

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Institute of Art Studies



Tereza Ivanova Bacheva

**ROMAN POPES IN THE MURAL PAINTING PROGRAMS OF THE
CHURCHES OF THE BULGARIAN LANDS
(15TH – 18TH CENTURIES)**

THESIS ABSTRACT

for acquiring the educational and scientific degree Doctor (PhD) in the professional field 8.1.
Art Studies and Fine Arts, Theory of the Arts

Sofia 2023

INSTITUTE OF ART STUDIES – BAS



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Supervisor
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The dissertation was discussed and assigned for public defense on an extended session of the Old Art Research Group, Fine Arts Department, held on 13.02.2023.

The total length of the dissertation is 355 pages including introduction, five main chapters, conclusion, bibliography, with 576 titles listed, catalogue of the images of attributed personalia (62 in total) and the respective image descriptions, additional comparative materials as illustrations (44 in total) and 2 adjuncts.

The public defense of the dissertation will be held on 27.06.2023, 11:00 PM, Institute of Art Studies, 21 Krakra Str., in the framework of the scientific jury's session. The members of the scientific jury are:

1. Corr. Memb. Prof. Ivanka Gergova, Institute of Art Studies, BAS
2. Prof. Elissaveta Moussakova, PhD, Institute of Art Studies, BAS
3. Prof. Miglena Prashkova, PhD, National Academy of Art
4. Assoc. Prof. Stilyana Batalova, PhD, Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center, BAS
5. Assoc. Prof. Marco Scarpa, PhD, Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center, BAS; University of Messina, Italy

All materials referring to the public defense of the dissertation are available in the *Administration department*, Institute of Art Studies, 21 Krakra Str., Sofia

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I. GENERAL FEATURES OF THE DISSERTATION

The presented text is a research of the images of Roman popes, preserved in some churches on the territory of Bulgaria, in the mural paintings made between 15th and 18th centuries. These are saints, who are still paid homage to and are worshiped by the Orthodox Church. The names of many of them can be found in the paraliturgical texts, while there are images, representing some of the popes, that are included in the mural painting programs of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches with memorial functions, as well as a part of a complex of heterogeneous constituted correlations between personalities of all the honored archierei and dogmatic, liturgical, and historical functions of the mural paintings of the eastern churches. Images of Roman popes are attested in the sanctuary as well in the lateral spaces of the churches – the mural menologia and the Ecumenical councils' cycles usually represented in narthexes and galleries.

1.1 Actuality of the topic and the statement status of the researches on the topic

The images of Roman bishops have not been researched independently in Bulgarian studies on art. However, in the studies dedicated to the mural painting programs of the churches from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period, these images are pointed out or commented on, albeit briefly. The existing publications about part of the monuments are an important testimony for some of these images – the article of A. Stransky (1940) about the image of pope Leo the Great in the Metropolitan church of St. Nicholas in the city of Melnik, the article of M. Zacharieva about the church of Mislovshitsa Monastery (2012) and the image of Pope Sylvester in the apse. Of special importance for systematic research of the images of Roman bishops are the *Corpuses of Mural Paintings from Bulgaria*, made from research teams of the Institute of Art Studies – *Corpus of Mural Paintings from 17th Century* (2012), edited by B. Penkova and Ts. Kuneva; *Corpus of Mural Paintings from 18th Century* (2006) by I. Gergova, E. Popova, E. Genova, N. Klisarov; *Corpus of Mural Paintings from the First Half of 19th Century* (2018), collective work of an extended group of specialists – A. Kuyumdzhiev, E. Moutafov, I. Vanev, I. Gergova, E. Popova, E. Genova, M. Kuyumdzhieva, M. Zacharieva, M. Stoykova, M. Hristemova, S. Moskova, H. Andreev, N. Klisarov, K. Dyulgerova, N. Dzhurkova, J. Varbanova. To this series of capital works belongs also the manuscript of the *Corpus of Mural Paintings from 15th Century*, completed in 2006 by its authors E. Bakalova, B. Penkova, G. Gerov and H. Andreev (still not published officially).

The study of the images of the bishops of Rome is based on the monographic books of some of the preserved monuments of the ecclesiastical art – by E. Floreva for the Church of St. Theodore Tyro and St. Theodore Stratelates in the village of Dobarsko (1981), the Church of the Savior in the Monastery of Alino (1983), and the Church of Prophet Elijah in the city of Boboshevo (1978); by L. Mavrodinova for the Church of Zemen monastery (1980), by D. Kamonova for the Church of St. Nicholas in Seslavtsi monastery (1977), and many others. In these studies, the images are commented mainly in the context of the Ecumenical councils and the group of hierarchs. The later studies concerning groups of the images of archierei in mural paintings keep this trend in approaching the images of Roman bishops – for example an article of E. Popova pertaining to images of hierarchs displayed on the south wall in the sanctuary of the chapel of the Church of St. Demetrius in the village of Arbanassi (2016), of E. Moutafov and the First Ecumenical council as a possible connection between the image of St. Sylvester and that of St. Constantine in the Metropolitan church of Nessebar (2022).

In approaching the context of the images of Roman popes, of particular importance for this research are the studies dealing with general principles of the incorporation of hierarchs' images in the mural painting programs of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches – of B. Penkova's article about mural paintings in the churches of Dragalevtsi monastery and Kurilo monastery, especially the rows with full-length figures of bishops (2018); of M. Kolusheva for the bishops saints from the naos of St. George church in Veliko Tarnovo (2015) and the series of bishop's figures, forming friezes in naoses of a group of post-Byzantine churches in Bulgaria, also following a general trend in Balkan context with specific pictorial solutions relating the episcopal representations.

The structure of the Melismos composition in the sanctuary attracts more often the scientific interest, thus, the researches of the correlations between the images of hierarchs and the Eucharistic theme become more prevalent. It has been often commented on, in the monographs dedicated to certain churches in particular. However, for this scene especially I will mention a few texts – the book of S. Gerstel *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (1999) and the book of Ch. Konstantinidi *Ὁ Μελισμός. Οι συλλειτουργούντες ιεράρχες και οι άγγελοι-διάκονοι μπροστά στην Αγία Τράπεζα με τα Τίμια Δώρα ή τον Ευχαριστιακό Χριστό* (The Melismos. The Co-officiating Hierarchs and the Angel-Deacons flanked the Altar with the Holy Bread and Wine or the Eucharistic Christ) (2008). These texts formulate many of the correlations between the hierarchs, drawn up on the basis of the frequency of appearance of these images. One more article belongs to this group of studies and it is A. Kuyumdzhiev's *Литургийното*

време и смисълът на композицията „Служба на архиереите“ в църквата „Св. Пантелеймон“ в с. Нерези (Liturgical Time and the Meaning of the Composition “Office of the Archierei” in the Church of St. Panteleymon in the Village of Neresi) (2003), which also sets a general question about the functions of a bishop image in the Melismos composition, hence, the importance of the bishop’s figures being more than memorial or symbolic images, but active participants in the Eucharist.

The images of the bishops of Rome have never been the subject of extensive research in the scientific studies of ecclesiastical monumental art in the rest of the Balkans as well. Here, exceptions are a few articles dedicated especially on the topic – of B. Todić for the roman bishops in the diaconicon of St. Sofia church in Ohrid (2008); of A. Gavrilović for the images of Pope Sylvester in the medieval Serbian churches (2019); of V. Bedros for representations of Roman popes in the mural painting programs of Wallachian and Moldavian churches (2019).

1.2. Object, subject, and range of the study

The main images, object of this research, are part of the mural painting programs of churches built or decorated within four centuries, located today on the current territories of the Bulgarian state. These are images of hierarchs of the Church of Rome, presented “by right” in the mural painting programs of eastern churches. Their memory is honored by the Orthodox Church, with all of them having been identified already in the Middle Ages.

The chronological framework of the study is related to the time when the images were executed, i.e., the 15th – 18th centuries. That is the period when the territories of Bulgaria are under Ottoman rule, a circumstance that reflects on church constructions, causing an adaptation of monumental paintings to the reduced spaces. Some of the earlier images of Roman popes in connection with the older tradition have also been traced – both in monuments from Bulgaria before the 15th century, and ones from other parts of the Balkan peninsula.

The territorial range of the researched images refers to the contemporary borders of the Bulgarian state, and are somewhat provisional, since the monuments at that time were not connected to territories of a common state structure. At different times and in different periods, part of the surviving monuments entered within the boundaries of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Patriarchy of Peč, both of which managed to retain some sort of autonomy, or at the very least, are part of the territories adjacent to these two dioceses.

1.3. *Objectives, tasks and projected outcomes*

The main objective of the study is to research the images of Roman bishops from the Bulgarian post-Byzantine churches during the Ottoman rule. The main points are: to analyze these images in the general context of Eastern Orthodox ecclesiastical art; to determine their role in the mural painting programs of churches with a view to the bishops' personalities from theological and historical point of view, and in the framework of pictorial tradition; arguments for the necessity that these personalities be represented in the mural paintings; to trace the relations between these images and artistic tradition, i.e., according to paradigms of Byzantine and post-Byzantine theological and visual concepts.

These starting points also determine the tasks of the research: a) systematization of the images from the post-Byzantine period, i.e., in the time range from the 15th to the 18th centuries, by personalia according to the available preserved images; b) tracing the image of each bishop in the context of the written sources and their relations with the pictorial tradition; c) determining to what retention degree is homage paid to the Roman bishops; d) emphasizing the significance of the each person in the context of the functions of the images of the archierei and the transformations in the compositions for the altar space.

The expected results are: to arrange all preserved images from churches on Bulgarian territories in the considered epoch; to determine the principles for the identification of the images and to deduce any possible hypotheses in the identification or rejection of any given image; to formulate the characteristics of the place, occupied from the figures of Roman bishops in the archierei's group; to contextualize the church's historical and theological significance in the mural paintings programs of the eastern churches.

1.4. *Methodology of the study*

The dissertation's methodology framework is connected with historical, iconographical and comparative approach to the images – textual sources of Roman popes, individual specifics of the images. The comparative approach is set in the context of the Eastern art tradition, with parallels regarding the mechanisms of implementation of these images in the mural painting programs, their place in the hierarchically structured bishops' groups, etc. The comparative analysis is relevant here both in the ways of finding out the transformations in the typological

characteristics of each hierarch and their adaptation to the canonical imagery of the Orthodox art, as well as for the identification of some of the problematic images.

II. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

2.1. First chapter. *Roman popes. Main personalia*

The purpose of the first chapter is to outline a historical and pictorial foundation of the images of Roman bishops in Eastern Orthodox art. In general, it is a pre-history of these images, traced through their earlier preserved examples from 10th century onwards and then through the changes in the system of Byzantine art from the next century, the strictly defined church spaces, the bishops' images signification renewed by the personal importance of the represented persons in an imagery concept for participation of the whole Ecumenical Church in the Eucharist. In the following centuries, the staff of represented bishops was composed depending almost entirely on the sanctuary composition, i.e., Melismos. In the 12th century this staff seems to have been completely made up by the maximum number of 70 hierarchs. It consists of bishops who already had their own special place in the Church and their images were often found in the altar space. Some of the Roman popes are also part of that group.

The staff of the Roman bishops is strictly defined. Some of them are officialized in Byzantine art subject to the Ecumenical councils held during the pontificate of some of the popes. These are Pope Sylvester (314–335); Pope Damasus (366–384); Pope Celestine (422–432); Pope Leo the Great (440–461); Pope Vigilius (537–555) (his name is an exception, as it is not present in the synaxaria); Pope Agatho (678–681), and Pope Hadrian (772–795). Not all of them have got attested images in the sanctuaries of the eastern churches. Two main names stand out from this list of staff – these are the names of Pope Sylvester and Pope Leo the Great. The rest are episodic images and rarely, if ever, can be seen in the sanctuaries.

Among the main bishops, and later in the scene of co-officiating bishops, there are two more representatives of the Roman Church, who have not been connected to the Ecumenical councils. These are Pope Clement (88–97 or 97–101) and Pope Gregory the Great (the Dialogues) (590–604). Still more names can be added to the main group, of whom it is possible to find images, most of them in churches outside Bulgaria. These are images from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period – of Pope Hippolytus (170–235) (30 January) in the church of Gračanitsa monastery (c. 1320); in St. George church, Staro Nagoričino village (1316/18); in Dečany monastery's church (1338/40); in the wall painting menologium of the catholicon of Docheiariou monastery on Mount Athos (1568) with a martyrdom scene, as well in St. Nicholas Philanthropinon on the island of the Ioannina lake; of Pope Stephen (254–257)

(2 August) in the catholicon of Dionysiou monastery, Mount Athos (16th c.); of Pope Martin (649–655) (14 April or 13 April) in the sanctuary of St. George church, Staro Nagoričino village (1316/18); the Church of the Virgin Mary, Matejče village (14th c.); in St. John the Theologian church, Zemen monastery (14th c.), in the row with full-length figure in the exonarthex of the church of Philanthropinon; of Pope Sixtus (115–125) (10 August) again in the menologium of St. Nicholas of Philanthropinon church (16th c.) with scene of his martyrdom; of Pope Innocent (401–417) and Pope Vigilius (537–555) in the diaconicon of St. Sofia church in Ohrid (mid-11th c.).

Some studies have considered possibilities the images of popes represented in the wall painting programs of certain church, in particular their presence in the Melismos, to be influenced, supposedly, from the Catholic Church. The impossibility to include all images of bishops, envisaged for the sanctuary, as well for the lateral spaces, leads naturally to the question of their choice/preference. This, in turn, suggests that this choice can be shaped by various circumstances, in this case those concerning the presence of the Catholic Church from the 16th and 17th centuries on the lands of the Bulgarians and the possible influences from it. With reference to this, the present study has made a brief historical review of the establishment or reestablishment of the Catholic Church on these territories – officially since 1601. The purpose is to explore the possibilities these events to determine the choice of archierei's images in the sanctuaries of some churches. No direct intervention in the choice of personalia among the Roman bishops can in any case be proved. What could be seen as influence are particular elements that appear in Orthodox churches in regions of contacts between the two confessions and could be derived from the Catholic tradition. But the appearance of elements only from Catholicism to the Orthodoxy rather shows that such processes were very limited at that time and it is not possible to affect the conservative Orthodox art, especially the compositions in the sanctuary, more likely the saint bishops of the Ecumenical Church.

The systematic research of the images of the popes of Rome in the post-Byzantine monuments from Bulgaria and the comparative analysis with those from the Balkans from the same period, as well as from the previous one, demonstrate that the representation of Roman bishops in the mural paintings follows a common pictorial convention. The list of the hierarchs included in the earlier Hermeneia points to a standardization of the personalia who could be part of the Melismos in the sanctuary, as well as the fact that the artistic practice adhered to sustainable models that did not undergo fundamental changes in the post-Byzantine period. As for the

bishops, this system allows some freedom in choosing the personalia, but it is within the framework of accepted staff, therefore it is rare to find repetitions by the same group of bishops in two churches, since these principles are applied in a closed system of honored saints from the Orthodox Church, where the group of the representatives of the Roman Church was formed too.

Although there was certain restoration of the relations with Rome and that was reflected in religious, national and political movements for rejections of the Ottoman rule, this in fact did not affect both staff of the Roman bishops, which was maintained by tradition from previous periods, nor the intensity of the representations of concrete personalia, nor the frequency of inclusion of their images in the wall painting programs of churches from the 16th and 17th centuries.

2.2. Second chapter. *St. Clement of Rome*

This chapter aims to represent the veneration of Pope Clement (88–97 or 97–101) (in the Eastern Church he is celebrated on 23, 24 or 25 November; in the Western Church – on 23 November) in order to outline the bases upon which the cult of the saint was created, to examine his earliest images, and through them to research the transition in the iconography development of the image until the establishment and/or its transformations in post-Byzantine art.

The inscriptions of all surviving images from the researched period point to only the first name of a bishop – Clement, though, the interpretations of which of the possible saints is depicted – St. Clement of Rome, St. Clement of Ancyra, or St. Clement of Ohrid, are uncertain, based primarily on the possible context and the supposed intentions of the wall painting program's compilers. In general, St. Clement of Rome is not a frequent choice for post-Byzantine churches on the territory of Bulgaria. For the considered period, only a few images are attested in sanctuaries: in *St. Theodore Tyro and St. Theodore Stratelatos church in Dobarsko village* (1614), on the arch at the apse; in *Prophet Elijah church in the city of Boboshevo* (1678); in the sanctuary of the *catholicon of the Rozhen monastery* (1732); outside the sanctuary; in the *Church of the Virgin Mary Vitoshka, Dragalevtsi monastery*, in the painting layer from the 16th century; in *St. John of Rila church, Kurilo monastery* (1596), in *St. Theodore Tyro and St. Theodore Stratelatos church in Dobarsko village* (1614); in the *Church of St. Nicholas*,

Seslavtsi monastery (1616). The images are commented on in terms of the iconography of the saint, as well as the context in which they are found. In most of the mentioned examples the typology of the saint is indisputable. The place where the figure is situated also proves the identification in favor of the Roman pope – especially for the images, placed in the sanctuary, while for those outside it, the advanced arguments relate to a common context in which the figure of Pope Clement appears.

In the last part of the chapter, a place is devoted to the inscriptions of the name and its alterations, which are taken into account in the wall paintings images of the Roman bishop. In the monuments on the territory of Bulgaria, in which the images of Pope Clement are attributed, there are no accounted examples of inscriptions including his archiereus position ‘pope’, nor the Church he represents – ‘Rome’. The name is inscribed without variants, only in the Rozhen monastery the name is in Greek in accordance with the rest of the inscriptions of the church. Nowhere in the examined images from churches on Bulgarian lands is St. Clement represented with a scroll.

2.3. Third chapter. *St. Sylvester of Rome*

Pope Sylvester (314–335) (in the Eastern Church celebrated on 2 January, in the Western Church on 31 December) is one of the most revered Roman bishops in the East. The images of the Pope, reflecting his constant presence in the Eastern liturgical calendar, became, if not obligatory, yet frequent for the churches of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period. They are present both in the imposing grand monuments and in the small parish churches on the Balkan peninsula. After the establishment of the Melismos composition between the 11th and 12th centuries and the movement of the images of the hierarchs towards the sanctuary, Pope Sylvester became part of the main group and can be often found in the procession of the co-officiating bishops as full-length figure or as half-length figure in medallion in the upper registers of the wall paintings. Although this image is not mandatory for every Byzantine or post-Byzantine church, Pope Sylvester is one of the most frequently represented Roman hierarch in the Eastern art.

Images of Pope Sylvester in churches on the territory of Bulgaria before 15th century have not survived. The earliest examples date from the second half of the 15th century, from churches in Western Bulgaria: *St. George church, Kremikovtsi monastery* (1493), the *Dormition of the*

Virgin Mary church, Mislovshitsa monastery (15th c.); images from the next century are found in *St. Petka Samardzhiyska* (of the Saddlers) in *Sofia* (the mural painting are dated in 1660s – 1670s); in the church of the *Kurilo monastery* (1596); *St. Petka church in Vukovo village* (1598); *St. Archangel Michael church in Goranovtsi village* (16th c.); *St. Archangel Michael church, Dolna Beshovitsa monastery* (16th c.); *St. Theodore Tyro church in Zimevitsa village* (16th c.). The single image from Eastern Bulgaria dating from the late 16th century is a full-length figure of Pope Sylvester in the *Metropolitan church of St. Stephen in Nessebar* (1599).

From the beginning of the 17th century, it appeared in some of the representative monuments of the period in the western territories of Bulgaria: the *Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, Iskrets monastery* (1602); the *Church of Dormition of the Virgin Mary, Priboy village* (17th c.), *St. Theodore Tyro and St. Theodore Stratelates in Dobarsko village* (1614); *St. Nicholas church, Seslavtsi monastery* (1616).

From the same century are also the images in several monuments in city of Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanassi village: *St. George church in Veliko Tarnovo* (1616); *St. George chapel in the St. Demetrios church, Arbanassi* (1621, second painting layer); the *Nativity of Christ church, Arbanassi* – in the sanctuary of the church (1681) and in the sanctuary of the chapel (1632); *St. Athanasios church, Arbanassi* (1667); the *Nativity of the Virgin Mary chapel in the catholicon of the Kilifarevo monastery* (17th c.).

For the whole period covered by the dissertation, the highest concentration of images of Pope Sylvester is registered in these two centuries precisely – the 16th and 17th centuries. Most often he is one of the bishops in the Melismos; his image can also be found in the wall painting menologium in the Church of the Nativity of Christ (17th c.) in Arbanassi village; his figure is identified in the scene of the First Ecumenical council from the narthex of the *Metropolitan church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Veliko Tarnovo* (15th – 16th c.), while his representation in the scene of the Council from the narthex of the catholicon of the Rozhen monastery (16th c.) remains much more unclear.

Only few images are accounted in the 18th century – the first is in the sanctuary of the *catholicon of the Rozhen Monastery* (in the wall paintings from 1732), and the second is in the cemetery *Church of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary, Rila monastery* (1795), south wall, sanctuary.

Images of Pope Sylvester can also be found outside the altar space – in the wall painting menologium in the gallery of the *Nativity of Christ church in Arbanassi* (first half of the 17th c.) and one more time on one of the arches dividing the bays in the western part of the gallery

(the image is not part of the menologium); in the scene of the First Ecumenical council in the narthex of the *Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Veliko Tarnovo* (15th – 16th c.). In the other survived cycles of the councils dating from this period, the image of Pope Sylvester cannot be identified definitively.

These examples enable several conclusions to be drawn regarding the wall painting representations of Pope Sylvester. And since the images of Pope Sylvester are quite numerous, that allows for some formulas to be derived about his representations, in particular the tracing of the place of the hierarch in the bishop's group and the ways of introducing this group in the mural painting programs. The observations show a relative stability if his image is located next to some other hierarchs – those connected with the Council in Nicaea in 325 г., St. Peter of Alexandria, St. Spyridon of Trimythous, St. Nicholas of Mira. On the other hand, an image of St. Sylvester can also be found next to that of St. Cyril of Alexandria. Here, no specific historical and doctrinal reason can be determined for that side-by-side depiction of the two saints, and in any probability that formula is rather an “icon-painters cliché”.

Thus, the figure of Pope Sylvester becomes part of the routine bishops' group, and it cannot be claimed that he is a hierarch who appears sporadically in the mural paintings or that his images can be influenced by external to the artistic tradition factors.

The inscriptions, which were preserved around the image of Pope Sylvester, show that his name is usually accompanied by his bishopric title ‘pope’, and the name of the Church he presides – ‘Roman’. The Cyrillic inscriptions show differences, while the Greek inscriptions contain typical errors. In several churches he is depicted with a scroll in his hand. In the reviewed images from Bulgaria, the texts of the scrolls (if any) are primarily prayers from the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, but there are no preserved examples including the text prescribed from the Hermeneia of Dionisius of Fournia. In the churches of Arbanassi Pope Sylvester is represented with the same text in his scroll.

2.4. Fourth chapter. *St. Leo of Rome*

Pope Leo the Great was head of the Roman Church 21 years (440–461). He was known for the *Tomus* sent to Archbishop of Constantinople Flavian (446–449) with explanations and arguments on the dogma of the dual nature of Christ, and which was the foundation of the decisions made from the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The volume of the corpus of images of

Pope Leo in Byzantine and post-Byzantine art is meagre at best. This observation, made about the monuments of ecclesiastical art from the Balkans, corresponds to the number of images that are found in the churches in our country for the period under consideration. They are only few of them, and for the entire period there is not a single image of him from the bishops' procession in the Melismos. They are found in several churches – in the sanctuary of *St. Theodore Tyro and St. Theodore Stratelates church in Dobarsko village* (1614); in the sanctuary of the *Church of the Savior, Alino monastery* (1626); supposedly, an image inscribed as St. Leontiy (Leontios) in the *Prophet Elijah church in the city of Boboshevo* (1678) belongs to Pope Leo. Several are also commented on as belonging to the Roman bishop outside the altar space, in the bishops' friezes from the nave of *St. John of Rila church, Kurilo monastery* (1596) and also from the nave of the catholicon of the *Dragalevtsi monastery*, preserved in a frieze fragment from the mural painting layers dated 16th century. The identification of these images is due to some characteristics in the development of the representations of the saint, to the common contextualization with another Roman bishop – Pope Clement, or to commitment with the image of St. Ambrosius, bishop of Milan, with a hypothesis here for a reinterpretation of the image of the latter in the framework of Pentarchy, which is an anachronism for the post-Byzantine period, and despite the fact that in the most cases the images of the bishop of Milan are not placed in relation to those of the Roman bishops.

Two images of Pope Leo the Great are found in the wall painting menologia. The first one is in the *Nativity of the Virgin Mary church, Rozhen monastery*, one of the few surviving fragments from the wall painting dated in 16th century, in the niches of the nave window. The second one is part of the wall painting menologium in the gallery of the *Nativity of Christ church in Arbanassi* (first half of the 17th c.), in the field for 18 February.

An image of Pope Leo from the scene of Fourth Ecumenical council in the *Metropolitan church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Veliko Tarnovo* (15th – 16th c.) is also included in the study. It is displayed on the right side of the emperor, the hierarch is represented with Latin mitre, and the inscription in the scene mentions the Roman bishop. In all probability, however, an image of Pope Leo does not appear in the scene of the Fourth Ecumenical council from 451 in the gallery of the Nativity of Christ church in Arbanassi, as well as in the refectory of the Bachkovo monastery (1643), where the complete cycle of the Ecumenical councils is depicted, but no Roman bishop is indicated in any of the scenes, which are created more simply, i.e., with a small number of hierarchs, and supposedly the Roman bishops are not part of the intention of the compiler of the wall painting program in the refectory.

The inscriptions accompanying the images of Pope Leo in all cases do not indicate the chair that the Roman bishop represents. In the name of Pope Leo there is another transformation related to the translation of the Greek name Λεόν to Bulgarian ЛЕОНЪ (Leon) or ЛЕОНТЬ (Leont), then the adaptation to ЛЕОНТИЕ (Leontie). The last variant of inscription of the name is most common about the images of Pope Leo in Bulgarian churches.

2.5. Fifth chapter. *Other images of Roman popes*

This chapter is focused on several images of prelates of Rome found only in a few churches. One of them belongs to Pope Telesphorus (125–136) (in the Eastern liturgical calendars his name is attested on 22 February as a celebration date; in the Western liturgical calendar he is listed on 5 January). Image of Pope Telesphorus can be seen in the mural painting menologium in the gallery of the *Nativity of Christ church in Arbanassi village* (first half of the 17th c.). The name of Pope Telesphorus is rarely present in the worship texts, and I cannot point out other depiction of him in the Eastern tradition.

The two other images are from the *Church of St. Archangel Michael. Dolna Beshovitsa monastery* (mid-16th c.). On a frieze on the east wall there are six images in medallions. One of them represents Pope Sylvester, and the other two have inscriptions that are read in the text of dissertation as Pope Agatho (678–681) (20 February) and Pope Hadrian (Hadrian I, 772–795) (11 October). The reasons for the three images to appear here are complicated and intertwined. The basis of the stated hypothesis is the connection with the Ecumenical councils – Pope Sylvester with the First Ecumenical council in Nicaea from 325, Pope Agatho with the Sixth Ecumenical council in Constantinople from 680, and Pope Hadrian I with the Seventh Ecumenical council in Nicaea from 787. Two images from the procession of co-officiating bishops on the south wall could also be contributed to this hypothesis. Part of the studies dedicated to the mural paintings of the church identify them as St. Cyril and St. Methodius. Based on this ascertainment, two assumptions are made here. One seeks grounds in the text of the Life of St. Methodius as a link between the images of the popes, being a source in which the councils are mentioned. The difficulty in this hypothesis comes from the fact that a manuscript of the Life had not yet been discovered in the South Slavonic tradition. The other points particularly concern the image of Pope Hadrian and the possible connection with those of St. Constantine-Cyril and St. Methodius, since both brothers' Lifes mention Pope Hadrian II (867–872) who received in Rome the brothers caring the relics of St. Clement. But there is

no evidence that Pope Hadrian II was honored in the Orthodox Church, as well there is no evidence he was canonized by the Roman Church. Hence, it is possible that a certain confusion of the names of Hadrian I and Hadrian II has occurred here.

The same chapter also includes comments concerning several other images that have been suggested in some publications as belonging to Roman popes. One of them is an image bearing inscription with the name of St. Cornelius. It is part of the frieze with bishops' medallions on the south wall in *St Nicholas church, Seslavtsi monastery* (1616). For that image in the dissertation is stated an opinion that it belongs to St. Cornelius the Centurion bishop. Two other images – from the church of the *Kurilo monastery* and from the gallery of the *Church of the Nativity of Christ in Arbanassi village*, bear the name of St. Gregory and are associated with Pope Gregory the Great (Dialogues) in some studies. In the text of this dissertation, it is assumed that they rather belong to St. Gregory the Theologian. Thus, not a single image of Pope Gregory the Dialogues can be confirmed with certainty in the Bulgarian monuments of the period under study. The comparative analysis with the monuments of mural painting from the previous centuries shows that his image has a specific place among the group of bishops, distinguished without any specific features, except by name, i.e., the Roman bishop is part of a group of bishops with the name Gregory (St. Gregory the Theologian is not in that group, keeping his place with the liturgists in the Melismos). During the Byzantine period this group was reduced, whereat in it have their own places two personalia only – St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory the Wonderworker, while the rest of the saints with the name Gregory are rarely depicted on the walls of the churches.

2.7. Conclusion

In the tradition of the Orthodox Church several Roman bishops is worshiped, who, both during the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period, continued to be part of the mural painting representations of hierarchs. The written tradition maintains their honors through the Vitas of each one of them. The pictorial system, however, includes them not just memorially, but officialize them as representatives of the Ecumenical Church, as liturgists and apologists of the faith. The mural painting programs from the post-Byzantine period remain quite conservative in the introduction of new saint bishops, therefore the archiereus staff basically does not undergo distinct transformations. This also applies to the Roman bishops' staff, which includes saint popes honored by the Orthodox Church, who had their pontificates before 8th century.

This chronological limitation in the first millennium could be interpreted in different ways – due to the fact that Ecumenical councils established and codified the main doctrines and also the fundamental decisions of the canon law, those of clergy discipline, but also because of the Grand schism in mid-11th century. The separations in the Church, however, did not affect the veneration of the Roman bishops set long before this event. If there is marginalization or dying out of some saint's cults, then this is a result of, so to speak, “internal” or self-regulating processes in which one cult dominates another. The case of the cult of Pope Stephen I and of the protomartyr Stephen is indicative. Both saints were celebrated on the same date according to the earlier synaxaria, but over time the day in the calendar began to be completely associated with the name of the latter at the expense of that of the Roman bishop. Such or similar conditions have also the veneration of some other popes, who, according to written tradition, outnumber those of whom images are found. This dependence between worship, liturgical calendar and images is one of the answers to the question of why the images of certain bishops of the Roman Church appear without time interruption and not of another, why one cult is preserved and another is not.

These processes are also reflected in the choice of Roman bishops among the images of hierarchs. During the post-Byzantine period, three Roman hierarchs – Pope Clement, Pope Sylvester and Pope Leo – kept their place in the churches from the Balkans, respectively in the churches on the territory of Bulgaria. Their images belong to churches built or decorated in the period from 15th to 18th centuries on today's territories of Western Bulgaria. A part of the total number refers to monuments from Veliko Tarnovo and its region, and only one can be found in the Metropolitan church of St. Stephen in Nessebar. Among them, those of Pope Sylvester are dominant – 25 for the considered period in our country. Followed by those of Pope Leo – 8, of Pope Clement – 7. Accordingly, several Roman bishops are represented with a single image. These are rare images of Pope Agatho, Pope Hadrian, pope Telesphorus. The scenes in which they are reported are Melismos – among the processions of the co-officiating hierarchs; as half-length figure in the altar space; in the friezes outside the sanctuary; in the mural painting menologia; in some of the scenes of the Ecumenical councils.

The number of the images of **Pope Sylvester** show a significant difference compared to those of Pope Clement and Pope Leo the Great. The representations of Pope Sylvester from the 15th – 18th centuries reflect the common tendency from the Balkans and the same proportionality in the comparison between the three Roman bishops. Thus, in the churches of the period the same frequency, the same positioning of his image is kept, i.e., the choice as an image for the

sanctuary, whether part of the processions in the Melismos, or a half-length figure in the upper registers associated also with the Melismos. His place related to other images of hierarchs is repeated constantly. His image is completely recognizable, for which the fact that he is the only canonized (ecumenical) bishop with this name is also important, i.e., there is no way that his name would be confused, hence, his pictorial features be mistaken with these of other bishops.

The images of **St. Clement of Rome** can be defined/identified in terms of the places they occupy, from the Pentarchy principle's point of view and as a result of the development of the common idea of the ecumenical bishops participating in the Melismos. In this case his image is treated in the same way as that of St. Sylvester. The difference here comes from the frequency of including his image in the mural painting programs of the Bulgarian post-Byzantine churches. The same difference occurs in churches from neighboring countries. It cannot be claimed that this image is maintained only in Slavonic tradition, although a significant part of the Eastern written sources about the saint was created in it, which implies a very large number of images. However, in comparison with representations of Pope Clement in churches from the territory of modern Greece and those of the Slavs, if we provisionally separate the veneration of the pope in Byzantium and among Slavs, no differences can be reported. It is accepted that the image of Pope Clement is conventional for the Melismos, but in fact it is rare. The problems surrounding the identification of his images are primarily related to the possible confusion of the names and the images of two more saints honored by the Orthodox Church – St. Clement of Ancyra and St. Clement of Ohrid.

With the images of **Pope Leo the Great**, the situation is quite similar – both from the point of view of their frequency and from the point of view of possible confusions with other bishops bearing the name Leo/Leontios (Leontiy). In the Bulgarian monuments considered in the dissertation there is not a single representation of him in the processions of the Melismos, although in that position his figure appears episodically in churches from the Balkans from the post-Byzantine period. The representations of Pope Leo, compared with those of Pope Sylvester, are rather marginal, especially as regards the Melismos scene.

In the churches on the territory of Bulgaria for the period 15th – 18th centuries there are images of several more representatives of the Roman Church – of **Pope Telesphorus**, of **Pope Hadrian**, and of **Pope Agatho**. These are nondistinctive and unusual images, although it is possible to derive a doctrinal and, accordingly, liturgical context for them. Their presence in churches on Bulgarian territories cannot be determined in the context of artistic traditions.

However, they cannot be considered as a literal choice from the synaxaria. There are possibilities to being part of a special concept of the compilers of the programs of the churches where these images are registered – whether that concept was devotional (Pope Telesphorus) or related to theological themes (Pope Hadrian and Pope Agatho), or related to a national ideologemes, or, simply, the result of an icon painters' practice in regard to the choice of the saints.

All these images reflect the liturgical calendar, and most of them also appear under the influence of the artistic tradition and of the implementations of standard pictorial models in the post-Byzantine churches, maintained by the compilers of the wall painting programs, but also as sustainable formulas of the icon painters. Thus, the examples from the churches from the present-day territory of Bulgaria and from the post-Byzantine period attest that the images of Roman bishops are situated in the general context of the iconography trends for the eastern churches in this period. From this point of view, the research of the images of Roman bishops from the churches in the Balkans countries is decisive.

It is difficult to be made stylistic parallels between images of Roman bishops preserved in the churches from the territories of the spread of the Byzantine/post-Byzantine art. Some of them originated from Bulgarian churches for which there are confirmed links with churches from neighboring countries in terms of artistic workshops executed the mural paintings, or are traceable interactions in areas of spread of artistic tendencies. However, such parallels are impossible to be made in the present study. An exception is a 'pair' of images – of St. Sylvester from the St. George church, Kremikovtsi monastery (1493) and from the St. John the Theologian church, Poganovo monastery (1499), which have definite iconographic and stylistic connections, since the mural paintings in both churches are executed by same icon painting team. For the other churches of the period, for which similar parallels have already been confirmed, connection through the depictions of Roman bishops cannot be made. Most often there is reported either change in the repertoire in the wall paintings, executed by the same team of icon painters or by icon painters associated with the same artistic circle, or there is just no extant image of a Roman bishop.

The main parallels that emerge in the analysis of the images from Bulgarian post-Byzantine churches and those from the Balkans relate mostly to common tendencies – first, the transfer and development of the typological characteristics in the images between Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods, respectively between the images from the reviewed Bulgarian monuments

and those from the same period in Greece, Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia; second, these parallels regard the place of the hierarchs in the relevant compositions, primarily the Melismos.

The implementation of images of Roman popes follows common practice of including saint bishops in the mural painting programs. Their representations have no deviations from the general tendencies regarding the interpretation of the images of the hierarchs of Rome in the Orthodox Church – both from the point of view of the iconography, and the place they have among the other bishops. The answers to the questions which Roman bishops are presented in the programs of the Bulgarian post-Byzantine churches, why some of the images are found more often than others, which of them become constant images for the Eucharistic theme cannot be unambiguous and must be sought in a different context. They cannot be defined either only by means of the worship textual sources, nor only in the artistic tradition, nor only in the period under research finally, but in the previous one and in the next one. In the 19th century, for example, the images of three more popes can be found, but they are absent in the previous couple of centuries, i.e., in the post-Byzantine period. That are the images of Pope Gregory the Great (Dialogues), of Pope Martin, and of Pope Hippolytus. Comparing the presence of these personalia in the preserved mural paintings on the Balkans from the Byzantine period, the situation seems analogous to that of the 19th century. Hence, in the 19th century there was obviously restoration of an already existing bishop's repertoire in the Middle Ages, which was reduced over the next few centuries. This means that the post-Byzantine period has decisive specifics for iconographic programs, and especially for the images of the popes. Therefore, the presence of the Roman bishops in the post-Byzantine mural painting's programs needs to be traced both through the particular problems surrounding their images and in the overall context, as far as possible and wherever possible – restored.

The research of the images of the Popes of Rome shows that they are part of a long tradition in the Eastern Orthodox art. Images that are necessary to complexly develop the theological and church historical concept of the Orthodox art, that are accepted in the Middle Ages and transmitted in the next centuries as a canonical system which the Orthodox Church needs for its idealistic as well as for its propaganda purposes. The Roman saints could not be separated from the veneration and the imagery that the mural painting programs of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches maintained, being a main part of the idea of the Ecumenical, i.e., Universal Church. The Orthodox Church precisely upholds the authorities, which are symbols of the united Church, adhering in this way to the apostolic heritage and the covenants of the Gospels.

III. CATALOGUE

The catalogue, attached to the main text of the study, is a collection of all the images of Roman bishops that have been preserved in the mural painting of the churches from the 15th to the 18th centuries on the lands of Bulgaria at the time. A single image has not been included here – that of St. Sylvester from the destroyed Church of St. Petka in Veliko Tarnovo – because the fragment is unavailable. The catalogue also contains an inventory (with catalogue numbers and references to the illustrations) of all the images. It includes information about the place of each image in the church where it is displayed, the dating of the mural paintings, inscriptions of the names and these in the scrolls, if there are scrolls. The catalogue also describes the main characteristics of the images, as well as the place of each bishop in comparison with the other hierarchs represented in the composition. The publications which mention or comment on the images, are also tagged here.

IV. MAIN RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

- The present dissertation collects and studies for the first time images of Popes of Rome in churches on the contemporary territories of Bulgaria for the period 15th – 18th centuries.
- The images are approached interdisciplinary in an attempt to be researched in all possible written, pictorial, theological and historical context, as a way to be achieved better ground for the identifications of part of them and to be defined the exact meaning of the images of the popes.
- The images are researched on the basis of the iconography of each character, a process which the study has attempted to cover as much as possible, using examples from accessible monuments on the Balkans.
- The analysis of the images is related both to the particular problems around each image and a complex approach that places the researched examples in a relation of the iconographic development of the Orthodox churches, as well as the bishop's repertoire.
- The principles of the implementation of the images of popes in the mural painting programs of the Eastern Orthodox churches have been traced and structured in an extension of the comparative features – both concerning periods in the development of the Orthodox art and the areas of spread of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine art.

V. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS ON THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

Т. Бачева. Мястото на папа Силвестър сред йерарсите в олтара (изображения на римския епископ от български църкви, XV–XVIII век). В: Изкуство и контекст. Сборник с доклади от VII Младежка научна конференция, 3-4 юни 2021. София, 2021, 35-64.

Т. Bacheva. Pope Sylvester from the St. Stephen Church in Nessebar. In. Art Readings 2021.I. Personalia. Sofia, 2022, 169-190.

Т. Бачева. Папа Адриан от църквата „Св. арх. Михаил“, Долна Бешовица“. – Бюлетин „Наследство БГ“, № 2/2022, 36-44.

Т. Бачева. Св. Климент Римски в стенописните програми на поствизантийските църкви в България. В: Изкуствоведски четения. 2022.I. Изкуство и общество. София, 2023, 171-198.

Т. Бачева. Бележки върху иконографията на папа Лъв във византийското и поствизантийското изкуство. В: XII Мартенски студентски четения, В. Търново (под печат).