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Original paper

## BISHOP STROSSMAYER AND THE GATES OF HEAVEN SCULPTURE AT THE DOMINICAN MONASTERY IN DUBROVNIK

Ana BIOČIĆ

Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb  
Vlaška 38, p.p. 432, 10 001 Zagreb  
anabiocic.1@gmail.com

### Abstract

At the Monastery of St. Dominic in Dubrovnik there is a famous marble statue of baby Jesus sitting in the Virgin's lap on the throne, authored by a famous Czech sculptor Václav Levý (1820-1870), who founded the modern Czech sculpture school of the nineteenth century. This particular sculpture was bought by Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer of Đakovo in 1866, and its further path, leading to the Dominican Monastery in Dubrovnik, remains unknown to date. The article deals with the purchase of the sculpture found in the correspondence of Bishop Strossmayer with Nikola Voršak (1836-1880), canon of the Chapter of St. Jerome in Rome, and kept in the Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (CASA) and the Archdiocesan archives in Đakovo. This correspondence reveals the details on the purchase of the sculpture (bargaining during sale, expert valuation, papal blessing of the sculpture). The CASA Archives also keep the correspondence of Bishop Strossmayer with the author of the sculpture, Levý, which shows that they had known each other before the purchase itself.

*Key words:* Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Dominicans in Dubrovnik, Gates of Heaven sculpture, Václav Levý.

## 1. The Gates of Heaven and Bishop Strossmayer

Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer was a renowned public and cultural figure engaged in ecclesiastical and political affairs.<sup>1</sup> His contribution on the cultural plan was especially important for the major political events of the period: the foundation of the University of Zagreb (founded in 1874), the Croatian (Yugoslav) Academy of Sciences and Arts (opened in 1866) and the Gallery of Old Masters (opened in 1884), now widely known under the name Strossmayer Gallery.<sup>2</sup> Strossmayer entrusted the Academy with his art collection in 1868, for the benefit of the people, and for that purpose he commissioned a Neo-Renaissance building in Zagreb to house the collection. The Gallery was opened in 1884 owing to the gift of the bishop.<sup>3</sup>

Besides that, Strossmayer financially sponsored numerous institutions, societies, educational facilities, reading-rooms, publications, and awarded many scholarships. The financial means for these endeavours were secured by rational management and modernization of ecclesiastical estates.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Josip Juraj Strossmayer (Osijek, 1815-1905), Bishop of Đakovo and Bosnia. He studied theology in Pest (1833-1837), where he was awarded a doctorate in philosophy in 1834, while he obtained a doctorate in theology from the Augustineum in Vienna in 1842. He acted as professor of mathematics and physics at the seminary in Đakovo, court chaplain (1847), professor of canon law and head master at Augustineum. On the suggestion of Ban Josip Jelačić he was appointed Bishop of Bosnia and Srijem on 18 November 1849, apostolic vicar for Serbia in 1851, a post which he held until 1896. His political activity started at the time of the 1848/1849 revolution. He was politically active in the Imperial Council in Vienna in 1860, Ban's Congregations in Zagreb in 1860-1861 and 1865, Diet of the Triune Kingdom in 1861 and 1865-1867, as great district prefect of the county of Virovitica (1861-1862). He was secluded from political life in 1873, following an unsuccessful revision of the Hungaro-Croatian Settlement. He was a member and the leader of the National Party. On Bishop Strossmayer, cf. Matija PAVIĆ – Milko CEPELIĆ, *Biskup Josip Juraj Strossmayer* [Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer], Đakovo, 1994; Međunarodni znanstveni skup Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Zagreb, 19. svibnja 2005. – Đakovo, 20. svibnja 2005.: povodom 190. obljetnice rođenja i 100. obljetnice smrti [International Scholarly Conference Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Zagreb, 19 May 2005 – Đakovo, 20 May 2005; on the occasion of the 190th anniversary of birth and the 100th anniversary of death], Franjo ŠANJEK (ed.), Zagreb, 2006; Međunarodni znanstveni skup Lik i djelo Josipa Jurja Strossmayera: zbornik radova [Proceedings of the International Scholarly Conference The Life and Work of Josip Juraj Strossmayer], Stanislav MARIJANOVIĆ (ed.), Osijek, 2008; Zbornik radova 7. i 8. Strossmayerovih dana [Proceedings of the 7th and 8th of Strossmayer Day], Ivica MANDIĆ (ed.), Đakovo, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Petar STRČIĆ, Josip Juraj Strossmayer danas [Josip Juraj Strossmayer Today], in: *Radovi Zavoda za znanstveni rad Varaždin*, 16-17 (2006), 103-139, notably p. 121-122.

<sup>3</sup> Ljerka DULIBIĆ – Iva PASINI TRŽEC, *Strossmayerova zbirka starih majstora* [Strossmayer's Collection of Old Masters], Zagreb, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Vinko ZLAMALIK, *Strossmayerova galerija starih majstora Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* [Strossmayer Gallery of the Old Masters of the Yugoslav Academy of Arts

This article will try to assess the contribution of Bishop Strossmayer to the foundation of the Gallery of Old Masters and his activity as an art collector. Collecting art in the nineteenth century was closely connected with the strengthening of national identity and formation of nations. Culture and arts as important components of a certain nation were gaining a significant place in the process of determination and then further, strengthening of national identity. In that direction, Bishop Strossmayer, also stimulated by the ideas of Enlightenment and education, intensely started to collect art.<sup>5</sup>

The crucial moment in the process of collecting art, which lasted many years, was Strossmayer's stay in Rome in the 1850s. Thence his interest was focused on obtaining valuable pieces of art (paintings and other artistic artefacts), which enabled the foundation and activity of the future Gallery.<sup>6</sup> He did not have any restrictions in the sense of style or chronology when collecting artwork, and therefore we can trace different styles and artistic periods in the Strossmayer's collection – from the fifteenth century Italian Renaissance art to contemporary Croatian art. The art collecting process was not conducted by Strossmayer personally; he delegated competent individuals to mediate the sale and auctions the artwork.<sup>7</sup> Until 1865 his associates were predominantly from Rome – professors at the Accademia di San Luca and at the Vatican's Accademia dei Virtuosi al Pantheon.<sup>8</sup> After that, Strossmayer was relying more on the canon of the College of St. Jerome (*Collegio Croato Di*

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and Sciences], Zagreb, 1982, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ljerka DULIBIĆ – Iva PASINI TRŽEC, Zbirka biskupa Strossmayera i osnutak današnje Strossmayerove galerije starih majstora [Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer's Art Collection and The Gallery of Old Masters in Zagreb ], in: *Hrvatska revija*, 1 (2014) (available at: <http://www.matica.hr/hr/410/Zbirka%20biskupa%20Strossmayera%20i%20osnutak%20dana%C5%A1nje%20Strossmayerove%20galerije%20starih%20majstora/>).

<sup>6</sup> After his stay in Rome, Strossmayer decided to give 1,000 *scudi* for the purpose of purchase of paintings. See more: Zoran GRIJAK, Korespondencija Josip Juraj Strossmayer – Izidor Kršnjavi (1875.-1884.) [Josip Juraj Strossmayer – Izidor Kršnjavi Correspondence (1875-1884)], in: *Cris*, 8 (2006) 1, 54-78, notably p. 56-58.

<sup>7</sup> Due to numerous economic activities which he modernized in his diocese, Strossmayer obtained financial gain, using which he could have helped a number of institutions. See more: Petar STRČIĆ, Josip Juraj Strossmayer danas, 120-121 and Domagoj ŠEGREGUR, Stvaranje Strossmayerove galerije [Foundation of the Strossmayer Gallery], in: *Cris*, 14 (2012) 1, 429-436, notably p. 430.

<sup>8</sup> The individuals in question were: Alfonso Chierici (1816-1873), Luigi Cochetti (1802-1884), Pietro Gagliardi (1809-1890). Cf. Zoran GRIJAK, Korespondencija Josip Juraj Strossmayer – Izidor Kršnjavi (1875.-1884.), 57.

*San Girolamo*), Nikola Voršak in Rome<sup>9</sup> and a Fiumese painter, Ivan Simonetti<sup>10</sup> in Venice.<sup>11</sup>

Due to abundant correspondence Strossmayer kept with his art dealers, it is possible to reconstruct the foundation of the Gallery, and thence to research a wider topic of art dealership in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, important information from the correspondence allows us to attribute pieces of art. Extant correspondence between Strossmayer and Voršak, mostly kept in the Archives of CASA illuminates a series of details about Voršak's dealership in obtaining art for the bishop. The information, varying in extent, often revealed the name of the previous owners, description, valuation and details of the sale.<sup>13</sup>

One of the pieces of art which Bishop Strossmayer obtained through his Roman intermediary, canon Voršak, was the sculpture of Madonna with a child, authored by Czech sculptor Václav Levý (Nebežiny, Czech Republic 1820 – Prague, 1881).<sup>14</sup> He was the founder of the nineteenth century Czech sculpture where he began his work as a self-taught painter. National motives casted in the rocks of Blanik and Klacelka date from that period. With the courtesy of his patron, Baron A. Veith, he studied at the Munich Academy for three years (1845-1848). After the studies he went to Rome (1848-1866), where he was

<sup>9</sup> Nikola Voršak (Ilok, 1836 – Rome, 1880), held a doctorate in theology from the University of Vienna and was a professor at the lycee of the diocese in Đakovo. He was appointed canon of the Chapter of St. Jerome in Rome in 1863. Cf. Petar RAJIĆ, *Grobnica Zavoda svetoga Jeronima na groblju Campo Verano u Rimu* [Tomb of the Pontifical College of St. Jerome at the cemetery of Campo Verano in Rome], in: *Papinski hrvatski zavod svetog Jeronima (1901–2001). Zbornik u prigodi stoljetnice Papinskog hrvatskog zavoda Svetog Jeronima* [Pontifical Croatian College of St. Jerome (1901–2001) Proceedings on the occasion of Centenary of the Pontifical Croatian College of St. Jerome], Jure BOGDAN (ed.), Rim – Zagreb, 2001, 669; Mirjana GROSS, *Vijek i djelovanje Franje Račkog* [The Life and Activities of Franjo Racki], Zagreb, 2004, 249.

<sup>10</sup> Ivan Simonetti (Rijeka, 1817 – Venice, 1880) was a Croatian painter known for his portraits. He studied in Rijeka and then at the Academy in Venice. Boris VIZINTIN, *Ivan Simonetti*, Zagreb, 1965, biography p. 12-25; on the relations with Strossmayer, p. 43-49.

<sup>11</sup> Domagoj ŠEGREGUR, *Stvaranje Strossmayerove galerije*, 432-433.

<sup>12</sup> Ljerka DULIBIĆ – Iva PASINI TRŽEC, *Zbirka biskupa Strossmayera i osnutak današnje Strossmayerove galerije starih majstora*, (available at: <http://www.matica.hr/hr/410/Zbirka%20biskupa%20Strossmayera%20i%20osnutak%20dana%C5%A1nje%20Strossmayerove%20galerije%20starih%20majstora/>).

<sup>13</sup> Iva PASINI-TRŽEC – Ljerka DULIBIĆ, *Slike u Strossmayerovoj galeriji starih majstora nabavljene u Rimu do 1868. godine* [Paintings in the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters acquired in Rome up to 1868], in: *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, 32 (2008), 297-304, notably p. 297.

<sup>14</sup> More on Levý, in: Levý Václav, in: *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, V, Wien, 1972, 168 (available at <http://www.biographien.ac.at/oebl?frames=yes>); Levý, Václav, in: *Enciklopedija likovnih umjetnosti* [Encyclopaedia of Fine Arts], III, Zagreb, 1964, 311.

attributed to the circle of Nazarene artists (Johann Friedrich Overbeck, Peter von Cornelius, Franz Pforr, Wilhelm Schadow).<sup>15</sup>

Levý's Madonna was originally imagined in natural size, and a proof for that statement is a 191 cm high polychrome cast model, finished in 1857. However, the size of the finished statue was significantly smaller, only 76 cm.<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the statute was sculpted without a previous order, meaning, without financial background, therefore the lack of money might be a plausible explanation for the final, altered, smaller size. From one extant letter, kept in the Archives of CASA, which Levý sent from Rome to Bishop Strossmayer on 16 November 1865, we can confirm that the expenses for making the sculpture were really high.<sup>17</sup> It is possible they had known each other before.

In the general public this sculpture is known as the Gates of Heaven's, indicating immediately its theological meaning. Throughout history, depictions of Virgin Mary through the prism of »gates« were common, and there is also a clear liturgical connection. In the course of the liturgical year, mass patterns, as the part of The Collection of Masses on Blessed Virgin Mary are repeated, and the last pattern is entitled Blessed Virgin Mary, the Gate of Heaven. The explanation is that it *celebrates Mother of Christ who mercifully watches over God's people travelling to its heavenly home*. Moreover, Virgin Mary in giving birth to Christ became the »gates of heaven« herself. She is the new Eve, because as Eve had closed the doors of Heaven to the mankind, Mary opened them with her humility and faith. Thus, old Church fathers and writers often depicted Virgin Mary as the Gates of Heaven.<sup>18</sup> Strossmayer's interest in the Gates of Heaven sculpture is also justified by artistic tendencies of that time, because in the course of the

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<sup>15</sup> Nazarene movement were a group of German painters which founded an artistic confraternity of St. Luke in Vienna at the beginning of the nineteenth century, imitating medieval confraternities. After several years they moved their centre to Rome, and they were especially devoted to ecclesiastical paintings. More in: Nazarenci, in: *Hrvatska enciklopedija* [Croatian Encyclopaedia], *online edition*, 2013, (available at <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=43161>).

<sup>16</sup> Krunoslav KAMENOV, K/30. Václav Levý (Nebežiny, Česka 1820 – Prag, 1881). Bogorodica s djetetom na prijestolju [Madonna and Child on a Throne], in: *Dominikanci u Hrvatskoj* [Dominicans in Croatia] [Gallery Klovićevi dvori, 20 December 2007 – 30 March 2008: Catalogue of the exhibition] / [Texts Hana Breko Kustura et al.; authors of the Catalogue Units Joško Belamarić et al.; Bibliography Dino Milinović; Photos by Živko Bačić et al.], Zagreb, 2011, 403-404.

<sup>17</sup> Krunoslav Kamenov dated the letter incorrectly to 16 October 1865. Cf. Krunoslav KAMENOV, K/30. Václav Levý (Nebežiny, Czech Republic 1820 – Prague 1881), 403.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. [http://www.franjevcisplit.hr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1030&Itemid=34](http://www.franjevcisplit.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1030&Itemid=34).

nineteenth century iconography was didactic and conventional; it popularized depictions of traditional patron saints, and especially Mary and Joseph.<sup>19</sup>

In the correspondence between Strossmayer and Voršak we have discovered a number of interesting facts about Strossmayer's purchase of the sculpture. On the basis of extant letters from February 1865 it is possible to trace the beginning of their correspondence on the sculpture. At the end of February, Voršak informed Strossmayer from Rome that Levy was asking 1,200 Roman *scudi* for his Madonna but for the Bishop, he would reduce the price by 100 *scudi*, because the sculpture should »dopala dobrih i vriednih rukuh« [come in good and worthy hands].<sup>20</sup> To settle for a lower price, at that point, was not an option for Levy, and Voršak suggested to Strossmayer to commission someone else to make the sculpture – a Croatian sculptor Vatroslav Donegani.<sup>21</sup> He listed the following reasons: because of its size Levy's Madonna would be more suitable for a room-sized church, and not for the altar, unless it was made according to the sculpture; Donegani was willing to work without a commission and he was Croatian.<sup>22</sup> Voršak spoke on Donegani's behalf by saying: »Ja sam puno uvjeren, da bi svako djelo Doneganiovo vriednostju i umjetninom nadmašilo ma koje Levyevo« [I am completely convinced that every Donegani's work would exceed any of Levy's in its value and artistic expression].<sup>23</sup> Thus, at the beginning, Voršak was suspicious towards the value of the sculpture due to its size and artistic value.

Nevertheless, Strossmayer demanded of Voršak, through Josip Miškatović,<sup>24</sup> that experts value the sculpture, which was finally done in mid-December

<sup>19</sup> Irena KRAŠEVAC, *Skulptura i oltari đakovečke katedrale u kontekstu sakralne umjetnosti u 19. stoljeću* [Sculptures and Altars of the Đakovo Cathedral in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century], in: *Međunarodni znanstveni skup Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Zagreb, 19. svibnja 2005.* – Đakovo, 20. svibnja 2005., 465.

<sup>20</sup> Arhiv Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti (HR-AHAZU-59), *The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer*, XI A, 1/Vor. Ni. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Vatroslav Donegani (Rijeka, 1836 – Đakovo, 1899) was a famous Croatian nineteenth century sculptor. Cf. Donegani, Vatroslav, in: *Hrvatska likovna enciklopedija* [Croatian Encyclopedia of Fine Arts], II, Zagreb, 2005, 60; Dragan DAMJANOVIĆ, Vatroslav Donegani, voditelj gradnje i kipar đakovačke katedrale [Vatroslav Donegani, Construction Manager and Sculptor of the Đakovo Cathedral], in: *Anali zavoda za znanstveni i umjetnički rad u Osijeku*, 24 (2008), 7-35.

<sup>22</sup> The cathedral in question is the one in Đakovo, which was built by the agency of Strossmayer in 1866. Interior design and sculptural decorations belong to the period from 1876 to 1882. More, in: Irena KRAŠEVAC, *Skulptura i oltari đakovečke katedrale u kontekstu sakralne umjetnosti u 19. stoljeću*, 455.

<sup>23</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, *The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer*, XI A, 1/Vor. Ni. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Josip Miškatović (Cernik, 1836 – Zagreb, 1890) was a Croatian publicist and politician, secondary school teacher in Osijek and Zagreb, and editor of journals *Novi Pozor* and

1865. Voršak hired a famous Italian painter Niccolo Consoni,<sup>25</sup> who was his frequent associate, and an Italian sculptor Luigi Amici,<sup>26</sup> »koj je liepi onaj i gorostasni spomenik Grguru XVI us. Petra ukljesao« [who sculpted that pretty and gigantic monument of Gregory XVI at the Saint Peter's].<sup>27</sup> Consoni assessed the work as artistically valuable, and especially emphasized Levy's diligence. He recommended Strossmayer to purchase the statute, regardless of its size, especially because it was worth 1,000 *scudi*, which was its final price.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, German theologian Augustin Theiner valued the statute, giving his positive final marks.<sup>29</sup> After expert valuation of the statute, Voršak himself changed his initial opinion and was inclined towards expert advice. In that sense, he wrote to the bishop, praising the sculpture by saying that there would not be an altar matching the one with Levy's sculpture.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, it is interesting to look at the correspondence between Voršak and Strossmayer about lowering the price of the sculpture, or about Voršak's bargaining on Strossmayer's behalf. Although the original price was 1,200 *scudi*, which Voršak managed to lower to 1,000, yet even after that, he continued to bargain. Voršak wrote to Strossmayer that after the valuation he had paid a visit to Levy and started to lower the price by 100 more *scudi*, however, Levy would not accept it.<sup>31</sup> The artist explained to Voršak that he invested his two-year scholarship in the statue. Finally, Voršak managed to lower the price by another 50 *scudi*, under the pretext that the transport of the

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Zatočnik. Cf. Miškatović, Josip, in: *Hrvatska enciklopedija, online edition*, 2013, (<http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=41229>); Ana BIOČIĆ, *Političko neslaganje ili sukob biskupa i svećenika? Prilog za životopis Josipa Miškatovića (1836.-1890.)*, in: *Historijski zbornik*, 70 (2017) 2, 395-409. Voršak's letter from Rome of 16 December 1865. Archive Šuljak, let. no. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Nikola Consoni (Ceprano, 1814 – Rome, 1884), famous Italian painter of mostly sacred and historical motives. More in: *L'enciclopedia Italiana, Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani Treccani*, XXVIII, 1983, (online version <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nicola-consoni/>).

<sup>26</sup> Luigi Amici (1817 – Rome, 1897), was a famous Italian sculptor, who authored several important works, including a statue of Bishop Strossmayer. More in: *L'enciclopedia Italiana, Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani Treccani*, II, 1960, (online version [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-amici\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-amici_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/)).

<sup>27</sup> Voršak's letter from Rome of 16 December 1865. Archive Šuljak, let. no. 2.

<sup>28</sup> The size of the statute was mentioned several times as the deficiency of the sculpture. The problem was that it was not in natural size, yet her height was 76 cm. More in: Krunoslav KAMENOV, K/30. Václav Levy, 403.

<sup>29</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer, XI A / Vor. Ni. 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Voršak's letter from Rome of 16 December 1865. Archive Šuljak, let. no. 2.

statute itself to Đakovo would cost Strossmayer another 1,000 *scudi*. In his letter of 25 February 1866 Strossmayer confirmed the sale of the statute of the Virgin Mary at a price of 950 *scudi*, which was evidently its final price.<sup>32</sup>

According to Voršak's letter of 13 February 1866, Levy impatiently inquired about Strossmayer's opinion, hoping for sale and payment.<sup>33</sup> In a later letter Voršak emphasized it openly by stating that he had given a couple of his own *scudi* to Levy, who was desperate and wanted to return home as soon as possible, and to do so, he needed money from the purchase.<sup>34</sup> Voršak reported to Strossmayer that Levy intended to leave Rome, because of problems with his eyes, and he intended to get treatment in his homeland – Bohemia.<sup>35</sup>

After the purchase, the statute was sent to Strossmayer in Đakovo on 7 March 1866, which was reported in a letter dated 13 March.<sup>36</sup> Precisely then, Voršak described the statute of the Virgin Mary as the Gates of Heaven and the means of packing to protect the sculpture better – he used hay and canvas before putting it into a crate.<sup>37</sup> According to Voršak's letter, the sculpture was supposed to travel via Ancona, then by Lloyd's through Trieste to Zagreb. According to the bishop's demand, the statute was supposed to arrive to Đakovo, via Sisak and Brod, and to parish priest Oršolić, who was supposed to inform Strossmayer about the statute's arrival.<sup>38</sup> From this description we have an insight into the means of transfer of art in the course of sale, which was not that simple.

In his letter Voršak explains how, with special care, the statute should be unwrapped and put together, so it would not be damaged: »Sve je pritvoreno s' uvijači, a tako valja i odklapat brez treske« [Everything is sealed with screwdrivers, and so it should be unscrewed without shaking].<sup>39</sup> He also wrote about optimal conditions for the installation of the statute – »Stolčić, na koj bi jur razmotan i sklopljen kip posadili neka je po prilici 5-6 stopah visok, da oko motreće shvatit more vàs izražaj. I svjetlost neka je prijatna. Soba na jedan prozor čini mi se da je najprikladnija« [The table on which the wrapped statue should be installed is approximately 5-6 feet tall, so the watching eye can observe its expression. And the light is somehow pleasant.

<sup>32</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer, XI A, 1/Vor. N. 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer, XI A / Vor. Ni. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Voršak's letter from Rome of December 16, 1865. Archive Šuljak, let. no. 2.

<sup>36</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer, XI A / Vor. Ni. 6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



The one-window room seems to me the most appropriate]. For transport Voršak managed to obtain a free-pass, »*lascia passare*«<sup>40</sup> from the Austrian emissary.

There are two pieces of evidence that the statute had arrived safely to Đakovo, and the first proof is the bishop's letter; Strossmayer responded on 10 May 1866 that Levy's statue had arrived undamaged to Đakovo.<sup>41</sup> The second proof is a telegram which Strossmayer sent to Voršak about the arrival of the statute. Although the telegram itself is not extant, Voršak in his letter to Strossmayer confirmed the receipt of it.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Voršak confirmed that the amount of 1,200 *scudi* which Strossmayer had sent via an emissary, arrived to his hands, and from that money he gave 950 *scudi* to Levy.

A curiosity regarding the statute is certainly the fact that Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) blessed it at Voršak's suggestion.<sup>43</sup> According to his letter to Bishop Strossmayer of 13 March 1866 we discover that the Pope had actually blessed the statue, and furthermore, issued a confirmation (certificate).<sup>44</sup> The statute was exhibited at the Vatican's consistorial chamber where the Pope saw it and praised its artistic value. According to Voršak, the Pope was impressed by the representation of the Blessed Virgin Mary because of the similarities to those of the first Christians in the catacombs. He had shown interest about the place of exhibition of the statute, and the details were clarified by the builder of the Venetian palace, Barvitijski the Czech.

The evidence that Levy's art was actually a part of Strossmayer's collection is the Strossmayer's list of art which he had purchased and donated to the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. The list was done on 2 October 1868 for the purpose of collecting the bishop's donation to the Gallery.<sup>45</sup> Kip Majke Božje s djetetom od Levi-ja Ceha [Statue of Virgin Mary with a child by Levy the Czech] is listed as item 102.<sup>46</sup> There is another inventory of art conducted by the bishop's secretary Milko Cepelić on 13 July 1883, on the occasion of transferring art which the bishop had given to the Academy, from Đakovo to Zagreb. Namely, on the eve of the grand opening of the Gallery of Old Masters, the works of art which the bishop had donated were still in Đakovo, and had

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer, XI A,1/Vor. N. 6.

<sup>42</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer, XI A / Vor. Ni. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Voršak's letter from Rome of 16 December 1865. Archive Šuljak, let. no. 2.

<sup>44</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, The legacy of Bishop Strossmayer, XI A / Vor. Ni. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Vinko ZLAMALIK, *Strossmayerova galerija starih majstora Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, List of art, XI-B-IV/57, Strossmayer list of art.

to be transported to Zagreb.<sup>47</sup> The Gates of Heaven sculpture is not listed there.<sup>48</sup> Strossmayer's list contains 117 pieces of art in total, while Cepelić lists 284 pieces of art. The reason for the discrepancy in the lists is Strossmayer's further art collecting, after the donation of 1868 all until the grand opening of the Gallery in Zagreb on 9 November 1884.<sup>49</sup> Following the chronology we can conclude that the Gates of Heaven sculpture was lost from the records between 1868 and 1883.

## 2. The Gates of Heaven and the Dominicans in Dubrovnik

The Gates of Heaven sculpture is now kept at the Dominican Monastery in Dubrovnik. However, the circumstances regarding the transfer from the bishop's collection to the monastery remain unclear. There is oral tradition of the Ragusan Dominicans how the sculpture came into their possession, according to which Strossmayer traded the sculpture for a specific painting from the Ragusan collection.

Namely, the Dominican Monastery and church in Dubrovnik are enriched by works of art of all periods and styles, from the Pre-Romanesque to modern art. The fact that the Dominicans owned such valuable and expensive art is justifiable by the important role of their monasteries in medieval communes. They are a reflection of communal awareness, and their exquisite taste is a consequence of their European education and international connections, which influenced their choice of art. The Dominicans came into possession of valuable art due to donations of wealthy and influential families which had personal altars consecrated to local and family saints.<sup>50</sup>

Although the case in question is a sacral building, alongside sacral art one can find profane art alike. It can be connected with foreign ambassadors who resided in the Dominican Monastery when visiting the Republic, and before departure, they would donate valuable profane works of art.<sup>51</sup> Many cases of the distribution of foreign artists alongside national ones should be

<sup>47</sup> Krešimir PAVIĆ – Ivica ŠESTAN, *Život i rad Milka Cepelića* [Life and work of Milko Cepelić], Đakovo, 1979.

<sup>48</sup> HR-AHAZU-59, List of art, XI-B-IV/58, Cepelić list of art.

<sup>49</sup> Vinko ZLAMALIK, *Strossmayerova galerija starih majstora Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Zoraida DEMORI STANIČIĆ, *Slikarstvo u crkvama dominikanskog reda u Dalmaciji od 1300. do 1520. godine* [Paintings in the Church of the Dominican Order in Dalmatia from 1300 to 1520], *Dominikanci u Hrvatskoj*, 120-127, notably p. 123.

<sup>51</sup> Stjepan KRASIĆ, *Dominikanski samostan u Dubrovniku* [The Dominican Monastery in Dubrovnik], Dubrovnik, 2002, 17, 23.

underlined. From the latter we can find Vlaho Bukovac (The miracle of St. Dominic and several other work), Đuro Pultika (Holy Family), Ivan Meštrović (Relief of Mourning of Christ), Stipo Sikirica (Cross, Last Supper), Nikola Božidarević (Virgin with Saints), Lovro Dobričević (Baptism of Christ), and from the former, Francesco Di Mario (Virgin with Saints), Paolo Veneziano (Crucifix), Joos van Cleve (Christ and Mary), several works of Vecelli Titian (St. Blaise, St. Magdalene with Toby, Archangel Rafael and Donator), followed by many others.<sup>52</sup> From the period of modernism the works of Edo Murtić (Scenery), Ivan Lacković (St. Dominic), Dimitrije Popović (Golgota), Mersad Berber (Death on the Cross), etc.<sup>53</sup> stand out. The presence of foreign authors, especially Italian masters, is a result of a trend of obtaining art from the Apennine Peninsula in the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

The most numerous are the fifteenth and sixteenth century objects, which can be a result of the fact that the Republic was an important centre of arts and crafts and builders precisely in that period. Then, the Ragusan monastery experienced the final stage of its emergence. In the fundus of the Ragusan Dominicans the most numerous artefacts are paintings, and under the influence of Italian renaissance painting, the »Ragusan painting school« with a centre in the Dominican church emerged in Dubrovnik.<sup>55</sup> Besides paintings, in their Ragusan monastery the Dominicans owned valuable sculptures, from the tenth century ornaments, and reliefs of tomb stones, various sculptures of stone, wood, marble and bronze, to a line of goldsmith's objects.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The list of artwork from the Ragusan Dominican church, cf. Stjepan KRASIĆ, *Dominikanski samostan u Dubrovniku*, 40-51 and the list of artwork of the Monastery museum p. 57-111.

<sup>53</sup> On the collection of modern art, cf. Stjepan KRASIĆ, *Dominikanski samostan u Dubrovniku*, 121-131.

<sup>54</sup> The reasons besides the Ottoman threat and wars were the growth of larger Italian cities of Venice, Florence and Naples, and their establishment as artistic centres of new styles. More in: Radoslav TOMIĆ, *Slikarstvo i skulptura u dominikanskim crkvama Dalmacije od 16. do 19. stoljeća* [Paintings and Sculpture in the Dominican Church of Dalmatia from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century], *Dominikanci u Hrvatskoj*, 130-160, notably p. 130.

<sup>55</sup> More on confraternities: Stjepan KRASIĆ, *Dominikanski samostan u Dubrovniku*, 18-19.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. f. 52.

### 3. The connections of Bishop Strossmayer and the Ragusan Dominicans. In lieu of a conclusion

When discussing the connections of Bishop Strossmayer with the Dominicans, they can be seen through their correspondence, and some letters are kept in the archives of the Provincial of the Croatian Dominican Province.<sup>57</sup> The remainder is kept in the archives of the Congregation of Sisters Dominicans in Korčula, and most of them the bishop addressed to a Dominican Anđeo Marija Miškov (1848-1922).<sup>58</sup> The letters are testimonies of Strossmayer's ties with the Dominicans, as well as the bishop's aspiration of attracting them to his diocese. For that purpose, he offered to Miškov adequate space in his diocese and assured the basic capital.<sup>59</sup> He also offered them administration of a seminary and collegium, which he had planned to open.<sup>60</sup> Strossmayer founded the trust for a male seminary, which had to assure Dominican management of the seminary, yet it was not realised in the course of the bishop's life because of a too small number of Dominican brothers.<sup>61</sup>

Besides material evidence which indicate the contacts of Bishop Strossmayer with the Ragusan Dominicans, their connections were present on the level of personal encounters. It is noted in Miškov's letter to his provincial, of May 1889, that the Dominicans were doing missionary work in the Diocese of Đakovo, and met personally with Bishop Strossmayer.<sup>62</sup> Grateful for cordial audience of the Dominicans there, the provincial of the order sent to the bishop a letter of thanks, with a certificate in which the general of the order Josip Larocca proclaimed the bishop »dionikom svih duhovnih dobara dominikanskog Reda« [the user of all spiritual possessions of the Dominican Order]. After this first mission, the Dominicans had 108 more in the Diocese of Đakovo until 1904. It is also known that the provincial of the Dominicans

<sup>57</sup> Twenty three letters of Bishop Strossmayer addressed to provincials of the Dominican province from 1888 to 1901 are extant. See more: Anđelko L. FAZINIĆ, *Korespondencija Strossmayera s hrvatskim dominikancima* [Strossmayer and Croatian Dominicans Correspondence], special print from *Nova et vetera*, 35 (1985), 71-104.

<sup>58</sup> Forty-five letters authored by Strossmayer are kept in the congregation of the sisters Dominicans in Korčula. Cf. Anđelko L. FAZINIĆ, *Pisma biskupa Strossmayera hrvatskim dominikancima* [Letters of Bishop Strossmayer to Croatian Dominicans], in: *Arhivski vijesnik*, 15 (1972), 69-83.

<sup>59</sup> Anđelko L. FAZINIĆ, *Korespondencija Strossmayera s hrvatskim dominikancima*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> Anđelko L. FAZINIĆ, *Pisma biskupa Strossmayera hrvatskim dominikancima*, 69.

<sup>61</sup> Anđelko L. FAZINIĆ, *Korespondencija Strossmayera s hrvatskim dominikancima*, 77-78.

<sup>62</sup> Alongside Miškov, the Dominicans travelling to Đakovo were Jerko Vlahović and Antonin Pisturić. Cf. Anđelko L. FAZINIĆ, *Korespondencija Strossmayera s hrvatskim dominikancima*, 73.

Alfons Petrinčić paid a visit to Bishop Strossmayer in 1895. The result of the connections with the bishop proved to be fruitful for the Dominicans, since he financially aided the foundation of a women's institute in Korčula, with the purpose of women's education in the native language.<sup>63</sup>

Taking into consideration the fact that Strossmayer and the Dominicans had many contacts, and furthermore, that the Ragusan Dominicans actually owned something for trading in their rich fundus, oral tradition on the exchange can also be considered in the context of a real possibility. Supporting is the fact that the bishop thrived, although through agents, when purchasing art, did not impose any chronological nor stylistic limitations, and tried to obtain mostly painting of old masters from the period of Renaissance and Baroque, art which is most present in the Ragusan monastery. Finally, Dominican monasteries along the Croatian coast, although wealthy with paintings, were poorer with statues and sculptures from the early modern period. Thus, in all likelihood, the exchange of painting(s) for the Gates of Heaven sculpture should be regarded as one of the possible reasons of tracing the artwork in its final destination to the monastery in Dubrovnik.<sup>64</sup>

### *Sažetak*

#### **BISKUP STROSSMAYER I SKULPTURA DUBROVAČKIH DOMINIKANACA »VRATA NEBESKA«**

Ana BIOČIĆ

Katolički bogoslovni fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
Vlaška 38, p.p. 432, 10 001 Zagreb  
anabiocic.1@gmail.com

*U Samostanu sv. Dominika u Dubrovniku pohranjena je mramorna skulptura maloga Isusa u krilu Bogorodice na prijestolju koja je djelo poznatog češkog kipara Václava Levýa (1820.-1870.). Radi se o utemeljitelju moderne češke kiparske škole 19. stoljeća što mu je donijelo određenu slavu izvan okvira njegove domovine. Poznato je kako je navedenu skulpturu kupio đakovački biskup Josip Juraj Strossmayer 1866. godine, a njezin daljnji put, do dubrovačkog dominikanskog samostana, ostao je do danas nepo-*

<sup>63</sup> Anđelko L. FAZINIĆ, Strossmayer i Korčula [Strossmayer and Korcula], in: *Croatica christiana periodica*, 3 (1979) 3, 70-79, notably p. 71, 75.

<sup>64</sup> Radoslav TOMIĆ, Slikarstvo i skulptura u dominikanskim crkvama Dalmacije od 16. do 19. stoljeća, *Dominikanci u Hrvatskoj*, 151.

znat. U ovom se radu donose zanimljivosti vezane uz kupnju skulpture preuzete iz korespondencije biskupa Strossmayera s Nikolom Voršakom (1836.-1880), kanonikom u Kaptolu svetoga Jeronima u Rimu, a koja je pohranjena u Arhivu Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Zagrebu i Nadbiskupijskom arhivu u Đakovu. Zahvaljujući korespondenciji doznajemo detalje oko kupnje skulpture (cjenkanje tijekom kupnje, procjene vrijednosti od strane stručnjaka i podatke o papinu blagoslovu skulpture). U istom se arhivu HAZU u Zagrebu nalazi korespondencija Strossmayera sa samim umjetnikom Levým iz koje je razvidno njihovo poznanstvo i prije kupnje skulpture.

Ključne riječi: *Biskup Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Dominikanci u Dubrovniku, skulptura »Vrata nebeska«, Václav Levý.*