

## “Mountain Imagery in Genoese, Ragusan, and Venetian Cityscapes”

For maritime merchant republics, the predominant geographical features are harbors, the inverse of mountains. Yet depictions of maritime merchant republics feature mountains in significant ways, varying by artist, audience, and subject. This paper traces depictions of mountains in cityscapes of Genoa, Ragusa (Dubrovnik), and Venice from the pilgrimage chronicles of the late fifteenth to late sixteenth centuries, to the proud and self-conscious iconography of the three republics at their primes, to depictions by nineteenth-century visitors to those cities in their post-independence eras.

Mountains for Genoa were primarily threatening. Genoa's narrow littoral was constantly in tension with the mountain strongholds of neighboring lords and the hostile lands beyond those mountains. A belt of hilltop forts was necessary to enforce Genoese sovereignty. Ragusa's location at the edge of the karst provided an essential opening to the Adriatic for Ragusa's extensive mountainous hinterland, just as the villages there provisioned Ragusa. Thus for Ragusa mountains signified a part of the larger economic and political ecosystem rather than a buffer zone against hostile powers. Venice, located in a lagoon at the edge of the extensive plain of the Po River, has no mountains anywhere near. Yet mountain images occur in Venetian cityscapes, either when the artist was unfamiliar with Venice, or when mountains signified elements of political iconography according with that artist's agenda.

Exploration of mountains in the context of maritime merchant republic iconography expands our understanding of urban iconography and adds to our inventory of meaning in mountain imagery.

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