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## Zagreb Cathedral's Reliquary Bust of Saint Stephen the King: the Context of its Commission and its Attribution

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### Abstract

*The 1635 Zagreb reliquary of Saint Stephen is a rare and exceptionally accomplished work of metal sculpture of the Roman Baroque. The author attributes the reliquary bust's head to Alessandro Algardi and*

*discusses the roles played by Francesco Barberini and Ivan Tomko Mrnavić in the commission of the reliquary.*

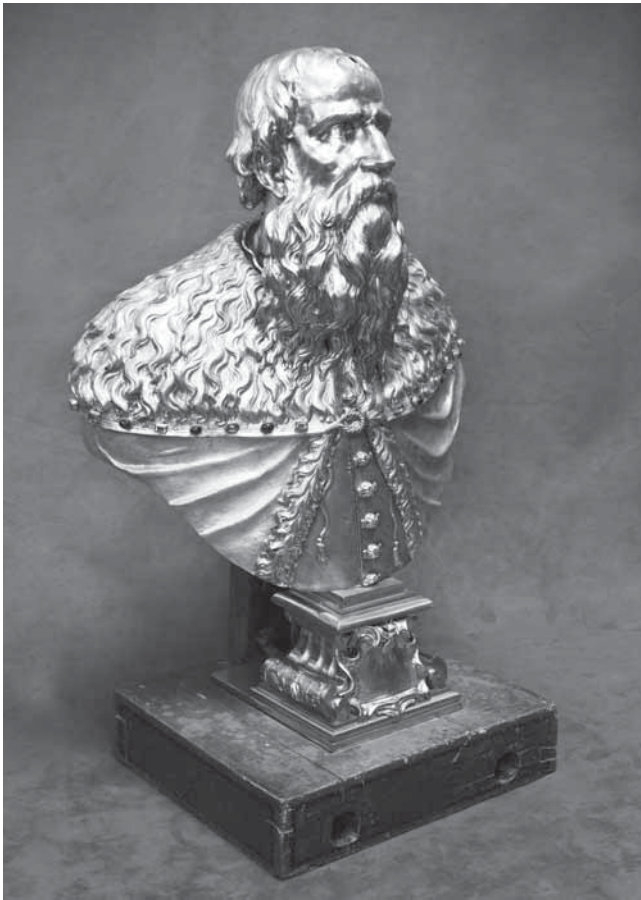
Key words: *Alessandro Algardi, Roman Baroque, sculpture, reliquary bust, Francesco Barberini, Ivan Tomko Mrnavić*

In 1635, Cardinal Francesco Barberini – Urban VIII's nephew, the Papal State's successful prime minister, a Jesuit trainee and an important patron of the arts – made an extraordinary donation to Zagreb Cathedral: a reliquary bust of its co-titular saint, the eleventh-century Hungarian King Stephen (Figs. 1–3).<sup>1</sup> The large-scale reliquary remains one of the few 17th century Roman reliquary busts that have come down to us. Moreover, the Holy Hungarian King's head is a superlative, if little known, example of metal sculpture of the Roman Baroque. My principal intention in this article is to identify the sculptor who created the unknown terracotta model used to cast the head. I will also shed light on the circumstances that prompted Barberini to make such a munificent donation to the Croatian bishopric.

The same year, 1635, saw the publication in Rome of a book by Ivan Tomko Mrnavić, a canon of Zagreb Cathedral and titular bishop of Bosnia. The final section of the book described the author's recent encounter in Rome with the Cardinal Nephew, during which he brought to the Cardinal's attention Zagreb Cathedral's need for a new reliquary. Soon afterwards, the Cardinal duly obliged by donating a reliquary, which Mrnavić himself promptly took back to Zagreb.<sup>2</sup> The fact has been reported by a number of later commentators, from Farlati (1775) to this very day, including Lentić's catalogue entries for a number of exhibitions between 1984 and 1994.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, when art historian Anđela Horvat first highlighted the exceptional artistic quality of the reliquary in 1975,<sup>4</sup> she made no mention whatsoever of Mrnavić, nor did any of the researchers who followed in her footsteps in their more recent contributions to the study of the Zagreb

reliquary. The silver head of Saint Stephen emerged for the first time in its full splendour at the 1999 exhibition of Croatia's Christian heritage in the Vatican Museums. Vladimir Marković, one of the exhibition's curators, eased the head's burden by removing its somewhat ill-fitting crown, having previously established it to be a 17th century Central European work (Fig. 4).<sup>5</sup> Hence, this article also illustrates the head without the crown, reflecting the object's original appearance. Marković went on to underline in even more unequivocal terms the exceptional level of craftsmanship that characterizes the head. In addition, he interpreted Barberini's donation against the more general backdrop of Pope Urban's commitment to the renewal and re-affirmation of Early Christian roots, as well as an expression of Francesco Barberini's personal concern for the Croatian lands (the Cardinal was one of the first to rush to Dubrovnik's aid in the wake of the disastrous 1667 earthquake). In 2001, two years after the Vatican exhibition, the Zagreb reliquary was displayed again at an exhibition documenting the millennial ties between Bavaria and Hungary. The author of the catalogue entries Uta Piereth identified a link between the Zagreb reliquary and a Roman circle of gold- and silversmiths working for the Barberinis (Panfilo Bernini, Fantino Taglietti, and Gaspare Mola).<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, instead of taking a closer look at these metalworkers, my intention is to focus on the sculptor who made the original terracotta bust that the gold- and silversmiths must have used to cast the head of Saint Stephen.

The reliquary comprises three parts (head, chest, and plinth). In terms of quality, each shows a different level of execution. The silver head was based on an unknown terracotta



1., 2., 3. *Reliquary bust of St Stephen the King*, the head here attributed to Algardi, 1635 (silver, copper, gilt, precious stones, height without crown 89 cm), Zagreb Cathedral's Treasury (Photo: P. Mofardin)

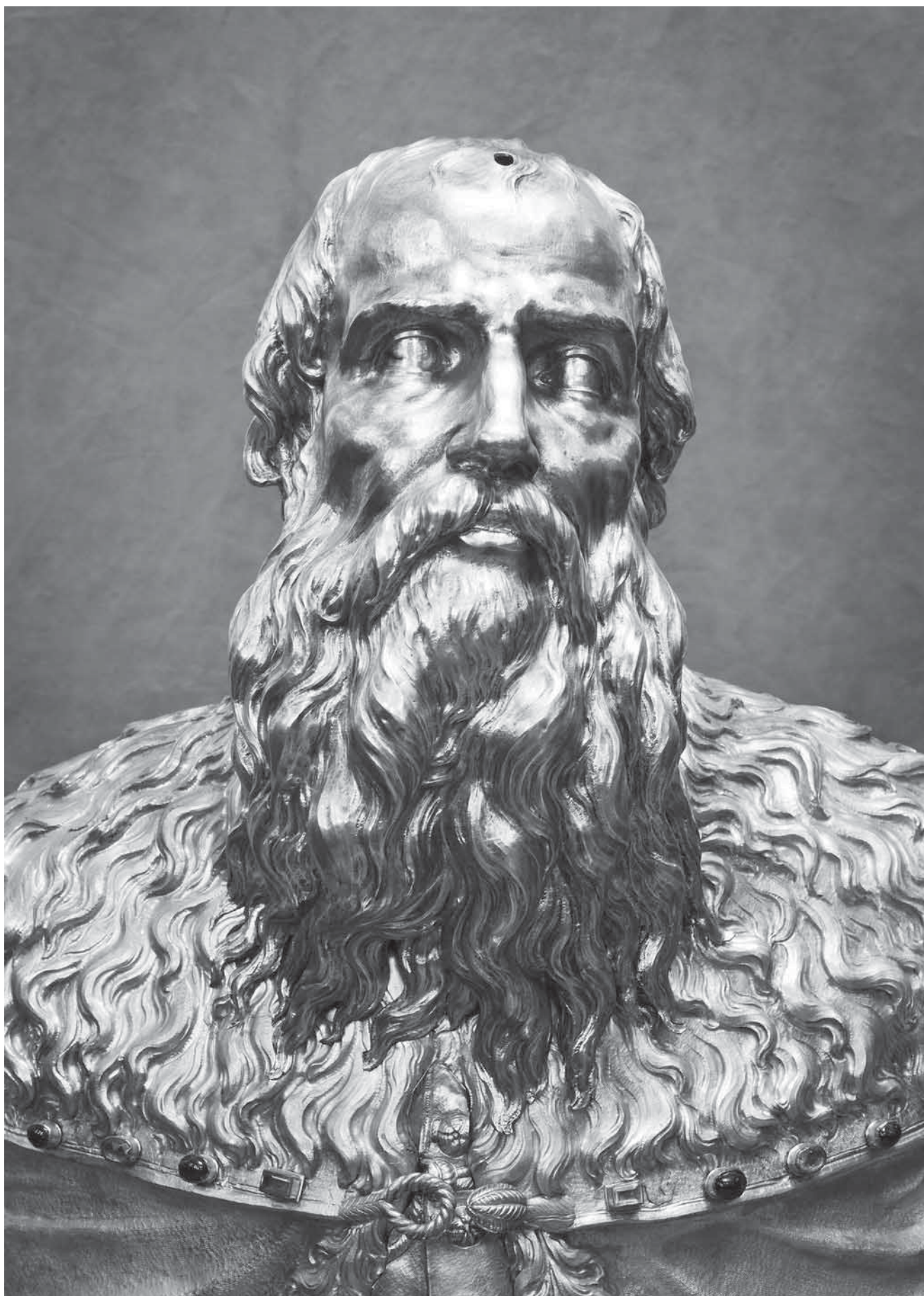
Relikvijar-poprsje sv. Stjepana kralja, glava ovdje atribuirana Algardia, 1635. (srebro, bakar, pozlata, poludrago kamenje, visina bez krune 89 cm), Riznica zagrebačke katedrale

model created by a distinguished sculptor. Unlike the head, the chest and shoulders, made of wrought and cast copper and silver, display inferior sculpting skills, appearing to be a silversmith's work. A horizontal string of precious stones divides the royal cloak into an upper section, fur with formulaic curls, and a lower one filled with formulaic drapery folds. However, the plinth and cartouche, cast in – partially gilded – silver and sporting the Barberini bees, are of the kind also seen in Bernini's marble bust of Urban's uncle Francesco Barberini (National Gallery of Art, Washington),<sup>7</sup> leading us to the very pinnacle of Roman metalwork (Fig. 5). An inspection of the bust's hollow interior reveals the parts to be held together by screws.

Bearing in mind the procedures and practice of the industry of Roman metalwork,<sup>8</sup> we may assume that Barberini commissioned the reliquary from a gold- or silversmith, members of the only guild licenced to sell works made of precious metal. The silversmith would, in his turn, commission a terracotta model of the saint's head from a sculptor, while probably modelling the chest himself, in order to avoid additional expenses. The plinth was based on a high-quality decorative model normally found in a silversmith's workshop. The mould may have been made by a master from the

Founders' Guild. It appears that in Rome small-scale metal sculptures were hardly ever commissioned from sculptors.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the fact that we have identified the presence of at least two different hands involved in the making of the Zagreb reliquary can, of course, hardly be seen as an exception, given the established procedures that prevailed. Likewise, it is not in the least surprising that the reliquary does not bear the master's stamp: this was perfectly usual with works of precious metal commissioned by the Pope or one of the Church's high dignitaries, the purpose being to make sure the craftsman involved would not be subject to any tax, as well as to speed up the actual execution.<sup>10</sup>

The head of Hungary's Holy King is similar in type to those of Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. It is slightly tilted to one side and upward-facing. The orbital bones and the forehead are quite pronounced, forming recesses that hold the saint's large eyes. The gaze is just barely traced. The vigorous contrast produced by the buoyant and long curls of the beard emanates from the hollows beneath the cheekbones. The lower lip protrudes beneath the mustache and, along with the nose, provides the whole face with a vigorous vertical axis that binds its two halves together. Both the face and the beard pulsate with an all-pervasive intensity: a hallmark of



the sculptor's creative energy. It is precisely in the modelling of the beard's flame-like curls that we can discern the hand of a distinguished sculptor. While a lesser sculptor would have reverted to a more rigid, formulaic rendition, the author of the Zagreb bust uses the curls to enhance both expression and impact. Saint Stephen's head emanates a controlled pathos, as well as a kind of low-key ecstasy. In this cast, I recognise the hand of Alessandro Algardi.

When the Zagreb reliquary was made in 1635, Algardi was 37 years old and had already been in Rome for about 10 years.<sup>11</sup> It was precisely at this time that his fortune was beginning to improve, as the first major commissions for marble sculptures poured in (the tomb of Leo XI in Saint Peter's, the *Beheading of Saint Paul* in Bologna's San Paolo, *Saint Philip Neri and the Angel* in Santa Maria in Vallicella), which he would eventually complete over the years that followed. While appearing to be on the brink of social recognition and financial security, Algardi was not yet quite fully established as a sculptor. In order to make ends meet on a stage dominated by Bernini, he had no choice but to take on less monumental work, such as making models for gold- and silversmiths or restoring ancient sculptures.<sup>12</sup> Bellori, too, reports that the Bolognese master was making »*modelli di putti, figurine, teste, crocifissi ed ornamenti per gli orefici*«,<sup>13</sup> a trend that persisted throughout his career.

Up until 1635, Algardi's most notable works were bronze sculptures: the urn of Saint Ignatius in the Gesù (1629) and the urn of Mary Magdalene in Saint-Maximin (1634). The curls of the Magdalene's hair (Fig. 6)<sup>14</sup> show similarities with those of Saint Stephen's beard. Jennifer Montagu's observation regarding the Magdalene's hair, – 'the beautifully chased locks of her hair floating down over her shoulder and breasts suggesting the flame-like purity of her purged soul'<sup>15</sup> –, may also be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Saint Stephen's beard. Even at a later stage, when he had already come to grips with marble (the principal path to a notable career in Rome), he still continued to make terracotta models, which were then cast in precious metals. In this Roman setting, Algardi's propensity for modelling was quite exceptional, and is best understood in the light of his origin and training. Algardi was trained in Bologna in the second decade of the 17th Century. At the time, the Bolognese scene was marked by the formal standards set by the Caracci family and Guido Reni. While Bologna lacked a sculptor of sufficient standing to rival the influence exerted by the Caraccis or by Reni, there still existed the powerful local tradition of sculpture in terracotta (hence, modelling over sculpting). Algardi was trained by Giulio Cesare Conventi, the city's leading sculptor. Saint Stephen's head shows a fully resolved mastery of all of the hallmarks of the Bolognese tradition, which Algardi's exuberant talent elevates to a higher level of sculptural expression. If we look beyond the artist's great modelling skills, what is quite noteworthy is the typology of the bony face and the beard. Let us consider one of Algardi's early works, the head of Saint Petronius in Bologna's Oratory of Santa Maria della Vita. While the work is still firmly rooted in the local tradition, the type of transition between the cheek bone and the beard's curls foreshadows the rendition found



4. The reliquary bust of St Stephen the King as displayed in Zagreb Cathedral's Treasury, height with crown 113 cm (Photo: D. Šourek)  
Relikvijar-popsrje Sv. Stjepana kralja kako je izložen u Riznici zagrebačke katedrale, visina s krunom 113 cm



5. Base of the reliquary (Photo: P. Mofardin)  
Postolje relikvijara



6. A. Algardi, *Urn of Mary Magdalene*, detail, 1634, bronze, Saint-Maximin (from: J. Montagu, *Alessandro Algardi*, New Haven-London, 1985, I, pl. I)

A. Algardi, *Urna sv. Marije Magdalene*, detalj, 1634., bronca, Saint-Maximin



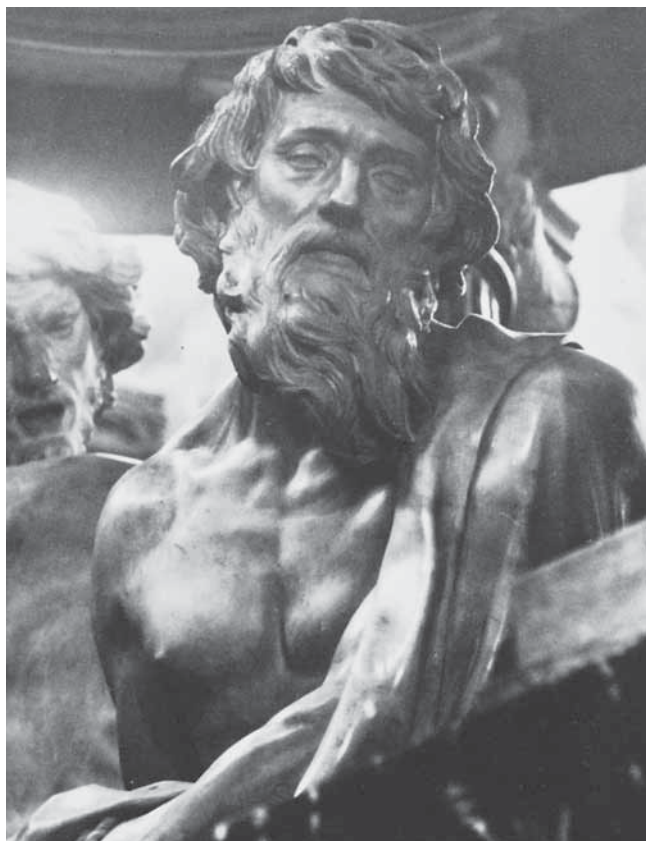
7. A. Algardi, *Tomb of Leo XI*, detail, marble, Rome, San Pietro (from: J. Montagu, *ibid.*, Fig. 49)

A. Algardi, *Grobnica Lava XI.*, detalj, mramor, Rim, Sv. Petar

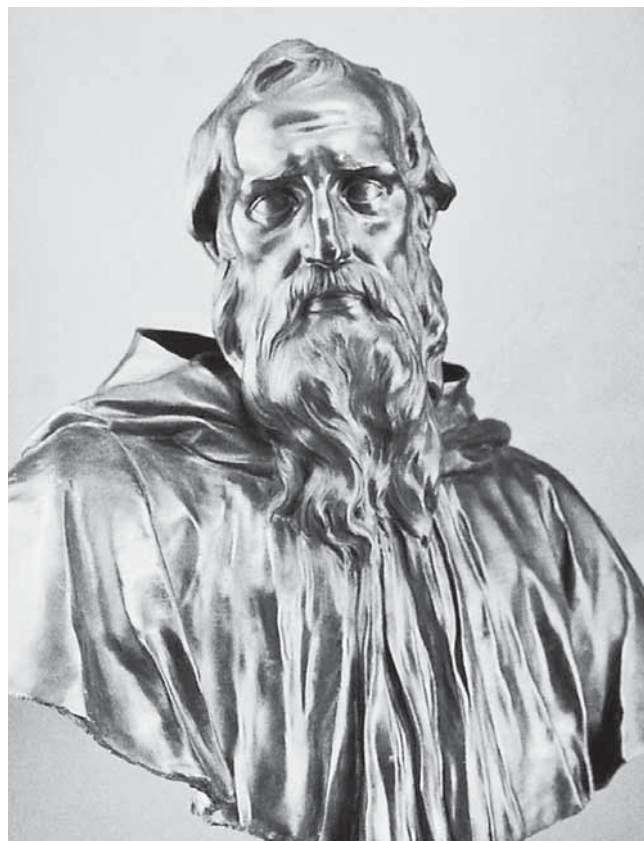
in Saint Stephen's head. The bony face with its long beard is more Bolognese than Roman. Moreover, Saint Stephen's upward-facing cornea and facial expression bring to mind the type of ecstasy found in some faces by Guido Reni, an ecstasy that is quite different in kind from that found in most of the Roman faces: it is less boisterous, quieter, more composed. Unlike Bernini's, Algardi's faces and gestures are introverted, and the ups and downs of the two sculptors' respective critical fortunes very much hinged on precisely this substantial difference. Bellori finds Algardi's style easier to associate with the Classical tradition. Little wonder, then, that, in his book on outstanding artists of the Seicento, he decided to include Algardi as the only sculptor. However, art historians of the twentieth century judged this kind of approach to be overly restrictive. They consistently championed Bernini, seeing in his work a type of Avantgarde break with tradition. Nonetheless, the period that followed Modernism saw Algardi's return to favour, as monolithic and normative ideas of style gave way, and the pluralism of styles, tasks and materials again began to attract more interest.

As I have already noted, Algardi negotiated a number of deals for his first large-scale marble sculptures at more or less exactly the time I assume him to have executed the terracotta model for the Barberini-commissioned reliquary.

In a technical sense, the typology and morphology of the locks and curls seen in the beards and hair of his marble sculptures derives from modelling, not sculpting: there are, for instance, no visible chisel marks, such as are normally found in the works of Bernini and his circle. The beards of Leo XI (Fig. 7)<sup>16</sup> and Saint Paul (Fig. 8)<sup>17</sup> feature the same formal principle that we encounter in Zagreb's Saint Stephen: the beard growth is sparser on the chin, but the locks flanking it are thicker and more powerful. Just like Saint Stephen, both faces feature a prominent lower lip. Likewise, Algardi's beards never revert to more formulaic patterns or vacant forms, a trait that can sometimes be observed in the beards executed by Bernini and his circle. These beards hold the key to Algardi's signature style and have no peers in Roman sculpture of the time. These same signature forms are also found in the hair locks of the angel flanking Saint Phillip in Santa Maria in Vallicella,<sup>18</sup> or the tongues of flame underneath Saint Michael in Bologna's Museo Civico.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, it may be worth noting that Saint Phillip's beard displays a growth pattern that is different from Algardi's other beards, probably because the Roman saint's head owes much to the powerful type established by Guido Reni's famous painting. Nevertheless, the profile of Saint Phillip's nose again closely resembles that of Saint Stephen.<sup>20</sup>



8. A. Algardi, *Beheading of Saint Paul*, detail, marble, Bologna, San Paolo (from: J. Montagu, *ibid.*, Fig. 54)  
A. Algardi, Odrublivanje glave sv. Pavla, detalj, mramor, Bologna, San Paolo



9. A. Algardi, *St Benedict*, after 1644, bronze, Genoa, Santi Vittorio e Carlo (from: *Alessandro Algardi – I bronzi della Chiesa di San Carlo a Genova / Ospiti 10*, Ferrara, 1998, 31)  
A. Algardi, Sv. Benedikt, poslije 1644., bronca, Genova, Santi Vittorio e Carlo

Montagu observes that Algardi 'was never so completely at ease with marble as with clay'.<sup>21</sup> In his later sculptures in metal, we again observe his joy in modelling hairs and his trademark beards, as in, for example, the bust of Saint Paul in London's Brinsley Ford Collection.<sup>22</sup> All of the features that we have so far enumerated as typical of Algardi's signature style are displayed to great advantage in the relatively recently restored and masterfully photographed busts in Genoa's San Vittorio e Carlo.<sup>23</sup> After Algardi's death, a total of 12 bronze busts were cast, based on terracotta models dated post 1644. For the sake of a comparison with the earlier bust in Zagreb, I would propose to consider the following bearded saints from Genoa: Saint Benedict (Fig. 9), Saint Augustine (Fig. 10), Saint Basilus (Fig. 11), Saint Romuald, Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Montagu offers the following reflection: »There is every reason to suppose that Algardi had in his studio a stock of terracotta heads which could be used for such purposes, and the bronze busts in the Franzone chapel in Genoa (...) no doubt record such models, which could equally well have been cast as reliquaries.«<sup>24</sup> It is in the light of this theory that I believe Saint Stephen's head should be seen. Just as the Zagreb bust, Algardi's Genoa saints were conceived and created as sculpted portraits, that is, as original explorations, rather than as effigies of saints conforming to an established

general typology or, indeed, following a specific model. It is, therefore, plausible to assume that, when working on certain commissions, Algardi would cast a glance towards a shelf in his workshop where all of his terracotta models were lined up (the great sculptor's creative, but also utilitarian, resource), and would simply pick whichever seemed to best fit his purpose. In the absence of inscriptions or traditional attributes, the elderly saints can hardly be identified. It was precisely for this reason that Zagreb's Saint Stephen was provided with a crown, the supreme symbol of royal power (see note 5). As for Algardi's earlier work on other models that were used for reliquary busts, Bellori himself addresses the matter in terms that are quite unequivocal: »né poche sono le teste de' Santi in argento che si espongono nelle solennità per le chiese di Roma fatte ancora da' suoi modelli, e putti e bassirilievi, statuette ed ornamenti, de' quali era copioso.«<sup>25</sup> Despite Bellori's observation, only one other reliquary bust attributed to Alessandro Algardi has been identified: the 1650 reliquary bust of Saint Crispin in the Basilica of Saint Prospero in Reggio Emilia.<sup>26</sup> Saint Crispin's youthful head bears no morphological similarities to Saint Stephen's elderly features.

To my knowledge, only one reliquary bust dating from the first half of the Seicento has survived in Rome itself (Saint



10. A. Algardi, *St Augustine*, after 1644, bronze, Genoa, Santi Vittorio e Carlo (from: *ibid.*, 24).

A. Algardi, Sv. Augustin, poslije 1644., bronca, Genova, Santi Vittorio e Carlo



11. A. Algardi, *St Basilius*, after 1644, bronze, Genoa, Santi Vittorio e Carlo (from: *ibid.*, 26).

A. Algardi, Sv. Bazilije, poslije 1644., bronca, Genova, Santi Vittorio e Carlo

Eligius in Sant'Eligio degli Orefici),<sup>27</sup> while another has been preserved from later in the century (Saint Phillip Neri in Santa Maria in Vallicella).<sup>28</sup> Both these heads display a level of craftsmanship clearly inferior to that of the Zagreb reliquary. Any other reliquary heads that may have existed in Rome appear to have been melted down in order to meet the onerous financial demands imposed by the French in 1797 Treaty of Tolentino, or else were systematically looted during the Roman Republics of 1798–1799 and 1848–1849.<sup>29</sup> Outside Rome one other reliquary bust bears some comparison with the Zagreb work. I am referring to the bust of Saint Clement in Velletri cathedral, thought to have been made by Giuliano Finelli between 1635 and 1639 (Fig. 12).<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Saint Stephen's head possesses an energy that is both livelier and more of its time, thereby achieving a quality level superior to that of the Velletri Saint Clement.

At the start of this article, I noted that the Zagreb canon and Bosnian Titular Bishop Ivan Tomko Mrnavić (1580–1637) referred to himself as the person who came up with the idea for Barberini's commission and eventual donation. Mrnavić was an important author of books on history, hagiography, and genealogy, works in which confabulation frequently played a prominent role. One of his ambitions was to forge

a representative and influential version of early Modern, South Slavic identity for the Croats (the Illyrian ideology).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Mrnavić was a prominent protagonist of the Catholic Reform, a movement which featured a return to the roots – *ad fontes* – as one of its principal goals. Lastly, he was also the Pope's long-standing and trusted advisor on Illyrian issues. Born in Šibenik (Sebenico), then part of Venetian Dalmatia, to a modest Catholic family that hailed from Ottoman controlled Bosnia, he had strong ties to the Holy See by virtue of his training, as well as the offices he discharged and missions he undertook on Rome's behalf. He spent the last decade of his life as a Habsburg subject in Zagreb. In order to better understand his role as mediator in the Saint Stephen commission, we may want to cast a brief glance on his life, which, among other things, explains his ties to the Barberinis and the Holy See. Like Francesco Barberini, Mrnavić was himself a Jesuit trainee, having studied at the Illyrian College in Rome from 1597 to 1603.<sup>32</sup> Having completed his studies, he returned to his native Šibenik, where he discharged a number of high offices in the local bishopric. Despite this, he kept up his links to Rome throughout his life. In 1608, he became a member of the Congregation of Saint Jerome in Rome (*Congregatio Sancti Hieronymi Illyricorum*) and later served no less than five terms as the Congregation's



president. Between 1621 and 1623, he travelled the Bosnian and Croatian *Krajin*as and the Ottoman lands. He worked for the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* from its inception in 1622, on whose behalf he promoted, among other things, the printing of church books in the Croatian language. He was named a Papal protonotary by Pope Urban VIII Barberini. In 1624, during one of his visitations in Dalmatia, *Propaganda Fide* dispatched him to act as an assistant to Garzadori, the Venetian Bishop of Zadar. Two years later, having obtained the consent of the Holy See, as well as the local clergy and citizenry, he was well on his way to becoming a bishop of Šibenik, but the Venetian Doge opposed his appointment. Venice always tried to ensure that only bishops loyal to Venetian interests, usually Venetian patricians, were appointed in the Serenissima's Dalmatian territories. But now, a mere ten years after the Interdict, they were having a local candidate foisted upon them: »canonico di questa Cathedrale di nation Morlaca«, in the words of the letter that Pietro Grimani, the Venetian Count of Šibenik, sent back to his masters in Venice. Grimani continued: »Non fosse bene che questo Vescovado cadesse nella sua persona maggiormente che depende affatto dalla setta de' Gesuiti«. <sup>33</sup> The Venetian envoy to Rome was of the same mind: »fa officio che il Vescovo di Sebenico sia dato a nobile nostro o suddito confidente«. <sup>34</sup> Cardinal Barberini himself entered the fray by lobbying for Mrnavić, specifically with the Venetian envoy to the Holy See. All, however, was to no avail, and Urban VIII soon confirmed the appointment of Venice's own candidate. In 1628, Mrnavić became a Canon Lector of the Zagreb Cathedral at the recommendation of Péter Pázmány, a Hungarian *primas*, Jesuit, and Titular Cardinal of the Croatian Church of Saint Jerome in Rome. Mrnavić maintained close links to Pázmány, dedicating to him his funeral speech for Faust Vrančić (Faustus Verantius). <sup>35</sup> Given the circumstances, the Pope had evidently decided it would be more helpful to dispatch Mrnavić to a large Croatian bishopric under Habsburg rule, with which the Holy See enjoyed much better relations. Amongst Mrnavić's numerous books his *Regiae Sanctitatis Illyricanae Foecunditas*, published in Rome in 1630, is worthy of note. It contained dedications to Francesco Barberini and the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III of Habsburg, the Hungarian-Croatian King, and the catalogue of Illyrian saints includes Hungary's apostolic king Saint Stephen. <sup>36</sup> In 1631, Rome awarded Mrnavić the freedom of the city, and the Barberini Pope appointed him Bishop of Bosnia. In 1632, he was admitted to the Order of the Knights of Malta. That same year, again at Pázmány's recommendation, *Propaganda Fide* sent him on a canonical visitation to the Pauline order in Hungary and Poland. <sup>37</sup> His presence was also recorded in Zagreb, where, aside from discharging a number of duties as the Cathedral's canon, he soon became the Bishop's Vicar and the King's secret advisor. In 1633, having previously visited his mother and friends in Šibenik, he travelled to Rome, where, a year later, he consecrated the Church of Saint Jerome. Two years later, he eventually returned to Zagreb, by no means empty-handed: he brought back the reliquary bust of Saint Stephen.



12. Reliquary bust of St Clement, attributed to Giuliano Finelli, c. 1635–1639 (copper and brass, gilt and silvered, with imitation jewels, 118 cm high), Museo Diocesano, Velletri (from: D. Dombrowski, Addenda to the work of Giuliano Finelli, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 140/1149 /1998/, 825)

Relikvijar-popsrje sv. Klementa, atribuiran Giulianu Finelliju, oko 1635.–1639. (bakar i mjed, pozlaćen i posrebren, s umjetnim draguljima, visok 118 cm), Museo Diocesano, Velletri

Mrnavić describes the latter development, as well as the circumstances that led to it, on the final pages of his book *Pro Sacris Ecclesiarum Ornamentis Et Donariis*, which also features an introductory dedication to Antonio Barberini, a patron of the Illyrian College in Rome. <sup>38</sup> The book is a historical overview featuring a theological debate, in keeping with Tridentine guidelines, on the need to decorate and make donations to places of worship. The narrative follows the chronological sequence of a selection of emble-

matic rulers (Solomon, David, Constantine, Charlemagne, Hungarian King Saint Stephen, etc.), leading up to Urban VIII, the 'triumph of Divine Providence'. In an attempt to supplement historiography and theology with autobiographical elements, the book's conclusion includes a reference to a recent event featuring the Cardinal Nephew Francesco Barberini and Mrnavić himself. Mrnavić reports a recent conversation with Cardinal Francesco Barberini, during which he brought to the Cardinal's attention the need to endow Zagreb's Cathedral with a new reliquary to house the relics of its co-titular. He goes on to explain that, since the old reliquary had been melted down late in the previous century to pay off the soldiers of the Sisak fortress (who, under the aegis of the Zagreb cathedral's Chapter and with the support of other military units, had won a crucial victory against the Ottomans in 1593),<sup>39</sup> no receptacle was now available to hold the Saint's relics. Upon hearing this, the Cardinal Nephew promptly obliged by making a donation to this distant bishopric shouldering such a heavy burden in the war for the common cause against the Ottomans.<sup>40</sup>

Mrnavić's narrative interweaves truth and confabulation. As far as our understanding of the backdrop to this particular commission is concerned, the narrative itself is a far more important source than any attempt to distinguish truth from confabulation. It is, for example, true that objects made of precious metals belonging to the Cathedral's treasury were melted down in order to bankroll the wars against the Ottomans. It is, nevertheless, of little importance to us whether this occurred around the middle of the sixteenth century, as a number of documents seem to suggest,<sup>41</sup> or indeed in the century's final years, as Mrnavić would have us believe. Furthermore, doubts have emerged more recently regarding the authenticity of the parietal bone held in the Zagreb reliquary, leading to a flat-out dismissal of Mrnavić's role and account.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, far more material for our purpose is the existence of an attestation from 1635,<sup>43</sup> as well as a 1546

inventory entry making reference to a »caput beati Stephani Regis in theca argentea«.<sup>44</sup>

While it is quite evident that Mrnavić was much given to creativity in his approach to the past, the fact remains that confabulation was seen at the time as a legitimate tool in enhancing one's sense of identity, be it personal, religious, or national. In the case at hand, however, his purpose appears to be both strong and clear. His objective was to secure a Papal donation for his own outlying diocese, territorially reduced, ravaged, and impoverished by the wars against the Ottomans. Moreover, he would not settle for any old donation: he wanted a showpiece to rival the possessions of bishoprics far wealthier than his own. He fulfilled this ambition by employing a combination of social skills, confabulation, and – above all – his good relations with the Holy See. As for Francesco Barberini, faced with Mrnavić's »realistic« account, he was unable to ignore the wishes of his loyal Croatian prelate. Barberini knew that, by granting his prelate's request, he was doing more than simply strengthening the distant province's Christian roots or promoting the post-Tridentine reform: he was helping to boost the morale and to preserve the identity and honour of a far-away bishopric straddling the outer border of the Pope's spiritual rule and influence. Thus, the interests of the two men felicitously coincided: *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, of course, but also without leaving either of the protagonists looking any worse.

Finally, it appears safe to conclude that Ivan Tomko Mrnavić and Francesco Barberini co-commissioned the Zagreb reliquary bust of Saint Stephen. The bust's head was based on a terracotta model by a great master, probably Alessandro Algardi. The Zagreb Cathedral's head of Saint Stephen is a rare and exceptionally accomplished work of metal sculpture of the Roman Baroque, all the more so for being made in silver. It deserves pride of place in the meagre catalogue of Roman reliquary busts.

(Translated by Tvrtko Černoš)

## Notes

1  
As the cartouche on the plinth tells us: »SACRO/D · STEPHANI/VNGAR REGIS. APLIQ/CRANIO. IN ZAGABRIENSI/ECCLIA. EIDEM DICATA. SERVATO/DECENTIVS ADSERVANDO/FRACISCVS TT S · LAVREN: IN DAMASO/S · R · E VICECAN-CELARIVS/DIACONVS CARDINALIS BARBERINVS/PIA IN S · REGEM OBSERVATIA/HVMILITER OFFERT/ANNO DNI MDCXXXV«.

2  
*PRO SACRIS ECCLESIAE ORNAMENTIS, ET DONARIIS. Contra eorum detractores. IOANNIS TOMCI MARNAVITII BOSNENSIS EPISCOPI. Lectoris, & Coadiutoris Zagabriensis; S.C.R.M. Consiliarij. DISSERTATIO. ROMAE, Apud Franciscum Caballum. 1635., 71–76.*

3  
*ILLYRICI SACRI TOMUS QUINTUS, ECCLESIA JADERTINA CUM SUFFRAGANEIS, ET ECCLESIA ZAGRABIENSIS, AUCTORE DANIELE FARLATO PRESBYTERO SOCIETATIS JESU. VENETIIS, APUD SEBASTIANUM COLETI, MDCCLXXV, 562;* ARNOLD IPOLYI, Magyar ereklyék, in: *Archaeologiai közlemények*, 3 (1863), 103; LJUDEVIT IVANČAN, Inventar Metropolitanske crkve Zagrebačke, (manuscript, Nadbiskupski arhiv u Zagrebu, cited hereafter as NAZ), Zagreb, 1915, 38–39; ANTUN IVANDIJA, Inventar Riznice zagrebačke katedrale, (typewritten, NAZ), Zagreb, 1986, I/I, 135–137, no. M 165; *Riznica zagrebačke katedrale*, exhibition catalogue, (eds.) Z. Munk et al., Zagreb (Muzejski prostor) 1983 and Zagreb (Katedrala) 1987, 191, no. 59 M; *Tisuću godina hrvatske skulpture*, exhibition catalogue, (ed.) I. Fisković, Zagreb (Muzejski prostor), 1991, 119, no. 25 Ri;

- Sveti trag – Devetsto godina zagrebačke nadbiskupije 1094–1994.*, exhibition catalogue, (eds.) T. Lukšić et al., Zagreb (Muzej Mimara), 1994, 401, no. 89. The reliquary is also mentioned in IVAN KUKULJEVIĆ SAKCINSKI, *Prvostolna crkva zagrebačka*, Zagreb, 1856, 50–51; IVAN KRSTITELJ TKALČIĆ, *Prvostolna crkva zagrebačka*, Zagreb, 1885, 116; PÉTER GERECZE, *Magyarország műemlékei*, Budapest, 1906, II, 1116; JOSEPH BRAUN, *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1940, 422. A detailed description was provided by Ivan Bach, see *Popis Riznice zagrebačke katedrale* (the list was compiled by the Heritage Preservation Institute in Zagreb in 1951, manuscript, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia), 73–76, no. 114 (165).
- 4  
ANĐELA HORVAT, *Između gotike i baroka – umjetnost kontinentalnog dijela Hrvatske od oko 1500. do oko 1700.*, Zagreb, 1975, 162, 165–166, 168.
- 5  
*The Croats – christianity, culture, art*, exhibition catalogue, (eds.) V. Marković et al., Vatican (Musei Vaticani), 1999, 506–507. I agree with Marković's assessment, based on stylistic considerations, that the crown was made by a Central European master. In fact, if one looks at the carefully executed curls adorning Saint Stephen's head back to front, there indeed appears to have been no intention of obscuring the hair by placing a crown on top of it. Hence, I suggest that the royal attribute was added on soon after the arrival of the reliquary in Zagreb. The crown remains on for its permanent showing in the Zagreb Cathedral's Treasury. The only time it has ever been shown without the crown was at the Vatican exhibition *The Croats – christianity, culture, art* (1999).
- 6  
Piereth mentions the ties of the Hungarian primas Pázmány with the Barberinis and Zagreb's Jesuits. Pázmány was Mrnavić's friend and advocate, but, as we shall see further on, we have no reason to suppose that he was involved in the commission of the reliquary. See *Bayern – Ungarn. Tausend Jahre*, exhibition catalogue, (eds.) W. Jahn et al., Passau (Oberhausmuseum), 2001, 40–42, no. 1.10.
- 7  
*See Scultura del '600 a Roma*, (ed.) A. Bacchi, Milan, 1996, fig. 141; RUDOLF WITTKOWER, *Bernini*, London–New York, 2008, 246–247.
- 8  
JENNIFER MONTAGU, *Roman baroque sculpture – The industry of art*, New Haven–London, 1989, 48–75; JENNIFER MONTAGU, *Gold, Silver and Bronze – Metal Sculpture of the Roman Baroque*, New Haven–London, 1996, 1–19.
- 9  
JENNIFER MONTAGU, *Alessandro Algardi*, New Haven–London, 1985, I, 184, note 16.
- 10  
VALENTINA GAZZANIGA, *La vita e le opere di Fantino Taglietti argentiere e altri protagonisti della produzione argenteria a Roma tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, in: ALBERTO DI CASTRO – PAOLA PECCOLO – VALENTINA GAZZANIGA, *Marmorari e argentieri a Roma e nel Lazio tra Cinquecento e Seicento – i committenti, i documenti, le opere*, Rome, 1994, 225.
- The reliquary of Saint Stephen is not mentioned in MARILYN ARONBERG LAVIN, *Seventeenth-Century Barberini Documents and Inventories of Art*, New York, 1975.
- 11  
My information regarding Algardi is based on JENNIFER MONTAGU (note 9), I & II.
- 12  
*Ibid.*, I, p.10.
- 13  
GIOVAN PIETRO BELLORI, *Le vite de' pittori scultori e architetti moderni*, (ed.) E. Borea, Turin, 1976, 402.
- 14  
JENNIFER MONTAGU (note 9), I, pl. I.
- 15  
*Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 16  
*Ibid.*, fig. 49.
- 17  
*Ibid.*, fig. 54.
- 18  
*Ibid.*, II, fig. 49.
- 19  
*Algardi – L' altra faccia del barocco*, exhibition catalogue, (ed.) J. Montagu, Rome (Palazzo delle Esposizioni), 1999, 189.
- 20  
JENNIFER MONTAGU (note 9), II, fig. 48.
- 21  
*Ibid.*, I, p.1; See also *Algardi...* (note 19), 68–72.
- 22  
JENNIFER MONTAGU (note 9), II, fig. 203; *Algardi...* (note 19), 179.
- 23  
See: *Alessandro Algardi – I bronzi della Chiesa di San Carlo a Genova (Ospiti 10)*, Ferrara, 1998, 22, 24, 26–28, 30–31.
- 24  
JENNIFER MONTAGU (note 9), I, 189.
- 25  
GIOVAN PIETRO BELLORI (note 13), 415.
- 26  
JENNIFER MONTAGU (note 9), II, fig. 184.
- 27  
*Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma e del Lazio dal Medioevo all'Ottocento*, exhibition catalogue, (eds.) M. Andaloro et al., Rome (Palazzo delle Esposizioni), 1975, 110, T. CXVI, fig. 262.
- 28  
*Ibid.*, 121, T. CXXIII, fig. 296.
- 29  
*Ibid.*, p. XXV; Likewise, many old reliquary busts were looted during the Sack of Rome in 1527, or were at some point melted down to meet financial needs, often of a military nature. See *Roma 1300–1875 – L' arte degli anni santi*, exhibition catalogue, (eds.) M. Fagiolo et al., Rome (Museo Nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia), 1984, 136–138.
- 30  
DAMIAN DOMBROWSKI, *Addenda to the work of Giuliano Finelli*, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 140/1149 (1998), 824–828.

- 31  
 Blažević defines Mrnavić's Illyrianism as a »fusion of the curial and Habsburg-imperial Illyrianism«. See ZRINKA BLAŽEVIĆ, *Ilirizam prije ilirizma*, Zagreb, 2008, 214–238.
- 32  
 All biographical data, unless otherwise noted, are based on TAMARA TVRTKOVIĆ, *Između znanosti i bajke – Ivan Tomko Mrnavić*, Zagreb–Šibenik, 2008, 25–32.
- 33  
 Ibid., p. 29.
- 34  
 Ibid.
- 35  
 ANTONIO GIUSEPPE FOSCO, Giovanni Tonco-Marnavić, Šibenik, 1890, 31; ARMIN PAVIĆ, Ivan Tomko Mrnavić, in: *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, 33 (1875), 75.
- 36  
 ZRINKA BLAŽEVIĆ (note 31), 234.
- 37  
 ANTONIO GIUSEPPE FOSCO (note 35), 34.
- 38  
*PRO SACRIS ECCLESIAEVM...* (note 2).
- 39  
 The victory at Sisak halted the Ottomans' westward drive and was celebrated across Europe: etchings were made and propaganda leaflets were printed throughout the Holy Roman Empire featuring the battle of Sisak, the Croatian Ban Toma Erdödy received a commendatory letter from the Pope Clement VII, while the Spanish King Philip II named him a knight of Saint Saviour. See Bregovac Pisk's and Pelc's articles in *Sisačka bitka 1593.*, (eds.) I. Goldstein et al., Zagreb–Sisak, 1994, 149–186; TATJANA RADAUŠ, Erdödy, Toma II, in: *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, (ed.) T. Macan, Zagreb, 1998, IV, 71.
- 40  
*PRO SACRIS ECCLESIAEVM...* (note 2), 74–75: »... dum Eminentissimus Princeps Franciscus Cardinalis Barberinus, incertum erga decorem domus Dei, an pauperum necessitates, indefessa munificentia, intra, extraque Urbem, per remotissima terrarum spacia, magis effusus, & sanctae prodigus, ut potè SANTISSIMI URBANI PATRUI SUI, CUIUS PIA MUNIFICENTIA PASSIM FELICITER SACRA TECTA RESURGUNT, CUIUS PRETIOSIS DONARIIS OMNIA TEMPLA REFULGENT, CUIUS BENIGNA PROVIDENTIA AEVO NOSTRO IGNORATUR EGESTAS, si qua in alia Heroica virtute, in effusione paternorum viscerum sedulus imitator; ubi primum nuditatem Reliquiae Sanctissimi Regis, erga cuius cultum exardescit perpetuo, nuper à me accepit, pretiosissimum ornamentum, auro, argento, gemmisque ditissimum, ipsum Apostolici Regis caput, humeros, & pectus, exprimens, Ungarico Regali paludamento insigne, Regia Corona, ad imitationem Angelicae, Apostolicaeque Coronae Ungarice, superbum, elegantia operis, nulli sacro Reliquiario secundum, Romana industria elaboratum, mihi ad ecclesiam nostram Zagrabiensem deferendum, ad manus, ingenti animi alacritate consignavit. in cuius illustrissimi ornamenta basi, eiusmodi pietatis argumentum incisum est perlegere, quod eque erga sanctissimum Regem, eminentissimae tanti Cardinalis pietatis, ut erga gentem nostram paterni affectus argumentum...«. See also comment in footnote 5.
- 41  
 LJUDEVIT IVANČAN, Podaci o zagrebačkim kanonicima, (type-written, NAZ), 518.
- 42  
 Ivančan questions the story of Saint Stephen's parietal bone, claiming that no such relic is mentioned in the Zagreb Cathedral's old catalogues of relics or, indeed, anywhere else, with the exception of Mrnavić's own *The life of the blessed Augustin Gazzoti (Vita b. Augustini episcopi)*. See LJUDEVIT IVANČAN (note 3). Caution was again advised later regarding the relic's authenticity, and the correspondence kept in the Treasury of the Zagreb Cathedral is referenced in *Popis Riznice...* (note 3), 76.
- 43  
 The attestation, as well as Saint Stephen's parietal bone, can be found in the bust's head. The attestation bears the date of 7 December 1635, informing us that on that day, in the presence of the bishop Ergelski and a number of other canons, Ivan Tomko Mrnavić deposited the Saint's relics into the reliquary. A copy of the attestation can be found in the 1792 canonic visitation (NAZ). On the honouring of relics following the Council of Trent, see SANJA CVETNIĆ, *Ikonografija nakon Tridentskog sabora i hrvatska likovna baština*, Zagreb, 2007, 42.
- 44  
 LJUDEVIT IVANČAN (note 41); The oldest inventory list from 1394 mentions a relic of Saint Stephen's side (*latus*). See LELJA DOBRONIĆ, *Biskupski i kaptolski Zagreb*, Zagreb, 1991, 19. The same relic is mentioned in the 1474 inventory list, see DRAGUTIN KNIEWALD, *Najstariji inventari zagrebačke katedrale*, in: *Starine*, 43 (1951), 73.
- \*  
 I owe a debt of gratitude to the following people: Sanja Cvetnić, Tvrtko Černoš, Donal Cooper, sister Lina Plukavec, Danko Šourek, Ana Plosnić-Škarić and my mother.

## Sažetak

Daniel Premerl

Relikvijar-poprsje svetog Stjepana kralja iz zagrebačke katedrale:  
atribucija i kontekst narudžbe

Godine 1635. kardinal Francesco Barberini – nećak Urbana VIII., uspješni »premijer« Papinske Države, isusovački gojenac i veliki barokni mecena – poklonio je zagrebačkoj katedrali impresivan dar: relikvijar-poprsje njezina su-titulara sv. Stjepana, ugarskoga kralja. Relikvijar se sastoji od tri dijela – glave, poprsja, postolja – koji su spojeni vijcima. Glava od srebra izlivena je prema nepoznatom terakotnom modelu vrsnoga kipara. Za razliku od nje, prsa od iskucanog i lijevanog bakra i srebra bez sumnje su, zbog manjka kiparske kvalitete, djelo srebrnara. No postolja i kartuša s pčelama Barberinia upućuju nas ponovno u sam vrh rimske metalne umjetničko-obrtne produkcije – izliveni su u srebru, djelomično pozlaćenom. Poznavajući procedure i prakse rimske metalne umjetničke industrije, možemo pretpostaviti da je Barberini naručio relikvijar od srebrnara/zlatara, koji je jedini bio zakonski ovlašten prodavati djela od plemenitih metala. Srebrnar je potom naručio glavu sveca u terakoti od kipara, dok je poprsje, pretpostavljam zbog uštede, oblikovao sam. Postolja je izliveno prema kvalitetnim dekorativnim modelima kakvi su se nalazili u srebrnarskim radionicama. Čini se da se djela rimske metalne skulpture manjih dimenzija uopće nisu naručivala od kipara. Također, ne čudi što relikvijar nema žig majstora – to je gotovo pravilo kod umjetničkih predmeta od plemenitih metala naručenih od pape i iz visokih crkvenih krugova.

Glava ugarskoga svetoga kralja tipološki je bliska glavama starozavjetnih patrijarha ili proroka. Pulsira kiparskom energijom visokog, sveprožimajućeg intenziteta; zrači suzdržanom ekstazom i pathosom. U tom odljevu prepoznajem nepoznati terakotni model Alessandra Algardia. U doba nastanka zagrebačke biste Algardi je na pragu društvene afirmacije i financijske sigurnosti, no još je uvijek »mladi« talentirani kipar koji – da bi preživio na kiparskoj sceni kojom vlada Bernini – izrađuje modele za zlatare i srebrnare te restaurira antičke skulpture. Poznato je da je za rimske crkve izradio mnogo relikvijara-poprsja, no niti jedno nije sačuvano. U bradi sv. Stjepana uočio sam istu rukopisnu formu kao i u uvojcima kose na nizu Algardievih skulptura – primjerice: *Sv. Magdalena* iz Saint-Maximin (1634.), anđeo uz sv. Filipa Neria, itd. Štoviše, isti princip oblikovanja brade kao i kod sv. Stjepana – brada slabije raste na bradi, dok su gušćeg i snažnijeg rasta uvojci koji flankiraju bradu – uočio sam na nizu Algardievih staračkih glava: *Leon XI.*, *Sv. Pavao*, te na nizu brončanih bista izlivenih nakon njegove smrti u crkvi Santi Vittorio e Carlo u Genovi. Brade otkrivaju Algardiev rukopis, i nemaju pandana unutar korpusa rimske skulpture toga vremena.

U Rimu je, koliko znam, sačuvan samo jedan relikvijar-poprsje iz prve polovice stoljeća (*Sv. Eligije*, crkva San Eligio degli Orefici), te još jedan iz druge polovice stoljeća (*Sv. Filip Neri*, Santa Maria in Vallicella). Njihove glave niže su razine kiparske izvedbe te nisu usporedivi sa zagrebačkim relikvijarom. Ostali rimski relikvijari-biste rastaljeni su kako bi se namirila Napoleonova visoka financijska potraživanja prema poraženome temeljem Tolentinskog sporazuma iz 1797. godine, ili su bili predmetom sistematičnih krađa. Jedini meni poznati relikvijar-poprsje usporediv sa zagrebačkim jest onaj *sv. Klementa* (Velletri, cca 1635.–1639., atribuiran Giulianu Finelliu). Glava sv. Stjepana kvalitetnija je od sv. Klementa.

Zagrebački kanonik i naslovni bosanski biskup Ivan Tomko Mrnavić (1580.–1637.) spomenuo je samoga sebe kao ideatora te barberinijevske narudžbe i darivanja. Na samome kraju svoje knjige *Pro sacris ecclesiarum ornamentis et donariis* piše naime kako je nedavno u Rimu kardinalu Francescu Barberiniu ukazao na potrebu zagrebačke katedrale za novim relikvijarom njezina su-titulara. Pritom mu je objasnio da su moći su-titulara zagrebačke katedrale trenutno bez relikvijara, jer stari bijaše rastaljen zajedno s ostalim zlatom i srebrom potkraj prošloga stoljeća kako bi se platile neisplaćene plaće vojnicima sisačke tvrđave.

Mrnavić je želio da papinstvo obdari njegovu prostorno stiješnjenu i ratovima s Osmanlijama ugroženu i osiromašenu dijecezu nekim značajnim i lijepim znamenom, kakvim su se dičile bogatije biskupije. Tu želju je ostvario uz pomoć socijalnih vještina, malo konfabulacije i – prije svega – zahvaljujući dobrim odnosima sa Svetom Stolicom. Francesco Barberini pak, suočen s »realističnom« Mrnavićevom pričom, nije mogao odbiti želju svog odanog hrvatskog prelata. Znao je da time ne utvrđuje samo kult lokalnih kršćanskih korijenja i poslijetridentsku obnovu, već i identitet, moral i čast biskupije sa same neizvjesne granice papine duhovne vlasti i utjecaja. Ivan Tomko Mrnavić i Francesco Barberini sunaručitelji su zagrebačkog relikvijara-poprsja, čija je glava izlivena prema neznanom terakotnom modelu velikog majstora, pretpostavljam, Alessandra Algardia. Zagrebačka glava sv. Stjepana vrhunsko je i rijetko djelo metalne – posebice srebrne – skulpture rimskog baroka te se ističe u oskudnom katalogu rimskih relikvijara-poprsja.

*Ključne riječi:* Alessandro Algardi, rimski barok, skulptura, relikvijar-poprsje, Francesco Barberini, Ivan Tomko Mrnavić