UNFAITHFUL REPRESENTATIONS OF DUBROVNIK IN FIFTEENTH- AND SIXTEENTH-CENTURY GRAPHICS

ANTUN NIČETIĆ

ABSTRACT: In the historical descriptions of Dubrovnik and Ancona, an identical graphic representation can be found of the two cities and their harbours. In addition, there are several other graphics and drawings which attempt to render the perspective of Dubrovnik, though with little success. Apparently, the typographers and printers of the time tended to reuse the existing clichés, calculating on the high cost of making new plates. Therefore, historians should be particularly careful when dealing with 'historical views' of Dubrovnik.

In the historical description of Dubrovnik several representations of the city can be traced, dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which seem to bear little resemblance to the city itself.

Milan Rešetar was among the first who, in 1924, published most of these graphics in the journal *Narodna starina*, in an article entitled »Slike starog Dubrovnika«.[1] The oldest illustration which, according to Rešetar, depicts

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[1] Milan Rešetar, »Slike staroga Dubrovnika«. *Narodna starina* 3/8 (1924): pp. 176-189.

[2] M. Rešetar, »Slike staroga Dubrovnika«: p. 176.

[3] Grga Novak, »Jadransko more, Povijest«. *Pomorska enciklopedija*, vol. III. Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod, 1956: p. 575.

Antun Ničetić, Captain of the merchant marine, Professor in the Department of Nautical Studies, University of Dubrovnik. Address: Iva Vojnovića 73, 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia.

Dubrovnik "... dates from 1481, the same year when Augsburg saw the publication of Rolenwinc's *Fasciculus temporum*, of which volume 9, under the year 458, contains a few references to Dubrovnik, and this small woodcut (8.2 x 6.4cm). A mere glance at it reveals that it was drawn by someone who had never set eyes on Dubrovnik, or even if he had, his reminiscences were reduced to a vague picture of a fortified city by the sea. The text itself bears scant witness to the city's magnificent public and private buildings, its vessels and a very good harbour closed by means of a chain. It is true that a chain did run (at night) from one side of the harbour entrance to the other (as shown in the picture) to seal it off against intruders, but the rest of the representation is pure invention—the walls, the buildings, and the narrow channel leading into the port from the open sea which does not exist nor ever has. The perspective is quite unreal" (Ill. 1).[2]

The same illustration accompanied a text on Dubrovnik authored by Grga Novak, published in *Pomorska enciklopedija* [*Maritime Encyclopaedia*] in 1956, captioned "Dubrovnik, according to a drawing from 1481".[3] It also appeared in 1980, in Vinko Foretić's *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*, with the author's explanation: "A primitive, unfaithful representation of Dubrovnik with the city harbour from Rolenwinc's *Fasciculus temporum*, printed in Augsburg, 1481".[4]

In 1991, the same picture reappeared in *Zbornik radova sa simpozija Likovna kultura 15. i 16. stoljeća*, in Dražen Budiša's contribution entitled »Dubrovnik i dubrovački motivi na knjižnim grafikama u 15. i 16. stoljeću«.[5] Dražen Budiša pointed to Rešetar's error in the citation of the author and the title of the work, and in his publication the woodcut has the caption "Perspective of Dubrovnik from Benali's second edition of *Supplementum chronicarum* by Jacobus Philipus de Bergamo, 1486".[6] Budiša's critical remarks are but a slender contribution to the problem. Namely, in the *Guida di Ancona* by Giorgio Mangani and Valerio Paci, published in the same year as Budiša's contribution, on page 27 stands the same reproduction, bearing the caption: "Veduta di Ancona, di Jacopo Filippo da Jesi (1540)".[7] It is evident that the same picture was used to

[4] Vinko Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*., vol. I. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1980: p. 116.

[5] Dražen Budiša, »Dubrovnik i dubrovački motivi na knjižnim grafikama u 15. i 16. stoljeću«, in: *Likovna kultura 15. i 16. stoljeća*, ed. Igor Fisković. Zagreb: Muzejsko-galerijski centar, 1991: pp. 32-37.

[6] Ibidem, p. 32.

[7] Giorgio Mangani and Valerio Paci, *Guida di Ancona*. Ancona: Il Lavoro Editoriale, 1991: p. 27.

represent two different towns, Dubrovnik and Ancona, the perspective itself having nothing in common with either of the two cities. Moreover, the picture is differently dated: Dubrovnik, 1486, and Ancona, 1540. There is ground to believe that behind the names of Jacobus Philipus de Bergamo and Jacopo Filippo da Jesi hides one and the same person, whose name is once reported in the Latin, and once in the Italian form.

In an attempt to resolve the dilemma, my article "Dubrovnik ili Ancona?" published in *Naše more* tends to shed more light on the problem.[8] The article has drawn the attention of some Italian historians and was subsequently published in translation in *Proposte e ricerche*, in Ancona.[9] When asked about the illustration by the journal editor Sergio Anselmi, Giorgio Mangani, co-author of the *Guida di Ancona*, responded that "… it represented neither Dubrovnik nor Ancona, but an archetype of a coastal town of the early modern period", a thesis we both seem to agree on. His claims are based on the assumption that "*'Anchona Piceni Civitas'*, as captioned on leaf 35v of the *Supplementum chronicarum* by Jacobus Philippus Bergamensis (Venezia: Bernadino Rizzo, 1492), represents one of the perspective views of the city in woodcut which illustrate this compendium of world history, a copy of which is housed in Biblioteca Planettiana of Jesi (*Fondo Incunaboli, Conv. Inc.* 4/1-2). The author, Jacopo Filippo Foresti (1445-1513), was an Augustinian friar known as 'Bergamense' on account of his Bergamo origin, where he had amassed a vast convent library which probably provided the material for his work (as reported in the book of R. Bigliardi Parlapiano, *Biblioteca Planettiana Jesi,* Fiesole: Nardini, 1997: pp. 44-45). This work also contains the views of other coastal towns (Naples, Syracuse, Marsiglia, Ragusa), all bearing a striking resemblance, whereas in the 1483 edition of the same work (a copy of which is kept at *Biblioteca Civica* in Fano) the perspectives of diverse towns are identical, as was often the case in the works of this genre, in which iconography primarily functioned as a decorative device, since typographers and publishers tended to use the same woodcuts, calculating on the high cost of engraving".[10]

Budiša rightly asserts that this controversial engraving cannot be considered the first graphic representation of Dubrovnik. In his opinion, "it could be an illustration from the Venetian edition *Supplementum cronicarum* of 1490

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[8] Antun Ničetić, »Dubrovnik ili Ancona?«. *Naše more* 44/5-6 (1997): pp. 287-288.
[9] Antun Ničetić, »Ragusa o Ancona?«. *Proposte e ricerche* 40 (1998): pp. 119-123.
[10] *Proposte e ricerche* 40 (1998): pp. 122-123.

(Ill. 2), which actually distinguishes certain geographic and architectural landmarks of Dubrovnik (the fort on Mount Srđ, Lovrijenac, the Fortress of St Luke, the Fortress of St John, Onofrio's Fountain), and which may thus be considered the earliest dated perspective view of Dubrovnik".[11] Yet a closer look soon reveals that none of the fortresses Budiša mentions can be discerned, especially not the fort on Mount Srđ, since it was constructed much later, during the French occupation in the early nineteenth century. At the time the woodcut was made, the Minčeta Tower, for example, had already been constructed and dominated the urban layout. However, this view fails to map it and adds to the obscurity of the city presented.

The urban layout of Dubrovnik failed to resemble either of the two perspectives (Ill. 3 and 4) Rešetar commented on: "I have two illustrations from the end of the sixteenth century which bear striking resemblance to each other, and there is no doubt that one of them was modelled on the other, only I cannot tell the original from the copy; neither of them, apart from the caption 'RAGVSI', has anything to do with Dubrovnik and might easily be a perspective of any coastal town. Yet it is interesting how the typographers and publishers of the time, driven by naive presumption, created and sold 'faithful' perspectives of various towns from other parts of the world".[12]

The view of Dubrovnik from the seventeenth century, which Rešetar attributes to Merian (Ill. 5), and Kozličić to Peeters (Ill. 6), is also far from faithful. Kozličić elaborates as follows: "With Dubrovnik (K-211) Peeters is original again. His depiction of the city with the harbour cannot be described as accurate, although it does make a significant improvement. The view being from the south-east, the Island of Lokrum lies in the foreground. Over its top, one can view the entrance to the city harbour but without the famous breakwater (*Kaše*), with an additional channel and a non-existent stretch of land to the south and to the west of the fortification (on the left-hand side of the picture). A most accurate portrayal of a Ragusan galley in the foreground draws particular attention, as it is by far the best drawing of this type of ship evidenced in cartographic sources".[13] But apart from the caption RAGUSA hovering above the city, and the galley (which might be of Ragusan construction), this graphic

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[11] D. Budiša, »Dubrovnik i dubrovački motivi na knjižnim grafikama u 15. i 16. stoljeću«: p. 32.

[12] M. Rešetar, »Slike starog Dubrovnika«: p. 179.

[13] Mithad Kozličić, *Atlas. Kartografski spomenici hrvatskog Jadrana*. Zagreb: AGM, 1995: p. 229.

representation bears no further resemblance to Dubrovnik. To what extent it actually departs from reality one can gather from the mosque and its tall minaret located in the central part of the city, which actually never existed in Dubrovnik.

Another interesting contribution to the topic is a drawing of Dubrovnik in the twelfth century from the State Archives in Dubrovnik (Ill. 7). Thanks to the watermark, it is possible to establish the origin of the drawing—eighteenth century at the earliest—with annotations clearly dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century.[14] In his article, however, Milan Rešetar makes no reference to this drawing, but Josip Lučić in his *Povijest Dubrovnika* does.[15] On the basis of this drawing, Željko Peković analyses the urban setting of Dubrovnik in the Middle Ages in his book *Dubrovnik—nastanak i razvoj srednjovjekovnog grada*: "The drawing represents a perspective view of Dubrovnik as it appeared in the twelfth century. Although drawn by the end of the seventeenth or in the early eighteenth century, if crudely, it affords a host of useful information on the city's development".[16] Here, one cannot but ask oneself how it is possible for a city perspective drawn at the turn of the seventeenth century to be a valuable source for the study of its appearance and development in the twelfth century.

In contrast to the mentioned examples so far, the city has been faithfully represented on a number of statues, paintings and drawings from the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The oldest and best preserved city model is the one on the silver statue of St Blaise from the mid-fifteenth century (Ill. 8).[17] The city patron holds the city in his hand. True, not all of the city streets have been shown: eight streets to the north of the *Placa* (*Stradun*), and seven to the south of it instead of fourteen on each side. The model also focuses on the city harbour adjoining some of the major buildings: the Cathedral, the Rector's Palace (enclosed by towers), the Great Arsenal, the Clock Tower, the Placa (square) with Orlando's Column flying the flag with St Blaise on it, and the Church of St Blaise. Strong fortifications protect the harbour and the city's

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[14] *RF, Bassegli-Gozze*, file 134, doc. n. 131a (State Archives of Dubrovnik).

[15] Josip Lučić, *Povijest Dubrovnika*, vol. II. Zagreb: Historijski institut JAZU u Dubrovniku, 1973: Ill. 13.

[16] Željko Peković, *Dubrovnik. Nastanak i razvoj srednjovjekovnog grada*. Split: Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske and Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 1998: p. 26.

[17] The work of Ragusan goldsmiths, probably mid-fifteenth century, gold-plated silver, punched, 67.5 cm x 22 cm x 14 cm, The Parish Church of St Blaise.

vital parts. The Fortress of St Luke and that of the *Muo* (the *Kaše* had not yet been constructed) mark the entrance to the harbour and are connected with a large chain, clearly discernable on the model.

By far the most beautiful and most accurate view of Dubrovnik and its harbour is depicted by Nikola Božidarević's triptych, the Blessed Virgin with Saints (St Thomas, St Augustine, St Paul and St Blaise) from the early sixteenth century.[18] St Blaise is shown grasping Dubrovnik firmly in his hands (Ill. 9), with all the major city landmarks clearly represented, especially the arsenals. The painting shows the eastern wall of the Great Arsenal with circular archways constructed at the turn of the fifteenth century. Behind it lies a wall with pointed arches which had lost its function with the construction of the new eastern wall. The Arsenal is protected by the *Kula ribarnice* (the Fishmarket Tower, destroyed in 1853) to the north and by the *Kaznena kula* (the Punishment Tower) to the south, at the bottom of which was a small triangular quay for boats to moor. The Small Arsenal was composed of three equal sections. Božidarević also portrayed the semi-circular *Kula od mula* (the Pier Tower), and the chain which connected it with the *Kaše*. An identical design of the tower appears in Illustrations 10 and 11.

And finally, a third faithful perspective of Dubrovnik has been found in the city and harbour plans filed at the State Archives of Turin (Ill. 10 and 11).[19] Their origin is assigned to the military preparations of Charles Emmanuel I (1598-1630), Duke of Savoy, for a campaign against the Ottomans, in which Dubrovnik was to become a military and logistic base.[20] However, there is reason to believe that the map collection had been started earlier by Charles's father, Emmanuel Philibert. Thus, the Ragusan maps may be dated before 1607/8, each drawing probably being made to suit its own purpose. A series of counter-Turkish campaigns (The War of the First, and later of the Second, Holy League) emphasised once again the value of Dubrovnik's geostrategic position, as well as the importance of its fortifications. Consequently, interest grew for detailed plans of the city and the harbour.

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[18] The Dominican Church, Dubrovnik.

[19] Ilario Principe, »Tri neobjavljene karte Dubrovnika iz XVI.- XVII. st.«. *Dubrovnik* N.S. 1 (1991): pp. 191-202.

[20] On the dating of the maps, see Stjepan Ćosić and Nenad Vekarić, »The Factions within the Ragusan Patriciate (17th-18th Century)«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 7 (2003): p. 13. Ilario Principe, who had published the drawings, made little attempt at more accurate dating.

In the focus of the drawing depicting the harbour are the arsenals: the Small Arsenal with the twin sections and a much smaller adjoining addition. Adjacent to it are the two tall square-based towers of St Dominic and St Luke. The Great Arsenal is distinguished by four arches with galleys protruding from them. Together with the Fishmarket Tower (behind which was the granary, built in 1461 and destroyed in the Great Earthquake of 1667) and the Punishment Tower, recognisable by the triangular quay before it, the Great Arsenal constituted a unique fortification complex. Between the Punishment Tower and the Great Arsenal was a smaller archway with a window above it. Due to subsequent reconstruction, it was walled up and no longer exists. Yet the top of the arch may still be seen at about 175cm above average sea level, testifying to its fairly modest size (about 3.80m in width). As proof of an earlier construction on the same site are the remains of a walled up, pointed arch of almost the same size as those of the Great Arsenal, but narrower. It was the entrance to the *Fontik* (grain warehouse and market), most likely walled up by the end of the fifteenth or the start of the sixteenth century.

Close analysis of the drawing reveals that St John's Fortress had not yet acquired the present-day design (dating from 1557), but instead stands *Kula od Mula* with its semi-circular bastion. The Revelin Fortress is not shown either, as it was built between 1538 and 1551. On the site is the outer Ploče Gate (1478), the inner Ploče Gate and the bridge (1449) with some minor adjoining buildings, in front of which lies a spacious square (then and now Arms Square—*Piazza d'armi)* equipped with cannons. The drawing depicts the square without the parapet, whose construction was decided by the Senate in October 1593.[21] The Ponta pier appears to have been a wooden construction supported by wooden pillars, its reconstruction in stone being undertaken in 1566. According to the evidence provided by this drawing, it probably dates from the mid-sixteenth century or even earlier. While none of the earlier mentioned graphics had been drawn by contemporary observers, this drawing is certainly a realistic and faithful representation of the city harbour.

Overall, then, the graphics and drawings in Illustrations 1-6 bear no resemblance to Dubrovnik. Despite this, some authors continue to reproduce them in their works. The 2001 edition of Slobodan Prosperov Novak's *Dubrovnik ponovljen* contains the perspective of Dubrovnik as shown in Ill. 1.[22] The reproduction

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[21] See Lukša Beritić, *Utvrđenja grada Dubrovnika*. Zagreb: JAZU, 1955: p. 164.

[22] Slobodan P. Novak, *Dubrovnik ponovljen*. Zagreb: LMN, d.o.o., 2001.

of these views without any critical comment or a word of warning about their unauthentic representation may lead readers astray. Further, scholars tend to disagree on the date and authorship of some of the graphics showing Dubrovnik (Ill. 1-6). Thus, Mithad Kozličić attributes the graphic in Ill. 3 to both Franco, 1579, and Rosaccio, 1606.[23]

But attributions and authenticity are not the major issues here. The fact that the books of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were illustrated with graphics of Dubrovnik as well as with some other Mediterranean cities, such as Ancona, Naples, Syracuse, Venice, Pisa, is most valuable information. Evidently, Dubrovnik was a well-known walled city and harbour at the time, an important commercial, shipping and shipbuilding centre of the Mediterranean world.

Thus, the aim of this article is not to locate all the graphics that are claimed to represent Dubrovnik, but to draw attention to the common practice among printers of using the same woodcut illustrations to represent two or more different cities. Apart from calculating on the high cost of their reproduction, contemporary typographers were primarily guided by good book illustration, adding thus a fictitious dimension to their work.

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[23] The author brings the same woodcut on page 149 and 210, citing two different authors. With respect to Franco's edition of the woodcut, he wrote: "In addition, Franco presents new views of Dubrovnik (K-115)" (M. Kozličić, *Atlas*: p. 146), while in reference to Rosacci's edition, he explains: "The harbour and the city of Dubrovnik (K-192) are well-oriented in space. The perspective view of the city might have been more rewarding in detail, but apparently such a depiction would not have suited a Venetian eye" (ibidem, p. 207).

Ill. 1. "Depiction of Dubrovnik, 1481" (M. Rešetar, G. Novak); "Depiction of Dubrovnik from Benali's second edition of *Supplementum chronicarum* by Jacobus Philipus de Bergamo, 1486" (D. Budiša); "View of Ancona by Jacopo Filippo da Jesi, 1540" (G. Mangani).
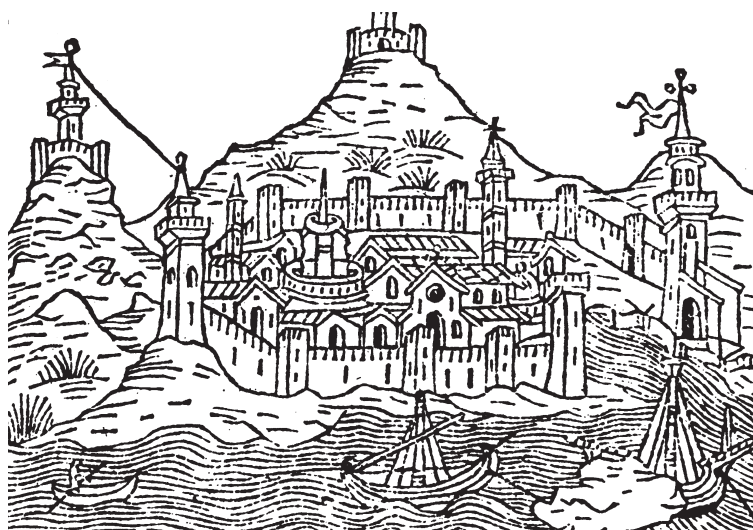

Ill. 2. "A Venetian edition of *Supplementum chronicarum* from 1490 by Bernardinus Ricius de Navaria (D. Budiša); "Dubrovnik; *Supplementum chronicarum*, Jacobus de Bergamo, Venice 1492" (Milan Prelog, »Dubrovnik: prostor i vrijeme«, in: *Zlatno doba Dubrovnika, XV. i XVI. stoljeće*. Zagreb: MTM, 1987: p. 30).

RAGVSI
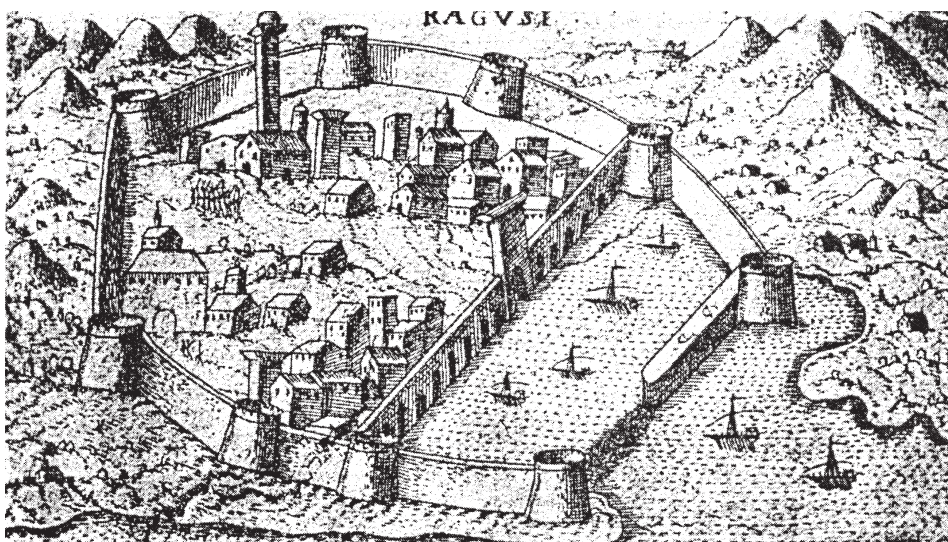
Ill. 3. "Depiction of Dubrovnik from around 1580" (M. Rešetar); "Depiction of Dubrovnik from
G. Rosaccio's *Viaggio da Venetia a Costantinopoli*, from around 1595" (D. Budiša); "Dubrovnik,
Franco, 1579" (M. Kozličić, *Atlas*: p. 149); "Dubrovnik, Rosaccio, 1606" (M. Kozličić, *Atlas*: p. 210).

RAGVSI

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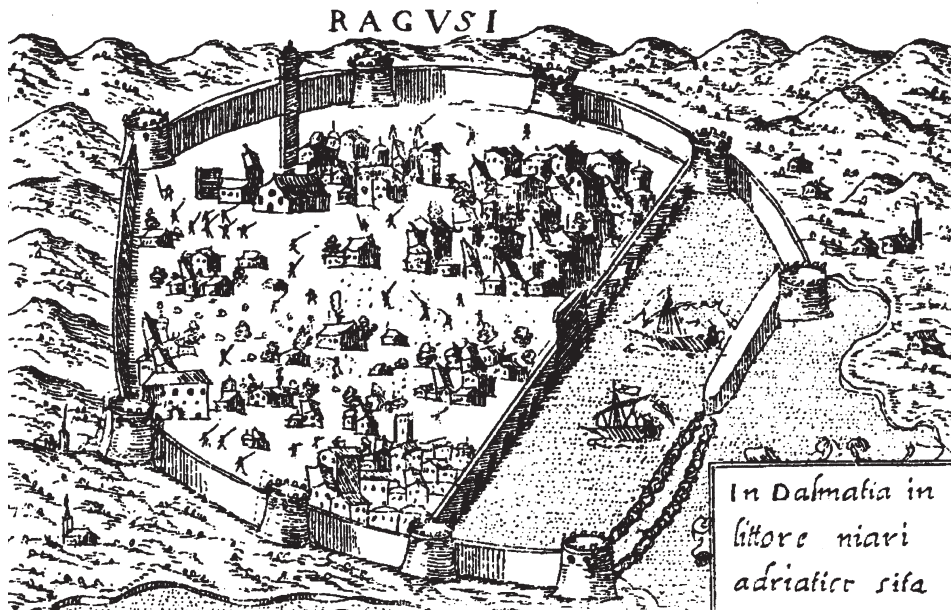
Ill. 4. "Depiction of Dubrovnik from around 1590" (M. Rešetar); "Depiction of Dubrovnik
(probably) from Francesco Valesi's *Teatro delle più illustri et famose città di tutto il mondo*, 1571"
(D. Budiša).
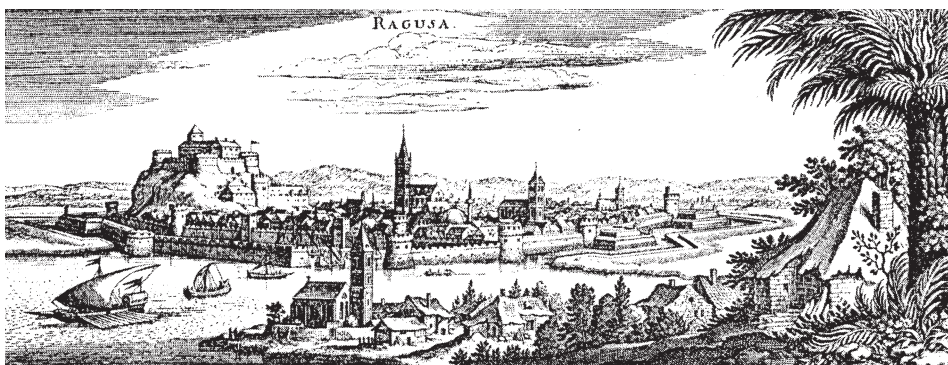
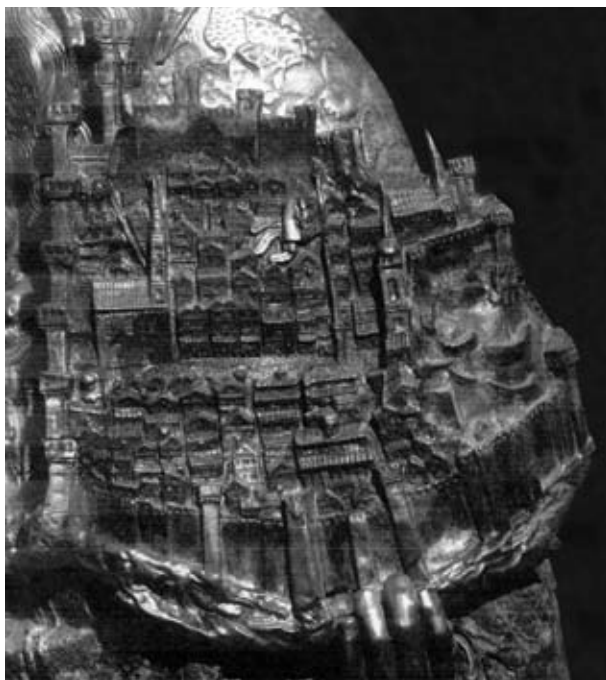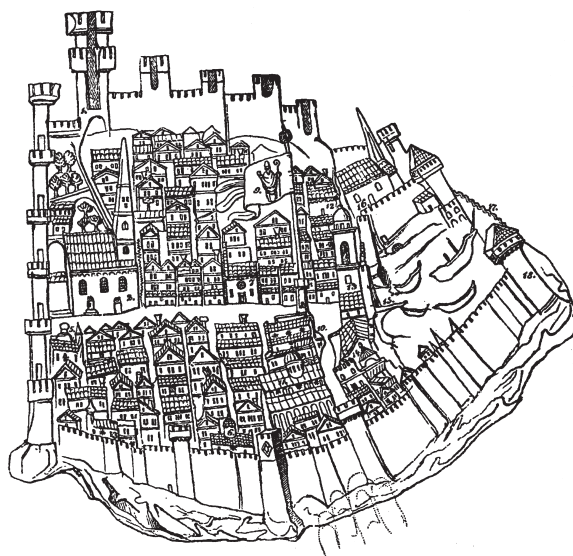Ill. 5. "Depiction of Dubrovnik from 1638 (Matija Merian)" (M. Rešetar).

Ill. 6. Dubrovnik, Peeters, 1686 (M. Kozličić, *Atlas*: p. 229).

Ill. 7. "A drawing of Dubrovnik (eighteenth century), depicting the city in the twelfth century"
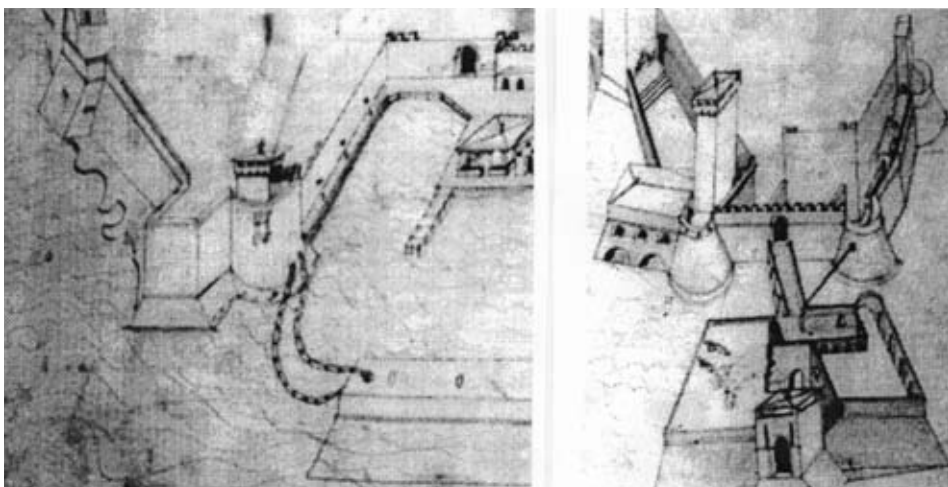(Ž. Peković)
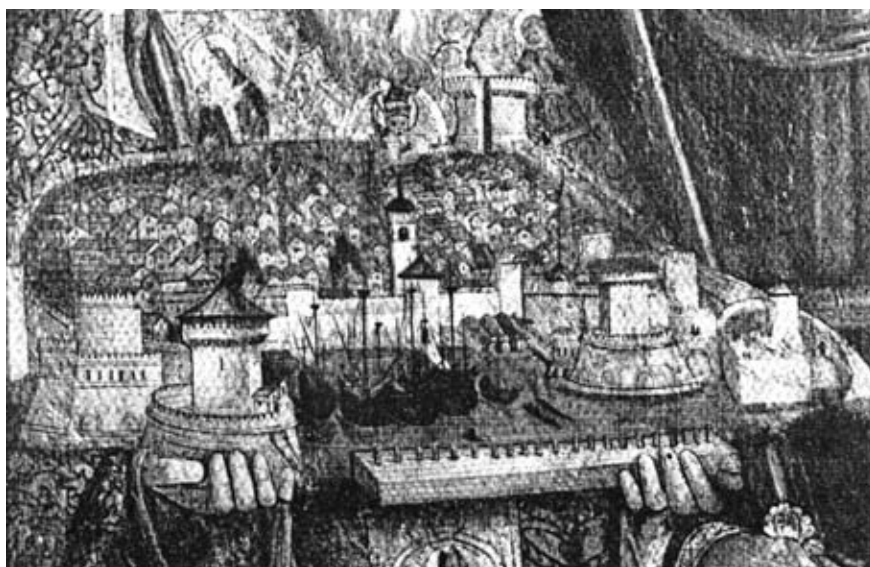
Ill. 9. Detail of Nikola Božidarević's triptych, the Blessed Virgin with Saints, from the early
sixteenth century, showing the harbour of Dubrovnik.

Ill. 8. Detail of statue of St Blaise from the mid-fifteenth century (original and drawing from: M. Rešetar, »Slike starog Dubrovnika«: p. 176).
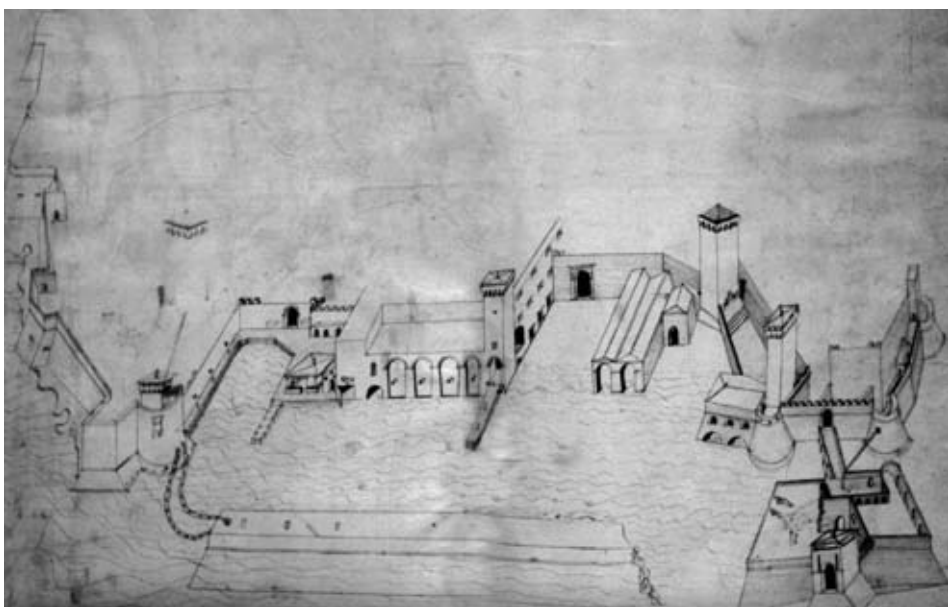
Ill. 10. View of the city harbour, mid-sixteenth century

Ill. 11. Detail of the view of the city harbour, mid-sixteenth century