

# Beatrice Tanzi

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## The double “territorialization/ peripheralization” of the Istrian and Dalmatian dioceses

In the context of the complex dialectic between centre and periphery – an issue still indebted to the fundamental essays by Ljubo Karaman and Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg<sup>1</sup>, it is interesting to assess how the administrations of civil and religious authorities can be reconciled in a border region such as the eastern Adriatic in the years following the Council of Trent. At the time, the coastal area between Koper and Boka Kotorska (except for Quarnero and Dubrovnik) had been incorporated into the well-organised Venetian administrative system, including the ecclesiastical one. However, the State of the Church also sought to exercise its control over the region, leading to a kind of double peripheralization revolving around two centres: Venice – which manifested its authority through the organization of *podesterie* or regiments (even if a minor part of the territory of Venetian Istria was enfeoffed) – and Rome, which held some of its more peripheral bishoprics in the region<sup>2</sup>.

In the religious sphere, the control and government of the peripheries took place through apostolic visitations, directly sponsored by the pope which constituted one of the most effective measures and means to implement and verify *in loco* the provisions issued by the Council of Trent. Apostolic visitations, on the one hand, enabled monitoring of the sites that belonged to the Church and of the records relating to the sacraments' administration,

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1 Ljubo Karaman, *O djelovanju domaće sredine u umjetnosti hrvatskih krajeva. Problemi periferijske umjetnosti* (Zagreb: Društvo historičara umjetnosti Narodne Republike Hrvatske, 1963); Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, “Centro e periferia”, in *Storia dell'arte italiana. Questioni e metodi*, vol. I. (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), 285–352.

2 On this question, see Aldo Stella, *Chiesa e Stato nelle relazioni dei nunzi pontifici a Venezia. Ricerche sul giurisdizionalismo veneziano dal XVI al XVIII secolo* (Rome: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1981).

the bequests and the related properties, and the condition of buildings, furnishings, and vestments. On the other hand, they aimed to verify not only the moral conduct of the clergy and the faithful – thus proving an efficient tool for gathering information on the social composition of the various bishoprics – but also the leadership of the diocese.

Shortly after the end of the Council of Trent in 1573, Pope Gregory XIII (Fig. 1) started sending legates to the bishoprics of his State and the neighbouring ones. Two years later, he appointed four illustrious bishops (Carlo Borromeo, Nicolò Sfondrati, Girolamo Ragazzoni, and Antimo Marchesani) to pursue the inspection of the dioceses in the other Italian states, except for those under the jurisdiction of foreign powers.

Extending such an initiative to the territories of the Serenissima was more problematic. During the sixteenth century, the Republic of San Marco was the beating heart of the trade with the German world, as well as the headquarters of the European printing industry. Venice itself was a cosmopolitan city where Greek Orthodox, Jews and Muslims lived together; a crossroads for writers, ambassadors, agents, spies, and political and religious refugees living in the shadow of republican freedom. Moreover, it was a crucial junction of heretical propaganda, also thanks to an intense trafficking of prohibited books. The traditional Venetian conflict with the imperial and papal powers gave space to heterodox movements; in addition to various works by Erasmus, the Serenissima also published vernacularizations of the writings of Saint Augustine on predestination, grace, and free will. In the Republic, therefore, the prevailing sensitivity and religious culture were different from traditional ones – and humanistically open to a dialogue with the promoters of the Reform. A tolerant attitude was necessary for a state where Orthodox and Jewish minorities coexisted, also in light of the widely known Paduan tradition of free academic discussion.

Therefore, the urgency of an apostolic visitation in the territories under the aegis of San Marco can easily be understood. The bishop of Verona Agostino Valier (Fig. 2), strongly supported by Pope Gregory XIII, was the first Apostolic Visitor after the Council of Trent to travel to the dioceses subject to the civil jurisdiction of the Republic of Venice in Dalmatia and Istria between 1579 and 1580<sup>3</sup>. This visit was preceded by the one of

3 On the figure of Agostino Valier, see Giovanni Cipriani, *La mente di un inquisitore: Agostino Valier e l'Opusculum De cautione adhibenda in edendis libris (1589-1604)* (Florence: Nicomp Laboratorio Editoriale, 2008); Elisabetta Patrizi, *Pastoralità ed educazione. L'episcopato di Agostino Valier nella Verona post-tridentina (1565-1606)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2015) and Stefano Andretta, "Valier, Agostino," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2020) (with previous bibliography). The extensive literature on the prelate is mainly focused on the religious, pedagogical and social aspects of his life, while his propensities and tastes in the field of visual arts have hardly been analyzed. On the artistic interests of the prelate see Luca Fabbri, "Costanzo Antegnati e Felice Brusasorci per Agostino Valier," in *L'organo di Domenico Farinati nel Duomo di Verona* (Vago: Editrice la Grafica, 2021); Valeria Rainoldi, "Agostino Valier, sensibilità religiosa e pittorica nel periodo posttridentino a Verona," in *La mano e l'inquisitore. Il lungo rinascimento di Erasmo e l'abuso dell'anima* (Padova: Cleup, 2015): 341-383; and Valentino Martinelli and Alfredo Marchionne Gunter, "Notizie su Agostino e Pietro Valier Cardinali di San Marco, veneti a Roma," in *La regola e la fama. San Filippo Neri e l'arte* (Milan: Electa, 1995): 98-107. A beautiful portrait of Valier in a private collection was attributed to Domenico Brusasorci by Enrico Dal Pozzolo, "1564: Domenico Brusasorci con Agostino Valier a Roma," in *Magna Verona Vale. Studi in onore di Pierpaolo Brugnoli*, ed. A. Brugnoli e G.M. Varanini (Verona: Editrice La Grafica, 2008), 405-412.



Fig. 1

Lavinia Fontana, Portrait of Gregorio XIII. c. 1580, oil on canvas, private collection  
[https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papa\\_Gregorio\\_XIII#/media/File:Lavinia\\_Fontana\\_-\\_Portrait\\_of\\_Pope\\_Gregory\\_XIII.jpg](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papa_Gregorio_XIII#/media/File:Lavinia_Fontana_-_Portrait_of_Pope_Gregory_XIII.jpg)

Fig. 2

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Bust of Agostino Valier, 1626-1627, marble, Ca' d'Oro, Venice.  
[https://it.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Busto\\_del\\_cardinale\\_Agostino\\_Valier\\_di\\_Gian\\_Lorenzo\\_Bernini,4.JPG](https://it.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Busto_del_cardinale_Agostino_Valier_di_Gian_Lorenzo_Bernini,4.JPG)



Giovanni Francesco Sormano between 1573 and 1574 to the diocese of Dubrovnik, not subject to the Venetian administration.

Apostolic visitations, deemed necessary in those dioceses whose territory was subject to different sovereignties and therefore politically dismembered in several states, were nevertheless perceived as an interference in the internal affairs of the states. The Council of Trent, however, omitted to define the respective administrative competencies between the State and the Church, giving rise to delicate problems of mixed jurisdiction. The very particular position of Venice toward Rome, generally recognized since the establishment of the *Tre savi all'eresia* in 1547 and the reorganization of the courts of the Domain, clearly indicated the will of the Serenissima to centralize and directly control religious matters, opposing the intrusiveness of visitors sent over by the pope, who were seen as subjects of another state. Furthermore, the Heads of the Venetian Council of Ten had long complained about allocating abbeys and priories to clergymen from other territories who *dilapidavano le intrade et le mandavano fuori del Stato* (squandered the revenue and sent it out of the State)<sup>4</sup>.

In this regard, one may draw a significant parallel with Carlo Borromeo's visit (contemporary to Valier's) to the western outskirts of the Serenissima while he was archbishop of Milan, the capital of another state<sup>5</sup>. This visit created a growing discomfort both with the local clergy and the Venetian authorities, so much so that in 1580 the Senate and Patriarch Giovanni Trevisan refused to authorize his apostolic visitation to the city of Venice, recalling how Carlo Borromeo in Brescia had introduced *estraordinarie novità* (extraordinary novelties) not only in matters *appartenenti alla religion* (pertaining to religion) but also in *mere laiche* (merely secular ones). A strong intolerance against Borromeo also emerged during his visit to the diocese of Cremona (1575), which could be also considered a peripheral bishopric: the Apostolic See gave the prelate the faculty to visit the Fabbrica del Duomo, but the *massari* vehemently opposed it, claiming their autonomy as a secular institution, dependent only on the City Council<sup>6</sup>. The opposition was so severe that Borromeo threatened them with excommunication to gain access to the premises.

The inspection of the bishopric of Venice planned by Carlo Borromeo was therefore carried out by Agostino Valier in 1581 together with Lorenzo Campeggi, who succeeded to the papal nuncio Alberto Bolognetti following some rather daring manoeuvres at the beginning of the visit. It is therefore evident that, if the great majority of Venetian bishoprics were governed by Venetian patricians, even apostolic visitations were tolerated

4 Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Roma*, filza, dispatch and attachments dated 7 February 1579.

5 Borromeo was firmly convinced that a foreign apostolic visitor would be more effective than a local bishop: Lorenzo and Mary Madeline Tacchella, *Il Cardinale Agostino Valier e la riforma tridentina nella diocesi di Trieste* (Udine: Arti grafiche friulane, 1974), 106.

6 Emilio Giazzi, "La Biblioteca della Fabbrica della cattedrale nella Visita apostolica di san Carlo Borromeo a Cremona: decadenza e dispersione in età posttridentina," *Bollettino storico cremonese* 13–14 (2006–2007): 169–189.

only when carried out by ecclesiastics of the Serenissima. For this reason, the inspection of Istria and the coastal territories of Dalmatia was not met with particular hostility, certainly also thanks to the fact that Valier showed a more moderate and less inquisitive attitude than Borromeo. Addressing the Doge Nicolò Da Ponte, the bishop of Verona wrote: *Non dubito che la Sublimità Vostra, per la pietà sua et per il zelo che dimostra sempre all'honor del Signor Dio, favorirà l'esecutioni di quelle poche ordinationi c'ho lasciato in Istria, come si è degnata di favorire l'esecutioni di quelle in Dalmatia, non havendo io havuto altro scopo che levar qualche disordine manifesto et lasciar la quiete tra li cleri et li vescovi, tutto a honor di N. S. Dio et a soddisfazione della Serenità Vostra* (I have no doubt that Your Sublimity, out of the piety and zeal that you always show toward Our Lord, will favour the execution of the few arrangements that I have made in Istria, just as you did in Dalmatia, seeing that I had no other aim but to quell some manifest disorders and to bring peace among the clerics and bishops, in honour of God and to the satisfaction of Your Serenity)<sup>7</sup>. However, in addition to walking on such a thin edge with the government of San Marco, Valier also had to face the fact not all the territory of Istria and Dalmatia was available for him to inspect.

In the sixteenth century, the Istrian territory was divided between the Venetian Republic and the House of Austria, while the Ottomans occupied a significant part of the Dalmatian territory. Valier only visited areas under the control of the Venetian Republic. In Istria, he did not inspect parishes under the Austrian dominion: parts of the Diocese of Trieste, the Archdeaconship of Rijeka (which was part of the Bishopric of Pula), and the Archdeaconship in the territory of the Earldom of Pazin. It is not clear whether he visited the Diocese of Pićan, whose centre was located in the territory of the Earldom of Pazin. In Dalmatia, the prelate also did not visit a large part of the bishopric of Split, occupied by the Ottomans. However, the reports of Valier's visit show that the bishop of Verona had to appease several diatribes within the bishoprics, as in the island of Cres, under the diocese of Osor, led since 1575 by the Vicentine patrician Coriolano Garzadori<sup>8</sup>. At the beginning of his episcopate, Garzadori had visited his diocese, urging it to adapt its religious life to Tridentine regulations and to renew its religious buildings. This had created quite a strong discontent within the council, which did not appreciate these continuous attempts at reform and repeatedly complained to Venice about the prelate's violations of old customs, for instance by controlling the income and expenditure of island churches.

The community sent a lengthy request to the apostolic visitor to dismiss the prelate. However, Valier managed to settle the disputes, also underlining the need to reconstruct the collegiate church dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Fig. 3, 5), as established by the conciliar dictates, first on the site of the

7 Stella, *Chiesa e Stato*, 31.

8 Stefano Tabacchi, "Garzadori, Coriolano," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1999).



Fig. 3

Former Collegiate of St. Mary  
of the Snows, Cres, portal  
(photo: J. Gudelj)



Fig. 4

Former Cathedral of the  
Assumption of St. Mary, Osor,  
portal (photo: J. Gudelj)



Fig. 5

Former Collegiate of St. Mary of  
the Snows, Cres, interior  
(photo: J. Gudelj)

Fig. 6

Former Cathedral of the  
Assumption of St. Mary, Osor,  
interior (photo: J. Gudelj)

demolished church of St John in *plathea ipsa Chersi*, then in the new square by the harbour<sup>9</sup>. The City Council agreed and, in 1581, appointed a committee of nobles and commoners to oversee the construction of the new church. The contract of 1582, signed by Bishop Coriolan Garzadori in Cres in the presence of representatives of the Cres Commune, names the local master Zuan Pier Zvonarić who, as *Protto Architetto et Maestro* of the Church of Saint Mary in Cres, undertook to expand and extend the existing building<sup>10</sup>. The documents testify to the abandonment of the original idea of a new church in the port, but also to the fact that local artisans from the Zvonarić and Soldatić families worked on the reconstruction of the Collegiata and that Bishop Coriolano Garzadori of Vicenza was the leading promoter of the project. The renovation was so extensive that in his *ad limina* relations from 1589 to 1593, Garzadori speaks of a radical reconstruction, from top to bottom. The church was extended a few meters to the west to accommodate the new proportions of the building, while the Renaissance portal was rearranged on the new facade. Bishop Garzadori and *Proto* Zvonarić, in order to create a building worthy of its co-cathedral status in Cres, followed the dimensions and morphology of the late fifteenth-century Osor cathedral (Fig. 4, 6) – an outdated stylistic formula, unlike the up-to-date Serlian elements used by local masters on the monumental city gates.

Therefore, the Cres Collegiata represents a clear example of peripheralization in architecture, since it takes as a prototype the bishopric's main church, completed almost a century earlier and inspired by Venetian canonical models.

Of course, on the one hand, we need to consider the economic factors that precluded the employment of Venetian masters; on the other, it can be assumed that Garzadori wanted to reach out to the local population to increase consensus. After all, it was a matter of common sense to use the local masters for architecture, while the bishop called his fellow citizen Andrea Vicentino for the pictorial decoration of both the Osor cathedral and the Collegiata in Cres. Had it been placed in a Venetian church, Vicentino's surviving painting in Osor would be considered of average quality. However, in Cres and Osor, these paintings take on an additional, trademark Venetian aura, given the lower quality of local painters<sup>11</sup>.

Agostino Valier's interest in these places is more comprehensive than what appears from these short notes. The bishop was operating "on-site", trying to promote the reconstruction or renewal of ecclesiastical institutions in Istria and Dalmatia, as in the case of the parish church in Labin, which also functioned as a co-cathedral of the Pula diocese and was largely restored during the same period as Cres, and the church of Saint George in Piran (Fig. 7). Regarding the Split Cathedral, Valier pointed out the necessity

9 Laris Borić and Jasenka Gudelj, *Uveliko i u malo: lik i likovnost renesansnog Cresa* (Zadar: Sveučilište u Zadru, 2019).

10 Borić and Gudelj, *Uveliko i u malo*, 220.

11 Around the same years, Vicentino was also commissioned to paint the huge canvas representing the *Battle of Lepanto* in the Doge's Palace in Venice.





Fig. 7

Church of St. George, Piran, facade  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/  
wiki/File:Slovenia\\_DSC\\_0107\\_  
\(15194664160\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Slovenia_DSC_0107_(15194664160).jpg)

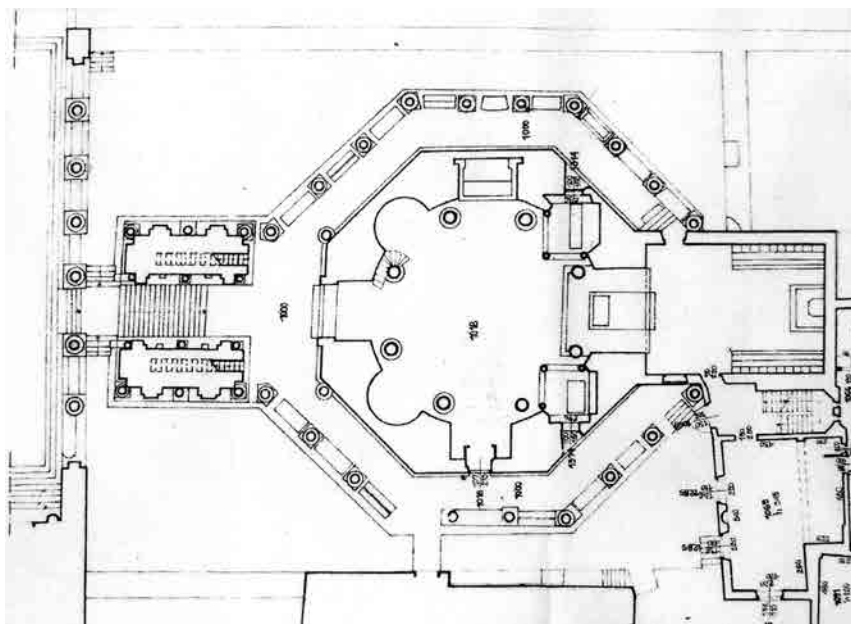


Fig. 8

Cathedral of St. Doimus, Split,  
exterior with presbiterium (photo: G.  
Bonaccorso)

Fig. 9

Cathedral of St. Doimus, Split, plan  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/  
wiki/File:Split-Kathedrale-Plan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Split-Kathedrale-Plan.jpg)

of a new choir, which was built in 1615 by archbishop Marcantonio De Dominis. The latter undertook the construction despite a lack of economic resources (due to the plague of 1608) by creating a new volume made entirely of stone taken from the Mausoleum and surrounding houses, cutting into the existing urban fabric (Fig. 8, 9)<sup>12</sup>.

In conclusion, the Roman Curia seemed more interested in exercising control over Venice than in proposing a renewal in art and architecture. Venice was considered a periphery and a nuisance to Rome because it had always claimed its autonomy. In its territories, apostolic visitations took the form of an observatory of the customs of the clergy and of the political situation, especially in the case of turmoil and contrasts with other religions. At the same time, Venice wanted to turn these territories into a well-marked offshoot of the Serenissima. The far east wing territories of the Republic of San Marco, composed of heterogeneous populations and religions, had to ensure that its cult never be confused with others. However, as mentioned above, Venice was subject to the control of Rome, which made this territory an emblematic and problematic case of double peripheralization.

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Beatrice Tanzi

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Ca' Foscari University Venice  
– Department of Philosophy  
and Cultural Heritage

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beatrice.tanzi@unive.it

12 Goran Nikšić, "Kor Splitske Katedrale," *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 40 (2005), 263–305.