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

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The community of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) in Genua and their chapel of Saint Blaise in Santa Maria di Castello*

Anita Ruso**

Abstract

The article examines the artworks and architecture of the Ragusan chapel in Dominican church in Genua, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and Saint Blaise, commissioned and maintained by Ragusan merchants and consuls in the Ligurian port. The analysis is based on known documents from Dominican convent archive in Genua and focuses on elements of particular Ragusan identity expressed in visual terms. Moreover, newly discovered archival documents from the Genua and Dubrovnik state archives, enable a better understanding of diplomatic relations between the two republics, therefore shedding new light on the role of the Ragusan "national" chapel in Genua.

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L'articolo esamina le opere d'arte e l'architettura della cappella dei Ragusei nella chiesa domenicana di Genova, dedicata alla Vergine Maria e a San Biagio, commissionata e gestita dai mercanti ragusani e dai consoli della Repubblica di Ragusa nel porto ligure. L'analisi si basa sui noti documenti d'archivio del convento domenicano di Genova e si concentra sugli elementi particolari dell'identità Ragusea espressa in termini visivi. Inoltre, i documenti d'archivio recentemente scoperti negli Archivi di Stato di Genova e Dubrovnik consentono una migliore comprensione delle relazioni diplomatiche tra le due repubbliche, aiutando a capire meglio il significato e il ruolo della cappella "nazionale" ragusea a Genova.

The combination of favorable geographical and navigational elements led to the establishment of the city of Ragusa/Dubrovnik[1] as a commercial center in the Middle Ages and its subsequent emancipation as a semi-independent republic[2]. Dubrovnik had managed to establish lively commercial contacts with a number of Mediterranean cities and the nearby continental powers, Bosnia and Serbia, maintaining the network even when the latter were enclosed within the Ottoman Empire. All this resulted in Dubrovnik's new role as the hub of East-West trade, facilitated through the network of consuls and commercial colonies both in the Balkans and in the western ports.

One of these Ragusan consulates was founded in 1531 in Genua, where Ragusan consul maintained the chapel of Saint Blaise at the church of Santa Maria di Castello[3]. Being the only known chapel directly supported by exclusively Ragusan merchants in Italy, it is interesting to compare the patronage of the Ragusan community in Genua with similar strategies devised by other Early Modern Schiavoni communities in Italy – which functioned as confraternities or colleges – in order to understand the self-image they tried to construct.

1. *Ragusan consulates and networks in early modern Italy*

The size and the spread of Dubrovnik's trade required the appointment of agents known as consuls to supervise and protect Ragusan ships, merchants and all *nobiles cives de fori* (aristocracy living outside the country) in the ports

[1] Ragusa is the old, Latin and Italian name for the city of Dubrovnik. The city-state was officially called "Repubblica di Ragusa" so we will use here "Ragusan Republic" or "Republic of Ragusa" when talking about city-state. Ragusans were inhabitants of the Ragusan Republic.

[2] Dubrovnik was under Byzantine protection from 800 to 1205; under Venetian rule from 1205 to 1358; under Hungarian suzerainty from 1358 and under Ottoman Empire from 1442 until the end of its existence in 1808. In 1442 he first agreed to pay tribute, called also *harač*. Dubrovnik always needed outside protection and was always prepared to pay real or symbolic tribute to one of the great powers in order to get protection from them. On Dubrovnik history see: Harris 2003.

[3] First Ragusan consul in Genua was a Genoese nobleman D. Daria de Vivaldis. Cf. Mitić 1982, p. 27; On Ragusans in Genua see also: Ivanković 1966; Lupis 2014.

they frequented[4]. The Ragusan government worked very assiduously on the furthering of ties with Italian cities, and over the centuries they developed a large and well-organized network of consulates based on commercial agreements, most of them established in the second half of the twelfth century. Numerous diplomatic letters exchanged between the Senate of Ragusa and its agents in the Italian centers are a testimony of these efficient diplomatic policies.

The consular service was notable for its practical flexibility. Its basic purpose was to serve as an extension of the central government and its members acted as judges, notaries, tax collectors and spies[5]. As the consular service became more and more important for the trading business, the government of the Republic had to regulate it. The Rector of the Republic with its Small Council chose the consuls between the merchants who already lived on the territory of the other states and were often members of Schiavoni confraternities[6]. The priority was given to the members of the aristocratic families, but in the absence of the aristocracy, it was possible to choose among non-noble famous or rich seaman. The consuls were privileged because they were allowed to take a percentage of the commercial taxes. However, Ragusans also had locals in their consular service, as they were familiar with the situation in their hometowns.

2. *Diplomatic relations between Ragusa and Genua*

The intense commercial and maritime relations between Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and the Republic of Genua are documented from the beginning of the 14th century[7]. The present analysis is based on published and unpublished diplomatic letters from State archives of Genua and Dubrovnik exchanged between the two Republics[8]. In Dubrovnik state archive, the correspondence

[4] Until the middle of the 15th century Ragusan trade was concentrated towards the Balkans. When Ottoman wars started in the area Ragusans concentrated on the Adriatic Sea. At the end of the 15th century, Ragusans had 23 consulates. The first consulates in Italy were in Syracuse (1390), Messina (1399), Trani (1409), Ancona and Barletta (1441). In the 16th century consulates in many Italian towns were formed: Palermo (1502), Agrigento (1504), Brindisi (1510), Monopoli, Milazzo (1511), Terant (1512), Laciano (1516), Livorno, Lecce (1517), Vasto (1523), Castro (1529), Pisa, Genova (1531), Mola (1541), Lipar (1519), Sardinia (1541). Cf. Mitić 1982, p. 39.

[5] Mitić 1982, pp. 29 and 37; Varezić 2014, p. 90.

[6] Some distinguished Ragusans were members of Confraternity of Saint Gerome in Rome: Stjepan Gradić (1613-1683), Pietro de Bosdari (1647-1684) who was also sent to Genua as an ambassador to collect the money from the banks in order to help Ragusans after the great earthquake in 1667, Benedikt Stay (1714-1801).

[7] Mitić 1982, p. 21.

[8] Dubrovnik State Archive (hereinafter ASD), *Diplomata et acta*, 16th century: Lettere di vari corrispondenti da Firenze degli anni 1571 e 1572 e da Padova, Lucca, Genova, Urbino e Malta degli anni 1570, 1588, 1591, n. 462; *Diplomata et acta*, 17th century: Lettere di vari corrispondenti da Genova degli anni 1642, 1625, 1632, 1659, 1660, 1666, 168, 1674, n. 2200; Lettere di vari

with Genua in 16th and 17th century appears in four archival series: *Diplomata et acta*[9], *Lettere e commisioni di Levante*[10], *Lettere e commisioni di Ponente*[11] and *Miscellanea sec. XVII*[12].

While Dubrovnik and Ancona collaborated in order to limit Venetian supremacy on the Adriatic Sea, Dubrovnik and Genua tried to put under control Venetian ambitions in the Levant, especially after the 1433 council of Basel, when Ragusans, Venetians, and Genoese all obtained the permission to commerce with the Levant. This also induced Ragusan trade with Alexandria in the beginning of the 16th century. Genua and Dubrovnik also jointly limited French ambitions in the Levant[13].

In addition, Genoese fleet used Dubrovnik as a base for its operations in the Adriatic[14]. The two maritime powers, Genua and Venice, had long been leading commercial powers with ties to Constantinople. Already at the end of the 14th century, Republic of Genua realized they needed representatives in the Ragusan Republic, so they started sending their consul to Dubrovnik. It is interesting to notice that *Il Serenissimo* Giovanni Agostino Giustiniani Campi (1538-1613), the doge of the *Repubblica di Genova* from 1591 to 1593, started his carrier as a merchant trading with the Republic of Dubrovnik. He is mentioned as «protector ac patron» on the epitaph in the Ragusan chapel in Santa Maria di Castello[15].

Ragusan merchants supplied Genoese mostly with grain, salt, sugar and wool[16] and they bought arms from them already in the 14th century; they even invited blacksmiths from Genua to work for the Republic[17]. Furthermore, many Ragusan letters were forwarded from Genua towards other western countries and vice versa[18]. Finally, the Genoese *Banco di San Giorgio* was very important for Ragusan investors, as famous Ragusan merchant Miho Pracat (1522-1607) has put his deposit in the said bank. His wife was to benefit from the interest

corrispondenti da Genova dell'anno 1618 al 1698, n. 2969; *Lettere e commissioni di Ponente* 1585-1588, 1588-1592, 1587-1689 and 1592-1598; *Miscellanea*, 17th century, Venetia litterae FV and FVI; Genua State Archive (hereinafter ASG), *Lettere principi*: Lettere della Republica di Ragusa alla Serenissima Republica di Genova 1519-1622 in 1681 a 1762.

9 ASD, *Diplomata et acta*, 16th century, n. 462; *Diplomata et acta*, 17th century, nn. 2069, 2200.

10 ASD, *Lettere e commisioni di Levante*, vol. 1587-1589.

11 ASD, *Lettere e commisioni di Ponente*, vol. 1592-1598.

12 ASD, *Miscellanea*, 17th century, Italia litterae VI.

13 Mitić 1982, p. 25.

14 Ivi, p. 20.

15 Ragusans gave him and his wife a burial place in the chapel as a gift for his protection and support: «…BE / NEFICIORUM MEMORES EORUM PROTECTORI AC PATRONO ILL(USTRISSIMO) D(OMINO) IO(ANNI) AUGUSTINO IUSTINIANO EIUSQ(UE) UXORI…». See the whole transcript of the epitaph in the note 35.

16 Ivančević 1966, p. 348.

17 Mitić 1982, p. 22.

18 Ivančević 1966, p. 351.

and the principal was to be inherited by the Ragusan government after his wife's death[19]. This deposit of 1000 *luoghi* (stocks) was used by the government after the great earthquake in 1667[20].

The first Ragusan consul in Genua was nominated in 1531, thanks to celebrated admiral Andrea Doria (1466-1560)[21]. Over 268 years (except for the years after the great earthquake, from 1667 until 1675) Ragusans had 21 consuls in Genua. They were all not-Ragusan; many of them were Genoese merchants and members of rich families. Just three last consuls in Genua were Ragusans (1787-1808)[22].

The artistic exchange between Dubrovnik and Genua is rather scarcely documented, and consulted diplomatic letters contain no information on Ragusan chapel in Genua, but what has resurfaced during the archival research is an important testimony on recovery after 1667 earthquake in Dubrovnik. Unpublished letters from the *Archivio di Stato di Genova* reveal that Ragusans intervened to bring back the reliquary of the left hand of their saint protector Saint Blaise stolen from the city after the great 1667 earthquake and brought to Genua[23]. On 5th July 1675, the saint's left hand was brought back to Dubrovnik[24]. To commemorate that day Ragusans even celebrated the feast called "Translatio Sancti Blasii"[25]. Unfortunately, on its way back home the reliquary was damaged and the jewelry it was covered with – disappeared. Today's appearance of the reliquary held in Dubrovnik's cathedral treasury under the number IV is a work of Venetian goldsmith Francesco Ferra (1712)[26].

19 Ivi, p. 350.

20 Vojnović 1983, pp. 52-58.

21 He also prevented Holy League from the idea of overtaking Ragusa and in 1538 he sent to Dubrovnik engineer Antonio Ferramolino who worked on Dubrovnik city walls. Cf. Mitić 1982, p. 25; Edoardo 1992.

22 Mitić 1982, pp. 30-31.

23 «Una di queste che è la Reliquia del gloriossissimo Santo Biago nostro Prottetore involataci dall'empia perfidia d'uno de nostri Vassalli, e sacrilagamente venduta, è capitata in cotesto Serenissima e dopò varij accidenti per commandamena di Vostra Servità levata dalla casa, ore si tenea, occultata è stata riposta nella loro Real Capella…», Lettere della Republica di Ragusa alla Serenissima Republica di Genova Ragusa, li 16 Agosto 1672, in ASG, *Lettere Principi 1519-1622 in 1681 a 1762*.

24 «…siammo voluto consolarci col rimettere à nostra dispositione la Reliquia del glorioso Santo Biago nostro Prottetore: per godere intieramente del favor con cui si sono compiacciute le S. Servità V.V. contribuire alle nostre sodisfationi; frà breve s'inviarà da noi costà un Sacerdote chi haverà cura di trasportarla à Ragusa… Ragusa, li 10 gennaio 1675». From the next letter we know the exact name of the person who was in charged of this important mission: «Riverirà in nome nostro [?] Servità V.V. D. Andrea Resti, à cui dà noi è Stato data l'incumbenza di ricevere la sacra reliquia per trasportarla à Ragusa… 30 gennaio 1675»: Lettere della Republica di Ragusa alla Serenissima Republica di Genova, in ASG, *Lettere Principi 1519-1622 in 1681 a 1762*.

25 This feast was celebrated in the same way as the feast of St Blaise. "Translatio" feast was practiced until 1808. Cf. Nodari 2014, p. 107.

26 Lupis 2014, p. 468.

3. *Ragusan chapel in Santa Maria di Castello*

The Ragusan protector-saint, St Blaise was worshipped wherever the Southern-Adriatic merchants established themselves, and his feast was especially celebrated in cities hosting Ragusan consulates[27]. In Genua, they had a chapel dedicated to the Virgin and St Blaise inside the Dominican convent complex, situated in the harbor, handy for Ragusans sailing into the city[28].

The convent of Santa Maria di Castello dates from the 7th century. In the mid-15th century, Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) entrusted the church to the Observant Dominicans of the Lombardy Congregation due to the circumstances of religious (Council of Basel-Florence) and political character (conflicts between Campofregoso and Adorno families)[29]. Dominicans immediately began purchasing the surrounding land and houses. They added a new cloister adjacent to the Romanesque one and the second cloister founded by brothers Grimaldi[30]. In the last decades of the 16th century, following the orders of the apostolic visitor Francesco Bossi, the choir screen and the four adjacent altars of the church were demolished. Between 1589 and 1594, the church was enlarged with the construction of the dome and the new apse, while the interior was renovated between 1590 and 1604, specifically the marble fronts with broken tympana of seven chapels: four in the right-hand nave, two at the top of the smaller naves.

The construction of the chapel of the *Ragusei* in the Dominican complex started in 1581 and the works lasted until 1600. The chapel was inserted next to the post-Tridentine apse, in a part of the complex that once had belonged to Embriaci family, who sold it to Dominicans. The chapel had simple rectangular form. Today it is divided into two levels and the original vault of the Embriaci family room is brought to light by demolishing the ceiling that had been built when the room was transformed into a chapel[31].

In the chapel, there was the altar dedicated to the St Blaise and to the Virgin Mary. The marble altar was finished in 1595 by Giovanni Maria Pambio[32]. Two columns in black marble on high, monumental plinths supported "broken"

[27] Even in Venice, where they were not allowed to have a consulate, and in Levante: Salonicco, Smyrna, Constantinople, Alexandria. Cf. Ivančević 1966, p. 352.

[28] Costantino Gilardi suggested that the foundation of the Ragusan chapel in this complex is related to the Council of Basel-Florence (1431-1449), as it resulted in the reunification with several Eastern Churches. The task of Dominicans was to improve contacts with Greece and Middle East that may also refer to Dubrovnik. Cf. Gilardi 2005, pp. 205-209. However, as explained, history of intense relations between two republics goes back to 14th century, and the construction of the chapel happened in the late 16th century, making this argument rather difficult to accept.

[29] Ivi, p. 206.

[30] Besides Romanesque one the complex had two more cloisters. In 1445 Dominicans begun building the second cloister while the third one was built between 1445 and 1452 by Emanuele and Lionello Grimaldi. The last one contained a library, the Grimaldi chapel, and sacristy. Cf. Gilardi 2014, pp. 9-10.

[31] Ivi, p. 53.

[32] Ivi, p. 37.

pediment decorated with three figures – Eternal father and two angels. The front side of the altar mensa is divided into three fields; the black marble antependium is decorated with red marble *cartouches* that flank the middle field with a quatrefoil and a lily.

The altar was dismembered and transferred to the church in 1874. The altar itself was moved to the current chapel of San Tommaso (fig. 1), while the Aurelio Lomi's altarpiece was collocated in the second chapel of the right-hand nave[33]. Three sculptures of the Eternal Father and the two angels were transferred to the pediment of the second chapel of the right-hand nave, replacing other three statues (fig. 2)[34].

The Ragusan chapel also contains the epitaph on the left side wall, recalling the space is dedicated to St Blaise and to the Virgin Mary and that every Ragusan ship that comes to Genoese harbor has to pay a fee for the maintenance of the chapel (fig. 3). Moreover, the Dominicans have to bury every Ragusan who dies in Genua and have to serve the holy mass every week for the souls of the dead and for their families. In addition, they have to celebrate the mass on 3 February, the feast day of St Blaise. The text also mentions the name of the notary Giovanni Augostino from Parma, who obviously styled the document signed on 15 September 1581[35]. The same wall still features the stone crests of Dubrovnik

[33] The chapels of the right-hand nave are: the *Assunta* chapel, the *San Pietro da Verona* chapel, the *Sant'Antonio* chapel; the *San Pio V* chapel, the *San Biagio* chapel. Ivi, pp. 25-27.

[34] Ivi, p. 27.

[35] The transcription of the text of the epitaph: INCLYTA RAGUSEORUM GENS QUAM OLIM ALEXANDER ILLE MAGNUS TOT TERRA MARINQ(UE) PRIVILEGIIS / DONAVIT TITULISQ(UE) PRAECLARIS FIDEI ET FORTITUDINIS INSIGNIVIT NINC MARITIMIS ITINERIBUS ILLUSTRIS SED / CHRISTIANA PIETATE CLARIOR SACELLUM HOC DEIPARAE AC D(IVO) BLASIO TUTELARI DICAVIT ET AUXIT PUBLICA / FIDE POLLITICA SE PRO QUALIBET EIUS NAVI GENUAE APPELLENTE QUAUOR EIUS MONETAE LIBRAS PATRIBUS HUIUS / CONVENTUS S(ANCTAE) MARIE DE CASTELLO COLLATURAM OMNI MUNERUM IURE LEGATAEQ(UE) CERAE SE ABDICANS EA / TAMEN LEGE UT PATRES HII RAGUSEOS SINGULOS QUI PIE OBIERINT GENUAE PROPRIIS OMNINO SUMPTIBUS HUMENT / FUNUS HONORIFICE EXEQUENTES SACRO EADEM DIE AD ARAM PRIVILEGIIS INSIGNITAM SOLEMNI POMPA PERACTO / ALIISQ(UE) MISSIS AD SUBLEVANDAS EAS ANIMAS ADIUNCTIS CETERUM SINGULIS HEBDOMADIBUS IN EIUS ALTARI PRO / DEFUNCTIS SEMEL BIS PRO NAVIGANTIBUS EIUSDEM GENTIS CELEBRENT QUOTANNIS VERO IN FESTIVIS ASSUMPTAE B(EATAE) / MARIAE SEU OCTAVA SS.(ANCTORUM) BLASII HIERONYMI NICOLAI DIEBUS MISSAM IBI DECANTENT CUI REI ANNUENTE G(E)N(ER)ALI MAG(IST)RO / ORD(INIS) PRAEDIC(ATORUM) SIXTO FABRI LUCEN(SI) PATRES OMNES ASSENSERE EISDEM RAGUSEIS ARCULAM OBLATIONUM HOC LOCO / CONCENDENTES QUAE DEPUTATORUM ARBITRIO RESERVATA EIQUOQUE NATIONI SIT COMMODO QUAE PUBLICO INSTRUMEN / TO IO (ANNIS) AUGUST(INI) PARMARII NOTARII RATA SUNT OMNIA SUB ANNO MDLXXXI DIE XXV SEPTEMB(RIS) DENIAUE RAGUSEI BE / NEFICIORUM MEMORES EORUM PROTECTORI AC PATRONO ILL(USTRISSIMO) D(OMINO) IO(ANNI) AUGUSTINO IUSTINIANO EIUSQ(UE) UXORI NON AUTEM / POSTERIS ULLIS SEPULCHRI LOCUM HOC EODEM IN SACELLO IMPARTIUNTUR ANNO SALUTIS MDC MENSE DECEM(BRI) DIE VII. The transcription was published in Ivančević 1966, pp. 357-358.

formerly at the sides of the altar (fig. 4), which survived the three-year rule of the Ligurian democratic republic (1797-1799), when most of the other noble coat-of-arms in the city were canceled[36]. The idea to connect directly the chapel with the church was present in the second half of the 18th century, but given a decrease of the number of Ragusan ships in Genoese port in that period, the means were reduced and the costs of that kind of intervention were too high, so the project was abandoned[37].

Today, the chapel of Dubrovnik merchants hosts a small museum, opened in 1966. The names of the two current museum rooms maintain the memory of the presence of the Dubrovnik merchants in Genua. In order to gain more space for the museum display, the chapel was divided into two levels (fig. 5); the upper level is a reconstruction of the 14th century room of an Embriaci family home, while at the lower one the quoted marble epitaph, with traces of gilding, still commemorates the founding of the chapel in 1581, thanks to the mediation of Giovanni Agostino Giustiniani Campi.

4. *Aurelio Lomi's altarpiece Martyrdom of St Blaise in the presence of the saints Nicholas, Peter, Dominic, and Jerome*

The large altarpiece by Aurelio Lomi from Pisa (1556-1622)[38], originally situated in the Ragusan chapel, was transferred in the 19th century to the chapel of Assumption in Santa Maria di Castello, built by Vincenzo Odone in 1591 (fig. 6). The painting was placed on the existing altar featuring two columns carrying a broken pediment and decorated with five statues (two in the niches flanking the painting and three on the pediment) by Taddeo Carlone and Battista Baguti, executed between 1591 and 1593[39]. It is possible that Giovanni Agostino Giustiniani Campi, "protector" and "patron" of Ragusan merchants, commissioned this painting as a sign of gratitude for the burial place Ragusan gave to him and his wife in their chapel. The commissioning of altarpieces was already a popular and common practice both in Dubrovnik and by Dubrovnik commissioners abroad[40].

36 Gilardi 2014, p. 52.

37 Ivanković 1966, p. 356.

38 Oil on canvas, 340x218 cm. Cf. Bernardini 2010. On Lomi see: Ciardi *et al.* 1989 and Bortolotti 2005.

39 Gilardi 2014, p. 27.

40 The pioneer of this practice was a commissioner Alvise Gozze (Lujo Gučetić), Ragusan merchant who lived in Ancona. In 1520 he hired Tizian Vecellio to paint him an altarpiece representing Virgin Mary with little Jesus, St Blaise, St Francis and himself. This Anconitan case can be related to Genoese one. In both cases, we have rich merchants as commissioners on one side and renewed painters, as executers of their wishes on the other side. On Gozze commission see: Gudelj 2010, p. 82, and the contribution by Giuseppe Capriotti in this volume.

The painting for the Ragusan chapel is signed and dated 1601 and shows the Martyrdom of St Blaise in the presence of the saints Nicholas, Peter, Dominic, and Jerome. It was painted during Lomi's Genoese period (1597-1605) and is one of the two paintings the Pisan master executed in the same year for the Dominican convent, the other being the Assumption[41]. Besides two paintings in Santa Maria di Castello, he was also responsible for some other commissions in Genoa and Liguria: in Ss. Annunziata di Portoria; in the church of the monastery of barefoot Carmelites dedicated to St Anna; in the church of the convent St Francesco in La Spezia and in the church St Siro[42]. Lomi was familiar with post-Tridentine iconography and composition and his engagement in the chapel of *Ragusei* was a strong message from the commissioner who obviously wanted a piece of art from a prominent artist.

The painting is divided into two horizontal zones, forming a typically Florentine composition[43]. The lower one shows two groups of figures: St Blaise, his three torturers, and two standing witnesses are placed on the left side of the lower level. On the right side, the Roman general is represented with his three guards (fig. 7). All participants are communicating with each other by lively gestures of their hands, which are also used to accentuate communication between Heaven and Earth.

While the group of the lower level is reserved for the scene of the torture, the upper level shows the Heaven with Virgin Mary, saints, and angels (fig. 8). It is possible that the image of the *Madonna della Misericordia* appeared in the center of the upper level of the composition. Was it directly painted on the canvas or it was placed within an oval frame supported by the group of little angels – remains unknown for the moment[44]. We know that the table with the *Madonna and Child* by Barnaba da Modena (1375) was part of the altarpiece until the restoration of 1977 when it was finally removed (fig. 9)[45].

The subject of the painting represents the scarification of the saint with iron combs for wool, which the torturers use to wound Saint Blaise's right ankle and chest[46]. Simultaneously, from the sky, the apostle Peter, the saints Nicholas, Jerome, and Dominic with angels and Virgin Mary with baby Jesus witness the terrible torture. The marine landscape in the background can be explained as a reference to the Genoese port where Ragusan ships were often anchored.

Saint Blaise, as already mentioned, is saint protector of the Republic of

41 Gilardi 2014, p. 27.
42 Bortolotti 2005.
43 Ratti 1768, p. 450; Pareto *et al.* 1846, p. 138.
44 Bernardini 2010.
45 Today the painting is exhibited in the upper hall of the *Ragusei*. For restorations of the altarpiece see: Rotondi Terminiello 1978, pp. 278-281. A similar case of the Byzantine icon inserted into baroque altarpience is the one in Dominican convent, in Dubrovnik – a painting of an unknown painter from Naples showing St Antonin Pierozzi, St Raymundus from Peñafort and Hyacinthus Cracoviensis has also a Byzantine icon painted by Donato Bizman inserted in the upper part of its baroque composition. Cf. Demori Staničić 2008, p. 127.
46 Da Varagine 1990, pp. 174-178.

Dubrovnik[47]. According to the legend, St Blaise saved multiple times Ragusans from Venetians and Turcs. He became the symbol of Dubrovnik and an inseparable part of its urban and spiritual tissue. From the 15th century, the saint is shown locally with a model or some more complex depiction of the city, which he proudly holds in his hands. From the 16th century, the city became a veduta in the background of the painting, while the patron is placed in front of it, on his own or with other saints, the Virgin or Christ. Moreover, the bishop of Sebasta is shown in the paintings in his ceremonial robes, with attributes – mitre and crosier. The figure of St Blaise with depictions of Dubrovnik can also be found in Barletta, Aquileia, Ancona, Palma de Mallorca and Barcelona, all important seaports for Dubrovnik trade[48].

An interesting case for discussing this civic iconography of Saint Blaise is represented by three altarpieces for Dubrovnik commissioners by Titian and his workshop. The two paintings that were destined for South-Adriatic city, the polyptych from the former church of St Lazarus – *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*[49], today on the high altar of the cathedral in Dubrovnik and *St Magdalene with St Blaise, Tobias and the Archangel Raphael* in the Dubrovnik Dominican convent, contain models of the city[50]. The earliest Titian altarpiece for Dubrovnik commissioner is *The Virgin Mary with Child, St Francis and St Blaise*, painted for the Franciscan observant convent in Ancona in 1520, San Francesco ad Alto and commissioned by Dubrovnik merchant Alvise Gozze (Lujo Gučetić). Here St Blaise is in his bishop vestments, but the city in the background is Venice, possibly indicating the origin of the painter[51].

While the specific Dubrovnik attribute of the saint is the model of the city, in the rest of Europe it is generally the carder's comb – the instrument of one of his martyrdom. The very scene of the martyrdom becomes more common in the post-Tridentine period, even in Genua itself[52]. Only one painting in Dubrovnik

[47] Blaise, who lived between the 3rd and 4th centuries, was born in a noble family and raised in the Christian faith and was elected bishop of Sebaste, today's city of Sivas in eastern Turkey. Instead of living in the city Blaise preferred to go to the mountains, in a sort of hermitage where he welcomed many wild animals and treated them with respect and took care of them when injured. At the outbreak of the persecution, the soldiers discovered the cavern where Blaise dwelled with animals, so they arrested him. He was tortured by beheading after a series of tortures, the most famous of which is the scarification with an iron comb for wool carding inflicted by the Roman governor Agricola in 315 or 316, during the empire of Licinius. Cf. Da Varagine 1990, pp. 174-178.

[48] Lupis 2014, pp. 140-146.

[49] It was in January 1574 when the polyptych was mentioned for the first time in the report of the apostolic visitator Giovanni Francesca Sormano who wrote that the painting was signed by Titian: «figura assumptionis gloriosae virginis ac multorum sanctorum depictis (!) manu (ut legitur titiani pictoris celeberrimi)». Cf. Tomić 2013, pp. 289-292. See also: Liepopili 1930, p. 10; Marković 1987, pp. 174-175.

[50] Bralić 2008, pp. 39-75; Gjukić-Bender 2014, p. 301.

[51] Tomić 2010, pp. 93-101; Gudelj 2010, pp. 81-93; Gjukić-Bender 2014, p. 313.

[52] For exemple: Caspar de Crayer (1582-1669), *Martyrdom of Saint Blaise*, St Martin,

shows the martyrdom of the Saint, as Ragusan painter Petar Matejevic-Mattei (1670-1726) painted the scene of the Saint kneeling in front of his torturers before the beheading. It is placed on the front side of the wooden choir above the main altar in the Saint's church in Dubrovnik[53].

St Jerome is usually depicted dressed as a cardinal, beating his breast, working in his study. He is accompanied by usual attributes: a lion, a book, and a cardinal hat. On this altarpiece, St Jerome is shown with his common attributes – cardinal costume and opened book. His birthplace of Stridon, a town in the Roman province of Dalmatia, made Jerome the saint representative of the Illyrian nation. He is especially venerated in Rome where Schiavoni confraternity dedicated him their church in Ripetta, the smaller of the two Roman fluvial ports. The complex of Saint Jerome of the Schiavoni/Illyrians at Ripetta represents an important feature in the life and presentation of Slavic Catholic immigrants from the Balkans[54]. Thus, it is not surprising that St Jerome was a titular of Schiavoni confraternity in Udine and in Pesaro where the confraternity was under his and St Peter's protection from 1453[55].

On Lomi's painting, St Peter is holding keys of Heaven, his traditional attribute while St Dominic is depicted in a brown habit holding a flame. As the founder of *Ordo Prædicatorum*, St Dominic represents one of those saints whose iconography went through some changes after the Council of Trent. If before the Council he was a contemplative middle-aged man in a brown habit with a stalk of lilies, a book or a star above his head or on his front, in the post-Tridentine paintings he became a more active participant[56]. Finally, St Nicholas is depicted holding a crosier in his right hand and wearing a mitre. St Peter and St Dominic have their eyes on the Virgin Mary while St Jerome is looking at the spectator and St Nicholas at St Blaise. Finally, St Peter is showing with his left hand St Blaise's martyrdom on the Earth.

The choice of the depicted saints was not accidental. Firstly, the inscription in the Ragusan chapel indicates that the Holy Mass had to be celebrated on the holidays of the Assumption, St Blaise, St Jerome and St Nicholas[57]. In Dubrovnik context, these saints, with St Peter and St Dominic, often accompany St Blaise. For example, Virgin's polyptych from the gothic church of St Blaise in Dubrovnik (1440) displays all of them together[58]. Furthermore, on the main polyptych of

Zaventem; an Anonymous Roman follower of Caravaggio, *The Scourging of St Blaise*, Tweed Museum of art, University of Minnesota Dulth; Carlo Maratta, *Martirio di san Biagio*, (1680), Genua, basilica di Santa Maria Assunta in Carignano.

53 Gjukić-Bender 2014, p. 306.

54 On Schiavoni/Illyrian confraternity and St Jerome's church and complex in Rome see: Gudelj 2016a, pp. 5-30.

55 Ivić 2016, p. 79.

56 Cvetnić 2010, p. 8.

57 «…eiusdem gentis celebrent quotannis vero in festivis assumptae b(eatae) / Mariae seu octava ss.(anctorum) Blasii Hieronymi Nicolai diebus missam ibi decantent…»

58 The polyptych was partly damaged in the fire in 1607. Today, the polyptych is on display in Dubrovnik Cultural history museum. See: Gjukić-Bender 2014, p. 315.

the Dominican church in Dubrovnik painted by local painter Lovro Dobričević (1420-1478) St Blaise is accompanied by St Dominic, St Nicholas, and St Peter[59]. The cult of St Jerome was on the list of mandatory holidays of the Republic from 1445 to 1552 and on St Jerome's feast day September 30, Ragusans celebrated Saint as "all other Dalmatians, his compatriots"[60]. However, this feast was not accompanied by official procession[61]. The Ragusan government showed special devotion to St Jerome in 1510 when they commissioned from local painter Nikola Božidarević (1460-1517) the depiction of the Saint for the Great Council's hall, which is not preserved[62]. Finally, large figures of St Jerome and St Blaise were commissioned for the church of St Blaise in Dubrovnik from sculptor Nikola Lazanić (second half of the 16th century), previously active in Rome and member of St Jerome confraternity (he made now lost reliefs with St Jerome for houses belonging to confraternity)[63].

5. *Ragusan community or Ragusan confraternity in Genua?*

In order to understand the visual language of the chapel in Genua, we have to compare it with other places of worship with Schiavoni patronage in Italy. Unlike other cases in this volume, the Ragusan presence in Genua was not the product of the immigration provoked by epidemics or Ottoman invasions, but was the consequence of the diplomatic and economic networking. Nevertheless, the two phenomena intersect and entwine, as Ragusan merchants were present in other seaports and trading centers, often interacting with Schiavoni/Illyrian institutions.

One of the signs of the Ragusan presence in these groups is a devotion to St Blaise. In Ancona, for example, Schiavoni founded the Confraternity of St Blaise already in the 15th century, responsible for an altar in the Dominican church. Documents published by Giuseppe Capriotti in this volume show that from 1444, this Schiavoni altar featured an altarpiece, described in an inventory of 1728 as representing at the center the Madonna with Child, on the right St Blaise and St Mary Magdalen and on the left St Jerome and St Lucy[64]. Here, as in Genua, St Blaise is accompanied by St Jerome, the presence of the protectors of Dalmatia and Dubrovnik signaling the presence of Dubrovnik expatriates.

The other documented case of the Confraternity of St Blaise in Italy is the one in Ascoli Piceno[65]. Capriotti noticed that Schiavoni in Ascoli worked mostly in

[59] Ivi, p. 297.
[60] Lonza 2009, pp. 257-259.
[61] Ivi, p. 422.
[62] Marković 1987, p. 352.
[63] Ivić 2016, p. 51.
[64] Cf. Capriotti 2018; Capriotti forthcoming.
[65] On Schiavoni confraternity in Ascoli Piceno see: Capriotti 2016, pp. 30-46.

the wool business as weavers or dyers or were carrying out hard and humble jobs. Their confraternity named *Societas illiricorum sive sclavorum scole sancti Blaxii* was connected with the church of Santa Maria della Carità, where most of them were to be buried. The 1489 contract with the prior of the said church obliged him to sing a mass on the feast days of St Blaise, St Jerome, St Michael the Archangel and St Nicholas, for the fixed payment of one *bolognino* for each mass. In Genua, almost the same demand was written on the epitaph of the foundation of the chapel.

In Ascoli, the priest had to administer the sacraments to members of the confraternity, those alive and those who were about to die. In Genua, Dominicans had to bury Ragusan who would die in Genua, but there is no mention of sacraments: this may be a signal that no permanent community was present in the Ligurian port. In addition, the Genoese Dominicans have to pay all the costs because Ragusan ships paid them "quatuor libras" every time they came to the port of Genua.

Unlike other mentioned Schiavoni confraternities, the Ragusans in Genua never had the official association with a name, as they seem not to have immigrated permanently to the Ligurian port. They formed a fluid community of Ragusan merchants and businessmen who stayed in Genua just for few days before continuing their business in other countries.

Nevertheless, Ragusans who came to Genua as merchants had a place to gather and worship their patron saints – it was their chapel in the Dominican church of Santa Maria di Castello dating from 1581. Their diplomatic representatives assured the basic spiritual service and a burial to wondering merchants of the Republic, the contract with Dominicans carved on the big epitaph situated on the lateral wall of the chapel. Moreover, their chapel with the altarpiece of Martyrdom of their saint protector represented an important identity marker; a place that Ragusans felt as their own, but also comprehensible to the local community. The Lomi's painting made a spiritual connection between their patron saint, painter's own visions of the scene of his martyrdom (influenced by Florentine mannerism) and maritime landscape that evokes Ragusan merchant network.

Ragusan community in Genua represents some kind of fluid society out of their *Patria* and their chapel was founded under circumstances that were different from those of immigrants organized in Schiavoni confraternities. Important patronage of Giustinani Campi, who even rose to prominence of Genovese doge between 1591 and 1593, demonstrates the level of diplomatic exchange between two maritime republics. Therefore, the chapel provided a familiar place of worship for Dubrovnik merchants, embellished by artists important in Genoese context, who enriched the visual culture of Ragusan and Schiavoni/Illyrian patronage in Early Modern Italy.

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Appendix



Fig. 1. Giovanni Maria Pambio, *The marble altar*, 1595, Genua, church of St Maria di Castello, San Tommaso d'Aquino chapel (originally situated in the Ragusan chapel) (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 2. Giovanni Maria Pambio, *Figures of Eternal Father and the two angels*, 1595, Genua, church of St Maria di Castello, San Biagio chapel (originally situated in the Ragusan chapel) (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 3. Inscription on the epitaph of the foundation of the chapel, 1600, Genua, former Ragusan chapel, today museum of the convent of St Maria di Castello (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 4. Reliefs of the crests of Dubrovnik, Genua, former Ragusan chapel, today museum of the convent of St Maria di Castello (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 5. Former Ragusan chapel transformed in 1966 into museum on two levels, Genua, the convent of St Maria di Castello (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 6. Aurelio Lomi, *Martyrdom of St Blaise in the presence of the saints Nicholas, Peter, Dominic, and Jerome*, 1601, Genua, church of St Maria di Castello, San Biagio chapel (originally situated in the Ragusan chapel) (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 7. Aurelio Lomi, *Martyrdom of St Blaise in the presence of the saints Nicholas, Peter, Dominic, and Jerome*, 1601, detail, Genua, church of St Maria di Castello, San Biagio chapel (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 8. Aurelio Lomi, *Martyrdom of St Blaise in the presence of the saints Nicholas, Peter, Dominic, and Jerome*, 1601, detail, Genua, church of St Maria di Castello, San Biagio chapel (Photo A. Ruso)



Fig. 9. Barnaba da Modena, *Madonna and Child*, 1375, detail, Genua, museum of the convent of St Maria di Castello (originally situated in the Ragusan chapel, then transferred into San Biagio chapel with Lomi's altarpiece) (Photo A. Ruso)

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