

A historical reconstruction of the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila (Kaštela, Croatia, 17th century)

Vinka Klišmanić ,
Mladen Domazet

University of Split, Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences, Split, Croatia

Aim: To explore the historical basis of the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila, which tells the story of the tragic love between Miljenko Rosani and Dobrila Vitturi, descendants of Kaštela nobility, doomed by the feud between their families.

Methods: We analyzed Ivačić's translation of Marko Kažotić's *Miljenko e Dobrila* (*Miljenko i Dobrila* in Croatian); sources and literature on the Vitturi and Rosani families; materials within the archives of Kaštela, Trogir, and the Split Archdiocesan Archive; literature on the social context of 17th-century Dalmatia; the version of the legend recorded by Neven Bučan; and the correspondence between the Dalmatian *provveditore* and the Venetian Doge in the 17th century.

Results: We divided our findings into two categories: arguments that support the historicity of the legend and those that do not. We verified the novel's settings – the Vitturi Castle in Kaštel Lukšić, the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir, and the Church of St. John at Rušinac – as well as the historicity of Francesco, Elisabetta, and Dobrila Vitturi; Dobrila's sister Klara (not mentioned in the novel); and Celio Doroteo (a Trogir counselor from the 17th century). We confirmed the feud between the Vitturi and Rosani families and the existence of the epitaph “May the lovers rest in peace” on a tomb in the Church of St. John at Rušinac and related the Vitturi family and the Monastery of St. Nicholas based on Francesco Vitturi's epitaph, his will, and his wife's inscription. However, we found no evidence that Dobrila was forcibly kept in the Monastery, or that Miljenko and Dobrila were either married or buried together, or that Miljenko was murdered in the 17th century. We could not corroborate the existence of Miljenko Rosani, his father Adalbert, Don Mavro, and the Trogir nobleman Družimir. We refuted the involvement of the Vitturi family in the transfer of the relics of St. John of Trogir.

Conclusions: The findings of this historical reconstruction were insufficient to decisively confirm or refute that the Kaštela legend was based on a real event. Due to the limitations of available sources, a substantial portion of the legend remains unexplored.

Keywords: legend of Miljenko and Dobrila; Dobrila Vitturi; Miljenko Rosani (Rušinić); Castle Vitturi; Castle Rosani; Kaštela

Correspondence to:

Vinka Klišmanić
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Split, Poljička cesta 35, 21000 Split, Croatia
klismanicv@gmail.com

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Introduction

The legend of Miljenko and Dobrila has become accessible and interesting to the wider public, i.e., the population outside the area of Trogir, Kaštela, and Split, following the publication of Marko Kažotić's novel *Milienco e Dobrilla* (*Miljenko i Dobrila* in Croatian, translated as "Miljenko and Dobrila") in 1833. According to Šoulavy and Bućan's study of local lore, the legend has existed in Kaštela since the end of the 17th century, when the tragic story allegedly took place ((1), p. 149). Therefore, the oral tradition of the legend preceded the publication of Kažotić's novel. The narrative closely resembles William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", which predates Kažotić's novel by two centuries.

We will take an in-depth look into the Vitturi and Rosani family histories to either confirm or refute the historical existence of the legendary protagonists, Dobrila and Miljenko, and will examine whether the characters of Don Mavro, Counsel Celio Doroteo from Trogir, and Lord Družimir are mentioned in available sources. We will also outline the links between the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir and the Vitturis, and investigate the feasibility of Dobrila's forced residence in the monastery. By analysing sources dealing with the transfer of St. John of Trogir's relics, we will determine whether Dobrila and her family took part in the event. We will also examine the dating of the grave inscription *Pokoj ljubovnikom* (translated as "May the lovers rest in peace") which, according to the legend, marks Dobrila and Miljenko's final resting place. Lastly, we will provide an analysis of sources that should presumably reference the tragic event, given its nature – namely, a murder in a noble family.

The legend

The tale of Miljenko and Dobrila was passed down from generation to generation among the peasantry, during village gatherings and festivities. In the preface to his *Milienco e Dobrilla*, Kažotić also noted that he first encountered the Kaštela legend by word of mouth, after which he serendipitously discovered an anonymous manuscript that helped him flesh out the tale ((2), p. 3). The content of the oral tradition and Kažotić's novel are largely congruent. In the novel, a young man and woman, believed to be descendants of the historical clans of Rosanis and Vitturis from Kaštela, respectively, grow up together because of the ties between their families and eventually fall in love. Their closeness ends after a dispute between their fathers over some noble privileges, due to which Miljenko and Dobrila were prohibited from seeing each other. Miljenko is sent to serve in the Venetian military, while Dobrila is forced to marry the Trogir nobleman Družimir in order to preserve the reputation of the noble Vitturi family. Dobrila was extremely unhappy because she did not love Družimir. This was noticed by her maid, who informed Miljenko, who, in turn, returned and dramatically disrupted the wedding ceremony with a sword in his hand. As punishment, Dobrila's father, Count Radoslav, confined her to a Benedictine monastery in Trogir, while Miljenko was exiled to the Franciscan monastery on Visovac by local authorities. With the help of a wet nurse from a nearby village, Miljenko sends word from his exile to Dobrila, telling of his enduring love and informing her of his location. Dobrila managed to escape from the monastery at night and join Miljenko on the

small island of Visovac, where they decided to get married. Count Radoslav, who was informed about Dobrila's escape, sent his representatives to Visovac to convince Dobrila and Miljenko to get married in the church in his castle, with his blessing. Radoslav, however, secretly wanted to take revenge on the young man and the girl for the shame they had caused him. Miljenko and Dobrila naively agreed to the hand of reconciliation, so they returned home, where a great wedding celebration was organized in their honor. At the very end of the event, at the moment when Miljenko and Dobrila were supposed to go to Miljenko's castle together, he was fatally wounded by a gunshot. Dobrila, inconsolable from grief, soon fell ill. On her deathbed, when she was to receive the last anointing, she called her father Radoslav and Miljenko's father Adalbert. Radoslav confessed to her that he had killed Miljenko, and was soon murdered himself by a stab of Adalbert's sword. Dobrila passed away herself soon after. The lovers are buried together in the Kaštela chapel, in a single grave bearing the Croatian inscription *Pokoj ljubovnikom*, meaning "May the lovers rest in peace" (1–3).

The legend of Miljenko and Dobrila in Croatian historiography

Despite its considerable popularity since the 19th century, particularly in Dalmatia, the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila remains largely overlooked in European and Croatian historiography. It was only investigated by historian Vjeko Omašić, albeit not at length (4). Omašić, believing that the oral tradition was true, assumed that the legend involved the Vitturi and Rosani families from Kaštela, with Dobrila Vitturi and Miljenko Rosani as the central figures. His arguments were based not only on folklore, but also on Kažotić's description of the legend's setting (2). Omašić, however, believed that Kažotić altered the characters' names for his novel. Based on the chronology and available historical sources, he posited that Count Radoslav was, in fact, Francesco Vitturi, that his wife Countess Marija was Isabetta (Elizabeta in Croatian, Elisabetta in English) Vitturi, and that Dobrila's name was accurate. He also assumed that the novel preserved the true names of both Miljenko and his father Adalbert, although he could not find any mention of them in his sources. Guided by this theory, Omašić undertook several investigations into the Kaštela legend. Archival documents from the State Archive in Split and the Kaštel Lukšić Parish Archive confirmed that the respective families were, indeed, feuding, though the tragic conclusion of the rivalry could be neither proved nor disproved ((4), p. 165). Art historians have looked into the Vitturi family estate and the clan's ties to ecclesiastical institutions, finding a centuries-long link between the family and the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir, which bears an epitaph for Francesco Vitturi and an inscription left by his wife Elizabeta (5). Despite the chronological relevance of these inscriptions, they have yet to be put to use in the historiographical research of the legend. The investigation by Henrik Šoulavy, which focused on the oral versions of the legend, was documented by Neven Bućan (1). This research, however, has shed little light on the historical basis of the legend, leaving many questions still unanswered. The historicity of the Vitturi and Rosani families, identified by Omašić as the protagonists of the legend based on Kaštela lore and Kažotić's depictions, remains the only irrefutable fact.

Retelling the legend

The various adaptations of the legend and their authors are presented in chronological order in **Table 1**. The legend was widespread not only in Croatia, but also in Italy and Russia. In Italy, for example, a drama and opera based on the theme of Kažotić's novel. The drama was authored by Virgilio Donzelli, while the opera entitled *Milienco e Dobrilla*, the first such piece about this legend, was composed by Neapolitan opera musician Salvatore A. Strino around 1888 ((1), p. 172). The content of Kažotić's novel is quite reminiscent of "The Duke of Trogir", a Russian tragedy in five acts written in 1881 by the playwright, prose writer, theatre critic and translator Dmitry Vasiljevič Averkijev. The subtitle of this drama, the story of which the author states was adapted from Dalmatian folklore, suggests that it is very likely the same story ((3), p. 84–85).

Table 1. Known adaptations of the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila in a chronological sequence, together with the names of their authors

Author	Title and type of retelling	Year
Marko Kažotić	<i>Milienco e Dobrilla</i> , novel	1833
Dimitrije Demetar	<i>Ivo i Neda</i> , short story	1844
Matija Ban	<i>Miljenko i Dobrila</i> , play	1850
Dmitrij Vasiljevič Averkijev	<i>Trogirski vojvoda</i> , five-act play	1881
Salvatore A. Strino	<i>Milienco e Dobrilla</i> , opera	1888
Bartul Matijaca	<i>Miljenko i Dobrila</i> – a translation of M. Kažotić's novel	1889
Ante Ivačić	<i>Miljenko i Dobrila</i> – a translation of M. Kažotić's novel	1929
Milivoj Koludrović	<i>Miljenko i Dobrila</i> , libretto of a three-act folk opera with an overture and epilogue	1952
Zdenko Runjić, Neven Bućan	<i>Legenda o Miljenku i Dobrili</i> , poem	1964
Neven Bućan	<i>Miljenko i Dobrila</i> , contemporary novel	1985

Previous research: the intersection of legend and reality (current assumptions)

Scholars and others began showing interest in the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila in the early 20th century, particularly in the Kaštela Bay area, with early research focusing on the oral lore, Kažotić's *Milienco e Dobrilla*, as well as registers from the Kaštel Lukšić Parish Archive and the Split Archdiocesan Archive. Here we provide a concise overview of the assumptions and findings based on the research by Henrik Šoulavy, Neven Bućan, Mate Zorić, and Vjeko Omašić.

Henrik Šoulavy and Neven Bućan: researching oral traditions

Henrik Šoulavy, a physician, explored the oral tradition surrounding the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila by talking to the Kaštela peasants, nobles, and noblewomen in his care. His interest was mostly driven by tourism (he had opened a guesthouse in Kaštel Lukšić in 1909) and by his desire to attract new visitors by sharing the local tragic love story with his guests, usually European scholars ((1), p. 157). The results of Šoulavy's research were

reported by Neven Bućan, who claimed that Šoulavy had been granted partial access to the Cambi family archive, where he discovered several documents and records, as well as heard first-hand accounts from Lord Cambi, passed down through generations of noble families who owned the Galeuša Summer House, built in 1590 by Split nobles, the Tartaglia family. While studying these records and the oral traditions of the Tartaglia family – whom he met through the Ambrossini and Cambi families, from whom, in turn, he had purchased the Galeuša Summer House – Šoulavy came across three different versions of the legend of the tragically fated lovers of Kaštela. The first version of the legend was used by Professor Omašić as the focal point for his research ((1), p. 155).

The first version

The most well-known version of the legend tells the tragic love story of Miljenko Rosani and Dobrila Vitturi. Miljenko is brutally murdered by Dobrila's father, Francesco, on the drawbridge of Vitturi Castle, in the wake of a conflict between the Rosani and Vitturi families. Dobrila, stricken with grief, dies shortly after. The lovers are buried together in a single grave marked with the inscription "May the lovers rest in peace" ((1), p. 155–156).

The second version

The protagonists of the alternative version of the legend are Dobrila Vitturi, Petar Tartaglia (the illegitimate son of Ludovik Tartaglia born in 1639 as the sole male heir to the Tartaglia line), and his housemaid Magdalena. Petar Tartaglia marries Dobrila, but also pursues an intimate relationship with her sister, Klara, who had remained unmarried and had led a disreputable life. Dobrila and Petar both die under mysterious circumstances in 1691, after a legal dispute in Trogir that divided the Vitturi family estate ((1), p. 156).

The third version

This version departs significantly from the widely known and acknowledged tale of the first one, but still retains the act of Rosani's murder and the links between the Rosani and Vitturi families. It partly draws from the account of the murder of a Rosani in the early 17th century, recorded by the historian Pavao Andreis from Trogir. Tensions between the noble Rosani family (also known as Rušinić) from modern-day Kaštel Lukšić and the Cega family from Kaštel Stari culminated in the fatal shooting of a Rosani by an unidentified member of the Cega family around 1615. Dominik Rosani, who lived in Rušinić Castle during this period, was married to Jelena Vitturi ((1), p. 156).

The root of the conflict between the Rosanis and Vitturis

Based on Šoulavy's conversation with Countess Jelisava Cambi, the animosity between Francesco Vitturi and Adalbert Rosani purportedly ran deeper than a squabble about lordly privileges. The underlying cause was believed to be Countess Lucrezia (called Giovanna in Kažotić's novel and Ivana in its Croatian translation), a distant relative of Francesco Vitturi. According to Countess Cambi and as reported by Bućan, Lucrezia, on an extended

visit from Santa Maria di Formosa, lived in Vitturi Castle for several years, while having an affair with its married owner Francesco. When Elisabetta Vitturi discovered the affair, Lucrezia was moved to the estate of the Rosanis, close friends of the Vitturis, where she eventually married Adalbert Rosani. Miljenko Rosani was born from this union, but Lucrezia passed away abruptly, shortly after giving birth ((1), p. 154).

Mate Zorić's analysis of Kažotić's *Milieno e Dobrila*

Mate Zorić, PhD, a professor of Italian language and literature, was an avid scholar of Kažotić's literary oeuvre, especially his *Milieno e Dobrila*, which he translated from its original Italian into Croatian ((6), p. 362–363). After analyzing the novel's plot, motifs, characters, and narrative style, Zorić concluded that Kažotić drew inspiration from Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* and Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi's *La battaglia di Benevento*. Through his biographical research on Kažotić, especially the environment in which he created his first and most significant work, Zorić developed a theory on the inspiration for *Milieno e Dobrila*. According to Zorić, Kažotić was fascinated by historical studies, thought to be vital for writing a "proper" historical novel. He began working on the novel in the idyllic solitude of his family's country house, in the garden next to the Kaštela Road, with a stunning view of Mosor, Kaštela, Čiovo, and Trogir. Kažotić's vivid descriptions of the Trogir region seem to have been born there; according to local tradition, that is also where he wrote most of his first novel ((6), p. 363).

Vjeko Omašić

While Vjeko Omašić conducted relatively little research on the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila, as his primary interest lay in the land and social relations in the Kaštela region, he made a major contribution to the historiographical analysis of the topic.

Names of historical figures – connections between the novel and historical reality

Based on the timeline provided in the introduction to Kažotić's *Milieno e Dobrila*, Omašić examined Kaštel Lukšić parish registers from the late 17th century, concluding that Kažotić altered most of the names for his novel. However, as he believed that Dobrila's name was unchanged, Omašić attempted to identify other individuals from the novel through their connections with the historical Dobrila Vitturi, who lived in the 17th century. After studying the Vitturi family tree, Omašić confirmed the existence of Francesco (Count Radoslav in the novel), Isabetta (Countess Maria in the novel), as well as Dobrila and Klara Vitturi ((4), p. 165). As Klara Vitturi does not appear in the legend, she was unknown before Omašić's research. According to Omašić's analysis of baptismal records, Francesco Vitturi, the last male heir of the family, had two daughters: Dobrila (also known as Bona) and Klara, both childless. With the deaths of Dobrila in 1690 and Klara in 1710, the only remaining heirs were the sons of Francesco's sister Katarina, who married Lord Jerolim Micheli from Brač in 1650. This marriage would birth the Micheli Vitturi bloodline, one of the most prominent noble houses in Dalmatia during the 18th century. However, after Francesco's death, other

families also claimed the inheritance of the Vitturi estates and privileges based on alleged familial connections, including the Rosani, Dragač, and Tomasseo lines ((4), p. 165–166).

The source of conflict between the Vitturis and Rosanis

Omašić argued that the main cause of hostility between the two highborn families lay in the conflict over noble privileges. Specifically, Klara (Chiara) Vitturi, daughter of Francesco, confronted the brothers Vincenzo and Zoran Rosani because they had pressured the peasants on the Vitturi estate to use the Rosani family mill to mill their olives and produce oil. This would have caused financial damage to the Vitturi family, as the mill owner typically profited from the oil produced by their mill. According to Omašić, this conflict, driven primarily by economic concerns and then social factors, was the cause of enmity between the two families ((4), p. 153).

Materials and methods

Given that Kažotić's *Milienco e Dobrilla* was written in Italian and published in 1833, we used Ivačić's translation entitled *Miljenko i Dobrila* for our research, as well as the records of 17th-century Trogir chronicler Pavao Andreis, collected in his *Povijest Trogira II* (7). We also consulted the relevant literature on the Vitturi and Rosani families, Kaštela, Trogir, and social conditions in 17th-century Dalmatia. For archival materials, we explored those kept in the Split Archdiocesan Archive, specifically the Kaštel Lukšić parish registers from the 16th and 17th centuries and documents on episcopal visitations from the 18th century, as well as literature containing the correspondence between the Venetian *provveditore* (governor) and the Doge during the 17th century.

Sources on the Vitturi family

We studied the history of the Vitturi family, especially during the 17th century, through relevant sources. Specifically, we reviewed the work *Trogirsko plemstvo do kraja prve austrijske uprave u Dalmaciji* (1805) on the nobility of Trogir until the end of the first Austrian Rule in Dalmatia (8) to investigate the origins, distribution, and presence of the Vitturi family in Trogir and analyze the Vitturi family tree. Our reconstruction of the daily life of the Vitturis and Kaštela nobles in general in the 17th century was based on the inventory of the Vitturi estate in Kaštela (9). We explored the relationship between the Vitturi family and the Church, as well as the possibility of Dobrila's stay at the Monastery of St. Nicholas, using literature on the Benedictine Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir, including the works *Benediktinski samostan sv. Nikole u Trogiru* (5) and *Koludrice na zidinama grada – Benediktinski samostan sv. Nikole u Trogiru* (10).

Sources on the Rosani family

We also analyzed the limited literature on the Rosani family from modern-day Kaštela. Specifically, we studied the origins, distribution, and presence of the family in Trogir and the Kaštela Plain from the aforementioned work on Trogir nobility until the end of the

First Austrian Rule in Dalmatia (8), as well as the book *Kaštela od prapovijesti do početka XX stoljeća* (4) which, through recounting the history of Kaštel from prehistoric times to the early 20th century, provides a concise history of the Rosani family and details the appearance and construction stages of their castle – one of the potential settings for the legend.

Archival records

We used the Kaštel Lukšić parish registers from the 16th and 17th centuries, kept in the Split Archdiocesan Archive, to investigate the historicity of the characters from the legend, focusing on 17th-century birth and baptismal records (*Kaštel Lukšić – Knjiga rođenih 1613. – 1614.g.*, p. 7–10; *Kaštel Lukšić – Knjiga rođenih 1638. – 1642. g.*, p. 10). We also attempted to confirm the alleged marriage of Miljenko and Dobrila and the existence of their parents against 17th-century marriage records from the same village (*Kaštel Lukšić – Knjiga vjenčanih 1612. – 1623*). To accurately date the inscription “May the lovers rest in peace”, we referred to *Vizitacija Antuna Kačića od 7. XI. 1726.*, no. 32, p. 130, also kept in the Split archive, which recounts the visitation of Antun Kačić to the area on November 7, 1726.

Results

We identified the core elements of the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila through an in-depth reading of Ante Ivačić’s Croatian translation of Kažotić’s *Milienco e Dobrilla*. Based on this, we divided our findings into two categories: arguments that support the historicity of the legend and those that do not (Table 2, Table 3).

Table 2. Core elements of the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila from Ivačić’s translation of Kažotić’s *Milienco e Dobrilla* and Omašić’s interpretations of these elements

Core elements of the novel <i>Milienco e Dobrilla</i> (2)	Omašić’s hypothesis (4)
Miljenko and Dobrila	Miljenko Rosani and Dobrila (Vitturi)
Dobrila’s parents: Count Radoslav and Countess Marija	Dobrila’s parents: Francesco and Elizabeta Vitturi
Miljenko’s father: Adalbert	Miljenko’s father: Adalbert Rosani
Miljenko and Dobrila’s castle	Dobrila’s castle: Vitturi Castle, Rosani (Rušinac) Castle (Miljenko’s castle)
Dorotej, a counsel from Trogir	/
Dobrila’s imprisonment in the Monastery of St. Nicholas	/
Lord Družimir	/
Don Mavro	/
Translation (transfer) of St. John’s relics	/
Miljenko and Dobrila’s wedding	/
Conflict between the Vitturis and Rosanis	Conflict over aristocratic privileges
Miljenko’s murder	/
“May the lovers rest in peace”	Confirmed the existence of the epitaph in the Church of St. John in Rušinac

Table 3. Arguments supporting or refuting the historical basis of the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila; the starting point for this analysis was Omašić's hypothesis about the names of the protagonists or sections from Ivačić's translation of Kažotić's *Miljenko e Dobrila*

Excerpt from Ivačić's translation of Kažotić's <i>Miljenko e Dobrila</i>	Page in Kažotić, 1929	Approximate English translation of excerpt	Preliminary hypothesis (source)	Corroborative evidence (source)	Contribution to the historical reconstruction of the legend
<i>U jednom od ovih obzidanih sela, (...) rasla je Dobrila (...)</i>	9	In one of these walled villages, (...) grew up Dobrila (...)	Dobrila's castle: Vitturi Castle (4)	Primary: Vitturi Castle inventory from the 17 th century confirms that the family resided in the castle during this period (9)	Supports the historicity of the legend
<i>Dvorac je odijeljen od kopna i sazidan u moru, te sačinjava otok, spojen pomičnim mostom.</i>	23	The castle was separated from the mainland and built into the sea, forming an island, connected by a drawbridge			
<i>Nedaleko od zidina koje skrivahu pristalu djevojčicu, dizao se dvorac Adalberta (...)</i>	9	Not far from the walls that hid the comely girl, rose the castle of Adalbert (...)	Miljenko's castle – Rušinac Castle (4)	Secondary: Omašić refers to a document showing that in 1678, Rušinac Castle was in disrepair and sold to Lord Ivan Radoš (4)	Refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>U jednom od ovih obzidanih sela, kao netaknuta ruža, zaštićena trnovitom živicom, rasla je Dobrila (...)</i>	9	In one of these walled villages, like a rose untouched, guarded by thorny hedges, grew up Dobrila (...)	Dobrila Vitturi (4)	Secondary: Vjeko Omašić cites Kaštel Lukšić parish registers from the 17 th century (4)	Supports the historicity of the legend
<i>(...) sina plemenita, uljudna i velikuđušna (...) stoga je Radoslav isto tako nježno pazio mladog Miljenka, kao što je Adalbert volio prijateljevu djevojčicu.</i>	9	(...) a noble, courteous, and generous son (...) thus Radoslav tenderly cared for young Miljenko, as Adalbert loved his friend's little girl	Miljenko Rosani (4)	Lack of evidence	Neither supports nor refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>Nedaleko od zidina koje skrivahu pristalu djevojčicu, dizao se dvorac Adalberta, bogatog gospodara onog kraja.</i>	9	Not far from the walls that hid the comely girl, rose the castle of Adalbert, the wealthy lord of that region.	Adalbert Rosani (4)	Lack of evidence	Neither supports nor refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>(...) Radoslav (tako se zvao otac Dobrilin) (...)</i>	9	(...) Radoslav (as Dobrila's father was called (...))	Francesco Vitturi (4)	Primary: epitaph at the Monastery of St. Nicholas (5); a list of Trogir nobility from the 17 th century (8); Francesco Vitturi's will (10) Secondary: referred to by Vjeko Omašić, citing Kaštel Lukšić parish registers from the 17 th century (4)	Supports the historicity of the legend
<i>(...) a Marija, stara majka Dobrilina (...)</i>	12	(...) and Marija, Dobrila's elderly mother (...)	Elizabeta Vitturi (4)	Primary: epitaph at the Monastery of St. Nicholas (5); a list of Trogir nobility from the 17 th century (8); an archival document on the responsibility of peasants towards village landowners (11)	Supports the historicity of the legend

Table 3. Continued

Excerpt from Ivačić's translation of Kažotić's <i>Milieno e Dobrila</i>	Page in Kažotić, 1929	Approximate English translation of excerpt	Preliminary hypothesis (source)	Corroborative evidence (source)	Contribution to the historical reconstruction of the legend
<i>Nastade prepirka između njihovih otaca zbog nekog gospoštinskog prava, koje su uživali tada gospodari zaselaka od svojih težaka.</i>	14	A quarrel ensued between their fathers over some lordly rights, enjoyed by the masters of the hamlets from their peasants	Conflict between the Rosani and Vitturi families over mill rights (2, 4)	Secondary: referred to by Vjeko Omašić, citing Kaštel Lukšić parish registers from the 17 th century (4)	Supports the historicity of the legend
<i>(...) don Mavra (tako se zvao onaj župnik).</i>	17	(...) Don Mavro (as was the name of the parish priest)	Don Mavro (2)	Lack of evidence	Neither supports nor refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>U ono doba živio je u Trogiru neki doktor Doroteo (...); Bijaše dakle savjetnik cijelog grada (...)</i>	34–35	In those days dwelled in Trogir a certain Doctor Doroteo (...) a counselor, indeed, to the whole city (...)	Counsel Celio Doroteo (2)	Primary: a list of Trogir nobility and jurists from the 17 th century (8)	Supports the historicity of the legend
<i>Dan 4 maja 1681 bio je određen za pripremljenu svečanost (...)</i>	52–53	May 4, 1681, was chosen as the day when the celebration was to take place (...)	Translation of relics – the Vitturis, including Francesco, Elizabeta, and Dobrila, participated in the event (2)	Secondary: Pavao Andreis mentions a Trogir counselor Celio Doroteo from the 17 th century in his chronicle (7) No evidence of Vitturi family participation in the event. Primary: Francesco Vitturi could not have attended as he died before the event (5)	Refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>U ovakvom pohvalnom zanosu bio bi skoro zločin da Radoslav, jedan od najbogatijih u onome kraju, ne uveliča ovu nabožnu svečanost.</i>	52–53	In such fervent worship, it would have been nearly a crime for Radoslav, one of the wealthiest men in the region, not to grace this pious festivity with his presence.		Secondary: Pavao Andreis lists notable participants, especially Trogir nobility, in his detailed retelling of the event. No mention is made of the Vitturi family (7)	
<i>Bijaše određen izlet i najavljen obitelji. Jadna djevojka bila je prisiljena da se udalji iz slatkog odmarališta svog samotnog dvorca.</i>	52–53	An excursion was planned and announced to the family. The poor girl was forced to leave the sweet solace of her secluded manor.			
<i>(...) kad je ugleda konte Družimir (...)</i> <i>Jedinac iz bogate porodice, plemenit (...)</i>	57	When Count Družimir saw her (...) The only son of a wealthy family, noble (...)	Lord Družimir V from Trogir (2); Lord Stjepko from Trogir, Družimir's father (2)	Lack of evidence	Neither supports nor refutes the existence of a historical basis for the legend
<i>Znajte da vam u kontu Družimiru V (...)</i>	57	Know that by Count Družimir V (...)			
<i>(...) Stjepko (tako se zvao otac mladog Družimira (...))</i>	57	(...) Stjepko (as was the name of young Družimir's father) (...)			

Table 3. Continued

Excerpt from Ivačić's translation of Kažotić's <i>Milienko e Dobrila</i>	Page in Kažotić, 1929	Approximate English translation of excerpt	Preliminary hypothesis (source)	Corroborative evidence (source)	Contribution to the historical reconstruction of the legend
<i>Znajte da vam u kontu Družimiru V (...)</i>	57	Know that by Count Družimir V (...)			
<i>(...) Stjepko (tako se zvao otac mladog Družimira) (...)</i>	57	(...) Stjepko (as was the name of young Družimir's father) (...)			
<i>(...) Radoslav zasnova najljuću osvetu; dozove četiri slugu i naredi im da sutra povedu Dobrilu u samostan sv. Nikole u Trogiru.</i>	78	(...) Radoslav plotted a fierce revenge; summoning four servants, he ordered them to take Dobrila to the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir the following day.	Dobrila was imprisoned in the Female Benedictine Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir by her father's order (2)	Lack of evidence	Neither supports nor refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>Dobrila je prešla u samostan gdje je po očevoj želji morala ostati zatvorena.</i>	85	Dobrila relocated to the monastery, where she was to remain imprisoned according to her father's wish			
<i>(...) osvane veliki dan koji je imao da rasvijetli Miljenkovu i Dobrilinu prisegu. U dvorskoj crkvi biće im udijeljen svećenički blagoslov. Tako je htio konte (...)</i>	138–139	(...) the great day dawned that was to shed light on Miljenko and Dobrila's vow. In the court chapel, they would receive the priestly blessing. As was the Count's wish (...)	Miljenko and Dobrila's wedding in the Vitturi Castle chapel (2)	Lack of evidence	Neither supports nor refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>Don Mavro sdruži ljubavni-ke. Izrečena je neopoziva riječ. Dobrila je kći kontova, ali žena Miljenkova (...)</i>	143	Don Mavro united the lovers. The irrevocable word was spoken. Dobrila, Count's daughter, was now Miljenko's wife (...)			
<i>(...) puče hitac iz puške (...) Miljenko pade ničice na zemlju.</i>	143	(...) the gunshot echoed (...) Miljenko fell to the ground	Francesco Vitturi murdered Miljenko Rosani (4)	Lack of evidence	Neither supports nor refutes the historicity of the legend
<i>Miljenko izdahne u cjelovu nesretne i obožavane zaručnice – on više ne živi.</i>	143	Miljenko breathed his last in the embrace of his hapless, beloved fiancée – he was no more.			
<i>Radoslav (...) sav bijesan zbog prekasnog kajanja zavapi: "Gromovi nebeski, pretvorite u pepeo oca ubojicu!"</i>	152	Radoslav... consumed by fury and late regret, cried out: "Heavenly thunder, turn the murderous father to ash!"			
<i>Radoslav je bio sahranjen u svojoj dvorskoj crkvi- ci – Dobrila uz Miljenka.</i>	153	Radoslav was laid to rest in his castle's chapel – Dobrila next to Miljenko	Miljenko and Dobrila's final resting place is a tomb with the inscription "May the lovers rest in peace" in the Church of St. John in Rušnac (4)	No evidence that Miljenko and Dobrila were buried together. Primary: epitaph in the Church of St. John in Rušnac (4)	Neither supports nor refutes the historicity of the legend Supports the historicity of the legend
<i>Samo dvije riječi spominju i danas grob onih zaljubljenih: Pokoj ljubovnikom.</i>	153	Only two words still mark the grave of the lovers: "May the lovers rest in peace"			

Arguments for historical veracity

Confirmed: the Vitturi Family resided in Vitturi Castle during the 17th century

In our review of the castle's inventories from 1621 and 1701, we determined that the Vitturi family lived in the castle during this period based on the continuity of household items and the periodic replacement of consumables. This is further corroborated by an early 18th-century inventory of the belongings of Francesco's daughter Klara Vitturi, including various worn-out domestic items (9).

Confirmed: Dobrila, Francesco, and Elizabeta Vitturi Lived during the 17th century

Both primary and secondary sources confirm that Francesco Vitturi lived during the 17th century. The most significant piece of primary evidence is an epitaph from the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir mentioned in the work *Benediktinski samostan sv. Nikole u Trogiru* ((5), p. 208), which reads: *Bogu najboljem i nasilnijem / Slavni rod Vitturija / ugasio se s Franjom. / Znaj, ti koji čitaš / da ništa nije besmrtno / kad je i Vitturi umrijeti / mogao / Godine Gospodnje 1679.*, which translates to "To God, the greatest and almighty / The glorious Vitturi line / has perished with Franjo. / Know, you who read this / that nothing is immortal / when even the Vitturi could / expire / In the Year of Our Lord 1679". Another piece of primary evidence is Francesco Vitturi's name on the list of Trogir nobility from the 17th century, compiled by Mladen Andreis based on Trogir parish records and archival documents about the city during the Venetian Republic (8). Francesco Vitturi's will, preserved in the Split Archdiocesan Archive and partially quoted by Vanja Kovačić (10), presents a third piece of direct evidence. Indirect proof of Francesco's existence can be found in Omašić's history of Kaštela, *Kaštela od prapovijesti do početka XX stoljeća – 1. dio*, where he references lost records from the Kaštel Lukšić Parish dating back to the 17th century (4).

The existence of Francesco's wife, Elizabeta Vitturi, in the 17th century is similarly confirmed by both primary and secondary sources. The most notable primary evidence is an epitaph from the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir mentioned in the work *Benediktinski samostan sv. Nikole u Trogiru* ((5), p. 208), which states: *Bogu najboljem i nasilnijem / i Djevici Bogorodici / Elizabeta Ivanić / Žena Franje Vitturija / Ovaj oltar posvećuje baštinici-ma / Godine Gospodnje 1693.*, which translates to "To God, the greatest and almighty / and the Virgin Mary / Elizabeta Ivanić / Wife of Francesco Vitturi / Dedicates this altar to her heirs / In the Year of Our Lord 1693". She is also mentioned in Mladen Andreis' genealogy of Trogir nobility, which elaborates on their family trees and marital connections, presenting the second primary source (8). The third piece of primary evidence is Elizabeta Vitturi's appearance in Omašić's booklet *Prilog poznavanju težačkog pokreta u Dalmaciji. Parnica 1697–1702. godine između kaštelanskih težaka i trogirskih zemljoposjednika*, which presents all archival documents from the Kaštel Lukšić Parish between 1697 and 1702. Elizabeta Vitturi is first referred to as a "widow" in *Steffano Vlah, 7, a Xabize, V. 12, vigna 7, aratorio il resto, olivi 10, fighi 20, paga alla Vedova Elizabeta Vitturi...*, and again as "Mrs. Elizabeta Vitturi" in *Miliza Vlahova, 7, a Xabize, V. 12 vigna, olivi 3, fighi 6, paga alla sig. Elisabetta Vitturi...* ((11), p. 188). Secondary evidence comes from Omašić's *Kaštela od*

prapovijesti do početka XX stoljeća - 1. dio, where the author cites the same sources that confirm Francesco Vitturi's existence (4).

In contrast, there is no mention of Dobrila Vitturi in primary sources. In his history of Kaštela, Omašić mentions Dobrila as the daughter of Francesco and Elizabeta Vitturi (4).

Confirmed: the conflict between the Vitturis and Rosanis in the 17th century

In records from the Split Archdiocesan Archive and the Kaštel Lukšić Parish Archive, Omašić chanced upon a retelling of a feud between Klara Vitturi and Vincenzo and Zoran Rosani. According to the cited document, Klara confronted the Rosani brothers because they had coerced peasants on the Vitturi estate into pressing olives and producing oil at the Rosani family mill ((4), p. 165).

Confirmed: Counselor Celio Doroteo from Trogir (17th century)

According to Pavao Andreis recounting of the translation of the relics of St. John of Trogir ((7), p. 360–361): *Procesija je prošla gotovo cijelim gradom i obližnjim otokom, a ugledni trogirski građani su se izmjenjivali u nošenju nebnice boje bijelog zlata sa zlatnim resom, na četiri koplja. Kod nošenja nebnice, u drugoj smjeni spominje se trogirski savjetnik Zuane Celio Doroteo.* This translates roughly to “The procession marched across almost the entire city and the nearby island, with distinguished denizens of Trogir taking turns carrying the white-gold canopy with golden fringe, on four poles. Among the canopy bearers, the Trogir counselor Zuane Celio Doroteo is said to have carried the canopy in the second shift.” Therefore, this confirms the existence of an advisor named Doroteo in Trogir at the end of the 17th century.

“May the lovers rest in peace”

The epitaph *Pokoj ljubovnikom* (i.e. “May the lovers rest in peace”) can still be found in the church, on the tombstone in front of the altar ((4), p. 157).

Counterarguments

Rušinić Castle in ruins, sold to Ivan Radoš in the 17th century

Based on a sale deed from the Kaštel Lukšić Parish Archive, Rosani family manor, already in disrepair, was sold to Lord Ivan Radoš in 1678, as its erstwhile owners could not afford the upkeep. Radoš then renovated the castle ((4), p. 157). In other words, at the time of the legend, Rušinić Castle had already been taken out of the family's possession.

Dobrila and her family do not participate in the 1681 transfer of St. John's relics in Trogir

According to Pavao Andreis's records Andreis, participation was mandatory for Trogir aristocrats, with the likes of Jerolim Cipiko, his brother Vicko Cipiko, Markiel Statileo, Ivan Nikola Andreis, and Koriolan Comolio in attendance. There is no mention of any member

of the Vitturi family. The only attendees from Vitturi Castle (Kaštel Lukšić) were local commoners, led by the parish priest ((7), p. 339).

Francesco Vitturi could not have attended the event as he had passed away two years prior, in 1679, as confirmed by the epitaph engraved at the Monastery of St. Nicholas ((5), p. 208).

Discussion

The arguments supporting and challenging the legend are insufficient to decisively prove or disprove its historical veracity. Much of the legend remains open to debate, as many of its key elements lack material evidence or are based on limited sources, with the latter especially being a significant issue for researchers.

An unknown chronicle as the basis for Milienco e Dobrilla

In the preface to his novel, Kažotić claims that his story is based on an Illyrian legend he discovered by accident, recorded by an anonymous author around 1697 ((2), p. 3). Given that the peasants of Kaštela were largely illiterate (4), the novel's first translator, Bartul Matijaca, suggested that this anonymous author might have been the parish priest of Kaštel Lukšić at the time. Matijaca believed that this was none other than Don Mavro, who had a hand in all the events from the story and thus knew all its details ((12), p. 296). However, the chronicle Kažotić cited in the preface has never been found, leaving open questions about its provenance and the author that may never be answered due to the lack of evidence.

The first version of the legend as the starting point for research

As already noted, Henrik Šoulavy's research into the oral traditions concerning Miljenko and Dobrila unearthed three different versions of the legend ((1), p. 155). It is unclear why Professor Omašić chose to focus on the first version, which he deemed to be more reliable than the other two. It is reasonable to assume that he did so due to its long history in the oral tradition of Kaštela, spanning four centuries, and due to the other two versions receiving little attention (4). However, researchers have so far failed to provide arguments that would fully discredit the other two versions. Thus, the possibility remains that past research was unsuccessful due to overreliance on the wrong version of the legend.

Names of characters in the novel Milienco e Dobrilla

The novel closely follows the oral tradition of Kaštela, which, unlike the novel, conveys the full names of its protagonists (1). It is widely believed that Kažotić used aliases for some of his characters due to the controversial nature of the subject matter ((3), p. 86). The protagonists' family names were omitted, although the Kaštela Plain was named and described as the setting of the story (2). Kažotić may have feared the reaction of the living members of the noble families involved in the story (presumably, the Rosanis and Vitturis). In any case, his fears were justified, as the Rosani family reached out to the authorities in an at-

tempt to halt the scheduled publishing of the novel in 1833, as they named it a deceitful satire penned by a hostile author ((3), p. 86–87). Although Kažotić left out the names of the families and their estates, readers familiar with the local lore could readily assume that the story was about the Rosani and Vitturi families ((1), p. 169).

Names of the protagonists

Vjeko Omašić never fully explained his position on the authenticity of the names of the characters from *Milienco e Dobrilla*, nor provided the reasoning behind his assumption that some were authentic, while others were fictitious (4). It is worth noting that Professor Omašić is held in high regard in the Croatian historiographical milieu as the most prominent historian of Kaštela, making his conclusions difficult to dismiss. Nevertheless, relevant materials from the Kaštel Lukšić archive were lost after his research, leaving his hypotheses open to scrutiny, if not directly verifiable.

Based on the timeline provided by Kažotić, which places the events of the novel at the end of the 17th century ((2), p. 3), Omašić sought to identify historical figures that matched the novel's descriptions by investigating records kept in the Kaštel Lukšić Parish Archive. Using Dobrila Vitturi as the reference point, he attempted to identify other characters, particularly her parents, while assuming that some names in the novel had been altered ((1), p. 153). Through Dobrila, whose death he placed in 1690 based on parish records, Omašić identified her father Francesco, her mother Elisabetta, and her sister Klara Vitturi. Although Klara is not part of the legend, her existence is confirmed by primary sources, such as the 1701 inventory of her property. In her review of the inventory, historian Fani Celio Cega noted that Klara Vitturi, Francesco's last heiress, died childless in 1710 ((9), p. 237). Citing Maja Novak's *Plemićka obitelj Michieli Vitturi u Kaštel Lukšiću* on the noble Michieli Vitturi family from Kaštel Lukšić, Cega, like Omašić, concluded that Dobrila died around 1690 (9). In his history of Kaštela, Omašić claims that Francesco Vitturi and Elisabetta Ivaneo (Ivanić) were married in 1666, citing now-lost parish records. Their children were, presumably, born after that year. Based on these indirect sources, it is possible to estimate that Dobrila lived and died between 1666 and sometime around 1690.

No confirmation of Miljenko and Adalbert Rosani

In his review of the parish records of Kaštel Lukšić from the 16th and 17th centuries, Omašić failed to uncover any mention of Miljenko or Adalbert Rosani. We re-examined the available parish records from the 16th and 17th centuries for this study, but again found no evidence of Miljenko or Adalbert Rosani (13–15). One significant obstacle in determining the historicity of these figures is the disappearance of a set of Kaštel Lukšić parish records from the 17th century. Specifically, there is a gap in the records between 1623 and 1638, and again between 1642 and the end of the 17th century. These are precisely the documents that might contain information about the legend's protagonists, such as the dates of their birth or baptism. According to staff at the Kaštela City Museum, these books went missing after Omašić's research. In his major work, Omašić claimed that they contained references to Francesco, Dobrila, and Klara Vitturi; however, he failed to provide the birth or baptism years for Dobrila and Klara, while providing only 1636 as Francesco's birth year ((4), p.

165). Mladen Andreis cited the same year in his reconstruction of the Vitturi family tree ((8), p. 278). It is reasonable to assume that if the missing records mentioned the Rosani family, Omašić would have provided this information in his work. Additionally, a document describing a 17th-century dispute between Klara Vitturi and the Rosani brothers makes no mention of Adalbert Rosani ((4), p. 165).

Absence of evidence for Don Mavro

Given that not all names in the novel are authentic, the name of the local priest, Don Mavro, may also be fictional. Our review of the chronological order of all parish priests of Kaštela from the establishment of the Kaštela parishes to the 20th century based on the parish archives offered no concrete evidence supporting the existence of Don Mavro. He is mentioned only in the context of the legend, as an actor in the tragic romance between Miljenko and Dobrila that took place around 1690 ((16), p. 172).

Based on the chronology of Kaštela parish priests and using the death of Francesco Vitturi as a reference point, it may be inferred that the parish priest during this time was Don Ivan Zucca, who might have featured in the legend ((16), p. 172). He is identified as the priest of Kaštel Lukšić who, alongside local commoners, participated in the transfer of the relics of St. John of Trogir (7).

Lord Družimir V

A review of the list of Trogir nobility up to the Austrian administration (early 19th century) revealed no reference to any Lord Družimir in 17th-century Trogir (8). Additionally, an analysis of the chronicles by Pavao Andreis, including a detailed list of 17th-century Trogir nobility with a special focus on those involved in the transfer of the relics of St. John of Trogir, also found no mention of a Lord Družimir (7). It is therefore possible that he might have been a product of the author's imagination.

Dobrila's imprisonment in the monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir

The link between the Vitturis and the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir

The Monastery of St. Nicholas had close ties with Trogir's aristocracy, particularly the Vitturis. An inscription preserved in its courtyard mentions Teodor Vitturi, who built a mill in the 16th century on the land granted for his military feats under the command of Ban Petar Berislavić, proving the Vitturi family's influence and their connections to the monastery ((10), p. 101). With many female members of the Vitturi family serving there as nuns, the monastery benefited from frequent donations by the family. Ultimately, on September 9, 1678, Francesco Vitturi bequeathed the monumental Vitturi Tower and courtyard – also known as Casa di Statio – to the monastery in his will. This was the most well-preserved tower in Trogir and was to be incorporated into the monastery and used as a cloister ((5), p. 208). In the second half of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century, the interior of the Church of St. Nicholas underwent extensive renovations, almost entirely funded by the Vitturis. One of the first stages involved installing a new southern

side altar in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Adjacent to the altar is a plaque with an inscription about the time and circumstances of its construction: *Bogu najboljem i nasilnijem / Slavni rod Vitturija / ugasio se s Franjom. / Znaj, ti koji čitaš / da ništa nije besmrtno / kad je i Vitturi umrijeti / mogao / Godine Gospodnje 1679*, which translates as “To God, the greatest and almighty / and the Virgin Mary / Elizabeta Ivanić / Wife of Franjo Vitturi / Dedicates this altar to her heirs / In the Year of Our Lord 1693” ((5), p. 205–208).

Dobriła's confinement in the Monastery of St. Nicholas as punishment for family disgrace

While the long-standing relationship between the Monastery of St. Nicholas and the Vitturi family is well-documented, there is no record of Dobriła Vitturi's confinement there at the end of the 17th century. According to the legend, Dobriła never became a nun. She is also not featured on any of the lists of abbesses of St. Nicholas from the 17th century. Although there are no sources to corroborate this aspect of the legend, it should not be entirely dismissed, given the ties between the Vitturis and the monastery (5). Additionally, since the punishment was meted out for shaming her family and disobeying her father, it might have been deliberately covered up or omitted from records in the patriarchal society, or potentially erased at the Vitturi family's request.

Rosani (Rušinac) Castle as the setting

Based on the descriptions from the novel, hypotheses about the protagonists' names, and oral tradition, Miljenko is believed to have lived in Rušinac Castle, located not far from Vitturi Castle. According to a document discovered by Omašić, Rušinac Castle was sold to Lord Ivan Radoš in 1678 because the Rosani family could not afford its upkeep ((4), p. 157). The timing of the sale coincides with the death of Francesco Vitturi ((4), p. 166), which opens three possibilities. The first possibility is that Miljenko did not reside in Rušinac Castle during the events of the legend due to the castle's dilapidated condition. Since no exact date is given for the sale of the castle or Francesco Vitturi's death, and no mention is made of Miljenko's death in the sources, another possibility is that Adalbert, Miljenko's father, sold Rušinac Castle after the tragic death of his only son. The third option is that the Rosani family continued to live in the castle despite its poor condition. When they could no longer afford the upkeep, they sold it to Lord Ivan Radoš, who restored it, while the Rosanis continued to live there as tenants.

Translation of relics

Francesco Vitturi's role in organizing the transference of St. John Relics

In the novel, Dobriła caught Lord Družimir's eye during the transference of St. John's relics. Shortly thereafter, he asked for her hand in marriage (2). According to historical records by Pavao Andreis, the commoners of Trogir wanted to build a chapel to house the relics of St. John, their patron saint. The Council of Nobles approved the construction of a canopy, worth 100 scudi, to be placed above the saint's tomb. In addition to the official

budget, nobles voluntarily made their own contributions to the project. Thanks to these donations, there was a significant surplus, with Frane Vitturi and Zuane Cipiko pledging 100 ducats each ((7), p. 339). This confirms Francesco Vitturi's involvement in organizing the event in 1681. However, despite his role in the preparations of the event as one of the most distinguished noblemen in Trogir, Francesco Vitturi passed away before witnessing it ((5), p. 208).

No evidence for Dobrila or her family taking part in the translation of Relics

Given Pavao Andreis' detailed description of the event, including the list of prominent participants that is conspicuously free from any mention of the Vitturis, it is unlikely that the family attended the solemn occasion. Consequently, it is improbable that Dobrila met Lord Družimir at the ceremonial as the novel suggests, especially as he is also absent from the list.

The murder of Miljenko Rosani

No record of Francesco Vitturi killing Miljenko Rosani

The murder of Miljenko Rosani must have taken place before 1679, as this was the year of Francesco Vitturi's death. Given the gravity of a homicide among the nobility, especially one committed by a member of such an illustrious family, the crime would have certainly been reported to the governor by the duke, who would then send word of it to the Venetian doge. Following this line of reasoning, we surveyed Grga Novak's *Commissiones et relationes Venetae* (17, 18) to search for relevant exchanges between the Dalmatian governor and the doge in the 17th century, but found no mention of the murder. However, Novak might have also omitted information about the assassination if he believed it was unimportant to his portrayal of Dalmatian affairs under Venetian rule. This is not to claim that there is no such record, as our review did not cover every available correspondence between the duke of Trogir and the governor kept at the State Archive in Zadar. However, Omašić's research also encompassed a substantial portion of documents concerning the Kaštela Plain during the medieval and modern periods (4).

Pavao Andreis made no mention of Miljenko Rosani's murder in his chronicles (7). All other references to the incident in the literature refer back to the legend ((4), p. 165–166).

Given the nature of the crime, it is conceivable that members of the Vitturi or Rosani families had intervened. The romance between Miljenko and Dobrila, descendants of two rival noble families from Kaštela, could have been seen as damaging to the reputations of both families. Consequently, the killing could have been intentionally stricken from official records, surviving only in rumor and folklore.

Did Rosani's murder inspire Kažotić?

According to Neven Bućan, Henrik Šoulavy, through his conversations with the Kaštela nobility, learned that a murder took place in the early 17th century, specifically in 1615. The victim, a Rosani, was married to Jelena Vitturi. The crime, committed by a member of

the noble Cega family, was also chronicled by Pavao Andreis in his history of Trogir ((1), p. 156). Kažotić might have used this historical incident as inspiration for the culmination of his novel, while the plot itself was fictional.

The epitaph “May the lovers rest in peace” was not engraved immediately after the events of the legend

The tombstone inscription “May the lovers rest in peace” from the Church of St. John in Rušinac was certainly not contemporaneous with the presumed timeline of the legend. According to records of a visitation from 1726 kept in the Split Archdiocesan Archive, the church was once a parish church, with the baptismal font still intact. The same source claims that a majority of residents had relocated to Kaštel Stari and Kaštel Lukšić, with only the castle still standing to the south of the church. There is a grave in the church, but it does not contain the inscription “May the lovers rest in peace” (19). Similarly, the records of the visitation by Bishop Didak Manola from 1760 (20) is silent on the topic of the inscription. In conclusion, the epitaph must have been carved sometime after 1760, but before the publication of Kažotić’s novel (2), which references it.

No evidence that Miljenko and Dobrila were buried together in the same location

During the 17th and 18th centuries, members of the Rosani family were buried at a village cemetery adjoining the Church of St. John in Rušinac or inside the church. Given the Rosani burial practices, it is plausible that Miljenko Rosani was laid to rest there as well ((4), p. 157). Following tradition and her own wishes, Dobrila might also have been buried alongside Miljenko as his wife. Nevertheless, no evidence has surfaced to substantiate this hypothesis.

Chronological overlap between Francesco Vitturi’s death and Kažotić’s retelling of the legend

In the preface to his novel, Kažotić states that the legend was recorded in the late 17th century, more precisely in 1697 ((2), p. 3). Francesco Vitturi, the last male member of the Vitturi family, passed away around the same time, as memorialized in the aforementioned epitaph at the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Trogir ((5), p. 208). Based on these insights, one of the central elements of the legend – the murder of Miljenko by his father-in-law – could have a historical foundation. However, the evidence is too thin to support a historical reconstruction of the legend.

The problem of limited sources

Researching the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila is inevitably made more complex by the scarcity of available sources. Microhistorical investigations of the modern period, such as this one, must rely heavily on local sources, particularly parish records. However, the material from the Kaštel Lukšić Parish Archive is severely limited for the relevant period. According to the staff of the Kaštela City Museum, the parish registers disappeared af-

ter Omašić's research, precluding the possibility of any accurate dating of the births and deaths of the legend's protagonists, or indeed confirming or refuting the core elements of the story. All subsequent researchers have been compelled to rely on Omašić's hypotheses, which he made based on these lost records that are now impossible to re-examine or verify. However, it should be noted that Omašić was a prominent historian, particularly noted for his expertise on the socio-political history of early modern Kaštela. Due to the absence of primary sources, his limited research on the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila is a crucial reference point for future investigations until unpublished relevant sources are discovered.

Missing records: deliberate intervention?

Gathering relevant sources on the Vitturi and Rosani families, especially the Rosanis, presented a major challenge in researching the legend. The correlation between the gap in the Kaštel Lukšić parish registers and the legend's alleged timeline is curious. While most of the parish records from the establishment of the village up to the modern era have been preserved in the Split Archdiocesan Archive, entries from the 17th century, specifically between the 1630s and the end of the century, are missing from the baptismal and marriage registers. Given Francesco Vitturi's death and the timeline provided by the novelist, these missing records should have included entries for the central figures from the legend, if they were indeed historical, including the marriage of Miljenko and Dobrila. It is suspicious that earlier records are intact, while those that could confirm or deny the historical veracity of the legend are missing. It is not unreasonable to speculate that these records might have been deliberately removed, if they had ever existed in the first place. The reason can be found in the fact that the nobility was extremely concerned about their reputation in society, which would be damaged by stories such as this one about Miljenko and Dobrila. Without these parish registers, it is impossible to verify the baptisms, the marriage, or the deaths of Miljenko and Dobrila.

Conclusion

The legend of Miljenko and Dobrila: a fusion of historical facts creating a historical myth?

Our analysis of archival sources and existing literature showed that it is not possible to prove or disprove all the core elements of the legend, and ultimately the legend itself. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the legend, whether true or not, contains credible historical elements. For example, the translation of relics did occur, noblewomen were sent to convents, and the inscription "May the lovers rest in peace" is real. The custom of confining noblewomen to convents does not, for instance, prove that Dobrila was confined to one, as no evidence supports this specific claim. Likewise, some elements of the legend can be historically confirmed, but are unrelated to Miljenko and Dobrila's story. For example, while the transference of the relics of St. John of Trogir did take place, the Vitturis were presumably not in attendance, as confirmed by Pavao Andreis ((7), p. 338–339). We

may, therefore, speculate that Kažotić used true historical facts to lend authenticity to his novel, creating a fictional narrative that captivated the imagination of his readers.

While investigating the lore surrounding the legend, Henrik Šoulavy encountered three different versions of the story. These were later published by Neven Bućan, largely without citing Šoulavy's sources (1). Since the tragic love story had manifold versions, Šoulavy and Bućan raised a logical question: "(...) could Kažotić have combined three different versions of the legend, each based on similar events, into a single narrative? Did he take these tragic motifs, sublimating them into a single legend that he then based his novel on ((1), p. 157)?" If Bućan and Šoulavy were on the right track, one must still account for the inscription "May the lovers rest in peace" in the Church of St. John in Rušinac, as well as the fact that the tale of Miljenko and Dobrila has been retold among the people of Kaštela for over three centuries. The grave marked by the inscription "May the lovers rest in peace" should be opened and examined, as should all available letters exchanged between the Duke of Trogir and the Venetian *provveditore* of Zadar. If these efforts do not yield confirmatory results, it could be concluded that the legend likely lacks historical veracity.

At present, this historical reconstruction of the legend of Miljenko and Dobrila, based on an analysis of the core elements of the novel *Miljenko e Dobrila*, that is, on Ivačić's translation of Kažotić's novel, has not uncovered sufficient evidence to definitively confirm or refute the historical authenticity of the legend.

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ORCID

Vinka Klišmanić  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1797-8147>

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