

*In Memoriam***NENAD VEKARIĆ**

(26 December 1955, Split — 20 July 2018, Zagreb)



While preparing the last year's volume of this journal, we did not know that we would part from its founder and longtime managing editor, Nenad Vekarić. Although historical demography attracted him from his early youth, he graduated law in Zagreb, after which he received his Master's and Doctoral degree from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zadar. From 1984 until death, he worked at the Institute for Historical Sciences HAZU (CASA) in Dubrovnik, since 1987 as its head. He was the managing editor of the journal *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku*. Thanks to his initiative and zeal, Dubrovnik University established the Department for the History of the Adriatic and Mediterranean. He was also the founder of the PhD programme of the History of Population (2006-2017), organised in collaboration with the Zagreb University, as well as mentor of a succession of doctoral candidates. He has received several awards for his scientific work. Since 2000 he was the associate member, and from 2012 full member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Department of Social Sciences.

Fellow Vekarić published thirty books (some of which in co-authorship) and more than fifty valuable and much-cited original scientific works. His paramount work is the monumental series *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika (Nobility of Dubrovnik)* in 9 published volumes, volume 10 is forthcoming), in which, from various angles, he examines the noble lineages of Dubrovnik, from the first evidence traced in the sources to the present, highlighting at the same time many aspects of the history of the Republic governed by this rank. By proving that the struggle between noble clans had for centuries determined Dubrovnik's political and public life, he dispelled the myth of Dubrovnik as a society free from internal frictions.

Apart from the history of Dubrovnik's noble class, among diverse issues that Vekarić tackled, several topics and paths he recurrently addressed. Results of international significance he has attained by studying the process of demographic transition in the Dubrovnik region, a topic of key importance for interpreting the development of human society over the last 250 years. According to his conclusions, this process had a very early start in the Dubrovnik region, yet—except with the elite—exhibited a very long middle phase, being the cause of a series of social problems that burdened nineteenth-century Dubrovnik. With Vladimir Stipetić as co-author, he published a voluminous monograph *Povijesna demografija Hrvatske (Historical Demography of Croatia)*, with which this discipline saw its first comprehensive scientific survey and valorisation in Croatia. In a number of books and articles, co-authored mainly, he provided a demographic study of certain parts of the former Dubrovnik Republic (Pelješac, Konavle, Lastovo), having thus laid the foundations for future research of the history of Dubrovnik rural area. While researching the criminal records of the Dubrovnik Archive, he has produced valuable contributions to the history of criminality and criminal judiciary.

Vekarić grounded his scientific conclusions on a bulk of data drawn from miscellaneous sources and gathered since his early youth, so dense in places that it resembles a census. A great deal of this treasure trove he has published in the form of metadata, for example, complete genealogical reconstructions of Dubrovnik nobility, in which every single individual from that rank that ever lived can be traced, on condition that he was recorded by a historical source. By doing so, he has provided the researchers into the history of Dubrovnik with complete and most reliable data, and doubtless, Vekarić's Herculean effort has paved a solid path for other researchers to come.

Vekarić was endowed with a special ability to detect neglected historical sources (the so-called "small series" of the Dubrovnik Archive), and to reveal their hidden potential in solving a major historiographic issue. For instance, while reading the report on the elimination of the illegally planted vines (*Vigne* series), he gathered remarkable data for the reconstruction of the number of inhabitants in the rural areas of Dubrovnik. By combining this "representative drop method" with genealogical method on other examples, he proved how, from a limited data set, useful information can be extrapolated to broader conclusions.

Although original in many of his scientific approaches, frequently offering subversive interpretations, Vekarić's works are infused with a profound respect

for literature and profession, much deeper than required by mere scientific correctness and citation rules. With immanent value of the ideas and argumentation in mind, Vekarić never discarded any information only because it had been published ages before or in a marginal publication. Therefore, many of his works are also trustworthy witnesses of the development of historiography and the contribution of the previous generations.

Fellow Vekarić was a man of strategic thinking, exemplified in the activities that bring fruit in the long run, such as the doctoral programme, which, through large-scale collective archival research, taught doctoral students the secrets of the trait, and also transmitted the love for “dusty documents” to them. In his kind yet determined way, Vekarić spared no one on this path, least of all himself.

Having gathered a new generation of historians, as head of the Institute for Historical Sciences HAZU (CASA) in Dubrovnik he is credited with its scientific ascent and the emergence of “new Dubrovnik historiography”. Today, no other but the works of Vekarić and those of his colleagues, mainly published by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, are an unavoidable historiographic cornerstone of the study of the history of the Dubrovnik Republic, equally acclaimed beyond Croatian borders.

A most concentrated collocutor and attentive listener, he had an unusually developed ability to strip off the insignificant and to probe deeply into the heart of the matter. His witty and critical mind was counterbalanced by sheer benevolence and human warmth. He was an ideal colleague and much-loved head, who fully trusted and selflessly supported each of his staff members.

Nella Lonza