

Julije Klović: the first colour drawing of Greater Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea apoda* in Europe and its model

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Abstract The prayer book *The Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, known as *The Farnese Hours*, was illustrated by the Croatian miniaturist, Julije Klović, between 1539 and 1546 in Rome. In this masterpiece of Renaissance miniature art, Klović drew in colour a bird of paradise. In 2001, the pictured bird was determined to be a Raggiana Bird of Paradise, *Paradisaea raggiana* P. L. Sclater 1873. Our later determination shows that it is actually a Greater Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea apoda* (Linnaeus 1758) and the first drawing of this species in colour in Europe. Klović's model for the Greater Bird of Paradise was one of the first trade skins of birds of paradise that, from 1522, had been arriving in Europe. Revision of the early drawings of the birds of paradise species in Europe, relevant to the Klović drawing model, has also been carried out and is discussed.

Keywords Birds of paradise · Julije Klović · Giulio Clovio · Trade skins · Europe

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Introduction

Juraj Julije Klović Croat—Georgius Iulius Clovius Croata (Grižani 1498—Rome 1578) was one of the leading European sixteenth century miniaturists. The iconographically richest and the most interesting part of his opus must be the prayerbook *Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (*Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis*) or *Officium Virginis*, best known as *The Farnese Hours*. It was produced at the order of the Roman cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520–1589) and was illustrated between 1539 (Cionini-Visani 1997; Prijatelj-Pavičić 1997, 1999) and 1546 (Voelkle 2001). The original booklet is kept today in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (MS. 69), but a colour facsimile (reprint) with commentaries in Croatian by W.M. Voelkle and I. Golub (Begović 2001) was published by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb/Graz. The first part of the breviary, called the Morning (prayer), contains an image of a bird of paradise on folio 6v (Fig. 1). Although both Klović's contemporary and his first biographers (Vasari 1568; Kukuljević-Sakcinski 1878), and later art historians and Klović scholars (Bradley 1891; Bonard 1929; Smith 1976; Prijatelj-Pavičić 1999) meticulously described every miniature in *The Farnese Hours*, the bird of paradise was merely mentioned. The comprehensive literature on the European history of the birds of paradise (Stresemann 1954), some of them including the chronology of the bird skins up to the present time (Frith and Beehler 1998), have failed to mention the Klović miniature. There may be several reasons for this omission. *The Farnese Hours*, a religious piece, has not attracted the attention of a broader circle of scholars, especially natural historians. Moreover, none of them applied a multi-disciplinary approach to the analysis of the miniature with the assistance from ornithologists and other naturalists.



Fig. 1 Greater Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea apoda*, illustrated by the Croatian miniaturist Julije Klović in *The Farnese Hours*

However, Klović's bird of paradise was determined for the first time in 2001 by Voelkle (2001) as "*Paradisaea Augustae-Victoriae*", with the habitat in the Huon Gulf in east New Guinea.

The history of birds of paradise in Europe begins in the sixteenth century with the Portuguese, Spanish and mostly Dutch expeditions who brought to Europe the beautiful plumes to be used as highly valued decorations of hats and caps (Kirsch 2006). Besides feathers, tradesmen brought to Europe birds of paradise skins, which consisted of skin and feathers. Most birds of paradise are characterised by sexual dimorphism, so gaudily plumed males were prepared in a way that highlighted the richly coloured flank plumes. This often entailed removing the legs.

Our aim was to investigate the origin of the model for the bird of paradise in *The Farnese Hours*, given that birds of paradise do not inhabit Europe, including the region where Klović lived during his work on the prayer book. At that time, there were no zoos where he could have seen the bird. Furthermore, we are certain that he never took part in European expeditions to the Far East. We started with the hypothesis that the skins, drawings and engravings of birds

of paradise were the only possible sources of models for drawing of this exotic and symbolical bird.

Methods

The model for the Klović bird of paradise drawing was searched for amongst the earliest trade skins that came to Europe, in the collections of natural curiosities, and in illustrations, drawings and engravings produced by Renaissance artists. For this purpose, we drew on the large literature on birds of paradise in Europe. The examined period, 1522–1546, starts with the year when birds of paradise were first brought to Europe and when their drawings first became available in Europe. It ends with the completion of Klović's work on *The Farnese Hours*. Furthermore, although the species seemed to have been identified in this masterpiece, we repeated the ornithological determination, using a guide for determination that contains drawings and textual descriptions of morphological characteristics (Frith and Beehler 1998). Already determined or not confirmed species of birds of paradise

found in different illustrations in the sixteenth century and relevant for Klović's model have been revised according to the time of emerging, ornithological identification and species distribution.

Results and discussion

The bird drawn by Klović in *The Farnese Hours* is determined as the Greater Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea apoda* (Linnaeus 1758). Previous determination as "*Paradisaea Augusta-Victoriae*" (Voelkle 2001), is related to the Raggiana Bird of Paradise (*Paradisaea raggiana* P. L. Sclater, 1873). Many birds of paradise were named after rulers and kings (Foster 2003), so Voelkle (2001) used an older vernacular name for this species proposed in the past by the German explorers of New Guinea in the 1880s, who wanted to honour German monarchs. Today, this species is considered a subspecies of the Raggiana Bird of Paradise *P. r. augustaevictoriae* (Cabanis, 1888).

Following the traces of the Klović's Greater Bird of Paradise model

Trade between New Guinea, the Moluccas and Asia was established about 4,000 years ago around a variety of commodities, of which one of the most important were the birds of paradise and their plumes (Swadling 1996). In 1513, the Portuguese Tomé Pires (1465?–1540?), who lived in Malacca and sailed through the East Indies archipelago, wrote that "those which are prized more than any others come from the islands called Aru (Daru), birds which they bring over dead, called birds of paradise" (Cortesão 1944). This earliest mention of a bird of paradise could relate to the Greater Bird of Paradise because this species is endemic to the archipelago Aru and southwest New Guinea (Coates 1990) although the archipelago Aru is also inhabited by the King Bird of Paradise *Ciccinurus regius* (Linnaeus 1758). It is obvious that trade in birds of paradise was already established by that time, and it is possible that several skins of the Greater Bird of Paradise could be found on islands on Magellan's expedition route in Indonesia.

First trade skins of birds of paradise in Europe

It is believed that the first birds of paradise were brought to Europe in 1522 from the Moluccas (Maluku; Spice islands), west of New Guinea in east Indonesia, by the crew of the explorer Ferdinand Magellan (1480–1521) on their return to Spain. The birds were brought not alive but as skins. The local ruler, the sultan of the Moluccas island of Bachian (present day island of Tidore), gifted the skins to

the Spanish king Charles V. The literature is not consistent, giving numbers (five or two) of the skins brought to Europe with the Magellan crew, and consequently the species are uncertain. According to Stresemann (1954), five skins of Lesser Bird of Paradise (*Paradisaea minor* Shaw, 1809) were brought, but Pigafetta (1956), chronicler of Magellan's voyage, stated that, out of the five skins, two were presented to the Spanish king. The Greater Bird of Paradise, as one of the skins, has also been mentioned (http://www.thebirdsofparadise.org/thebirdsofparadise.org/BoP_NH.html). Nevertheless, it should be taken into consideration that two specimens offered as a gift could belong to Wallace's Standardwing *Semioptera wallacii* Gray, 1859, because this species is endemic to the northern Moluccas islands (Bachian and Halmahera). Confirmation of this assumption is in Pigafetta's description of those two gifted specimens that fits to the only species of bird of paradise inhabiting Bachian (<http://www.thewonderofbirds.com/paradise/magellan.htm>). We may suppose that the other three skins were other species of birds of paradise that could be acquired by trading between the natives of New Guinea and nearby islands and the Magellan crew.

The destiny of those five skins could be followed like this. Two birds, probably Wallace's Standardwings, have been kept by the Spanish king Charles V. The third one was sent to the Salzburg cardinal Mattheus Lang von Wellenburg by Maximilianus Transylvanus, who was a secretary to the Spanish king and also interviewer of survivors from the Magellan expedition. He sent it together with a report about legless bird of paradise in October 1522 (<http://www.thewonderofbirds.com/paradise/magellan.htm>). The fourth specimen could have been a skin of a bird of paradise that the archduchess Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), a relative of the Farnese family, acquired in the Flemish (Belgian) town of Mechelen as early as 1523 (Mason 2007). This could have been one of the Klović's drawing models. The fifth specimen could have been kept by Pigafetta who was invited to the court of the Pope Clement VII in Rome as early as 1523 to share his experiences from his travels with Magellan (Lach 1994). It cannot be excluded that Pigafetta brought a bird of paradise skin with him and even gave it to the Pope as a gift.

First drawings and engravings of birds of paradise

The earliest known print of the skin and also the first known illustration of a bird of paradise (Schulze-Hagen et al. 2003), suggested to be a Lesser Bird of Paradise, and illustrated according to one of the five skins brought by Magellan expedition (Eisler 1995), was produced by the German painter Hans Baldung Grien (c.1484/5–1545) between 1522 and 1525 (<http://www4.gu.edu.au:8080/adt-root/uploads/approved/adt-QGU20070202.134244/public/>

07Chapter4.pdf). Nevertheless, according to specifically shaped crown, the species can rather be considered a Red Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea rubra* (Daudin 1800). Furthermore, although they are the only known drawings before Klović, Baldung's illustrations could not have served as a model for Klović because of the different species, while Klović's picture is in colour.

Klović's drawing of the Greater Bird of Paradise was followed by the bird of paradise in the tapestry "The Barque of Venus", woven after the scheme by the famous Italian mannerist architect and painter Giulio Romano (1499–1546). The tapestry is kept in the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon. It is part of the "Children Playing" series, made in Mantua around 1540 at the order of the cardinal Hercules Gonzaga. The allegorical scene shows the bird of paradise flying in the sky, and its flank plumes are spread in a natural position. Thus, it is the first representation of a bird of paradise as it looks when living in nature. The species can be identified as *Paradisaea apoda*, the same one as Klović's. The friendship and collaboration between Klović and Romano (Cionini-Visani 1997), as well as the fact that Romano's tapestry was created around the beginning of the work on *The Farnese Hours*, where the bird of paradise is placed in the first part of the breviary, indicate that these two painters could have learnt about the bird as early as 1523 in Rome, and even shared the model. Romano's image was followed by the three authors with several representations of bird of paradise in the sixteenth century. Gessner (1555) made the engraving of the Greater Bird of Paradise. Conrad Aicher (Eisler 1995) illustrated a male and female bird in gouache in 1567, which is under the name of two birds of paradise kept in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. The species has not yet been determined but they seem to be two Greater Birds of Paradise. The next are five woodcuts by artists in Aldrovandi (1599–1603): two Greater Birds of Paradise (one probably after Gessner), one Red Bird of Paradise (probably), one Lesser Bird of Paradise (probably) and one unidentified. Yet all of these engravings were produced after the miniature by Klović and after the completion of his work on *The Farnese Hours*.

We propose that the Klović miniature in *The Farnese Hours* is the first depiction of a bird of paradise in colour in Europe. It is also the first known illustration of the Greater Bird of Paradise. Because some of the first skins of birds of paradise were legless, it seems certain that Klović used a legless skin for his model. This is why the miniature shows the bird from the back.

Klović's model was one of the first skins of birds of paradise brought to Europe. The origin of the model for Klović's miniature may possibly be found in the cabinets of curiosities that in the sixteenth century emerged in royal and aristocratic families. They were part of a growing

interest in acquiring exotic animals from the newly discovered regions and displaying them as status symbols. He could have obtained it at some point between the beginning of the trade in skins in Europe in 1522 and the beginning of his work on *The Farnese Hours* in 1539. This period included the arrival of Magellan's skins, so it is possible that the model for his picture was one of Magellan's three *Paradisaea* sp. skins. The fact that the miniature shows the species Greater Bird of Paradise and that it comes from the period when birds of paradise skins had just begun to arrive to Europe, speaks in favour of the hypothesis stated by Frith and Beehler (1998) that some of Magellan's skins were of the Greater Bird of Paradise.

However, neither in the sixteenth nor in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have there been records, drawings or indeed any indications of Raggiana Birds of Paradise in Europe. Besides revising the ornithological identification of Klović's drawing and the species determination, this presents yet another proof for the claim that Klović did not use a Raggiana Bird of Paradise skin for his model.

Conclusion

The first colour drawing of a bird of paradise in Europe was produced by Juraj Julije Klović Croat in the prayerbook *The Farnese Hours* between 1539 and 1546. The species is determined to be a Greater Bird of Paradise. This confirms that this species, which inhabits the archipelago of Aru and southwestern New Guinea, was amongst the first trade skins of birds of paradise brought, as exotic precious goods, by seamen from Indonesia into Europe. It is proposed that the model for the drawing of the Greater Bird of Paradise in *The Farnese Hours* was a skin from one of the first collections of natural curiosities owned by aristocrats with whom Klović associated. It is possible, indeed, that the model came from the Magellan voyage trade skins.

Zusammenfassung

Julije Klović: Die erste Farbzeichnung des Großen Paradiesvogels *Paradisaea apoda* in Europa und ihr Modell

Das Gebetbuch „Die Stunden der heiligen Jungfrau Maria“, bekannt als Stundenbuch für den Kardinal Farnese, wurde von dem kroatischen Miniaturenmalers Julije Klović zwischen 1539 und 1546 in Rom illustriert. In diesem Meisterwerk der Miniaturmalerei der Renaissance zeichnete Klović einen Paradiesvogel in Farbe. Im Jahr 2001 wurde der abgebildete Vogel als Raggiana-Paradiesvogel,

Paradisaea raggiana P. L. Sclater 1873, bestimmt. Unsere spätere Bestimmung zeigte, dass es sich in Wirklichkeit um einen Großen Paradiesvogel *Paradisaea apoda* (Linnaeus 1758) und somit um die erste Farbzeichnung dieser Art in Europa handelt. Klovićs Modell für den Großen Paradiesvogel war einer der ersten behandelten Bälge von Paradiesvögeln, die seit 1522 in Europa angekommen waren. Eine Nachprüfung der für Klovićs Modell relevanten Paradiesvogelart ist ebenfalls durchgeführt und diskutiert worden.

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