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ON THE CONSTRUCTION, FUNCTION AND DEMOLITION OF THE BAPTISTERY-BELFRY OF THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL IN DUBROVNIK

ANA MARINKOVIĆ

ABSTRACT: The article gathers the hitherto known visual and written sources regarding the baptistery of the Romanesque cathedral in Dubrovnik, along with some new evidence drawn primarily from the documentation of its demolition in the early 1830s. Comparative analysis of the relevant sources contributes to the knowledge of its appearance (notably the articulation of the baptistery interior with a shallow segmented ribbed dome). The author suggests a link not only between the Dubrovnik baptistery and the formal models from the episcopal centres of the Po Plain (Parma), but also with a more general concept of the rite of Easter baptism developed in the communes of medieval Italy. Source comparison helps establish the chronology of the different functions of this building, from the initial belfry, documented baptismal function at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, to that of a church with the regular liturgy once the baptismal ceremony was transferred to the cathedral itself.

Key words: Dubrovnik, Romanesque architecture, baptistery, baptismal font, belfry, cathedral

Although being one of the most elaborate medieval buildings of the east Adriatic, mentioned continuously in literature from the nineteenth century to

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Ana Marinković, Assistant Professor at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Art History. Address: Ivana Lučića 3, HR-10 000 Zagreb, Croatia. E-mail: amarinko@ffzg.hr

the most recently published monograph *The Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin in Dubrovnik*, the baptistery of the Dubrovnik Romanesque cathedral and the course of its construction are still rather vague, as well as its changing function and the circumstances surrounding its demolition, while the scattered, most diverse visual and written sources yet await in-depth analysis and synthesis.¹ This article attempts to gather and compare all the known sources, with an aim to elucidate the appearance and chronology of this significant building. Most important among these is the hitherto neglected voluminous documentation of the baptistery's demolition from the early 1830s, which to a marked extent adds to our knowledge of this edifice.

After demolition in 1832, Dubrovnik baptistery continued to live in the memory of the Ragusan writers, but it was only in the mid-twentieth century that it received a first art-historical assessment by Cvito Fisković, soon followed by that of Lukša Beritić.² Both authors provided references to archival documents, while Fisković also afforded comparative examples, along with the possible models for this type-specific baptistery-belfry. Conducted by Josip Stošić and Ivica Žile in the 1980s, archaeological excavations under the Baroque cathedral made an invaluable contribution to the baptistery's definition. Apart from the remains of two subsequent medieval cathedrals, the findings also included the baptistery's foundations within its urban context.³ Systematic publishing of the sources from the State Archives in Dubrovnik over the last fifty years has made

¹ This text is the beginning of a more comprehensive research into the role of monumental Romanesque baptisteries in the urban history of the east Adriatic. It includes the newly-built freestanding baptisteries in Dubrovnik and Koper, along with the renovation and change of function of the earlier (not necessarily baptismal) buildings in Zadar, Trogir and Split.

² Cvito Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*. Dubrovnik: JAZU, 1955: pp. 25-28; Lukša Beritić, »Ubikacija nestalih građevinskih spomenika u Dubrovniku.« *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 10 (1956): pp. 71-72. A most recent appraisal of the baptistery has been provided by Danko Zelić, »The architecture of the old cathedrals.«, in: *The Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin in Dubrovnik*, ed. Katarina Horvat Levaj. Zagreb – Dubrovnik: Institut za povijest umjetnosti - Gradska župa Gospe Velike, 2016: p. 48, outlining the until then known data, with minor additions. The edifice is also mentioned by Pavuša Vežić, »Ikonografija romaničke katedrale u Dubrovniku.« *Ars Adriatica* 4 (2014): pp. 63-74.

³ Josip Stošić, »Sažeti prikaz istraživanja, nalaza i problema prezentacije pod katedralom i Bunićevom poljanom u Dubrovniku.« *Godišnjak zaštite spomenika kulture Hrvatske* 12 (1986): pp. 241-248; Josip Stošić, »Prikaz nalaza ispod katedrale i Bunićeve poljane u Dubrovniku.« *Arheološka istraživanja u Dubrovniku i dubrovačkom području. Izdanja Hrvatskog arheološkog društva* 12 (1988): pp. 15-37.

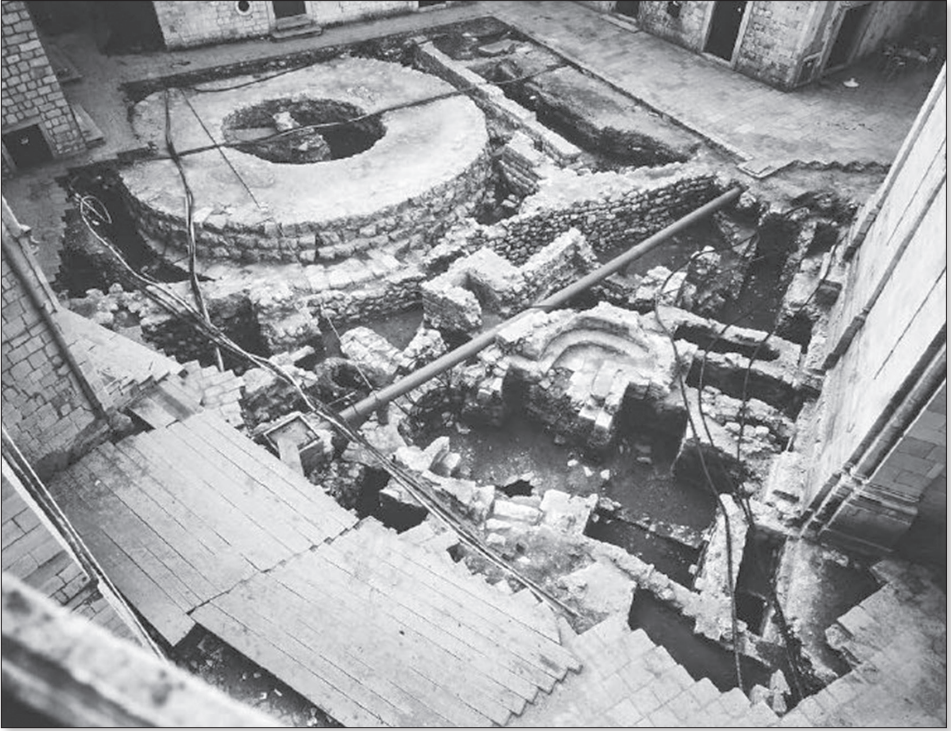


Fig. 1. The Bunić Square during the archaeological excavations in the 1980s.

Photo by K. Tadić

accessible a number of new documents related to the construction and decoration of the Dubrovnik baptistery, in addition to a couple of the most recently discovered documents, all of which are collated here for the first time.

The shaping of the square and construction of the belfry-baptistery

Decisions of the Ragusan councils had already provided a broader framework for the urban project of terrain clearing around the cathedral, with emphasis on shaping a square in front of its west facade, functionally related to the project of building a baptistery-belfry on the newly-created public space. In so doing, the square project with the baptistery may have been formulated by October 1322, when the Minor Council appointed several noblemen to oversee “the cession of the houses in front of the cathedral in order to open up a square in

front of the church”.⁴ The document regarding the demolition of the houses has not been preserved, and from the meagre description it is not quite clear whether the newly-formed communal square (*platea comunis*) was to expand north of the cathedral, or a new space was being opened up on its western side for the future location of the baptistery as one of the key ecclesiastical and communal buildings.⁵ According to a new decision of the Minor Council from July 1325, some wooden houses in front of the cathedral (owned by the canons’ chapter) were to be demolished, yet this time the actual reason behind the whole project was clearly defined, and that was the building of a belfry with the baptistery on the site of the demolished houses.⁶

The formulation of the Minor Council, *campanile cum batisterio*, must have implied the type of a construction with baptistery on the ground floor, commonly built on the cathedral squares of the north—and central-Italian cities in the twelfth and thirteenth century. The meaning of the baptistery as a centre of the probably most important urban ceremony of the Italian medieval communes, that of Easter baptism, cannot be overstated either as a factor of social homogenisation, or as a factor of urban shaping, considering that it symbolised not only the acceptance of the baptised into Christian community, but also into the civic one.⁷ Prior to the completion of the new Dubrovnik baptistery, apparently

⁴ Michel de Sclauī, Junius de Dersa, Nichola de Gundula in minori consilio [...] electi fuerunt ad cessandum a patronibus domus, que sunt ante ecclesiam cattedralem, quomodo platea possit fieri ante dictam ecclesiam. *Libri reformationum*, vol. I, ed. Ivan Krstitelj Tkalčić [*Monumenta Ragusina*, vol. I]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1879: p. 70; C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*, p. 24

⁵ Cf. Danko Zelić, »The architecture of the old cathedrals«: p. 59. In 1360 the government decided to pave the city centre, including the space around the cathedral; *ibidem*.

⁶ [...] *quod domus de lignamine ecclesie sancte Marie, que sunt posite ante ecclesiam sancte Marie, debeat destrui et super illo territorio super quo sunt posite dicte domus, debeat construi unum campanile cum batisterio*. *Monumenta Ragusina: Libri reformationum*, vol. V, ed. Giuseppe Gelcich. Zagreb: JAZU, 1897: p. 175. In the transcription of the document published in *Monumenta Ragusina: Libri reformationum*, vol. II, ed. Ivan Krstitelj Tkalčić. Zagreb: JAZU, 1882: p. 316, the term *domus* is in singular (*que est posita*), yet from the rest of the document it is quite evident that it is a mistake.

⁷ On the role of Romanesque baptisteries in the context of official civic devotion of Italian communes, see: Enrico Cattaneo, »Il battistero in Italia dopo il Mille.«, in: *Miscellanea Gilles Gérard Meersseman. Italia sacra* 15 (1970): pp. 171-195; Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125-1325*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2005: pp. 26-33, 311-313 and further; *Monumenta. Rinascere dalle acque. Spazi e forme del battesimo nella Toscana medievale*, ed. Annamaria Ducci and Marco Frati. Pisa: Pacini, 2011; Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, »Nel mio bel San Giovanni, fatti per loco de’ battezzatori: Baptismal Fonts in Tuscany.«, in: *The Visual Culture of Baptism in the Middle Ages*, ed. Harriet M. Sonne de Torrens,

not before the late fourteenth century, baptismal ceremonies were performed in the early-Christian/early-medieval *memoria*, transformed into a baptistery for the needs of the early-medieval cathedral.⁸ However, if there already existed this older building used as the baptistery in front of the main facade of the Romanesque cathedral, located in accordance with the new, communal spatial-ceremonial strategy, one is puzzled by the fact that, in the first half of the fourteenth century, when the Italian communes tended to abandon the concept of a detached baptistery building, Ragusan government decided to erect a new baptistery. A logical reason would be that the cathedral needed a belfry, within which there was also space for a new baptistery, modelled after the type prevailing in the diocesan centres of the Po Plain. It appears more likely, however, that this decision was mainly motivated by the wish, also modelled on the earlier mentioned cities, to reflect the power of the city government in representative spatial and ceremonial forms (though with a considerable delay).

The construction of the baptistery-belfry started in the same year when the decision was passed, as evidenced by the count's order of December 1325, by which the construction of the belfry should not violate the rights of Junius Volcassio.⁹ The officials in charge of belfry construction still had to remove certain walls related to Junius' property, of which he complained, so that in March 1326 the count ordered that the works be suspended until his rights were examined.¹⁰ Count's order mentions the laying of belfry foundations (*fundamentantur campanilem*), which indicates an early stage of construction, although the foundations alone must have been a huge undertaking given the thickness of the foundation walls.¹¹

Miguel A. Torrens. Farnham–Burlington: Ashgate, 2013: pp. 15-16, On the liturgical roles of the baptisteries, see: Barbara Bruderer Eichberg, »Osservazioni e riflessioni critiche sulla polivalenza liturgica dei battisteri nord-occidentali d'Italia dei secoli XI e XII.«, in: *Architettura dell'XI secolo nell'Italia del Nord. Storiografia e nuove ricerche* ed. Anna Segagni Malacart and Luigi Carlo Schiavi. Pavia: Edizioni ETS, 2013: pp. 99-116.

⁸ Cf. J. Stošić, »Sažeti prikaz istraživanja«: pp. 22-24.

⁹ *Dominus Comes fecit scribere ad memoriam quod laborerium quod fit de campanili ecclesie Sancte Marie Maioris non preiudicet in aliquo iure Junii de Volcassio*. C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 24, note 161.

¹⁰ *Dominus comes ad petitionem Junii de Volcasso fecit interdire procuratores Sancte Marie per Miscos rivarius comunis quod non procedant ad destructionem alicuius murus existens ubi fundamentantur campanilem Sancte Marie donec rationem cognoscerit inter eos*. C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: pp. 24-25, note 162.

¹¹ D. Zelić draws attention to a contract from July 1325, shortly after the decision on the construction, by which the procurators ordered a larger quantity of lime; D. Zelić, »The architecture of the old cathedrals«: p. 63, note 83.

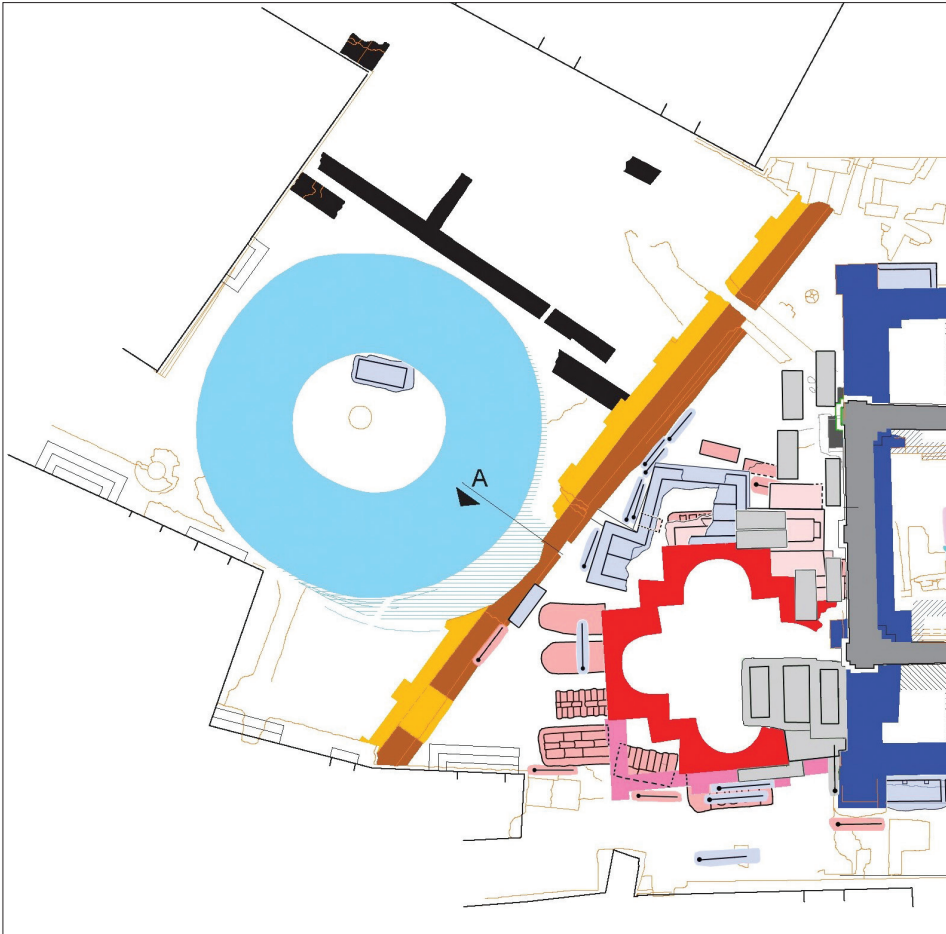


Fig. 2. Plan of the archaeological findings below the Bunić Square.

J. Stošić - I. Tenšek - M. Perkić, based on D. Zelić, »The architecture of the old cathedrals«

Archaeological finds clearly illustrate the developments documented in archival records.¹² Next to the baptistery foundations, the remains of the walls of Romanesque houses have been found, probably related to the mentioned demolition in 1325. Apart from these thin walls, the foundations of the baptistery also damaged the massive early-medieval defence wall, which stood between the cathedral's west front and the site of the future baptistery. On the defence

¹² J. Stošić, »Sažeti prikaz istraživanja«: passim.

wall, and also on the thin walls, clearly visible are the traces of demolition, and according to a shift of the upper layer of the baptistery foundations towards the west, on the position where it has no contact with the defence wall, plausibly after Junius' complaint and the demolition suspension, the foundations were relocated for about two metres.¹³ This opens the question whether the mentioned walls as well as the defence wall were also the property of Junius Volcassio, as it adjoined the block owned by his lineage, of which partly extant are the foundation walls perpendicular to the defence wall.¹⁴ However, it is still rather obscure as to when exactly the whole space of the new square was finally cleared.

On the basis of the content of Junius' will of 1340, by which he bequeathed one half of the house *ante sanctam Mariam* to Paulus Quirino, Stošić concluded that it was then that Junius Volcassio's block was demolished, including the defence wall that separated the cathedral from the suburb, which facilitated the shaping of a square in front of the cathedral.¹⁵ Although it appears that Junius owned several properties in the area north-west of the cathedral, making it difficult to ascertain as to which of these properties the complaint from 1325/6 pertained, other sources testify to the fact that the building of the baptistery developed slowly, and that it never progressed beyond the ground floor level. Angelus Leticia's bequest from 1348, by which he left as many as 100 perpers for the construction of the belfry (*campanile de Santa Maria maçore*), clearly indicates that even twenty years after the beginning of the construction the project was neither completed nor abandoned.¹⁶ According to Skurla and Gelcich,

¹³ J. Stošić, »Sažeti prikaz istraživanja«: p. 32.

¹⁴ On the properties owned by Junius Volcassio at the square in front of the cathedral, see: Irena Benyovsky Latin – Stipe Ledić, »The Estate of the Volcassio Family in Medieval Dubrovnik.« *Dubrovnik Annals* 18 (2014): pp. 30-31; on the assumption that the demolition undertaken for the purpose of baptistery erection opened up the Volcassio block: Marija Planić Lončarić, »Ceste, ulice, trgovi srednjovjekovnog Dubrovnika.« *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 29 (1990): p. 164.

¹⁵ Stošić argues that the location of the baptistery was corrected due to ground settlement; J. Stošić, »Prikaz nalaza ispod katedrale«: p. 32; Bariša Krekić, »Mlečani u Dubrovniku i Dubrovčani u Mlecima kao vlasnici nekretnina u XIV. stoljeću.« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti JAZU u Dubrovniku* 28 (1990): p. 23. Benyovsky and Ledić warn that the notary records regarding the bounds of private houses make no mention of a defence wall; I. Benyovsky Latin – S. Ledić, »The Estate of the Volcassio Family«: p. 30, note 108. Also, Fisković had drawn attention to two documents from the latter half of the fourteenth century in which the *platea sancte Marie Maioris* is mentioned; C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 26.

¹⁶ *Ancora sia data perperi C per lavorero delo campanile de Santa Maria maçore*. C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: pp. 24-25; Gordan Ravančić, *Vrijeme umiranja: Crna smrt u Dubrovniku 1348.-1349.* Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010: p. 164.

the ground floor with the baptistery was completed in the 1390s,¹⁷ following a long time gap after the pestilence. Although the absence of council decisions concerning the continuation of construction throughout the second half of the century might suggest that a series of outbreaks of plague between 1348 and 1374 may have caused a shortage in the construction financing, the bequest of Marinus Mençe from 1381 for everyday mass service *in cappella Sancti Iohannis Baptiste ubi est Baptisterium*, and the oil lamp at the altar *dicte capelle Sancti Iohannis* confirms that the building was completed by around 1380 at the latest.¹⁸ The idea of the erection of a belfry was reconsidered in December 1395, when the Minor Council approved of an annual expenditure of as many as one thousand perpers for the construction of “the belfry of Saint John the Baptist near the church of Saint Mary” (*campanille Sancti Iohannis Baptiste penes ecclesiam Sancte Marie*), yet it appears that no further works, either then or later, were undertaken.¹⁹

The form of the baptistery according to the sources

The actual appearance of the Ragusan baptistery may be gleaned from a couple of preserved sources, although it is not depicted on the oldest presentations of the city in the hands of the city patron (silver relief of St. Blaise, the altarpieces by Dobričević and Božidarević). A later cityscape of Dubrovnik, dated to the mid-seventeenth century, depicts the baptistery surrounded by lower buildings, with a prominent lead-covered dome above a circular arcaded body.²⁰ On the

¹⁷ Stefano Skurla, *Ragusa, cenni storici*. Zagreb: published by author, 1876: p. 90; Giuseppe Gelcich, *Dello sviluppo civile di Ragusa*. Dubrovnik: C. Pretner, 1884: p. 36, cited in: C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 25, notes 169 and 170.

¹⁸ The document has been recently published by Donal Cooper, »The Silver There is Very Good: Pilgrim Narratives as Sources for Sacred Art in Dubrovnik and a New Proposal for Lovro Dobričević«, in: *Grad hrvatskog srednjovjekovlja: Slika grada u narativnim vrelima – stvarnost i/ili fikcija?*, ed. Irena Benyovsky Latin and Zrinka Pešorda Vardić. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017: p. 349, note 73.

¹⁹ *In dicto minori consilio captum fuit de dando de bonis nostri comunis procuratoribus Sancte Marie pro laborando ad campanille Sancti Iohannis Baptiste penes ecclesiam Sancte Marie quolibet anno ypperperos mille*. L. Beritić, »Ubikacija«: p. 72; *Odluke dubrovačkih vijeća 1395-1397*, ed. Nella Lonza. Zagreb – Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2011: p. 98.

²⁰ On the cityscape owned by the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiques see: Danko Zelić, »Grad u slici«, in: *Dubrovnik prije trešnje - konzervatorsko-restauratorski radovi i interpretacija slike*, ed. Ljubo Gamulin, katalog izložbe. Dubrovnik: Društvo prijatelja dubrovačke starine, 2016: pp. 9-33.

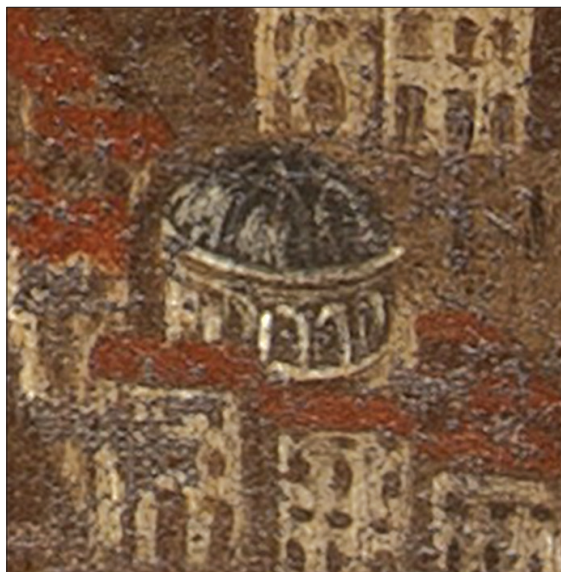


Fig. 3. The cityscape of Dubrovnik prior to the 1667 earthquake, detail, Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiques

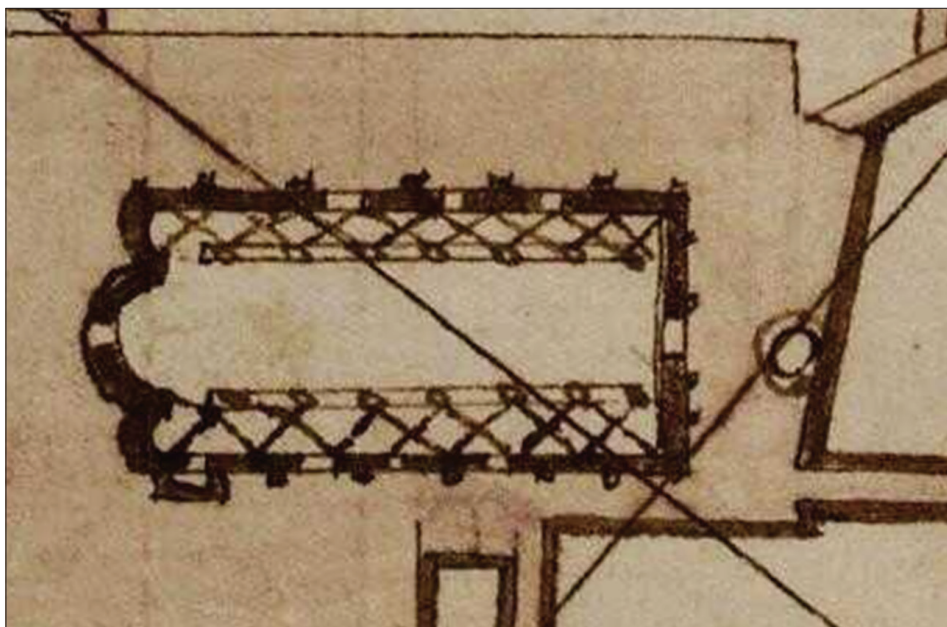


Fig. 4. The map of Dubrovnik, c. 1600, detail, State Archives in Turin



Fig. 5. The photograph of the Dubrovnik baptistery model from the photo-album by P. F. Martecchini, 1892, State Archives in Dubrovnik

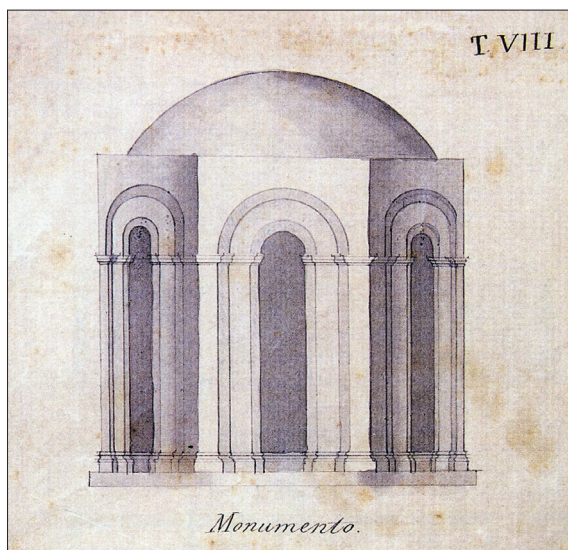


Fig. 6. Drawing of the Dubrovnik baptistery, L. Vitelleschi, 1828, State Archives in Dubrovnik

map of Dubrovnik compiled around 1600, kept at the State Archives in Turin, the circular baptistery building is clearly visible, leaning onto the residential block on the west side of the square.²¹ From a later drawing (1828) and ground plan (1830) it is evident, however, that the baptistery had an octagonal floor plan, as testified by a preserved photograph of the wooden model from the album of Pier-Francesco Martecchini from 1892.²² Clearly articulated on the model are high arched openings, between which, on the very corners of the octagon, detached columns with simple capitals are placed. Below the openings and columns flows a richly moulded base, and above them a simpler entablature profiled around the columns. The building is covered with a shallow dome (covered with lead plates) on the octagonal base. The drawing by engineer Lorenzo Vitelleschi from 1828, with some simplifications, provides valuable information on the polychromatic effect achieved by using two types of stone, also confirmed by archaeological findings.²³ Namely, archaeological excavations north of the baptistery resulted in the finding of a layer of red and white stone splinters, which corresponds to Vitelleschi's description of the construction material (*pietra silicea rosa*).²⁴ Despite the preserved memory on its baptismal function, certain construction elements (notably the non-existent or walled-in entrance) led Vitelleschi towards doubting the practical aspects of the use of the building as a baptistery.

²¹ The map was published by Ilario Principe, »Tri neobjavljene karte Dubrovnika iz XVI.-XVII. st.« *Dubrovnik* n.s. 2/1 (1991): pp. 191-202.

²² *Obiteljski fond Martecchini*, RO-264, fasc. 31 (State Archives in Dubrovnik, hereafter cited as: SAD). Cf. C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 26. I am indebted to Nikša Selmani, archivist of the State Archives in Dubrovnik, for his assistance in locating and photographing the archival material from the nineteenth century.

²³ *Zbirka Ragusina*, R-802 (State Archives in Dubrovnik), drawing published in: Lorenzo Vitelleschi, *Povijesne i statističke bilješke o Dubrovačkom okrugu 1828.* / *Notizie storiche e statistiche del Circolo di Ragusa 1828.*, ed. Vinicije B. Lupis. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska, 2002.

²⁴ *Monumento. In prossimità della Cattedrale si trova questo piccolo vetusto Monumento, con finestroni arcuati assai stretti e lunghi, e senza ingresso. Il basamento è circondato da pietra silicea rosa, come pure le alette, le colonne cilindriche, e gli archi dei finestroni. L'edifizio è vuoto nel mezzo, e coperto da una volta alla cui sommità una scala interna conduce. Da molti si suppone che fosse l'antico Battistero forse pella sua vicinanza alla Cattedrale; ma ciò non può accordarsi giacché come si è detto manca l'ingresso. Che si pensasse a farlo quivi inseguito ion on trovo ciò improbabile, giacché tagliato venne il basamento sotto uno dei finestroni per entrarvi quantunque angusto troppo riuscito sia questo passaggio.* L. Vitelleschi, *Povijesne i statističke bilješke*: p. 90; J. Stošić, »Sažeti prikaz istraživanja«: p. 34.

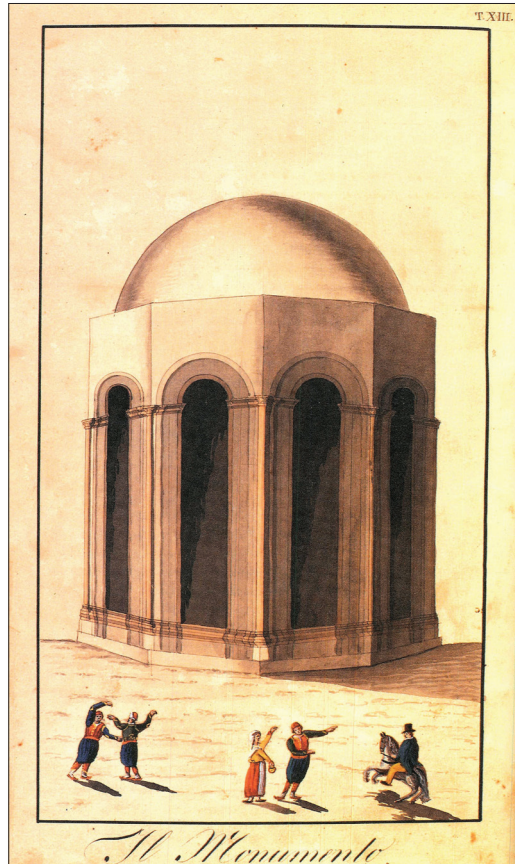


Fig. 7. Drawing of the Dubrovnik baptistery, based on L. Vitelleschi, *Notizie di Ragusa*, ed. R. Tolomeo

The other extant manuscript of Vitelleschi's description (largely extended, possibly by another hand), kept in Venice, introduces additional data not included in the Dubrovnik documentation. The most important among them is the description of the dome as the *volta scema*, that is, a type of segmental domical vault, which, however, better corresponds with the drawing from the Dubrovnik manuscript than with that of Venice.²⁵ Furthermore, the building is described

²⁵ Cf. *Notizie di Ragusa*, ed. Rita Tolomeo. Roma: Società Dalmata di Storia Patria, 2004: pp. 17-18. Although the drawing of the baptistery in the Venetian manuscript is of far lesser quality and closer to genre-scene, unlike the Ragusan drawing, it faithfully renders the small columns between the openings. I am grateful to D. Zelić for having brought this publication to my attention.

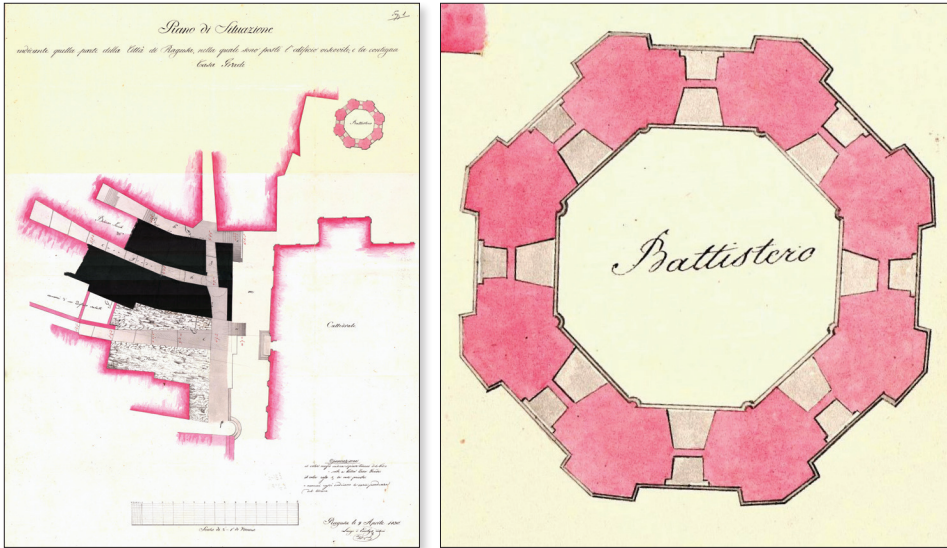


Fig. 8.1 and 8.2. Plan of the southern part of the present-day Bunić Square with the baptistery and the former Archbishop's Palace, L. de Emiliis, 1830, detail of the baptistery, State Archives in Dubrovnik

to have been built of travertine, while the columns (*colonne angolari e cilindriche*), base, cornice and window mouldings were made of red quartz stone from Lepetani; the windows were slim and tall, and the spiral staircase was embedded into the thick wall. The ground plan of the urban layout around the cathedral square, executed by engineer Luigi de Emiliis in 1830, shortly before the baptistery's demolition, apart from a precise ground plan of the baptistery showing the entablature profiled around the columns as well as the slanted window jambs, also points to a detail regarding the articulation of the interior, i.e., the responds (engaged columns) in the corners.²⁶

On the basis of the hitherto known data, an attempt to reconstruct the baptistery's interior has not been possible, yet the newly-discovered documentation of its demolition in 1830-32 provides new insights into its interior decoration. Considering that the deconstruction aimed to preserve for reuse as much stone as possible (red and white stone is cited), detailed deconstruction instructions

²⁶ *Privremeni popis nacrtne dokumentacije i spisa Okružnog i Kotarskog građevnog ureda u Dubrovniku*, no. 25/1 (SAD).

also include a technical description of the building, which mentions the arches bearing a Gothic ribbed dome. Among the most interesting documents is the site report executed by the district engineer Lorenzo Vitelleschi and the representative of the cathedral *fabbriche* committee, Nikola Grmoljez, of 28 September 1830, in which the building was referred to as “Gothic” (*antico edificio gotico, detto il battisterio*).²⁷ Although the meaning of the term *volta gotica* is not quite clear (that is, whether the use of the ribs alone contributed to such stylistic reference), it is plausible that the interior walls were richly articulated with blind arches in the lower zone and responds continuing into eight ribs of the dome. The expenditure list of the dome demolition, drafted on 22 January 1831, describes it as semispheric (*semisferica*), uncovered from the outer side, and from the inside covered with small stone slabs, with the mention of arches in the lower zone.²⁸ The expenditure list of the demolition of the rest of the building brings its measures, and the fact that its inner and outer surface was made of finely carved stone slabs (*à filigrana*).²⁹

²⁷ [...] 1. Che il piccolo edificio in discorso è di costruzione ottangolare del medio evo, ad archi sostenenti una volta gotica rialzata con ogivi. 2. Che tutta la parte superiore della volta per vetustà è crolata, e che il rimanente è in pericolo di cadere ogni momento. 3. Che la maggior parte dei fulcri cilindrici angolari è mancante, il che à indebolita tutta la costruzione. 4. Che una parte degli archi è strapiombata e sconessa e che molti dei suoi cunei sono fuori del vivo. 5. Che alcune delle pietre formanti i timpani sono da due giorni cadute. 6. Che tutto l'edificio e per il cattivo stato del basamento, e per le fenditure, e per le pietre screpolose non mostra solidità sufficiente. Dietro a ciò si riconobbe che non avvi luogo ad alcuna riparazione istantanea, ma che bisogna tosto demolire la cupola, e le pietre che sono fuori del vivo, per cui si presenta dal prefatto signor ingegnere l'analogo fabbisogno. Riflettendo poi, che la demolizione proposta e da farsi tosto, lascierebbe i muri isolati, e pel loro stato cattivo potrebbero in combinazione di qualche scossa di terra crollare e cagionare qualche disastro, si trova dal signor ingegnere necessaria la demolizione di tutto l'edificio, e tanto più ch'esso presentemente per la sua forma, e pel suo stato di decadenza non può essere di niun uso, perciò si presenta un secondo fabbisogno per la intera sua demolizione, e l'estimo del suo materiale. [...]. *Okružni građevni ured Dubrovnik 1816-1860*, IV. 1, Chiese (SAD).

²⁸ [...] La cupola è semisferica scoperta nella sua parte superiore. Li ridossi di rottami di fabbrica sciolti dalle intemperie crollano ad ogni tratto con pericolo di quelli che passano. Nella parte interna è rivestita di lastre di pietra viva, ma di piccole dimensioni. Si propone la demolizione della detta cupola fino alla mossa dell'arco. [...]. *Okružni građevni ured Dubrovnik 1816-1860*, IV. 1, Chiese. Also mentioned is a small wooden construction within the building itself (*esistendo nel recinto interno una caponiera stabile di legname*).

²⁹ Il battisterio è di forma ottagona regolare. Uno de' suoi lati esterni misura 2.0.10 Il corrispondente interno 1.1. Si elevano li muri sopra il suolo selciato di sasso spessato 4.0, sono rivestiti internamente ed esternamente di larghi pezzi regolari di pietra dura lavorata à filigrana. [...]. *Okružni građevni ured Dubrovnik 1816-1860*, IV. 1, Chiese.

With regard to the exterior, documentation mainly describes the ruinous state of the building, confirming the details from Martecchini's model, yet apart from the general notes on the decoration, an untypical document enclosed in the documentation offers far more concrete data. Apparently, mentioned in the report by which the overseer of the clearing works was accused of stealing the dismantled material are parts of a statue and decorated cornice, which represent the only extant proofs of the figural decoration of the baptistery building.³⁰ Indeed, these fragments could possibly be identified among the bulk of material, housed in the Dubrovnik museum depots, but the report alone—mentioning a fragment of *fregio scolpito*—suffices to remind one of Benedetto Antelami's *zooforo* frieze at the Parma baptistery.

Models for the Dubrovnik baptistery

What was the belfry-baptistery supposed to look like according to the original concept? Extreme thickness of the foundations at 3.5 metres to a diameter of no more than around 11 metres is indicative of a projected construction of great height, which is in conformity with the fact that in the sources the edifice was most commonly referred to as belfry, starting with the decision on its erection—*campanile cum batisterio*. As already recurrently mentioned, neither the shape nor the location of the Dubrovnik baptistery may be said to have drawn upon the Venetian models, although its building started while the Venetian Nicola Corvo was the protomagister of the cathedral.³¹ This type of building appears in the Romanesque cathedral complexes of the cities of the Po Plain, and thus a close parallel may be drawn between the Dubrovnik baptistery-belfry and its counterparts in Parma and Cremona, but equally so with those in Pisa and Florence.³² The baptistery of Dubrovnik bears a very close resemblance to that of the Parma cathedral, in terms of both location at the square in front of the west entrance to the cathedral, but also its concept (belfry with baptistery on the ground floor) and architectural design (polygonal ground floor plan,

³⁰ *All'appaltatore Barabich. Nella demolizione del battisterio avendo voi trovato un avanzo di statua ed un tratto di fregio scolpito dovrete consegnarli allo scrivente che rappresenta l'amministrazione interessata della Fabbriceria, non ritenendo mai che simili pietre siano da confondersi con quelle del contratto. Vi guarderete bene dall'appropriarvi anche di altre che si rinvenissero. Okružni građevni ured Dubrovnik 1816-1860, IV. 1, Chiese, no. 406/335.*

³¹ C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 28.

³² C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 26-27.



Fig. 9.1 and 9.2. Baptistery of the Parma cathedral, photo Bigsmooth CC BY-SA 3.0;
interior of the dome, photo by H.A. Rosbach

articulated by blind arches in both the interior and exterior, ribbed dome, polychromatic stone effect, sculpted frieze).³³ Apart from the size itself, the main difference between the Dubrovnik baptistery and that in Parma is the non-existence of interior galleries in Dubrovnik, while the exterior ones presumably awaited future construction phases and were to be built on the higher levels of the building.

Nevertheless, C. Fisković concluded that direct impact was hardly probable, given that master builders from the mentioned cities have not been recorded in Dubrovnik at the time, and he sought the model for the Dubrovnik baptistery in the local east-Adriatic tradition of the early-Christian baptisteries (through Zadar builders recorded in Dubrovnik in the fourteenth century), as well as in the Angevin belfry in Monte Sant'Angelo, pilgrimage site in Apulia, which exhibits certain constructive similarities with the Dubrovnik edifice.³⁴ However, despite the absence of any documents on the activity of the master builders from the mentioned north-Italian cities in Dubrovnik in the early fourteenth century, the transference of the model through cross-Adriatic contacts should not be discarded. Namely, in the second decade of the fourteenth century several notable state officials from Parma and Cremona were recorded in Dubrovnik: *medicus* Petar from Parma is mentioned in 1312, magister Albertinus from Cremona was chosen as Ragusan chancellor in 1313, while in 1323 *physicus* Ivan from Parma was admitted to communal service,³⁵ followed by a succession of notaries and chancellors from these two cities in the latter half of the fourteenth century.³⁶ Yet the fact that fra Bonaventura of Parma was the archbishop of Dubrovnik in the period from 1281 to 1307 (or even 1312) seems of particular relevance to this

³³ On the baptistery of the cathedral in Parma see: *Il Battistero di Parma: iconografia, iconologia, fonti letterarie*, ed. Giorgio Schianchi. Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1999, with cited bibliography. On the urban context and role of the Parma baptistery in the construction of the city identity see: Areli Marina, *The Italian Piazza Transformed. Parma in the Communal Age*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press: 2012.

³⁴ C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 27. Four-level belfry of the Sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo was built around 1274 in octagonal shape, but considering that it was not used for liturgical purposes, it is almost completely closed on the ground and first floor, while a staircase is embedded in the thick wall. It is dome-vaulted in the lower three levels, yet only the dome of the third level is ribbed. Although reddish stone was used, decorative system is far less elaborate than the Dubrovnik example (for instance, there are no columns in the exterior nor blind arches in the interior, nor any figural decoration).

³⁵ *Monumenta Ragusina*, vol. 1: pp. 25, 45, 102.

³⁶ Nicolò Villanti, »Maestri di scuola a Ragusa (Dubrovnik) nel medioevo, 1300-1450.« *Dubrovnik Annals* 22 (2018): pp. 7-50; Francesco Bettarini, »Per un censimento dei notai dalmati.« *La Rivista Dalmatica* 111 (2014): pp. 13-26.

issue, in the sense of introducing the concept of the new baptistery, as well as the guidelines for its design, thus testifying to the continuity of relations with the mentioned region.³⁷ A special impetus in the transfer of the model of urban devotion and relevant architectural forms may have been given by the recent consecration of the baptistery of Parma in 1270, shortly before Bonaventura's arrival in Dubrovnik. The contacts between Dubrovnik and the cities of Tuscany and Po Plain were apparently quite lively, and therefore the possibility of direct model adoption of this type of baptistery should not be excluded, as well as (though less plausible) of an undocumented visit of an Italian master in Dubrovnik.

Function: baptistery and church of St. John the Baptist

In the earliest documents the baptistery was always referred to by the primary role of this bifunctional building, that is, as “belfry” (*campanile*). By the end of the century, given that in the meantime the baptistery began to function as such, in the sources the edifice was referred to as “the belfry of St. John the Baptist” (*campanille Sancti Iohannis Baptiste*) or “the chapel/church of St. John the Baptist” (*cappella Sancti Iohannis Baptiste; glexia de Sancto Zohan; ghiexia de sancto Zuane Baptista*). The abovementioned will of Marinus Mençe is of great significance as it is the first document—following the decision on the construction—to mention the building's function as baptistery. In January 1381 Marinus bequeathed forty perpers a year for everyday mass at the chapel *Sancti Iohannis Baptiste ubi est Baptisterium*, and ordered that his legacy be used for the maintenance of the oil lamps at the altar *dicte capelle Sancti Iohannis*.³⁸ This testament is also invaluable in the sense that the execution of his bequest may be traced in continuity over the next hundred years in the other series of the Ragusan archives. The entry here in question concerns the book of the treasurers' rents from 1428, which reads that the bequest was made back in 1381, and that

³⁷ Older historiography shows inconsistency regarding the end of term of Bonaventura's archbishopric in Dubrovnik, 1292, 1293, 1296 or 1307, yet according to a register entry of Pope Clement V, it appears that Bartholomaeus of Trani, following a futile election of Jacobus of Bari, directly succeeded Bonaventura as archbishop of Dubrovnik; cf. Stjepan Kراسić – Serafino Razzi, *Povijest dubrovačke metropolije i dubrovačkih nadbiskupa (X.-XVI. stoljeća)*. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska, 1999: pp. 95-104, 119-120, note 359.

³⁸ [...] *in perpetuum omni die celebret unam missam in capella Sancti Iohannis Baptiste ubi est Baptisterium et quod illi presbitero in perpetuum dentur de bonis meis hyperperi quadraginta omni anno et quod altare dicte capelle Sancti Iohanni sin perpetuum illuminari debeat cum bonis meis cum una lampade et oleo omni nocte*. D. Cooper, »The Silver There is Very Good«: p. 349, note 73.

Marinus' grandsons, Marinus and Nicolaus, until 1424, made a regular contribution for mass service at the church of St. John the Baptist, "which is the baptistry" (*che è el baptisterio*).³⁹ Payment entries were registered until 1478 (when many entries ceased), which nevertheless may not be accepted as an argument in favour of the building's continuous function as baptistry. Other sources from this period refer to the "church" of St. John the Baptist, such as a will from 1430 which mentions *la ghiexia de sancto Zuane Baptista apresso sancta Maria*,⁴⁰ or the decision of the Senate from September 1463, by which a proposal to erect a wooden construction for the bells next to (the church of) St. John (*prope sanctum Johannem ante ecclesiam sancte Marie*) was denied, and it was decided that such a wooden construction should be built next to the church of St. Saviour, opposite the Rector's Palace.⁴¹ A document from September 1422, which mentions the furnishing of the bell chamber in the small loggia (*lobiola*) below the cathedral belfry,⁴² might refer to the baptistry, but also to the base of a provisional belfry (bell gable), the location of which was recurrently discussed on the councils, and frequently changed in the course of the second half of the fifteenth century. The mentioned expenditure list of the baptistry

³⁹ *Ser Marin e ser Nicholla de ser Biaxio de Mençe die dar per uno lasso che fa ser Marin luor avo in 1381, a carta 17 in notaria, che imperpetuo con li sui beni se trovi uno prevede per cantar ogni dì messa in Sancto Çohane Baptista, la che è el baptisterio, e dia sse al ditto prevede pp. XXXX. Item se debia illuminar una lampa com ollio perpetualmente in la dita glexia con li mei beni. Tratto delo libro vechio a poste 191. Die sse dar alo prete de Sancto Zohan avanti de Sancta Maria. Trovassimo esser pagado infina per anno 1424. [further payments recorded from 1428 to 1478]; *Knjiga rizničarskih najmova / Liber afflictuum thesaurarie (1428-1547)*, ed. Danko Zelić. Zagreb – Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2012: pp. 192-193. The entry into the book of the treasurers' rents obviously repeats the wording *ubi est baptisterium* as formulated in the text of the will.*

⁴⁰ Reference to the will has been published in D. Cooper, »*The Silver There is Very Good*«: p. 349, note 75.

⁴¹ *Prima pars est de dando libertatem domino rectori et suo minori consilio faciendo fieri unum campanile de lignamine ad sanctum Salvatorem pro campanas erigendas. Per XX contra XIII. Secunda pars est de faciendo dictum campanile prope sanctum Johannem ante ecclesiam sancte Marie* (cancell.); *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, ser. 3, vol. 17, f. 271v (SAD); C. Fisković, *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*: p. 25

⁴² *Captum fuit de dando libertatem ser Marino de Resti, ser Andree Mar. de Volço et ser Marino de Gradi procuratoribus Sancte Marie quod possint aptare domunculam campanarum que est sub campanile Sancte Marie in lobiola prout eis melius videbitur expensis tamen procuratie eorum; Acta Minoris Consilii*, ser. 5, vol. 3, f. 12v (SAD). The repair of the bell chamber is mentioned once again in 1431; *Acta Minoris Consilii*, vol. 5, f. 146r. Documents have been transcribed in the scope of the project *Dubrovnik: Civitas et Acta Consiliorum. Visualizing Development of Late Medieval Urban Fabric* [DUCAC – HRZZ 9492], <https://ducac.ipu.hr/project/mapping/e4-segment/e4-campanile/> (accessed September 2019).

demolition also includes a description of a small wooden house that stood inside the building itself (*esistendo nel recinto interno una caponiera stabile di legname*), which could refer to the abovementioned bell chamber.

While describing the cathedral in 1440, Italian teacher Filippo Diversi merely remarked: “The baptismal font is also there” (*Estque fons baptismalis*).⁴³ Considering that the font was mentioned midst the description of the cathedral interior, between the choir and the pulpit, the paving and wall paintings, one could conclude that Diversi describes the “everyday” baptismal font, used in the Italian communes for baptisms besides the grand annual ceremonies, and was always located in the cathedral itself.⁴⁴ However, the question remains as to the nature and circumstances of the Easter baptismal ceremony in Dubrovnik, since it has not been recorded in the extant Ragusan sources, while the building of the new baptistery was completed in the period when this practice tended to be abandoned in the Italian cities.⁴⁵

Like Diversi, apostolic visitor Giovanni Francesco Sormano, in January 1574 described the baptismal font within his account of the cathedral interior, immediately following the description of the altar, and not while visiting the chapel of St. John the Baptist.⁴⁶ Sormano describes the baptismal font as round and made of marble, decorated with various figures, and covered with a wooden lid, with an ampule for baptismal water.⁴⁷ This baptismal font may have originated from any period once the baptismal ritual was transferred from the exterior

⁴³ Filip de Diversi, *Opis slavnoga grada Dubrovnika*, trans. and ed. Zdenka Janeković Römer. Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2004: pp. 49, 146.

⁴⁴ Cf. Silvia Schlegel, »Festive Vessels or Everyday Fonts? New Considerations on the Liturgical Functions of Medieval Baptismal Fonts in Germany.«, in: *The Visual Culture of Baptism*: pp. 129-147.

⁴⁵ Several data on the baptismal rite in Dubrovnik in the early modern period are extant, yet they fail to illuminate the existence of the late communal practice of the Easter baptismal rite in Dubrovnik. On the ritual role of rector during baptism in Dubrovnik in the eighteenth century see: Nella Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti. Ceremonijal i državni blagdani Dubrovačke republike u 17. i 18. stoljeću*. Zagreb - Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2009: p. 351.

⁴⁶ Sormano also mentions a small bell gable with three bells, without citing its exact location (this probably refers to the small bells in the church itself): *Campanille autem repertum fuit nimis parvum ac ecclesiae indecens in quo tres sunt campane pariter parvae pro ecclesia cathedrali*. Cvito Fisković, »Umjetnine stare dubrovačke katedrale.« *Bulletin Zavoda za likovne umjetnosti JAZU* 13/1-3 (1967): pp. 69, 75.

⁴⁷ *Fons vero batismatis repertus fuit in forma rotunda, et marmore confectus circumque circa variis figuris ornatus, ligneoque tegmine, clave et sera munito coopertus, cum ampula vitrea intus preclusa pro infundenda aqua*. C. Fisković, »Umjetnine stare dubrovačke katedrale.« pp. 65, 71.



Fig. 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3. Fragment of the baptismal font from the Dubrovnik cathedral depot; detail of the cherub's ear; rear side grooves for the lid, photos by J. Klaić

baptistery to the cathedral itself,⁴⁸ yet the curved fragments of the Renaissance marble furniture, with visible grooves for the wooden lid, unearthed in the archaeological excavations underneath the Baroque cathedral and Bunić Square conducted in the 1980s, indicate that this may have taken place in the late fifteenth or in the sixteenth century. Moreover, the fragment on which the cherub's wings and an ear are discernible, along with floral decoration with a central spiral motif (dragon's tail?), in terms of shape and motif patterns remind of the monumental Tuscan holy water fonts from the circle of Antonio Federighi of the latter half of the fifteenth century.⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that the new baptismal font of the Baroque cathedral, built in the 1780s, also has cherubs carved on the sides,⁵⁰ possibly reminiscent of the baptismal font destroyed in the earthquake, providing thus more proof for the interpretation of this fragment as a part of the Renaissance baptismal font, built when the baptistery building ceased to serve its original purpose.

⁴⁸ Illustrative of the continuity of the use of older quatrefoil-planned memoria as baptistery of the Romanesque cathedral prior to the completion of the new edifice are the burial layers in and around the memoria, whose archaeological documentation yet awaits to be thoroughly examined.

⁴⁹ N. Ben-Aryeh Debby, »*Nel mio bel San Giovanni*«: pp. 19-20. It should be noted that smaller Renaissance and Baroque baptismal fonts, housed in the churches themselves, had a shape similar to the holy water fonts.

⁵⁰ On the commission of a new baptismal font, see: Daniel Premerl, »A Century of Furnishing the Baroque Cathedral.«, in: *The Cathedral of the Assumption*: p. 259.



Fig. 11. Baptismal font of Dubrovnik Baroque cathedral, late 18th c.,
photo by A. Marinković

Descriptions of the cathedral made by Diversi and Sormano support the assumption that, by the first half of the fifteenth century, the edifice dedicated to St. John the Baptist had already lost its original function. However, the fact that Dubrovnik baptistery was built on a newly-designed square in front of the cathedral, with features similar to Romanesque baptisteries of the north and central Italy, where the shape and location were explicitly dictated by the massive ritual gatherings of the citizens, may be taken as solid arguments for the practice of the Easter baptismal rite in Dubrovnik. Although no data on the practice of this ceremony have survived (bearing here in mind that the archbishopric archive was destroyed after the 1667 earthquake), correspondence between the Dubrovnik baptistery and those of the north-Italian communes in terms of appearance and location confirms a principal intent, at least, for a mentioned rite to be introduced. Diversi's remark on the exclusive baptismal practice in the cathedral ("baptisms are administered in it alone, since Dubrovnik has no other parish church") possibly conveys certain allusions to the centralisation

of the sacrament of baptism in the cathedrals, effective during the communal period.⁵¹

In all likelihood, the ex-baptistry building was used for liturgical service in the second half of the sixteenth century, when Sormano visited it as “the church of St. John the Baptist located in the city of Dubrovnik near the cathedral” (*ecclesiam Sancti Johannis Battiste sitam in civitate Ragusii prope cathedralem*). Sormano describes the church as well maintained, well furnished with liturgical vestments, having only one altar with a gilt altarpiece, along with a beautiful wooden polychrome statue of John the Baptist close to the altar, yet in this detailed description Sormano does not mention the baptismal font.⁵² This confirms the

⁵¹ *Solum in ea datur baptisma, cum nulla altera sit Racusii ecclesia parochialis*. F. de Diversis, *Opis*: pp. 49, 146. Cf. A. Thompson, *Cities of God*: pp. 312-314.

⁵² *Reverendissimus dominus delegatus prosequendo visitationem accessit ad ecclesiam sancti Johannis Baptistae sita in civitate Ragusii prope cathedralem, et ibi prius genibus flexis debitis profusis orationibus, visitavit altare maius quod reperiit unius lapidis integri consecrati et bene sigillati cum duobus tobaliis bonis et mundis cum pallio telae sericeae diversis coloribus cum cruce aurea. Ancona vero est lignea in multis partibus aurata ac laesa cum scabello ligneo bono ac comodo cum uno candelabro ferreo.*

Decrevit de tribus aliis tobaliis bonis ac mundis et de duobus candelabris aeheneis providendum esse ac anchonam in partibus laesam reparando termino trium mensium sub poena duorum scutorum ad pias causas applicari.

Et super dicto altari reperiit unum calicem argenteum auratum cum patena aehenea aurata cum tribus paribus corporalium cum palla ac tribus purificatoriis.

Decrevit de sex aliis purificatoriis ac duobus paribus corporalium providendum esse termino duorum mensium sub poena duorum scutorum ad pias causas applicari.

Reperiit unam planetam veluti puniceae cum cruce aurea.

Item aliam veluti viridis cum cruce veluti puniceae.

Item aliam veluti rubei cum cruce aurea.

Item aliam planetam telae lineae nigrae cum cruce telae croceae.

Item alias planetas duas telae cottoneae albae cum crucibus ormissini rubei.

Cum stollis et manipulis totidem eiusdem drapi et tele.

Item albas tres bonas et nitidas cum totidem amittis.

Item unum pallium pro altari ciambelotti nigri cum cruce aurea.

Item aliud pallium damasci fulvi cum cruce rubea.

Item aliud pallium telae cottoneae cum cruce eiusdem telae.

Item missale novum.

Item unam statuam ligneam pictam ac pulcherimam sancti Johannis Baptistae prope dictum altare.

Item unum crucifixum magnum ac devotum cum lampade ante ipsum.

Item campanam unam bonam.

Muri, tectum, pavimento nulla indigere reparatione.

assumption that the baptistery lost its original function probably not more than fifty years after it had been completed, and that, having retained the titular name that reminds of its original role within the cathedral complex, it continued to function as a church most probably until the earthquake of 1667.

Conclusion

On the basis of the sources known to date, the unfinished baptistery-belfry of the Romanesque cathedral of Dubrovnik has been recognised in literature since the middle of the twentieth century as a significant Romanesque monument modelled after similar buildings in the Italian centres. By linking the context of its construction to the data on the Ragusan officials of north Italian provenance, the proposed assumptions were more solidly grounded and additionally focused on the cities of the Po Plain, and, given the formal similarities between the buildings, on Parma in particular. The similarities primarily concern the type of the building itself, which includes two important functions, that of the cathedral belfry and baptistery, but also the very articulation of the exterior and interior. Recently discovered sources—documentation of the building's demolition—have enabled new interpretations of architectural forms of the baptistery interior. This primarily refers to the shallow dome with ribs that continue from the corner responds, which prompted the engineers responsible for demolition of the building to refer to the vault, and the edifice itself, as Gothic. The stylistic aspect of the monument, that is, a possible presence of Gothic features, is a question that most certainly deserves additional comparative considerations.

With regard to the use of the baptistery building, comparative analysis of the sources has shown that at the very start of the construction the emphasis was placed on the belfry function (probably because the old baptistery was still used as such), yet from the 1380s, with the transfer of the baptismal ceremony

Congreg. Vescovi e Regolari, Visita Ap. vol. 28, f. 719r-720r (Archivio Segreto Vaticano).

Here attention ought to be drawn to a recent proposal by D. Cooper, by which Dobričević's polyptich *The Baptism of Christ* from the collection of the Dominican friary should be associated with the commission for the altar of the cathedral baptistery (the church of St. John the Baptist) instead with the commission of the main altarpiece for the Dominican church from 1448. D. Cooper, »*The Silver There is Very Good*«: pp. 346-350.

to the new edifice, through the first half of the fifteenth century, it was referred to as baptistery. It was also known as the church/chapel of St. John the Baptist which, although the titular name indicates its original function, does not necessarily imply that it retained this function until the second half of the century. This also raised the question of the practice (though not recorded in the written sources) of the city ceremony of Easter baptism, a ritual witnessed in Italian diocesan centres with which Dubrovnik had very close relations. For instance, Archbishop Bonaventura, who came from Parma, at the turn of the fourteenth century may have introduced some new elements into Ragusan liturgical practice during his long episcopate, and which eventually led to the erection of a new, significantly larger and more appropriate building. The issue of Easter baptismal rite in the medieval cities of east Adriatic, in view of the Romanesque (re)constructions of cathedral baptisteries, is an important topic of medieval urban history which calls for further research.

Epilogue

The forgotten octagonal building, void of any function, still stood on the “baptistery square” (*piazzale del battisterio*, as referred to in a document from 1831) after the erection of the Baroque cathedral. However, seen that the new cathedral was given a different orientation, the former baptistery-belfry, now located behind the cathedral’s rear facade, away from the main communication route from the Placa, across the Communal Square to the cathedral, became devoid of content and insignificant in terms of focal points in urban space. Although in 1801 the Senate denied the proposal for its sale,⁵³ the fact that the district engineer Lorenzo Vitelleschi in his description of the city monuments from 1828 refers to it under a general term *Monumento*, with doubts concerning the account of its historic function, is quite telling of its neglect. The abandoned octagon (under another generic term *La Rotonda*) was rented out to private

⁵³ *La prima parte è d’insinuare ai Signori Tesorieri di S. Maria Maggiore, che mettano in vendita la nota fabbrica detta Battistiera situata dietro il Duomo previa la dispensa da ottenersi dall’Illustrissimo Monsignore Arcivescovo nostro, con che il ritratto debba erogarsi in beneficio della nostra chiesa cattedrale* (cancell.) *La 2.da è di no. 21 contra 4. Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, vol. 208, f. 12r. L. Beritić (»Ubikacija«: p. 72) warned about this document, although he misunderstood that the building had been sold.

persons, later confiscated by the Austrian army,⁵⁴ until the final decision on its removal. In the extensive documentation of its demolition, which speaks more of the city authorities' concern for public space and finances rather than the historic building itself, is Vitelleschi's decision of September 1830, by which, due to the danger from further decay, instead of the planned renovation, the ruinous baptistery was to be fully deconstructed. Given the complex preparations, the baptistery was demolished only in April 1831.⁵⁵

A sad ending of one of the focal points of urban devotion, having shifted the guilt for the years of neglect to the final executor of the building's end—a process much too frequently witnessed in our own day—has been vividly described by Medo Pucić, a contemporary observer: “in front of the very doors [of the cathedral] there stood that beautiful baptistery of white and red marble, stamped deeply on the memory of all those who were not born yesterday, it did not fall from the earthquake, but a certain Austrian general had it demolished in order to get more light in his office; may God give him light perpetual!”⁵⁶

Translated by Vesna Baće

⁵⁴ *Esiste inoltre dietro la Chiesa Cattedrale un' antico edificio detto la Rotonda, questi nell' anno 1814 si era affittato per tre anni in ragione di franchi 10 annui, e l'inquilino Luca Pupator lo detenne per un solo anno, pagandone il relativo affitto, perchè da anno 1815 ne impossessarono di fatto i diversi E.E. R.R. signori Generali di guarnigione, che abitano la vicinissima casa Gozze, i quali si servivano e servono di questo fabbricato senza pagare affitto veruno. Registro generale delle Fondazioni amministrate dal Consiglio di Fabbrica della Chiesa Cattedrale e Collegiata di S. Biagio [1829] (Diocese of Dubrovnik Archives). I thank I. Viden for having drawn my attention to this document, as well as to an entry in the book of cathedral expenditures in the following note.*

⁵⁵ Apart from a succession of documents in the series of the State Archives in Dubrovnik *Okružni građevni ured Dubrovnik* for the year 1831, the material from the diocesan archives also provides data on the baptistery demolition, for example: *A Stiepo Vagliallo (?) maestri per giornate e per la demolizione della cupola dell' antico battisterio* [23 May 1831]; *Katedralna crkva sv. Marije Velike u Dubrovniku*, sign. 35 (Prihodi i rashodi Katedrale i Zborne crkve Sv. Vlaha 1812.-1834) (Diocese of Dubrovnik Archives).

⁵⁶ Medo Pucić, *Dubrovnik, cvijet narodnog književstva* 1 (1849): p. 7 (reprint Zagreb: Erasmus, 2006).