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THE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAMME OF THE WALL- PAINTING ENSEMBLE OF THE MONASTERY CHURCH OF GRÁBÓC

Contemporary Hungary's oldest functioning Orthodox monastery is the Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Grábóc, Hungary, (Serbian name: *Грабоваци*), founded by monks from Dragović in Dalmatia, in 1585.¹ The church of the monastery was built in 1741 in the arrangement seen today; the interior decoration and furnishings acquired their final and current form in the mid-1780s. The wall-painting ensemble extending over the entire internal wall surfaces of the church, nearly preserved in full, was made by two artists. As suggested by relevant findings in art history research, the figural compositions may be identified as the main work of Andrej Šaltist (?–1797/1798), a painter from Novi Sad, whereas the so-called *quadratura* painting, in imitation of architectural and plastic ornamentation, is to be attributed to Franz Florian Hofman (?–?), whose name is as yet known in the history of art only from this single place.² The significance of the Grábóc wall-paintings in art history is first and foremost justified by the fact that it was here that Baroque Illusionism adopted from western art first emerged in the Orthodox wall painting of the historic Archbishopric of Sremski Karlovci.³

¹ The author wishes to thank the Serbian Institute of Budapest for supporting her research in Grábóc, as well as for the assistance with preparing her publications on this subject and the translation thereof. All photos included in this study were made by Iván Jaksity.

² The bottom of the depiction of the Last Supper displays the inscription *Андреј Флоријан*. 1785. ('Painted by Andrej'); the scene of the Sacrifice of Abraham features the signature *Franz Florian Hofman. Pinxit. 178.* These indications were discovered during the conservation work in the 1980s. On the attribution of the pictures, see Л. Шелмић, *Српско зидно сликарство XVIII века*, Нови Сад 1987, 42–44; Д. Давидов, *Споменици Будимске епархије*, Београд 1990, 305–306; Б. Тодић, *Творци барокног ентеријера цркве у манастиру Грабовцу*. Радови о српској уметности и уметницима века по архивским и другим подацима, Нови Сад 2010, 401–425, 409–413. Most recently on Andrej Šaltist, with an overview of previous research and literature, see: Б. Тодић, *Српски сликари од XIV до XVIII века*, II, Нови Сад 2013, 42–43.

³ The significance of the wall paintings from a history-of-art-related perspective was first considered by the first researchers of Serbian art in Hungary, Dejan Medaković and Dinko Davidov (Д. Медаковић, *Српске уметничке старине у Мађарској*. Путеви српског барока, Београд 1971, 215–226, 220–221; Давидов, *Споменици Будимске епархије*, 305–306).



Fig. 1 The vault of the apse of the sanctuary

Сл. 1 Свод апсиде, олтарски простор

The ensemble was painted between June 1784 and October 1785, at the request of Sofronije Kirilović, Bishop of Timișoara (1781–1786), also Administrator of Buda simultaneously, former Archimandrite of Grábóc (1761–1770), and, subsequently, Bishop of Buda (1774–1781).⁴ The contract concluded by the Bishop and Šaltist in Timișoara on 5 February 1784 – similarly to other comparable sources surviving from that period – does not contain specifications about the thematic composition of the murals.⁵

The iconographic programme of the wall-painting ensemble has so far not been addressed in detail in any inquiries,⁶ although some of its prominent innovative features were pointed out by Leposava Šelmić and Miroslav Timotijević (the picture cycle of the Corporal Works of Mercy,⁷ the dome painting depicting the Glorification of the Holy Trinity,⁸ as well as the representations of baroque em-

⁴ Concerning the exact date when the painting of the church began, Branislav Todić also found data in the margin indications of a printed book from Grábóc. According to these, the painting of the murals was commenced on 5 June 1784. „1784-го јунија 5-го зачеше молери рисовати церков нашу” (ГР40, Library of Grábóc, Serbian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Museum, Library and Archives=SOEMLA, Szentendre; Тодић, *Српски сликари од XIV до XVIII века*, I, 43).

⁵ Even though Davidov knew about contract with Šaltist (Давидов, *Споменици Будимске епархије*, 305), its complete text and the accounts subsequently appended to it would only be published by Branislav Todić (Тодић, *Творци барокног ентеријера цркве у манастиру Грабовцу*, 407–408.)

⁶ Davidov published the list of the compositions in the pioneering corpus of his focusing on the artistic heritage of the Eparchy of Buda: Давидов, *Споменици Будимске епархије*, 306. Prior to that, Stevan Čamprag had published informative figures about the thematic distribution of the murals in his work on the monastery with a predominantly historical orientation (С. Чампраг, *Манастир Грабовац у Мађарској*. Зборник за друштвене науке Матице српске 17 (1957) 130–149, 141–147).

⁷ Шелмић, *Српско зидно сликарство XVIII века*, 44; М. Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, Нови Сад 1996, 51, 416–417.

⁸ Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 50, 121. The depiction of the Choirs

Fig. 2 The ceiling
of the chancelСл. 2 Лучни део
иконостаса

blematics in the decorative painting).⁹ In what follows, an attempt will be made to provide an overview of the individual compositions and thematic cycles in the liturgical space, highlighting some general content-related connections of the pictorial programme. Knowledge of the iconographic system of the murals may contribute to further iconographic research with specialised foci, including the reconstruction of their visual and written sources, antecedents and analogies in the future.

In line with the symbolism of the chancel, the iconography of the sanctuary of the church of Grábóc is also defined by the theme of the Eucharistic redemptory sacrifice, enriched by new emphases in 18th century Serbian art as well.¹⁰ In contrast with similar heritage sites dating from the same age, the space surrounding the altar in Grábóc accommodates fewer figural compositions, occupying larger picture areas. Together with the figural elements of the decorative painting, they are focused on the Eucharist and its Old Testament prefigu-

Fig. 3 Christ *Fons pietatis* in the niche of the
proskomedijaСл. 3 Христос *Fons pietatis* у ниши
проскомидије

of Angels in human form also appeared here in Serbian monumental painting (Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 307).

⁹ Шелмић, *Српско зидно сликарство XVIII века*, 42–44; Л. Шелмић, *Западноевропейски барок и српско зидно сликарство XVIII века*. Српска уметност 18. и 19. века (Одабране студије), Нови Сад 2003. 373–386. (first published in 1991), 379; Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, see in the Index: Грабовац.

¹⁰ On the increasing prevalence of baroque depictions of the Eucharist and the liturgy in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation in the baroque art of the Archbishopric of Sremski Karlovci as of the 1740s, see М. Тимотијевић, *Идејни програм зидног сликарства у олтарском простору манастира Крушедола*. Саопштења 26 (1994) 63–90, 63.



Fig. 4 The Glorification of the Holy Trinity in the dome of the church

Сл. 4 Света Тројица у куполи цркве у Грабовцу

rations.¹¹ The apse wall is painted with a traditional but abridged cycle of the Eastern Church Fathers and the authors of the liturgy: (from north to south) Saint Gregory (of Nazianzus) the Theologian, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the Great and Saint Nicholas the Miracle Worker, attired in the baroque vestments of senior clergymen. Above them, in the longitudinal axis of the church, the figure of God the Father is seen accompanied by angels, with the Holy Spirit as a dove below in a separate area.¹² The High Place (also known as ‘cathedra’), the episcopal furniture item symbolising the heavenly throne of Christ, in a manner completes the trinity above with the figure of the Son.¹³ (Fig. 1) It is evidently seen in several elements of the interior of the church of Grábóc that the pictorial programme of the wall-painting ensemble must have been given its final meaning in conjunction with the iconographic programme of other contemporaneously erected furnishings: the iconostasis, the various thrones and other furniture items. The semi-dome of the sanctuary accommodates depictions of the scene of the institution of the Eucharist (Last Supper) and its Old Testament prefiguration, the Sacrifice of Abraham, at its two sides respectively.¹⁴ Their emphatic presence in

¹¹ Cf. Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 49–50.

¹² On the veneration of the Holy Spirit and its western antecedents in Baroque-Era Orthodox theology, with allusions to the fresco in the chancel of the church of Grábóc, see Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 300.

¹³ On the symbolism of this item of church furniture, see Тимотијевић, *Идејни програм зидног сликарства у олтарском простору манастира Крушедола*, 68–69.

¹⁴ The Sacrifice of Abraham is also featured on the iconostasis of Grábóc, interestingly enough in an unusual place, in the cartouche above the Royal Doors, a phenomenon that could also be accounted for by the Eucharist-centred iconography of baroque chancels. The theme of Old Testament sacrifices is also represented in the sanctuaries of the church of Krušedol and Almaška Church in Novi Sad (painted by Šaltist). The Sacrifice of Abraham was interpreted in the baroque sermon tradition of Orthodoxy as well as the manifestation of God’s love for mankind (Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 398–399).



Fig. 5 The south wall of the tambour

Сл. 5 Јужна страна тамбура



Fig. 6 The north wall of the tambour

Сл. 6 Северна страна тамбура

the iconography of the sanctuary is indicative of the influence of western Post-Tridentine theology.¹⁵ It is in combination with the two aforementioned monumental compositions that the composition ‘The Hospitality of Abraham’, the Old Testament prefiguration of the Holy Trinity, painted on the obverse side of the iconostasis, constitutes a picture cycle. It may not be accidental that it is situated opposite, in a way acting as a match for the New Testament Trinity emerging in the eastern major axis of the sanctuary. It is here on the vault of the western portion of the sanctuary that the ‘Annunciation’ of Zechariah is depicted, thematically also connected to Saint John the Baptist painted in a medallion on the wall of this spatial unit. The figure of Melchizedek, just as Zechariah, is the prefiguration of Christ the High Priest, with bread and wine in his hands.¹⁶ (Fig. 2) His counterpart, the figure of Samuel, holding a horn of oil, on the one hand, belongs to the other Old Testament characters associated with the Eucharistic typology but also fits into the thematic focus of this space accentuating ritualistic eating and ‘hospitality’, on the other.¹⁷ Old Testament emblems, such as the Ark of the Covenant on the southern side (below Samuel’s medallion) and the Tables of the Law on the northern side, below Melchizedek and above Saint John the Baptist,

¹⁵ Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 394.

¹⁶ Besides his symbolic connotations also stressed in Catholic Counter-Reformation, Melchizedek was admitted into the pictorial programme of Orthodox sanctuaries in defence of communion under both kinds as well (Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 399). The biblical explanations for the depictions over the altar table are to be found in Chapter 7 of the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasising, on the one hand, that Jesus is a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek and, on the other hand, that the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of the Old Testament, for he was ‘made a surety of a better testament’ (Hebrews 7:22).

¹⁷ Amongst the Old Testament sacrifices, Samuel’s peace offerings are also mentioned, for instance, in the priest’s prayer in the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, as prefigurations of the bloodless sacrifice of Christ.



Fig. 7 The Dream of Jacob

Сл. 7 Лествица Јаковљева

depicted as part of the decorative painting, make the symbolic meaning of this space as described above complete.¹⁸

The adjoining lateral spaces of the sanctuary were also supplied with partly traditional, partly innovative pictorial decoration. The *prothesis*, on the south side of the Table of Oblation, features the *Fons pietatis*-type representation of Christ.¹⁹ (Fig. 3) It is one of the symbolic

depictions given rise by the liturgical veneration of the body and blood of Jesus in 18th century Orthodox art, predicated upon Chapter 6 of the Gospel of John.²⁰ The medallion in the *diaconicon* bears the image of Saint Naum. The emergence of his figure in this space is rather odd and requires further study. Despite his misleading Greek inscription, he had better be identified as the Prophet Nahum, who predicted the destruction of the wicked city of Nineveh. Perhaps it is precisely on account of the theme of repentance that his character may be linked to his counterpart, John the Baptist.

The *soleas* ('outer sanctuary') liturgically represents a transition between the sanctuary and the *naos*. The murals on the vault extending over the iconostasis of the church of Grábóc are also envisaged to manifest the symbolic connection that usually defines the meaning of this space and the icon screen. The eight prophet-medallions display the half-length portraits of the Prophets Saint Elijah, Jeremiah, David, Moses, Aaron, Solomon, Isaiah and Daniel. The righteous and kings of the Old Testament, as the prophets of the first coming of Christ to earth, form part of the pictorial programme of the *naos* area as well, permeated by the mystery of Incarnation.

¹⁸ On the subject of the Old Testament prefigurations of the Eucharist and for the related Baroque-era textual sources, see Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 398.

¹⁹ On this iconographic type in Serbian fine art, see Д. Медаковић, *Барокне теме српској уметности*. Барок код Срба, Загреб 1988, 207–225, 218–225.

²⁰ On the iconographic type 'Christ the Bread of Life', also based on the biblical verse John 6:35 ('Jesus answered, »I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst«'), see М. Тимотијевић, "Хлеб животни" у ниши проскомидије манастира Бођана. Грађа за проучавање споменика културе Војводине 18 (1996) 151–161. The iconographic types 'The Bread of Life' and *Fons pietatis* contain a number of common elements.

The dome fresco dominating the nave in Grábóc shows the Glorification of the Holy Trinity. The New Testament Trinity is surrounded by the heavenly powers (also known as the Holy Bodiless Powers), the nine angelic orders depicted in anthropomorphic forms.²¹ (Fig. 4) The dome picture represents a radical innovation in the Serbian mural painting of the age as has been pointed out by previous research, for it is here that this theme is first painted in a real dome. Thus, the heavens, imagined as the opening firmament, a very common vision of western Baroque, materialise in Serbian art in Grábóc for the first time.²² The inscription 'Holy' in the three cartouches of the cornice running round the composition is an allusion to the Seraphim, as well as to the triumphal hymn, extolling Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts.

As part of the pictorial programme of the *naos* of Grábóc, a Marian thematic selection is accommodated in the six compositions of the tambour. The Marian cycle – the 'prehistory' of the incarnation of the Word – consists of six scenes in a chronological order: the 'Conception',²³ Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, Feeding by the Angel,²⁴ Annunciation and the Visitation of the Theotokos. (Fig. 5–6) In Serbian monumental painting of the Baroque period, extensive cycles of Mary's childhood were no longer typical, thus the mural series in Grábóc is unique in this respect, too.²⁵ Art history research has associated the accentuation of the conception and childhood of Mary (represented by the scene of the feeding of Mary independently alongside the Presentation in the Temple) with Immaculist approaches common in the sphere of influence of the Theological Academy of Kiev and hence in Serbian Baroque culture as well.²⁶ However, in the church

²¹ These are the Angels (*ангели*), the Archangels (*архангели*), holding scales, the so-called Principalities (*начала* – 'principates' in Latin), wearing crowns, the Thrones (*престоли*), surrounding the red throne, the Seraphim (*серафими*), holding flaming hearts, the Powers (*власти*), with spears and helmets, the Virtues (*сили*), wearing crowns, the Cherubim, holding open books, and the Dominions (*господства*), holding sceptres. On the anthropomorphic depiction of the Angelic Orders in Serbian Baroque (including previous literature), see Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 307.

²² Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 50, 116, 121; cf. Шелмић, *Српско зидно сликарство XVIII века*, 44–45; Cf. М. Тимотијевић, *Теодор Илић Чешљар (1746–1793)*, Нови Сад 1989, 129, fig. 85.

²³ The western-type depiction of the Conception of the Theotokos as Immaculata appeared in the mural painting of Serbian Baroque in Krušedol but also became widespread in icon painting in the artistic practice of the Archbishopric of Sremski Karlovci during the second half of the 18th century. For more on the subject with references to previous literature, see Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 339–361.

²⁴ This theme in Byzantine monumental painting was known as a supplementary scene to the Presentation in the Temple and was also featured in the engravings of Ukrainian liturgical books in the Baroque Period as such. Out of its baroque-era depictions, in terms of Grábóc, the most notable depictions may well be the ones in the church of Bodani, where the dedication of the church, the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple, accounts for the emergence of this theme both among the murals and in the sovereign tier of the iconostasis, though (cf. Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 76). In Grábóc, it could be assigned an independent composition not only on account of Šaltist's presumed Ukrainian affiliation but by virtue of the increased 'angel-centredness' informing the entire pictorial programme as well.

²⁵ Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 346.

²⁶ Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 339–346.



Fig. 8 The west wall of the naos: The Corporal Works of Mercy

Сл. 8 Западни зид наоса: Телесна дела милосрђа

of Grábóc, dedicated to the Heavenly Powers, the emphatic veneration of the Archangel Gabriel may also provide an explanation for the unusual extent of the Marian cycle.

It is well worth noting that, out of the scenes from the life of Christ, as well as of the Twelve Great Feasts – apart from the three aforementioned feasts of the Theotokos (the Nativity, Annunciation and Presentation of Mary in the Temple) – only the Ascension and the Pentecost are painted in the

central area of the *naos*, namely on the tambour. (The Passion of Christ is featured in the narthex in an independent cycle, which will be described later.) It must be observed that the Theotokos is also ascribed an important compositional role in the larger pictures of the tambour with Christological references: She appears as the central character in the descent of the Holy Spirit but is also positioned in the major axis of the scene in the Ascension of Jesus.²⁷ The biblical verse in the cartouche below the depiction of the Ascension recalls the words uttered by the two men, shown as angels in the respective scene, to forecast the second coming of Christ. In the cartouche below the depiction of the Pentecost, the emblems of the episcopal office were painted.

As wall painting in the church of Grábóc allows for a relatively large area to be decorated with purely ornamental elements in the lower zones of the *naos*, only a limited number of saints could be depicted in the widening part of the nave, on the walls of the so-called cantor's stands (*kliroses*). The 'Pillars of the Church' are embodied by the Evangelists painted on the pendentives, as well as by the Apostle-medallions lining up in the arches over the cantor's stands. Below them, the upright figures of Serbian national saints are shown:²⁸ Saint Sava of Serbia, the church founder, (1169–1235) and the Great Martyr and 'Tsar' Saint Lazarus, on the south wall,²⁹ as well as Saint Stephen of Dečani (King Stefan Uroš III,

²⁷ The two events intertwined in the biblical narrative as well were celebrated by the early church at the same time, therefore providing a liturgical basis for their close connection as demonstrated in the interior of the church of Grábóc.

²⁸ The depictions of national saints in Grábóc were accommodated on the walls of the *naos* in line with the general tendency in Serbian baroque painting, cf. Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 380.

²⁹ On the cult of the latter among Serbs living in the northern regions, see М. Костић, *Поштовање култа светитеља, њихових моштију и чуда на подручју Карловачке митрополије у периоду барока*. Чудо у словенским културама. Уред. Дејан Ајдачић.

?–1331) and Saint Sava's immediate successor, Archbishop Saint Arsenije the Sarmian (?–1266)³⁰ on the north wall.³¹ One of the peculiarities of the pictorial programme of the church of Grábóc is the fact that, in this zone, there are no saints featured other than Serbian saints, thereby giving a powerful national character to the Byzantine legacy of monumental painting. In this vein, the national saints were intended to unify the themes of martyrs, holy rulers and warriors, traditionally depicted in the lower tiers of the *naos*. Therefore, on the one hand, it is they who ultimately personify the foundations of the Christian Church within the pictorial programme of this church, and, on the other hand, it is through them that, in accordance with the ecclesiastical-policy-related endeavours of the Metropolia of Sremski Karlovci, a sense of national identity, the nurturing of which was treated as a cause of personal importance by Serbian church leaders forced to live in the territory of the Hapsburg Empire, becomes manifest.³²

The connection between the murals of the church of Grábóc and the contemporaneous furnishings may mostly easily be captured in the *kliroses*: The pictorial programme of the *naos* is clearly complemented by the depictions of saints painted on the cantor's pews.³³ In the first cartouche of the north cantor's pew, dynasty founder Stefan the First-Crowned (as Monk Simon) is also linked to the figure of Saint Sava appearing in the mural. In the right cartouche of the cantor's pew, Saint Stefan Štiljanović, as an 'ambitious ruler', corresponds to the character of Tsar Lazarus. On the cantor's pew of the south side, the pantheon of national saints of Grábóc is completed by the depiction of the holy ruler of the Serbs, Stefan Lazarević, a Serbian despot also with ties to Hungary.

The central area of the *naos* under the dome is joined by an additional nave section in the west. The iconographic programme of its murals basically

Београд, 2000. 237–259. 245.

³⁰ With the establishment of the Archbishopric of Sremski Karlovci, cherishing the cult of Serbian saints 'from the north', including those of Sarmia, became part of ecclesiastical policy. On this, inter alia, see Костић, *Поштовање култа светитеља, њихових моштију и чуда на подручју Карловачке митрополије у периоду барока* 240–241, 245; on relations in monumental painting, see Шелмић, *Српско зидно сликарство XVIII века*, 34.

³¹ The cult of Saint Stephen of Dečani was brought into the territory of the Archbishopric of Sremski Karlovci by the leader of the second major wave of Serbian immigration (1737–1739), Patriarch Arsenije IV Šakabenta. The saint would be depicted in this region in the 1740s for the first time.

³² On the cult of Serbian national saints in the territory of the Hapsburg Empire, including previous literature, see М. Костић, *Поштовање култа светитеља, њихових моштију и чуда на подручју Карловачке митрополије у периоду барока*. Чудо у словенским културама. Уред. Д. Ајдачић. Београд 2000, 237–259. On the connections between the Orthodox calendar reforms introduced by Hapsburg monarchs and the emphatic veneration of national saints, see Д. Медаковић, *Положај српског народа у Аустрији током XVIII века*. Сеоба Срба 1690. Саст. Р. Горјанац, П. Милошевић, Београд 1990. 123–138, 129; Ђ. Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве*, II, Минхен, 1966, 61–62. From the 'gallery of popular Serbian holy sovereigns' of the Baroque period, the graphic model establishing role of *Srbijak* (*Правила молебнаја свјатих сербских просветитеља*) must be taken into account. On this issue, see: X. Golub, *A grábóci szerb orthodox monostortemplom kántorpadjai*. Magyar Egyházzene 22 (2014/2015) 301–316, 306–316.

³³ On these, in more detail, see: Golub, *A grábóci szerb orthodox monostortemplom kántorpadjai*, 301–316 (cf. Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 60).



Fig. 9 The west wall of the narthex

Сл. 9 Западни зид припрате

draws on parables, conveying primarily moralising (penitential), as well as eschatological meanings. There was no paintable wall surface in the lower zone of this area, partly to due to the presence of the baroque *stasidia* and partly owing to the south entrance opening in the direction of this area, as well as the west wall of the nave pierced by openings. The north wall bears the inscription of construction. In the ribbed vaults, two martyrs, Saint George and his destroyed match (possibly Demetrius), were painted. In the central picture of this area, the Dream of Jacob is shown. (Fig. 7.) This strong emphasis on the theme may be viewed as an idiosyncratic arrangement in Grábóc, even though instances of its depiction in the westerly regions of the space under the dome are evidenced from the 18th century.³⁴ As the Old Testament prefiguration of the Ascension of Christ, it is also an allusion to the corresponding depiction in the tambour. As in the overall pictorial programme of the church of Grábóc, the figures of the angels, who are the patron saints of this church, mediating between the earthly sphere burdened by sin and the heavenly one promising purification from it, play an important role in the western annexe of the nave as well. This is most patently seen in the scene of the Dream of Jacob displayed on the vault but is also palpable in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, wherein the angels carry the justified beggar into the bosom of Abraham. The parable about the rich man and the poor Lazarus was granted a conspicuously large composition above the south entrance. The dramatic figure of the rich man burning in Hell – appropriately for its position above the entrance – indicates a straightforward symbolic connection with the similarly theatrical western-style scene of the Apocalypse in the narthex.³⁵

The cycle ‘The Corporal Works of Mercy’ on the western outer wall of the *naos* may well be the most boldly innovative element of the ensemble in Grábóc, with decorative painting assigned an unprecedentedly prominent role between the scenes depicted in separate painted frames.³⁶ (Fig. 8) This church

³⁴ It is displayed on the west archivolt of the dome, for instance, in the monastery churches of Drača and Krušedol, as part of the cycle of Beatitudes in the latter. See also: Љ. Шево, *Српско барокно сликарство 18. вијека у византијској традицији*, Бања Лука 2010, 153.

³⁵ On the Serbian representations of this iconography, see Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 180–182.

³⁶ On the functional and content-based relations of the cycle, see also: Тимотијевић,

wall is most reminiscent of works of secular monumental painting from the same period, which comes through as all the more unexpected in a monastic environment of the likes of Grábóc. However, despite appearances to the contrary, the wall section evocative of castle interiors has close iconographic connections with the other murals of the liturgical space. The cycle 'The Corporal Works of Mercy' and the theme of the Rich Man and Lazarus are also linked from a content-related point of view since it is precisely in the parable about the Last Judgement, eternal punishment and eternal life that Jesus enumerates the deeds that represent the earnest of everlasting life. Therein He also tells His disciples that those who do not act like this 'will be cast into the eternal fire' (Matthew 25:31–46).³⁷ This way, the mural cycle – similarly to the symbolism of western walls – does in fact, by means of references to the Last Judgement and indirect allusions to the Passion of Christ, function as a transition towards the pictorial programme of the narthex, dominated by the themes of Passion and the Apocalypse.

In contrast to medieval traditions, continued in 18th century Serbian wall painting as well, no depictions of saints were accommodated in the lower zone in the course of the painting of the narthex of the church of Grábóc.³⁸ In this wall-tier, depictions are to be found only on the west wall: a pair of *grisaille* angels with the Instruments of the Passion and with Veronica's Veil respectively, as well as the Holy Cross, held by the Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena above the west entrance, featured as the 'climax' of the symbols associated with the Passion. (Fig. 9) The inclusion of this latter theme in Grábóc may be labelled as customary, just as the that of the angels, also pertinent to the second coming of Christ, is not foreign to late Byzantine monumental painting traditions, either.³⁹ The illusionistic formulation of their painting, however, lacks precedents in Serbian art. The *grisaille* technique itself, actually a method of painting imitating sculptures, is rather difficult to reconcile with the basic principles of Orthodox art disapproving of three dimensional representations. The brave innovations of the interior painting in Grábóc, also borrowed from western art, such as *grisaille* and the various artistic tricks of illusion creation, must have been meant to enhance the real and 'tangible' presence of angels (in a western and modern sense) in the interior of the church. Therefore, it is these *grisaille* angels, with their outright repudiation of the theological foundations of Byzantine art, that reveal a change of

Српско барокно сликарство, 415–417.

³⁷ In addition to the traditional, eschatological interpretation of the Works of Mercy, the ethical-teaching-related meaning of this theme is also foregrounded in the Baroque period. For more detail on this and the related sources, see: Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 415; as well as М. Тимотијевић, *Иконографија параболо у српском барокном сликарству и украјински проповеднички зборници*. Зборник Матице српске за ликовне уметности 26 (1990) 159–188. 180–181.

³⁸ Inasmuch as the 'women's church' character of the narthex area is emphasised, depictions of female saints and martyrs may also be featured in its lower wall-tier, whereas, on its vault and walls, scenes from the life of the Theotokos may be displayed, too. In this zone, depicting national saints, the individuals commissioning the construction of the church, as well as the donators was well-established. This custom is exemplified by the baroque-era painting of the church of Krušedol, tracing depictions from an earlier layer.

³⁹ In the Monastery Church of Bođani, the figures of the Archangel Michael and the Guardian Angel are displayed in the same position.



Fig. 10 The vault of the narthex

Сл. 10 Свод припрате

view and secularisation in Serbian ecclesiastical monumental painting induced by western influence, perhaps most potently in the interior of the church of Grábóc. The *grisaille* painting method, thus, seeks to underscore the mediating function of angels between the earthly and the other world, while, through their attributes held in their hands, the angels are intimately connected to the Passion-cycle on the vault and upper wall sections of this area as well.⁴⁰

The conceptual and systematic planning of the interior painting in Grábóc is illustrated by the fact that the two *grisaille* angels also act as complements to the Parousia scene, the apocalyptic vision depicted as the triumph of the titular saint, the Archangel Saint Michael, displayed in the enormous lunette of the west wall. In harmony with the theological concept informing the ensemble of Grábóc, in the depiction of the Revelations, the identification of which is facilitated by its inscription, the role of angels is prominently highlighted, not only in the heroic central figure of Saint Michael, prevailing over the dragon, but also in the angelic characters fighting the Evil One and guiding the Apocalyptic Woman to the heavenly throne.⁴¹ The vault of the narthex features the Passion of Christ, concluded by the depiction of the Crucifixion in the central composition on the east wall. (Fig. 10) The scene on the Mount of Olives painted in the central area of the vault may be regarded as the beginning of the cycle, with the role of the angel similarly accentuated. (The Last Supper is depicted in the chancel.) Between the east wall recounting the redemptory sacrifice of Christ and the depictions on the west wall opposite, a formal link is also created by the representation of the Holy Cross, corresponding to the Golgotha-composition.

Finally, it should be added that, in Byzantine Christianity, the Archangel Saint Michael is celebrated together with the Archangel Gabriel and the Holy Bodiless Powers on 8/21 November. This way, in the pictorial programme of the interior of the Monastery Church of Grábóc, including its mural ensemble

⁴⁰ Emblematic representations of *Arma Christi*, as well as of Veronica's Veil held by angels, became widespread in the art of the Archbishopric of Sremski Karlovci from Ukrainian-Russian *antimensions*. On this subject, see: Тимотијевић, *Идејни програм зидног сликарства у олтарском простору манастира Крушедола*, 82–83.

⁴¹ On the baroque-era representations of the Second Coming of Christ and the theme of the Last Judgement, see Тимотијевић *Српско барокно сликарство*, 51; Шелмић, *Српско зидно сликарство XVIII века*, 40.

and furnishings, not only the commemoration of Saint Michael but of all Angelic Orders and angelic intercession is assigned a central and significant role. In line with the points discussed above, the angel-depictions featured as part of the decorative painting are also seen in a new light as they are rendered semantically charged components of this conceptually devised arrangement, whether they hold the cartouche with the 'angelic' prophesy of the Ascension or the Instruments of the Passion. All this, however, cannot be detached from the generally valid tendency in Serbian baroque art indicating the emphatic veneration of Archangels and the Bodiless Powers during the 18th century.⁴² Albeit of differing proportions and intended for different purposes, the ensembles showing a similar iconographic logic were produced as representatives of the genre of graphic reproduction in that period: A collection of 'angel-related' picture themes is also seen in the copperplates, dating from about 1760, showing Saint Michael with the Holy Trinity and the Assembly of the Angelic Orders.⁴³ In Zaharije Orfelin's engraving from 1758, the central picture is surrounded by twelve 'angelic' biblical scenes, which, along with Jacob Schmutzer's engraving of the Choirs of Angels demonstrably influenced the composition of the dome picture in Grábóc.⁴⁴ The graphic compositions in question and the iconography of the mural ensemble in Grábóc are indicative of an approach very similar to that described in the chapter on the veneration of angels in the apologetic work entitled *The Stone of Faith* (*Камень веры*) by Stefan Javorsky. The book, which was important in the Slavic Orthodox culture of the respective period, makes an inventory of the versatile roles of angels in salvation history by listing the appropriate biblical events, the majority of which are also represented in the interior painting of the church of Grábóc.⁴⁵ The first edition of the book, issued in Moscow in 1729, was kept in the library of the Monastery of Grábóc as early as 1750, as testified by its handwritten inscription.⁴⁶

⁴² On the baroque-era signification of the iconographic programme placing angels in the centre, see: Тимотијевић, *Српско барокно сликарство*, 308–310. The anti-pagan connotations of the figure of the Archangel Saint Michael defeating the demon – particularly popular in the Orthodox art of the period as well – are not necessary to elaborate upon.

⁴³ A further example is the engraving by an unknown artist, made at a request from Serbia, depicting the Monastery of the Archangels in Jerusalem (Д. Давидов, *Српска графика XVIII века*, Београд 2006, 362–363, kat. 140, fig. 259).

⁴⁴ Dinko Davidov traces the ceiling picture in Grábóc to the copperplate engraving made for the Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Kovilj in 1761, which he would attribute to Jacob Schmutzer for the first time. (Previous research associated the plate with Zaharije Orfelin.) Cf. Давидов, *Српска графика XVIII века*, 227–228, kat. 138. Upon scrutinising the dome picture in Grábóc, it may be established that the depiction of the Angelic Orders could in fact hark back to the engraving from 1761. However, the central depiction of the New Testament Trinity is more akin to the illustration of Johann Ulrich Krauss's (1655–1719) work entitled *Biblisches Engel* (1694). The latter inspired the copperplate engraving composition *The Holy Trinity and the Archangel Saint Michael*, made by Zaharije Orfelin for the Monastery of Privina glava in 1758, on the order of Pavle Nenadović, Metropolitan of Sremski Karlovci (Давидов, *Српска графика XVIII века*, 297, kat. 71, fig. 103.). The somewhat clumsy composition of the ceiling picture in Grábóc arose out of the fusion of these two graphic prototypes.

⁴⁵ Стефан (Яворский, Симеон Иванович): *Камень веры*. Москва, 1749. 474–480.

⁴⁶ GP20, Library of Grábóc, SOEMLA, Szentendre.

In spite of all its unique features, the monumental painting of the church of Grábóc exhibits those general tendencies that also became characteristic in the painting of church interiors in the Archbishopric of Sremski Karlovci in the Baroque period. Accordingly, on the walls of the *naos*, depictions with moralising-didactic, as well as ecclesiastical policy-related purposes are prioritised. National saints are portrayed in the area of the *soleas*, on the walls of the *kliroses* or on the cantor's pews themselves. It is with the same moral teaching-centred objective that the parables and miracles of Christ are represented as instruments of baroque persuasion, on sections of the nave walls easily visible for the congregation. Regarding its function, the boldly innovative cycle 'The Corporal Works of Mercy', as a visual means of fostering repentance, shown on the west wall of the nave of the church of Grábóc, appears to fully fit the orientation described above.

The pictorial programme of the mural ensemble in Grábóc, radically novel in the Serbian art of the age, was undoubtedly informed by a specific concept originating with the client. The intellectual master behind the paintwork must have been no other than Bishop Sofronije Kirilović, commissioning the painting of the whole interior in Grábóc, whose progressive creative spirit had also been manifested in another major assignment, though partially 'inherited' from his predecessor, Bishop Dionisije Novaković: the innovative, magnificent baroque interior of the Serbian Episcopal Cathedral of Szentendre (1777–1781). However, it is precisely thanks to its mural ensemble that the church of Grábóc goes even one step further, in terms of both content and form, than the earlier monumental painting traditions of Serbian art. In addition to the illusionistic *quadratura* painting in evidence here, a number of new themes, as well as their wider contexts and connections also contributed to the creation of an inventive and iconographically unprecedented baroque ensemble in Grábóc.

Ксенија Голуб

(Народна библиотека Сечењи)

ИКОНОГРАФСКИ ПРОГРАМ ЗИДНОГ СЛИКАРСТВА У МАНАСТИРСКОЈ ЦРКВИ
У ГРАБОВЦУ (МАЂАРСКА)

Најстарији активни православни манастир у Мађарској је манастир Светих Арханђела у Грабоцу (српско име: Грабовац). Основали су га српски монаси из Далмације 1585. године. Унутрашња декорација и мобилијар цркве (зидане 1741.) углавном преферирају ка бароку. Главни сликар је био Андреј Шалтист (?-1797/1798), сликар из Новог Сада, који је у Грабовцу 1784. и 1785. године. Од посебног је значаја примена барокног илузионизма која је усвојена из западноевропске уметности. Врло вероватно је управо у Грабовцу први пут илузионизам употребљен на територији Карловачке митрополије. Сликаство манастира Грабовца није посебно изучавано, посебно његове иконографске карактеристике. Овај рад има за циљ да укаже на бројне сликарске иновације тога доба које су се појавиле управо у Грабовцу, као и да укаже на литургијски карактер појединих композиција које својом инвентивношћу указују на одлике каснобарокног сликарства.