The Republic of Dubrovnik

Vedran Sohinger (University of Warwick)

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The Croatian city of Dubrovnik was the seat of a powerful maritime republic: *The Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), 1358–1808*. → Venice’s rival for domination on the Adriatic.
The Adriatic Sea

Figure. Adriatic Sea.
The origins of Dubrovnik and its name

- Originally believed to be founded by Roman inhabitants fleeing the nearby Epidaurus from Slavic and Avaric incursions in the 7th century C.E.
- Recent archaeological findings suggest that the city already existed in the 5th century C.E.
- Throughout history interchangeably called **Ragusa** and **Dubrovnik**.
  - ‘**Ragusa**’: comes from ancient Greek ‘*laus*’–rock island.
  - ‘**Dubrovnik**’: most likely comes from the Paleo-Slavic ‘*dub*’–oak, also ‘*dubrava*’–oak grove.
    Possibly also from the Celtic ‘*dubron*’–water.
Byzantine rule

- Originally under Byzantine rule.
  - Mostly Roman population.
  - Besieged by the Saracens 866–867.
  - Saved by intervention of Emperor Basil I.
  - → Reorganisation of Dalmatia within Byzantium.

- Weakening of Byzantine power
  → Venice starts to perceive Dubrovnik as possible threat.
    - Failed attempt of Venice to take over Dubrovnik in 948.
    - The citizens of the city attribute their salvation to Saint Blaise, who is henceforth the patron saint of Dubrovnik.

- Brief periods of Venetian and Norman rule in 11th century.

- End of Byzantine rule in 1204.
Figure. Renaissance triptych featuring St. Blaise by Nikola Božidarević, Lat. Nicolò Raguseo (cca. 1460–1517) in the Dominican Monastery of Dubrovnik.
**Figure.** The church of Saint Blaise in Dubrovnik.
Venetian rule

- **1205**: Venice invaded Dalmatia as part of the *Fourth Crusade*. Dubrovnik needed to pay a tribute. Also a source of supply for hides, wax, silver and other metals.
- It became a Venetian naval base.
- Retained most of its independence.
- People resent the tribute.
- **1296**: A devastating fire destroyed most of the city. → Rebuilt with new urban plan.
- **1348**: The plague reached Dubrovnik.
  - **1377**: Local authorities introduce the institution of the *quarantine*.
  - It is effective in saving the city’s population.
Oldest continuously operating pharmacy in Europe

**Figure.** The Old Pharmacy of the Franciscan Monastery (1317) is the oldest continuously operating pharmacy in Europe.
Independence from Venice and Hungarian sovereignty

- **1358**: By the Treaty of Zadar, Venice lost Dalmatia to Hungary.
- Dubrovnik recognises Hungarian sovereignty, but functions as an independent republic. → The Republic of Dubrovnik.
- Expansion of territory.
- **1395**: First insurance law in Europe (for ships).
- **1416**: Abolition of slavery (first in Europe).
Ottoman sovereignty

- **1458**: Treaty with Ottoman Empire → tributary of the sultan.
- **1481**: Republic passes into Ottoman protection; increased tribute.
- The republic was virtually independent.
  - Relations with foreign powers as long as there was no conflict with Ottoman interests.
  - Its ships sailed under the Dubrovnik flag.
  - Handled Adriatic trade on behalf of the Ottomans.
  - Merchants could enter Black Sea (otherwise forbidden for non-Ottomans).
  - Ottoman support in disputes with Venice.
- Trade route **Florence-Dubrovnik-Bursa**.
FIGURE. Dubrovnik Fleet flag.
**FIGURE.** Dubrovnik Republic flag.
FIGURE. Dubrovnik coat of arms.
FIGURE. Dubrovnik merchant.
Dubrovnik-Ancona alliance

Simultaneously formed alliance with the **Maritime Republic of Ancona**.

- Both were Venice’s rivals on the Adriatic.
- **Venetian trade route**: via Germany and Austria.
- **Alternative route**: Dubrovnik-Ancona-Florence-Flanders.

**Figure.** Trade routes possible due to the Dubrovnik-Ancona alliance.
**Organisation of the Republic**

- **Aristocratic republic** with three classes: nobility, citizens, and plebeians.
- **Venetian** model of government.
  - **Major council**: male members of the aristocracy of age 18 or more.
  - **Minor council**: members elected by the major council.
  - **Senate**: elected each year; members aged 40 or more.
- **Head of state**: Rector.
  - Elected for a one-month mandate by the Major Council.
  - Could be reelected after two years.
  - **Goal**: Prevent the domination of one family.
- When the **jugo** wind was blowing, no laws were passed (believed to tamper with one’s judgement).
The Rector’s Palace

FIGURE. The Rector’s Palace.
Dubrovnik during the jugo wind

**FIGURE.** Dubrovnik during the jugo wind.
The oldest arboretum in Europe

**Figure.** *Trstenik*: The oldest arboretum in Europe; known to exist since 1498.
**Habsburg sovereignty**

- **Discovery of the Americas** → crisis of Mediterranean commerce.
- Decline of both Venice and Dubrovnik.
- **1667**: Devastating earthquake. Most of the city had to be rebuilt.
- **1683**: Ottomans are defeated near Vienna → joint Ottoman and Habsburg sovereignty.
  - One of the most distinguished Field marshals in the Habsburg army was Dubrovnik native Frano Dživo Gundulić.
- **1699**: The Treaty of Karlowitz.
  - Ottomans gave up majority of Adriatic coast territory to the Habsburgs. → Full Habsburg sovereignty of Dubrovnik.
  - Some Ottoman coastal territory was given to Venice.
  - Dubrovnik additionally ceded two patches of its coast to Ottomans. → Protection against a land attack from Venice.
- One of the first countries to establish ties with the newly-formed USA.
FIGURE. Map of the Republic of Dubrovnik, after 1699.
The end of the Republic

- **1805**: Battle of Austerlitz. → The Habsburgs had to relinquish control of Dalmatia to France.
- The Republic of Dubrovnik tried to maintain neutrality.
- **1806**: Napoleon’s forces occupied the city.
- **1808**: Marshal Marmont issues proclamation abolishing the Republic of Dubrovnik.
  - Becomes part of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy.
  - Marmont is the new ‘Duke of Ragusa’ (*Duc de Raguse*).
- **1810**: joins the French Illyrian Provinces, together with Dalmatia and Istria.
Scientific contributions

- **Marin Getaldić (1568–1626)**, a mathematician, physicist, astronomer, and diplomat.
  - Worked in geometry and optics.
  - Constructed parabolic mirrors (exhibited in the National Maritime Museum in London).
  - Calculated orbits of comets; cited by Huygens and Halley.

*Figure. Marin Getaldić (1568–1626).*
Scientific contributions

- Ruđer Bošković (1711–1787), a mathematician, physicist, astronomer, philosopher, diplomat, poet, theologian, and Jesuit priest.
- *De Viribus Vivis*: attempt to find a middle way between Newton’s gravitational theory and Leibniz’s theory of monads.
- *Philosophiae naturalis theoria*: a precursor to atomic theory.
- Called the ‘Croatian Leibniz’ by Werner Heisenberg.

![Figure. Ruđer Bošković (1711–1787).](image)
FIGURE. Dubrovnik sunset.

Thank you for your attention.