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## **The Reception and Interpretation of St. Jerome's Description of Two of St Hilarion's Epidaurian Miracles in Dubrovnik-based Sources and Tradition<sup>1</sup>**

Hoc Epidaurus et omnis illa regio usque hodie praedicat,  
matresque docet liberos suos ad memoriam in posteros transmittendam.  
Jérôme, *Vie d'Hilarion*, 29, 4.

**Abstract:** The brief sojourn of St Hilarion to a setting not far from Epidaurus in Dalmatia in circa 365 CE was depicted by St Jerome in *Vita Sancti Hilarionis*, portraying the two notable miracles of the famous Palestinian anchorite – the slaying of the dragon Boas ravaging the area and the rescue of the city from the giant waves that threatened to devastate it. Both miracles have been interwoven into the later narratives of both medieval writers and the Renaissance chroniclers of Dubrovnik, especially Thomas the Archdeacon (of Split), Anonymous, Nicolò Ragnina and Serafino Razzi. The paper discourses these historians' interpretations (along with the accounts of later Dubrovnik chroniclers) of the glorious miracles of St Hilarion. In the Dubrovnik chronicles, the miracle of the dragon is correlated with the legend of the Theban king Cadmus, who was transformed into a serpent upon his arrival in the area, or with Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine whose most famous sanctuary was the homonymous town in the Peloponnese and whose symbol was a serpent or snake on a rod. In accordance with the local legend, the mentioned chroniclers unambiguously correlated the liberation of the city from beast with the ending of paganism and the baptising of the Dubrovnik populace. Furthermore, the paper discusses the elements related to the cult of St Hilarion in Dubrovnik and its vicinity, drawing attention to the lore preserved in oral tradition.

**Keywords:** St Jerome, the miracles of St Hilarion, saintly dragon-slayer, Epidaurus, Dubrovnik, Cadmus, Asclepius, written sources, the cult of St Hilarion.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written during my research stay in Paris at the end of 2009 for the publication *Les fouilles de Umm el-Amr (Bande Gaza): le Monastère*, ed. René Elter, which was to be published in the Brepols edition as part of the chapter on the cult of St Hilarion in Sicily, Dalmatia and Cyprus. However, due to the complicated geo-political situation in the Gaza Strip, it was not possible to complete the planned archaeological excavations of the remains of the St Hilarion Monastery, and thus the issuing of the above article was postponed. At this point, the work is published in its original form, with minor changes in the text and literature.

*The Life of St Hilarion* penned by St Jerome is the third and last part of the trilogy dedicated to famous monks, which also consists of *The Life of St Paul* and *The Life of St Malchus*. In fact, Jerome wrote *The Life of St Hilarion* before the year 392 CE.<sup>2</sup> The *Vitae Patrum* embody merely a modest segment of the inscribed legacy of the famous exegete and translator of the Bible, with which he affirmed himself as the author of the first hagiographies in Latin. Jerome chose to depict aspects of monastic, primarily anchorite life, an ideal to which he personally aspired, via the lives of three exemplary ascetics – Paul, the founder of monastic life in Egypt, Malchus, a monk from Syria and lastly, Hilarion, the founder of the first monastic community in Palestine. It is believed that from thence he had interwoven the personal, direct experiences of monastic life in Palestine as well as his travels around the Mediterranean Sea, into the hagiography of St Hilarion from Gaza. In *The Life of St Hilarion*, of particular importance are the depictions of two notable miracles that took place not far from Epidaurus in Dalmatia: the slaying of a dragon and the rescue of the city from giant waves. Relying on Jerome's text, later Dubrovnik chroniclers also interlaced these occurrences into their narratives, charging them with new denotations in accordance with the ideological premises of the time in which these narratives were written, whereas the miracle with the dragon has been preserved in oral tradition.

St Hilarion was born at the beginning of the last decade of the 3rd century in Tabata, not far from Gaza, receiving an education in Alexandria by a grammarian. It was there that he became acquainted with Christianity and, enticed by the example of St Anthony, he departed for the Egyptian desert to asceticize together with the famed anchorite. However, the fifteen-year-old Hilarion was instigated by the great number of faithful who visited St Anthony daily and for this reason, he returned to Gaza. Relinquishing his inheritance, he retreated to a place between the swamp and the sea, not far from Mayuma, and dedicated himself to the strictest asceticism over a period of more than two decades. His fame and miracles attracted a substantial number of the faithfuls and monks to Gaza, and consequently, Hilarion established a monastery which thus set an example for other monastic communities in Palestine.<sup>3</sup> At the age of 63, Hilarion decided to withdraw from his monastery and once again visit the Egyptian desert and the sites where St Anthony had dwelled. As he could not be utterly alone in the desert, he left to Sicily, accompanied by a disciple in the hope that he would find

<sup>2</sup> The following critical edition of the *Life of St Hilarion* was used: Jérôme, *Vie d'Hilarion*, In idem, *Trois vies de moines (Paul, Malchus, Hilarion)*, texte critique par E. M. Morales, traduction par P. Leclerc, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 212–299.

<sup>3</sup> On the remains of this monastery: E. René, A. Hassoune, "Le monastère de Saint-Hilarion à Umm-el-Amr (bande de Gaza) (note d'information)," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 148/1 (2004), 359–382.

peace on the island. However, whilst there he was visited on by scores of sick and pious people, which is why he desired to retreat someplace where his fame did not precede him, where his name was unknown and where he could settle in peace.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, he decided to go to the region of Dalmatia, where he settled not far from Epidaurus. However, withdrawal from the world was not a choice to be sustained for a long time. Namely, at that time, the entire province was enduring the horror of a dragon of astonishing size named 'boas' by the local population, a beast which gobbled not only animals small and large but also farmers and shepherds working in the fields.<sup>5</sup> St Hilarion therefore ordered a bonfire to be laid out which, after the saint offered a prayer to Christ, the dragon mounted and, in plain sight of the whole population, it was burned to a crisp.<sup>6</sup> After such an impressive miracle, St Hilarion could no longer dedicate himself to ascetic life and he began to devise a new getaway. Nonetheless, it so happened that he once again rescued the city before his retreat from Dalmatia, this time from the giant waves which occurred after the death of Emperor Julian (361–363 CE).<sup>7</sup> Responding to the appeal of the denizens of Epidaurus to save them, St Hilarion drew three crosses in the sand and raised his hands in the direction of the waves that promptly ceded in front of him, slowly withdrawing following that.<sup>8</sup> The news of such an impressive miracle soon spread throughout the province, reaching its capital, Salona, where the memory lived even at the time of Jerome. However, as he could no longer live in isolation and devote himself to prayer, St Hilarion left Dalmatia and headed for Cyprus under the cover of night, hidden in a small boat.<sup>9</sup> He initially settled on an island not far from Paphos but then withdrew even further to an undisclosed location where he spent the last years of his life, deceasing in 371 CE. Ten months after the repose of St Hilarion, his disciple and follower Hesychius transferred the saint's body to his monastery in Mayuma near Gaza. The cult of St Hilarion soon flourished both in Gaza, where his body was interred, and in Cyprus, where his spirit was believed to reside. As regards Dubrovnik, the earliest data on the existence of the cult of St Hilarion in the city emerged in the 13th century. The memory of Hilarion's so-

<sup>4</sup> Jérôme, *Vie d'Hilarion*, 28, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 28, 3. (285)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 28, 4. (285)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 29, 1. (287). Jerome's statement indicates that it involved a chronicled strong earthquake followed by a tsunami, which happened on July 21, 365 CE. However, there is also the opinion that «le tsunami d'Épidaure n'a à être mis en rapport avec celui du 21 juillet 365; il est la conséquence d'une secousse locale qu'on peut au plus situer vers 363–365». F. Jacques, B. Bousquet, "Le raz de marée du 21 juillet 365. Du cataclysme local à la catastrophe cosmique," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité*, 96/1 (1984), 448.

<sup>8</sup> Jérôme, *Vie d'Hilarion*, 29, 3. (287)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 29, 7. (289)

jour to the vicinity of Epidaurus is preserved primarily in the church dedicated to him in Mlini, which is first mentioned in the Dubrovnik Statute from 1272, as well as in later chronicles of learned Dubrovnik humanists.

Although not lengthy – it is contained within Chapters 28 and 29 of *The Life of the Saint* – the depiction of the sojourn of St Hilarion to the Dalmatian coast points to a series of genre topos, among which the one related to the presence of a dragon in the narratives about the saint's life is unquestionably prominent. No less important is the issue of the origin of the beast – be it Biblical or mythological. It is not without significance that Jerome had situated this great miracle in Epidaurus, that is, in a province of Dalmatia familiar to him in terms of origin and his hermit life. This point is especially important when taken into account that Jerome had interwoven other autobiographical elements into the narrative of St Hilarion. In addition, he rendered a portrayal of Christianity in southern Dalmatia, which in the second half of the 4th century was still not significantly extant on this territory, since St Hilarion regarded the eastern Adriatic area as inhabited by barbarians.<sup>10</sup> Hence, it is not a surprise that later local narratives correlated St Hilarion's stay to these parts with the Christianization of the local populace.

Unlike biblical and apocryphal texts in which the snake or serpent dominates as a symbol of evil and fear of death or as a personification of the devil,<sup>11</sup> it is dragon figures that are largely represented in the lives of saints. The dragon in hagiographic writings, just like the snake, primarily personifies the devil or a demon, although its presence in these narratives often denotes mythological connotations.<sup>12</sup> According to Victor Saxer, hagiographic texts account for dragon occurrences in diverse ways. They serve to impart an epic dimension to a saint's life following the example of the deeds of ancient heroes, or as a pretext for a lesson on of monastic life, whereupon struggles with monsters are primarily of a spiritual nature. Therefore, dragons were introduced into these narratives as a form of literary creation, whilst the miracle with the dragon in *The Life of St Hilarion* by St Jerome is the first of its kind in Latin hagiography.<sup>13</sup> In point of fact, Jerome specified that the local population named the dragon 'boas' and further elucidated that the term arose from the fact that the dragon was of such an immense size that it could swallow bulls (Lat. *boves*) whole. Such a monster, albeit

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 28, 1.(285)

<sup>11</sup> T. Jovanović, "Motiv zmije u apokrifima". In *Guje i jakrepi: književnost, kultura*, eds. M. Detelić, L. Delić (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2012), 245–253.

<sup>12</sup> V. Saxer, "Le dragon dans la littérature hagiographique latine ancienne et médiévale." In *Drac: symbolique et mythologie du dragon entre Rhône et Alpes*, Cahier des Alpes-Maritimes VI (Nice: Art et culture des Alpes-Maritimes, 1990), 53–88.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 57–58.

a serpent which could ingest a deer or a bull, was described by Pliny the Elder. He claimed that according to Magestenos, such serpents inhabited India and that the truth of his statement was confirmed by the fact that in Italy there was a serpent named 'boa' whose stomach had once housed the body of a child (*HN* VIII, 14). In later local written sources, this monster was associated with the legend of the Theban king Cadmus and the 'ancestor' of the Illyrians who, upon his arrival to this area, was transformed into a serpent. It is also linked with the serpent of Asclepius, which in turn rendered to the miracle of St Hilarion a new, primarily mythological meaning. Daniele Farlatti, quoting Bommanus' lost work *Historia Dalmatiae*, finds the explication of the myth of Hilarion as a dragon slayer in the existence of a species of snake that the locals called "kravosija" (cow-sucker).<sup>14</sup> Finally, in regards to the name of the dragon, it is not without significance that the term Boa can be found in Dalmatian toponymy. Namely, Boa or Boas is the name of a island near Trogir, today's Čiovo, which is mentioned by Pliny (*HN* III, 152 – *contra Tragurium Bova*) and Ammien Marcellin (*Amm. Marc.* XXII 3, 6 – *ininsulam Delmatiam Boas* and *Amm. Marc.* XXVIII 1, 23 – *ad Boas Delmatiae locum*), and which also can be seen on Tabula Peutingeriana and which was later on cited in the Ravenna Cosmography.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the miracles of St Hilarion in Dalmatia are mentioned by Sozomen (*Hist. eccl.* V, 10, 15) and following that by Cassiodorus (*Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* VI, 12, 1–4) without any additional elucidations. St Aldhelm (c. 639–709), the first Bishop of Sherborne, in his monumental work *De laudibus virginittatis* (*PL* 89, col. 127A–128A) paraphrased the text of St Jerome regarding the Dalmatia-based miracles of St Hilarion in more detail, mentioning that it was exemplary.<sup>16</sup> The extent to which Jerome's *Vitae Patrum* was popular during the Middle Ages is demonstrated by the abundance of transcripts in both the Latin and Greek languages.<sup>17</sup> In Croatia and Dalmatia *The Life of St Hilarion* was translated from Latin for the reason of local liturgical practice. However, the Glagolitic breviaries, written from the 14th century to the year 1561, contain a

<sup>14</sup> D. Farlatti, *Illyrici sacri* VI (Venetiis: apud Sebastianum Coleti, 1800), 4. *Kravosija* or *kravosac* is a four-lined snake also known under the name the Aesculapian snake.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted according to: *Real encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, III/1 (1878), 572; about the name Boa/Bova also see D. Ivšić, *Predslavenski sloj u hrvatskoj toponimiji*, unpublished PhD thesis (Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, 2013), 123–124.

<sup>16</sup> The following author also drew attention to this text, G. Praga, "La leggenda di S. Ilarione a Epidauro in Adelmo scrittore anglosassone del secolo VII," *Archivio Storico per la Dalmazia* 25 (1938), 83–91.

<sup>17</sup> M. D. McNeil, "The Latin Manuscript Tradition of the Vita Sancti Hilarionis." In *Studies in the Text Tradition of St. Jerome's Vitae Patrum*, ed. W. A. Oldfather (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1943), 251–305; R. F. Strout, "The Greek Versions of Jerome's Vita Sancti Hilarionis." In *Studies in the Text Tradition of St. Jerome's Vitae Patrum*, 306–448.

miniscule part of the text in relation to Jerome's original although they overlook the text describing the saint's stay to Dalmatia.<sup>18</sup> However, what is of interest is how the text regarding the miracles that St Hilarion accomplished during his sojourn in Epidaurus was integrated in the narrative historical sources of Dalmatia, more precisely those of the city of Dubrovnik, and the explanation why the cult of St Hilarion had failed to spread significantly in this province, even in the city itself (Dubrovnik) which was the successor of the former Epidaurus.

Our knowledge of ancient Epidaurus is exceptionally modest. Although it bears the same name as the more eminent Peloponnesian city of Epidaurus, it seems that it is not of Greek but rather, of Illyrian origin. After the collapse of the powerful state of the Illyrian Ardians in 167 BCE, a region of Konavle came under Roman rule. Epidaurus, a city enclosed by ramparts, was first mentioned in 47 BCE. It received the status of a colony most likely during Caesar Augustus, and the citizens of Epidaurus were registered in the *Tromentina tribus*.<sup>19</sup> In the second half of the 4th century, at which time St Hilarion arrived in the area, the populace of Dalmatia were still largely unbaptized.<sup>20</sup> It is not easy to determine the precise time when the episcopal see was established in Epidaurus, and even less so which saintly cults were cultivated. The Bishop 'Pitaurane' was first mentioned in 530 CE at the First Church Council in Salona, but the see ceased to exist at the beginning of the following century, when Epidaurus was devastated in the attacks by the Avars and the Slavs.<sup>21</sup>

The population fleeing Epidaurus settled upon the cliffs of Ragusa/Dubrovnik,<sup>22</sup> a city that became the successor of Epidaurus and its episcopal see. The parity between the two cities was recognized by an anonymous geographer of Ravenna who stated that "Epidaurus id est Ragusium" (Rav. Cosm. IV, 16, 10), which denotes the earliest mention of Ragusa or Dubrovnik in written sources.<sup>23</sup> In Dubrovnik-based sources, including the city Statute instituted in

<sup>18</sup> V. Badurina-Stipčević, "Legenda o svetom Hilarionu opatu u hrvatsko glagoljskim brevijarima", *Slovo* 52–53 (2004), 27–40.

<sup>19</sup> G. Novak, "Povijest Dubrovnika od najstarijih vremena do početka VII stoleća (do propasti Epidauruma)", *Anali Historijskog instituta u Dubrovniku* X–XI (1966), prilog, 1–69; N. Cambi, "Antički Epidaur", *Dubrovnik*, n.s., XVII/3 (2006), 185–216.

<sup>20</sup> For the history of Christianity in Dalmatia v. J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans la province romaine de Dalmatie* (Paris: H. Champion, 1906).

<sup>21</sup> Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques XV (1963), col. 601–602, s. v. "Épidaure" (R. Aubert).

<sup>22</sup> Ž. Peković, *Dubrovnik. Nastanak i razvoj srednjovjekovnoga grada – Dubrovnik. La fondation et le développement de la ville médiévale* (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika Split, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Regarding relationship between the two cities v. L. Kunčević, "The Oldest Foundation Myth of Ragusa: the Epidaurian tradition," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 10 (2004), 21–31.



1272, Epidaurus is named *Ragusa vetus*, *Ragusa vecchia*, *vetusa civitas Ragusii*, but also *Civitas Vetus*, *Civita Vecchia*. Similarly, the episcopal see of Ragusa was considered the legitimate successor of the former see in Epidaurus. When in 1022 Pope Benedict granted the pallium to Vitaly, he addressed him with "archbishop sancte Pitabritane sedis e ciuitate Labusei,"<sup>24</sup> which underlined a continuity of ecclesiastical jurisdiction between the two cities.

There is scant possibility of knowing whether and in what way the memory of St Hilarion was preserved in Epidaurus, but it can be assumed that a church dedicated to him was located in the immediate vicinity of this town – in Breno (today's Mlini),<sup>25</sup> existed before the 13th century. Namely, the 1272 Statute of Dubrovnik stipulated that meetings on disputes or lawsuits between the kingdom and the people of Zeta and those from Dubrovnik were to be held in Mlini, "prope ecclesiam sanct (sic) Hylacrioni."<sup>26</sup>

Also originating approximately from the same time as the Statute, from around 1266, is the mention of the miracle of St Hilarion's dragon in the opening chapter of the well-known history of the Salonitan or Split church, *Historia Salonitana*, by Thomas the Archdeacon. Dalmatia is depicted in this segment and within that description Thomas recalls, referring to the authority of the poet, "Secundum poetarum fabulas," that Cadmus had arrived in the province and been transformed into a snake at that very place.<sup>27</sup> The historian adds that Epidaurus is the city of Cadmus' and furthermore, that a not inconsiderable cave can be found there and also, that it was common belief in his time that a dragon had dwelled in the cave. Therefore, the inhabitants of that area were also called 'anguigene' or 'serpent-born.'<sup>28</sup> In the continuation of the text, the medieval chronicler cites that St Hilarion had slain a dragon in that area.<sup>29</sup> He further explains that Cadmus was the king of Greece from whence he was expelled, adding that when he arrived in Dalmatia he became the cruelest of pirates and started

<sup>24</sup> *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, I, ed. M. Kostrenčić (Zagreb: Jugoslovenska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 1967), N° 44, 61–62.

<sup>25</sup> The place Breno is mentioned for the first time in a document dated 1163–1178. *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, II, ed. T. Smičiklas (Zagreb: Jugoslovenska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 1904), N° 95, 98–99.

<sup>26</sup> *Liber statutorum civitatis Ragusii, compositus anno MCCLXXII = Statut grada Dubrovnika, sastavljen godine 1272*, eds. A. Šoljić, Z. Šundrica, I. Veselić (Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku 2002), III, LIV.

<sup>27</sup> *Thomae Archidiaconi Spalatensis Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum Pontificum = Archdeacon Thomas of Split, History of the bishops of Salona and Split, History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, eds. D. Karbić, M. Matijević Sokol and J. R. Sweeney (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

“like a slithering serpent, to rage over the sea.”<sup>30</sup> Apart from Epidaurus, the myth of Cadmus is also linked with other localities along the southeastern coast of the Adriatic Sea.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, it is believed that the tribe of Enchelians who crowned him as their king had conquered the neighboring Illyrians.<sup>32</sup> In the new homeland, a son named Illyrios was born to Cadmus and Harmonia and according to legend, a snake was wound around the newborn at birth, imparting all its magical powers to him. According to another version of the myth, Cadmus and Harmonia were transformed into snakes at that exact place, in Epidaurus.<sup>33</sup> Thomas the Archdeacon, however, confined himself to a lapidary presentation of data in his writings. Only considerably later narrative sources bring the pagan heritage of Epidaurus into a direct correlation with the miracle of St Hilarion.

The miraculous triumph of St Hilarion over the dragon acquired a new dimension in the interpretation of the earliest Dubrovnik historians and chroniclers. These writings were composed at the end of the 15th and in the 16th century, at the time when the Republic of Dubrovnik was experiencing its heyday. An anonymous author of the Dubrovnik annals,<sup>34</sup> Nicolò Ragnina (1495–1582)<sup>35</sup> and Serafino Razzi (1531–1606)<sup>36</sup> wrote extensively about St Hilarion and his Dalmatian miracles. Although principally following St Jerome’s account, these authors date St Hilarion’s stay in Dalmatia to the beginning of the 9th century, adding new specifics and linking it to the tradition of the city of Dubrovnik and its authorities – not to Epidaurus.

The earliest of these historiographical writings are *Annales Ragusini Anonymi* compiled at the end of the 15th century, a text predominantly written in the form of a vivid dialogue between St Hilarion and the Dubrovnik residents. His account was later followed by writers whose scripts revealed very slight differences. Thus Ragnina, who in the preface to his work stated that he had used

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> About the myth of Cadmus in this part of the Adriatic v. I. Stevović, *Praevalis. Obrazovanje kulturnog prostora kasnoantičke provincije* [Summary: Praevalis. The Making of Cultural Space of the Late Antique Province] (Podgorica: Društvo arheologa Crne Gore, 2014), 24, 51, 107–108.

<sup>32</sup> M. Šašel Kos, “Cadmus and Harmonia in Illyria,” *Arheološki vestnik* 44 (1993), 113–136.

<sup>33</sup> G. Novak, “Questiones epidauritanae,” *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 339 (1965), 115–116.

<sup>34</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*. In *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, ed. S. Nodilo (Zagrabiae: Academia scientiarum et artium slavorum meridionalium, 1883), 1–163.

<sup>35</sup> *Annali di Ragusa del Magnifico ms. Nicolò di Ragnina*. In *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, 165–301. (= Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*)

<sup>36</sup> S. Razzi, *La storia di Ragusa scritta nuovamente in tre libri*, eds. L. Ferretti. G. Gelcich (Ragusa: Tipografia Serbo–Ragusea A. Pasaric, 1903).



the text “ex libro epistolarum Sancti Hieronimy”<sup>37</sup> in his narrative, also enters some particulars about the saint's life, mostly those referring to the period following his arrival in Dalmatia. Razzi, at the same time, was aware of Jerome's text albeit mistakenly attributing it to St Anthony.<sup>38</sup> In brief, according to the cited chroniclers, a dragon of astonishing size came from the Levant in the year 789 CE and settled in a cave near Epidaurus, which, as Ragnina specified, was a “citta vecchia.”<sup>39</sup> The dragon inflicted terror on the area for 13 years, causing much harm to the inhabitants who, helpless before the beast, considered abandoning their homes.<sup>40</sup> In 802 CE, a hermit called Hilarion came from Sicily to Breno (today's Mlini) where he built a thatch-roofed hut. Witnessing the newcomer, dwellers of the nearby strongholds of Spilan and Gradac arrived to forewarn him of a horrific dragon that roved the coast slaying not only animals but also children, men and women, proposing that he depart with them to either Dubrovnik or to one of the strongholds. St Hilarion instructed them to have no fear of the dragon as he could rescue them from the beast but only on the condition that they keep the faith and commandments of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they were to request the same of the Ragusans. After making sure the following day that the saint had not been killed by the dragon, the governors of Ragusa decided to direct a message to St Hilarion, aiming to summon him to the city.<sup>41</sup>

“Quali homeni, andati con molti homeni a cavallo, gionti sono alla abitation dello eremita, allo quale parlorono, dicendo, narassegli la sua condition, et nome, et la patria sua. Quale rispose, esser venuto da Levante, per esser per comandamento di Dio mandato, per liberarli dalla obsidione dello dragone, con condition se volete credere in Jesu Cristo ed alli sui comandamenti. Quali risposero: Noi semo cristiani, et etiam si governamo per i suoi precetti. Alli quali eremita diede la risposta: Ben vero tenite la fede a modo vostro; ma se volete **credere nella fede vera cristiana, et battizzarvi a modo romano**, farovvi liberare dalla obsidione dello dragone i farollo morire.”<sup>42</sup>

The saint rejected the governors' summons to Ragusa, advising the envoys that he had journeyed from the Levant to liberate the Ragusans from the terror of the dragon by God's command, but on the condition that they put faith in Christ and his commandments. Although the denizens retorted that they were

<sup>37</sup> Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 168.

<sup>38</sup> Razzi, *La storia di Ragusa*, 28.

<sup>39</sup> Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 188.

<sup>40</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 11; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 188; Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 24–25.

<sup>41</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 12; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 189; Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 190. The same scene in *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 12, Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 25.

Christians, the saint affirmed that they needed to accept the true Christian faith and not worship God according to their own customs. He also added that they were to be baptized according to the Roman rites, following which they would be free from the dragon. Having no other choice, the people of Dubrovnik sent ten 'homeni canuti' accompanied by about a thousand 'homeni armati' to St Hilarion who "cavo una sua croce da legno della sua casetta, et ordinò tutti li homeni ingenocchiare, facendoli far orationi Pater noster et Ave Maria, supplicando a Dio li conceda tale gratia: cridorono poi tre volte misericordia."<sup>43</sup> Thereafter, St Hilarion embarked on a boat accompanied by four men heading for Epidaurus. There, bearing a cross in his hand, he approached the cave where the beast dwelled. The dragon, as obedient as a lamb, appeared before St Hilarion, who tied a his belt around his neck and steered him towards the boat. Upon sailing back, the dragon swam alongside the boat. When they returned to the hut in front of which the congregation awaited, the saint ordered the dragon to climb up onto the bonfire. After the dragon was smoldered, St Hilarion gave a sermon to the gathered whereupon he explicated that the dragon was possessed by the devil, the one whom the inhabitants of Epidaurus had worshipped in the cave in ancient times.<sup>44</sup> He then pointed out the errors of the Dubrovnik residents who, even though Christians, put faith in sorcery and dreams, and therefore he proceeded to baptize them all. Subsequently, he continued his mission of Christianization in the Adriatic hinterland "per Bosnia, et Valachia, rivontadoli dalla setta grechesca nella fede cristiana."<sup>45</sup> St Hilarion's hut in front of which he had burned the dragon was converted into a church dedicated to the Mother of God, although later it changed patrons and was dedicated to St Hilarion. Chroniclers added that St Hilarion had erected another three churches in the name of the Holy Trinity in a place called Gravos, that is, in the Dubrovnik port of Gruž. These were the Church of St George, St Clement and the Church of the Mother of God, which was also subsequently dedicated to St Hilarion.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time when St Hilarion was residing in the interior, the sea had almost reached the mountains, deluging a large part of Dubrovnik. The saint returned immediately to the city upon an invitation from the inhabitants. Then, according to Anonymous and Ragnina, Hilarion made three crosses which he arranged on the shore, impeding the sea. Furthermore, it is maintained that one of the crosses can be found under the altar of the Church of St Hilarion in

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<sup>43</sup> Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 190.

<sup>44</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 13–14; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 189–191; Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 26.

<sup>45</sup> Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 191.

<sup>46</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 14; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 191; Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 26.

Gruž.<sup>47</sup> Razzi's account differs to some extent from the preceding ones, as he had notated that the saint had formed the sign of the cross with three stones, arranged them on the shore and impeded the waves while kneeling in prayer. These three stones were placed under the altars of the churches St Hilarion had erected. Razzi complements his account by citing that the three-day processions organized by the Dubrovnik residents denoted a gesture of gratitude to the saint, during which followers strode barefoot.<sup>48</sup> St Hilarion left Dubrovnik after the second miracle, but in 813 CE a certain Sargio or Sergio, a disciple of St Hilarion of Albanian origin, arrived at the city, who subsequently became the chaplain of the St Vitus church.<sup>49</sup>

Renaissance chroniclers, as expected, correlated the miracles of St Hilarion with the city of Dubrovnik and not Epidaurus, making significant alterations to the actual chronology of Hilarion's visit to Dalmatia. The appearance of the dragon to these parts is dated to 789 CE, while it is believed that the saint arrived in 802 CE, despite the fact that both Nicolò Ragnina and Serafino Razzi were aware that these events had taken place in the 4th century. Moreover, in the prologue to his work, Ragnina mentions specifically that after the death of Julian the Apostate, Epidaurus and the entire area were endangered by a flood which took place in 363 CE.<sup>50</sup> In point of fact, it is on the basis of the miracles of St Hilarion that the antiquity of Ragusa, which originates from Epidaurus, was established. Moreover, in the text itself, at the end of the narrative about Hilarion, Ragnina adds that it is more likely that the floods had occurred in 373 CE, before the Goths destroyed Epidaurus.<sup>51</sup> Razzi also expresses doubts about the local chronology of events, noting that it was not Ragusa that was mentioned in the saint's biography but rather Epidaurus.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, despite what was said, the chroniclers acknowledged the chronology of events stated for the first time in *Annales Ragusini Anonymi* in their histories. They all concurred that the dragon had arrived to this area from the Levant. Moreover, the danger to Dubrovnik derived from the Levant at any rate. The historians dated the arrival of St Hilarion to the Epidaurus at the time of the incursions of Arab fleets into the Adriatic Sea, among which the raid from around 840 CE stands out, when Budva, Rose and Kotor's lower town were destroyed – this probably refers to Anonymous' mention of Saracen attacks that he dated to the year 740 CE – and especially the one from 866/67 CE when Dubrovnik was under siege for 15

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<sup>47</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 14–15; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 191–192.

<sup>48</sup> Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 15; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 192; Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 27.

<sup>50</sup> Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 168.

<sup>51</sup> Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 191.

<sup>52</sup> Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 28–29.

months.<sup>53</sup> Closer to the time in which the Dubrovnik annals were compiled is undoubtedly the threat to the Republic of Dubrovnik from the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, from the middle of the 15th century (the treaties of 1442 and 1458) the residents of Dubrovnik were obliged to pay a haraç tax to the sultan.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, it cannot be said whether the backdrop of the 13-year-long terror of the dragon is a factual historical event or it is simply a literary topos. In any case, holding a sermon after the slaying of the dragon, St Hilarion distinctly declared that the beast was possessed by a devil, the one worshipped in the cave by the denizens of Epidaurus in ancient times.<sup>55</sup> Serafino Razzi is more specific than the two older authors, hence unequivocally linking the beast and Asclepius. To be precise, Razzi states that St Hilarion expounded in a sermon to the Ragusans that the people “ne i tempi antichi, in Epidauro adorauano un serpente di bronzo, da loro lo Dio Esculapio addimandato.”<sup>56</sup> What everyone agreed on is that the prerequisite for deliverance from the beast was the acceptance of baptism according to the Roman rite, since the Dubrovnik residents, regardless of the fact that they had adopted Christianity, still believed in fortune tellers, sorcery and dreams.

It seems that a Slavic apostle's mission was incorporated into the narrative of St Hilarion, albeit indirectly. Specifically, Ragnina stated that Sergio, the disciple of St Hilarion alluded to previously, was in fact a disciple of St Cyril, a monk who had baptized all Bulgarians and Slavs into the Catholic faith. This statement is even more significant when it is taken into account that the texts of the Renaissance chroniclers maintain that St Hilarion departed for Bosnia and Wallachia after the miracle of the dragon, where he converted the populaces from the “Greek cult” to the Christian faith.

Dubrovnik-based writers included elements that refer to the then city administration and even its appearance in the depiction of the miracle of St Hilarion. The narrative mentions the city administrators, ten wise, i.e. reputable men (which practically corresponds to the number of members in the Small Council, of which there were eleven) along with some one thousand armed residents of Dubrovnik. The recollection of a contemporary disaster is perchance noted in the depiction of the rising sea miracle. The vivid representation of Pustjerna draws attention. This was a part of the city where there were straw

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<sup>53</sup> I. Goldstein, *Hrvatski rani srednji vijek*. (Zagreb: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1995), 203–206.

<sup>54</sup> For more details in regards to the correlation between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire during the 15th century v. V. Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808. Prvi dio. Od osnutka do 1526*. (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1980), 201–216, 226–236.

<sup>55</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 13–14; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 189–191.

<sup>56</sup> Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 26.

houses, various osteria or restaurants, as well as a market with a variety of goods, and cattle, horses, bulls, cows, sheep, pigs and other animals for sale. According to chroniclers, the sea had flooded Pustjerna on one Saturday in the month of October (sic!).<sup>57</sup>

Lastly, relics or more precisely, contact or secondary relics associated with St Hilarion are correlated with the rescue of the city from the rising sea: a wooden cross he had made by hand, that is, three stones which he used to make the sign of the cross and which were kept under the altars of three churches in the port of Dubrovnik.<sup>58</sup> Although the authenticity of these relics is questionable, it is very likely that the churches had interred some relics at the end of the 15th and during the 16th century that were believed to originate from St Hilarion and furthermore, their citation is an indication of local worship. Unfortunately, none of these churches are mentioned by the learned Tuscan Philippus de Diversis in his description from the year 1440 of the city of Dubrovnik and its immediate surroundings.<sup>59</sup> Writing about the churches in Gruž, de Diversis primarily points out the Church of St Blaise, the patron saint of the city, and subsequently the St Martin, St Michael, and St Fosca Churches, adding that countless other churches were existent there, albeit failing to mention any that could be associated with St Hilarion.<sup>60</sup> Razzi, however, was aware of three shrines that were erected midway between Dubrovnik and Gruž. He claimed that in his time, at the end of the 16th century, it was possible to see one of the three old churches in a place called Bella Vista about a kilometer from Ragusa and that this place was even then called “ad tres basilicas,” adding that “il complesso dalle tre chiese del sec. XIII e XIV [...] è oggi rappresentato dall'unica chiesa officiata di S. Giorgio, al cui servizio è un ritiro di Bizocche.”<sup>61</sup> At the beginning of the 19th century, Francesco Maria Appendini (1768–1837) stated that for centuries on St Hilarion's Day the Ragusans express their gratitude to the great saint. This took place in a small chapel near *Ragusa vecchia* and in three small churches located in the environs of Dubrovnik.<sup>62</sup> The three churches mentioned by the Appendines are undoubtedly the identical ones cited by the older Dubrovnik

<sup>57</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 14; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 191; Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, 14; Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, 191; Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> F. De Diversis, *Opis slavnoga grada Dubrovnika*, preface, transcription and translation from Latin Z. Janeković-Römer (Zagreb: Dom i svijet 2004).

<sup>60</sup> F. De Diversis, *Opis slavnoga grada Dubrovnika*, 46.

<sup>61</sup> Razzi, *Storia di Ragusa*, 26, nota 1. *Bizocche* were tertiaries, that is members of third orders. On their status in Dubrovnik v. V. Živković, *Religioznost i umetnost u Kotoru XIV–XVI vek* [Summary: Religiosity and art in Kotor (Cattaro) in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries] (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2010), 101–102.

<sup>62</sup> F. M. Appendini, *Notizie storico-critiche sulle antichità. Storia e letteratura de' ragusesi*, I (Ragusa: A. Martecchini, 1802), 68.

chroniclers. Nonetheless, there is no mention of crosses, i.e. the stones placed under the altars of the mentioned churches. It is possible that all traces of them had disappeared following the devastating earthquake of 1667.

The small chapel near *Ragusa vecchia* mentioned by Appendini is the Church of the Mother of God in Mlini, built on the site of the saint's hut in front of which he had scorched the dragon, a depiction noted by writers of annals. The chapel was later dedicated to St Hilarion – this is unquestionably the same church mentioned in the 1272 Dubrovnik Statute. In actual fact, this temple is not listed by de Diversis. The medieval church was ruined in the devastating 1667 earthquake, after which it was restored in the Baroque style. However, it was once more destroyed in the earthquakes of 1823 and 1824, following which it was rebuilt for the second time. It is known, however, that the church had held a miraculous icon of Mary, the Mother of God in the 17th century. Namely, the Marian Atlas of the German Jesuit Guilielmi Gumpfenberg printed in 1657/8 mentions, among others, three miraculous icons of the Mother of God on the territory of the Republic of Dubrovnik. Two were located in the city of Dubrovnik, while the third 'antiquissima' image of the Virgin Mary who performed miracles and is venerated by all was sited in the church of St Hilarion in the Dubrovnik Parish (Imago B. V. miraculosa in Breno).<sup>63</sup> This information was dispatched to Gumpfenberg from Ragusa. Therefore, the text about St Hilarion relies mostly on Dubrovnik chroniclers, primarily the account of Serafino Razzi. Namely, at the end of his testimony, Gumpfenberg cites the sermon of St Hilarion in which he reveals that the beast burned at the stake is "idem ipse, quem olim ex Epidauro Achaiae Aesculapium."<sup>64</sup>

With the advancement of the Republic of Dubrovnik, the expansion of its territory and the wave of humanism, there were also attempts of numerous writers to correlate the early stages of Epidaurus with ancient myths. They thus enhanced the reputation of Dubrovnik, which according to them was the same city as Epidaurus after changing its name, though it was a town newer, larger and far more famous. For this reason, the narrative of Asclepius as the legendary founder of Epidaurus was increasingly mentioned. The cult of the Greek god of medicine was most likely conveyed to Dalmatia by Roman colonists.<sup>65</sup> Three gems with the likeness of Asclepius were found in Epidaurus, on two of which he was depicted together with Hygieia, though the remains of an inscription

<sup>63</sup> P. Knezović, "Dubrovačka Gospina svetišta 17. stoleća prema *Atlas Marianus* W. Gumpfenberga", *Anali Dubrovnik* 43 (2005), 75–92

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>65</sup> Novak, *Questiones epidauritanæ*, 116–119.



or a temple dedicated to him were not discovered.<sup>66</sup> The people of Dubrovnik, however, were very fond of this legend and in official documents often emphasized their Epidaurian origin and the union between the cities. They sought to emphasize the antiquity of Epidaurus, that is, the city of Dubrovnik itself with inscriptions, legends, and even 15th and 16th century works of art. The Dubrovnik elite employed a fictitious tradition both in acquiring new estates and in the process of conserving the memory of the origins of the city and the nobility, whereupon archaic ancestries were seen as a covenant of singular rights and a sanction of intransience.<sup>67</sup> Once the Rector's Palace was constructed in Dubrovnik in the 15th century (before 1440), Asclepius was depicted on a pillar capital and an inscription in verse compiled by Dubrovnik notary Niccolò della Ciria from Cremona was positioned alongside it. The verses called attention to the fact that Dubrovnik was essentially the home town of Asclepius.<sup>68</sup>

The chroniclers of the Baroque period, however, paid little attention to the legends of St Hilarion. Upon his mention, they largely deferred to the authenticity of historical data, dating St Hilarion's visit to the 4th century in Dalmatia, not engaging in any additional interpretation of the dragon's demise. Thus Junius Restius (1669–1735), the most authoritative chronicler of Ragusa, confined himself to reciting Jerome's text in a terse form.<sup>69</sup>

The legend of Asclepius flourished once again at the beginning of the 19th century, an age of renewed interest in the past and the forming of new historical narratives. It was during this period that the scholar Francesco Maria Appendini identified the cave in which Asclepius' snake had lived, according to the local population.<sup>70</sup> The famous English archaeologist Arthur Evans also wrote

<sup>66</sup> A. Evans, *Antiquarian reserches in Illyricum*, I–II (Westminster: Nichols & Sons, 1883), 17; B. Bijadija, "Roman religion and cults in Epidaurus," *Archaeologia Adriatica*, 6/1 (2012), 67–86.

<sup>67</sup> Z. Janeković Römer, "Stjecanje Konavala: Antička tradicija i mit u službi diplomacije". In *Konavle u prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti*: zbornik radova, ed. V. Stipetić (Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 1998), 31–45.

<sup>68</sup> Regarding this inscription and the historical context in which it originated v. S. Kokole, "Ciriaco d' Ancona v Dubrovniku: renesancna epigrafika, arheologija in obujanje antike v humanisticnem okolju mestne državice sredi petnajstega stoletja," *Arheoloski vestnik* 41 (1990), 663–697, especially 667–668.

<sup>69</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii ab origine urbis usque ad annum 1451, item Joannis Gundulae (1451–1484)*, ed. N. Nodilo (Zagrabiae: Ex Officina Societatis Typographicae, 1893), 15.

<sup>70</sup> "Poco lungi dalle rovine Epidauritane nel mezzo della Partenia, oggi pianura Canalitana apreso nel vasto lato Orientale dell'altissimo deserto sniescniza un'orrida spaziosa caverna, che l'immeroabile tradizione dei vicini abitanti spaccia per quella, in cui si annidava in serpente di Esculapio." Appendini ordered that a marble plaque be placed at the entrance to the cave with an inscription in 'Illyrian' which read: "hridni stan smaja eskulapskoga 1801." Appendini, *Notizie istorico-critiche sulle antichità*, 32–34.

about "Asclepius' Cave," stating the previously held belief that Cadmus and Harmonia had been transformed into snakes in situ, and that Asclepius had later appropriated the sanctuary for himself.<sup>71</sup> Along with the supposed Asclepius' Cave, Arthur Evans also noted the one in which St Hilarion's dragon dwelled, a cave named *Scipum*, concluding thus: "But how interesting is this personified triumph of Christianity over the Cadmean and Aesculapian serpent-worship of earlier Epidaurus! – how suggestive is this annexation of local mythology by the new religion."<sup>72</sup>

However, there is no substantiation of a potential worship of St Hilarion in Epidaurus itself. Although the writers of the Dubrovnik chronicles crafted a direct link between the sojourn of St Hilarion and the baptism of Ragusans, there was no trace of any church, chapel or altar within the city walls dedicated to him.<sup>73</sup> When the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote about Dubrovnik in the 10th century, he revealed that the relics of St Pancratius were interred in the heart of the city in a church dedicated to St Stephen the First Martyr.<sup>74</sup> The relics of St Pancras were translated from Rome to Dubrovnik together with the relics of Saints Nereus, Achilleus, Domittila and Petronilla seemingly in the mid-8th century.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, these holy relics were interred in the referenced church of St Stephen,<sup>76</sup> and their cults were cultivated in the inclusive area of the Dubrovnik commune. Thus, for instance, in the 13th century in the area of Astoreja, i.e. the site of the Church of St Hilarion, there were as many as three churches dedicated to St Pancratius,<sup>77</sup> which speaks in favor of the fact that the Dubrovnik authorities cultivated cults within the city itself but not those in its immediate vicinity, as is the case with the cult of St Hilarion.

<sup>71</sup> A. Evans, *Through Bosnia and the Herzegovina on foot during the insurrection, August and September 1875: with an historical review of Bosnia, and a glimpse at the Croats, Slavonians, and the ancient republic of Ragusa* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1876), 394.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 397. On the Šipun cave and its legends v. V. Božić, "Legende o špilji Šipun u Cavtatu", *Subterranea Croatica* IV/6, (2006), 41–46.

<sup>73</sup> L. Beritić, "Ubikacija nestalih gradjevinskih spomenika u Dubrovniku." *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 10/1 (1956), 50–79.

<sup>74</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, English translation R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Center for Byzantine Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 1967), XXIX, 235–236.

<sup>75</sup> T. Živković, "The earliest cults of Saints in Ragusa," *Zbornik radova vizantološkog instituta* 44 (2007), 119–127.

<sup>76</sup> Z. Janeković Römer, "Štovanje Sv. Stjepana Prvomučenika u ranosrednjovjekovnom Dubrovniku: mučeništvo u temeljima grada, komune i (nad)biskupije", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 57 (2019), 9–28.

<sup>77</sup> A. Marinković, "Territorial Expansion of the Ragusan Commune/Republic and the Churches of its Patron Saints," *Dubrovnik Annals* 13 (2009), 16–18.

Along with the veneration of Roman saints, the cults of saints from the East also emerged in Dubrovnik, which is very plausible considering the fact that Dubrovnik was under Byzantine rule at the time. Finally, from the end of the 10th century, the Ragusans began to venerate St Blaise, the Bishop of Savastia, whom the city of Dubrovnik still celebrates as its protector and patron.<sup>78</sup> However, in the pantheon of saints, protectors of the city and the Republic, there was no place for St Hilarion.

In point of fact, the cult of St Hilarion was fostered beyond the city ramparts, primarily in the Mlini church at the ostensible locality of the saint's hut, a location which had attained the distinctive perpetuation of a holy place. The Renaissance authors of the Dubrovnik annals displayed significant interest in the saint's brief stay in Dalmatia and his miracles. Relying on the text of St Jerome, they enhanced the narrative by adding components of the period in which they were penned relating to the city of Dubrovnik and its social organization, and even the depiction of some city districts. In the works of the first Dubrovnik chroniclers, St Hilarion became the conveyor of orthodox Christianity, a saint who had baptized the residents of Dubrovnik and freed them from a terrible beast which Epidaurians had worshiped in ancient times. Given that the chronicle of Asclepius as the legendary founder of Epidaurus was created in Dubrovnik during the Renaissance period, the learned Dominican Serafino Razzi likened the beast slain by Hilarion with Asclepius' snake. However, despite the importance attached to St Hilarion by Renaissance scholars, any depiction of an icon or another representation of the saint in Dubrovnik at that time is unknown or has not been preserved.<sup>79</sup> The writers of the next epoch replicated Jerome's text about St Hilarion into their works without any additional commentaries. Nevertheless, it was during this period that Hilarion became the main protagonist in the local patriotic literary works.

The renowned Dubrovnik writer, poet and playwright Junije Palmotić (1606–1657) not only depicts the miracle of St Hilarion and the dragon in stanzas in several places in his literary work *Pavlimir*, but also sets the drama dedicated to the legendary founder of the city at the time of the saint's sojourn in the vicinity of Dubrovnik.<sup>80</sup> In this famous work, like in the local folk tradition, the saint is called Ilar.<sup>81</sup> At the beginning of the 19th century which was marked by a

<sup>78</sup> J. Belamarić, "Sveti Vlaho i dubrovačka obitelj svetaca zaštitnika". In idem, *Studije iz srednjovekovne i renesansne umjetnosti na Jadranu* (Split: Književni krug, 2001), 165–190.

<sup>79</sup> V. Djurić, *Dubrovačka slikarska škola* [Résumé: L'école de peinture de Dubrovnik] (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1963).

<sup>80</sup> J. Palmotić, *Pavlimir* (Vinkovci: Riječ, 2000).

<sup>81</sup> For the local legends about St Hilarion, that is, St Ilar v. Lj. Marks, "History and Fiction in the Oral Legends of Konavle", *Narodna umjetnost* 35/1 (1998), 157–185; M. Bošković Stuli,

renewal of interest in history and glorious old times, chroniclers of Dubrovnik's past were once again interested in the ancient legends about Cadmus and Asclepius, and accordingly in the miracle of St Hilarion, all of which were correlated. At that time, the saint's feast was celebrated with a special reverence in three churches in the port of Dubrovnik and in the Mlini church.<sup>82</sup> In fact, the latter church remains the heart of the cult of St Hilarion,<sup>83</sup> who is also considered as a patron saint of Mlini. This locality, as well as the narrative of the dragon miracle, ultimately gained a significant place in the local oral tradition in which there is even now the conviction that the path upon which St Hilarion had dragged the dragon Boaz from his cave Šipun to Mlini can be glimpsed when the sea is tranquil.

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. supra. n. 62.

<sup>83</sup> In addition to the church in Mlini in the Dubrovnik area, there is only one other locality that bears the name of this saint. A. Badurina, M. Tadić, "Hagiotopografija Istre i dubrovačkog područja", *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 12–13 (1988–1989), 59–63. The name of St Hilarion can be found in the hagiotopography of Konavle. A. Badurina, "Hagiotopografija Konavla". In *Konavle u prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti*, 253–260.

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