

THE HUNT FOR THE MIRACULOUS STAG OR ST GILES'S HIND?

ON THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE MURAL PAINTING IN THE NAVE OF THE OLD PARISH CHURCH IN TURNIŠČE, SLOVENIA

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In terms of the richness of its paintings and the size of what is now, unfortunately, only a fragmentarily preserved composition, the nave of the old parish church in Turnišče occupies the most distinguished place among Slovenian monuments.

STELE 1935, p. 17.

Almost a century has passed since the art historian and conservator France Stele wrote these words in his pioneering study of medieval mural painting, and though much has been revised, updated, and newly discovered since then, the nave of the old parish church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Turnišče (in Slovenia's Prekmurje region) still represents "the most magnificent medieval painted interior in Slovenia".¹ The mural is a part of the extensive *oeuvre* of the painter Johannes Aquila from Radkersburg in the province of Styria, who worked with his workshop in Turnišče under the patronage of Bánffi family (from the Hahót-Buzád kindred). As indicated by the inscription on the southern part of the triumphal arch wall, the painting in the nave was finished in August 1389.² Although the collection of remarkable motifs in the church's

¹ HÖFLER 2004, p. 233.

² Immediately after the architectural Gothicisation of the original church, by 1383, Aquila had already painted the chancel as well. Among the preserved murals in the chancel, the following paintings stand out: the depiction of

nave has been well synthesised by now,³ a few unsolved iconographic puzzles nevertheless remain among the painted scenes. In this regard, I would like to draw attention to an otherwise modest and only partially preserved scene painted on the lower part of the nave's southern wall. Ever since Stele, the researchers considered this motif a narrative depiction of a deer hunt,⁴ while its context and meaning remained undefined. Already some time ago, I suggested that the scene might depict the legend of St Giles,⁵ though the relevant findings have not yet been published⁶ and will therefore be presented more extensively below.

THE HUNTING SCENE

On the lower part of the nave's southern wall, two partially preserved scenes that depict the Calling of St Peter and Mary with the Child on her lap and are clearly separated from each other by a vertical decorative band, follow from the point of contact with the triumphal arch wall. In the second scene, the kneeling donor, in the company of a holy monk, is calling upon the Virgin and the Child, and it seems that the depiction of the hunt that follows is directly related to it (Fig. 1).

the Apostles on the northern wall, the fragmentary scenes from the Jesus and Mary cycle on the areas beneath the vaults on the northern and southern wall, and the depiction of *Maiestas Domini* in the apse calotte, complemented by the symbols of the Evangelists and angels on the vault. About the chancel murals, see especially HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, pp. 30–34, 117–119 (with a scheme); BALAŽIC 1994a, pp. 47–59. A monumental donor portrait of Ladislaus I Bánffy's family, located on the chancel's northern wall in the area of the painted curtain below the Apostles, was destroyed in 1928 during its unsuccessful removal from the wall, see STELE 1951; BOGYAY 1951. About the extent of the cycle dedicated to the Virgin Mary on the chancel's southern wall, which can be reconstructed based on the removed fragments of the mural, see BENCE 2009a.

³ The mural in the nave is designed in several horizontal bands. On the northern wall, it comprises, starting from below, the Old Testament story of Susanna; above, St Anne (*Ana Selbdritt*) between St Catherine of Alexandria and St Barbara with their legends, and a separate depiction of the Stigmatisation of St Francis of Assisi, placed at the junction with the triumphal arch wall. The entire third band on the northern wall depicts the Last Judgement. The murals on the northern part of the triumphal arch wall are thematically complemented by the depictions of scenes from the legend of St Nicholas, while the Coronation of the Virgin Mary is painted above the side altar. Meanwhile, the southern part of the triumphal arch wall is covered with events from the lives of Saints Peter and Paul. The scenes with St Paul continue in the higher bands on the southern wall of the nave, where a separate scene of the martyrdom of St Lawrence is added in the lower part. Below that, the mural discussed in this article is located. On all three walls of the nave, the fourth and highest band features a cycle of scenes from the Ladislaus legend. For a detailed description, see HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, pp. 34–38, 119–120 (with a scheme); BALAŽIC 1994a, pp. 60–88. The nave murals also included the partially removed portrayal of St Christopher from the southern exterior wall, see BENCE 2009b, p. 52.

⁴ STELE 1935, p. 17; BOGYAY 1951, p. 130; BOGYAY 1986a, p. 249; BOGYAY 1986b, pp. 151, 154; LANC 1989, p. 75; MAROSI 1989, p. 50; HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, p. 120; BALAŽIC 1994a, p. 83; LANC 2002, p. 27 (Textband); KERNY, MÓSER 2010, p. 44; BALAŽIC 2018, p. 78.

⁵ BENCE 2012, pp. 43–46.

⁶ So far, my position has only been summarised by Janez Balažic, who remains reserved, see BALAŽIC 2018, p. 78.



1. Mural painting in the lower part on the nave's southern wall in the old parish church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Turnišče, 1389 (© Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, France Stele Institute of Art History (ZRC SAZU, UIFS), photo: Gorazd Bence)

A horizontal inscription band separates the mural in question from the scenes painted higher on the southern wall. Underneath this mural, on the ground floor as elsewhere in the nave, a decorative curtain was painted into which a wall niche was placed already during the Middle Ages to serve for the southern side altar. To the west, the mural necessarily concluded at the former medieval southern portal of the church. During the Baroque period, one of the nave's original windows, located above this portal, was replaced by a rectangular aperture that was cut out and thus absorbed into the upper part of the mural in question. The presentation of the mural we can see today has resulted from the extensive conservation and restoration works carried out in the church during the 1970s.⁷ The removal of the nave's Baroque barrel vault during World War II undoubtedly contributed to the comprehensive perception of the medieval space. Although the mural paintings in

⁷ Between 1971 and 1980, the restoration works were overseen by the restorer Ivan Bogovčič, see BOGOVČIČ 1981.

Turnišče had been known to the professional public ever since Flóris Ferenc Rómer's discovery in 1863 and first mention in 1874,⁸ most of the scenes were only uncovered during the research carried out by the Hungarian monuments service before the new church was erected next to the old one's southern wall in 1914–1915. István Gróh's preserved watercolour sketch from 1912 indicates that the mural on the nave's southern wall was also discovered at this time (Fig. 2).⁹

The motif in question came to France Stele's attention already when he first inspected the church as a conservator in the summer of 1920.¹⁰ He also made the only attempt so far to decipher its substantive background¹¹ but has not elaborated on it anywhere. When describing the mural painting in the nave, he merely mentioned it in his 1935 work *Monumenta Artis Slovenicae*. Because of the importance of the context in which Stele placed the hunting scene, I shall quote the paragraph in full: "Among the narrative paintings, the legend of King Ladislaus the Holy occupies the highest band. However, despite extensive inscriptions, the contents of the events depicted in the remaining four bands remain unclear. The inscription about Saul and Ananias in the second band from the top on the southern wall proves that these scenes at least partly originate from the Bible. Meanwhile, the deer hunting scene and the distinctive headgear depicted on the southern wall suggest that these may be scenes from the chronicles of the origin of the Hungarians."¹² The matter deserves a more thorough examination.

⁸ RÓMER 1874a, pp. 213–214; RÓMER 1874b, pp. 24–32

⁹ Gróh's watercolour is now kept in the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center, Budapest, Monument Protection Department, Print & Drawing Archives, inv. n. FM 40. A summary of the completed interventions and the associated documentation was published in ZAKARIÁS 1989, pp. 146, 157–167; see also KERNY 2015.

¹⁰ Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, France Stele Institute of Art History, Ljubljana (ZRC SAZU, UIFS), Terenski zapiski Franceta Steleta, V, fol. 32r, 19 September 1920: "f.../ a landscape with trees and archers (very unclear). We can see the rear end of the galloping horse"; and then in XLII, fol. 52v, 28 July 1926: "a painting depicting a deer or doe hunt in the woods"; LIV, fol. 5r, 26 January 1935: "a scene in the woods with a deer"; CXXVI, fol. 38v, 6 August 1937: "a picture of a deer hunt"; and LXXXVI, fol. 32v, 6 September 1947: "a scene of hunting in the woods".

¹¹ Cf. footnote 4. Among the interpretations that deviate from Stele's initial evaluation, presented in the continuation, it is worth mentioning Damjan Prelovšek's entry in the catalogue of monuments from Stele's 1972 monograph on mural painting from the *Ars Slovenica* collection, where, next to the scheme of individual scenes, Prelovšek identifies the fragment on the nave's southern wall as the scene with a lion, which is probably merely a lapse, see STELE 1972, p. XLVII. Meanwhile, in his diploma thesis, Janez Balažič took the view that as a peripheral motif, the hunting scene could probably be related to some other more iconographically extensive scene, for example the Procession of the Magi, see BALAŽIČ 1994b, p. 182. The fact that such conceptions can also be found in the rest of Johannes Aquila's *oeuvre* is evident from the depiction of the Procession of the Magi on the nave's northern wall in the church of the Holy Trinity in Velemér from 1377–1378, which also includes the motif of dogs hunting a deer, cf. RÓMER 1874a, pp. 207, 213; LANC 2002, p. 27 (Textband). However, the hunting scene in Turnišče is designed separately, while the Procession of the Magi can be found among the murals in the chancel (HÖFLER, BALAŽIČ 1992, pp. 32, 118; BALAŽIČ 1994a, p. 49). Thus, it is unlikely that the same scene would be duplicated in the nave.

¹² STELE 1935, p. 17.



2. István Gróh: watercolour of the mural on the southern wall of the nave in Turnišče, 1912
(© Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center, Budapest)



3. Hunting scene on the southern wall of the nave in Turnišče around 1928
(© Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, Heritage Information and Documentation Centre (INDOC Centre), photo: Matej Sternen)

France Stele hypothetically associated the deer hunting scene with the medieval chronicles of the origin of the Hungarians, which he also mentions several times in relation to the depiction of the legend of St Ladislaus in the nave of the Turnišče church.¹³ As explained in the continuation, Stele was referring to the so-called *Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle* (*Chronicon pictum*),¹⁴ created at the royal court of Louis I of Anjou in 1358, which could also have been illuminated later. The manuscript is a remarkable example of the representational aspirations of the new dynasty. The constructed historical continuity it presents was supposed to contribute to the legitimisation of the Anjou rule in Hungary. The Latin text of the richly illuminated codex is a compilation of several older works and recounts the history of the Hungarians from their mythical beginnings to 1330, and there is no lack of instructive accounts of heroic warfare, terrible massacres, and hunting adventures. Naturally, we wanted to establish which specific part of the *Illuminated Chronicle* France Stele could have referred to in his interpretation of the hunting scene portrayed in Turnišče. A hint is provided by Stele's Hungarian colleague Tamas Bogyay, who was also intrigued by the context of the painted hunting scene. In his in-depth article from 1986,¹⁵ Bogyay discusses the depiction of the legend of the Hungarian King St Ladislaus in the nave of the Turnišče church in the context of the Anjou royal court. In his efforts, he draws on the donor portrait of Ladislaus I Bánffy's family in the chancel, which had been destroyed in 1928.¹⁶ Comparatively, he also underlines the donor portrait and the hunting scene on the southern wall of the nave. Somewhat less prominently, in a footnote, he equates Stele's elaboration on the deer hunt with the Hungarian origin myth of the pursuit of a hind.¹⁷ In my opinion, this is even more evident from France Stele's notes from the year 1932,¹⁸ where he quotes this very myth. Under the heading "Deer Hunt", he refers to a longer paragraph from the first printed edition of the codex from 1867, edited by Ferenc Toldy.¹⁹ The paragraph, copied into Stele's notebook, discusses the beginnings of the expansion of the Hungarian ancestors in the eastern parts of Scythia. A part of this account is the famous tale of the brothers Hunor and Magor, who, during a hunt, chased

¹³ E.g. STELE 1935, pp. 17–18; STELE 1969, p. 86.

¹⁴ The same also in STELE 1969, p. 37. Nowadays, the codex is kept in the manuscript collection of the National Széchényi Library in Budapest under the signature Cod. lat. 404. The references to the codex in the continuation are summed up after BORECZKY 2018, pp. 294–295.

¹⁵ BOGYAY 1986a.

¹⁶ For more information about the donor portrait, see also footnote 2.

¹⁷ BOGYAY 1986a, p. 249 (n. 63).

¹⁸ ZRC SAZU, UIFS, Terenski zapiski Franceta Steleta, XVII A, 1932, fols. 13v–15r. The notebook entries are not specifically dated but include various notes and extracts from books about Hungarian history, art history, and monument conservation. Cf. table of contents in the same notebook, fol. 46r.

¹⁹ Cf. MARCUS DE KALT 1867, p. IV. This is also the part of the text from Toldy's edition that STELE 1935, p. 18 (n. 66), quotes in a footnote in *Monumenta Artis Slovenicae*, though only when elaborating on the legend of St Ladislaus, which the stated passage does not mention.

a fleeing hind to the Maeotian Swamp by the Sea of Azov, where they temporarily made a new home. The relevant passage from the beginning of the fifth chapter of the *Illuminated Chronicle* states:

*It happened that one day they [Hunor and Magor] had gone out hunting, and in a deserted place there appeared before them a hind, which they followed into the Maeotian marshes as it fled before them. When it disappeared completely before them, they could not find it in any way though they sought it for a long time. Having finally searched the said marshes thoroughly, they found the place was suited for feeding herds. Thereupon they returned to their father and having obtained leave they went with all their goods to the Maeotian marshes, there to dwell and to raise herds.*²⁰

Many versions of the tale of the miraculous stag or hind are widespread in the traditions of Eurasian peoples from Japan to the British Isles, and it can be encountered in ancient mythology as well as in Christian legends. Basically, they are stories in which one or more hunters chase an escaped deer only to find a place or land where they can settle down and create a family or establish a religious institution. The characteristics of these stories can also be identified in the myth of the origin of the Hungarians, as recounted in medieval chronicles and ancient oral tradition.²¹ The hind (female deer, doe) that features prominently in this myth was probably adapted into the tale of the miraculous stag (Hungarian: *csodaszarvas*) only later, under the influence of Christian tradition.²² As ancient forefathers, the brothers Hunor and Magor represent the close relationship between the Huns and the Hungarians (Magyars). This is therefore a myth of the eastern, Scythian ethnic origin of the Hungarians before their permanent settlement in the Carpathian Basin.²³ Another version of this deeply rooted myth is also reflected in the legend of the establishment of the Vác Cathedral, which the princes from the Árpád dynasty, Geza I and his younger brother, later King Ladislaus I, had constructed in the spot where a stag appeared to them as an angel of God.²⁴

Already in the late Middle Ages, the legendary tradition of the Hungarians' origin was widespread among the nobility. France Stele probably recognised a part of this Magyar prehistory in

²⁰ *The Illuminated Chronicle* 2018, p. 15.

²¹ MÁTÉFFY 2012, pp. 941–942, 944. This is discussed at length in BERZE NAGY 1927.

²² On the significance of gender ambivalence, see BERZE NAGY 1927, pp. 73, 76; cf. the totemic meaning of the mother-doe in SICARD 1971, pp. 267–268. For the distinctions between the Hungarian traditions, see Ilona Dobos, Tekla Dömötör, *Csodaszarvas; Magyar néprajzi lexikon*, <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-neprajzi-lexikon-71DCC/cs-72291/csodaszarvas-72366/>. The Hungarian tale of the miraculous stag is available at: <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Szovegyujtemeny-szovegyujtemeny-1/a-magyar-oskolteszet-emlekei-2/magyar-mese-es-mondavilag-29/a-csodaszarvas-A67B/>.

²³ MÁTÉFFY 2012, pp. 944–945; *The Illuminated Chronicle* 2018, p. 13.

²⁴ BERZE NAGY 1927, p. 74; *The Illuminated Chronicle* 2018, p. 233. For the image in the *Illuminated Chronicle*, see MAROSI 2018, p. 42, repr. 13. This legend should not be confused with Ladislaus' erection of the basilica in Várad (Oradea, Romania) after his victory against the Cumans, which is also depicted in Turnišće, cf. STELE 1935, p. 18; BALAŽIC 1994a, p. 87, table XXXII; KERNY, MÓSER 2010, pp. 52–53.

the depiction in the nave of the Turnišče church.²⁵ The iconographic interpretation of the scene in the nave of the church in Turnišče, which had not yet been fully uncovered and was difficult to discern at the time, was not an easy task. This is evident from a photograph taken in 1928 by Stele's faithful collaborator, painter and restorer Matej Sternin (Fig. 3). France Stele might have based his assumption also on the study of Gróh's detailed watercolour, partly drawn with a pencil (cf. Fig. 2), which Stele was familiar with already as early as 1932.²⁶ Notably, Toldy's edition of the codex was accompanied by a facsimile of a richly decorated folio from the beginning of the *Illuminated Chronicle's* fifth chapter²⁷ – i.e., the very part of the transcribed text that Stele based his notes on. In the upper left corner of the folio is an illuminated initial A,²⁸ directly illustrating the text (Fig. 4). Although the facsimile was lithographically improved, it is mostly faithful to the original from the manuscript. The ornamented initial on a gold background features a picturesque hunting scene against a simple landscape backdrop. A group of hunters and their dogs is portrayed on the right side, with their leader – either Hunor or Magor – standing out in the foreground. Their attention is focused on the hind standing on the left and about to flee into the small woods in the background.²⁹ At this point, it is sufficient to note that at first glance, the miniature hinds indeed correspond to the composition of the Turnišče hunting scene, though it is also fundamentally different from it. To highlight



4. Facsimile of an illuminated initial A with the hunting scene from the *Illuminated Chronicle* (MARCUS DE KALT 1867)

²⁵ Just as a curiosity: allegedly, the “miraculous stag” was also depicted in the Procession of the Magi scene in Velemér, see MAKKAY 1997, pp. 27, 61. Cf. footnote 11.

²⁶ This can be discerned from the notebook, where Gróh's watercolours from Turnišče, at the time stored in the monument office in Budapest, are listed together with the explanations of their contents, see ZRC SAZU, UIFS, Terenski zapiski Franceta Steleta, XVII A, 1932, fol. 21v.

²⁷ MARCUS DE KALT 1867, table between pp. IV and V. We are referring to fol. 3r (or p. 5) from the *Illuminated Chronicle*.

²⁸ The chapter opens with “Accidit autem dierum /.../”, cf. *The Illuminated Chronicle* 2018, p. 14.

²⁹ Cf. the description in CSAPODI GÁRDONYI 1968, p. 78. For the most recent information on the stylistic and iconographic analysis of the illuminations, see MAROSI 2018, pp. 54–70; LUCHERINI 2021.

just the most obvious difference: unlike the mythical scene, in which the illuminator emphatically depicts the noble way of life of the Hungarian ancestors hunting in the Maeotian Swamp,³⁰ the Turnišče hunting scene is much more diverse in terms of the genre and set in a distinctly overgrown forest. But we will elaborate on this later.

In any case, the presented contextualisation of France Stele's hypothesis is clearly merely speculative. Even otherwise, doubts are being raised about it. Depictions of the proposed scene are extremely rare, to my knowledge even non-existent at medieval sacred locations. It is difficult to imagine the scene as part of the otherwise richly conceived iconographic programme of the Turnišče church mural, even as an invention of the commissioner (or painter). Moreover, the mural was not fully presented until the most recent restoration works, which justifies its re-examination and detailed analysis.³¹ It makes more sense to look, already at the outset, for the interpretation of the otherwise profane hunting scene in the collection of saintly legends featuring the motif of the "miraculous stag", which is also not rare.³² The most famous hunting tales include those of St Eustace³³ and St Hubert,³⁴ who, in a miraculous vision, saw the Crucified among the antlers of a stag; or the touching story of St Genevieve, wrongly sentenced to death for alleged adultery, whose innocence is established by her husband during a hunt for a hind that had nourished his runaway wife and newborn child in the forest.³⁵ In my opinion, the scene depicts the legend of St Giles, who was well known in the Middle Ages, even in the present-day Slovenian territory.

THE LEGEND OF ST GILES

The Benedictine monastery in Saint-Gilles-du-Gard in Provence, southern France, represents the centre of the veneration of the hermit and abbot St Giles (c. 640–720), who founded the monastery and was also buried there. As the site was located at the crossroads of prominent pilgrimage paths to Rome, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and even Jerusalem, mass pilgrimages to St Giles appeared as early as the 11th century, spreading his cult throughout Europe.³⁶ At that time, his cult also reached the area north of the Alps, where Bishop Otto I of Bamberg, in 1120 (or 1124), built the chapel of St Giles with the hospital under the monastery of St Michael (Michaelsberg)

³⁰ MAROSI 2018, p. 48.

³¹ This was already pointed out by BOGYAY 1986a, p. 249.

³² For an overview of the Christian tradition, see BERZE NAGY 1927, pp. 73–76.

³³ TSCHOCHNER WERNER 1994a, col. 194.

³⁴ TSCHOCHNER WERNER 1994b, col. 548.

³⁵ MOLLE 1994, col. 360.

³⁶ ELIS 2012, pp. 67–70; see also MAYR 1994, cols. 51–52.

for the relic, the thumb of the saint, which was brought to Bamberg from a pilgrimage to Saint-Gilles-du-Gard. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the first St Giles's churches in this part of Europe is the church of Camporosso in Valcanale (Friuli), also built by Bishop Otto, probably in the 1120s.³⁷ In Styria and Carinthia, St Giles even became the provincial patron saint. Apart from many others, the city church of Graz (now the cathedral), first mentioned in 1174, and the one in Klagenfurt were also dedicated to St Giles, though the latter was documented as the church of St Giles only as late as the middle of the 14th century.³⁸ The role of the Benedictine monastery in Somogyvár near Lake Balaton in Hungary was not negligible, as it was Giles's most prominent shrine east of the Alps. It was founded in 1091 by King Ladislaus I of Hungary with the support of the Benedictines of Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, who also settled the monastery.³⁹ At the royal court of the Polish Piast dynasty, to which Ladislaus was related, the saint's cult was spreading ever since St Giles's miraculous intervention at the birth of the later King Boleslav III in 1086.⁴⁰ All of this attests to the extraordinary importance of Giles's saintly cult and the trust in his intercession. Let us mention at least two of the most notable miracles in his legend.⁴¹ Charlemagne's absolution from an unconfessed sin certainly qualifies among the miracles that were particularly popular in the medieval dynastic circles and which demonstrated the power of Giles's saintly intercession.⁴² The sin was so shamefully great that it was unspeakable. Thus, an angel placed it in writing on the altar during a mass celebrated by Giles. It was only through Giles's intercession that the sin was forgiven.⁴³ The second miracle, also relevant to the present discussion, is related to the miraculous rescue of a hind, known from Giles's *vita*. After the death of his noble parents, Giles set out from Athens and, with stops in between, headed to France, where he lived as a hermit in a cave, nourished only by the milk of a hind. Giles's hind was repeatedly pursued by the hunters of the Visigothic King Wamba⁴⁴ and only remained at large due to the saint's intercession. Instead of the

³⁷ HÖFLER 2016, p. 414. About the beginnings of the expansion of the cult of St Giles in the present-day Slovenian territory and its immediate neighbourhood, see HÖFLER 2016, pp. 413–414; see also STEGENŠEK 1905, pp. 187, 213, 217. For more information about Styria and Carinthia, see MEZLER 1955; ELIS 2012, pp. 77–121.

³⁸ Among the earlier churches dedicated to St Giles is the one in Tigring, mentioned in 1136, see HÖFLER 2016, p. 414.

³⁹ For the historical circumstances of the monastery's founding, see KISS 1999. About the prevalence of the cult in Hungary, see BÁLINT 1974. St Giles was quite popular in the northern part of the Medieval Hungary, the parish church of Bardejov was also dedicated to him.

⁴⁰ About the beginnings of St Giles's cult in Poland, see SOSNOWSKI 2024.

⁴¹ The saint's miracles mostly adhere to the proven hagiographic approach of *imitatio*. Like St Martin, Giles shares his cloak with a beggar; like St Nicholas, he rescues a group of sailors; and even like Jesus, he exorcises a demon, cf. *The Golden Legend* 1995, pp. 147–149.

⁴² Cf. MAYR 1994, col. 52.

⁴³ Summed up after *The Golden Legend* 1995, p. 148. About the importance of this miracle for the expansion of St Giles's cult in Poland and Hungary, see SOSNOWSKI 2024, pp. 91–92.

⁴⁴ Cf. MAYR 1994, col. 52.

hind, an arrow wounded Giles. The unfortunate event was witnessed by the bishop and the King, both of whom humbly begged the saint's forgiveness. Giles refused all the assistance offered and gifts promised. Instead, he modestly proposed to build a new monastery, whose abbot he would later become.⁴⁵ In the famous medieval collection of Jacobus de Voragine, the *Golden Legend*, the most dramatic part of the legend reads as follows:

*Word of this reached the king, and, suspecting how matters stood, he came out with the bishop and a throng of huntsmen. When the dogs did not dare to come close to the doe but turned tail howling, the huntsmen surrounded the place, which was so thickly overgrown with thorn bushes as to be impenetrable. One of them incautiously shot an arrow, hoping to drive out the quarry, but instead inflicted a serious wound on the man of God as he prayed for his doe. The soldiers then cut a way through the brambles and came to the hermit's cave. There they found the old man wearing a monk's habit, white-haired, venerable with age, and the doe stretched out at his feet.*⁴⁶

The hunt for the hind became one of the central scenes from the legend of St Giles. Apart from the Benedictine habit that the hermit consistently wears, the hind even represents his saintly attribute. The distinctly profane character of the hunt probably also contributed to the scene's predominance among the artistic depictions of the saint's legend.⁴⁷ This scene has never before been noticed in Slovenian medieval mural painting. To find other visual models, we will therefore need to examine the collection of preserved examples from the broader (Central European) area, which, though also limited, is still representative enough for a general insight into the issue at hand.

The *Krumlov Picture Codex (Liber depictus)* contains what is probably the most extensive visual representation of St Giles's legend. The purpose of this uniquely designed codex is still not fully understood, but its origins can be traced back to the establishment of the Franciscan monastery in the Bohemian town of Český Krumlov by the Rosenberg family around 1358.⁴⁸ The contents of the codex, as outlined in an ink drawing, are divided into two parts. The first part consists of the *Biblia pauperum* illustrations, while the second part comprises thirty-four saintly legends, including a cycle of some twenty scenes from the legend of St Giles.⁴⁹ The distinctly narrative-based legend is presented in horizontal bands of pictures arranged along the length of

⁴⁵ Summed up after *The Golden Legend* 1995, p. 148.

⁴⁶ *The Golden Legend* 1995, p. 148.

⁴⁷ About the iconography, see MAYR 1994, cols. 52–54.

⁴⁸ The codex is kept at the Austrian National Library in Vienna under the signature Cod. 370. For more information about it, see SCHMIDT, UNTERKIRCHER 1967. The digitised codex is available in its entirety at: https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_6072567.

⁴⁹ The individual scenes are not always clearly separated, so their number is only approximate.



5. Part of the illustrated legend of St Giles in the Krumlov Picture Codex, around 1358
 (© Austrian National Library, Vienna, Cod. 370, fols. 62v–63r)

both folios of the open manuscript, with a scant Latin explanation added to each scene.⁵⁰ Among the many other miracles of St Giles, the story about the hind is also presented, broken down into five images: Giles takes refuge in a desert cave; Giles drinks hind milk; the hind hunt and the animal's rescue; Giles refuses the King's gifts; and the erection of the monastery. The central scene of this part of the legend is presented in the middle of folio 63r (Fig. 5). The event's dramaturgy is characterised by a group of horsemen with the King, the bishop, and several hunting dogs. A soldier with a crossbow rides at the front while the hind runs from him towards the saint's shelter. The wounded Giles is portrayed kneeling in front of the cave with an arrow piercing his knee.

A similar sequence of events can also be discerned in one of the oldest painted legends of St Giles in a mural in the chancel of the succursal church of St Rupert, originally a castle chapel, in Weißpriach, Salzburg (Figs. 6–7). The scenes, set in a distinctly drawn landscape setting, belong

⁵⁰ The legend is presented on fols. 62r (middle) – 63v (bottom). The scenes largely follow the text of the *Golden Legend*, see SCHMIDT, UNTERKIRCHER 1967, p. 11; they are listed on pp. 82–83.



6.-7. Legend of St Giles,
mural in the chancel of the
succursal church of St Rupert
in Weißpriach, 1180-1185
(© ZRC SAZU, UIFS,
photo: Gorazd Bence)

among the finest works of the Salzburg monumental painting from 1180-1185.⁵¹ In the lower band of the mural on the southern wall, the continuous cycle begins with a portrayal of Giles drinking hind milk, followed by the equestrian hunting scene. The first of the scenes on the northern wall probably used to depict the hind's rescue, followed by the illustration of Giles's request to construct the monastery, while the cycle concludes with his miraculous intervention during the mass. Unfortunately, the scene with the hind is the least preserved, as only a part of the cave with the saint remains.

⁵¹ LANC 1998, p. 436.

The mural on the northern wall of the chancel of the old parish church in St. Egydien an der Drau in Carinthia also represented a rather extensive cycle. The mural from around 1460 belongs to the circle of the Villach painting workshops and is attributed to the so-called Master of Tessendorf.⁵² Originally, Giles's legend was presented in two bands, probably consisting of four scenes, of which only the hunt for the hind has been fully preserved (Fig. 8).⁵³ The vivid depiction consists of a fashionably clothed group with the King, two hounds, a hunter pointing a crossbow straight at Giles, and the hind hiding in the cave behind him. Giles gazes dejectedly straight into the eyes of the hind, pointing at the arrow protruding from his abdomen with his right hand.



8. Hunt for St Giles's hind, mural on the northern wall of the chancel of the old parish church of St Giles in St. Egydien an der Drau, around 1460 (© ZRC SAZU, UIFS, photo: Gorazd Benčec)

The depiction of St Giles's legend on the outer right wing of the Apocalypse Altarpiece by the workshop of Master Bertram of Minden from Hamburg from the late 1380s is iconographically unique. The retable is kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.⁵⁴ The saint's legend is the subject of three images on the left side of the painted panel, while the hunting scene is depicted at the bottom (Fig. 9). Its composition consists of two events from the legend, taking place simultaneously. On the left side of the image, we can still follow the crowded group of hunters on horseback, headed by the King and the bishop; while on the right side, the latter two figures are already on their knees, begging forgiveness from the wounded saint. Giles, who has taken an arrow straight to the chest, comforts the frightened hind in his arms. Two other peripheral motifs enrich the contents of the scene: using an axe, one of the men has made a path for the horsemen

⁵² HÖFLER 1982, pp. 24–25.

⁵³ In the upper part, only a part of St Giles's habit remains visible; while in the lower right scene, the King and a kneeling deacon are portrayed, probably from the scene of the miracle at mass. Cf. HÖFLER 1982, pp. 24–25, repr. 68, 71.

⁵⁴ About the design and dating, see WORM 2019, pp. 160, 162. The reproduction is available on the Museum's website: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O89176/altarpiece-with-45-scenes-of-altarpiece-master-bertram/?carousel-image=2009CR8203>.



9. Hunt for St Giles's hind on the Apocalypse Altarpiece, around 1390 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

through the densely overgrown forest; while another figure has sounded his hunting horn to gather the dogs around him after the premature conclusion of the hunt.

Typological reductions in the depiction of the scene, featuring only the saint and the hind, perhaps with the sole addition of the archer to intensify the drama of the depicted event, are no less eloquent in terms of contents. The miniature from the prestigious *Hungarian Angevin Legendary*, commissioned by the Hungarian royal court with the illuminator's workshop of Bolognese-oriented painters after 1330, belongs to the first group. The individual parts of the codex have been preserved scattered in several locations, but it originally contained at least fifty-eight

saintly legends.⁵⁵ One of the most extensive parts of the preserved codex, which includes an illustrated legend of St Giles, is now kept in the Vatican Apostolic Library. The cycle consists of eight paintings, primarily representing St Giles's miracles, including the scene with the hind.⁵⁶ The miniature dramatically captures the moment when the saint, pierced by an arrow, collapses to the ground of the overgrown rocky landscape, supporting himself with his right hand, while the terrified hind with antlers (!) hides behind him. Just as a curiosity, let us add that the next scene shows a disinterested wounded saint, whom the two main protagonists of the hunt ask kneeling for forgiveness.

The depiction of St Giles on a mural painting in the succursal church of St Vitus in Altenmarkt (Wies) in Styria by the workshop of the Master of Einersdorf from the end of the 14th century adheres to a similar composition reduction (Fig. 10).⁵⁷ In terms of the composition, the portrayal of St Giles with the hind is placed in the area of the wall beneath the vault, just above the window

⁵⁵ BORECZKY 2018, pp. 294–295. For the latest comprehensive discussion on the manuscript, see SZAKÁCS 2016.

⁵⁶ Vatican Apostolic Library, Rome, Manuscript Vat. lat. 8541, fols. 94r, 95v; the miniature with St Giles and the hind can be found on fol. 94r, bottom right. The entirety of the digitised codex is available at: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.8541. For the illuminations of St Giles's legend, see SZAKÁCS 2016, pp. 154–155.

⁵⁷ LANC 2002, pp. 663–664 (Textband); see also HÖFLER 2004, pp. 244–245, 251.



10. *St Giles with the hind, mural in the chancel of the succursal church of St Vitus in Altenmarkt (Wies), around 1400 (© ZRC SAZU, UIFS, photo: Gorazd Benec)*

on the northern side of the chancel's polygonal termination, with St Paul the Hermit depicted as a pendant on the opposite side of the chancel. Surprisingly, the depiction deviates from the legend, as in this case, the saint is supposedly pulling an arrow from the wounded hind (!).⁵⁸ Because the end of the arrow is not explicitly marked with feathers, it is more likely that Giles is merely pointing to his wound with his left hand while turning around towards the frightened hind behind him.

An excellent example of the type of depiction that also features an archer can be found on the right outer wing of the 1427 Calvary Altarpiece by the painter Thomas of Coloswar (Fig. 11). The work was created for the Royal Benedictine Monastery in Hronský Beňadik in Slovakia and is now kept in the Christian Museum in Esztergom.⁵⁹ The panel painting features the wounded saint comforting the frightened hind in front of a church building, faced by an archer peeking from an overgrown forest and brandishing a drawn bow. Of all these examples, the latter depiction is characterised by the distinctly intensified dramaturgy of the event, co-created by the apparent linear path of the arrow that the hind has miraculously avoided. The arrow is painted twice: on the right, it is still in the shooter's drawn bow, while on the left, it has already pierced Giles's chest.

⁵⁸ LANC 2002, p. 664 (Textband).

⁵⁹ POSZLER 2006. For the most recent in-depth stylistic analysis, which places the painter between the International Gothic style of the Prague court and the works of Nuremberg painters at the beginning of 15th century, see JÉKELY 2017, pp. 69–73.



11. Thomas of Coloswar: *St Giles on the Calvary* Altarpiece, 1427 (© Christian Museum, Esztergom, photo: Attila Mudrák)

The Turnišče mural should also be placed in the historical context of thoroughly studied medieval depictions, which attest to the extent and significance of the saintly cult of St Giles. Let us finally take a detailed look.

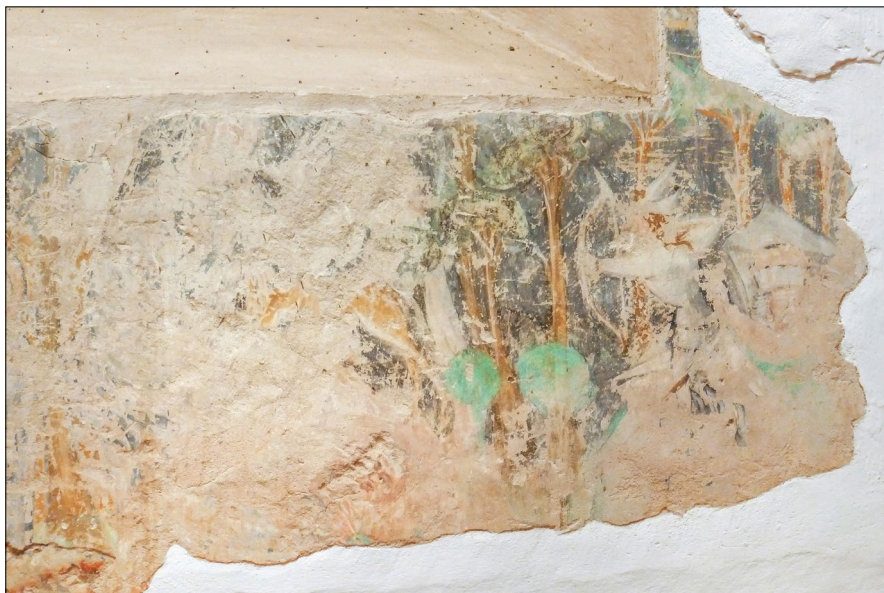
So, what can we still discern from the mural fragment today? Only the upper half of the scene has been preserved, but even that is difficult to make out (Fig. 12). The schematic drawing made during the study of the painting *in situ* will therefore be helpful for the iconographic reconstruction (Fig. 13). From the left, the scene begins somewhere behind the back of the full-length holy monk figure from the donor portrait. The two depictions seem to flow into each other, as there are no clear visual caesurae between them.⁶⁰ The scene's conclusion on the right side has been destroyed, but we can assume it ended by the church's medieval southern portal. The scene's entire upper length was accompanied by an inscription band, of which only a fragment on

the right remains. Most information can be gleaned from the right half of the mural, where the colour layer is best preserved. The peculiarity of the exceedingly dynamic composition is that the scene actually takes place in a forest.⁶¹ A hunting party, consisting of at least three figures on the right side, is depicted among the trees. The figure in the foreground, wearing a sort of fur-lined headdress⁶² and looking back at the companion in the background, gesticulates energetically. It is the only character still depicted on horseback, of which only the head and mane remain. There is

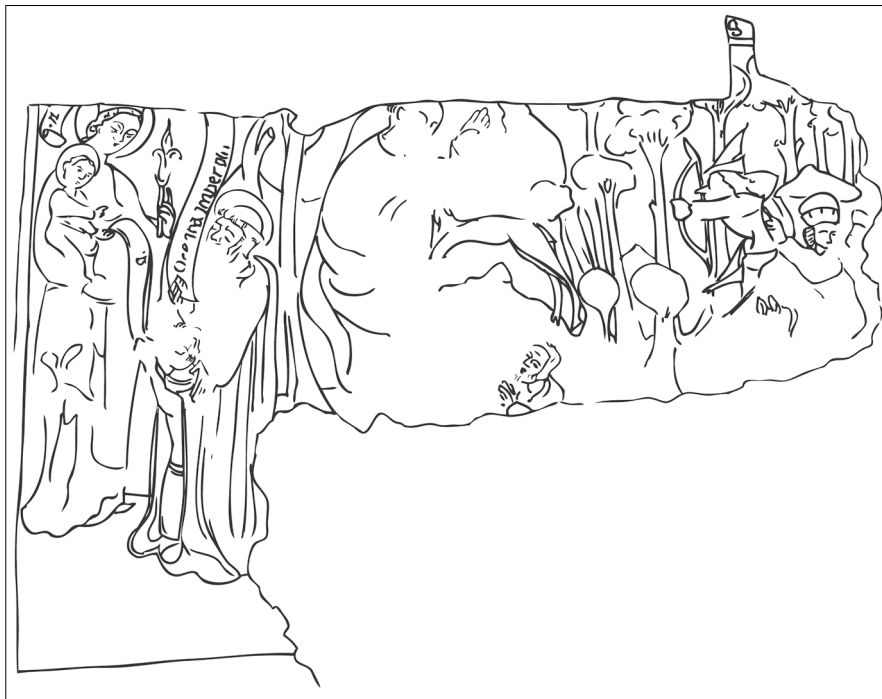
⁶⁰ If we look for a comparison only in the context of Aquila's mural in the nave of the Turnišče church, it is sufficient to mention the legend of St Catherine of Alexandria on the northern wall, which is depicted without any clear boundaries between the many scenes – they are merely arranged from left to right, cf. BALAŽIC 1994a, p. 61, table XXIII.

⁶¹ The scene could be placed alongside the depiction of a hunt in the basement of a house in the Main Square in Bad Radkersburg, Austria, from around 1390, which was also painted by Aquila's workshop, cf. LANC 2002, p. 27 (Textband), table 29 (Tafelband). As a mere backdrop, the forest is depicted in the opening scenes of Ladislaus' legend in the Turnišče church nave, cf. the relevant reproductions, see HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, pp. 80–82.

⁶² Similar headgear is worn by the Hungarian noble magnates in the scene of Ladislaus' election as king in the Turnišče church nave, cf. HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, repr. on p. 82.



12. Hunting scene on the southern wall of the nave in Turnišče
(© ZRC SAZU, UIFS, photo: Gorazd Benčec)



13. Schematic drawing of the donor portrait and the hunting scene in Turnišče
(Drawing: Gorazd Benčec)

no way to know whether this is the Visigothic King Wamba wearing hunting garments, though his and the bishop's portrayals could be expected somewhere around this spot. The archer wearing a pointed headdress with an upturned brim,⁶³ portrayed in profile, stands out from the group. His bow, pointing towards the left side of the scene, is no longer drawn, so the arrow has already been fired.⁶⁴ Due to the mural's poor state of preservation, it is impossible to make out precisely what was happening in the lower half of the scene. However, the upper part of a figure, of which only the head and hands clasped in a pleading gesture remain, is still visible. This could simply be another member of the hunting party (?).⁶⁵ Judging from its preserved back end, the swiftly running wild animal on the left side could be identified as a hind.⁶⁶ However, the image of a previously overlooked prominent figure in the background seems more significant. We can just barely make out the outline of its dark grey clothes, an outstretched left arm, and a fragment of a head with eyes. It is more difficult to say whether the figure is depicted seated in a cave.⁶⁷ Could this nevertheless be St Giles, towards whose arms the frightened hind is running and towards whom the arrow has been shot? In my opinion, the key to solving the previously unexplained hunting scene lies precisely in the depiction of the overlooked figure behind the hind. The figure's still tangible features are suspiciously reminiscent of the holy monk from the donor portrait, wearing a dark grey habit and a tonsure. Given the historical context of veneration and the iconographic design of the depiction of the central scene from the legend of St Giles, one cannot help but also recognise this very hind hunting scene in the mural in the nave of the church in Turnišče.

DONOR PORTRAIT

I have already pointed out that the hunting scene is linked to the scene of Mary with the Child, the holy monk, and the donor, painted next to it without any apparent visual or notable spatial caesurae (cf. Figs. 1 and 13). In fact, we could even say that the hunting scene is a part of the

⁶³ STELE 1935, p. 17, identified this type of headgear as "characteristic" of the miniature paintings in the *Illuminated Chronicle*. In the Turnišče church nave mural, such headwear can be found in several other instances, for example in the depictions of the Cumans from Ladislaus' legend or the executioners in the martyrdom of St Peter and St Lawrence. For reproductions, see HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, pp. 77, 79, 81, 84. For more information about such headgear, featured in the codex, see MAROSI 2018, p. 67.

⁶⁴ Cf. the depiction of the drawn bow of the archers from Ladislaus' legend in HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, repr. on pp. 81, 84.

⁶⁵ The depiction could also be a repeated portrayal of the King and the bishop during their plea for forgiveness. Conditionally, France Stele identifies the figure as a donor portrait, see ZRC SAZU, UIFS, Terenski zapiski Franceta Steleta, XVII A, 1932, fol. 21v.

⁶⁶ According to his notes, Stele first identified the depicted animal as a horse and later as a deer or a doe, cf. footnote 10.

⁶⁷ Cf. the image of St Paul the Hermit in the cave on a mural in Martjanci, painted by Aquila's workshop in 1392. For a reproduction, see HÖFLER, BALAŽIC 1992, p. 103.

donor's portrait. Based on the arguments presented, it is sensible that the holy monk in the donor portrait is recognised as St Giles, who, as the patron saint, intervenes with Mary and the Child on behalf of the donor who is kneeling before him. Given the context of the hunting scene interpretation so far, it has not yet been possible to determine who the donor was.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, already Tamas Bogyay identified the donor as a male figure,⁶⁹ while Tekla Szabó even interpreted him as a cleric.⁷⁰ Could it be that a priest called Giles might have worked in Turnišče when Aquila was completing the nave mural?⁷¹

⁶⁸ Cf. BOGYAY 1986a, p. 249; BENCE 2012, p. 46.

⁶⁹ BOGYAY 1986a, p. 249.

⁷⁰ SZABÓ 2018, p. 150.

⁷¹ I am preparing a separate discussion on the donor portrait from 1389 in Turnišče. I would like to thank my colleague Gordana Šövegeš Lipovšek for her assistance with the interpretation of the Hungarian literature.

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**LOV NA ČUDEŽNEGA JELENA ALI EGIDIJEVO KOŠUTO?
K IKONOGRAFIJI STENSKE POSLIKAVE LADJE STARE ŽUPNIJSKE CERKVE V TURNIŠČU**

Povzetek

Čeprav je motivno izredno bogata stenska poslikava ladje stare župnijske cerkve Marjinega vnebovzvetja v Turnišču, ki jo je pod patronatom dolnjelendavske rodbine Bánfi do leta 1389 naslikala delavnica Janeza Aquile, dodobra raziskana, se med prizori še vedno najde kakšna nerazrešena ikonografska zagonetka. V to skupino sodi tudi fragmentarno ohranjeni prizor na spodnjem pasu poslikave južne stene ladje, ki je v literaturi obveljal za narativno upodobitev lova. Umetnostni zgodovinar in konservator France Stele je doslej edini, ki je poskušal razvozlati njegov vsebinski pomen. Leta 1935 je v prizoru prepoznal lov na jelena in ga povezal z vsebino srednjeveške kronike o izvoru Madžarov, vendar postavljene hipoteze ni nikjer obširneje pojasnil. Zgolj iz njegovih terenskih zapiskov in iz namiga madžarskega umetnostnega zgodovinarja Tamas Bogyayja iz leta 1986 je mogoče sklepati, da je Stele najverjetneje mislil na mit o začetkih širjenja madžarskih prednikov v vzhodnih delih Skitije. Košuta, ki sta jo med lovom zasledovala, je pripeljala brata Hunorja in Magorja do Majotskega močvirja ob Azovskem morju, kjer sta si pred madžarsko stalno naselitvijo v Karpatskem bazenu začasno ustvarila nov dom. Motiv mitskega lova je v različnih oblikah razširjen v izročilu številnih evrazijskih nomadskih ljudstev, značilnosti te pripovedi pa povzemajo tudi srednjeveške zgodovinske kronike, kot je znamenita *Slikovna kronika (Chronicon pictum)*, ki je nastala v krogu madžarskega anžujskega dvora po letu 1358. Četudi se zdi ideja o upodobitvi te tematike v turniški ladji zelo mikavna, se o tem vseeno pojavljajo dvomi. Likovne upodobitve mita o zasledovanju košute so sila redke, še več, v srednjeveških sakralnih prostorih jih sploh ne najdemo. Tudi kot naročniško invencijo si upodobitev mita v sicer bogato zasnovanem ikonografskem programu stenske poslikave turniške ladje le težko predstavljamo. V prispevku je zato na podlagi zgodovinskih izhodišč in primerjalnega srednjeveškega likovnega gradiva argumentirano predstavljena teza, da je bolj smiselno, če izrazito profano zaznamovan prizor lova iščemo znotraj posameznih svetniških legend. Ponovni ogled in detajlna analiza stenske poslikave razkrivata, da gre v prizoru za osrednji del legende iz življenja puščavnika in opata sv. Egidija, ki je bil v srednjem veku zelo priljubljen. Razgibana kompozicija turniškega prizora lova se odvija v gozdu. Med drevesi na desni je vidna vzhičena lovska družina vizigotskega kralja Vamba z lokostrelcem, ki meri na pobeglo košuto na levi. Na levi strani prizora je bila doslej spregledana slabo vidna sedeča figura, h kateri se zateka prestrašena košuta. Upravičeno lahko v njej prepoznamo upodobitev sv. Egidija, s čigar priprošnjo je bila košuta med lovom rešena, njej namenjena izstreljena puščica pa je nesrečno poškodovala prav svetnika. Prizor lova se brez večje likovne cezure navezuje na upodobitev Marije z Detetom, nekim svetim menihom in donatorjem. V nadaljnjih raziskavah bo zato smiselno, da tudi v podobno upodobljenem menihu prepoznamo sv. Egidija, ki pred njim klečečega donatorja kot njegov imenski zavetnik priporoča Mariji z Detetom. S tem pa so nakazane tudi nove možnosti za identifikacijo anonimnega donatorja, ki je bil že doslej prepoznani kot klerik.