

Praying with the senses. Examples of icon devotion and the sensory experience in medieval and early modern Balkans

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This paper discusses sensory experience in the practice of devotion of two highly venerated icons in medieval and Early Modern Balkans: the mosaic icon of the Virgin Hodegetria from the monastery of Chilandar and the icon of Gospa of Škrpjela (Our Lady of the Reef) from the Bay of Kotor. Although part of two different, albeit historically intertwined and perpetually connected cultural and liturgical spheres, icon veneration in both the Orthodox and the Catholic community of the broader Mediterranean world and the Balkans in medieval and Early Modern times shares the same source. It relies on the traditional Byzantine manner of icon veneration. This is particularly true of highly venerated and often miracle working images of the Mother of God, identity markers of political, social and religious entities, objects of private devotion as well as performative objects around which are centered public rituals of liturgical processions and ephemeral spectacles.

Keywords: Mother of God, Hodegetria, Gospa od Škrpjela, icon veneration, sensory experience, medieval Serbia, Bay of Kotor in early modern times

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¹ On the senses and *synaesthesia* in Byzantine icon devotion: B. V. Pentcheva, *The sensual icon. Space, ritual, and the senses in Byzantium*, University Park 2010, in particular 1–15. The literature on

As *eikones*, i.e. matter imbued with divine *pneuma*, releasing *charis*, icons were intended to be physically experienced through the ritual act of *proskynesis* which implied touching, kissing and an all-encompassing “seeing” of an icon of which touch, smell, taste and sound were an integral and defining part. Icons, and in particular those in luxury media such as mosaic, gold and silver repoussé adorned with enamel and precious stones or carved in semi-precious stone, dating from the Middle and Late Byzantine periods, were transformed into true *empsychoi graphes* under the lights of candles or oil lamps, thus inducing *pathema*, internal agitation, in the spiritual eyes and the souls of the faithful. The tactile visuality or the haptic and visual experience of the holy thus produced a feeling of true communion with the divine and partaking in Christian mysteries.²

The present state of research of the cult of icons and icon painting as significant part of the visual culture of the Balkans is focused mainly on historical, stylistic and iconographic analysis and has so far shed little light on the role and impact of sensory experience in icon devo-

icons of the Holy Mother of God, and in particular those venerated in the Mediterranean world, their performativity and visuality, is vast and in this instance we point out some of the most recent seminal publications: *The Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine art*, ed. M. Vassilaki, Athens–Milan 2000; *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki, Aldershot 2005; B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*, University Park 2006; *The cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and images*, eds. L. Brubaker, M. B. Cunningham, Aldershot 2011. On miraculous images and their veneration in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period see: *The miraculous image in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Papers from a conference held at the Academia di Danimarca in collaboration with the Bibliotheca Hertziana (Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte)*, eds. E. Thunø, G. Wolf, Rome 2004.

² On this aspect of icon veneration: Pentcheva, *The sensual icon*, 1–15. On the senses in religion in Eastern and Latin Christianity, as well as in Judaism and Islam, in the Middle Ages: *A cultural history of the senses in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. Newhauser, London 2014, in particular B. Caseau, *The senses in religion: Liturgy, devotion, and deprivation*, 89–110.

tion and its relation with the visuality of icons produced and revered in this region as part of the broader Mediterranean world in the medieval and Early Modern period. It is, therefore, the aim of this text to draw attention to this highly significant aspect of both religious and cultural dynamics as well as visual culture of the Balkans by presenting two case studies – one from a medieval Serbian monastic milieu and the other from a seventeenth century urban community in the Bay of Kotor. In both cases icons of the Virgin Mary appear as the center of cultic attention and as the object and subject of sensory experience as well as most prominent markers of political, cultural and religious identity. These examples also stand to show the lasting presence and reception in different religious and cultural spheres in the Balkans of the ancient Christian concept of praying with the senses, as proposed by Origen and later, in the Early Modern period, further explicated by St. Ignatius de Loyola.

One telling and multiply significant example from the medieval period is that from the very beginning of the Nemanide era and is found in the features of and devotional practice tied to the luxury mosaic icon of the Virgin Hodegetria from the Serbian monastery of Chilandar on Mt. Athos, as recorded in a number of written sources. The first *vitae* of Symeon Nemanja, composed at the very beginning of the thirteenth century by his sons, Sava the Serbian³ and Stefan the First Crowned,⁴ as well that written in 1263/64 upon commission of Serbian king Uroš I, grandson of Nemanja, by Domentijan,⁵ Chilandar monk and pupil of St. Sava, relate the same story which took place at Nemanja's deathbed. Feeling that the hour is upon him ("the hour of my leave is near"), Nemanja asks his son Sava to bring forth to him the icon of the Virgin so that he could fulfill his vows of committing his spirit into her hands ("Bring to me, child, the mother of my Lord Jesus Christ, so that I can, as I promised, commit into her hands my spirit.") while lying on the ground on a simple straw mat, his head resting on a stone, in utter monastic humility.⁶ Teodosije does not relate the act of bringing the icon forth before Nemanja but speaks rather of the emotional and spiritual effect of his contact with this holy icon. He speaks of the fact that in the hour of his death Nemanja's face was "bright and he looked with joy at the most pure *eikon* of Christ and at his most pure mother..."⁷

Historiography has identified this icon of the Mother of God with Christ into whose hands Symeon Nemanja committed his spirit as the mosaic icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Christ child, a supreme work of Komnenian icon painting in the luxury medium of gold mosaic, produced at the very end of the twelfth century, around 1198,

most probably in Constantinople or Thessaloniki. It was highly revered as patron and protectress of Chilandar, the katholikon of which was dedicated to the Virgin and the feast of the Introduction of the Virgin to the Temple. As such she was given a highly prominent place within the hierotopical ensemble of the church and kept in the altar or by the iconostasis of the monastery katholikon.⁸

The act of most intense, spiritual communication with the holy at the hour of death, by physical or visual touch with icons, often of the Virgin Mary, pressing them against the body or holding them before the face of the dying, was part of the *ars moriendi* of monks in the Byzantine world, as attested in visual culture in representations of dying monks. Such a relation between a departing soul and the icon is rendered in Chilandar itself, in the thirteenth century fresco cycle of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete found in the chapel of St. George located on the storey of the Chilandar pyrgos of the same dedication where a dying monk is shown underneath an icon of the Virgin to whom he directs his final thoughts and prayers.⁹

Whatsmore, at the time of death of Symeon Nemanja, and in the Komnenian world in general of which Serbia of Nemanja's day was an integral part, close, personal and emotional, sensory experience of the holy was a hallmark of piety and of both state and private devotion and cult. It was already the mother of the genos and of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos, Anna Dalasena, who, as attested by Nikephoros Bryennios, expressed her own personal deep connection and dedication to Christ, certainly not without political implications for the dynasty, by wearing an icon of the Lord on her body at all times.¹⁰ Most telling in that respect is, however, the development of the cult and ritual of veneration of the palladium of capital and Empire, the holy miracle-working icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in Constantinople under the Komnenoi. The usual weekly Tuesday procession with the icon, which began at the ton Hodegon church, the shrine of the Hodegetria, and proceeded throughout the urban space of the capital, with icon bearers swirling, borne by the divine power invested in the holy image, with exclamations of *Kirie eleison* and crowds weeping, touching and vying to kiss the icon as an ultimate sign of divine protection of the Virgin Mary over her city and the Empire.¹¹ In the Komnenian period, in accordance with this general trend of elevation of private devotion to a status of public, state-sponsored religion, the Pantokrator Monastery, as the main endowment and burial church of the Komnenoi in Constantinople, was at the same time the focus of the dynastic cult and the sacral center of the capital and the Empire. The high point of this phenomenon, as stipulated by the Typikon of the monas-

³ Sveti Sava, *Žitije Svetoga Simeona Nemanje*, in: *Sabrani spisi*, ed. D. Bogdanović, Beograd 1986, 95–119, in particular 113.

⁴ Stefan Prvovenčani, *Život svetog Simeona*, in: *Sabrani spisi*, ed. Lj. Juhas-Georgievska, Beograd 1988, 61–101, in particular 83.

⁵ Domentijan, *Život svetoga Simeona*, in: *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona*, ed. R. Marinković, Beograd 1988, 236–325, in particular 294.

⁶ Stefan Prvovenčani, loc. cit. Citations from Stefan the First Crowned translated into English by J. Erdeljan.

⁷ Teodosije, *Žitije Svetog Save*, in: *Žitija*, ed. D. Bogdanović, Beograd 1988, 99–261, in particular 144. Citation from Teodosije translated into English by J. Erdeljan.

⁸ V. J. Đurić, *Mozaička ikona Bogorodice Odigitrije iz manastira Hilandara*, *Zograf* 1 (1966) 16–20.

⁹ B. Todić, *Freske XIII veka u paraklisu na pirgu sv. Georgija u Hilandaru*, *Hilandarski zbornik* 9 (1997) 35–73; idem, *Slikarstvo XIII veka*, in: *Manastir Hilandar*, ed. G. Subotić, Beograd 1998, 215–220.

¹⁰ On the emergence this and other expressions of private devotion, most notably of the ktetorship of members of the Komnenian dynasty, see: V. Stanković, *Komnini u Carigradu. Evolucija jedne vladarske porodice*, Beograd 2006, 270–288, on Anna Dalasena and the icon of Christ especially 280.

¹¹ A. Lidov, *The flying Hodegetria. The miraculous icon as bearer of sacred space*, in: *The miraculous image in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 273–304.

tery, is the intergration of public procession with the Hodegetria icon in the commemorative services for the emperors.¹² The text of the Typikon of John II Komnenos specifically stipulates that “the holy icon of my most pure Lady and Mother of God Hodegetria”, should be taken into the monastery on the days of the commemorations of the ktetors and be set in the church of Saint Michael near their tombs.¹³ With the entrance of the icon of the *Theotokos Hodegetria* into the Pantokrator Monastery, this endowment of the Komnenoi would mystically be transformed into the scene of a real encounter of the Mother of God with her Son in the metaphorically real environment of a new Holy Sepulcher and New Jerusalem.¹⁴

Baroque piety forms a complex network of liturgical, spiritual and pious practices. Although the sense experience has always been one of the central to traditional Catholic worship and piety,¹⁵ in time of the rise of skeptical philosophy and empirical science Catholic church tended to defend and emphasize it. In the debates about the Eucharist (which underline especially the doctrine of real presence)¹⁶ and other sacraments, images (in particular acheiropoetic, created through direct physical contact with the body) and relics, as well as in debates related to the overall construction of belief, the sensory experiences was an issue of fundamental significance. In post-Tridentine treatises on sacred art the tripartite rhetorical function of an image – instructing, delighting, and affecting spectator’s mind – the latter was given primary importance. Icons of the Virgin are presented with special representational strategies and attitudes towards them reveal a dense relationship between visual imagery and the senses. As attested by written documents, images of the Virgin were praised for their ability to represent, as well as to provoke a broad range of emotions and thus empower not



Fig. 1. Icon of Virgin Hodegetria, Chilandar

¹² B. Pentcheva, *Icons and power*, 165. Cf. E. Congdon, *Imperial commemoration and ritual in the Typikon of the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator*, REB 54 (1996) 161–199.

¹³ M. N. Butyrskij, *Vizantijskoe bogosluženie u ikony soglasno tipiku monastyrja Pantokratora 1136 goda*, in: *Čudotvornaja ikona v Vizantii i drevnej Rusi*, red. A. M. Lidov, Moskva 1996, 145–158, in particular 146–147. For the passage in the text of the Typikon: *Byzantine monastic foundation documents. A complete translation of the surviving founders’ typika and testaments*, eds. J. Thomas, A. C. Hero, with the assistance of G. Constable, Washington 2000, 756. On the procession with the Theotokos Hodegetria as an image of the Presentation: Pentcheva, *Icons and power*, 136–143; eadem, *The activated icon. The Hodegetria procession and Mary’s eisodos*, in: *Images of the Mother of God*, 195–207.

¹⁴ On the monastery of the Pantokrator in Constantinople as an image of New Jerusalem: J. Erdeljan, *Izabrana mesta. Konstruisanje Novih Jerusalima kod pravoslavnih Slovena*, Beograd 2013, 116–126. On the similar encounter, in semantic terms, which took place during the annual procession between the Lateran and the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome: H. L. Kessler, J. Zacharias, *Rome 1300. On the path of the pilgrim*, New Haven 2000, 126–157.

¹⁵ The body of Christ became visible during the elevation of the host and was tasted in communion; holiness was evidenced in the smell and offered to touch and viewing; churches were a kind of theatrical spaces in which the senses served as the channels of a multimedia experience. On that: B. Majorana, *Governo del corpo, governo dell’anima: attori e spettatori nel teatro italiano del XVII secolo*, in: *Disciplina dell’anima, disciplina del corpo e disciplina della società tra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. P. Prodi, Bologna 1994, 437–490.

¹⁶ On the history of perception of the host: J. A. Jungman, *The mass of the Roman rite. Its origins and development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, Westminster (Md.) 1986, vol. II, 206–212; L. P. Wandel, *The eucharist in the Reformation. Incarnation and liturgy*, Cambridge 2006, 237–240.

only the process of experiencing the passions of Christ but also of belonging to the Church as an institution and a particular social entity.

Images of Madonna with the Child, material and immaterial (visions, poetical, rhetorical and descriptive) played a special role in the Bay of Kotor: they performed miracles, had corporeal qualities which gave them the ability to swim, move, talk, weep or be injured and be the injurers, and were truly present in the lives of community and the individual.¹⁷

Through their representatives at the Council of Trent (1545–1563),¹⁸ books, papal envoys, students of Jesuit colleges and other institutions of the Catholic church, the Bay of Kotor became familiar with Trent’s definition of status of the sacred image, which was based on the traditional Byzantine manner of veneration of icons.¹⁹ Theo-

¹⁷ On these qualities of Mary’s icons in the Bay of Kotor: S. Brajović, *U Bogorodičinom vrtu. Bogorodica i Boka Kotorska – barokna pobožnost zapadnog hrišćanstva*, Beograd 2006. About these characteristics of icons and their presence in the broader context: D. Freedberg, *The power of images. Studies in the history and theory of response*, Chicago 1989; H. Maguire, *The icons of their bodies. Saints and their images in Byzantium*, Princeton 1996.

¹⁸ A Dominican from Kotor, Albert Dujmić (Johannes Albertus Duimius), took part in the sessions held in 1551 and 1562, a bishop of Kotor, Luka Bisanti, was present at the final sessions of the Council: D. Farlati, *Illyricum sacrum. Episcopi Ascrivenses sive Catharenses VI*, Venezia 1800, 487–489.

¹⁹ About the Twenty-fifth Session of the Council of Trent in 1563, which defined the status of sacred image on the base of the Se-



Fig. 2. Tripo Kokolja, *Our Lady of the Reef, Gospa od Škrpjela near Perast, 1452*

logians from the Bay of Kotor, and in particular the archbishop of Bar Andrija Zmajević, a student of the Roman *Congregatio de propaganda fide*, learned from the writings of St. Ignatius de Loyola that one should yield to the “infinite mildness and sweetness” of physical experience – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and activate “the entire being, spirit and body” in simultaneous meditation and visualization of Christian mysteries.²⁰ In writing about the Virgin in his *Annales Ecclesiastici*, Zmajević underlines the sensual beauty of her face, in particular the sweetness of her lips and speech, the scent of her body at the moment of the Dormition, the pain she feels under the Cross and in lamenting the wounded body of Christ; in describing the passions of Christ he follows with special attention the instructions given by St. Ignatius about *compositio loci* and *applicatio sensuum*; particular attention is dedicated to the means of creation and therapeutic effects

cond Council of Nicaea of 787: *The canons and decrees of the Council of Trent*, ed. H. J. Schroeder, Rockford 1978, 215–217.

²⁰ See, for example, the first and fifth exercise of the first week of the *Spiritual Exercises*: I. de Loyola, *Duhovne vježbe*, in: *Načela jezuita. Sveti Ingacije i družba Isusova*, eds. M. Tomić, B. Grubačić, Z. Đinđić, Beograd 1990, 60, 63. On these subjects: J. De Guibert, S. J., *La spiritualità della Compagnia di Gesù. Saggio storico*, Roma 1992, 45, 48. Zmajević writes about St. Ignatius in his *Annales Ecclesiastici*: A. Zmajević, *Ljetopis crkovni*, red. M. Pižurica Cetinje 1996 (Književnost Crne Gore od XII do XIX vijeka, 8), II, 473–474.

of Veronica’s veil, which they observed and about which they heard at lectures at the *Congregatio de propaganda fide*.²¹ Zmajević took special care that churches in the Bay of Kotor and in the broader area of the Archdiocese of Bar receive images of the Virgin, as well as to providing their adequate veneration.²²

The esteemed priest, preacher and writer from the Bay of Kotor, Ivan Antun Nenadić, points out the significance of the senses in his work *Christian Teaching*. In keeping with traditional iconography he lists sight first, followed by hearing, smell, taste and touch, as “windows” through which both good and evil enter the soul of the faithful.²³ Nenadić’s catechesis is an invaluable source for understanding the sensory experience of the faithful in Baroque times in the Bay of Kotor, which is expressed especially through the veneration of relics.²⁴ As one who copied, created and directed sacral dramas, the so-called *prikazanja* (presentations), Nenadić counted on the sensory experience of the audience whom he clearly invited to dedicate themselves with their entire bodies to the passions of Christ.²⁵

Documents testify that images of the Virgin in the Bay of Kotor were perceived not only by seeing – although observing the holy image was always a special state of perception,²⁶ but by multisensory vision, that is through a gaze which involves all the senses simultaneously. Baroque sermons call on the faithful to ask for remission of sin every day from the “beautiful, good, perfect” Virgin, “in front of her image”; she will show to her Son “the bosom with which she nursed him”, and the Son will “show to his Father the wounds he suffered”; then, God the Father will forgive them their sins.²⁷ Strong expressed sensual potential of integrated presentations of the Incarnation and Passion is expressed in a number of verbal and visual images in the Bay of Kotor. In a sermon from Baroque Perast the faithful are called on to uphold the image of the Virgin before their eyes at all times: they should keep it in “their rooms and on themselves”.²⁸ Material sources testify of a great number of medallions with images or relics of the Virgin which the inhabitants of the Bay of Kotor always held close. Written documents prove that no house in Perast was without a replica of the miracle-working icon of Our Lady of the Reef (Gospa od Škrpjela).

²¹ Zmajević, *Ljetopis crkovni*, tom I, 167–168, 188–194.

²² Brajović, *U Bogorodičinom vrtu*, 96–98.

²³ I. A. Nenadić, *Nauk Kerstjanski*, Venezia 1768, 31, 50, 111.

²⁴ On this: M. Ulčar, *Sensations of the glorious head: veneration of the Saint Tryphon’s reliquary through the liturgical year*, in: *Beyond the Adriatic sea. A plurality of identities and floating borders in visual culture*, ed. S. Brajović, Novi Sad 2015, 151–172.

²⁵ Sacral dramas are published in: I. A. Nenadić, *Drame*, ed. R. Rotković, *Književnost Crne Gore od XII do XIX vijeka*, Cetinje 1996.

²⁶ About the multiplicity of gaze, discerning forms of the gaze with regard to images and their viewing: C. Hahn, *Visio Dei. Changes in medieval visuality*, in: *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance. Seeing as others saw*, ed. R. S. Nelson, Cambridge 2000, 169–196; B. V. Pentcheva, *The performative icon*, *The Art Bulletin* 88/4 (2006) 631–655; eadem, *The sensual icon*, 121–155.

²⁷ The sermon (with quotations from St. Bernardino da Siena) given on the feast of the Conception of the Virgin on December 8th, year unknown: NAP XII, 5.

²⁸ *E per ajutare la vostra memoria sa dicono averla sempre dinanzi gli occhi adornano le vostre stanze e voi stessi colle Immagini di Lei* (NAP XII, 3): NAP XII, 3.

The icon of Gospa od Škrpjela, crowned by tradition, was created around the middle of the fifteenth century after an older miracle working icon of the Virgin Hodegetria of Byzantine origin.²⁹ The icon on the altar in the church which was raised for her on an artificial island in the mid-aquatorium of the Bay – the demarcation point between Venetian and Turkish property – was an emblem of protective power of the *real* Virgin Mary who by her vigilant eye watched over the Bay of Kotor. Our Lady of the Reef was the most powerful pillar of Marian piety – uniting a visual, devotional and performative network, which shaped the Bay of Kotor as an integrated system.³⁰ A multisensory manner of perception of the icon enhanced the feeling of belonging of the faithful not only to the metaphysical kingdom but to the community of Perast in the Venetian Republic as well.

Source on its presentations and manners of “functioning” during the Baroque era testify of its relation with the faithful as very direct, corporeal and spiritual at the same time, thus enhancing its devotional and didactic power. Devotion displayed before the icon was a system of gaze, gesture, behavior, prayer, devotion, liturgical practice, sacral rites and ceremonies.

Sermons call on the faithful to observe, together with this icon, “those testaments which hang on the holy walls”, which the “Gracious Lady received”,³¹ that is the votive pictures and silver votive plaques donated to the church as a token of gratitude to Our Lady of the Reef. These ex-votos were given as gifts to the church of Gospa od Škrpjela, itself a votive offering to the Virgin, as the most important pilgrimage goal in the region. The essence of pilgrimage is visual and tactile veneration of the miracle-working icon, to which pilgrims presented votive offerings.³² Our Lady of the Reef was *responsible* for soothing not only spiritual pain and providing deliverance from great adversity, but also for healing of the body, as attested by a great number of votive plaques with images of shipwrecks, battles with pirates or Turks, as well as the “anatomical” plaques, i.e. those showing various parts of the body.

²⁹ The painting is ascribed to Lovro Dobričević, painter from Kotor: V. J. Đurić, *Ikona Gospe od Škrpjela*, Anali Filološkog fakulteta 7 (1967), 83–89. Contemporary analysis points toward the so-called *Majstor Gospe od Škrpjela* as the author of the painting: I. 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 2013, 126–137.

³⁰ About all the segments of the making of a cult of this image – the legend of its acheiropoiitos origins, arrival by sea from the East, and the choice of the sea in front of Perast as its home, as well as on the significance of this image and church in constructing the idea of the Bay of Kotor as the kingdom of the Virgin: Brajović, *U Bogorodičinom vrtu*, 184–211; eadem, *Marian piety as devotional and integrative system in the Bay of Kotor in the early modern period*, in: *Beyond the Adriatic sea*, 126–150.

³¹ NAP XII, 5.

³² About sight and touch as a definition of pilgrimage experience: G. Vikan, *Byzantine pilgrimage art*, Washington 2007, 5, 25. On the precise number of votive gifts, the manner of their production, workshops engaged in their making in the Bay and Venice: P. Pazzi, *Gli ex-voto d'argento del Santuario della Madonna dello Scarpello nelle Bocche di Cattaro per la prima volta esposti a pubblica universale curiosità*, Cattaro 2007. On votive gifts in Gospa od Škrpjela in the context of Marian piety in the Bay of Kotor: Brajović, *U Bogorodičinom vrtu*, 218–227.

Like the Hodegetria of Constantinople, Our Lady of the Reef was considered “a strong and unbreachable wall against the enemy”: it was housed in the city fortress of the Holy Cross during the great attack of the Turkish army in 1654. Women, children and old men knelt before it in “fervent prayer”.³³ At this turning point in the history of the city of Perast the icon of the Virgin turned its “pupils full of grace” to the citizens of Perast and guided the bullet into the body of the Turkish leader which resulted in the withdrawal of his forces. The Perast legend stresses that the Virgin had thrown ashes into the eyes of the Turks who were thus blinded and had to run away. When a band of pirates from Tunisia attacked the city thirty years prior to that date, in 1624, Our Lady of the Reef was hurt “personally”: the church was robbed and the icon struck by a bullet; the icon took revenge and the pirate “payed for that blasphemy with his head”.³⁴

Citizens of Perast celebrated the defense of their city in 1654 each May 15th as the feast of the Virgin of Perast. In this, as in other urban rituals, priests, artists, masters of ceremony, were united in creating an urban theatrical space. Other than visual aspects, this implied a sensory impact as well: sound, smell, movement (the peal of bells from the city churches, shots fired from fortresses and docked ships; preaching and singing, wreaths of flowers, everything in movement). This celebration was at once religious, theatrical, artistic, musical, and, on account of the feasts given on the occasion, also a gastronomical ritual. Thus, with both profane and religious spectacle accompanied by elaborate visual, auditory and other sensory effects, the city of Perast was transformed into a sort of theatre of the senses and the projection of ideal forms on the urban community.³⁵

In the course of this, as well as other urban rituals, the holy image of the Virgin was touched, rosaries were pressed against it, as well as handkerchiefs and other personal belongings; it was kissed and washed with tears. In Baroque devotional life, during prayer or mass, sacral dramas and urban rituals, the state of lachrymosity, a public “drowning” in tears, was highly desirable. It was an attachment to a long established devotional tradition, a manifestation of the mercy of God, *donum lacrimarum*.³⁶ Baroque theologians reminded of the patristic texts by St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Great, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, which point out that tears of penance have a purifying effect; as well as of texts of leading saints of the Catholic church, especially St. Dominic and St. Francis of

³³ As attested by an abbot and chronicler from Perast, Andrija Balović, in his *How the citizens of Perast felt the assistance of Our Lady of the Reef through their history*, cf. *Proza baroka*, eds. G. Brajković, M. Milošević, Titograd 1987, 304–316.

³⁴ Citation from Balović's text: *Proza baroka*, 304. About the damage in the church: *Libro dela Fraternalita della Madonna d'Scarpello da Perasto*, 57 (NAP).

³⁵ This, like other urban rituals, the city of Perast, as well as other cities of the Bay of Kotor, created after the model of those established in Venice: Brajović, *U Bogorodičinom vrtu*, 266–294. On Venetian rituals: E. Muir, *Civic ritual in renaissance Venice*, Princeton 1981. On Venice as a theatre of the senses: I. Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco. Theatre of the sense, market place of the world*, in: *Religion and the senses in early modern Europe*, eds. W. de Boer, C. Göttler, Leiden–Boston 2013, 331–362.

³⁶ J. Imorde, *Tasting God. The sweetness of crying in the Counter-Reformation*, in: *Religion and the senses in early modern Europe*, 257–272.

Assisi, whose eyes were “a fountain of tears” upon meditating the passions of Christ. St. Ignatius of Loyola, an exemplary figure of Catholic reform, in his *Spiritual diary*, points out in a number of places the power and importance of tears in devotional practice.³⁷ Andrija Zmajević in his *Annales Ecclesiastici* emphasizes the Virgin’s tears; both he and other authors from the Bay of Kotor stress the penitential and therapeutic potential of the Hodegetria, in front of whom one weeps. The fact that crying in public before the Virgin’s icon or some other Marian presentation was a widespread phenomenon is attested by a considerable number of *Plačevi Gospe* (*Lamentations of Our Lady*) preserved in the Bay of Kotor. The preacher Ivan Antun Nenadić in his sacral dramas, and especially in the scene *The Presentation of the Virgin Mary with Jesus Christ Dead in Her Arms* calls on the audience to “wash

the holy body with terrible tears”³⁸ Nenadić requires the act of crying; a lack of tears indicates a lack of virtue: “When you don’t weep because of your lazy heart you are more impervious than a rock”.

An icon created after the model of the Hodegetria of Constantinople, which swam the sea and made the reef in front of Perast her home, clad in a luxurious silver frame which reflected sun rays or candlelight, thus achieving an effect of radiance and an impression of malleability of the surface, accompanied by the sounds of sermons, songs, organs, in the service of the Eucharist, or in the course of urban festivals during which she was carried in processions – was observed, touched, doused with tears and covered with kisses. This multisensory experience on which Baroque piety insisted gave her the status of one of the most effective and fully realized icons of the Hodegetria in the Balkans and the broader Mediterranean world.

³⁷ I. de Loyola, *Duhovni dnevnik*, in: *Načela jezuita. Sveti Ignacije i družba Isusova*, 123–143.

³⁸ Nenadić, *Drame* 244.

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Молитва чулима. Примери поштовања икона и чулног искуства са средњовековног и раног модерног Балкана

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У тексту се изучавају начини поштовања двеју Богородичиних светих слика – средњовековне мозаичке иконе из манастира Хиландара и ренесансне иконе на дасци из цркве Госпе од Шкрпјела у Боки которској. Иако су те Богородице Одигитрије настале у различитим временским, просторним, културним, конфесионалним и литургијским оквирима, њихова сродност исказује се у стилу, иконографији, функцији и, нарочито, у начину на који су штоване. Однос према њима, пажљиво реконструисан на основу извора, указује на истоврсност рецепције и венерације светих слика током средњег века и раног модерног доба у медитеранско-балканској сфери. Начин на који су „посматране“ очима, али и свим другим чулима, утемељен је у традиционалном хришћанском, пре свега византијском маниру штовања светих слика, који почива на сензорном искуству светости. Визуелно искуство обе Богородичине иконе било је неразлучиво од хаптичког и аудитивног. Такво мултисензорно

искуство светих слика имало је подршку у теолошкој литератури од Оригена до светог Игнација Лојолског, у литургијској пракси и популарној побожности. Симултано чулно искуство које је производило осећање истинске комуникације с божанским било је стожер око којег су се обе Богородичине иконе градиле као окоснице својих религиозних, социјалних и политичких ентитета и постајале многопоштовани објекти приватне побожности и перформативних јавних ритуала. Начин венерације светих Богородичиних слика у различитим миљеима – манастирском и урбаном, православном и католичком, средњовековном и нововековном – указује на интензивну религиозну и културну диманику Балкана, у овом случају обједињеног старим хришћанским концептом молитве чулима.