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Latin-Byzantine Artistic Interactions and the Church of Saint Basil in Mržep (Montenegro)

Abstract: The present paper offers some thoughts on and a new interpretive frame of the painted program of the small, single-nave church of Saint Basil in Mržep, in the vicinity of Donji Stoliv, in the Vrmac peninsula near Kotor, Montenegro. This monument stands out for the abundance of available information on its history, including the name of the painter (Mihailo), the identity of the donor (Stefan Kalođurđević) and even the date of its construction and pictorial decoration (1451). Nevertheless, the art-historical debate has been mostly puzzled by the *mélangé*, Latin-Byzantine character of the painted images, which has been explained as an outcome of the Union of the Orthodox and Roman churches declared at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438–1439. The analysis provided here emphasizes the scarcity of indications about the impact of the latter's resolutions on the arts and proposes an alternative interpretation that associates the choice of specific forms with the devotional strategies worked by Stefan Kalođurđević for his and his family's spiritual health.

Keywords: Kotor, Montenegro, Mržep, Stefan Kalođurđević, Byzantine-Latin artistic interactions, Council of Ferrara-Florence.

A few years ago, during a study trip to Montenegro, I had a chance to visit the church of Saint Basil in Mržep, a small village in the vicinity of Donji Stoliv, on the coast of the Vrmac peninsula in the bay of Kotor.[1] The building and its wall paintings have been the object of important studies by scholars

such as Vojislav Korać,[2] Svetozar Radojčić,[3] Dragan Nagorni,[4] Klaus Wessel,[5] Rajko Vujičić,[6] Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić,[7] and Valentina Živković,[8] but an article by the late Prof. Vojislav J. Đurić, published in 1996, was the most comprehensive attempt to contextualise and interpret the monument.[9] Even if these contributions come to different conclusions, they all betray, to some extent, their authors' astonishment at the unconventional appearance of the painted cycle, which seems to oddly combine features associated with both Latin and Byzantine traditions. Such "mixes", which recent scholarly work has shown to be less

[2]   В. Кораћ, "Споменици средњовековне архитектуре у Боки Которској" [Monuments of medieval architecture in Boka Kotorska], *Споменик САН* CIII (1953), 124–125.

[3]   С. Радојчић, "О сликарству у Боки Которској" [On painting in Boka Kotorska], *Споменик САН* CIII (1953), 59–66.

[4]   D. Nagorni, "Die Entstehungszeit der Wandmalerei und Identifizierung ihres Malers nach der Fresko-Inschrift in der Kirche Sv. Bazilje in Donji Stoliv (Golf von Kotor)", *Зограф* IX (1978), 43–49.

[5]   K. Wessel, "Pictores graeci. Über den Austausch künstlicher Motive zwischen Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Montenegro". In *Jugoslawien. Integrationsprobleme in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Beiträge des Südosteuropa-Arbeitskreises der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft zum V. Internationalen Südosteuropa-Kongreß der Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-Est-Européen, Belgrad, 11.–17. September 1984*, ed. Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 98–104, esp. 101–102.

[6]   R. Vujičić, *Srednjovjekovna arhitektura i slikarstvo Crne Gore* (Podgorica: CID, 2007), 247–252.

[7]   I. Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi za izgubljenim slikarstvom. O majstoru Lovru iz Kotora i slikarstvu na prostoru od Dubrovnika do Kotora tijeom druge polovice XV. stoljeća* (Dubrovnik: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Dubrovniku, 2013), 214–218; eadem, "Prilog poznavanju ikonografije fresaka u crkvi sv. Bazilija u Mržepu". In *Litterae pictae: Scripta varia in honorem Nataša Golob septuagesimum annum feliciter complentis*, eds. Tine Germ and Nataša Kavčić, (Ljubljana: Filosofska fakulteta Univerze u Ljubljani, 2017), 283–298.

[8]   V. Živković, "Persistenze di tradizione bizantina nella pittura della città cattolica di Cattaro". In *Les chrétientés orthodoxes post-byzantines face à l'Europe de la Réforme et des Temps modernes 1450–1700. Circulations, similitudes, corréspondances*, eds. Sabine Frommel and Pierre Gonneau, (Rome: Campisano editore, 2023), 95–109, esp. 100–103.

[9]   В. Ђурић, "У сенци фирентинске уније: црква Св. Госпоње у Мржепу (Бока Которска)" [In the shadow of the Florentine union: the church of the Holy Lady in Mrzep (Boka Kotorska)], *Зборник радова внзантолошког института* XXXV (1996), 9–56. I have dealt with some aspects of the Mržep murals in two articles: M. Bacci, "Western Liturgical Vessels and the Byzantine Rite". In *Ornamenta Sacra. Late Medieval and Early Modern Liturgical Objects in a European Context*, eds. Ralph Dekoninck, Marie-Christine Claes and Barbara Baert, (Leuven: Peeters, 2022), 249–276; and idem, "Along the Art-Historical Margins of the Medieval Mediterranean". In *Out of Bounds. Exploring the Limits of Medieval Art*, eds. Pamela A. Patton and Maria Alessia Rossi (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023), 79–132.

unusual than previously assumed, challenge traditional stylistic taxonomies and inexorably confront art historians with the methodological limits of their ill-defined discipline.[10]

The building is puzzling for several reasons. First, because of its modest exterior appearance and diminutive dimensions (6.5 x 4 m), emphasized by its location in the open countryside, on the slopes of a hill that also marks the threshold between cultivated fields and woodlands (Fig. 1). Its structure could hardly be simpler: it is a single-nave, apsed space with a single entrance, a small, narrow window on the façade and a larger opening on the south wall. The presence of a tomb slab on the parvis and the remnants of burials unearthed in past excavations clearly indicate that the site was associated with funerary or commemorative rituals. The interior (Figs 2–6) can but impress visitors with its walls entirely covered in paintings and create the illusion of entering a different spatial and temporal dimension, inhabited by heavenly beings and evocative of both the liturgically re-enacted main moments of sacred history and the eschatological perspective of the end of time. At least at first glance, it looks like the coherent iconographic program of an Orthodox church, albeit adapted to a barrel-vaulted rather than domed space, with the three zones of what Otto Demus considered the classical system of Byzantine decoration reserved, respectively, for the saints, the Gospel events corresponding to the twelve major feasts (*Dodekaorton*) of the liturgical year, and the visual epiphanies of God and the Virgin Mary.[11] The stylistic features seem to be in keeping with Late Byzantine conventions. Yet, this impression falters on closer inspection: some iconographic solutions look idiosyncratic, and the rendering of figures is highly differentiated, with some departing from a conventional, frontal and stylized posture to adopt a more fleshy and animated appearance.

The painted décor is arranged so as to direct the gaze according to a reading order that proceeds from west to east and from bottom to top in a boustrophedon manner. Four superimposed layers of sequentially displayed images, delimited by red lines, converge toward the altar space (Fig. 3), dominated by the image of Christ Pantokrator blessing and holding an open book. The visitor's eastward movement is punctuated, in the lower portion of the walls (Figs 2, 4), by a parataxis of saintly figures, two of which – the Latin saints Francis of Assisi and Tryphon of Kotor – are rendered in a three-quarter view looking towards the holy table. On both sides of the door (Fig. 5), which marks the boundary

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[10] For an assessment of "mixes" and the historiographical biases associated with them, cf. M. Bacci, "On the Prehistory of Cretan Icon Painting", *Frankokratia* 1 (2020), 108–164.

[11] O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration. Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London: Treubner & Co., 1947). Cf. also E. Kitzinger, "Reflections on the Feast Cycle in Byzantine Art", *Cahiers archéologiques* XXXVI (1988), 51–73; J-M. Spieser, "Liturgie et programmes iconographiques", *Travaux et mémoires* XI (1991), 575–590.
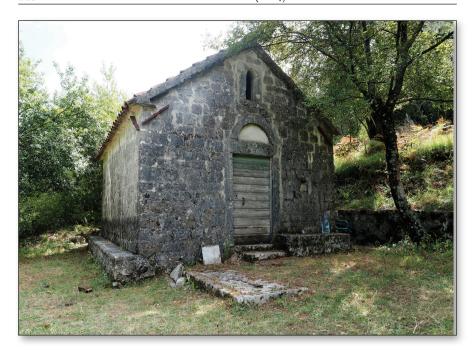
Fig. 1. Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, exterior (photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

Fig. 3. Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, view towards the apse
(photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

Fig. 2. Painter Mihailo, *Holy Intercessors*, *Dodekaorton scenes*, painted cycle, 1451. Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, interior, north wall (Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

Fig. 4. Painter Mihailo, *Holy Intercessors, Dodekaorton scenes*, painted cycle, 1451.
Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, interior, south wall
(Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

between the material world and the perspectival, metaphoric dimension of the divine mediated by liturgical rites, are two figures that were invested, in Catholic and Orthodox traditions, respectively, with protective and apotropaic qualities: to the left, Saint Sebastian, whose naked body transfixed by innumerable arrows metonymically evokes the wounds and pain of the plague victims who relied on his intercession,[12] whereas the archangel Michael, represented to the right in military attire and with a huge sword in his hands,[13] manifests his liminal

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[12] On the meaning and history of Saint Sebastian's image in general, cf. *Saint Sébastien. Rituels et figures*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, 25 November 1983–16 April 1984), ed. Jean Cuisenier (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1983); J. Darriulat, *Sébastien le Renaissant. Sur le martyre de saint Sébastien dans la deuxième moitié du Quattrocento* (Paris: Lagune, 1998); P. Pacifici, *San Sebastiano. Nudità, sangue e peste nella pittura devozionale toscana* (Follonica: Debatte, 2017).

[13] For a general survey of the Archangel's iconography cf. G. Bertelli, "San Michele nell'arte". In *San Michele Arcangelo*, eds. Giorgio Otranto and Sandro Chierici (Milan:

Fig. 5. Painter Mihailo, *Saint Sebastian, the Archangel Michael, Dormition of the Virgin*,
painted cycle, 1451. Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, interior, west wall
(Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

function as the heavenly commander who drives evil beings out of the house of
God. His presence in the viewer's space is emphasized by a curious detail: the
right foot that extends over the lower frame and indicates that he, as a heavenly
being whose name formulates the question "Who is like God?", cannot be really
contained within a flat, material surface.

Making their first steps, visitors find themselves flanked on both sides
by female saints. Despite the tiny dimensions of the building, this iconographic
strategy was aimed at marking a gendered arrangement of sacred spaces that, in
keeping with traditional notions of the gradation of holiness, reserved the west-
ernmost part of churches for women. Looking south (Fig. 2), one intercepts the
gaze of Saints Petka and Nedelja, *graece* Paraskeve and Kyriake, both labelled
with Serbian *tituli* and rendered in a perfectly frontal way but with their arms

San Paolo, 2022), 56–77.

Fig. 6. Painter Mihailo, *Holy Officiants, Deesis, Ascension*, painted cycle, 1451.
Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, apse
(Photo: Michele Bacci)

turned eastwards.[14] Viewers are thus invited not to linger in that place and encouraged to get closer to the altar by two figures that, more than for their virtues as martyrs, were venerated for the associations evoked by their names, which made them personifications of, respectively, Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, i.e., Easter. The distinctive roles of both figures are emphasized by their contrasting attires: whereas the former wears a conventional and inconspicuous tunic with a red veil, the latter is shown as an aristocratic lady with a diadem, a white head veil, and a red mantle embroidered with gold and gems.

On the northern wall (Fig. 4), the sequence begins with Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Rather surprisingly, her representation underscores her virtues as a martyr clad in simple female clothes like Petka rather than in princely garments, as she is usually shown in both Byzantine and Western art. Unlike the figures on the facing wall, she does not point eastwards: instead, she adopts a strictly frontal, standing posture, and both of her hands are used to hold attributes. The cross in her right hand is traditionally a generic indicator of martyrdom in Eastern traditions, whereas the spiked wheel displayed in her other hand is an individual signifier that regularly occurs in Western Late Medieval iconography: its inclusion undoubtedly enabled even those who were unable to read the accompanying *titulus* to identify the saint, whose cult had by then become extremely popular in association with pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the Sinai monastery, which housed her body.[15] In the Eastern Mediterranean, the wheel appears almost in the same period in the decoration of churches located in Latin-ruled areas.[16]

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[14] On Paraskeve/Petka's image and cult in the Balkans, in her multiple hagiographic identities, cf. Г. Суботић, *Св. Константин и Јелена у Охриду* [St. Constantine and Jelena in Ohrid] (Београд: Филозофски факултет– Институт за историју уметности, 1971), 89–104; E. Bakalova, "La vie de saint Parascève de Trnovo dans l'art balkanique du Bas Moyen Âge", *Byzantino-bulgarica* V (1978), 175–209; Д. Поповић, *Под окриљем светости. Култ светих владара и реликвија у средњовековној Србији* [Under the cover of sanctity. The cult of holy rulers and relics in medieval Serbia] (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2006), 271–293; S. A. Gabelić, "Sveta Petka Double Portrait", *Зборник Матице Српске за ликовне уметности* XLIV (2016), 25–40. On Kyriake/Nedjelja cf. D. Mouriki, "The Cult of Cypriot Saints in Medieval Cyprus as Attested by Church Decorations and Icon Paintings". In *The Sweet Land of Cyprus*, eds. Anthony Bryer and Georgios S. Georghallides (Nicosia: The Cyprus Centre, 1993), 252–257; Z. Gavrilović, "Observations on the Iconography of St. Kyriake, Principally in Cyprus". In *Λαμπηδών. Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη της Ντούλας Μουρίκη*, ed. Mary Aspra-Vardavakis (Athens: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis E. M., 2003), 255–264.

[15] For a succinct survey of Catherine's cultic history and iconography, cf. D. Balboni and G. B. Bronzini, "Caterina di Alessandria". In *Bibliotheca sanctorum* (Rome: Pontificia Università Lateranense/Città Nuova, 1961–2013), III, 954–975.

[16] N. Patterson Ševčenko, "The Monastery of Mount Sinai and the Cult of Saint Catherine". In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and*

Fig. 7. Painter Mihailo, *The Holy Trinity*, painted cycle, 1451.
Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, vault
(Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

On the same wall, the sequence moves forward with a representation of three military saints, Theodore, Demetrius, and George, who, as in many painted cycles throughout the Balkans, are shown in a frontal pose, parading their armour and different weapons – respectively, a lance, a recurved arch of Mongol-Turkish shape, and a sword.[17] Further eastwards is Saint Tryphon, the patron of Kotor,[18] who is represented as a young nobleman, wearing a red mantle and a

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Culture, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 118–137, esp. 129; M. Bacci, "L'attribut en tant que signe d'identification des saints dans l'art du Levant au Moyen Âge tardif". In *Des signes dans l'image. Usages et fonctions de l'attribut dans l'iconographie médiévale (du Concile de Nicée au Concile de Trente)*, eds. Michel Pastoureau and Olga Vassilieva-Codognet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 239–263, esp. 252–254.

[17] C.Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); P. Ł. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[18] On Saint Tryphon and his role as the focal point of Kotor's local identity cf. B. Живковић, *Религиозност и уметност у Котору, XIV–XVI век [Religiosity and Art*

short blue tunic embellished with golden embroidered bands, and purple hose. He has long, wavy hair and holds a palm branch in the right hand and a model of his city and fortress in his left, reflecting an iconographic scheme that had reappeared already in a 14th-century metalwork repurposed in the majestic golden altarpiece from 1440 in the town cathedral.[19] The formula was a local adaptation of the visual conventions worked out in Italy specifically for the images of city patron saints.[20] The representation is impressive for different reasons: it is rendered in much the same technique as the other murals, as revealed, e.g., by the dark green *proplasmos*, but it intentionally departs from the frontal and standing posture of the other saints and has a more three-dimensional, fleshy, and dynamic appearance in a three-quarter view. In its free adoption of Westernizing features, it seems to anticipate the imaginative solution elaborated in 1658 by the Cretan painter Elias Moskos in an icon now in the treasury of Kotor Cathedral, where the saint is shown against the background of the bay of Kotor.[21]

Saint Tryphon is shown right on the threshold between the nave and the sanctuary, delimited by a slightly raised pavement, and marked by the light that penetrates the church from the tiny nearby window. The protector of Kotor ostensibly invites viewers to direct their gaze towards the Eucharistic miracle reenacted in that space through the performance of the mass. Much the same attitude is shared by Saint Francis, on the opposite wall (Fig. 2).[22] Labelled in Latin

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in Kotor (Cattaro) in the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries] (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2010), 139–148, 210–212.

[19] M. Milošević, "Tragovi prve srebrne pale kotorske katedrale iz XIV stoljeća", *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* XXI (1980), 215–224; Живковић, *Религиозност*, 144–145; N. Jakšić, "Srebrna oltarna pala u Kotoru", *Ars Adriatica* III (2013), 53–66.

[20] V. Camelliti, "La città in una mano. Per una storia della rappresentazione di modelli urbani dalle origini all'Occidente medievale". In *Un Medioevo in lungo e in largo (VI–XVI secolo). Studi per Valentino Pace*, eds. Vittoria Camelliti and Alessia Trivellone (Pisa: Pacini, 2014), 289–300.

[21] L. Mirković, "Die Ikonen der griechischen Maler in Jugoslawien und in den serbischen Kirchen ausserhalb Jugoslawiens". In Πεπτραγμένα τοῦ Θ´ Διεθνοῦς Βυζαντινολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου. 1. Οργάνωσις, πρόγραμμα καὶ πρακτικὰ τοῦ συνεδρίου. Ανακοινώσεις. 1: Ἀρχαιολογία, eds. Stilpon Kyriakides, Andreas Xyngopoulous, and Panagiotes I. Zepos (Thessaloniki: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1955), 301–329, esp. 325; V. J. Đurić, *Icônes de Yougoslavie* (Belgrade: Naučno Delo, 1961), 123 no. 64; Z. Demori Staničić, "Entry no. 45". In *Zagovori svetom Tripunu. Blago Kotorske biskupije*, ed. Radoslav Tomić (Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2009), 217.

[22] On the visual construction of the image of Saint Francis of Assisi cf. esp. K. Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus in Italien. Gestalt und Funktionswandel des Tafelbildes im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1992); W. R. Cook, *Images of St. Francis of Assisi: In Paintings, Stone and Glass From the Earliest Images to ca. 1320 in Italy. A Catalogue* (Florence: Olschki, 1999); R. Brooke, *The Image of Saint Francis. Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

as *Sanctus Franciscus*, he is shown turned eastwards, tonsured and wearing the habit of the Minor Friars: he holds a book in his left hand, visibly marked with the *stigma*, and makes a blessing gesture that simultaneously points to the altar and the nearby figure of Saint Nicholas.[23] The latter is heavily visually emphasized: in the sequence, he is the only one rendered in a thoroughly self-contained way and a rigid frontal pose, in contrast to the dynamic image of the saint from Assisi. His sign of benediction with the middle finger resting on the thumb creates a visual assonance with the shape of the nearby figure's hand.

The composition characterizes the Great Thaumaturge of Myra as an almost dematerialized, icon-like presence interposed between the three saints pointing to the altar and the sanctuary. As the "arch-hierarch" of Christ, the bishop *par excellence*, he is most suited for a representation in the vicinity of the easternmost part of the church (Fig. 3). Vojislav Đurić assumed that the latter may have originally been separated from the nave by a low iconostasis or templon,[24] but neither the pavement nor the side walls show any traces of such a structure. Therefore, the zone reserved for the performance of sacred mysteries was fully visible and its distinctive status was conveyed by its painted décor. First, the compositions were arranged differently: in the easternmost portions of the northern and southern wall, as well as to both sides of the apse, the decoration included not only the ornamental band with stylized vegetal scrolls encountered in the nave but also simulated marble plates and hanging curtains, signaling the higher sacredness of that space through such embellishments as golden hems and stylized lilies. A hole in the floor indicates the spot where the altar stood, whose table can perhaps be identified as the thick stone slab now lying against the southern wall. To the right of the apse is a niche that may have been intended for ampullae and vasa sacra. In the upper layer of both sides, more figures of saints are rendered in a smaller format than in the nave: they include the holy physicians Kosmas and Damian – two figures normally not shown in this part of the church[25] – followed, from right to left, by three holy deacons, including, on the northeastern corner, Saints Romanos and Stephen the First martyr. The apse is divided into two zones. The conch displays the half-figure of Christ Pantokrator, blessing and holding an open book as he receives the intercessory prayers of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist, represented as full-

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More specifically on the image of Saint Francis in 15th century Italian arts cf. M. Alberto Pavone, *Iconologia Francescana. Il Quattrocento* (Todi: Ediart, 1988).

[23] On Saint Nicholas and his cult and iconography in general cf. M. Bacci, *San Nicola. Il Grande Taumaturgo* (Bari: Laterza, 2009).

[24] Ђурић, "У сенци", 27.

[25] They are most commonly located either in the west part of the naos or in the narthex: cf. B. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting in the Age of King Milutin* (Belgrade: Draganić, 1999), 180.

length figures in the orant pose. In the lower register, two church fathers, John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, are represented as officiating bishops on both sides of an altar equipped for the mass.

In keeping with Byzantine tradition, the triumphal arch displays the *Annunciation* scene split into two zones, with the Archangel Gabriel rendered in a dynamic posture on the left and the Virgin Mary sitting on a throne on the right.[26] This composition is the starting point for the narrative images that make up the standard *Dodekaorton* cycle and are arranged in inverse order to the one followed so far. The chronological sequence is displayed on the south wall from east to west (Fig. 2) and includes the *Nativity*, the *Presentation in the Temple*, the *Baptism* and a now very fragmentary *Resurrection of Lazarus*. Remnants of a broad *Dormition* can still be detected on the counterfaçade (Fig. 5), a location often reserved for this image in Orthodox churches. The story resumes on the northern side, unfolding from west to east, with the *Entrance into Jerusalem*, the *Crucifixion*, the *Pious Women at the Sepulchre*, and the *Anastasis* (Fig. 4), and finds its conclusion in the scene of the *Ascension* split into two images, the one in the upper portion of the east wall with the apostles and Mary showing their astonishment (Fig. 6), and the other on the easternmost part of the vault with Christ seated in a cloud of light raised to heaven by four angels (Fig. 7). Significantly, the latter could also be read as part of the eschatological composition that dominates the rest of the vault, i.e., as a *Maiestas Domini* glorifying the Son of God close to the epiphany of the Father, as in Prophet Ezekiel's vision, within a lozenge-shaped *kavod* inhabited by the four animals of the tetramorph; to the west, it was followed by a now almost lost representation of the *Hetoimasia* of the Last Judgment. Such an idiosyncratic combination of images was also meant to evoke the heavenly dimension of divine power as manifested in the three persons of the Holy Trinity. The supernatural space is delimited, like in painted Byzantine domes, by medallions displaying representatives of the different angelic hierarchies.

The Mržep cycle was arranged so as to pull visitors into an intense, immersive, and emotion-provoking experience that benefited from an intentional and nonchalant combination of forms associated with both Latin and Byzantine traditions. Starting from the provocative

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[26] On the *Annunciation* scene and its placement in Byzantine churches, cf. I. Vara-lis, "Παρατηρήσεις για τη θέση του Ευαγγελισμού στη μνημειακή ζωγραφική κατά την μεσοβυζαντινή περίοδο", *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* XIX (1997), 201–219; E. Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantine et occidental du XIe au XIVe siècle: l'Annonciation* (Venice: Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 2007).

Fig. 8. Lovro Dobričević (attr.), *Virgin of the Annunciation*, mural painting,
ca. 1450-1455. Herceg Novi, Savina Monastery, church of the Dormition of the Virgin
(Photo: Michele Bacci)

observation that such an unusual decorative program would have aroused discomfort in the most rigorous theologians, Catholic and Orthodox alike, Đurić suggested that it should be understood as a local reflection of the union between the Greek and Latin churches declared at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438–1439. According to this view, the building should, therefore, be assumed to have belonged to a local Orthodox community that, around the mid-15th century, had accepted the unionist policy supported by Marino Contarini, Bishop of Kotor, who had participated in the conciliar meetings in Italy.[27] This suggestion, as already noted by Valentina Živković,[28] raises a number of methodologically relevant questions, namely: to what extent could the blend of styles and iconographies that we are so keen to immediately identify in its derivative qualities be acknowledged by pre-modern viewers as an indicator of a theological compromise? Is it right to assume that the deliberations of the Council of Florence had a direct impact on the decoration of churches? Did the combination of forms and images serve a specific ideological agenda, or was it the outcome of more contextual factors?

The Council of Ferrara-Florence has often been deemed responsible for the emergence of artworks combining Latin and Byzantine visual features. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that the acceptance of a pro-unionist position did not entail any major change in liturgical matters, and it is, therefore, difficult to evaluate if, and to what extent, liturgical arts were affected by the conciliar resolutions, which were silent on such issues. The only artistic initiative promoted by the Greek fathers in Florence was the tomb of Patriarch Joseph II in the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella, whose portrait, with its frontal, icon-like rendering, albeit made by a local painter, bears witness to their preference for visual conventions evocative of Byzantine painting.[29] Examples of church programs explicitly meant to convey a unionist message in direct connection with the conciliar deliberations are lacking in major Orthodox areas under Latin rule, like Crete or Cyprus, and even later church unions that proved more effective, like those that followed the 1596 Union of Brest and led to the establishment of Greek-Catholic communities in Polish- and Hungarian-ruled Carpathian Rus', did not substantially

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[27] Ђурић, "У сенци", 52–54. Cf. also Prijatelj, *U potrazi*, 209.

[28] Živković, "Persistenze", 100–101.

[29] M. Bacci, "Tomb G at the Chora and the Illusion of Presence", in *Biography of a Landmark. The Chora Monastery/Kariye Camii in Constantinople/Istanbul from Late Antiquity to the 21st Century*, ed. Manuela Studer-Karlen (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 100–134, esp. 109–112.

impact the performative structuring of sacred spaces or engender any radical change in the formal and iconographic repertoire used in their pictorial decoration.[30]

On the other hand, it has been assumed that a reflection of the new ecclesiastical policy may have been the diffusion of icons displaying some specific iconographic formulas, such as *Christ the Vine*,[31] the embrace of the apostles Peter and Paul, or the same saints holding a church model: all these schemes have been interpreted as an immediate outcome of the political détente between Orthodoxy and Catholicism.[32] Such hypotheses do not explain, however, why the scheme spread among communities that did not adhere to the union, as is shown, e.g., in the murals made in ca. 1565–1577 by a painter associated with Mount Athos in the church of the Holy Archangels in Gremi, the capital of the Georgian kingdom of Kakheti.[33] In fact, the *Embrace* image reworked much

[30] On Greek Catholic communities in Carpathian Rus' see the survey by P. R. Magocsi, *With Their Backs to the Mountains: A History of Carpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Rusyns* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2015), 78–86. On the decoration of Greek Catholic churches cf., e.g., P. Bernadett, "The Architecture and Art of Wooden Churches in the Eparchy of Mukacheve (Munkács) in the 17th and 18th Centuries". In *The Light of Thy Countenance*, ed. Szilveszter Terdik (Debrecen: Metropolitan Church of Hungary, 2020), 76–91.

[31] A. G. Mantas, "The Iconographic Subject 'Christ the Vine' in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art", *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* XXIV (1972), 347–360.

[32] M. Vassilaki, "A Cretan Icon in the Ashmolean: The Embrace of Peter and Paul", *Jahrbuch für Österreichische Byzantinistik* XL (1990), 405–422; eadem, "Cretan Icon-Painting and the Council of Ferrara/Florence (1438/39)", *Μουσείο Μπενάκη* XIII–XIV (2013–2014), 115–127. Cf. the critical remarks in E. Despotakis and V. Tsamakda, "Archival Evidence and Byzantine Art in Fifteenth-Century Venetian Crete. The Case of Georgios Mavrianos and Konstantinos Gaitanas", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* LXXVII (2023), 245–319, esp. 308–309. Other studies that interpret the circumstances of the church union as conducive to the adoption of Italianate forms in 15th century Crete include U. Ritzerfeld, "Bildpropaganda im Zeichen des Konzils von Florenz: Unionistische Bildmotive im Kloster Balsamonero auf Kreta", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* LXXX (2014), 387–407, and A. Drandaki, "Piety, Politics and Art in Fifteenth-Century Venetian Crete", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* LXXI (2017), 367–406.

[33] The representatives of the Georgian church in Florence did not sign the final act: cf. E. Mamistvalishvili, "kartvelebi perara-plorentsiis k'rebaze (XIII–XV ss.)", *Kadmos* VIII (2016), 250–268. On the Gremi murals and the activity of Athonite painters in Georgia cf. S. Amiranashvili, *История грузинского искусства* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1969), 303; M. Vačnadze, "Некоторые особенности и хронологическая последовательность группы кахетинских росписей XVI века". In *II международный симпозиум по грузинскому искусству* (Tbilisi: Akademija nauk gruzinskoj SSR – Institut istorii gruzinskogo isskusstva im. G. N. Čubinašvili, 1977), 1–14; M. Garidis, *Μεταβυζαντινή ζωγραφική (1450–1600). Η εντοίχια ζωγραφική στον ορθόδοξο κόσμο μετά την πτώση του Βυζαντίου και στις χώρες υπό ξένη κυριαρχία* (Athens: Spanos, 2007), 376–381; N. Datunishvili, "Artistic Tradition of Mount Athos and Pictorial Ensemble Created by Levan, King of Kakheti".

older motifs that conveyed the idea of *concordia apostolorum* and could, therefore, be adapted to different situations and interpretations.[34] The same is true of the compositions that displayed Eastern and Western church fathers, including canonised popes wearing tiaras, close to each other: in the Latin-ruled, multiconfessional societies of the Eastern Mediterranean, such images predated the Council of Ferrara-Florence and stood out for their visual ambiguity, inspiring some viewers to feel part of a single, undivided Christian community and others to emphasize the orthodoxy of the bishops of Rome who lived in the pre-Schism period and contrast it to the heterodoxy of the contemporary Roman church.[35]

In most cases, it remains highly speculative whether, and to what extent, the emergence of pictorial formulas combining elements from Italian and Byzantine traditions should be understood as a kind of visual propaganda, implying a widespread acknowledgement of the cultural ascendancy of each motif, or, rather, as the result of both intentional and unintentional accommodations of artistic motifs circulating in the same environment. When it comes to Mržep, we are in a much better position because we are well-informed about the chronology of the building and its decoration, as well as its donor and painter, but the data at our disposal offer little support for an interpretation of the wall paintings as a pro-unionist propaganda tool. The tiny dimensions of the chapel, its countryside location, the presence of burials, and some specificities of its iconographic cycle indicate that it more served an individual's devotional expectations than the concerns of contemporary theologians. The bilingual inscription once displayed in the south-western corner, very close to the image of Saint Sebastian, and on the top of a now walled-up opening that Dragan Nagorni interpreted as a side door, despite its being very low, provides basic information about

In *Georgian Art in the Context of European and Asian Cultures*, eds. Peter Skinner and Dimiti Tumanishvili (Tbilisi: Georgian Arts & Culture Center, 2009), 275–277.

[34] H. L. Kessler, "The Meeting of Peter and Paul in Rome: An Emblematic Narrative of Spiritual Brotherhood", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* XLI (1987), 265–275. On the semantic flexibility of the *Embrace* image cf. also R. Cormack, "… And the Word was God: Art and Orthodoxy in Late Byzantium". In *Byzantine Orthodoxies: Papers from the Thirty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Andrew Louth and Augustine Casiday (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 111–120, esp. 119–120, and A. Katsioti, "Το κλίτος του Αγίου Ιοάννου του Προδρόμου". In Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou, Angeliki Katsioti and Maria Borboudaki, *Οι τοιχογραφίες της Μονής του Βαλσαμονέρου. Απόψεις και φρονήματα της ύστερης βυζαντινής ζωγραφικής στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κρήτη* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2020), 181–290, esp. 259.

[35] On this point, cf. M. Bacci, "The Art of Lusignan Cyprus and the Christian East: Some Thoughts on Historiography and Methodology". In *The Art and Archaeology of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus (1192–1571). Recent Research and New Discoveries*, eds. Michalis Olympios and Maria Parani (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 21–42, esp. 39–41.

the circumstances of its building.[36] This way of exhibiting foundation texts is frequently encountered in the Balkans, e.g., in Studenica, Žiča, and Gračanica: inscriptions were thus incorporated into the pictorial continuum of the sacred space and became part of the program, operating as graphic components of the latter, which not only epitomized an individual or a group's piety but also immortalized their rights and distinctive association with the ritual activities that the building was meant to host.[37]

The text, written in Italian with strong Venetian inflections, is presented as a notarial document, introduced by a sign of the cross and drawn along parallel lines like those incised on parchments. It reports that the church was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary and erected from the ground up on the initiative of *Stefano Chalogergi Spedon*, chancellor and Slavic translator in Kotor, in November 1451. Furthermore, it established that its *solemnis dies* was to be on the day of Assumption, August 15th. A Serbian inscription in smaller lettering, added along the lower margin and including a date in Greek characters, specified that the murals were made a little later by a painter called Mihailo of Kotor, a disciple of the master Jovan of Debar.[38] If the Italian text underscored the association of the building with an individual donor and the salvation of his soul, the Slavic version reported the date of its decoration and the identity and professional qualities of the artist responsible for it. He was probably still young, given that he was so keen to make his teacher's name known.

The founder has long been identified as Stefan Kalođurđević, a prominent figure in the social life of Kotor during the first decades of Venetian rule, which started in 1420.[39] Many written traces of him were left in documents preserved in the town archives, which he largely contributed to writing in his role as notary, translator, and registrar. From this documentation, we learn that he was a Latin-rite Christian who got married according to the habits of the Roman

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[36] Nagorni, "Die Entstehungszeit", 44.

[37] В. Ђурић, "Портрети византијских и српских владара с повељама" [Portraits of Byzantine and Serbian rulers with charters]. In *Есфигменска повеља деспота Ђурђа*, ур. Павле Ивић (Београд: Југословенски завод за заштиту ревија споменика културе, 1989), 20–55, esp. 36–38, 48–52; S. Kalopissi-Verti, "Church Inscriptions as Documents. Chrysobulls – Ecclesiastical Arts – Inventories – Donations – Wills", Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας XXIV (2003), 79–88; М. Чанак-Медић, Д. Поповић и Д. Војводић, *Манастир Жича* [Žiča Monastery] (Београд: Републички завод за заштиту споменика, 2014), 37–41, 338–345.

[38] The inscriptions are transcribed in Ђурић, "У сенци", 11, and Vujičić, *Srednjovekovna arhitektura*, 247–248.

[39] Ђ. Петровић, "О Стефану Калођурђевићу и његовој породици" [On Stefan Kalođurđević and his family] , *Годишњак поморског музеја у Котору* XLVIII–XLIX (1999–2001), 41–55.

Church in 1420.[40] In the 1430s, he lived in the quarter of San Martino with his mother Ljubislava, his wife Domuša, his son Nicholas, his daughter Catherine, his nephews Domenico and Palma, and the servants Maruša and Vladitsa.[41] From 1431 onwards, he held the position of *chancellarius* or *notarius sclavus* and, in 1435, became *vigerius communis* (from French *viguier*, "magistrate"). In this role, he participated in several negotiations, dispute resolutions, and embassies: he was on very good terms with the Bishopric and acted as a mediator in issues concerning Catholic and Orthodox monasteries. He certainly belonged to the town's wealthy élite and, like many of his fellow citizens, invested in profitable businesses, such as naval trade and winemaking.[42]

His religious zeal was as intense as his commitment to business. In 1439, he was head (*magister*) of the ancient lay Confraternity of the Holy Cross;[43] later, he and his son Nicholas also joined the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit, where he was soon given a leading role.[44] He seems to have been particularly attached to Saint Sebastian's cult: an early 16th-century document mentions a chapel dedicated to this saint in a garden, close to the church of San Bernardino al Pozzo, which had once belonged to *Stefano Callogeorgii*, so we can assume that it had been erected by Stefan as a token of personal devotion to the protector of plague victims.[45] He also showed his devotion to his namesake: his testament apparently included a bequest of one hyperpyron for the renovation of an image of Saint Stephen.[46] Furthermore, his choice of the name Nicholas for his son bears witness to his veneration for a universal saint whose cult had strong roots in Kotor,[47] and his daughter's name, Catherine, may indicate attachment

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[40] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN III, 451 (21 October 1420).

[41] *Case e persone di Cattaro*, Kotor, Historical Archives, UPM, CCIII, 275–3 (1436): "41 Stefano quondam Chalozorzy chanzelier/ Glubislaua sua madre/ Domussa sua dona/ 18 Nicholo suo figlio/ Chatarina sua figlia/ Dominicho suo nieuo/ Palma suo nieuo/ Marussa sua fante/ Vladica sua fante". The numbers written before his and his son's names indicate their age in 1436, suggesting that Stefan Kalođurđević was born in 1395–1396. The same document indicates that Nicolò (Nicholas) was then eighteen years old, which means that he was born in 1418, two years before Stefan and Domuša's marriage. Cf. Ђурић, "У сенци", 18–19, footnote 48.

[42] Ђурић, "У сенци", 12–13.

[43] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN VI, 509 (23 May 1439).

[44] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN IX, 361 (7 May 1445), where he is described as *chanzelarius sclavus* and *magne fraternitatis Spiritus Sancti magister*.

[45] Ђурић, "У сенци", 24.

[46] Kalođurđević's testament is lost, but the bequest is evoked in a document preserved in Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XIII, 433 (29 January 1467), where mention is made of "unum perperum pro restitutione unius figure Santi Stephani".

[47] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 218–222, 225.

to the cult of the Alexandrian martyr or the new homonymous saint from Siena, whose cult is also well-attested in Kotor.[48]

There are some indications that, like many of his contemporaries, Stefan was obsessed with the perspective of death or, to be more precise, with the risk of dying without having adequately provided for his spiritual health. Although he died in 1467 at the age of seventy-two, he had started making provisions for his family tomb in his youth. He secured a place for himself and his relatives close to the church of Saint Michael in 1426 and another in the church of Saint Francis, outside the town walls, in 1432. Valentina Živković has convincingly argued that the first burial was used for some members of his family who may have died during the pestilence of 1430, given that this entailed sealing the inhumation site.[49] Indeed, the presence of nephews in his house in the following years may mean, perhaps, that a brother or sister of his had been buried there. In any case, the affair of the two tombs testifies to an attitude common at the time of the great epidemics of the 14th and 15th centuries: on the one hand, the poignant conviction of having to prepare the family tomb well in advance and the spasmodic search for a location corresponding to one's social rank and one's expectations of salvation; on the other hand, the perception of the collective burial for the family's contemporary and future members as a fundamental place where people, having survived divine wrath, could affirm their role as patriarchs entrusted with the task of siring a new lineage.

Nevertheless, Stefan Kalođurđević's patriarchal ambitions were thwarted by the ill-fated vicissitudes of life. He was widowed sometime in the 1450s and married his second wife, Nicoletta, in 1460.[50] After his death in 1467, his office as translator and magistrate went to his son-in-law Natalin, son of his next-door neighbour, the goldsmith Matko, rather than to his male heir, Nicholas, as one would expect.[51] This may suggest that Nicholas had died before 1467. As there are no traces of him in documents from around the date of his father's death, it seems plausible to assume that he had passed away several years earlier. This event must have been devastating for Stefan, who, with the death of his only son, lost all hope of becoming the progenitor of a long family line. The visual emphasis given to Saint Nicholas in the Mržep chapel may have been instrumental to a commemorative strategy, where the Great Thaumaturge of Myra was invoked as

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[48] Ibidem, 225 (Saint Catherine of Alexandria), 233–234 (Saint Catherine of Siena).

[49] В. Живковић, "Култови светитеља заштитника од куге о Котору" [Cults of the protector saints against the plague of Kotor], *Историјски часопис* LVIII (2009), 181–196, esp. 189–190. Cf. also Петровић, "О Стефану Калођурђевићу", 52.

[50] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XII, 197 (10 February 1461), where mention is made of a house obtained by Stefan "ex donatione sibi facta per dominam Nicoletam eius consortem".

[51] Ђурић, "У сенци", 21–22.

a special intercessor for his namesake. His interest in the restoration of an image of Saint Stephen suggests that he believed that addressing his prayers to a saint sharing his name was particularly beneficial in devotional terms. The selection of saints featured in the murals includes other namesakes: Stephen, prominently shown in the sanctuary, and Catherine, who bore the name of the donor's daughter, close to the door on the north wall. If his wife's name – Domuša – may be interpreted as the diminutive or hypocoristic variant of the name *Dominica*, it is possible that she was evoked by the representation of Saint Nedelja (Kyriaki), "Holy Sunday", on the south wall. In this respect, it is worth remembering that the male form of the same name was represented in the group by his nephew Domenico (*Dominicho*). Finally, Saint George, displayed on the north wall, signalled a connection with Kalođurđe, Stefan's father. His son-in-law Natalin (from Italian Natale, "Christmas") and his other nephew, Palma (whose name referred to Palm Sunday), could associate their names with the scenes of the Nativity and the Entry into Jerusalem. Other figures were connected to the donor's personality and devotional preferences, including the Archangel Michael and Francis, i.e., the titular saints of the churches where the chancellor had chosen burial places for himself and his loved ones, Saint Sebastian, whom he had venerated as a protector against the plague, and Tryphon, the patron saint of Kotor and the titular of the town cathedral, with whose chapter he had a very close relationship.

Overall, the program bears evidence to the founder's religious expectations in the eschatological emphasis conveyed by the program, which proves instrumental to the building's funerary-commemorative function. It is likely that, like the chapel of Saint Sebastian, the Mržep building was erected in lands belonging to Stefan Kalođurđević. Several documents testify to his commitment to viticulture and engagement in buying and renting vineyards throughout the Vrmac peninsula, including the area of Stoliv, Mržep, and Prčanj, whose lands largely belonged to the cathedral chapter of Kotor.[52] In 1437, he was even exempted from paying taxes to the same chapter, to which he was closely connected, for the agricultural exploitation of fields in the same area.[53] The possession of vineyards in Merzeppo (Mržep) is confirmed as late as 1460.[54] It can, there-

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[52] On the lands owned by the cathedral chapter and other church institutions from Kotor in Stoliv and Mržep cf. L. Blehova Čelebić, *Hrišćanstvo u Boki 1200–1500: kotorski district* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 2006), 54, 81, 212, 314, 326, 336.

[53] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN VI, 171 (18 May 1437), which explicitly mention a vineyard in Stoliv ("… pro una sua vinea posita in Stalivo").

[54] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XII, 151–152 (7 December 1460). The specific vineyard mentioned in this document and obtained through the donation of a widow named Radoslava, was sold by Kalođurđević two years later: cf. Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XII, 345–346 (9 January 1462).

fore, be assumed that he used his land to build a private church that would host anniversaries and votive masses for the remedy of his and his relatives' souls, especially of his son Nicholas.

If the program reflects the founder's religious sensibility, fears, and hopes, one may wonder whether the decision to entrust its realization to an artist trained in the Byzantine-Serbian tradition was instrumental in conveying any distinctive message. Vojislav Đurić had no doubts that the adoption of a Byzantine approach to church decoration, with an uninterrupted sequence of images distributed according to a hierarchical principle, implied a direct association with the Orthodox Slavonic rite, and suggested that Stefan Kalođurđević may have been a Catholic convert who, encouraged by the new climate of the church union, wanted to somehow reconcile with his Orthodox ancestry.[55] That, however, is hard to prove. Firstly, his possible association with the later Kalođurđević clan of Paštrovići has no firm grounds,[56] given that his was a patronymic and not a family name. He was the son of the relatively unknown Ljubislava and Kalođurđe; both names were widespread among the different religious denominations of the Montenegrin coast. Kalođurđe probably stemmed from the Greek nicknames Καλογεώργιος/Καλογιώργης ("good George") and was widespread among the nomadic Vlach tribes of Dalmatia and the Orthodox Slavs of the area[57] but also among the Catholics: a notable example is Petar Kalođurđević, the Latin-rite priest of Gorica near Svač, known from a 1445 document.[58]

Stefan's office as translator indicates that Slavic was his mother tongue, but it has been observed that his language had some flaws, e.g., was not familiar with Cyrillic numbers.[59] The fact that he was much more at ease with Italian than with Latin probably indicates that this was the non-native language he had learnt first and more frequently used in his everyday life. For his children, he chose names of universally venerated saints (*Caterina*, *Nicola*) that sounded almost the same in Slavic or Italian. On the other hand, his nephews bore ostensibly Venetian names: Domenico and Palma. Furthermore, it can be assumed

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[55] Ђурић, "У сенци", 52–54.

[56] Ђурић, "У сенци", 13.

[57] M. Pijović, *Vlasi u dubrovačkim spomenicama do 14. stoljeća*, PhD dissertation (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 2018), 312–313. On Vlachs in the Western Balkans, cf. B. Đurđev, *Postanak i razvitak crnogorskih i hercegovačkih plemena* (Titograd: Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 1984); V. Kursar, "Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15th–18th Centuries)," *OTAM* 34 (2013), 115–161. I thank Valentina Živković for these references.

[58] И. Божић, *Немирно поморје XV века* [Troubled seas of the 15th century] (Београд: СКЗ, 1979), 89.

[59] As remarked by К. Јиречек, *Споменици српски* [Serbian monuments] (Београд: У државној штампарији краљевине Србије, 1892), 6 and 67 footnote.

that his appointment as *chancellarius sclavus* shortly after the establishment of Venetian rule was facilitated by his belonging to a Latin-rite family, where Italian may have also been spoken.

The use of three different scripts in the Mržep murals is undoubtedly the outcome of the multilingual context in which they were created. However, the *tituli* accompanying the images and the dedicatory inscriptions serve fundamentally different purposes. The painter Mihailo signed his name in Serbian, and he was most likely a Slavic-speaking Orthodox who had learnt his art from an artist named Jovan from Debar, in present-day North Macedonia.[60] On the other hand, this language was deliberately not chosen by Stefan Kalođurđević, as one might expect if he had wanted to promote a church officiated according to the Orthodox Slavonic rite. The choice of Italian indicates that he did not understand it as indicative of his confessional affiliation: in that case, Latin would have been more appropriate, and, in keeping with this principle, he had indeed made use of standardized Latin formulas in his tomb slabs in Kotor. Instead, he chose Italian because he considered it more representative of his high social status as a member of Kotor's town elite, into which he had so seamlessly integrated.

The use of the *tituli* depended more directly on the liturgical and cultic traditions of each of the images. The *Dodekaorton* inscriptions have mostly faded away, but the Serbian script can be detected on two of them. The medallions with prophets are also in Serbian. Of the saints displayed in the nave, Nicholas, Nedelja/Kyriaki, Tryphon, George, Demetrius, Theodore, the Archangel Michael, and even the more "Western" Sebastian were labelled in Cyrillic, whereas Catherine and Paraskeve (Petka) have Greek inscriptions, and Francis is marked in Latin. What is more, all the writings displayed in the apse are Greek. The general impression is that Mihailo basically reproduced the inscriptions he found in works he used as models – including perhaps a sketchbook received from his teacher, master Jovan of Debar.[61] This would also explain the stylistic changes detected in his work: his images of Sebastian, Francis, and Tryphon look Gothic because they were inspired by Italianate visual sources he intentionally imitated. This choice was not due to a lack of iconographic alternatives: in Dečani, the patron saint of Kotor had been rendered as a young, curly-haired martyr, wearing a mantle and a long tunic decorated with golden bands reminiscent of a *loros* and holding a cross in his right hand.[62] Rather than relying on such a conventional, non-individualized solution, the painter decided not only to conform to

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[60] Ђурић, "У сенци", 26, suggests that Jovan of Debar may have been a follower of Metropolitan Jovan, who was responsible for the decoration of the church of Sveti Andrejaš on the Treska river.

[61] Ђурић, "У сенци", 44.

[62] B. Todić and M. Čanak-Medić, *The Dečani Monastery* (Belgrade: Museum in Priština, 2005), 426.

the locally customary iconography but also to evoke the visual effectiveness of Tryphon's dynamic posture and imposing physique.

Nevertheless, the use of Greek inscriptions in the sanctuary, the most important part of the church, shows to what extent Byzantine tradition was seen as authoritative by local Christians, regardless of their denominational distinctions. The Greek script was not alien to the decoration of Catholic churches in Kotor, where it had occasionally been employed in combination with Latin: it was part of a widespread appreciation of Greek religious painting as invested with a special aura of sacredness, whose foundational moment was the work of the apostles and, in particular, Luke the Evangelist.[63]

The emergence of Italianate-Gothic pictorial solutions that apparently departed from the set of forms used in Byzantium in the 14th and 15th centuries did not prevent important Latin-rite institutions from hiring Byzantine or Byzantine-trained artists to decorate their buildings. This is widely witnessed in different contexts, such as Genoa, Venice, Crete, Pera, Rhodes, Cyprus, southern Poland, and Lithuania.[64,]

But perhaps the best examples are the 14th-century churches of Kotor, such as Santa Maria Collegiata or the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, which were

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[63] M. Bacci, "Alla 'maniera' dell'Evangelista Luca'. In *Immagini medievali di culto dopo il Medioevo*, ed. Vinni Lucherini (Rome: Viella, 2018), 19–39.

[64] Genoa: In ca. 1313–1315, the Genoa Cathedral was decorated with Byzantine murals, possibly by a Constantinopolitan master named Markos and mentioned in a 1313 document: cf. esp. R. S. Nelson, "A Byzantine Painter in Trecento Genoa. The Last Judgment at S. Lorenzo", *The Art Bulletin* LXVII (1985), 548–566; C. Di Fabio, "Bisanzio e Genova tra XII e XIV secolo. Documenti e memorie d'arte". In *Genova e l'Europa mediterranea. Opere, artisti, committenti, collezionisti*, eds. Piero Boccardo and Clario Di Fabio (Genoa: Silvana Editoriale, 2005), 183–203; E. Rentetzi, "Gli affreschi bizantini nella cattedrale di Genova. Una nuova lettura iconografica", *Arte documento* XXVIII (2012), 104–111; F. Volpera "Proposta di lettura delle pitture di cultura paleologa all'interno del Duomo di Genova", *Intrecci d'arte dossier* I (2016), 134–150; K. Krause, "Passionsfrömmigkeit und kommunale Propaganda um 1300. Die "byzantinischen" Fresken im Dom von Genua". In *Inszenierungen von Sichtbarkeit in mittelalterlichen Bildkulturen*, eds. Henriette Hoffmann, Caroline Schärli and Sophie Schweinfurth (Berlin: Reimer, 2018), 163–215; C. Di Fabio, "Le vie dell'ordinario. Genova, il Tirreno e il Mediterraneo nel XIV secolo. Casi artistici e questioni di metodo". In *Per omnia litora. Interazioni artistiche, politiche e commerciali lungo le rotte del Mediterraneo tra XIV e XV secolo*, eds. Alessandro Diana and Caterina Fioravanti (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2024), 11–37.
Venice: The enduring success of Byzantine or Byzantinesque forms in the decoration of Venetian churches is best exemplified by the mid-14th-century mosaics in the Baptistry of San Marco: cf. H. Belting, "Dandolo's Dreams. Venetian State Art and Byzantium". In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New Haven: Yale University Press and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 138–153; V. Pace, "Il ruolo di Bisanzio nella Venezia del XIV secolo. Nota introduttiva a uno studio dei mosaici del Battistero marciano", *Ateneo Veneto* C (2013),

243–253; E. De Franceschi, "I mosaici del battistero, fra il rinnovamento bizantino-paleologo e la produzione pittorica veneta dei primi decenni del Trecento". In *San Marco, la basilica di Venezia. Arte, storia, conservazione*, ed. Ettore Vio (Venice: Marsilio, 2019), I, 309–317.

Crete: An extant example of a Latin-rite liturgical space decorated with Byzantine murals is the Dominican church of Saints Peter and Paul in Candia (Heraklion): cf. D. Chronaki and D. Kalomoirakis, "Ὁ ναός του Ἁγίου Πέτρου των Δομηνικανῶν στο Ἡράκλειο", in *Πεπραγμένα Θ΄ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Ελούντα, 1–6.10.2001* (Heraklion: Etaireia Kretikon Istorikon Meleton, 2004), 119–135; E. Delinikola, D. Chronaki and D. E. Kalomirakis, "Restoration of the Dominican Church of St Peter in Heraklion, Crete". In *Routes of Faith in the Medieval Mediterranean. History, Monuments, Pilgrimage Perspectives*, ed. Evangelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: European Centre of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, 2008), 430–440; E. Chorafa, "Ὁ ιερός ναός του Ἁγίου Πέτρου *δομινικανῶν* στο Ἡράκλειο Κρήτης: το έργο της αποκατάστασης". In *Ἀρχαιολογικό Ἔργο Κρήτης 2: Πρακτικά της 2ης Συνάντησης, Ρέθυμνο, 26–28.11.2010*, eds. Michalis Andrianakis, Petroula Varthalitou and Iris Tzachili (Rethymno: Ekdoseis Philosophikes Scholes Panepistimiou Kretes, 2012), 382–392; V. Sythiakaki, "Τα βενετικά μνημεία του Χάνδακα και η τύχη τους". In *Η γλυπτική στη βενετική Κρήτη (1211–1669)*, eds. Maria Vakondiou and Olga Gratziou (Heraklion: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 2021), 33–60, esp. 52–53.

Pera: On the murals discovered in the ancient Dominican church of Saint Paul, present-day Arap Camii, cf. esp. R. Quirini-Popławski, *The Art of the Genoese Colonies of the Black Sea Basin (1261–1475)* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 248–274.

Rhodes: Some of the churches that can be safely associated with the Knights Hospitaller (such as, e.g., Hagios Georgios Chostos on Mount Phileremos and Saint George of the "English" in the town walls) were decorated in ways that often combined Byzantine and Western elements. On the multiple cultural elements in the painted decoration of Hospitaller Rhodes cf. E. Kollias, *Η μνημειακή εκλεκτική ζωγραφική στη Ρόδο στα τέλη του 15ου και στις αρχές του 16ου αιώνα. Μνήμη Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2000); T. Archontopoulos and A. Katsioti, "Η ζωγραφική στη μεσαιωνική πόλη της Ρόδου από τον 11ο αιώνα μέχρι την κατάληψή της από τους Τούρκους (1522): Μια εκτίμηση των δεδομένων". In *15 χρόνια έργων αποκατάστασης στη Μεσαιωνική Πόλη της Ρόδου* (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2007), 454–465; T. Archontopoulos, *Ο ναός της Ἁγίας Αικατερίνης στην πόλη της Ρόδου και η ζωγραφική του ύστερου Μεσαίωνα στα Δωδεκάνησα (1309–1453)* (Rhodes: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2010). On Saint George Chostos and its dating, cf. J–B. de Vaivre, "Peintures murales à Rhodes: les quatre chevaliers de Philerimos", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* CXLVIII (2004), 919–943. On Saint George at the walls cf. I. Bitha and A-M. Kasdagli, "Saint George 'of the English': Byzantine and Western Encounters in a Chapel of the Fortifications of Rhodes". In *Intercultural Encounters in Medieval Greece after 1204. The Evidence of Art and Material Culture*, eds. Vicky Foskolou and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 131–170.

Cyprus: In late-14th-century Famagusta, at least two Latin-rite churches – the Carmelite church of Our Lady and the Benedictine church of Saint Anne – were decorated by Byzantine painters probably from Thessaloniki: cf. esp. M. Bacci, "Patterns of Church Decoration in Famagusta (Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)". In *Famagusta. Volume I: Art and Architecture*, ed. Annemarie Weyl Carr (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 203–276, esp. 215–226.

sumptuously decorated with Palaiologan-style murals probably by immigrant painters, the famous *pictores graeci* mentioned in several 14th-century archival documents.[65] What is particularly striking in Mržep is Mihailo's interest in differentiating specifically Latin from universal saints *stylistically*, or, in other words, in reproducing the outward appearance of his models by imitating their three-dimensional modelling technique. In contrast, his predecessors had transformed even Ambrose or Augustine into Greek metropolitans wearing a *polystavrion phelonion* and standing out for their awe-inspiring, austere facial types furrowed with deep wrinkles.[66] Meanwhile, a major change had happened: artists – and viewers – had started acknowledging and emphasizing the visual distinctiveness of Byzantine vs. Western or Italian styles and perceived them as instrumental in expressing different devotional needs, which were, at any rate, not understood as mutually exclusive.

If Italianate forms sparked the viewer's emotional, participative, and empathic response, those evocative of Byzantine traditions endowed sacred images

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Poland: The painted cycles in the collegiate church of Wiślica (ca. 1400), in Sandomierz Cathedral (ca. 1403–1416), in the Royal Chapel of the Holy Trinity in the Castle of Lublin (1418) and in the Virgin Chapel of Wawel Cathedral in Kraków (ca. 1420) were entrusted by King Władysław II Jagiełło to Byzantine-trained painters: cf. A. Różycka-Bryzek, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w kaplicy zamku Lubelskiego* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983); eadem, *Freski bizantyńsko-ruskie fundacji Jagiełły w kaplicy Zamku Lubelskiego* (Lublin: Muzeum Lubelskie, 2000); eadem, "Malowidła ścienne bizantyńsko-ruskie". In *Malarstwo gotyckie w Polsce*, eds. Adam S. Labuda and Krystyna Secomska (Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki SAN, 2004), I, 155–84; G. Jurkowlaniec, "West and East Perspectives on the 'Greek Manner' in the Early Modern Period", *Ikonotheka* 22 (2009), 71–91; M. Smorąg-Różycka, "Bizantyńskie malowidła w prezbiterium katedry pw. Narodzenia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w Sandomieryu – odkrycia niespodziewane i doniosłe", *Modus* 12–13 (2013), 53–73; P. Ł. Grotowski, *Freski fundacji Władysława II Jagiełły w kolegiacie wiślickiej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo księgarnia akademika, 2021); G. Mickūnaitė, *Maniera Greca in Europe's Catholic East. On Identities of Images in Lithuania and Poland (1380s–1720s)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 119–160.
Lithuania: Mickūnaitė, *Maniera Greca*, 39–118.

[65] Радојчић, "О сликарству", 57–58; R. Kovijanić, I. Stjepčević, *Kulturni život staroga Kotora (XIV–XVII vijek)* (Cetinje: Istoriski Instut NR, 1957), I, 93–101; В. Ђурић, *Византијске фреске у Југославији* [Byzantine frescoes in Yugoslavia] (Београд: Југославија, 1974), 58; Живковић, *Религиозност*, 277–282; eadem, "*Tota depicta picturis grecis*. The Style and Iconography of Religious Painting in Medieval Kotor (Montenegro)", *Il capitale culturale* X (2014), 65–89; eadem, "In Encountering Western Culture – The Art of the Pomorje (Maritime Lands) in the 14th Century". In *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art*, eds. Ljubomir Maksimović and Jelena Trivan, *Volume II: Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. Danica Popović and Dragan Vojvodić (Belgrade: Institute for Byzantine Studies SASA, 2016), 357–365.

[66] Bacci, "Along the Art–Historical Margins", 89.

with an aura of charismatic authority. Even a cursory glance at the remnants of mid-15th-century monumental paintings in and around Kotor indicates that painters did not cease to resort to *alla greca* iconographic schemes and compositional features in the decoration of sacred spaces, without it preventing them from enhancing the visual impact of religious imagery through the adoption of a "Western" approach to the rendering of bodies and space.[67] Local artists shared the same concerns that drove contemporary Cretan painters to emphasize the dramatic elements of the *Crucifixion* scene and their Venetian colleagues to revitalize the compositional model of Marian icons.[68] On the one hand, they felt the need to update the figurative repertoire with solutions capable of satisfying a devotional sensibility prevalent among the Latins but also fascinating to the Orthodox, which promoted meditation on the humanity of Christ and the Virgin as conducive to a more intimate, direct, and embodied contact with the sphere of the sacred. On the other hand, they tried not to confuse viewers with forms based too explicitly on the optical simulation of sensible reality and potentially contradictory to the evocation of the spiritual dimension at which religious painting was deemed to aim.

The pursuit of a visual compromise between the two approaches is well illustrated by two painted cycles made in the same period as the one in Mržep in a Latin and an Orthodox church. The former is Saint Michael in Kotor, which was used as a burial and commemorative space by many prominent families, including the Kalođurđevićs, as mentioned above. Byzantine schemes, meant to convey fundamentally eschatological meanings, were used in the decoration of the apse in an original way: a *Deesis* was displayed in the conch, the multi-layered symbolism of the veil – hinting at the *parochet* of the Old Jerusalem Temple – was given visual prominence in the lower wall, an *Ascension* was represented above the arch, and an *Annunciation* and images of saints were shown on both sides of the apse. At the same time, the specific ways in which body postures, facial features, and folds were rendered betray the use of "Gothic" modelling devices and stylistic formulas.[69] A similar approach is also detectable in the second example, the mural paintings in the chapel of the Dormition of the Virgin at Savina Monastery near Herceg Novi. As emphasized in scholarship, the cycle follows the standard patterns of Byzantine church decoration and iconography

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[67] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 282–288.

[68] On these two aspects, cf. M. Bacci, "Modèles italiens dans la peinture d'icônes au Moyen Âge tardif: la *Crucifixion* crétoise du Musée national de Stockholm", *Rivista d'arte*, ser. V, VII (2017), 249–261; and idem, "Bellini's Renewed Icons of Mary and Their Appropriation on Crete". In *Revivals or Survival? Resurgences of the Icon from the 15th Century to the Present Day*, eds. Ralph Dekoninck and Ingrid Falque (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2023), 64–78.

[69] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 201–208, and 283–284.

but is rendered in a style that betrays the authorship of an artist trained in, or perfectly acquainted with, contemporary Gothic painting.[70] In both cases, the Virgin of the Annunciation is represented in an elegantly slicing posture designed to impress beholders: at Saint Michael's, she holds her Western attribute, a book, whereas in Savina she stands under an elaborate marble canopy rendered in a foreshortened view (Fig. 8). Analogous Italianate solutions, stemming from the repertoire of contemporary Venetian arts, appear in a number of Cretan *Annunciation* icons from the second half of the 15th century, but their rendering is usually (and intentionally) more lax about the rules of perspective.[71]

Both the murals in Saint Michael and Savina Monastery have been tentatively attributed to the renowned Kotor-born, Latin-rite painter Lovro Dobričević (*post* 1415–1478), who was trained in Venice, painted in a Late Gothic style with elements reminiscent of the Vivarinis' work and also had strong connections with Dubrovnik.[72] Since he was Kalođurđević's next door-neighbour,[73] it is somewhat surprising that he was not entrusted with the decoration of the Mržep church. One can only speculate that this was due to the painter's unavailability, personal issues, or perhaps to the fact that the *chancellarius sclavus* did not want to bother such a famous (and probably quite expensive) artist for the decoration of a small private chapel. Nevertheless, another possibility is that he chose Mihailo, a disciple of Jovan of Debar, because he wanted somebody to embellish his chapel in a distinctively Greek-looking way. The result was a fresco

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[70] В. Ђурић, "Манастир Савина" [Savina Monastery], *Бока* V (1973), 1–18; Vujičić, *Srednjovjekovna arhitektura*, 260–261; Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi*, 210–214.

[71] Notable examples are an icon from ca. 1460 in the Gallery of Vicenza and a contemporary one in a Greek private collection: cf. P. Vokotopoulos, "11. Annunciazione", in *Venetiae quasi alterum Byzantium. Da Candia a Venezia. Icone greche in Italia XV–XVI secolo*, exhibition catalogue (Venice, Museo Correr, 17 September–30 October 1993), ed. Nano Chatzidakis (Athens: Foundation for Greek Culture, 1993), 56–61, and M. Chatzidakis, "113. Royal Doors, right panel. Second Half of the 15th Century". In *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, exhibition catalogue (Athens, Old University, 26 July 1985–6 January 1986), ed. Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou (Athens: Ministry of Culture, 1986), 112. On similar architectural solutions in works attributed to Lovro Dobričević cf. G. Gamulin, "Položaj Lovre Dobričevića u slikarstvu Venecije i Dubrovnika". In *Likovna kultura Dubrovnika 15. i 16. stoljeća*, ed. Igor Fisković (Zagreb: MSG, 1991), 167–178, esp. 169.

[72] On this painter and his work cf. В. Ђурић, *Дубровачка сликарства школа* [Dubrovik school of painting] (Београд: Научно дело, 1963), 90–94, 108–116; K. Prijatelj, *Dubrovačko slikarstvo XV–XVI stoljeća* (Zagreb: Zora, 1968), 18–20; Vujičić, *Srednjovjekovna arhitektura*, 253–268; D. Nagorni, "Dobričević, Lovro Marinov". In *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon. Band 28: Disney-Donnus* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001), 152–153; Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi*, 307–311 and *passim*.

[73] Ђурић, "У сенци", 19, underlines that Kalođurđević lived in the same street as Lovro Dobričević.

ensemble that took inspiration from the standard program of Orthodox church-
es but was adapted to the specificities of a Latin-rite sacred space intended for
the performance of *pro anima* masses. This is indicated not only by the odd se-
lection of saints and the eschatological emphasis pervading the cycle but also the
highly unusual program of the sanctuary. Two details indicate quite clearly that
the building was intended for the Western rite: on one side, Stefan's namesake
is shown holding an object that, in its dimensions and shape, looks much more
like a pyx, a liturgical vessel used to contain hosts, than as an artophorion. On
the other hand, the composition in the apse rules out that the church may have
employed the Orthodox rite or a Greek Catholic adaptation of the latter. At first
sight, we are obviously reminded of the standard image of the officiating bishops
in the bema of Byzantine and Serbian churches.[74] This program, which usually
includes several saints, is sometimes adapted to smaller spaces in an abbrevi-
ated form, restricted to the figures of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil,
as seen, for instance, in the small church of Sveti Andrejaš on the Treska river.[75]
Occasionally, the condensed solution was also used in external annexes, like on a
fresco located in the narthex of the katholikon of Dečani Monastery, which may
have originally been associated with a side altar.[76] Here, as in the larger compo-
sitions, the altar is covered with a richly embroidered tablecloth, whose purple
colour, evoking both an idea of regality and the red appearance of blood, proves
instrumental in conveying the complex spectrum of Eucharistic metaphors that
underlie the *Melismos* image.[77]

     Even though Mihailo faithfully replicated the general compositional
structure of the *Officiating Bishops* scene, he rendered the altar in a completely
different way. He refrained from visually staging the sacramental presence of

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[74] G. Babić, "Les discussions christologiques et le décor des églises byzantines au XIIᵉ
siècle. Les évêques officiant devant l'Hétimasie et devant l'Amnos", *Frühmittelalterliche
Studien* II (1968), 368–386; C. Walter, "La place des évêques dans le décor des absides
byzantines", *Revue de l'art* XXIV (1974), 81–89; idem, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine
Church* (London: Variorum, 1982), 198–214; J-M. Spieser, "Liturgie et programmes
iconographiques", *Travaux et mémoires* XI (1991), 575–590; Todić, *Serbian Medieval
Painting*, 145–153; A. G. Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Βήματος τῶν
μεταβυζαντινῶν ναῶν τῆς Ἑλλάδας (843–1204)* (Athens: Ethniko kai Kapodistriako Pana-
pistimio Athinon, Philosophiki Scholi, 2001); A. M. Lidov, *Иконы. Мир святых обра-
зов в Византии и на Руси* (Moscow: Feoriya, 2013), 168–192.

[75] J. Prolović, *Die Kirche des Heiligen Andreas an der Treska: Geschichte, Architektur
und Malerei einer palaiologenzeitlichen Stiftung des serbischen Prinzen Andreaš* (Vienna:
Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 100–104.

[76] Todić and Čanak-Medik, *The Dečani Monastery*, 434.

[77] C. Konstantinide, *Ὁ Μελισμός. Οἱ συλλειτουργοῦντες ἱεράρχες καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι-διάκονοι
μπροστὰ στὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα μὲ τὰ τίμια δῶρα ἢ τὸν εὐχαριστιακὸ Χριστό* (Athens: Kentro
vyzantinon erevnon, 2008).

Christ in the holy bread by representing Christ as either a child or a dead man lying on the table or inside the paten, or even on both the paten and the chalice. This solution, which was common in Orthodox churches of the period, would probably have been met with astonishment by Catholic viewers. The comparison with Simone Martini's *Mass of Saint Martin* (1316–1317) in the Lower Church of Saint Francis in Assisi[78] shows that he represented the altar according to the habits of Latin-rite churches, i.e., covered with two textiles: a larger, purple one, with richly and multi-coloured edges, which completely conceals the front, and a white tablecloth superimposed on it, whose lateral flaps, decorated with ornamental bands, fall along the short sides. The simulated altar worked as a visual double of the real one that stood before it, and, accordingly, even evoked its equipment with the most important *vasa sacra*: an oval paten, an open missal placed on a decorated cushion, and a distinctively Gothic-type chalice, with a wide foot, a roundish knob, and an elongated and tight cup.[79]

All the visual emphasis was laid on the sacred vessels (Fig. 6). If it is true that a variant, widespread in Venetian-ruled Crete, of the *Melismos* – defined by Chara Konstantinide as "realistic" – displayed the *diskos* (sometimes covered with an *asteriskos*) and *poterion* empty or filled with bread and wine instead of visualizing Christ's presence through the image of his lying body,[80] the solution employed in Mržep expanded the binary association by including a third element, the book. This choice was meant to establish a Trinitarian symbolism by way of metonymy, with the vessels used to hint at their contents, which were, in turn, invested with multiple metaphoric associations. The wine with which the chalice was to be filled stood for Christ's divine nature and, by association, for God the Father. Therefore, the object was given the same central position that the Lord of the Universe had in the vault. The empty paten hinted at the bread as the Eucharistic double of Christ's incarnated body and was, therefore, a symbol of the Redeemer. Finally, the open Missal, lying on a cushion according to the Latin fashion, manifested the Word and the Wisdom of the Lord and could be understood as a symbol of the Holy Ghost. In keeping with Western medieval visual conventions, the book was also shown as a material embodiment of

[78] A. Martindale, *Simone Martini: Complete Edition* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 174–181.

[79] Bacci, "Western Liturgical Vessels", 260–276. On the visual rendering of Latin altars in medieval pictorial arts cf. J. Kroesen and M. Sureda i Jubany, "The Altar and Its Equipment 1100–1350: Liturgy and Art". In *North&South. Medieval Art from Norway and Catalonia, 1100–1350*, exhibition catalogue (Utrecht: Museum Catherijneconvent, 25 October 2019–26 January 2020; Vic, Museu Episcopal, 15 February–15 May 2020), eds. Jurgen Kroesen, Micha Leeflang and Marc Sureda i Jubany (Zwolle: Wbooks, 2019), 17–33.

[80] Konstantinide, *Ο Μελισμός*, 65–73, 162–172.

the liturgical formulas that, once enacted through their recitation by the priest, ensured the sacramental effectiveness of the transubstantiation taking place in the rite of consecration, visually evoked in the mural by the two *vasa sacra*.[81]

As already mentioned, Đurić provocatively stated that if either Orthodox or Catholic theologians had entered the church, they could only have expressed strong reservations about its idiosyncratic iconographic program.[82] The point is that the cycle of paintings aimed less to visualize theological frameworks than to meet the devotional expectations of a layman concerned about his and his loved ones' fate in the afterlife. It gave expression to a deep concern about the soul's *salus* ("health"/"salvation"), which could be ensured by the exercise of charity and the engagement in increasing divine worship, that is, constructing and embellishing new sacred spaces, and using the latter, at least in part, for the performance of prayers and masses *pro remedio animae*. This type of liturgical activity had the power to "buy back" the sins that burdened the soul and bring relief to the deceased undergoing the purification process in purgatory. In keeping with the strong Eucharistic focus of lay piety in Kotor,[83] the apse of the small commemorative chapel in Mržep was decorated with a figurative double of the material altar on which the votive masses for the souls of the chancellor's family were celebrated: its liturgical equipment epitomized the soul-benefiting agency of the rituals expected to be enacted in front of it. The officiating priest and the other attendees of the Mass could thus have the feeling of the simultaneous consecration of the host and wine in both the earthly and heavenly dimensions. The identity of the beneficiaries of these "individualized" rites and the assistance offered to them by the inhabitants of the spiritual realm were evoked by the sequence of many namesake saints in the nave, while the upper part of the walls staged, in all its intensity, the salvific perspective of the Kingdom of Heaven, disclosed by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Overall, the program declared how confident Stefan Kalođurđević was that, sooner or later, the Lord would reward his meritorious efforts by opening the gates of Paradise to him and his loved ones.

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[81] On this symbolic meaning of the Missal, cf. P. Nourrigeon, *De la* translatio *à la creation. Les images dans les manuscrits du* Rational des divins offices (Paris: Cerf, 2018), 66–67.

[82] Ђурић, "У сенци", 42–43.

[83] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 238–252.

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