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LEATHER MANUFACTURING AND CIRCULATING MODELS IN THE MIDDLE AGES: FROM A BYZANTINE PATENA IN HALBERSTADT TO A VENETO-CRETAN ICON IN LJUBLJANA

The use of models in the art of the Middle Ages is a well known and much studied phenomenon.[1] For painting and sculpture, models were usually graphic references that artists could follow more or less faithfully and eventually adapt to their own need; for other artistic typologies, models were more binding and were often out-and-out matrices or moulds that could be impressed upon materials such as metal, textile and leather.

The real extent of the phenomenon is hard to evaluate because of the near total loss of these matrices. With only a perceived functional value at the time of their creation, they were likely worn out, lost or destroyed over the centuries. Some rare moulds have fortunately survived, however; some being displayed in the 1985 exhibition devoted to *Ornamenta ecclesiae*, organized in Cologne,[2] whilst another matrix was exhibited in Rome in 1979.[3] These objects are illuminating but isolated testimonies of a vast phenomenon, still yet to be completely understood.

[1] First of all, I want to thank some people, without whose help and support I would have never been able to write this article: Luca Mor, for all the helpful advices he gave me, and his constant encouragement; Joanne Anderson, for all her suggestions, and for having edited and revised my English.
Herbert L. KESSLER, s. v. Modello, *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, VIII (ed. Angiola Maria Romanini), Roma 1997, pp. 491–496; Robert W. SCHELLER, *Exemplum. Model-book drawings and the practice of artistic transmission in the middle ages (ca. 900–ca. 1470)*, Amsterdam 1995; Fabrizio CRIVELLO, L'immagine ripetuta: filiazione e creazione nell'arte del Medioevo, *Arti e storia nel Medioevo. Del vedere: pubblici, forme e funzioni*, III (edd. Enrico Castelnuovo, Giuseppe Sergi), Torino 2004, pp. 567–592.
[2] Brigitte BÄNSCH, in: *Ornamenta ecclesiae. Kunst und Künstler der Romanik* (Köln, Schnutgen Museum der Stadt, 6. 3.–9. 6. 1985, ed. Anton Legner), Köln 1985, vol. I, p. 320, catt. B93–B94; pp. 322–323, catt. B97–B99; pp. 324–326, catt. B102–B104; pp. 337–346, catt. B114–B125. Hermann FILLITZ, ibid., pp. 323–324, cat. B100; Renate KROSS, ibid., p. 321, catt. B95–B96; Peter SPRINGER, ibid., pp. 336–337, catt. B111–B113.
[3] *Icone bulgare dei secoli IX–XIX* (Roma, Museo di Palazzo Venezia, 15. 5.–15. 6. 1979, edd. Kostadinka Paskaleva, Ljuben Prashkov), Roma 1979, p. 12, cat. 4.

1. Byzantine workshop, *Patena with Crucifixion*, silver. Halberstadt,
Treasure of the Cathedral

In this article I will present a particular case of model usage and circulation. Here analysis is particularly fruitful because of the survival of what seems to be the matrix and some of the products obtained through its impression, albeit with modifications in their materials and functions. It also has bearing on the prestige of the matrix itself and the notable geographic and chronological reach of the phenomenon: from an 11th–12th century Byzantine *patena*, to a 14th century *retrotabulum* from the Veneto to a 16th century Venetian frame.

On 16 August 1205, Konrad von Krosig, bishop of Halberstadt (1201–1208), went back to his Episcopal See after having taken part in the Fourth Crusade. He took several objects with him from Constantinople, including a silver *patena* (fig. 1) created by a workshop

of the Byzantine court between 1050 and 1190, and that in Eastern liturgy was intended to keep the Eucharistic Bread; the *patena* is still kept in the Treasury of the Cathedral of that same city.[4] On its base is represented in relief a *Crucifixion*. Christ, a strong and noble figure, stands majestically on the Cross, which itself is placed in the centre of the composition. His anatomy is lightly, yet confidently articulated, and great prominence is given to his bust from which ejects a spurt of blood. The long loin-cloth wraps his legs as a shroud. This noble figure seems to be triumphant over his death and martyrdom, in order to visualize the promise of salvation that was contained in the Eucharistic Bread kept in the *patena*. The base of the Cross seems to be fixed directly in Adam's skull and bones instead of the mount of Golgotha, symbolically visualizing the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice. At the sides of the Cross, the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist are standing, completely wrapped in loose-fitting, classicised robes. They gaze impotently at Christ, and express with vivid gestures the *pathos* of the moment; Mary holds out a hand to her Son, and keeps the other one at her chest, while John keeps a corner of his cloak with one hand and places the other on his cheek. In the upper part of the composition, the floating archangels Michael and Gabriel, identified through accompanying inscriptions, present Christ to the viewer holding out a hand towards Him. Greek inscriptions in fact accompany all of the figures and are present on the sides of the *patena*: on its inner part are written the words that Christ says on the Cross, putting Mary and John in each other's mutual care, while on the external profile of the *patena* is written the form of the Eucharistic celebration. On the border there is a frame in relief with floral decorations. The same frame is replicated on the internal and external border of the *patena*, spaced out by eight half-length Eastern martyrs[5] in roundels and bishop-saints,[6] each one with his own inscription of identity.

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[4] Christian HECHT, in: *Der Heilige Schatz im Dom zu Halberstadt* (Halberstadt, Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt, Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, ed. Harald Meller), Regensburg 2008, pp. 90–93, cat. 20 [Diskos ("Weihbrotschale" bzw. Patene) und vier steinewerfende Juden].
[5] Demetrios, Theodor, Merkurios, Eustathios, Nestor, Niketas, Prokopios and Georgios; HECHT 2008, cit. n. 4, p. 90.
[6] Basileos, Gregorios, Rholasios, Spyridon, Athanasios, Chrysanthos, Johannes Chrysostomos and Nikolaos; HECHT 2008, cit. n. 4, p. 90.

2. Venetian workshop, *Retrotabulum with Crucifixion*, leather. Brescia, Private Collection

The original function of the *patena* as receptacle during the Eucharistic liturgies was altered in Halberstadt. It became a reliquary of St. Stephen, civic patron and titular of the Cathedral. In the 13th century, four figures sculpted in metal were added to the border of the *patena*, representing the Jews, as indicated by their clothes and caps, who stoned the very saint whose relics were now to be kept inside. A shrine with the relics was then fixed to the *patena*; the assembly holes were cleverly inserted far from the original figures of the *patena* to avoid them being damaged by the new metallic inserts. The *Crucifixion* was after all essential to the symbolic meaning of the reliquary, and would have created a clear visual paradigm between the martyrdom of the saint and Christ's own sacrifice; here presenting Stephen as *Alter Christus*, and thus according to an iconographical scheme commonly used during that period.

We might hypothesize that someone made a mould of the *patena* during the process of changing it into a reliquary in order to better shape the four metal figures that were to be added, or with the precise aim to reproduce that model in other works. According to Christian Hecht, it is probable that Rhennish craftsmen did the work, but they needed to go to Halberstadt to adapt the new figures to the shape and dimension of the *patena*.[7] Perhaps it is a rash hypothesis to posit that a mould of the *patena* was completed and sent to the craftsmen so that they could do the work on the base of that exact model, and then send back the four new figures and the shrine to Halberstadt. Nevertheless, we can be sure that a precise mould of the *patena* (or of a similar object obtained through the impression of the same matrix used for the patena itself) did exist and that it had a wide geographic and chronological circulation.

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In fact, we find the mould again in the Veneto, hundreds of miles away and two centuries after the date of the *patena* and its original model. And this time it is impressed on leather. An Italian private collection holds a work made in leather on a wooden core (fig. 2) that portrays a Crucifixion with the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist and two angels inside a trilobe-arched frame with spiral columns and squared capitals.[8]

[7] Hecht 2008, cit. n. 4, p. 93.
[8] I am deeply beholden to Luca Mor, who informed me about the existance of this work of art, as well as of those here quoted at note 25. I wish also to thank their owners, who allowed me to see and study them.

3. Byzantine workshop, *Patena with Crucifixion*, silver. Halberstadt, Treasure of the Cathedral, detail

4. Venetian workshop, *Retrotabulum with Crucifixion*, leather. Brescia, Private Collection, detail

It is clearly obtained from the Halberstadt *patena* (or from an identical object). The two columns rest on a base that repeats in leather three of the saints in roundels and a portion of the floral frame of the border of the Byzantine *patena*. A comparison between the figures is sufficient to confirm the clear connection (figg. 3–4), with particular reference to the anatomy of Christ's body, totally identical in the two works, with prominent bust and identical loincloth, in addition to the slight and elegant bending of his left knee. We can also see the identical position of the two archangels, the wing furthest from view flexed between the halo and the arm stretched out towards Christ. The poses of the Virgin Mary and John and their zigzag drapery clearly correspond to those seen on the original *patena*. Moreover, they share the same decorative typology of the halo, with a double incision on its external border. If these comparisons are not sufficient enough, we can look to the identical dimension of the two works and the presence of the same details derived from the *patena* that in the leather do not have any iconographical relevance to the overall composition and thus exist only as a result of the mould. The cross on which Christ hangs in the *patena* measures ca. 19x13.5 cm,

5. Byzantine workshop, *Patena with Crucifixion*, silver. Halberstadt, Treasure of the Cathedral, detail

6. Venetian workshop, *Retrotabulum with Crucifixion*, leather. Brescia, Private Collection, detail

while that of the leather is ca. 18x12.3 cm, a gap of few millimetres attributable to the propensity of leather to contract in minute dimensions whilst drying up. The dimensions of the other figures correspond with the same precision.[9] Furthermore, the circumference of the leather around the depiction clearly matches that of the inner part of the *patena*. In the upper part it is also possible to discern the central letters of the inscription written in the frame of the Byzantine plate (figg. 5–6), as well as the central cross from which the inscription itself departs (the floral

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[9] St. John in the *patena* is 11.2 cm hight, while that of the leather is 10.3; Mary's dimensions are 10.6 and 9.9 cm.

7. Byzantine workshop, *Patena with Crucifixion*, silver. Halberstadt, Treasure of the Cathedral, detail

8. Venetian workshop, *Retrotabulum with Crucifixion*, leather. Brescia, Private Collection, detail

frame is just visible above, like that in the *patena* which lies between the strip with the inscription and the external border of the plate). Faint traces of the inscriptions are visible at the base of the leather, just under the impressed circumference and in proximity to the figures. These elements do not have any precise iconographical nor functional reason to be added to the leather and so tell us that the matrix used to obtain this work of art reproduced exactly and completely the shape of the *patena*, and not just the central Crucifixion. The artist involved in the work's manufacture freely took from the mould different elements and chose to use the external profile of the matrix to obtain the inferior frame of his own work of art, where we can see three bishop-saints taken from those of the *patena* and some floral spirals of the frame that divided them from each other. The long face of the central saint (figg. 7–8) corresponds to the saints in the *patena* who have a long pointed beard. It is also

9. Byzantine workshop, *Patena with Crucifixion*, silver. Halberstadt, Treasure of the Cathedral, detail

10. Venetian workshop, *Retrotabulum with Crucifixion*, leather. Brescia, Private Collection, detail

possible to observe the flow of the floral spirals at his sides that seem to be sloping; such a detail perfectly matches the shape of the identical frame in the *patena* that clearly compliments its round format. The two lateral saints, with chubby cheeks, seem to be derived from those of a younger age with shorter beards. The left one appears to have his right hand raised in blessing. Each tentative attempt to capture such gestures is distorted because of the difficulties in rendering small, precise and delicate details with leather but we can propose a comparison with the saint that lies in the upper part of the *patena*, to the left, just above the Virgin Mary (figg. 9–10). These figures also share the same decorative pattern on their halos with those of the Byzantine plate, with a double incision on the external profile. Finally, the strong relief of the border corresponds to the barbed frame of the *patena*.

The use of matrices for the manufacturing of leather, a material that could also be painted and gilded, was widespread and is testified to on several occasions.[10] Indeed, the procedure was known during Antiquity and several workshops were located throughout the Mediterranean Area. Leather handiworks were appreciated and kept in important

[10] Chiara MERUCCI, Il cuoio, *I supporti nelle arti pittoriche. Storia, tecnica, restauro* (ed. Corrado Maltese), II, Milano 1990, pp. 225–276. See also the catalogue entries for the exhibition held in Cologne cited in note 2, amongst which is an interesting model for a Crucifixion.

collections, such as the treasure of the Holy See: an inventory compiled under Boniface VIII in 1295 includes several objects made entirely from leather.[11] An important place of production was Venice, a city which boasted a long tradition and a large number of workshops involved in such manufacturing. The first statute of the painters' guild, dated 7 December 1271,[12] already regulated the activity of leather workers, called "cuoridoro" in that city.[13] The association lasted for centuries, and leather was later used to create altar decorations[14] as well as private houses fittings.[15] By the time the "cuoridoro" obtained independent guild status in the 16th century (their premises located in Strada Nuova near the church of Santa Sofia,)[16] there were already more than seventy workshops active in leather production in Venice.

[11] See the "*theca de corio*", the "*copertura pro coxino laborata super corio*", the "*duo coria magna antiqua cum diversis laboreriis ad auripellum*", and the cover in red leather "*cum fibulis de argento*" for a book of hours in three volumes. The complete text of the inventory has been published in several numbers of the same review by Émile MOLINIER, Inventaire du trésor du Saint-Siège sous Boniface VIII (1295), *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres*, 43, 1882, pp. 277–310; 45, 1884, p. 31–57, spec. p. 44; 46, 1885, pp. 16–44, spec. p. 42; 47, 1886, pp. 646–667, spec. pp. 664; 49, 1888, pp. 226–237, spec. p. 229. See also Julian GARDNER, The artistic patronage of Boniface VIII: the Perugian inventory of the papal treasure of 1311, *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 34, 2001–2002 (2004), pp. 69–86.
[12] Giovanni MONTICOLO, Il capitolare dell'arte dei pittori a Venezia composto nel dicembre 1271 e le sue aggiunte (1271–1311), *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, 2, 1891, pp. 321–356.
[13] Anna CONTADINI, "Cuoridoro": tecnica e decorazione di cuoi dorati veneziani e italiani con influssi islamici, *Arte veneziana e arte islamica, Atti del primo simposio internazionale sull'arte veneziana e l'arte islamica* (ed. Ernst J. Grube), Venezia 1989, pp. 231–251.
[14] Fiorella SPADAVECCHIA, Il restauro dei paliotti in cuoio dorato e dipinto della chiesa del Redentore, *I Restauri a Venezia: 1987–1998* (ed. Gloria Tranquilli), Milano 2001, pp. 82–85; Oleg ZASTROW, Antichi cuoi lavorati e decorati. Un patrimonio artistico derelitto e ignorato, *Archivi di Lecco e della Provincia. Rivista di Storia e Cultura del Territorio*, XXIX, 2006, n. 4, pp. 46–63.
[15] In his 1608 travel book, Thomas Coryat wrote: "*Visitai anche un altro palazzo pubblico, che apparteneva al praetor o podestà di Padova [...] In una delle stanze ai piani superiori vidi dei bellissimi addobbi come non ne avevo mai visti in Inghilterra. Ma quando visitai Venezia ne vidi in gran quantità. Sono fatti di una specie di pelle fine, con una bella doratura, e costituiscono un ornamento che dona non poca leggiadria all'ambiente [...] le più belle stanze sono sfolgoranti e luccicanti, le pareti tutt'attorno ornate di sontuosissimi arazzi e cuoio dorato*". Thomas CORYAT, *Crudezze, viaggio in Francia e in Italia (1608)* (edd. Franco Marenco, Antonio Meo), Milano 1975, p. 191.
[16] CONTADINI 1989, cit. n. 13.

It is possible that one of these active workshops created the work of art currently under discussion; Venice boasted several connections with foreign cities, thanks to the flow of commercial traffic, which included artworks and artists. It is thus possible that the matrix travelled along one of the established trade routes and arrived in the Veneto where it was reproduced to create other identical matrices as well as works of art in diverse formats, materials and functions. Venice was the ideal place to trade in Byzantine products, as they were widely appreciated in many different artistic fields. While it is notable that an ancient model was reused so many decades later, it is possible that its high value was linked precisely to its antique, Eastern appearance.

Indeed on the basis of comparisons with Venetian artworks it is possible to chart a chronology for our leather and to identify its typological category. Trilobe-arched frames held on spiral columns were commonly used in Venetian works, as well as in the wider Veneto, during the XIV century; in Venice this model was used in sculpture (for elements of architectural decorations and niches for statues),[17] as well as in painting to create the wooden frames of imposing polyptychs.[18] While our leather, with its small dimensions, could not compete with such works

[17] See for example the trifore of Palazzo Ducale in Venice, formed by three trilobe arches on spiral columns, with floral capitals with squared shape; and the monument where doge Marco Cornaro is buried inside the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, by Nino Pisano and Andriolo de' Santi. For a discussion on the relationship between real architectural elements and their rendering in the paintings by Lorenzo Veneziano see Luca FABBRI, Architettura dipinta e architettura reale nella pittura di Lorenzo Veneziano, *Lorenzo Veneziano. Le Virgines Humilitatis. Tre Madonne "de panno lineo": indagini, tecnica, iconografia* (edd. Chiara Rigoni, Chiara Scardellato), Cinisello Balsamo 2011, pp. 61–69.

[18] Consider in particular the paintings by the Maestro dell'Incoronazione del 1324, Paolo and Lorenzo Veneziano; for the terraferma see Turone di Maxio. Andrea DE MARCHI, La postérité du devant-d'autel à Venise: retable orfévreés et retable peints, *The Altar and its Environment, 1150–1400* (edd. Justin E. A. Kroesen, Victor Schmidt), Turnhout 2009, pp. 57–86, spec. p. 64, fig. 4; Cristina GUARNIERI, *Lorenzo Veneziano*, Cinisello Balsamo 2006, p. 178, cat. 5; pp. 180–181, cat. 9; pp. 186–187, cat. 14; pp. 190–192, cat. 20; pp. 202–204, cat. 33; p. 207, cat. 37; pp. 213–214, cat. 44; pp. 215–216, cat. 46. Tiziana FRANCO, in: *Museo di Castelvecchio. Catalogo generale dei dipinti e delle miniature delle collezioni civiche veronesi. I. Dalla fine del X all'inizio del XVI secolo* (Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio, edd. Paola Marini, Gianni Peretti, Francesca Rossi), Cinisello Balsamo 2011, pp. 67–69, cat. 33 [Turone di Maxio da Camnago]; Fausta PICCOLI, *Altichiero e la pittura a Verona nella tarda età scaligera*, Sommacampagna 2010, pp. 13–52, tav. 1.

11. Veronese workshop, *Antiphonary MLII-3*, f. 145r. Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, detail

12. Veronese workshop, *Gradual MLIX-VI*, f. 159r. Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, detail

of art, some miniatures of the same period could support an argument for its use as an altar decoration. More specifically, I refer to the works found in Antiphonary MLII-3 and Gradual MLIX-VI, both kept in the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona, which function as a valuable, figurative testimony, as recently noticed by Marta Minazzato.[19] These finely detailed miniatures[20] (figg. 11–12), executed in a style close to that of Turone and Altichiero, portray liturgical celebrations on minor altars, decorated with all the required apparatus. In particular, some interesting *retrotabula*[21] are visible, characterised by their small dimensions over one or two registers. Set inside trilobe-arched frames on spiral columns, undeniably similar to that of our leather, we see full figured saints and the *Virgin and Child*. Some laymen are taking part in the ceremonies and so, according to Minazzato, the altars represented in the miniatures are the minor ones, located in small chapels or under the rood screen. It is therefore possible to hypothesize that the laymen depicted were mem-

[19] Marta MINAZZATO, Polittici nelle miniature venete del Tre e Quattrocento, *Arte Veneta*, 62, 2005, pp. 14–25, spec. pp. 18–19. EAD., Il Trecento e l'Età gotica, *La parola illuminata. Per una storia della miniatura a Verona e a Vicenza tra Medioevo e Età Romantica* (ed. Gino Castiglioni), Verona 2011, pp. 35–84, spec. pp. 42–53.
[20] Respectively at f. 145 r. and 159 r.
[21] For a discussion on the term used to indicate such paintings see MINAZZATO 2005, cit. n. 19, spec. n. 3, p. 23; see also *The Altar and its Environment ...* 2009, cit. n. 18.

bers of brotherhood who usually met at these altars. If this is true, we could assume that a brotherhood was involved in the commission of our leather, indeed specifically asking for a leather *retrotabulum*, in an antique and Eastern style. Such works of art were likely completed with additional panels at their sides bearing representations of saints inside a frame, similar to the one still surviving (fig. 2).[22] With the manuscripts dating to 1368, the one that confirms the comparison already proposed with elements common to sculpture and large-scale polyptychs.

The existence of altar decorations made in leather, as known from later periods by well-known surviving examples,[23] can surely be dated as early as the 14th century; the current lack of comparative works probably due to the perishable nature of the material and changes in taste. As such, the scenario proposed in this article would add a small, yet vital piece of knowledge to our understanding of the history of the production of *retrotabula* in Venice and in the Veneto; workshops involved in such production were clearly able to master the established technique of leather manufacturing, as well as those of painting, metal and wood works.[24]

The model of the Byzantine *patena* in Halberstadt, and later the Venetian *retrotabulum*, must have remained in vogue for a long period, and at least three other examples of it survive.[25] The one that interest us the most is probably the latest one, where it is used as a decorative element in the upper part of a frame. It indicates that in Venice the model was mostly used for leather, since all the products, to the best of my knowledge, are executed in this very material. It is also possible to follow the process of deterioration of the matrix, evident in the less detailed rendering of the figures, which become more and more blurred.

The frame and the painting that is inserted in it (fig. 13) are now kept in the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana.[26] The complete

[22] It is not possible to verify the existence of fixing systems at the sides of the work, since two little pieces of wood have been added to its sides in modern times.
[23] SPADAVECCHIA 2001, cit. n. 14.
[24] Cf. in particular DE MARCHI 2009, cit. n. 18.
[25] In this article I consider only one of them; the other two will be analysed in a different context. The three works are kept in the same private collection; they are slightly different in shape and format, but they all share the same dimension and are obtained from the same matrix of the Halberstadt *patena*.
[26] Anica CEVC, Ksenija ROZMAN, *Nove pridobitve Narodne galerije 1965–1975* (Ljubljana, Narodna galerija), Ljubljana 1976, p. 56, cat. 39 [Marija z Jezusom – Ikona]; Federico ZERI [, Ksenija ROZMAN], *Tuji slikarji od 14. do 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana, Narodna

13. Veneto-Cretan and Venetian workshops, *Icon with the Virgin and Child.* Ljubljana, National Gallery of Slovenia

lack of knowledge about its provenance, as well as its typology, makes it hard to attempt any historical clarifications. The work of art, a Veneto-Cretan icon that shows a *Virgin and Child* on a typical gold background, was given to Professor Francè Stelè by the FZC (Federalni zbirni center / Federal Collection Centre),[27] like several works sequestered in the territory during the Second World War. In 1974 it entered the Museum as a gift by the France Stelè Institute of Art History of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Nothing is known about its history before 1946 but it is possible that the painting was originally intended for a local church, or a private dwelling.

Despite these historical gaps, Federico Zeri[28] hypothesized that the painting was produced by a Venetian workshop at the end of the 15th century, one which was collaborating with some of the *Madonneri* who worked in the city during that period and belonged to the Veneto-Cretan movement.[29] In fact, although we tend to think that Veneto-Cretan icons were produced only in Crete, it is important to remember that many workshops were located throughout the Mediterranean Area, especially along the trade routes with a large number being found in Venice. Their presence increased after 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turkish, provoking a diaspora from the epicentre of Byzantine culture and its subject territories. It is certainly true that Byzantine migrants took refuge in Crete, under the rule of Venice until 1699, and many artists were found among them, but Cretans were also active in the Veneto. Venice was a favoured place for the trade of icons, and particularly during the important market that took place every year in the city on the feast day of the Ascension. Some documents written at the end of the 15th century imply that workshops were kept busy preparing for this market in order to satisfy the numerous requests for these icons.[30] Because of the presence of the most active Greek orthodox

galerija), Ljubljana 1983, pp. 101–102, cat. 3 [Madonna che allatta il Bambino]; Federico ZERI, Ksenija ROZMAN, *European paintings: catalogue of the collection* (Ljubljana, Narodna galerija), Ljubljana 2000, p. 34, cat. 3.

[27] For a discussion about the FZC see ZERI, ROZMAN 2000, cit. n. 26, pp. 22–24.

[28] ZERI 1983, cit. n. 26.

[29] The bibliography on the Veneto-Cretan school is vast; in this article, I will quote only the issues that are directly relevant.

[30] On 4 July 1499 the Venetians, Giorgio Baseggio and Pietro Varsama ordered from three Cretan artists 700 icons, that had to be executed by the 15 August, the feast day

community, its mediating role between East and West, and the presence of several icons, *ab antiquo* and often acquired from the East, being venerated in the most important churches of the city,[31] Venice offered the best guarantee for authentic paintings. Indeed, they were highly valued and appreciated for their particular aura of sacredness.[32]

Federico Zeri interpreted the peculiar decorative typology on the halos of the figures of the Ljubljana icon as proof of the Venetian nationality of the painter; according to him, such decorations were derived from those typical of the Trecento-painter, Paolo Veneziano and his workshop. Although the similarity between them is undeniable,[33] we have to consider that such a detail might not be significant after the passage of so many years. Moreover, the combination of Eastern and Western elements was common to all Veneto-Cretan production. Zeri's judgment was probably distorted by his chronological hypothesis, since he thought that the painting was produced at the end of the 15th century. Even if we must always be cautious in the appraisal of Veneto-Cretan painting, in my opinion this dating could be postponed by several decades, placing it more fully in the 16th century. The style of the icon finds convincing comparison with other paintings created in the 16th century, especially in the more intimate and tender relationship between the Mother and Son, in the expanded volumes of the figures, in the spare anatomical details and also in the cross-fertilisation between two

of the Ascension: Magister *Migiel Fuca depentor* was paid to paint 200 icons; Magister *Njcolò Giprioti depentor* received a commission for 300 paintings; finally, Magister *Giorgio Miçocostantin depentor* had to execute the other 200. Mario Cattapan, Nuovi elenchi e documenti dei pittori in Creta dal 1300 al 1500, *Thesaurismata*, 9, 1972, pp. 202–235, spec. pp. 211–213, docc. 6–8.

[31] Alberto Rizzi, Le icone bizantine e postbizantine delle chiese veneziane, *Thesaurismata*, 9, 1972, pp. 250–291.

[32] André Chastel, "Medietas imaginis". Le prestige durable de l'icone en Occident, *Cahiers archéologique*, 36, 1988, pp. 99–110; Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages*, New Rochelle 1990, pp. 131–185; Maria Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, La pittura di icone a Creta veneziana, secoli XV e XVI: questioni di mecenatismo, iconografia e preferenze estetiche, *Venezia e Creta* (atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Iraklion-Chanià, 30th September–5th October 1997, ed. Gherardo Ortalli), Venezia 1998, pp. 459–507.

[33] For an indepth study on the technique and style of punch decorations in paintings by Paolo Veneziano see Rosa Maria Salvador, *Punzoni e altre operazioni dell'oro in Paolo Veneziano e nella pittura del primo Trecento a Venezia*, MA thesis, supervisor Andrea De Marchi, Università di Udine, accademic year 2006–2007.

different iconographic versions of the same theme, as often happened from the 16th century on.[34] We might thus conclude that the number "1591" written by a modern hand on the back of the painting could be linked to a circumstance connected to the commission -if not to the commission itself- which was still remembered or documented before the painting was sequestered in the 20th century.

The provenance of the artwork from Venice can now find confirmation in a simple fact: the presence in its frame of the model of Crucifixion derived from the Halberstadt *patena*, one already used in the Veneto. The model was likely favoured for a long period of time in Venice, thanks to the enduring appreciation of Eastern devotional objects in that city. Indeed, the frame may have been executed by one of the above noted seventy workshops involved in leather manufacturing during the 16th century in Venice, who had previously collaborated with painters from at least the 13th, when they belonged to the same guild. Today the frame, and the painting inside, is greatly damaged. It has certainly been restored, and maybe altered, however weak traces of gold indicate that originally it could have been completely gilded, perhaps to imitate wooden frames. The Byzantine model is nonetheless perfectly recognizable (fig. 14), even if by that time less defined; its use is confirmed again by the precise correspondence of the dimensions.[35] The frame -although not easy to analyze because of the difficulty of clearly distinguishing the original elements to those added later- correlates with the Venetian tradition of reusing typical older elements, such as pinnacles with floral decorations, the two spiral columns, and the squared capitals.

We can be sure that the setting and function of the Ljubljana work of art, and the Byzantine Crucifixion in its frame, were different from

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[34] Such elements, partly due to the conflation of Eastern and Western elements, became more common after the mid 16th century; see in particular, the stereotypical geometric shapes of the two figures, and the way in which the Child is sitting without any support: his Mother's hand is indeed on his left shoulder. The painter also merged here two different iconographical versions, the *Virgin Odighitria* and the *Galaktotrophousa*. Patrizia ANGIOLINI MARTINELLI, Teologia, tipologia, stile delle icone, *Icone dalle collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Ravenna* (Ravenna, Museo Nazionale, 9.–11. 1979, ed. Gino Pavan) Santa Sofia di Romagna 1979, pp. 19–23, spec. p. 23; Luciana MARTINI, ibid., pp. 39–41, catt. 29, 33, 35, 36.

[35] The Cross in the Ljubljana frame measures 17.3x12.1 cm, St. John 10 and the Virgin Mary 9.8 cm.
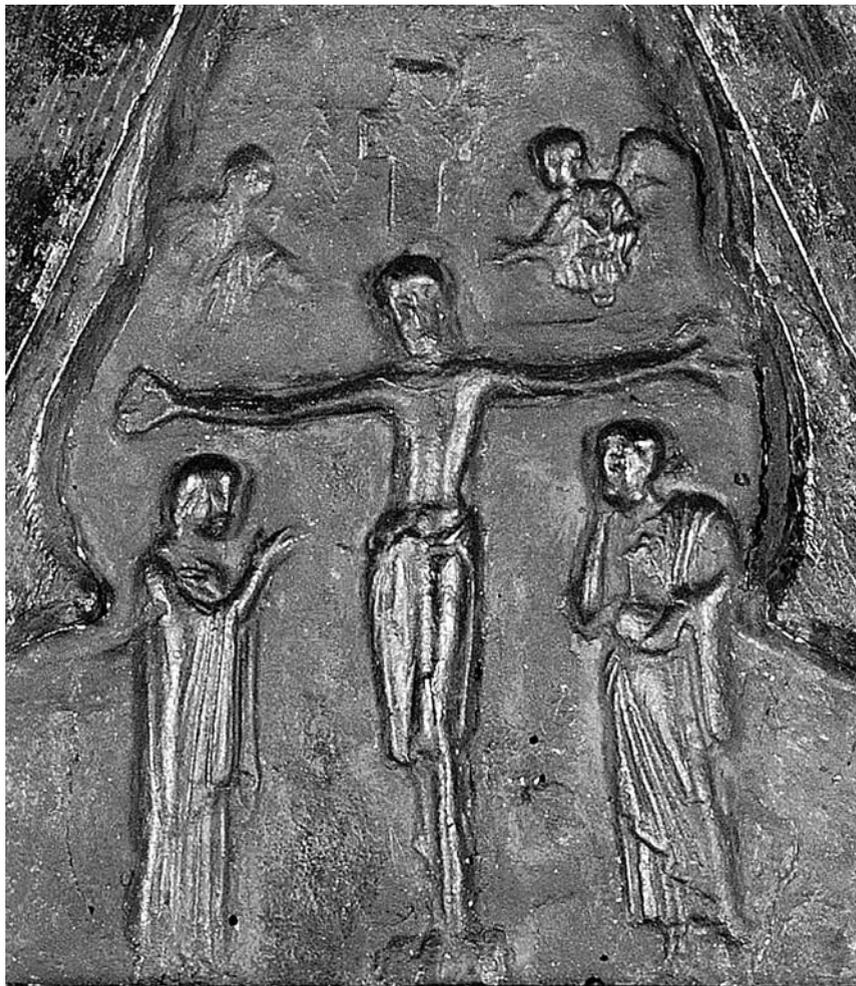
14. Veneto-Cretan and Venetian workshops, *Icon with the Virgin and Child*.
Ljubljana, National Gallery of Slovenia, detail

the *patena*, as well as the *retrotabulum*; the icon was possibly destined for the private devotion in a bourgeois private house, one of the many "*quadretto di Nostra Donna candiotto*" often quoted in old inventories.[36]

[36] Ennio Concina, Venezia e la tradizione artistica di Bisanzio, *Cristiani d'Oriente. Spiritualità, arte e potere nell'Europa post bizantina* (Trieste, Scuderie del Castello di Miramare, 27. 7. 1999–9. 1. 2000, ed. Grigore Arbore Popescu), Milano 1999, pp. 87–91, spec. p. 91.

15. Veneto-Cretan workshop, *Icon with the Virgin and Child.* Venice, Ducal Palace

Indeed, it may have functioned as a protection for its owner,[37] or perhaps located in a sacred space, church or chapel, which in Venice

[37] Such icons were often taken onto ships by Venetian merchants to ensure their safe passage; an icon kept in Trieste, for example, has an inscription dated 1525 with the name of its owner, Pietro Rivarelli di Creta, who asked for Mary's protection for himself and his little boat. Also the doge Sebastiano Venier had an icon on his boat during the battle of Lepanto; in 1921 the painted icon was given as a gift by Giambattista Venier to the church of Santa Maria Formosa, where it is still located. RIZZI 1972,

were often decorated with oriental icons.[38] But it could also be possible that the icon was venerated for its powers of civic protection. As a comparison, we can look to the well-known Veneto-Cretan icon, painted around the same time as ours (fig. 15), and probably commissioned by the doge Antonio Grimani, who ruled between 1521 and 1523,[39] for the Ducal Palace where it is still displayed. Although our icon could not have been exposed outside, on account of the perishable nature of leather, it is interesting to note that the two works share the same relationship between painting and architectural frame; the frame is built into the painting itself and thus inextricably linked.

Both painted icon and leather frame mutually complete one another, from a stylistic and formal, as well as an iconographical point of view: the Eastern essence of Veneto-Cretan paintings was known, requested and valued during that period and the commissioner must have been able to discern this in the Crucifixion of the matrix. It is even more evident if considered in the cultural and artistic context of that period, which was characterized by a different stylistic taste. The theme of the Crucifixion, furthermore, perfectly matched and completed the symbolic meaning of the painted depiction: the Christ Child, still in swaddling clothes, is pushing himself out towards the Christian globe, trying to catch it, while the Virgin keeps it in her hand more as a future promise than a present reality. The Child, in fact, hardly reaches it, as only after his own sacrifice on the Cross can this iron will expressed in the little outstretched hand be truly rewarded. The symbolic link, but we can say also the temporal sequencing, between the two episodes may have been visually more evident in its original state, thanks to the gilding on the Crucifixion in the frame, which would have served as an iconic counter-part to the crossed globe of the painting below.

Despite the unfortunate gaps and doubts that punctuate their histories, it is clear that there was a precise connection between the

cit. n. 28, p. 279, cat. 55; Marisa BIANCO FIORIN, Circolazione delle immagini sacre nell'Europa sud-orientale. XV–XVIII secolo, *Cristiani d'Oriente* ... 1999, cit. n. 36, pp. 107–111, spec. p. 110.

[38] RIZZI 1972, cit. n. 31.

[39] Marisa BIANCO FIORIN, Pittori cretesi-veneziani e "madonneri". Nuove indagini ed attribuzioni, *Bollettino d'Arte*, 47, 1988, pp. 71–84, spec. p. 79.

three works of art analysed in this article. Moreover it was a connection able to survive over time, distance and boundaries. A history that is still dark, and only in places enlighten by the few certainties we have, which in the future we shall try to throw much more light on. It is hoped that future archival discoveries and new comparative works will shed further light on this intriguing case of models and their circulation.

Photographic references: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt; photo Gunar Preuss (figs. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9); Biblioteca Capitolare, Venezia; photo Michele Favalli (figs. 11, 12); Ljubljana, National Gallery of Slovenia (figs. 13, 14); from Marisa BIANCO FIORIN, Pittori cretesi-veneziani e "madonneri". Nuove indagini ed attribuzioni, *Bollettino d'Arte*, 47, 1988, p. 79 (fig. 15).

OBDELAVA USNJA V SREDNJEM VEKU IN ŠIRJENJE PREDLOG: OD BIZANTINSKE PATENE V HALBERSTADTU DO BENEŠKO-KRETSKE IKONE V LJUBLJANI

Povzetek

Uporaba predlog je bila v srednjem veku močno razširjen pojav, katerega študij danes otežuje skorajda popolna odsotnost matric oz. šablon, ki so se potem, ko so bile izrabljene, skozi stoletja postopoma izgubile. Pričujoči članek obravnava primer uporabe predloge in njenega širjenja, rezultati analize pa so posebej zanimivi zaradi preživetja matrice in nekaterih izdelkov, pri katerih je bila uporabljena. Poudarek je tudi na prestižnosti same matrice ter na pomembnem geografskem in kronološkem razponu pojava: od bizantinske patene iz 11.–12. stoletja do „retrotabuluma” 14. stoletja iz Veneta in beneškega okvirja iz 16. stoletja.

Izhodišče je matrica (ali sočasni izdelek, narejen v istem odlitku), ki razkriva predlogo, ki je bila pozneje uporabljena v različnih obdobjih in kontekstih: srebrna patena, delo bizantinske dvorne delavnice iz časa med 1050 in 1190, ki jo je leta 1205 prinesel v Halberstadt Konrad von Krosig, tamkajšnji škof. Na njenem podnožju je upodobljen relief Križanja z Marijo in Janezom Evangelistom ob straneh, nadangeloma Mihaelom in Gabrijelom zgoraj ter osmimi vzhodnjaškimi mučeniki in svetimi škofi v tondih na notranjem in zunanjem robu patene.

Lahko bi domnevali, da je nekdo izdelal odlitek patene ali da je nekoč obstajal identičen izdelek; v resnici se mi je posrečilo najti dve drugi deli, ki sta nastali z uporabo istega odlitka, ki je bil uporabljen pri izdelavi halberstadtske patene. Gre za dva usnjena izdelka iz Benetk, pomembnega središča obdelave usnja; natančna primerjava z drugimi izdelki iz Veneta dovoljuje njuno umestitev v kronološki in geografski kontekst nastanka, prav tako pa tudi oblikovanje hipoteze o njuni prvotni tipologiji in funkciji.

Prvo delo, ki ga bom obravnavala, je majhna neobjavljena usnjena ikona na leseni podlagi z upodobitvijo križanja z Marijo, Janezom in angeloma v trilistno zaključenem okvirju, ki nedvomno izhaja iz halberstadtske patere. Primerjava med figurami že sama po sebi potrjuje povezavo, identične so tudi dimenzije obeh del, prav tako pa lahko tudi prisotnost nekaterih elementov, ki nimajo na usnjeni ikoni nobenega ikonografskega pomena, razložimo kot posledico uporabe matrice. Na podlagi primerjave z beneškimi deli je ikono mogoče datirati in prepoznati prvotno namenbnost: nekaj miniatur iz 1368 bi lahko govorilo v prid tezi, da je šlo za oltarno dekoracijo, točneje retrotabulum manjšega oltarja, in da je nemara šlo za naročilo neke bratovščine.

Drugo delo, ki ga predstavljam, je beneško-kretska ikona iz 16. stoletja, ki jo hrani Narodna galerija v Ljubljani, katere okvir krasi Križanje, nedvomno povzeto po halberstadtski pateni. Kot kažejo sorodni primeri, je slika po vsej verjetnosti nastala v Benetkah, namenjena pa je bila bodisi hišnemu oltarčku meščanske družine ali sakralnemu prostoru.

Kljub temu, da je v našem poznavanju zgodb treh obravnavanih del še veliko vrzeli in z njimi povezanih dvomov, je jasno, da je med njimi še danes prepoznavna povezava, ki je preživela skozi stoletja, razdalje in meje. Ta del zgodovine je za zdaj še temačen, a ga bomo poskušali v prihodnosti osvetliti.

Slikovno gradivo:
1. Bizantinska delavnica, *Patena s Križanjem*, srebro. Halberstadt, stolnična zakladnica
2. Beneška delavnica, *Retrotabulum s Križanjem*, usnje. Brescia, zasebna zbirka
3. Bizantinska delavnica, *Patena s Križanjem*, srebro. Halberstadt, stolnična zakladnica, detajl
4. Beneška delavnica, *Retrotabulum s Križanjem*, usnje. Brescia, zasebna zbirka, detajl
5. Bizantinska delavnica, *Patena s Križanjem*, srebro. Halberstadt, stolnična zakladnica, detajl
6. Beneška delavnica, *Retrotabulum s Križanjem*, usnje. Brescia, zasebna zbirka, detajl
7. Bizantinska delavnica, *Patena s Križanjem*, srebro. Halberstadt, stolnična zakladnica, detajl
8. Beneška delavnica, *Retrotabulum s Križanjem*, usnje. Brescia, zasebna zbirka, detajl
9. Bizantinska delavnica, *Patena s Križanjem*, srebro. Halberstadt, stolnična zakladnica, detajl
10. Beneška delavnica, *Retrotabulum s Križanjem*, usnje. Brescia, zasebna zbirka, detajl
11. Veronska delavnica, *Antifonarij MLII-3*, f. 145r. Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, detajl
12. Veronska delavnica, *Gradual MLIX-VI*, f. 159r. Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, detajl
13. Beneško-kretska in beneška delavnica, *Ikona z Marijo z detetom*. Ljubljana, Narodna galerija
14. Beneško-kretska in beneška delavnica, *Ikona z Marijo z detetom*. Ljubljana, Narodna galerija, detajl
15. Beneško-kretska delavnica, *Ikona z Marijo z detetom*. Benetke, Doževa palača