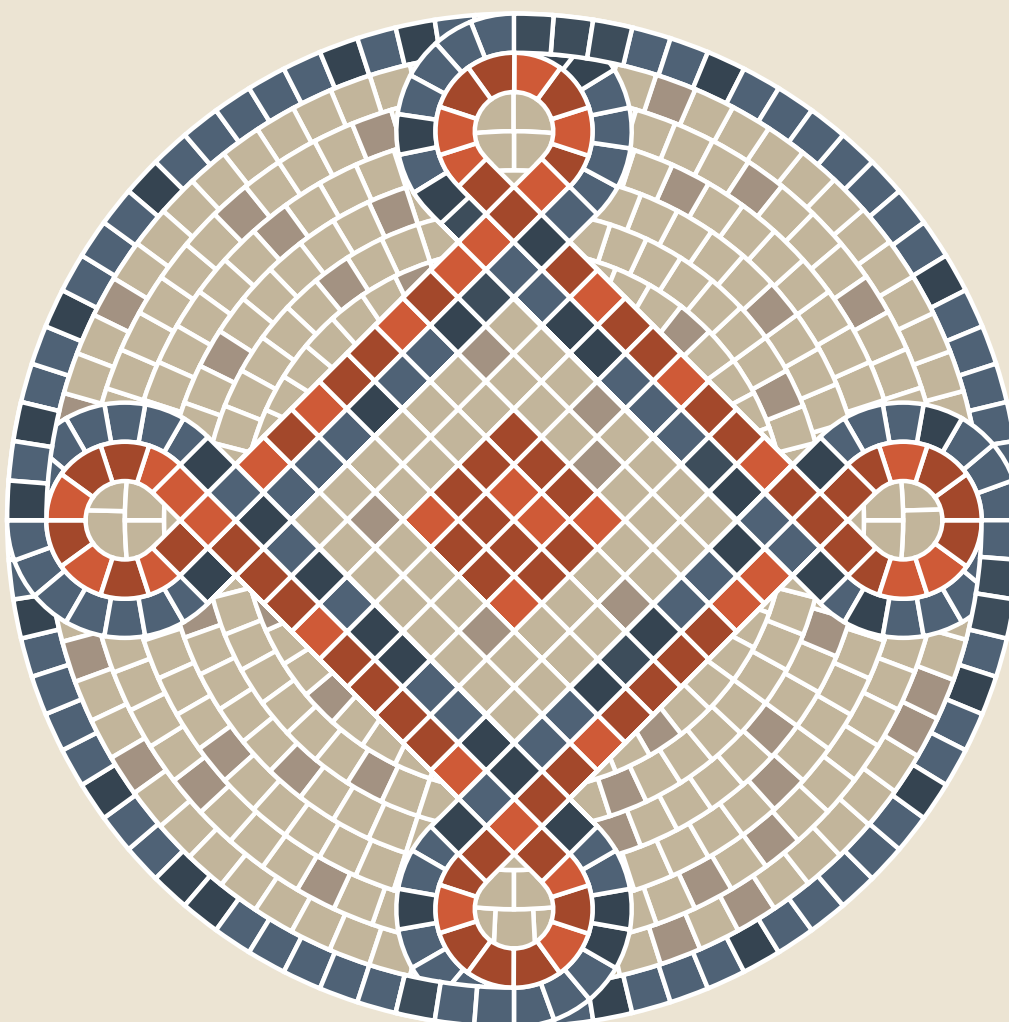




Studies in Art History and Archaeology of the North Adriatic from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference



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University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral Rijeka

2026



Studies in Art History and Archaeology of the North Adriatic from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

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Edited by:
Palma Karković
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University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral Rijeka

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Foreword

Through Synergy of Scholarship towards New Insights into the Northern Adriatic History and Heritage

The Proceedings of the Third International Conference *Studies in Art History and Archaeology of the North Adriatic from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, organized in 2023 in collaboration between the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Rijeka and the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka reaffirms again the importance of the northern Adriatic as a dynamic hub of cultural and economic interactions from Antiquity to the late Middle Ages. The papers in this volume offer valuable new contributions on ancient necropolises, historical trade routes, Roman marbles, goldsmithing, and luxury textiles on the coast and the islands.

As Director of the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka, I am exceptionally proud that this publication is the result of the strong and continuous cooperation between our heritage institution and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Rijeka. This volume, which grew out of a scholarly conference organized by the Faculty, represents an exemplary case of synergy between the heritage sector and higher education. I am particularly proud of the work of our museum archaeologists, whose collaboration with fellow scholars from the Faculty made it possible to combine extensive field experience with scholarly and theoretical research. It is precisely this close and active connection between an institution that safeguards valuable heritage and an academic community that provides deeper contextualization and gives a new dimension and motivation to our understanding of the history of the northern Adriatic. The publication of this volume therefore clearly demonstrates how interinstitutional cooperation can result in rewarding editions for the benefit of the professional and scholarly but also wider community.

The publication of this volume is the result of the joint efforts of the Faculty as a publisher and the Museum as a co-publisher. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the editors, members of the editorial board, reviewers, and all the authors who contributed to this edition. I believe that these studies will encourage further research and broaden our understanding of the rich cultural heritage of the northern Adriatic.

Tamara Mataija
Director of the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka

Editors' Preface

The northern Adriatic has for centuries constituted a dynamic zone of contact between the Mediterranean and Central Europe, shaped by the movement of people, objects, materials, artistic models and ideas. Its islands, coastal settlements and hinterland were connected by maritime and terrestrial routes that enabled exchange but also generated distinctive local responses to broader cultural and artistic phenomena. From Antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages, these complex networks played an essential role in shaping the region's heterogeneous material and visual culture. The study of such connections, transfers and transformations provided the conceptual framework for the 3rd International Conference dedicated to Art History and Archaeology from Antiquity to the Middle Ages of the northern Adriatic, held in Rijeka on 16 and 17 November 2023.

The conference was organized by the Sub-department of Ancient and Medieval Art of the University of Rijeka in collaboration with the Maritime and Historical Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka. It continued a series of scholarly meetings related to the research interests of the Sub-department and Museum, in particular to the two projects co-financed by the University of Rijeka: *Migrations, Identities and the Context of Medieval Art in Kvarner* and *Contextualization of Roman and Early Medieval Sculpture on the Island of Krk Based on Mineralogical-petrographic and Chemical Analysis of the Stone Sculpture*. Both projects approach the artistic heritage of Kvarner from the perspective of cultural contacts, movement and exchange, placing local monuments and artefacts within the wider artistic and historical networks of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean.

The conference sought to encourage dialogue between scholars of ancient and medieval art history and archaeology and to reconsider the northern Adriatic as a region whose cultural identity cannot be understood through isolated local development alone. Particular attention was given to the materiality and provenance of objects, the transfer of artistic ideas and visual languages, the relocation and reuse of monuments, changing contexts and functions, communication routes, and the continuities and transformations from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. The contributions collected in this volume reflect the extent of these questions and demonstrate the value of combining archaeological, art-historical, archival and scientific approaches.

Several studies focus on material culture as evidence of mobility and connectivity. The Roman necropolis of Apsorus on the islands of Cres and Lošinj offers significant new archaeological evidence for burial practices and the circulation of ceramics, glass and other objects between the late first century BCE and the second century CE. The settlement in Podšilo Bay on the island of Rab, on the other hand, provides a perspective on late antique patterns of

trade and everyday life, revealing both the persistence of wider Mediterranean exchange and the increasing importance of regional Adriatic networks. The cosmopolitan character of late antique and early medieval Carnium is explored through belt buckles and belt sets whose distribution points towards connections extending from the Eastern Roman Empire to Germanic communities of western and central Europe.

The volume also illustrates how the reconstruction of historical contexts may depend on the reassessment of material, archival and scientific evidence. New research on the basilica and cemetery of Saints Felix and Fortunatus in Aquileia combines archaeological discoveries with manuscripts, archival documents and early records in order to reconsider the development of an almost entirely lost sacred complex. Likewise, previously unpublished mosaic pavements from Aquileia are brought into scholarly discussion through the integration of archival photographs and recent archaeological excavation. Scientific analysis plays a particularly important role in the studies devoted to the sculpture from the island of Krk. Mineralogical and petrographic analyses of early medieval stone sculpture on Krk offer new possibilities for establishing the provenance of raw materials, reconstructing trade routes and identifying workshop connections, while the study of a fragmentary Roman marble altar from Krk combines ancient religious, epigraphic and archaeometric approaches to place the monument within wider networks of marble distribution across the Adriatic, the Aegean and beyond.

Artistic connections are equally visible in the movement of motifs, models, craftsmen and luxury objects. A capital from Zagreb Cathedral is examined in relation to comparable late 12th-century sculpture in Esztergom and Modena, revealing the remarkable diffusion and re-interpretation of an Antique-derived motif across different European artistic environments. Archival evidence from 15th-century Šibenik illuminates the intense relationships between local goldsmithing and Venice and the Veneto, expressed through the mobility of craftsmen, systems of apprenticeship, standards of precious-metal production and the circulation of iconographic models. The contribution on the folding altarpiece of the church of San Pietro in Venice examines the relationship between object, liturgy and architectural space, demonstrating how changes in ritual and spatial context could lead to transformations in function and, ultimately, to the dismemberment and decontextualization of an artwork. Finally, the study of rare medieval silk velvets preserved in the Franciscan monastery at Trsat places these precious objects within the political and cultural environment of the Counts of Krk and within the wider system of maritime and terrestrial routes through which luxury textiles circulated across Europe.

As a whole, the contributions in this volume demonstrate that the northern Adriatic should be understood not as a cultural periphery but as an active intersection of routes and networks. Objects, materials, technologies and artistic ideas travelled through this space, but their reception was never merely passive: they were selected, adapted, transformed and invested with new meanings according to local circumstances. The resulting artistic landscape was therefore both deeply connected to neighbouring regions and marked by distinctive local identities.

It is our hope that the studies presented here will contribute not only to a more nuanced understanding of the artistic and archaeological heritage of the northern Adriatic, but also to broader discussions concerning connectivity, mobility and cultural transfer between Antiquity and the Middle Ages. By bringing together different disciplines, methods and geographical perspectives, this volume continues the dialogue initiated at the conference and opens further possibilities for research into a region whose monuments and material culture testify to centuries of movement, encounter and exchange.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this volume for their support, commitment, and valuable ideas, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration.

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Preliminary Report

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The Necropolis of the Roman City of Apsorus Preliminary Results

The site of one of the burial grounds of the Roman city of Apsorus (present day Osor, island of Cres) is located on the island of Lošinj, south of the present-day canal. The site has been known since the first amateur excavations in the 19th century as a prehistoric and ancient necropolis. In the 2022 rescue excavations more than 200 graves were excavated in an area of almost 4000 m². The excavation yielded 188 incineration graves and 14 inhumation burials. Most of the burials were simple incinerations with remains buried in simple cuts in the bedrock, followed by burnt remains laid in walled tombs and burials in stone and ceramic urns. Skeletal burials were laid down in simple grave cuts. The researched graves were concentrated in several groups in the northern, central and southern areas of the necropolis. The graves were adorned with a variety of ceramic and glass vessels, with bronze, iron and bone objects. The oldest ceramic finds from the group of fine tableware belong to the black slip pottery, while thin-walled pottery of north italic origin is the most numerous one. The terra sigillata finds are the second in numbers, with specimens usually from north italic workshops mostly dated till the mid-1st century, followed by a group of wares from eastern workshops. The coarse pottery is represented mostly by pots. The origin of the lamps is also north italic workshops, as are most of the glass objects, with some possible Cypriot origins. Numismatic finds range from Octavian to empress Vibia Sabina. With the collected data burials on the Osor necropolis were conducted from the last decades of the 1st century BCE till the middle of the 2nd century CE.

Keywords: Osor, necropolis, Roman era, burials, cremations, small finds

Introduction

The burial ground, which functioned as a necropolis during prehistoric and Roman periods, occupies the northeastern coastal zone of Lošinj island, at the geographic juncture where it was formerly contiguous with Cres Island through a narrow land bridge. Currently, this isthmus is bisected by an artificially constructed waterway known as Kavanela (Italian: *Cavanella*), located in proximity to the settlement of Osor (fig. 1).

Under Hellenistic influence, from the 3rd to 1st century BCE, Osor underwent urban development and organization according to authentic urban planning principles, featuring a systematic orthogonal arrangement of streets, residential structures, and quarters. The pre-existing fortifications were reinforced with large ashlar blocks utilizing dry-stone masonry techniques, which remain clearly visible along the eastern perimeter and adjacent to the present-day cemetery. With the evolving political situation in the Adriatic, Osor came under Roman rule in the 1st century BCE. During this period, it acquired particular strategic importance, experienced its highest degree of urban development, and attained the status of *municipium*. During this period, Osor occupied its maximum spatial extent with an irregular circular plan, and archaeological investigations have defined the urban grid with the main streets, the *cardo* and the southerly-oriented *decumanus*, along with squares and stairways. Adjacent to the *decumanus*, remains of the forum have been excavated at the present-day square, which was considerably larger, containing all the most representative structures such as the temple.¹

The prehistoric and Roman necropolis site at Osor has been documented in scholarly literature since the latter half of the 19th century. Systematic archaeological excavations were conducted from 1860 onwards on the Lošinj side, in the area of Kavanela. The majority of the recovered material assemblage comprised finds from the Roman period, most of which were published by parish priest Dr. Ivan Kvirin Bolmarčić in *Mittheilungen der KK-Central Commission and Archaeologisch-epigraphische Mittheilungen aus Oesterreich-Ungarn*. A smaller number of finds and site descriptions were contributed by Richard Burton, Eduard von Sacken, Otto von Benndorf, and Anton Klodič.² Given that the Austrian Ministry of Culture co-financed the project, Otto von Benndorf spent several days supervising the excavations. Benndorf himself published an exhaustive account of the finds, along with a detailed site description, concentrating on material from the Roman period. Subsequently, Klodič published a portion of the prehistoric finds. Bolmarčić conducted excavations from 1874 to 1880 on a large scale, but without substantial professional supervision and with virtually non-existent documentation. His investigations were succeeded by conservator Stefano Petris in 1894 and 1897, who published these results in the same journal of the Imperial and Royal Commission.³ In the work *Aus Liburnien und Istrien*, Edward Nowotny and Piero Sticotti present several finds.⁴ Excavations in the necropolis area, designated as Kavanela, were also conducted on a modest scale by Carlo

1 A. Starac, 2000, 79-81.

2 R. Burton, 1877; E. von Sacken, 1879, 150; O. von Benndorf, 1880; A. Klodič, 1885; M. Blečić Kavur, 2015, 27.

3 S. Petris, 1895; 1897.

4 E. Nowotny, P. Sticotti, 1896, 176.

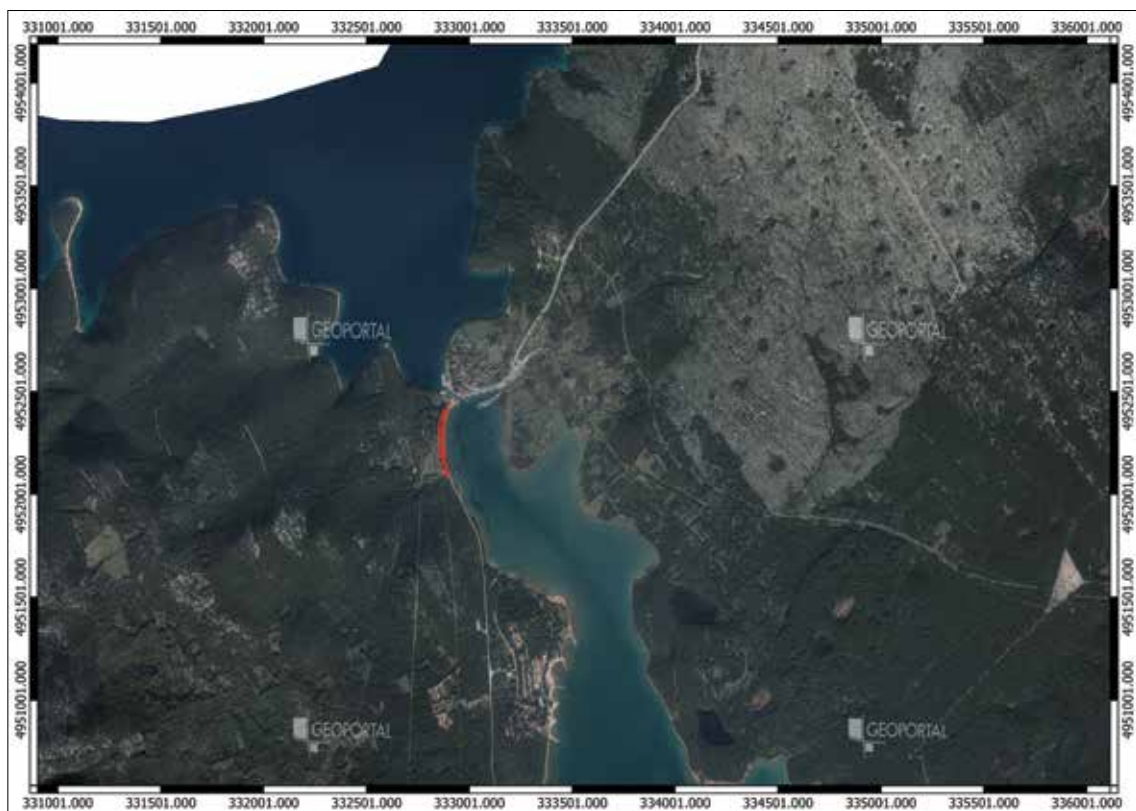


Fig. 1 Location of the site

Marchesetti in 1901, as part of his research on hillforts in the Cres-Lošinj archipelago.⁵ A comprehensive presentation of all finds from the necropolis, i.e., from the museum collection at that time, was published in 1924.⁶

The archeological excavations in Osor, mostly after World War II, continued inside the urban area of the settlement. During the 1950s the research of the Archaeological Museum of Istria from Pula brought to light finds from the Bronze and Iron ages with the locations of burial places on the eastern side of the town.⁷ New data on the location of the defenses of the town, town gates and ecclesiastical complexes were researched by the Institute of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences⁸ and the Institute of Archaeology from Zagreb.⁹ From the 1990s on a few rescue excavations were conducted without proper publications.¹⁰

Renewed research in the area of the Osor necropolis was initiated due to infrastructure works associated with the renovation of state road DC 100. Thus, at the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, trial excavations were conducted in the section of the road closer to the bridge over the canal, which confirmed the presence of prehistoric and Roman-period burials.¹¹ During 2021, a trial archaeological excavation was carried out along the planned widening route of the state road DC 100. These excavations established the southern extent of the necropolis and determined its southern boundary. On this occasion, approximately one hundred burials were investigated, predominantly dating to the Roman period.¹²

The Necropolis

The excavations confirmed the presence of burials immediately south of the canal, although further south than the present-day canal, given that a portion of the shoreline near the bridge was filled in during the first half of the 20th century. At the entrance to the “Preko mosta” campsite, the presence of interments was established, confirming the northern extension of the necropolis toward the Kavanella area. The necropolis extended southward, following the line of the former shoreline for a length of 335 m, where it was observed to terminate at the line of a drystone wall that currently demarcates the plots. The investigation determined that at this location the bedrock rises, and no further burial remains were recorded to the south (fig. 2).

The density of burials varies, particularly in the eastern section of the excavation, which is primarily conditioned by the formation of the path, i.e., the road. The investigated burials are grouped into several clusters, between which vacant spaces were present. The absence of burials in these locations is partially conditioned by later interventions. In the northern section

5 C. Marchesetti, 1903.

6 C. Marchesetti, 1924.

7 J. Mladin, 1960.

8 A. Mohorovičić, 1953.

9 A. Faber, 1972; 1982.

10 The largest excavation has been conducted from 2022 to 2025 with pending results.

11 Dž. Los, 2019.

12 D. Tresić Pavičić, 2021.

and at the southeastern edge, the absence of interments was observed to be caused by the natural slope of the terrain toward the sea.

The burial distribution across the necropolis showed significant spatial variation. Higher concentrations of burials (15-18 graves) were found in the northern part (sectors 2-3, 5, 12-13, and 16-29), while notable gaps (8-16 meters without burials) appeared in sectors 4, 9-11, and between sectors 21-22 (central part of the necropolis).¹³ The eastern sections (sectors 39-56) yielded few or no burials, likely due to natural terrain features (high bedrock and slope toward the sea) and later disturbances from road construction.

A particularly significant find was a special burial plot demarcated by drystone walls and masonry structures (SU 185, 184, 240, 365, 377), containing 14 cremation burials attributed to wealthy inhabitants of ancient Apsorus. Notable burials included stone urns (some containing glass urns within), ceramic urns, one double burial with both ceramic and stone urns, and one stone cist burial. Additionally, four simple pit burials were found in this area. This concentration was confirmed by trial excavations in trenches 2-4 conducted in 2021, establishing a dense burial zone extending nearly 100 meters in the southern part of the necropolis (fig. 3, 4).

Prehistoric Finds

During the rescue archaeological excavation in 2022, an inhumation burial (GR 14) was discovered, which was radiocarbon dated to the 2nd and first half of the 1st century BCE (fig. 5).

Anthropological analysis determined that bones of four individuals were collected in the grave, the majority of which belong to a male of advanced adult age (older than 55 years). The deceased was positioned supine, with the head oriented to the southeast. The right arm was flexed and placed on the chest. Twenty-one special finds were discovered beside and around the skeleton, among which amber beads predominate numerically, with a total of 10 found. Of the finds, prior to conservation-restoration work, an iron knife could be identified. In the nearby vicinity fragments of a spiral fibula of the Adriatic or B type has been found, with analogies at the site of the monastery of St. Peter in Osor.¹⁴

Roman-era Burials

The overwhelming majority of the 202 investigated burials belong to the period of Roman rule. During the excavation and processing of the excavated burial assemblages, two burial practices were identified. The first, with a greater number of represented interments, is the burial of cremated remains of the deceased, i.e., the cremation burial type. This burial type comprises 184 burial assemblages, i.e., 92% of the Roman burials. In 17 cases, the burial of the deceased in the ground was identified, i.e., the inhumation burial practice, which constitutes 8% of the total number of burials from the Roman period.

¹³ For the spatial distribution and numbering of the graves within the necropolis see: A. Janeš *et al.*, 2025.

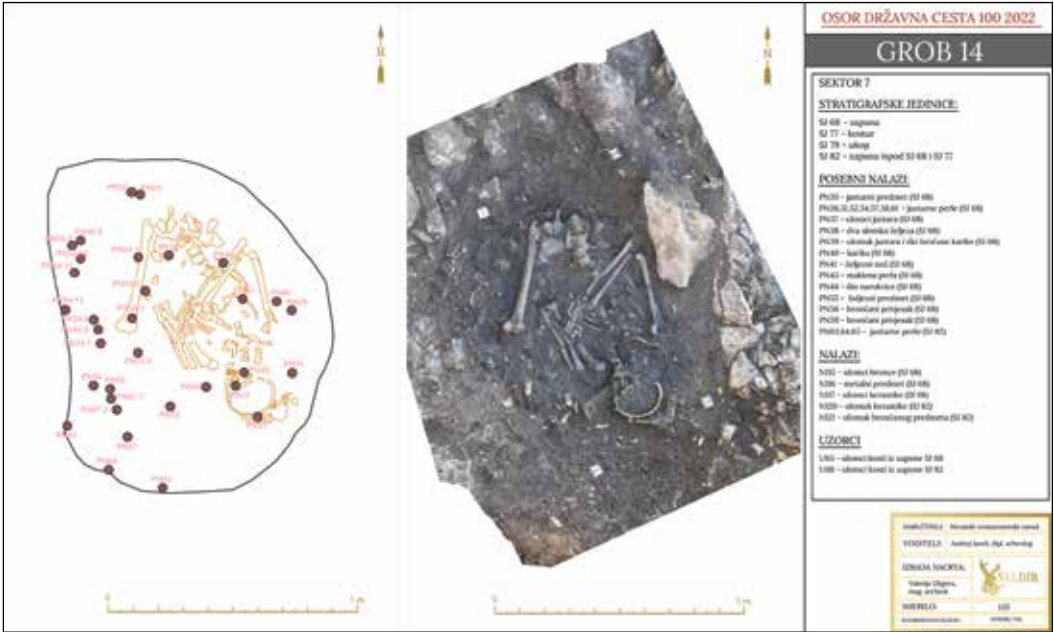
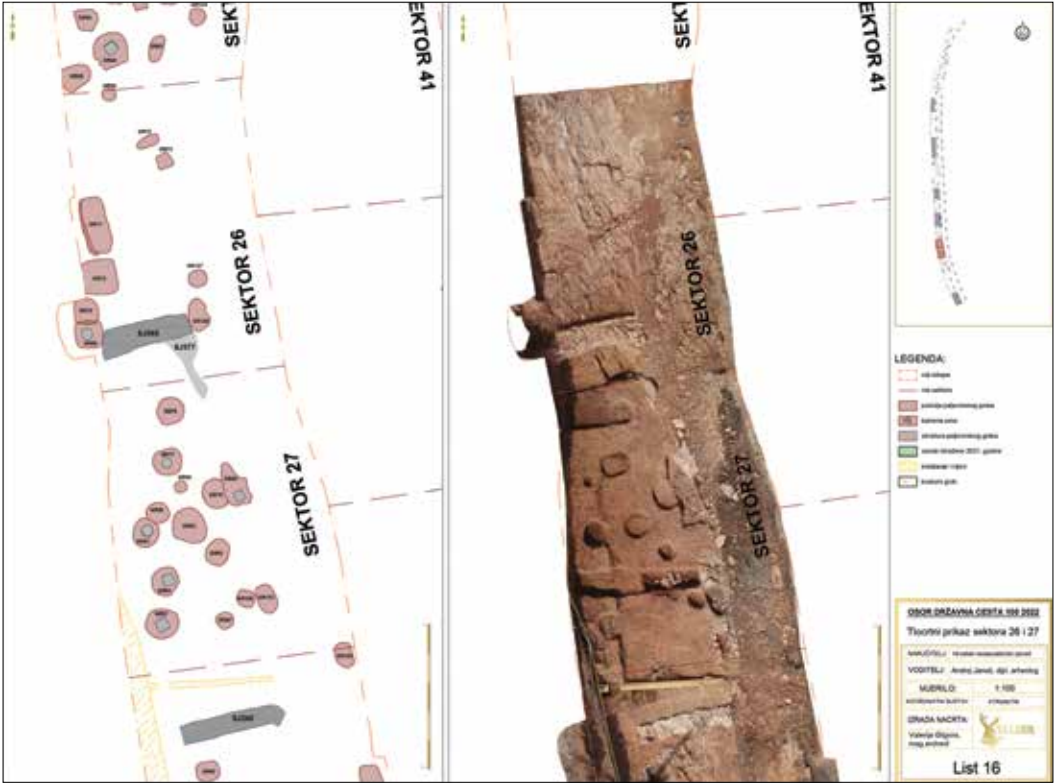
¹⁴ M. Blečić Kavur, 2021, 543.



Fig. 2 Layout of the excavated necropolis



Fig. 3 Orthophoto of grave plot



Cremation Burials

Among the cremation burials, several types of interment of cremated remains were identified, and within individual types, different variations were also observed. The majority were interred in simple pits, carved into bedrock or excavated into the deposit layer, constituting 67% of cremation burials. Burials in which the deceased's ashes were placed in ceramic urns represent 17%. Burials in which the deceased's ashes were placed in stone urns constitute 7%. Half as many, 3%, are burials with the deceased placed in amphorae, while 2% consist of masonry burials. Burials were also found that contained only a stone urn lid in the fill. One double burial was recorded, along with a burial with stone construction, a burial in which the deceased's remains were placed in a stone cist, and for a small number of burials it was not possible to determine the type due to the high degree of damage (fig. 6).

The most prevalent burial type in the Roman necropolis at Osor is interment in a simple pit carved into bedrock or excavated into the deposit layer (fig. 7). On this occasion, the deceased's ashes were scattered into the pit, into which various objects that were dear to the deceased were placed, thereby creating a home for the deceased where they would reside contentedly without the need to return to the world of the living and cause problems.¹⁵ Grave goods were often found in an extremely fragmentary state. Some had been cast onto the funeral pyre and were thus placed into the burial pit together with the ashes.

Such burials result from cremations performed at a designated location within the cemetery (*ustrinum*), with extraction of the ashes and placement in an urn or wrapping in fabric and deposition in the grave together with grave goods. *Ustrinata* are characterized by various forms, due to the fact that the cremation ritual consisted of diverse components that changed over time, or could be employed only in specific phases of the funerary procedure.¹⁶

A special burial type in which the deposited remains of the cremated deceased were found are masonry graves (fig. 8). Four such graves were investigated (GR 26, 99, 104, and 147). They were found in different parts of the necropolis: grave 26 in the northern section, graves 99 and 104 in the central section, while grave 147 was located at the southern edge of the necropolis. The graves were primarily cut into bedrock, and partially into the deposit layer (grave 99), with the sides built against the walls of the cut. The graves were constructed of stone bonded with white lime mortar. Two graves (GR 26 and GR 99) have a square plan (GR 26: 0.8 x 0.6 m; GR 99: 0.7 x 0.7 m), while two are rectangular (GR 104 and GR 147). Grave 104 is 1 m long, 0.5 m wide, oriented north-south with a slight deviation to the west. Grave 147 is oriented northwest-southeast, 1.4 m in length, while its original width is unknown as it was truncated on the eastern side by the construction of a modern road.

The fill of all the aforementioned graves consists of a distinctly black earth layer with a considerable quantity of charcoal, and all finds within it were in an extremely fragmentary state. Given the characteristics of the fill, these very likely represent the *bustum* burial type.

¹⁵ Z. Serventi, 2020, 133.

¹⁶ T. Leleković, 2012, 313.

Such graves are characterized by the fact that both cremation and deposition were performed at the same location, which allows easy distinction from the *ustrinum*; features of the *bustum* include burnt grave walls, while the fill consists of the pyre, fragments mixed with human and animal bones, as well as burnt and melted grave goods.¹⁷

Cremation burials with the greatest number of preserved grave goods belong to burials of the deceased whose remains were placed in urns, which were deposited in graves. Some of the grave goods were placed inside the urn itself, while another portion was arranged around the urn within the burial pit (fig. 9). Of a total of 42 burials with urns, 29 contained ceramic urns. Urns were deposited in narrow cuts carved into bedrock, in larger burial pits also carved into bedrock, or in pits excavated into the deposit layer. Two examples of graves with ceramic urns that were 'secured' by stone slabs arranged around them were found. Only around this construction were grave goods arranged in the burial pit. Both graves (GR 79 and GR 82) were investigated in the southern part of the necropolis. In the northern part, a grave with a ceramic urn (GR 179) was investigated, deposited in a grave with a stone ring arranged along the edge of the burial pit cut.

A total of 13 burials in which cremated remains of the deceased were deposited in stone urns were investigated (fig. 10). The highest concentration of stone urns was recorded in the southern part of the necropolis. In the northern part of the site, three graves containing stone urns were found. In the central part, one grave with a stone urn was found. In seven instances, the deceased's remains were placed in smaller-dimensioned square urns. Grave goods were deposited in the urn itself with the deceased's ashes, while larger specimens, such as glass vessels or *sigillata* plates, were placed in the burial pit beside the urn. In six cases, stone urns with circular cross-section were found in the graves (GR 62, GR 81, GR 86, GR 91, GR 162, GR 165), which can be classified as so-called cylindrical or *cineraria* urns.¹⁸ Four are of larger dimensions (GR 62, GR 81, GR 86, and GR 162) with domed lids, while two (GR 91 and GR 165) have flat lids. In grave 86, the lid was additionally secured with iron clamps. In five cases, except for grave 91, these represent the richest graves in the investigated section of the necropolis. Graves 81, 86, and 162 are particularly notable, where glass *ollae* were found inside the stone urns, in which the deceased's remains had been placed.

Two graves (GR 58 and GR 77) were investigated that represent a rarity in this necropolis, consisting of burials in simple pits that differ from the others in that only stone lids were found in them, along with other grave goods. In the case of grave 58, this involves an interment in bedrock, probably in a glass urn covered with a stone lid, which led to its disintegration.

In the southern part of the necropolis, grave 110 was excavated, containing skeletal remains deposited within a stone cist. The cist was constructed from stone slabs arranged to form a rectangular structure, covered by several stone slabs (fig. 11).

During the excavation of the necropolis, 18 inhumation burials were excavated. Although these represent a smaller percentage, the burials are distributed throughout the entire

¹⁷ T. Leleković, 2012, 320.

¹⁸ A. Busuladžić, 2016, 68, 71-72.

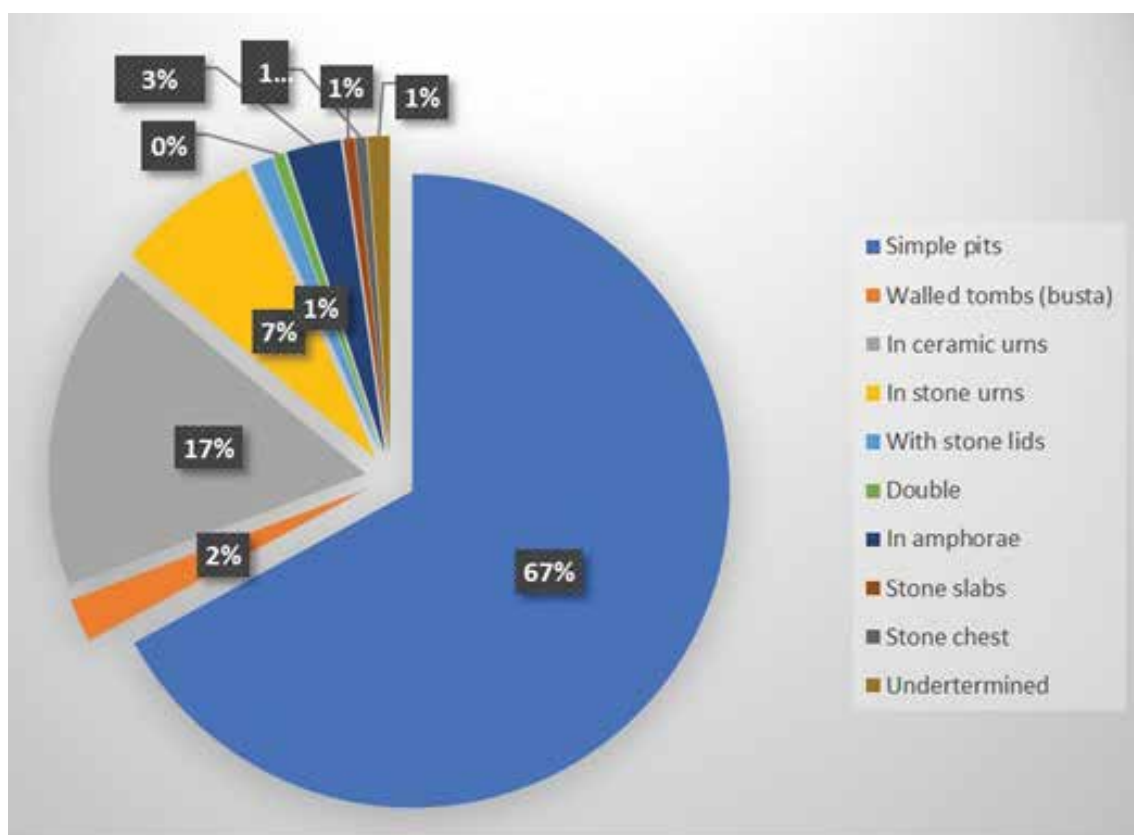


Fig. 6 Distribution of incineration graves



Fig. 7 Incineration grave (*ustrinata*), grave 63



Fig. 8 *Bustum* type of grave, grave 104



Fig. 9 Burial in a ceramic urn, grave 65



Fig. 10 Grave with a stone urn, grave 162



Fig. 11 Grave in a stone cist, grave 110



Fig. 12 Inhumation burial, grave 38

necropolis. Eight inhumation burials were excavated in the northern section, five burials in the central section of the necropolis, and four in the southern section.

The deceased were most commonly interred in a supine position with extended legs and arms positioned alongside the body. Generally, they contain no grave goods, thus grave 38 is particularly notable, in which eight glass objects, two oil lamps, one thin-walled ceramic vessel, two iron objects, and one coin were recovered (fig. 12). Two burials (GR 112 and GR 116) in the southern section of the necropolis proved to be of interest, representing interments of a presumed young female individual (GR 112) and a child (GR 116). Both deceased were interred in a left lateral recumbent position. The deceased in grave 112 was positioned with the head oriented to the west and legs slightly flexed at the knees. The deceased in grave 116 was interred with the head oriented to the east

Anthropological Analysis

Anthropological analysis was conducted on both cremated and inhumated human skeletal remains.

Standard methodological criteria¹⁹ were employed to gather information regarding the sex and age at death of the individuals. Pathological conditions were documented according to the criteria described by Ortner²⁰ and Aufderheide and Rodríguez-Martín.²¹

A total of 202 burials were unearthed during the archaeological excavations. Of those, 184 were cremations and 18 were inhumations. However, anthropological analysis yielded different (varying) results. One inhumation burial (GR 20) was missing from the sample, and only unburned human remains were found in three cremation graves (148, 181, and 182). Additionally, one grave contained the remains of both burned and unburned individuals (GR 141). Altogether, 21 skeletons were present in the sample. Nearly half of the sample (10 skeletons) belonged to males, five to subadults, three to females, and three were of an undetermined sex. (fig. 13).

The age distribution (fig. 14) shows that subadults are represented in the youngest age categories (fetal, newborn, and 1-2 years old), while adults were most prevalent in two age cohorts: young adults and middle-aged adults. Only two adults were present in the oldest age category.

Regarding cremated remains, there was no recovered skeletal material in 48 graves, while in 18 cases, there was either a charred bone fragment, an unburnt bone fragment, or animal bones, so they could not be attributed to any kind of grave. In total, there are 118 graves containing 127 individuals, as nine graves were double burials.

Unfortunately, the cremated sample consists mostly of individuals (around 60%) whose sex, besides that they are adults, could not be determined. There are 24 males or probably males, 18 subadults or possible subadults and only seven females or probably females (fig. 15).

19 J. E. Buikstra, D. H. Ubelaker, 1994.

20 D. J. Ortner, 2003.

21 A. C. Aufderheide, C. Rodríguez-Martín, 1998.

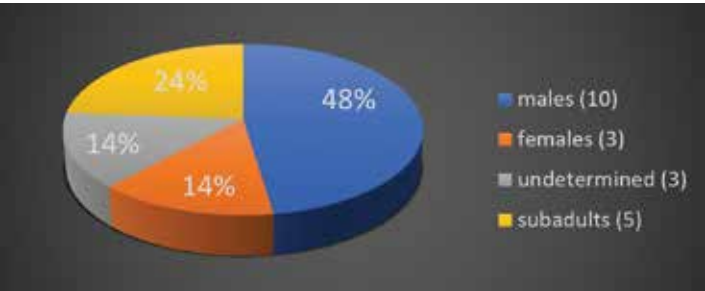


Fig. 13 Sex distribution in skeletal graves

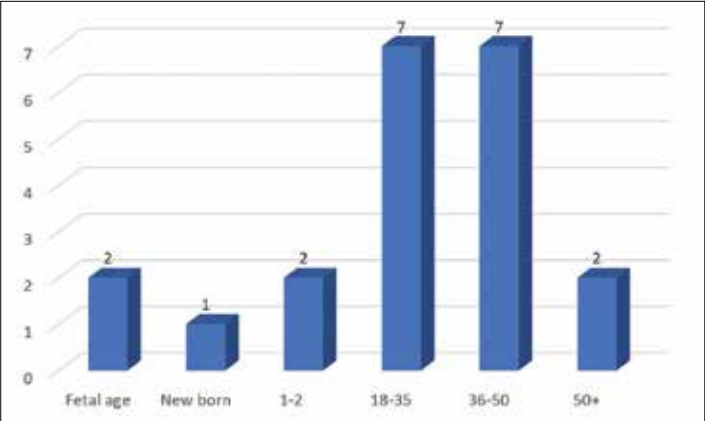


Fig. 14 Age distribution in skeletal graves

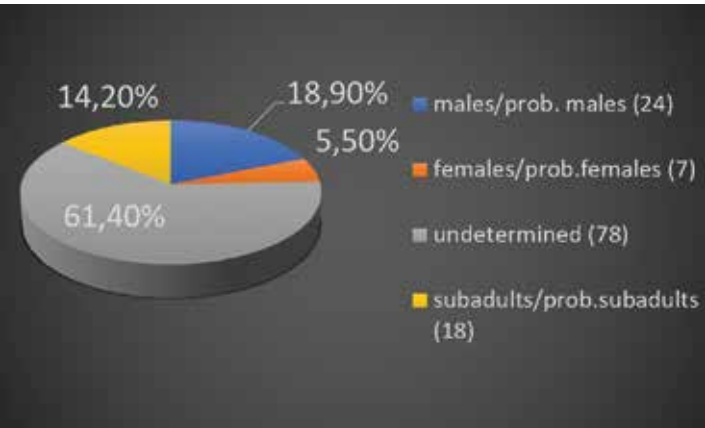


Fig. 15 Sex distribution in cremated graves

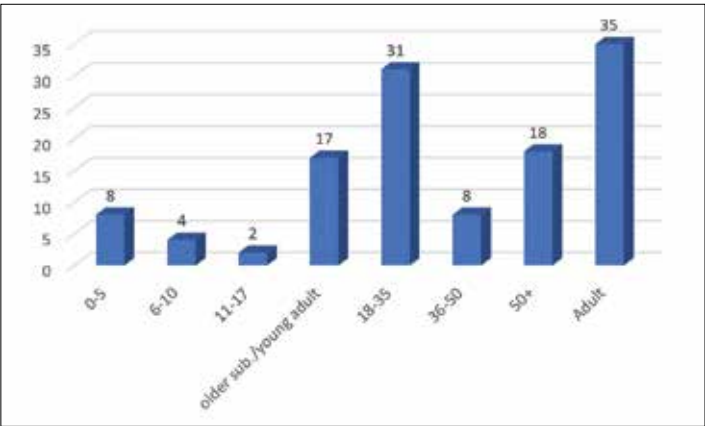


Fig. 16 Age distribution in cremated graves



Fig. 17 Linear enamel hypoplasia in a subadult from cremated grave 179



Fig. 18 Vertebral osteoarthritis on a skeleton from grave 14



Fig. 19 Abscesses and antemortem tooth loss on the adult maxilla from cremated grave 91

Considering the age distribution, 35 out of 123 (28%) adults could not be identified in age, while 17 out of 123 (14%) individuals could only be classified as older subadults or young adults. The young adult age cohort was the most prevalent, followed by older adults. Children are most prevalent in the age group up to five years old (fig. 16).

Pathological conditions found on the bones, in both – skeletal and cremated remains, include trauma, indicators of subadult stress (*cribra orbitalia*, sub-periosteal new bone formation, and linear enamel hypoplasia – fig. 17), indicators of hard physical labour (osteoarthritis on vertebrae – fig. 18 and joints, Schmorl's nodes), and dental pathologies (caries/cavities), antemortem tooth loss and abscesses – fig. 19).

Although the skeletal material is limited, it reveals evidence of poor health, as indicated by the high frequency of dental pathologies, as well as subadult and physical stress. Three individuals also show evidence of probable violent episodes.

Although human remains from cremated graves also show the presence of pathologies, such as *cribra orbitalia* and linear enamel hypoplasia in subadults and osteoarthritis, subperiosteal new bone formation, and dental pathologies in adults, unfortunately, these pathologies cannot be quantified. Therefore, they cannot be used to reconstruct living conditions or general health.

The poorly preserved state of the skeletal remains makes it difficult to draw broad conclusions about the health of different social classes, notable exceptions exist. In six wealthy burials, the presence of Schmorl's defects and robust muscle attachments in two males (graves 38 and 162) points toward a life of physical toil. Such labor-intensive markers could suggest that one man may have served as a soldier – a hypothesis supported by the inclusion of a strigil in grave 162.

Ceramic Finds²²

The previously known assemblage of early imperial pottery from Osor,²³ has been significantly enriched by recent research (2018/2019, 2021, 2022),²⁴ with a detailed documented context of finds, which was largely absent from the previously known material. The last of them, from 2022, covered the largest area and produced the highest amount of archaeological material.

As is often the case at archaeological sites, the most frequent traces of human activity belong to pottery, which, depending on the site in question and in addition to utilitarian function in everyday life, could also have an important role in cult and funeral practices. Such is the case with the Osor necropolis, where at least 1,100 vessels were recorded in the graves, along with several hundred more in the layers outside of them. Considering that a certain

22 The finds presented herein represent a survey of the recovered material, with detailed analyses to be addressed in subsequent publications.

23 R. Makjanić, 1981; 1983; 1985; A. Konestra 2016.

24 Dž. Los, 2019; D. Tresić Pavičić, 2021.



Fig. 20 Example of thin-walled pottery from grave 65



Fig. 21 Example of *terra sigillata* plate from grave 65



Fig. 22 Example of lamp from grave 162



Fig. 23 Stone spreading plate from grave 111

number of graves were not intact, the material was found in varying degrees of conservation. Generally speaking, the most numerous finds are those from the early Roman Empire, while in certain areas, mostly outside the graves, prehistoric or pottery that can be associated with the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period have also been recorded. Prehistoric finds indicate the continued use of the same space for burials, while late medieval and early modern finds may indicate a time when a certain number of graves were disturbed. The oldest Roman graves from the area of necropolis affected by the excavations from 2022 belong to the Augustan period and are usually located in the northeastern part that is closer to Kavanella, while later graves appear towards the southwest. Although the number of vessels varies depending on the grave in question, the higher number of finds usually accompanies graves that can be dated around the middle and second half of the 1st century or immediately after. It should be kept in mind, however, that the oldest graves that is the area where they are located, were subjected to greater disturbance than other excavated parts of the necropolis. When it comes to the dating of the finds, it is necessary to distinguish between the time of production of a certain vessel, and the time of its deposition in the context in which it was found, that is, dating according to typology and dating according to the context of finds. Although there are finds from different parts of the Mediterranean among the new pottery assemblage from Osor, the most dominant products are those from northern Italy, thanks to the developed production of the workshops there, their proximity, as well as the distribution and trade network through which these products came to the eastern Adriatic, as well as to Osor. That material is a constant and is found through various pottery styles and shapes from the earliest to the latest graves from the excavations.

Roman pottery is classified into several main categories: fine ware (42%), coarse ware (25%), plain ware (6%), lamps (9%), transport and storage wares (16%) and architectural ceramics (2%). The most numerous group of fine pottery is thin-walled pottery (67%), which is also the most represented type among the entire pottery assemblage from the site (about 27%). *Terra sigillata* is represented in large numbers (32%), while other groups (1%), such as glazed pottery and black slip ware, are documented with only a couple of fragments.

The aforementioned thin-walled pottery (fig. 20) appeared in the first half of the 2nd century BCE in central Italy under the influence of local cultures as well as Hellenistic vessels. Apart from the thickness of the walls, which can be extremely thin, probably under the influence of metal vessels, this pottery group is also characterized by a large number of variants when it comes to vessels of smaller dimensions used for drinking. At first, taller and narrower shapes, that is cups, prevailed, while somewhat later wider and lower shapes, that is bowls, took over.²⁵ Among the early imperial material from Osor, bowls are the dominant form (83%), including examples with one or two handles. On the other hand, a smaller group of finds belongs to forms where the height is more pronounced than the width (5%), with mostly smaller fragments that could not be determined thoroughly in this regard (12%). The pottery of this group is often in darker tones, shades of gray fabric as a rule, which indicates firing with

25 E. Schindler-Kaudelka, 1975; 1998; 2012; M. T. Marabini Moevs, 1973; Lj. Plesničar Gec, 1977; A. Ricci, 1985.

reduced supply of air in the kilns, while it is less often of lighter tones, that is fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. Such a situation is often indicative of the provenance of the material and indicates its origin in the northern Italian workshops where such a method of production was characteristic. On the other hand, a smaller number of fragments fired in an oxidizing atmosphere are probably related to central Italian workshops, next to several examples who have analogies with material connected to probable eastern Adriatic production, so far unidentified but assumed to be somewhere in the wide Zadar area.²⁶

Although less numerous than the previous group, the finds of *terra sigillata* are often considered more important due to the possibility of more detailed typological and chronological attribution. This most recognizable Roman pottery group (fig. 21) is characterized by an often shiny and red slip made of clay suspension, in production from approximately mid-2nd century BCE, at first in Asia Minor workshops (Eastern *sigillata*), where the red slip fashion also originated. In Italy, the production of this pottery has been known since the second half of the 1st century BCE in plain and relief variant, with the use of one-piece molds, thus following the pattern known from the previous period, when Hellenistic relief pottery was made, known from the late 3rd century BCE, and the (somewhat) not well-known plain pottery with slips in different colors (black, gray, red, brown).²⁷ In the territory of Italy, the transition from black to red slip and the earliest production was established in its central part, where very quickly the Roman *Aretium* (Arezzo) developed into the most important center of its production. With the migration of potters, new workshops were established in northern Italy, after a while also in Gaul, as well as in other parts of the Empire. Assemblage from Osor is classified according to provenance and further according to forms.²⁸ According to provenience, the assemblage from Osor is divided into northern Italian *terra sigillata* (67%), central Italian *terra sigillata* (22%), Eastern *sigillata* (10%) and south Gallic *sigillata* (1%), with a smaller number of fragments of unclear origin. Almost all examples belong to open forms, while only a few are closed forms, that is jugs. Likewise, the vast majority of various shapes, often plates/platters (*Consp.* 20, *Consp.* 21) and bowls (*Consp.* 34), belong to plain *sigillata* (95%), while examples with relief decoration are represented in a smaller number (5%) with only one shape (*Consp.* R 13/Sarius cup). Better-preserved examples of plain *sigillata* often have an applied decoration known from around 30 AD, first in central, then in northern Italian workshops. The dominance of northern Italian products among the finds is not surprising and has been previously known in the Eastern Adriatic, as well as in Osor, although a significant number of central Italian vessels should also be highlighted.²⁹ *Sigillata* from central and northern Italy is usually from the first half of the 1st century, while from the second half of the same century, Eastern *sigillata* appears more often. Several types of plates and bowls (Hayes 80) appear, of which not a single form stands out number-wise. At the same time when Eastern *sigillata* took place previously held by vessels from Italy, in the northern part of the country, southern Gallic *sigillata* also appeared in

26 Z. Brusić, 1999, 30-31.

27 M. Matković, 2015, 133-244.

28 H. Dragendorff, 1895; J. Hayes, 1985; *Conspectus*, 1990.

29 R. Makjanić, 1981; 1985; A. Konestra, 2016, 204-342.

significant numbers.³⁰ That is so far only exceptionally documented in the Croatian part of the eastern Adriatic.³¹ To this context belongs the only fragment of this type from Osor that can be attributed to one of the forms with relief decoration (Drag. 29/37) from the second half of the 1st century.

Of particular importance are master/workshop stamps that can provide more detailed insight into the organization of individual workshops or their distribution, while they are also important for modern researchers due to their chronological sensitivity. They appear on *sigillata* from the second half of the 1st century BCE in several forms and ways, that is positions on the vessel where they were placed. Among the finds from Osor, the most numerous are marks in the shape of the foot (Lat. *in planta pedis*), in use since the time of Tiberius, or approximately 15 CE. The two most numerous are related to Arretine workshops of Lucius Gellius and Lucius Avillius, of which the first mentioned is documented in significant numbers on sites in present day Croatia.

A common find on Roman sites are lamps, which mainly belong to two large groups (volute, factory) with a number of types (fig. 22).³² All the finds of lamps from Osor belong to the typical early imperial examples made in two-part molds, some of which continued to be produced even after that time. They were usually deposited in graves in one copy. Among the most numerous volute types, known from the Augustan period, the lamps with nozzle of angular shape (Loeschcke I) (38%) are the most numerous and also the oldest. A rounded nozzle shape (Loeschcke IV) (11%) is represented in much smaller numbers while other types are scarcer. Factory lamps (*Firmalampen*) appeared around mid-1st century with a variant that has closed channel between disc and nozzle (Loeschcke IX), although they were more common towards the end of the 1st century when the variant with open channel (Loeschcke X) appeared and became standard in the following centuries. They are mostly of high quality, without decoration, while relief workshop stamps are located on the bottom, typically of northern Italian provenance. It is interesting to mention that all specimens were found outside the urns, unlike the volute types.

Coarse ware is one of the most represented groups on the site. As is the case with the majority of pottery assemblage, a significant number of vessels have analogies among finds from the northern Italian area. Among the oldest finds are the rare fragments of Cassani I-III hand-made pots, which appeared in the Augustan period and are rarely found in local literature, perhaps due to their modest workmanship and appearance.³³ From the second half of the 1st century and also a form characteristic primarily for northern Italian production, are *olle a orlo modanato* which are documented in several fabrics.³⁴ Imported vessels from other parts of Italy and the Mediterranean also appear: Campanian coarse pottery is represented by plates with a bifid rim (Di Giovanni 2131a) and lids (Di Giovanni 2421a) associated with them,³⁵ less

30 A. Gabucci, 2018.

31 I. Borzić, 2020, 58-60.

32 S. Loeschcke, 1919; E. Buchi, 1975.

33 G. Cassani, 1991.

34 C. Ardis, V. Mantovani, E. Schindler Kaudelka, 2019, 93-99.

35 V. Di Giovanni, 1996.

often by Pompeian red ware.³⁶ A certain number of vessels can be attributed to, in the eastern Adriatic omnipresent, Eastern coarse ware, with casseroles (Hayes casserole type 2), jugs and mugs (Hayes mug type 2).³⁷ African coarse ware is exceptionally represented with the shape of a casserole (Hayes 194),³⁸ which, as in some other eastern Adriatic sites, was documented in Osor in a time that preceded the mass importation of ceramic products from African workshops.

After fine and coarse wares, amphorae are the third most represented group of finds on the site. As a rule, they were found in the graves in fragments, while a small number of them were preserved more or less intact. They are also significant due to the fact that the examples from graves, unlike most other pottery groups, are usually not from northern Italy but from other parts of the country as well as other parts of the Mediterranean. *Amphorae vinariae* predominate, that is the types that were used to transport wine. Although due to its fragmentary nature, the exact attribution of this material is often difficult, it is clear that the most common type is Dressel 2-4, of which bifid handles and a thickened profiled rim are often documented. It cannot be discounted that some of them also belong to akin Dressel 5 type. They trace their origin to amphorae from the island of Kos with similar characteristics, in production since the 4th century BCE. They were produced in Italy before the middle of the 1st century BCE, at first in the south, later in other parts of the country as well as elsewhere in the Mediterranean. The same is indicated by the finds from Osor with various fabrics, which probably indicate the origin from different Mediterranean workshops (Italy, Greece). From other types, we should highlight Dressel 7-11, for fish products, recorded in significant numbers and Dressel 6A, used for wine. Other types from the graves are represented with a smaller number of examples, while in the layers outside the graves there is a significant number of Lamboglia 2 amphorae, which are also the oldest examples of amphorae here. Sometimes it is difficult to separate them from the aforementioned Dressel 6A amphorae, which replaced them and with which they share certain morphological similarities.

To conclude, the total number of pottery from the necropolis of Osor indicates its important position in the burial customs of the Osor population, especially when it comes to imported fine wares. Preliminary analysis showed that the assemblage can be dated to early Imperial times while belonging to various groups and shapes, as outlined in the text above. Taking into account the geographical position of Osor, the chronology of the excavated part of the necropolis (Augustean period to mid-2nd century) and the known patterns in that part of eastern Adriatic, it is of no surprise that most of the assemblage, excluding the amphorae, can be connected with northern Italian workshop circles. However, a more detailed and complete analysis of pottery assemblage from the excavated area of the necropolis, taking into account its burial contexts, as well as other types of material encountered there, will give us a clearer picture about various questions regarding pottery usage.

36 N. Lamboglia, 1950.

37 J. Hayes, 1983, 122-132.

38 J. Hayes, 1972, 206-207.

Glass Finds

The Osor necropolis has unearthed a rich and diverse collection of glass objects that demonstrate high skill in glass shaping. The glass material found contributes to a better understanding of the chronology of glass finds, the tastes of the local population, and trade relations.

The glass finds can be grouped into several main categories: balsamaria, urns with lids, tableware (including beakers, plates, jugs, bowls, and bottles), and unique items (such as a goblet, a ladle, a rhyton, an amphora, and a glass with a Greek inscription). Among these, balsamaria are the most numerous, displaying a range of shapes including tubular, ovoid, conical, and spherical forms. They are among the earliest forms of glassware. Originating in Egypt and Mesopotamia, they were made using core forming. Their simple shapes made them the first products manufactured using the free-blown glass method. Used to store and transport cosmetic substances such as fragrances, oils, paints, and medical preparations, they were made of colored, multi-colored, and natural blue-green glass.³⁹ Numerous examples from the Osor necropolis exhibit deformation caused by fire, suggesting that they were burned with the deceased, and likely containing fragrant oils intended to mask odors during cremation.

Turning to manufacturing techniques, the glass from the necropolis of Osor mostly belonged to typical early imperial products of the 1st and 2nd centuries and was made using the free-blowing technique. Most of the products came from workshops in northern Italy (a plate with a tubular edge and a flat bottom, a cylindrical beaker with horizontal incisions, a tubular *balsamarium*, and urns).

In terms of color, the natural color of the glass prevails. However, there are also specimens of dark blue (GR 38, GR 81), yellow (GR 76, GR 102, GR 154), emerald green (GR 80), amber (GR 140) and decolourized glass.

Urnns are represented by several forms, Isings form 67 a, an urn without a handle (GR 86), Isings form 64, urns with an H or Ω handle (GR 81 T1:2 a,b; GR 162, T 1:1a,b; GR 102), Isings form 62, rectangular urns (GR 101). They are made of natural-colored glass. Urns with handles were found together with lids (Isings form 66 a, b, d).

Lids with an applied central button-like protrusion (Isings form 66a, GR 81, T 1:2b), lids with a hollow cylindrical neck and a flat end (Isings form 66b, GR 162, T1:1 b), and lids with a hollow cylindrical neck with a two-horned end (Isings form 66 d, GR 102) date to the second half of the 1st-2nd century. Their production is assumed to be in northern Italy. In particular, the lids with horn-shaped ends are characteristic of the Este area and were probably made in a local workshop.⁴⁰

Similarly, the beakers are also represented in several shapes: a beaker with depressions on the wall (Isings form 32), a bell-shaped beaker, and a cylindrical cup with linear wheel-cut decoration (T1:7 GR 91, Isings form 29).

In addition to beakers, various shapes of bowls are also included. The most common are bowls with conical bodies (Isings form 41b) (T.1:3 GR 76). The bowl has a wide-out turned curved

39 Z. Gregl, I. Lazar, 2008, 83

40 Z. Buljević, 2016, 279; C. Isings, 1957, 85-86.

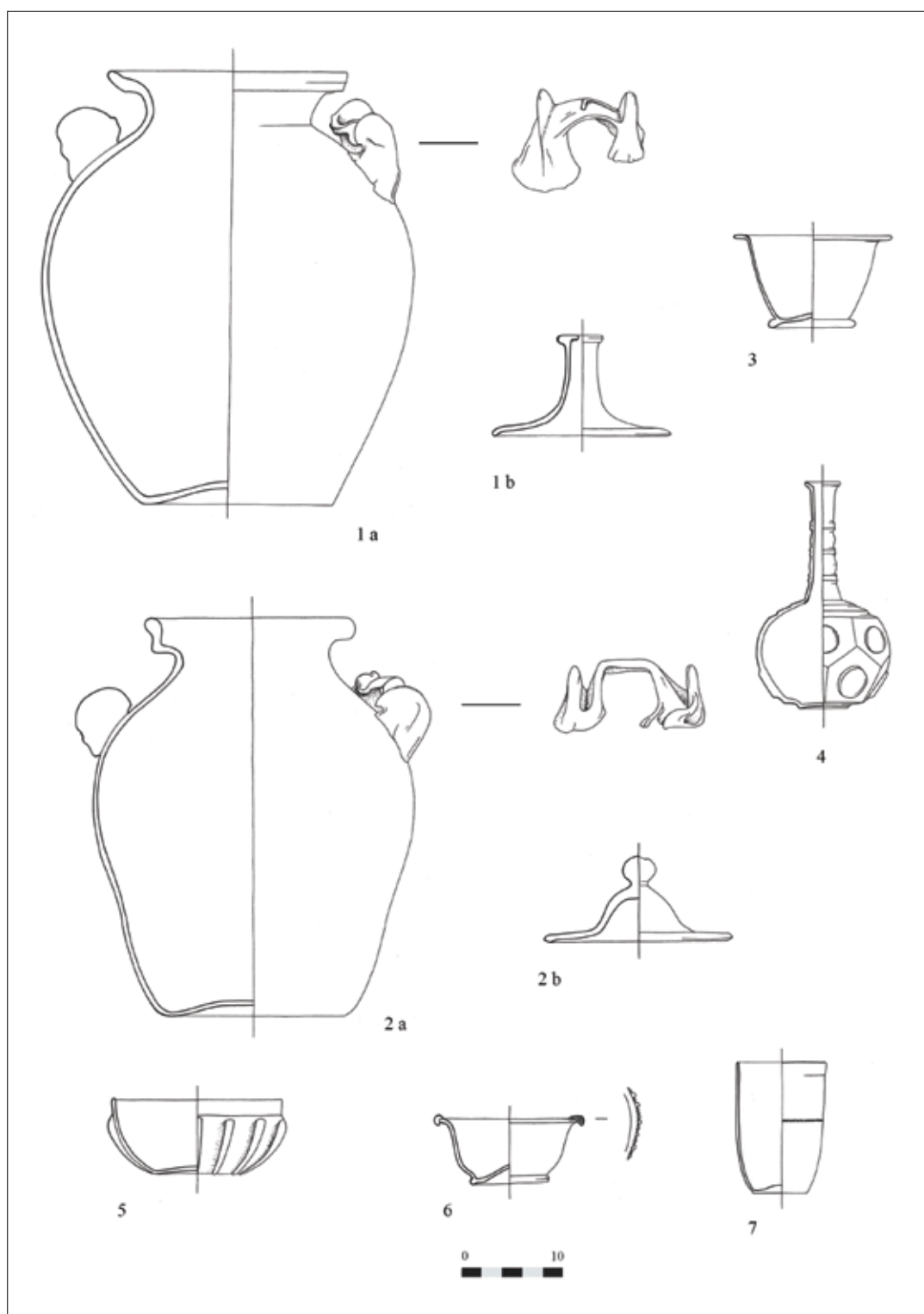


Table 1 Examples of some glass types from the necropolis

rim and a body that narrows at the bottom. This particular form of bowl was common in the early imperial period and was probably produced in workshops in northern Italy. They first appeared on the eastern Adriatic coast in the 30s of the 1st century and were in demand until the first decades of the 2nd century. They are most often made of naturally coloured glass, blue-green, while rarer examples are made of intensely colored glass (dark green, amber, cobalt blue).⁴¹

Among the glass objects, bowls and plates with relief decoration on the edge of the vessel, the so-called pseudo-handles (GR 24, GR 25 T1:6, 58, 74, 164), were found. Vessels with pseudo-handles were very popular in the early imperial period, their use being most intensive during the second half of the 1st century. They are attributed to an eastern Mediterranean workshop origin, although finds from the Western provinces suggest possible Western workshops.⁴²

A smaller number of mold-blown products were also found. These include a bottle with a square body and a stamp in the form of concentric circles on the bottom (GR 165). Additionally, a notable piece is a bottle with circular protrusions on the wall (GR 86, T1:4), which is probably a product of eastern workshops. Furthermore, among the mold-blown products, the glass found in Grave 154, should be singled out. This glass features an inscription in the Greek alphabet (*KATAIXAIPE KAI EYΦAINOA*), Harden type F I.⁴³ In Croatia, three specimens from the Zadar area have been found, generally dating to the second half of the 1st century.⁴⁴

In grave 62, (T1:5), a bowl with ribbed walls (Isings 3a form) was included. It was made of blue-green glass by fitting a glass disk onto a mold, and the ribs were then made with tweezers. This form dates from the end of the 1st century BCE and throughout the 1st century. During the Flavian dynasty, naturally colored glass became popular and continued to be produced almost exclusively in that color. The large number of widely distributed, naturally colored, ribbed bowls suggests that several glass workshops functioned simultaneously in the East and West (Italy), but the Italic workshops soon took over production.⁴⁵

An interesting example is made of multi-colored glass (GR 165). It is a free-blown jug made of blue-green, purple, and green glass. There are a few analogies for this shape. For instance, a similar shape was found in Bakar and dated to the late 1st-2nd century.⁴⁶ Another example comes from Zadar, from a Roman necropolis, and is dated to the last quarter of the 1st century.⁴⁷ A third analogy is from Argyruntum, 1st-mid 2nd century.⁴⁸ However, these examples are made of natural-colored glass. Furthermore, Lazar believes that this example may reflect a shape created in local Dalmatian workshops.⁴⁹ Additionally, a vessel with this color combination but a different shape (jug) has been found in Aquileia, and it is assumed that it was created in the workshops of the northern Adriatic area in the second half of the 1st century.⁵⁰

41 B. Šefanac, I. Fadić, 2023, 59-60.

42 B. Šefanac, I. Fadić, 2023, 57-58.

43 D. B. Harden, 1935, 171-172.

44 A. Eterović Borzić, 2014, 369-370.

45 I. Lazar, 2003, 40; A. Šopar, 2021, 2, 14.

46 Z. Gregl, I. Lazar, 2008, 114, pl. 7:4.

47 *Transparentna ljepota*, 2013, 52-53, cat. no. 70.

48 I. Fadić, 2006, 65, cat. no. 90.

49 Z. Gregl, I. Lazar, 2008, 65.

50 L. Mandruzzato, A. Marcante, 2005, 83, cat. no. 156.

The glass finds presented here represent a portion of the material recovered (a detailed analysis will be published in a forthcoming publication), but in general, the majority of glass products in the graves come from northern Italian workshops, while a smaller number can be attributed to eastern workshops. This is not surprising given the proximity of Aquileia and its glass workshops and craftsmen.

Graves containing the most numerous and diverse glass items are those with glass urns (GR 62, 81, 86, 162, 165). Luxury vessels are also present in other graves, though typically as individual items rather than in large quantities.

In summary, the glass objects from the Osor necropolis serve as a testament to economic prosperity, cultural life, and numerous trade contacts during the early imperial period.

Metal Finds

Bronze artifacts demonstrate greater morphological diversity, enabling functional determination of individual objects in the majority of cases. Morphologically and functionally distinctive are strigil finds, implements utilized for the mechanical removal of dirt, perspiration, and pre-bathing oil applications (*strigilus*) (T2:1). Strigils are documented as hygiene implements in ancient Greek and Roman contexts, employed predominantly by males, particularly athletes, though also attested as components of female grooming practices for depilatory purposes.⁵¹ Archaeological excavation of the Osor necropolis yielded 13 strigil specimens recovered from grave fill contexts.

Four graves (GR 44, GR 65, GR 89, and GR 165) yielded fragmentary bronze vessels of small dimensions, morphologically consistent with *aryballoi* (T2:2). These specimens constitute components of standard cosmetic-medicinal equipment utilized for bodily hygiene practices. Given their limited volumetric capacity, it can be reasonably inferred that these vessels contained pharmaceutical or cosmetic preparations and aromatic oils, functioning as integral components of body care and cleansing assemblages in conjunction with strigils.⁵²

Certain artifacts can be classified within the category of cosmetic-medicinal implements, including needles and cosmetic *spatulae*. A subset of needles (*acus*) was employed for probing and sondage procedures. Some specimens exhibit bulbous ends, while the shaft tapers distally, terminating in a pointed apex (T2:3-5).⁵³

Graves 61, 62, 79, and 89 yielded bronze bracelet specimens (*armillae*), all attributable to the typological category of bracelets with overlapping ends secured by threading (T2:6).

Grave 86 contained a bronze lamp with a handle executed in the form of an equine head. The lamp discus is delineated by a prominent ring, while the oil-filling aperture is similarly demarcated by a raised ring. The discus opens toward the nozzle via a channel incorporating an air vent perforation. The nozzle exhibits slight lateral expansion. The handle is configured

51 M. Bolla, A. Bounopane, 2010, 414.

52 A. Busuladžić, 2015, 182; A. Starac, 2022c, 35.

53 A. Busuladžić, 2015, 177.



Table 2 Selected metal and bone assemblages

as an equine head, with the neck featuring a small circular perforation. A projecting element with a circular aperture is executed on the horse's chin. The lamp is supported on an annular foot (T2:7a, 7b). A coin of Emperor Domitian was found in this grave.

An additional copper alloy lamp specimen documented as originating from a grave at Kavanela is preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Istria.⁵⁴

For certain finds it can be hypothesized that they constitute elements of wooden chests (*arca*) deposited in graves accompanying the deceased. Small-diameter circular rings were recovered from graves 44, 72, 111, 120, and from stratigraphic units SU 541 and SU 500. Wood-mounted rings functioned to secure loops for the insertion of leather straps, cordage, or textile, utilized for portage.⁵⁵ Similar finds are documented at the Marsovo polje necropolis in Pula.⁵⁶ Several graves yielded chains terminating in circular rings. Analogues are found in grave 63 at Marsovo polje in Pula.⁵⁷ Graves 6, 24, 71, 94 and 104 contained handle specimens. These handles were affixed to wooden lids by means of rings with elongated bifurcated arms, identical to those securing suspension chain assemblages⁵⁸ (T2:8, 9). Similar finds from the necropolis of Marsovo polje in Pula have been dated to 1st century.⁵⁹ The glass finds in grave 104 are dated to the end of the 1st and 2nd century, with a coin of emperor Domitian, dated to the second half of the 1st century.

Bone and Stone Finds

The term *acus* designates pointed implements, sewing needles, and hairpins (T2:10, 11).⁶⁰ The function of hairpins and needles has remained unchanged for centuries, and they represent some of the earliest invented artifacts of utilitarian and ornamental-utilitarian character, manufactured by specialized craftsmen designated as *acuarius* or *acutarius*.⁶¹ A total of eleven bone needle specimens were recovered, eight of which derive from funerary contexts (GR 43, GR 62, GR 81, GR 100, GR 158, GR 167, GR 174, and GR 195), while three originate from layers. Specimens of *pyxides*, i.e., round vessels with lids for storing ointments, cosmetics, and jewelry, were recovered from graves 61 and 81 (T2:12). Bone *pyxides* (*pyxides*, *narthecia*), cylindrical and often relief-decorated boxes with lids for creams, pigments, and various cosmetic preparations – were extensively utilized throughout the Roman Empire during the 1st-2nd centuries.⁶² The simplest bone *pyxides* from the 1st and 2nd centuries lack any ornamentation or feature only a series of incised or profiled rings on the body or base.⁶³ Analogies can be found in Iader,

54 A. Starac, 2022a, 142.

55 A. Starac, 2022b, 33.

56 A. Starac, 2022b, 34-36.

57 A. Starac, 2022b, cat. no. 37.

58 A. Starac, 2022b, 37.

59 A. Starac, 2022b, 37-38, cat. nos. 50-53

60 M. Kovač, 2017, 115.

61 M. Kovač, 2017, 143.

62 A. Starac, 2022b, 27.

63 A. Starac, 2022c, 28.

dated to the 1st century⁶⁴ and Salona that are dated by analogies to the third quarter of the 1st century. Similar finds are reported in present-day Hungary and Trier.⁶⁵

Among the objects that can be defined as medical or pharmaceutical equipment are stone spreading plates of rectangular form with beveled edges (fig 23). These were plates for spreading ointments. Additionally, they served as lids for metal boxes carried by physicians and pharmacists.⁶⁶ Two specimens of spreading plates were recovered from the Osor necropolis, in graves 111 and 173. Similar plate has been discovered in Sisak, the site of the Grain Warehouse, but dated broadly from 1st to 4th centuries.⁶⁷



Fig. 23 Stone spreading plate from grave 111

Numismatic Finds⁶⁸

From the total of 70 roman coins found, most of them, a total of 20 (29%) are dated to the reign of Tiberius. Followed by 11 coins (16%) struck during the reign of Claudius. Nine (13%) belong to the period of Caligula's rule, followed by seven coins (10%) of Domitian. Five coins (7%) belong to Trajan, four (6%) to Augustus and three (4 %) to Titus and Hadrian (and Sabina) respectively. One coin each belongs to Probus and Theodosius I. A total of six coins could not be determined, dated to the 1st and 4th/5th centuries. Out of the total of 70 coins dating to the Roman period, 55 were recovered from within funerary contexts.

64 K. A. Giunio, 2010, 92, cat. no. 124.

65 S. Ivčević, 2002, 333, cat. no. 13.

66 Z. Gregl, 1983, 178; A. Busuladžić, 2015, 179.

67 I. Bačani, *et al.* 2011, cat. no. 503; T. Tomaš Barišić, R. Škrkulja, 2021, 41, cat. no. 87.

68 The analysis of numismatic finds was carried out by Zrinka Ettinger Starčić from the Lošinj Museum and Luka Štefan from the Moneterra Museum in Zagreb whom we sincerely thank.

Concluding Remarks

Archaeological excavations conducted in 2022 examined the eastern margin of the western Osor necropolis. It was determined that the necropolis extended almost 400 m southward and followed the configuration of the coastline. Analysis of the movable finds established a temporal range of burials from the transition between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE through the mid-2nd century. Analysis of the ceramic material from the Osor necropolis indicates that the graves in which this material was recovered can be dated from the Augustan period through the first half of the 2nd century. A certain number of more or less devastated graves, which typically lack diagnostic fragments, are likely of similar dating, although given this fact they can only be attributed to the Roman period. The chronology of specific types or forms indicates that finds are more frequent from the Tiberian period onward. The earliest Roman graves belonging to the Augustan period are generally located in the northeastern section of the investigated area, closer to Kavanella, while later graves appear toward the southwestern section of the excavated area. The most abundant finds, comprising ceramic and vitreous assemblages, indicate that the majority were imported from northern Italian workshops, with a significantly smaller percentage attributable to other production centres, such as Gaul in the case of select ceramic specimens, or the Levant and the eastern Mediterranean in the case of vitreous finds. This substantiates a robust economic nexus with the western Adriatic littoral, as a consequence of the profound integration of the Kvarner archipelago into the Roman socio-economic and political orbit during the early Imperial period. The increase in burials during the earlier phase of interment can be correlated with the development of the town and its acquisition of Latin *municipium* status under Emperor Augustus. Due to the occurrence of the gentile name *Iulius*, it is held that civic rights were obtained during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius.⁶⁹ Such legal transformations were a consequence of urban development, which was reflected in population growth during the 1st century. Although it is held that the traditional mode of burial during the first centuries of Roman rule was cremation of the deceased, the existence of inhumation burials rich in grave goods confirms that both practices were employed simultaneously, as is known from the cases in Iader.⁷⁰ Within the grave assemblages, the most recent numismatic finds do not extend beyond the reign of Emperor Hadrian, which accords with other recovered movable finds. This raises the question of burial locations for Osor's inhabitants during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, given that no burials from this period were identified within the excavated area. By the mid-2nd century, the necropolis reached the southern extent, so it can be only presumed that the burials continued to the west from the excavated area, so the excavated area represents the earliest phase of the cemetery of Roman Apsorus.

69 A. Starac, 2000, 79.

70 K. A. Giunio, T. Alihodžić, 2019, 78.

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Late Antique Connectivity and Trade Patterns of the Kvarner Region Evidence from the Settlement in Podšilo Bay on the Island of Rab

Since 2017 multidisciplinary geo-archaeological research within the large Roman rural complex at Podšilo Bay on the Lopar peninsula on Rab island (NE Adriatic, Kvarner Gulf) has been conducted. The last phases of settlement within the complex have yielded an array of fine and cooking wares, and amphorae, which will be tackled in this contribution as they provide contextual evidence of the material culture in use during the 5th and 6th centuries CE, and perhaps after. While showing evidence of the continuity of Mediterranean trade in foodstuffs and tableware, a new inflow of goods of regional, Adriatic provenience can be suggested thanks to the analyses of coarse wares. The pottery evidence will be contextualized to better understand the use of the site in these last phases, and to glimpse at the everyday and mundane of the population inhabiting this area of the island. A look at the material culture from the wider Northeastern Adriatic region will allow us to determine whether we might suggest the emergence of a regional pattern of late antique connectivity and how it related to the adjacent regions, especially the Northwestern and Upper Adriatic, but also the remaining coastal part of the province Dalmatia.

Keywords: Kvarner, late antique rural settlement, late antique pottery, late antique connectivity

Introduction

The island of Rab is located in the NE Adriatic's Kvarner Gulf, that is the *Sinus Flanaticus* of the Roman sources.¹ Situated just a few miles from the coast, the island is mid-sized compared

¹ Last published in M. Vitelli Casella, 2021, 42, 181, 203.

to others within the Kvarner archipelago. A high ridge forms the main anticline of the island, composed of carbonates, as opposed to the three valleys which are mostly composed of flysh and alluvial deposits, just as is the peninsula of Lopar. A mild climate with hot summers, plenty of water springs and abundance of flat terrain ensure favourable conditions for agriculture, while the slopes and plateaus at higher altitudes are traditionally used as pastures.

In Antiquity the island belonged to the area traditionally ascribed to the Iron Age Liburnian communities,² though very little data is available for this timeframe, apart from sporadic mentions in historic sources,³ while a particular, regional cultural group seems to have developed already in the late Bronze/early Iron Age.⁴ The onset of Roman rule within the region can be followed at least since the late 2nd century BCE,⁵ while the municipalization of the main island's settlement, Arba, seems to have occurred in Augustan times or in any case in the first half of the 1st century CE,⁶ though data is very scant.

Reconnaissance and survey campaigns carried out on the island in the last decade identified a network of rural and coastal sites dating to the Roman period.⁷ These can be roughly interpreted as rural and coastal *villae* and/or farms, some with indicators of more opulent features of their *pars urbana*, while very little is known about their economic activities.⁸ Further research at selected sites allowed not only to better define their architecture, but also to collect stratigraphic and material culture data, especially regarding the last phases of use of these complexes.

One such site was identified in Podšilo Bay on the Lopar Peninsula, in the northern part of the island (fig. 1). Research at Podšilo started in 2009 with the identification and excavation of a Roman pottery kiln used to produce building materials, mainly *tegulae* and *imbrices*.⁹ Subsequent surveys and geophysical prospections identified several areas with the remains of subsurface features, that is, remains of ancient architecture,¹⁰ another kiln,¹¹ and eroded archaeological materials. Three such areas, named Complexes 1-3, were selected as locations for the excavation of trial trenches (fig. 1).

Complex 1 was identified on the northern slopes of the bay, on a flat terrace whose southern edge is characterized by eroded scarps on the bottom of which plenty of redeposited archaeological material was collected. The results of geophysical prospections revealed a

2 D. Glogović, 1989.

3 Last published in M. Vitelli Casella, 2021; P. Androić Gračanin, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2024.

4 M. Blečić Kavur, 2021.

5 F. Milivojević, 2021, 89-92.

6 M. Vitelli Casella, 2021, 231-234.

7 Data stems from previous excavations (e.g. M. Jurković, T. Turković, 2019 with earlier bibliography; G.P. Brogiolo *et al.*, 2017), and the results of field research carried out within the framework of the project "Archaeological topography of the island of Rab", conducted through a cooperation of the Institute of Archaeology in Zagreb and the Institute of Archaeology of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (led by A. Konestra and F. Welc).

8 See e.g. A. Konestra, G. Lipovac Vrkljan, F. Welc, 2022 with earlier bibliography.

9 G. Lipovac Vrkljan, B. Šiljeg, 2012.

10 F. Welc *et al.*, 2019; A. Konestra *et al.*, 2020, 233-237.

11 F. Welc, 2018.

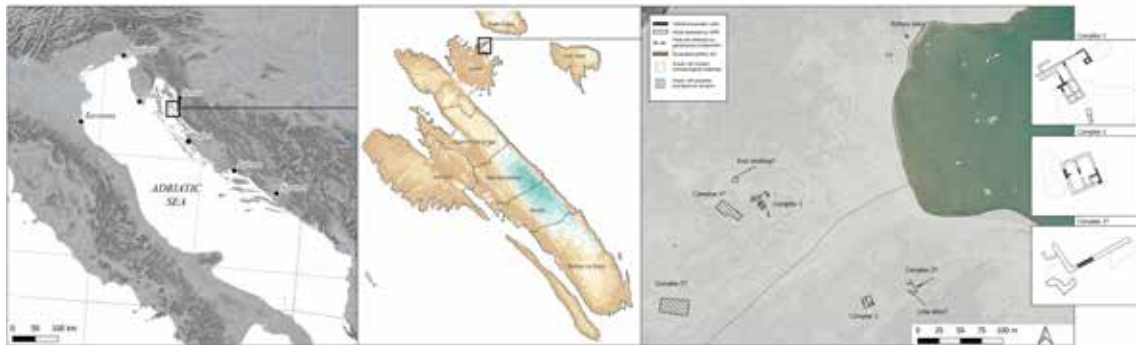


Fig. 1 The Adriatic with marked location of the island of Rab, its close-up and the topography of Podšilo Bay



Fig. 2 Layout of the trenches in Complexes 1 and 2, and continuation of the walls as reconstructed on the bases of geophysical prospections

building with a central area, likely a courtyard, surrounded by several rooms and an additional wing extending to the east. Two trenches were dug to explore the eastern wing of the complex and its central part. In all cases, shallow stratigraphy was recognized, along with walls mostly preserved with just a few rows of stone blocks of their elevation.¹² Better preserved architecture was unearthed in the adjacency of a raised floor, in the central part of the complex. In several spaces differently preserved remains of mortar floors were discovered, including the floor lining of a small vat identified in the so-called eastern wing.¹³ Stratigraphy is related to the last phases of use of the area and can be associated with a series of postholes, pits, a hearth and other features possibly associated with the use of fire. The postholes are, in some cases, dug directly into the former floor (fig. 2). Along with several categories of finds, the layers yielded wasters related to iron smithing.¹⁴

Complexes 2 and 3 are located in the southern part of the bay on a small terrace (Complex 2) and on eroded slopes further east (Complex 3) (fig. 1). In the first case, a square, 10x10 m building was recognized thanks to geophysical prospection. Excavations revealed the foundations of the external walls and one partition wall, while shallow stratigraphy can again be associated with postholes and a large rubbish (?) pit sealed with stones and *spolia* of a column base (fig. 2). The layout of nearby Complex 3 could not be delineated with precision, due to severe erosion and subsequent land clearing. Anyhow, several walls could be detected by geophysical prospection, and other features possibly indicating hearths or other features related to the use of fire. Excavations within a small trench brought to light a pit with stone and sediment infill and, stratigraphically below, a layer of an earlier floor preparation (mortar with crushed ceramics) and a substantial quantity of loose stone mosaic *tesserae*. Associated with these were sherds of Aegean thin-walled ware and a coin of emperor Trajan. Otherwise, no such early finds were found during excavations, and just few sherds were recovered during survey (e.g. one sherd of Pannonian slipped ware),¹⁵ giving the impression that the buildings were already abandoned at the time of setup of the wooden dwellings, and that the area was cleared of the deposited rubble, leaving no stratigraphic evidence of the first phases of occupation. Similarly, a substantial quantity of stone rubble was uncovered only within a room located in the southern part of trench 2 in Complex 1, where it might have been deposited for levelling purposes. Without entering the matter of in-depth interpretation of structural reuse, which might however point to a short-term, perhaps seasonal reoccupation of the site, on this occasion the pottery finds from the late phases of use of the complexes will be discussed in a regional, Adriatic context. These are mainly associated with finds of late antique glass and several coins mostly datable to the 4th century, but with the most recent belonging to the second half of the 6th century.¹⁶ Therefore, the excavated layers are interpreted as belonging

12 See A. Konestra *et al.*, 2020, fig. 5.

13 *Ibid.*, fig. 4.

14 *Ibid.*; Konestra *et al.*, 2022.

15 I. Ožanić Roguljić, A. Konestra, 2017.

16 Numismatic finds are still under restoration, upon which a more in-depth study will be presented in a dedicated publication. The latest coins belong to Justinian and Athalarich, and we would like to thank dr. Mato Ilkić from the Department of Archaeology of the University of Zadar for his preliminary assessment.

to the phase of abandonment of the last phase of (re)use of the area, which in all probability lasted for a short, yet to be precisely determined time frame.

Fine Wares and Amphorae

Identified fine wares and amphorae are mostly of north African, Tunisian origin, with few exceptions originating from the eastern Mediterranean. Most notably, African Red Slipped ware (ARS) (fig. 3; pl. 1.1-10) is present with several types spanning the second half/end of the 4th and the first half of the 5th century, the earliest being Hayes 50B and 61A, the latter type being also present with the slightly later variants A/B2, B1 and B2 dated to the first half of the 5th century.¹⁷ Along with these, and dated to a roughly similar timeframe, types Hayes 67B, 73A and 91B have been identified, while late 5th century ARS is present with Hayes 67C and 81B types.¹⁸ Much later, with a date within the second half of the 6th – beginning of the 7th century is an almost complete Hayes 99B/C bowl. Phocaeen red slipped ware (PRSW) is present with only two individuals, both belonging to Hayes Form 2, but one to a small variant of this plate (fig. 3; pl. 1.11).¹⁹

Tunisian amphorae present similar, though also somewhat later chronologies (fig. 3; pl. 2). The earliest type is Africana IIIB/Keay 25, var. R dated to the 4th century, followed by slightly later Africana IIIC/Keay 25, var. E and G, dated in the late 4th – first half of the 5th century, and the Spatheion 1/Keay 26, var. F dated in the first half of the 5th century.²⁰ Type Keay 35A can be dated within the 5th century.²¹ Much later are types Keay 61B²² and the globular amphora Bonifay type 64,²³ the former dated in the late 6th – first half of the 7th century, and the latter in the advanced 7th century. Possibly, but the rim sherd is very small, a Sidi Jdidi type 1 amphorae is also present, dated in the 7th century or possibly somewhat earlier within the 6th.²⁴ A specific, recently identified type of Tunisian amphorae seems to be also present within the assemblage (pl. 2.6). The type has been defined on the bases of a substantial quantity of vessels within the deposits of warehouse 17 of the port of Classe as a transitional type between Keay 40 and 57, while at Marseille it was considered residual, and connected to early Roman amphorae.²⁵ Interestingly, since warehouse 17 at Classe burned within the end of the 5th and the early 6th century,²⁶ this is the timeframe when this type certainly circulated.

17 J. W. Hayes, 1972, 69-73, 100-101; M. Bonifay, 2004, 167-171.

18 J. W. Hayes, 1972, 112-116, 128; M. Bonifay, 2004, 171-173.

19 J. W. Hayes, 1972, 327-329.

20 M. Bonifay, 2004, 119-122, 125.

21 *Ibid.*, 134-135.

22 *Ibid.*, 2004, 140-141; M. Bonifay, 2005, 455-456.

23 M. Bonifay, 2004, 153.

24 *Ibid.*, 2004, 143-146.

25 E. Cirelli, 2014, 542, fig. 3; M. Moliner *et al.* 2007, fig. 6. no. 6.

26 R. Baldassari, E. Cirelli, 2009, 925.

	Chronology									
	300-350	350-400	400-450	450-500	500-550	550-600	600-650	650-700		
Amphorae										
Africana IIIB / Keay 25, var. R										
Africana IIIC / Keay 25, var. E										
Africana IIIC / Keay 25, var. G										
Spatheion 1 / Keay 26, var. F										
Keay 35A										
Keay 40-57										
Keay 61 B										
Globulaire 2 (Amphore type 64)										
Sidi Jdidi 1										
LR 3										
Fine wares										
Hayes 50B										
Hayes 61A										
Hayes 61A/B2										
Hayes 61B1										
Hayes 61B2										
Hayes 67B										
Hayes 67C										
Hayes 73A										
Hayes 81B										
Hayes 91B										
Hayes 99										
LRC Small Form 2										
LRC Form 2?										
Cooking wares										
Hayes 23										
Hayes 197										
Hayes 196										
C.A.T.H.M.A. 5										
Classe										
NI Burnished										

- entire period
- part of the period

Fig. 3 Chronology of the pottery types attested per class, subdivided in 50-year ranges

Few undiagnostic sherds most likely belong to Late Roman 3 amphorae, covering the large timeframe of the 4th–7th century,²⁷ while until now no other eastern Mediterranean amphorae were conclusively identified within the deposits.

Cooking Wares

The earliest occurrences of cooking ware²⁸ are related to African products (ACW), that is 4th century Hayes 23 pan,²⁹ Hayes 197 casserole³⁰ and Hayes 196 lid,³¹ which can be dated to the second half of the 4th – first half of the 5th century (fig. 3; pl. 3.1-4). Due to abraded surfaces of the sherds it is hard to estimate the production area of these vessels, though most seem to belong to the *orlo annerito* (ACW C/B) production of the Byzacena.³² The importation of cooking ware from the eastern Mediterranean is also attested to, but with only one type of casserole, that is type Fulford 35/ C.A.T.H.M.A 5, dated to the mid-5th century (fig. 3; pl. 3.5).³³

Among the cooking vessels of regional Adriatic provenance (fig. 3; pl. 4), rounded pots with more or less everted rim and most probably flat bottom (at least 18 vessels)³⁴ are by far the most numerous group. Seven sherds of bases were found³⁵ and all are flat. The assemblage of Adriatic coarse ware includes also five bowl sherds (two of them can be considered a pan or a casserole) with straight or slightly convex walls and a straight or inturned rim,³⁶ one sherd of a flat shaped baking plate with rounded lip,³⁷ ten sherds of baking lids³⁸ and four of lids.³⁹

Some of the coarse ware sherds from Podšilo, namely those of a biconical pot (pl. 4.1) and of a bowl/pan with inturned rim (pl. 4.2),⁴⁰ can be classified as North Italic burnished ware (*ceramiche grezze lisciate a stecca*).⁴¹ It is a very homogeneous pottery group, consisting mainly of biconical cooking pots, pans with inturned rims and casseroles characterised by burnishing of the outer surface of the vessel.⁴² This pottery was most likely produced in the Central and Eastern Po Valley, and widely distributed between the 4th and 6th centuries.⁴³

27 D. Pieri, 2005, 94-101.

28 See B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022 for a more detailed analyses.

29 J. W. Hayes, 1972, 45-48; M. Bonifay, 2004, 211-213.; B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. no. 30.

30 J. W. Hayes, 1972, 209; M. Bonifay, 2004, 225-226; B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. no. 32.

31 J. W. Hayes, 1972, 208-209; M. Bonifay, 2004, 225-226.; B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. no. 40.

32 M. Bonifay, 2004, 67.

33 M. Fulford, 1984, 187-189, fig. 70; C.A.T.H.M.A., 1991, 35, fig. 17; B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. no. 24.

34 E.g. B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. nos. 3-18, 20-21.

35 *Ibid.*, cat. nos. 25-27.

36 *Ibid.*, cat. nos. 28-29.

37 B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. no. 33.

38 E.g. B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. nos. 34-37.

39 *Ibid.*, 2022, cat. nos. 38-39.

40 *Ibid.*, 2022, cat. no. 29; A. Riccato, 2022, 38.

41 A. Riccato, 2022.

42 *Ibid.*, 27.

43 A. Riccato, 2022, 27.

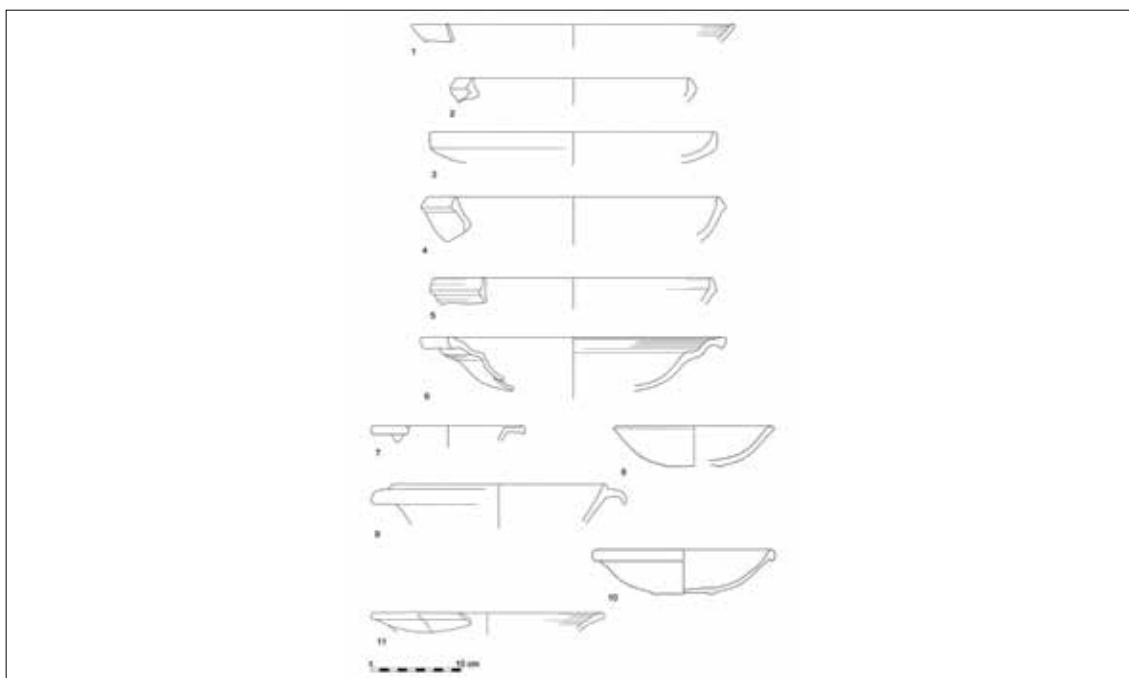


Plate 1 Fine wares: 1 – Hayes 50B, 2 – Hayes 61A; 3 – Hayes 61A/B2; 4 – Hayes 61B1; 5 – Hayes 61B2; 6 – Hayes 67B; 7 – Hayes 73A; 8 – Hayes 81B; 9 – Hayes 91B; 10 – Hayes 99B/C; 11 – Phocaean Red slipped ware (PRSW) Form 2

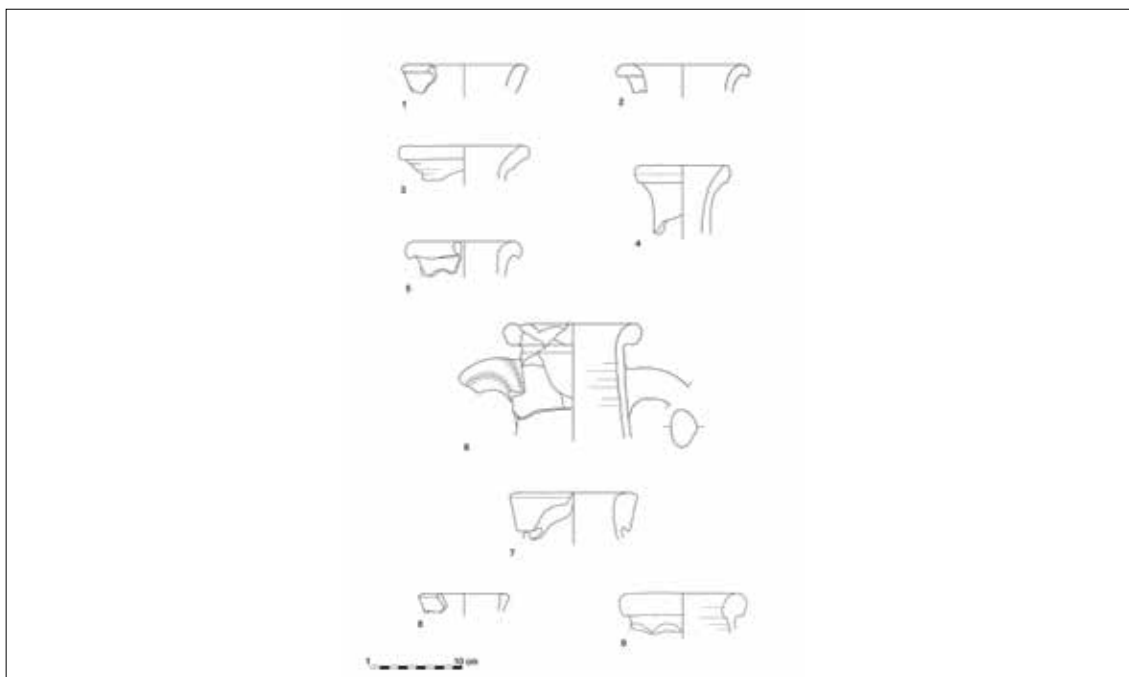


Plate 2 Amphorae: 1 – Africana IIIB/Keay 25, var. R; 2 – Africana IIIC/Keay 25, var. E; 3 – Africana IIIC/Keay 25, var. G; 4 – Spatheion 1/Keay 26, var. F; 5 – Keay 35A; 6 – Keay 40-57; 7 – Keay 61 B; 8 – Globulaire 2 (Amphore type 64); 9 – Sidi Jdidi 1

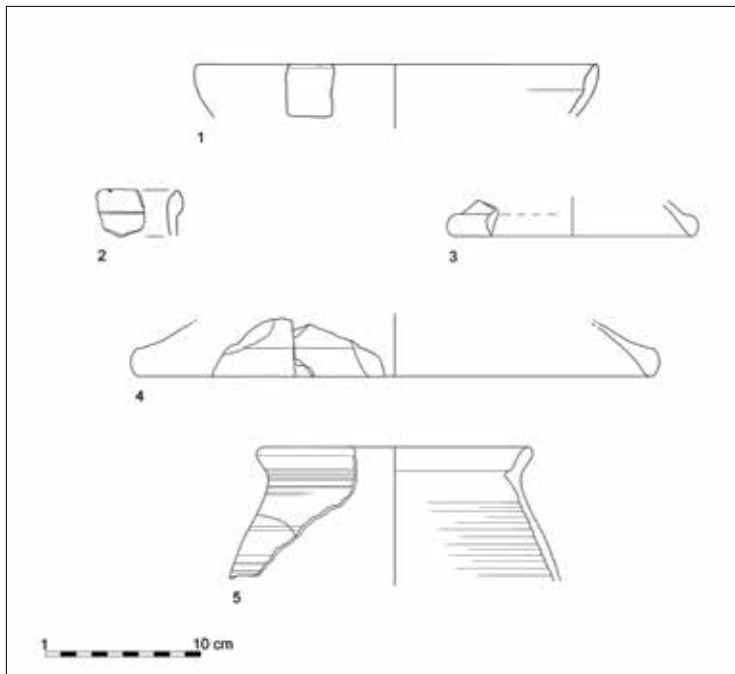


Plate 3 Imported cooking wares:
1 – Hayes 23 pan;
2 – Hayes 197 casserole;
3-4 – Hayes 196 lid;
5 – C.A.T.H.M.A 5 casserole

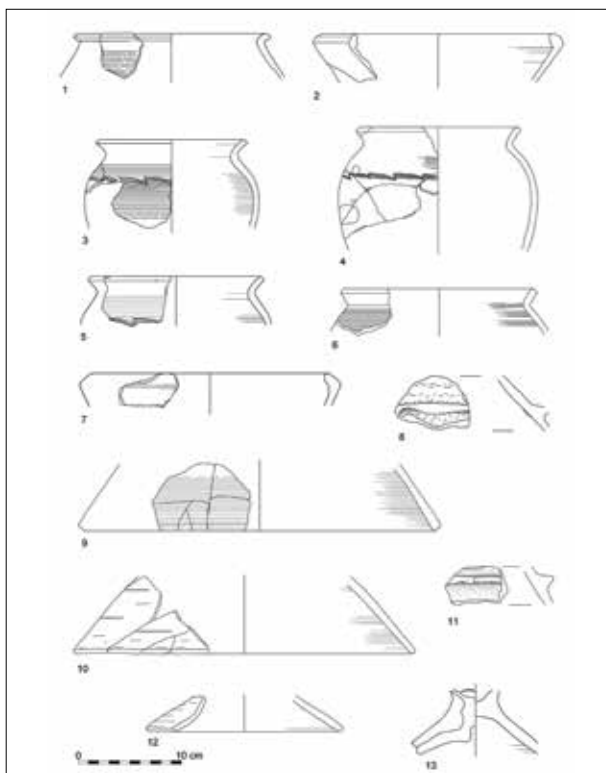


Plate 4 Adriatic coarse ware: 1-2 – North Italic
burnished ware; 3-6 – Classe type pots;
7 – Classe type casserole; 8 – Classe type
baking lid; 9-10 – baking lids; 11 – Classe
type baking lid; 12-13 – Classe type lids

Far more numerous, however, is coarse ware which can be categorized as Classe type pottery.⁴⁴ This ware includes mainly ovoid pots with flat base, everted rim and flat, oblique lip, very often decorated on the shoulder with multiple wavy lines (wavy band). Furthermore, it includes casseroles with inturned rim, baking lids in the shape of a truncated cone with convex walls, a flat top and side lobes, and lids with conical profile and a central knob.⁴⁵ This ware was widely distributed in the northern Adriatic region between the 6th and 8th centuries.⁴⁶ At Podšilo, ten fragments of pots (pl. 4.3-6),⁴⁷ one fragment of a bowl/casserole with inturned rim (pl. 4.7),⁴⁸ five fragments of baking lids (pl. 4.8; 4.11)⁴⁹ and two fragments of lids (pl. 4.12-13) were classified into Classe type pottery.

The assignment to the Classe type pottery is not only due to the similarity of forms and decoration, but also to the clear resemblance observed between the fabrics of the Podšilo vessels and the fabrics of the Classe type pottery from Italian sites, including Classe,⁵⁰ Potentia/Porto Recanati,⁵¹ and Canusium/Canosa San Pietro.⁵² According to Patterson,⁵³ Verreyke,⁵⁴ and Gliozzo *et al.*⁵⁵ Classe type pottery is characterised by a fabric with abundant temper, consisting mainly of broken or crushed calcite rhombohedra and limestone grains with a size of 0.3–2.2 mm. Other grains of the temper, such as quartz grains or mica flakes, are much smaller and less frequent.

Macroscopic analysis of the vessels from Podšilo assigned to the Classe type showed that their fabric is also characterised by a polymodal grain size distribution. The most abundant grains are white, semi-transparent and greyish, equant and elongate, angular – sub-rounded, numerous with a platy habit and a glassy lustre (most probably calcite – tests with HCl solution carried out on white ‘calcite’ grains showed that these grains foam strongly). The size of macroscopically observed grains is in most cases 0.1–2.5 mm, in a few cases the largest grains are up to 4 mm long. In the fabric were also observed sparse pale brown, pale yellow, light grey, and mat grains, sub-angular – sub-rounded, equant – elongate, 0.5–2.0 mm in size.⁵⁶ In the case of several vessels, a few very small mica flakes were also detected. Thus, we have a very high correspondence with the fabric of pottery defined as Classe type vessels from Italy.

44 S. Gelichi, 1998.

45 *Ibid.*, 481.

46 E. Cirelli, 2015, 18.

47 B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. nos. 13-14.

48 *Ibid.*, cat. no. 28.

49 *Ibid.*, cat. no. 37.

50 H. Patterson, 1998, 489-490.

51 H. Verreyke, 2007, 481.

52 E. Gliozzo *et al.*, 2024, 12.

53 H. Patterson, 1998, 489-490.

54 H. Verreyke, 2007, 481.

55 E. Gliozzo *et al.*, 2024, 12.

56 B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, 96.

Discussion

Similarly composed pottery assemblages are typical of the Adriatic area in the relevant timeframe, finding analogies at several sites of the Northeastern, mid-Western and Upper Adriatic, but also presenting certain peculiarities. In fact, if the influx of fine ware at Ravenna is observed, ARS seems to dominate the assemblages at least until the mid-6th century, when PRSW seems to become slightly more numerous to then again being overtaken by Tunisian imports.⁵⁷ A similar general trend was observed elsewhere in the western Adriatic as well.⁵⁸ Regionally, though data is still scant, revealing a similar dominance of ARS as opposed to PRSW.⁵⁹ Concerning ARS typology, Hayes 50 and 61 with variants, are by far the most numerous vessels recovered at the so-called Castrum on the Brijuni island,⁶⁰ as well as at several Roman rural sites on mainland Istria (e.g. Hayes 50: Loron,⁶¹ Fizine,⁶² Školarice,⁶³ Hayes 61: Školarice,⁶⁴ Fizine,⁶⁵ Dragonera,⁶⁶ Barbariga,⁶⁷ Marić Bay⁶⁸), and for e.g. at Aquileia⁶⁹ and Ravenna.⁷⁰ However, it is interesting to note that at Podšilo, though settling seems to occupy the latter part of the 6th century, the latest shapes of ARS are rare (only one Hayes 99 vessel), although being present in the Northern and Upper Adriatic (e.g. Veštar,⁷¹ Koper⁷² and Piran⁷³). Apart from the two above mentioned vessels of PRSW, no other fine ware occurs at the site, and in general on the eastern Adriatic coast, as opposed to the western one, where various red-coated classes were locally produced.

Amphorae, or rather the goods shipped within them, seem to mostly originate from Tunisia, which is not fully in line with the regional framework.⁷⁴ All variants of the large cylindrical Africana III amphorae are common throughout the Adriatic,⁷⁵ just as are the so-called *spatheia*, smaller cylindrical amphorae dated to a slightly later timeframe.⁷⁶ Other

57 E. Cirelli, 2017.

58 E.g. Apulia: C. De Mitri, R. Goffredo, 2021; C. De Mitri, 2023, 380.

59 E.g. at Senj: A. Konestra, V. Glavaš, 2024, 34-36. Generally, see in: P. M. Pröttel, 1996.

60 P. M. Pröttel, 1996, 272-301.

61 P. Maggi, 2001.

62 P. M. Pröttel, 1996, 240; A. Gaspari *et al.*, 2007.

63 T. Žerjal, 2020, 187-188.

64 *Ibid.*, 187-188.

65 P. M. Pröttel, 1996, 240; A. Gaspari *et al.*, 2007.

66 A. Starac, 2010, 112-113.

67 P. M. Pröttel, 1996, 32.

68 J. Višnjić, L. Bekić, I. Pleština, 2010.

69 P. Ventura, E. Zullini, 2012-2013; D. Dobrev, 2023, 299-300.

70 E. Cirelli, E. Lo Mele, 2010, 41.

71 M. Pešić, 2014.

72 P. M. Pröttel, 1996, 234-238; R. Cunja, 1996, 94-101.

73 V. Vidrih Perko, 1995; P. M. Pröttel, 1996, 239-204.

74 E.g. E. Cirelli, 2017, fig. 11.

75 See e.g. R. Auriemma, E. Quiri, 2007, 33-37; J. Višnjić, 2009; M. Bueno, M. Novello, V. Mantovani, 2012, 161; M. Pešić, 2019, 207-212; D. Dobrev, S. Zago, 2021, 324; A. Konestra, V. Glavaš, 2024, 62-63.

76 See e.g. R. Auriemma, E. Quiri, 2007, J. Višnjić, 2009, 127; E. Cirelli, 2014, 542 with earlier bibliography; M. Pešić, 2019, 216-218; A. Konestra, V. Glavaš, 2024, 63-64.

types, while more sporadic, do occur on both the eastern and western Adriatic,⁷⁷ though the above mentioned rare types should be highlighted.⁷⁸ The thus far small quantities of eastern Mediterranean amphorae might be a consequence of the current state of research, although it seems that regionally they had a stable distribution during a chronologically wider timespan but never reaching a significant peak, while Tunisian amphorae started to be more substantially imported from the 3rd century onwards.⁷⁹

Coarse ware is the least studied category, at least as far as the eastern Adriatic is concerned. Just as it can be observed for other pottery classes identified at Podšilo, cooking wares also originated from Tunisian workshops. While some might be residual (Hayes 23 rim stems from a topsoil layer), generally their chronology is similar to that of the other African vessels. ACW is common throughout the Adriatic, and in earlier periods it was flanked by Aegean Cooking Wares⁸⁰ and in some areas, mainly the Upper and western Adriatic, locally produced cooking wares.⁸¹ Podšilo, but also data from the wider region, seem to point to a lack of locally produced cooking wares,⁸² not only in the timeframe under study, but also previously, and this is backed by the repertoire of the only identified pottery workshop in the Kvarner area located at Crikvenica.⁸³

As for the most numerous cooking wares, the data gathered at Podšilo allows us to link most of it to imported wares produced most likely in Italy or the Upper Adriatic area. As mentioned above, two coarse ware fragments can be classified as examples of North Italic Burnished Ware,⁸⁴ which was most likely produced in the Po Valley between the 4th and 6th centuries. And in turn, as many as 18 vessels can be attributed to Classe type pottery, which was most probably produced in the Ravenna region from at least the 6th to the mid-8th century.⁸⁵ Therefore, the material from Podšilo shows a switch to imports of Adriatic productions at least from the 5th century onwards, when ACW was not present on the market anymore. An upsurge of these products was noticed in other Adriatic areas as well, where they mark a turn to locally produced vessels or short-range commerce of cooking ware.⁸⁶ North Italic Burnished Ware is most common at sites in the Po Valley and northern Italy, but it is also found in the Marche region,⁸⁷ in western Slovenia and Istria (map 1).⁸⁸ Examples of Classe type pottery are found in large numbers in the Italian regions of Marche, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto.⁸⁹ On the western

77 T. Bezecky, 2019, 207.

78 E.g. E. Cirelli, 2014, 542; Pešić, 2019.

79 Cf. A. Konestra, V. Glavaš, 2024, 79-80, fig. 4.

80 *Ibid.*, 43-54.

81 E.g. D. Dobrev, A. Riccato, M. Trivini Bellini, 2018.

82 E.g. A. Konestra, V. Glavaš, 2024, 39-54.

83 I. Ožanić Roguljić, 2012.

84 B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, cat. no. 29; A. Riccato, 2022, 38.

85 E. Cirelli, 2015, 18.

86 E. Cirelli, 2011; A. Riccato, 2024, 145-151, fig. 5, 12.

87 H. Verreyke, P. De Paepe, 2009.

88 A. Riccato, 2022, 38.

89 E. Gliozzo *et al.*, 2024, 5.

Adriatic coast, however, they are found as far south as northern Apulia,⁹⁰ while on the eastern Adriatic coast they are very abundant in Istria⁹¹ and the Kvarner, while single examples have also been recorded in central Dalmatia, north of Salona (map 2).⁹²

Examining the pottery import shifts observed at Podšilo on the small scale, reveals a chronological evolution (fig. 3) that can be compared to the broader regional and supra-regional context of the Adriatic. In fact, while well within the 5th century imports stem from the then most active Mediterranean producers of both pottery and foodstuffs, late in the century and in the following decades, a shift to a more localized, Adriatic circulation of goods can be proposed. This is particularly visible when observing coarse wares, while fine wares and seemingly certain foodstuffs seem to be still sourced from a wider area.

Nevertheless, concerning the latter classes, two issues emerge; one concerns the chronology of the attested materials, and the other is related to the modes of acquisition of the imported products, either direct or mediated. As mentioned, some of the identified types are much older than the overall deposits they were found within. A possible explanation is a locally prolonged use of the vessels, especially if a short-term or seasonal settling of the site is considered, which might signal reuse as opposed to targeted market acquisition.⁹³ On the other hand, prolonged use of both fine wares and amphorae has been noticed elsewhere in the Adriatic as well.⁹⁴ The best example is that of the previously mentioned warehouse at the port of Classe. There, certain amphorae can be considered as belonging to the same chronological horizon, while within the same assemblage a substantial quantity of earlier vessels was discovered, indicating that these might have circulated for a long time as reused containers.⁹⁵ Therefore, their utility in the reconstruction of commerce is doubtful as the origin of their last cargo is unknown.⁹⁶ Similarly, the chronology of their production should not be considered as dating evidence for their use and deposition.⁹⁷ A prolonged duration of use of fine wares should also be considered.⁹⁸

Regardless of these problems that should be addressed by a contextual, stratigraphic analyses of the assemblages and a regional diachronic perspective, evidence from cooking wares seems to place Kvarner within a northern Adriatic trade network. This network can be observed starting from the 4th (?) – 5th century, as reflected by the distribution zone of North Italic burnished ware (map 1), which then became fully apparent in the dense distribution network of Classe type pottery (map 2). It can be stated that for the vast majority of coarse ware of regional Adriatic origin from Podšilo, analogies can easily be found in Istria and in the

90 E. Gliozzo *et al.*, 2024.

91 E.g. P. Ruffieux, 2010, 260, pl. 2.

92 E.g. B. Maletić, 2021, 111, cat. no. 38.

93 See J. T. Peña, 2007, 63 for the possible ways of amphorae reuse.

94 Recently proposed later dating of certain types should also be considered, see G. D. R. Sanders, 2020.

95 E. Cirelli, 2014, 542.

96 *Ibid.*, 545.

97 *Ibid.*

98 C. De Mitri, R. Goffredo, 2021, 135. For the duration of use of Roman pottery vessels see e.g. J. T. Peña, 2007, 58, 331; R. Willet, J. Poblome, 2015, 139–140.

Italian regions of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna.⁹⁹ This is completely opposite if compared with the contemporary pottery distribution in the south-eastern Adriatic, for which Narona offers a good starting point. Occurring there in large numbers are globular pots with sharp internal break towards the body and everted, narrowing rim, and bowls with long, inturned, thickened rim,¹⁰⁰ which find analogies almost exclusively within the region (e.g. at Ošlje-Gradac¹⁰¹ and Mogorjelo¹⁰²). At the same time, the pot types prevalent in the northern part of the eastern Adriatic or imported from northern Italy seem to be absent at these sites. This fact has led researchers to hypothesize a local pottery workshop or workshops in the Narona region, catering to the needs of the local market.¹⁰³

Finally, the analysis of the assemblages from Podšilo indicates constant contact with the Adriatic market, either multidirectional, concerning the acquisition of fine wares and foodstuffs, or through a direct Northwestern connection through which coarse ware was acquired. Possibly, it is through this latter channel that all pottery was sourced, through a system of small scale traffics originating in the main coastal hubs of the Northwestern Adriatic, from where reused containers and stocked fine wares were redistributed within the whole region. The pronounced difference with the distribution of cooking wares in the central and southern Adriatic, and which might also concern other thus far poorly studied pottery classes, would seem to point in such a direction.

Conclusions

The here dealt with, overall small pottery assemblage stemming from late phases of reuse of a Roman rural site (tentatively a villa) opened up several interpretational problems. Firstly, a chronological discrepancy between some of the types of all pottery classes led to the assumption that old and possibly reused vessels were used at the site, and that such material possibly circulated in the market of the Kvarner in the late 5th, but more probably 6th – 7th century. From a methodological perspective it alerts us once again to carefully consider pottery as dating evidence for the phases of use and abandonment of a site, and to consider the material contextually, that is to study all evidence along with stratigraphy and other archaeological indicators. It also indicates that while Mediterranean imports with well-defined typo-chronologies do provide information on dating and goods circulation, they are perhaps not the best on-site dating evidence, thus a turn to the humbler coarse ware can provide a better framework for both issues. Precisely this class enabled us to discuss the Kvarner within Adriatic goods circulation and to propose its insertion within a northern Adriatic market that will continue to develop in the next centuries¹⁰⁴ and whose main pole of attraction and

99 B. Nowacki, A. Konestra, F. Welc, 2022, 104-112.

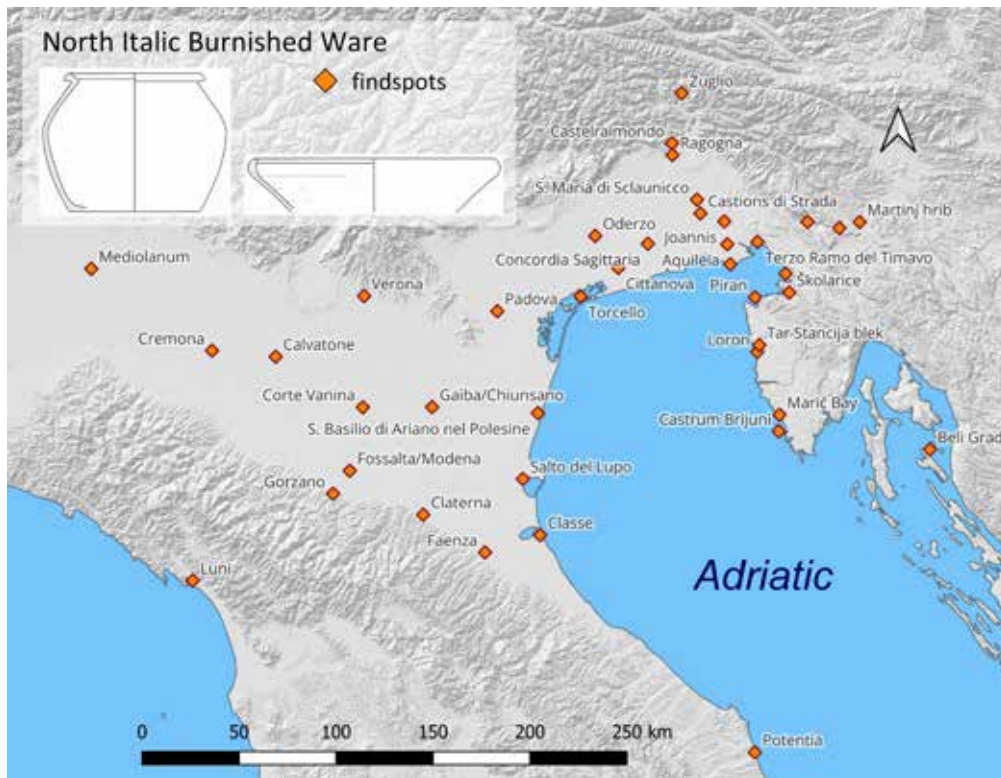
100 E.g. J. Mardešić, T. Šalov, 2002.

101 A. Karađole, N. Grbić, 2022.

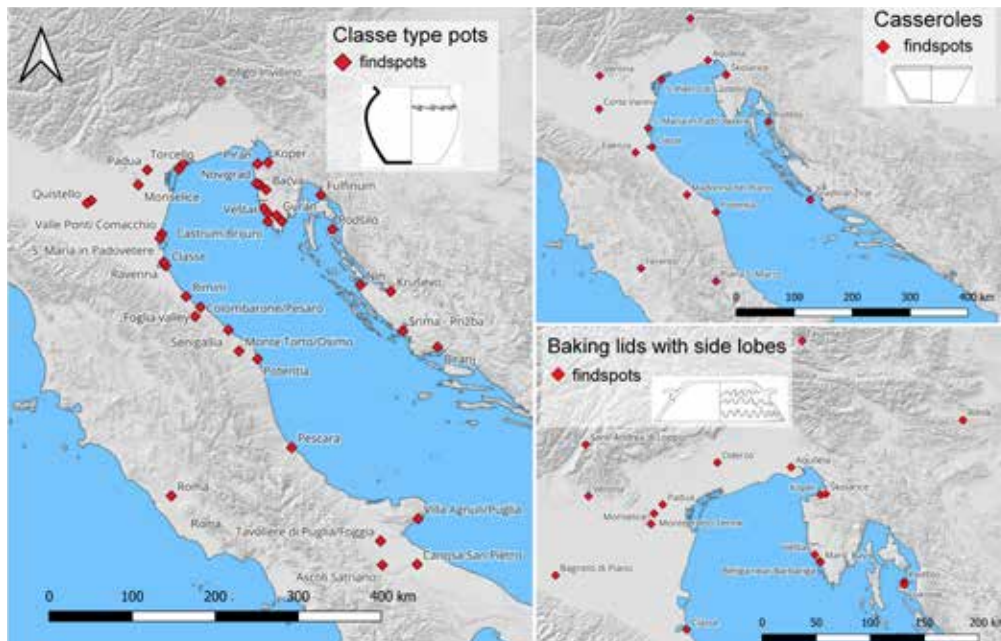
102 I. Čremošnik, 1952.

103 A. Karađole, N. Grbić, 2022, 171.

104 R. Hodges, 2012, 230-234, 12.



Map 1 Distribution of North Italic burnished ware in the Adriatic



Map 2 Distribution of Classe type pottery: pots, lids and baking lids

distribution hub in the here analysed timeframe was Ravenna with its ports,¹⁰⁵ from where, possibly through a system of small scale redistribution and cabotage, both imported and locally produced goods were shipped to the eastern Adriatic as well.

Such considerations should be kept in mind not only during the analyses of stratigraphically excavated sites, but especially in the interpretation of legacy data stemming from older excavations, and when analysing surface finds. While more work is required to understand some of the differences noted in the pottery assemblages of the Kvarner when compared to the wider northern Adriatic region, such as the low but steady number of eastern Mediterranean imports, the here presented data provides a first glimpse into the pottery acquired and used at a, albeit transformed and refunctionalised, late antique insular rural settlement of the region.

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105 Cf. P. Reynolds, 2010, 99; R. Hodges, 2012, 211-212; E. Cirelli, 2014, 541-542; E. Cirelli, 2016, 38-39; E. Cirelli, 2021, 480-481.

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- Plate 4 Adriatic coarse ware: 1-2 – North Italic burnished ware; 3-6 – Classe type pots; 7 – Classe type casserole; 8 – Classe type baking lid; 9-10 – baking lids; 11 – Classe type baking lid; 12-13 – Classe type lids (drawings by B. Nowacki)
- Map 1 Distribution of North Italic burnished ware in the Adriatic (based on A. Riccato 2022 with additions; © Ancient World Mapping Centre; by B. Nowacki)
- Map 2 Distribution of Classe type pottery: pots, lids and baking lids (© Ancient World Mapping Centre; by B. Nowacki)

Unpublished Aquileian Pavements: Between Archival Sources and Archaeological Excavations

For the past twenty years, the University of Trieste has been conducting excavations in the second insula northeast of the forum, where one of the largest and most luxurious late antique residences in Aquileia has been identified. This contribution presents several mosaic pavements known from photographic documentation preserved in the Archive of the National Archaeological Museum of Aquileia, as well as others uncovered during archaeological excavations in the house that have remained unpublished to date.

Keywords: Aquileia, *Casa dei Putti danzanti*, mosaics, archival data

In 2017, following an extensive programme of digital cataloguing of all published and unpublished pavements from Aquileia, a *corpus* of 750 examples was compiled, covering a broad chronological range from the city's foundation through Late Antiquity.¹

Within this work, the complete *dossier* of pavements uncovered up to that time in the state-owned area bounded by *Via Gemina*, *Via Leicht*, *Via Pellis* and *Via Salvemini* (parcels nos. 424 and 425 and their subdivisions) was also presented.² This urban quartier, excavated on several occasions during the 20th century by Giovanni B. Brusin and Luisa Bertacchi,³ has been the focus of new, ongoing archaeological investigations conducted by the University of Trieste. More specifically, it refers to the second *insula* northeast of the forum, part of Aquileia's original urban layout and centrally located with respect to both land and water communication routes.⁴ In this area, during Late Antiquity, a large noble residence extended, referred to in the scholarly literature as the *Casa dei Putti danzanti* (fig. 1).⁵ In this contribution, I present several

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- 1 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017. The project was presented on multiple occasions, cf. M. Bueno, M. Novello, F. Rinaldi, 2012; F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2015; F. Ghedini, F. Rinaldi, A. Didoné, 2015.
 - 2 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 161-175, nos. 248-269. For specific studies on certain mosaics, see: F. Fontana, 2006, 25-35; 2007, 77-87; 2013b, 205-211.
 - 3 F. Fontana, 2015, 77-83; M. B. Carre, C. Zaccaria, 2015, 97-105; P. Ventura, 2017, 29-39; E. Murgia, 2020, 1-20. Short remarks in J. Bonetto, 2012, 21-22.
 - 4 F. Fontana, 2017, 13-19.
 - 5 Last F. Fontana, 2020, 1-12. See also E. Murgia, 2009a, 41-66; E. Murgia, 2009b, 69-84; F. Fontana, 2012, 131-140; F. Fontana, E. Murgia, 2012, 297-308; F. Fontana, 2013a, 177-180; F. Fontana, 2014, 195-204; F. Fontana, E. Murgia, 2014, 435-440; M. Gomez Serito, E. Rulli, 2012, 309-316; F. Fontana, 2016, 1621-1639; E. Murgia, 2016, 1943-1952; E. Murgia, 2017, 1-20;

pavements that emerged from archival research or field investigations carried out in the years following the important 2017 publication.

The informational potential of archival data for archaeological research is demonstrated by the increasingly frequent publications, including those relating to the Aquileian context.⁶ In the specific case under consideration, the analysis of the archival photographs made it possible to identify a previously unknown mosaic, which remains buried to date and was intercepted by one of the trenches excavated by Luisa Bertacchi (fig. 2).⁷

The pavement is a white-ground *tessellatum* bordered by a black broad-band and appears to be articulated into at least two decorative units. The portion visible in the photograph shows a panel framed by a sequence of alternating white and black fillets, together with a serrated saw-tooth pattern (*Décor* 10g). At the centre of the panel there is a shield of triangles with two straight sides, in contrasting colours, as radial lines of superposed triangles and concentric circles of juxtaposed triangles (*Décor* 331a). Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine the number of triangles per row. In the spandrels, vegetal scrolls together with a vessel-shaped motif are depicted.

The motif represents a *unicum* at Aquileia, whereas the analogous shield of triangles (*Décor* 327a, 327b, 327c) is attested in several instances: in bichrome examples – such as those from the building of the *Fondo Lanari*, the *Santo Stefano*⁸ area, the *Casa del Clipeo*⁹ and the *Casa di Dioniso*¹⁰ – dated to the 1st century CE, and in a polychrome version from a pavement in the *Circus* area¹¹ assigned to the 2nd century CE. The closest parallels include a pavement dated to the mid-6th century CE from *Heraclea Lynkestis*¹² and an example, known only from a drawing, from Lancia, 2nd-3rd centuries CE.¹³

Topographical data emerge from the combined study of the archival photographs, showing labels that indicate both the trench and the location of the documented archaeological evidence. This is complemented by the cartographic documentation, specifically plan no. 9¹⁴, which records the positioning of the trenches and the remains uncovered within parcels nos. 424 and 425.

The pavement is in fact located east of the *cardo* (trench 10, position 9) and therefore belongs to a building different from the *Casa dei Putti danzanti*.

Federica Fontana's reflections on the function and spatial organization of the quarter suggest that Flavian-period urban interventions between the forum and the harbour also affected the north-eastern *insulae*, subjected them to reorganization and functional

6 See in particular J. Bonetto, V. Centola (eds.), 2017; P. Basso (ed.), 2018; P. Basso, D. Dobrevá (eds.), 2023.

7 *Quaderno* 4798/40: "Fondo Cassis, TR. 10 – pos. 9". *Quaderno* 4798/42: "Fondo Cassis, TR. 10 – pos. 9".

8 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 480-481, no. 740.

9 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 144, no. 219.

10 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 32-33, no. 21.

11 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 137, no. 200.

12 G. Cvetković-Tomašević, 1975, tav. CLXXXVII, 2.

13 F. Regueras Grande, 2014-2015.

14 *Archivio Disegni*, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia, Drawer 10, tube 10, drawing produced in November 1965.

diversification. On that occasion, it is possible that a new *cardo* was introduced to the west of the harbour, and that the space between the two cardines functioned as 'buffer' zone between an area with a commercial vocation and a residential one.¹⁵ Since the excavations have not been extended to this sector of the state-owned area, it is not possible to address, in the case of the pavement described, the issue of its functional attribution or its chronology.

The excavation of the *Casa dei Putti danzanti* yielded a large quantity of mosaic *tesserae*, pavement fragments, and brick tile inlays.¹⁶ Floor coverings composed of large terracotta *tesserae* enjoyed considerable popularity in northern Italy and are attested at Aquileia in numerous contexts, both public and private, in service areas as well as representational spaces, across a broad chronological span (from the Late Republican period to Late Antiquity).¹⁷ Within the *Casa dei Putti Danzanti*, this flooring type is documented only once as a homogeneous surface in a corridor¹⁸ and in two further cases in association with *opus spicatum* in rooms of functional or service character.¹⁹ Floors brick laid in a herringbone pattern²⁰ are attested within the *Casa dei Putti Danzanti*, especially in spaces connected to the bath area²¹, as well as in a room north of Court 23 that likely predates the late antique residence. The latter is, moreover, one of the rooms excavated by Giovanni Brusin in 1934, but it lacks graphic and photographic documentation.²² Among the terracotta floor coverings, three hexagonal tiles should also be noted, one of which bears a central white *tessera*. This type is only rarely attested in northern Italy.²³ At Aquileia, too, the typology is poorly documented, with five occurrences at *Villa Raspa* and at the *Fondo Puntin*, in association with large terracotta *tesserae*²⁴, as well as in the *Casa dei Fondi Cossar*.²⁵ The decorative use of hexagonal elements appears to have been intended for representational spaces rather than for service areas, including open-air spaces.²⁶

The small and medium-sized mosaic fragments, brought to light in redeposited layers or in the fills of ancient and post-antique pits, consist predominantly of simple white or black-ground *tessellata*; decorated examples, although less frequent, are also present. Among these, the most significant group is represented by approximately 750 fragments of a white-ground mosaic carpet featuring both bichrome and polychrome geometric and figural

15 F. Fontana, 2017, 18.

16 F. Guidobaldi, L. Gregori, 1996; P. Rendini, 2001; C. Angelelli, 2004; F. Rinaldi, 2007, 255-265; L. Schifi, 2021, 277-284; A. De Natale, E. Rinaldi, P. Izzo, 2025, 37-50.

17 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 300, no. 454. The production extends in northern Italy from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century CE, with a peak between the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, F. Rinaldi, 2007, 259.

18 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 170, no. 257.

19 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 167, no. 250; 169, no. 256.

20 At Aquileia, the technique is attested from the 2nd century BCE through the 5th century CE, see F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 85, no. 115.

21 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 174, no. 267.

22 G. Brusin, 1934, 159, 162; F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 160, no. 241.

23 F. Rinaldi, 2007, 263-265, with bibliography.

24 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 208-209, no. 327; 209, nos. 329-331, 334; 383, no. 593.

25 S. Mazzocchin, 2021, 821.

26 D. Scagliarini Corlàita, 1987, 389-390; J. Ortalli, 2006, 270; F. Rinaldi, 2007, 263-264.

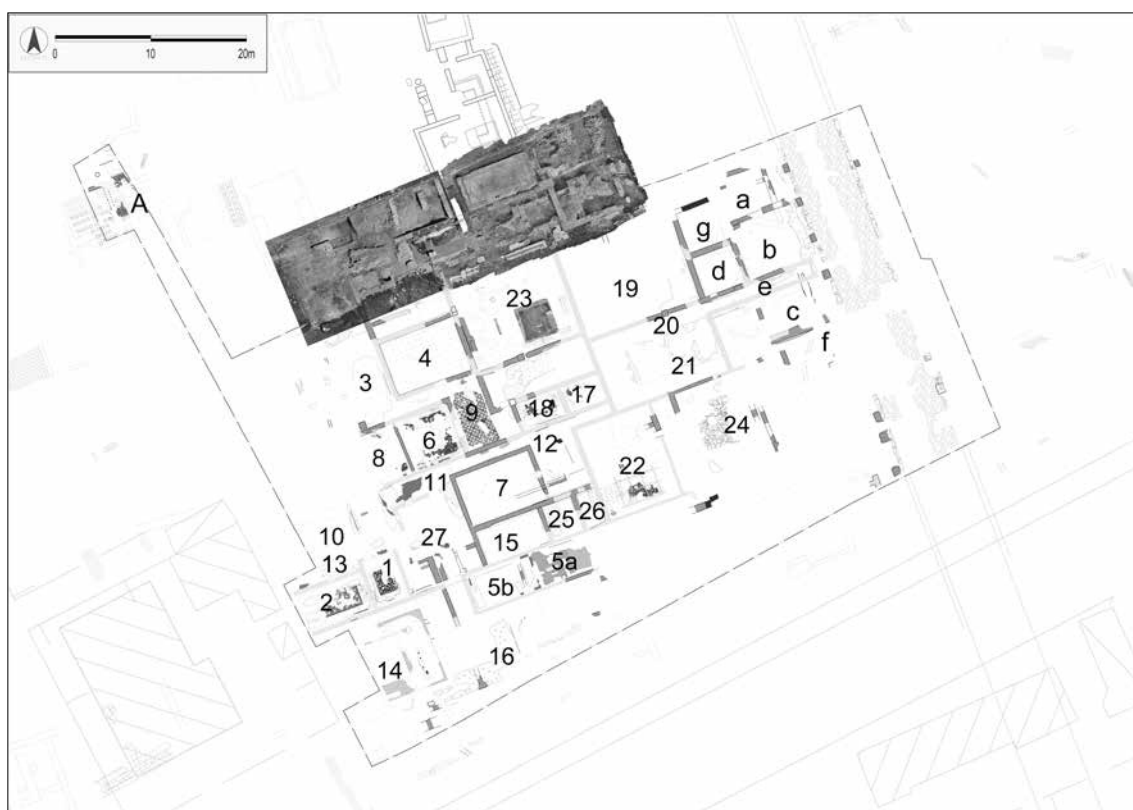


Fig. 1 Aquileia, via Gemina, excavation plan



Fig. 2 Bichrome *tessellatum* with shield of triangles. Notebook 4798/40, Photographic Archive Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia



Fig. 3 Aquileia, via Gemina, mosaic fragments



Fig. 4 Aquileia, via Gemina, mosaic fragments



Fig. 5 Aquileia, via Gemina, mosaic fragments

motifs of extremely fine workmanship (with *tesserae* measuring as little as 0.3 mm). Elements attributable to guilloches, knots and vegetal motifs can be distinguished, including the petals of two flowers²⁷ (figs. 3-5). Their fragmentary condition – clearly the result of 20th century excavation activities – precludes reconstruction of the original decorative scheme or secure chronological assignment.

Finally, the most recent field investigations allowed the rediscovery of several rooms – beyond the one already mentioned with an *opus spicatum* floor – which, on the basis of their characteristics and dimensions, are attributable to the residential complex brought to light by Giovanni Brusin (*Casa Ritter-Záhony*) and subsequently reburied.

More specifically, the floor preparation associated with the black-ground mosaic carpet with polychrome marble inserts, now housed in the lapidary galleries of the Museum of Aquileia, has been identified.²⁸ The *tessellatum* features a rectangular black central field containing irregular marble and stone inserts, white *tesserae*, and small cross motifs. The apparently disorderly arrangement distinguished it from other Aquileian examples with the same motif (*Décor* 106a), such as those from the *Casa del Tralcio di Vite*²⁹ and the *Casa Comelli*.³⁰ This characteristic may be the result, as suggested by Federica Fontana, of a later restoration intervention,³¹ though this hypothesis cannot be verified given the current state of preservation of the pavement. The size of the room (8.08 × 3.93 m) suggests that it functioned as a representational space. Along the eastern edge of the preparation of this pavement, a second floor of sesquipedian bricks with its bedding layer was uncovered, within which – according to a common propitiatory practice – a partially corroded coin of Claudius had been inserted.³² This provides a *terminus post quem* of CE 54 also for the *tessellatum* with inserts, which had previously been dated to the first half of the 1st century CE, more precisely to the Augustan period.³³

Another preparation layer, only partially excavated, pertains to the bichrome mosaic – also now housed in the Museum galleries – with a T + U scheme, which in recent scholarship has been stylistically attributed to the 2nd century CE;³⁴ the stratigraphic data would make it possible to raise the dating to the 1st century CE. Beneath this preparation layer, moreover, extremely fragmentary traces of another mosaic pavement were identified;

27 F. Rinaldi, 2007, 201-205.

28 Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. no. 597494. F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 158-159, no. 237.

29 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 314, no. 481c.

30 F. Ghedini, *et al.*, 2017, 218, no. 360.

31 F. Fontana, 2020, 9. A restoration intervention may also be suggested by the use of what, on autoptic examination, appears to be black marble from Aquitania (*marmor Celticum*), whose quarries began to be exploited at the end of the 3rd century CE, F. Antonelli, 2002, 270-273. The scholar expressed the hope that a detailed petrographic analysis would resolve the issue.

32 This is an as of Claudius, found in the preparation layer of the brick pavement 3125: Claudius I, Rome, CE 41-54. As, AE; 7.87 g; 27 mm; die axis 6 h. Obv.: [TI CLAVDIVS] CAESAR AVG P M [---], bare head of Claudius left. Rev.: Minerva standing right, holding a spear in her right hand and a shield in her left; SC in the fields; beaded border, RIC 100, 116.

33 C. Della Porta, 1996, 193; F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 158-159, no. 237. Cf. M. Donderer, 1986, 46 dated to the second half of the 1st century CE.

34 Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia, inv. no. 597997; Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 152-153, no. 229.

a second mosaic – if not the same one – appears to have been obliterated by the wall that enclosed the room to the south.

Between this room and those further to the south runs one of the east–west perimeter trenches excavated by Luisa Bertacchi, which severely compromised the stratigraphy and the interpretation of the planimetric relationships between the various residential units of the *Casa Ritter-Záhony* and those of the *Casa dei Putti Danzanti*. Nevertheless, it was possible to bring to light two large mosaic fragments, unfortunately damaged in several areas and cut by a large pit. These consist of two white monochrome *tessellata* with geometric decoration and a black border. It is unclear whether they formed part of the same floor covering, articulated into two decorative units, or belonged to two separate pavements. One of the two features a shaded three-strand guilloche on a black ground (*Décor* 72d). According to recent stylistic analyses, the motif appears as early as the Republican period; the three-strand version initially occurs in bichrome and only from the 2nd century CE in polychrome on a dark ground. Its greatest diffusion, however, took place in Late Antiquity.³⁵

Given the conditions of discovery, it is difficult to propose a chronological framework for the mosaic fragments, which, on the basis of a combined assessment of their elevations, would appear to be later than the mosaic with a T + U scheme. It is likewise difficult to clarify whether they originally formed part of the *Casa Ritter-Záhony* and were subsequently annexed, like the others, to the *Casa dei Putti Danzanti*, or whether they were associated from the outset with the latter complex. As noted above, post-antique spoliation and, above all, the extensive intervention carried out in the 1960s preclude a clear reading of the successive building phases in this sector of the excavation area.

In conclusion, the data presented here confirm the central role of the *Casa dei Putti Danzanti* in the study of Aquileian artistic production.

35 F. Rinaldi, 2007, 35-36; F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 345-346, no. 523.

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La basilica e il cimitero dei Santi Felice e Fortunato ad Aquileia: nuove osservazioni e ipotesi alla luce di una revisione delle fonti archeologiche, bibliografiche, manoscritte e d'archivio

Edificata sulla tomba dei martiri vicentini, la basilica dei Santi Felice e Fortunato sorgeva a sud-est delle mura imperiali di Aquileia e costituiva il fulcro di uno dei principali cimiteri della città. La sistematica demolizione a cui andò incontro alla fine del Settecento ha fatto sì che le attuali conoscenze su questo sito siano molto limitate, legate principalmente alla documentazione cartografica del XVII e del XVIII secolo, a scarni riferimenti nelle fonti scritte e alle scoperte effettuate nel corso di un piccolo scavo tra gli anni Settanta e Ottanta del Novecento. Tuttavia, un'analisi più attenta dell'edito, la consultazione di testimonianze inedite (manoscritti e corrispondenza degli eruditi che frequentavano la chiesa quando era ancora visibile o durante il suo smantellamento, diari, relazioni di scavo, piante) e il loro confronto con i materiali rinvenuti nell'area, in particolare iscrizioni, permettono di formulare nuove ipotesi sull'organizzazione, sulle trasformazioni e sulle caratteristiche dell'edificio di culto e dell'area funeraria circostante. Rispetto alla basilica, dunque, seppur in maniera ipotetica, si può ricostruire una realtà complessa, interessata da una successione di fasi, scandite da diversi livelli pavimentali. Nell'area presbiteriale, il primo tra questi poteva essere costituito dalle epigrafi poste a chiusura di un gruppo di tombe privilegiate, fatto piuttosto singolare nell'area di influenza aquileiese, dove generalmente le sepolture si disponevano fuori dalle chiese, in narteci o vani annessi. Altri nuclei di tombe occupavano l'area circostante l'edificio.

Keywords: Aquileia, Angelo Maria Cortenovis, basilica dei Santi Felice e Fortunato, epigrafia cristiana, iscrizioni funerarie, sarcofagi

La basilica dei Santi Felice e Fortunato (spesso detta semplicemente di San Felice) sorgeva a sud-est delle mura imperiali di Aquileia, sulla sponda sinistra del fiume Natissa (p.c. 648/1), e costituiva il fulcro di uno dei principali cimiteri del centro alto adriatico. Era stata edificata sulla tomba dei martiri vicentini, in un settore del suburbio occupato almeno fin dalla prima epoca imperiale da varie installazioni e strutture con funzione residenziale, produttiva, funeraria e, forse, culturale (fig. 1).¹

¹ A. Vigi Fior, 1981, 4-5; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 265-266; N. Grande, 2001, 36; P. Maggi, F. Oriolo, 2009, 170; R. Bresciani, 2014, 15-16; ERPAC FVG, schede SI 819, 820, 821. A causa dei periodi storici in cui furono scoperte e delle metodologie di indagine impiegate, non è sempre possibile determinare la cronologia di tali evidenze e gli eventuali rapporti reciproci.

Dopo l'asportazione delle reliquie dei santi, ultimata nel pieno medioevo, la posizione periferica della chiesa e il progressivo spopolamento di Aquileia favorirono il suo abbandono. La basilica, tuttavia, rimase visibile ancora per lungo tempo, venendo frequentata da eruditi e antiquari che copiavano e raccoglievano le epigrafi reimpiegate nelle sue strutture. Solo nel 1769 l'arcivescovo di Gorizia autorizzò la sua demolizione e la vendita dei materiali ricavati a beneficio di altri edifici di culto. Cominciò così uno smantellamento sistematico, che si protrasse fino alla fine del secolo e che portò al rinvenimento di numerosi sarcofagi e iscrizioni cristiane, solo in parte tramandate dai testimoni dell'epoca. Successivamente, sporadiche indagini ottocentesche, i lavori per la realizzazione della ferrovia Cervignano-Belvedere tra 1903 e 1907 e altre scoperte occasionali nel corso del Novecento restituirono nuove evidenze archeologiche relative all'area circostante la chiesa. Da ultimo, tra 1978 e 1985, un piccolo scavo promosso dal professor Mario Mirabella Roberti, docente di Archeologia Cristiana presso l'Università di Trieste, individuò alcune strutture pertinenti all'antica basilica e al suo cimitero.

La basilica dei Santi Felice e Fortunato e un possibile gruppo di tombe privilegiate presso il suo presbiterio

La basilica sorgeva sul luogo in cui erano stati sepolti i martiri Felice e Fortunato. Secondo Mirabella Roberti, era stata preceduta da una *memoria* costruita sulla tomba venerata, la cui posizione sarebbe stata richiamata da un altare circondato da colonne, ancora visibile al centro della chiesa nel XVI secolo.² Nel corso dei suoi scavi, tuttavia, lo studioso non raggiunse quel settore dell'edificio e, per quanto probabile, ad oggi non ci sono evidenze archeologiche di tale sacello.³

Grazie a scritti, piante e vedute di Aquileia di XV – fine XVIII secolo, invece, si può ricavare qualche informazione sulla basilica e sulle trasformazioni a cui andò incontro nel corso del tempo. Essa, dunque, si presentava come una chiesa a tre navate, orientata, preceduta da un modesto nartece, perfettamente inserita nell'impianto urbanistico della città romana. Alcune piante settecentesche la raffigurano con un'abside rettangolare, ma tale dato non ha potuto essere confermato dagli scavi di Mirabella Roberti, che non hanno portato alla luce quell'area.⁴ Se tale rappresentazione fosse veritiera, però, sarebbe interessante osservare come la medesima conformazione dell'abside sia attestata anche nella seconda fase della chiesa dei Santi Felice e Fortunato a Vicenza.⁵

2 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 268. Alla scrivente, invece, sembra più probabile che la sepoltura martiriale si trovasse in corrispondenza dell'altare nell'area presbiteriale, dove sono venute alla luce numerose testimonianze funerarie ed epigrafiche (vedi *infra*).

3 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 268.

4 Si tratta della pianta di Giovanni Antonio Gironcoli, comunemente detta del Bertoli, anteriore al 1728, e della mappa catastale del geometra A. Padoan, datata 24 agosto 1760. In merito alle piante si veda Gruppo Archeologico Aquileiese, 1986, 10-12; rispetto all'assenza di dati sull'abside dagli scavi degli anni Settanta-Ottanta si veda M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 266.

5 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1979, 23. Per le affinità tra le chiese dei Santi Felice e Fortunato ad Aquileia e a Vicenza si veda E. Possenti, 2021, 118-119.

Una veduta di Aquileia del 1693 conservata presso il Museo Diocesano di Udine sembra suggerire che le pareti esterne fossero scandite da lesene e che la facciata fosse stata modificata in età rinascimentale con la realizzazione di una partizione a semicerchi, caratteristica delle chiese venete e istriano-dalmate dell'epoca (fig. 2).⁶ Rispetto all'organizzazione interna dell'edificio, il conte Bartolomeo di Porcia, abate di Moggio, che nel 1570 vide la basilica durante una visita apostolica, ricorda che le navate erano divise da 16 colonne marmoree, 8 per lato, ormai verdi per l'umidità.⁷

Nel 1731 Gian Domenico Bertoli, scrivendo a Giusto Fontanini, afferma che l'imperatore voleva per una delle sue costruzioni 20 colonne di granito orientale, provenienti dalle chiese della Beligna e di San Felice.⁸ Una lettera del sacerdote Antonio Bresciani del 22 aprile 1775, invece, riporta che 18 colonne provenienti dalla basilica erano state vendute al conte Carlo de Pace, mentre altri materiali erano stati acquistati da Gerolamo di Toppo.⁹ Attualmente, i resti di due colonne di marmo venato greco e di due colonne di granito rosso e un capitello di fine V secolo provenienti da questo edificio sono conservati a Tapogliano, nel giardino di villa Pace Strassoldo.¹⁰

Durante gli scavi condotti da Mirabella Roberti, a ca. -0,80 m di profondità,¹¹ furono scoperti cinque zoccoli di mattoni provinciali quadrati di 1 m per lato, interpretati come alcune delle ipobasi delle colonne che dividevano le navate. Grazie a tali evidenze, lo studioso calcolò che le dimensioni della basilica dovevano essere state equivalenti a 20-21 m di larghezza (10 m la navata centrale, 5 m le navate laterali) e 31 m di lunghezza (27 m il corpo centrale, 4 m l'area absidale), per un rapporto di 2:3.¹²

Rispetto alla pavimentazione della basilica, Bartolomeo di Porcia ricorda che ai suoi tempi era ancora costituita dall'antico mosaico policromo.¹³ Già allora, tuttavia, quest'ultimo doveva aver conosciuto diversi restauri e interventi in quanto varie iscrizioni di epoca imperiale (*InscrAq.* 144, 939, 1478, 1531) e cristiane (*InscrAq.* 2981, 3092) erano inserite nella pavimentazione della chiesa, con una particolare concentrazione nell'area absidale e del coro. Tale situazione conservativa è confermata da Bertoli, che ricorda come nel pavimento di San Felice rimanessero solo "alcuni pezzi di Musaico".¹⁴ Tra questi, si distinguevano in particolare

6 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 262-263; M. Vidulli Torlo, 2008, 354.

7 Bartolomeo di Porcia, BCUD, ms. f. pr. 1039, f. 41'.

8 G. Vale, 1946, 56.

9 A. Giovannini, 2007, 249-250.

10 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 264; S. Piussi, 2008b.

11 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 265 riporta che gli zoccoli furono individuati a -1,80 m di profondità, mentre *Notiziario*, 1981, 16 sostiene che il livello antico del pavimento della basilica fosse a -0,83 m. Considerando le quote di alcune strutture, probabilmente residenziali, che avevano preceduto la basilica (un tessellato bicromo individuato a -1,46 m; un pavimento in grandi tessere fittili a -1,35 m), quest'ultimo dato sembra più attendibile e la cifra riferita nell'articolo riassuntivo dello scavo potrebbe contenere un refuso.

12 P. Cassola Guida, 1980, 19; *Notiziario*, 1981, 16; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 265-267; M. Vidulli Torlo, 2008, 355. Anche la basilica dei Santi Felice e Fortunato a Vicenza presentava dimensioni simili, pari a 32,30 x 20,40 m (e.g. E. Possenti, 2021, 118).

13 Bartolomeo di Porcia, BCUD, ms. f. pr. 1039, f. 41'.

14 G. D. Bertoli, 1739, n. 495.

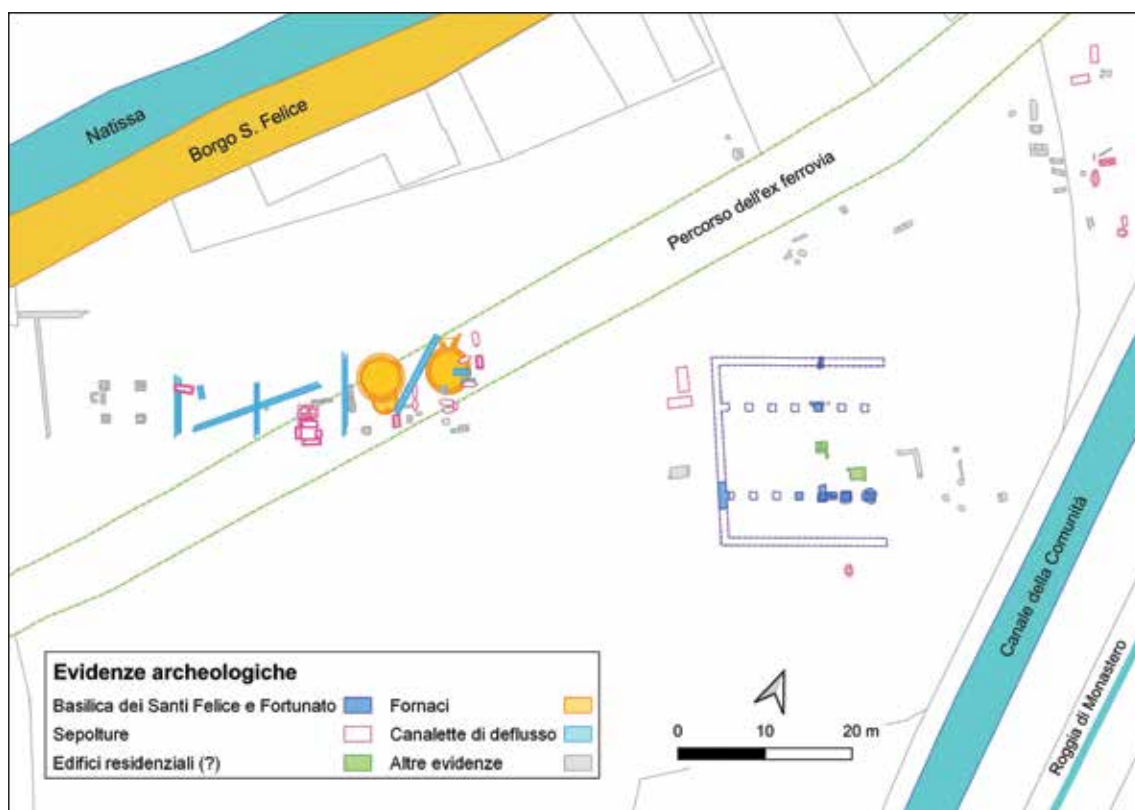


Fig. 1 Evidenze archeologiche presso la località San Felice



Fig. 2 La località San Felice nella veduta di Aquileia del 1693 al Museo Diocesano di Udine

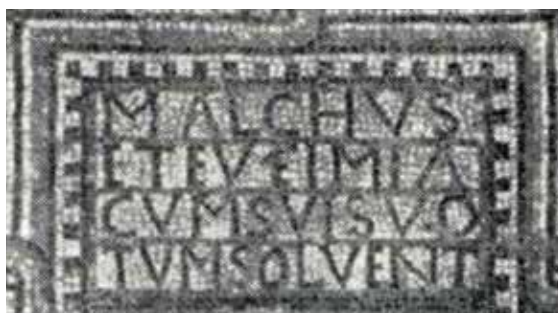
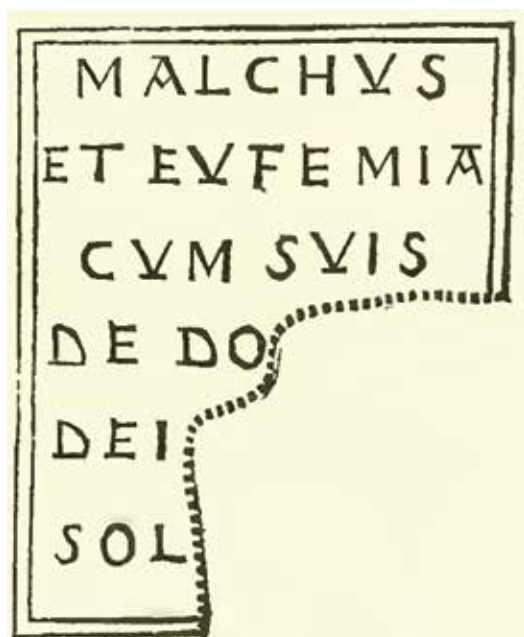


Fig. 3 Le iscrizioni di *Malchos* ed *Eufemia* a San Felice



Fig. 4 L'iscrizione di *Biktor*

tre pannelli quadrangolari, realizzati in tessere marmoree bianche e nere, molto consumati e lacunosi, che riportavano alcune iscrizioni di oblatori.¹⁵

La presenza fra questi ultimi della coppia di *Malchus* ed *Eufemia* ha spinto gli studiosi ad accostare la loro epigrafe a quella di *Malchus* ed *Eufimia* nella navata destra della basilica di S. Maria delle Grazie a Grado (fig. 3). Spesso, infatti, si è pensato che si potesse trattare dei medesimi individui e che, di conseguenza, i due edifici di culto potessero presentare una cronologia ravvicinata. La costruzione della chiesa gradese generalmente è stata collocata tra fine V e inizio VI secolo o nei decenni subito successivi, anche se secondo Villa essa potrebbe essere anticipata al V secolo¹⁶.

Rispetto alla basilica aquileiese, Mirabella Roberti sottolinea come il nome *Eufemia* si sia diffuso all'indomani del Concilio di Calcedonia del 451 e propende per una datazione alla seconda metà del V secolo sia del mosaico sia dell'edificazione dell'edificio. Fino ad allora, invece, il culto dei martiri sarebbe rimasto legato a una semplice *memoria*.¹⁷

Va rilevato, tuttavia, come l'identificazione tra le due coppie di donatori non sia certa e come, anche qualora fosse confermata, in assenza di altri indizi, essa abbia delle ripercussioni solo sulla datazione del rivestimento pavimentale e non necessariamente su quella dell'impianto della chiesa dei Santi Felice e Fortunato.

La medesima considerazione può essere estesa anche ad alcuni frammenti di mosaico policromo, realizzati su una preparazione molto solida, scoperti durante gli scavi di Mirabella Roberti.¹⁸ Tra di essi, inoltre, alcuni sono caratterizzati da un tessuto diverso dagli altri e potrebbero testimoniare un restauro più tardo del tessellato.¹⁹

Come emerge da queste osservazioni, le problematiche relative al rivestimento pavimentale dell'edificio di culto hanno importanti ripercussioni sulla datazione dell'impianto della basilica e sull'identificazione delle sue eventuali fasi successive. Rispetto a tale tematica, pare degno di nota come alcuni scritti della seconda metà del Settecento, relativi alle scoperte effettuate durante la demolizione della chiesa, sembrino illustrare una realtà più complessa di quella delineata dalle fonti esaminate finora e dai rinvenimenti di Mirabella Roberti, interessata da una successione di livelli pavimentali.²⁰

15 G. D. Bertoli, 1739, nn. 495, 496, 497; *CIL* V, 1617, 1618, 1619; G. B. Brusin, 1951, 50.

16 S. Panciera, 1976, 223, 231; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 267-268; J.-P. Caillet, 1993, 206-207, 464; D. Mazzoleni, 1994, 199; L. Villa, 2003, 522-525; M. Vidulli Torlo, 2008, 355; R. Bresciani, 2014, 18; D. Mazzoleni, 2017, 554-555.

17 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 267-269. Lo studioso non esclude, comunque, che la chiesa aquileiese fosse stata costruita qualche decennio prima di ricevere la pavimentazione musiva.

18 *Notiziario*, 1981, 16; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 267; M. Vidulli Torlo, 2008, 355-356; F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 479. Alcuni frammenti recano dei motivi geometrici, tra cui quello della treccia a due capi policroma, molto diffuso tra metà IV e metà VI secolo; un solo frammento presenta i resti del profilo stilizzato di un volto umano di tre quarti.

19 *Notiziario*, 1982, 16.

20 In assenza di nuovi scavi e riscontri materiali, tutte le riflessioni espresse di seguito vanno intese unicamente come ipotesi di lavoro.

In primo luogo, dunque, si può rilevare come già nel 1774 l'Arcivescovo di Udine Girolamo Gradenigo avesse riferito alle *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma* il rinvenimento ai piedi del coro della chiesa di due grandi sarcofagi che riportavano gli epitaffi metrici *InscrAq.* 2915 e 3233.²¹ Qualche anno dopo, alcuni passaggi delle epistole del padre barnabita Angelo Maria Cortenovis e del suo allievo Girolamo Asquini forniscono maggiori particolari sulle evidenze archeologiche individuate durante lo smantellamento dell'edificio.²² Infatti, in una lettera a monsignor Lucio Doglioni, diacono della cattedrale di Belluno, datata Udine, 5 ottobre 1783, trattando del rinvenimento dell'epitaffio di *Leontia* (*InscrAq.* 3114), Asquini ricorda che "nel cimitero de' Santi Felice e Fortunato fuori d'Aquileja, che si è scoperto ultimamente sotto il pavimento in Musaico di quella antichissima chiesa ora affatto distrutta, dove avevano riposato i corpi per più secoli di quei Santi Martiri, si sono trovate molte arche sepolcrali [...]".²³

In maniera simile, Cortenovis, scrivendo il 7 febbraio 1786 a Gaetano Marini, sottolinea come la basilica non esista più, "benché esista gran parte dell'antico cimitero cristiano, che stava nascosto sotto il pavimento di mosaico della chiesa stessa. Vorrei poter mettere mano in quei molti sarcofaghi, che vi sono ancora da scoprirsi, che debbono essere i più antichi per essere quelli che corrispondevano alla Cappella maggiore della chiesa".²⁴ In un'altra lettera a Marini, risalente al 28 giugno 1787, comunicando la scoperta delle iscrizioni *InscrAq.* 2907, 2995 e 3162 e Vergone 2007, n. 47 e richiamando il precedente rinvenimento di un sarcofago iscritto finora inedito, il padre barnabita afferma che le epigrafi furono trovate "nell'antico cimitero cristiano che era sotto il Pavimento di Musaico della Chiesa de' Santi martiri Felice e Fortunato, fuori delle Mura d'Aquileia [...]".²⁵ Inoltre, più avanti, nella medesima missiva, aggiunge che "tutte queste iscrizioni erano sotto il Presbiterio della detta Chiesa in lastre di pietra bianca riposte dentro alle grandi Arche che quasi tutto questo sito occupano".²⁶

Accogliendo tali notizie, in relazione a queste iscrizioni, nelle relative schede nelle *Inscriptiones Christianae Latinae et Graecae aevi milliarum* (*Vat. Lat. mss.* 9071-9074), oltre a ricordare la loro provenienza dall'area presbiteriale della basilica, Marini afferma che le lastre con gli epitaffi erano state scoperte *ingenti arca imposita*, *arca imposita* e *imposita arca marmorea*.²⁷ Tali descrizioni potrebbero chiarire anche la sistemazione delle epigrafi di *Geminus* (*CIL V*,

21 *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma*, 1774, 100-101. Oltre ai resti dei defunti, nel sarcofago che riportava *InscrAq.* 3233 furono trovati un'ampolla e due elementi circolari, forse relativi a una scatola per profumi. Nel medesimo anno fu scoperta anche *InscrAq.* 2911, ma G. Marini riferisce solo che venne alla luce in *veteri Coem. ad S. Felicem*, senza specificare se fosse stata trovata all'interno o all'esterno della basilica (e.g. G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9072, f. 473, n. 6).

22 Rispetto alla figura di Cortenovis, si veda L. Rebaudo, 2007, 118-129. Per Asquini, si rimanda a S. Panciera, 1970, 13-18 e a L. Rebaudo, 2007, 129-133.

23 G. Asquini, BBUD, ms. 158, ff. 305'-306.

24 G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9046, f. 156'.

25 G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9046, f. 162'.

26 G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9046, f. 163. Il sarcofago inedito è menzionato per la prima volta in G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9046, f. 158'. Cortenovis ricorda che al suo interno furono trovati due stili metallici, forse scrittori; rispetto all'iscrizione, invece, riporta solo che cominciava con *Hic requiescit* in quanto non aveva ancora potuto vederla di persona e i suoi corrispondenti non gli avevano inviato una trascrizione completa.

27 G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9072, f. 495, n. 3; G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9074, f. 880, n. 7; G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat., 9073, f. 754, n. 6.

1662)²⁸ e di *Leontia* (*InscrAq.* 3114),²⁹ che in base ai loro apografi sembra fossero incise su delle lastre, ma rispetto alla cui scoperta le fonti più antiche menzionano, in modo un po' confuso, anche dei sarcofagi.

Di tali documenti, attualmente sembrano conservarsi soltanto le iscrizioni *InscrAq.* 2995 e 3162 e Vergone 2007, n. 47 (figg. 4-6). In questi casi, dal punto di vista della tipologia del supporto, si può notare come si tratti di lastre abbastanza spesse (tra i 5 ed i 7,5 cm) e larghe (tra i 50 ed 61,5 cm nel caso dei pezzi interi), potenzialmente adatte a fungere da copertura per una forma contenente un sarcofago o direttamente per la cassa di un'arca.

In base a questi elementi, ci si può domandare se tale sistemazione, che apparentemente prevedeva il posizionamento nell'area presbiteriale di sarcofagi e lastre sovrapposte a sarcofagi, risalga al momento dell'impianto della basilica o se sia una soluzione successiva, in cui i manufatti erano stati reimpiegati come semplice materiale da costruzione o riutilizzati ancora con una funzione funeraria. Tuttavia, se si presta fede alla documentazione settecentesca, queste ultime eventualità sembrerebbero da escludere.

Da una parte, infatti, il fatto che all'interno del sarcofago che recava *InscrAq.* 3233 e dell'arca inedita ricordata da Cortenovis siano stati trovati i corpi dei defunti e alcuni elementi di corredo induce a scartare un loro riutilizzo come materiale edilizio; dall'altra, se si ammettesse un riuso sempre in chiave funeraria, esso dovrebbe comunque risalire a un periodo piuttosto antico poiché secondo il padre barnabita e Asquini questi documenti furono rinvenuti al di sotto del mosaico del presbiterio e forse sotto una pavimentazione in lastre lapidee. Accettando tale notizia (ed escludendo, ad esempio, che tali sepolture avessero tagliato dei mosaici più antichi), infatti, si dovrebbe ammettere che questa organizzazione fosse antecedente alla stesura del tessellato policromo, risalente, qualora corrispondesse a quello visto da Bertoli e parzialmente individuato da Mirabella Roberti, al V secolo o alla seconda metà del V secolo.³⁰

A suffragare l'idea che queste testimonianze siano più antiche del pavimento musivo e che siano state trovate in giacitura primaria, concorrerebbe anche l'analisi del materiale epigrafico, contraddistinto da caratteri comuni. Si tratta, infatti, di epitaffi cristiani, databili sulla base di elementi interni tra la fine del IV secolo e la prima metà del V secolo.³¹ Inoltre, sebbene la perdita delle informazioni su molte delle arche a cui erano associati e sull'eventuale presenza di elementi di corredo non permetta di delineare un profilo completo dei defunti a cui si riferivano, alcuni documenti sembrano rivelare l'appartenenza a un'utenza socialmente, economicamente e culturalmente elevata.

28 *Antologia Romana*, 1776-1777, 137-141. L'apografo di A. M. Cortenovis, BCUD, ms. f. pr. 850, f. 24, si riferisce a una lastra lapidea e G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9073, f. 729, n. 8 menziona esplicitamente una *tabula*. Nessuna fonte, invece, chiarisce se anch'essa fosse stata rinvenuta nell'area presbiteriale della chiesa.

29 G. Asquini, BBUD, ms. 158, ff. 305'-306. Anch'essa fu trovata sotto il pavimento musivo del presbiterio.

30 M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 267-268 ritiene che il pavimento musivo della basilica risalga alla seconda metà del V secolo; recentemente, invece, F. Ghedini *et al.*, 2017, 479 hanno datato il tessellato più genericamente al V secolo.

31 Tra le iscrizioni pagane restituite dalla chiesa, sembra che solamente *InscrAq.* 1472 sia stata trovata al di sotto del piano pavimentale dell'edificio di culto; sfortunatamente, però, non rimangono indicazioni sulle modalità del suo utilizzo (reimpiegata nelle fondazioni della basilica? riutilizzata come materiale da costruzione nelle strutture funerarie paleocristiane?).

In particolare, si può osservare la presenza di tre iscrizioni metriche (*InscrAq.* 2915, 3114 e 3233), il richiamo a dei personaggi di rango senatorio (*InscrAq.* 3114) e a un ufficiale superiore dell'esercito (*InscrAq.* 2915), l'uso di sarcofagi come contenitori funerari, almeno uno dei quali probabilmente in marmo e decorato a rilievo (*InscrAq.* 2915 e 3233 e l'arca inedita ricordata da Cortenovis). In più, l'epitaffio di *Leontia*, pur non facendo esplicita menzione dei nomi di Felice e Fortunato, sembra far riferimento ad una sepoltura *ad sanctos* attraverso l'espressione *cui tale / sepulchrum / sancta beato/rum merito vi/cinia praestat* (*InscrAq.* 3114, ll. 3-7).³² Al contrario, la formula *in hoc sanctorum loco* nell'epigrafe di *Pisinio* (*InscrAq.* 3162) non è necessariamente indicativa della vicinanza a una tomba venerata, sebbene il rinvenimento della lastra in corrispondenza del presbiterio appaia alquanto suggestivo.³³

Sulla base di queste evidenze e di tali considerazioni, dunque, non sembra irragionevole ipotizzare la presenza di un nucleo di sepolture privilegiate nell'area presbiteriale della basilica di San Felice, in prossimità della tomba martiriale, coeve o di poco successive all'impianto dell'edificio di culto, che potrebbe risalire già agli anni compresi tra la fine del IV e l'inizio del V secolo. Ne deriverebbe che, per lo meno in corrispondenza del presbiterio, la chiesa aveva conosciuto diversi livelli pavimentali succedutisi tra loro. Accogliendo tale ricostruzione, infatti, in un primo momento il piano di calpestio di questo settore dell'edificio sarebbe stato costituito dalle lastre lapidee con gli epitaffi dei defunti, spesso trovate associate a dei sarcofagi; in seguito, queste sarebbero state coperte da un tessellato policromo tardo, forse una porzione di quello visto nel XVI e nel XVIII secolo e i cui frammenti furono scoperti da Mirabella Roberti; quest'ultimo nel corso del tempo potrebbe aver conosciuto degli interventi di restauro; infine, un ulteriore livello avrebbe potuto essere rappresentato da una pavimentazione in lastre di pietra, in cui sembra fossero reimpiegate anche alcune iscrizioni romane (*InscrAq.* 144, 939, 1478 e 1531) e almeno un'epigrafe cristiana (*InscrAq.* 2981), sulla cui datazione non si può dire nulla di preciso.

Non è chiaro se questa successione di fasi possa aver caratterizzato tutto l'edificio basilicale o principalmente il settore presbiteriale.³⁴ Di certo, però, quest'ultimo fu la parte della chiesa che conobbe maggiori rimaneggiamenti e, probabilmente, un progressivo innalzamento di quota tra la tardantichità e il basso medioevo, che finì per obliterare i livelli più antichi. Oltre a richiamare le iscrizioni reimpiegate in quest'area, infatti, alcune fonti dal XVI secolo in poi ricordano che l'altare maggiore della basilica, su cui si trovava ancora l'arca marmorea che

32 D. Mazzoleni, 2008, 334. Sembra significativo, inoltre, che questa sia l'unica testimonianza aquileiese abbastanza sicura di un sepolcro in prossimità di una tomba venerata. L'interpretazione di tutte le altre iscrizioni che potrebbero alludere a una sepoltura *ad sanctos* (ad es. *InscrAq.* 3042, 3162, forse 3240), invece, è meno certa e aperta ad altre letture.

33 A. Vigi Fior, 1981, 5; G. Cuscito, 1984, 281; N. Grande, 2001, 37; G. Cuscito, 2004, 543; S. Piussi 2008a vi vedono la prova di una sepoltura *ad sanctos*; secondo D. Mazzoleni, 2007, 51 e D. Mazzoleni, 2008, 344, invece, tale formula designa semplicemente il cimitero in cui era sepolto il defunto.

34 Da un lato, è interessante osservare come gli scavi di Mirabella Roberti abbiano individuato alcune tombe in anfora, senza corredo e attualmente non databili, tra le ipobasi delle colonne della chiesa (e.g. P. Cassola Guida, 1980; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 265); dall'altro, Bartolomeo di Porcia, BC Ud, ms. f. pr. 1039, f. 41' ricorda che la pavimentazione dell'edificio era costituita da un mosaico policromo e non fa riferimento a ulteriori livelli.

si pensava avesse ospitato le reliquie dei martiri, era collocato su una tribuna³⁵ e menzionano delle cripte sottostanti il coro e il presbiterio.³⁶

Sembra opportuno sottolineare come tale proposta ricostruttiva presenti anche alcune criticità. Da una parte, infatti, le tre epigrafi superstiti tra quelle restituite dall'area presbiteriale non sembrano particolarmente consumate, come se fossero state calpestate per lungo tempo. Dall'altra, la testimonianza di Cortenovis non è sempre diretta e/o pienamente comprensibile. Il padre barnabita, infatti, non fu sempre presente ai lavori di demolizione della basilica, i cui esiti talvolta gli furono riferiti dai suoi corrispondenti. A volte, dunque, egli vide le iscrizioni rinvenute già esposte nei luoghi in cui erano state ricoverate dopo la loro asportazione dai ruderi della chiesa o ricevette a Udine degli elementi di corredo. Nel caso della missiva del giugno 1787, inoltre, non è completamente chiaro se il richiamo alle "lastre di pietra bianca" (vedi *supra*) si riferisca al supporto delle epigrafi trovate dentro i sarcofagi (in crollo?) o al materiale con cui all'epoca era pavimentato il presbiterio.³⁷

Allo stesso tempo, però, è interessante osservare come lo sviluppo proposto in questa sede per l'area presbiteriale della chiesa aquileiese trovi un parziale confronto nella basilica di S. Vigilio a Trento, sotto il cui piano pavimentale furono scoperte varie sepolture chiuse da lastre di pietra iscritte, databili tra il pieno V secolo e la prima metà del VI secolo, obliterate in età giustiniana da una pavimentazione in mosaico.³⁸

Accogliendo tale ricostruzione, inoltre, si dovrebbe rilevare come la basilica di San Felice rappresenti almeno in parte un'eccezione rispetto alle pratiche funerarie caratteristiche di Aquileia e della *Venetia* nord-orientale sotto la sua influenza. È stato osservato, infatti, come generalmente tale areale, diversamente da quanto attestato a Roma, Milano o Ravenna, non abbia restituito sepolture tardoantiche, nemmeno privilegiate, all'interno del luogo di culto. Normalmente, infatti, lo spazio interno delle basiliche era caratterizzato da estesi tappeti musivi, recanti le iscrizioni degli oblatori che avevano partecipato alla loro realizzazione; il cimitero, invece, si sviluppava all'esterno, attorno alla chiesa, o in narteci (basiliche di Monastero e di S. Giovanni in Foro ad Aquileia, chiesa di S. Canzian d'Isonzo) e vani annessi (basilica di Monastero ad Aquileia, basilica di Concordia) all'edificio.³⁹

35 Bartolomeo di Porcia, BCUD, ms. f. pr. 1039, f. 41'. G. D. Bertoli, 1739, n. 527 riporta l'iscrizione medievale apposta sul sarcofago, che commemora la traslazione delle reliquie dei martiri dalla tomba sottostante all'interno di quell'arca, avvenuta nel 1325.

36 G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat., 9073, f. 754, n. 6; *CIL* V, 1698. S. Tavano, 1972, 291 ritiene che la cripta fosse una costruzione medievale.

37 G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat. 9046, ff. 158', 162-163.

38 E. Possenti, 2021, 110, nota 48, 117, 125 nota 137. In questo caso, però, tali sepolture si trovavano nella navata centrale ed erano state realizzate in un momento successivo all'impianto della basilica. I lavori che durante il medioevo interessarono a più riprese l'area absidale, invece, non permettono di comprendere se delle tombe privilegiate avessero trovato posto nell'area del presbiterio, sebbene ciò sembri probabile.

39 N. Grande, 2001, 40-41; E. Possenti, 2021, 109-124, partic. 110, 124. La medesima situazione sembra attestata presso la basilica della Madonna del Mare a Trieste e nella chiesa dei Santi Felice e Fortunato a Vicenza. In questi casi, tuttavia, sono state individuate alcune sepolture anche all'interno delle chiese, rispettivamente nel presbiterio (e. g. E. Possenti, 2021, 121-123) e lungo le navate (e.g. E. Possenti, 2021, 117-119). Le modalità con cui furono effettuati gli scavi, però, non permettono di datare tali tombe.

I motivi che potrebbero aver portato a questa diversa gestione degli spazi interni della basilica non sono chiari e si può solo genericamente immaginare una particolare devozione nei riguardi dei Santi Felice e Fortunato presso la comunità cristiana aquileiese dell'epoca e una volontà di promozione del loro culto.⁴⁰ In ogni caso, nonostante la possibile presenza di tale gruppo di sepolture privilegiate presso il settore presbiteriale dell'edificio, è opportuno sottolineare come la chiesa di San Felice non sembri aver mai assunto l'aspetto di un vero e proprio *coemeterium subteglatum*, capace di accogliere centinaia o migliaia di tombe, come le basiliche costantiniane e S. Paolo fuori le mura a Roma, S. Massimino a Treviri o, in un'area più prossima, S. Vigilio a Trento.

Il cimitero *sub divo*

In merito al cimitero circostante la basilica, non sono giunte molte informazioni. Sembra che tale settore del suburbio fosse stato destinato a un utilizzo funerario almeno dalla prima epoca imperiale.⁴¹ Questa funzione da un lato è testimoniata dal rinvenimento di una quindicina di epigrafi, databili tra l'inizio del I secolo d.C. e la prima metà del III secolo d.C., scoperte in situazioni di reimpiego presso la basilica e i suoi annessi, nelle strutture e nei terreni circostanti la chiesa o nel fiume adiacente (*InscrAq.* 518, 710, 939, 969, 992, 1113, 1193, 1208, 1431, 1472, 1478, 1531, 1532, 1680, 2606, 2809; *CIL* V, 1498);⁴² dall'altro, dalla notizia di Carlo Gregorutti secondo cui la stele *InscrAq.* 1208 fu trovata nel 1877 nella terra di Leonardo Andrian, entro il circondario dell'antica necropoli di San Felice (ca. 200 m a est della chiesa), presso le fondazioni di un recinto funerario. All'interno di quest'ultimo furono scoperte anche diverse urne.⁴³

Analogamente a quanto si registra in altri settori del suburbio, dunque, sembra probabile che anche in questa zona la necropoli di epoca imperiale fosse organizzata in file di recinti funerari allineati su un asse viario, in questo caso minore, che accoglievano le sepolture e i loro segnacoli.⁴⁴ Per contro, una ricostruzione dell'articolazione del cimitero di epoca tardoantica risulta più difficile.

40 Cfr. Ven. Fort. *Vita sancti Martini* IV, vv. 658-660, in MGH, *Auctorum Antiquissimorum*, IV/1, 369, in cui il pellegrino che fosse giunto ad Aquileia è esortato a venerare i martiri Canziani e Fortunato (negli anni precedenti il corpo di Felice era stato traslato a Vicenza).

41 A. Vigi Fior, 1981, 4; N. Grande, 2001, 36; R. Bresciani, 2014, 16; ERPAC FVG, scheda SI 820.

42 Potrebbe risalire al III secolo d.C. anche l'arca *InscrAq.* 1230, vista nel 1793 da Cortenovis "ancora al suo luogo sotto terra nel cimitero di S. Felice". Non è chiaro, tuttavia, se fosse stata scoperta entro il perimetro della chiesa o al suo esterno e se accogliesse ancora la sepoltura originaria o fosse stata reimpiegata per un'inumazione successiva (e.g. A. M. Cortenovis, BCUD, ms. f. pr. 850, f. 100; G. Marini, BAV, Vat. Lat., ms. 9046, ff. 198-198'; *CIL* V, 1679). In ogni caso, sembra lecito domandarsi se tutti i materiali riutilizzati nella basilica in origine provenissero proprio dalla località di San Felice o se fossero stati portati anche da altre zone nei dintorni.

43 C. Gregorutti, 1879-1880, n. 58.

44 Per un inquadramento generale delle necropoli aquileiesi si veda A. Giovannini, 2009.



Fig. 5 L'iscrizione di *Pisinio*

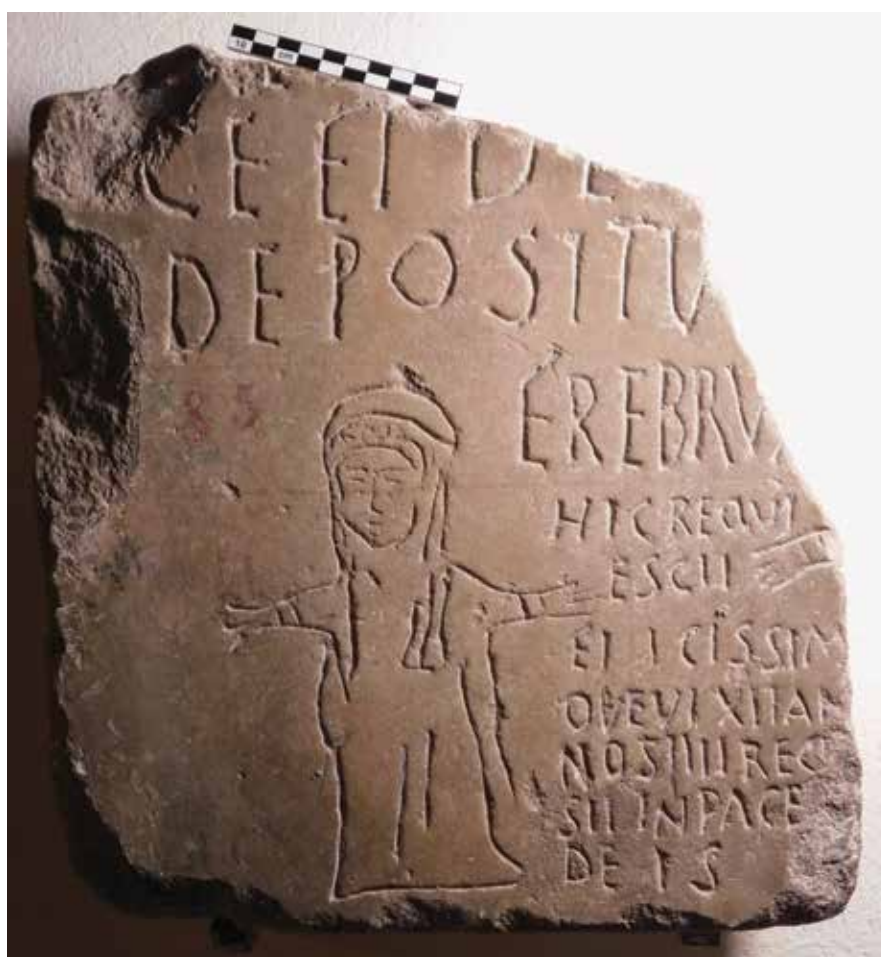


Fig. 6 L'iscrizione di *Filicissima*

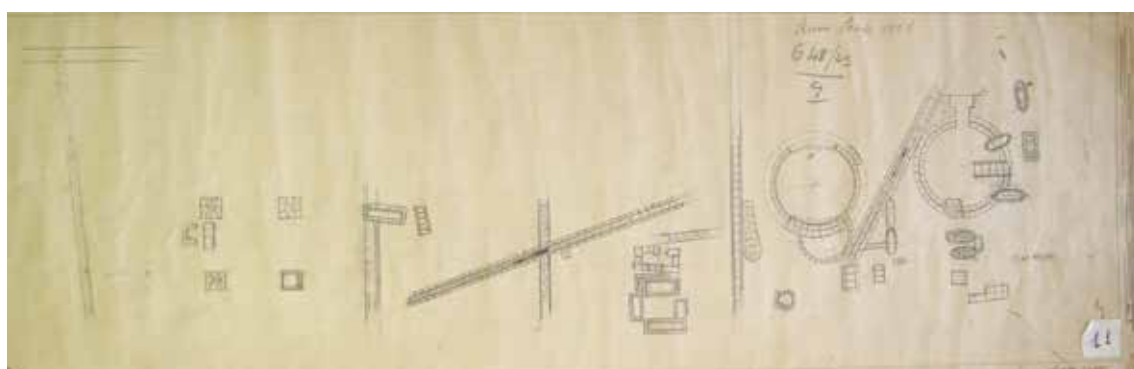


Fig. 7 Le strutture rinvenute durante gli scavi del 1906

Alcune piante relative ai lavori di inizio Novecento per la costruzione della ferrovia Cervignano-Belvedere,⁴⁵ alle indagini archeologiche di Mirabella Roberti e quella riassuntiva redatta da Bertacchi nel 2003 mostrano varie sepolture in corrispondenza dell'area davanti alla chiesa, qualche testimonianza in prossimità dell'edificio di culto e un piccolo gruppo di tombe situate a 20-40 m a nord-est della basilica (figg. 1, 7).⁴⁶

Tuttavia, la maggior parte di tali evidenze non sono accompagnate da sezioni di scavo o informazioni che permettano di risalire alle loro quote o di collocarle cronologicamente. Esse, dunque, potrebbero riferirsi al cimitero tardoantico, ma anche essere precedenti, di età medievale o appartenere a epoche diverse. Si può osservare, infatti, come alcune strutture funerarie si presentino sovrapposte tra loro e come già nel 1774 monsignor Gradenigo segnalasse che nell'area "è comparso un prodigioso numero di varie sepolture, l'una all'altra sovrastante".⁴⁷

Allo stesso tempo, però, si può rilevare come tra queste testimonianze sembri attestato solo il rituale inumatorio, affermatosi soprattutto dal II secolo d.C.; come varie tombe presentino il medesimo orientamento dell'edificio di culto o siano perpendicolari ad esso; come nei suoi appunti Maionica attribuisca all'"epoca cristiana" quattro sepolture a cassa laterizia e una tomba a cassa di lastre di pietra, che reimpiegava elementi architettonici più antichi, in parte già violate e in parte ancora intatte, scoperte nella zona all'inizio del XX secolo.⁴⁸ Sembra molto probabile, dunque, che almeno una parte delle evidenze funerarie attestate da questi documenti sia effettivamente pertinente all'epoca tardoantica e al cimitero cristiano che si articola-va attorno alla basilica dei Santi Felice e Fortunato.

Sfortunatamente, in base alla documentazione disponibile, non è possibile localizzare con precisione due sepolture trovate da Mirabella Roberti e da lui definite "tombe a camera". Lo studioso sottolinea come questa tipologia tombale all'epoca del rinvenimento non fosse ancora nota ad Aquileia e come in corrispondenza di quell'area fossero state trovate numerose tessere musive. Ipotizza, dunque, che tali sepolture fossero coperte da mosaici funerari, simili a quelli dell'Africa, della Sardegna e della Dalmazia.⁴⁹

45 In tale occasione, il direttore del museo di Aquileia, Enrico Maionica, individuò nella proprietà di Francesco Scuz delle fornaci (p.c. 648/23), dei mosaici, una strada e alcune sepolture (p.c. 648/1) (vedi *infra*). La ferrovia attraversava con un andamento NE-SW tutta quest'area e oggi è ricalcata da un percorso ciclo-pedonale.

46 MAN, Archivio disegni, Cassetto 30, n. 588; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, fig. 2; L. Bertacchi, 2003, tav. 39.

47 *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma*, 1774, 100. Spesso questo passaggio è riferito solo ai rinvenimenti effettuati nel settore presbiteriale della chiesa (e.g. A. Giovannini, 2012-2013, 222). Tuttavia, nonostante una certa imprecisione e ambiguità, sembra che questa frase indichi più genericamente tutta l'area della basilica e le sue immediate vicinanze. Parlando del luogo della scoperta di *InscrAq.* 2915 e 3233, infatti, l'autore pare procedere per gradi, partendo da una definizione generale dell'area per arrivare al punto specifico della chiesa. Egli, dunque, scrive "furono, non è molto, scoperte un miglio in circa in distanza delle antiche mura di Aquileja, ove tuttavia sorge, ed è onorata una Chiesetta dedicata ai SS. Martiri Felice, e Fortunato, Protettori primari della Provincia Aquilejese. Si credono inedite, perché recentemente dissotterrate in quel luogo, ove è comparso un prodigioso numero di varie sepolture, l'una all'altra sovrastante. Potrebbe colà esservi stato un'antico Cemetrio, ed anco Sepolcro de' Martiri Aquilejesi: il preciso sito, ove fu trovato l'uno, e l'altro Sarcofago, sta a piedi del Coro della suddetta Chiesa".

48 MAN, Archivio storico, Armadio 2, Cassetto 15, Manoscritti vari 1 - Ferrovia, nn. 33-37.

49 *Notiziario*, 1978, 19; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 264; R. Bresciani, 2014, 21.

Giovannini, invece, le interpreta come indicatori di possibili loculi sotterranei, assimilabili in qualche modo alle catacombe e agli ipogei romani, con cui potrebbero essere in relazione alcuni manufatti di non chiaro utilizzo nel contesto aquileiese, tra cui un fondo d'oro con Mosè che percuote la roccia.⁵⁰ Al contrario, Possenti sottolinea come la situazione morfologica e idrologica locale renda poco probabile l'esistenza di aree cimiteriali sotterranee, mentre evidenzia come la descrizione di Mirabella Roberti sembri richiamare le sepolture rinvenute all'interno del nartece di S. Giovanni in Foro ad Aquileia.⁵¹

A parte questo caso problematico, le altre strutture e contenitori funerari restituiti dalla zona sono tutti afferenti a tipologie molto diffuse nel bacino mediterraneo tardoantico, come tombe a cassa laterizia e in lastre di pietra, tombe con copertura alla cappuccina, tombe in anfora e sarcofagi, alcuni dei quali sicuramente reimpiegati e cristianizzati.⁵² Al momento della scoperta, alcune di esse risultavano già violate, altre accoglievano ancora i resti dei defunti; nessuna era associata a un'iscrizione funeraria.

Rispetto ai sarcofagi, oltre a quelli trovati nell'area presbiteriale della chiesa, si può ricordare una grande arca anepigrafe, verosimilmente marmorea, di reimpiego, venuta alla luce nel corso del XVIII secolo e contraddistinta dalla raffigurazione di due pastori criofores sotto delle arcate, ai lati di una *tabula inscriptionis*. Entrato subito nella collezione dei conti Pace a Tapogliano, il sarcofago rimase in quella sede fino al 1945, quando fu asportato dalle truppe alleate acuartieratesi nella villa. Da allora non si hanno notizie sulla sua collocazione e attualmente è noto solo grazie a un disegno di Asquini.⁵³ È possibile, infine, che facesse parte di un monumento funerario anche il bassorilievo in calcare, non finito, con i busti affrontati di Pietro e Paolo, scoperto nel 1901 a ovest della basilica.⁵⁴

Per concludere, sembra opportuno formulare qualche breve considerazione sui supporti delle iscrizioni funerarie rinvenute nell'area, sulle loro dimensioni e sul loro rapporto con le strutture tombali attestate. Escludendo gli epitaffi riportati sulle casse dei sarcofagi, dunque, si può osservare come tutte le epigrafi siano incise su lastre lapidee, che possono essere suddivise in base al loro spessore. La maggior parte è molto sottile, con uno spessore compreso tra 1,5 e 4 cm; alcune, però, si caratterizzano per uno spessore maggiore, che può raggiungere addirittura i 12 cm. Tra queste ultime, si segnala soprattutto l'epigrafe di *Megetiolus* (*InscrAq.* 3137), contraddistinta da dimensioni ragguardevoli per l'ambito aquileiese (cm 99,5 x 70 x 12), che si può supporre coprisse da sola una tomba a cassa laterizia o in lastre di pietra. Nel caso di lastre più sottili, invece, è verosimile che la tomba fosse dotata di una propria copertura, ad esempio in laterizi, su cui era fissato il supporto dell'epitaffio.

50 A. Giovannini, 2012-2013, 218-219.

51 E. Possenti, 2021, 110, nota 48.

52 MAN, Archivio storico, Armadio 2, Cassetto 15, Manoscritti vari 1 - Ferrovia, nn. 33-37; P. Cassola Guida, 1980; Notiziario, 1982, 16; M. Mirabella Roberti, 1993, 264-266, 268; R. Bresciani, 2014, 21-22.

53 G. Asquini, BAU, ms. 344, f. 11; G. B. Brusin, 1968, 21-22; G. Cuscito, 2004, 541; M. Vidulli Torlo, 2008, 354, 357; R. Bresciani, 2014, 20.

54 F. Russi, 1951; A. Ruggia, 1998; G. Cuscito, 2004, 541. E. Possenti, 2021, 113 lo attribuisce a un sarcofago.

Inoltre, prendendo in considerazione anche le altre dimensioni delle epigrafi, si può notare come, ad eccezione di *InscrAq.* 3137, nessuna sia abbastanza grande da chiudere da sola una sepoltura. Si può ipotizzare, dunque, che in origine fossero accostate ad altre lastre.

La cronologia dell'area funeraria

A seguito delle epoche e delle modalità di scavo con cui fu indagata l'area funeraria di San Felice, molte informazioni in merito al suo sviluppo e alla sua cronologia sono andate irrimediabilmente perdute. Non disponendo di dati stratigrafici, attualmente l'unico strumento per analizzare questi aspetti è rappresentato dalle iscrizioni restituite dalla zona. Sfortunatamente, tuttavia, solo poche epigrafi recano la data consolare e, per di più, due di esse presentano dei problemi interpretativi e di autenticità.

L'unico documento la cui datazione è assolutamente certa è l'epitaffio di una giovane morta a poco più di ventitré anni e sepolta il 25 novembre 382 (*InscrAq.* 2938). Ad oggi, si tratta della più antica testimonianza del cimitero di San Felice e mostra come l'area fosse utilizzata a scopo funerario da parte della comunità cristiana almeno dagli ultimi decenni del IV secolo.⁵⁵

Al contrario, l'epitaffio di *Anicia Ulfina* (*CIL*, V 47*) del 30 agosto 459, che potrebbe rappresentare l'iscrizione datata più recente non solo di questo contesto, ma dell'intera Aquileia, è sospettato di essere un falso creato all'inizio dell'Ottocento da Asquini.⁵⁶ I dubbi relativi all'iscrizione perduta di *Flavius Aparenta* (*InscrAq.* 2911), spesso attribuita al 432, invece, dipendono dall'interpretazione della parola/espressione a chiusura del testo, abbreviata o riunita in un monogramma di scioglimento incerto, e dall'impossibilità di controllarla sulla pietra.⁵⁷

In ogni caso, in base agli elementi interni alle altre epigrafi, sembra possibile collocare la maggior parte delle testimonianze venute alla luce in quest'area nel corso del IV secolo e nel passaggio tra IV e V secolo, con un'estensione almeno fino alla prima metà del V secolo.

55 Tale iscrizione è più antica anche del settimo sermone di Cromazio, risalente al periodo del suo episcopato (388-408), il cui incipit testimonia come il culto di Felice e Fortunato si fosse già affermato ad Aquileia negli ultimi decenni del IV secolo (e.g. Chrom. *Sermones* VII, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiae Aquileiensis* 4/1, 80-81).

56 Nota fin dall'inizio dell'Ottocento, l'epigrafe venne considerata per la prima volta un falso da Mommsen (*CIL* V 47*), fu riabilitata da Panciera (e.g. S. Panciera, 1970, 52-67) e venne nuovamente condannata da Billanovich (e.g. M. P. Billanovich 1974). Da allora, coloro che si sono occupati del documento si dividono tra chi ha accolto le argomentazioni di Panciera a favore di una sua rivalutazione (e.g. *PLRE* II, 8, 635, 911; A. Vigi Fior, 1981, 5-6; L. Cracco Ruggini, 1988) e chi sostiene la ricostruzione del suo processo di falsificazione proposta da Billanovich (e.g. Ch. Pietri, 1982, 116, nota 101; L. Rebaudo, 2007, 132; EDF000141).

57 A. M. Cortenovis, BCud., ms. f. pr. 850, f. 23 e le edizioni che dipendono da tale lezione (in primis *CIL* V, 1652; *ILCV*, 439; *InscrAq.* 2911) hanno reso l'espressione con le lettere A, R e D separate da un segno di interpunzione; Asquini (e.g. G. Asquini, BAU, ms. 345, f. 330) e Coleti (e.g. G. Coleti, BMCVe, ms. Cicogna 2746, n. 34 = antica segnatura: Cicogna MMCXIX), invece, hanno rappresentato dei monogrammi, anche se di forme differenti. Parte degli editori ha preferito non esprimersi sul significato di tali lettere; Diehl, invece, ritiene che l'abbreviazione possa essere sciolta come *Ard(abure)* e vi ha visto un riferimento all'omonimo console del 434 (rispetto all'anno del consolato, tuttavia, spesso la bibliografia relativa a questa iscrizione lo ha reso come 432. Cfr. B. Forlati Tamaro, 1974, 209; G. Cuscito, 1984, 275; D. Mazzoleni, 1994, 210; N. Grande, 2001, 36); più di recente, infine, Lorenzo Cigaina nella scheda EDR di questo documento (EDR145399) si domanda se la formula possa essere intesa come *a(nimam?) r(eddidit?) D(eo?)*.

Abbreviazioni

- BAU – Biblioteca arcivescovile di Udine.
- BAV – Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
- BBUD – Biblioteca Bartoliniana.
- BCUD – Biblioteca Civica “Vincenzo Joppi” di Udine.
- CIL – *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*, Berlino, 1863-.
- EDF – *Epigraphic Database Falsae*; <https://edf.unive.it/>
- EDR – *Epigraphic Database Roma*; <http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php>
- ERPAC – Ente Regionale Patrimonio Culturale Friuli Venezia Giulia; <https://erpac.regione.fvg.it/>
- ILCV – E. Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*, Berlino, 1925-1931.
- InscrAq. – G. B. Brusin, *Inscriptiones Aquileiae*, voll. I-III, Udine, 1991-1993.
- MAN – Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia.
- MGH – *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*; <https://www.dmgh.de/>
- PLRE – *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, voll. I-III, New York, 1971-1992.

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Belt Buckles – One of the Indicators of Late Antique Carnium's Contacts with the East, West, North and South

The Kranj-Lajh cemetery is one of the largest and at the same time most important cemeteries with continuous burials since the last decades of the 5th century and at least throughout almost the entire 6th century in the area of the southeast Alps and the middle Danube. It is a distinctly "cosmopolitan" cemetery, where archaeological materials from various Germanic groups, and, according to most authors was a mix of the indigenous population. It is difficult to associate the materials with specific ethnic groups, but it is possible to trace the origins of some finds, their greatest concentration being in a certain area and, depending on their distribution, their dispersion. Some exceptional belt buckles or belt sets were also found in Kranj. I will try to find the connections of the inhabitants of late antique and early medieval Carnium (Kranj) with the Eastern and Western Germanic groups, and with the Eastern Roman Empire at the end of the 5th and the 6th century based on these belt buckles. Considering the finds, the Kranj-Lajh cemetery is probably one of the most prominent cemeteries from the mentioned period in the area between the Danube and the Adriatic. It is a cemetery where materials and thus contacts, if not influences or the direct presence of peoples from different parts of Europe mixed during the time between the Ostrogothic occupation of part of the Western Roman Empire and the consolidation of Lombard power in Italy. At the same time, we should not ignore the possible connection of the Carnium with the Franks (if not directly, then through the Alemanni who were subordinate to the Franks).

Keywords: Late Antiquity, Early Middle Ages, Carnium (Kranj), Eastern and Western Germanic peoples, Kranj-Lajh cemetery, grave goods, belt buckles

Late Antique Kranj (Carnium) and the Kranj-Lajh Cemetery

The Roman cities of today's Slovenia reached their last peak in the 4th century. Archaeological finds show that life there continued until the end of the 4th century and during the first decades of the 5th century. After this time, the cities died out, since only a few traces of occupation from the 5th and/or 6th century were discovered.¹ A small number of finds from the second half of the 5th and/or 6th century in these cities can be attributed to the fact that the youngest strata in Roman cities were most exposed to destruction in later periods. In any

¹ S. Ciglencečki, 1997, 191-192; 1999b, 290-291; 1999c, 302; 2000, 120-121.

case, given their low administrative, economic, infrastructural, and societal function, typical of Roman cities, they can be considered collapsed.² Archaeological finds show that the old urban settlements were gone in the second half of the 5th and 6th centuries. A similar thing happened with village settlements and rural estates. At the same time, refuges were built and eventually became permanent settlements during the 5th century.

At first, they were located near towns and other settlements in the plains, but later the inhabitants searched for more remote and hidden areas. In the second half of the 5th century, the settlement structure changed completely. The most important novelty were fortified hill-top settlements. They are known throughout Slovenia, except for the Prekmurje region, as well as in neighbouring countries. Some of the hilltop fortifications from the late 5th and 6th centuries differ from others in terms of strategic location and often their layout as well. They are located near the most important access roads to Italy, as well as along other important routes. Some of them supervised traffic on the Sava River. Their elevated position enabled them a good overview of the land and they are often placed so that signalling between them is possible. In addition to the locals, they also housed Germanic military garrisons. The garrisons allegedly did not consist of regular soldiers, but mercenaries with their families. They probably made a living by cultivating the surrounding land and raising livestock and performed their military duties only in time of need.³

Kranj (*Carnium*) represents the largest and most important settlement from Late Antiquity in today's Slovenia.⁴ *Carnium's* position is lowland, but it was almost unconquerable. The rocky pier of the confluence of the rivers Sava and Kokra offered it natural protection. *Carnium's* conditions were akin to contemporary hilltop settlements. Its natural protection and lowland location represented an advantage over the hilltop settlements, as they allowed for quick intervention. With its central position, it controlled access roads to the Upper Sava Valley and northeast Italy, entry into the Poljanska and Selška Valleys as alternative routes to Friuli⁵ and access to the mountain passes in the Karawanks leading to Austrian Carinthia⁶ (fig. 1).

On the site of Kranj's old city centre, a Roman settlement already existed in the Augustan period. However, the importance of the nearby *Emona* (Ljubljana) probably grew after the annexation of Noricum and the consolidation of its position in the region. Some early-Roman

2 P. Štih, 2001, 10.

3 Slavko Ciglencečki researched mostly the late antique colonization of the southeast Alpine area (e.g. S. Ciglencečki, 1999b; 1999c; 2000; 2023). See also T. Milavec, 2021. For hilltop settlements, see: S. Ciglencečki, 1987; 1992; 1994; 2008; S. Ciglencečki *et al.*, 2011, 273-287.

4 E.g. S. Ciglencečki, 1999a; 2023, 111-112; M. Sagadin, 2020, 208-211.

5 M. Sagadin, 2008, 192. These are the communication routes in the northwestern part of Slovenia and partly in Austrian Carinthia and Friuli that safely and in the shortest possible way enabled access across the Alpine world to the Friulian Plain through Upper Carniola and Soča Valley (S. Ciglencečki *et al.*, 2011, 260, 262, fig. 5.1).

6 If we take into account the authors who believe that the prevalence of Gothic monetary finds is a fairly reliable indicator of their settlement (e.g. A. Kiss, 1984; Ž. Demo, 1994; P. Kos, 2000) and consider other archaeological finds that can be linked to their occupation or rather control at the end of the 5th and first half of the 6th century, then we get a fairly clear picture of their settlement in Dalmatia, Noricum and Pannonia. This also shows that the northeastern border of the Gothic-controlled area was represented by the Drava river along its entire course. Therefore, much of present-day Austrian Carinthia fell under their direct control (G. Tica, 2017, 352-353).

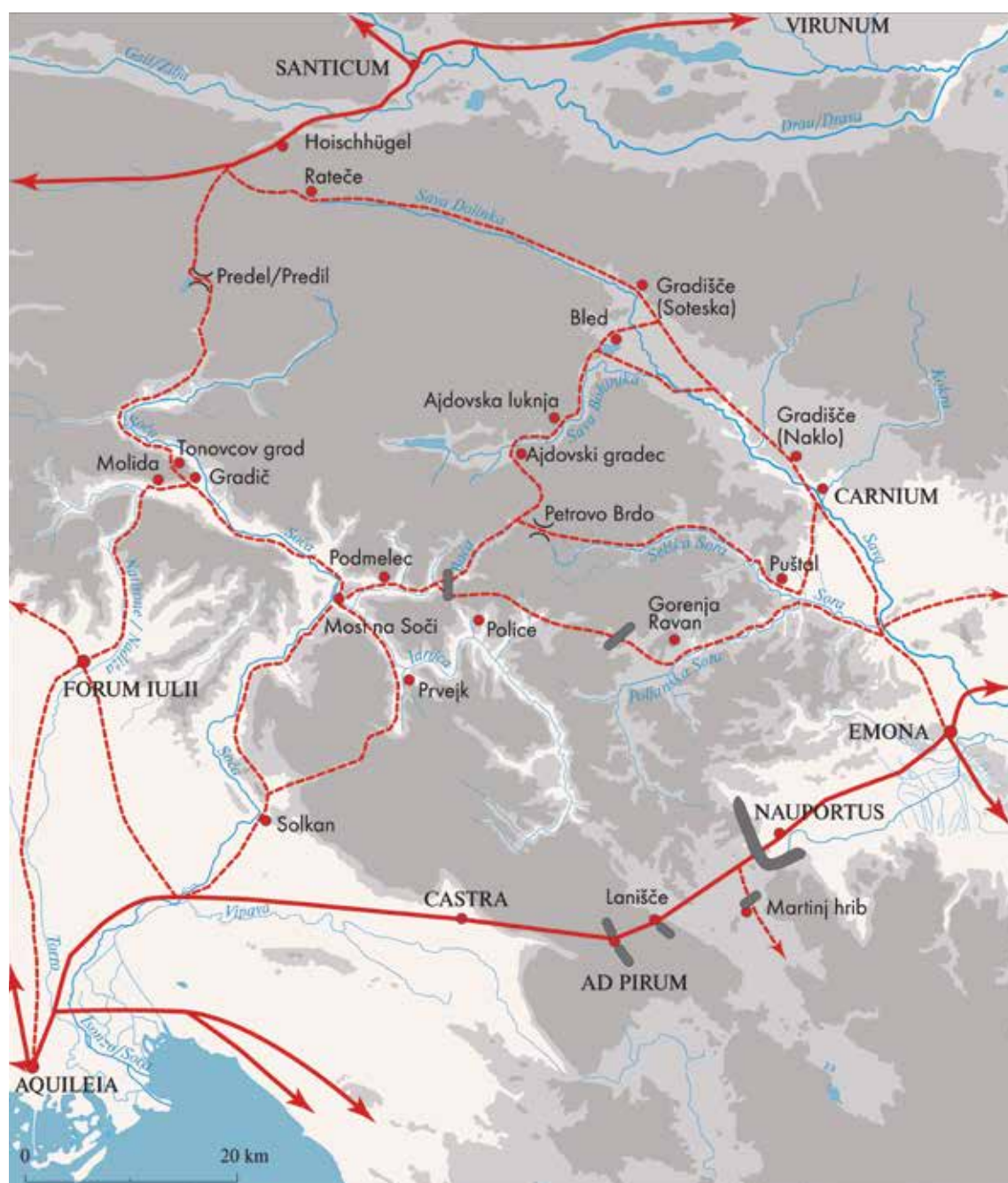


Fig. 1 An attempt to reconstruct the late antique roads, routes and posts in northwest Slovenia

settlements, including *Carnium*, thus ceased to exist, as seeking alliances with the local population and the existence of fortified settlements became obsolete. There is a gap in Kranj's population during the second half of the 1st century up to the 4th century. Then the settlement was revived or re-established, as evidenced by some, otherwise rare jewellery finds, clearly limited to the 4th century. It is possible that a building (or several of them) with a luxurious interior existed. It supposedly dates to the 5th century, as evidenced by the remains of roof tiles, paved walkways, mosaic stones and remains of frescoes.⁷ Due to its natural protection and geographical position, the settlement flourished at the end of the 5th and throughout the entirety of the 6th century.

The distribution of the finds shows that in Late Antiquity the entire conglomerate pier, which today encompasses the old town of Kranj,⁸ was inhabited (fig. 2).

Below the settlement, on the southwestern part of the rocky pier, on the Lajh fallow land, lay the cemetery of the late antique *Carnium*. The Kranj-Lajh cemetery is one of the largest late antique/early medieval cemeteries with continuous burials from the end of the 5th and at least through the entire 6th century in the southeast Alps and the Middle Danube area. In just over a hundred years, about 800 graves have been excavated. Over 150 were excavated from 1982 onward, and the rest at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Given that the entire cemetery has not yet been explored, this is not the final number.⁹

The materials from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were published in a monograph by Vida Stare,¹⁰ but due to numerous errors, the publication urgently needs revision.¹¹ Therefore, despite the lack of pictorial material, it is still necessary to use older publications, especially those of Jakob Žmavc and Walter Šmid.¹² The problem with the graves that have been excavated since 1982 is that material has not been published, with rare exceptions.¹³ The graves excavated in 2004-2005 and 2009-2010 were discussed by Tilen Podobnik in an unpublished diploma thesis and excavation report, but their accessibility is rather limited.¹⁴ Some representative finds were published in catalogues of various exhibitions.¹⁵ Unfortunately, Werner's remark (made before the publication of Vida Stare) is

7 M. Sagadin, 2008, 139-140, 176, 188-189; 2020, 206-208.

8 M. Sagadin, 2008, 155, map 3; 2020, 208, fig. 4.

9 T. Knific, 1995, 23-32; T. Knific, J. Lux, 2010, 31-32; 2015, 31; G. Tica, 2023, 110, fig. 5. For the history of research at the Kranj-Lajh cemetery, see J. Lux, J. Ravnik, 2008; for the history of research in the late 19th and early 20th centuries see also H. Bras Kernel, 2002.

10 V. Stare, 1980.

11 G. Tica, 2017, 288-291, 356-364. Some other authors have also pointed out errors in Stare's publication (e.g. I. Bóna, 1981 (a review of Stare's monograph); T. Knific, 1995; H. Bras Kernel, 2002; T. Milavec, 2004; T. Milavec, 2007). In some recent publications, the authors, with the help of archival material and old publications, have already started to use revised data (e.g. P. Bitenc, T. Knific (eds.), 2001, 69, cat. no. 216, 77, cat. no. 245; T. Knific, 2005, 334-337, 342, fig. 4: a; 9: 1, b; T. Milavec, 2004, 38-39; T. Milavec, 2007, 336, notes 20, 22; 337, notes 48, 49, 51; 339, note 83; cat. nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 11).

12 J. Žmavc, 1904; W. Šmid, 1907.

13 E.g., in T. Knific, J. Lux, 2010; G. Tica, 2021.

14 T. Podobnik, 2016; M. Urek *et al.* 2016a; 2016b (excavation report).

15 E.g. in P. Bitenc, T. Knific (eds.), 2001; *Zlata doba*, 2006; V. Vidrih Perko, 2013; V. Perko, 2018.

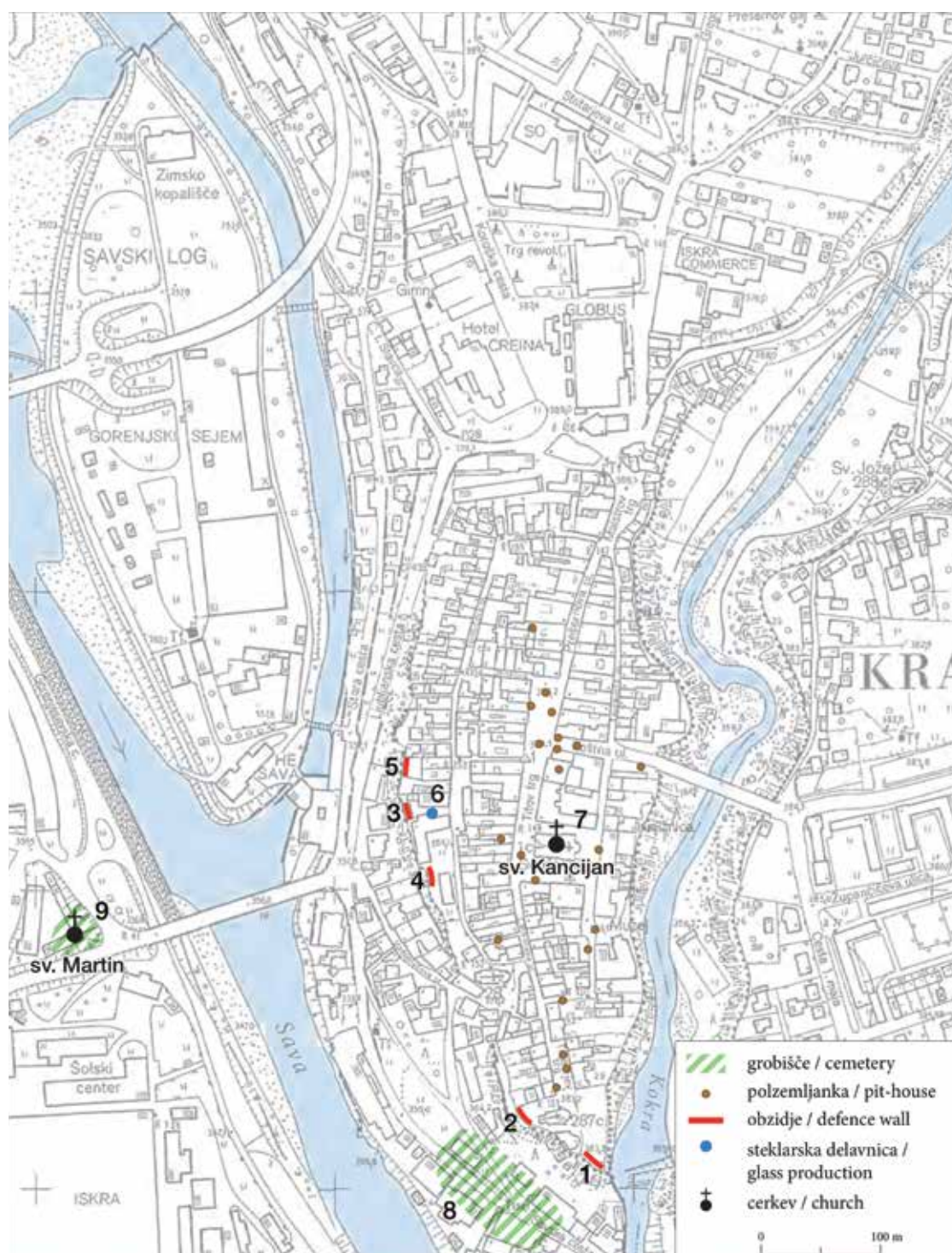


Fig. 2 Kranj – late antique sites (M. Sagadin 2020, fig. 4). 1, 2 – Trubar Square (Pungart); 3, 4 – Tomšič Street 44 (northern and southern Kieselstein castle courtyard); 5 Tomšič Street 38; 6 – Tomšič Street 44 (northern Kieselstein castle courtyard); 7 – St. Cantius church; 8 – Kranj-Lajh cemetery; 9 – Križišče-Iskra cemetery with former St. Martin church

still valid, that a more detailed analysis of *Carnium*'s cemetery does not make sense until its full publication is published.¹⁶

Belt Buckles from the Kranj-Lajh Cemetery

Kranj-Lajh is a distinctly "cosmopolitan" cemetery, where materials from various Germanic groups and, according to most authors, the materials from the indigenous population are mixed. It is difficult to associate the materials with specific ethnic groups, but it is possible to trace the origin of some finds, their greatest concentration in a certain area and, depending on their distribution, assess their expansion. I will briefly present this on the belt buckles found at the cemetery. However, the purpose of this article is not to describe all the belt buckles found at the cemetery, classify them typologically or process them in detail.¹⁷ I only present a selection from the Kranj-Lajh, which, in my opinion, represent peculiarities or are interesting due to the prevalence and chronological classification of similar specimens in Europe.¹⁸ I think that the belt buckles mentioned portray a representative pattern related to the topic of this article.

The Oldest Belt Buckles from the Kranj-Lajh Cemetery

Among the oldest belt buckles at the Kranj-Lajh cemetery are specimens that developed from the belt buckles with a kidney-shaped plate from the end of the 4th and the first decades of the 5th century, and especially between the belt buckles of the so-called East Germanic cultural complex (also horizon or *koine*), which appears in the Hun and post-Hun period.¹⁹ The East Germanic cultural complex is characterized primarily by a specific costume, which is formed by more or less richly decorated pairs of bow brooches on the shoulders and belt buckles. This costume type is defined based on rich (rather rare) female graves in the Pannonian Plain from the second third or third quarter of the 5th century. Various East Germanic groups (the Goths, the Gepids, the Heruli, the Sciri, etc.) and partially the Iranian Alans are considered part of the East Germanic cultural complex.

A belt buckle specimen from grave 6/2009 could be classified as one such example (fig. 3). It is a two-piece belt buckle with a kidney-shaped plate adorned with tendrils and spirals made in the chip-carving technique (*kerbschnitt* in German). On the back side, a silver

16 J. Werner, 1962, 125.

17 According to publications and excavation reports in the last two decades on the Kranj-Lajh cemetery, slightly less than 300 different belt buckles (fastening belts, shoes, weapons, bags, etc.) made of different materials (silver, gilt silver, bronze, stone, brass and mostly iron) were found at the cemetery (e.g. V. Stare 1980; T. Knific 1995; T. Knific, J. Lux 2010; T. Podobnik 2016; M. Urek *et al.* 2016a; 2016b). Therefore, a precise analysis of these finds would greatly exceed the topic of the article. In addition, the article's purpose is not to present the Carnium belt buckles, but the connections of Kranj with various European regions. Also, due to the great number of finds, I deliberately opted only for several types of belt buckles, which, as the representative samples, are sufficient for this purpose.

18 The chronological dating was outlined by the aforementioned authors.

19 E.g. J. Tejral, 2012.

sheet with three rhombus-shaped cells with a green and red glass inlays was embedded into the pierced plate. Double quadrants are engraved on the side surface of the tongue base. A zig-zag pattern is engraved on one side surface of the tongue top while the other side is decorated with a series of V-shaped incisions.²⁰ A young woman was buried in the grave. The coffin remains were preserved, in addition to the gilded silver belt buckle with a kidney-shaped plate laid above the pelvis. Furthermore, gold threads were excavated. They lay horizontally over the forehead and from the middle of the forehead towards the top of the head, and were probably part of some headgear. A fragment of a bronze ring and a fragment of bronze sheet metal were discovered near the head, and a round, gold rosette fibula with multi-coloured glass and/or garnet inlays was placed under the neck (fig 4).²¹ Disregarding the relatively small number of finds, the grave, based on the accessories' quality, belonged to a female member of Carnium aristocracy.

Even though the belt buckle is decorated with a spiral ornament, it cannot be labelled as an Italian "Ostrogothic" piece. The shape of the buckle plate itself is atypical of the "Ostrogothic" Italic belt buckles, and the spiral ornament appears already on the pieces of the so-called "Karavukovo" style, with the oldest specimens dating to the middle third of the 5th century. The belt buckle most likely originated in the Pannonian Plain, as it can be best compared (shape, decoration, tongue) to the belt buckle from Turda, Transylvania (the Gepids), although the belt buckle from Turda is more richly decorated (fig. 5). By comparing tongues and plates,²² Radu Harhoiu dated it to the middle of the 5th century.²³ Mihai Bărbulescu notes that the comparisons for the belt buckle from Turda can be found from Crimea to Spain, but most of them are from Pannonia and Central Europe. Furthermore, the Italian specimens supposedly came to Italy with Odoacer or Theodoric (469/470 or 489). Bărbulescu also slightly expands Harhoiu's dating to the second half of the 5th century, possibly its last third.²⁴

However, if the belt buckle (its manufacture) can be dated at the latest to the last third of the 5th century, there is a problem with grave 6/2009's dating due to the round rosette fibula with *cloisonné* enamel (fig. 4:3 and fig. 6). The best parallels for the rosette fibula are a fibula from grave 72 from Hegykő (the Lombards), a fibula from grave 256 from Alterending (the Baiuvarii), a pair of fibulae from grave 306 from Straubing-Bajuwarenstraße (the Baiuvarii), and a pair of fibulae from Gammertingen (the Alemanni), all dated to the middle third of the 6th century.²⁵ It can be assumed that the belt buckle from Carnium grave 6/2009 represents a family heirloom. Both the belt buckle and the rosette fibula could probably have come to Kranj from either Central Europe (allegedly links to the Alemanni) or Pannonia (allegedly links to the Gepids, who took over part of the material culture from the Lombards upon their arrival in Pannonia).

20 Belt buckle size 10.04 cm x 6.08 cm; plate size 4.75 cm x 6.08 cm, loop size 4.1 cm (e.g. M. Urek *et al.*, 2016a, 242; 2016b, 58, Pl. 82:4; V. Perko, 2018, 112, cat. no. 30).

21 M. Urek *et al.*, 2016a, 128-129; 2016b, 57-58, Pl. 81: grave 6/2009: 1-3; 83: 4.

22 R. Harhoiu, 1997, fig. 20.

23 R. Harhoiu, 1997, 114-115.

24 M. Bărbulescu, 2008, 44-53, 196-197.

25 E. Horvath, 2012, 224, fig. 4f, tab. 2, with literature for all mentioned archaeological sites.



Fig. 3 The two-part belt buckle consisting of an oval loop and a kidney shaped fitting from Kranj-Lajh, grave 6/2009

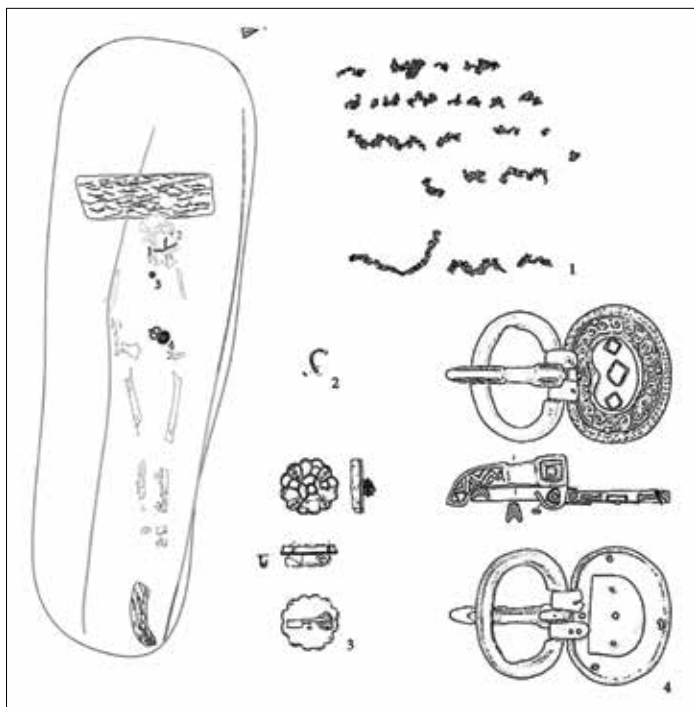


Fig. 4 Kranj-Lajh, grave 6/2009



Fig. 5 Finds from a rich female grave from Turda (Transylvania, Romania)



Fig. 6 Round rosette fibula with *cloisonné* enamel from Kranj-Lajh, grave 6/2009

The second belt buckle is a specimen from grave 12/2009, which was manufactured approximately at the same time as the belt buckle from grave 6/2009 (fig. 7).²⁶ The two-part belt buckle consists of an oval loop and a kidney-shaped plate. The oval loop is made of stone,²⁷ the copper alloy tongue has a shield-shaped base, and the kidney-shaped plate is polychrome. The tongue is attached to the plate with a strip of gilded copper alloy. The top of the plate features flat oval garnets and green glass ovals. Thirty small, round, red garnets are inserted into the gold rim of the plate in five groups of six, intersected with rivets joining the decorated upper part of the plate with the copper alloy base. The polychrome style of the fitting is different from that of the pendant from the same grave where the golden base is visible – the raised cells containing a flat garnet and glass inserts cover the entire decorated area. For this decoration style, the term *cloisonné* is frequently used.

Belt buckles with kidney-shaped plates in the *cloisonné* style were in use between the second half of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century.²⁸ Belt buckles with loops made of stone, most frequently rock crystal (quartz) or sepiolite (*meerschau*), and organic material, most frequently bone, have a broader timeframe of use, from the late 4th century to the first half of the 6th century, but their peak corresponds roughly to that of kidney-shaped and *cloisonné* belt buckles.²⁹ Most such belt sets were discovered in male graves in the Rhine, upper Danube, and Tisza Basins, that is to say, areas predominantly settled by the Franks, Alemanni, and Gepids.³⁰ Belt buckles with stone loops are typically found in richly furnished graves,³¹ and are believed to have been given as diplomatic gifts or military service awards.³² There are solid analogies for setting small garnets into entire rims of belt plates, for example in the graves of Apahida near Cluj-Napoca in Transylvania,³³ as well as on the other side of Europe in the grave of Childeric I from Tournai in Belgium (the so-called Apahida-Tournai group).³⁴ In Apahida, various *cloisonné* items feature a combination of red garnets and green glass, as seen in the belt buckle from Kranj.³⁵ All the graves from Apahida and the grave of Childeric I count among some of the most richly furnished graves of the second half of the 5th century in Europe. However, the belt buckle from Kranj cannot be dated to the second half or the end of the 5th century, as shield-based tongues only started appearing in the first half of the 6th

26 The buckle was first described in the Kranj-Lajh cemetery excavation report in 2009 and 2010 by Tilen Podobnik (e.g. M. Urek *et al.* 2016a, 243-245). The buckle was later published several times (e.g. V. Perko, 2018, 113, cat. no. 34; G. Tica, 2021, 151-152; 2023, 115-117).

27 Interpreted as malachite (e.g. V. Perko, 2018, 113, cat. no. 34) or Greek green porphyry (e.g. M. Urek *et al.* 2016, 243).

28 E.g. D. Quast, 1993, 54; R. Harhoiu, 1997, 112-115; M. Schulze-Dörlamm, 2009, 91-94.

29 E.g. V. Bierbrauer, 1975, 158-161; D. Quast, 1996, 335-337; H. Eger *et al.*, 2017, 221.

30 D. Quast, 1996, fig. 7 (map of the distribution of belt buckles with quartz loops).

31 D. Quast, 1993, 54.

32 D. Quast, 1996, 340-341.

33 R. Oanță-Marghitu, 2010, 223, cat. no. 40.c, 225, cat. no. 40.2; R. Oanță-Marghitu, 2014, 159, left fig., 160, right fig., 162, right fig., 164; R. Oanță-Marghitu, S. Nagy, 2014, 617, cat. no. 167.1., 621, cat. no. 167.2.1., 622, cat. nos. 167.2.2., 167.2.3., 623, cat. no. 167.2.4., 624, cat. no. 167.2.5., 625, cat. nos. 162.2.7., 167.2.8.

34 D. Quast, 2015, 167-168, fig. 3, pl. 2: 1; 6: 1; 7: 1; 9; 10; 15: 3, 9, 11, 12, 14, 19; 16; 17; 18; 20; 21.

35 R. Oanță-Marghitu, 2010, 223, cat. no. 40.a, 223, cat. no. 40.b, 224, cat. no. 40.1; 2014, 161, left fig., R. Oanță-Marghitu, S. Nagy, 2014, 622, cat. no. 167.2.2., 626, cat. no. 167.2.10., 627, 628, cat. no. 167.2.12.

century, with the earliest examples, such as the one from Kranj, stemming from between 510 and 530.³⁶ It needs to be noted that the buckle had undergone repair and that the tongue was added to the buckle later.³⁷ Joan Pinar Gil believes the belt buckle from Kranj to be the missing link between the *cloisonné* items from the older, so-called Apahida-Tournai-Mšec group (second half of the 5th century)³⁸ and the younger, so-called Odoacrian / Theoderician Italian jewellery³⁹ (late 5th and early 6th century).⁴⁰

The leaf-shaped pendant⁴¹ and the belt buckle from Kranj's grave 12/2009 could represent typical finds of the second half of the 5th century, assuming that the shield-shaped tongue was a later addition to the belt buckle and knowing that the pendant could have been made already in the middle of the 5th century. The belt buckle and the pendant are without a doubt items only deposited in richly furnished graves, hence we can speculate that the grave belongs to a child of an elite family from late antique Carnium. Both finds are potentially part of the family heirloom which would have been made years, if not decades or half a century before they were deposited.

“Ostrogothic” Belt Buckles

The belt buckles of the Kranj (Krainburg) type are probably the most “Ostrogothic” type of belt buckles in the Kranj-Lajh cemetery (fig. 8). These are quite rare specimens,⁴² however,

³⁶ U. Koch, 2001, 65-66, code Y24, fig. 21: Y24; M. Slabe, 2003, 85.

³⁷ This hypothesis is based on the damage of the gilded copper alloy strip that connects the loop to the plate, and on the state of preservation of the copper alloy base of the belt buckle.

³⁸ In addition to the listed finds from Apahida and Tournai, there are, for example, the belt buckle from Mšec in the Czech Republic (published as a series of articles in a collection of scientific papers, dedicated to the finds from Mšec and Řevničov in the central Czech Republic; J. Jiřík *et al.*, 2023, 10-69), the belt buckle from Pontic Olbia (e.g. M. Kazanski, 2023, fig. 5), a part of grave goods from a rich male grave from Blučina-Cezavy in Moravia (e.g. Droberjar, 2002, 20-22, with the above listed older literature) or the belt buckle from a rich grave from Rüdern (D. Quast, 2023).

³⁹ E.g. a belt buckle from an unknown Italian site from the Castellani jewellery collection kept by the Museo nazionale etrusco di Villa Giulia (e.g. V. Bierbrauer, 1975, fig. 42, pl. 82: 4), a pair of arch fibulae from the Desana depot find (e.g. M. Aimone, 2010, pl. 4-5) or a pair of round fibulae from grave 5 from Unterhaching, Bavaria (e.g. B. Haas-Gebhard, 2013, 45, pl. 6: 6-7).

⁴⁰ J. Pinar Gil, 2023, 155.

⁴¹ A leaf-shaped pendant made in the polychrome style was also found in grave 12/2009. It was made in the Hun or, more likely, post-Hun period, in the 5th century. It probably originates from one of the production centres in the Pannonian Basin, possibly in Gepid territory based on the available parallels (e.g. G. Tica, 2021, 147-151).

⁴² Most of them are known from Italy: Argenta (FE), Pieve di San Giorgio, probably from a destroyed grave (e.g. V. Bierbrauer, 1994, 185, cat. no. III.17), and two finds without site data (e.g. V. Bierbrauer, 1975, Pl. 64: 4; 77: 2). Another buckle fragment was found in Gradec pri Veliki Strmici in the Dolenjska region in Slovenia – metal detector find (e.g. P. Bitenc, T. Knific, 2008, 112, cat. no. 6), and a local variant is represented by a belt buckle from an unknown site in Spain (e.g. V. Bierbrauer, 1975, pl. 59: 3). The Spoleto type belt buckles are similar. They differ from the Kranj type mainly in the decoration on the rectangular belt plates, which feature stylized heads of birds of prey facing each other. In addition, the Spoleto type buckles, unlike the Kranj type, have two heads of birds of prey connected by another stylized, double-beaked bird of prey's head in the middle of the shorter side of the rectangular plate (e.g. V. Bierbrauer, 1975, 142-143). The most luxurious example of a belt buckle with a rectangular plate, on which the birds of prey's heads facing each other are depicted on the shorter side, is a gold *cloisonné* belt buckle from Landrian (prov. Pavia), found at the end of the 19th century, for which we do not have precise site data (e.g. V. Bierbrauer, 1975, pl. 25: 1-1a).



Fig. 7 The two-part belt buckle consisting of an oval loop and a kidney shaped fitting from Kranj-Lajh, grave 12/2009



Fig. 8 The belt buckles of the Kranj (Krainburg) type; 1. Kranj-Lajh, grave Schulz 45, 2. Pavšlar's collection, purchased in 1937, Kranj Lajh, without site data

except for one specimen from Kranj (where we cannot determine other grave goods)⁴³ and one from Kerch in Crimea,⁴⁴ they are finds for which we do not have precise site data.

The belt buckles of the Kranj type are cast, three-part buckles with rectangular plates. The end parts feature birds of prey heads turned toward each other, bordered with a nielled decoration. Polished semicircular almandines/garnets are inlaid in the corners. The inner edge of the plate is decorated with a line of deeply etched spirals. The Kranj type represents a transition stage between the older buckles decorated with spirals and younger buckles decorated with a knit ornament. It is characteristic of the Italo-Ostrogothic period, but it can also occur earlier.⁴⁵

It seems that apart from the local variants from Spain, the Kranj-type buckles are limited to Italy and the northeast Alps. This territory was under Ostrogothic control at the end of the 5th and in the first decades of the 6th century. The only find discovered outside this area is a belt buckle from tomb 163/1904 from Kerch in northeast Crimea. The tomb itself is dated to a later time, to the second half of the 6th century.⁴⁶ Some authors associate "Gothic" and "Gepid" finds from Crimea (Kerch) with Justinian's military actions against the Huns, who invaded/occupied the Cimmerian Bosphorus in 527/528 or 533/534. At least part of Justinian's military units are believed to have consisted of the Danube Germans (the Goths and the Gepids),⁴⁷ even before the so-called Gothic wars (if the invasion happened in 527/528), which means they were mercenaries.

Others believe that Gothic and Gepid materials appeared in Crimea after 535. Supposedly, it was the Goths and Gepids who fell into Byzantine captivity during the Gothic wars. Such events could indicate the defeat of the Ostrogothic army in Dalmatia and the fall of the Ostrogothic Sirmium into Byzantine hands in the years 530 to 535. It is quite possible that during these military actions, the captured Ostrogoths would be expelled to the east, to Thrace or perhaps even to Crimea. A Gothic community already resided in Thrace that did not join Theoderic's military campaign in Italy in 488. The conquest of Sirmium occurred almost simultaneously with the expeditionary units' march to the Cimmerian Bosphorus against the Huns. The military deportation of the Goths to Crimea around or after 535 may be one of the reasons for the appearance of Ostrogothic elements in material culture along the northeastern Black

43 Vida Stare published both Kranj type buckles as finds without location data. They were purchased in 1937 from the heirs of the then-owner of the land where the Kranj-Lajh cemetery lies, Tomaž Pavšlar, who was a miller and a merchant (e.g. V. Stare, 1980, 77, pl. 113). But at least one belt buckle (fig. 8: 1) can be said to have originated from the female grave 45, which was excavated in 1901 by Ferdinand Schulz. In the report for the grave 45 Schulz states, among other things, that an iron weapon (probably a knife), was found at the hips, and next to it lay a "beautiful bronze clasp" decorated with eleven stones. We know of only one "beautiful bronze clasp" with eleven almandine inserts from Kranj, and it is the buckle published by Stare in pl. 113: 2 (the report of Ferdinand Schulz Gräbfunde in Krainburg 1901 is kept by the archive of the Archaeological Department of the National Museum of Slovenia (*Narodni muzej Slovenije*) in Ljubljana, no. 383; a manuscript with situational sketch of excavated graves). The second belt buckle published by Stare (pl. 113: 2) is from Pavšlar's collection, which was purchased in 1937 and published already in 1903 by Alois Riegl (e.g. A. Riegl, 1903, fig. 207). It is interesting to compare the two publications. With Riegl, the buckle has a preserved middle part of the central plate with four inserts for almandines/grenades, three of which are still in place. The buckle in Stare's publication does not have this part, but it is fully published in the catalogue *Od Rimljanov do Slovanov* (fig. 8: 2).

44 E.g. A. I. Ajbabin, 2011, fig. 36: 3.

45 V. Bierbrauer, 1975, 143-145, 150-152.

46 A. I. Ajbabin, 2011, 94.

47 E.g. A. I. Ajbabin, 2011, 90.

Sea coasts. The defeated Ostrogoths would thus become a reinforcement of the Byzantine military units stationed there. It should not be surprising that the hypothetical shift of the Ostrogoths to Crimea is manifested mainly in the elements of women's costumes. Unlike the captured Gothic soldiers, who allegedly had to adapt to Byzantine "military fashion" when they were relocated, the ethnographic traditional characteristics would primarily be preserved in the costumes of their wives. The captured Gothic soldiers were supposedly accompanied by their families when they were transferred to Crimea.⁴⁸ Therefore, the Kranj-type belt buckles could represent connections on the Italy – Central Danube – Crimea line.

In graves 12 and 238, among other grave goods, two small, two-piece belt buckles with glass inserts in rectangular plates were found (fig 9:1).⁴⁹ According to Vinski, the buckles could be of Ostrogothic, but more likely of Mediterranean origin.⁵⁰ He found comparisons for them in the allegedly male grave 21 from Rifnik near Šentjurju in the Strya region in Slovenia⁵¹ and in the male grave 33 from Rakovčani in northwestern Bosnia.⁵² It is a fairly widespread form of belt buckle.⁵³ Similar rectangular buckle plates were, for example, found in highland settlements of Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj⁵⁴ and in Gradec near Veliki Strmici⁵⁵ in the Dolenjska region. All these sites were (could have been) established on the border between the provinces of Dalmatia and Savia during the time the Ostrogoths controlled both the northeastern Alps and northern Bosnia. Considering other grave goods in some of the previously mentioned graves, the belt buckles can be dated no later than the first half of the 6th century.⁵⁶ The small, two-piece belt buckles with a glass insert in a rectangular plate are also found in areas not occupied by Ostrogoths. A belt buckle, identical to the one from Rakovčani as stated by Nada Miletić, was found at the Kalemegdan Fortress in Belgrade (Singidunum, the late antique province of Moesia Superior).⁵⁷ The fortress is in the immediate vicinity of the Ostrogothic province of Pannonia Sirmiensis (late Roman Pannonia Secunda). However, another similar belt buckle was found on the other side of Europe, in the Frankish cemetery of Kärlich (Mülheim-Kärlich) in western Germany. That buckle is dated to the second half of the 5th century.⁵⁸

Given the distribution map of such buckles, based on site and finds research and publication, we can conclude that most originate from the southeast Alps. The area was under Ostrogothic control, despite the fact that during the rule of Theoderic and his daughter Amalasuntha, it was still officially part of the Roman Empire. The belt buckle from Rakovčani is from that time and is located in an area controlled by the Ostrogoths. The Singidunum find is

48 E.g. M. Kazanski, 2018.

49 V. Stare, 1980, pl. 11: 1; 73: 13.

50 Z. Vinski, 1980, 20.

51 L. Bolta, 1981, pl. 4: 13.

52 N. Miletić, 1970, pl. 4: 33.

53 M. Slabe, 2003, 86.

54 S. Ciglencečki, 1994, pl. 9: 10.

55 S. Ciglencečki, 2006, fig. 9: 5.

56 These are primarily belt buckles with sharply cut tongues (e.g. G. Tica, 2017, 316).

57 The belt buckle is not published, but Miletić states that it is kept by the Belgrade City Museum (*Muzej grada Beograda*) under the inventory number 657 (e.g. N. Miletić, 1970, 143, note 184).

58 E.g. W. Menghin (ed.), 2007, 510, cat. no. VII.40.8.

also not surprising since it comes from the immediate neighbourhood of *Pannonia Sirmiensis* (*Pannonia Secunda*). However, the buckle from Kärlich deviates spatially, and the explanation of its presence in the Frankish territory would only be speculation.

“Merovingian” Belt Buckles

Later forms of belt buckles at the Kranj-Lajh cemetery (dating to the second half of the 6th and 7th century) could be better associated with the Merovingian cultural circle (the Franks, the Alemanni, the Baiuvarii) rather than with the Lombards, whose presence in Carnium is supposedly easier to prove than the presence of the Ostrogoths.⁵⁹ Some belt buckles, especially in men’s graves, are universal and cannot be classified.

The buckles that can be attributed to the Merovingian cultural circle include primarily the belt buckles with shield-shaped, hinged plates (graves 194 and 613 according to Stare)⁶⁰ and the silver-inlaid, iron belt set with tongue-shaped plates (grave 332 according to Stare).⁶¹

In grave 613 (26/1901), a belt set with an iron belt loop and a bronze, shield-shaped, hinged plate and other variously shaped plates were excavated in addition to an iron knife (fig. 10). The grave was excavated in 1901 by Josef Szombathy, the curator of the Museum of Natural History Vienna (*Naturhistorisches Museum Wien*).⁶² Wilfrid Menghin connects the grave to the Lombards, who were supposed to reside in Carnium until the Avar invasion in 610, and the tomb itself dates back to around year 600.⁶³ But belt buckles with shield-shaped, hinged plates rarely occur in Italian burials attributed to the Lombards. For example, two smaller iron plates, part of a belt set, were discovered in grave 36 at the Castel Trosino cemetery, dated from the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 7th century. It is considered to be the oldest military grave at the cemetery.⁶⁴ Furthermore, two iron belt buckles were found at the cemetery in Colloso-mano in Buja (the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region), which date to the beginning of the 7th century.⁶⁵

The belt buckles with shield-shaped, hinged plates and tongues with a shield-shaped base, which can be bronze or iron, feature a round or a semicircular loop. Most often they are made of iron or bronze. The rivets, usually three, are also bronze or iron. Both the tongue and the hinged plates can be decorated, some in the chip-carving technique, others in the damascening technique⁶⁶ (*Tauschierung* in German). These are probably belt buckles of Merovingian origin,⁶⁷ as they appear in the greatest number in France, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

59 E.g. Z. Vinski, 1980, 27. However, it is true that according to Vinski the presence of the Lombards in Kranj is shown on the basis of findings, as “the complex Carnium necropolis does not show any characteristics of the Lombard cemeteries with graves in rows”.

60 V. Stare, 1980, pl. 63: 12; 128: 5-9.

61 V. Stare, 1980, pl. 98: 9; P. Bitenc, T. Knific (eds.), 2001, 77, cat. no. 246.

62 V. Stare, 1980, 82, pl. 128: 5-9; 129: 1. A partly preserved iron buckle from grave 194 is similar (e.g. V. Stare, 1980, pl. 63: 12).

63 W. Menghin, 1985, 131.

64 L. Paroli, M. Ricci, 2007, pl. 47: 11-12.

65 A. Tagliaferri, 1992, 112, cat. nos. II.16-II.17.

66 Inlaying different metals into one another.

67 M. Slabe, 2003, 86.

The specimens from Alemannic, Frankish and Baiuvarii cemeteries are important for the demarcation of the phenomenon in Lajh in Kranj.⁶⁸ They mainly appear in the 7th century, but can also be found as early as the 6th century.⁶⁹

Among the most interesting belt buckles from the Kranj-Lajh cemetery is an iron belt buckle with a tongue-shaped plate and an equally shaped opposite plate, which together with the missing back plate formed a three-part belt set. Both plates are decorated with striped bands of different shapes and concentric circles in the so-called damascening technique with silver threads. It is not easy to find close parallels for the decoration pattern of the belt plates. The plates were attached to the belt with three iron rivets each (fig. 11).⁷⁰ The belt set was found as early as 1901. It was, however, covered in thick rust. Only an X-ray from the end of the last century showed that it was a belt set, decorated with inserted silver threads in the damascening technique.⁷¹

Only one other belt set, decorated in the damascening technique, was found in Slovenia. It was found in grave 18 in Solkan near Nova Gorica. According to some authors, the grave dates to the first half of the 7th century,⁷² and according to others the middle or even the second half of the 7th century.⁷³ However, the Solkan belt set belongs among the Lombard belt sets, dated to the end of the 6th or mainly to the first half of the 7th century. The tongue-shaped plates are narrower and more graceful than the Kranj specimen. They are also distinguished by decoration, as the Lombard specimens are dominated by animal style II decoration. It is in general composed of a strictly symmetrical interlace with fully integrated animals or their anatomical details. It can also depict a cross, often using gold and not only silver threads.⁷⁴

68 R. Heynowski, 2017, 130, type 7.1.2. The monograph of Ronald Heynowski is only a general piece aiming to provide a nationally standardized scientific vocabulary for the typology of archaeological finds. When noting the distribution of individual types, he omits sites from east Europe, such as the aforementioned Carnium examples or a specimen from Keszthely-Fenékpuszta in the west of Lake Balaton (e.g. R. Müller, 2014, pl. 25: 5). He does, however, cite basic literature on buckles with a shield-shaped hinged plate. Therefore, there is no need for me to cite many examples of such belt buckles from well-described sites (especially graves) in Central and Western Europe.

69 R. Müller, 2014, 137; R. Heynowski, 2017, 130.

70 T. Knific, 1995, 36, fig. 10; P. Bitenc, T. Knific (eds.), 2001, 77, cat. no. 246.

71 The grave was excavated in October 1901 on the property of the aforementioned miller and merchant Tomaž Pavšlar by the professor of the Kranj secondary school Jakob Žmavc. The grave was originally marked as grave Ž 4. It is not the grave 4 Žmavc published in 1904 (e.g. J. Žmavc, 1904, 239-240). The third grave, associated with Pavšlar and Žmavc, and marked as grave 4, was excavated on Pavšlar's property as early as 1899. Stare merged it with grave Ž 4 in a 1980 publication and marked it as grave 332 (e.g. V. Stare, 1980, 74, t. 97: 4-11; 98-99). For more on the grave Ž 4 and grave 4 from 1899, see also T. Knific, 1995, 34, 36.

72 T. Knific, D. Svoljšak, 1984, 280, 282, fig. 8-10, pl. 2: 5, 7-8, 11-13; P. Bitenc, T. Knific (eds.), 2001, 83-84, cat. no. 269.

73 V. Bierbrauer, 1992, 86, cat. no. I.93.

74 In addition to the belt set from Solkan, e.g. F. Maselli Scoti (ed.), 1989, pl. 7: 59/1; I. Ahumada Silva *et al.* (eds.), 1990, figs. 38-39, 42-44, pl. 15: 4; 16: 5-6; 17; O. von Hessen, 1992a, 183, cat. no. IV.58aa/ai; O. von Hessen, 1992b, 213, cat. no. 106; C. Rupp, 2005, pl. 34: 18-20, 22; 35: 25-29; 97: 28, 30; 113: 8-9; etc.; L. Paroli, M. Ricci, 2007, pl. 60: 4a-4b; 68: 13a-13b, 13d; 102: 32a, 32d-32e; 103: 32h-32i, 32l, 32p-32q; etc; Brogiolo *et al.* (eds.), 2017, 218, cat. no. II.9; 229, cat. no. II.24; 230, cat. no. II. 25; 231: cat. no. II. 26.

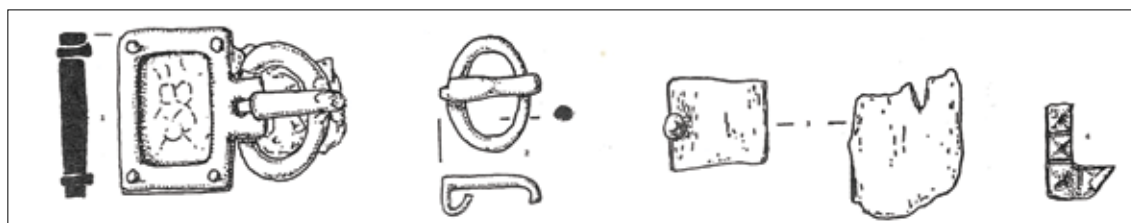


Fig. 9 Finds from the Kranj-Lajh, grave 238 with two-piece belt buckle with a glass insert in a rectangular plate

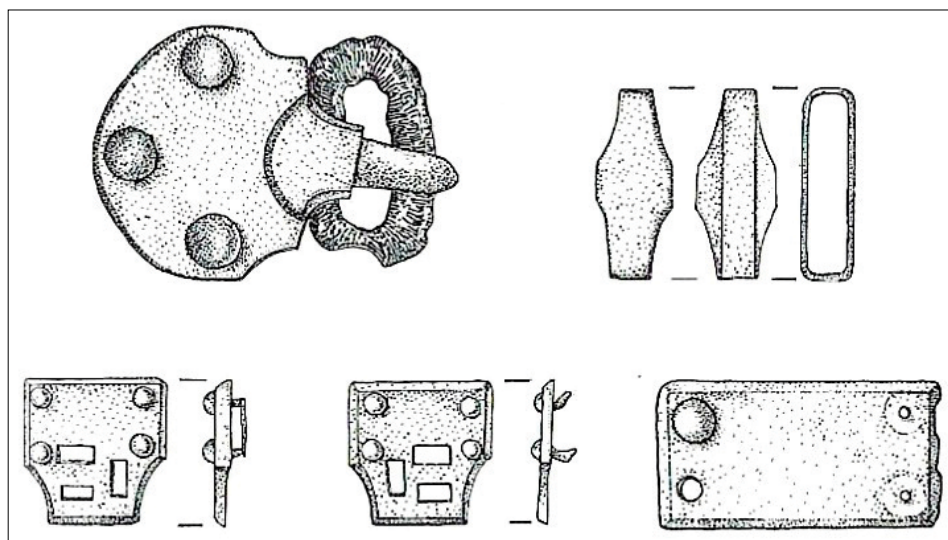


Fig. 10 Belt set with an iron belt loop and a shield-shaped, hinged plate and various shaped plates from Kranj-Lajh, grave 613

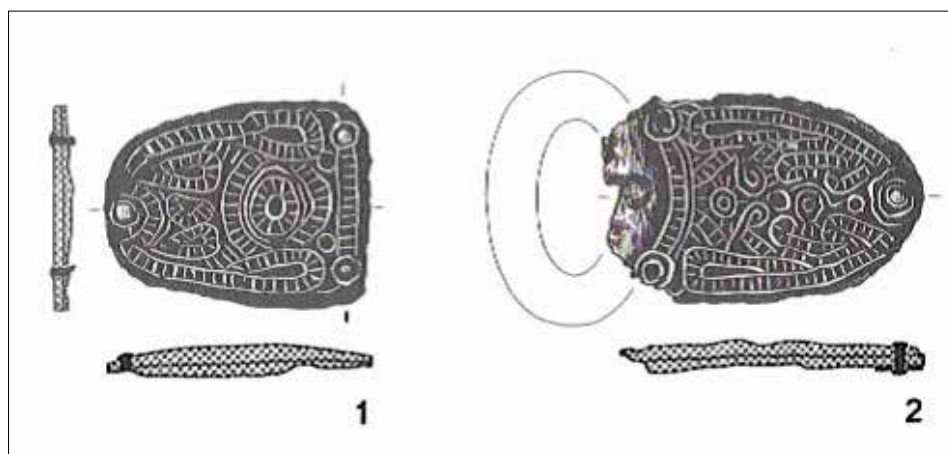


Fig. 11 Iron belt buckle with a tongue-shaped plate and an equally shaped opposite plate, decorated in the so called damascening technique from Kranj-Lajh, grave 332

The Kranj belt set can be classified as a specimen with wider tongue-shaped plates, decorated in the damascening technique.⁷⁵ Such plates occur rarely regarding the Lombards. The belt buckle from grave 70 from the necropolis of Sant'Albano Stura (Cuneo) is one such example, dated to the second half of the 7th century.⁷⁶ The cemetery lies on the westernmost border of the Lombard settlement area in Italy.

The buckles' origin could be found among the unadorned, tongue-shaped, Merovingian iron plates with three rivets, which have been appearing in western and central Europe (southern Germany and Switzerland) since the 6th and especially in the early 7th century.⁷⁷ The tongue-shaped plates with three rivets, which are decorated in the damascening technique, date to the 7th century (from about 600 to about 670/680) in both the Frankish and Alemannic settlement areas.⁷⁸ Thus, the belt set from Kranj, despite its unique decoration, can be associated with Central and Western European specimens of the 7th century rather than with the Lombard ones. The Lombard belt sets appear to be somewhat older, as they are mainly dated by other authors to the late 6th and the first half of the 7th century.

All of the belt buckles or belt sets mentioned so far can be linked to different East and West Germanic groups in one way or another. I will examine further variants, the ones I have named the "international" belt buckle types.

Sucidava-type Belt Buckles

One belt buckle of the Sucidava-type (fig. 12) is known from the Kranj-Lajh cemetery. We do not have its site data, but it is a find that was purchased by the National Museum of Slovenia in 1937 as part of the so-called Pavšlar Collection. It probably originates from the excavations in 1898.⁷⁹ The Sucidava-type belt buckles are classified under the Byzantine type. The Sucidava type includes bronze and rare, silver, one-piece belt buckles, characterized by a carved cross decoration with a crescent below it. Sometimes there are two holes on each side of the cross, which gives the impression of a human face or a mask. The map of the Sucidava type distribution given by Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm⁸⁰ shows they occur most often in the Eastern Balkans. West of the Vardar – Morava – Danube line, the Sucidava-type belt buckles appear sporadically. The second concentration is in southern Crimea and the third is east of the Tisza River and along the Mureş River. In the western Balkans, some finds have been excavated within the late antique province of Dalmatia. Some rare specimens are known from along the

75 The tongue-shaped plates can also be described as triangular/trapezoidal or bell-shaped.

76 G. P. Brogiolo *et al.* (eds.), 2017, 201, cat. no. I.11.

77 E.g. A. Nice, 2008, 180, fig. 258: S.332B; R. Heynowski, 2017, 132-133 (type 7.4.1.); M. Friedrich, 2016, 300, 254 (type 1.11a), 301 (type 1.11a), fig. 61. See, for example, graves 206, 226 and 246 from the Pleidelsheim cemetery (e.g. U. Koch, 2001, pl. 77: A/4-5; 88: A/2; 95: 3-4).

78 E.g. C. Pilet, 1994, pl. 80: 615; H. Roth, C. Theune, 1995, pl. 37: 6; 219:5; S. Buchta-Hohm, 1996, pl. 29: 5; A. Nice, 2008, figs. 261: S.121, S.285; 262: S.331; 263: S.319, S.351; J.-C. Routier *et al.*, 2008, figs. 14: Tombe 35/1a, 1b; 26: t.88; S. Walter, 2008, pl. 254: 6, 8; 265: 8-10;

79 A. Riegl, 1903, 232, fig. 214; V. Stare, 1980, 78, pl. 115: 3; M. Slabe, 2003, pl. 5: 2.

80 M. Schulze-Dörrlamm, 2009, fig. 54.

Danube's middle course. In Italy, they were found in Cividale del Friuli, Ravenna and Imola. Individual specimens appear in Central Europe and on both sides of the Seine River. Most finds originate from settlements, mainly from the Justinian and post-Justinian periods. Despite the sporadicity of the finds outside the Eastern Roman Empire, it can be said that in addition to the Roman/Eastern Roman Greek population (*Romanoi*), they were also used by members of various Germanic and Avar groups. Some authors date them exclusively to the middle and the end of the 6th century,⁸¹ many in the first half of the 7th century.⁸²

“Mediterranean” Belt Buckles

Furthermore, I examine here the so-called Mediterranean belt buckles,⁸³ more precisely two buckle types. The first type is a cast, silver, one-piece belt buckle with a shield-shaped tongue and a rectangular loop. Its pentagonal belt plate is decorated with punched holes, and the longer sides are formed to resemble a series of palmettes. The buckle was found in grave 6 (containing many grave goods), where a warrior was buried (fig. 13). In addition to the belt buckle, a sword (*spatha*), a shield boss, several spears and arrowheads, knives, various shackles, buckles and rivets were found. The finds were both a part of the costume and a part of the military equipment. Bronze rings, tweezers, two combs, a flintstone and flint striker set, iron scissors and iron hobnails were also excavated.⁸⁴

The belt buckle is quite rare. The distribution map by Fingerlin shows such buckles appear in three areas, in addition to grave 6 in Kranj. The first is the Alemannic settlement area, the second is Frankish settlement area and the third is Central Spain.⁸⁵ For example, grave 4 from Langenenslingen in Baden-Württemberg (the Alemanni) is interesting.⁸⁶ As in Kranj, a warrior was buried in the grave, together with a sword (*spatha*), spear, knife, axe (*francisca*), tweezers and similar silver Mediterranean-type belt buckle. Although the grave goods in grave 4 in Langenenslingen are more modest than in Kranj grave 6, they are connected by several finds. Wilfried Menghin classified both graves among graves with swords within his group C timeline (Zeitgruppe C), i.e. between 530 and 570, the middle third of the 6th century.⁸⁷

81 E.g. M. Schulze-Dörlamm, 2009, 246, Chronologietabelle der Schnallentypen, type D 1.

82 E.g. D. G. Teodor, 1991, 125; É. Garam, 2001, 97.

83 The so-called Mediterranean belt buckles represent a group of specific belt buckles. The term was first introduced by Gerhard Fingerlin (e.g. G. Fingerlin, 1967) for a certain type of one-piece belt buckles with rectangular loops. They are widespread in the Merovingian world and some specimens were found in the Pyrenees and the Apennine Peninsula. Zdenko Vinski attributed several two-piece belt buckles to the type, most often with an oval loop, regardless of the differences in decoration and tongue shape (e.g. Z. Vinski, 1974, 41).

84 W. Šmid, 1907, 58-59; V. Stare, 1980, 50-51, pl. 2: 7-15; 3-6.

85 G. Fingerlin, 1967, 181-182 (Fundliste E9, Pl. 69. He attributes the rectangular loop with a shield-shaped tongue from grave 244 in Kiszombor (the Gepids) to the same group (e.g. D. Csallány, 1961, pl. 141: 14, 14a). The belt buckle from Bourcq in northern France can also be assigned to the same group, which is dated to around year 600 (e.g. M. Bouxin, 1982).

86 L. Lindenschmit, 1860, 199, pl. 1: 11-18.

87 W. Menghin, 1983, 248-249, cat. nos. 98-99.



Fig. 13 Finds from the Kranj-Lajh, grave 6 (selection) with cast, silver, one-piece pentagonal belt buckle decorated with punched holes, with a shield-shaped tongue and a rectangular loop



Fig. 12 The belt buckle of the Sucidava type from Kranj-Lajh, without site data



Fig. 14 Belt buckles with triangular plates from Kranj-Lajh, graves 77 (3), 327 (2) and 337 (1)

The second Mediterranean type is the one Vinski classifies as a two-part belt buckle. These are bronze buckles with triangular plates from graves 77, 327 and 337 (fig. 14).⁸⁸ All three buckles, like the buckle without site data found by Szombathy, have triangular plates in which tin sheets are inserted, decorated with concentric circles. They also have a tongue with a trapezoidal-shaped base. The buckle from grave 337 has a rectangular loop, no circles on the edges of the shorter side of the triangle, and the back of the triangular plate is highlighted by two circles. The other three buckles have an oval loop, circles at the edges of the shorter sides of the triangles, and they can feature circles at the plates' backs.

All four belt buckles belong to the so-called bronze, two-part Mediterranean buckles. They have an oval or rectangular loop with a trapezoidal, shield-shaped tongue and a triangular plate with accentuated circular corners. The central inserted sheet on the plate can be decorated with punched circles. The decoration on some specimens also continues onto the tongue. The fifth such buckle was excavated in the area of today's Slovenia. It originates from a male grave 8 from Rifnik, where it was the only find and was found on the left side above the waist.⁸⁹ For Vinski, such two-part buckles are not necessarily Lombardic, since they are not known to the Pannonian Lombards. For the Kranj and Rifnik specimens, he believes that they could be "barbarized-indigenous". The Lombards supposedly learned about them "only from the indigenous population in Carnium and its surroundings". In the south-eastern Alpine foothills near the Adriatic Sea, between the upper Sava and Pavia between 550 and 600 and even later, there was by Vinski a manufacturing centre for one and two-part buckles of the Mediterranean type.⁹⁰ Curiously, Vinski did not find comparisons for these specimens in the nearby Lombard Cividale del Friuli or northern Italy, but in the Frankish-Alemannian area, specifically the Merovingian cultural circle of the 6th and 7th centuries. These manufactures produced similar belt buckles to our specimens, comparable in shape and decoration with punched circles.⁹¹ However, in 2010, the San Mauro cemetery excavations in Cividale del Friuli were published. A belt buckle of the same type was found in a female grave 39, dating to the last third of the 6th century.⁹²

88 V. Stare, 1980, pl. 31: 2; 95: 6; 102: 6; P. Bitenc, T. Knific (eds.), 2001, 62-63, cat. no. 188. In addition to these three buckles, Josef Szombathy found another one at the Kranj-Lajh cemetery in 1901, but the precise location is unknown (e.g. Z. Vinski, 1980, fig. 14).

89 L. Bolta, 1981, pl. 2: 1.

90 Z. Vinski, 1974, 46; Z. Vinski, 1980, 24.

91 Z. Vinski, 1974, 46, pl. 47: 5-7. Let me also mention the buckle from grave 11 (a warrior's grave) in Nettersheim in western Germany, which is dated to the second half of the 6th century (e.g. W. Menghin, 2007, 520, cat. no. VII.45.2.5).

92 I. Ahumada Silva (ed.), 2010, pl. 38: 8; 103: 39/8.

Conclusion

Given the time of manufacture among the typologically and chronologically identifiable belt buckles, the buckles from graves 6/2009 and 12/2009 are among the oldest specimens, although both were undoubtedly placed in the graves a few decades after their manufacture. The manufacture of both can be dated to the post-Hun period, and they can be linked to the so-called East Germanic cultural complex. The complex developed among the East Germanic peoples in the Pannonian Basin in the Hun and post-Hun periods and is characteristic of all East Germanic peoples. Both belt buckles could be linked to the arrival of Gepid groups in Carnium (as *foederati*).

They would be, chronologically speaking, followed by belt buckles of the Kranj (Krainburg) type. Given their distribution, we describe them as the most “Gothic” type of belt buckles in Kranj. The Kranj-type buckles and similar variants appear exclusively in the territory managed by the Ostrogoths or where their influence was strong (Spain). The only find outside this area is the Kerch belt buckle from northeast Crimea, which could indicate a forced or voluntary presence of Gothic soldiers within Justinian’s military units. Small, two-part belt buckles with glass inserts in rectangular plates occur almost simultaneously with the Kranj-type buckles. These appear almost exclusively in the territory managed by the Ostrogoths at the end of the 5th and in the first decades of the 6th century.

Among the typologically and chronologically identifiable belt buckle types, the “Ostrogothic” ones should be followed by the belt buckles characteristic of the Lombards. The same should apply to other finds. However, except for a foot fragment of a Lombard arch fibula from grave 58⁹³ and the so-called S-fibulae, which are not necessarily all Lombardic,⁹⁴ we do not have grave goods in Kranj that would be reliably attributed to the Lombards. Even those types of Kranj belt buckles that could be associated with the Lombards are rare in the Lombard settlement area in Italy.⁹⁵ They often occur within the Merovingian cultural circle of Central and Western Europe (the Alemanni, the Baiuvarii, and the Franks). The belt buckles with shield-shaped hinged plates and silver-inlaid iron belt sets with wide tongue-shaped plates are considered to be Merovingian forms that could have been transferred to Carnium from Central Europe (via the Karawanks ?) and not through the Lombards’ lands from Italy.

The same applies to the “international” types of belt buckles. The Sucidava-type buckles are most likely of Byzantine origin, which have in one way or another been adopted by various Germanic and Avar groups, possibly also the Lombards in Italy or the Merovingian Central and Western Europe. The discussed Mediterranean-type belt buckles occur quite often in Merovingian Central and Western Europe and rarely in Lombard Italy or areas controlled by the Byzantines in the second half of the 6th and 7th centuries. The same applies to the Kesz-

93 V. Stare, 1980, pl. 26: 4.

94 G. Tica, 2023, 114-115. For S-fibulae from Slovenia, see also T. Milavec, 2007.

95 Apart from the S-fibulae, the finds from Kranj cannot be associated with the finds characteristic of the Lombard Pannonian phase.

thely-Dobogó type of belt sets.⁹⁶ One was found in grave 331. The areas where the so-called Byzantine or Mediterranean belt buckles appear were already more or less populated by various barbarian groups in the 6th and 7th centuries. Due to constant conflicts and wars, they had a strong combative mindset. We know from both archaeological and written sources that in areas under the direct control of Constantinople (e.g. former Eastern Illyricum, parts of Italy, Dalmatia),⁹⁷ a significant part of the military units were formed by various barbarians. So the “circulation” of Byzantine military equipment, including belt buckles, between different ethnic groups, especially along the border and main roads, should not be surprising.

The discussed belt buckles from the second half of the 6th and 7th centuries point more to Carnium’s connections to the Merovingians rather than to the Lombards or the Byzantine world. A few typologically and chronologically identifiable belt buckles can be associated with the Ostrogoths and the Lombards, which supposedly had a military outpost in Carnium. The same applies to other finds. Given the numerous finds (not just belt buckles) associated with the Merovingian world, the presence of Franks (or the Alemanni at their service) could be expected in Carnium.

Archaeologists believe that the late antique Carnium fortress existed from the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century to the end of the 6th century and first decade of the 7th century. It was allegedly controlled by the Ostrogoths at first, and later by the Lombards. However, the discovery of the silver-inlaid iron belt set with tongue-shaped plates from grave 332 shows that the Carnium fortress existed at least until the middle of the 7th century. And if the fortress served in the 7th century as a military outpost, we can ask ourselves who had control over it – the Lombards, the Franks or less likely the Byzantines?

⁹⁶ Z. Vinski, 1974, 42, pl. 43.

⁹⁷ E.g. A.H.M. Jones 1964, 659, 663-668; P. Southern, K.R. Dixon 2000, 64-66; A.D. Lee 2018 (with cited sources and older literature). The main source for the Byzantine army in the 6th century is Procopius of Caesarea; Procopius, *Hist. wars* I.2.5.

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Connections Around an Antique-like Capital Composition

This paper takes as its topic the capital from Zagreb Cathedral that displays some similarity with the sculpture at Saint Stephen Hall in Esztergom and the bell tower (Ghirlandina) in Modena, produced between 1180-1190. These three monuments are connected by a remarkable phenomenon of late twelfth century European sculpture, the use of the bucranium motif of the ancient Greco-Roman tradition. The secret of the diffusion of this motif in Italy and through a good part of Europe lies in its simple traditional appearance.

Keywords: Romanesque art, 12th century, King Béla III of Hungary, Zagreb Cathedral, Esztergom Saint Stephen Hall, Modena Ghirlandina, bucranium motif, *Maestri Campionesi*

A column capital (fig. 1) decorated with animal heads and garlands showing connections to the one in the Esztergom Royal Castle is preserved in the History Museum in Zagreb.¹ The Croatian literature considered the piece to be of Medvedgrad origin and dated it accordingly. The basis for mentioning the Medvedgrad origin is that the piece was identified by Mirko Valentić as a piece from an excavation in Medvedgrad in 1969,² and published by Gjuro Szabó in 1920 and 1941.³ The piece is located in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. Josip Stošić, Mirko Valentić and Lada Prister published the capital as coming from Medvedgrad, noting that it might belong to some other Romanesque building in Zagreb.⁴

Research in Hungary also actively studied the capital. The connections to Hungary of the capital decorated with animal heads and garlands have been known since the beginning of Ernő Marosi's research on the art of Esztergom around 1200.⁵ In 1984, he assumed a connection between Medvedgrad and Esztergom. Vladimir P. Goss realized the misunderstanding and published the capital in 2006, 2007 and 2010 as originating from the chapel of St. Stephen, Cathedral of Zagreb, and one of the very few remains of pre-Romanesque sculpture in continental Croatia before 1100.⁶ Sándor Tóth's statement that Valentić confused the gar-

1 Hrvatski povijesni muzej, inv. no. 6742.

2 M. Valentić, 1969, 87-88, cat. no. 50.

3 G. Szabo, 1920, 45, note 1; 1941, 25-26.

4 J. Stošić, 1994, 165; M. Valentić, L. Prister, 2002, 48.

5 E. Marosi, 1984, 136-137.

6 V. P. Goss, M. Vicelja 2006, 171, figs. 30-31 (with swapped captions); V. P. Goss, 2007, 103, cat. no. 96; V. P. Goss, 2010a, 190-191; V. P. Goss, 2010b, 88-89, fig. 92.

land-and-animal-heads-decorated Esztergom capital with Szabó's Medvedgrad capital was published by Tibor Rostás in 2010 as well,⁷ also drawing attention to the fact that there is a significant difference in style and dating between the Medvedgrad carvings and the garland and animal heads carving. While the latter could have been made in the 12th century, the Medvedgrad carvings were only made after the Tatar invasion of 1241–1242.⁸ Most recently, Vjekoslav Jukić attended to the capital and dated it to around 1200.⁹

The decoration of the capital has an antique-like composition and can be considered a derivative of the composite order. Instead of volutes, animal heads were used, arranged in a diagonal view. The animal heads appear to graze on the garland-like leaf decoration, or as if they were nibbling on it. The animal heads and the garland are plastically shaped, and the stone block is drilled under the animals' necks. The garland curves between the animal heads and the bouquet of leaves placed on the axis of the capital sides. The bunches of leaves are joined by a rope-like trunk rising to half height, which is closed by a ring of leaves. The bunch of leaves is spread over this. Below the garland decoration and between the trunks, a leaf decoration appears, made up of a diagonal leaf with a protruding upper part (which supports the garland under the animal head). The composition is closed by an abacus (flat plate), slightly curved. Traces of an abacus rosette can be easily identified in the middle of one side.

The Esztergom parallel of the composition appears as the capital of the half-column (fig. 2). The only compositional difference is that the abacus plate is covered with leaf decoration and the abacus rosette is missing. At the same time, a stylistic connection can be established between the two pieces. The stylistic details are clearly visible on both pieces, but the surfaces of the piece in Zagreb are damaged, while the one in Esztergom is in excellent condition, even though its surfaces were painted in the 19th century, and then the painting was removed as part of restoration work in the 1930s. The leaves are derived from *acanthus* in both places. The leaves are made up of lobes held in bunches. The lobes can also appear independently, lined up next to each other: in Esztergom in the decoration of the abacus, in the piece in Zagreb in the bottom row, or a part of it. The chops have an elongated shape, with a pointed end. Their surface is concave. The division between the rib bunches was solved with a drill hole. In Esztergom, one can observe a vertical trench below the boreholes, which widens upwards. A crescent-shaped cut was also used between the trench and the borehole. In both cases, the trunk of the leaf bouquet placed in the shaft is shaped like a rope braid. Similar composition and forms of detail may have characterized other capitals from Esztergom and Óbuda, but these pieces are fragmentary (fig. 3).¹⁰ The Esztergom half-column head is an *in situ* piece and since its companions have also survived, the definition and dating of its artistic environment can be based on more reliable foundations.

7 T. Rostás, 2010, 284 (212–287), note 130.

8 Cf. V. Goss, V. Jukić, 2007; V. Goss, V. Jukić, 2015.

9 V. Jukić, 2017, 70–71; V. Jukić, 2019, cat. no. 36.

10 See e.g. Á Mikó, I. Takács (eds.), 1994, 105, cat. no. I-47; 110, cat. no. I-55.

The Esztergom half-column capital can be found in the central column hall of the lower level of the royal palace, which was later named after King Stephen I of Hungary. The construction of the royal palace is traditionally associated in the literature with King Béla III (1172–1196) king of Hungary and Croatia. A written source informs us that in 1198 the son of King Béla III placed the palace at the disposal of the Archbishop of Esztergom, noting that the palace was not yet finished. The question is which parts were completed by 1198. The Saint Stephen Hall must belong to the earlier parts since it is located on the lowest level: without its construction, the parts above it would not have been completed either. If that had been the case, the source would not have mentioned unfinished construction, but at most, a construction that had just begun. Moreover, the source could not have spoken of the transfer of a palace to the archbishop. But the Hall could not date from too early either: the start of construction in Esztergom by the king who ruled from 1172 is generally associated with the 1180s, and many researchers associate it with the king's second wife, Margaret of France, who arrived in Hungary in 1186. The entrance *façade* of the royal palace can be well matched with this time. It was built in connection with the northern wall of Saint Stephen Hall. The fragments of the former window of the *façade*, the use of the red marble material and the style can be connected with the western main gate of the Esztergom Cathedral, also destroyed, but known from depictions and fragments, the *Porta speciosa*. Based on the depiction of King Béla III and Archbishop Jób (1185–1204), the gate can be dated between Jób's consecration as archbishop of Esztergom and Béla III's death, so between 1185 and 1196.¹¹ This time interval can also be considered in the dating of Saint Stephen Hall, but it can be assumed that based on the building history of the Hall, the dating can be more accurate to the second half of the 1180s. Such a dating must be valid for the Zagreb capital as well as for the fragment of the Óbuda composition.

The dating of the carvings can also be checked with the help of an Italian example of the composition. In the earlier Hungarian literature, it was stated that the composition of Saint Stephen Hall in question was the invention of the workshop that built the palace in Esztergom, the prototype of which could be the capital that the archaeological research found in the foundation of the floor of this room.¹² Endre Raffay expressed a different opinion in his publications, clarifying the origin of the composition on the one hand, and revealing the range of compositional kinship on the other.¹³ The composition thus derives from the antique *bucranium* motif.¹⁴ On antique friezes and altars, the garland curves between ox skulls, on mediaeval examples, friezes and capitals, between heads showing live animals.

Examples of 12th-century compositions are mostly known from antique-like artistic environments, for example from the cloister of Monreale Cathedral (fig. 4-5) and the *campanile* (Ghirlandina) of Modena Cathedral (fig. 6). The Modena example is closest to the Esztergom one. The animal head here is more delicately shaped and can be defined as a goat based on its horns. The abacus here is not covered with leaf decoration, like the example in Zagreb. The

11 E. Marosi, 1994, 154.

12 M. Tóth, E. Marosi (eds.), 1978, 125.

13 E. Raffay, 2006, 7-9.

14 The motif is continuously present from Greek Neolithic Age. S. Nanoglou, 2009.



Fig. 1 Capital, Zagreb, Cathedral, Povijesni Muzej Hrvatske, inv. no. 6742



Fig. 3 Capital, Pécs, Cathedral, Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, inv. no. 55.1603; Capital, Óbuda, Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, inv. no. 34/1924

Fig. 2 Capitals, Esztergom, Saint Stephen Hall: half column capitals, capital found in the foundation of the floor

abacus rose does not appear here, but the middle of the side is emphasized here as well. The compositional connection is confirmed by the detailing of the *acanthus* leaves. As a dividing element between the leaf lobes in Modena, a hole and a groove running vertically below it were also used.

The question is, from when does the Modena capital date? The capital belongs to the west window of the fourth level of the Ghirlandina. The Italian literature is quite contradictory regarding the dating of the levels of the *campanile*: the debate revolves around the interpretation of the year of an inscription on the tower.¹⁵ Endre Raffay previously suggested a different starting point: comparing the capitals of the tower with the carvings of the cathedral.¹⁶ The close relatives of the capitals of the fourth level of the *campanile*, assumed to be workshop identities, appear in the upstairs gallery of the Porta regia, the *pontile* structure and the columns of the high altar. A group of masters called the *Maestri Campionesi* worked on these carvings. From the large-scale inscription next to the Porta regia, we learn that the church was consecrated by Pope Lucius II in 1184. The association of the inscription and the gate can be assumed from the outset, but the association of the altar and the consecration cannot be questioned. By 1184, for the consecration, the *pontile* element of the “set” could have been completed, as well as the fourth and fifth levels of the *campanile*. This dating can be well matched with the one in Esztergom, and may also be valid for the piece in Zagreb.

The immediate artistic environment of the piece in Zagreb (closer to Esztergom and Modena) is therefore not known. The artistic environment of the Esztergom and Modena pieces, however, is known: these capitals are not scattered finds (except for the compositional versions of the Esztergom carving, including the one of Óbuda origin), but appear in the vicinity of *in situ* pieces and their counterparts that are also *in situ*. The art environment of the column head in Esztergom and Modena can also be linked. Most of the compositional solutions can be called antique-like in both places. The *acanthus* detail forms are similarly designed. These correlations can be explained by the fact that a group of masters of uniform education and quality participated in the construction in both places. The sculptors of Modena can be identified with the *Maestri Campionesi*, and the masters of Esztergom can be identified with those who acquired their education and training (mostly) in the company of the *Maestri Campionesi*. The compositions (both here and there) include not only *acanthus* leaves but also full-leaves whose surface and side edges remain completely unsegmented. In Esztergom, such motifs survived in the Saint Stephen Hall, but not in the upper part of the palace (fig. 7). On the red marble consoles of the aforementioned *façade* window and on the capital, which can be associated with the theoretical reconstruction of the window, the centre of the leaf is segmented, but the edge of the leaf is not. The full-leaf solution can also be found in Modena on the fifth level of the bell tower and in the upstairs gallery of the Porta regia (fig. 8). The full-leaf solution occurs in a variety of forms, showing a simpler solution next to the complex *acanthus* detail formation. But the full-leaves are witnesses of an earlier phase of the development of *acanthus*

15 W. Montorsi, 1976, 16-21; M. G. Orlandini, C. Ceccarelli, 1975, 133-134; S. Lomartire, 2010, 72.

16 E. Raffay, 2006, 28-38.

forms. In these leaf shapes, the *acanthus* details still “live inside”. This is indicated by the full-leaves of the carving circle, on which the formation of the *acanthi* was started, but not finished. On the other hand, the Modena and Esztergom full-leaf forms do not seem to show any signs of incompleteness. The members of the workshop thought both here and there: the simpler solution could be an alternative to the more complicated *acanthus*. It cannot be ruled out that sectional forms were applied to these surfaces by painting. Of course, the result could not have had a plastic effect as if it had been carved: these pieces also provided formal enrichment with their painted decoration.

In addition to the alternative full-leaf solution, not only was the result of the variety of forms important but there is no doubt that the execution of the full forms also took less time. The latter aspect, especially in the case of works prepared to a tight deadline, is not incidental. The end of the work in Modena may have been the deadline for the papal consecration. We do not know the specific reason for the rush of the works in Esztergom. But which customer is not in a hurry to move into their property? In any case, the plan and concept changes and thoughtlessness that can be determined in the construction history of the royal palace in Esztergom indicate some kind of haste. It is no coincidence that many researchers have different opinions about the history of construction. As a result of form variation here and there, the full-leaf carvings could be less “valuable”. The stonemason was paid less for such work. Also, such forms were made for less visible places: in Modena on the upper part of the Porta regia and up to the Ghirlandina, and in Esztergom down to the Saint Stephen Hall. This room was not one of the more representative ones. The variation in the form of the half-column capitals could not really prevail, regardless of the question of leaves examined. It cannot be proven that a window or windows originally played a role in lighting the room. This can be related to the original function of the room. The room’s closedness, vaulted design and the building’s easily reconstructed original traffic system, as well as the location of the room in the building, may indicate its function. The assumption is that it may have served as a bath. This assumption is not independent of the Byzantine education of the builder King Béla III (and his first wife, Anna of Antioch / Anne de Châtillon).

The inclusion of the full forms in an antique-like environment can also be approached from the perspective of the marble material, both in Modena and Esztergom (fig. 9). The hardness of marble makes it difficult for the stonemason to create finer shapes. In addition to the full forms, there are those divided by one edge, which cannot (any longer) be thought to be products of the phase preceding the shaping of *acanthus* forms. In Esztergom, such forms were therefore present in the surroundings of the Porta speciosa, and on the windows of the already mentioned main entrance *façade* of the palace. Their material is red marble (geologically, it is the massive red limestone of Tardos-Süttő). The quarry near Esztergom was owned by the king, and later it was given to the archbishop. One of the earliest examples of the use of red marble is the coffin of King Béla III’s first wife (Anna of Antioch), made for the queen’s funeral in 1184 in Székesfehérvár. The “discovery” of red marble by the king’s (entourage) can be explained by the similarity of the material to porphyry, which played an important role in



Fig. 4 Capital, Monreale, cloister; Capital, Piacenza, Cathedral



Fig. 5 Capital, South Italian, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 23.280.14



Fig. 6 Capital, Modena, Ghirlandina, west side, 4th floor, bifora



Fig. 7 Capitals, Esztergom, Saint Stephen Hall



Fig. 8 Unfinished full-leaves on fifth level of the Ghirlandina

the representation of Byzantine rulers. The material was not completely unknown to those who came to Esztergom from the circle of *Maestri Campionesi*: red marble from a different quarry was also used in Modena. In this regard, the Porta regia in Modena is one of the most important monuments. An even richer but slightly later example is the Baptistry in Parma.

The full-leaf form also appears on a capital from Zagreb (fig. 10), the dating of which is subject to disagreement among researchers. The carving is associated with the Zagreb Cathedral. The basis for this is that the piece was found in the foundation of the Chapel of St. Stephen the Protomartyr. Since the piece cannot be related to the carvings of the Chapel, it cannot be assumed that it is a damaged piece that could not have been used otherwise. Of course, the piece is seriously damaged and is really not suitable for use as a column head. The piece is therefore earlier than the chapel and probably comes from a destroyed building or part of a building. Based on this finding, it can be dated to the 12th century.

The dating is not questioned by the solutions shown in the capital. The composition is made up of bands (zones) of leaves rising from the layers behind each other. In the middle, an accented motif is seen, and above, there is a fragment of a volute or a form that replaces it. The leaves have an unsegmented surface and lateral edges. The ending is like a dumpling. All of these solutions also appear in the artistic environment to which the animal head-and-garland column head belongs. The two pieces may be close to each other not only in terms of their artistic relationship but also in terms of their original architectural connections. This statement may be the basis for linking the animal-head-and-garland column capital to the former building of the Zagreb Cathedral. Tibor Rostás has already made a similar assumption.¹⁷ Such an assumption can also lead to another one: that a master from the *Maestri Campionesi* circle also worked at the Zagreb Cathedral during the reign of King Béla III, sometime in the second half of the 1180s or the beginning of the 1190s. Based on the dimensions of the capital, this activity can be assumed to be of a small architectural nature.

17 Rostás, 2010.



Fig. 9 Porta speciosa, Esztergom 1185-1196 (1:3 scale model: 1938); Porta regia, Modena; Battistero, Parma



Fig. 10 Capital, Zagreb Cathedral, Chapel of St. Stephen

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A Marble Altar Dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the Thunderer (?) from the Island of Krk. A Contribution to the Study of Marble Trade and Distribution in the Northern Adriatic during the Roman Period*

From the site of Podno Mira, in the southern part of the island of Krk, comes an unpublished fragmentary Roman inscribed marble monument. It was studied within the framework of the University of Rijeka project "Contextualization of Ancient and Medieval Sculpture of the Island of Krk Based on Mineralogical-Petrographic and Chemical Analysis of Stone." This paper offers a comprehensive interpretation of the monument: a proposed typology, a restitution and dating of the inscription text, as well as the results of the mineralogical-petrographic and chemical analyses of the marble, considered in the context of Roman culture on the island of Krk and in relation to the island's trade connections with the northern and broader Adriatic region, the Aegean and beyond.

Keywords: Roman marble, inscribed altar, *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*, *Curictae*, *Curicum* (Krk), Proconnesian marble

Podno Mira is a locality in the southern part of the island of Krk, between the towns of Jurandvor and Baška, in the so-called Baška Valley - a fertile plain nestled between two karst massifs (figs. 1-2). Despite its relatively small size, the region is rich in archaeological sites, with evidence of Roman, late antique, and early Christian architecture and artifacts. Notable finds include a Roman cemetery and an early Christian complex in Baška, as well as remains of Roman cemeteries in Mire, Veli Grad, Draga Bašćanska, and other nearby locations

* This work was carried out within the UNIRI young scientists project "Contextualization of ancient and early medieval sculpture on the island of Krk based on mineralogical-petrographic and chemical analysis of stone" 2022 (UNIRI-MLADI-HUMAN-22-55).

(fig. 2).¹ The archaeological topography of the island's southern part suggests the absence of a central urban settlement, instead indicating a landscape dotted with several smaller, scattered communities.²

From the site of Podno Mira, comes a fragmentary Roman inscribed marble inscription. It was found in 2008 but remained unpublished until now. It was studied within the University of Rijeka's project "Contextualization of Ancient and Medieval Sculpture of the Island of Krk Based on Mineralogical-Petrographic and Chemical Analysis of Stone" and revealed valuable insights into the Roman-period development of the southern region of Krk and the island as a whole.

The Context of the Find

The locality of Podno Mira lies beneath the settlement of Mire. In the cadastral plans of the 19th century, the name of the site is San Nicolo (fig. 3). This is likely the reason why the early Christian church discovered at the site is often referred to as the Church of Saint Nicholas.³ Today the area is also known as "Tomino", or the site of Thomas, possibly linked to the same saint or simply to the personal name *Toma* (Thomas). The two toponyms may preserve traces of a local tradition associating the site with a sacred or "antique" architecture. During the 20th century, the area was used as a vineyard. During the cultivation of the land, fragments of late antique pottery, tegulae, and mosaic *tesserae* surfaced, providing further confirmation of this theory.

Preliminary excavations at the site began as early as the 1970s, with the discovery of two late antique tombs leaning against the wall of a larger building.⁴ Excavations conducted in 1995 with the discovery of a semi-circular apse inscribed in the flat rear wall and a mosaic floor confirmed that the wall belonged probably to a church. It was only between 2005 and 2012 that excavation work continued, revealing the remains of a three-nave basilica, a vestibule, and several other tombs (fig. 4).⁵

The 1995 excavations yielded an extraordinary discovery. In the area between the apse and the eastern wall of the church, the remains of a mosaic floor were uncovered. One of these, located to the north of the apse (fig. 5), carried the inscription: *Saprilla apsida(m) cum secretaria fecit*.⁶ This is one of the few examples confirming how during Late Antiquity parts of the architecture were referred to as *secretaria* and *apsida*, which are in use until the present day.⁷

1 Š. Ljubić, 1884, 71-74; B. Fučić, 1960, 168-200; V. Dautovska-Ruševljanin, 1970, 142-144; R. Starac, 1996, 137-141; A. Rendić-Miočević, 2004, 191-203; L. Bekić, J. Višnjić, 2008, 209-257; N. Jakšić, N. Novak, 2009, 403-410.

2 A. Konestra, G. Lipovac Vrkljan, F. Welc, 2022, 205, *passim*.

3 <https://maps.arcanum.com/en/map/cadastral/?layers=3%2C4&bbox=1640972.6003884354%2C5616465.04917254%2C1642787.9798102083%2C5617093.265998759> (accessed on 7/7/2025). V. Dautovska-Ruševljanin 1970, 142-144; A. Kurilić, Z. Serventi 2016, 2281-2306.

4 V. Dautovska-Ruševljanin, 1970, 142-144.

5 R. Starac, 1996, 137-141; A. Kurilić, Z. Serventi, 2016, 2281-2306; R. Starac, 2021, 163-171.

6 R. Starac, 1996, 137-141; *AE* 1996, 1217.

7 See also: *AE* 1894, 00025 = *AE* 1894, 00138 (*Numidia*).

Excavations carried out between 2004 and 2010 uncovered mosaic floors, both bichrome and polychrome, that originally decorated all three naves. Due to agricultural activities conducted in modern times, as well as the relatively poor artisanship of the mosaics themselves, only limited portions of paved surfaces have been preserved. Among these, the most interesting were 13 donor inscriptions found in the central nave, set within simple polygonal frames, regularly arranged in parallel rows throughout the entire width of the nave. The inscriptions are simple in form, recording the names of donors - either a man and a woman, or a man together with his family - who dedicated the mosaic. Some names, such as *Alexander* and *Proclinus*, are well-known in early Christian epigraphy, while others, like *Saprilla* and *Titisenia*, appear for the first time in Latin inscriptions from this area.⁸ In any case, the evidence suggests the involvement of a larger group of individuals belonging to the early Christian community oriented around this church dated based on the characteristics of the movable finds, architecture, mosaics, and the epigraphic features of the inscriptions, to the 5th century.⁹ The community was probably of rural character.¹⁰ Whether its center was located directly to the north, in the settlement of Mire, or closer to the church is difficult to determine at present. Another early Christian centre was discovered less than 800 m to the south, within the town of Baška itself (fig. 2). This site comprises a double basilica with a baptistery, dated also to the 5th century, adorned with mosaic floors featuring various Christian motifs, yet without any inscriptions.¹¹ In Baška, the remains of material culture dating back to the Roman period have been discovered too.¹² They most likely belonged to a community oriented toward agriculture, seafaring, and trade, which nevertheless did not develop into an urban-type settlement.

The mosaics from the church Podno Mira may not stand out in terms of quality or content when compared to the broader corpus of early Christian mosaic and mosaic inscriptions. However, their significance lies in the fact that, particularly in the Kvarner region, they represent a rare example of early Christian donor inscriptions, offering valuable insights into the donors' names, origins, and indirectly of the community to which they belonged.¹³ In addition to the mosaics, the site revealed several distinct types of tombs, indicating multiple phases of use. Furthermore, a fragmentary Roman inscription was uncovered, which forms the primary focus of this paper.

The inscription was discovered in 2008. It was situated as part of the stairs at the entrance to the northern nave of the basilica, leading from the vestibule, and it is currently displayed in close proximity to its original findspot. (fig. 6). The monument has been truncated along its entire height on both the left and right sides, preserving only the central part of the

8 A. Kurilić, Z. Serventi, 2016, 2291.

9 A. Kurilić, Z. Serventi, 2016, 2291.

10 A. Konestra, G. Lipovac Vrkljan, F. Welc, 2022, 205, *passim*.

11 N. Jakšić, N. Novak, 2009, 403-410.

12 L. Bekić, J. Višnjić, 2008, 209-257.

13 A. Kurilić, Z. Serventi, 2016, 2281-2306. From the Kvarner region, only one other inscription is known, from Tarsatica (Rijeka), discovered in the floor of the central nave of an early Christian basilica; J. Višnjić, 2024, 104-105. For other examples of related inscriptions, see: J.-P. Caillet, 1993.

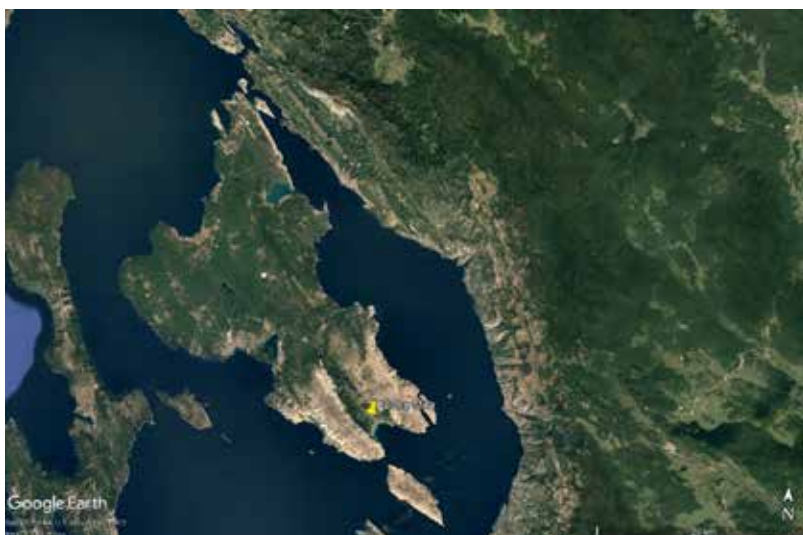


Fig. 1 Location of the island of Krk and the site Podno Mira



Fig. 2 Location of the sites Jurandvor, Podno Mira, Baška, Stara Baška on the island of Krk



Fig. 3 The site Podno Mira in the area called San Nicolo on the cadastral map of the island of Krk within the municipality of Bescia Nuova, 1892, Habsburg Empire – Cadastral maps



Fig. 4 Site Podno Mira



Fig. 5 Podno Mira, the area of the apse and the secretaria of the church where the mosaic with the inscription *Saprilla apsidac(m) cum secretaria fecit* was found



Fig. 5 Podno Mira, the church, the site where the Roman inscription was found

inscription field and a portion of the crown, which has also been significantly damaged. The almost transparent grey-ice colour, the granulation with shiny crystals and the vertical dark-grey veins indicate that it was made of marble. Although it was found in secondary use at an early Christian site, the monument likely originates from the area of Podno Mira. It is one of approximately 30 Roman inscriptions from the island of Krk.¹⁴

The Island of Krk in Roman Times

As for the Roman period on the island of Krk, it is relatively well-documented. The island was inhabited by the pre-Roman Liburnian population, which, according to Pliny the Elder, was organized into two principal communities: the *Fertinates* and the *Curictae* (fig. 7).¹⁵ The primary settlement of the *Fertinates* was located on the northern coast of the island, at the site of modern-day Omišalj. Despite its significance, this settlement never developed the characteristics of an urban center. In contrast, nearby at the site of Mirine, the Roman *Fulfinum* was founded, likely during the Flavian period. The foundation is often attributed in the literature to the settlement of veterans, although this remains unproven.¹⁶

On the southwestern coast of the island, the *Curictae* established an eponymous urban centre as early as the Liburnian period. This community aligned itself with Rome during the initial phases of the provincial organization of *Illyricum*, notably supporting Caesar during the Civil War. As a result of this alliance, the *Curictae* were granted the status of a peregrine community by the late 1st century BC or early 1st century CE, and subsequently received the *ius Italicum* in the following decades.¹⁷ These are the only urban settlements on the island. Based on their locations and the geomorphological characteristics of the terrain, it is likely that their territories extended respectively over the northern and central parts of the island (fig. 7). Due to the geographic and spatial distinctiveness of the southern region, particularly the Baška Valley and the surrounding mountainous terrain, most scholars agree that this area likely belonged to the territory of the municipium of *Senia*, located on the mainland directly opposite today's Baška (fig. 7).¹⁸ *Senia* represented a significant communication and transit centre along this area of the Adriatic coast. However, its territory lacked an adequately sized hinterland to fully support or develop its ager in the Roman period. This has led to the prevailing assumption that

14 At present, there is neither a catalogue nor a comprehensive publication of Roman inscriptions from the island; for this purpose, reference online databases are used, primarily the Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby (EDCS): <https://edcs.hist.uzh.ch/en/search?place=Krk%2C+Otok+%2F+Curictae> (accessed on 1.6.2026.)

15 Plin. NH, III, 139; D. Zelić, 1991, 25-35; N. Novak, 2011, 9-12.

16 The assumption is based on the fact that the settlement was founded *ex novo* and on the discovery of the inscription (AE 2020, 952), which commemorates Emperor Domitian, under whose reign the *Aqua Flavia Augusta*, collected from new springs, was brought into the city, while *Lucius Sestius Dexter*, veteran of the Third Praetorian Cohort, took care to have the work carried out at his own expense; D. Rendić-Miočević, 1974, 47-56. On Roman *Fulfinum* see also: A. Faber, 1978, 77-79; M. Čaušević, 2006, 27-31; N. Novak, 2011, 13-17; M. Vitelli Casella, 2021, 225-231.

17 G. Lipovac, 1991, 38-39; M. Čaušević, 2006, 21-27; M. Vitelli Casella, 2021, 225-231.

18 D. Zelić, 1993, 10, *passim*.

the Baška area did not belong to the ager of *Curictae*, but rather to that of *Senia*.¹⁹ Although fragmentary, inscriptions such as the one discovered at the site of Podno Mira offer valuable insights not only into the historical development of the island of Krk, but to the territory of Roman-period *Senia* as well.

As far as the material evidence is concerned, the importation of Italic ceramics was already recorded on the island during the Liburnian period. At Roman-period sites in the northern part of the island, Italic ceramics and products predominate, while in the Baška Valley area, most finds consist of African imports or imitations of Aegean types.²⁰ The characteristics of the material culture thus suggest the existence of distinct economic, and possibly even administrative zones. It is within this context that the altar fragment from Podno Mira should be interpreted.

An Altar with a Dedication to Jupiter the Best the Greatest and Almighty, the Thunderer (?)

As previously noted, the monument from the site of Podno Mira was found in secondary use. Having been cut vertically on both sides, only the central portion of the monument and the inscription has been preserved (fig. 8). The object is a rectangular stone block, with a smoothed, flat inscribed surface on the front, bearing letters. Above and below the inscribed field, traces of a simple moulding are visible, while the rest of the stone is roughly worked, most likely due to later re-use or modifications in subsequent periods. On the upper side of the monument there is a coarsely hewn semi-circular depression (fig. 9). The overall dimensions of the monument are: 125 (from the top to the soil) x 25 x 23 cm. The height of the inscribed field is 36 cm, while the width of the fragmentary inscription is 19-21 cm. The height of the letters is: 1st line- 5 cm, 2nd line- 6 cm, 3rd line- 5,5 cm, 4th line- 5,5 cm, 5th line- 5,5 cm.

Based on the preserved form, the proportions of the inscribed field in relation to the zones above and below the moulding, and the depression on the upper side, it can be concluded that the object was originally an altar. If so, it may have been either votive or funerary, a distinction that can usually be made with greater certainty based on the content of the inscription. Unfortunately, due to its fragmentary state, the text is extremely difficult to reconstruct, as only the central portions of the lines, three to four letters each, have survived. These fragments represent not only complete words but also, in keeping with standard Roman epigraphical practice, common abbreviations. Consequently, any discussion of its content must necessarily rely on standard formulas and abbreviations typical of this type of monument, comparisons with similar examples from the region, and tentative hypotheses regarding the words that the preserved letters may have formed.

The inscription consists of five lines (fig. 10). In the first line, the letters *M* and *O* are clearly visible, followed by another letter with a vertical stroke, possibly *F*, but also perhaps *P* or *R*. Since this is the beginning of the inscription, it most likely contained the invocation i.e. the

19 On Roman *Senia* and its territory see: M. Glavičić, 1993, 85, *passim*.

20 For the Roman finds of the territory of Fulfinum and the northern part of the island of Krk: R. Starac, 2002, 140-148; M. Čaušević-Bully, 2008, 410-413; M. Čaušević-Bully, S. Bully, 2014; A. Konestra, 2014, 259-277. For the Roman finds of the southern part of the island of Krk: L. Bekić, J. Višnjić, 2008, 209-257.

name of the deity or the person to whom the monument was dedicated. From the preserved letters, the most plausible reconstruction at present appears to be: *[I(ovi) O(ptimo)] M(aximo)*, possibly followed by the attribute *O(mnipotenti)*. The text might then have continued with *F(ulminatori)* or *F(ulguratori)*. If the third letter is read as *P* or *R*, it could be reconstructed as *P(aterno)* or *R(ector)*.

The hypothesis that the dedication was to Jupiter rests on the ways in which his name and common epiclesis were abbreviated.²¹ It is further supported by the broader regional pattern of dedicatory practices, in which dedications to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus* predominate.²²

If one takes into account that this is a votive monument, and based on the common formulas for this type of inscription,²³ the letters *EAVS* in the second line may represent part of a male name, possibly belonging to the person who dedicated the monument. The problem, however, is that there are hardly any *gentilicia* ending in this combination.²⁴ In the third line, the letters *ANI C* are separated by a punctuation mark (possibly in a form of a hedera leaf, fig. 10) between *I* and *C*, which could indicate the *Ani(ensis)* voting district and the beginning of a cognomen starting with *C*. The largest number of inscriptions from the province recording the *Ani(ensis)* voting district come from *Burnum* or *Aequum*, in the hinterland of the central Dalmatian coast, and they mostly concern Italic- members of military units who give their *domus* as *Forum Iulii*, *Ariminum*, *Cremona*.²⁵ There are also soldiers belonging to this voting district originating from the eastern part of the empire who cite the Troad or Myliada as their home.²⁶ It is therefore possible that the dedicant of the Podno Mira altar was also an Italic, or more generally a foreigner. A connection with the army and military units is not emphasized here. As for the *cognomen*, the presumed space available seems too small, so this interpretation remains uncertain. In the fourth line, the letters *MILIA* could be the remnant of the female *gentilicium* *Aemilia*, which might indicate the name of another person involved in dedicating the altar. *Gens Aemilia* is widely attested in the province.²⁷ The bearers of this *gentilicium* are predominantly Italic, though in Liburnia it also appears among the indigenous population. In the fifth line, the letters *BAN* may represent part of a woman's *cognomen*, for example, *Urbana*. This is

21 See for example the catalogue of the monuments dedicated to Jupiter from the territory of modern Croatia in: M. Sinobad, 2012, 199-236.

22 Research by V. Zović and A. Kurilić has shown that, in the area of Roman Liburnia, which included the island of Krk, most votive inscriptions were dedicated to Jupiter, Best and Greatest, followed by dedications to the indigenous Liburnian deities. On the other hand, for example, only a single epigraphic monument attests to the worship of the imperial cult; V. Zović, A. Kurilić, 2015, 400-401.

23 The majority of votive epigraphic monuments from Roman Liburnia follow this pattern of dedication: the name of the deity appears at the beginning, followed by the name of the dedicator, then, if present, any decorative elements, and finally a verb or votive formula, see V. Zović, A. Kurilić, 2015, 402, *passim*.

24 There is a funerary monument belonging to a certain *Norbanus Luci filius Epaseus* from Lusitania (EDCS-74200396), and a funerary monument of Ammon (or Ammus) Cuneausus (or Cuneausius) Carbillus, from Hispania Citerior (EDCS-08400337).

25 See for example: *CIL* III, 2839=EDCS-28300168; *CIL* III 14996=EDCS-32700571; *CIL* III 14997=EDCS-32700573 (*Burnum*); *CIL* III 2733=EDCS-28300058 (*Aequum*).

26 EDCS-10101067 (*Salona*); *CIL* III, 8487=EDCS-31900305 (*Bigeste*).

27 G. Alföldy, 1969, 55.

one of the more common female cognomina.²⁸ Generally speaking the cognomen is found predominantly among freedmen and slaves, but it also appears on monuments of individuals with civic status.²⁹ Due to the lack of textual evidence, it is difficult to say more than that. The text would typically be concluded by a standard verb or a brief votive formula.

Based on all of the above, the following reconstruction is proposed:

[l(ovi) o(ptimo)] m(aximo) o(mnipotentī) f(ulminatori) or p(aterno)(?)

[–]EAVS[–]

[–]ANI. C[–]

[et? Ae?]mili[a] (?)

[Ur?]ban[a p(osuerunt?)]

A man whose name could be in the 2nd and 3rd lines and a woman whose name could be *Aemilia Urbana* made a vow to Jupiter the Best the Greatest and Almighty, the Thunderer, or maybe less likely, the Paternal or the Rector.³⁰

Iuppiter Optimus Maximus is one of the oldest ways of naming the supreme Roman god. “By acquiring the epicleses of *Optimus* and *Maximus*, he is placed not only at the summit of the hierarchy of the Roman pantheon... but also set above all the other gods: from the height of the Capitoline Hill he guaranteed, at the highest level, and therefore in an unlimited way, the maximum of resources (*Optimus* from *ops* = resource, good) and the maximum of extension, that is, an *imperium sine fine*.”³¹ This is also the most frequent way in which his name is recorded in inscriptions from the province of *Dalmatia*, and the Liburnian region too.³²

The adjective *Omnipotentus* does not appear on inscriptions dedicated to Jupiter in the province, but it is attested in several examples from across the Empire as well as in literary sources.³³ Varro describes the god as omnipotent and eternal, the generator of all things human, physical, and metaphysical, and “defines him as both progenitor and genetrix: ‘male’ as the active fertilizing principle and, at the same time, ‘female’ as the passive generative principle.”³⁴ Closely connected to this concept is the meaning of his epithet *Fulminator* (“the Thunderer”), which designates Jupiter as the lord of lightning, one of his earliest and most fundamental “powers”, intrinsically linked to his guardianship of the sky and atmospheric phenomena and, indirectly, to agriculture and the fertility it sustains.³⁵ Although literary sources often describe him in relation to lightning and thunder, which is reflected in the fact that the lightning bolt

28 T. Nuorluoto, 2023, 328.

29 I. Kajanto, 1965, 311; G. Alföldy 1969, 316.

30 We would like to thank Prof. Anamaria Kurilić, University of Zadar, for her assistance with the reconstruction of the text.

31 Citation: C. Santi, 2014, 11 (translation by authors). On the Roman cult of Jupiter see also: J. Rufus Fears, 1981, 2-141.

32 See note 22.

33 See for example: *CIL* IV, 6864 (Pompeii); EDCS-20600701 (Rome); *AE* 1946, 44 (*Africa Proconsularis*); *AE* 1908, 242 (*Numidia*), etc. For literary sources see: L. Raione, 2023, 46, *passim*.

34 August. C.D. VII, 9. Citation: L. Raione, 2023, 46 (translation by authors).

35 J. C. Murley, 1922, 6-7; G. Wissowa, 1971, 122. See also: C. Santi, 2014, 5.



Fig. 7 Approximate division of the territory of the island of Krk



Fig. 8 Roman altar from the site of Podno Mira displayed at the site itself



Fig. 9 Upper part of the Roman altar from the site of Podno Mira



Fig. 10 Inscription field of the Roman altar from the site of Podno Mira



Fig. 11 Relief depicting Jupiter from Roman lader, 2nd century

is one of the basic elements of his iconography (fig. 11), inscriptions in which he bears this epithet are rare.³⁶ Three are known from the province of *Dalmatia*. One was found in present-day Vrlika, in the hinterland of the central Dalmatian coast. It bears a dedication to *Iuppiter Fulminator* by *T. Aurelius Quintus* and is dated between the mid-2nd and late 3rd century.³⁷ Two altars from Zenica (central part of the province) were dedicated to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Fulminator* by the same individual, *Flavius Seneca, vir egregius*.³⁸ The first vow he made voluntarily on his own, while the second he made voluntarily together with his family; both date to the 3rd century.

The letter *F* from the first line of the Podno Mira inscription could also be reconstructed with *Fulgator*. This epithet, quite similar in meaning to *Fulminator*, is even rarer in inscriptions.³⁹ In *Dalmatia*, it is attested in a dedication from the vicinity of Gračanica (also central part of the province). The dedicants, *K. Patricius* and *Paula*, erected the altar against misfortunes that threatened them and their loved ones, on the Nones of September (5 September). The monument is dated between the early 3rd and the mid-4th century.⁴⁰

Although originating from *Pannonia Superior*, specifically from the Roman colony of *Siscia*, two votive inscriptions dedicated to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Fulminator Fulgator* deserve mention here, owing to their specificity, that is, the rarity of these epithets being combined.⁴¹ Only one of the inscriptions preserves personal names, referring to *referring to Fl. Verus Myrobalanus*, an official responsible for the provincial treasury (*procurator Augusti*) and the customs station of the mining district (*praepositus splendissimi vectigalis ferrarium*) who erected the monument in honour of *Asclepiades*, the treasurer (*arcarius*) of the station. The monument is dated between 271 and 350 CE.⁴²

By comparing the examples mentioned, it can be concluded that the only common feature of all monuments dedicated to Jupiter *Fulminator* from the province of *Dalmatia*, including the inscription from Podno Mira, is that they were found in areas that would have been rural in Roman times. This corresponds to the role attributed to Jupiter *Fulminator/Fulgator* as a protector of crops and agriculture. An exception is the inscription from *Siscia*, where Jupiter bears both epithets and is explicitly associated with officials of the provincial administration.

Regarding comparative examples of inscriptions dedicated to Jupiter *Paternus*, many are known, but non from the province of *Dalmatia*.⁴³ As for Jupiter *Rector*, or other epithets suggested by the letters *F*, *P*, or *R*, such as *Feretrius*, *Patronus*, or *Restitutor*, they will not be considered here, as they are extremely rare or unattested in the province and in Roman epigraphy

36 Other than those from *Dalmatia* and *Siscia*, we are aware only of inscriptions: *Iovi sacri fulminari* (*Regio X*, *CIL V*, 2474); *Div<u=O>m Fulgur / conditum // Div<u=O>m Fulgur / conditum* (*Regio XI*, *CIL V*, 6778). For literary sources see: L. Raione, 2023, 40, *passim*.

37 *CIL III*, 14966; EDCS-17000067.

38 *CIL III*, 12763= EDCS-31400217; *CIL III*, 12771= EDCS-31400225.

39 *AE* 2007, 1164 (*Pannonia Inferior*).

40 *AE* 2009, 1010; EDCS-44200188.

41 *CIL III*, 3953; *CIL III*, 3954.

42 *CIL III*, 3953; EDCS-28701037.

43 See for example: *CIL III*, 8148, EDCS-11201429, EDCS-11201430 (*Moesia Superior*); EDCS-15400045, *CIL III*, 894 (*Dacia*); *CIL XIII*, 06144 (*Germania Superior*), etc.

in general. Taking into account the context of the monument's discovery in the rural part of the island of Krk, and considering all the previously mentioned difficulties in reading the inscription, the most plausible reconstruction at present appears to be a dedication in honour of Jupiter, Best, Greatest, and Almighty, the Thunderer. Therefore, it can be concluded, based on its formal features and the proposed content, that the monument from Podno Mira was most likely a votive altar.⁴⁴

It is now necessary to attempt to provide an approximate dating for the monument. A possible chronological "reference point" may be the fine formal square capital, with generally uniform letter height, which is characteristic of the entire 1st century, though with a broader range as well. A similar letterform, though of somewhat smaller dimensions, appears on a fragment of the funerary stele, now in secondary use in the small church of St. Lucy in Jurandvor and probably also originating from the area of the Baška Valley (fig. 12).⁴⁵ This is the stele that a woman whose name is not preserved (who was Turus's daughter) set up to herself, her husband Volso and her parents Turus and Fata (who was a daughter of another Volso). This stele is dated to the period between the 1st and the mid-2nd century. Comparable paleographic features are also found on several other monuments from the island of Krk, which are likewise dated to the same period.⁴⁶ A dating element may also be the mention of the *tribus Aniensi*, if the restitution of the text is correct, as it appears on monuments in *Dalmatia* from the 1st century up until the mid-2nd century.⁴⁷ On the other hand, a somewhat later dating is suggested by other inscriptions of Jupiter the Thunderer from the province, which are dated to between the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Based on all of the above, one can consider placing the inscription chronologically in the first half of the 2nd century.

With the aim of contributing to the dating of the monument, it is certainly possible to take into account the discussion of its origin i.e. the origin of the marble, and the potential workshops and trade connections through which the monument reached the island of Krk.

Mineralogical, Petrographic, and Chemical Analysis of the Altar Marble

Apart from the formal and epigraphical analysis, one of the aims of this research was to determine the type of stone from which the monument was made, and, if possible, its workshop origin. For the stone analysis, a specimen of approximately 2 × 3 cm was taken from the altar on site. Preliminary observations were carried out by Z. Baričević from the Faculty of Biotechnology in Rijeka. It was observed that the material was fully crystallized, with relatively large striations and crystals, and that the stone was originally grey-blue in colour (fig. 13). The second phase consisted of mineralogical, petrographic and chemical analyses, performed at

44 Altars are the predominant type of votive monument with inscriptions in the territory of Liburnia; A. Kurilić, 2010b, 265-266.

45 *CIL* III, 03134.

46 *AE* 2015, 01086 (*Fulfinum*); EDCS-73200004 (*Curicum*); EDCS-10000953 (Jurandvor). See also J. Marohnić, 2014, 15-20.

47 Compare notes 25-26. For the dating of monuments containing a reference to the *tribus*, from Liburnia and Dalmatia more broadly see for example: A. Kurilić, 2006, 23-24; D. Demicheli, 2016, 37-40.

LAMA, *Laboratorio di Analisi dei Materiali Antichi* (Laboratory for Analysing Materials of Ancient origin) at Ca' Foscari University in Venice.⁴⁸ From the specimen, a thin section was prepared and examined under a polarizing microscope. A heteroblastic microstructure composed of calcite crystals with embayed and sutured boundaries was observed, indicating that the material is marble (fig. 14). The specimen was also used to yield powder for both the X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD) and stable carbon and oxygen isotope (McCrea 1950) analyses with a PANalytical EMPYREAN (Cu-K α /Ni: 40kV and 40 mA) diffractometer and a FINNIGAN Mat Delta E mass spectrometer, respectively.⁴⁹ The results suggested that the most probable geographic provenance of the marble from Podno Mira is the island of Marmara (ancient Proconnesus) in present-day Turkey, specifically the Saraylar quarry.⁵⁰

The Saraylar (Proconnesus) quarry was among the most renowned sources of marble in Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, celebrated for its fine-grained white marble, often accented with delicate blue-grey veins. Some of the most famous monuments constructed from this marble include the Great Altar of Zeus in Pergamon, commissioned by King Attalos around 180 BCE, and, about seven centuries later, the columns of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, built under the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I in 532-537 CE.⁵¹

Based on studies of Roman marble both at the quarry sites themselves and in museum collections, as well as research on ancient shipwrecks, it has been established that this marble was used primarily in architecture- for elements of architectural decoration, for sarcophagi, and to a lesser extent in sculpture.⁵² It entered Italy and Rome on a large scale during the Flavian period, and throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries it "rivalled" another famous white marble- the marble from Luni (Carrara). Proconnesos marble is found mainly in the eastern part of the Empire, in the Adriatic, much of central North Africa, the Levant, and along the coasts of Asia Minor - where it was distributed even before the beginnings of large-scale export to Rome, and to a lesser extent in the western provinces.⁵³ Research at the site of Saraylar, and especially evidence from ancient shipwrecks, indicates that products made of this marble were shipped both as semi-finished and finished goods.⁵⁴ This was facilitated by the fact that the marble could be loaded directly onto ships at the harbour of Saraylar, located very close to the quarries in a highly convenient location. All of this probably contributed to their lower price compared to marbles from other quarries and to their enduring popularity throughout the Principate.

48 F. Antonelli, 2023.

49 The results of the isotopic analysis were expressed in δ (‰) values, relative to the international PDB standard (Craig, 1957; Craig and Craig, 1972), and compared, through ad hoc isotope diagrams, with the databank proposed by F. Antonelli, A. Lazzarini, 2015, which includes more than 1000 samples from the main quarries of the Mediterranean basin; *Archaeometric study* 2023.

50 F. Antonelli, 2023.

51 T. Cramer, K. Germann, W.-D. Heilmeyer, 2002, 285-291; S. Öngen, N. Aysal, 2020, 442.

52 C. Beltrame, 2021, 437-462; D. Taelman, 2022, 857, *passim*.

53 *Ibid.*

54 C. Beltrame, 2021, 437-462; D. Taelman, 2022, 857, *passim*.

As for the presence of Proconnesian marble, and ancient marbles more generally, in the eastern Adriatic, archaeometric studies have so far been published for only a limited number of monuments and artefacts. Petrographic analyses have been carried out on selected Roman statues from the Danielli collection and the Archaeological Museum in Zadar,⁵⁵ while mineralogical, petrographic and chemical analyses have also been conducted on imperial statues from *Narona* (Vid, near Metković)⁵⁶ and selected Roman monuments from the Archaeological Museum in Pula.⁵⁷ For certain marbles of Diocletian's Palace in Split,⁵⁸ and for a portion of the Roman and early Christian sarcophagi from Salona, observations have so far been based only on macroscopic visual inspection.⁵⁹ The results reveal patterns consistent with those observed at other sites: Proconnesian marble was most commonly used for tombstones and architectural elements, while Pentelic, Luni, Paros, Thasian marbles were preferred for sculpture.⁶⁰

It is further assumed that in the period between the 2nd and 6th centuries Salona served as one of the principal distribution centres for Proconnesian marble sarcophagi, which are easily recognized by their lids with acroteria (fig. 15).⁶¹ "After receipt, the sarcophagi were carved at local workshops with designs that have much in common with those of northern Italy and Istria. There was at least one such workshop in the northern Adriatic, almost certainly at Ravenna; another very possibly at Salona itself."⁶² In Pula, this marble has been identified across Roman artefacts and objects of various types, suggesting that the city may have hosted a similar workshop and perhaps even served as a distribution hub for it.⁶³ Whether these centres were connected by the same trade route, with stops at the major cities along the eastern Adriatic coast, or whether they belonged to separate trajectories, remains an open question. In this context, one may also ask whether the island of Krk could have been included in such a network?

Roman Stone Monuments on the Island of Krk - Between the Local Craftsmanship and Imported Goods

The Roman monuments from the island of Krk are mostly made of limestone. They consist primarily of funerary monuments, along with several honorific and votive examples. A few pieces of architectural decoration have also been preserved, including column fragments and parts of entablatures. These are relatively standardized forms, with sculptural decoration of

55 M. Zorica, M. Rajzl, V. Čosović, 2019-2020, 621-666. A mineralogic, petrographic and chemical study of marble has also been conducted on the statue of Isis from *Aenona* (Nin), which is now housed in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, P. Karković Takalić, D. Mudronja, 2020, 93-121.

56 A. Álvarez, I. Rodà, 2004, 167-174.

57 A. Starac, 2011, 137-145; 2015, 319-331.

58 J. Ward Perkins, 1970, 40; K. Marasović, D. Matetić Poljak, 2010, 89-100.

59 J. Ward Perkins, 1970, 40-42.

60 See notes 52-58.

61 J. Ward Perkins, 1970, 40-42.

62 Citation: J. Ward Perkins, 1970, 42.

63 The collection of the Archaeological Museum of Istria includes several different types of objects made of Proconnesian marble, not only sarcophagi, but also sculptures, as well as constructive and decorative architectural elements; A. Starac, 2015, 319-331.

simple and moderate quality. Among the inscriptions, the quality of lettering ranges from fine square capitals and rustic capitals to simpler, somewhat irregularly executed forms.

Since the island had two urban centers and smaller rural communities, it is very likely that there were at least two workshops producing stone monuments for everyday use. With regard to local stone carving and funerary monuments, particular mention should be made of the so-called Liburnian cippi, a considerable number of which have been discovered on the island of Krk.⁶⁴ Recent research has shown that these monuments are not of pre-Roman origin, but rather products of local Liburnian workshops and artistic traditions.⁶⁵

On Krk itself, there are sites that may have served as limestone quarries, though probably on a smaller, local scale. Recent mineralogical, petrographic, and chemical studies of Roman and early medieval limestone sculpture from Cickini (northern inland part of the island, in Roman times territory of *Fulfinum*), indicate that the material most likely originated from Istria, particularly the Vinkuran area.⁶⁶ It is assumed that the quarries and workshops active in Istria during Roman times continued to operate into the early Middle Ages, exporting objects not only within Istria but also across the wider northern Adriatic, from Ravenna to the island of Krk. The conclusion of this research is that high-quality limestone, either as finished or semi-finished products, was imported to Krk, with the examined examples traced specifically to southern Istria. This practice likely reflects a tradition dating back to the Roman, or perhaps even pre-Roman, period: high-quality limestone was imported for more important and costly monuments, while local stone was reserved for those of lesser quality.⁶⁷ Given that relatively few remains of Roman stone sculpture survive on the island, it may also be assumed that simpler work was carried out locally, whereas more complex pieces in finer limestone were imported from larger workshops in Istria or elsewhere. By analogy, a similar assumption can be made for the southern part of the island and the area of Baška Valley.

As for marble objects, apart from the altar from Podno Mira, only a few other marble monuments from the Roman period have been found on the island. From Jurandvor, approximately 10 km north of Podno Mira, there is a funerary slab with an inscription in square capital letters, dating between the 1st and the first half of the 2nd century (fig. 16).⁶⁸ The marble is composed of relatively large, yellowish-white crystals. The original appearance of the monument cannot be fully determined, as it shows traces of reuse, possibly as a Christian mensa. There is also a fragment of a sarcophagus from Stara Baška, about 10 km south-west of Podno Mira, made of a finer grained yellowish-white marble (fig. 17). Due to the quality of its execution, it is assumed that the sarcophagus was certainly imported as a finished product during the period between 240 and 250 CE.⁶⁹

64 I. Fadić, 1989, 51-59; Kurilić, 2010a 133, 139-142; 2021, 148.

65 Kurilić, 2021, 148.

66 N. Belošević, J. Ujčić Grudenčić, 2026, in print.

67 *Ibid.*

68 EDCS-10000953.

69 A. Rendić-Miočević, 2004, 191-203.

Regarding the connection of Krk with the aforementioned distribution routes of objects in Proconnesian marble, evidence supporting links between the southern part of Krk and the Greek archipelago comes from discoveries at the site of St. Marko in Baška. At the site, thirty graves were excavated, which can be divided into two phases. The earlier layer of burials dates from the beginning of the 2nd century to the 3rd century. It is characterized by both cremation and inhumation burials. Among the grave goods, ribbed cups and small jugs predominate, modelled on Aegean prototypes, while plates and bowls are also attested, mostly belonging to various North African types. Among the oil lamps, those of northern Italian production prevail.⁷⁰ The latest graves are those in amphorae and under tegulae, which can be dated to the late antique period of the 4th-5th centuries. The amphorae belong to North African types, originating mainly from present-day Tunisia.⁷¹

These finds indicate that in the area immediately south of Podno Mira, a community existed in the 2nd century that maintained trade connections with northern Italy, but primarily with the Aegean region and North Africa. Like many other sites in the late antique period, trade links with North Africa, particularly in relation to amphorae, intensified. The finds from the Baška necropolis confirm that the community inhabiting the site in the 2nd-3rd centuries had established contacts with the eastern Mediterranean and was surely involved in the distribution of marble from that region.

Venus, Diana, Jupiter - Roman Cult Practices on the Island of Krk

The economy and trade connections of the island were to a certain extent intertwined with its cult practices. The study of Roman sacred landscapes and topography has, in countless examples, demonstrated how the location of cult places, cult monuments, and the cults themselves reflects the character of particular regions, including their economy and society, and, conversely, how regional characteristics shape religious practices.⁷² A similar pattern can also be observed and demonstrated for the cult monuments on the island of Krk. Not only the altar referred to in this paper, but also a stone block with a dedication to Venus from the city of Krk, an altar to Diana from the site of Cickini, and a slab dedicated to Venus and Jupiter from *Fulfinum*.

A stone block dedicated to Venus was found in the historic centre of the town of Krk. It mentions two officials who took care of restoring the temple of Venus at public expense. The inscription is dated between the end of the 1st century BC and the first decades of the 1st century CE.⁷³ In 2010, remains of a rectangular building with a semi-circular apse were discovered in the southern part of the town and were unofficially interpreted as the remains of a temple

70 J. Višnjić, L. Bekić, 2008, 219-229.

71 J. Višnjić, L. Bekić, 2008, 211-219.

72 R. Häussler, G. F. Chiaï, 2020. Or different publications of the series *Fana, templa, delubra. Corpus dei luoghi di culto dell'Italia antica*, <https://www.college-de-france.fr/en/fana-templa-delubra-corpus-dei-luoghi-di-culto-dell-italia-antica-ftd> (accessed on 8/7/2025).

73 A. Kurilić 2006, 137; EDCS-57200001.

of Venus, although this identification was later disputed.⁷⁴ Regardless, the inscription confirms the existence of a temple and the cult of Venus in the town of Krk at the turn of the era, which can be linked to the community of *Curictae*'s close relationship with Caesar and his preferred cult.⁷⁵ The cult was publicly worshipped and was therefore included in the *fasti* of *Curictae*.

In the northern interior of the island, *Q. Fonteius Maximus* erected an altar to Diana in fulfilment of a vow (fig. 18). The monument is dated to a broad period between the 1st and 3rd centuries, and serves as evidence of private devotion to the goddess.⁷⁶ It was found in secondary use within one of the structures of the mentioned, late antique, site of Cickini. The site consists of a church, a residential complex and a cemetery, and it developed near an early Roman settlement. In the wider area, multiple finds of both ancient and late antique architecture have been recorded, so it is possible that these sites, at least for a period, formed a single estate or economic unit of residential and agricultural character.⁷⁷ In any case, the area was wooded and rural, making it a fitting context for the worship of Diana, the goddess of the wild, the moonlight, and the hunt.⁷⁸

An inscription carved on a clay tablet, discovered in 2008 in the forum area of *Fulfinum*, records a dedication to Venus, Jupiter, and possibly other deities, commissioned by a city *duo-vir*.⁷⁹ It is dated between the early 2nd and the early 3rd century.⁸⁰ Given the material, it is possible that the piece represents an *ex-voto* originating from a temple dedicated to one of the eponymous gods. The presence of Venus on the island can be associated with the close ties that the local communities maintained with the imperial family, a tradition that goes back to Caesar. The presence of Jupiter in *Fulfinum*, and on the island more generally, is likewise unsurprising. His cult was among the most widely attested in the province and was also common regionally in Liburnia.⁸¹ Monuments dedicated to him occur in both urban and rural contexts, which is understandable, given that Jupiter, as the supreme Roman god, encompassed a wide spectrum of human activity, from agriculture and viticulture to governance, international relations, and the protection of Roman institutions and the army.⁸² It is not impossible that the central temple of *Fulfinum* was dedicated to Jupiter himself, or perhaps to the Capitoline Triad. A dedication of the central temple to Venus seems less likely, since the municipium was founded in the Flavian period, when the preferred goddess was Minerva.⁸³ This, however, does not exclude the possibility that a separate temple dedicated to Venus existed in the city, as was the case in Krk.

74 F. Velčić, 2013, 41-50.

75 E. Badian, 2009, 13, *passim*.

76 A. Konestra, R. Starac, G. Lipovac Vrkljan, 2024, 14.

77 A. Konestra, R. Starac, G. Lipovac Vrkljan, 2024, 6-7.

78 E. Simon, G. Bauchhness, 1984 (*LIMC* II, s.v. Diana), 849-855.

79 M. Čaušević-Bully, 2008, 411-412.

80 *AE* 2015, 1086=EDCS-72700158; M. Čaušević-Bully, I. Valent, 2015, 113.

81 See notes 21-22.

82 C. Santi 2014, 1-21; L. Raione, 2023.

83 It was Domitian who was particularly devoted to Minerva; J. L. Girard, 1981, 233-245.



Fig. 12 Fragment of a Roman stele in secondary use at the entrance of the Church of St. Lucy in Jurandvor

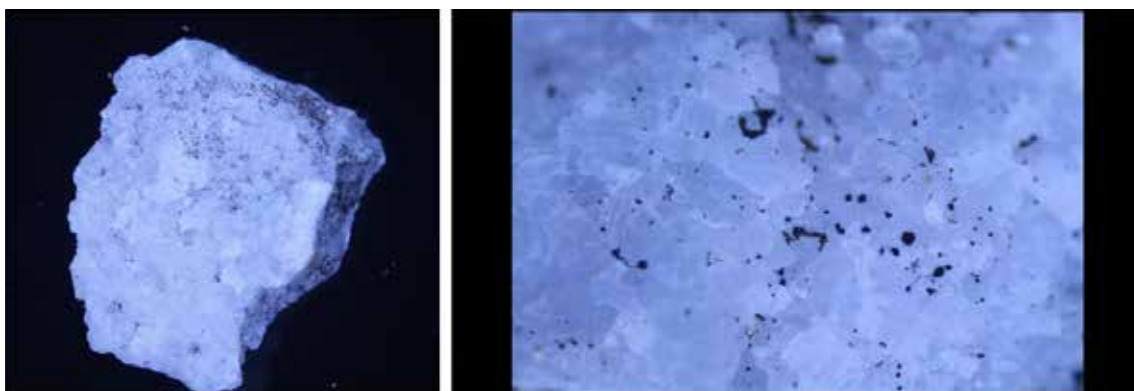


Fig. 13 Microscopic photograph of a marble sample of the Roman inscription from Podno Mira

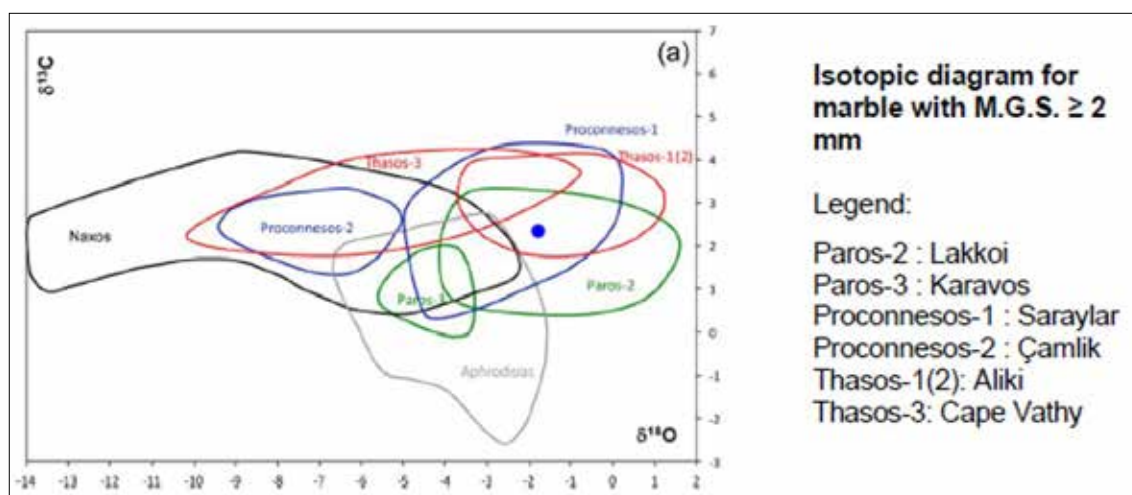


Fig. 14 Isotopic diagram for the marble sample of the Roman inscription from Podno Mira



Fig. 15 Sarcophagus of the Good Shepherd, from Salona, Archaeological Museum in Split



Fig. 16 Fragmentary Roman tombstone, collection of monuments at the Church of St. Lucy in Jurandvor



Fig. 17 Fragment of a marble Roman sarcophagus with a scene from the Trojan War from Stara Baška, Archaeological Museum in Zagreb



Fig. 18 Roman altar dedicated to Diana from the site of Cickini, Collection of archaeological finds from Cickini, Sveti Vid–Miholjice, Malinska

Taking all of the above into account, when the landscape of the Baška Valley is considered in relation to the local economy - primarily oriented toward agriculture, viticulture and olive cultivation, and trade, the dedication to Jupiter the Thunderer acquires particular significance. The altar may have belonged to a sanctuary situated in the southern part of the valley, serving the inhabitants of the wider area. Numerous parallels confirm the existence of extra-urban sanctuaries dedicated to Jupiter. For example, west of the legionary camp at *Burnum*, several altars dedicated to Jupiter have been discovered, which may have belonged to a sanctuary embedded within the natural landscape of Bukovica region.⁸⁴

Conclusions

This paper presents the results of research conducted within the project on stone sculpture from the island of Krk. As can be discerned from the text, these are preliminary discoveries that open up a much broader range of topics, such as local craftsmanship of stone objects, traditions of stone-working, marble and stone trade in the northern Adriatic during Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, Roman period cults and cult practices of the island, etc.

Although the inscription on the altar from the site of Podno Mira is difficult to reconstruct with precision, petrographic, mineralogical, and chemical analyses provide more reliable information. These analyses confirm that the altar was made of Proconnesian marble from the Saraylar quarries in Turkey. Considering the palaeographic and epigraphic features of the inscription, as well as the distribution of Proconnesian marble, which became firmly established in the province from the 2nd century onward, the inscription can be dated to the first half of the 2nd century. It is likely that the altar reached Krk either as a semi-finished or as a finished product, with the inscription perhaps carved locally. This possibility suggests that the trade connections of southern Krk extended not only toward the Aegean for everyday goods, but also toward more prestigious items, such as votive, maybe also funerary monuments in Proconnesian marble. The quality and typology of monuments in this region further suggest the existence of a relatively prosperous community, not only in the early Christian period but already in Roman times.

⁸⁴ P. Karković, 2026, in print, with previous bibliography.

Abbreviations

- *AE* – *L'Année épigraphique: revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine*. Paris, (annually from 1888.).
- August. CD – Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* (Sancti Aurelii Augustini *De civitate Dei*. Ediderunt B. Dombart, A. Kalb. Bibliotheca Teubneriana. Leipzig: Teubner, 1981.)
- *CIL* – *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Berlin: [1863–today].
- *LIMC* – *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich-München, Vol. I-VIII, 1981-1999.
- PLIN. *NH* – Gaius Plinius Secundus, *Naturalis Historia* (Pliny. *Natural History*. Volume II: Books 3-7. Translated by Harris Rackham. Loeb Classical Library 352. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.

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Results of the Mineralogical and Petrographic Analysis of the Limestone as a Starting Point for the Contextualization of the Early Medieval Stone Sculpture from the Island of Krk*

Numerous fragments of early medieval liturgical sculpture are known from various localities on the island of Krk, but due to the lack of information on the circumstances of the discovery of individual fragments, as well as the lack of knowledge about the ecclesiastical circumstances of that period on the island of Krk, it is very difficult to determine the time and context of their creation. Since the early medieval sculpture of this Kvarner island is characterized by a variety of selected motifs and decorative elements, as well as significant oscillations in the method and quality of carving, only possible connections with Istrian and Dalmatian works have been established using the usual art-historical methods. Within the framework of the project whose results are presented in this article, mineralogical and petrographic analyses were conducted for the first time on ancient and early medieval sculpture fragments from the island of Krk. The goal was to determine the exact origin of the stone raw material used in their production. These findings serve as a foundation for identifying trade routes to the island of Krk and provide a basis for comparing the analyzed fragments with pieces of the same sculptures from the raw material's place of origin. This comparison aims to establish workshop connections and facilitate a more precise dating of the relief-decorated fragments from Krk.

Keywords: mineralogical-petrographic analysis, limestone, sculpture, island of Krk, quarries

Fragments of late antique and early medieval sculpture on the island of Krk are mostly known from the scarce publications and articles in which individual relief decorations from

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this corpus are compared with similar examples from surrounding areas.¹ However, more precise dating and context of the creation of the largest part of Krk's stone sculpture of that period have mostly remained unknown. The reasons for this lie in the lack of data about the finding of individual fragments (often collected in various local, church and private collections or secondarily incorporated into newer buildings), in the inability to connect the preserved fragments with a specific architecture,² but also in the lack of knowledge about the ecclesiastical context of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages on the island of Krk. What has been concluded so far about Krk sculpture is that it is characterized by a variety of selected motifs and decorative elements, by significant oscillations in the manner and quality of carving and datable only roughly to the broad time intervals from the 5th/6th to the 9th centuries. Since conventional art-historical methods were insufficient to connect the Krk fragments with analogous, more precisely dated fragments from the Kvarner islands, Istria, or Dalmatia, we decided to determine the origin of the raw stone material used in their production. We then compared these fragments with stone carvings from areas near the quarries to identify possible similarities in motifs, compositions, and characteristic details. This approach aimed to facilitate a more accurate dating of the examined sculpture fragments, most commonly the parts of the liturgical furniture from the island of Krk.

The aforementioned research is being conducted as part of a one-year project for young scientists *Contextualization of roman and medieval sculpture on the island of Krk based on mineralogical-petrographic and chemical analysis of stone*³ (ended January 2024). The main goal of the project was to determine the composition and age of the stone used in the making of ancient and early medieval sculptures from selected sites on the island of Krk. Based on the obtained results, the exact origin, or possible quarries from which the stone was extracted, will be determined. These data serve as a starting point for contextualizing the ancient and early medieval sculpture of the island, specifically for determining the distribution routes of raw materials as well as finished stone products in the northern Adriatic region. Additionally, comparing the formal and technical characteristics of the analysed sculptures with relevant examples from the stone's place of origin may reveal connections to the same workshop circles, which could provide insights into the transmission of artistic models and possibly the migration of craftsmen.

1 Most of the known fragments of early medieval sculpture from the island of Krk are catalogued in the article by M. Skoblar (M. Skoblar, 2006, 59-89). Several significant fragments have been published in the catalogue by A. Milošević (A. Milošević ed., 2000), and in the article by M. Jurković (M. Jurković, 1988, 121-128), while individual examples have only been mentioned in several articles or monographs.

2 M. Jurković, 1988, 121-128; R. Starac, 2004, 234; M. Skoblar, 2006, 59.

3 The initial project team were: Nikolina Belošević, Ph.D (project leader) Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, Palma Karković, Ph.D Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, and Ranko Starac and, Jasna Ujčić Grudenić, the archaeologists from Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka. The analyses of the marble samples were carried out at the LAMA Laboratory at the IUAV University in Venice, with results to be published in a separate paper. Samples of the limestone sculpture were processed at the Laboratory for Geological Materials Analysis of the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Petroleum Engineering in Zagreb, with a report on the results prepared by independent researcher Katarina Šprem, Ph.D.

The project was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, initial research of relevant literature and part of the field visits to selected sites on the island of Krk were carried out. During the field work, fragments of sculpture were selected for sampling. To obtain the most accurate results, we selected sites from different parts of the island, focusing on locations where multiple fragments of liturgical furniture and architectural decoration from the same church were discovered. Although very small samples are required for the analyses,⁴ their collection represents physical damage to the monument. Because of that, spolia and fragments displayed in collections and museums, where the back or undecorated sides were not accessible, had to be excluded from the final selection. In accordance with the instructions from the local Conservation Department, it was necessary to select “sculptural fragments that are less presentable but diagnostically equivalent and, due to their nature, capable of withstanding small-scale sampling.”⁵ To obtain relevant results, we selected fragments that definitively belonged to larger relief-decorated ensembles of stone furniture from the same sites. So far, a total of twelve samples have been analysed – two marble and ten limestone. The sampled marble monuments were found at the Basilica “podno Mira” site near Baška and within the Cickini complex near Malinska, while the limestone samples come from the Cickini complex, from the town of Krk (Cathedral area) and from the church of St. George (Mala Krasa) near Punat.⁶

In the second phase, the samples were processed in laboratories. Since they were treated chemically and physically for the intended analyses, photographs were taken beforehand, and their microstructure was observed under a powerful microscope (fig. 1).⁷ Archaeometric study of marble samples from the island of Krk and interpretation of the results were conducted by professor Fabrizio Antonelli at the LAMA Laboratory of the IUAV University in Venice.⁸ The limestone samples were sent to the Laboratory for the Analysis of Geological Materials of the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Petroleum Engineering in Zagreb, where, in collaboration with Associate Professor Uroš Barudžija, the cuttings were made. The micropetrographic analysis and interpretation of the cutting results were carried out by Katarina Šprem. The marble samples were taken from ancient monuments, and their contextualization and publication were carried out by Palma Karković Takalić, a specialist in ancient art. Here, we present the preliminary results of the analyses of early medieval sculpture samples made of limestone.

4 The required sample size for marble analysis is 0.5 x 0.5 x 0.2 cm, while the minimum sample size for limestone analysis must be slightly larger, at approximately 1 cm³.

5 Excerpt from the letter/response to the Request for sampling of sculpture from the island of Krk from the Croatian Conservation Department in Rijeka.

6 Samples from the Cickini site were selected among the material from the depot of the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka. We express special thanks to archaeologist Matija Makarun and Petar Kopanica, who helped us with the sampling of sculptures from the Cathedral in Krk and from the church of St. George in Mala Krasa.

7 We would like to thank Zrinko Baričević, Ph.D from the Faculty of Biotechnology and Drug Development in Rijeka for photographing and recording the samples under a microscope (Olympus IX-83, 10 x magnification) His observations, based on moss remains and impurities in the stone structure, suggested the possibility of a common origin for certain samples – a hypothesis that was later confirmed by chemical analyses.

8 Marble samples were taken from parts of ancient sculptures, and the results of the analyses were presented in a separate paper by Palma Karković and Ranko Starac.

According to the overall results of the micropetrographic analyses of the limestone, nine out of ten samples belong to the geological period of the Early Cretaceous, the Cenomanian layer (table 1).⁹ On the geological map, areas with deposits of such material are marked with a certain shade of green and the symbol K_2^1 . In the vicinity of the island of Krk, these areas extend in a relatively narrow line from the central to the southern part of the Istrian peninsula and to a small part of the north-eastern coast of Istria, between Lovran and Plomin (map 1). Certain zones on the island of Krk and on the eastern coast of the Kvarner Bay are also marked with a similar shade of green. Therefore, it was firstly necessary to examine the possibility of whether the raw material for the production of the early medieval liturgical furnishing of Krk's churches might have been extracted in a local quarry on the island. There is no record in written sources about old quarries in the area of the island marked with that specific shade of green. Moreover, local memories related to stone extraction and processing primarily refer to the western side of the island, where the stone looks completely different (*breccia*) (fig. 2). However, limestone of a similar composition and age as the samples we analysed is currently exploited in the central part of the island, in the Garica quarry. The concessionaire is the local company GP Krk, which only started working on Garica in the late 1960s / early 1970s, in a place where there were no traces of previous exploitation. Moreover, the stone from Garica, although similar in composition to the Istrian one, is not suitable for extracting larger blocks, because the island is located on a fault that intersects the main Omišalj-Dobrinj-Baška syncline, which is why the rock mass has cracked and the maximum size of the stone pieces is not sufficient for construction or for the production of liturgical sculpture.¹⁰ The areas of Vinodol and Liburnia, due to their proximity across the sea, should also be considered as possible sources of the limestone used on Krk in the Early Middle Ages. However, it has been established that these regions were exposed to similar geological movements in the distant past,¹¹ preventing the extraction of sufficiently large limestone blocks. This led to the conclusion that southern Istria was the closest possible source of raw stone material for Krk, as the Kvarner islands have been well connected to it by maritime routes since prehistoric times.¹² Such a conclusion was confirmed by the results of the conducted analyses, some of which are presented below.

Sample STUD-AZC-1 originates from the Cickini site near Malinska. Based on its shape and the remaining relief decoration, it can be concluded that it was part of the frame of a late antique chancel panel, similar to one composed of approximately twenty fragments (fig. 3) and displayed in the collection of archaeological finds in the village of Sv. Vid-Miholjice near Malinska.¹³ The surface of the fragment is whitish to very light ochre, dotted with somewhat

9 K. Šprem, 2023.

10 We are grateful to mining engineer Tomislav Šokić for his kindness and effort in answering our questions regarding the history of the Garica quarry and the geological composition of the raw material extracted there.

11 H. Anderson, J. Jackson, 1987, 937-983; I. Velić, I. Vlahović, L. Fuček, 2009, 60-62; I. Velić, I. Vlahović, 2009, 63-65; I. Vlahović, J. Tišljarić, I. Velić, 2009, 65-66; L. Fuček, 2009, 66-69; T. Korbar, S. Markušić, O. HASAN *et. al.*, 2020.

12 R. Matijašić, 2001, 161-174.

13 The collection is housed in a former bakery (*peknjica*) that has been converted into a gallery, and makes a separate exhibition space of the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka.

darker brownish spots of irregular shape. The original, milky white color of the stone was revealed at the place where the sample was taken. The sample has sharp fracture edges, a very fine sugary texture, and crumbles under strong finger pressure. The microphotography of the cut shows the structure, colour, type, and size of the particles, as well as parts of fossils of specific protozoa, characteristic of the Early Cretaceous period (Cenomanian) and the Gornji Humac formation. Throughout history, such material was mostly exploited in the Valtura quarry near Pula, and in Antiquity in the quarry in the Portić bay on Premantura and near Ližnjan.¹⁴

Sample STUD-AZC-2 was taken from a fragment that originally belonged to a late antique or pre-Romanesque capital (fig. 4). The museum collection of finds from Cickini exhibits two such fully preserved capitals, while the study collection of the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral Rijeka houses another ten smaller fragments of the same type of capitals. The sample belonged to one of them. The surface of the fragment is greyish brown, and milky white at the sampling point. According to other macroscopic characteristics, such as sharp fracture edges, texture and ease of crumbling, the similarity to the previously described sample can be seen, which was confirmed by the results of micropetrographic analysis. The stone from which the considered capital was made also belongs to the younger Cretaceous geological layer (Cenomanian) and comes from a quarry in southern Istria (Vinkuran, Premantura, Valtura, etc.).

Particularly interesting from both an art-historical and petrographic perspective is sample STUD-AZC-4. It was also found at the Cickini site, and it appears to belong to early medieval rather than late antique sculpture. Although the volute on the front side may resemble a part of a capital, the treatment of the back side indicates that it was part of a pre-Romanesque trabeation, most likely an architrave (fig. 5). The extremely light, milky-white colour of the fragment's surface differs only slightly from the colour at the place where the sample was taken. The texture is sugary, the edges are sharp, although not as much as in the previously described fragments, it remains stable under finger pressure and does not crumble. Unlike all other analysed fragments, this one displays the characteristics of a slightly older geological layer – specifically, the Upper Jurassic deposits, which are widespread along the western coast of Istria, and shows a high degree of similarity to the stone quarried near Vrsar, in the quarry of Biškupovi Vrh. Given that the formal and petrographic features of this sample differ from the rest of the analysed sculpture from the Cickini site, it can be assumed either that the architrave was transferred from another location, or (which seems more likely) that the church was equipped with new stone furniture during the Early Middle Ages.

Sample PN-2 was found during recent archaeological excavations in the immediate vicinity of the Krk Cathedral of St. Mary. According to this location, the quality of craftsmanship, the depth of the background carving, as well as the preserved section of a threefold interlace, which apparently formed a rather complex motif, it can be assumed that the sampled fragment belonged to the pre-Romanesque chancel screen of the Cathedral. Although the surface of the fragment has developed a greyish-brown patina, the original tone of the stone is almost

¹⁴ K. Šprem, 2023 (for the needs of the project).

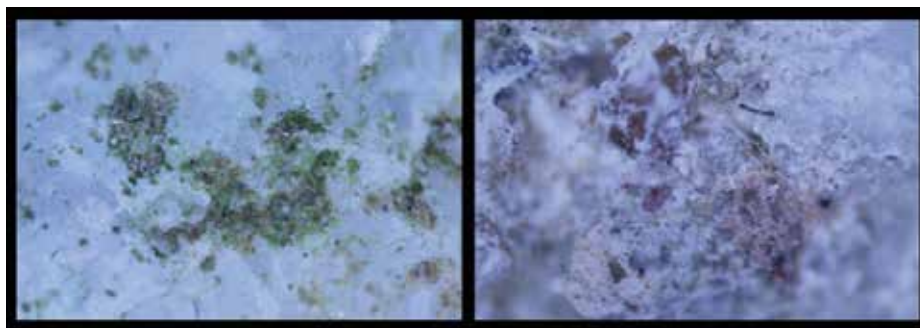


Fig. 1 Sample structure and microparticles of moss and pollution visible under a microscope (Olympus IX-83, 10 x magnification)



Fig. 2 Breccia – typical stone from the island of Krk

Nr.	SAMPLE	Period
1.	STUD-AZC-1	Late Cretaceous (Campanian?)
2.	STUD-AZC-2	Late Cretaceous
3.	STUD-AZC-3	Late Cretaceous (Cenomanian)
4.	STUD-AZC-4	Late Jurassic?
5.	STUD-AZC-5	Late Cretaceous (Cenomanian)
6.	STUD-AZC-6	Late Cretaceous (Campanian?)
7.	STUD-AZC-7	Late Cretaceous (Cenomanian)
8.	PN1 Krk	Late Cretaceous
9.	PN2 Krk	Late Cretaceous (Cenomanian)
10.	Sv. Juraj - Punat	Late Cretaceous

Table 1 Overall analysis results

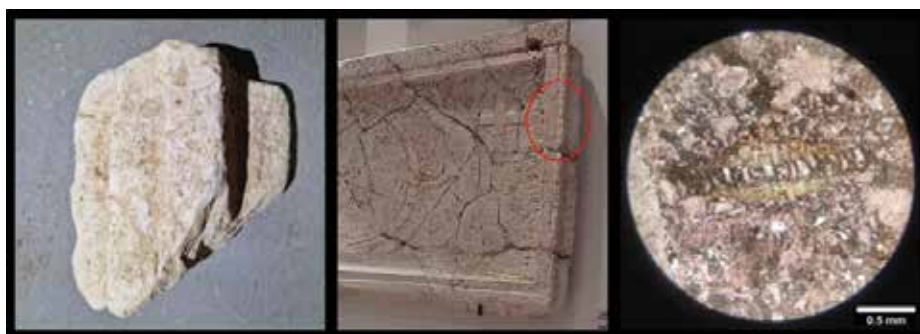


Fig. 3 Fragment from which sample STUD-AZC-1 was taken. Chancel panel similar to the one to which the sampled fragment belonged. Microphotograph of the STUD-AZC-1 cut



Fig. 4 Fragment from which sample STUD-AZC-2 was taken. Capital similar to the one to which the sampled fragment belonged. Microphotograph of the STUD-AZC-2 cut



Fig. 5 Front and back of the fragment from which the sample STUD-AZC-4 was taken. Architrave from Krk's cathedral similar to the one to which the sampled fragment belonged. Microphotograph of the sample STUD-AZC-4 cut and comparison of lithotypes from Cickini (A, C) and Biškupovi vrhi quarry near Vrsar (B, D)

snow-white. The sample shows great hardness, and a very fine texture, resembling compact powder particles that do not crumble under finger pressure. Micropetrographic analysis revealed that it is an exceptionally valuable fine-grained limestone, commercially known as *unito* or *statuario*, and the most famous site of its exploitation is the Vinkuran quarry in southern Istria. Based on the described characteristics and visual appearance, the block of stone used to make a piece of liturgical furniture probably looked quite similar to marble. This suggests that it may have stood alongside the fragmentarily preserved chancel panel (fig. 6), the only known marble fragment from the Krk Cathedral, with which it also shares similarities in the selection and execution of the relief decoration. In any event, the described fragment indicates the collaboration of an extremely wealthy patron and a highly skilled stonemason, capable of executing complex motifs in both reused antique marble and carefully selected high-quality Istrian limestone.

A pilaster fragment, a sample of which was also sent for petrographic analysis, was found among the ruins of the church of St. George on Mala Krasa near Punat. Due to its long period under the ground, its surface had become reddish brown, but at the sampling spot the original milky-white tone of the stone was revealed, closely resembling the colour of other fragments from the same site, which are housed in the collection of the Franciscan Monastery on Košljun. (fig. 7). The texture of the sample is sugary, with some impurities visible to the naked eye, and it crumbles into sharp-edged fragments when pressed firmly with the fingers. Micropetrographic analysis revealed that it is a type of limestone very similar to that used at the Cickini site.

The described mineralogical-petrographic analyses of the stone used in production of Krk's liturgical sculpture were carried out for the first time and have conclusively proven that limestone from Istrian quarries was used at all selected sites, that is, in all parts across the island. This confirms that raw materials from Istria were distributed throughout Krk over several centuries, spanning Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The analysis determined that most of the sampled limestone originated from the extreme south of Istria, specifically from the Vinkuran and Valtura quarries near Pula, Portić Bay on Premantura, or the vicinity of Ližnjan. Additionally, one limestone sample was traced to the west coast of the peninsula, specifically to the Biškupovi Vrh quarry near Vrsar.¹⁵ These quarries are located in the immediate vicinity of the sea or in bays where ports with designated docks may have existed. In some cases, the stone could even be loaded directly onto ships without the need for additional port infrastructure.¹⁶ Since maritime transport has been significantly cheaper than land transport since ancient times,¹⁷ it would not have been unusual for high-quality limestone to have been

¹⁵ K. Šprem, 2023.

¹⁶ I. Koncani Uhač, 2018, 168.

¹⁷ From *Diocletian's Edict on Prices* (301 AD), it is known that land transport of goods was significantly more expensive than sea transport (A. Kropff, 2016, chapter XVII.1 for road transport charges and chapter XXXVII for maritime transport charges). Considering that Roman roads were still in use during the Early Middle Ages and that no significant technological advancements had occurred in the meantime, the ratio of transport costs from the early 4th century to the late 9th century could not have decreased; rather, it would have remained the same or even increased.



Fig. 6 Fragment from which the sample PN-2 was taken. Chancel panel from Krk's Cathedral similar to the one to which the sampled fragment probably belonged. Microphotograph of the sample PN-2 cut



Fig. 7 Fragment of pilaster from the church of St. George on Mala Krasa near Punat from which the sample was taken. Original colour of the stone on the sampling spot. Fragment of the architrave from the same church, kept in Franciscan Monastery on Košljun. Micro photograph of the sample cut



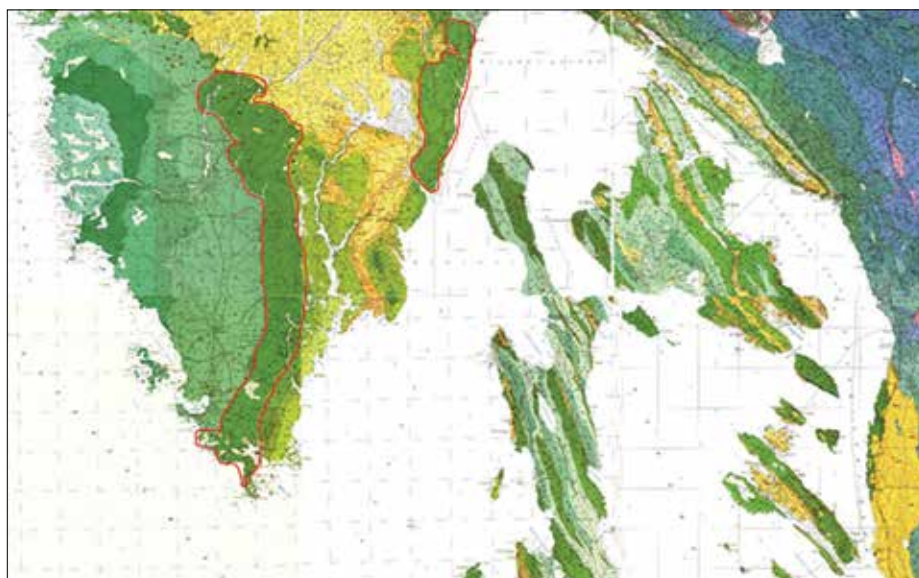
Fig. 8 Capitals from Cickini (capital of the altar screen), the Cathedral in Pula (capital of the colonnade) and the church of St. Theodore in Pula (capital of the altar screen)



Fig. 9 Motifs on pilaster (spolia) in the church of St. Mary in Omišalj and the pilaster from the church of St. Mary the Great near Bale



Fig. 10 Specific motifs on pilasters from the cathedrals in Krk, Pula and Osor, and the detail preserved on the sampled fragment PN-1



Map 1 Geological map of the area. The red line marks areas of limestone deposits of the same age and composition as the sampled material

brought to Krk by sea, even if the route went around the island of Cres.¹⁸ Although extensive art-historical analyses of the relief characteristics and comparisons between the sampled sculpture from Krk and pieces produced by local workshops in the stone's area of origin are yet to be conducted in the third and final phase of the project, certain parallels and similarities can already be observed. For example, the capitals from the Cickini site (fig. 8) correspond in shape, carving technique, and specific execution of selected elements to the capitals from several important churches in Pula. The relief decoration of the pilaster, incorporated as spolia in the church of St. Mary in Omišalj, is very similar in both motif selection and the executional-technical characteristics of the stonemason's 'handwriting' to the relief on the pilaster from the church of St. Mary the Great near Bale (fig. 9). The connection between south Istrian stonemasons and the northern Adriatic islands, as well as the probable migrations of these craftsmen, is most clearly indicated by the use and execution of specific details, such as the lily flower that terminates in the sinusoidal tendrils on pilaster fragments from the cathedrals in Krk, Pula, and Osor. A fragment of this same motif can be identified on the stone piece from which sample PN-1 was taken (fig. 10). Moreover, in the upper corners of the Krk and Osor pilasters, identical half-heart-shaped leaves appear as a kind of personal 'signature' of the carver, clearly indicating that they were created within the same workshop and likely under the chisel of the same stonemason. While it has already been established that Istrian workshops supplied churches in Osor with stone furniture,¹⁹ this is the first time that artisanal connections between particular Istrian stone carvers and those at the Island of Krk have been identified. Given the results of the conducted analyses and the previously mentioned navigation route from Istria via Cres to Krk, it is not surprising that both artistic models and stonemasons migrated together with the import of raw materials.

18 A. Mohorovičić, 1954, 214; Z. Brusić, 1970, 549-568; A. Badurina, 1992, 8; *Peljar za male brodove*, 2020, 44.

19 M. Jarak, 2007, 57-77; M. Jurković, 2016, 231-242.

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La pala ripiegabile e l'arredo festivo per l'altare maggiore della chiesa cattedrale di San Pietro di Venezia: forme e funzioni

La chiesa cattedrale della laguna veneziana, titolata a San Pietro, era dotata di un ricco corredo di preziosi che veniva ostentato durante le più importanti celebrazioni dell'anno liturgico e che aveva come suo fulcro la pala ripiegabile, realizzata all'avvio del XV secolo e collocata sull'altare maggiore. Questa era composta da un elemento orafico ed uno ligneo che costituivano, rispettivamente, la facies festiva e quella feriale. Questo contributo si pone l'obiettivo di indagare la funzione originaria della pala ripiegabile, facendo uso dei documenti archivistici superstiti, nel tentativo di ripercorrere le tappe che portarono allo smantellamento del complesso ed alla dispersione delle parti mobili. Nel corso dello studio si darà importanza, inoltre, alle prassi liturgiche che avevano luogo nell'area presbiteriale e, in particolare, a come il rifacimento dello spazio architettonico abbia comportato la variazione funzionale del manufatto e la conseguente decontestualizzazione.

Parole chiave: arte, medievale, pala d'altare, liturgia, arredo, Venezia, laguna

Le origini della diocesi castellana sono da individuare nel 774, ovvero quando il concilio dei prelati veneziani elesse il neo vescovo Obeliatto a primo vicario della nascente cattedra di Olivolo, situata geograficamente ai margini del territorio lagunare di Venezia;¹ il cambio di titolazione avvenne nel 1091² quando, a seguito della partizione definitiva in sestieri della città, la sede vescovile cadde in quello di Castello (fig. 1).³

La prima testimonianza significativa sull'edificio medioevale è un passo, tratto da un testo del noto erudito veneziano Flaminio Corner, che narra come nel dicembre dell'anno 1120 la chiesa cattedrale sia stata distrutta da un incendio.⁴ Barral i Altet, con un'analisi attenta sulle origini e sulle evoluzioni del complesso ecclesiastico,⁵ rileva come vi siano poche fonti che

1 La proposta di una nuova diocesi con sede nella più grande città lagunare venne mossa dal Doge Galbaio, che risiedeva a Malamocco, a Papa Adriano I. L'isoletta di Olivolo venne eletta come sede fisica della nuova Diocesi. A. Niero, 2005, 32. Si veda anche G. Bozzolan (ed.), 1974.

2 *Ibid*, 33. Si veda anche G. Bozzolan (ed.), 1974.

3 La bibliografia in merito agli aspetti storici della nascita e dell'evoluzione della Diocesi è molto estesa. *Ibidem*.

4 Il testo asserisce che l'incendio scoppiò durante le celebrazioni di venerdì 15 dicembre e che distrusse non solamente la chiesa ma anche le abitazioni e le strutture limitrofe. F. Corner, 1758, 7.

5 X. Barral i Altet, 2018, 111-138.

si riferiscano al periodo medioevale delle strutture e attribuisce questo scarso successo documentario alla posizione marginale della cattedrale rispetto fulcro politico e liturgico della laguna, da individuare nell'area marciana.⁶ Gli studi congiunti del già citato Barral I Altet e di Gianmario Guidarelli permettono, comunque, di ricostruire idealmente quella che doveva essere la chiesa edificata a seguito dell'incendio e perdurata, almeno fino alla prima metà del Cinquecento, nella sua conformazione romanica soprattutto per quel che riguarda l'alzato e il prospetto (fig. 2).⁷

All'interno di questo contributo non si potrà indagare l'intera struttura e l'evoluzione cronologica della stessa;⁸ sarà, quindi, necessario restringere il campo allo spazio interno dove avevano luogo la maggior parte delle celebrazioni liturgiche, ovvero quello presbiteriale.

A fronte di una scarsità documentaria in merito al complesso architettonico, si contrappone una ricchezza di fonti archivistiche riferite ai beni, agli arredi ed alle prassi liturgiche che avevano luogo all'interno dell'edificio.⁹ Gran parte di queste è conservata presso l'Archivio della Curia Patriarcale di Venezia e consta, in particolare, di numerose visite pastorali ed inventariazioni dei Beni. È opportuno specificare che, sebbene i vescovi sia della Diocesi castellana sia di altre provenienze visitassero numerosissimi edifici del territorio lagunare, la chiesa di San Pietro costituiva l'avvio dell'itinerario e il fulcro di maggior interesse per le inventariazioni, in quanto sede della Cattedra. Sebbene la documentazione sia abbondante e giunta fortunatamente in buone condizioni di leggibilità, l'unico vero regesto completo delle fonti che si riferiscono, nello specifico, agli arredi liturgici ed alle prassi celebrative è quello pubblicato da Antonio Niero nel 1978;¹⁰ dopo di tale studio, infatti, l'attenzione è stata concentrata su altri aspetti del complesso episcopale.

Il manufatto più prezioso ad oggi pervenuto dell'altare maggiore è la pala orafa con San Pietro, Cristo, figure di Santi e i dodici Apostoli, custodita all'interno del Tesoro di San Marco¹¹ (fig. 3) e che originariamente doveva costituire la parte metallica di un più articolato sistema scenografico composto da un corrispettivo ligneo e da una serie di cornici, telai, argani e mulinelli che dovevano permetterne la movimentazione.¹² Lo studio di questa tipologia di opere

6 *Ibid*, 113-115.

7 *Ibid*, 116-117; G. Guidarelli, 2013, 185-201; 2014, 117-124; 2015, 19-38.

8 L'edificio era monumentale, sviluppato in altezza rispetto alle costruzioni circostanti, diviso in tre navate, con tre absidi sporgenti e scalari. L'interno era probabilmente a doppio colonnato con almeno otto fusti di colonne per lato. Per la ricostruzione dettagliata degli spazi si veda nota 7.

9 Questa fortuna documentaria si giustifica con la presenza della cattedra episcopale che determinava, di conseguenza, sia la presenza stabile del vescovo veneziano, sia la visita obbligatoria degli altri prelati presso la sede della *Diocesis*.

10 A. Niero, 1978, 257-291.

11 All'interno del Tesoro di San Marco sono custodite due pale orafe, di dimensioni molto simili: una era collocata originariamente come paliotto dell'altare della Basilica e l'altra è quella proveniente dalla chiesa di San Pietro. Sebbene oggi siano esposte in parallelo e possa sembrare che assolvessero alla medesima funzione, il paliotto di San Marco era collocato sulla parte inferiore dell'altare, a differenza di quello di San Pietro che era, invece, issato alle sue spalle. La funzione di quest'ultimo verrà chiarita all'interno del contributo. In merito al tesoro di San Marco, alla sua storia ed ai componenti si veda la dettagliata monografia di H. Hahnloser, 1971.

12 Nella mia Tesi di dottorato, in corso di revisione e di pubblicazione, mi sono occupato di catalogare le "pale ripiegabili" superstiti in area adriatica. La laguna veneziana ne contava molteplici esemplari, ad oggi smembrati e decontestualizzati. Si veda P. F. A. Giambò, 2023.

è stato avviato nell'ultimo decennio; l'esemplare più noto è quello collocato alle spalle dell'altare maggiore della basilica di San Marco sebbene la diffusione di questi manufatti fosse ben più ampia e distesa sulle coste dell'Adriatico.¹³

L'opera di San Pietro ha una dimensione di 100 x 327 centimetri ed è costituita da un'anima lignea rivestita da lamine argentee dorate. Il manufatto è riccamente adornato con figure di Santi ed Apostoli in piedi, per un totale di ventiquattro, organizzati in quattro gruppi da sei ed affiancati ai due personaggi centrali seduti simmetricamente al centro e, proporzionalmente, di dimensioni maggiori. Dei troni che sorreggono queste due figure, ovvero Cristo e San Pietro, non si scorge alcun indizio se non le vesti che modellano le ginocchia e cadono sui polpacci con pieghe molto profonde e marcate (fig. 4). Sia gli Apostoli che fiancheggiano Cristo nella fascia superiore, sia gli otto Santi e le quattro Sante disposte simmetricamente accanto a San Pietro nel registro inferiore, sono sorretti da mensole decorate a traforo e disposte entro archi trilobati dalla cornice mistilinea, sostenuti da esili colonnine tortili (fig. 5).¹⁴ Il fondo sul quale sono posizionati i personaggi è lavorato con piccoli e sottili punzoni che tessono una trama fitta e intricata, all'interno della quale si diramano racemi vegetali e motivi a fogliette. I soggetti in piedi sono abbigliati con manti perlopiù levigati nella parte del busto e caratterizzati da pieghe profonde al di sotto della vita, che generano giochi chiaroscurali dove l'effetto specchiato del petto si contrappone alla restante parte dell'abito. In merito all'artefice, Hahnloser ipotizza che possa trattarsi di un orafo dalmata di formazione veneziana e che sia possibile rintracciare la sua mano in una croce processionale argentea conservata presso il tesoro del duomo di Capodistria (figg. 6, 7).¹⁵ Merkel, De Marchi e Mezzacasa concordano con il confronto stilistico dello studioso e, in particolare quest'ultimo, sostiene che entrambe le opere siano state realizzate intorno al primo decennio del XV secolo.¹⁶ Ad una visione ravvicinata della croce sono evidenti i segni della lavorazione raffinata e precisa della superficie di fondo; in particolare, i girali vegetali che la arricchiscono si intrecciano con curve morbide che avvolgono i soggetti in rilievo dei bracci della croce. Inoltre, il manto che avvolge e definisce il corpo di Maria è appena modellato all'altezza delle ginocchia, cadendo liscio fino alla mensolina che la sorregge e rimandando agli abiti che caratterizzano i Santi della pala veneziana. Credo sia opportuno avvalorare l'ipotesi che la bottega orafa che abbia realizzato i manufatti sia la medesima.

La letteratura che menziona la pala di San Pietro non è molto estesa; l'unico saggio interamente dedicato alle vicende storiche del manufatto è quello di Niero,¹⁷ che costituisce il fondamentale punto di partenza per uno studio che si occupi di reinserire l'opera all'interno del proprio contesto originario e di ricostruire perché e come essa sia stata dapprima modificata e, successivamente, decontestualizzata.

13 Tra i primi studi dedicati a questi complessi d'altare movimentabili si segnalano quelli di De Marchi e Guarnieri. A. De Marchi, 2009a; C. Guarnieri, 2017, 9-35; 2019, 39-53. In merito alla pala dell'altare maggiore della basilica marciana si veda G. Fiocco, 1965, 115-119.

14 M. Mezzacasa, 2019, 228.

15 H. Hahnloser, 1971, cat. n. 171.

16 M. Mezzacasa, 2019, 229.

17 A. Niero, 1978, 257-294.

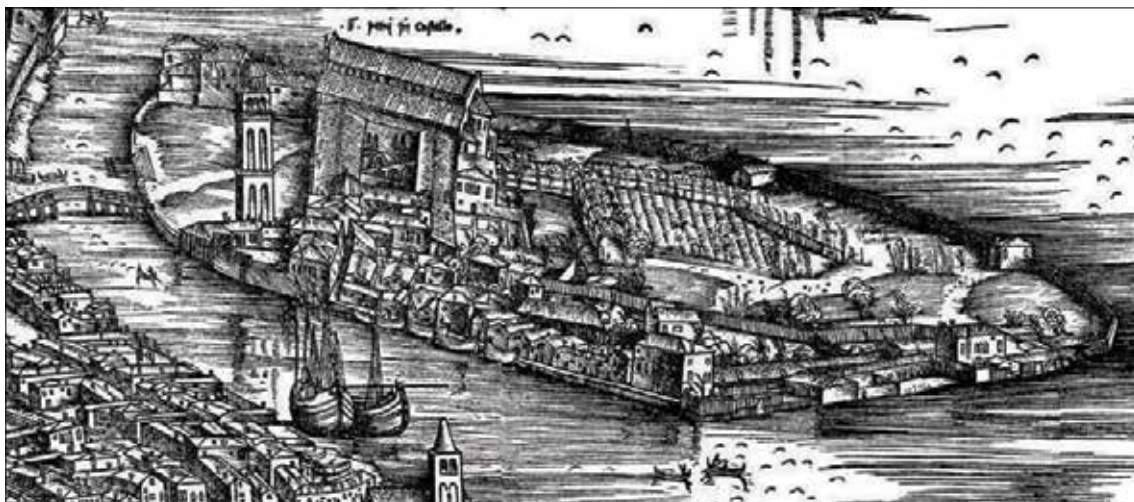


Fig. 1 Jacopo de' Barbari, Venetie MD, dettaglio con l'isola di Olivolo con la chiesa di San Pietro

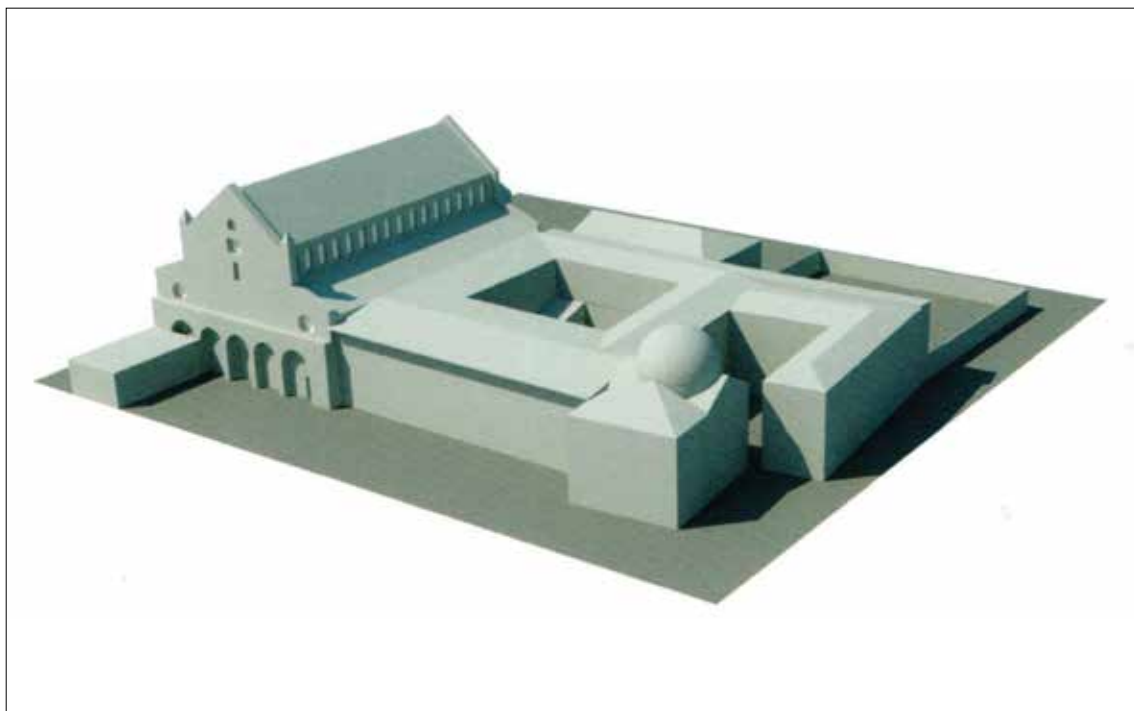


Fig. 2 A. Necoloiu, A. Surduleasa, Rendering digitale del complesso episcopale del XVI secolo

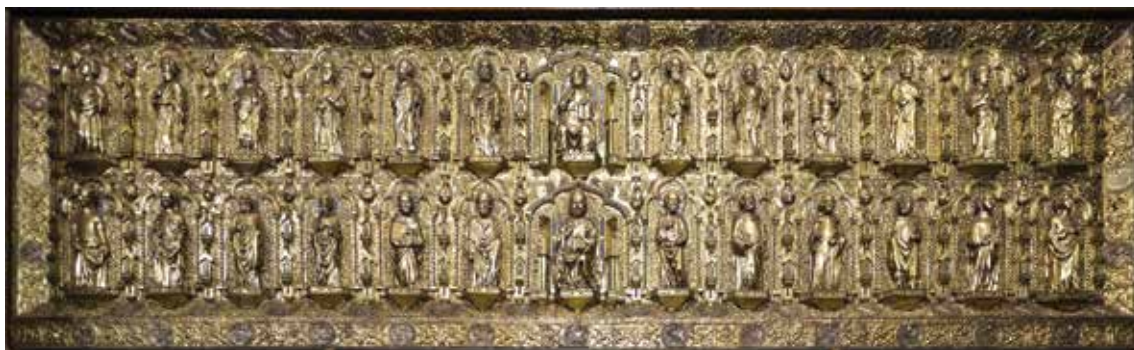


Fig. 3 Bottega orafa veneziana, Pala d'oro con Cristo, San Pietro, Apostoli e Santi, primo decennio del XV secolo, Tesoro di San Marco, già altare maggiore della chiesa cattedrale di San Pietro, Venezia



Fig. 4 Bottega orafa veneziana, Pala d'oro con Cristo, San Pietro, Apostoli e Santi, dettaglio di Cristo e San Pietro, primo decennio del XV secolo, Tesoro di San Marco, già altare maggiore della chiesa cattedrale di San Pietro, Venezia

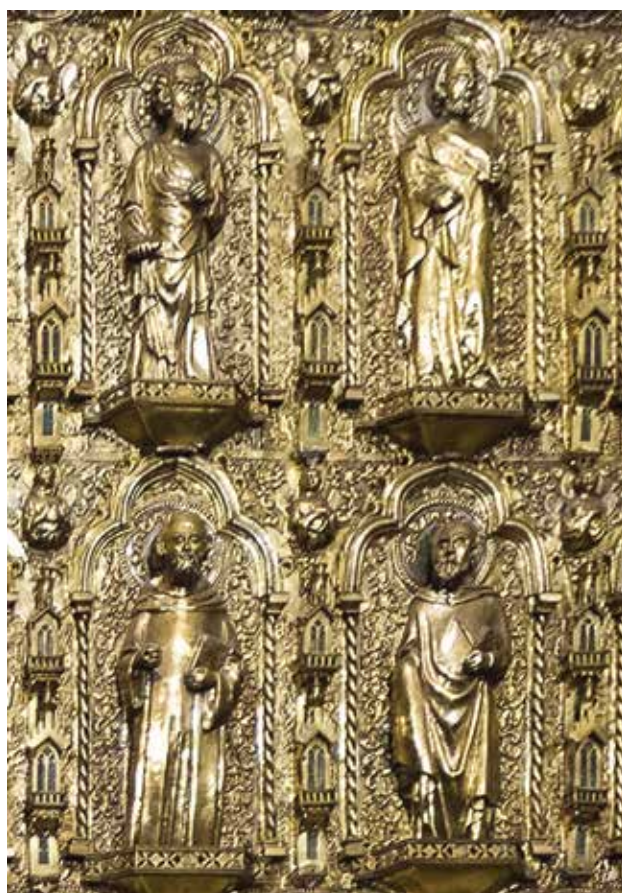


Fig. 5 Bottega orafa veneziana, Pala d'oro con Cristo, San Pietro, Apostoli e Santi, dettaglio di Santi ed Apostoli, primo decennio del XV secolo, Tesoro di San Marco, già altare maggiore della chiesa cattedrale di San Pietro, Venezia

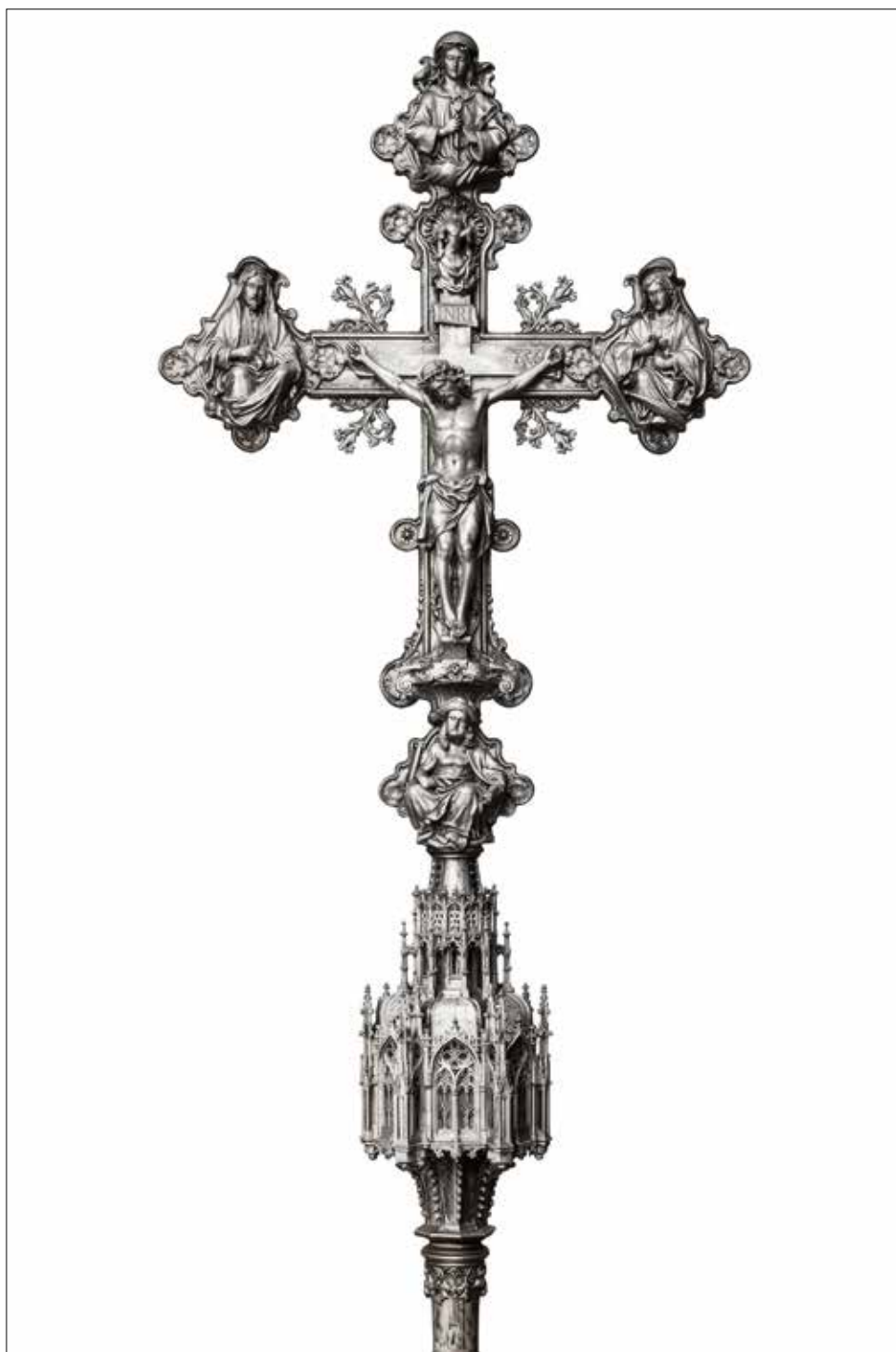


Fig. 6 Bottega orafa veneziana, Croci processionali, primo decennio del XV secolo, sagrestia della cattedrale dell'Assunta e di San Nazario, Capodistria (Koper, Slovenia)



Fig. 7 Bottega orafa veneziana, Croci processionali, primo decennio del XV secolo, sagrestia della cattedrale dell'Assunta e di San Nazario, Capodistria (Koper, Slovenia)

Durante il periodo di ricerche del mio progetto di Dottorato ho avuto l'occasione di verificare le fonti archivistiche già pubblicate e di rintracciare ulteriori menzioni inerenti al manufatto ed alle prassi liturgiche della chiesa episcopale.¹⁸

Il primo accenno alla pala orafa è nella visita apostolica del 1581, quando il 26 maggio la cattedrale di San Pietro venne visionata e descritta dettagliatamente dal vescovo Agostino Valier.¹⁹ Il commento del prelado fornisce interessanti informazioni anche sull'area presbiteriale e sui suoi spazi; il presbiterio era fiancheggiato da due amboni laterali, su modello di San Marco, ed innalzato di nove gradini. Al di sotto di esso si trovava una cripta ed era delimitato da un'iconostasi.²⁰

Alla descrizione dell'arredo dell'altare maggiore è dedicato solamente un breve commento che, tuttavia, fornisce un'informazione importante per conoscere lo stato della pala orafa alla fine del XVI secolo: essa si trova, infatti, collocata sopra all'altare maggiore ed è in ottime condizioni di conservazione.²¹ In merito al termine con il quale è chiamato il manufatto, ovvero *iconam*, Niero afferma che la terminologia indicata dalle fonti archivistiche sia un discriminare imprescindibile per una corretta ricollocazione dei manufatti in relazione alla mensa d'altare;²² tuttavia, questa così rigida considerazione influenza la corretta interpretazione delle fonti che, in particolare in epoca moderna, adoperano termini diversificati (ma considerati, ai tempi, equivalenti) per la nomenclatura di molteplici tipologie di manufatti.

La successiva testimonianza archivistica che certifica la presenza dell'opera *in situ* e di un corredo d'altare è costituita da un inventario dei Beni redatto nel 1590.²³ La fonte è molto estesa ed elenca suppellettili di vario genere e, nondimeno, l'intero corredo di tessuti; tuttavia, all'interno della sezione dedicata ai beni mobili orafi, seppur non comparando direttamente la pala orafa poiché collocata sull'altare maggiore e, quindi, non inventariabile tra i beni custoditi in locali secondari, essa viene nominata in relazione all'utilizzo di altri componenti orafi. La fonte costituisce un'attestazione fondamentale per le ricerche, dato che non solo viene menzionata per la prima volta l'apertura della palla ma vengono specificate alcune delle occasioni nelle quali questa viene movimentata.²⁴ Tra i beni compaiono sia croci

18 Le ricerche sviluppate durante il percorso di Dottorato, in corso di pubblicazione, sono state condotte all'interno del progetto *Le pale ribaltabili in area veneziana ed adriatica tra XIII e XV secolo: tipologie e funzioni*, tutor Prof.ssa Cristina Guarnieri, Università degli Studi di Padova, ciclo XXXV.

19 Il manoscritto originale si trova oggi conservato presso l'Archivio della Curia Patriarcale di Venezia (d'ora in avanti ACPVe), *Visite pastorali, Visitatio apostolica*, 1 v. In merito alla fonte si veda lo studio dedicato e specifico di S. Tramontin *et. al.*, 1965, 453-533. Si veda anche L. Parentin, 1997, 246-345.

20 Dalla visita si ricavano informazioni in merito alla struttura di tutto l'edificio, composto da tre navate in cotto, soffitto a capfitto scoperte, un totale di sedici altari con pavimento a mosaico e quadroni in marmo. A. Niero, 1978, 258.

21 *Altare majorem pulcherrima ornamenta habet iconam argenteam inauratam optime et pulcherrime accommodatam, qua omnia comendanda esse dicerunt.* ACPVe, *Visitatio Apostolica*, 1 v.

22 A. Niero, 1978, 259

23 ACPVe, *Chiese, inventari*, n. 50

24 *Una croce piccola de arzinto con pietre false si mette sull'altar grandò li giorni festivi che si apri; un presepio d'arzinto con li sui portili si apri in una casseta di ligno deppenta si mette su l'altar quando si apre la palla; quattro candelieri de arzinto si mettono su l'altar quando si apre la palla.* *Ibidem*.

e candelieri, da porre sull'altare maggiore in occasioni festive e quindi quando è visibile la pala orafa poiché non celata dalla sua coperta feriale, sia una cassetta di legno dipinta, all'interno della quale è contenuto un presepe, che doveva arricchire l'altare presumibilmente durante le celebrazioni natalizie, ovvero "quando si apre la palla".²⁵ Quest'ultimo complemento d'arredo era stato letto e trascritto erroneamente da Niero come un "frontespizio con portili",²⁶ generando un'interpretazione errata della configurazione dell'altare maggiore; lo studioso, a seguito di questa interpretazione, aveva ipotizzato che la chiesa cattedrale fosse dotata di due opere orafe per la medesima mensa, su modello del complesso marciano.²⁷

Ciò che emerge dalla rilettura dei documenti è la presenza di un ricco corredo d'altare che veniva esposto occasionalmente e, in particolare, durante le celebrazioni dei principali momenti dell'anno liturgico, davanti alla pala orafa che doveva apparire eccezionalmente svelata nella sua *facies* festiva. Questa doveva, quindi, fungere da fondale scenografico per l'ostentazione dei preziosi della cattedrale e, nondimeno, delle numerose teche reliquiario custodite dentro l'edificio.

La visita successiva da parte del vescovo Priuli, nel 1591,²⁸ riporta la descrizione dell'altare maggiore; questo è coronato da un baldacchino di damasco rosso²⁹ ed è impreziosito da una pala orafa, divisa in due parti, che si tiene celata se non nei giorni festivi.³⁰ Credo che la menzione della divisione in "due parti" possa essere da ricondurre sia alla disposizione della narrazione in due registri della pala argentea, sia alla "coperta feriale" che doveva rivestirla e che doveva essere costituita da due tavole. In merito al termine continuamente, credo sia da leggere come indicazione del fatto che la pala stesse chiusa per la maggior parte del tempo liturgico, ovvero per "più tempo continuato" e non come un indice della frequente variazione di configurazione tra feriale e festiva. La descrizione si conclude con un'osservazione in merito allo stato conservativo dell'opera, evidenziando come "in alcune parti detta palla è corrotta"³¹ e ordinandone le riparazioni necessarie. Questa testimonianza rileva un primo danneggiamento dell'opera, che dovette necessariamente avvenire nel decennio tra il 1581 e il 1591 e che doveva essere evidente a tal punto da richiedere un intervento di restauro.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ A. Niero, 1978, 260.

²⁷ *Ibidem*. Anche De Marchi riporta questa fonte, riprendendola da Niero. Cfr. A. De Marchi, 2009b, 83.

²⁸ ACPVe, *Visitatio Priuli*, L.I. f. 14 r.

²⁹ Un paragone proposto da Niero è il baldacchino che si erigeva sull'altare maggiore della Cattedrale di Grado. Si vedano G. Cuscito, 1966, 87; A. Niero, 1978, 287.

³⁰ *Una palla d'argento in due parti divisa quale si chiude continuamente et s'apre solo nei giorni delle festività principali et in essa appariscono molte figure d'argento indorate di diversi santi, in alcune parti detta Palla è corrotta, Sua Santissima ha ordinato che si rivegga diligentemente, et si ristauri dove sarà bisogno*. ACPVe, *Visitatio Priuli*, L.I. f. 14 r.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

La successiva visita pastorale di Francesco Vendramin,³² avvenuta il 4 ottobre 1609, rileva ancora una volta lo *status* danneggiato dell'opera che viene visionata sull'altare maggiore e scritta nelle sue componenti.³³ Il prelato annota che l'opera orafa "di non poco valore"³⁴ viene tenuta "serrata",³⁵ lasciando intendere che la copertura non abbia solamente la funzione di celare dalla vista il manufatto per la maggior parte dell'anno liturgico ma anche, e soprattutto, di tutelare l'oggetto prezioso. Il dato più rilevante della fonte è l'osservazione in merito allo stato conservativo dell'opera, che risulta essere ancora da restaurare, in particolare nell'area destra (ovvero dell'Epistola)³⁶ della "parte superiore che non è d'argento".³⁷ Credo che, in questo caso, si faccia riferimento non tanto alla cornice del manufatto, che è di materiale metallico, quanto alla copertura lignea, la quale all'inizio del XVII secolo doveva manifestare importanti danneggiamenti.

Le visite successive, presenziate da Giovanni Tiepolo (1620 e 1621) e da Federico Corner (1633), tacciono della pala e della sua coperta.³⁸ In questo momento storico, durante il rifacimento seicentesco della cattedrale, l'originario altare maggiore di epoca medioevale subì la demolizione e la successiva sostituzione con una nuova mensa.³⁹

La pala d'altare compare nuovamente nell'inventario dei beni della sacrestia della chiesa, datato 3 aprile 1633 e redatto a seguito di una visita di Corner.⁴⁰ La descrizione dell'oggetto è arricchita di ulteriori dettagli utili a comprendere sia la composizione della pala e della sua coperta, sia l'effettiva condizione alla metà del XVII secolo;⁴¹ nella fonte, infatti, viene specificato che il manufatto è diviso in due parti e che si chiude con due chiavi. Alla luce di questa osservazione è possibile confermare quanto già notato durante la visita Vendramin.⁴²

Il prelato, inoltre, sostiene che sia stata eseguita per volontà del Pontefice Angelo Corner, che era stato precedentemente vescovo della medesima chiesa nel 1379. La catalogazione inserisce la pala e la relativa coperta all'interno delle opere custodite nei locali annessi alla chiesa e non più ad arredo dell'altare maggiore che, come già detto, era stato demolito una decina di anni prima. È interessante notare che l'intero complesso d'altare, incluso il telaio con le serrature, fosse stato spostato nella sua totalità, decidendo inizialmente di conservare tutte

32 ACPVe, *Visitatio Vendramin*. f.n.n.

33 *Visitò l'Altar maggiore sotto l'Inuriazione di S. Pietro, qual è consacrato, et hà una Palla co l'immagine di argento honorevole, et di non poco valore, et viene tenuta serrata, che non si apre nilli giorni solenni, la parte superiore che non è d'argento, è alquanto rotta dalla parte dell'Epistola; però che Santissimo ordinò che sia accomodata. Ibidem.*

34 *Ibidem.*

35 *Ibidem.*

36 *Ibidem.*

37 *Ibidem.*

38 ACPVe, *Visitatio Corner; Visitatio Tiepolo*.

39 A. Niero, 1978, 262.

40 *Una Palla d'altar maggiore d'argento dorato, di rilievo in due parti, che si serra con due chiavi, con figure d'argento n°.... fatta si dice dal Sommo Pontefice Correr, che fu Vescovo della detta chiesa l'anno 1379. ACPVe, Visitatio Corner, f.n.n.*

41 Il numero di figure è volutamente non indicato. Come puntualizzato dalla direttrice dell'Archivio del Patriarcato, Dott.ssa Levantino, le visite avevano lo scopo di catalogare i beni presenti più che di descriverli. Sottolineo che Niero trascrive erroneamente la data del 20 giugno 1631, anticipando di due anni la cronologia. Si veda A. Niero, 1978, 262.

42 Cfr. nota 29.

le sue parti.⁴³

La successiva visita di Marco Morosini datata 12 febbraio 1645⁴⁴ conferma la prosecuzione dello stallo dell'opera nella sacrestia, annotando che è presente solamente la parte orafa; da questo dato è possibile ipotizzare che la perdita delle tavole protettive del manufatto orafico sia da collocare tra l'aprile del 1633 e il febbraio del 1645.

L'opera venne nuovamente posta in uso negli ultimi decenni del secolo, come testimoniato dalla visita pastorale di Giovanni Alberto Badoer nel 1690, quando si trovava collocata sull'altare laterale di San Carlo.⁴⁵ Nell'inventario inerente agli ori e redatto a seguito della visita viene nuovamente specificato che la cattedrale conserva la pala, sebbene questa abbia assunto una collocazione differente da quella originaria.⁴⁶

L'11 maggio 1760 la visita del Patriarca Giovanni Bragadin⁴⁷ testimonia la presenza della pala orafa sull'altare titolato a San Girolamo e alla Madonna della Salute.⁴⁸ A riguardo della collocazione, essa risulta essere variata ancora una volta, non trovandosi più sull'altare di San Carlo ma su quello titolato a San Girolamo e alla Madonna della Salute. Si deve allo stesso Bragadin il successivo spostamento dell'opera dall'altare di San Girolamo e il relativo adattamento a paliotto per l'altare maggiore. Questa variazione funzionale, ovvero da opera posizionata sopra la mensa ad opera esibita davanti ad essa, ha comportato la modifica della cornice per permettere di armonizzare la sagoma e le dimensioni alla nuova collocazione.⁴⁹ In tale occasione la pala orafa fu quindi allungata di circa cinquanta centimetri, optando per l'inserimento di una torretta decorata tra gli archetti di ogni figura in piedi.⁵⁰

La pala orafa ha subito, quindi, numerose variazioni di collocazione con conseguenti modifiche alla conformazione originaria; queste traslazioni, che hanno confinato l'opera in alcuni intervalli di tempo ad altari laterali dell'edificio, hanno necessariamente implicato il riadattamento liturgico della stessa ed hanno favorito la decisione di musealizzarla all'interno del Tesoro marciano a partire dal 1807.⁵¹

Il caso studio dell'arredo liturgico presbiteriale della cattedrale veneziana costituisce un *unicum* per quel che concerne le testimonianze e, in particolare, per la possibilità di ripercorrere la sua cronistoria nelle tappe fondamentali. Tra i dati più interessanti che emergono sono

43 Niero ipotizza che la pala e la coperta fossero riposte all'interno di una grande cassa lignea, custodita in sacrestia. Tuttavia, ad una attenta rilettura delle fonti, non emerge alcun contenitore con questa funzione. Cfr. nota 34.

44 *La pala d'argento di sopra l'Altare maggiore di figure n° 26*. ACPVe, *Visitatio Morosini*, f.n.n.

45 *Altare S. Caroli quod habet Pala Argentea antiquissimam cum figuris n. vigintiquatuor*. ACPVe, *Visitatio Badoer*, III, f. 3 v.

46 *Una pala d'argento dorata con figure n° 26 de rilievo, che è sopra l'altare di S. Carlo*. ACPVe, *Visitatio Badoer*, III, f. 48 r.

47 ACPVe, *Visitatio Bragadin*, f. 15.

48 *Visitavit altare S. Hieronimi seu B.M.V. a Salute. Altare hoc necessariis ornamentis, non enim habet, nisi parvam lampadem argenteam, et candelabra, et cruce cuius Crucifixo ex ebene. Vidit supra bases ante descriptas collocatam esse iconem dypticam, in qua 26 figure anaglyphico opere elaboratae, apparent, quae repraesentant in medio a parte superiori Jesum Christum et a parte inferiori S. Petrum apostolum et alias imagines sanctorum, omnes argenteas inauratas*. *Ibidem*.

49 A. Niero, 1978, 263.

50 E. Merkel, 2007, 118.

51 M. Mezzacasa, 2019, 228.

da evidenziare la perdita della coperta feriale lignea alla metà del XVII secolo e la funzione perdurante della pala orafa come fondale scenografico di altari differenti. La volontà di preservare il manufatto prezioso nonostante il cambio di gusto potrebbe essere, infine, un'ulteriore espressione della volontà della chiesa cattedrale lagunare di continuare a possedere un'opera preziosa quanto quella che fungeva da fulcro liturgico della basilica marciana e di altri importanti edifici del territorio, quasi a voler sostenere una competizione che aveva come oggetti di confronto quelli che arricchivano gli spazi più sacri della cristianità.

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Immagini

- Fig. 1 Jacopo de' Barbari, *Venetie MD*, dettaglio con l'isola di Olivolo con la chiesa di San Pietro. (X. Barrar i Altet, 2018, 122, fig. 17).
- Fig. 2 A. Necoloiu, A. Surduleasa, *Rendering digitale del complesso episcopale del XVI secolo*. (G. Guidarelli, 2015).
- Fig. 3 Bottega orafa veneziana, *Pala d'oro con Cristo, San Pietro, Apostoli e Santi*, primo decennio del XV secolo, Tesoro di San Marco, già altare maggiore della chiesa cattedrale di San Pietro, Venezia (M. Mezzacasa, 2019, 236, fig. 285).

- Fig. 4 Bottega orafa veneziana, *Pala d'oro con Cristo, San Pietro, Apostoli e Santi, dettaglio di Cristo e San Pietro*, primo decennio del XV secolo, Tesoro di San Marco, già altare maggiore della chiesa cattedrale di San Pietro, Venezia (M. Mezzacasa, 2019, 237, fig. 288).
- Fig. 5 Bottega orafa veneziana, *Pala d'oro con Cristo, San Pietro, Apostoli e Santi, dettaglio di Santi ed Apostoli*, primo decennio del XV secolo, Tesoro di San Marco, già altare maggiore della chiesa cattedrale di San Pietro, Venezia (M. Mezzacasa, 2019, 237, fig. 288).
- Fig. 6 Bottega orafa veneziana, *Croci processionali*, primo decennio del XV secolo, sagrestia della cattedrale dell'Assunta e di San Nazario, Capodistria (Koper, Slovenia). (Foto ed elaborazione digitale dell'autore).

Goldsmithing Connections Between Šibenik and the Regions of Venice and the Veneto in the Late Middle Ages*

Based on archival sources from Šibenik and, to a lesser extent, surviving goldsmithing works, this paper examines the connections between 15th-century goldsmithing in Šibenik and that of Venice and the Veneto. The first part of the paper focuses – within the limits allowed by the extant archival records – on the movement of goldsmiths between these regions and the training of local apprentices in Venetian settings. It also explores the weight system used for gold and silver in 15th-century Šibenik, the use of Venetian-quality silver, and the alloy-testing practices that conformed to Venetian standards. Additional evidence of these connections is provided by a small number of preserved works, most likely imported from those regions, as well as by pieces created by Šibenik goldsmiths whose iconographic models may, in some cases, have been inspired by paintings or drawings by artists active not only in Venice and the Veneto, but also in Dalmatia. Finally, further indications of goldsmithing ties between Šibenik and these regions are found in archival documents referring to now-lost secular works, which may have been either imported or produced locally based on models from that artistic milieu.

Keywords: goldsmithing, apprenticeship, reliquary, processional cross, jewellery, silver tableware, 15th-century, Šibenik, Venice, Veneto

Compared to other major coastal towns in Dalmatia with ancient urban and cultural traditions – such as Zadar, Trogir, Split, or Dubrovnik – Šibenik came into existence relatively late,¹ which naturally influenced the development of its goldsmithing activity. Nevertheless, despite its more recent foundation and complex socio-political and ecclesiastical circumstances, the town developed during the late Middle Ages into a prominent administrative, economic, ecclesiastical, cultural, and artistic centre on the eastern Adriatic coast. In line with its overall growth and the needs of the local community, goldsmithing in Šibenik gradually took shape during the later medieval period, as attested by a modest number of surviving works and,

* At the 3rd International Conference *Studies in Art History and Archaeology of the North Adriatic from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, held in Rijeka on 16 and 17 November 2023, I presented a contribution titled *Goldsmithing Connections between Šibenik and Venice in the Late Middle Ages*, the scope of which has been expanded in this paper to include the Veneto region.

1 For further information on the existence and development of Šibenik, refer to: D. Zelić, 1999.

even more so, by numerous archival records. Although goldsmithing in Šibenik during this period represents a significant segment of Croatian goldsmithing heritage, it has only recently become the subject of more systematic scholarly research, most notably through a doctoral thesis dedicated to the topic.² Nonetheless, one important aspect – the goldsmithing connections between Šibenik and the regions of Venice and the Veneto in the 15th century – has not yet been examined in depth. This article focuses on these ties, analysing them to the extent permitted by the surviving goldsmithing works and archival sources.

Goldsmiths' Mobility between Šibenik and the Regions of Venice and the Veneto

In the context of late medieval goldsmithing in Šibenik, artistic connections with Venice and the Veneto can be traced through archival records referring to goldsmiths who had settled in the town from those regions, or were of such origin, as well as to those from Šibenik who maintained various ties with Venice and the Veneto. These interactions, whether temporary or long-term, are indicative of broader patterns of artistic mobility, exchange, and cultural transfer that characterised the late medieval Adriatic.

In the preserved Šibenik archival records, documents have been found mentioning three goldsmiths from Venice, one from Vicenza, and one of Paduan origin, who resided or stayed in Šibenik for varying lengths of time. These include Nikola from Venice (*Nicolaus de Venetiis*), Alojzije (Alvise) from Venice (*Aluisio de Venetia*), Petar Ivanov Niger from Venice (*Petrus Niger quondam Iohannis, aurifex de Venetiis*), Karlo Šimunov from Vicenza (*Carolus Simonis de Vicentia*), and Jeronim Franin from Split, whose father was from Padua (*Hieronymus quondam ser Francisci de Padua, aurifex de Spaletto*).³

Goldsmith Nikola from Venice,⁴ recorded as a resident of Šibenik, appears in a single notarial document dated 8 February 1462, in which he agrees to pay Mihovil, son of the late Bartul – a military mercenary stationed at the Šibenik fort (*in castro Sibenici*) – a sum of 20 libra and 2 soldi on behalf of a debt owed to Leonard dal Puo (?), an apothecary in Šibenik.⁵ Since Nikola is recorded as a resident of Šibenik, it is reasonable to assume that he settled in the town, rather than being a transient visitor.⁶

2 See: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 1-1030.

3 All known documents on these goldsmiths have been partially transcribed in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 100-101, 114, 128-129, 134, 158-162, 304-306 (notes 1121-1134), 334 (note 1342), 355 (notes 1552, 1553), 359 (notes 1604-1609), 403-415 (notes 1950-2022). To facilitate future archival research in Italian archives, the Italian versions of the goldsmiths' names – Latinised in Šibenik archival sources and Croatised in scholarly literature – will be proposed in the footnotes.

4 Ital. *Nicola/Niccolò da Venezia*.

5 Državni arhiv u Šibeniku, Bilježnici Šibenika (hereafter: HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ), box 18/I, Cristoforo q. Andree, F f, fol. 7v. The transcription can be found in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 334 (note 1342). On page 114 of the same doctoral thesis, it is mistakenly stated that the goldsmith Nikola committed to paying off the apothecary Leonard's debt, whereas he had in fact committed to repaying a debt owed to Leonard.

6 Since he was recorded in Šibenik in early 1462, it is unlikely that the document refers to Nikola, son of Stoja, who was sent to Venice in 1456 for a seven-year goldsmithing apprenticeship scheduled to last until 1463. See the next section of this paper.

A similar conclusion can be drawn for the goldsmith Alojzije (Alvise) from Venice.⁷ He is indirectly referenced in the manuscript notes of Krsto Stošić, which state that he was present in Šibenik in 1476.⁸ Additionally, an archival document drafted on 29 July 1478 records him as a witness and refers to him as a *comestabilis* (commander) at the Šibenik fort.⁹ Since he is addressed with the title *ser*, it can be assumed that he enjoyed a certain level of prestige in the town.¹⁰

Unlike the two goldsmiths previously mentioned, Petar Ivanov Niger from Venice is referenced in over sixty documents dating from 1497 until his death in the 1520s.¹¹ In the earliest of these, drafted on 5 October 1497, he is already recorded as a resident of Šibenik.¹² On that day, he entered into a lawful marriage with Margarita, daughter of the barber *Michael quondam Ioannis* (from Venice, authors' note), who had settled in Šibenik. The marriage lasted until 1509, when it was annulled.¹³ Archival sources confirm that Petar remained in Šibenik until the 1520s, although it is possible that he occasionally travelled to Venice. This is suggested by his will, drawn up on 6 April 1523, before a planned journey to Venice.¹⁴ However, it is uncertain whether this journey ever took place, as only one further document from his lifetime has been found. Dated 23 July of the same year, it records that he was bedridden in the house of the priest Mihovil Blibošić and made a codicil to his will.¹⁵ In addition to his presumed occasional travels to Venice, Petar maintained indirect ties to his homeland through business and personal relationships with Venetians living in Šibenik, as well as with locals who travelled to Venice.¹⁶

Given these connections, it is worth considering whether they played a role in his presumed involvement in goldsmithing. While there is no definitive proof that Petar practiced the craft, some evidence points in that direction. One indication is found in a document drawn up in his *apotheca* on 6 May 1507, which records the presence of Nikola Veselković, a goldsmith

7 Ital. *Alvise da Venezia*.

8 K. Stošić, *Povijest Šibenika*, III/10, (Zlatari), fol. 3r; The original document confirming this was not found in archival sources.

9 Biskupijski arhiv Šibenik, Biskupska kurija (hereafter: HR-BAŠ-18/1, BK), box 8, without a folio number.

10 For example, in Zadar's 14th-century archival sources, the title *ser* was used to designate nobles, with occasional exceptions for wealthy and prominent individuals. (e.g. E. Hilje, 1994, 96).

11 Ital. *Pietro Nigro di Giovanni da Venezia*. Although the majority of known documents concerning the aforementioned goldsmith date from the 16th century, the earliest recorded mention of him in Šibenik, as far as is known, dates to the late 15th century and thus falls within the chronological framework of this paper.

12 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 23/II, Martinus Campellis de Gaivanis, fasc. 26/IIa, fol. 198v-199r.

13 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 28/II, Lovrinac Butrasić, fasc. 30/IIb, fol. 23r. On 27 March 1509, the count of Šibenik issued a ruling requiring Nikola to return the dowry to Margarita and grant her a substantial portion of his property, suggesting that he had to pay significant compensation for violating the marital union. It is precisely from this document that we learn Margarita's father was from Venice, as he is marked with the designation *de Venetiis*. Since, in the Middle Ages, "the so-called 'separation of bed and board' was only possible in cases of adultery, concealment of illness, abuse, committed crime, or mutual agreement of the spouses to enter into church service" (e.g. B. Glavan, 2008, 272, with the references cited therein), it is likely that the annulment of the marriage between the goldsmith and his wife was due to one of these reasons.

14 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 30/VIII, Frane i Donat Tranquillo, fasc. a (1514-1547), fol. 109v.

15 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 30/VIII, Frane i Donat Tranquillo, fasc. a (1514-1547), fol. 119r.

16 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 23/VIII, Martinus Campellis de Gaivanis, fasc. 26/VIIIc, fol. 58v-59r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 30/I, Frane i Donat Tranquillo, fasc. b (1517-1519), fol. 185r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 30/II, Frane i Donat Tranquillo, fasc. e (1523), fol. 10r.

from Šibenik, as one of the witnesses.¹⁷ While this *apotheca* may have been his goldsmith's workshop, it cannot be ruled out that it actually served as a commercial facility for other purposes, given Petar's involvement in the trade of oil, wine, and other goods.

Further indications of his potential goldsmithing activities are found in a document dated 23 October 1516, when he was invited to redeem a copper paten and two chalices with silver cups and copper bases that he had pawned.¹⁸ As he failed to do so, these items were sold at a public auction on 10 March 1517 for 3 libra per ounce.¹⁹ In the absence of evidence, it remains unknown whether these works originated in his goldsmithing workshop.

While no reliable records confirm that the previously mentioned goldsmiths practised their craft in Šibenik, a written source verifies that Karlo Šimunov from Vicenza,²⁰ the son-in-law of the sculptor and builder Lorenzo Pincino from Venice, did work as a goldsmith in the town. Between 1447 and 1455, Karlo is mentioned in six archival documents. The most significant among them is dated 8 March 1450, recorded in the account book of the Confraternity of the New Church in Šibenik, and confirms a payment made to the goldsmith and his collaborator for work on the confraternity's matricula.²¹ Although the goldsmith is listed without a patronymic, the record almost certainly refers to Karlo Šimunov, as no other goldsmith by that name appears in Šibenik's archival records from the late 14th to the early 16th century. The payment likely relates to the creation of silver-gilt appliquéés for the cover of the matricula, as suggested by records of other expenses associated with its production. Namely, an ounce and a half of silver – lacking for the decoration of the matricula (*a fornier a mariegola*) – is listed above the sum of 9 libra and 10 soldi paid to the goldsmith and his associate. Additional listed items include 3 ducats, 3 ounces of mercury (*arzento vivo*), almost certainly used for gilding, and a piece of silk. Taken together, these records suggest that before 8 March 1450, goldsmith Karlo Šimunov from Vicenza, together with his unnamed associate, most likely produced the now-lost silver-gilt appliquéés for the matricula of the Šibenik Confraternity of St. Mary – one of the town's four major confraternities – mentioned in archival sources under several different names.²²

Further confirmation of Karlo's involvement in goldsmithing is likely provided by a document dated 19 April 1455, which notes that he failed to redeem an anvil pawned for 1 libra and

17 See the first archival reference in the previous note.

18 Državni arhiv u Šibeniku, Općina Šibenik (hereafter: HR-DAŠI-1, OŠ), box 4, fasc. 1.1.16.1.9, fol. 390(7)r.

19 Although the weight of the objects was not recorded, the price was set at 3 libra per ounce (29.812 g). For illustration, if their combined weight had been 10 ounces, they would have realised 30 libra at auction.

20 Ital. *Carlo di Simone da Vicenza*.

21 Biskupijski arhiv u Šibeniku, Bratovština Nove crkve (hereafter: HR-BAŠ-15, BNC), box 16, fasc. 11, Računi 1433-1454, fol. 93r.

22 Throughout its history, the confraternity had its headquarters in several churches: Our Lady (St. Mary) of Kaštel, St. Chrysogonus in Šibenik, and the New Church in Šibenik. Therefore, it was recorded in documents as the Confraternity of St. Mary of Kaštel (*fratrea Sancte Marie de Castro; frataya de Santa Maria del Monte*), Confraternity of St. Mary of Mercy (*fraternitatis Sancte Marie Misericordie ecclesie Noue Sibenici*), Confraternity of St. Mary of Valverde (*schola Sancte Marie de Ualuerde; scola Sancte Marie Vale Viridis*), and the Confraternity of St. Mary of the New Church (*fraternitas Sancte Marie ecclesie Noue*). See: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 207 (note 306), 784.

4 soldi; the item was therefore sold at public auction on 16 June of the same year.²³ It is worth noting that Karlo's father lived in Korčula, suggesting potential professional ties between the goldsmith and that town – a detail that merits further archival investigation.

The goldsmith Jeronim Franin from Split,²⁴ living in both Split and Šibenik, also had roots in the Veneto region, as his father was originally from Padua. Between 1482 and 1493, Jeronim is recorded in a total of six documents, most of which originate from the Split archive. Nonetheless, the earliest – and perhaps most revealing – document about him comes from Šibenik's archival records. On 14 February 1482, Jeronim rented a goldsmith's workshop and/or shop (*apoteca*) for one year, located near the Great Land Gate in Šibenik. The lease was granted by Filip Rudatović for an annual rent of 14 libra. Jeronim was required to pay half (7 libra) within two months, while Filip agreed, at their joint expense, to install a good and well-lit window suitable for goldsmithing work.²⁵ However, should the Franciscans evict them from the premises before the lease expired, Filip was obliged to reimburse Jeronim for any investments made. There is no evidence to suggest a business partnership between the two, as the term *aurifex* does not appear alongside Filip's name, which would indicate he was a goldsmith. It is more likely that Filip, having rented the premises from the Franciscans, sublet them to Jeronim, agreeing to adapt the space to suit the requirements of the goldsmithing craft, thereby providing clear evidence that Jeronim practised goldsmithing in Šibenik. Unfortunately, the archival sources do not reveal how long Jeronim remained in the town before appearing in a document from Split dated 27 November 1491, together with his brother Petar, who was also a goldsmith.²⁶ Although their father originated from Padua, it is currently unclear whether his sons were born there or in Dalmatia, where he eventually settled.

In addition to the five goldsmiths from Venice or the Veneto region mentioned above, two others are recorded posthumously in Šibenik's archival sources.²⁷ These are Antun Pavlov from Venice (*Antonio quondam Pauli, aurifex de Venetiis*)²⁸ and Stjepan from Chioggia (*Stephanus de Clugio*),²⁹ both referred to only indirectly – Antun in 1452 as the deceased husband of Katarina, daughter of the late Juraj Smotulić from Šibenik, and Stjepan in the patronymic formula of his son Petar, a shoemaker living in Šibenik, in documents dating from 1463 to 1495. Although Antun was married to a woman from Šibenik, the document does not clarify whether he ever resided in the town, and the same applies to Stjepan.

While it is possible to confirm that Karlo Šimunov from Vicenza and Jeronim Franin practised goldsmithing in Šibenik, the possibility that the other individuals mentioned did so as

23 Državni arhiv u Šibeniku, Miscellanea (hereafter: HR-DAŠI-197, Miscellanea), box I, Liber citationum 1453-1457, fol. 101v.

24 Ital. *Girolamo, figlio di Francesco da Padova*.

25 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 11/VII, Ante Campolongo, F 10/Vd, fol. 21v. The term *balconum* is used in the document, but it most likely refers to a large, spacious window that allowed ample light to enter and served as a display area.

26 Državni arhiv u Zadru, Općina Split (hereafter: HR-DAZD-16, OS) box 24, fasc. 40/1, fol. 137r.

27 All known documents concerning the two goldsmiths can be found in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 111, 118, 332 (note 1324), 337-339 (notes 1374-1385).

28 Ital. *Antonio di Paulo da Venezia*.

29 Ital. *Stefano da Chioggia*.

well cannot be excluded. This uncertainty arises from the fact that Šibenik's archival records are only partially preserved, and some relevant documents may have been irretrievably lost over time. Moreover, records of other goldsmiths who migrated from Venice or the Veneto region to Šibenik may no longer exist. In addition, contracts for goldsmithing commissions were typically drawn up for pieces requiring specific design and quality specifications, whereas more standardised objects were likely produced on the goldsmiths' own initiative and sold directly from their workshops, leaving no written record.

Likewise, only a few documents indicate that some Šibenik goldsmiths may have visited or resided in Venice at some point in their lives.³⁰ The goldsmith Mihovil Vratislavov from Kobilica (*Michael Vratislai de Cobilica*), in the Knin region, who was married to Polonia from Venice, is mentioned only once in Šibenik's archival sources, on 25 November 1435.³¹ He may have later returned to his native region or moved to Venice with his wife. Another archival document, dated 12 February 1449, concerns the goldsmith Šimun Pomenić from Trogir, a resident of Šibenik (*Simon Pomenich de Tragurio, habitator Sibenici*), who was preparing to travel to Venice due to a legal dispute with Stjepan Petrov Cega from Trogir, evidently residing in Venice at the time.³² Although Šimun agreed to make the journey in pursuit of this claim, it remains unknown whether he actually travelled there, as he appears again in archival sources only a month later. Finally, it appears that the goldsmith Petar Matejev (Matijević) from Šibenik (*Petrus Mathei/Mathieuich de Sibenico*) maintained ties with Venice as well; on 12 July 1469, Andrija Vitković appointed him as his legal representative to retrieve certain items in that city.³³

However, the limited number of references does not necessarily mean that such journeys were rare or isolated. It is quite possible that travel between the regions in question was more frequent and widespread than reflected in the surviving historical sources.

Apprenticeships in Venice

Goldsmithing apprenticeship and the continual transmission of skills and knowledge to new generations lay at the heart of the craft's development and sustainability throughout the late Middle Ages. In the absence of formal educational institutions for the training of craftsmen in the 15th century, young apprentices were trained directly in the workshops of master goldsmiths.³⁴ This was also true in 15th-century Šibenik, where local masters trained boys not only from the town and its surroundings, but also from the wider Zadar and Knin regions, as well as from Split, Brač, and Hvar.³⁵ Archival records further confirm that some of the boys

30 All known documents on these goldsmiths have been partially transcribed in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 91, 97-99, 101-110, 297 (note 1029), 301-303 (notes 1096-1117), 306-331 (notes 1138-1318).

31 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 3/III, Mihovil pok. Ivana, fasc. 3/IIIe, fol. 200r.

32 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 11/II, Ante Campolongo, F 11/III, fasc. 10/VIIe2, fol. 89r; The following documents probably also relate to that legal dispute: HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 11/IV, 11/V, Ante Campolongo, F 10/III, fol. 79r-79v; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 11/VI, Ante Campolongo, F 10/IVb/1, fol. 32r.

33 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/V, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IIIg2, fol. 82v-83r.

34 T. Andrić, 2011, 127.

35 More on the goldsmithing apprenticeship in Šibenik can be found in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 760-766; Đ. Lakošeljac 2024, 124-126.

were taken by their masters to Venice – a journey that facilitated both the transfer of skills and exposure to new artistic influences, which they could later incorporate into the goldsmithing traditions of Šibenik. Although such instances are for now evidenced by only two archival records – one from 1456 and another from 1488 – it is reasonable to presume that occasional apprenticeships in Venice were part of a broader, if sporadic, practice.

The document from 14 April 1456, drawn up in Šibenik, offers valuable insight into the goldsmithing apprenticeship of a Šibenik boy in Venice (fig. 1).³⁶ It details an agreement by which Stoja, the wife of Petar Milulović from Šibenik, arranged for her underage son Nikola, approximately twelve years old, to apprentice with a goldsmith in Venice. With her husband's consent, Stoja entrusted Nikola to Anteo from Venice, son of the late Filippo (*Antheo quondam Philippi de Venetiis*), who was responsible for bringing Nikola to his brother, Ludovico, a master goldsmith residing in Venice (*Ludouicus quondam Philippi, habitator in ciuitatis Venetiis*).³⁷ Under the terms of the agreement, Nikola was to live with Ludovico and work in his workshop for a period of seven years. During this time, he was to receive food, clothing, and full training in the goldsmith's craft. The document emphasizes the expectation of faithful service from Nikola, who was explicitly instructed not to steal and to conduct himself as a loyal apprentice. Upon completion of the apprenticeship, Ludovico was obliged to provide Nikola with a set of goldsmithing tools – essential for establishing his own practice – as well as a payment of seven ducats. This contract highlights not only the responsibilities of apprentices but also the structured support provided by master craftsmen, reflecting a formalized system of skill transmission that was vital for ensuring the craft's continuity across generations. Although there is no record confirming Nikola's completion of his apprenticeship,³⁸ the contract offers a rare and informative glimpse into interregional apprenticeship practices, shedding light on how young men from Šibenik could receive professional training in Venetian goldsmiths' workshops.

Many years later, on 18 June 1488, another document was drawn up – this time in Zadar – indicating that a boy from Šibenik had likely accompanied his master goldsmith to Venice (fig. 2).³⁹ This archival record is, in fact, a contract between Petar Matejev,⁴⁰ a goldsmith from

36 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/IV, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IIc, fol. 87v.

37 Ital. *Ludovico di Filippo da Venezia*.

38 In Šibenik's 15th-century sources, a goldsmith Nikola from Venice (*Nicolaus de Venetiis*), a resident of Šibenik, is mentioned; this is the same Nikola discussed in the preceding section. However, it is unlikely that this refers to Nikola, the son of Stoja, as he was expected to remain in Venice to complete his apprenticeship until April 1463. Nonetheless, it is worth considering the possibility that the contractual terms were amended, allowing Nikola to complete his training earlier and acquire the title of master. Further research in the Venetian archives may, in time, provide us with more information on Nikola.

39 Državni arhiv u Zadru, Bilježnici Zadra (hereafter: HR-DAZD-31, BZ), Gregorius de Bosco, box 83, F III/8, fol. 8r. Cvito Fisković published a partial transcription of the document, though the folio number was not provided. Additionally, he reads the name of the Zadar goldsmith as Zanalazo instead of Lancilago (Croatian: Vladislav, Vladan, Ladislav; English: Ladislaus). Cf. C. Fisković, 1959, 120, 200 (note 752). The goldsmith is listed under the wrong name (Zanazalo Matov) even in a later publication (N. Bezić-Božanić, 1999, 225). The error has recently been corrected. See: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 327 (note 1291).

40 For more information on this goldsmith, see: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 101-110. This goldsmith sent his other son, Jeronim, to Ancona to learn the goldsmith's craft from the master goldsmith Toma Jurjev from Split.

Šibenik, and Vladan Matejev, a jeweller (*zoclerio*)⁴¹ originally from Zadar but at the time residing in Venice, who agreed to take Petar's son Stjepan as an apprentice. Given that Vladan is identified as a resident of Venice, it can be assumed that Stjepan spent at least part of his apprenticeship there, even though the document does not explicitly state this. According to the contract, Petar formally entrusted his son Stjepan to Vladan's care for a term of seven years to learn the craft of jewellery-making (*dictam artem zocleariam*). Stjepan was obliged to remain with Vladan, obey his instructions, and refrain from any form of theft or disobedience. In return, his master committed to providing Stjepan with suitable clothing and thorough training in the jewellery craft. Upon completing the seven-year term, he was also required to pay Stjepan two gold ducats – both as a conclusion of the apprenticeship and as initial financial support for his future career.

However, it appears that Stjepan did not complete the apprenticeship as originally agreed, as he reappears in Šibenik on 4 July 1492⁴² – only four years after the presumed beginning of his term in Venice. The document shows that his father, the goldsmith Petar (Matejev) Matijević, placed him in a four-year apprenticeship with the renowned Šibenik goldsmith Andrija Lalić.⁴³ At that time, Stjepan was approximately twelve years old, suggesting that he would have been just eight when he was supposed to begin his training in Venice in 1488. The reasons for his early return remain unknown, but living in a foreign city under the care of an unfamiliar master, facing a different language and culture, must have been a difficult experience for a child of such a young age. Whatever the reasons, it appears that Stjepan did spend some time apprenticing in Venice, as he was later placed with master Andrija for a shorter, four-year term. Although the exact length of his presumed stay in Venice is unclear, by 1492 he had evidently acquired foundational skills in the craft, as indicated by the shortened duration of his apprenticeship with the Šibenik goldsmith and the 12-ducat payment he was set to receive upon its completion. However, a marginal note indicates that even this document was annulled after only eight months. Despite the many unanswered questions regarding Stjepan's apprenticeship, he must have ultimately completed his training, as he is later referred to in Šibenik's archival sources as a master goldsmith.⁴⁴

On the Measures and Quality of Gold and Silver

Given that Šibenik came under Venetian rule in 1412,⁴⁵ remaining so for nearly four centuries, it is unsurprising that, during the 15th century, the trade of precious metals in the town adhered to the Venetian mark (*marca veneziana*, *marco di Venezia*), while silver may also have

41 The word *zoclerius* likely refers to "jeweller" and may represent an unusual rendering of the Venetian word *zogelèr* (Italian *gioielliere*). For the meaning of the word *zogelèr*, see: G. Boerio, 1856, 371 (*ligador*), 819 (*zogelàr*; *zogelèr*), index (p. 53 /*gioielliere*/).

42 Arhiv Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti (hereafter: AHZU), II b 29, fol. 107r. See in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2024, 136 (note 145).

43 More on the goldsmith Andrija Cvitin Cimaturić Lalić can be found in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 134-142.

44 More on the goldsmith Stjepan Petrov Farsunić (Matijević) can be found in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 146-149.

45 S. Grubišić, 1974, 42.

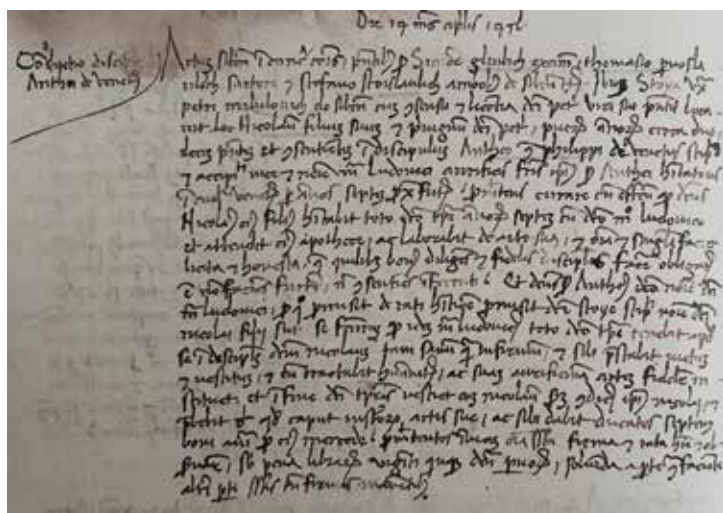


Fig. 1 Apprenticeship contract (1456) for Nikola of Šibenik with master goldsmith Ludovico in Venice (HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/IV, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IIc, fol. 87v)

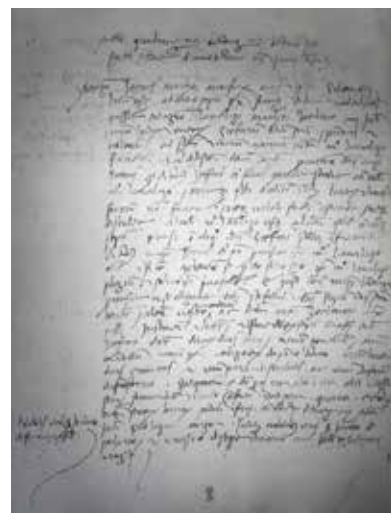


Fig. 2 Apprenticeship contract (1488) by which Vladan Matejev of Zadar, residing in Venice, agrees to take Stjepan, son of Petar Matejev of Šibenik, as apprentice (HR-DA-ZD-31, BZ, Gregorius de Bosco, box 83, F III/8, fol. 8r)

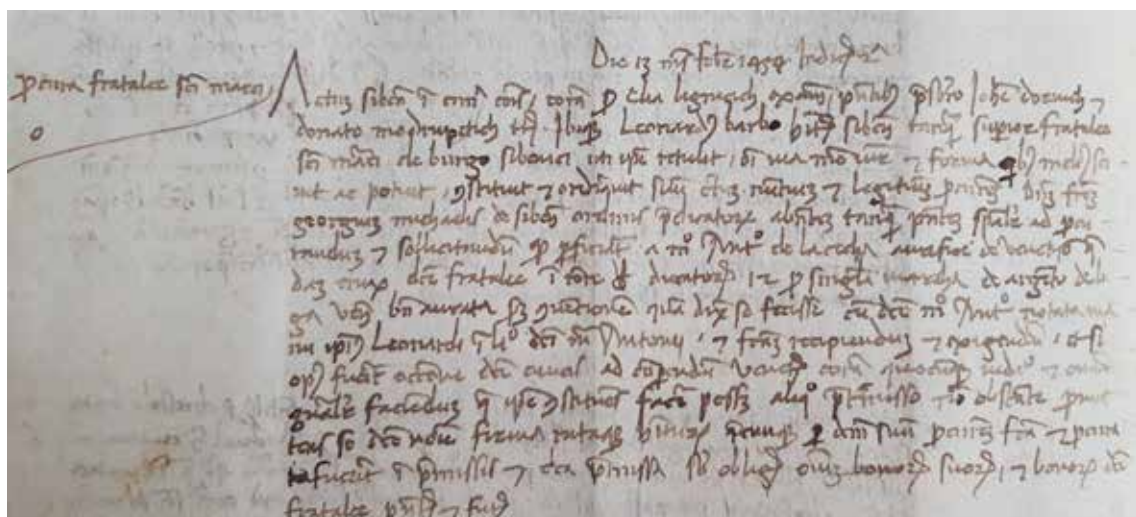


Fig. 3 Archival document from Šibenik (1454), in which Leonard Barbo, superior of the Confraternity of St. Mark de Burgo, appoints Dominican friar Juraj Mihovilov as his envoy and legal representative to collect a silver-gilt cross from the Venetian goldsmith Antonio de la Cecha (HR-DAŠI-63, BŠ, box 15, 16/I, Karatus Vitale, fasc. 15/Id, fol. 25v)

been measured using the silver libra (*libbra d'argento, libbra del peso delli arienti*).⁴⁶ While the weight of the silver libra differed from the Venetian mark, its subdivisions (ounces, quarters, carats, and *grani*) were identical in both systems,⁴⁷ meaning that the weight of refined silver and finished silver items was the same.

The connection with Venetian goldsmithing of the time is also indicated by the designation for silver quality (*argentum de liga Veneta, argentum de lega Venetiana, argentum ad ligam Venetam*), recorded in several documents from Šibenik.⁴⁸ The fineness of Venetian-quality silver can be determined, as it is known that the alloy was required to have a fineness of 888.8 thousandths,⁴⁹ meaning that it had to consist of 88.88% silver. On 19 June 1432, the Šibenik goldsmith Stjepan Ivanov (Skočibuha) pledged to give his apprentice, Šimun Vučkov Gojković, 10 ounces of silver of that quality upon the completion of his ten-year apprenticeship. Of the same quality were the 28 ounces of worked silver (*argenti laborati*) that, together with 16 libra, were handed over on 28 June 1438 to the guardian of the Franciscan monastery in Šibenik by the executors of the will of the Šibenik goldsmith Stjepan Milgostov (Milgostić, known as Jajce), in fulfilment of his bequest. These were probably silver items (*argenti laborati*), but it cannot be determined whether they were produced in Stjepan's workshop or merely obtained by him from another source. Silver of Venetian quality was also used for the processional cross of the Šibenik confraternity of St. Mark, made in Venice around 1454 by the goldsmith Antonio de la Cecha, as will be discussed in the following section. Silver of the same fineness was used for two silver-gilt cups, a pair of silver-gilt earrings, the base of a jug, some silver belt decorations, and a pair of silver-gilt rosary beads handed over to Juraj Kamenarić the Younger in 1470. Additionally, the silver-gilt censer for the church of Our Lady of Kaštel in Šibenik, commissioned from the Šibenik goldsmith Matej (Marinov) Pomenić from Trogir on 11 March 1477, was to be made "according to the Venetian quality" (*ad ligam Venetam*). Similarly, a processional silver-gilt cross for the church of St. George in Ervenik was to be made *de lega Venetiana*, as agreed on 21 February 1489 by the Šibenik goldsmith Andrija (Cvitin Cimaturić) Lalić, while a silver-gilt chalice and paten for the church of St. Michael in Kameničnik were to be crafted *de argento bono liga Veneta* by the goldsmith Frane Jurasčić, known as Foša (Foxa), who accepted the commission on 5 July 1496.

It is not possible, based on current archival evidence, to determine whether the silver alloy was imported from Venice or produced by Šibenik goldsmiths to match the Venetian standards. However, a document from 1515 may provide some insight: the nobleman Ivan Tolimerić sold a property and various items to Petar Divnić, including one ounce of silver bearing the hallmark of St. Mark (*onciam argenti bullo Sancti Marci bullatam*),⁵⁰ which had undoubtedly been acquired in Venice. Unfortunately, the few surviving goldsmithing works from late

46 Z. Herkov, 1971, 83.

47 Z. Herkov, 1971, 83. In addition to the aforementioned measures, there was also the *libbra d'oro et argento filato* (e.g. Z. Herkov, 1971, 82), which was probably used for measuring gold and silver thread.

48 The transcripts of these documents are available in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 209 (note 316), 241 (note 590), 606 (note 500), 835-836 (doc. 7), 841-842 (doc. 10), 843-844 (doc. 12), 846-847 (doc. 15).

49 P. Pazzi, 1992, 47.

50 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 28/II, Lovrinac Butrisić, fasc. 30/IIh, fol. 55v.

medieval Šibenik do not feature any hallmarks (quality marks or master's punches), making it impossible to verify the origin of the silver alloy or identify the craftsmen.⁵¹ Nonetheless, this is not surprising, as the control of goldsmiths' work and the use of hallmarks were still sporadic, and the majority of European goldsmithing from that period bear no markings.⁵²

Since Šibenik goldsmiths were at times entrusted with assessing the value of goldsmithing works,⁵³ they were undoubtedly familiar with procedures for verifying the quality of the alloys used, which directly influenced the price of the final product. Evidence is found in the inventory of the goldsmith Stjepan Ivanov Skočibuha, which records the presence of a touchstone (*pezo de parangon*)⁵⁴ in his workshop, used for testing the quality of silver and gold alloys. This refers to a hard stone used to assess the quality of silver, known as *pietra del paragone* or *pietra di paragone*, for which a distorted form of the word, *parangon*, was sometimes used.⁵⁵ In Venice, this method was typically employed to test goldsmithing works weighing less than two ounces, and was carried out by *toccadori* – officials responsible for ensuring the compliance of gold and silver alloy used in goldsmithing with the legal standards. They would discreetly scratch the object using a special stone and apply acid to the scrapings; if the alloy met the prescribed standards, it would remain unaffected.⁵⁶ Items weighing more than two ounces were examined by *sazadori* using a more complex procedure that involved taking a sample, exposing it to fire, and comparing the melting behaviour with a reference sample of known quality.⁵⁷

Evidence that Šibenik goldsmiths were also acquainted with these procedures comes from a 1484 contract for a silver-gilt chalice commissioned for the church of St. Mary in Skradin from the goldsmith Andrija (Cvitić Cimaturić) Lalić.⁵⁸ Notably, beyond the standard contractual clauses, the document explicitly stated that the quality of the silver was to be verified using one of the two methods (*parangono siue sazo*). This clearly demonstrates that the testing of silver and gold alloys in Šibenik followed the same procedures as in Venice, even though Šibenik's legal statutes did not explicitly mandate such practices.

Imported Goldsmithing Works

The links between late medieval goldsmithing in Šibenik and Venice and the Veneto are further evidenced by preserved goldsmithing works that, based on archival sources or stylistic

51 An indication that at least some Šibenik goldsmiths from the 15th century marked their products with master's punches and quality marks is provided by the estate inventory of the goldsmith Stjepan Ivanov Skočibuha (e.g. Đ. Lakošeljac, 2024, 117, 121-122).

52 R.W. Lightbown, 2000, 61.

53 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/5, fol. 241v; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 38/I, Ivan Krstitelj Zavorović, fasc. g, fol. 17.

54 Đ. Lakošeljac, 2024, 117, 122, 129.

55 G. Boerio, 1856, 471 (*paragòn*), 508 (*piera*; *piera del toco o de paragòn*); G. Chiarot, 2001, 141 (*parangonum*); A.M. Lorenzoni, 2012, 74 (*parangonus*).

56 P. Pazzi, 1992, 40, 48; P. Pazzi, 1996, 31.

57 P. Pazzi, 1992, 40, 48; P. Pazzi, 1996, 31.

58 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 21/II, Gregorio q. Lorenzo, fasc. f, fol. 17v.

analysis, can be identified as imported works from those regions.⁵⁹ Although the precise context of their commissioning, acquisition, and provenance is mostly unknown – making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the nature of such exchanges – their presence within the corpus of late medieval Šibenik goldsmithing nonetheless provides valuable insight into its artistic and cultural connections with Venice and the Veneto. Unfortunately, only a limited number of such examples survive and will be examined in the remainder of this section.

One such example is the processional cross of Šibenik's Confraternity of St. Mark, commissioned in Venice likely in late 1453 or early 1454. This is known indirectly from a Šibenik document dated 13 February 1454, when Leonard Barbo, superior of Šibenik's Confraternity of St. Mark *de Burgo*, appointed the Dominican friar Juraj Mihovilov from Šibenik as his envoy and legal representative to collect the confraternity's silver-gilt cross from the Venetian goldsmith *Antonio de la Cecha de Venetiis* (fig. 3).⁶⁰ According to the contract – which Leonard personally wrote down in the goldsmith's "book" – the cross was to be made of silver of "Venetian quality" (*de liga Veneta*) and richly gilded, and cost 12 ducats per mark of silver.⁶¹ The Confraternity of St. Mark was based in the church of St. Mary in Dolac (*Sancta Maria de Burgo*) during the 15th century, and from the 17th century in the newly built church of the Holy Cross, whose construction began in 1605 next to the existing church of St. Mary, which continued to serve as its confraternal hall.⁶² Therefore, it was logical to search for the mentioned cross in Šibenik's church of the Holy Cross in Dolac. Research in the Diocesan Archive in Šibenik led to the discovery of an inventory of the Confraternity of St. Mark in Dolac, dated 9 November 1455, which records two crosses – one silver-gilt and the other copper-gilt.⁶³ The copper-gilt cross is described as depicting the crucified Christ on the front and the Virgin Mary on the back, accompanied by additional figures. This description corresponds to the preserved copper-gilt processional cross of Gothic design still housed in the church of the Holy Cross in Dolac.⁶⁴ The

59 For more on these works, see: Đ. Lakošelj, 2022, 431-433, 444-446, 472-474, 630, 866-867, 886-887, 902-905.

60 Ital. *Antonio della Cecha (Zecca?) da Venezia*. See: Appendix 1. Since the goldsmith is recorded in the archival document as *Antonio de la Cecha de Venetiis*, it is possible that the designation *Cecha* was a misspelling of *Zecca*, which would suggest that he may have been employed at the Venetian mint (*Zecca*). If so, his name could perhaps be understood as "Anthony from the mint".

61 Since the contract was not drawn up in a notary's office, it is unlikely ever to be found.

62 K. Stošić, 1933, 5.

63 (fol. 26r) *Millesimo quadringentesimo quinquegesimo quinto, indictione tertia decima, die uero nona mensis nouembris. Egregius vir Dominicus Ambrosius Michitich arcium doctor et confrater fratralie (fol. 26v) Sancti Marci reducte in ecclesie Sancte Marie de Burgo Sibenici, uice et nomine totius fratralie suprascripte comparuit coram venerabili viro domino Iacobo Zillii archipresbitero nunc vicario reuerendisimi in Christo Patris, et domini Vrbani Vigniati (...) episcopi Sibenicensis petens (...) ad conficiendum inuentarium bonorum mobilium dicte fratralie (...). Seguitur inuentarium.*

In primo una crux argentea et deaurata cum una figura Crucifixi ex una parte et ex alia uero parte dicti Crucifixi figura Sancti Marci, in lateribus uero figura Beate Marie Virginis et Beati Ioannis Evangeliste cum aliis figuris consuetis circum circa. (fol. 27r) Item alia crux de cupro siue de rame, deaurata cum figura Crucifixi ex una parte et cum figura Beate Virginis et cum aliis figuris consuetis circum circa. (...) (Biskupijski arhiv Šibenik, Zbirka oporuka (hereafter: HR-BAŠ-75, box 1, fol. 26r-27v); K. Sošić, 1933, 12. Krsto Stošić only mentions a silver-gilt crucifix but does not provide information on the source or a transcript. He interpreted the content of the document differently and placed the figures of Mary and John on the back of the crucifix.

64 For a detailed discussion of this processional cross, see the next section.

second, silver-gilt cross is described as featuring the crucified Christ on the front, the figure of St. Mark (the confraternity's patron) on the back, and "fully formed figures" (*uero figura*) of Mary and John the Evangelist on the sides, surrounded by other customary figures. Thus, just a year and nine months after Leonard Barbo appointed a legal representative to collect the commissioned cross in Venice, the confraternity's inventory records a silver-gilt cross of the Crucifixion type, adorned with figures of Mary and John on the lateral sides, Christ at the centre of the obverse, St. Mark on the reverse, and additional figures in the terminals.⁶⁵ Another Gothic processional cross, preserved in the church of the Holy Cross in Dolac – silver and once apparently gilded – bears an image of St. George on the reverse, thereby excluding its identification with the cross recorded in the 1455 inventory.⁶⁶ Moreover, the reliefs are rather crudely executed, and the overall design of the cross – its silhouette with polylobed terminals and in-between points – suggests a local interpretation of a type widely seen in the goldsmithing of Venice and the Veneto during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Fortunately, a black-and-white photograph from around 1920 was found among the old Alinari photographs stored in the photo archive of the Conservation Department in Zadar. It captures a now-lost processional cross of the Crucifixion type from the church of the Holy Cross in Dolac (fig. 4a). The image clearly shows the side figures of Mary and John the Evangelist, with Gothic-Renaissance characteristics, flanking a cross from a later period featuring the Crucified Christ in its centre and a knop (node) in the form of a small castle, all surrounded by a wreath of roses (?). Although this silver (?) cross appears to be a composite work from different stylistic periods, the sculptures of Mary and John – and possibly the corpus of Christ and the architectural knope⁶⁷ – likely originated from a Late Gothic Crucifixion-type processional cross, probably imported from a more artistically advanced centre. Given the positioning of Mary and John on the processional cross shown in the photograph, it is evident that their positions are reversed compared to those on the original cross, where they stood on opposite sides facing the Crucified Christ in traditional mourning postures.

Based on this photograph, the only surviving remnant of the composite cross was identified in the Šibenik City Museum: the sculpture of the Virgin Mary,⁶⁸ known to have originated from the church of the Holy Cross in Dolac.⁶⁹ It almost certainly once flanked the monumen-

65 This is the only example of a processional cross with flanking figures recorded in Šibenik's archival sources from the 15th century. Moreover, none of the surviving processional crosses from Šibenik dating to this period feature sculpted figures flanking the crucified Christ; however, such elements appear frequently in Venetian goldsmithing during the Gothic period.

66 Certain components of this processional cross will be examined in the following section.

67 The photograph's quality does not allow for a definitive assessment of whether Christ's corpus and the knop are Neo-Gothic additions or original Gothic elements reworked in the 19th century. Furthermore, since the reverse side of the crucifix was not photographed, it is impossible to determine whether the figure of St. Mark was located at the centre of the reverse at that time. I would like to express my gratitude to the Conservation Department in Zadar for providing the photographs.

68 It has only been published once, in an exhibition catalogue, where it was dated to the 15th century with a note suggesting that it originally formed part of a Gothic cross or reliquary. However, it was mistakenly identified as a silver figure of the Virgin and Child. Cf. K. Kalauz, 1998, 112, 117, 206 (no. 127).

69 This information is recorded in the documentation of the Šibenik City Museum (inv. no. KPO 273). I extend my gratitude for the documentation to Marina Lambaša, Senior Curator at the Šibenik City Museum.

tal processional cross crafted around 1454 by the Venetian goldsmith Antonio de la Cecha for Šibenik's Confraternity of St. Mark (fig. 4b). The typology of this Crucifixion-type cross, its monumental scale (suggested by the size of the Virgin's figure),⁷⁰ the design of the preserved fragment, and its distinctive Gothic-Renaissance elements all reflect advanced artistic tendencies that are otherwise absent from surviving 15th-century Gothic processional crosses from Šibenik. The preserved sculpture suggests that the goldsmith successfully blended Late Gothic psychological expressiveness and emotional intensity with emerging Renaissance formal elements. However, his craftsmanship did not attain the sophistication of the finest Venetian goldsmithing of the 15th century. Thus far, no direct artistic models in painting or sculpture have been identified, nor is there any comparable extant goldsmithing work that can be definitely attributed to this Venetian goldsmith.

If the assumption about the confraternity's pro-Venetian orientation during Šibenik's period under Venetian rule is accurate,⁷¹ it is unsurprising that this processional cross was commissioned in Venice. It is known that, at the beginning of the 17th century, the confraternity maintained commercial ties with Venice,⁷² suggesting the possibility that such connections may have existed in earlier centuries as well. Thus, Leonard Barbo may have entrusted the commission to a more skilled foreign goldsmith, thereby symbolically affirming the confraternity's pro-Venetian orientation. This interpretation may be further supported by J.A. Soldo's remark that the confraternity celebrated Šibenik's annexation to the Republic of Venice (*fešta della santa intrata*).⁷³ In this context, it is particularly noteworthy that the Confraternity of St. Mark was the only one among Šibenik's four major confraternities that did not commission its processional cross from a local goldsmith in the 15th century.

The precise date when the Gothic processional cross was dismantled and the fate of its components remain unknown. However, it was likely not sold around 1501, when Šibenik's confraternities disposed of church silver to fund the arming of a trireme for combat against the Neretvans.⁷⁴ Agostino Valier's 1579 visitation records a "large silver cross" (*una crux argentem magnam*),⁷⁵ which may well refer to this very processional cross. It can be assumed that it remained in use until at least 1785, when the confraternity's silverware was pawned due to

70 The height of the Virgin's figure is as much as 14.3 cm, and with the base, which very likely dates from a later period, it reaches 16.8 cm.

71 J.A. Soldo, 1982, 109.

72 K. Stošić, 1933, 7-8.

73 J.A. Soldo, 1982, 109.

74 V. Miagostovich, 1893, 13; As Miagostovich states, on 10 March 1501, Doge Antonio Barbarigo issued an order for the Šibenik confraternities to be reimbursed for the cost of selling church silver for that specific purpose.

75 A. Valier, 1579 (*Visitatio Sibenicensis*), fol. 32r. Valier mentions a "large silver cross" and a "small silver cross", but he makes no reference to the copper-gilt cross recorded in the confraternity's 1455 inventory, which is still preserved in the church of the Holy Cross in Dolac. However, the fact that he does not specify that the large silver processional cross was gilded does not necessarily mean that his record does not refer to it, as Valier occasionally omitted details about gilding even for significantly more elaborate works, such as the silver-gilt altarpiece in the Cathedral of Krk, which he recorded simply as silver (e.g. I. Žic-Rokov, 1971, 139). That same altarpiece is explicitly described as silver-gilt in the record of Bishop Stefano David's pastoral visitation of Krk in 1685 (e.g. D. Ciković, 2017, 70-71; D. Ciković, 2018, 91-92).

famine,⁷⁶ raising the possibility that parts of the Gothic cross were pawned at that time and never redeemed. The acquisition of a new silver cross for the confraternity's banner pole, along with a new banner in 1787, may be linked to this event.⁷⁷

Another notable example of imported sacred metalwork is the gilded bronze⁷⁸ reliquary of St. Ursula, originally from the church of the Holy Spirit in Šibenik and now on display at the *Civitas Sacra* Interpretation Centre of St. James' Cathedral in Šibenik (fig. 5a). It is an architectural-type reliquary with a crystal (or glass?) *theca* for housing saintly relics. The earliest known records of this reliquary dates to around 1920, when it was photographed in the church of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁹ Interestingly, the apostolic visitors Agostino Valier (1579) and Michele Priuli (1603) do not mention this reliquary in their reports. Instead, they note the presence of a reliquary containing the relics of the Forty Martyrs.⁸⁰ By the time of Priuli's visitation, the altar of St. Martin in the church of the Holy Spirit was already associated with St. Ursula, making it hardly coincidental that the reliquary containing her relics originates from this church.⁸¹ While the relics of St. Ursula likely arrived in the church after Priuli's visitation, the reliquary itself may have been present there earlier. It is even possible that the current reliquary of St. Ursula once housed the relics of the Forty Martyrs, which Valier recorded as being kept in a "metal reliquary with crystal" (*tabernaculum accaicum (?) cum christallo*).⁸² Even if this were the case, the reliquary must have been brought to the church of the Holy Spirit after the fire of 1458, which caused significant damage to the building.⁸³

The reliquary rests on a six-lobed base that rises into a polygonal stem, featuring a compressed polyhedral knop. It supports a crystal (or possibly glass) *theca*, designed to house the saintly relics, framed by an architectural structure reminiscent of Gothic buttresses with finials, emphasizing the verticality and dynamism of design. The translucent container is bordered above and below by a double crown of stylised lily flowers and is surmounted by a hexagonal spire topped with a small cross. Its surfaces are alternately divided into smaller trapezoidal sections by engraved lines – some left smooth and others adorned with engraved zigzag patterns. In terms of design, the reliquary is closely related to a group of reliquaries from northern Italy dated to the early 15th century. These include three brass reliquaries from the treasury of the Padua Cathedral, attributed to one or more goldsmiths from the Veneto region (figs. 5b,

76 S.T. Petric, 1992, 129.

77 K. Stošić, 1933, 13.

78 I obtained the information about the type of metal from the documentation of Kvinar d.o.o. from Podstrana, which restored this reliquary in 2017-2018, though I had personally believed it to be made of brass.

79 It is about Alinari's photograph, which is held in the Conservation Department in Zadar.

80 A. Valier, 1579 (*Visitatio Sibenicensis*), fol. 34v; M. Priuli, 1603, fol. 67v.

81 M. Priuli, 1603, fol. 68r.

82 A. Valier, 1579 (*Visitatio Sibenicensis*), fol. 34v. The ink is quite smudged, so at first glance, it may appear to read *tabernaculum aureatum* (e.g. Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 445, 866). However, upon closer examination, it can be observed that it more likely reads *tabernaculum accaicum*, which, in the context of the preserved gilded bronze reliquary of St. Ursula, actually makes more sense. For Valier, the term certainly did not refer to steel, but rather to a metal that was not precious like silver or gold.

83 The information that the church was damaged by fire that year is provided by Krsto Stošić (e.g. K. Stošić, 1932, 400).

5c, 5d),⁸⁴ and a closely related reliquary from the Udine area, attributed to an unknown German workshop.⁸⁵ This reliquary type is characterized by structural simplicity and formal consistency, with minor variations in the proportions of individual elements and decorative detail. The typical format includes a slender, polygonal stem with a compressed knop, rising from a multi-lobed base and supporting a transparent cylindrical *theca* enclosed within Late Gothic buttresses with pinnacles and crowned with a tall, slender spire and a cross. According to Giovanni Mariacher, this type of reliquary was introduced to Venice by transalpine goldsmiths around the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries.⁸⁶ It was soon adopted by the local masters and subsequently disseminated to other parts of Italy. The dating of these brass reliquaries is often based on comparison with a silver reliquary of St. James and St. Mark from the Pordenone Cathedral treasury, which is securely dated to the early 15th century as it bears the coat of arms of the Mantica family.⁸⁷

However, dating cast-bronze and brass reliquaries of this type must be approached with caution, as such forms may have remained in use over extended periods. No historical sources have yet been found to reliably confirm or refute the dating of the Šibenik reliquary of St. Ursula to the 15th century. Therefore, based on the aforementioned analogous examples, it can only be tentatively and cautiously attributed to a Venetian or Veneto-based workshop from that period. It is important to note that such simple forms could have even been replicated in the 19th century. However, this does not appear to be the case with the Šibenik reliquary, which displays a softness of form typically absent from 19th-century reproductions. That said, I believe a more precise dating can only be established for pieces that were already documented in archival sources during the late Middle Ages.

The final group of presumably imported goldsmiths' works comprises three silver, partially gilded vessels for holy oils from Šibenik Cathedral, which have been housed in the *Civitas Sacra* Interpretation Centre of St. James' Cathedral (figs. 6a, 6b, 6c). The earliest known mention of the set is found in 1579, in the apostolic visitation of Agostino Valier, where it is described as "three silver vessels for holy oils" (*tria uasa argentea pro oleis sanctis*).⁸⁸ In 1603, Michele Priuli also recorded them, referring to "three silver vessels for storing holy oils" (*tre uasi d'argento da conseruare ogli santi*).⁸⁹ However, apart from these two sources, no other written references to the vessels are known, and they have only been published twice, without any analysis. They first appeared in scholarly literature in 1994, when Pierro Pazzi – without providing any supporting arguments – dated them to the first half of the 15th century.⁹⁰ He described them

84 See: A.M. Spiazzi, 2004a, 113 (cat. no. 33 with previous publications); A.M. Spiazzi, 2004b, 114 (cat. no. 34 with previous publications); A.M. Spiazzi, 2004c, 114 (cat. no. 35 with previous publications).

85 I am familiar with the reliquary from the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia – Catalogo Patrimoniale Culturale website. URL: https://patrimonioculturale.regione.fvg.it/opera/?s_id=513876 (13.10.2024).

86 I am familiar with this information from a secondary source (e.g. A.M. Spiazzi, 2004a, 114).

87 For more on the reliquary, see: C. Gaberscek, 1992, 94 (cat. no. II.36) and the publications cited therein.

88 A. Valier, 1579 (*Visitatio Sibenicensis*), fol. 30r; S. Krasić, 1975, 304.

89 M. Priuli, 1603, fol. 51v.

90 P. Pazzi, 1994, 37.



Fig. 4 a) Alinari photograph (c. 1920) of a now-lost or disassembled processional cross from the church of the Holy Cross in Šibenik; b, c) Sculpture of the Virgin from the now-lost processional cross of the Confraternity of St. Mark in Šibenik, made by the Venetian goldsmith Antonio de la Cecha, c. 1454 (before 9 November 1455), Šibenik City Museum



Fig. 5 a) Anonymous Venetian or Veneto goldsmith (?), Reliquary of St. Ursula from the church of the Holy Spirit in Šibenik, Civitas Sacra Interpretation Centre of St. James' Cathedral in Šibenik, 15th century (?); b) Anonymous Veneto goldsmith, Reliquary of the Holy Thorn, Padua, Cathedral Treasury, early 15th century; c) Anonymous Veneto goldsmith, Reliquary of a Fragment of the Column (of the Flagellation), Padua, Cathedral Treasury, early 15th century; d) Anonymous Veneto goldsmith, Reliquary of Saint Bellinus, Padua, Cathedral Treasury, early 15th century

as valuable examples of Gothic oil vessels, especially noteworthy for their rarity and large dimensions, although he noted that the absence of hallmarks made attribution to a specific workshop impossible.⁹¹ They were later published again in 1998, in the exhibition catalogue *Na slavu Božju*, where a group photograph was included with a general dating to the 15th century.⁹²

These pear-shaped vessels, approximately thirty centimetres in height, are still in use today – not for everyday purposes, but for the solemn rite of consecrating holy oils on Maundy Thursday, performed by the bishop, after which the oils are distributed to all parishes of the diocese. The vessels are nearly identical in form, differing primarily in their inscriptions. The vessel for the oil used in the baptismal rite bears the inscription *O > C*, (*oleum catechumenorum*), while its lid features the inscription, executed using the punching technique (figs. 6 – a, a1, a2). The vessel for the oil used in the Holy Chrism (*sanctum chrisma*) is marked with a barely visible gilded Greek cross with widened arms and has no markings on the lid (figs. 6 – b, b1, b2), while the vessel for the oil of the Anointing of the Sick bears the inscription *O ∅ I* (*oleum infirmorum*) on its body and a marking on the lid (figs. 6 – c, c1, c2).

The inscriptions on the bodies, as well as on the lids of two of the vessels, are crudely and imprecisely executed, suggesting that they were likely added at a later date. Although slightly different in certain details, the vessels are crafted almost identically, featuring an elegant pear-shaped body set on a tall, circular-profile foot with a high rim, along which runs a beaded decoration bordered by simple moulding. A beaded “ring” also adorns the top of each foot, just beneath the rounded containers, which are further embellished at their midpoint by a band of beading compressed between two simple mouldings edged with a Gothic crenelation. All three vessels feature an elongated, narrow neck with a slightly flared, six-lobed opening and a radially structured, six-lobed lid with a pointed apex. The top of each lid is adorned with six silver-gilt beads, above which rises a brass (?) Gothic-style cross with polylobed terminals on its arms. Originally engraved with fine striations, the surfaces of these crosses are now largely smoothed due to repeated cleaning and polishing. Each lid is affixed to its vessel by a hinge, decorated on both the upper and lower sides with a stylised acanthus leaf. The upper branch of this motif is damaged on two of the vessels. On the front of the neck, just below the opening, all three vessels feature a linear trefoil motif with pointed leaves, incised from the front side of the vessel, accompanied by a continuous U-shaped line following the contour of the six-lobed opening. The gilded rim of both the opening and the lid is decorated with a beaded frieze and simple moulding, and traces of gilding are also visible on the base edges, the rings beneath the containers, the bands around the bodies, and the beads atop the lids.

The vessel for the Holy Chrism differs from the other two in the proportions of its individual parts and the execution of details. Its neck is more elongated and elegant, positioning the opening slightly higher than on the other two vessels, though its lid is shallower, resulting in all three vessels being of equal height. Differences are also evident in the detailing; the beaded bands on this vessel’s rings are finer and more precisely executed, and the incised

91 P. Pazzi, 1994, 16.

92 K. Kalauz, 1998, 117-118, 206 (no. 134).

trefoil on its neck is more delicately rendered. Given that the vessels for the oils used in baptism and the Anointing of the Sick share a more similar design, it is plausible that they were produced in the same workshop as the vessel for chrism oil, but at a later point in time (though certainly before 1579, when Valier recorded it), and modelled on the vessel for the Holy Chrism to complete the set.

The awkward execution of the inscriptions on the bodies and lids of the vessels suggests that they were added at a later date, most likely after the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and in accordance with the instructions of Charles Borromeo, which required that vessels for holy oils be appropriately marked with specific inscriptions.⁹³ However, the vessel for the Holy Chrism bears no markings other than a gilded cross on the upper hemisphere of the container's front, which must have already been present when inscriptions were engraved on the other two vessels. Although, as far as is currently known, there are no recorded mentions of these vessels before 1579, it is possible that the chrism oil vessel was originally intended for secular use and later came into the possession of the Šibenik Cathedral through a bequest or donation, at which point a cross was added to the front of the container and to the top of its lid. Alternatively, it may have originally served as a vessel for handwashing during the Mass.

In any case, the form of the Šibenik vessels is clearly derived from secular tableware, as seen in various European paintings. Similar vessels appear in French and Central European painting as early as the 14th century and throughout the 15th century, although the Šibenik examples more likely date from the late 15th or early 16th centuries. This dating is supported by analogous examples, such as the reliquary in the Mainfränkisches Museum in Würzburg (fig. 7a). While only the base of this reliquary is definitively dated, H.R. Hahnloser and S. Brugger-Koch suggest that its lid may have been created around the same time as the base, which bears an engraved date of 1519.⁹⁴ The Šibenik vessels are also comparable to smaller cruets for water and wine used during the Mass, such as those in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (fig. 7b), dated to 1518,⁹⁵ and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, donated to the Cathedral of Basel by Arnold zem Luft, canon from 1474 until 1516 (fig. 7c).⁹⁶ The online collections of both museums identify these sets as German works. The Šibenik vessels, however, are significantly larger and feature more elaborate lid designs, closer to that of the Würzburg reliquary, although not that complex. The crystal container of this reliquary has been tentatively identified as a Venetian work from the 14th century – though no provenance has been

93 B. Montevercchi, S. Vasco Rocha (eds.), 1987, 151.

94 H.R. Hahnloser, S. Brugger-Koch, 1985, 184 (cat. no. 352), table 300.

95 For more on the cruets, see: URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/467483>; URL: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/467484> (12.10.2024.).

96 For more on the cruets, see: URL: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O111819/cruet-unknown/> (12.10.2024.). The set from Basel is dated to the second half of the 14th century on the museum's website, according to a bibliographic reference, but in the very same reference it is clearly stated that "The form of these vessels was widely favored over an extended period of time, making a precise date or localization difficult to determine." (e.g. T. Husband, 2001, 57, cat. no. 11). I am inclined to believe that the vessels were produced closer to the lifetime of Arnold zem Luft, a cathedral canon from 1474 to 1516, who donated the set to the Basel Cathedral, as stated in the inscription scratched beneath the foot of both pieces – on one, DOCTOR ARNALDVVS, and on the other, AR. Zê. LVFT. The information on the inscription is provided in T. Husband's publication on the same page.

suggested for the upper silver elements, which are apparently later additions. While vessels of similar typology appear in German painting of the 14th and 15th centuries, the Šibenik vessels were more likely produced in Venice at the end of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century. If this assumption holds, two of the three Šibenik vessels were made somewhat later, modelled on the vessel for the Holy Chrism, and commissioned in Venice rather than in the transalpine regions, despite the absence of directly comparable examples in surviving Venetian or Veneto goldsmithing.

This hypothesis is perhaps further supported by the fact that the reliquary of St. Justina from the church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, dated to the final decades of the 15th century, is topped with an almost identical cross with polylobed terminals, similar to those on all three Šibenik vessels for holy oils.⁹⁷ Since a silver jug is mentioned only once in Šibenik's archival sources from the 15th century⁹⁸ – specifically, the base of a silver jug of Venetian quality (*vn pe de vn buchal de argento de liga Veneta*),⁹⁹ to be collected by the nobleman Juraj Kamenarić the Younger, the rest of the object having evidently been destroyed – it is reasonable to assume that such items were imported rather than produced in Šibenik.

The set of vessels for holy oils completes the corpus of preserved late medieval imported goldsmithing works that, in all likelihood, arrived in Šibenik from Venice or the Veneto. While the context of their commissioning and arrival remains uncertain – except for the now-lost silver-gilt processional cross of the Confraternity of St. Mark, from which only the small sculpture of the Virgin Mary survives – this research may serve as a foundation and guide for further studies, which may clarify the unresolved questions and establish more firmly the provenance of these significant works of liturgical art.

Goldsmithing Works Made in Šibenik that Reflect Connections with Venetian and Veneto Goldsmithing and Painting

In addition to the goldsmithing works likely imported into Šibenik from Venice or the Veneto, discussed in the previous section, several locally produced pieces have been preserved that, in certain design elements, reflects connections with goldsmithing works and pictorial art from those regions. These include three processional crosses: a copper-gilt processional cross and a silver (originally probably gilded) processional cross from the church of the Holy

97 A photograph of the reliquary can be found in: M. Collareta, 2000, 181.

98 A silver *pehar Crouato de argento con couertor* is recorded in the inventory of the nobleman Juraj Kamenarić the Elder, although in this case it is unclear whether the object was a stemmed cup with a lid or a jug (e.g. G. Budeč, 2010, 76; G. Budeč, 2013, 166; Đ. Lakošeljac, 2020, 113, 126 /entry no. 82 in appendix 2; Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 489, 642-643). Although it was previously assumed that the remainder of this object (the base) could be identified among the items that Juraj's son, Juraj Kamenarić the Younger, was to receive from his guardians – who managed his inheritance after his father's death until he came of age – it appears that these could be two separate objects. Namely, the *pehar* is described with the adjective *Crouato* ("Croatian"), whereas the base of the silver jug is referred to as being of Venetian quality, which suggests that it likely bore a hallmark indicating the quality of silver. However, it cannot be ruled out that this was the same object, whose design reflected specific features then associated with what was considered "Croatian", yet was made of silver of Venetian quality.

99 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/V, Karotus Vitale, F 15/IIIh, fol. 23v.



Fig. 6 Anonymous Venetian goldsmiths (?), three silver, partially gilded vessels from the Šibenik Cathedral for the solemn rite of the consecration of oils on Maundy Thursday, Civitas Sacra Interpretation Centre of St. James Cathedral in Šibenik, late 15th or early 16th century (?) (before 1579)



Fig. 7 a) Anonymous goldsmith, Becherreliquiar, Mainfränkisches Museum in Würzburg (detail of the lid), 1519 (?); b) Silver cruets for Mass water and wine, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, 1518; c) Silver cruets for Mass water and wine, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, late 15th or early 16th century (?)



Fig. 8 Anonymous Šibenik goldsmith, copper-gilt processional cross, church of the Holy Cross in Šibenik, late 14th or early 15th century

Cross in Šibenik – both briefly mentioned in the previous section – and a processional cross from the New Church in Šibenik.¹⁰⁰

The oldest among them is the copper-gilt cross from the church of the Holy Cross in Šibenik (fig. 8), whose silhouette and iconographic models – except for the Virgin and Child on the reverse and Adam rising from the grave at the bottom of the obverse – shares certain features with a number of goldsmithing works found in Lombardy and the Veneto, in Istria, in the Croatian Littoral, and in northern Dalmatia. Certain elements appear to have been produced using the same matrices or were based on common iconographic models. This group of works can be dated to the late 14th century, and the Šibenik copper-gilt processional cross likely belongs to the same period or the early 15th century. The Šibenik cross is first mentioned in the 1455 inventory of the Confraternity of St. Mark as a “*crux de cupro siue de rame, deaurata cum figura Crucifixi ex una parte et cum figura Beate Virginis et cum aliis figuris consuetis circum circa*,” which establishes a *terminus ante quem* for its creation.¹⁰¹ At that time, the confraternity was based in the church of St. Mary in Dolac (*Sancta Maria de Burgo*); in the 17th century, its seat moved to the newly built church of the Holy Cross nearby, where the cross has been preserved to this day.¹⁰² Given that the central motif on the reverse of the cross features the Virgin and Child, it is possible that the cross was originally made for the church of St. Mary in Dolac and was subsequently placed at the disposal of the Confraternity of St. Mark, for which the Venetian goldsmith Antonio de la Cecha produced a new processional cross around 1454. The copper-gilt cross is characterised by a complex silhouette, with symmetrically mirrored protrusions on the arms and medallion-shaped terminals, where shallow trilobes were separated by pointed interstices. At the centre of the obverse is a depiction of the Crucified Christ; in the lateral terminals, the Virgin Mary appears on the left and St. John on the right, while at the top is the eagle of St. John – which must originally have been positioned on the reverse – and at the bottom, Adam is shown rising from the sarcophagus, holding up the lid with his hands. The reverse features the Virgin and Child at the centre, flanked by the lion of St. Mark in the left terminal and the ox of St. Luke in the right. At the top is an angel with a censer – originally part of the obverse – while the figure of St. Matthew appears at the bottom.

As previously mentioned, the design and iconographic models of this cross correspond to some extent to a group of goldsmithing works distributed across a very wide area, first identified by Nikola Jakšić and later expanded upon by Marijana Kovačević.¹⁰³ This corpus includes a substantial number of processional crosses as well as two reliquary caskets from Zadar. Based

100 For more on these works, see: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 450-455, 457-460, 461-462, 791-792, 875-877, 881-883, 890-891.

101 See note 63.

102 This was discussed in the previous section, in connection with the processional cross made for the same confraternity around 1454 by the Venetian goldsmith Antonio de la Cecha.

103 Given the complexity of the subject and the large number of goldsmithing works involved, it is not possible to examine this issue in greater detail within the scope of this paper; therefore, we refer the reader to the following publications: N. Jakšić, R. Tomić, 2004, 26, 31-33, 36, 88, 129-138; M. Kovačević, 2005, 17-23, N. Jakšić, 2010a, 332-334; N. Jakšić, 2010b, 299-326; M. Kovačević, 2010, 1043-1056, 1246-1264, 1275-1278; N. Jakšić, 2015, 143-152; N. Jakšić, 2016, 320-325.

on the dating of a crucifix from Novigrad near Zadar to the very end of the 14th century, the entire group can be assigned to the same general timeframe. Jakšić has pointed out that many of these works (except the reliquaries, of course) contain nearly identical depictions of Christ accompanied by the Virgin and St. John, along with the symbols of the Evangelists. In some cases, however, only portions of the original reliefs survive, or Christ's corpus was produced according to a different model. Nevertheless, the Šibenik crucifix is comparable to several works within this group not only in the shape of the cross, but also in most of the reliefs, which appear to have been made after the same or similar models – albeit evidently not using the same matrix. The Šibenik cross is more rudimentarily executed, yet it is clear that a significant number of reliefs were derived from closely related prototypes. The cross shares with some of the works in the group comparable reliefs of the Virgin and St. John, as well as the symbols of the Evangelists, and a version of the corpus of Christ that, despite its crude rendering (especially in the lower part of the body), adheres to a related iconographic type. The relief of the Virgin and Child on the reverse, executed in an extremely naïve manner, suggests that the goldsmith had neither a model nor a matrix at his disposal. As such, it most clearly reflects the technical and artistic limitations of the craftsman, who was, in all likelihood, a Šibenik-based goldsmith active in the late 14th and/or early 15th centuries. Supporting this hypothesis is the relief depicting Adam, for which no known parallels exist within the group, though two later processional crosses produced in Šibenik – from the New Church and the Šibenik Cathedral – feature nearly identical depictions of Adam.¹⁰⁴ While it is possible that the Holy Cross example served as a prototype for these later works, it is also plausible that a now-lost cross in Šibenik may have served as the common model for all three pieces.

The depiction of Adam rising from the grave and the overall design of the silver-gilt processional cross from the New Church (figs. 9 – b, b2) suggest that this work was also made locally. Now on display at the *Civitas Sacra* Interpretation Centre of St. James' Cathedral in Šibenik, the cross was long believed to belong to the Cathedral but was more likely originally used by the New Church. The obverse features the Crucified Christ, flanked by the Virgin Mary (left) and the mourning figure of John (right) in the extensions. At the top is the eagle of St. John – originally positioned at the top of the reverse – while Adam is shown rising from the grave at the bottom. The reverse depicts the Virgin and Child at the centre, surrounded by the symbols of three Evangelists in the extensions – the lion of St. Mark (left), St. Matthew (right), and the ox of St. Luke (below) – and topped by the Archangel Michael, who likely belonged on the obverse in the original design. Of particular interest within the context of this study is the relief of the Virgin and Child, which bears certain similarities to the *Virgin and Child with Saints Peter and Anthony of Padua*, a painting attributed to Juraj Čulinović (Giorgio Schiavone) and housed at the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris (fig. 9 – b3).¹⁰⁵ Although the painting in the Paris museum

¹⁰⁴ See the reproductions in: Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 459 (fig. 40, fig. 41, fig. 42).

¹⁰⁵ This artist, originally from Skradin near Šibenik, signed a contract in Venice on 28 March 1456 with the Paduan painter Francesco Squarcione, agreeing to live and work in his workshop for three and a half years (V. Lazzarini, A. Moschetti, 1908, 38-39, 157-159). Their relationship was apparently troubled, and by 1461, Čulinović had departed (perhaps fled?), first to Zadar and then to Šibenik (E. Hilje, 2013, 48). For additional literature on the painter, see the reference list in the same publication.



Fig. 9 a, a1, a2) Anonymous Šibenik goldsmith(s), silver processional cross from the church of the Holy Cross in Šibenik, Civitas Sacra Interpretation Centre of St. James Cathedral in Šibenik, third quarter of the 15th century; a3) Carlo Crivelli, Saint George (from the altarpiece painted for a Dominican church in Ascoli Pino), mirrored image, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, 1472; b, b1, b2) Anonymous Šibenik goldsmith, silver-gilt and copper-gilt processional cross from the New Church in Šibenik, Civitas Sacra Interpretation Centre of St. James Cathedral in Šibenik, third quarter of the 15th century; b3) Giorgio Schiavone (?), Virgin and Child with Saints Peter the Martyr and Anthony of Padua, Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris, 1456-1460



Fig. 10 a) Gregorio Franceschino and Giovanni Zavattari, Queen Theodelinda's Wedding Banquet (detail), fresco in Theodelinda's Chapel, Cathedral of Monza, 1440s; "Taste" tapestry from the Lady and the Unicorn series (detail), Musée de Cluny in Paris, c. 1500

– assuming the attribution is correct – likely did not serve directly as a model, it is plausible that a drawing or now-lost painting by Čulinović was available in Šibenik following his arrival in the town, and influenced the anonymous goldsmith who created the Virgin and Child relief on the New Church cross. The relief and the painting show notable parallels in figural composition, such as the attempt at foreshortening and the modelling of volume – particularly around the knees. Similarities can also be observed in the Virgin’s gesture of grasping the edge of her *maphorion* with her left arm and in the Christ Child’s reciprocal gesture, although the resemblance is general rather than specific. It is unknown whether Čulinović was a member of the Confraternity of St. Mary, based in the New Church in Šibenik, but his father-in-law, Juraj Dalmatinac (Giorgio Dalmata / Giorgio da Sebenico), was affiliated with it. Assuming that the relief was indeed based on a drawing or painting by Čulinović, the processional cross could be dated to the 1460s at the earliest, although this remains speculative. Whatever the model may have been, it is evident that the Šibenik goldsmith was technically limited. He was unable to achieve a greater degree of conviction in the rendering of proportion, anatomy, and volume; in the depiction of physiognomies, and he did not rise above a naïve and somewhat vernacular expression.

The same applies to the silver (originally probably gilt) processional cross from the church of the Holy Cross in Šibenik, which is executed in an even cruder manner (fig. 9 – a, a1, a2).¹⁰⁶ Over time, the cross underwent significant modifications: the silver plates on the front and back of its body were likely replaced, while the small sculpture of the Crucified Christ at the centre of the obverse is clearly a later addition. The original reliefs – albeit very rudimentarily executed – are preserved in the extensions of the cross’s arms of both sides, while the centre of the reverse features a somewhat more skilfully rendered figure of St. George. This relief may have been modelled on a more refined drawn or painted prototype. The saint’s posture and ornate military attire show certain parallels with the depiction of St. George by

¹⁰⁶ At this point, there are no written records indicating whether the processional cross originally belonged to the church of the Holy Cross in Dolac (Šibenik) or whether – as seems more likely – it was later brought there from one of the churches dedicated to St. George in the wider Šibenik area. Churches dedicated to St. George were located in Zaton, Humljani, Donje polje, Sitnica (Sitno), Biranj (Birno), Goriš, Koljevrata (Konjevrata), Pirovac, Putičanje, Dragišići, Primošten, and Prhovo (K. Stošić, 1941, 28, 29, 56-57, 89, 95-96, 107, 111, 148, 154, 155, 258, 260). Krsto Stošić records that objects from the church of St. George in Humljani (a silver chalice, two crosses, two banners, and several other items) were handed over to the Confraternity of St. Luke in Zaton, whose representatives undertook to safeguard them by storing them in the tower of Petar Tavilić in Zaton, to protect them from the Turks, and to use them during feast days. It may be assumed that these objects (or some of them) later found their way to the parish church of St. George and St. Roch in Zaton (consecrated in 1533), which served as the seat of that confraternity. The parish was not always provided with its own resident priest and was on some occasions served by the parish priest from Šibenik’s Dolac (K. Stošić, 1941, 28, 29). This information is significant as it suggests a connection between the parish church in Zaton and the parish church of the Holy Cross in Dolac (Šibenik), where this processional cross with the figure of St. George has been preserved. The link is further underscored by the fact that the Confraternity of the Holy Cross in Dolac took part in processions and in the blessing of the fields in Srma, Zaton, and Raslina in 1674, 1761, 1768, and 1802 (Državni arhiv u Šibeniku, Miscellanea /hereafter: HR-DAŠI, Miscellanea/, box III, nr. 34). Given the close relationship between these two communities and their churches, it is possible that the processional cross with the figure of St. George, now kept in the church of the Holy Cross in Dolac, was brought there from the parish church in Zaton – having previously been transferred to Zaton from the church of St. George in Humljani.

Carlo Crivelli in 1472, originally part of a polyptych from the Dominican church in Ascoli Piceno and now housed at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (fig. 9 – a3). Although these similarities exist, it is unlikely that Crivelli's painting served as a direct model. Nevertheless, the fact that both Carlo and Vittore Crivelli spent some time in Zadar opens up the possibility that other, now-lost paintings or drawings by these artists or their "followers" once existed in the region and may have influenced Šibenik goldsmiths. Future identification of the prototype for the relief depicting Adam may be assisted by the distinctive rendering of the letter M in the inscription ADAM, resembling the letter H with a vertical stroke through the centre. Given the pronounced naivety in execution, the Gothic elements of the cross were likely created by a Šibenik-based goldsmith (or goldsmiths?), probably in the third quarter of the 15th century.

The three processional crosses considered in this section clearly demonstrate the presence of Venetian and Veneto artistic influences in Šibenik goldsmithing. However, due to the modest number of surviving works, it has not been possible to trace precise transmission channels or to identify with certainty the models that served as prototypes for specific compositional aspects.

Secular Goldsmithing Works Known from Archival Sources¹⁰⁷

Secular goldsmithing works from Šibenik – including tableware, cutlery, jewellery, and other personal or household items – have almost entirely disappeared over time, making it impossible to reconstruct their original appearance or design. Consequently, it remains unclear to what extent these objects may have been inspired by works seen by Šibenik goldsmiths in Venetian or Veneto workshops, or among citizens who acquired such pieces abroad. Archival sources, however, suggest that secular goldsmithing works were far more numerous than ecclesiastical ones, but societal attitudes towards precious metals led to their near-total loss. While ecclesiastical objects were usually preserved due to their religious significance, secular silverware often functioned as a form of monetary reserve. This is aptly illustrated by the inscription on the lid of a 14th-century French drinking vessel, which reads: *Laetitia menti, decus aulae, pignus egenti* ("happiness to the mind, grace to the hall, and a pledge in need").¹⁰⁸ Such items were frequently pawned, donated to churches or confraternities as testamentary bequests, or melted down and reused as raw material for the production of new objects. The gradual depletion of this corpus was further accelerated by adverse historical circumstances, centuries of division of family estates, and the inevitable shifts in taste. Given the highly fragmentary survival of secular goldsmithing works from Šibenik, archival research is essential in shedding light on the material culture of the town's population during the late medieval period, and their connections to other regions. Of all the silver tableware used for food and drink, silver cutlery, various types of jewellery, and other silver or silver-gilt acces-

¹⁰⁷ This section is based on archival documents and their analysis in my doctoral thesis from 2022 (e.g. Đ. Lakošeljac, 2022, 634-723).

¹⁰⁸ R.W. Lightbown, 1978, 56.

sories and devotional items recorded in Šibenik's archival sources, only a small number of earrings and rings have survived. Descriptions of such items are rare, as they are mostly listed in estate inventories or pledge records – that is, in types of documents that provide only basic information about them.

For example, certain sweetmeat dishes – referred to in Šibenik's archival sources as *confetiere*, *confitiere*, or *confetere* – may have been imported from Venice, the Veneto, or other parts of Italy, or perhaps even produced in Šibenik under the influence of goldsmithing works from those regions. These were luxury items – costly and rare, likely owned only by the town's wealthier citizens. Their status as markers of high social standing is suggested by the fact that, in the surviving 15th-century Šibenik documents, only nine such vessels have so far been identified, most of them in the possession of noble families.¹⁰⁹ These were silver, sometimes gilded display dishes used for storing and serving candied almonds, hazelnuts, and similar sweets – *confetti* (Italian) or *dragées* (French). The word *dragée* was first recorded in 1220 in Verdun,¹¹⁰ while the production of *confetti* in Italy is documented from the 15th century in Sulmona.¹¹¹ In the late Middle Ages, such sweets were not consumed solely for their flavour; they also served symbolic and ceremonial roles, as markers of social status, and were therefore served in elegantly crafted vessels during banquets and celebrations.¹¹² Such practices are vividly illustrated in artworks from the period – for example, in the fresco of Queen Theodelinda's wedding banquet in the Cathedral of Monza (fig. 10 – a), and in the "Taste" tapestry from the *Lady and the Unicorn* series in the Musée de Cluny in Paris (fig. 10 – b). The Monza fresco also depicts the custom of serving hard *confetti* at royal and aristocratic weddings,¹¹³ a tradition that survives today in the practice of gifting such sweets at baptisms, first communions, and weddings.¹¹⁴ In the aforementioned artworks, *confetiere* are depicted as elegant vessels with a base, stem, container, and lid – shaped much like pyxes or tall goblets. While it is possible that other types existed, perhaps made of different materials, their rarity and high value suggest that the Šibenik examples were probably imported from developed goldsmithing centres such as Venice. However, the possibility of local production based on imported models cannot be excluded.

The same applies to silver or, more rarely, silver-gilt cutlery such as spoons, forks, and knives. None of these have survived in Šibenik,¹¹⁵ although their existence is documented in archival sources. While knives, spoons, and forks were not entirely unknown in the late Middle Ages, cutlery sets as we know them today did not exist or were extremely rare. Liquid and semi-liquid foods were typically consumed directly from shallow bowls or using wooden

109 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/5, fol. 205r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/7, fol. 328v; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/8, fol. 367v; HR-DAŠI-1, OŠ, box 1, fasc. 1.1.2.1, fol. 211r; HR-DAŠI-1, OŠ, box 1, fasc. 1.1.5.1.2, fol. 91r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 23/III, Martinus Campellis de Gaivanis, fasc. 26/IIb, fol. 169v-171v.

110 *New Larousse*, 2018, entry "DRAGÉE" (e-book without pagination).

111 "CONFETTO" in: *Vocabolario Treccani*, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/confetto> (3.11.2024.).

112 R. Hryszko, 2021, 84.

113 R. Hryszko, 2021, 81 and the literature cited therein.

114 For example, this is still a living custom in Istria (Croatia).

115 The Šibenik City Museum holds only three copper (?) spoons, which can only be roughly dated to the 15th-16th century.

spoons, while solid foods were cut and eaten with knives or even fingers.¹¹⁶ While knives were by far the most common eating utensils, forks were rarely used even in the 15th century, outside what is now Italy.¹¹⁷ At the time, it was not yet customary to set cutlery on the table, particularly not forks,¹¹⁸ so guests often brought their own. This is clearly reflected in Šibenik's archival records from the 15th century, which mention belts with a suspended silver fork and knife or a pair of knives, with or without sheaths.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, a few sets of silver spoons and forks are also recorded in Šibenik's documents from this period, generally belonging to the upper classes and representing exceptions rather than the norm.¹²⁰ Silver spoons were more widely owned, but forks and knives made luxury items, typically found in noble households. They had not only practical functions but also served as fashion items, indicators of high social and economic status, and sometimes as a form of monetary reserve.¹²¹ Belts with a suspended silver fork and a pair of small knives, with or without sheaths, are recorded in the Šibenik archives. Since forks were only sporadically used in most European countries during the 15th century, their presence in the households of wealthy and prominent citizens of Šibenik is quite surprising.¹²² It is likely that they began using them relatively early under the influence of Italian customs, as forks were adopted much earlier in the area of present-day Italy,¹²³ and therefore in some Dalmatian towns as well.¹²⁴ Thus, it is plausible that certain silver or silver-gilt cutlery pieces were imported into Šibenik from Venice or other major centres, while others may have been crafted by Šibenik goldsmiths under the influence of foreign goldsmithing works.

¹¹⁶ M. Kovačević, 2010, 782-784 with the references cited therein.

¹¹⁷ B. Wilson, 2012, 192, 193.

¹¹⁸ It seems that an individual fork was not necessarily placed on the table even in the mid-17th century (e.g. F. Braudel, 1992, 213). Tonija Andrić notes that forks were placed on the table in 15th-century Split (e.g. T. Andrić, 2018, 269, notes 1673, 1677, 1678), but supports this claim with only a few documents, so it should be viewed with some caution and considered more an exception than the rule.

¹¹⁹ HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/4, fol. 171v; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/4, fol. 175r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/7, fol. 327r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/1, fol. 29v. The belt is not mentioned in the last two documents, but given that the fork and knives were suspended from a silver chain, it can reasonably be assumed that they were worn attached to the belt.

¹²⁰ HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 11/II, Ante Campolongo, F 11/III, fasc. 10/VIc, fol. 148r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/4, fol. 175v; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/5, fol. 216v; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/3, fol. 98r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/1, fol. 29v; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/1, fol. 45r; HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/7, fol. 328v.

¹²¹ When such items were recorded in the possession of members of the lower social strata, it was usually a single piece or just a few, most likely acquired through the purchase of unredeemed pledged goods. It can therefore be assumed that such objects served them primarily as a form of monetary reserve.

¹²² More than 230 silver and silver-gilt forks are recorded in Šibenik's 15th-century archival sources. Of course, it should be kept in mind that the same pieces may have been recorded in more than one document, as they came into the possession of other individuals through inheritance, pledging, or sale. Still, even if their total number were reduced by half, we would be dealing with at least a hundred silver forks of which no trace remains today.

¹²³ B. Wilson, 2012, 192.

¹²⁴ In addition to those from Šibenik, silver forks are also recorded in 15th-century archival sources from Split and Dubrovnik. See: T. Andrić, 2018, 269; C. Fisković, 1949, 188, 192, 198.

When it comes to various types of jewellery and functional-decorative items – such as silver crowns and other head ornaments, chains and pendants, rings, earrings, brooches, belts, clasps, buttons, strings of pearls, rosaries, silver toothpicks, and other objects – it is even more difficult to assess the extent to which individual pieces were connected to contemporary Venetian or Veneto goldsmithing. This is primarily because such items are generally recorded in Šibenik's archival sources without detailed descriptions, and – except for a small number of surviving rings and earrings – none have been preserved. Nonetheless, for certain categories of items, it is possible to establish connections with Venetian (and broader northern Italian) fashions of the time. For example, Šibenik's archival sources from the second third of the 15th century mention several head ornaments referred to as *girlanda* and *corona*, which probably correspond to the type of head ornament known as *frenello*, commonly used in 15th-century Italy. The *frenello* – a type of hair ornament of Tuscan origin later diffused throughout what is now Italy – consisted of one or more strands of pearls that could be worn over a veil, braided into the hair, or shaped as a band, with the pearls arranged in strands or set onto a metal framework, as frequently depicted in contemporary Italian paintings.¹²⁵ Although the Šibenik records do not use the term *frenello*, expressions such as *girlanda margaritarum*,¹²⁶ *girlanda lauorada cum perle*,¹²⁷ *corona vna de perlis*,¹²⁸ and *corona di perle de dona*¹²⁹ likely refer to this very type of head ornament. A 1450 inventory from Friuli Venezia Giulia lists such an item as *1 crinale seu girlanda vel frinuellum de margaritis cum aviculis et floribus de argento*.¹³⁰

An even more popular type of jewellery in Italy was the *fermaglio* or *fermaglietto* – a gold clasp or brooch, often decorated with gemstones, semi-precious stones, or pearls, and used in the 15th century to fasten garments or worn on the left shoulder, attached to a veil, or directly in the hair.¹³¹ In Šibenik's archival sources, only two references to gold items named *formaieto* and *firmaieto* have been found, which – based on the limited descriptions – can reasonably be identified as examples of this jewellery type.¹³² In the estate inventory of the Šibenik nobleman Ilija Tolimerić from late 1452, a piece is described as *Vn formaieto doro cum una columba in mezo e cum cinque granate*¹³³ – likely a gold clasp featuring a dove at its centre and five garnets. A similar item sold by the nobleman Ivan Tolimerić in 1515 is referred to as *firmaietum siue pendentem auri in forma angeli cum uno rubino in medio et tribus perlis*

125 S. Franzon, 2011, 49.

126 J. Kolanović, 1989, 256 (doc. 166).

127 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 11/II, Ante Campolongo, F 11/III, fasc. 10/VIIc, fol. 147v.

128 HR-DAŠI-1, OŠ, box 1, fasc. 1.1.2.1, fol. 224r.

129 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/6, fol. 283r.

130 G. Baldissin Molli, 2006, 119; S. Franzon, 2011, 49.

131 More on this type of jewellery can be found in: P. Venturelli, 1995, 116-118; G. Baldissin Molli, 2006, 113-115, 117, 119, 134, 137, 142, 144, 171; S. Franzon, 2011, 50 and onwards; S. Franzon, 2014, 15-28.

132 In Šibenik's archival sources of the time, especially in estate inventories, distorted forms of Italian and Latin words were frequently used to define goldsmiths' works. This also appears to have occurred in Italian archival documents, where the same type of jewellery is referred to as *formaieto*, *fermageto*, *formaieto*, *fermaieto* and *formageto* (e.g. G. Baldissin Molli, 2006, 113, 115, 117, 119).

133 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/1, fol. 31r.



Fig. 11 a) Bonifacio Bembo, Portrait of Bianca Maria Visconti, Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, c. 1470; b) Jacopo da Montagnana, Saints Daniel of Padua and Louis of Toulouse, Detroit, Detroit Institute of Art, between 1495 and 1499; c) Davide Ghirlandaio (previously attributed to Sebastiano di Bartolo Mainardi), Profile Portrait of a Young Woman, State Museums of Berlin, c. 1490; d) Piero del Pollaiuolo, Portrait of a Woman, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, c. 1480

*circumcirca alligatis*¹³⁴ – that is, a gold *firmaietum* or pendant in the form of an angel, with a ruby at the centre and three surrounding pearls. Although recorded in the early 16th century, this description recalls depictions of similar jewellery in Italian *Quattrocento* paintings¹³⁵ – for instance, in the *Portrait of Bianca Maria Visconti* attributed to Bonifacio Bembo (fig. 11 – a), or in *Saints Daniel of Padua and Louis of Toulouse* by Jacopo da Montagnana (fig. 11 – b), a painter who never left the Veneto region.¹³⁶ An even closer parallel may be seen in the *Profile Portrait of a Young Woman* attributed to Davide Ghirlandaio (fig. 11 – c). However, given that the Šibenik piece is described as a pendant (*pendente*), it was likely worn suspended from a necklace, similar to the one in Piero del Pollaiuolo's *Portrait of a Woman*, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 11 – d). While such jewellery was widespread throughout Italy, it cannot be stated with certainty whether the piece owned by Ivan Tolimerić was imported from Venice or the Veneto. However, it is highly unlikely that such a refined and valuable item would have been produced in Šibenik.

Among over 130 men's and women's belts with silver or silver-gilt elements recorded in Šibenik's archival sources, only one – the black silk belt belonging to Jakov Nestašin (Nestašić) and recorded in 1460/1461 – is explicitly described as featuring thirteen silver ornaments made "in the Venetian style" (*Item vna centura darzento de seda negra cum passeti 13 ala veneciana*).¹³⁷ This suggests that the belt was either imported from Venice or made locally after Venetian models. However, without further detail, the designation "*ala veneziana*" merely indicates that the thirteen silver plaques (*passeti*) were made in the Venetian manner or style, without specifying the design characteristics.

In 15th-century Šibenik, costumes were often embellished with buttons made from silver, or silver-gilt, and pearls, more rarely from gold or brass. Although most are not described in detail, some types can be tentatively associated with Italian influences or even importation. Among these are buttons referred to as *piroli*, *piruli*, *peroli*, *piroleti*, or *pirolleti*, which, according to Bartolomeo Cecchetti, were pear-shaped and made from a variety of materials, including fabric, wire, gold, silver, silver-gilt, copper, enamel, amber, and crystal.¹³⁸ In Šibenik, silver and silver-gilt examples appear most frequently in the sources. Other types, such as silver and silver-gilt buttons known as *pianete*, *pianette*, or *planete* – described by Cecchetti as flat¹³⁹ in shape – may also have been imported or produced in Šibenik under similar stylistic influences.

When it comes to rings adorned with gemstones or semi-precious stones, Šibenik's archival sources do not allow us to determine their provenance. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of these materials were sourced from Venice, given its central role in the medieval gemstone trade. In the Middle Ages, gemstones were mined across Europe – notably in what is now Germany, Britain, and France – or imported from the East via

134 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 28/II, Lovrinac Butrišić, fasc. 30/IIh, fol. 55v.

135 For more depictions and further information on this type of jewellery, see: P. Venturelli, 1995, 116-118; G. Baldissin Molli, 2006, 113-115; S. Franzon, 2011, 53; S. Franzon, 2014, 15-28.

136 S. Franzon, 2014, 17 (see the publication cited in note 26).

137 HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/II, Karatus Vitale, F 15/IVb/5, fol. 246r.

138 B. Cecchetti, 1886, 91-93.

139 B. Cecchetti, 1886, 95.

Constantinople (from present-day India, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka), and then transported to Venice, from where they were distributed across Europe.¹⁴⁰ A similar assumption can be made about certain strands of pearls and rosaries made of amber or coral. While there is no direct evidence that these were imported as finished products from Venice, the possibility remains. In one case, however, the origin is more certain: it is a pair of silver-gilt rosaries owned by the Šibenik nobleman Juraj Kamenarić the Younger, which he had evidently inherited from his father, Juraj. These are described as “a pair of women’s silver-gilt rosaries of Venetian quality, with a pomander (?)” (*Vn par de paternostri da dona de argento indoradi cum l’oldano de liga Veneta pexa onze cinque quarti 3*),¹⁴¹ suggesting that the silver alloy used to make them was likely identifiable by the Venetian hallmark certifying its quality, as otherwise the fineness of the silver would have been difficult to ascertain.

Conclusion

Given the gap of some six centuries – during which most of Šibenik’s late medieval goldsmithing heritage has been irretrievably lost and its craftsmen largely forgotten – it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the achievements of Šibenik’s goldsmithing or the precise nature and extent of its connections with the goldsmithing traditions of Venice and the Veneto. However, based on the limited surviving archival sources and the small number of extant works, certain connections between Šibenik and the regions in question indeed existed. This is evidenced by documents attesting to the interregional mobility of goldsmiths, as well as by records of two apprentices from Šibenik who received part or all of their training in Venice. Further evidence is provided by a handful of surviving goldsmithing works, some of which were certainly imported from Venice or the Veneto, and others likely so – as well as from specific figural compositions on locally produced objects that exhibit the influences of Venetian and Paduan painting circles, particularly from the third quarter of the 15th century.

While Šibenik’s late medieval secular goldsmithing output has almost entirely vanished, archival records suggest that certain pieces were acquired in Venice or the Veneto, while others were likely produced in local workshops following imported models. Given that Šibenik had been under Venetian rule since the early 15th century, it is reasonable to assume that various types of secular goldsmithing objects gradually came into use in the town, influenced by customs introduced from the Italian Peninsula – particularly among the upper social classes, for whom such objects served as symbols of their elevated status. Some of these items may have been acquired directly from abroad, while others were likely produced in Šibenik by local goldsmiths working under the influence of foreign models and stylistic trends, reflecting both the town’s integration into wider cultural currents and the aspirations of its elite to align themselves with contemporary fashions. Yet, due to the fragmentary nature of both the documentary and material evidence, our current understanding remains partial and limited. From

¹⁴⁰ P. Bengtsson Melin, 2014, 260.

¹⁴¹ HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 16/V, Karotus Vitale, F 15/IIIh, fol. 24r.

today's vantage point, we can only catch a glimpse of the scope and nuances of Šibenik's goldsmithing production and its interregional connections during the late medieval period.

Appendix 1

13 February 1454 – Leonard Barbo, superior of the Confraternity of St. Mark *de Burgo Sibenici*, appoints the Dominican friar Juraj Mihovilov from Šibenik as his envoy and legal representative to collect the confraternity's silver-gilt cross from the Venetian goldsmith Antonio de la Cecha.

(in the margin:) *Procura fratalee Sancti Marci.*

Die 13 mensis februarii 1454, indictione 2^a.

Actum Sibenici in cancellaria communis, coram ser Elia Ligniçich examinatore, presentibus presbitero Iohanne Cvrnich (?) et Donato Modripetich testibus. Ibique Leonardus Barbo habitator Sibenici, tanquam superior fratalee Sancti Marci de Burgo Sibenici, uti ipse retulit, omni uia, modo, iure et forma quibus melius sciuit ac potuit, constituit et ordinavit suum certum nuntium et legitimum procuratorem dominum fratrem Georgium Michaelis de Sibenico, ordinis predicatorum, absentem tanquam presentem, specialiter ad procurandum et sollicitandum quod perficiatur a magistro Antonio de la Cecha aurifice de Venetiis quamdam crux dicte fratalee in totum (L – crossed out) ducatorum 12 pro singula marcha de argento de liga Veneta bene aurata secundum conventionem quam dixit se fecisse cum dicto magistro Antonio, notata manu ipsius Leonardi in libro dicti magistri Antonii, et factam recipiendum et exigendum. Et si opus fuerit occasione dicti crucis ad comperendum Venetiis, coram quocumque iudicio, et omnium generaliter faciendum quam ipse constituens facere posset aliquo pretermisso non obstante. Promictens se dicto nomine firma rataque habiturum quecumque per dictum suum procuratorem facta et procurata fuerint in premissis et circa pramissa, sub obligatione omnium bonorum suorum et bonorum dicte fratalee presentium et futurorum.

(HR-DAŠI-263, BŠ, box 15, 16/I, Karotus Vitale, fasc. 15/Id, fol. 25v).

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Silk, Roads, and the Counts of Krk

The paper presents an analysis of previously unknown fragments of multi-coloured silk velvet, which are preserved in the Treasury of the Franciscan monastery in Trsat (Rijeka, Croatia), in the form of two stoles and as part of a liturgical set believed to be a donation from Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (Vienna, 1717-1780). These are rare silks with a pattern characteristic of the early 15th century. The only direct comparative examples to the Trsat silks are two smaller fragments of velvet preserved in the collection of the Abegg-Stiftung Foundation (Riggisberg, Switzerland), dated between 1400 and 1410. The precious fragments of velvet are among the oldest items in the Franciscan sanctuary in Trsat, but they do not represent the oldest silks in the Kvarner region, specifically in the region that was under the rule of the Counts of Krk during the late Middle Ages. Along with the Trsat fragments, several other exceptionally valuable liturgical silk items have been preserved in this area, dating to the 14th century, and decorated with embroidery made in Venetian workshops. The paper also contextualizes the possible circumstances of the production and donation of these luxury items within a broader European context, emphasizing the essential role of roads and maritime routes in their procurement.

Keywords: silk, velvet, embroidery, last wills, Trsat, Kvarner region, Venice, Counts of Krk, 14th century, 15th century

In the Franciscan monastery in Trsat (Rijeka), the well-known Marian sanctuary and pilgrimage centre, there is a relatively small, but very valuable, collection of early modern silks. One of the most prominent places in the treasury's showcases is occupied by a set of liturgical vestments, consisting of a chasuble, two dalmaticas, three stoles, two maniples, chalice veil,

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burse, and pall (fig. 1).¹ All the items are made from monochromatic dark green velvet with decorations created using silver thread embroidery. The set is believed to be a donation from Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (Vienna, 1717-1780) to the monastery in Trsat, and, according to a local legend, the empress personally made the embroidery.² Such a donation from Maria Theresa is by no means an exception. Indeed, there are numerous examples of similar donations of liturgical vestments throughout the Habsburg Monarchy, such as the set of liturgical vestments preserved in the Municipal museum of nearby Bribir, originally from the parish church of St. Peter and Paul, or a set of liturgical vestments in the Cathedral of St. Teresa of Avila in Požega, as well as a series of liturgical items in the Treasury of the Cathedral of Saints Ilario and Tanziano in Gorizia.³ Although it is quite unlikely that the famous Austrian empress embroidered the Trsat velvet herself, it is important in this context to emphasize the strong local devotion and collective memory surrounding the significance of these preserved items for the community.

In this respect, it's interesting to observe that although silks of the aforementioned Trsat set were most likely produced in an Austrian weaving workshop in the third quarter of the 18th century, two stoles of the set contain pieces of much older, luxurious, polychrome velvet (fig. 2). The design of this rare velvet is characteristic of the early 15th century and it remained popular until the 1420s.⁴ These patterns are very dynamic, mostly designed in several colors and often featuring diagonally arranged bands as well as floral and plant motifs. Similar designs can be seen on luxurious garments worn by members of the social elites in their portraits, such as Louis II of Valois-Anjou, Duke of Anjou and Count of Provence (Toulouse, 1377-Château d'Angers, 1417) or John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford (1389-Rouen, 1435) and his wife Anne of Burgundy, Duchess of Bedford (1404-Paris, 1432).⁵ The only direct comparative example to the Trsat fragments are two velvet pieces of identical design, kept in the collection of the Abegg-Stiftung Foundation in Riggisberg, which were only recently published (fig. 3).⁶ The complete composition of the Trsat fragments is visible now after the pattern was reconstructed, making the direct correspondences with the motifs of the Swiss fragments even more evident (fig. 4). In addition to pattern resemblance, the fragments from the Abegg-Stiftung and those from the Franciscan Monastery in Trsat are also closely related in technique. In both cases, they are polychrome voided satin velvets with an asymmetric small-scale design formed by parallel wavy bands filled with a lattice of rhombuses and medallions with plant motifs. From these bands grow thin, twisted branches with a dominant palmette motif. The composition of the velvet is created by alternating cut and uncut areas of a green pile warp, while details of

1 The set probably also included a cope that was sent to an exhibition in Vienna in 1904, after which it did not return to Trsat. (e.g. J. Ivoš, 2000, 309).

2 M. Bradanović, E. Hoško, 2011, 55.

3 More about the Bribir set, cf. I. Jazbec, 2012, 138; For Požega set, cf. S. Banić, 2022, 234-242; For examples from Gorizia, cf. M. Bellina, 1996, 110-117. More about Empress Maria Theresa's donations, cf. D. Köhler, 1998, 165-203.

4 L. Monnas, 2012, 35; M. Peter, 2019, 45.

5 L. Monnas, 2012, 34-35, 59.

6 M. Peter, 2019, 42-45.

the small plant motifs within the palmettes and medallions are achieved by combining two additional pile warps, one in red and another with alternating white and blue silk threads (fig. 5).⁷ The Swiss fragments are dated between 1400 and 1410 and are attributed to an Italian weaving workshop, which could also be proposed for the Trsat fragments.⁸

The discovery of these precious velvet fragments, which are among the oldest objects in the Trsat sanctuary, raises several questions, primarily regarding the context of their commission and donation to the Franciscan sanctuary, once an important possession of the Counts of Krk. Based on comparisons with archivally documented examples of testamentary donations of textiles and a contextual analysis of silk items preserved in the Kvarner region within a broader European context, this paper will attempt to reconstruct and contextualize the circumstances surrounding the commission and donation of the Trsat velvet fragments. Additionally, using the example of the above mentioned group of silk items adorned with embroidery from the Kvarner region, crafted in Venice during the 14th century, this study will highlight the multifaceted importance of trade routes in establishing a strong financial base for acquiring luxury artworks, ensuring the accessibility and circulation of luxury items, and in shaping patrons' tastes, as well as the dynamics of spreading and embracing modern trends in art.

Regarding last wills from the late medieval period, which are among the most valuable written sources for researching this topic, only two belonging to a members of the Counts of Krk family has been published to date. The earliest example, the one of Count Nikola III (1343-1377), was written in 1377, but it has been preserved only partially in a transcript from the 18th century, and it does not contain data relevant to this topic.⁹ The second is the will of Count Ivan VII (1434-Zákány, 1486), from the year 1453. Ivan VII was the youngest of eleven children of the most powerful count from this family, Nikola IV (before 1393-1432), precisely to whose era the Trsat velvet fragments are dated.¹⁰ Fortunately, the wills of Finna Buzzacarini (Padua, 1328-1378), wife of the lord of Padua Francesco I da Carrara (Padua, 1325-Monza, 1393), and of Count Pavao II Šubić (around 1295-Ostrovica, 1346), a member of another prominent Croatian noble family, have been preserved. Both were related to the Counts of Krk. Finna Buzzacarini was the mother-in-law of Count Stjepan I of Krk (before 1330-1389), the uncle of the aforementioned Count Nikola IV, i.e., the mother of his wife, Caterina da Carrara (before 1372-after 1405). Count Pavao II Šubić was the husband of Countess Elizabeta of Krk (+ after 1347), the sister of Count Bartul VIII (before 1332-1360), who was the grandfather of Nikola IV.¹¹ Therefore, the wills of Finna Buzzacarini and Pavao II can serve as means of comparison, assuming that the wills of the Counts of Krk were composed in a similar manner.

7 The velvets match in other structural elements as well. Both are woven in an irregular satin of 6, created by threads of a light green ground warp twisted in the Z direction, and a yellow-green weft (two threads twisted in the Z direction), along with three pile warps. The first is made of dark green, the second of red, and the third of white and blue silk threads. In both examples, the pattern repeat is estimated to measure 21.5 cm in height. *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 M. Magdić, 1900, 24-25.

10 V. Klaić, 1901.

11 For more about the ties between the Carrara family and the Counts of Krk, cf. G. Ronconi, 2006, 69-82. For the ties between the counts of Krk and Bribir, cf. V. Klaić, 1901.



Fig. 1 Chasuble, stole and maniple, c. 1760, Treasury of the Franciscan monastery, Trsat



Fig. 2 Stoles, 1400-1410 and c. 1760, Treasury of the Franciscan monastery, Trsat



Fig. 3 Velvet with diagonal pattern design, 1400-1410, Abegg-Stiftung Foundation, Riggisberg (courtesy © Abegg-Stiftung, CH-3132 Riggisberg, inv. no. 662 a, b)



Fig. 4 Polychrome velvet with diagonal pattern design

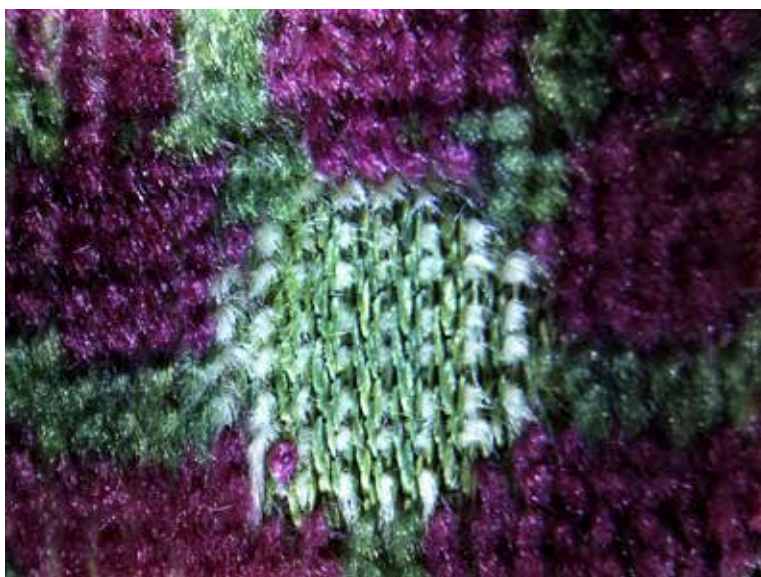


Fig. 5 Polychrome velvet with diagonal pattern design, detail, 1400-1410, Treasury of the Franciscan monastery, Trsat

In the above mentioned will, drawn up on March 2, 1453, the then young, nineteen-year-old Count Ivan VII bequeaths, among other things, his personal clothing to some of the churches or monasteries, listing it immediately after his silverware.¹² Fina Buzzacarini did something very similar on August 15, 1378, when she left all her silverware and clothing for the furnishing of the baptistery of Padua Cathedral.¹³ The will of the Count of Bribir Pavao II Šubić from 1346 is somewhat different. Count Pavao bequeaths existing liturgical furnishings to the Franciscan Church of St. Mary in Bribir (Dalmatia), including vestments and paraments.¹⁴ It is particularly interesting to mention the altar frontal ("*pannum ante altare*"), which may have been similar to the altar frontals made for the Cathedral in Krk and the capitular churches in Dobrinj and Grobnik, i.e., for sacred places in the area under the rule of the Counts of Krk. This potentially testifies to a similar patronage taste and donation practice.

In a broader European context, one of the most significant examples of well-documented testamentary donations, including textile items, is certainly that of Clementia of Hungary (Naples, 1293-Paris, 1328), daughter of Charles Martel of Anjou (Naples, 1271-1295) and the second wife of King Louis X of France and Navarre from the House of Capet (Paris, 1289-Vincennes, 1316). This case is particularly valuable because, in addition to the queen's will, drawn up on October 5, 1328, a comprehensive and descriptively written inventory of the queen's possessions, or items owned by the queen, has been preserved.¹⁵ The inventory list, which was meticulously compiled by the executors of the queen's will after her death, contains more than 700 different items, including numerous textiles.¹⁶

The practice of testamentary donation of textile items was well known among aristocratic circles in the wider Adriatic basin since the early medieval period. For example, in his will written on August 31, 829, Doge Giustiniano Partecipazio (+ Venice, 829) bequeaths a number of liturgical items, including textiles, to the famous Venetian monastery of San Zaccaria.¹⁷ A number of similar cases were documented in the following centuries along the Eastern Adriatic, i.e., Dalmatia, in 10th and 11th century. For instance, in 999, a daughter of tribune Dabro, Agape, left five silk items to the renowned benedictine Abbey of St. Chrysogonus in Zadar

12 "Item ordinavit et legavit, quod si eum ante sue vite decessum de suis bonis mobilibus, ut puta de pecuniis, equis, argenteriiis, vestimentis vel aliis huiusmodi mobilibus bonis alicui ecclesie vel monasterio [...]" (e.g. Š. Ljubić, 1876, 100).

13 "Item reliquit Capelle predicte solum ad ornatum et pro ornamento ipsius Capelle et altaris in ea existentis totum suum argentum et omnia eius Vestimenta quod et que repertum fuerit dictam testatricem obitus sui habere." (e.g. H. Saalman, 1987, 391. For the patronage of Fina Buzzacarini see C. Warr, 1996, 139-155).

14 "Item III humerales de perlis; item III camisas ecclesiasticas; item duas stolas et III manipulos; item capsulam de rubeo sanito cum fristis; item dalmaticam cum frixis; item pannum ante altare et listam de piloso et plavo acsamito rubeo; item toaliām super altare laboratam cum serico [...]" (e.g. Š. Ljubić, 1870, 419; D. Karbić, 2000, 316-317; S. Ivović, M. Kunčić, 2019, 202).

15 M. Proctor-Tiffany, 2019, 145-175.

16 *Ibid.*

17 "Item de ornamento suprascripti monasterii, id est crucem aurea maiore unam [...], calicem argenteos tres, pathenas argenteas tres, turibulos argenteos tres et alios turibulos ereos duos, coronas ereas viginti quinque, lucernas ereas tres, palia vero altariorum, id est staurecene [...] (c)endato uno, pecia una circondata auro et margaritis." (e.g. A. Gloria, 1877, 14; R. Cessi, 1942, 96; L. Lanfranchi, B. Strina, 1965, 21. On the dating of the will see A. Carile, 2013, 329-332).

upon her death.¹⁸ Such a practice was certainly widely accepted over a much broader area, likely throughout Europe, continuously during the medieval period and well beyond. The original will of Mary of Hungary (around 1257-Naples, 1323), of the Árpád dynasty, has not been preserved, but her testamentary donations are well known since they were listed in details in an inventory made in 1326, three years after the queen's death.¹⁹ Among other things, the queen of Naples donated one chasuble, one tunic, one dalmatic, and three copes to the Benedictine Abbey of St. Martin on Mount Pannonhalma in her native Hungary.²⁰

Just like the queen of Naples, the Hungarian-Croatian queen Elizabeth of Poland (Cracow, 1305-Buda, 1380), of the Piast dynasty, bequeathed numerous liturgical items to selected churches in her kingdom. According to the will she drafted on April 6, 1380, Queen Elizabeth left, among other items, a piece of priestly garment made of yellow satin, which was more likely a golden colour, and adorned with pearls, to the Clarist monastery in Óbuda (today part of Budapest, Hungary), where she also chose to be buried.²¹ Furthermore, she left one chasuble adorned with pearls and its accompanying items, likely a stole and maniple, to the recently established Franciscan monastery in Lampertháza (today Berehove, Ukraine).²² Finally, she also bequeathed, among other items, a satin chasuble, presumably in gold and decorated with pearls, along with its accompanying elements, most certainly a stole and maniple, to the Benedictine abbey in Aracs (today Arača, Serbia), which she had restored just about ten years earlier.²³

In the context of this study, it is almost equally important to mention some of the donations that Queen Elizabeth made during her lifetime. In 1343-1344, the queen undertook a diplomatic journey to the Apennine Peninsula, with Naples as her final destination, during which she also visited two important pilgrimage centres. These were, of course, the Basilica of

18 "...artatikió serico I, inuestitura de serico I, panno serico I, lisa I, pennulas II, pirestres XX, mappas IIII, antelectulos III, capilectulo I, mappula ad calicem operiendum I, [...], racinas II, culcitrans II, culcitrino I, capitales III, capitale de serico [...] de serico I, caldarias maiores II, frixorias maiores II, cucuma [...] mortario hereo I, sella ferrea I, vrceo hereo cum aquiminile, camastras II, deuterias II, archiscamno I, arcella I, buttes II, tina I, bussedo I, macinas pario I, turabulo hereo I, stagniolo I." (e.g. J. Stipišić, M. Šamšalović, 1967, 49; M. Skoblar, 2020, 297-298).

19 V. Lucherini, 2015, 433.

20 "Item assignasse [...] fratri Nicolao abbati monasteri Sancti Martini in Sacro Monte Pannoniae, ordinis sancti Benedicti, deputandam divino cultui in praedicta ecclesia Sancti Martini, planetam unam de sammitto rubeo cum friso ante et retro ad modum crucis laboratam ad flordelisia, tunicellam unam, dyalmaticam unam de eodem sammitto rubeo cum friso similiter in capiczalia et manicis, pluviale unum de eodem sammitto cum friso laborato ad flordelisia et aquila, pluviale aliud de eodem sammitto cum friso laborato ad flordelisia cum avibus et castellis, et pluviale aliud de eodem sammitto rubeo cum friso laborato, ubi sunt castella in medio quidam nodi et a latere quaedam aves." (e.g. V. Lucherini, 2015, 445-446).

21 "Item vnum ornamentum sacerdotale de Atlas flauo coloris, cum suis pertinentiis, perlis ornatum, ad tempus exitus nostrae animae praeparatum, in claustro B. virginis de praefata vetere Buda, cum vno calice aureo minori, prout calicem eidem dudum datum, nunc habitam." (e.g. I. Katona, 1790, 674; C. Mielke, 2017, 137-138).

22 "Item ad opus claustrum B. virginis de Lumprekháza D. florenos auri et vnam casulam, cum suis pertinentiis, perlis decoratam, in dicto claustro de veteri Buda B. virginis habitam, cum vno calice argenteo deaurato, V. marcas ponderante; vnum thuribulum argenteum et duas nucas argenteas, in processione supra velum gestatas." *Ibid.*

23 "Item ad opus claustrum de Aracha, si vita nobis comite perfici non potuit, D. florenos auri, vnam casulam de Atlas flauo, cum suis pertinentiis, perlis ornatam; duas nucas argenteas, in processione super velum gestatas, et duas ampullas argenteas, in superiori capella nostra habitas." *Ibid.*

St. Peter in Rome and the Basilica of St. Nicholas in Bari.²⁴ Of the numerous *ex voto* donations that the queen surely prepared with care, it seems that almost nothing has survived to this day, except possibly for the well-known reliquary in the form of a chapel at the Museo Nicolaiano in Bari.²⁵ From the inventory list compiled in the second half of the 14th century it is revealed that Elizabeth donated at least a chasuble, a tunic, and a dalmatic made of green velvet to the Basilica of St. Nicholas,²⁶ as well as an altar frontal featuring depictions of 18 saints, very likely embroidered with gold threads.²⁷ It should certainly be noted and emphasized that the queen's example seems to have been followed by an unnamed *comitissa* of the Queen of Hungary from her entourage, who donated a "planeta pulcra" and a "pannus Tartaricus" to the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome.²⁸ This indicates the vertical transmission of the idea, i.e., the practice of donating textile items to prominent shrines within the nobility, or within the hierarchy of the social elites.

The continuity of the practice of testamentary donation of textile items can also be traced beyond the 14th century.²⁹ A valuable example of this practice during the 15th century is documented in the will of the Bosnian queen Katarina Kosača Kotromanić (1425-Rome, 1478). Queen Katarina spent her final years in Rome and was strongly connected to the Franciscan order throughout her life.³⁰ It is therefore no surprise that she arranged to be buried in the presbytery of the Franciscan church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. According to her will, drawn up in Rome on October 20, 1478, the queen bequeathed numerous already existing textile items like chasuble and other liturgical vestments as well as altar clothes to this renowned Franciscan church and to the Church of San Girolamo degli Schiavoni (dei Croati), also in Rome.³¹ Of particular significance is her instruction to donate her precious royal mantle "de panno aurato" (of gilded cloth) to the above mentioned Franciscan church in Rome.³² There is no reason to doubt that this and the queen's other bequests were fulfilled, especially given

24 L. Szende, 2007, 133-137.

25 More about the reliquary and its potential donors, including Queen Elizabeth, in N. Barbone Pugliese, 2005, 158-161; D. G. Năstăsioiu, 2015, 105.

26 "218. Item Planeta, Tunica et Dalmatica de velluto viridi cum frisis aureis, donata Ecclesie per Reginam Ungarie, infoderate cendato rubeo." (e.g. E. Rogadeo, 1902, 332).

27 "248. Item Frontale unum missum per Reginam Ungarie de auro cum ymaginibus de auro et fringijs de serico diversorum colorum, que ymagines sunt numero decem et octo." (e.g. E. Rogadeo, 1902, 333).

28 D. G. Năstăsioiu, 2015, 108.

29 Such a practice existed also among less well-off families. For examples from Trogir, cf. M. Karbić, Z. Ladić, 2001, 161-254. It is important to note that this analysis does not include examples of donations made by clergy, as their gifts to churches, often including their cathedrals, were generally expected, such as the series of bequests by Bishop of Trogir Nikola Kažotić (+1371) (e.g. I. Babić, 2010, 234-235).

30 More about the life of Queen Katarina and her ties with the Franciscan order, cf. E. O. Filipović, 2015, 165-182; L. Špoljarić, 2018, 61-62, 69-72.

31 "Item voluit et legavit dicte ecclesie sancte Marie de Araceli palium seu suum Regale mantellum de panno aurato. Item eidem ecclesie beate Marie de Araceli legavit et legat unum tusale sericeum pro altare cohoperiendo diversorum colorum, quod pro ornatu sue capelle habebat. Item legavit et legat Hospitali sancti Hieronymi de Lausto pro natione Sclavonorum capellam suam integram, hoc est Missale, calicem cum patena et corporale, planetam cum suis camisiis et aliis sacerdotalibus indumentis, et unum tusale sericeum, quo altare cohoperitur." (e.g. A. Theiner, 1863, 510).

32 *Ibid.*

that she was indeed interred in her chosen Franciscan church. Her tombstone remains visible today, set into the first northern pier leading to the presbytery.

In addition to the two established models of donating textiles to churches, in the form of pre-existing liturgical items and personal garments to be repurposed into new items, a third model also existed-leaving funds for purchasing textiles. An example of this practice is recorded in Verona, though it does not involve the famous ruler Cangrande I della Scala (Verona, 1291-Treviso, 1329). While the textiles preserved in his tomb are precious examples of late medieval fabric, in the context of this study, the will of Guglielmo di Castelbarco (+ Lizzana, 1320) is even more interesting. The wealthy *condottiero*, in his will dated August 13, 1319, left an enormous 2,000 liras for his funeral rites and other things needed for the occasion, including “vestimentis et alliis apparamentis de seta et auro”.³³ By comparison, Guglielmo allotted “only” 1,500 liras in the same will for the construction of his monumental tomb, which still exists today.³⁴ As for the burial garments of European aristocratic elites, one should certainly recall the *odežda* of Serbian Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović (Prilepac, 1329-Kosovo field, 1389). Prince Lazar, who died in the famed 1389 Battle of Kosovo, was buried in an opulent garment now preserved in the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade.³⁵ Although there are no surviving documents, as with the Verona example, the well-preserved ceremonial garment from Belgrade serves as a precious example of this type of attire, and it is highly probable that it involved a commission of equal or similar luxury.

Compared to items made from other expensive materials, such as gold, silver, ivory, and especially marble, textiles are distinct in that they are relatively easy and inexpensive to re-tailor into secondary objects and reuse in new functions, with further alterations also being quite manageable. Additionally, because textiles are relatively lightweight, which makes them easily transportable, it is significantly more complex to research and determine their original form and function, as well as their provenance and contextual origins. Considering all the above mentioned, it is possible to preliminarily propose a typology of textile donation practices to sacred places. These practices can be grouped into three main types: donating already existing liturgical items (usually from the donor’s private chapels), donating textiles that are yet to be tailored into liturgical items (often in the form of personal clothing), and, finally, donating funds for their purchase (frequently intended for burial garments).

Regarding the velvet from Trsat, it is possible that these silks were not originally created for the church or for liturgical purposes but were later donated to the Franciscans, potentially during a substantial renovation of the sanctuary around 1453 under Nikola’s son, Martin Frankopan (1416-1479).³⁶ There is also the possibility that the stoles were transferred as pre-tailored liturgical items from another church, for example from a destroyed Franciscan church in

33 “...relinquo et iudico quod in funere meo et eius occasione in vestimentis, cera et alliis necessariis expendantur duo milia libra(rum) denariorum Veronensium parvorum ita tamen quod de vestimentis et alliis apparamentis de seta et auro fiant apparamenta ad divinum et pro divino officio celebrando” (e.g. E. Napione 2008, 28-29).

34 *Ibid.*

35 Б. Поповић, 2020, 214.

36 М. Bradanović, 2017, 28-30.

Senj.³⁷ However, this seems less likely, as the Trsat shrine was recognized from its inception as an important pilgrimage site and was enriched with numerous *ex-voto* donations, beginning with its first patrons – the Counts of Krk, later known as the Frankopans. It's also worth noting that some members of this noble family, including the aforementioned Martin, were buried in the church, making it much more plausible that such donations were specifically intended for this prominent Franciscan sanctuary, whether by a family member or someone within their closest circle of vassals. Finally, it's noteworthy that in 1438, records mention a professional tailor in nearby Rijeka, indicating that re-tailoring as early as the 15th century was a realistic possibility.³⁸

The appearance of luxurious and rarely preserved silks in Trsat should certainly be viewed in the context of a commission from a financially powerful and well-informed member of the European aristocratic elite, which the Counts of Krk undeniably were at that time. As dual vassals to both the Venetian Doge, from whom they held the island of Krk, and the Hungarian-Croatian king, from whom they received control over the coastal area stretching from Trsat to Senj, along with its expansive hinterlands (now Gorski Kotar and Lika), the Counts of Krk oversaw a crucial intersection of maritime and land routes on the eastern side of the northern Adriatic, particularly the town of Senj.³⁹ Control over such an important geostrategic location significantly contributed to the prosperity of the family. The family reached the peak of its power under the rule of Count Nikola IV, *Banus* (Cro. Ban) of Croatia and Dalmatia, whose era coincided with the production of the Trsat velvets. Unfortunately, destruction in later centuries during the wars with the Ottomans, along with the devastation of World War II, eradicated layers of this area's valuable artistic heritage. The catastrophic destruction of Senj and Modruš, two of the three major centres under the rule of the Counts of Krk, alongside Krk itself, reduced the catalogue of medieval textiles to *reliquiae reliquiarum*.⁴⁰ However, preserved examples, such as the fragment of the lampas from the Reliquary of St. Ursula in the parish church of St. Andrew in the castle of Bakar – which is presumed to have been created in the 14th century – still demonstrate the significant financial strength of the local social elite, as well as their close familiarity with artistic trends and practices in production centres.⁴¹

This study highlights several of the most valuable examples of silk liturgical items produced for patrons and churches in the castles under the rule of the Counts of Krk in the period immediately preceding the Trsat velvets, specifically during the 14th century. These items are adorned with precious embroidery crafted in Venetian workshops. The most significant of these is undoubtedly the altar frontal, which was embroidered according to a preparatory drawing by Paolo Veneziano and is currently housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Originally created for the high altar of the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

37 On the Franciscan church in Senj see P. Marković, 2006, 9-10.

38 O. Kosanović, 2014, 53, 55.

39 G. Ravančić, 2022, 19-35.

40 For more about destruction of Senj and Modruš, cf. M. Špikić, 2009, 287-306; 2017, 157-176; M. Bradanović, 2021, 187-214.

41 I. Jazbec, 2012, 133.

in Krk (fig. 6), it stands as one of the most important examples of its type and the most valuable example of Venetian embroidery from the 14th century. It was very likely commissioned by Bishop of Krk Ivan II (before 1358-1389) in the 1350s, with the clear aim of the prelate's self-promotion, but possibly also as a means of memorializing an important event, such as the episcopal ordination.⁴² It is quite possible, and indeed likely, that the creation of such a monumental and luxurious work of art was financed by a member of the Counts of Krk family, such as the *Ban* of Croatia and Dalmatia, Count Ivan V (before 1343-1393), the father of Count Nikola IV.⁴³ Count Ivan V supported the members of the Anjou dynasty on the Hungarian-Croatian throne, and notably distinguished himself during the liberation of Queen Mary (1371-Buda, 1395) from captivity in Novigrad (Dalmatia) in June 1387, for which he was richly rewarded by Mary's husband, King and later Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Sigismund of Luxembourg (Prague, 1368-Znojmo, 1437).⁴⁴

A few years after the Krk masterpiece, an altar frontal was created for the capitular church of St. Stephen the Protomartyr in the castle of Dobrinj, also located on the island of Krk. This is a smaller altar frontal, but still a luxuriously crafted and highly valuable example of 14th-century Venetian embroidery (fig. 7). The altar frontal is dated between 1360 and 1370, while the preparatory drawing is attributed to a follower of Paolo Veneziano.⁴⁵ There is no doubt that the altar frontal in Dobrinj echoes the monumental creation for the cathedral in Krk, but on a more modest scale, commissioned as a result of admiration for the earlier work.⁴⁶ This occurred around a decade later, at a time when the great master Paolo was unfortunately already deceased.

Finally, in the capitular church of St. Philip and Jacob in Grobnik, the westernmost castle under the rule of the Counts of Krk, three chasubles with applied fragments, including examples of 14th-century Venetian embroidery, were preserved until the second half of the 19th century.⁴⁷ The chasubles were then purchased with the funds of Bishop of Đakovo Josip Juraj Strossmayer (Osijek, 1815-Đakovo, 1905) and were restored in Rome. Today, three quite large fragments featuring precious embroidery are owned by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and are housed in the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb.⁴⁸ These are, lesser-known but published, fragments of embroidery that were originally made as decorations for an altar frontal (fig. 8) and at least one other liturgical item, possibly a chasuble and/or a cope. In a more careful analysis, it is possible to determine that one of the several embroidered saints depicted beneath the Gothic arcades is St. Jacob (fig. 9). This depiction of the church's titular saint, where the fragments were housed in the 19th century, has not been identified up until now. Although modest, it nonetheless contributes valuably to the effort of establishing the original sacred

42 D. Ciković, 2017, 153-154; D. Ciković, I. Jazbec Tomaić, 2020, 254-255.

43 I. Jazbec Tomaić, 2018, 232-233; I. Jazbec Tomaić, D. Ciković, 2024, 134.

44 P. Strčić, 1998.

45 C. Guarnieri, 2006, 66.

46 V. Baradel, 2019, 72-73.

47 J. Ivoš, 2010, 44-46; Lj. Dulibić, I. Pasini Tržec, 2018, 138-139.

48 *Ibid.*



Fig. 6 Veglia Altar frontal, 1350-1360, Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Fig. 7 Dobrinj Altar frontal, detail, 1360-1370, Collection of Sacred Art of the Parish Church of St. Stephen, Dobrinj

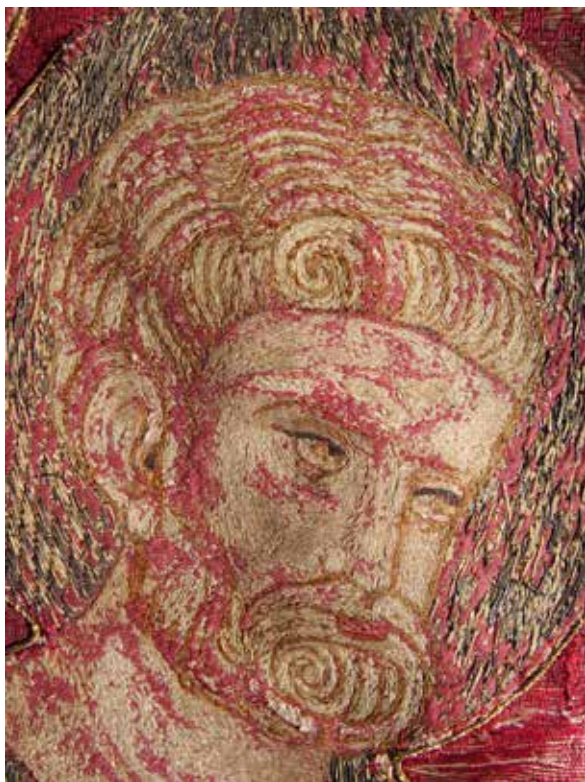


Fig. 8 Fragment of Grobnik Altar frontal, detail of St. Peter, 14th century, Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb



Fig. 9 Fragment of a chasuble or a cope, detail with St. Jacob, 14th century, Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb

space for which these luxurious liturgical items were commissioned in the 14th century. There is currently no reason to doubt that the fragments found in the parish church of St. Philip and Jacob in Grobnik were indeed originally commissioned for that same church.

The availability of luxurious silks to patrons from the eastern Adriatic coast during the late Middle Ages should certainly be viewed in the context of the growing silk production in Venice, particularly stimulated by the arrival of masters from Lucca in the early 14th century.⁴⁹ The significance of this economic sector for the city on the lagoon is evidenced by a detail from the last will of Doge Tommaso Mocenigo (Venice, 1343-1423). According to Mocenigo's will, drafted on March 10, 1423, at that time in Venice, there were "tessari da panni di seta tremile, da fustagni sedici mile".⁵⁰ For a more complete understanding and interpretation of this information, it's essential to know that the metropolis on the lagoon had approximately 100,000 inhabitants at that time.⁵¹ Therefore, the significance of silk production for the Venetian economy and society as a whole was unquestionably immense.

The exceptionally favourable geostrategic position, along with a strong financial base and relatively easy access to artworks, afforded the Counts of Krk a keen awareness of contemporary artistic trends. It has already been noted how crucial Senj – as the key port in the northern part of the eastern Adriatic – was in this regard. In Senj, the maritime trade route connecting Venice with Constantinople intersected with the overland route, the Roman *via magna* or *via regis*, connecting this maritime route to Hungary.⁵² The significance and, above all, the large number of travellers passing through the town is underscored by the fact that the matter of pilgrims' transit through the port was strictly regulated by a separate article in the Senj statute from 1388. According to Article 130, when pilgrims were traveling to Rome via Senj, the priority for boarding in the port was given first to the ships of nobles, followed by those of citizens, and then to foreign ships, with a preference for those from Ancona.⁵³ However, it is often overlooked that nearly all of the Hungarian-Croatian kings, along with their numerous entourages, passed through Senj at least once, as did many other members of European social elite, such as the papal legate Cardinal Gentile da Montefeltro (1308), Charles of Luxembourg (1337), who would become Holy Roman Emperor in 1355, and Erik VII, King of Denmark and Sweden (1425).⁵⁴ The numerous visits of rulers and high dignitaries to Senj during their travels might have influenced the tastes of the local social elite, making the role of these routes significant in this context as well. It is also known that the Counts of Krk were married to members of several noble families from the Apennine Peninsula, such as the Carrara, Gradenigo, Morosini, and Visconti families, and that they personally undertook pilgrimages – for example, Nikola IV traveled to Rome and

49 L. Molà, 1994, 25-30; I. del Punta, M. L. Rosati, 2017, 85, 229-230.

50 S. Romanin, 1855, 94.

51 According to: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1281705/venice-population-historical/> (28.09.2024)

52 A. Fara, 2007, 9, 21-22; S. Florence Fabijanec, 2007, 105-108; P. Strčić, 2007, 162; K. Prajda, 2012, 10-11; K. Kužić, 2017, 52-53.

53 "Item, quando romipete uadunt romam per ciuitatem Segnie, primo debent honerari nauigia nobilium; secundo ciuium; tercio forensium; uidelicet anchonitani primo." (e.g. L. Margetić, 2007, 61).

54 V. Štefanić, 1936, 50; S. Dokoza, 1998, 67-68; R. Kurelić, 2019, 539; D. Ciković, 2022, 370.

Jerusalem.⁵⁵ There is, therefore, no doubt that they had the financial means, access, and were simultaneously well-informed about contemporary trends in production centres, as well as at the courts of European rulers.

It is quite unlikely that we will ever know for certain who acquired the velvets preserved in the Trsat sanctuary at the beginning of the 15th century and for what purpose. However, on the basis of everything presented so far, it is possible to assume that the silks were originally acquired for members of the large family of Count Nikola IV or some of his closest vassals, and that in the following decades they were donated to the well-known Franciscan sanctuary and repurposed into liturgical garments. It is also quite possible that these expensive fabrics were not directly commissioned from a manufactory in the Apennines by a wealthy commissioner from the territory under the rule of the Counts of Krk. Instead, they may have reached this dynamic area through the mediation of merchants active along the Florence – Venice – Buda route. Examples of such merchants include Gianozzo di Giovanni Cavalcanti, one of the agents of the Medici of Venice and brother-in-law to Lorenzo di Giovanni de' Medici (Florence, 1395 – Florence, 1440), or Matteo di Stefano Scolari, an international merchant and brother of the Hungarian baron Pippo Scolari, who was a business partner of Tommaso di Domenico Borghini, a silk manufacturer.⁵⁶ To further substantiate this notion, a well-documented fact shows that in January 1426, Count Nikola IV, at the peak of his own and his family's power, was indebted to Pippo Scolari, with King Sigismund personally urging repayment of the debt in June of 1427. Interestingly, the aforementioned merchants Matteo Scolari and Gianozzo Cavalcanti, together with Filippo Frescobaldi, sold Tommaso's silk textiles to King Sigismund at almost exactly the same time (in 1425) leaving the king himself in their debt for 1,300 florins, in a situation not too different from that of his loyal subject and important ally, Count Nikola IV of Krk.⁵⁷

55 D. Ciković, 2022, 376-377.

56 K. Prajda, 2015; 2018, 104-108.

57 *Ibid.*

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