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SEVEN STREAMS

The Stylistic Tendencies of Macedonian Fresco Painting in the 13th Century

In the contemporary picture of 13th century Byzantium, art historians have given significant contribution to explicate the impact of the dynamic shifts of political power on the development, as well as on the social role and the character of artistic production. In that regard, the latest theories of some of the most respectable scholars have clearly shown that the change of the historical circumstances caused by the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204 largely influenced not only the general cultural context of creative ideas, but also the distinctive features of artistic expression, such are: the thematic content, the manufacturing techniques and the stylistic design of the works of art. The contact of the two cultures, originating from the same religious background, yet burden with centuries long theological discrepancies, resulted in an exciting exchange of iconographic patterns and artistic trends in the interactive meeting of Eastern and Western traditions, mostly evident in the domains of easel painting and manuscript illumination¹. After the Imperial restoration in 1261, the consolidation of the Byzantine political power by the Palaiologan dynasty provided a solid ground for a grandiose revival of authentic creative tendencies that will label the artistic production in the period until the final fall of the Empire in 1453, renewing Constantinople's prominence as the art capital which, once again, dispersed the new currents all over the territories of its cultural influence.

For the most part of the period in question, Macedonian territory was a battlefield of different political interests of the neighboring countries that established their rules over the dominions of the former Empire². Undergoing frequent changes of political authority and loosing its long-lasting cultural contacts with Constantinople and Thessalonica, this region was almost excluded from the representative map of contemporary artistic attainments and left to draw its creative impulses from the well of its own tradition from the past centuries. Cut off from the mainstreams of creative evolution of the 13th century artis-

¹ R. Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, Oxford 2000, 188-192

² Б. Панов, *Македонија во XIII век (до 1261 година)*, Историја на македонскиот народ I, Скопје 2000, 470-479

tic trends, it became a territory of a conservative, yet genuine cultural identity, established on the recognizable characters of the most representative achievements from the bygone centuries and permeated with the authentic spirit of its own cultural environment. Some twenty different fresco ensembles, preserved well enough, as well as in sections and in fragments, speak in favor of the creative efforts of the local artists to maintain the painterly tradition throughout the whole period of the 13th century.

In regard to the above mentioned theory of the traditional qualities of the artistic production in this region, some thirty years ago Professor Petar Miljković Pepek came up with an inventive idea of the so called artistic pluralism of Macedonian fresco painting in the 13th century³. According to his investigations of the fresco ensembles dated in this period, one can determine three different stylistic tendencies appropriate for definition of the artistic development within the chronological boundaries of 1204 and 1300. Having in mind their order of appearance, they can be signified as follows:

- the first one is the tendency towards continuation of the graphicism of the Comnenian painting,
- the second is the tendency towards a subtle artistic expression with a sensual beauty of the images,
- the third one is the tendency towards creation of a new monumental style by emulation of the works of art from the 10th and 11th centuries.

However, this idea, according to which the 13th century fresco ensembles should be classified in three artistic categories, could easily be further developed into a theory of seven different stylistic tendencies that appeared in this region during the time in question. The persistent continuation of the Comnenian stylistic pattern, the evolutive inventions of the talented church dignitaries, the lyrical artistic expression commissioned by the nobility, the restitution of the main features of the monumental style, the appearance of the plastic style, the unique fusion of the Prilep fresco painters and the breakthrough of the Palaiologan innovations could be defined as seven streams of the dynamic flow of the overall creative potential characteristic of the 13th century artistic production. The intention of this paper is to briefly examine the suggested theoretical consideration.

FIRST STREAM – THE KURBINOVO ADDICTION

Following the leading principle of Professor's Pepek classification of the fresco ensembles and bearing in mind the quantity of the works of art belonging to the specified categories, one can easily notice that the tendency towards continuation of the main features of the Comnenian expression occupies the leading position. This is not surprising if we have in mind the extraordinary painterly qualities of the two masterpieces of Byzantine artistic culture from that period preserved in the territory of Macedonia and situated in the villages

³ P. Miljković-Pepk, *Un courant stilistique dans la peinture du XIIIe siècle en Macédoine*, Patrimoine culturel IV, Skopje 1971, 23

of Nerezi and Kurbinovo. The exceptional composition of the scenes rendered with geometrical precision, the refined spirituality of the forms depicted with tender sophistication and the spasmodic outburst of emotional resonance of the Nerezi fresco decoration⁴, as well as the ecstatic élan of the dynamic forms, the delicate treatment of the painterly elements that shiver in the nervous rhythm of the lines and the refined treatment of the playful draperies in the painted arrangement of Kurbinovo⁵, have become synonyms for the highest achievements in mediaeval art. However, in spite of the exquisite achievement of the painted ensemble in Nerezi executed by some of the leading Constantinopolitan painters of that period, the one in Kurbinovo became the main source of inspiration for many generations of local artists until the end of the 13th century.

This strong addiction to the stylistic manner of Kurbinovo painters, which can be detected in at least a dozen fresco ensembles all around the territory in question, retained almost all of the recognizable features of the iconographic patterns and painterly expression conceived in the mentioned ensemble. Besides the fragmentarily preserved sections of several fresco ensembles dated in the opening decades of the century, the main group of examples of this artistic trend that dominated over the cultural climate of the region could be detected among the representative achievements of the masters who worked in the second half of the 13th century, creating the painted decoration of the churches in Ohrid and Prilep as the two leading artistic centers, according to the number of the produced monuments and the quality of the executed fresco arrangements. In that regard, the linear fractalization of the facial structure of the saintly images in the church of Saint Nicholas in the village of Manastir from 1271⁶ (Fig. 1), the elegant anatomic configuration of the figures of the Officiating bishops (Fig. 2) and the vigorous gestures of the protagonists in the scenes from the Passion cycle (Fig. 3) in the church dedicated to Saint John the Theologian - Kaneo in Ohrid from the 70ties of the century⁷, as well as the playful rhythm of the draperies in the altar decoration of Saint Nicholas in Prilep from 1298⁸ (Fig. 4), are the most significant examples of this prevailing tendency to keep the Kurbinovo painterly lessons alive and fruitful more than a century afterwards.

SECOND STREAM – THE REFERENDARIUS JOHN'S ARTISTIC IDIOLECT

In the context of the retroactive development of artistic tendencies in Macedonian fresco painting in the 13th century, a person singles out from the legacy of Late Comnenian tradition by his endeavor to infuse new energy into

⁴ I. Sinkević, *The Church of Saint Panteleimon at Nerezi. Architecture, Programme, Patronage*, Wiesbaden 2000, 76-80; S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale*, Milano 2006, 70-74

⁵ C. Grozdanov, L. Hadermann-Misguish, *Kurbinovo*, Skopje 1992, 74-79; S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 80 - 81

⁶ Д. Коцо - П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *Манастир*, Скопје 1958, 91-92

⁷ П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *Црквата Св. Јован Богослов Канео во Охрид*, Културно наследство III, Скопје 1967, 91-93

⁸ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 148-150



Fig. 1 Manastir,
Church of St.
Nicholas (1271),
St. John Chrysostom
Сл. 1. Манастир,
Црква Св. Николе
(1271),
Св. Јован Злагоусти



Fig. 2 Ohrid, Church of St. John the Theologian Kaneo
(ca. 1270-1280), Officiating Church Fathers
Сл. 2. Охрид, Црква Св. Јована Богослова - Канео
(о. 1270-1280), Служба архијереја



Fig. 3 Ohrid, Church of St. John the Theologian Kaneo
(ca. 1270-1280), Incredulity of St. Thomas
Сл. 3. Охрид, Црква Св. Јована Богослова - Канео
(о. 1270-1280), Неверовање Томино

Fig. 4 Prilep, Church of St. Nicholas (1298), St. Archangel Michael

Сл. 4. Прилеп, Црква Св. Николе (1298), Арханђео Михаило

the existent status of the old fashioned painterly practice. Known from the inscription discovered in the central bay of the naos of Saint Nicholas in Manastir, as well as from the text inscribed on the icon with the image of St. George found in Struga⁹ by the name of John, the Deacon and Referendarius of the

⁹ Ф. Баришић, *Два грчка натписа из Манастира и Струге*, Зборник радова



Fig. 5 Struga, Church of St. George,
Icon of St. George (1266/67)

Сл. 5. Струга, Црква Св. Ђорђа,
Икона Св. Ђорђа (1266/67)



Fig. 6 Manastir, Church of St.
Nicholas (1271), St. Artemius

Сл. 6. Манастир, Црква Св.
Николе (1271), Св. Артемије

Ohrid Archbishopric, he is believed to be the coordinator of a number of significant artistic projects in the 8th decade of the 13th century¹⁰. The evident deflection from the standard Comnenian principles of graphicism in the configuration of the forms, the meticulous exposition of the facial volume in elaboration of the depicted characters and the skillfully organized anatomic construction of the figures which does not abandon the flat treatment of the masses, speak in favour of the original aesthetic criteria promoted by one of the highest ranking representatives of the Church institution. This tendency towards a more plastic approach in the shaping of the saints' images, incorporated in the basic linear concept of the depictions, as well as the minute attention to details in the execution of the lavishly elaborated costumes evident in the depiction of the military saints on the icon from Struga from 1267¹¹ (Fig. 5) and in the central bay of Manastir from 1271¹² (Fig. 6), as features of Referendarius John's artistic idiolect, become more obvious in the scenes from the patron cycle in the church of Saint Archangel Michael in Prilep from the mid-70ties of the century¹³ (Fig. 7), marked by a delicate

Византолошког института VIII/2, Београд 1964, 13-27

¹⁰ P. Miljković-Peppek, *Jovan – đakon i referendar*, Likovna Enciklopedija Jugoslavije 1, Zagreb 1984, 698

¹¹ P. Miljković-Peppek, *L'icône de Saint Georges de Struga, oeuvre du peintre Jean*, Cahiers Archéologiques XIX, Paris 1969, 213-221; idem, *L'art de l'icône en Macédoine médiévale*, Trésors médiévaux de la République de Macédoine, Paris 1999, 60

¹² S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 141

¹³ П. Миљковић-Пепек, *Живописот и прилепските зографи*, Прилеп и прилепско низ историјата, Прилеп 1971, 101; В. Ј. Ђурић, *Византијске фреске у Југославији*,



Fig. 7 Prilep, Church of St. Archangel Michael (ca. 1270-1280),
St. Archangel Michael Calling to Joshua

Сл. 7. Прилеп, Црква Св. арханђела Михаила (о. 1270-1280),
Арханђео Михаило и Исус Навин

refinement in the treatment of the depicted faces and their expression. The mild curvature of the images in the accomplishment of the plastic effects, the soft shades that saturate the facial volume with noble accords of tonal harmony and the selection of delicate hues in the application of the palette, place the painted arrangement of the Prilep church on the pedestal of the best achievements of Deacon John's painterly circle. Far from abandoning the basic principles of the Late Comnenian painterly practice, this distinguished character gave more than a significant contribution to the belated evolution of the 13th century artistic trends in this region.

THIRD STREAM – THE LYRICAL EVOLUTION

In regard to the above mentioned, we have to notice that several fragmentarily preserved fresco arrangements from the closing period of the 13th century speak in favor of the important role of Referendarius John in the conception of a particular artistic trend¹⁴, indicative of a more innovative approach in the exploitation of the artistic instructions of the past decades. Although the mentioned ensembles are heavily damaged and preserved only in remnants, several figures from the fresco decoration in the eastern part of the church of Saint Demetrius in Prilep, painted around 1290, could be seen as representative examples of this stylistic tendency. The cautious approach in the treatment of the facial volume in the depiction of Saint Demetrius (Fig. 8) and the Virgin Mary

Београд 1974, 16; С. Коруновски - Е. Димитрова, *о. cit.*, 146.

¹⁴ P. Miljković-Pepek, *Un courant stylistique dans la peinture du XIIIe siècle en Macédoine*, 23-24



Fig. 8 Prilep, Church of St. Demetrius
(ca. 1290), St. Demetrius

Сл. 8. Прилеп, Црква Св. Димитрија
(о. 1290), Св. Димитрије



Fig. 9 Prilep, Church of St. Demetrius
(ca. 1290), The Virgin with Child

Сл. 9. Прилеп, Црква Св. Димитрија
(о. 1290), Богородица са Христом

with Christ (Fig. 9) painted laterally from the altar space and the delicate shaping of their images imbued with subtle beauty speak of a painter who nurtured a lyrical inclination in his artistic handwriting¹⁵. The careful conception of the depicted faces in a form of a perfect oval, the almond-shaped eyes that gleam with tender sensibility, the luscious repletion of the rosy-bloomed and tactile lips, the graceful rhythm of the elegant movements and the sensitive charge of noble tranquility are the elements of the poetic painterly expression of the master who submerged in the obscure spheres of creative invention. The meticulous treatment of the costumes and the substantial anatomic elaboration of the figures altogether with the sharp drawing complete the picture of his artistic ardour, defining at the same time the primary source of his aesthetic inspiration. Even though he obviously appropriated the basic components of Referendarius John's stylistic pattern, the subtle modeling of the saints' faces, the sensuality of their expression and the humanization of their specific portrait attributes are the features of a more refined artistic trend, aristocratic enough to satisfy the delicate taste of the donors belonging to the highest nobility circles.

¹⁵ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 147

FOURTH STREAM – THE RETROACTIVE MONUMENTAL STYLE

An entirely different stylistic tendency¹⁶, anxious and explosive in its artistic expression can be perceived in the painted decoration of several monuments dated in the second half of the 13th century, out of which an image of Christ in the church of Saint George at Goren Kozjak¹⁷ and the prophetic portraits in the arches between the central and the north lateral bay of St. Nicholas in Manastir¹⁸ could be seen as the most representative examples. The corpulent dimensions of the masses that form the corporal structure of the represented figures, the massive anatomic configuration of the monumentally conceived forms, the bold



Fig. 10 Manastir, Church of St. Nicholas (1271), Jeremiah the Prophet

Сл. 10. Манастир, Црква Св. Николе (1271), Пророк Јеремија



Fig. 11 Manastir, Church of St. Nicholas (1271), Jonah the Prophet

Сл. 11. Манастир, Црква Св. Николе (1271), Пророк Јона

contours in the depiction of the painterly components, the strong contrasts in the application of the complementary colours and the trenchant exposition of the facial expression characterize the stylistic orientation of the masters dedicated to the rigorous manners of artistic performance. In that regard, the robustly painted busts of the prophetic characters in the church of Saint Nicholas in Manastir that emanate with tameless dynamics (Fig. 10), the emphasized eyes that burn with inward energy (Fig. 11), the wavy hair which falls on their shoulders in combed

¹⁶ P. Miljković-Pepек, *La formation d'un nouveaux style monumental au XIIIe siècle*, Actes du XIIe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines III, Beograd 1964, 309-313

¹⁷ З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Исус Христос Антифонитис од црквата Св. Ѓорѓи во Горни Козјак*, Зборник посветен на Димче Коцо, Археолошки музеј на Македонија VI-VII, Скопје 1975, Fig. 1

¹⁸ Д. Коцо - П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *op. cit.*, 91-92

locks (Fig. 12) and the suggestive expression of their countenances (Fig. 13) are the most impressive features of this rare stylistic tendency that reanimated the spirit of the works of art originating from the tradition of intellectual asceticism. Returning to some of the acknowledged characteristics of 11th century painting in the cathedral church of Saint Sophia in Ohrid¹⁹, this retroactive artistic course accentuates the sharp drawing, the vigorous modellation and the powerful configuration of the depicted images. Inheriting the formal painterly attributes of one of the most prominent fresco ensembles in the region, this stylistic trend reanimated the creative magnitude of the master-peaces executed in the heroic period of Byzantine artistic production.



Fig. 12 Manastir, Church of St. Nicholas (1271), Zechariah the Prophet

Сл. 12. Манастир, Црква Св. Николе (1271), Пророк Захарија



Fig. 13 Manastir, Church of St. Nicholas (1271), Moses the Prophet

Сл. 13. Манастир, Црква Св. Николе (1271), Пророк Мојсије

FIFTH STREAM – THE PLASTIC STYLE

Contrary to the former theory that the plastic style of the second half of the 13th century bypassed Macedonian territory, leaving only a fragmentarily preserved scene in the cave church dedicated to Saint Archangel Michael at the village of Radožda²⁰, the several figures depicted in the central aisle of Saint Nicholas in Manastir²¹ testify to its circulation among the local artists of the

¹⁹ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 54-56

²⁰ Г. Суботић, *Пећинска црква арханђела Михаила код Струге*, Зборник Филозофског факултета VIII, Споменица Михаила Динића I, 1964, 313 - 317; Figs. 5, 6; В. Ј. Ђурић, *op. cit.*, 17

²¹ Д. Коцо - П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *op. cit.*, 92; S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 142



Fig. 14 Manastir, Church of St. Nicholas (1271), Deisis
Сл. 14. Манастир, Црква Св. Николе (1271), Деизис



Fig. 15 Manastir, Church of St. Nicholas (1271), St. Nicholas
Сл. 15. Манастир, Црква Св. Николе (1271), Св. Никола



Fig. 16 Manastir, Church of St. Nicholas (1271), St. Archangel Michael
Сл. 16. Манастир, Црква Св. Николе (1271), Арханђео Михаило

period. The monumental charge of the forms accomplished by the broad strokes of the paintbrush, the consistent firmness of the painterly elements that radiate with sparkling energy, the plastic modeling of the shapes based on the tonal distribution of the colours and the warm and noble accords of the softly nuanced palette as features of the Radožda fragment depicting the scene of the Miracle at Chonae, place this long ago and irretrievably destroyed ensemble among the leading artistic products of the period. However, the painter who participated in the decora-

tion of the eastern part of the central aisle in Manastir depicting the five saintly figures located close to the altar space, can also be ranked among the most progressive artists of the second half of the 13th century by his strong association with the current painterly trends, compatible with the remarkable esthetic qualities of the frescoes in Radožda. Broad in the manner of conception of the forms, powerful in the manifestation of plastic effects and monumental in their painterly expression, the five characters of the Manastir fresco arrangement bear the spirit of the artistic avant-garde that penetrated the territory in question with the creative potential of its influential course. The animated volume in configuration of Christ's figure within the Deisis composition (Fig. 14), the softness of the drawing and the well-balanced modeling of the image of saint Nicholas (Fig. 15), as well as the elastic picturesqueness of the sophisticatedly energized portrait of Saint Archangel Michael (Fig. 16) are the most significant features of the tendency towards plastic expression, which in this region maybe appeared limited in scope, but demonstrated highly considerable qualities of its artistic performance.

SIXTH STREAM – THE FUSION

Another, very peculiar stylistic tendency marks the work of the masters who decorated the naos of the church of Saint Nicholas in Prilep in 1298²², which has no formal parallels in the fresco arrangements of the related period. The pale residues of the ambitious linearism hidden behind the agitated structure of the depicted forms as a reminder of the graphic animation of the Late Comnenian painterly manner, the temperamental approach towards massive configuration of the compositional elements with a purpose of creation of monumental dimensions in the optical impression of the depicted scenes and the exuberant rhythm of the movements which explodes as a firework all over the entire surface of the pictures merged into a dynamic compound of stylistic phrases unknown to the history of the 13th century fresco painting. The lively contours of the saints' images permeated with sensitive expressiveness (Fig. 17), the stout figures of the saints that emanate weight and volume, the plastic accents in the configuration of the forms, the



Fig. 17 Prilep, Church of St. Nicholas (1298), Betrayal

Сл. 17. Прилеп, Црква Св. Николе (1298), Издајство Јудино

²² В. Ј. Ђурић, *op. cit.*, 19; R. Hamann-Mac Lean, *Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien*, Giessen 1976, 289-290; S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 150-152



Fig. 18 Prilep, Church of St. Nicholas (1298),
Raising of Lazarus

Сл. 18. Прилеп, Црква Св. Николе (1298),
Васкресење Лазарево



Fig. 19 Prilep, Church of St. Nicholas (1298),
Road to Golgotha

Сл. 19. Прилеп, Црква Св. Николе (1298),
Пут Христов на Голготу

dynamism of the postures and the intensity of the depicted movements (Fig. 18), the expressive rhythm of the gestures and the harmony of the optical impression in the arrangement of the compositions (Fig. 19) are the most remarkable components in the vivid creative matrix of the two anonymous painters. By the introduction of the diverse psychological expression of the rendered characters in the depiction of their suggestive physiognomies, by the infusion of the intense rhythm of the postures of the represented figures and by the inventiveness in the selection of genre elements, the authors of the painted decoration created a fresco arrangement that unpretentiously and spontaneously announce the changes in the Byzantine visual aestheticism. Executed at the very end of the 13th century, a few years after Michael and Eutychios have decorated the church of The Holy Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid in 1295 promoting the breakthrough of Palaiologan style, the painted ensemble of Saint Nicholas with its picturesque painterly technique and the explosive vivacity of artistic expression firmly closed the gate of the expiring period, when the great Thessalonican painters widely opened the door for the art of the following century.

SEVENTH STREAM – THE PALAIOLOGAN BREAKTHROUGH

In the explosive world of the expressive visual energy of Michael Astrapas and Eutychios in the church of the Holy Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295)²³, the new opportunities of artistic expression of the Palaiologan epoch penetrate with invasive dynamics and with restive temper of the creative invention. The theatrically composed sights, the vivid gestures of the protagonists in the depicted events and the dramatic whirlpool of movements in the scenes soaked in the exciting rhythm of motion and in the dynamic resonances of colours are the basic components of the specific painterly language of the masters in promotion of a fresh artistic vision, permeated with the trenchant hues of emotional suggestibility. The principle of balance in the visual integration of the painterly elements, noticeable in the meticulous arrangement of the structural components in the configuration of the scenes (Fig. 20), is the leading criterion of the painters in their desire to create harmonic level of the numerous segments in the compositions. The large and massive forms of the depicted personages that impress



Fig. 20 Ohrid, Church of St. Virgin Peribleptos (1295), Dormition

Сл. 20. Охрид, Црква Св. Богородице Перивлепте (1295), Успење

²³ Н. Hallenseben, *Die Malerschule des Königs Milutin*, Giessen 1963, 128-133; П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михајло и Еутихиј*, Скопје 1967, 183-188; В. Ј. Ђурић, *op. cit.*, 17-19; S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 154-161; E. Dimitrova, *On the Mise-en scène and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Mediaeval Painting*, Macedonian Heritage 29, Skopje 2006, 4 - 8



Fig. 21 Ohrid, Church of St. Virgin Peribleptos (1295), Baptism of Christ

Сл. 21. Охрид, Црква Св. Богородице Перивлепте (1295), Крштење Христово



Fig. 22 Ohrid, Church of St. Virgin Peribleptos (1295), Agony in the Garden (detail)

Сл. 22. Охрид, Црква Св. Богородице Перивлепте (1295), Молитва у Гетсиманском врту

with their uncompromising corpulence (Fig. 21), the heavy draperies that fall in angular folds, the impressive images nuanced with emphatic sensitivity, the large-scale architectural backdrop of the scenes, the masculinity of the saintly figures and the emphatic temperament in their movements (Fig. 22) are the most characteristic features of the painterly discourse of the masters, woven from the threads of their powerful creative inventiveness. The piercing glance of the depicted characters, the dramatic rhythm of their restless gestures, the skillful approach in the rendition of the figures' various postures and the narrative density of the action in the compositions burgeon with the power of an unrestrained painterly vision, are the elements that boldly and pretentiously announced the new artistic era in the history of the Byzantine culture.

As the streams run into the river in the confluent vigor of its course to the sea, so flourished the artistic currents on the fertile soil of Macedonian painterly tradition in the turbulent times of the 13th century. Originating from the centuries-long heritage of supreme artistic achievements and generating diverse forms of recognizable stylistic variety, they irrigated the ground they have sprung from with the beneficial nectar of inexhaustible inven-

tion. Bridging over the period of historical disruption, they nurtured the sprouts of creative potency until the age of the Byzantine renaissance.

Елизабета Димитрова

СЕДАМ ТОКОВА

Стилске тенденције фреско сликарства на македонској територији у XIII веку

У контекст већ постојеће теорије о стилском плурализму у развоју монументалног сликарства на македонској територији током XIII века, анализа уметничког стваралаштва овог динамичног историјског раздобља нуди могућност за детекцију седам различитих ликовних трендова у оквиру сачуваних ансамбла, насталих у периоду 1200.-1300. године. Упорно настављање стилског модела епохе Комнина, еволутивне инвенције ликовног израза црквених достојанственика, лирска уметничка експресија аристократских кругова, реституција главних одлика монументалног стила, појава пластичног стила, оригинална фузија прилепских зографа и појава палеологовских стилских новина су елементи дефиниције наше идеје о седам различитих струја енергичног тока општег креативног потенцијала тринаестовековне уметничке продукције на македонском подручју. Разматрајући специфичне одлике уметничког језика мајстора - стваралаца декоративних аранжмана, као и карактеристике ликовног израза аутора данас већ тешко оштећених ансамбла, укратко смо скицирали општу представу о седам различитих тенденција регионалне визуелне културе XIII столећа:

Први ток: Као резултат пресудног значаја изузетних ликовних квалитета Курбининовског сликарства, највећи број истраживаних споменика припада тренду који представља својеврсну адикцију на уметнички манир репрезентативног "рукописа" курбининовских мајстора. Линеарно ломљење ликовне структуре у приказивању ликова у цркви Св. Николе у Манастиру (1271), елегантна анатомска конфигурација и енергични покрети фигура у Св. Јовану Богослову - Канеоу у Охриду (око 1270-1280) и лепршави ритам драперија у олтарској декорацији Св. Николе у Прилепу (1298) су најзначајнији примери упорног настојања за одржавање курбининовских сликарских поуга дубоко у XIII век.

Други ток: У оквиру ретроактивног, каснокомнинског развоја македонског сликарства овог доба, личност Јована, Ђакона и референдара Охридске архиепископије, уноси нову енергију у постојећи статус конзервативне сликарске праксе. Тенденција ка пластичнијем приступу у обликовању светитељских ликова, уметнута у основни линеарни концепт представа и минуциозна пажња посвећена обради раскошно приказаних костима на икони из Струге (1266/67) и у сликању светих ратника у Манастиру (1271), достиже свој климакс у репертоару цркве Св. Арханђела Михаила у Прилепу (око 1270-1280) деликатним рафинманом у третману представљених ликова и њиховог фацијалног израза. Иако није напустио основне принципе комнинске ликовне експресије, овај високи црквени достојанственик и талентовани зограф и иконописац дао је изузетно значајни допринос закаснелој еволуцији тринаестовековног сликарства.

Трећи ток: У контекст пресудног утицаја Јовановог уметничког манира на сликаре који су примењивали иновативнији приступ у експлоатацији уметничких инструкција из прошлости, неколико фрагмента из цркве Св. Димитрија у Прилепу (око 1290) припадају стилској тенденцији коју дефинише лирски приступ у обликовању светитељских портрета. Полазећи од Јовановог "иконописачког" рукописа, аутор сензуалних ликова прилепске декорације представник је рафиниранијег уметничког тренда, довољно аристократског, да би задовољио укус ктитора највиших племићких кругова.

Четврти ток: Потпуно другачији стилски тренд, експресиван и експлозиван у свом уметничком изразу карактерише поједине делове сликарства Св. Ђорђа у Горњем Козјаку (друга половина XIII века) и Св. Николе у Манастиру (1271) елементима наглашене контуре у експликацији фигура и динамичним набојем унутрашње енергије ликова. Наглашавајући оштар цртеж и моћну конфигурацију приказаних светитеља, овај ретро - монументални стил представља носталгични дуг експресивног

сликарства Охридске катедрале из XI века у напору за реанимацију креативног домета Светософијског ремек-дела, насталог у херојским временима византијске уметничке продукције.

Пети ток: Насупрот старијим теоријама да је пластични стил друге половине XIII века мимоишао македонско подручје, остављајући једино фрагментарно сачувану сцену у пећинској цркви у Радожди, неколико фигура из централног брода наоса Св. Николе у Манастиру (1271) представљају сведочанство циркулације овог тренда међу локалним сликарима тог периода. Разиграни волумен Христове фигуре из Деизиса, мекоћа цртежа и уравнотеженост моделације у приказивању Св. Николе и еластична живописност енергизираниог портрета арханђела Михаила из ове цркве, примери су тенденције ка пластичном изразу, који је и у овом региону демонстрирао веома високе квалитете уметничког перформанса.

Шести ток: Сасвим другачији стилски манир обележава рад мајстора који су декорисали наос Св. Николе у Прилепу (1298), у чијем су делу сасвим бледи остаци амбициозног линеаризма из прошлости сакривени иза сасвим елабориране форме ликовних приказа, масивне конфигурације композицијских елемената и раздраганог ритма покрета у сликарској фузији непознатој историји тринаестовековног сликарства. Нијансирајући своје ликовне великим спектром психолошког израза, интензивирајући ритам ставова приказаних фигура и укључујући у своје композиције мноштво инвентивно одабраних жанр елемената, аутори прилепске фреско декорације непретенциозно и спонтано најављују промене у византијској визуелној естетици крајем XIII века.

Седми ток: У експлозивном свету експресивне ликовне енергије Михајла и Еутихија у Св. Богородици Перивлепти у Охриду (1295), нове могућности уметничког израза Палеологовске епохе продиру инвазивном динамиком иновативне креативне инвенције. Тетарално компоновани призори, жива мимика протагониста и драматични вртлог покрета у композицијама натопљеним узбудљивим ритмом динамичних колористичних резонанци, основни су елементи специфичног сликарског речника мајстора у промоцији свеже уметничке визије, засићене богатим валерима емотивне сугестибилности. Вешти приступ у конфигурацији композицијских матрица, зналачки распоред у остварењу просторних решења и наративна концентрација акције у приказаним сценама, храбро и претенциозно најављују нову уметничку епоху у историји византијске културе.