

## THE GARDENS OF THE BENEDICTINE ABBEY ON THE ISLAND OF LOKRUM

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**ABSTRACT:** The author analyses the features of the Lokrum gardens originating from the time when the island belonged to the Benedictine abbey, 1023-1798. According to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century descriptions, the monastery was engaged in the production of fruit, vegetables, and wine. The same sources also provide evidence on the existence of the “beautiful” gardens, that is, grounds particularly designed for repose and enjoyment. The author highlights the efforts made to cultivate and develop the green open space surrounding the monastery, as well as the construction and maintenance of the footpaths.

### *Introduction*

About 1.5 km long, the island of Lokrum lies southeast of Dubrovnik, facing the city diagonally at a distance of about half a kilometer. Lokrum is a nature reserve of evergreen vegetation and the most representative park gardens of Dubrovnik. It is an exceptional historic contribution to landscape architecture with a valuable archeological and architectural nucleus. Lokrum is one of the most popular excursion points and a bathing area.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Šišić, »Prilog raspravama o uređenju i korištenju otoka Lokruma.« *Hortikultura* 1 (1968): pp. 31-32; idem, »Otok Lokrum - izuzetan perivoj u gradskom prostoru Dubrovnika.«, in: *Otok Lokrum - Ekološke monografije*, I. Zagreb: HED, 1989: pp. 165-166.

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Above all, Lokrum gardens owe their identity and excellence to the centuries-long determination of the Benedictine abbey to run the estate by treating the land and developing both utilitarian and pleasure gardens.

### *The Benedictine abbey of Lokrum*

According to some authors, hermits and Basilian monks had inhabited the island before the Benedictines,<sup>2</sup> and they too had probably treated parts of the fertile island plain. It is possible that certain plants had been cultivated even earlier, as indicated by the very name of the island derived from *acrumen*, Latin for citrus fruit.<sup>3</sup>

The island of Lokrum was given in to the Benedictines by the Ragusan Commune in 1023 to build an abbey church and a monastery.<sup>4</sup> Thus the first monastic community in the Dubrovnik region was founded. Lokrum abbey was run according to the Benedictine Rule. Carefully organized daily routine consisting of prayer, manual labour, and study allowed for the development of diverse farming activities. Gradually, the cultivated area under fruit, vegetables, and medicinal herbs spread beyond the island plain to the belts of the bordering slopes.

Together with the Benedictine abbey of St. Peter in Osor (island of Cres), St. Grisogonus in Zadar, and St. Stephen near Split, the abbey of Lokrum had a significant place in the development and spreading of the order in the Croatian coastal region in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> In the mid-twelfth century the Lokrum monastic community was granted special status, its abbots being privileged to exhibit the bishop's insignia.<sup>6</sup> Over the centuries the abbey offered hospitality to many pilgrims and travelers.<sup>7</sup> The Benedictines are also known to have contributed to settle certain delicate matters of the Ragusan state.<sup>8</sup> The custom of burying distinguishing members of the Ragusan nobility on the island survived until the thirteenth century, testifying to the repu-

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<sup>2</sup> Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, II. Split: Benediktinski priorat Tkon, Split, 1964: p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> Petar Skok, *Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskog ili srpskog jezika*, II. Zagreb: JAZU, 1973: p. 315.

<sup>4</sup> Vinko Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*, I. Zagreb: NZMH, 1980: p. 37; Josip Lučić, »Prošlost otoka Lokruma.«, in: *Otok Lokrum - Ekološke monografije*, I: p. 186.

<sup>5</sup> I. Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, II: p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> I. Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, II: p. 424.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, I. Split: Benediktinski priorat Tkon, Split, 1963: p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> J. Lučić, »Prošlost otoka Lokruma.«: p. 184.

tation the abbey enjoyed.<sup>9</sup>

Through its founder, Petar of Ragusa, formerly monk of St. Mary's abbey on Tremiti islands off Puglia and a number of others, the abbey of Lokrum had long-established relations with one of the most important Benedictine centres across the Adriatic—the abbey of Monte Cassino.<sup>10</sup> The connection between the Lokrum abbey and its Italian counterparts may have influenced the style and extent to which the monastic grounds were arranged.

In order to provide a better understanding and evaluation of the medieval Lokrum gardens, I aim to shed more light upon the historical background of this specific art within the Western European cultural context.

### *Medieval gardening: historical background*

Unrivaled in imagination and achievement in the civilization of classical Rome,<sup>11</sup> the art of arranging gardens and parks was in descent with the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the emergence of new and less developed cultures. The decay of the Empire meant the withdrawal of the social stratum which was the major contributor to the development of the art of gardening as a status symbol and an expression of beauty and civilized life. The new era showed no interest in cultivating gardens for the purpose of relaxation and leisure. The early Middle Ages were marked with more than a hostile attitude towards any manifestation of extravagance or pursuit of pleasure, a behaviour considered contrary to the rigid Christian teachings based on the renunciation of physical pleasures and modesty.<sup>12</sup> Given no encouragement, the art of gardening remained outlawed in Western Europe for centuries. It was the development of feudal society that stimulated the cultivation and maintenance of gardenlike open space designed for private enjoyment. By contrast, the medieval Islamic world and that of the Byzantium prided with magnificent royal and majestic park gardens of Constantinople, the Calipha-

<sup>9</sup> I. Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, II: p. 422.

<sup>10</sup> I. Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, II: p. 420.

<sup>11</sup> Dušan Ogrin, »Imperium Romanum«, in: *Vrtna umetnost sveta - Pregled svetovne dediščine*. Ljubljana: PUDON - EWO, 1993: pp. 22-28; Bruno Šišić, »O povijesnom nasljeđu vrtno umjetnosti na jugoslavenskom primorju do početka XIX stoljeća«, in: *Vrtna umjetnost Jugoslavije*, I. Zagreb: CPVRKD, 1985: pp. 67-87.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Grimal, »Le jardin médiéval: La postérité occidentale du jardin antique«, in: *L'art des jardins*. Paris: Presse universitaire, 1964: pp. 51-66.

tes of Damascus and Baghdad, and those of the Moorish Spain.<sup>13</sup> What remained a link between the classical horticultural heritage and that of the early Middle Ages in the Mediterranean was the cultivation of garden crops for food, as well as the preservation of vaster agrarian landscape. Based on the traditional skills of cultivation, the preserved ancient practices of growing fruits, vegetables, and grapevine persisted in this region as a source of food and profit. Some of the current styles in planting fruit trees in regular quincunx patterns (*quincunx*), or the practice of growing grapevine on a pergola date from the classical Roman times. *Ragusium*, a settlement dated from the late antiquity, was among those which modeled on the classical agricultural heritage.<sup>14</sup>

The growth of medieval urban centres paralleled the development of the adjoining agricultural land consisting of orchards, vineyards and utilitarian gardens which over the centuries formed a vegetated suburban landscape. As to how significant these green spaces were and to what extent they contributed to the scene, one can find in Pietro de Crescenzi's thirteenth-century descriptions of the surroundings of Bologna, and Giovanni Villani's of Florence. According to some sources, new areas of cultivated landscape began to emerge around the city of Dubrovnik in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

Being the chief repositories of cultural life and education, medieval monasteries developed practices in gardening and landscape design similar to the mentioned ones, the evidence of which can be traced in the valuable documents of Sankt Gallen Benedictine abbey, dating from as early as the ninth century.<sup>16</sup> Vast monastic grounds planted with fruit trees and grapevine constituted green landscape structures of a broader ambiental meaning. Cloister gardens began to appear within the enclosed courts of the monastic buildings. Cloister, however, with its characteristic architectural features—atrium and peristyle—has its roots in antiquity.<sup>17</sup> Unless paved, the open cloisters of some monasteries were traditionally traversed by paths and the ground between them was planted with herbs, mainly medicinal plants, dotted with

<sup>13</sup> P. Grimal, »Le jardin médiéval«: pp. 36-50.

<sup>14</sup> Bruno Šišić, *Dubrovački renesansni vrt*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 1991: pp. 26 and 40.

<sup>15</sup> B. Šišić, *Dubrovački renesansni vrt*: pp. 38-46.

<sup>16</sup> Maria Luise Gothein, *Geschichte der Gartenkunst*, I. Jena, 1926: plate no. 124.

<sup>17</sup> Dušan Ogrin, »Samostanski vrtovi-Srednjeveški dvorni vrtovi«, in: *Vrtna umetnost sveta - Pregled svetovne dediščine*: pp. 33-44.

shrubs or trees.

In a dry climate with extremely permeable soil, such as that of the Croatian coastal region, the cloistered courtyards were generally paved and used for collecting rainwater in the underground watertank. An exception to this rule were the carefully tended gardens which graced the cloisters of the Dubrovnik monasteries, the most representative among them being an axial garden arrangement of the lower cloister of the Franciscan Monastery of Dubrovnik from the fourteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

Maintenance, development, and spreading of the medieval cultivated landscape surrounding towns, monasteries, and castles may well be considered one of the first historical conditions for the appearance of green areas convenient for relaxation and enjoyment. The process, however, proved a long-running one. Records from the tenth to thirteenth century cast little light on the existence of an open green space arranged for enjoyment. As these descriptions mainly concern figures such as King Charles the Great, King Arthur, Roland, and Tristan and Isolde, whose lives and deeds belong to the realm of legend rather than that of history, they should be treated with reserve.

A significant contribution in terms of a detailed description of a medieval garden with all the features designed for one's repose is the renown *Romance of the Rose*, written at the beginning of the thirteenth century by Guillaume de Lorris. What underlies the author's use of the term *le verger* or orchard is what puzzles a specialist in his attempt to grasp the main elements and the character of the green space described in the poem. According to the versed description, it was a walled garden in which fruit trees were the principle feature, probably planted in regular patterns. A path led through the orchard gateway towards an old pergola. The walk was edged with peppermint and caraway. The records also mention a well under a pine which implies that there were other trees besides fruit trees. The author located this medieval orchard in the valley of the Loire. As his verses also refer to certain kinds of citrus fruit, date palms even, one may rightly assume that the description was influenced by the Crusaders' accounts and what they had encountered in foreign lands.<sup>19</sup>

Gardens with a variety of plants cultivated and arranged for the purpose of enjoyment as those described in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, for example,

<sup>18</sup> B. Šišić, »O povijesnom nasljeđu vrtne umjetnosti«: p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> P. Grimal, »Le jardin médiéval«: p. 55.

appear in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. The ideas of Humanism and the revival of classical models influenced the rebirth of gardens as an expression of the appreciation of nature and the craft of gardening, manifested in the most magnificent examples of Renaissance landscape architecture. Renaissance introduced new philosophical and design concepts into garden planning. Outlawed for almost ten centuries, the art of gardening boldly re-entered the Western European scene. The first gardens designed in the Renaissance style appeared in Tuscany in the mid-fifteenth century.

This brief historical survey of the development of medieval gardens should serve as a parameter in evaluating the centuries-long efforts to create, preserve, and maintain the Benedictine gardens of Lokrum within the general framework of garden and landscape design.

#### *Interpretation of the sources on the gardens of the Lokrum abbey*

In the Benedictine gardens of Lokrum major emphasis was given to arrangement and adequate maintenance. To prove that this statement is not an elusive one, I shall refer to a fifteenth-century Italian humanist and master, Filippo Diversi (Philippus de Diversis), and his work *Situs aedificiorum, politiae et laudabilium consuetudinum inclytiae civitatis Ragusii* (Description of the site, buildings, government, and commendable customs of the famous city of Dubrovnik) from 1440. Among others, a brief description concerns the island of Lokrum: "... on the island named Lokrum is ... a monastery and abbey of the monks of the order of Saint Benedict. They have considerable earnings. There are churches of Our Lady and Saint Benedict, and the residence of numerous monks, as well as a hospice for the poor financed by the monastery. The abbey rules the entire island. It is covered with rich vineyards, lavish vegetable gardens and beautiful gardens (*in qua sunt multae vineae boni vini, fertiles horti et viridaria pulchra*). The island is inhabited and cultivated by abbots, monks and the aforesaid poor, and there exist no other buildings but the monastic ones. In calm weather the island is frequented by travelers and foreign visitors in pursuit of devotion, and repose of body and soul."<sup>20</sup> There is no reason why we should doubt that in the Middle

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<sup>20</sup> Philippus de Diversis, "Situs aedificiorum politiae et laudabilium consuetudinum inclytiae civitatis Ragusii", ed. Vitaliano Brunelli. *Programma dell'I.R. Ginnasio Superiore in Zara* 23 (1880): p. 22.

Ages Lokrum was a planned and intensively cultivated estate. F. Diversi's mention of the "beautiful gardens" leads us to believe that his admiration was inspired by an interesting variety of plants laid out in a particular style so as to give an attractive accent to the scene. No doubt these gardens contributed greatly to the general appeal of the Lokrum Benedictine estate, offering the Ragusan as well as foreign visitors delightful hours of retreat and leisure.

Two important questions yet remain to be raised when medieval gardens are concerned, with particular reference to those of Lokrum: which species and varieties were planted there and how were they laid out?

The first reliable sources concerning the growing of plants in medieval gardens are related to the Sankt Gallen abbey in the ninth and tenth century. The preserved plan of one of the medieval monasteries testify to the area being planted with trees and fruit trees (pears, plums, mulberries, figs, and walnuts), vegetables (leek, parsley, garlic, and poppy), aromatic plants such as rue, rosemary, and sage, in addition to flower-beds of roses, lilies, and gladioli.<sup>21</sup>

More evidence can be traced in one of Pietro de Crescenzi's fourteenth-century treatises on gardens in which he adverts to the shaded vine pergolas as a common garden requisite or a design element. The herbs grown were rue, sage, sweet basil, sweet marjoram, and mint. Trees were traditionally trained against walls. The fruit trees cited are apple, pear, and pomegranate. Cypress and bay laurel also found their place in these gardens along with flowers, headed by rose and lily.<sup>22</sup>

Given the period in which the medieval Lokrum gardens were cultivated, one has to keep in mind that orange and lemon trees had been introduced into Norman gardens of southern Italy in the twelfth century and progressively gained in importance in the gardens throughout the Mediterranean. As for date palm, which bears sweet fruit in hot climate, it was introduced in the gardens of southern Italy by the Arab conquerors.<sup>23</sup>

Documents from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries testify to an increasing number of garden species and varieties. The vegetable and herb list

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<sup>21</sup> Georgina Mason, »Medieval and Early Humanist Garden.«, in: *Italian Gardens*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1966: p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> G. Mason, »Medieval and Early Humanist Gardens«: p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> G. Mason, »Medieval and Early Humanist Gardens«: p. 48.

was extended with spinach, beetroot, hyssop, and caraway. Apart from grapevine, the choice of climbers was extended with ivy and climbing rose. The bushes included myrtle and bilberry, fruit trees cherry, while the list of trees was extended with oak and pine. Ornamentally- shaped box hedges also made their appearance as well as the first lawns. In the fifteenth century terracotta pots with flowers and herbaceous plants were used for decorating the space around the house.<sup>24</sup>

Focusing on the plants cultivated in the Croatian medieval gardens, a close study of the horticultural history of the Dubrovnik region might be of considerable assistance particularly in terms of the plant diversity.

One should draw attention to the nobility-owned farming estates which were handed down by generations. Generally located in the City's vicinity, these feudal estates known as *carine* enjoyed a privileged status. They were cultivated most intensively with grapes, fruits, and vegetables.<sup>25</sup> It was the maintenance and development of these farming estates that stimulated the need to keep pace with the agricultural and gardening achievements of the most advanced European regions.

The variety of plants grown in the Dubrovnik region towards the close of the thirteenth century can be traced in the records pertaining to the fruit and vegetable city market supply. Thus the display of fruits consisted of apples, pears, quinces, cherries, sour cherries, peaches, and plums, nuts of walnuts and almonds, along with other fruit such as mulberries and services, olives and pomegranates as the fruit indigenous to warmer temperate regions. Also the fact that oranges were among the local produce sold at the market place is of essential value to the researcher. The supply of vegetables was even greater and consisted of different varieties of cabbage, some of which have remained highly valued in the Dubrovnik region to the present day. Legumes under wide cultivation were lentils, horse bean, chickpeas and sweet vetch, along with onion, garlic, marrows, melons, watermelons, spice herbs of various sorts, and grapes.<sup>26</sup>

A century and a half later F. Diversi described the green market sale in the following way: "... the vegetables such as cabbage, mangold, lettuce, parsley,

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<sup>24</sup> G. Mason, »Medieval and Early Humanist Gardens«: pp. 50-63.

<sup>25</sup> B. Šišić, *Dubrovački renesansni vrt*: pp. 19-25.

<sup>26</sup> B. Šišić, *Dubrovački renesansni vrt*: p. 26.



rue, watercress, sage, cucumbers, endive, chicory, radish, celery, caraway are sold in bunches, leaves, flowers and seeds of dill, roses, violets, lilies and others, as well as cherries, sour cherries and similar fruit..." Also "... both fresh and dry apples and pears are sold, fresh horse beans, figs, walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds and similar fruit... lemons and oranges... are sold a piece".<sup>27</sup>

The fact that in the thirteenth century oranges were grown in Dubrovnik gardens and two centuries later lemons is of paramount importance for the study. Much emphasis was also given to the cultivation of the aromatic ever-green bay, a species highly valued in the medieval gardens of Dubrovnik.

Therefore the cultivated plants most commonly grown in the vineyards, groves, and gardens around Dubrovnik resemble those of the Italian and French gardens, the leading European countries in agriculture and gardening of the time.

A thirteenth-century record sheds a welcome light on the development of agriculture and gardening in medieval Dubrovnik with the first mention of gardening as a skill and gardeners as craftsmen. Archive documents refer to the latter as *ortolanus* or *ortorarius*. A selection was traditionally carried out among the tenant farmers of the Dubrovnik region, priority being given to those showing exceptional skill in the growing of more demanding cultures such as certain sorts of vegetables, fruit, flowers, or grapevine. They were skilled in sowing, propagation, nursing, pruning, pricking, layering and other special techniques. Since they operated as individual contract workers, the gardeners were paid for their services and were treated as craftsmen.<sup>28</sup>

An increasing growth of the cultivated plants in the Dubrovnik region during the late Middle Ages influenced the appearance of green spaces which, apart from being arranged for utilitarian purposes, were also to offer enjoyment and relaxation. Therefore structural components such as paths, rest places, pergolas, and terraces were gradually introduced into the suburban cultivated green areas and utilitarian gardens strewn with flowers, ornamentals, and aromatic plants. The lavish vegetation of thirteenth-century gardens

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<sup>27</sup> Ph. de Diversis, "Situs aedificiorum...". *Programma dell'I.R. Ginnasio Superiore in Zara* 25 (1882): p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> Josip Lučić, *Obrti i usluge u Dubrovniku do početka XIV stoljeća*. Zagreb: Institut za hrvatsku povijest Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1979: p. 112; B. Šišić, *Dubrovački renesansni vrt*: p. 29.

often included most carefully placed family chapels which further added to the atmosphere of retreat and repose.<sup>29</sup>

In view of the evidence available, more can be said about the plants of the European and Ragusan medieval gardens than of their structural design elements. The plan of Sankt Gallen abbey is considered an earliest reliable source of medieval garden design, showing the vast architectural complex of the abbey church and the accompanying monastic buildings, bordered with fruit groves, while in the monastery's inner area vegetables, herbs, flowers and aromatic plants were grown. These beds were rectangular in shape and separated from each other by paths, each bed being cultivated with one sort of plant only. Flowers were integrated with the aromatic plants and green vegetables.<sup>30</sup> Trees are traceable in the early cloister design, but this area does not seem to follow the traditional pattern in which cloisters were divided into four parts by paths with a well in the middle. The plans of some other medieval gardens also testify to the rectangular shaped beds of low plants laid regularly and separated by paths, while somewhat higher ground areas were edged with small walls.<sup>31</sup>

The cloister garden of the fourteenth-century Franciscan monastery in Dubrovnik is the oldest preserved medieval garden in Croatia. A paved walk bordered by stone benches divides the garden into two raised rectangular beds. At the southern end of the walk stands a fountain erected in the 1440s. According to F. Diversi, in the first half of the fifteenth century orange trees and bay were grown here with vegetables under them. This cloister garden is a valuable contribution to the European history of garden design.<sup>32</sup>

These rare but illustrative examples of the medieval garden planning may serve as a starting point in the reconstruction of the original gardens of the Lokrum abbey.

Most of the fertile island plain was covered with vineyards, fruit groves and vegetables, cultivated to meet the needs of the order. Vineyards, and orchards partly, were probably planted in regular quincuncial patterns (*quincunx*) traceable to the antiquity. Vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants may

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<sup>29</sup> Bruno Šišić, »Naznake povijesnoga razvoja u uređivanju vrtnih prostora na području Dubrovnika do pojave renesanse.« *Dubrovački horizonti* 27 (1987): pp. 70-80.

<sup>30</sup> G. Mason, »Medieval and Early Humanist Gardens«: p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> P. Grimal, »Le jardin médiéval«: pp. 54-57.

<sup>32</sup> B. Šišić, *Dubrovački renesansni vrt*: pp. 48-50.



1. The oldest path from Portoč to the monastic complex (11th century)

have been grouped according to the species in the carefully laid out rectangular beds, the length of which varied. The beds were either parallel or in a row. The distribution of certain species and the number of their beds were governed by the specific needs of the monastic community.

In the Middle Ages Lokrum was also covered with green pleasure areas which F. Diversi referred to as “beautiful gardens”. They stretched along the main approach to the monastery and around the abbey architectural complex. Having in mind some of the layout features of the orchard-garden described in the *Romance of the Rose*, one is to assume that the main approach (illus.1) and the paths were edged with borders of herbaceous plants and florals, while the fertile area near the Romanesque church and the monastic buildings (illus. 2-5) was covered with a carefully planned variety of trees and fruit trees, aromatic and fruit shrubs of diverse size, form, and seasonal effect, together with miscellaneous low bedding plants. The quality of the Lokrum medieval gardens leads us to believe that it was here that the very first orange and lemon trees had been planted in the Dubrovnik region. Taking into consideration the history and reputation of the Lokrum Benedictine abbey as well as the exemplary design of the green spaces from the very beginnings, one may rightly establish its pioneering role in the development of landscape or garden planning in the Dubrovnik region.

In 1466 the Benedictine abbey of Lokrum was adjoined to the Congregation of St. Giustina in Padua, one of the most powerful Benedictine communities.<sup>33</sup> This change brought to the construction of a new and more comfortable monastic building in the Gothic-Romanesque style,<sup>34</sup> completed in the 1530s (illus. 6). The new quadrilateral building, in the centre of which was an open-arcaded cloister colonnaded in the Late Gothic style (illus. 7), bordered on the south wing of the older Romanesque monastery building. Unlike the stone paved courtyard of the Romanesque monastery dominated by a water tank, the new cloister remained a garden area. The rainwater tank and the stone well decorated with the crest of the Giorgi patrician family of Dubrovnik were located under the arcade of the southern monastery wing, remaining so until the present. Such a solution gave way to arranging the open cloister atrium into a garden, a pattern followed in some other cloisters of the Dubrovnik region (illus. 8).

The accounts of Serafino Razzi, a Dominican, help illustrate as to how remarkable the gardens of the Lokrum abbey were in the sixteenth century. In the 1580s he was ordained from Italy to Dubrovnik where he remained for two years. He dedicated his time to visiting as much of the local area as possible, describing his impressions in a book entitled *La storia di Raugia*, published in 1595. Referring to Lokrum, he states that “on the island there is only one abbey and a magnificent Benedictine monastery built ... across the Republic of Dubrovnik with **beautiful gardens** and vineyards on the island plain towards the south and the east”.<sup>35</sup> Just as F. Diversi had done 150 years before him, S. Razzi too could not but admire the beauty and pleasure of the cultivated gardens and landscape of the Lokrum Benedictine abbey. These two records represent most valuable evidence in confirming the significance of the old Lokrum gardens.

But apart from the successful government and well-being of the monastery, skilled cultivation and garden planning, the sources point to certain interven-

<sup>33</sup> I. Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, II: p. 425.

<sup>34</sup> Cvito Fisković, »Lokrumski spomenici«, in: *Bulletin Zavoda za likovne umjetnosti JAZU* 11/2 (1963): pp. 47-65.

<sup>35</sup> Serafino Razzi, *La storia di Raugia*. Lucca, 1595: p. 170. “...*Ma vi è solamente vna Badia e Monastero magnifico di San Benedetto negro, edificato... dalla Republica Raugea, con bellissimi giardini e vigne, nella parte piana dell’Isola, al mezzogiorno, e a leuante.*” Very interesting is his description of the plants growing on the island: *Ma perchè non ci sono se non acqua dolci cisternali, quindi è fra quelle perpetue verdure di lecci, di ginepri, di bossoli, di mortelle, di pini, e d’altri arbori di più sorte, non si veggono volare, ne vi si odono cantare, se non rari augelli.*”





2. The outside view of the ruins of the Romanesque church of St. Mary, destroyed in the great earthquake of 1667



3. The interior of the church



4. The church wall

tions in the arrangement and treatment of the surrounding vegetated landscape covering most of the island, with particular regard to the southern island area close to the monastery, covered with highly valuable examples of wild vegetation.

Roberto Visiani of Šibenik, a botanist and director of the famous Botanic Gardens of the University of Padua, visited Lokrum in 1863, leaving valuable records concerning the island gardens. According to his description,





5. The watchtower in the north-west corner of the ruins

holm oak, a native species, grew not far from the building itself, along with Aleppo and stone pine, bay laurel and carob. Bay laurel is a woody plant distributed unevenly across the Dubrovnik region, growing mainly in more fertile and moist soil (e.g. in Trsteno or in Ljuta, Konavle), quite contrary to that of Lokrum. Today single trees or clusters of bay laurel may be found scattered in Lokrum's wild vegetation. Highly valued and thus frequently grown in the medieval gardens of Dubrovnik, bay laurel must have had a long trad-



6. The east front of the Gothic-Renaissance monastic building with the main entrance

ition in the gardens of Lokrum as well. Visiani described a very old and impressive example of Aleppo pine, which, with its three strong branches and a broad, spreading crown, dominated over the secluded Portoč harbour. The shaded area under it proved a perfect site for the construction of a resting place overlooking the sea.<sup>36</sup> The presence of Aleppo pine, stone pine and bay laurel in the woodland surrounding Portoč and the monastic building leads to the conclusion that the Benedictines intervened in the natural landscape by adding certain species, designed most likely to contribute to the diversity of the native greenery. Traversed by paths, the area represented a landscaped park, a perfect retreat for repose and contemplation.

The landscape of Lokrum witnessed certain additional interventions in the period during which the island belonged to the Benedictines, as was the construction and maintenance of the paths across the island. As the Republic of

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<sup>36</sup> Roberto Visiani, *Sulla vegetazione e sul clima dell'isola di Lacroma in Dalmazia*. Trieste, 1963: pp. 1-16.





7. The arcaded cloister, colonnaded in the late Gothic style under the east wing of the Gothic-Renaissance monastic building

Dubrovnik considered Lokrum an important strategic and defence point of the City and a natural observation post of the navigation routes, a footpath was constructed across the island. It led from the Portoč harbour along the northern ridge of the cultivated surface, meandering through the central part of the island towards the north and its highest point which offered the best view of the entire area. It then descended down the northern island slope,



8. A motif from the cloister garden

turning towards the emergency landing place named Skalica, and from there, running parallelly with the north-eastern coastline, it returned to the starting point in Portoč.<sup>37</sup> The connection of Portoč and Skalica was of particular importance for the life on the island. The sea route from the City port to Skalica was significantly shorter than that to Portoč. In addition, Skalica was

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<sup>37</sup> See illustration no. 13.



9. Maximilian's residence, designed in the historical style and interpolated into the archeological ruins and the Gothic-Renaissance monastery

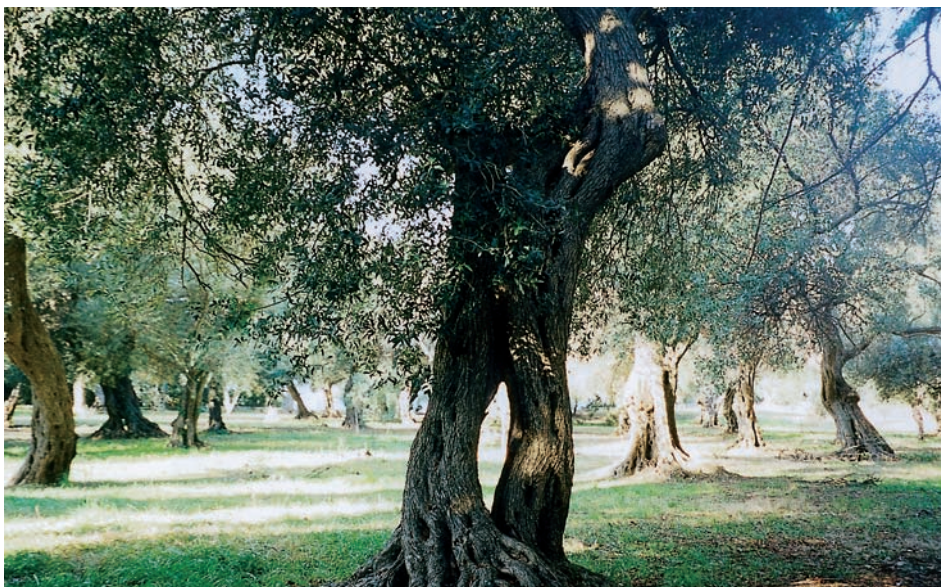
secluded from the violent winds and seemed more practical for a number of reasons, contributing to the assumption that Portoč and Skalica were connected from the very first days of the Abbey's establishment on the island.

Another fact also draws our attention. Between 1534 and 1557 the Republic of Dubrovnik chose Lokrum for the site of its third lazaretto, or quaran-





10. A detail from the terrace garden of Maximilian's residence, designed in the historical style



11. The old olive grove north of the archeological complex, the only authentic reminder of the Benedictine gardens

tine station.<sup>38</sup> Close to the City yet at a safe distance from it were good enough reasons for the Ragusan authorities to found the lazaretto on the northern half of the island. The Republic seemed to have given up on the original idea with time, holding the building of the lazaretto might serve as a fortification in case of an attack against Dubrovnik. The building was deconstructed, and the material was used for the construction of the City's fortification walls. What remained was a high wall enclosing a squarelike area of around one hectare. When the inside walls were pulled down, the land was prepared and planted with olive trees, some of which have survived to date.

The disastrous earthquake of April 6, 1667, which destroyed much of the City, did not spare the Lokrum Benedictine abbey either. The Romanesque Church of St. Mary was completely devastated, together with the older monastic building and the northern and western wings of the new building. A fact that after the earthquake Dubrovnik needed more than a century to stand on its feet again speaks of the actual size of the catastrophe and Dubrovnik's inability to help the reconstruction of the Lokrum abbey. The post-earthquake period in the life of the abbey was marked by poverty and decline of a once distinguished and wealthy monastic community. As the Republic of Dubrovnik showed no interest in its renovation, in 1798 Pope Pius VI, under pressure from Dubrovnik's government, issued a decree abolishing the Benedictine abbey of Lokrum.<sup>39</sup> This meant the end of the abbey's centuries-long presence in the area.

The new era of the Lokrum gardens began in 1859, when the Archduke Maximilian Ferdinand of Habsburg, brother of Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph, purchased Lokrum from the City of Dubrovnik. Shortly after the acquisition, the new owner undertook large-scale activities in terms of garden arrangement, introduction of exotic plants, and construction of the summer residence. During the second half of the nineteenth century, when it was owned by the members of the Habsburg dynasty, the whole island was turned into a unique park, representing at present a magnificent example of nineteenth-century landscape architecture.<sup>40</sup>

The historical nucleus of the island area still consists of the remains of the eastern and southern wing of the Gothic-Renaissance monastic building, as well as of the valuable archeological remains of the Romanesque church and

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<sup>38</sup> V. Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808.*, I: p. 99.

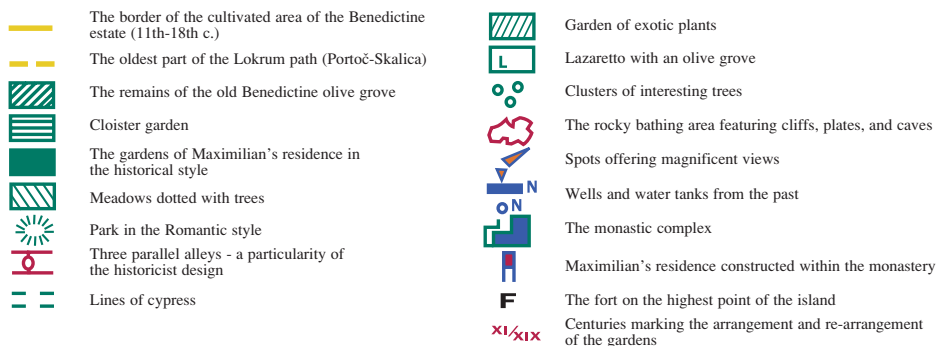
<sup>39</sup> Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, III. Split: Benediktinski priorat Tkon, Split, 1965: p. 272.

<sup>40</sup> B. Šišić, »Otok Lokrum«: pp. 165-182.

the monastery with the tower, into which, during the 1860s, Maximilian's summer residence, constructed to meet the design features of historicism, was incorporated (illus. 9). The vast fertile area, which the monks and the farmers had cultivated over the centuries by growing grapes, olives, and other plants, represented a coherent, complementary whole with the Lokrum historical nucleus. During the second half of the nineteenth century, in accordance with the guidelines of historicism, the access area between Portoč and the monastic building, that is, Maximilian's summer residence, was designed, as well as the enclosed garden of the residence terraces (illus. 10), attached to the cloister garden from the sixteenth century.

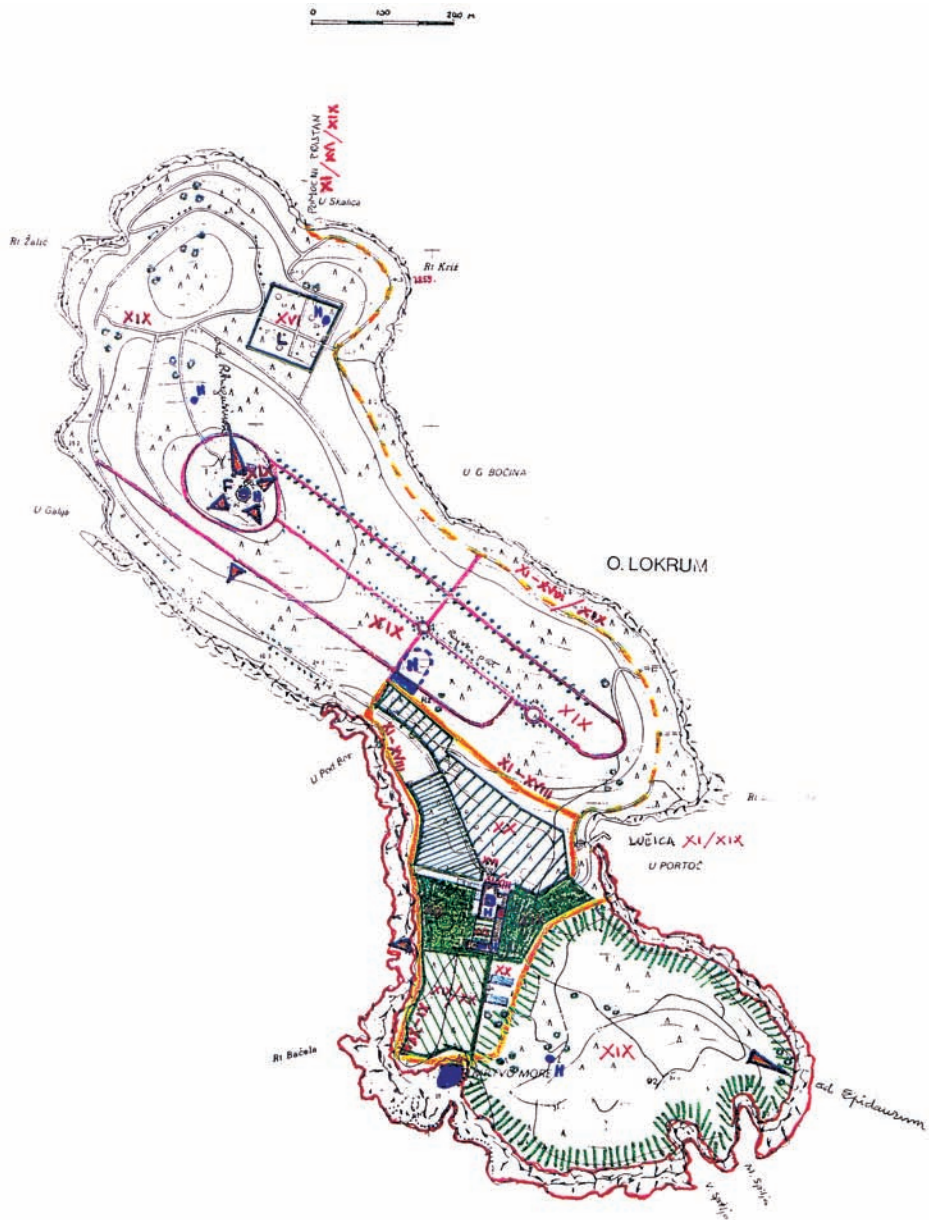
Today, south of the monastery, on the site once occupied by vineyards and olive groves, are spacious meadows with a rare olive or other tree, used as a recreation area of the beach belt. Along the northern border of the old Benedictine monastic building, on the site once occupied by fruit groves and vineyards, a botanical garden of the exotic trees, shrubs, and other plants was founded in 1960. An olive grove located north of the archeological complex (illus. 11), between the coastal belt and the botanical garden, is the only authentic culture traceable to the gardens of the Benedictine abbey. Some of the trees here are more than 300 years old.<sup>41</sup>

In conclusion, apart from the fact that the landscape or garden design of the island of Lokrum is at present primarily marked by nineteenth-century historicism and Romanticism, particular attention should be drawn to the historical aspect of Lokrum's landscape planning and the long-standing efforts of the Benedictine abbey to contribute to the cultivation of the space.

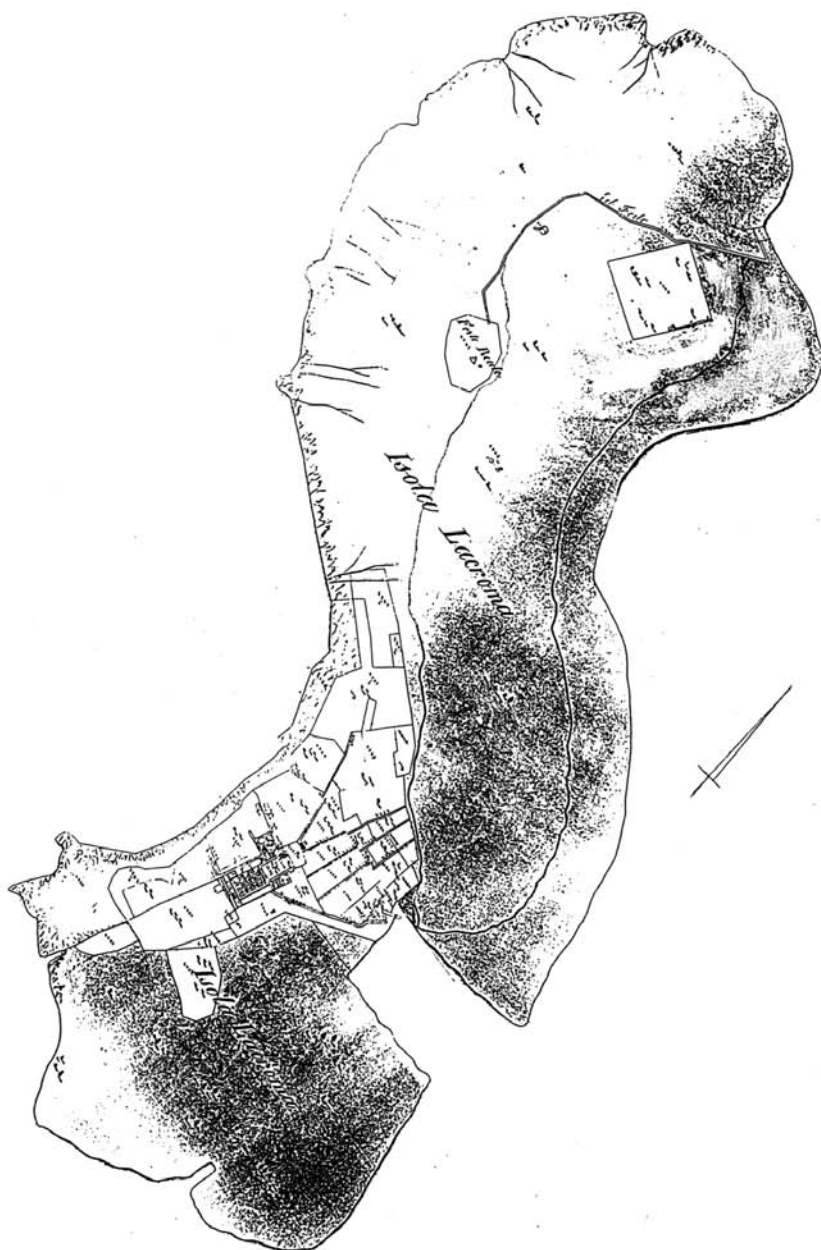


<sup>41</sup> Pavle Bakarić, »Masline kao gospodarski i pejzažni elementi vegetacije otoka Lokruma«, in: *Otok Lokrum - Ekološke monografije*, I: pp. 259-263.





12. A chronological presentation of the landscape planning of the island of Lokrum



13. Austrian map of the island of Lokrum of 1837, Map Archives of Istria and Dalmatia in Split