

THE PAINTING OF SAINT GEORGE IN OMORFOKLISIA,  
KASTORIA AND THE SCENE OF THE KOIMISIS  
OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The re-establishment of the domination of the Palaiologos after the battle in Pelagonia, in the area of Kastoria, signifies a constructive and artistic flourishing. The people who express this renovation are the representatives of the church and of the local leaders, while the byzantine emperor Michael VIII himself took part in donations in the old monasteries setting first the good example. Among the high circles of the church and the local military officers, Michel VIII and later Andronikos II, found efficient supporters that played an important role to the maintenance of the domination in this disorderly region. This period of time the portraits of the byzantine leaders with the texts *hrisovul* appeared in the monastery of the Virgin Mary Mavriotissa.<sup>1</sup> As long as Kavalas is at the throne of the archiepiscopate of Achrida, the spirit of renovation is expressed through the activities of the referentarios John<sup>2</sup>, who hires artists and exercises influence on their inspiring ideas in monuments of a wide region. At this period of time the after-komnien perceptions about art dominate. The survival of these tendencies cannot be explained as a provincial delay or as an ignorance of the artistic atmosphere of the large centres<sup>3</sup>. This artistic situation was a result of the powerful after-komnien tradition, which was connected with all these circles that were taking the decisions. Just before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the conservative directions signified a change in most of the countries of the Byzantine circle and they acquired plastic-supple value and a complicated and constituent accomplishment.

It has been noticed, within the limits of the tendencies we have already referred to, that in the boundaries of Kastoria there haven't been any works of art with the characteristics of immobility. The richness and the variety of the painting totals, from the 6<sup>th</sup> decade until the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, can be pre-

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<sup>1</sup> N. Moutsopoulos, *The monastery of the Virgin Mary Mavriotissa*, Athenes 1967, 82-83.

<sup>2</sup> Б. Бабић, *Три грчка фресконатписа на зидовима цркава средњовековног Прилепа*, Зборник за ликовне уметности 5, Нови Сад 1969, 25-31.

<sup>3</sup> V.J. Đurić, *La peinture murale byzantine*, 75-76.



Fig. 1. Illustration of the Holy Trinity – Church of St Georgios in Omorphoklissia – end of the XIII century

Сл. 1. Представа Свете Тројце - Црква Светог Георгија у Оморфоклисији - крај XIII века

sented through some examples. The best artistic traditions can be found in the icon of Saint George in the Byzantine Museum in Athens, which comes from the same church<sup>4</sup>, in the unpublished icon of the whole body of Virgin Mary, from the same church too, in the outer frescos of Taxiarchis Mitropoleos<sup>5</sup> and in the monastery of Virgin Mary of Mavriotissa. In these works and in the physiognomies of the west part of the church of Saints Archangelos in Prilep,<sup>6</sup> the sense of the style of after-komnenian art preserved and moreover the plasticity is emphasized and the physiognomies are becoming larger. A strong penetration of the plasticity is noticed in the frescos of the church of Virgin Mary Koumbelidiki,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> M. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Εικόνες του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Αθηνών*, Αθήνα 1998, 26-28.

<sup>5</sup> M. Χατζηδάκης, *Καστοριά*, Αθήνα 1984, 92-105.

<sup>6</sup> P. Miljković-Persek, *Contribution aux recherches sur l' evolution de la peinture en Macedoine au XIII siecle, L'art byzantin du XIII siecle*, Beograd 1967, 191-192.

<sup>7</sup> X. Μαυροπούλου-Τσιούμη, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του 13<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα στην Κομπελιδική της Καστοριάς*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1973.



Fig. 2. Assumption - Church of St Georgios in Omorphoklissia – end of the XIII century

Сл. 2. Успење Богородице - Црква светог Георгија у Оморфоклисији - крај XIII века

showing at the same time that the presence of these plasticity alone is not a criterion for the evaluation of these works. If we examine these values in extended limits, these calm physiognomies of light colour tones and the clear forms are closer to the well-known works of Serbia and Pelagonia of the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Some representations with their originalities refer to the wonderful continuity of the local themes and the act of iconography. The artists that have occupied with the decoration of the monuments of the area could find solutions by looking back at previous works in Kastoria. The attempt of searching the origin and the place of stay of the artist of this period is closely related to the concluded answer to some questions which have to do with their figurative contribution fine arts in decorations of churches, where the searches for their style haven't been successful. The examination of their relation in style among monuments like the monastery of Saint Nicolas near Prilep,<sup>8</sup> the church of Saint George in Omorfoklissia,<sup>9</sup> Kastoria, the destroyed decoration of the church of Saints Archangelos Tsoukas in Kastoria,<sup>10</sup> the outer freskos of the monastery of the Virgin Mary Mavriotissa<sup>11</sup> in connection with the presence of some im-

<sup>8</sup> В.Ј. Ђурић, *Византијске Фреске у Југославији*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> E. Stikas, *Une eglise des Paleologues aux environs de Castoria*, BZ, 51 (1958), pp. 100ff.

<sup>10</sup> D. Nicol, *Two Churches of Western Macedonia*, BZ, 49 (1956), pp. 113ff.

<sup>11</sup> М. Χατζηδάκης, *Καστοριά*, 78-81.



Fig. 3. A detail of the Assumption

Сл. 3. Деталъ Успења

portant icons in the collection of Kastoria, leads to the thought that there was certainly a constant activity of painters who continued the artistic creation of the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and who moved to the southern geographic limits of the Archiepiscopate of Achrida having as a base Kastoria.

The names of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II , his wife Irene, his son Michael and his wife Mary, are mentioned in the inscription of the church of Saint George in Omorfoklisia.<sup>12</sup> From the way the inscription is preserved today, it looks that thw year of decoration of the monument was 1286-87. Nevertheless the actual historical events of this time are not in harmony with the information we get by reading this inscription and in particular with this year. According to the sources, Andronikos II was crowned emperor in 1282, while Michael VIII Palaiologos was crowned on 21<sup>st</sup> of May in 1294 and got married to the princess Xenia of Armenia on 16<sup>th</sup> of January 1295 and she was named Maria. So it is more possible that there have been some extra-paintings on the inscription, something that you can see at the point where the date is written. An attempt

<sup>12</sup> Ε. Δρακοπούλου, *Η πόλη της Καστοριάς τη βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή εποχή*, ΧΑΕ, Αθήνα 1997, 85-87.

of a correct reading of the date leads us to the year 1296-97. This particular chronology restores the sequence of historical events and it follows the development of the style of the painting of the church as well.

During the years of reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos, there have already been observed some staggering actions for the union of the two churches, which provoke the reactions of the clergy and of the people, especially in Constantinople and the dissatisfaction of the patriarch Joseph (who was against the union 1267-1275 and 1283)<sup>13</sup>. In the council of Lyons (1274)<sup>14</sup> the ecclesiastic subordination to the west was confirmed and it was this council that arranged, in a way, the relations between the two churches without any problems until 1279, when some strong disagreements began to appear between the emperor, the head of the church and the people themselves. At this time we have ordination of the patriarch John Vekos (1275-1282)<sup>15</sup> who was a unionist and ready to give answers to such important issues like the springing from the Holy Spirit, the so called filioque<sup>16</sup>. The manipulation of these issues from

the part of Michael VIII can be characterized as a political arrangement, so that it paves the way for the necessary unions. By putting his uncertain politics into practice he is trying to combine on the one hand the dogmatic subordination to Rome where he would ensure an union and on the other hand the maintenance of the orthodox typical in the liturgy in order to get internal tranquillity. His diplomacy is to be found in the application of his external ecclesiastic politics



Fig. 4. St Demetrios - Church of St Georgios in Omorphoklissia – end of the XIII century

Сл. 4. Свети Димитрије - црква светог Георгија у Оморфоклисији - крај XIII века

<sup>13</sup> I. Αναστασίου, *Ο θρυλούμενος διωγμός των αγιορειτών υπο του Μιχαήλ Η Παλαιολόγου και του Ιωάννη Βέκκου*, Αθωνική Πολιτεία επι τη χιλιετηρία του Αγίου Όρους, Θεσσαλονίκη 1963, 211-224

<sup>14</sup> D. Nicol, 'The Papal Scandal', *Studies in Late Byzantine History and Prosopography*, London 1986, ch. II, pp. 141ff, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, τόμος Θ', 126-128.

<sup>15</sup> Maffry-Talbot, *The correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople*, Washington, D.C. 1975

<sup>16</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, Oxford 1957, p. 92, D.Nicol, *The Byzantine Reaction to the second council of Lyons, 1274*, *Studies in Church History*, VII, Cambridge 1971, pp. 113ff.



Fig. 5. St Nestor - Church of St Georgios in Omorphoklissia - end of the XIII century

Сл. 5. Свети Нестор - црква  
светога Георгија у Оморфоклисији  
- крај XIII века

to the clergy of Constantinople mainly and to all around areas and it seems that he hasn't given any attention to distant areas. These issues imposed close mutual relations between the wider area of Macedonia-Epirus and Constantinople. The great religious confusion – which doesn't stop but only after 1282, when the union was cancelled by Andronikos II – gave a support to a dogmatic confrontation, which was transferred to the iconography as well and especially in Kastoria. For the first time in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the issue of the Holy Trinity is represented in monuments of the area. This is done on the vault of the inner narthex of the church of Virgin Mary Koumbelidiki<sup>17</sup> and on the vault of the inner narthex of the church of Saint George in Omorfoklissia<sup>18</sup>. In the representation of Koumbelidiki three figures are presented in a way that the one is inside the other. In the church of Saint George in Omorfoklissia there is a body through which the faces of Holy Trinity appear. Later in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the subject appears in another representation with different arrangement and with the addition of the royal deisis to Saint Nicolas of

Tzotza.<sup>19</sup> According to the eastern orthodox conceptions, the Father and the Holy Spirit are indescribable.<sup>20</sup>

The Catholic addition of the word ``filioque`` transformed the creed to state that the Holy Spirit proceeds from God and His Son together.<sup>21</sup> Only the Son is describable and of course only in his human nature as ``a word of economy`` and not as ``a word of theology``. As a ``word of economy`` Christ is represented symbolically with the figure of God of the days or of the Almighty, when the two qualities – that of the Father and that of the Son – are regarded as the same.

<sup>17</sup> Χ. Μαυροπούλου-Τσιούμη, 85-89.

<sup>18</sup> Μ. Παϊσίδου, *Η ανθρωπόμορφη Αγ. Τριάδα στον Άγιο Γεώργιο της Ομορφοκκλησίας*, ΕΕΣΜ, Θεσσαλονίκη 2001, 371-392.

<sup>19</sup> Ι. Σίσιου, *Μια άγνωστη σύνθεση στον Άγιο Νικόλαο Τζότζα Καστοριάς*, ΕΕΣΜ, Θεσσαλονίκη 2001, 511-536.

<sup>20</sup> Μ. Farantos, *Η περι του εν Τριάδι Θεού και ιδία περι Αγίου Πνεύματος διδασκαλία του Ιερού Συμβόλου Νικαίας-Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, Κοινωνία 4, (1981), pp. 500ff.

<sup>21</sup> J. Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, New York 1981, pp. 190ff.

Until 1259, Kastoria was a territory of the Despotate of Epirus and belonged to the Archiepiscopate of Achrida, Constantinos Kavasilas was probably at the seat of the Archiepiscopate from 1246 and he was a man who the imperial circles disliked because his family from Dirachio had always served the Despots of Epirus while the Archiepiscopate, during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, didn't have relations with the emperors on the one hand and with the Patriarchate on the other, and those who took the lead didn't stop to declare their anti-latin beliefs.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the iconographic type of Holy Trinity has been chosen as an ideological answer against those who believed in the latin dogmatic interpretations of that age.

The general opposition to the union of the churches was strong, especially among the monastic circles which had Holy Athos as their centre. Holy Athos had great influences at that time and they dominated on the political scene the next century. The religious renaissance at the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> century which was completed after the cancellation of the union of churches, undoubtedly contributed to

the specially plethoric artistic activity of this period, evidence of which are the construction and the renovation of the monasterial churches. This activity was incited, according to the sources, by the Patriarch Athanasios I (1289-1293), 1303-1309) an monk from Athos and the leader of the Hesychastic movement.<sup>23</sup> He was the man who built or renovated churches in Constantinople and in other different places. Most of the large monasterial establishments, which are either dated or can be dated from that time, were constituted during the two periods of his Patriarchate and the intermediate decade.



Fig. 6. St Christophoros - Church of St Georgios in Omorphoklissia – end of the XIII century

Сл. 6. Свети Христофор - црква светог Георгија у Оморфоклисији, - крај XIII века

<sup>22</sup> D.M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epirus*, Oxford 1957, 101, 168, 222-225, and Γ. Ι. Θεοχαρίδης, *Ιστορία της Μακεδονίας κατά τους μέσους χρόνους (285-1354)*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1980, 322-335.

<sup>23</sup> J. Meyendorff, *St. Gregoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe*, Bourges 1959, and the same, *A study of Gregoire Palamas*, London 1964.

Irrespective of the poor constructive activity, the emperors of Byzantium were praised as great donators and re-erectors. Nikiforos Kallistos praises Andronikos II as a ``new Constantinos`` because he renovated many monuments of Constantinople.

The scene of the Koimesis<sup>24</sup> in the church of Saint George, although only the upper part, is partly preserved differs from all thw known, up to the present time, scenes like the one in Perivleptos of Achrida,<sup>25</sup> the Kraljevna crkva in Stoudenitsa<sup>26</sup> and the one of Staro Nagoritsino.<sup>27</sup> ``The gates of Paradise`` are represented at the top of the scene. Until the Late-byzantine period, the byzantines have preserved their manichaeistic faith to the demons-publicans, who controlled the moral baggage before the entrance in the gates of paradise. The byzantine fathers often repeat the transfer to the gates of paradise, which Virgin Mary crossed during her Koimesis or Ascension. The Ascension of Theotokos and the delivery of the belt to apostle Thomas are represented under the gates. The body of Virgin Mary was taken up into Heaven, seated on a throne into glory and lifted by two angels. A third angel brings the cloud with apostle Thomas. Apostle Thomas is a witness and the belt of Virgin Mary in his hands is evidence that the Ascension was a fact. In thw monuments of Serbia the earlier example of Ascension as the absolute development of the subject, has appeared in the church Leviska<sup>28</sup> and later in Saint Sophia of Achrida and in both cases like an illustration of the speech of John Damaskinos for the Koimesis. It is the only example in the wider area of Macedonia.

The content of the second speech of John Damaskinos seems to inspire the artists at this period of time. In this speech he emphasizes that Theotokos is the Queen of the Apostles, the prophets and the angels that surround her. John Damaskinos refers to Virgin Mary as the ark of orthodoxy. Theotokos is the mental ark and Christ is the new Solomon. In the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, he explains why Virgin Mary preserved her body after the Koimesis.

The celebration of the Koimesis near 1300 was very popular. The month August was dedicated to this celebration after a royal decree, because Andronikos II considered it was necessary to honour Virgin Mary and her Ascension to Heaven.<sup>29</sup> Its importance became immediately obvious to the art and to the decorations of churches, whereas the the scene has acquired a distinguishing position. Iconography concerning this important celebration of orthodoxy was more developed and more episodes were added which were taken from secret texts, speeches and poetic references, which were properly worked

<sup>24</sup> L. Wratisslav-Mitrović and N. Okunev, *La dormition de la Sainte Vierge dans la peinture medievale orthodoxe*, Byzantinoslavica, III (1931) pp. 134ff.; I. Zervoy-Tognaxxi, *L' iconographie de la Koimesis de la Santa Vergina*, *Specchio del Pensiero Teologico dei Padri Byzantini*, Studi e Ris. Sull Oriente Christiano 8 (1985) pp. 21ff.

<sup>25</sup> G. Millet-A. Frolow, *La peinture du Moyen age en Yougoslavie*, III, pl. 11/2-3, 12 ; Th. Egloff, *Entschlafung der Gottemutter*, *Der christliche Osten*, XV (1985) 75-76.

<sup>26</sup> Г. Бабић, *Краљевна црква у Студеници*, Београд 1987.

<sup>27</sup> Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, Београд 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Д. Панић-Г. Бабић, *Богородица Левишка*, Београд 1975.

<sup>29</sup> PG, 161, col. 1095-1108, ; V. Crumel, *Le mois de Marie des Byzantins*, *Echos d'Orient*, XXXI/3 (1932) 257-269.



out and were placed in the mass concerning the Koimesis. The discussion for the episodes which are connected with her belt and her maphorio, begins from the first decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We come to this conclusion looking at the decorations of the gates of Souzdal<sup>30</sup> and the freskos of forty martyrs in Tyrnovo<sup>31</sup> and becomes stronger when we get closer to the end of the century. In the Perivleptos apart from the traditional Koimesis some more episodes are painted like the announcement of the death of Virgin Mary, her prayer, the transfer of the body and the delivery of the belt to apostle Thomas. That means that new texts have been introduced to the philological examples for the icon of Koimesis. In Kraljevena crkva in Stoudenitsa the transfer of the body of Virgin Mary draws our attention at the front and other traditional parts are divided around it (Christ with the soul of Virgin Mary, the angels, the apostles, bishops, the women of Jerusalem) and those which were introduced during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> Staro Nagoritsino takes this basic shape from Stoudenitsa, but it enriches it with new details.

In the three pre-nous monuments, the basic conception for the scene of the Koimesis is based on the secret texts which appeared in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century and their authors are hidden behind the names of Saint John Theologos, Meletios and Joseph from Arimathia.<sup>33</sup> They, in a great extent, were able to affect, in an indirect way, the icon of the Koimesis through the aphorisms and the verses of great byzantine orators and poets of the 8<sup>th</sup> century like Germanos of Constantinople,<sup>34</sup> Andrew of Crete, John Damaskinos, Kosmas Majuma and of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Theodoros Stoudites, Theofanis Graptos, whose works were dedicated to the Koimesis and were included in the mass of the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. Moreover the formation of the Prayer Book of the celebration, which is read after the sixth sound of penitence for the Koimesis, was based on these texts.

The painters could freely choose scenes taken from these texts, trying to adjust them to the needs of the mass. According to John Damaskinos,<sup>35</sup> the Apostles carried Virgin Mary as a new ark, more glorious than the old testament itself.<sup>36</sup> Christ has accepted the soul of Virgin Mary under the escort of psalms and hymns and the orders of angels admired their lord who had taken her soul in his hands.

Constantinople, was the centre from which the worship of Theotokos was originated because it brought the burden of the historical heritage of the

<sup>30</sup> J. Blankoff, *Les Portes d'or de la cathedrale de Suzdal*, Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, 23 (1979), 32-37.

<sup>31</sup> A. Grabar, *La peinture religieuse en Bulgarie*, Paris 1928, 98-99.

<sup>32</sup> Г. Бабић, *Краљевна црква*, 162-167.

<sup>33</sup> M. Judie, *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, Studi e testi, 114, Citta del Vaticano 1944, 103-171.

<sup>34</sup> A. Wenger, *Un nouveau témoin de l'Assomption - une homilie attribuee a saint Germain de Constantinople*, REB XVI (1958) 43-58.

<sup>35</sup> S. Jean Damascene, *Homilies sur la Nativite et la Dormition*, Sources chretiennes 80, Paris 1961, 114, ; M. Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption*, 256, ; С. Радојчић, *Беседе Јована Дамасцина и фреске Успења Богородичног у црквама краља Милутина*, Узори и дела старих српских уметника, Београд 1975, 181-193.

<sup>36</sup> A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge*, 387.

glorious protectress of the city. It is reasonable that this worship and respect to Virgin Mary was expanded to the area of Kastoria too. After all, estimating the painting decoration of the monuments which have been preserved since the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, we come to the conclusion that artists of these areas rather than artists of the centre, were interested in such subjects. The prologue or the epilogue of the enrichment of every scene depended on the personal stroke of the creator of the programme. The Hesychastic circles played an important role on the development of iconography. Those circles emphasized the idea that the incarnation of God's word and the mental union of the orthodox church with Christ are being evident through the holy activity and that the earthly christian empire was the countervalue of the Kingdom of the heaven. This new emphasis on theology, in contradiction to the emphasis on liturgical and narrative subjects, which characterized the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was a result of the persistent non-unionist movements of that time. It seems that the ideas, which were born by these tendencies, have managed to enter literature and the painting of the monuments since the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The variety of the symbolic representations, that are connected with the Holy Trinity, is at the same time evidence of this tendency and it can be considered as a product of these troublous years, the years of religious controversies. The methods of symbolic expression and the obvious messages, which were sent through symbolic objects, inscriptions, some portraits, help the historian of art to recompose the social and religious atmosphere of this age and to approach the political situations inside the word of art. We can presume that the conception of the iconographic programme was a personal achievement of an important ecclesiastic factor with theological education. There is also the possibility that the Sponsors Netzades had chosen this programme and they wanted, at this time of religious elevation, to introduce a contemporary programme with solutions to the problems and they also aimed to the projection of their social hypostasis. For such a programme, the special workshop of Virgin Mary was absolutely essential because the emperor Andronikos, who was a great personage had dedicated a whole month to her grace. The frescos of the church of Saint George, in Omorfoklisia, is a painting total, which gives important elements that concern the procedure of the development of the style of the time of Palaiologos. At the same time, they are an evidence of a continual artistic presence in the wider area of Kastoria. Comparing them to other works of the same time, like the Perivleptos in Achrida, we come to the conclusion that we deal with artists who are originated from two centres with different tradition. In Kastoria there is a big tradition which at the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, acquires special interest and in Achrida two invited artists from Thessaloniki appear, who bring the last achievements of the byzantine art of the centre. The early works of Michael and Eftichios in Achrida<sup>37</sup>, although they have the forms of the style of the monuments of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, are positively turned to the future. As a basic painting total of the first palaiologan art they present the introduction in the wall painting. The general consideration of the painting of the Perivleptos for the development of art, has to be led proportionality to the certified influences in the painting of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is the strong

<sup>37</sup> С. Киссас, *Солунска уметничка породица Астрапа*, Зограф 5, (1974), 35.

tradition that created in Kastoria different conditions of artistic expression. The knowledge of the directions which are given by the centre is certified and it is obvious mainly in the new researches concerning iconography. The fact that they don't easily accept the new tendencies in style, doesn't mean that they choose stability. The new solutions, simply, don't persuade the artists of this region to follow them thoughtlessly. So it is not the provincial delay that keeps the artists of Kastoria from creating works equal to those of Achrida. The calm setting and the magnificent gorgeousness predominate in the painting of the church of Saint George in Omorphoklissia. The exteriorization of the inner world, without losing its dramatization and expressive passion, doesn't reach



Fig. 7. Icon of the Theotokos, Church of St Georgios in Omorphoklissia, end of the XIII century  
Сл. 7. Икона Богородице, црква светог Георгија у Оморфоклисији, крај XIII века

the extremities of the painting in Perivleptos. The excellent shaping and the mentality of the figures lead to the thought that the artists had creatively assimilated all the previous tradition, which doesn't relate only to this area but to Thessaloniki as well.

On the basis of this analysis of their style, we are led to a tendency which developed a little time after the decoration of Koumbelidiki which characterizes the first decades after the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and it is found in the antipode of the pompous palaiologean style. The painters are evolutively placed in the middle of the monuments which are represented by the frescoes of great serbian monuments of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, like Sopotsani, having overcome on the one hand the monumental style and on the other the linear afterkomnenian remainders in the church of Saint Nicolas in Prilep. According to this analysis the frescoes of the church of Saint George are dated at the end of the thirteenth century, very close to the date of the inscription. The monument's decoration of the wall painting is one of the earliest examples of great works, like the one of Perivleptos.

Јоанис Сисију

СЛИКАРСТВО СВЕТОГ ЂОРЂА ОМОРФОКЛИСИЕ  
И ЦИКЛУС УСПЕЊЕ БОГОРОДИЦЕ

У натпису светога Ђорђа Оморфоклисије помињу се имена цара Антроника II, његове жене Ирене, сина Михаила IX и његове жене Марије. Година живописања 1286-87. Међутим, историјски догађаји тог времена изгледа да не одговарају са датовањем према натпису. Андроник II Палеолог према изворима био је крунисан 1282, а Михаило Палеолог 21. маја 1294. и 16. јануара 1295. се венчао са принцем Јерменском Ксенијом која је добила име Марија. Вероватно је натпис пресликан. Према нашем читању година украшавања је 1297.

Године владања Михаила VIII Палеолога је време покушаја за уједињавањем двеју црква. Развој међусобних односа православља са западном црквом пролази кроз сабор у Лиону 1274.

Без обзира на њихову скромну градитељску делатност, византијски цареви хваљени су као велики градитељи. Никифор Калист Ксантопул хвали Андроника II као „новог Константина“ јер је, према њему, много оправљао чувене цариградске грађевине. Говорећи о цару као обновитељу православља, Ксантопул одређеније описује тежњу Андроника II да обнови и учврсти религиозни живот у својој престоници.

Слика Успења Богородичиног у Светом Ђорђу, мада је делимично сачувана, само горњи део, разликује се, од свих других до сада познатих, као што су слике Перивлепте у Охриду, Краљеве цркве и Старог Нагоричина. На врху слике су представљена „врата неба“. До касног средњег века Византинци су очували и маникејско веровање у демоне-царинике, који претресају морални пртљак пред вратима неба. Византијски хомилитаристи често понављају метафору о вратима неба, кроз која је прошла Богородица по смрти или по вазнесењу. Испод врата неба живописано је вазнесење Богородице и предаја појаса апостолу Томи. Богородица се у телу вазноси на небо седећи на трону у мандорли а подижу је два анђела. Трећи анђеоло приноси облак са апостолом Томом, који пружа руке да прими појас Богомајке. Апостол Тома је сведок, а Богородичин појас у његовим рукама доказ да се чин Вазнесења заиста збио. Међу српским споменицима, најранији пример Вазнесења као потпуно уобличене теме јавио се у Богородици Љевишкој, а касније у Св. Софији Охридској, у оба случаја као илустрација канона Јована Дамаскина на Успење. Код нас изгледа да је једини случај.

Садржина друге беседе Јована Дамаскина изгледа да у ово време много инспирише сликаре. У њој се истиче како је Богородица краљица апостола, пророка и анђела који је окружавају. Јован Дамаскин опширно говори о Богородици као кивоту. Богородица је духовни кивот, а Христос нови Соломон. У 14. поглављу објашњава због чега је Богородица сачувала тело и после смрти. Празник Успење Богородице у годинама око 1300. задобио је изузетну популарност. Посебним царским декретом њему је посвећен цео месец август, јер је образложио цар Антроник II да се прослави Богородица, њено уснуће и подизање на небо. Значај овог празника се нарочито видљиво показао у ликовним уметностима, у декорацијама храмова добијао је најпрегледније место, његова иконографија се условљавала, епизоде гомилале, подскрек за нове обрасце налажен је у старим апокрифним, хомилијским и поетским текстовима које је у одломцима или прерађене већ било прихватило богослужење везано за Богородичину смрт. Опширније приказивање смрти Богородичине и епизода везаних за њен појас и мафорион започиње већ у првим деценијама XIII века, што судимо по вратима Суздаљског сабора и фрескама Четрдесет мученика у Трнову, а јача нарочито у његовим последњим годинама. У цркви Богородице Перивлепте у Охриду насликано је уз традиционално успење још неколико епизода, које значе и увођење нових текстова у литерарне предлошке за слику Богородичине смрти.

Нагоричино преузима ту основну схему из Студеничке цркве и обогаћује је многим новим појединостима.

У хомилијама на овај празник често се подсећа на улогу Богородице у делу оваплоћења Христовог, као на пример, у другој хомилији на Успење св. Јована Дамаскина. На службама око 15. августа стално се истиче Богородица која је дала тело Христу „Мати Божја, која си зачала живот, умиреш по законима природе и стижеш са земље на небо у знаку онога који се оваплотио из твоје чисте и драгоцене крви“ (17. август, стихира на вечерњи), „предајеш своју душу у руке Онога који се оваплотио из тебе због нас“ (14. август, друга катизма на јутрењу, 16. август, друга катизма на јутрењу). У 6. песни Канина на успење каже „син твој населио те је у светињи светиња, заиста као светли свећњак нестварне светлости, као кадионицу златну божанског жара, као суд и палицу, таблицу богописану, ковчег свети, трпезу Слова живота“.

Цариград је био жариште Богородичиног култа, јер се он поносио реликвијама своје славне покровитељке и из њега се ширило зрачење посебног поштовања Богородице у ове крајеве православног света. Порекло сложених приказа Успења са пратећим догађајима везује се за Цариград. Судаћи према сачуваним споменицима с краја XIII века, више је заинтересовао сликаре у Србији и северној Грчкој, него оне у највећим центрима. Од личног става уметника или творца програма зависило је каквим ће прологом или епилогом обогатити сцену.

Ове територије имале су дубока црквенополитичка превирања, која можемо пратити од Лионског Сабора 1274. који је третирао питања уједињења цркве. Оваква ситуација утицала на стварање блиских међусобних односа између Епира, области Македоније и Цариград. Ови велики црквени конфликти који су трајали до 1282. г. кад је на власт ступио Антроник II, изгубили на својој актуелности. Тиме је епирска властела добила могућност да са већим правима одлучује о духовно политичком животу. Међу члановима остао је и надаље амбициозан и јак противник уједињења отац севастократора Тесалије Јован Дукас.

Духовни преокрет који се догодио на прелазу из 13. и 14. век утицао је на развој уметничког и идеолошког става у програму црквене уметности.

Идеја оваплоћења логоса и духовна инкарнација православне цркве са Христом осећа се кроз теолошку божанску енергију. Нове тенденције доводе до обogaћења у третирању ставова према тадашњим канонским програмима.

Те идеје су се огледале у оновременој књижевности а самим тим вршиле су утицај на програм сликарства. Богатство симболике у представама Свете Тројце очигледни су докази тих нових схватања. Може се претпоставити да је то дело људи са високим теолошким образовањем и културом. Као и потврда прихватања тих тенденција од стране ктитора високог ранга.

Истицање култа богородице у задужбинама Андроника другог кроз представе успења са обogaћеним симболичким програмом докази су прихватања и ширења нових идеја у уметности овог времена.

