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HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS ON EARLY MODERN ITALIANITÀ FROM LIFE ON A DALMATIAN ISLAND

Proceeding from the tangible relics of an erstwhile Italian presence on the island of Hvar and personal experiences there over the last fifteen years, the author explores some recent historical literature on the meaning and legacy of 400 years of Venetian domination of the region.

Key words: Italianità, Venetian maritime empire, early modern Dalmatia, Hvar

In front of me I have notes from a Roksandić lecture delivered at the Central European University with the date 16 December 1998. I was sitting next to Bojan Aleksov, now an Associate Professor at SEES in London, to whom I asked help with terminology I was struggling with, here *Serhat-ı Bosna*, the Turkish term for the Bosnian *krajina* or frontier. I was always impressed with Drago Roksandić's energy and commitment – he worked long hours, could be found at weekends touring Budapest's Military History Museum up on the Vár, and inspired a bevy of female research students many brought from Zagreb to coordinate and help in the production of one after another of his *Triplex Confinium* publications (four by my reckoning: *Microhistory*, 1998; *Constructing Border Societies*, 2000; *Ekohistorija*, 2003; *Tolerance and Intolerance. Approaching the Other*, 2004). I was lucky to be taken under his wing: he organised a memorable conference in Zadar in May 2000 on *Ekohistorija*, where I presented a paper on the birth of national parks in Croatia with Plitvice as a case study.¹ Interesting tours were organised, led by Prof. Damir Magaš to Ugljan and Zadar's *entroterra*, where we pottered around studying *zadruga* field-systems explained to us by Vanni D'Alessio, and climbed up to Ugljan's Sveti Mihovil on a Sunday afternoon.

In those years I was travelling regularly between Florence, where I was finishing my Ph. D. and Budapest, where I was working at the CEU, and often – at the beginning of the good season – with pleasurable diversions to the Kvarner. In 1997, terribly ill and weakened with summer flu, I lay for three days in a tent on an island olive grove near Preko, venturing out once a day to eat *riblja juha* at a *gostionica* served by an earnest waitress in a traditional black starched uniform with white pinafore. It both cured me and instilled something deeper. After three subsequent fat years of working tax-free in America, I ended up buying an old stone house on Hvar in July 2003 in one of the inland villages, Vrisnik, for very little, although the proprietor insisted on edging the price up a bit every time we met. Unlived in since the 1960s when the population gave up agricultural pursuits for touristic

¹ Stefan Halikowski Smith, "Od vojne granice do nacionalnog parka: otkriće Plitvičkih jezera", in: *Triplex Confinium (1500-1800): Ekohistorija. Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa održanog od 3. do 7. svibnja 2000. godine u Zadru, Split – Zagreb 2003*, 213-225.

ones on the coast, it was going to prove a *lebenslanges Projekt*, as everyone in the village told me. At the outset, I cooked on a small camping *plin* and used an oil lamp, performing my ablutions in the fields behind the church late at night. I soon realised that the important people on the island were no longer the *kapetani*, whose material lifestyles of the 1850s are recreated on the top floor of the Palazzo Biankini Museum in Stari Grad and whose substantial stone houses in Vrisnik remained completely empty and decaying, but were *majstori*, electricians, even the *samouci* who had moved over from Hercegovina during the wars in the 1990s and whose work ethic was incomparable to the local workers whose brains had either been fried by too much sun or whose patience or availability was in very short supply. Medical researchers have pointed out the very serious deleterious health effects of autozygous (a. k. a. inbred) village populations selected from Brač, Hvar and Korčula.²



Fig. 1. Illyrian inland retreat. Vrisnik, Otok Hvar (photo of the author)



Fig. 2. The high culture of the Greek polis. The southern Riva, Stari Grad, 1926.

² Igor Rudan, *Effects of inbreeding on human qualitative traits and common complex diseases of late-onset*, Ph. D., Edinburgh 2005.

I read as much as I could. There was Selimović's isolated and doleful retirement novel, *Otok*, then an anthropological survey of farming activities in a settlement on Brač conducted in the 1970s³, and finally a slightly more upbeat autobiographical novel from the 1950s, upbeat if only because the author's childhood years, spent in island life, rapidly became displaced by the bright city lights of Split. But after the dreaming and the reading, whilst in dead-end research jobs in America, I slowly became confronted with the realities of my decision. Those first years there were hard: I was simply unaccustomed to life among *pijesak*, *cement* and *vapno*, carting the weight of these materials up steep little mule paths in *kariole*. My hands would be destroyed after a few days, my clothes spattered with white paint, and worse still, *katran* from cleaning smoke-stained stones with a *brusilica* (they had in a former life framed a bread-oven). This was no *ljetnikovac* of the kind which grew to pepper the area around Dubrovnik in the sixteenth century complete with interior walled garden and that particular form of socialising, in mutual conversations and debates, which Nada Grujić describes so vividly, Gučetić's dialogues *On Beauty and On Love* (1581) written at Trsteno, or Hektorović's *Ribanje i ribarsko prigovaranje* composed in Stari Grad (1568).⁴ What little time I could devote to culture I experienced in the Centar za kulturu in Stari Grad with Aldo Čavić and his wife, Sofija, who also ran the neglected municipal library and gave me copies of Branko Kirigin's incisive book on the early settlers of the island and the dynamics between native Illyrians and Greek settlers, or Phariots.⁵ I once met Mateo Bratanić, a lecturer at Zadar, who comes from the village of Vrbanj ("a lawless village, like Texas", I was warned) who gave me the papers of the 19th century Ambrogio Vranyczany, Signore di Severin. But culture was an uphill struggle. While Čavić sought to protect it, becoming something of a vigilante policeman, upbraiding the citizens of Stari Grad who were brazenly conducting house alterations that compromised the ancient homogeneous fabric of the town, I felt entirely stripped of it: a dirty *lumpen* coming in from the hills to the polished white *brački kamen* underfoot in the towns, to the art *galerije*, to wander goggle-eyed alongside wealthy yachts and seaside pleasure-seekers. As an academic myself, I felt consciously guilty walking past Šime Ljubić's mausoleum on the Riva in Stari Grad.

I had come to Hvar expecting more of an Italian influence beyond the *bevanda* which people sipped on their terrasses, and certain common names like Mario and odd words in the dialect like *škala* (for *stepenica*). Many of the local tradesmen and workers had rather spent time in their early working lives in Germany and it was German values of sobriety, hard work and precision, which carried their respect. Italy, just a three and a hour half hour *katamaran* journey, was a distant land of softer-hearted Latins, from where came the *gosti* in late August around the time of their national holiday, *Ferragosto*. Later, when I co-taught a course on South-East European history with Florian Bieber at Graz, I started to understand the phenomenon better. Giuseppe Praga, author of *History of Dalmatia* (Pisa 1993) concentrated on what he termed the "massacre of Dalmatian *Italianità* carried out

³ Marijean H. Eichel, *Dalmatia in microcosm: an historical geography of changing land use on Brač, Yugoslavia*, Ph. D., Berkeley 1975.

⁴ Nikola V. Gozze, *Dialogo di Bellezza detto Antos, secondo la mente di Platone. Composto da M. Nicolò Vito di Gozze, gentiluomo ragugeo*, Venetia 1581, 1; Idem, *Dialogo d'Amore*, Venetia 1581, repr. as *Dijalog o ljepoti*, eds. Ljerka Schiffler – Natka Badurina – Sanja Roić – Smiljka Malinar, Zagreb 2008; Nada Grujić, "Les villas de Dubrovnik aux XVe et XVI siècles", *Revue de l'Art*, 115/1, 1997, 42-51.

⁵ Branko Kirigin, *Pharos: an archaeological guide*, Stari Grad 2003.

by 1870-80", how Croats and Austrians overturned the municipal governments, how the centuries old provincial Diet was closed down. As "annexationists" defeated "autonomists", contacts across the sea with "brothers" in Italy were absolutely forbidden. Meanwhile, I started to appreciate the nationalist position. I read how critics of Venetian colonialism considered Venetian dominion "una notte lunga 400 anni"⁶, how important local industries, like the saltpans of Ston, were obliged by the erection of high export tariffs to send three-quarters of their production to the Camera del Sale Veneziana. Split port export licenses between 1475 – 1569, which indicate the name of the exporter, the goods and quantity of goods, the ship owner and destination, offer much the same verdict: 88% of the wine, 99% of figs, 75% of skins (*PELLI*) were exported to Venice. The remainder went to Puglia. Then there was the steady drain of Dalmatia's manpower, young men recruited and press-ganged into serving in the galleys across Venice's *Stato da mar*, and beyond.⁷ Between 1560 and 1702 the population of Dalmatia as a whole inched from 100.000 to only 109.000 despite the geographical expansion in the shape of the *acquisto nuovo*.⁸ Even today there is a lively debate between historians like Benjamin Arbel who argues for Venice's eastern possessions serving as "exploitation" colonies⁹ and Italian historians like Ermanno Orlando, who argues the Venetian commonwealth was "a complex system of complementary economies and of political solidarities focused on Venice, one capable of linking together heterogenous but substantially coherent and interconnected spaces".¹⁰ The argument spills over into one of identity: for recent scholars like Karen-edis Barzman, Venetianness was a positive, progressive statement for being Christian, civic-minded, and anti-tyrannical.¹¹ Venetian government was primarily through committees; Venice preserved Dalmatian cities' communal institutions and did not rule the region directly, as was the case with Crete (Candia) and Koroni (Koron, in the southern Peloponnese).¹² But for many cities in Dalmatia, a new literary genre of *laudationes urbium Dalmaticarum* sought rather to emphasise rather their particularity and distinctiveness from Venice, which some scholars are keen to see constituting the construction of an "Illyrian" identity.¹³ Croatian

⁶ Giovanni K. Albinoni, *Memorie per la storia della Dalmazia*, Zadar 1809, quoted in: Uwe Israel – Oliver Schmitt (eds.), *Venezia e Dalmazia*, Rome 2013, 163.

⁷ Gligor Stanojević, "Jugoslaveni u vojnoj službi Venecije na kopnu Italije u XVII vijeku", *Istorijski časopis*, 24, 1977, 145-160.

⁸ Pierre Cabanes, *Histoire de l'Adriatique*, Paris 2001.

⁹ Benjamin Arbel, "Venice's maritime empire in the early modern period", in: Eric R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, Leiden 2013, 125-253.

¹⁰ Ermanno Orlando, "Mobilità, migrazioni, intrecci", in: *Il Commonwealth veneziano tra 1204 e la fine della Repubblica: identità e peculiarità*, ed. Gherardo Ortalli et al., Venice 2015, 405-431.

¹¹ Karen-edis Barzman, *The Limits of Identity: Early Modern Venice, Dalmatia, and the Representation of Difference*, Leiden 2017.

¹² Nada Grujić, "Les loggias communales en Dalmatie aux XVe et XVIe siècles", in: Konrad Ottenheim – Krista De Jonge – Monique Chatenet (eds.), *Public Buildings in Early Modern Europe*, Turnhout 2010.

¹³ I have used the biography of Toma Nigler on: <http://www.enciklopedija.hr> (access 21/2/2019). A freely accessible and searchable database of 69 Latin texts by 53 authors has been created by Neven Jovanović as a subset of the digital collection Croatiae auctores Latini, see: www.ffzg.unizg.hr/klafil/croala (access 1/4/2018). Zrinka Blažević, *Ilirizam prije ilirizma*, Zagreb 2008; "Između komunalnog patriotizma i protonacionalnog univerzalizma: identitetski modeli u ranomodernoj dalmatinskoj historiografiji", in: Wilfried Potthoff et al. (ur.), *Dalmatien als europäischer Kulturraum. Beiträge zu den Internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposien "Dalmatien als Raum europäischer Kultur synthese" (Bonn, 6-10 Oktober*

historians like Johannes Lucius seemed to be writing their works, *De Regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae* (Venice 1673, 6 vols.) almost as if to extol a defunct native kingdom in the face of the republican tyranny of outsiders, accepted reluctantly only to counteract the Ottoman threat.¹⁴

In practical terms, we can appreciate how this *Kommunikationsraum* worked from a number of different sources.¹⁵ First there are the rutters which go right back to Rizo's, published in 1490, and which stipulate sailing distances and standard travel times between ports. These journeys can be corroborated from the many eastward-bound pilgrimage accounts in the Adriatic.¹⁶ Then there is cartographic production: portolan charts, atlases and *isolarii*.¹⁷ Historians like Milorad Pavić has scrutinised these maps for depictions of ship types, principally of Venetian galleys, but also carracks and marsilians.¹⁸ Venice sent mail every other week down to Constantinople via Kotor which, 800 km away, was the transshipment point to overland trade for the remaining 1050 km of the journey. The Bolizza family was responsible for the operation of this system via renewable contracts, although their frigates, which called along the Dalmatian coast on the way to Venice were susceptible to "personal business".¹⁹ Split was considered, after Trieste, the second liveliest port of the Adriatic, after it had been developed in the 1590s as a formal market (*scala*) to challenge Ragusa's dominance in trade connecting with Ottoman lands.²⁰ Involving a lot of small shipping, but this trade operated under the protective carapace of a Venetian guarantee which, as the Frenchman L. F. Cassas observed as late as 1782, still remained intact "for the protection of commerce from the attempts of pirates who, as has already been observed, frequent the seas in this region and would infest them to a still greater

2003) und "Staedtische Kultur in Dalmatien. Die Genese eines europaischen Kulturraum", Split 2010, 93-129.

¹⁴ Cf. an Italian edition, *Historia di Dalmatia, et in particolare delle città di Traù, Spalatro e Sebenico*, Venezia 1674. See the interesting comments picked up by the pilgrim Konrad von Grünemberg, *Beschreibung der Reise von Konstanz nach Jerusalem*, Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. St. Peter, pap. 32, especially fol. 11v-12r; Andrea Denke, *Konrad Grünembergs Pilgerreise ins Heilige Land 1486: Untersuchung, Edition und Kommentar*, Köln – Weimar 2011, 234, 239, 277, 325; Vanda Perretta, "Il viaggio di Konrad Grünemberg da Costanza a Gerusalemme e ritorno", in: *La Dalmazia nelle relazioni di viaggiatori e pellegrini da Venezia tra Quattro e Seicento*, ed. Sante Graciotti, Roma 2009, 115-129.

¹⁵ Oliver Jens Schmitt et al., *Südosteuropa und die Adria im späten Mittelalter*, Bucuresti 2012, esp. "Das venezianische Südosteuropa als Kommunikationsraum (ca. 1500-1600)", 47-70.

¹⁶ Hilda F. M. Prescott, *Once To Sinai The Further Pilgrimage Of Friar Felix Fabri*, Cambridge 1947, 247.

¹⁷ Konrad Kretschmer, *Die italienische Portolane: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kartographie und Nautik*, Berlin 1909, 420-552 ([https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:46828924\\$1i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:46828924$1i)); Corradino Astengo, "The Renaissance Chart Tradition in the Mediterranean", in: *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, eds. John B. Harley – David Woodward, Chicago 2007, chap. 7. Individual exemplars worth highlighting are Rosaccio's pilot of 1606 (copy in Archeological Museum Split) and Vincenzo Coronelli, *Le Royaume de Dalmatie*, Paris 1720.

¹⁸ Mithad Kozličić, "The Defensive System of Adriatic Navigation", *Historia Antiqua*, 6, 2000, 49; Milorad Pavić, "Prikazi plovlia u jadranskim izolarama 16. stoljeća", *Povijesni prilozi*, 47, 2014, 185-204.

¹⁹ Dursteler, "Power and Information. The Venetian postal system in the early modern eastern Mediterranean, 1573-1645", in: Diogo Ramada Curto – Eric R. Dursteler – Julius Kirshner – Francesca Trivellato (eds.), *From Florence to the Mediterranean: Studies in Honor of Anthony Molho*, Florence 2009.

²⁰ Sergio Anselmi, "Venezia e i Balcani: la 'Scala' di Spalato tra Cinque e Seicento", *Studi Storici*, 13/2, 1972, 408-412.

extent but for this precaution of the government".²¹ Safeguarding the peace went hand-in-hand with a policy of neutrality which had been declared ever since the War of Spanish Succession (1700 – 1713), and even the opening of the Adriatic to Habsburg competition with the "Wiener Orientalische Handelskompagnie" between 1667 – 1683. From 1719, the Habsburgs would open up Trieste and Fiume as free ports (*Freihäfen*).²²

Then there are trade sources, customs and excise records. These can be used to make arguments for both sides. Dalmatia as a whole was a net receiver of cereals, which the *pax veneziana* facilitated so as to be imported *in buona misura* from both Sicily and Puglia.²³ But it would also be true to say that by concentrating trading activity on herself, and imposing duties so as to uphold this reality, Venice weakened commercial activity into the Dalmatian hinterland, at least until the port of Split was developed into a free port at the end of the 16th century following the plan of Daniel Rodríguez (Rodrigo).²⁴

Then, if we turn to cultural production, Peter Burke's chapter reminds us how important Venice was for publication of South Slavic literature and translation, in much the same way as Rome was for the training of the South Slav clergy (the Kapitol, founded in 1589, today the Pontificio Collegio Croato di San Girolamo a Roma).²⁵ Rather than an active policy of cultural suppression in Dalmatia, we find an efflorescence of literary production, the forging of new genres of expression as in Hektorović's *Ribanje*, but also a classical humanist reawakening of a sense of the past as we can see from the way ancient ruins, here of Burnum, a late Roman Republican military camp and town, found their way on to Dalmatian maps, such as that entitled *Zarae e Sebenici descriptio* (in Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, 1573). Kadić reminds us that Dalmatia was the centre of the Croatian Renaissance (probably, therefore, we should call it the Dalmatian Renaissance, certainly it stands in opposition to the "blood and tears" characterising life in the hinterland).²⁶ Scholars of Slavic literature jump too prematurely to celebrating Jan Kochanowski as the "first Slav poet of any stature to write in the vernacular".²⁷ Literature went hand in

²¹ Louis F. Cassas, *Travels in Istria and Dalmatia*, London 1805, 91-92. Cf. Jacob Spon, *Voyage d'Italie de Dalmatie de Grece et du Levant*, 1, The Hague 1724. Note the journey was made in the 1670s. The same journey was made by an English companion traveller George Wheeler, *A journey into Greece*, London 1682. Unlike Cassas, they visited both Jelsa on Hvar and Korčula.

²² Herbert Hassinger, "Die erste Wiener Orientalische Handelskompagnie, 1667-83", *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 35, 1942, 1-53; Wilhelm Kaltenstadler, "Der österreichische Seehandel über Triest im 18 Jahrhundert", *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 55/4, 1969, 481-500.

²³ Jorjo Tadić, "Venezia e la cosa orientale dell'Adriatico", in: *Venezia e il Levante*, I, Firenze 1973-1974, 696.

²⁴ Maren Frejdenberg, "Venetians, Jews and the Ottoman authorities on the Balkans (16th century)", *Etudes Balkaniques*, 30/3, 1994, 56-66.

²⁵ Peter Burke, "Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication", in: *Venice Reconsidered*, eds. John Martin – Dennis Romano, Baltimore 2000, 389, Table 4 lists histories of Dalmatia published in Venice.

²⁶ Ante Kadić, "Croatian Renaissance", *Studies in the Renaissance*, 6, 1959, 28-35; Mihovil Kombol, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti do preporoda*, Zagreb 1961, 62. Also useful is the catalogue of an exhibition held in Leiden University Library: *Between the cross and the crescent. Printed books on Croatia and Dalmatia from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries: a selection from the Dubravčić Collection*, eds. Pietro Masturzo – Rita Colognola, Leiden 2005.

²⁷ Anita Dębska, *The Well-Tempered Lute. Poems from Poland's Golden Age*, Wivenhoe 2013.

hand with music. One of the highlights of the course at Graz was the showing of a recorded performance of Marko Marulić's *Judith* (1521/1531) set in the Romanesque church of St. Donat in Zadar to reconstructed fiddle (*lirica*) and flute (*dvojnica*) music by the film team Dialogos (2010); another ensemble, the Ensemble Renaissance, have brought to life the madrigals for four and five voices of Julije Skjavić from Šibenik, published in 1562.

Some of the latent and sometimes explicit anti-Italian feeling nurtured by Croatian historians can be legitimately traced back to quarrels over border issues in the wake of the First World War or the atrocities of the Second World War. Just outside the village of Vrbanj is a humble stone obelisk commemorating the burning, destruction and killing of "patriotic defenders" (*spomenik uvojić pokolja*) at the hands of "talijanski fašisti" on 3rd January 1943. But when one turns to the historical sources of the early modern period, to the Hvar-born Vinko Pribojević, author of *De origine successibusque Slavorum*, or to the Šibenik poet Juraj Šižgorić (1445 – 1509), then problems emerge: although their work has been recently edited in a series entitled "Hrvatski latinisti",²⁸ these individuals clearly styled themselves as Slavonic or Slavic-speaking Venetians living alongside the *abitanti romanici* who emigrated from Venice bringing with them the administrative and juridical norms of the Italian communes, as well as artistic practices and expectations of the Renaissance.²⁹ Meanwhile in Venice they were referred to as "Schiavoni" (not in relation to their language, a geographical denomination but also a cultural one – Giustiniani's *relazione* of 1553 reports how the citizens of Zara lived "all'usanza schiava") and in Rome at the aforementioned college, "Illyrians". Some of these fracture lines and dynamics of identity and perception of the other may be unearthed from the wealth of literature on the "dormouse revolt" of 1510-1514 (*pučki ustanak*) of 1514.³⁰

Marxist historians were keen to show the conflict between nobles and commoners (or peasants) as manipulated by or testimony to a nascent merchant class on the islands, and plaques on the island of Hvar dating from Yugoslav times like to celebrate the *predvodnik* Matej Ivanić as the "veliki sin" of Vrbanj. Although the trigger of the uprising seems to have been mismanagement by the Venetian appointed "Count of Lesina", Antonio Lippomano, and the sexual predations of three young Lesinan noblemen, it rapidly became a platform for the island inhabitants to insist on better communal representation: Ivanić wrote to Ven-

²⁸ Davor Dukić (ed.), *Latinska književnost hrvatskog humanizma*, Katedra za stariju hrvatsku književnost Odsjeka za kroatistiku Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu, 2007/2008.

²⁹ John V. A. Fine, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans: A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods*, Ann Arbor 2006, 255. For the spread of Venetian artistic practice into Dalmatia, see the essays in: *Venezia e il Levante*, II: Vojislav Djurić, "Influence de l'art vénitien sur la peinture murale en Dalmatie jusqu'à la fin du XVe siècle" (139-163); Cvito Fisković, "I contatti degli scultori e architetti dalmati con l'arte veneziana fino al XV secolo" (175-181); Krno Prijatelj, "I contatti dei pittori della Scuola Dalmata Veneziana" (361-377). See also: Ivan Pederin, "Die venezianische Verwaltung Dalmatiens und ihre Organe (XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert)", *Studi Veneziani*, 12, 1986, 99-163; Egidio Ivetić, "Tolerance towards the 'others' in the cities of Venetian Dalmatia (1540-1645)" is good on the question of a Turkish Dalmatia, Morlachs, Jews and Orthodox "others" in the early modern period, in: Drago Roksandić – Egidio Ivetić, *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium. Approaching the "Other" on the Borderlands Eastern Adriatic and beyond 1500-1800*, Padova 2007, 265-281. For Pribojević, apart from Grga Novak's Croatian translation and commentary (Zagreb 1951), there is the recent analysis by Domagoj Madunić, "Strategies of distinction in the work of Vinko Pribojević", in: Balázs Trencsényi, *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe*, Leiden 2010, 176-198.

³⁰ Andro Gabelić, *Ustanak hvarskih pučana (1510-1514): izvori, tokovi, dometi*, Split 1988.

ice asking for permission to hold a council of all classes (a Great Council) in order to create a more just government. The letter held seals and signatures of more than 20 prominent citizens, with 60 voicing their support. Furthermore, although the fleet of the military commander sent from Venice, Sebastiano di Marino Giustiniani, was punitive, confiscating the rebels' properties, and sentencing 65 to death, appeals were launched once the military fleet had left which shows, as Arbel concludes, that "Venetian repressive actions, even the most drastic ones, were never conclusive".³¹ Angelo Ventura has already drawn analogies to events unrolling on the *Terraferma*, but a wider European comparison is perhaps necessary.³² The *ustanak* was no more severely dealt with at the hands of the foreign occupying Venetians, indeed there was far more protracted discussion both on Hvar (in a "ceremony of peace" in the cathedral) and in the relevant Venetian committees than was ever allowed György Dózsa, the leader of the "peasants' war" in Hungary, which also took place in 1514, who was put to death under a burning metal crown on the order of János Zápolyai, *comes* of Szepes county.³³ Or if we compare with the "sociopolitical struggles" in Danzig between Town Council (*Rada*) and commonalty (*pospólstwo*), which broke out in 1521 with commoners demanding a Protestant church, the abolition of large commercial companies, a lesser tax burden, protection against usury, and elected councillors. The conflict burned until the *Constitutiones Sigismundi* were declared in 1526, a kind of diplomatic fudge where the commonalty were granted the Third Order (a new 100-strong political body).³⁴



Fig. 3. The monument to the victims of Italian fascism outside Vrbanj

³¹ Arbel, "Venice's maritime empire", 216. A different array of facts is presented by Joško Bracanović, "Pučka opsada grada Hvara (1.-7. kolovoza 1514.)", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU*, 30, 2012, 219-230.

³² Angelo Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo nella società veneta del Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, Milano 1993, 150-168.

³³ István Nemeskürty, "György Dózsa and the 1514 Peasant War", *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 13/48, 1972, 63-73; János M. Bak, "Quincentennial of the birth of György Székely Dózsa (a report on the state of research)", *East Central Europe*, 1/2, 1974, 153-167.

³⁴ Edmund Cieślak – Czesław Biernat (eds.), *History of Gdańsk*, Gdańsk 1995, 130-142. The Polish language Wydawnictwo Morskie edition of 1985 (in three volumes) offers more comprehensive coverage.

A strong line in the historiography on the region focuses, indeed amplifies the western lies and mythologisations of western travellers – an Orientalism of sorts.³⁵ Božidar Jezernik tries to fit these myths into the rubrics of “exotic”, “outlandish” and “primitive”. Even at the height of the Enlightenment, Cassas harps on about the “smoaky hut of the tasteless haiduck” or the “infectious pallet of straw on which the debased Dalmatian reposes”.³⁶ Voltaire was apparently genuinely surprised that Italian culture had not – in his opinion – fulfilled its civilizing role in relation to the Slavs.³⁷ As late as Robert Kaplan’s *Mediterranean Winter*, published in 2004 by an author who was said to have significantly influenced Clinton’s Yugoslav policy in the 1990s, we find clichés about “unruly and raffish” Slavs; an unending trope, then.

By contrast, the official Venetian *commissiones et relationes*, like the “Relazione di Zacharia Valaresso” of 1527 or that of Giovanni Battista Giustiniani in 1553 are objective affairs, cataloguing the pastoral products issuing from the island economies, like the 120.000 heads of sheep and goats on Ossero and Cherso, the wool used to produce rough textiles called *rasse*, *scerze* and *grisi* which were sold at the *fiere* di Recanati (Provincia di Macerata).³⁸ Nineteenth-century postcards of Hvar reveal an island shorn of the thick pine forests one finds there today, the land exploited in intensive small field agriculture, the stones collected to form a network of walls and sheep pens. Lesina, from its first Venetian occupation in 1421, was however famous for the skills of its seamen (*marinai*) and fishermen working offshore sardine banks, and saw significant salt imported from Pag for the preparation of the finished product, which was then sent on to Venice, alongside Crete, Zante, and Cephalonia.³⁹ The capital town of the island was also graced with a spanking new Arsenal, which doubled as a shipyard and offered a variety of services and facilities to the military galleys, and was built during the second half of the sixteenth century under the department *Provveditori alle fortezze*. It was, however, the harbour in Korčula which was particularly suited to ships of large burthen (*navi di grande stazza*) and it was here right through to the 1850s, 60s and 70s that the Duboković family commissioned its ocean-going brigs, barques and schooners.⁴⁰

³⁵ Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs, the discovery of Dalmatia in an age of enlightenment*, Stanford, CA 2003.

³⁶ Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the gaze of Western travellers*, London 2004, IV.

³⁷ Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l’esprit de nations et les principaux faits de l’histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu’au Louis XIII*, Berne 1784.

³⁸ For the period 1540 – 1645: *Commissiones et relationes venetae*, ed. Šime Ljubić, Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, 8/II: annorum 1525-1553, Zagreb 1877; 11/III: annorum 1553-1571, Zagreb 1880; as well as those volumes edited by Grga Novak in Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, 47/IV: annorum 1572-1590, Zagreb 1964; Idem, 48/V: annorum 1591-1600, Zagreb 1966; Idem, 50/VII: annorum 1621-1671, Zagreb 1972; Idem, 51/VIII: annorum 1620-1680, Zagreb 1977.

³⁹ Jean-Claude Hocquet, *Le sel et la fortune de Venise*, I, Paris 1978, 318-321.

⁴⁰ Ennio Concina, “Sostener in vigore le cose del mar: arsenali, vascelli, cannoni, in Venezia e la difesa del Levante, 1570-1670”, Venice 1986. Martino Ferrari Bravo – Stefano Tosato (eds.), *Gli arsenali oltremarini della Serenissima. Aprovigionamenti e strutture cantieristiche per la flotta veneziana (sec. XVI-XVII)*, Milano 2010; Maurice Aymard, “La leva marittima”, in: Alberto Tenenti – Ugo Tucci (eds.), *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, 12, Rome 1991. The Duboković archive in Jelsa still has sailing logs of these ships. On Korčula, see: Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Korčula sous la domination de Venise au XVe siècle: pouvoir, économie et vie quotidienne dans une île dalmate au Moyen Âge tardif*, Paris 2011.

We do not possess a study of Lesina's social and economic dynamics along the lines Stephan Sander-Faes's much praised notarial investigation of mid-sixteenth century Zadar, but its lines of jurisdiction are somewhat clearer.⁴¹ Lesina had been made a castellany in 1495, one of nine to serve as Venice's defensive bulwark against Ottoman advance, and its jurisdiction extended to Lissa (Vis), its communal organisation responsible for its own public affairs without recourse to Venetian magistrates.⁴² In contrast to the port cities on the mainland, the island communes returned more (in tax payments) than they absorbed from Venice and 600 *venturieri* on 80 boats came from Hvar and Brač during the siege of Split between 13 – 21 June 1657, led by none other than the Rector (a military governor of small Venetian territories), Angelo Orio. The population of these islands, moreover, was boosted by waves of people fleeing Makarska and *le ville adiacenti* particularly during the wars of 1540 – 1570, which rate as among the cruellest in modern Dalmatian history, although in the longer term population in the first three settlements of Grad Hvar, Jelsa and Stari Grad dropped between 1673 and 1779 by 1.14%.⁴³ Despite these depredations, which saw the prince's palace in Hvar destroyed in 1571, Hvar helped again at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 with the dispatch of a galley alongside six other Dalmatian galleys (from Zadar, Krk, Rab, Cres, Šibenik, Trogir and Hvar).⁴⁴

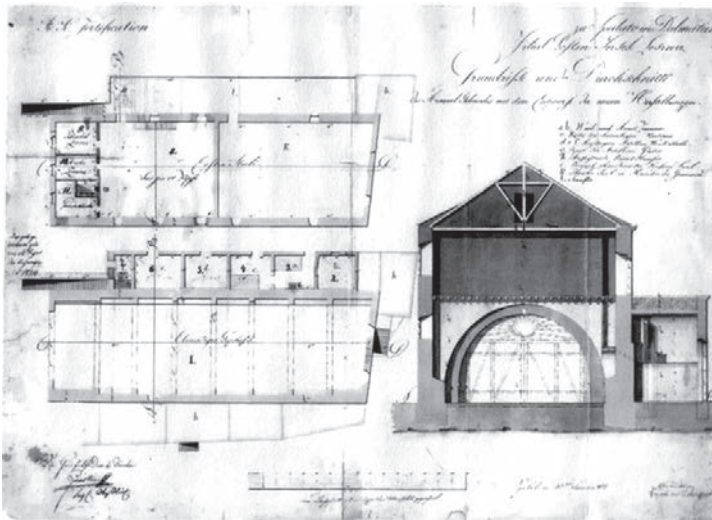


Fig. 4. Hvar Arsenal, restored by Duke Petar Semitecolo 1611 – 1613, and here depicted at time of Austro-Hungarian inventurisation, 1822 (Courtesy of Historijski arhiv komune hvarske)

⁴¹ Stephan Sander-Faes, *Urban elites of Zadar, Dalmatia and the Venetian Commonwealth, 1540-69*, Rome 2013.

⁴² Monique O'Connell, *Men of Empire. Power and Negotiation in Venice's Maritime State*, Baltimore 2009, 47.

⁴³ The island's population dynamics are reprod. in: Francis W. Carter, "Settlement and Population during Venetian Rule (1420-1797)", *Journal of European Economic History*, 23/1, 1994, 7-47, from sources including the Arhiv Boglić-Božić, the *relazione* of Girolamo Cornaro in 1682, the Dominikanski Arhiv in Stari Grad and the commentaries of Petar Hektorović, in: Petar Kuničić, *Petar Hektorović, njegov rod i Tvrdalj. Starogradske i hvarske uspomene*, Dubrovnik 1924, 66-67.

⁴⁴ Arbel, "Venice's maritime empire", 212.

Another form of Venetian knowledge bequeathed Dalmatia is its accomplished topographic and cadastral systematisation of Adriatic space: atlases like that of Faustino Brascuglia, his *Atlante della Dalmazia* (1745) or Nicolò Guidalotto da Mondavio *Atlante nautico* of 1646, with its larger scale representations and its invective against the Ottomans for their invasion of Crete and the ill-treatment of Giovanni Soranzo, the Venetian ambassador, to whom the Atlas is dedicated.⁴⁵ The level of care and accuracy in geographic representation was of course part of Venetian self-perception (*Wahrnehmung*) as worldly cosmographers and store-holders of information especially on the sea routes into the Ottoman world.⁴⁶ But even today if you visit the offices of the Stari Grad municipal notary, his offices are bedecked with coloured enlargements from the first systematic Austrian Catasto (land registry) of the 1840s, conducted in Italian, and which was used by the Croatian state until very recently when the system was computerised.⁴⁷

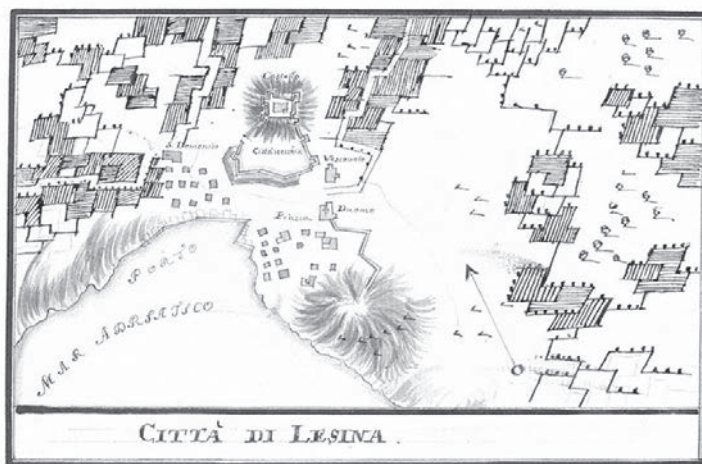


Fig. 5. Faustino Brascuglia, *Atlante della Dalmazia*, 1745, c.65v: "Città di Lesina"

⁴⁵ Marco Fassoi, "Carta nautica del Adriatico", Venice 1675, It. VII, 343 (= 10045); the *isolario* of Bartolomeo Venetiano (dated 1515) has one map of the whole Adriatic, K. B. R. Bruxelles, Cartes et Plans ms. 17.874, fol. 56-57.

⁴⁶ Pierre Sardella, *Nouvelles et spéculations à Venise au début du XVIIe siècle*, Paris 1949, argues that Venice was the "leading centre of information and communication in Europe", especially in terms of news from the Porte. Daniele Scruzzi, *Eine Stadt denkt sich die Welt: Wahrnehmung geographischer Räume und Globalisierung in Venedig von 1490 bis um 1600*, Berlin 2010. "Descrizione corografica, topografica, & iconografica della provincia di Dalmazia e stati confinanti. Con l'aggiunta della Navigazione del Golfo di Venezia, ò sia Mar Adriatico, assieme con il Mar di Levante sin alle Bocche de' Dardanelli di Costantinopoli, con le sue distanze di Miglia da un Luoco all'altro; delineata da me Faustin Brascuglia...", Venice 1745, It. VI, 195 (= 10054). The Guidalotto atlas is at Marciana, It. IV, 10 (= 5062). Ff. 2v-3r consist of a "carta nautica dell'Adriatico". See: Debby Nirit Ben-Aryeh, "Crusade Propaganda in Word and Image in Early Modern Italy: Niccolò Guidalotto Panorama of Constantinople (1662)", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 67/2, 503-543.

⁴⁷ Irena Ipšić – Jasenka Maslek, "Katastarski prihodi i izravni porezi na poluotoku Pelješcu u drugoj polovici 19. stoljeća", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku*, 53/2, 2015, 379-405. There is also a Masters thesis by Marina Ševo, *Digitalizacija knjižnog dijela arhivskog katastarskog operata*, Zagreb 2011.

To conclude, my purpose here is not to make an apology or indulge in nostalgia for a Venetian Adriatic, although I do think much of the orientalisising mythologisation owes rather more to western travellers than Venetian officialdom. The dreams of erstwhile Italian Foreign Minister, Gianni De Michelis his plan for regional cooperation, the Pentagonale founded in 1990, feel like history – Italian foreign direct investment (FDI) in Croatia is only 5% (1993 – 2015), whilst trade exchange is 12.5 – 14%.⁴⁸ Since joining the EU in July 2013 Croatia has become a fully acting member of the European family in its own right, which has brought it some stability, although its demographic outlook – like many Eastern and southern European countries -- is not good (my friend Bojan Aleksov jokes that the years of Communism can't have been that bad, because the population grew: "people must have been happier", he says). Ongoing important infrastructural projects are connecting Dalmatia to Zagreb and the world in ways that overturn the region's historical isolation, and new professions like "artfarmers" are giving the inhabitants of outlying islands something to occupy themselves with. I have not kept up as much as I would have liked with Drago's career over the past eighteen years, though I look forward to reading about it in this volume, but it is in part thanks to him that Dalmatia plays a significant role in my life today.

⁴⁸ "Invest in Croatia", Agency for Investments and Competitiveness, Zagreb 2014 (https://www.aik-invest.hr/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/INVESTMENT-GUIDE_pdf.pdf, access 2/4/ 2018).