

THE CASE OF ZADAR PROCONSUL GREGORIUS' CIBORIUM – SPOLIA AS A TEMPLATE FOR A NEW MONUMENT*

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Relying on the already established observation that the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium from the Zadar Cathedral displays stylistic and morphological features which sharply distinguish it from other three arcades of this immensely important liturgical installation with great historical significance, the authors will try to provide a detailed analysis to support this observed fact. They will present arguments to corroborate the opinion that the rear arcade belonged to an earlier, pre-Romanesque ciborium from the Cathedral, and was used as spolia to construct a new high altar ciborium in the 1030s, determining its size and by and large its overall appearance. While the front and two lateral arcades have already been recognized as the work of the so called Zadar-Solin (Split) Stone Carvers' Workshop, the authors attribute its rear arcade to the stone carving production of the so called Master of Zadar Ambos, which dates it to the first decade of the 9th century. In conclusion, they also reflect on certain technical details involved in the construction of an early Romanesque ciborium as a new form of liturgical installation and propose a hypothesis regarding the potential origin of a Zadar ciborium that bears a strong resemblance to this one.

Key words: Zadar, cathedral, Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium, sculpture, spolia, early pre-Romanesque, early Romanesque, 11th century

Over ten years ago, while writing about Proconsul Gregorius' high altar ciborium from the Zadar Cathedral (Fig. 1),¹ parts of which were found in 1891 on the first floor of its belfry,² our laureate, Nikola Jakšić, pointed out the “more casual” treatment of the motifs on its rear arcade (Fig. 2b). He remarked that its peacocks “vary slightly from other animal figures on the ciborium” and that “their

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¹ It was precisely Nikola Jakšić who first associated the ciborium more strongly with the Zadar cathedral, dismissing previous hypotheses that this liturgical installation had originally been erected in another Zadar church dedicated to St. Peter, more precisely, in the one called St. Peter “in foro” or St. Peter The New, which was located in what is now Narodni trg (People’s Square). N. JAKŠIĆ, *Solidus romanatus* na istočnoj jadranskoj obali, *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, ser. III, 12/1982, Split, 1982, p. 182, n. 48; N. JAKŠIĆ, *Tri umjetnička i epigrafska spomenika iz Sukošana*, *Diadora*, 10, Zadar, 1988, p. 199.

² I. PETRICIOLI, *Pojava romaničke skulpture u Dalmaciji*, Zagreb, 1960, p. 15; I. PETRICIOLI, *Tragom srednjovjekovnih umjetnika*, Zagreb, 1983, p. 7.



Fig. 1. Proconsul Gregorius' high altar ciborium from the Zadar Cathedral, limestone, Archaeological Museum, Zadar (photo: I. Josipović)

contours are reminiscent of some peacocks from other Dalmatian reliefs, commonly dated to the 9th century". Accordingly, Jakšić stated that "it would not be completely groundless to assume that this arcade might belong to an older ciborium in the Zadar Cathedral, whereas the three new ones were formed to fit in with this 'inherited' one that has subsequently been placed at the back".³ The first to voice this opinion, albeit orally, was Ante Milošević, and it differed substantially from Ivo Petricioli's interpretation that had been universally accepted up to that point. Although he believed that the workmanship on the rear arcade was "more casual and rustic" or "superficial and awkward", he did not question its

³ N. JAKŠIĆ – E. HILJE, *Umjetnička baština Zadarske nadbiskupije – Kiparstvo I*, Zadar, 2008, 127.



Fig. 2. Proconsul Gregorius' high altar ciborium, four arcades, limestone, Archaeological Museum, Zadar (photo credit: © Archdiocese of Zadar, photo: Z. Alajbeg)

dating to the fourth decade of the 11th century (which is the documented and established governance period of Proconsul Gregorius who is named in the cornice inscription on the front arcade of the ciborium),⁴ nor its association with the early Romanesque art.⁵ More recently, Jakšić has gone even further in his reflections and corrected the dating for "the peacocks from other Dalmatian reliefs" from the 9th century to "the late 8th or early 9th century", whereas for the peacocks from the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium he proposed a closer analogy in "the peacocks from an architrave" that was found in the Zadar Cathedral in the late 1980s (Fig. 3).⁶ After analysing style and

⁴The inscription is in two lines and reads as follows: + O PRINCEPS PETRE PRINCIPVM CAELESTIS AVLAE CLAVIGER DEVOTIONIS SVSCIPE MVNVSCVLV(m) Q(uod) VO(veram) / PROCONSVL EGO INFIMVS GREGORIVS Q(ui) NOMINOR VT PIE MICHI CONFERAS PRO PARVIS M(a)G(na munera). There are five translations into Croatian and the English translation here is a compilation of three of them: "Oh, Peter, first among the leaders, Prince and the key-holder of the heavenly palace, accept this votive gift that I, lowest proconsul Gregorius (Gregory), vowed to give as a small token to receive in turn magnificent gifts". Cf. J. BOGDANOVIĆ, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017., p. 123. Generally, about the times and circumstances surrounding the reign of Proconsul Gregorius in Zadar and Dalmatia for more information see: N. JAKŠIĆ, *Il caso dell'arconte Dobronà e del proconsole Gregorio*, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 13/1, Zagreb - Motovun, 2007, pp. 78, 137-138 ff.; N. JAKŠIĆ, *Klesarstvo u službi evangelizacije – studije iz predromaničke skulpture na Jadranu*, Split, 2015, pp. 425-426 ff.

⁵ Cf. I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1960), pp. 7-10, 15-18; I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1983), pp. 7-10; I. PETRICIOLI, *Ciborij iz zadarske crkve sv. Tome*, *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, ser. III, 11/1981, Split, 1981, pp. 164, 168.

⁶ N. JAKŠIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 4, 2015), p. 498.

morphology, Ivan Josipović attributed the fragment of this architrave, or possibly a lintel, to the stone carving production that he called *Master of Zadar Ambos*,⁷ whose activity he recently dated to the first decade of the 9th century.⁸

* * *

Before we go into the style and morphology of the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium, we should briefly list the most important insights into this outstanding Zadar liturgical installation of great historical significance. Refraining from a detailed account of opinions given in the source literature,⁹ we shall only point out that the first one to address the topic more comprehensively was Ivo Petricioli, who had reconstructed it in the Zadar Archaeological Museum in the autumn of 1954¹⁰ and subsequently presented an in-depth stylistic analysis.¹¹ On morphological level he associated it with similar reliefs from Zadar, Solin and Split and identified all of them as the work of the same stone carving production that he defined and called "the Split-Zadar group" or workshop.¹² In the meantime, on several different occasions, parts of another morphologically very similar Zadar ciborium were uncovered among the remnants of a former early Christian basilica dedicated to St. Thomas.¹³ Over time its parts were also repurposed as building material in subsequent renovations of the church, and after it was torn down in the 19th century, for the buildings that were later constructed on the site or in its immediate surroundings.¹⁴ This ciborium, in comparison to the one from the Cathedral, has slightly larger dimensions (it is 242 cm wide, whereas Gregorius' ciborium measures 227 cm in width), its form is more refined and relief deeper, and it was carved from a different, softer stone. That is also probably why its quality is somewhat better than that of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium which was made of hard grainy limestone.¹⁵

As far as the Cathedral's ciborium is concerned, for a long time nobody expressed any reservations about Petricioli's reconstruction, i. e. his classification of arcades into front, back and lateral. More recently, however, Pavuša Vežić expressed doubt that the arcade with dogs (or possibly lion cubs or lambs) within one triangular corner and the griffin snatching a lamb in the other was actually the

⁷I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *Predromanički reljefi na teritoriju Sklavinije Hrvatske između Zrmanje i Krke do kraja 9. stoljeća (doctoral thesis; part 1)*, Zagreb, 2013, pp. 21-35; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *Il maestro degli amboni zaratini, Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 22, Zagreb - Motovun, 2016, pp. 443-450.

⁸I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *Biogradska predromanička skulptura, Ars Adriatica*, 7, Zadar, 2017, pp. 75-77.

⁹For an in-depth insight into all relevant reference works on Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium see: N. JAKŠIĆ – E. HILJE, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 128. The last more detailed reference to the ciborium in: N. JAKŠIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 4, 2015), pp. 433-440, 481-484, 495-499.

¹⁰I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1960), p. 15.

¹¹I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1960), pp. 7-10, 15-18; I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1983), pp. 7-26 (*passim*).

¹²I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1960), p. 7; I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1983), p. 7.

¹³I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 5, 1981), pp. 163-168.

¹⁴The first fragments of this ciborium were found back in the summer of 1956 near the former St. Thomas Church, so Petricioli refers to them already in his book from 1960, attaching a photo of the biggest among them, with a preserved image of a dog (that will later turn out to be a lamb), and noting that it "displays all the characteristics of animal figures on Gregorius' ciborium and, consequently, the entire group". I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1960), p. 18, tab. VI, 4. See also: I. PETRICIOLI, *Jedan nepoznati arhitektonski spomenik u Zadru, Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru. Razdio historije, arheologije i historije umjetnosti*, 4(2)/1962-1963, Zadar, 1966, p. 69. Other ciborium fragments were found 14 years later, in 1970, after a school that had been built on top of the church's remnants was demolished. These finds made it possible for the ciborium to be subsequently reconstructed as a whole. See I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 5, 1981), pp. 163-164; I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1983), 10; P. VEŽIĆ – M. LONČAR, *HOC TIGMEN – ciboriji ranog srednjeg vijeka na tlu Istre i Dalmacije*, Zadar, 2009, pp. 89-90.

¹⁵I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 5, 1981), p. 167.



Fig. 3. Architrave or lintel from the Zadar Cathedral, limestone, Cathedral, Zadar (photo: N. Vranić)

front side of the ciborium as suggested by Petricioli.¹⁶ According to Vežić, the peacock arcade should be seen as the front one, and not the rear arcade like Petricioli thought, and its “superficial workmanship” should be attributed precisely to the fact that it was not in direct sightline.¹⁷ In support of his suggestion, Vežić tried to draw iconographic analogies between Proconsul Gregorius’ ciborium and many high altar ciboria from Italy and Dalmatia (Cortona, Perugia, St. Martha in Bijaći near Trogir, Galovac near Zadar, St. Thomas in Zadar),¹⁸ but there is one underlying flaw in his comparisons. With the exception of the ciborium from St. Thomas’ in Zadar, with a peacock arcade that again only Vežić interprets as the front arcade, these are all early pre-Romanesque liturgical installations made in the late 8th and early 9th century. His “iconographic scheme” can by no means be applied to early Romanesque ciboria because they clearly indicate a change in taste and a new repertory of decorative motifs, out of which a typical “Romanesque bestiary” had already started to emerge, leaving its imprint on other sculptures and architectural decorations of the 11th century.¹⁹

In other words, the peacock arcade may once have indeed been the front arcade of an older Cathedral ciborium, but that was certainly not Proconsul Gregorius’ ciborium! As already stated, it was observed that its treatment was not a result of lax stone carving workmanship; these are actually stylistic and morphological features typical of an earlier style period. Therefore, the arcade in question was obviously subsequently repurposed as spolia, and as such it determined the size and to a great extent the overall appearance of the newly formed liturgical installation from the 11th century, whereas the older arcade was positioned at the back of the ciborium where it was largely out of sight.

This can be further supported by a detailed comparison between the peacock arcade; i. e. the rear arcade on Proconsul Gregorius’ ciborium and the remaining three arcades ((Fig. 2a, 2c-2d), which represent reliefs that were undoubtedly carved in the second quarter of the 11th century. Since all the ciborium arcades were conceived in the same way, the easiest way to compare them is to look into how motifs from the same parts of arcades were treated; i. e. to compare borders with borders and arches with arches, or various animal figures in triangular insets with each other. In all four cases the arcade arches are filled with thickly interwoven multi-band (double- or triple-band) ribbons in various types of weaves. It becomes immediately apparent that the weaves on the front and two side

¹⁶ P. VEŽIĆ – M. LONČAR, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 83.

¹⁷ I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 5, 1981), p. 164.

¹⁸ P. VEŽIĆ – M. LONČAR, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 83, n. 219.

¹⁹ Referring to the iconographic repertory of the 11th-century sculpture on the Adriatic in general, Nikola Jakšić wrote the following in 2008: “In addition to lions that are on the decline, other animals are increasingly emerging, primarily rabbits and fish (mostly in Pomposa), then puppies and finally griffins as an indication of the new medieval bestiary.” N. JAKŠIĆ – E. HILJE, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 31.

arcades are very regular and neat, with thinner multi-band ribbons for which the master carver must have used geometric tools (ruler and compass). On the other hand, the weave on the arch at the back of the ciborium consists of markedly thicker triple-band ribbons. It is also rather irregular, with a significantly more dynamic and undulating carving ductus. The same distinctive treatment is apparent on the double-band multi-ribbon braids that run along the borders of all arcades (the technicalities involved in putting together the ciborium and classification of borders on all arcades into front and back stone groups will be addressed later). On the front and side arcades, however, small holes or round-shaped motifs (the so called eyes) are clearly visible in the centre of knotted braids, whereas two border braids on the rear arcade are decidedly thicker, leaving no space in the centre of knots that would then be decorated with such a hole or “the eyes”.

Still, quite logically, the most apparent difference in execution comes to the fore if we compare various animal figures within two triangular sections on each arcade, either in simpler or more complex compositions, that hold their place in the corners between the cornice, the side border and the arcade’s arch.

Also, the front and lateral arcades of Proconsul Gregorius’ ciborium are iconographically more varied from the one at the back because in addition to peacocks, they feature various four-legged creatures from the real (lions, dogs, lambs, pigeons) as well as the phantastical animalistic repertory (griffins),²⁰ in compositions that are much more dynamic and complex. On the rear arcade, however, there is only one peacock in each triangular inset and only after we consider the arcade as a whole, can we see them as a symmetrical animal couple facing each other.

Even if we leave the iconographic component aside, a different approach is visible in the way animal bodies are shaped. On the three arcades they appear significantly more realistic and proportional, with meticulous treatment of certain parts, such as head details (almond or round eyes, carefully fashioned

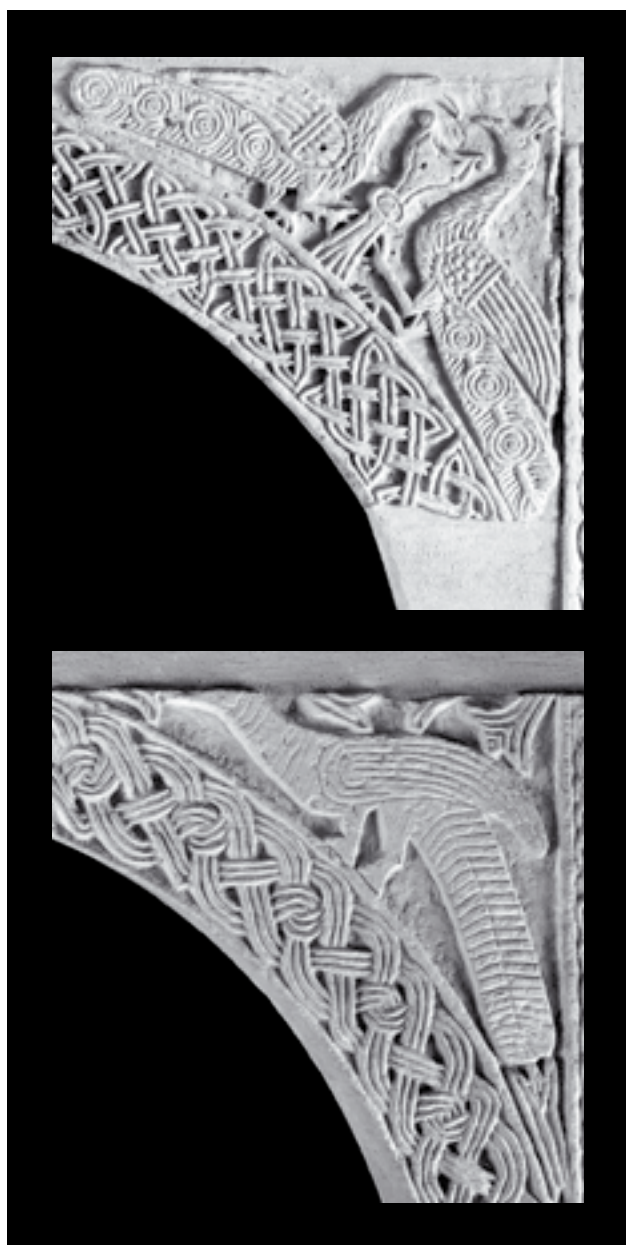


Fig. 4. Comparison – details of the right lateral (above) and rear arcade (below) of the Proconsul Gregorius’ ciborium (photo credit: © Archdiocese of Zadar, photo: Z. Alajbeg)

²⁰ Following the previous quote from Nikola Jakšić, who said griffins were “an indication of the new medieval bestiary” (see footnote 19), Magdalena Skoblar examines the issue further and connects their appearance in the Dalmatian sculpture of the 11th century with silk that was imported from the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic world more frequently than in previous centuries. On that see further in the text by the above mentioned author entitled *Beast from the East: The Griffin’s Journey to Dalmatian Eleventh-Century Sculpture* in this book.

ears, raised or lowered whiskers, stuck-out tongues), talons, wing joints or prominent thighs on the four-legged creatures that are traced with an incised line. Fur or feathers on animals are rendered in dense and small nicks made with a sharp bevel chisel. All of this is simply missing from the peacocks on the rear arcade! The shape of these birds is significantly more ungainly and their rendering more careless, completely lacking a detailed treatment of parts of their anatomy (especially evident on the wings, tails and talons). The decorations on the tails, wings and necks are noticeably laxer, rendered only in parallel or concentric lines shallowly cut into the stone surface. This becomes especially obvious if we compare the peacocks from the rear arcade with the pair of peacocks facing each other and drinking from the central kantharos in the right-hand corner of the right lateral arcade of the ciborium (Fig. 4). All this points to clear stylistic differences between a typical early Romanesque treatment of relief on the frontal and lateral arcades of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium and its rear arcade that displays characteristics of early pre-Romanesque sculpture.

What is more, it is possible to morphologically correlate the three arcades on Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium with similar reliefs from Zadar, Split and Solin [for comparative purposes the examples from Zadar are especially pertinent, i. e. the ciborium from the Church of St. Thomas and plutei from the Church of Holy Dominica (Croat. *Sv. Nediljica*; Ital. *Santa Domenica*; Lat. *Santa Maria Mater Domini*)] that have been identified as the work of the so called *Zadar-Solin (Split) Stone Carvers' Workshop*, active around the mid-11th century (Fig. 5; Fig. 8). Similarly, it is also possible to find



Fig. 5. Comparison – details of reliefs of the so called Zadar-Solin (Split) Stone Carvers' Workshop: right pluteus of the chancel screen from the Church of the Holy Dominica in Zadar (a), left lateral arcade of the Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium (b), left lateral arcade of the ciborium found in the Church of St. Thomas in Zadar (c) and panel with enthroned Croatian king from the Cathedral Baptistry in Split (d) (photo credit: © Archdiocese of Zadar, photo: Z. Alajbeg)

closer analogies for the rear arcade of the Cathedral ciborium that would provide a basis for its attribution to some already identified stone carving production and would consequently allow more precise dating. As mentioned before, Jakšić compared the peacocks on the rear arcade with the same kind of birds carved into a relief, or to be more exact, into an architrave or lintel from the Zadar Cathedral.²¹ After conducting a stylistic and morphological analysis, Ivan Josipović related this relief with other similar fragments from Zadar and its surrounding area, the better part of which come precisely from the Zadar Cathedral, and identified them all as the work of the same stone carving production (stone carving workshop) that he called *Master of Zadar Ambos*.²²

This workshop is characterized by compositions placed within a grid of squares and rectangles, frequent depictions of the human form, the contrast between deep background and soft treatment of motif edges, shallowly carved lines employed to render details primarily on human and animal figures and, in contrast, completely smooth surfaces on these same motifs. Josipović identified the master's work in the furnishings of the Zadar Cathedral and reliefs that can with considerable certainty be traced back to the Church of St. Chrysogonus in the same town (although many were found in Neviđane on the Pašman island), as well as in numerous fragments found in and around the early Christian church of St. Martin in Pridraga, a village in the Zadar hinterland. In the absence of more conclusive arguments, Josipović was able to draw stronger analogies with the Langobardic sculpture produced mostly in the latter half of the 8th century and thus date the work of the *Master of Zadar Ambos* loosely to the late 8th and the very beginning of the 9th century.

Recently, however, Miljenko Jurković extended the master's body of work to include pieces from the town of Rab, conclusively attributing to him a fragment of the pluteus from the local lapidarium with a rare depiction of senmurv, a hybrid creature that in its original form has a dog's head,



Fig. 6. Three pre-Romanesque arcades of the ciborium of the Rab Cathedral, limestone, Cathedral, Rab (photo: Z. Alajbeg)

²¹ N. JAKŠIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 4, 2015), pp. 498-499, fig. 68. See also: I. PETRICIOLI, *Sculpture in Zadar between the Late Roman and pre-Romanesque Periods*, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 1, Zagreb - Motovun, 1995, p. 78, fig. 7.

²² See footnote 7.

often with its tongue stuck out, a lion's paws and a peacock's tail. In addition, albeit somewhat cautiously, he suggested that the three pre-Romanesque arcades of the ciborium of the Rab Cathedral (Fig. 6) were also the work of the *Master of Zadar Ambos*. On that occasion Jurković proposed that this production could be more precisely dated to the first decade of the 9th century.²³ He tried to support this dating with stylistic and iconographic similarities between the works of the *Master of Zadar Ambos* and the Friulian sculpture of the age, primarily from Cividale, which used to be an important religious centre at the time, but also with other related social and political reasons. He expressed the opinion that the master carver himself most probably came to Rab, Zadar and Pridraga from Cividale or its region, and that all proposed analogies between the sculpture typical of this town and the most representative works of the *Master of Zadar Ambos* "certainly point to a short period of Carolingian presence in Dalmatian towns in the first decade of the 9th century".²⁴ This thesis, which seemed altogether reasonable and logical, all the more so since similar conclusions had been drawn before,²⁵ has recently been completely corroborated.

In his analysis of a pre-Romanesque fragment, found among other early Christian and pre-Romanesque reliefs in the Zadar Romanesque basilica of St. Chrysogonus,²⁶ Josipović detected that it was originally used as a pilaster of the chancel screen carved by the so called the *Stone Carvers' Workshop of the Plutei from the Zadar Cathedral*.²⁷ However, soon afterwards it was repurposed when a visual repertory typical of chancel screen architraves made by the *Master of Zadar Ambos* was carved into its rear side. Although both of these stone carving productions had previously been dated to the same period (the second half of the 8th and the early 9th century), now it became clear that the *Master of Zadar Ambos* was slightly younger than the *Stone Carvers' Workshop of the Plutei from the Zadar Cathedral* after all. This has made it possible to date the latter workshop with more certainty to the last quarter of the 8th century, or to be exact, around the time when the Council of Nicaea was held in 787. On the other hand, the *Master of Zadar Ambos* could have been active only in the period suggested by Jurković, which is the first decade of the 9th century, certainly before the Treaty of Aachen in 812.²⁸

So if we now go back to the appearance of the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium, keeping in mind the distinctive features of the works by the *Master of Zadar Ambos*, we can safely say that this arcade does indeed reflect all their morphological qualities. For example, this is apparent in the treatment of peacocks, where a contrast between the deep background and soft edges of their bodies is also obvious. Their tails, wings and necks are rendered in shallowly cut lines, merely scoring the surface, whereas some parts of their bodies remain completely smooth. It was probably this latter quality that led Ivo Petricioli to attribute this to the superficial and lax approach of the master carver in the case of the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium. This kind of motif

²³ M. JURKOVIĆ, Un raro motivo iconografico sulla scultura altomedievale – i senmurv di Arbe e Nevidane, in: *Scripta in honorem Igor Fisković. Zbornik povodom sedamdesetog rođendana / Festschrift on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, (eds.) Miljenko Jurković, Predrag Marković, Zagreb - Motovun, 2016, pp. 43-51.

²⁴ M. JURKOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 23), p. 48.

²⁵ For example, Nikola Jakšić expressed the same opinion about the dating of parapet fragments of the Zadar ambos in several places. See N. JAKŠIĆ, Scultura e liturgia, in: *Bizantini, Croati, Carolingi. Alba e tramonto di regni e imperi*, (eds.) Carlo Bertelli et alii, Milano, 2001, p. 184; *Bizantini, Croati, Carolingi. Alba e tramonto di regni e imperi*, (eds.) Carlo Bertelli et alii, Milano, 2001, p. 381 (Nikola Jakšić, cat. n. V. 14); N. JAKŠIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 4, 2015), p. 83.

²⁶ See further in: I. JOSIPOVIĆ – I. TOMAS, The Abbey of St. Chrysogonus in Zadar – between Early Christian Sculpture and the Romanesque Architecture, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 23/1, Zagreb - Motovun, 2017, pp. 299-305.

²⁷ About defining this stone carving production, its dating and morphological characteristics see further in: I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 7, 2013), pp. 37-56; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, Radionica plutejâ zadarske katedrale, *Ars Adriatica*, 4, Zadar, 2014, pp. 43-62.

²⁸ Cf. I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 75-77.

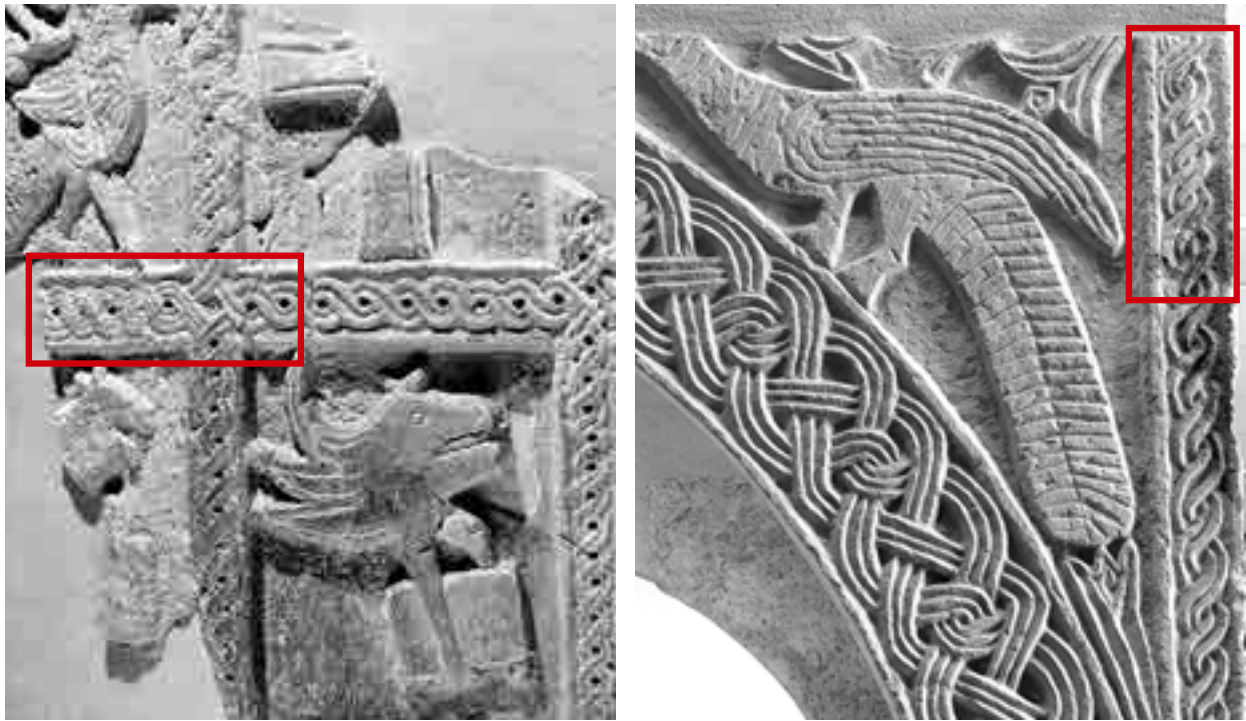


Fig. 7. Comparison – details of the ambos parapet from the Zadar Cathedral (left; photo credit: © Archdiocese of Zadar, photo: Z. Alajbeg) and rear arcade of the Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium (right; photo: I. Josipović)

treatment is also visible on the left peacock from the aforementioned architrave in the Zadar Cathedral, whereas the body of the peacock on the right was left perfectly smooth. Also, while the legs and especially the talons of the peacock on the left side of the architrave were rendered with care and attention to detail, the peacock facing it from the right, as well as both peacocks from the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium, have legs that are significantly more crude in their shape and talons that resemble small triangles. A similar treatment is evident in various animal figures carved by the *Master of Zadar Ambos* into plutei fragments from Pridraga, parts of ambos parapets from the Zadar Cathedral and from the Church of St. Chrysogonus, as well as on the three arcades at the back of what is today a hexagonal high altar ciborium from the Rab Cathedral. In all these examples the phenomenon of “intentional incompleteness” is visible both in zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs, as well as in the rather awkward placement on unshapely legs lacking joints, which is why, unlike other body parts, these legs seem to be hanging from the animals instead of supporting them.

Furthermore, the space behind the peacocks' backs is filled with stylized lily flowers, carved identically to those on two of the three pre-Romanesque arcades on the ciborium in the Rab Cathedral. What is especially important for this attribution is the fact that the entire braid filling the left vertical border on the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium, emerging from the elongated rectangle with a twisted profile,²⁹ is braided with two triple-band ribbons. A double-ribbon braid from the right border is quite distinct because it does not start out as a twisted form, and what makes it even more unique are its double-braided ribbons that transition into a

²⁹ Interestingly, in this detail the front arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium imitates the rear arcade as well, because the twisted form from which the double-ribbon triple-band braid in the left border of the front arcade emerges, was preserved on its left-side base.

triple-band profile at its highest point (or what has remained of it).³⁰It is precisely this feature that belongs among the main “morellian” details, typical of the *Master of Zadar Ambos*, so much so that we might almost call it his “signature”. The same kind of braiding, which he obviously consciously and purposefully reiterates, can be found in a number of his other works, such as the ambos parapets from the Zadar Cathedral (Fig. 7) and the Church of St. Chrysogonus in the same town.³¹ We trust that all these arguments are sufficient to attribute the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius’ ciborium beyond any doubt to the *Master of Zadar Ambos*, dating it to the first decade of the 9th century.

Speaking of the said master, it should be pointed out that all his works exhibit characteristics which in general morphological terms reveal strong similarities with the sculpture of the broader Friulian and Istrian region in the period from the second quarter of the 8th until the early 9th century.³² Its most representative examples are the famous octagonal ciborium of Patriarch Callistus,³³ Patriarch Sigwald’s plate from Cividale del Friuli³⁴ as well as the seminal hexagonal ciborium of Bishop Mauritius from Novigrad Istarski (Ital. *Cittanova d’Istria*).³⁵ Although some of these works, such as Callistus’ ciborium, represent the peak of what source literature calls the “Liutprand Renaissance”, the others, like the Novigrad ciborium, are considered to be an eastern Adriatic echo of this style.³⁶ The third group, like Sigwald’s plate, represents a typical mainstream in the body of work constituting the early European pre-Romanesque sculpture, but what all of them have in common is a visual language immanent in the *Master of Zadar Ambos*. Therefore, this master, along with the stone carver of the Novigrad ciborium, belongs to the same production that was inspired by the Northern Italian sculpture of the era. Its artistic influence spread to the eastern Adriatic coast in the late 8th and the early 9th century owing to the sponsorship and expansion of this Frankish ruler and the growing jurisdiction of the Aquileian patriarch, so it might be argued that the relationship between these master carvers was that of the teacher and the pupil.

³⁰ Ivo Petricioli observed this particularity as early as 1983, but later authors did not attach any significance to this. Curiously enough, while interpreting this phenomenon the author in question still believed that it was “caused by clumsy and careless stone carving”. I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 2, 1983), p. 8.

³¹ I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 7, 2013), p. 28; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 7, 2016), p. 448.

³² More on the Friulian sculpture of the era and its influence on what is now the Croatian coastline see in: S. LUSUARDI SIENA – P. PIVA, *Da Pemmone a Paolino d’Aquileia: Appunti sull’arredo liturgico e la scultura in Friuli tra VIII e IX sec.*, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 8, Zagreb - Motovun, 2002, pp. 295-323.

³³ *Le diocesi di Aquileia e Grado*, (ed.) Amelio Tagliaferri, in: *Corpus della scultura altomedievale*, X, Spoleto, 1981, pp. 210-216, cat. n. 315-330; T. LXXXV-XCV.

³⁴ *Le diocesi di Aquileia...*, *op. cit.* (n. 33), pp. 216-219, cat. n. 331, T. XCVI.

³⁵ M. JURKOVIĆ, *Il ciborio di Novigrad (Cittanova d’Istria)*, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 1, Zagreb - Motovun, 1995, pp. 141-149; *Bizantini, Croati...*, *op. cit.* (n. 25), pp. 326-327, 346-347 (Miljenko Jurković, cat. n. IV. 18); M. JURKOVIĆ – I. MATEJČIĆ – J. ZIHERL, *Novigradski lapidarij / Lapidario di Cittanova*, Novigrad - Cittanova, 2006, pp. 45-54; P. VEŽIĆ – M. LONČAR, *op. cit.* (n. 14), pp. 39-46, 181-203.

³⁶ On echoes of the “Liutprand Renaissance” as well as other schools of sculpture from the broader area of northern Italy see further in: N. JAKŠIĆ, *Dalmatinski primjeri reljefa u stilu liutprandovske »renesanse«*, in: *Renesansa i renesanse u umjetnosti Hrvatske (Zbornik radova sa znanstvenih skupova »Dani Cvita Fiskovića« održanih 2003. i 2004. godine)*, (eds.) Predrag Marković, Jasenka Gudelj, Zagreb, 2008, pp. 395-406; N. JAKŠIĆ, *Riflessi della »rinascenza liutprandea« nei centri urbani della costa Adriatica orientale*, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 16, Zagreb - Motovun, 2010, pp. 17-26; N. JAKŠIĆ, *La scultura „longobarda“ in Croazia*, in: *Letteratura, arte e cultura italiana tra le due sponde dell’Adriatico / Talijanska književnost, umjetnost, kultura između dviju obala Jadrana (Atti della Giornata di studio, Padova, 9 novembre 2007 / Zbornik radova međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa, Padova, 9. studenoga 2007.)*, (eds.) Luciana Borsetto, Nedjeljka Balić-Nižić, Živko Nižić, Zadar, 2014, pp. 9-26; N. JAKŠIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 4, 2015), pp. 103-132.

In the 1030s the Zadar proconsul Gregorius commissioned a new high altar ciborium that was installed in the choir of the early Christian Zadar cathedral dedicated to St. Peter. This ciborium must have replaced an earlier pre-Romanesque one, carved by the *Master of Zadar Ambos*, and one of its arcades, most probably the front one, was reused as spolia and placed at the back when the new liturgical installation was planned and constructed. The destiny of the remaining fragments of the pre-Romanesque ciborium remains unknown, but some of its elements may be recognized in the early pre-Romanesque reliefs that were found within the Zadar episcopal complex, part of which have already been attributed precisely to the *Master of Zadar Ambos*.³⁷ In this way the contracting party, the stone carvers as well as the entire religious community paid homage to the old pre-Romanesque ciborium that was considered “a sacred object” and as such could not have been thrown away or destroyed. So one arcade was incorporated into the new, early Romanesque liturgical installation as a “historical artefact”, while its other parts were probably stored somewhere within the episcopal complex and most of them were quite possibly also reused at some later date.

Be that as it may, an arcade of the older ciborium was combined with the three early Romanesque arcades to make a new whole that we now know as Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium. The front and rear arcades are wider than the lateral ones by the depth of one side, and they were joined together by aligning these lateral arcades with the back edges of the front and rear arcade, thus forming right angles of the ciborium.³⁸ This basically means that the decorations flanking the front and rear arcade constitute vertical borders on the lateral arcades, which are in this particular case filled with very regular and neatly carved double-band double-ribbon braids with “the eyes”, a treatment that indisputably belongs to the early Romanesque style typical of the 11th century. This points to the conclusion that the carver of the so called *Zadar-Solin (Split) Stone Carvers' Workshop*³⁹ had to partly

³⁷ This primarily refers to one very interesting capital, already attributed to the *Master of Zadar Ambos*, which was found in the northern side of the main apse in the Zadar Cathedral. It displays an intriguing and unorthodox repertory of decorative motifs, such as small pointed squares, voluminous corner volutes and a zig-zag ribbon circling around its base, i. e. the section where it transitions into the column. See P. VEŽIĆ – M. LONČAR, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 79; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 7, 2013), p. 31, T. II. 4; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, (n. 7, 2016), p. 448-449, n. 31, fig. 10. In addition to this capital, there is another piece that can be interpreted as a part of the pre-Romanesque ciborium of the Zadar cathedral and as such the work of the aforementioned master carver; a very similar arcade fragment found in the gallery of the St. Donatus Church, which Pavuša Vežić associates with the capital in question, and speculates that both fragments are “*parts of a ciborium from the cathedral or the rotunda (St. Donatus; authors' comment) from the second half of the 8th century*”. P. VEŽIĆ – M. LONČAR, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 79.

³⁸ In more general terms, about constructing ciboria and assembling its arcades see further in: P. VEŽIĆ – M. LONČAR, *op. cit.* (n. 14), pp. 28-38.

³⁹ Following the line of thought imposed by the sentence structure, we might have inadvertently singled out the stone carver from an entire group of people who make up a stone carving production. That is why we feel it should be pointed out that Igor Fisković particularly insisted on his individualization and recognition as the most important contributor, i. e. a foreman of sorts in the *Zadar-Solin Stone Carvers' Workshop*. In an effort to anchor this individualization terminologically, he applied a common practice of art historians in “christening” unknown masters and named him after his best and most representative work. That is how Fisković coined the phrase the *Master of King Petar Krešimir IV*, naming him after the Split, i. e. Solin relief depicting this Croatian king (Fig. 5d). As a later work by this stone carver, it is one of the finest in his oeuvre since it seems “*more mature and technically refined*” than his Zadar body of works, “*approaching the sensibility of the Romanesque style*” in its characteristic features. I. FISKOVIĆ, *Majstor kralja Petra Krešimira IV.*, in: *Munuscula in honorem Željko Rapanić (Zbornik povodom osamdesetog rođendana / Festschrift on the occasion on his 80th birthday)*, (eds.) Miljenko Jurković, Ante Milošević, Zagreb - Motovun - Split, 2012, pp. 239-255, and especially p. 246 and pp. 254-255. A diametrically opposed opinion regarding the identification of the king from the aforementioned Solin (Split) relief, according to which the figure in question represents King Demetrius Zvonimir - which dates the relief to a later period - was proposed by Magdalena Skoblar in her recent book on figural reliefs in Dalmatia and Croatia in the 11th century. M. SKOBLAR, *Figural Sculpture in Eleventh-Century Dalmatia and Croatia – Patronage, Architectural Context, History*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2016, pp. 118-154.

rework the sides of the arcade from the early 9th century when it was attached to the back of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium. This required him to slightly "trim it down" along the edges in order to accommodate for the depth of the relief on the new decoration along its sides, i. e. the aforementioned vertical braids. The traces of this mild narrowing of the rear arcade are visible along the edges of its decoration because the outer mouldings of the borders are slimmer than those on the inside. This narrowing also defined how wide the Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium would finally be, which is how the old arcade of the pre-Romanesque ciborium actually determined slightly smaller dimensions of the new liturgical installation – Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium.

Interestingly, a similar ciborium was found in the Zadar Church of St. Thomas (Fig. 8). From what can now be seen on its reasonably well preserved rear arcade (Fig. 8c) (from the front one only two smaller fragments remain), it most probably did not have a double-band multi-ribbon braid along the sides of the front and rear arcade. If that indeed was the case, it would imply that the lateral arcades did not have braided borders, which is slightly surprising. It is precisely this rear arcade that provides strong support to the attribution of the rear arcade of Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium to the *Master of Zadar Ambos* because it faithfully reproduces its iconography with one peacock in each of the two triangular arcade insets. Their treatment, however, is strikingly different, which provides an ideal opportunity to compare the same motifs carved into those two arcades and establish what distinguishes the early pre-Romanesque style from a typical early Romanesque expression (Fig. 9). Moreover, the St. Thomas' ciborium, although an obvious imitation of the Cathedral ciborium, is somewhat larger in size, but as we have already emphasized, its shape is sleeker and relief deeper.

Also, based on the site where the latter ciborium had been found, there was a consensus in the source literature that this liturgical installation was placed in the choir of the early Christian basilica of St. Thomas in the second quarter of the 11th century. However, we shall put forth some consid-

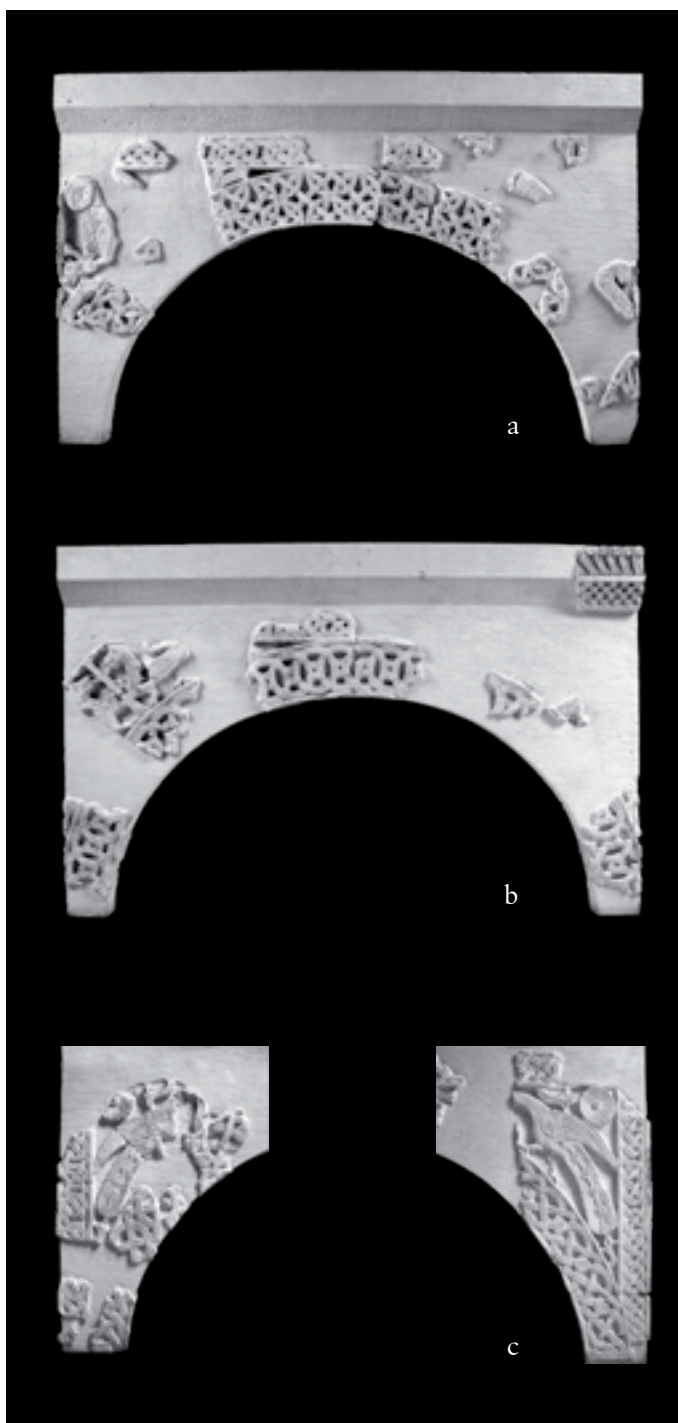


Fig. 8. Three arcades of the high altar ciborium found in the Church of St. Thomas in Zadar: left lateral arcade (a), right lateral arcade (b) and two parts of the rear arcade (c), limestone, Archaeological Museum, Zadar (photo credit: © Archdiocese of Zadar, photo: Z. Alajbeg)

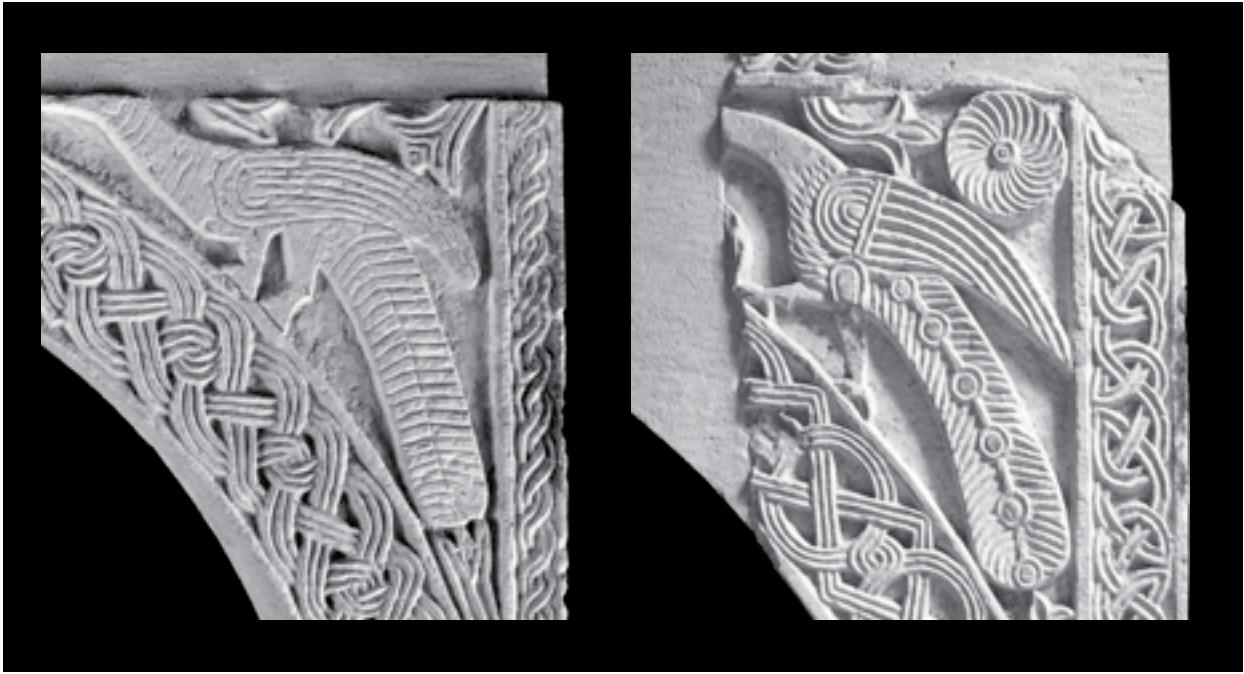


Fig. 9. Comparison – details of the rear arcade of the Proconsul Gregorius' ciborium (left) and rear arcade of the ciborium found in the Church of St. Thomas in Zadar (right) (photo credit: © Archdiocese of Zadar, photo: Z. Alajbeg)

erations that might lead to a considerably different conclusion. It is a fact that, with the exception of the fragments from the said ciborium, no other pre-Romanesque or early Romanesque fragments of sculpture or architectural decoration come from the Church of St. Thomas - only early Christian fragments from previous periods are linked with this basilica.⁴⁰ The church itself was reconstructed in the Romanesque period when it acquired a row of columns with massive cubical capitals, several of which have been found,⁴¹ and again in 1340 when it was given a Gothic main portal.⁴² On 20th June 1412 a flagellant confraternity of St. Sylvester relocated to St. Thomas' from the Church of St. Sylvester in southeastern part of the town, i. e. the Zadar peninsula, which is why the basilica was subsequently renamed after this new titular.⁴³ So it does not seem completely improbable that

⁴⁰ P. VEŽIĆ, *Zadar na pragu kršćanstva – arhitektura ranoga kršćanstva u Zadru i na zadarskome području*, Zadar, 2005, pp. 158-178 (*passim*); A. MIŠKOVIĆ, *Liturgijski ambijenti i instalacije ranokršćanskog razdoblja na zadarskom području* (doctoral thesis), Zagreb, 2012, part 1, pp. 77-80; part 2 (catalogue), pp. 33-47, cat. n. (23)1.-(28)6.

⁴¹ N. KLAJČ – I. PETRICIOLI, *Prošlost Zadra II – Zadar u srednjem vijeku do 1409.*, Zadar, 1976, p. 261.

⁴² I. PETRICIOLI, Lik Zadra u srednjem vijeku, in: *Radovi Instituta Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, 11-12, (eds.) Grga Novak, Vjekoslav Maštrović, Zadar, 1965, p. 153; I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 14), pp. 59, 69-70.

⁴³ According to Vladislav Cvitanović, the confraternity moved to the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle after St. Sylvester Church was torn down in 1541. V. CVITANOVIĆ, Bratovštine grada Zadra, in: *Zadar: geografija – ekonomija – saobraćaj – povijest – kultura* (zbornik), (ed.) Jakša Ravlić, Zagreb, 1964, p. 462. This information is incorrect since the move took place much earlier, more precisely - as already stated above - in 1412, even before the demolition of the Church of St. Sylvester, which was torn down between 1541 and 1544. The Third Order of Saint Francis acquired it in 1541 and moved to this new location from the demolished Church of St. John in the part of Zadar now known as Relja. In the place where the ruins of St. Sylvester's stood they erected a new and larger church with the adjoining monastery that they dedicated to St. John the Baptist. This church was torn down in 1844 when the Austrian authorities built a sprawling barracks in its place. Cf. A. STRGACIĆ, Kada je zadarska bratovština flagelanata prešla iz crkve sv. Silvestra u crkvu sv. Tome Apostola, *Vjesnik staleškog društva katoličkih svećenika NRH*, IV, 1-4, Zagreb, 1957, *passim*; I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 42), p. 151, n. 39; I. PETRICIOLI, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 59.

the early Romanesque ciborium, the fragments of which were found on the site of the former St. Thomas basilica, originally belonged to the old Church of St. Chrysogonus Monastery where it had probably replaced the old altar ciborium from the late 8th century.⁴⁴ After a new Romanesque basilica was built and consecrated in 1175,⁴⁵ it was then relocated to its choir. There it could have stayed by the early 18th century at the latest, since a new, opulent Baroque altar was constructed in the St. Chrysogonus basilica in 1701.⁴⁶ It was on this occasion that the early Romanesque ciborium could have been disassembled and removed from the St. Chrysogonus basilica and its parts taken to the nearby Church of St. Thomas before it was completely demolished in the 19th century.

Should this hypothesis, which we propose here for the first time and for which it is not possible to provide conclusive evidence, be accepted as probable or at least possible, this would mean that the case of the two early Romanesque Zadar ciboria corroborates the fact the Benedictine church of St. Chrysogonus did indeed imitate the Zadar cathedral. This would then be further confirmation of the already observed phenomenon that the church of the Benedictine monastery for men was what could be described as a smaller and less expensive version of the Zadar cathedral. The correlation of this church with the Cathedral is evident in the similarity of their pre-Romanesque reliefs and the affinity of the architectural and sculptural choices made during the construction of the Romanesque church of the Benedictine monastery, as can be immediately seen on its façade.⁴⁷ However, whereas all the known examples of artistic achievements from and in the Church St. Chrysogonus have always been poorer imitations of their Cathedral counterparts, the Benedictine ciborium would be the first example of work that is actually slightly more refined than Proconsul Gregorius' Cathedral ciborium. This latter liturgical installation consists of arcades carved in the 11th century and an older arcade from a pre-Romanesque ciborium, which was used as spolia, thus establishing a template that defined dimensions and to a certain extent the overall appearance of the newly assembled monument.

Translation from Croatian: Sandra Mladenović

⁴⁴ All that remains from this ciborium are one arcade and a fragment of its pyramidal roof that have been attributed to the *Stone Carvers' Workshop of the Plutei from the Zadar Cathedral*, which dates them to the last quarter of the 8th century. Cf. I. JOSIPOVIĆ – I. TOMAS, *op. cit.* (n. 26), pp. 303-304, fig. 11a-b; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 75-77, fig. 8; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, La scultura della cattedrale di Zara e della chiesa di San Crisogono a Zara tra IX e XIV secolo, in: *Conversano nel Medioevo: storia, arte e cultura del territorio tra IX e XIV secolo (Saggi di storia dell'arte)*, (eds.) Gaetano Curzi et alii, Campisano Editore Srl, Roma, 2018, p. 174, with reference to previous relevant literature.

⁴⁵ I. JOSIPOVIĆ – I. TOMAS, *op. cit.* (n. 26), p. 299; I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 44, 2018), p. 173.

⁴⁶ See R. TOMIĆ, *Umjetnička baština Zadarske nadbiskupije – Kiparstvo II*, Zadar, 2008, pp. 42, 138-143, with all previous relevant literature.

⁴⁷ Cf. I. JOSIPOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 44, 2018), pp. 176-177.

Slučaj zadarskog ciborija prokonzula Grgura – spolij kao predložak za novi spomenik

Pronalazak većeg broja ulomaka zadarskoga ciborija prokonzula Grgura 1891. godine dodatno je obogatio umjetničku baštinu Zadra te je doprinio unaprijeđenju saznanja o njegovim ranoromaničkim reljefima. Nakon rekonstrukcije ciborija koju je 1954. godine u Arheološkom muzeju u Zadru napravio Ivo Petricioli te stilsko-morfološke analize koju je nakon toga proveo, ciborij je temeljem karakteristika njegove izvedbe uvršten u opusu tada definirane *Zadarsko-solinske (splitske) klesarske radionice*, čije je djelovanje, upravo po dokumentirano potvrđenom vremenu Grgurove vlasti, pouzdano datirano u drugu četvrtinu 11. stoljeća. Međutim, u nekim recentnim studijama primijećena je bitna razlika u načinu izvedbe začelne od ostalih arkada toga ciborija. Stilsko-morfološka neujednačenost između njegovih arkada upućuje na razliku između ranoromaničkoga pristupa koji se ispoljava na prednjoj i dvjema bočnim arkadama te začelne arkade ciborija koja posjeduje karakteristike rane predromaničke skulpture.

Dakle, oslanjajući se na već uočenu činjenicu, autori začelnu arkadu nastoje pripisati klesarskoj produkciji nazvanoj *Majstor zadarskih ambona*, čije je djelovanje datirano u prvo desetljeće 9. stoljeća. Sukladno tome, smatraju da je ciborij prokonzula Grgura zamijenio stariji predromanički ciborij u zadarskoj katedrali koji je bio djelo *Majstora zadarskih ambona*, a jedna od arkada toga starijeg ciborija kasnije je kao spolij uklopljena u konstrukciju nove, ranoromaničke liturgijske instalacije.

Za rasvjetljivanje problematike porijekla začelne arkade ciborija prokonzula Grgura poslužila je i usporedba s ciborijem iz zadarske crkve Sv. Tome, koji je Petricioli također uvrstio u opus *Zadarsko-solinske klesarske radionice*. Naime, začelna arkada tog ciborija u ikonografskom smislu oponaša začelnu arkadu ciborija prokonzula Grgura, ali je u stilsko-morfološkom pogledu posve identično izvedena kao preostale njegove arkade te je nešto većih dimenzija u odnosu na začelnu arkadu katedralnog ciborija. Razlika u dimenzijama tih dvaju ciborija upućuje i na minimalno prilagođavanje starije, začelne arkade ciborija prokonzula Grgura njegovim trima novoisklesanim ranoromaničkim arkadama.

Na kraju članka, autori razmatraju mogućnost da je ciborij čiji su ulomci pronađeni na mjestu porušene ranokršćanske crkve Sv. Tome izvorno bio dio liturgijske opreme stare predromaničke crkve Sv. Krševana, a što bi onda dodatno potvrdilo već odavno uočenu činjenicu da je crkva muškoga benediktinskog samostana bila svojevrsna umanjena i jeftinija inačica zadarske katedrale. Međutim, dok su umjetnička ostvarenja sa i iz crkve Sv. Krševana iz svih dosada poznatih primjera bila uvijek lošije imitacije katedralnih rješenja, u ovom bi slučaju ranoromanički benediktinski ciborij po prvi put bio nešto dotjeraniji rad od srodnog mu ciborija prokonzula Grgura na koji su se redovnici očito ugledali. Taj je pak katedralni ciborij, osim od novoisklesanih arkada 11. stoljeća, bio sastavljen i od jedne arkade starijega predromaničkog ciborija koja je kao spolij postala predložak za definiranje dimenzija, a jednim dijelom i ukupnoga izgleda novosklopljenog spomenika.

Ključne riječi: *Zadar, katedrala, ciborij prokonzula Grgura, skulptura, spolij, rana predromanika, rana romanika, 11. stoljeće*