



The Church of Saint Blaise in Ancona

Artistic Patronage of a Confraternity
founded by Schiavoni





Publisher

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb
FF press

Under the Patronage of Arcidiocesi di Ancona-Osimo



For the publisher

Vesna Vlahović-Štetić

Peer Reviewers

Barbara Wisch
Konrad Eisenbichler
Jasenska Gudelj

Cover page design

Boris Bui

Cover photograph

Church of Saint Blaise, interior, around 1930, Ancona, Fondo Corsini

Graphic design and layout

Boris Bui

Circulation

300 copies

Printed by

Tiskara Zelina, Sv. Ivan Zelina

ISBN

978-953-175-698-3

CIP data are available in the digital catalogue of the National and University Library in Zagreb, no. 001070339

This work has been partially supported by Croatian Science Foundation under the project number 2305 - *Visualizing Nationhood: the Schiavoni/Illyrian Confraternities and Colleges in Italy and the Artistic Exchange with South East Europe (15th - 18th centuries)* and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Croatia





Giuseppe Capriotti

The Church of Saint Blaise in Ancona
Artistic Patronage of a Confraternity
founded by Schiavoni

FF press

Zagreb 2020







Contents

Preface by Jasenka Gudelj	7
Introduction	11
Chapter 1	
Confraternities of Schiavoni and Albanians in the Marche	17
Schiavoni and Albanians in the Marche: Similarities and Differences	17
The Saint of the Albanians: Saint Venera	20
The Saints of the Schiavoni: Saint Blaise and Saint Jerome	22
Chapter 2	
Saint Blaise and Saint Jerome as the Central Figures in Artistic Patronage by the Confraternities of Schiavoni in Ascoli Piceno and Pesaro	26
The Polyptych by Pietro Alemanno for the Schiavoni of Ascoli Piceno.	26
The Chapel of Saint Peter and the New Oratory of Saint Jerome of the Schiavoni in Pesaro.	29
Chapter 3	
The Confraternity of Saint Blaise in Ancona. Traces of the Schiavoni Phase in the Fifteenth Century.	33
The Documentary Sources of a Case Study	33
The Schiavoni Origins of the Confraternity: The History of a “Painting”	36
The Schiavoni Origins of the Confraternity: Controversial Documents	38
A Second Confraternity of Schiavoni in Ancona and the “Quattrocento adriatico”	44
Chapter 4	
On the Trail of the Old Chapel Altarpiece of the Schiavoni of Ancona. Giovanni Antonio da Pesaro, Luca di Costantino, and other Adriatic Comparisons	48
The Compartments of an Altarpiece by Giovanni Antonio da Pesaro.	48
Adriatic Comparisons: Saint Blaise for Ragusans on the Western Adriatic Coast	53
The 1543 Altarpiece by Luca di Costantino.	57
Chapter 5	
The Church of Saint Blaise in 1718. The Saints of the Schiavoni on the Altars and Reliquary of Saint Blaise	60
A Wandering Confraternity	60
The Church of Saint Blaise in 1718 and the Saints of the Schiavoni on the Altars	64
The Reliquary of Saint Blaise	68





Chapter 6

The Church of Saint Blaise in 1748. Giovan Battista Urbini, Francesco Maria Ciaraffoni, Gioacchino Varlè, Bernardino Bini, and Domenico Simonetti, called Magatta	72
Demolition and Reconstruction	72
The Architect: Giovan Battista Urbini (1691-1761)	75
The Decorators: Francesco Maria Ciaraffoni (1720-1802) and Gioacchino Varlè (1731-1806)	78
The Altarpiece by Domenico Simonetti, called Magatta (1685-1754)	84
Francesco Trionfi (1706-1772) as a Benefactor of the Church	89
The Other Altarpieces: Francesco Maria Ciaraffoni and Bernardino Bini	91
The Memory of the Schiavoni Origins in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries	95
Appendix of Documents	97
Bibliography	129
Index of Names and Places	144



PREFACE

In 1520, Tiziano Vecellio painted an altarpiece for Alvise Gozze (Gozzi, Lujo Gučetić), a noble merchant from Dubrovnik (Ragusa), which was destined for the high altar of San Francesco ad Alto, the Observant Franciscan church in Ancona, now in the Pinacoteca civica Francesco Podesti. In the painting, the merchant is presented to the Madonna and Child by the patron saint of Dubrovnik, Saint Blaise, in the presence of Saint Francis, to whom the church is dedicated. This altarpiece remains the most significant artwork commissioned by an Eastern Adriatic individual in which his origin sharply defines his identity. This is also literally spelled out in the fictive handwritten note at the bottom of the image that proudly incorporates the name and the native city of both the donor – “Aloyxius Gotius Ragusinus” – and the painter.

The cosmopolitan society of Early Modern Ancona particularly valued the contributions of foreign merchants. The commercial elites included Ragusans and other foreigners who were, among other things, also responsible for major artistic commissions of prominent altarpieces in the city’s churches from artists such as Titian and Pellegrino Tibaldi, just to name two. The Ragusan group included nobles – members of the Gozze/Gučetić, Gondola/Gundulić and Zuzzeri/Zuzorić families – and other citizens of the East Adriatic maritime republic, like the Bosdari/Bozdari, Perlizzi and Vodopich/Vodopić. The rise to wealth and, finally, to the power of the latter group is particularly well documented in the 17th centuries. In that period, the orientation towards Western routes in the Mediterranean trade and the terrible earthquake that almost destroyed Dubrovnik in 1667 changed the fortunes of both Adriatic seaports, permitting these families to buy their way into the aristocracy.

This elite immigration to Ancona, reciprocated by a similar presence of Marchigian merchants in Dubrovnik, is paralleled by the more massive arrival of waves of refugees from the Eastern Adriatic escaping plague, famine, and war. Between the 15th and 16th century they settled in the smaller centres in the Marche, such as Fermo, Pesaro, Ascoli Piceno, Loreto, Camerano and so on. A number of confraternities of Schiavoni and Albanesi were founded across the region in response to the hostile environment of the host society; their collective identity was also expressed through the works of art they commissioned. After initial resistance, these Schiavoni/Illyrian organizations rarely maintained the proto-national character over the *longue durée*, their members assimilating with the local population and their devotion to patron saints changing to more universal cults.

In this book, Giuseppe Capriotti has brilliantly explored this interplay between the different groups and individuals of South-Slavic origin living in the Early Modern Marche by focusing on the definition and embellishment of places of collective worship. Particularly intriguing are his findings about Ancona, where the Ragusan Republic was seen as an equal partner. Here, as well, Ragusan identity markers, such as confraternities and churches dedicated to its patron saint, represented a point of attraction even for Eastern Adriatic immigrants who did not necessarily originate from territories under Ragusan control.

Giuseppe Capriotti’s investigation has been conducted within the research project *Visualizing Nationhood: the Schiavoni/Illyrian Confraternities and Colleges in Italy and the Artistic Exchange with South-East Europe (15th - 18th c.)* financed by the Croatian Science Foundation





between 2015 and 2018. The outcomes of the project – this book being one of the most significant – have strongly benefitted from cross-referencing different case studies, i.e. proto-national confraternities and institutions of Eastern-Adriatic immigrants across Italy. The comparison of the artistic patronage of Schiavoni/Illyrian confraternities in cosmopolitan societies, such as Loreto, Rome, and Venice, has demonstrated the uniqueness of Ancona. The fact that the research team consisted of both Croatian and Italian scholars, enabled a fruitful dialogue between national historiographies and different perspectives on paradigms, such as immigration, proto-national identity, confraternity studies or, closer to art history, centre/periphery, Adriatic *koiné* and even Schiavoni artists vis-à-vis the artistic heritage of the Schiavoni immigrants in Early Modern Italy.

Giuseppe Capriotti's discussion of Schiavoni/Illyrians artistic patronage in the Marche is a new and valuable contribution towards a fuller comprehension of all the above-mentioned issues. His profound understanding of the art as an expression of religious needs, as a social marker and as a product on the market is eloquently articulated in the pages that follow. Unearthing circumstances of public and private devotion to particular saints, not only Saint Blaise, Saint Jerome and Saint Venera, but also Saint Doimus, has brought to light deep societal changes regarding Eastern-Adriatic immigrants. The investigation into the memory in later centuries of the Schiavoni origins of a lay confraternity provided new insights into the process of the mythologizing a sodality's origins, a process well known for other social groups, especially families. With all this contributions, Capriotti's research provides a crucial foundation for a large-scale art historical discussion of the lower Adriatic area, where the Venetian art market acted as a magnet in the Early Modern period. Still, the situation is not as simple, when considering the extreme mobility of artists and materials and the artworks themselves as well as the artistic and architectural expertise circulating between the two coasts.

Capriotti perceptively moves between analyses of visual art and architecture, and a careful reading of archival sources. In the process, he has firmly established that the 18th-century church of Saint Blaise in Ancona is the work of the architect Giovan Battista Urbini, who is worthy of further study. His research has revealed commissions of confraternity of Saint Blaise to many talented, though little-known artists like the painter Domenico Simonetti, called Magatta. Capriotti's investigation of devotional cults, including devotion to relics, has resulted in the most fortunate find of the precious early 17th-century reliquary of Saint Blaise, commissioned by the same confraternity. Therefore, Capriotti not only contextualizes new sets of data on previously unknown and understudied works of art and architecture, but also, through the study of commissions related to the Schiavoni/Illyrian confraternities in the Marche, is able to describe in a highly original way the complicated tensions between collectives and individuals, locals and foreigners, nobles and citizens in Early Modern Italy. His holistic vision that takes into consideration an extensive set of problems, approaches and perspectives, in my opinion, should be considered exemplary and a stimulus for future research that will hopefully follow.

Jasenka Gudelj

