

Μακεδονικά

Τόμ. 35 (2006)



Iconographic characteristics of the churches in Moschopolis and Vithkuqi (Albania) [RALITSA ROUSSEVA, Εικονογραφικά χαρακτηριστικά των ναών της Μοσχόπολης και του Vithkuqi]

R. Rousseva

doi: [10.12681/makedonika.8](https://doi.org/10.12681/makedonika.8)

Copyright © 2014, R. Rousseva



Άδεια χρήσης [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

Rousseva, R. (2011). Iconographic characteristics of the churches in Moschopolis and Vithkuqi (Albania) [RALITSA ROUSSEVA, Εικονογραφικά χαρακτηριστικά των ναών της Μοσχόπολης και του Vithkuqi]. *Μακεδονικά*, 35, 163-191. <https://doi.org/10.12681/makedonika.8>

ICONOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCHES IN MOSCHOPOLIS AND VITHKUQI (ALBANIA)

By the end of the 17th and throughout the 18th centuries the town of Moschopolis became an important economic and cultural centre whose influence spread well over the boundaries of the Ochrid diocese into most of the enslaved Eastern-Orthodox territories reaching as far as the Austro-Hungarian strip of the Danube. Until it was ruined in 1769, the town traded on a large scale with renowned European commercial centres such as Venice, Vienna and Leipzig. In 1916 the Moschopolis was devastated by fire and only five from about thirty Churches survived as well as the St. John the Baptist Monastery in the vicinity of the town. At the beginning of the 20th century these churches were not only reminiscent of past glory, but as Demetrios Kallimachos put it *they were bustling with life*¹.

Nineteenth century travellers G. Weigand² and H. Gelzer³, as well as some eyewitnesses of the town's destruction, give us a rough idea of what the settlement used to look like. Of great value is the work of the local citizen Theophrastos Georgiades who lived in Moschopolis before the city was ravaged. He makes brief descriptions of the 22 churches and chapels, the church donors' inscriptions and the church registers⁴. He also describes the architecture and the decoration of these temples. Unfortunately, Georgiades does not say a lot about the murals, mentioning only that on the inside and the outside the church walls were covered with scenes from the Vita of saints and martyrs, the Holy Bible and the Apocalypse.

The neighbouring settlement of Vithkuqi has a similar fate. The cultural and economic development of Vithkuqi is inseparable from that of Moschopolis and that is why its Churches will be viewed as part of these in Moschopolis.

During the 17th and 18th centuries Ochrid, the St. Nahum Monastery and Moschopolis took part in the process of cultural and cleric-educational upsurge, headed by the then Archbishop of Ochrid Joasaph of Moschopolis (1719-1745). Through the vigorous activities of this man the old fame and glory of the

1. Δ. Καλλίμαχος, *Παναθήναια*, τ. 26, 1913, σ. 5.

2. G. Weigand, *Die Aromunen. Ethnographisch - philologisch - historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der sogenannter Makedo-Romanen oder Zinzaren*, B. II, Leipzig 1894, pp. 97-99.

3. H. Gelzer, *Vom Heiligen Berg und aus Makedonien*, Leipzig 1904.

4. Θ. Γεωργιάδης, *Μοσχόπολις*, Αθήναι 1975, σσ. 19-38.

Ochrid Archbishopric were restored. The printing house, established in Moschopolis during the time of Archbishop Joasaph, played the role of a powerful engine to this clerical, ideological and educational upsurge⁵.

The churches in the region of Moschopolis are among the most representative monuments of 18th century ecclesiastical art on the Balkans. Indicatively, their murals are comparable to that in the large monastic centres at Mt. Athos and Meteora. Despite the differences in style and date, all monuments have a common concept, i.e. a common iconographic programme⁶. The recurrent pattern is determined to some extent by the similar architectural design of the churches. This approach leads to the differentiation of thematic cores in the separate vaults and surrounding barrel vaults and walls, which do not vary greatly from church to church.

This study is based on evidence from the following churches: Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Vithkuqi (1682-1728); Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Moschopolis (1712); Archangels Michael and Gabriel (1720-1725) in Moschopolis; St. Nicholas Church in Moschopolis (1721-1750); St. Athanasios (1724-1745) in Moschopolis; the Monastery Church of SS. Apostles Peter and Paul (1708-1764), and the SS. Cosmas and Damian Chapel (1736-1750) near Vithkuqi; the Church of St. George (1767) in Vithkuqi; the Church of Theotokos in Vithkuqi (18th century) and the Church of the Monastery of St. John the Baptist (1659-1767).

The overall architectural design is specific and identical in most churches under consideration⁷: a large three-aisled basilica (around 20x10 m) with a gable roof. The central aisle has three domes, and the two side aisles are divided by arcades into several domes, vaults and barrel vaults. The churches are single-apse, with a wide altar apse and internal niches that serve as a prothesis and diakonicon⁸. Most churches also have one niche each on the northern and southern walls, next to the prothesis and diakonicon respectively. Along the southern side there is an arched porch.

The Church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Vithkuqi has undeservedly remained outside the researchers' mainstream interest⁹. With the subject of its iconography, however, it poses many questions. The inscription

5. See about the print house in details in: M. Peyfuss, *Die Druckerei von Moschopolis 1731-1769*, Wien 1989.

6. All inscriptions are in Greek, irrespective of the origins of the painters or the regional contexts of the themes.

7. About the architecture of the churches in Moschopolis, see: Π. Θώμος, «Οι εκκλησίες της Μοσχόπολης», *Διεθνές Συμπόσιο Μοσχόπολης*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1999, σσ. 45-63.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Only a photo from the scene of Deesis was published by K. Kallamata, *Ikona*, Athens 1998, p. 147.

above its southern door reads:

ΑΝΗΤΕΡΩ ΕΚ ΒΑΘΟΝΤΗΣ ΕΠΙ ΕΤΟΥΣ „ΑΧΠΙΒ΄ / 1682 /. ΚΑΙ ΑΝΗΣΤΟΡΙΤΕΙ Ο ΘΕΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝΣΕΠΤΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ ΟΥΤΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΠΑΝΜΙΓΙΣΤΩΝ ΤΑΞΙΑΡΧΩΝ ΜΗΧΑΝΑ ΚΑΙ ΓΑΒΡΙΑ. ΔΕΙΑ ΕΞΟΔΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΕΥΡΙΘΕΥΤΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΗΝΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΗΤΙΑΣ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΕΙΑ ΣΥΝΔΡΟΜΗΣ ΚΑΠΟΥΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΜΟΧΘΟΥΣΤΑΥΡΟΥ ΙΕΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΟΥ. ΑΡΧΗΕΡΑΤΕΥΟΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΙΕΡΟΤΑΤΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΟΥ ΚΑΣΤΟΡΙ ΚΥ ΚΥ ΧΡΥΣΑΝΘΟΥ. ΙΕΡΑΤΕΥΟΝΤΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΥΛΑΒΕΣΤΑΤΟΥ ΙΕΡΩΝ

On the left side, additionally, there is the following inscription *ἐπὶ ἔτους ΑΨΚΗ΄ ὀκτομβρίου α /1728, first of October/*.

The above mentioned Chrysanthos, Bishop of Kastoria, was elected to this post as late as 1719 and preserved it with several brief interruptions till 1764. In 1682 Bishop of Kastoria was Dionissios (probably Manthuka)¹⁰. Therefore, if the Church was painted at the time of the Bishop Chrysanthos, one ought to accept the year of 1728, which was additionally inscribed on the side.

The year of 1728 is associated with the Church Convention of Bobosciza near Korça. An agreement was signed there between Joasaph, Archbishop of Ochrid, Chrysanthos, Bishop of Kastoria (representing the autochthonists) and the participating notables. The latter took the obligation *to act like one against those who tell tales to the aliens (the Turks)*¹¹. As regards the precise dating, there is yet another question which shall not be dealt with in this exposition, namely – a sublayer of murals is preserved in the apse and it is very likely for them to correspond to the year 1682, while the upper layer can be dated to 1728.

But there is another inscription in the apse:

ΕΤΟΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗ ΕΝ ΣΑΡΚΟΥ ΗΚΟΝΩΜΙΑΣ. „ΑΨΙΒ΄ ΕΝ ΜΗΝΗ ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟ Κ. ΔΙΑ ΧΕΙΡΟΣ ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΥ ΚΙΡΚΟ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΟΤΗ.

The inscription is done in the year 1712 after Christ, in the month of September on the day 20, by the hand of painters Kyrko and Panaioty.

The Dormition of the Holy Virgin Church (1712), in the Sarca quarter, is the largest church (22.5×11 m.) preserved in Moschopolis to date. According to the donor's inscription, the murals were painted by Theodoros Anagnosti and Sterianos from the village of Agrapha. The church was probably built earlier, under Metropolitan Selasphoros of Korça (1694-1699).

The Church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (in Moschopolis) was built and decorated in 1722, according to the donor's inscription. The Codex of the St. John the Baptist Monastery says that Vreta Bezuka laid the foundations in

10. И. Снегаров, *История на Охридската архиепископия*, Sofia 1924, т. II, pp. 145, 230-232, 294.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

1720. On the murals, however, there are separate donor's inscriptions. The latest inscription (between the figures of St. Nicetas and St. Procopios) dates from 1725, which suggests that the murals must have been completed by then. At present, the painters remain unknown. The church once stood in the aristocratic part of town. Theophrastos Georgiades mentions that the Church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel had two chapels dedicated to St. Spiridon and St. Nahum, which are *in ruins*¹².

The Church of St. Nicholas in Moschopolis was built in 1721-1722. The interior was decorated by the prominent painter David of Selenica, together with Constantine and Christo, in 1726¹³. The donor was Hadji Georgi, and he is portrayed on the southern wall near the entrance. David of Selenica worked in Mt. Athos: the narthex of the Chapel Koukouzellissa in Great Lavra (1715); the exonarthex of Docheiariou (1720s); the Church of St. John the Baptist (1727) in Kastoria, and the Church of Nea Panagia (1727) in Thessaloniki¹⁴. David of Selenica and Dionysios of Fourni were the main founders of a new trend in 18th century ecclesiastical art, which reproduced stylistic and thematic models from Palaeologan art –mainly those of Manuel Panselinos, but reformulated in the context of painting influenced by the Cretan-Venetian masters¹⁵. Undoubtedly, the work of David influenced his contemporaries, as well as later painters in the region.

The porch of the Church of St. Nicholas (1750), as well as the murals in the other churches, are the work of the famous painters Constantine and Athanas of Korça¹⁶. The Church of St. Athanasios is probably preserved best, and

12. Γεωργιάδης, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

13. Th. Popa, «Considérations générales sur la peinture post-byzantine en Albanie», *Actes du Congrès International des Etudes Balkaniques et Sud-Est européennes II*, Sofia 1969, pp. 767-782; Th. Popa, *Piktoret mesjetare shqiptare*, Tirana 1961, pp. 63-71; H. Nalbani, «De l'œuvre du peintre David Selenicasi», *Monimentet 1*, Tirana 1971; M. Χατζηδάκης, «Η Τέχνη», *Ιστορία τοῦ Έλληνικοῦ Έθνους*, τ. IA'. Ο Έλληνισμός ὑπὸ ξένη κυριαρχίᾳ 1669-1821, Αθήνα 1975, σσ. 249-250; M. Χατζηδάκης, Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση (1450-1830), τ. 1, Αθήνα 1987, σσ. 235-234; D. Dhamo, *La peinture murale du Moyen Age en Albanie*, Tirana 1974, pp. 8-9; D. Dhamo, *Peintres albanais aux XVI- XVIII siècles en Albanie et dans d'autres régions balkaniques*, Tirana 1984, pp. 10-12; E. Kuriakosidης, «Η μνημειακή ζωγραφική στη Θεσσαλονίκη και το Αγιον Όρος, το 18ο αιώνα. Αισθητικές αναζητήσεις και τεχνοτροπικά ρεύματα», *Θεσσαλονικέων πόλις 4* (2001) 146-149.

14. According to E. Tsigaridas one of David's assistants worked in the Chapel of St Demetrios in Vatopediou (1920), the Chapel Koukouzellissa in Great Lavra (1715) and the Church of Nea Panagia (1727) in Thessaloniki. E. Τσιγαρίδας, «Οι τοιχογραφίες τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Νέας Παναγίας Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ τό κίνημα ἐπιστροφῆς τοῦ 18ου αἰώνα στήν παράδοση τῆς τέχνης τῆς Μακεδονικῆς σχολῆς», *Χριστιανική Θεσσαλονίκη. Όθωμανική περίοδος 1430-1912*, τ. B', Θεσσαλονίκη 1994, σσ. 315-368.

15. For details about the style of David see Τσιγαρίδας, *op.cit.*

16. Χατζηδάκης, Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση, *op.cit.*, τ. 1, σσ. 157-58 και τ. 2, σσ. 135-136.

the inscription about the decoration dates from 28 June 1745. The St. Athanasios is now Moschopolis's cemetery church.

The Church of SS. Apostles Peter and Paul near Vithkuqi was built in 1708 by Hadji Athanasios Rimara and consecrated in 1710 by Metropolitan Dionyios of Kastoria. The monastery used to be in the Kastoria eparchy. The adjacent SS. Cosmas and Damian Chapel was built in 1736 under abbot Methodios, manciple Ioannes from the village of Aidenorh near Serres, and the monk Anthim. Both the church and the chapel were decorated with the donations of Siropoulos from Aidenorh and Panayot Deshin (Ντεσίνος) from Vithkuqi¹⁷. The architectural design of the two buildings differs from that of the other churches, and this difference stems from their function. In all probability, the sons of Constantine and Athanas also took part in their decoration, since there are stylistic similarities with the murals in the Ardenica Monastery and Lubofsk, where Terpo is also known to have worked. Constantine and Athanas were also painted the Church of St. George 1767 in Vithkuqi, of which only the mural on the eastern wall is preserved.

Constantine and Athanas, joined later on by their sons Terpo and Nahum, worked, in the Korça region (Moschopolis, Vithkuqi, Korça, Lubonje), in the Ardenitsa Monastery and in the church of St. George in the near village of Ljubofsk, Permet, in the Prespa region (St. Germanos church 1743; a part of Panagia Porphira 1743) and in Mount Athos (Philotheou 1752, 1765; skete of St. Anna 1757; Xenophontos 1766; Xiropotamou 1783)¹⁸. In his latest research on 18th century painting in Thessaloniki and Mount Athos E. Kiriakidis pays special attention to the work of Constantine and Athanas of Korça¹⁹. This family of painters made a great contribution to the formation and proliferation of the visual cult of the Slavic saints, especially of Holy Heptarithmoi and St. John Vladimir²⁰.

The Church of the Monastery of St. John the Baptist, according to the do-

17. Чегаров, *op.cit.*, p. 497. K. Kirchhainer, «Das Ossuarium des Petrus- und Paulus- Kloster in Vithkuq (Nordepirus) und seine Freskendekoration (1750)», *Μακεδονικά* 34 (2005) 149-208.

18. Popa, *Piktoret mesjetare shqiptare*, *op.cit.*, pp. 83-98; Th Popa, «Piktoret korcare Kostandin dhe Athanas zografi dhe freskat e tyne me skenat e Apokalipsit», *Buletini per Shkencave shoqeror*, N. 1 (1959) 23-48; T. V. Caca, «Some data about the Activity of Kostandin and Athanas Zografi from Korca and the Characteristics of their Art in the 18th Century», *Ζητήματα Μεταβυζαντινής Ζωγραφικής στη μνήμη του Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη*, Αθήνα 2002, σ. 200, ill. 209. Γ. Τσιγάρας, *Οι ζωγράφοι Κωνσταντίνος και Αθανάσιος: το έργο τους στο Αγιον Όρος (1752-1783)*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1997.

19. Κυριακούδης, «Η μνημειακή ζωγραφική στη Θεσσαλονίκη και το Άγιον Όρος το 18ο αιώνα», *op.cit.*, pp. 177-186.

20. In their iconographic repertoire in Mount Athos presents also the Bulgarian hermit St. John of Rila.

nor's inscription, was built in 1632 and painted in 1659²¹. The monastery Codex, however provides more evidence about the decoration, according to which Andon Shipskioti and later Theodor Simo Grunde worked there²².

The murals in some of the churches under review have been examined in certain general studies on ecclesiastical art in Albania, mainly by T. Popa and D. Dhamo. This applies to the works of David of Selenica and Constantine and Athanas²³. The other churches –e.g. of the Holy Virgin and of Archangel Michael in Moschopolis– are only mentioned in some historical and regional studies or by the above-mentioned German travellers. As regards the Church of St. Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi, there is no evidence at all –or at least I have not come across any to date.

This study will not dwell on the universally valid and compulsory elements in all Orthodox churches, but will attempt to present in brief the general characteristics of the overall iconographic programme of mural painting in the Moschopolis region in the 17th-18th centuries, as well as of separate scenes and themes that are very rare in ecclesiastical art. The iconographic analysis and interpretation of the separate scenes and problems are the subject of a forthcoming publication.

Altar programme. The representations on the altar apse are in several tiers, with the procession of Officiating Prelates at the bottom; the next tier depicts the Communion of Apostles, and the one above, Old Testament scenes and scenes of the life of the Holy Virgin related to the Eucharist. The Holy Virgin occupies the conch. Here I will note several rare interpretations of the altar programme.

In the Church of Archangel Michael in Moschopolis, scenes related to the Eucharist are shown above the Communion of Apostles, i.e. above the concrete liturgical-Eucharistic scene there are representations of its prototypes from the Old and New Testament: Hospitality of Abraham, Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom with two angels, Decapitation of a St. Zachary, Righteous Joachim and Anna in Prayer, Annunciation of St. Anna. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is represented in certain mediaeval manuscripts, but it is not a theme interpreted in monumental painting. The scene of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom arguably has a parallel in the scene of the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great in the St. Sophia Church in Ochrid. This parallel is quite distant by time but not by place, and it was obviously familiar to the painter

21. Γεωργιάδης, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-36.

22. Theodor Simo Grunde worked in 1767, he has worked also in Serbia and Hungary.

23. Nalbani, «De l'œuvre du peintre David Selenicasi», *op.cit.*; Dhamo, *La peinture murale du Moyen Age en Albanie*, *op.cit.*; Dhamo, *Peintres albanais aux XVI- XVIII siècles en Albanie et dans d'autres régions balkaniques*, *op.cit.*; Τσιγαρίδας, *op.cit.*, with bibliography.

who reproduced it in Moschopolis.

In the Church of St. George in Vithkuqi, the Divine Liturgy is represented on both sides of the apse. To the left, Christ as High Priest blesses an angel; to the right, the altar table is depicted with the Holy Spirit as a dove. By the table, God Father (Ο Πατήρ), also in bishop vestments and with features similar to those of an Old Testament high priest, blesses bread on the head of an angel. Such a representation of God Father as Priest –at that, in the apse– is quite unusual, albeit not exceptional. The closest parallel is the scene in the apse of the church of Panagia Porphyra (1741) on the island of St. Achilius, which was probably also painted by Constantine and Athanas²⁴. The same theme can be found on the drum of some monuments from this and subsequent periods. For example, another variant of the Divine Liturgy appears on the dome of the church in the Monastery of the Holy Virgin in Kicevo: to the right of the altar table, Sabbaoth is depicted with a triangular halo, also blessing bread on the head of an angel.

In the churches of St. Nicholas and of SS. Peter and Paul, Judas appears on the far left of the Communion of Apostles, moving away with a demon on his shoulder that is whispering in his ear. The motif of Judas with the devil in the scene of the Communion of Apostles is rarely found in the post-Byzantine period²⁵. In Communion of Apostles, Judas with the devil appears in, for example, the Barlaam Monastery (1566) in Meteora and in the katholicon of the Gregoriou Monastery; the same motif was painted by Terpo in the church of the St. Nahum Monastery²⁶.

In the SS. Cosmas and Damian Chapel in Vithkuqi, the Three-Faced Christ, flanked by kneeling angels, is represented in the centre of the apse arch. Images of the Three-Faced Christ are quite rare, and appear in several variants. The closest parallel to this rare image is a mural by the painter Onufrios in Selcan, where the interpretation is more complicated²⁷. Another rare scene is depicted on the vault by the apse in the St. Athanasios and in the SS. Cosmas and Damian. This is the Holy Trinity with the Crowning of the Virgin, in which Christ and God Father are represented as high priests. In the SS.

24. Σ. Πελεκανίδης, *Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά μνημεία της Πρέσπας*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1960, σ. 100, ill. XXXIV.

25. About this theme in iconography see: M. Garidis, *La peinture murale dans le monde orthodoxe après la chute de Byzance, 1450-1600, et dans les pays sous domination étrangère*, Athènes 1989, p. 332, pl. 183; A. Τούρτα, *Οι ναοί των Αγίου Νικολάου στη Βίτσα και των Αγίων Μηνά στο Μονοδένδρο*, Αθήνα 1991, σ. 61; A. Tourta, «The Judas Cycle? Byzantine and Post Byzantine Survival», *Byzantinische Malerei. Bildprogramme - Ikonographie - Stil*, Wiesbaden 2000, pp. 322-324.

26. Ц. Грозданов, *Свети Наум Охридски*, Skopje 1995, p. 108, ill. 91.

27. Garidis, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-207, ill. 209; Popa, *Piktoret mesjetare shqiptare*, *op.cit.*, ill. 28.

Peter and Paul, the Crowning of the Virgin is shown above the Dormition. The Crowning of the Virgin is a scene which is not found in monumental painting, even though it appeared in icon-painting in the post-Byzantine period under the influence of West European art.

Prothesis. In most examples, Christ of Pity is represented in the prothesis with the symbols of passions on both sides. Of greater interest is the lower part of the prothesis where, in all murals painted by Constantine and Athanas, there is a beadroll in the form of an arcade; the beadroll is divided into separate tables for the names of monks, nuns, priests and laics... In the Church of SS. Peter and Paul, the prothesis displays the Lamentation and, above it, Christ seated on clouds with the inscription *ΑΝΩ ΚΕ ΕΝ ΘΡΟΝΩ* ([He] ascended on a throne). There is a beadroll under this scene too.

Programme of the Domes. By tradition, God Sabbaoth, Christ Pantocrator, Christ Emmanuel or the Holy Virgin (on the western dome) are represented in the three domes of the aisle. However, the western dome of the St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis displays the Divine Liturgy with Christ as King of Kings and High Priest in the centre, surrounded by a host of angels, whereas the pendentives show four hymnographers. The only earlier representation of Christ as King of Kings on a dome is found in Treskavec, where Christ as King is surrounded by the host of heaven, the Holy Virgin as Queen and Hetimasia²⁸. The closest, albeit later, parallel is the representation of Christ as High Priest on a dome in the narthex of the Gregoriou Monastery (1779), with the hymnographers (St. Cosmas Hymnographer, John Damaskinos, Theodore the Studite, Stephan Agiopolitis) appearing on the pendentives. In the church of St. Athanasios in Moschopolis, the hymnographers are portrayed on the pendentives of the westernmost central dome, where the Holy Virgin is represented. This image belongs to the themes depicted in the narthex or, due to the absence of a narthex, more generally in the western part of the church. The representations of Christ as King of Kings and High Priest in different and unusual contexts recur in the work of painters in other parts of Albania too. For example, Christ as High Priest appears on the vault of the Church of St. Nicholas (17th century) in Saracinica²⁹, and a Theophanic vision with Christ as King and High Priest –in the monastery in Raverya (17th century)³⁰.

Christological cycles. The vaults of the central aisle, as well as the vaults

28. Ц. Грозданов, «Христос Цар, Богородица Царица, небесните сили и светите воини во живописот од XIV и XV век во Трескавец», *Студии за охридскиот живопис*, Скопје 1990, pp. 133-137.

29. Г. Гиакоумης, *Μνημεία Ορθοδοξίας στην Αλβανία*, Αθήνα 1994, ill. 249.

30. *Ibid.*, ill. n. 78, p. 81.

of the side aisles, are occupied by different New Testament cycles, including a very elaborate and detailed cycle of Passions. The cycles of Parables and Miracles are designated according to the Sundays on which the respective text is read. Old Testament prophets and saints are shown on the arcs of the arches. On the separate side domes, a central figure of a prophet (Noah, Abraham) is surrounded by New Testament scenes, and other prophets who prophesied the respective events are portrayed on the arcs. Here I will mention the scene of the Resurrection, since it is represented in a rather specific way in all churches in question. Above the figure of Christ in limbo, a medallion shows a crowned Christ as the Wisdom of God, carried by angels. David of Selenica depicted the figure of Wisdom as standing and holding a sphere in his hand. This image of Wisdom is also present in the scene of the Last Judgement, from Apocalypse, in the Church of St. Athanasios in Moschopolis. In the eponymous churches of Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi and Moschopolis, between the figures of Christ and Wisdom there is a host of angels with octagonal nimbi and diamond-shaped rhipidia with the epithets η χαρά, η νίκη, η αρθαρούσια, etc. The host of angels is depicted in the same way by Frangos Kastelanos in the Barlaam Monastery (1548) in Meteora, and in the Holy Virgin Rassiotissa (1553) in Kastoria.

I will also mention the scene of the Transfiguration, whose iconographic scheme follows the Athos model which includes three episodes: the apostles led by Christ towards Mt. Tabor, the Transfiguration itself in the centre and, finally, Christ blessing the apostles. However, in the monuments under consideration, Sabbath and His words from Matthew 17:5 are represented above Christ; in the Church of the Holy Virgin, Prophet Noah is also depicted above Christ in the same scene.

Christ Anapesson is often portrayed below the Dormition. David of Selenica probably popularized this image of Christ under the influence of Manuel Panselinos, since it is absent in earlier monuments but was reproduced by Constantine and Athanas.

Cycles and scenes of the Holy Virgin. The northern aisle is arguably dedicated to the Holy Virgin. The domes, vaults and upper tier on the walls depict a cycle of the Holy Virgin, the Akathistos hymnos of the Holy Virgin, the In Thee Rejoiceth, the Tree of Jesse, the Praise of the Holy Virgin or a Nativity hymn. In the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin, the cycle of the Holy Virgin continues in the apse above the Communion of Apostles.

The Akathistos cycle appears in almost all churches. Its scenes merge with scenes illustrating other hymns. In the Church of the Holy Virgin, the scene of the Restoration of the Cult of Holy Icons (The Orthodox Sunday) is linked with the Akathistos scenes and the In Thee Rejoiceth. Two icons are represented:

of the Virgin with the Christ Child, and of Christ. The two icons are surrounded by clerics, with Empress Theodora and the young Emperor Michael to the right. The iconographic characteristics of this scene are strongly reminiscent of the illustrations of the last verses of the Akathistos, which are illustrated with «liturgical» scenes before an icon. This scene is typical of the churches in the Mt. Athos monasteries. For example, the scene of the Restoration of the Cult of Holy Icons with Empress Theodora and the young Emperor Michael, also appears next to the In Thee Rejoiceth in the katholicon of the Gregoriou Monastery. The Restoration of the Cult of Holy Icons –however, interpreted as a procession with an icon– is also present in the Vatopedi Monastery in the skete of St. Demetrios.

The Tree of Jesse also figures prominently in the programme of the Moschopolis churches. In the Church of the Holy Virgin, it is depicted above the Akathistos scenes on the northern wall, whereas in the St. Athanasios, it divides a vault in the northern aisle, along with the Transfiguration and the In Thee Rejoiceth; in the Church of St. Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi, the Virgin, encircled by a frieze with the Tree of Jesse, appears in a medallion on the westernmost part of the vault. A typical feature of the scenes illustrating hymns in the Moschopolis murals is the portrayal of concrete saints, e.g. St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, St. Athanasios, Cosmas Hymnographer and others.

Western Wall. Traditionally, the Dormition of Holy Virgin is represented on the western wall. The interpretation of the Dormition, however, is extended by the addition of scenes inspired by hymnography³¹. This cycle is preserved best in the Church of St. Athanasios. The following scenes are depicted on the northern and southern vault on the sides of the west wall: the Holy Virgin is told by the angel that she shall depart from life on Earth, the Holy Virgin chars her chemises, the Holy Virgin bids farewell to her loved ones, the Holy Virgin bids farewell to apostles, the scenes of her body being carried to the grave, and the apostles at her empty grave; on the other side, the Assumption and the Wanderings of Our Lady through Hell. The cycle dedicated to the death of the Holy Virgin appeared in the Palaeologan period for the first time in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ochrid. This extended interpretation of the theme of her death may be considered as part of the overall extensive cycle dedicated to the Holy Virgin.

Martyrological cycle. The cycle dedicated to the martyr's death of Chri-

31. L. Wratislaw-Mitrović, «N. Okunev. La dormition de la Sainte Vierge dans la peinture médiévale orthodoxe», *Byzantinoslavica* III (1931) 134-174; П. Мильковик-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Еутихиј*, Skopje 1967, pp. 49, 112, 134-174; Б. Тодин, *Старо Нагоричино*, Belgrad 1993, pp. 103-107, with bibliography.

stian saints commences with a cycle of St. John the Baptist. St. John the Baptist is portrayed in a medallion carried by angels on one of the vaults in the southern aisle, with scenes from his life on the pendentives or around the medallion: Sermon of St. John the Baptist, Decapitation of the Baptist, First and Second Invention of John the Baptist's Head. The iconographic scheme of the Decapitation of the Baptist is reproduced in the churches of St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis and Vithkuqi, as mention A. Tourta, it is a typical iconography about the Cretan School, and we can find it in many icons and murals from the post-Byzantine period³², for example in frescoes by Frangos Katelanos in the Barlaam Monastery in Meteora. As the «first Christian martyr», his cycle merges with the cycle of Passions of apostles and early Christian martyrs, which starts from the southern wall, runs along the western wall and continues on the northern wall. The scenes of the martyr's death of saints are often above the standing figures of the respective saints. Along with the death of the apostles, there are also scenes of the death of St. Stephen, St. George, St. Mercury, St. Artemios, St. Charalambis, St. Theodore of Tyro and St. Theodore Stratelates, St. Marina³³, St. Barbara, St. Kyriaki, St. Paraskevi and others. Although it is strongly reminiscent of the Menologion, the martyrological cycle is not a calendar cycle.

Tier of standing Saints. Here I will mention several representations other than the traditional figures of standing monk, soldier, high priest and other saints. Deesis with Christ as King of Kings is shown near the iconostasis in the southern aisle of the St. Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi and, in the same place, in the church in Embore (14th century)³⁴. This scene, which is typical of Palaeologan and post-Byzantine painting in the Ochrid Diocese, is traditionally represented on the northern wall near the iconostasis, i.e. on the mirror location³⁵. Obviously the Vithkuqi painter reproduced the geographically closer model, which he knew from Embore. This scene is linked with the adjacent images of standing saints, who are prominent bishops, thus conveying

32. Τούρτα, *Οι ναοί του Αγίου Νικολάου στη Βίτσα και του Αγίου Μηνά στο Μονοδένδρο*, *op.cit.*, p. 205.

33. A cycle of her Vita is represented at the entire dome at the North aisle in the Church of St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis; a six scenes from her life are composed around a central medallion.

34. In Embore the composition of King's Deesis is not accidentally located on the southern wall, contrary to tradition, but represents the patron of the church, Christ Zoodotes. R. Lozanova, «The Church of Christ Zoodotes in Embore (Albania)», *Образ и слово. Юбилеен сборник по случай 60 годишнината на проф. Аксиния Джуркова*, Sofia 2004, pp. 151-162.

35. Грозданов, «Христос Цар , Богородица Царица, небесните сили и светите воини во живописот од XIV и XV век во Трескавец», *op.cit.*, pp. 132-149; Id., «Исус Христос цар над царевима у живопису Охридске архиепископије од XV до XVII века», *Зограф* 27 (2000) 151-160, and literature, Belgrad.

the idea of Christ as High Priest and his earthly images – the bishops. The same theme is also continued with the portrayal of bishops in the medallions above the standing saints.

On the northern wall opposite Deesis, the Holy Virgin is represented enthroned, flanked by two angels with rolls and defined by the epithet «η πάντων χαρά». There is an identical composition in the Church of St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis, but the Holy Virgin in it is not defined by an epithet. Probably the earliest representations of the Virgin «η πάντων χαρά» are in the three monuments, which are geographically related: in the Church of St. Athanasios tou Mouzaki in Kastoria, in the Church of Christ Zoodotes in Embore and a fresco on the rocks around Megali Prespa near the village of Nivitsa (Psarades).

The repertoire of saints: The choice of saints in the Moschopolis churches is determined by the dominant ideas in the region at that time, expressed foremost through the output of the printing house in Moschopolis. In its service to religion, this printing house played a direct role in reviving and popularizing the cult of the patron saints of the region, most of whom were Slavs. It was there that Archbishop Joasaph started the publication of Akoluthie of the Saints from the Ochrid Archbishopric (1740-1742)³⁶. Alongside with publishing offices and Vitas of saints, the pictorial aspect of the cult got a strong impetus³⁷. The Moschopolis painters played a key role in the revival, enrichment and widening of the scope of the cult of Slavic saints from the period of the First Bulgarian Kingdom – the Holy Heptarithmoi (especially St. Nahum of Ochrid and St. Clement of Ochrid) and St. John Vladimir³⁸, as well as in establishing the cult of neomartyrs of the Christian faith, as in the case of St. Nicodemos of Vithkuqi. The figures of Slavic saints do not have a permanent location in the church and appear both in the naos and on the porches.

Apart from the publications in Moschopolis, I believe that the choice of saints was also determined by the concrete historical circumstances. The

36. The printing house used the services of Venetian engravers, and the typographer was Gregory of Moschopolis.

37. R. Lozanova, «Images of Slavic Saints in Moschopolis and Vithkuqi-Albania», *Les Saints slaves dans l'histoire de l'église chrétienne; Annuaire de l'Université de Sofia «St. Kliment Ohridski», Centre de recherches slavo-byzantines «Ivan Dujcev»*, t. 92 /11/2002, Sofia 2003, pp. 177-188, ill. 332-351.

38. St. John Vladimir is represented in the St. Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi on the west wall, on the porch of the churches of St. Nicholas and in the SS. Peter and Paul on the west wall; St. Nahum is portrayed in the churches of St. Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi and Moschopolis, of St. Athanasios, of St. Nicholas, of SS. Cosmas and Damian and in the church of SS. Peter and Paul; St. Clement of Ohrid is depicted in the St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis, in the SS. Peter and Paul and the SS. Cosmas and Damian; the scene of the Holy Heptarithmoi is also represented in the SS. Peter and Paul.

accent on early Christian saints, who died a martyr's death, was directly related to the non-Christian Turkish bondage and served as a role model. At the same time, the presence of the many archbishop saints and of St. Clement of Ochrid (in three of the churches) indicates a desire to assert the Orthodox Church after the fall of the Balkans to the Turks, and to highlight the integral link with the Orthodox Church before the conquest.

Programme of Porch. Arguably, the porches served not only as an exonarthex or portico, but might have also had a chapel-like function. This assumption is suggested by the presence of a niche on the eastern wall of the preserved porches, which is occupied by a representation related to the patron of the whole church. In the Church of the Holy Virgin, this niche is occupied by the Holy Virgin with the rare epithet «η ελπίς των χριστιανών» (Hope of Christians). The respective niche in the Church of St. Archangel Michael depicts Synaxis of Angels, with St. Marina and St. Spiridon to the left, and St. Nahum and St. Paraskevi to the right. The eastern niche of the porch in the Church of St. Nicholas shows Deesis with Christ as Great Priest and from the both sides of the niche are St. Nicholas and St. Athanasios.

Two Apocalyptic cycles are preserved on the vaults, pendentives and walls of the porches of the churches of St. Athanasios and St. Nicholas³⁹. Theophrastos Georgiades notes that the Apocalypse was also depicted in the Church of the Holy Virgin, whose porch is now almost completely destroyed⁴⁰. The two Apocalyptic cycles in Moschopolis are important not only in themselves, but also for another two reasons. First, they offer evidence about the iconographic trends and models in the now destroyed Moschopolis churches; second, these two cycles mark a new stage in the iconographic approach to the theme, which differs from the preceding cycles in Mt. Athos. Primarily, the general conceptual and compositional design is different. The scenes illustrating the main episodes are not arranged chronologically on the walls and are not as distinctly separated as in the earlier Mt. Athos cycles, but merge with one another. Constantine and Athanas also applied this approach later to the arrangement on the walls in the Xeropotamou Monastery, from where it was probably borrowed by the Bulgarian painters too⁴¹.

The Monastery of SS. Peter and Paul does not have a porch, but a portico

39. R. Lozanova, «The Apocalypse in Moschopolis - Iconographic and Historiographic Parallels», *International Scientific Conference «The Culture and Art of Ohrid and the Christianity»*, Ochrid 2000.

40. Γεωργιάδης, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

41. R. Lozanova, «Първообрази на Апокалипсиса в българското църковно изкуство», *Проблеми на изкуството*, Sofia, 1998, pp. 3, 40-49; R. Lozanova, *The Illustrative Cycle of the Revelation of St. John the Theologian in Bulgarian Religious Art*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Sofia 1999.

above the northern entrance with representations of the Last Judgement in the dome, the Wheel of Life, the Murder of Enoch and Elijah, Dormition of Hosios Ephraim the Syrian, the Holy Heptarithmoi and others.

In the churches under consideration, the scene of the Last Judgement –traditionally depicted as a separate theme on the external wall or narthex– appears only in the St. Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi⁴². It stands on the external wall of the church, and is interpreted in an extensive variant typical of post-Byzantine art. In the churches of St. Nicholas and St. Athanasios in Moschopolis, the Last Judgement is linked with the cycle of the Apocalypse, as an illustration of chapters 21-22.

The choice of subject in the representations on the east wall of the narthex in the Church of St. John the Baptist is quite interesting. The lunette above the church entrance represents the church patron, flanked by scenes from his Life and a medallion frieze with saints. Synaxis of the Taxiarchs and St. Peter and St. Paul with the model of the Church are depicted in niches on both side of the entrance. Between the entrance and the niches there are alternating representations of full-length figures from Deesis and half-length images of Christ (Christ High Priest - above the entrance, Christ Emmanuel - above the Synaxis of the Taxiarchs and Christ as Archangel of the Great Council - above St. Peter and St. Paul).

Arguably, the above exposition justifies an approach to those monuments –irrespective of their diversity– as a compact group with its own distinctive typological characteristics. The geographical location of the population centres has been conducive to the accumulation of iconographic traditions that vary by time and origins. This study calls into question T. Popa's classification of post-Byzantine painting in Albania into three groups: painting from Berat and central Albania; from Korça and southeastern Albania; and finally, painting associated with the Cretan school and Mt. Athos⁴³. Popa regards David of Selenica as the founder of the school of painters who worked in Korça, Moschopolis and the nearby population centres, and distinguishes him from those who worked in Mt. Athos⁴⁴. Such a classification lacks a clear systematic indicator and, besides, does not take into account the iconographic logic. As we have seen, thematically –if not stylistically– identical schemes were applied in the monuments in the Moschopolis region before the arrival of David of Selenica. A more adequate explanation may be found in M. Chatzidakis's ge-

42. In the region of Korça the scene of the Last Judgement on the facade appears also in the St. John the Baptist Church in Bobostica (1591, 17th C.) and in the Christ Zoodotes in Embore (14th C., 17th C.).

43. Popa, «*Considérations générales sur la peinture postbyzantine en Albanie*», *op.cit.*, p. 771.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 780.

neral theses about the 18th century, according to which several families of painters travelled and decorated churches in Epirus, Makedonia, Mt. Athos and Thessaly, and reached Peloponnesus and the islands. Their style is characterized, on the one hand, by naiveté and spontaneity and, on the other, by an influence from Italy and central Europe –in Mt. Athos, by imitation of the style of Panselinos⁴⁵.

On the whole, the iconographic and conceptual programme of the churches in the Moschopolis region is similar to that in the large monastic centres at Mt. Athos and Meteora. It is not accidental that the cited parallels are precisely from those centres. This initial thesis needs to be concretized and supplemented. First, the Palaeologan tradition was continued and developed in the spirit of post-Byzantine painting from Mt. Athos – in other words, with an obvious influence of West European graphic Baroque patterns, already applied at Mt. Athos by the exponents of the Cretan school. The second tradition is the tradition of art in the Ochrid Diocese from the mediaeval and Turkish period. This is obvious in the choice of certain rare compositions, such as Kings Deesis, the Divine Liturgy with Christ as King, and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. However, the influence of the Ochrid tradition is most tangible in the choice of saints, which is associated with the regional cults revived by the publications in Moschopolis. The third element is arguably the 16th-17th century Epirus tradition manifested in the monasteries in Meteora, as well as in the œuvre of the painter Onufrios.

Although those three cultural traditions overlap and intertwine, the monuments under consideration may be divided into two groups by style. The first group includes the chronologically earlier churches of the Holy Virgin and St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis, of St. Archangel in Vithkuqi and the Monastery of St. John the Baptist which continued local Epirus traditions from the 16th and 17th centuries. Precisely those churches have remained beyond the scope of academic interest. They can be classified as what A. Xyngopoulos defines as the popular trend in the 18th century (which includes the majority of painters)⁴⁶. They demonstrate an accumulation of the Cretan tradition in Epirus and the 14th century Macedonian tradition, and are distinguished by a simpler style which, in the monuments under consideration, is characterized by flatness and decorative elements⁴⁷.

45. M. Chatzidakis, «Considérations sur la peinture postbyzantine en Grèce», *Actes du premier congrès international des études balkaniques et sud-est européennes*, t. 2, Sofia, 1969, p. 710.

46. A. Ξυγγόπουλος, *Σχεδίασμα ιστορίας τῆς Θρησκευτικῆς ζωγραφικῆς μετά τὴν ἀλωσιν*, Αθήνα, 1957, σσ. 311-312.

47. Their iconographical and stylistic features are relatively similar to those in the churches in Monodendri (Epirus). According to A. Tourta, this artistic trend was founded on the 14th, 15th and

The question of the authorship of the murals in the church of St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis remains open. In all likelihood, the churches of the Holy Virgin and of the St. Archangel Michael in Moschopolis were decorated by the same team of painters – despite the differences, some of the painters, at least, were probably the same. The ornamental frieze is identical, whereas the composition of the altar programme is very similar. According to Victoria Corobar, the murals on the eastern wall of the porch are not by Theodoros Anagnosti and Sterianos of Agrapha, but by Hieromonk Constantine. Other painters, whose works have not survived to date, also worked in the region. For example, the painter Theodoros of Moschopolis mentioned by Theophrastos Georgiades, who decorated in 1750 the now destroyed chapel dedicated to St. Euthymius (*διὰ χειρὸς τοῦ Θεοδάρου ἐκ τῆς Μοσχοπόλεως*)⁴⁸.

The Church of St. Archangel Michael in Vithkuqi raises the greatest number of questions. The painters who worked there were obviously better schooled, even though they were associated with the first group. The colours are bright and the figures are proportional, rendered linearly, whereas the ornamental frieze is complex. There are obvious stylistic and thematic similarities with the churches, painted by the masters from the village of Linotopi. The choice of scenes is associated with the large bishop and metropolitan centres. This church also boasts the earliest portrayal of St. John Vladimir as cephalophoros known to date. The question of the dating of the murals, raised by the three dates in the donors inscription and in the apse, also remains open, since the murals are closer in style to 17th century painting.

The second group of monuments is associated with David of Selenica and the brothers Constantine and Athanas from Korça, who continued the tradition of Palaeologan painting revived at Mt. Athos. According to E. Tsigaridas, David used iconographical models not only from Protaton, but also from Ochrid and Thessaloniki. Arguably, this was a general trend to revive the 13th-14th century prototypes of the Macedonian School⁴⁹. Notably, there is a difference in the style of the two brothers (and their assistants). The style of one brother is much closer to that of David of Selenica and Dionysios of Fourni –for example, his are God Sabbaoth and St. Aitalas and St. Gregorios Dialogos in the Church of SS. Peter and Paul. The other brother's style is much more schematic and flat, with accented outlines, and this style was continued later by the painter Terpo.

early 16th century painting tradition in Macedonia and was enriched by Cretan painting; this trend also established new themes and forms; Τούτα, *Οι ναοί των Αγίων Νικολάου στη Βίτσα και των Αγίων Μηνά στο Μονοδένδρο*, *op.cit.*, p. 247.

48. Γεωργιάδης, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

49. Τσιγαρίδας, *op.cit.*, pp. 339, 363.

The murals in the Theotokos Church in Vithkuqi are far inferior to other monuments, executed in the best traditions of Athonite and Epirot painting. However, they are indicative of provincial religious art that developed independent of the large metropolitan and monastic centers.

Finally, I would define this presentation of the monuments in the Moschopolis region –which are undoubtedly among the masterpieces of Orthodox culture– only as a preface to their «discovery» by science. This discovery –which, in a sense, is yet to come– will inevitably involve extensive interpretative, as well as field work. Even though it follows the signs of the past, the requisite field work covers the incendiary routes of the contemporary Balkan world.

RALITSA ROUSSEVA

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ralitsa Rousseva, *Εικονογραφικά χαρακτηριστικά των ναών της Μοσχόπολης και του Vithkuqi.*

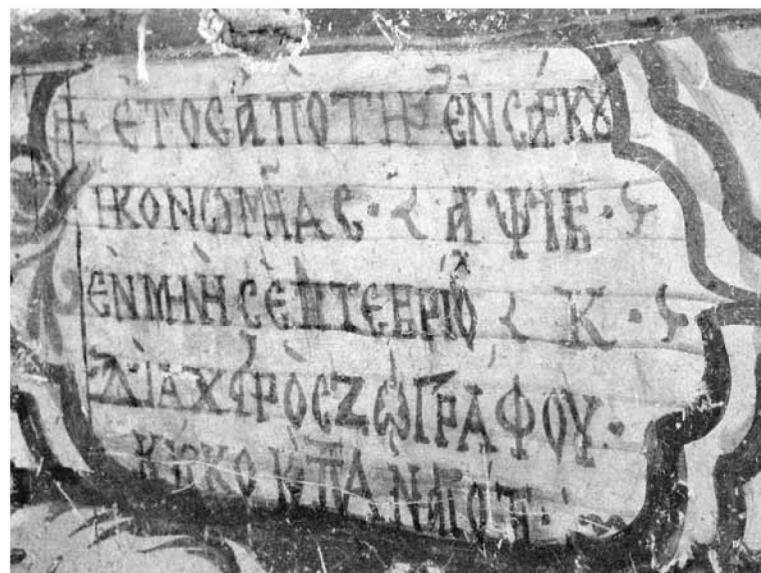
Οι ναοί της περιοχής της Μοσχόπολης είναι από τα πιο αντιπροσωπευτικά μνημεία της θρησκευτικής ζωγραφικής του 18ου αιώνα στα Βαλκάνια. Στην έρευνα περιλαμβάνεται: ο ναός των αγίων Αρχαγγέλων Μιχαήλ και Γαβριήλ (1682-1728) στο Βιθκούκι, ο ναός της Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου (1712) στη Μοσχόπολη, ο ναός των αγίων αρχαγγέλων Μιχαήλ και Γαβριήλ (1720-1725) στη Μοσχόπολη, ο ναός του αγίου Νικολάου (1721-1750) στη Μοσχόπολη, ο ναός του αγίου Αθανάσιου (1724-1745) στη Μοσχόπολη, το παρεκκλήσι των αγίων Αναργύρων Κοσμά και Δαμιανού (1736-1750) κοντά στο Βιθκούκι, ο ναός των αγίων Αποστόλων Πέτρου και Παύλου (1708-1764) κοντά στο Βιθκούκι, ο ναός του αγίου Γεωργίου στο Βιθκούκι, ο ναός της Παναγίας (18ος αιώνας) κοντά στο Βιθκούκι και η μονή του Ιωάννη του Βαπτιστού (1659-1767) κοντά στη Μοσχόπολη.

Το παρόν άρθρο αναλύει το εικονογραφικό και το θεματολογικό πρόγραμμα των ναών στην περιοχή της Μοσχόπολης του 17ου-18ου αιώνα, όπου υπάρχει επιρροή των μεγάλων μοναστικών κέντρων, όπως το Άγιον Όρος και τα Μετέωρα. Υπάρχουν ακόμη κάποιες εξιμηνευτικές παραλλαγές των συνθέσεων της Καινής Διαθήκης, η προτίμηση λειτουργικών και υμνογραφικών θεμάτων, η επεξεργασία κάποιων ασυνήθων σκηνών και προσώπων (η Λειτουργία του αγίου Ιωάννη του Χρυσοστόμου, ο Χριστός Βασιλεύς και Αρχιερεύς στον τρούλο, η θεία Λειτουργία με τον Θεό Πατέρα στο Ιερό Βήμα, ο Χριστός με τις τρεις μορφές, η βασιλική Δέηση, ο Αποκαλυπτικός κύκλος και άλλα).

Στα μνημεία αυτά διακρίνονται τρία καλλιτεχνικά ρεύματα. Το πρώτο ρεύμα συνεχίζει την παράδοση των Παλαιολόγων, προσαρμοσμένη στο πνεύμα της μεταβυζαντινής τέχνης του Αγίου Όρους. Η αφετηρία του δεύτερου ρεύματος αρχίζει από την περιοχή της Αχρίδας της μεσαιωνικής και της τουρκικής περιόδου, καθώς εκδηλώνεται κυρίως στην επιλογή των αγίων που συνδέονται με τη λατρεία της περιοχής και ανανεωμένο από την παραγωγή της Μοσχόπολης –παράδειγμα ο άγιος Ναούμ της Αχρίδας, ο άγιος Κλήμης της Αχρίδας και ο άγιος Ιωάννης Βλαδίμηρος. Το τρίτο ρεύμα εντάσσεται στην παράδοση της τέχνης της Ηπείρου του 16ου-17ου αιώνα, εφαρμοσμένη

στα μοναστικά κέντρα των Μετεώρων, καθώς και στο έργο του ζωγράφου Ονούφριου.

Τα καλλιτεχνικά αυτά ζεύματα δείχνουν γενικά ότι η ζωγραφική των πρωτότερων μνημείων συνδέεται πιο στενά με την παράδοση της Ηπείρου, αλλά και με τη θεματολογική επιρροή των μνημείων της Αχρίδας [Άγιοι Αρχάγγελοι Μιχαήλ και Γαβριήλ (1682-1728) στο Βιθκούνι, Κοιμηση της Θεοτόκου (1712) στη Μοσχόπολη, Άγιοι αρχάγγελοι Μιχαήλ και Γαβριήλ (1720-1725) στη Μοσχόπολη, όπως και η μονή του αγίου Ιωάννη του Βαπτιστού (1659-1767)]. Τα υπόλοιπα μνημεία είναι έργα των ζωγράφων Δαβίδ από τη Σελενίτσα και του Κωνσταντίνου και Αθανάσιου και των τέκνων τους από την Κορυτσά. Οι καλλιτέχνες αυτοί συνδυάζουν την αθωνική παράδοση και την παράδοση της περιοχής της Αχρίδας. Παρόλο τις στυλιστικές διαφορές των ζωγράφων, όλα τα μνημεία αποκαλύπτουν παρόμοιο ιδεολογικό και θεματικό πρόγραμμα της ζωγραφικής διακόσμησης της περιόδου της τουρκοκρατίας. Εκτός μένει ο ναός της Παναγίας κοντά στο Βιθκούνι, όπου επίσης υπάρχουν μορφές σλάβων αγίων, αλλά έχει το λαϊκό χαρακτήρα της επαρχιακής τέχνης χωρίς την επίδραση των μεγάλων καλλιτεχνικών κέντρων.



1. The Inscription from 1712 in the Apse of the church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (1682-1728), Vithkuqi.



2. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. The church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (1720 - 1725), Moschopolis.



4. The Divine Liturgy. The church of St. George (1767), Vithkuqi.



3. The Apse. The church of St. Nicholas (1726), Moschopolis.



5. *The Three-Faced Christ and The Crowning of the Holy Virgin. The chapel of SS. Cosmas and Damian (1750), Vithkuqi.*



6. *The Communion of Apostles. The church of SS. Peter and Paul (1764), Vithkuqi.*



7. *The God Sabbaoth*. The church of St. Nicholas (1726), Moschopolis.



8. *The God Sabbaoth*. The church of St. Athanasios (1745), Moschopolis.



9. Christ King of Kings and High Priest. The church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (1720-1725), Moschopolis.



10. *In Thee Rejoiceth and The Orthodox Sunday. The church of Dormition of Holy Virgin (1712), Moschopolis.*



11. *King's Deesis. The church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (1682-1728), Vithkuqi.*



12. St. John Vladimir, St. Nahum and Archangels Michael. The church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (1682-1728), Vithkuqi.



13. Saints. The church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (1720-1725), Moschopolis.



14. *Saints and Scenes from St. Nicholas Vita. The church of St. Nicholas (1726), Moschopolis.*



15. *Saints and the Healing of the Paralytic. The church of St. Nicholas (1726), Moschopolis.*



16. St. Aitalas and St. Gregory Dialogos. The church of SS. Peter and Paul (1764).



17. Apocalypses (1:12-18). The church of St. Nicholas (1750), Moschopolis.



18. *Saints and Apocalypses. The church of St. Nicholas (1750), Moschopolis.*



19. *The Last Judgement. The church of SS. Peter and Paul (1764).*