

## GIFTS OF DUBROVNIK ENVOYS TO ZETA RULERS – THE BALŠIĆ – BETWEEN 1360 AND 1403

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### ABSTRACT

*Based on both published and unpublished material from the State Archives in Dubrovnik (fond 27 Lettere e commissioni di Levante and fond 34 Reformationes), as well as relevant literature, the paper describes the gifts offered by envoys from Dubrovnik to the Balšić family, the rulers of the Principality of Zeta, between 1360 and 1403. In the introductory part, the paper defines the historical framework and outlines the relationships between the Balšić family and Dubrovnik, as revealed by the documents that allowed free and safe trade to Dubrovnik merchants. Next, the situations in which the Dubrovnik people or the Balšić turned to each other for assistance or services are described, along with interpretation of the choices of gifts involved. In fact, the gifts were implicit diplomatic messages. The people of Dubrovnik used the gifts manipulatively as strategic tools to achieve pragmatic objectives at specific moments in time. The paper discusses the importance and meaning of gifts in diplomacy, gifts as means of non-verbal communication, as conveyors of political and economic influence in regard to Dubrovnik, as well as signs of respect, trust, affection, friendship, and peace. The motives guiding the selection of gifts are interpreted in the context of relations aspired to, established, or developing between the city of St. Blaise and the Principality of Zeta. The gifts are considered separately per type: fabrics, weapons, food, money, civil rights, and health services.*

*Keywords: gifts, diplomats, Dubrovnik, Zeta, Balšić, 14<sup>th</sup> century*

### I DONI DIPLOMATICI RAGUSEI AI BALŠIĆ, SIGNORI DI ZETA, DAL 1360 AL 1403

### SINTESI

*Basandosi sulle fonti inedite e quelle pubblicate dall'Archivio di Stato di Ragusa (vol. 27 Lettere e commissioni di Levante e vol. 34 Reformationes) nonché sulla letteratura pertinente, l'autore si presta a fare luce sulle donazioni che i diplomatici di Ragusa fecero ai Balšić, i signori di Zeta, nel periodo dal 1360 al 1403. Nell'introduzione l'autore presenta il contesto storico e le relazioni dei Balšić con la città di Ragusa soffermandosi*

*sui documenti che garantivano ai mercanti di Ragusa un libero e sicuro scambio di merci. L'autore presenta le situazioni nelle quali i ragusei chiesero aiuto ai Balšić e viceversa, interpretando da tal punto di vista la scelta dei doni diplomatici. Tali regali erano una specie di messaggi diplomatici accuratamente confezionati. I ragusei usarono tali doni come arma strategica per realizzare dei propri obiettivi pragmatici nei momenti specifici. L'autore sottolinea l'importanza dei doni diplomatici nonché il ruolo della comunicazione non verbale tramite tali doni, messaggi sull'influenza politica ed economica di Ragusa, rispetto, fiducia, affetto, amicizia e pace. I motivi della scelta dei doni sono analizzati nel contesto dei rapporti cui si aspirava, nonché quelli attuali e futuri tra la città di San Biagio e Zeta. A seconda della loro tipologia, l'autore si sofferma sui seguenti doni: tessuti, armi, alimentari, denaro, servizi sanitari.*

*Parole chiave: doni, diplomatici, Dubrovnik, Zeta, Balšići, XIV secolo*

## INTRODUCTION

For medieval Dubrovnik, the coastal region of Zeta was the area of immediate action and the sphere of its deepest interests. Also, residents of the region of Zeta were geographically and professionally tied with Dubrovnik (Ćirković, 1997, 47–55). Dubrovnik merchants were coming to Zeta, importing and selling their goods; they bought locally made goods and exported them to Dubrovnik. That is why it was important for Dubrovnik traders to protect their trade by nurturing good relations with the Balšići, who ruled Zeta from 1360 to 1421 (Dinić-Knežević, 1999, 131–134). The trade and diplomacy of Dubrovnik induced Zeta rulers to issue a charter to the City of St. Blaise. The Charter contains provisions guaranteeing the safety of Dubrovnik's citizens and the aspirations of the Zeta rulers to establish stronger economic cooperation. Brothers Stracimir (1360–1372), Đurađ I (1360–1378), and Balša II (1360–1378) in the charter of 17 January 1368, abolished the customs in Danj. Đurađ I Balšić promised Dubrovnik in the charter of 30 November 1373 that he would not introduce duties that had not existed during the rule of Emperor Dušan. In the Charter of 30 May (the year was not recorded, but it is believed to originate in the period 1374–1376), Đurađ I Balšić guaranteed Dubrovnik that he would not interfere with trade between the city and Zeta. Balša II Balšić, in the Charter of 20 November 1379, laid down that Dubrovnik was to pay customs in Danj and Kriva Rijeka as in the time of Đurađ I's rule. In the Charter of Balša II of 24 April 1385, it was stated that that Dubrovnik was not to pay customs and crossing of rivers that had not been lawful at the time of Emperor Dušan and Đurađ I. Although the previous charters had already guaranteed the legal certainty of Dubrovnik traders, Đurađ II Stracimirović Balšić (1385–1403) issued a charter on 27 January 1386, laying down again that his subjects must not impose unlawful duties on their own initiative and that the traders had to be compensated for any damage suffered. He abolished all salt squares introduced after the death of Emperor Dušan.<sup>1</sup> The re-confirmation of these charters strengthened the friendship and provided trading freedoms, ensuring good working conditions for Dubrovnik traders. These conditions implied freedom of movement, protection of trade, and inviolability of property.

Research on the importance of gifts attracted anthropologists, sociologists, historians, economists, writers, ethicists, psychologists, etc.<sup>2</sup> Gifts in the history of Dubrovnik-Zeta relations are a topic that no study has covered thus far. In most cases, they are mentioned as a part of a broader topic. A significant contribution to the discovery of some of them in the framework of Zeta-Dubrovnik relations in the 14th century was provided by Srđan Rudić. Further research activities relied on the work of Josip Jelčić,

1 On the charters of Balšić to the citizens of Dubrovnik, cf. Ćirković, Božić, Bogdanović & Đurić, 1970, 27, 31, 46, 52; Foretić, 1980, 154–156, 181; Šekularac, 2011, 39–40, 178, 180; Premović, 2018a, 876–878; Premović, 2019, 188–189; Rudić 2021, 52, 58, 64, 68, 75–77.

2 The following studies have helped us a lot in writing this paper: Lévi-Strauss, 1950; Sherry, 1983; Berkling, 1999; Groebner, 2002; Šundrica, 2008, 143; Lonza, 2009; Zovko, 2013; Heal, 2014; Lazzarini, 2015; Fletcher, 2015; Sindzingre, 2017; Mos, 2018; Mallard, 2019; Šošarić, 2021.

Božidar Šekularac, and Marijan Premović (cf. Jelčić, 2010; Šekularac, 2011; Premović, 2018b). These researchers have presented the Balšići relations with Dubrovnik mainly through political and economic history. They mentioned gifts only as a side topic, as it was not the main subject of their work, so the result was just partial.

The wealth of Dubrovnik archive material provides opportunities for new research and scientific considerations. The sources allow us to reconstruct the list of Dubrovnik diplomatic gifts given to the Zeta rulers Balšići according to the political and social rank of the recipients and the current interests of Dubrovnik. The paper uses the material kept in the Dubrovnik National Archive, primarily the archive series *Litterae et Commissiones Levantis* (vol. I–V), which recorded the missions of envoys to the Balšići. In these instructions, the gifts and value the envoys carried to the Zeta rulers were recorded in some places. The gift data can be supplemented with the archival series: *Reformationes* (vol. XVIII–XXXII), which provides insight into diplomatic missions.<sup>3</sup> We have to point out that no gifts were mentioned in some of the documents where diplomatic missions are mentioned, although we believe they were most likely an integral part of the mission. Furthermore, the paper will also use reference literature indicating the importance of gifts.

In our research, the gifts will be presented through the realm of Dubrovnik's diplomacy towards Zeta. Gifts were an extremely influential means of non-verbal communication, which could express specific messages about political power and economic impact (Lazzarini, 2015, 240–241, 254–260). The value of the gifts symbolised the material, practical, artistic, symbolic, and emotional messages. We will put the indicated symbols into the context of mutual relations. The objective of this paper is multiple. It seeks to highlight the importance of gifts in diplomacy, the inclusion of non-verbal communication in gifts, messages about the political and economic influence of Dubrovnik, respect, trust, affection, friendship, and peace. The gifts influenced both the current and future Dubrovnik-Zeta relations. They played the role of bribery and corruption in Dubrovnik diplomacy. With this paper, we would like to provide a small contribution to the research activities mentioned.

#### DUBROVNIK ENVOYS AS BEARERS OF GIFTS TO ZETA RULERS THE BALŠIĆI

In the Middle Ages, an envoy, diplomatic mediator, negotiator was called *poklisar* (Krizman, 1957, 14–22). In archival records, Dubrovnik envoys who led the missions were addressed as *ambaxiatores* or *oratores* (Zovko, 2012, 59–74). In Western Europe, envoyships were granted to higher-ranked envoys: nuntius and procurator (Queller, 1967, 8, 19–26, 34–57). The selection of the leader of a diplomatic mission took place regularly in the Major Council (Janeković-Römer, 1999, 196). When a Dubrovnik envoy was to go to Zeta, it meant Bar, Ulcinj, and

3 Most of the sources from this series have been published: MR III, 1895; Dinić, 1964; Lonza & Šundrica, 2005; Lonza, 2011.



Fig. 1: Vittore Carpaccio, *The Departure of the English Ambassadors*, 1495–1500, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy (<https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/c/carpacci/1ursula/1/index.html>).

Shkodra all the way to Danj, with the surrounding area within a distance of one or half-day journey (Krizman, 1957, 19). The salaries of the envoys were foreseen in the Dubrovnik Statute of 1277. If one of several envoys were sent to Durrës, each of them should have received seven perpers. The ship and the servants were part of every mission. From Dubrovnik to Ulcinj and Bar, the envoy would

receive five perpers. In 1287, the Minor Council decided that an envoy was to get seven perpers when visiting Shkodra. The envoy who went to Kotor got three perpers (Šoljić, Šundrica & Veselić, 2002, 167). The distance from Dubrovnik determined the monetary compensation. An envoy had to be loyal to his commune, educated, skilful, and a good connoisseur of the circumstances in his place of residence and the places he was sent to. The size of the mission was decided upon in the Dubrovnik Major Council, and the Consilium Rogatorum confirmed the decision (Lonza, 1998, 169–175; Janeković-Römer, 1999, 193–203). Some of the envoys were specialised in diplomatic missions in Zeta. Namely, Mato Vitov Giorgi (1329–1400) had the greatest number of diplomatic missions to Balša II and Đurađ II. He and his family had an extremely close trade relationship with the coast of Zeta (Manken, 1960, 219–221; Premović, 2018b, 105). Balšić and Mato developed a relationship of trust, and that is why Dubrovnik authorities were aware that he could be successful.

The objective and task of each mission were determined in advance, and in case of some new circumstances, the envoys were not allowed to act on their own but had to seek new instructions (Krizman, 1957, 14–22; Janeković-Römer, 1999, 196–197). Gift-giving was an important part of the state ceremony of Dubrovnik. From ancient times to this day, bribery and gifts have always been used in diplomacy. Corruption has always been present, and diplomats have been using it to the best of their knowledge and abilities (Šundrica, 2008, 143; Lonza, 2009, 203, 206; Zovko, 2013, 21, 26). Gifts, as a diplomatic message, expressed respect, confidence, benevolence, friendship, and peace (Komter, 2007, 99–100; Cavenaghi, 2016, 464–470). Gifts were to be given by envoys, as they were supposed to facilitate negotiations and enable accomplishment of a mission's objectives (Groebner, 2002, 1–4; Neumann, 2021, 187–190). The gifts were carefully packaged diplomatic messages that the recipients could interpret in different ways (Heal, 2014, 26–29). Choosing a gift was a delicate issue because the first impressions created by the first contact were important. It was desirable to know the recipient's taste so that the selected gift could inspire the desired excitement and surprise (Sindzingre, 2017, 7–14). The Dubrovnik traders were providing information to the city authorities what gifts the Zeta rulers liked most. Although Dubrovnik authorities were not flaunting their gifts, they were aware that gifts could affect the course of the negotiations (Janeković-Römer, 1999, 196–199; Zovko, 2013, 30–33). The motives for selecting a gift should be put in the context of the current and desired relationship between the City of St. Blaise and the Balšići (cf. Bergquist & Ljungberg, 2001, 309–319). If the gift matched the taste and wishes of the recipient, it had the ability to induce positive emotions, but if the recipient was dissatisfied, the consequences could be rather unpleasant (Heal, 2014, 50–59). In its famous study, *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss states that the gift as a basic form of exchange has developed over time into simpler and specialised forms: barter, sale, and purchase, credit, etc. Gift-giving connects society and represents a deal or a social contract. In the

opinion of Mauss, the one who receives gifts must give a gift in return because a gift that does not encourage solidarity is a contradiction (Mos, 2018, 23–24, 85, 90, 137; Mallard, 2019, 14–24). Sociologist Helmuth Berking points out that after selection, the gift is to be given. A gift is an important tool of non-verbal communication used to convey positive messages. Gifts should aim to create an atmosphere of trust, satisfaction, and affection, facilitate negotiations, enable the accomplishment of the mission objectives and create conditions for close relations in the future (Berking, 1999, 20–44). The gift implies three obligations: giving, receiving, and giving in return. Each gift is subject to a system of reciprocity in which the honour of the gift giver and recipient are linked. The gift is the beginning of exchange; it definitely obliges the recipient to give gifts in return (Mos, 2018, 11, 61–62, 128–129).

In addition to gifts, envoys in missions also had the task to win the interlocutor over by well-chosen and flattering words, expressing kindness. They flattered the interlocutor in order to win him over and create a favourable atmosphere facilitating the negotiations. They knew very well what to say and in what order, and what to do in the first audience. They had an obligation to ask him after his health unless he was ill (Fletcher, 2015, 149–160; Lazzarini, 2015, 193–202; Maxson, 2017, 129–143). One of the most important things was to highlight past good relations and friendship with predecessors and distant relatives. The task of Dubrovnik envoys in Zeta was to obtain a confirmation of trade privileges given to the city by his predecessors. Upon their return to Dubrovnik, the envoys submitted a diplomatic report and justified their expenses (Janeković-Römer, 1999, 196–199; Zovko, 2013, 30–33; Šoštarić, 2021, 106). Gifts given to Zeta rulers by Dubrovnik can be divided into several groups: gifts in fabrics, arms, food, and money, as well as the granting of Dubrovnik citizenship as a diplomatic gift, then services of doctors and provision of health care to Zeta rulers.

## GIFTS IN FABRICS

The fabrics were used in most cases as a gift for diplomatic purposes. Luxury fabrics symbolised authority, prosperity, and prestige as a gift (Dinić-Knežević, 1982). When Đurađ II Balšić came to power in autumn of 1385, the state needed considerable money to restore power and continue the policy of his predecessors. His income had been declining after most prominent members of the nobility went rogue. Immediately after taking over the power, he addressed Dubrovnik asking for financial assistance in the form of loans (Premović, 2018a, 876). On 5 December 1385, Dubrovnik decided not to grant the loan (Jelčić, 2010, 168). To make acceptance of the rejection easier, they decided to send him fabrics worth 500 ducats as a gift (Dinić, 1964, 219). The change on the throne of Zeta required confirmation of previous documents. Dubrovnik wanted to get a new charter as soon as possible to confirm free trade and all guarantees and privileges previously acquired.

Dubrovnik envoys Simun Bona (around 1345–1420) and Jakov Gondola (around 1340–1415) visited Đurađ II in Shkodra (27 January 1386), giving him expensive fabrics (Dinić, 1964, 219; Dinić-Knežević, 1982, 63; Jelčić, 2010, 168). It was Florentine wool cloth, of high quality and in high demand at the market. It is not stated what other fabrics these were, but it is assumed that it was silk and wool cloth (Dinić-Knežević, 1982, 24–25, 31, 40). The importance of this charter to Dubrovnik is shown by the decision to take expensive fabrics worth 500 perpers as a gift. The fabrics were consistent with the needs of the ruler of Zeta, his interests, and preferences. The type of the gift, its value, and method of giving is of great importance for understanding the non-verbal diplomatic communication of Dubrovnik; a gift is actually a polysemantic symbol (Dinić-Knežević, 1982, 63; Lonza, 2009, 205, 207, 211; Zovko, 2013, 26). In late May 1388, the authorities decided to give fabric as a gift to the ruler of Bosnia, Tvrtko I (*II panni de grana et II de panno fino florentino*) (Dinić, 1964, 433). When we compare this type and value of the gift to that of the ruler of Zeta, we can see that Tvrtko got less; Dubrovnik knew how to adapt the gift to the needs of the political mission.

The mission was well-received in Shkodra, and the diplomatic mission was completed successfully. Đurađ II issued Dubrovnik with a Charter on 27 January 1386, which confirmed the friendship and the trade freedoms granted. The envoys stayed for almost a month (they returned on 11 February). They brought back to Dubrovnik the privileges much broader and more favourable than the previous ones. Compared to the previous charters of the Balšići, that Charter contained two new provisions, expanding the trade freedoms of Dubrovnik. The first laid down that the subjects of the ruler of Zeta would not claim goods from Dubrovnik ships wrecked along the coast of Zeta and provided a guarantee of the safety of the goods salvaged (Premović, 2018a, 876–879). The people of Dubrovnik give cloth as a gift, and the lord of Zeta gives Dubrovnik a charter of free and safe trade. In this case, it is the exchange that gives the gift its meaning (Lévi-Strauss, 1950).

In early July 1389, Đurađ II was in Budva, where two Dubrovnik envoys visited him and invited him to visit Dubrovnik (Dinić, 1964, 531–532, 560). Preparations were made for his reception on 8 July, a gift was discussed, and a decision was made to give fabrics (Dinić, 1964, 560–561). By giving quality fabrics and valuable wool cloth woven in Cuma, Dubrovnik wanted to show respect and appreciation to its guest. Đurađ II delayed his arrival to the city, probably due to the Ottoman invasion and the battle of Kosovo, not wanting to leave Zeta in those dangerous days.

The usual gift from the commune of Dubrovnik for the wedding of a dignitary or his family member were fabrics, which also implied cordial greetings. The Major Council decided on 31 October and 1 November 1395, to send various fabrics to Đurađ II as a gift for his niece's wedding and to bring his son (Balša III) to the brigantine (Lonza, 2011, 90). Dubrovnik authorities tried to make use of the good mood over the wedding to protect their trade interests with a gift.





## ARMS AS A GIFT

The Balšići state achieved major territorial expansion in 1372 and 1373 (Šekularac, 2011, 174–176). After the death of King Vukašin on the Maritsa River (26 September 1371), Đurađ I Balšić took Prizren in 1371. Prizren was extremely important for the trade of Dubrovnik, and many traders lived in it (Rudić, 2021, 57). Aiming to get closer to the Balšići, prominent representatives of Dubrovnik families in Prizren gave four armours as a gift (each worth five silver livres). The gift was extremely valuable (Petrović, 1976, 103), and with it, they wanted to express “joy” over his success.<sup>4</sup>

On 6 May 1391, the Minor Council approved the request of Đurađ II and loaned him handheld firearms (Lonza & Šundrica, 2005, 159). Dubrovnik authorities allowed the supply of weapons; we believe that the ruler of Zeta needed the weapons to protect the territory from Ottoman attacks or disgruntled nobility, who went rogue (Petrović, 1976, 103).

## GIFTS IN FOOD

To the city of St. Blaise Đurađ II Balšić arrived on 27 August 1389, greeted with a welcome ceremony (Dinić, 1964, 532). The ceremony of his visit took place in three stages: welcome, official audience, and farewell. He was welcomed by a special delegation appointed by the Minor Council. The welcome ceremony and the program of the visit were adapted to the social position of the guest, but also to the political interests of the city. The Council’s decisions did not specify who welcomed him or the size of his escort, nor where they met him. The task of the delegation was to express welcome and convey the compliments of the Dubrovnik government, and then they would usually escort the guest to his lodgings. The decision on the lodgings of the guest also depended on the visitor’s rank. We do not have the information about the house that Đurađ got as lodgings. The Dubrovnik authorities sought to ensure comfort and entertainment for their guests (Janeković-Römer, 1996, 81–83; Lonza, 2009, 168–170, 186, 196–199). Food was an important means of appeasing (Heal, 2014, 35–43). They offered him veal, beef, pork, and chicken meat, roosters and pigeons, shellfish, marzipan, pine nuts cake, and other delicacies, fresh fruit, wine, etc. Đurađ had an audience with the Duke and in the Minor Council, where he was formally presenting them some important fact for which he arrived from Zeta. All foreign envoys had audiences there; it was an inevitable part of the state protocol also in the centuries to come (Lonza, 2009, 168–170, 186, 196–199, 201; Zovko, 2013, 36–38). He stayed for two days only. The ways of his travel home were discussed, and a decision was made to sail on a brigantine, or a boat if that was not possible. The

4 For Muslims, the symbolic value of weapons meant that they had the right to rule, which was a common gift when enthroning a new sultan. Cf. Pedani, 2009, 189–192.

farewell mission for the ruler of Zeta comprised three noblemen, with a high rank in the city's public life (Tadić, 1939, 61; Dinić, 1964, 564). Why Balšić came to Dubrovnik at the time is not known.

## GIFTS IN MONEY

Money has always had extraordinary power as a gift, and it could have influenced the outcome of diplomatic efforts. We can define money giving as a bribe. The amount of money given had to remain secret because it could have been the cause of a third-party discontent and jealousy.<sup>5</sup> In early May 1363, Dubrovnik sent an envoy to the Balšići brothers and a gift of 150 perpers (MR III, 1895, 257, 259). In the summer of 1381, Dubrovnik merchants were attacked in the region of the river Vergo (Škumba). That is why the city authorities sent an envoy, Domanja Duornich. He was given 15 perpers, which he should have handed over as a gift to Balša II or whomever he felt necessary (Dinić, 1964, 19, 22). In both cases, the money was to appease the lords of Zeta and guarantee the safety of trade to Dubrovnik since traders were often the target of robberies.

In 1395, Đurađ II Balšić entered into an armed conflict with Radič Crnojević over Budva, since Radič seized control over that city from Balšić already in November 1392 (Milutinović, 1999, 203). The Crnojevići were on good terms with Dubrovnik (Lonza, 2011, 225–226). The Crnojevići brothers (Radič and Stefan) promised friendship to Dubrovnik and gave them the freedom to trade in their territory (Rudić, 2008, 157–161). In mid-August 1395, Dubrovnik discussed sending a mission to Đurađ II Stracimirović and Radič Crnojević. The Consilium Rogatorum, on 23 August, decided to give a gift of 30 perpers to Đurađ through envoys. Radič got a gift of 15 perpers (Lonza, 2011, 230). The Dubrovnik authorities used gifts in their diplomatic missions, as non-verbal communication, to convey messages of peace to the warring parties. None of the parties were aware of the value of the gift in order to avoid envy. With secret diplomacy and money-giving, Dubrovnik wanted to stop the further fighting between the Balšići and the Crnojevići. Instability in Zeta threatened their trade. Based on their experience in diplomacy, they believed the mission would successfully end with bribery and winning them over for their own benefit. Gullible and greedy rulers easily fell for this game of Dubrovnik. However, the impact of diplomatic missions did not yield any result, and at the end of May 1396, Radič was killed in a clash with Đurađ's army (Čirković, Božić, Bogdanović & Đurić, 1970, 64).

In the first half of March 1399, Dubrovnik authorities allowed Đurađ II to sail into the city on their brigantine. He arrived on 18 March, stayed in Dubrovnik at the expense of the Senate, and was allowed to spend up to 10 perpers a day. He asked the authorities for some business regarding the noble family of Volzio, but

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5 There is an opinion that money as a gift is not a suitable gift for everyone and that it is usually not well received. Cf. Webley, Lea & Portalska, 1983, 223–238.

he was rejected. He stayed in town for three days only. He was given a manned ship to take him to Ulcinj and a gift worth 100 ducats (Tadić, 1939, 64–65). After refusing do him a favour, the authorities wanted to appease the ruler of Zeta with valuable gifts. Such a high sum of money was not a common gift, as in his previous visits.

#### GRANTING DUBROVNIK CITIZENSHIP AS A DIPLOMATIC GIFT

Apart from the customary gift-giving, Dubrovnik granted the rulers of the hinterland also Dubrovnik citizenship to make them their friends and live in peace with them. Diplomatic relations between Dubrovnik and Đurađ I, Stracimir and Balša II were established in July 1361 with the mediation of envoy Kliment Tomin Dersa (around 1300–around 1376), which the Dubrovnik authorities sent to a mission to the Balšići brothers. His mission concerned forging an alliance in the fight against the Prince of Hum, Vojislav Vojinović (early 14th century–1363) and the commune of Kotor, political events related to Budva, the sale of salt and some of the seized goods for which the envoy of Dubrovnik brought receipts signed by Stracimir and Đurađ I. During this diplomatic mission, Dubrovnik authorities granted Dubrovnik citizenship to the Balšići brothers (DAD, 1; Premović, 2020, 628). Dubrovnik authorities granted citizenship to prominent people for their merit or those whose friendship it considered useful. The authorities expected support and assistance from their honorary citizens. Any act of hostility meant betrayal of trust and friendship (Mijušković, 1961, 90–102; Janeković-Römer, 1993, 29–34; Pešorda-Vardić 2012, 77–96). The analysis of the Dubrovnik citizenship granting as a gift points to two important things. First of all, it was important for the city of St. Blaise to have the Balšići as partners for a safe trade. Secondly, it was done because the political circumstances were delicate, and they needed an ally because the Prince of Hum and Kotor threatened the city.

At the end of the 1380s, the Ottomans came closer to Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik wanted to avoid armed conflict and resorted to diplomacy. The city was collecting news from its traders and confidants (Krekić, 1988, 50–56), so they were aware that Đurađ II Balšić had influence on the Ottomans because he was their ally at the time (Tošić, 1995, 86). On 10 August 1388, the Senate sent priest Marin from Ulcinj, with residence in Dubrovnik, to Balšić (Dinić, 1964, 480). Then, on 18 August, they received Đurađ's envoy, Žora Bokšić, who came with regard to negotiations with Sahin Pasha (1330–after 1388) to dissuade them from any attack on their territory (Dinić, 1964, 440). Đurađ protected his partners in Dubrovnik from the Ottoman attacks, and they granted him their citizenship.<sup>6</sup> The political motive for granting citizenship was a token of gratitude for assistance given to stop the Ottoman attack on the city. Granting of the rights of Dubrovnik citizenship to Đurađ II Stracimirović took place on 15 October 1388 (DAD, 2). The authorities

6 On the problem of acquiring the status of a citizen of Dubrovnik, cf. more in: Raukar, 1976–77, 139–149.

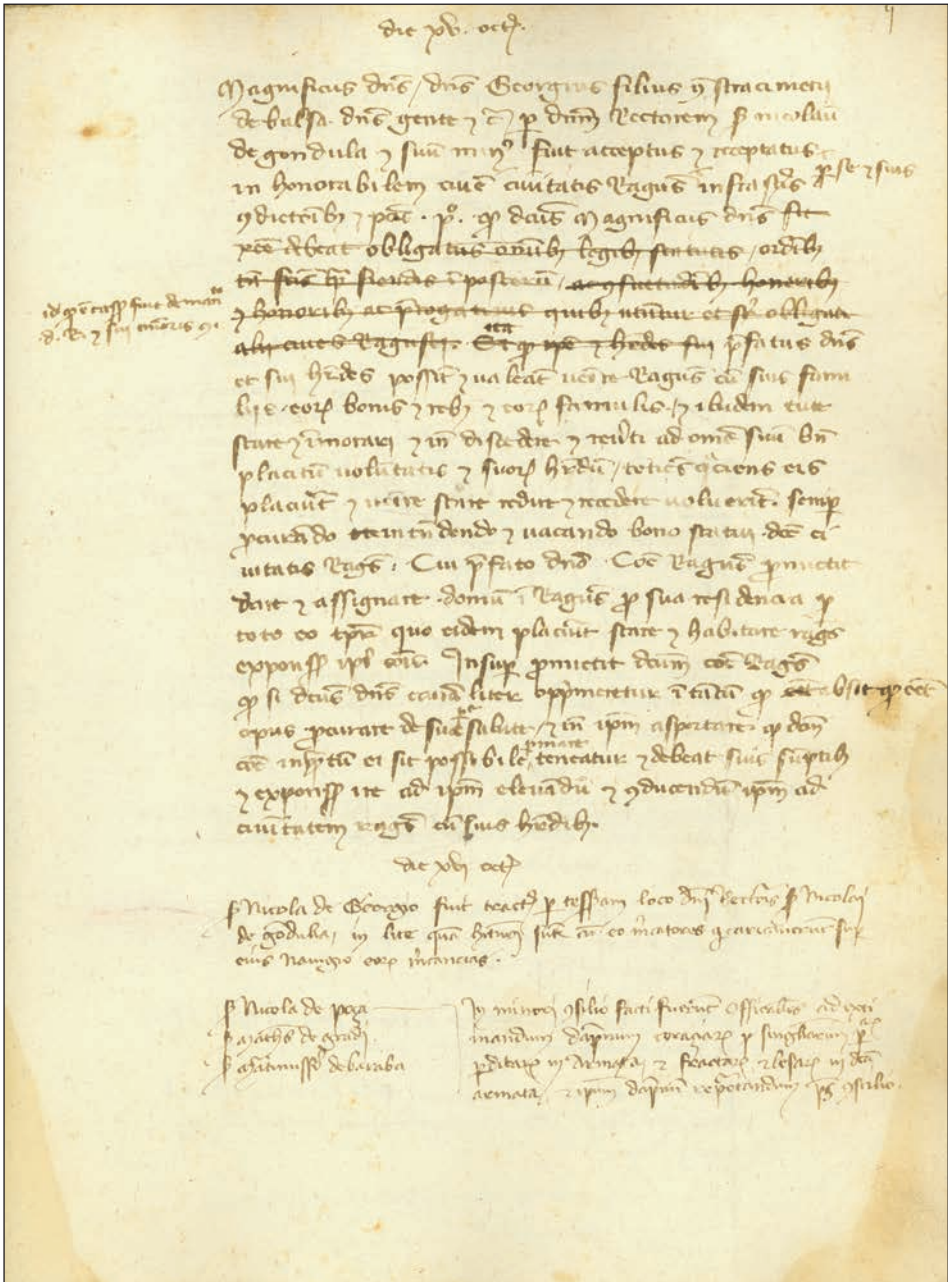


Fig. 3: Assignment of Dubrovnik citizenship to Đurd II Stracimirović Balšić 1388 (DAD 2, Reformationes, book 28, f. 140v, 15. 10. 1388).

expected friendly support from its honourable citizens whenever needed, and in return, it provided refuge and other services. Đurađ and his descendants were given the opportunity to stay in the city. He also had a house at his disposal, with the right to stay at the expense of Dubrovnik if he had to leave Zeta in case of danger (Mijušković, 1961, 90–102; Janeković-Römer, 1993, 29–34; Jelčić, 2010, 186–187). The ruler of Zeta thus got a refuge for himself and his family in the city. We do not know which house he got and in which part of the city it was. It was probably some rented town house. With this diplomatic gift as an act of non-verbal communication, the city authorities expressed their gratitude, respect, and friendship on behalf of the authorities and the entire community.

### MEDICAL SERVICES IN THE SERVICE OF DUBROVNIK DIPLOMACY – PROVIDING HEALTH CARE TO RULERS OF ZETA

Dubrovnik expressed its goodwill to the rulers of Zeta by sending a special doctor, thus also fostering good diplomatic relations and protecting trade privileges. On the other hand, the doctors could provide valuable information about political, economic, or health-related circumstances in Zeta. *Physicus Albertinus de Chamurata de Padua* had an important place in the good relations between Dubrovnik and Zeta. In May 1385, Balša II asked Dubrovnik authorities to send him a doctor (Jeremić & Tadić, 1939, 17). We do not know what condition he suffered from and whether the doctor from Dubrovnik was staying in Zeta. A few months later (18 September), Balša was killed in a clash with the Ottomans in the Saurian field near Berat.

At the end of spring 1387, Đurađ II sent a request for the city authorities of Dubrovnik to send him a doctor. On 28 March, the Major Council decided that Albertin had permission to go to Đurađ II for 20 days. He was promised a special *per diem* of two ducats, the usual salary, and expenses (Jeremić & Tadić, 1939, 17–18; Dinić, 1964, 316). We do not have any information on whether or not he actually conveyed any information during this visit.

In January 1389, Đurađ II asked again to be given a doctor who would provide health care for him and his family (Jeremić & Tadić, 1939, 17–18; Belicza & Blažina-Tomić, 1998, 208). The Minor Council approved his request (on 4 February) and granted permission to doctor Albertin to visit the ruler of Zeta again. The following day, the Major Council verified that decision (Dinić, 1964, 503). With this service, Dubrovnik authorities were building trust, expressing goodwill, and improving diplomatic relations. In January 1390, Stracimirović suffered from health problems, so he asked the city to send him medical help. The Minor Council decided to send him doctor Albertin (Lonza & Šundrica, 2005, 103). In early March 1403, the health condition of Đurađ II was very bad; he was unable to even get out of bed (Jelčić, 2010, 263). On 21 March 1403, the Archdeacon of Ulcinj went to bring one of the Dubrovnik state doctors to aid. Three days later, the Minor Council decided to send one doctor to Đurađ because of his illness. On 27

March, the Major Council accepted and confirmed that doctor Jakov de Salgeriis was to be sent to him, who was granted 10 days of leave. The Archdeacon of Ulcinj received a gift of five perpers in medication and wax (Jeremić & Tadić, 1939, 22). Despite the care provided by the Dubrovnik doctor, Đurađ II died in the first half of April 1403 (Milutinović, 1999, 206). Dubrovnik was informed of his death on 18 April. On the same day, the Minor Council gave instructions and sent envoys to Ulcinj to express condolences to his wife. The envoys expressed their condolences to the widow, saying that all his subjects and neighbours loved him and that Dubrovnik deeply mourned the death of their *good and special friend* (DAD 3; Jelčić, 2010, 264–265). Dubrovnik did not really mean what was written; they were using polite words to indulge his widow, concerned over his successor, how the change in Zeta would affect their interests, and how much they would have to bribe his successor.

DARILA DUBROVNIŠKIH ODPOSLANCEV ZETSKIM VLADARJEM IZ  
RODBINE BALŠIĆEV MED LETOMA 1360 IN 1403*Marijan PREMOVIĆ*

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## POVZETEK

Avtor v članku uvodoma predstavi zgodovinski kontekst in oriše odnose med Dubrovnikom in Balšići v obdobju med letoma 1360 in 1403. Nadalje izpostavi spremembe v medsebojnih odnosih in situacije, v katerih je ena od strani prosila drugo za pomoč ali uslugo, ter v tej luči interpretira izbiro (vrste in vrednosti) diplomatskega darila. Dubrovniške oblasti so darila manipulativno uporabljale kot strateška sredstva za doseganje pragmatičnih ciljev v določenem zgodovinskem trenutku. Razlogi, ki so vodili izbiro dubrovniških odposlancev v Zeto, so bile z delom pridobljene izkušnje in veščine, ki so jih posedovali v času izbire. Osrednji del članka je posvečen predstavitvi vrste daril, ki jih je Dubrovnik pošiljal rodbini Balšić od sredine 14. do začetka 15. stoletja. Izbira darila je bila rezultat in izraz prevladujočega okusa in mode tistega časa. Z njimi so Dubrovničani želeli vzbuditi čustven odziv v obdarjencih, jih razveseliti in si zagotoviti njihovo hvaležnost. Nadvse zaželeno in zato vladarjem Zete tudi najpogosteje podarjano darilo so bile tkanine. Darila so bila izbrana tako, da so potrjevala razlike med ravnmi v hierarhiji oblasti oziroma na nebesedni način posredovala informacije o položaju, ki ga je posameznik v vladajoči strukturi zasedal. Vsako posamezno darilo je tako treba obravnavati ločeno, na podlagi spremljanja seznamov daril, prejetih v daljšem časovnem obdobju, pa je mogoče sklepati o spremembah v položaju obdarjenca, tj. kakovosti odnosa med posameznim članom rodbine Balšić in Dubrovničani. Z denarnim darilom (15 perperjev), ki so ga slednji leta 1381 podarili Balši II, so želeli zaščititi svoje trgovce pred napadi, z dariloma sprtima rodbinama Balšić (30 perperjev) in Crnojević (15 perperjev) pa so poskušali zagotoviti mir in stabilnost v Zeti v dobro dubrovniške trgovine. Leta 1399 so mestne oblasti Dubrovnika zavrnilo zahtevo Đurađa II glede poslov z družino Volzio, potem pa so ga pred vrnitvijo v Zeto nagradile s 100 dukati. Na ta način so želele ublažiti nezadovoljstvo zetskega vladarja nad neizpolnitvijo njegovih zahtev. Denarna darila so bila pravzaprav podkupnine. Med zasedanjem Prizrena leta 1372 so dubrovniški trgovci podarili bratom Balšić štiri oklepe. Njihovo darilo je bilo diplomatsko sporočilo podpore Dubrovnika vladarjem Zete v njihovem osvajanju. Ko je leta 1389 Đurađ II Balšić prišel v Dubrovnik, so ga sprejeli z vsemi častmi. Dubrovniške oblasti so se svojemu gostu trudile zagotoviti udobje z dobro hrano: z jedmi iz teletine, govedine, svinine in perutnine, s svežim sadjem, izbranimi vini in podobnim. Analize podelitve dubrovniškega meščanstva pripadnikom rodbine



*Balšić leta 1361 in 1386 kot darila kažejo na to, da je bilo za mesto sv. Blaža pomembno, da ima Balšiče za partnerje pri zagotavljanju varnega trgovanja. Diplomatsko darilo podelitve meščanstva je bil izraz hvaležnosti, spoštovanja in prijateljstva. Dubrovničani so z zagotavljanjem zdravstvenim uslug v letih 1385, 1387, 1389, 1390 in 1403 pomagali zetskimi vladarjem ohranjati zdravje. S tem so izrazili svoje zaupanje in spoštovanje, negovali medsebojne dobre diplomatske odnose in ščitili svoje trgovske privilegije.*

*Ključne besede: darila, odposlanci, Dubrovnik, Zeta, Balšiči, 14. stoletje*

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