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## **HISTORY VERSUS MYTH: NARRATIVE AND DOCUMENTARY SOURCES ON THE ATTITUDE OF THE RAGUSANS TOWARDS THE NEMANJIĆ RULERS**

**Abstract:** In the mirror of the Ragusan chronography, Serbian sovereigns, with the exception of Stefan Dušan, are portrayed as figures lacking benevolence towards Dubrovnik. This biased approach in the Ragusan narrative sources regarding Serbian rulers prompted the author to turn to documentary sources, both Serbian and Ragusan, which relate to topics addressed in narrative sources. Indeed, when Ragusan chroniclers discuss the political and military aspects of the relations between Dubrovnik and Serbia, they draw extensively from documentary sources. However, these documentary sources often lean towards economic rationality and the pursuit of mutual benefits rather than towards a state of perpetual conflict driven by the irrationality of Serbian sovereigns. This raises the question of the gap in the interpretation of documentary sources by the chroniclers. The article's author seeks the causes of this gap in the more than two centuries separating the events described from the time of their recording in the chronography. These two centuries witnessed the emergence of new frameworks for historical discourse, influenced by the literary works of the Ragusan Baroque, the spirit of Counter-Reformation, and the communal patriotism fuelled by the pervasive Ottoman and Venetian threat. By incorporating these new frameworks into their narratives, Ragusan chroniclers and historians constructed a new interpretative grid, in which objective discourse gave way to a mythical interpretation of the relationships between Dubrovnik and the medieval Serbian state. According to this framework, the relationship is reduced to the daily resilience of the Ragusan authorities, who are exposed to the arbitrary and unpredictable nature of the Serbian sovereigns from the Nemanjić dynasty.

**Keywords:** Serbia, Dubrovnik, Ragusans, Nemanjić dynasty, chroniclers, documentary sources, narrative sources, history, myth.

Contemporary historians' contributions to the Balkan and Adriatic region during the Middle Ages often relied on documents from the Archives of Dubrovnik (Ragusa).

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This is particularly true for contributions regarding the various economic and social aspects of medieval Serbian and Bosnian towns, to which academician Desanka Kovačević-Kojić dedicated most of her work. There is an epistemological discontinuity between the ancient historiography based on the work of the old Dubrovnik chroniclers and historians and the modern historiography based on examining documentary sources from local archives. Reading the Ragusan archives series seems to provide a new functional model for interpreting historical sources.

During a brief stay in Dubrovnik on the eve of the Second World War, Fernand Braudel observed that “*the Ragusa archives offer anyone, with the patience to go through the voluminous Acta consiliorum, an opportunity to see a medieval town in action, still strangely preserved*”.<sup>1</sup> This serves as a tribute to documentary sources, clearly reminding us that Dubrovnik, along with several other cities along the eastern Adriatic coast, experienced the same sudden and beneficial flourishing of documentary sources at the very end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century as many Italian cities, a thriving described by historians as a veritable “scriptural” or “documentary” revolution.<sup>2</sup>

From that time onwards, there is no doubt that the Ragusan authorities assumed the responsibility of preserving municipal records in public and private domains, simultaneously becoming communal memory’s primary users and custodians. Scholars, particularly those from the new generation of the Serbian critical historical school in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, assigned a privileged status to these documentary sources. This preference was evident in both the publication of Ragusan sources and the analytical and synthetic works derived from them. Regarding the history of Dubrovnik specifically, this newfound appreciation for documentary sources has also created a certain reluctance towards narrative sources – chronicles and annals – that have dominated Ragusan historical scholarship since the early modern period. To contemporary medievalists, Ragusan documentary production undeniably reflects the image of its ruling class of merchant patricians. It is primarily sober and precise in evoking the facts and actions it produces and preserves in memory.

The best example illustrating the intangible nature of Ragusan serial sources is the record of decisions made by Dubrovnik’s three governing bodies: the Great Council, the Small Council, and the Senate. These records represent an almost uninterrupted series of minutes detailing concrete and specific measures to be taken, yet devoid of passions, divisions, or confrontations within the patrician order that often preceded any significant decision-making process. The same sober and precise character defines the Registers of Letters and Commissions of the Levant, a vast repertoire of instructions issued by Ragusan councils to emissaries sent to foreign powers from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century onward.

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<sup>1</sup> Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*, T. I–II, Paris 1969, T. II, 533.

<sup>2</sup> A relatively recent concept, originating at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, describes the flourishing of notarial activities within the communal societies of Italy; see, for example, Paolo Cammarosano, *Italia medievale, struttura e geografia delle fonti scritte*, Roma 1991.

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However, a history of the Commune based solely on successive decisions made by governmental councils, while objective, remains incomplete. Heuristics adopted new and valuable sources as medieval studies expanded during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In medieval historiography, the concept of “networks of sources” – and occasionally even “connections” between these networks – began to gain traction in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, significantly accelerating with the digitisation of archival materials. Medieval studies of Dubrovnik were not immune to this evolution. The history of Dubrovnik has been enriched by a vast repertoire of subjects that gradually shifted focus from documents related to the political and military activities of the Commune to various forms of economic, social, and cultural history. New fields of study in medieval history – of which the first to emerge, although by no means the only one, was the history of daily life – relied on specific series from the Ragusan archives. The medieval history of Dubrovnik was increasingly viewed through the lens of relationships among its inhabitants from opposing social categories (elites versus marginalised groups), conflicts stemming from acculturation issues (Romance versus Slavic elements), religious intolerance (Christians versus Jews), gender identities (men versus women), generational divides (elders versus youth), professional differences (noble versus humble trades), or simply societal dynamics (relationships among “patricians”, “citizens”, and “residents”, or more broadly between native Ragusans and immigrants to the city). All the societal indicators of a growing commune in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries emerged. The historian’s interest evolved from reconstructing different facets of communal life to investigating how the inhabitants perceived it.

Entire pages from registers of criminal complaints, judicial sentences, and notarial acts recount and interpret in various ways the daily conflicts of interest in the Commune’s residents’ shops, taverns, public squares, streets, or private homes. In contrast to this diversity of sources illustrating the multiple facets of a new urban dynamic in Dubrovnik, the three main series of registers resulting from the work of the Ragusan governmental councils proved surprisingly uncommunicative. While these registers documented the most significant decisions – those regarding relations with foreign powers, addressing war and peace, and affecting the very liberty of the Commune, both in the short and long term – the public expression of various opinions driving these decisions was neither encouraged nor, in some cases, permitted. Consequently, one must admit that a century after contributing to the emergence of the Serbian critical historiography school by challenging knowledge derived from popular tradition, the Ragusan governmental registers no longer fulfilled the requirements of the expanded heuristic field of Serbian critical historiography. The most pressing demand was to grasp the very reasons behind the decisions recorded in the registers of the three councils, which responded to the political and military challenges of the time while also drawing from the collective memory of the patrician elite and the Ragusan population as a whole.

Although the influence of collective memory on daily politics, including the sensitive areas of war and peace, is rarely mentioned in the Ragusan governmental registers, it is highly present in the writings of Ragusan chroniclers and historians.

According to them, memory constitutes the essential driving force behind the measures adopted by the Ragusan councils. Are Ragusan historians and chroniclers of the Middle Ages and the early modern period mere mythmakers, or are they also conveyors of collective memory that official registers failed to express or preserve by their very nature? This question will be addressed in the following lines as we attempt to reconstruct the image of Serbian sovereigns in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries as it appeared in the chronicles and documentary sources.

Unlike Venice, Ragusan chronography lacks works predating the creation of the first public archives.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note this distinction to understand why Ragusan chroniclers emphasised their adherence to “*the unshakable truth of public archives*”<sup>4</sup> to borrow Junije Restić’s apt expression. Some chroniclers did so directly by referring to their research in archival collections, while for others, this conclusion naturally emerged from reading their accounts, but their indebtedness to documentary sources is unquestionable. The fact that the oldest surviving council register dates to 1301 does not exclude the hypothesis that Ragusan chroniclers may have been aware of and incorporated knowledge from older council registers that have since been lost.

Located in a sensitive area, at the intersection of two strategic routes, one maritime, linking Venice to the expansive Mediterranean, and the other continental, running from the Adriatic into the Balkan hinterland via coastal river valleys and Dinaric Mountain passes, Dubrovnik was encircled by powerful neighbours who, depending on the circumstances, were either its partners or competitors. When considered over the long stretch of the late Middle Ages, relations with these neighbours experienced both highs and lows. During moments of greatest peril, the contents of council registers should – or at least could – have crystallised the collective memory of the Commune. Since this was never the case, chroniclers’ accounts filled the void. For the period before 1301, when the preserved registers of the three councils began, we must rely on the works of local chroniclers and historians.<sup>5</sup> These chronicles, sometimes separated by centuries, shed more light on the cultural profiles of their authors than on the mindset of Dubrovnik’s inhabitants during the periods described in their respective narratives. For instance, the Ragusan scholar Ludovik Crijević Tuberon, in describing Dubrovnik’s submission to Venetian overlordship in 1204, acknowledged neither merit nor virtue in the Commune’s inhabitants. Instead, he highlighted a manifestation of their corrupt morals resulting from accumulated

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<sup>3</sup> For the precedence of Venetian chronicles over documentary sources, see, for example, Freddy Thiriet, “Les chroniques vénitiennes de la Marcienne et leur importance pour l’histoire de la Romanie Gréco-vénitienne”, *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 66 (1954) 241–292.

<sup>4</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii (ab origine Urbis usque ad annum 1451) item Joannis Gundulae (1451–1484)*, digessit Speratus Nodilo, Scriptorum volumen II, Zagrabiae 1893, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Although Ragusan chroniclers’ and historians’ works have been published, these are older editions, with the notable exception of the work by Mavro Orbini, part of which was published in 1968 with a critical apparatus. See: Мавро Орбин, *Краљевство Словена*, Београд 1968.

wealth. He argued that this led them to place themselves under the yoke of the Serenissima: “*Since trade was the only activity in which they engaged, they lacked the courage to confront the tyrant. As if they were unworthy of living under their laws, they made a decision that led them into servitude. By surrendering their homeland to foreign rule, they brought eternal shame upon themselves and their descendants.*”<sup>6</sup> As a member of a patrician family who spent much of his life in the Benedictine order, Ludovik Crijević Tuberon, due to his origins and life choices, could not empathise with the commercial and maritime vocation of his native city,<sup>7</sup> which he perceived as a source of weakness and moral corruption. He directed the same criticism toward the Venetians in his work, placing them on an equal footing with his Ragusan compatriots. However, two centuries after Crijević, another Ragusan, Junije Restić, recounted the same episode in a completely different tone. After recalling that in 1204, Dubrovnik was under the authority of a count who had largely abused his power by remaining in office longer than permitted by law, Junije Restić adds: “*And since the love of liberty indeed outweighs the logic of necessity, Peter Benessa, the son-in-law of Juda [the count], secretly gathered in his house the senators who were still in the homeland and could no longer endure the tyranny.*”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the portrait of Ragusan elites drawn by Junije Restić is the opposite of that of Ludovik Crijević. Indeed, Restić’s historical discourse, particularly its heightened communal patriotism, aligns more closely with the historical and literary paradigm of the Ragusan Baroque century than with the medieval Christian culture deeply rooted in Ludovik Crijević Tuberon’s work.<sup>9</sup>

Numerous interactions characterised the late 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries – sometimes peaceful, sometimes hostile – between the Serbian sovereigns of the Nemanjić

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<sup>6</sup> Vladimir Rezar, “De origine et incremento urbis Rhacusanae Ludovika Crijevića Tuberona (kritičko izdanje, prijevod i komentar)”, *Anali* 51/1 (Dubrovnik 2013) 106.

<sup>7</sup> Born into an ancient Ragusan patrician family, Ludovik Crijević Tuberon (Ludovicus Cervarius Tubero), 1458–1527, received a solid humanist education, notably at the University of Paris before joining the Benedictine order in Dubrovnik, where he led a monastic life until his death. His main work is a history of his time in eleven chapters. It was first published in Frankfurt in 1603 under the title *Ludovici Tuberonis Dalmatae Abbatis Commentariorum de rebus quae temporibus eius in illa Europae parte, quam Pannonii et Turcae eorumque finitimi incolunt, gestae sunt, libri undecim*. A translation was published in Zagreb in 2001 by Vlado Rezar under title *Komentari o mojem vremenu*, accompanied by a critical apparatus. The fifth chapter, partly dedicated solely to the Commune of Dubrovnik, was frequently revised and supplemented, resulting in several editions between 1603 and 2013, independently of the rest of the work, under the title mentioned in the previous note.

<sup>8</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, 70.

<sup>9</sup> The intimate personality of Ragusan chroniclers and their historical culture merits separate discussion. This topic remains unexplored in historical literature, with the notable exception of Mavro Orbini, whose portrait was depicted by Miroslav Pantić in the introduction to his work. See: М. Орбин, *Краљевство Словена XI–CVIII*. For writers and chroniclers of the Middle Ages in Florence and Venice, the prosopographic approach has been extensively explored. See, for example Christian Bec, *Les marchands écrivains, affaires et humanisme à Florence 1375–1434*, Paris – La Haye 1967.

dynasty and the Ragusan Commune. Since the council registers from this period have not been preserved, the only sources available to assess the mindset of the Ragusans toward the Serbian sovereigns are the later accounts of Ragusan authors such as Mavro (Mauro) Orbini,<sup>10</sup> Nicolas Ragnina, the compiler and editor of one of the versions of the Ragusan Annals,<sup>11</sup> Jakov Lukarević,<sup>12</sup> and particularly Junije Restić.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Il Regno De Gli Slavi hoggi corrottamente detti Schiavoni. Historia di don Mavro Orbini Rauseo abbate Melitense. Nella quale si vede l'Origine quasi di tutti i Popoli, che furono della Lingua SLAVA, con molte, & varie guerre che fecero in Europa, Asia & Africa; il progresso del Imperio loro, l'antico culto & il tempo della loro conversione al Christianesimo. E in particolare veggonsi i successi de' Re, che anticamente dominarono in DALMATIA, CROATIA, BOSNA, SERVIA, RASSIA, & BULGARIA.* In Pesaro, Appresso Girolamo Concordia, Con licenza de' Superiori, MDCl. Attributing the title of 'chronicler' to Mavro Orbini may seem inaccurate, as he is recognised in Serbian historical literature as one of the great precursors of modern historiography. Unlike those mentioned in this article, his work adopts a thematic rather than a strictly chronological approach to history. It should be acknowledged that Orbini's discourse extends well beyond the confines of his native commune; however, when he does refer to it, he demonstrates neither superior knowledge nor greater critical insight than contemporary chroniclers with more modest horizons.

<sup>11</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina, digessit Speratus Nodilo, Scriptorum volumen I, Zagrabiae 1883.* Nicolas Ranjina (1494–1582), a descendant of an old patrician family from Dubrovnik and several times count (rector) of the Commune, compiled the Ragusan Annals based on various older anonymous annals. Natko Nodilo published both the Anonymous Annals and Ranjina's Annals in a single volume, where their respective accounts frequently overlap.

<sup>12</sup> *Copioso Ristretto de gli Annali di Rausa, Libri Quattro di Giacomo di Pietro Luccari, Gentilhuomo Rauseo : Que diligentissimamente si describe la Fondatione della Citta, l'origine della Republica, e suo Dominio, le guerre, la pace, e tutti i notabili avvenimenti occorsi dal principio di essa all' anno presente MDCIII. Et insieme narra il sito, i costumi, gli habiti, il governo, i Magistrati, le Famiglie Nobili & gli Arcivescovi d'essa. Con la Tavola, licenza di Superiori e Privilegio.* In Venetia, Ad instantia di Antonio Leonardi, 1605. Jakov Lukarević (Giacomo Luccari) 1551–1615, a Ragusan writer and diplomat, compiled a narrative he described as a "copious summary of Ragusa's annals after reading and comparing the old annals". In the introduction, he acknowledged undertaking this task despite his modest abilities, aiming to correct the errors circulating among the populace. He claimed to have used "the smallest thing or detail he could extract from the archives to achieve his goal. Strengthened by 'the truth and sincerity of everything he could find there, he set out to write the History of Dubrovnik". These fine words from Lukarević were sharply contradicted a century later by his fellow citizen Junije Restić, who marvelled that Lukarević, despite his status as a senator and his right to access the archives, had not made better use of these privileges, nor applied more accuracy and rigour to his narrative.

<sup>13</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, 4. Junije Restić (1669–1735), a Ragusan patrician, authored a chronicle of Dubrovnik from its origins until 1451. His modern editor, Natko Nodilo, supplemented it with a chronicle by another patrician, Ivan Gundulić (1600–1650) (not to be confused with the renowned Ragusan baroque poet), covering the period from 1451 to 1484. As a Ragusan senator, Junije Restić had access to the Commune's official documents, which he claimed to have extensively used, according to his own words. See also: Nenad Fejić, "La Chronique Ragusaine de Junije Rastić et la politique de Venise dans la mémoire collective de Dubrovnik", in: *Chemins d'Outre-mer, études d'histoire sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris 2004, 292–310.

Although more than a century separates Mavro Orbini and Jakov Lukarević from Junije Restić, all three authors are significantly influenced by Ragusan historiography of the Baroque era, characterised by communal patriotism. This influence is heightened in Mavro Orbini by Pan-Slavism and in Jakov Lukarević and Junije Restić by post-Tridentine militant Catholicism.

According to Mavro Orbini, Miroslav and his brothers, whom Orbini characterises as “*intelligent men and good warriors*”,<sup>14</sup> demanded that the Ragusans surrender the last ruler of Dioclea, who had sought refuge in Dubrovnik. The Ragusans replied “*that they wished to live in friendship with everyone while preserving the honour and freedom of their Republic, for which they were ready to sacrifice even their lives*”.<sup>15</sup> After this refusal, Orbini stated that the brothers attacked Dubrovnik but suffered a significant defeat and were compelled to leave the district’s territory.

The grand župan Stefan Nemanja personally returned with his army to the district in 1177, inflicting further damage on Ragusan vineyards. Mavro Orbini concludes: “*He acted out of hatred towards the Ragusans*”.<sup>16</sup> While reporting quite faithfully on the various episodes of the long-standing hostility between Dubrovnik and Stefan Nemanja, Orbini provides ambivalent assessments of the grand župan: Nemanja was “*intelligent and a good warrior*”, yet he also “*hated the Ragusans*”. Furthermore, “*as he triumphed over his enemies, everyone respected him and regarded him as an experienced warrior. For all these reasons, and because he was also a wise and very generous man, he was respected and loved by all*”.<sup>17</sup> The same author offers final praise for Stefan Nemanja when discussing the reign of his son, Stefan Prvovenčani, noting that the latter “*began by emulating his father in courage and wisdom*”.<sup>18</sup>

The chronicler Jakov Lukarević, another member of the Ragusan patriciate and a contemporary of Orbini, does not hesitate to emphasise the danger of schism, a key concern of post-Tridentine Catholicism: “*Nemanja wanted the bishops of Serbia, suffragans of the Church of Ragusa, to be subjected to the Metropolitan of Saint Peter of Rascia. The lords of Ragusa, fearing that their state might become infested with*

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<sup>14</sup> *Il Regno De Gli Slavi*, 245.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*: “*I quali risposero loro che desideravano vivere in amicitia d’ogni uno pero senza pregiudicio dell honore e della liberta della loro Republica e per conservazione della quale erano risoluti perdere l’istesa vita non ch’altro.*”

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 247: “*... che fece per odio che portava a i Rausei.*” Sima Ćirković mentions the inclination of Mavro Orbini to address the attitude of Serbian rulers towards Dubrovnik. This observation can be applied to all Ragusan chroniclers. See: M. Орбин, *Краљевство Словена*, comments by Sima Ćirković, 299. Also see a newer approach concerning the subject: Ивана Коматина, “*Између историје и традиције – наративи о Стефану Немањи у дубровачким хроникама*”, *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 12 (2024) 49–76.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 248: “*...et riportando sempre vittoria de nemici era per huomo d’assai tenuto da ogn’uno et riputato persona molto esperta in guerra. Là onde si per questo, come per esser anco homo savio et molto liberale da tutti era riverito et amato.*”

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, 250: “*E gli successe suo figliuolo Stefano. Il quale comincio seguitare il suo padre nel senno e nella prodezza.*”

*barbaric remnants, were compelled to seek help from everyone through prayers and new promises. However, the Ragusans told Nemanja, proudly demanding their response, that the decision belonged to the Pope. He then declared war”.*<sup>19</sup>

The third account, that of Junije Restić, is the most detailed regarding the mindset of the Ragusans in the face of threats. Drawing from Mavro Orbini’s work, Restić attributes Nemanja’s paternity to Dessa whose hostility towards the Ragusans he ascribes to their unwavering commitment to the sacred right of asylum, which explains their refusal to surrender his enemy, Radoslav, the deposed ruler of Dioclea who had sought refuge with them.<sup>20</sup> According to Junije Restić, this hostility was so deeply rooted in Dessa that he passed it on to his son and to his entire lineage, thus compelling the Commune to remain vigilant.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to these specific reasons that prompted the Serbian grand župan to attempt to seize Dubrovnik in 1184, Restić also highlights religious factors already present in Jakov Lukarević’s account. *“It was fatal that Rascia did not embrace the truth of the Church nor acknowledge the true worship, but stubbornly persisted in the errors of schism, in which it was not only deeply immersed but also persecuted those who offered it salvation.”*<sup>22</sup> According to our chronicler, having decided to confront the Ragusans at sea, Nemanja entrusted a squadron to his brother Miroslav. Junije Restić concludes: *“The Ragusans, aware of the situation, prepared a fleet and sent it to attack the Slavic squadron, aiming to defeat and destroy it before the Slavs became accustomed to maritime ways; for they believed that if this nation became competent at sea, combined with its power on land, all its neighbours would be reduced to*

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<sup>19</sup> *Copioso Ristretto*, 26: *“Ricerco Nemagna che li vescovi di Servia, suffraganei della Chiesa di Rausa fussero sottoposti al Metropoli di San Pietro di Rassia... La Signoria di Rausa temendo dello Stato proprio infesto dalle scorrarie de’ barbari, fu costretta a ricercare con preghi e con nuove obligationi aiuti da ciascuno...Ma Nemagna instando superbamente per la resolutione, i Rausei gli risposero che questa cognitione spettava al Papa. Onde mosse la guerra.”*

<sup>20</sup> On the attribution of Stefan Nemanja’s paternity to Dessa by Mavro Orbini, highly contested in critical historiography see: М. Орбин, *Краљевство Словена*, comments by Sima Ćirković, 295.

<sup>21</sup> *Chronica Ragusina*, 55–56: *“Questa risposta altero talmente l’animo d’esso Dessan che prese un odio irreconciliabile contro la repubblica e comincio asperissimamente perseguitar i Ragusei, divenuto fierissimo nemico loro... Questa dissensione ed inimicizia con Dessan duro molti anni e passo anche in eredita ai suoi figlioli con vari successi... essendo convenuto alla repubblica, piu o meno secondo le occasioni, ma pero continuamente star con l’armi alla mano, per garantirsi da qualsivoglia attentato d’un nemico, che pur stava sempre armato ai confini suoi.”* The last ruler of Dioclea was not Radoslav, but Mihailo: Restić has simply repeated Orbini’s mistake in this respect: see: М. Орбин, *Краљевство Словена*, comments by Sima Ćirković, 295–296.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 59–60: *“Era fatale que la Rassia non potesse abbracciar la verita della romana chiesa, ne che volesse riconoscere il vero culto, ma persistesse ostinata negli errori dello scisma, nei quali non bastandole solamente esser immersa anche perseguitasse coloro che procuravano la sua salute.”*

*servitude*".<sup>23</sup> The fundamentally negative opinion that Junije Restić held of Stefan Nemanja does not waver throughout his account. It resurfaces when he recounts the demise of the Serbian grand župan: "*In the meantime, the grand župan Nemanja, against whom the Republic waged several long wars but with whom it also spent much time in peace – a prince more ambitious than strong, luckier than prudent, timid in adversity, full of arrogance and uncompromising in prosperity, and one whose will to harm never faltered – came to the end of his life and his malevolent reign*".<sup>24</sup>

Ragusan chronography shows greater leniency towards Stefan Prvovenčani, who succeeded Nemanja in 1196. Mavro Orbini noted: "*he was a great friend of the Ragusans, and he always maintained a friendly relationship with them*".<sup>25</sup> Junije Restić initially shares this view: "*Stefan, the elder, retained the title of grand župan and lived in friendship with the Republic without causing it harm*".<sup>26</sup> However, the same chronicler later qualifies this favorable opinion of the grand župan by criticising him and his brother Vukan for having "*harassed Dubrovnik on various occasions regarding religious and territorial disputes*".<sup>27</sup>

Without governmental registers, all other accounts from Ragusan chronography about relations with Serbian sovereigns in the 13<sup>th</sup> century share similar traits. Even King Radoslav, the only Serbian sovereign of the Nemanjić dynasty to have visited Dubrovnik before Stefan Dušan, deserves no more indulgence in Restić's eyes: he is described as "*a haughty, superb prince who despised the faith. However, when he arrived in Dubrovnik, he confirmed to the Ragusans the old privileges and immunities that they had obtained from his predecessors, promising to reinstate them if he succeeded in regaining the throne*".<sup>28</sup> According to Junije Restić, his brother Vladislav,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 60: "*Ma i Ragusei che diligentissimi eran, ed avevano avuto sentor di tal spedizione, misero in pronto un armata di alcune galere e vascelli, e la mandarono con ordine d'attaccare l'armata slava, per batterla e distrugger ne suoi principi, prima che gli Slavi s'assuefacessero alla marina, su la considerazione, che se una volta questa nazione si facesse abile per mare, con la potenza che aveva per terra, tutti i finitimi sarebbero ridotti in servitu.*"

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, 67: "*Intanto il gran giupano Nemagna, col quale la repubblica ebbe diverse e lunghe guerre, ma anche molto tempo stette in pace, principe piu ambizioso che forte, piu fortunato che prudente, pusillanime nell'aversa, pieno d'alterigia ed intrattabile nella prospera fortuna, ed a cui la volonta di nuocer mai manco, fece fine di viver, regnar e far male.*"

<sup>25</sup> *Il Regno de gli Slavi*, 250: "*Il sudetto Stefano giupano era grande amico de Ragusei e visse sempre con loro in pace e essi all'incontro l'amavano e honoravano e spesso mandarono gli ambassadori a presentarlo.*"

<sup>26</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, 67: "*Stefano il primogenito si ritenne il nome di gran giupano e comincio a viver con la repubblica amorevolmente senza far alcuna innovazione...*"

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, 76: "*Questi ancora molestarono lo stato di Ragusa in vari tempi e la causa fu talora per interesse de suffraganei, talora per conto delle terre possedute dalla repubblica, le quali loro pretendevano attenssero al regno di Rassia.*"

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 83: "*Lui era principe altiero, superbo e disprezzator della fede : pero arrivato a Ragusa, confermo gli antichi privilegi ed immunità, che i Ragusei avevano in vari tempi ottenuto dai suoi antecessori, da dover osservar ogni volta che si redintegrasse nel regno.*"

who overthrew him from the throne, “*was an enemy of the Republic and sought to undermine its territory*” from the outset of his reign<sup>29</sup>. The third brother, Stefan Uroš I, who in turn overthrew Vladislav was, according to Restić, “*a prince deeply entrenched in schism, unwilling to uphold the faith, motivated by whims or personal gain, disregarding all obligations*”<sup>30</sup> and “*so capricious that the Ragusans could not expect him to display any consistency, nor to refrain from acting against them at the slightest suspicion*”.<sup>31</sup> When the Ragusans appealed to the Venetians for defence against the king’s repeated attacks, the Venetians instructed the count, their sovereign representative in Dubrovnik, to travel to Serbia. However, the count refused to comply. Junije Restić suggests this was “*because he feared attending a ‘semi-barbaric’ court*”.<sup>32</sup> Later, about another grievance that alienated King Uroš I from the Ragusans, Junije Restić recalls that he was an impious and unjust prince, adding that “*many inhabitants of Rascia, who valued peace and a tranquil life, fled to Ragusa with their families and possessions*”.<sup>33</sup> Recalling the treaty concluded in 1253 between Dubrovnik and the Bulgarian Emperor Michael Asen, creating a military alliance in view of Stefan Uroš’s deposition, Junije Restić paints a sharp portrait of the Serbian sovereign: “*These leagues and alliances had precisely the desired effect on a man remarkable for his ignorance, capricious in his frivolity, suspicious, inconsistent, and cowardly by nature. They forced Uroš to seek peace, and he ensured that ambassadors were sent to him*”.<sup>34</sup>

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Restić’s harsh judgement is all the more surprising given that Radoslav had granted Dubrovnik some very advantageous privileges. It is true that he did it, as an already deposed king, and that these advantages could not become effective until he was restored to the throne of Serbia with the probable help of the Ragusans. Franz. Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica spectantia historiam Serbiae, Bosnae, Ragusii, Viennae* 1858, 19–20; Љубомир Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, Београд 1929, 11–12; *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља и писама Србије, Босне и Дубровника*, књ. 1, 1186–1321, Београд 2011, 129–130; Божидар Ферјанчић, “Одбрана Немањиног наслеђа – Србија постаје краљевина”, in: *Историја српског народа* I, ed. Сима Ћирковић, Београд 1981, 310.

<sup>29</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, 77: “*Essendo morto il sudetto Stefano Monaco, lascio due figlioli, Stefano Urose e Stefano Vladislavo; ma questo, benche minore, e subito si mostro nemico della Repubblica e comincio a rovinare il suo stato.*”

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, 91: “*... un principe, che imbevuto nel scisma, niente curava di servir la fede, ma tutto tirato o dalli proprii caprici, o atento a i proprii vantaggi, calpestava ogni dovere.*”

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 90: “*Ma in Stefano Orossio, re di Rassia era tale la volubilita, che i Ragusei non potevano promettersi fermezza alcuna, e che non si movesse per ogni minimo sospetto.*”

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 90: “*Arrivato il Giorgi per conte a Ragusa li 24 giugno, o fosse paura d’andar ad una corte mezzo barbara...*”

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem* 96: “*... perche lui essendo un principe empio e ingiusto, molti della Rassia ed i meglio stanti, i quali amavano la pace ed il viver quieto si riducevano a Ragusa con le proprie famiglie e facolta.*”

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 93: “*Queste leghe ed unioni fecero appunto quell’effetto che dovevano fare in un uomo superbo per incoltura, volubile per leggerezza di mente, sospettoso, inconstante e pusillanime per natura, mentre ridussero Orossio a cercar la pace, e lui procuro li fossero mandati ambasciatori.*”

The occasional conflicts between Serbian sovereigns and the Ragusan Commune did not end with the conclusion of Stefan Uroš I's reign in 1276. However, from the last third of the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward, our knowledge is no longer based solely on the accounts of chroniclers and the royal charters granted to the Ragusans. The oldest documents from the Ragusan private chancery date back to 1278, and the earliest governmental council registers to 1301. While the heuristic field for historians broadens from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward, the question of whether earlier registers existed remains open. In any case, it is crucial to seek convergence between the content of Ragusan chronicles and the treaties between Serbian sovereigns and the Commune of Dubrovnik during the period preceding the oldest surviving registers of the three councils (1301).

Junije Restić is well aware of the treaty concluded on 27 September 1186 between grand župan Stefan Nemanja and his brothers Miroslav and Stracimir on one side and the Ragusans on the other.<sup>35</sup> He enumerates its clauses in his account, demonstrating to his readers – if proofs were still needed – that his chronicle was founded on a thorough understanding of Serbian diplomatic sources.<sup>36</sup> However, when detailing the specific conditions under which this treaty was prepared and concluded, Restić primarily attributes the initiative to the Serbian grand župan. “*Knowing that his attempts against the Republic were futile and unsuccessful, and seeing no way he could hope to achieve his goal... Grand župan Stefan Nemanja sent his ambassadors to Dubrovnik to seek concord and union with the Ragusans.*”<sup>37</sup> The treaty, concluded on 27 September 1186 between the Serbian Grand župan and the Commune of Dubrovnik, mentions the re-establishment of peace (*pacem fecerunt*) and a mutual acknowledgement of damages inflicted and suffered by both sides, as well as a willingness to return to the status quo without reciprocal compensation.<sup>38</sup> Although the treaty ended hostilities, nothing in its diplomatic content suggests or implies that it resulted from the renunciation or exhaustion of the Serbian grand župan's military strength. Did Junije Restić have access to other now-lost sources that enabled him to assert categorically that the restoration of peace was due to the grand župan's failure

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<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, 61. Јованка Калић “Борбе и тековине великог жупана Стефана Немање” in: *Историја српског народа I*, ed. Сима Ћирковић, Београд 1981, 254.

<sup>36</sup> Стојан Новаковић, *Законски споменици српских држава средњег века*, Београд 1912, 132–133; Јован Радонић, *Дубровачка акта и повеље I/1*, Београд 1934, 7–9; *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља*, 45–48; Ивана Коматина, “Неке особености српско-дубровачких односа у светлу уговора од 27. септембра 1186. године”, *Мешовита грађа* 45 (2024) 9–34.

<sup>37</sup> *Chronica Ragusina*, 61: “*Perciocche, conoscendo il gran giupano Nemagna, che i suoi tentativi contro la repubblica eran vanni e senza frutto, ne vedendo d'onde sperar vedesse a suoi disegni il desiderato fine...furono mandati ambasciatori a Ragusa per dimandar concordia ed unione con i Ragusei.*”

<sup>38</sup> С. Новаковић, *Законски споменици*, 132; Ј. Радонић, *Дубровачка акта и повеље I/1*, 8. Cf. Ненад Фејић, “Један поглед на ратове Дубровника”, *Историјски часопис* 56 (2008) 117–151, 119.

to achieve his primary goal of conquest? He becomes even more vehement towards prince Miroslav, Stefan Nemanja's brother and ally. Regarding the treaty concluded on 17 June 1190 between Prince Miroslav and Dubrovnik, which stipulated that Miroslav would gain the right of asylum, Restić writes – without offering any evidence – that this request stemmed from Stefan Nemanja's defeat at the Battle of Morava against Emperor Isaac II Angelos. *“And since these Slavic princes were uncultured and lacking knowledge of letters or civilised life when fortune favoured them, they were inflated with ignorant pride and could not restrain themselves within the bounds of moderation. When fortune turned against them, they debased themselves into indignity. Miroslav, Nemanja's brother, having forgotten the fury with which he had persecuted the Ragusans and fearing the consequences of this rout, sent ambassadors to ask the Republic to offer him and his men a haven in the city of Dubrovnik should misfortune and unforeseen events force him to retreat.”*<sup>39</sup> The treaty between King Vladislav and the Ragusans concluded at the end of 1234 or the beginning of 1235, also does not explicitly mention past hostilities. However, the king is referred to as *“an enemy of the Republic”* in Junije Restić's chronicle<sup>40</sup>. It discusses the application of the right of asylum should the king and his entourage need to take refuge in Dubrovnik, as well as the commercial privileges granted to Ragusan merchants. Restić also mentions the agreement between King Vladislav and Dubrovnik in his chronicle<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> *Chronica Ragusina*, 63: *“E siccome questi principi slavi erano incolti, senza lettere, ne cognizioni del viver civile, così, nella prospera fortuna gonfi d'una ignorante superbia, non sapevano contenersi tra i limiti della moderazione, all'incontro, negli accidenti aversi s'avvilivano sino all'indegnita. Ora Miroslavo, Fratello di Nemagna dimenticato con quanta rabbia avesse perseguitato i Ragusei, e temendo la conseguenza di questa rotta, mando ...ambasciatori i quali dovessero con ogni aggiustata maniera domandar dalla repubblica sicuro ricovero nella città di Ragusa per Miroslavo e per i suoi, dentro la città di Ragusa, se l'avversa fortuna e gli accidenti portassero, che lui fosse necessitate ritirarsi.”* С. Новаковић, *Законски споменици*, 134–136; *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља*, 55–57. In attributing this treaty to the defeat suffered on the river Morava, Restić also makes a chronological error, as the treaty with Miroslav was concluded in the summer, before the battle between the Serbs and the Byzantines, which took place in the autumn. On Miroslav's rule in Hum, see also: Небојша Порчић, *“Прилог историографским портретима хумског кнеза Мирослава и његових потомака”*, in: *Споменица др Тибора Живковића*, Београд 2016, 205–212.

<sup>40</sup> Although there is no direct mention of hostilities between King Vladislav and Ragusa in the treaty, evidence of mutual violence has been preserved, notably in a complaint from King Vladislav to the Ragusans dating from 1238 and in an apology from the Count of Ragusa to the King dating from the same year. See: F. Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica*, 21; Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, 15–16; *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља*, 149–152; Небојша Порчић, *Документи српских средњовековних владара у дубровачким збиркама: доба Немањића*, Београд 2017, 147–148.

<sup>41</sup> F. Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica*, 22; *Chronica Ragusina*, 77; С. Новаковић, *Законски споменици*, 139–143; Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, 12–14; *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља*, 133–138; Б. Ферјанчић, *“Одбрана Немањиног наслеђа”*, 313.

King Stefan Uroš I, who was judged most harshly among the Nemanjić dynasty by Ragusan chronography, also concluded treaties with Dubrovnik, the first in 1243, upon his accession to the throne, and the second in 1254, after a period of conflicts that led to reconciliation with the Commune. Instead of explicitly stating the previous state of war, these treaties merely reaffirm principles of mutual friendship and loyalty, along with protections for the persons and property of the citizens of both states.<sup>42</sup>

The introduction of a new type of documentary source, specifically the oldest registers of the three Ragusan councils preserved since 1301, does not seem to have diminished the peculiar antinomy between the chroniclers' discourse and the content of the treaties concluded between the Serbian sovereigns and the Commune. The discourse in the chronography remains exclusive and, at times, violent towards the Serbian sovereigns. At the same time, the treaties continue to use carefully measured diplomatic expressions, extolling the desire for good relations and shared security between the king and the citizens of the Commune. Thus, King Milutin, although described by Mavro Orbini as "*a friend of the Ragusans since always, at the instigation of some of his men, enemies of Dubrovnik, declared war on them*".<sup>43</sup> Drawing from Mavro Orbini, Jakov Lukarević is much more critical of King Milutin: "*While Uroš was dwelling on these and similar honourable and praiseworthy deeds, the common enemy of mankind having attacked his noble spirit by handing him over to certain men, more skilled in speaking evil with their tongues than in doing good with their hands, he made war on Ragusa under the pretext of recovering some cities*".<sup>44</sup>

Junije Restić delivers the harshest judgment against King Milutin, accusing him of "*waging a fierce war against the Ragusans and harassing them so relentlessly that the government could not find a remedy for his arrogance. Many citizens considered completely abandoning their homes in Dubrovnik to settle in more peaceful locations in Italy, which were less exposed to attacks from unfaithful and barbaric princes*".<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Sime Ljubić, *Listine o odnosajih izmedju Južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike I*, Zagreb 1868, 59; F. Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica*, 45; *Chronica Ragusina*, 83, 93; С. Новаковић, *Законски споменици*, 147–148, 150–152; Сима Ћирковић "Српске и поморске земље краља Уроша I" in: *Историја српског народа I*, ed. Сима Ћирковић, Београд 1981, 343, 348; Ивана Коматина, *Краљ Стефан Урош I Велики и његов век*, Београд 2021.

<sup>43</sup> *Il Regno de gli Slavi*, 253: "*E il re Milutino...benche fosse stato sempre amico de Rausei, nondimeno per sugestione e malignita d'alcuni suoi, inimici de Rausei, mosse loro guerra.*" On conflicts between king Milutin and the Ragusans prior to 1301 see: Небојша Порчић, "Случај Урса Перклуза", *Историјски часопис* 56 (2008) 371–387.

<sup>44</sup> *Copioso Ristretto*, 38: "*Mentre questo Urosc si tratteneva con queste e simili altre onorate e lodevoli attioni, l'inimico commune del genere humano assali il suo nobil'ingegno: perche dandosi egli in preda d'alcuni huomini, piu a dir male con la lingua, che far bene con la mano, fece guerra a Rausei.*"

<sup>45</sup> *Chronica Ragusina*, 103: "*... sinche il re Orossio mosse alla repubblica una crudelissima guerra e talmente vesso le cose e lo stato de Ragusei, che per la sua prepotenza non si poteva trovar riparo dal governo. E molti dei cittaini totalmente si disponevano ad abandonar il domicilio di Ragusa ed andar abitar luoghi piu quieti in Italia e manco esposti alle vasazioni de principi infidi e barbari.*"

The brief but violent conflict between Dubrovnik and King Milutin concluded with the king granting a charter in August 1302, which outlined the privileges of Ragusan merchants. Although it is the most comprehensive and precise of the royal charters granted by Serbian sovereigns to Dubrovnik up to that point, it makes no direct reference to any military conflict or damage inflicted or suffered beforehand. It does nothing to explain the violent rhetoric aimed at the king by the Ragusan chroniclers.<sup>46</sup> However, the merchants of Ragusa had good reason to complain about the way they were treated by the King, as can be seen from some of his letters concerning the imprisonment of merchants for unpaid debts.<sup>47</sup>

However, neither the harsh words of Ragusan chroniclers against the Serbian sovereign nor the cautious and polished language of the treaty concluded at the end of the conflict – looking forward without mentioning the past – can fully measure the efforts made by the Ragusans to ensure their defence. The true measure of collective efforts, the level of public commitment – primarily economic and military – of an entire communal society, is revealed in the decisions of the three Ragusan councils. For instance, when the Grand Council decided on 6 August 1301 to elect 300 individuals capable of bearing arms to protect the vineyards in the district's territory and placed them under the command of a "*captain of war*", it should be noted that this represented at least one-tenth of Dubrovnik's intra-muros population and certainly more when considering only the city's male population fit for military service.<sup>48</sup> In early August 1301, a committee of three individuals was established to oversee armaments and the city's surveillance.<sup>49</sup> Simultaneously, the Senate decided to "*send scouts wherever necessary to gather information inside and outside Ragusa*".<sup>50</sup> Although the

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<sup>46</sup> F. Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica*, 51–53; Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, 36–37; *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља*, 343–347. Junije Restić, unlike Mavro Orbini, does not explicitly mention the peace concluded after this conflict. Jakov Lukarević does so, somewhat curiously attributing King Milutin's pacifist turn to a vision he allegedly had in a dream of his late brother Dragutin. The latter supposedly urged him to make peace with the Ragusans. According to Sima Ćirković, Lukarević might have committed an anachronism here, confusing the 1301 conflict between King Milutin and the Commune with that of 1317–1318. During the latter conflict his brother had already passed away. М. Орбин, *Краљевство Словена*, comments by Sima Ćirković, 301. See also: Сима Ћирковић, "Унутрашње борбе почетком XIV века", in: *Историја српског народа* I, ed. Сима Ћирковић, Београд 1981, 451; Nebojša Porčić, "Peace negotiations between Serbia and Dubrovnik in 1301–1302: a case study in medieval diplomacy", *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 1 (2013) 115–135; Небојша Порчић & Невен Исаиловић, "Папе, краљеви, моћници, комуне. Западна политика", in: *Свети краљ Милутин : владар на раскршћима светова*, Београд 2022, 159–163, 175, 183.

<sup>47</sup> Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, 37–38; *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља*, 353–354; Н. Порчић, *Документи српских средњовековних владара у дубровачким збиркама*, 187–188.

<sup>48</sup> Josip Gelcich, *Monumenta Ragusina. Libri reformationum* V, Zagreb 1897, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

social and professional categories of those mobilised are not specified, it is evident that it was easier to mobilise city residents than those from the district. The mobilised population directly participated in productive activities (merchants, artisans, and even workers or apprentices in urban workshops). Their exposure to the mortal risks of armed conflict and their absence from economic circuits would abruptly and severely disrupt daily life, likely generating collective anxiety that resonated in the later testimonies of chroniclers. At the end of August 1301, the Grand Council explicitly authorised “*all those who wish to go and defend against the Slavs, by land and sea, to do so at their discretion*”.<sup>51</sup> To complement these measures, which were not solely defensive, the Grand Council decided on September 16 “*to appoint three individuals within the Small Council to wage war on our enemies abroad*.”<sup>52</sup> However, the sacrifices for the war were both military and economic. Not only did the removal of part of the population from its daily activities in the urban space have consequences, but the council registers also reveal measures such as the prohibition of Ragusan presence and trade “*in terris regis Stefani et tota Sclavonia*”, under penalty of a fine of 500 hyperpera (approximately 250 Venetian ducats) and confiscation of property.<sup>53</sup> A compulsory collective loan of 2,000 hyperpera (approximately 1,000 Venetian ducats) was imposed on the wealthiest citizens.<sup>54</sup> Ragusan merchants, therefore, faced a kind of double penalty, as the Commune’s prohibition against trading within the Serbian kingdom subjected those already there to local government reprisals. Many merchants were imprisoned, prompting the Commune to negotiate for their release with the Serbian king’s envoy in Dubrovnik.<sup>55</sup> Beyond the loss of freedom, Ragusan merchants also suffered significant economic losses, taking months to recover. For instance, following a brief period of hostility between King Milutin and the Commune from 1317 to 1318,<sup>56</sup> more than a year later, in 1319, the Grand Council resolved to appoint two ambassadors “*to request the king to make the payment of 3,000 hyperpera to Ragusan merchants as the second instalment for damages and thefts suffered, according to the terms of the treaty concluded between us*”.<sup>57</sup>

A conflict arose between Dubrovnik and King Stefan Dečanski in 1327–1328. This last recorded conflict between the Commune and the Serbian sovereigns is not well known, as the Ragusan council registers from that period have not been preserved.<sup>58</sup> According to the chroniclers, the good intentions evident at the beginning of Stefan Dečanski’s reign were soon contradicted by his actions. Mavro Orbini writes: “*Among*

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, 15.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, 12–13.

<sup>56</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, 106. The Ragusan chronicle is more exhaustive on this war than the documentary sources. See also: Бариша Крекић, “О рату Дубровника и Србије 1327–1328”, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 11 (1968) 193.

<sup>57</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, 110.

<sup>58</sup> Б. Крекић, “О рату Дубровника и Србије”, 193–204.

his other commendable qualities, he treated every merchant he encountered with respect. As a result, many Ragusans chose to remain in his kingdom to participate in trade. However, one day, misled by false information from some dubious individuals he trusted, the king declared war against the Ragusans”.<sup>59</sup> Junije Restić is far harsher, accusing Stefan Dečanski of committing cruelties and extortions against Ragusan merchants in 1325. After recalling the Ragusans’ attempts to gain the king’s favour, the same chronicler refers to his disappearance in even more cutting terms: “In those times, filled with age and insatiability, King Uroš of Rascia died”.<sup>60</sup> The unfavourable remarks of Mavro Orbini and Junije Restić regarding Stefan Dečanski’s attitude towards the Ragusans are corroborated by council registers, even though the preserved entries date to years before the outbreak of armed conflict. For example, in October 1325, the Grand Council decided to send two ambassadors to Venice “to complain and lament about the enormous and unlawful extortions and deprivations carried out against us, which are continually perpetrated and executed by Lord King Uroš and his people, against God, justice, and the peace and treaties established between him and us”.<sup>61</sup>

King, the later Emperor Stefan Dušan, is undoubtedly the most esteemed sovereign of the Nemanjić lineage in Ragusan narrative sources. In the chroniclers’ accounts, none of his qualities are eclipsed by significant flaws, as with all his predecessors. The king did not betray the hopes the Commune had placed in him since his accession to the throne in 1331. He was even the driving force behind the greatest territorial expansion in Dubrovnik’s history, having ceded the Pelješac peninsula to the city in 1333 and the entire coastal region from Dubrovnik to the fortress of Ston. In doing so, he helped shape the boundaries the Commune would maintain until its dissolution.

The anonymous Ragusan Annals and the Annals of Nicolas Ragnina, which later inspired chronicles and histories, attribute more credit to the king’s protovestiar, Nikola Buća, than to the sovereign himself concerning the cession of the Pelješac peninsula.<sup>62</sup> Through the protovestiar’s intercession on behalf of the Ragusans, the Serbian sovereign reportedly granted them this significant favour. However, the anonymous Annals also note that the king granted the Ragusans numerous other privileges, including the acknowledgement of their registers’ contents as authentic within his kingdom, equivalent to documents drafted by his own chancellors.<sup>63</sup> The

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<sup>59</sup> *Il Regno de gli Slavi*, 254–255: “Et fra l’altre sue lodevoli qualità dovunque gli capitava per le mani alcuno mercante, egli lo trattava benissimo. Laonde molti Rausei si trattenevano volentieri e negoziavano nel suo Regno. Ma in un tempo per male informazioni d’alcuni malevoli a quali egli prestava fede entro in Guerra con Rausei...”

<sup>60</sup> *Chronica Ragusina*, 122: “Era già morto il re Orossio di Rascia, pieno di anni e insaziabilità.”

<sup>61</sup> Josip Gelcich, *Monumenta Ragusina. Libri reformationum* I, Zagreb 1879, 181.

<sup>62</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, digessit Speratus Nodilo, Zagrabiae 1883, 35, 225. In both chronicles, the Serbian rulers are presented as “kings of Bosnia”. See: M. Орбин, *Краљевство Словена*, comments by Sima Ćirković, 305.

<sup>63</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, 35.

Annals of Nicolas Ragnina highlight that the following verses were immediately written in memory of King Stefan Dušan and to honour his donation: "*The Isle of Ston of Ragusa was given to us, by the lords of Stefan, emperor of Moesia, may God make him great, and may he always reign in peace*".<sup>64</sup> The anonymous Annals cast a flattering light on Stefan Dušan, emperor of the Serbs and Greeks since 1346, and the Ragusan authorities, who offered hospitality to him and his wife, Helena, in 1350. The Annals of Nicolas Ragnina similarly emphasise the gifts made by the imperial couple to Ragusan religious institutions, with the notable mention of a reciprocal gift of 60 rolls of delicate fabric.<sup>65</sup>

The Ragusan Annals, like those of Nicolas Ragnina, recount an intriguing proposal that Emperor Stefan Dušan allegedly made to the Ragusans following his visit. He purportedly asked the Commune to send him "*20 gentlemen aged 10 to 14 to be raised at his court, to do good for them and their families. The Commune courteously declined, apologising and sending only three gentlemen aged forty and older. In his country, he elevated them to the rank of counts and trusted them more than his own nobles Bosnians*".<sup>66</sup> According to the Annals of Nicolas Ragnina, whose account was supplemented by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ragusan humanist Saro Crijević, the erudition of the Ragusans so impressed Stefan Dušan that, upon his return, he donated precious books to them. These books were to be preserved in the collections of a Ragusan library bearing his name.<sup>67</sup>

Ludovik Crijević Tuberon attributed the donation of the Pelješac peninsula "*by Stevan Nemanja (sic!), known for his piety, to the many services rendered to him by the Ragusans*".<sup>68</sup> Mavro Orbini, likely drawing from the anonymous Ragusan Annals, noted that "*he always lived in friendship with Dubrovnik and confirmed for them the charter by which the Ban Stjepan had previously ceded Ston and Pelješac to them*".<sup>69</sup> When describing Stefan Dušan's visit to Dubrovnik seventeen years later, Orbini again relies on the Ragusan Annals, just as he did for the cession of Pelješac. Since the records of the three councils concerning Stefan Dušan's visit to Dubrovnik have only been partially preserved, Mavro Orbini's account must be treated with

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<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, 226: "*Data nobis insula Stagni Rhagusii dominis Stephano imperante Mysiae quem Deus accrescat et semper in pace quiescat.*"

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, 39, 228. The Anonymous Annals primarily discuss the generous donations made to churches and monasteries within the Commune's territory. However, intriguingly, the lavish reception held in his honour is not mentioned. The visit of the Emperor and Empress is also noted in the Annals of Nicolas Ragnina. See also: Jorjo Tadić, *Promet putnika u starom Dubrovniku*, Dubrovnik 1939, 43–45.

<sup>66</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, 39–40.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, 229; J. Tadić, *Promet putnika*, 46.

<sup>68</sup> V. Rezar, "De origine et incremento", 119.

<sup>69</sup> *Il Regno De Gli Slavi*, 261: "*Con li Rausei sempre visse in amicitia e confermo loro la donazione che il bano Stefano haveva lor fatta di Stagno e Ponta.*" Sima Ćirković believed that Mavro Orbini drew on the ancient Ragusan annals, but made significant changes to them. See: M. Орбин, *Краљевство Словена*, comments by Sima Ćirković, 305.

caution.<sup>70</sup> Between the descriptions of Stefan Dušan's visit to Dubrovnik in 1350 found in the Annals and Mavro Orbini's work, there are significant convergences and two minor discrepancies. These differences suggest that Orbini may have drawn from another source, now lost: first, the emperor's initial reluctance to visit Dubrovnik, which was overcome thanks to the persistent intervention of his protovestiar Nikola Buća, who remained favorable to the Ragusans; and second, the detailed account of the imperial couple's accommodation in the Venetian rector's palace, accompanied by dances and festivities held in their honour, details absent from the Ragusan analysts.<sup>71</sup>

Jakov Lukarević also mentions in his work the two significant events of Stefan Dušan's reign that marked the history of the Commune: the cession of the Pelješac peninsula along with the fortress of Ston in 1333 and the imperial couple's visit in 1350. Lukarević presents an interpretation not found in other narrative sources, including Mavro Orbini, concerning the cession of new territories to Dubrovnik. If proven to be true, this interpretation would have undermined the deep trust that Emperor Stefan Dušan placed in his Ragusan friends. According to Lukarević, the emperor allegedly asked Domanja Bobaljević, a Ragusan canon and secretary to Stjepan Kotromanić, to betray the Bosnian ban, with whom the emperor was then in conflict, by delivering him into the emperor's hands. In return for this betrayal, Stefan Dušan supposedly promised to reward the canon with "*a large part of the Bosnian state*". The canon refused and informed the ban, who, as a token of gratitude to the secretary's hometown, granted Dubrovnik not only Pelješac but also the island of Posrednjica in the Neretva estuary.<sup>72</sup> Stefan Dušan's visit to Dubrovnik offers Jakov Lukarević an opportunity to portray the emperor in a more favorable light than Mavro Orbini. While Orbini describes an emperor hesitant and only persuaded by the insistence of his protovestiar Nikola Buća to enter Dubrovnik unarmed, Lukarević portrays Stefan Dušan as "*magnanimous by nature*", agreeing to the Commune ambassadors' request to enter Ragusa with a reduced entourage and rejecting his barons' suggestion to take the city by force of arms.<sup>73</sup> According to Jakov Lukarević, the reception he received impressed Stefan Dušan to such an extent that "*he himself*

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<sup>70</sup> Ibidem, 307–308. However, the few extracts from the registers of the Ragusan councils that have survived leave no doubt as to the invitation addressed by the Great Council to the emperor, the empress, and their son to visit Dubrovnik. There is also a confirmation of the decision by the Grand Council to present the Empress with a gift, during her visit to the city, as well as of an apology to the Emperor, concerning his request for galleys to continue his journey after the visit. See: Josip Gelcich, *Monumenta Ragusina. Libri reformationum II*, Zagreb 1882, 111, 115.

<sup>71</sup> *Il Regno De Gli Slavi*, 266.

<sup>72</sup> *Copioso Ristretto*, 55. This episode is missing from the Anonymous Annals and those by Nicolas Ragnina. In Mavro Orbini, we find the motif of Domanja Bobaljević's loyalty to the Ban of Bosnia, but according to him, Bobaljević gained from this act of loyalty rather than his home commune.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem, 58: "*Ma l'Imperadore di natura magnanimo, alli prieghi de nostri oratori delibero d'entrare disarmato.*"

*observed and judged that he could not have been received more splendidly, maintained more lavishly, or served more abundantly along with his entire family”.*<sup>74</sup>

Among all accounts of Stefan Dušan’s character, those in Junije Restić’s Ragusan Chronicle are the most favorable towards him. The fact that its author, due to his privileged position, had unrestricted access to various Commune registers, including those of the three governmental councils, adds particular credibility to his account. Similar to his predecessors, Stefan Dušan’s actions captured Junije Restić’s attention on two notable occasions: the donation of the Pelješac peninsula to the Ragusans in 1333 and his visit to Dubrovnik in 1350. As early as 1332, upon their return from the coronation they had attended, the Ragusan ambassadors reportedly spoke, according to Restić, of the “warm welcome” they had received from the new king and assured the communal authorities that they could secure the cession of the Pelješac peninsula if they engaged earnestly in negotiations.<sup>75</sup> The new king “had a favorable opinion of the citizens of Dubrovnik, and he demonstrated it on all occasions”.<sup>76</sup> Observing the goodwill the King of Rascia felt towards the Ragusan nation, “having repeatedly expressed his desire to demonstrate it through action, the Republic decided to verify whether his intentions matched his words”.<sup>77</sup> Once the Ragusans’ acquisition of the Pelješac peninsula was confirmed, some ill-intentioned individuals within the king’s entourage denounced the transaction, claiming that the Ragusans were incapable of protecting the territory from their enemies and the king’s foes. Stefan Dušan hesitated and sent ambassadors to demand the return of his donation. Nevertheless, the Commune’s emissaries dispelled the king’s doubts and retained his full trust.<sup>78</sup> Junije Restić’s Chronicle does not add new elements regarding Stefan Dušan’s visit to Dubrovnik, except for one notable point: instead of reporting a single visit, it mentions two. The first was in 1349, “during which the Republic treated the king (*sic!*) with the honours due to a prince of his stature”,<sup>79</sup> and the second in 1350, when the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibidem, 59: “... dove con tanta leggiadria e pompa era alloggiato, ch’egli stesso giudico e disse che non poteva esser raccolto piu sontuosamente, ne piu riccamente presentato, ne con maggior abbondanza di tutte le cose pasteggiato con tutta la sua famiglia.”

<sup>75</sup> *Chronica Ragusina*, 122.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem, 123. Junije Restić offers in the following passage the best illustration of the causes of this favorable opinion of the king towards the Ragusans: “Per la pace goduta gli ultimi anni della vita del re Orossio e dopo lui a questo tempo, li cittadini di Ragusa avevano respirato, e col mezzo d’un florido commercio per la Slavonia fatto ricchezze grandi, dal che era derivato che si fossero moltiplicati gli abitatori nella citta. Il che produceva maggior bisogno de formenti che per la sterilita del paese non s’avevano. Ma questo difetto era emendato dall’essersi anche moltiplicato l’uso della navigazione con la quale esportando le merci della Slavonia a paesi piu lontani, e riportandone anche le manifatture delli stessi, abbondavano la Bossina e la Rassia, il che era di commodo al paese ed utile grande all’erario del re Stefano. Per la qual cosa questo principe, all’oposto di Orossio, suo padre, aveva in buona opinione li cittadini di Ragusa, e lo dimostrava in ogni occasione.”

<sup>77</sup> Ibidem, 124.

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem, 126.

<sup>79</sup> Ibidem, 132.

Ragusans, taking advantage of Stefan Dušan's proximity, "invited him again to come to Dubrovnik with his son Uroš, where he was received with such splendour that it inspired much goodwill in return".<sup>80</sup> Revisiting the theme of "ill-intentioned barons unfavourable to the Republic" influencing the Serbian sovereign during the transfer of the Pelješac peninsula in 1333, Junije Restić has them whisper in the sovereign's ear during the first visit that "the Republic had not done everything it was obliged to do to show its gratitude for such a great honour as his visit. Seeing only malice in these remarks, the emperor did not waver in his goodwill toward the Republic and confirmed all previous treaties concluded with his predecessors".<sup>81</sup>

Though Junije Restić, like his predecessors in Ragusan chronography, places significant importance on the outward signs of mutual friendship between King and later Emperor Stefan Dušan and Dubrovnik, he more keenly discerns the political and self-interested dimension of this friendship. Indeed, in a global assessment of the relations between Stefan Dušan and his son Uroš with Dubrovnik, Restić writes in his chronicle that during the reigns of these two sovereigns, the Ragusans "had absorbed all of Rascia's trade, to the exclusion of any other nation".<sup>82</sup> Although documentary sources still contain evidence of the violence and damage suffered by Ragusan merchants during his reign, the image of the Serbian sovereign, unlike that of his predecessors, has not suffered as much in narrative sources<sup>83</sup>. Stefan Dušan was more sympathetic to the Ragusans than his predecessors, which certainly left a mark on the collective memory, as recorded by local chroniclers. According to them, relations were smooth expressions of friendship plentiful, and signs of discontent occasional from both sides. This beneficial context for trade in Serbia would drastically change after the death of Stefan Dušan's son Stefan Uroš, as Junije Restić further notes in his chronicle under the year 1371.<sup>84</sup> It is worth noting that a similar assessment of the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibidem. The theory of the emperor's two successive visits to Dubrovnik has not been widely accepted in historiography. For further reading on this subject, J. Tadić, *Promet putnika*, 43–45; Сима Ђирковић & Раде Михаљчић, "Освајања и одолевања: Душанова политика 1346–1355", in: *Историја српског народа I*, ed. Сима Ђирковић, Београд 1981, 550.

<sup>81</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, 132–133. The illustration that the Ragusans' hospitality towards the Serbian sovereign did not compromise their traditional prudence in diplomatic matters is shown by their refusal of the emperor's request to allocate four galleys for attacking certain maritime towns belonging to the Ban of Bosnia.

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem, 153: "Nei tempi del re Stefano e d'Orossio, ultimi della casa di Nemagna, per il buon trattamento fattoli da quei principi avevano assorbito tutto il negozio della Rascia, ad esclusione di ogni altra nazione."

<sup>83</sup> The reiteration of the provisions stipulating that no one, including the sovereign, could deprive the Ragusan merchant of his goods without payment, was both proof of the violence that these merchants suffered on a daily basis and of the sovereign's firm resolve to put an end to it. See: Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма I/1*, 66; Н. Порчић, *Документи српских средњовековних владара у дубровачким збиркама*, 205.

<sup>84</sup> *Chronica Ragusina*, 153: "Ma in questi tempi, perhe qual regno era in disordine per la discordi regnante tra li principali baroni, non si poteva con quiete dai Ragusei mercantare. Et questi

situation, almost identically phrased, appears in a documentary source from the same year. This is found in the instructions given to emissaries at the court of King Louis I of Hungary. They reference the crisis in Ragusan trade with Serbia and direct them to explain to the king the reasons for the shift from land-based trade to maritime trade.<sup>85</sup> This is compelling evidence, if any were needed, that Junije Restić based his chronicle on thorough documentary research.

Contemporary medievalists rightly emphasise Stefan Dušan's goodwill towards the Ragusans, his reluctance to resort to any form of threat or violence against the Commune, and his outright refusal to subjugate it by force of arms.<sup>86</sup> The main reason for this benevolence is to be found in the Serbian sovereign's desire not to upset Venice, which at the time was still Dubrovnik's suzerain power and whose naval support he was seeking for his far-reaching political plans intended to supplant Byzantium. But Stefan Dušan's benevolence may also have reflected the very fact that the role of the Ragusans in importing and exporting the products of mining and other activities from his realm to Mediterranean destinations had far outstripped the contribution of their Venetian rivals.<sup>87</sup> This dimension distinguishes Stefan Dušan from his predecessors. During the reigns of the early Nemanjić dynasty sovereigns, Dubrovnik remained under Venetian control and was tightly integrated into its commercial and maritime commonwealth. Dubrovnik's own network was still under development or had just been completed. From the establishment of mining centres in Serbia during the last third of the 13<sup>th</sup> century – coinciding with the reigns of Kings Uroš I and Milutin – the network of mining concessions and trading posts in Serbia, overseen by Ragusan merchants, positioned Dubrovnik as a vital partner in the Serbian economy.<sup>88</sup> Its maritime network was supported by its own commercial fleet. Among the charters published by the Serbian sovereigns, the one issued by Stefan

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*non potendo star senza negozi, si diedero alla marina piu del consueto, fabbricando vascelli grossi. Estendendo il commercio alli piu lontani paesi, li riuscì con molta facilità d'esser accolti in Egitto ee sommamente accarezzati."*

<sup>85</sup> Јорјо Тадић, *Писма и упутства Дубровачке Републике I*, Београд 1935, 214.

József Gelcich & Lajos Thallóczy, *Diplomatarium relationum Reipublicae Ragusanae cum Regno Hungariae*, Budapest 1887, 48–54: "Anchora volemō et comandemo che habiando complidi li servisi dela vostra comissione debie exponere al nostro signore la condicione della sua citade di Ragusa, chomo non podemo vivere salvo façando la merchadantia, et la maçor parte dela nostra merchadantia fasemo in lo regno de Rassa, et per lo mal stado chi e lo ditto regno di Rassa, et per la division deli baroni, nuy non podemo ni ausamo fare al presente tanta merchadantia, quanta faseamo per li tempi passadi. Et per questa occasione li merchadanti di Ragusa se ha dato a far merchadantia per mare..."

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, С. Ђирковић & Р. Михаљчић, "Освајања и одолевања", 546.

<sup>87</sup> As Bariša Krekić has pointed out, the economic influence of the Ragusan merchants in Serbia has significantly surpassed that of their Venetian rivals. See: Bariša Krekić, "Venetian merchants in the Balkan Hinterland in the Fourteenth Century", in: *Dubrovnik, Italy and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages*, London 1980, XIV, 413–419.

<sup>88</sup> Desanka Kovačević-Kojić, "Dans la Serbie et la Bosnie médiévales", *Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 2 (1960) 248–258.

Dušan in 1349 is exceptional for the detail and precision with which it regulates the situation of Ragusan merchants in his state<sup>89</sup>. However, like under his predecessors, the diplomatic documentation issued by his chancellery regarding Dubrovnik is considerably less informative, regarding the deeper motivations behind Stefan Dušan's policy towards this city.

The last sovereign of the Nemanjić lineage to maintain relations with Dubrovnik, Emperor Uroš, left no narrative testimony in Ragusan sources concerning his attitude towards the Commune. This absence cannot be attributed solely to his weakness, frequently mentioned to the extent that it has become synonymous with his name in collective memory. The policy of conquering former Byzantine territories, undertaken by his father Stefan Dušan, had already distanced the Serbian state from its historical cradle near the Adriatic basin and thus from Dubrovnik. This trend was even more pronounced under his son, whose presence in Dubrovnik's surroundings was represented by a local lord, Vojislav Vojinović, who asserted Uroš's authority to instigate hostilities against the city in 1361.<sup>90</sup>

The comparative analysis of Ragusan narrative and documentary sources provides interesting insights into the perception of the Serbian sovereign in Dubrovnik. The preference for Ragusan documentary sources in critical historiography has long been acknowledged and affirmed in the study of relations between the Commune and the medieval Serbian state. Research in the Dubrovnik archives has revealed a genuine complementarity between the decisions of Ragusan governmental councils and the charters granted by Serbian sovereigns to Dubrovnik. On the one hand, this is formally reflected in a series of military, political, and diplomatic episodes concerning relations with Serbia, as recorded in the registers of the three councils. On the other hand, it is substantively reflected in the economic benefits and fiscal, judicial, and territorial concessions documented in the charters of Serbian sovereigns, most often granted at the Commune's request, beginning with King Milutin's reign and continuing through those of Stefan Dečanski, Stefan Dušan, and Emperor Uroš. However, as previously mentioned, this complementarity can only be definitively established starting with King Milutin, whose reign partially coincides with the earliest preserved documentary sources, such as the first registers of notarial acts and the records of the three governmental councils. Regarding military, political, and diplomatic episodes during the sovereigns preceding Milutin – specifically, Stefan Nemanja, Stefan Prvovenčani, Radoslav, Vladislav, and Uroš I – historians only have access, from the Ragusan side to narrative sources left by chroniclers. With the notable exception of Mavro Orbini's work, Ragusan narrative sources have not undergone critical examination by contemporary medievalists. Certainly, the chronicles of Jakov Lukarević and Junije

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<sup>89</sup> С. Новаковић, *Законски споменици*, 169–172; Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, 59–64; С. Ђирковић & Р. Михаљчић, “Освајања и одолевања”.

<sup>90</sup> С. Новаковић, *Законски споменици* 183–185; Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, 99–101; Раде Михаљчић, “Два царства”, in: *Историја српског народа* I, ed. Сима Ђирковић, Београд 1981, 581.

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Restić, which are most often cited here, explicitly assert that they are based on documentary sources stored in the urban archives, which the authors claim to have consulted. Their chronicles reference both military and diplomatic measures taken by Dubrovnik. Indeed, the relationship between the Commune and Serbian sovereigns revolves around conflicts and reconciliations during all reigns, except those of Stefan Dušan and his son Uroš. However, narrative sources differ from documentary ones by attributing the causes of conflicts to the personal attitudes of Serbian sovereigns, whose character traits they are keen to portray in sharp detail.

In Dubrovnik, documentary sources, such as council registers and charters granted by Serbian sovereigns, predate narrative sources. Therefore, Ragusan chroniclers could use the information provided by these sources. From this foundation, they developed a specific interpretative framework for documentary sources to create narratives they understood would resonate with readers of successive eras, whether immersed in Latin humanism, Baroque imagination, post-Tridentine Catholicism, or communal patriotism heightened by the looming Venetian and Ottoman threat. Indeed, the relationships with the Nemanjić dynasty sovereigns, due to their continuity and vital role in the survival of the Commune, offered an ideal context for applying this interpretative framework. At its centre lay the reigning sovereign's personality, from Stefan Nemanja to Stefan Dušan. The character traits of these rulers, along with their actions and reactions, formed the narrative fabric of the relationship between Dubrovnik and the medieval Serbian state. Therefore, over the centuries, and through narratives based on an authentic documentary corpus, the Ragusan chronicle has established a true urban mythology that celebrates the Commune's resilience in the face of the powerful and unpredictable sovereigns of the Nemanjić dynasty.

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Ненад Фејић

**ОД ИСТОРИЈЕ ДО МИТА: ДОКУМЕНТАРНИ И НАРАТИВНИ ИЗВОРИ О ОДНОСУ  
ДУБРОВНИКА ПРЕМА СРПСКИМ ВЛАДАРИМА ИЗ ДИНАСТИЈЕ НЕМАЊИЋА**

**Резиме**

У огледалу локалних хроничара и историчара, односи Дубровника са Србијом у раздобљу великих жупана, краљева и царева из династије Немањића били су опредељени готово искључиво расположењима владарâ. Српски владари су у дубровачкој хронографији и историографији приказивани као нагле, непредвидљиве и, са изузетком Стефана Душана, Дубровнику ненаклоњене личности. Овако једностран и једноставан приступ навео је аутора да упореди вести о ставовима и поступцима српских владарâ из дубровачких наративних извора са вестима о њиховим ставовима и поступцима из дубровачких и српских документарних извора. Пажња је посвећена изводима из дубровачких *Анонимних анала* и *Анала* Николе Рањине, *Краљевства Словена* Мавра Орбина, *Обимног извода из дубровачких анала* Јакова Лукаревића и *Дубровачке хронике* Јунија Рестића, у којима се помињу ставови и поступци српских владара из династије Немањића према Дубровнику током скоро два столећа. Приказујући дипломатску и војну историју дубровачко-српских односа, посебно ратова, поменути аутори се често ослањају на старије документарне изворе настале у дубровачкој и српској средини, које углавном добро познају. Зато се природно поставља питање зашто у дубровачким наративним изворима долази до отклона, односно зашто се поступци владара тумаче више њиховим тренутним стањима и расположењима, него разлозима узајамних интересâ на које ипак јасно указују савремени документарни извори, посебно повеље српских владара Дубровнику. Аутор овог рада тумачи поменути отклон распоном од више од два столећа колико је протекло од времена о којем су хроничари писали до времена у којем су живели и стварали. У том раздобљу настајале су и јачале нове матрице историјског дискурса, под утицајем књижевних узора дубровачког барока, борбене пост-тридентске контрареформације и комуналног патриотизма, у околностима у којима се Дубровник суочавао са османском плимом и сталном млетачком опасношћу. Полазећи од документарних извора, дубровачки хроничари су се од њих постепено удаљавали и градили један нови дискурс у коме је објективност уступала место својеврсној митској интерпретацији односâ између града и средњовековне српске државе. У тој интерпретацији, односи су почивали на жилавом и борбеном отпору дубровачке комуне наглости и непредвидљивости српских владара.