

Visualizing Past in a Foreign Country:
Schiavoni/Illyrian Confraternities and
Colleges in Early Modern Italy in
comparative perspective



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ABSTRACTS

The Politics of Images, Saints, Relics and Books: Schiavoni/Illyrians in Early Modern Italy

People from the area broadly coinciding with present-day Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and coastal Montenegro, sharing a common Slavic language and the Catholic faith, migrated in a steady flux to Italy throughout the Early Modern period. The reasons behind the move varied, spanning from the often-quoted Ottoman conquests in the Balkans or plague epidemics and famines to the formation of merchant and diplomatic networks, as well as ecclesiastic or other professional career moves. Moreover, a common form of short-term travel to Italy on the part of the so-called Schiavoni or Illyrians was the pilgrimage to Loreto or Rome, while the universities of Padua and Bologna, as well as monastery schools, attracted Schiavoni/Illyrian students of different social extractions.

The first known organized groups described as Schiavoni are mentioned in Italy from the fifteenth century. Through the Early Modern period, Schiavoni/Illyrian confraternities existed in Rome, Venice, throughout the Marche region and in Udine. As was the case with proto-national confraternities throughout Early Modern Europe, these organizations served as a key regulative societal instrument of integration into the tissue of the host society, their charity work designed around helping the sick, the poor, slaves, students, and pilgrims of their nation.

Based on the “national” key, such confraternities inevitably formulated their identity on their “otherness”: the prerogatives for becoming a member, besides good social standing, were a certain area of origin and familiarity with the Slavonic language spoken in this area. This inspired the study of geography and grammar, resulting in maps and books, but also the formulation of certain narratives, both textual and visual, constructing the prominence of the nation through deeds of great men and national saints and their relics. Moreover, the rulers of

the host societies often used Schiavoni/Illyrian institutions as tokens of their politics in South-East Europe: heroic Schiavoni shielding the Europe from the Turks or missionaries in the Slavic lands were the roles often interpreted by members of the Schiavoni communities.

All these aspects mark a multifaceted and ever-changing image of the Early Modern *natio* in question, providing an insight on the circulation of taste and knowledge and enriching the understanding of the role of artistic heritage in the construction of proto-national identity in the European context.

Venetian painters and Dalmatian patrons: minor masters in the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni

The decoration of the *sala superiore* of the Scuola di San Giorgio e Trifone, initiated in 1586 and executed throughout the final decades of the 16th and the first half of the 17th century, coincided with a period of economic prosperity of the Dalmatian confraternity and its members. The extensive decorative campaign included the construction of wooden stalls along the sides of the meeting hall, coffered ceiling with figures of the confraternity's patron saints, and a series of paintings placed above the stalls featuring religious compositions complemented by portraits of confraternity members. The ambitious decorative programme of the *sala superiore*, which must be considered in the light of the scuola's status of a "small" confraternity (*scuola piccola*), reflects not only collective aspirations of the Dalmatian community within the vibrant Venetian society, but also individual desires of its members to leave a permanent mark in the history of their confraternity. Subject matter of canvases adorning the *sala superiore* reveal an eagerness to provide an unambiguous visual connection with the confraternity members' Dalmatian origin, but their stylistic features remain strongly linked to the Venetian painterly tradition of the 16th and early 17th century. The paper seeks to address certain attributive problems related to individual paintings in the Scuola di San Giorgio e Trifone, as well as assess the decorative campaign of the *sala superiore* in the context of similar endeavours commissioned by Venetian confraternities in the same period.

Saint Blaise between Dubrovnik and Genoa

The construction of the Ragusan “national” chapel in the Dominican church of Santa Maria di Castello in Genoa started in 1581 and the works lasted until 1600. The altarpiece with the Martyrdom of St. Blaise in the presence of the saints Nicholas and Jerome was painted by Aurelio Lomi from Pisa (1556-1622) in 1600. The painting remained in its original location until 1969, when the work of transforming the chapel of S. Biagio into the museum was underway. After restoration, it was in the chapel of the Assunta and now it is placed at the museum.

The paper will concentrate on the analysis of both archival sources and the surviving artworks, exploring the mechanisms of patronage and the possible existence of a Ragusan confraternity in the Ligurian port. Moreover, questions to be addressed include the issue of placement of a Ragusan national stronghold in the Dominican church, its role within the urban situation of Genoa and its connections to Dubrovnik, as well as comparison to other Schiavoni/Illyrian organizations in Italy.

Working for Popes and the Schiavoni: the Painter Gapić from Cres

The paper presents a number of archival data related to painter and *stucco* master Ivan Gapić, known in late Roman *Cinquecento* as Giovanni da Cherso or Giovanni Schiavone. His career has been significantly related to the circle of Taddeo and Federico Zuccari in whose *bottega* Gapić probably received his elementary training, and remained in close relation with Zuccari, sharing several of their commissions. This enabled Gapić to be recognized by some of the most demanding and high-ranked commissioners of *Cinquecento* Rome, such as cardinals Alessandro Farnese and Ippolito d'Este, popes Sixtus IV and Gregory XIII and even Vasari dedicated him a few words of approval. Coming from the insular town of Cres in northern Adriatic, Gapić was a member of the St. Jerome confraternity for which he also painted a (lost) figure of the patron saint.

The paper will outline this forgotten Schiavone's career within complex structures of late Roman *Cinquecento*, particularly related to position of associates within greater masters' orbits. Paintings that should be attributed to Gapić indicate a style that expectedly comes out of Zuccaris' *Cinquecento* amalgam, while his *stucco* works reflect the iconographical and formal impact of the Tridentine shift; earlier commissions variate grotesque repertoire, while those dated in Gapić's later years are fashioned after geometrical early-Christian decorative models.

“Rito greco, lingua dalmatica”: Ruthenians in Early Modern Rome

After signing the Union of Brest in 1596 that brought large portion of the Orthodox East Slavs under papal jurisdiction, it took several decades for the Ruthenians (Belarusian and Ukrainian) to secure their own national church in Rome. In 1641 Pope Urban VIII entrusted the church of Santi Sergio e Bacco in Rome to the Byzantine-Rite Basilian monks from regions that now form part of Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. The establishment of the Ruthenian national church went hand in hand with the creation of a college that over the years acted as a hospice for the East Slavs that visited Rome. Yet SS. Sergio e Bacco also differed substantially from other national churches that predated it. Although the church was assigned to the Ruthenians, the latter themselves were one among several peoples of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, along with Poles, who already had their own national church in Rome. SS. Sergio e Bacco was additionally the seat of a procurator representing the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church – a *sui juris* church in union with Rome. Moreover, the procurator invariably was a member of the Basilian Order that provided Ruthenian church both with monks and bishops. Such triple overlap of converging and at times conflicting allegiances and responsibilities was further complicated by a direct oversight of the place by the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide on one hand, and by an increasingly Italian (and thus Latin) presence at this Byzantine-Rite church: locals from the neighborhood developed a strong devotion to a “copy” of the miraculous Ruthenian icon of Our Lady of Żyrowice located in the church. SS. Sergio e Bacco presents us with a rare scenario of how a rather small community forged its own identity while carefully navigating a complex world of church hierarchies, institutions, cross-national politics, and of other minorities in Early Modern Rome.

I cittadini e le chiese della Serenissima a Roma nel primo evo moderno

La presenza della Serenissima a Roma era costituita da due distinti filoni: da un lato, dalle rappresentanze religiose, politiche e istituzionali, tutte allocate nel complesso architettonico di San Marco, meglio noto come palazzo di Venezia; dall'altro dalla variegata comunità dei veneziani che, prevalentemente artigiani e mercanti, si insediarono nell'itinerario ideale che portava da Campo dei Fiori e via del Pellegrino sino a Borgo e poi direttamente a San Pietro.

La presenza dei veneziani a Roma è consistente, anche perché con tale definizione si intendevano i cittadini che provenivano dall'interno dei confini politici e giurisdizionali della Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia, anche quando gli stessi confini nel tempo erano variati. E allora per tutto l'evo moderno, venivano considerati veneziani, molti artigiani, quali orafi, vetrai, argentieri, orologiai, armigeri, indoratori e merciai, anche se provenienti da città diverse, quali veneziani, vicentini, veronesi, bresciani e bergamaschi. A queste specializzazioni, presenti numerose nell'area tra il Tevere e Via Giulia, vanno aggiunte anche le botteghe degli incisori e dei lavoratori del piombo, spesso anch'esse venete e dalmate, dei librai e stampatori, degli intagliatori di legname, anche qui monopolio o quasi di bergamaschi, friulani e trentini e degli "spaccapietra" ancora dalmati e istriani. Come noto, alla presenza dei muratori dalmati, molto consistente nella metà del Quattrocento, si sostituisce nel Cinquecento quella fiorentina, a sua volta rimpiazzata alla fine del secolo da quella lombarda-ticinese, che assumerà il monopolio nei cantieri romani. Nell'ambito degli appartenenti alla Serenissima, bisogna poi ancora menzionare la presenza, nei cantieri barocchi, di un'alta percentuale di falegnami e muratori bergamaschi, che sovente vengono contemporaneamente inclusi sia nell'ambito delle maestranze lombarde sia nell'orbita della Serenissima. Alla presenza veneziana, si devono associare le chiese di Sant'Eligio degli Orefici e di Santa Lucia, ancora insistenti nell'area di via del Pellegrino.

Confraternities, immigrants and artistic production of the „Illyrians“ in the Marche (XV-XVI cent.)

The paper gives an overview of the two years of research of the artistic production with possible connections with Schiavoni confraternities in the Marche region. Unlike the Albanian communities, identifiable for their choice of Saint Venera as their patron saint, the Schiavoni confraternities are more difficult to identify due to a greater variety of patron saints, not exclusively „national“, such as Jerome, George, Blasius, but also Saint Peter the Martyr, Saint Sebastian and Saint Germano. Historical data also seem to show an early assimilation of these confraternities in the age of Counter-Reformation: the „ethnic“ element is attenuated, sometimes new post-Tridentine devotions, such as the Holy Sacrament, overlap with those associated with the earlier national saints. A strong identity, recognizable by the images, seems to have resisted until the 15th century, but not much later. Moreover, in this research, the historical series the „art of confraternities“ is crossed with the „art of Schiavoni artists“, a much more substantial and documented category in the Marche of the 15th and 16th century: from the Schiavoni stonecutters and sculptors from Fermo, Ancona, Fano and Pesaro, to painters like Giambono da Ragusa and Marchisiano Giorgio da Tolentino, to the woodworker Giovanni Schiavo.

The wooden compartments with stories of St Blaise by Giovanni Antonio da Pesaro: a work commissioned by the Schiavoni confraternity of Ancona?

The aim of this paper is to analyze the phenomenon of the migration of the cult and the iconography of St. Blaise toward the Italian Adriatic coast, thanks to the movement of individuals or groups of people from the Dubrovnik Republic, where the saint was venerated as patron. In the painting of this city, in effect, between the 15th and the 18th century, St. Blaise is always represented as a bishop with the little model of the city in his hands, to demonstrate the protection offered by the saint to the Republic. For different reasons and patronages, the cult of St. Blaise is quite spread in Italy and Europe, but on the Italian Adriatic coast, in particular, it was promoted by citizens who moved from Dubrovnik for business motives, as is testified, for instance, by the paintings commissioned to Titian by Alvise Gozzi (Ancona, in the Marche) and to Padovanino by Nikola Radulović (Polignano a Mare, in Puglia), both Ragusans. The core of the paper will be the analysis of wooden compartments executed by Giovanni Antonio da Pesaro (15th century), representing the stories of St. Blaise, as a probable commission of the documented confraternity of St. Blaise of Ancona. The compartments, now preserved in different museums and collections, could be parts of the altarpiece of the chapel of the confraternity of Schiavoni in the church of St. Dominic.

Giuseppe Maria Mitelli's etching *Gran prodezza di soldato croatto*

The etching *Gran prodezza di soldato croatto*, made by Bolognese engraver Giuseppe Maria Mitelli in 1684, depicts a Croatian cavalry soldier who in the heat of the battle beheaded both an Ottoman horseman and his horse in one stroke. The etching has always been listed in Mitelli's catalogues, without any further information.

The paper will look into iconographic and narrative sources of this image of bravery. Also, the etching will be associated with actual battles it may have referred to. Finally, Mitelli's commission will be interpreted as the propaganda effort of the Illyrian-Hungarian College in Bologna.

Bolognese fame of Arpadian King: Krčelić, Zaniboni, Minelli and *Compendio in rime della vita, e di alcuni miracoli di S. Ladislao re d' Ungheria*

In 1738, the Illyrian-Hungarian College of Bologna published a booklet with Italian verses containing episodes of life of the holy Hungarian king Ladislas. It was, in a way, a product of cultural collaboration presented by a College alumnus Baltazar Adam Krčelić – the future Zagreb canon and famous historian – and Bolognese poet Antonio Zaniboni, founder of the Accademia de' Nascosti. Its frontispiece was adorned with an engraving by Bolognese artist Sante Manelli, representing the holy ruler on horseback, lacerating a rock with his lance and miraculously unsealing a hidden spring. This, in the local Pannonian context, quite uncommon solution can thus be regarded as a Bolognese contribution to the Ladislas's iconography. Indeed, it served as a direct inspiration for a large altar painting, attributed to the Austrian painter Michelangelo Unterberger, that found its way to the Jesuit church in Marosvásárhely (present Târgu Mureș), in a remote, Transylvanian corner of the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom.

Visual and literal formation of Saint Jerome as the national saint in the Eastern Adriatic Coast in the Late Middle Ages

In Croatian historiography, the cult of Saint Jerome holds the position of a national cult and his veneration through the centuries is often interpreted as an expression of ethnic and proto-national ideas. As much as the cult of Saint Jerome, in the Late Middle Ages, can be connected to the global popularity of the saint, serving as a perfect model for humanists of the ideal of ascetic lifestyle, the cult in the Eastern Adriatic Coast, especially Dalmatia, has its own characteristics which contributed to the formation of the cult of as an expression of the common ethnic identity. This, for example, can be seen in the Schiavoni confraternities founded in Italy under his protection. While Jerome was also praised as a church father and the translator of the Bible, in Dalmatia his veneration is further connected to the beliefs that he was born somewhere in the territory of Dalmatia, which leads to an additional myth attributing the invention of the Glagolitic letters to the Saint as well. This paper deals with the perception of the cult of Saint Jerome in the Late Middle Ages in the Eastern Adriatic Coast, focusing on the visual and literal elements which expressed Jerome's "local" affiliation. Furthermore, this paper will sketch the main determinants of Jerome's (proto) national cult, reflecting upon the historical and the political contexts in which this formation occurs.

Searching for Schiavone authors - Three cases from Korčula

The art history term of „Schiavone“ – used for an artist born in Croatia, or Dalmatia, and active abroad, mostly in Italy – is almost completely absent from the Croatian literary history. No such history will, however, dare to omit the category of „Croatian authors outside their homeland“, proudly listing there, for example, Janus Pannonius, Joannes Staphyleus, Trypho Dalmata (Bisanti), Simon Aretophylus Tragurinus Dalmata, Juraj Dragišić (Georgius Benignus), Philippa Lazea (Polana Illyrica), Joannes Polycarpus Severitanus, Franciscus Patricius, Matthaeus Ferchius Vegliensis. A certain anxiety nevertheless connected with this category of writers can be recognized in the need to stress that „the work of those Croatian Latinists who spent most of their lives (...) in foreign countries is an integral part of the uniform(!) organism of Croatian literature“ (Gortan and Vratović, 1971) – the same anxious need that produced the article „What makes Croatian Latinists ours?“ (Pavličić 1991). The affiliation to national literature becomes even more tenuous in writers belonging to the second generation of immigrants or born from mixed marriages, such as Franciscus (Pescenius) Niger or Giulio Delminio Camillo. Well, then – what should we do with „Schiavone authors“? What do we see when we decide to look at them as a social group? What are the risks, what are the gains? The reinterpretative possibilities of the „Schiavone author“ as a social category will be demonstrated on cases of three intellectuals from the island of Korčula connected with the Illyrian Congregation of St. Jerome in Rome during the 16th century: Jakov Baničević, Nikola Petrović, Antun Rosaneo.

Il Morlacco di Alberto Fortis – “buon selvaggio” nel cuore dell’Europa illuminata

Nella mia tesi di dottorato, pubblicata in lingua croata (Nino Raspudić, *Jadranski polu(orijentalizam): prikazi Hrvata u talijanskoj književnosti*, Naklada Jurčić, Zagreb, 2010) ho analizzato ampiamente la tradizione, dominante nella letteratura e pubblicistica italiana, di guardare i Croati (e la sponda orientale dell’Adriatico in generale) come gli Altri rispetto alla propria civiltà, considerata “europea” e superiore. Quel “semiorientalismo transadriatico” possiede la maggior parte delle caratteristiche dell’orientalismo generale, descritto da Edward Said, nonché del “balcanismo”, nel senso in cui quel termine è stato usato da Maria Todorova.

Il primo fondamento di questa tradizione si trova nel libro di Alberto Fortis (Padova 1741 – Bologna 1803), naturalista e scrittore padovano, intitolato *Viaggio in Dalmazia* e pubblicato a Venezia nel 1774. L’opera di Fortis ha avuto grande successo non solo in Italia: Goethe, Herder, Merimée sono stati soltanto alcuni tra i molti entusiasti lettori del libro, che aveva colpito l’immaginazione del pubblico colto europeo, appagandone il gusto dell’esotico e del primitivo, che era tanto di moda nel tardo Settecento. Fortis ha presentato il suo viaggio in Dalmazia come scoperta di un popolo nuovo e un paese sconosciuto.

La parte più interessante del libro, che gli aveva procurato tanta fama, parla degli usi e dei costumi dei Morlacchi. Con questo termine di origine veneta (abbreviazione di mauro valacchi: i valacchi neri) erano indicati quegli abitanti della Dalmazia che non vivevano nelle città costiere, bensì nell’entroterra montagnoso, e parlavano l’«illirico».

Tra i modelli principali della costruzione dell’immagine di Croato come appartenente a una cultura subordinata nella tradizione del “semiorientalismo transadriatico” cronologicamente primo era il modello di “buon selvaggio”, inaugurato da Fortis. Analizzeremo quel modello e i meccanismi del suo funzionamento nella produzione dell’immagine dell’Altro inferiore.

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