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THE NOBILITY OF THE EPISCOPAL TOWN OF STON (*NOBILITAS CIVITATIS EPISCOPALIS STAGNENSIS*)

STJEPAN ĆOSIĆ

ABSTRACT: The title of the »noble of the episcopal town of Ston«, with no prerogative, was conferred by the Dubrovnik Senate in the period from the mid-eighteenth century until the fall of the Republic in 1808. Most often it was granted to those Ragusan citizens and consuls who were to contribute to the well-being of the Republic with their activities abroad. Supplemented by the basic genealogical and biographical references to 24 members of the Ston nobility, the paper also addresses the question of why the Habsburg Monarchy did not recognize this title in the nineteenth century.

1. Introduction

In order to highlight the phenomenon and significance of the Ston nobility—apart from the autochthonous Ragusan nobility the singular noble title granted to its citizens by the Republic of Dubrovnik—it is necessary to provide a brief survey of the basic features of the Ragusan patriciate.¹

¹ A contemporary approach to the study of the Ragusan patriciate will be found in the following works: Josip Lučić, »Društveni odnosi u Dubrovačkoj Republici od 16. do 19. stoljeća.«, in: *Društveni razvoj u Hrvatskoj od 16. do 19. stoljeća*, ed. M. Gross. Zagreb : SN Liber, 1980: pp.

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As an elite group of families with the right to rule and govern the commune, in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the patriciate of Dubrovnik gradually separated from the rest of the society on the basis of wealth and reputation. Having originated as an urban aristocracy, the Ragusan patriciate acquired estates as late as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with the Republic's acquisition of the vast areas of Pelješac, Primorje, and Konavle. The end of the thirteenth and the start of the fourteenth century is generally held to be the period of the patriciate's consolidation, as formally recognized by the 1332 decision of the Great Council on the closure of the patrician rank (*serrata*). The ever-increasing power of the state influenced the process of legal definition of the class prerogatives, thanks to which the Ragusan aristocracy gained exclusive ruling power. The Ragusan patriciate was closed and determined by extremely rigid criteria of the genuine aristocratic origin. Legal equality of the patriciate, heirship through the lawful male lines, membership in the Great Council, and rotation on public duties were the basic determinants of the Ragusan patriciate, immune from any substantial change until the fall of the Republic.² The image of the nobility is reflected in the *Specchio*, a true mirror containing all the names of the male adult members of the Dubrovnik patriciate and the offices they held in the period between

143-174; Zdenko Zlatar, »The "Crisis" of the Patriciate in Early Seventeenth Century Dubrovnik: a Reappraisal.« *Balkanica* 6 (1975): pp. 111-130; Bariša Krekić, »O problemu koncentracije vlasti u Dubrovniku u XIV i XV vijeku.« *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 24-25 (1986): pp. 397-406; and particularly Zdenka Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode: dubrovačka vlastela između srednjovjekovlja i humanizma*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1999. For the eighteenth century, see Žarko Muljačić, »Istraga protiv Jakobinaca 1797. god. u Dubrovniku.« *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 2 (1953): pp. 235-252; Žarko Muljačić, »O strankama u starom Dubrovniku.« *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 6-7 (1959): pp. 25-40; Žarko Muljačić, »Salamankezi i Sorbonezi.« *Filologija* 2 (1959): pp. 161-173. About the distinctions between the social structures of the Dalmatian communes and Dubrovnik, see Tomislav Raukar, »Društvene strukture dalmatinske komune u srednjem vijeku.« *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis* 1-4 (1978): pp. 102-110; Bariša Krekić, »Developed Autonomy: the Patricians in Dubrovnik and Dalmatian Cities,« in: *The Urban Society of Eastern Europe in Premodern Times*, ed. Bariša Krekić. Los Angeles-Berkeley-London: University of California Press, 1987: pp. 185-215. On the social role and the processes within the nobilities of the wider European framework, see *The European Nobilities in the 17th and 18th Centuries, I- II*, ed. H.M. Scott. London and New York: Longman, 1995.

² The formal equality of the Ragusan patriciate was displayed in the title as such. In Croatian they were addressed as *vlastelin dubrovački* (nobleman of Dubrovnik), while the women bore the title of *vladika* (noblewoman). However, *conte* (count) or *nobile di Ragusa* (nobleman of Ragusa) was the ultimate title of nobility for external and official use. Viewed etymologically, the Croatian term *vlastela* (based on the Croatian word *vlast* 'power') indicates the main determinant of the Ragusan nobility—the holding of power.

1440 and the fall of the Republic (1808).

The Ragusan patriciate nourished a myth according to which they were among the most ancient European aristocracies. This explains the nobility's highly conceited and arrogant attitude towards all foreign titles of nobility which had been conferred upon a considerable number of Ragusan patricians and commoners. In the Republic those titles never had any social prestige, let alone political significance.³

The arms of the Ragusan patrician families—indispensable attributes of nobility and a symbolic expression of the origin or meaning of the family name—were also genuine. These armorial bearings were not granted by foreign sovereigns, but were created by their bearers—the Dubrovnik patricians themselves.

The patrician rank only once enrolled new members: in the period between 1666 and 1678, due to some families dying out, ten wealthy nonnoble families were coopted among nobility.⁴ The eighteenth century continued to witness a decline of the patrician families. Internal antagonism between the “older” and the “new” nobility persisted until the outburst in the latter half

³ For example, by the end of the sixteenth century the Mažibradić brothers, Nikola, Luka, and Jero, recognized by the Republic as descendants of the Kotromanić family, were granted a Spanish noble title which encouraged them to stay permanently in Spain. In the late sixteenth century, Admiral Petar Ohmučević, descendant of the old Bosnian noble family, worked on the recognition of his nobility in Dubrovnik. The Senate, however, refused to recognize it. As a worthy mariner, Petar was granted privileges by the Spanish Crown. Having no successors, his family line died out with him in Lisbon in 1599. Though commoners, the Alegrettis were awarded an Austrian title of nobility. Another family of nonnoble origin, Aleti, was granted an Italian nobility title “nobile di Camerino e di Ossimo”. The nobility title of the Austrian hereditary lands was conferred upon the families of Pelješac shipowners - Krstelj (1674), Orebić (1707), and Bizaro (1738), but they too could exercise their privileges and titles outside the Republic only. A line of the Sorgo family was granted Spanish peerage in 1679, while Austrian noble titles were conferred upon the families Gozze (1687), Pozza (1688), and Gondola (1777). A branch of the Bona family received a Polish noble title in 1754.

⁴ The fourteenth century witnessed as many as 78 patrician lineages and 32 subbranches. By 1766, however, this number had decreased to 29. The procedure of admittance into the patrician circle was complex, long-lasting, and based on consensus, which, due to frequent conflicts in the eighteenth century, became impossible to reach. Cf. Dragoljub Pavlović, »O krizi vlasteoskog staleža u Dubrovniku XVII veka.« Zbornik radova SANU, 17. Institut za proučavanje književnosti, bk. 2. Beograd: SANU, 1952: pp. 27-38; Irmgard Mahnken, *Dubrovački patricijat u XIV veku*. Beograd: SANU, 1960: pp. 75-83; Milan Rešetar, »Popis dubrovačkih vlasteoskih porodica.« *Glasnik učenog društva 'Sveti Vlaho' 1* (1929): pp. 1-11.

of the century.⁵

The process of stratification of the commoners was particularly prominent by the end of the fifteenth century. From then on, citizens (*cives, cittadini*) in the strict sense, implied well-off commoners, mainly merchants or shipowners, also referred to as *popolo grosso*. This group never managed to mold into a social aggregate, for economic and social mobility facilitated the movement of people up and down the social hierarchy. A significant social determinant of the citizenry featured in their adherence to two distinguished trade fraternities—the Fraternities of St. Anthony (established in 1432) and of St. Lazarus (established in 1521). Apart from the financial criteria, membership in these two fraternities was conditioned by an attitude of despise and aversion to every form of craft or manual work, which automatically restricted its membership to merchants, shipowners, and high officials of the state. On account of their wealth, the citizens created their own parallel elite, enjoying only a few elements of social prestige beyond the political sphere. The citizens imitated the patrician life-style, as remaining loyal to in-marriage. Membership in the Fraternities of Saints Anthony and Lazarus was widely sought after, for it guaranteed considerable social prestige to the whole family and kin. The citizens never succeeded in their intent to use their financial power as a means of attaining political rights. In order to reduce the political aspirations of the mounting citizen class, the patriciate stressed their exclusive status by introducing a number of privileges of either material or symbolic nature. In the eighteenth century the Senate took full control of the activity and admittance into the prestigious fraternities of St. Anthony and St. Lazarus. In this manner the ruling aristocratic government kept an eye on all of the most prominent citizen families. Occasionally, and as the circumstances demanded, the distinguished citizens were granted titles, honors, and privileges which could by no means jeopardize the leading position of the aristocracy. In addition to having a privileged position in the trade business, the members of these two fraternities could be chosen by the Senate for the important administrative offices of secretary, notary, and chancellor. In this way members of the citizen class were introduced to government affairs.

⁵ At the same time, the European nobility completed the process of consolidating the aristocracy—higher ranks of nobility which, thanks to their social status, wealth, political power, and diplomatic skill—differentiated from the less influential noble families. See *The European Nobilities in the 17th and 18th Centuries I*: pp. 21-24.

In the course of the maritime and economic conjuncture, which began in the mid-eighteenth century, some citizen families not only increased their wealth, but were also of great service to the Republic. From the second half of the eighteenth century on, a number of citizens (noblemen and foreigners as well) were granted a variety of military titles (mainly honorary), financial credits, or fraternity membership in tribute to their particular merits. The titles of captain (*capitano della milizia*) and sergeant of the militia (*alfiere*) were most commonly bestowed upon Ragusan consuls, shipmasters, and tradesmen who contributed to the welfare of the Republic. The title of deputy captain (*tenente capitano*) was awarded to foreigners who acted as Ragusan consuls, while the titles of militia colonel (*colonello*) and military tribune (*tribuni militum*) were reserved for the Ragusan patricians and diplomatic agents abroad. Military titles represented a certain kind of sinecure, for they came with a modest income.⁶

Simultaneously, the Senate also introduced a noble title: *Nobilis Civitatis Episcopalis Stagnensis* (Nobleman of the Episcopal Town of Ston).⁷ The “Nobility of Ston” was attributed with certain nominal noble qualities—a title of nobility and a charter. However, it is clear that the Republic had no intention of introducing a parallel peerage nor a somewhat more inferior noble rank half way between the patriciate and the citizenry.

2. The Nobility of the Episcopal Town of Ston

On the basis of the available evidence, in the period between 1758 and 1808 the Senate conferred the noble title of Ston upon 24 citizens of the Republic of Dubrovnik. All the Senate’s decrees are similar in form, brief and void of any information as to why the privileges were granted. Not a single

⁶ Ilija Mitić, »Počasne titule u Dubrovačkoj Republici tokom XVIII. i početkom XIX. stoljeća.« *Pomorski zbornik* 26 (1988): p. 524. According to the author, the Republic awarded a total of 80 military honorary titles: 64 captains, 4 colonels, 6 lieutenants, 2 sergeants, and 4 military tribunes.

⁷ To date, the nobility of Ston has been partially discussed in two shorter articles: Antun Vučetić, »Novosti iz dubrovačke historije: Stonsko plemstvo.« *Srd* 6 (1907): pp. 283-284; Milan Rešetar, »Antunini i Ladzarini.« *Dubrovački list* 37 (1925): pp. 1-2. A more comprehensive treatment of the subject can be found in I. Mitić, »Počasne titule... «: pp. 521-533. These studies single out but a few noblemen of Ston and fail to provide an in-depth consideration of the meaning of the title as such. In their marginal references to the nobility of Ston, certain authors are prone to fallacious explanations, relating the title to the pressure the citizen class exerted on aristocracy. See, for example, Vuk Vinaver, *Dubrovnik i Turska u XVIII. veku*. Beograd: SANU, 1960: p. 140.

decision of either of the Republic's councils has been discovered so far which could throw more light on the possible criteria concerning the title nominations and prerogatives of the Ston nobility. In order to learn more about the nature and characteristics of the title itself, as well as the motives behind it, it is necessary to examine the genealogies and life stories of the Ston noblemen.

1. Mato Vodopić, son of Ivan, was born in Stupa, Dubrovačko primorje in the early 1700s.⁸ According to the evidence, he was the first citizen of Dubrovnik to receive this title of nobility. The privileges were granted to him by the Senate on 25 February 1758, the charter being issued on 23 December of the same year. This was at the same time the longest drawn-out decision of the Senate regarding the granting of the Ston title, leading us to believe that it was hereditary.⁹ The Vodopić family branched out into two lines.¹⁰ Mato Vodopić comes from the original Vodopić branch of Primorje. As a young man he began his military career in Russia, and later served as an officer of the Spanish troops in Italy for a number of years. He fought a hero's battle at Velletri, as well as in the siege of Naples. Subsequently, he turned to engineering, realizing successful military and civic projects in Spain. He received great credit for constructing the Royal Arsenal, the hospital, and the fortifications in Cartagena and was consequently highly respected at the Spanish court.¹¹ He chose Cartagena for his permanent residence and advanced

⁸ Throughout this study, unless otherwise indicated, the dates of death and birth, along with other genealogical references, have been cited according to the database of the Dubrovnik genealogies filed at the Institute for Historical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Dubrovnik. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Nenad Vekarić, who compiled and arranged the data upon which this study is based.

⁹ *Fides et Attestata* (hereafter cited as : *FA*), ser. 86, vol. 3, f. 208v, State Archives of Dubrovnik (hereafter cited as *SAD*); *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (hereafter cited as: *Cons. Rog.*), ser. 3, vol. 170, ff. 84v-85 (*SAD*).

¹⁰ On the origin and history of the Vodopić family, see Nenad Vekarić, »Porijeklo dubrovačkog biskupa Mata Vodopića (Rodovi Vodopić i Buconić iz Stupe).« in: *Zbornik o biskupu Matu Vodopiću* (in print); *Matricola della confraternità di S. Lazzaro* (hereafter cited as: *Matricola S. Lazzaro*), ser. 22.1, vol. 15, f. 53v; *Matricola della confraternità di S. Antonio* (hereafter cited as: *Matricola S. Antonio*), ser. 22.1, vol. 25, f. 97; Stjepan Čosić, »Administrativna struktura i plaće službenika Dubrovačke Republike (1700.-1808.).« *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti u Zadru* 38 (1996): pp. 138-149. Apart from Mato Vodopić, son of Ivan, his relative from the City branch Mato Vodopić (1722-1790), son of Josip, was also a distinguished consular representative of the Republic in Patras (1756), Nauplia (1761), and Khania (1767). See Vinko Ivančević, »Diplomatsko-konzularna predstavnštva Dubrovačke Republike.« *Pomorski zbornik* 3 (1965): pp. 854, 860, 862.

¹¹ Francesco Maria Appendini, *Notizie storico-critiche sulle antichità, storia e letteratura de' Ragusei*, II. Dubrovnik: Martecchini, 1803: p. 195.

socially by marrying Maria Josepha Darban, widow of Ignacio Dantovid, general of the Royal Fleet.¹² His activities on behalf of the Republic of Dubrovnik intensified. Although his diplomatic status was not formally established, he became the Republic's most confident agent in the Spanish lands. Highly esteemed by the Senate, Vodopić played an important role in nominating new consuls to Spanish ports, his counsel also being required on a number of diplomatic issues.¹³ That is in fact why he was granted the noble title of Ston, for the charter proved essential in establishing relations in the conservative diplomatic and political circles of Spain. He was particularly active in the early 1780s, when in 1781 he was authorized to inquire about the renewal of the privileges which had once been granted to the Republic by the Spanish crown.¹⁴ Acting in accordance with Vodopić's recommendation, the Senate awarded the office of consul in Barcelona to Ignacio Villavecchia, who was to remain at that post well after the fall of the Republic, protecting the interests of Dubrovnik's seamen. There is no evidence about Vodopić's return to Dubrovnik. He died in Cartagena in 1787, most likely without any heirs.¹⁵

2. Baldo Marić was born in Broce, Pelješac, in 1726. The charter was granted to him on 27 October 1763 and is the only one of its kind containing nothing but a short statement which certifies that Baldo Marić bears the title.¹⁶ Therefore, it can be assumed that Marić, or possibly his father, had been granted the title much earlier. Apart from the fact that he was a shipmaster, which could lead us to believe that he may have taken part in diplomatic activities, his life, place of death, and contributions to the Republic remain veiled in obscurity.¹⁷

¹² Susana Revuelta Alonso, »Ignacio Villavecchia de Ferrari posljednji dubrovački konzul u Barceloni.« *Zbornik Diplomatske akademije* 3 (1998): p. 137.

¹³ In 1765 the Senate asked Vodopić to intervene with the French through the Spanish Court in the conflict with the French consul to Dubrovnik, Prevost. *Lettere di Ponente*, ser. 27/6, vol. 80, ff. 63 and 99 (SAD).

¹⁴ *Lettere di Ponente*, vol. 111, f. 11. The Republic worked on gaining privileges in the Spanish ports in America, but acting in accordance with Vodopić's advice, the Senate postponed its requests due to the raging war between Spain and England.

¹⁵ See Ilija Mitić, *Konzulati i konzularna služba starog Dubrovnika*. Dubrovnik: JAZU, 1973: pp. 91, 98-99.

¹⁶ *FA*, vol. 4, ff. 21v-22.

¹⁷ Josip Luetić, *O pomorstvu Dubrovačke Republike u XVIII. stoljeću*. Dubrovnik-Zagreb: JAZU, 1959: p. 80.

3. Marija, daughter of Ivan Niketić, was born in Dubrovnik in 1738. She is the only woman among the holders of the Ston nobility title. She was issued the charter on 12 November 1774 for the privileges granted to her father, Ivan Niketić (1695-1741), the last male descendant of the Niketić family. Although my search for a document which could confirm his title gave no result, it could be supposed that Niketić had been conferred the Ston title before Mato Vodopić, for Niketić lived only until 1741.¹⁸ The Niketić family draws its origins from Risan in the Bay of Kotor. Around 1650 Vice Niketić migrated to Dubrovnik, where he became an established merchant. His heirs continued with the family business. In 1714 Ivan Niketić became a member of the St. Lazarus fraternity, and in 1726 he was admitted into the fraternity of St. Anthony together with his brother Marin.¹⁹ The family's marriage strategy speaks in favor of its prominence. In 1723 Ivan married Maria, daughter of Giovanni Regitano, commander of the Ragusan military forces. From the mid-sixteenth century on, this post was reserved for the representatives of the Kingdom of Naples. Regitano succeeded his father at the post in 1700 and acted successfully on behalf of the Kingdom of Naples (from 1734 the Kingdom of Two Sicilies). Judging by the results, his diplomatic activity was well coordinated with the goals and political interests of the Republic. Namely, the Senate acted on the renewal of his mandate, additionally presenting him with the title of the governor of the arms (*governatore delle armi*), the post at which he remained until his death in 1750.²⁰ It is in this family network that one should seek the merits behind Niketić's noble title. The last descendant of the Niketić lineage, Ivan's daughter Marija, was first married to the chancellor Ivan Flori. After her husband's death, she remarried Antun Pasquali from the Island of Brač.²¹

¹⁸ *FA*, vol. 4, f. 133rv.

¹⁹ *Matricola S. Lazzaro*, f. 53; *Matricola S. Antonio*, f. 99; manuscript genealogy registered under the title *Genealogija dubrovačkih građanskih obitelji* (hereafter cited as: *Katić's genealogy*), Legacy Ernest Katić, RO 170, SAD.

²⁰ Regitano was succeeded by his son, Giovanni Battista Regitano. Having committed murder, the young Regitano fled from the Republic to the Ottoman territory where he triggered a conflict between the Republic and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. On the duties of the governor of arms and the Regitano family, see: Ilija Mitić, »Nadzornik oružanih snaga i guverner oružja XVII-XIX stoljeća u Dubrovačkoj Republici.« *Anali Historijskog instituta JAZU u Dubrovniku* 12 (1970): pp. 277-294.

²¹ *Diversa Notariae*, ser. 26, vol. 144, f. 91 (SAD).

4. Josip Vodopić was born in Dubrovnik in 1755. He is the second holder of the Ston nobility title from this family. He was the son of a Ragusan consul to Morea, Mato Vodopić, son of Josip, and a remote kin to Mato, son of Ivan, mentioned earlier in this text.²² Josip was granted the title on 21 April 1776 when he was appointed assistant to the Treasury.²³ He became member of the St. Lazarus fraternity as early as 1773. Apart from the fact that he was a shipmaster for a certain period of time, there is no available evidence of his diplomatic activity. From 1781 on he worked in the State department of measures, in addition to the service at the magistrate's in the actions against wine smuggling. He remained at that post until the fall of the Republic.²⁴ Vodopić died in Dubrovnik in 1825.

5. Pasko Pugliesi was born in Zaton in 1723, the place of his family's origin. He was granted the title on 14 June 1776²⁵ and enrolled in the St. Lazarus fraternity in 1767.²⁶ His wife being the sole heir to Antun Ivelja Ohmučević, Pugliesi inherited his entire estate. It is from then on that the dual surname form Pugliesi-Ohmučević was employed.²⁷ Pugliesi was among the distinguished Dubrovnik shipmasters of the mid-eighteenth century, a period marked by the rise of Ragusan shipping and maritime commerce. In 1759 his ship, together with its cargo and Genoese passengers, was seized by Algerian pirates.²⁸ The Senate reacted by undertaking a series of diplomatic actions. Pugliesi himself intervened with the Ragusan consul to Cadiz and the English representative in Algeria in order to restore his ship and cargo. A year later, the Porte issued a special firman according to which the vessel and the cargo were to be restored to its owner, and the passengers set free. According to Consul Doder, this action represented a precedent and a great success which facilitated further development of the Ragusan maritime trade.²⁹ It is

²² *Katić's genealogy*, ff. 91-92v.

²³ *FA*, vol. 4, f. 149; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 185, f. 108.

²⁴ S. Ćosić, »Administrativna struktura«: p. 146.

²⁵ *FA*, vol. 4, ff. 150v-151; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 185, f. 143v.

²⁶ *Matricola S. Lazzaro*, f. 54.

²⁷ Antun Golušić, *Rodovi Slanskog primorja*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1990: p. 61.

²⁸ In its letter of 30 July 1759, the Senate informed Pugliesi, who was in Venice at the time, of its diplomatic mission. Trojan Lalić, Dubrovnik's consul to Venice, was also to receive instructions on the assignment. *Lettere di Ponente*, vol. 71, ff. 1-3.

²⁹ I. Mitić, *Konzulati i konzularna služba*: p. 94.

plausible that Pugliesi gained considerable diplomatic points in this episode, winning himself a reputation as a skilled diplomat, the services of whom were often required by the Senate in resolving similar problems.³⁰

6. Josip Bratošević de Leoni was born in Dubrovnik in 1735. He was the son of Božo Bratošević of Podimoć, Dubrovačko primorje. His mother, whose surname he also used, was of the distinguished family Leoni, member of the fraternity of St. Anthony. He was granted the title on 30 April 1777.³¹ His career as a civil engineer led him to Zagreb, where in 1777 he applied to the Senate to confer upon him the charter of the Ston nobility, so as to improve his employment prospects and social position. The Senate met his application and sent him a *patente di nobiltà*.³² In the 1760s, trade relations between Dubrovnik and Zagreb, where there was a small colony of Ragusan businessmen, had intensified to such a degree that in 1765 the Senate took steps to open a consulate there. The Republic's petition was denied by the Habsburg court, and the candidate for the consular post, Count Ivan Patačić, was not nominated.³³ Following Count Patačić's death in 1773, the Senate must have been counting on Bratošević's eventual help regarding the protection of its interests.

7. Andrija Frano Ivan Altesti was born in Dubrovnik to a distinguished citizen family in 1766. He was granted the title on 29 August 1781.³⁴ His father, Ivan Ksaver Altesti (1727-1816),³⁵ was a renowned translator, a collector, a copyist of literary works in Croatian, and a long-standing government servant. In 1765 Ivan Ksaver was admitted into the St. Lazarus fraternity, and by the end of his career in 1793, he qualified for membership in the St. Anthony fraternity as well.³⁶ Andrija Altesti continued his schooling in Italy, which could account for his fairly early reception of the noble title. No

³⁰ According to the Senate's instructions, Pugliesi intervened in the case of the Algerian piracy in 1763. *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 175, f. 16v.

³¹ *FA*, vol. 4, f. 160v; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 186, f. 79v.

³² Ilija Mitić, »Prilog proučavanju veza Dubrovačke Republike i Trsta tokom XVIII. i početkom XIX. stoljeća.« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti Istraživačkog centra JAZU u Dubrovniku* 21 (1983): p. 110, note 21.

³³ Bogdan Krizman, »Pokušaj osnivanja dubrovačkog konzulata u Zagrebu.« *Hrvatsko kolo* 4 (1950): pp. 678-694.

³⁴ *FA*, vol. 4, f. 219v; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 189, f. 211.

³⁵ F. M. Appendini, *Notizie storico-critiche*: p. 301.

³⁶ *Matricola S. Lazzaro*, f. 54; *Matricola S. Antonio*, f. 99.

doubt, his father's merits were also taken into consideration. Following a stay in Constantinople, Altesti took a post with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the service in which his noble title proved most welcome. There he campaigned on behalf of the Republic and devoted himself to writing political essays and programs. He was in regular touch with his first tutor, Đuro Ferić, and Marko Bruerević, his friend, who dedicated a poem to Altesti during his brief visit to the City in 1795. Upon his return to Russia, he fell into disfavor with the Russian Emperor Paul I (1796-1801) and spent three years in Siberian exile. Being pardoned by Alexander I, he left Russia and spent the rest of his life travelling across Europe, settling briefly in Trieste, and finally in San Giorgio, Furlany, where he died in 1850.³⁷

8/9. The brothers Ivan Karlo (*1746) and Vlaho (1754-1834) Maškarić were presented with a joint charter which was to certify that the Senate granted the title to them on 13 March 1788.³⁸ Their grandfather had migrated to the City of Dubrovnik from Smokovljani, Dubrovačko primorje, while their mother was a member of the prominent Vodopić family. Vlaho was a shipmaster, as may well be supposed of his brother too. Gathering from the request made by Josip and Filip Maškarić—most likely Vlaho's sons—to the Austrian Heraldic Committee in 1821, their father was in the Austrian Navy from 1778, whereas from 1792 he lectured in mathematics and navigation in Trieste.³⁹ Vlaho Maškarić was among the first officers and commanders of the growing Austrian Navy during the reign of Joseph II. Besides experienced and well-trained British and Dutch commanders, the Austrian Navy also recruited numerous Croats. Vlaho Maškarić was in charge of the navigation safety regulations during the first Austrian rule in Dalmatia (1797-1805) and because he contributed to the welfare of the Republic at that post, the Republic presented him with the noble title.⁴⁰

10. Nikola Ban was born in Dubrovnik in 1765. The title of nobility was conferred upon him on 13 July 1788.⁴¹ This particular Ban (Bani) family

³⁷ Vinko Foretić, »Altesti, Andro.« *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, I. Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod 'Miroslav Krleža', 1983: p. 94, and the bibliographical references cited herein.

³⁸ *FA*, vol. 6, f. 5.

³⁹ *Heraldički spisi Vlade*, 1821, VIII/7, no. 1109, State Archives of Zadar (hereafter cited as: SAZ).

⁴⁰ »Un raguseo ufficiale delle due prime navi erariali dell'Austria.« *L'Epidauritano lunario Raguseo per l'anno 1910* (1909): pp. 73-75.

⁴¹ *FA*, vol. 6, f. 37; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 196, f. 22.

draws its roots from Popovo polje in Herzegovina. Nikola's father, Antun Ban, acquired membership of St. Lazarus fraternity in 1765. For his merits during his consular service in Izmir from 1778 to 1784, he was accepted to the fraternity of St. Anthony.⁴² Nikola's uncle, who shared his name, was the Republic's agent in Barletta.⁴³ I have found no data concerning Nikola's life or the place of his death. One may suppose that he too lived abroad, deserving the privileges on account of his family background.

11. Petar Antun Bettera was born in Dubrovnik in 1724. The charter of his noble title was issued on 4 June 1789.⁴⁴ The Bettera family comes from Bergamo, Italy; in 1610 Pietro Bettera settled in Dubrovnik. In the course of the eighteenth century, the Bettera family positioned itself among the most prominent families of the Fraternity of St. Anthony. Its members were well-established merchants, clergymen, and public servants. Marija Bettera-Dimitri, Petar's aunt, was a renowned writer, as was her father, Petar's grandfather Baro Bettera.⁴⁵ Dominik and Ruđer, Baro's sons and able merchants, qualified for membership in the St. Anthony fraternity in 1726.⁴⁶ Ruđer's son and nobleman of Ston, Petar Bettera, was assigned to consular service in Izmir between 1789 and 1794. He died in Dubrovnik in 1806.

12. Sebastijan Marini was born in Dubrovnik in 1747. His charter was issued on 19 August 1789.⁴⁷ This Marini family originates from Gruž. Sebastijan (Savin) Marini was admitted to the St. Lazarus fraternity together with his brother Stjepan and father Bartul in the year 1765. In 1790 he was appointed consul to Cartagena.⁴⁸ Marini remained in public service over a long period. He died in Dubrovnik in 1820.

13. Stjepan Rajčević was born in Dubrovnik on 30 June 1739. The noble title was conferred upon him on 22 July 1790.⁴⁹ The Rajčević family comes from Strmica (Popovo) in Herzegovina, and Stjepan's grandfather was the

⁴² V. Ivančević, »Diplomatsko-konzularna predstavništva«: p. 852; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 191, f. 86.

⁴³ *Lettere di Ponente*, vol. 101, ff. 103, 104, 106.

⁴⁴ *FA*, vol. 6, f. 99; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 196, f. 121.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ *Katić's genealogy*, ff. 38-39v.

⁴⁷ *FA*, vol. 6, f. 132; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 196, f. 193v.

⁴⁸ V. Ivančević, »Diplomatsko-konzularna predstavništva«: p. 850.

⁴⁹ *FA*, vol. 7, f. 46; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 197, f. 119.

one to migrate first to Dubrovnik. Stjepan's mother was of the Marini family. Rajčević left Dubrovnik very young to pursue studies in law and medicine in Italy.⁵⁰ He was a typical erudite of the eighteenth century, committed not only to his professional diplomatic and trade career, but to writing as well. He kept in regular contact with his hometown through his friends Đuro Ferić and Tomo Bassegli. In pursuit of mercantile business, he travelled to Moldavia and Walachia, where he joined the service of Prince Alexandru Ipsilanti. In 1781 he was appointed the first Austrian agent in Moldavia, with a seat in Bucharest. He continued his service throughout Romania, also sending for the shipbuilder Ivan Ivelja Ohmučević of Dubrovnik, who constructed a river fleet for Ipsilanti.⁵¹ It was then that Rajčević was granted the noble title of Ston, which, according to the current practice, facilitated his advancement in diplomatic career. With the title of imperial counsellor, he was appointed Austrian consul to Tuscany in 1805, with a seat in Livorno, which nested a sizeable Ragusan colony.⁵² There is also evidence of his temporary residence in Vienna, where he most probably died some time after 1813. Particular attention should be drawn to the only known printed work *Osservazioni storiche naturali e politiche intorno la Valachia e Moldavia* (Napoli, 1788) that pioneered Romanian and Moldavian historical and cultural scholarship. Rajčević's work *Lettere intorno all'origine, le emigrazioni, le dottrine e la religione dei popoli Slavi* (1795-1800) was dedicated to Đuro Ferić, together with his allegoric biography *Sogno di Filopatris*, both of which are still in manuscript. Through his study and popularization of Slavic national and folk heritage, Rajčević contributed to the early Revival movement in the same way as Ferić, whom Rajčević himself introduced to Johannes Müller.⁵³

14. Lujo Spagnoletti was born in 1725 to an old Ston family, first mentioned in the sixteenth century. Lujo Spagnoletti, a Franciscan, was the last descendant of the Spagnoletti family and the only Ston-born individual granted

⁵⁰ It is possible that Rajčević first joined the diplomatic service, for in 1763 a certain Stjepan Rajčević was appointed consul to Khania. See V. Ivančević, »Diplomatsko-konzularna predstavnštva«: p. 854.

⁵¹ In addition to a short note by F. M. Appendini (*Notizie storico-critiche*: p. 188), Frano Čale provides exhaustive information on Rajčević, »O Stjepanu Rajčeviću Dubrovčaninu.« *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta* 3 (1955): pp. 193-198.

⁵² Vinko Ivančević, *Luka Livorno i dubrovački brodovi (1760-1808)*. Građa za pomorsku povijest Dubrovnika, bk. 4. Dubrovnik, 1968: p. 94.

⁵³ F. Čale, »O Stjepanu Rajčeviću«: pp. 194-195.

with the noble title of Ston. It was conferred upon him by the Senate on 23 February 1792, on the same day that he was installed as bishop of Dubrovnik.⁵⁴ He died in Dubrovnik in 1799.

15. Šimun Grgić was born in Dubrovnik in 1781, the last offspring of a wealthy family that had its roots in Gabela, the Neretva River Delta.⁵⁵ He was granted the title on 11 October 1794.⁵⁶ Šimun's father, captain Nikola, became a member of the St. Lazarus fraternity in 1765, together with his brother Marko, also a captain, and a long-running consul to Modon, Nauplia, and Patras. No other record exists on Šimun's life except that he died in the City in 1802, and considering he was very young when granted the title, there is ground to believe that his family's merits stand behind the awarded privileges.

16. Jakov Kristić, son of Jakov, was born in Dubrovnik in 1739. He was granted the noble title on 13 October 1794.⁵⁷ In the eighteenth century, the Kristić family enjoyed the status of a prominent seafaring family of Cavtat with a long tradition of shipmasters, and thus it comes as no surprise that two of their members were presented with the noble title of Ston. As the evidence on Jakov's life is very scarce, we can assume that the noble title was conferred upon him for his diplomatic missions abroad.

17. Baldo Lupi was born in Karmen, on the Pelješac Peninsula, in 1740, though his family came from Dubrovnik. The Senate presented him with the title on 26 August 1794.⁵⁸ There is no evidence on his life nor on his credits to the Republic.

18. Jakov Kristić, son of Petar, was born in Dubrovnik in 1776, a descendant of a Cavtat family. He was granted the title on 12 September 1796, at the same time when he became member of the St. Lazarus fraternity.⁵⁹ His father, Captain Petar Kristić (1740-1791), was a Ragusan consul to Thessaloniki

⁵⁴ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 199, f. 38; Nenad Vekarić, *Pelješki rodovi*, II. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1996: p. 295.

⁵⁵ *Katić's genealogy*, ff. 106-108. For further details on the Grgić family, see Marijan Sivrić, »Obitelj Grgić iz Gabele u Dubrovniku.« *Napredak - hrvatski narodni godišnjak* 1996 (1995): pp. 245-258.

⁵⁶ *FA*, vol. 8, f. 28; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 201, f. 112v.

⁵⁷ *FA*, vol. 8, f. 32; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 201, f. 139.

⁵⁸ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 201, f. 115.

⁵⁹ *FA*, vol. 9, f. 60; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 203, ff. 130v-131.

and played an important role in the conflict with the Tripolitanian Turks in 1786, with whom he managed to establish good relations. In 1791 Jakov succeeded his father at the consular post in Thessaloniki and engaged in negotiations with the Tripolitanian pirates on several occasions, of which he sent detailed reports to the Senate. His 1796 negotiations with Jusuf-pasha Karamanli were a success, and his noble title was most likely received in recognition of his endeavors.⁶⁰ In 1799 Kristić was appointed Dubrovnik consul to Marseille and in 1802 he was promoted general commissioner of commercial affairs. In addition, the Republic named him captain of militia. Kristić sent regular reports on political and commercial affairs in France and the Mediterranean until the last days of the Republic.⁶¹

19. Vido Marija Bettera was born in Dubrovnik in 1771. He was the son of Baro, the poet, and a nephew of the Ston nobleman Petar Bettera. Vido's mother was of the Vodopić family, whose surname Vido occasionally used. He received his title on 13 April 1798.⁶² Between 1793 and 1797 he was an officer in the Russian Army, and in 1801 he engaged in the mercantile business in Sevastopol (*Chersonesus*). The turn of the century was particularly important for Ragusan maritime commerce and its emergence on the Black Sea market, and it was then that Bettera was awarded his noble title. From 1803 on, he worked for a Schuller banking firm in Vienna, in which the Republic had its capital deposited. In the years of crisis involving the occupation of the Republic, he resumed his service in the Russian military. Bettera dedicated his last years to political writings and the struggle for the re-establishment of the Republic. For his counter-Austrian activity in London, he was denounced as one of the most dangerous Dubrovnik republicans and was eventually arrested in Amsterdam in 1824. Although never convicted, this political dreamer spent the rest of his life in Austrian imprisonment in Mukacheve, Ukraine, where he died in 1841.⁶³

⁶⁰ Vesna Miović-Perić, »Odnosi Dubrovnika i Tripolitanskog namjesništva u XVIII. stoljeću (II. dio).« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 32 (1994): pp. 83-85.

⁶¹ I. Mitić, *Konzulati i konzularna služba*: p. 88.

⁶² *FA*, vol. 10, f. 26.

⁶³ Bettera entitled one of his political pamphlets, *Memoires sur une époque de ma vie ou appel aux hommes d'honneur et en particulier à ceux de l'Empire Vienne par Vite Marie de Bettera Wodopich, gentilhomme ragusain*. For information on the works of Vido Bettera, including bibliography, see Miljenko Foretić, »Bettera, Vito Marija.« *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, I: pp. 731-732.

20. Baro Bettera was born in Dubrovnik in 1773. He followed the example of his elder brother and joined the Russian service. He was awarded the title on 18 June 1798. According to some records, he died insane in Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴

21. Kristo Lupi was born in Dubrovnik in 1773. He was most likely an offspring of the Lupi family of Slano, and is therefore not related to the earlier cited Lupi.⁶⁵ The title was conferred upon him on 26 March 1805 and a charter provided on 2 April of that same year.⁶⁶ He was a shipmaster, and sailed aboard his brigantine "Il Nettuno" between the ports of Livorno, Genoa, and farther off to America. On his voyage back from America to Livorno in 1798, his vessel was seized by the Algerians, but was soon recovered.⁶⁷ His negotiations with the Moroccans, who had attacked Ragusan trade ships, ended favorably and most likely earned him the noble title. Livorno being a frequent stop of his, the Senate commissioned him to purchase gifts and negotiate with the Moroccan and Algerian pirates, for shortly prior to the fall of the Republic the north-African basin became an important destination of the Ragusan commercial fleet. In 1806 Lupi was instructed to travel to Algeria, following the dethronement of the bey, and to reassure them of Ragusa's positions through gifts and negotiations. The mission was never to take place, because, in the meantime, the French troops marched into Dubrovnik, and in September 1806 the Senate instructed Lupi to sell the already purchased gifts and return home.⁶⁸

22. Božo Pezer was born in Dubrovnik in 1753. The noble title was granted to him on 4 November 1807.⁶⁹ The Pezer family originates from Čepikuće in Dubrovačko primorje. Božo Pezer amassed his wealth by trading with Trieste, which, by the end of the eighteenth century, had grown into a leading Adriatic port. Together with his son Lujo, in 1804 Božo founded the business company *Ditta Natale Pezzer Figlio e Comp.* in Trieste, which protected the commercial interests of the Ragusans and enjoyed a privileged status

⁶⁴ *FA*, vol. 10, f. 37; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 205, f. 77; Katić's genealogy.

⁶⁵ A. Golušić, *Rodovi Slanskog primorja*: pp. 40-41.

⁶⁶ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 210, f. 28; *Diplomata et acta saec. XIX*, ser. 76, vol. 10, no. 592/80 (SAD).

⁶⁷ V. Ivančević, *Luka Livorno*: pp. 46, 65, 80.

⁶⁸ V. Ivančević, »Diplomatsko-konzularna predstavništva«: p. 103; I. Mitić, *Konzulati i konzularna služba*: p. 115.

⁶⁹ *Diplomata et acta saec. XIX*, vol. 10, no. 592/198.

among other companies in that port (*Casa nazionale Ragusea*). Thanks to his abilities, in 1807 Lujo was appointed consul to Trieste and the broader region of Istria, while his father was granted the noble title of Ston. A prominent tradesman, Lujo acted on behalf of the Ragusan seafarers and merchants in Trieste well after the fall of the Republic. Miho, Božo's elder son, was also a merchant and a consul of the Republic to Scala Nuova near Izmir.⁷⁰ It can be assumed that all the members of this family remained in Trieste, as no evidence of their stay or death can be traced in Dubrovnik.

23/24. Stjepan Risnić and Antun Pavlović, of whom no records are known, were the last to receive the noble title of Ston—shortly prior to the abolishment of the Republic, on 14 and 15 January 1808.⁷¹ They must have been credited for their efforts taken to save the Republic's independence.

3. *The Character and Elements of the Ston Nobility*

Whether to grant the noble title of Ston was a decision to be made by the Senate, while the charter was confirmed by the rector and the Minor Council of the Republic. Due to the sparsity of the sources, the qualifications and factors that determined the selection of the candidates, as well as the social role and the prerogatives of the Ston nobility can only be established indirectly from the biographical data of the title bearer.

Their life-stories lead us to conclude that the granting of the title was connected with the candidate's diplomatic and political achievements, as proven by some of the title holders who were particularly active and successful in these activities (Vodopić, Pugliesi, Rajčević, Kristić). In their cases, the noble title represented a specific award. Moreover, it was a means which facilitated the performance of their diplomatic missions, for according to the diplomatic practices of the eighteenth century, a title of nobility was the key to many doors and a way to faster political and social affirmation. Apart from being a quality of social prestige, it was regarded as a licence, almost a constituent part of the diplomat's accreditation. Ragusan consuls, shipmasters, and merchants abroad were often in the position to perform diplomatic and political duties on behalf of the Republic, while a number of Ragusans in the

⁷⁰ I. Mitić, »Prilog proučavanju veza Dubrovačke Republike i Trsta«: pp. 112-113; I. Mitić, *Konzulati i konzularna služba*: p. 189; V. Ivančević, *Luka Livorno*: p. 67.

⁷¹ *Diplomata et acta saec. XIX*, vol. 10, no. 203 and 204.

foreign service acted as informal advocates of the Republic's interests.⁷² The noble title of Ston was generally presented in such cases, that is, to those Ragusans who lived and worked out of the Republic and who had contributed to its political and economic interests from abroad. Almost all the noblemen of Ston lived away from the Republic for a longer period of time, the only exceptions being Niketić, Grgić, and Bishop Spagnoletti. Their credit was most likely based on their position or the influential social background of their families.⁷³ Though the majority of the Ston noblemen came from the families who were members of the fraternities of St. Lazarus and St. Anthony, there is every ground to believe that this fact was not the guiding criterion in qualifying for the title (Marić's case, and that of Bratošević, Maškarić, and Rajčević). Family background was not meritory, yet it was decisive when the title was conferred upon very young Ragusans, as proven in the cases of Altesti and Grgić.

The title of the Ston nobility was completely insignificant in Dubrovnik's internal life. Its practical value could only be exhibited outside Ragusan social circles, and that is why it was granted to prominent Ragusans living abroad. However, we can also speak of the honorary character of the Ston nobility title. Since it had the function of an award similar to that of fraternity membership, the Senate never conferred the title upon foreigners.

There is no doubt that this nobility title was a helpful means of climbing up the social ladder outside the Republic. It is clear that the Republic granted it only to a well-selected few, impeccably loyal citizens.⁷⁴ The absence of a special decision of the Council, giving a detailed description of the terms of

⁷² One of Dubrovnik's most successful citizens in the home diplomatic service was the renowned Josip Ruđer Bošković. The Republic would most certainly have conferred the Ston title on him if he had not already been granted a more illustrious noble title by the Italian Republic of Lucca. See Ivica Martinović, »Ljetopis života i djela Rudera Boškovića.« *Dubrovački horizonti* 35 (1995): pp. 41-48.

⁷³ Niketić was a close relative of the representative of Naples to Dubrovnik, whereas Grgić was a heir of a wealthy family of consuls and shipmasters. Ordained in Rome, Bishop Spagnoletti was widely respected in ecclesiastical circles and the Curia. See N. Subotić and J. Velnić, »Franjevci s poluotoka Pelješca.« *Spomenica Gospe od andela 1470.-1970.* Omiš, 1970: p. 374.

⁷⁴ Proof of this can be found in the limited number of the titles granted, and the case of Antun Pušić of Cavtat (1760-1838). It is plausible that this Portuguese officer obtained a forged charter of the Ston nobility with the intent to rise up in the military hierarchy, was eventually awarded a nobility title of Portugal in 1793, and crowned his career by becoming an admiral and governor of the Cape Verde Islands. See Ivan Pederin, »Antun Pušić, guverner Zelenortskih otoka, admiral i znanstvenik na početku prošlog stoljeća.« *Adriatica maritima* 3 (1979): pp. 169-179.

the Ston noble charter leads us to the conclusion that such a description was never meant to be. The Ragusan patriciate had no intention of taking a risk by providing a precise definition of a novel noble group, springing from the citizen class. There was an ever-present danger of the loyalty to the regime turning into disloyalty overnight. With this in mind, the traditionally careful Senate never defined the privileges of the Ston nobility for external use. The charter did not even contain a grant of the arms, as was the case with the contemporary Austrian noble titles awarded to members of the middle class for special services to the state. The title of Ston was also chosen with a reason. Being the second largest town in the Republic and a see of bishop, Ston proved suitable for a title, underlying both the difference from and subordination to the autochthonous nobility of Dubrovnik.

As no armorial bearings accompanied the title, a number of the Ston nobles employed their family insignia for the purpose. Similar insignia were displayed on the gravestones of numerous citizen families as early as in the fifteenth century.⁷⁵ From a strictly heraldic view, coats-of-arms were exclusive hereditary symbols of the patrician families, featuring their hereditary class status, while the citizens merely followed this heraldic fashion in their own private patterns. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the brethren of St. Lazarus and St. Anthony developed their own hereditary arms insignia, and as this was tolerated by the patriciate, they often displayed it before the public.⁷⁶

On the basis of the scanty Senate records and copies of the charters, one can establish that the Ston nobility was hereditary through both male and female lineage. More evidence can be found in the later documents of the Austrian Heraldic Committee.

⁷⁵ See Đurđica Petrović, »Sepulkralni spomenici u srednjovjekovnom Dubrovniku.«, in: *Likovna kultura Dubrovnika 15. i 16. stoljeća*, ed. Igor Fisković. Zagreb: Muzejsko-galerijski centar, 1991: pp. 127-136.

⁷⁶ Regrettably, the arms of the Ragusan citizen families have failed to stir any large-scale research. Yet they can be said to follow the patterns and symbols of the patrician armorial bearings, though they were styled more freely and devoid of the strict language of heraldry. The traditional armorial elements are most commonly devised to convey the origin or etymology of the family's name or profession. The best collection of these arms was compiled by a printer and drawer, Petar Frano Martecchini, in the 1850s (*Legacy Martecchini*, RO 173, SAD).

4. *The Fate of the Ston Nobility Under the Austrian Rule*

The Heraldic Committee of Dalmatia operated within the regional government in Zadar from 1 January 1817 until 31 December 1831, and was established with the aim of evaluating the noble titles of different origins and their possible recognition by the Austrian Royal Court. The committee was entrusted with gathering data on the nobility in the Habsburg Kingdom of Dalmatia and presenting it before the government, which, in due course, decided on the recognition of titles and arms.⁷⁷ According to a proclamation issued on 16 August 1816 and a later one of 27 December related to the formation of the Committee, it immediately recognized the nobility of Dubrovnik on the basis of authentic documents (art. 3), along with the noble title conferred prior to the establishment of Venetian rule in Dalmatia, the nobility of the former Venetian communes: Zadar, Split, Trogir, and Kotor, as well as the nobility in the Venetian *Libro d'Oro*.⁷⁸ All the other titles, including those of Ston, were not recognized. This "recognition" of noble status, which meant nothing to the already dethroned patriciate of Dubrovnik, placed it among the vast aristocratic corpus of the Habsburg Monarchy. This procedure proved humiliating for most members of the Dubrovnik patriciate. As an act of protest, some of them refused to file for the formal recognition of the title. On the other hand, the descendants of the Ston nobility, particularly those residing in Dubrovnik and other parts of the Monarchy, persisted in their attempt to gain recognition on the basis of Article 3 and the recognition of Dubrovnik nobility.

By 1817 the Heraldic Committee, prompted by numerous requests for recognition, repeatedly demanded detailed information on the Ston nobility from the Dubrovnik municipality and the district authorities. According to the archival records of the former Republic, the district commissioner, Locella, informed the Committee on the subject in April 1817. He verified the existence of such a title, submitting Bishop Spagnoletti's example, while on the matter of privileges themselves and other relevant details he could inform them no further. The Committee insisted on the references pertaining to the pre-

⁷⁷ The records of this committee form a separate series: *Spisi Heraldike komisije*, SAZ. The government's decisions concerning the issues with which the committee dealt comprise a series: *Heraldiki spisi Vlade*, SAZ. Numerous documents in this series relating to the Dubrovnik patrician families are to be found in fasc. VIII/7 for the years 1817-1820.

⁷⁸ *Spisi Heraldike komisije*, vol. 1, no. 1; *Heraldiki spisi Vlade*, fasc. VIII/7, no. 12149 and 17026.

rogatives of the Ston nobles in the former Republic, as well as on details relating to the system of selection and the hereditary aspect of the title.⁷⁹ An exhaustive archival search by the Dubrovnik municipality and the political administration followed, and on 8 June 1818 the district authorities of Dubrovnik came forward with an extensive report on the nobility of Ston, on the basis of upon which the Committee developed a hostile attitude shared also by the government when the recognition of the noble title was in question.

The district administration established the following: the Senate decided on the grants for the Ston title of nobility upon individual requests which could be conferred or denied. A charter was issued to certify the title, but there are no documents in support of the existence of any form of specific prerogative. The title of the Ston nobility had little significance in Dubrovnik, as it conferred no political power. The title was mainly granted to the Ragusans living abroad, for whom it played an important role. It was primarily conferred upon Ragusan consuls, captains, and representatives who acted on behalf of the Republic and its interests abroad, and for whom it was a most welcome means of accomplishing a prominent social position. Although no reliable evidence can be provided, it is possible to conclude that residence abroad conditioned the hereditary aspect of the title, that is, it descended in regular succession to all the heirs who remained outside of the Republic.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, the government received a number of requests for the recognition of the noble status. Referring to article 3 of the Nobility Recognition Act, Baro Prosper, son of Petar Bettera, and Antun, son of Pasko Pugliesi, filed for the recognition as early as 1817. They persisted in their attempt throughout the following year, sending elaborate and minutely decorated requests, supplemented by notarized copies of the charters, family trees, and descriptions of armorial bearings. Unfortunately, not a single request contained the basic documents granting them specific privileges in relation to other subjects of the former Republic, as there were none.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Spisi Heraldike komisije*, vol. 1, no.27, 115; *Općina Dubrovnik*, 1817, F. IV, no. 1497 (SAD).

⁸⁰ *Heraldčki spisi Vlade*, 1818, VIII/7, no. 18757.

⁸¹ *Heraldčki spisi Vlade*, 1817, VIII/7, no. 14872; *Spisi Heraldike komisije*, vol. 1, no. 101, 128, 151, 153. As Martecchini's collection of armorial bearings does not contain the arms of the Pugliesi family, here is its description from one of the requests: "*in uno Scudo in Campo azuro con due monti, una mezza luna ed una Stella d'oro, e con un' inspugnatura di spada sormontata da una corona*".

In the session held on 6 October 1818, the government refused both requests with the same explanation.⁸² On the basis of the report of the Heraldic Committee, it was established that the Ston nobility could in no way whatsoever parallel the autochthonous nobility of Dubrovnik—the bearer of sovereignty of the former Republic. The nobility of Ston had no special privileges in the state, and that is another reason why it could not find any legal ground in Article 3, nor could it be recognized within the boundaries of the Monarchy. The Heraldic Committee and the regional government persisted in their strict criteria, as they also refused to recognize the old communal nobility of Hvar, Šibenik, and Korčula.

With the same explanation as in the case of Bettera and Pugliesi, the request of Lieutenant Josip Maškarić was turned down. His father and uncle had been granted the title, and he filed for his brother Filip and himself in 1821.⁸³ Discouraged as he may have seemed, but well reputed in the Austrian administrative circles in Dalmatia, Bettera repeated his request in 1837, demanding recognition of the title for himself and his heirs.⁸⁴ The government, however, denied his request with exactly the same wording. Božo Božović filed a request in the name of Nikola Pezer in 1838. From the government's decision, it can be gathered that Nikola Pezer attempted to prove that he was the lawful son of Božo Pezer.⁸⁵ Whatever the reason, the request was denied in conformity with all the previous cases. The last to file for recognition of the title was Aleksandar Altesti, property owner from Trieste and son of Andrija Altesti. His request was received by the Trieste district authorities in 1857, and referred to the legalization of the adoption of financial counsellor Giacomo Zeballo, who was to inherit his noble family name d'Altesti. As the person in question was an important official liable to abuse the noble title, the Trieste district authorities proceeded the request to the au-

⁸² *Heraldički spisi Vlade*, 1818, VII/7, no. 18757, 18759.

⁸³ *Spisi Heraldike komisije*, vol. 1, no. 207; *Heraldički spisi Vlade*, 1821, VIII/7, no. 1109.

⁸⁴ *Heraldički spisi Vlade*, 1837, VIII/7, no. 7704. Bettera most likely attributed the denial of the title in 1818 to the counter-Austrian activity of his cousin Vido, already a bearer of the Ston title.

⁸⁵ The original request has not been preserved, but merely the government's denial accompanied by a brief summary of the request (*Heraldički spisi Vlade*, 1838, VIII/7, no. 6901 and 13272). Therefore, there are no biographical references of Nikola Pezer. This could have been a case of attempted forgery, because the only known sons of Božo Pezer were Miho and Lujo.

thorities of Dalmatia.⁸⁶ After a thorough investigation, Altesti's request was denied in the session of the district authorities of 24 November 1862.⁸⁷

Thus well into the nineteenth century, in the period of an already transformed and decaying aristocratic milieu in the Monarchy and the complete decadence of the noble elite, the last administrative attempt to revive the nobility of Ston ended in failure. The holders of the Ston nobility title and their successors having died out, the title itself and the role it once had quickly sank into oblivion.

⁸⁶ *Heraldički spisi Vlade*, 1857, VIII/4 a, no. 3347 al 1743.

⁸⁷ *Heraldički spisi Vlade*, 1862, VIII/4 a, no. 20263 al 1379.