

**Saša Brajović – Milne Ulčar**

***Silver Covers, Iron Grids and Sensory Experience: Simultaneousness of Iconoclastic and Iconophilic Nature of Veneration in the Early Modern Bay of Kotor***

Post-Tridentine eagerness to reform religious values and practices has been usually recognized as critical toward both iconoclastic nature of Protestantism and late medieval exaggerated and often misused iconophilia. Consequently, church authorities were portrayed in historiography as dominant agents of strict, top-down movement of disciplining and educating common laypeople. However, in order to understand the complex web of believers' attitudes toward sacred objects, it is necessary to move beyond explicit dualism (iconoclasm-iconophilia, official-popular) and to adopt certain form of negotiation as dominant model of early modern creativity. During the 17th and 18th centuries in the Bay of Kotor a vast number of artefacts was altered in order to correspond more conveniently to the orthodox norms of post-Tridentine Catholic church. In this paper, we want to suggest the subtlety of this transformation by using the examples of various "additions" to the most precious holy objects. These adjustments can rather eloquently suggest the problematic nature of labelling each of these practices as either iconoclastic or iconophilic in its nature. It could be more fruitful, instead, to examine whether this blockage of the believers' gaze could act as a trigger for a kind of perception that exceeds only repressive impulses imposed by institutional authorities. Regulation of images and discipline of believers' bodies, hence, could be used as heuristic tools, open to the analysis that imply a different vocabulary used for communication between subject and object in post-Reformation era. The aim of this paper is to propose the existence of a dialogue between categories and agents that are usually

presented through clear-cut binaries, and to examine it by using visual evidences and archive material found in the churches of Kotor. Concepts of negotiation and paradox will be employed as methodological tools, crucial for the understanding of these complex visual mechanisms.