
THE MURAL PAINTINGS FROM THE EXONARTHEX OF VATOPEDI MONASTERY'S KATHOLIKON

Petru Sofragiu*

*University 'Al. I. Cuza', Faculty of Theology, Department of Conservation-Restoration, 9 Closca,
700065 Iasi, Romania*

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Abstract

This article is a review about the narthex decoration from one of the most representative monuments of the Holy Mountain, Vatopedi's katholikon, which still preserves Byzantine art from Palaeologan period (XIVth century). We have examined the architectural features of the Athonite style and provided an analysis of the iconographic program of Vatopedi exonarthex. We pointed out stylistic elements of compositions, the theological significance of the iconographic themes, and we have highlighted the peculiarities and similarities with other monuments that have been decorated by the same Macedonian painting school.

Keywords: katholikon, exonarthex, Paleologan period

1. Introduction: brief history of the Vatopedi Monastery

Vatopedi Monastery, (in Greek Βατοπέδι or Βατοπαίδι) is one of the twenty monasteries that preserves the cenobitic or cenobitic way of life (monastic community), and had approximately 80 monks in 1999, placing second in the hierarchy of monasteries from the Holy Mountain. Koinobion (gr. κοινόβιον, lit. 'common life'), is a monastery housing a community of monks or nuns and emphasizing a communal and egalitarian way of life. *Koinobia* in their earliest form were created by Pachomioiosin Egypt, for example, at Tabennisi. Theodore of Stoudios and Athanasios of Athos continued to emphasize the importance of the cenobitic tradition. In the later centuries of Byzantium however, *koinobia* tended to develop into communities of landowners rather than of working brethren. Clothes, tools, and other items were owned in common and distributed as necessary. The cenobitic life stressed obedience to the superior or hegoumenos, and adherence to the rules of the Typikon, including regular attendance at services and avoiding contact with the outside world (especially members of the opposite sex). The koinobion resembled a spiritual family, in which the monks or nuns were linked by a spirit of brotherhood or sisterhood [1].

* E-mail: sofragiu.petru@gmail.com; tel.: +40 754361539

This Saint Monastery was built, according to tradition, by Theodosius the Great and was devoted to Blessed Holy Mother of Christ, as gratitude for saving his son, Arcadius, from drowning. Arcadius was found under a bush, after being swept away by the waves and thrown into the sea. „Therefore, the name of the monastery could stem from this miracle, Vatopedium, which translates as the child from the bush [2]”. It is possible that the name of the monastery could derive from the surrounding flora, which is made up of „thick groups of shrubs (vatos = shrub, pedion = land, terrain)” [3].

Another tradition attributes the foundation of Vatopedi to emperors Contantine and Helena [4], long before Theodosius the Great. Around the beginning of the Xth century, the monastery was destroyed by pirates, and rebuilt in 972 by three founders: Athanasius, Antonius and Nicholas, disciples of Saint Athanasius the Athonite – founder of the first monastery on the Holy Mountain, the Great Lavra. „Opening up of their tombs in February 1992, proved true the one thousand long tradition regarding the founders tombs, through discovery of their pleasant-smelling saintly relics” [5]. In this monastery lived forty three saints which are known, notable among them being Saint Gregory Palamas, Saint Nicodim, Prince Rațco together with his father Stephen Nemanja (they later become monks under the names of Sava and Simeon, founding the Hilandar monastery), Sava the one crazy into Christ, Evdokim the Pious, Saint Maxim the Greek – the luminary of the Russians, Cosmas of Aetolia, the new pious Joachim from Vatopedi, that supported and helped the 1821 Revolution and many others. Not far from here, the Athos School was founded, in 1749, as a dependency of the Vatopedi monastery and with financial support from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, being erected on the peak of the north-eastern area of the monastery, where its imposing ruins still stand today.

2. Exonarthex decoration from monastery’s katholikon

The katholikon is in accord with the traditional Athonite type architecture. „In the Athonite type, the main church consists of the area marked out by the four arms of the cross, with the spaces contained in the angles of the arms and the large dome in the centre, and of the choir apses which protrude on each side. The dome is borne, as usual, on four pillars and is hemispherical with windows in the drum. The arms of the cross are roofed with semi cylindrical vaults, while the spaces in their angles are covered with hemispherical vaults, cross vaults or semi cylindrical vaults. The choir apses are semicircular on their inner side and have three or more outer sides; they are roofed with quarter-spheres. The central section of the sanctuary is formed by an extension of the East vault of the cross (borne on an additional pair of pillars or columns) and the central apse, which is semicircular on the inside and triangular on the outside, with a quarter-sphere roof. The lateral parts of the sanctuary are topped with small domes and their apses are semicircular inside and triangular outside, with quarter-spherical roofs. In some cases, domed peripheral rooms - called *typikaria* protrude from the two corners of the east wall and are roofed with domes. The spacious exonarthex has

a roof divided into a number of parts in various forms (domes, vaults, cross-vaults, etc.) borne on between two and eight pillars. To the side of the exonarthex are chapels (one or two in number), which as a rule are in the compressed cross-in-square chapel type; these communicate with the exonarthex but may also be entered from their western sides. Further to the west is the narthex itself (or in some cases the exonarthex), whose facade consists of open or blind arches and which is roofed with small drum less domes or cross vaults.” [6]

Within the monastery there are a number of important Byzantine and Post-Byzantine buildings. The main building, the katholikon, dates from the Xth century, with the feast dedicated to the *Annunciation* (Figure 1). Inside, the decoration contains an impressive marble pavement of an exceptional artistic quality and the interior of the church is paved with multi-coloured marble pieces, in ‘opus alexandrinum’, with the mosaics being dated in XIth and XIVth centuries and the frescoes from 1312, were traditionally attributed to Manuel Panselinos. Opus alexandrinum is a type of decorative pavement work widely used in Byzantium in the IXth century. It utilized tiny, geometrically shaped pieces of coloured stone and glass paste that were arranged in intricate geometric patterns dotted with large disks of semiprecious stones [1, vol. 1, 1176].

In March 1993, the first phase of cleaning and conservation of the frescoes from the katholikon and narthex was completed, revealing superb works of art realized by Panselinos atelier, one of the most famous in Thessaloniki. The church having the yearly feast celebrated on the 25th of March, Annunciation of the Lord day, was built at the beginning of XIth century, right after the construction of Great Lavra [7]. The Vatopedi church reflects the traditional Athos pattern: the two lateral enlarged apses forming the three apses or the triconc plan, with four columns sustaining the dome in the central part of the naos. The exonarthex portico, similar to a vestibule, dates from XVIth century, while the chapel on the left of the narthex, dedicated to Saint Demetrius was built in 1781; the right one is dedicated to Saint Nicholas and was erected in 1780.

Above the Saint Demetrius chapel lies the *Panagia Paramithia* (Holy Mother of Consolation), built in 1678. Above the narthex, on both sides of the stands (the place for catechumens), lies the chapel of Archangels and Holy Trinity.

The Vatopedi Church is the only church from Mount Athos that still conserves the original mosaic. The mosaics on the katholikon walls are in accordance with the artistic and spiritual renewal of the Palaiologos epoch [1, vol. 3, 1557] formulated in Constantinople, while the rest of the exonarthex painted decoration reveals the renewal that took place in Thessaloniki along with Panselinos School. Only four compositions are preserved: a first scene with the *Annunciation* within the naos and a second scene with the same theme within the exonarthex, Saint Nicholas, above the entrance in the chapel with the same denomination. The oldest scene from these cycles is the *Annunciation* from the

naos. This scene occupies the two registers belonging to the supporting columns from the east part of naos, on the shaft of the dome.



Figure 1. Mosaic depiction of the *Annunciation*.

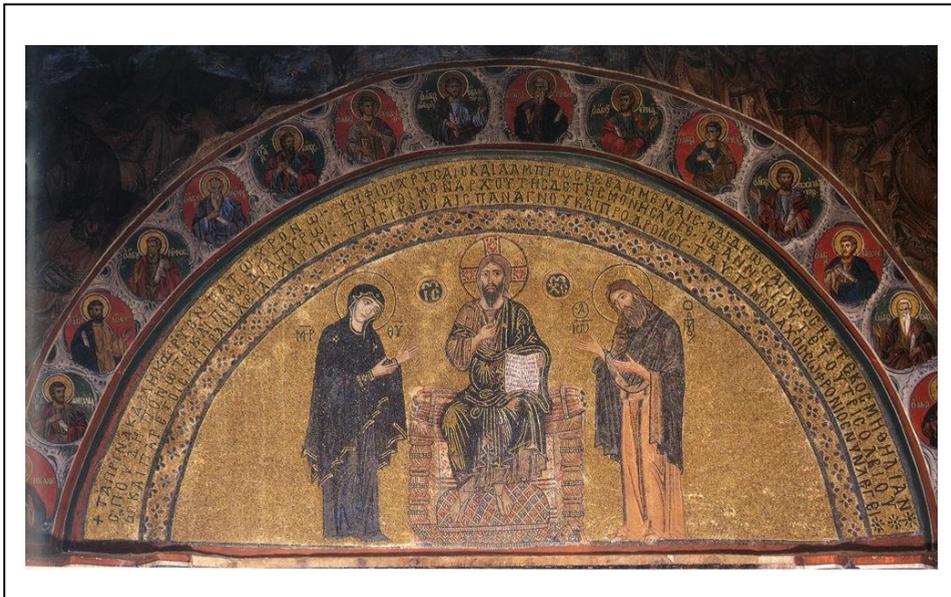


Figure 2. Above the entrance leading from the exonarthex to the narthex, in a semi-circular shallow lunette, is the scene of the *O Deisis*.

On the left side of the shaft lies the Archangel Gabriel and on the right Holy Mary. This work dates at the beginning of the XIth century and has a strongly archaic character, being very stylized; Holy Mary expresses through her gaze the restlessness caused by the received news.

On the other hand, in the *Annunciation* from the exonarthex (Figure 1), on the two registers placed at the left of Archangel Gabriel, while on the right of exonarthex entrance lies a more resigned Holy Mary in the face of divine will. The composition dates from the end of XIIIth century - beginning of XIVth century.

On a higher plan, in the tympanon above the door, the scene *O Desis* (Figure 2) is depicted. According to the traditional iconographic pattern, Emperor Christ sits on the throne in the middle of the composition, receiving the prayers of the two great intercessors: on the left, the Holy Mother Mary, representing the Church of the New Testament, on the right Saint John the Baptist, representing the Church of the Old Testament. The mosaic doesn't have the same strong and stylized style specific for the *Annunciation* composition from the naos, being more delicate and subtler in design. An inscription on the superior part of the composition indicates that it was executed at the request of father superior Ioanichios in the beginning of XIIth century.

The fourth mosaic is the bust of Saint Nicholas of Myra, placed on the tympanon above the door that leads to the vestibule of the saint's chapel. It is largely deteriorated and dates, probably, from the end of XIIIth century - beginning of XIVth century. In the exonarthex, the order of the iconographic pattern is set according to the perspective plan and begins with the north wall: the Passion of Christ in the superior registers beginning with: 1. The Last Supper; 2. Jesus washes Peter's feet; 3. Jesus explain the meaning of this act. The Passion scenes continue on the eastern wall with only two compositions, larger and grander in scale: 4. Jesus discovers the sleeping apostles; 5. Judas betrayal. These two scenes marks the next stage in the evangelical narrative of Christ Passion – the apostles helplessness in watching in his prayer from the Gethsemane garden, the kiss of Judas, when Jesus is caught and taken to the judgement before the high priests of the temple Annas and Caiaphas. On the southern wall the advance of the Passion continues with four more scenes: 6. the Flagellation; 7. Preparing of the Crucifixion; 8. Taking down from the Cross; 9. Mother of Mercy or funeral lamentation. The Passion scenes are interrupted on the western wall, due to the insufficient space above the tympanons windows on which there are depicted the messianic prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zachariah, interpolated, from time to time, in the tympanons windows by the Saint Doctors like Cosmas and Damian, Pantaleon and Ermolae.

The artistic and spiritual renaissance of the Palaiologos period (1261-1453) provided the Holy Mountain with mural paintings that hold a great importance in the history of art. Most important monasteries wanted to decorate the churches interior and employed the best and most famous painters of the time, having the centre in Thessaloniki, subsequently spreading their artistic activity in the whole region of Macedonia and medieval Serbia.

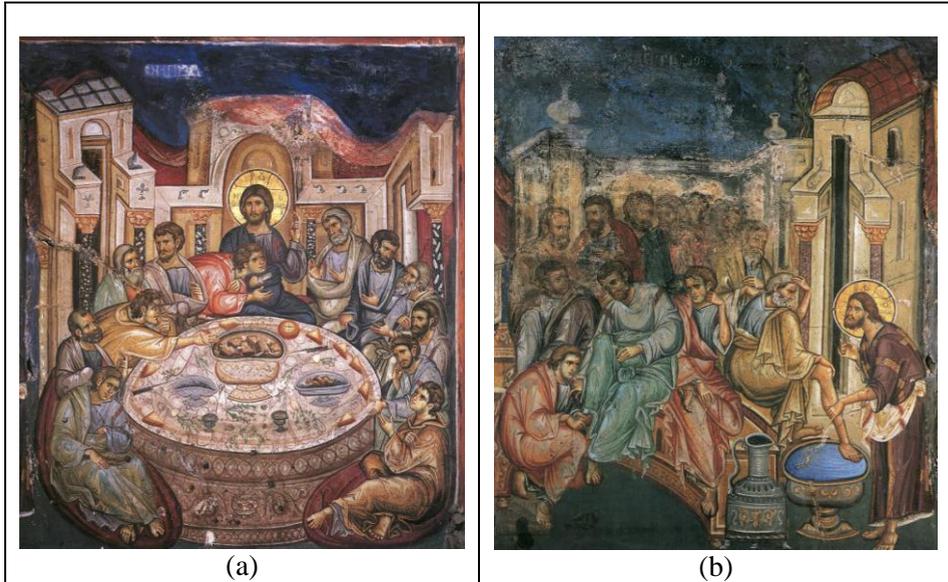


Figure 3. (a) Lord's Supper and (b) the Washing of the Disciples' Feet frescoes on the north wall of the exonarthex.

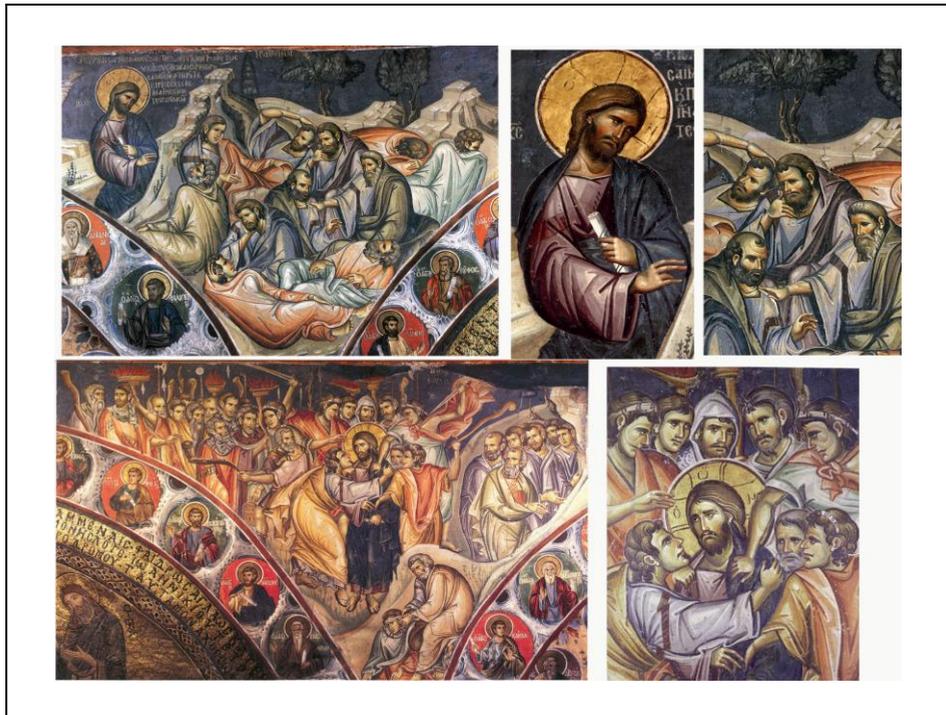


Figure 4. On the eastern wall on both sides of Mosaic with *Deisis* there are two large compositions - *Prayer on the Mount of Olives* and *the Betrayal by Judas*.

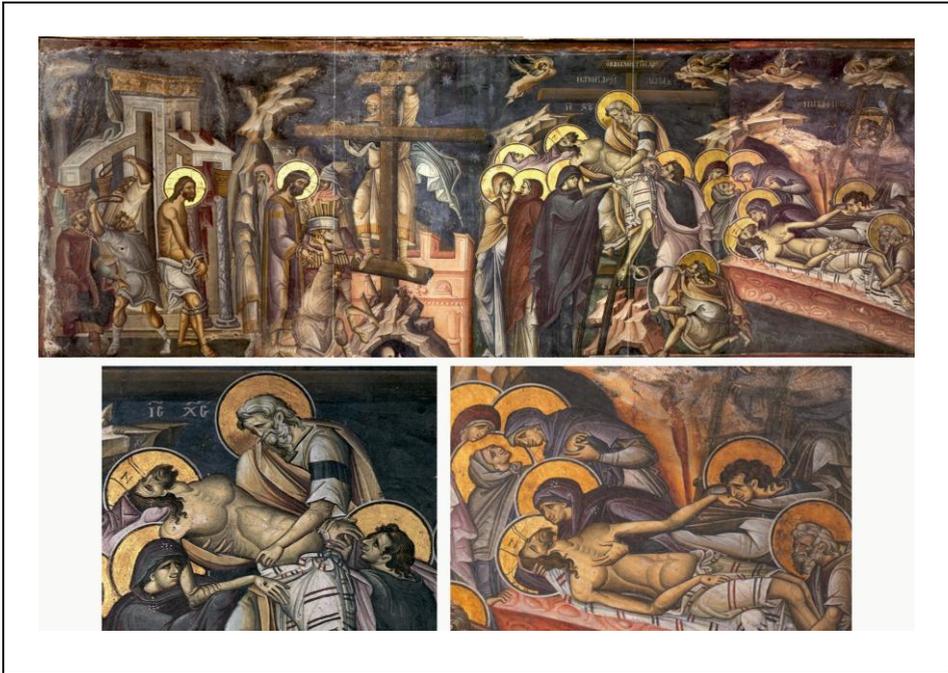


Figure 5. Four passions scenes on the south wall: Scourging of Christ, the preparations for the Crucifixion, the Deposition from the Cross, and the Lamentation at the Tomb.

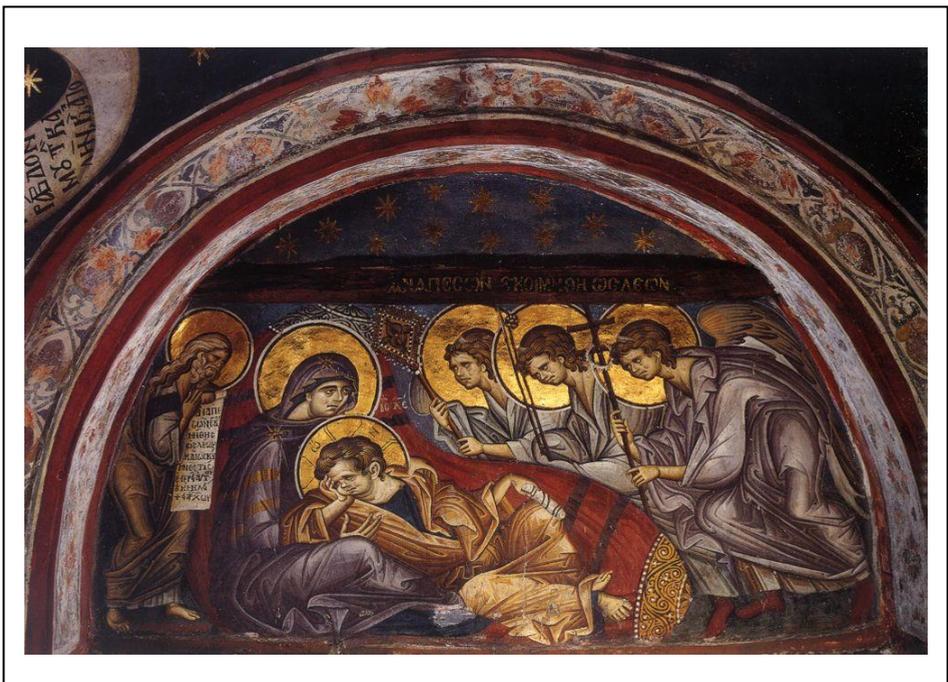


Figure 6. Christ Reclining (*Anapeson*) - on the west wall, on the lunette of the entrance to the exonarthex.

The main works of art from this period at the Holy Mountain are the mural paintings from the Vatopedi Monastery katholikon, dating from 1312, according to an inscription from 1819 that survived in the exonarthex and together with more recent decorations date from XVII-XIX centuries. The first part of the inscription reads: „the actual saint church was painted during the reign of the greatest Orthodox king, Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos and with the contribution of Chir Arseni, the monk in 1312”. This text reproduces the lost original inscription, that was positioned in the katholikon already during the reign of Andronikos the Second Palaiologos.

The inscription has a great significance, as it offers us the year when one of the most notable frescoes of the Palaiologos Renaissance surviving until today was executed. These frescoes illustrates the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ and are placed in the superior part of the exonarthex. Christ cycle of life contains fourteen scenes that unfolds in a continuous narrative on the surface of the walls from the exonarthex.

These mural paintings survived without being repainted, without interventions that took place in the naos and co-exist in the same space with mural paintings from 1819, realized by an artist called Veniamin and his apprentices from Galatista in Halkidiki. This cycle of passion is completed by the bust or complete figures of prophets and saints, painted on the western wall.

On the northern wall The Last Supper, The Washing of the Feet and Christ explaining the meaning of washing the feet of apostles (Figure 3). On the eastern wall three episodes are represented: Christ prayer on the Mount of Olives, Judas Betrayal, Christ is taken to the Praetorium (Figure 4). On the southern wall (Figure 5), where scenes with the Passion and Resurrection of Christ continue to unfold, three area are placed as follows: in the upper part, through a continuous narrative the Flagellation of Christ, Preparing for Crucifixion, Taking down from the Cross, Funeral Lamentation are represented, with the omission of the scene depicting the Crucifixion itself. In the middle section of the southern wall the Tombstone and descending into Hell scenes are separately presented; in the lower part two scenes that narrate the Showing of Jesus to apostles after Resurrection, the ‘Pace vobiscum’ and Thomas Doubt. On the western wall, on the tympanon above the exonarthex entrance, a ‘Reclined Jesus’ (Anapeson) (Figure 6) presented in an original iconographical pattern is depicted, with the specific aim to underline and enhance the symbolism of the Passion and sacrifice on the Cross of the one that is the embodied Word of God. Christ is represented at an early age, sleeping with its eyes half-open, held in her arms by the Holy Mother, sitting down on a diagonally placed robe. Near Him, three angels bow to Him with the Passion symbols, while in the left side of the scene, Jacob, the patriarch, is holding a rotulus reading: „He laid like a Lion, Who will wake Him up?” (Facts 49.9)

On the tympanons and arches formed in the openings of the walls, busts and whole figures of Prophets and Saints are placed. The prophets that are depicted standing, such as Ezekiel, Zachariah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Isaiah, as it

is obvious from the filacteria they hold, are connected to the central scene of the Anapason.

On the walls of exonarthex, there are also scenes of Passion. Efthymios N. Tsigaridas, in his study regarding the interior frescoes of the exonarthex states that this complex is clearly the work of two artists, which display completely different artistic personalities, and yet collaborated in conceiving a unified iconographical program. „The first artist, that painted the individual saints on the western wall – starting with the scene of Christ taken to the Praetorium and ends with Thomas Doubt – uses either elongated and graceful proportions of the characters, either short with small heads, these being depicted in counterpoint or with a strong contortion of their body. Their elongated faces are supported by thin, distorted and expressive necks. It is also worth noting the sculptural feeling in expressing the bodily structure, due to the sculptural usage of attire, which seem moulded. When painting the attire, the artist uses fluid and bright surfaces and through progressive tones of the same colour, he achieves the effect of thin material that seems to flow and hangs onto the body, conveying its structure in relief. This artist, whom we are going to conventionally refer to as the ‘painter of the Taking down from the Cross’, expresses in the highest order and in an unique manner in the Byzantine Art, a sensation of realism and drama, in his use of facial expressions, gestures, body movements, and manages to construct both the tragic character of Christ Passion and its human dimensions. Therefore, the realism in expressing the age and pain on the face of Holy Mother and the other women from the scene of Taking down from the Cross and the scene of Funeral Lamentation at the Tomb, the truth in representing the contorted facial expressions of John and John from Arimatea, as well as the imprint of death on the deadly deformation on the face of dead Christ, is transmitted for the first time in a manner so obvious and dramatic in the paintings from the Palaiologos period, and even more generally, in the whole Byzantine Art.” [8]

This unknown artist, through the character of its expressionist painting, which is a bit unusual in Byzantine Art, also contributed to the decoration of the main part of the naos. Not only the individual figures of Saints, but also the scenes such as *The Assumption of Virgin Mary*, *Washing of the Feet*, *The Last Supper*, etc. are also attributed to him.

„The second artist, conventionally named as ‘the painter of the Prayer on Mount of Olives’, and, as we discovered, wasn’t part of the decoration of the main part of the church, is the author of the scenes such as *The Last supper*, *Washing of the Feet*, *The Prayer on Mount of Olives* and *Judas Betrayal*. His paintings present iconographical similitudes and stylistic relation with the paintings from the Protaton of Kareya, from Mount Athos. This relation is to be observed not only in the manner in which he constructs its narrative on the chosen themes, but also in the iconographical scenario of the scenes, in the serenity and the monumental character of the works, where calm and care are rhythmically integrated.” [8]

The faces painted by this artist, although part of an unified whole, retain a sense of autonomy in their composition, suggesting that they had been 'frozen' in their attitudes for eternity. Also, in contrast with the expressionist character of the artist of the *Taking down from the Cross*, the above mentioned artist is remarkable for the discrete, spiritual expression of the faces that are serene and peaceful, without tension even in the violent scenes, such as Judas Betrayal. Furthermore, the stylistic relation between the painter of Prayer on Mount of Olives and the painter from Protaton, identified by tradition with the legendary artist from Thessaloniki, Panselinos, can be observed in the common physiognomic typology, with elongated faces and robust necks, with the same quality of expression, as we can see if we compare with the group of Christ and John from *The Last Supper*. The characters from Protaton church are short and robust, but strong, with a monumental 'breathing' of bodily volume, which is sculpturally constructed.

The similitudes with the clothing attire from Protaton Church are obvious. These are painted in wide and successive registers, with bright reflections, that convey the feeling of body volume, which often holds a sculptural quality, as we can see in the *Prayer on Mount of Olives* but also in the depiction of Christ explaining the meaning of *Washing of the Feet*. The faces are expressed with large areas of bright carnation, obtained with tones of bright ochre, in which the redness emphasizes the cheeks volume, offering a warm tone. The bright tones on the faces, obtained with open accents and lines, sometimes even with pure white, are remarkable through their plasticity, but also through effect of serenity and peace offered to the face, respectively their deep spiritual expression. All these elements are representative for Panselinos art from the Church from Protaton. The mountainous landscape from the frescoes belonging to the painter of *Prayer on Mount of Olives* is compact and minimalistic and unfolds on breadth, in accordance to the spirit of the reliefs from *Protaton Church* and from the *Virgin Mary Peribleptos* from Achris, and contrary to the reliefs painted by the painter of the *Taking down from the Cross*, which is developed on height and peaks on levels, in the spirit of the paintings from the second decade of the XIVth century. A special characteristic of this painter's technique is the use of white contour around the body and face, in order to detach the figure from the flat background of the wall and underline its individuality in the composition. This method can be seen also at *Protaton Church* (cca. 1290), at *Peribleptos Church* from Orhidra (1295), and became compulsory for the first time during Palaiologos period in the monumental painting of the exonarthex belonging to the Vatopedi katholikon. Moreover, in the case of the faces of the servants from Judas Betrayal, a white line is used for the face contour, which leads to breaking the unity of colour background. This method, that offers more volume, seems to have been known in the painting from *Virgin Mary Peribleptos* from Orhidra, and its use at Protaton becomes possible. On the bases of those mentioned earlier, we conjure that in the exonarthex from Vatopedi Monastery katholikon, the paintings that we attributed to the painter that realized the *Prayer on Mount of Olives*, belongs, through the technique and the quality of expression to the

school of the painter from Protaton, identified by tradition as „Kyr Manuel Panselinos, that in Thessaloniki shone like a light” [9]. Other differences that we can observe between the two decorations (from Vatopedi and Protaton) can be explained through the distance in time of twenty years, as other similar differences can be observe between the same artist and its own school in the works of Panselinos contemporaries from Thessaloniki, Mihail Astrapas and Eutich. The discovery of the Vatopedi katholikon's decoration is, without a doubt, the greatest discovery of decades of painting from the Byzantine world, therefore it represents a work of art with unique artistic and iconographical interest, dated with precision in 1312.

The decoration of the nave and exonarthex are clearly contemporary, fact confirmed by the unity of their iconographical program's unity, as well by the fact that the same painter of the *Taking down from the Cross* worked both to the naos and exonarthex. The dating in 1312, given by the inscription from 1819, cannot be contested. According to the comparison we made shows a direct relation between Vatopedi decoration and monumental compositions from the end of XIIIth century from Protaton and the first two decades of the XIVth century (Prizren-Zica). It is clear that in spite of numerous repaintings, at least three artists, with their disciples, worked at the naos. The first artist painted, probably the hierarchies from the altar and innernathex; he must have been more conservative, as the artistic manner and the physiognomic figures are related, as we saw in the painting from Protaton (cca. 1290) and, especially by the *Virgin Mary Perobleptos* from (1295). The second artist realized the Christology Cycle from the upper registers of the decorations, but also many saints, is rather eclectic in its painting. From our comparisons clear points of contact with the paintings from *Protaton*, *Prizren* (1307-1313), *Zica* (1309-1316), and *Staro Nagoricino* (1316-1318), which he appropriated in its own, artistic style, are obvious. The third painter working at the naos, whose scenes are placed in the lower register of the decoration, such as *The Assumption of Holy Mary*, *The Last Supper*, *Washing of the Feet*, *The three young men in the fire oven* but also the individual faces of saints, has a more unified style, marked by the expressions realism, deformed faces and the energetic movement in space; this artist also worked at the exonarthex decoration.

The exonarthex decoration concludes with the depiction of *John Climax Ladder* (Figure 7), on one side of the northern and eastern wall. The symbolical scene of John's Ladder, inspired by the biblical account of Jacob's Ladder (Facts 28.10), represents a quintessential iconographic subject for monasteries churches. The depiction of the Ladder at Vatopedi holds a special interests, as it retells an original subject, with unique elements in the iconography of this scene. The originality lies in the fact that a demon, represented in the left and approximately in the middle of John's Ladder (Figure 8), leads a monk to a noblemen's banquet, which is represented immediately in the left, the composition taking as much space as the depiction of Virtues Ladder. Tsigaridas states that „the subject of the banquet is a reminiscence of the parable of the royal wedding from Manasija, in medieval Serbia (1406-1418).

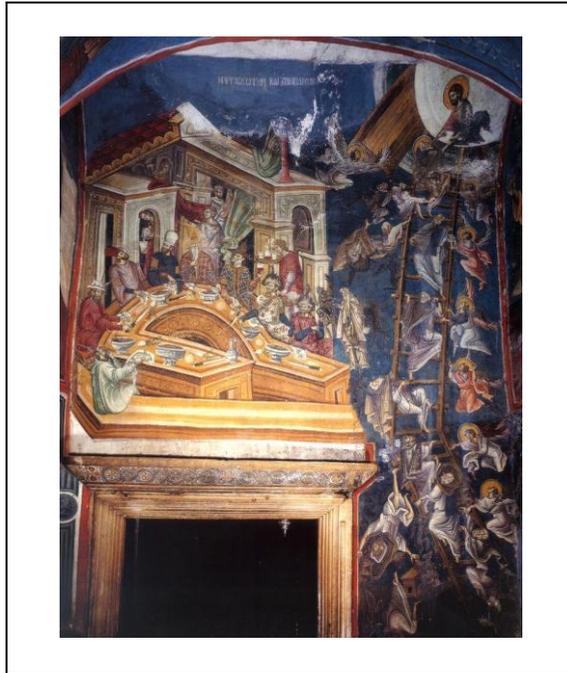


Figure 7. Depiction of the *Ladder of Saint John Climacus* on the north and part of the eastern wall.

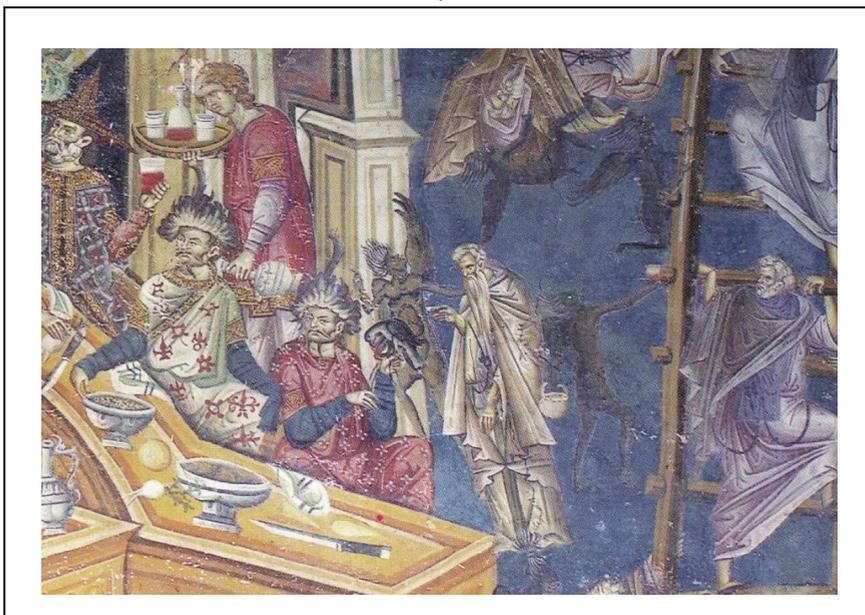


Figure 8. *Ladder of Saint John Climacus*, detail of the original moment when a monk is tempted by the devil to join the heavenly banquet table.

This theme was later reused, being present in the northern apse of the naos at the church of monastery from Manasija (Resava). Still, the association of the two scenes was made also by Saint John Climax in many passages of his speeches, which probably were the starting point in the elaboration of the described composition.” [<http://www.pemptousia.com/2011/10/the-wall-paintings-of-the-exonarthex-the-wall-paintings-of-the-katholikon/>]

The 1312 exonarthex decoration is completed by the depiction of feet and busts of some of the most famous monarchs and military saints as Sava, Antonius, Eftimios the Iberian, Artemius, Areta, Dimitrios, George, etc. and extended in the pronaos of Saint Dimitrios Chapel, which are not visible anymore, due to repaintings.

2. Conclusions

The Passion scenes from Vatopedi exonarthex are presented as a continuous narrative, without any of the usual dividing strips between themes; the result is that the characters from composition join the groups with the nearby theme. This method was adopted in a limited manner, in the earlier monumental compositions from Vatopedi katholikon, as in the example of *Protaton church* (c. 1290), *Peribleptos from Orhidra* (1295), in the *Saint Eftimios Chapel* (1303), and in Saint Dimitrios from Thessaloniki. Here, for the first time in the monumental painting from Palaiologos period, when the Passion cycle achieves such proportions, when these themes built an ample story, in one monumental composition, unfolded on three walls of the exonarthex. In the same time, the artist integrates the theme of Christ Passion in the other compositions of the iconographical program of the exonarthex, with a natural connections between themes and a theological unity, realized through emphasizing the Christ suffering on the Cross, for the redemption of mankind. It is, therefore, realized in the spirit of harmony between the Old and the New Testament, this being the principle that organizes the iconographical program on the exonarthex surfaces. In the middle of these representations sits *Christ Anapeson*, the foreshadowing of the Passion and Resurrection, with the prophets whose texts on papyrus is carried from one side to the other, while in the rest of the exonarthex a continuous narrative presents the Passion and Resurrection in accordance to the readings from Gospels instituted by liturgical order in Sacred Thursday and Sacred Friday. The mural paintings from exonarthex were realized, as we showed, by two artists and their disciples, who collaborated, despite their different artistic personality, bringing to life unique compositions, with narrative character in Palaiologos period. In these compositions, the painter of the *Taking down from the Cross* is different through his anti-classical character of its paintings and explosive realism expressed through expression of human emotions at a level never before matched in the Byzantine painting. In contrast, the painter of the *Prayer on Mount of Olives* is to be noted through its calm character, monumental compositions, profound spiritual expression.

Despite the fact that the two artists collaborated in the same time at the exonarthex decoration of the Vatopedi Monastery katholikon, they seem to be of different generation. The latter belongs to the 1290 generation of artists, authors of monumental compositions at the church of *Holy Mother Peribleptos* from Achris (1293) and from *Protaton church* from Mount Athos (around 1290), whose art and expressive manner developed even further and created an amazing classical group. On the other hand, the first painter can be placed among artistic generations from the second decade of XIVth century, which are special for their dramatic expression of Christ Passion and human pain. To them also belongs the mosaics from the church of Saint Apostles from Thessaloniki (1312-1315), the frescoes of church *Saint Nicholas Orafonos* also from Thessaloniki (1310-1320), *Christ Savior* from Verria (1315), the painting of the katholikon of *Hilandar Monastery* from Mount Athos (1318-1320), *Saint George* from Staro Nagoricino in medieval Serbia (1316-1318).

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