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THURIFER ANGELS OF THE CRUCIFIXION GROUPS IN RAGUSAN FRIARIES: WONDERS, IMAGES AND CULTS

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ABSTRACT: This paper sets out to explore the miraculous accounts concerning the Crucifixion groups in two Ragusan mendicant churches. The starting point is a well-documented case of the Franciscan high cross, which was embellished by a pair of wooden thurible-bearing angels by the prominent fifteenth-century preacher, Giacomo della Marca, later to become a blessed and saint. As legend has it, Giacomo announced a miracle, as was later corroborated at high feast days when the angels were incensing the cross by swinging their censers. Apart from a number of early modern accounts of these wondrous occurrences, the miracle-working imagery that graced the triumphal arch of St Francis' church has come down to us through an early seventeenth-century drawing, which allows for the examination of the iconographical features of the venerated object lost in the aftermath of the 1667 earthquake. As scholars have already rightly recognised, the illustration shares remarkable closeness to the mid-fourteenth-century Crucifixion group in the Ragusan Dominican church, a surviving composition that was endowed with the same miraculous narrative. Admittedly, different early modern writers accredited the trope of the miraculous thurible-swinging angels to both the Franciscan and Dominican crucifixions. These sources, therefore, testify to the complex yet understudied histories of the Ragusan Crucifixion groups, and call for a more attentive examination of wonders reverberated centuries after the enshrinement of these imposing compositions in the city's principal mendicant churches.

Keywords: Giacomo della Marca, miracle narratives, miracle-working crucifix, Crucifixion group, Friars Minor, Dominicans, Dubrovnik

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The status of miracle-working images, as well as their impact on the social and political, not to mention devotional life of Eastern Adriatic communities where they were treasured and worshipped, have received noteworthy attention in recent years.[1] A good deal of research concerning late medieval and early modern Dubrovnik, however, is predominantly focused on the veneration of relics and cults of saints,[2] while wonder-working objects have not yet been studied in depth. In true fact, Ragusan miracle narratives are scarce when compared to the sources regarding other objects of public piety, in the first place, to saints' relics. Admittedly, apart from few seventeenth-century devotional etchings of miracle-working images of the Virgin, which have witnessed enduring cults,[3] the surviving data on Ragusan devotional landscape appear rather tenuous.[4]

Along with revered effigies of the Virgin, notable were the cults of several crucifixes. The devotion to the cross in the church of St Blaise rose to prominence in 1527, following the decision of the Senate to call for two daily masses in honour of the Holy Cross, which, alongside the Holy Spirit, was believed to have protected the city from the devastating outbreak of the plague and the sack of the Maori galleys.[5] The Franciscans on the isle of Daksa treasured a

[1] Zoraida Demori Staničić, *Javni kultovi ikona u Dalmaciji*. Split-Zagreb: Književni krug and Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, 2017; eadem, »Miraculous Icons in Dalmatia«. *IKON* 10 (2017): pp. 65-74; Saša Brajović and Milena Ulčar, »Legends, Images and Miracles of the Virgin Mary in the Bay of Kotor in Early Modern Period«. *IKON* 10 (2017): pp. 149-158.

[2] Among recent contributions to the topic, with special reference to Dubrovnik or Adriatic region, see: Ana Marinković, »The Changing Objects of Civic Devotion: Gender, Politics, and Votive Commissions in a Late Medieval Dalmatian Confraternity«, in: *The Routledge History Handbook of Gender and the Urban Experience*, ed. Deborah Simonton. London: Routledge and Taylor & Francis, 2017: pp. 259-270; Tanja Trška, »*Una processione da farsi ogni anno con una Messa Solenne*: reception of stone relics from the Holy Land in Renaissance Ragusa«, in: *Natural Materials of the Holy Land and the Visual Translation of Place, 500-1500*, ed. Renana Bartal, Neta Bodner and Bianca Kühnel. London-New York: Routledge, 2017: pp. 79-93; Ana Munk, »Deconstructing the myth of Byzantine crown: the head reliquary of Saint Blaise in Dubrovnik«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 20 (2016): pp. 7-51.

[3] Pavo Knezović, »Dubrovačka Gospina svetišta 17. stoljeća prema Atlas Marianus W. Gumppenberga«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 43 (2005): pp. 75-92; Z. Demori Staničić, *Javni kultovi ikona u Dalmaciji*: pp. 80-86.

[4] Recent research, among other, include: Tanja Trška, »Miraculous Image as a Relic: The Reliquary of St Filippo Benizi in Dubrovnik's Cathedral Treasury«. *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 41 (2017): pp. 67-81, and Samo Štefanac, »The Devotional Context of a Miraculous Image: Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino's Madonna at Orebić«, in: *Renaissance Studies in Honour of Joseph Connors*, vol. 1, ed. Machtelt Israëls and Louis A. Waldman. Florence: Harvard University Press, 2013: pp. 200-227.

[5] Nella Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti: ceremonijal i državni blagdani dubrovačke republike u 17. i 18. stoljeću*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2009: pp. 282-283.

miraculous cross, worshipped for "many goods accepted", yet the circumstances surrounding the origin of this cult remain obscure.[6] The third case—that of the venerable cross in the city's principal Franciscan church—is not only the best documented one, but it also stands out for its alleged wonder. The succinct tale of the miracle goes as follows: the Franciscan James of the Marches (1393-1476), better known under his Italian name Giacomo della Marca, later declared blessed (1624), and finally saint (1726), arranged a pair of angels fashioned in wood at the sides of the high cross in St Francis' church. As was prophesied by this ardent preacher, the angelic figures were to work a miracle by waving their censers suspended from chains, and incensing the cross on occasion of the high feast days.[7]

There is no foundation for this legend in the fifteenth-century records of Giacomo's several sojourns in Dubrovnik.[8] Nevertheless, this particular Ragusan wondrous matter was examined in an investigation inaugurated in Rome in the early 1600s, which aimed at convening evidence for Giacomo's beatification. In fact, it was precisely then that the codification of the miraculous narrative came about, the turning points being the 1609 account of the wonder, and the 1614 drawing of the miracle-working imagery, both corroborated by eyewitness reports of prodigious occurrences. In an attempt to reconstruct the early modern reception of this wonder, my aim is to explore these seventeenth-century sources, and to confront them to several other largely unconsidered early modern records. This examination, in consequence, could shed light on the perception of the miracle of Giacomo's angels, and clarify the issue of the reverberation of the miraculous account after the loss of the thurible-swinging angels in the aftermath of the 1667 earthquake.

However, the narrative of the so-described miracle in the Franciscan church is not as straightforward: some records attribute the miracle of thurifer angels to the Crucifixion group mounted above the high altar of the Dominican church as well. For this reason, these lavish mendicant compositions yield exemplary

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[6] The cult developed around the Daksa crucifix can be traced in a number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century accounts, see Josip Sopta, *Daksa: povijest franjevačkog samostana*. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska, Ogranak and Franjevački samostan Male braće, 1998: pp. 46-47, n. 88-89.

[7] Daniele Farlati and Jacopo Coletti, *Illyrici sacri, tomus sextus: Ecclesia Ragusina cum suffraganeis, et ecclesia Rhiziniensis et Catharensis*. Venetiis: apud Sebastianum Coleti, 1800: pp. 123-124, 519.

[8] A great number of documents has been gathered in: Benvenuto Rode, »Documenti francescani di Ragusa, an. 1379-1451«. *Miscellanea Francescana* 14 (1912): pp. 24, 26, 60-66.

material for addressing the issue of employment of identical miracle tropes to sacred objects belonging to different churches, in this particular case, to the Franciscan and Dominican ones respectively. My discussion will therefore focus on the correspondence in appearances and discrepancies of (otherwise largely identical) miraculous narratives of mendicant crucifixions. As I shall try to prove, wonders of these Cross groups were cherished around the ubiquitous late medieval pictorial motif of incensing angels, which were in later times employed as continuing visual attestation of the sainthood of a number of friars who operated miracles through these images.

The birth of Giacomo's cult and the earliest accounts of miraculous angels

In 1495, the chancellor of the Duke Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken, Johann Meisenheimer, recorded His Grace's pilgrimage to the Holy Land, providing the earliest evidence for the study of miraculous angels. Among other matters, Meisenheimer attested a "wondrous thing": the Ragusan Dominican church was said to treasure angels by the cross, which incited visitors' interest for swinging their incense burners at the time of the most solemn days of the Christian year, including Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.[9] Although the central motifs of this account correspond precisely with the later narrative associated with Giacomo della Marca, two key features diverge. Firstly, there is no account of the Franciscan preacher, and secondly, the church of enshrinement of the miracle-operating angels is that of the Dominicans, and not the Franciscans. Pilgrim travelogues often mistake one church of the same town for another, which can be confirmed by other examples from such narratives describing Dubrovnik and its religious legacy.[10] However, if such a confusion was really the case here, and Meisenheimer was actually referring to the Franciscan church, it is odd that he does not accredit the miracle to Giacomo della Marca.

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[9] *Es ist meinen G. H. Fürwar zugesagt / daß im Kloster daselbst sey ein Crucifix / und auff einer jeglichen seiten heng ein Engel mit eim Räuchfaß in seiner Handt / unnd alle hohe Fest / als Weihnachten / Ostern / Pfingsten / und unser lieben Frawen Abend und tag bewegen sich dieselben Engel / eben als geben sie dem H. Crucifix rauch auß irem Räuchfaß / welchs dann ein köstlich ding ist*. Krešimir Kužić, *Hrvatska obala u putopisima njemačkih hodočasnika XIV.-XVII. st.: opora, vinorodna, kršćanska.* Split: Književni krug, 2013, prilog: Njemački tekstovi putopisa: p. 150.

[10] The most illustrative instance is the swapping of Ragusan cathedral with the church of St Blaise, or vice versa, present in a number of pilgrim travelogues. See Donald Cooper, »*The Silver there is Very good*. Pilgrim Narratives as Sources for Sacred Art in Dubrovnik and a New Proposal for Lovro Dobričević«, in: *Towns and Cities of the Croatian Middle Ages: Image of the Town in Narrative Sources: Reality and/or Fiction?*, ed. Irena Benyovsky Latin and Zrinka Pešorda Vardić. Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, 2017: p. 329, n. 25.

Indeed, arguably the most prominent fifteenth-century Franciscan to carry out the Order's business in Dubrovnik, Giacomo must have still been remembered at the time of Meisenheimer's writings. Tracing the precise chronological path of the itinerant preachers is often nearly impossible, as numerous voyages are in great part doubled by their early biographers in order to fuel their cult and instigate its rapid recognition.[11] Still, Giacomo's stays in Dubrovnik are fairly well documented, the first being recorded in 1432. After having delivered a Lent sermon, he set off to Bosnia to inspect the local Franciscan houses.[12] In the meantime, he was appointed the *vicarius et commisarius* of the Ragusan friary, which is why the Senate pleaded for his return to the city in the wake of the Lent of the following year.[13] Upon returning from the Bosnian mission, Giacomo was constrained to leave Dubrovnik again, so he installed Ludovico da Strassoldo, another acclaimed preacher, as new guardian of the friary.[14] Shortly later, at the end of 1434, Giacomo returned to Dubrovnik, but this time his presence provoked discontent among the brethren due to his rigorous defence of the Franciscan Observance. Having expelled from Dubrovnik the members of the Bosnian province not clinging onto the new Observant regulations, he encountered opposition from civic authorities,[15] and it was not until the 1450s that he returned to the city again.[16] The conflict with the

[11] György Galamb, »*In ultimis christianorum finibus*: Due osservanti italiani nell'Europa centrale e nell'area balcanica«, in: *San Giacomo della Marca e l'altra Europa: crociata, martirio e predicazione nel Mediterraneo Orientale (secc. 13.-15.). Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Monteprandone, 24-25 novembre 2006* [Quaderni di San Giacomo 1], ed. Fulvia Serpico. Monteprandone: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo and Comune di Monteprandone, 2007: p. 16.

[12] Dionysius Lasić, *De vita et operibus S. Iacobi de Marchia: studium et recensio quorundam textuum*. Falconara M.: Biblioteca Francescana, 1974: p. 119. For a more recent overview of the general outlines of Giacomo's sojourn in Dubrovnik see Viktor Palić, »Djelovanje sv. Jakova Markijskog u Dubrovniku, Konavlima i ostalim primorskim mjestima«, in: *Jakov Markijski i njegovo djelovanje u Bosni. Radovi s međunarodnog simpozija o sv. Jakovu Markijskom održanom u Deževicama 19. i 20. rujna 2015*., ed. Milenko Krešić. Sarajevo-Deževice: Univerzitet u Sarajevu, Katolički bogoslovni fakultet and Župa Gospe Snježne u Deževicama, 2016: pp. 201-213.

[13] Bazilije Pandžić, »Jakov Markijski vikar bosanske vikarije«. *Bosnia franciscana* 7 (1997): p. 157.

[14] B. Pandžić, »Jakov Markijski vikar bosanske vikarije«: p. 158. For the Mendicants and their preaching activities in Dubrovnik, without explicit reference to Giacomo or Ludovico, see Zdenka Janeković Römer, »The Power of Word: Preachers in Medieval Dubrovnik«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 17 (2013): pp. 7-23.

[15] B. Pandžić, »Jakov Markijski vikar bosanske vikarije«: p. 161.

[16] Stanko Josip Škunca, *Franjevačka renesansa u Dalmaciji i Istri: opservantska obnova i samostani Provincije sv. Jeronima u 15. st.* Zadar: Franjevačka provincija Sv. Jeronima u Dalmaciji i Istri, 1999: p. 122; Fulvia Serpico, »L'Oriente nei codici di San Giacomo della Marca«, in: *San Giacomo della Marca e l'altra Europa: crociata, martirio e predicazione nel Mediterraneo Orientale (secc. 13-15)*: p. 137.

government was by then long resolved, so that the Senate authorised the *venerabilis Frater Jacobus de Esculo* to preach in 1464.[17]

This brief outline of Giacomo's relations with Dubrovnik is to say that his role was far from irrelevant, and that the miracle attributed to him would have further bounded the city and its Franciscan community with the prominent figure of the Order. In this light, it is important to underline that down into the final quarter of the fifteenth century, when numerous effigies of Giacomo were commissioned following his death in 1476, he was depicted with an aureole, either radiant or full, that is, as a blessed or saint respectively. The purpose of these attributes, in line with heroic-like biographies, was to foster vivid devotion to the Preacher.[18] Returning to the contemporaneous Meisenheimer's account, it can be observed that a miracle of the animated angels had by the end of the fifteenth century been acknowledged in Dubrovnik and recounted to its visitors. However, the earliest record of this Ragusan miracle seems to have been grounded on Meisenheimer's mistake of the confounding mendicant church, fairly similar in architectural design and decoration, so that it may be inferred that the wonder was associated with the Franciscans and, in all probability, by that time already ascribed to Giacomo. However, as will be discussed later on, there are some further indications of the existence of identical miracles in both mendicant churches.

The early seventeenth-century narrative of the miracle

More than a hundred years later, in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the codification of the miracle in the Franciscan church took place. Its timing precisely corresponds to the launching of Giacomo's beatification process, in support of which numerous wonders were employed. The initial

[17] Frano Jurić, *Povjesno-opisni prikaz franjevačkog samostana u Dubrovačkoj Rijeci*. Zagreb: Tiskara i litografija C. Albrechta, 1916: p. 53.

[18] For the early development of Giacomo's iconography, and its further implications for his cult see Luigi Abetti, »La *costruzione* di un culto. Nascita e sviluppo del culto di San Giacomo della Marca attraverso le opere d'arte«, in: *Gemma lucens*: *Giacomo della Marca tra devozione e santità. Atti dei convegni (Napoli, 20 novembre 2009 – Monteprandone, 27 novembre 2010)* [*Quaderni di San Giacomo* 3], ed. Fulvia Serpico. Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013: pp. 109-116; Thomas Golsenne, »*Tanta vertù ed efficatia*. Aux origines d'un culte: le *Bienheureux Jacques de la Marche* de Carlo Crivelli«. *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen-Âge* 114/2 (2002): pp. 1067-1093.

hearings were held as early as in 1525-1526, but these involved only the miracles in Ascoli Piceno and Naples.[19] The re-opening of the process at the beginning of the seventeenth century was far more ambitious and successful: the campaign resulted in up to sixty miracles investigated across Italy (comprised in the so-called *rotolo remissoriale*),[20] and additional seventeen wonders from modern day Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (included in *Articuli additionales*).[21] The Ragusan miracle, for that purpose entitled *Angeli miraculose thurrificantes*, narrated that during one of Giacomo's sojourns in Dubrovnik, the preacher instructed that a pair of incense-bearing angels be placed at the sides of the high cross, which would, according to him, miraculously incense the cross.[22] The prodigious events were said to be taking place *in solemnioribus actibus et festivitatibus*,[23] as was already recounted by Meisenheimer in the final decade of the fifteenth century. Corroborated by twelve witnesses, the story of the wonder conceived in 1609 constituted its official version, which served as the foundation for all the subsequent textual tellings of the miracle.

Five years after the delivery of this codified narrative, in 1614, while the process of the beatification was still ongoing, the drawing of the miraculous angels enframing the cross, as well as a more meticulous account of the miracle, were in preparation for print. The document, entitled *Il vero ritratto della divotissima imagine del Crocifisso meraviglioso posto nella Chiesa di S. Francesco della Città di Ragusa*, measuring 64 centimetres in height and 28 centimetres in width, is nowadays kept in St Francis' friary.[24] It was supposed to be sent to print by Simone Parlaschi, a Bolognese printer and book editor, and the document's bottom right corner displays the mark of one of Parlaschi's close collaborators, Bartolomeo Cocchi. Apart from this drawing, the Paduan collection of Filippo Riceputi, one of the editors of *Illyricum sacrum*, includes the file

[19] Marina Montesanto, »Alcune note per una tipologia dei miracoli di San Giacomo della Marca«, in: *Biografia e agiografia di San Giacomo della Marca. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Monteprandone, 29 novembre 2008. [Quaderni di San Giacomo 2]*, ed. Fulvia Serpico. Sismel Edizioni di Galluzzo and Comune di Monteprandone, 2009: p. 96.

[20] See Daniele Capone, *San Giacomo della Marca nel rotolo remissoriale della sua beatificazione* (*1624*). Napoli: Convento San Francesco al Vomero, 1972.

[21] D. Lasić, *De vita et operibus S. Iacobi de Marchia*: pp. 434-435.

[22] D. Lasić, *De vita et operibus S. Iacobi de Marchia*: pp. 435-436.

[23] D. Lasić, *De vita et operibus S. Iacobi de Marchia*: p. 435.

[24] For an *in extenso* transcription see Justin V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće u Dubrovniku: povijesni prikaz života i djelatnosti«, in: *Samostan Male braće u Dubrovniku*, ed. Justin V. Velnić. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Kršćanska sadašnjost and Samostan Male braće u Dubrovniku, 1985: pp. 181-182.

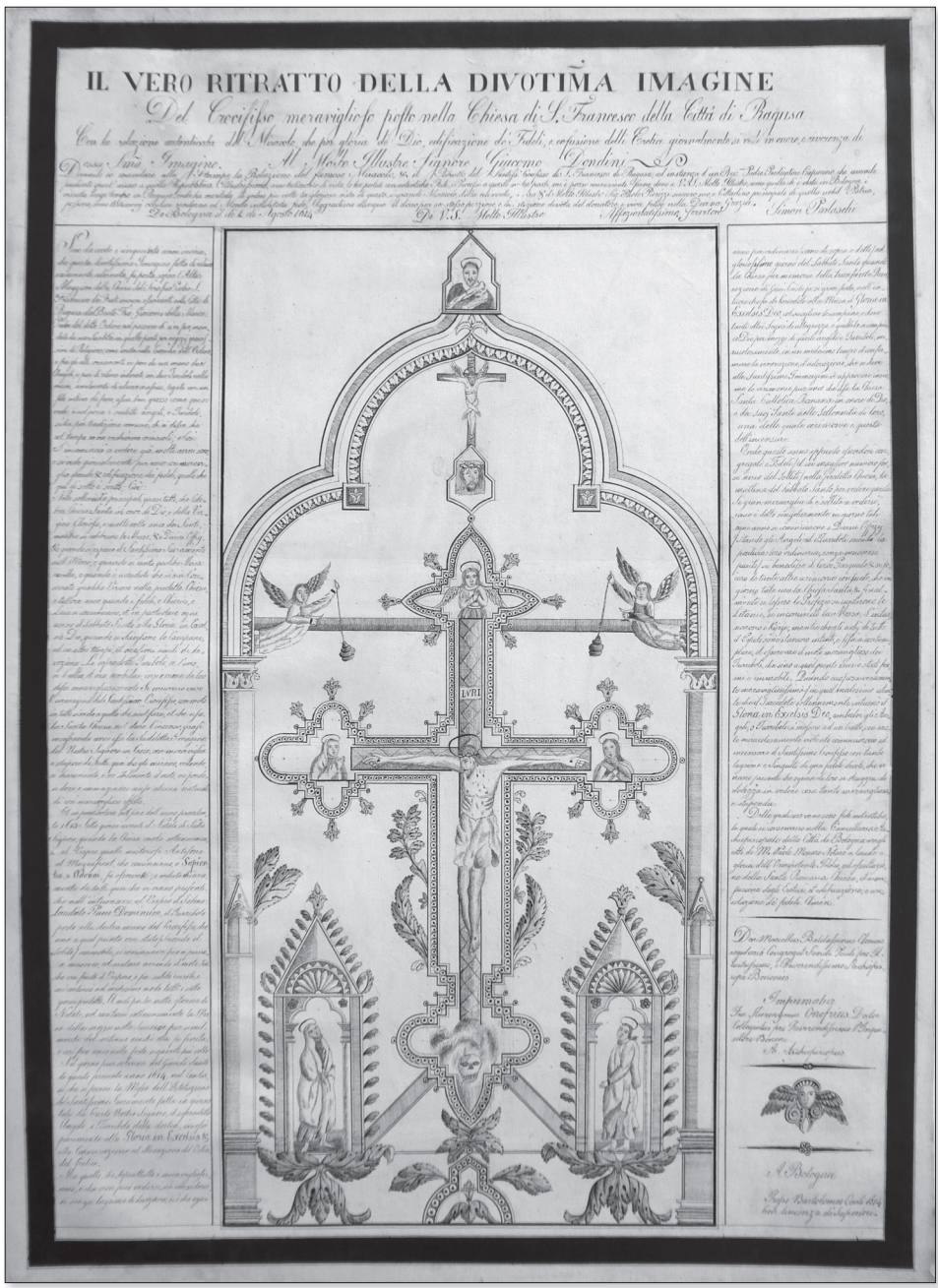

Figure 1. *Il vero ritratto della divotissima Imagine del Crocifisso meraviglioso posto nella Chiesa di S. Francesco della Città di Ragusa*, 1614. Photo: Fr Stipe Nosić, OFM.

entitled *Storia del Crocefisso Miracoloso di S. Francesco di Ragusa*.[25] It also dates from 1614 and bears Cocchi's name,[26] so that the Paduan document is most convincingly the transcript of the Ragusan one, executed for the purposes of the *Illyricum sacrum* project. No other copies have been identified so far, so it is presumed that this preparatory drawing had never been etched.[27]

The accompanying text consists of two separate parts: in the first one, Simone Parlaschi tells of a Capuchin friar who, after having preached in Dubrovnik, reported on the miracle in the city's Franciscan church. While preparing the miracle story (*La Relazione del famoso Miracolo*) and its visual rendering (*Il Ritratto del Santissimo Crocefisso*) for print, Parlaschi sent these records to the Bolognese nobles Giacomo Dondini and his father-in-law, Paolo Pierizzi. As he expounds, forwarding these materials to Dondini and Pierizzi seemed well suited, since both lived in Dubrovnik, and were themselves eyewitnesses of the wonder. The second part of the account, undersigned by Marcello Baldassino, a cleric regular of the Barnabite congregation, is an authentic testimony of the miracle approved by the Bolognese church authorities. It remains uncertain as to whom Parlaschi was referring when citing unnamed *Padre Predicatore Capuccino*, and whether he was in fact alluding to the Barnabite Baldassino, whose account he was to print.

The very fact that Parlaschi sent the account of the miracle to Dondini and Pierrizzi as a gift opens further questions to reflect upon, for these Bolognese families were tied to Dubrovnik for several generations. Guglielmo Dondini carried out the duty of a secretary and public notary in the second half of the sixteenth century, for a total of twenty-seven years,[28] and was affiliated with a learned circle of mostly foreign humanists grouped around Ragusan archbishop Lodovico Becadelli.[29] Upon returning to Bologna, Guglielmo and his son jointly composed the treatise on the history of Dubrovnik, a piece of work dedicated

[25] Miljen Šamšalović, »Građa za *Illyricum sacrum* sačuvana u Padovi«. *Zbornik Historijskog instituta JAZU* 3 (1960): p. 426. I thank Danko Zelić for bringing Šamšalović's article to my attention.

[26] Parlaschi and Cocchi collaborated on a number of projects, and Cocchi most often provided the typography for the prints; Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi za izgubljenim slikarstvom: o majstoru Lovru iz Kotora i slikarstvu na prostoru od Dubrovnika do Kotora tijekom druge polovice XV. stoljeća*. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska, ogranak Dubrovnik, 2013: p. 161, n. 549.

[27] Grgo Gamulin, *The Painted Crucifixes in Croatia*. Zagreb: Udruženi izdavači, 1983: p. 53, n. 56.

[28] Giovanni Francesco Erri, *Dell'origine di Cento e di sua pieve: delle estensione, de' limiti, e degl' interramenti delle valli circumpadane*. Bologna: per L. dalla Volpe, 1769: p. 289.

[29] Relja Seferović, »Foreign Teacher and Humanist: Nascimbene Nascimbeni on Rhetoric in Dubrovnik«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 14 (2010): p. 114.

to the Senate, but up until now, no traces of this document have been detected.[30] Giacomo Dondini, to whom Parlaschi dispatched the miracle account, can most probably be identified as Guglielmo's son and father of the prominent Jesuit and prolific writer, Guglielmo Dondini (1606-1678), named after his grandfather. Although I am not prepared to speculate here that Parlaschi sent the miracle account in order to be included in the volume penned by the Dondinis, the issue is surely worth paying attention to.

The latter part of the discourse—despite being heavily soaked with narrative tropes of the genre—casts some light on the nature and perception of the miracle. As attested by Baldassino, in the days preceding Christmas of 1613, the right-side angel, usually motionless, commenced to incense the cross by swinging the thurible during the sung sections of the services. The same occurred on Maundy Thursday of the following year, when both angels waved the thuribles as the Host and Eucharistic chalice were elevated on the high altar.[31] Particularly suggestive is the description of the richly staged ceremony of the Holy Saturday, which included the dedication and lightening of the Paschal candle, as well as the singing of the litanies and hymns. Correspondingly to the first chords of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, both angels began the act, provoking the congregants to "melt due to the sweetness of observing such a wondrous and stunning thing".[32]

For now, it seems appropriate to compare how the accounts of the miraculous events set forth in two contemporary sources, the 1609 description and the 1614 print-sketch, relate. It has already been pointed out that the earlier account was employed for the purposes of Giacomo's beatification and, accordingly, is a condensed narration in which only the focal points of the story are registered. According to the 1607 description, Giacomo was responsible for the display of the angels only, while the crucifix existed in St Francis' church *a tempore immemorabili*.[33] More importantly, Giacomo's role in the announcement of the miracle was validated by putting his words in quotation marks.[34] The 1614

[30] Nella Lonza, »Dondino (Dondini), Guglielmo«. *Leksikon Marina Držića*, ed. Slobodan P. Novak, Milovan Tatarin, Mirjana Mataija and Leo Rafolt. Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2009: pp. 133-134.

[31] J. V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće«: p. 182.

[32] *...ognun di loro si struggeva di dolcezza in vedere cosa tanto meravigliosa, e stupenda* (J. V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće«: p. 182).

[33] J. V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće«: p. 182. The Archives of the Archbishopric was destroyed in the 1667 earthquake, so that the sources Baldassino is referring to have not survived.

[34] *...aliquando hi angeli miracula facient* (D. Lasić, *De vita et operibus S. Iacobi de Marchia*: p. 436).

account, by contrast, approached the matter as a hard fact, so that Giacomo's quote was not cited, with his role being brought down to popular tradition (*tradizione commune*), validated by *Fedi autentiche*, collected in the episcopal archives.[35]

Furthermore, certain features of the 1614 text reveal that it was composed as support for the visual representation of the drawing of the cult imagery. The text opens up with the claim that the *divotissima Imagine* was displayed above the high altar of the Franciscan church "roughly hundred and fifty years ago", which is a novelty in comparison to the 1609 account. Moreover, not only that the exact time of the enshrinement is declared, but Giacomo was reported to have been responsible for the whole set-up, including not only the wooden angels, but other imagery as well.[36] More importantly, after describing in depth the movements of the angels, equated to those of altar servers incensing the altar table, the author of the text, Marcello Baldassino, concludes that this miracle "confirms the veneration and adoration of the Sacred Images".[37]

Alongside this typical post-Tridentine justification of the cult of images, Baldassino articulates the fundamental concept of devotional prints: their agency is in no way lessened by the fact that they merely reproduce the 'originals'. On the contrary, such etchings are equal to third-class relics, and are to be venerated *per se*.[38] Indeed, essential to print making was the possibility to disseminate copies quickly and inexpensively, thus boosting the reputation of the replicated sacred prototype and the church of its enshrinement. In this way, the participation in the miraculous powers of this venerated image was expanded by its presence in households where such prints were displayed and used.[39] The most apparent reason for devising the etching, therefore, is the promotional activity of the miracle of the Ragusan Franciscans, coordinated with the endeavours to ratify

[35] J. V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće«: p. 181.

[36] *...e fra gli altri ornamenti vi pose di sua mano due Angeli, pur di rilievo indorati, con due Turiboli nelle mani, similmente di rilievo massicci, legati con un filo interno di ferro, assai ben grossi, come qui si vede* (J. V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće«: p. 181).

[37] *...confermare la venerazione, et adozione, che si deve alle Santissime Immagini* (J. V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće«: p. 181).

[38] See chapter »Religious prints and their use«, in: William B. Taylor, *Theatre of a Thousand Wonders: A History of Miraculous Images and Shrines in New Spain*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016: pp. 398-453, esp. p. 420.

[39] Margaret A. Morse, »From *Chiesa* to *Casa* and Back: The Exchange of Public and Private in Domestic Devotional Art«, in: *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: a celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown*, ed. Maria de Blake and Mary E. Frank. Milan: 5 Continents Edition, 2013: pp. 147-148.

Giacomo's cult. Although the preparatory drawing found its way to the Bolognese studio of the print-editor Parlaschi, no etching seems to have been pressed, which raises doubts as to whether the promotional campaign had ever been launched.

The "divotissima Imagine" according to the 1614 illustration

Now, I will turn to the iconographical features of the miraculous imagery. In broad terms, the *divotissima Imagine* is a representation of the Crucifixion group that features a centre-placed cross, flanked by the figures of Virgin Mary and John

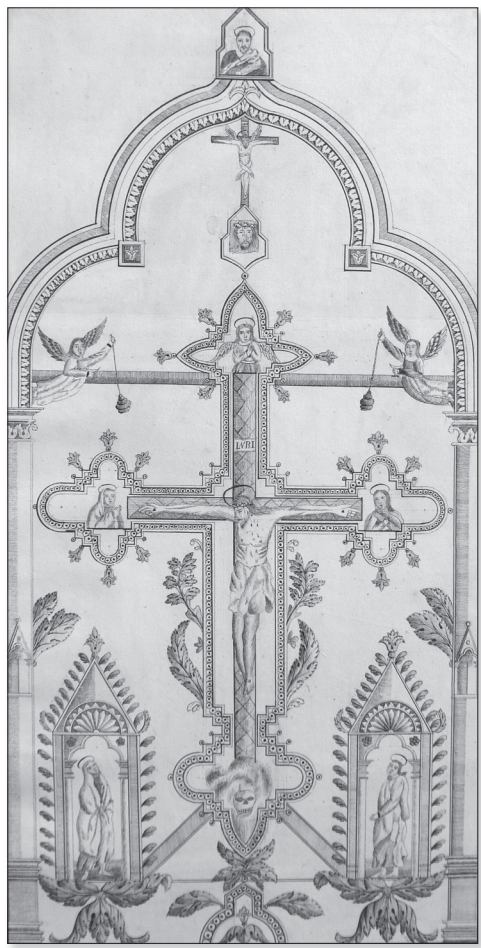

Figure 2. *Il Ritratto del Santissimo Crocefisso*, 1614. Photo: Fr Stipe Nosić, OFM.

the Evangelist on either side. Given its probable usage, the drawing was arguably executed in Dubrovnik and has faithfully followed the actual image. Corresponding ensembles graced the sanctuaries of the most prominent Ragusan churches; besides the one in the Franciscan church, there is evidence of an analogous set-up (but a lavishly gilded one) that adorned the triumphal arch of the Ragusan cathedral,[40] while the iconographically equal painted cross group in the Dominican church retains its original location. As a matter of fact, the still-standing Dominican Crucifixion—convincingly dated to around 1350 and attributed to Paolo Veneziano—exhibits remarkable closeness to the 1614 illustration. The side panels of the Virgin and John are indeed quite similar, as are some other parts of the ensembles, such as the low relief angels with thuribles on the uppermost part of the composition,

Figure 3. Paolo Veneziano, *Crucifixion*, ca. 1350, St Dominic's church, Dubrovnik. Photo: Živko Bačić (Institute of Art History in Zagreb, Photoarchives, inv. no. IPU-F-HU-153)

[40] Igor Fisković, »Artwork and Decoration of the Old Cathedrals«, in: *The Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin in Dubrovnik*, ed. Katarina Horvat-Levaj. Dubrovnik-Zagreb: Gradska župa Gospe Velike, Institut za povijest umjetnosti and ArTresor, 2016: p. 97.

which were in recent scholarship employed as a key argument for attribution of the Franciscan cross group to the same Venetian master.[41]

However, both the 1609 and 1614 accounts clarify that the central cross was not painted on panel (as in the Dominican Crucifixion), but that it was a full-volume wooden sculpture. The 1609 authentic narrates of a sizeable wooden cross, *crucifixus magnus ligneus*,[42] and the same is inferred by Baldassino's 1614 description, which refers to the miraculous image as *fatta di rilievo*.[43] Furthermore, the Franciscan cross group, at least judging by the illustration, incorporated a number of additional elements, not present on Veneziano's Dominican Crucifixion. These included the bust-length figures of Virgin and John, curiously duplicated at the side terminals, the figure of St Michael on the top terminal of the cross, followed by a small icon-like Veil of Veronica, a smaller Seraph, and the God Father on the top of the trefoil arch crowning the ensemble. Despite the dominant iconographical affinities of the two mendicant crucifixions, therefore, a closer inspection uncovers a number of distinctions.

It is not my intention here to go deeper into the questions pertaining to the iconography and stylistic kinship of the Franciscan Crucifixion, nor to contest the date of its fashioning. However, a few words should be devoted to one of the recent propositions concerning the Franciscan Cross ensemble, which suggests that some of its detailed repertoire has come down to us, and had therefore survived the 1667 demolition of the *divotissima Imagine* in the fire that followed the Great Earthquake. The panel representing John the Evangelist, now treasured in the collection of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb,[44] was interpreted as being originally arranged at the right terminal of the cross, as featured on the 1614 illustration. Still, this hypothesis, albeit met with acclamation in scholarly publications, stands only on stylistic ground by which the figure was, in art-historical terms, interpreted as *paolesque* in style.[45]

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[41] Cvito Fisković, »Slika iz radionice Paola Veneziana u Prčanju«. *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 18 (1979): p. 57; Zoraida Demori Staničić, »Bottega di Paolo Veneziano: San Giovanni evangelista, circa 1350«, in: *Il Trecento Adriatico. Paolo Veneziano e la pittura tra Oriente e Occidente*, exhibition catalogue. Milan: Silvana Editoriale Spa, 2002: pp. 172-173.

[42] This was firstly put forth by Donal Cooper, »Gothic Art & The Friars in Late Medieval Croatia 1212-1460«, in: *Croatia: Aspects of Art, Architecture and Cultural Heritage*, introduction by John Julius Norwich. London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2009: p. 91.

[43] *...divotissima Imagine fatta di rilievo* (J. V. Velnić, »Samostan Male braće«: p. 181).

[44] Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb, inv. no. MUO-004570: Sv. Ivan: slika (55 by 42 cm).

[45] Z. Demori Staničić, »Bottega di Paolo Veneziano«: pp. 172-173. The panel was first published by Alma Orlić, »Ukras aureole kao mogućnost prepoznavanja autora«. *Peristil* 34 (1991): pp. 26-27. The author of the most recent index of the fourteenth-century painted crosses, Marcello Gaeta,

Figure 4. Nicolo Semitecolo (att.), Saint John, second half of the fourteenth century. Zagreb: Museum of Arts and Crafts, inv. no. MUO-4570. Photo: Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb.

However, we should bear in mind that any surviving fragment of *divotissima Imagine* would have immediately become a worshipped object had it outlasted the destruction of the miraculous imagery, and there are numerous equivalent cases in Dubrovnik and elsewhere. One example must suffice: the gilded relief of St Blaise. According to the local belief, the effigy of the patron saint remained untouched when the fire of 1706 wiped out his eponymous church. This very fact granted the worshipping of the object, and has instigated its enshrinement on the high altar as a central devotional image of the newly-erected church.[46]

follows the attribution to Paolo Veneziano; see his comprehensive catalogue *Giotto und die croci dipinte des Trecento. Studien zu Typus, Genese und Rezeption Mit einem Katalog der monumentalen Tafelkreuze des Trecento (ca. 1290-ca. 1400)*. Münster: Rhema-Verlag und Herstellung, 2013: pp. 220, 377. However, the panel was also attributed to Nicolo Semitecolo, active in Venice between 1353 and 1370, see Cristina Guarnieri, »Per un corpus della pittura veneziana del Trecento al tempo di Lorenzo«. *Saggi e Memorie di storia dell'arte* 30 (2006): pp. 54-55, 59.

[46] This was commemorated by an inscription displayed near the high altar of the newly-built church, see: Daniel Premerl, »The Gilded Silver Statue of St Blaise from the Fifteenth Century«, in: *The Collegiate Church of St Blaise in Dubrovnik*, ed. Katarina Horvat-Levaj. Dubrovnik-Zagreb: Dubrovačka biskupija, Institut za povijest umjetnosti and ArTresor naklada, 2018: pp. 179-180.

Hence, the post-destruction case of the Saint John panel—if it had been the one represented on the 1614 illustration—would have been analogous. Finally, the Franciscan records of 1667 adverted only to the remorse for the destruction of the miracle-performing imagery, giving no clue as to whether some elements had survived.[47]

Miracles and their Images

Although the Franciscan Crucifixion ensemble was ultimately destroyed in 1667, the early modern accounts perpetuated the narrative of the miracle of censing angels. The body of evidence for this matter is considerable, so that in the following pages I will offer a selection of the most copious citations. Firstly, it should be noted that the commutation of the miracle between the Franciscan and Dominican church, already attested in the late fifteenth-century pilgrim travelogue, has its eighteenth-century episode as well. Seraphinus Cerva, in the second volume of his *Monumenta congregationis Sancti Dominici de Ragusio* of 1733, narrates of the same miracle, which he attributes to the Dominican Crucifixion. According to Cerva, the Cross group, arranged above the high altar of St Dominic's church in 1358 as a monumental *anti peste* ex-voto, proved its miraculous powers in later times. During the exequies of the venerable friar Antoninus Clementis, the "two simulacra" were incensing the cross by swinging the thuribles; in Cerva's words, *non sine miraculo*.[48]

In order to support his assertions about miraculous powers of the Dominican Crucifixion, Cerva speaks of its long-standing tradition, and quotes an unidentified

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[47] *Quod magis dolendum celebres illi angeli ad latere Crucifixi a D. Jacobo Picenate positi, qui suo miracolosa movebat thurribula flammis absumpti deperiere*, cited as in I. Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi za izgubljenim slikarstvom*: p. 162.

[48] *In medio Christi morientis imago, non prominens, sed aequabilis, suisque depicta coloribus. In summitate duo simulacra genios referentia, quos ferunt aliquando non sine miraculo movisse thuribula, quae gestant. Et sine id re vera accidisse, cum Venerabilis viri Fratris Antonini Clementis exequiae in ea Aede celebrarentur, ex constanti maiorum traditione, et Carmelitarum, quorum institutum professus fuerat, Annalibus suo loco referemus. Circa crucem vero hinc inde duae Tabulae eodem opere caelatae, quorum altera Divam Mariam juxta crucem dolore confectam, altera Joannem dilectum discipulum exhibet.* [Seraphinus Maria Cerva, *Monumenta congregationis Sancti Dominici de Ragusio ordinis fratrum praedicatorum*, vol. 2. Ragusa, 1733: pp. 42-43]; cited as in Cristina Guarnieri, »Per la restituzione di due croci perdute di Paolo Veneziano: il leone marciano del Museo Correr e i dolenti della Galleria Sabauda«, in: *Medioevo adriatico: circolazione di modelli, opere, maestri [Culture dell'Adriatico 14]*, ed. Federica Toniolo and Giovanna Valenzano. Rome: Viella, 2010: p. 137, n. 17.

Carmelitan source.[49] However, apart from the doubtful account from the late fifteenth century, there seems to be no firm ground to support Cerva's claim. In this sense, it is worth recalling that Serafino Razzi in his exhaustive late sixteenth-century description of the Dominican church makes no account of the Crucifixion group and its alleged wonder, but acknowledges the miraculous powers of an image of the Virgin and a cross, both displayed on the altars in the nave of the church.[50] The situation gets even more complicated since the identical miraculous episode (at least in the nature of the wondrous event occurred during the burial of a friar) had by that time already been accredited to the cross group in St Francis' church, but not tied to Giacomo della Marca. In 1698, the German Franciscan historian Fortunatus Hueber published his lengthy *Menologium Franciscanum*, in which he describes a funeral of the distinguished Franciscan friar Evangelista Balionius, taking place on 9 August 1494. Hueber's account contains the very same motifs—the ceremony was accompanied by the miraculous event of angels incensing the church—only here, the story was set in the church of the Franciscans.[51]

Whether the identical miracle was accredited to mendicant churches of the same city in the following centuries is still impossible to ascertain. However, this puzzling attribution of the same wonder to both the Franciscan and Dominican churches could be explained by the fact that the two Crucifixion groups are indeed similar in appearance. Apart for the already discussed dissimilarities between the two compositions, they shared a decisive element that may have enabled the attribution of the animated-angels miracle to both churches. As in the drawing of 1614, Veneziano's group includes a pair of flying vested angels bearing the thuribles, symmetrically displayed on the opposite ends of the cross, with a strong impression of movement (Figures 5a and 5b).

The thurifer angels, iconographical subject that draws on the understanding of angels as celestial acolytes of the Mass, gained momentum in the fourteenth

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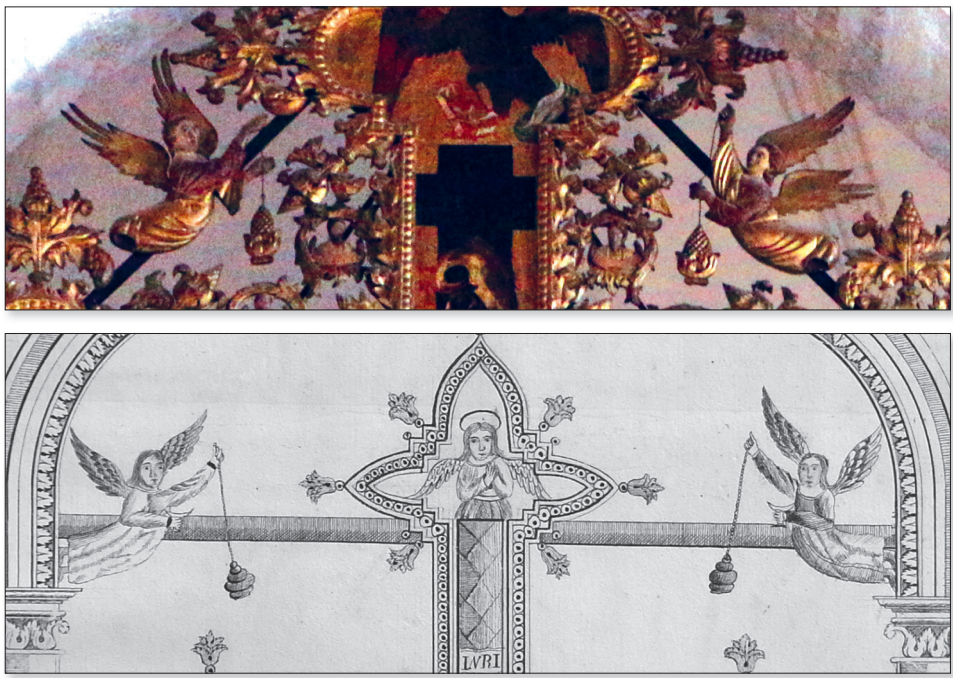
[49] *...ex constanti maiorum traditione, et Carmelitarum, quorum institutum professus fuerat, Annalibus suo loco referemus* (C. Guarnieri, »Per la restituzione di due croci perdute«, p. 137, n. 17).

[50] *Serafino Razzi, La storia di Ragusa: scritta nuovamente in tre libri*. Lucca: per Vicentio Busdraghi, 1595: pp. 142-143.

[51] *[Nonis augusti] Ragusae in Illirico, anno 1494. Evangelista Balionius, sanctitate et virtutibus excelluit, ut Angeli visi sint, corpus ipsius mortui, tempore, exequiarum, dum terrae mandaretur, thuribulo et incenso perfumigare, in altero claustri Sacello, Conventus S. Francisci apud Ragusam*. Fortunatus Hueber, *Menologium, seu brevis illuminatio, relucens in splendoribus, sanctorum martyrum, confessorum, virginum [...] ex triplici ordine Fratrum Minorum [...] Clarissarum [...] Poenitentium*. Monachii: Typis Ioannis Lucae Straubii, Statuum Provincialium Typographi, 1698: p. 1531.



Figures 5a and 5b. Angels thurifers in the cross groups in the churches of St Dominic (a) and St Francis (b). Photo: Fr Stipe Nosić, OFM; Živko Bačić (Institute of Art History in Zagreb, Photoarchives, inv. no. IPU-F-HU-153).

century.[52] The recognition of angels as assistants in religious service is underscored in the 1609 description of the Ragusan miracle as well, where their wondrous acting was equated to that of the altar servers.[53] We should not fail to notice that the angels on the 1614 drawing, apart from the thurible, bear a *navicella*, an incense container, which is yet another symbol of their role of subministers of a Mass (fig. 5b). Both Ragusan examples stand out given that comparable Crucifixion scenes more often featured angels bearing a chalice in which the blood gushing out from the Christ's wounds was collected.[54] On a more general

[52] Cf. Matthew M. Reeve, *Thirteenth-Century Wall Paintings of Salisbury Cathedral: Art, Liturgy, and Reform*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008: pp. 95-97; Maurice B. McNamee, *Vested angels: Eucharistic allusions in early Netherlandish paintings*. Leuven: Peeters, 1998: pp. 41-60.

[53] *...dicta duo thuribula (...) nulla humana arte impellente, moventur moverique ab omnibus visa sunt et videntur, non secus ac si a duobus acolythis dicto crucifixo de religioso more thurificaretur* (D. Lasić, *De vita et operibus S. Iacobi de Marchia*, p. 436).

[54] Cf. Clifford Davidson, »Heaven's Fragrance«, in: *The Iconography of Heaven*, ed. Clifford Davidson. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994: pp. 110-127.

level, the motif of the censing angels derives from the genre of saintly visions in which the event is elevated by olfactory means or, alternatively, it draws on the Eucharistic ceremony.[55] The Ragusan miracle in question accords perfectly with both sources.

Further evidence concerning the angels' miracles

The miracle attributed to Giacomo della Marca witnessed considerable resonance in later Franciscan sources. Contrary to Giacomo's earliest biography, which makes no account of the Ragusan miracle but, rather, underlines his anti-heretical mission during his Bosnian and Adriatic *iter*,[56] in the seventeenth century, following the already discussed 1607 and 1614 accounts, there is a handful of references to the miracle worthy of attention. The same year in which the Franciscan miraculous imagery was to be destroyed saw the publication of Giovanni Battista Barberio's *Epitome della vita del beato Giacomo della Marca*, in which he elaborates on the 1609 authentic by underlining Giacomo's veneration of sacred images. He recounts that Giacomo ordered the angels to be placed for rendering *una singulare divotione e pietà* to the wooden high cross, referred to as *Sacrosanta Imagine*.[57]

Some years after Barberio's *Epitome* was published, Benedetto Mazzara's *Leggendario Francescano*, often described as one of the first comprehensive collections of Franciscan biographies, offers further evidence of early modern "fortuna" of the miracle. When narrating on Giacomo's enterprises, Mazzara provides an account of his numerous wonders, among which he describes only

[55] Laura Sangha, *Angels and Belief in England, 1480-1700*. London-New York: Routledge, 2012: pp. 19-20.

[56] Venanzio da Fabriano, author of the first biography, recounts the numerous miracles performed by Giacomo in order to attract the new Christian flock, but this most probably concerns the Bosnian part of his mission, see *La vita di s. Giacomo della Marca (1393-1476) per fra Venanzio da Fabriano (1434-1506)*, ed. Marino Sgattoni. Zadar: Convento S. Francesco, 1940: pp. 138-139. We know that the Bosnian mission was not as nearly successful as indicated in Venanzio's writings, but few towns still keep the memory of Giacomo's sojourn there, see Marko Dragić, »Sveti Jakov Markijski u predajama i legendama Hrvata«, in: *Jakov Markijski i njegovo djelovanje u Bosni*: pp. 241-260.

[57] Giovanni Battista Barberio, *Epitome delle segnalate virtù, e miracolose attioni oprate dalla Divina Onnipotenza in progresso della dilettissima sua sposa Chiesa Santa, in persona del beato Giacomo della Marca minore osservante*. Roma: per Giacomo Dragondelli, 1667: p. 150. Giacomo's employment of images has recently been examined by Giuseppe Capriotti, »Defining the Boundaries of the Lawful Cult: History of an Adriatic Icon«. *IKON* 9 (2016): pp. 243-252.

three that, according to his words, could still be admired, testifying to the enduring signs of the Preacher's sainthood.[58] Indeed, the first on the list is the miracle of the angels in the Ragusan Franciscan church, which is referred to in the life of yet another distinguished Franciscan, Bonaventura da Palazzuolo, who was celebrated for embarking on a preaching mission to Albania and Serbia. In order to reach these lands, Bonaventura arrived in Dubrovnik with a group of fellow friars in 1634. Upon being warned that the voyage they were about to undertake was a highly risky one, the group was said to have started praying before the cross and the angels of Giacomo della Marca.[59] On one level, such an episode aimed at equating Bonaventura's mission to that of the blessed Giacomo, but it equally testified to the continuing linkage of Giacomo with Ragusan Franciscans. It is also the very first acknowledgement of the Franciscan cross group as a locus for prayer.

All these sources hailed the life and miracles of the blessed Giacomo, while new impetus for devotion was surely instigated by his canonisation in 1726. The investigation, concluded almost a hundred years after the beatification, remains to be explored in more detail.[60] Until then, it is worth noting that Naples, the city that held Giacomo's body and propelled the canonisation investigation, refused to cover the expenses of the process, so that it was necessary for the Franciscan Order to step in and provide the funds. Every Franciscan province, including the houses in the Republic of Dubrovnik, was obliged to participate,[61] and thus a wide platform for the project of canonisation was created. It is therefore possible that some of the evidence of Giacomo's cult could be linked to the post-canonisation devotion. These include an altar consecrated in his name in the church on Daksa, but attested only in 1818,[62] and his portraits which are preserved in the Franciscan friaries in Dubrovnik and in Rožat (Rijeka dubrovačka).[63]

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[58] *De' suoi miracoli non può assegnarsi numero, nè comporsi volume per la di lor' immensa quantità, benche se ne siano fatti fin' a nove processi (...) quali dal suo tempo fin' al presente si veggono continuati, tralasciando gl'altri per fuggire la proliffità*; Benedetto Mazzara, *Leggendario Francescano Nel quale Secondo l'Ordine de' Mesi si rapportano le Vite, e Morti de' Santi, Beati, & altri Huomini Venerabili, & Illustri*, vol. 1 della seconda parte. Venice: Appresso Giovanni Battista Tramontino, 1680[2]: p. 586.

[59] B. Mazzara, *Leggendario Francescano*, vol 2 della seconda parte: p. 15.

[60] See Fulvia Serpico, »Introduzione. Tra santità ufficiale e devozione popolare: prime considerazioni per la ricostruzione del processo di canonizzazione di Giacomo della Marca«, in: *Gemma lucens*: *Giacomo della Marca tra devozione e santità*: pp. XIII-XXI.

[61] Josip Sopta, *Spisi franjevačke provincije u Dubrovniku: analitički inventar*. Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku and Samostan Male braće u Dubrovniku, 2006: p. 55, doc. 170.

[62] J. Sopta, *Daksa*: pp. 81, 83.

[63] F. Jurić, *Povjesno-opisni prikaz*: p. 83; J. Sopta, *Daksa*: p. 18.

By that time, other smaller wonders were accredited to Giacomo. According to the popular belief, he drew mosquitos out of a marshy land nearby the friary in Rožat, so that the room where he had lodged was turned into a small oratory.[64] Giacomo's sojourns in Dubrovnik therefore echoed well into the modern period, and the same holds true of the miraculous angels. It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that the processions led by Franciscans featured two altar servers with thuribles, which symbolised Giacomo's long-destroyed angels.[65] This representational twist—animated wooden angels that wondrously emulated acolytes were now impersonated by the acolytes themselves—kept the miracle alive in the collective memory of Ragusan churchgoers.[66]

Conclusion

The sources pertaining to the miracles of the animated angels demonstrate that the wonder attributed to Giacomo della Marca had undergone a process from not having been acknowledged in the preacher's earliest biography to being listed first among the miracles recounted in the seventeenth-century sources. Naturally, miracles of different kinds were sought through the centuries, and it comes as no surprise that the initial stage of the nurturing of Giacomo's cult was characterised by an eagerness to underscore his profile of a converter of heretics and disease healer, while later Franciscan writings insisted upon the still ongoing miracles. Although the sources here presented do not permit the reconstruction of the miracle's "fortuna" in full, it is clear that the critical point of the codification of the miraculous narrative occurred at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when it was employed in the investigation for the purposes of Giacomo's beatification.

The 1614 drawing may arguably be linked to the launching of the promotional campaign, but so far very little information on its reach has been provided. Similarly

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[64] F. Jurić, *Povjesno-opisni prikaz*: p. 57.

[65] T. (Urban Talija), »Podatci za povjest dubrovačke biskupije. Povjest čudotvornog križa naših franjevaca«. *List dubrovačke biskupije* 3/4 (April 2, 1903): p. 37.

[66] By the late 1920s, however, the Franciscan church has seen the birth of another cult, that of the statue of Immaculate Heart of Mary, which could supposedly move eyes and lips. Nevertheless, Dubrovnik Church authorities were reluctant to promote the miracle, while the commission formed to enquire into the matter disputed the testimonies of the immediate eyewitnesses. In consequence, the wondrous episode of Mary's statue, contrary to that of Giacomo's angels, was very soon brought to an end. The material pertaining to these wondrous appearances was gathered in a lengthy brochure, and the matter witnessed considerable interest, see Urban Talija, *Neobične pojave na kipu Gospe Presv. Srca Isusova u crkvi Male braće u Dubrovniku*. Dubrovnik: Narodna svijest, 1926.

shadowy appears the issue of reception of the miracle in early modern Dubrovnik. Accounts are silent as to whether the Franciscan cross (referred to as *santissima* or *sacrosanta imagine*) and Giacomo's censing angels arranged at its sides had achieved a prestigious place among Ragusan devotional images. For now, we can safely assume that such a Eucharistic miracle, performed by an inaccessible object mounted above the high altar, could not have excited an enthusiastic cult, considering that the venerated image did not possess thaumaturgic powers, could not answer votive supplications, nor offer protection against perils.[67]

Still, records from fifteenth to eighteenth century tell of identical miracle in both mendicant churches. These wonders, as I have argued, were grounded in compositionally and iconographically related Crucifixion groups of the two neighbouring churches. The thurifer angels rendered at the sides of the crosses—although originally conceived as lateral part of these lavish ensembles—conveyed the sacred narratives. They operated as a visual confirmation and artistic materialisation of the wonder or, in other words, as a means of its authentication. In that respect, Ragusan miracles studied in this essay, apart from being wonders *of* images, reiterated in a number of early modern accounts, were as well, iconographically speaking, miracles that existed *in* the imagery itself.

While the presence of angels in both Crucifixion groups enabled the attribution of identical miracle, their very context (that is, their setting in the Franciscan or Dominican church), provoked different narratives, tied to venerable Franciscan or Dominican friars respectively. However, the cults of otherwise little-known friars, Evangelista Balionus and Antonius Clementis (whose burials were glorified by the miracle of the angels), were acknowledged only in their local Mendicant communities. On the contrary, Giacomo della Marca possessed a widely-recognised cult, with the miraculous angels in the Ragusan Franciscan church being just one of the episodes of its centuries-long nurturing.

In conclusion, the Crucifixion groups in question were not objects of cultic veneration in their own right, and we cannot understand their wonders in the framework of the cult of images, for they operated as agents of the cults of friars to whom the miracles were attributed. The hierophantic token of thurifer angels, therefore, bolstered the sainthood of venerable friars more than it transformed

[67] My conclusions owe much to the research on miraculous objects by Megan Holmes, see, for instance, her essay »Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence«. *Art History* 34/3 (2011): pp. 432-465.

the Ragusan mendicant churches into sites of potent sacred intercession. In consequence, this would also explain the somewhat peculiar absence of local evidence of these wonders, and ample references to them in the early modern collections of friars' *vitae*. It is my hope that new findings will enlarge the body of evidence presented in this essay, and offer a more nuanced understanding of mendicant cross groups and their respective miracles.