office, and so forth. This electoral practice changed over the years in that a prior vote in the committee was no longer performed, but the candidate could automatically await ballot by the

⁵⁸ Unless cited otherwise, the evidence in chapters 3-7 has been drawn from *Cerimoniale* II, ff. 36v-45v.

⁵⁹ The sortition was done by the secretary who drew the lots from a leather bag. While all the other Ragusan sources mention the drawing of tokens or coins, Luccari also cites little paper notes (*Copioso ristretto*: p. 258).

⁶⁰ Gilded balls were mentioned as early as 1391 (SAD, *Reformationes*, ser. 2, vol. 29, f. 136rv). Records of expenditure contain several entries on the gilding of six balls for the Major Council (e.g. SAD, *Detta*, ser. 6, vol. 16, ff. 68 and 129v).

⁶¹ The regulation from 1363 restricted the patricians from leaving the chambers and also denied entrance to unauthorised persons (at the time, as mentioned earlier, the electors met in separate rooms); see *Liber viridis*, c. 26 and *Libri reformationum* III: pp. 249-250.

Major Council. But to honour tradition, the committees retained a ritual reminiscent of the voting: the chancellor himself deposited all six balls (for the six members of the committee) into the portion of an urn intended for affirmative votes, and emptied them into the palms of the elector, by whom the candidate had been offered, to signify that there was no obstacle to proceed to ballot.

After both committees and the Minor Council as the third committee had named their candidates, the former two were dissolved and the electors returned to their seats. Then the secretary repeated the names of the three nominees, and the candidate nominated by the Minor Council was voted for first.⁶² Each nominee, together with his immediate family and relatives, was required to leave the council chamber until the vote on his candidacy had been completed.⁶³

3.2. *Direct nomination of candidates (scrutinium)*

An alternative electoral model was characterised by the direct nomination of candidates to be submitted to election.⁶⁴ It is not until the end of the fourteenth century that we hear of nomination *per scrutinium*, although further back the same term had been used for nomination in committees.⁶⁵ A detailed description of the *Ordinum scrutinii* is to be found in Article 65 of *Liber Viridis* from 1388 which regulated elections of the ambassadors.⁶⁶ According to the legislation, each member of the Major Council had the right to propose candidates in secret, the potential nominees enjoying equal terms of candidacy. The chancellor approached each patrician and asked him, in confidence, for the name of his candidate, writing it down on a strip of paper, the ends of which were stuck together and rolled around a wooden stick. The candidates were listed at random in order to protect the secrecy of the procedure. Once

⁶² A practice already maintained in the fourteenth century (*Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike* II, ed. M. Dinić. [ZIJKSN, III.21]. Beograd: SANU, 1964: p. 237). The minutes offer no conclusive evidence that the candidate of the Minor Council enjoyed any form of privilege.

⁶³ On this, see chap. 6.1.

⁶⁴ On this system in Venice, see Giuseppe Maranini, *La Costituzione di Venezia, II: Dopo la serrata del Maggior Consiglio*. Venezia, 1931 (reprint Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1974): pp. 262-268.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Libri reformationum* I: p. 180.

⁶⁶ *Liber viridis*, c. 65. The same decision of the Major Council is also brought in *Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike* II: pp. 411-413.

all the councillors had been given the opportunity to propose their candidates, the chancellor retired to review the list and prepare for voting, singling out the names which appeared at least twice.⁶⁷ At first, the Major Council took a vote on every name read out by the chancellor, but this was replaced by a procedure in which the names were drawn out of a cap, or a sack.⁶⁸ In this way, the use of the ‘endless’ strip gave way to a more practical device.

The secrecy of nomination was a guarantee of free selection,⁶⁹ and the nominees’ random order warranted equal opportunities in election. The system proved immune to electioneering and the ‘buying of votes’. The fact that this stage kept the councillors in ignorance of the current procedure (they had no knowledge of the number of candidates or whether their favourite was to be voted on) meant that anxiety was shared by all. Soon a demand arose to make public the names of all the candidates before the Major Council started the vote, but it took a long time before this regulation was passed.⁷⁰

Interestingly, the direct nomination of candidates was practised only for filling the ‘outside’ vacancies, that is, positions in the local administrative units, certain missions abroad, along with one or two lower ranked positions.⁷¹ Conversely, the nomination of candidates for the inner government circle was carried out indirectly through committees.⁷² In Ragusan electoral practice, *electio* or indirect candidature gained precedence over *scrutinium* because the element of incidence introduced with the double selection by lot - for the benches which were established to form the nominating committees, and to designate the patricians who were authorised to propose the candidates - was considered a safer practice against machinations and fraud.

⁶⁷ From 1410, a vote was taken only on those who were nominated by at least five members of the Major Council (*Liber viridis*, c. 132).

⁶⁸ This transitional phase, but not as a novelty, was mentioned in *Liber croceus*, c. 117 from 1487.

⁶⁹ In the arena of *Liber viridis*, c. 65 (which should not be taken literally in all of its parts), the Ragusan legislators point to the goal “... ut cuilibet consulenti liber sit animus in consulendo secundum suum verum et rectum consciencie iudicium, amotis amore, odio, spe atque timore...”.

⁷⁰ In 1389 the proposition failed (*Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike* II: p. 507), and it was not until 1487 that it was decreed that, prior to voting, the chancellor was to read out the name of each candidate (*Liber croceus*, c. 117).

⁷¹ See *Liber viridis*, cc. 65, 99, 199, 212, 256, 322, 352, 408, 414; *Liber croceus*, c. 89.

⁷² On this point, see *Liber croceus*, c. 272B from 1555.

By the sixteenth century the mechanism of direct nomination had already been abandoned and replaced by a simplified alternative: the Major Council selected by lot three patricians, each of whom secretly nominated one candidate.⁷³

4. Balloting

4.1. Historical background

As early as the thirteenth century, documents testify that voting on the Major Council was done by means of balls (*balle, balottae*).⁷⁴ The use of ballots, maintained until the fall of the Republic, prevailed as a decision-making device, employed in the passing of legislation as well as in elections.

Elections based on vote by ballot can be traced in the Ragusan accounts to the 1330s.⁷⁵ Prior to 1358, the electoral competency of the Major Council was insignificant, but following the termination of the Venetian rule, it became a body which elected office-holders of all the major government institutions. Thus, in turn, the election system gained in importance, leading to its further articulation and the shaping of the technical and protective devices.

4.2. Ballot procedure

Until the middle of the fifteenth century, two members of the Minor Council were delegated to carry the voting urns, later to be succeeded by chancellery clerks. Since there were several urns available, voting could be done fairly quickly: two clerks conducted the voting in the Minor Council, another conducted the *provisores* voting, and the rest traversed the rows of benches.

⁷³ This is probably contained in the provision of *Liber croceus*, c. 272B from 1555, which quotes: "...li quali camarlenghi ... sin hora s' hano soluti eleggere al orechia...". Luccari is more explicit (*Copioso ristretto*: pp. 259-260).

⁷⁴ See *Liber statutorum Civitatis Ragusii*, VIII, 48, probably from 1283 or 1284. The anonymous chronicler is anachronous in his statements that ballots had been used for voting as early as the tenth century; cf. *Annales Ragusini anonymi*, ed. N. Nodilo. [MSHSM, XIV]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1883: p. 22.

⁷⁵ In 1334 the Major Council decided that the Count of Ston be elected *ad busolos et ballotas* (»*Liber omnium reformationum*«, ed. A. Solovjev, in: *Istorisko-pravni spomenici, I. Dubrovački zakoni i uredbe*. [ZIJKSN, II.6]. Beograd: SANU, 1936: XXVI, 4); a few years later officials of the mint were elected by means of balls (*Liber omnium reformationum*, XII, 7), and in 1345 officials supervising wine trade (*Libri reformationum* I: p. 180).

By giving each patrician a ball, the clerk was to specify a candidate. Each councillor inserted his hand into a specially-designed urn (*bussolo, vaso, urna, pixis, blustro*) carried by the clerk, and dropped a ballot into either of the two compartments - red (affirmative) or green (negative). Secrecy was further ensured by using balls made of linen rather than wood, whose sound might disclose how a patrician had voted.⁷⁶

As for the objects employed in balloting, three urns from the late Republic period have been preserved. One of them, as shown in the photographs, is housed in the Historical Museum of Dubrovnik. The second urn, almost identical but not as well preserved as the first, belongs to the collection of the Franciscan Monastery in Dubrovnik. It may have later served the needs of the monastic community, as it has two portraits of Our Lady painted onto it. The third voting urn is exhibited in the museum of the Dominican Monastery. The urns were originally decorated with the Republic coat of arms, the traces of which no longer exist.⁷⁷ The urn had two divisions, one red and one green. The top of the red division carried the mark “*di si*”, and the green one “*di no*”. The urns were designed in such a way as to allow a hand to enter it and drop a ballot secretly into either of the compartments.⁷⁸ The bottom part of each portion was cup-shaped and could easily be opened for the ballot count.⁷⁹

5. Election results

Having completed the voting, each chancellery clerk placed the remaining balls onto a special plate. These extra balls usually belonged to the relatives who were excluded from voting. The urns were then taken before the Minor Council. The member of the Minor Council seated on the Rector's right held a red urn, while the councillor seated on his left held a green one so that each clerk emptied the contents of his urn into a corresponding box.

⁷⁶ G. P. Luccari, *Copioso ristretto*: p. 259.

⁷⁷ According to Luccari (*Copioso ristretto*: p. 259), it was a coat of arms with eight stripes in red and silver; for more detail on this, see Vito Galzinski, »Državni grbovi Dubrovačke Republike«, in: *Fiskovićev zbornik, 1. Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 21 (1980): pp. 342-354, particularly p. 346. The practice of painting the Republic coat of arms on the urns and on the ballot boxes is known to have persisted in the latter half of the seventeenth century, as evidenced by an expenditure made for the purpose: “per dipinger li due calici e tre bussoli con Arme” (*Detta*, vol. 16, f. 117r).

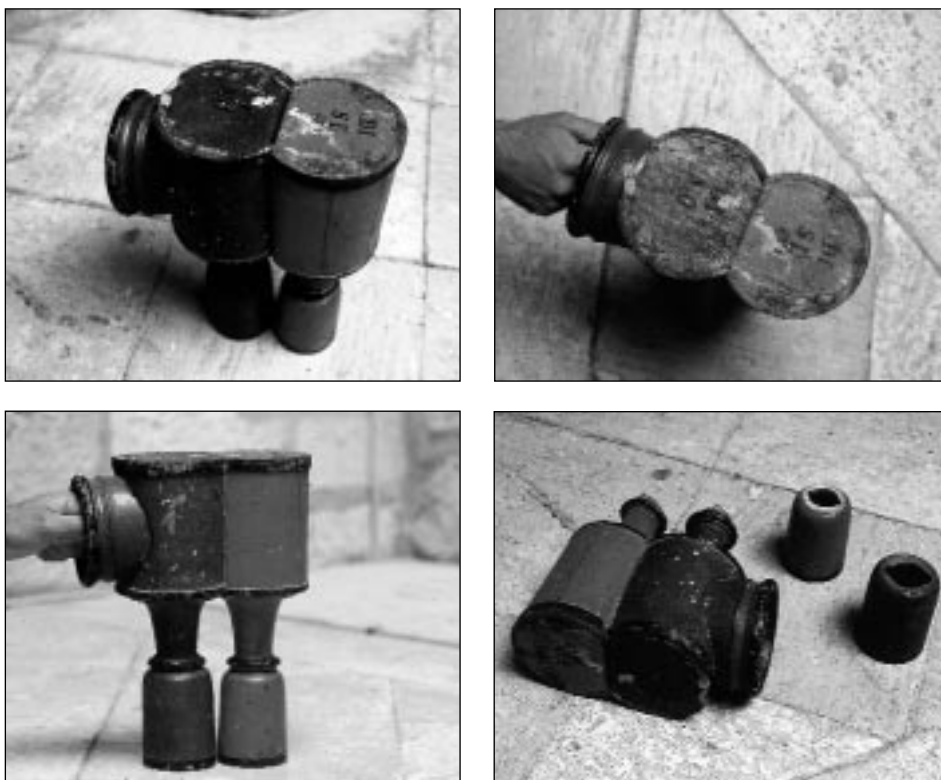
⁷⁸ See photographs 6-8.

⁷⁹ See photograph 9.

Once all the ballots were sorted, the counting began. Two chancellors were entrusted with the counting of votes. They approached the red and green urns and proceeded to open them. Having emptied the red urn with the pro votes first, and established that there were fewer than sixteen balls, the counting was interrupted and the balls were presented before the Rector. The results of the voting were recorded with a series of zeroes. If, however, there were more than sixteen affirmative votes, they proceeded with the counting, and the counting board (*vaso piano*) was placed before the member of the Minor Council seated to the right. Each ball was placed into a groove and carefully counted. The same was done with the negative votes from the green urn. The results were made public by announcing the affirmative and negative votes, plus the number of those excluded (*extra*).

It should be noted that the voting mechanism in the Republic of Dubrovnik differed to a certain extent from modern electoral systems, that is, it corresponded with the manner in which the members of the Major Council voted on all the other matters. Namely, the voter did not give his vote to one candidate of his choice, but took a vote for or against on a slate of candidates. The consequences of such a procedure may seem insignificant at first, but it had an impact on the final results. Nomination by committees allowed each member of the Major Council to have a clear review of the nominees and their number, so that he could decide which candidate to vote for, if any, or vote against all the nominees, hoping the first balloting would not decide on all the vacancies and his favourite would be proposed as a candidate in the reballoting. If more than one vacancy was to be filled (e.g. by senatorial elections), the voter could cast a positive vote for more than one candidate, thus raising the chances of those who were not his favourites but whom he considered more fit for the office than others. Nomination by scrutiny further encouraged the voting for several candidates because the voters had no prior knowledge of the nominees nor did they know their exact number. As it was perfectly legal to vote in favour of more candidates than the available vacancies, it should come as no surprise that the sum of affirmative votes for all the candidates often exceeded the number of participants in the council session.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ On 30 January 1363, for example, the Rector for February was being elected. Seventy-seven councillors were present, and in the fifth balloting two candidates received 46 votes each (*Libri reformationum* III: p. 247). During an election in 1380, sixty patricians attended the meeting of the Major Council. The three nominees won 33 votes each, which means that every third voter, on average, voted in favour of more than one candidate (*Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike* I: p. 98).



Photographs 6-9: The voting urn (Dubrovnik Museum).

In most of the high-office elections the candidate had to be elected by an absolute majority, that is, the votes in favour had to exceed the votes against and the victor had to have a majority over his rivals. As for candidates receiving more votes against than votes for, three zeroes were noted into the Major Council record instead of the results themselves.⁸¹ If each candidate received more votes against than for, the Rector was notified so that he could pronounce the vote void and give permission for another ballot.⁸² The

⁸¹ This procedure had already been in practice in the fourteenth century; see *Libri reformationum* III: pp. 226-227; *Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike* I: p. 100. In the rectorial election of 27 August 1442, there were 67 voters (i.e. balls); Jacobus de Georgio was elected with 37 votes for, 24 against, and 6 excluded. His opponents, Marinus Raphaeli de Goze and Nicola Marini de Caboga, received more votes against than for, and thus a series of zeroes was entered (see photograph 10).

⁸² “Signori, non è rimasto nessuno, s’anderà alla seconda elezione con miglior ventura” (*Cerimoniale* II, f. 44r).

procedure was then re-established from the selection of two new benches for the nominating committees, the nomination stage, and so forth. If several candidates received the same number of votes, they were balloted for a second time.⁸³ If only one candidate received more votes for than against,⁸⁴ the elections were concluded, and the register was presented to the Rector for the announcement of the results.⁸⁵ If several candidates received more positive than negative votes, the one with the best results was considered the winning candidate for office.

According to a law introduced towards the end of the fourteenth century, the Rector, members of the Minor Council, judges and ambassadors were elected by a two-thirds majority. This model soon proved unrealistic, and so fell into disuse within less than a year.⁸⁶

With elections of the local officials of the Republic (counts, etc.), in which the number of candidates was not limited, the elections were initially

Dne 27dy Augusti 1442		b. Dubrov.	
Electio. dñi Rectoris y mō sept.			
R. de Goze	---	6	0
Jacobus de Georgio	---	6	0
Nicola agm de Caboga	---	6	0

Photograph 10: Results of the election held on 27 August 1442 (*Acta Consilii Maioris*, ser. 8, vol. 7, f. 54v, State Archives of Dubrovnik).

⁸³ Cf. *Liber viridis*, c. 65; *Libri reformationum* III: p. 247. Interestingly, during the balloting on the candidates for the Minor Council in 1380, each of the three nominees received an equal number of votes, that is, 33 out of 60 patricians attending the meeting of the Major Council (*Od-luke veća Dubrovačke Republike* I: 98).

⁸⁴ As far as the winning majority is concerned, Ragusan legislation understood it as the majority of those who actually took a vote, that is, the number of the patricians present was reduced by the number of those excluded from the ballot in conformity with Ragusan law. Thus, for instance, Miho Sorgo was elected Rector in 1625 with the following result: 68 for, 64 against, and 9 excluded (*Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 34, f. 231r).

⁸⁵ In the late period of the Republic the formula announcing the victor read as follows: “Con nome di Dio, è rimasto Signor N.N.” (*Cerimoniale* II, f. 44rv).

⁸⁶ Cf. *Liber viridis*, c. 83, regulations dated 12 October 1394 and 4 December 1395.

performed in several ballots, so that after the first ballot, the elections narrowed down to the best three candidates, and finally to only two.⁸⁷ Accordingly, the candidate elected in the final ballot actually was supported by the majority of the electoral body. But in the second half of the fourteenth century, the system was simplified and reduced to a single ballot in which the winning candidate was the one with the best result.⁸⁸

6. Measures against fraudulent elections

6.1. Exclusion of relatives

As each nominee was officially announced, his immediate family and other specified relatives (up to the second degree by canon law or fourth by civil law, including nephews) were required to leave the council chamber until the vote on his candidacy had been completed.⁸⁹ The Ragusan system of exclusion merely aimed at abolishing the most obvious cause for concern that the vote would not occur according to the genuine political evaluation of the candidates. In principle, laws regarding exclusion cannot easily be defended against strong objections of formalism and implicitness: for some, no doubt, the sense of moral rectitude overcame personal connections, while for others, even the weakest social ties proved stronger than the sense of responsibility for public office. The Ragusan patriciate had never been impressive in size even when at its peak, and the web of kinship and personal interest was woven very tightly. In the circumstances, the effect of the aforementioned regulation regarding exclusion of kin was practically irrelevant. It was designed rather to allay the social embarrassment caused by the voting of relatives than to protect the fairness of selection.

6.2. The secrecy of the ballot

The secrecy of the ballot is the most essential element of every electoral system which is based on the principle of the free vote. In Ragusan practice, secret voting was made possible by using specially designed ballot urns and balls made of cloth. In addition, attempts to vote openly, coming from the

⁸⁷ *Liber omnium reformationum*, XXVI, 4 and *Libri reformationum* II: p. 352 from 1334.

⁸⁸ *Liber viridis*, c. 65 from 1388.

⁸⁹ G.P. Luccari, *Copioso ristretto*: p. 258. Cf., for instance *Libri reformationum* II: pp. 259 and 266. See also Z. Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode*: pp. 178-179.

voters themselves, were resolutely discouraged in the institutional practice of Dubrovnik in order to prevent a dangerous precedent.⁹⁰ Obviously, open voting is subject to a wide scope of social scruples whereas secret voting strives towards an ideal of a conscious decision. Moreover, eventual agreements on mutual support or the effects of electioneering were less effective when they had to survive the final challenge of the secret casting of ballots. Lastly, open voting could easily generate disorder, violence and tensions within the ruling class, which was seen as a major threat to the stability of the Ragusan political system.

6.3. *Supervision of the elections*

Until the middle of the fifteenth century the election itself was conducted and overseen by two members of the Minor Council.⁹¹ Once the posts of the *provisores civitatis* were established in 1477, their duties involved scrutinising the performance of the highest institutions, to be extended to election monitoring.⁹² From then on, election assemblies were to be supervised by at least two *provisores* and one *advocator communis*, whose duty was to prevent any irregularities during elections.⁹³ The movements in the Council Hall were in fact monitored from three positions. The Minor Council, which presided the session, supervised voting from its platform; the *provisores* surveyed the voting activities from their bench at the opposite end of the chamber;⁹⁴ the chancellery clerks, who carried the urns, were also delegated to guard against illegal electoral activity.⁹⁵ The fact that non-noble bureaucrats were commissioned to oversee the electoral behaviour of patricians may seem odd. But we should bear in mind that the Ragusan institutional system had already developed the practice of engaging clerks for certain supervisory tasks if it proved efficient.⁹⁶ In fact, the commoners in public service tended to exhibit more loyalty than some members of the patrician rank, and they were in a perfect position to observe the casting of the ballots.

⁹⁰ *Liber croceus*, cc. 86, § 37 forbids an open ballot on pardons and on the extension of deadlines set for public debtors; a vote which was not cast secretly was pronounced invalid.

⁹¹ *Liber viridis*, c. 444.

⁹² *Liber croceus*, c. 86, X and XV. On other responsibilities of the *provisores civitatis*, see a concise survey by K. Vojnović, »O državnom ustrojstvu«: pp. 59-62.

⁹³ *Liber croceus*, c. 86, XV.

⁹⁴ On the seating arrangement, see G. P. Luccari, *Copioso ristretto*: p. 257.

⁹⁵ *Liber croceus*, c. 212 from 1510.

⁹⁶ Cf. Z. Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode*: pp. 174-175.

In comparison with the Major Council of Renaissance Venice, which occasionally summoned in the number of 1000-1400 patricians,⁹⁷ election supervision in the Ragusan Major Council was far simpler. The periods of prosperity increased membership of the Major Council to more than 250 patricians,⁹⁸ but the average attendance was rarely more than 50 per cent.⁹⁹ In the years of demographic stagnation or loss of interest in public affairs, the elections were performed with fewer than 100 councillors.¹⁰⁰ This fact contributed to the easier supervision of nominations and voting in the Ragusan council in comparison with the Major Council of Venice.

6.4. Measures against counterfeit and extra ballots

Unlike those of Venice, Ragusan ballots were not marked so as to distinguish them from the fraudulent ones.¹⁰¹ As far as we know, counterfeit globules were not a major problem in the Ragusan electoral procedure; the problem was rather the balls that remained unused in one ballot to be secretly cast in another run-off.¹⁰² It seems that a couple of ballots could have been inserted into the urn without anyone noticing, proof of which are the two dice found among the contents of an urn in the fifteenth century.¹⁰³ An enormous

⁹⁷ Cf. R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: p. 21.

⁹⁸ Between 1455 and 1490, the Major Council counted an average of about 270 patricians (D. Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage and Politics*: p. 31). The plague year of 1527 reduced membership by half (Alexandre Soloviev, »Le patriciat de Raguse au XVe siècle«, in: *Rešetarov zbornik*, Dubrovnik 1929: p. 65; cited after Zdenko Zlatar, *Our Kingdom Come: The Counter-Reformation, the Republic of Dubrovnik and the Liberation of the Balkan Slavs*. New York: Boulder, 1992: p. 39). By 1600, according to Zlatar, the Major Council consisted of 380 patricians, by around 1615 the number had declined to 300, in 1625 it dropped below 200, and in 1650 it shrank to 177 (*Our Kingdom Come*: p. 47).

⁹⁹ In 1470, an average of 127 patricians voted on the Major Council (D. Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage and Politics*: p. 47).

¹⁰⁰ In addition to the cases cited in the notes, for the turn of the seventeenth century, see Ivica Martinović, »Ivan Šiškov Gundulić u izbornom žvrnju 1696-1700.«. *Dubrovnik* N.S. 12/3 (2001): pp. 37, 41-50.

¹⁰¹ On similar practice in Venice, see Lauro Martines, *Power and imagination: City-states in Renaissance Italy*. London: Allen Lane, 2. edition, 1980: p. 206.

¹⁰² On 3 January 1450, for example, 136 patricians met at the Major Council to elect two members of the Minor Council. While for one candidate the total vote (for, against, and excluded) amounted to the number of the councillors present, 14 balls were missing in the vote on the second candidate. The balls which were not cast remained with the voters, which could be improperly used in one of the upcoming elections (*Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 9, f. 94). See also *Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 23, ff. 64v-65v.

¹⁰³ *Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 9, f. 93; vol. 16, f. 204v. For more on this incidence, see Zdravko Šundrica, »Skandal u Velikom vijeću«. *Dubrovnik* 16/3 (1973): pp. 114-115.

commotion arose in the Major Council during the senatorial election of 1485, when in an urn an excess of as many as 30 ballots had been found, which means that one-sixth of the total votes were the result of electoral malfeasance. The Major Council ordered an immediate investigation of the incident, but with little result.¹⁰⁴ Until the beginning of the sixteenth century, the problem of the excess of ballots was dealt with very pragmatically: balloting was repeated only if the difference between the total number of the members participating and the number of the votes cast was such that it could interfere with the electoral outcome.¹⁰⁵ The scandal which occurred during the election of the Count of Ston in 1510 (an excess of 6 ballots in the first balloting and 8 ballots in the reballoting), however, necessitated changes in electoral procedures.¹⁰⁶ Stringent regulations were imposed concerning the casting of more than one ballot into the urn. No one was to be permitted to vote for a candidate until he first publicly showed that he held only one ballot to deposit into the urn. In an attempt to secure useful information on electoral corruption, the promise of a substantial reward awaited informants reporting instances of electoral abuse, even if the informant was an accomplice to the crime.¹⁰⁷

Clearly, the cases I have noted demonstrate that fraud was not attempted by a single malefactor. Was it the result of coordinated action aimed at fixing elections? If there was a 'conspiracy', it was an incredibly clumsy one. It seems to me that in the Ston case cheating can hardly be attributed to a group, but rather to a number of individual patricians, each of whom tried to support his candidate by adding extra ballot(s). Although the dishonest tampering was revealed, in the next ballot some of the councillors repeated the same trick, which cannot be seen as a realistic manoeuvre of a coordinated group. The number of counterfeit ballots in the case from 1485 is even more drastic. Such an excess of ballots could not have escaped notice and the elections had to be voided. I am more inclined to interpret the latter case as an impertinent act of a cabal of several patricians aimed at ridiculing the procedure and provoking scandal, similar to the casting of dice, rather than an attempt at electoral fraud.

¹⁰⁴ *Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 15, f. 65v.

¹⁰⁵ *Liber omnium reformationum*, XXII, 4 from 1394.

¹⁰⁶ On this case, see *ibid.*; *Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 18, f. 157v; *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, vol. 31, f. 271v.

¹⁰⁷ *Liber croceus*, c. 212. The malefactor could be punished with six months' imprisonment, exclusion from the Major Council and all other offices and benefices for ten years, and a fine of 100 ducats.

6.5. Measures against electoral corruption

Ragusan laws prohibited electioneering (*liga, compositio, unio, conspiratio, conventicula*, or *coniurazione, broglio*,¹⁰⁸ *bagra, fazio*) which could in any way influence the election prospects of a candidate. A number of measures were designed to counter both lobbying and putting pressure upon the voters once the electoral procedure was set in motion: councillors were not allowed to address the members of the electoral committees,¹⁰⁹ nor could they leave the hall without permission.¹¹⁰ *Provisores*, entrusted to supervise the elections, were to prevent any attempt at solicitation.¹¹¹ The very existence of a law according to which the selection of electors was to be immediately followed by nomination and ballot shows the Republic's marked concern about electoral corruption. Also, a number of provisions were passed to discourage devious stratagems and conspiracies. The latter, as described by law, undermined the sanctity (*sanctimonia*) of voting according to one's sound and genuine judgement, and could be treated as treason. Harsh penalties were prescribed: from a fine of 1000 perpers to three months of jail, and up to six years of exclusion from all offices and benefices.¹¹² One method of fighting corruption was the promise of a reward for those who reported any illegal activity during the elections,¹¹³ but it seems that this opened the door to the unpleasant practice of false accusation, which had to be suppressed, as evidenced by a provision of 1477.¹¹⁴

Ragusan authorities considered *broglio* a serious problem, and displayed open scepticism about its total elimination.¹¹⁵ Penalties awaited all those engaged in

¹⁰⁸ This is a Venetian term which, in its widest sense, meant political intrigue or corruption in general. It stems from a word describing the piazzetta between the Ducal Palace and the basilica where the patricians gathered and made their deals before entering the councils. See Donald E. Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth*. Urbana-Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986: p. 53.

¹⁰⁹ A regulation from 1363 in *Liber viridis*, c. 26.

¹¹⁰ *Liber croceus*, cc. 86, XV and 212.

¹¹¹ "... che li consiglieri non vadano de luogo ad luogo praticando et contaminando l' uno al altro in facto del ballotare..." (*Liber croceus*, c. 86, XV).

¹¹² For more detail, see *Liber viridis*, c. 83 from 1394 and *Liber croceus*, c. 86, X from 1477.

¹¹³ *Liber viridis*, c. 83. The monetary reward amounted to half of the fine, and could even be given to accomplices in the conspiracy if they came forward with information about the wrongdoing.

¹¹⁴ *Liber croceus*, c. 86, § 10.

¹¹⁵ *Liber croceus*, cc. 366 and 396.

lobbying, soliciting support, vote trading, and other illegal methods designed to gain nominations or win elections.¹¹⁶

Constructing a picture of a society on the basis of statutes and laws is always a methodological challenge. On the one hand, the preamble of statutes is often formulated so as to overemphasise the problem rhetorically and thus should not be taken literally; on the other hand, a law will not encompass anything that is alien to social reality. In concrete terms, it is impossible to confirm whether electoral corruption was widespread, and whether false accusations were really that intense, but there is no doubt that there was enough reason for government concern about corruption. There is reason to believe that there was greater leeway in elections for local offices for electoral corruption to expand since the nominations were done by scrutiny.¹¹⁷

A survey of the Ragusan electoral process points to a common practice in which a patrician who failed in the elections would be re-nominated for the same office, even on the very same day. It is difficult to understand why the new nominator believed that reballoting in the same council would bring his favourite better chances of election (because of the earlier mentioned 'for and against' voting mechanism it was of little significance to him that his counter-candidates had changed). In fact, cases of exceptionally persistent candidatures of the same person have been recorded despite the hostile majority.¹¹⁸ This may lead to the assumption that a group of patricians may have worked out a plan as to which candidate to nominate if elected to the committee and that they proved determined to see the scheme through. But, if it were a case of electoral conspiracy, it would be a very bad stratagem to insist on a losing candidate without providing him with a better network of supporters or without finding a new candidate with a better prospect instead. Cases of patricians being elected after a succession of futile ballots seem to confirm the existence of a secret 'coordination' among the voters, which eventually provided the required number of affirmative votes. This theory, however, does not hold in the majority of cases, in which the turn of events did not take place between the sessions but in the reballotting during the same meeting, without any possibility for the councillors to confer on

¹¹⁶ For a detailed description, see *Liber croceus*, c. 366; *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, vol. 161, f. 129.

¹¹⁷ On this point, see *Liber croceus*, c. 366.

¹¹⁸ In 1450, for example, Junius Calich was nominated five times as new Rector for the month of February, and was finally elected in the sixth ballot (D. Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage, and Politics*: p. 46).

candidates.¹¹⁹ Therefore, arguments in favour of the existence of a stratagem adopted by certain patrician groups in order to control the elections remain unconvincing. In my opinion, the same candidate was not re-nominated on the basis of background ‘coordination’, but because of the internal and less calculating backing of his friends and relatives.¹²⁰ These informal groupings of supporters persisted in nominations with low prospects, failing to develop any rational instruments of election control. The circumstances in which the unsuccessful candidate finally reached the winning majority may have been inconsequential: the following meeting was attended by a couple of voters more or less,¹²¹ or the voters were tired and wished to put an end to exhaustive reballoting. In support of the assumption that the Ragusan elections were not firmly controlled by certain political structures within the rank is the fact that rectorial monthly elections were often carried out swiftly and without any obstruction in the first round, but could just as equally be repeated over and over again the following month.¹²² It should be pointed out that the analysed

¹¹⁹ On 22 November 1623, for example, during the rectorial election, Petar Giorgi managed to receive the majority vote in the fourth ballot (74 in favour, 73 opposed, and 4 excluded), but was beaten by Jerko Resti (76:66:9) whose candidacy failed in six ballots that very same day (*Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 34, f. 99rv). A week later, at a meeting during which he failed to receive the winning majority, Frano Gondola unexpectedly won by 86 votes in favour and 65 opposed (*ibid.*, f. 100). On 9 December of the same year, Matej Ghetaldi was elected member of the Minor Council with 73 votes for, 72 against, and 2 excluded, while the previous ballot held at the same meeting had failed to bring him the winning vote (*ibid.*, f. 104v).

¹²⁰ This may account for the fact that Petar Gondola was candidate for the office of Rector six times in 1380, and every single month in 1381. In eighteen ballots he received a positive majority vote only once, and then again he was beaten by his opponent. In January 1382, he was finally elected Rector in the second ballot, as in the first vote he and the second candidate were tied (*Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike* I: pp. 97-281). Or, in the elections of members of the Minor Council at the end of 1623, it took 24 ballots to elect the last two members: Miho Resti had run an unsuccessful candidacy as many as 23 times, and Frano Zamagna 22 times. It is interesting that Resti won by a particularly close majority (74 in favour, 73 opposed, 4 excluded), whereas Zamagna received respectable support (85 in favour, 57 opposed). See *Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 34, f. 113r.

¹²¹ In 1380, for example, Matej Georgio was nominated for the rectorial post several times: in January he failed at the elections twice, in February also twice, and was finally elected by a close vote in March (31 in favour out of 60 voters). In January, 63 patricians participated in the meeting, in February 69, so that the number of March votes would not have brought him victory in February (see *Odluke veća Dubrovačke Republike* I: pp. 97-98). In 1450, it took 35 ballots to elect Jakov Gondola to the post of Criminal Court Justice, winning by a majority of one (*D. Rheubottom, Age, Marriage, and Politics*: p. 48).

¹²² See examples in Note 4. In December 1623, four ballots were required to fill the Rector’s post, while in the following month the Rector was elected in the first ballot (*Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 34, ff. 100r and 123r).

samples from different time periods do not lead to the conclusion that the electoral prospects of the candidates of the Minor Council (i.e. the government) were greater in any way than those of their rivals.¹²³

7. *Pattern, models, analogy*

A parallel may be drawn between the development of the election system of Dubrovnik and of the European societies constructed on similar social and institutional patterns (for example, Italian communes).

The shaping of the election system in the Ragusan constitutional practice may be traced back to the first half of the fourteenth century. Some of the more developed western communes could already pride themselves on having articulated and efficient electoral patterns. Given the nature of the sources, it is often difficult to determine the exact origin of certain elements. Also, diversity of detail makes the establishment of the common denominator of the systems even harder. Viewed generally, one may confirm that in mid-thirteenth century communes the secret ballot was a standard procedure, while nomination through committees had already gained precedence, usually in combination with the selection of electors by lot. In addition, electoral regulations were accompanied by protective mechanisms similar to the ones we have described in the Ragusan practice.¹²⁴

This was also the framework of the Venetian electoral system during its institutional transformation from a commune into a state ruled by the aristocratic elite (the end of the twelfth to the end of the thirteenth century).¹²⁵ With some minor reforms, it prevailed until the fall of the Venetian Republic. Thanks to detailed descriptions in chronicles and travel accounts, along with the information afforded by statutory provisions, the electoral procedure in

¹²³ By contrast, the nominee of the Venetian Senate enjoyed considerable advantages, his candidacy being considered the only serious one in the eighteenth century (James C. Davis, *The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962: p. 85).

¹²⁴ On this, see the survey: Arthur M. Wolfson, »The Ballot and Other Forms of Voting in the Italian Communes«. *The American Historical Review* 5/1 (1899): pp. 1-21; for a brief reference see also Philip Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997: p. 411.

¹²⁵ On the process, see G. Zordan, *L'ordinamento giuridico veneziano*: pp. 63-96. There was a two-stage nomination of candidates in the rudimentary election procedure of 1177-1178, but a gradual shift of political power away from the general assembly towards the Major Council (ending with the formal 'closing' of the latter in 1297) gave way to a complex procedure which combined the elements of selection by lots and ballot.

Venice has been reconstructed in detail, while other archival documents shed light upon its electoral reality.¹²⁶

A parallel drawn between the Venetian and Ragusan pattern in their mature stages shows a high degree of similarity in the election procedure, but also in the technical and ritual aspect of the practice. Not only were the elections framed in the same manner, but the election sessions in both communities display a striking similarity in the agenda, while the electoral devices (balls, ballots, urns) were exactly the same.¹²⁷ Judging by appearance, the similarities are such that, without a deep insight into the distinctive features, one could not tell the difference between a description of the Ragusan or Venetian election procedure. Both systems also exhibit a close resemblance in the choice of measures designed to protect the process.

Formal similarities aside, significant differences between the systems come to light. In Venice, the nominating procedure was carried out by four committees (*mani*), implying that the number of candidates was either four or five times greater (if the Senate was authorised to nominate) so that an absolute majority could not have been reached in the first ballot but through several ballotings, eliminating the candidates with fewer prospects.¹²⁸ Conversely, the two Ragusan committees and the Minor Council nominated three candidates for a single vacancy, which in principle could lead to an immediate majority result, but in practice often failed to do so. This difference had a significant impact on the efficiency of the election procedure. While

¹²⁶ All the comparative information has been obtained from: G. Maranini, *La Costituzione di Venezia* II: especially pp. 101-129; Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*. Baltimore-London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973; Donald E. Queller and Francis R. Swietek, »The Myth of the Venetian Patriciate: Electoral Corruption in Medieval Venice«, in: Donald E. Queller, *Two Studies on Venetian Government*. GenPve: Librairie Droz, 1977: pp. 99-175; R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: especially pp. 89-96 and 196-226; *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630*, ed. David Chambers and Brian Pullan. Oxford-Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992.

¹²⁷ As an illustration, ballots made of cloth were also used in Venice (G. Maranini, *La Costituzione di Venezia* II: p. 116), and from 1492 urns similar to the Ragusan ones were in use (see G. Maranini, *La Costituzione di Venezia* II: pp. 116-117; R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: p. 202). The urns are depicted on sixteenth-century graphics (reproduced in: F. Lane, *Venice*: p. 261 and S. Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall*: pl. XXXIX), and one urn is housed at the *Museo Correr* (Inv. XIX, n. 450). Venetian and Ragusan urns differed from each other in one detail: the latter had one opening to insert the hand and drop the ballot into either of the two divisions, while the former had two separate openings.

¹²⁸ G. Maranini, *La Costituzione di Venezia* II: p. 118.

the Ragusan system proved inefficient in reaching an absolute majority at one stage of the electoral procedure, restarting from the very beginning with a new list of candidates, and necessitating reballoting over several meetings, the Venetian procedure constructed in several stages and with the subsequent elimination of less successful candidates contributed to the much greater efficiency of the process as a whole. On the other hand, the Ragusan principle that the elections had to be repeated from the nominating procedure in the case of an inconclusive ballot contributed to the greater importance of the laws of chance, thus making the system less open to corruption. By contrast, elections in Venice, in which the electoral body dealt with the same candidates during a series of sessions, provided perfect ground for electoral manoeuvres. Here we come to the problem of interaction between the election pattern and the institutional and political reality.

8. Dubrovnik and Venice: the same election pattern, a different institutional and political context

As we have seen, the election patterns of Dubrovnik and Venice bear close resemblance. However, given the distinctive institutional, social, and political frameworks of the two republics, the same election system proved different in practice.

Ample literature on the Venetian election practice agrees that electoral corruption, that is, electoral abuse, dogged elections at every stage. The sources afford a plethora of illegal methods, popular among the patricians: from tricks to ensure the extraction of the gilded ball in order to enter the nominating committee, and various fraudulent techniques involving the voting urns (e.g. the smuggling in of fraudulent globules), to sending special signals to the electors on the committees.¹²⁹ Some of the actions we might mark as suspicious were not considered illicit (soliciting support from friends and relatives, exchange of favours),¹³⁰ but many were explicitly prohibited by law (trading money for nominations or the distribution of delicacies to the voters,¹³¹ vote bargaining around which poor patricians organised themselves

¹²⁹ D. Queller - F. Swietek, »The Myth of the Venecian Patriciate«: pp. 114-118 and 123-125; R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: pp. 201-208; *Venice: A Documentary History*: pp. 78-79.

¹³⁰ D. Queller - F. Swietek, »The Myth of the Venecian Patriciate«: p. 119; R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: p. 199.

¹³¹ R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: p. 200.

into groups in the sixteenth century and sold their votes to the highest bidder¹³²). The state itself was also involved in vote seeking, and at times it was common practice for a candidate to make financial contributions or to give loans to the treasury, which in fact were officially announced shortly before the ballot.¹³³ According to Robert Finlay, electoral corruption or *broglia* may also be viewed as a vital stabilising mechanism, which attenuated the conflict between factions within the Venetian ruling class.¹³⁴

As to how intense electoral corruption actually was in Dubrovnik, it is impossible to say with exactitude. Cases of corruption have been traced in the sources, and the Ragusan government showed some concern in fighting it. The sources, however, offer no ground to believe that electoral corruption was a common phenomenon in Ragusan political practice, let alone that it extended to the proportions it did in Venice.¹³⁵

The explanation of the differences should be sought in the broader institutional context which imbued the elections in Venice with such political interests unlikely to be found in the Republic of Dubrovnik. There was little resemblance between the positions of the head of state in the two republics. The institutional authority of the Doge of Venice was not great, but his political power was considerable.¹³⁶ While the Doge's political influence derived, among other things, from the fact that he was elected for life, the extremely short-term mandate narrowed the political ambitions of the Ragusan Rector to his representative role. The Doge's lifelong honour brought social and economic prosperity to all his family, while the one-month rectorship of his Ragusan counterpart failed to bring any lasting prestige or benefit to its holder or his kin. In fact, there were no genuinely lucrative offices in Dubrovnik,¹³⁷ while in Venice a succession of desirable sinecures were much sought after: from the bishopric (unlike Dubrovnik, it was reserved for natives of the

¹³² D. Queller - F. Swietek, »The Myth of the Venecian Patriciate«: pp. 130-133.

¹³³ F. Lane, *Venice*: p. 263.

¹³⁴ R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: pp. 219-222.

¹³⁵ On a similar conclusion, see Z. Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode*: p. 111.

¹³⁶ On analysis, see F. Lane, *Venice*: pp. 267-270. This explains the extremely complex election procedure of the Doge who was selected by means of as many as nine *ad hoc* bodies (see G. Zordan, *L'ordinamento giuridico veneziano*: pp. 74-76).

¹³⁷ For more detail and particulars on this issue, see Z. Janeković Römer: *Okvir slobode*: pp. 159-169; D. Rheubottom, *Age, Marriage, and Politics*: p. 39.

Republic) to high-ranking supervisory posts.¹³⁸ Ragusan patricians tried to avoid posts in the local units because they were unpleasant, terribly boring, and of minimal financial benefit,¹³⁹ while their Venetian counterparts often profited from offices in Venetian regional and local administration both financially and politically.¹⁴⁰

In short, what was at stake in the Ragusan and Venetian elections was not the same. Heated and fierce competition for office, often characterised by illegal and corrupt methods, had no fertile ground in Dubrovnik.¹⁴¹ Here one should not underestimate the social significance of winning office or the influence of the position of the head of state, nor should we ignore the cases when, driven by personal motives, certain posts became more desirable.¹⁴² The Ragusan electoral context should not be envisaged as completely neutral, since cases of cheating prove otherwise, but a victorious outcome could hardly transform a nobleman's future. In Venetian political practice, however, such powerful governmental positions were not rare, and thus the motives to abuse divine and human laws (sortition and vote) were incomparably stronger.

¹³⁸ F. Lane, *Venice*: pp. 263-264. Finlay claims that "office seeking dominated and shaped Venetian political life" in the Renaissance (*Politics in Renaissance Venice*: p. 197).

¹³⁹ For example, Nicola de Martinusio, who was elected Count of Lastovo on 26 September 1450 chose to pay the relatively high fine of 25 perpers rather than take the post on the remote island (*Acta Maioris Consilii*, vol. 9, f. 139). On avoiding office in the fifteenth century, see Z. Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode*: pp. 165-166; in the sixteenth century, cf. *Liber croceus*, c. 262; in the seventeenth century, *Liber croceus*, c. 299; in the eighteenth century, see N. Lonza, *Pod plaštem pravde*: pp. 62-64. There were, however, different cases: cf. the "Ston case" from the sixteenth century described in Chap. 6.4.

¹⁴⁰ This was particularly the case with the governing posts in the inland towns of the Venetian Republic. The large number of electoral conspiracies in the fifteenth century was related to the elections for these posts (cf. D. Queller - F. Swietek, »The Myth of the Venetian Patriciate«: pp. 141-152). For more detail on this point, see D. Queller, *The Venetian patriciate*: pp. 53-54.

¹⁴¹ Z. Janeković Römer rightly asserts that the Republic of Dubrovnik did not witness such a discrepancy between the number of offices and candidates as in Venice (*Okvir slobode*: p. 111). In my opinion, however, the 'new posts' owed their growth to the proliferation of the central state institutions in the fifteenth century rather than to territorial expansion.

¹⁴² On impoverished Ragusan patricians and their efforts to secure state sinecures, see Z. Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode*: pp. 160-161. On Venice in the fifteenth century cf. D. Queller - F. Swietek, »The Myth of the Venetian Patriciate«: pp. 110-111; R. Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*: pp. 75, 205; in the eighteenth century cf. Laura Megna, »Riflessi pubblici della crisi del patriziato veneziano nel XVIII secolo: Il problema delle elezioni ai reggimenti«, in: *Stato, società e giustizia nella Repubblica Veneta (sec. XV-XVIII)*, II, ed. G. Cozzi. Roma: Jouvence, 1985: p. 258.

In addition, we should bear in mind that the difference in size between the two states had a considerable effect on electoral practice. Electoral procedure in the Great Council of Venice with thousands of patricians taking part was certainly difficult to control, and the bustle during the meetings worked to the advantage of electoral fraud. But the mere one-tenth of the number that gathered in the Ragusan hall was far easier to supervise.¹⁴³

Ragusan political reality suffered more from inefficiency than from corruption. On the one hand, the demographic decline of the patriciate and a weakening interest in decision making affected the patricians' attendance of meetings. Even though the regulations on quorum became more flexible in order to adapt to social reality, elections were often postponed, and entire divisions of the governmental apparatus (particularly in the local units) remained vacant and dormant over a long period of time. On the other hand, the required absolute majority in the single casting of votes was hardly attainable: factional interests or discrepancies within the patrician body need not have been great for this goal to remain unfulfilled. Interventions to eliminate the most serious defects in the electoral system and to ensure the regular distribution of government institutions never took place. The reason probably lies in the deep conservatism and traditionalism of Ragusan society. This resistance to innovation is also evident in some of the earlier mentioned elements of the election procedure which survived long after their practical purpose ceased to exist.

It was the deepening of the rift within the patriciate and the conflict between the two factions in the middle of the eighteenth century that finally triggered a series of reforms in the electoral system. These measures, however, were not designed to improve the efficiency of the system or secure due electoral practice, but were palliative and often quite contradictory, serving primarily as a device for one of the factions to achieve political dominance.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Some of the Venetian cases of electoral corruption simply could not have been carried out in Ragusan circumstances (cf. D. Queller - F. Swietek, »The Myth of the Venetian Patriciate«: pp. 115, 145; *Venice: A Documentary History*: p. 79).

¹⁴⁴ The year 1747 marked the beginning of profound institutional reforms in the electoral system as well, securing the power of the senatorial oligarchy. For more detail, see Nella Lonza, »Izborni postupak Dubrovačke Republike«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti u Dubrovniku* 38 (2000): pp. 46-50.