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**THE APOCALYPTIC ASPECT OF ST. MICHAEL'S CULT IN  
ELEVENTH-CENTURY ISTRIA**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

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by

Mihaela Vučić

(Croatia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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External Reader

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I, the undersigned, **Mihaela Vučić**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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# Abstract

In the present work, I studied the history of St. Michael's cult in Istria from the sixth to eleventh centuries with special emphasis on the meanings the cult assumed in the context of apocalyptic expectations at the turn of the Millennium. My aim was to investigate whether the Michaeline cult in Istria developed apocalyptic connotations and in which contexts. I mapped the churches of St. Michael constructed from the sixth to eleventh centuries, analyzed their architectural typologies, their artistic programs and placed them in their wider political and ecclesiastical contexts by analyzing two types of written sources, diplomatic and hagiographic. I concluded that the cult developed apocalyptic nuances in the eleventh century in the context of the Camaldolese church of St. Michael at Limska Draga through its connection with St. Romuald. However, eleventh-century Istria was not exclusively preoccupied with the apocalypse, because some aspects of St. Michael's cult that had been traditionally present in Istria from the sixth century coexisted with the apocalyptic Michael in the eleventh century. Understanding how the cult of St. Michael functioned on a local level in the decades on either side of the Millennium can reduce generalizations regarding the apocalyptic aspect of the cult on the wider European level.

# Acknowledgements

After a long and difficult pilgrimage toward understanding the meanings of St. Michael's cult, I wish to express my indebtedness and thankfulness to my dear supervisors, Béla Zsolt Szákacs and Gábor Klaniczay, my colleagues and professors, my precious husband and family, and finally, my namesake – St. Michael, for *nomen est omen*. I would not have succeeded without your help and patience.

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# 1. Apocalyptic Expectations and Where to Find Them

The study of the relevance of the cult of St. Michael in the context of the apocalyptic expectations around the year 1000 represents only a fragment of hagiographic studies of St. Michael's cult on the one side and the apocalyptic studies on the other. Albeit a fragment, it has developed into a fruitful and exciting area of research with many open questions and problems. One of them is the fragmentariness of information about the number and location of churches dedicated to the archangel in different regions and countries of Europe. Italy and France have progressed greatly in mapping St. Michael's churches because of their longer tradition in Michaeline studies. For other European countries, such as Croatia and Hungary, the systematization of the material, that is, mapping St. Michael's churches, is still in development.<sup>1</sup> Thus, my own work is a minor contribution to the mapping of St. Michael's churches in Croatia.

The second problem in the Michaeline apocalyptic studies is in the theoretical approach to the issue of "apocalyptic expectations". The Apocalypse and the expectations of medieval Christians concerning the Last Days and their portents have been among the most misused and misunderstood themes in historiography. In the nineteenth- and twentieth-century debates about the apocalyptic fears of the year 1000, two movements with completely disparate attitudes formed, where the nineteenth-century Romantics presented the society of the late tenth century as though ridden with fear of the imminent end. Later twentieth-century historians countered their predecessors' interpretations, thus acquiring the name of anti-Terrors school.<sup>2</sup> For them "the eleventh century did not produce anything new in the history of apocalypticism,

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<sup>1</sup> One of the pioneers in Croatian scholarship who undertook a project of mapping the *tituli* of the pre-Romanesque churches of Dalmatia and Istria is Tomislav Marasović. In his monumental four-volume work *Dalmatia Praeromanica* he mapped and presented around thirty Michaeline churches in the designated area. Still, more work needs to be done regarding the mapping of the eleventh-century and later medieval churches.

<sup>2</sup> Preface of the volume *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes *et al.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), vii.

and in comparison with the following centuries it should not be singled out as an era of especially fervent hopes of the End of the World.”<sup>3</sup>

My own work is indebted to the volume “The Apocalyptic Year 1000” and the group of scholars joined around Richard Landes’ project who presented a third paradigm for interpreting apocalypticism in the decades around the Millennium. Scholars such as Richard Landes, Johannes Fried and Daniel Callahan suggested a change in terminology and in the object of analysis. Instead of referring to the “terrors” of the year 1000, one should speak about the *expectations* of the Millennium, which shifts the focus from the “expressions of anxiety at the prospect of the end of the world” to a wider reality which includes both the fears of Antichrist’s persecutions of the Church and the hopes of a new reality, the New Jerusalem descending on earth after the tribulations of the Last Days and the Last Judgment.<sup>4</sup> Thus, when pinpointing the apocalyptic expectations on the eleventh-century map of Europe, the general call for penance and good deeds, such as constructing new churches and monasteries, should be added to the list.

Johannes Fried demonstrated through detailed analysis of the written sources of diverse genres from the tenth and eleventh centuries that among learned clerics and the political elites of the period in question existed both lines of biblical exegesis of the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse. One line followed the traditional Augustinian warning that one cannot know the day and the hour of the second Parousia, strengthened in the Carolingian times by Ambrosius Autpertus “mystical” interpretation. The other, apocalyptic line, followed Bede’s

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1979, 88.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes Fried, “Awaiting the End of Time around the Turn of the Year 1000”, in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes *et al.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23.

historical interpretation and saw in concrete events of their time the fulfillment of biblical warnings.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of the apocalyptic climate of the turn of the Millennium, St. Michael's cult gained prominence as one of the main eschatological figures of the Christian Apocalypse and of other Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature. Many churches were dedicated to the leader of the heavenly hosts around the Millennium and in the subsequent century, and one of the main reasons stemmed from the apocalyptic tensions. However, St. Michael's cult has a long and rich history, his angelic identity developed several aspects through many centuries, and it would be imprudent to define him an exclusively apocalyptic even in the decades preceding and following the Millennium.

The theme of the present work is the apocalyptic identity of St. Michael in eleventh-century Istria. My aim is to determine whether the apocalyptic interpretation of the cult on the European level functions on a micro-level, specifically, that of eleventh-century medieval Istria. I have chosen to analyze this micro-region for three reasons. Firstly, in the eleventh century at least four Michaeline churches were erected there. Secondly, from the mid-tenth century Istria became increasingly important as the bordering region of the Holy Roman Empire and as such was under the influence of German cultural sphere, where many aspects of the apocalypticism emerged. Finally, so far, Croatian scholars mainly dealt with specific Michaeline churches in Istria, analyzed their typology and artistic programs and interpreted each on its own terms. There are no works which offer an overview of the Istrian churches dedicated to the Archangel from the mid-sixth to the end of the eleventh century and a synthesis of the aspects the cult assumed in different political, ecclesiastical and cultural contexts.

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<sup>5</sup> Idem, 31.

To accomplish my intentions, I have assumed an interdisciplinary approach regarding the nature of my sources. On the one side, I will analyze the art historical elements of St. Michael's churches from the mid-sixth to the eleventh century conclusively, and on the other, I will analyze two types of written sources related to these churches – diplomatic and hagiographical. The art historical analysis will include mapping of the churches, describing their geographical position, analyzing their typology and artistic programs and their function. In the written sources, I have mainly focused on the commissioners, donors and prominent persons in the “lives” of specific churches, their intentions regarding each church and the cultural sphere from which they came. By combining these sources, I will offer the interpretation of the most probable meanings and aspects of St. Michael in each of the cases.

Although the focus of my work are the monastic churches built in the eleventh century, I will present the general history of the cult and the aspects of St. Michael's identity as well. It is impossible to go *in medias res* about the apocalyptic aspect of the cult without outlining the facets the cult accumulated through time. Being acquainted with the history of the cult will enable my readers to follow the arguments as to why in specific cases I will identify the cult as funerary, eschatological, thaumaturgic or apocalyptic. Moreover, it often occurs that multiple facets are present in a single context.

I have decided to deal with the churches built from the mid-sixth to the eleventh century conclusively, and exclude the later Michaeline churches for two reasons. Firstly, I intend to compare the number of the churches built from mid-sixth to mid-ninth centuries to the number of the churches dating from the eleventh century. In the first period, only two Michaeline churches were constructed, whereas in the eleventh century, there are four certain and one possible Michaeline church, and that difference in quantity has drawn my attention (see Figure

1).<sup>6</sup> Secondly, later Michaeline churches are mainly private or local parish churches and since my intention is to contextualize the Istrian cult in the international network of relations and meanings, I have restricted myself to Benedictine and Camaldolese monastic churches which have international significance and elite patrons.

The turn of the Millennium and the subsequent century were indeed permeated with apocalyptic expectations and the cult of St. Michael became important because of his apocalyptic role. Despite that, just as there were believers who maintained the traditional Augustinian position, the cult of St. Michael did not necessarily flourish only because of the apocalyptic climate. I wish to demonstrate that in eleventh-century Istria several aspects of St. Michael's identity coexisted parallelly. Benefactors, commissioners and founders of the churches were equally interested in the funerary and protective roles of the archangel as they were in his abilities to fight the "old dragon" at the approach of the Last Days.

The title of the first, introductory, chapter is "The Apocalyptic Expectations and Where to Find Them" because in the pursuit of the Millennium and the apocalyptic expectations, one can always assume extreme positions which are not useful in understanding how the apocalypticism functioned. Therefore, when assessing the cult of St. Michael as one of the exponents of apocalypticism, one must be aware of the existence of both apocalyptic and anti-apocalyptic currents in medieval theological thought. Medieval Christians shared the eschatological framework: they all believed in the second Parousia, the last Judgment and the end of history, but not all expected the imminent end at the turn of the Millennium. For this

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<sup>6</sup> The first period: St. Michael and St. Clement's monastic church near Pula and St. Michael *sotto terra* near Višnjan. The second period: St. Michael and St. Mary's monastic church near Limska Draga, St. Michael's monastic church near Bale, St. Peter's and St. Michael's monastic church on Kras and St. Michael's pilgrimage church near Banjole-Vodnjan. Possibly St. Michael near Pazin, known only from the written sources.

reason, it is important to know when and where, or in which contexts, the apocalyptic aspects of St. Michael's cult can be found.

Let me, therefore, lead you through the “when and where” of St. Michael's cult in eleventh-century Istria. In the second chapter, you will read about the general history of the cult, its literary basis and all the aspects the cult assumed from its early Christian beginnings until the Ottonian period in the eleventh century. Special accent will be placed on the shrine of St. Michael at Monte Gargano in Apulia since it is the oldest apparition site of St. Michael in Western Europe which acted as a model for many European, including Istrian, Michaeline churches.

In the third chapter I will discuss the aspects of the Michaeline cult in Byzantine and early medieval Istria, from the mid-sixth to mid-ninth centuries. In the first section of the chapter, I will present and analyze the written sources and the debates regarding the dating of the two churches built in the first period. In the second section, I will present the churches *per se* and offer an interpretation of the roles St. Michael played in the time of Byzantine and Carolingian rule on the peninsula of Istria.

In the fourth chapter, which is the central part of the present work, I will present four Michaeline churches built in the eleventh century, with special accent on the two best-preserved – St. Michael's monastic church near Limska Draga and St. Michael's pilgrimage church near Banjole-Vodnjan. I will identify their geographical locations and analyze their typologies, interpret the artistic programs of the two best-preserved, and finally, place them in the wider context of the period. The church of St. Michael near Limska Draga will receive most attention not only because of its art historical value, but also because of the two prominent contemporaries, St. Romuald and Engilmar, the bishop of Poreč, who profoundly influenced the life of the monastery and the meaning of St. Michael.



## 2. The Development and the Aspects of St. Michael's Cult, c. 300 – c. 1000

The task of defining St. Michael's identity is difficult from the outset since his very name, meaning "Who is like God", points to the Creator rather than to himself. In time, his identity acquired many facets that some definitions and a chronological overview of the cult's development are indispensable. Firstly, St. Michael is not a physical and an historical being – unlike martyrs, confessors or church doctors, in that he left no corporeal relics or thick volumes of church doctrines – but is a spirit. His primary role is that of a divine messenger (Hebrew: *mal'akh*, Greek: ἄγγελος). He was given several distinct roles in different geographical and cultural contexts depending on the traditions and the needs of the communities that invoked him.

Most of St. Michael's roles had already been set forth in the Jewish and Christian writings.<sup>7</sup> In the book of the prophet Daniel (Dan 10,13; 10,21; 12,1) Michael is described as the protector and the champion of God's people. In the Epistle of Jude (Jude 9) he is shown as the advocate over Moses' body in a dispute with Satan. The apocryphal book of Enoch describes his apocalyptic roles: he was given the task to bind evil, cleanse the sinful deeds and establish cosmic order through the Law of God (1 Enoch 10,11), to cast the unruly angelic cohorts into the fiery abyss (1 Enoch 54,6) and is associated with the waters of physical and spiritual cleansing (1 Enoch 67,8-12).<sup>8</sup> In the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse, Michael

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<sup>7</sup> John Charles Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel: The Formation and Diffusion of a Sainly Cult, c.300-c.800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 9.

<sup>8</sup> In the Second Temple Judaism, the apocalyptic literature developed specific angelic names and attributed adequate roles to each name. Michael's name meant "Who is like God" which can be understood both as a statement and a rhetorical question. The first refers to the hypostatization of God, or that Michael represents him in his attributes, and the second rhetorically inferred "no one". See: Arnold, *Footprints*, 13.

appears in the great battle in heaven (Rev 12,7) as the leader of the Heavenly Host against the dragon, or the devil, and his angels.<sup>9</sup>

In the early Christian times, Michael was venerated by Jews, ‘pagans’ and Christians. They even shared shrines devoted to him, such as the one at Chonae, Phrygia, but did not share the attitudes and theologies concerning angels.<sup>10</sup> At Chonae, the Archangel was invoked for his thaumaturgic powers, which he performed within a *locus amoenus* through healing waters.<sup>11</sup> Such perception of St. Michael’s role continued in Byzantium where the miracle at Chonae was celebrated on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

A further development of the Michaeline identity occurred in the early fourth century near Constantinople, when his healing abilities were reinterpreted through a symbol – the healing of feet at the Michaelion.<sup>12</sup> When he healed the feet of a high state official there, this healing referred to more than physical health of an individual, it meant securing the *salus* of the Empire.<sup>13</sup> Feet symbolized the stability and power of the Empire, and through healing of the feet Michael became tightly connected to the imperial Theology of Victory. By protecting the *salus* of the Empire, he was simultaneously protecting God’s people, the Christendom, and for that was granted the title of *archistrategos*.<sup>14</sup> This title resonates with his Biblical role in Daniel, but instead of referring to Israel, it refers to the new people of God – the Church and the Christian Emperor.

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, this chapter of the Apocalypse describes the battle in heaven before the Incarnation, when Satan was still one of the heavenly dwellers. Immediately afterwards, we are shown the dragon’s persecution of the Woman and her Child, symbols of the Virgin and the Child. After the Incarnation, or the twelfth chapter, not a single angel is mentioned by name, only by tasks they perform in the Last Days and on the Last Judgment.

<sup>10</sup> Arnold, *Footprints*, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Constantine erected a sanctuary in honor of St. Michael outside of Constantinople called the Michaelion where people came for both physical and spiritual healing. See: St. Michael the Archangel, New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm>, accessed on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 19:39.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold, *Footprints*, 50-51.

<sup>14</sup> Idem, 48. “Michael’s title of *archistrategos* described his simultaneous leadership of the angels and the protection of the borders of ‘Israel the land of His inheritance’ [Deut 32,9].”

The healings performed at Chonae and Michaelion were understood in time as more than physical and political. By invoking St. Michael, one could experience spiritual cleansing as well and receive orthodoxy, that is, the true understanding of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as pronounced in the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.<sup>15</sup> When St. Michael healed a deaf daughter of a “dishonorable and idolatrous pagan” from Laodicea at Chonae, he taught the man how to become an orthodox Christian by calling on “the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost [...] through the ministry of Michael.”<sup>16</sup>

The Archangel’s role of the protector of the Empire cannot be separated from its eschatological and apocalyptic connotations. Namely, in the Christian understanding of the History of Salvation, the *pax Romana* was crucial for the spreading of Christianity (Luke 2,1).<sup>17</sup> Early Christians believed that the second Parousia depended on the successful spreading of the gospel to all nations. After Christianity had gained a new status in the society, Christians continued praying for the wellbeing of the Empire still having in mind the spreading of the message “until the ends of the earth” (Matthew 24,14; Acts 1,7).

The Empire obtained an eschatological meaning which reached its peak in the Western Christianity with the German Emperors.<sup>18</sup> The ‘withholder’ from 2 Thessalonians 2,7 was

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<sup>15</sup> Such understanding developed in the context of great Trinitarian and Christological debates of the fourth and the fifth centuries. Christ was identified with angelic beings by the Arians. To counter this “heresy”, the supporters of the Nicæan and Constantinopolitan creeds developed an interpretation of St. Michael and the angels as subordinate beings who glorify and obey Christ. St. Michael thus became the protector of the orthodoxy. In that way, Michael’s cult became institutionalized and the orthopraxis regarding his invocation became the matter of bishops who prescribed the only proper way of understanding and veneration of the leader of the angelic hosts. See: Arnold, *Footprints*: 58.

<sup>16</sup> Glenn Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 145-146.

<sup>17</sup> “At the same time one universal power, the Roman Empire, arose and flourished [...] [and] profound peace reigned throughout the world. [...] two roots of blessing, the Roman Empire, and the doctrine of Christian piety, sprang up together for the benefit of men.” See: Eusebius, “The Oration of Eusebius Pamphilus in Praise of the Emperor Constantine” in *Eusebius Pamphilus: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. Philip Schaff and tr. Arthur Cushman McGiffert (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, s.a.), 1536.

<sup>18</sup> Not all Christian writings supported the idea that the Empire should be viewed as the positive eschatological entity, as the means of spreading the gospel. The Revelation represents the Empire as the eschatological arch-enemy of Christians. The Great Harlot of Babylon drunken with the blood of the martyrs symbolizes St. John’s verdict on the role of the Empire. However, from the time of Pseudo-Methodius’ *Apocalypse*, written in Syriac in

interpreted in the Middle Ages as the Western Roman Empire, which evolved into the Legend of the Last Emperor and the Myth of the World Unity in the Middle Ages.<sup>19</sup> These signs were understood as the portents of the Last Days and were referred to in the time of Charlemagne, Otto III and Henry II.

St. Michael's apocalyptic role was related strictly to his participation in the battle against Satan and his angels in the first battle in heaven when the dragon was cast down to earth (Rev 12,7). Yves Chrste even assures that between 800 and 1150 representations of the Last Judgment in the West usually avoided representing the chapters after the Battle in the chapter 12. The examples where the Last Judgment was represented based on the text from the Apocalypse 20 are uncommon and could point to the heightened expectations of the apocalyptic events.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.1. St. Michael at Monte Gargano – the Seedbed of the Cult in Western Europe

The sanctuary of St. Michael at Monte Gargano in Apulia was the seedbed for the diffusion of the cult in the West. Many of the aspects of the Michaeline cult that developed in

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the late seventh century, Byzantine Empire became the eschatological figure that would save the Christendom from the destruction of the Muslims. The text spread in the West through translations in Greek and Latin and through an abridged edition called *Visions of Daniel*. Adso of Montier-en-Der used the *Visions* for his *Libellus de Antichristo*, where he identified the Western Empire and the Frankish Emperor with the eschatological Roman Empire. See: Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. Dorothy Abrahamse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 2-8, 18-20.

<sup>19</sup> Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3. Christians believed that before the coming of Antichrist and the Last Judgment after it, there would be a time of peace and prosperity when a great Roman Emperor would rule and bring all nations to one faith. Then, even the Jews would convert through the preaching of Enoch and Elijah. When the time was ripe, the great Emperor would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and renounce his crown before God and usher in the last days.

For an overview of the medieval beliefs regarding Antichrist and the Last World Emperor, see: Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art and Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 83-89.

<sup>20</sup> The main literary source for the representation of the last things was not the text of the Apocalypse 20, but of the Gospel of Matthew (24-25). Yves Chrste, "Apocalypse and the Last Judgment around the Year 1000", in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 139-140. Since the text of the Apocalypse developed a negative eschatological vision of the Empire, it might be the reason for the omission of the second part of its narrative from the monumental representations of the Last Judgment.

the East were transmitted to the West through this sanctuary. In some respects, it imitates the bucolic landscapes of Michaeline shrines in Asia Minor. As at Chonae, it is also situated in a *locus amoenus* where pilgrims experienced physical healing by drinking or submerging themselves in the spring-water. Simultaneously, by placing the sanctuary in a grotto on the hilltop, it diverges from the eastern models. According to the *Liber de apparitione Sancti Michaelis in Monte Gargano*, the Archangel performed three miracles on the site. By leaving his footprints in stone and a red cloth, he made himself physically present, consecrated the grotto and ordered the Sipontan bishop to celebrate mass inside.<sup>21</sup> John Charles Arnold maintains that the image of the footprints, the sweet-water source in the cave and the red cape for the altar reflect imperial and eucharistic associations present in the Byzantine models.<sup>22</sup>

The Garganic type of St. Michael spread throughout Europe in the early Middle Ages due to several factors. The first factor was the pilgrims, both secular people who circulated the copies of *Apparitio* in their own lands and Benedictine monks and priests.<sup>23</sup> Then, due to the Lombards, for whom Michael was a symbol of militant power and their national protector after their victory over the Byzantine forces at Siponto. After the Carolingians conquered the Lombard Italy, they took the militant aspect of the cult from them and amalgamated it with the Byzantine understanding of the Archangel as the *archistrategos*.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the Garganic St. Michael related to the Legend of the Last Emperor through three German Emperors. En route to the Holy Land, Charlemagne visited the shrine of St.

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<sup>21</sup> Giorgio Otranto, "Il santuario di San Michele sul Gargano: un modello diffuso in Italia e in Europa", in *Santuari d'Italia: Puglia*, ed. Giorgio Otranto and Immacolata Aulisa (Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2012), 26.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold, *Footprints*, 67-68.

<sup>23</sup> A well-known example is St. Aubert, who made a pilgrimage to Monte Gargano, took the relics of the cape and of the stone around the footprints, returned to Normandy and in 708 consecrated Mont-Saint-Michel with them. See: Arnold, *Footprints*, 93.

In the tenth century, Odo of Cluny, the great reformer of the order in France, visited Monte Gargano, as well as John of Gorze, who initiated the reform in southern Germany. Daniel F. Callahan, "The Cult of St. Michael the Archangel and the 'Terrors of the Year 1000'", in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 185.

<sup>24</sup> Idem, 182.

Michael at Monte Gargano to receive the blessing of the Archangel. Nevertheless, it was not before the visionary Emperor Otto III that the legend became reality. Desirous to emulate Charlemagne, his renowned predecessor, he also traveled to Monte Gargano in 999, and expressed a desire to visit Jerusalem as well.<sup>25</sup> His desires were impeded by his death in 1002, but interestingly, his successor, Henry II continued these eschatological, if not apocalyptic, pursuits well after the Millennium had passed and in 1022 made a pilgrimage to the Archangel at Monte Gargano.<sup>26</sup>

This summary of the development of St. Michael's cult from the early Christian times to the Ottonian period was included for two reasons. In the mentioned period, all main aspects of St. Michael's identity formed – his healing powers, his role as the protector of the Empire and the Christian Emperor, his militancy, his protection against demonic forces, his protection of the orthodoxy, his role as the intercessor in death before God and his apocalyptic role as waging war against Satan. As I stated in the introductory chapter, before generally describing St. Michael's cult at the turn of the Millennium and in the eleventh century as apocalyptic, one should always consider all other layers of Michaeline identity. I will assume this approach when analyzing and interpreting the cult in Istria.

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<sup>25</sup> Idem, 185.

<sup>26</sup> Idem, 186. Callahan quotes Georges Duby's work *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest* where Duby offers an explicitly apocalyptic interpretation of Henry II, notwithstanding the insufficient evidence. Duby claims that the Emperor Henry II believed himself to be this Last Emperor and that he was supposed to prepare the *oikoumene* for the Last Days.

### 3. First Phase of St. Michael's Cult in Istria

As I have stressed in the previous chapter, one of the most prominent traits of St. Michael's cult is its multifaceted identity or the layers of meaning it accumulated over time. Although the aim of the present work is to understand whether the apocalyptic aspect permeated the eleventh-century Michaeline cult, I cannot disregard the aspects of the cult in the preceding period from the sixth to ninth centuries. The overview of the cultic development in the Byzantine and Carolingian Istria, and its comparison with the post-Ottonian St. Michael, will be useful in clarifying the meaning of the eleventh-century cult. I will analyze and interpret only the monastic churches in their interconnection with the political and ecclesiastical elites because it was in the international Benedictine and German imperial context that the apocalyptic expectations flourished.

The cult of St. Michael had been present in Istria since at least the Carolingian period, and possibly as early as the Byzantine re-conquest, after 538.<sup>27</sup> However, it seems that the cult did not proliferate until the post-Ottonian period when, according to Ivan Ostojić, a substantial number of monasteries dedicated to St. Michael were either erected or reconstructed.<sup>28</sup> In the eleventh century the archangel received four monastic churches under his protection: the larger of the two churches from the monastic complex at Limska Draga, the monastic church near Bale, the monastic church of St. Peter and St. Michael on Kras and the pilgrimage church with Benedictine background near Vodnjan. Although churches continued to be dedicated to St.

<sup>27</sup> Regarding the Byzantine roots of the cult, there are two opposing positions: the prevailing opinion in the twentieth-century Croatian scholarship, stressing the Byzantine background of the cult, has been contested by more recent findings suggesting Carolingian origin of the cult in Istria. Two churches dedicated to St. Michael were considered to have Byzantine origin: the monastic church at Veli Vrh outside Pula and the smaller of the two churches at Limska Draga. I will elaborate on this issue in the following subchapter.

<sup>28</sup> Ostojić offers a list of Benedictine monasteries in Istria according to which the dedications to St. Michael even surpass the dedications to the Virgin. See: Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj i ostalim našim krajevima*, vol. 3 [Benedictines in Croatia and in Other Croatian Lands] (Zadar, Split: Benediktinski priorat TKON, 1965), 76.

Michael in the later Middle Ages, once Benedictine activity in Istria diminished, the cult became tied to local parish or private churches.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.1. Byzantine Heritage and St. Michael

In nineteenth- and twentieth-century Croatian historiography, the beginning of the Michaeline cult in Istria was usually associated with the implementation of the Byzantine rule after Justinian's re-conquest of the eastern Adriatic, around the mid-sixth century. Two churches were identified as Byzantine: the smaller of the two churches from the monastic complex near Limska Draga and the large monastic church near Pula.<sup>30</sup>

Concerning the smaller church at Limska Draga, most scholars who dealt with the topic agree on its Byzantine roots, but disagree on its dedication. In 1950s, Ana Deanović claimed that the smaller church must have been consecrated to the Archangel and that only with the coming of the Camaldolese order was the larger church given the title of the Virgin.<sup>31</sup> More recently, Nikolina Maraković suggested that the double title of the church had existed already in the early Middle Ages, when St. Michael's name was added to the original dedication to the Virgin, and that it was retained as such when the larger church was built in the eleventh century.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the dedication should not be understood separately, but as a whole.

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<sup>29</sup> A local funerary church was dedicated to St. Michael in Pićan, outside the town walls and next to the town's graveyard. As this one, most of the later Michaeline churches are not monastic churches, such as the church at Borut near Pićan, in Grdoselo, in Frata near Šterna, in Zamask and in Žminj, all twelfth- and thirteenth-century constructions. For the church in Pićan, see: Damir Demonja, "Istarske romaničke jednobrodne crkve s istaknutim apsidama" [Istrian Single-spaced Romanesque Churches with Protruding Apses], *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 23 (1999), 22, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Pietro Kandler, a nineteenth-century Italian historian, suggested the Byzantine background of the church of St. Michael near Pula. See: Pietro Kandler, "Cenni al forestiero che visita Pola", in *Notizie storiche di Pola*, Poreč: Gaetano Coana, 1867, 47, 75.

<sup>31</sup> Ana Deanović, "Ranoromaničke freske u opatiji svetog Mihovila nad Limskom Dragom" [Early Romanesque Frescoes at St. Michael's Abbey above Limska Draga], *Bulletin JAZU* 9-10 (1956), 18. Additionally, in the 1990s, Igor Fisković asserted that the smaller church is the Virgin's church, and that in the eleventh century the larger church was dedicated to St. Michael. See: Igor Fisković, "Nova viđenja oko benediktinskog samostana na Limu" [New Insights regarding the Benedictine Monastery at Lim], *Izdanja HAD-a* 18 (1997), 240.

<sup>32</sup> Nikolina Maraković, "Zidno slikarstvo u Istri od 11. do 13. stoljeća: Revalorizacija lokalne umjetničke baštine u europskom kontekstu" [Wall Painting in Istria from the Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries: Reassessing the Local Cultural Heritage in the European Context], Ph.D dissertation, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, 2009, 49-50.



Concerning the monastic church of St. Michael on a hill near Pula, only written sources and two drawings from the nineteenth century remain. Pietro Kandler could still see the remains of the church of St. Michael and its funerary chapel of St. Clement before the mid-nineteenth century, and dated the church proper to 550s.<sup>33</sup> Relatively recently the dating of the larger church at Pula was contested. Pavuša Vežić, following the conclusions of Miljenko Jurković's investigations of the monastic complex of St. Mary Major in Bale, suggested a later date for the church near Pula. Based on their similar typology, he dated St. Michael's complex to the Carolingian late eighth century.<sup>34</sup>

Contrary to Vežić's assertions, I find it odd that after the sixth-century re-conquest, there would not be a single Michaeline church in entire Istria. As I previously stated, St. Michael was considered *archistrategos* in Byzantium, the protector of the Empire and of orthodoxy. Before Justinian's re-conquest, Istria belonged to the Ostrogothic Kingdom. Since Byzantium overtook Istria from the Ostrogoths who were Arians, it is reasonable to conclude that the orthodox Byzantines would introduce the cult of St. Michael, the protector of orthodoxy. I will return to this issue in the analysis of the Carolingian phase of the monastery of St. Michael.

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<sup>33</sup> St. Michael's monastery was dated into the mid-sixth century by Pietro Kandler in 1825, when he also published a drawing of the ground plan of both the main three-aisled church and the adjoining chapel, and drawings of the chapels western façade and its southern wall. In 1825, the three-aisled church was preserved on the level of ground-floor, but the chapel was still covered with a roof. Unfortunately, the Austrians destroyed it in 1850. Other than the polygonal apses, Kandler did not possess any written evidence that pointed to the Byzantine period of the construction for the larger church. See: Camillo de Franceschi, "Dante e Pola", in *Atti e memorie della Società istriana di archeologia e storia patria* 44 (1932), 54-57.

<sup>34</sup> Pavuša Vežić summarizes Miljenko Jurković's conclusions regarding the Carolingian background of St. Michael near Pula in his work on Christian *memoriae* of a cruciform plan in Istria and Dalmatia. Namely, the typology of the main churches both in the case of Pula and Bale and the typology of their adjoining cruciform chapels point to a Carolingian architectural and liturgical customs rather than to the Byzantine. Also, in Pula the dedication of the adjoining chapel, to St. Clement, a Roman pope and martyr, indicates connections to Rome, which further strengthens the Carolingian interpretation of the entire complex. See: Pavuša Vežić, "Memorije križnog tlocrta na tlu Istre i Dalmacije" [Christian *memoriae* of a Cruciform Ground-floor Plan in Istria and Dalmatia], *Ars Adriatica* 3 (2013), 34.

### 3.2. Carolingian St. Michael

Unlike for the Byzantine period, there are both written sources and architectural remains which testify that in the Carolingian period two monasteries dedicated to St. Michael were active. The first one is the “problematic” monastery of St. Michael and St. Clement near Pula and the second one is newly constructed St. Michael’s monastery near Višnjan. Before I proceed with their analyses, I will offer a short historical context of Carolingian Istria.

In the late eighth century, Charlemagne seized Istria from the control of Byzantium. The exact date is unknown, only that in 791 an Istrian count and his men helped Charlemagne in his advance against the Avars.<sup>35</sup> Istria was formally part of the March of Friuli and belonged to the bordering territory of the Kingdom, and after 800 of the Empire. Due to the Carolingian occupation of Istria, Byzantium entered war with them, which was ended with a signing of a peace treaty in Aachen in 812. Istria was recognized *de iure* by Byzantium as Carolingian, and Charlemagne confirmed Byzantine rule over the Dalmatian towns.

When the Franks established their rule in Istria, they introduced a way of governing unacceptable to the indigenous inhabitants. The continuity of Roman social, legal and economic traditions was disrupted by the introduction of the feudal system. The local ruling elites lost many of their rights, among which was the right to choose and to be chosen as military and civil officials, and the duke (*dux*), representative of the Frankish rule, was given much higher jurisdiction than any *magister militum* had ever had.<sup>36</sup> John, the first duke of Istria, appropriated the lands from the indigenous Romanized population which were not used for

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<sup>35</sup> Maurizio Levak takes this year as the *ante quem* for the establishment of Carolingian rule in Istria. Namely, Charlemagne described this advance against the Avars in a letter to his wife (791) and emphasized the role the Istrian count played in it. By that year, Istria had already been integrated into the Kingdom of the Franks. Maurizio Levak, “Istra i Kvarner u ranom srednjem vijeku” [Istria and Kvarner in the Early Middle Ages.], in *Nova zraka u europskom svjetlu. Hrvatske zemlje u ranome srednjem vijeku (oko 550 – oko 1150)*, ed. Zrinka Nikolić Jakus (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2011), 397.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, 397-398.

agriculture and leased them to the Slavic colonists.<sup>37</sup> These radical changes turned the local inhabitants against the Frankish rule because of which the *Placitum* of Rižan was convoked in 804 to settle the dispute. The towns obtained the desired self-government, but the lands were never returned to them and the Slavs remained there as colonists.

Fortifying the Frankish rule in Istria was, therefore, a laborious task. Their borders with the Byzantine Empire were contested formally until 812, but even after the treaty, the vicinity of Venice and Grado as Byzantine outposts was not completely reassuring. Furthermore, the internal political and economic situation was boiling. One of the pragmatic responses to a tense situation was constructing a line of fortified monasteries in the hinterland of several major towns in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Monasteries such as St. Mary Major near Bale and St. Andrew near Rovinj became strategic outposts for the surveillance of the surrounding area and provided support to the newly established government.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.2.1. St. Michael and St. Clement's Monastery

St. Michael and St. Clement's monastery on the hill above Pula partly belongs to the same wave of Benedictine monasteries founded by the Carolingians. The three-aisled church with three apses was dedicated to St. Michael and is most probably Byzantine, but the cross-shaped funerary chapel of St. Clement dates to the Carolingian period.<sup>39</sup> As I have remarked in the previous subchapter, Pavuša Vežić dated the entire complex to the late eighth century because the typology of the larger, three-aisled church, with its three apses, polygonal on the exterior

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<sup>37</sup> Idem, 398.

<sup>38</sup> Both were constructed late in the eighth century and both were positioned on strategic locations. St. Mary Major near Bale was constructed on a slope of a hill just above the main communication between Rovinj and the south-western part of Istria. St. Andrew's monastery was constructed on a small islet off the coast of Rovinj. Levak, "Istra i Kvarner", 402.

<sup>39</sup> Željko Ujčić accepts Kandler's dating of the larger, St. Michael's church, but warns, based on Kandler's drawings, that St. Clement's chapel most probably belongs to the early medieval phase and its western addition to the eleventh century. Željko Ujčić, "Pola paleocristiana alla luce del catastro austriaco dell' anno 1820", in *Radovi XIII. Međunarodnog kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju III*, ed. Nenad Cambi and Emilio Marin (Split: Arheološki muzej, 1998), 745.

and semicircular on the inside, resembles St. Mary Major near Bale dated to the late eighth century.<sup>40</sup> In that way, both St. Mary and St. Michael would reflect the Carolingian idea of *renovatio* – taking the early Christian architecture as a model, in this case chosen from the local Late Antique heritage of Pula.<sup>41</sup>

I maintain it is somewhat farfetched to insist on this dating because the evidence, as far as I can judge, does not explicitly point to either of the periods. Therefore, I am not completely convinced by Vežić's arguments regarding the Carolingian origin of St. Michael's church based on its similarities with the church of St. Mary Major near Bale.<sup>42</sup> I accept the traditional dating of the Michaeline church to the mid-sixth century, and Željko Ujčić's dating of the construction of St. Clement's chapel to the early Carolingian period.

Most probably the strategic importance of the monastery on the hilltop was recognized in the Carolingian times, since the entire coast and the surrounding *ager* could be overseen from it. Sometime later, the Benedictines constructed a funerary chapel connected with the main church and dedicated it to St. Clement.<sup>43</sup> St. Michael was given a double role: since the monastery functioned as a strategic outpost, he was invoked to protect, and since St. Clement's chapel had a funerary role, both saints were supposed to watch over the deceased, intercede for their souls and guide them to heaven.

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<sup>40</sup> Vežić, "Memorije križnog tlocrta": 34.

<sup>41</sup> St. Mary *Formosa* is firmly dated to the mid-sixth century and has polygonal apses and two cross-shaped chapels.

<sup>42</sup> Firstly, the polygonal apses *per se* can be used both to support the Byzantine period of construction and the Carolingian *renovatio* of early Christians models. That applies as well to the cross-shaped chapels which were present in Istria in early Byzantine period and continued to be built in the early Middle Ages. Secondly, the funerary chapel at Bale is removed from the church, it is several times smaller and has a single apse, whereas in Pula, it is connected to the main church, it is equally long and has three apses. Finally, the choir of the chapel in Pula is much deeper and the eastern walls thicker in comparison to that of the main church.

<sup>43</sup> Bernardo Schiavuzzi stated that in the ancient times, there existed a graveyard on the slope of the hill where later St. Michael and St. Clement's monastery would be built. Bernardo Schiavuzzi, "L'abbazia di S. Michele in Monte di Pola", *Archivio Veneto* vol. 4, Venice, 1928, 81-82.

In the West, as early as the eighth century, especially in Ireland, a tradition developed regarding St. Michael's role as the protector of the soul at the hour of death and on the Last Judgment.<sup>44</sup> That the archangel was accompanied by St. Clement does not necessarily weaken the argument, since Clement was an early Christian martyr and the bishop of Rome. The dedication to St. Clement could also convey the Carolingian idea of *renovatio imperii*: the focus on Rome and the papacy for religious and political unity.

### 3.2.2. St. Michael *sotto terra* near Višnjan

The second Michaeline monastery that belongs to the Carolingian phase is situated near Višnjan and is called St. Michael *sotto terra*.<sup>45</sup> The *ante quem* for the monastery is 853 when it was placed under the protection of Emperor Louis II.<sup>46</sup> In 857 it was apparently granted the imperial protection against the pretensions of the bishop of Poreč and the right to choose their own abbots.<sup>47</sup> The designation *sotto terra* refers to the eastern part or the choir of the monastic church which was 1,5 m below the ground-level. The archaeological excavations in 1970 confirmed that the oldest part of the church is the eastern end and that it was built before mid-ninth century.<sup>48</sup>

This monastery was one of the most important and wealthiest on the territory of the bishopric of Poreč throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>49</sup> Levak asserts that this monastery also belonged to the line of strategic outposts connecting northwestern and southern Istria on the one hand and with Italy on the other.<sup>50</sup> When Emperor Louis II granted these privileges to St.

<sup>44</sup> Callahan, "Cult of St. Michael", 182.

<sup>45</sup> Ante Šonje, "Novi nalazi starokršćanske i ranosrednjovjekovne arhitekture u Poreštini" [New Finds of the Early Christian and Early Medieval Architecture on the Territory of Poreč], *Histria Archaeologica* (1970/2), 71-75.

<sup>46</sup> Pietro Kandler, *Codice diplomatico istriano I*, 60, Anno 853.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, 62, Anno 857.

<sup>48</sup> Based on the fragments of the liturgical furnishings with the three-string interlace motif found in the oldest part of the church, the sanctuary, Šonje dated the church to the first half of the ninth century. See: Šonje, "Novi nalazi", 75.

<sup>49</sup> The abbey was one of the wealthiest in the bishopric of Poreč being in possession of many lands in the surrounding villages of Kolombere, Višnjan, Labinci, Tar and Vižinada. Also, it gave several bishops in the Middle Ages. Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, 113.

<sup>50</sup> Levak, "Istra i Kvarner", 402.

Michael's monastery, its strategic value could have been even more important than in the times of Charlemagne. The second half of the ninth century was a time of political turmoil in the Empire and, apparently, St. Michael did not fulfill the expectations concerning his role as the protector of its integrity. Not even this mighty archangel could intervene in the poor familial relations of the sons of Louis the Pious. Eventually, the Empire disintegrated in the late ninth century.

Conclusively, it seems that St. Michael's cult in the context of the Carolingian Istria assumed a triple role. Firstly, he protected the newly established borders toward Byzantium on the strategic points from north to south, isolating the valuable coastal towns and their *agri* from possible intrusions in the east. It was also necessary to secure these towns in case they rebelled, because the tensions did not die away after the *Placitum*. Secondly, by being associated with Benedictine monasteries, St. Michael became their spiritual protector, as was the case in other parts of Europe.<sup>51</sup> Finally, being joined with St. Clement, he was responsible for the souls of the deceased, and protected the *renovatio imperii* and the desired religious unity of the Empire.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.3. St. Michael between Carolingian and Ottonian Rule

The sources are silent concerning the continuation of the activity of the Carolingian Michaeline monasteries in Istria in the intervening period, before the Empire was renewed by the Ottonians in the second half of the tenth century.<sup>53</sup> After 857, there are no written sources that mention the monastery of St. Michael *sotto terra* until the twelfth century, when the

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<sup>51</sup> Callahan, "Cult of St. Michael", 182.

<sup>52</sup> There are two more double dedications in Istria: the first is St. Michael and St. Mary near Limska Draga and the second is St. Peter and St. Michael's monastery, in the village of St. Peter on Kras, in the bishopric of Novigrad. I will elaborate this topic in the following subchapter.

<sup>53</sup> The earliest written source is from 990 where St. Michael's and St. Clement's monastery near Pula is mentioned in a donation charter in which Sergius from Pula conferred lands in Rumiano to the monastery in 990. "[...] in C. Polae donatione quam facio ego Sergius in domo sancti Michaelis, ubi est monasterio [...]." See Kandler, *Codice*, 84, Anno 990.

patriarch of Aquileia and Pope Alexander III confirm the Parentine bishop's jurisdiction over it.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that because the Empire had dissolved and the monastery had lost its imperial patron, the bishop seized the opportunity and took control over the monastery and its lands.

Regarding the monastery near Pula, the sources testify to its prosperity and prestige. It became one of the wealthiest monasteries in Istria, judging by several donation charters from 990, 1030 and the 1060s from which we find out that it received many lands from both secular and ecclesiastical persons.<sup>55</sup> One donation stands out: in 1030, it received the entire monastery of St. Cassian from Poreč with its property from the bishop of Poreč, Engilmar. Bishop Engilmar's request was that the monks would continuously pray for his soul and the souls of his predecessors. In the same century, the funerary chapel of St. Clement received a large nave in the west decorated with a single stepped portal and a row of blind galleries in the axis above the portal. The addition is quite large, and if the monastery was indeed so prestigious, then it is logical to assume that it housed the tombs of well-to-do Istrian inhabitants and that the demand to be buried under the protection of St. Michael increased in the eleventh century.

From 990 and the first mention of St. Michael near Pula in the written sources until 1040 when the new phase of St. Michael's cult began with the construction of St. Michael near Limska Draga Istria changed its legal status several times. In 952, it was united with the Duchy of Bavaria where it was supposed to protect the empire from Hungarian incursions.<sup>56</sup> But Bavaria grew too strong and Otto II removed from it the marches of Carinthia, Styria, Carniola, Friuli and Istria and created the Duchy of Carinthia. The importance of Istria grew immensely after it became one of the bordering marches of the Holy Roman Empire. In the period after

<sup>54</sup> Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, 109.

<sup>55</sup> For Engilmar's donation, see: Kandler, *Codice*, 91, Anno 1030. Concerning the donations from the 1060s, see: Idem, 103, Anno 1060. For the historical background of the sources, see: Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, 117.

<sup>56</sup> Fried informs that around the year 960 the Hungarians were understood not only as a political and economic threat, but also as Gog and Magog, the pre-apocalyptic nation outside the *oikumene* that will herald the end of the world. Fried, "Awaiting the End", 19.

976, it was ruled by counts of German descent who were granted fiefs in Istria in exchange for the defense of the borders.

Around the mid-eleventh century, Istria's legal status changed once more when it got excluded from the Duchy of Carinthia and was given the title of the March of Istria. Its margraves were appointed directly by the Emperor, the first being Ulric, from the family of Weimar-Orlamünde. Around that time, a new wave of church construction spread through Istria among which is the church of St. Michael near Limska Draga.



### 3. St. Michael's Monastery near Limska Draga

St. Michael's monastic church near Limska Draga is the central church for the present discussion about the apocalyptic aspect of St. Michael's cult. Firstly, the integrity of its structure and its artistic program have been preserved better than in any other Michaeline church and can be analyzed. Secondly, it was the first Michaeline church consecrated after the Millennium, moreover, after the Carolingian period in general. Thirdly, its community had been founded a few years after the Millennium by St. Romuald, the reformer of monasticism. In the following elaboration, I will focus on the analysis of the wall paintings and the *Vita* of St. Romuald because through them, I will demonstrate that the cult of St. Michael possesses apocalyptic connotations.

The remains of the church and the monastery of St. Michael and the Virgin are situated near Limska Draga, in the county of Vrsar. It is only one kilometer away from the edge of a high cliff which overlooks the sea channel called Limska Draga. Nowadays it is surrounded by a thick forest, but only seventy years ago, instead of a forest, there was a field and I assume the scenery was similar in the medieval period since the complex belonged to a feudal estate called Gradina or Kalisedo [Figure 4].<sup>57</sup> The entire complex was neglected for a long time which caused substantial damage to the artistic program, thus leaving many aspects to skillful interpretation.<sup>58</sup>

St. Michael's monastic community near Limska Draga is traditionally believed to be founded by St. Romuald, the founder of the Camaldolese order. According to his hagiographer, Peter Damian, he lived in Istria as a hermit somewhere around 1001/2 until 1004, and again in

<sup>57</sup> Sunčica Mustač, *Samostan Sv. Mihovila nad Limom – konzervatorska podloga* [The Monastery of St. Michael above Lim – Conservation Assessment] (Pula, Poreč: Konzervatorski odjel u Puli, 2014), 14.

<sup>58</sup> For the information concerning the conservation assessment of the monument, I am indebted to Kristina Gergeta from the Cultural Heritage Conservation Office in Pula who kindly showed me the site and opened the access to the library of the Office. Regarding the analysis and interpretation of the artistic program, I rely on Nikolina Maraković's interpretation from her 2009 doctoral dissertation.

1010.<sup>59</sup> It is improbable that he initiated the construction of the monastery *per se*, but gathered around himself a community of hermits who later organized and founded the monastery.<sup>60</sup>

Two written sources mention the monastery of St. Michael and the Virgin: the earlier is the donation charter of Countess Azcica and the latter is a dispute between the abbot John and the Parentine bishop Engilmar over the tithing of the monastery, both from 1040. In the first source Countess Azcica, the daughter of the Istrian Count Wecelino, donated lands to the monastery, and bishop Engilmar was called to consecrate the new church of the blessed Virgin and St. Michael.<sup>61</sup> In the second, bishop Engilmar enters a dispute with the abbot of the monastery, John, and Azcica intervenes as a defender of their rights.<sup>62</sup> Although the twentieth-century Croatian scholars expressed their doubt regarding the authenticity of both documents, I will use them here as trustworthy in terms of names and dates, for names can be supported by other written sources and the dates by archaeological evidence.<sup>63</sup>

The monastic complex, as it was written above, possessed two churches. The smaller of the two is a rectangular single-spaced building with a polygonal apse in the east, which was one of the indicators for the early dating, after the sixth-century Byzantine re-conquest. It was

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<sup>59</sup> Colin Ralph Phipps, "St. Peter Damian's *Vita beati Romualdi*: Introduction, Translation, Analysis", PhD dissertation (London: King's College, 1988), 252.

<sup>60</sup> Danilo Klen suggested that there was a monastery prior to the mid-eleventh century, but the most recent findings do not support his claim. Mustač, *Samostan Sv. Mihovila*, 15.

<sup>61</sup> "[...] Igitur qualiter inlustrissima Azcica [...] patre Wecelino et Wilpurga nobilissima matre [...] ecclesiam ad honorem Dei et sancte Marie virginis, beatique Michaelis archangeli a domno Johanne abate [...] et a domino Engelmario venerabili Parentino episcopo eadem invitante consecratam humilima devotione et benignissimo caritatis affectu dotaverit [...]" Kandler, *Codice*, 98, Anno 1040.

<sup>62</sup> "[...] inter dominum Engelmarum episcopum Parentine civitatis ex una parte, et ex altera parte domnum Johannem abbatem monasterii sancte Marie virginis et sancti Michaelis archangeli de Lemo." Idem, 99, Anno 1040.

<sup>63</sup> Such an approach was the general attitude of the period of 1960s and 1970s towards donation charters involving Church property. Danilo Klen indeed demonstrated that the donation charter of countess Azcica was a copy from the end of the thirteenth century, but he assumed that everything written in it must have been falsified. See: Danilo Klen, "Neke misli i podaci o Sv. Mihovilu nad Limom" [Some Thoughts and Facts about St. Michael above Lim], *Bulletin JAZU* 1-2 (1963), 12-13.

Nikolina Maraković proposed a different approach to the problem. Even if the donation charter is not an original, but a copy that served as an argument in favor of the bishop of Poreč in the conflict with the county of Vrsar about the jurisdiction over the monastic lands, it does not follow that all information is falsified. See: Maraković, "Zidno slikarstvo", 24.

vaulted with a barrel vault most probably in the time of the construction of the larger church, to receive the pressure from its northern walls.<sup>64</sup> The churches connected with each other through an opening in the south-western section of the smaller church. The larger church is also a rectangular single-spaced building, but it is twice as high as the older church. On its eastern wall, it has a single, semi-circular, tall protruding apse covered with a conch. The entire space of the church is covered with an open timber roof.<sup>65</sup>

The smaller church most probably served as a type of a local funerary chapel in the early Middle Ages for the inhabitants of the nearby Gradina.<sup>66</sup> There are elements in the structure of the western wall that indicate the presence of a bell-tower on its western façade. As briefly noted in the third chapter, Maraković asserts that in the tenth century, a tower was added to the western façade of the church and dedicated to St. Michael. Maraković maintains that such a dedication is in line with the early medieval practice of dedicating high places such as bell-towers to St. Michael.<sup>67</sup> What made the construction of the larger church necessary was the presence of a newly established monastic community of the Camaldolese order.

### 3.4. Iconographic Program of St. Michael's Church near Limska Draga

The church structure we can see today is a consequence of several restoration campaigns in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. The artistic program is very fragmentary, with the frescoes preserved only in the apse and on the southern wall of the triumphal arch. Despite the fragmentariness, Maraković recognized the influence of the

<sup>64</sup> Mustač, *Samostan Sv. Mihovila*, 14.

<sup>65</sup> The typology of this church is important for the development of the local architecture in the eleventh century; researchers stress its international importance since it introduced the early Romanesque to the Istrian peninsula. It is considered as a *post quem* for other Istrian churches of the same type – single-spaced, rectangular and with a single protruding semi-circular apse in the eastern wall. See: Demonja, “Istarske jednobrodne crkve”, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Excavations from the time of Branko Marušić showed that there were many tombs around the church, and he dated them from the sixth to eleventh century. See: Mustač, *Samostan Sv. Mihovila*, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Nikolina Maraković, “Zidno slikarstvo”, 49-50.

southern German artistic sphere in the formal features of the frescoes in the linearism in conveying the human figure, the expressiveness through gesture and the use of red-and-white contrast in rendering the drapery.<sup>68</sup> On the apse wall, one of the most unusual iconographic programs is represented – the Martyrdom of St. Stephen.<sup>69</sup> The Martyrdom is divided into two scenes by a window in the apse wall. On the left side, we can see a kingly man sitting on a throne with two men in the background, and a standing man in front of him. The standing man is depicted without an aureole; thus, it cannot be St. Stephen, but most probably his false accuser. Ana Deanović interpreted the scene as St. Stephen being falsely accused in front of the High Priest of the Jews.<sup>70</sup>

The Stoning of St. Stephen is on the right side of the apse wall. St. Stephen can be recognized in the central kneeling figure flanked by Saul on the left and the angry mob on the right, caught in the moment just before they would throw the stones. St. Stephen's head is turning slightly heavenward from where an angelic figure descends surrounded by reddish rays of light. Compositionally and from the perspective of iconography, Istrian Martyrdom is closest to the Martyrdom fresco in St. John's monastic church in Müstair, Switzerland. However, they contrast in one detail – at Müstair, St. Stephen sees the hand of God protruding through the heavens, whereas in Istria it is an angel whom the martyr sees in the heavenly vision.<sup>71</sup>

On the southern wall of the triumphal arch a figure of a saintly bishop can be seen, which Maraković identified as St. Maurus, a local early Christian martyr and the bishop of

<sup>68</sup> Maraković, "Zidno slikarstvo", 40-43. The frescoes were dated after the mid-eleventh century, but before 1086.

<sup>69</sup> Maraković warns that there were only three examples of the Martyrdom of St. Stephen in early medieval Europe in monumental fresco painting: the first is from the crypt of St. Germain in Auxerre, the second from the southern apse of the monastic church of St. John in Müstair and the third from abbot Epifanio's crypt in the church of San Vincenzo in Voltorno. Idem, 30-31.

<sup>70</sup> Ana Deanović, "Ranoromaničke freske", 13-14.

<sup>71</sup> Deanović could still see the angel in 1954, and all later scholars depended on her descriptions. Today, only rays of light are visible. See: Deanović, "Ranoromaničke freske", 13.

Poreč.<sup>72</sup> Ana Deanović could still see the figure of a monk dressed in black robes on the left wall of the triumphal arch whom she identified as St. Benedict.<sup>73</sup> We cannot know anything regarding the iconographic program in the conch, on the wall above the triumphal arch and on the western wall.<sup>74</sup> Thus, if there was a depiction of the Last Judgment in the church, it is impossible to know it. The only element of the entire program that could be regarded as “apocalyptic” is the vision of St. Stephen, but only if understood in connection to the life of St. Romuald. Igor Fisković suggested that the choice of the iconographic program depended on the spirituality and practice of St. Romuald, who was a visionary just like St. Stephen.<sup>75</sup>

As I have written above, the Martyrdom is a very rare theme in medieval monumental painting, and it becomes even more unusual in the context of a relatively small monastic community at Limska Draga. I maintain it is fruitful to deal with this problem further in the following chapter where I intend to offer my own interpretation of the relation between the cult of St. Michael, the monastery near Limska Draga and St. Romuald.

### 3.5. St. Michael in the Light of the *Vita* of St. Romuald

When analyzing the artistic and iconographic program of the church near Limska Draga, I underlined the lack of explicit apocalyptic content, such as the Last Judgment or *Maiestas Domini*. However, a second variable should be introduced before reaching a conclusion. The unusual iconographic program that includes the Martyrdom of St. Stephen still requires a more

<sup>72</sup> According to Maraković, the presence of the local martyr and bishop in a monastic Camaldolese church stems from the rise of the importance of the self-government of Istrian coastal towns in the eleventh century, such as the nearby Poreč. The self-government is reflected on the symbolic level in the rise of the local cults, such as that of St. Maurus. Nikolina Maraković, “Zidno slikarstvo”, 36.

<sup>73</sup> Ana Deanović, “Ranoromaničke freske”, 13, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Maraković suggests that it was *Maiestas Mariae* that occupied the conch: Maraković, “Zidno slikarstvo”, 29; and disagrees with Igor Fisković who claimed that it must have been *Maiestas Domini*: Igor Fisković, “Nova viđenja”, 249, note 36. Both are possible since in the wider European monumental painting, *Maiestas Domini* and *Maiestas Mariae* conform to the theological accents of the period. Christ in Glory would have had apocalyptic meaning, and *Maiestas Mariae* was used in reformed Benedictine monasteries.

The western wall had already been demolished when the local lumberjacks began using it as a storage for the tree-trunks at the beginning of the twentieth century. Mustač, *Samostan Sv. Mihovila*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Igor Fisković, “Nova viđenja”, 243.

detailed interpretation. I will attempt to find justification for the choice of the main theme in the life and spirituality of St. Romuald, the founder of the community. Furthermore, I will also analyze of the *Vita beati Romualdi* in search of apocalyptic elements and references to St. Michael.

St. Romuald, the founder of the community at Limska Draga, was a rigorous ascetic-hermit, a visionary and a prominent reformer of monasticism who spent several years near Limska Draga in the years immediately following the Millennium.<sup>76</sup> According to Peter Damian, Romuald came to Istria twice. During his first visit, he remained near Poreč for three years, “[...] in one of which [years] he built a monastery, but for the other two remained enclosed.”, and for his second visit, he was not permitted to stay long.<sup>77</sup> Peter Damian is laconic regarding Romuald’s second visit to Istria, indicating only that he was summoned with urgency to Rome.

The main aspects of St. Romuald’s spirituality presented in the *Vita* are most certainly his rigorous asceticism and his drive to convert both secular Christians to monastic life and pagans to Christianity. Damian also conveys his innate desire for the “desert” and contemplation, the gift of a contrite heart which expiates the sins of others, the possibility of comprehending the divine mysteries and the gift of foreseeing the future.<sup>78</sup> In my pursuit of apocalyptic themes in the *Vita*, I will focus on the last gift.

Romuald’s first vision relates to the moment of his “monastic conversion” when he decided to enter the *coenobium*. During a vigil in the church of Sant’ Apollinare in Classe, the saint himself appeared to him from under the altar clothed in rays of sun, his light filling the entire

<sup>76</sup> In the present work, I rely on Colin Ralph Phipps' unpublished doctoral thesis as the source for the *Life of St. Romuald* because it provides an English translation with the critical analysis of the content from the perspective of historical authenticity of Damian’s narrative. Damian sets Romuald’s arrival to Poreč in Chapter 31 after Emperor Otto’s death presented in Chapter 30. Phipps, “Saint Peter Damian’s *Vita*”, 246-258. For the standard Latin text with commentaries in Italian, see: Peter Damian, *Vita beati Romualdi*, ed. Giovanni Tabacco, Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1957.

<sup>77</sup> Phipps, “Saint Peter Damian’s *Vita*”, 252, 333.

<sup>78</sup> Idem: 38, 49, 252-255.

church, and with a golden censer he cast incense on all the altars in the church. Phipps commented that the entire *Vita* is pregnant with symbolism and that here, St. Apollinaris enacts the Apocalyptic vision of the angel bringing incense to the heavenly altar, that is the prayers of the faithful, and offers them to God.<sup>79</sup> Thus, St. Romuald's monastic conversion, his renounce of the worldliness, was marked by an apocalyptic image.

After this event, a heavenly vision is recorded only once more, and it happens during the two years which Romuald spent in seclusion in Istria. We are informed that "[...] he both foresaw no small number of events that were to come and penetrated with the rays of [spiritual] understanding many [of the] deep mysteries of the Old Testament and the New."<sup>80</sup> However, in the entire hagiography, I could not find explicit visions or references to the imminent end and the Millennium. Johannes Fried would disagree that the absence of explicit apocalyptic material from the tenth and eleventh-century hagiographies and historical works implies the absence of millenarian expectations. He affirms that the shame which the people felt about fearing the imminent end caused the silence of the sources.<sup>81</sup> I find Fried's assertion regarding shame unconvincing, because it represents an over-generalization and is farfetched.

On the other hand, Fried offers a more convincing argument regarding the elements of hope in the apocalyptic expectations. He suggests that the general call to penance and virtuous deeds in the lives of the tenth and eleventh-century saints represents the other side of the apocalyptic medieval tradition.<sup>82</sup> One of the most striking features of St. Romuald's personality is his urgent drive to convert whoever he meets to the most perfect form of Christianity – the practice of eremitism. According to Damian, he was responsible for the conversions of Pietro Orseolo the Elder, father of the Doge Orseolo II, John Gradenigo, the future St. Venerius, Bruno of

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<sup>79</sup> Idem, 48.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, 253.

<sup>81</sup> Fried, "Awaiting the End", 22.

<sup>82</sup> Idem, 23.

Querfurt and Tammus, Otto III's close friend.<sup>83</sup> He even urged Otto to follow in the footsteps of Christ, renounce his imperial power and join the hermitage.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, Romuald's encounter with Otto III resonates with the Legend of the Last Emperor and the Myth of the World Unity. These are excellent examples of meliorist tendencies in the apocalyptic tradition. According to the version of the sibylline prophecy contained in the *Tiburtine Oracle* about the life and deeds of the Last Emperor as the portents of the Last Days, his rule will bring a period of peace for the Church, during which the Jews and the pagans will be converted and all nations will be united under his crown. When these events have happened, he will go to Jerusalem and lay his crown before the Lord, thus ushering the Last Days signaled by the coming of Antichrist.<sup>85</sup> Romuald's invitation to Otto and his urgent call to repentance and conversion can be interpreted as indicators of the heightened apocalyptic expectations. Moreover, after Otto disregarded the saint's recommendations, Romuald prophesied the emperor's imminent death.<sup>86</sup>

The *Vita* also records St. Romuald's devotion to the archangel. One of the most difficult episodes of his life happens at the monastery of St. Michael at Bagno which he founded and dedicated to the archangel.<sup>87</sup> The brethren at the monastery extremely disliked his discipline and resorted to physical violence to expel him. Spiritually, it was the weakest moment of Romuald's life because an impious thought crossed his mind: he wished to pursue his own salvation instead of the conversion and salvation of others. It is possible that the presence of St. Michael reminded him of his spiritual calling and discipline.

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<sup>83</sup> Phipps, "Saint Peter Damian's *Vita*", 71, 138, 189, 206.

<sup>84</sup> Idem, 195-203.

<sup>85</sup> Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 89.

Emerson also warns that in the Middle Ages, there was no consensus regarding the chronology of the apocalyptic events and the accents placed on them. See: Idem, 83.

<sup>86</sup> Phipps, "Saint Peter Damian's *Vita*", 248-249.

<sup>87</sup> Idem, 152.



St. Michael at Bagno, however, was not the most important Michaeline monastery for Romuald. Earlier in the saint's life, he undertook a voyage to the Pyrenees and spent five years as a hermit at the monastery of St. Michael in Cuxa. It is one of the rare examples where his presence was so arduously desired that the inhabitants of the region decided to murder him just to keep his physical remains always present.<sup>88</sup> A comparable situation happened in Poreč, after his first visit, when the bishop of Poreč, grief-stricken because of his departure, forbade every boat-owner in the port to take Romuald back to Italy.<sup>89</sup>

So far, I have identified apocalyptic content in the *Vita* of St. Romuald and confirmed the importance of St. Michael in the life of the hermit. The question of the choice of the iconographic theme in the apse of the church at Limska Draga remains unanswered. Who was St. Stephen and why would his martyrdom be important for the Camaldolese community? I maintain that St. Stephen was chosen as the biblical type embodied in the life and sufferings of St. Romuald. Both were visionaries who could penetrate the divine mysteries and were persecuted for their criticism of the religious establishment.

If there is a single aspect of St. Romuald's spirituality that stands out in his hagiography, it is his pervading conflict with the monastic structures, especially abbots, because of their desire for worldly power.<sup>90</sup> It is true that Romuald never suffered martyrdom as St. Stephen did, but he was often persecuted because of his strict adherence to the *regula*, and all his sufferings became a martyrdom *in voto*. Indeed, the image which permeates his hagiography is that of a living martyr who suffered the iniquities at the hand of the corrupt monks and abbots who would not be admonished, but beat him and expelled him from the community.

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<sup>88</sup> Idem, 124.

<sup>89</sup> Idem, 262-263.

<sup>90</sup> Idem, 246-247.

I maintain that the dedication of the larger church at Limska Draga should be understood in connection to St. Romuald's spiritual heritage. The archangel was his heavenly protector and the community he left behind wished to pay him homage in that way. Although the *Vita* intimates apocalyptic content, I can only circumstantially designate St. Michael at Limska Draga as apocalyptic, since no written sources testify to the precise reason for the dedication.

### 3.6. Bishop Engilmar of Poreč and St. Michael

Bishop Engilmar is the second prominent person connected to the monastery of St. Michael near Limska Draga. He came to Poreč from the monastery of Niederaltaich in Bavaria in 1028, but always kept the *familiaritas* with the monks from both Niederaltaich and Regensburg.<sup>91</sup> His arrival to the episcopal see of Poreč aligned with the German political measures for the stability of imperial position in Istria, especially toward Venice.<sup>92</sup> In the second year of his episcopacy, he donated the monastery of St. Cassian in Poreč to the monastery of St. Michael in Pula with a petition that the monks pray for his soul and the souls of his predecessors.<sup>93</sup> Through this donation, he was strengthening his own position, since St. Michael's monastery in Pula was one of the most influential in Istria.<sup>94</sup>

He wished to extend his influence over the monastery of St. Michael near Limska Draga, which was on the territory of the bishopric of Poreč, by demanding a full annual tithe.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>91</sup> We know that he kept close relations with the reformed monastery at Regensburg from the Necrologue of Regensburg. Namely, in 1045 they received the news of the bishop's death. Nikolina Maraković, "Crkva Sv. Martina u Svetom Lovreču Pazenatičkom – privatna crkva porečkih biskupa ili istarskih markgrofova?" [St. Martin's Church at Sveti Lovreč Pazenatički: A Private Church of Bishops of Poreč or Istrian Margraves?], *Histria: godišnjak Istarskog povijesnog društva* 1 (2011), 15, note 8.

<sup>92</sup> In 1000, Pietro II Orseolo set out on a campaign against the *Narrentani*, and on his way through the Adriatic, he visited Istrian and Dalmatian coastal towns to secure their allegiance. Moreover, coastal towns such as Poreč and Pula never fully accepted German rule and often found themselves between Venice and its pretensions on the one side, and German attempts of stopping Venice on the other. See: Levak, "Istra i Kvarner, 407.

<sup>93</sup> Kandler, *Codice*, 91, Anno 1030.

<sup>94</sup> Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, 163.

<sup>95</sup> Kandler, *Codice*, 99, Anno 1040.

When the Countess Azcica complained to the king Henry III, because she donated the lands to the monastery in the first place, the monastery was granted full royal protection.

These are the only written sources that testify to Engilmar's presence in Istria, and in both he is connected to the two most prominent Michaeline monasteries. As Evan Gatti suggested, Engilmar sought aid in this powerful protector for the stability of his episcopacy and of the region.<sup>96</sup> As in the Carolingian period, Istria again became the bordering area toward Croatia in the east and Venice across the sea. In the eighth century, St. Michael protected the integrity of the contested area, oversaw the main communication on the axis north-south and the rebellious coastal towns through Benedictine monasteries constructed on strategic points. In the eleventh century, the task of protection remained Michael's, but the shift was made on the earthly level – the stabilization of the bordering territory was given to bishops as the exponents of the imperial rule.

### 3.7. St. Michael's Churches in Istria and the Apocalyptic Chronology

Before concluding the present discussion, I must consider the chronology of the apocalyptic expectations and compare it with the chronology of the Michaeline churches. Why have I insisted so far on associating the church of St. Michael near Limska Draga with the apocalypticism if the church was consecrated in 1040, four decades after the turn of the Millennium? Johannes Fried warns that “expecting the end of the world in the near future and anticipating the signs of its arrival are not confined to the year 1000 of our reckoning.”<sup>97</sup> Fried

<sup>96</sup> Evan A. Gatti, “In the Apse or in between: The Benedictional of Engilmar and Traditions of Episcopal Patronage in the Apse at Poreč”, in *Saintly Bishops and Bishops' Saints*, ed. John S. Ott and Trpimir Vedriš, (Zagreb: Hagiotheca, 2012), 150.

<sup>97</sup> Computing the exact year of the millennium was an arduous task and different theologians arrived at different conclusions. Firstly, it depended on whether one should start counting from Christ's Incarnation or from his death. Secondly, for the theologians who took Christ's death as the usher of the “last span of human history”, the exact year of Christ's death was equally difficult to determine. Therefore, Fried suggests considering a relatively wide time chronological span to look for heightened millennial expectations. Fried, “Awaiting the End”, 21.

suggests looking for the signs of apocalyptic expectations between 979 and 1033/4 or even up to 1042. In that period, only one Michaeline church was active – the monastic church near Pula with its funerary chapel – and the church at Limska Draga was erected at the very end of the apocalyptic season.

Additionally, after Limska Draga, three more churches were dedicated to the archangel. In the period between the mid-sixth and mid-ninth centuries, only two Michaeline churches were active, whereas one half of the eleventh century witnessed two times as many. What can account for this great chronological gap and the quantitative difference? It is possible that after the apocalyptic expectations had subsided, a wave of constructing new churches flooded Istria from the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century. “It was as if the whole world were shaking itself free, shrugging off the burden of the past, and cladding itself everywhere in a white mantle of churches.”<sup>98</sup> And indeed, in Istria and on the whole eastern Adriatic many monastic churches were either reconstructed or built anew in the eleventh century as a part of the wider monastic reform begun in Cluny and Gorze already in the tenth century.<sup>99</sup>

St. Michael’s larger church served as a model for other eleventh-century single-spaced churches with a single protruding apse.<sup>100</sup> Among them, there are two monastic churches, St. Michael near Bale and St. Peter and St. Michael on Kras, that belong to this wave of international early Romanesque architecture which diverged from the Istrian traditional typology of churches.

The written sources place the *ante quem* for the two monastic churches in the twelfth century, 1102 for the church on Kras and 1178 for the church near Bale, but the similar

<sup>98</sup> Rodulfus Glaber, *The Five Books of the Histories*, ed. and tr. John France (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 116-117.

<sup>99</sup> Miljenko Jurković, “Crkvena reforma i ranoromanička arhitektura na istočnom Jadranu” [Church Reform and Early Romanesque Architecture on the Eastern Adriatic], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 20 (1990), 195.

<sup>100</sup> Demonja, “Istarske jednobrodne crkve”, 18.

typology indicates a date prior to 1100, and later than 1040.<sup>101</sup> Ante Šonje suggested that all the monasteries with the typology like at St. Michael's church near Limska Draga were Camaldolese.<sup>102</sup> The Michaeline monastery near Bale is set on a hilltop and is close to the main communication previously mentioned in connection to the monastery of St. Mary Major, thus, it could have also had a strategic role. St. Peter's and St. Michael's church on Kras was part of the property bequeathed to the Patriarch of Aquileia by the Istrian Margrave Ulric II and his wife Adelaide in 1102.<sup>103</sup> Through that donation, St. Michael became the protector of the patriarch's position in Istria.

The third eleventh-century Michaeline church near Banjole-Vodnjan typologically and functionally does not belong to this wave of Camaldolese churches, and will be analyzed in the following subchapter.

### 3.8. St. Michael's Church near Vodnjan

St. Michael's church near modern-day Vodnjan formed part of a medieval village of Banjole. The village was abandoned in the period between 1300 and 1456 when the inhabitants moved to a larger village of Vodnjan.<sup>104</sup> Presently, it is difficult to find the church because of its remoteness from any settled area or public roads and is surrounded by thick bushes. Its perimeter walls are preserved up to one meter in height and only several columns remain *in situ* that belonged to the original construction. In a nearby chapel, also dedicated to St. Michael and constructed in 1456, there are fragments of liturgical furnishings from the old church

<sup>101</sup> For Bale, see: Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, 147. For Kras, see: *Codice*, 119, Anno 1102.

<sup>102</sup> Šonje suggested that all eleventh-century Michaeline monasteries were Camaldolese and that the monastery near Pazin should be counted among them. Ante Šonje, *Crkvena arhitektura zapadne Istre: Područje porečke biskupije od IV. do XVI. stoljeća* [Church Architecture of Western Istria: The Territory of the Bishopric of Poreč from the Fourth to Sixteenth centuries] (Zagreb, Pazin: Kršćanska Sadašnjost, IKD Juraj Dobrila, 1982), 123.

<sup>103</sup> Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj*, 96.

<sup>104</sup> Martina Barada and Sunčica Mustač, "Sv. Mihovil Banjolski – preliminarni rezultati istraživanja trobrodne bazilike" [St. Michael of Banjole – Preliminary Results of the Investigation of the Three-Aisled Basilica], in *I. Porečki susret arheologa – rezultati arheoloških istraživanja na području Istre*, ed. Miljenko Jurković, (Poreč: Zavičajni muzej Poreštine, 2008), 159.

imbedded in its walls.<sup>105</sup> The eleventh-century construction represents the third phase which substituted earlier mid-fifth century and the Carolingian phases. The fragments found both on the site of the three-aisled church and in the 1456 chapel date from the Carolingian and eleventh-century phase respectively.<sup>106</sup>

The large three-aisled church with three semicircular protruding apses in the eastern wall, a deep and raised choir in the east, a narthex and a bell-tower on the western end constituted the eleventh-century church. Typologically, it belongs to the period of renovation of the early Christian architecture brought about in the eleventh century through the church reform.<sup>107</sup> Few churches in the eleventh-century Istria belong to this type, which makes this exemplar even more extraordinary.<sup>108</sup>

It should also be noted that for a small medieval village such as Banjole, this twenty-two-meters-long and fourteen-meters-wide church obviously exceeded the spiritual needs of perhaps a few dozens of people.<sup>109</sup> Certainly, its architecture indicates some form of international Benedictine influence typical for the period in question, but the archaeological finds exclude the possibility of an adjoining monastery. Sunčica Mustač suggests that the church most probably functioned as a pilgrimage center together with the nearby church of St. Fosca.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Idem, 152.

<sup>106</sup> Sunčica Mustač, "Ambo from the Church of St. Michael at Banjole near Peroj (Istria)", *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 15/2 (2009), 418.

<sup>107</sup> Regarding the importance of the monastic and church reforms for the introduction of early Romanesque into Istria and generally, into the eastern Adriatic in the eleventh century, see: Miljenko Jurković, "Benediktinci na sjevernom Jadranu" [Benedictines on the Northern Adriatic], in *Opatijske crkvene objekte: Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa održanog u Opatiji 17. i 18. studenoga 2006. godine*, ed. Ivan Crnković (Opatija: Grad Opatija, 2008), 8-9. See also: Jurković, "Crkvena reforma", 7-9.

<sup>108</sup> St. Martin's church in Lovreč Pazenatički is the only eleventh-century three-aisled basilica with three protruding apses next to St. Michael near Vodnjan. In Istria, church architecture preferred inscribed apses to protruding ones, like in St. Fosca's church. See: Damir Demonja, "Trobodne romaničke crkve u sklopu istarske umjetnosti" [Three-aisled Romanesque Churches in the Context of Istrian Art], *Peristil* 41 (1998), 18.

<sup>109</sup> Barada and Mustač, "Sv. Mihovil Banjolski", 157.

<sup>110</sup> St. Fosca's church displays some similarities with St. Michael in that it is a disproportionately large church for a rural context, and there are no remains of an adjoining monastery. Also, the iconography of the frescoes at St.

The artistic program of the church is very fragmentary. Among the numerous fragments of stone plastic found in the eleventh-century church, Mustač managed to reconstruct the ambo and only partly the chancel screen. Both are contemporaneous with the third phase of the church or slightly later, from the beginning of the twelfth century.<sup>111</sup> Again, as in the case of the church near Limska Draga, the iconographic program does not reveal anything explicitly apocalyptic. On the ambo, several Christological scenes are represented: The Annunciation, the Nativity and the Bathing of the Christ Child on one side, and on the other Flight to Egypt and the Women at the Sepulcher.<sup>112</sup> On the only preserved fragment of the chancel screen Mustač identified the figure of Christ showing his wounds to the disciples after the Resurrection.<sup>113</sup>

Since the iconographic program does not point to a certain direction, I will turn to the stylistic analysis of the fragments. Its quality does not reflect international craftsmanship, but the work of a local master. However, Mustač warns that he must have used an international model, most probably owned by the workshop where he was employed or by the commissioner.<sup>114</sup> On the ambo and on the chancel screen fragment, human figures are conveyed in a stiff manner, frontally and extremely schematized, and have disproportionate limbs. Their heads are veiled and their eyes wide open dominating the oval faces. The eyes are

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Fosca, especially the Ascension of Christ on the wall above the triumphal arch, displays southern Italian influences evident in Benedictine monastic churches and pilgrimage churches. Maraković concluded that it must have functioned as a local pilgrimage church. See: Maraković, "Zidno slikarstvo", 167.

That St. Fosca functioned as a pilgrimage site and that its iconography was evidently connected with the southern Italian artistic sphere probably directed Mustač in her interpretation. Mustač added that the church was probably situated along one of the pilgrimage routes in Istria, although there has not been a systematic research of the pilgrimage routes in Istria. See: Mustač, "Ambo from St. Michael", 425.

Surprisingly, unlike the church of St. Michael, which collapsed most probably due to the problems with the static, the church of St. Fosca is still standing and is fully functional for receiving pilgrims.

<sup>111</sup> Mustač, "Ambo from St. Michael", 428.

<sup>112</sup> Some fragments of the ambo are known only through the photographs from Domenico Rismondo's research in 1907/8, they have been lost in the meantime. See: Idem, 419.

<sup>113</sup> Idem, 422. She bases her conclusion on the description and a photograph by Domenico Rismondo. Namely, Rismondo was in possession of eleven sculpted heads which were set in a row next to each other on relief fragment that belonged to the architrave of the chancel, which is now lost. She proposes that the eleven heads represented eleven apostles present in the house where Christ appeared to them after the Resurrection, showing his wounds.

<sup>114</sup> Idem, 421.

rendered by carving the iris around the pupil which juts out, and by high eyebrows that descend into the curve of a triangular nose.

The manner of rendering the faces on the ambo and on the chancel screen directed Mustač toward the contemporary sculpture on Monte Gargano, found in the ruins of St. Peter's church.<sup>115</sup> This sculpture represents Christ *orant* and there are certain formal similarities between the Banjole chancel fragment and the sculpture from St. Peter at Gargano. Both heads are oval and veiled in a similar manner, the pupils are carved into the stone, the nose is shallow, the lips small and the hands are in a similar position.

I am not completely convinced by Mustač's conclusion regarding the provenance of the model for the sculpted fragments of the ambo and the chancel screen since she only provides one example of a sculpture of Christ in the gesture of *orant* from the church of St. Peter at Monte Gargano. The argument for the southern Italian influence based on the formal similarities of the sculpture at St. Michael's church with that from St. Peter's at Monte Gargano cannot stand on its own.

Mustač provides two additional indicators of the southern Italian influence sphere present in this church. Firstly, it is the modelling of the chancel and its relation to the ambo. Namely, the chancel was deep and connected to the ambo with a passage resembling early Christian *solea*. The position of the ambo in the church and the overall form of the chancel draw on early Christian models promoted by the papal reform in the late eleventh century.<sup>116</sup>

Secondly, in Rismondo's 1907 campaign, the inscription *dialectica* was found on a pillar in the southern aisle. It led Mustač to suggest that the commissioners of the church must have belonged to a highly-educated community acquainted with the renewed efforts of abbeys such

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<sup>115</sup> Idem, 426.

<sup>116</sup> Idem, 424-426.



as Monte Cassino in the study of dialectics.<sup>117</sup> These three elements together were enough for Mustač to conclude that the commissioners of St. Michael participated in the efforts of strengthening the Roman reform and the papacy in Istria by promoting contemporary Roman liturgical practices and Garganic artistic practices.<sup>118</sup>

Due to the lack of written sources related to this church, I cannot conclude anything more than has already been suggested by Mustač, although not without reservation since the sculptural evidence is fragmentary and the comparative material scarce. Provided that this project of the highly-educated commissioners interested in *dialectica* reflects the reformist efforts by emulating the Roman liturgical models and the southern Italian artistic experience, the role St. Michael was given in this context could simply be that of the protector of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.<sup>119</sup>

However, the Roman Church reform was not simply a matter of regulating the pragmatic relations between the Church and the state in the matters of investiture. Brett Edward Whalen focused on the theoretical or theological background of the papal reform and demonstrated its eschatological meaning. Namely, the intention of the Church reform was to unite all Christians under the leadership of the papacy, which Whalen described as a type of Christian universalism.<sup>120</sup> Until then, in the minds of the medieval people, only the Last Emperor possessed the power to unite nations and bring about the Last Days.

The church of St. Michael at Banjole-Vodnjan, constructed only twenty years after the beginning of the reform, became the beacon of the reformed Roman presence in Istria. In the eleventh century, Istria was ecclesiastically under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Aquileia,

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<sup>117</sup> Idem, 425.

<sup>118</sup> Idem, 426.

<sup>119</sup> Naturally, orthodoxy and orthopraxis viewed from the Roman perspective.

<sup>120</sup> Whalen, *Dominion of God*, 13.

which was, in turn, the representative of the imperial policies. In the eleventh century, Germans, such as Engilmar at Poreč or Megingaudius at Pula, occupied the episcopal sees strengthening imperial position in the coastal towns.<sup>121</sup> Thus, by becoming the protector of the papal reform in the German Istria, St. Michael assumed an eschatological role.

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<sup>121</sup> For Megingaudius, see: Kandler, *Codice*, 103, Anno 1060.

## 4. Conclusion

In the long history of St. Michael's cult in Istria, the archangel assumed many roles in several distinct contexts. We have encountered him at the monastery on the hilltop near Pula around the mid-sixth century in the recently re-conquered Istria. As Justinian's armies pushed out the Arian Ostrogoths, this *archistrategos* performed his duty as the guardian of the orthodoxy and the protector of the integrity of Empire.

In the late eighth-century Carolingian Istria, the strategic position of his monastery at Pula was recognized and joined with the monasteries of St. Mary Major near Bale and St. Andrew near Rovinj. In that time, he also shared his funerary role with St. Clement, when a funerary chapel dedicated to this Roman martyr was added to the monastery. St. Michael prospered in his role of a soulmate, so much so, that in the eleventh century the funerary chapel received additional aula to house more tombs.

In the ninth century, a monastery called *sotto terra* was dedicated to the archangel in the north-western part of Istria, built on strategic location near a route that connected Istria with Italy. Seemingly, St. Michael's main duty in the Carolingian period was to protect the integrity of the Empire, its contested borders and secure the rebellious coastal towns. After the dissipation of the Empire in the late ninth century, we possess no written sources about any of the two monasteries until 990.

The development of the cult stagnated until the eleventh century, the central period of interest of this work. Around 1030, Bishop Engilmar sought the help of the archangel by asking the monks to intercede for his soul and the souls of his predecessors. However, he did not stop there, but wished to secure his episcopal position and the integrity of the Empire through consecration of the new church of St. Michael at Limska Draga by claiming the right to the annual tithe.

The new church of the monastery at Limska Draga belonged to the Camaldolese community founded by one of the most prominent hermits and monastic reformers of the eleventh century – St. Romuald. We find out from Peter Damian's *Vita* that this rigorous ascetic received heavenly visions, obtained the gift of prophecy, felt an urgent need to convert people and called for repentance and change of life and by experiencing martyrdom *in voto*, expiated the sins of the corrupted monastic and political elites. In the formative years of his eremitism, he experienced the closeness of St. Michael at the monastery at Cuxa, and in the crucial moment of his spiritual path, at the monastery of San Michele in Bagno, where he was tempted to give up on his calling. After the turn of the Millennium, he went to Istria where he spent three years and formed a community of hermits. St. Michael became the protector of the Camaldolese community through the heritage of St. Romuald.

However, because of the apocalyptic content in the life of St. Romuald on the one hand, and the time of the construction of the church of St. Michael at Limska Draga which corresponds to the chronology of the apocalyptic expectations in Europe on the other, I have cautiously concluded that St. Michael assumed an apocalyptic role in this context. The conclusion is further corroborated by the gap of two centuries in the construction of Michaeline churches in Istria, and by the quantity of Michaeline churches in the eleventh century. Other than St. Michael at Limska Draga, three additional churches were dedicated to the saint before the end of the century: St. Michael near Bale, St. Peter and St. Michael on Kras and St. Michael at Banjole-Vodnjan.

I have described this wave of constructing new churches in Istria with the words of Radulfus Glaber: "It was as if the whole world were shaking itself free, shrugging off the burden of the past, and cladding itself everywhere in a white mantle of churches." This citation points to the general climate of the late tenth and eleventh centuries illustrated in the *Vita* of

St. Romuald. In the context of the apocalyptic expectations, people were called to repent and reform their lives, to anticipate the new creation, that is the Heavenly Jerusalem, that follows the turmoil of the last days.

I have stated that the medieval tradition developed an ambiguous attitude towards the apocalypse. On the one hand, medieval Christians expected calamities caused by Antichrist, and on the other, they expected the joys of heavenly rewards. This ambiguity is further mirrored in the narratives about Antichrist and the Last World Emperor. Simultaneously, Christians expected a general falling away from the true faith, moral decay and natural disasters as the heralds of the last days, and spreading of the gospel until the end of the earth (Mt 24,12) and the unity of Christians under the legendary Last Emperor. Furthermore, this dual relationship toward the Millennium stems from the different traditions of interpreting the apocalyptic books. One line followed the injunction of Christ himself, and St. Augustine, and did not calculate the day and the time of Christ's second Parousia. The other line, especially present in the Ottonian political circles, identified the contemporary events with the biblical types of apocalyptic events.

Likewise, the cult of St. Michael did not assume exclusively apocalyptic connotations in the decades on either side of the Millennium, neither did it relinquish its apocalyptic role after the Millennium had safely passed. This multifaceted identity of St. Michael is present in the eleventh-century Istria. Although through St. Romuald and the monastery at Limska Draga he assumed apocalyptic connotations, other traditional Michaeline roles equally developed in Istria. He remained the protector of the integrity of the Empire, the ancient *archistrategos*, by association with the ruling and ecclesiastical elites and their support of some of the monasteries, as in the case with bishop Engilmar, Countess Azcica and Margrave Ulric II. When the monastery of St. Michael and St. Clement received an additional nave in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to

house new tombs, his funerary role, established in the Carolingian eighth century, was reaffirmed. Finally, in the pilgrimage church near Banjole-Vodnjan, the commissioners imagined him as the protector of the papal reform and its orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

The present work, as I have stated in the introduction, is a small contribution to the Michaeline studies. Although I have mapped and analyzed the churches from the mid-sixth to eleventh centuries, further effort is required to finish mapping the late medieval Michaeline churches, not only in Istria, but on the entire eastern Adriatic to understand how the cult functioned, in what type of environment did he receive his sanctuaries, in which political formations and spiritual climates did the cult thrive and what facets of his complex identity did the archangel display in each context. The main aim of such a project would be a more thorough insight into the dynamics of the cultic development on regional and micro-levels through which the trap of over-generalization could be avoided, be it in the direction of *les terreurs* or anti-Terrors.

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## 6. Appendices

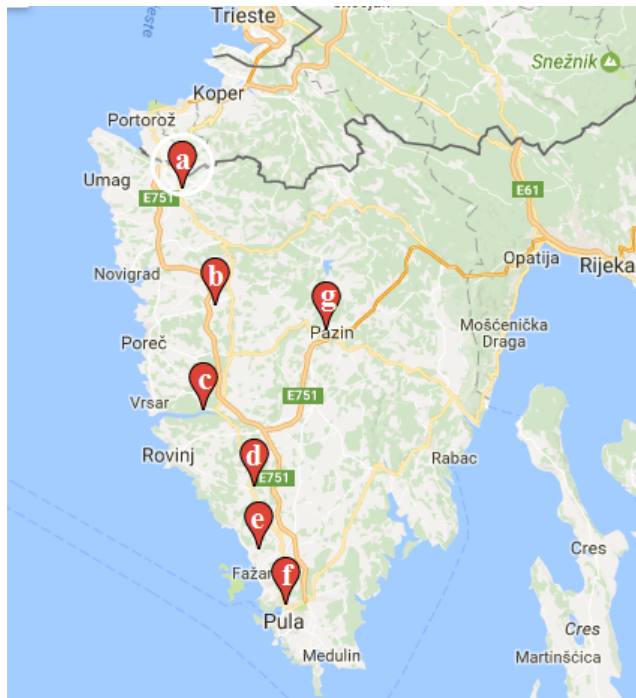


Figure 1 Map of Istria with marked churches

From the north: a) St. Peter and St. Michael on Kras, b) St. Michael *sotto terra*, c) St. Michael near Limska Draga, d) St. Michael near Bale, e) St. Michael near Vodnjan, f) St. Michael and St. Clement near Pula, g) St. Michael near Pazin (uncertain dating).

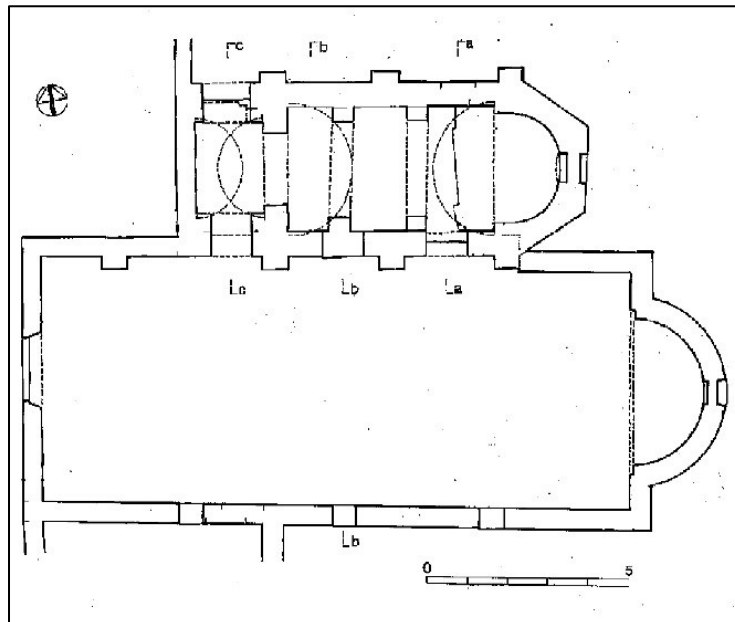


Figure 2 St. Michael near Limska Draga, Ground-Floor Plan (Igor Fisković)



*Figure 3 St. Michael near Limska Draga, eastern apse*

Courtesy of Ms. Kristina Gergeta, Cultural Heritage Conservation Office, Pula.



*Figure 4 St. Michael near Limska Draga, 1966*

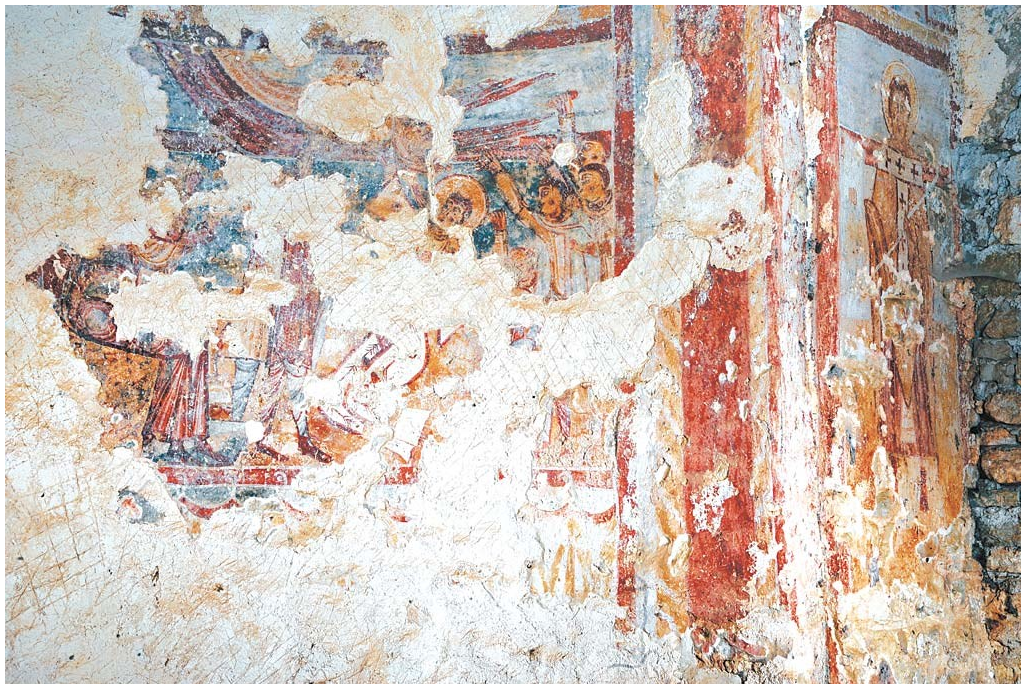
Courtesy of Željko Bistronić, Cultural Heritage Conservation Office, Rijeka.





*Figure 5 St. Michael near Limska Draga, interior, eastern apse*

Wall paintings, after mid-eleventh century. Courtesy of Ms. Kristina Gergeta.



*Figure 6 Martyrdom of St. Stephen, on the apse wall and St. Maurus on the right*

Source: <http://revitas.org/hr/turisticki-itinerari/freske/sv-lovrec-klostar,10/sv-mihovil,61.html>, accessed on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 10:30.





*Figure 7 St. Michael near Vodnjan, archaeological remains*

Courtesy of Željko Bistrović.



*Figure 8 St. Michael near Vodnjan, Christ, chancel screen fragment (left) and Christ orans, St. Peter, Gargano*

Sunčica Mustač, “Ambo from the Church of St. Michael at Banjole near Peroj (Istria)”, *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 15/2 (2009), 426.

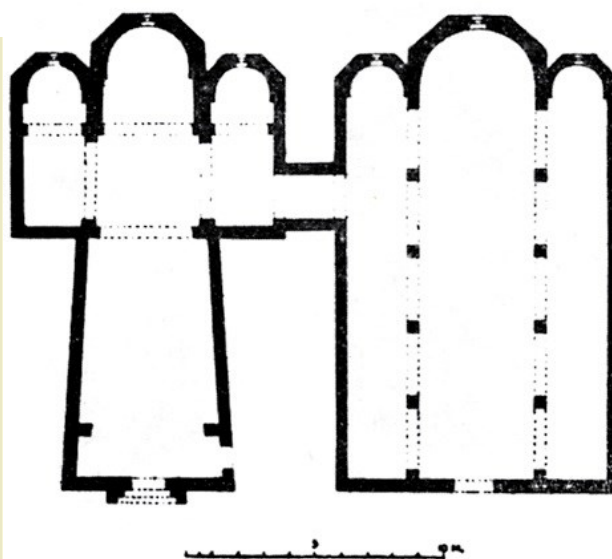
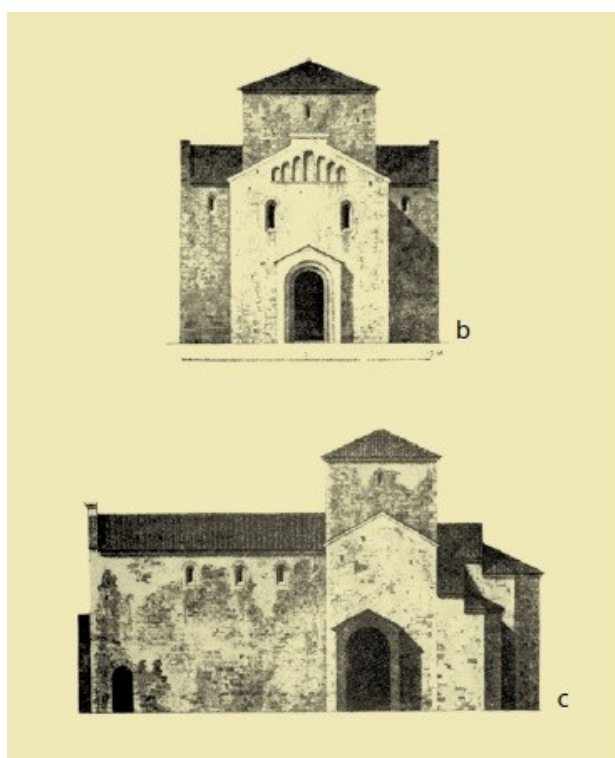


Figure 9 St. Michael and St. Clement near Pula, according to Pietro Kandler

Pavuša Vežić, “Memorije križnog tlocrta na tlu Istre i Dalmacije” [Christian *memoriae* of a Cruciform Ground-floor Plan in Istria and Dalmatia], *Ars Adriatica* 3 (2013), 34.