

The narrative on the battle of Dubica from Petar Berislavic's Vita is a fictional story

Summary

The author relates the peak of Petar's success to the famous victory over Ottomans near Dubica on 16 August 1513 and devotes to it some dozen pages of the Vita. The story on the victory may be put apart from the context as a self-enclosed whole that emphasizes a key event in a glorified life of the hero, a justification of the social honors and achievements. However, its length and completeness, which goes beyond traditional forms of vita, is also opposed to the fragmented and circumstantial nature of the data concerning the actual historical event. Despite its reliance on two known historical sources, the entire story is a literary reconstruction of historical developments and is based more on motivational guesses than on authentic or empirical facts. The story unfolds after the model of historical representations of Hunyadi's victories over Ottomans by Bonfini or of Skanderbeg's by Barleti. Discrepancies between space and time indicate a chronotopic construction of the story based on the imprecise depictions of the time. The author has derived the date of the victory from a chronicle by Tomasic, which he used on several occasions in the Vita, and the very description of the battle follows Istvanffy's account in his Hungarian Histories. Such established correlations undermine the allegation by Fortis, hence, while excluding Vrancic, they confirm Mrnavic as the only authentic author of the Vita. By presenting the battle at Dubica and its outcome as a result of divine providence, with only ten loss in life among Ban's soldiers, the author has managed to depict a hero who has succeeded to revive to an extent the glory of Matijas's time. This has secured his glory among the population of the kingdom, who started carving Petar's name (with exclamation marks) over the city; and it has also secured him a Pope's gift, an embellished sword, as a confirmation of his standing in the Christian world. Of course, this is all just a writer's fiction, an epideictic discourse in which significations of time have determined the standpoint of narration from a long distance not only in the sense of narrative time, but also of Antun Vrancic's death.

Keywords: fiction, narrative, falsification, plagiat, Mrnavic, Vrancic, Berislavic, Dubica.