

Reviews

Benedykt Cotruglio, *Księga o sztuce handlu / Book on the Art of Trade*, ed. Piotr Wróbel and Jacek Bonarek. Krakow: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Historia Jagellonica", 2007. Pages 172.

A worthy testimony of a Latin sententia that 'books have their own fate' is that of Benedikt Kotruljević *On the Art of Trade*. The manuscript of this pioneering work in medieval commerce was completed in the summer of 1458 (this year being its 550th anniversary). The manuscript witnessed numerous copies, three of which are extant (two in Florence, and the oldest copy in Malta). It was 115 years later that the manuscript was published in Venice, in the printing house of Frane Petrić-Patritius, who redacted the text by making certain additions and shortenings. Surrounded by a great deal of publicity, the book soon saw four editions in Italian and a translation into French (Lyon, 1582). With the last edition in Italian (Brescia, 1602), the book fell into oblivion.

It was not until the early twentieth century that Karl Peter Kheil published a tract on Kotruljević and his book (in Czech and German, but also a Russian translation), reviving the interest in Kotruljević's pioneering work on the double-entry bookkeeping. Modern editions, however, lagged well behind: in 1975 a reprint of Kotruljević's book from 1573 was published and several Croatian translations of this work (1958, 1963, 1985 and 1989). It was then that Ugo Tucci published in Venice a new edition of the book based on the Florentine manuscript, pointing to the many discrepancies between the original and the printed work from 1573. This discovery apparently hampered further affirmation of Kotruljević's thought and the publishing of new translations (critical edition of Kotruljević's manuscript will be published this year). The reaffirmation of Kotruljević's thought in terms of general scholarly recognition owes much to the Dubrovnik conference on the life and work of Benedikt Kotruljević organised by Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1996, along with a number of contributions and

papers published in Croatia and abroad. Several books on Kotruljević have been published in Italy, crediting him for being the first to disseminate the method of double-entry bookkeeping (setting aside the hitherto recognised Italian Luca Pacioli).

Increasing scholarly interest in the work of Benedikt Kotruljević is additionally confirmed by the translation of his masterpiece *On the Art of Trade* into the Polish language. Let me note that, apart from Croatian, it is the first translation into a foreign language 426 years after it had been translated into French. The author of this review sees it as a sign of increasing international interest in the Croatian contribution to the world science, this contribution being fairly significant yet ignored (partly due to our own neglect towards this heritage). It should be emphasized that Polish authors translated Tucci's edition of Kotruljević's book from 1990, prepared and based on Kotruljević's manuscript from the end of the fifteenth century filed in Florence. This Polish edition is thus the first translation of Kotruljević's book made on the basis of this manuscript, which is closer to the original than the printed text from 1573.

A complete translation of Kotruljević's work is accompanied by a lengthy introduction (34 pages). Most of the introductory study (nearly 30 pages) the authors devote to Benedikt Kotruljević, referring to scientific contributions in Croatian, Italian, English, Spanish and Polish literature. Thorough study of the sources best illustrates the scrupulosity with which the editors and authors of the introduction approached the project. A Polish reader thus encounters Kotruljević as an exponent of early humanism and the Renaissance, which, emerging from the shores of the Mediterranean, anticipated the birth of the modern world. At the dawn of this new civilisation Kotruljević was among the rare who foresaw the significance of trade and economy, and that is why his work continues to attract both academic and professional attention.

Who are the authors of the introduction? One of them, Piotr Wróbel, graduated history

(1989) from the old and famous Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Since 1991 he has worked at the Historical Institute in Kraków. In 1997 he was awarded a Doctor's degree with the thesis *Panstwa balkanske (Bosnia, Serbia, Dubrownik) w obliczu agresji tureckiej w latach 1444-1463* / *The Balkan States (Bosnia, Serbia and Dubrovnik) under Turkish Expansion in the Period 1444-1463*. He published the thesis in a somewhat expanded form in 2000 under the title *Krzyz i Polksiezyc. Panstwa zachodnich Balkanow wobec Turcji w latach 1444-1463* / *The Cross and the Crescent: West Balkan under Pressure between 1444 and 1463*. The history of Dubrovnik remains in the focus of his scientific attention, and thus in 2004 (in collaboration with J. Bonarek) he published the translation of Philippus de Diversis' *Description of the Famous City of Dubrovnik* from 1441. Wróbel has published many studies on the history of Dubrovnik and broader Balkan area, with emphasis on Bosnian church, slavery in Dubrovnik in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, »Fall of Bosnia in 1463 in the Light of the Contemporary Chroniclers«, »Participation of the Western Balkans in the Campaigns of Wladyslaw Jagiello against the Turks and the Political Consequences«, along with »Benedikt Kotruljević—Man on the Border of the Two Worlds and Two Epochs«. At present, he is completing his habilitation thesis entitled *Dubrovnik Republic 1358-1526*.

The contributions of the Polish historians should be highly valued and possibly financially supported through grants for the research in the Croatian archives, exchange of publications and professors, livelier contacts, etc. As the significance of Kotruljević's book by far surpasses the local borders and is an essential resource for the study of economic and social thought of Renaissance Europe, the latest translation in Polish is a welcome contribution to introducing this important treatise to the wider international readership.

Vladimir Stipetić

Zdenka Janeković-Römer, *Maruša ili suđenje ljubavi. Bračno-ljubavna priča iz srednjovjekovnog Dubrovnika* / *Maruša or love on trial. A tale of romance and marriage from medieval Dubrovnik*. Zagreb: Algoritam, 2007. Pages 327.

Maruša Butko, widowed Bratosaljić, daughter of a fifteenth-century Ragusan parvenu, would have sunk into oblivion had it not been for the rich resources of the Dubrovnik State Archives and the meticulous research of Zdenka Janeković-Römer. Why was the life of this particular woman brought to light after five hundred years of anonymity? The reason is fairly simple, for had she been our contemporary, her trials and fortunes would undoubtedly have added spice to the everyday media sensationalism. Namely, Maruša was the wife of two men at the same time.

The few details sprinkled here about her life raise many questions: What is 'small history' and what is its meaning? What is the correlation between 'small' and 'great' history? Who is Maruša Butko in fact? Is she a heroine or just another adulterous woman? Why does an eminent historian devote years of research in order to analyse the life of an adulteress? Are Maruša and her lovers but a bait we cannot resist?

'Great history' deals with the 'great reality', which is none other than the plurality of our limits, a framework in which, whether we like it or not, we are bound to move, banging our head on the walls or managing to cushion the blows. 'Great reality' is composed of our aspirations and our inability. It is above us and beyond us, and if lucky, we try to live in it unharmed. 'Small reality', however, is composed of achievements, small reality is us, it is within us, it is what we feel and how we really live.

And that is why, I think, Maruša Butko—a woman emerging from this 'small reality'—found herself in the focus of scholarly attention, both as a personality leaving certain trace and as a historical topic, or even motive for