

# Putting the Late Medieval North-Eastern Adriatic on the Regional Communication Map

## Abstract

Placing the late medieval North-Eastern Adriatic into the framework of interregional long-distance communication is an undertaking that is with modern-day level of knowledge of the area at hand in the late Middle Ages difficult to carry out. Its economic history in the period in question is anything but articulated. Just as unarticulated and blurry is the image of its economic magnitude and that of its embeddedness in the economic life of the area extending from the Italian peninsula in the west to Central Europe in the north and the east and the Balkan peninsula in the south. This image is marked by several decisive factors that do not have much to do with the Middle Ages. Some of them can be derived directly from the existing national historiographic narratives around the Adriatic Sea. This is more than just a conflict of nationalisms in or for the area in question; the image is impacted by the very nature of the formation of national history as well. The general courses of European historiography in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its preoccupation and methods also played a role in making this image difficult to adjust. The lack of typical sources for the late medieval social and economic history of the area in the period of rise of social and economic historiography in the 1960s and 1970s had a vast impact on the modern-day balance of knowledge of the social and economic history of this space and its surroundings it in the late Middle Ages. One of the factors that had to be taken into consideration when putting that part of the world on a late medieval regional communication map is of a completely different nature: the complexity of the historiographical perception and reception of the term North-Eastern Adriatic.

## 1 The North-Eastern Adriatic – The Perception

The geographical term North-Eastern Adriatic itself cannot be easily associated with regional historiography, at least not to that of pre-modern times. It has not been used in historiography until recently at all. Being predominantly nation-based, regional historiographies use different denominations for the area that can be referred to as the

North-Eastern Adriatic. Their primary yardstick for the description of such an area was the territory within ethnic frontiers, i. e. homeland. Along with the nation-based perception of the area, there are two modes of its perception in the historiography that are nowadays widely in use: the North-Eastern Adriatic ‘region’ and the ‘two shores’ North-Eastern Adriatic. However, neither of them seems suitable for the task of putting the area on the regional communication map in the late Middle Ages.

It was only after the rise of trans-national research that the term North-Eastern Adriatic became justified in historiography. Dealing with phenomena such as frontier societies or post-war social transition, regional trans-national historiography seeks to disregard national and pre-modern historiographic frameworks and tends to use this geographical term as a seemingly neutral term for defining the area as a stage of regional history.<sup>1</sup> Actually, when used in historiography, the North-Eastern Adriatic is not a neutral term. It does away with all the trouble brought about by the national-history perspective and helps us with a better grasp of a variety of historical processes in an array of lands, regions, and provinces surrounding the North-Eastern Adriatic, which are nowadays part of Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia. However, it also creates a new set of matters that need fixing. The use of this term together with the term region suggests that in many aspects the North-Eastern Adriatic could and should be perceived as a well-established region, as a region per se. It suggests that it can be distinguished from its surroundings as an entity, not just geographically but with its own homogeneous history as well. The trans-national historians’ North-Eastern Adriatic, a ‘region’, is a somewhat fluid territory that includes historic Friuli and Venezia Giulia, Carniola (Kranjska), Istria and a part of Dalmatia, with no clear boundaries to the north or to the south of it. When convenient, it stretches as far as Carinthia, Austria, and, if necessary, includes or excludes certain parts of the Kvarner Gulf (Quarnero), in Croatia.

Far more disputable than a coherent ‘regional’ North-Eastern Adriatic view is a view, by which the North-Eastern Adriatic is simply a northern part of something that is suggestively called exactly the same as it is called geographically: the Eastern Adriatic (“L’Adriatico orientale” in Italian, “Vzhodni Jadran” in Slovenian, “Istočni Jadran” in

1 The use of the term North-Eastern Adriatic in recent historiography e. g. Marina Cattaruzza (Ed.), *Nazionalismi di frontiera. Identità contrapposte sull’Adriatico nord-orientale, 1850–1950*, Soveria Mannelli 2003; The EIRENE project – Post-War Transitions in Gendered Perspective: The Case of the North-Eastern Adriatic Region (<https://project-eirene.eu/>; 14. 3. 2022); Rolf Wörtsdörfer, *Krisenherd Adria 1915–1955. Konstruktion und Artikulation des Nationalen im italienisch-jugoslawischen Grenzraum*, Paderborn 2004, pp. 238, 326; Sabine Rutar, *Epistemological Borders and European Contemporary History: the Example of the Northeastern Adriatic Region*, in: *Europa Regional* 22, 3–4 (2014), pp. 192–206.

Croatian). This particular denomination, on the other hand, sounds pretty familiar to historians, particularly to those dealing with pre-modern times. In terms of categories of physical geography, there is nothing wrong with the Eastern Adriatic. With its many islands and an irregular, rocky coast its shores are distinctly Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> A disputable moment emerges when the Eastern Adriatic is regarded as one of the Adriatic's two constitutive, culturally and historically antipodal shores – the Adriatic that is a frontier.<sup>3</sup> Even more, the Adriatic that is a frontier to its core: a sea where the division between the East (if not the Orient) and the West (definitely the Occident) should be obvious to the extent that it represents its most noticeable historical feature. According to this view, the rocky Eastern Adriatic and the flat Western Adriatic should be perceived as nothing but the 'two shores' (in Italian, 'le due sponde') of Adriatic.

The 'two shores' view on the Adriatic is a regional variant of a broader discourse. It is based on ethnic, religious, political, cultural or other historically relevant circumstances along Adriatic shores from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the modern era. It promotes duality as the most adequate view of past realities and state of affairs in the history of the Adriatic, along with the need for 'better understanding' and 'building bridges' between two sides, one of which is Italy and the other its counterpart, somewhat elusive and somewhat amorphous 'Slavia'. It was formed in the process of nation building and formation of nation-based culture, along with art, literature, and, last but not least, history.

The realities of the Adriatic in the Late Middle Ages and earlier can be reflected by means of the 'two shores' view only with great difficulties. Firstly, there is not much room for duality in the fragmented world of the medieval man. Secondly, even though it seems that 'two shores' could be derived directly from physical geographical features of the coasts around the Adriatic, this is not the case. If the shores of this Mediterranean gulf undergo a strict division according to the cardinal directions and considering the coastal configuration as a criterion as well, there should be a third coast of the Adriatic, i. e. the northern coast, the Adriatic of the lagoons. Thirdly, if a strong Byzantine presence and especially the presence of Islam is a criterion for finding the 'East' in the Adriatic, it is easy to get confused if this is to be attributed to one of the 'two shores' in the Middle Ages.

2 On geography of the Eastern Adriatic and its physical borders in the historiographical context, cf. Egidio Ivetich, *Un confine nel Mediterraneo, L'Adriatico orientale tra Italia e Slavia (1300–1900)*, Roma 2014, pp. 27–30; id., *Adriatico orientale. Atlante storico di un litorale mediterraneo*, Rovigno 2014, pp. 17–21; Boris Gombač, *Atlante storico dell'Adriatico orientale*, Pontedera 2007, p. 3.

3 Ivetich, *Un confine nel Mediterraneo* (see note 2).

## 2 The 'communications and cities' North-Eastern Adriatic

At this stage, the only North-Eastern Adriatic that can be put on the late medieval regional communication map without hesitation is the 'communications and cities' North-Eastern Adriatic. Bearing in mind the influential doctrinal statement by Lucien Febvre that "the Mediterranean is the sum of its routes"<sup>4</sup> and Fernand Braudel's equally determinative conclusion that "cities and their communications, communications and their cities have imposed a unified human construction on geographical space",<sup>5</sup> the term 'communications and cities' North-Eastern Adriatic is coined here with one purpose only. Namely, to give a name to the northern part of the geographical Eastern Adriatic in the Middle Ages, as it is outlined by the structure of the late medieval regional communications. This area was never a region or anything similar. It can be observed as a defined area only in relation to the 'communications and cities' approach. Out of this very particular context, this part of the Adriatic is hard to map into a recognizable medieval or early modern unit. The routes that are making it observable as a 'communications and cities' area in the late Middle Ages linked the Italian peninsula with the lands on its east, Central Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe.

The 'communications and cities' late medieval North-Eastern Adriatic is easiest definable by means of a negative definition: it is that part of the geographical Eastern Adriatic which is not marked by the maritime cities that made it into history as the predominant centres of late medieval exchange between the Balkans and Italy. In other words, it is not its 'shiny' South, that part of the 'two shores' Eastern Adriatic to which the economic historiography of the 1970s and 1980s attributed the role of the distinguished regional late medieval communication hub, with Dubrovnik (Ragusa) as its extraordinary front-runner.

Following great men of early economic history during the pre-war period in Yugoslavia, Gregor Čremošnik, Jorjo Tadić, and Mihailo Dinić<sup>6</sup> and the early Annales

4 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, New York 1966, p. 271.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 272.

6 On Gregor Čremošnik, Jorjo Tadić, and Mihailo Dinić as historians and their connection with the archives of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), see: Ignacij Voje, Savinjančan Gregor Čremošnik, raziskovalec Balkana [Gregor Čremošnik, a Native of the Savinja Valley, a Researcher of the Balkans], in: *Kronika* 65 (2017), pp. 541–550; Radovan Samardžić, Jorjo Tadić kao istoričar [Jorjo Tadić as a Historian], in: *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu 11* (1970), pp. 1–16; Spomenica posvećena preminulom akademiku Mihailu Diniću [A Tribute to Deceased Member of the Academy Mihailo Dinić], Vaso Ćubrilović (Ed.), in: *Posebna izdanja Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti*, vol. 441, Beograd 1971.

school, the economic historiography of the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia discovered the Mediterranean of ‘communications and cities’ in their own yard, in the South-Eastern Adriatic. They first discovered it in the archives of Dubrovnik (Ragusa). That Adriatic was very specific. It was, as expected, very urban based and urban oriented. The emphasis was on ties between coastal cities as maritime trade centres and great powers or lands in their hinterland (Rascia, Bosnia, Croatia and Sclavonia), which were considered the predecessors of subsequent national states of South Slavic nations that were in need of their own medieval (economic) history. In order to shape that world and put it on a regional communication map, it was necessary to concentrate on tracing the so-called ‘high trade’ commodities that were exported on a large scale from Central Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe via Dubrovnik (Ragusa), Split (Spalato) and Zadar (Zara) to the Italian peninsula. That was done zealously.<sup>7</sup>

From the very beginning, there was never a shadow of doubt that Dubrovnik (Ragusa) was part of such Adriatic. Its inclusion in the world of ‘communications and cities’ was already debated in the late 1920s, years before Fernand Braudel’s visit to the Dubrovnik (Ragusa) archives (1936). Zadar (Zara) and Split (Spalato) followed much later, in the 1970s. Dubrovnik (Ragusa) was the final point on the Balkans communication system, while Zadar (Zara) and Split (Spalato) were the final stops on the road referred to as the Great Road, *Via magna exercitua*lis. Known also as the Road of King Coloman, it was a major late medieval route linking the Pannonian Plain and the Adriatic, connecting Hungary and Dalmatia via Zagreb, Modruš and Bihač.<sup>8</sup> It terminated in Senj (Segna; Zengg), Zadar (Zara) and Split (Spalato).

7 The economic history production in Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s, based on the archives of medieval Dubrovnik (Ragusa), Zadar (Zara), Split (Spalato) and partially Kotor (Cattaro) is yet to be properly evaluated.

8 Although referred to as *Via magna*, it is sometimes not included on maps, e.g.: Online-Handbuch zur Geschichte Südosteuropas, Karten, Wichtige Handelswege im späten Mittelalter (Leibniz Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung, Regensburg) (URL: <https://www.hgsoc.ios-regensburg.de/fileadmin/karten/WichtigeHandelswegeSpaetmittelalter.jpg>; 14. 3. 2022). Barring Rijeka’s connection with Zagreb – which was not a major route in comparison to that connecting Zagreb and Zadar (Zara) –, no major connections are shown between the Adriatic and the hinterland to the north of Drijeva on the river Neretva. Rab (Arbe) is misplaced, it is put in the location of Osor. On sections of *Via magna* in modern-day Croatia see: Tomislav Raukar, *Zadar u XV stoljeću. Ekonomski razvoj i društveni odnosi [Zadar in 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Economic and Social Relations]*, Zagreb 1977, p. 18; Nada Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata u srednjem vijeku [The History of Croats in the Middle Ages]*, Zagreb 1990, p. 249; Franjo Pajur, *Rakovečka trasa “vojničke” ceste ili Kolomanove ceste [The Rakovec Section of the Military or the Coloman Road]*, in: *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 29 (2011), pp. 23–37.

### 3 Shaping of the late medieval ‘towns and communications’ North-Eastern Adriatic

Using the same criteria, following the routes of the cattle, cattle skin and silver ore, the type of the North-Eastern Adriatic being put on the map here, includes what can be described as the ‘remnants’ left behind by the ‘shiny South’. These remnants include parts of historic Dalmatia to the north of Zadar (Zara), entire Istria and parts of Carniola and Friuli-Venezia Giulia to the south of the so-called Ljubljana Road that connected Hungary with Venice in the mainland to the north of the Adriatic lagoons.<sup>9</sup> This space is likely to be shown as a blank spot on the maps of trans-regional medieval economy and trade routes from the East to the West and vice versa.

Similarly to the *Via magna*, the Ljubljana Road was actually a set of parallel routes in certain sections. These routes followed the Sub-Alpine valleys (modern-day Slovenia) after the Pannonian Plain and the Drava river had been crossed in Ptuj (Pettau). All these routes met in Ljubljana, from where it was possible to continue either towards Gorizia, Udine, Portogruaro and towards the Italian peninsula in the case of cattle trade or towards Trieste, Koper (Capodistria), and Piran (Pirano), as well as towards Rijeka (Fiume) and Bakar (Buccari) in the case of skin trade and iron.<sup>10</sup> It became the main route of long-distance trade between Austrian and Hungarian lands on one hand and Italian lands on the other after 1360, when Duke Rudolph IV from the House of Habsburg took control over the bulk of transit routes between German and Italian lands and when his successors consolidated their position in the Duchy of Carniola and in Istria and when

9 See Ferdo Gestrin, *Trgovina s kožami v Markah v 15. in v prvi polovici 16. stoletja* [Skin Trade in Marches in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and in the First Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century], in: *Zgodovinski časopis* 30,1–2 (1976), pp. 23–35; id., *Slovenske dežele in zgodnji kapitalizem* [Slovenian Lands and Early Capitalism], Ljubljana 1991, pp. 139–188; Othmar Pickl, *Der Viehhandel von Ungarn nach Oberitalien vom 14. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, in: *Internationaler Ochsenhandel (1350–1750)*, Stuttgart 1979, pp. 39–81; Andrea Fara, *Italian Merchants in the Kingdom of Hungary in Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period (XIII<sup>th</sup>–XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, in: Iulian Mihai Damian / Ioan-Aurel Pop / Mihailo St. Popović / Alexandru Simon (Eds.), *Italy and Europe’s Eastern Border (1204–1669)*, Frankfurt a. M. et al. 2012, pp. 119–133; id., *Il commercio di bestiame ungherese verso la Penisola italiana tra tardo Medioevo e prima Età moderna (XIV–XVI secolo)*, in: *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome-Moyen Âge* 127,2 (2015), pp. 2–19; id., *An Outline of Livestock Production and Cattle Trade from Hungary to Western Europe in Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period (XIV<sup>th</sup>–XVI<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, in: *Crisia* 45 (2015), pp. 87–95.

10 Gestrin, *Slovenske dežele* (see note 9), pp. 101–102.

Trieste voluntarily submitted to their rule (in 1382).<sup>11</sup> *Via magna exercitualis*, on the other side of the area, was formed earlier than the Ljubljana Road, it was already there in the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century if not earlier. The space between these two roads was neither devoid of large urban settlements next to the sea nor of a role in long-distance trade between the Italian peninsula and Central Eastern Europe. The blanks on maps are to be attributed more to modern-day historiography than to the situation on site in the late Middle Ages. The knowledge of social, economic and urban history of the late Middle Ages in the Eastern Adriatic is far from balanced: it is still largely concentrated in its South.

There is only one medieval coastal urban settlement situated between the mouth of Isonzo (slov. Soča) and Zadar (Zara) that made it firmly into the ‘communications and cities’ world in the times of the peak of economic (and social) history: Piran in Slovenia. This might sound strange, as the Commune of Piran was not a *civitas* but a *terra*, whose elite were the citizens of the council and not nobles like in *civitates*. Undoubtedly, it was a place of vivid maritime economic activity, with some long-distance trade included.<sup>12</sup> It was also a decent late medieval urban settlement; however, it was not exactly a place of abundance and opulence. The reason why Piran made it into that world, unlike the *civitates* such as Trieste, Koper (Capodistria), Poreč (Parenzo), and Pula (Pola) in Istria, Krk (Veglia), Rab (Arbe) in the Kvarner Gulf (Quarnero), lies in the attainability of typical sources for the late medieval economic history in the 1960s and 1970s, namely

11 On the Ljubljana Road, its development and continuation from Carniola to Friuli, see: Ferdo Gestrin, *Trgovina slovenskega zaledja s primorskimi mesti od XIII. do konca XVI. stoletja* [The Trade between Slovenian Mainland and Littoral Towns from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century to the end of 16<sup>th</sup> Century], in: *Kronika* 11,2 (1963), pp. 73–85; id., *Slovenske dežele* (see note 9), pp. 139–188; Donata Degrassi, *Le strade di Aquileia. Nuovi itinerari tra Friuli e golfo adriatico*, Gorizia 2000; ead., *Dai monti al mare. Transiti e collegamenti tra le Alpi orientali e la costa dell’alto Adriatico (secoli XIII–XV)*, in: Jean-François Bergier/Gauro Coppola (Eds.), *Vie di terra e d’acqua. Infrastrutture viarie e sistemi di relazioni in area alpina*, Bologna 2007, pp. 161–188; ead., *Una città tra Carso e mare: territorio e vie di comunicazione di Trieste nel tardo medioevo*, in: Michela Messina (Ed.), *Medioevo a Trieste. Istituzioni, arte, società nel Trecento*, Milano 2008, pp. 281–296; ead., *Lo spazio alto-adriatico nel medioevo e gli scambi tra mondo mediterraneo e mondo centro europeo (XII–XV secolo)*, in: Daniele Andreozzi et al. (Eds.), *Acque, terre e spazi dei mercanti. Istituzioni, gerarchie, conflitti e pratiche*, Trieste 2009, pp. 269–302; Miha Kosi, *Boj za prehode proti Jadranu – Kras od 12. do 15. stoletja (politično- in vojnogodovinska skica)* [A Struggle for Passes Towards the Adriatic – Karst from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century (Political and Military Historical Sketch)], in: *Kronika* 63,3 (2015), pp. 379–444.

12 See: Ferdo Gestrin, *Pomorstvo srednjeveškega Pirana – La marineria di Pirano nel Medio Evo*, Ljubljana 1978; id., *Rapporti commerciali tra le terre Slovene e l’Italia tra XIII e XVII secolo*, in: *Rivista storica del Mezzogiorno* 15–16 (1980–1981), pp. 61–84.

notarial records. Along with Dubrovnik (Ragusa), Piran is the only commune in the Eastern Adriatic with a completely preserved series of notarial or *vicedomini* records from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (notaries 1282–1320, *vicedomini* 1325–1784). No other urban settlement in the North-Eastern Adriatic can compare to Piran even remotely when it comes to the preserved sources for the late Middle Ages. These sources were the basis for research of Piran's social and economic history conducted in the 1970s and 1980s by Slovenian historians, with Ferdo Gestrin at the forefront.<sup>13</sup>

The reasons why late medieval notarial records (or those of *vicedomini*) were not preserved in the North-Eastern Adriatic vary from city to city; they were destroyed in fires, in armed conflicts in long-gone past or due to carelessness and slovenliness in more recent periods. Late medieval Trieste and Rab (Arbe) did well in this regard. Numerous documents issued by a variety of issuers and a considerable part of books of *vicedomini* from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century are preserved in Trieste.<sup>14</sup> Along with many preserved documents from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, books of two notaries from the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (1369–1382) are preserved in Rab, as well as a continuous series of notary records from 1441 onwards.<sup>15</sup> The case of Koper (Capodistria), where the historic documents were unavailable for a specific, barely comprehensible reason, is the most unusual one. The salient part of the commune of Koper (Capodistria)'s archive (1381-1944) was removed hastily in 1944. It was kept in a secret location in Italy for a long time. These documents were inaccessible to researchers; officially, they did not exist. This scandalous situation, which bewildered the scholarly public, was resolved in 2016. It was at that point that the documents' existence was officially confirmed and, consequently, they are now available to researchers on a temporary basis in the State Archives in Venice (Archivio di Stato di Venezia).

Along with the unavailability of sources typical of late medieval social and economic history of the North-Eastern Adriatic, an additional circumstance ought to be addressed due to its importance in terms of the area's economic magnitude in the period in question.

13 See: Dušan Mlacović, Poznosrednjeveška koprška elita in zgodovinski viri [The Elite of Koper in Late Middle Ages and the Historical Sources], in: Janez Mlinar / Bojan Balkovec (Eds.), Urban Elites in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Times between the Alps, the Adriatic and the Pannonian Plain, Ljubljana 2011, pp. 169–171.

14 See: Daniela Durissini, Economia e Società a Trieste tra XIV e XV secolo, Trieste 2005 (Fonti e studi per la storia della Venezia Giulia, ser. II 10), pp. 241–249.

15 See: Stjepan Antoljak, Izvori i literatura o prošlosti otoka Raba od ranoga srednjeg vijeka do godine 1797 [The Sources and the Literature on the History of the Island of Rab from the Early Middle Ages to 1797], Zadar-Rab 1986, pp. 19–30; Dušan Mlacović, The Nobility and the Island. The Fall and Rise of the Rab Nobility, Zagreb 2012, pp. 70, 100, 110–111, 327.

With regard to nation, this area functions as a forcibly shared space, where national sentiments are intense and often heated. Regardless of loud slogans or resounding words uttered by rapturous bards and irrespective of the national appropriation, this area is considered to be marginal by national histories; it is seen as an area outside grand national medieval topics or events. Neither Italian, nor Slovenian or Croatian history see this area as constitutive for their national history in the late Middle Ages.

#### 4 The perspectives

With all this in mind, how does one place the late medieval North-Eastern Adriatic on the regional communication map, making the routes between the Italian peninsula and Central Eastern Europe part and parcel thereof? It would be most suitable to regard late medieval large-scale commerce between the Italian peninsula and Central Eastern Europe in this part of the world as commerce that was imbued with trade channels in the direction from Venice to the Mediterranean and with regional supply of Venice as a metropolis. These channels are easier to trace if research focus is shifted from the period of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century to that from the late 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century. In doing so, the distribution of political (and economic) power on the aforementioned trade routes, which is typical of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, comes to the foreground. At that time the power of the central authority was not as strong as later. This power was at the hands of higher nobility, ecclesiastical institutions (the Patriarchate of Aquileia), and the most powerful Venetian noble families, who obtained control over the North-Eastern Adriatic in their division of spheres of interest in the Mediterranean. In symbiosis with the capability of their clientele and elites of large coastal cities to see to the operation of movement of goods, people and services, their political and economic power provided a basis for efficient large-scale communications in the North-Eastern Adriatic. Communication routes were thus embedded into the communication patterns of competing interlaced political and economic networks, which were designed as kaleidoscopes.

The position of Senj (Segna; Zengg) in one of those kaleidoscopes serves as an example of what happens with the perception of the North-Eastern Adriatic in the context of late medieval communications between the Italian peninsula and Central Eastern Europe if it is observed from a different viewpoint. Taking the Via magna, the Adriatic Sea and the soil under the rule of the Hungarian king could be reached fastest through Senj (Segna; Zengg) and its port. Building upon normative sources for economic history of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century (trade and market regulation, agreements, restrictions) and looking at Senj (Segna; Zengg) from a bird's eye view (from the position of macro-historical discussion of regional communications), it appears that perhaps Senj

(Segna; Zengg)'s vibrant port and marketplace could be associated directly with the power of the city's elite, as was the case in Zadar (Zara), Split (Spalato) or Dubrovnik (Ragusa), and that the inhabitants of Senj (Segna; Zengg) and their overlords the Counts of Krk (Veglia) (the Frankopans) are a key element of the port's success.<sup>16</sup> By means of these sources this can be done without mention of a single inhabitant or item arriving at the port of Senj (Segna; Zengg) (attested in the sources) from either side and from there continuing to either Hungary or across the sea. With the House of Anjou, the Frankopans, Venetians, Florentines, and Marchesans, a macro-historical view of Senj (Segna; Zengg) does not require anyone else for a smooth operation of the Senj (Segna; Zengg) port within large-scale connections. It does not require urban tissue in the city or any neighbours around the city and its administrative area.

Looking at Senj (Segna; Zengg) from a somewhat lower perspective, normative sources from the period suddenly indicate its connectedness with the neighbouring island of Rab. Based on what was written in decrees of the Venetian senate, intervening to the benefit of their subjects, it can be concluded that the elite from the nearby island of Rab (Arbe) was involved in commerce in Senj (Segna; Zengg) to a certain extent. However, this was done under the aegis of the central authorities. As the nearest Venetian territory, Rab (Arbe) seemed as another or a complementary Senj (Segna; Zengg), in the interest of Venice. The town of Senj (Segna; Zengg) continues to exist as a phantom city in this case as well. Its inhabitants or urban tissue are still not needed.<sup>17</sup>

Sources from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century paint a completely different picture of relations between Rab (Arbe) and Senj (Segna; Zengg) as far as embeddedness into regional communication trends are concerned. In sources from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century we can observe a decline of both cities' economic importance and an increased impact of the central authorities on regional commercial trends. In the context of cross-Adriatic communications both cities must be regarded as an inseparable pair, with Rab (Arbe) in the leading position, not Senj (Segna; Zengg). At the same time, sources from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century reveal that attention should be paid to at least four other cities when placing the northern part of the Eastern Adriatic on a map of regional communications, namely Rijeka (Fiume), Pula (Pola), Trieste, and, first and foremost, Koper (Capodi-

16 On Senj (Segna; Zengg) as a port tracing normative sources from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, see: Zsuzsa Teke, *Il porto di Segna come impresa economica nel Medioevo*, in: *Studia historica adriatica ac danubiana* 1,1 (2008), pp. 71–79.

17 On Rab (Arbe) as a complementary Senj (Segna; Zengg), see: Bogumil Hrabak, *Regionalna i međunarodna trgovina Mlečana i Dubrovčana drvetom iz Senja (XIV–XVIII stoljeće)* [Regional and International Venetian and Ragusan wood trade from Senj (14<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Century)], in: *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 24 (1991), pp. 57–107.

stria). The probability that their role in communications between the Italian peninsula and Eastern Central Europe in the late Middle Ages was greatly underrated is considerable. In future, these cities, their respective societies and economy should be explored with regard to politico-economical networks, as well as their urban and environmental history. At this point, let us add a few words on the cases of late medieval Rab (Arbe) and Koper (Capodistria).

The beginnings of Rab's economic and cultural flourishing reach back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and peaked two centuries later. From 1018 onwards, the *civitas* of Rab (Arbe) paid tribute to its overlord, Venice, in silk and/or in gold. In the hierarchy of relations between the cities of Lower Dalmatia up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Rab (Arbe) held the third place, immediately after Zadar (Zara) and Split (Spalato), which is also attested by the fact that after having occupied Dalmatia, King Coloman made grants to three selected Dalmatian Churches, one of which was the Church of Rab. The city on the island saw rapid expansion. As early as in the 11<sup>th</sup> century its planned suburbs began to grow. The 12<sup>th</sup> century saw the city's urban area and inhabitants grow more than double in size and number, becoming one of the largest cities of the Adriatic. The city's rapid development and that of its community is associated with its position along the maritime route from Venice to the east Mediterranean and along the route to Hungary and, consequently, with long-distance commerce, as well as small cattle husbandry, production of vine, oil and other provisions. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Rab (Arbe) was one of the largest eastern Adriatic communities, organized as a commune.<sup>18</sup>

The Rab (Arbe) commune was firmly embedded in the Venetian political and economic orbit; it was its southernmost stronghold up to the conquest of Zadar (Zara) in 1202. It was led by the Count of Rab, elected by the Rab (Arbe) political elite. How important Rab (Arbe) was to Venice is evident from a list of counts of Rab (Arbe) up to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They were sons of doges: Pietro Ziani, his son Marco, and Marco Mastropietro (1213–1235). Earlier, Doge Vitale II Michiel had placed his son Nicholaus in the position of count of Rab (Arbe) (from 1171 to 1184); he was married to Maria, daughter of the Hungarian King Ladislaus II and niece of King Stephen IV. Even prior to that, the Count of Rab (Arbe) had been Rainer Polani (1143–1152), son of Doge Peter Polani.<sup>19</sup> In the last decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Rab (Arbe) shifted again towards the Michieli family. The Rab (Arbe) elite elected Marco Michiel (aprox. 1280–

18 On the position and role of Rab (Arbe) in the Adriatic in the Middle Ages, see: Mlacović, *The Nobility and the Island* (see note 15), pp. 75–207.

19 On the significance and role of the Counts of Rab (Arbe) in the Venetian political system, see: Irmgard Fees, *Reichtum und Macht im mittelalterlichen Venedig: Die Familie Ziani*, Tübingen

1311) as their count. His son Andrea (1320–1347) was the last count of Rab (Arbe) to be elected to this position for life, according to the agreements between Venice and Rab (Arbe) in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup>

It was only in the shelter of this type of Rab (Arbe) that a Templar stronghold could be established, standing in a coastal settlement that grew on the ruins of ancient Segnia, beneath a steep mountain pass through Velebit. Rab's nobility had the necessary infrastructure, knowledge and connections at their disposal, as well as protection stemming from their embeddedness into political and economic networks of great players in the region. Additionally, in terms of regional communication Rab (Arbe) was an inevitable stop because it offered protection from the area's greatest geographical danger, i.e. the unpredictable and strong Senj (Segna; Zengg) bora. Rab (Arbe)'s bays provided shelter for ships on route via the Senj (Segna; Zengg) passage (Senjska vrata), which is attested by numerous mooring bollards carved in rocks.

The port in the city of Rab (Arbe) served as a starting point for the route to Senj (Segna; Zengg) and towards Hungary. Rab's elite had houses and emporiums in Senj (Segna; Zengg), including the Benedictine abbeys of St Peter and St Andrew (a nunnery).<sup>21</sup> The connections between these two towns were regulated a long time ago, the oldest preserved agreement dates back to 1205.<sup>22</sup> Three documents serve to illustrate Rab's embeddedness into regional communications in association with Senj (Segna; Zengg). A year after the death of Andrea Michiel on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1347, Johannes Gradonico (Gradenigo), the new count of Rab, entered into a joint enterprise with his kinfolk, his brother-in-law Francisco Loredano, his nephew Jacomello Contareno and with the richest Rab (Arbe) nobleman, Stephanus Damiani de Dimine (Domine, later Dominis), in which the sum of 2,000 ducats was invested.<sup>23</sup> If we go deeper in time, in 1291, Count Marco Michiel was contacted by the Venetian merchant Lumbardo who stated that, during the era of King Bela (Bela IV, 1235–1270) he had taken over a large

1988 (Bibliothek des deutschen historischen Instituts in Rom 68), pp. 467–470 (Anhang 3, Zu den Venezianischen *Comites* von Arbe).

20 Mlacović, *The Nobility and the Island* (see note 15), pp. 151–152.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 97–101, 114–117, 151; *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae* (= CD), ed. by Tadija Smičiklas, vol. 8, Zagreb 1910, p. 224; *Državni arhiv u Zadru, Arhiv stare rapske općine, Spisi rapskih bilježnika* [State archives in Zadar, Archives of the Commune of Rab, Notaries], Thoma Stantiis, 2 V, fol. 219 (3 September 1452, the Abbess of St. Andrew leased the house of the monastery in Senj-Segna-Zengg to a merchant from Bergamo).

22 CD, vol. 3, Zagreb 1905, pp. 48–49.

23 *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* (= ASVe), *Cancelleria inferiore* (= CI), b. 233, fasc. 17 (*Acta Christofori de Çambonino de Rodanis*).

part of the mercantile goods owned by Marco Michiel, now the count of Rab, and that he had sold them to the Hungarian King Stephen (Stephen V, 1270–1272), during which process the latter had undertaken to effect speedy payment and had issued a royal letter confirming that he had taken delivery of the goods in the value of 1,200 marks in silver.<sup>24</sup> There is evidence of business dealings between Hungary and Venice by way of Rab (Arbe) also in the will of a young Venetian merchant called Jacobus della Torre, which was drawn up on the island in 1267. He had accommodation in the town and a warehouse full of assorted goods such as skins, wine, fabrics, wax and, what is most interesting, silk. Apart from Rab, where he lived, with his brother-in-law, the Venetian nobleman Peter Venerius (Venier), he also conducted business in Senj (Segna; Zengg).<sup>25</sup>

When the Frankopans, the Counts of Krk (Veglia), became lords of Senj (Segna; Zengg), this one was more reminiscent of a marketplace or an unloading area than of Dalmatian *civitates* such as Rab (Arbe). An urban settlement was situated nearby; it had a limited self-administration and was filled with foreigners living between Rab (Arbe) and Senj (Segna; Zengg). A mere one family from Senj (Segna; Zengg) that was part of commercial trends in their city of residence, along with their relatives from Rab (Arbe) and other foreigners in the city, can be seen in the available sources from Rab (Arbe) in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. They held the position of *iudex* on behalf of the Counts of Krk (Veglia), overlords of Senj (Segna; Zengg). In 1375 they were represented by “dominus Moysinus quontam iudicis Dominici”.<sup>26</sup>

The aforementioned connection of Rab (Arbe) and Senj (Segna; Zengg) as a stop on the route from Hungary to the Italian peninsula operated within a broader network and relations with other networks. Along with the islands of Krk (Veglia) and Osor (Cres and Lošinj), Rab (Arbe) formed a cluster of communities, where small cattle husbandry was featured prominently and supplied Venice, the metropolis.<sup>27</sup> The proximity of Zadar (Zara) had a significant impact on the movement of these networks. In 1292, the procedure before the Venetian Senate by which the Rab (Arbe) – Zadar (Zara) bor-

24 ASVe, Dono Dandolo, b. 1, 80.

25 ASVe, CI, b. 2, 17 (Acta notarii Grimerii Alexii).

26 The Monastery of St. Euphemia in Kampo (Rab), Acta notarii Nicolai quondam Zanmathei de Curtarodulo, vol. 1, 152v–154r.

27 On disputes related to small cattle see: Listine o odnošajih između južnog Slavenstva i Mletačke republike – Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, ed. by Šime Ljubić, Zagreb 1870, vol. 2, pp. 1, 5–8, 33, 188; Arhiv HAZU Zagreb, Acta mediaevalia, Notarijatski prijepisi listina rapskih [HAZU Zagreb Archive, Mediaeval Acts, Notary Transcriptions of Rab Documents], IVD 31/1.

der on the island of Pag was to be set was completed.<sup>28</sup> The Count of Rab (Arbe) Marco Michiel was the authorised representative of the Commune of Rab (Arbe) in Venice. His influential brother Tomaso stepped in to help in the defence of Rab's interests. The suit had come about at the request of Zadar (Zara), where they were not satisfied with the border defined by the arbitrator, Fredericus, Count of Krk (Veglia), in 1289.<sup>29</sup> Naturally, the arbitrator could not overlook the symbiosis of Rab (Arbe) and Senj (Segna; Zengg). An additional impetus for deciding in favour of Rab (Arbe) was the fact that Marco's mother was Auremplase, sister of Count Schinella of Krk (Veglia) and Fredericus' first cousin.<sup>30</sup> Marco's brother Tomaso did not take care of matters in Venetian high offices only on behalf of Rab, but also on behalf of this relatives, overlords of Krk (Veglia).<sup>31</sup> Obviously, in Rab (Arbe) there was a good reason for having elected the Michiel as their counts.

Placing Koper (Capodistria) on a regional communication map will be particularly exciting. The results will have a strong impact on the relations and course of commercial routes in the region of the late Middle Ages, particularly in the context of communications between the Italian peninsula and Central Eastern Europe. As early as in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Koper (Capodistria) demonstrated its character as a regulated urban environment on an island with developed bodies of civic authority and a convent. By way of an imperial deed of donation, Koper (Capodistria)'s territory grew in size in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, becoming the most important Istrian city of the late Middle Ages, which was reflected in its new name – Caput Histriae (Capodistria). From the late 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Koper (Capodistria) was the seat of the bishopric; this impressive diocesan complex was a result of an ambitious municipal project. Modelled after large northern Italian cities, Koper (Capodistria) operated as a commune and was led by an elected *podestata* in 1186. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as a hegemonic city, Koper (Capodistria) subjected smaller coastal neighbouring settlements to its rule and sent army to those rebelling against it. Its hegemonic tendencies prompted other Istrian coastal cities to turn to Venice for protection

28 CD, vol. 7, Zagreb 1909, p. 32.

29 CD, vol. 6, Zagreb 1908, pp. 624, 634–640; vol. 7, Zagreb 1909, pp. 89–94.

30 Cf. "Ego Quirina". Testamenti di Veneziane e forestiere (1200–1261), ed. by Fernanda Sorelli, Roma 2015, pp. 147–149: cit. ASVe, Procuratori di S. Marco, de Ultra, b. 191 and ASVe, Dono Dandolo, b. 1.

31 See: Vittorio Formentin, Prime manifestazioni del volgare a Venezia, Roma 2018 (Chartae Vulgares Antiquiores 3), pp. 85–87: cit. ASVe, CI, Notai, b. 2, fasc. 16.

and in 1279, following armed conflicts, Koper (Capodistria) had to submit to Venice as well.<sup>32</sup>

If we seek to outline the boundaries of Koper (Capodistria)'s urban fabric in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century in a very conservative manner (between the Dominican monastery on one side and the Franciscans on the other), the area measured approximately 10 ha, which is comparable to that of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was almost twice the size of Rab (Arbe) in that period. If the boundaries of the urban tissue are drawn along the edge of the island, which is the approximate size of Koper (Capodistria)'s urban area in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (21 ha), the only eastern Adriatic city whose size matches that of Koper (Capodistria) is Zadar (Zara). The city's urban character and its economic and social image, which researchers will be able to demonstrate after the reopening of the Koper (Capodistria) communal archives, will demonstrate true extent of its economic power and embeddedness into the late medieval regional communication map. The power of its elite and the elite's inclusion in regional communications is hinted at in the oldest preserved book of *vicedomini* from the 14<sup>th</sup> century: in 1386, six years after the severe and presumably devastating attack of the Genoese navy on Koper (Capodistria), a marriage contract was concluded in the city between members of two local noble families, the bride from the Vida family and the groom from the Tarsia family. The dowry was estimated at 5.673 libras, which amounted to a good 1.500 ducats.<sup>33</sup> Enough is said if it is pointed out that this dowry was comparable to that of nobility in Zadar (Zara) or Dubrovnik (Ragusa), nobility of two eastern Adriatic cities, which have been part of the world of "communications and cities" for a very long time.

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32 An overview of the history of Koper (Capodistria) in: Salvator Žitko, Lo sviluppo politico e amministrativo di Capodistria dalla tarda antichità alla fine del XIII secolo, in: Mitja Guštin (Ed.), Capodistria tra Roma e Venezia. Contributi per la storia di Capodistria, Ljubljana 1989, pp. 29–56. A brief survey of historiography about Koper (Capodistria) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in: Mlacović, Poznosrednjevska koprška elita (see note 13), pp. 166–186.

33 The Archives of the Commune of Koper (Capodistria) (temporarily in ASVe), Majer n.i, 5v–6v.