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**ВИЗАНТИЙСКО
И ПОСТВИЗАНТИЙСКО ИЗКУСТВО:
ПРЕСИЧАНЕ НА ГРАНИЦИ**



**BYZANTINE
AND POST-BYZANTINE ART:
CROSSING BORDERS**

ART READINGS

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Съставители

**Емануел Мутафов
Ида Тот**

Edited by

**Emmanuel Moutafov
Ida Toth**

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Painters of Western Training Working for Orthodox Patrons – Remarks on the Evidence of Late-medieval Transylvania (14th–15th Century)

*Dragoş Gh. Năstăsoiu*¹

*Central European University,
Budapest, Hungary*

Abstract. The article deals with the question of medieval painters trained in the West, who decorated murals in Eastern-rite churches and who received their commissions from Orthodox patrons. It focuses on two case studies – the mural decoration of the sanctuaries of the Orthodox churches in Strei (first half of the 14th century) and Hălmaşiu (late-14th – early-15th century) – coming from the Voivodate of Transylvania and the Kingdom of Hungary, respectively, regions where Orthodox Romanians lived alongside Catholics but under the Latin rule of the latter. Such context led to the emergence of frequent phenomena of hybridization in the sphere of religious art.

Key words: church decoration, religious iconography, Byzantine painting, Catholic painting, artistic hybridity, patronage.

The southern area of the Voivodate of Transylvania and the south-western counties of the Kingdom of Hungary, respectively, represented during the Middle Ages regions where several ethnic and confessional groups coexisted², each of them bringing into play

1 Dragoş Gh. Năstăsoiu is a PhD Candidate in Medieval Studies at Central European University, Budapest. He is an Art Historian working on the religious art of medieval Hungary with particular emphasis on Transylvania. His research interests include: church iconography and the cult of saints in medieval Central Europe and the Balkans; the phenomena of artistic hybridity in cultural contact zones (e.g., medieval Transylvania, Cyprus, Crete, etc.).

2 Pop, Ioan-Aurel. The Ethno-confessional Structure of Medieval Transylvania and Hungary

their own cultural and religious traditions. Under the Hungarians' Latin rule, Orthodox Romanians³ lived together with Catholic Hungarians, Szeklers, and Saxons, creating a long-lasting *conviventia* which generated many cultural contacts with the 'other'. These frequent encounters have left meaningful traces in the religious art of both confessional groups.

Orthodox patrons had a complex relationship with Western art, often commissioning builders who were active on nearby Catholic sites. These masters created religious edifices with prevailing Western appearance for their patrons, but which, in fact, served the Orthodox rite. Accordingly, the churches of Orthodox Romanians in 14th- and 15th-century Transylvania often have rectangular sanctuaries separated from the nave by built iconostases; their architectural structures are dominated by tall western towers, and their windows and portals are decorated with Gothic stonework⁴. Most of the time, Orthodox patrons entrusted the mural decoration of their rural churches to painters of Byzantine tradition who – as their work attests – unevenly mastered their craft. Regardless of their abilities, these painters' diverse skills and techniques were acquired somewhere within the Eastern/Orthodox world. Given their peripheral position in relation to the center(s) of Byzantine art and their integration into a Latin state, these painters also proved to be highly receptive to themes and motifs typical for Western/Catholic iconography⁵.

(9th–14th Centuries). – Bulletin of the Center for Transylvanian Studies, 1994, No. 4, 1-48; Pop, Ioan-Aurel. Nations and Denominations in Transylvania (13th–16th Century). In: Csaba Lévai, Vasile Vese (eds.). Tolerance and Intolerance in Historical Perspective. Proceedings of a Conference Held in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, and Debrecen, Hungary, September 2003. Pisa, 2003, 111-123.

3 This conventional term designates the Romance-speaking people living in medieval Transylvania, and it does not refer to present-day Romanian national identity. There are no self-referential sources of this people, to whom others referred to as "Vlachs". On Romanian cultural specificity during the Middle Ages, see: Panaitescu, P. P. Perioada slavonă la români și ruperea de cultura Aposului. In: Silvia Panaitescu (ed.). Interpretări românești. Studii de istorie economică și socială. Bucharest, 1971, 28-49; Pop, Ioan-Aurel, The Romanians as a Border People during the Middle Ages. Between Slavonianism and Latinity. – Eurolimes, 2008, No. 5, 21-27.

4 Greceanu, Eugenia. Influența gotică în arhitectura bisericilor românești de zid din Transilvania. – Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Seria Artă Plastică, 1971, No. 1, 33-59; Popa, Radu. La începuturile evului mediu românesc. Țara Hațegului. Bucharest, 1988, 225-247; Rusu, Adrian Andrei and Pascu Hurezan, George. Biserici medievale din județul Arad. Arad, 2001, 36-53.

5 For overviews of Orthodox mural painting in late-medieval Transylvania, see: Drăguț, Vasile. Pictura murală din Transilvania (sec. XIV–XV). Bucharest, 1970; Drăguț, Vasile (ed.). Pagini de veche artă românească. Repertoriul picturilor murale medievale din România (sec. XIV–1450) V/1. Bucharest, 1985 (henceforth: *Drăguț*, Repertoriul); Popa, Corina. La peinture murale orthodoxe en Transylvanie au XIV^e siècle et ses relations avec le monde serbe. – Revue Roumaine d'His-

Given the multicultural and bi-confessional situation of Transylvania and Hungary during the Late Middle Ages, it is not surprising that borders – understood both artistically and confessionally – were often easily crossed in the field of religious art. Subsequently, one can find a significant number of cases where Western painters worked for Orthodox patrons or, vice versa, painters of Byzantine tradition working for Catholic commissioners. In the text that follows, I shall briefly discuss two instances of this paradigm, emphasizing the most striking cases of artistic hybridity. A comprehensive analysis, as well as a discussion of the latter model will be the subject of another paper.

The church in Strei (Hunyad County), built sometime after 1300 and serving the local Orthodox community, was probably dedicated to St Nicholas and decorated with frescoes sometime during the first half of the 14th century by a workshop that employed several painters⁶. Judging by their linear-narrative manner, all of them received their training in a Western milieu, where they acquired formal features specific for a provincial, early-Gothic style unevenly mixing elements of Romanesque-Gothic, Italian *Trecento*, and even Byzantine style. In an attempt to adapt their modest skill and knowledge to the requirements of their Orthodox commissioners, this eclectic workshop created a hybrid iconographic programme, which combined Western and Byzantine themes and motifs⁷. However, to a great extent the painters retained the iconographic layout specific to Catholic sanctuaries, which seemingly did not pose a great challenge to be understood by their Orthodox patrons (**Fig. 1**).

The painters represented Christ in Glory (*Maiestas Domini*) in a mandorla supported by two angels on the eastern webbing of the quadripartite rib vault. The same depiction could usually be found in

toire de l'Art. Série Beaux-Arts, No. 33, 1996, 3-19; *Porumb*, Marius. Dicționar de pictură veche românească din Transilvania sec. XIII–XVIII. Bucharest, 1998.

6 For the secondary literature on this monument, see: *Porumb*. Dicționar de pictură, 385. The most comprehensive study on the church's murals is: *Popescu*, Maria Irina, *Tugearu*, Liana. Biserica ortodoxă din satul Strei (Călan, jud. Hunedoara). In: *Drăguș*. Repertoriul, 234-283. For a critical treatment of previous literature, see: *Burnichioiu*, Ileana. Biserici parohiale și capele din comitatele Alba și Hunedoara (1200–1550). PhD diss., Universitatea Națională de Arte București, Bucharest, 2009, 319-324.

7 *Prioteasa*, Elena Dana. Western and Eastern Themes in the Iconography of the Sanctuary of the Church of Strei (Hunedoara County, Romania). – Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU, No. 9, 2003, 181-196.



Fig. 1. Interior view of the sanctuary, Orthodox church in Strei

a similar position in Catholic churches across medieval Hungary⁸, but it was in fact an iconographic solution occurring predominant-

⁸ *Drăguț, Vasile. Iconografia picturilor murale gotice din Transilvania (Considerații generale și repertoriu pe teme). In: Pagini de veche artă românească. Bucharest, 1972, Vol. 2, 13-17; Dvořáková, Vlasta, Krása, Josef, and Stejskal, Karel (eds.). Stredoveká nástenná mal'ba na Slovensku. Bratislava, 1978, 15-7.*

ly in Transylvania's Orthodox churches⁹. The customary image of the Virgin with the Child in the sanctuary's conch¹⁰ was sometimes replaced by that of the *Pantokrator* in Byzantine churches without a dome¹¹, or in religious edifices built in the eastern periphery of Byzantium (e.g., Cappadocia or Georgia¹²). In Transylvania, however, the *Pantokrator* type, occurring only in Densuş, was usually dropped in favor of the types of *Maiestas Domini* or Christ in Glory¹³. In Strei, medallions with busts of Old Testament Prophets are portrayed on the intrados of the triumphal arch, whereas standing figures of apostles are shown conversing and holding each of their own attributes on the side walls. Both types of depictions are encountered in the sanctuary of many Hungarian Catholic churches, displaying similar iconographic arrangements and compositional devices¹⁴.

Following most likely their Orthodox commissioners' request, the Western painters in Strei depicted holy bishops in the sanctuary's lowermost register (Fig. 1-4), as was customary in the altar space of Byzantine churches¹⁵. Five out of six figures of holy bishops are identified by inscriptions in Old Church Slavonic which give their names and are placed next to their heads: St Callinicus (of Constantinople), St John (Chrysostom), St Cyril (of Alexandria or Jerusalem), St Peter

9 Streisângeorgiu (1313–1314), Densuş (before 1443), Hălmaşiu, and probably Ribiţa. *Bratu, Anca*. Biserica ortodoxă Sf. Gheorghe din satul Streisângeorgiu (Călan, jud. Hunedoara). In: *Drăguţ*. Repertoriul, 283–300; *Cincheza-Buculei*, Ecaterina. Le programme iconographique des absides des églises à Riu de Mori et Densuş. – *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art. Série Beaux-Arts*, No. 13, 1976, 81–103. The iconography of the latter two sanctuaries is discussed below.

10 *Parani*, Maria G. Reconstructing the Reality of Images. Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries). Leiden, 2003, 194–195.

11 *Skavran*, Karin M. The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting in Greece. Pretoria, 1982, 54; Kalopissi-Verti, Sophia. Osservazioni iconografiche sulla pittura monumentale della Grecia durante il XIII secolo. In: Raffaella Farioli Campanati (ed.). Seminario Internazionale di studi su "La Grecia paleocristiana e bizantina": Ravenna, 7 – 14 aprile 1984. Ravenna, 1984, 199–200.

12 Byzantine periphery: *Velmans*, Tania, *Korać*, Vojislav, and *Šuput*, Marica (eds.). Rayonnement de Byzance. Paris, 1999, 43–92. Cappadocia: *Jolivet-Lévy*, Catherine. Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords. Paris, 1991, 337–340. Georgia: *Velmans*, Tania. L'image de la Déisis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans celles d'autres régions du monde byzantin. – *Cahiers archéologiques*, No. 29, 1980–1981, 47–102.

13 *Cincheza-Buculei*, Ecaterina. Din nou despre pictura bisericii Sf. Nicolae din Densuş. – *Ars Transsilvaniae*, No. 19, 2009, 90.

14 *Drăguţ*. Iconografia picturilor, 15–17, 63, 80.

15 *Walter*, Christopher. La place des évêques dans le décor des absides byzantines. – *Revue de l'Art*, No. 24, 1974, 81–89; *Gerstel*, Sharon E. J. Beholding the Sacred Mysteries. Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary. Seattle, 1999, 15–36.

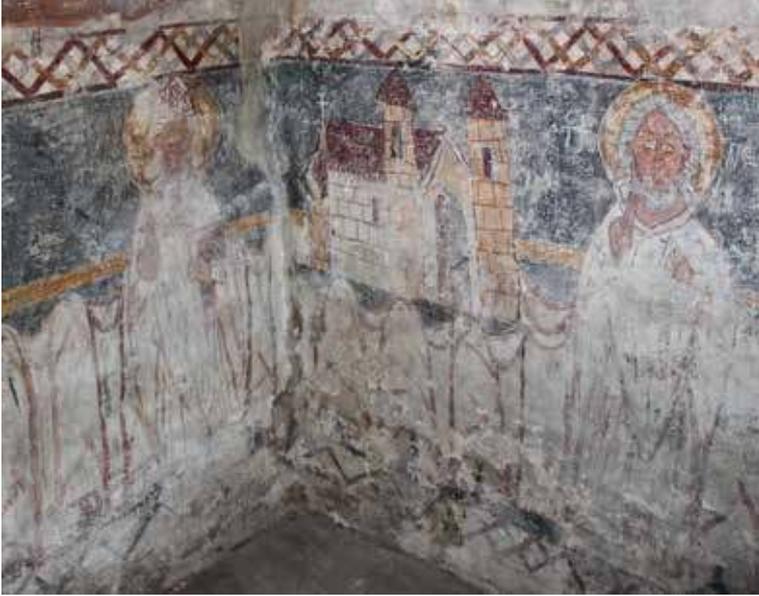


Fig. 2. Sts Cyril and Peter flanking the model of a Romanesque church, lower register of the eastern and southern walls of the sanctuary, Orthodox church in Strei.



Fig. 3. Sts John and Cyril flanking the Man of Sorrows, lower register of the eastern wall of the sanctuary, Orthodox church in Strei



Fig. 4. Model of Romanesque church, St Nicholas, and supplicant Grozie, lower register of the southern wall of the sanctuary, Orthodox church in Strei

(of Alexandria), and St Nicholas¹⁶. However, the Church Fathers are dressed in Latin episcopal vestments composed of albs and chasubles decorated with Latin crosses; some of them wear mitres and hold either closed or open books (**Fig. 2-4**). Four of them stand on the side walls next to the models of Romanesque churches with two western towers, whereas the remaining two flank the symbolic depiction of the Man of Sorrows depicted in the sanctuary's axis (i.e., below the eastern window and above the former altar table). The symbolic image of the *Melismos* typical of Byzantine sanctuaries¹⁷ was most likely unknown to these Western-trained painters, who replaced it with another depiction endowed with strong Eucharistic meaning, namely, the Man of Sorrows (**Fig. 3**). The Eucharistic component of this representation prevailed in the Latin West ever since the transfer of this iconography from Byzantium to the West¹⁸. This is most likely the reason why the Western-trained painters in Strei, unfamiliar with the Byzantine depiction of the *Melismos* (i.e., the symbolic image of the Transubstantiation occurring during the Liturgy and representing the sacrificed Christ as a naked baby on the altar or on a bowl-shaped paten), resorted to their own (Catholic) iconography of the Eucharist (i.e., the Man of Sorrows). Subsequently, having been requested by their Orthodox patrons to represent in the axis of the sanctuary a symbolic image of the Transubstantiation, the Western-trained painters in Strei came up with a literal version of it, namely, the depiction of a sacrificed, wounded Christ placed actually above the medieval altar table of the sanctuary (now vanished¹⁹).

16 For the holy bishops' identifying inscriptions, see: *Popescu, Tugearu*. Biserica ortodoxă, 268-270.

17 *Konstantinidi*, Chara. Ο Μελισμός. Thessaloniki, 2008; *Walter*. Place des évêques, 85; *Gerstel*. Beholding the Sacred, 37-47.

18 Byzantium: *Belting*, Hans. An Image and Its Function in the Liturgy: The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium. – *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 34, No. 5, 1980–1981, 1-16; *Simić-Lazar*, Draginja. Sur le thème de Christ de Pitié en Serbie à la fin du moyen âge et dans les Balkans à l'époque post-byzantine. In: A. Paliouras (ed.). Μίλτος Γαριδης (1926–1996): Αφιέρωμα. Vol. 2. Ioannina, 2003, 689-728. In Byzantine art, the representation of the Man of Sorrows occurs sometimes as decoration for the prothesis niche, i.e., on the altar's northern side. West: *Panofsky*, Erwin. *Imago Pietatis*: Ein Beitrag zur Typengeschichte des *Schmerzensmanns* und der *Maria Mediatrix*. In: Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag. Leipzig, 1927, 261-308; *Bertelli*, Carlo. *The Image of Pity in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme*. In: Douglas Fraser, Howard Hibbard, Milton J. Lewine (eds.). *Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*. London, 1967, 40-55. For the Eucharistic variant of the *Vir dolorum*, see *Sallay*, Dóra. The Eucharistic Man of Sorrows in Late Medieval Art. – *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, No. 6, 2000, 45-80.

19 The white, trapezoidal area without paint below the image of the Man of Sorrows marks the place where the medieval altar table was originally attached to the wall.



Fig. 5. Interior view of the triumphal arch and sanctuary, St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Hălmagiu

Equally peculiar is the integration of the lay supplicant Grozie into the sanctuary's register of Church Fathers (Fig. 4). He is dressed according to the Western fashion, makes a prayer gesture typical for the Catholics (i.e., hands joined in front of his chest), and stands next to St Nicholas. The supplicant together with the holy bishop, who is depicted in the proximity of one of the four idealized church models, recalls remotely the iconographic layout of Byzantine votive compositions. This was probably another result of the Western painters' attempt at adjusting their existing patterns to new Orthodox circumstances, even though the inclusion of laymen in the register of the Church Fathers and, moreover, in a size comparable to that of the holy bishops would have hardly been possible in the most sacred space of Byzantine sanctuaries²⁰.

20 For the recent discussion on the image, see *Năstăsoiu*, Dragoș Gh. The Social Status of Romanian Orthodox Noblemen According to Donor Portraits and Church Inscriptions. In: Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, Alexandru Madgearu (eds.). *Études Byzantines et Post-Byzantines*. Bucharest and



Fig. 6. Old Testament Prophets flanking the Lamb of God and Christ in Glory, vault of the sanctuary, St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Hălmagiu

The decoration of the sanctuary and triumphal arch of St Nicholas Church in Hălmagiu (Zaránd County) was commissioned by *ju-pan* Moga and his brother from a workshop, which seems to have been trained in a Central-European artistic milieu²¹ (**Fig. 5**). Its provincial, late-Gothic manner deriving from the so-called “School of Friul” has close parallels with the murals of a significant number of Hungarian Catholic churches, which were painted at the turn of the 14th and 15th century²². The iconographic program of the sanctuary

Brăila, vol. 7, 2016, 223-227.

21 For the monument’s literature, see: *Porumb*, Dicționar de pictură, 185. The most comprehensive study on the murals is: *Cincheza-Buculei*, Ecaterina. L’ensemble de peinture murale de Hălmagiu (XV^e siècle). Iconographie et fondateurs. – Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes, No. 1, 1984, 3-25. For historical data on the settlement’s noble owners, see: *Rusu and Hurezan*, Biserici medievale, 97-105.

22 Stylistic analogies in *Prioteasa*, Elena Dana. Medieval Wall Paintings in Transylvanian Orthodox Churches and Their Donors. PhD diss., Central European University, Budapest, 2011, 149, fig. 7.56-7.61.

in Hălmaġiu is closely related to that of the sanctuary of St Nicholas Church in Ribița (Zaránd County), another religious foundation patronized by Romanian Orthodox noblemen and which had its sanctuary decorated probably in 1393²³. Iconographically, the two sanctuaries in Hălmaġiu and Ribița, respectively, are similar in their selection of themes and their distribution on church walls. Whereas the sanctuary in Hălmaġiu was decorated by a workshop composed most likely of Western-trained painters, the sanctuary in Ribița was undoubtedly decorated by painters of Byzantine tradition. Judging by the similarity between the iconographic programs of both the sanctuaries in Hălmaġiu and Ribița, the Western painters of the former church followed more closely the directions set out by their Orthodox commissioner/iconographer, even though they relied partly on more familiar iconographic solutions.

In Hălmaġiu, the apocalyptic vision of Christ in Glory shown blessing with two hands in-between the Sun and Moon is placed on the barrel vault of the rectangular sanctuary²⁴ (Fig. 6). The busts of the Old Testament Prophets who foresaw Christ's Second Coming are depicted in the medallions on the vault's western side²⁵ and flank the *Agnus Dei* in the apex²⁶. Eucharistic and eschatological symbol alike, this image appears rarely in Byzantine iconography, and, if it does, it occurs only under Western influence²⁷. This was possibly

23 For a reevaluation of the murals' various dating hypotheses (1393, 1404, 1407, 1414, 1414/5, and 1417, respectively), see *Năstăsoiu, Dragoș Gh., Adashinskaya, Anna. O ipoteză privind datarea picturilor murale ale bisericii Sf. Nicolae din Ribița în lumina unor informații noi.* In: Ioachim Lazăr, Florin Dobrei (eds.). *Cultură și spiritualitate în comuna Ribița (jud. Hunedoara).* 600 de ani de la atestarea bisericii "Sfântul Ierarh Nicolae" din Ribița (1417) și 25 de ani de la reactivarea Mănăstirii Crișan (1992). Cluj-Napoca and Deva, 2017, 54-92; a revised, English version of this study is going to be published this year in *Museikon*. For the secondary literature on the frescoes, see *Porumb. Dicționar de pictură*, 336. The murals' uncovering and restoration is not completed yet, so the ensemble lacks a comprehensive study. *Cincheza-Buculei, Ecaterina. Ipoteze și certitudini în frescele descoperite la Ribița.* – *Ars Transsilvaniae*, No. 5, 1995, 85-92; *Prioteasa. Medieval Wall Paintings*, passim.

24 For this iconography, see: *Belting-Ihm, Christa. Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts.* Stuttgart, 1992; *Poilpré, Anne-Orange. Maiestas Domini: Une image de l'église en Occident (V^e-IX^e siècle).* Paris, 2005. In Ribița, the image on the vault is largely destroyed, but remaining traces of a crucifer halo indicate that here, too, a representation of Christ was initially painted.

25 Streisângeorgiu, Strei, and Ribița offer direct analogies.

26 The composition in Ribița is partly whitewashed and partly damaged, so one can no longer be certain what was depicted on the arch's apex.

27 *Jolivet-Lévy, Catherine. Le Canon 82 du Concile Quinisexte et l'image de l'Agneau: À propos d'une église inédite de Cappadoce.* – *ΔΧΑΕ*, No. 17, 1993-1994, 45-52; *Folda, Jaroslav. Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Fourth Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291.* Cambridge, 2005,



Fig. 7. Unknown holy bishop, lower register of the northern wall of the sanctuary, St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Hälmagiu



Fig. 8. Sts Basil the Great and Nicholas flanking the Holy Chalice on the altar table and Arius falling down, lower register of the southern wall of the sanctuary, St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Ribița

the case with Hălmagiu, too, as the Lamb of God was placed in a similar, lofty position and Old Testament-themed setting in many Catholic churches of medieval Hungary²⁸. Witnesses and disseminators of Christ's redemptive work, the Evangelists in Hălmagiu and Ribița, represented in the postures of sitting and writing, are depicted in the proximity of the *Maiestas Domini*. Their placement on the sanctuary's vault betrays yet another connection with Western iconography²⁹. This time, however, the model was adapted rath-

316-317.

28 Analogies in Čečejojce, Szalonna, or Tornaszentandrás. *Dvořáková, Krása, and Stejskal*, *Stredoveká mal'ba*, 81-82, fig. 30; *Bécsi, János and Pintér, Attila*. A szalonnai református templom falképeinek helyreállítása. – Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve, No. 20, 1981, 61-71, fig. 12-13; Tornaszentandrás – *Valter, Ilona*. A tornaszentandrási templom r. k. templom kutatása. – Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve, No. 19, 1980, 117.

29 Analogies in *Prioteasa*, *Medieval Wall Paintings*, 154-155, figs. 7.54-7.56, 7.58-7.66.



Fig. 9. Angel with censer next to the painted altar table, lower register of the eastern wall of the sanctuary, St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Hălmaġiu

er than being directly followed, as it is a regular feature of Catholic iconography that the Latin Church Doctors are represented seated at their writing desks and not the Evangelists. The Evangelists are usually represented only through their symbols, and are often depicted in the company of the Latin Doctors³⁰. For obvious reasons, the Latin Doctors are absent from the vaults of the sanctuaries of the Orthodox churches in Hălmaġiu and Ribița, but the Evangelists are represented instead, seated at their writing desks, that is, in the Latin Doctors' usual hypostasis for Catholic iconography.

In the sanctuaries of Hălmaġiu and Ribița, whose iconographic

30 Direct analogies in Chyžné, Rákoš, Rimavské Brezovo, Mălâncrav; when alone on the vault, the Evangelists are depicted only through their symbols (e.g., Kraskovo and Poniky). *Dvořáková, Krása, and Stejskal*, *Stredoveká mal'ba*, 107-112, 131-132, 135-136, 139-40; *Drăguț, Vasile*. *Picturile murale din biserica evanghelică din Mălâncrav*. – Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Seria Artă Plastică, No. 1, 1967, 87, 89.

programs display striking similarities despite their execution by Western and Byzantine painters respectively, the side walls are decorated with the holy bishops shown frontally, blessing, and holding inscribed scrolls or closed books (**Fig. 7-8**). In Hălmagiu, five of the six holy bishops dressed in Western liturgical vestments, including the alb, chasuble, and *pallium*, are identified by inscriptions in Old Church Slavonic offering their names: St Sylvester, St Clement, St John Chrysostom, St Basil the Great, and St Nicholas³¹ (**Fig. 7**). Dressed instead in the Eastern episcopal attire composed of the *omophorion* and either a simple *sakkos* or the *polystavrion*, only two of the six holy bishops in Ribița are currently identifiable (**Fig. 8**). They are Sts Basil and Nicholas, who occupy the same place as their namesakes in Hălmagiu. In both sanctuaries, a deacon (St. Stephen in Ribița) joins the Church Fathers on the eastern side of the southern wall. He is unusually close to the archangels with censers, who flank the *Melismos* in the sanctuary's axis³² (**Fig. 9**). The patron of the two churches, St Nicholas, is similarly placed on the western side of the southern wall, and he stands in both cases next to a chalice placed on an altar table, in the lower part of which the bent figure of Arius is falling down³³ (**Fig. 8**). The painters used the compositional scheme of the Vision of St Peter of Alexandria, but substituted the figure of the Alexandrian bishop with that of St Nicholas, transferring upon the holy bishop of Myra the Eucharistic and anti-heretical stance of the composition³⁴. Trained in different traditions, the painters of the two sanctuaries created similar, highly original, and unparalleled representations. This supports the idea that a creative and specific iconographic canon existed in Orthodox Transylvania at the turn of the 14th and 15th century and, moreover, reinforces the idea that the Western-oriented workshop in Hălmagiu followed

31 *Cincheza-Buculei*. Ensemble de peinture, 8.

32 Only the altar table has survived in both cases. On the upper register of the sanctuary's eastern wall, there are seraphs/cherubs above the archangels' figures. *Cincheza-Buculei*. Ensemble de peinture, 8; *Cincheza-Buculei*. Ipoteze și certitudini, 89-90.

33 The partially-preserved inscription in Hălmagiu contains an invocation of the Holy Trinity, *Cincheza-Buculei*. Ensemble de peinture murale, 10; additionally, the recently-uncovered inscription in Ribița features also Arius' name.

34 For the identification and meaning of this scene, see *Cincheza-Buculei*. Ensemble de peinture, 9-11; see also *Prioteasa*. Medieval Wall Paintings, 170-181. For St Peter of Alexandria's Vision, see: *Koukiaris*. Archimadrite Silas. The Depiction of the Vision of Saint Peter of Alexandria in the Sanctuary of Byzantine Churches. – *Zograf*, No. 35, 2011, 63-71; *Coetkovski*, Sašo. The Vision of Saint Peter of Alexandria, from the Church of St Archangels in Prilep. *Iconographical Research*. – *Zograf*, No. 36, 2012, 83-88.



Fig. 10. Holy Apostle Bartholomew, lower register of the northern wall of the sanctuary, St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Hälmagiu

closely the recommendations of their Orthodox iconographers.

Additionally, near by the *prothesis* niche in Hălmaġiu, there is the depiction of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, who is oddly represented as a naked, flayed man holding his skin on a staff, i.e., according to his Western iconography³⁵ (Fig. 10). This depiction was often encountered in Catholic churches across medieval Hungary, where the saint was venerated as the patron of animal-skin processing crafts and a protector against skin diseases and nervous disorders³⁶. The image is not unique in the context of Orthodox Transylvania, as this hypostasis of the holy apostle appears also in St Nicholas Church in Densuș (Hunyad County). This iconographic transfer from the West to the East occurred during the Late Middle Ages in other Orthodox territories found under Latin rule: St Bartholomew's Western iconography appeared, thus, in several Orthodox churches of Venetian-ruled Crete³⁷. As cultural contact zones, both Catholic-ruled Crete and Transylvania experienced broadly comparable social, political, and confessional circumstances, and one should not be surprised if the hybridity of their religious art brings them together, too. In Hălmaġiu, however, St Bartholomew's sacrifice acquired an Eucharistic emphasis by being placed next to the *prothesis* niche, rather comparable to the significance of this holy apostle's figure in the Western/Catholic iconography across medieval Hungary³⁸.

As it could be seen from the two case studies that have been put forward in this essay, when painters trained in the West worked for Orthodox patrons, they showed the tendency towards maintaining the general iconographic layouts specific for Catholic cult spaces.

35 *Cincheza-Buculei*. Ensemble de peinture, 8-9.

36 *Prioteasa*. Medieval Wall Paintings, 182-191.

37 St Pelagia Church in Ano Viannos (1360) and Holy Apostles Church in Drys (1382-1391). *Vassilakis-Mavarakakis*, Maria. Western Influences in the Fourteenth Century Art of Crete. – *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, No. 5, 1982, 303-304, fig. 7-8; *Lymberopoulou*, Angeliki. Regional Byzantine Monumental Art from Venetian Crete. In: Angeliki Lymberopoulou, Rembrandt Duits (eds.). *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*. Burlington, 2013, 65, fig. 3.2, pl. IV.

38 Examples in *Drăguț*, Vasile. Picturile murale de la Mediaș. O importantă recuperare pentru istoria artei transilvănene. – *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor*. Monumente Istorice și de Artă, No. 2, 1976, 14. St Bartholomew's depiction in Čerín is associated to the Eucharistic Man of Sorrows, both images functioning as a mural retable for a secondary altar in the church, which had sacrifice and Eucharist as iconographic focus. *Dvořáková, Krása*, and *Stejskal*, Stredoveká mal'ba, 86. In Remetea, St Bartholomew's Martyrdom and the iconic, flayed image are both placed in the sanctuary next to the niche used for keeping the Eucharist. *Lángi, József and Mihály*, Ferenc. *Erdélyi falképek és festett faberendezések*. Vol. 2. Budapest, 2004, 71-4.

This did not pose too great a challenge for the understanding of the Catholic iconography by the Orthodox faithful, as both Catholic and Orthodox systems of sanctuary decoration in late-medieval Transylvania shared a significant number of iconographic features (e.g., the selection and arrangement of scenes in the sanctuary's upper side). The obvious formal differences between the visual traditions of the West and East proved to be unimportant, as they did not hinder, nor alter significantly the religious content meant to be communicated. Trying to meet the unfamiliar demands of commissioners belonging to a different confession than their own, the Western-trained painters followed two paths when making the decoration of the sanctuary's lower register. They either adjusted their previously-learned patterns in order to meet the expectations of their Orthodox commissioners (e.g., the *Vir Dolorum* replacing the *Melismos*, the holy bishops with the models of Romanesque churches, or the pseudo-votive composition in Strei), or followed closely the directions prescribed by the Orthodox iconographers (e.g., the iconography of the sanctuary in Hălmagiu reflecting faithfully the iconography of the sanctuary in Ribița or vice versa). Even when they took the latter path, they observed the prescriptions in their general lines and made sure to communicate the meaning they were supposed to. However, they allowed themselves certain variations, whenever they were not specifically instructed to do otherwise or when their innovations didn't change radically the iconographic content of a program (e.g., the holy bishops' Western and Eastern vestments in Hălmagiu and Ribița, respectively). During these processes of "negotiation of meaning", the Western-trained painters often adapted their iconographic and formal vocabulary, in order to respond to the requirements of the particular worship space they had to decorate or to their commissioners' devotional sensibilities and demands. These processes of adjustment sometimes led to the phenomena of hybridization in the sphere of religious art, phenomena which, on the one hand, challenge traditional, art-historical labeling (i.e., *Western* versus *Eastern/Byzantine* or *Catholic* versus *Orthodox*) and, on the other hand, indicate that borders, understood either artistically or confessionally, are not so much dividing lines as they are, in fact, meeting points.

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Художници със западна школовка, работещи за православни поръчители – бележки върху данните от късносредновековна Трансилвания (XIV–XV век)

Драгош Нъстъсою



През Средновековието южните и югозападните части на Войводство Трансилвания и Унгарското кралство са райони, в които съжителстват по няколко конфесионални групи, всяка от които има своя културна и религиозна традиция. При управлението на латините православните румънци (власи) живеели с унгарци католици, шеклери и саксонци, като тяхната *conviventia* генерира чести взаимодействия, а това оставя дълбоки следи в религиозното изкуство и на двете религиозни групи. Православните дарители имат сложна релация със западното изкуство, възлагайки често поръчки на строители, които работят в съседните земи с католически градове, като в резултат на това създават религиозни сгради със „западен“ облик. Въпреки че православните ктитори поверяват украсата на своите църкви на майстори, работещи във византийската традиция, тези художници проявяват висока степен на възприемчивост по отношение на сюжети и мотиви, характерни за западната/католическата иконография. А може да се добави, че православните дарители предоставят на западни ателиета да украсят техните религиозни сгради със стенописи.

Тази статия се фокусира върху два характерни казуса – стенописната украса на православните храмове в съседни области: в Стрей (област Хуняд, Войводство Трансилвания) и в Хълмаджю (област Заранд, Кралство Унгария), изпълнени респективно през първата половина на XIV в. и между късния XIV в. и ранния XV в. При декорирането на олтарното пространство на тези православни храмове двете западни ателиета се принуждават последователно да пригледат своя иконографски и формален изказ, за да отговорят на изискванията на това специфично култово пространство или на чувствителността на поръчителите. Това „нагаждане“ често води до хибридикация на явленията в областта на църковното изкуство, което бяга от обичайните си категории, и представлява предизвикателство за традиционното изкуствоведско етикетирание на познатите ни опозиции: византийско/източно versus западно или православно versus католическо.

List of Contributors

Andreas Rhoby, Ph.D, Associate Professor,
University of Vienna (Austria)
andreas.rhoby@oeaw.ac.at

Andromachi Katselaki, Ph.D,
Ministry of Culture and Sports (Greece)
archanes1315@yahoo.gr

Angeliki Katsioti, Ph.D,
Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese,
Head of the Department of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Sites,
Monuments, Research and Museums (Greece)
gelikatsioti@gmail.com

Antonio Enrico Felle, Ph.D, Professor,
University "Aldo Moro", Bari (Italy)
ae.felle@gmail.com

Aleksandra Kučeković, Ph.D, Associate Professor,
University of Arts, Belgrade (Serbia)
akucekovic@gmail.com

Anna Adashinskaya, Ph.D Student,
Department of Medieval Studies of Central European
University in Budapest (Hungary)
adashik@gmail.com

Antonis Tsakalos, Ph.D, Curator,
Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (Greece)
antonistsakalos@gmail.com

Constantin I. Ciobanu, Dsc.,
Institute of Art History "G. Oprescu", Bucharest (Romania)
constantini_ciobanu@yahoo.com

Dimitrios Liakos, Ph.D,
Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidiki and Mt. Athos,
Ministry of Culture and Sports (Greece)
liakos712003@yahoo.gr

Dragoş Gh. Năstăsoiu, Ph.D Student,
Medieval Studies at the Central European University
in Budapest (Hungary)
dragos_nastasoiu@yahoo.com

Elka Bakalova, Corresponding Member of the BAS,
Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria)
elkabakalova@gmail.com

Elissaveta Moussakova, Ph.D, Professor,
Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria)
emoussakova@gmail.com

Emmanuel Moutafov, Ph.D, Associate Professor,
Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria)
moutafov1@gmail.com

Ida Toth, Ph.D, Senior Lecturer,
Oxford University (United Kingdom)
ida.toth@history.ox.ac.uk

Jelena Erdeljan, Ph.D, Associate Professor,
University of Belgrade (Serbia)
jerdelja@f.bg.ac.rs

Maria Kolousheva, Ph.D, Assistant Professor,
Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria)
m.kolusheva@gmail.com

Melina Paissidou, Ph.D, Associate Professor,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece),
mpaisidou@hist.auth.gr

Tsvetan Vasilev, Ph.D, Assistant Professor,
Sofia University (Bulgaria)
cvetanv@gmail.com

Valentina Cantone, Ph.D, Adjunct Professor,
University of Padua, Department of Cultural Heritage (Italy)
valentina.cantone@unipd.it

Vladimir Dimitrov, Ph.D, Assistant Professor,
New Bulgarian University, Sofia (Bulgaria)
vladimirdim@gmail.com

Vincent Debiais, Ph.D, full researcher,
Centre national de la recherche scientifique (France),
Centre d'études supérieures de civilisation médiévale,
University of Poitiers (France)
vincent.debiais@univ-poitiers.fr

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**ВИЗАНТИЙСКО И
ПОСТВИЗАНТИЙСКО ИЗКУСТВО:
ПРЕСИЧАНЕ НА ГРАНИЦИ**

**BYZANTINE AND
POST-BYZANTINE ART:
CROSSING BORDERS**

Институт за изследване на изкуствата, БАН

Institute of Art Studies, BAS

съставители
Емануел Мутафов
Ида Тот (Великобритания)

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Emmanuel Moutafov
Ida Toth (United Kingdom)



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Андрю Смол (Оксфордски университет)
Хю Джефри (Оксфордски университет)

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