

Antun Baće – Maja Zeman

Ancient Water-God in the Residences of Early Modern Dubrovnik

In the middle of the 16th century, as a prominent feature of the most representative decorative element of Dubrovnik palaces and villas – stone wash-basin – a head of a bearded man with dolphins or scrolls appeared. This figure, as well as the specific shape of basins to which it was applied, became common and in time replaced all other motifs and decorative elements. The ancient origin of the motif has long been observed, but was not interpreted more closely. The aim of the paper is to present the results of a detailed research, based equally on the written sources and the iconographic analysis. As the research reveals, all the elements of this relief representations – with some variations – were brought together to form a well-defined composition, thus referring to the specific prototype: depiction of the ancient Oceanus in Roman art. In the early modern period, this prototype was even used in respect to its original meaning, as is shown by the more contextualized interpretation of ancient narratives concerning Eastern Adriatic coast, as well as the works of Dubrovnik humanists. Among latter, *De raptu Cerberi* of Jakov Bunić, with its description of Heracles journey in the Oceanus' world, referred to contemporary model, constructed in the environment of the early 16th-century papal Rome, where Dubrovnik humanists found their strongholds in specific social circles. Transferred and further developed in the local sphere it became a personal sign of Dubrovnik's elite, equally representing the western culture built on the ancient tradition.