



Dubrovnik (pronounced [dǔbrɔ̌v̌nik]) is a Croatian city on the Adriatic Sea coast positioned at the terminal end of the Isthmus of Dubrovnik. It is one of the most prominent tourist destinations on the Adriatic, a seaport and the centre of Dubrovnik-Neretva county. Its total population is 42,641 (census 2011).[1] In 1979, the city of Dubrovnik joined the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

The prosperity of the city of Dubrovnik has always been based on maritime trade. In the Middle Ages, as the Republic of Ragusa, also known as a Maritime Republic (together with Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, Venice and other Italian cities), it became the only eastern Adriatic city-state to rival Venice. Supported by its wealth and skilled diplomacy, the city achieved a remarkable level of development, particularly during the 15th and 16th centuries. Although demilitarised in the 1970s with the intent of forever protecting it from war devastation, in 1991, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, it was besieged by Serb-Montenegrin forces for 7 months and heavily damaged by shelling.

In Croatian, the city is known as Dubrovnik; in Italian as Ragusa, and its historical name in Greek is Raiyia (Ραιγία) or Ragousa (Ραγούσα).

The current Croatian name was officially adopted in 1918 after the fall of Austria–Hungary. It is also referred to as Dubrovnik in the first official document of the treaty with the Ban of Bosnia Ban Kulin.

Historical lore indicates that Ragusa (Dubrovnik) was founded in the 7th century on a rocky island named Laus, which provided shelter for Dalmatian refugees from the nearby city of Epidaurus. The romance-dalmatian founders were escaping from the Slavic invasions.[2]

Another theory appeared recently, based on new archaeological excavations. New findings (a Byzantine basilica from 8th century and parts of the city walls) contradict the traditional theory.

The size of the old basilica clearly indicates that there was quite a large settlement at the time. There is also increasing support in the scientific community for the theory that major construction of Ragusa took place before the current era. This "Greek theory" has been boosted by recent findings of numerous Greek artifacts during excavations in the Port of Dubrovnik. Also, drilling below the main city road has revealed natural sand, contradicting the theory of Laus (Lausa) island.

Dr. Antun Ničetić, in his book "Povijest dubrovačke luke" (History of the Port of Dubrovnik), expounds the theory that Dubrovnik was established by Greek sailors. A key element in this theory is the fact that ships in ancient times travelled about 45-50 nautical miles per day, and required a sandy shore to pull out of water for the rest period during the night. The ideal rest site would have a fresh water source in its vicinity. Dubrovnik has both, and is situated almost halfway between the two known Greek settlements of Budva and Korčula (95 NM is the distance between them).