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

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

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Saints' Relics in Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni: An Anti-Ottoman Pantheon*

Ana Marinković**

Abstract

The intensified military campaigns against the Ottomans in the second half of the fifteenth century palpably influenced the cult of saints venerated in Scuola di S. Giorgio e Trifone in Venice (also degli Schiavoni), both by assimilating new saints, as well as strengthening the existing cults through indulgences and relic acquisitions. The initial pair of patron saints – St George and St Tryphon, the city patrons of Bar and Kotor – delineated the geographical area where the majority of the initial confraternity members originated from, that is, Venetian Albania. The inclusion of St Jerome, the patron of Dalmatia, to the confraternal pantheon by Cardinal Bessarion's indulgence issued in 1464, in addition

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to rounding up the holy patronage to all the Eastern Adriatic Venetian dependencies, also marked the beginning of a strong anti-Ottoman motivation in the Scuola's hagiographic horizon. The triple endowment of the Scuola in 1502 – relic acquisition, granting of an indulgence, and commission of Carpaccio's monumental cycle – continued to work on the same line, and added to the practical aspect of spiritual support to the members of Venetian troops coming from the Eastern Adriatic. However, the saints whose relics are today kept in the altar of the lower hall, including the patron saint of the Republic of Dubrovnik, point to an even wider devotional agenda, possibly arranged after the Battle of Lepanto, as the comparative analysis of the reliquaries show.

Le campagne militari contro gli Ottomani intensificatesi nella seconda metà del XV secolo influenzarono palesemente il culto dei santi venerati nella Scuola di S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni, sia attraverso l'assimilazione di nuovi santi, sia tramite il rafforzamento del culto già esistente verso le indulgenze e l'impulso all'acquisizione di reliquie. La prima coppia di santi patroni – San Giorgio e San Trifone, patroni della città di Bar e Cattaro – delimitano l'area geografica da cui proviene la maggior parte dei membri della confraternita, cioè l'Albania veneta. L'inclusione nell'indulgenza concessa dal cardinal Bessarione nel 1464 di San Girolamo, protettore della Dalmazia, oltre a estendere il patronato del santo a tutte le dipendenze veneziane dell'Adriatico orientale, segnò anche l'ingresso di una forte spinta anti-ottomana nell'orizzonte agiografico della Scuola. La triplice dotazione della Scuola nel 1502 – l'acquisizione della reliquia, la concessione dell'indulgenza e la commissione del ciclo monumentale di Carpaccio – si pose sulla stessa linea, concorrendo al sostegno spirituale verso i membri delle truppe veneziane che provenivano dall'est Adriatico. I santi le cui reliquie sono oggi conservate nell'altare della sala inferiore, tra cui il santo patrono della Repubblica di Dubrovnik, indicano tuttavia un'agenda devozionale ancora più ampia, forse organizzata dopo la battaglia di Lepanto, come mostra l'analisi comparativa dei reliquiari.

The saints venerated in Scuola di S. Giorgio e Trifone (also degli Schiavoni) was a dynamic group assimilating new members as the Ottoman threat advanced along the Eastern Adriatic in the later fifteenth and the early sixteenth century. The anti-Ottoman subtext in devotion to the confraternal patron saints may be observed in the iconography of Carpaccio's fresco cycle today situated in the lower hall of the Scuola, but other means of strengthening the cults (such as papal indulgences and acquiring new relics) played a considerably more visible role in the military agenda of encouraging and rewarding the soldiers coming from the other side of the Adriatic. Moreover, the increasingly even geographical distribution of the Eastern-Adriatic saintly protectors' provenance, as well as the direct impetus for their veneration coming from the major military events in the Eastern-Mediterranean campaigns, indicate the decisive role of the anti-Ottoman context to the formation of the Scuola's devotional horizon.

The importance of saints' cults as a reflection of the social and political backdrop of the Scuola's activities was tangible from its very outset. Namely, the supplication by the brethren to the Council of Ten of 19 May 1451, as well as the immediate Council's decision to confirm the foundation of the new confraternity, expressly refer to two saintly protectors, St George and

St Tryphon¹. The same couple of heavenly protectors appears in the opening chapters of the *mariegola* composed three years later, where the brethren oblige themselves to observe the feast days of their two patrons². The choice of patron saints was related to the provenance of the confraternity's members, who, according to the testamentary legations to the Scuola, in major part (47%) came from the cities of Kotor and Bar in Venetian Albania (today the coast of Montenegro)³. It is important to stress that, whereas the role of St Tryphon as the patron saint of Kotor has largely been recognized in the historiography on the Scuola, the other Scuola's patron, St George, was only sporadically mentioned in the context of his patronage of Bar⁴. This is probably due to the fact that Bar fell to the Ottomans in 1571, and thus, unlike St Tryphon, St George was not present in the subsequent imagery of the Scuola as the civic patron⁵. Nevertheless, the two initial patron saints are clearly localizing the hagiographical horizon of the beginnings of the Scuola in the area of so-called Venetian Albania.

However, as the military activities on the Eastern Adriatic as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean intensified, the 'Christianizing' or 'anti-infidel' potential of these cults soon came to the fore and was used in a context related to the

¹ «Che possa fare una schuola, secondo la condicione dele altre schuole pizole, de questa nostra gloriosa citade, la qual i diti supplicanti intende de fare ad honer de miser san Zorzi, et miser san Trifon, nella chiezia de miser san Zane del tempio» (19 May 1451); Archivio di Stato di Venezia (henceforth ASV), *Consiglio dei Dieci*, Delib. Miste XIV, 47v.

² «De honorar le nostre feste, cioue' el giorno de misier san Zorzi, et il giorno de Misier san Trifon» (26 Jan 1454); ASV, *Provveditori di comun*, Registri, I serie (A-Z), pezzo P. *Matricola* (henceforth *Matricola*), cap. 22, 583v; published in *Il primo statuto* 1975, pp. 5-6. The confraternity's *mariegola*, composed and approved by the Venetian authorities in the year 1454 and regularly updated until the end of the 17th century, together with the catastic and the book of inventories represents the main source for any investigation on the Scuola's history. The most encompassing study on the Scuola remains Perocco 1964 (1975), together with the series of articles by various authors published in the journal «Scuola Dalmata dei SS. Giorgio e Trifone» from the 1960s onwards. More recently, a number of articles by Lovorka Čoralić dealing with various segments of the confraternity's history have been summed up in Čoralić 2001 and 2003.

³ Čoralić 2001, p. 460, fig. 40. Thirty-four percent of the testaments were composed by immigrants from Dalmatia, whereas the remainder was divided between the provenants from *Schiavonia*, Croatia and the Republic of Dubrovnik. The statistics is based on the data from the period of the 14th to 18th century, so it is important to underline that in the earlier part of the analysed period there were more members from Boka and Bar, whereas later on the proportion of Dalmatians grew, which indicates a larger initial participation of the former than the average for the whole period.

⁴ To my knowledge, Čoralić is the only author who relates the choice of St George to the high initial participation of the confraternity's members from Bar; Čoralić 2006, pp. 124-125. In the forthcoming paper I am analysing the motives of the choice of the confraternity's patron saints (notably St Jerome), both with regards to the provenance of its members as well as to the wider military strategies of the Papal State and the Venetian Republic; Marinković 2018.

⁵ However, already the names of the Eastern-Adriatic galleys participating in the Battle of Lepanto are indicative of this development. Namely, the galley from Kotor was named after St Tryphon, the galley from Hvar after St Jerome, and the galley from Šibenik after St George, the patron of Šibenik's cathedral; Kužić 2011, pp. 123-124.

threat posed both to the cities of the Eastern Adriatic and to the Christian world in general. The anti-Ottoman undertow of the Scuola's iconography should not come as surprise, seen not only the provenance but also the occupation of the confraternity's members. Namely, the brethren of the Scuola were dominantly maritime-oriented (32%), whereas a large part of the artisans, as the second most represented occupation (30%), plausibly also participated in the shipbuilding and maintenance industry⁶. The maritime orientation of the Venetian Schiavoni is expressly mentioned in the 1451 supplication to the Council, stating that the Schiavoni frequently joined the Venetian fleet (*nelle armade nostre*)⁷. In the answer to this request, the Council of Ten referred to the members of the Scuola as *marinari schiavoni*⁸. The maritime orientation of the Scuola undoubtedly represented the key interest for the Venetian Republic and its Christian allies in the times of putting together the naval fleet for fighting the Ottoman force on the Mediterranean, as shall be seen from their treatment of the Scuola's saintly protectors' cults.

The cults venerated in the Scuola, that is, the official feasts of its holy patrons were several times granted a papal indulgence for visiting the Scuola's altar on the patrons' feast days, the first among them being the 1464 indulgence by Cardinal Bessarion⁹. Bessarion's indulgence, more importantly, introduced a new cult to the confraternal pantheon – that of St Jerome, the patron saint of Dalmatia¹⁰. I have discussed elsewhere the anti-Ottoman context of the widening of the geographical area of saintly protection under the auspices of the Scuola, but let it suffice here to address the actual military context of the three indulgences issued to the Scuola¹¹. Namely, the first indulgence was granted only months after the fall of Bosnia, the key event which opened the way to the Ottoman troops to Central Dalmatia, and also amidst Bessarion's manyfold efforts in the promotion of crusade. Although St Jerome was never officially included in the Scuola's name, he regularly continued to appear both in the texts related to the confraternity's devotional practices and in its iconography, most frequently featuring the three saints together.

The second indulgence, issued to the Scuola in 1481 by Pope Sixtus IV, was even more directly related to the anti-Ottoman agenda. The indulgence was

⁶ Čoralić 2001, p. 461, fig. 41.

⁷ «Alguni Schiavoni habitadori in Venexia, quali per divina inspiratione mossi da grandissima pieta et compassione, perche molte et infissnite volte achade molti et assai poveri dela dita nazione nelle armade nostre esser feridi a morte e vegnir in questa nostra terra, ocorendo el piu dele volte lor manchar da necessitade per non haver subsidio ni sostegno di persona alguna» (19 May 1451); ASV, *Consiglio dei Dieci*, 47v.

⁸ Copied in the third chapter of the *mariegola*, *Matricola*, cap. 3, 580r.

⁹ On the indulgences see Vidoli Ratti, Giadrossi 1992, and the respective studies by Čoralić.

¹⁰ «In ecclesia Sancti Georgii de sclavonibus Venetiis [...] qui ecclesiam in qua dicta Societas congregabitur in festis sancti Georgii, Corporis Christi, sancti Hieronymi, sancti Triffonis, et in prima Dominica post Ascensionem Domini devote visitaverint (10 Feb 1464)»; Vallery 1973, p. 15; Čoralić 1998a, p. 158.

¹¹ Marinković 2018.

expressly granted as a reward for participation in the military expedition to Rhodes the previous year, that is, to *every person that went to the expedition against the Turks*¹². Although the text of the indulgence does not name particular cults, the continuous veneration of St Jerome is attested by other contemporary documents, as well as by inclusion of his feast in the following indulgences.

The third indulgence, granted in 1502 by the papal legate Angelo Leonini acting on behalf of Pope Alexander VI, mentions again the feast of St Jerome among the main feast days of the confraternity, but also the renovation of the confraternity's building¹³. This renovation is undoubtedly related to the most important among the artistic commissions for the Scuola, the cycle of paintings by Vittore Carpaccio executed in 1502 to 1507. Both the commission of this lavish cycle, as well as the acquisition of the indulgence, should be directly related to possibly the most solemn event in the Scuola's history, which took place in the same year, that is, the translation of the relic of St George. The relic was donated to the Scuola by the Venetian Admiral Polo Valaresso, who obtained it from the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, allegedly on the patriarch's deathbed, as suggested in a description preserved in the *mariegola*¹⁴. Although

¹² «Pro expeditione contra perfidos Turchos, Christiani nominis hostes in deffensionis insule Rhodi et fidei Catolice [...] Omnes illas personas, que aliquid elargite, ibant sanctam contra Turchos expeditionem» (27 Sept 1481); Ćoralic 1998a, pp. 117-118.

¹³ «Qui altare prefactum sancti Georgii situm in dicta scola Sclavonorum in Sancti Georgii, Sancti Ioannis Baptiste, Sancti Triphonis et Sancti Hieronymi festivitibus [...] visitaverint»; «[...] cupientes ut Scola sive Confraternitas Sancti Georgii Sclavonorum [...] nec non altare in ipsa Confraternitate sive Scola sub vocabulo Sancti Georgii constituto et sito in suis structuris et edificiiis debite reparentur conserventur et manuteantur» (22 June 1502); Ćoralic 2000, p. 27. The feast of St John the Baptist was included because of the ties with the priorate and the church of S. Giovanni del Tempio (dei Furlani) as one of the original titulars of the confraternity's building. The fourth indulgence was granted by Pope Urban VIII in 1640 and mentions again the feasts of each of the three saints, with addition of St Nicholas and St Mark; Ćoralic 2015, pp. 84-85.

¹⁴ «Vegnando a' morte el Patriarca de Gierusalemme in Coron uomo de buona vita, e fama, ed era vecchissimo, ed al ponto della sua morte manifesto' havere appresso de lui una reliqua(!) de san Zorzi, et attrovandosi el Magnifico Misier Polo Valaresso fu' de Misier Gabriel della contrada di Sant' Angelo essere in detta terra di Coron delibero' sua Magnificientia de haver e detta reliqua et portarla a' Venetia, et ne ha' fatto un presente alla scuola delli Schiavoni sotto il titolo, et nome de misier san Zorzi, et havuta la licentia dalli Reverendissimi Monsignori el legato del Papa, et el Patriarca de Venetia de portar la detta reliqua alla scuola, onde li fradelli della scuola con gran devotion accettarono con assai Preti, trombe, e Piphari insieme con il magnifico Misier Polo a' levar la reliqua alla giesia de Santo Anzolo, e portarla alla scuola sopradetta, et fu' presentata sopra l' altar di san Zorzi con grandissima devotion, e per segno da carita' li sopradetti fratelli hanno accettato el sopradito Misier Polo in la scuola con li suoi primogeniti, et etiam hanno accettato Misier Nicolo suo fratello, et Misier Luca, et Misier Vettor Valaresso fu' de Misier Zeronimo della detta contrada de Sant'Anzolo, ed essi fradelli della scuola vogliono, che li detti gentiluomeni siano partecipi de tutti li beni saranno fatti per la detta scuola, e portare alla loro casa el suo pan, e candella, et loro accettar la elemosina, che per li stessi gentilhuomeni sara dana, intendando, che le candele de misier Polo debbano essere maggiori dell'altre, et etiam detti fradelli, cioue' quelli, che si ritrovano di tempo in tempo alla banca s'obligano d'andar ad accompagnar li corpi morti alla sepoltura delli detti gentiluomini, che Iddio li doni vita lunga, et alla fine il Paradiso e cosi ancora a' tutti noi» (24 April 1502); ASV, *Matricola*, cap. 66, 595v-596r; published in Perocco 1964, pp. 215-216, and Giadrossi 1984, pp. 11-12.

it was suggested that the patriarch in question should be identified with Cristoforo Garatoni who held this office in the mid-fifteenth century, it seems more plausible that it was Cardinal Giovanni Antonio da Sangiorgio, who carried the title of the patriarch in the period between 1500 and 1503, and was promoted to the cardinalate by Pope Alexander VI¹⁵. The close connection of the relic owner to the Pope who issued the indulgence could explain the coordinated action of the relic translation and the issuing of the indulgence.

Although it does not mention the military merits of the members of the Scuola degli Schiavoni, there are certain elements of the account sufficient to relate the gift to the anti-Ottoman campaign. Firstly, the very status of the donors, the Admiral of the Venetian fleet in the Peloponnese (the forts of Coron and Modon) and the titular Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, residing in the city of Coron, indicate a high-level donation, related to the elite military ambience of the Eastern Mediterranean anti-Ottoman efforts. Moreover, the translation was approved by the papal legate Angelo Leonini – the same who issued the indulgence on behalf of the pope – as well as Venetian Patriarch Tommaso Donà. The recent unfortunate loss of the cities of Coron and Modon – namely, both in 1500 fell to Sultan Bayezid II – is delineating the backdrop of desperate measures for troops' exhortation. Seen that the so-called Second Ottoman-Venetian War ended only in 1503, the gift to the confraternity whose members made an important part of the Venetian fleet might be seen as a sign of reward and consolation, as well as of encouragement for the continuation of the battle. The iconographic choices of the visual narratives regarding its holy patrons, notably their "Christianising" potential, might also be reflecting an anti-Ottoman character of the commission¹⁶.

It was rightfully suggested that the commissioner of Carpaccio's cycle in Scuola degli Schiavoni might have plausibly been Polo Valaresso in person, acting on the occasion of his acceptance to the Scuola as a honorary member¹⁷. The passage in *mariegola* describes not only the solemn translation of the relic from its temporary accommodation in the church of Sant'Angelo, close to the Valaresso palace, to the Scuola di S. Giorgio on the feast day of St George (24 April), but also the ceremony of inclusion of the new members from the Valaresso family: Polo, together with his sons, brother, and cousins¹⁸. Perocco relates the relic gift to the Schiavoni confraternity to the Valaresso family's

¹⁵ While the patriarch's surname also suggests a special connection to the relic, the weak element to the story is that he died only in 1509, and was since 1499 until his death parallelly holding the office of the bishop of Parma. For the argumentation for Garatoni hypothesis, see Giadrossi 1984, pp. 14-16.

¹⁶ See Marinković 2018. On Carpaccio's «orientalism» see Fortini Brown 1992, pp. 211-233.

¹⁷ See Perocco 1975, p. 8 (I am citing the 1975 bilingual Italian-English edition of the original publication Perocco 1964); Fortini Brown 1992, pp. 79-81.

¹⁸ Perocco 1975, pp. 5-7. The close ties of Valaresso with the Scuola are attested also in his last will, where he orders that 125 Schiavoni brethren accompany his funeral; Fortini Brown 1992, p. 8.

connections with the cities on the Eastern Adriatic. Namely, Polo's father's cousin, Maffeo Valaresso, was the archbishop of Zadar in the long period between 1450 and 1496, whereas Maffeo's father and uncle held positions of the potestate of Zadar and the governor of Dalmatia respectively¹⁹. At the time of the relic acquisition, Maffeo's brother Jacopo held the office of the bishop of Koper.

A coat of arms depicted on the first couple of the Carpaccio's panels for the Scuola, *The Calling of Matthew* and *Agony in the Garden*, featuring the reliquary of the *a fiala* type (fig. 1), provided evidence for further speculations on the identity of the cycle's commissioner. Taking into account the similarities of the basic heraldic features of the depicted coat of arms and that of the Vendramin family, Perocco singles out another Venetian nobleman, Andrea Vendramin, knight of the Jerusalem Order and the alleged hero of the Battle of Rhodes, among several other suggestions for the commissioner's identity (including two gastalds and the prior of S. Giovanni del Tempio)²⁰. Such unusual heraldic feature is plausibly referring to the contemporaneous acquisition of St George's relic for the Scuola, and – regardless to which family it belonged – strongly relates both the commission of the cycle and the granting of the papal indulgence to the acquisition of the saint's relic.

The relic of St George was undoubtedly an important addition to the Scuola's pantheon, but the identity of the other saints' bodily remains in the Scuola has yet to be discerned. The founding documents do not refer to any relic on the Scuola's premises, and although according to the initial agreement with the prior of the neighboring church of San Giovanni del Tempio, an altar dedicated to St George was to be built for the confraternity's needs, no special relic was mentioned in connection to this altar either²¹. Thus, not only that the relic of St George was the first mentioned individual relic in the Scuola's quarters, but the description of its translation also provides additional indication as to the relic's original placing at the altar of St George in the Scuola, the same altar that was being granted the indulgence.

However, in the mid-sixteenth century the whole building was restructured, so the original ensemble consisting of Carpaccio's cycle with the altar of St George as the focal point of the upper hall was dismantled and went through several subsequent alterations. Today's setting of the relic features an altar in the ground floor hall, commissioned in 1658, whose arcaded predella contains niches with five reliquaries of *a fiala* type (figg. 2-3). The inscriptions within the reliquaries identify the relics as belonging to the following saints: St George, with the most elaborate among the five reliquaries (fig. 4); St Tryphon (with

¹⁹ Perocco 1975, p. 7.

²⁰ Perocco 1975, pp. 27-28. Providing a brief survey of the hypotheses on the cycle's commissioner, Mignozzi confuses the persons involved, identifying Valaresso with the Jerusalem Patriarch; Mignozzi 1984, p. 106.

²¹ Perocco 1964, pp. 210-211.

the largest, centrally positioned reliquary), possibly existing on the premises of the Scuola before 1502, seen the availability of the relic particles from Kotor; two minor saints, both related to fighting the infidels, namely, St Constant (possibly the seventh-century bishop of Capri, venerated for his anti-heretic actions throughout Italy)²² and St Teonist (a fourth-century bishop-martyr, sometimes referred to as a knight, related to the battles with Visigoths)²³. The fifth reliquary is of a special interest since it contains a relic of St Blaise, who, in addition to being a universal protector, one of the Fourteen Helpers, was also – and in this context more importantly – the patron saint of Dubrovnik (figg. 5-6)²⁴. This reliquary has not been mentioned in the contemporary sources, nor in the scholarship on the Scuola (with the exception of the recent survey of the Scuola's history)²⁵, and is still awaiting an investigation on its commission and relic acquisition, to which I will try to provide a possible historical context in the following passages.

The comparative material for the reliquaries can offer a *terminus ante quem* for the acquisition of the relics, provided they were not moved from a more recent to an older reliquary. The closest analogies are found in the collection of reliquaries kept in the Museo diocesano d'arte sacra Sant'Apollonia in Venice, especially the one dated to the second half of the sixteenth century, made of gilt bronze and attributed to a Venetian workshop (fig. 7). The shape of its *nodus*, as well as the engraving, are almost identical to that of the reliquary of St George. St Blaise's and other three reliquaries are much simpler, but the side tendril-shaped handles are akin to the reliquary at St Apollonia, and also to the Venetian-type reliquaries in the Vodnjan (Istra) parish church collection, all dated to the sixteenth century (fig. 8). Thus, the five reliquaries in the Scuola could be related to the rearrangement of the church after the mid-sixteenth century. Moreover, the arcaded predella could also have been executed for the altar built during the renovation²⁶.

The earliest preserved inventory, composed in 1557, immediately after the main part of the reconstruction of the ground floor took place, mentions three glass reliquaries with the relics of St George and Tryphon: *Tabernacoli tre de vetro con reliquie de ms. S. Zorzi et ms. S. Triphon* (fig. 9)²⁷. In 1567 another hand added a note that one of the reliquaries was made of silver: *delli quali*

²² Roccia 2003.

²³ Borrelli 2001. St Teonist's relics were venerated in the cathedral of Treviso, as well as in the church of San Lorenzo in Venice.

²⁴ I am grateful to Sig. Stefano Rossi from Scuola di S. Giorgio e Trifone for his kind help and for sharing with me the photo of the inscription in the reliquary of St Blaise.

²⁵ Vallery 2011, p. 139. The relic was mentioned in Giadrossi 1984, p. 17.

²⁶ Nineteenth-century descriptions attest that the seicento altar reused a quattrocento polyptych (*tavola antica in campo d'oro*), and it is possible that it also reused the preexisting cinquecento reliquary-predella; on the hypotheses on the Scuola's Quattrocento altarpieces see Trška 2016, pp. 65-66.

²⁷ Perocco 1964, p. 226.

uno è d'ariento. Nothing is said of their placement, but the fact that they were made of glass suggests they were of a *fiala* type. Another added note from 1582 mentions other three glass-reliquaries, six altogether, but unfortunately not individually, indicating that one was missing: *altri tre de vetro del 1582 che sono 6, et uno non sono – manca*. Around 1617, the Scuola was allowed to spend five ducats in the repair of the reliquaries since the glass parts were broken (*si ritrovano li Vasi delle nostre Reliquie rotti, talche non si possono portar in procession*), which suggests the same reliquaries were still in use, though derelict²⁸. The inventory of 1637 finally brings mention of the reliquary of St Blaise (*un Detto dell'Ossa di S. Biasio m.*) among another five listed reliquaries: those of St George, St Tryphon, St Victoria (instead of St Teonist), St Constant, and a reliquary of various saints' relics²⁹. The six reliquaries listed in 1637 correspond to the same number of reliquaries reported in 1582, and can with high certainty be considered the same ones.

Finally, what can be said of the possible context for the acquisition of the relic of St Blaise? The only significant official connection of the Scuola to Dubrovnik is through its gastald Nicolaus Ragusinus (otherwise referred to as Nicolaus à Thure), mentioned in the discussed indulgence of 1481, being the only documented Scuola's gastald originally from Dubrovnik³⁰. However, this might be too early a date for the presumed acquisition of the Ragusan patron's relic, seen that only St George and St Tryphon among the five saints whose reliquaries are placed in the predella were included in the early mentions of saints' feasts observed by the Scuola. It is plausible that the other three relics were obtained rather shortly after the mid-sixteenth century reconstruction. Seen that as much as 7% of the Eastern-Adriatic sailors in Venice came from Dubrovnik, it is not inconceivable that they somehow acquired a relic of their patron saint, even without a direct relation to their military roles³¹.

However, the context of the Scuola's pantheon was expressly military almost from its outset, and the remaining question is on what occasion was the relic

²⁸ «Magnifici Signori, si ritrovano li Vasi delle nostre Reliquie rotti, talche non si possono portar in procession pero' ad honor, e gloria del Signor Iddio, et delli Santi Mette parte Missier Piero quondam Trifon di Santi Sindico, che possi spender il Guardian Novo ducati cinque per una volta tanto per far li detti Vasi come meglio parera' a dette Magnificentie, et che per l'avvenir sia fatta la Procession con esse relique(!) la festa di San Zorzi, et la festa di San Trifon ogni anno in tali feste intorno la riva delli Schiavoni, et che gli sia dato ogni volta a' quelli, che' s' attroveranno a' portare esse relique(!) in detta Procession ducato uno per ogni volta, qual ducato sia diviso tra' d'essi Preti in pena al Guardian, che s' attrovera' di tempo in tempo, che mancasse a' far dette Processioni per ogni volta ducati dieci applicati all' escavation de Rii. Ballottata la sopradetta parte a' bossoli, e ballote hebbe dalla parte de si balle numero 22 – et dalla parte di non balle numero 5» (year 1617?); ASV, *Matricola*, 636r.

²⁹ Vallery 1979, pp. 4-5.

³⁰ The list of gastalds in Perocco 1964, pp. 233-236.

³¹ For the statistics see Čoralčić 2001, 458, fig. 36. The importance of the Ragusan immigrants' devotion to St Blaise is illustrated by their testamentary legations for visiting the church of S. Biagio in Venice; Čoralčić 1999, p. 23.

of St Blaise adopted to this anti-Ottoman support-pantheon. The mentioned additional notes to the 1557 inventory are suggesting that the new reliquaries appeared in the period between 1567 and 1582, that is, roughly around the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. The Republic of Dubrovnik was notoriously hesitant to offer any kind of military help to the Holy League since it was an Ottoman tributary state and a very clever diplomat, so it is puzzling that the relic of this saint is found in such a context. The possible answer could be found in the unofficial realities of Ragusan diplomatic balancing. Namely, in spite of the expressed wish of the Ragusan Republic to remain neutral, there were several dozens of Ragusan private transport ships sailing under the Spanish flag, bringing supplies to the Christian fleet during the Battle of Lepanto³². Although the Ragusan sailors situated in Venice sailed on Venetian (and not Spanish) ships, the unofficial attitude Dubrovnik took towards fighting the Ottoman power in the Mediterranean, could have prompted the acquisition of the relic of Ragusan patron saint as the reward and encouragement for the Scuola's members, sailors originally from Dubrovnik. Just as Scuola degli Schiavoni was rewarded by an indulgence for their members' engagement in the defence of Rhodes in 1481, and similarly in 1502 by a relic for defending Coron, it is possible that the victory at Lepanto brought about the further enlargement of the Scuola's pantheon with three new relics.

A sporadic mention of the obligations for the feast of Candlemas, or Purification of the Holy Virgin, in 1638, possibly indicate another connection to Dubrovnik³³. Namely, the two feasts are strongly interconnected: Candlemas takes place on the eve of St Blaise's feast, that is, on 2 February, and was one of the most important feasts in Dubrovnik. The importance of the Candlemas feast in Dubrovnik official sanctorale did not lie only in the fact of its clustering with the civic patron's feast – the cluster also included St Tryphon whose feast took place on the same day as St Blaise. An additional strong link to Dubrovnik lied in the fact that Dubrovnik Cathedral was housing the relic of the Holy Swaddling Clothes of Christ, which was considered the most important relic in its possession, and one of the major local cults³⁴. Although it has not been confirmed yet that the relic of St Blaise was necessarily brought from Dubrovnik, nor that the relic was an official gift to the Scuola, the circumstantial evidence

³² Harris 2003, pp. 103-105, 112-117. On the political background of the Battle of Lepanto see Malcolm 2015, pp. 151-174.

³³ «Item, che nella solennità della Purification della Beatissima Vergine, che e solito farsi la dispensa delle Candelle a' quelli della Banca, et altri fratelli della detta Veneranda Scuola, et perche non vi e' alcuna limitation di quante Cere si deve dispensare in tal giorno. Per tanto; Mette parte il Magnifico Signor Guardian Grando sudetto, che di cetero nella sudetta festività' nella dispensa delle Candelle, che dovevano farsi nel sudetto giorno non si possi dispensar piu' di lire trenta di Candelle, et dispensandone di piu' il Guardian Grande sia sottoposto a' pagar del suo proprio quello, che spendesse. Ballottata la predetta ballote hebbe dalla parte de si numero 21, et di non ballote numero 1, e presa» (8 Aug 1638); ASV, *Matricola*, 639v-640r.

³⁴ Cf. Belamarić 2014, pp. 171-173.

strongly suggest it could have been related to the rising role of Ragusan sailors in the anti-Ottoman military campaigns. Future research in both the Archives of the Scuola Dalmata dei SS. Giorgio e Trifone (today's official name of the Scuola) and the State Archives in Dubrovnik might bring further insights on the history of the relic.

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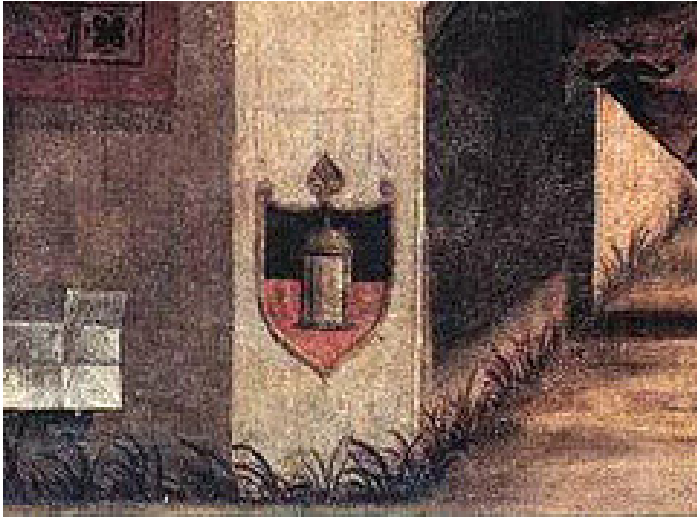
Appendix

Fig. 1. Coat of arms, detail of the panel *The Calling of Matthew* by V. Carpaccio (<<http://www.wga.hu>>)



Fig. 2. Altar in the lower hall of the Scuola di S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni (Photo author)



Fig. 3. Reliquary-predella of the altar in the lower hall of the Scuola (Photo author)



Fig. 4. Reliquary of St George in the Scuola (Photo author)



Fig. 5. Reliquary of St Blaise in the Scuola (Photo author)



Fig. 6. Inscription *Sancti Blasii Martyris* on the reliquary of St Blaise (Photo S. Rossi)



Fig. 7. Reliquary, Museo diocesano d'arte sacra Sant'Apollonia, Venice (Photo author)



Fig. 8. Reliquary of St Lawrence, Collection of sacral art at the parish church of St Blaise, Vodnjan (<<http://zupavodnjan.com>>)

Caleci vno d'argento mecan 2 patena 7 cassa 2 do boise una boisa
 Caleci doi d'argento con le patene 7 cassa vno et altri
 Feribolo vno d'argento 7 la sua cassa.
 Mamecla vna d'argento con il cuebier 7 cassa
 Tabernacoli tre de vetro con reliquie de m. S. Zorzi
 et m. S. triphon. velli quali vno e d'argento. altri tre de vetro del ispa et sono d'
 vna bremela con doi ampole d'argento. it vno no sono mmele
 vna sbariegola coperta de veludo eremesin fornida
 d'argento con la sua cassa 7 cussinelo.
 vna pase cioe vno et
 vno panno da morti de veludo eremesin con frisi
 d'oro et figure d'oro 7 cussin del medemo panno 2
 quattro fiochi d'oro 2 panno de lana rosso p sopra 7 la
 sua tela rossa et cassa m. meca il panno rosso 1564
 vna de veludo archio 7 cussi m. meca il panno

Fig. 9. Scuola's inventory from the year 1557, detail (Perocco 1975)

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