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# Changing the Enemy, Visualizing the Other:

## Contacts between Muslims and Christians in the Early Modern Mediterranean Art

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# Distinctive features attributed to an infidel. The political propaganda, religious enemies and the iconography of visual narratives in the Renaissance Venice

Ivana Čapeta Rakić*

*Abstract*

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the political debate between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire intensified, culminating with the War of Cyprus in the second half of the 16th century. At the same time the rise of Lutheranism started to erode Christian Europe from the North. In these times of crisis, the Church did not hesitate to

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use all available resources in its battle against infidels. Several Christian monks preached claiming that they had foreseen the triumph of Christians over Muslims. Their words were printed on various pamphlets, leaflets and brochures which were distributed throughout the Venetian territory and beyond. That kind of propaganda was supported and reinforced by visual narratives. In this text, the author analyzes the impact of historical circumstances and of ecclesiastical and political propaganda on the iconography of Renaissance painting in Venice, particularly focusing on how two Venetian painters – Girolamo and Francesco da Santa Croce – responded to those inputs.

Dopo la caduta di Costantinopoli nel 1453, il dibattito politico tra la Repubblica veneta e l'impero ottomano si intensificò, culminando con la guerra di Cipro nella seconda metà del XVI secolo. Allo stesso tempo la diffusione del luteranesimo aveva cominciato a erodere l'Europa cristiana dal Nord. In questi tempi di crisi, la Chiesa non esitò a utilizzare tutte le risorse disponibili nella sua battaglia contro gli infedeli. Diversi monaci cristiani predicarono affermando di aver previsto il trionfo dei cristiani sui musulmani. Le loro parole furono stampate su vari opuscoli, volantini e pamphlet distribuiti in tutto il territorio veneziano e oltre. Tale propaganda fu sostenuta e rafforzata da narrazioni visive. In questo testo, l'autore analizza l'impatto delle circostanze storiche e della propaganda ecclesiastica e politica sull'iconografia della pittura rinascimentale a Venezia, in particolare sul modo in cui due pittori veneti – Girolamo e Francesco da Santa Croce – reagirono a quegli input.

One of the most important iconographic themes of Christianity is the *Adoration of the Magi*. It is an extremely important doctrinal and liturgical event for the Catholic Church since it represents the first acknowledgment of Christ's divine nature, and thus the starting point of Christian faith. By bringing the gifts, the Magi recognized the power of the young Christ King[1]. Although the exact number of the magi has never been specified in the canon[2], it is already from the earliest visual renderings, dating from the 2nd century (in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome), that their "basic" iconography was formed and their number established[3]. However, the image of the Oriental magi has changed over time. The most obvious change is their transformation into kings[4], which has later developed into a virtual platform for representation

[1] Prijatelj Pavićić 1998, p. 154.

[2] Matthew 2, 11. For the purpose of this paper, the following edition was used: *Biblija* 2013, p. 1103.

[3] The shaping of the iconography was also affected by apocryphal writings: the Protoevangelium of James, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, and Evangelium Infantiae Arabicum. Cf. Kehrer 1904, p. 4.

[4] Iconographic transformation of the Oriental Magi into kings was probably influenced by Tertullian, an early Christian writer and apologist (Carthage, around 160 AD – Carthage, around 225/240), who was the first to establish a connection between a part of Matthew's Gospel and the Psalm 71, 10-11 as a prefiguration of the Adoration from the New Testament. This prefiguration was probably not accepted in the iconography before the 8th century, with the earliest examples most likely being those in the mosaics in the Vatican Grottos. In the early 9th century a closer bond was established between the Psalm 71, 10-11 and the adoration of the wise men, which is evident in the illustration of the said psalm from the so-called Stuttgart Psalter, which is kept in Würtembergische Landesbibliothek. Cf. Garrucci 1877, pl. 280, n. 5; Kehrer 1908; Mâle 1978, pp. 66-72.

and propaganda of a broad variety of phenomena: from church and religious doctrines[5], through personal and secular displays, to various other allegorical and political manifestations[6]. Thus, due to contextualization and actualization of the themes of Epiphany and numerous other iconographic themes, it has assumed completely new meanings and conveyed entirely new messages.

Andrea Mantegna (Isola di Carturo, 1431 – Mantua, 1506) played an important role in the process of iconographic transformation of the theme in Italian Renaissance, in particular through his painting the *Adoration of the Magi* which he had painted for the Gonzaga family in Mantua between 1462 and 1470[7]. In this concave rectangular painting, the Virgin Mary and Child are standing in a dark cave surrounded by a *mandorla* of cherubs, while St. Joseph is standing in front of it. Above the cave, four angels are shown from the waist up and among them is a star whose ray descends vertically towards the Christ Child, accentuating the importance of his figure. The left half of the painting features a landscape with a winding road down which a royal procession is travelling descending towards the Holy Family. Following the usual scheme established already in the 6th century (in the mosaics from the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna), Mantegna showed the Three Wise Men as representatives of the three ages of man but, to my knowledge, he was the first Italian painter to show them also as representatives of three continents and three different ethnicities[8]. In Mantegna's painting, the first of the Wise Men is shown as an old man with a long white beard. He is kneeling down on one knee and his arms are crossed on his chest. He has already delivered his gift to Christ Child, who is extending His right arm towards him in the gesture of benediction. He is a representative of Europe and Christianity. He is followed by a man of a more mature age, darker complexion and head stubble, with a thick, dark beard. In his left hand he is carrying a gift and is just about to kneel down, while behind him a young wise man, dark-skinned, is already kneeling on the ground. They are representatives of Asia and Africa. The introduction of a dark-skinned man (a black man) in the Adoration of the Magi scene has begun in the late Middle Ages. In Italian art it most likely appeared between 1266 and 1268, on the pulpit made by Nicola Pisano in the cathedral of Siena[9]. At that time, the only role assigned to this figure was that of a servant or companion to the magi. In the European context, the dark-skinned magus appeared around 1360 (probably

[5] Nilgen, Franciscono 1967, pp. 311-316.

[6] It is sufficient to remember the depiction of this theme in the paintings of the Florentine Renaissance, such as the Adoration of the Magi by Gentile da Fabriano (currently kept at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence), Benozzo Gozzoli (Magi Chapel of Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence, 1459-1461) or Botticelli (also kept at the Uffizi, Florence).

[7] The painting is now part of the collection in the Uffizi Gallery Museum in Florence. Cf. Fossi 2004, pp. 112-113.

[8] Kaplan 1985; Carr 1997, p. 64; Kaplan 2005, p. 131; Manca 2006, p. 81; Kaplan 2010, p. 21.

[9] Kaplan 2010, p. 21.

the earliest was his appearance in the *Adoration of the Magi* painting in the Emmaus Monastery in Prague)[10], while it was Andrea Mantegna who introduced it into Italian art in the painting he created for the Gonzaga family. The dark-skinned man representing Africa, as well as the one representing Asia, are both Muslim. Their link to Islam is determined by their headgear – turbans. Although turbans existed long before Mohammad[11], starting from the Middle Ages, for Europeans, people who wore turbans were synonymous with unbelievers and members of Islam[12], even if they wore other items of clothing which could belong to any other entity or be entirely fantastical[13]. This is confirmed by some of the earliest examples in Italian painting, such as the famous Giotto's fresco *Saint Francis Proposing the Trial by Fire to the Sultan* in the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce, Florence. The Sultan is characterized by his rich garments and a turban surmounted by a crown; a fantastic creation, yet appropriate from an Italian perspective[14]. The Muslim world that encountered Europe in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 15th century consisted not of one dynastic power but two, each with its distinguishing cultural features. In the words of Francesco Filelfo in his letter to Charles VIII from 1451: «Duo sunt infidelium genera… Turci et Sarraceni»[15]. The term 'black Turks' in Venetian and western art derives from the Venetian usage (*turchi mori*)[16]. When examining representations of the black African magus in the visual arts of Italian Renaissance, it is important to remember that physical blackness was usually associated with sin and Otherness and the black Magus is no exception[17]. As Yona Pinson has pointed out, already towards the end of the Middle Ages blackness or swarthiness were perceived as symbols of evil, sin and demonic, and in Renaissance art blacks are mostly associated with heresy and infidelity[18]. Although Yona Pinson points out that not every representation of the black magus should be interpreted as that of an enemy, i.e. an infidel, in Mantegna's case it is rather evident. The dark-skinned representative of Africa as well as the Asian Magus are both Muslims, and there is no doubt that Mantegna intentionally and consciously attributed clear iconographic characteristics of infidels, i.e. of contemporary adversaries of the Catholic Church, to the two magi.

A few years later Mantegna painted another work of art on the same theme, which is now kept in J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles[19]. In comparison

10 Devisse, Mollat 1979, p. 27.

11 It is mentioned by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*: Midas, careful to hide his long ears, wore a purple turban over both, which hid his foul disgrace from laughter (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XI, 180-181).

12 Friedman 2008, pp. 173-191; Mack 2002, p. 152; Madar 2011, p. 159.

13 Kubiski 2001, pp. 161-180.

14 Mack 2002, p. 152.

15 Raby 1982.

16 Kaplan 2011.

17 Kaplan 1985, p. 119.

18 Pinson 1996, pp. 159-175.

19 Carr 1997.

with the previous instance, the theme of the Adoration of the Magi has been reduced to the essentials. The painting, shaped as a horizontal rectangle with a dark, un-defined background depicts Virgin Mary and Child from the waist up. The narrow area in the upper left corner features St. Joseph peeking over the Virgin's shoulder. The three Magi are also depicted from the waist up and identified as representatives of the three ages of man, as well as representatives of three different ethnicities. Andrea Mantegna was the brother-in-law of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, the two most prominent Venetian painters, under whose tutorship two painters from the Santa Croce workshop, Francesco di Simone da Santa Croce (Santa Croce, Val Brembana, c. 1470/75 – Venice, 1508)[20] and Girolamo da Santa Croce (Santa Croce, Val Brembana, c. 1480/85 – Venice, 1556) started their career[21]. They were most likely rather familiar with Mantegna's work, considering that Francesco di Simone da Santa Croce had made the earliest known copy of Mantegna's Adoration, preserved in Getty's Museum[22], while several other similar compositions derived from the same source are attributed to the Santa Croce workshop[23]. Sometime between 1535 and 1545 Girolamo da Santa Croce, whose selected works, together with those of his son Francesco da Santa Croce (Venice, 1516 – Venice, 1584) are the main focus of this paper, realised another painting of the *Adoration of the Magi* (Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, fig. 1)[24]. In terms of composition,

[20] So far no archival data have been found to testify to whether Francesco di Simone was Bellini's student. However, in the painting which depicts the Virgin and Child on a throne and two saints, the painter signed his name as FRANCISCUS DE SANTA † D. I. B. 1507 (D.I.B could be interpreted as "discipulus Iohanni Bellini", that is, "student of Giovanni Bellini"). The painting was made for the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, and today it is kept in the church of San Pietro Martire in Murano. Cf. Baccheschi, della Chiesa 1975, p. 497, fig. 506.

[21] The name of Girolamo da Santa Croce is first mentioned in an archival document dated October 20, 1503. On that day he attended the signing of the last will and testament of Maria Trevisan, the second wife of Gentile Bellini. In this document he signed his name as *Ierolimo da maistro Bernardin depentor*. To sign an official document in front of a notary public also meant that the witness had to have been of age, which is why that document is used to establish the possible date of Girolamo's birth. Cf. Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Testamenti di Scalla Andrea*, busta 879, n. 243, transcribed according to: Ludwig 1903, p. 8; Fiocco 1916, pp. 11-12; Stradiotti 1975-1976, p. 570; Baccheschi, della Chiesa 1976, p. 5. He is again mentioned in the last will and testament of Gentile Bellini dated February 18, 1507, as a certain disciple named *Hieronimo*, who is presumably Girolamo da Santa Croce. In his last will and testament, Gentile left his own drawings to him and another student for them to share among themselves […] *Item dimitto et dari volo Venture et Hieronimo meis garzonibus mea omnia designa retracta de Roma que inter ipsos equaliter dividantur* […]. Cf. Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Sezione Nototarile, Testamenti, Bernardo Cavagnis, notary public, folder 271, n. 352, transcript according to Ludwig 1903, p. 16.

[22] The painting was kept in a Kaiser Frierich Museum in Berlin, and it was destroyed in the 1945 bombing. Cf. Baccheschi, della Chiesa 1975, p. 497, cat. 6 and p. 505, fig. 1; Carr 1997, pp. 72-73.

[23] Baccheschi, della Chiesa 1975, p. 498, cat. 16, and p. 505, fig. 2; Baccheschi, della Chiesa 1976, p. 48, cat. 90; p. 80, fig. 5; p. 80, fig. 7.

[24] The original ubication of the painting is unknown, but in the early 20th century Cavalcaselle stated that it was in the Manfrin collection in Venice. Cf. Crowe, Cavalcaselle 1912, p. 447.

this multi-layered painting has no similarities with the previous examples, but they can be examined within the same context due to their content, meaning and iconological interpretation. Virgin Mary and Child and St. Joseph are placed in front of a piece of stone architecture which occupies the right third of the painting, surmounted by exposed wooden eaves. In the background we can see blue skies and a hilly landscape with a path winding through it. Down that path, a royal procession is travelling with horses and camels. Two Wise Men are kneeling before the Virgin and the Child, while the third one is a young, black Magus who is standing and offering his gift. Both Girolamo da Santa Croce and his son Francesco are known to have built their compositions using the principle of addition. It is a sort of 'cocktail' of borrowed figures, arranged in the painting's context, which are literally copied from famous works by other masters or repeated in a slightly altered manner[25]. Thus, Girolamo's *Adoration of the Magi* is also a sort of 'patchwork' based on a number of sources, especially those from the graphic media. Two of Dürer's prints (woodcuts) depicting the *Adoration of the Magi* are important for us, in particular the one created between 1509 and 1511[26] (fig. 2). Although Girolamo did not copy the composition literally, the main model remains recognizable[27]. The piece of architecture in front of which the scene is taking place in the two images is very similar, although Girolamo has reduced it in the upper part, having chosen a horizontal shape for the painting in comparison to the vertical orientation of Dürer's print's composition. In Dürer's print, the scene is taking place within the architectural framework, while Girolamo places his protagonists outside, i.e. in front of it. The arrangement of the Virgin and the Child is largely adopted from the same source, although it is not copied rigorously[28]. However, the most obvious link between the graphical source and the painting can be seen in the figure of the first kneeling Magus. In Girolamo's painting, the head of the old man is somewhat different from its graphical counterpart (in the painting, the old man has taken off his turban and placed it on the ground), but the posture of his body and the folds of the fabric are completely identical. In both Dürer's and Girolamo's works, the first Magus is dressed after the Ottoman fashion. Over a long-sleeved tunic, the old man is wearing a ceremonial kaftan, the

[25] Čapeta Rakić 2011, p. 37.

[26] The second graphical source is a woodcut number 11 taken from the cycle known as the *Seventeen Cuts From the Life of the Virgin*, created between 1501 and 1505. Cf. Kurth 1963, p. 185. It was from this graphical source that Girolamo adopted the idea of placing stone blocks, on which the Virgin and Child are seated, in the lower right corner of the painting, as well as a group of angels holding a cartouche in the upper section of the painting.

[27] It should be noted that, at the time when Girolamo was working on his painting in Venice, there was a certain number of copies of Dürer's prints originating from the *bottega* of Marcantonio Raimondi and the other copyists, which is why Girolamo could have used their prints as well. However, regardless of that fact, the credit for the compositional arrangement belongs to Dürer.

[28] Hans Tietze was the first autor who wrote about correspondences in composition between Girolamo's *Adoration of the Magi* and Dürer's graphics. Cf. Tietze 1941, pp. 88-95, 122.

distinctive item of the oriental costume which has a distinct hierarchical social symbolism[29], although in the painting the fabric of the kaftan can be more closely inspected, thus allowing a more precise iconographical interpretation. It is a luxurious fabric, made of silk and velvet and belonging to the distinct 'a griccia' typological group[30]. This type of silky velvet was produced both in Venetian weaving mills and in those in Bursa, although the latter one was of somewhat different technical execution and poorer in quality[31]. It is therefore inherent to both cultures, the European and the Ottoman, and was equally used to produce luxurious textile items in both East and West[32]. Another example of an Ottoman kaftan similar to the one seen on Girolamo's painting is now kept at the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul (inv. 13/500)[33] (fig. 3). It was made in the 16th century from Venetian silk velvet, which further emphasized its value, considering the fact that in the Ottoman court, textile items made of imported, especially Venetian fabric were seen as exclusive commodities[34]. Kaftans made from luxurious Italian fabrics were reserved for the Ottoman Court only[35]. The Sultan wore them during public ceremonies and diplomatic audiences, and they could also be worn by foreign ambassadors who received them as a gift from a Sultan or by viziers for their loyalty to him[36]. For example,

29 Han 1984, p. 277.

30 «The Renaissance *a griccia* textile pattern is characterized by the motif of a massive trunk twisting diagonally, thereby forming gaps which in turn are filled by thick foliage, flowers and fruit, among which those of the thistle, lotus flowers, pomegranates and pine cones can be identified. Previously, authors believed that the term *a gricce* referred primarily to the motif, while recently it has been pointed out that *griccio* also entails the manner in which the loom was set up. *Griccio* – or *grizze* in the Venetian dialect – is a term which referred to the dominant direction of the pattern on a fabric, according to which the loom had to be set up. Thus, *grizze a camino* refers to a strictly symmetrical, mirror-like arrangement, while *grizze a grizze* denotes a pattern with a diagonal orientation». Quotation from Banić 2011, p. 118. For more information on the typology, Silvija Banić suggests the following titles: De Gennaro, Peri 1985 and D'Avanzo 1981, p. 102. I woud hereby like to thank my colleague Silvija Banić for her considerable assistance with this part of the text.

31 Nurhan *et. al.* 2001, pp. 182-190.

32 Mack 2002 pp. 27-49; Carboni 2007, pp. 187-189; Mackie 2004. For Italian silks made for export to the Ottoman sultans, see: Nurhan *et. al.* 2001, pp. 182-190.

33 Cf. Saule 1999, pp. 96-97; Nurhan *et. al.* 2001, p. 182; Carboni 2007, p. 323; Nurhan *et. al.* 2001, pp. 182-190.

34 This is substantiated by an instance when envoys from Dubrovnik, bearing gifts for the Sultan, tried to pursuade the women from the Ottoman court to replace Venetian satin with the Florentine one, which was less valued and declined with indignation. Cf. Belamarić 2012, p. 413.

35 This is substantiated by the fact that only two ceremonial kaftans from the Topkapi Palace Museum collection in Istanbul were made of velvet manufactured in the ottoman weaving mills. Cf. Nurhan *et. al.* 2001, p. 182.

36 Festal, i.e. ceremonial caftan as a luxurious and costly piece of artistic craftsmanship of Turkish origin often served as a gift offered by the Porte to individuals of foreign nationality, and first of all to diplomatic representatives of European royal courts and governments, then to Christian princes and other members of contemporary high society. Donated caftans were accepted with pleasure and often (re)used in various ways. Festive caftan, in other words, as the sign of the hierarchial social symbolics at the Porte, was often remodelled into vestments for Catholic liturgical celebrations. Cf. Han 1984, p. 287.

tribute emissaries from Dubrovnik, the *oratores tributari* – who brought gifts to the sultan's court in Istanbul in exchange for the freedom of their City – used to put on the kaftans they received as a gift at the beginning of the consignment ceremony. Upon returning to Dubrovnik, the emissaries had to hand the kaftans over to the state authorities, and they were then converted at the government's expense into liturgical vestments and given to the church where they were used to celebrate the holy mass[37].

However, sultans and members of the court wore ceremonial surkaftans with long decorative pendant sleeves over the short-sleeve kaftans underneath, which were closed with matching-color buttons[38]. What we see in Girolamo's painting is actually a surkaftan, which is why there is no doubt that Girolamo consciously and intentionally painted the Wise Man as a high-ranking member of the Ottoman court. This is further substantiated by the piece of headgear which, as a sign of respect for Mary and the Child, the magus has placed on the ground. It is a turban made of white cloth folded and curled around the red cap (*tãj*), a kind of turban which was introduced to the Ottoman court by Mehmed II, later to become a recognizable Ottoman attribute. Sometimes, as in this example, the end of the white cloth (*'adhaba*)[39] was left to trail freely from and behind the turban[40].

Both Dürer's prints depicting the *Adoration of the Magi* theme were made in the early 16th century, after his sojourns in Venice. There the German painter had an insight into the appearance of Oriental figures, most likely thanks to their presence in the works of Gentile Bellini[41] and other Venetian masters[42]. He is also one of the first of many German artists to use images of the Turk directly in biblical scenes, attributing them various iconographic roles[43].

It is therefore very curious that Girolamo, as a Venetian painter and a student of Gentile Bellini, relied on secondary sources to depict the Ottomans in his

[37] Also interesting is the state ceremony of preparing the tribute emissaries for their mission. The emissaries and their entourage were 'invested' at holy mass held at the cathedral; after which they would move in a slow and dignified horseback procession through the crowd gathered in the city and bow before the Rector and the members of the Small Council, as well as before the church of St. Blaise. They were also accompanied by a chaplain, and according to the lore, on their way to Constantinople the emmissaries from Dubrovnik also carried a small portable altar with a truly fitting depiction of the Adoration of the Magi. Cf. Belamarić 2012, p. 416; Prijatelj Pavičić 1998, p. 154.

[38] Mackie 2004, p. 221.

[39] For the definition of the term *'adhaba* see: Bearman *et al.* 2012.

[40] Portraits of Mehmed II the Conqueror are preserved, showing both types of turbans. Cf., for example, Campbell, Chong 2006, pp. 78-79, cat. n. 23.

[41] This hypothesis is further substantiated by Dürer's drawing *Three Turks Wearing Long Coats and Turbans*, dated between 1495 to 1500. The drawing is based on three figures in the background of Gentile Bellini's painting, *Corpus Christi Procession in the Piazza San Marco*, signed and dated 1496 (today in Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice). The drawing is kept in the British Museum in London. Cf. Madar 2011, p. 160.

[42] Raby 1982, p. 25.

[43] Madar 2011, pp. 155-183; Colding Smith 2016, p. 36.

paintings. It is even more curious that the same iconographic pattern was also adopted by Girolamo's son Francesco da Santa Croce, in his work depicting the same theme, which is now kept at the Museo Borgogna in Vercelli, as well as Girolamo's grandson Pietro Paolo da Santa Croce (Venice ? – Venice, 1620) in the painting kept in the Basilica of st. Anthony of Padua[44]. If we want to consider the appearance of the Magi / Muslims in these paintings of Renaissance masters in the context of historical, religious and political circumstances of the time, we will see that the years immediately preceding the creation of the first of Mantegna's paintings, the *Adoration of the Magi* for the Gonzaga family, were marked by the efforts of Pope Pius II to gather the European rulers in Mantua in order to prompt them to wage a defensive war against the Ottomans, and by his attempt to launch a crusade against the Ottomans[45]. Such ideas gained even more ground after the fall of Constantinople in 1453; an event which had a particular impact on Rome and Venice. The Pope's fruitless efforts resulted in an offer to the Ottoman sultan promising him the title of Roman Emperor in exchange for his conversion to Christianity[46]. In the eyes of the Catholics, the triumph of the Church over Islam would have been accomplished only through the conversion of the Sultan and his empire to Christianity. Such an idea was not a novelty. It originated back in the 13th century, when Pope Innocent III predicted the fall of Islam six hundred sixty six years after its emergence, as well as the Second Coming of Christ which was supposed to take place in 1284. In order to pave the way for this eschatological event, the Muslims of the Middle East would have to be converted to Christianity[47]. A similar climate continued in the centuries to come. In the 15th and 16th century the prophecy and propaganda of the conversion of Muslims and the fall of Islam found its support in new visual narratives and in interpretations of the existing ones. At the time, it was believed that certain scenes in the mosaics of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice contained hidden prophecies related to the future of Venice[48]. Such iconography of works of art was reinforced by prophecies written by several Christian apologists and preachers. Their words were printed on various pamphlets, leaflets and brochures and distributed throughout the Venetian territory and beyond[49]. At the beginning of the 16th century, more precisely in 1509 a monk, Pietro Nanni, preached in Venice. He predicted that, after losing all their dominion due to their sins, the Venetians would regain their territorial possessions after a 'flagellation' of two and a half years. Nanni also said «Il Turcho si fará Christian» (the Ottoman will become a Christian)[50]. During

44 Čapeta Rakić 2011, pp. 38-40.
45 Prijatelj Pavičić 1998, p. 68.
46 Jezernik 2010, p. 4.
47 Cutler 1970, p. 95.
48 Sansovino 1604, p. 58.
49 Preto 1975, pp. 67-91.
50 Deny 1936, pp. 201-220; Setton 1992, pp. 18-19. Preto 1975, pp. 67-91.

those years, another priest was present in Venice: Paolo Angelo, a refugee who had fled from the Ottoman Albania, the author of several prophetic texts in which Ottomans and Protestants were represented as the most dangerous enemies of Christianity[51]. Prompted by the failure of the Ottomans in Vienna in 1529 and due to the fact that the previous prophecies had not come true, in 1534 *De eversion Europae Prognosticon* was printed[52]. The publication had a great reception. It was printed in several editions during the 16th and 17th century and has been translated into several languages including German, French and English[53]. The author claimed that the Venetians would succumb to the Turkish assault. But Christ would ultimately reconcile the Christians; all of Europe was going to respond with a vast crusade overseas. Victory would attend the crusaders' arms, and would affect the conversion of Turks to Christianity. The Ottoman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire would be united under a single emperor. Muslims and Jews would receive Christian baptism[54]. This was supposed to occur in 1538. Instead of that, the Third Ottoman-Venetian War broke out. Precisely at that time, two other Venetian prophetic brochures were printed, one in 1538 and the other in 1542, whose task, according to Bataillon, was to offer hope and consolation to Christian troops in battle[55].

I believe that Girolamo's painting was created in this period, i.e. between 1535 and 1545, during his most productive and most creative phase. For Christians, the black magus and the magus shown as a Muslim who came to bow before the Christ Child offered faith in the triumph of the cross over the crescent moon[56] and the victory of true faith over heresy. Behind the main scene in Girolamo's painting we can see multiple other figures among which we can recognize a few Ottomans. They are all there as witnesses, present at the time of the conversion of the Muslim and his recognition of Christ's divine nature. Angels are holding a scroll with an inscription from Luke's Gospel: GLORIA. IN / ALTISIMI / DEO / ET IN TERA / PASE FRAGIL / OMENI (Glory to God in Heaven and Peace to Men on Earth), which can certainly be linked to the political situation of the time.

51 Preto 1975, pp. 67-91.

52 Although it is assumed that the manuscript dates from a bit earlier, there are no known editions prior to 1534. Cf. Ernst 2005, pp. 635-646.

53 Setton 1992 p. 25.

54 Cf. Setton 1992, p. 26.

55 Bataillon 1966, p. 461; Preto 1975, pp. 72-73.

56 In the woodcut of the *Adoration* by Albrecht Dürer, dated between 1501-1505, even the banners which the soldiers carry are Ottoman; one is decorated with the crescent and star. The crescent was not identified with Islam until the appearance of the Osmanli Turks, whilst on the other hand there is the clearest evidence that at the time of the Crusades and long before, the crescent moon and star were the regular insignia of Byzantium and the Byzantine emperors, some of whom placed it on their coins. It is held by some that the Ottoman Turks adopted the crescent moon and the star symbol from Byzantium after their occupation of Northern Asia Minor, whilst others hold that they did started employing it after the capture of Constantinople in 1453. Moreover, there is evidence that the crescent with a star or stars is much older than the Byzantine empire in the Aegean world. Cf. Ridgeway 1908, pp. 241-258; Raby 1982, p. 25.

The topic of the conversion of Muslims to Christianity is also featured in the famous epic *Orlando Furioso* written in the early 16th century by Ludovico Ariosto (Reggio Emilia, September 8, 1474 – Ferrara, July 6, 1533). It would be far too impractical to discuss such a complex literary work here, but there are several segments of the plot which are interesting for us. Those are, first and foremost, the conflicts between Christians and Saracens (which took place in the 9th century, during the reign of Charlemagne), and the love between a Christian woman, the Frankish warrior Bradamante, and the Saracen warrior Ruggiero, whose irreconcilable religious divide is bridged by his conversion from Islam to Christianity[57]. The motif of the conversion of Ruggiero and his sister Marfisa is crucial for the interpretation of Ariosto's perception of Saracens, as the author expresses his attitude not only towards the Saracen faith, but indirectly also towards the contemporary Ottoman beliefs. This was emphasized by Pia Schwarz Lausten, who pointed out that in the 16th century, under the influence of Classical culture, the medieval perception of Saracens as infidels, heretics and enemies of the true faith was gradually replaced by the image of Ottomans as a paradigm of an uncivilized, barbaric people[58]. A similar idea is also present in the visual narratives inspired by the epic, which we would like to highlight here. The first illustrated edition of Ariosto's epic was printed in Venice in 1530 by the publisher Nicolò d'Aristotile called Zoppino, who also printed the extended edition with forty six cantos illustrated with forty six woodcuts in 1536[59]. As was already said by Andrea Canova, those illustrations depict battle or court scenes as general motifs which could have served for any chivalric romance[60]. Thus Caneparo, Pezzini, Rizzarelli and Urbaniak recognize the woodcuts printed to accompany Zoppino's edition of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* of 1536 in the illustrations of Aretino's *Tre primi canti di Marfisa*, also printed by Zoppino in 1535 in Venice[61]. The second illustrated edition of *Orlando*

[57] Apart from Ruggiero, five other Muslims are converted to Christianity: Marfisa, Sobrino, Clorinda, Sansonetto and Brandimarte. Cf. Donnelly 1977, pp. 162-170; Schwarz Lausten 2014, pp. 261-286.

[58] It was Pia Schwarz Lausten who pointed out the allusions to contemporary political developments in Ariosto's epic, although she did not focus on interpreting visual representations, but rather examined the issue exclusively through the literary medium. Cf. Schwarz Lausten 2014, pp. 261-286.

[59] Stéphane Lojkine claims that none of the editions published in Ariosto's lifetime were illustrated, but this was disproved by Federica Caneparo, Serena Pezzini, Giovanna Rizzarelli and Martyna Urbaniak, having published preliminary results of their research. This research was conducted within the scientific research project called *L'Orlando Furioso e la sua fortuna figurativa. Ricerche per un archivio digitale di parole e immagini*. The project is managed by Lucia Tongiorgi Tomasi, and implemented by the Università degli Studi di Pisa – Storia delle arti. Compare with: <http://sites.univ-provence.fr/pictura/Arioste/AriosteEditions.php>, 03.01.2011. Their previous research was published on: <http://www.ctl.sns.it/furioso/apps_v3/mastro_furioso/intro.phtml>, 27.12.2010.

[60] Canova 2003, p. 110.

[61] Cf. <http://www.ctl.sns.it/furioso/apps_v3/mastro/mastro.php#x1>, 27.12.2010.

*Furioso* was also published in Venice in 1542 by the publisher Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari[62]. This edition must have left an impression on Giorgio Vasari, as he described it in the following manner: «Non furono anco se non lodevoli le figure che Gabriel Giolito stampatore de' libri, mise negl'Orlandi Furiosi, perció che furono condotte con bella maniera d'intagli»[63]. The author of the prints is unknown. However, they represent a significant departure from the previous edition, visible in the elegantly shaped figures which are printed by means of relief printing technique, while the difference which is particularly important for our topic is the change in the visual narration of certain themes with regard to the previous edition. Indeed, in Zoppino's edition, the African king Agramante, leader of the Saracens, was depicted as any other European king wearing a crown on his head, while in Giolito's edition from 1542 he exhibits the traits of an Ottoman in the illustration accompanying the Canto XXXVIII[64]. Particularly important for us is the fourth, illustrated edition of Ariosto's epic which was first published in 1556 by the Venetian publisher Vincenzo Valgrisi[65], seen that the xylographies from that edition were used by Francesco da Santa Croce as sources for his three paintings depicting themes from *Orlando Furioso*[66]. One of the three paintings, which is now kept in a private collection in Macclesfield (sold by Christie's auction house in 2009), is a visual representation of scenes from the Canto XIV of Ariosto's epic. The protagonists are Agramante, the king of Saracens, Rodomonte, the king of Sarza and Algiers, and Mandricardo, the son of the Tatar king and the lover of Doralice (fig. 4). On the left side of the painted composition, Agramante is sitting with his entourage greeting the army troops, including the one of king Rodomonte whose army is besieging the city of Paris (Canto XIV, 25-26). The figures from the vertically oriented composition of the print, which features a selection of scenes from the following canto (fig. 5), were arranged by Francesco on his horizontally oriented painting surface. While the unknown author of the xylography attributes a somewhat fantastical appearance to the character of Agramante, with merely a hint at his belonging to the Muslim world (turban on his head), Francesco's rendering of Agramante, and his entourage in particular, is more explicitly that of the contemporary Ottomans. It is difficult to say when

[62] This edition has been re-published numerous times, dating from 1542 to 1603. Venetian libraries (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Fondazione Querini Stampalia) still keep a total of fourteen Giolito's editions printed between 1536 and 1559. Editions printed before 1542 contain no illustrations. The complete 1542 edition is available in digital form at <http://www.ctl.sns.it/furioso/apps_v3/mastro/mastro.php#x1>, 23.10.2017.

[63] Vasari 2003, p. 852.

[64] Ariosto 1542.

[65] A complete digital edition is available at <http://bibliotecadigital.fl.ul.pt/ULFL036841/ULFL036841_item1/P1.html>, 22.12.2010.

[66] Two paintings are currently kept in a private collection in Macclesfield, while the third one is in the Columbus Museum of Art. I wrote about the attribution of those paintings to Francesco da Santa Croce in 2012. See: Čapeta Rakić 2012, pp. 130-137.

Francesco's painting was made, considering the fact that it was neither signed nor dated, and it is also unknown who the commissioner was. It certainly must have been made between 1556 and 1584, and one cannot but wonder whether the siege of Paris might be a reference to the events which took place in Cyprus in 1570.

Current circumstances of the historical moment in question can be used to interpret another painting by Francesco, the *Flagellation of Christ*, which is kept in the Venetian Galleria dell Accademia[67] (fig. 6). Much like Girolamo's *Adoration of the Magi*, this painting was also made by collaging various Dürer's prints borrowed from the cycles known as *The Large Passion* (1497-1500), *Small Passion* (1511), and *The Engraved Passion* (1507-1512). The scene takes place in an interior in the middle of which there is a marble pillar. Tethered by ropes to the pillar is Christ, completely naked save for his hips which are covered with a white cloth. Two executioners are flicking their whips at him. They are a reference to Dürer's executioners from the *Flagellation of Christ* scene (*Small Passion*, sheet 17). In Francesco's painting, the third executioner has put down his bundle of sticks and, having removed his headgear, is kneeling on the ground. He is derived from the *Mocking of Christ* print (*Small Passion*, sheet 14), but in the painted version the explicit gesture of the executioner's right hand was changed. While in Durer's print he is making a fig sign, wherein the thumb is thrust between the middle and index fingers in a derisive gesture (which was used already by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*)[68], in the painting the executioner has put two fingers into his mouth, clearly mocking Christ by whistling at him[69]. The right side of the painting features a group of three men who are observing the scene and commenting on it among themselves. One man is seen in the foreground. He is shown in profile; beneath a pointy headgear, only his nose and a long brown beard are jutting out[70]. In the background we can see an older, grey-bearded figure, who is pointing with his right index finger to the central scene, while his head is turned towards his interlocutor. Behind him is a man whose facial features (exaggerated nose and beard) border on a caricature. He is also wearing a piece of pointy brown headgear with a frontlet[71]. The external characteristics of these men (their clothes, pointy headgear, frontlet, exaggerated nose physiognomy…) as well as the roles assigned to them, define them as Jewish servants and villainous onlookers. On

67 The painting was originally from the Venetian church of San Severo. Cf. Fiocco 1916, p. 19; Bacceschi, della Chiesa, 1976, p. 38.

68 «Al fine delle sue parole il ladro / le mani alzó con ambeduo le fiche, / gridando: Togli, Dio, ché a te le squadro»: Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, XXV, 1-4.

69 Francesco adopted the gesture from another Dürer's print, i.e. from a woodcut from the *Large Passion* cycle: number 3, *Flagellation of Christ* (1497).

70 This figure can be found on the right side of the *Christ on the Cross* woodcut from the *Small Passion* cycle (sheet 24).

71 He was 'borrowed' by Francesco from Dürer's print *St. Peter and St. John Healing the Cripple*, from the *Engraved Passion* cycle (sheet 16).

the left side of Francesco's painting is an elevated throne on which Pontius Pilate is sitting, flanked on each side by two men. Here Francesco has again resorted to collaging Durer's figures. It is most likely that he combined two prints depicting the same theme – that of *Pilate Washing His Hands* (*Small Passion*, sheet 20[72] and the *Engraved Passion*, sheet 9, fig. 7), but in doing so, he has conducted an iconographic metamorphosis. Francesco's Pilate is a high-ranking Ottoman official (a sultan?) who, just like Girolamo's magus, is wearing a luxurious ceremonial kaftan made of silk and dark blue velvet with the "a griccio" pattern. His advisor standing on his left is also a member of the Ottoman court. Francesco's awareness of specific ranks associated with Islamic costumes allowed him to create a hierarchy among figures[73]. Christ before Pilate represents the moment when Christ is sentenced to flagellation and crucifixion, and seen through the prism of Christian iconography it also identifies those responsible for his death. The responsibility was attributed equally to the Roman prefect and the Jewish Sanhedrin, which is the topic of numerous theological debates. Dürer's Pilate is washing his hands. This episode is mentioned only in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew, 27, 24), wherein Pilate is saying as follows: «I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man». Despite that, Dürer confers to him the traits of a contemporary infidel, while Francesco, having left out the hand-washing motif, undoubtedly and explicitly assigns Pilate the role of a villain. In the foreground of the painting, next to Pilate's throne, two other male figures are standing. They are dressed after the European fashion. We identify them as a German soldier and probably a German merchant. The German soldier is taken from Dürer's *Ecce Homo* composition which forms a part of the *The Large Passion* cycle (sheet 4)[74]. The same German soldier was also included in the large painting of the *Crucifixion*, which is now kept in the Sala Capitolare of Scuola Grande di San Marco in Venice[75] (fig. 8). The painting is a collaboration between Girolamo and Francesco da Santa Croce made in the mid-16th century[76]. Christ crucified on the cross is shown in the central axis of the composition. In accordance with all four Gospels, he is flanked by two thieves. A tearful Mary Magdalene is embracing the Cross of Christ while the Virgin Mary is seated unconsciously on the ground. She is supported by Saint

[72] In this print, Pilate is wearing a Mamluk outfit. In comparison with the Ottoman attire, this one is primarily distinguished by a turban. Although there are several types of turbans in the Mamluk culture, their common trait is that they were 'high-rising' with vertical, rather than horizontal folds of contemporary Ottoman turbans, and unlike the latter they were never wound around a *tāj*. Cf. Raby 1982, p. 40.

[73] Carboni 2007, p. 304.

[74] Professor Hans Ankwicz first noted that the German soldier was taken from Dürer's prints. Cf. Ankwicz 1905, pp. 127-134.

[75] The painting was originally created for the Monastery of San Giorgio in Alga in Venice. Cf. Čapeta Rakić 2017, pp. 9-23.

[76] Previously, literature has usually attributed the painting to Alvise di Donato. Cf. Čapeta Rakić 2017, pp. 9-23.

John and the holy women. In the crowded composition we can also recognize Longinus the Centurion on horseback, while Stephaton the sponge-bearer has joined a group of Roman soldiers who are sitting on the ground throwing dice to decide who shall receive Christ's seamless robe. An entire series of other figures participate in this allegorical Crucifixion, in which political and religious iconography has fused the contemporary enemies with well-known biblical and hagiographic villains by giving them visibly distinctive features which could be attributed to infidels. Followers of Islam, as we have seen so far, have been empirically identified with the Ottomans and the Ottoman army, and in the painting they are marked by turbans and the flag. The flag which can be seen on the left side of the painting is particularly interesting. It is divided into two horizontal stripes. The top bar bears the acronym SPQR while the bottom stripe bears a symbol composed of three crowns. In the second half of the 15th century, three crowns became symbols of the territory conquered by Mehmed II (Asia, Empire of Trebizond and Greece), and therefore symbols of the Ottoman Empire. We can see them on the medal of Mehmed II which was designed by Gentile Bellini, as well as in his portrait of the Ottoman emperor[77]. From one of the towers in the fortified Jerusalem, which was seized by the Ottomans in 1517, one Ottoman soldier is also waving a red flag with three crowns. Some soldiers are carrying the Holy Roman Empire flag. Here we should remember once again the sentence from the *De eversion Europae Prognosticon*: «The Ottoman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire would be united under a single emperor», and this emperor is Christ himself. Therefore, references to contemporary and recent historical events in the painting are unmistakable. This painting, too, abounds in references to Dürer's prints from the *Large Passion* cycle, but we shall focus on just a few: the blue-clad horseman on the left side of the painting can also be seen on the right side of Dürer's *Crucifixion* (sheet 6); the hatted figure wearing a green tunic and turned with his back towards the observer was 'borrowed' from the *Arrest of Jesus* print (sheet 10); and the boy below the cross of the thief on the right can also be seen in the *Ecce Homo* print (sheet 4).

In the context of this topic, which discusses the representation of Ottomans as biblical villains in the works of the Santa Croce workshop, we also need to emphasize their presence in iconographic themes which involve martyrdoms of Christian saints. In effect, Roman emperor Licinius, who sentenced St. Blaise to martyrdom, is also shown in Girolamo's painting *Martyrdom of Saint Blaise* (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool) as wearing a turban, as well as the Roman prefect who condemned St. Lawrence to death in the painting representing the *Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* (The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, fig. 9)[78]. The person stoking the grill under the Christian martyr

[77] Cf. Campbell, Chong 2006, pp. 74-75, 78-79, cat. n. 19, 20, 23. For the three crowns on Mehmed II's portraits, see Karabacek 1918, pp. 48-49.

[78] The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri.

is also shown as a Muslim in the event which involves a number of other witnesses wearing turbans[79].

The works of the Santa Croce workshop, painted by means of anachronistic method, are consistent with the circumstances of their age, combining the visual narratives and iconography of visual works of art with the propaganda of Christian faith and politics in the fight against the heretics and enemies of the time. Such atmosphere is further reinforced in post-Tridentine iconography in which peoples of other ethnicities attest to the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church and the global expansion of the Gospel[80].

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[79] The painting with the theme of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence attributed to Girolamo da Santa Croce is also kept in the gallery Gemäldegalerie in Dresden. The one attributed to Francesco is located in Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte in Naples. Cf. Baccheschi, della Chiesa 1976, p. 38.

[80] Cvetnić 2010, p. 153.

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## *Appendix*

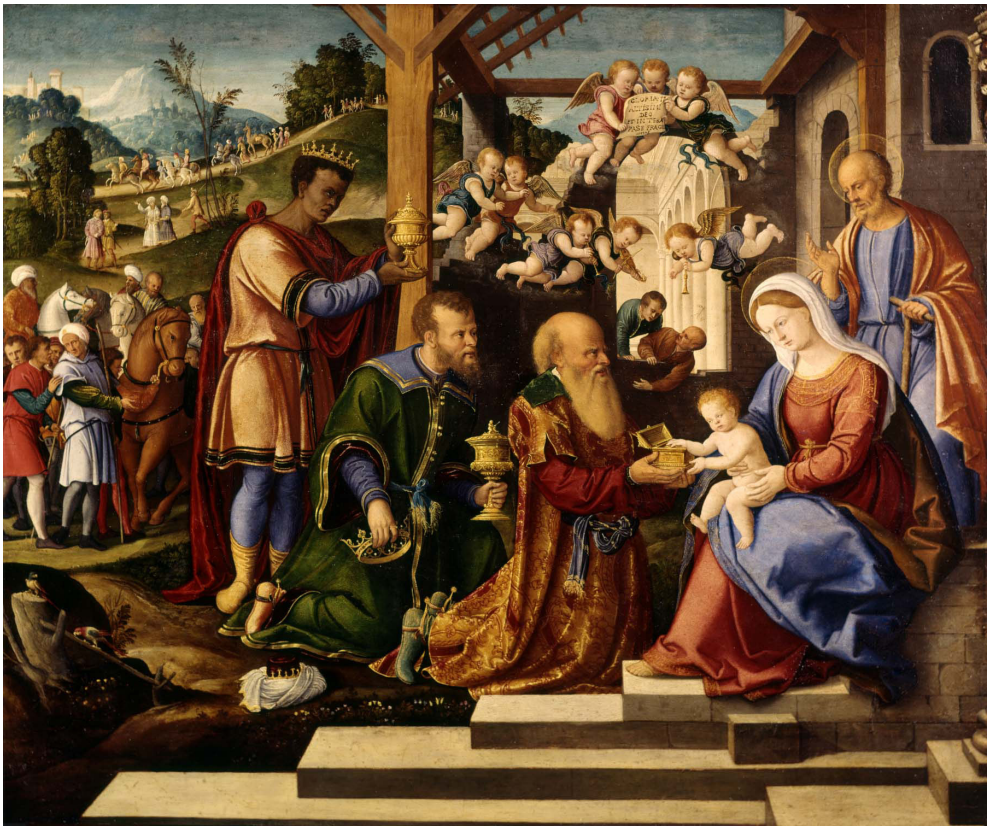

Fig. 1. Girolamo da Santa Croce, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1535-1545, Baltimore, Maryland, Walters Art Museum

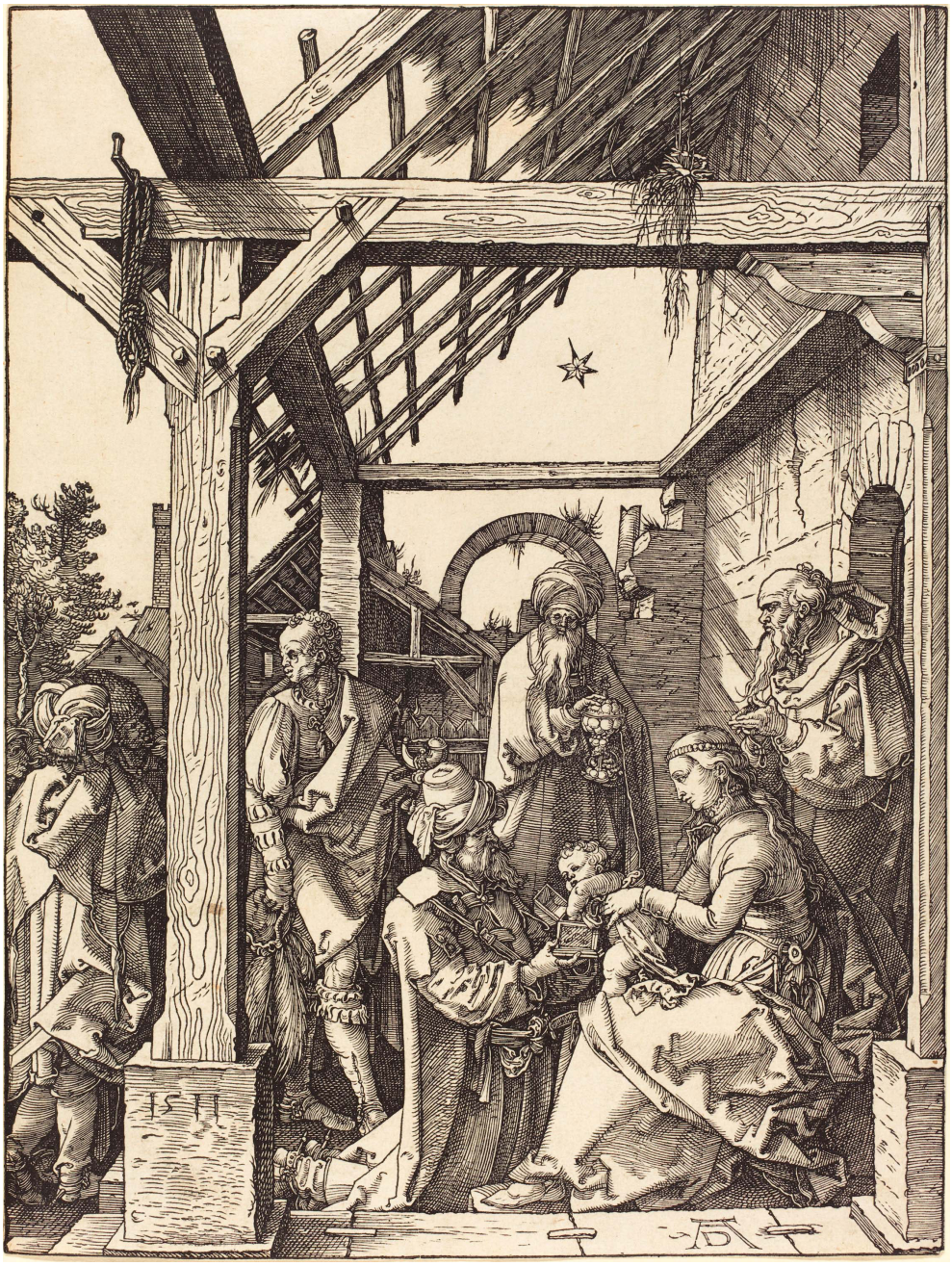

Fig. 2. Albrecht Dürer, *Adoration of the Magi*, woodcut, c. 1509-1511

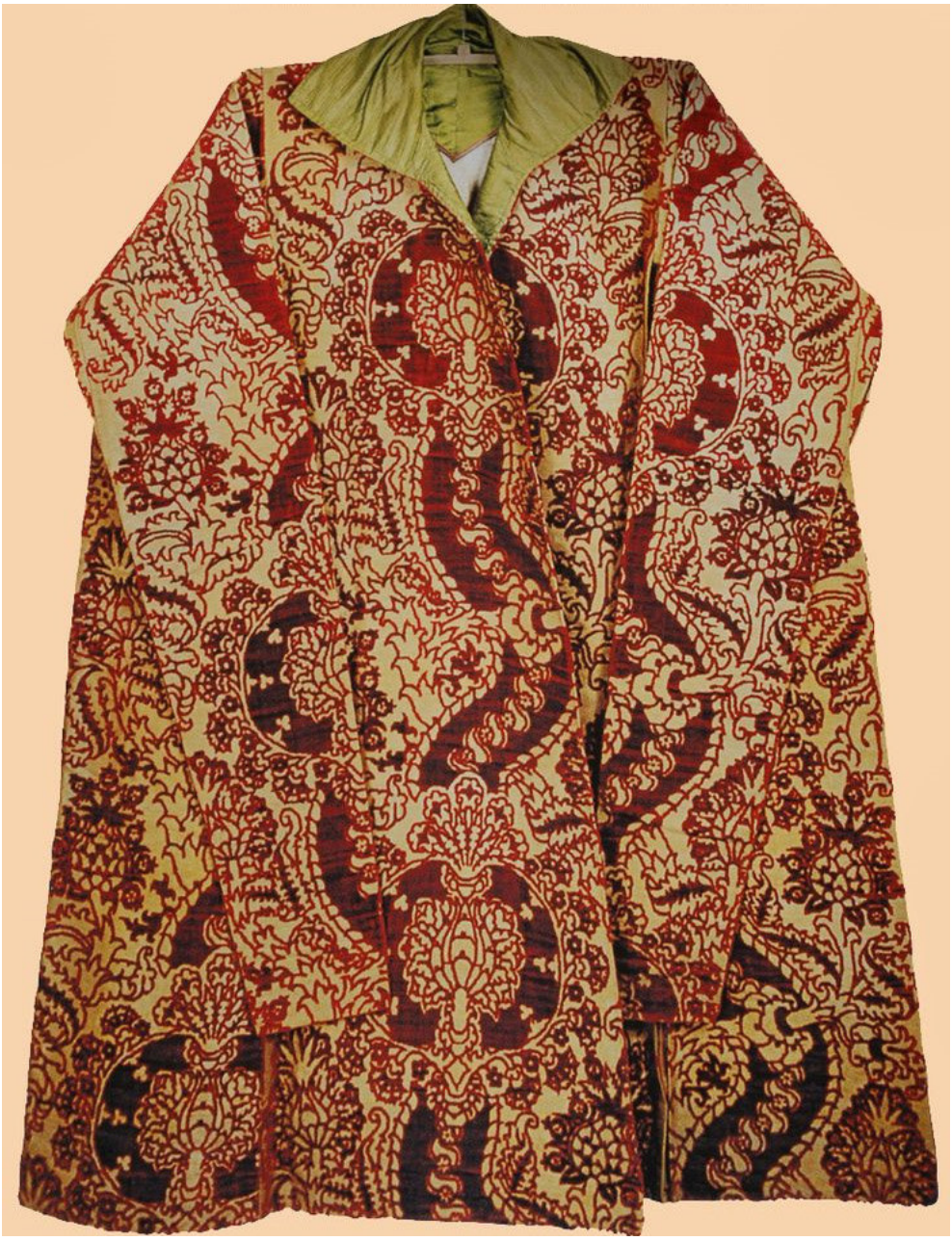

Fig. 3. Kaftan made of Italian velvet, 16th century, Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Museum, inv. n. 13/500

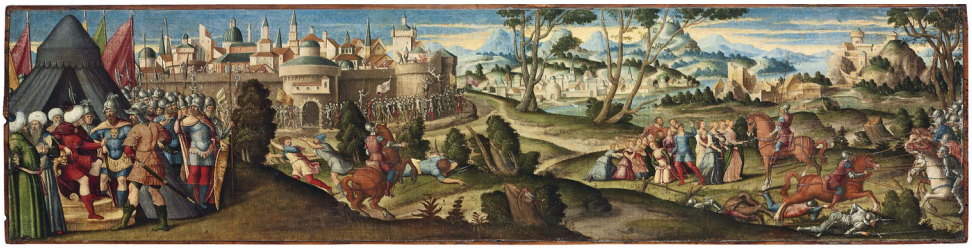

Fig. 4. Francesco da Santa Croce, Visual representation of scenes from the Canto XIV of Ariosto's epic Orlando Furioso, private collection in Macclesfield

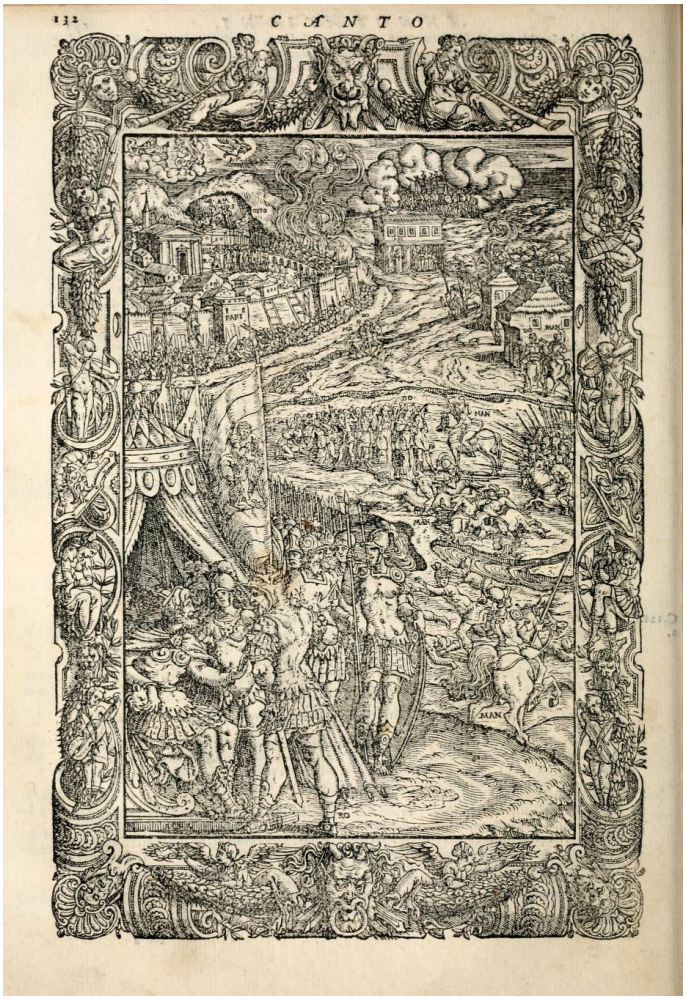


Fig. 5. Sixteenth Century Xylograph, Visual representation of scenes from the Canto XIV of Ariosto's epic Orlando Furioso, Venetia: appresso Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1562

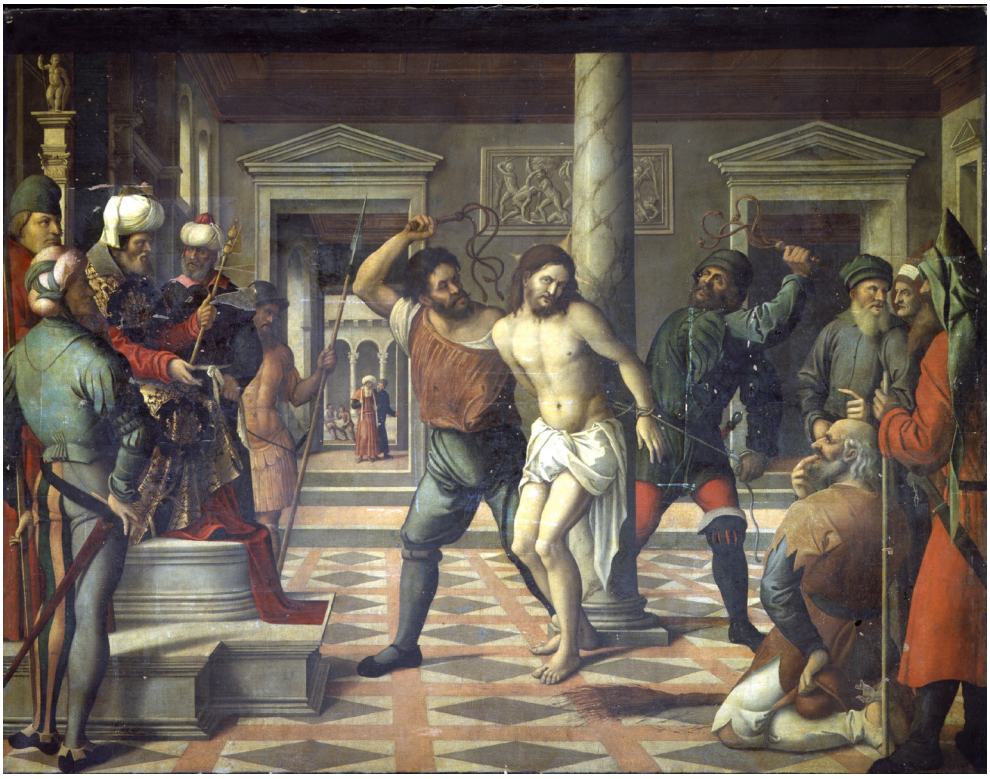

Fig. 6. Francesco da Santa Croce, *Flagellation of Christ*, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia

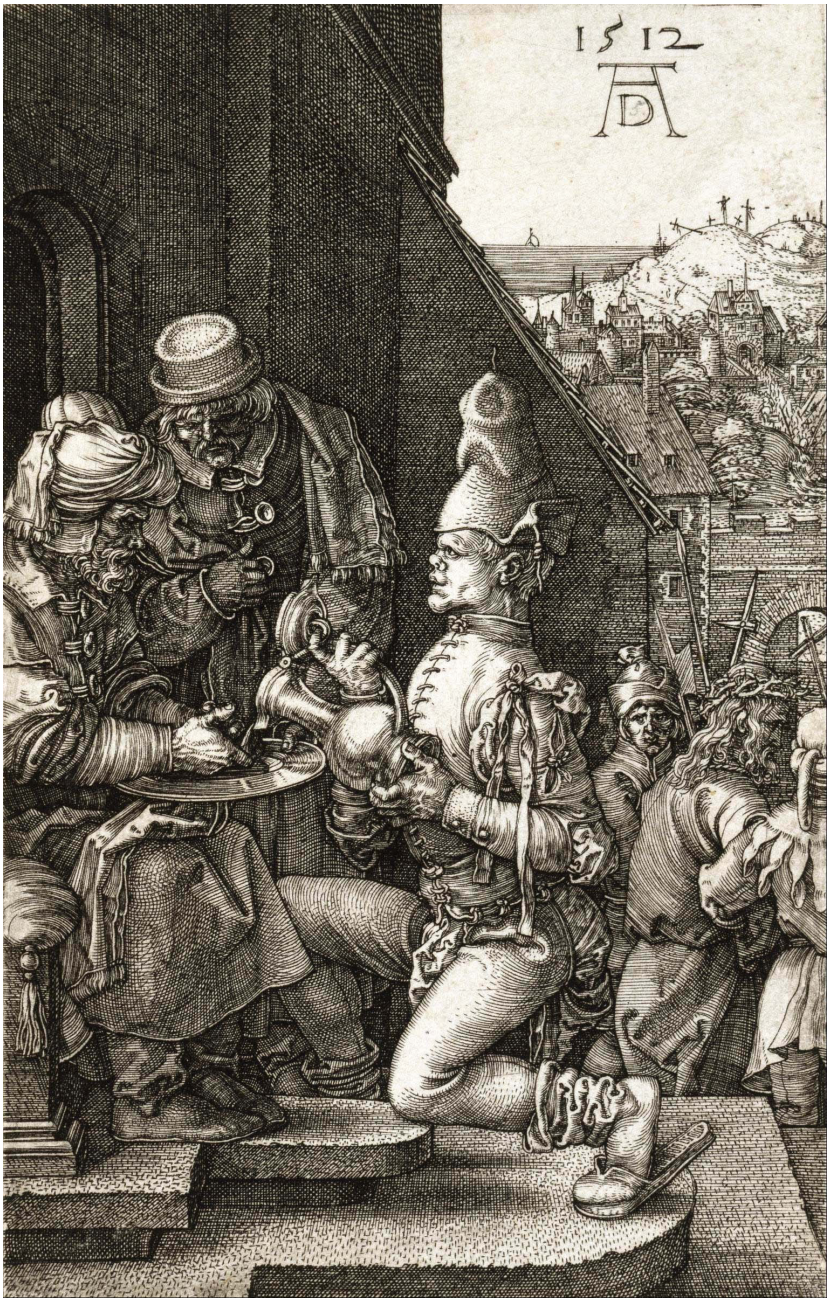


Fig. 7. Albrecht Dürer, *Pilate Washing His Hands*, The Engraved Passion, sheet 9

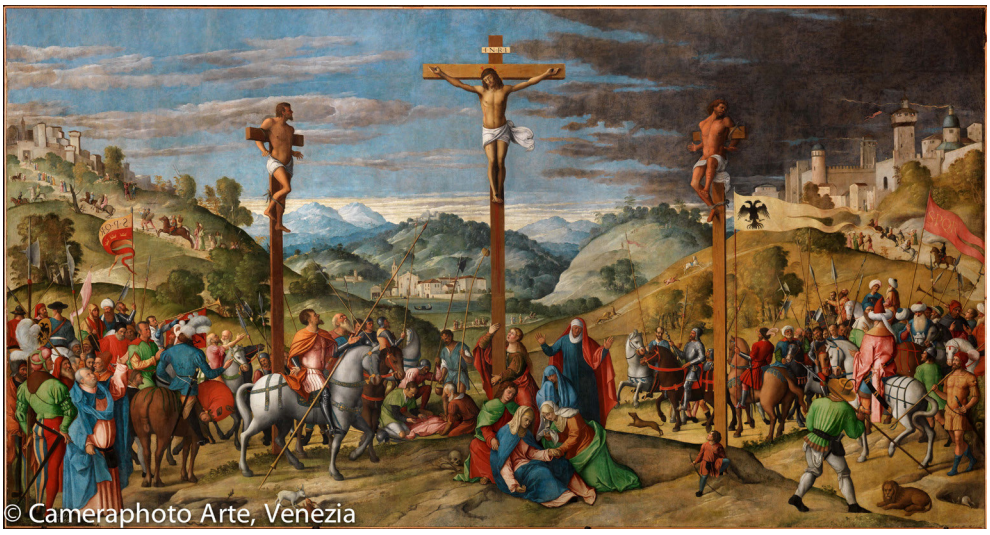


Fig. 8. Girolamo and Francesco da Santa Croce, *Crucifixion*, Venice, Sala Capitolare of Scuola Grande di San Marco

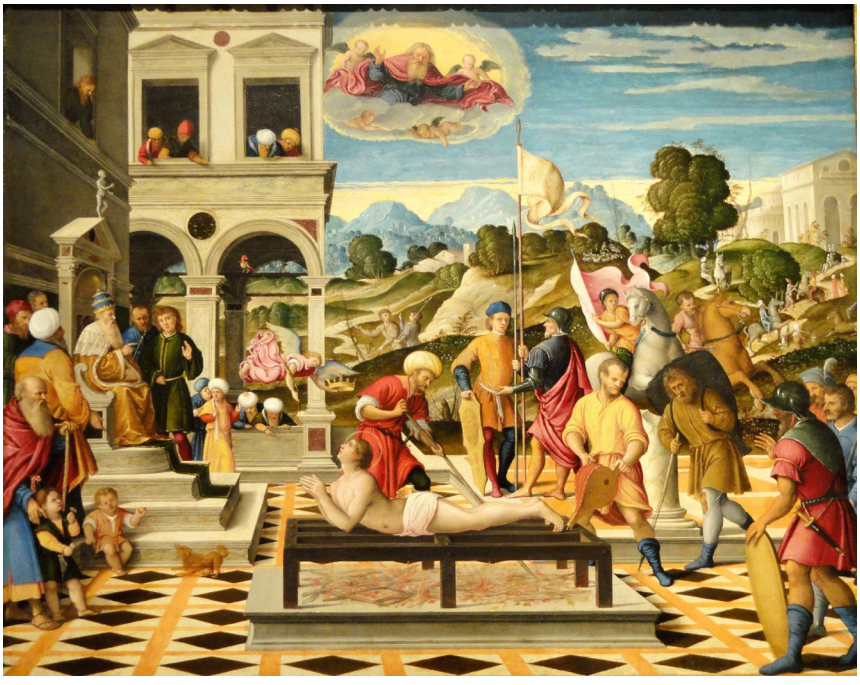

Fig. 9. Girolamo da Santa Croce (attr.), *Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence*, Kansas City, Missouri, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

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