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**NICHOLAS OF LYRA, *Postilla in Apocalipsim***  
**In Latin, illustrated manuscript on parchment**  
**Dalmatia [Montenegro], Cattaro [Kotor], dated 26 September 1438**

88 ff., complete (quires tipped in, but collation apparently as follows: i-viii<sup>10</sup>, ix<sup>8</sup> [10-2, with last two leaves of quire cancelled]), written in a regular informal littera bastarda, in brown ink, on up to 32 long lines, parchment ruled in pale red and pale brown ink (justification 170 x 100 mm), heading in red, biblical excerpts underlined in red ink, Roman numerals indicating chapters in red and blue ink, 4-line high decorated initials opening each chapter in alternately blue or red paint with characteristic brown ink penwork ornamentation, 6-line high opening historiated initial with drawing in brown ink, representing saint John writing on Patmos, with an angel and God in Heaven, coat-of-arms in a circular wreath traced in brown ink in lower margin of f. 2 (folded over to meet new size constraints when the manuscript was rebound). Modern vellum over pasteboards, boards stained in pink, smooth spine (Upper margin of fol. 2 cropped, slightly affecting historiated initial, fire damage to a few leaves towards the end of the manuscript, else in clean, legible condition). Dimensions 188 x 125 mm.

One of a coherent group of five localized manuscripts signed by the scribe Johannes de Luxia in Montenegro, this manuscript contributes to our knowledge of manuscript production in the Venetian colonies, providing proof of the cultural hegemony of Italy over these regions coexisting with local Croatian Glagolitic culture. Manuscripts copied in Dalmatia and properly identified as such are extremely rare.

## PROVENANCE

1. Colophon (f. 88v) reveals that the present manuscript was copied in Venetian Cattaro (medieval town of Kotor, Montenegro, off the coast of the Adriatic) by Johannes de Luxia (Venetian notary and chancellor of Cattaro) a recorded scribe who copied two other manuscripts (Bologna, Univ. MS 2556, f. 260 [dated 8 November 1435], see *Studi italiani di filologia classica*, 1909, vol. 17, no. 1323; and Vatican, MS Reg. lat. 430 [dated 2 April 1450]; recorded in Bouveret, 1973, I, p. 366, no. 10371 and 10372). We have located a third manuscript copied by Johannes de Luxia, in Cambridge, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Typ 292: this manuscript was copied in 1444 and contains Petrus Berchorius, *Libellus naturalium de fide contra vanos et curiosos philosophos*. Interestingly the Houghton manuscript presents a similar drawing in ink and wash (see link to Digital Scriptorium in Online Resources below and R. S. Wieck, *Late Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts 1350-1525 in the Houghton Library*, 1983, p. 130, fig. 87). Finally the same Johannes de Luxia copied a deluxe manuscript for Giovanni Balbi in 1457, containing a copy of the *Catasticus*

of the town of Zupa di Cattaro (commissioned in 1429) and illuminated by a drawing similar in style that includes a representation of St. Triphone (patron saint of Cattaro), the winged lion of St. Mark and the arms of the Balbi family (Roanne, Médiathèque, Collection Auguste Bouillier, MS 5) (for the digitized image of first folio, with drawings highlighted in colored wash, see below). There are arms placed in lower margin of f. 2, traced in brown ink. Oddly this folio is longer in length, and the bottom part of the leaf has been folded over, hiding the arms. It seems likely that originally the manuscript was larger in size and was cropped when rebound. In order to preserve the arms drawn in the margin, the bottom of f. 2 was simply folded over. These arms have not been identified and are not those of the Venetian Balbi Family as found in two other manuscripts copied by Giovanni de Luxia (MSS. Houghton and Roanne).

2. Private Collection, Europe.

### TEXT

f. 1, Title-page, in a later hand, reads: "Anonimus episcopus Canonensis. Super Apocalipsim S. Ioannis inter prefatio. MCCCXXVIII [1329]" (date of composition alluded to in chapter 13, according to a note on f. 1v: "Scipsit autem anno millesimo tercentesimo [sic] vigesimo nono ut patet ex cap. xiii. huius lib. prope finem");

ff. 2-3, Nicholas de Lyra, *Postilla in Apocalipsim*, Prologus super librum Apocalipsis, heading in red, *Apocalipsis*; incipit, "Oportet te iter propheticare populis et gentibus Apocalipsis x<sup>o</sup>. Sicut dixi in principio genesis vetus ac novum testamentum...";

ff. 3-88, Nicholas de Lyra, *Postilla in Apocalipsim*, chapters 1 to 22, incipit, "*Apocalipsis ihesu Christi etc. Iste liber dividitur in duas partes...*"; explicit, "[...] et subdit eius oratio cum dicitur *Pro omnibus fidelibus. Gratia domini nostri ihesu christi sit cum omnibus vobis. Amen*"; colophon, "Explicit appocalipsis domini nostri ihesu christi scriptus per me johannem de luxia cancelarium communitatis catari et completus die .xxvi. mensis septembri .mccccxxx. octavo [1438] inditione prima ad laudem et gloriam dei omnipotentis" [Here ends the Apocalypse of Our Lord Jesus Christ, written by Johannes de Luxia, chancellor of the city of Cattaro and completed on 26 September 1438...];

This manuscript contains Nicholas of Lyra's commentary on the Apocalypse, for which Stegmüller records some 30 manuscripts, all in European collections (see Stegmüller, IV, no. 5923). This commentary was studied and translated by Krey (1997). The *Postillae* were a running commentary on the Old and New Testaments in reaction to the tendency of over-allegorization of the Bible, in which the exegete chose to focus rather on the literal sense of Scripture. Nicholas of Lyra applied his "double literal sense" which allowed him to draw two interpretations from a prophetic passage: one meaning for the reader's own time and another for the future it promised (see Krey, 1997, p. 18).

Nicholas de Lyra O. F. M (1270-1349) remains no doubt the greatest biblical exegete of the fourteenth century. Born near Evreux (Normandy), he became thoroughly acquainted with Hebrew exegetical works, which would have a profound influence on his own exegetical works (for a comprehensive list of books and articles on Nicholas of Lyra, see Krey, 1992 and 1996). The

*Postillae* of Nicholas of Lyra on the Apocalypse of St. John was printed for the first time separately without the Bible text in Rome in 1471-1472 by Sweynheym and Pannartz and again as part of the complete *Biblia latina cum postillis Nicolai de Lyra*, in Venice, J. Herbolt for N. Jenson and Associates in 1481.

Between 1420 and 1797, the city of Kotor (Cattaro in Venetian) and its surroundings were under the rule of the Republic of Venice. The Gulf of Kotor (Boka Kotorska) is one of the most indented parts of the Adriatic Sea. The city of Cattaro was part of the "Albania Veneta" of the Republic of Venice from 1420 to 1797 except Ottoman administration between 1538-1571 and 1657-1699. ("Venetian Albania" was the name for the possessions of the Republic of Venice in Southern Dalmatia). While located geographically in Montenegro, the bishopric is part of the Catholic Church in Croatia, as it was historically linked to Croatia. An important portion of the population living in the coastal towns in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was Venetian or Italian speaking, and of Western Latin culture.

The present copy is interesting in that it is signed and dated by the scribe Johannes de Luxia, notary and chancellor of the Venetian Dalmatian town of Cattaro (see Provenance above). Giovanni de Luxia was an active scribe, in the service of the Venetian count or *podestà* of Cattaro Giovanni Balbi. Two illustrated manuscripts copied by Giovanni de Luxia present the Balbi coat-of-arms (manuscripts in Harvard and in Roanne; on the Roanne manuscript, see Dempsey ed., 1996, p. 35, who discusses this copy of the *Catasticus* for the town of Zupa de Cattaro, and its "typically central-European style, remote from anything that would have been produced in mid-Quattrocento Venice"). In all, we have localized a coherent group of 5 manuscripts copied by the Chancellor de Luxia. There is little information concerning the Italian scribes, such as Giovanni de Luxia, working in Dalmatia in the fifteenth century before the invention of printing, their ties to continental Italy and Venice in particular, the styles of decoration and script, the types of texts they copied (on manuscripts copied in Croatia, mostly liturgical, see below [Exhibition, 2004]; some information can be found in Stipcevic, 1986, pp. 26-33). The present manuscript is a witness to the development of "private" scribes (here a trained notary and chancellor) who copied books for patrons, perhaps for sale, and for themselves, for their own spiritual edification and didactic needs. A general survey of manuscripts copied, decorated and illuminated in "Albania Veneta" would likely yield the names of further scribes as well other examples of work signed and dated by Giovanni de Luxia.

This manuscript contributes to our knowledge of Latin and Italian manuscript production in the Venetian colonies (considerably understudied and poorly identified), providing proof of the cultural hegemony of Italy over these regions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, coexisting with the local Croatian Glagolitic (ancient alphabet of Slavic languages) culture and script. Manuscripts copied in Dalmatia, and properly identified as such, are extremely rare.

## LITERATURE

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[Exhibition, 2004]. *Trois écritures-trois langues: pierres gravées, manuscrits anciens et publications croates à travers les siècles. Exposition, Bibliothèque royale, Bruxelles, 23 janvier-28 février 2004, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, 26 avril-8 juin 2002, Zagreb, 2004.*

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Dempsey, C. ed. *Quattrocento adriatico. Fifteenth-century art of the Adriatic Rim. Papers from a Colloquium held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1994*, Bologna, 1996, in particular, R. C. Mueller, "Aspects of Venetian Sovereignty in Medieval and Renaissance Dalmatia", pp. 29-56.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Digital Scriptorium, Cambridge, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Typ 292

[http://ds.cul.columbia.edu:8080/ldpd/app/exist/scriptorium/individual/MH-H-122.xml??querytype=advanced&stringtype1=phrase&field1=scribe\\_key&term1=scribe\\_x\\_132&queryecho=Johannes%20de%20Luxia&order=lo&operator1=and&field2=any&term2=&stringtype2=all&operator2=and&field3=any&term3=&stringtype3=all&begin=&end=&single=&DatedOrNot=&Document=&library=any&country=any](http://ds.cul.columbia.edu:8080/ldpd/app/exist/scriptorium/individual/MH-H-122.xml??querytype=advanced&stringtype1=phrase&field1=scribe_key&term1=scribe_x_132&queryecho=Johannes%20de%20Luxia&order=lo&operator1=and&field2=any&term2=&stringtype2=all&operator2=and&field3=any&term3=&stringtype3=all&begin=&end=&single=&DatedOrNot=&Document=&library=any&country=any)

Médiathèque de Roanne, Collection Auguste Bouillier

<http://www.lectura.fr/fr/galerie/fiche.cfm?idgal=33&idimage=250>].

Historical Archives in Kotor (Montenegro)

<http://www.matf.bg.ac.yu/iak/iak.htm>