

The Franciscan monastery of St. Nicholas in the old town of Antivari (Bar), *Monasterium Sancti Francisci de Antibaro*, was a sizeable, one-nave late-Romanesque building of the 13th century. Now situated in the northern part of the old town, it was built in a former suburb, near the town gates, and later embraced by more recent defensive belt. Given the fact that the Franciscan mission in Antivari was mentioned in 1283, it may have been built about 1288 by queen Helen of Anjou, the wife of Serbian king Uroš I.

The Franciscan monastery's church in Antivari, as well as that one in Cattaro (Kotor), had rectangular apse, arched with longitudinal barrel vault, of wide range and height. Internal width of the main monastery church, placed west-east, is approximately 6.2 meters, its length is 17 meters and 4.6 meters the side of the apse.

The church was unique for its upper structure. It distinguished itself in very good construction of plan and elevation, as well as with a high quality of masonry technique, indicating the end of the thirteenth century. The influence of Byzantine architectural schemes in the Romanesque of Zeta had been reaching the monastery's naos (cella), which is very similar to that of the church marked as „C“ of nearby Ratac Abbey. Along the eastern part of the north side, as of the Franciscan church in Cattaro (Kotor), there was a chapel, i.e. two rooms for the sacristy, and along the western part of the same side was the bell tower. Similar examples of merging of Byzantine spatial schemes with Romanesque forms are witnessed in Dečani and some churches in Apulia.

The semicircular western staircase led to the portal that was two meters high. In the ruins of the Franciscan monastery there was found a part of the archivolt, previously situated above a window or the portal, with stylized palmettes, characteristic for the 14th century. There were also found a detail of the shoot with the leaf from a door-jamb, a head of manticore, parts of the portal with scenes from the Apocalypse and other smaller fragments (image of a naked male figure that personifies Hell, humanoid head with bulging eyes symbolizing fear, part of one of griffins which guarded the entrance); all of which are typical examples of coastal, Romanesque stone decoration from the 13th or early 14th century.

The part of the church on the north side is preserved. The main nave had on each side three pairs of side leaned arches, supported by the triple jut of wall reinforcement. On the west side of the monastery there is a wall block that was, as a result of the explosion, removed together with the ground that carried it. Preserved parts of wall indicate that the facade was made of not precisely processed, gray and red ashlar, arranged mostly without order in the various layers. There were slender Gothic window and oculus on the facade. On the lateral sides of the portal there were the marble slabs with inscriptions; in the lower part of the wall was a plaque with the following inscription:

„Rs. DNS PETRVS CAPSENTA CAN(onicus) ANTIBARENSIS HOC
MONVMENTVM SIBI POSTERISQVE SVIS POSVIT“.

Several graves, turned into ossuaries, are found in the floor of the church and in the immediate vicinity of its walls.

The remnants of the frescoes in the church (showing St. Nicholas, St. Mark, Christ Pantocrator, the Arcangel) very probably date from the time when there was completed the construction of the Franciscan churches on the southern Adriatic coast. The frescoes were painted in the traditional style of Zeta, on light-blue background up and green down, in a bright ocher and pale-green shadows.

The Franciscan monastery was probably mentioned in the will of the priest Sergio Turturosi from Antivari in 1390, when he left to the church of St. Nicholas the

legate of vestments, 3 ducats worth. „*Religiosus frater Bartholomeus de Scutaro guardianus Sancti Nicolai de Antibarò*“ was among Antivari's orators receiving the Venetian sovereignty, in Venice in 1406. Antivari's patricians, representatives of the commune, obtained on 19 May 1443 at the church of St. Nicholas near Antivari („*ala Chiesa de s. Nicolo apresso Antibari*“), the Venetian confirmation of town's privileges. Document from 1453 mentions the Minorites and „*Domus Sancti Nicolai extra muros Antibarenses*“. In September 1464, „*Fr. Honofrius de Sulmona*“ was assigned „*pro gvardiano Antiberi*“, and *Fr. Raphael* from Sebenico (Šibenik) „*pro discreto Antiberi*“. „*Zorzi condam Dobroslavi de Antivari*“ in 1479, after testamentary distribution of the most of his assets, concludes: „*Residuum de tutto laso una metà a frati de s. Nicolò*“. Rade Mihailov from Cattaro (Kotor) in 1516 endowed 1 ducat to church of St. Nicholas in Antivari.

In a report which refers to events that happened around 1525 is recorded the vicinity of another monastery of St. Nicholas: „*vscirno tutti questi di questa terra et andorno fora al monasterio de San Nicolo qui propinquo*“. According to his testament, *Zuane Zupan* from Antivari bestowed in 1570 his vineyard „*agli frati di m. S.to Nicolo*“, provided that they perpetually undertake to maintain two masses weekly for his deceased family members.

If the monastery belonged to the Observants, to the same refers the information about its guardian, dated 16 November 1577: „*Guardiano domus S. Nicolai Antibaren. Ordinis Minorum Observantium...*“. During the vacancy of the archbishop's see, to him was conceded the „*facultas absolvendi a casibus reservatis*“. The archdeacon of Antivari's Cathedral chapter *Blaž Baptalea* (Battaglia) in 1579 points out that the Franciscan monastery of St. Nicholas was looted and destroyed, even turned into the stable, while some of its movable property was guarded in the family houses of the nuns of the female convent of St. Andrew.

Subsequently, toward the end of the 16th century, the monastery was turned into mosque which was called „*Orta*“ („the middle“, as it was in the midst of the town); also is termed as of „*Sultan Murad III*“.

Partially damaged in bombardment of 1877/78, in 1908 it was still well preserved and covered. At the time, the military stuff was kept inside (including some old weapon: rifles, sabers, iron helmets - undoubtedly from Venetian period). According to a 1912 record of German Hugo Grothe, in the wide hall of the church, filled „to the brim“ with the grenades and ammunition, stacked material rolled and hit against the flagstones. It was destroyed intentionally, during the First Balkan War, in the explosion of gunpowder placed there, on 2 November 1912.

Within the complex of the Franciscan monastery, beside the **cloister** and the other buildings, there was another **church**, probably **dedicated to St. Mark**. The chapel situated close to old town gates is consisted of two rooms, without the altar space or apse. Its facade and portal were made in Romanesque style. The church („*vel sacella*“) of St. Mark is mentioned in historiography in 1817. The suburban church of St. Mark („*suburbani S. Marci*“) in Antivari is recorded in 1291. Confirming his archdeaconry, the Pope in 1291 gave the approval for entrusting the church of St. Mark „*extra muros Antibarenses*“ to *dilectum filium* Marin Žare, the later archbishop of Antivari. Marko Jorga, archbishop of Antivari, noted in 1697 that the church was located inside the town's walls.

Savo Marković, *Stanovništvo srednjovjekovnog Bara*, Perast 2014, pp. 614, 797-800, and there quoted literature.