

Stephan Karl Sander-Faes. *Urban Elites of Zadar: Dalmatia and the Venetian Commonwealth (1540–1569)*.

I libri di Viella 155. Rome: Viella, 2013. 292 pp. €35. ISBN: 978-88-6728-115-2.

This book is based on the author's PhD research in the archives of Venice and Zadar and contains numerous references to Italian and Croatian historiography. It gives an overview of the elites' life in the capital of the Venetian province of Dalmatia and Albania during the period in the mid-sixteenth century from the Battle of Preveza until the eve of the Cyprus War. In order to explain the concept of the Venetian commonwealth, the author provides a broad explanatory framework regarding Venice's eastern Mediterranean expansion in the centuries prior, including its conquest of the Dalmatian coastal communities. The Venetian interest in eastern Mediterranean and Adriatic territories was impeded, however, by Ottoman expansion into Western Europe and its conquest of the Aegean and Ionian areas, including the Dalmatian hinterland. The main factor behind the wealth of Venice lay in its economic growth based in part in these overseas colonies. Nevertheless, the Ottoman conquest of the Dalmatian hinterland put the coastal communities in a very difficult position where they were unable to survive without constant help from the capital. In this way Dalmatia became a very expensive province.

The author shows how these historical developments influenced the lives of Zadar's elite. He provides a definition of the various administrative levels of Zadar's territory under Venetian rule as a physical space where urban elites carried out their economic and social activities. In this way Zadar's elite was defined by its economic, geographical, and social character. In the book the main actors are well described and classified according to three distinctions: the urban nobility, intellectual elites, and ecclesiastical elites. The work is predominantly based on analyses of notarial documents (export licenses and procuratorial appointments), which provide a vivid picture of the economic and social connections as well as the connections with other Dalmatian communities and Italian cities. Especially interesting are Sander-Faes's

analyses of women's participations in economic activities and their social life in Zadar; though they were not legally independent from their fathers or spouses, they were far more visible than one would assume. Examination of Zadar's property market also provides interesting conclusions; for example, while the economy was threatened by Ottoman expansion in the hinterland, Zadar remained an active economic center, with urban elites leaving evidence of their everyday life and material culture in notary property inventories and last wills and testimonies.

Other social and nonelite groups in Zadar are also examined, including Jews and immigrants from the Croatian territory and Venice. In addition, Sander-Faes supplies transcriptions of some original archival documents such as *procura*, sales contracts, planting concessions, rental or leasehold contracts, and an inventory. The book also contains some explanations of measurements from the period, a list of toponyms in their original forms, and a Croatian and Italian transcription that is very important for better understanding archival sources. The additional maps are also important for a geographical understanding of the narrative and analysis. The book is therefore an essential contribution to the field, and will lead to further investigations into the history of Renaissance Dalmatia, and Zadar in particular.

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