



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation of

INES IVIĆ

on

**THE BIRTH OF A NATIONAL SAINT: THE CULT OF SAINT JEROME IN LATE
MEDIEVAL DALMATIA**

will be held on
Monday, 31 August 2020, at 11:00

online
Central European University (CEU)

Examination committee

Chair: László Kontler (Department of History, CEU)

Members: Gábor Klaniczay, supervisor (Department of Medieval Studies, CEU)

Béla Zsolt Szakács (Department of Medieval Studies, CEU)

György Endre Szőnyi (Department of Medieval Studies, CEU)

External readers:

Daniel Russo (University of Burgundy)

Jasenska Gudelj, (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection on the CEU e-learning site.
Should you wish to access it and or attend the defense online, please contact Csilla Dobos (dobos@ceu.edu)

Summary

In this dissertation, I study the veneration of Saint Jerome (c.345–420), a Church Father, in the Eastern Adriatic Coast during the Late Middle Ages, with the focus on the veneration in the Dalmatian communes during the fifteenth century. There, the saint gained great prominence around the middle of the fifteenth century when he started to be celebrated as a patron saint of Dalmatia, and when his image became ubiquitous in the main urban centers of the region. His feast day started to be celebrated officially in Dubrovnik (1445) and Trogir (1455). The “heavenly lineage” between Dalmatians and Jerome was also expressed in the monumental reliefs representing the saint, executed in Šibenik (1465–1468) and Trogir (1467). The main reason for such strong appropriation of the saint lies in the belief that Stridon, Jerome’s birthplace—once was on the border of the ancient provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia—was on the territory of Dalmatia. From the end of the fifteenth century, with the emergence of the proto-national ideas in the patriotic narratives of the Dalmatian and Croatian humanists, Jerome has been elevated to the rank of a national saint, expressed in the visual and the literary production, such as in Georgius Sisgoreus’ *De situ Illiriae et civitate Sibenici* (1487) or Vinko Pribojević’s *De origine successibusque Slavorum* (1532), and the monumental fresco decoration in the Roman church *San Girolamo degli Illyrici* executed in the sixteenth century.

However, unlike other national saints, Jerome’s position was a bit unusual. He is a national saint without a state. The period of the fifteenth century when his cult started to spread in Dalmatia and beyond, has been particularly turbulent. From the one side, it is one of the culturally and artistically most productive periods of the Croatian history, on the other side, in the political terms, it was a breaking point for the subsequent history of Croatian lands, with the incorporation of Dalmatia in the Venetian Republic in 1420, and the direct Ottoman threat after the fall of the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1463. Between the intellectual progress and the direct threat to the existence of the Croatian Kingdom, an integral part of the Kingdom of Hungary, the first ideas of the common ethnic or proto-national belonging started to emerge within the Dalmatian-Croatian *republic of letters*, where the saint was appropriated as Dalmatian, Croatian, Illyrian or Slav.

Although the role of Saint Jerome as a national saint during the Early Modern Period has been largely discussed in the scholarship, the evident gap on the beginnings of veneration and the development of the regional particularities of the cult has been noted. For that reason, this study has focused on the implementation of the cult of Saint Jerome in the urban centers as the focal points of changes, supported by the urban intellectual elites, clerical and humanist, in the process of the adoption of the Italian manifestations of the cult, but also by its subsequent adaptation to reflect Jerome’s prominent position among those who considered him a compatriot.

Unlike the previous scholarship which gave precedence to the Glagolitic tradition, which from the thirteenth century nurtured special devotion to Jerome due to the belief in his alleged invention of the Glagolitic letters and the translation of the Bible into the Slavonic language, this thesis identifies the humanist appropriation as the main transformative force of Jerome's cult in Dalmatia. Due to the general popularity of the saint in the period, Italian manifestations of the cult—devotional literature and the particular iconographic types—have been adopted and subsequently adapted to reflect Jerome's Dalmatian origin. By focusing on the visual sources as the historical evidence of the period in which they were made, this thesis opens a window in the different segments of the society which saw Jerome as their special saintly advocate, portraying the cultural, devotional and political atmosphere in which formation of Jerome as Dalmatian happens. This thesis presents different traditions of veneration, which have developed out of the belief that saint's birthplace was somewhere on the territory of Dalmatia, already mentioned Glagolitic tradition, the veneration in the Franciscan province of Dalmatia whose patron Jerome was since 1393, and the humanist one.

The initial assessment of the thesis has directed the research into exploring how these three traditions intertwined and contributed to the formation of Jerome as Dalmatian and as a national saint of Dalmatians or Croats, Slavs or Illyrians, depending on the denomination expressed in the sources. However, the analysis of the visual and written sources, together with different expressions of devotion to the saint, private and public ones have shown that regardless of initially being driven by the natural progress of adoption which came out from the close cultural and ecclesiastical connections between the two coasts of the Adriatic Sea, Jerome's transformation was not straightforward and centralized, but involved and polycentric. Different factors influenced the transformation of the cult and different actors promoted it— from educated individuals, humanist circles, and communal governments to migrant communities, cathedral chapters, local bishops, and even the Roman Curia. The complex process of transformation of Jerome's image of a Church father into a Dalmatian has occurred in three phases— adoption, adaptation and confirmation—and it reflects different progressive aspects of the society in which it happens from intellectual, devotional and more importantly cultural ones. Due to the ramifications of the cult, the reach of the cultural environment in which it takes place, and the involvement of the bearers of regional renaissance cultural production, higher social strata—humanist nobles and church dignitaries— the transformation of the renaissance cult of Saint Jerome into regional and national saint can be characterized as the most significant undertaking of the Croatian Renaissance.

Although this thesis is focused on the adoption of the Italian manifestations of the cult and its subsequent adaptation, it was necessary to present the other parallel traditions which have nurtured devotion to Jerome, based on the belief he was born in Dalmatia. The *Chapter 2*, thus presents the only segment of Jerome's cult in medieval Dalmatia and Croatia that has been researched so far. In it, I reviewed the

reasons for the veneration of Jerome among the monastic communities, who praised the saint as the inventor of the Glagolitic script and examined the historical circumstances which led to the formation of this myth. I have focused only on those aspects necessary for understanding the adoption of the myth of Jerome's being the inventor of Glagolitic letters into the literary narrative of national history by Dalmatian humanists in the sixteenth century. However, I am bringing new conclusions on the perception of the Glagolitic letters as a miraculous intervention, and with that, the possibility of Glagolitic written liturgical production being perceived as a secondary relic of the saint. Importantly, by presenting the liturgical sources of Glagolitic provenance, I have argued and concluded that they do not attest to the existence of Glagolitic tradition in the urban centers of Dalmatia, as they do in medieval Croatia.

The chapter 3 *The Patron of the Franciscan Province of Dalmatia*, explores the adoption of Jerome in this role from the end of the fourteenth century. Due to the many under-researched segments of Franciscan activities, especially those concerning the implementation of the Observant reform whose rise is parallel to the rise of Jerome's cult in Dalmatia, I have focused only on the artistic production of Franciscan provenance presenting the saint, questioning whether Jerome's role as the patron saint of the province has resulted in the formation of the specific iconography of the saint. Through the comparative analysis with the Italian production of Franciscan provenance, I have concluded that the iconographic type "Saint Jerome as a cardinal" with or without a model of the church in his hand, does not represent regional particularity as it was often perceived. Furthermore, I have positioned Jerome in the broader context of Franciscan veneration, drawing the typology between Saint Francis and Saint Jerome, underlining the importance of the Franciscan adoption for the general development of the cult.

The fourth chapter *Jerome Between Humanism and Private Devotion* observes the manifestations of private devotion to the saint in Italy, mainly Florence and Venice, in their social, religious, and cultural context, in order to establish the pattern of devotional practices. Such elaboration is necessary to understand the contemporary practices of Dalmatian humanists as a reflection of the growing popularity of the saint among their counterparts in the Apennine peninsula, adopted through the spread of humanism and the Renaissance. Although it summarizes most of the already discussed segments of Jerome's cult, it brings a new perspective on the personal devotion to the saint and his image in the popular piety, pointing out the under-researched aspects of Jerome's veneration in Italy.

The fifth chapter *The Adoption of the Renaissance Cult in Dalmatia* analyses the visual manifestations of the cult in Dalmatia where they are presented as commodities of exchange between the two coasts of the Adriatic Sea that have spread with the development and expansion of humanism and the Renaissance. This is demonstrated by presenting the early adoption of the cult, already at the end of the fourteenth century among the Zadar merchant elite, and focusing on the numerous renaissance artworks in Trogir, "the cradle" of the renaissance devotion to the saint in Dalmatia, mainly executed by Niccolò Fiorentino

and his workshop. Through an analysis of the iconography, their original location, commissioners and the reasons beyond the commission, and its positioning in the overall artistic production of Jerome's cult at the period, I discussed that not every artistic representation of Jerome in Dalmatia should be considered only as the expression of his privileged status among his compatriots.

Even though such ideas could be contained in them, the initial framework through which they should be analyzed is one of the civic cult and the private devotion of the individuals. This chapter positioned the Dalmatian production within the context of the Italian Renaissance, bringing valuable conclusions on the circulation of the artistic motifs and the styles, and sets the foundation for understanding the particularities of veneration in Dalmatia, pointing out the presence of Niccolò Fiorentino in Trogir, as one of the main actors in the adoption of the visual manifestations of the cult, equivalent to those in Italy.

Chapter six, *The Institutionalization of Jerome's Cult*, presented the first step in the formation of Jerome's image as a Dalmatian, through the inclusion of his feast day in the official communal calendars in Trogir, Dubrovnik and possibly Šibenik, whereby the civic cult received its public expression. Furthermore, it outlined the existence of the ecclesiastical network of the Dalmatian bishopric seats as the polycentric impulses promoting the cult. The promotion that was correlated with the appointment of several bishops by Pope Nicholas V who granted permission to the *Schiavoni* members in Rome to found a national church of Saint Jerome in the Eternal city in 1453. Additionally, the chapter looked at the example of the confraternity in Venice, where Jerome's cult started to develop among members from 1463, pointing out the connections between it and the Zadar cathedral chapter and exploring the manners of communication within the mentioned network of institutions and their contribution to the establishment and the promotion of Jerome's image as a Dalmatian.

The seventh chapter *The Visual Formation of Jerome as a Dalmatian* focuses on the transformation of Jerome's public image in the examples of the reliefs in Trogir and Šibenik, marking their execution as the turning point in the perception of the saint in Dalmatia. The chapter offers a detailed iconographic analysis placing these two compositions within the renaissance production of Jerome's image. Special attention is put on the relief of Trogir, due to its unique composition and iconography, proposing it as the invention of the Trogir humanist circle led by Coriolano Cippico and bishop Jacopo Turlon, based on an adaptation of examples of private piety in Venice. I have proposed that the iconographic reading of the relief is based on the apotropaic Psalm 90 where the protective features of the psalm were translated into Jerome's image as a primary heavenly protector. In this chapter, I have offered a different methodological approach to the Dalmatian renaissance production, observing the artistic production beyond its stylistic features, opening the questions beyond the iconography, which can be read embedded in the visual representation. I have emphasized the importance of the unstable historical context in which such commissions happen, that of the anticipation of the Ottoman conquest which has made the people

living in the Eastern Adriatic Coast to turn to the heavenly aid asking for the protection and the intercession of the saint in the unstable period, when the Dalmatian communes were already weakened due to the several plague outburst during the period of 1460s.

The last chapter, *From Sainthood to Myth: Jerome in the Humanist Literary Production* observes the humanist written production of Dalmatian provenance in three main genres: devotional literature, national history, and polemical essays on his origin. In this chapter, I have argued that by the end of the fifteenth century, Jerome's image as Dalmatian has been undoubtedly accepted by those who consider him a compatriot, seen in the polemical essay on Jerome's origin by Marko Marulić, and discussion on a matter present in the works by Georgius Sisgoreus, Vinko Pribojević and others who felt an obligation to defend Jerome from any possible, primary Italian appropriation. By analyzing the original Dalmatian devotional literature composed in the Croatian vernacular language I have presented that by the end of the century, together with the imported Italian devotional literature, the local humanist circles have produced the original devotional material to the saint by the adoption and translation of Italian works, like it was with the *Florentine* and *Trogir life of Saint Jerome*, or the unique devotional poem *Angelic Virtues*. Furthermore, I have questioned the correlation between the humanist and the Glagolitic tradition, and the way the Glagolitic myth has been used in defense of Jerome's Dalmatian origin, concluding that the reason why Jerome was promoted to the rank of national saint did not lie in the alleged invention of the Glagolitic letters, but in his saintly image of a Church Father and a theologian who has done so many important things for the Church, and was known to the whole Christian world, as it was emphasized several times in the sources.

Curriculum Vitae

Education

- 2016– PhD in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
- 2015–2016 MA in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
- 2012–2015 MA in Art History, Portuguese Language and Literature, University of Zagreb, Croatia
- 2009–2012 BA in Art History, Portuguese Language and Literature, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Awards, grants and scholarships

- 2020 Academic achievement award for advanced doctoral students, Central European University, Budapest
- 2018 ERASMUS+ study mobility, Ca Foscari University of Venice, Venice
- 2018 Stipend for mastering Italian language, Italian Institute of Culture, Zagreb - Istituto Italiano di Cultura Zagabria
- 2016 Best thesis award, Center for Religious studies, Central European University, Budapest
- 2015 "Radovan Ivančević" award for best thesis, Croatian Society of Art Historians, Zagreb

Conference papers relevant to the dissertation

- 2019 Colloquia Mediaevalia Croatica III. National ideas and ethnic loyalties in Renaissance Croatia (Zagreb, February 24, 2017), Jeronim Dalmatinac: etničko prisvajanje svetog Jeronima u izvorima 15. i ranog 16. stoljeća
- 2017 Visualising past in a Foreign Country: Schiavoni (Zagreb ,30-31 May 2017), Visual and literal formation of Saint Jerome as the national saint in the Eastern Adriatic Coast in the Late Middle Ages
- 2017 The Saints of Rome (Rome, 4-6 October 2017), Jerome as a Roman Saint: The Translation of His Relics and the Construction of His Cult in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore
- 2018 XII.Letteratura, arte,cultura tra le due sponde dell'Adriatico (Zadar, 25-27 October, 2018), Saint Jerome between the two Coasts of the Adriatic Sea
- 2018 Warwick in Venice Annual Conference (Venice,27 November 2018), Following St.Jerome between Venice and Dalmatia
- 2019 Cantieri dell'Agiografia (Rome,16-18 January 2019), "Recubo praesepis ad antrum": Reviving the cult of Saint Jerome in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome at the end of the 13th century

- 2019 29. Marulićevi dani (Split, 25-27 April 2019), Saint Jerome and Coriolanus Cippico–Possible Textual Prototypes for the Development of the Cult in Trogir
- 2019 Fourth medieval workshop (Rijeka, 30–31 May 2019), Reading of the Sculpture: Renaissance Intertwining of Textual Models and Artistic Representations on the Example of the Relief of Saint Jerome in Trogir
- 2019 Hieronymus noster, Ljubljana (Slovenia), October 23rd–26th, 2019), From private to popular devotion: The humanist formation of the cult of Saint Jerome as the national saint in the 15th-century Dalmatia
- 2020 Cantieri dell'Agiografia - IV Edizione (Roma 21-23 gennaio 2020), A stone or a book? Transformation of the iconographic type „Saint Jerome in the Wilderness“ in Renaissance Trogir
- 2020 (postponed) Croatian Culture and Saint Jerome (Zagreb, 21-22 April, 2020), Development and formation of the iconography of Saint Jerome in the Eastern Adriatic Coast during the Late Middle Ages
- 2020 (postponed) Iconography and Hagiography Visualizing Holiness (Rijeka, 28-29 May 2020), Multifunctional Saint: Text and Image in Transmission of Holiness of Saint Jerome

Selected publications	
------------------------------	--

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 2016 | Jerome comes Home: The Cult of Saint Jerome in Late Medieval Dalmatia. <i>Hungarian Historical Review</i> 5 (2016): 618-644. |
| 2017 | Ille meus est et ego suus The appropriation of Saint Jerome in the writings of Dalmatian humanists. "Annual of Medieval Studies 23 (2017): 77-90. |
| 2018 | The “Making” of a National Saint: Reflections on the Formation of the Cult of Saint Jerome in the Eastern Adriatic, <i>Il Capitale Culturale, Supplementi</i> 7 (2018), 247-278 |
| 2020 | «Recubo praesepis ad antrum»: The Cult of Saint Jerome in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome at the End of the 13th Century, <i>Il Capitale Culturale</i> 21 (2020), 87-119. |
| Forthcoming | Circulation of Vita et Transitus Sancti Hieronymi along the Eastern Adriatic Coast in the Late Middle Ages, Unity and dialogue, |
| Forthcoming | Development and formation of the iconography of Saint Jerome in the Eastern Adriatic Coast during the Late Middle Ages, <i>Proceedings of Croatian Culture and Saint Jerome (Zagreb, 21-22 April, 2020)</i> . |