



## THE OLDEST FOUNDATION MYTH OF RAGUSA: THE EPIDAUROIAN TRADITION<sup>1</sup>

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### *Epidaurum id est Ragusium*

As M. Bloch put it, there has always been something idolatrous, even “demonic,” in the relationship of historiography—both ancient and modern—with beginnings. This “demonic” in beginnings, or better, in origins, whether of a people, a kingdom or a city, refers not only to an epistemological overestimation, ascribing to the origin the power to completely explain the subsequent history of a thing. It refers much more to the ever-present political relevance of the image of the origin, an image of the ancient past which figures as prescriptive, as an authority for the present.<sup>2</sup>

Such an image of the origin and its political implications is what this study seeks to address: the oldest and the most influential origin-, or better, foundation-myth of medieval Ragusa. Interestingly, this myth seems to be present as early as the very first historical mention of the city, in an enigmatic note of a seventh- or eighth-century anonymous cosmographer from Ravenna, which states: *Epidaurum id est Ragusium*.<sup>3</sup> Epidaurum was a significant late Classical urban center and bishopric located some fifteen kilometers south of today's Ragusa (Dubrovnik). Like so many other Dalmatian cities, it simply disappears from the written sources at the end of the sixth century—modern scholarship suggests that it was destroyed by Slavs sometime in the seventh century—only to re-emerge, after perhaps a hundred years, in this ambiguous sentence.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised first chapter of my MA thesis “The Foundation Myths of Medieval Ragusa” defended in June 2003 at the Department of Medieval Studies, CEU. The rest of the thesis deals with the subsequent history of the Ragusan foundation myth in an attempt to reveal the different ways in which the Ragusan foundation was represented in medieval chronicles, addressing the questions of, first, how those accounts were narrated and altered, second, by whom, and, finally, why. Here I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor János M. Bak.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 25. For this reference, which expressed my thoughts exactly, I wish to thank Patrick Geary.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Ferdo Šišić, “O Hrvatskoj Kraljici Margareti” (About the Croatian Queen Margareta), *Dubrovnik* 1 (1930): 5.



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What is to be understood under this cryptic *id est*? How does it signify the relationship between the two cities, the old, Classical (Epidaurum) and the new, medieval (Ragusium)? It could simply imply the spatial proximity of these two settlements.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, more intriguingly, this *id est* could be understood literally; that somehow Epidaurum truly is Ragusium. In other words, this laconic equation might signify a certain claim to continuity or even an identification of the two cities, the new and the old, and thus the beginning of an immensely powerful tradition, the so-called “Epidaurian” tradition of Ragusa.

This tradition is of primary concern here. The main goal of this work is to investigate the ways in which the elites of early medieval Ragusa sought to establish this continuity or even identification. Its goal is to answer a seemingly strange question: how was Ragusa Epidaurum? What was the logic of such a descent? Accordingly, what should have been appropriated in order to appropriate its identity? Finally, why was such a claim important, even necessary?

Chronologically, the first of many answers to those questions is given by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his *De Administrando Imperio*, a source which needs no special introduction. In the middle of the tenth century the Byzantine emperor wrote:

The city of Ragusa is not called Ragusa in the tongue of Romans but, because it stands on the cliffs, it is called in Roman speech ‘the cliff, lau’; whence they are called ‘Lausaioi,’ i.e. those who have their seat on the cliff.’ But vulgar usage, which frequently corrupts names by altering their letters, has changed the denomination and called them Rausaioi. These same Rausaioi used of old to possess the city that is called Pitaura; and since, when the other cities were captured by the Slavs that were in the province, this city too was captured, and some were slaughtered and others taken prisoner, those who were able to escape and reach safety settled in the almost precipitous spot where the city now is; they built it small to begin with, and afterwards enlarged it, and later still extended its wall until the city reached its present size, owing to their gradual spreading out and increase in population. Among those who migrated to Ragusa are: Gregory,

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<sup>4</sup> Analogous to other formulas of “x *id est* y” in the cosmographer’s text, it can be inferred that he merely implied the spatial proximity of the two towns. Slobodan Čače, “‘Kozmografija’ Anonima Ravenjanina i počeci Dubrovnika” (The cosmography of Anonymous from Ravenna and the beginnings of Dubrovnik), *Dubrovnik. Časopis za književnost i znanost* 4 (1997): 91–92.



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Arsaphius, Victorinus, Vitalius, Valentine the archdeacon, Valentine the father of Stephen the protospatharius. From their migration from Salona [sic] to Ragusa, it is 500 years till this day, which is the 7<sup>th</sup> indiction, the year 6457. In this same city lies St. Pancratius in the church of St. Stephen, which is in the middle of this same city.<sup>5</sup>

The emperor's account is quite complex and full of confusing information.<sup>6</sup> However, the endless historical and philological debates concerning this paragraph are not of prime importance here. What is important is that Porphyrogenitus explicates what, it seems, the cosmographer of Ravenna implied: there is a fundamental connection between the two cities. It lies in the fact that medieval Ragusa was founded by the refugees from the neighboring Classical city of Epidaurum ("Pitaura"), which was destroyed by the Slavs. This myth constructs the most rudimentary of all the continuities, literally a genealogical one, that of blood itself, which connects the mother-city and its "offspring."

Judging by his detailed descriptions of Dalmatian cities, it is plausible to assume that the emperor had informants from the region itself. Consequently—especially since it was soon to appear in Ragusan sources—it may be that the story about the Epidaurian foundation is what the tenth-century Ragusans themselves claimed about the beginnings of their city.

This "Epidaurian motif," for the first time clearly exposed in the emperor's text, was to be repeated endlessly in Ragusa as the "official" version of the city's

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<sup>5</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, tr. R. J. H. Jenkins (Dumbarton Oaks: Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967), 135.

<sup>6</sup> Only some of many debated points are: the emperor's etymology of the city's name; the unexplained mentioning of a certain group of Salonians, even the names of those who migrated to Ragusa; the confusing dating of their migration which, according to *DAI*, happened five hundred years ago, e.g. in 449, and therefore before the Slavs could have destroyed Epidaurum and, consequently, before Ragusa could have been founded at all (!). For a classical interpretation of the Porphyrogenitus text, see Josip Lučić, *Povijest Dubrovnika od VII stoljeća do godine 1205* (History of Dubrovnik from the seventh century until the year 1205) (Dubrovnik: Anali Historijskog odjela Centra za znanstveni rad Jugoslavenske akademije u Dubrovniku, 1976), 10–19 (henceforth: Lučić, *Povijest Dubrovnika*). For a concise summary of the dominant interpretation at the moment, see Radoslav Katičić, "Aedificaverunt Ragusium et habitaverunt in eo. Tragom najstarijih dubrovačkih zapisa" (Aedificaverunt Ragusium et habitaverunt in eo. Tracing the oldest written monuments of Ragusa), in *Uz početke hrvatskih početaka. Filološke studije o našem najranijem srednjovjekovlju* (Split: Književni krug, 1993), 131–134; for an original, but not widely accepted, analysis, see Vladimir Koščak, "Od Epidaura do Dubrovnika" (From Epidaurum to Dubrovnik), *Dubrovnik. Časopis za književnost i znanost* 4 (1997): 13–16.



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beginnings, as the myth of the state until the fall of the Republic in 1808. Literally every medieval or Renaissance historical text reproduced it in one version or another; it was certainly the greatest myth of old Ragusa. The wide acceptance of an Epidaurian origin in the Middle Ages had deep reasons; the appropriation of Epidaurum's identity brought immense "symbolic capital." In the first place the prestige of the old metropolis, of ancientness and a "noble" Classical origin. Furthermore, the double institutional heritage of a bishopric and a Roman *colonia* was significant. The first was a *condicio sine qua non* of any serious urban development in medieval Dalmatia and the second legitimized the factual independence early medieval Ragusa enjoyed under a distant Byzantine sovereign. Importantly, this double institutional legacy was automatically accompanied by the territory of its jurisdiction—the territory of ancient Epidaurum, which in both its diocese and its civil autonomy encompassed a significantly larger area than that under the control of early medieval Ragusa, which was composed of only the immediate surroundings of the city. Thus, in both Ragusan secular and ecclesiastical diplomacy during the Middle Ages, the motif emerged of reestablishing justice and returning what is due, of giving back the territories and jurisdictions unjustly taken from the heirs of old Epidaurum.<sup>7</sup>

### A Questioned Heritage?

Besides the account of Porphyrogenitus, another account of Epidaurian heritage might reveal the principal ideological claim behind the story in the tenth century. Such a claim can be inferred from a close reading of the acts of the ecclesiastical synods which took place in Split in 925 and 928. These synods, whose main purpose was to recreate a unified ecclesiastical organization for Dalmatia, took as their main principle the restoration of the old, Classical situation extant before the barbarian invasions.<sup>8</sup> Historical argumentation was crucial. Therefore,

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<sup>7</sup> The ecclesiastical aspect of the exploitation of the Epidaurian heritage will be elaborated shortly in the text. Therefore, concerning only the secular territorial aspirations, see, Zdenka Janeković, "Stjecanje Konavala: Antička tradicija i mit u službi diplomacije" (The acquisition of Konavle: Classical myth and tradition in the service of diplomacy), in *Konavle u prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti. Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa "Konavle u prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti" održanog u Cavtatu od 25. do 27. studenog 1996. godine. Svezak 1*, (Konavle in the past, present and future) ed. Vladimir Stipetić (Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 1998), 31–44.

<sup>8</sup> Želimir Puljić, "Uspostava dubrovačke metropolije" (The establishment of the Ragusan Metropolis), in *Tisuću godina dubrovačke (nad)biskupije. Zbornik radova u povodu tisuću godina uspostave dubrovačke (nad)biskupije/metropolije (998.–1998.)* (A thousand years of



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all the officials of Dalmatian churches went to the synod armed with Classical identities and claims of continuity. So probably did the Ragusan bishop. But this time, Ragusans were not believed to have a Classical heritage, or at least not completely. In the synodal acts, the Ragusan bishopric was entitled only *Ragusitana*, not *Epidauritana* as it was later continuously. There is absolutely no mention of the ancient city. One might conclude that the Epidaurian tradition did not yet exist at that time, or that it was not used in the argumentation, were it not for the curious eighth article of the first synod. This states: “As for the Ragusan and Kotoran bishops, of which obviously *one seat* is discerned, they should justly divide that same diocese between themselves...”<sup>9</sup> This seat can only be that of ancient Epidaurum—quite inconveniently providing legal grounds for not one but two bishoprics.<sup>10</sup>

It seems that at this point there were two candidates for the Epidaurian heritage, both Ragusa and the nearby city of Kotor, neither of which could—in front of the relatively well-informed Dalmatian bishops and papal legates—claim it completely.<sup>11</sup> Ragusan continuity with Epidaurum in the first half of the tenth century seems to have been far from unquestionable.<sup>12</sup> The city was to triumph, eventually; however, the contested heritage was acquired largely by luck and not due to Ragusa’s own strength. A set of favorable political

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Dubrovnik’s (arch)bishopric. A collection of works celebrating the thousand year anniversary of the Founding of the (arch)bishopric/metropolis of Dubrovnik [998–1998]), ed. Želimir Puljić and Nedeljko A. Ančić (Dubrovnik–Split: Biskupski ordinarijat Dubrovnik–Crkva u svijetu Split, 2001) (henceforth: Puljić and Ančić, *Tisuću godina*), 18 (henceforth: Želimir Puljić, “Uspostava dubrovačke metropolije”). The whole very complex context of those synods is far beyond our concern here. What is important are references to Dubrovnik. For a general reference, see Nada Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata u Srednjem vijeku* (History of Croats in the Middle Ages) (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), 78–85; a more conservative account is given in Ferdo Šišić, *Povijest Hrvata u Doba Narodnih Vladara* (History of Croats in the age of National rulers) (Zagreb: Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske, 1990), 414–421.

<sup>9</sup> “VIII. De episcopis Ragusitano et Catharitano, quorum mani(f)este una sedis dignoscitur, ipsam diocesim equa lance inter se dividant...” quoted in Puljić, “Uspostava dubrovačke metropolije,” 16.

<sup>10</sup> Puljić, “Uspostava dubrovačke metropolije,” 18.

<sup>11</sup> A series of traces seem to exist of Kotor claiming continuity with Epidaurum. For the whole complex argumentation, see Milorad Medini, *Starine dubrovačke* (Dubrovnik’s antiquities) (Dubrovnik: author’s publication, 1935), 191–194.

<sup>12</sup> Sources do not provide an answer as to how this continuity was argued for at the synod. Only from the example of the later Ragusan chronicles can it be suggested that perhaps the crucial element was the insistence that the Epidaurian bishop migrated into one of the newly founded cities, thereby providing its church with a rich inheritance.



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conditions around the end of the tenth century enabled it to definitively monopolize the Epidaurian past. It was probably the Bulgarian Tsar Samuel, organizing his newly acquired southern Adriatic possessions, whose mediation was crucial for Ragusa to gain no less than the rank of archbishopric, legally grounded in the Epidaurian tradition.<sup>13</sup> The papal bull of Benedict VIII in 1022, addressing *Vitali, archiepiscopo sancte Pitabritane sedis*, signifies that the discussion had come to an end.<sup>14</sup> This letter is the first proof of the papacy and the Roman Church *explicitely* accepting an exclusive equation of the Ragusan Church with that of Epidaurum. After that, the city's Epidaurian roots were never to be challenged again. Double continuity with the old city, that of population and of the most important institution—the Church—was ensured for the new city.

### An Odd Oblivion

Once monopolized, the story of the foundation by the Epidaurians turned into a true *topos* of Ragusan literary and political tradition. Moreover, this story did not die with the Republic. Afterwards, its popularity did not decrease, only its function changed. From the official myth of the state, it became the basis of the almost consensually accepted, extremely influential, scholarly account of the founding of Ragusa that has dominated Croatian historiography until the present day.<sup>15</sup>

Yet there is one thing which the emperor and after him other medieval chroniclers of Ragusa failed to mention, and due to their silence, a fact of which even modern scholarship was ignorant until very recently. It is the undeniable truth that there was already a city, and, it seems, not an insignificant one, on the site of Ragusa. A city with strong Classical fortifications, a large basilica-shaped church and a continuity of settlement probably reaching as far back as Illyrian

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<sup>13</sup> On the complex and widely debated question of the origin of Ragusan archbishopric, see the whole book edited by Puljić and Ančić, *Tisuću godina*.

<sup>14</sup> Jovan Radonić, ed., *Dubrovačka akta i povelje* (Ragusan decrees and charters), Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost Srpskog naroda, treće odeljenje, knjiga 2 (Belgrade: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1934), 3–5.

<sup>15</sup> When discussing the foundation of Ragusa most modern histories basically follow the story of Porphyrogenitus, narrating the destruction of Epidaurum and the founding of Dubrovnik by the refugees. See Vinko Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808. Knjiga Prva* (History of Dubrovnik until 1808. Book One) (Zagreb: Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske, 1980), 17; Lučić, *Povijest Dubrovnika*, 10–19. For an overview of the recent positions on this problem, see the whole thematic issue of the magazine *Dubrovnik. Časopis za književnost i znanost* 4 (1997).



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times. Even more inconveniently, it was a city with the name of Ragusa/Ragusium, a name which the medieval settlement inherited. And names, naturally, have a great deal to do with identities. In other words, what the emperor and subsequent accounts all failed to mention was the simple fact that *Epidaurians had not founded Dubrovnik*. They had merely immigrated into another significant Late Classical urban center, which rose to be a powerful competitor of Epidaurum in the last centuries of antiquity:<sup>16</sup> a city with its own history and soil—and traditions to be inherited.

Linguists have already pointed out the dubiousness of Porphyrogenitus' etymology and warned that the name Ragusa/Ragusium might be of Illyrian origin. This brought into question the clear and simple concept of the seventh-century city-founding inherited from *De Administrando Imperio*, but it was archaeology that definitely challenged the modern picture of Ragusa's beginnings. Fragments of Roman and Early Christian monuments were found in Dubrovnik repeatedly from the nineteenth century on. The first major finds were the remains of a strong (Hellenistic?) fortification wall under the extant walls. In the early 1980s archeological excavations under the present Ragusan cathedral uncovered a spectacular find: a large basilica with three naves whose dating is uncertain. Archeologists have suggested everything from the fifth to the early ninth century—although the most frequently mentioned dating is that to the sixth century, connecting it with the period of Justinian's *reconquista*. All in all, quite definite traces appeared of a probably not insignificant (at least) Late Classical settlement.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ivica Prlender, "Totius gentis metropolim," *Historijski Zbornik* 51 (1998): 1.

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of the finds in Ragusa, see Željko Peković, *Dubrovnik Nastanak i razvoj srednjovjekovnoga grada* (Dubrovnik. Genesis and development of the medieval city) (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika-Split, 1998), passim; for the finds under the cathedral 116–142; for several hypotheses concerning the nature of the city before Epidaurian settlement, see Ivica Žile, "Naselje prije Grada" (The settlement before the city), *Dubrovnik. Časopis za književnost i znanost* 4 (1997): passim (henceforth: Žile, "Naselje prije Grada"). Only a few of many comments on the finds under the cathedral are the following: Trpimir Macan, "U povodu istraživanja u dubrovačkoj katedrali" (Concerning the Excavations in the Ragusan Cathedral), *Dubrovački Horizonti* 23 (1983): 3–11; J. Stošić, "Prikaz nalaza ispod katedrale i buničeve poljane u Dubrovniku" (A report on the finds under the cathedral and Bunić's Square in Ragusa), *Izdanja Hrvatskog arheološkog društva* 12 (1988): 15–38; Željko Rapanić, "Marginalia o 'postanku' Dubrovnika" (Marginalia about the 'beginning' of Dubrovnik), *Izdanja Hrvatskog arheološkog društva*, 12 (1988): 15–38, accepting the sixth-century dating, even suggested that the church was a seat of a bishop!





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Although it is difficult to assess the significance and the administrative rank of this settlement, its existence is now undeniable. This raises many questions, not the least significant of these being the relative silence of the written sources about it. A programmatic oblivion or truly the work of centuries? There is no definite answer. The physical remains of the ancient settlement—its Late Classical ruins—might have survived until deep into the Middle Ages, organizing memories around themselves and thus revealing the city's heritage from antiquity.<sup>18</sup> If not in their physical form, the traces of the ancient edifices might have endured as toponyms which left a revealing imprint on the city. Thus, for example, *castellum*—the name for the oldest part of the city throughout the Middle Ages—kept the memory of the Classical fortification which existed there. The very name of the city, Ragusium/Ragusa, adopted from the old settlement, suggests a continuity of population, and therefore of memory as well. But however powerful a reminder they might have been, both of these toponyms could, with time, have also completely lost their old connotations.

Written accounts are equally ambiguous, although some of the sources might contain distant “echoes” of a city before the Epidaurians. Sources from the tenth to the fourteenth century, written mostly by strangers to the city, albeit clearly reproducing the story about the Epidaurian foundation, nevertheless contain several vague hints concerning the existence of the settlement before the Epidaurians. For example, the account of Porphyrogenitus, the earliest clear statement of the “Epidaurian tradition,” contains a serious inconsistency. The emperor's odd dating of the immigration of certain Salonans to Ragusa—supposedly in the year 449—contradicts the rest of the text, which implies that Ragusa was only founded in the seventh century (namely after the Slavic destruction of Epidaurum). It seems possible that this part of the emperor's account was based on some written source which was negligently compiled with the information about the seventh-century Epidaurian founding of Ragusa, probably received from Dalmatian-Ragusan informants. This written source, speaking of the Salonans, could truly have contained the information about their settling in the city as early as 449, since Ragusa, judging by all we know (now), did exist at the time. Another example of a hypothetical remembrance of the

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<sup>18</sup> Besides the aforementioned basilica, also worth mentioning are the remains of the Late Classical fortifications, dated to the fifth or sixth century, whose remains beyond any doubt persisted until the early eleventh century, Žile, “Naselje prije Grada,” 107–108. However, even if the architectural remains of old Ragusium persisted, and some of them—the walls and the church—probably did, they could have been attributed to the later “Epidaurian” settlement.





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settlement before Epidaurians is provided by the twelfth-century *Chronicle* of the Priest of Duklja. According to this source, although they are narrated together, the founding of the city in fact consisted of two separate acts. First the mythic founder king Bello and his escorts built a certain fort, *castellum*, (as noted above, this was, significantly, the medieval name for the oldest part of the city) and only then, hearing this, did the refugee Epidaurians join them and together they *aedificaverunt civitatem supra mare in ripis marinis...*<sup>19</sup>

Several works of late medieval historiography written by Ragusan authors, and, significantly, written long after the waning of the conflicts in which the Epidaurian heritage was crucial, indicate less ambiguously that a memory of the old settlement might truly have persisted. Among these, the clearest example is a late fifteenth-century *Annales Ragusini Anonymi* according to which Ragusa was truly founded twice. According to this text, the Epidaurians *moved to* Dubrovnik only centuries after its first settling and construction by a certain mythic King Bello.<sup>20</sup> There are other contemporary accounts as well, which provide, one is tempted to say, a compromise solution, claiming that Epidaurians and Bello only *renewed* Ragusium.<sup>21</sup> N. Ragnina's sixteenth-century chronicle, following basically the same story of renewal, even offers a completely invented but magnificent Classical genealogy for old Ragusium.<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately, since all these accounts were written many centuries after the foundation of Ragusa, any firm assumption based on them is deeply problematic. It is possible that a vague memory of ancient Ragusium persisted, linked to the remains of the old city (whether physically or toponymically), surviving until native late medieval chroniclers brought it to, however dim, light. Yet since it did not fit the ideologically constructed past, the need for the Epidaurian origin, it was pushed aside as early as the tenth century. Memory has a soft spot for politics, towards power; and the powerful tend to be querulous and intransigent where matters of remembrance (and oblivion) are concerned.

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<sup>19</sup> Ferdo Šišić, *Letopis Popa Dukljanina* (The chronicle of the priest of Duklja) (Belgrade: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1928), 319–320.

<sup>20</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, Monumenta spectantia historiam Sclavorum meridionalium 14, ed. Natko Nodilo (Zagreb: Academia scientiarum et artium Slavorum meridionalium, 1883), 7 (henceforth: *Annales*).

<sup>21</sup> Ludovik Crijević Tuberon, *Komentari o mojem vremenu* (Comments on my epoch), ed. Mirko Valentić, tr. Vlado Rezar (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2001), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Is this all just a Renaissance obsession with antiquity or an attempt to bring contradicting memories into concord? *Annales*, 169, 171–175.



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### **The Logic of *Locus Absconditus* or the Need for “Virgin Soil”**

Why could this sort of oblivion have been necessary? Due to the lack of sources, only a very speculative solution can be offered. In order to claim the Epidaurian heritage for Dubrovnik, the two cities had to be connected with as clear and as unambiguous a link as possible. However, there was a certain surplus of identity to be dealt with: the existence of Ragusium, a city with its own past and traditions. To state that Epidaurians simply migrated to Ragusium would pose significant problems for the claims of heritage. On the other hand, to say that they *founded it* made descent as direct as possible. For genealogy to flow uninterruptedly, it might have been necessary to perform a certain *damnatio memoriae*. It was not any kind of soil which was required for the Epidaurian identity to flow pure; it had to be virgin soil, *locus absconditus*, void of any previous content, not having a history of its own. A deserted place, Porphyrogenitus’ “cliffs near the sea,” without a past which might endanger the transition of identity, which might bring into question the purity of heritage. Such virgin soil was settled by men from Epidaurum, bringing their history with them.

### **Final Thoughts**

However, it was not only the ghost of Epidaurum that was summoned to serve medieval politics. Other Dalmatian examples of such a binding of a Classical city with the newly founded settlement are Split, claiming the heritage of great Classical Salona, and Bar claiming that of Diocleia. All these new cities shared one trait: none of them could claim a glorious Classical past and the prerogatives which followed. So, rightfully or not, Classical predecessors were found. However, since they all lacked territorial continuity with them, the story of the foundation was always simultaneously one of migration: of Epidaurians to the cliffs, of Salonans to the ruins of Diocletian’s palace, of Diocleians to the future site of Bar.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Nor was this exclusively a Dalmatian phenomenon; the first account of the founding of Venice conforms to the same pattern, strikingly resembling the Dalmatian accounts. John the Deacon, in the early eleventh century, describes how the refugees from Aquileia, the ancient capital of Veneto, led by their patriarch, founded a new home on another *locus absconditus*, the islands in the lagoon. The contemporary St. Peter Damiani clearly understood the essence of the myth when he proclaimed Venice to be “Aquileia reborn.” For an excellent analysis of Venetian relationship with its history, see Patricia Fortini-Brown, *Venice and Antiquity. The Venetian Sense of the Past*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).



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Although it is probable that all these stories contain an element of truth, they certainly contain a serious element of ideological consideration as well. The problem is not only that those stories appear very late, several centuries after the events they seek to describe,<sup>24</sup> nor is it only that those accounts can, as the case of Dubrovnik shows, blatantly contradict the findings of archeology. The core of the problem is that they fit the elementary political interests, projects, and plans of these medieval cities all too well—they were what they wanted others to believe. In other words, it seems that what we encounter in those accounts is rarely a blatant lie; it can be more precisely described as a very suggestive simplification of the past—and that is the most common way, even today, to make history serve ideology.

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<sup>24</sup> To take only the two most influential accounts: in the case of Ragusa and Split, Porphyrogenitus wrote three centuries after the supposed events took place, and from hundreds of miles away, while Thomas the Archdeacon gave his account of the founding of Split after more than half a millennium.