

Esad Kurtović, *Izvori za historiju srednjovjekovne Bosne. Ispisi iz knjiga zaduženja Državnog arhiva u Dubrovniku 1365-1521* [Sources for the History of Medieval Bosnia. Transcriptions from the Debita Notariae series of the State Archive in Dubrovnik], vol. 1-2. Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 2017. Pages XII + 969.

Historian Esad Kurtović, full professor at the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Sarajevo, is the author of numerous studies, among which is the monograph on Duke Sandalj Hranić Kosača (2009), *Vlasi Bobani* (2012), *Konj u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* [Horse in Medieval Bosnia, 2014], as well as a collection of essays entitled *Iz povijesti dubrovačkoga zaleđa* [From the History of Dubrovnik Hinterland], published in 2018 by the Dubrovnik branch of Matica hrvatska.

As these titles suggest, Kurtović focuses on the history of medieval Bosnia and Herzegovina and its relations with the Dubrovnik area, with emphasis on ordinary people and their everyday life, travellers and merchants who, in pursuit of profit, created a network of business relations throughout the whole territory. Through the prism of their financial dealings, the author has contributed to the understanding of these most complex issues in his earlier book *Iz historije bankarstva Bosne i Dubrovnika u srednjem vijeku* [From the History of Banking in Bosnia and Dubrovnik in the Middle Ages, 2010]. Following the mentioned monographs, in the volume before us, he has compiled selected archival documents upon which his works are based. As he warns in the introduction, “the collection contains transcriptions made over a longer period of research into different thematic frameworks. The transcriptions do not represent systematic transcribing with pre-determined goals to present in full all the material offered from each volume.” (p. IX)

Interpretation of this edition thus calls for a two-fold approach. While the Centre for Balkan Research ANU BiH includes this work into the sources for the history of medieval Bosnia (as the first book of this series), we may consider it as yet another important contribution to Dubrovnik history in general. The book of this kind could also find its place in the *Monumenta historica Ragusina* of the Institute for Historical Sciences CASA in Dubrovnik, as a continuation of a series of editions prepared by Gregor Čremošnik, Josip Lučić, Zdravko Šundrica and Nella Lonza, while studying the documents of the Dubrovnik chancery from the end of the thirteenth century and the books of deliberations of the Dubrovnik councils from the end of the fourteenth century. However, unlike the mentioned editors who published all the archival sources as recorded by the chancellors, and who, due to the voluminous scope of the material, confined themselves to a very narrow period of a couple of years, Kurtović resorted to selection, choosing only the documents relating to the merchants and travellers from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Dubrovnik. This allowed him to cover a much broader time span, from 1365 to 1521, which he argued by the fact that Ottoman invasion of the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1463 did not put an end to certain processes that marked the medieval society on the whole, notably the fates of ordinary people, considering that, in principle, the trade routes and business activities experienced no halt, particularly the customs that marked the everyday life of every individual. In this light, we attempt to interpret why the selection of published documents ends with the year 1521: it was then that, upon the Ottoman invasion of Belgrade, the sultan no doubt established his power in the Balkans, which had a considerable impact on Dubrovnik and the immigrants from the Bosnian-Herzegovinian hinterland in search of new trade connections.

The book contains more than 4,500 documents, transcribed from 68 volumes of the *Debita Notariae* series (vol. 7-74), as well as from one volume of the *Diversa Notariae* series (vol. 31). Such a wide span of records is arranged in two volumes with continuous pagination. Selected documents

largely pertain to credit transactions between immigrants from the hinterland or remote areas and the Ragusans, their agreements being signed in Dubrovnik before local judges and witnesses.

Given that the editor wished to elucidate some of the secrets of the economic relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina on the one and Dubrovnik on the other side, he emphasised that “for a survey of merchants in medieval Bosnia this series [*Debita Notariae*] was most important” (p. IX). Indeed, *Debita Notariae* is one of the most significant series for the study not only of the credit business and economy in medieval and early-modern Dubrovnik, but also of the many elements of everyday life of the city and its dwellers, and equally so for the purpose pinpointed by Kurtović. However, this series is certainly not the only source. An array of valuable information is provided by the other series of archival documents, such as the collection of wills known as *Testamenta Notariae*, minutes of the three Dubrovnik councils, along with *Litterae et Commissiones Levantis*, collection of the letters to the East, or by various records of the Dubrovnik notary and chancery (*Diversa Notariae*, *Diversa Cancellariae*). The author is obviously aware of this fact, whereupon we may merely agree with Emir Filipović who has proposed that, in the footsteps of this edition, affiliate works including select data from the mentioned archival series ought to be prepared, if the objective circumstances allow so (see the review in *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 35 (2017): p. 260).

In the preparation of these new editions, some of the shortcomings of the book before us ought to be avoided. Owing to the long experience in tackling documents from the Dubrovnik archive, Kurtović is a skilful and accurate palaeographer. The reader can fully rely on his description of abbreviations and interpretation of cumbersome Latin phrases, often penned in hardly legible minuscule chancery Gothic script and early humanistic script. Appended at the end of the book are ten documents testifying to the demanding scale of this task. In some cases, however, priority may have been given to different solutions from those offered by Kurtović. The name of the famous notary from the late fourteenth century, Giovanni Conversini from Ravenna, is here cited as *Conversini da Gregnano* (document no. 173), or even *deli Stegnani* (document no. 187; this variant has not even been included in the name index at the end of the book), yet the only form currently accepted by the relevant authorities is *del Frignano*. Further, the name of the notary Ruško Hristoforović from the early fifteenth century, who at the end of various agreements is often mentioned also as witness, is cited in several variants—Ruscus, Ruschus, Rauschus—inadequately entered in the name index.

Apart from the mentioned inconsistencies in writing personal names, we should also draw attention to the variant writing of the name of the Vlach ethnic group: *moroblachus*, *morolachus*, *vlacchus* and *vlachus* in a number of places. Thus in the documents no. 1376, 1377 and 1378, written on the same day (14 June 1445), variant name forms were successively recorded, and here it would have been useful to warn the reader about this notary practice which should not be ascribed to the editor but to the document itself. Grammatical inconsistencies ought to have been treated in the same way, e.g. incorrect replacement of the nominative case with that of dative is clearly observed in document no. 1384, which reads *dare et solvere* [...] *tutores heredum* instead of the expected *tutoribus heredum*. As an example of an obvious lapsus is the form *prime vice* (document no. 1391) instead of the correct form *prima vice*, while part of the expression *confessus fuit habuisse et recepisit a suprascripto debitori per solutione* (document no. 1372) ought to have been transcribed as a *suprascripto debitore*, and the incongruence between preposition and noun case should have been flagged with an exclamation mark. In document no. 1913, the phrase *medietas sit dictus ser Nicole* has also been transcribed incorrectly, whereas instead of the nominative case *dictus*, a genitive *dicti* would have been expected. Also cited incorrectly at times is the phrase *proxime futurum - proxime futuros*, commonly used to signify the deadline by which an obligation had to be settled.

Thus in document no. 2066, it reads *ad festum Natiuitatis domini proxime futuros* instead of the expected *ad festum [...] proxime futurum*, and in document no. 2077 *per totum mensem aprilis proxime futuros* stands instead of *per totum mensem [...] proxime futurum*.

This list needs not to be continued. Although medieval scribes were known for their sloppiness, deviations from the language standard in this edition should have been indicated respectively, at least by an exclamation mark (!). Also, for the reader's convenience, the abbreviations used in the original ought to have been explained in the introduction.

One can hardly agree with the editor's decision not to include the regesta with the published documents. As exemplified by the earlier edition prepared by Josip Lučić, immense benefit may be drawn from the elementary regesta (a single word may suffice at times) for the better understanding and survey of the material.

Sadly, today we encounter a wide-spread practice of publishing a scientific work without the subject index, as is here the case with the edition of select debt writs from the Dubrovnik archive. Thanks to modern technology, this defect could be partly emended: being available on the website in digitised form, the book is search engine-friendly by all the desired criteria.

Quibbles aside, this edition certainly deserves positive review. First of all, the publishing of medieval documents, as a rule, is an unrewarding task, the value of which matures with time. A modest number of 300 printed copies speaks for itself. Auxiliary historical sciences and palaeography within them are nowadays losing the position in the study of historical themes, so that an increasing number of scholars is impelled to use the editions such as this in their own research. Lastly, archival material itself is best preserved by publication, after which it can be safely and adequately stored in the archive depots. Kurtović's edition, however, deserves quite the reverse: wide readership and presence in public circles, higher citation index in the historiographic studies yet to come. Regardless of whether we consider it an important contribution to the history of the medieval Bosnian state or a new impetus to the understanding of medieval and early-modern Dubrovnik, we salute this publication, hoping to see it continue in the future.

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