

# MALTA AND DUBROVNIK TOWARDS THE YEAR 1380<sup>1</sup>

by

Anthony Luttrell

During the later middle ages Malta lay on none of the great trade routes. Venetian shipping bound for the Western Mediterranean or even Tunis normally passed along the northern shores of Sicily, while Genoese, Catalan and other Western vessels making for Syria and Egypt sailed by way of Southern Greece, Rhodes or Cyprus. The only long-distance route which regularly brought ships to Malta was that to Tripoli.<sup>2</sup> Malta formed part of the Kingdom of Sicily and lay marginally within the loose economic unity dominated by the Crown of Aragon, which included Sicily, Sardinia and the Balearics, as well as the mainland territories of Catalunya, Valencia and Aragon proper;<sup>3</sup> and by the 1370s the Catalans were increasingly penetrating the Adriatic in search of the timber they needed from Senj and other Dalmatian ports.<sup>4</sup>

The ships and merchants of the lesser mercantile centres also visited Malta from time to time. In the case of Dubrovnik, whose merchants exported Dalmatian wood and the gold and silver of Bosnia and Serbia, its foreign trade expanded greatly after it became politically and commercially independent of Venice in 1358. In the following decades Dubrovnik merchants were active in the Levant and even, occasionally, in North Africa.<sup>5</sup> Dubrovnik naturally traded across the Adriatic,<sup>6</sup> and at times was also

1. This is based on only a brief exploration in the Dubrovnik State Archives, largely following indications in B. KREKIC, *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant au Moyen Age* (Paris-The Hague, 1961), and publishing three texts, two of them calendared in KREKIC, 217, 223. Useful descriptions of the archives are in KREKIC, 161-165, and J. TADIC, "Les sources de l'histoire maritime yougoslave", *Les sources de l'histoire maritime en Europe, du moyen âge au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. M. MOLLAT (Paris, 1962). Note: Dubrovnik, the medieval Ragusa, is easily confused with the Sicilian port in close contact with Malta; the Melita of the Dubrovnik documents is a Dalmatian Island; the *de Goze* is a Dubrovnik family.
2. Details and references in A. LUTTRELL, "Venetians at Medieval Malta", *Melita Historica*, iii, no. 1 (1960).
3. Cf. A. LUTTRELL, "La casa de Catalaunya-Aragó i Malta: 1281-1412", *Estudis dedicat a Ferran Soldevila*, i (Barcelona, 1969); see also IDEM, "Malta and the Aragonese Crown: 1282-1530", *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal Malta University*, iii, no. 1 (1965).
4. Catalan activities in the Adriatic await study, but see references and examples in A. LUTTRELL, "La Corona de Aragón y la Grecia catalana: 1379-1394", *Anuario de estudios medievales*, vi (forthcoming).
5. The process is studied in KREKIC; apart from Documents I and III below, the evidence for North Africa is only slight (e.g. *ibid.*, 25, 78, 104 n. 1, 173, 273, 355, 407).
6. M. POPOVIC-RADENKOVIC, "Le relazioni commerciali fra Dubrovnik (Ragusa) e la Puglia nel periodo angioino: 1266-1442", *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, lxxvi-lxxvii (1957-1958).

anxious to maintain friendly contacts with Sicily in order to ensure its wheat supply. When a vessel from Zara captured a Sicilian ship in mid-1380 and unloaded its goods at Dubrovnik, the authorities at Dubrovnik instructed their envoys at Zara to protest and to point out not only that their wheat supply had been endangered but that the Sicilians were the friends of their overlord, the King of Hungary. These instructions dated 25 June 1380, revealed that the Sicilian vessel carried goods loaded by certain Jews from Malta:

Et anchora laltro di uegnando uno nauilio di Siciliani uno brigen-  
tino de zara delo qual e patron damiano Stoyanouich prese lo dicto  
nauilio in mar et meno lo dicto nauilio cargado di mercadantie di  
Sicilianj et di zudei che habita in la malta a raguxa li quali son  
amisi del nostro signor, et . . . . .<sup>7</sup> et nostri, et le cosse deli  
Sicilianj rendereno ali Sicilianj et le cosse deli zudei tolse, la qual  
cosa poria tornar in grando dampno a noy per che el ne conven  
andar in la Sicilia per mercadantie et per blaua la qual noy usemo  
a comprare in la Sicilia dando ne caxon che zaratini, et noy ragusinj  
semo subiecti ad uno signor.<sup>8</sup>

Not only were Maltese merchants sending goods into the Adriatic, but one was there in person. On 20 July 1380 the Council at Dubrovnik exempted Bonfiglio de Malta, captain of a ship then at Dubrovnik, from the *gabella* on goods he imported into and exported from Dubrovnik, on condition that by May 1381 he produced letters from his *domini*, that is from the *comunitas* of Malta and from Manfredo Chiaramonte who was one of the four *vicari* or regents of Sicily,<sup>9</sup> granting Dubrovnik merchants similar exemptions at Malta. He was to leave pledges for his fulfilment of these conditions, and if he did not send the letters he was to pay three percent on all goods brought into or taken out of Dubrovnik.<sup>10</sup>

This proposal for a trade agreement apparently came to nothing,<sup>11</sup> but Dubrovnik merchants did visit Malta at this time. In 1377 Joanna, wife of Tomchus Bogdanich of the Dalmation island of Kolocep won a case against Milos Gugnevich who on 4 August 1376 had contracted with Tomchus and a certain Philipo Samo of Genoa to go to Senj, to collect a cargo of timber and to take it to Tripoli. Instead Milos had sold the wood in Malta and as a result Tomchus had been thrown into prison in Tripoli. Milos

7. Two words illegible.

8. Dubrovnik State Archives, *Lettere di Levante*, ii, f. 143v-145; the whole letter, with variants on the text given here, is in J. TADIC, *Litterae et commissiones ragusinae*, i (Belgrade 1935), 437-441 (no. 384).

9. On Chiaramonte's claims as Count of Malta, see LUTTRELL, "La casa de Catalunya-Aragó," 24-26.

10. Document II.

11. See the subsequent documents from Dubrovnik State Archive: *Liber Reformationum*, xxiv, printed in extenso in M. DINIC, *Acta Consiliorum Reipublicae Ragusinae*, i (Belgrade, 1951).

claimed that on reaching Malta he had heard that Tripoli was being besieged and that it was unsafe to go there, and that in any case the Maltese had forcibly seized the timber. After examining the evidence, which included various testimonies which Milos had secured from Malta, the court was found against Milos and ordered him to go to Senj, load the timber and carry it to Tripoli as originally agreed.<sup>12</sup>

Milos Gugnevich appears to have returned to Malta and to have made more trouble there, for in May 1382 he was calling witnesses in Dubrovnik to prove that he had carried a quantity of cotton to Tripoli on behalf of an anonymous Jew at Malta. In Tripoli he claimed to have received quantities of oil and material; on account of bad seas, Milos was — he claimed — unable to take these to Malta but instead he apparently sold part of the material in Sicily and some oil in Cephalonia, and took the rest to Dubrovnik. He claimed to have paid the Jew *pecias iij lencij* and four ducats worth of figs, but there had clearly been disagreement about this.<sup>13</sup>

These relations between Malta and Dubrovnik seem not to have been sustained, partly perhaps because of the troubled times through which Malta passed at the end of the century.<sup>14</sup> None the less the affairs of Milos Gugnevich of Dubrovnik show that Malta did have a position on the route to Tripoli; and in 1380 there was sufficient contact for the authorities at Dubrovnik to consider a formal trade agreement.

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12. Document I.

13. Document III.

14. New documents may be found which alter this picture. Two documents of 24 January 1409 (Dubrovnik State Archives: *Diversa Cancellariae*, xxxviii, f. 51v-52, partially calendared in KREKIC, 255-256) mention a *Gulielmus de Malta*, a merchant then at Dubrovnik, but he was apparently from Sicily, possibly from Siracusa; in any case, he had only arrived at Dubrovnik because of bad weather.

## DOCUMENTS

1. *Dubrovnik State Archives: Sententiae cancellariae, ii, f. 36*  
(24 July 1377).

Mccclxxvij Indictionis xv  
die xxiiij mensis Iulij

Cum questio foret et uerteretur Coram domino Marcholo de thiodisio honorabili Rectore comunis Rasmusij et Iuratis Iudicibus ser Andrea dobre de binzola et ser Iohanne de grede inter Iohannam Vxorem Tomchi bogdanich de Calamota ex parte vna petentem et Milossium gugneuch ex parte alia se defendentem Proponebatur et dicebatur per ser Blasium de grade aduocatum dicte Iohanne dicto Milossio ibidem presenti Tu milossi fecisti vnum concordium naulizamenti cum Tomcho meo marito et cum philipo<sup>15</sup> somo de Ianua in mcccclxxvij die quarto mensis augusti prout clare patet in quaterno scribani dicti mei viri quod de venecijs debebas ire ad Segniam et onerare tuum nauigium ligneamine de sub cohopena et de supra, illius sortis prout conuenisti cum ipsis et portare dictum ligneamen ad Tripolum de barbaria quod ligneamen debebas emere de denarijs mercationum ipsarum quas portasti ad dictam Ciuitatem Venetiarum Tu Iuisti in segniam et ronerasti dictum tuum nauigium dicto ligneamine tamen non iuisti cum dicto ligneamine in Tripolum secundum pacta que habes cum dicto viro meo et suo socio set iuisti ad insulam malte et ibi vendidisti dictum ligneamen propter quod dictus Tomchus meus maritus est incarceratus et detinetur a saracenis et est multum damnificatus vellem quod tu omnino facias sic quod meus maritus propter tuam occasionem inpeditus liberetur et affrancetur et quod restituas sibi totum suum dampnum et interesse que passus est et patietur tua occasione. Et per ser lucam de bona aduocatum dicti Milossij respondebatur. Verum est quod habui istud pactum et concordium cum tuo viro et illo Ianuensi et oneraui meum nauigium ligneamine in segniam et volebam ire in Tripolum cum dicto ligneamine ad illos secundum pactum quod habebam cum illis set eundo ad eos quando fui in malta habui certa noua quod Tripolum erat obsessum a Saracenis et nullum Nauigium poterat illuc secure accedere ita quod ista de causa et etiam quia fui captus ab illis de malta et discargatus per vim de dicto ligneamine ab illis michi ablato non potui complere illud quod eis promisi ita quod de hoc non fuit aliqua mea culpa set ista duo iusta impedimenta prout sum paratus clare probare ita quod ad impossibile nemo tenetur in pacta intelliguntur quod debent adimplere ubi iusta inpedimenta non opponant. Et per dictum ser Blasium advocatum replicabatur tu non habuisti aliquod iustum inpedimentum set de tua propria voluntate exonerasti et vendisti dictum ligneamen in malta et quia delectabat te tenere denarios

15. Ms: *pho*.

dictorum pauperum hominum et lucrare cum illis et facere facta tua prout fecisti, maliciose adinuenisti nouum quod tripulum est obsessum quod non vadas illuc et consumpsisti dictos pauperes qui te naulizaerunt. Vnde dominus Rector cum dictis iuratis Iudicibus auditis petitionibus et responsionibus vtriusque partis et viso et intellecto tenore quaterni dicti naulizamenti ac examinatis quibusdam testibus per dictum Milossium in suam favorem productis et intellecto tenore cuiusdam instrumenti in malta confecti ad petitionem dicti Milosij et per aliquorum dierum spatia super premissis habita deliberatione matura dixit concorditer cum dictis Iudicibus et per sententiam iudicavit quod dictus Milossius gugneuich infra dies xv proxime futuras debeat cum dicto suo nauigio recessisse de Ragusio ad prosequendum iter expedite ad eundem in Segniam et debeat ibi emere et onerare dictum nauigium de illo ligneamine prout pepigit cum Tomcho et philipo Ianuensi predictis et portare illis dictum ligneamen in Tripolum de barbaria secundum formam pactorum que habent insimil secundum formam naulizamenti predicti. Et quod iura utriusque partis de primo viagio quod ipse Milossius non compleuit sint salua inter partes predictas ad petendum sua iura placitandum et litigandum inter se prout sibi melius videbitur et placebit.

die primo mensis augusti prefata Ohanna fuit contenta quod milossius gugneuich usque per totum diem lune in diem decem mensis augusti debeat recessisse de Ragusio et ire expedite in segniam ad emendum et parandum ligneamen oportunum pro dicto viagio. Et quod dictum Nauigium debeat ire ad forum baroli<sup>16</sup> et redeundo inde Ragusium expedite debeat ire in segniam ad recipiendum et onerandum dictum ligneamen et prosequendum suum iter secundum formam predictae sententiae et sit in voluntate maroe matheouich de calamota ad eundem de apulia in segniam si poterit non redeundo inde Ragusium de dicto foro et ser nicolaus marinj de menze et ser lampre de zrioua tamquam patroni dicti Nauigij ad petitionem dicti milosij ibidem presentis et volentis consenserunt omnibus supradictis et dictus Milossius promisit premissa obseruare sub pena ducatorum auri .C. et si infra dictum terminum ipse Milossius non poterit inuenire nauigium ad eundem in segniam teneatur ad suas expensas inuenire et naulizare unam barcham et ire ad tardius die mercurij proxime future sub dicta pena.

2. *Dubrovnik State Archives: Liber Reformationum*, xxiv, f. 113  
22 July 1380).<sup>17</sup>

die .xxij. mensis Julij.

In minori consilio in quo interfuerunt consiliarij octo ad sonum cam-

16. Barletta.

17. Already published in J. RADONIC, *Dubrovacka akta i povelje*, i fasc. 2, (Belgrade, 1934), 842 (no. 399), with errors, and in DINIC, 54-55, correcting some of Radonic's errors.

pane more solito congregato captum et firmatum fuit quod bonfilius de malta patronus unius nauigij sit francus exemptus et liberatus a soluendo gabellam rerum et mercium per eum portatarum et uenditarum ragusij, et rerum et mercium quas portabit extra, Cum hac conditione, quod ipse bonfilius usque per totum mensem maij proxime venturi de .mcccclxxxj. debeat reddere certum nostrum comune per litteras domini sui videlicet domini manfredi de Claramonte, et comunitatis de malta quoniam in terra malte nos ragusei non soluimus per tempora transacta, nec soluere tenemur, nec soluemus in futurum de aliquibus mercibus per nos raguseos debeat ipse bonfilius in ciuitate ragusij bonam et ydoneam cautionem Ita quod si in dicto termino non presentauerit uel fecerit presentari dictas duas litteras ex parte predictorum continentes predicta, quod plegius quem pro ipso bonfilio se plegium constituerit soluere teneatur dohanerijis nostri comunis tres pro centenario mercium ductarum regusium, et tres pro centenario mercium extractarum de ragusio.

3. *Dubrovnik State Archives:Lettere di Levante, iii, f. 47v (22 may 1382)*  
Mcccclxxxij die xx maij

Milos gugneuich coram domino Rectore ser Andrea dobre de binzola et eius curia per infrascriptos testes intendit probare et fidem facere, quod cotonum quod habuit a <sup>18</sup> Iudeo de Insula malte ipse portauit in tripolim de barbaria, et assignauit illj cui ipse Iudeus ordinauit, et pro illo cotono recepit in tripoli zarras iiij<sup>or</sup> olej, et ballas tres storiorum, quas zarras et storia propter fortunam maris non potuit conducere ad maltam Insulam predictam, et pro istiiis zarris et storijs dictus Iudeus habuit ab eo Milosio pecias iij lencij, et tot ficus quod fuerunt ualoris iii<sup>or</sup> ducatorum

+ Velchus cranchouich  
Tomchus radoslauich de insula de medio } testes  
Goian de dicta Insula  
+ Marchus scribanus

Velchus crancouich testis productus Iuratus de ueritate dicenda coram dicto domino Rectore et Iuratis Iudicibus ser martholo de Todisio, ser luca de bona, et ser blasio de Sorgo, Interrogatus et diligenter examinatus super dicta intencione suo sacramento dixit Ego tantum scio quod ego eram cum dicto Milosio in insula malte. et dictus Milos dimisit Iudeo tres peccias lencij et de ficibus circha staria tria, et postea dictus Iudeus dedit dicto Milosio Saccos duos bombicis deferendos cum nauigio tripolim de barbaria, quos duos Saccos dictus Milosius in tripoli dedit cuidam factorj qui se dicebat factorem dicti

18. A space is left throughout for the Jew's name.

Iudej. Sed ego nescio si ipse dedit dicto Milosio pro illo bombice aliquos denarios. Sed bene scio quod dictus factor in tripoli dedit dicto Milosio zarras *nescio iiij<sup>or</sup> uel quinque uel*<sup>19</sup> .vj. olej et tres fassos storiorum. Interrogatus quid fecit de dictis zarris et storijs. dixit quod unam de dictis zarris ipse Milosius uendit in cephalonia. et Residuum apportauit ragusium. Et de storijs unum fassium uendit in scicilia. et alia apportauit Ragusium Interrogatus de fabis quid fecit dictus milosius. Respondit ego nescio si dedit dicto factorj, uel si uendit

Marchus scribanus testis productus Iuratus de ueritate dicenda, coram dicto domino Rectore et dictis Iudicibus Interrogatus et diligenter examinatus super dicta intencione. dixit suo sacramento. Ego scio tantum quod de ficibus portauit dictus Milosius, sed ego nescio quid fecerit Et de pecijs lencij ego nichil scio. Et bene scio quod duos saccos bombicis dictus Milosius dedit cuidam factorj in tripolj et duos alios saccos uendit dublis xlj. Et dictus factor dedit dicto Milosio zarras .v. olej et fassia tria storiorum. Et fabas dictus Milosius uendit in Tripolj dublis xj ut est scriptum in quaterno meo.

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19. Italicized words added in the margin (ignored by KREKIC, 223).