

## The “Making” of a National Saint: Reflections on the Formation of the Cult of Saint Jerome in the Eastern Adriatic

The formation of common identity among medieval migrant groups far from their homeland was based on the common geographical, ethnic, linguistic or cultural background, intertwined with personal and business networks, and rooted within religious institutions. An illustrative example for shared expatriate identity can be found in the city of Venice and its numerous lay confraternities where people coming from the same geographic area or the same ethnic group gathered, united under the protection of the patron saint whose cult was usually brought from their homeland and connected with the city whence majority of members originated. Venice was home to several “national” confraternities, for example, the *Scuola de Santa Maria Elisabetta* gathering citizens of the city of Bormio was consecrated to Virgin Mary, Saint Elisabeth as well as Protasio and Gervasio, saintly martyrs and patrons of Bormio.<sup>1</sup> There are similar examples for “imported” saints in other *scuole* as well. For instance, citizens of Lucca were united in the confraternity under the protection of Volto Santo di Lucca (the Holy Face of Lucca), a miraculous crucifix kept in the cathedral of Lucca until the present day.<sup>2</sup>

This pattern of using “imported” local saints is also discernible in the case of Schiavoni confraternity, founded in Venice in 1451 and placed under the protection of Saint Tryphon and George.<sup>3</sup> Even though Saint Jerome was never officially added to the confraternity’s name, his cult had a special place in the devotional practices of the members.<sup>4</sup> While the presence of Saint Tryphon is not surprising due to the role of Kotor merchants and migrants in the formation of the confraternity,<sup>5</sup> that of Jerome certainly is. He was not a patron of any commune in the Eastern Adriatic from where the cult could have been transferred directly, nor was there a central place for his worship. However, the Venetian example of appropriating Saint Jerome as one of the patrons is not exceptional, it actually seems to be rather common among Schiavoni in the Apennine peninsula. The confraternity under the protection of Saint Jerome was founded in 1452 in Udine,<sup>6</sup> followed by one in Rome in 1453, also consecrated to Saint Jerome.<sup>7</sup>

While tracing the presence and the manifestations of the cult among the migrants is beyond the scope of the present article, it will sketch the factors which have contributed to the perception and acceptance of Jerome as the universal patron of all Schiavoni coming from the different parts of the Eastern Adriatic Coast, and demonstrate how the idea of Jerome as the unifier through geographical origin, language and religion was a reflection of ideas brought from the homeland. Even though some aspects of Jerome’s cult have been already discussed by various scholars including myself, the aim of this article is to highlight hitherto unexplored elements which contributed to the formation of Jerome as a national saint and the logic behind selecting

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<sup>1</sup>Vio 2004,p. 433.

<sup>2</sup>Ivi,p. 535–538.

<sup>3</sup>Čoralić 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Among the seven panels representing the patron saints in Scuola, made by Vittore Carpaccio in 1502, three are displaying the stories from Jerome’s hagiography: *Saint Jerome and the Lion in the Convent*, *Saint Augustine Having a Vision of Saint Jerome in his Study*, and *The Funeral of Saint Jerome*.

<sup>5</sup>Čoralić 2008.

<sup>6</sup>Mann, Čoralić 1995.

<sup>7</sup>Jelić 1902; Perić 2002; Mandušić 2006; Gudelj 2015; Gudelj 2016.

him as a patron among the migrant communities in Italy.<sup>8</sup> This work will trace the beginnings of this idea in the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, that is, before the development of the national saint discourse in the writings of Croatian Renaissance historiographers.

### *Jerome: The superstar of the fifteenth century*

To understand the rising popularity of the saint in the Eastern Adriatic Coast from the middle of the fifteenth century, a brief overview is necessary of the development of his cult. Unlike other church fathers, Jerome's recognition was a long process which started at the end of the thirteenth century when his relics were translated to the church of Santa Maria Maggiore.<sup>9</sup> Slowly, Jerome acquired more roles than the saint of great knowledge who translated and edited a Bible. With the rising humanist culture, he became an ideal model of pious and educated man; the most prominent humanists such as Giovanni d'Andrea or Pier Paolo Vergerio owned copies of his works and even composed new devotional literature about the saint.<sup>10</sup>

In the wake of the growing reform movements, especially among monastic communities, Jerome represented the ideal for monks to achieve piety, obedience, and humility.<sup>11</sup> Spreading from Italy, Jerome's cult appeared across the whole Western Christianity in different forms. The iconographic types established in Italy—Jerome as Cardinal, Jerome in the Study, and Penitent Jerome—became standard in the visual representation of the saint.<sup>12</sup> Examples include Jan van Eyck's famous portrait of Jerome in his study and Giovanni Bellini's series of paintings of the penitent Saint Jerome in the desert.<sup>13</sup>

The proximity and constant exchange of goods and ideas between the two shores of Adriatic Sea helped the cult and its ideas to gain foothold on the Eastern Adriatic Coast in both written and visual form. Among others, Jerome's work was transcribed by Dalmatian humanists, Italian artists were commissioned to produce visual representations of the saint, and the devotional literature about the saint was used and produced in the Eastern Adriatic Coast.<sup>14</sup> The implemented ideas of veneration are reflected in the text of the proclamation of the official veneration of Jerome's feast day (September 30) in Trogir in 1455 where he is named *gloriosissimus doctor*,<sup>15</sup> Jerome's most common title between the end of the fourteenth century and the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

The rising popularity of the saint in the Eastern Adriatic is also shown by the popularity of the name Jerome (Jeronim or Jerolim in Croatian) during the fifteenth century. Nella Lonza already noted this phenomenon in the case of Republic of Ragusa based on the occurrence of the name in the testaments of the period.<sup>17</sup> There was a similar situation in Trogir. The detailed lists of the names used by the aristocracy through the centuries reveal that before fifteenth century not

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<sup>8</sup> Since the list of all the relevant works would be long to be presented here, the most important works were used and cited in this article throughout the text. This article continues on the previous research by author: Ivić 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Rice 1985, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Vergerio, McManamon 1999.

<sup>11</sup> See more about the development of the cult in the Renaissance: Rice 1985.

<sup>12</sup> Russo, 1987.

<sup>13</sup> Belting 2014.

<sup>14</sup> One of the examples of the devotional literature to the saint is *Transito di San Girolamo*, a compilation of the works about Jerome with focus on his death. During the fifteenth century it was extremely popular work of literature. The Venetian redaction of the work served as the base for the Croatian edition, published in 1509 in the Croatian vernacular and Glagolitic letters.

<sup>15</sup> Strohal 1915, p. 259.

<sup>16</sup> Rice 1958, p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Lonza 2009, p. 257. See note 941.

a single individual was named after Jerome, while in the fifteenth century fifteen people were given the name of the saint.<sup>18</sup>

From the middle of the fifteenth century, Jerome's cult emerged in all major settlements in the Eastern Adriatic Coast, from Istria to Boka Kotorska, regardless of what political entity they belonged to. The cult of Saint Jerome was present in the Republic of Ragusa, Venetian Dalmatia and Istria, and the parts of Lika and Krbava which were a part of the Hungarian kingdom. Even though the cult in the Eastern Adriatic was densely interconnected with and reminiscent of the established cult practices of Italy, it contained other components which gave the cult political connotations and transformed Jerome into a national patron. These distinctive components are the main subject of this paper.

### *Local origin: Jerome the Dalmatian*

The first and strongest reason for the appropriation of Jerome by Dalmatians is based on his own words about his birthplace. In his work *De viris illustribus*, Jerome relates that he was born in Stridon, a small *oppidum* that once stood at the borders of the Roman provinces of Pannonia and Dalmatia.<sup>19</sup> Its exact location was unsure in the Middle Ages and is still debated, which resulted in several theories throughout the centuries.<sup>20</sup> This uncertainty explains why there was no central place of worship in the Eastern Adriatic. The coexisting Dalmatian and Istrian theories of the location of Stridon lay at the heart of the humanist debate about Jerome's origin.

The fact that his birthplace should be somewhere in the territory of the Eastern Adriatic was known before the fifteenth century but it seems that it did not have much influence on the development of personal and official devotion until the middle of the fifteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Notably, however, the establishment of the independent Franciscan province of Dalmatia, bearing the name of Saint Jerome since 1398, greatly contributed to the dispersion of the worship of the saint. Despite Jerome's importance and the promotion of the ascetic lifestyle in Franciscan theology, the reason for this name choice lies primarily in the saint's regional origin.<sup>22</sup>

Historical data suggests that the crucial phase in the development of the cult was the years between 1445 and 1455 when the confraternities in Italy were founded and Jerome's feast day was included in the official communal calendar and celebrations. Certainly, this was done to emphasize the importance of the saint for the people living in the territory of Dalmatia, inspired by his growing popularity in Europe. Additionally, it shows how commonly accepted was the idea of Jerome's Dalmatian origin. In 1445, the text of a Dubrovnik decision stipulates that "Jerome should be worshipped by us and all the Dalmatians of whose nation he was."<sup>23</sup> Similar words were repeated ten years later in Trogir, where it is stated that among other accomplishments, Jerome should be praised and celebrated because of his regional origin.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Andreis 2006, p. 295.

<sup>19</sup> Jerome 2010, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> Bulić 1986.

<sup>21</sup> Archdeacon Thomas et al. 2006, p. 3. In the thirteenth century, Toma Arhidakon writes about the location of Stridon in the Gulf of Kvarner, which he counts in the borders of Dalmatia, based on the borders of the Roman Province of Dalmatia. «Today, however, Dalmatia is a maritime region. It begins from Epirus, where Durrës is, and extends up to the Gulf of Kvarner, in the hinterland of which is the town of Stridon, which was the boundary between Dalmatia and Pannonia. This was the native town of the blessed Jerome, the illustrious doctor.»

<sup>22</sup> The exact reasons why Jerome was chosen to be a patron of the province are not known since the documents from the chapter in Koln are not preserved, but certainly it was done due to the believe that he was Dalmatian.

<sup>23</sup> Nedeljković 1984, p. 320. «[...] a nobis ac ceteris Dalmaticis de quorum natione fuit.»

<sup>24</sup> Strohal 1915, p. 259–60. «[...] ipsum beatissimum sanctum a quorum provincia originem habuit.»

The widespread acceptance of Jerome's Dalmatian origin is best shown in the dispute between Dalmatian and Italian humanists.<sup>25</sup> It was triggered by the Italian appropriation of the saint by Flavio Biondo. The Italian Renaissance humanist Biondo propagated the Istrian theory of the saint's origin, adopted from Pier Paolo Vergerio, a devoted worshiper of Saint Jerome and composer of sermons in Jerome's honor.<sup>26</sup> According to Biondo, Jerome's birthplace, Stridon, was the Istrian village Sdrigna (Zrenj) near the present-day town of Buzet. This appears in the chapter on Istria's affiliation to Italy in *Italia Illustrata*, Biondo's historiographical and encyclopaedic work on Italian regions published in 1474, in which he discusses the history of the regions from the antiquity in order to prove the continuous existence of the same peoples in the same territory united by their shared culture and language.<sup>27</sup> For him Istria was part of Italy, so Jerome, born in the territory of Italy, could not be anything but Italian.<sup>28</sup> Biondo was aware of the Dalmatian theory of the origin, which he rejected as false.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, despite Biondo's promotion, the idea of Jerome's Istrian origin never took root on the Eastern Adriatic Coast, primarily because of the lack of humanist centres in Istria which could propagate it, as was the case in Dalmatia. Secondly, it never gained foothold because of the Dalmatian humanists' strong reaction to Biondo's appropriation. Still, in Istria Jerome's cult remained present in the popular devotion and liturgical services, as evident from the inscription of his feast day in the liturgical calendars and books.<sup>30</sup>

The Dalmatian humanists' passionate response to Biondo's words illustrates the extent to which Jerome was considered Dalmatian, one of their own, and that by no means they would allow someone, especially an Italian, to take the saint from them. The first one to eagerly defend Jerome was Juraj Šižgorić in his *De situ Illyriae* written in 1487, mentioning Jerome as the most prominent among Illyrians and adding that the Italians were eagerly trying to steal him because they thought "that the Dalmatian thorn could never bear such a fertile rose."<sup>31</sup> Although Šižgorić does not name the Italians who appropriated the cult, it is likely that he refers to Biondo and Pier Paolo Vergerio.

The most notable response to Biondo was by Marko Marulić, the author of a work about the life of Saint Jerome. His argumentative essay *In eos qui beatum Hieronymum italum fuisse contendunt* (Against all of those who think that Jerome was Italian) is the direct answer to Biondo and his student Jacopo Foresti di Bergamo (1434-1520) who also propagated the idea of Jerome's Italian origin. In the text, Marulić reproaches Foresti's ignorance, blaming his teacher, Flavio di Biondo, and mocking Biondo's naivety.<sup>32</sup> He uses ancient sources to prove that Biondo was wrong. Marulić also goes as far as to identify himself with Jerome saying "*ille est meus et ego suus*" (he is mine and I am his) on the ethnic, national and cultural level. He does not identify with Jerome merely as an erudite and pious man, but also as his compatriot. Still, it is necessary to highlight that if it was not for Biondo's appropriation, there would be fewer valuable sources at our disposal to demonstrate the Dalmatian devotion to this saint.

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<sup>25</sup> The idea of Italian appropriation mentioned in works by Dalmatian humanists demonstrates the importance of Jerome's local affiliation. While it is not possible to discuss each in detail here, besides those mentioned in the text, others include Benedikt Kotruljević in his *De Navigatione* written in 1461 and Ivan Polikarp Severitan in his *Dionisii: Apolloni: Donati* written in 1517.

<sup>26</sup> McManamon 1985.

<sup>27</sup> Biondo 1542.

<sup>28</sup> Biondo 1542, p. 196.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*. "Molti ci sono ingannati credendo che San Girolamo fusse di Dalmatia [...]"

<sup>30</sup> Pantelić 1971; Badurina Stipčević 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Šižgorić 1981, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> Suić 1986; Zlatar 1989; Novaković 1994; Suić 1997.

It is notable that in the sources of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, Jerome is called a Dalmatian,<sup>33</sup> a Slav,<sup>34</sup> an Illyrian<sup>35</sup> or Croat.<sup>36</sup> Due to the limited scope of the present work, I cannot not go into more detail about the meaning and the differences of these designations, especially that at this stage of research it is not easy to distinguish the minor differences between these categories. However, it is necessary to underline that regardless of the ethnic affiliation attributed to the saint in the sources, the virtues for which he was praised are the same: his erudition and intellectual work, his saintly miracles, and above all that he was the greatest and most important individual, *a vir illustris*, of their kind. When it comes to Jerome, these ethnic designations seem equivalent: while in the fifteenth century Juraj Šižgorić praises Jerome as the greatest Illyrian, Vinko Pribojević in the sixteenth century praises him as the greatest Slav.

Whether Jerome was called Illyrian, Slav or Dalmatian (for example Marko Marulić), the intention is obvious. Besides appropriating Jerome as the member of their own ethnic group in order to elevate themselves (in this case, Šižgorić or Pribojević) as someone equally rich in knowledge and virtues on an ethnic basis, it also served the purpose to prove the long-standing existence and continuity of this ethnic group since Jerome's time." In this case, highlighting Jerome as Illyrian was to demonstrate the existence of the ethnic group to which Šižgorić belonged in the same territory since ancient times.

This myth—it is a myth since Jerome was a Roman citizen and could not have been in any sense connected with the historical Illyrians, Late Medieval "Illyrians" or Slavs—reflects the process of the formation of a common identity. According to Adam Smith, the "modernity" of any nation depends on its historical roots and long continuity, but in the case where such historical base is missing, it was necessary to re-invent it.<sup>37</sup> Naturally, this process is not a result of a series of planned actions but that of a long social process combined with other political factors such as the establishment of the Venetian government in the Eastern Adriatic Coast and Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. The re-invention of Illyrian history is associated with the figure of Saint Jerome in another aspect too, the linguistic one, which I will discuss in the following together with Jerome's role as a national hero.

### *Language: Jerome as the inventor of Glagolitic letters*

The other myth which defines the Jerome cult in the Eastern Adriatic is his alleged invention of the Glagolitic letters.<sup>38</sup> It is not certain when this concept emerged first, but the earliest documented mention is from the thirteenth century in Pope Innocent IV's reply to the bishop of Senj. It contains a permission for the clerics of the bishopric to use the Slavic language and liturgy, since they were using letters invented by the saint himself.<sup>39</sup> Again, this is entirely

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<sup>33</sup>Throughout the text Marulić refers to Jerome as Dalmatian trying to prove his Dalmatian origin by using ancient sources.

<sup>34</sup> Pribojević 1997, p. 143,160. In 1525 Pribojević held a speech on the history of the Slavs, where he drew the history of Slavs from the ancient Illyricum. Besides the history and the geographical position of the Dalmatia, he enumerated the most important Slavs, including Macedonian and Illyrian rulers and some Roman emperors, as well as Saint Jerome. He referred to Marulić's work addressed to Biondo, and accepted the theory of Jerome inventing different letters for his compatriots without naming the alphabet.

<sup>35</sup> Šižgorić 1981, p. 22. In his work, modelled upon the ancient authors, Šižgorić discusses the geography and the history of the province of Illyricum. In Chapter 5, he discusses the most prominent Illyrians including Jerome.

<sup>36</sup> Badurina Stipčević 2016. In the fifteenth-century miscellanea composed of different hagiographical texts, Jerome is referred to as *Hrvatina* (Croatian).

<sup>37</sup> Smith 1986, p. 212.

<sup>38</sup> For detailed discussion on topic see: Verkholantsev 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Glavičić 2014; Kraft Soić 2016..

unfounded historically: Jerome lived a long time before the letters were invented, and could not have any connections with the early development of Slavic literacy.

The connection between Jerome and Glagolitic communities is evident in the presence of Jerome's officium in the Glagolitic breviaries and masses in his honour in the missals.<sup>40</sup> Due to this, it is generally accepted in Croatian historiography that this invention took place inside monastic communities, while Julia Verkholtantsev suggests that it might have been the initiative of the Roman clergy which wanted to incorporate the Glagolitic communities into the Western church. Even though they used the Slavic language and served Slavic liturgy, they were loyal to Rome.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of the initiator, the intention is evident. Who could disregard the letters and the mass invented by one of the greatest saint, translator of the Bible and author of so many theological works? The sacred legitimation not only made the letters sacred, but it gave sacred legitimation to everything written in the alphabet as well. The Slavic language became the language of the Church, an equal to Latin and Greek.

Another important element which leads to the construction of this myth was in the condemnation as heretics of Saint Cyril, the actual inventor of Glagolitic letters, and Methodius.<sup>42</sup> Even though the reaction to this act should have been the rejection of the Slavic mass and the Glagolitic script by those who use them, the opposite happened. By replacing Cyril with Jerome, the Glagolitic communities could easily receive Rome's blessing to their activities. As noted previously, while the originator and architect of this process is irrelevant here, its impact is more than evident, primarily in material culture such as Glagolitic liturgical books which contain Jerome's officium or mass in his honor.

How much did the idea of Jerome being the inventor of Glagolitic letters spread and become commonly accepted? It seems that Jerome's cult gradually ceased to be limited to the monastic setting. Evidence for this can be found in several written accounts. The first one is the marginal note written by Juraj Slovinač, also known as Georgius de Sclavonia (1355/1360-1416), a theologian at Sorbonne and the promoter of the Glagolitic script.<sup>43</sup> In his own copy of Jerome's commentaries on the Psalms, he added a marginal note next to the passage where Jerome explains how he translated the Psalms into vernacular, he writes "[...]in linguam sclavonicam[...]" suggesting that Jerome used the Slavic language as vernacular instead of Latin.<sup>44</sup>

Valuable information about the Dalmatian perceptions of Jerome can be obtained from the foreign travellers who made stops along the Eastern Adriatic Coast on their way to the Holy Land. Beside the descriptions of churches and mentions of the important relics held in them, they also reflect upon local customs. Surprisingly, a few of them mentions Saint Jerome as the protector of Dalmatia. The earliest such note is in the itinerary of Pero Tafur (1410-1484), a Spanish pilgrim. During his short stay in Split in the 1430s, he talked with the local people, probably canons of cathedral or local aristocrats who informed him that two saints – Saint Christopher and Saint Jerome - were born in the city and that the memory where their houses stood was still alive at the time.<sup>45</sup> Even though the story is not certifiable, it demonstrates how

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<sup>40</sup> Stipčević 2013; Pantelić 1971; Pantelić 1976.

<sup>41</sup> Verkholtantsev 2014, p.59.

<sup>42</sup> Verkholtantsev 2014, p.51.

<sup>43</sup> Šanjek, Tandarić, 1984; Novak 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Novak 2010, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Tafur 1926, p. 53 « [...] we came to a town called Spalato, which is also in Dalmatia. St. Jerome and St. Christopher were born in this town, and there is an arm of the sea which passes by a hamlet, where they say St. Christopher carried the poor people across who could not pay for a boat, and even to-day there is some remembrance of the houses of both those saints. »

the idea of Jerome's local, or better to say regional, origin was present, and that people of Dalmatia were aware of the fact that he was born somewhere on the territory.

Similar observations are found in the itineraries of the other pilgrims. For example, Felix Fabri (1438/1439-1502) stopped at several places on Eastern Adriatic coast in the 1480s, where he met some locals who informed him that Jerome had invented letters different from Greek and Latin for his compatriots and that he used those letters to translate the Bible into Slavic. He also adds that the mass was held in the Slavic language.<sup>46</sup> Georges Lengherand, the mayor of the city of Mons, also passed through some along the Eastern Adriatic coastline. While he was in Poreč, he attended a Slavic mass which was said to have been composed by Saint Jerome.<sup>47</sup>

These accounts suggest that the people living in the fifteenth century Eastern Adriatic were aware that Jerome was born among them, and that they felt it important to emphasize to the foreigners coming to their land. Emphasized in the writings of the Dalmatian humanists and reflected in the popular devotion, it is evident that Jerome was praiseworthy as one of the most important individuals whom they considered to be their compatriot.

Jerome's relics?

It is not known whether certain communes in the Eastern Adriatic possessed Jerome's relics and if they played a crucial role in the celebration of the saint, or if they were a destination for local pilgrimages.<sup>48</sup> But one example sheds light on Jerome's perception as the inventor of Glagolitic letters. The lack of Jerome relics resulted in the worship of secondary relics: books. This is not surprising considering Jerome's translation and edition of the Bible and in the Eastern Adriatic it is also connected with the Glagolitic tradition. At the end of the fifteenth century, *Glagolita Clozianus*, a Glagolitic codex dating back to eleventh century, passed to the ownership of Marquardo Breisacher, the emperor's envoy.<sup>49</sup> He had received the codex from Luka Rinaldis, canon of the island of Krk, who had close relations with the Frankopan family and who saved the codex after the death of Ivan Frankopan when his belongings were robbed and scattered.<sup>50</sup> Breisacher added the Latin note that the codex was an autograph of Saint Jerome covered in

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<sup>46</sup> Fabri 1848, p.369 «Quod autem beatus Hieronymus in vernaculam linguam divinum officium et sacram scripturam transtulerit, patet in epistola de locis et nominibus hebraicarum quaestionum, ubi dicit: studii nostri est, de libris Ebraeorum errores refellere, etymologias quoque nominum atque regionum vernacula lingua explanare. Et iterum in epistola ad Sophronium: antiquorum, inquit, translationem diligentissime emendatam olim meae linguae hominibus tradidi. Pannonia enim adhaeret Dalmatiae, in qua oppidum sancti Hieronymi fuit, dictum Sidrona vei Stridon, dudum penitus destructum a Gothis. A nullo autem in divinis differunt a Latinis, nisi in lingua: legunt sicut nos; cantant et mores habent per omnia, sicut nos. »

<sup>47</sup>Lengherand (1861), p. 88. «Et ce propre jour entre autres messes oymes ung prêtre qui dit messe en langue esclavon; et nous fut dit que saint Géromme composa les messes qui pour le présent se dient en ce langage. »

<sup>48</sup> Current research managed to identify these relics of Jerome. The earliest mention is in Zagreb, where Jerome's relics were used in 1275 during the consecration of the altar of Saint Peter and Paul in the sacristy. Tkalčić 1889, p. 175; The author brings transcription of the letter from 1381 written in Dobrinj, island of Krk, about the relics in the church among which was the one of Saint Jerome. Crnčić, 1867, p. 157–58; During the consecration of the main altar in the church of saint Andrew in Bakar in 1493, Jerome's relics were used. Pantelić 1964, p. 51. However, it is known that the small church of Saint Jerome on the hill Marjan, near Split, was a goal of the local pilgrimages. In the second half of the fifteenth century, present-day church was built on the place of the earlier hermitage.

<sup>49</sup> Štefanić 1953; Štefanić 1955. Geary 2013, p. 22. Unfortunately, not many pages from this massive book survived until today. The first 14 pages, including the note added by Breisacher are kept in the Biblioteca comunale di Trento (ms. 2476). The additional two pages are kept in the Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck

<sup>50</sup> Štefanić 1953, p. 131.

silver and gold binding and was worshipped as a relic.<sup>51</sup> He also adds that the codex was written *in lingua Croatina scripta*,<sup>52</sup> referring obviously to the Glagolitic script.

Despite the note's historical incongruity, it provides an important insight into the perception of Jerome as the inventor of Glagolitic letters. There are several reasons why the codex was worshipped as a relic. The first one is the lack of Jerome's bodily remains. Considering the popularity of the saint in Western Europe, it was probably not easy to obtain a relic. Secondly, the codex was written with the older, rounded variant of Glagolitic letters which was indeed different from the angular type of the fifteenth century. Taking these factors together with the tradition of Jerome's invention of the letters – the relic was born. That the receiver of the gift did not understand the text in the book is suggested by the note in which he claims that the book containing homilies is a Bible. As Štefančić argues, it is quite unusual that Luka Rinaldis decided to give the codex to an Austrian military governor who could not have any functional use of it.<sup>53</sup> The logical explanation, as supported by the note, is that it was actually perceived as a relic. Because of this, it is possible that the codex was scattered and today only a few pieces remained.

There are some other examples which support the idea that Glagolitic books were perceived as the secondary relic of Saint Jerome, even though it is not explicitly stated in the historical documents. Joško Belamarić, for example, presents the case of “the most expensive Croatian book ever” from Šibenik.<sup>54</sup> In 1440, a priest, Marko Marijašević, made a contract with the officials of the parish of Saint Michael in Rogovo, which obliged the parish to pay him around 520 liters of barley, 1280 liters of wine and 1000 liters of oil, in exchange for a book to be received after his death. Additionally, he also was given a house in Zadar. Belamarić agrees with the Petar Runje who argues that the high price of the book can be explained by its immense value as a relic rather than its material worth.<sup>55</sup> Both authors convincingly suggest that it is possible that the book was, similarly to the *Glagolita Clozianus*, bound in richly decorated cover and kept in the treasury. And if it was venerated as a relic, whose was it if not Jerome's?

Other examples in Dalmatia may also underpin the idea of the book as the secondary relic of the saint. One of these is the case of the *Evangeliarum Spalatense*, which has been anecdotally linked to the person of Saint Domnius (Dujam), local martyr and patron saint of the city but was probably written in Split in the eighth century.<sup>56</sup>

Connecting saints and texts in this way is not unique for this geographic area. It can be seen in other examples producing books with divine help, for example of Saint David, a patron saint of Wales, and his *Imperfect Gospel*,<sup>57</sup> or the Reims Gospel, a manuscript of Slavonic origin composed out of two texts written in Cyrillic and Glagolitic letters, most probably in the fourteenth century in the monastery of Saint Jerome (Emmaus) in Prague. Because of its rich binding decorated with precious stones, the latter was venerated as a relic and spurred the unfounded legend that it was the one on which French kings took oath during the coronation ceremony. Another legend, however, attributed the authorship of the text to the Czech Saint Procopius of Sazava.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Ivi*, p. 130 “...qui librum auro et argento ornatum pro reliquiis venerabatur.”

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> Štefančić 1953, p. 143.

<sup>54</sup> Belamarić 2008, p. 171.

<sup>55</sup> *Ivi*, p. 172.

<sup>56</sup> Stipčević 2004, p. 21., Matijević Sokol, Galović 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Cowley 2007, p. 276.

<sup>58</sup> Viriville 1854.



More relevant analogies for Jerome as a saintly inventor of script can be observed in the context of the spread of Christianity, as was the case of the Armenian alphabet and its inventor Mesrop Mashtots (362-440), or Saint Wulfila (311-383) who invented Gothic letters in order to translate the Bible. Interestingly, all three of them were ecclesiastical dignitaries and were near contemporaries. Whether the attribution is proven, such as Mesrop Mashtots, or alleged as the case of Jerome centuries later, the ideas and the purpose are the same: to show the divine origin of the alphabet, to sacralize the production written in it and to prove the distinctiveness of the people who use it.<sup>59</sup> It is exactly for this reason that Glagolitic letters are called Slavic or Croatian in the sources, for example in Biondo who refers to the script as *littera schiavonica*, or the note of Breisacher who calls it *Croatian*.

The invention of Glagolitic letters by Saint Jerome could be perceived as a miraculous invention of the saint who decided to bring a word of God to his compatriots. Not only were they chosen and not forgotten by this erudite and pious man, but their language was equal to other languages of the Church – Greek and Latin. Furthermore, this narrative also conveys the idea of the distinctiveness of people who used the language. In addition to its sacred nature, the script was created with intention—that of a great Christian, a church father, who despite all his other great accomplishments did not forget his compatriots. Additionally, it provides a certain continuity of the language since ancient times, proving the centuries-long existence of the people who are using it. This argument suggests that Dalmatians/Slavs/Illyrians/Croatians had lived on the same territory from Jerome's time onwards.

This idea did not receive much attention among the Croatian humanists in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. It was not before the second half of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century that Dalmatian humanists, largely influenced by Sarmatian ideology and Italian humanist historiography, began to use it as an argument for the Slavic peoples' origins in this territory, as well as that of their language and culture.<sup>60</sup> For example, this idea is surprisingly absent from the work of Jerome's main defenders and promoters in Dalmatia: Juraj Šižgorić and Marko Marulić. Marulić, the author of the only Dalmatian written contribution to the cult of the saint – the *Vita Divi Hieronimi* written in 1507 – does not reflect upon it at all. The fact that Marulić, as a writer of important vernacular works himself, was familiar with vernacular sources of his time makes this silence even more intriguing. Because of the accepted *opinio communis* at the time, Marulić may have decided to ignore the fact known to him from earlier sources, namely, that Saint Cyril invented the Glagolitic script.<sup>61</sup>

Another element that contributed to the formation and acceptance of the idea that Jerome invented the Glagolitic alphabet is the establishment of the vernacular in the spheres of the public life and literacy in the fifteenth century. The importance of Glagolitic literacy in this period can be seen in the first printed books, mostly liturgical, printed in Glagolitic letters and in the Croatian language. One of these is *Tranzit svetoga Ieronima*, a translation of the Italian *Transito di San Girolamo*, printed in Senj in 1509.<sup>62</sup>

The infiltration and the new appreciation of the vernacular among humanists and writers can be also seen in the first vernacular novel written by Petar Zoranić in 1536.<sup>63</sup> In the prologue of the book he thanks Jerome for teaching him to write in his language, not only accepting the alleged

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<sup>59</sup> Mathews 1994, p. 38.

<sup>60</sup> See more: Kurelac 2015. Blažević 2008.

<sup>61</sup> At the beginning of the sixteenth century Marko Marulić translated the Croatian redaction of the medieval Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja to Latin. During that work he should have read that it was Saint Cyril who invented Slavic letters.

<sup>62</sup> Nazor 1999; Štefanić 1964.

<sup>63</sup> Zoranić 1998.

attribution of the Glagolitic alphabet to Jerome but also referring to other literature written in a vernacular and Glagolitic script that he was familiar with.



Figure 1 Gentile Bellini, *The organ doors in the cathedral of Trogir, 1489.*

famous Bellini workshop, known for their representations of Saint Jerome in the desert. It was entirely executed in Venice and then shipped to Trogir. The standard iconography of the penitent saint does not differ much from usual depictions, except for the detail of the open book filled with letters.<sup>65</sup> Keeping in mind the large dimensions of the painting (150,5x107cm) the observer should be able to clearly read the letters.

The initials are written in red forming the Latin word *DOLLEO* referring to Jerome's penitence and suffering in the desert. The other letters resemble alphabets used in that period and geographical area – Glagolitic, Cyrillic, and even Greek letters. Still, it is difficult to distinguish meaningful text and specific graphemes of the certain script.<sup>66</sup> Was the mere purpose of these letters to fill the empty space in the book featured as Jerome's attribute or did it have a symbolic meaning connecting Jerome with

*Glagolitic letters as a saintly attribute?*

Surprisingly, despite the popularity and the acceptance of the idea that Jerome being the inventor of the Slavic alphabet, they were never considered passed as his visual attribute in any of the numerous artworks representing Jerome. Although it is now difficult to find visual representations of this particular element of the cult, the organ doors made by Gentile Bellini in 1489 for the Trogir Cathedral hide an interesting detail.<sup>64</sup> The painting was commissioned from the



Figure 2 Gentile Bellini, *The organ doors in the cathedral of Trogir, 1489. (detail)*

<sup>64</sup> Tomić 1997, p.12.

<sup>65</sup> See: Belting 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Here I would like to express my gratitude to Vesna Badurina Stipčević and Mateo Žagar for their help with the palaeographical analysis of the text.

the local tradition praising him as the inventor of Glagolitic letters?

It is justifiable to suggest that the book in this particular image stood for Jerome's connection with the Glagolitic alphabet, even though the letters do not resemble actual Glagolitic script. There are several reasons behind this incongruence. In the first place, the painter may not have fully understood what was being painted. It is highly likely that the commissioners expressed their wish for a certain message to be written in the book but the painter, not knowing what the letters looked like, invented a script to represent Glagolitic. A similar example can be found in the case of Arabic or Hebrew letters represented in medieval paintings, where the inscription resembles the script only in form, meaningless and impossible to read but still bearing the symbolic meaning.<sup>67</sup> Despite the lack of accuracy, the intention is evident – to represent these scripts.

Thus, it is not unlikely that the letters in the representation of Saint Jerome in Trogir were meant to stand for Glagolitic script. Although the medieval commune of Trogir, unlike Zadar, was not a center of Glagolitic literacy, the presence of the spoken Croatian vernacular language which was used in Trogir regardless of social class.<sup>68</sup> In this context, it is also understandable why the Glagolitic letters are only represented symbolically: the writing was simply not necessary to be understood, its purpose was to emphasize the connection of the great saint with the mother tongue used in the liturgy.

#### *Humanist devotion to Jerome*

Despite the strong local cult of Saint Jerome in Dalmatia, it is notable that the rising humanist culture in the Eastern Adriatic also significantly contributed to the spread of the cult of saint and directly supported the dispersion of the material manifestations of the cult – paintings and sculptures, as well as books containing either his own work or texts about his life. Recent research has identified the presence of Jerome's cult in the most of the urban cores in the eastern Adriatic. As discussed above, Jerome's cult was also present in the hinterlands, but it was mostly connected with the Glagolitic veneration among Slavic speaking communities.

It is certain that the expansion of Jerome's cult, and the beginnings of the development of his national cult, are both connected with the humanist elites which transferred elements of the growing cult from Italy back to their homeland through their personal connection.<sup>69</sup> This phenomenon is best demonstrated in the possession of Jerome's works by Croatian humanists. For instance, in his last will Juraj Benja left his handwritten copy of Jerome's letters to his friend Marin Krešava.<sup>70</sup> In 1461, the bishop of Hvar, Tommaso Tomassini, commissioned a transcription of the Letters of Saint Jerome from a priest, Antun.<sup>71</sup> Quotations from Jerome's works by certain humanists certainly prove that his works were read.<sup>72</sup> In the introduction to his collection of poetry, for example, Juraj Šižgorić writes that he “answered his opponents in the same way as Jerome answered his.”<sup>73</sup> It is similarly indisputable that Marko Marulić

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<sup>67</sup> See the examples for Hebrew script: Rodov 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Fisković 1971, p. 100–101. The decision from 1426 obliged all of the members of the Great Council to speak Latin or Italian language, otherwise they will be punished. The reason for this was certainly connected with the use of the Croatian vernacular by the aristocracy. In 1553, Venetian inspector Giovanni Battista Giustiniani writes that in Trogir most of the aristocracy spoke Croatian language in their houses and that their wives spoke very bad Italian or none.

<sup>69</sup> The Italian influence came through different channels. In the first place through the people who studied in Italy and had a first-hand experience with the growing cult which certainly included teaching of Jerome's works at universities, but also through the books they brought back to homeland to sell them and earn some money.

<sup>70</sup> Špoljarić 2017, p. 50.

<sup>71</sup> Stipčević 2004, p. 56.

<sup>72</sup> See Knezović 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Knezović 2016, p. 3.

possessed works both by and about Jerome,<sup>74</sup> which ultimately inspired him to write the *Vita Divi Hieronymi*.<sup>75</sup>

In humanist circles, Jerome represented a perfect model for an erudite, but also pious, man. The list of the humanists who tried to model their life upon Jerome's is long, ranging from Petrarch and Pier Paolo Vergerio to Erasmus. A number of artistic depictions survived of famous humanists who identified with Jerome, and the representation of Jerome working in his study room was to become the model for later representations of humanists in their study. Identifying with Jerome can be found both in the above mentioned work by Šižgorić and that of Marulić writing "Ille est meus, et ego suus." This statement indicates not only their parity in the religious and spiritual sense but also their shared origin in the same culture and ethnic group.



Figure 3 Tripun Bokanić, Saint Jerome, beginning of the 17th century (Galerija umjetnina Split)

Identifying with Jerome was a commonplace during the Renaissance. Italian humanists identified with the saint on the basis of his erudition, pious and penitent life, and in the Eastern Adriatic coast, the ethnic component was added. While prominent humanists and cardinals being depicted like Jerome was common in the West, in Dalmatia such representations are few and far between.<sup>76</sup> The sole surviving example of such a depiction may demonstrate how the achievements of the Renaissance gained foothold on Dalmatian soil.

At this point, it is important to note the importance of Cipiko family in the spread of the cult in Trogir where a large number of visual representations of the saint were executed in the second half of the fifteenth century. The family's devotion to the saint can be portrayed on one example. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, sculptor Tripun Bokanić made a sculpture of Saint Jerome in Trogir, commissioned by Alviz Cipiko (d. 1606) in the memory of his late father, Jerome.<sup>77</sup> This veneration

through name choice is not accidental: Cipiko had the sculpture made both for his late father and as the *ex voto* for his only surviving son, also named Jeronim.<sup>78</sup> The sculpture is executed with naturalistic portrait features which resembled the late Jerome Cipiko.<sup>79</sup> It is evident that in

<sup>74</sup> Grubišić 2007. The testament of Marko Marulić has a list of his book which were to be given to certain individuals and monasteries, among which are few written by Jerome and about Jerome.

<sup>75</sup> Novaković 1994. Marulić decided to write a new life of Saint Jerome, decent to his sanctity after he read few of them giving not accurate information.

<sup>76</sup> Ridderbos 1984. See chapter 3 and 4, It is assumed that Antonello Messina's Saint Jerome in study is representing cardinal Nicholas of Cusa.

<sup>77</sup> Belamarić 2001.

<sup>78</sup> *Ivi*, p. 470.

<sup>79</sup> A similar portrait was done nearly a century before when Ivan Duknović portrayed Jerome's brother and Koriolan's son, Alviz Cipiko as Saint John. Belamarić 1998.

both cases the erudition and the pious life of Cipiko brothers were to be compared to those of the represented saint. Their virtues are resembling the virtues of the saints.

Aristocratic families from Trogir, known for their humanist engagement as well as the political activities in the local government, certainly made their mark not only on the intellectual life of the city, but also of the region through the several centuries. The most prominent member of the dynasty—relevant to the present discussion—was Koriolan Cipiko (1425-1493), born to a humanist father, Petar Cipiko, and educated in Venice and Padova. He was from a young age familiar with the contemporary discussions and ideas circulating in the Italian humanist scene. Together with Bishop Giacomo Torlon (1452-1483), Koriolan was among responsible for the city's *renovation urbis* in the second half of the fifteenth century. Being the *operarius* of the cathedral, he was in the position to hire the best artists of the time—Niccolò Fiorentino, Andrea Alessi and Ioaness Dalmata—to work on the new chapel of Saint John of Trogir and the baptistery of cathedral church, as well as other public works.<sup>80</sup> Andrea Alessi's relief of Saint Jerome studying books in the cave, commissioned for the new baptistery which was finished in 1467, is especially pertinent here.

The unique nature of this representation, recently noted by Samo Štefanac, results from the fact that the two most common types of representation of the saint are merged: Saint Jerome in the desert, as suggested by his hermit outfit, and Saint Jerome in the study, suggested by the books he is reading.<sup>81</sup> It is beyond the purview of the present study to discuss this representation on the level of detail it deserves, however, the importance of this representation for the spread of Saint Jerome's cult is highly relevant here. After making this relief, several other ones, often smaller in size and different in form, were sculpted by Andrea Alessi and Niccolò Fiorentino and their workshops. These works constitute the single most important body of primary sources to understand the representations of the Dalmatian Jerome.

This type of representation was probably not invented by Fiorentino and Alessi, but rather by the Venetian painters' circle, where Jacopo Bellini introduced the image of the penitent Jerome in the desert. Bellini's landscape certainly resembles the rocky cave on the above-mentioned reliefs. The Venetian tradition of representing Saint Jerome in a landscape of bare rocks and wild animals was continued by Jacopo's sons, Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, as it can be seen in the above-mentioned example from the Trogir Cathedral. The development of representation also brought about a change of medium from painting to sculpted relief, as well as the reduction of the iconographic representation to the most important attributes—cave, books, wild animals and Jerome's galero (cardinal's hat).

These representations can be considered as the "Dalmatian Jerome" for various reasons, primarily because of the popularity and geographical diffusion of the reliefs during the fifteenth century. Second, this is also undergirded by the popularity of the type even later in the century. Finally, it is connected with the function and the presence of the saint in the public sphere. A number of these reliefs survived to this day, which feature the same iconography but are unique in their execution.<sup>82</sup> It is evident that they were made in a series: although the documentation

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<sup>80</sup> Štefanac 2006; Bužančić, 2012; Fisković 1996.

<sup>81</sup> Štefanac 1996. .

<sup>82</sup> The reliefs that are attributed to Niccolò Fiorentino and his workshop are kept in Paris in Musée Jacquemart-André and in the private collection. The reliefs which quality stand out and are today in the church of Santa Maria di Giglio and in the Dubrovnik museum, are also connected with his workshop. The reliefs whose production is connected with the Andrea Alessi and his circle are the one in the church of Marjan near Split, relief from Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool reliefs from the Museum of Fine Arts in Split, relief from the church of saint John in Zadar, relief from the church of saint Duje in Pašman, relief in the Fondazione Roberto Longhi and one that was



of the commission of certain reliefs is no longer available, some of the owners can be identified by the coat of arms in the lower part of the reliefs, such as the Gozze family from Dubrovnik or the Venetian rector Alvisio Lando in Trogir. The diffusion of the reliefs from Dubrovnik to Zadar is particularly salient for the present discussion. The ownership of Gozze family, for example, supports the argument of the popularity of reliefs.<sup>83</sup> No masters are known to have worked in Dubrovnik, which means that someone from the Gozze family ordered the relief with a reason. In all, it is difficult to establish the secure provenance of the reliefs but the presence of the one in Venice certainly suggests that they were popular outside the homeland: a relief incorporated in the façade of the private house, on Fondamenta San Iseppo, Castello 978 in Venice.<sup>84</sup>

The earliest documented position of the relief comes from the beginning of the twentieth



Figure 4 Niccolò Fiorentino, *Saint Jerome reading in the cave*, 15th century (Santa Maria dell Giglio)

century. However, the fact that this part of the Castello district, especially between the streets Secco Marina and Fondamenta San Giuseppe, was inhabited with numerous Schiavoni through the centuries, raises the question whether this relief was put there by someone from the Slavic community.<sup>85</sup> Currently, at this stage of research, it is not possible to give definitive answers. A closer look at this particular relief may shed some light on the purpose of these reliefs.

Although it is commonly

accepted that they served as private altars, this conclusion was probably made based on the one that Alessi incorporated into an altar in the Church of Saint Jerome on Marjan hill near Split, I believe that their function should be examined with more attention. The relief in Fondamenta San Giuseppe in Venice, as well as the one in the church of Santa Maria dell Giglio (not in its original position) and one on the façade of the church of Saint Duje Monastery in Kraj, were incorporated into the wall, what can give us the other possible function of the reliefs<sup>86</sup> Accepting the theory that they were originally intended to be displayed on façades, they are interesting examples for merging a family's coat of arms with the representation of the saint they worshipped: like the Dubrovnik relief possessed by Gozze family, all these reliefs had a part reserved for inscription or coat of arms.

From a modern perspective, the importance of heraldic and other representations in the liminal spaces between private and public is difficult to estimate in the formation of urban visual culture, but they certainly played a role in the dissemination of the cult. Similar examples are easy to find. In Venice there are numerous examples of similar reliefs incorporated in the

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once built in the wall of the house in the Fondamenta San Giuseppe in Venice. For additional bibliography about the reliefs see the works by Ivo Petricioli, Cvito Fisković and Krano Prijatelj.

<sup>83</sup> Prijatelj 1951, p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Schulz 1976, p. 113.

<sup>85</sup> See before mentioned works by Lovorka Čoralić.

<sup>86</sup> Schulz 1976, p. 116.

façade.<sup>87</sup> However, the Dalmatian examples can be also meaningfully observed in the context of the urban visual system in which they existed, having the greater symbolical meaning than it seems at first glance. After 1409, the reliefs of Saint Mark were erected in all the cities under the Venetian rule, being the strong visual marker of the political power. The lion of Saint Mark became omnipresent and superseded all other characters.<sup>88</sup>

Should these reliefs be seen as simple votive artefacts dedicated to a great saint of the Catholic Church? Or do they possess a more complex symbolic representation of certain ethnic affiliation (Dalmatian/Slavic/Illyrian)? This question takes the discussion back to Alessi's relief made for the baptistery of the cathedral in Trogir. The construction of the baptistery began in 1460 and it is difficult to imagine that mounting a relief of Saint Jerome was not part of the original plan.<sup>89</sup> It is important to note here that the feast day of Saint Jerome was introduced to an official city calendar five years before the construction started, and the text clearly states that Jerome should be worshipped because of his ascetic lifestyle and his intellectual achievements—the two attributes which are directly represented on this relief merging two iconographic types—but more than anything because of his regional origin.<sup>90</sup> It is certainly his regional origin which contributed to the choice of Jerome for the lunette in the baptistery, more than the other characteristics of the saint. Importantly, the popular trends in the devotion, based on the devotional literature to the saint, also influenced this representation.

The written model for this representation probably lies in the letters of pseudo-Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Eusebius of Cremona, which emerged at the end of the thirteenth century in the Dominican circle of Santa Maria Maggiore.<sup>91</sup> These forged letters brought more elements into Jerome's hagiography, upon which the cult was built in the Late Middle Ages. Regardless of their provenance, they had a strong impact on the visual representations of Saint Jerome. All three letters emphasise the parallels between the two saints: for example, in Augustine's letter to Cyril, Saint John the Baptist appears to Augustine in the company of Saint Jerome, encouraging him to write down the praise of Jerome. In this sense, the two saints are paired due to their ascetic lifestyle and devotional life, where Saint Jerome can be seen as the new Saint John.<sup>92</sup> Upon this, many other artworks represent two saints paired together. So, it is not surprising that in the baptistery of cathedral of Trogir, which is referred as *capella sancti Johanni Baptisti* in the documents about the construction, we find the representation of both saints – Saint Jerome on the relief and Saint John on the altar.<sup>93</sup>

While this type of double representation certainly reflects contemporary trends, the element of Jerome's Dalmatian origin remains an intrinsic part of the representation. Detailed and extensive research on this topic is in progress and should yield new conclusions about the representations of the saint in Dalmatia.

#### *Vir Illustris becomes a national saint*

Despite the general popularity of the saint in the fifteenth century, it is hard to imagine that the cult would have become this widespread in the Eastern Adriatic without the element of the local origin which marked the saint as one of "their own." This appropriation can be seen in the text

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<sup>87</sup> See: Rizzi 1987.

<sup>88</sup> Raukar 1982, p. 97.

<sup>89</sup> About the construction of the baptistery see: Josipović 2009; Marković 2013.

<sup>90</sup> See footnote 24.

<sup>91</sup> Rice 1985, p. 55.

<sup>92</sup> See more: Rice 1985; Lizzi Testa 2007, p. 306, 313, 324.

<sup>93</sup> Josipović 2009, p. 48.

of the official veneration, as well as in the later writing of the humanists which emphasize his importance as the most prominent individual when writing about Illyrians, Dalmatians or Slavs.

The multifunctional nature of his figure and cult eventually led to his emergence as the national saint, where his importance was emphasized on the several levels. The first factor was the reflection of the common ancient origin, expressed in the Dalmatian/Illyrian/Slav/Croatian affiliation of the saint. Proving Jerome's origin meant proving not only the long existence of this ethnic group in the eastern Adriatic, but also the perennial character of their language and its sacred legitimacy. Jerome's figure expressed the linguistic unity of the people living in the Eastern Adriatic, through the common language, the Croatian vernacular, which began to penetrate the cultural life at this time.

It is also of note that the political context certainly played an important role in the emergence of Jerome as national patron saint. As the political context cannot be discussed here at length, observing the two most fundamental factors will suffice: the establishment of the Venetian government and the Ottoman conquest of Balkan. Once medieval Croatian lands found themselves under a different political authority after the establishment of the Venetian government, common language became one of the important elements of the identification of the peoples not living in the same political unity. The fifteenth century was a turning point for the Dalmatian communes which lost its autonomy on many levels and was incorporated into the centralized system of the Venetian Republic which severely restricted their original autonomy. Even though the Serenissima kept the local laws, the influence of the local community, especially the aristocracy, was curbed, and the most influential communal posts came to be occupied by the people appointed from Venice. This resulted in the complete loss of the commune's ability to make decisions without the approval of Venice.<sup>94</sup> It is evident that in the period of the Venetian government's consolidation the communes became more aware of their shared past, language and customs.

It was due to this increased awareness, too, that Jerome came to be worshipped as the patron of Dalmatia: leaving room for the continued worship of commune patron saints, but representing a higher level of worship and protection as the universal patron of all Dalmatians. There are several surviving examples for this practice. In Trogir, a stone polyptych from the Dominican church features the Virgin Mary with Saint John of Trogir and Saint Jerome.<sup>95</sup> In Dubrovnik, Nikola Lazanić made two statues for the Church of Saint Blaise, a local patron saint: Saint Blaise and Saint Jerome.<sup>96</sup>

The identification of the communes with common past and customs can also be seen in the example of the Republic of Ragusa where Jerome's feast day was officially celebrated from 1445 onwards.<sup>97</sup> In this period, Ragusans frequently emphasized their Dalmatian origin and language to distinguish themselves from the Italians, but also to identify with the other Dalmatian communes, with which they once formed part of the Hungarian kingdom.<sup>98</sup> In the

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<sup>94</sup> Raukar 1982; Novak 1965.

<sup>95</sup> Bužančić 2009, p. 43. Due to the representation of the city's patron Saint John and the protector of Dalmatian, Saint Jerome, the author suggests that the commissioner for this stone polyptych should have been a local government.

<sup>96</sup> Fisković 1951, p. 29.

<sup>97</sup> See a footnote 23.

<sup>98</sup> Kunčević 2009, p. 159; Radonić 1935, p. 492-493. In 1444, the merchants of the Republic of Ragusa were forced to pay so-called *Italian tax* in Barcelona. In the protest letter to the authorities of Barcelona sent in 1446, Ragusan clearly stated that «it is clear to the nations of the whole world[...] that Ragusans are not Italians[...] quite the contrary, that both judging by their language and by criteria of place, they are Dalmatians». Even though it seems that this statement was issued only to avoid paying taxes, it is evident that in



sixteenth century, when the Republic of Ragusa established its boundaries and moved its political focus from what became a Venetian Dalmatia, Jerome's cult was no longer celebrated officially.<sup>99</sup>

Although some researchers see the development of the cult of Saint Jerome as a response to the constant threat of the Ottoman army, it is quite likely that this was not the real reason for the formation of the common affiliation expressed through the worship of the saint.<sup>100</sup> It is true that in 1464 Cardinal Bessarion gave an indulgence to the Scuola dei Schiavoni in Venice, which can be seen as a way to counter Ottoman activities, but this was years after the cult in Dalmatia had been fully formed.<sup>101</sup> The preserved documents which refer to the worship of the saint do not explicitly mention the Ottoman threat at all. Furthermore, despite the proximity of the Ottoman army to the Dalmatian cities, their preoccupation with possible conquest was not a real threat until the fall of Bosnia in 1463.<sup>102</sup> Importantly, there are no references to Jerome as a Dalmatian in anti-Ottoman orations, neither is he called upon as a saintly helper.<sup>103</sup> He is, however, mentioned and sometimes even quoted in texts of this genre, where Jerome letter to Heliodorus, describing how barbarians destroyed the Roman Empire and its churches and how they killed the bishops, was used as an analogy for the destruction of Croatian lands.<sup>104</sup> While Jerome certainly figured in texts at the time of Ottoman threats to Croatian lands and indeed served as added protection in this period of fear and insecurity, the rise of his cult was definitely not brought about by the search for the heavenly protection against heathens.

## Conclusion

Even though this study provided only a brief overview of the factors contributing to the formation of Saint Jerome as a national saint, it aims to help a better understanding of the other texts about saintly patronage of Schiavoni communities in this volume. It is important to stress that this research in progress opens many questions, which will be dealt separately in the forthcoming publications.

The examples gathered convincingly show that the choice of Jerome was not accidental. His role as the unifier was not only based on his saintly powers, but built on the belief that he was born in the territory of Dalmatia and invented the Glagolitic alphabet to bring the word of God to his people. He became a national hero. Was there a better candidate whom Dalmatians/Illyrians/Slavs could be this proud—a truly holy man, the translator of the Bible and author of theological treatises, born among them yet praised across the whole of Western Christendom? A saint that did so much good for Christianity, but still never forgot his compatriots?

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this period Ragusans are emphasizing their Dalmatian identity, what can be also seen through the worship of Saint Jerome.

<sup>99</sup> Lonza 2009, p. 258. Nella Lonza argues how in the sixteenth century, when the Republic of Ragusa already established their borders and placed itself on the map of the power in the Mediterranean, there was no necessity for the integration with the other Dalmatian communes, now under the rule of Venice.

<sup>100</sup> Kunčić 2008, p. 16.

<sup>101</sup> Čoralić 1998, p. 152-154.

<sup>102</sup> Raukar 1982, p. 90.

<sup>103</sup> Gligo V. 1983.

<sup>104</sup> *Ivi*, p.25. In the letter to Heliodor Jerome describes the ruins left after the barbarians invaded the Roman Empire. He sees the destruction as the punishment for all the sins. In this sense, Dalmatian humanists identify themselves with Jerome since their country was also burned by Ottomans. Reading the works by sixteenth-century humanists such as Marko Marulić, Bernard Zane and Trankvil Andronik, we can notice that they were familiar with this work by Jerome.

The worship of Saint Jerome united people coming from different parts of Eastern Adriatic, but gathered under an umbrella of a shared origin and language—and Jerome's heavenly protection. Enjoying a high rank in the *communio sanctorum* and widely celebrated all over Christian Europe, Jerome became an important point of pride among the believers, so it is not surprising that Dalmatians wary of others trying to appropriate their saint. Yet, if it was not for this unwelcome appropriation, humanists would have been so eager to defend the saint as Dalmatian/Illyrian/Slav/Croatian and modern scholarship would be entirely oblivious about the importance of Jerome in the late Middle Ages in Dalmatia and later elsewhere in the Eastern Adriatic.

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