

Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

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Works on Christian-Muslim relations
1500-1600

Central and Eastern Europe

Juraj Šižgorić

Juraj Šižgorić Šibenčanin; Georgius Sisgoreus (Sisgorich, Sisgoritus) Sibenicensis Dalmata; Giorgio Sisgoreo

DATE OF BIRTH 13 September, approximately 1445

PLACE OF BIRTH Šibenik

DATE OF DEATH November, 1509

PLACE OF DEATH Šibenik

BIOGRAPHY

Juraj Šižgorić was a clergyman, lawyer and humanist poet. His family had migrated from inland Croatia to the Dalmatian city of Šibenik less than a century before his birth, and a Šižgorić held the captaincy of the city when it was finally annexed by Venice in 1412. The poet's paternal uncle, also called Juraj, was bishop of Šibenik 1437-54. Šižgorić studied in Padua from about 1465 to 1470, obtaining his doctorate in canon law in February 1471. He spent the rest of his life in his home town as a canon of Šibenik cathedral, one of the vicars general of bishops of Šibenik Luka Tolentić (Lucas de Tolentis, bishop 1470-91) and Francesco Quirini (bishop 1491-5), and archdeacon of the diocese.

Šižgorić wrote in Latin. He was the first Croatian to publish a book of poetry (*Elegiarum et carminum [libri III]*, Venice: Adam de Rottweil, 1477), which consisted mostly of society verse and religious poems. A cycle of hymns to the Apostles remained unpublished during his lifetime (first edition 1962), as did a short prose description of his homeland and his home town, *De situ Illyriae et civitate Sibenici* ('On the location of Illyria and the city of Šibenik', first edition 1899). His speech on literary excellence from the year of his graduation, *Oratio habita de litterarum prestantia* (1471), is still unpublished.

Šižgorić's prose and poetry attest to his network of connections with minor Italian humanists (Tideo Acciarini, Raffaele Zovenzoni, Panfilo Morato Martinengo, Gilberto Grineo), professors and students of the University of Padua (Girolamo Contareno, Angelo da Castro, Giorgio Priuli, Tano de S. Vito, Antonio Zarotti, Andrea Banda), Venetian officials (Marco Bollani, Paolo da Riva, Antonio Calbo), local churchmen (bishop of Šibenik Urbano Vignati), and his compatriots (Ambroz Miketić, Šimun Divnić, and Jakov Naplavčić from Šibenik; Ivan Križan from Zadar;

Jerolim Makarelić from Trogir; Marko Marulić and Petar Petraka from Split; a friar Grandinus from Dubrovnik).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

The only details about Šižgorić's life are to be found in his works.

Secondary

- K. Čvrljak, 'Tršćanski humanist Raffaele Zovenzoni (1434-1485?) u Istri i Dalmaciji: s posebnim osvrtom na Kopar i Šibenik te Jurja Šižgorića', *Mogućnosti* 39 (1992) 890-915 (literary friendship of J. Šižgorić and Trieste humanist R. Zovenzoni)
- F. Coppola, 'Kršćanski motivi u poeziji Jurja Šižgorića', *Dani Hvarškoga kazališta* 17 (1991) 114-19
- V. Gortan, 'Šižgorić i Pribojević', *Filologija* 2 (1959) 149-52
- M. Šrepel, 'Humanist Šižgorić', *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti. Razredi filologičko-historički i filozofičko-juridički* 51 (1899) 206-69 (still the most complete biography and interpretation of the Venice 1477 book)

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Elegia de Sibenicensis agri vastatione; Elegija o pustošenju šibenskog polja, 'Elegy on the devastation of the district of Šibenik'

DATE 1477

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Latin

DESCRIPTION

This Latin poem of 98 verses in elegiac couplets was published in Šižgorić's *Carmina* (Venice, 1477, Book 2, poem 29). It is a poetic reaction to an early summer incursion of the Ottoman *akıncı* into the area around Šibenik, probably the 1470 expedition. The poem is clearly structured in three parts. In verses 1-28, the elegiac narrator introduces the event as another in a series of torments plaguing his life, a misfortune surpassing those that affected Tibullus and Ovid. The central part of the poem, verses 29-86, first describes the Turks as a hated, infidel people, who are supposed to obey Muḥammad's law and the *Alcoranus*, but are actually given to all kinds of transgressions (forbidden intercourse with both women and men, drinking wine, being themselves

dirtier than swine while they avoid pork). They live by the sword and are intent on destroying God's sacred laws; they have conquered Constantinople, Lesbos (1462) and Negroponte (the Venetian stronghold fell in July 1470). The poem then describes the attack on Šibenik. A skirmish between Turks and the locals occurred in front of the city walls, before the narrator's eyes. Turkish cavalry was especially prominent; the defenders were Šibenik citizens, peasants and Venetian mercenaries. The Turks attacked three times, and were repelled each time. Nevertheless, the enemy torched the houses in the countryside, fed their horses on young wheat and flowering grape vines, burned or cut down the olive trees, captured slaves and raped them, and desecrated churches (specifically, holy images, altars and the reserved sacrament) before setting fire to them. At the climax of the poem, verses 87-98, anguish forces the narrator to lay down Apollo's lyre and books of law, and take up arms, ready to die for faith and homeland.

As is characteristic in autobiographical humanist elegies, the poet takes on a double role, as the narrator of a painful episode from his own life and as the interpreter of an event impressed on the collective memory (Novaković, *Izbor iz djela*). Reality, however, is interpreted through the filter of ancient Roman poetry, especially Ovid's *Fasti* and *Tristia* (Šižgorić's Turks are similar to Ovid's Getae in *Tristia* 5.7). Šižgorić describes the enemy in commonplace terms of anti-Ottoman propaganda (sinfulness, lust, dishonesty, cruelty), with specific features based on religious differences (Muhammad, the Qur'an, Islamic dietary laws) and current military events (advances in Greece). The devastation of Šibenik is presented in growing intensity – first come the crimes against property, then those against people, and finally those against religion.

SIGNIFICANCE

The poem is Šižgorić's only text on the Ottomans and is the earliest published poetic response to Ottoman attacks in Croatian literature. It was printed in the same year as the Latin prose history *Petri Mocenici imperatoris gesta* by Koriolan Cipiko from nearby Trogir (which reports on a phase of the Ottoman-Venetian war 1470-4). Together, the two texts introduce a period when many Croatian intellectuals contributed to the European anti-Ottoman narrative.

The first modern readings found in Šižgorić's elegy 'an expression of the great hatred with which Christian Europe regarded the Turks' (Šrepel, 'Humanist Šižgorić'), but appreciated it primarily for its patriotic

and Christian sentiments. Then, in the second half of the 20th century, it was praised and anthologised as an individual response to the historical event, 'a picture taken from life' (Kombol, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti*; Novak, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti*). Its role as a bridge between international and local perception of the Turk as the Other is sketched by Dukić (*Sultanova djeca*) and Dukić and Grgin ('Juraj Šižgorić and the Ottomans').

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

- D. Dukić and B. Grgin, 'Juraj Šižgorić and the Ottomans. The image of the other in a late medieval Dalmatian commune', 2014 (forthcoming; includes an English trans.)
- D. Novaković (ed.), *Juraj Šižgorić: Izbor iz djela*, Vinkovci, 2000 (contains Croatian trans.)
- V. Vratović (ed.), *The Croatian muses in Latin. A trilingual anthology Latin-English-Croatian*, Zagreb, 1998 (includes selected texts in Latin, with English and Croatian translations)
- V. Vratović (ed.), *Latinism and Mediterraneanism. The Mediterranean constant in Croatian literary culture, accompanied by Croatian Latin lyrics, a bilingual anthology*, Zagreb, 1997 (includes selected texts in Latin, with English trans.)
- D. Novaković, *Hrvatski latinisti. Razdoblje humanizma*, Zagreb, 1994 (includes selected texts in Croatian trans.)
- V. Gortan and V. Vratović (eds), *Hrvatski latinisti = Croatici auctores qui Latine scripserunt*, Zagreb, 1969, pp. 115-50 (includes a selection of texts in Latin original and Croatian trans.)
- V. Gortan (ed.) and N. Šop (trans.), *Elegije i pjesme*, Zagreb, 1966 (Latin text and Croatian trans. of the 1477 edition)
- Šrepel, 'Humanist Šižgorić'
Georgii Sisgorei Sibenicensis Dalmatae elegiarum et carminum liber primus [-tertius], Venice, 1477

STUDIES

- Dukić and Grgin, 'Juraj Šižgorić and the Ottomans'
- D. Dukić, *Sultanova djeca, Predodžbe Turaka u hrvatskoj književnosti ranog novovjekovlja*, Zadar, Croatia, 2004, pp. 11-12 (a study of the image of the Turks in early modern Croatian literature)
- Novaković, *Izbor iz djela*
- S.P. Novak, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti. Knj. 2, Od humanističkih početaka do Kašičeve ilirske gramatike 1604*, Zagreb, 1997, pp. 118-19 (a history of Croatian Renaissance literature)

- M. Tomasović and D. Novaković, *Judita Marka Marulića. Latinsko pjesništvo hrvatskoga humanizma*, Zagreb, 1994, pp. 86-7
- M. Kombol, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti do narodnog preporoda*, Zagreb, 1961, p. 65 (a history of Croatian literature)
- Šrepel, 'Humanist Šižgorić'

Neven Jovanović