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## PATRIOTIC SOCIETY (1793-1794) AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT PURSUITS OF MIHO SORGO

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*Abstract:* The Patriotic Society, founded in February 1793 by the learned Ragusan aristocrat Miho Sorgo (1739-1796), is considered the first true Enlightenment society in the Republic of Ragusa. Unlike previous humanistic and baroque societies, which bore the name "academy" and were all dedicated to literary and linguistic topics, Sorgo's society of amateur scholars focused on practicality and social engagement. This meant adopting a critical attitude towards the reality of Ragusa, particularly towards the ruling aristocratic oligarchy gathered in the Senate, which held a monopoly on political decision-making. Although Europe was undergoing profound social and political transformations at the time, the static nature of Ragusa's conservative circles did not allow any reform attempts. As a result, the society of reformists was very short-lived, lasting only a year. This paper will present an overview of academic sociability in Ragusa up to the eighteenth century, as well as the establishment and goals of the Patriotic Society and its members. Special attention will be paid to the topics of preserved speeches, the concept of enlightened and old aristocratic patriotism, and the contribution of the aristocrat Tomo Bassegli, whose Enlightenment profile was formed during his stays in Bern, Göttingen, and Vienna.

*Keywords:* Enlightenment, patriotism, Republic of Ragusa, reforms, sociability, public sphere

### Introduction: Ragusa and the Enlightenment

In the eighteenth century, the Republic of Ragusa was not known in Europe for its Enlightenment but rather for its republican freedom. Namely, the Republic fell among

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the few existing aristocratic republics, along with Venice, Lucca, Genoa, and San Marino in Italy, as well as the Dutch and Swiss confederations. Their form of government intrigued the Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire and Montesquieu, while Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a citizen of Geneva was a republican himself who promoted republican thought in his works.<sup>1</sup> For centuries, the Republic of Ragusa was governed by a closed hereditary noble rank,<sup>2</sup> headed by a rector elected to a one-month office term, which foreign visitors found very odd.<sup>3</sup> The greatest power was in the hands of the Senate, a special political body between the Minor and Major Council, whose members were chosen from among the nobility only.<sup>4</sup> The highest state authority exercised Catholic exclusivism, which enhanced the conservatism of the Ragusan society. Yet the tiny, Catholic state surrounded by Venetian and Ottoman powers remained exceptionally stable over the centuries, without social unrest, determined to preserve its independence.<sup>5</sup> In addition, in the wider Slavic world the city of Ragusa was well known for its cultural and artistic achievements from the period of Humanism and the Renaissance, particularly in the field of literature and drama, due to which it was perceived as a strong cultural centre. The year 1667 was fatal for Ragusa as the Great Earthquake devastated the city: having lost almost half of its population, Ragusa never fully recovered from this disastrous blow. However, in comparison to the neglected neighbouring Venetian Dalmatia, Ragusa distinguished itself in every aspect. During his first visit in 1780, Italian natural historian and advocate of the Enlightenment Alberto Fortis (1741-1803), who reintroduced Dalmatia to Europe with his travelogue *Viaggio*

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<sup>1</sup> In the eighteenth century, the classical idea of republicanism found fertile ground among the Enlightenment thinkers headed by the French encyclopaedists and Rousseau. Republicanism was viewed as a way of life and not as political force which enabled its depoliticised implementation in monarchies as well. Thus the Russian empress Catherine II liked to describe herself as having a "republican soul" (*l'âme républicaine*) despite the fact that her rule, due to the vast size of the Russian state, was necessarily autocratic. Public education was considered an instrument by which the subjects could be moulded into Roman citizens and patriots who would be willing to sacrifice themselves for their homeland. On modalities of enlightened monarchical patriotism, see Teodora Shek Brnardić, "Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism in the Mid-Eighteenth Century Habsburg Monarchy", in: *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and Márton Zászkaliczky, Leiden: Brill, 2010, 631–661.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account on hereditary nobility, see Zdenka Janeković Römer, *The Frame of Freedom: The Nobility of Dubrovnik between the Middle Ages and Humanism*, Zagreb-Dubrovnik: CASA, The Institute for Historical Sciences in Dubrovnik, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Nella Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti. Ceremonijal i državni blagdani Dubrovačke Republike u 17. i 18. stoljeću*, Zagreb: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2009, 40.

<sup>4</sup> For a succinct survey, see Nella Lonza, "Election Procedure in the Republic of Dubrovnik". *Dubrovnik Annals* 8 (2004): 7–41.

<sup>5</sup> This thesis has been elaborately argued by Lovro Kunčević, *Vrijeme harmonije. O razlozima društvene i političke stabilnosti Dubrovačke Republike*, Zagreb: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2020.

in *Dalmazia* (1773),<sup>6</sup> was captivated by Ragusa to such an extent that he compared it to the ancient Sparta:

Oh! Here, here there are good, beautiful things. The material appearance of the noble city is well adorned, even though a hundred years ago it was all brought to ruin by the earthquake. Suburbs, heavenly and elegant against the rugged karst which is the backbone of this barren area, and the cultivation of land far superior to anything bearable in Venetian Dalmatia, are the first things that strike the eye of a curious foreigner. The formal side, however, is much better: culture thrives among the nobility, discipline among the people, Spartan honesty in state principles, and spontaneity and good manners are exceedingly well calibrated in conversations...What more can I say? This good and beautiful land has all the benefits I could wish for in the most cultured Italian city, yet is free from its discomforts and vices.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, set in a fragile constellation and surrounded by great powers, especially the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice, Ragusan authorities were determined to prevent the spread of any sort of subversive or dissenting ideas. Namely, the neighbouring states would most certainly take advantage of any attempt at coup or revolution to put an end to Ragusan independence. Thus, the city had neither university nor educational institutions of any other type apart from the Jesuit (later Piarist) College, which was attended by young noblemen before they assumed state offices. The rare patricians whose material circumstances allowed it, pursued specialised and law studies abroad, particularly at the universities in Rome, Bologna, Siena, and Naples, while the commoners were granted bursaries for deficit professions such as medical ones, but also music and art. Censorship was not solely under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church but was also the responsibility of a state office within the Senate, to which all newly acquired and imported books were reported. There were no public libraries in the city, and the printing activity only began in 1783 with the printing of strictly controlled books, mostly concerning the old Ragusan history and literature.<sup>8</sup> Musical and theatrical activities notwithstanding, Ragusa did not have the necessary urban infrastructure that would facilitate the development of arts and sciences in the

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<sup>6</sup> Alberto Fortis, *Put po Dalmaciji*, trans. by Mate Maras, Zagreb: Globus, 1984, 2004. For various aspects of this discovery, see Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> The letter written by Alberto Fortis to Ante Radoš Michieli Vitturi, nobleman of Trogir, on 24 January 1780. Valtazar Bogišić, *Dva neizdana pisma Alberta Fortisa o Dubrovniku*, Dubrovnik: Srpska dubrovačka štamparija, 1905, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Žarko Muljačić, "O prvoj dubrovačkoj tiskari", *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 4-5 (1956), 583-612; *id.*, "O drugoj dubrovačkoj tiskari", *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 10-11 (1966), 309-331; Vesna Čučić, "Prvi tiskari u Dubrovniku: s popisom tiskane građe", *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* 48/3-4 (2005), 108-158. For a comprehensive survey, see Teodora Shek Brnardić, "Intelektualni razvoj", in: *U potrazi za mirom i blagostanjem. Hrvatske zemlje u 18. stoljeću*, ed. Lovorka Čoralić, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2013, 212.

Enlightenment terms, and judging by the opinion of some foreign visitors as well as of the enlightened Ragusans themselves,<sup>9</sup> the general level of knowledge—the measure of progress in the Enlightenment—and overall, the interest in science, was fairly low: "Ragusa has always had a wealth of learned people and famous men of letters, but they mostly thrived outside their homeland and earned their name and glory far away from home. Now, too, there are a few celebrated Ragusans, some of whom live in one part of Europe and others elsewhere, whereas in Ragusa greatest ignorance prevails, or very little learning".<sup>10</sup> Nobleman Tomo Bassegli (1756-1806), who spent several years in the cities of Central Europe "attracted by the lovely allure of learning,"<sup>11</sup> was even more critical in his description of the spiritual climate in Ragusa after his return from Vienna in the autumn of 1792:

Our good fellow citizens are today in a hermaphroditic state between culture and barbarism. They bring together in a manner most awkward and disgusting the savage stupidity with vices and ridicule of the polite and corrupted nations. The best among them see well but do bad things everywhere out of habit. The rest languish in presumptuous ignorance and arrogant misery, which often becomes unjust. Idleness, the daughter of ignorance and misery, prevents them from escaping this state even more than their physical and political situation. But time, contrary to their selves, will make them advance towards a goal according to which the order of things has fixed their tendency. Every good citizen must determine that tendency towards good as much as [it] is in him. By throwing the seeds of patriotic ideas, putting useful truths in circulation, and making advantageous attempts at the common good, one has a right to hope for something for this poor, small country, which could be far better off than it is.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "They cannot imagine that a person, other than a priest, can engage in scientific work, and the most contemptuous statement they can produce about someone is that he is writing a book". Tomo Basiljević, "Bilješke o malim gradovima i o malim državama (trans. by Žarko Muljačić)", *Dubrovnik* 13 (1970), 135. Even the founder of the Patriotic Society, Miho Sorgo, shares a similar attitude in his discourse on the Slavic language *Disquisitiuncula de vulgari illa lingua Illyrica, excerpta ex commentariis auctoris in opusculum L. C. Tuberonis, cura comitis de Sorgo editum Rhacusae 1790. apud A. Trevisan*: "However, considering that those who engage in studies (*studiis*) are promised neither reward nor gratitude – aside from what they might hope from unknown individuals scattered throughout the world – the passion that compels a person to dedicate himself to science either fails to ignite or is extinguished too soon. Consequently, our expectations in these matters are perpetually high, yet the results often fall short". Vlado Rezar, "Kratak prilog poznavanju rada Miha Sorga (1739.-1796.)", *Dubrovački horizonti* 31 (2000), 54.

<sup>10</sup> From an Austrian anonymous report to Maria Theresa dating from 1775-76. Maja Novak, "Dubrovnik u drugoj polovici 18. stoljeća", *Anali Historijskog odjela Centra za znanstveni rad JAZU u Dubrovniku* 15-16 (1978), 139 and 141.

<sup>11</sup> "...*pulcro doctrinae illectus amore...* Brno Džamanjić, "Poslanica Tomi Jakovljevu Bassegli, vlastelinu dubrovačkom, trans. Josip Torbarina", in: *Pet stoljeća hrvatske književnosti. Hrvatski latinisti II. Piscu 17-19. stoljeća*, ed. Rafo Bogišić, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska - Zora, 1970, 552-553.

<sup>12</sup> *Nos bons concitoyens sont aujourd'hui dans cet état hermaphrodite entre la culture et la barbarie. Ils associent d'une manière très incommode et très dégoûtante la stupidité sauvage avec les vices et les ridicules de nations polisés et corrompus. Les meilleurs d'entre eux voient le bien et font partout le mal par habitude. Les autres crupissent dans une ignorance presumptueuse, et dans une misère orgueilleuse qui devient même souvent injuste. La paresse, fille de l'ignorance et de la*

Ragusan scholars and the literati headed by the famous "trio"—physicist Ruđer Bošković (1711-1787), Newtonian scholar Benedikt Stay (1714-1801), and translator of Homer, Rajmund Kunić (1719-1794)—earned their reputation primarily abroad, mainly in Italy. In Rome, Kunić and Stay were part of the "colony of Ragusan Latinists", which in the classicist spirit gathered the best Latinists and Hellenists,<sup>13</sup> of which their compatriots in Ragusa were exceedingly proud. However, given the cultural as well as political context, the development of the public sphere and the institutions of sociability, so typical of the eighteenth century, could not have been stopped in Ragusa itself either. Some families and cosmopolitan members of the Ragusan nobility zealously followed the developments and the emergence of new ideas, mostly through their connections with the Italian states, which were closest to them both geographically and culturally. Private libraries saw new acquisitions with the most recent but also forbidden books<sup>14</sup> that circulated between the owners, while the like-minded gathered in the private spaces of the houses, countryside villas and salons for sharing ideas on serious topics or entertainment.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the political context after the mid-1760s crisis, marked by the reform of the electoral law<sup>16</sup> and the increasing polarisation between the Salamanca (*salamankezi*) and Sorbonne (*sorbonezi*) political factions within the noble rank,<sup>17</sup> may also have prompted some members of the nobility to reshape their perception of patriotism in tune with the Enlightenment standards. In so doing, priority was given to

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*misère, les empeche de sortir de cet etat plus encore que leur situation phisique et politique. Mais le temps les fera avancer malgré eux vers le but vers le quel l'ordre des choses a fixé leur tendance. Tout bon citoyen doit determiner cette tendance vers le bien autant qu'il est en lui. C'est en jetant des germes des idées patriotiques, en mettant en circulation de verités utiles, en faisant des essais avantageux au bien generale qu'on est en droit d'esperer quelque chose pour ce pauvre, petit pays qui porroit pourtant etre beaucoup moins mal de ce qu'il est. Undated and corrected letter draft by Tomo Bassegli to Stjepan Rajčević. State Archives in Dubrovnik, HR-DADU-253, Bassegli Family Archive, box. 11, C/11. See note 76.*

<sup>13</sup> Žarko Muljačić, "O Petru Franu Aletinu (1768-1836)", *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 8-9 (1962), 626.

<sup>14</sup> Nada Beritić, "O zabranjenim knjigama u Dubrovniku potkraj 18. i početkom 19. stoljeća", in: *eadem, Otkrića iz arhiva*. Split: Književni krug, 2000, 172-177.

<sup>15</sup> Slavica Stojan, *U salonu Marije Giorgi Bona*, Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku. 1996; *ead.*, "Kulturni krug Luke i Miha Sorgo (Sorkočevića): glazbenici, pjesnici i diplomati", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 54 (2016), 247-262; T. Shek Brnardić, "Intelektualni razvoj", 212. On aristocratic musical circles, notably that of the Sorgo family, see Vjera Katalinić, *Sorkočevići, dubrovački plemići i diplomati*, Zagreb: Muzički informativni centar, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> N. Lonza, "Election Procedure in the Republic of Dubrovnik". *Dubrovnik Annals* 8 (2004): 7-41.

<sup>17</sup> For more on these clan-based, political frictions in Žarko Muljačić, "O strankama u starom Dubrovniku. Prilog povijesti dubrovačkog društva 18. stoljeća", *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 6-7 (1959), 25-40; *id.*, "Salamankezi i sorbonezi u Dubrovniku. Prilog etimologiji naših političkih naziva", *Filologija* 2 (1959), 161-173. Voltaire was also acquainted with the dissenting voices among Ragusan nobility: *Voulez-vous que nous ayons le plaisir d'examiner à fond tous les gouvernements de la terre, depuis l'empereur Chinois Hiao, & depuis la horde hébraïque jusqu'aux dernières dissensions de Raguse & de Genève?* [Voltaire], *Dialogues et entretiens philosophiques. Œuvres de Voltaire*, vol. 36, Paris: Stoupe, 1792, 313.

the aspiration for reform, that is, the improvement of the existing state to spread practical knowledge and the achievement of progress.<sup>18</sup> According to the Italian historian of the Enlightenment Franco Venturi (1914-1994), the combination or "marriage" between patriotism and cosmopolitanism was the main feature of European Enlightenment.<sup>19</sup> The drivers of change were individuals who were able to bring experiences acquired from many travels and connections with the Enlightenment thinkers from more developed countries into local communities. In the Croatian context, cultural historian Žarko Muljačić (1922-2009) applied Venturi's methodology in his research, since most of his scholarly interest focused on the study of the Croatian, and particularly Ragusan, role in the European Enlightenment, along with the links and connections between the local Enlightenment figures and the centres in Italy and elsewhere in Europe.<sup>20</sup>

In the Ragusan context, that aspect of the Enlightenment activities, recurrently addressed by Muljačić himself, may be observed in the initiative and short-term activity of the so-called Patriotic Society<sup>21</sup> of the learned nobleman, man of letters and patron Miho Sorgo (1739-1796), "one of the most educated men, admirer of art and literature", "filled with good taste for fine arts", "enraptured by the love of antiquities".<sup>22</sup> From his early youth, Sorgo was a man "on the move", connecting on his

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<sup>18</sup> Ideas that were previously unthinkable emerged about transforming the Ragusan political system from hereditary to elective aristocracy, with Tomo Bassegli being a proponent of this: "What is the origin, therefore, of all evil that comes from it if not from a bad form of government, i.e. from hereditary aristocracy, by which the nobility can create unhappiness for its subjects?" Tomo Bassegli, [Reflections on the revolution in Europe and in Dubrovnik], Cited in: Žarko Muljačić, "Dubrovački disident i njegov 'istražitelj'", in: *Dubrovačka Republika i Francuska revolucija / La République de Dubrovnik (Raguse) et la Révolution française*, ed. Miljenko Foretić, Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska, 1996, 76.

<sup>19</sup> John Robertson, "Review Article: Franco Venturi's Enlightenment", *Past & Present* 137 (1992), 193; Teodora Shek Brnardić, "Intellectual Movements and Geo-Political Regionalization: The Case of the East European Enlightenment", *East Central Europe* 32/1-2 (2005), 170-171.

<sup>20</sup> Žarko Muljačić, "Tomo Baseljić u Göttingenu", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 36 (1998), 227; Ljerka Schiffler, "Prinos istraživanju hrvatske kulturne povijesti: Žarko Muljačić, *Iz dubrovačke prošlosti*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2006, 308 str.", *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske baštine* 65-66 (2007), 136. Regrettably, after Muljačić these topics attracted virtually no scholarly attention.

<sup>21</sup> Given that the society was of private, i.e. club-like, and not public character, no archive has survived. Therefore, its existence can be gleaned merely from the sporadic mentions in published biographies, correspondence and manuscript speeches preserved in the family archives—that is, accidental discoveries made by some researchers. See Rudolf Maixner, "O akademiji Miha Sorkočevića", *Građa za povijest književnosti hrvatske* 24 (1952), 57-67; Žarko Muljačić, "Dva priloga povijesti dubrovačkih akademija", *Radovi Instituta JAZU u Zadru* 4-5 (1959), 319-340; this important work has been reprinted in the collected works of Žarko Muljačić, *Iz dubrovačke prošlosti*, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2006, 121-140. Other authors mainly cite the research results of these two authors. A speech on the education of the nobility, ascribed to Franjo Marija Appendini (1768-1837), the Piarist scholar, has been analysed by Relja Seferović, "Politička retorika Francesca Marije Appendinija pred kraj Republike", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 53/2 (2015), 311-349.

<sup>22</sup> The works of Franjo Marija Appendini, Ragusan cultural historian and Sorgo's contemporary, are full of praise for Sorgo's enlightened and cultural endeavours in Ragusa. Francesco Maria Appendini, *De vita et scriptis Junii Antonii filii comitis de Restiis patricii Ragusini commentariolum*, in: *id., Junii Antonii comitis de Restiis patricii Ragusini carmina*,

journeys Ragusan environment with the Italian Enlightenment and mondain centres. By choosing a bachelor's life so as to be able to devote himself to both office and science, he made frequent visits to Padua, Vicenza and Venice, where he had many friends and was warmly welcomed in scholarly societies, salons and gathering places of the male and female lovers of science and literature, with whom he maintained correspondence, but also contributed to journals.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, this article seeks to elucidate the foundation and objectives of the Patriotic Society, its members, the topics of the preserved speeches, with special emphasis on the topic of a speech delivered on the need to establish scholarly societies which represents the voice for change, i.e. reform of the old Republic and accomplishment of the Enlightenment project in the tiny Adriatic state. As a diachronic introduction to the topic the text first shortly outlines the development of academic sociability in Ragusa in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, as well as the character of their activities, which were not attuned to the taste of the later Enlightenment thinkers.

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Padova: typis seminarii, 1816, ix; Francesco Appendini, *De vita et scriptis Bernardi Zamagnae patricii Rhacusini*, Zara: Ivan Demarchi 1830, 54, where Appendini emphasises that Sorgo could read Greek and Latin poetry in the original. From Sorgo's editions of Ragusan writers we know that he wrote in the Latin language. Sorgo mastered classical languages as a student at the Jesuit *Collegium Ragusinum*, where he was taught by the famous Hellenist, Fr. Vlaho Bulić (1717-1759), thanks to whom Sorgo is believed to have developed a passion for the Greek language and the antiquities. Sorgo studied philosophy and rhetoric under the famous professor Francesco Maria Zanotti (1692-1777) in Bologna, after which he repeatedly visited some major Italian cities. Vlaho Stulli, "(Michele Antonio) Sorgo", in: *Biografia degli Italiani illustri nelle scienze, lettere ed arti del secolo XVIII, e de' contemporanei compilata da letterati italiani di ogni provincia*, I, ed. Emilio de Tiplado, Venezia: Alvisopoli, 1834, 416.

<sup>23</sup> Stulli emphasises Sorgo's friendship with Abbot Giuseppe Toaldo (1719-1797), astronomer and meteorologist, with the famous linguist and translator abbot Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730-1808), and with the aforementioned naturalist Alberto Fortis (1741-1803), who was the closest to him of them all and in whose hands he purportedly died in Paris in 1796. Stulli, *ibid.* In one of his dedications, Fortis notes that Sorgo is one of his dearest friends (...*d'uno de' più cari, de' più antichi, de' più desiderati amici ch'io m'abbia...*). Alberto Fortis, *Lettere geografico-fisiche sopra la Calabria, e la Puglia al Conte Tommaso de Bassegli*, Napoli: Giuseppe Maria-Porcelli, 1784, iii. Sorgo paid frequent visits to the literary salon of the famous Venetian *salonnière* Isabelle Teotochi Marin Abrizzi (1761-1836)—Venetian Madame de Staël—while the journalist Elisabetta Caminer Turra (1751-1796) even invited him in 1787 to collaborate in the preparation of her third journal titled *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico*. Žarko Muljačić writes that Sorgo socialised with Italian Enlightenment exponents interested in the "Illyrian", i.e. Slavic literature, culture and customs. On these friendship ties, see Žarko Muljačić "Miho Sorkočević i talijanski prosvjetitelji", in: *id.*, *Fortisološke studije*, Split: Književni krug, 2011, 7-18; *id.*, "Le amicizie letterarie italiane di Miho Sorkočević", in: *Problemi di lingua e letteratura italiana del Settecento. Atti del Quarto Congresso dell'Associazione internazionale per gli studi di lingua e letteratura italiana (Magonza e Colonia, 28 aprile -1 maggio 1962)*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965, 164-169; *id.*, "Isabella Teotochi Marin i Miho Sorkočević: jedno književno prijateljstvo", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 33 (1995), 137-147. See also the letter by Elisabetta Caminer Turra to Miho Sorgo dated 27 September 1779 in: *Elisabetta Caminer Turra. Selected Writings of an Eighteenth-Century Venetian Woman of Letters*, ed. and trans. by Catherine M. Sama, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 153-155.



## Ragusan academies from leisure (*otium*) to business (*negotium*)

In keeping with humanist philosophy, beginning with the Renaissance Ragusan intellectual and political elite embodied in aristocracy made a clear distinction between work and leisure, that is, time for business (Lat. *negotium*) and leisure (Lat. *otium*).<sup>24</sup> This dichotomy in human creativity has been present since the antiquity, and was adopted by humanist philosophers and thinkers, as well as by the professionally active Ragusan nobility. *Otium* implied a creative break from professional obligations, a time in which an active man could dedicate himself to literary activities (*litterae*), i.e. to himself and his literary interests that helped him build his spiritual self. Spending time in their Arcadias epitomised in the country residences, such as the estates in Trsteno and Rijeka dubrovačka, the idlers did not always indulge in solitude but sought the company of the like-minded who were not necessarily their equals in rank. Contrary to real life, these gatherings included noblemen and commoners alike, as was customary in the "literary republic" (*res publica litteraria*), bonded by love for poetry writing, linguistic issues and erudition in general.<sup>25</sup>

The first academy of this kind in Ragusa, which, due to its Romance and Roman-Catholic culture maintained lively connections with Italy, was the *Accademia degli Concordi* or *Akademija složnijeh* (Academy of the Concordant), established after the so-called Italian "model" of Renaissance academies. Its initiator in the mid-sixteenth century was Savino de Bobali Sordo (1530-1585), Ragusan nobleman, together with Miho Monaldi (1540-1592). The Academy gathered Bobali's friends, who, like him, were not keen on Latin but Italian poetry within the movement for the revival of Petrarchism.<sup>26</sup> Nothing is virtually known of the Academy itself, and it is assumed that it gathered in the hall above the Customs in the Sponza Palace.

While still recovering from the Great Earthquake of 1667, by the end of the seventeenth century, in the same premises, Ragusa saw the gatherings of poets and learned literati in the Academy of the Learned Idlers (*Akademija ispraznijeh ili dangubijeh*, Lat. *Accademia otiosorum eruditorum*, It. *Accademia degli Oziosi Eruditi*), modelled after the celebrated *Accademia degli Arcadi*, founded in Rome in 1690. Italian *Arcadia* was founded to restore simplicity in poetry as a reaction to Baroque flamboyancy and pomposity and aspired

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<sup>24</sup> Latin term *otium* meant "leisure" and "idleness", as opposed to *negotium* or "absence of idleness", i.e., "activity", "business", "work", "occupation". In ancient Rome, upon which the humanists leaned, dichotomy suggested a contrast between "private sphere and public political life" (in the works of Cicero, Sallust, Pliny the Younger and others). Michael Stolz, "'Otium et Negotium': Reading Processes in Early Italian and German Humanism", in: *Reading Books and Prints as Cultural Objects*, ed. Evangelina Stead, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 81-82.

<sup>25</sup> Zdenka Janeković Römer, "Otium litterarum, utočište, ishodište", *Kolo* 4 (2004), <https://www.matica.hr/kolo/294/otium-litterarum-utociste-ishodiste-20152/> (accessed 12 May 2023).

<sup>26</sup> Rafo Bogišić, "Akademija 'Složnih' (dei Concordi) u Dubrovniku 16. stoljeća", *Croatica* 17 (1986), 67.



towards the restoration of literary taste. It was inspired by the ancient Arcadia, idyllic pastoral landscape on the Greek Peloponnese, swarming with shepherds as described in Virgil's *Bucolics* or *Pastoral Poems*.<sup>27</sup> *Accademia degli Arcadi* had soon become fashionable and spread throughout many Italian cities, but also across the Adriatic Sea to Croatian lands. Namely, Arcadian poetry became a lifestyle of the social and intellectual elite both on the continent and coastline because it was a fresh addition to the classical humanist education acquired primarily at the Jesuit colleges.

The Ragusan Academy of the Learned Idlers gathered distinguished members of the noble but also non-noble, i.e. citizen rank, young and old men, Italians and Ragusans, merchants and clergymen. According to Mirko Deanović, a conservative worldview prevailed in the Academy, characteristic of the nobility (members of the Sorgo, Bona and other families) and clerics (Benedictines, Jesuits) who dominated among the academicians.<sup>28</sup> The Academy did not convene in continuity, but during a forty-year period (between 1690 and 1730) it was "revived" several times, mainly to mark a specific occasion.<sup>29</sup> Literary language was nominally in the focus of the academicians' interest, and they aspired to enrich it for the purpose of the restoration of literary activity. Their plans also included the compilation of a comprehensive Latin-Italian-Croatian dictionary, which, sadly, never came to fruition. Although of public status<sup>30</sup> and acknowledged, though not funded, by the state, the Academy has left no trace worthy of attention.

In the age of Enlightenment, when the sense of practicality and worldly happiness had reached its zenith,<sup>31</sup> literary academies whose activity proved of inadequate contribution to the society were particularly exposed to criticism. Such was the negative review of the aforementioned Alberto Fortis, Venetian naturalist and Enlightenment figure, who, in 1784, in the *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico*, wrote a caustic critique of the first edition published by the newly-established printing house in Ragusa.<sup>32</sup> Namely, within the series of the "Illyrian" writers from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, printer Carlo Antonio Occhi decided in 1783 to reprint an edition of Italian poems of the aforementioned Renaissance academicians Savin de Bobali and Miho Monaldi under the title *Rime del nobil uomo s. Savino de Bobali Sordo, e del sig Michele Monaldi; dedicate all' Eccelso Senato della Repubblica di Ragusa* (Ragusa: Carlo Antonio Occhi, 1783). In his

<sup>27</sup> Mirko Deanović, "Odrzi talijanske akademije 'degli Arcadi' preko Jadrana", *Rad JAZU* 248 (1933), 4–5.

<sup>28</sup> M. Deanović, "Odrzi talijanske akademije", 55.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> It was referred to as *publica*, as opposed to other private academies known as *particolare*, whose existence has also been noted. *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Shek Brnardić, "Intelektualni razvoj", 195.

<sup>32</sup> Žarko Muljačić, "Iz korespondencije Alberta Fortisa", *Građa za povijest književnosti hrvatske* 23 (1952), 84; *id.*, "Miho Sorkočević i talijanski prosvjetitelji", 10; Smiljka Malinar, "The Eastern Coast of the Adriatic in the Journals of Elisabetta Caminer", *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabienis* 63 (2018), 106. Anonymous review published in *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico* 1 (1784), 16-20.

review, Fortis publicly assessed that the majority of sonnets were boring and void of inspiration and that "fortunate Ragusan minds will, doubtless, benefit from the new printing house by delivering to the public the works far better than these and worthier of the century of Stay, Kunić, and Bošković, who at the same time are such an honour to their glorious Homeland, and that from the ruins of the Academy of the Idlers (*Accademia degli Oziosi*) an [Academy] of the Concordant (*Accademia di Concordi*)<sup>33</sup> will rise, which would engage in more exact and useful matters than Petrarchan trifles".<sup>34</sup>

In fact, it was Alberto Fortis, among others, who initiated the Ragusan Patriotic Society, having publicly drawn attention to this idea and need in his published letters addressed to the young and accomplished Ragusan nobleman, Tomo Bassegli (1756-1806).<sup>35</sup> The latter's parents, Jakob Bassegli (1720-1805) and Kata Bassegli née Sorgo (1729-1792), along with her learned brother Miho Sorgo, sent Tomo to study law, but not to one of the Italian Catholic universities in Bologna or Padua, as was customary, but to the republican Switzerland, to the Protestant Bern.<sup>36</sup> Young Bassegli took advantage of the proximity of Germany to transfer to the University in Göttingen, and later to Vienna, where he married Maria (Mimi) von Born (1766-1830), daughter of the well-known Austrian mineralogist and freemason, Ignaz von Born (1742-1791).<sup>37</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> Fortis probably refers to the *Accademia dei Concordi* in Rovigo, which also drew its roots from the Renaissance yet by the start of the eighteenth century came under the patronage of the Venetian Senate (therefore, enjoyed state support), and which, at its meetings, discussed practical issues in the field of science and agriculture. Nicolò Biscaccia, *Accademia dei Concordi in Rovigo*, Venezia: Pietro Naratovich, 1846, 20.

<sup>34</sup> *E da tener per certo, che i felici ingegni Ragusei profiteranno della nuova Stamperia per dare al pubblico produzioni migliori di queste e più degne del secolo degli Stay, de' Kunich, dei Boscovich, che fanno tanto onore contemporaneamente alla illustre lor Patria, e che se su le rovine dell'Accademia degli Oziosi ne risorgerà una di Concordi, essa si occuperà d'oggetti assai più solidi e utili che le Petrarcherie*. Fortis's review in *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico* 1 (1784), 19-20, cited in: Muljačić, "Iz korespondencije Alberta Fortisa", 84. In the age of Enlightenment and dynamic progress that it introduced, idleness began to be viewed as a flaw, so aptly described by Ruđer Bošković in a letter to his brother Božo: "Idleness is the worst of things (*L'ozio è una pessima cosa*)". Slavica Stojan, "Ljetnikovci Rijeke dubrovačke", *Vijenac* 636-638 (2018), <https://www.matica.hr/vijenac/636%20-%20638/ljetnikovci-rijeka-dubrovacke-28117/> (accessed 12 May 2023).

<sup>35</sup> A most comprehensive study of this major exponent of the Croatian Enlightenment has been provided by Žarko Muljačić. See Žarko Muljačić, *Tomo Bassegli. Predstavnik prosvjete u Dubrovniku*, PhD dissertation, Zagreb, 1955, which was published in an abridged version as *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji, predstavnik prosvjete u Dubrovniku*, Beograd: Naučno delo, 1958. On Bassegli's idea of the Illyrian Republic, see Teodora Shek Brnardić, "Tomo Bassegli: Patriotic Musings", in: *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe, I, Late Enlightenment – Emergence of the Modern 'National Idea'*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, Budapest: CEU Press, 2006, 312-315.

<sup>36</sup> According to Žarko Muljačić, Tomo's parents, in a letter dated 17 May 1781, on the advice of Ruđer Bošković, friend of the Sorgo family, suggested the Catholic Fribourg as a place of study (Ž. Muljačić, "Iz korespondencije", 79).

<sup>37</sup> Because of this marriage, which dissolved in the meantime due to the escape of his spouse Mimi, Tomo had considerable problems in Dubrovnik. For more on this, see Žarko Muljačić, "Tomo Baseljić u Beču", *Dubrovački horizonti* 27/36 (1996), 71-80; Helmut W. Flügel, *Maria von Born (1766-1830): Biographie einer emanzipierten Österreicherin in einer Übergangszeit*, Berlin: Pro Business, 2013. Based on Flügel's monograph is also the work of Viktorija Franić Tomić, "Prilozi za biografiju Mimi von Born, supruge hrvatskog prosvjetitelja Tome Basseglja", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 56/1 (2018), 299-361. The Welsh historian Jonathan Singerton is preparing a modern biography of Mimi based on archival sources under the working title *Beginning Her World Anew: Maria von Born* (forthcoming).

purpose of this, from the Ragusan perspective, quite uncommon *grand tour* was to learn as much as possible about the more advanced societies of Central Europe and to transfer useful knowledge to his homeland. Although from the letters' content it is clear that in 1785 his uncle Miho had already suggested that a society be founded such as that Fortis proposed for Ragusa, yet it was not until 1793 that the society was created, after Tomo Bassegli's return to Ragusa. Unfortunately, unlike the Academy of the Idlers, the society existed no more than a year.

### The foundation and membership of the Patriotic Society

I wish that after your arrival an association be made with some books and a few people to be able to come in contact and communicate on the idea level at least with the rest of cultural Europe... We are not the best situated for the unloading of scientific books, which become the objects of aversion or contempt shortly after their arrival. I know only one country in the world in which it is [still] necessary to justify good philosophy from the malignant imputations of fools.<sup>38</sup>

The first news of nobleman Miho Sorgo's foundation of the Patriotic Society was brought in 1834 by the poet and comedy playwright Vlaho Stulli (1768-1843), who knew Sorgo personally and was the author of his first biography.<sup>39</sup> In his opinion, Sorgo founded such a society because, due to an illness of some kind, he had to find "a

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<sup>38</sup> *Voglio che dopo il vostro arrivo si faccia una alleanza con alcuni pochi libri e pochi uomini onde mettersi in corrente e comunicare almeno in idea col rimanente dell'Europa colta ... Noi siamo sinistramente situati per l'approdo de' scientifici materiali, che sono poi oggetto di aversione (!) o di disprezzo dopo il loro salvo arrivo. Io conosco un unico paese al mondo, in cui è ancora necessario di giustificare la buona filosofia delle imputazioni maligne de sciocchi ...* The letter of Miho Sorgo to Tomo Bassegli dated 21 May 1785. State Archives in Dubrovnik, HR-DADU-254, Bassegli-Gozze Family Archive, box 12, envelope C2/10. Cited partially in Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 321.

<sup>39</sup> Vlaho Stulli, "(Michele Antonio) Sorgo", 416-417. This initiative in the Sorgo family was not new because their palace and country villas had already hosted learned gatherings. Luka Sorgo, Miho's grandfather, hosted "academician Idlers" in that same palace, and was an academy member together with his two sons, Antun and Miho. M. Deanović, "Odrazi talijanske akademije", 45-46. In addition, their cousin Marin Orsatov Sorgo, in his humble summer residence in Mokošica, hosted the famous Ruđer Bošković in 1743. According to Bošković's own words, it was in the company of Sorgo and other noblemen with an amateur interest in physics and mathematics that he came to view his theory of forces most clearly. S. Stojan, "Ljetnikovci Rijeke Dubrovačke". These private meetings were frowned upon and disapproved by the representatives of the Catholic Church, and they were even denounced to the Vatican for practicing freemasonry, which was banned by the pope at the time. Karl Kovač, "Zanovičeva škola i framasunstvo Dubrovniku", *List Dubrovačke biskupije* 12/5 (1913), 56-57. On the history and genealogy of the Sorgo family, see Stjepan Ćosić and Nenad Vekarić, *Dubrovačka vlastela između roda i države: salamankezi i sorbonezi*, Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2005, 204-211.

merrier way to spend his days".<sup>40</sup> For that purpose, in his own residence he established "an academy" composed of "most dear friends and learned men" who helped soothe his health problems by the power of prose and poetry.<sup>41</sup> That illness was aggravated by the "bitter" events from Miho's "public and private life".<sup>42</sup> Apart from political failures,<sup>43</sup> the suicide of his brother Luka, who threw himself out of the third-floor window of their family residence in the city on 11 September 1789, was a devastating blow. Luka left behind a wife, four daughters and son Antun, whose education became Miho's responsibility. The select company most probably gathered in the "grand library" of the Sorgo palace<sup>44</sup> at Pustijerna (today Bishop's Palace), which had already earned a reputation for its wealth.<sup>45</sup> Shortly before retiring in Ragusa after numerous private and diplomatic travels across Italy, Miho had the palace redecorated with the portraits of the Ragusans who distinguished themselves in arts and sciences.<sup>46</sup> Miho's initiative should come as no surprise since both he and his brother were diplomats and at the same time cosmopolitans who had developed a broad social network and had connections with the Italian and Austrian elite. In addition, in Ragusa they gathered their equals in rank among kin and friends who shared with them the same interests and openness towards new trends.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The first sessions of the Society were probably held in February 1793, because the first speech that was delivered mentions the recent (*ultimamente*) death of the learned Franjo Stay, who died on 10 February 1793. See Miho Sorgo, *Elogio dell'abate Francesco Stay*, Dubrovnik: Carlo Occhi, 1793, 6. Due to his health condition, Miho Sorgo often frequented Italian thermal spas, and from one of such visits to the Umbrian spa Nocera he published a travel letter about the health benefits of the natural mineral waters. [Miho Sorgo], "Lettera del sig. Co: Michele di Sorgo Patrizio Raguseo, al Sig. Co: Ferdinando Gualdo Vicentino, intorno ai Bagni di Nocera", *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico* (June 1788), 76-80, and Ž. Muljačić, "Miho Sorkočević i talijanski prosvjetitelji", 12.

<sup>41</sup> V. Stulli, "(Michele Antonio) Sorgo", 417. Sorgo's initiative is also mentioned by the comment on the first page of the manuscript of the "Zagreb" speech on scholarly societies in the Kaznačić family fond of the CASA Archive: "Discorso pronunziato nella 1a sessione di una Accademia (!) letteraria che progettarono di stabilire diversi amici, in Casa delli Sig: Sorgo ad impulsione e persuasione del N. U. il Sig: Conte Michele di Sorgo. La quale accademia dopo una decina di sessioni dovette (!) disgraziatamente sopprimersi per cedere alla malignità de tempi perversi che anche le virtuose istituzioni sanno denigrare, accusare, e render sospette". HR-AHAZU-7 /XV 21/ B V 8, f. 1r.

<sup>42</sup> Tomaso Chersa, *Della vita e delle opere di monsignore Giorgio Ferrich*, Dubrovnik: Antonio Martecchini, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Muljačić mentions great discontent among the *salamankezi* once the rumours about the connections between the Sorgo brothers and Vienna had reached Dubrovnik in 1783. Purportedly, Miho Sorgo was assaulted both physically and verbally by the rector himself, Baldo Gozze. It seems that the Sorgo brothers, who intended to maintain their central political position between two polarised camps, were not very popular mainly because of their reliance on the Austrian emperor Joseph II, as well as their personal flaws. After the failure of the "third way", Sorgo left for Italy for three years (1786-1788), and again in 1791. Ž. Muljačić, "O strankama u starom Dubrovniku", 35-36 and *id.*, "Miho Sorgo i talijanski prosvjetitelji", 13.

<sup>44</sup> Miho, who never married, lived there with his brother Luka and his wife and children.

<sup>45</sup> M. Novak, "Dubrovnik u drugoj polovici", 145.

<sup>46</sup> Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga povijesti", 322. On the paintings, see Kruno Prijatelj, "O portretu Rajmunda Kunića", *Analiz Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 34 (1996), 207-214.

<sup>47</sup> S. Stojan, *U salonu* and "Kulturni krug", *passim*.

Miho was a member of the Roman Academy of Arcadia. On his travels, as mentioned above, he was warmly welcomed in the famous Italian literary salons. He was also a correspondent member of the Paduan Academy of Sciences (*Accademia delle scienze*).<sup>48</sup> Fortis, Miho's close and insightful friend, described him as most popular in various social circles and that in all the Italian cities he had visited he made a very good impression of himself. Highly learned, eloquent and witty in conversation, he made a delightful impression on many. In all likelihood he was modest and hardly anything was known about his "inclination to compose Illyric verses, to spend leisurely moments in the company of Italian muses and his masterly preoccupation with Latin poetry, and that these exercises did not divert him either from the responsibility of [state] governing or more serious pursuits".<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Sorgo was primarily interested in the local antiquities (*gran genio per le antichità*), and apart from publishing Ragusan historical books, he showed equal zeal for the "Illyric", i.e., Slavic language,<sup>50</sup> archaeology of Epidaurum,<sup>51</sup> and also had his mind set on the publishing of a manual of the domestic, i.e., Ragusan law.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, in the spirit of the Enlightenment he raised the awareness about prominent Ragusans, and thus wrote and published laudatory speeches to the scholars Franjo Stay and Rajmund Kunić,<sup>53</sup> while Ruđer Bošković wished to leave all his manuscripts to no other but Miho Sorgo.<sup>54</sup>

In Sorgo's conception of founding a scholarly society, his nephew Tomo Bassegli offered major support. Upon the dissolution of marriage with Mimi von Born, Tomo returned to Ragusa in the summer of 1792. After months of mourning for his only son, who fell ill and died upon their return to the homeland, he was ready to assume

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<sup>48</sup> Ž. Muljačić, "Miho Sorkočević i talijanski prosvjetitelji", *passim* and Žarko Muljačić, "Kako je A. Fortis pripremao za drugo francusko izdanje *Puti po Dalmaciji* novo poglavlje o Dubrovniku", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti JAZU u Dubrovniku* 17 (1979), 245-246.

<sup>49</sup> A letter by Alberto Fortis to Elisabetta Caminer Turra published as "Lettera del Sig. Alberto Fortis alla Compilatrice del Giornale", *Giornale Enciclopedico* 3 (March 1781), 33-41, published in: Žarko Muljačić, "Jedan članak Alberta Fortisa u vezi s Dubrovnikom", *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 34 (1968), 40-42.

<sup>50</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>51</sup> In his most important work on Ragusan antiquities, Appendini emphasises Sorgo's great contribution regarding the excavation of Epidaurian inscriptions, whose exhibition in the Cavtat City Hall he commissioned, and whose content he published in the Latin commentaries of the work of Ludovik Crijević Tuberon *Commentariolus L. Cervarii Tuberonis de origine et incremento urbis*, Dubrovnik: Andrea Trevisan, 1790, 51-59; Francesco Maria Appendini, *Notizie storico-critiche sulle antichità storia e letteratura de' Ragusei divise in due tomi e dedicate all' Eccelso Senato della Repubblica di Ragusa*, vol. 1, Dubrovnik: Antonio Martecchini, 1802, 44-45 and 49 and *id.*, *Povijesno-kritičke bilješke o starinama, povijesti i književnosti Dubrovčana*, trans. Ante Šoljić, Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska - ogranak Dubrovnik, 2016, 86-90.

<sup>52</sup> Muljačić, "Iz korespondencije", 100. These interests refute the opinion of earlier literary historians by which Sorgo was no more than a *bel esprit*, *bonvivant* and Arcadian at heart, who sought only leisure and amusement in literature. R. Maixner, "O akademiji", 60.

<sup>53</sup> M. Sorgo, *Elogio dell'abate Francesco Stay* and *Elogio dell'abate Raimondo Cunich*, [Dubrovnik, 1795].

<sup>54</sup> V. Stulli, "(Michele Antonio) Sorgo", 416.

public duties, but also to help his uncle found a society of the "patriotic and public utility" (*patriotisch-gemeinnützig*) type, such as those he encountered in Switzerland and Germany. Alberto Fortis, who was the main advocate of Tomo's law studies in the republican Swiss confederation, in the Protestant Bern, where he had many connections,<sup>55</sup> assigned Tomo the role of the major reformist upon return to his native land. Fortis outlined the reform programme for the Republic of Ragusa in a travel letter about the mineralogical discoveries in Calabria, which he sent to Tomo on 30 October 1783.<sup>56</sup> Tomo and his father-in-law, Ignaz von Born, had the letter translated and published in 1787-88 in a German journal *Der deutsche Merkur*, because the Italian censorship in Naples would suppress it due to the criticism of the Catholic Church. Special emphasis in the letter is placed on the need to establish a scholarly society in Ragusa: "What this city needs now is yet another academy of useful and patriotic learning which would be the centre of knowledge of the entire nation". Fortis mentions that he knows that there were academies in the past, but they were devoted to poetry, and that now "a society worthy of our century should be gathered in which serious topics, i.e., [fine] art[s], commerce and history of Ragusa would be discussed".<sup>57</sup>

Tomo's own thoughts about the patriotic society are found in his notes. Among his musings on the reform of the Republic of Ragusa, Bassegli—a great admirer of natural sciences, physics, chemistry and mathematics—explicitly mentions German and Swiss patriotic societies upon which Ragusa should be modelled. Besides the society, he dwells on the foundation of a small library, natural history museum and a cabinet of physics instruments, which was a common standard. A society of this kind would contribute immensely to "the public education and culture of the nation". Based on this, it seems that Miho Sorgo and Tomo Bassegli seriously considered the formal foundation of the society, and that the latter even planned to acquire the statutes of the society in Bern through private channels, with which

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<sup>55</sup> Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević–Baselji*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> In 1784 Fortis published six letters in Naples in the original Italian version, with a dedication to Miho Sorgo. A. Fortis, *Lettere geografico-fisiche*, iii.

<sup>57</sup> ... nun fehlte dieser Stadt noch eine Akademie der nützlichen und vaterländischen Gelehrsamkeit, die der Mittelpunkt des Wissens der Nation würde. Alberto Fortis, *Mineralogische Reisen durch Calabrien und Apulien von Alberto Fortis*. In *Briefen an den Grafen Thomas von Bassegli in Ragusa*, Weimar: in der Hoffmannschen Buchhandlung, 1788, 28-29. Tomo first translated these letters into German and looked for a publisher while still in Switzerland. On the role of these published letters, see Teodora Shek Brnardić, "Private Letters, Public Interest: the Roles of the Published Scientific Correspondence in Central and Southeastern Europe", unpublished paper submitted on the 15th International Congress of the International Society for Eighteenth Century Studies (ISECS), Edinburgh, 15 July 2019. Rudolf Maixner was the first to draw attention to the German edition of these letters in "O akademiji Miha Sorkočevića", 59. Following in his footsteps, Žarko Muljačić traced the Italian edition and compared it with the German one. See Muljačić, "Dubrovačke teme u dvjema Fortisovim knjigama"; *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru. Razdio lingvističko-filološki* 8/5 (1970), 187-197 and reprint in the collected papers *Iz dubrovačke prošlosti*, 55-74. I have discovered that the letters written in German were first published in the journal *Der deutsche Merkur* in the yearly volumes 1787-1788.

he was obviously familiar.<sup>58</sup> Tomo had the experience of a natural history academician: he attended two sessions of the Academy in Padua in June 1781, during which he heard the lecture of Alberto Fortis on seed germination and a three-month report by Melchiorre Cesarotti.<sup>59</sup> In 1783 he was a member of the Society of Physical Sciences of Lausanne (*La Société des sciences physiques de Lausanne*) for a certain period of time.<sup>60</sup> In the following year, he was appointed honorary member of the Economic Society of Bern (*La Société économique de Berne*).<sup>61</sup> Bassegli's first experience of freemason sociability took place in Basel, by becoming a member of the masonic lodge "To Perfect Friendship" (*Zur vollkommenen Freundschaft*), while in August 1785 he continued with these activities in the Viennese lodge "To True Harmony" (*Zur wahren Eintracht*) of his father-in-law, Ignaz von Born.<sup>62</sup> All these activities, naturally, were to remain hidden from the Ragusan social circles, although later they gave rise to obscure speculations. Towards the end of his life, in 1803, he became correspondent of the recently founded Portuguese Literary Society (*Sociedade Literaria Tubucciana*) in Abrantes, which aspired to have two eminent correspondents from each of the European capitals.<sup>63</sup>

Switzerland, which at the time abounded in Enlightenment societies that owed their foundation to patriotic initiatives (in Basel itself there were some 13 different societies!),<sup>64</sup> made a deep impression on Tomo; he considered it his second homeland.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Une société de personnes qui établiraient une petite bibliothèque à leur usage particulier, un musée d'histoire naturelle, un cabinet d'instruments physiques etc. contribueroit beaucoup à donner un ton pour l'éducation publique et pour la culture d'une nation. Telle est une société à Bremen (probably Bern, T.S.B.)... Je pourrais me procurer les loix de cette société dont on pourroit tirer parti pour un petit code d'une société analogue; Mainers pourroit me les procurer. Le code de la société de l'Hotel de Musique à Berne je l'avrai par W (probably Wyttenbach, Ž. M.).* Tomo Bassegli, a sheet in the folder *Plan de réforme de la République de Raguse idée par M. Th. De Bassegli Patricien de la même... Lan 1806*, S 8, Bassegli Family Archive, box 6, B2/12, cited in: Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji*, 33, footnote 14.

<sup>59</sup> Ž. Muljačić, "Iz korespondencije", 79.

<sup>60</sup> Đuro Ferić describes this in his epigram: *Cui puero praeceptor eram, suadente Diavolo / hunc pater ignotos misit Helvetios. / Lausonii hic primum, mox Bernae discit et Angli Gottinga urbs regis docta coronat opus.* Žarko Muljačić, "Tomo Baseljić u Göttingenu", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 36 (1998), 242-243.

<sup>61</sup> Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Bassegli*, PhD dissertation, 57. Bassegli-Gozze Archive contains a letter written by Christoph Friedrich Freudenreich on 29 July 1784 in Bern, in which he informs Bassegli about the enclosed diploma ... *de membre Honoraire de cette société littéraire et patriotique.* Arhiv Bassegli-Gozze, A 17. The bundle does not contain the diploma, only the passport of the City of Bern.

<sup>62</sup> *Die Protokolle der Wiener Freimaurerloge 'Zur wahren Eintracht'*, ed. Hans Josef Irmen, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994, 343.

<sup>63</sup> Bassegli, together with Antun Sorgo, was recommended for this honorary position by Baldassare Radich. Letter to Tomo Bassegli dated 27 July 1803 from Lisbon. Besides the letter in the Bassegli-Gozze Archive, also preserved is a diploma and activity programme of that academy, box 7, A 17.

<sup>64</sup> Ulrich Im Hof, "Der Sozietätsgedanke im 18. Jahrhundert", *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 7 (1981), 9.

<sup>65</sup> Letter by Tomo Bassegli to his sister Deša dated 1 October 1783. The letter is kept in the Bassegli-Gozze Archive, box 13, C2/11, cited in: Anacleto Verecchia, "Un amico di Lichtenberg: Tommaso Bassegli", *Studi Germanici* 13 (1975), 132.



He looked favourably upon the gatherings in the societies and clubs because such social occasions ennobled people, brought them together, and contributed to the circulation of ideas and sentiments among them. In his opinion, everything that contributed to the reciprocal clarification of their conceptions, everything that made people "wiser, more virtuous, more amiable, more confident, more unique" was socially useful.<sup>66</sup> The patriotic society as an important instrument in the education of the public played a significant role in Bassegli's reformation plan for the Republic of Ragusa:<sup>67</sup>

The objective of the patriotic society should be relentless work on the common good by deracinating prejudice, by enlightening the nation about its true interests, by extending enlightenment through amelioration of studies, education of clerics aimed at their occupation with the betterment of the link between true ideas of religion and civil laws. All is done step by step; time is that which destroys all, reorganises all and regenerates... Although I shall not be a spectator of the good that in the long run would result from a society such as ours ought to be, I sincerely wish that [it] will prosper one day in the better times. With culture and enlightenment day by day we become [more] human... But the combined forces of fools and rogues will again over a long period of time belittle the efforts of reason because to these two sorts [of people] it is most important that things remain as they used to be.<sup>68</sup>

It should be noted that among the advocates for the establishment of the society was also the secular clergyman Đuro Ferić (1739-1820), learned fable writer and poet of non-noble descent, who collected and copied Ragusan literature in the Slavic language. He privately tutored Tomo Bassegli and many other young noblemen, and assisted Miho Sorgo in publishing the commentary of the historic work of Ludovik Tuberon Crijević *Writings on the Present Age (Commentaria temporum suorum)* in 1790.<sup>69</sup> Like

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<sup>66</sup> *Tout ce qui contribu à éclairer reciproquement leur conceptions; tout ce qui les rende plus sages, plus vertueux, plus aimables, plus confiants, plus unis; est fort utile pour le bien de la société en general. C'est dans ce point de vu que j'estime beaucoup les clubs et les assemblées.* Tomo Bassegli, "Clubs, assembles, sociétés", Bassegli-Gozze Archive, box 5, B2/7, registry no. 10.

<sup>67</sup> On this plan, see T. Shek Brnardić, "Tomo Bassegli".

<sup>68</sup> *L'objet des occupations d'une société patriotique doit etre de travailler sans relache au bien generale en derasinant les prejuges, d'eclairant la nation sur ses vrais interets, d'étendant les lumieres par l'amelioration des etudes, par l'instruction du clairgé de s'occuper de perfectionner la liaison de vraies idées de religion avec celles des loix civiles. Tout se fait peu a peu; le temps qui detruit tout, reordonne et regenere tout... Quoique je ne serai pas spectateur du bien qui a la longue résulterait surement d'une société telle que la notre devoit etre, je souhaite sincerement que le bien prospere un jour dans de meilleurs temps. Avec la culture et les lumieres on devient tout le jour plus humain... Mais les forces combinees des sots et des coquins rendront vain encore pendant tres long temps tous les efforts de la raison, car c'est à ces deux classes surtout qu'il importe le plus que les choses restent sur l'ancien pied...* Tomo Bassegli, a sheet in the folder *Plan de reforme de la République de Raguse idée par M. Th. De Bassegli Patricien de la même...* *L'an 1806*, § 8, Bassegli Family Archive, box 6, B2/12, cited in: Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji*, 33, footnote 14.

<sup>69</sup> V. Rezar, "Kratak prilog", 43.

Sorgo, Ferić was a member of the Roman Arcadia, along with a couple of other Italian academies. His biographer, Ragusan writer and diplomat Tomo Krša (1782-1826), wrote about Ferić, quoting an Italian author, that literary meetings were of great benefit to him because they urged people to communally glorify and emulate virtuous lives. And that was why he passionately encouraged Miho Sorgo to create such a society in his own house, where the rare admirers of sciences (*lettere*) would come together to discuss freely any scientific or literary topic, up to their own preference. Krša notes that Sorgo accepted Ferić's proposal, and that his house became a gathering place of the Ragusans "in pursuit of honour and glory of the accomplishments of mind". During the first meetings, Ferić, apparently, recited his first fables.<sup>70</sup> Krša, who could hear from the first hand, from Ferić, about the details regarding Sorgo's academy, emphasises its short existence and the reasons underlying its dissolution: "This academy, from which—albeit private—the first benefits for the growth of scientific research (*incremento degli studi*) in Ragusa were already emerging, had barely formed when it had to be dissolved due to the envy-fueled ignorance which, opposing the sciences (*lettere*), makes those sciences even more deserving of respect".<sup>71</sup>

Other members came from the noble as well as non-noble ranks. Social amalgamation of this kind—uncommon for Ragusan nobility—was in keeping with the Enlightenment postulates which gave precedence to merit over privileged birth. Meritocratic system of this type was a common phenomenon in public institutions, notably in scientific and artistic societies in which prestige was earned by knowledge and skills and not descent. Besides Sorgo and Bassegli, representing aristocracy was also Miho's politically like-minded good friend, Latin satirist, polyglot and lawyer, Junije Resti (1755-1814).<sup>72</sup> Although antagonistic towards French philosophers and novelties, Resti sided with the reformist camp flocked around Sorgo and Bassegli, which aspired to enlighten and then reform the Republic peacefully. Francesco Maria Appendini (1768-1837), Italian Piarist and professor of rhetoric at the Ragusan Gymnasium, writes about Resti's participation in the Patriotic Society. Appendini mentions that he and Resti went together to Miho Sorgo's place (*illum adiremus*) "on particular days three times a month" while he was alive and that Resti recited a speech before him in Italian titled "A Discourse on Patriotism" (*Discorso sul patriotismo*), in which he "equated the sophistication of the theme with the purity and elegance of the Italian language; moreover, he showed with how much

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<sup>70</sup> T. Chersa, "Della vita e delle opere", 37-38. In 1794 Ferić published a book entitled *Fabulae ab Illyricis adagiis desumptae*, Dubrovnik: Andrea Trevisani, 1794, a collection of Latin fables based on folk proverbs. Ferić advocated for the artistic value of didactic literature. Ivan Pederin, "Đuro Ferić kao pjesnik hrvatskih fiziokrata i jedan od začetnika hrvatskog narodnog preporoda", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 21 (1983), 228.

<sup>71</sup> T. Chersa, "Della vita e delle opere", 38.

<sup>72</sup> On him, see Zdenka Janeković Römer, "Ladanjska Arkadija Junija Antunova de Resti (1755.-1814.) - utopište starog svijeta", *Peristil* 56 (2013), 207-212.

love and commitment he cared for his homeland, while striving to battle against the evils and adversities in the Republic".<sup>73</sup>

Apart from Resti and Appendini, the sources also confirm an Italian surgeon in the service of the Republic, Michelangelo Roini,<sup>74</sup> a protégé of the Sorgo brothers, along with the gifted Bolognese student of medicine, Luka Stulli, and possibly, his brother Vlaho, Sorgo's biographer.<sup>75</sup> Tomo Bassegli invited the learned Stjepan Rajčević from Vienna as a correspondent member, whom both he and Ferić knew personally, and whom Bassegli urged to prepare a report on grain trade,<sup>76</sup> since Rajčević, as an Austrian diplomatic representative, was well versed in this subject matter. Miho Sorgo attempted to enroll the Split physician Julije Bajamonti, whose offprint of the work on plagiarism in the field of physiology Roini read aloud at a meeting. Sorgo's letter addressed to Bajamonti on 4 March 1794 contains at the same time the last mention of the society: "When we need your presence most, then we miss even your letters. The regrets are not solely mine, for I share them with Bassegli, Resti and many other friends who gather once a week to read successively a communication on any subject whatsoever that pertains to the homeland and the state. You love and know it [the Republic of Ragusa] fairly, and therefore I believe that you will not deprive your friends of the right to make you a member and partner in their judicious and beneficial undertaking".<sup>77</sup> The palace of Miho Sorgo witnessed the gatherings of both Ragusa-born nobility and commoners, who in the later period played a

<sup>73</sup> F. M. Appendini, *De vita et scriptis Junii Antonii*, ix.

<sup>74</sup> On him as a member of the Society, see especially in: Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 334-339.

<sup>75</sup> Vlaho Stulli explicitly states that Miho Sorgo "enlisted his brother among his academicians with a very kind letter, after he had already departed for Bologna". V. Stulli, "(Michele Antonio) Sorgo", 417.

<sup>76</sup> Preserved in the State Archives in Dubrovnik is a draft of Bassegli's reply to Rajčević's letter of 3 February 1793, in which he mentions the possibility of the preparation of a memorandum on grain trade. Letter in the folder *Plan de reforme de la République de Raguse idée par M. Th. De Bassegli Patricien de la même... L'an 1806*, § 15, State Archives in Dubrovnik, HR-DADU-253, Bassegli Family Archive, box 6, B2/12. Rajčević replies on 3 April 1793, yet without the memorandum. Bassegli Family Archive, box 11, C/10. See also Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 328. On Rajčević, see Frano Čale, "O Stjepanu Rajčeviću Dubrovčaninu", *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 3 (1955), 193-198 and Castilia-Luminita Manea-Grgin, "Wallachian and Moldavian Boyars in the Travel Writings of Two Dubrovnik-Born Authors, Ruđer Bošković and Stjepan Rajčević (18th Century)", *Revue de l'Association Internationale d'Etudes du Sud Est Européen* 40-44 (2010-2014) [2014], 125-144.

<sup>77</sup> *Quando si ha sempre maggior bisogno della vostra presenza, si manca perfino di lettere. Questa è una doglianza che non l'ho io solo in bocca, ma che m'è comune co' Bassegli, con Resti e diversi altri amici che si radunano una volta alla settimana regolatamente per leggere successivamente ciascuno una comunicazione (?) su qualsivoglia soggetto, che abbia relazione cola (!) Patria e col paese. Voi lo amate e conoscete abbastanza e però non potete negarvi alla brama de vostri amici di avervi per aggregato e socio nella loro giudiziosa e giovevole intrapresa.* Archaeological Museum in Split, Legacy of Julije Bajamonti, 49 h 1/1, cited in: Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 330, and modernised translation cited in: Ivan Milčetić, "Dr. Julije Bajamonti i njegova djela", *Rad JAZU* 192 (1912), 245-246. Other members mentioned by Josip Bersa, i.e. Alberto Fortis, Franjo Stay, Marin Martellini and Brno Zamagna, have not been confirmed by the sources, which does not imply otherwise. Josip Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike 1800.-1880*. Hannover: Hrvatski zapisnik, 2002, 168. Also, Miho's young nephew, Antun Sorgo, and his friend of French origin, Marko Bruerević (Marc Bruère Desrivaux), son of the French consul in Dubrovnik, may also have been among the members.

prominent social and cultural role in the city. The topics of the discussions ranged widely as long as they were related to the homeland, that is, the Republic of Ragusa. Each meeting consisted of a read-out discourse, followed by debate and conclusion.

### Speeches—cries for the reform of the tiny Republic

What were the topics discussed by Sorgo's academicians? What did their patriotism consist of? Historical anthropologist Richard van Dülmen defines as "patriotic" all the societies "that wish to act in a generally beneficial and practical sense out of patriotic or moral interests, that is, those that did not intend to produce erudition, but useful knowledge, and to disseminate and apply, i.e. to put into the practice of social life new scientific and practical insights".<sup>78</sup> The concept of patriotism as social virtue was linked to the philosophy of the Enlightenment, and patriots were considered as the most enlightened part of the society.<sup>79</sup> Key words in the language of this new patriotism were "public happiness", "public utility" and "common good".<sup>80</sup> The activity of the enlightened patriots, therefore, focused on happiness, that is, the improvement of life of the broader community, which included the establishment of various patriotic or utilitarian societies of the like-minded from different social strata.

It is worth noting that the name of the Ragusan "Patriotic Society" was not of formal character, but rather the result of the translation of French expressions in the preserved speeches of Tomo Bassegli. He commences both his extant speeches in French by mentioning the Patriotic Society (*la société patriotique*): "Patriotic Society, gentlemen, of the type you have created, by virtue of its name, and even more so by the very zeal you are driven, announces that the love for public utility is the principal goal of your gathering";<sup>81</sup> "My friends! Patriotic Society, as you wished to name this society of ours, should have in mind only public utility and general welfare of our compatriots".<sup>82</sup> As

<sup>78</sup> Richard van Dülmen, *Die Gesellschaft der Aufklärer. Zur bürgerlichen Emanzipation und aufklärerischen Kultur in Deutschland*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996, 67, 69.

<sup>79</sup> Werner Krauss, "'Patriote', 'patriotique', 'patriotisme' à la fin de l'Ancien Régime", in: *The Age of Enlightenment. Studies presented to Theodore Besterman*, ed. W. H. Barber, Edinburgh: University Court of the University of St. Andrews, 1967, 391.

<sup>80</sup> T. Shek Brnardić, "Modalities of Enlightened Patriotism", 634.

<sup>81</sup> *Un Societé Patriotique, Messieurs, telle que vous avez constitué la votre annonce par son titre et plus encore par le zele qui vous anime que l'amour de l'utilité publique est le but principal de votre reunion*. Tomo Bassegli "Discours sur l'utilité publique", in: Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji*, 95; original in the Bassegli Archive, box 2, B2/7. The speech has been translated into Croatian as "Rasprava o javnoj korisnosti (trans. by Romana Horvat)", *Kolo* 4 (2004), 260-269.

<sup>82</sup> *Mes amis! Une société patriotique, tel que vous avez voulu nommé la notre, ne doit avoir en vue que l'utilité publique, et le bien etre general de nos compatriotes*. Tomo Bassegli, "Des causes de la pauvreté et de la mendicité dans notre pays, et des moyens d'y remédier", in: Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji*, 103. Bassegli-Gozze Archive, box 6, B2/12. French original published in: Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji*, 103-105.

already mentioned, his experience of living abroad, in Switzerland, has given him an opportunity to learn what exactly is meant by "patriotic spirit" that builds a community in which one lives, as well as the concept of "patriotism" itself that he employs.

Bassegli was acquainted with the work of the freethinking freemason Carlo Antonio Pilati (1733-1802), in which he describes his travels through Europe, including the Swiss confederation:

All the cantons are full of men of masculine and republican virtue, the Swiss are the only nation of all the contemporary peoples who are familiar with and who practice this virtue known as love for homeland, which other peoples cannot even conceive. Such citizens in large numbers we see especially in Zurich, Bern and Basel. There are societies that have no other goal but to seek ways to make their fellow-citizens happy and to help various state confederations flourish.<sup>83</sup>

Pilati notes that the Swiss cultivate many sciences and that they have a large number of scholars who enjoy great freedom in their studies, i.e. they are free to pursue their own particular interests. He underlines that scientists ought to focus their research, as much as it is possible, on public good.<sup>84</sup> For Bassegli, who kept his masonic membership secret,<sup>85</sup> public utility ought to have been the main objective of the Patriotic Society, which was to be the topic of his programmatic speech.

Given that no archival documents of the Society have survived, sporadic investigations have traced the texts of the speeches that are believed to have been given at the society meetings.<sup>86</sup> Hitherto known are the titles and manuscripts of eight discourses given in Italian and French: 1) "Academic discourse. On special utility of literary societies in small republics" (*Discorso accademico. Della special utilità delle società letterarie ne piccoli paesi repubblicani*) by anonymous author;<sup>87</sup> 2) "On education that befits our nobility in

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<sup>83</sup> [Carlo Antonio Pilati], *Voyages en différens pays de l'Europe en 1774, 75, 76. Ou Lettres écrites de l'Allemagne, de la Suisse, de l'Italie, de Sicile et de Paris*, 1, La Haye: C. Plaat, 1777, 188.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>85</sup> This was subject to speculation, denunciation even. Ruža Radoš, "'Lovac smrti i njezinih bolesti': Dubrovčanin Toma Basiljević (1756.-1806.)", in: *Ljudi 18. stoljeća na hrvatskom prostoru. Od plemića i crkvenih dostojanstvenika do težaka i ribara*, ed. Lovorka Čoralić et al., Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016, 328.

<sup>86</sup> There must have been more than ten meetings, as mentioned by an anonymous remark at the beginning of the "Zagreb" discourse, because Sorgo stresses the continuity of meetings in a letter to Bajamonti of 4 March 1794. Cited in: Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 330.

<sup>87</sup> The discourse bearing the mentioned title was found in 1952 by Žarko Muljačić in a collection of documents pertaining to the Bonda family, in the archive of the Institute for Historical Sciences CASA in Dubrovnik (see Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 320, footnote 7). That manuscript, despite relentless search, has not been found yet in the inventories and the manuscript legacy of the Institute. A duplicate of this speech without title, that is, a draft with many corrections is kept at the CASA Archive in Zagreb, in the legacy of Antun Kaznačić, sig. XV 21/B V 8, published by

the present circumstances" (*Dell'educazione che conviene ai Nostri Nobili nelle presenti circostanze*) by anonymous author, dated 16 March 1793;<sup>88</sup> 3) "Discourse on patriotism" (*Discorso sul patriotismo*) by Junije Resti, dated 15 June 1793;<sup>89</sup> 4) "Discourse on public utility" (*Discours sur l'utilité publique*) by Tomo Bassegli;<sup>90</sup> 5) "On money and coin minting" (*Sur la monnoye et le monnoyage*) by Tomo Bassegli;<sup>91</sup> 6) "On the causes of poverty and begging in our country and the ways towards remedying it" (*Des causes de la pauvreté et de la mendacité dans notre pays et des moyens d'y remédier*) by Tomo Bassegli (unfinished);<sup>92</sup> 7) "Elogium on Abbot Franjo Stay" (*Elogio dell'abate Francesco Stay*) by Miho Sorgo (printed in Ragusa in November 1793);<sup>93</sup> 8) "Letter of the gentleman doctor Julije Bajamonti to the illustrious P. Giovambattista da San Marino, member of several eminent academies on the true authors of some discoveries" (*Lettera del sig. dottor Giulio Bajamonti al chiariss. P. Giovambatista da S. Marino socio delle più illustri accademie sopra i veri autori di certe scoperte*) by Julije Bajamonti, recited by Michelangelo Roini (published in *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico* in January 1793).<sup>94</sup> On the first sessions

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Rudolf Maixner, and that is the text we have used in this paper. See *id.*, "O akademiji", 62-27. The difference between the two versions of the manuscript lies in the use of the term "scientific societies" (*società scientifiche*) in Muljačić's text, and "literary societies" (*literarie società*) in that of Maixner. Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 22, footnote 19. In this text, preference shall be given to the term "scientific societies", which were characteristic for the Enlightenment era.

<sup>88</sup> That speech, in addition to the previous one, Žarko Muljačić discovered in a collection of documents of the Bonda Family legacy in the archive of the Institute for the Historical Sciences CASA in Dubrovnik (see Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", footnote 7, 320), yet that manuscript is not available at the moment either. Žarko Muljačić and Relja Seferović attribute the speech to the Piarist and pedagogue Franjo Marija Appendini, who was the only teacher among the academicians. Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 323 and R. Seferović, "Politička retorika", 316-323. The Serbian literary historian Predrag Stanojević argues against that assumption because of the use of the personal pronoun "we", that is, the first-person plural pronoun with the nouns denoting Ragusan state and nobility, and also because of the briefness of Appendini's stay in Dubrovnik at the time of the speech delivery. Predrag Stanojević, *Književni istoričar Frančesko Marija Apendini*, ed. Irena Arsić, Beograd: Ars libri, 2013, 36. In my opinion it appears far more likely that the speech was authored by the experienced Đuro Ferić, who privately tutored many young noblemen, including Tomo Bassegli (see footnote 60), and was even employed as professor at the Dubrovnik Gymnasium for three years, and therefore well acquainted with the contemporary educational circumstances.

<sup>89</sup> The manuscript of this speech has long been unknown, and I discovered it in the Franciscan Archive in Dubrovnik under sig. 1144. Its content will be the subject of my forthcoming special study.

<sup>90</sup> See footnote 81.

<sup>91</sup> Bassegli-Gozze Archive, box 6, B2/12. Bassegli criticises the antiquated technology of the Ragusan Mint, in which coins are minted by hammer instead of machine as in other countries. Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji*, 29, 53 and 58.

<sup>92</sup> See footnote 82. Muljačić argues that the mentioned speech, in terms of chronological order, was probably given first. Ž. Muljačić, *Tomo Basiljević-Baselji*, 34, footnote 18.

<sup>93</sup> At the beginning of the speech, in the first note, he writes that the discourse was read during one of the meetings held weekly in the author's house (*Questo discorso fu recitato in una delle adunanze che ogni settimana si tengono in casa dell'autore*), i.e. during one of the Society sessions. Sorgo, *Elogio dell'abate Francesco Stay*, 5.

<sup>94</sup> In his letter to Julije Bajamonti dated 29 April 1793, Roini mentions that in the last session, he read his printed letter to the Venetian journalist in the January issue, which Bajamonti is known to have sent to his friends in the form of an offprint. Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 327.

Đuro Ferić, as earlier mentioned, read his fables, while the speech on the education of the nobility makes reference to the previously given speech on physical education, which has not been preserved.<sup>95</sup> Also, Tomo Bassegli encouraged Stjepan Rajčević to write a memorandum on grain trade, of which Rajčević was knowledgeable due to his experience in the Austrian service.<sup>96</sup>

Scientific and literary topics interchanged in the Society, as reflected in the speakers' repertory. Two speeches may be considered programmatic, as they speak about the objectives of the society: the speech about the practicality of literary or scientific societies in small republics by an anonymous author and the speech about public utility by Tomo Bassegli, in which he defines public utility as a virtue that is imminently related to the love for mankind. Junije Resti's speech on patriotism is an addition to these speeches on the theoretical level, because it defines the legitimacy and justness of patriotic feeling from the angle of natural law. The speech on the education of young noblemen, on eradication of poverty and money minting proved to be concrete proposals for the solution of current issues that burdened the Ragusan Republic. As illustration, let us examine the first delivered speech on scientific societies under the working title "Academic discourse. On the special utility of literary (i.e., scientific) societies in small republics".

The speech on the utility of scientific societies, read by a very young speaker—youngest among the society members at the time<sup>97</sup>—addresses the political, moral and physical arguments in support of establishing a society of that kind in a tiny republic such as that of Ragusa. According to the speaker, worthy of establishment is any institution with an honest origin, engaged in noble cause, and with a virtuous goal. These conditions are equally fulfilled by scientific societies, since they owe their creation to the zest for sciences, which they pursue with a mission to disseminate their own knowledge and that of others, for common prosperity. From the political perspective, the speech underlines the aristocratic form of government in Ragusa, and the fact that it is the

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<sup>95</sup> *Riguardo al primo di questi abbiamo inteso nell'ultima nostra adunanza gli inconvenienti, e le assurdità al nostro paese proprie con sommo intendimento osservate.* Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 332.

<sup>96</sup> *Vous m'aviez parlé une fois d'un commerce de grain qui pouroit avoir lieu ici et être si utile à la nation et aux particuliers. Voudriez vous développer ses idées dans une espece de mémoire, et voudriez vous que nous faisons germer cette idée et que nous la cultivions ensemble. Quel bien on ne feroit pas au pays en y attirant une branche de commerce si essentielle.* Draft of Tomo Bassegli's letter to Stjepan Rajčević. See footnote 76. In a bundle titled "Commerces actives et manufactures" in the folder *Plan de reforme de la République de Raguse idée par M. Th. De Bassegli Patricien de la même... Lan 1806* is also the proposition for the foundation of a cloth factory in the Republic of Ragusa, presented as a speech (*Ci obblighiamo, Eccellentissimi Signori, di piantare in questo stato, e mantenere per venti anni una fabbrica di panni e sua tintoria*). Bassegli Family Archive, box 6, B2/12. The text is corrected by Bassegli's hand, yet the handwriting resembles that of Rajčević. Perhaps Bassegli read its corrected version at the meeting of the Patriotic Society or later before the Senate, after becoming a senator.

<sup>97</sup> *... come fors' anche d'età tengo fra voi l'ultimo rango?* R. Maixner, "O akademiji", 62. It might have been Vlaho Stulli, who was 25 in 1793. By that time, his younger brother Luka had already embarked on studies in Bologna.



duty of each nobleman to preserve the general welfare of the nation and to govern the state. However, other strata (referring to non-nobles) are also obliged to serve the state in various services, so that all of them may aspire towards an honour of some kind, which obliges them to develop their talents. A nobleman must be acquainted with the conceptual framework of state interests, with the obstacles as well as the means for the attainment of public happiness. To be a worthy governor of state, he is obliged to scrutinise its customs, nature and resources. To execute his responsibilities successfully, from the very first years, in his private moments when not holding duty, he should get into the habit of sharing his considerations and ideas with others. Hardly can a person who indulges in pleasures in his youth mature into a serious senator versed in conversation and argumentation.

All those attending scientific societies would practice the exact faculties required for their office. No member would ever embark upon debate without thorough preparation, and each member would become accustomed to the "language of reason and truth". Everyone would benefit from these debates and some kind of "capital of knowledge and enlightenment, a common understanding, so to speak" would be created, from which each individual could profit. Regular practice of speech writing was a good exercise for the spirit and the enhancement of eloquence, and it provided training in conversing on any topic without fear. The speaker underlines the political benefit of scientific societies by mentioning the republican ideal in the person of the Roman Marcus Tullius Cicero, a private citizen, statesman, and great philosopher and orator. In his villa in Tusculum, Cicero had a porch known as the "Academy", where every afternoon he invited his friends to debate on a current topic, resulting in the splendid *Tusculan Disputations* that have come down to us.

From a moral point of view, however, the speaker compares monarchy with aristocracy, underlining that in a monarchy, power and authority are concentrated in one person, who has the need to make only himself enlightened and virtuous. A small number of men to be appointed as ministers merely interpret his will and advise his decisions. On the other hand, in the republics it is essential that all citizens be enlightened and virtuous since they all, more or less, hold or may hold public offices. It is even more essential if the state is territorially modest, extending over a small area such as that of Ragusa. General peace requires a large portion of "virtuous tolerance and benevolence in behaviour". With this purpose in mind, it is good to cultivate literature and science because everyday experience proves that "the true friends of literature and science are of a kind and flexible character and that they easily adapt to one another and consent to live in a peaceful society". Further described is a profile of "a true literatus" and "true philosopher" who harbours no envy for the knowledge of others and is ready to share his knowledge. Mentioned within that context is the recent death of Abbot Franjo Stay, "greatest paragon and true friend of literature", who, among others, was also an

example of "tolerant sociability", since he agreed even with those whose character was diametrically opposed to his.<sup>98</sup>

As for the geographical aspect of Ragusa, the speaker makes a brief overview of its isolated position, due to which Ragusa learned to rely on its own resources and talents:

Wherever I turn, I see dry soil, barely cultivated and perhaps not very cultivable, I see barbarian nations that surround us, I see a stormy sea that separates us from the cultured countries. Therefore, all our resources must emanate from our own selves. The lesser the progress of arts and knowledge, the more has to be done. Agriculture, commerce, navigation, they are all in a state where other nations had been [several] centuries ago...If the talent of the nation is cultivated, marvellous progress will be achieved in a short period of time.<sup>99</sup>

The speaker concludes the discourse by promoting individual approach in the engagement for the public good and education; may each man make an effort to grasp his own talents and resources for the acquisition of knowledge and to encourage its dissemination, as well as mutual emulation. And may each man's glory rest in his benefit to the state, of which he is a constituent part. A major role in the promotion of thus conceived practice would be played by scientific societies. In conclusion, the speaker draws attention to the opponents of these aspirations, i.e., to "the malignity of idle ignorance" (*la malignità dell' ignoranza oziosa*) that could obscure the contribution of such societies and cast a shadow of ridicule on them, which ought to be fearlessly ignored.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion: conflicts between two patriotisms

Regardless of the benevolently conceived goals of the founders of the Patriotic Society, who sought a peaceful way towards the betterment of the conditions their state was in, the society did not last long. On the first sheet of the Zagreb speech, added by an unknown hand is a remark stating that the academy had to be dissolved after some

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<sup>98</sup> *La vostra sincera emozione mi prova abbastanza che voi già capiste di chi io intenda dire del nostro di onorata memoria Francesco Stay. La morte in esso ci hà tolto il modello il più perfetto, del vero amico delle lettere, onde debolmente qui sopra mi sono provato di accennare i caratteri distintivi. Nessuno più di lui unì maggior modestia al vero merito, nessuno più sinceramente amò lo studio, e la verità, nessuno unì al sapere più innocenti costumi, e più tollerante sociabilità, essendo sempre stato la delizia, anche di quelli che a lui di opinione, e di carattere erano non solo dissimili, ma fors' anche diametralmente opposti. R. Maixner, "O akademiji", 66.*

<sup>99</sup> *Per ogni parte eh' io mi volga io vedo un arido suolo, pochissimo coltivato, e forse poco coltivabile, vedo delle barbare Nazioni, che ci circondano, vedo un mar tumultuoso che ci divide dai colti Paesi. Dunque tutte le nostre risorse devono emanar da noi medesimi; quanto meno di progresso hanno fatto le arti, e le cognizioni tanto più ce ne resta da fare. Agricoltura, Commercio, Navigazione tutto è ancor nello stato ove le altre nazioni erano addietro de secoli... Si coltivi il talento della nazione, e in breve farà meravigliosi progressi. Ibid., 67.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

ten sessions "due to the malice of a corrupt time, which knows how to tarnish, accuse, and cast suspicion on even virtuous institutions".<sup>101</sup> The last mention of the society is to be found in Miho Sorgo's letter to Julije Bajamonti dated 4 March 1794. According to Žarko Muljačić, dissolution—which was ordered from the above, that is, by the Major Council—was the result of a well-thought-out scheme according to which the academy members, such as Tomo Bassegli and Miho Sorgo, were appointed to administrative duties outside the city to prevent them from attending the academy sessions.<sup>102</sup>

It should be noted that in the states of Central Europe, Germany and Switzerland in particular, the societies of this type tried to apply contemporary scientific insights in practice and served as an extended arm of the state institutions.<sup>103</sup> However, in the Republic of Ragusa private endeavours of this kind were understood as political opposition,<sup>104</sup> especially in the period after the French Revolution. Two years later, Sorgo himself, "a philosopher-observer", died of a stroke in revolutionary Paris, in the arms of his friend Alberto Fortis,<sup>105</sup> while the Society produced no results. Why was that the case?

Without entering an in-depth political analysis, one may conclude that a conflict between two types of patriotism was at work here: modern, enlightened against the old, aristocratic one. Namely, Ragusan republican patriotism, based on the idea of the independent Republic of Ragusa and its *libertas* (freedom),<sup>106</sup> was a common identity sign of the entire nobility, which held the power in its hands, but equally so of the commoners who were excluded from it. Further, that ancient patrician patriotism included "identification with the class *skupnovlada*, [i.e.] with the Republic that guaranteed the nobility's identity".<sup>107</sup> Hereditary aristocracy excluded commoners from political power and held a political monopoly, but until the end of the Republic this social dualism

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<sup>101</sup> *La quale Accademia dopo una Decina di sessioni dovette disgraziatamente sopprimersi per cedere alla malignità de tempi perversi che anche le virtuose istituzioni sanno denigrare, accusare, e render sospette. Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>102</sup> Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 329-330.

<sup>103</sup> Richard van Dülmen, *Die Gesellschaft der Aufklärer. Zur bürgerlichen Emanzipation und aufklärerischen Kultur in Deutschland*, Frankfurt am Main, 1996, 67.

<sup>104</sup> Ivo Banac, "Tomo Baseljić i pitanje dubrovačkih 'Frančeza'", in: *Dubrovačka Republika i Francuska revolucija / La République de Dubrovnik (Raguse) et la Révolution française*, ed. Miljenko Foretić, Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska, 1996, 64.

<sup>105</sup> Žarko Muljačić, "Zašto je M. Sorkočević putovao 1796. g. u Pariz?", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 15-16 (1978), 229-242.

<sup>106</sup> On Ragusan concept of freedom, see Lovro Kunčević, "Discourses on Liberty in Early Modern Ragusa", in: *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2103, 195-214.

<sup>107</sup> Stjepan Čosić and Nenad Vekarić, *Dubrovačka vlastela između roda i države: salamankezi i sorbonezi*, Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2005, 99-100. The term "skupnovlada", coined in the nineteenth century, is a Croatian synonym for the word "republic".

never fuelled revolutionary aspirations aimed at overthrowing the existing order.<sup>108</sup> However, in the eighteenth century, the Ragusan aristocracy witnessed a political rift based on lineage purity—that is, affiliation to the old and new nobility, the so-called *salamankezi* and *sorbonezi*.<sup>109</sup> *Salamankezi* tried to preserve their power position despite dissenting voices among them, while in the mid-1780s, brothers Luka and Miho Sorgo attempted to form the so-called "third faction," with Society member Junije Resti as its advocate. This faction, in collaboration with the *sorbonezi*, aimed to implement mild reforms in the Republic. However, due to accusations of Austrophilia and support of Joseph II<sup>110</sup> in the war against the Ottomans, which was interpreted as a betrayal of Ragusan neutrality, that third way collapsed, and Luka Sorgo committed suicide.<sup>111</sup>

One might say that the patriotism of the old nobility aimed to preserve the old order and ancient laws, which was one of the main features of the Ragusan political system. Over the four and a half centuries of Ragusan independence there were no serious or radical attempts at reform.<sup>112</sup> Lovro Kunčević emphasises that conservatism was one of the essential values of Ragusan political culture, grounded in the belief "that the existing institutions, laws and customs, inherited from the ancestors and tested over time, were far better than any innovation". Moreover, the ancient character of a custom, law or institution was proof of its quality and good reason not to change it. The idea of continuity was deeply embedded in political tradition, and any kind of innovation or novelty had negative connotations.<sup>113</sup>

Tomo Bassegli, as a former expatriate and Enlightenment figure of European prominence, became the main target of the conservative noblemen in Ragusa, who had little understanding for his innovations. In his solitude, Bassegli mused and drew plans about the reform of the Republic of Ragusa, as evidenced by his manuscripts. The idea of modern enlightened patriotism was a peaceful transformation using reform, and in that sense, it anticipated a revolution. "Before I respond to your question, whether (or not) I wish for a revolution in our state, we should first agree on the meaning of *revolution*. I see it as a change of the current political and religious state, regardless of how it is attained, but not, if it is possible, with the use of violence and bloodshed. I,

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<sup>108</sup> That aspect is regularly emphasised in Croatian historiography on Dubrovnik. See, for example, Stjepan Ćosić, "Luka Stulli i dubrovačka književna baština", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 41 (2003), 267.

<sup>109</sup> For etymology and substance of these terms, see Ž. Muljačić, "O strankama u starom Dubrovniku" and *id.*, "Salamankezi i sorbonezi", as well as S. Ćosić and N. Vekarić, *Dubrovačka vlastela*. See also footnote 17.

<sup>110</sup> Luka Sorgo acted as Ragusan envoy in Vienna in the early years of Joseph II's reign. Dating from that time is his journal, which has been translated into Croatian. *Luca Sorgo: Memoriae / Dnevnik Luke Sorokočevića*, ed. and trans. by Katja Radoš-Perković, Zagreb: Hrvatsko muzikološko društvo, 2021.

<sup>111</sup> Ž. Muljačić, "Dva priloga", 32.

<sup>112</sup> L. Kunčević, *Vrijeme harmonije*, 121.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-119.

namely, lay great importance on the difference between revolution and rebellion" said Tomo Bassegli to an unknown investigator in the summer of 1791.<sup>114</sup> The world of the Enlightenment was a world in transformation; and to the Ragusan Francophiles, Bassegli being one of them in the 1790s, the arrival of Napoleon's French troops in May 1806 gave some hope of change. However, in addition to changes, the small republic was abolished in 1808, after which there was no going back. What remains a desideratum is further research on the speeches of the Patriotic Society, both in terms of discourse and concepts, as valuable sources for understanding the history of Ragusan republican thought during this turbulent period.

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<sup>114</sup> Ž. Muljačić, "Dubrovački disident", 76 and 79.

