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CRISTIANO GUARNERI

# CIRCULATION, USE, IMPACT

*The Consumption of Architectural Books  
in the Early Modern Eastern Adriatic*

BREPOLS

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## FOREWORD



# PERIPATETICS OF ARCHITECTURAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE EASTERN ADRIATIC

Jasenska Gudelj

This volume presents the findings of the European Research Council-funded project *Architectural Culture of the Early Modern Eastern Adriatic* (AdriArchCult), which I had the privilege of leading at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. The project aimed to comprehensively study the architectural culture of the eastern Adriatic between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period characterised by significant political transformations. During this time, the region was divided among the Venetian Republic, the Republic of Dubrovnik, the Habsburg monarchy (which included the Hungarian-Croatian realm from 1526), and the Ottoman Empire, resulting in a fragmented political landscape. This division turned the region into a vast archipelago where even mainland coastal towns were often isolated from their hinterlands. The resulting fragmentation fostered the emergence of a fluctuating and floating architectural market that operated within a multilingual and multiconfessional milieu.

Despite the significance of this complex architectural production, study of it has remained incomplete and often skewed, with historiographies in different languages historically divided and rooted in national or centre-periphery paradigms. To address these challenges, the AdriArchCult project assembled an international team of scholars to explore the interrelated dimensions of the region's architectural culture. The team's investigation focused on four interconnected domains. The first concerned architecture as an expression of territorialisation, analysing its relationship to the production of territories and its role in constructing identity and difference within the secular sphere. The second domain addressed the impact of religious transformations, exploring how the arrival of Islam and the Counter-Reformation reshaped the architectural landscape within the region's evolving confessional mosaic. The third focused on the peripatetics of architectural knowledge, investigating the eastern Adriatic's participation in European intellectual exchange, particularly through the dissemination of architectural treatises and related texts. The final domain covered architectural practice, identifying the agents, networks, and hubs that shaped the production and exchange of architectural expertise. By

addressing these themes, the AdriArchCult project shed new light on the architectural culture of the early modern eastern Adriatic, emphasising its dynamism and its integration into broader European cultural and intellectual movements.

The study of architectural culture in the early modern eastern Adriatic, which was defined by remarkable mobility, necessarily involves examining the circulation of architectural knowledge. The rise in the exportation of high-quality stone—commonly referred to as *pietra d'Istria*—facilitated the movement of ready-made building components, and of skilled professionals. This trend is especially visible in the fifteenth century, evident from the documented presence of Dalmatian and Istrian masters in major construction projects. Their contributions were often memorialised alongside those of their patrons, as attested by Juraj Dalmatinac's (Giorgio Dalmata, c. 1410–1473) 1443 signature on Šibenik Cathedral, Andrija Alešić's (Andrea Alessi, 1425–c. 1505) 1467 inscription in Trogir's baptistery, and the Ragusan Senate's 1446 public commemoration of Onofrio de la Cava (?–1455) as 'ARCHITECTO MVNICIPES' in Dubrovnik, with an inscription composed by Ciriaco d'Ancona (1391–1452). The lattermost represents the earliest known public use of the Vitruvian professional term after antiquity.

The rise of renowned architects in 15th-century Dalmatia paralleled a time of vigorous construction and the blossoming of a refined urban culture in the region. However, the defensive needs prompted by the expansion of the Ottoman Empire soon disrupted this flourishing of civic and domestic architecture. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the growing number of printed architectural treatises introduced a new medium for disseminating architectural knowledge, one increasingly dependent on the dynamics of the book market. This shift, rooted in the broader geopolitical and cultural circumstances of the early modern eastern Adriatic, is the focus of Cristiano Guarneri's book.

The research domain of the project to which this study belongs, referred to as '*the peripatetics of architectural knowledge*'—a phrase used here to describe the mobility of ideas on the art of building disseminated through books—is inspired by

the title *Discussiones peripateticae* (Basel, 1581) by Frane Petrić, a philosopher born in Cres (also known as Francesco Patrizi, 1529–1597). Petrić, a prominent Renaissance thinker, authored works such as *La città felice* (Venice, 1553), a description of an urban utopia, and *Della historia dieci dialoghi* (Venice, 1560), an epistemological treatise.

While Petrić's writings demonstrate familiarity with Vitruvius and contemporary texts on military architecture, and while he includes painters and sculptors among the *uomini illustri* (though he ranks painters and sculptors below philosophers), the history of architecture and architects, in his view, remained confined to the realm of utility. He equates architecture with practical crafts such as sock-knitting and dressmaking, thereby locating it outside the scope of legitimate historiographical inquiry. This perspective starkly contrasts with the respected recognition accorded architects in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Dalmatia.

Petrić's views also diverge from events in his native Cres, where, in 1582, the local *protto architetto e maestro* Zuan Piero Zvonarić (documented 1582–1585) was not only preferred over a generic 'Venetian architect' proposed by the Apostolic Visitor Agostino Valier (1531–1606) for the construction of a new church dedicated to Saint Mary of the Snows, but was also likely depicted in Andrea Vicentino's (1542–1618) 1585 monumental altarpiece (now lost) for the church's main apse. In the painting (replaced by a 19<sup>th</sup>-century variant), an architect is depicted designing the future Santa Maria Maggiore in the snow on Rome's Esquiline Hill, where he is surrounded by the pope and parishioners.

The status of architectural professionals in the early modern eastern Adriatic, as in Venice and other European regions, oscillated between that of honoured individuals described in sophisticated Vitruvian terms and craftsmen deemed unworthy of historical recognition. While this phenomenon is not unique, what should be emphasised is the region's full and active participation in the accompanying discourse, which contributed a significant piece to a pan-European cultural phenomenon.

At the same time, another philosophical work by an eastern Adriatic author explicitly references Vitruvius: *Dialogo della bellezza* (Venice, 1581), published under the name of the Ragusan nobleman Nicolò Vito Gozze (Nikola Vitov Gučetić). The dialogue occurs between two Ragusan noblewomen, Fiore Zuzzeri (Cvijeta Zuzorić) and Maria Gondola (Mara Gundulić), both of whom are documented in extant sources; the latter was Gozze's wife. The book is dedicated to Fiore's sister, Nika Zuzzeri, suggesting the possibility of female authorship of the ideas presented in the text. The protagonists gathered in the paradisaical environment of the Gozze family villa in Trsteno near Dubrovnik, where they engaged in philosophical discussions against the backdrop of the villa's vast garden overlooking the sea, which still exists today.

Vitruvius's name is explicitly invoked in considerations of bodily proportions in *Dialogo della bellezza*, while it is absent from similar discussions elsewhere, such as those found in *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne* (Venice, 1552) by the Tuscan author Agnolo Firenzuola. While *Dialogo della bellezza* emphasises the principles of symmetry and of harmony among the various parts of a whole, it does not explicitly address the art of building. Nonetheless, these principles were deeply embedded in the aesthetics of contemporary Dubrovnik architecture, particularly in domestic buildings—a domain traditionally associated with female activities. This connection expands our understanding of the impact of architectural treatises in the eastern Adriatic, offering a rare example of female readers engaging with Vitruvian concepts.

Thus, the discourse on architecture and related fields was undeniably a vibrant component of intellectual life in the early modern eastern Adriatic. This is substantiated by numerous examples cited in Cristiano Guarneri's study, which examines the circulation of knowledge among professionals engaged in various aspects of architectural production, as well as their patrons.

The evidence-based analysis of preserved book copies presented here involved carefully selecting titles for research and compiling the first comprehensive survey of early modern books held in eastern Adriatic libraries; the possible provenance and circulation of these volumes were also considered. Guarneri's study further pushes methodological boundaries with its in-depth examination of all evidence of use of the books, even indications other than traditional marginalia. Additionally, Guarneri has incorporated an analysis of buildings, drawing on a diverse range of sources and comparative material. Situated at the intersection of architectural history, book history, and the history of knowledge, this approach is both innovative and bold, yielding new and unexpectedly compelling results.

Thus, Guarneri's research provides a groundbreaking and methodologically innovative case study, whose value and applicability extend to other historical contexts where traditional historiography—often focused on prominent architects—has proven insufficient for generating meaningful insights. Furthermore, the book addresses the historiographical challenges posed by the region's contemporary linguistic and cultural divisions, offering a model for future research on the eastern Adriatic and other multicultural and multilingual settings across Europe, and beyond.