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Barisa Krekic. *Dubrovnik: A Mediterranean Urban Society, 1300-1600.* Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 1997. xviii + 360 pp. \$99.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-86078-631-3.

Kiril Petkov. *Infidels, Turks, and Women: The South Slavs in the German Mind, ca. 1400-1600.* New York: Peter Lang, 1997. 335 pp. \$57.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8204-3259-5.

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Balkan Slavs in the Early Modern Period: Different Perspectives, Different Approaches

There is little in common between these two works except the chronological span. Although they seemingly deal with the same region (the Balkans) and the same extended ethno/linguistic group (the Slavs of the Balkans), their focus of attention is far apart. In one case, the object of study is the city-republic of Dubrovnik; in the other, although the South Slavs appear in the title, it is in fact the Orthodox Slavs that are dealt with, thus preempting what little common ground is left. More importantly, these are two completely different approaches to history: one, in the best traditions of critical empirical historiography as it was developed in the nineteenth century, focuses primarily on original archival research; the other, inspired by the new developments in the humanities, and informed by social theory, seeks to reassess existing material. That in itself is legitimate (and maybe the only ground for comparison.

The eighteen studies of Professor Krekic's collection were written over the span of a decade (1984-1995) in English, French, and Italian. Following the purpose of *Variorum*, to reprint article-length works of a single author around a unifying theme, the volume fulfills its task admirably. It entirely avoids the impression left by so many *Variorum* publications: that of an auto-festschrift. It not only presents a number of studies that naturally belong together, but it has added an introduction which stands as an original contribution on its own: a historical survey of works on Dubrovnik produced over a quarter century,

between 1971 and 1996.

One of the best connoisseurs of the rich Ragusan archives, which boast a systematic collection from 1278 onward (with documentation going back to the early eleventh century), Barisa Krekic has worked in practically all four areas that he delineates for the study of medieval and Renaissance Dubrovnik: general surveys, international relations, internal history, and the publication of documents.[1] This very useful and generous survey has its natural focus on the works of Yugoslav historians, but it covers also Italian, American and Russian authors. It would have been a good addition to include also the work of Bulgarian historians who have contributed much on one of the major aspects of Dubrovnik's international relations, the ones with its Balkan hinterland.[2]

Krekic's own contributions to this volume fall under the rubrics of internal and international relations, and they are accordingly grouped under two titles: "Dubrovnik's Internal Life" and "Dubrovnik and the Mediterranean World"; (all eighteen studies are hereafter referred to in Roman numerals). Dubrovnik's favorable geographic situation secured it the primary intermediary role between the continent and the sea, between the western and the eastern Mediterranean, between the world of Latin Christianity and its Orthodox hinterland, as well as the world of Ottoman Islam. In attempting to assess the unique features of Dubrovnik

compared to the other Dalmatian cities and the hinterland, Krekic pays special attention to the role of the Ragusan patriciate as the motor behind the city's autonomy. Having acquired their strength through commerce, not from landowning, the patricians of Dubrovnik became rich earlier than those in other Dalmatian cities, and this helped them withstand much more effectively Venetian pressure. Altogether, while all Dalmatian cities enjoyed some elements of city autonomy, Dubrovnik was the only one which steadily increased its autonomy since the eleventh century, and after 1358 became a virtually independent city-republic (II, p. 206).

The correlation between political and economic power is the theme of another study focused on the Ragusan patriciate. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the patriciate comprised practically all economically powerful families. But from the mid-fourteenth century on it closed its ranks, and the richest plebeians were totally excluded from the political process. On the other hand, a fine prosopographical analysis of the main patrician families, based on the series *Reformationes*, *Consilium Majus*, *Consilium Minus*, *Consilium Rogatorium* of the Historical Archive of Dubrovnik (HAD, Historijski Arhiv u Dubrovniku), shows that while power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the ten most powerful families, they were not all necessarily the richest. In fact, the correlation between political influence and economic power was more pronounced within the ranks of the plebeians, than among the patricians. The overall conclusion of Krekic is that, while economic power played an important role, it was the "human element, the personal ability of certain individuals" (I, p. 257) which secured their position in the political hierarchy of the city. This sounds somewhat naive, or at best trivial. After all, only desperate vulgar economic determinism would assert otherwise. What this could indicate is not mere human ability, but a degree of professionalization among the patrician elite.

Several studies are dedicated to aspects of daily life in the city and the response of the Ragusan patricians: the attitudes toward labor, the poor, children, and the elderly compare Dubrovnik very favorably to Florence and other Mediterranean and European cities. In its professed and effected need to protect the textile workers and their rights, the city was quite unique in the sixteenth century world (V). On the other hand, in its attitudes toward homosexuality, this *abominandum crimen*, Dubrovnik was not very different from its contemporary counterparts. Krekic interprets convincingly the harsh decrees and punishments against homosexuals in the framework of

conservative responses to the intensive process of urbanization and its accompanying phenomena, which threatened the established or perceived security of the old ways (VII).

One aspect of this process of urbanization was intensive migration from the Balkan hinterland into Dubrovnik, whence part of this population moved on into Italy; thus, in the apt definition of Krekic Dubrovnik was both "pole of attraction and point of transition" (XVII). The largest influx came in time of famines, which periodically swept the countryside. Another component of Balkan migrations was the export of slaves from the Balkans to or via Dubrovnik to Italy. Krekic convincingly refutes the long-standing interpretation that slavery had been abolished in Ragusa in 1416. He shows, instead, that only some geographic limitations affecting the immediate Bosnian hinterland were imposed, but the Levant, Black Sea, and African slave trade was alive and flourishing throughout the whole fifteenth century (IV).

The intensive demographic growth in the fifteenth century was not accompanied by a relevant physical enlargement of the city, and the consequent population density went hand in hand with an increased danger of fires, of which the conflagration of 1463 was the most devastating (VI). Still, in this respect Dubrovnik was not much different from other contemporary European cities. In a commercial and maritime city, used to the precarious balance between the Latin, Orthodox, and Muslim world, as well as different additional Christian heresies, there existed experience in treating diverse ethnic and religious communities, and the Jews profited from these attitudes. Without necessarily embellishing the condition of the Jews, or underestimating existing conflicts, Dubrovnik compared favorably to other places in its treatment of this group.

Throughout its history, Ragusa was the great rival of the other master of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, Venice. This rivalry, however, had a high degree of complementarity, and Krekic explores Dubrovnik's role in the navigation of the Venetian *mudae* (XII), Ragusan presence in the Levant (XVI), and the rise and decline of its maritime power. The Ragusan fleet reached the height of its expansion between 1540 and 1585, after which it began to decline and lost its predominance with the final eclipse of the city in the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake of 1667 (XV). Venetians were living in Ragusa both before and after the period of Venetian sovereignty (1205-1358), and they held considerable real estate. But in the second half of the fourteenth century there was a great

increase in Ragusan real estate ownership in Venice, to be explained by the economic flourishing of Dubrovnik in this period (XI).

Most remarkable was the high degree of correlation between the fortunes of Ragusa and the Ottoman empire. During its Venetian period, Dubrovnik had already managed to amass considerable wealth, mostly because of the profitable mining industry (silver, copper, iron, lead) in its Serbian and Bosnian hinterland. After it set on its independent path, its position was especially precarious since it coincided with Ottoman expansion in the Balkans. However, the remarkable maneuverability of its experienced elites secured Dubrovnik the best possible arrangement. Besides, the establishment of the *pax ottomana*, the creation of a unified and politically stable zone, seems to have had a favorable effect on Ragusan commerce, both at land and at sea (XIII). In fact, Dubrovnik's decline is intimately related to the beginning of Ottoman decline after the end of the sixteenth century (XIV).

Dubrovnik's heyday went hand in hand with an exceptional intellectual development which made it "the torch-bearer of the European Renaissance on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea" (IX, 151). Schools, libraries, the circulation of books, the preservation of documents, and measures against illiteracy were the indications of this intellectual life. Yet Krekic is quick to point out that illiteracy was persistent and pervasive, and even though it was a problem for commercial city-states, in this period it was compensated with education "through the eyes and ears" (VIII, 229). There were four languages operative in Dubrovnik: Latin for official documentation; Old Ragusan, a Romance language of Latin origin which became increasingly rare by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; Italian as the language of trade; and Slavic which became the most widespread of all. The slavization of Dubrovnik, completed by the end of the fifteenth century, saw also the gradual and precarious entry of the Slavic language into legal and other transactions alongside Latin.

Krekic takes issue with Francesco Petrarca, who in the fourteenth century wrote in a letter to a friend that "we have the sea in common, but the shores are opposite, the souls are diverse, the teachings are different, the language and customs totally dissimilar. As the Alps [keep us separated] from the Germans and the French, and the tempestuous Mediterranean from the Africans, so the Adriatic Gulf keeps us separated from the Dalmatians and the Pannonians." Instead, Krekic believes

that "the Slavization of the cities on the eastern coast of the Adriatic and their close and constant links with Italy produced not just an encounter, but truly a blending of the two cultures. Thus a specific urban mentality took shape in those cities, whose population was open to both cultures and where both cultures were easily accessible" (XVIII, p. 332).

It is here that Kiril Petkov picks up. He is exploring not the point of contact which leads to symbiosis, but the contact that serves for constructing alterity. Defined in his own words, his study "is a book about being different, about not being German, as seen through the eyes of Germans; yet, at the same time, not being a total stranger either. It is an investigation of the basic ideas, values, concepts, prejudices, and mental stereotypes which the average literate Renaissance German-speaker deployed when thinking about the Balkans" (p. 27). He premises his study first on the notion of textual attitude, the specific way to conceive of foreign people, and specifically the interaction between textual attitude and new information, i.e. "the nature and mechanism of reconciling tradition and innovation" (p. 30). His second premise is the basic continuity of European culture since the late medieval and early modern period, i.e. the period, according to him, of the gradual beginning of modern states and nations. It is this continuity which ensures the perpetuation of attitudes, perceptions and images of the "European other" (p. 17).

It has to be said from the outset that this is a truly pioneering work: it is the first for the southeast European region in the time period covered, although it builds on an already existing respectable, if still small and growing, literature.[3] At the same time, it is a contribution as much to the new field of "imagology," as well as to works on nationalism proper. It sheds light "both on the image and the projecting mind" (p. 261) and thus adds to our understanding of the shaping of German identity itself.

Petkov is aware that his categories of choice need some justification. Is it proper to single out a specific German perspective in light of the considerable number of translated works contributing to the formation of a German view? How legitimate is the notion of collective imagination? What is the choice of representative sources? These are questions which the author, at least in the mind of this reviewer, has convincingly argued. Less felicitous is the use of the notion of "South Slavs." Petkov confines it to the "Orthodox core," arguing that the Catholic Balkan Slavs "belonged to Latin Christianity which thus ensured them a position in the German

mind not much different from that of the Central European Slavs, Bohemians and Poles” (p. 20). This caused the Germans, under certain circumstances, to neglect their otherness, or to make them only relatively “other,” and to look at them as assimilable to the other imperial nations and even to the German nation.

But there is an anachronism here, if not an oversimplification. While this is certainly the case today (and for reasons very different from religion but using its rhetoric), it would not be difficult to demonstrate that it was not such a straightforward division in the past. Turning only one page back in history, the so called “cultural continuity” of viewing Catholic Slavs as less “other” did not prevent Germans from exterminating Catholic Poles, while arguing for the Turanian origins of their Orthodox and Slavic Bulgarian allies. In a way, Petkov’s project is teleological: it seeks to explain the roots of today’s divisions. This is a perfectly understandable and valid motivation but, precisely because he does not (and should not be expected to) take the narrative down to the present, he ought to have been doubly cautious against committing anachronistic errors.

While South Slavs today are an operative (though murky) notion, and looking at the roots of today’s attitudes toward the Orthodox Slavs does demonstrate the existence of a textual attitude, one shouldn’t forget that the concept “South Slavic” is a philological category only of the latter nineteenth century, and the notion of *Slavia Orthodoxa* is a scholarly concept only of the twentieth century. Besides, for all the splendid examples and first-class analysis, what does not convincingly follow is: a) that Orthodox Slavs were treated as a sufficiently undifferentiated and homogeneous whole, and b) that in the late medieval and early modern period they were really seen and treated sufficiently separately from the other Balkan Orthodox populations: Greeks, Vlachs, Moldovans, etc. The author’s interest in attitudinal continuities toward the Orthodox Slavs is legitimate enough and does not need the retrospective reification of a later category.

The argument is developed in five chapters, and begins with an analysis of the late crusading attitudes toward the Orthodox of the Balkans, who were seen as “heretics,” “pagans,” and “unbelievers,” (“in heidenschaft”), no lesser enemies to Catholicism than the Muslim Ottomans (ch. 1). Part of this was understandable, when taking into account that often Balkan rulers fought as Ottoman vassals or allies like, for example, Stephan Lazarevich, who, with his 5,000 Serbian troops, won the

day for Bayezid I at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396. Most of the accounts, however, emphasize the transitional status of the Balkan population: they live between Hungary and the pagans, i.e. the Ottoman Turks (“zwischen ungeren und den heiden”), and are half-pagan themselves (“schiefer halber heiden”) (p. 50).

A fine analysis of Ulrich von Richental’s “Chronicle of the Council of Constance” written in the 1430s, illustrates the point. In this work, literary geography subordinated topographical information to religious denomination. The world consisted of three continents. Europe comprised the lands from the White Russians to the Scots, and from Spain to the lands of the Roman crown; Cyprus was also part of it. Asia included Tartary, India, Arabia, Ethiopia, the Holy Lands and the Near East; Bulgaria was considered its part. The rest of the Balkans was not only represented by Africa, but Africa itself was confined to the Balkans. “Africa is Greece, and has two empires in it: Constantinople and Athens”; it also included Wallachia and Serbia. The reason for this attribution was not necessarily geographic ignorance but the idea that Africa, which for a fifteenth century western European stood for “pagan,” “infidel,” and “savage,” described the Balkans, with their complex denominational mixtures. There were additional confusions: the people of the King of Bosnia came from Europe, whereas the people of the Duke of Bosnia in Turkey came from Africa. “In a word, the confused fluid situation in the Balkans, with its maze of double vassalages, frequent changing of political and religious allegiances, and gradually becoming Ottoman, put its stamp on Ulrich’s perception of the region” (p. 55-58).

Around 1500, the longstanding tradition from the ninth century on, according to which the Catholics, and the Germans in particular, had viewed themselves as the true Christians against the schismatic and pagan Orthodox, began to weaken. This was triggered by the influx of the “true” infidels, the Muslim Ottomans, and led to a transformation of perceptions that shaped two opposing types of attitudes: one tended to assimilate the Orthodox into the new infidels, thus regarding them as “Turks” (ch. 2); the other led to their readmission as Christians in captivity (ch. 4). The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was a crucial turning point, but so was the impact of the Reformation. The collapse of the internal homogeneity of Catholicism, and with it the notion of the one good Christian, opened the way for an easier acceptance of the Orthodox as still other Christians. A telling episode in this respect is the shortlived plan to convert the Orthodox people, and among them the South Slavs, to the Lutheran

doctrine, especially in the circle of Philipp Melanchton, Hans Ungnad and Primus Trubar in the 1550s and 1560s (pp. 190-197).

All this left its imprint on the concept of Europe, which in this period began to slowly supplant the notion of Christianity (ch. 5). “Christiani: vide Europai” was the entry in Abraham Ortelius’s 1578 *Thesaurus Geographicus*. Ortelius’s maps show the Balkans vacillating between Europe and the Orient. In the text, their belonging to Europe was never questioned on geographical grounds, but it was more problematic in political terms because of the Ottoman conquest.

The excellent review of German Renaissance map production from Andreas Walspurger to Ortelius shows, first, the strong political commitment of cartographers. It next points to a differentiating treatment of Catholic and Orthodox South Slavs, where the first were covered in meticulously detailed maps, while the second had to wait until the late eighteenth, and especially the nineteenth century for similar coverage. Next, it shows an increased interest in the revival of classical toponymy in the age of humanism.[4] This went hand in hand with the increased interest, indeed, obsession about origins.

Humanistic anthropology was based on the complete identification of the ancient and contemporary peoples of Europe. The roots of the Balkan people, “sanctioned by their remote and honorable ancient past, established an unquestionable Europeanness” and therefore the great humanist Ulrich von Hutten in his *Exhortation* could assimilate the Balkan peoples as heirs to the ancient Thracian tribes to the Germans, and oppose them to the alien Ottoman Orientals (p. 239). Throughout the fifteenth century, a theory about the common roots of Slavs and German Vandals was revived as the “Slavo-Vandal” theory, and exercised a powerful influence on German minds. Successive studies linked first the Dalmatians, then the Bulgarians, and then other South Slavs to “Germanic” roots. Solomon Schweiger, the Tuebingen theologian, wrote that “Serbians, Bulgarians, Rascians, have their origins in the ancient German tribes of Daci, or ‘Danubians,’ and Daki, or Danes. The ancient Romans had called them Gethae after Goto or Geta, companions of Tuyscon, the grandfather of all Germans” (p. 256). This, as Petkov convincingly demonstrates, accompanied the inclination of the most distinguished intellectuals of German-speaking Europe “to regard the whole of the Slavic world as a legitimate province of the Holy Roman Empire” (pp. 250-251).

In what appears to me to be the strongest chapter in

this book, Petkov offers an outstanding analysis on the gendering of the subjugated Slavs of the Ottoman Empire (ch. 3). There was a tradition of looking down on peasant societies as womanized societies and, on top of it, conquered nations were perceived as servile, unwarlike, and effeminate. Martin Luther himself endorsed this gendered perception in his last tract on Ottoman matters, and thus secured its broad reception (p. 131).

Likewise, in his extremely popular universal cosmography (1544), Sebastian Muenster treated the Slavs as possessing extratemporal traits. Totally disregarding the historical record, he described the South Slavs as always having been ruled by foreign powers. Accordingly, instead of illustrating his text with the usual maps, coats of arms or other concrete drawings that he used for his other entries, Muenster chose as an illustration for his subchapter on Bulgaria the image of a stereotypical woman which could serve as the representation of any “subservient, middle class housewife” (p. 123). It would be fascinating to trace the shift from this gendered, effeminate depiction of the Balkans to the no less gendered but clearly male image of the twentieth century, a trope I pointed out but have not sufficiently elaborated on in my own work.[5]

It is because the subject is so captivating, the primary material so completely absorbing, and there is such a good mind working on it that one would have wished the prose could be more careful, tighter and more disciplined. Many of the drawbacks could have been alleviated with good editing. A good editor would have also insisted on a bibliography and a more elaborate index. Still, this is a praiseworthy endeavor in all respects.

As pointed out at the outset, there is hardly any valid point of comparison between the two works under review. They use very different lenses to look at their subject matter. While one work reconstructs a past based on the written traces left by a sophisticated maritime community of Catholic Slavs in the Balkans, the other deconstructs a series of images about the Orthodox Slavs of the Balkans, left by outsiders, in this particular case Germans, many of whom were not even immediate observers. The two approaches bear the characteristics of the conventions (or historiographical traditions) in which they steeped, with all their respective advantages and drawbacks. One work is driven mostly by the questions that an archive can answer. In this, it is admirably solid, precise, and reliable. At the same time, by not even posing the questions which the source material cannot immediately answer, there are missed opportuni-

ties for more profound explanations and broader comparative pictures. It is also an approach where the persona of the historian is entirely submerged behind the objectivist prose, something which is arguably not merely a matter of philosophy but also of temperament.

The other work drives the sources toward the questions which are bothering the author. In this, it is admirably subtle, innovative, and gratifying. It also clearly positions the author in his complex web of intellectual and emotional motivations. At the same time, by asking broad and difficult questions, and employing insights from neighboring disciplines, such an approach always risks occasional overgeneralizations or questionable categories.

In the end, what matters most is the quality of the practitioner. For this reviewer, demonstrating the possibility not simply of peaceful, but of fruitful, coexistence between two totally different approaches, each having its appropriate place, made the attempt at comparison worthwhile.

Notes

[1]. Barisa Krekic, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th Centuries: A City between East and West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972); idem, *Dubrovnik, Italy and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980); idem, *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant au Moyen Age* (Paris-La Haye: Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1961); idem, *Dubrovnik i Levant (1280-1460)* (Beograd: SANU, 1975); idem, *Dubrovnik, Italy and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980).

[2]. While several monographs have been published in Bulgarian, mentioned here are only a few ar-

ticles that have appeared in French: Joanna Spisarevska, "De l'activite des associations commerciales de Raguse (Dubrovnik) dans les terres bulgares aux XVe et XVIe siecle," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 2 (1974); idem, "Le commerce ragusain envisage comme un facteur du developpement economique des regions bulgares sous la domination ottomane (XVe-XVIe s.)," *Balkanica*, Beograd, 6, 1975; idem, "Sur le probleme de la place et du role reserves aux bulgares dans le commerce ragusain," *Etudes historiques* 8 (1978); Ekaterina Veceva, "Les associations commerciales des habitants de Dubrovnik dans les terres bulgares durant les XVIe-XVIIe siecles (structures et organisation)," *Etudes historiques* 9 (1979).

[3]. For the early modern period, see in particular Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters Between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Roger Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[4]. For comparison, see Frank Lestingrant, *Mapping the Renaissance World: The Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[5]. Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) [reviewed on HABSBURG: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?~path=1749878161715>].

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