



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation in Medieval Studies
of

Ana Marinković

on

**The Birth and the Agents of an Episcopal Civic Cult:
St John of Trogir (12th-15th Century)**

will be held on

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in the

**Senate Room – Monument Building
Central European University (CEU)
Nádor u. 9, Budapest**

Examination Committee

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Abstract

The aim of the present thesis was to analyse the process of transformation of the cult of a local bishop into the cult of a civic patron saint, and to trace the strategies used in order to accomplish the civic appropriation of the cult. Such a transformation was the result of the separation of the secular civic authorities from the ecclesiastical ones – a process which was completed roughly in the thirteenth century in the Italian communes, and by the first half of the fourteenth in Dalmatia. The new civil, secular urban communities, having detached from the pre-communal civic patrons, that is, the Cathedral patrons, needed to establish a new civic pantheon on which they could rely in matters of heavenly intercession as well as symbolic self-representation. Those new cults were frequently built around local bishops, since they possessed of the civic quality of *indigenusness*, which made them especially suitable for the role of civic patrons.

The determinants used in the title, *civic* and *episcopal*, only partially and rather generally describe the complex set of features defining the cult of St John of Trogir. First of all, as argued in the introduction, the notions of *communal* and *civic*, though interchangeable in this context, do not cover the same semantic spectre, and although the thesis is dealing with the birth of the civic cult in general, its major part is focusing on the appropriation of the cult on the part of the communal institutions in particular. Further on, the notion *episcopal* is used here rather in the meaning 'of the local bishops', although the wider comparative material (Dalmatian, as well as Italian) include not only the local (frequently Early Christian) bishops, but other types of saints as well.

Finally, to the determinants important for the analysis of the birth of the Tragurian civic cult, the notion of *reformist* (as of Gregorian reform) should be added as well. The holy reformist bishops were receptive to civic veneration primarily since their episcopates and early cults coincided with the early stages of the city-communes, but there were also more complex motives for their frequent appropriation as city patrons, reflected in the reformist bishops' hagiographical *topoi* which eventually served as the basis for their civic appropriation. Those *topoi*, such as defence of the city, pacification of civic conflicts, or founding monasteries and building activity, while strongly tied to the reformist background, at the same time bear strong 'civic flavour'.

For example, the *topos* of the bishop as *defensor civitatis* is related to the actual political context of the conflict between the Papal State and Emperors, reflecting in the hagiographies of many Italian reformist bishops. The role of bishops as protectors of the city against the enemy's

attack was likely to provoke civic veneration, and the later follow-up of this conflict will be reflected in the appropriation of certain civic cults by either guelfs or ghibellines, sometimes causing the dichotomy of the civic devotion, as in Bologna for example.

Since no consequences of this conflict were visible in Dalmatian cities, and the role of the Emperor as the agent of construction of civic cults did not exist, the universal *topoi* of defence of the city or the related prophecy, and pacification of the internal civic struggles were taken over, and applied to the locally existing problems – conflicts with the supporters of the unreformed Church and the military attacks of various enemies. Thus, the germs of Dalmatian civic cults of reformist bishops lay in the local variants of the universal *topoi* of reformist episcopal hagiography, as well as in various levels of political and religious circumstances in which the cult developed. Among other features distinguishing the cult of St John from the other two Dalmatian reformist episcopal cults, those of St Gaudence and St Rainer, it was the papal confirmation of the Tragurian cult, pronounced in the context of papal efforts to solve the mentioned problems on the Eastern Adriatic, which added to the strength of the local cult. Thus, the reformist background of the Tragurian bishop's cult actually represents the prehistory of the civic cult, as it traces the germs on which the patronage of the city will be based.

The second part of the thesis covered two aspects of the secular authorities' appropriation of the cult of St John. The first is the strategies of appropriation on the part of the communal institutions, notably the city Council, which might be considered as the *internal* civic appropriation, and the second refers to the strategies used by the rulers of Trogir (Hungarian kings, Venetian doges) towards the local civic cult, that is, the *external* civic appropriation.

Both of the levels of governance focused mostly on the liturgical centre of the cult, that is, the holy bishop's relics, and their translations to ever new tombs and chapels. Thus, first of all, I have tried to round up the knowledge on the forms and the ritual use of the tombs of St John, and to identify the commissioners of each new phase of the tomb structure. Since the independent institution of *Operaria* was responsible for all the buildings in the Cathedral, neither the canons' chapter nor the Commune could be held directly responsible for the commissions of the arks and the chapels. However, certain features, such as the *comes'* throne as an integral part of the Gothic chapel's structure, or the *comes'* coat of arms marking the entrance to the Renaissance chapel, indicate the active role of the civic institutions and/or its officials in the conceiving of the patron's chapels.

The most important result of the reconstruction of the Gothic chapel and the new reading of several other sources is the discovery that the design of the ark and the chapel of St John served as the model for the ark and chapel of St Simeon in Zadar, commissioned by the Hungarian Queen Elisabeth. Moreover, not only that it represented an important link in development of Dalmatian shrines, but the design of the Tragurian ark, provenient from the Venetian tradition, stands as an early example of the full-figure effigy on a holy person's tomb in general.

The main analytical chapter dealing with the instances of communal appropriation is possibly representing most clearly the methodological approach used in the analytical parts of the thesis, that is, the treatment of each mention of the Saint, in any form of votive act or offering, as an instance of appropriation. Therefore, the first step was to identify the agent or commissioner of every such instance, and then to put those instances in a meaningful sequence. Thus, I have analysed the following means of the civic appropriation of the cult: the invocations in the official documents, which has shown both the transformation of the ecclesiastical and private devotion into the official civic devotion towards St John, as well as his taking place of St Lawrence, the previous civic patron; the final institutionalisation of the cult through the Statute regulations, the civic insignia, and the public use of the relics, as well as the reflection of the official status of both civic cults (the old and the new) in the hagiotopeographical strategy of marking the communal territory with the churches dedicated to the patron saints.

However, up to the fifteenth century, the roles and scopes of the communal patron and the Cathedral patron, as the new and the old civic protectors, were difficult to distinguish. Not only in the hagiotopeographical demarcation, but also in invocations and Statute regulations, and certain official iconographic solutions (such as the relief in the public *loggia*), St John and St Lawrence appear on equal terms. Thus, I have tried to delineate chronologically and thematically the contexts in which St John appeared independently, as well as those where he did not accompany St Lawrence. The latter concerns the fact that St John never assumed the official patronage of the Cathedral, whereas the former contexts turned out to be primarily related either to ceremonies related to St John's relics, or the visual representation on the civic insignia, or the institutionalised public devotion through the activities of the confraternity.

The public devotion was not included in the analytical scope of the thesis, seen that the central problem were the official aspects of the cult. However, the confraternity as an institutionalised form of both public and private devotion played an important role in the system

of civic religion, interacting directly with the communal institutions regarding the matters of the patron's cult, as well as introducing new elements of civic self-representation (such as the new iconography of the patron saint holding the model of the city).

The synthetical chapter concluding the analysis of the first phase of civic appropriation, that is, of the process through which the communal institution assumed the control over the cult of the holy Bishop, took into consideration the comparative features – similarities and differences – of two other typologically congruent Dalmatian cults, those of the reformist bishops of Osor and Split. The comparison has shown that the civic elements in the hagiographies played considerable role in this process, but the particular local constellations of ecclesiastical and political circumstances were of the decisive significance.

The second phase of civic appropriation regards the attitude of the external rulers, that is, Hungarian kings and Venetian doges, towards the local patron's cult. The analysis of all the available instances of the rulers' references to the cult of St John, brought forward two patterns of the ruler's management of devotion to the city patron: firstly, the administrative interventions on the part of the Venetian Doge, visible as early as the first Venetian rule in the mediated regulations brought by the Council lead by the Venetian *comes*, but in the fifteenth century represented by the direct orders (ducals) regarding the role of the civic officials in the cultic activities. The second pattern regards the Hungarian kings of the Angevin dynasty who used a different strategy of using strong symbolic gestures, such as the crowning of the reliquaries of Dalmatian civic patrons. However, unlike the Venetian government that payed special attention to the civic cult of Trogir, the Angevin rulers were mostly focused on Zadar as the capital of Dalmatia, and the introduction of the new Jadertine civic cult of St Simeon the Elder, whereas the cult of St John remained in the backplane.

Maybe somewhat surprisingly, since the early Tragurian hagiography had defined Venice as the major civic Enemy, the period of the Venetian rule in Trogir did not witness any attempt of suppressing the cult of St John. On the contrary, it instigated the development of all of its institutional aspects, while at the same time introducing the cult of St Mark in a very limited form. Here I should mention the hagiographical manuscript collection of Venetian origin, containing the earliest known copy of St John's *Vita*, dated plausibly to the mid-fifteenth century, and reflecting the inclusion of the Tragurian patron in the wider Venetian civic pantheon.

However, the Venetian strategies were not always met with compliance in Trogir, and there were, moreover, discordances between the Church and the Commune as to the role and the features of the civic cult. Each of the involved parties had its own agenda, and the motives for controlling the cult have been scrutinised on the example of the dispute over the translation of the date of the feast.

The last part of the thesis is a case-study on the most prominent episode from the Tragurian bishop's hagiography, namely, the *furtum* of St John's arm relic on the part of the Venetian army, and its eventual miraculous return. This episode, assumed as the utmost act of the saintly patronage of Trogir, became the basis of the civic visual self-representation (the insignia), that is, the central narrative of civic devotion. This narrative is of interest not only because it shaped the symbolic civic identity of Trogir, but also because it shaped the image of Venice, which paradoxically played both the roles of the Ruler identifying with the local cult, as well as the Enemy, 'othered' by the local hagiography. The development of this episode in the long run, from its writing down in 1203 until its transformations in the writings of the seventeenth-century Venetian authors, show how St John's cult reflected the changing political context of the city he protected.

All the analysed instances of the civic appropriation of the cult show that, although the pre-communal civic patron of Trogir, St Lawrence, remained present in the civic pantheon in a very high position, often paired with St John, the role of the communal patron in the strictest sense was reserved for the cult of the local bishop. The fact that his relics never physically left the ecclesiastical environment (not even in the case when a chapel, built purposely for housing the relics of the civic patron, was commissioned by the Commune) is only reflecting the generally observed fact that the communal, civil, government was rather in search of sacralising its own existence and practice, than of secularising the cults of civic patrons. In Augustine Thompson's words:

The growing division of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions paradoxically led the commune to cultivate an ever more sacred ethos for itself. As bishops became less visible in government and cities constructed their own public buildings, the commune ceased to share the holy aura of the Mother Church. 'Secularized' communes needed their own divine legitimacy. They sought it in heaven, invoking the protection of new patron saints, and on earth, saturating their laws, assemblies, and communal institutions with sacred rhetoric, symbolism, and ritual.¹

¹ Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of Italian Communes 1125-1325* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 107-108.

Curriculum vitae

Born in 1972 in Zagreb. 1989-1999 worked as a journalist, art critic and cultural programme editor at the "Radio 101" (Zagreb). 1997-1999 member of the editorial board of the "Biblioteka Psefizma" at the Croatian Architects' Association.

Graduated art history and ethnology from the University of Zagreb in 2000. In 2001 defended the MA thesis entitled "The Royal Chapel of King Coloman in the Monastery of St Mary in Zadar" at the Medieval Studies Department at the CEU (supervisors Jozsef Laszlovszky and Neven Budak). The same year entered the doctoral programme in medieval studies at CEU.

In the period 2002-2004 conducted the research in the Vatican Secret Archives for the project "Centre and Periphery: The Papal Penitentiary Registers and Central-Eastern Europe" (head of the project Gerhard Jaritz). In 2003 received doctoral research grant from the CEU for research in Rome, affiliated to Università di Roma Tre, Department of History, Geography and Anthropology.

Actual president of the Croatian Hagiography Society "Hagiotheca."

Since 2007 holds the position of a teaching assistant at the Art History Department, University of Zagreb, and research assistant on the project "Figural Art in Dalmatia in the Late Middle Ages" (head of the project Igor Fisković).

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