

DEFENSE POLITICS IN A MEDITERRANEAN CITY: MEDIEVAL MILITARY THREATS TO DUBROVNIK (RAGUSA) AND EMERGENT TENSIONS BETWEEN DEFENSIVE STRATEGY AND SECURING PUBLIC ORDER

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ABSTRACT

The author examines the history of the medieval wars of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in two parts: first, he illustrates its active defense against military threats including the formation of an urban militia, the recruitment of mercenaries, and the organization of a navy, and second, he traces the corollaries of the threat of a foreign enemy and the city's militarized reaction to the deterioration of public order and its effect on local social and political cohesion.

KEYWORDS

Dubrovnik, War, Militia, Mercenaries, Public Order.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Ragusa, Bellum, Militia, Mercenarii, Ordinatio ciuium.

Up until the end of the Middle Ages, the city of Dubrovnik, situated on the eastern coast of the Adriatic sea, progressively expanded its political and economic zone of influence far beyond its civic borders.¹ When threats arose, the city was forced to protect this expansive realm militarily.² Dubrovnik was situated along a strategic maritime route between Venice and the Strait of Otranto behind an archipelago of small islands, which protected it against strong winds and ocean currents. It was also ideally territorially situated between caravan routes that crossed the Balkans and thus reaped the benefits of thriving commerce from both the Eastern and Western Mediterranean. The city was unique in the Balkan Peninsula, having achieved certain elements of modernity by asserting its political independence. Dubrovnik was also the only Balkan community to have capitalized on its unique geographical position and nurtured the political and economic currents that it encountered as a result of its position between Western Christendom and the Ottoman Empire. Archives chronicle the depth of local memory and documentation dedicated to this precocious modern age relates the exceptionalism of the medieval history of urban Dubrovnik.³

The Ragusans can offer contemporary historians a mirror of their past from the late Middle Ages. There had always been a privileged patrician class among them, although they did not occupy a space in a nation-state, as would be the case during the birth of Balkan nationalism in the twentieth century.⁴ Local patricians wielded political and economic power and assertively conveyed the image of a peaceful, inclusive, and modern urban commune that was open to the territorial states of the hinterland such as Serbia, Bosnia, and later, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.

1. Abbreviations: Drzavni archiv u Dubrovniku (DAD).

2. Two key texts of Ragusan history are cited here. They have been published in French and English, respectively, but many more citations are possible: Krekic, Barisa. *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant*. Paris: École Pratique des Hautes Études, 1961; Krekic, Barisa. *Dubrovnik in the 14th and the 15th century: A city between East and West*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962.

3. The four most notable Ragusan historians include Jakov Lukarevic, (Giacomo Lucari), author of the well-known chronicle, *Copioso ristretto degli annali di Ragusa*, (Luccari, Giacomo. *Copioso ristretto de gli annali di Ragusa*. Venice: Antonio Leonardi, 1605) Mavro Orbin (Mauro Orbini) author of one of the most remarkable histories of the Slavic people, *Il Regno delli Slavi*, (Orbini. Mauro. *Il regno degli slavi: hoggi. Corrottamente detti schiauoni*. Pesaro: G. Concordia, 1601), Junije Restic (Junius Restii), 1669-1735, author of a history of Dubrovnik up until 1451, *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii, ab origine urbis usque ad annum 1451, item Joannis Gundulae (1451-1484)*, (Restii Junius. *Chronica Ragusina junii Restii, ab origine urbis usque ad annum 1451. item Joannis Gundulae 1451-1484*, eds. Natko Nodilo, Junije-Dzono Antunov Rastic, Ivan Marinov Gundulić. Zagreb: ex officina Societatis Typographicae, 1893), et Nicolas Ragnina, who offered an addendum to an anonymous Ragusan work of history, the *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, ed. Natko Nodilo. Zagreb: Ex officina Societatis Typographicae, 1883.

4. Braudel, Fernand. *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1949: II, 1113: *Elles offrent à qui aurait la patience et le temps de parcourir les volumineux Acta consiliorum, l'occasion de surprendre en pleine action une ville médiévale encore, étrangement sauvegardée. Elles offrent aussi, conservés pour des raisons d'enregistrement ou de discussions de justice, d'extraordinaires documents, lettres de change, notes, assurances maritimes, règlements de participation, fondations de sociétés, successions, engagements de domestiques* (They offer to those who have the patience and the time to go through the voluminous, Acata consiliorum, the chance to catch in action a medieval town still strangely safeguarded. They offer also extraordinary documents, exchange letters, notes, maritime insurances participation rules, foundations of societies, inheritances, contracts of servants preserved for reasons of having been recorded of forming part of legal discussions...).



These powerful individuals also conveyed their sense of respect for Dubrovnik's powerful maritime partners as well as rivals —the states of Venice and Genoa.

Contemporary historians have commonly viewed medieval Dubrovnik as a city whose wealth was based on a maritime merchant class, rather than an elite warrior class. This impression is compounded when assessing the city's fate as it sparred with its eternal Adriatic rival, Venice during the Napoleonic conquests of the nineteenth century. While it is indisputable that Dubrovnik's ruling elites were more concerned with dominating commercial shipping than engaging in foreign conflict and Dubrovnik largely averted major engagements in warfare, during the last three centuries of the Middle Ages, Dubrovnik was a site of numerous military clashes which on several occasions threatened its very survival as a city-state.

Wars were perceived as threats to political and governmental freedom, but more importantly as threats to the economy. As navigation was restricted in times of war, the citizens of Dubrovnik interpreted military challenges as a call for the total mobilization of the urban body. However, once hostilities ceased and commercial relations resumed, period histories glorified the efforts of elite Ragusans, rather than the sacrifices and labors of the civic collective. Thus, what was committed to historical memory was in many ways a myth. It is therefore not surprising that, even in contemporary history, the Ragusan elites have been studied as major stakeholders in the wars between medieval states that successively struck the Adriatic between Dubrovnik, Serbia, and Bosnia, as well as other occasional rivals, Venice and Genoa.

In times of war, whatever enemy or danger loomed, the main concern of the authorities was to secure the urban zone and central districts, after which efforts were immediately made to cease hostilities and restore trade, reopen ports, and resume freedom of movement in the Adriatic. War typically provoked a series of logistical measures designed to ensure the adequate mobilization of the defensive forces, the protection of the urban perimeter, and the assurance of internal peace and order, with the ultimate aim of a rapid and successful conclusion of hostilities. Measures to consolidate defense forces and guarantee public order are recorded in Dubrovnik's medieval political, economic, and judicial archives, and relate the work of elites as well as commoners in these military operations. Many policy measures were enacted long before the outbreak of conflicts. City councils passed preemptive security measures and policy plans for ceasing wars in progress and restoring order before any hazards were made manifest. A study of military safety measures in medieval Dubrovnik must therefore not only include sources from times of conflict, but also those from times of peace. Defensive military strategies were voted on and applied to avoid potential future dangers that threatened Dubrovnik, as well as the territory beyond. Approved policies reveal the extent of the perceived threats feared by medieval Ragusans, as well as the élites' dedication to extensive diplomatic exchange with foreign powers.

At the height of its expansion, medieval Dubrovnik was comprised of a coastal strip of just eighty kilometers long and a maximum of ten kilometers wide. It reached from the estuary of the Neretva River and the peninsula of Peljesac (Sabioncello) to the Bay of Kotor (Cattaro). However, the municipality of Dubrovnik could not provide sanctuary for the entirety of the population occupying the territory in times of



war.⁵ It is precisely this reality of a population's search for shelter and security that was foremost on the minds of Dubrovnik's maritime merchants when deciding its politics of prudence, diplomacy, and pacifism. The population's origins in the former colony of Epidaurus (now Cavtat) and the Slavic invasions in the sixth and seventh centuries formed the military mindset of the community that had to make difficult decisions regarding its political reality.

Unlike Venice, Dubrovnik's geopolitical situation did not change significantly in the Middle Ages. Its territorial enlargement could not compare to that of Venice, even if one includes the small islands of Elafiten, Mljet (Melitta), and Lastavo (Lagosta), who were far from the Adriatic coast and only reluctantly submitted to the authority of Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik's size thus rendered any bellicose overtures on its part unlikely. Some historians have expressed admiration for Dubrovnik's exceptional resistance in a hostile environment, especially after the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans where the Ragusans expressed recalcitrance at the offer of a status as a city-state. Unfortunately, this line of reasoning can be equated with the mythologizing of Ragusan self-determination and is without substance. There was no interruption in the exercise of foreign sovereign power over the city. Indeed, Dubrovnik recognized several foreign authorities throughout medieval and modern history, including the Byzantine Emperor until the late eleventh century, then briefly the Normans of Southern Italy between 1081 and 1085. Later, during the wars of Robert Guiscard against Byzantine Albania. Later, Dubrovnik came under Byzantine rule throughout the twelfth century, except during the years of the Norman offensive against Byzantium in the period of Andronicus I Comnenus.

During the period of the Byzantine Dynasty of Angels, the city returned to the Byzantine fold and remained there until the Fourth Crusade when it fell under the authority of Venice. It conclusively rejected the authority of Serenissima in 1358 in order to recognize the Kingdom of Hungary under Louis I of Anjou. From 1458 onward, the suzerainty of Hungary was parallel to the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire in Dubrovnik. This was recognized by the regular payment of annual tribute. The recognition of Hungarian authority came to a close in 1526 with the collapse of the kingdom due to the Turkish invasions.

Before further discussing strategies of Dubrovnik's defense, it is necessary to examine the wars in which the Ragusans found themselves engaged between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Although there were a large number of armed conflicts, there are numerous gaps in the historiography, largely because of the uneven condition and preservation of sources.⁶ Despite this, can a typology of the wars

5. At the time of its greatest expansion in the fifteenth century, the population of the city *intra muros* was between five and six thousand. An estimate of the population of the entire district is more vague, but is likely to have been between twenty and twenty-five thousand inhabitants.

6. Since the close of the twelfth century, the following wars have been documented in history (in chronological order): The war against the Serbian Prince Stéphane Némania (1184-1185), the war against King Stéphane Vladislav (1234), two wars against King Stéphane Ouos I (1252-1254 and 1266-1268), two wars against King Stéphane Ouos II Miloutine (1301-1302 and 1317-1318), the war with King Stéphane Ouos III (1327-1328), the "War of Zara" against the Genovese on the coast of Venice (1351-1355), the War of Chioggia (Ténéδος) (1378-1381) against Venice on the coast of Genoa and in



of Dubrovnik be drawn for the last three centuries of the Middle Ages? It can be said with some certainty that in this period, three distinct periods can be perceived which correspond to three types of wars in which the city-state engaged.

The first “type” of war dates from the late twelfth century until the first third of the fourteenth century, a period in which the city was the victim of frequent attacks, first by the Serbian Prince Stefan Nemanja (the Grand Zupan), and later by his descendents the kings of the Nemanide Dynasty. From the perspective of the Serbian monarchs whose lands comprised the hinterland near Dubrovnik, military engagements with Dubrovnik were simply part of military campaigns against other rival powers such as the Normans and the Venetians. With the exceptions of the first conflict with Prince Stefan Nemanja in the late twelfth century and the conflict with the Serbian-controlled city of Kotor in the early fourteenth century, all conflicts with Serbia in this early period took place in Dubrovnik’s immediate hinterland. The end of the first period is marked by Emperor Stefan Dusan’s policies of expansion against Byzantium between 1331 and 1355. Unlike his predecessors, this Serbian king, and later emperor pursued policies of diplomacy and respect toward the small adriatic city-state. He ceded the great peninsula of Peljesac (Sabioncello) in 1333, which became host to the permanent garrison of Dubrovnik which defended the northern boundaries of the district.

The second period corresponds to the major conflict between Venice and Genoa during the second half of the fourteenth century. Dubrovnik involved itself in the Wars of Zadar (Zara) between 1350 and 1355, and Chioggia (the War of Tenedos) between 1378 and 1381. In the same period Dubrovnik saw the gradual weakening of the authority of Serbia after the death of the Emperor Stefan Dusan in 1355 and the subsequent death of his son, Stefan Ouros in 1371, who was the last of the Nemanide Dynasty. This development encouraged the emergence of a number of lords who only barely recognized the authority of the last Nemanide king and sought to assert themselves as strong partners, sponsors, or opponents of Dubrovnik. However, these men were too weak and disorganized to threaten the existence of the commune.

The third period encompasses the late fourteenth century as well as the fifteenth century, during which military campaigns against Dubrovnik (although less frequent) were more seriously threatening. This period corresponds to the weakening of the Hungarian suzerainty which was beset by feudal anarchic discord between the death of Louis I in 1382 and the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg beginning in 1387. This period of conflict resulted in the decline of the Kingdom of Bosnia after the death of Tvrtko I in 1391. The kingdom’s deterioration was marked by the interference of Ottoman governors who incited conflict among the Bosnian lords or between the Bosnian lords and the city of Dubrovnik, particularly between 1430 and 1432 and between 1451 and 1454. The Ottomans intent was to convince the citizenry of Dubrovnik to understand the extent of their vulnerability and force

Hungary, the war against the Serbian Lord Vojislav Vojinovic (1359-1362), the war against his nephew Nicolas Altomanovic (1370-1371), the war against the Bosnian King Stéphane Ostoja (1403-1404), the war against the Bosnian Lord Radoslav Pavlovic (1430-1432), and the war against the Bosnian Lord Stéphane Vukhtitch Kossatcha (1451-1454).



it to seek the arbitration and protection of the Ottoman sultan. Thus, this period is marked by the slow but marked rise of Ottoman power in the Balkans whose presence was perceived as threatening to Dubrovnik's borders and autonomy.

Historians cannot present the narrative of the defense of Dubrovnik in this period without discussing both military strategy and means of self-governance. Active military protection measures included the mass mobilization of local and foreign allies, the recruitment of mercenaries, and the purchase, acquisition, and stockpiling of weaponry. Passive defensive strategies included the construction of defensive architecture, including bridges, ditches, forts, and pillars. Just as essential, however, were the means of administration in this period, which was designed in order to secure public order. Security was guaranteed through surveillance, swift criminal justice, and the conciliation of powerful or potential foes, who could have been solicited by enemy republics or powers to betray the city.

1. Active military protection

1.1 Combat units in Dubrovnik's wars

Unlike most Italian communes of the same period, and despite the fact that there was considerable economic exchange and growth throughout the region during the twelfth century, Dubrovnik's economic growth can be seen as unique in that the development of its crafts and commercial products grew in tandem with its military strategy. What drove professionalization of functions and crafts in this period also seems to have driven defensive military strategy. While it is known that the militias, foot soldiers, artillery forces, the navy, and other military squadrons were comprised of everyday civilians from across the social and professional spectrum, little documentation exists to categorize what activities or sectors these individuals were involved in prior to combat. Sources have demonstrated, however, distinctions between combat units as well as the difference in assignments given to people of the district from those given to other residents of the city. Mercenaries in the service of Dubrovnik were recruited from both coasts of the Adriatic and became more commonplace in the late fourteenth century. These individuals played a key role in fighting during the first half of the fifteenth century. Command of the three principle combat units—the navy, the local militias, and mercenaries—was the duty of the patricians. These patricians were members of the three councils of government and were responsible for the execution of military operations in wartime.

1.2 The militia

Major combat units were recruited from the population of the city and the district. Knowledge of the origins, recruitment, and chains of command of the Du-



brovnik militia has increased over the centuries, thanks in large part to documentary sources from the thirteenth century, particularly those chronicling the third of the last three wars in Dubrovnik.

The earliest evidence detailing the Ragusan militia dates from the twelfth century. In 1184 and 1185, the city was besieged by the troops of the Serbian prince Stefan Namania.⁷ In 1185, according to an anonymous Ragusan chronicler, the Serbian army of thirty thousand cavalry (or fifty thousand men according to a different account) laid siege to Dubrovnik. The assault ended in failure for the Serbian army as the Ragusan militia launched counteroffensives aimed at burning the war machines that the attackers had laid at the foot of the city walls. Testimonies from this attack reveal both the military activity of the Dubrovnik militia, as well as the important fact that the fortifications and the organizing system around which city defense was established were constantly in a state of amelioration and technological improvement. Dubrovnik's defensive strategies became more capable and technically sophisticated until the end of the Middle Ages.

The urban perimeter of Dubrovnik could accommodate both a standing army and a large proportion of the citizenry seeking refuge from attack. Throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth century, the forces of the Serbian kings attacked Dubrovnik's exterior zones. The local militia often repelled such attacks successfully in this area. Only in the fifteenth century did warfare take place within the district zone of Dubrovnik. For instance, in 1252 when the grandson of the dynastic leader Stefan Ouros I led his troops to attack Dubrovnik, the cavalry, foot soldiers, and machines of war never reached the city center as Dubrovnik's leaders settled with the Serbian king diplomatically.⁸ Furthermore, despite the rise in the power of Dubrovnik's militia throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the city avoided open conflict and extensive military confrontation whenever possible. Only in the fifteenth century with the incorporation of experienced units of Italian mercenaries did Dubrovnik engage in open campaigns against the Bosnian and Serbian rulers.

When the Bosnian prince Tvrtko I surrounded Dubrovnik's city walls in 1367, the militia was ordered to secure the perimeter and remain on the defensive within the walls, but also to make all attempts to prevent the invading army from capturing the livestock that was grazing outside.⁹

This relative reluctance of the militia to fight outside the walls changed dramatically in the fifteenth century, however. More active military recruitment within Dubrovnik and the inclusion of Italian and Albanian mercenaries resulted in a more seasoned, capable, and bellicose fighting force. The exact numbers of the Ragusan militia vary according to different documentation. Moreover, as with accounts of the first conflict with the Serbian prince Stefan Nemanja, recorded numbers of troops or cavalry

7. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 60; *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina...*: 218.

8. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 90.

9. *Monumenta Ragusina: libri reformationum. IV, ann. 1364-1396*, ed. Josephus Gelcich. Zagreb: Academia scientiarum et artium slavorum meridionalim, 1896: 92.



can vary widely. What is known thanks to contemporary demographic analysis is that at its apogee of population expansion in the fifteenth century, Dubrovnik contained between five and six thousand inhabitants.¹⁰ Still, there are considerable discrepancies among the fifteenth-century sources (until recently historians' sole sources on demography) on issues regarding militia strength, battlefield chronicles, and government recruitment of soldiers.¹¹ In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Senate and Lower Council of Dubrovnik conducted censuses in order to assess the proportion of the population available for recruitment into the militia. In 1323, the government claimed to have identified all Ragusans between the ages of 15 and 70, assigned them to twelve battalions with commanding officers, and had them trained for combat.¹² The census was repeated in 1357, 1428, and 1430, each time with the intention of organizing military strategy.

The census of 1428 saw the formation of three patrician collectives who took charge of registering the names of all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 65. These patrician leaders also recorded the number of women in the city, an important facet of understanding the general population's growth and its potential for future mobilization.¹³

The 1430 census is exemplary for its precision. As part of its implementation, the Dubrovnik Senate instructed the principle leader of the Lower Council to conduct a "comprehensive" census of all residents of the city, including men, women, children, and the elderly. The Senate also mandated a record of each individual's social condition so that it would be made aware of the percentage of the population capable of bearing arms.¹⁴ Truly unfortunately, the results of the censuses are nowhere to be found in the archives. In order to know the proportion of the population included in militia formation, historians must look to deployment orders and other documents related to the securing of the city in specific moments. Deployment orders were not exclusively utilized in wartime. Evidence suggests that military organization and preparation was a sustained activity in times of peace and periods of openness and widespread economic activity.

The ring road surrounding the city walls stretched almost two kilometers and included the fortifications along the port, the arsenal, and the forts in the northwest and southeast. The St. Lawrence and Revelin forts were constantly guarded by two detachments of the urban militia who numbered between six and fifty depending on the circumstances. Detachment duty was split between day and night shifts,

10. Krivosic, Stjepan. *Stanovništvo Dubrovnika i demografske promjene u prošlosti (La population de Dubrovnik et les changements démographiques dans le passé)*. Dubrovnik: JAZU, 1990.

11. The oldest registers chronicling the decisions of the government councils of Dubrovnik cite the High Council, (Consilium Maius) Lower Council (Consilium Minus) and the Senate (consilium Rogatorium). The registers date from 1301 and detail (with few interruptions) the history of governance throughout the entirety of the Middle Ages. These registers are today held in the State Archives in Dubrovnik (Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku), and are available for historians to use.

12. *Chronica Ragusina junii Restii...*: 113.

13. DAD. *Consilium Minus*, IV, f. 200.

14. DAD. *Consilium Rogatorium*, IV, f. 136'-137'.



and each shift was marked by rigorous discipline towards guarding the forts. Any evidence of desertion, neglect, or insubordination while on duty was punished by imprisonment and heavy fines. The hierarchy of military organization was as follows: captains (*capitanei*), who were also patricians, formed the elite; members of the High Council (*nobili*) administered the ranks; and militia fighters were formed from the ordinary citizenry (*homini*).

Clearly, in extraordinary circumstances, the military detachments were not large enough to confront the direct external threat. A larger recruitment pool and a strong chain of command were essential. Records indicate that a number of battalions employed during the wars in Dubrovnik did not come from populations recorded in the city census. In response to the 1301 battle against the Serbian King Stefan Miloutine, the city recruited 300 persons capable of bearing arms and sent them to the outer territory to “protect the city’s vines”.¹⁵ In 1378 during the War of Chioggia (Tenedos) the Ragusans, fearing a Venetian attack on city, recruited roughly one thousand individuals from the surrounding areas, but it was not sufficient for its purposes.

Who controlled the Dubrovnik militia? Small detachments were certainly deployed by the patricians in times of war as well as peace. However, the broader chain of command was more complex. At the highest level, the oligarchic High Council, as well as the Senate and made decisions concerning war and peace in Dubrovnik. The leader of the Councils was the central principal of government and was elected for a term of one month, without the possibility of renewal. The High Council was comprised of the most influential members of the patrician class, and engaged in little to no military activity directly. The Senate consisted of forty men who focused on the management of international relations and diplomatic affairs. The Lower Council and its principal met most often during times of war, acting frequently in complete concert with each other to effectively respond to the fluctuating circumstances of battles and conflicts. In certain moments, the tasks of command and logistics in wartime proved too heavy for the three ruling bodies of the government of Dubrovnik. In these times, between two and five “War Counselors” or “High Generals of War” (*savii sapientes capitanei*) were appointed by the Councils or its principal in order to effectively manage the high degree of mobilization required.

1.3 Mercenary units serving Dubrovnik

Unlike most cities and towns in Italy, Dubrovnik only rarely used mercenary forces. They were incorporated into the military structure of the city only in the fifteenth century—a relatively late moment in the Middle Ages. Mercenaries proved more effective in the city’s offensives against the feudal lords of Dubrovnik’s hinterland, rather than in battles against the great power of the era—the Ottomans.

15. *Monumenta Ragusina: libri reformationum. V, ann. 1301-1336*, ed. Josephus Gelcich. Zagreb: Academia scientiarum et artium slavorum meridionalim, 1897: 1.



The late integration of mercenaries is explained by their high cost and the fact that such costs were only possible when Dubrovnik reached the pinnacle of its economic power in the fifteenth century. Their commitment to Dubrovnik was crucial in the campaigns against the Bosnian lords where domestic or local foot soldiers would have been insufficient.

The first records depicting mercenaries in the employ of the city date from the early fourteenth century (1301) and relate the recruitment of eight technically skilled catapult engineers and operators from Castile who were paid a modest wage of two and a half ducats per month.¹⁶ During the War of Tenedos between Genoa and Venice, Dubrovnik sent envoys to its ally, Genoa, to recruit loyal and skillful catapult engineers who were “above reproach” for “the best price possible.”¹⁷ Two decades later, during a difficult and prolonged war against the Bosnian King Stefan Ostoja, the Council of Dubrovnik recruited from among the larger Balkan population. They approached local potentates from Montenegro and Albania, as well as lieutenants of the Ottoman sultan in Albania, for their assistance in the recruitment of soldiers. As part of their greater incorporation of mercenary forces, new terminology was employed to distinguish the contingents of local militia from Dubrovnik. The nomenclature of “soldatesca” or “veterani” thus came into common parlance in the fourteenth century.¹⁸

The high period of mercenary intervention in Dubrovnik coincided with two wars against the Bosnian princes. Bosnia had sought (and attained) the support of the Ottoman Sultan Murad II in their campaigns led by Radoslav Pavlovic between 1430 and 1432, and later by Stefan Vuktichich between 1451 and 1455. In both wars, the role of Albanian and later, Italian mercenaries was significant. Official city registers reveal their high numbers and the degree to which they cooperated (or failed to integrate) with the contingents of local Dubrovnik militia.

Some conclusions regarding mercenaries emerge from the Council records. First, mercenary response was recorded as punctual and dependable during the wars of the fifteenth century. They mercenaries were recruited on the eve of a scheduled battle and did not typically remain in the city once their services had been rendered—leaving Dubrovnik with their remuneration when the conflict ceased. Secondly, mercenaries comprised only a minority position among militia fighters and while they cooperated with and were supervised by local Ragusans, did not normally integrate themselves into their units or with the local population. Also, local Ragusan sources confirm that these mercenaries were likely to constitute cavalry forces and archers often armed with spears. These men were known as the “stratiotes” and were often solicited by the Venetians in the fifteenth century in their campaigns

16. *Monumenta Ragusiana: libri reformatiuonum. V...*: 7.

17. *Monumenta Ragusiana: libri reformatiuonum. IV...*: 251.

18. The recruitment and deployment of mercenaries was a time-consuming process, which gave a strategic advantage to the aggressor at the opening of hostilities or the outbreak of conflict. However, in the long term, and certainly at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Ragusans managed to turn circumstances to their military advantage and succeeded in re-establishing the status quo that existed prior to the conflict.



against the Ottomans in Dalmatia and Venetian Albania. Thirdly, contrary to Venetian practice, these mercenaries took were not independent as they were in Italy, and their orders from the commanders of the Ragusan militias which proved disastrous in the conflicts between the city and the Bosnian lords between 1430 and 1432 and again between 1451 and 1454. Lastly, while these mercenaries were a minority force, they often proved crucial to determining the outcome of battles and guaranteed victory for Dubrovnik at several key moments.

What is unique in the history of mercenaries is historians' access to a greater number of sources, including some intimate chronicles of mercenaries, their accounts of battle victories and (more or less dependable) tales of glory and triumph over adversaries. In the first war against the Bosnian Duke Radoslav Pavlovic between 1430 and 1432, the Senate sent a small force of mercenaries from Albania with a mission to inflict the greatest possible amount of damage on the enemy territory. One document states, "The mercenaries, in the employ of a determined nation, performed their task with great success and looted, burned, and devastated the entire region they traversed".¹⁹ After this, however, came a more negative account:

The Albanian irregulars, unaccustomed to discipline and seeing the prudence with which we advanced...and believing they would be deprived of booty, mutinied... They broke from the contingent and scattered. The Bosnian Duke seized the opportunity and fell upon them with all his might. They would have all been killed if the Ragusan commandant had not come to their rescue.²⁰

Similarly, Dubrovnik hired four hundred Italian mercenaries in the campaign against Duke Stefan Vuktchitch Kossatcha between 1451 and 1454. These men were recruited from the lands of the wealthy Italian lords Frederic d'Urbino and Sigismond Malatesta de Rimini. Although Dubrovnik hoped for a high degree of military response by including these mercenaries, their expectations were not met. The Ragusan captains controlled an inexperienced local militia, and alongside these soldiers, the Italian mercenaries had little ability to demonstrate their effectiveness. They were barely able to save the contingent during a battle in 1451 when the Bosnian Duke's army completely encircled them and practically annihilated the entire force.²¹ These sources beg the question: to what degree were hired mercenaries trustworthy? In the chronicles of Dubrovnik, there exists an allusion to a conspiracy among mercenaries during the war between 1451-1455. One reference posits, "there is a plot... to put the city in the hands of a foreign prince," the "prince" referenced clearly being Bosnia's Stefan Vuktchitich Kosatcha.

All in all, the mercenaries served almost exclusively in Dubrovnik's later wars, and proved overall to be more effective in battle than the local militia, although there are

19. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 235.

20. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 236.

21. Cirkovic, Sima. "Vesti Brolja de Lavelo kao izvor za istoriju Bosne i Dubrovnika" ("Les renseignements de Broglio de Lavello en tant que sources pour l'histoire de la Bosnie et de Dubrovnik"). *Istorijski casopis*, 12/13 (1961-1962): 167-187.



exceptions. They certainly contributed to the safeguarding of Dubrovnik's freedom during the period of successive encroachment by the Bosnian kings. As their surrounding Balkan rivals became subjects of the Ottoman sultan by the late fifteenth century, Dubrovnik found itself in later centuries alone in front of the powerful empire.

1.4 The Dubrovnik arms

Assuring the supply of weaponry was a primary concern of the Dubrovnik government throughout the Middle Ages. During periods of prolonged armed conflict against the Serbian and Bosnian kings in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as well as the wars against Genoa and Venice in the fourteenth century and the Bosnian lords in the fifteenth century, the government took extraordinary measures to rearm the population.

The funds earmarked for rearmament were enormous, drawn from all available income in the city. Revenue was also acquired through levies on salt, wheat, and wine, sold by the town to individuals. There were also export taxes on precious metals and import taxes on goods brought into the city, notably wool. Dubrovnik manufactured most of its weaponry and imported other parts or arms from its allies. The local militias engaged in war on foot, unlike the Italian and Albanian mercenaries who came to Dubrovnik's service already armed with advanced weaponry. The militia was most successful when it could launch defensive attacks from the ramparts and from within the city walls and prevent a breach of the perimeter. Once the militia was drawn to fight in the open countryside, it often found itself outmatched. The orders placed for weaponry by the government reflect this preference for defensive strategy.

Thus, at the beginning of the War of Tenedos in 1378, Dubrovnik, along with its Genoese allies, ordered two hundred sets of armor, two hundred helmets, four hundred breastplates, and one hundred pounds of rope for the catapults.²² During the war with the Bosnian Duke Stefan Vukčević, the city hired local craftsmen to produce twenty small bombardment projectiles weighing five pounds each, and ten medium projectiles of twenty pounds each.²³ They also ordered two hundred small-caliber firearms and ten large caliber arms known as "pouchkoni".²⁴

By 1461, Dubrovnik was clearly feeling the Ottoman threat and commissioned a Florentine engineer, Master Massa, to design five large bombardment projectiles. These were to be placed along the ramparts of the city walls and were given the names "The Fury," "City Salute," "Well-Armed," "Saint Blaise" (the city's patron saint), and "Victory." However, the gunpowder used to launch the bombs was poorly secured, and twice the city experienced accidental explosions, including

22. *Monumenta. Ragusina: libri reformationum. IV...*: 176.

23. DAD. *Consilium Minus*, XIII, f. 48.

24. This refers to a firearm or a kind of arquebus or 20 to 25 millimeter hook gun. It was often used as a weapon of support in strengthening the defense of the parapet.



once during a battle with the Ottomans in August of 1463, which destroyed several buildings, damaged the Council Principal's palace, and killed several dozen people, including prominent Council members and the Principal, himself.

The city government actively encouraged (and later forced) mass participation in war preparations. From the middle of the fourteenth century, government registries recorded the participants of the "Palia," which was largely a competition where battle skills and war machine engineering were put on display, which culminated in the awarding of honors and distinctions to the winners. In 1383, the government confirmed by legislative decree that the bi-annual *Palia* had resulted in a greater number of competent and experienced catapult operators and archers.

The government thus concerned itself with the management of arms and weaponry, the strict control of its import and export, and the maintenance of the good condition of the stockpiles. Regularized reviews and repairs of weapon stocks were instituted later in the Middle Ages, and demanded strict oversight. Each helmet, breastplate, collar, spear, shield, arrow, catapult, bombs, and gunpowder were carefully numbered and inventoried. These stockpiles had to be guarded from enemies as well as from ordinary citizens of the city. During the war against the Bosnian Duke Stefan Vuktchitch Kossatcha, a Dubrovnik patrician was commissioned by the High Council to control imports and exports of arms, and he developed strict accounting policies and mechanisms by which to measure entries and exits of weaponry belonging to the commune.²⁵

1.5 The Dubrovnik navy

Fernand Braudel first illuminated the history of the Ragusan navy when he brought to light the supreme navigability of Dubrovnik's ships in the sixteenth century that expanded Mediterranean commerce. Ragusan ships crossed the Mediterranean and traveled beyond the Straights of Gibraltar. But unlike its rivals in Venice, the ragusans ships were rarely engaged in wars. Venice went to serious lengths in an attempt to limit the power of the Dubrovnik merchant marine. However, the evolution of the Adriatic political economy led Venice to modify its uncompromising attitude towards Dubrovnik, particularly during the maritime conflict against Genoa, known as the "War of Zadar" which took place between 1351 and 1355.

Even in 1346, when Dubrovnik was still under the suzerainty of Venice, Venice demanded that the city send an armed envoy to assist in the re-conquest of city of Zadar, which had defected to the King of Hungary. According to Ragusan chronicles, "Dubrovnik wished the very opposite of victory for Venice, but nonetheless sent an envoy comprised of a patrician captain and a large contingent of armed

25. DAD. *Consilium Maius*, X, f. 31-32.



soldiers to strengthen their forces".²⁶ Dubrovnik's maritime dominance increased radically after 1358, when Venice relinquished its control of the city and recognized the power of the Kingdom of Hungary. From the second half of the fourteenth century fortune favored Dubrovnik maritime commerce. The Hungarian power was less competitive and repressive than Venice had been, and allowed the expansion of new trade.

The Hungarian monarchy established its suzerainty over Dubrovnik through the Treaty of Vissegrad in 1358, which formally required the municipality to provide an armed and equipped army contingent in case of maritime war. Following this treaty, however, free trade expanded substantially and Dubrovnik was given access to mining concessions in the Balkans, which allowed for the increased use of its ports and an increased role in international commerce in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. No longer content to control just parts of the Adriatic, Ragusan merchants extended their commercial reach to the far corners of the Mediterranean. This expansion, however, made their ships vulnerable to pirate attacks. This prompted Dubrovnik to create a marine power that could police the seas, particularly along the coastlines between the Peljesac Peninsula in the north and the Bay of Kotor in the south, as well as the Apulian Coast.

The armament and command of commercial security forces was only possible in peacetime. At moments where, for instance, Dubrovnik was summoned to send reinforcements to Hungary or Genoa, it was forced to sacrifice commercial maritime security for a greater cause. It was during the War of Zadar, however, when Dubrovnik's interests were directly threatened. During this time, Dubrovnik took the opportunity to reinforce its city walls and ramparts and invest in its arsenal. It also increased the presence of armed ships in the Adriatic, not wanting to be surprised by its rival, Venice. Dubrovnik also sought to join its naval forces with Genoa in the Adriatic. Over the course of the war, Dubrovnik supplied Genoa with men, arms, and ships. Nevertheless, its assistance did not prove decisive in the War of Chioggia, as Venice enjoyed the final victory.

Dubrovnik was cautious during this war and demonstrated a lack of zeal in its battles with the Venetian forces, which exasperated their Genoese allies. Strained and repeated negotiations took place over the course of the war which consisted of Genoese demands for Ragusan naval forces to fortify its army against Venice, and Ragusan demands that Genoa supply ships and guards to defend the now vulnerable city of Dubrovnik in the event of a Venetian attack. In the end, Dubrovnik's defenses improved over the course of the War of Chioggia as its structures and arsenal were heavily reinforced.

Dubrovnik's general policy regarding maritime warfare privileged the protection of maritime trade and avoiding wherever possible the commitment of the navy in foreign military operations. Dubrovnik employed a policy of committing the absolute minimum number of ships and soldiers to its allies so that commercial networks would not be compromised. This explains why Dubrovnik never attained an im-

26. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 131.



portant military success throughout medieval history, despite the high quality of its navy and its military capabilities.

2. Passive military engagement

2.1 *The city walls*

As the district of Dubrovnik expanded and nearly tripled in size, the area of the city walls remained unchanged until the Late Middle Ages. All construction efforts were dedicated to better protecting the urban zone, rather than ensuring the greater inclusion of the city's total population within the ramparts.

The structure of the walls did improve over several centuries, however, and walls were made higher with wider trenches, and denser towers. Still, government records indicate concerns increased over the ability of the structure to protect the home population as well as the population of the district's islands. Anxieties over the city's defense can be explained by the rise of new, more threatening, and more intransigent enemies in the local vicinity. The Ottomans prevailed in 1463, ending the medieval Kingdom of Bosnia and surrounding the city of Dubrovnik. Protection of the city remained paramount throughout the Ottoman period.

Passive defense consisted of a continuous process of construction and repair of the city walls as well as large buildings in its interior in the immediate vicinity of the walls. Knowledge of the construction of the urban space is crucial for understanding the history of Dubrovnik's defense. Indeed, the walls formed a rough pentagon with three walls facing the sea, and two facing the hinterland. Like Venice, Dubrovnik was divided into six districts (known as *sesterces*), five of which occupied the great rock known as "Laus" which protruded from the shore. Only one district extended to the foothills of Mount Srdj. At some distance from the city walls the Ragusans built two forts between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries —St. Laurence (Lovrijenac) and Revelin. These forts served as points of advanced warning to the east and west of the city. The port and the arsenal were on the eastern side of the walls and oriented towards the sea. However, the port and arsenal were also located close to the center of the city, which allowed for direct access to the city if they were breached. Thus, particular defensive strategies were implemented to secure the port and the arsenal.

A true investigation of the city's architecture, construction methods, maintenance, and repair would require an entire volume. Suffice to say that architectural design and construction engineering was directed toward neutralizing the danger of foreign invasions. Wars with Serbia, Bosnia, Venice, and Genoa served to reinforce Dubrovnik's impenetrability and sustain its independence in the Middle ages. When the Serbian King Stefan Miloutine attacked Dubrovnik in 1301, the ancient convents of the lower orders (on convents of the dominicans and franciscans) serve



as shelter for those attacking the walls.²⁷ Half a century later, in 1366, the two convents were inside the city walls.²⁸

In 1358 during the War of Zadar, the Councils of Dubrovnik ordered that all city gates be closed except the two principle gates at Pilé and Plotché, which were protected by deep moats and drawbridges. In that conflict, the destroyed buildings in Dubrovnik's immediate surroundings were used as launch points of attacks. During the War of Chioggia (Tenedos), patrician estates and churches were razed and the city walls were threatened over the duration of the war.

The fifteenth century was the period in which the greatest work was performed on the city walls. This was the era of the most intensive attacks of the Dukes of Bosnia which were followed by Ottoman threats. It was also a period of unprecedented wealth for Dubrovnik which allowed it to imagine bolder and more expensive military initiatives. In 1430 an ordinance passed to develop and expand the use of the city walls which stated, "this measure is enacted not to increase the city's beauty, but rather its security".²⁹ In 1455, the tallest tower in Dubrovnik — named "Mintcheta" — was erected to flank the city walls. It was the work of the noted Florentine architect Michelozzo who believed it would form the cornerstone of Dubrovnik's defense.³⁰ The construction of the tower progressed rapidly. The walls were also reinforced to be an average of five meters in thickness and deep ditches were constructed surrounding them. All of this was a solid guarantee against a potential Ottoman siege.

The amount of work involved in such endeavors is illustrated by the Mayor Council's decision in 1462 to place a commanding order on all roads leading to Dubrovnik that "any person traveling on the road be given a stone which he would be required to carry to a worksite inside the city". In the interest of fairness, it was added that "road supervisors are to insure that larger stones are assigned to the hardest men, and smaller stones to the less robust..."³¹

The main source of Dubrovnik's wealth from 1420 was the sale, trade, and manufacture of wool. The proliferation of wool workshops and trading houses in Dubrovnik's surrounding regions contributed to the city's enrichment but also proved to be highly dangerous in times of war. During the 1460s, in the final stages of the Ottoman offensive against Bosnia, the Ottoman army used the wool workshops as camps and staging grounds for their offensive against the city. As prosperity could

27. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 105.

28. On more than one occasion, in the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the commune authorities sought to reinforce the urban perimeter, notably the area surrounding the two largest convents — the Franciscans and the Dominicans. These convents formed part of the city walls and thus were particularly vulnerable to attacks by outside enemies.

29. DAD. *Consilium Rogatorum*, IV, f. 136v-137v.

30. DAD. *Consilium Minus*, XV, f. 184. The architect drew an annual salary of 240 ducats, of which 40 ducats were advanced to him in Florence. His contract stipulated "He is to manage and supervise all work on the ramparts, ditches, and towers, and to order and offer guidance on the execution of plans and drawings, according to his will and the will of the government. Further, he is not obliged to carry out the construction with his own hands".

31. DAD. *Consilium Minus*, XVI, f. 41v.



not come at the expense of security, the authorities in Dubrovnik launched a massive campaign in 1463 to destroy the weavers' workshops and stores. Artisan wool production, which had been brought to Dubrovnik by Tuscan master weavers and Catalan wool merchants, would never fully recover from the destruction. Weavers were found liable for the destroyed workshops, and the city authorities filled wells and destroyed water tanks, ensuring that life was not possible outside the city walls. Other extreme solutions to the heightened security problem were offered, such as the destruction of the city aqueduct, which had been constructed by the Neapolitan engineer Onofrio de la Cava. But in the end they were not carried out as the Ottoman threat waned and the city returned to a normal state of commerce.³²

2.2 The city arsenal

Despite being within the city walls, an essential feature of passive military defense was the arsenal. Unlike the walls, the port and the arsenal were spaces where the city's maritime power was contained, and where protection of ships, anchors, moorings, and other sea vessels was paramount. Hence, there were strict regulations concerning the organization of the defense of the port and arsenal, many of which were part and parcel of laws concerning public order and the security of the urban zone.

The amounts expended on construction and repair of city defenses rose substantially in the fourteenth century when Dubrovnik participated in two major maritime military coalitions. The Council decision of 1345 was of singular importance: to complete the construction of the wall separating the port from the arsenal. This was considered a crucial safeguard of the arsenal in case of the invasion of the port.³³ In 1347 a chain was placed between the towers of St. Luke and St. John which connected the northernmost and southernmost points of the port. A pier was also constructed in the middle of the harbor during this time, which was intended to break up dangerous waves as well as interfere with the incursion of invading vessels.³⁴ At the start of the fifteenth century, work began on a new arsenal that was to be closed to the port and accessible from within the city limits, and therefore invulnerable to maritime attacks as well as attacks from Mount Srdj, north of the city.

32. DAD. *Consilium Rogatorum*, XVII, f. 236.

33. *Monumenta. Ragusina: libri reformationum. I, ann. 1306-1347*, ed. Josephus Gelcich. Zagreb: Academia scientiarum et artium slavorum meridionalim, 1879: 184-185.

34. Fejic, Nenad. "Construire et contrôler: le gouvernement de Dubrovnik (Raguse) face au défi de la construction et de la protection des infrastructures portuaires (XIV-XV siècles)", *Ports maritimes et ports fluviaux au Moyen âge. XXXVe Congrès de la SHMES, la Rochelle, 5 et 6 juin 204*, Patrick Boucheron, ed. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2005: 117-125.



3. The consolidation of public order: contributions to defense policy

Dubrovnik's active port was a commercial center and a nexus of manufacturing, and therefore a crucial hub in the Adriatic Sea, particularly in the last two centuries of the Middle Ages. Still, the fourteen major international and local wars in which Dubrovnik was engaged represented a significant handicap to economic activity. The city's residents had to continually manage the presence of foreigners in their homes and neighborhoods, their port, and their public spaces. The population also had to increase surveillance on domestic agents who would act in concert with foreigners against local interests, and authorities continually struggled to maintain order and civility in times of war. Domestic policy had the dual goal of limiting external threats and consolidating public order in times of war.

Public policy surrounding public order was far more nuanced and complex than policy regarding civic defense. The objectives concerned each member of the population and their relations with one another, as well as with foreigners. Governing elites as well as commoners were given specific roles to locate and neutralize elements of the population who could be construed as disloyal or dangerous to the municipality. There were those —both foreign and Ragusan— who could benefit from instability, insecurity, and opportunities engendered by war at the expense of the city. The maintenance of public order sought to check those dangers.

Dubrovnik profited greatly from the dense population of merchants and artisans whose trades enriched the entire population. These skilled men often originated from the Balkan states of Serbia, Bosnia, Hungary, and later, the far reaches of the Ottoman Empire, and while Dubrovnik was aware of their economic value, they also feared their potentially conflicting interests. Dubrovnik was aware of how valuable it was to the Balkan States, who were deprived of ports, navies, and valuable skilled populations. These states were also dependent on Dubrovnik for the expansion of their own economies as the port of Dubrovnik exported the wealth of their gold, silver, and copper mines, as well as their trade goods such as wood, wax, leather, honey, silk, and livestock. The Balkan states were also dependent on Dubrovnik's control over the trade routes which brought weaponry, fabrics, jewelry, glassware, and other luxury goods which secured the status of the Balkan monarchies and ruling classes.

Dubrovnik's trade ban on merchants who wished to travel to hostile countries was as devastating to the city, itself as it was to the enemy kingdom. During the campaign against the Serbian King Vladislav in 1234, Dubrovnik banned all citizens from traveling to the enemy's territory and ordered all citizens within enemy territory to return at once, under penalty of deprivation of citizenship.³⁵ The same order was given to merchants during the War of Tenedos in 1378. These restrictive measures were clearly disruptive and extremely unpopular with the merchants. However, the government always stood firm.

35. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 77.



During the War of Tenedos, all Ragusans wishing to leave the city had to seek permission from a Council leader. The claimant had to promise to return within a month's time or face a fine. In order to increase the social pressure, the names of every Ragusan who departed was proclaimed by the town crier in common spaces so that "they would be known to all and that their obligation to return be made public, so that they present themselves immediately upon their return to the army commanders".³⁶ The government also preempted any attempts of its citizenry to escape the city without explicit permission. A measure voted in the Lower Council forbade the exit of any person in Dubrovnik from the city without permission under penalty of one ducat, and demanded it illegal to climb the city walls unless one was a night watchman.³⁷ Although Dubrovnik was quite divided by social class, these restrictions and impositions applied equally to patricians and commoners.

In 1301, during the attack of the King of Serbia, the inhabitants of the island of Mljet received government orders to "bring a sword, a shield, a helmet, and a sling".³⁸ Subsequently, in 1432, during a prolonged and arduous conflict against the Bosnian Duke Radoslav Pavlovic, the city authorities entrusted the keys to important defensive doors to "those serious men who lived closest to the walls" who could be trusted to only open the doors for the night watchmen. In the morning the "serious men" were charged with retrieving the keys from a patrician and commanding the guards, and returning the keys.³⁹ At certain moments, the government was more authoritarian with the peri-urban population than the centralized urban population, as the outlying areas were more prone to penetration by foreigners. Faced with the threat posed by the presence of the powerful Ottoman fleet in 1480, the government authorized the inhabitants of the island of Lastavo to abandon their island place themselves in more protected areas "within Puglia, the Marche region, and in Dubrovnik proper, or seek refuge elsewhere".⁴⁰ The government then appropriated all the vacated or unused homes in Dubrovnik and designated them as places of refuge for the citizens of the island of Lastavo, where they remained for the duration of the Ottoman threat.⁴¹

Foreigners from hostile territories were not treated equitably in times of conflict, particularly if they were Slavs or Venetians. During the war against the Serbian King Stefan Miloutine between 1317 and 1318, security guards placed near the port were to "Publicly display a list of all aliens who entered the city carrying weapons,

36. *Odluke veka dubrovačke republike (Les Décisions des conseils de la République de Raguse)*, ed. Mihailo Dinic. Belgrade: Sryska Kraljevska akademija, 1964: 89.

37. *Odluke Veka dubrovačke republike...*: 148.

38. *Monumenta Ragusina: libri reformationum. V...*: 6.

39. Who were these "serious men", who carried out such specific functions and responsibilities? Historians have not found any references to their status or membership in the Patrician class. They could have well been from the class of ordinary citizens, and thus excluded entirely from government posts or the military command.

40. DAD. *Consilium Minus*, XXI, f. 144v.

41. DAD. *Consilium Minus*, XXI, f. 144v.



so that they be approached to surrender their arms before entering the city walls".⁴² If a foreigner was caught smuggling weapons inside the city walls, he was fined one ducat per day, and two and a half ducats per night of his crime. Carrying weapons at night was punished by immediate confiscation. This last order was proclaimed "in slavonesca lingua" by the town crier. During the duration of the war, the Lower Council demanded that a register be created of all the Slavs resident in Dubrovnik who would serve the town, "so that individuals could be punished or rewarded, as was their due, and no one could boast of evil deeds".

The Councils also desired to establish powerful deterrents against foreigners acting as double agents.⁴³ In 1330, when the city was replete with mercenaries, a radical measure was passed by the High Council whereby a commission of five patricians was established that was authorized to "act by any means necessary to act in the best consideration and good of the city and eliminate and kill any individual who could be a threat to Dubrovnik".⁴⁴ Sometimes, such measures had a particular individual as a target. During the war against the Bosnian Duke Stefan Vukhtich Kossatcha between 1451 and 1454, the town took advantage of the gesture made earlier in peacetime whereby the Duke was granted Ragusan citizenship and passed the extreme but symbolic measure to accuse him of treason and put a price on his head. While it was largely a symbolic act, it had a strong effect on the duke, who temporarily interrupted his siege of the city.⁴⁵

The urban common not only prohibited its citizens from traveling to hostile territories, but also placed restrictions on travel for foreigners from these regions. Measures often included harassment and detention of these individuals. Prominent Venetian merchants who were welcomed and warmly treated by the Ragusan elite in peacetime found themselves victimized, persecuted, imprisoned, or expelled during the War of Tenedos. Foreigners were not the only victims of such xenophobia. Ragusans' everyday activities were also policed in the name of securing urban harmony. All public traffic and commerce was restricted and observed, particularly at night, where it was often banned entirely. On several occasions in wartime Dubrovnik, the city prohibited any resident aliens as well as Ragusans to go out of doors without a lantern after the third bell. After this time, innkeepers were also prohibited from serving wine to their customers, unless they were night watchmen, who could be served at any hour. There were also other bizarre restrictions such as those made in 1330 where individuals were "forbidden to walk the town in disguise, especially in the disguise of a Jew, in possession of offensive weapons, sticks, or stones, punishable under the statute".⁴⁶

42. *Monumenta Ragusina: libri reformationum. V...*: 117r.

43. *Monumenta Ragusina: libri reformationum. II, ann. 1347-1352*, ed. Franjo Racki. Zagreb: L. Hartman, 1882: 303.

44. *Monumenta Ragusina: libri reformationum. II...*: 326.

45. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 319-320.

46. *Liber Statutorum civitatis Ragusii compositus anno 1272*, ed. Bogisic Valtazar, Jirecek Konstantin. Zagreb: Societas typographica, 1904.



Additionally, during wartime, the ruling elite had reason to be fearful of commoners. Artisans' apprentices, sailors, servants, and the underclass had much to gain and little to lose from disruptions to order. These individuals aroused the suspicions of the patricians and measures were often taken against them. As in Venice, where the rule of the oligarchy was tested several times throughout the Middle Ages, the social order of Dubrovnik was not immune from threats. Liberty and liberal political organization which had thrived in peacetime was a potential threat in wartime. It was well known that outside enemies could promptly take advantage of the dissatisfied or disenfranchised classes and sow chaos in a city. According to historical chronicles of Dubrovnik, when the city was attacked by the Serbian King Stefan Ouros in 1275, "the King, having been counseled by confidante, would not sign the peace treaty ending the war as long as the Ragusans retained a Venetian count as part of the government. They were ordered to replace the Venetian with a minister of the Serbian king which would guarantee Dubrovnik's subservience to Serbia, rather than another territory".⁴⁷

Another example is drawn from the time immediately preceding the attack of the Bosnian king when four young patricians sought to overturn the public order of the city of Dubrovnik in 1401. In the historical sources, these men are accused of "practicing shameful customs and leading an infamous a way of life, which distinguished them from other patricians as they were so disreputable." These young patricians entered into an agreement with a foreign leader (most likely the King of Bosnia) in order to gain power for themselves at the expense of the political establishment. They were discovered by the authorities along the city walls exchanging letters, which were immediately seized. The conspirators confessed their crime and were quickly beheaded.⁴⁸ The citizens of the city later learned that the four patrician turncoats had, in addition to support from a foreign leader, the promise of assistance from two hundred inhabitants of humble origin of their district of Konavli.⁴⁹ It was particularly concerning that the conspiracies were conceived by members of the patrician class, who were considered to be faithful supporters of the established order. Ironically, though, the ordinary citizens, merchants, craftsmen, apprentices, and servants aroused a greater degree of mistrust in wartime. Council records indicate that these members of the underclass were placed under heavy surveillance and restrictions, despite having pledged their loyalty and friendship to Dubrovnik on several occasions.

In the mid-fourteenth century, Dubrovnik increasingly diversified its military capacities and sought the specialization of its armed forces for either the maintenance of public order within the city walls or the defense of the ramparts and walls. This specialization of forces occurred gradually with the emergence of the urban night police which was responsible for enforcing the Statute and the decisions of the Councils. These special contingents were recruited from among the

47. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii...*: 96.

48. *Annales Ragusini anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina...*: 242-243.

49. DAD, Liber Maleficiorum, I, 13r-14v.



urban populace and were responsible for the night patrols. They were known as the “domini de nocte” and were comprised of roughly thirty men —two shifts of eight men in groups of four. In addition to urban patrols, they monitored the entrances to the port located between the towers of Saint Luke and Saint John as well as the Pilé door. The night police were commanded by a “capitaneus noctis” who was a patrician.

4. Conclusion

This work has endeavored to illustrate the city of Dubrovnik in times of war during the Late Middle Ages. The city was composed of an urban collective that was joined to a rural complex governed by an elite patrician class through three councils. The ruling class constituted a small minority of the population and commoners (*cives de populo*) as well as foreigners comprised the remainder of the urban and peri-urban populace. These common individuals were ruled by the urban statutes governing the urban civilians (*habitatores*), which conferred on them few rights. Merchants, laborers, artisans, and slaves all contributed to the city’s defense, however.

Study of Dubrovnik’s defense policy in wartime cannot be limited to research concerning military order or strategy or the practice of defense. It must encompass an analysis of urban governance and civic identity which shaped the character of the urban collective and how it orchestrated great measures for the preservation of Dubrovnik. The historian must draw out the lived experiences of the “silent majority” which constituted the non-patrician class in medieval Dubrovnik.

Assuredly, the maintenance of public order in times of war or peace rested in the hands of the patrician class. This group congregated in the Senate (*Consilium Rogatorum*), the High Council, and the Lower Council to enact policies that affected every individual in society. It is important to note, though, that the ruling class’ attitudes toward and relationships with commoners were not entirely marked by fear and distrust. Patrician commanders of militias were forced to interact with commoners for prolonged periods of time in difficult conditions, making complex relationships possible across class and ethnic divides. All citizens were put to work for the greater good of the social collective and the physical structure of the city. Certain individuals were chosen to guard the port and the arsenal at the entrance to the city proper. Perhaps this role was assigned to those whose origins made them more likely to be aware of delinquents, marauders, or enemies of the city, and therefore more effective guards? It is clear that throughout Dubrovnik’s history, specific capacities and functions were certainly assigned to particular social groups to ensure specialization of military tasks. Dubrovnik’s all-encompassing social strategy for the maintenance of ideal self-defense deserves greater historical research.

