

GOTHIC CRUCIFIX FROM THE ISLAND OF VISOVAC

Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to indicate an under-researched subject of our artistic heritage. It is a Gothic crucifix, the oldest, from the Museum Collection of the Franciscan monastery on Visovac. The article describes in detail processional, patrol crucifix of gilded silver plate and then, using analogies, associated with several similar crucifixes in Šibenik and Zadar area from the 14th century, especially those on Pašman, Dugi Otok, Sukošan, Olib...*

The arms of the cross terminate with trefoils, Gothic trilobites. Christ's crucified body is disproportionate: the body is increased so gaunt ribs come to the fore. Above Christ is - in the top medallion - St. Michael's relief. Symbols of the Evangelists: the winged lion, the angel and the eagle are the rough surface. The central part & the revers shows the figure of the Virgin and Child. In the top medallion winged bull is located - a symbol of the Evangelist Luke, and the other one showing a medallion of Adam out of the grave. It is evident that the relief obverse spread out and better executed than relief reverses. It is assumed that described Gothic crucifix from the 14th century is made by a local craftsman.

Key words: *cultural heritage, processional crucifix, a description of the silver gothic crucifix, a local craftsman from 14th century, monastery Visovac*

The topic of this paper is a gothic crucifix from the Museum Collection of the Franciscan Island of Visovac. The crucifix is a valuable inventory of Croatian sculptural heritage, which has not, unfortunately, until now been seriously studied. There have only been several references to Visovac crucifix.¹ The librarian of the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Redeemer and the head of the Museum Collection of the Franciscan Island of Visovac has also pointed to the lack of research into this subject and ex-

¹ It is mentioned in a few sentences by Radoslav Tomić in his *Visovac Monograph (Monografija Visovca)*, additional data can be found in the tourist guide *Visovac* written by Josip Ante Soldo, and in the catalogue of the exhibit *Dalmatinska zagora – The Land Unknown* compiled by Zoraida Demori-Staničić.

pressed the need for it.² There are many more artefacts and preserved cultural heritage inventories of different properties that share similar fate and have still not received the attention which they deserve in research papers. Relative unavailability or geographic remoteness of this rarity must have contributed to the noted lack of research and written references. There are other artefacts of great value, impressive history and interesting underlying stories in this collection, as well as many others, which share this fate.³ The purpose of this paper is to shed some light on the history of a valuable, yet so far neglected, artefact of regional goldsmithery. This gold artefact is specific because it had a practical role in major Church holiday celebrations, burial processions and similar occasions. Meeting both the practical and aesthetic standards of the gothic style, the crucifix from the island of Visovac is an artefact deserving of research and admiration, just like many other still unacknowledged artefacts in the region.

1. The History of the Franciscan Monastery on Visovac

Visovac is an islet in the downstream of the river Krka within the Krka National Park in the Šibenik-Knin County (Picture 1). The first written record of Visovac appears in a charter issued by King Louis I the Great of Anjou, dated 16 April 1345.⁴ The charter issued in Višegrad confirms that the town of Rog and the islet of Visovac were land possessions of Budislav Ugrinić, who was a count of the House of Šubić. As already mentioned, Budislav Ugrinić became a supporter of the Nelipčić family, which in 1335/1336 ignited a dispute with Mladen II of Bribir, his brothers, and his uncles Paul II and George (Karbić, 2008:136). The agreement was signed in April 1337 and the last blow from Bud-

² The librarian in office of the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Redeemer is friar Petar Đukić, and the head of the Museum Collection of the Franciscan Island of Visovac is friar Stojan Damjanović, whom I would like to thank for his help and for providing me access to the crucifix. Also, I would like to thank the late professor Marijana Kovačević, PhD, for her help, friar Šime Samac for reading and supplementing this paper, and above all, my mentor, Ivana Tomas, PhD.

³ It was a pleasant surprise to discover that the library in Visovac keeps three incunabula with the most prominent being the *Aesop's Fables* (*Aesopi fabulae, Brixiae, Boninus de Boninis de Ragusia, MCCCCLXXXVI*) printed and illustrated by Dobriša (Dobre) Dobričević, a local printer born on the island of Lastovo.

⁴ King Louis I the Great approved land possessions of Budislav Ugrinić and allowed him to take over his cousin Ivan Jurjev's lands of. For more details see: [N. Karbić, 2008:143, N. Klaić, 1976:599 – 601 and V. Klaić, 1974:97]

islav to his family was struck when Budislav declared loyalty to King Louis I the Great, while others supported the Venetians.⁵ In the aforementioned charter from 1345 King Louis I forgave Budislav his disloyalty and thus reapproved his possessions (N. Klaić, 1976:599 – 601). What followed was a period of allegiance of the Croatian region to the Hungarian king and a period of frequent conflicts between the king and the Venetians, especially over Zadar (N. Klaić, 1976:610 – 625). The Ugrinić family, a fraction of the House of Šubić, were descendants of Grgur, Bogdanac's grandson.⁶ Bogdanac was the first zhupan of Bribir and during his life (in 1222) the first conflict (between Grgur and Višen) within family took place.⁷ Another record of the Ugrinić family states that Butko and Grgur, George Ugrinić's sons, shared a manor house with Katarina Banić near Bribir city walls.⁸

At the time, the inhabitants of Visovac were the Augustinians, who were active in the region in 14th century.⁹ The hermits of Saint Augustine, who were under the patronage of Croatian noblemen (magnates), arrived and built a small monastery and a church dedicated to St. Paul (Soldo, 1968:6). They also held a small estate in Remetić, on the right side of Visovac. Around 1440, they fled Visovac fearing the Ottoman invasion and, as oral tradition has it, they settled on one of the uninhabited islands near Korčula (Soldo, 1968:6). Franciscans came to the islet in 1445, but they

⁵ Conflicts between the Venetians and the locals were very frequent as were the conflicts between the Venetians and the King Louis I the Great in the later period. [V. Klaić, 1974: 97]

⁶ The village of Pećani was mentioned as a possession of Nikola Ugrinić, descendant of Grgur, a grandson of Bogdanac. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 219]

⁷ Bogdanac, the first zhupan of Bribir is important since the interrupted genealogy line starts with him. He also performed other duties which were the prerogative of the noblemen, which corroborates his noble stature. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 196]

⁸ The manor house walls were located at the northeast, by the town walls, meaning that the location of the house was probably in the north part of Bribirska Glavica along the northeast town walls. There has still not been any archaeological research in the north part of Bribirska Glavica, so it can only be speculated on the position, timeframe and the layout of the manor house. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 205]

⁹ Soldo, 1968:6. The former Augustinian monastery was built in the year 1315 as well as the still standing church of St. Jerome in Rijeka. For more details see: <http://fluminensia.org/tag/augustinski-samostan> In the opinion of friar Petar the Baptist Bačić, the first inhabitants of Visovac were the Paulines which is why the name of the monastery was the Monastery of St. Paul. This is recorded in *The History of the Franciscan Monastery on Visovac (Croatian: Povijest franjevačkog manastira na Visovcu)*, the manuscript that can be found in the archive on Visovac.

were raided several times by the Ottoman soldiers.¹⁰ In 1496, Pope Paul II called upon the bishops to renovate the destroyed monastery and to donate books, chalices and clothes.¹¹ This information might be relevant to the topic of this paper – 14th century processional crucifix from Visovac.

2. Description and the development of monastery complex

The gothic crucifix is the oldest artefact from the museum collection of Visovac. Other “contemporaries” of the crucifix include the remnants of the hermits’ cluster – water well rim and the pillars with the arches (Picture 2) (Soldo, 1968:20). Cadastral maps from the 19th century show that the first monastery had a square ground plan, which confirmed the authenticity of the eastern and the northern wall, while the western wall was probably at the same position as the present wall (Živković, 1997: 345). The position of the southern wall can only be speculated on, although the position of the old wall in the basement indicates that the southern wing might have been a bit wider than the rest because it comprised the dining room that is found there (Živković, 1997:345). Only one room of unclear original function has been preserved of the old hermits’ monastery, and it is today used as a sacristy.¹² Records by Paul Pelizer from Rovinj show that the Franciscans first built a gothic church that was extended at a later date.¹³ The Franciscans came to the islet of Visovac in 1445, and in 1568 they established the monastery that is today called the Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy. Additional works on the monastery and upgrades were done at the end of the 17th century, and even more intensively in the 18th century.¹⁴

¹⁰ Very soon Franciscans became active in the neighbourhood but the material losses they suffered from Turkish troops were simply too devastating. [Soldo, 1968:6]

¹¹ The monastery of Visovac is mentioned by the Franciscan historian Gonzaga, and in 1506 it was referred to as the as “Monastery of St. Paul” and listed as one of the monasteries of Cetina Custody in the Bosna Srebrna Province. [Soldo, 1968:6]

¹² It was speculated that the present sacristy was a chapel of the original monastery but this has never been confirmed. It is more likely that the sacristy was a capitular hall, taking into consideration the relatively low and shallow barrel ceilings. [Živković, 1997:343, 348]

¹³ Paul from Rovinj described the first Franciscan church as moderately nice and simply painted while emphasising choir seat with conspicuously tasteful small pillars. Also, Paul from Rovinj commented on a noticeable disproportion of the monastery. [Soldo, 1968:22, 23]

¹⁴ In 1703 the monastery was upgraded by the building adjacent to the church. Around 1715, Stjepan Brakus from Tribunj built a new wing of the monastery that contained two floors. Around 1724 Pavao Nikolić built the entrance to the monastery which has been

In 1694, the church that the Franciscans found at the site was extended to the south and transformed into the present baroque church. A simple front facade, above three semi-circular steps, ascends along a modestly profiled door with an open tympanum holding a sculpture of St. Francis positioned above the door. In 1715 a new two-floor southern wing of the monastery was built (so-called *Brakusova fabrika (Brakus's Artwork)*, named after the guardian Stjepan Brakus). By 1741, another, eastern monastery wing was completed (so-called *babuša*, named after guardian Tomo Babić).¹⁵ The building located just opposite the church entrance, so-called *Babina kuća (Babić's House)*, was built in 1724 and it was used as a guest house for travellers, as well as a storage and laundry room (Živković, 1997: 347). The first bell tower was built in 1728 by Antun Nakić, but it soon started to deteriorate. The renovation started in 1789 and it was completed in 1802, when the guardian was Josip Babić. The bell tower is on the west side of the church and it has rusticated walls with small windows and a booth with double stone arches (Picture 3). In 1826, Andrija Mlinar built a new room above what is today the sacristy for the purposes of the novitiate (Živković, 1997: 348). The church has the longitudinal form closed with two apses, both containing an altar. The monastery got its present form in 1905 when the Franciscans built a new monastery with a spacious ground floor and the first floor¹⁶ Studies and upgrades carried out in 1988/1989 opened up the possibility that the original monastery had a bell tower, although it is more likely that the structure in question was a side of a polygonal apse of the old gothic church. Nevertheless, the possibility that the bell tower actually

preserved to the date. In the same year Pavao Nikolić also built so-called 'Babina kuća (Babić's House)' for guests. Around 1723 guardian Toma Babić commenced the construction of a new wing of the monastery that was supposed to have two floors. The wing was completed in 1741 which is witnessed by the inscription on the building and it is still referred to as 'Babića zgrada (Babić's Building)'. [Soldo, 1968:20]

¹⁵ 'Brakusova fabrika (Brakus's Artwork)' was the most significant piece of architecture constructed by the Franciscans on Visovac. This monastery wing, featured in old postcards, was built to the south of the present monastery and it was destroyed in 1905. The wing that was built by the guardian Toma Babić is almost completely preserved in the original condition and it comprises a stone building with the basement, ground floor, first floor and cells on both sides of the centrally located corridor. [Živković, 1997:347,348]

¹⁶ At that time, major demolitions of the monastery were planned, but *babuša*, two sides of the old cluster and the sacristy were preserved at the intervention of the Conservatory Office in Split (Frane Bulić). New monastery wings were completed in 1911, using the design of the architect Slade from Trogir. [Živković, 1997: 348]

existed has not been refuted.¹⁷ Studies and modification and renovation plans were done in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit the region in 1986. Furthermore, clues pointing to the possibility of the existence of two towers appeared, one under the north apse and one on the west side of the pediment of *babuša* (the monastery wing built in 1741).¹⁸ The museum space renovated in 1970s is located on the ground floor of the new western wing (Živković, 1997: 350). The facilities of the islet primarily attract worshippers and pilgrims during major summer religious holidays, as well as tourists that visit natural sights in the region.

3. Description of the crucifix

The processional crucifix from Visovac (Picture 4) is made of silver gilded sheet metal and it is used mounted on a staff using an attachment handle with an orb slightly concaved on the sides. It is assumed that it was designed by a local craftsman (Tomić, 1997:119). Due to its function, the dimensions of the processional crucifix are larger than the dimensions of the crucifixes used in the Eucharist ceremony.

The arms of the cross end in triplets, gothic trilobes, and the body of the cross is well developed with mirrored embossments that end in semi-circular fashion, creating a slightly hooked appearance of the cross. The front side and the back side are covered in tiny dots, which extend along the outer lines of the cross, including the embossments, creating the medallions holding the reliefs at the ends of the arms. Similar yet slightly larger articulation extends on both sides, from the upper medallion to the central reverse, i.e. the crucified Christ on the obverse.

3.1. The description of the front side

The crucified and tortured body of the Christ (Picture 5) emanates with great suffering and pain. The head, with an aureole of a different colour, is tilted to the right in exhaustion. The muscles on the arms are lean and the

¹⁷ While removing the mortar on the exterior part of the gothic chapel apse, a grout network, walled up openings and various types of stone were found. [Živković, 1997: 343-5]

¹⁸ These are the remnants of the painted mortar at the west side of the monastery wing and walled up, small, rusticated windows on the apse. It is assumed that the towers were built when a certain danger, as Turks which were the constant threat at that time, approached. In construction at the height of four meters and above the calcareous sinter was used. Calcareous sinter is a very strong and easily processed material, it dries fast and it was extracted in Roški Slap near Visovac. It is also assumed that the towers blended with the church body, after the inner walls were built in 1694, and thus dictated the construction of two apses. [Živković, 1997: 345-7]

rib cage is protruding. The body is disproportional. The trunk is oversized, accentuating the protrusion of the ribs. A sunken perizoma drops down to the knees, giving further prominence to the emaciation of the body. The face with downward-looking eyes turned to the right is relatively inexpressive, except for a mild and sad curve of the mouth. The legs are thin and lean and the feet are crossed and pinned down with nails. Typically, there is a relief of St. Michael above Christ in the upper medallion. The body of the saint is concaved, while only the edges of the shaped silhouette and the head are embossed. There is a thin circular line around the head that represents aureole. It is obvious that the wings were in the focus.

Thin lines and dots also shape the wings of the symbolic representation of evangelists in the medallions located laterally and above the Christ. The bodies of a winged lion, an angel and an eagle are shaped in the relief above the relief of St. Michael (Pictures 7, 8 and 9). They are placed on a rectangular background whose borders are marked by lines. Upon close examination, it can be noticed that the surface of the symbols of evangelists Mark, Matthew and John is not smooth. It appears that the roughness was intentional and that it serves the purpose of creating a more powerful visual impact and highlighting their separateness from the surface of the cross. The symbol that is placed below the Christ is shaped somewhat awkwardly, being compressed below the body of the Christ and forming a truncated gothic trilobe that leads to the handle with the orb.

3.2. The description of the back side

The iconographical content of the central back part of the crucifix depicts the Virgin and Child, a content frequently on the reverses of crucifixes (Picture 10) (Tomić, 1997:119).

The bodies have the shape of a spindle. It appears that the author wanted to shape them as small spindles with very little detail (Picture 11). A tiny aureole made of small dots can be seen above the head of the sitting person in the central medallion. In the upper medallion there is the symbol of the evangelist Luke, a winged bull (Picture 12). The cylindrically-shaped tail and wings reveal the same design used on the front side in the symbols of the other evangelists, with the only difference being the trunk that is spindle-shaped. Also, the horns are depicted above the embossed head and they are not depicted separately but as joined together.

The medallion on the left side features an embossed depiction of the Mystic Lamb (Agnus Dei) with tiny horns and a line above the body rep-

representing the flag that the Mystic Lamb carries (Picture 13). On the right side, there is an angel with a curved body line, clearly indicating that he is flying (Picture 14). It should be mentioned that more details were used in depicting this image than in depicting any other image on the reverse of the crucifix. The body is embossed with two or three lines that represent the clothes. Thin arms with fingers are raised with fairly recognizable forearms distinct from the body, while the area of the eyes on the face is concaved. As in the depiction of the Virgin, there is a dotted aureole above the head.

The lower medallion depicts Adam as he leaves the grave (Picture 15). Adam's shape is embossed and spindle-shaped, while his coffin is depicted with lines, adorned by small decorations on the front side. The vertical lines divide the surface of the coffin in three parts, all of which are decorated with small dots. The lines depict the three dimensions of the coffin, suggesting the depth of the space in which Adam is sitting. The difference in the design of the reliefs on the front side and the back side is obvious. It is possible that they were designed by two craftsmen or that the time for the design of the reverse was limited. It is also possible that the difference in the design was intentional.

Although the research had spawned some assumptions that the scene on the obverse actually depicts St. Anthony of Padua with the Infant Christ, since he is an important Franciscan saint. Also, his depiction on this small island is linked not only to the arrival of the Augustinians but also to the arrival of the Franciscans. However, an assumption with more arguments is the one that the obverse of the crucifix presents the *Salvation History* from the *Book of Revelation*. If we take a look at the *Book of Revelation*: "And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and [one] sat on the throne." (4, 2), we can interpret the reliefs on the crucifix in this sense: on the throne, therefore the front side of the crucifix, sits Jesus Christ while humanity is presented by the repentant sinner Adam, who leaves the grave.¹⁹ Furthermore, in the *Book of Revelation* it says: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." (12, 1) "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne." (12, 5), "stood a Lamb as it had been slain."²⁰ According to the literary

¹⁹ Online Bible source: http://www.discoverrevelation.com/Rev_4.html

²⁰ Online Bible source: http://www.discoverrevelation.com/Rev_12.html http://www.discoverrevelation.com/Rev_5.html

source of the *Salvation History* it is obvious that the images on the crucifix are images of the Lamb in the left medallion on the obverse and the *man child*, therefore the child like Christ in the central medallion on the obverse.

The relief on the obverse, as noted above, is more detailed and possibly even of better quality, while the relief on the reverse is only roughly designed and lacking in detail. The outlines of faces and persons are even slightly damaged, with plenty of space in the medallions left blank. However, there is a notable similarity in the design of the symbol of evangelist Luke and in the depiction of Adam's coffin.

4. Dating and origin

The cross from Visovac is mentioned in the *Visovac Monograph* (Croatian: *Visovačka monografija*) as "dated as belonging to the 14th century and bearing similarity to the group of 14- and 15-century gothic crucifixes from the Šibenik and Zadar region" (Tomić, 1997:119).

Despite the similarities, the crucifix from Visovac is in many ways unique. Some of its features can be found in few of the other crucifixes. Some of the examples include the crucifixes from the Parish Church of St. Mary on Pašman (late 14th century), the Parish Church of the Assumption of Mary in Sali and the Parish Church of John the Baptist in Žman, both on Dugi Otok (14th century), the Parish Church of St. Cassian in Sukošan (late 14th century) and the Church of St. Anastasia on the island of Olib (early 14th century).²¹

4.1. Linking the Visovac crucifix with other similar crucifixes

Iconographical content of the obverse is typically the corpus of the Christ, with Mary and John in the medallions on the sides, while the symbols of evangelists are found on the reverse (Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:24, 250). Another example of a crucifix with medallions on the front side that contain the symbols of evangelists is the processional crucifix from Pašman (14th century, picture 16).²² The picture of Adam leaving the grave is usually

²¹ Descriptions and data on all the crucifixes can be found in: Jakšić, Tomić, 2004. Goldsmithery of the Zadar Archdiocese was also studied by the Fellow of Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts Ivo Petricoli who wrote the books *From Donatus to Radovan: A Review of the Art in Dalmatia from 9th till 13th Century* (1990) Croatian: *Od Donata do Radovana : pregled umjetnosti u Dalmaciji od IX. do XIII. stoljeća*, (1990), *Zadar in the Middle Ages till 1409* (1976) (Croatian: *Zadar u srednjem vijeku do 1409. (1976)*, written in collaboration with Nada Klaić.

²² The processional cross from the Parish Church of St. Mary on Pašman was dated as belonging to the late 14th century and its dimensions are 60 x 31.5 cm. It is referred to as being the most elaborated piece from the Zadar region. [For more details see: Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:134, 135]

found on the obverse and not on the reverse as in this case.²³ The Virgin with the Child was only rarely, and only in the later periods, depicted on the reverse of crucifixes. That is why it is unusual that it was this picture that was placed centrally on the reverse instead of a picture of a patron saint (e.g. St. Anthony of Padua with the Infant Christ) or the symbols of evangelists, for instance.²⁴ The aforementioned mirrored embossments of the cross that end in a semi-circular fashion can also be found on the processional cross kept in Sali on Dugi Otok (14th century, picture 17), and an even more similar type of embossments is found on the processional cross from Sukošan (14th century, picture 19).²⁵

The crucifix has slightly hooked embossments similar to those found on the processional cross from Žman on Dugi Otok (14th century, picture 18) and on the already mentioned processional cross from Pašman (15th century).²⁶ Furthermore, with respect to the shape, the crucifix from Pašman is regarded to be “the most elaborated crucifix in the large group of crucifixes from the Zadar Archdiocese” (Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:135). The Pašman crucifix has the largest number of embossments, especially in the lower part of the cross, but the embossments of the crucifix from Visovac

²³ Adam leaving the grave is usually depicted in the lower medallion on the obverse, especially in the early 14th century. In the later gothic stages the skull may be included. [Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:25]

²⁴ The middle medallion of the reverse usually depicts the patron of the order, while in the later stages the Virgin with the Child is sometimes depicted instead. [Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:27, 29]

²⁵ The processional cross from the Parish Church of the Assumption of Mary in Sali on Dugi Otok dates from the 14th century and its dimensions are 55 x 23 cm. The cross is a typical gothic silhouette with the arms that end in triplets adorned by semi-circular embossments that run through the middle of the arm. The corpus of the Christ has distinctly wide hips and the knees are heavily bent to the right. [For more details see: Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:123, 124] The processional cross from the Parish Church of St. Cassian from Sukošan dates from the late 14th century and its dimensions are 60.5 x 31.5 cm. It also features distinctive embossments on a typical gothic silhouette as well as dotted shapes on the arms. [For more details see: Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:137]

²⁶ The processional cross from the Parish Church of John the Baptist from Žman on Dugi Otok dates from the 14th century and its dimensions are 31 x 22.5 x 1.5 cm. An intricate gothic silhouette and arms that end in the pentaplex shape with a string of thick embossments are a unique example in Zadar Archdiocese. Ivo Petricoli warns that the medallions and the corpuses of this crucifix and the crucifix from the parish church from Sali at Dugi otok were hallmarked at the same moulds. [For further details see: Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:125]

are significantly larger and more curved, which makes the whole cross more elaborated. The same phenomenon can frequently be found in gothic crosses of the wider Venetian area.²⁷ The dots that form the circles of the medallions can also be found on the processional cross from Sukošan (14th century) (Jakšić, Tomić, 2004: 137).

The processional cross from Pašman (14th century) is the most akin in shape and iconographical content to the crucifix from Visovac, but the shaping of the corpus of the Christ on the two crucifixes does not bear much similarity. The corpus of the Christ found on the crucifix from Pašman is elongated and upright and the Christ appears to be still alive. Christ's body on the Pašman crucifix is not yet weakened from pain, emaciated and barely alive as the body on the crucifix from Visovac. Another detail on the Pašman crucifix reinforcing the impression that the Christ as still alive is the body posture and the base under his feet on which he stands with feet separated – not pinned down with nails. The corpses of the Christ on processional crosses from the island of Olib (early 14th century, picture 20), from Sali (14th century) and from Žman (14th century) can be compared to the corpus on the Visovac processional cross.²⁸ On these three processional crucifixes the head is shown in semi-profile and upright. The head of the Christ from Visovac is bent to the right and is slightly leaning on the shoulder in exhaustion and pain. The arms with stretched, tense and lean muscles are on all four corpses positioned above the shoulder level and almost reach the end of the surface of the cross. The ribs and the chest of the Christ from Visovac are more protruded, creating an additional contrast against the sunken abdomen. There is a difference in the shape of the chest of the Christ. The chest of the Pašman and Žman corpses is narrower and it is wider on the Olib corpus. Also, the sunken abdomen can only be found on the corpus of the Christ on the Olib and Visovac crucifixes, while the other two have distinctly raised abdomen. The perizoma on the Visovac crucifix is tightly fitted, similarly to the perizoma on the Olib crucifix, which falls in copious folds from the knot

²⁷ Of course, the mentioned phenomenon refers to the mirrored and semi-circular extensions at the end of the arms of the crucifix. [Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:135]

²⁸ The processional crucifix from the Church of St. Anastasia on the island of Olib dates from the early 14th century and its dimensions are 58.5 x 31.5 cm. There is a perizoma at the hip of the corpus of Christ reaching above the knees. The folds on the perizoma are Romanesque and they are ripping out from the knot at the hip. The legs are slightly bent in the knees and the feet are overlapped. The important detail consists of protruded ribs that are similar to the ribs of the Christ on the Visovac crucifix. [For more details see: Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:78]

on the right hip. The bent position of the legs on the crucifixes from Sali and Žman marks another difference in the shape of the corpus of the Christ with the crucifix from Visovac, where the legs are stretched to their anatomical limits. The straight and overlapped legs on the crucifixes from Olib and Visovac most closely resemble the shaping of the corpus of the Christ on the Visovac crucifix. The corpus of the Christ on the processional crucifix displayed in Šibenik City Museum also bears some resemblance to the Visovac crucifix.²⁹ Similarity mainly refers to the protruded ribs, tight perizoma and the elongation of the body, but the Šibenik crucifix was designed a bit later (15th century). There are many open questions as to the author of the Visovac crucifix and how the crucifix found its way to Visovac. There are multiple possibilities considering the complex historical background as well as numerous political and government shifts. The most logical assumption is that the crucifix was designed by a local craftsman for the Augustinians that were at the time based in the monastery on Visovac.³⁰ Dating of the crucifix as belonging to the 14th century and the relief of the Virgin with the Child on the reverse, which was a cult honoured by the Augustinians, support At the time, goldsmithery was a widespread craft in Zadar and the region. There are references to goldsmiths in other coastal towns in documents dating from the 12th century (Fisković, 1959: 108). The first list of goldsmiths appeared in the following century and the goldsmiths were allocated a street in Zadar in 1274.³¹ Zadar specialised in education of the future goldsmiths from numerous other regions: Bjelovar, Lika, Bosna, the Sava region and other parts of Dalmatia (Fisković, 1959: 117). Around 1300 goldsmith Šimun from Zadar forged in silver and gilded the reliquary of the right hand in which the right hand of St. Anselm was kept in Nin, which was a gift from

²⁹ The crucifix is displayed in the permanent exhibition of the Šibenik City Museum. The information regarding the crucifix can be obtained at the museum or in the catalogue of the permanent exhibition.

For more details see: <http://www.muzej-sibenik.hr/hrv/default.asp>

³⁰ So far the written material does not explicitly confirm that the crucifix was most likely designed by a local craftsman. [Tomić, 1997:119] Since the crucifix is dated as belonging to the time when the Augustinians were active on Visovac, it can be easily assumed that a local craftsman designed the crucifix for them, but that is not the only logical and possible explanation of the origin of the crucifix.

³¹ It is a street with numerous goldsmith shops. The street was near what is today known as the Narodni Trg in downtown Zadar. This confirms the status goldsmiths enjoyed in Zadar from 13th century onwards. [Fisković, 1959: 109]

Paul Šubić.³² Another example of collaboration between the counts of Bribir and the goldsmiths from Zadar is when, in the 15th century, Stjepan Crnotić promised a noblewoman Tomazini, the widow of Budislav Šubić the Count of Bribir, to have a chalice forged in silver, gilded and adorned with enamel, modelled after the chalice from the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Zadar.³³ This, along with the fact that a long list of goldsmiths from Zadar was compiled in the 14th century, suggests that the crucifix from Visovac is linked to the circle of craftsmen influenced by Venetian goldsmiths.³⁴ The shape of the cross and the symmetrical embossments were the basis for the comparison of the cross to the crosses from Pašman and Žman, often compared to the cross from Feltre that was under the Venetian rule at the time.³⁵ It has not been determined where the Augustinians came from; however, it is possible that they brought the crucifix with them.³⁶ Maybe it was a belated response of a diocese to the request of the Pope John II that did not take place until 1496.³⁷ We do know that, after the Augustinians, the Franciscans, who were under the patronage of the Bribir counts from the House of Šubić, came to

³² This is one of few examples of a signed piece of work by a goldsmith from Zadar. [Fisković, 1959: 122]

³³ Noblewoman Tomazini was from the House de Georgiis from Zadar and her order was one of many orders placed at that time. Duke Sandalj Hranić's wife Kata presented the Benedictines of the Monastery of St. Mary with two enamelled and gilded hands decorated with the relief vine. In late 11th century, the Prior of Zadar Kasej's wife gave those same nuns a reliquary of St. James with the relief of the saints in the arcades. [Fisković, 1959:126]

³⁴ Some of Zadar goldsmiths active in the first half of the 14th century include Marin Draginje, Blaž, Šime of Andelo Straniot, Damjan, Pribac Slavkov, Marin Jurjev and Lovre Deodotov. In the second half of the century that were Kolan Ivanov, Grubša Prodanov, Kusina, Ivan Lovrov, Stojan Bogdašin, Ivan Gerardinov, Stjepan Petrov, Sperko, Damjan Andrijin, Cufchi Krševanov, Jurko, Barte Ivana Dobroš, Junije and his father Radin, Stjepan Galzijev, Frano Mihajlov de Botono, Produl Andrijin, Lovre Bogdanov, Pribislav Stoišin and his student Juraj from Zadar, son of Dobra. At the end of the century the list includes Bartul Bogdanov, Ivan Jurislavov, Enrik Chergnchi (Kernića?), Greško, Ivan Radislavić, Pavao Nikolin, Pripko Šimunovi, Stjepan Crnotić, Toma Martinušević, Toma Stojanov and Juraj Šemiković.

³⁵ Jakšić, Tomić, 2004:125,

³⁶ The crucifix is similar to other crucifixes from the Zadar region often compared to the Venetian crucifixes. We do not know where the Augustinians came from so the question is whether they brought the crucifix with them if they came from a region that was under the Venetian rule.

³⁷ Pope Paul II's request is mentioned by Josip Ante Soldo, but not in relation to the crucifix. However, the main reason for disputing the possibility that the crucifix came to the islet as a consequence of the request is the time gap between the design of the crucifix and the appeal of the pope for the donations. [Soldo, 1968: 6]

the islet.³⁸ The Šubić family had close ties with the diocese and they initiated the process of secession of the Šibenik Diocese from the Trogir Diocese.³⁹ The Bribir counts were buried in their capital in the Franciscan Church of St. Mary and they generously donated to Franciscan churches on their lands.⁴⁰ The Franciscans dramatically grew in popularity as of the mid-13th century and the Pope Alexander IV (1254 – 1261) expressed his support for the establishment of their monasteries in 1256.⁴¹ Also, the Anjou dynasty supported the Franciscans, with Louis of Anjou, or Louis of Toulouse, having renounced the crown in order to become a Franciscan.⁴² If the crucifix was brought by the Franciscans, it is possible that the relief at the centre of the reverse has been misinterpreted and that it actually depicts St. Anthony of Padua with an Infant Christ. This saint is important to the Franciscans, having been member of the Order. He is depicted with the child because he had a vision of the infant Jesus Christ.⁴³ If the Franciscans came to Visovac from

³⁸ By the end of the 13th century the counts of the Šubić family had established two Franciscan monasteries in Skradin, the monasteries of St. Elisabeth and St. John the Baptist. Paul Šubić's sister was a nun of the Poor Clares Order and she lived in the former monastery.

³⁹ The Šibenik Diocese had been trying to secede from the Trogir Diocese from the mid-13th century. In late 13th century, Count George visited Pope Boniface VIII and pleaded with him to resolve the dispute between the clergy. Queen Mary was under the patronage of the Pope and she tried to bring Charles Robert to the Hungarian-Croatian throne as soon as possible. The situation led Pope Boniface VIII to issue a papal bull on the 1 May 1298. [For more details see: N. Klaić, 1976:434 – 426, T. Pavičić, 2010:57 – 62]

⁴⁰ The coat of arms of the Šubić family carved on the cover of one of the graves supports the thesis that they were buried in the aforementioned church. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 157] The content of the testaments of the Šubić family members confirms their donations to the Franciscans. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 203] [Fisković, 1959: 125, 126]

⁴¹ Pope Alexander IV issued the document recommending the Franciscans to the spiritual and the secular authorities, while the most eager proponent of the Order was Pope Nicholas IV who was a Franciscan himself and who had ties with the Anjou family. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 207, 208]

⁴² In 1296, the son of the King of Naples Charles II renounced the crown in order to join the Franciscans. Louis of Toulouse was canonized shortly after his death in 1297. His brother Robert and his wife Sancha helped in the construction of the churches and the Franciscan monasteries in Naples and the area. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 207]

⁴³ St. Anthony of Padua is depicted with the kneeling donkey which was, according to the legend, necessary to convert one non-believer from Toulouse. He refused to believe that the Christ is in the Eucharist till his donkey kneeled in front of the holy sacrament that was carried by St. Anthony who was coming out of the church. Also, especially from the Renaissance period onwards, he is depicted with the infant Jesus in his arms. [For more details see: Ivančević, 1990:119, 120]

the Šibenik Diocese, which would be logical, the crucifix can be linked to the Bribir counts of the House of Šubić.⁴⁴ Finally, since the Visovac crucifix has been brought into closest resemblance with the Olib crucifix due to the shaping of the corpus of the Christ and since the Olib crucifix has been dated as belonging to early 14th century, is it possible to date the Visovac processional crucifix as belonging to the same time period as well?

4.2. The possibility of a past restoration done on the crucifix

Another issue that needs to be raised is the layout of the images on the crucifix. How come the images of evangelist Luke and Adam are on the obverse? The possible solution to this is the lack of space needed to depict Adam on the front side of the crucifix. Usually, Adam is placed underneath Christ's legs, from which blood is dripping. This is done to present the washing of Adam's since in a more picturesque manner. Besides the lack of the space, it is possible that, during the restoration of the crucifix, there has come to a misplacement of the images. Due to its age, the crucifix maybe needed fixing so the images of St. Michael and the evangelist Luke could have been accidentally misplaced.

What is fascinating is the fact that this is only a small piece of the still unexplored cultural heritage puzzle. Unfortunately, the past years have taken their toll on a large number of artworks, ranging from architectural works to liturgical artefacts, which are now completely forgotten. Many questions have been raised and I truly hope that they will be answered and that the history of the processional crucifix from Visovac will be written out.

5. Conclusion

An interesting yet still uncertain history of the gothic crucifix from Visovac remains veiled by a set of complex relations, circumstances and historical events. The oldest artefact from the Museum Collection of the Franciscan Island of Visovac has been described in detail and analogically linked with several crucifixes with a view to shedding some light on its history. The crucifixes from the Parish Church of St. Mary on Pašman (late 14th century), the Parish Church of the Assumption of Mary in Sali and

⁴⁴ More precisely, the crucifix could be linked with the craftsmen from Šibenik from that time that were supported by the Šubić family. Craftsman Vidul Ivanov did the majority of work for them. [Laszlo Klemar, 2012: 158]

the Parish Church of John the Baptist in Žman, both on Dugi Otok (14th century), the Parish Church of St. Cassian in Sukošan (late 14th century) and the Church of St. Anastasia on the island of Olib (early 14th century)⁴⁵ contain only some of the analogies which, in my opinion, can be applied to the pieces from the wider Venetian region. Despite its unknown origin, whether it was brought by the Augustinians, the Franciscans, or whether it was a donation from another diocese, the gothic crucifix from Visovac is a precious asset of our cultural heritage, as well as many other artefacts pending further research.

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UDK: 398(497.5 Šibenik)

Izvorni znanstveni rad

GOTIČKO RASPELO S OTOKA VISOVCA

Sažetak: *Svrha je ovomu radu ukazati na jedan nedovoljno istražen umjetnički predmet naše spomeničke baštine. Riječ je o gotičkom raspelu, najstarijem predmetu, iz Muzejske zbirke franjevačkog samostana na Visovcu. U članku se pobliže opisuje procesionalno, ophodno raspelo od srebrnog pozlaćenog lima i potom, metodom analogije, povezuje s nekoliko sličnih raspela na šibenskom i zadarskom području, iz 14. st. posebno s onima na Pašmanu, Dugom otoku, Sukošanu, Olibu... .*

Krakovi križa završavaju trolistima, gotičkim trilobama. Kristovo raspeto tijelo je neproporcionalno: trup je uvećan pa ispijena rebra dolaze u prvi plan. Iznad Krista nalazi se – u gornjem medaljonu – reljef sv. Mihovila. Simboli evanđelista: krilati lav, anđeo i orao imaju grubo obrađenu površinu. Na središnjem dijelu reversa lik je Bogorodice s Djetetom. U gornjem medaljonu smješten je krilati bik – simbol evanđeliste Luke, a drugi medaljon prikazuje Adamov izlazak iz groba. Uočljivo je da je reljef aversa razvedeniji i kvalitetnije izveden nego reljef reversa. Pretpostavlja se da je opisano gotičko raspelo iz 14. stoljeća rad domaćeg majstora.

Ključne riječi: *spomenička baština, procesionalno raspelo, opis srebrnog gotičkog raspela, domaći majstor 14. stoljeća, samostan Visovac*