



Urban elites of Zadar: Dalmatia and the Venetian Commonwealth (1540–1569)

Egidio Ivetic

To cite this article: Egidio Ivetic (2015) Urban elites of Zadar: Dalmatia and the Venetian Commonwealth (1540–1569), *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 30:2, 175-177, DOI: [10.1080/09518967.2015.1117208](https://doi.org/10.1080/09518967.2015.1117208)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518967.2015.1117208>



Published online: 09 Mar 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 4



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Notes

1. For the possibilities that their specific legal status offered Oriental Christians under Muslim rule and the attitude of the leaders of these communities, see Johannes Pahlitzsch, *Der arabische Procheiros Nomos: Untersuchung und Edition der arabischen Übersetzung eines byzantinischen Rechtstextes*, Forschungen zur Byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 31 (Frankfurt am Main: Löwenklau-Gesellschaft, 2014, 34–60).
2. Albrecht Fuess is preparing a study entitled *The clash of Muslim empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mamluks in the sixteenth century*; see also his ‘Ottoman ghazwa – Mamluk jihad: two arms on the same body?’, in *Everything is on the move: the ‘Mamluk Empire’ as node in (trans-)regional networks*, edited by Stephan Conermann (Göttingen: Bonn University Press 2014), 269–82.
3. For this approach with a focus on Oriental Christians in the Islamic world as an especially significant case, see Johannes Pahlitzsch, ‘Mediators between East and West: Christians under Mamluk rule’, *Mamluk Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (2005): 31–47.

Johannes Pahlitzsch

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany

pahlitzsch@uni-mainz.de

© 2016, Johannes Pahlitzsch

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518967.2015.1117210>

Urban elites of Zadar: Dalmatia and the Venetian Commonwealth (1540–1569), by Stephan Karl Sander-Faes, Rome, Viella, 2013, 292 pp., 3 maps, €35,00 (paperback), ISBN 978-8867281152

In recent years a growing number of studies have been devoted to the maritime dominion of the Republic of Venice. The so-called *Stato da Mar* has become the subject of an increasingly international historiography after decades of sharp scholarly divisions between mainland and sea, between the Italian *venezianistica* on one side, and national historiographies, mainly Croatian and Greek, on the other. What has for a long time been repeatedly described as a relationship between a centre and its colonial dominions is now increasingly seen as a Venice/eastern Adriatic ‘nexus’, namely a complex, integrated area representing a sort of sub-region of the Republic’s maritime and territorial dimensions across the Adriatic region: a maritime area founded on political, institutional, military, economic and cultural connections between the metropolis and its eastern peripheries of Istria, Dalmatia and Albania – a fundamental part of the Venetian *commonwealth*.

Dalmatia has always been the backbone of the Republic, the most important dominion, a province on the maritime route eastward. There were two Dalmatias: first the so-called *acquisto vecchio* (the old purchase), which was Dalmatia reduced to its littoral and islands between 1409/20 and 1699, an armed province that had had to face the advance of the Ottoman Empire through seven wars. Then there was the *acquisto nuovo* and *nuovissimo* (the new purchase): a new and Dalmatia extended towards the continent after the peace treaties of Carlowitz and Passarowitz in 1699 and 1718, respectively. Renaissance Dalmatia has not been investigated systematically, or in the way it deserves. Apart from studies on general issues of the Dalmatian province and some economic aspects, there is a lack of monographic surveys regarding cities of the *acquisto vecchio*. Nothing significant has been written since the books by Grga Novak on Split (1961) and Tomislav Raukar on fifteenth-century Zadar (1977).¹ Now, *Urban*

elites of Zadar by Stephan Karl Sander-Faes is a welcome addition to the literature, and to some degree fills the gap.

The focus of the Sander-Faes's book is on the city known as Zara, in the sixteenth-century 'metropolis et chiave' of Venice's Adriatic dual province of Dalmatia and Albania, as well as on Zadar's jurisdiction encompassing the minor districts of Nin, Novigrad and Vrana in northern Dalmatia. The book is divided into six chapters and documents the life of the urban elite in the thirty years between the two Ottoman–Venetian wars of 1537–1540 and 1570–1573. The study is based on a vast cache of archival material from the Croatian State Archive in Zadar, and on reports from *Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionalium*, edited by Simeon Ljubić and Grga Novak.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the major developments in Venice's maritime state, focusing on Dalmatia between the beginning of the second Venetian dominion (1409–1420) and the outbreak of the Ottoman–Venetian war in 1537. It details the most important economic, legal, political and social aspects, underlying structural characteristics of the Venetian maritime and mercantile enterprise in the Adriatic. Chapter 2 identifies the principal actors in Zadar society in the period 1540–1569 and their trans-Adriatic connections. Special attention is paid to 'procura' contracts, which allow a quantitative analysis of the economic, occupational, geographical and social origins of contracting parties and the geographical destinations of the appointees. A total of 930 individual notarial contracts from 1540 to 1569 have been analysed. This provides quantitative and qualitative data to supplement the traditional methods measuring communications across the sea. The data clarify that communication frequency with Venice increased notably in the three interwar decades.

The identification of the aristocratic elites is at the centre of Chapter 3. Zadar was the main city of Dalmatia, with the most prominent Dalmatian nobility, Venetian patriicians in service, clergy from the important Zadar's archbishopric and Nin's bishopric and the authoritative local monastic congregations: the Benedictines, Dominicans and Franciscans. The commercially active elite consisted mostly of merchants, property owners and spice traders. For the nobility, a detailed survey of testaments and codicils has been conducted. Zadar's interwar property markets are the subject of Chapter 4, which deals with developments in Zadar real estate transactions between 1540 and 1569. Contrary to what existing scholarship usually emphasises, asserting a general downward directions of property markets after the Venetian reacquisition in 1409, Sander-Faes has a more cautious approach. His analyses of real-estate transactions, based on 1772 notarial acts (sales, concessions and rental and leasehold transactions), have brought to light a rather dense panorama, more dynamic than hitherto supposed. In contrast to the idea of a preceding long economic decline, the 1560s in Zadar witnessed a marked upturn in economic activities, as both transferred acreage and turnover doubled. However, this did not last. Significant border revisions and the shrinking of Zadar's *contado* in 1573 altered the situation and the economic recovery stalled.

Chapter 5 deals with the geographical and social mobility of Zadar's foreigners. The nobles preferred marriage alliances with families of aristocratic descent from elsewhere in Dalmatia. The author puts under the lens 656 marriage-related contracts. The final chapter discusses other elite groups: Venetians, Croats and Jewish communities, which were small but important. This part contributes to explaining how Venice's representatives were integrated into the societies of Dalmatia by broadening the discussion to include a wider spectrum of urban elites.

The systematic study of unpublished documents opens up diverse social aspects and covers secular and ecclesiastical protagonists, family relationships, the presence of foreigners, marriage, immigration structures, the property market, the allocation of urban spaces and behavioural traits of the Dalmatian nobility as well as minorities. What emerges are more inclusive characteristics of the Adriatic coastal cities than expected around the middle of the sixteenth century. This book is definitely a vivid reconstruction of urban daily life in a Dalmatian city. As Sander-Faes states: ‘despite obvious differences in scale and institutional complexity, Venice’s Adriatic dominions strongly resembled the lagoon metropolis in terms of its social diversity and fluidity’ (215–216).

In sum, this is an important contribution to the history of Dalmatia and the Venetian commonwealth, and a valuable survey that enriches the historiography of the Adriatic. Surely, as the author argues, it is time to carry out comparative studies with other Dalmatian towns and areas of the province. For now, this book exemplifies how to overcome the dualism between the *venezianistica* and Croatian national historiography in building a transnational historiography within the Adriatic area.

Note

1. Grga Novak, *Povijest Splita. Knjiga 2. (Od 1420 do 1797)* (Split: Čakavski sabor, 1961); Tomislav Raukar, *Zadar u XV. stoljeću: ekonomski razvoj i društveni odnosi* (Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu-Institut za hrvatsku povijest, 1977).

Egidio Ivetic

University of Padua, Italy

egidio.ivetic@unipd.it

© 2016, Egidio Ivetic

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518967.2015.1117208>

Religion and trade: cross-cultural exchanges in world history, 1000–1900, edited by Francesca Trivellato, Leor Halevi and Cátia Antunes, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, 296 pp., £12.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-19-937919-4

This collective volume is a gift. Thanks to the plurality of its approach and vision, to the variety of themes it gathers together, and to the numerous regions and periods it covers, it is a must for anyone interested in this area of study – also because it urges the reader to consider how a global history of the intersection of religion and economics in pre-modern commerce is both possible and necessary. It even proves how the often-reviled genre of the collective volume can achieve something that neither a synthetic or research monograph nor an article – always eager to present a single vision – is able to offer. With its admirably vast scope, this volume shows the wide range of approaches in the field and even the juxtapositions between them, allowing us to discover the richness and the gaps and questions that face the present state of research.

Few will be able to judge the degree to which each chapter presented here adds new knowledge to each distinctive special field of research – from new readings of twelfth-century Hebrew-Arabic sources of the Geniza merchants trading between Cairo and India (Roxana Eleni Margariti, in the footsteps of Goitein though always supplying her own readings and interpretations of the precious documents) to archival records