



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF PRIZREN DURING XIII - XV CENTURY

Bedri Muhadri

Dr. Sc., Professor Assistant,
Institution of History "Ali Hadri",
Head of Department of the Medieval History,
Prishtina, Kosovo

Abstract:

Scientific studies of many researchers show that Prizren during the developed feudal period was among the most economically developed territory in the Balkans. This also comes as a result of the road infrastructure, especially road of Zeta, "Via de Zenta". From the gift act of Nemanjideve of 1348, issued for the monastery of St. Arkangjel Mikhail and Gabriel, it is known that in Prizren and adjacent area some economic activities such as handicraft, agriculture, livestock, etc were exercised. The economic activities such as of the currier, shoemaker, textile weaver, tinny production, wax production and cultivation of beekeeping etc were known. The development of economic activities in the town of Prizren urged the necessity of the establishment of the consulate of Ragusa in Prizren in order to protect the interests of traders and facilitate the development for traders. Thus, on 8 III 1332, Ragusa has founded its consulate in Prizren. The Consulate has protected the interests of traders of Ragusa and organized big fairs of economic character in the town of Prizren.

Keywords: Kosovo, Prizren, Novo Brdo, Via de Zenta, Danja, Skodra, Ragusa, Raguzians, Ottomans, Pristina, Diplom of Saints Micheal and Gabriel, Trepca, Manastery of Decani, Balshaj, Zeta, Consul, Paulus de Martinusso, Bosnians, Assembly of Raguziana, Namanjid Kingdom, Bogdan Chirisma

Prizren, medieval economic center

Economic research of many scholars whether foreign or Albanian, shows that Kosovo during medieval times was among the richest regions in the Balkans. A range of centers

with unique ancient traditions, such as Prizren, Vuçiterna, Pristina and Novo Brdo developed in the medieval before ottoman period as important product and exchange commercial centers with enough broad impact in the economic, political and cultural development in the Arber regions in the Middle Ages.

Among the well-known medieval economic centers Prizren is one of the most important countries that influenced in the development of processes not only economic but also historical-political in the broad Balkan realm and Albanian nationwide.

Prizren (antique Theranda) since the old time was found at the crossroads of influences coming from different sides. As well, in Prizren were important crossroads of the Adriatic and from here branching off in Kosovo and beyond. Having a good geographical position and natural riches, Prizren connected too early through the roads with various parts of the Balkans.

A typical example for our findings is the road heading Shkodra, continuing northeast, and then reaching Prizren. This road in medieval Latin documents referred to as "«*Via de Zenta*»", (Kosova, 1973, 906) a name given by Raguzian traders, who often walked it. This road passed through Prizren, Novo Brdo and extended to Sofia (Drançolli, 1987, 58; Škrivanič, 1955, 387-389). This road ramified in two directions. One direction roads united in the northers part of Skadar Lake and went through the valley of Limit in Peja, while other direction roads unitet in Danja, from the large commercial road, passing the mountains of northern Albania, extended to Prizren. This road, which includes the streets of Kotor, Bar and Ulcinj related to Skodra, then the river roads through the cours of Buna, Drini to Lezha and from there continuing in the ground roads in Danja and then further in Prizren.

According to the data, from Shkodra to Prizren you had to travel 33 hours (Drançolli, 1987, 60; Drançolli, 1986, 40). The territory through which passed the road mentioned, entered under Gjon Kastrioti territories (Drançolli, 1987, 60).

In 1430 the Raguzians made an agreement with the Ottomans, which was linked to the interests of Raguzian traders, who demanded unhindered passage to reach Novo Brdo and Prishtina « *per la contrada fo de Juan Castrioti ad Alexie*» (Drançolli, 1987, 60). This road one time passed through the territories of the Dugagjins (Drançolli, 1987, 60). On the right side of it, today it is found the region of Mirdita, while on the left side the Dukagjins territories. As the first land here comes Puka (*Epicaria te Ptolomeu; ad Picaria in Pajtingers chart*) (Jireček, 1959, 280). The way lead further near the spring river Fan and further to the village Han-i-Sakatit which came in the Drin of St. Spas in which place also the customs was found (Drançolli, 1987, 60). Beyond the road in the right side of the river Drin was found Lek Dukagjinis Castle. Through Krupa valley, a road went towards northeast to Gjakova and Peja (Adami, 1983, 50). From Spaç, from the left side of the river Drin the main road ramified heading from the coast through several

villages, which in 1348 Emperor Dusan donated to the Monastery of Saints Michael and Gabriel (*Siriniqi, Shikaj and Kryemadhi*) (Drançolli, 1986, 41). Further, this road ramified through the White Drin and its branch of Luma and going through old bridges arrived in Prizrens field. From Prizren the road passed through Dules Neck and took the lead towards Kosovo (Jireček, 1959, 280-281).

From the Diploma of Saints Michael and Gabriel we learn that from Prizren prolonged two main roads and two secondary roads. The main roads were: the first lead in the Dukagjin valley through Big and Small Krusa, whereas the second lead to Kosovo through Blace and Dulës. Less important roads: one went to Kaçanik, while the second through Opoja to Tetovo (Škrivanič, 1955, 392), and the other important direction that began from Prizren passing through villages Krushë, Orahovac, Drenica and Trepca. "*Starim putem koji grade od Prizrena u Trepçu do hrisovulja Deçanskoga*" (Škrivanič, 1955, 392) From this, an old road to Trepca went towards a property of the Decani Monastery that surely stretched through the Krusha village and from there north through Decanis supplements, Big and Small Hoca (Škrivanič, 1955, 392, 61).

In Zetas road itinerary are marked some important customs points. The most important customs point in the Albanian medieval territories from where the traders passed was Danja that stretched near Shkodra. This customs was a time in the hands of the family of Balshaj. Balshaj in a document dated 17.01.1368 release the Raguzians from payment of customs in this place « . . . *we donated that customs tax in Danja, so that no customs tax was takes from you and your citizens amd traders, in order to pass freely through our land, without being obliged to pay anyone this costums tax* (Burime, 1962, 184-185).

Through Danja customs was made the transporting of goods from the coast of Zeta to Prizren and Novo Brdo. Another customs that was important for the movement of goods from the coast of Zeta to Prizren was also that of St. Shirgj that was found in the river Buna 6 miles away from Shkodra towards the river flow, on the road leading from the delta of Buna and Drini towards Shkodra, Prizren and Novo Brdo. Other customs that existed in the road of Shkodra-Prizren was that of St. Spas. Here except the customs and the market was found also the inns for caravans that circulated from Lezha and Shkodra to Prizren.

Prizren an important consular center of Raguzia in the XIV century

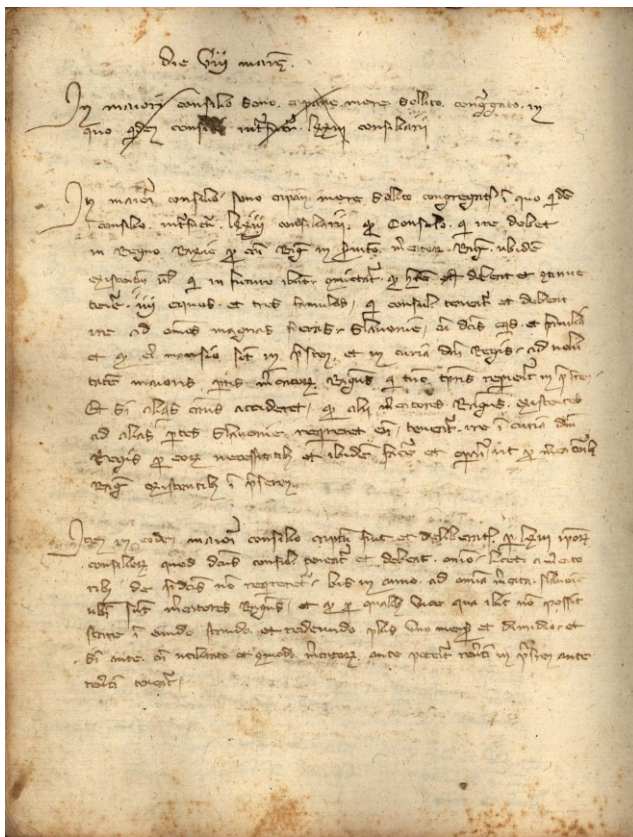
Due to certain political circumstances, as well as being an important link in the road traffic, Prizren created favorable preconditions for a rapid development and its promotion. At the time in the new conditions the city raised in one of the biggest and most important shopping malls of the Balkans. Prizren had received the typical appearance of medieval western cities and consisted of two urban units: From Castrum

or Castellum the fortress city, and Civitas-Varoshi (established outside the fortress city) administrative center. Towards the end of the XIII century and almost throughout the XIV century Prizren teemed from foreign traders, that through his familiar roads came from foreign countries, as Ragusa, Kotor, Korcul, Split, Zara and even from Venice, from Florence etc. Traders not only sold their goods in the markets of Prizren and its surroundings, but at the same time, they had their warehouses in the city, from where they easily distributed goods in different countries. Foreign merchants, having utility in the city founded their own colonies. The largest colony was that of Ragusa.

Already during the first half of the XIV century due to its position Prizren took an important firsthand political and trade importance for Raguzians. According to sources, without difficulty can be said that the trade and economic relations between Ragusa and Prizren were among the most developed in the region.

ⁱ In order to protect their interests, Raguzian traders operating in Prizren requested to appoint a permanent consul in the city. Their request, the Grand Council of Ragusa, on the proposal of the Senate in its meeting held on 18. II.1332, by majority (74 “for”, 66 “against”) /// decided to appoint five advisers whose job was to investigate the trading condition of Ragusa in Prizren (... , *et quicquid ipsi sapientes invenerint, reducatur ad presens consilium, et tunc secundum quod in dicto consilio reformetur, ita procedatur- Electi fuerunt dicxti sapientes: Marinus de Binçola,*

Junius de Volcasso, Junius de Lucaro, Nicolaus de Petrana et Martinusso de Mençe) (Reformationes X, 59; Gelcich, Monumenta Ragusiana, tomus V,(1301-1336), 1987, 340) and then to submit their respective proposals to the Council (Drançolli 1986, 47). Thus, after the decision of the Great Council, on 8.III.1332 their supplication for selecting a permanent consul in Prizren was approved (*quod eius monsiio sit in Prizren, et in curia domini regis, ad voluntatem maioris partis mercatorum Ragussii...*) (Reformationes X, 61^v; Gelcich, 1897, 342). The date 8.III.1332 has a great

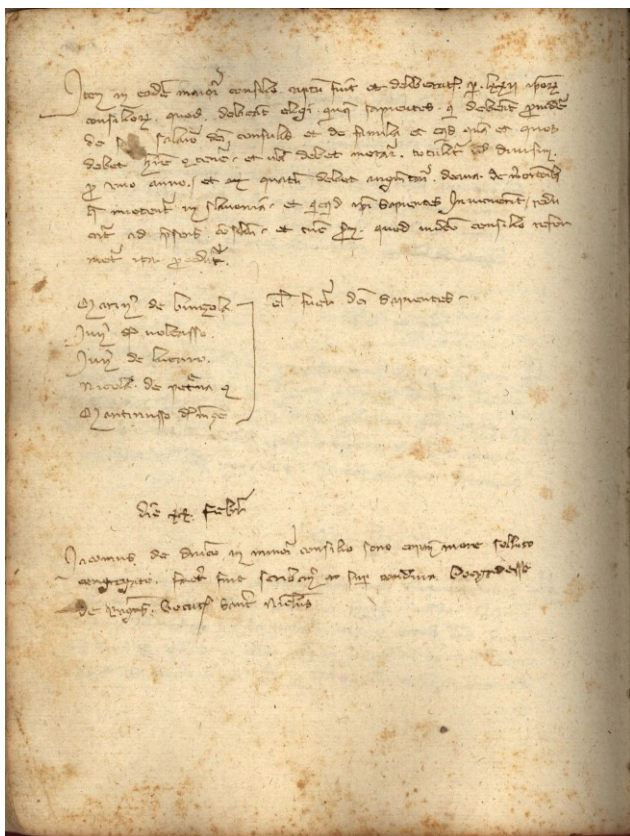


ⁱ Facsimile of the original document Book X Reformationes year 1332. Doc. Nr. 61v. In this document we have the decision of the Great Council of Ragusa (Consilii Maioris) for selecting permanent consul in the city of Prizren. See footnote 17.

significance for the development of diplomatic institutions and for the beginning of consular life in Kosovo (Drançolli, 1986, 47).

On 15.III.1332 the first Raguzian Consul in Prizren was appointed *Paulus de Martinusso*. (... , *Die XXV Marçii intratvit in dicta doana-Paulus de Martinusso fuit electus consul predictus...*) (Gelcich, 1897, 343) All documents issued by the consul in Prizren had a public character and were available just as they had been issued in Ragusa.

The consul had also the authority to give the verdicts in resolving disputes between Raguzians. The competence of imposing punishment previously belonged to the Raguzian Assembly. Therefore, the consul had the task to send the list of the punished in Ragusa (Drançolli, 1986, 48). He was entitled to the allocation of responsibilities between traders in case of any damage caused or on the occasion of the



award of any grants for the Nemanjid royal yard (Čremošnika, 1929, 86)ⁱⁱ. The consul salary amounted 400 Perper in a year (Mitič, 1973, 32). This amount was divided into installments: in the case of departure from Ragusa, the council took 200 Perper, and after six months another 100 Perper, and after nine months another 100 Perper (“.., *Qui cosul debeat haber pro suo salario, computatos in eo equos et familiam predictos, pro uno anno yper. IIIIC de quibus dari sibi debeat in recessu suo de Ragusoi, cum inverti pro dixcto suo officio exercendo, yperperos cc, in capites sex mensium yper. C et in capite VIII mensium yper c...*, J. Gelcich, *Monumenta Ragusiana (Libri Reformationum)*, tomus. V. 343. 342).

The consul had no right to deal with trade otherwise he was punished by the ruler of the city. The consular service lasted a year counting from the day he left Ragusa (Drançolli, 1986, 48).

After this deadline, the Great Council should ascertain the work of the consul in Prizren and according to the verified state, to take further decisions (Drançolli, 1986, 48).

ⁱⁱ Facsimile of the original document Reformationes Book X since 1332. Doc. Nr. 59. The document was issued by the Great Council of Ragusa (Consilli Maioris). The document confirms the appointment of five advisers to proceed with the opening of the Consulate in Prizren. See footnote 19.

After the Battle of Kosovo the Ragusan government, 16.VIII.1396, due to the situation created made the decision to appoint a consul and a judge for Novo Brdo and Pristina and according to a decision of the Small Council of Ragusa dated 22.VIII.1415 in Peja operated a Raguzian consul (Drançolli, 1986, 49, 53).

Under the provisions of the Great Raguzian Council over Raguzian consuls belonging Nemanjid Kingdom, the consul center for the Nemanji Kongdom was Prizren. The consul of Prizren was obliged, in the interests of Ragusan trade, to organize twice a year, and this at least one month, major fairs in the territories of the so-called "Sclavonia" (it is about the territories of Istria, Adriatic coast and Buna till inside the Balkan Peninsula where Raguzian traders operated) (Mitič, 1973, 30). According to documents of that time, it can be seen that the Raguzian council during the relevant time (1332) mostly stayed in Prizren. And as a result of all this Prizren during the XIV century became one of the largest centers in the Balkans fairs. At that time, four fairs were held during the year that gave the center a special zest. Prizren fairs were held in different periods of the year and up to 8 October when it was held the last one in this developed center. Fairs were bound and held under the patronage of priests and near monasteries. Near the monastery "Mala Gospoda" on September 8 is kept the episcopal fair, while at the Monastery of Saints Michael and Gabriel are held two fairs, the first on the eve of St. Spas, the second on the eve of the Saints Miha and Gabriel, and a fair of the Hilandar Monastery that was held in the eve of St. Nicholas (Drançolli, 1986, 172). Fairs were usually held on the occasion of religious holidays. The ruler S. Nemanja gave the right of the fair to the Velika village near Prizren, S. Dusan the Lipjan market, while Uros III allowed Gračanica Monastery the fair.

At these fairs usually were displayed handicraft products. From the card of the Arkangjevj Monastery and Gabriel of Prizren of the year, 1348 among others we learn that in Prizren and surrounding were exercised these crafts: vorbtaria, production of tin, weapons manufacture, saddler, currier, bootmaker, weavers etc.

Serbian rulers, managing customs taxes and those of the market, did everything by easing provisions in order to encourage the collection of the traders in the markets and fairs. For example, in the Crisobule of Uros III Prizren was declared as a "*porto franco*" of those mountainous hinterland where trade could be made freely by anyone (Shkodra, 1997, 152). And, in terms of maintaining peace and order in the trading environment, in this document it was said that anyone who overset and made confusion in the marketplace was fined with 500 Perper and whoever raised the knife or sword was obliged to pay the penalty (Shkodra, 1997, 152) About the importance of trade fairs in Prizren testify also the two letters of the Serbian king Uros III sent in Dubrovnik which are saved: The letter of April 24, 1357, which shows that foreign traders, in particular those Raguzians and Venetians, who could freely visit the cities of

Kosovo (Prizren also, as a known center of trade) without impediment from nobody and if during the way the trader was damaged, the landlord would pay the damage and if ever the goods were confiscated without giving the money it could not be withdrawn even from the landlord (Jireček, 1959, 351). In the other letter, of the year 1357 (Jireček, 1959, 351), it can be seen that newly the freedom of traders is guaranteed stating that in the customs of Prizren the church of the Archangel Michael will lead, to which was given as a gift (Jireček, 1959, 351).

In Kosovo's markets, except the Raguzian currencies circulated as well the currencies cut in the cities of Kosovo, as it comes groshi of Novo Brdo (Grossi de Naubreda since 1349), currencies of Vukasin in Prizren (*Cech de Prisreno, since 1370*) (Drançolli, 1986, 158). During the fourteenth century, Prizren was popular among internal and external traders, who in religious terms initially were led by the Bishop of Prizren (Drançolli, 1986, 108), and later of the Holy Archangels monastery.

In the Prizren market was made the transaction of various goods. Different types of leather were sold, which were important in Balkan exports. The leather came from different cities of Serbia and Bosnia and was exported besides in Venice also in other Italian regions. For the export of the leather from Prizren proves the testament of the year 1363, where a Raguzian trader, stating the things leaving in his shop in Ragusa, mentions also leather that were owned by a man from Prizren (Drançolli, 1986, 108).

In 1345, the Rogate Council in Ragusa proposes that Raguzian traders, who stayed in Prizren, could maintain further their connections with Ragusa through the Raguzian consul in Pristina. Also, traders were guaranteed freedom of travel in the lines between the hearsay cities.

Thus, the connections between Ragusa and Prizren were raised up in the first half of the XIV century.

The peace of Visegrad, 1358, after the Hungaro-Venetian war, which broke the 150-year rule of Venice over Ragusa and the entrance of Ragusa under the protection of the Kingdom of Hungary (1358-1526), Raguzian-Serbian relations were significantly weakened. So when the Hungarian king began again preparing for war against Serbia, the Serbian ruler Uros V ordered in June 1361 to imprison all the Raguzian traders operating in the cities of his empire. In the current situation, one of the first decisions of the Raguzian advises was to block Kotor and to imprison traders of Prizren, who were then in Ragusa. It was also decided to confiscate all their goods (Drançolli, 1986, 116). This led Ruguzans to major problems in Prizren.

Raguzian resistance, and their alliance with the Albanian nobleman Balshaj (Millutinovič, 1982, 60) and with Zeta made possible that the Emperor Uros III to give up the war and to make agreements with Ragusa. A Serbian delegation led by Mark, accompanied by a well-known trader of Prizren, Bogdan Chirisma, whom we encounter

as a sensational trader. Raguzians in response on August 12 ordered the traders of Prizren to leave the town, but all goods to remain in Ragusa (Drançolli, 1986, 117). Bogdan Chirisma was also allowed, he only had to pay the debt and to him was applied the prohibition to deal with trade also (Millutinovič, 1982, 47). However, two days after this prohibition Bogdani borrows from San Marino de Vitanja 100 ducats, which he would return in two months (Millutinovič, 1982, 47).

In November 1361, Raguzians allowed again the traders of Prizren to trade with Ragusa and the confiscated goods were returned to them. However, the events of 1361 weakened significantly the trade development in Prizren and especially weakened the Ragusan trading activities in this city. In this regard, sources of that time say that the number of Raguzians in Prizren was significantly reduced. Apart from the above facts, another important factor that directly influenced to the weakening of connections between Ragusa and Prizren was the occupation of St. Shirgj (1399) by the Republic of Venice, which now prohibits Raguzians the commercial transport through this scaffolding. Thus was hindered the passage of Raguzians through the road of Zeta towards Prizren, which naturally led to adverse consequences for the further promotion of connection between Ragusa and Prizren. Raguzian orientation at that time and in the first half of the XV century took the direction towards these cities: Pristina, Novo Brdo,

A safety period for development of trade in the city of Prizren and the Raguzians traders we have during the reign of Prizren by the known Albanian ruler Gjergj Balsha I (1372-1379). In this regard, we have notifications about good cooperation between the ruler Balsha and the traders. Raguzian traders who were then in Prizren donated Balsha four harnesses.

The ruler Gjergj Balshaj at that time possessed also the customs of Prizren. In 1374 in Prizren we face two generous Raguzians, Georgius Domanga de Dournich and Pocre de Benesse, who paid George Balsha all debts for Prizrens customs (Drançolli, 1986, 120).

The researcher Jahja Drançolli, addressing the history of deployment and operation of Ragusan consulates in the cities of Kosovo, as political institutions, notes that despite the fact that at the end of the XIII century and the first half of the XIV century the region of Kosovo was under Serbian rule, no substantive changes were made to the existing administrative system. In the occupied cities, the institution of *qefaliu* was held or it was revived. In the created conditions in the cities of Kosovo, this institution is mentioned for the first time in Prizren (Drançolli, 1986, 27). From the Ragusan data Prizren during the XIV century is mostly mentioned as a trading center (markado), which was led by *qefaliu* (commander of the fort), Prince Comes (Conte de Marcado) and the customs official who was Raguzian or Kotorras (Rizaj, 1983, 53). Meanwhile, during the reign of Dragutinit (1276-1282) in Prizren, except *qefaliu*

institution, the Byzantine title *sevast* is also mentioned. Besides Prizren, the institution mentioned later, in the time of the reign of king Milutin (1282-1321), is also mentioned in Hvosno (Drançolli, 1986, 27).

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