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The Diplomatic Machinery of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), 1430-1458:
Why Ragusa's Diplomacy can be Classified as Renaissance Diplomacy

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Abstract

In October 1458, the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) obtained the Ottoman Empire's protection, which further established the Ragusan-Ottoman relations. This was a result of various factors, throughout the mid-fifteenth century, especially the Ragusan diplomacy. The same time-period saw the peak years in the Italian Renaissance diplomacy, which is commonly known to be the root of modern-day diplomacy. However, there is a neglect of the inclusion of other powers' diplomacies outside the Italian peninsula. This thesis argues that the Republic of Ragusa, by the time of the mid-fifteenth century, had a well-established diplomatic machinery, which the Ragusans used to balance between the greater powers in their geopolitical neighborhood. Through diplomatic tools, associated with the ones used in the Renaissance, Ragusa managed to obtain the protection of several states and empires. This thesis therefore looks at Ragusa's diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century as Renaissance diplomacy by using the example of how Ragusa used diplomacy to secure Ottoman protection. In addition, to the neglect of diplomacies outside the Italian peninsula in the fifteenth century, the diplomatic activities of the merchants have been overlooked, which is why the second goal of this thesis is to include the Ragusan merchants as diplomatic actors and representatives in the Ragusan diplomacy of the Renaissance.

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Glossary

Ahdname Ottoman charter, also referred to as a capitulation.

Ducat: a golden trade coin.

Ferman a royal mandate, issued by an Islamic sovereign, like the Ottoman sultans.

Haraç (tribute) a tax, the states paid to the Ottoman Empire for the permission to enjoy the profits from the Ottoman territory.¹

Hyperperi a Byzantine coin.

Poklisari the Ragusan tributary ambassadors.

Quattrocento the fifteenth century.

Ragusa the Italian name for Dubrovnik.

Ragusan an inhabitant of Dubrovnik/Ragusa.

The Sublime Porte the Ottoman central government, first located in Adrianople, and then in Constantinople.

Voivode an Ottoman governor.

Pronunciation

Č – is pronounced *ts* as in “change”.

Ć – is pronounced in a similar way, however, it sounds more like *ty* in “future”.²

Đ – is pronounced as a harder *j*, as in the name “George”.

Š – is pronounced *sh* as in “shake”.

Ž – is pronounced *s* as in “measure”.

¹ Sugar, Peter F. *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1977), 174

² Harris, Robin, *Dubrovnik: A History* (London: Saqi Books, 2006), 15

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Aim of the Thesis

“I the Great Master and Great Amir Sultan Mehmed-beg swear that every tributary state of [the Sultan’s] dominion, who do the Ragusans [or] their merchants any harm, will have to pay for the damages, the Ragusan rulers will have to send a yearly tribute of 1500 golden ducats”.³ The excerpt is retrieved from the reconstructed version of Sultan Mehmed II’s *Ahdname of October 1458*, and it confirms the tributary status of the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik, modern day Croatia), as well as, Ragusa’s obtainment of the Ottoman Empire’s protection – a situation that could have played out very differently had it not been for the Ragusan diplomacy during the 1430s, 1440s and 1450s.⁴

By the year 1458, the Ottoman Empire, characterized as a new political entity emerged and conquered a large part of the Balkan peninsula, which influenced the political scene in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. The Christian West was therefore faced with the threat of Islam, which required a new political structure.⁵ Between the Christian West and the Ottoman Empire, positioned on the western coast of the Balkans, was Ragusa, who by then had been under the protection of several states and empires. Prior to the obtainment of Ottoman protection, the republic existed as a *de facto* independent city-state under the sovereignty of the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom.⁶ This meant that their autonomy was challenged, and threatened by the emergence of the Ottomans, which required the Ragusans to develop a diplomatic tactic that could secure their further existence as a *de facto* independent republic.

The earliest Ragusan-Ottoman encounters date back to the 1390s. From that time until the late 1450s, Ragusa managed to keep its relations with the Ottomans at a distance. However, the question of Ragusan submission to the Ottoman Empire was the center of the Ragusan-Ottoman diplomatic relations, particularly in the early 1440s and the late 1450s. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Ragusans understood that the Ottoman presence in the Balkans was to continue, and they thus had to change their diplomatic tactic and rhetorical strategies in

³ *Spomenici Dubrovački [Ragusan Monuments]*, Srd V/9 (1906), ed. by Vučetić, Antonije; “Charter of October 1458” in *Dubrovački -Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458. Godine, knjiga XI-1* (Beograd: Zbornik Filozofskog Fakulteta, 1970); The excerpt is an abbreviated version of the Charter of October 1458. Due to the length of the charter, only the most important information has been reproduced in the excerpt.

⁴ *Spomenici Dubrovački [Ragusan Monuments]*, ed. Vučetić

⁵ Riccardi, Luca, “An Outline of Vatican Diplomacy in the Early Modern Age”, in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), ed. by Frigo, Daniela. Trans. by Belton, Adrian. Published online: October 2009, 95-108, p. 101

⁶ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 62-76

their relations with the Ottomans. The beginnings of more steady relations between Ragusa and the Ottoman Empire were established in the 1450s, and particularly after Ragusa obtained Ottoman protection in 1458.

The same time-period marked the beginnings of the *Golden Age* of the Renaissance diplomacy on the Italian peninsula.⁷ In historiography, Renaissance diplomacy is linked to the Italian city-states, and it is considered to be the roots of the modern-day diplomacy. The development from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy has been related to the emergence of the resident ambassador.⁸ However, recent studies show that the inclusion of a resident ambassador is not the only new development of the diplomacy conducted in the Renaissance.⁹

In the research field on Renaissance diplomacy, there is a lack of the inclusion of other political entities' diplomacies outside the Italian peninsula, and the diplomatic machineries of few nations or states have been studied and classified as Renaissance diplomacy. It is therefore interesting to investigate whether the Ragusan diplomacy during the mid-fifteenth century can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy, since it separates itself from the medieval diplomatic models employed at that time, by displaying a more modern approach to politics. The aim of this thesis is therefore to classify the Ragusan diplomacy from the 1430s to the late 1450s as Renaissance diplomacy. It must be stressed that a similar approach in the studies of the Ragusan diplomacy has not been done before, and the topic remains untouched within the research fields on both Ragusan diplomacy and Renaissance diplomacy. By arguing that Ragusa's diplomatic machinery in the mid-fifteenth century is classified as Renaissance diplomacy, and therefore also an example of a political entity's diplomacy outside the Italian peninsula, this thesis contributes to a broader understanding within the academic field of Renaissance diplomacy.

The approach in which this thesis argues for the definition of the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy is through the example of Ragusa's relations with foreign powers, mainly with the Ottoman Empire, but also with other strong powers such as the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom and the Papal States. The main example employed in this thesis is *how* Ragusa utilized diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458, and how the Ragusans justified and explained their relations with the Ottomans to the Christian powers. The questions this thesis answers are therefore, *how* did the Ragusans employ diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458? To answer this question, it is essential to discuss *how* Ragusa could obtain

⁷ Kurbalija, Jovan, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy: Compromise as a Solution to Conflict: Diplomacy and Technology: A Historical Journey" at DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

⁸ Mattingly, Garret, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, (Harmondsworth; Penguin Books, 1973), 60

⁹ Lazzarini, Isabella, *Communication & Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4

Ottoman protection, as a small city-state, who was a part of the Christian West. Based on the Ragusan diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century, can the Ragusan diplomatic machinery be classified as Renaissance diplomacy?

The second aim of this thesis is to categorize the Ragusan merchants as diplomatic actors. Ragusa was a mercantile city-state with trade networks in the Mediterranean and in the Balkan hinterlands.¹⁰ With the Ottoman emergence and their conquest of the Balkans, the Ragusan merchants were the first to witness the changing situation in the geopolitics and could therefore report back to the Ragusan government on what they observed in the hinterlands.¹¹ The diplomatic activities of the merchants during the Renaissance have generally been ignored in the research field of Renaissance diplomacy.¹² Since this thesis is investigating whether the Ragusan diplomacy can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy, the Ragusan merchants' diplomatic activities will be included in the discussion.

Methodology and Primary Sources

This thesis classifies the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy by particularly focusing on the Ragusan-Ottoman relations. It is therefore essential to understand how the Ragusans gathered information, communicated, negotiated, and were represented abroad. The study of Ragusa's diplomatic activities is based on archival collections from the Croatian State Archives in Dubrovnik (Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku), which are full of material from the existence of the Ragusan republic, alongside relevant transcribed collections of the primary sources. Some of the transcribed collections are employed in the discussion of the research questions. The primary sources used here were collected during three archival trips to Dubrovnik in the summer and fall of 2021, and in the spring of 2022.

The research topic of this thesis requires the interpretation and analysis of the contents in various diplomatic letters and instructions that the Ragusans sent abroad to foreign courts, among themselves, and to their ambassadors. This is done by employing a quantitative method, a method utilized to comprehend the meaning of the content and information of written text.¹³ The most important collection in discussing the Ragusan diplomacy is the collection HR-DADU-8 *Litterae et commissiones Levantis* (Letters and commissions to the Levante), which

¹⁰ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 152

¹¹ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 78

¹² Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 37-38

¹³ Andersen, A., Rosland, S., Ryymmin, T., Skålevåg, S.A., *Å gripe fortiden: Innføring i historisk forståing og metode*, Second Edition, (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 2019), 113-114

contains the relevant letters and instructions to conduct the discussion of this thesis.¹⁴ This archival collection therefore provides the basis of the main argument, namely that Ragusa's diplomacy can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy. It is, furthermore, useful in understanding the processes Ragusa went through and how they developed their diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458. In addition, it provides insightful information on how Ragusa employed diplomacy to justify and explain their relations with the Ottomans in the early 1430s to the other Christian states. Moreover, the letters and instructions obtained from this collection contributes to the comprehension of the Ragusan diplomatic development in the mid-fifteenth century, and how the Ragusans employed various diplomatic rhetorical strategies according to their diplomatic counterpart.

A second archival collection that is applicable for the discussion is HR-DADU-1 *Reformationes*.¹⁵ This collection holds a document from 1301, discussed in an article written by Stevan Dedijer, in which he argues that Ragusa had the very first intelligence-service in Europe.¹⁶ This particular document can potentially prove the beginnings of the development from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy in Ragusa in the early fourteenth century. By analyzing the contents of the document, one is provided with a comprehension of how essential information was for the republic.

The third archival collection used is HR-DADU-9 *Diversa Notarie*.¹⁷ However, only a few documents from this collection are employed. Despite this, these documents are highly relevant when discussing the Ragusan diplomatic machinery as Renaissance diplomacy because they confirm the existence of Ragusan representation in the Balkan hinterlands. It contains, among other things, the correspondence between the Ragusan government and their consulates in the Balkans. Another useful archival collection when discussing the Ragusan representation is HR-DADU-21.2 *Lamenta de foris*.¹⁸ Like the latter archival collection, this one also contains documents confirming the correspondence between the Ragusan government and the consulates. The two collections, HR-DADU-9 *Diversa Notarie* and HR-DADU-21.2 *Lamenta de foris*, additionally provides the primary sources that are necessary to discuss the merchants' role in the Ragusan diplomacy.

¹⁴ Drzavni Arhiv u Dubrovniku (National Archives in Dubrovnik), onwards referred to as HR-DADU. The full name of the archival collection is HR-DADU-8. 1 *Litterae et commissiones Levantis*

¹⁵ The full name of the archival collection is HR-DADU-1 *Reformationes*

¹⁶ Dedijer, Stevan, "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806): A Model for the Twenty-First Century?", *International Journal and Counterintelligence*, 15, 2002, 101-114

¹⁷ The full name of the archival collection is HR-DADU-9 *Diversa notarie*

¹⁸ The full name of the archival collection is HR-DADU-21.2 *Lamenta de foris*

The final archival collection employed is HR-DADU-7-2-1-1 *Acta Turcarum*.¹⁹ This collection contains the Ottoman *Ferman of October 1458* (the Ottoman document confirming the Ragusan payment of the tribute). It is a relevant document as it provides the basis of the understanding of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in the late 1450s. Moreover, this document is the first preserved document in Turkish of the State Archives in Dubrovnik.²⁰

It must be stressed that these collections of primary sources have been transcribed by scholars, such as Ljubomir Stojanović, Josip Gelcich, Lajos Thalloczy, Jovan Radonić, and Antonije Vučetić. The most important transcribed collections are *Stare Srpske povelje i pisma, drugi deo, Dubrovnik i susedi negovi* (Old Serbian Charters and Letters, second part, Dubrovnik and its neighbors) edited by Stojanović, *Diplomatarium relationum reipublicae ragusanae cum regno Hungariae* (The diplomatic relations between the republic of Ragusa and the kingdom of Hungary) edited by Josip Gelcich and Lajos Thalloczy, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje* (Dubrovnik's acts and charters) edited by Jovan Radonić, "Spomenici Dubrovački", *Srd* (Dubrovnik Monuments) edited by Antonije Vučetić, and finally "The Charter of October 1458" in *Dubrovački-Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458 Godine* (The Ragusan-Ottoman agreement from the 23rd of October 1458) edited by Branislav M. Nedeljković.²¹

"Spomenici Dubrovački", written in Cyrillic, contains primary sources that are useful for the third chapter of this thesis, which discusses the early history of Ragusa until the first Ragusan-Ottoman contacts in the late fourteenth century.²² *Diplomatarium relationum* contains the highly relevant collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, which originally includes the letters and instructions given to the Ragusan ambassadors when visiting the Hungarian court. These documents are written in Italian and Latin. Even though the transcribed version is compromised by documents regarding the Ragusan-Hungarian relations, it contains important information about the Ottomans as well.²³ The work must be included in this thesis because it does not only provide a broader understanding of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in the 1440s and 1450s, but it is also essential to the understanding of *how* the Ragusans employed diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458.

¹⁹ The full name of the archival collection is HR-DADU-7-2-1-1 *Acta Turcarum*

²⁰ HR-DADU-7-2-1-1 *Acta Turcarum*

²¹ *Stare srpske povelje i pisma, knjiga 1, Dubrovnik i susedi njegovi, drugi deo* (Vol. 1/II), (Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1934), ed. Stojanović, Ljubomir; *Diplomatarium relationum reipublicae ragusanae cum regno Hungariae*, (Budapest: Kiadja a m. Tud. Akadémia Tört. Bizottsága, 1887), ed. Gelcich, Josip & Thalloczy, Lajos; *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I & Vol 1/II (Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija: 1934), ed. Radonić, Jovan; *Spomenici Dubrovački [Ragusan Monuments]*, ed. Vučetić

²² *Spomenici Dubrovački [Ragusan Monuments]*, ed. Vučetić

²³ *Diplomatarium relationum*, ed. Gelcich & Thalloczy

Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma, also written in early Cyrillic, contains the transcribed *ahdnames* of Sultan Murad II from 1430, 1431, 1442 and the *Ferman* of Sultan Mehmed II from 1458. These are extremely important documents that help provide a comprehension of Ragusa's position in the relations with the Ottomans. They are also crucial because by analyzing them, one is able to identify the development in the Ragusan-Ottoman relations. These are especially useful to pinpoint the difference in their relations after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.²⁴ Primary sources from the collections *Divera Notarie* and *Lamenti di foris*, are also included in this collection of transcribed documents.

Another work with transcribed versions of the primary sources is *Dubrovačka akta i povelje* volume I/I and volume I/II.²⁵ The two volumes include primary sources in Italian and Latin. This work, like *Diplomatarium relationum* contains primary sources from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. In difference to *Diplomatarium relationum*, the instructions that the Ragusan ambassadors received when travelling to the Ottoman government, are included. These documents are especially important because one may identify how the Ragusans utilized diplomacy in their relations with the Ottomans, and how it differed from relations with other states. This is more thoroughly discussed in chapter six.

The final transcribed collection used in this thesis, *Dubrovački-Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458. Godine*, written in early Cyrillic, contains a highly relevant document, "The Charter of October 1458". It provides the necessary information regarding the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in 1458, and it is also the charter that placed Ragusa under the Ottoman protection.²⁶ It must be stressed that the original version of the Charter of October 1458, or *Ahdname of October 1458* has unfortunately not been preserved in its original form, but the existence of it is confirmed by the *Ahdname of 1462*. It has, nonetheless, been reconstructed because of the existence of an Italian translation of the Greek version of the document, which will be used in the further analysis.²⁷

The different letters and instructions are all written in different languages, as the three official ones during the time of the republic was Slavic (Croatian), Italian, and Latin.²⁸ Some of the primary sources, mainly the different *ahdnames* of the sultans, but also the *Ferman of 1458*, are written in early Cyrillic, while the letters and instruction from the collection *Lettere e commissioni di Levante* are written in Italian and Latin. This thesis is mainly based on the

²⁴ *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović

²⁵ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol I/I & Vol I/II, ed. Radonić

²⁶ "Charter of October 1458" in *Dubrovački -Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458. Godine*, ed. Nedeljković

²⁷ "Charter of October 1458" in *Dubrovački -Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458. Godine*, ed. Nedeljković

²⁸ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 247

early Cyrillic and Italian letters and instructions, however some of the Latin documents are employed as well.

State of Research: Ragusan Diplomacy

There are several directions in the study of Ragusan history, but the two most studied are the economic- and the diplomatic history. Mostly because there is a common agreement between scholars that the Ragusans were successful in two manners. Firstly, economically, as the city-state was built and developed through its commercial success in the Mediterranean and in the Balkan hinterlands.²⁹ Ragusa is, nevertheless, most known for its successful diplomacy and for its skillful ambassadors. Its diplomatic machinery has therefore been the subject of research among many scholars, and it has been studied superficially and in depth.³⁰ Furthermore, due to its position in the Balkans, Ragusa has been classified as a city-state between the West and the East, and it thus had various contacts in the two parts of the world.³¹

Several studies of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations have been conducted, but only the most important and relevant ones are presented here. Among them are the books of historians Robin Harris and Vesna Miović. Harris focuses on the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in one of the chapters of his book, *Dubrovnik: A History* from 2006. His book mainly focuses on the general history of Dubrovnik, from its very start in the seventh century to the Croatian Independence war in the early 1990s.³² It has, nevertheless, provided the useful frames needed to present a general background of the Ragusan history until the late fourteenth century.

Vesna Miović, on the other hand, dedicates a whole book to the Ragusan-Ottoman relations, and gives an in-depth study of it in, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istambulu* (Dubrovnik's diplomacy in Istanbul). Miović gives a detailed account of the way the Ragusan ambassadors (*Poklisari*), sent to the Sublime Porte (Ottoman central government), worked, and the instructions the ambassadors received from the Ragusan government. Both books have,

²⁹ Havrylyshyn, Oleg; Srzentić, Nora, "Economy of Ragusa, 1300 - 1800 The Tiger of Mediaeval Mediterranean" at The Twentieth Dubrovnik Economic Conference, (Zagreb: Croatian National Bank, 2014)

³⁰ Miović, Vesna, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istambulu* (Zagreb; Dubrovnik: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2003); Harris, *Dubrovnik: A History*; Miović, Vesna, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik" in *European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (Brill Publishers, 2013), ed. Karmán, Garbor and Kunčević, Lovro, 187-208

³¹ Krekić, Bariša, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries: A City Between East and West*, (Norman, Oklahoma: Univeristy of Oklahoma Press), 33-76; Miović, Vesna, *Wisdom at the Crossroads: True Stories From the Time of the Republic of Dubrovnik and the Ottoman Empire* (Dubrovnik: Udruga za pomicanje multikulturalnih vrijednosti "Kartolina", 2011), 16

³² Harris, *Dubrovnik: A History*

nevertheless, contributed to the understanding of the Ragusan diplomacy in general and the Ragusan-Ottoman relations.³³ It must be stressed that Miović has contributed a lot in the research field of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations. Miović's chapter, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Ragusa" in *European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* is perhaps the most valuable contribution in comprehending why the Ottomans placed Ragusa under their protection, instead of seizing the city-state.³⁴ A third contribution of Miović is the book, *Wisdom at the Crossroads*, which contributes to the comprehension of the beginnings of Ragusa's relations with Sultan Mehmed II.³⁵ This is essential in understanding *how* Ragusa obtained Ottoman protection in 1458.

A third scholar that has contributed a great deal to the research field of Ragusan history is Lovro Kunčević. His book, *Vrijeme harmonije* (the Time of Harmony), and many of his articles such as, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", are essential in comprehending Ragusa's position between the East and the West, both geographically and politically.³⁶ Kunčević's works are valuable in comprehending the various tactics and rhetorical strategies the Ragusans employed in their diplomacy.

Another valuable account is Zdenko Zlatar's book *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, in which he sheds the light on how and why Ragusa's ruling class, the Patriciate, decided to change the city-state's Ottoman protection for the one of Habsburg in 1684. Even though the focus of this thesis is slightly different, Zlatar's account gives a valuable insight in the early diplomatic relations between the Ragusans and the Ottomans, as well as a deeper understanding of the Ottoman ahdnames.³⁷

Even though all these contributions have been exceedingly insightful and valuable, none of them have tried to classify the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy. Additionally, none of them have discussed the Ragusan merchants' contribution in the diplomatic activities of the city-state. The merchants have only been briefly mentioned, and there is a lack of a deeper study of their diplomatic activities. It is reasonable to discuss the possible contribution of the

³³ Miović, Vesna, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istanbulu*

³⁴ Miović, Vesna, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik", 187-208

³⁵ Miović, *Wisdom at the Crossroads Empire*, 12

³⁶ Kunčević, Lovro, *Vrijeme harmonije: O razlozima društvene i političke stabilnosti Dubrovačke republike*, (Dubrovnik: Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti zavod za povijesne znanosti u Dubrovniku, 2020); Kunčević, Lovro, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", *Dubrovnik Annales*, No. 17, 2013, 37-68

³⁷ Zlatar, Zdenko, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent: The Republic of Dubrovnik and the Origins of the Eastern Question*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992)

Ragusan merchants as scholars have emphasized the role of the merchants in Italian Renaissance diplomacy.³⁸ Because of the absence of the merchants' diplomatic activities, this thesis can be an essential contribution to the academic discourse.

State of Research: Renaissance Diplomacy

The studies existing of Renaissance diplomacy are mainly centered around the city-state's of the Italian peninsula from the 1350s, and onwards, with a particular focus on the second half of the fifteenth century. Scholars, such as Jovan Kurbalija, have described the late fifteenth century as the *Golden Age* of Renaissance diplomacy, and it is widely accepted that this period saw the emergence of the first resident ambassador.³⁹ The traditional grand narrative of the Renaissance diplomacy is based on the spreading of a new diplomatic practice that was grounded on residency, professional ambassadors, and central control.⁴⁰ Historians studying the Renaissance diplomacy generally emphasize that the key characteristic of the transition between medieval and modern diplomacy to be the inclusion of a resident ambassador in the Italian city-states.⁴¹

Although the Italian city-states have been the case-study of Renaissance diplomacy, the area has been neglected in Italian historiography in general. Daniela Frigo explains the lack of interest shown by Italian historians because of their suspicion of political history, which is what diplomatic history has been identified as. She also points out that the neglect is due to "[...] the excessively sharp demarcation line drawn between the interior and exterior of the state by early twentieth-century historiography."⁴² This distinction prevented an understanding of the connection between the government of state and the foreign policy, between diplomatic and military choices and internal arrangements, and between negotiations, alliances, and alignments, one the one hand. The dynastic and patrimonial concerns of the princes, or the political concerns of the republican patriciates, on the other.⁴³ The new manner of studying international relations reconstructs the aims, negotiations, grand alliances and diplomatic

³⁸ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 39

³⁹ Kurbalija, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFoundation, 21.06.21; Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 60

⁴⁰ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 31

⁴¹ Fubini, Riccardo, "Diplomacy and Government in the Italian City-states of the Fifteenth Century (Florence and Venice)", 25

⁴² Frigo, Daniela "Introduction" in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), ed. by Frigo, Daniela. Trans. by Belton, Adrian. Published online: October 2009, 1-24, 5

⁴³ Frigo, "Introduction", 5-6

alliances of the European states, and it examines every individual state, the thinking and culture of its leaders, the continuities and cleavages in the choices of its foreign policy, its disputes with other states, and the conceptions of state and sovereignty embraced by its ambassadors.⁴⁴

Historian Garret Mattingly's *Renaissance Diplomacy* provides a useful frame in the study of Renaissance diplomacy, in which he emphasizes the role of the resident ambassador.⁴⁵ A more recent study of the Renaissance diplomacy in the Italian city-state is Isabella Lazzarini's, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520*, where she challenges Mattingly's account. In difference to Mattingly, Lazzarini states that there is more to the roots of modern-day diplomacy than the resident ambassador. She even argues that her book can potentially replace Mattingly's book, as it presents innovative approaches to the theme of Renaissance diplomacy compared to Mattingly's "outdated" work.⁴⁶ She defines Renaissance diplomacy as a flexible political activity consisting of negotiation, information-gathering, representation, and communication, and she connects them to the political and cultural transformations of power and authority.⁴⁷ Her work is a valuable addition in the research field as Lazzarini's definition of Renaissance diplomacy allows for the inclusion and classification of the diplomacies of other political entities, like the Ragusan diplomacy, as Renaissance diplomacy. Her work is also essential in defining the Ragusan merchants as diplomatic representatives, as she introduces the term *occasional diplomats* to describe the diplomatic activities of the Italian merchants.⁴⁸ This will be further discussed in chapter 7.

Mattingly's approach in the study of Renaissance diplomacy and the view that the key element in the transition from medieval to modern diplomacy is the resident ambassador is challenged once more. Historian Riccardo Fubini states that the traditional approach in the study of Renaissance diplomacy is out of date, and he uses Mattingly's work as an example. One of the main arguments for the outdated approach being, "it would not be difficult to find examples, even very early ones, of prolonged residentially, like that of the Florentine notary dispatched to the papal Curia in 1285".⁴⁹ This may indicate that the resident ambassador already existed in the medieval diplomacy of the Italian peninsula.

Historian Luca Riccardi, in his essay on Vatican diplomacy, puts an emphasize on the evolution in the international situation at the end of the fifteenth century, and that these

⁴⁴ Frigo, "Introduction", 6

⁴⁵ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*

⁴⁶ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 3

⁴⁷ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 4

⁴⁸ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 39

⁴⁹ Fubini, "Diplomacy and Government in the Italian City-states of the Fifteenth Century", 30

developments resulted in a progressive strengthening of the state and its functions. Additionally, the more stable diplomatic relations were established to guarantee fewer irregular contacts, which characterized the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ The developments in the international situation may perhaps be explained by the emergence of the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹

The disagreement among scholars studying Renaissance diplomacy, whether the resident ambassador is the key characteristic of the transition or not, may be explained by the different interpretations of the term “permanency”. According to historian, Catherine Fletcher, the precise length of a stay is unimportant, but that the essential matter was the diplomatic credentials of the ambassador posted overseas.⁵² A diplomatic credential is defined as a letter sent with an ambassador from his government, addressed to the government of the receiving state.⁵³ It may also explain why there is an ongoing historiographical debate about the establishment of the first permanent resident ambassador in the Italian states, beyond and during the fifteenth century.⁵⁴

These approaches in the study of Renaissance diplomacy, mentioned above, solely focus on the diplomacy conducted by the Italian city-states in the Renaissance. However, they are extremely important contributions to the research field. What is absent though, in the research field is the study and classification of the diplomatic machineries of city-states located outside the Italian peninsula. Ragusa, for example, has only been briefly mentioned as a city-state with one of the strongest diplomacies in the Renaissance. Scholar, and the founder of DiploFoundation, Jovan Kurbalija has placed it among the top three developed diplomacies during the Renaissance. However, he only briefly mentioned this in a masterclass on Renaissance diplomacy, where he points out that he did Ragusa “some injustice” by not including it in the discussion.⁵⁵ An inclusion of Ragusa in the field of Renaissance diplomacy is still absent, even though its diplomatic machinery has been widely studied by Croatian, and international scholars.⁵⁶ This study can therefore be an important contribution in the research field of Renaissance diplomacy, and in the general studies of Ragusa’s diplomacy.

⁵⁰ Riccardi, “An Outline of Vatican Diplomacy in the Early Modern Age” in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800*, 99

⁵¹ Riccardi, “An Outline of Vatican Diplomacy in the Early Modern Age”, 101

⁵² Fletcher, Catherine, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 24

⁵³ “Modern Diplomatic Practice” in Britannica, 12.04.2022,

⁵⁴ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 23

⁵⁵ Kurbalija, Jovan, Lecture on “Renaissance Diplomacy: Compromise as a Solution to Conflict: Diplomacy and Technology: A Historical Journey” at DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

⁵⁶ Harris, *Dubrovnik*; Kunčević, “The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)”, 37-68; Miović, “Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik”, 187-208

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The Root of Modern-day Diplomacy

When approaching the study of the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy, and how they employed diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458, a theoretical framework is needed. In this case, diplomatic theory, borrowed from the field of political science, is a relevant tool. Due to the many primary sources this thesis employs, it is crucial that a theory is included, as it provides the support pillars in the analysis, as well as a basis to support the findings and the argumentation in this thesis.⁵⁷ This chapter aims to provide the theoretical framework needed to discuss Ragusa's diplomacy in the Renaissance.

Earlier approaches in the studies of Renaissance diplomacy have focused on the emergence of the resident ambassador as the principal change in the development from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy, and therefore also why Renaissance diplomacy is considered to be the root of modern-day diplomacy.⁵⁸ Newer approaches, on the other hand, stress that diplomacy is a flexible political activity comprised of tools like *negotiation*, *information-gathering*, *representation*, and *communication*.⁵⁹ These different diplomatic instruments can be defined as the official side of diplomacy. It should be emphasized that diplomacy, and particularly the diplomacy in the Renaissance also consisted of a more unofficial side. The tools falling under this category are *lying*, *espionage*, and *bribery*. Scholars, such as the British diplomat Harold Nicolson, and scholar, Jovan Kurbalija disagree about the importance of these tools compromising the informal part of Renaissance diplomacy. Nicolson argues that these were the *weak* tools of the diplomacy in the fifteenth century, while Kurbalija defines them as the *trademarks* of Renaissance diplomacy.⁶⁰ This thesis will, nonetheless, study the use of these tools as useful instruments in the diplomacy performed by the Ragusans from the 1430s to 1458. For the sake of illustrating how Ragusa's diplomacy functioned and how it can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy, this thesis proceeds by defining the different elements, both the official and unofficial ones that together characterize the field of Renaissance

⁵⁷ Andersen, A., Rosland, S., Ryymin, Teemu., Skålevåg, S. A., *Å gripe fortida: Innføring av historisk forståing og metode*, 132-134

⁵⁸ Hamilton, Keith & Langhorne, Richard, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its evolution, theory and administration*. (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 2; Berridge, G.R., *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, (London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), 1-2; Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 60

⁵⁹ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 4

⁶⁰ Kurbalija, Jovan, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

diplomacy. In addition, this chapter discusses the different theoretical perspectives in the studies of diplomacy, specially emphasizing the studies of the diplomacy in the Renaissance, but also focusing on the existing studies of the Ragusan diplomacy in the fifteenth century.

Diplomacy: Definition and Aim

Diplomacy is a part of a broader term known as international relations (IR), and it is described as a regulated process of communication, as well as the communication system of international relations.⁶¹ Another definition is diplomacy as the common name of the different organs that convey the international relations between states.⁶² However, this is a vague and superficial definition, which requires a further explanation. Diplomacy functions as the political instrument a state uses to secure its interests in relation to other states.⁶³ A fourth definition, and perhaps the most useful one so far, due to its depth, defines diplomacy as the ways in which states communicate, negotiate, and relate to each other or the international society.⁶⁴ It can, by interpreting these definitions, be argued that diplomacy is a collective term for the tools a state employs in the handling of international relations, namely negotiation, representation, communication and information-gathering. The aims of these tools are to maintain peaceful relations and to secure a state's interests, through peaceful means rather than by force, propaganda, and the recourse to law.⁶⁵

In the modern world, diplomacy is mostly conducted in bilateral or multilateral contexts, between states, international inter-governmental organizations (IGO) such as the European Union and the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) like Amnesty International. During the Renaissance, especially the period of Italian Renaissance diplomacy, 1350-1494, diplomacy was developed and conducted among the Italian city-states, the Papal states, and the Kingdom of Naples. Kurbalija describes Renaissance diplomacy as “compromise as a solution to conflict”.⁶⁶ His description is in reality what diplomacy is about as the main goal is to prevent a conflict to escalate into the state of war, and this needs to be done through peaceful means and through compromise.

⁶¹ Berridge, G.R., *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, (London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), 19; Jönsson, Christer; Hall, Martin, “Communication: An Essential Aspect of Diplomacy”, *International Policy Perspectives* (2003), 4, 195-210

⁶² Hauge, Sigvald; Neumann, Iver B., *Hva er diplomati*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2011), 30

⁶³ Bech, Jon and Lundbo, Sten. 2019. *Diplomati*, *Store norske leksikon*, retrieved 02.11.2021

⁶⁴ Hauge; Neumann, *Hva er diplomati*, 11

⁶⁵ Berridge, *Diplomacy*, 1

⁶⁶ Kurbalija, Jovan, Lecture on “Renaissance Diplomacy”, DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

Defining the Diplomatic Tools

Representation, information-gathering, negotiation, and communication all consisted essential parts of the Ragusan diplomacy throughout its existence. It must be stressed that the aspect of communication is an important part in the employment of all the other tools of diplomacy, and due to this only a few lines will be dedicated to the explanation of it. Communication is described as the essence of diplomacy because diplomacy in itself is defined as a regulated process of communication, or the communication system of the international society.⁶⁷ Since communication is a tool defined as the essence of diplomacy, it will not be further discussed on its own, but rather as forming a part of the other diplomatic instruments.

Representation, and most importantly information-gathering are crucial tools in the conduct of negotiation, which is why it is essential to define these prior to describing the aspect of negotiation. Information in the Renaissance was a spectrum that included news, rumors, and speculation, and the control of it became crucial for small and great political actors.⁶⁸ The importance of information-gathering has been emphasized by many scholars, and even rulers. The Italian ruler Francesco Sforza viewed it as a weapon and an instrument of political confrontation. Controlling the information required an advanced system of information-gatherers, networks, agents, and informers.⁶⁹ Kurbalija states that information-gathering is the most important task of the resident ambassadors, who he describes as being *indispensable* intelligence-gatherers, who reported back to their city-states about military preparations, cargoes arriving, the situation at foreign courts, the state of alliance, political gossip, and the atmosphere of the market.⁷⁰ One may observe how information-gathering and representation functioned together. Although it is often linked to the development of the resident ambassador, information-gathering is a persisted aspect of diplomacy.⁷¹

In Renaissance diplomacy, representation is connected to the resident ambassador that emerged in the Italian city-states in the mid-fifteenth century.⁷² The development of the early sovereign states led to the ruler's need for the knowledge of internal affairs of his neighboring states, which could prevent potential crises. Furthermore, the resident ambassador was a key in raising the diplomatic alarm when any power threatened the balance. Their role was also to

⁶⁷ Jönsson, Christer & Hall, Martin, "Communication: An Essential Aspect of Diplomacy", 195-196

⁶⁸ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 70

⁶⁹ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 71

⁷⁰ Kurbalija, Jovan, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

⁷¹ Jönsson & Hall, "Communication", 197

⁷² Berridge, *Diplomacy*, 19

look out for the safety of their fellow countrymen abroad.⁷³ Despite the importance of the resident ambassador, representation cannot solely be linked to the resident ambassador as many of the Italian city-states, such as Venetia, were commercially driven, and because of it they had built a strong manufacturing and mercantile profile. The merchants of these city-states created trading networks around the Mediterranean, which in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries worked as places to conduct information-gathering. Due to these trading networks, rulers and governments could be provided with the easy access of information and contacts.⁷⁴ Similar to many of the Italian city-states, Ragusa depended on its commerce to survive. Throughout its existence, Ragusa developed commercial ties around the Mediterranean and in the Balkan hinterlands, which also led to the formation of Ragusan trading colonies and development of Ragusan consulates. In the years of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, these trading colonies and consulates proved to be of importance, particularly in the gathering of information, as these colonies witnessed the fall of many places and towns.⁷⁵ Ragusa's trading colonies, and particularly the consulates are discussed in chapter seven. This confirms that both representation at foreign courts, and representations in the sense of colonies and consulates, were necessary in the gathering of information.

Negotiation has been described as “a technique of regulated argument which normally occurs between delegations of officials representing states, international organizations or other agencies.”⁷⁶ A second definition, which one may connect to Nicolson's definition of diplomacy is negotiation as a tool two parts use to solve an international question.⁷⁷ The commonly recognized aim of negotiation is to resolve a conflict without the use of force, on joint or parallel agreement.⁷⁸ This is also the core function of diplomacy, to prevent war through peaceful means. However, there can be several aims of negotiations. Firstly, it can be used to identify common interests and to get to an agreement on joint parallel action in their pursuit. Secondly, negotiation may be used in the recognition of conflicting interests and to get to a compromise.⁷⁹ Fred Charles Iklé argues that the two aims are intertwined since without a common interest nor an issue of conflict, negotiation cannot take place. Without a common interest, there is nothing

⁷³ Bjola, Corneliu & Kornprobst, Markus, *Understanding International Diplomacy: Theory, Practice and Ethics*, (London: Routledge, 2013), 25

⁷⁴ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 38-39

⁷⁵ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 160

⁷⁶ Berridge, *Diplomacy*, 117

⁷⁷ Hauge; Neumann, *Hva er diplomati*, 94

⁷⁸ Berridge, *Diplomacy*, 119; Cohen, Raymond, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1991), 7; Hauge; Neumann, *Hva er diplomati*, 94; Iklé, Fred Charles, *How Nations Negotiate*, (New York; Evanston; Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), 2

⁷⁹ Berridge, *Diplomacy*, 119

to negotiate for, and without a conflict, there is nothing to negotiate about.⁸⁰ There are several examples of how Ragusa negotiated on the level of common interests, and to prevent the escalation of conflicts, especially in the Ragusan-Ottoman relations during the late 1450s.

Negotiation was perhaps the most important tool in the Ragusan diplomacy as it in many ways functioned as Ragusa's defense system, due to the size of the city-state and their lack of military force.⁸¹ They relied on negotiation to continue their existence as a city-state, and there are several examples of how the Ragusans negotiated with foreign overlords and courts to obtain their interests. This thesis provides several examples of how Ragusa employed negotiation. The examples discussed are the Ragusan-Hungarian negotiations in Višegrad in 1358, when the Ragusans managed to obtain *de facto* independency, how they used negotiations to acquire several trading rights, and lastly how they utilized it to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458. To discuss these events in sufficient detail, it is imperative to include the art of negotiation as part of the discussion.

Defining the Key Concepts in Renaissance Diplomacy

The key concepts of Renaissance diplomacy can best be described by this excerpt, "They bribed; they stimulated and financed rebellions; encouraged opposition parties; intervened in the most subversive ways in the internal affairs of the countries to which they were accredited; they lied, they spied, and they stole."⁸² These are the words of Harold Nicolson, and what he viewed as the weakness of Renaissance diplomacy. However, this was the reality, and the different actions he describes, were in fact important tools, which Kurbalija defines as the *trademarks* of Renaissance diplomacy.⁸³ Nicolson's argumentation must be seen in the light of his view on Renaissance diplomacy in general. In difference to other scholars, Nicolson did not view Renaissance diplomacy to be the roots of modern diplomacy. He, moreover, argued that the French diplomacy had to professionalize and purge the Italian inheritance of its corruption, thus developing into the system that exists today. In his opinion, the French diplomacy of the seventeenth centuries constituted the roots of the modern diplomacy.

In Ragusan diplomacy, lying, espionage, and bribes were not uncommon tools, which functioned alongside the more official part of the diplomatic craft. Furthermore, scholars have described Ragusa as being a center of espionage, and for assuming a double role among the

⁸⁰ Iklé, *How Nations Negotiate*, 1

⁸¹ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 298

⁸² Kurbalija, "Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

⁸³ Kurbalija, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

states in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans.⁸⁴ The presence of the trademarks may indicate that they were significant to conduct the more official part of diplomacy, namely information-gathering, communication, negotiation, and representation. To develop an understanding of the Ragusan diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century, it is crucial to define the trademarks of Renaissance diplomacy.

The contemporary understanding of the role of the Renaissance diplomat was that he was sent abroad, to reside overseas and to suppress the truth when it was necessary. Suppressing the truth constituted a significant part of the Ragusan diplomatic rhetoric, particularly when explaining their relations with the Ottomans to the rest of the Christian West, which will be further discussed in chapter four.⁸⁵ Sir Henry Wotton describes the Renaissance ambassador as “an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country”.⁸⁶

A second trademark, bribery, also known as *mito*, was further a regular tool in Ragusan diplomacy, and the ambassadors were often instructed to present the foreign courts with gifts of different values according to the importance of the officials at the courts. For example, the kings, queens, and the courtiers in foreign states had to be presented with expensive and exclusive gifts. *Mito* was also a familiar action in the Ragusan-Ottoman relations, which the Ragusans used as a tool to obtain their own interests.⁸⁷ Fletcher points out that the ambassadors in the Renaissance usually expected something in return for their generosity. The action of bribery or gift-giving was not codified, and it was usually not recorded.⁸⁸ There is, nevertheless, proof of how the Ragusans were instructed to give gifts at foreign courts in the instructions the ambassadors received from the Ragusan government.⁸⁹

The third trademark of the Renaissance diplomacy, which Kurbalija points out is espionage.⁹⁰ Ragusa has been described as a place where espionage frequently happened.⁹¹ It is likely that Ragusa's geographical position, and their diplomatic relations with both the East and the West, allowed the city-state to develop into a place of such activities. Ermolao Barbaro, the author of the first literary treatment of the “new diplomatic machinery” of the resident

⁸⁴ *Republika*, Episode 1, «Mali medu velikima», directed by Bozidar Domagoj Buric, aired 18.04.2016 on Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (HRT 1)

⁸⁵ Kunčević, “The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)”

⁸⁶ Fletcher, Catherine, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 36

⁸⁷ Miović, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istambulu*, 51; Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 64

⁸⁸ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 145

⁸⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21

⁹⁰ Kurbalija, Jovan, Lecture on “Renaissance Diplomacy”, DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

⁹¹ *Republika*, Episode 1, «Mali medu velikima», directed by Bozidar Domagoj Burić, aired 18.04.2016 on Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (HRT 1)

ambassador, warns about activities such as espionage because an ambassador partaking in these activities, will only ruin himself as the truth will eventually be known.⁹²

Theoretical Perspectives in the Studies of Diplomacy

Does diplomatic theory exist? The field of diplomacy is described as a field that has not been the object of much theorizing.⁹³ Furthermore, the British scholar of international relations, Martin Wight argues that there is no diplomatic theory at all, which can be explained by the historical absence of diplomacy.⁹⁴ In difference, researchers Costas M. Constantinou and Paul Sharp suggest the existence of a lot of diplomatic theory, and they argue that theoretical perspectives in diplomacy are anchored in the key conceptual investigations, intellectual exchanges, and normative and critical proposition concerning different aspects of the diplomatic practice.⁹⁵ Moreover, diplomatic theory can be understood as the main ideas of the diplomats, and scholars who study them have granted the conditions for the general way of thinking about diplomacy and international relations.⁹⁶

Most scholars of diplomacy argue that their field of research have been neglected by their colleagues of international relations. However, the issue relies on how seriously one takes diplomacy to be an autonomous concept that can provide valuable viewpoints in understanding and discussing international relations.⁹⁷ Moreover, diplomacy is often synonymized with other terms such as *foreign policy*, *statecraft*, or *international relations* in general. It is, furthermore, viewed as an *instrument* or a *medium* of foreign policy, rather than being theorized as the engine room of international relations, in the sense that it functions as a practice that forms, reproduces, maintains, and modifies international systems and world orders.⁹⁸

What diplomacy is or what it ought to be have been challenged by critical approaches. These are identified as being post-modernist, post-colonialist, post-structuralist, and post-positivist, which have provided the conditions for diplomacy to be discussed within other fields

⁹² Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 107-108

⁹³ Jönsson & Hall, "Communication", 197

⁹⁴ Constantinou, Costas M. & Sharp, Paul, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", in *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*, (London: Sage Publications Inc, 2016), ed. by Constantinou, Costas M., Kerr, Pauline & Sharp, Paul, 13

⁹⁵ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 13

⁹⁶ Sharp, Paul, *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* part of the series *Cambridge Studies in International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6

⁹⁷ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 16

⁹⁸ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 16-19

of international relations.⁹⁹ The aim of most of these approaches is to uncover the power and ethical implication of various practices of diplomacy, and especially the marginalization, hierarchies, alienations, and exclusions that these diplomatic practices intentionally or unintentionally develop.¹⁰⁰ There are, in addition, new theoretical approaches in the studies of diplomacy. Approaches like these have discussed diplomacy outside the sphere of international relations, and rather included other fields into the conversation of diplomatic studies, such as anthropology, sociology, theology, psychology, and cultural studies, and a more plural understanding of diplomacy has been suggested by these studies.¹⁰¹

There is a link between the practice of diplomacy and the practice of theory, which must be understood in the light of diplomatic thought on the different historical periods.¹⁰² In this case, it is relevant to focus on thinkers or researchers on the diplomacy conducted in the Renaissance. The research on the medieval and early Renaissance diplomacy have extensively discussed the diplomatic office, and topics as the court behavior, the oratorical and persuasive skills, as well as the sociability and the intellectual talent of diplomatic agents.¹⁰³ An example of such a focal point may be identified in Garrett Mattingly's book, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, in which his focus lies on the resident ambassador, and why the emergence of this diplomatic agent characterized the change from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy.¹⁰⁴

A similar focus can be recognized in Lovro Kunčević's article, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", where he argues that the Ragusan ambassadors developed different diplomatic rhetorical strategies to justify their relations with the Ottomans in the mid-fifteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Kunčević's article may be linked to the focal point on the persuasive skills of the diplomatic agents in the Renaissance. Similar approaches on the studies of the Ragusan diplomacy can also be found in historian Vesna Miović's book, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*, in which she centers her discussion around the Ragusan tributary ambassadors, and their mission to deliver the tribute (*haraç*) to the Sublime Porte. Her account focuses on the ritualized aspect of electing the tributary ambassadors, the ritual of delivering the *haraç*, but also the day-to-day life of the ambassadors when staying in Istanbul.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 22

¹⁰⁰ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 22

¹⁰¹ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 24

¹⁰² Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 13

¹⁰³ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 14

¹⁰⁴ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*

¹⁰⁵ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 37-68

¹⁰⁶ Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*

Negotiation has further been emphasized as another key focus of the diplomatic craft. Both the conditions for a prosperous negotiation, but also the ends of negotiation have been the center of discussion for scholars studying diplomacy.¹⁰⁷ The focus has been on both the conditions for and the end results of negotiation. *Strategy* forms another focal point in the studies of negotiation. It is described as an important ingredient of diplomacy that underlines the method of getting one's way with others.¹⁰⁸ In the studies of Ragusan diplomacy, the focus on the strategies employed in negotiation can be found in Lovro Kunčević's article "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", because, as already mentioned, he emphasizes the diplomatic rhetorical strategies employed by the Ragusans in negotiations.¹⁰⁹

This thesis argues for the classification of the Ragusan diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century, as Renaissance diplomacy, and how the Ragusans employed diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458. It is therefore necessary to use the different theoretical perspectives in the studies of diplomacy that are relevant as models for the discussion. Furthermore, to comprehend the Ragusan diplomacy in the fifteenth century it is valuable to discuss the Renaissance diplomacy as a complex instrument, in the sense that the focal point cannot only be based on one of the theoretical perspectives, but rather on the various sides that together form diplomacy.

¹⁰⁷ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 14

¹⁰⁸ Constantinou & Sharp, "Theoretical Perspectives in Diplomacy", 15

¹⁰⁹ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 37-68

Chapter 3: The Development of Ragusan Diplomacy

Why it is Crucial to Include Ragusa's Diplomatic History

In order to provide more context for the answering of this thesis' research questions, this chapter illustrates Ragusa's diplomatic history to the end of the 1390s. It is crucial to include a short account of the Ragusan history prior to the emergence of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, not only because of the lack of a general knowledge about Ragusa's existence, but also because its history shaped and influenced the city-state's diplomacy into how it was exercised in the mid-fifteenth century. The republic's history dates back to the seventh century, however, due to the space limitation only the major events will be discussed.

Ragusa's existence, from the seventh century until the early nineteenth century, can be characterized as a small republic dependent on outside protection to stay alive, as Ragusa, throughout its history existed under the rule and protection of several states and empires. Its political past is usually divided into three main political periods. The first includes Ragusa's establishment, its time under the sovereignty of the Byzantine Empire, and under Venetian sovereignty. Ragusa's second political period involves the republic's *de facto* independency under the protection of the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, their period as a tributary state under the protection of the Ottoman Empire, and finally its time under Habsburg protection. The third and final political period, begins with the fall of Ragusa in 1808, with the occupation of France and Austria, until the Congress of Vienna.¹¹⁰ This thesis focuses on the second political period, while drawing on essential occurrences during the first period, in order to provide a broader context.

This chapter answers the following questions. How did events in Ragusa's first political period influence and shape its diplomacy? The rapid change of overlords, and the changes in the geopolitical scene of the Mediterranean during Ragusa's existence, required a change of diplomatic tactic and rhetorical strategies. It can be argued that the Ragusans, due to their experience with different cultures and religions under different powers, managed to change their diplomacy according to their diplomatic counterpart. The second question considers Ragusa's geographical position. Why was Ragusa's position in the Balkans crucial for the development of the republic's diplomacy, and how did the position shape it? Scholars, such as

¹¹⁰ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, p. 19-20 & Krekić, Bariša, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries: A City Between East and West*, (Norman, Oklahoma: Univeristy of Oklahoma Press), 33-76; Mitić, Ilja, *Dubrovačka Drzava u Medunarodnoj Zajednici (od 1358 do 1815)*, (Zagreb: Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske), 19

Bariša Krekić, have emphasized how Ragusa, due to its position between the East and the West, functioned as a window or a mediator between the two parts of the world.¹¹¹ A position which would be both crucial and beneficial during the emergence of the Ottoman Empire. The rapid change of overlords and diplomatic tactic must be seen in the light of the republic's geographical position and advantages, as the Ragusans knew that their position was also valuable for foreign powers.

Compared to the Italian peninsula on the western coast of the Adriatic, Ragusa on the eastern coast had natural advantages, especially in regard to its geographical position and navigation. Geographically, Ragusa is located in an area that is surrounded by mountains, which, during the time of the republic, functioned as good navigation points along the eastern shore.¹¹² This location allowed Ragusa to prosper economically over the span of its existence. Its location, furthermore, allowed Ragusa to develop a commercial fleet that during its peak years formed a major threat to the commercial fleet of the Republic of Venetia, as the number and size of Ragusa's fleet was equal to Venetia's. A size that is considered to be remarkable as Venetia had a population nearly 20 times larger than Ragusa.¹¹³ Additionally, to the development of a rich maritime trade, the Ragusan economy also flourished from the trade in the Balkan hinterlands. The slow development of communication by roads to nearby places, but also across the Balkan peninsula to Danube, and to Constantinople in later years, enabled the Ragusan trade to expand.¹¹⁴ Its economy could therefore prosper from both maritime trade and the hinterland trade, which placed Ragusa in a valuable position. In years where one of the two types was affected by conflicts between greater powers, the Ragusans could always rely on the other.

Its geographical position, and the trading networks in the hinterlands were valuable during the Ottoman emergence and conquest of the Balkans. Due to the Ragusans having merchants in different trading centers, they automatically also had the access to information. This was not only beneficial for the republic itself, but also for foreign powers like the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, who received information about the Ottomans by the Ragusan government, who again received it, from among others, their merchants witnessing the events.¹¹⁵ This is an important factor that contributes to the comprehension of how the Ragusan

¹¹¹ Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, 3

¹¹² Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, 3

¹¹³ Havrylyshyn; Srzentić, "Economy of Ragusa, 1300 - 1800 The Tiger of Mediaeval Mediterranean", 23-24

¹¹⁴ Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, 3-4

¹¹⁵ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 78

diplomacy functioned, and also in what ways they employed information-gathering in the Renaissance period.

Establishment, Byzantium and the *Serenissima*

Ragusa's emergence has been the topic of disagreement between traditional Ragusan historiography and recent historiography. Traditional historiography argues that the existence of the city-state dates back to the first few decades of the seventh century, and its origin and development are connected to the destruction of Epidaurum (modern day Cavtat in Konavle), located 20 kilometers south of Ragusa. This theory claims that the refugees from Epidaurum, who were of Roman origin, settled on the hills of Ragusa and that they developed the city state. This is based on the information written by the Byzantine emperor and writer, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in his work *De administrando imperio*.¹¹⁶ However, recent archeological findings within the city-walls of Ragusa challenge the traditional assumption. The discoveries of Illyrian and Hellenistic coins serve as proof of a settlement existing there in the third or second century BC.¹¹⁷ A theory has therefore been suggested, namely that Ragusa was constructed by the Byzantines, which seems likely as the Balkan peninsula was under the control of the Byzantine Empire in the beginning of the seventh century.¹¹⁸ Although there is a disagreement between traditional and recent historiography, Ragusa, originally built for military purposes, developed in an accelerated pace with the arrival of the refugees from Epidaurum.¹¹⁹

The first few centuries of Ragusa's existence was spent under the sovereignty of the Byzantine Empire, which lasted until 1204. The time was, nonetheless, characterized by Ragusa spending many short periods under the sovereignty of other states as well, like the Republic of Venetia, the Hungarian kings, the Norman Kingdom in Naples, as well as a few independent years.¹²⁰ This was a result of different political crises and threats the republic faced. An example from the twelfth century with the death of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus in 1180 confirms this. With the death of the emperor, the fragility of the Byzantine Empire was exposed. At the same time, Venetia's power flourished, and the most significant change in the geopolitics

¹¹⁶ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, pp. 22-23; Dedijer, "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 102; Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika, knjiga 1*, 18

¹¹⁷ Zile, Ivica, "Archeological Findings Within the Historic Nucleus of the City of Dubrovnik", *Dubrovnik Annales* 2008, vol. 12, 73-92, 76

¹¹⁸ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 28; Foretic, Vinko, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808, Prva Knjiga* (Zagreb: Frortuna, 2019), 17

¹¹⁹ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 29

¹²⁰ Havrylyshyn and Srzentić, "Economy of Ragusa, 1300 - 1800 The Tiger of Mediaeval Mediterranean", 14

of the century was the shift of dominance in the Eastern Adriatic from Byzantine to Venetian dominance. As the power of Ragusa's overlord, the Byzantine Empire declined, Ragusa faced threats from both Venetia and from a Serbian dynasty, the Nemanjić dynasty. The latter threat developed into a crisis between the Nemanjićs and the Ragusans. Ragusa therefore turned to the Norman Kingdom for protection against the Serbian dynasty, a protection which resulted in a peace treaty between the two counterparts.¹²¹ This confirms that the Ragusans, already in their early diplomatic history, sought the protection of a power they viewed to have the strongest ability to protect them from outside threats. Another example that confirms this is from 1192, when the Ragusans again returned to Byzantine protection due to the decline of the Norman power.¹²²

Ragusa's time under Byzantine sovereignty was overall beneficial for the city-state as their trade prospered, which resulted in a commercial network that was considered to be successful by the beginning of the thirteenth century. Byzantium was also a conveniently distant protector, that led to the establishment of the Ragusan civic institutions and a Ragusan archbishopric.¹²³ Ragusa thus got a *taste* for independency, but Byzantium's sudden collapse by the fall of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 had fatal consequences for the prospect of effective independence for Ragusa, which resulted in a century and a half under the rule of the Republic of Venetia.¹²⁴

The last part of the first political period was characterized by a firmer presence of their new overlord, which was somewhat different from the previously more distant Byzantium. The presence of Venetia, also known as the *Serenissima*, was already evident by the Venetians sending one of their own to function as the Ragusan rector (the head of Ragusa's administrative power). In that way they had their own representative, as well as one who could perform their power in Ragusa.¹²⁵ More affectively for Ragusa, Venetia imposed certain terms on the city-state in the mid-twelfth century only to guarantee Venetia's political power, which is confirmed by a charter written in 1232.¹²⁶ The charter, based on the correspondence between Ragusa and Venetia in January and May 1232 states that "all the [Ragusan] men of the county above thirteen years of age [...] will be sworn fidelity to the lord duke [of Venetia] and his successors".¹²⁷ The

¹²¹ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 36-37

¹²² Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 38

¹²³ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 52

¹²⁴ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 33

¹²⁵ Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808, knjiga 1*, 59

¹²⁶ *Pacta et...* (the rest of the title of the original document has faded away) in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25

¹²⁷ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25 (own translation)

charter further states, “All who will be friends of Venetia, the Ragusans will have them as friends, and all who will be enemies of Venetia, the Ragusans will have them as enemies.”¹²⁸ The third, and perhaps the most affective one for the Ragusan trade was, “[the] Ragusans ought only to arrive in Venetia each year with only four ships [of a certain capacity]”.¹²⁹ They were, furthermore, forbidden to trade in places where the Venetians were banned to trade.¹³⁰

The beginning of this chapter discussed that the Ragusans, due to having two methods of trade, the maritime and the Balkan trade, always had a way to trade in periods where one of the two methods was affected. This statement is verified by the following term from the charter of 1232. Although the Ragusan maritime trade was somewhat restricted due to the Ragusans only being allowed to send four merchant ships a year to Venetia, the Balkan hinterland trade flourished due to this term, “Of the wares of Slavonia, they ought to pay [no tax].”¹³¹ It must be stressed that Slavonia (today one of the four historical regions of Croatia) was compromised by Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and Dalmatia during the twelfth century.¹³² By imposing the term of no tax requirements for the goods from this area, Venetia not only secured Ragusa’s trade prosperity at that time, but it also guaranteed Ragusa’s further existence. The three terms mentioned above, are only some of the terms imposed on Ragusa in 1232, but which can be viewed as the ones who affected the city-state the most.

The Venetian charter of 1232 is not only valuable in understanding the Ragusan situation at the time, but it also provides an understanding of the Ragusan diplomacy and its diplomatic actors in a medieval context, by the terms used to describe them. Understanding the agents involved in a diplomatic process gives an insight into the later development of the Ragusan diplomacy as well, and the change from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy. In the thirteenth century, the Ragusan diplomatic actors were referred to as *nuntii* and *procurators*.¹³³ The nuncios (*nuntii*) and the procurators (*procuratores*) were two classes of diplomatic agents, who could not be classified as proper ambassadors, and were therefore also only entitled to some of the privileges that the ambassadors had. They were the ones who were sent for minor businesses. There was, nevertheless, a certain distinction between the two classes of agents. A nuncio was defined as a messenger, who spoke with the voice of his master, or to represent his employer in a ceremony. The mission of a nuncio was over when his message was delivered,

¹²⁸ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25 (own translation)

¹²⁹ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25 (own translation)

¹³⁰ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25 (own translation)

¹³¹ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25 (own translation)

¹³² Harris, *Dubrovnik*, p. 47

¹³³ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25

or his symbolic act performed. A procurator, on the other hand, had no symbolic representative function, and could in difference to the nuncio, negotiate. The procurator was supplied with legal powers to present the interests of his master, or to organize on fixed terms a particular segment of business.¹³⁴ By the charter of 1232, the Ragusan nuncios and procurators, “had to come to the presence of the illustrious lord Jacobini Teupol [...] duke of Dalmatia and Croatia [...] [to beg] for peace, agreement, and reconciliation”.¹³⁵ Wherefore, it can be assumed that the Ragusan nuncios were sent to deliver the message or the desire for peace. While the procurators were perhaps sent to discuss and negotiate what was to become the charter of 1232. The terms nuncio and procurator were once again used when the charter was reconfirmed in June 1236.¹³⁶

Based on the terms used in the charter of 1232, and the reaffirmed charter of 1236, it can be stated that Ragusa at the time did not have proper ambassadors to send abroad. This can, additionally, be confirmed by Garrett Mattingly, who states that there was a common agreement that only the greater European powers were entitled to appoint diplomats of the highest rank, commonly known as *ambaxiator*.¹³⁷ It can, furthermore, verify the fact that the Ragusan diplomacy during the early thirteenth century was still classified as medieval diplomacy, and had not yet developed into Renaissance diplomacy.

Ragusa’s loyalty and fidelity towards the Republic of Venetia is confirmed by the “the formulae of the solemn inauguration oaths taken by the rector, the judges, council members, and other public officials” found in the Ragusan lawbook from 1272, the *Statut Grada Dubrovnika*.¹³⁸ The oath was taken by officials, and they had to swear loyalty to the Venetian doge, like this example from the lawbook from the oath of the rector, “I, Rector of Ragusa [...] swear to protect this city [...] in honor of the Venetian commune and doge”¹³⁹ This can be understood as the Ragusan way of showing acceptance to Venetian overlordship.

Despite the measures bestowed upon Ragusa, the time under the *Serenissima* was also characterized by territorial expansion. There is one particular example that demonstrates what is considered to be the finesse of the Ragusan diplomacy in the early fourteenth century, the acquiring of the Pelješac peninsula and with it the salt pans of Ston in 1333. According to historian Robin Harris, this was the first occasion when Ragusa fully displayed what would be viewed as, “its most legendary diplomatic virtuosity, by dabbling in other powers’ conflicts to

¹³⁴ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 28

¹³⁵ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25 (own translation)

¹³⁶ *Patti della repubblica con li Veneziani* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 28-32

¹³⁷ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 27

¹³⁸ *Statut Grada Dubrovnika*, assembled in 1272, (Dubrovnik: Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku, 2002) translated by Križman, M & Kolanović, J, 677 (own translation)

¹³⁹ *Statut Grada Dubrovnika*, trans. Križman & Kolanović, 124-125

advance its own interests.”¹⁴⁰ By using the civil war that had broken out after the death of a Serbian ruler, and with it a weakening of Serbian control in outlying regions, as an instrument in their diplomacy, which resulted in the acquiring of Pelješac, alongside the coast from Neretva to Astarea.¹⁴¹

During the same time as the Ragusan territorial expansion, an ongoing conflict between Venetia and the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom was approaching its peak. A conflict that led to the Venetian loss of their Dalmatian possessions, including Ragusa to the Croatian-Hungarian king, Louis I by the *Peace Agreement of Zadar*. This event was of particular importance in Ragusan history, as with a more distant overlord, they could execute practical independency.¹⁴² *The peace of Zadar* marked the end of the first political period in Ragusan history, a period characterized by frequent changes of overlordship, territorial expansion, economic prosperity, and also the establishment of the Ragusan diplomacy. It was also a period where the Ragusans experienced a taste for independency, specifically during the years of the decline in Byzantine power, but also because of the distance between them and Byzantium. In difference, their later overlord, Venetia held a much tighter control over the city-state. Despite this, the Ragusan diplomacy developed during this period, as a result of conflicts between its neighbors, and also because of the territorial expansion of its city-state. The latter one allowed the Ragusans to test their diplomatic abilities, which were successful with the acquiring of the Pelješac peninsula in 1333, and the area from Neretva to Astarea.

The Taste of *Libertas* and the Goal of Keeping It

*Non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro*¹⁴³

This quote is taken from the stone above the entrance to St. Lawrence Fortress in Ragusa, which served as the Latin slogan of the city-state, and it translates to “Liberty is not to be sold for all the gold in the world”.¹⁴⁴ In this context, the word *libertas* is understood in its political meaning, namely autonomy. St. Lawrence was constructed during the period under Venetian sovereignty, but it is unclear which exact year it was built.¹⁴⁵ It is, however, likely that the slogan was written

¹⁴⁰ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 55-56

¹⁴¹ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 56

¹⁴² Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 66

¹⁴³ The slogan was written in stone above the entrance of Fort Lawrence (Lovrijenac), and it is still visible to this day.

¹⁴⁴ Slogan above the entrance of Fort Lawrence

¹⁴⁵ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 293

during the same time as the construction of the fortress. Either way, it illustrates how important liberty was for the city-state. This continued to be the most essential diplomatic matter for Ragusa in the following years.

The change of overlords from the Republic of Venetia to the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom in 1358, marks the beginning of the second political period in Ragusan history. Only the first century of this period will be relevant for this thesis.¹⁴⁶ This period was characterized by the taste for independence, and the aim of keeping it, which is why it is arguable that it constituted the main diplomatic matter of Ragusa in this period of its existence. This is already evident during the negotiations about Ragusa's status in Višegrad between Ragusa and King Louis I, which resulted in what may perhaps be said to be one of Ragusa's most important diplomatic accomplishments. Scholars, such as Robin Harris, have argued that the Ragusans during these negotiations displayed their diplomatic expertise.¹⁴⁷ It is therefore crucial to devote some space for this particular negotiation because it is not only evidence of how the Ragusans employed diplomacy to gain their interests, but it also illustrates the changes in their diplomatic machinery from previous years.

The Ragusan mission, led by the Ragusan archbishop, Ilja Saraka, were sent with an instruction written on the 11th of April 1358 with the order to “defend the liberty of [Ragusa], and after having defended the liberty of [Ragusa] to submit the city to [King Louis I]”.¹⁴⁸ They were further instructed to “give [King Louis I] a yearly tribute of one thousand perperi”.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, they were also ordered to ask for nineteen requirements from the king. Only the most important ones will be mentioned. These were some of the requirements; “that the Lord King owe [Ragusa], to defend [them] from every person by land and sea”, “that [the Ragusans] were freely allowed to increase or decrease the statute, the order and the costumes”, “that [King Louis I] confirms all of [the Ragusan] territory”, “that the [Ragusan] government could freely select the people of the municipality from [their] own inhabitants”.¹⁵⁰ These requirements are all indicators of independency. However, submitting themselves to the Croatian-Hungarian protection, and actively requiring the protection of the king, verifies that Ragusa, despite their desire for independence, knew that outside protection was necessary for their further existence.

¹⁴⁶ Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, 33-76

¹⁴⁷ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 62

¹⁴⁸ “Spomenici dubrovački [Ragusan Monuments]”, ed. Vučetić 458 (own translation)

¹⁴⁹ “Spomenici dubrovački [Ragusan Monuments]”, ed. Vučetić, 458 (own translation)

¹⁵⁰ “Spomenici dubrovački [Ragusan Monuments]”, ed. Vučetić, 462-463 (own translation)

The negotiations in Višegrad resulted in the *Treaty of Višegrad of 1358*, issued on the 27th of May, which regulated the Ragusan-Hungarian relations.¹⁵¹ Ragusa's liberty and independence was challenged by this treaty as it is explicitly stated that "the community of the aforesaid [Ragusa] [...] will swear physically [...], fidelity and submission to [the Croatian-Hungarian crown] and to [their] heirs and successors forever".¹⁵² By submitting to the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, the Ragusans theoretically gave away their liberty and independence to some extent, as the term "submission" is used in the treaty, which means to allow someone to have power over you.¹⁵³ Another example from the treaty is, "[the Ragusans] will continue to wear our flags and insignia both on land and [...] at sea."¹⁵⁴ Both, the Croatian-Hungarian flag and insignia were important symbolically, as they formally meant that Ragusa was under the power of the Croatian-Hungarian crown.

It has been argued that the Ragusans tended to interpret the Ragusan-Hungarian relations as an agreement on protection, rather than being under the control of the Hungarian king.¹⁵⁵ Based on the information given in the *Višegrad Treaty of 1358*, Ragusa was formally and theoretically under the sovereignty of the Croatian-Hungarian king, Louis I.¹⁵⁶ However, the Ragusans took certain measures that went against it. In the same year of 1358, the Ragusan Major Council decided to make a change in the new copies of the Ragusan Statute. It was mentioned earlier that in the Statute of 1272, all Ragusan officials took an oath where they swore loyalty to Venetia, "in honor of the doge and Venetian commune".¹⁵⁷ However, it now was to state, "for the honor and growth of the Ragusan commune".¹⁵⁸ This meant that none of Ragusa's officeholders, from the superior Rector to the lowest offices of the Ragusan state, was to pledge loyalty or allegiance to the Croatian-Hungarian crown, but only to the Ragusan commune.¹⁵⁹ This indicates that the Ragusans still viewed themselves as an independent city-state.

The *Treaty of Višegrad* also showcases the change in Ragusan diplomacy, especially how they classified their diplomatic agents. In their relations with the Venetians, the Ragusan diplomatic actors were defined as nuncios and procurators. In the treaty of 1358, they are classified as *procurators* and *syndici*, a small difference from the thirteenth century. As

¹⁵¹ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 90-95

¹⁵² *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 90-95 (own translation)

¹⁵³ Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "Submission". 11.04.2022

¹⁵⁴ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 90-95 (Own translation)

¹⁵⁵ Kunčević, Lovro, "On Ragusan *Libertas* in the Late Middle Ages", *Dubrovnik Annals 14* (2010), 25-69, 32

¹⁵⁶ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 90-95

¹⁵⁷ *Statut Grada Dubrovnika*, ed. by Križman & Kolanović, 124-125

¹⁵⁸ Kunčević, "On Ragusan *Libertas* in the Late Middle Ages", 32

¹⁵⁹ Kunčević, "On Ragusan *Libertas* in the Late Middle Ages", 32

mentioned previously, a procurator is classified as a person with no symbolic representative function but was supplied with legal powers to negotiate the interests of his principal.¹⁶⁰ A *syndic*, on the other hand, is classified as a person sent for the purpose of more than just communication, and he was sent to represent a corporative body. The appearance of syndics was common in Italian city-state diplomacy.¹⁶¹ It might perhaps be argued that the *syndic* in this case replaced the task of the *nuncio*, who was sent to deliver a message or to represent his employer at a given diplomatic ceremony. However, as stated the *syndic* did more than just communicate, and it can thus be stated that the *syndic* in this case represented a corporative body, the Ragusan government.

Ragusa's second period lasted from 1358 until 1526, when the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom was defeated at Mohács by the Ottomans.¹⁶² Even though the *Višegrad Treaty of 1358* clearly confirmed Ragusa as the dominion of the Hungarian crown, they existed as a *de facto* independent republic for the first time in their existence due to the distance of their overlord, who was chiefly preoccupied with preventing further conflicts with his Venetian enemies.¹⁶³ Their time as a *de facto* independent republic under Croatian-Hungarian sovereignty can be described as a time where Ragusa grew into being a commercial power. It was, furthermore, a time characterized by territorial expansion with the acquirement of Konavle. Due to the change of overlords from Venetia to the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, the Venetian trade regulations abolished, which meant that the Ragusan sea trade flourished again. The trade in the hinterlands, nevertheless, continued to be dominant commercially.¹⁶⁴

However, by the late fourteenth century, the Ragusan hinterland trade faced a major threat, the Ottoman Empire. By the late fourteenth century, the Ottomans had extended their territory, and with the defeat of the Serbian and Bosnian forces at the first Battle of Kosovo in 1389, they firmly established themselves in the Balkans, a rule that would last for over five centuries.¹⁶⁵ Ragusa's newly acquired *de facto* independency was now threatened with the firmer establishment of the Ottoman Empire in their neighborhood. According to Bariša Krekić, the first political contact between them began in 1392, and were based around trade

¹⁶⁰ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 28

¹⁶¹ Queller, Donald E. *The Office of the Ambassador in the Middle Ages*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 5 & 33

¹⁶² Kunčević, "On Ragusan *Libertas* in the Late Middle Ages", 33

¹⁶³ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 66

¹⁶⁴ Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, 42

¹⁶⁵ Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, 20-21

agreements.¹⁶⁶ Their interaction continued to be sporadic until the late 1450s, however more concrete interactions happened during the 1430s, and 1440s.

The first two political periods in Ragusan history enabled the Ragusans to gain experience in dealing with foreign powers, and overlords. Due to the many threats the Ragusans faced during these two periods, they had to develop a diplomacy that secured the existence of the city-state, which could only be assured through outside protection. The Ragusans, furthermore, developed a diplomacy that guaranteed as much autonomy as possible. Ragusa's geographical position facilitated for such a development in their diplomatic machinery as their foreign overlords, especially in the beginning of the first political period, and in the second political period were distant. The distance also allowed for the experience of *de facto* independency, which continued to be an essential part of Ragusa's diplomatic goal.

¹⁶⁶ Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, 58

Chapter 4: Justifying the Early Interactions with the Ottomans

The Threat to Ragusa's Existence and of the *Respublica Christiana*

Prior to the fifteenth century, the Ragusan diplomacy evolved around its relations with the Byzantine Empire, the Republic of Venetia, and the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom. However, with the emergence and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, Ragusa's diplomatic focus shifted towards the Levante. By the early fifteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had extended its territory, and by the beginning of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations, the Ottomans controlled a significant part of the Balkan peninsula. Additionally, the Ottoman emergence affected the political scene in the Mediterranean, and by the year 1566, it became the most influential power in Europe and in a huge part of the Middle East, controlling the biggest and most lucrative trading routes between Europe and Asia.¹⁶⁷ This is an example of what Henry Kissinger views as some natural law. Meaning that in every century a country with the will, the power, and the intellectual and moral impetus to shape the entire international system according to its own value, emerges.¹⁶⁸ The Ottoman emergence, and its power to outgrow its neighbors can best be explained by its rulers' single-minded commitment to the ideal and practice of *gaza* or Holy War.¹⁶⁹ Another explanation is that the Ottoman sultans had absolute power, which further explains how such a big empire remained stable for so many centuries. In his book, *the Prince*, the Italian diplomat from the Renaissance, Niccolò Machiavelli points out that there are two approaches to govern a principate, where one of the two is the absolute power of the Ottoman sultan. Machiavelli further states that such a state is hard to conquer, but if one manages to conquer it, it is easy to maintain absolute power.¹⁷⁰

Ragusa's existence as a *de facto* independent state was threatened by the expansion of the Ottomans. The expansion, moreover, threatened the rest of the Western world. In the international relations of the Western Christian states in early modern times, a common political thought was shared among them, namely the system of the *Respublica Christiana*, which was meant to be the successor of the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁷¹ The main purpose of the community

¹⁶⁷ Waage, Hilde Henriksen, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* (Kristiansand: Cappelen Damm Akademiske), 48

¹⁶⁸ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 17

¹⁶⁹ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 77

¹⁷⁰ Machiavelli, Niccolò, *Fyrsten* (Oslo: Cappelen Akademiske Forlag, 2021), translated by Bingen, Jon, 20-21

¹⁷¹ Jackson, Robert, *Classical and Modern Thought on International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 80; Wolff, Elisabetta Cassina, *Italias politiske historie 476-1945* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademiske, 2016), 31

was the Christian redemption and salvation. The *Respublica Christiana* gave a unity to the Christian Europeans, and it was the duty of every Christian ruler to defend it.¹⁷² Ragusa, a Catholic city-state, formed a part of this community, and it had to defend the faith like any other Christian state. It, nevertheless, differed from the rest of the Christian community due to its geographical position in the Balkans, surrounded by different religions, and with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, Ragusa was the first line of defense of the *Respublica Christiana*, which gave them the description as a frontier of Christianity. The Ragusans viewed themselves to be the frontier guard of the *Respublica Christiana*, which formed a significant part of the Ragusan Renaissance diplomacy.¹⁷³ Ragusa's strategical position was crucial for the rest of the western states, and a possible conquering of the republic would have fatal consequences for all Christianity.¹⁷⁴ The city-state was, moreover, faced with having to establish closer relations with the Ottomans. However, cooperating with the Ottomans was frowned upon among the states in the Christian West, and the Ragusan-Ottoman encounters in the late 1390 could lead to consequences and reactions.¹⁷⁵ The question being raised is, therefore; how did the Ragusans employ diplomacy to justify their interactions with the Ottomans, and what strategies did they develop to explain the Ragusan-Ottoman relations?

The Early Ragusan-Ottoman Interactions

The potential Christian reactions to the early Ragusan-Ottoman relations must be seen in the light of a doctrine formulated by Pope John VIII, as early as the ninth century, which criticized any manner of an alliance with Muslims. A Christian ruler making an alliance with Muslims automatically excluded him from the Christian community and was to be treated in the same way as Muslims. By the thirteenth century, this also included any kind of treaty that could harm Christian interests. For Ragusa, depending on trade to survive, any treaty with the Ottomans could potentially exclude them from the rest of the Christian West, and therefore also ruin any commercial ties in the Mediterranean.¹⁷⁶ Ragusa, nevertheless, obtained the right to trade in the

¹⁷² Jackson, *Classical and Modern Thought on International Relations*, 80; Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 16-18

¹⁷³ Kunčević, Lovro, *The Myth of Ragusa: Discourses on Civic Identity in an Adriatic City-State (1350-1600)*, PhD-dissertation, (Central European University, 2012), 163

¹⁷⁴ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 37 & 56

¹⁷⁵ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 46

¹⁷⁶ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 47-48

Levante in 1373 by Pope Gregory IX, which resulted in the early contacts between Ragusa and the Ottoman Empire in the 1390s. Later approaches, in the late 1420s, for the rights to trade in the Levante failed, which may be explained by the Ottoman advance in the Balkans, since it alarmed the Christian powers.¹⁷⁷

By the beginning of the 1430s, the first proper relations between Ragusa and the Ottoman sultan, Murad II were established by the correspondence among them in 1430 and 1431. On the 10th of June 1430, a letter was sent from Sultan Murad II, from the Ottoman capital at the time, Adrianople, to the Ragusans.¹⁷⁸ In the letter, the Ragusans, among other things, were asked to send a delegation to the Ottoman Sublime Porte, as Sultan Murad II wished to establish closer relations between them and his own people.¹⁷⁹ The sultan further criticized the Ragusans for the ongoing conflict they had with a voivode (local governor), Radoslav Pavlović about the area of Konavle, where he threatened them that, “[he] will send the big army to burn the lands”, and ordered them to resolve the conflict.¹⁸⁰ Consequentially, like many times in Ragusan history, outside protection was needed. The Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, Ragusa’s overlord could not provide them with the help they needed to defend their interests against Pavlović, which is why the Ragusans sent a delegation to the Sublime Porte.¹⁸¹

On the 6th of December 1430, an Ahdname was written by Sultan Murad II in Adrianople, and it begins with a solemn invocation, “I, the Great Master, the Great Amir, Sultan Murad beg, son of the Great Amir, Sultan Mehmet Beg”¹⁸² An inclusion of the solemn invocation indicated that everything written in the charter was true and guaranteed by the sultan.¹⁸³ *The Ahdname of 1430* confirms that the Ragusans sent a delegation led by two of their tributary ambassadors to the Sublime Porte, Petar Lukarević and Duro Gucetić.¹⁸⁴ They were sent with costly gifts and sweeteners as a way to bribe the Ottomans, since according to the Ragusans the Ottomans, “do everything for money, and he who gives more win”.¹⁸⁵ Gifts of all sorts were important tools in the diplomatic practice of the Renaissance, and this particular example illustrates how essential it was in the Ragusan-Ottoman relations, as the Ottomans

¹⁷⁷ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 81

¹⁷⁸ GZM. XXIII, no. 1. in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 227-228

¹⁷⁹ «Sublime Porte», Britannica, retrieved on 23.03.2022; GZM. XXIII, no. 1. in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 227-228

¹⁸⁰ GZM. XXIII, no. 1. in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, ed. Stojanović, 227-228 (own translation)

¹⁸¹ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 79

¹⁸² GZM. XXIII, no. 2. in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II ed. Stojanović, 229-231 (own translation)

¹⁸³ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent: The Republic of Dubrovnik and the Origins of the Eastern Question*, 31

¹⁸⁴ GZM. XXIII, no. 2. in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 229-231

¹⁸⁵ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 79-80

played a major geopolitical role in the region at the time.¹⁸⁶ This is because the Ragusans obtained most of their demands by the *Ahdname of December 1430*. By it, Sultan Murad II granted the Ragusan merchants “free movement in all the territory of his dominion”, that the “trade rights be legalized”, lastly and most importantly that the Ragusan merchants could “trade in the western parts, in the eastern parts, on dry lands and by sea, in Serbia, in Arbanasi and in Bosnia, and on all the lands, territories and cities of [the Sultan’s] dominion”.¹⁸⁷ The on-going conflict with Pavlović was resolved by a letter, written on the 9th of June 1431, in which the sultan promised to send the “truthful” Ali-Beg to take lands from the voivode.¹⁸⁸

The first proper relations between the Ragusan and Ottomans can be characterized by the Ragusan reluctance in establishing any closer relations with the Ottomans. The letters and the *Ahdname* indicate, however, that the relations were needed by the Ragusans. Even though independency was what the Ragusans desired, they were not strong enough to deal with geopolitical matters on their own. As the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom could not provide them with the protection needed, they had to turn to the Ottoman Empire to resolve the ongoing conflict with Pavlović. Nevertheless, based on their position as a small, but wealthy republic, they could bribe the Ottomans to get what they desired, which explains that size did not particularly matter, but by being wealthy one could come a long way.

The Ragusan Rhetorical Strategies

The beginning of this chapter explained how any contact between Muslims and a Christian state was frowned upon, which is why historians, like Lovro Kunčević describes the early Ragusan-Ottoman contacts, and the obtainment of the Ottoman privileges in the early 1430s as embarrassing.¹⁸⁹ An essential matter for the Ragusans was therefore to secure the privileges received from the Ottomans, and their trade with the Ottomans had to be legitimized by the pope. Ragusa therefore developed a methodology to maintain its special international position, between the West and the East, which was characterized by submissive rhetoric and avoidance

¹⁸⁶ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 166

¹⁸⁷ GZM. XXIII, no. 2. in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, ed. Stojanović, Vol. 1/II, 229-231 (own translation)

¹⁸⁸ GZM. XXIII, no. 3 in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II ed. Stojanović, 231 (own translation)

¹⁸⁹ Kunčević, *The Myth of Ragusa: Discourses on Civic Identity in an Adriatic City-State (1350-1600)*, 93

of conflict.¹⁹⁰ The latter characteristic constitutes the most essential goal of diplomacy in general.¹⁹¹

A system of distinguished *topoi*, a set of traditional arguments were formed to defend the behavior of the city-state. According to Kunčević, there are specifically two different rhetorical strategies that the Ragusans developed and employed to explain their status with the Ottomans in the mid-fifteenth, which historians consider remarkable for the time.¹⁹² The first strategy centered around Ragusa being a frontier guard of the *Respublica Christiana*. A second strategy employed was silence about the Ragusan-Ottoman relations.¹⁹³ It can be argued that a third strategy was employed by the Ragusans, which was compromised by the argument of the value of Ragusa's existence.

The Ragusans were well-aware of their valuable geographical position, and what it meant for the rest of the Western world, which may be seen in the first of the strategies, namely Ragusa as the frontier guard of the *Respublica Christiana*. The core of the first rhetoric was focused on Ragusa's relations with the Ottomans as something that could benefit the whole of Christianity, and that the Ragusans performed a crucial task for the interests of the rest of the Christian states, positioned by the Muslim "infidels" and the Orthodox "schismatics". As a result, the Ragusans meant that they deserved a special treatment from the rest of the Christian community.¹⁹⁴ The core of the second strategy was to neglect to mention the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in diplomatic letters and instructions¹⁹⁵. While the third strategy's central element was to explain the value of the city-state's existence for its surrounding states, which can be connected to the first strategy. Examples of the three strategies are confirmed by the correspondence between the Ragusans and King Sigismund of Hungary, and by the instructions sent to the Ragusan ambassadors travelling to the Hungarian court, particularly in the years 1431-1434, but also in the instructions sent to King Sigismund and to the Ragusan Dominican and Master of Theology, Ivan Stojković in 1433.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ Kunčević, Lovro, "The city whose "ships sail on every wind": Representations of diplomacy in the literature of early modern Ragusa (Dubrovnik)" in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800*, ed. by Hennings, Jan & Sowerby, Tracey A., 65-79. Taylor and Francis, 2017, 65

¹⁹¹ Berridge, *Diplomacy*, 1

¹⁹² Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 39-49

¹⁹³ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 39-49

¹⁹⁴ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 39-49

¹⁹⁵ Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 39-49

¹⁹⁶ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. I/1 ed. Radonić, 430; Excerpt and translation from Kunčević, *The Myth of Ragusa*, 161

How the Rhetorical Strategies were Employed

In a letter from February 1431, retrieved from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, the Ragusans admitted the Ragusan-Ottoman relations to King Sigismund, and that they had sent an embassy to the Porte, to resolve the problems they had with voivode Radoslav Pavlović over the territory of Konavle.¹⁹⁷ They justified their relations with the Ottomans by blaming it on “the unbearable situation of their city-state” due to the conflict with Pavlović.¹⁹⁸ Another argument they used was that they sent an embassy to the Ottomans because of necessity and to “protect the city of [King Sigismund]”.¹⁹⁹ These arguments together, and particularly the last argument, are relevant examples of the first strategy, the struggle of a small city-state performing a crucial task for the rest of the Christian states. One may also identify the second strategy, silence, in the letter from February 1431, as there was no mentioning of the trade privilege the Ragusans received by the *Ahdname of 1430*.

Further examples of the rhetorical strategies are identified in Ragusa’s attempt to obtain the privilege to trade in the Levante by the pope from 1432-1433. In an instruction from the 26th of March 1432, written in Ragusa, the Ragusan priest Ivan Gasulo was instructed to ask King Sigismund to consider their case about trade in the Levante, and to ask Pope Eugene IV about the Ragusan rights to trade with the “infidels”.²⁰⁰ By referring to the Ottomans as the “infidels” (unbelievers), the Ragusans communicated the common thought of the rest of the *Respublica Christiana*. To explain *why* Ragusa needed the pope’s permission to trade, Gasulo was instructed to define them as “the most trustworthy servants of his crown”, and as a city “founded in a very hard place and it could not be inhabited without the greatest exercise of trade”.²⁰¹ Thereby referring to trade as the most essential element to their further existence. The Ragusan instruction is also an example of the common feature in the diplomacy conducted in the Renaissance, as it was regular to send ambassadors with instructions on how to behave and negotiate in foreign courts.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1430-35. f. 20 in *Diplomatarium relationum* ed. Gelcich and Thalloczy. 351-353

¹⁹⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1430-35. f. 20 in *Diplomatarium relationum*, ed. Gelcich and Thalloczy, 351-353 (own translation)

¹⁹⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1430-35. f. 20 in *Diplomatarium relationum*, ed. Gelcich and Thalloczy, 351-353 (own translation)

²⁰⁰ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. XI. 1430-35. f. 82-83 in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I ed. Radonić, 329-332

²⁰¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. XI. 1430-35. f. 82-83 in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I ed. Radonić, 329-332 (own translation)

²⁰² Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 158

On the 22nd of December 1433, Ragusa obtained the privilege to trade in the Levante with the Ottomans, through the charter *Privilegium navigationis ad partes Orientis* (permission of free movements and action in the Oriental parts), issued by Pope Eugene IV during the Council of Basel, retrieved from the collection *Santae Marie saec.*²⁰³ The Council of Basel was a general council of the Catholic church held in Basel, Switzerland.²⁰⁴

By the charter of 22nd of December 1433, the Ragusans were allowed to “trade in the Holy Land and in the Levante with the infidels”, and also to “establish their consulates [in the Levante]”²⁰⁵ They also received the rights to establish churches and cemeteries, in order to perform the Holy Mass in the lands of the “infidels”.²⁰⁶ Alongside, the rights to export goods to the lands of the Muslims, except forbidden subjects such as arms and food, they received the rights to transport pilgrims to the Holy Land.²⁰⁷ Based on the charter, there are two important contributors to the Ragusan obtainment of the trade privilege, King Sigismund and Ivan Stojković.²⁰⁸ According to Kunčević, Stojković and King Sigismund were likely the ones responsible for the charter echoing the rhetorical strategies of Ragusa’s Renaissance diplomacy. The following part is retrieved from Kunčević’s, *The Myth of Ragusa*, and it is translated by him as well:

That the city of Ragusa is situated on the shore of the sea, with whose waves it is frequently battered, shaken and endangered, and on the harshest of rocks in an infertile area. The neighboring infidel rivals of the Christian faith and the enemies of the Catholic Church of different sects, heretics and schismatics, often used to attack it in big numbers, with various prosecutions and wicked wars. To them the citizens resisted strongly, luckily, and fearlessly, equipped, and strengthened by the divine force, not sparing any effort, strain nor expense in various occasions for the glory of divine name and defense of the Catholic faith, since the right hand of the Lord gave them virtue. With their honest and Catholic exhortations, zeal, and incitements, they have managed and are still managing every day to attract (surrounding non-Catholics) of both sexes to the love of our redeemer Jesus Christ and have them baptized in great numbers. This city persists in Christian faith and cult as well as in the most faithful obedience towards the Hungarian King, and humbly and consistently accepts the teachings of the Apostolic See and the Holy

²⁰³ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/I.* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I ed. Radonić, 340-343

²⁰⁴ “Council of Basel”, Britannica, retrieved 25.03.22

²⁰⁵ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/I.* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I ed. Radonić, 340-343 (own translation)

²⁰⁶ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/I.* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I ed. Radonić, 340-343 (own translation)

²⁰⁷ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/I.* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I ed. Radonić, 340-343 (own translation)

²⁰⁸ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/I.* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I ed. Radonić, 340-343 (own translation)

Roman Church. We have heard many other laudatory things as well, which rightly make this city worthy of commendation in front of us and the whole Church and deserving of every grace and favor.²⁰⁹

There are several aspects of the Ragusan diplomacy that are visible in this document. Firstly, the Ragusan frontier rhetoric. This rhetorical strategy is communicated when it is stated that the Ragusans were often attacked in big numbers by the “heretics”, “schismatics” and the “infidels”, and that the Ragusans resisted strongly “[against] the divine name and defense of the Catholic faith”.²¹⁰ In other words, it illustrated what a crucial role Ragusa played for the rest of the Catholic world, which according to Kunčević, was the core of the first rhetorical strategy.²¹¹ Another essential part of the first rhetorical strategy was that the Ragusans deserved special treatment due to their crucial performance for the Catholic Church. This is identified in the end of the excerpt, where the charter states that “we have heard many other laudatory things [...] which rightly make this city worthy of commendation in front of us and the whole Church and deserving of every grace and favor.”²¹²

The second rhetorical strategy, silence can also be identified in the Charter from 1433, as there is no reference to the Ragusan obtainment of the rights to trade in Ottoman territory by the *Ahdname of 1430*.²¹³ Despite the fact that the Ragusans admitted the contacts with the Ottomans to King Sigismund, they did not acknowledge the obtainment of the Ottoman trade privileges.²¹⁴ Based on the fact that King Sigismund was not informed about the *Ahdname of 1430*, and because of the lack of information about the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in the Charter of 1433, it confirms that the second strategy of silence was employed.

In their relations with other powers, the Ragusans often argued for the importance of the existence of their city-state, and that it was more beneficial for the other states that it existed. For that reason, it can be argued that the Ragusans operated with a third rhetorical strategy in their diplomacy during the 1430s and the early 1440s. The third strategy of arguing for the importance of their existence was used in the explanation and justification of their relations with the Ottomans, but also when negotiating with the Ottomans. A first example of this

²⁰⁹ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. I/1, ed. Radonić, Jovan, 430; Excerpt and translation from Kunčević, *The Myth of Ragusa*, 161

²¹⁰ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. I/1, ed. Radonić, 430; Excerpt and translation from Kunčević, *The Myth of Ragusa*, 161.

²¹¹ Kunčević, “The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)”, 39

²¹² *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. I/1, ed. Radonić, 430; Translation from Kunčević, *The Myth of Ragusa*, 161

²¹³ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/I*. in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol I/I, ed. Radonić, 340-343

²¹⁴ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1430-35. f. 20* in *Diplomatarium relationum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 351-353

strategy is identified from the Charter of 1433, as it is stated that, “With their honest and Catholic exhortations, zeal, and incitements, they have managed and are still managing every day to attract (surrounding non-Catholics) of both sexes to the love of our redeemer Jesus Christ and have them baptized in great numbers.”²¹⁵ The excerpt conveys the message that the rest of the Christian West benefitted from Ragusa’s existence, as due to its position, surrounded by the “unbelievers”, they performed a crucial role for the rest of the *Respublica Christiana*. This is because one of the two common purposes of being a part of the Christian community was redemption and to protect the faith from the “unbelievers”. It is also an example of how the Ragusans established themselves as a firm part of the *Respublica Christiana*.

A second example of the third rhetorical strategy is found in their relations with the Ottomans in the late 1430s/early 1440s. A significant change in the relations between the Ragusans and the Ottoman Empire happened because of the Ottoman presence in Bosnia and due to the fall of the Serbian despotism in 1439.²¹⁶ In 1440, Sultan Murad II wanted Ragusa’s submission, and he required them to pay a yearly tribute. However, through their negotiations with the Ottomans, the Ragusans managed to postpone the matter of tribute for one and a half years. According to Miović, these arguments were used; “we really have no doubt that [the Sultan] will obviously see and realize that there is much, much more to [Ragusa] than he would have from the haraç and the tribute”, “if our government agrees to give the haraç to Your Emperor, other kings, rulers and governments of coastal areas, in places and cities that we trade much more with than on land, hearing of this tribute, all would ask us for similar tributes, to which our city, laid among stony cliffs, it could not satisfy. As a result, the ruin and the breakdown of our city would follow, which we are sure would be unpleasant to His Majesty, the Emperor at his mercy and would turn to his damage and inconvenience due to the lack of merchants who constantly benefit his countries.”²¹⁷ Miović states that these arguments formed the root of the Ragusan diplomacy in the East.²¹⁸ These arguments are, in addition, examples of the of the third strategy. The example from the Charter of 1433, and these examples from the relations with the Ottomans, together confirm that the Ragusan employed the rhetorical strategy of arguing for the importance of their existence, and how other states benefit from it.

Ragusa’s justification and explanation of their interactions and relations with the Ottomans were thus a result of the three rhetorical strategies employed during the 1430s, and

²¹⁵ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. I/1, ed. Radonić, 430; Translation from Kunčević, *The Myth of Ragusa*, 161

²¹⁶ Miović, Vesna, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istanbulu*, (Zagreb; Dubrovnik: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zavod za povijesne znanosti, 2003), 9-10

²¹⁷ Miović, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istambulu*, 9-10

²¹⁸ Miović, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istambulu*, 9-10

early 1440s. By portraying themselves as defenders of the Catholic faith, proving that their existence was beneficial for the other powers, and keeping the *Ahdname of 1430* under silence, the Ragusans managed to justify and explain their relations with the Ottomans, as well as obtaining the right to trade in the Levante by the Council of Basel. Additionally, they established themselves as a firm part of the Christian community, through the first rhetorical strategy, the rhetoric of being a frontier guard of the *Respublica Christiana*.

Chapter 5: The Middleman

The Republic Between the East and the West

Ragusa's existence have been described in this way, "[Ragusa was] the door to the Orient for Christians, to the West for the Turks, faithful daughter of the Roman Church, and friend of Catholic Spain, vassal of the Sultan, impartial distributor of news to friends and enemies, "double spy" of Turks and Christians."²¹⁹ Yugoslav historiography has firmly settled Ragusa's position in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans as a republic between the East and the West.²²⁰ During the first few centuries of its existence, it was under the rule of the Byzantine Empire, thusly a part of the Eastern world. However, with the change of overlords in the early thirteenth century, Ragusa became a part of the Western world. It remained a part of the Western world for several centuries, through Venetian sovereignty, and later through its existence as a *de facto* independent republic under the protection of the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom from 1358. Several scholars have emphasized Ragusa's unique position, such as Zdenko Zlatar in his book, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, and Lovro Kunčević in his article "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)".²²¹ The title of Zlatar's book refers to Ragusa's position between two empires, as the term *Double Eagle* alludes to the Habsburg Empire, while *Crescent* to the Ottoman Empire. Even though the terms are more suitable for Ragusa's situation in the sixteenth century, it still provides an insight in terms of Ragusa's situation, which can be considered as continual.

Their position as a middleman was particularly apparent from the late 1430s and onwards. Because of the period restriction of this thesis, the focus of this chapter will be on Ragusa's position as an intermediary until 1458, when the republic obtained Ottoman protection. The previous chapter illustrated that the Ragusans both obtained the rights to trade on all Ottoman soil by the *Ahdname of 1430*, and the rights to trade in the Levante by Pope Eugene IV and the Council of Basel in 1433. Furthermore, it explained and exemplified how

²¹⁹ Dedijer, Stevan "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 104

²²⁰ Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, 3; Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent* p. xiii; Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 37-68; Kunčević, "The city whose 'ships sail on every wind': Representations of diplomacy in the literature of early modern Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 65; Miović, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottomans and Dubrovnik" in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, pp. 186-208 (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2013), 109

²²¹ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, xiii; Kunčević, "The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)", 7-68

the Ragusans justified their relations with the Ottomans. It can be argued that Ragusa, by the *Ahdname of 1430* and the Charter of 1433 was established as a middleman between the Ottoman Empire and the *Respublica Christiana*. Ragusa's position, and its ability to trade in the Levante meant that they would be essential for the rest of the Christian West, particularly during the crusade against the Ottomans in the 1440s. During the same years, their contact with the Ottomans were sporadic, but there is however, one year that was notable for the further relations between them, namely the year 1442, when Ragusa obtained another, and even more detailed *Ahdname* from Sultan Murad II.²²²

The purpose of the following chapter is therefore to demonstrate Ragusa's unique position in the Balkans. It might be considered to be interesting that a republic like Ragusa, that was well-established in the *Respublica Christiana*, and that participated in the crusade against the Ottomans in the 1440s, obtained Ottoman protection in 1458. The question being raised is, how did Ragusa function as a middleman between the Ottoman Empire and the *Respublica Christiana*? This question is essential in understanding *how* Ragusa obtained Ottoman protection because it illustrates the development in the Ragusan diplomacy, as well as exemplifying how the Ragusans employed tools that are associated with Renaissance diplomacy. The latter is, moreover, important for the further discussion and classification of the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy.

Sultan Murad II's *Ahdname of 1442*

It has already been mentioned that Sultan Murad II wanted Ragusan submission in 1440 and a yearly tribute (haraç), but that the Ragusans managed to postpone the matter for two years. However, on the 7th of February 1442 in Adrianople, the Ragusans wrote a charter to Sultan Murad II, where they swore to send an ambassador with gifts worth a thousand golden ducats on a silver plate, a yearly gift, and to be "loyal and right to the Great Sultan Murad Beg".²²³ According to Austin Coins, one ducat equals 150 US dollars. However, the value may increase or decrease depending on the current price of gold per ounce.²²⁴ In the *Ahdname of 1442*, the sultan promised the Ragusans that he would "not harm [Ragusa] nor any of the lands under their control, nor their merchants nor their people".²²⁵ He further promised that the Ragusan

²²² GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 232-234

²²³ GZM. XXIII, 5. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 232-234

²²⁴ Austin Coins, "How Much is a Venetian Coin Worth?", *Rare Coins Blog*, 16.07.2021

²²⁵ GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 232-234 (own translation)

merchants could “walk on the sea, on the dry land [...] in Romania, in Bulgaria, in Serbia [...] in Bosnia and on all the land and in all the cities of His dominion”, without having to pay taxes on items they did not sell in, among other cities, Adrianople.²²⁶

Compared to other states, the sultan granted the Ragusan merchants a privileged position in his lands. In addition to not having to pay taxes on goods they did not sell, they were only required to pay a 2 percent tax, while other merchants had to pay a 4-5 percent tax on sold goods.²²⁷ Additionally to their commercially privileged position, the sultan granted the Ragusans more specific privileges. Firstly, a Ragusan who had committed a crime was to be tried by the Ragusan courts, with the Ragusan laws in most cases. However, a convicted Ragusan had the right to be tried in front of an Ottoman court if they wished to. Secondly, in the case of a dispute between a Ragusan and a Muslim, the issue had to be solved in an Ottoman court with an Ottoman judge, known as a *kadi*. Thirdly and finally, the properties of a dead Ragusan were to be assigned to the Ragusan government.²²⁸

The *Ahdname of 1442* is perhaps the most valuable and important charter to study in the Ragusan-Ottoman relations, as it was not only significant for that year, but it established the ground for any further relations between them. Additionally, it worked as a model for later Ottoman *Ahdnames*, and is also far more detailed compared to the *Ahdname of 1430*, which provided a more general set of privileges. It is important to stress that neither the Ragusans in their charter or the sultan in his *Ahdname* mentioned the Turkish word for the tribute, “haraç”, which is why Ragusa could not be classified as a tributary state of the Ottomans. Both parts rather used the word “gift”, another indication that the Ragusans were not tributary subjects of the sultan.²²⁹ The obtainment of the *Ahdname of 1442*, and the accomplishment of *not* becoming a tributary state can possibly be explained by the arguments the Ragusans used in their negotiations with the Ottomans, which is linked to the third rhetoric strategy, suggested in the previous chapter. It is applicable to argue that the sultan was persuaded by the Ragusan ambassadors’ arguments about the importance of their existence, and how he could benefit greatly from not requiring them to pay the yearly haraç. This can also be explained by the absence of skillful Ottoman merchants, which is why the Ragusans argued that their merchants were beneficial for the sultan, and the rest of the sultan’s empire.²³⁰

²²⁶ GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II ed. Stojanović, 232-234 (own translation)

²²⁷ GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II ed. Stojanović, 232-234; Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 8-9

²²⁸ GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 232-234

²²⁹ GZM. XXIII, 5. & GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II ed. Stojanović, 232-234

²³⁰ Miović, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istambulu*, 9-10

A Strong Anti-Ottoman View

Ragusa's position as a middleman became more apparent in the 1440s, particularly in 1443 and 1444 during the Crusade against the Ottomans. As the main concern of the majority of the Christian community in the 1440s and 1450s was the emergence of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, it indicates that the Ottomans managed to affect the geopolitical scene of the Mediterranean. Although the Ragusans obtained trade privileges from the Ottomans in February 1442 and swore to be "loyal and right to the Great Sultan Murad Beg", the years between 1442 and the fall of Constantinople in 1453 were characterized by a strong anti-Ottoman view within the republic, particularly within the Ragusan government, which may explain the Ragusan participation in the crusade.²³¹

After the First Crusade and the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, the idea of a military struggle between the Christian West and their enemies emerged. These crusades were defined as military struggles between the Christian world, and the "schismatics", "heretics", and the biggest enemy of the Christian West, Islam.²³² The Western Christian powers viewed themselves as one society with one common goal, to stop the further expansion of the Ottoman Empire. One might therefore perhaps study the diplomacy of the Western powers as one, particularly in their relations with the Ottoman Empire. Even though crusading in itself cannot be classified as diplomacy, as it is not a peaceful manner of solving a conflict, the preparations Ragusa was involved in prior to the Crusade of 1443 and 1444 can be classified as diplomatic activities. According to Harris, the Ragusans desperately hoped for the success of the Christian powers, and that they would come together and drive the Ottomans out of the Balkans.²³³ The Ragusans were therefore involved in the processes of *information-gathering* and *representation*, which were important tools in the preparations for the crusades against the Ottomans.

The control and necessity of information became crucial in the Renaissance period as it meant a potential control over unexpected events. To be able to gain the control of information, a wide information-network was required.²³⁴ During the preparations for the Crusade, the power over information was essential due to the potential or unexpected movements of the Ottomans. The Ragusans therefore became a part of the information-network of the foreign powers, such

²³¹ GZM. XXIII, 5. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 232; Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 9

²³² Imber, Colin, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45* (Cornwall: Ashgate. 2006), 1

²³³ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 86

²³⁴ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 71

as the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, which is confirmed by several letters from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. The growing need of information, furthermore, required the ambassadors to collect news and report to their masters.²³⁵ This can be verified by a letter from the same collection, written on the 17th of October 1441, in which the Ragusans informed the Hungarian king, Vladislav about the military preparations of the Ottomans, and their plans of an invasion of Hungary.²³⁶

The attention to information emerged consistently in the diplomatic letters from the second half of the fourteenth century.²³⁷ This is also confirmed by the letters and instructions to the Ragusan ambassadors at the Hungarian court, Ragnina, Caboga and Resti. A first example is found in an instruction sent to the Ragusan ambassadors on the 7th of October 1443, in which the ambassadors are instructed to inform King Vladislav about the events that occurred in Slavonia. It is stated that Slavonia was “taken and occupied by the [Ottomans]” and that “[the Ragusan] merchants were detained and tied up and robbed.”²³⁸ A second example is found in an instruction sent to ambassador Ragnina on the 27th of June 1444, where he was instructed to inform the Hungarian king about the great Ottoman preparations.²³⁹ A third example is confirmed by the instruction sent to the Ragusan delegation on the 31st of July 1444, as it contains information about the crusade against the Ottomans.²⁴⁰

These examples, additionally, confirm that Ragusa’s method of conveying acquired information is an example of how information was handled and further communicated. As this process, particularly in the Renaissance, consisted of the direct voice of princes and governments, through private or public audiences, personal contacts, and the official version of a chancery. Once, the information was collected, it was organized into letters and went through a process of analysis and summarization, and at last developed into information materials.²⁴¹ These examples confirm that the Ragusan ambassadors were involved in the standard processes of the gathering and conveying of information during the Renaissance, which is an indicator that backs up the theory of this thesis, namely that the Ragusan diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy.

²³⁵ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 76

²³⁶ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, 1441-48. f. 52* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 439

²³⁷ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 71

²³⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1441-45. f. 127-130* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 439-446 (own translation)

²³⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 152* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*. ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 457

²⁴⁰ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 154* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 457-459

²⁴¹ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 78-79

Over the timespan from October 1443 to July 1444, at least four instructions and one letter were sent to the Ragusan ambassadors, Ragnina, Caboga, and Resti, who were sent to the Hungarian king. These are examples of Ragusa's involvement in the diplomatic processes of information-gathering and the dissemination of it, but also how they were engaged in the representational aspect of diplomacy. The instructions and the letter from the collection, *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, reveal that the three ambassadors were sent for a longer period of time. An example that verifies this is found in an instruction sent from Ragusa, written on the 23rd of January 1444, and it begins with “[to] the ambassadors at the dominion of the Hungarian reign”, which indicates that the ambassadors were with King Vladislav at the time they received the instructions.²⁴² The second example is retrieved from a letter sent to the Ragusan ambassador Ragnina, “one of our ambassadors sent to the majesty the serene sir Vladislav the Hungarian king, and our lord”²⁴³ A third example is an instruction addressed to ambassador Ragnina at the Hungarian court, issued on the 27th of June 1444 in Ragusa.

Sending ambassadors abroad for a longer period was a result of the pressure of public events.²⁴⁴ It is therefore likely that the Ragusan ambassadors were sent to the Hungarian king as a result of the crusade against the Ottomans, and because of the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Although representation in diplomacy is associated with the resident ambassador, an envoy sent for a longer period of time may have functioned in a similar manner. The resident ambassador was understood to represent a republic or a prince, receiving formal instructions from its government, and the one responsible for general day-to-day business.²⁴⁵ Firstly, the three Ragusan ambassadors were sent to represent Ragusa, thus having one of the three characteristics of the resident ambassador. Secondly, they were sent and provided with instructions from their own government, which is the second characteristic of the resident ambassador according to Catherine Fletcher. Lastly, they were responsible for conveying the information from the Ragusan government, concerning the different actions of the Ottomans. The information about the Ottoman moves is mentioned in the instructions that the Ragusan ambassador received, which may classify their actions as day-to-day business. It can therefore be concluded that the Ragusan ambassadors staying at the Hungarian court with King Vladislav, functioned as the representation of Ragusa for a longer period of time. This is yet another

²⁴² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 141.* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thaloczy, 450-451 (own translation)

²⁴³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 154* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thaloczy, 457-459 (own translation)

²⁴⁴ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 32

²⁴⁵ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 42

indicator that supports the theory that the Ragusan diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy. The examples retrieved from the letters and instructions sent to the Ragusan ambassadors at the Hungarian court are crucial in the discussion and classification of the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy. They confirm that the Ragusans were engaged in the common diplomatic processes of the diplomatic machinery of the Renaissance, which is why it is applicable to argue that the theory of this thesis is verifiable.

The Failed Crusade and its Aftermath

The Crusade of 1443 and 1444 was called by Pope Eugene IV, and it was led by King Vladislav, the Hungarian nobleman and governor, John Hunyadi, and the exiled Serbian despot Đurađ Branković.²⁴⁶ An essential element to the crusades was the involvement of the pope, as without him the crusades would exist as merely secular conflicts between the West and the Ottoman Empire. However, with the involvement of the Pope, the conflicts had a religious background.²⁴⁷ The Ragusans participated actively in the Crusade, which is confirmed by the primary sources containing letters of the correspondence between Ragusa and Pope Eugene IV, found in the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*.²⁴⁸ In a Papal letter, written on the 17th of December 1443, Pope Eugene IV requested the Ragusans to send and equip him with “three warships against the Turks”²⁴⁹ The Ragusans answered the pope’s letter in February 1444, that they were preparing for the Ottomans and that they were willing to send two warships against them under the condition that the Papacy sent twelve warships.²⁵⁰ In the same letter, the Ragusans clearly stated how they viewed the Ottomans because they described them as “the enemy” and as “the most unjust sect of Muhammed [...] [who] will be destroyed”.²⁵¹ Thus revealing and stressing their desperate wish for the destruction of the Ottomans in the Balkans.

Even though, the Christian army had some early victories, a big loss to their campaign was when the Sultan managed to win over one of the leaders of the crusade, the exiled Đurađ

²⁴⁶ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 86

²⁴⁷ Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45*, 1

²⁴⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, 1440-48. f. 144* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 448-450

²⁴⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, 1440-48. f. 144* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 448-450 (own translation)

²⁵⁰ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 148* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 451-454

²⁵¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 148* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 451-454 (own translation)

Branković by offering him the return of his lands and twenty-four Serbian towns. By the summer of 1444, King Vladislav agreed to a ten-year truce with the Ottomans to the pope's annoyance. Pope Eugene IV, therefore urged a breaking of the agreement. As the initial goal of the crusade was to prevent any further expansion of the Ottoman Empire, an important action was to prevent the sultan from bringing his army to Europe. The Christian army, with the two Ragusan warships, was crushed by the Ottomans in Varna, Bulgaria in November 1444.²⁵²

The failed crusade in Varna had significant consequences because the Christian loss resulted in a firmer establishment of the Ottoman presence in the Balkans. It, moreover, had consequences for the Byzantine Empire as the way to Constantinople was open, and it made it easier for the Ottomans to gain control over the city in 1453. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, the biggest city in the Balkans at the time, marked the end of the Byzantine Empire.²⁵³ For Ragusa's part, the failed crusade, and their participation in the crusade could lead to consequences with the Ottomans. The most important diplomatic matter for Ragusa after the failed crusade was to reestablish their relations with the Ottoman Porte. Ragusa's only way in reestablishing its relations with the Ottomans was through the Serbian despot, Branković, who was not only their neighbor, but their friend. Most importantly for Ragusa, Branković enjoyed the favor of the sultan. As with their earlier encounters with the Ottomans, the Ragusans were reluctant in establishing any closer relations with them, and they therefore sent one of their ambassadors as a part of the envoy sent by despot Branković to the Porte in February 1447. The Ragusans were successful as they managed to obtain even better privileges than the ones from 1442, as they did not have to pay any regular tribute, only a one-time payment of 1500 ducats.²⁵⁴

Ragusa's government continued to be anti-Ottoman, which is evident from their support to the anti-Ottoman campaign led by the Hungarian Governor Hunyadi in 1448.²⁵⁵ Yet another indication of the anti-Ottoman view in Ragusa are the letters found in the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, which show that the Ragusans also provided the governor with information about the Ottomans. By sending a letter written as early as September 1447, the Ragusans provided Hunyadi with new information about the Ottomans.²⁵⁶ The letter is also proof that the Ragusans continued to use their middle position to gather information for the western powers, which they kept doing through the 1450s as well. In a letter written on the 13th

²⁵² Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 86-87

²⁵³ *Republika*, Episode 1, «Mali medu velikima», directed by Bozidar Domagoj Buric, aired 18.04.2016 on Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (HRT 1)

²⁵⁴ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 86-87 (See page 44 of this thesis for today's dollar value of one ducat)

²⁵⁵ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 9

²⁵⁶ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 241* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 466-467

of August 1450, the Ragusans provided Governor Hunyadi with information on the planned Ottoman campaign in Albania, and the Ragusans asked the governor to remember their republic in a potential peace treaty with the Ottomans.²⁵⁷

One may thus develop an understanding of how the Ragusans, and their ambassadors worked, both in terms of representation and information-gathering. By interpreting and analyzing the different letters and instructions above, it can be stated that the Ragusans and their ambassadors did not only work for their own republic, but they functioned as both information-gatherers and ambassadors for their overlord at the time, the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, as well as for the Papacy.

What Ragusa's Position Meant for the Republic

Having a position like the Ragusans had, allowed them to become a middleman between the different powers, but also between the East and the West. In one way, it can be stated that the Ragusans established the foundation for further negotiations between the Western powers and the Ottoman Empire as both information-gathering and the conveying of information are crucial to conduct negotiations and dialogue. As is stated by Jovan Kurbalija, diplomatic reporting was an essential tool in the communication between the diplomatic missions and the capitals in the Renaissance.²⁵⁸ Ragusa's position enabled it to become a key element in the East-West communication, which is essential in order to understand *how* Ragusa obtained Ottoman protection in 1458, but also how the Ragusans used tools that can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy.

It can be argued that the Ragusans used their position as a middleman to secure its own interests, as Ragusa's policy was "to have no friends or enemies, only [Ragusa's] interests".²⁵⁹ Firstly, even though their government was anti-Ottoman in the 1440s and 1450s, it was important for Ragusa to obtain the Ottoman protection of its merchants trading on Ottoman soil, as well as trading privileges when it comes to taxes. In that manner, they secured their trade in the Balkans, and also their economy. Secondly, by participating in the crusade and in later conflicts between the Christian West and the Ottomans, by providing the different western powers with information, they not only showed their loyalty to the Christian community, but they secured their position within the *Respublica Christiana*. Thirdly, balancing between the

²⁵⁷ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1448-88. f. 38* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thaloczy, 472-474

²⁵⁸ Kurbalija, Jovan, Lecture "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFoundation, 21.06.21

²⁵⁹ Dedijer, Stevan, "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 104

powers in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans, and cooperating with them, be it the Christian states or the Ottoman Empire, and avoiding any kind of dispute, allowed the Ragusans to argue for the importance of their existence, and for their valuable position in the Balkans. Lastly, it is applicable to argue that the different powers benefitted more from Ragusa being *de facto* independent rather than under the power of any sovereign. These factors provide a useful framework in the further discussion of how Ragusa employed diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection.

Chapter 6: Establishing Closer Relations with the Ottomans

A Firmer Ottoman Presence

The failed anti-Ottoman crusade during the Battle of Varna in 1444, showed the Ragusans that the power of their overlord at the time, the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, had declined, which may be one of the factors that contributed to the establishment of closer relations between the Ragusans and the Ottomans during the 1450s. This thesis has so far illustrated that the Ragusans were reluctant in establishing any closer relations with the Ottomans, and how there also were anti-Ottoman views within the Ragusan government as a result of the emergence of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. However, the final push towards Ottoman protection came with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which was a significant change in the geopolitics of the region, and it became dangerous for the Ragusans to allow their loyalty with the *Respublica Christiana* to influence their diplomatic actions.²⁶⁰

Constantinople's fall did not just mark the end of the eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire, but it established a more permanent Ottoman presence in the Balkans. The event is crucial in understanding and analyzing *how* the Ragusans employed diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection in 1458. The fall of Constantinople was evidence for the Ragusans that the Ottoman presence in the Balkans would continue, and that their existence as a *de facto* independent republic was threatened and could therefore not continue without any closer relations with the Ottomans. Consequently, one may notice a shift in the Ragusan diplomatic rhetorical strategies to stay alive as a city-state. The aim of this chapter is therefore to identify the change in the Ragusan relations with the Ottomans in the 1450s. How did the Ragusan-Ottoman relations change after the fall of Constantinople in 1453? Another aim of this chapter is to analyze the Ragusan obtainment of Ottoman protection in 1458, which is one of the most important events in Ragusan history. Discussing this question will provide the essential understanding of how Ragusa employed diplomacy to obtain Ottoman protection, but also the necessary insight to determine whether the Ragusan diplomatic system can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy.

One can argue that the Ragusans had an ability to understand the power structure in its geopolitical neighborhood at different times throughout its history. Due to their ability, they could change the strategy of their diplomacy into suiting the geopolitical situation in the

²⁶⁰ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 92

Balkans, which may also explain how they managed to balance between the different powers of the region. This has been exemplified throughout this thesis, first with the period under Venetian sovereignty, then negotiating their way to *de facto* independency under Croatian-Hungarian rule, and lastly through their early relations with the Ottomans. The change of diplomatic tactic thus allowed them to choose its protector with the most power, and the one who could provide the best conditions for Ragusa. The failed Christian crusade led by the Hungarians, showed the Ragusans the decline in the Croatian-Hungarian power, and the increase in Ottoman strength, which again indicated that the Hungarians no longer could provide the Ragusans with the protection they needed from the threats from the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venetia. The last continued to be a major threat to the Ragusans since Venetia possessed cities and islands along the Dalmatian coast. Venetia, furthermore, viewed Ragusa as its former possession. To avoid yet another period under Venetian sovereignty, the Ragusans needed a stronger protector.

The Shift in Ragusan Diplomacy

“The one who has conquered the city is soon to come to our doorstep”²⁶¹

The excerpt above, reproduced by Vesna Miović, was allegedly said by the Ragusans after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the Ragusans were right to fear Sultan Mehmed II as he planned to attack their republic. This is confirmed by a letter found in the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante* from the 14th of November 1457, in which the Ragusans beg for Hungarian protection because Sultan Mehmed II commanded “Exebegh Isakovic, his voivode, and the masters of Bosnia [...] having combined [...], an army, they shall rush upon us, plunder [Ragusa] and ravage our country with fire and iron”.²⁶² The Ragusans further stated that “the aforesaid Exebeg Isakovic [...], who, as it were, declared war upon us, who was commanded by the great Turk, said that the enemy would wage war against us [...], unless we should quickly send ambassadors to him”.²⁶³ In the same letter, the Ragusans stated that the sultan also threatened to imprison their merchants trading in his territory.²⁶⁴ To maintain peace between

²⁶¹ Miović, *Wisdom at the Crossroads*, 9

²⁶² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 114* in, *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thaloczy, 600-602 (own translation)

²⁶³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 114* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thaloczy, 600-602 (own translation)

²⁶⁴ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 114* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thaloczy, 600-602 (own translation)

their republic, their neighbors and the Ottomans, the Ragusans had to discuss the potential conflict in a peaceful matter, namely through diplomacy.

The Ragusans were also advised to resolve the matter, by among others, Despot Grgur and Herceg Stjepan (Vukcic Kosaca).²⁶⁵ Based on the advice from their neighbors, the Ragusans understood that they had to cooperate more closely with the Ottomans. However, at the same time as the Ragusan Rector and his Council prepared a mission to the Ottoman sultan, the Ragusans celebrated the coronation of the new Croatian-Hungarian king, Mathias Corvinus, which is verified by a letter from the 8th of March 1458, sent to the newly elected king.²⁶⁶ This is why it can be stated that anti-Ottoman thoughts still existed in Ragusa.

The Ragusan preparation of a mission to the sultan is confirmed by an instruction sent with the Ragusan ambassadors in April 1458, who were sent to the Sublime Porte. As mentioned earlier, the Ragusans were advised to send a mission to the sultan. This is proved by the same instruction from April 1458 when the Ragusan rector instructed his ambassadors on what to say if they encountered Herceg Stjepan. They were to say that “you were sent especially because of the persuasions of his Lord Herceg and other friends of ours.”²⁶⁷ The mission sent was led by the two Ragusan ambassadors, Paladin de Gondola and Paladin de Luccharis.²⁶⁸ Gondola and Luccharis were provided with instructions prior to their departure, and they continued to receive instructions, particularly on the 22nd of May and on the 1st of September 1458, a month prior to obtaining the *Ahdname of 1458*, which is why it is reasonable to assume that they were sent for a longer period of time.²⁶⁹

Negotiating the Sultan Mehmed II's *Ahdname of 1458* was not an easy task as the sultan initially wanted Ragusa to pay a tribute of 10000 ducats.²⁷⁰ The Ragusan ambassadors further had to negotiate the matter of tribute with the highest Ottoman dignitaries prior to being allowed to visit the sultan, which is confirmed by the three instructions sent to the ambassadors

²⁶⁵ Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*, 12

²⁶⁶ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 104* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 606-607

²⁶⁷ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

²⁶⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II ed. Radonić, 14-21

²⁶⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 194-195* e *Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 196* all found in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-25

²⁷⁰ Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*, 12 (See page 44 of this thesis for today's dollar value of one ducat)

throughout 1458.²⁷¹ The most important one to persuade from these dignitaries, was Mahmud Pasha Angelović, the Ottoman Grand Vizier (the head of the Ottoman government) at the time, which is verified by the first Ragusan instruction of April 1458, since it clearly stated, “make sure that you go to [...] Angelović and present yourself and the letter of credence, which he will receive on behalf of our Lordship.”²⁷²

The Ragusans changed their diplomatic rhetorical strategies based on the time, who they negotiated with, and the final goal of the negotiations. During the negotiations of 1458, the main motive for the city-state was to maintain peaceful relations with the Ottomans, and to decrease the amount of tribute as much as possible. Chapter four of this thesis identified the three rhetorical strategies that the Ragusans used in the early 1430s to justify their relations with the Ottomans to the Western powers. Based on the information from the instructions given to the Ragusan ambassadors, one may identify a similar rhetorical pattern with new rhetorical strategies. The first strategy used in the negotiations in 1458 was portraying themselves as a poor city-state in the hope of a decrease in the yearly tribute. An example, retrieved from the first instruction from April 1458, in which the ambassadors were instructed to tell the Grand Vizier, Angelović that “through the advice, favor and help of your grace, we may be able to make and conclude a good agreement with the Lord the Great Emperor, [...], and honor him in accordance with our little ability and the power of our poor city”.²⁷³ By saying this, the Ragusans hoped that Angelović would allow them to honor the sultan with 100 golden ducats yearly. They were, nevertheless, prepared to pay a higher amount, as is stated by the instruction, “And if [Angelović] is not satisfied with one hundred ducats, you are free to put them up to the sum of two hundred.”²⁷⁴

The Ragusans were prepared on the occurrence of different scenarios in the negotiations with the Ottoman dignitaries, but they, nevertheless, continued with the suggested strategy of portraying themselves as a poor republic. In case the ambassadors were brought to the presence of the sultan they were instructed to explain the ambassadorship to the sultan in the following manner “first of all make an excuse in a good way because in the past we have not sent our ambassadors to the Porte, since for a long time our city has been plagued and harassed by the

²⁷¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 194-195 e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 196* all found in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-25

²⁷² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

²⁷³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

²⁷⁴ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation) (See page 44 of this thesis for today's dollar value of one ducat)

plague, for which reason our gentlemen, and Rector of Ragusa, have been outside the city in the fear of the plague, so that they have not been able to meet and agree to send their ambassadors to the Porte and fulfil their obligation to the Great Lord.”²⁷⁵ One may assume that the ambassadors were instructed in this manner to blame the poverty of the city-state as a result of the pandemic.²⁷⁶ They were further instructed to say, “however poor [Ragusa] may be and how much less power and responsibility [Ragusa] has at present than in the past, [Ragusa] will nevertheless endeavor to honor the said Emperor with 300 ducats in silver every year, and that every three years we are obliged to send our ambassador with the said ducats.”²⁷⁷

A second rhetorical strategy, which is identified by the instruction from April 1458, is emotional manipulation. The Ragusan ambassadors were instructed to emotionally manipulate the sultan by using their previous diplomatic relations with his father, Sultan Murad II in the negotiations. In the case of the sultan’s unwillingness to conclude the negotiations around tribute, the Ragusan ambassadors were instructed to say that during the reign of the sultan’s father, “our city was much better off at that time and that it was better to pay 1000 ducats then than 200 ducats now”²⁷⁸ One may identify both the strategies in the excerpt, as the Ragusans also here emphasized how poor their city-state was at the present time. Another example of the second strategy may be found in the same instruction, as Gondola and Luccharis were instructed to say “when the father of the present Emperor took the country of Despot Grgura, he freed our merchants from all taxes and granted them many other exemptions, because we made an agreement with him to honor him every year.”²⁷⁹ It might perhaps be assumed that the Ragusans instructed their ambassadors to convey this message to encourage the sultan to give their merchants the same privileged rights they received in 1442.

The excerpts and examples from 1458, but also the earlier examples from chapter four illustrate that the Ragusans relied on rhetorical strategies in their diplomacy throughout the mid-

²⁷⁵ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194 in Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

²⁷⁶ The Republic of Ragusa had the first functioning quarantine system in the world, which was developed because of the plague in the early fourteenth century, more specifically in 1347. They built quarantine systems on the island of Mrkan. When visiting Dubrovnik today, one may see traces of this system as the buildings of Lazzaretti, not far from the Ploče entrance to the old town, were used as quarantine stations for travelers and merchants. All people entering the Republic had to quarantine for 40 days, whence why it is called “quarantine” as it stems from the Italian word for forty, quaranta. (See: Miović Vesna, *Wisdom at the Crossroads: True Stories from the Time of the Republic of Dubrovnik and the Ottoman Empire*)

²⁷⁷ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194 in Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation) (See page 44 of this thesis for today’s value of one ducat)

²⁷⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194 in Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

²⁷⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194 in Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

fifteenth century. However, compared to the three rhetorical strategies discussed in chapter four, some differences can be identified. In the relations with the Christian powers, the rhetorical strategies employed were, Ragusa as a frontier state of the *Respublica Christiana*. The second focused on silence about the Ragusan-Ottoman relations. The third focused on the valuable position of Ragusa, and how it because of its geographical position benefitted other states. In the Ragusan-Ottoman relations of 1458, two rhetorical strategies are identified. The first being centered around the poverty of their city-state, while the second evolved around emotional manipulation. It can therefore be concluded that there was a shift in the Ragusan diplomatic strategy after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which is why it also can be stated that the Ragusans shifted their rhetorical strategies according to the situation, the time, and their negotiating counterparts.

In addition to rhetorical strategies, the instruction from April 1458, gives a valuable insight in how the Ragusan rector and his council structured the Ragusan diplomacy, and it is an important document in understanding the process of obtaining the *Ahdname of 1458*. Negotiating the *Ahdname of 1458* took several months and was a lengthy process because the Ragusans wanted to decrease the tribute from 10000 ducats as much as possible. However, their initial offers of 300 and 600 ducats turned to be unrealistic.²⁸⁰ The Ragusans and the Ottomans came to a final conclusion, which is confirmed by the instruction, written on the 1st of September 1458 in Dubrovnik as it stated, “finally, how you came with the name of God to a conclusion, following your commission. Only one thing remains that the aforementioned [Angelović] wants 1500 ducats and not less, and he wants them ahead of time, and he does not want to assent to your requests. Therefore [...], we send you the said 1500 ducats.”²⁸¹ According to the same instruction, the Grand Vizier, Angelović, recommended the ambassadors to visit the sultan at the Sublime Porte. Gondola and Luccharis were therefore instructed by the rector to ask for Angelović’s instructions on how to behave at the Porte, so that the sultan could write the charter according to the Ragusans wishes. The rector further instructed them to, “when you are at the Porte, follow your instructions.”²⁸²

The negotiations between April and October 1458 are evidence of the importance of negotiation in the Ragusan diplomacy, and they are also an indication of the Ragusan negotiating skills. This negotiation is an example that prove that the Ragusans relied on

²⁸⁰ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, 93

²⁸¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. XIV, 1448-1462, 194-195* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/II, ed. Radonić, 24-25 (own translation)

²⁸² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. XIV, 1448-1462, 194-195* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/II, ed. Radonić, 24-25 (own translation)

diplomacy, not only to maintain peaceful relations, but to obtain their own interests. It might be considered to be remarkable that Gondola and Luccharis, with the instructions from the Ragusan rector and the council managed to decrease the amount of tribute from 10000 ducats to 1500 ducats, which they managed to do by using the arguments of how poor their republic was, and by emotionally manipulating the sultan.

The Ahdname of 1458

After lengthy negotiations, Sultan Mehmed II finally confirmed the Ragusan payment of the yearly tribute by the *Ferman of October 1458*, issued in Skopje, in which the sultan states, “we have received 1500 golden ducats that you sent”.²⁸³ The sultan, furthermore, issued the *Ahdname of 1458*, which confirmed all the privileges and the protection of the republic in return for a yearly tribute of 1500 golden ducats.²⁸⁴ The *Ahdname of 1458* confirmed all the privileges the Ragusans received by Sultan Murad II in 1442. The most important advantages were the privileged position of the Ragusan merchants, particularly with the reduction in taxes compared to other tributary states, and the right to trade on all Ottoman territory, “on sea and on the dry lands, in Bulgaria, in Serbia [...], in Arpanase and in Bosnia”.²⁸⁵ This meant that the Ragusan merchants could reassume the trade in the sultan’s possessions, with the small taxation of 2 percent, which their Balkan trade profited greatly from. It further re-confirmed the Ragusan right to be tried in front of a Ragusan court, however, in the case of a dispute between a Ragusan and an Ottoman or a Muslim, the case had to be tried in front of a *kadi* (an Ottoman judge). Thirdly, the belongings and the property of a dead Ragusan in Ottoman territory was to be returned to the republic.²⁸⁶ The main difference between the *Ahdname of 1442* and this one, is that the *Ahdname of 1458* established the permanent Ragusan-Ottoman relations.

There is, nevertheless, an essential difference between the *Ahdname of 1442* and the *Ahdname of 1458*. The difference lies in the different terms used to describe the number of ducats the Ragusans gave to the sultan. In Sultan Murad II’s charter the term *gift* is used, whereas in the *Ahdname of 1458*, the Turkish word for tribute, *haraç*, is used.²⁸⁷ Using the word

²⁸³ HR-DADU-7-2-1-1, *Acta Turcarum*; GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II ed. Stojanović, 237-238 (own translation) (See: Appendix)

²⁸⁴ An amount that would increase to 12500 ducats by 1481, when it was fixed for the entire duration of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations. (See, chapter 8: Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-180*, 173

²⁸⁵ Charter of October 1458, in *Dubrovačko-Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458*, ed. Nedeljković (own translation)

²⁸⁶ Charter of October 1458 in *Dubrovačko-Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458*, ed. Nedeljković

²⁸⁷ Charter of October 1458 in *Dubrovačko-Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458*, ed. by Nedeljković (See page 44 of this thesis for today’s value of one ducat)

haraç instead of *gift* is an essential difference as paying the *haraç* meant that Ragusa officially became a tributary state of the Ottoman Empire.

What did the *Ahdname* mean for Ragusa's *de facto* independency? By paying the tribute in 1458, and by agreeing to do so yearly, Ragusa's relations with the Ottomans were regulated by the *Ahdname*. According to Lovro Kunčević, *Ahdname* clearly referred to "obedience" or "submission" to the sultan.²⁸⁸ Most historians studying Ragusan history agree that the republic was effectively independent, but in the legal sense a "vassal" state under the sultan's supreme rule.²⁸⁹ Peter F. Sugars argues that Ragusa was a vassal in name only as they did not depend on the goodwill of the sultan as other rulers like Transylvania.²⁹⁰ The answer lies in the fact that the Ragusans understood the Ottoman way of thinking and could thus use it against them. This can best be explained by the interpretation of the tributary status. Because of the vagueness of the Ottoman documents, like the *Ahdname*, in defining Ragusa's legal status, the Ragusans were allowed to interpret and manipulate the original meaning of its tributary status. In Ottoman documents, regarding tributary relations, the politically compromising ideas were usually mentioned, such as "fidelity", "servitude", "obedience" and "protection". These ideas, according to Kunčević, in Islamic law had clear connotations of submission. However, in Ragusan diplomacy such terms were used in the relations with every important Christian ruler and were thus typical of their diplomatic rhetoric. The Ragusans were well-aware of the meaning of the Ottoman ideas, and they made sure to use the same terms in their relations with other states, as well as the Sublime Porte.²⁹¹ Despite the obtainment of Ottoman protection by the *Ahdname of 1458*, Ragusa continued to be a *de facto* independent republic under the official rule and protection of the Croatian-Hungarian king.²⁹² The *Ahdname of 1458*, nonetheless, showed that the Ragusans became dependent on Ottoman protection to continue its existence as a *de facto* independent republic.

²⁸⁸ Kunčević, Lovro, "Status of the Ragusan Republic in the Early Modern Period" in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. by Kármán, Gábor and Kunčević, Lovro (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 98

²⁸⁹ Kunčević, "Status of the Ragusan Republic in the Early Modern Period", p. 98; *Republika*, Episode 1, «Mali medu velikima», directed by Bozidar Domagoj Buric, aired 18.04.2016 on Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (HRT 1)

²⁹⁰ Sugars, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, 113

²⁹¹ Kunčević, "Status of the Ragusan Republic in the Early Modern Period", 98

²⁹² Foretic, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808, knjiga 1*, 228

An Explanation of Ragusa's Privileged Position

How Ragusa obtained Ottoman protection instead of becoming a part of the Ottoman Empire in 1458 can be explained by its privileged position in the Ahdnames of 1442 and 1458. It is already familiar that the *Ahdname of 1458* confirmed all the privileges of the *Ahdname of 1442*. It must therefore be stressed that the Ragusans enjoyed a more privileged position than the other tributary states of the Ottoman Empire. The significant difference can best be explained by the different forms of tributary status, which requires an understanding of the general Ottoman theory of tributary states.²⁹³ According to the *Sharia*, the Sacred Law of Islam, the world is divided into two categories, *Dar al-Islam*, and *Dar al-Harb*. The first, describes the land of Islam, where the head of the state is Muslim and where Islamic law applies. Both Muslims and non-Muslims may reside in the *Dar al-Islam*. To live there, the non-Muslims must accept the Islamic law and the rules that apply for the non-Muslims in an Islamic state. The status applied to the non-Muslims was the *dhimmi*-status, which gave them protection, but not full rights. *Dar al-Harb*, on the other hand, is defined as the land of war, which is not under Islamic law and order. According to the Islamic law, these areas will be given the offer to become a part of *Dar al-Islam*. If the offer is declined, the area may be conquered following the rules of holy war, *jihad*.²⁹⁴

In what category did Catholic Ragusa fall under? To answer the question, a closer look into the Ragusan-Ottoman relations is necessary. Although Ragusa agreed to pay the tribute from 1458, it did not make it a part of *Dar al-Islam* because Islamic rule did not apply in Ragusan territory as it did in the rest of the *Dar al-Islam*. Both the Ahdnames from 1442 and 1458 state that Ragusan law should be applied in Ragusan territory.²⁹⁵ Chapter five indicated that Ragusan law also applied in the areas where the Ragusans had merchant colonies and consulates.

A second reason, which is pointed out by Alexander H. De Groot, is that no Ottoman *kadi* (an Ottoman judge) ever held office in Ragusa.²⁹⁶ This may also be confirmed by the Ahdnames of 1442 and 1458, as they state that a convicted Ragusan should be tried in front of

²⁹³ Miović, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik", 26

²⁹⁴ Store Norske Leksikon (SNL), "Dar al-Islam", 06.06.2018. Retrieved 10.12.2021

²⁹⁵ *Stare Srpske povelje i pisma*, Vo. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 237-238; HR-DADU-7-2-1-1 in the State Archives of Dubrovnik, part of the collection *Acta Turcarum*, 45

²⁹⁶ De Groot, Alexander H., "The Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime in the Ottoman Middle East from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries", *Oriente Moderno*, 2003, Nuova Serie, Anno 22 (83), Nr. 3, The Ottoman Capitulations; Text and Context (2003), 575-604

the Ragusan court, but the convicted may choose to be tried in front of an Ottoman *kadi*.²⁹⁷ It is therefore reasonable to claim that Ragusa cannot be classified as being a part of the *Dar al-Islam*. Furthermore, classifying it as a part of the *Dar al-Harb*, the land of war, would also be incorrect, as the Ragusans accepted Ottoman protection and acknowledged the Ottoman request of a yearly tribute in 1458. It is thus more accurate to place Ragusa's status somewhere in-between the categories of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*.

As the Ottoman Empire grew in power, the distinction between *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb* proved to be unsatisfactory, and a third category emerged, the *Dar al-'Ahd* or *Dar al-Surb*. According to Nicolaas Beigman, '*Ahd* translates to "treaty", which can be confirmed by the Ottoman name for the tributary charter, *Ahdname*. *Dar al-'Ahd* therefore includes all the states and peoples prepared to pay the tribute, but not ready to accept the *dhimmi* status.²⁹⁸ *Dar al-'Ahd*, described as a category in-between the two latter ones, seems to be the most precise one to use when describing Ragusa's special status. Here again it is necessary to pay close attention to the name of the category and what it means. '*Ahd*, as mentioned earlier, translates to "treaty", which the Ragusans obtained from both Sultan Murad II and from Sultan Mehmed II. 1458 marked the year when Ragusa started paying the tribute, making it a tributary state, which is one of the reasons why it can be classified as a part of the *Dar al-'Ahd*. The second reason can be explained by verse 90 of the 4th Surah in the Holy Book of Islam, the Quran. It states that those who are bound to Muslims by a treaty, or those people who wish to maintain peace with Muslims are not to be fought against.²⁹⁹ Even though the category of *Dar al-'Ahd* is not mentioned explicitly in verse 90 of the 4th Surah in the Quran, it is applicable to use the verse in this discussion. With Ragusa being a tributary state of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans, who were believers of the Quran, were not permitted to wage war against them.

In addition to its tributary status, Ragusa's privileged position, especially the privileged position of the Ragusan merchants, may perhaps be explained by the skillful diplomacy of the Ragusan ambassadors in the Levant, and particularly their negotiation skills. During the Renaissance, negotiation consisted of the creation and the maintenance of an agreement between political parts.³⁰⁰ It was highlighted in chapter five, how the Ragusan ambassadors in 1440, postponed the matter of tribute with the Ottomans through negotiation. This example may

²⁹⁷ GZM. XXIII, 6. in *Stare Srpska Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 232-234; Charter of October 1458 in *Dubrovačko-Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458*, ed. by Nedeljković

²⁹⁸ Beigman, Nicolas H., *The Turco-Ragusan Relationship According to the Firmans of Sultan Murad III (1575-1595) Extant in the State Archives of Dubrovnik* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1967)

²⁹⁹ *Koranen Kvinnene 4:90*, translated by Berg, Einar (Oslo: De norske bokklubbene, 2000), 58

³⁰⁰ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 86-88

be taken into consideration when discussing Ragusa's privileged position, as it laid the ground for the *Ahdname of 1442*, in which Ragusa originally obtained its beneficial status, but which was again renewed in 1458. The Ottomans and the Ragusans, through negotiation, reached a mutual agreement, which resulted in the *Ahdname of 1442*. One of the arguments that the Ragusan ambassadors used in 1440 to prevent the Ragusans from paying the tribute, is of particular relevance as it has to do with the Ragusan merchants. According to the Ragusans, an eventual payment of the tribute would lead to "the ruin and breakdown of our city [...] which we are sure would be unpleasant to His Majesty the Emperor at his mercy and would turn to his damage and inconvenience due to the lack of merchants who could constantly benefit his countries."³⁰¹ This is indicative of how the Ragusan ambassadors were aware of the benefit the Ottomans would enjoy from Ragusan neutrality in the 1440s.

However, this diplomatic tactic was not only employed in the negotiations of the early 1440s, but it was also used during the negotiations of what would become the *Ahdname of 1458*. The two Ragusan ambassadors, Gondola and Luccharis, were instructed to say to Grand Vizier Angelović that "everyone knows how much use is made of [the Ragusan] merchants' work in the places where they work and converse."³⁰² Another example can be found from the same instruction from April 1458, where the ambassadors were instructed to mention, "when the father of the present Emperor took the country from Despot Durad, he freed our merchants from all taxes and granted them many other exemptions because we made an agreement with him to honor him every year".³⁰³ This diplomatic tactic may perhaps explain why the Ragusan merchants were put in such a privileged position, as other merchants had to pay a 4-5 percent tax on sold goods, while the Ragusans only had to pay 2 percent.

Ragusa's beneficial position, and why it did not become a part of the Ottoman Empire, can therefore be explained by two distinctive elements. Firstly, it can be explained as being rooted in verse 90 in the 4th Surah of the Quran, as a city-state bound to the Ottoman Empire by treaty, and it was therefore classified as *Dar al-'Ahd*. Secondly, it can be justified through the negotiating skills of the Ragusan ambassadors, particularly using the argument of how the Ragusan merchants benefitted the Ottoman Empire.

³⁰¹ Miović, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istambulu*, 9-10

³⁰² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

³⁰³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

Why the Sultan did not Conquer Ragusa

Aside from Ragusa's privileged position, there were other factors that prevented its annexation to the Ottoman Empire. Dennis P. Hupchick describes Constantinople as the "middleman" between the eastern Mediterranean and central Asia, which was particularly beneficial for both the sea and the land trade. For Sultan Mehmed II, controlling a city like Constantinople, meant great wealth and prestige for him and for the rest of his empire.³⁰⁴ The previous chapter exemplified how Ragusa functioned as a middleman between the East and the West. Both the Western and Eastern parts benefitted from Ragusa's position. Because of Ragusa's beneficial position in the Balkans, the question being raised is why did Sultan Mehmed II keep Ragusa under his protection rather than conquering it? What makes it even more interesting is the fact that one of the aims of the sultan was to conquer the Italian peninsula, and ideally Rome. A conquered Ragusa would potentially serve as a perfect foothold for his mission.³⁰⁵ There are many aspects that need to be considered when answering this question. It must be stressed that the question is essential in understanding *how* Ragusa obtained Ottoman protection in 1458.

There are five essential reasons to why Sultan Mehmed II could potentially conquer the republic as Ragusa had five things the Ottomans lacked, which they needed. The five being, their skillful merchants, businessmen, and bankers, Ragusa as a neutral port, Ragusa as a neutral territory, its position as a mediator between the East and the West, and lastly Ragusa's function as a window to the Mediterranean.³⁰⁶ However, the five things could better be provided for the Ottomans by Ragusa being neutral. Firstly, the Ragusans were known for being skillful businessmen, merchants, and bankers.³⁰⁷ The way the Ottomans viewed the merchants must be stressed. Since the Ottomans were preoccupied with warfare, they did not have the time to assume the role of merchants, which they viewed as a low calling. In addition, the Ottomans did not trust their own subjects to assume the role, and they did not want the Venetians or other powers to take on such an important task, which may also explain why the sultan provided the Ragusan merchants with the privileged tax position through the *Ahdname of 1458*.³⁰⁸

Secondly, the Ottomans needed a neutral port where they could trade with the states they waged war against. Particularly with Spain, Venetia, and the Papal States. A point that needs to be stressed is that the Ottomans viewed Ragusa as a perfect candidate to assume the

³⁰⁴ Hupchick, Dennis P., *The Balkans: From Constantinople to Communism*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 188

³⁰⁵ Miović, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik", 188

³⁰⁶ Miović, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik", 187-189

³⁰⁷ Miović, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik", 187-189

³⁰⁸ Charter of October 1458 in *Dubrovačko-Turski Ugovor od 23. Oktobra 1458*, ed. by Nedeljković

role of neutrality because they both had important trading contacts in the West, but they were also dependent on the Porte to continue their existence as a *de facto* independent republic. The first instruction sent with the Ragusan ambassadors to the Sublime Porte in 1458, provides an example of Ragusa's dependency on trade, and therefore also on the Ottoman government, as the rector instructs the ambassadors to emphasize that "we do not live if not for our merchants more by sea than by land".³⁰⁹ By having Ragusa as a neutral territory, the Ragusans could both trade in the Ottoman possessions and in the western lands, even during the many wars fought between the Ottomans and the western princes. Due to political reasons, the subjects of the Ottoman Empire were not permitted to trade with the enemies of the empire, and the Ragusans were therefore the perfect candidates.³¹⁰ Additionally, as the Ragusans had a well-established trade-network, the Ottomans saw no reason in capturing the republic outright.³¹¹

A neutral Ragusa was, additionally, beneficial in terms of the exchange of prisoners, and it also allowed the city-state to function as a mediator between the East and the West, but also among states in general. These two constitute the third and fourth reasons to why the sultan did not conquer Ragusa. Lastly, Ragusa worked as a window to the Mediterranean, where information-gathering on the Christian states could be conducted. This, however, required that the Ottomans left the city-state free.³¹² A neutral Ragusa was not only beneficial for the Ottoman Empire, but for the Western states as well. This can best be explained by a significant consequence that came with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. As a result of the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of Constantinople, the trade routes between Europe and Asia, through the Silkroad, were partially closed.³¹³ Ragusa was one of the terminals of the caravan roads from Africa to the Orient, which further made it a center of economic activity and social life. These mercantile centers like Ragusa were important places for the flow of goods and information.³¹⁴ However, what characterizes Ragusa, because of its tributary status with the Ottomans, is that it functioned as a neutral port, which is why it is applicable to argue that its tributary status also benefitted the western states, as the West could still trade through neutral Ragusa.

In addition to the five reasons why Ragusa did not become a part of the Ottoman Empire, Dennis P. Hupchick explains it by the inexperience of the Ottomans in dealing with states such

³⁰⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

³¹⁰ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 10

³¹¹ Hupchick, *The Balkans*, 160-163

³¹² Miović, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik", 187-189

³¹³ Wolff, *Italians politiske historie 476-1945*, 85

³¹⁴ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 38

as Ragusa. Hupchick points out that the Ottomans could not control and manipulate Ragusa as they had done with many other Balkan states previously. They simply lacked the experience in dealing with a state government with corporate institutions, such as Ragusa.³¹⁵

In similarity with Ragusa's previous overlords, the Ottomans benefitted from Ragusa's existence, and the republic could therefore continue to stake its survival on the power of a more capable overlord. Ragusa could furthermore carry on the role as a key diplomatic player with its neighbors and sovereigns. Zdenko Zlatar argues that Ragusa decided to stake their survival as a *de facto* independent political unit under the protection of the Ottoman Empire by accepting the terms of the *Ahdname of 1458*. The city-state would further base its economic prosperity on the trade in the Balkans, on the rights and the privileges, and the guarantees that the *Ahdname of 1442*, and especially the *Ahdname of 1458* seriously protected.³¹⁶ The reason why Ragusa accepted Ottoman protection was that the republic realized in the 1450s that the power of the Ottoman Empire overshadowed the power of the Croatian-Hungarian king, which had been displayed in 1444 and 1448. Due to the decrease in Hungarian power, the Ragusans understood that the Hungarian military could no longer protect them from the Ottoman Empire and from the Republic of Venetia.³¹⁷ This also gives an answer to the initial question of this chapter, namely how the Ragusan-Ottoman relations changed in the 1450s, and particularly after the fall Constantinople in 1453. It can therefore be concluded that the principal change in their relations was the establishment of closer relations between them, and Ragusa becoming a tributary state of the Ottomans, which can be identified as a result of the changing power pattern in Ragusa's geopolitical neighborhood.

³¹⁵ Hupchick, *The Balkans*, 160-163

³¹⁶ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 10

³¹⁷ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 10

Chapter 7: The Diplomatic Activities of the Ragusan Merchants

Diplomacy and Trade

This thesis has so far explained how Ragusa employed diplomacy to obtain the Ottoman protection by the *Ahdname of 1458*. Before the final chapter of this thesis, that classifies the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy, an inclusion of the Ragusan merchants as diplomatic representatives is necessary. What is absent from the studies of Renaissance diplomacy in general, and in the study of Ragusan diplomacy in particular, is the inclusion of the merchants in diplomatic activities. A topos of the nineteenth-century studies of the Italian diplomacy was the connection between diplomacy and trade, but as stated by Lazzarini these theses have not been followed up by any consistent research where trade and diplomacy have been connected. It needs to be stressed that there is a strong tradition of ignoring the diplomatic effects of the merchants' expansion in the research of mercantile networks, and according to Lazzarini there does not exist any essays devoted to the diplomatic roles of the merchants.³¹⁸ It may be argued that merchant diplomacy constituted a significant part of Renaissance diplomacy as the diplomatic actors in the fifteenth century came from different backgrounds, and due to the flexible nature of the diplomacy at the time.³¹⁹

The aim of this chapter is therefore to illustrate the diplomatic activities of the Ragusan merchants and elaborate what it meant for the Ragusan diplomacy in general during the 1430s to the 1450s. This will be done by utilizing examples from the Ottoman expansion and conquest of the Balkans. It is likely that the Ragusan merchants engaged in diplomatic activities in the Mediterranean and the Balkans since they had trading privileges in these areas, alongside colonies and consulates. The likelihood that the Ragusan merchants participated in the diplomatic activities of the city-states must be discussed in the light of these questions; Did the Ragusan merchants participate, or have a role in Ragusa's diplomacy in the 1430s to 1450s? If so, what role did the merchants take on?

The reason why it is relevant to include the Ragusan merchants in the discussion of diplomatic activities during the Renaissance is the fact that the Ragusan merchants, due to their wide networks in the Mediterranean and in the Balkan hinterlands, could engage in diplomatic activities. Lazzarini argues that the Italian city-states' merchants could work as information-

³¹⁸ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 38

³¹⁹ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 31

gatherers for their courts due to their trade networks.³²⁰ As a result of its wide trade network the Ragusan merchants had various contacts in both the Mediterranean harbors and in the Balkan hinterlands, which they could potentially retrieve information from, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that the Ragusan merchants had a similar role.

Another reason why it is relevant to include the Ragusan merchants as diplomatic actors is the fact that many of them traded in different places. According to Lazzarini, the merchants in the Italian city-states were important contributors to the flow of information as they were in contact with available diplomatic contacts. Their interactions guaranteed the different governments with a sporadic flow of information, which is why Lazzarini places the merchants in the category of *occasional diplomats*.³²¹ It is likely, due to the similarities between Ragusa and the Italian city-states, that the Ragusan merchants functioned in a similar manner.

Like the Italian city-state, Ragusa was a strong mercantile profile that scholars have described as *The Tiger of the Mediterranean*.³²² It is considered to be one of the most successful Mediterranean city-states when it comes to among others, trade, shipping, and the level of wealth. The Croatian economic historian Vladimir Stipećić compared the prosperity of the Ragusan trade with the ones of modern-day Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan.³²³ Lovro Kunčević states that Ragusa was probably one of the most intensely mercantile and maritime economies of Renaissance Europe, largely due to its mercantile profits, and because trade was the most important fragment of the Ragusan economy.³²⁴

Once again, Ragusa's geostrategic position must be stressed as it explains the commercial prosperity of the city-state because it allowed them to trade both by land and by sea. The importance of the Ragusan trade, especially in the Balkans is confirmed by the many trade agreements between the Ragusans and the Ottomans, especially the *Ahdname of 1430*, the *Ahdname of 1442* and the *Ahdname of 1458*.³²⁵ Moreover, the significance of the Ragusan trade is confirmed by the trading privilege they obtained by the Council of Basel in 1433, which allowed them to trade with the Levante.³²⁶

³²⁰ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 37-40

³²¹ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 139

³²² Havrylyshyn, Oleg; Srzentić, Nora, "Economy of Ragusa, 1300 - 1800 The Tiger of Mediaeval Mediterranean" at The Twentieth Dubrovnik Economic Conference, (Zagreb: Croatian National Bank, 2014)

³²³ Havrylyshyn and Srzentić, "Economy of Ragusa, 1300 - 1800 The Tiger of Mediaeval Mediterranean" p. 9

³²⁴ Kunčević, Lovro, "The Maritime Trading Network of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) From the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century" in *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade Around Europe 1300-1600* ed. by Blockmans, Wim; Krom, Mikhail and Wubs-Mrozewicz, Justina, (London; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 143

³²⁵ *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 229 & 236

³²⁶ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Mariae saec. XV/I* in Radonić, *Dubrovačka Akta i Povelje*, Vol. 1/I, 341-343

Ragusan Representation in the Balkan Hinterlands

The expansion of the Ragusan trade, and the establishment of several trading centers throughout the Balkans and the Mediterranean harbors by the late fourteenth century, required the regulation and protection of the mercantile groups and their families. These tasks were bestowed upon various representative bodies, known as consulates, which governed the Ragusan communities.³²⁷ Consular relations date to ancient times and have been established between people since then, and in a modern sense, these can function as diplomatic missions. Among the tasks of consulates today is the establishment of economic and commercial relations between the sending state and the receiving state.³²⁸ It may be said that during the fifteenth century, the most essential element of the Ragusan consulates was commerce. Despite the fact that the consulates in the Mediterranean harbors most likely played an essential role in the Ragusan diplomacy, it is more relevant to focus on the consulates in Balkan trading communities, as they witnessed the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. This is why the Balkan consulates will be the center of the further discussion.

Alongside the obtainment of the rights to trade with the Levante, and thereby also with the Ottomans by Pope Eugene IV and the Council of Basel in 1433, the Ragusans received the liberty to establish consulates there. By the charter from the 22nd of December 1433, found in the collection *Acta Sanctae Mariae saec*, Ragusa received “the full permission of the Apostolic see” to establish, among other things, consulates.³²⁹ The existence of such consulates is confirmed by a letter found in the collection *Div. Not. 1446* from the 27th of April 1444, which was sent from the consulate in Khotyn (Ukraine) to the rector of Ragusa.³³⁰ In the letter the Consulate of Khotyn informed the rector of Ragusa about one of their judgements.³³¹ A second example of the existence of Ragusan consulates is validated by a letter from the 10th of November 1457 from the collection *Lamenti de foris 1457*, sent from the consulate in Ragusa’s colony in Srebrenica to the rector of Ragusa.³³² These letters are essential as they not only confirm the existence of various consulates in the Balkan hinterlands, but they also verify the presence of different Ragusan trading colonies there.

³²⁷ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 40

³²⁸ Vienna Convention on Consular Relations from 1963, Done at Vienna on 24 April 1963. Entered into force on 19 March 1967. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 596, 261

³²⁹ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Mariae saec. XV/1* in *Dubrovačka Akta i Povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 341-343 (own translation)

³³⁰ *Div. Not. 1446 str. 4. – P. II, 126* in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 430-431

³³¹ *Div. Not. 1446 str. 4. – P. II, 126* in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 430-431

³³² *Lamenti de foris 1457 l. 264 – sl. XI, 93* in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 31-433

The organization of the consular system allowed the communities to function judicially, and the judges were expected to judge according to the appropriate legal regulations sent by the Ragusan Small Council. The consuls had the power to handle legal problems, however, a too serious or contentious matter to be tackled locally required the handling of a Ragusan ambassador, who visited the communities or colonies annually.³³³ There are several examples of the judicial power of the consulates. A letter from the collection *Lettere e commissioni di Levante* from the 15th of November 1417 reveals that a Ragusan local was summoned to court.³³⁴ Another example is from the letter earlier mentioned from the collection *Div. Not. 1446* from the 27th of April 1444 written in Khotyn, which informed the Ragusan rector about one of the judgements of the consulate, and that they had judged according to Ragusan law.³³⁵ A third example can be found in a letter found in the collection *Lamenti de foris 1457* from the 10th of November 1457 in Srebrenica, by which the Ragusan rector is informed about a judgment of a robbery of 180 ducats.³³⁶

The three letters analyzed above confirm that the Ragusan rector was informed about the judgments in the colonies, which is also evidence of how the consulates and the consuls represented Ragusa in their commercial communities in the Balkans. It, furthermore, verifies that the Ragusan merchants in these trading circles were important contributors in the Ragusan representation abroad, as the consuls were elected among the merchant groups.

A factor in Renaissance diplomacy, which has been described as the main characteristic of the development from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy by scholars such as Garret Mattingly, is the resident ambassador.³³⁷ Even though Ragusa did not maintain a resident ambassador in Istanbul prior to the mid-sixteenth century, it is arguable that the consulates in the Balkans functioned as the Ragusan representative abroad because they represented Ragusa in the relations with different rulers in the Balkans.³³⁸ *Article 17 (1) Performance of diplomatic acts by consular officers* in the Vienna Convention on Consular relations from 1963 states that a consul may represent its sending state, and be authorized to perform diplomatic activities if there is no diplomatic mission in the receiving state.³³⁹ Although the convention regulates

³³³ Harris, *Dubrovnik*, p. 160

³³⁴ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante 1411- 1417. – P. I, 304; GZM. XX, 182 in Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 441

³³⁵ *Div. Not. 1446 str. 4. – P. II, 126 in Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 430-431

³³⁶ *Lamenti de foris 1457 l. 264 – sl. XI, 93 in Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 431-433. (See page 44 for today's dollar value of one ducat)

³³⁷ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 60

³³⁸ Ahmetović, Suad, *Dubrovački kurioziteti: iz dva minula tisucjelca*, (Dubrovnik: Alfa-2, 2015), 42

³³⁹ *Article 17 (1) Performance of diplomatic acts by consular officers* in Vienna Convention on Consular Relations from 1963, Done at Vienna on 24 April 1963. Entered into force on 19 March 1967. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 596, 261

modern diplomacy, it confirms that a consul may potentially function as a representative of a state. It therefore indicates that the Ragusan consulates, in for example Khotyn and Srebrenica, functioned as the Ragusan representatives there.³⁴⁰

In difference to Mattingly, Lazzarini stresses that Renaissance diplomacy was a flexible political activity where information-gathering, negotiation, representation, and communication interacted.³⁴¹ One may therefore argue that the Ragusan consulates were a part of this flexible political activity, as they contributed with many of the tools mentioned by Lazzarini. To some extent one may even argue that the Ragusan consulates did many of the similar tasks that were bestowed upon the resident ambassador, as for example the resident ambassador in the Italian city-states of the same time-period. Residence diplomacy was not common throughout Europe until the seventeenth century.³⁴²

Merchants as Information-gatherers

Although it can be stated that *representation* and the judicial function were the main task of these consulates, other diplomatic tasks were bestowed upon them, for example *information-gathering*. The gathering of information in diplomacy can be done in different manners as it required a sophisticated range of different activities, especially in the Renaissance.³⁴³ Lazzarini states that “information” is a whole spectrum of different terms, consisting of news, rumors, and speculations.³⁴⁴ Throughout the 1430s, 1440s, and 1450s, the Ragusan ambassador assumed the role of information-gatherers and the providers of information for their own city-state, but also for other states and empires, specifically informing them about the movements of the Ottomans. It is therefore interesting to investigate if the Ragusan merchants did the same, but for its own government.

In the Renaissance, the Italian city-states’ colonies became a hub for the flow of information and goods. In addition, the local networks built up various relationships with the host communities and their governments, and they were at the forefront as information-gatherers and potential sources of intermediators, translators, and political and diplomatic agents. It provided the governments, at least in the Italian city-states, with information, without

³⁴⁰ *Div. Not. 1446 str. 4. – P. II, 126: Lamenti de foris 1457 l. 264 – sl. XI, 93* both found in *Stare Srpske Povelje i Pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović, 430-433

³⁴¹ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 4-5

³⁴² Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 95-76

³⁴³ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 78

³⁴⁴ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 70

the governments being directly involved.³⁴⁵ As Ragusa also had communities and consulates in various places, it is arguable that they assumed the same role as the colonies of the Italian city-state. It may be said that the Ragusan communities and consulates were contributors in the development of communication and information networks.

Some scholars have emphasized the importance of the Ragusan communities and consulates regarding the gathering of information, among which Lovro Kunčević states that the consuls were an important part of the Ragusan information network, as they could send news-reports from their local territories.³⁴⁶ The Ragusan merchants in the communities and consulates in the Balkan hinterlands have been described as the eyes and ears of Ragusa, and the Ragusan government received a flow of information from them.³⁴⁷ In that manner, the Ragusan merchants were directly involved in the diplomatic activities of Ragusa. Their importance was especially noticeable during the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans as they could report back to the Ragusan government about the events they observed, but also to foreign governments. An example of this may be seen in a report from one of the most important colonies, the Ragusan colony in Belgrade. In October 1558, the Ragusan community in Belgrade reported to the Spanish king about the Ottoman preparation for war against the Hungarians.³⁴⁸ Although this example is from 1558, a century after the time-period of this thesis, it supports the assumption that the Ragusan colonies/communities and consulates worked as information-gatherers. It additionally supports the theory that they functioned in a similar way during the 1430s, 1440s and 1450s. In that manner one may identify similarities between the Ragusan ambassadors and the merchants in the colonies/communities.

An earlier example of how the Ragusan merchants worked as information-gatherers is confirmed by a letter written by the Ragusans to King Sigismund on the 4th of May 1436, where they informed the king about a potential Albanian action against the Ottomans.³⁴⁹ In this letter the Ragusan merchants trading in Schlavonia, Bosnia and Zeta are mentioned.³⁵⁰ It is further mentioned that these merchants knew how big of an influence the Ottomans could be in these areas, and that they had to deal with them daily.³⁵¹ The information in the letter indicates that

³⁴⁵ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 39

³⁴⁶ Kunčević, "The Maritime Trading Network of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) From the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century", 149

³⁴⁷ Dedijer, Stevan "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 108

³⁴⁸ Dedijer, Stevan "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 107

³⁴⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XII (1435-1440, f. 24-25)* in *Dubrovačka Akta i Povelje, Knjiga 1, Serija 1*, ed. Radonić, 358-360

³⁵⁰ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XII (1435-1440, f. 24-25)* in *Dubrovačka Akta i Povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 358-360

³⁵¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XII (1435-1440, f. 24-25)* in *Dubrovačka Akta i Povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 358-360

the Ragusan government received information from the merchants in Schlavonia, Bosnia and Zeta. However, this is not mentioned explicitly.³⁵²

During the 1450s, a huge part of the Ragusan diplomacy in general, and the diplomacy of the rest of the states in the *Respublica Christiana*, evolved around the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. It is interesting to note from some of the correspondence between Ragusa and other foreign courts that the Ragusans conveyed information they received from their sources. An example of this is verified by the letter from Ragusa to the Hungarian Governor Hunyadi, written on the 20th of November 1455, retrieved from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*.³⁵³ In this letter, the Ragusans inform Governor Hunyadi about the information they themselves received from their sources about the Ottoman withdrawal from the Bosnian borders.³⁵⁴ Although the Ragusan merchants are not directly mentioned in this letter either, one may assume that the information came from them as Ragusa had several merchant communities in the Balkans, as well as merchants travelling along the trade route.

Occasionally, when the Ragusans informed the Hungarian king about the Ottoman affairs, they neglected to mention where they received the information from, which was the case of the two previous examples.³⁵⁵ Another example of how the Ragusans fail to mention from whom they obtained information, is found in the letter from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, written on the 12th of November 1457.³⁵⁶ However, in the last paragraph, which ends with “These things are new among us...”, the Ragusans provide the Hungarian king with news, without specifically mentioning from where or whom they obtained the information.³⁵⁷ It is reasonable to assume that the information came from either the Ragusan merchants trading in Adrianople, or from their ambassadors resting there. The reference point here is that the news contains information concerning the Ottomans and Adrianople.³⁵⁸ As is already familiar, Adrianople was the capital of the Ottoman Empire prior to the fall of

³⁵² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, XII (1435-1440, f. 24-25) in *Dubrovačka Akta i Povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 358-360

³⁵³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1454-60 f. 175 in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 585-586

³⁵⁴ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1454-60 f. 175 in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 585-586

³⁵⁵ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, XII (1435-1440, f. 24-25) in *Dubrovačka Akta i Povelje*, Knjiga 1, Serija 1, ed. Radonić, 358-360; *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1454-60 f. 175 in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 585-586

³⁵⁶ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1454-60 f. 113 in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 599-600

³⁵⁷ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1454-60 f. 113 in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 599-600 (own translation)

³⁵⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. 1454-60 f. 113 in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 599-600

Constantinople in 1453. After the transition of capitals to Constantinople, Adrianople continued to be the second most politically important city of the Ottoman Empire.³⁵⁹ The city was therefore of great importance not only for the Ragusan ambassadors, but for their merchants as well. Although the Ragusans did not have any colonies there, it was one of the main trading centers of the Balkans. Prior to the fall of Constantinople, Adrianople was the last destination of the Ragusan ambassadors, however, after the fall it became an important resting place along the route to Constantinople.³⁶⁰ That is why it is reasonable to assume that the information the Ragusans obtained came from either their merchants trading in Adrianople or from their ambassadors resting there.

Even though there is no explicit mentioning of the Ragusan merchants as information-gatherers in the preceding examples, the following letter from 1458, confirms that the Ragusans, also explicitly mentioned the merchants as gatherers of information. The letter from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, shows how the Ragusans actively used the information they had received from their merchants when informing foreign lords about news concerning the Ottomans.³⁶¹ The receiver of the letter is not actively mentioned, other than that the Ragusans start the letter with “Serenissime”.³⁶² Based on the information from the letter, Ragusa received information from their merchants in the Ottoman lands, who informed the Ragusan government about the Ottoman presence in Uskoplje (Bosnia).³⁶³ The Ragusans were further informed about the Ottoman army in the area, and that a large part of the army “were consumed by fever and starvation”³⁶⁴ The merchants were thus a part of the Ragusan information-system. However, it must be stressed that the receiving of information required careful evaluation and confirmation, as the quantity of information was produced by a broad spectrum of women and men, which had circulated through different channels.³⁶⁵ In Ragusa’s case just like in the Italian city-states, the broad spectrum included the merchants.

³⁵⁹ Kursar, “The Diplomatic, Religious, and Economic Presence of the Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in Ottoman Edirne”, 338

³⁶⁰ Kursar, “The Diplomatic, Religious, and Economic Presence of the Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in Ottoman Edirne”, 302

³⁶¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60 f. 74* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 612

³⁶² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60 f. 74* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 612

³⁶³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60 f. 74* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 612

³⁶⁴ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60 f. 74* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 612 (own translation)

³⁶⁵ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 78-84

It can therefore be concluded that the Ragusan merchants participated in some of the activities forming diplomacy, mostly *representation* and *information-gathering*, which according to Lazzarini went hand in hand during the fifteenth century.³⁶⁶ Furthermore, it must be stressed that conveying the information they gathered to the Ragusan government was an essential part of their diplomatic activities, and an important part for later Ragusan negotiations, an activity that might perhaps count as the diplomatic tool of *communication*. Finally, it may be concluded that the Ragusan merchants functioned as diplomatic actors to some extent, which can best be explained by Lazzarini's term *occasional diplomats*, which she uses to explain the diplomatic activities of the merchants of the Italian city-states, yet another indication of the similarities between Ragusa and the Italian city-states.

Ragusan Merchants as Pieces in a Diplomatic Game

In the 1440s and the 1450s, the Ragusan merchants were used in a completely different manner, and not by their own government, but by the Ottoman Empire. While they were used as information-gatherers and representatives of the city-state by their own government, they were used as pieces in a diplomatic game by the Ottomans. As is already familiar, the Ragusans were reluctant in establishing closer relations with the Ottomans prior to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, nor were they willing to pay a yearly tribute. As a consequence, the Ragusan merchants were either taken as hostages or threatened.

In the modern world, the term "hostage" has a very negative connotation. However, the term needs to be understood in a medieval context. Holding hostages was not an uncommon tool in the West during the 1450s, and they were taken for various reasons. According to researchers Matthew Bennett and Katherine Weikert, the taking and holding of hostages was a regular occurrence in political, social, and military terms.³⁶⁷ While this thesis' focus is on the Ragusan-Ottoman relations, using examples from other areas may be helpful in obtaining a greater understanding of the taking of hostages. From earlier history, the Romans, for example, used hostage-taking for many purposes, and it was not unusual for them to hand their own

³⁶⁶ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 81

³⁶⁷ Bennett, Matthew & Weikert, Cathrine, "The State of Play: Medieval Hostageship and Modern Scholarship" in *Medieval Hostageship c. 700 – c. 1500: Hostage, Captive, Prisoner of War, Guarantee, Peacemaker* ed. By Bennett, Matthew & Weikert, Cathrine (New York; London: Routledge, 2017), 1

people over as hostages as short-term securities in peace-negotiation, to prove their desire for a peace arrangement.³⁶⁸

There are particularly two examples from 1440 and 1457 that need to be included. In 1440, Sultan Murad II requested a formal Ragusan submission in the form of a yearly tribute. The Ragusans refused his request, and consequently the sultan imprisoned all the Ragusan merchants and confiscated their goods in all his territory.³⁶⁹ It is necessary to stress the importance of the Ragusan trade, as it was one of the two most important factors of the city-state's existence, alongside diplomacy. One may assume that the sultan captivated the Ragusan merchants to weaken an already inferior city-state because he knew that a commercial weakening could prove fatal for Ragusa's existence. The fate of these merchants is unknown.

Similar actions were pursued by the Ottoman Empire throughout its existence. Sultan Murad II took the Ragusan merchants in captivity perhaps to secure further negotiations with the Ragusans, and to ultimately have them pay the tribute. A similar action was committed by his son, Sultan Mehmed II in 1457. "The People of Ragusa turn to the King and the Hungarian lords for protection against the voivode Exebech Isakovic, who has been ordered by the Sultan to attack [Ragusa] and arrest their merchants."³⁷⁰ This summary of a letter from the 14th of November 1457 to the Hungarian king reveals that the Ragusan merchants could potentially be used as pieces in the diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and Ragusa.³⁷¹ The letter was written a year prior to the Ragusan obtainment of Ottoman protection and tributary status. Sultan Mehmed II threatened the Ragusans with these measures for them to accept the tributary status.³⁷² It is reasonable to assume that the sultan indeed imprisoned the Ragusan merchants. This can be confirmed by the instruction sent with Gondola and Luccharis in April 1458, as they were instructed to tell voivode Exebech Isakovic that they "have gone with gifts to the Great Lord in order to intercede with and obtain the liberty of freeing our merchants in the country of the said Great Lord".³⁷³ As the letter to the Croatian-Hungarian king was written in November 1457, and the Ragusan prepared and sent a mission to the sultan in April 1458, it is reasonable to assume that the Ottoman measures were effective.

³⁶⁸ Lee, A.D, "The Role of Hostages in Roman Diplomacy with Sasanian Persia" in *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 40, H. 3 (1991), 366-374, published by Franz Steiner Verlag

³⁶⁹ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 8

³⁷⁰ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 114* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Tháloczy, 600-602 (own translation)

³⁷¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 114* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Tháloczy, 600-602

³⁷² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 114* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Tháloczy, 600-602

³⁷³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, pp. 14-21

Although, the Ragusan merchants were a part of the Ragusan diplomatic activities in the 1430s, 1440s and 1450s by representation in the different merchant communities, through consulates, and by information-gathering, it may be stated that they were not directly involved in Ragusa's diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire, at least not as active negotiators. However, they observed the different events in the hinterlands which led to the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. In addition, they were under the constant threat from the Ottoman sultans, as they were the ones facing consequences if, and when the Ragusan government did not want to negotiate with the Ottomans, which has been illustrated with examples from 1440 when the Ragusan merchants were arrested by Sultan Murad II, and in 1457 when they were threatened and imprisoned by Sultan Mehmed II.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*, 8; *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60. f. 114* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 600-602

Chapter 8: Why Ragusa's Diplomacy Can be Classified as Renaissance Diplomacy

The Steps in Discussing the Ragusan Diplomacy

Can then, the Ragusan diplomacy of the mid-fifteenth century be classified as Renaissance diplomacy? The aim of this final chapter is to answer this question and classify the diplomacy of Ragusa in the 1430s to the obtainment of Ottoman protection in 1458, as Renaissance diplomacy. It has been mentioned several times throughout this thesis that the diplomacy in the Renaissance, which is known to be the roots of the modern diplomacy, is associated with the Italian city-states. However, there is an absence in the research field on Renaissance diplomacy, and there is a lack of the study of the diplomacies of different political entities, outside of the Italian peninsula, such as the diplomacy of the Republic of Ragusa, which is why this approach can be a contribution to the research field on Renaissance diplomacy. It may also inspire the classification of other political diplomatic systems outside the Italian peninsula as Renaissance diplomacy.

In the earlier chapters of this thesis, several Ragusan letters and instructions have been analyzed that indicate that the Ragusan diplomacy was already well-established by the 1430s, and that there were similarities between the Ragusan diplomacy and the diplomatic machineries of the Italian city-states. It is therefore highly relevant to consider Ragusa's diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy. Nevertheless, it requires the Ragusan diplomacy to be examined in the light of diplomatic theory. This has to be done by studying the four essential parts that construct diplomacy, namely, *information-gathering*, *communication*, *representation*, and *negotiation* of the Ragusan diplomacy, that are considered to be the official side of diplomacy. In addition to the official side, the Ragusan diplomacy's unofficial side has to be discussed, which consisted of some more unconventional tools, defined as both the *weak* tools, but also as the *trademarks* of the diplomacy in the Renaissance. The three tools that fall into this category are *espionage*, *lying*, and *bribery*. All the tools, both the official and the unofficial ones will be discussed individually by employing examples from Ragusan letters and instructions. The different examples will together prove that Ragusa's diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy, and therefore like the diplomacy of the Italian city-states the roots of modern diplomacy.

The first step in discussing whether Ragusa's diplomacy can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy is to understand the emergence of the Renaissance diplomacy, and why it allegedly emerged in Italy. At the time, Italy was fragmented politically and was composed by various polities and powers. However, it also possessed some unity due to shared languages and practices of power, cultural identity and background, and human mobility. What the Italian political polities lacked was internal legitimacy and external recognition.³⁷⁵ Due to wars among the city-states, and the ever-changing political geography, no city on the Italian peninsula could really feel secure. A method of providing for this awareness and responding to the dangers of war could be found in the new style of diplomacy that the flexible and creative system of powers provided the conditions for.³⁷⁶

Ragusa did not wage war on the same level as the Italian city-states, but there are three important turning points in the Ragusan history prior to the year 1458. The three turning points were the submission to the Republic of Venetia, the submission to the Croatian-Hungarian crown, and the emergence of the Ottoman Empire. This has to be understood in the light of the earliest history of Ragusa, under the sovereignty of the Byzantine Empire. As mentioned in chapter three, the Ragusans existed as a somewhat independent city-state during the time under Byzantine control as the Byzantine emperor was distant, and they therefore got the *taste* for independency. For the Ragusans, it became crucial to be recognized as an independent state, which is why it can be argued that the core of the Ragusan diplomacy was to keep as much autonomy as possible. To secure Ragusan autonomy, the Ragusans had to develop a diplomacy that suited the different geopolitical matters at different times, mainly threats from foreign powers. The Ragusan manner of responding to these geopolitical situations was by developing different rhetorical strategies that best responded to the given circumstances in their geopolitical neighborhood, but that could also assure them as much autonomy as possible, as well as the protection of a stronger power.

The Evolution of the Ragusan Diplomatic Agents

A second step in discussing the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy is to take a closer look at the development of the diplomatic agents. The Quattrocento was a period that saw some key moments in the multiplex process of developing new practices of diplomacy, which were influenced by social, cultural, constitutional, and political factors. Among the more investigated

³⁷⁵ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 4-5

³⁷⁶ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 54; Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 4-6

changes are the nature and privileges of the medieval diplomatic envoys. Over a period, the formal diplomatic agent was transformed from being the simple instrument of a master's authority (*nuncio*), firstly into an agent provided with more independence defined by mandate (*procurator*), and finally into an official agent with full decision-making independence and a public role (*orator* or ambassador), who was provided with a broad and variable range of competencies (diplomatic, legal, political), according to the purposes and the situation of a given mission.³⁷⁷ Mattingly states that by the 1430s, there was a common agreement that only the greater European powers were entitled to appoint diplomats of the highest rank. The common Italian word for it was *ambaxiator*.³⁷⁸ Lazzarini argues that this evolution in the nature and the role of the diplomatic agent was a result of innovative resolutions on how to answer urgent needs – to present, to keep informed, to negotiate, and to participate. Among the changes after the transformation of the diplomatic agent were that the judicial status of the agent changed, his political autonomy grew, and his stays were prolonged.³⁷⁹

A similar pattern of change can be identified in the evolution from the medieval diplomacy of Ragusa to the Ragusan Renaissance diplomacy, which happened gradually. This is revealed by the Ragusan primary sources. In the mid-twelfth and the mid-thirteenth century, the Ragusan diplomatic agents sent abroad to foreign courts were either classified as procurators and nuncios or as syndics. The Venetian charter of 1232, the *Višegrad Treaty of 1358* and the instructions sent with the Ragusan ambassadors to the Porte are examples of this change. Firstly, in the Venetian charter of 1232, in which Venetia imposed certain terms on Ragusa, the Ragusan representatives are classified as *nuncio* and *procurators*.³⁸⁰ Secondly, in the *Višegrad treaty of 1358*, which declared Ragusa as the dominion of the Croatian-Hungarian king, Louis I, the Ragusan representatives are defined as *procurators* and *syndics*.³⁸¹ Thirdly, the primary sources of letters regarding the Ragusan-Hungarian relations of the 1440s, reveal that the word *ambaxiator* was frequently used, which indicates that the Ragusans were entitled to employ and send ambassadors abroad.³⁸² Finally, the instructions sent with the Ragusan mission to the Ottoman Sublime Porte, reveals that the Ragusan representatives were classified as

³⁷⁷ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 33-34

³⁷⁸ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 27

³⁷⁹ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 33

³⁸⁰ *Pacta et...* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 21-25

³⁸¹ *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/I, ed. Radonić, 90-95

³⁸² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 141. Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 450-451

ambassadors.³⁸³ This is an indication of the change in the Ragusan diplomacy from the mid-thirteenth century to the mid-fifteenth century.

The formal diplomatic agents were provided with full credential letters, accurate instructions, safe-conducts, and mandate.³⁸⁴ A letter of credence is, as stated in chapter one, addressed by the head of the ambassador's sending state to the head of the host state as a way of introducing the sent ambassador as a representative of a state.³⁸⁵ The Ragusan ambassadors sent to the Sublime Porte in April 1458 were provided with credential letters, accurate instructions, a mandate, and safe-conducts. The instruction from April 1458, confirms that the ambassadors were provided with accurate instructions, but also that they were provided with a mandate.³⁸⁶ The latter one is defined as "the authority given to an elected group of people, such as a government, to perform an action or govern a country".³⁸⁷ In the instruction from April 1458, the Ragusan ambassadors' mission was to go to the Sublime Porte to negotiate the question of tribute, and the position of their merchants in the hinterlands. The same instruction also reveals that the ambassadors were provided with a letter of credence, as the ambassadors were instructed to, "[Greet Exebegh] and present him with the letter of credence".³⁸⁸

The development in the diplomatic agents illustrates that the Ragusan diplomacy went through a similar process in the change from the medieval diplomacy to Renaissance diplomacy as the Italian city-states of the Quattrocento. Additionally, it is evidence of Ragusa's growth into a more stable city-state, as only the greater European powers were entitled to appoint diplomats of the highest rank, namely the ambassador.³⁸⁹ This change thus proves the theory that Ragusa's diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy as very likely.

³⁸³ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. XIV, 1448-1462, 190-194; Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. XIV, 1448-1462, 194-195; Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. XIV, 1448-1462, 196* all can be found in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-25

³⁸⁴ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, p. 34

³⁸⁵ "Modern Diplomatic Practice" in *Britannica*, 12.04.2022,

³⁸⁶ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. XIV, 1448-1462, 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21

³⁸⁷ *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "Mandate". 12.04.2022

³⁸⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. XIV, 1448-1462, 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

³⁸⁹ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 27

Representation in the Ragusan Diplomacy

The third step in discussing Ragusan diplomacy within the field of Renaissance diplomacy is to explore the flexible political activity of diplomacy consisting of representation, information-gathering, communication, and negotiation. Communication, as stated in chapter two, is the essence of diplomacy, which is why it will not be discussed in-depth, but rather as forming a part of the other diplomatic instruments. A good starting point is to discuss the representational part of diplomacy, and what methods of representation the Ragusans used because it in many ways provides the ground for information-gathering and negotiation.

Representation in diplomacy, especially in the studies of Renaissance diplomacy is linked to the emergence of the resident ambassador. In diplomatic history it is broadly accepted that the first permanent diplomatic mission was established in 1450, which represented the Duke of Milan to Cosimo di Medici of Florence.³⁹⁰ It, nonetheless, exists a disagreement among scholars around the idea of *permanency*.³⁹¹ According to historian Garrett Mattingly, Venetia, Naples, Florence, and Milan had all established permanent embassies with each other by the 1450s.³⁹² However, historian Catherine Fletcher argues that Venetia continued to send ambassadors only on a relatively short-term basis. The interpretation of the resident ambassador has been rather vague, and not every mission that over-ran six months could be classified as a permanent residency. However, missions could have the characteristics of residency, if sent in order to secure continuous representation. There are two characteristics of the resident ambassador that distinguishes him from other diplomatic agents, namely that he was sent overseas with diplomatic credentials, and he handled day-to-day business. The length of his stay is insignificant.³⁹³

The resident ambassador, nevertheless, is not the single method of representation and residency did not mean the same thing for all the Italian city-states.³⁹⁴ Other forms of representation, than the resident ambassador, can be identified in the Ragusan diplomacy of the mid-fifteenth century. For example, Ragusa sent ambassadors abroad to foreign courts. The first relevant case is from 1358 during the negotiations in Višegrad. Ragusa had a representative at King Louis I's court, through the Ragusan Marino Gozze, which some may consider to be

³⁹⁰ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 63; Kurbalija, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFound, 21.06.2021

³⁹¹ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 23

³⁹² Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 95

³⁹³ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 24

³⁹⁴ Mallet, Michael, "Ambassadors and their Audiences in Renaissance Italy", in *Renaissance Studies*, September 1994, Vol. 8, No. 3, 229-243, 233

an excellent internal support due to the great trust the king had in him.³⁹⁵ It is not, however, clear what purpose Gozze served for Ragusa other than being an internal support in the Ragusan-Hungarian negotiations. Furthermore, the length of Gozze's time at the Croatian-Hungarian court is unknown. Another example is the three ambassadors Ragnina, Caboga, and Resti, who were sent to the Croatian-Hungarian court for a longer period of time during the crusade in 1443 and 1444.³⁹⁶

Diplomatic representation was crucial in the gathering of information, which the second form of representation provides examples of.³⁹⁷ The second form can be identified by the consular system, discussed in the previous chapter. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the Ragusans established several consulates, both in the Mediterranean harbors, but also in the Balkan hinterlands. This is confirmed by letters from two particular collections, *Diversa Notarie* and *Lamenti de foris 1457*, particularly the existence of the consulates in Khotyn and Srebrenica.³⁹⁸ Even though the consulates were primarily established to regulate the trading communities legally, they were at the forefront as information-gatherers. In addition, the consulates and the consuls could function as intermediators, political and diplomatic agents, and translators. In the Renaissance states in general, these consulates provided the governments with easy access to information, as well as effective contacts, without being directly involved.³⁹⁹

Although Ragusa did not have any permanent resident ambassador during the mid-fifteenth century, having Ragusans at foreign courts, and having consulates in the Mediterranean harbors and the Balkan hinterlands confirm that Ragusa was represented abroad. It can further be argued that their ambassadors at foreign courts and their consuls in effect functioned as "resident ambassadors".⁴⁰⁰ As the common assumption that the inclusion of the resident ambassador as the main characteristic of the transition from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy has been challenged, it is applicable to argue that other methods of representation, along the three other essential parts of diplomacy, can count as a characteristic of the

³⁹⁵ *Republika*, Episode 1, «Mali medu velikima», directed by Bozidar Domagoj Buric, aired 18.04.2016 on Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (HRT 1)

³⁹⁶ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 141.* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 450-451; *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1440-48. f. 154* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 457-459

³⁹⁷ Kurbalija, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFound, 21.06.2021

³⁹⁸ HR-DADU-9 *Div. Not. 1446 str. 4 – P. II, 126*; HR-DADU-21. 2 *Lam. for. 1457 I. 264 – sl. XI, 93* both documents found in *Stare Srpske povelje i pisma*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Stojanović 431-433

³⁹⁹ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 39

⁴⁰⁰ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 31

Renaissance diplomacy. This reveals that the Ragusan diplomacy, representational wise count as Renaissance diplomacy.

Ragusa's Small Head-start in the Gathering of Intelligence

To conduct any form of diplomacy, being provided with the latest news is crucial. Yugoslav academic Stevan Dedijer puts it this way, "Diplomats without the required intelligence information are helpless parade horses."⁴⁰¹ The gathering of information came with the task of organization, presentation and evaluation of the information gathered.⁴⁰² Political actors in the Renaissance could, through information-gathering, have control over unexpected events, and the attention to information grew in the fifteenth century.⁴⁰³ Controlling the information was arguably the most important matter for Ragusa as a political actor as well, due to their goal of maintain neutrality, to keep their independence, and to obtain the protection of a stronger power.

A document from the early fourteenth century, found in the collection *Reformationes*, reveals the importance of information-gathering for the city-state.⁴⁰⁴ According to Dedijer, the document from 1301 is a proof of the birth of the first intelligence and security service in Europe.⁴⁰⁵ The document, written on the 12th of August 1301, reveals that the Ragusan Senate decided to choose eligible men to be responsible for the fortification and the security of the city. In addition, competent men were elected to the task of gathering information inside and outside of the republic, and to inform the rector as necessary for the good and prosperity of the city-state.⁴⁰⁶ A similar description of the task of information-gathering can be found a century and a half later in the declaration of the Florentines, Pandolfini and Sachetti, cited by Lazzarini, "the ambassadors' office [...] is to report to their masters everything they know hour by hour, day by day, telling them also how they came to know it, and from whom they got the information, and how".⁴⁰⁷ This indicates that they viewed information-gathering to be the task of the ambassadors. All the spare-time of an ambassador on a commission was expected to be used for the gathering of information.⁴⁰⁸ Ragusa, on the other hand appointed three men, specifically for this task in 1301, under the description, "the exploration of news and for

⁴⁰¹ Dedijer, "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 104

⁴⁰² Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 70

⁴⁰³ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 71-90

⁴⁰⁴ HR-DADU-1 *Reformationes*, serija 1/no. 1, years 1301-1303

⁴⁰⁵ Dedijer, "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 104

⁴⁰⁶ Dedijer, "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 104

⁴⁰⁷ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 76

⁴⁰⁸ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 76

information of state officials.”⁴⁰⁹ This document verifies that Ragusa compared to the Italian city-states had a head-start within the field of information-gathering. The document can potentially, furthermore, even suggest that the process in the development from medieval diplomacy to Renaissance diplomacy may have started earlier in Ragusa than on the Italian peninsula. Additionally, the document proves as a verification of the establishment of a proper information-gathering system in Ragusa in the beginning of the fourteenth century, which again confirms that they had well-established information-gatherers prior to the *Golden Age* (1454-1494) of the Italian Renaissance diplomacy.⁴¹⁰ Information-gathering continued to be an important part of the Ragusan diplomacy, and their defense system, throughout the mid-fifteenth century.

Ragusa, furthermore, due to its stable trading system in the Mediterranean and in the Balkan hinterlands, could enjoy a flow of information from their merchants in both areas. Ambassadors in the Renaissance utilized, among others, the commercial networks to gather information. The use of networks in information-gathering was Europe-wide phenomenon in the Renaissance.⁴¹¹ Examples of how Ragusa used these networks, and especially the commercial network can be found in letters from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*. A particular example is found in a letter the Ragusans sent to King Sigismund on the 4th of May 1436, where they informed the king about the news on a potential Albanian action against the Ottomans, which they had received from their merchants.⁴¹²

It has been mentioned that the focus on information grew steadily during the Renaissance, and the increase of it required the different chanceries to develop new techniques and practices to organize the amount of information. One of the techniques developed was “*avisi*”.⁴¹³ This method described the summaries of news prepared by chanceries and which were further included in the letters to the ambassadors.⁴¹⁴ Similar processes in the Ragusan handling of information is confirmed by a letter from the 12th of November 1457, where a small summary called, “These things are new among us” is included in the final paragraph.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁹ Dedijer, “Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)”, 104

⁴¹⁰ HR-DADU-1 *Reformationes*, serija 1/no. 1, years 1301-1303

⁴¹¹ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 118-119

⁴¹² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XII (1435-1440, f. 24-25)* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I, ed. Radonić, 358-360

⁴¹³ Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 82

⁴¹⁴ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60 f. 113* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 599-600; Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520*, 82

⁴¹⁵ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante. 1454-60 f. 113* in *Diplomatarium Ragusanum*, ed. Gelchich and Thalloczy, 599-600 (own translation)

The document from the collection *Reformationes*, and the example of how Ragusa utilized its commercial networks in the Balkans confirm the importance of information, and they also serve as indications that the Ragusan system of information-gathering functioned in a similar manner to the ones in the Italian city-states. The use of the *avisi* method in the organization of information in the Ragusan diplomacy indicates the similarities between them and the Italian city-states. To conclude this part, it is applicable to confirm that the essential part of information-gathering, as well as the handling of it, were present in the Ragusan diplomacy. Due to the similarities with its Italian counterparts of the same time-period, it verifies that this is another indication that the Ragusan diplomacy can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy.

The Greatest Ragusan Skill

To maintain Ragusan *de facto* independence, they had to balance between different powers and empires, which required the Ragusan ambassadors to be patient and persuasive, particularly in their negotiation with foreign counterparts. This became more crucial with the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. Negotiations, and taking part in them became vital for political survival, and for the importance of the exercise of independent political agency. It must be stressed that the term *negotiation* covered a broad sense of interaction, both official ones and private ones.⁴¹⁶ The official form of negotiation will be discussed here mainly by using the example of the Ragusan-Ottoman negotiations in 1458, that resulted in the Ragusan obtainment of Ottoman protection.

The most common type of diplomatic interactions in the Renaissance were the meetings between princes and governments on one side and ambassadors on the other.⁴¹⁷ The Ragusan-Ottoman interactions in 1458 may be classified as the common type of negotiation. In these negotiations, the Ragusans had to go through a full arrangement of steps, rituals, and mediators to be allowed an audience to the Sublime Porte, and Sultan Mehmed II. Firstly, the instructions from April, May and September 1458 reveal that the Ragusans, on their way to the sultan, had to justify their visit to the Sublime Porte to the Ottoman commander, Isa-Beg Isakovic (Exebegh).⁴¹⁸ Secondly, the instructions confirm that the Ragusan ambassadors, upon arrival

⁴¹⁶ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 88

⁴¹⁷ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 100

⁴¹⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194; Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 194-195; Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 196* all found in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-25

had to present themselves, their mission, and the letter of credence to the Grand Vizier, Angelović. Thirdly, the instructions verify that the Ragusans had to justify their visit to Angelović, and “through the advice, favor and help of [Angelović], [the Ragusans] may be able to conclude a good agreement with the Lord Great Emperor”.⁴¹⁹ Fourthly, the instructions confirm that it was the task of the Grand Vizier to bring the Ragusan ambassadors in the presence of the sultan. The instructions finally, confirm the ritualized aspects of the Renaissance negotiation, through the ritual of gift-giving. Gondola and Luccharis were instructed to give the different Ottoman dignitaries gifts.⁴²⁰ This is an indicator that the negotiations in the Renaissance were complex, and prior to being allowed to negotiate the main matter of a mission, ambassadors had to go through various steps. This happened often in the negotiations between ambassadors and the local political societies during the Renaissance in general.⁴²¹ It, nevertheless, is another indicator that supports the theory that the Ragusan diplomacy can be categorized as Renaissance diplomacy.

During the Renaissance a new format of negotiation developed in Italy, and diplomatic interactions were gradually changed into dense political reasoning, by new ideas of politics. This new format created and imposed a different way of interacting, and a whole range of new ideas, languages, and discursive resources of powers were selected.⁴²² A similar pattern is identified in the development of the Ragusan diplomacy in the Renaissance. Throughout this thesis the development and use of the different Ragusan diplomatic rhetorical strategies according to who they negotiated with have been analyzed and illustrated. It has also been demonstrated how they changed it according to the circumstances of the negotiation or the geopolitical situation in their neighborhood. The different diplomatic rhetorical strategies used in negotiations can perhaps be argued to be the greatest Ragusan skill. Ragusa developed three diplomatic rhetorical strategies to explain their early interactions with the Ottomans to the rest of the *Respublica Christiana* in the early 1430s when negotiating the trade privilege from the pope.⁴²³ The three diplomatic strategies being the frontier rhetoric, silence, and the importance of Ragusa’s existence.⁴²⁴ Similar strategies were once again developed and used during the

⁴¹⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

⁴²⁰ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21

⁴²¹ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 100

⁴²² Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict, 1350-1520*, 90

⁴²³ HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/1*. in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I, ed. Radonić, 340-343

⁴²⁴ Kunčević, “The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)”, 39-49; HR-DADU, *Acta Sanctae Marie saec. XV/1*. in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol 1/I, ed. Radonić, 340-343

negotiations with the Ottomans in the early 1440s, and the late 1450s. The Ragusans, nevertheless, developed two new diplomatic rhetorical strategies. Firstly, by portraying the alleged poverty of the city-state, and secondly, the rhetoric of emotional manipulation, which the three instructions from 1458 confirm.⁴²⁵ Developing and employing rhetorical strategies in diplomacy was not unique for Ragusa as this was a common occurrence during the negotiations in the Renaissance. It was, furthermore, an important element for the Renaissance ambassador to show his discursive and rhetorical skills, which is yet another indication that the Ragusan diplomacy can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy.⁴²⁶

The Useful Unofficial Tools: Lying and Bribery

So far, the formal side of diplomacy has been the topic of discussion, through the tools of information-gathering, communication, representation, and negotiation. As already indicated, there is also a more unofficial side of diplomacy, and particularly of the diplomacy in the Renaissance. This side will be discussed through the unconventional tools of lies and bribes, described as both being *weaknesses* and as the *trademarks* of the Renaissance diplomacy. Espionage is also considered to be a part of the unconventional tools; however, this tool is more apparent in Ragusa's later years and can potentially be a topic of later studies. It must be stressed that both the tools of lying, and bribery were present in the Ragusan diplomacy during the mid-fifteenth century, and for that reason it is essential to include them in this discussion of Ragusa as an example of Renaissance diplomacy.

As mentioned in chapter two, the English king's envoy to Venetia, Sir Henry Wotton said, "the ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country".⁴²⁷ Sir Henry Wotton's saying describes the Ragusan ambassadors well, as they allegedly said, "Non siamo Cristiani, non siamo Giudei, ma poveri Ragusei".⁴²⁸ It translates to, "We are not Christians, we are not Jews, but poor Ragusans". A saying that describes, at least some aspects of the Ragusan diplomatic rhetoric throughout the republic's existence. It has been highlighted several times throughout this thesis how the Ragusans portrayed the alleged "poverty" of the republic, in their interactions and negotiations with the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom and the

⁴²⁵ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194; Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 194-195; Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 196* all found in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-25

⁴²⁶ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 91

⁴²⁷ Kurbalija, Lecture on "Renaissance Diplomacy", DiploFoundation, 21.06.2021

⁴²⁸ Dedijer, "Ragusa Intelligence and Security (1301-1806)", 104

Ottoman Empire. An example of the use of lies is confirmed in the instructions to the Ragusan ambassadors travelling to the Sublime Porte in 1458, as the ambassadors were instructed to, “acquire the gratitude of the said Great Lord Emperor (the Sultan) and honor him in accordance with our little ability and the power of our poor city”.⁴²⁹ A tactic used to decrease the amount of tribute. It might be argued that the tactic of lying about their wealth was successful as the Ragusans after lengthy negotiations managed to decrease the tribute.⁴³⁰

The giving of *mito* (bribes) was a common occurrence in the diplomacy of the Renaissance and were defined as forbidden gifts to officials.⁴³¹ In early modern Europe, ambassadors were frequent givers of rewards, tips, and bribes, and they usually expected something in return for the generosity.⁴³² Bribery in particular, was a tool that was a recurring part of the Ragusan diplomacy through gift- and money-giving. However, gifts were not a foundational part of the diplomacy, at least not in the West. Gifts occurred sporadically in the Western diplomatic interactions as they were viewed to be suspicious.⁴³³ Valentina Šoštarić, on the other hand, argues that gift-giving was an obligatory act in diplomacy. She further states that the absence or inappropriateness of gifts was viewed as an insult, which could result in serious events, and could even end in disputes.⁴³⁴ The giving of gifts may be interpreted in different manners; however, it will here be interpreted as bribery.

Gift-giving was a part of the Ragusan diplomacy for at least a century by the time of the Ragusan-Ottoman negotiations in 1458. This is confirmed by the Ragusan-Hungarian negotiations in Višegrad in 1358, where the Ragusans gifted King Louis I with money, clothes, and even eagles.⁴³⁵ The giving of presents continued to be a part of the Ragusan-Hungarian relations, particularly with the accession of a new Hungarian kings, when negotiating Ragusa's status, and the privileges of their merchants. An example of the first situation is confirmed by the instruction sent with the Ragusan mission on the 15th of May 1438. Because of the accession

⁴²⁹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21 (own translation)

⁴³⁰ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 196* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 24-25

⁴³¹ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 147

⁴³² Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 145

⁴³³ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 254

⁴³⁴ Šoštarić, Valentina, “Gift-Giving in Dubrovnik's First Diplomatic Contacts with the Sublime Porte, 67-114, *Historical Searches*, 20/2021, 71

⁴³⁵ *Republika*, Episode 1, «Mali među velikima», directed by Bozidar Domagoj Buric, aired 18.04.2016 on Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (HRT 1)

of the new Hungarian king, Albert II Habsburg, the Ragusan ambassadors were instructed to present him with gifts.⁴³⁶

It can be argued that gift-giving, or bribery happened more frequently in Ragusan diplomacy because examples retrieved from letters and instructions from the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante* reveal the frequency of bribery, not only in Ragusa's relations with the Hungarians, but also in their relations with the Ottoman Empire. It must be stressed that interactions with the Eastern and Muslim powers required more meaningful signs of respect and honor.⁴³⁷ The sign of honor was mentioned explicitly by the Ragusan government in their instruction to the Ragusan ambassadors, Gondola and Luccharis, in May 1458. They were instructed to give the Ottoman commander, Isa-beg Isakovic (Exebegh) a certain amount of money as a sign of honor. The instruction states, "if [Exebegh] is not satisfied with 100 ducats of *honor* per year, [...] you will promise him up to 200 ducats of *honor* per year."⁴³⁸ This instruction confirms that Ragusa, similarly the Italian city-states, sent gifts as a sign of honor to the Ottoman dignitaries.⁴³⁹

Even though the protocol of gift-giving was uncodified, it was not unusual for Western rulers to create and prepare lists with gifts to present for a Muslim ruler, his son, and the highest dignitaries of the court. The gift lists preceded in the instructions of the ambassadors were followed by a detailed description on how the gifts should be arranged and gifted.⁴⁴⁰ This is confirmed by the first instruction sent with the Ragusan ambassadors Gondola and Luccharis in April 1458. In the end of the instruction a small paragraph is included, titled *doni* (presents).⁴⁴¹ The summary included instructions on what to give, and to who the ambassadors were supposed to give it to. In addition, it was mentioned which gifts to give in privacy and which to give officially.⁴⁴² Similar approaches were done in the diplomacy of Renaissance Rome, and it confirms the similarities between the Ragusan diplomacy during the same time-period.⁴⁴³ Yet another confirmation why one may consider Ragusa's diplomacy to be classified as Renaissance diplomacy.

⁴³⁶ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, XII, (1435-1440), f. 81-83 in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 402-409

⁴³⁷ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 257

⁴³⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 194-195 in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 21-24 (See page 44 of this thesis for today's value of one ducat)

⁴³⁹ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict*, 257

⁴⁴⁰ Lazzarini, *Communication & Conflict* p. 258; Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 145

⁴⁴¹ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194 in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21

⁴⁴² *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 190-194 in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 14-21

⁴⁴³ Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, 145

Šoštarić argues that the symbol of gift-giving, especially in the early Ragusan-Ottoman interactions, played an important role in the formation, strengthening, and shaking present and potential ties between the Ragusan government and the Sublime Porte. It is further argued that gifts were socially constructed to shape, maintain, control, and transform social identities and political relations. The intentions of gift-giving were to establish an atmosphere of satisfaction, trust, to facilitate negotiations, establish conditions for close mutual relationships in the future, and to enable the realization of desired purpose of the mission.⁴⁴⁴ However, the value of the gift had to be taken into consideration. For Ragusa, using a strategy of portraying the poverty of the republic, it was important not to send too valuable gifts/bribes as it could potentially ruin the Ottoman perception of them. It should be stressed that Ragusa was not a poor republic as it prospered economically during the fifteenth century.⁴⁴⁵

Ragusa's gifts, especially to the Ottomans, can be divided into three different categories according to their type. The first included furs, garments, and fabrics. The second various physical objects made of silver, while the third included money.⁴⁴⁶ In this case, it is more relevant to focus on the third category, money as it was used more frequently in the period of focus. The giving of money as a bribe has been viewed as not being suitable for everyone, and that it is usually not well received. Nonetheless, in the Ottoman ruling class it was desirable to be gifted money.⁴⁴⁷ An example of the giving of money as a gift/bribe is revealed by the instruction sent to the Ragusan ambassadors in May 1458, where they were instructed to give money to the Grand Vizir, Angelović.⁴⁴⁸

The giving and receiving of gifts thus provided a fundament for the establishment of the interactions between the West and the East, in this case between Ragusa and the Ottoman Empire. It may also be argued that gift-giving/bribery in this context was a helping tool in the further establishment of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in the end of the 1450s. One may therefore conclude that the *weak* tools or the *trademarks* of the Renaissance diplomacy, bribery and lying, were present in the Ragusan diplomacy of the mid-fifteenth century, particularly during the establishment of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations in 1458. The tools of lying and bribery were especially important in the negotiation of the Ragusan status with the Ottomans. By lying, the Ragusans managed to portray the poverty of their republic. However, risking the

⁴⁴⁴ Šoštarić, "Gift-Giving in Dubrovnik's First Diplomatic Contacts with the Sublime Porte", 74 & 95

⁴⁴⁵ Havrylyshyn and Srzentić, "Economy of Ragusa, 1300 - 1800 The Tiger of Mediaeval Mediterranean", 17

⁴⁴⁶ Šoštarić, "Gift-Giving in Dubrovnik's First Diplomatic Contacts with the Sublime Porte", 80

⁴⁴⁷ Šoštarić, "Gift-Giving in Dubrovnik's First Diplomatic Contacts with the Sublime Porte", 91

⁴⁴⁸ *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante, XIV, 1448-1462, f. 194-195* in *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, Vol. 1/II, ed. Radonić, 21-24

tactic with the lists of gifts sent to the Ottoman dignitaries. They, nevertheless, managed to maintain the image of a poor city-state. The presence of the *trademarks* of the diplomacy in the Renaissance proves the theory that Ragusa's diplomacy can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy to be likely.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to classify the Ragusan diplomacy in the years between 1430-1458 as Renaissance diplomacy. It aimed, in addition, to answer the following questions; *how* did the Republic of Ragusa obtain Ottoman protection in 1458, and how did they employ diplomacy to obtain it? What role did the Ragusan merchants have in the republic's diplomacy? These questions have been contributors in the classification of the Ragusan diplomacy as Renaissance diplomacy. The main method used to answer these questions have been to analyze the transcribed versions of primary sources, primarily the letters and instructions found in the collection *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante*, but also sources from other archival collections like *Acta Turcarum*, *Diversa Notarie*, *Reformationes*, and *Lamenta di Foris*. The different published collections of the different primary sources have also been employed in answering the questions of this thesis.

The Ragusan obtainment of Ottoman protection in 1458 through the employment of diplomacy, and how the republic could gain the protection of a Muslim empire is a result of many factors. It can be explained by three factors - Ragusa's historical background, the republic's geopolitical position, and lastly the Ragusan diplomacy. All of these factors are intertwined. Firstly, throughout the history, Ragusa can be characterized as a city-state always in the struggle for independence, but not strong enough to be *de jure* independent, and therefore had to exist under *de facto* independency under the protection of stronger overlords. As a small, and militarily weak republic, Ragusa had to develop a diplomatic tactic that allowed it to keep as much autonomy as possible. This was done by changing their diplomatic rhetorical strategies according to their negotiating counter parts, always making sure to manipulate their counter parts by touching on their weaknesses. Hupchick points out that the Ottomans could not control and manipulate Ragusa as they had done with many other Balkan states previously. They simply lacked the experience in dealing with a state government with corporate institutions, such as Ragusa.⁴⁴⁹ Ragusa, on the other hand, had throughout its history gained the experience the Ottomans lacked, in their struggle for independence. It can therefore be stated that manipulation was an integral part of the Ragusan diplomacy, as this was one of the ways Ragusa kept its existence. The main manipulative rhetoric they employed was how Ragusa's existence and their geographical position in the Balkans benefitted the other powers in their geopolitical neighborhood. By Ragusa being a tributary state of the Ottoman Empire, the Western states

⁴⁴⁹ Hupchick, *The Balkans: From Constantinople to Communism*, 160-163

could still trade through Ragusa. The Ottomans, on the other hand, benefitted more by keeping Ragusa as a neutral port, instead of conquering it due to the five essential things they lacked. The five being, their skillful merchants, businessmen, and bankers, Ragusa as a neutral port, Ragusa as a neutral territory, its position as a mediator between the East and the West, and lastly Ragusa's function as a window to the Mediterranean. It can therefore be concluded that Ragusa managed to obtain Ottoman protection through employing a diplomacy characterized by rhetorical strategies and manipulation.

The second theme this thesis has explored is the role of the Ragusan merchants in diplomacy, and how they participated in diplomatic activities, as the role of the merchants as diplomatic actors have been neglected both in the studies of Ragusa's diplomacy, but also within the research field of Renaissance diplomacy. This thesis defines the Ragusan merchants as *occasional diplomats*, in the sense that they only took part in some of the tools defining diplomacy. The two most important being information-gathering and representation.

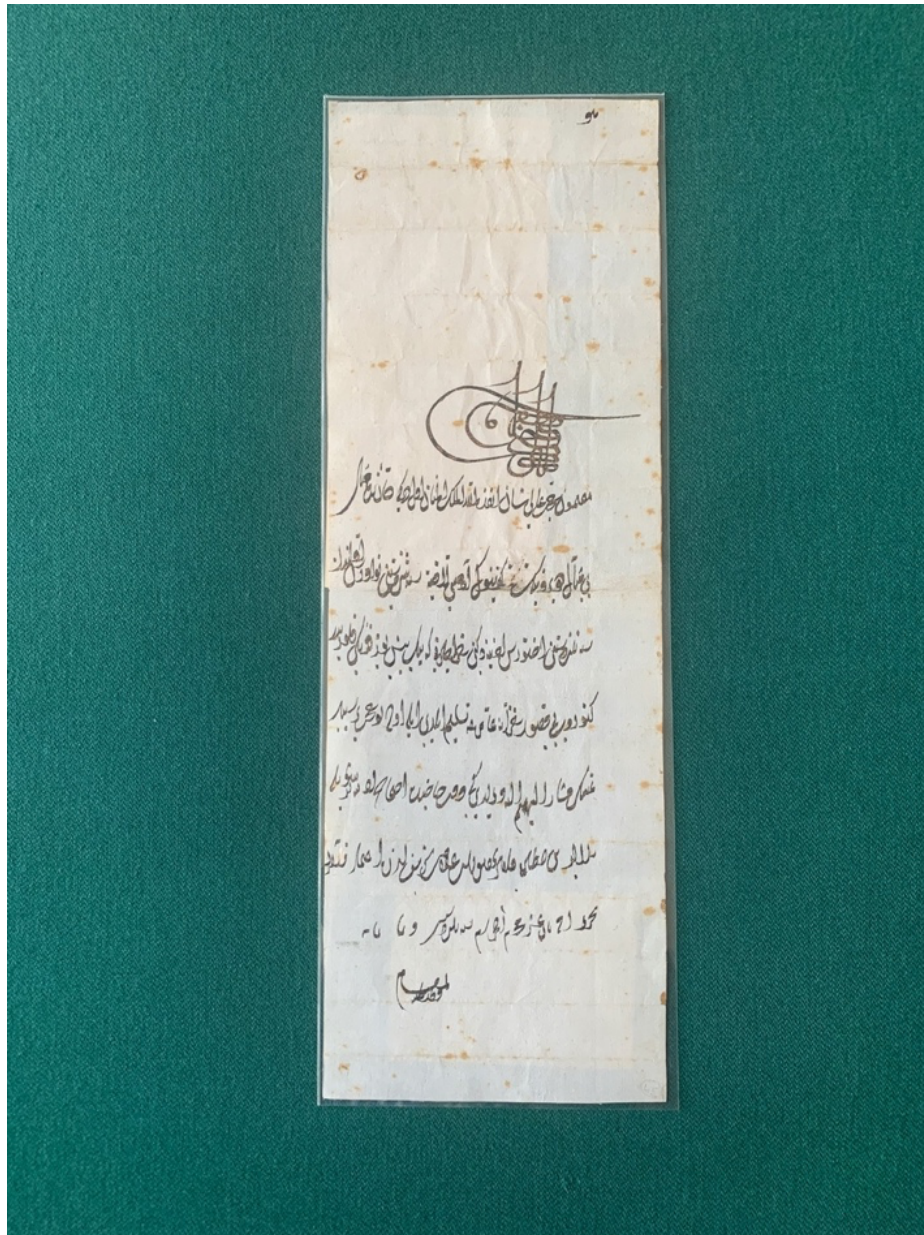
Classifying the Ragusan diplomacy from the 1430s to the late 1450s as Renaissance diplomacy has been discussed in the light of the different tools employed in the Renaissance diplomacy, such as *information-gathering*, *communication*, *negotiation*, and *representation*. Communication must be seen in the light of all the other tools, as one may state that it constitutes an important part of all of them. In addition, the more unofficial side of the diplomacy conducted in the Renaissance has been discussed. Firstly, Ragusa developed the first intelligence service in Europe in 1301, which indicates that information already then was valuable for the city-state. Information continued to be essential for it, and the ambassadors and merchants provided Ragusa, as well as foreign courts with intelligence. This confirms that the first tool was apparent in the Ragusan diplomacy.

Secondly, Ragusa's ambassadors and its government developed different approaches within the negotiating spectrum, by employing different rhetorical strategies to reach the goal that could benefit them the most, which is one of the two goals of negotiation in general. Through negotiation, Ragusa obtained *de facto* independency from the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom, the right to trade in the Levante by the Council of Basel in 1433, and the Ottoman protection in 1458. The negotiating processes, especially the Ragusan-Ottoman negotiations in 1458 happened within the classical approach to negotiation during the Renaissance period, which happened by ambassadors on the one side, meeting the governments and princes on the other. This therefore verifies that the Renaissance form of negotiation can be identified in the Ragusan diplomacy of the mid-fifteenth century.

Thirdly, Ragusa was represented abroad through their ambassadors at foreign courts, and through merchants and consulates in the Balkans, but also in the Mediterranean. Even though the resident ambassador is commonly viewed as the main characteristic change from medieval diplomacy to Renaissance diplomacy, new approaches in the study of the diplomacy in the Renaissance suggest that the process was more complex. In addition, due to the vague definition of representation, and what can count as resident diplomacy, it is applicable to argue that Ragusa was represented in terms of Renaissance representation.

Lastly, the more unofficial side of Renaissance diplomacy, bribery and lying was apparent in the diplomacy of Ragusa. The first is more apparent in the pre-negotiations with the Ottomans, while the latter was an essential part of the Ragusan diplomatic rhetorical strategies employed in negotiations with the Western powers, but also with the Ottoman Empire. In conclusion, all these factors together confirm that the Ragusan diplomacy in the mid-fifteenth century can be classified as Renaissance diplomacy, and therefore also the roots to modern-day diplomacy, like the diplomacy conducted by the Italian city-states of the same time-period.

Appendix 1 – Ferman of October 1458



Sultan Mehmed II's *Ferman of October 1458*, which confirmed the Ragusan payment of the tribute, or *haraç* (the land tax). This is the oldest preserved document in Turkish in the State Archives of Dubrovnik.

(HR-DADU-7-2-1-1)

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