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Ενας σέρβικος μύθος του Αγίου Αποστόλου Τίτου και η αντανάκλαση του στην τέχνη

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A SERBIAN LEGEND OF THE HOLY APOSTLE TITUS AND ITS REFLECTION IN ART

Ο άγιος απόστολος Τίτος απεικονίζεται σχεδόν αποκλειστικά στο νησί της Κρήτης, ενώ σε άλλες περιπτώσεις ο άγιος αποτελεί μέρος της παράστασης των Εβδομήκοντα Αποστόλων. Στη σερβική τέχνη του 15ου και 16ου αιώνα, ωστόσο, η παράσταση του αγίου Τίτου απέκτησε ιδιαίτερη θέση στα εικονογραφικά προγράμματα αρκετών εκκλησιών, γεγονός το οποίο εξηγείται από την εμφάνιση μιας τοπικής μυθικής αφήγησης, σύμφωνα με την οποία ο Τίτος ήταν αυτός που εκχριστιάνισε τους Σέρβους και ανήγειρε τον πρώτο επισκοπικό τους ναό.

The holy apostle Titus was almost exclusively painted in the island of Crete, while further afield, he only figured as one of the Seventy Apostles. In Serbian 15th- and 16th-century art, however, the image of St. Titus was granted a prominent place in the fresco programme of several churches, which is explained by a local legend according to which it was this apostle who had christianized the Serbian land and had its first episcopal church built.

St. Titus, whose name was borne by our dear, prematurely deceased colleague Papamastorakis, was a disciple of the apostle Paul. Paul sent him a pastoral epistle and appointed him the first bishop in Crete to ‘set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city’ (Titus 1: 4-5). The cult of St. Titus spread from the city of Gortyna, the ancient seat of the Archbishopric of Crete. It was probably there that, by the 8th century, an extensive legend of Titus had been created. The legend firmly tied him to Crete by birth, various activities and miracles, and

helped spread his popularity further afield.¹ Namely, by the 10th century the legend had already been included first in the Byzantine and then in the Slavic synaxaria, and read on the saint’s feast day on the 25th of August.² That St. Titus enjoyed great reverence in Crete is obvious from his many images in the island’s medieval churches.³ He was depicted on the side walls of the sanctuary as a full-length figure, always as an elderly bishop clad in a phelonion and omophorion, holding a gospel book in one hand and blessing with the other.⁴ He was usually shown

Λέξεις κλειδιά

Μέσοι χρόνοι, Σερβία, εικονογραφία, άγιος απόστολος Τίτος.

Keywords

Middle Ages, Serbia, iconography, holy apostle Titus.

¹ F. Halkin, “La légende crétoise de saint Tite,” *AnBoll* LXXIX (1991), 241-256.

² H. Delehay, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, Brussels 1902, col. 921-924.

³ Here are just a few survey articles on medieval painting in Crete: K. Gallas, K. Wessel, M. Borboudakis, *Byzantinisches Kreta*, Munich 1983, 201, 219, 247, 263, 270, 284, 310, 384, 390, 432, and 434; I. Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete. Rethymnon Province*, vol. I, London 1999, 125, 172, 173, 228, 237, 238, 266, fig.

135; id., *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, Leiden 2001, 7, 25, 33, 40, 44, 48, 60, 73, 79, 108, 124, 133, and 163; id., *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete. Mylopotamos Province*, vol. II, Leiden 2010, 38, 176, 222, fig. 21, 263, 337, 377.

⁴ This iconographic type is in sharp contrast to his descriptions as young and beardless in the painter’s manuals: M. Medić, *Stari slikarski priručnici*, vol. II, Belgrade 2002, 174, 175, 380, 381, 508; vol. III, Belgrade 2005, 390, 391 (parallel texts in Greek and Serbian).

in company with the Cretan archbishops Cyril, Andrew and Myron.⁵ On one occasion, in the apse of the church of St. Anne in the village of Amari (1225), he was shown with St. Andrew, both clad in polystavria and with unfolded scrolls, celebrating the liturgy around the altar,⁶ while the church of St. John the Baptist in Kritsa (1389/90) shows him in a similar manner, but as the last in the row of holy bishops.⁷

St. Titus was rarely depicted beyond Crete. One of such portraits was painted on the wall of the church of St. Nicholas in the village of the same name near Monemvasia in the 2nd half of the 13th century,⁸ while the farthest known point is the church of St. Simeon the God-receiver in Novgorod, where his image dates from the 2nd half of the 15th century.⁹ It is reasonable to assume that he was more often shown in association with the theme of the assembly of the Seventy Apostles. The trouble, however, is that the earliest surviving examples of the theme, such as the churches of the Virgin Hodegetria (ca. 1320) and Pantanassa (ca. 1420) in Mistra,¹⁰ either do not show all of the apostles or their names have not survived, which makes it impossible to know whether St. Titus was among them. In post-Byzantine wall painting, on the other hand, his presence among the Seventy is unquestionable, as evidenced by the published 16th- and 17th-century monuments.¹¹ He was depicted in the same manner as the other apostles, usually a bust enclosed in a medallion, but always clad in bishop's vestments.¹²

Apart from the portraits quoted here, the Orthodox world, especially its post-Byzantine period, will certainly

yield more images of St. Titus, even though they are not likely to change the established fact that he was portrayed almost exclusively in Crete. This is understandable given that the apostle Titus was the founder and first bishop of the Cretan church, which is why he was also depicted as a bishop. His presence in Cretan painting is a typical reflection of a local cult such as found across the Byzantine world. By portraying their founders or distinguished representatives, local churches emphasized their own place in the Orthodox *oikoumene* and their canonical status.¹³

Among the Cretan images of St. Titus, the one in the church of St. Anne in Amari (1225), showing him celebrating the liturgy with St. Andrew of Crete, has drawn particular attention. This particular image has been bound to arouse the interest of researchers for the simple fact that a similar composition involving local bishops has been recorded in only two more places: in the prothesis of the Holy Apostles at the Patriarchate of Peć (ca. 1270) and in the chapel of St. Demetrios at Dečani (1337/47). Stella Papadaki-Oekland suggested early on that the portrayal of two Cretan bishops in St. Anne's was not an accident and that they must have been introduced at the request of the ktetor, probably hieromonk Michael Varouchas.¹⁴ Chara Konstantinidi further elaborated on the fresco, explaining it in the light of the local situation during the Venetian occupation of the island: the depiction of Sts Titus and Andrew would have been meant to emphasize the apostolic origin of the Archbishopric of Crete, which continued to be an inseparable part of the Orthodox church.¹⁵ We do agree with her view that the increasingly frequent

⁵ Gallas Wessel Borboudakis, op.cit., 201, 219, 270, 284, 432; Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, op.cit., vol. I, 226, 237 238; vol. II, 38; id., *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, op.cit., 73, 163. It is probably St. Titus in company with Sts Andrew and Cyril in a post Byzantine icon: M. Acheimastou Potamianou, "Εικόνα τριών ιεραρχών του Μιχαήλ Δαμασκηνού," *AAA XIX* (1986), 83 97.

⁶ S. Papadaki Oekland, "Οι τοιχογραφίες της Αγίας Άννας στο Άμάρι," *ΔΧΑΕ Ζ'* (1973 1974), 49; Spatharakis, *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, op.cit., 7; Ch. Konstantinidi, *Ο Μελισμός*, Thessaloniki 2008, 141 142, and 163.

⁷ Gallas Wessel Borboudakis, op.cit., 434; Spatharakis, *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, op.cit., 133; Konstantinidi, *Ο Μελισμός*, op.cit., 141, 207, fig. 220.

⁸ N. V. Drandakis, "Οι τοιχογραφίες του Άγίου Νικολάου στὸν Άγιο Νικόλαο Μονεμβασίας," *ΔΧΑΕ Θ'* (1977 1979), 42, fig. 16a.

⁹ L. I. Lifshitz, *Monumental'naia zhivopis' Novgoroda XIV-XV vekov*, Moscow 1987, 519.

¹⁰ S. Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzan-*

tines de Mistra, Paris 1970, 10, 43, figs 24 27; Archim. S. Koukiaris, "Η Σύναξη των αγίων αποστόλων στη βυζαντινή εικονογραφία," *Κληρονομία* (1986), 291 293; M. Aspra Vardavaki M. Em manouil, *Η Μονή της Παντανάσσας στον Μυστρά*, Athens 2005, 182 191, figs 78 87.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Koukiaris, op.cit., 294 298; N. Toutos G. Fouteris, *Ευρετήριο της μνημειακής ζωγραφικής του Αγίου Όρους. 10ος-17ος αιώνας*, Athens 2010, 213, 223, and 267.

¹² On the depiction of the Seventy Apostles in Byzantine churches see Ch. Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London 1982, 25 26 and 54.

¹³ Cf. S. Tomeković, "Les évêques locaux dans la composition absidale des saints prélat officiants," *BNJb XXIII* (1981), 65 88; Ch. Walter, "Portraits of Local Bishops. A Note on their Significance," *ZRVI 21* (1982), 7 17; Ch. Konstantinidi, "Le message idéologique des évêques locaux officiants," *Zograf 25* (1996), 39 50.

¹⁴ Papadaki Oekland, op.cit. (n. 6), 49 51.

¹⁵ Konstantinidi, "Le message idéologique," op.cit., 48 49.

portrayal of local Cretan prelates conveyed 'Orthodox-Greek' and 'anti-Latin' messages, even though we believe that the issue should be looked at against a broader historical background. Namely, the old polemic between Rome and Constantinople over the concept of apostolicity and primacy was rekindled immediately after the Latin conquest of the Byzantine capital in 1204. Letters and orations of the patriarch John Kamateros, of Nicholas Mesarites, his brother John, and other known and anonymous polemicists, reiterated the old Byzantine view of Christ's exclusive primacy and of the equality of all apostles, and consequently of the equality of all ecclesiastical sees they had established.¹⁶ The Byzantines produced a new argument against the primacy of the apostle Peter, as articulated by the Mesarites brothers: the significance of the mission accomplished by the apostles was incontestable, but it had not been them but their seventy disciples who had been the first bishops of certain cities.¹⁷ It was probably not a coincidence that, a little later, the Seventy Apostles began to be portrayed as a separate group in Byzantine churches. Nor was it a coincidence that from the 13th century on the founders or the most distinguished representatives of the Cretan, Athenian, Serbian and other local churches increasingly frequently figured in the Melismos scene, the most important liturgical scene in an Orthodox church.¹⁸ The antiquity, canonicity and continuity of these autocephalous churches were equally expressed by their frontally portrayed bishops. In Crete, these were Titus, Cyril, Andrew and Myron, portrayed many times, either together or individually, in the sanctuaries of local churches.

The Archbishopric of Crete was among the rare local churches that could claim authentic apostolic origin. It is characteristic, however, that St. Titus was not portrayed as an apostle in the area under its jurisdiction. The only departure from the pattern, around the year 1300 – in the church of Christ the Saviour in Meksla, St. John's in Pana-

gia and the church of the Virgin in Saitoures – is his portrait accompanied by an unusual inscription, *ΙΣΑΠΟ-ΣΤΟΛΟΣ* or *ΤΡΙΣΑΠΩΣΤΟΛΟΣ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ* (Thrice Apostle of Crete), the epithet normally attributed to the first Christian emperor, Constantine.¹⁹ Despite the unusual title, St. Titus was depicted in the usual manner, as a bishop, not an apostle. The emphasis was on his being the first bishop of Crete, and, if he was shown together with Cyril and Andrew, the image expressed the continuity of the autocephalous Cretan church since St. Titus.

St. Titus enjoyed no particular veneration in Serbia, except that he was regularly commemorated on the 25th of August, when his vita based on the Cretan legend was read. He was not portrayed in Serbian wall painting until the 15th century, not even within the menologia. It has been suggested that his image was included in the menologion at Dečani (1337/47), where an apostle holding a scroll seems to have been painted under or around the 25th of August,²⁰ but the fresco is so damaged that any identification is highly conjectural. What seems more likely is that he used to be painted as one of the Seventy Apostles, a theme introduced in Serbian churches from the beginning of the 14th century. However, as these early examples of the theme are in a poor state of preservation and lack inscriptions, their iconography may be only assumed to have reiterated the contemporary Byzantine models, which is to say that they were regularly shown as bishops, clad in phelonion and omophoria. Such portraits, apparently of only some of the Seventy, can be found in Žiča (*ca.* 1310), on the arch between the naos and the sanctuary,²¹ and in the church of St. Stephen at Banjska, on the arches under the dome in the naos.²² They seem to have been somewhat more numerous in the prothesis and diaconicon of Matejič (*ca.* 1350), and few at Staro Nagoričino (1315/7) and Gračanica (1319/21).²³ Their portraits are in a better state of preservation in only two early 15th-century churches: the Kalenić monastery church of the

¹⁶ For more detail see F. Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew*, Cambridge 1958, 289–293.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 290–291.

¹⁸ Konstantinidi, "Le message idéologique," *op.cit.*; ead., *Ο Μελισμός*, *op.cit.* (n. 6), 139–142.

¹⁹ Spatharakis, *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, *op.cit.* (n. 3), 25–27; *Id.*, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, *op.cit.* (n. 3), vol. I, 228, 274, 328; vol. II, 38, n. 55, 312.

²⁰ *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana. Gradja i studije*, Belgrade

1995, 420 (S. Kesić Ristić–D. Vojvodić).

²¹ B. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, Belgrade 1999, 307.

²² B. Todić, "Banjsko zlato – poslednji ostaci fresaka u crkvi Svetog Stefana u Banjskoj," *Manastir Banjska i doba kralja Milutina*, Niš–Kosovska Mitrovica 2007, 168–169.

²³ Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting*, *op.cit.*, 321, 323, 334, 335; E. Dimitrova, *Manastir Matejče*, Skopje 2002, 106–107, 120–122 (at Matejič, they wear episcopal polystavria, which is quite unusual).

Virgin (*ca.* 1420), where their busts are set in stylized vines around the apse,²⁴ and the Resava monastery church of the Holy Trinity (1415/8), showing them in the second register in the sanctuary. In Resava, they are shown in the same manner as in Banjska, enclosed in medallions in rainbow colours, clad in phelonia and omophoria, holding closed gospel books and blessing, while the names of the churches they founded or administered as bishops are inscribed next to them.²⁵ The Seventy Apostles with the inscriptions similar to those in Resava were also painted in the Virgin Hodegetria in Mistra. Among the Seventy in Resava there survives the portrait of St. Titus 'of Gortyna'²⁶ as a young man with a small beard, pretty much in keeping with the descriptions contained in the painter's manuals.²⁷ The group of the Seventy Apostles continued to be painted in Serbian churches in the 16th and 17th centuries according to the earlier model, which means that they were shown as bishops. The number of apostles varied, depending on the available space, but nowhere were all seventy depicted. In the Morača monastery church (1574) they were shown in the naos and the sanctuary;²⁸ in the Trinity monastery near Pljevlja (1592), enclosed in medallions in rainbow colours on the arches attached to the northern and southern walls of the narthex under the dome;²⁹ in the Hopovo monastery church of St. Nicholas (1608) their busts are in the upper portions of the piers supporting the dome in the naos.³⁰ Only some of them are also designated as bishops, and quite exceptionally their places of origin are also quoted. St. Titus is nowhere among them. His portrait can be found only in the narthex of the Patriarchate of Peć (1565), but among the busts of saints apparently arranged according to the liturgical calendar.³¹

This catalogue of churches appears to suggest that St. Titus did not hold a place of prominence in Serbian painting, which is true, but only for the period until the 15th century. As early as 1415-1418, in the Resava monastery church, a foundation of despot Stefan Lazarević, this Cretan, or Gortyna bishop (which is how he was designated) was given a central place among the Seventy Apostles alongside St. Stachys of Byzantium (Fig. 1).

His prominence in Resava would be of little consequence had he not been granted an even more distinguished place in Kalenić (*ca.* 1420), a foundation of the despot's protovestiarior Bogdan. As we have seen, of the Seventy Apostles painted on the sides of the pilasters around the apse, only ten portraits have survived in lower zones. They are shown in phelonia and omophoria and without gospel books. Their busts are set in acanthus scrolls, and above them are their names and saintly epithets, which have survived for Thaddeus, Cyril (?), Prochorus, Trophymus and, as it seems, Crispus. St. Titus was set apart and painted next to them on the western side of the southern pilaster, above St. Spyridon from the Melismos scene. St. Titus (CTBI ΘHTB) is shown frontally, full-length, clad in a sticharion, epitachelion, epigonation, phelonion and omophorion, blessing with his right hand, and holding an ornate gospel book in the left. He is short-haired and barely bearded (Fig. 2).³² Only a few more bishops were painted in a similar manner in the sanctuary of Kalenić, among them St. Eleutherius on the northern pilaster.

St. Titus was even more conspicuously set apart from the rest of the Seventy at Morača in 1574. The painters who decorated the naos and the sanctuary³³ with frescoes for the second time took a quite free approach to the portrayal of the Seventy: some were placed in the sanctuary, others

²⁴ V. R. Petković, *Staro Nagoričino - Psača - Kalenić*, Belgrade 1933, 82, pl. XXIII; B. Živković, *Kalenić. Les dessins des fresques*, Belgrade 1982, 10 11; D. Simić Lazar, *Kalenić et la dernière période de la peinture byzantine*, Skopje Paris 1995, 78 79.

²⁵ B. Todić, *Manastir Resava*, Belgrade 1995, 57 61 and 83; J. Prolović, "Predstava liturgije u oltarskom prostoru crkve manastira Resava," *Saopštenja XLI* (2009), 54 66 and 75 76.

²⁶ Prolović, "Predstava liturgije," *op.cit.*, 58, fig. 3.

²⁷ Cf. n. 4 herein.

²⁸ S. Petković, *Morača*, Belgrade 1986, 230 233 and 238 241, with schemes of the frescoes.

²⁹ S. Petković, *Sveta Trojica kod Pljevalja*, Belgrade 1974, 174 (scheme of the frescoes), pls III IV (list of the frescoes and inscriptions).

³⁰ S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo na području Pečke patrijaršije 1557-*

1614, Novi Sad 1965, 207.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

³² Živković, *Kalenić*, *op.cit.*, 11; Simić Lazar, *Kalenić*, *op.cit.*, 78.

³³ The Morača monastery church of the Virgin, a foundation of prince Stefan Vukanović, was built in 1252, and frescoed a few years later. Of the original, high quality frescoes, only those in the diacon icon have survived: V. J. Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien*, Munich 1976, 50 51; Petković, *Morača*, *op.cit.*, 23 40. Abandoned in the early 16th century, the church was renovated about 1570 and received new frescoes in phases: in 1574 in the naos and the sanctuary, in 1578 in the narthex, in 1616 on the façades, later that year in the prothesis, and in 1642 in the northern chapel. The painters of the new frescoes in the naos and the sanctuary and only these are of interest here did not strictly follow the earlier arrangement of wall paintings, and even introduced new themes.



Fig. 1. Resava. St. Titus of Gortyna, 1415-1418.

on the arches in the naos; some occur twice or mixed with other bishops.³⁴ The rule they followed, however, was to add the title of bishop to the names of those in the sanctuary, while all those in the naos were enclosed in medallions and designated only by name.³⁵

St. Titus is the only to have been set apart and depicted differently. He was placed in the first register, on the west side of the south-western pilaster, next to the repainted ktetor scene involving prince Stefan Vukanović and second ktetors, hegoumenos Thomas and *knez* Vukić

Cf. Petković, *Morača*, op.cit. (n. 28), 45. It was then that the portraits of the Seventy Apostles were painted for the first time.

³⁴ Cf. n. 28 herein.

³⁵ Many bishops from the group of Seventy Apostles were painted in

the prothesis of Morača after 1616 as well. On them and their significance see B. Todić, "Srpski arhiepiskopi na freskama XVII veka u Morači. Ko su i zašto su naslikani," *Manastir Morača* (ed. B. Todić D. Popović), Belgrade 2006, 97-100.



Fig. 2. Kalenić. St. Titus, ca. 1420.

Vučetić, for whom the Virgin intercedes with Christ enthroned (Fig. 3). In the southern transept, not far from St. Titus, are the twelve apostles, probably modelled after the 13th-century frescoes. They hold gospel books and are

designated by their names and the title of 'holy apostle.' St. Titus, a frontal full-length figure, is blessing with his right hand and holding an ornate gospel book in the other. He is clad as a bishop, in a sticharion, epitachelion, phelo-

nion and omophorion.³⁶ The well-preserved inscription reads: *СЪТЪ АПСЛЪ ТИТЪ* (holy apostle Titus). It should also be noted that Titus is the only bishop among the standing figures of saints in the naos, apart from St. Sava of Serbia, painted with St. Simeon (Nemanja) in the northern transept.³⁷

Why did St. Titus rise to such prominence in Serbian 15th- and 16th-century monuments, first indicated in Resava, strengthened in Kalenić and strongly emphasized in Morača? The question is even more interesting because St. Titus was never portrayed – or at least there is no reliable evidence that he was – in Serbian art before the 15th century. Except for Crete and a single example in the Peloponnese, and even there in the sanctuaries of churches, he was never painted in the lowest fresco register in the naos, as he was in Morača. The question, therefore, is: were these Serbian examples not reassertions of the significance of Titus as the apostle and first missionary to Crete?

The question may seem inappropriate considering that the Serbian church obviously was not of apostolic origin and that it based its autocephalous status on St. Sava who had canonically established the archbishopric in 1219. For that reason, from the early 13th century he was often depicted in Serbian churches, alone or with his successors, and was sometimes designated as the first archbishop. Lined up next to each other, frontal figures clad in festal vestments and accompanied by formal titles, the archbishops painted on the walls of the naos or narthex testified to the longevity of the Serbian church and the continuity of episcopal authority within it. When introduced into liturgical scenes and joined to other holy bishops, above all into the Melismos scene in the sanctuary, they were meant to assert their belonging to the Orthodox community which always, everywhere and in the same way offers service to God. Old Serbian art knew of and readily used both

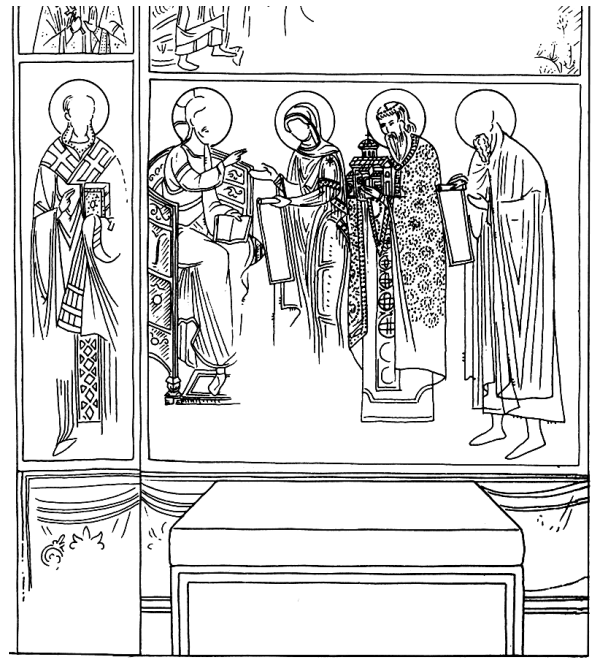


Fig. 3. Morača. Holy apostle Titus and the ktetor scene, 1574.

iconographic patterns of depicting its bishops, and in that it was no different from other parts of the Orthodox world.³⁸ The Serbian church had never officially claimed apostolic origin, as it did not have one. If it called St. Sava an apostle, it did so in most general and symbolic terms, to emphasize that he was a successor of the apostles and their accomplishments. It also took up the Orthodox stance that all the apostles shared equal credit for establishing Christ's church on earth, which was the reason why the apostles were often – especially in the 13th century – depicted as a separate group in its churches.³⁹

³⁶ Petković, *Morača*, op.cit. (n. 28), 242–243 (drawing of the fresco). St. Titus' face was destroyed in 1644/5 in order to mount a massive timber beam to support the large icon of Sts Sava and Simeon in front of the ktetor scene.

³⁷ Ibid., 44 and 237 (drawing of the fresco).

³⁸ Cf. G. Babić, "Nizovi portreta srpskih episkopa, arhiepiskopa i patrijaraha u zidnom slikarstvu XIII–XVI veka," *Sava Nemanjić - sveti Sava. Istorija i predanje*, Belgrade 1979, 319–342; Tomeković, "Les évêques locaux," op.cit. (n. 13), 65–88; J. Radovanović, *Ikongrafška istraživanja srpskog slikarstva XIII i XIV veka*, Belgrade 1988, 38–55; Konstantinidi, "Le message idéologique," op.cit. (n. 13), 39–50;

B. Todić, "Reprezentativni portreti svetog Save u srednjovekovnoj umetnosti," *Sveti Sava u srpskoj istoriji i tradiciji*, Belgrade 1998, 225–248; Id., "L'apôtre André et les archevêques serbes sur les fresques de Sopoćani," *Byzantion* LXXII (2002), 451–474.

³⁹ It was only once, under the delicate circumstances surrounding the Union of Lyon (1274) that the Serbian church invoked the authority of the apostle Andrew, but not even then directly, but through the Constantinopolitan church, with which it was formally linked after it had achieved autocephaly in 1219. This found an echo in the frescoes at Sopoćani painted about 1274. For more see Todić, "L'apôtre André et les archevêques serbes," op.cit., 451–474.

Towards the end of the medieval period, however, there arose a legend which ascribed the Christianization of the Serbian land to the apostles themselves and an especial role in that to St. Titus.⁴⁰ Traces of the legend survived in chronicles and genealogies, compilations usually lacking the original documentary value but exceptionally important for understanding the period in which they were created, between the 2nd half of the 14th century and the end of the 16th.⁴¹ The legend of the evangelization of the Serbian land by the apostles should be related to the legend about the descent of the founder of the medieval Serbian dynasty, Stefan Nemanja, from the emperor Constantine the Great. This legend, inspired by the Slavonic versions of John Zonaras' *Chronicles*, arose in the reign of despot Stefan Lazarević (1402-1427),⁴² which is also the time when the image of the holy apostle Titus first appeared in Serbian art. This does not seem to be a mere coincidence. The genealogies and chronicles were widely read, as evidenced by some twenty transcriptions made until the 18th century, and it has been demonstrated that they influenced literature and the visual arts, of which we have already written.⁴³

The legend appeared for the first time in the *Chronicles of Peć*, dated to the 14th century. Its introduction relates that Christianity was spread in the Serbian land by the apostles themselves; later on, its negligent rulers let many heresies thrive, and it was not until the grand *župan* Stefan Nemanja that the heresies were uprooted and the Orthodox faith firmed up in all of his land.⁴⁴ The chronicler describes Nemanja as a new beginning – Nemanja ushered in the age of the Orthodox rulers who completed what the apostles had begun.

Genealogies of a somewhat later date expanded the legend from the *Peć Chronicle* and linked it to the apostle Paul's disciple Titus, even ascribing the building of the church of

Sts Peter and Paul at Ras to him. One of these, the so-called Pejatović Genealogy, was reliably created in the reign of despot Stefan Lazarević, as it contains the story of Stefan Nemanja's descent from the emperor Constantine. Reordering the sequence of historical events, it relates that Nemanja, having conquered the neighbouring tribes, was baptized 'in the church of Sts Peter and Paul at Ras, which had been built by Titus the apostle.' The Ruvarc Genealogy (1563-1584) reiterates the story: 'Nemanja was baptized in the midst of the Serbian land, in the church of Sts Peter and Paul, which had been built by Titus the apostle, Paul's disciple, because the Serbian land had been Christianized by the apostles.'⁴⁵ The *Dečani Chronicle*, in reference with the appointment of first bishops by St. Sava, also says that one of them was appointed 'to the ancient Raška [Rascia] church of the holy apostle Titus.'⁴⁶

The legend of the early spreading of Christ's teachings in the Serbian land by the apostles, created in the 14th century, could have easily been linked to St. Titus at the beginning of the following century because it was known from the Second Epistle to Timothy (4:10) that this disciple of Paul's had also preached in Dalmatia, which was adjacent to Serbia. The attribution of the church of Sts Peter and Paul at Ras (Fig. 4) to Titus is also explicable. From the 15th- and 16th-century perspective, this church dating from about 900⁴⁷ was the oldest church of the Serbs and the first seat of the Bishopric of Raška (documented from 1020), where Stefan Nemanja had been baptized according to the Orthodox rite (which is a fact). It was only natural, then, to link the church to the beginnings of Christianity in the region and to the apostle Titus.

The creation of the legend sometime in the early 15th century allows us to explain the first appearance and iconographic type of St. Titus in Serbian wall painting by it.

⁴⁰ N. Radojčić, "Sveti Sava i avtokefalnost srpske i bugarske crkve," *Glas SKA* CLXXIX (1939), 216-217.

⁴¹ Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, Sremski Karlovci 1927; Dj. Sp. Radojčić, "Doba postanka i razvoj starih srpskih rodoslova," *Istorijski glasnik* 2 (1948), 21-36; Id., "Konstantin Filozof i stari srpski rodoslovi," *Zbornik Instituta za proučavanje književnosti* I (1951), 57-63; D. Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti*, Belgrade 1980, 208-212.

⁴² Radojčić, "Doba postanka i razvoj starih srpskih rodoslova," op.cit., 28-29.

⁴³ Todić, "Srpski arhiepiskopi na freskama XVII veka u Morači," op.cit. (n. 35), 107-114.

⁴⁴ Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, op.cit., 62-64; Radojčić, "Doba postanka i razvoj starih srpskih rodoslova," op.cit., 22; F. Kämpfer, "Prilog interpretaciji Pečkog letopisa," *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* XXXVI (1970), 70-71.

⁴⁵ Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, op.cit., 46, 53. On the dating of these texts see Radojčić, "Doba postanka i razvoj starih srpskih rodoslova," op.cit., 30 and 34.

⁴⁶ Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, op.cit., 194.

⁴⁷ J. Nešković, R. Nikolić, *L'église Saint-Pierre près de Novi Pazar*, Belgrade 1987; S. Popović, "Preispitivanje crkve Svetog Petra u Rasu," *Stefan Nemanja – sveti Simeon Mirotočivi. Istorija i predanje*, Belgrade 2000, 209-229.



Fig. 4. Ras, the church of Sts Peter and Paul, 9th-10th century.

His earliest surviving portrait, in the monastery of Resava, belongs to the saint's usual type within the group of the Seventy Apostles and is designated, as all the others, by the name of his ecclesiastical seat in Crete. However, the placement of his portrait and that of St. Stachys of Constantinople in the middle of the apse suggests that, to those who commissioned the frescoes, St. Titus might have been more important than the others. A few years later, at Kalenić, he was set apart from the other apostles, who were shown bust-length, and he was given a prominent place next to the apse and a formal appearance. The identifying inscription omits the reference to Cretan Gortyna, and his counterpart becomes St. Eleutherius, bishop of Illyricum. Finally, St. Titus' portrait in Morača was moved down to the first fresco register and accorded a place of honour next to the ktetor scene. Titus is shown as a bishop, but the inscription accords him the title of apostle, unlike anywhere else either before or after, except for Crete,

where he is designated 'thrice apostle' a few times. Such an inscription associated St. Titus with the twelve apostles painted in the southern transept, but he remained distinct from them both by his place within the fresco programme and by his episcopal paraphernalia.

In that way, St. Titus' portrait in Morača came quite close to the saint's Cretan images. Given that there could not have been any direct link between Crete and Morača, we believe that the similarity resulted from a strange coincidence of St. Titus' apostolic role: a real one in Crete, where he was thought to be the first bishop in Gortyna, and an imagined one in Serbia, where he was ascribed the credit of christianizing the Serbian land and of building the first episcopal church at Ras. The legend probably arose in the early years of the 15th century, more likely at the court of despot Stefan Lazarević than at the patriarchate. At no time did it deny or diminish the significance of St. Sava of Serbia as the first archbishop, nor did it intend to. It was

intended to emphasize the earliest, if imagined, apostolic period of Christianization of the Serbian land, the effects of which had slid into oblivion over time and were renewed and completed by the grand *župan* Stefan Nemanja and his son, St. Sava, who ushered the Serbian people into the Orthodox community. Of limited duration and

never officially accepted, the legend nonetheless left a trace in Serbian chronographic literature and religious art, which we have tried to bring to light and explain. After the 16th century St. Titus would seldom appear on the walls of Serbian churches, and simply as one of, and in no way distinct from, the Seventy Apostles.

ΕΝΑΣ ΣΕΡΒΙΚΟΣ ΜΥΘΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΥ ΤΙΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ Η ΑΝΤΑΝΑΚΛΑΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΕΧΝΗ

Οι παραστάσεις του αγίου αποστόλου Τίτου εντοπίζονται σχεδόν αποκλειστικά στο νησί της Κρήτης. Σε σπάνιες περιπτώσεις που απεικονίζεται εκτός του νησιού αυτού, αποτελεί μέρος της παράστασης των Εβδομήκοντα Αποστόλων. Η συχνότερη παρουσία του αγίου Τίτου και η απεικόνισή του ως επισκόπου στην κρητική ζωγραφική γίνεται κατανοητή, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τη θεώρησή του ως ιδρυτή και πρώτου επισκόπου της εκκλησίας της Κρήτης. Κατ' αυτόν τον τρόπο, οι παραστάσεις του αποτελούν τυπική αντανάκλαση τοπικής λατρείας, όπως αυτές εντοπίζονται σε διάφορες περιοχές του βυζαντινού κόσμου. Απεικονίζοντας τους ιδρυτές ή εξέχοντες αντιπροσώπους, οι τοπικές εκκλησίες ισχυροποιούσαν τη θέση τους στην ορθόδοξη οικουμένη και υπογράμμιζαν τη συμπόρευσή τους με το κανονικό δίκαιο.

Ο άγιος Τίτος δεν έχαιρε ιδιαίτερης τιμής στη Σερβία, εκτός από την τακτική του μνημόνευση στις 25 Αυγούστου, την ημέρα που ο βίος του, βασισμένος στην κρητική παράδοση, διαβαζόταν. Απεικονίσεις του δεν σώζονται στις σερβικές τοιχογραφίες μέχρι το 15ο αιώνα, ούτε και στα μνημολόγια. Στο μοναστήρι της Resava και μόνο στα έτη 1415-1418, ο Κρης ή από τη Γόρτυνα επίσκοπος (με αυτόν τον τρόπο χαρακτηρίζεται στην τοιχογραφία) έλαβε κεντρική θέση μεταξύ των Εβδομήκοντα Αποστόλων μαζί με τον άγιο Στάχυ από το Βυζάντιο. Μερικά χρόνια αργότερα, γύρω στο 1420, ο άγιος Τίτος απεικονίστηκε στην αψίδα του ναού στο Kalenić. Στη Morača (1574), τοποθετήθηκε στην πρώτη ζώνη στη δυτική πλευρά του νοτιοδυτικού πεσσού, δίπλα στην επιζωγραφισμένη κτητορική παράσταση. Πρέπει, επίσης, να σημειωθεί ότι ο Τίτος ήταν ο μόνος επίσκοπος μεταξύ των ολόσωμων απεικονίσεων των αγίων στο ναό, εκτός από τον άγιο Σάββα της Σερβίας. Πού οφείλεται η διακριτή θέση που έλαβε η παράσταση του αγίου Τίτου στα σερβικά μνημεία του 15ου και 16ου αιώνα, όπως φαίνεται αρχικά στη Resava, στη συνέχεια στο Kalenić και με μεγαλύτερη έμφαση στη Morača; Η σερβική εκκλησία δεν επιδίωξε επίσημα μια αποστολική καταγωγή, που άλλωστε δεν είχε. Αν ονό-

μασε τον άγιο Σάββα απόστολο, αυτό το έπραξε σε ευρύτερο και πιο συμβολικό επίπεδο, προκειμένου να τονίσει ότι ήταν διάδοχος των αποστόλων και συνεχιστής των επιτευγμάτων τους.

Προς το τέλος της μεσαιωνικής περιόδου, ωστόσο, αναπτύχθηκε μια αφήγηση η οποία απέδιδε τον εκχριστιανισμό των Σέρβων στους αποστόλους και μάλιστα στον άγιο Τίτο έναν ιδιαίτερο ρόλο στη διαδικασία αυτή. Η εξιστόρηση αυτή εμφανίστηκε για πρώτη φορά στα Χρονικά του Ρεć. Στην εισαγωγή της παραδίδεται το γεγονός της διάδοσης του Χριστιανισμού στη Σερβία από τους ίδιους τους αποστόλους. Σε μεταγενέστερες γραπτές πηγές η μορφή της μυθικής αφήγησης, όπως διασώθηκε στα Χρονικά του Ρεć, επεκτάθηκε και συνδέθηκε με το μαθητή του Παύλου Τίτο, στον οποίο αποδόθηκε ακόμη και η ανέγερση της εκκλησίας των αγίων Πέτρου και Παύλου στο Ras.

Η δημιουργία αυτού του θρύλου στον πρώιμο 15ο αιώνα μάς επιτρέπει να εξηγήσουμε την πρώτη εμφάνιση και τον εικονογραφικό τύπο του αγίου Τίτου στις σερβικές τοιχογραφίες. Η παλαιότερη απεικόνισή του στο μοναστήρι της Resava ανήκει στο συνηθισμένο τύπο του αγίου, σύμφωνα με τον οποίο εικονίζεται μεταξύ των Εβδομήκοντα Αποστόλων και επιγράφεται, όπως οι υπόλοιποι, με την ιδιότητά του ως επισκόπου Κρήτης. Ωστόσο, η τοποθέτηση της παράστασής του μαζί με τον άγιο Στάχυ της Κωνσταντινούπολης στο μέσον της αψίδας, θα μπορούσε να θεωρηθεί ως ενδεικτική της σημασίας που είχε ο άγιος Τίτος στους παραγγελιοδότες των τοιχογραφιών. Λίγα χρόνια αργότερα στο Kalenić διαχωρίζεται από τους υπόλοιπους αποστόλους, οι οποίοι παριστάνονται σε προτομή, και αποκτά διακριτή θέση δίπλα στην αψίδα και επίσημη εμφάνιση. Στην αγωνυμική επιγραφή παραλείπεται η αναφορά στην κρητική Γόρτυνα και συναπεικονίζεται με τον άγιο Ελευθέριο, επίσκοπο του Ιλλυρικού.

Τέλος, η απεικόνιση του αγίου Τίτου στη Morača τοποθετήθηκε στην κατώτερη ζώνη των τοιχογραφιών και απέκτησε σημαντική θέση ως όμορη της κτητορικής παράστασης. Εικονίζεται ως επίσκοπος, αλλά η επιγραφή

τού αποδίδει τον τίτλο του αποστόλου, χωρίς κανένα σχετικό, παλαιότερο ή μεταγενέστερο, παράδειγμα, εκτός από την Κρήτη, όπου ορισμένες φορές επιγράφεται ως *ΤΡΙΣΑΠΩΣΤΟΛΟΣ*.

Με αυτόν τον τρόπο, η παράσταση του αγίου Τίτου στη Μογαča πλησίασε τις απεικονίσεις του αγίου στην κρητική ζωγραφική. Δεδομένης της μη ύπαρξης άμεσων επαφών μεταξύ Κρήτης και Μογαča, θεωρούμε ότι η ομοιότητα προκύπτει από μια περίεργη σύμπτωση του αποστολικού ρόλου του Τίτου: ενός πραγματικού στην

Κρήτη, όπου θεωρείται ότι αποτελεί τον πρώτο επίσκοπο της Γόρτυνας και ενός ιδεατού στη Σερβία, όπου του αποδόθηκε ο εκχριστιανισμός των Σέρβων και η ανέγερση του πρώτου επισκοπικού ναού στο Ras. Περιορισμένης διάρκειας και χωρίς να έχει ποτέ αναγνωριστεί επίσημα, ο μύθος άφησε το σημάδι του στη σερβική χρονογραφική λογοτεχνία και στη θρησκευτική τέχνη, την οποία προσπαθήσαμε να φέρουμε στο φως και να την ερμηνεύσουμε.