

Reviews

Diego Dotto, *Scriptae venezianeggianti a Ragusa nel XIV secolo. Edizione e commento di testi volgari dell'Archivio di Stato di Dubrovnik*, Roma: Viella, 2008. Pages 558.

The volume under review is based on the research for doctoral thesis of Diego Dotto, young specialist in Romance philology (b. 1980), whose scholarly pursuits have, until now, been mainly concentrated around Padua and Budapest. From his embarkment upon the thesis to the publishing of this book, Dotto's research developed within the Italo-Croatian project *Interadria*, one of the partners being Padua University, where Dotto made his first scientific steps.

As suggested by the title, the central part of Dotto's book comprises philological edition and linguistic commentary of the documents that meet the following criteria: 1) they were written in the fourteenth century; 2) also, written in an idiom recently defined as *volgare venezianeggiate*; 3) they are kept at the State Archives in Dubrovnik. A specialist in this field will soon see that the young author has re-entered the topic much studied to date, though from different aspects, by Konstantin Jireček (*Die Romanen in der Städten Dalmatiens während des Mittelalters*, 1902-1904), Matteo Giulio Bartoli (*Das Dalmatische*, 1906) and Žarko Muljačić (*Dalmatski elementi u mletački pisanim dubrovačkim dokumentima 14. st.*, 1962). However, the critical review of what these outstanding authorities have written is a huge enterprise itself. In doing so, I am happy to say, Dotto's efforts have borne fruit and his successful work has led him much further than mere revision.

The idea that guided Dotto towards the re-examination of partly published documents follows Gianfranco Folena's demands by which fourteenth-century Ragusan documents written in a specific idiom of Venetian typology should no longer be treated as an 'excavation site' of rare residues of Dalmatian or, in this particular

case, of Ragusean, but a living picture of the most complex linguistic contacts that marked the expansion of Venetian idiom to the towns of the eastern Adriatic, among which Zadar and Dubrovnik stood out as true multilingual and multicultural centres. This being his point of departure, refreshed with new historical data and methodological innovations, for the first time Dotto has submitted to scientific audience an important sample of surviving documents in *volgare venezianeggiate* that were written in Dubrovnik and its surroundings between the end of the thirteenth and the close of fourteenth century, many of which unpublished to date.

Dotto's criteria for editing the texts and transcription are deeply rooted in the Italian philological school, from Castellani's *Nuovi testi fiorentini del Duecento* (1952), Stussi's *Testi veneziani del Duecento e dei primi del Trecento* (1965) to Tomasino's *Testi padovani del Trecento* (2004). In the spirit of this tradition, an Italian editor of a medieval text intended for general use, will, as a rule, use a moderate interpretative method in publishing the text with the elements of diplomatic approach: by means of various brackets and italics, the reader of the copy is provided with an explanation of certain abbreviations, illegible and obscure parts of the text, special marks designating new line in the original text but also every fifth line, facilitating thus the use of the transcription and index. Croatian tradition, however, from the classical series of *Listine* and *Codex diplomaticus* to our day, rests upon radical interpretative method, which fails to help the reader detect the so-called 'weak points'. As a result, the reader is unable to ascertain which part of the published document is actually a literal transcription and which the editor's interpretation. No doubt, such editions prove most useful to historians, for the value of information they offer. By contrast, philologists are known to 'get stuck' on the form of a single word. Thus a serious philologist will lean on these editions merely as his initial information, after which he will most certainly turn to the original. To illustrate my point, let me cite a seemingly trivial example: in the participles of type *dado/*

dadu the author of documents abbreviates the ending vowel, whereas the editor decides on one solution (*o* or *u*). Whether the final vowel is *o* or *u* appears to be of little significance to a historian, but to a philologist it is of essential importance, as well as whether the ending vowel is written in its full form or it is the fruit of editor's interpretation. Dotto's edition of Ragusan documents is the first publication of one medieval Romance archive fund from Dalmatia which combines the elements of the interpretative and philological editorial approach that will appeal to both philologists and historians. As author of this review, I highly recommend Dotto's editorial methodology to all scholars planning future publication of other Croatian archive funds.

With regard to methodological aspects, Dotto's decision to divide the corpus into autochthonous *scripta* (chapter V. *La scripta autoctona*, pp. 59-245) and chancery *scripta* (chapter VI. *La scripta cancelleresca*, pp. 247-429) is praiseworthy. The first section includes 53 texts, of which roughly three-quarters unpublished, kept as separate leaves in the following series of the State Archives of Dubrovnik: ser. 1 *Praecepta rectoris*, vol. 1; ser. 2 *Reformationes*, vol. 2, 4-6, 8-11; ser. 25 *Diversa cancellariae*, vol. 1-2, 5-6, 8-9, 11-12, 15; ser. 76 *Miscellanea saec. XIV*. Appended to this chapter is the well-known 'Zadar letter' written by nobleman Todru de Fumat to Ragusan chancellor Pone Stamberto in 1325, as well as the register of Ragusan wills from 1348 and 1363. Given that the latter fund contains most of the elements of the then already dying Ragusean language, particularly valuable is Dotto's attempt to establish the origin of those who wrote these documents. The chapter on chancery *scripta* is subdivided into a section dealing with documents dated before the year 1358 (pp. 254-289) and section covering the period 1358-1380 (pp. 290-362). The first subchapter includes 14 documents written by an anonymous notary, as well as the notaries known as Riccardo, Ubertino de Flochis and Pone Stamberto from Pistoia. The second subchapter

encompasses 57 documents written by the following scribes: Francesco from Piacenza, Francesco di Bartolomeo from Arco, Teodoro Scolmafogia from Brindisi, Zoane Fusco from Cividale, Monte, probably from Tuscany, and Articuuccio from Rivignano.

Viewed methodologically, the division into autochthonous and chancery *scripta* proved fully justified, as evidenced by the conclusion (*Conclusioni: eterogeneità e libertà di scrivere*, pp. 431-438). Basing his conclusion on meticulous analysis, Dotto asserts that autochthonous *scripta* are characterised by two apparently irreconcilable tendencies: on the one hand a loose norm which allows a much greater degree of variation than in the contemporary Venetian *scripta*, and on the other consistency and loss of the local features, contributing thus to the approach to the Venetian norm. But as Dotto rightly emphasises, the contradiction is elusive because the coexistence of an unstable norm and adaptation to this very norm is a clear sign of linguistic contact. Such oscillations are an expected reflection of the then society and different contexts of linguistic use. Departure from Venetian norm as well as the impact of the dying Dalmatian is evident in autochthonous corpus, notably in the domain of unaccentuated vocalism (*e* > *i*, *o* > *u*), the Venetian base remaining fully stable. In the chancery *scripta* not a single Dalmatian relic has been traced. In this respect Dotto should have focused more attention upon the problem of continuity between the features that may be defined as local and our knowledge about Dalmatian. This, however, would require a broader insight into *scriptae* from the wider Dalmatian area, particularly from Zadar and Split.

Dotto's closing elaboration on the relationship between linguistic norm and personal level of variation is of paramount importance to the understanding of linguistic identities in the Middle Ages. Dotto questions whether the term 'Venetian norm' has but a heuristic or real value. Allowing the latter, Dotto argues that such an idea of the linguistic-cultural Romance

continuum, manifested through linguistic competence of both the Romance-speaking population and the Slavs, should by no means be ascribed ideological functions that language has today. In other words, the expansion of Venetian literacy in Dalmatia in the fourteenth century has nothing to do with any kind of planned or intentional linguistic policy: its acceptance in Dalmatia in the period when the Venetians, not only in Ragusan documents, are defined as *nostri hostes* clearly testifies to the fact that the use of Venetian idiom was not perceived as a mark of Venetian identity. The strength of Dotto's book lies in the fact that, following in the footsteps of Deanović and Folea, he decided to interpret the methods and contexts of the use of Venetian *scriptae* within a broader context of the medieval Mediterranean. In this world the idea of equating language with identity does not exist, writing in Venetian does not imply Venetian identity, but being an active participant of a wider cultural circle in which writing in this idiom has its clearly defined contexts and functions. After two centuries of crime committed in the name of language throughout Europe, such a view many still find difficult to understand. Diego Dotto deserves all compliments for having reminded us of this, but also for his excellent scientific contribution.

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Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa Zbornik Nikše Ranjine. O 500 obljetnici (1507. – 2007.) [Collected papers from the conference Zbornik Nikše Ranjine. On the 500th anniversary (1507-2007)], ed. Nikola Batušić and Dunja Fališevac. Zagreb: HAZU, 2009. Pages 210.

In 1507 Nikša Ranjina (Ragnina), a nobly-born thirteen-year-old Ragusan boy, future statesman and city chronicler, began compiling poems of his contemporaries that stirred his young soul and mind. Little did he know that his juvenile passion and collector's zeal would result in an impressive volume containing 800 poems, a paramount and an invaluable contribution to Croatian cultural heritage and, at the same time, the oldest collection of secular poetry in the Croatian language. The first critical edition of Ranjina's *Zbornik* was published by Vatroslav Jagić in 1870, and the second, textually more critical, was published by Milan Rešetar in 1937. These two editions are the basis of countless literary-historical and philological studies that elucidate its significance for the development of Croatian literary language and integration of Croatian literature into the European literary main-streams of the Renaissance.

Famous poets from Ranjina's collection are Šiško Menčetić, Džore Držić, Marin Krističević and Mato Hispani. Menčetić is the author of about 500 poems, and Držić of about 70. Two poems are unquestionably attributed to Vetranović, and one to Krističević and Hispani respectively. The first, most extensive and oldest part of the collection (some 600 poems), contains mainly the verse by Menčetić and Držić, while the second and third part contain about 200 mainly anonymous poems. Later Ranjina made an addition to the collection consisting of a small volume of about 15 poems which has been lost, the first lines having survived in the list of poems. *Zbornik* is particularly valuable as evidence on numerous anonymous poets from the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, their poems appearing nowhere else but in this collection. Menčetić and Držić were by far the