

Republic of Ragusium (Dubrovnik) between 7th and 19th Century

(from Chronology Of Dubrovnik by J.Lucic)

7th to 9th Century

Around 614, groups of refugees from Epidaurum and Salona, established a settlement on the island of Ragusium.

Before their arrival small communities of Illyrians and Romans had lived there.

Geographically and politically the town was a part of Dalmatia, which at that time was under the Byzantine Empire.

Around 667, the first time the name of the town was mentioned – “Epidaurum id est Ragusium” (Epidaurum is today Ragusium) - by an anonymous cosmographer from Ravenna.

The people of Ragusium inhabited the tiny island entirely, and surrounded themselves with a wall. In those days Ragusium governed the whole of the surrounding area, which was called Astartea.

In 866, Saracens attacked Ragusium from the sea but the town held out against a 15-month siege. When, at the request of the Ragusium inhabitants, the Byzantine Emperor sent his ships to help, the Saracens withdrew.

10th to 11th Century

In 972, St.Blasius becomes patron saint.

Around 992, on his way to Croatia, the Macedonian Emperor, Samuilo, passed by Ragusium and on that occasion burned and devastated the town.

The people of Ragusium filled in the canal between the inhabited island and the mainland and the whole area was encircled with a wall.

In 1000, The Venetian Duke, captured the whole of the Croatian Adriatic coast and Ragusium officially recognized the Duke's rule.

In 1081, Ragusium, together with Croat and Norman naval forces, took part in the naval battle at Durazzo against Byzantine and Venetian fleets.

Ragusium recognized the sovereignty of the Normans. The assistance given to the Normans during the 1081-1085 war enabled them to penetrate the markets of southern Italy, Apulia and Sicily. In centuries to come this area became one of the main trading spheres for the town and a springboard for trade and maritime business in the Mediterranean.

12th to 13th Century

In 1148, Ragusium contracted an agreement with the town of Molfetta. This agreement, which was the first known trade agreement, gave both towns the freedom to trade without the payment of port fees. Henceforth Ragusium developed into a big maritime and trading center on the coast; the town became a mediator for trade between inland areas and western lands overseas.

In 1167, the Byzantine Emperor Comnenus restored the authority of Byzantium in Croatia and Dalmatia, which had been lost during the time of the Croatian King Kresimir IV.

In 1169, Ragusium signed a trading agreement with Pisa. With this agreement Ragusium opened up commercial routes, enjoying the same privileges as Pisa throughout the Levant and Constantinople and the areas from Syria to Gibraltar.

In 1181, the first mention is made of the Ragusium Commune (communitas ragusina). In the course of time this medieval commune became a city-state.

In 1184, Ragusium defeated the navy of Raska, after the threat of invasion by sea. Because of the defeat, Raska attacked Ragusium from inland. Because of the threat of an attack from the rulers of Raska, Ragusium again accepted the protection of the Normans.

In 1189, Kulin Ban allowed the people of Dubrovnik the liberty of trading in Bosnia without the payment of taxes. In return they gave him whatever they thought appropriate. In the agreement the Croatian name, Dubrovnik, appeared for the first time.

In 1192, Dubrovnik shook off the sovereignty of the Normans and returned to the Byzantine Empire. As an incentive, they received from Emperor Angelus a special Charter. The Charter gave Dubrovnik the right to trade freely in the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria, and in return they were bound not to form any alliance directed against the Byzantine Empire.

During the fourth Crusade (1204) Crusaders took possession of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire ceased for a time to exist. The so-called Latin Empire (1202-1261) was formed and with the fall of Constantinople the Byzantine sovereignty over Dubrovnik ceased forever.

In 1232, Venice forced Dubrovnik once again to bow to its authority and with an agreement forced restrictions on navigation and trade.

In 1272, at a meeting of the townsfolk a statute was announced and Dubrovnik received her own fundamental law. The statute, by various decrees and supplements, codified juridical norms referring to the internal and external life of the community, administration, inheritance and other rights, trade, maritime law, crafts, urban regulations for the development of the town, sewage and so on. The statute was one of the oldest on the Adriatic and consisted of 8 books.

In 1296, a huge fire broke out which devastated a large part of the town and outskirts, after which a detailed urbanistic plan was developed inside the walls. The main contours of this plan have been preserved until today.

14th to 15th Century

In 1337, an official mint started to operate in which the first "dinar" (gros) was minted. Until the year 1803 Dubrovnik minted her own currency.

In 1345, Dubrovnik extended her territory by including under her rule the island of Meleda.

In 1348, the "Black Death" struck down 110 members of the Great Council and 7,000 townsfolk. The Plague re-occurred in 1357, 1366, 1371, 1374 and 1391.

In 1358, Louis I, The Croatian-Hungarian King, compelled Venice through an Armistice in Zara to withdraw from the eastern coast of the Adriatic. Dubrovnik broke away from the sovereignty of Venice.

Dubrovnik became part of the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, where it stayed until the year 1526. Dubrovnik was allowed to trade with Venice and Serbia, even when the King was at war with them.

In 1377, Dubrovnik was the first port on the east coast of the Adriatic to build a lazaretto and to introduce quarantine for ships and passengers.

In 1390, the first Dubrovnik Consul was installed in one of the sea ports at Syracuse on the island of Sicily.

In 1406, the last 200 wooden houses in the town were demolished, and Dubrovnik became “the white town”, built of stone.

In 1416, Dubrovnik abolished slave trading.

In 1420, the government founded the pharmacy, which exists to the present day at Placa.

In 1430, the people of Dubrovnik acquired a new privilege from the Sultan, which allowed them to trade on the Balkans and the whole of the Turkish territory.

In 1435, Dubrovnik opened its first public school - a kind of classical grammar school.

From 1436 to 1438, Dubrovnik acquired its first public waterworks and fountain built by Onofrio de la Cava.

Around 1450, Dubrovnik had a large number of Consulates throughout the Mediterranean. In particular in the towns and ports of Ancona, Barletta, Manfredonia, Siracusa, Trani, Crotona, Bari, Pesaro, Ortona and towards the end of the century in the ports, Naples, Polignano, Termoli, Augusta, Trapani, Vieste, Catania, Molfetta, Malta, Marseille and so on.

In 1465, the impressive Minceta tower was finished. The original Minceta tower had been built in 1319.

In 1497, Dubrovnik is granted the privilege of trading in France.

At the end of 15th century, the town of Dubrovnik had 5000-6000 inhabitants and together with the rest of its territory 20,000-25,000.

16th to 17th Century

In 1507, the Spanish King Ferdinand reassured the people of Dubrovnik that they could keep all the old privileges gained in the Kingdom of Naples. With the protection of the Spanish King, at that time the mightiest ruler in the West, the inhabitants of Dubrovnik were able to carry on uninterrupted trade and navigation over the whole of the middle and western Mediterranean, and to develop their trade and seafaring outside that area.

After the battle at Mohac (1526), in which the Croatian-Hungarian King Louis II was killed, and with the end of the Croatian-Hungarian alliance, the people of Dubrovnik “via facti” recognized the sovereignty of the Turkish Sultan, under whose formal protection they remained until the end of their own state. The Turkish rulers allowed Dubrovnik merchants freedom to trade in their enormous Empire, in which a unique system of insurance and customs regulations existed. As Turkey developed and territorially expanded, so Dubrovnik land trading grew.

Between 1538 and 1540, the first war of the Holy League (Spain, Venice, Austria, and the Pope) took place against Turkey. Venice attempted to involve Dubrovnik in the war on the side of the

League, but without success. During the war Dubrovnik trade grew to three or four times the size it had been in times of peace. As a neutral state, Dubrovnik traded with both sides.

In 1539, the tower of Revelin was built.

In 1568, a Committee of Five was set up for handling maritime insurance (*ordo super assicuratoribus*). This was one of the first statutes on maritime insurance in the Mediterranean and the world.

In 1571, with all her persuasive powers Venice tried to involve Dubrovnik in the war against Turkey in order to deprive the town of its profitable trading on the mainland. Venice proposed that soldiers from the League should occupy Dubrovnik before the Turks did. With the help of their great diplomat Gundulic and the support of the Pope and the Spanish King Dubrovnik succeeded in withstanding all intrigues. Furthermore, they procured a guarantee from the members of the Holy League to recognize the unity of Dubrovnik territory.

In 1588, Dubrovnik ships joined the "Invincible Armada" of the Spanish King Philip II in a raid on England, hoping to be victorious and in this way to extend their trade across the Atlantic. When the attempt failed, England began to cause problems for the people of Dubrovnik in retaliation for their unfriendly attitude, and eventually pushed all Dubrovnik traders off the island.

By the end of 16th century, Dubrovnik owned more ships than ever before.

The Merchant Navy consisted of 170-200 large ships. Apart from these ships, which sailed all over the world, Dubrovnik had a large number of smaller coastal vessels for navigation and seafaring within the Adriatic. The whole of the Merchant Navy had in those days around 5,000 sailors. At the same time, in the 16th century, Dubrovnik trade reached its highest point. Dubrovnik had 50 Consulates in the Mediterranean; 36 in Italy, 3 in French ports, 4 in Spanish ports, 6 in Turkish ports and one on Malta.

In 1667, a terrible earthquake demolished Dubrovnik. What did the earthquake not flatten was consumed by fire. Over 4,000 citizens were left under the ruins. Between 2,000 and 3,000 people survived. Buildings, manuscripts, objects of art and other priceless material and cultural articles perished.

Dubrovnik recovered thanks to the trade which was still carried on by the ships anchored in foreign ports and the generosity of people from Dubrovnik all over the world, who organized help for the stricken town.

During, the "Long War" (1683-1699), Venice captured a part of Dubrovnik inland area and approached its borders. They presented the threat of completely surrounding and cutting off Dubrovnik trade inland. In view of this danger, expecting the defeat of the Turks by Vienna in 1684 and hoping that the Austrian Army would capture Bosnia and Hercegovina, Dubrovnik sent emissaries to the Austrian Emperor, Leopold, in Vienna. In 1684 the emissaries renewed an agreement contracted in the year 1358 and accepted the sovereignty of the Austrian Emperor.

18th to 19th Century

Around 1750, Dubrovnik continental trade slackened, but its sea trade was renewed thanks to its neutrality. In that year Dubrovnik had nearly 150 ships, on which sailed about 2200 sailors.

In 1759, Dubrovnik renewed her trade connections with England, which had been broken off after 1588.

In 1776, Dubrovnik and France signed a trade agreement in which Dubrovnik was treated as the "Republic of Dubrovnik".

Around 1780, Dubrovnik ships successfully sailed not only in the Mediterranean but also in the Black Sea. They appeared as well in American Atlantic ports such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and others.

In 18th century, the Dubrovnik navy revived and became stronger after their decline in the 17th century. Towards the end of the 18th century Dubrovnik had at its disposal 300 large ships of various types.

Around 1800, Dubrovnik had a very good network of Consulates and Consular establishments in over 80 towns and ports. This imposing number not only shows the large growth of overseas trading and navigation, but also is a witness to the fact that many larger and stronger European states did not have available such a powerful and well developed network of Consulates.

In 1806, French General Lauriston occupied Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik Government developed important diplomatic activities in Austria, Turkey, France and Russia to preserve its freedom and status as a Republic.

Napoleon's blockade of England contributed to the breakdown of the Dubrovnik Merchant Navy.

On the decision of Marshal Marmont, in 1808 the Dubrovnik Republic was abolished. All her territories were placed under the French rule in Dalmatia. Marshal Marmont became "Duke of Ragusium".

In 1814, the Austrian army marched into Dubrovnik. With them came the British army and the local insurgents against the French occupation.

At the Congress of Vienna, Dubrovnik was integrated into the Kingdom of Dalmatia and annexed to Austria (which later became Austria-Hungary), where it remained up to 1918.

*and this is the end of this article.
If you wish to learn more about Dubrovnik or Croatia,
I m sure you ll find many places on the Web with lots of information.*

Mario