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Periferie
Dinamiche economiche territoriali
e produzione artistica

a cura di Giuseppe Capriotti e Francesca Coltrinari

Saggi

Tota depicta picturis grecis. The style and iconography of religious painting in medieval Kotor (Montenegro)

Valentina Živković*

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to render a basic review of the circumstances of the setting up, recognition, duration and dissolving of religious painting in late medieval Kotor, which is in various sources and studies called *pictura graeca*. This involves a specific method which can be seen correspondingly in the style as well as the iconography, and thus it is necessary to perceive and analyse this occurrence as a well-rounded and complex phenomenon with a historical, social, economic, religious and cultural context. Thus the emergence and duration of Kotor's *pictura graeca* can be examined in regards to the public for which it had been founded, that is, as an expression of the preference of the milieu and the patrons, formed in a certain historical context. The special character of the form and contents represents a basic trait of Kotor's religious painting corroborated by the preserved fragments of the wall

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paintings which emerged in the period from the beginning of the 13th to the end of the 15th century. The studying of Kotor's *pictura graeca* in a historical context in which it emerged and endured inspires the contemplating of the course which Kotor took, from a distinctive cultural and diplomatic centre within the framework of the Serbian medieval state to a border town at the edge of the Venetian Republic.

Lo scopo di questo saggio è quello di fornire una revisione generale delle circostanze della costituzione, del riconoscimento, della durata e della dissoluzione della pittura religiosa nella Cattaro tardo medievale, che in varie fonti e studi è chiamata *pictura graeca*. Questo comporta uno specifico metodo che può essere messo alla prova corrispondentemente nello stile così come nell'iconografia, consistente nel considerare e analizzare tale evento come un fenomeno complesso all'interno del contesto storico, sociale, economico, religioso e culturale. Così la nascita e la durata della *pictura graeca* di Cattaro possono essere esaminate dal punto di vista del pubblico, per il quale tale pittura è stata realizzata, cioè come espressione del gusto del *milieu* e dei committenti, costituitosi in un determinato contesto storico. Il carattere speciale della forma e del contenuto rappresenta un tratto fondamentale della pittura religiosa di Cattaro, corroborata da frammenti superstiti di dipinti murali realizzati nel periodo che va dall'inizio del XIII alla fine del XV secolo. Lo studio della *pictura graeca* di Cattaro, nel contesto storico in cui è emersa e perdurata, invita a considerare il ruolo che la stessa città di Cattaro ha avuto, da caratteristico centro culturale e diplomatico nel quadro dello stato medievale serbo a città di confine alla periferia della Repubblica di Venezia.

1. Introduction

Similar by definition to the term *maniera graeca*¹, albeit not so much in the form of expression, *pictura graeca* has become a term which is used to define the style of Kotor fresco-painting of the late Middle Ages. Though a number of samples of panel paintings have been preserved, as well as fresco paintings in the churches within the vicinity of Kotor which can also be included in the term *pictura graeca*, there was on this occasion an emphasis placed on fresco painting which emerged in city churches within the heart of old medieval Kotor: in the churches of St Lucas, St Paul, St Mary Collegiate, St Tryphon, St Michael and St Anne. The painted decorations in Kotor's churches depicts the emerging, duration, as well as the dying off of a specific artistic taste which can be defined in relation to the religious needs and demands of an urban environment – a small medieval city commune on the east Adriatic coast which was simultaneously impenetrable but also unrestricted for influences which came from diverse sides.

¹ On *maniera graeca*, which was especially developed in southern Italy, see Lasareff 1965, pp. 17-31; Lasareff 1966, pp. 43-61; Kitzinger 1966, pp. 25-47; Demus 1970, pp. 205-240; Pace 1980; Falla Castelfranchi 1991; Jurkowlanec 2009, pp. 71-92.

A particularly interesting issue which this topic deals with is the possibility that the continuity of the *pictura graeca* can be viewed within the framework of an economic, political, social and spiritual context. Namely, the transformations which *pictura graeca* underwent in style and iconography during its lasting had in principle followed the changes which the city (institutions, society, and culture) went through in changing its suzerainty. This kind of research also involves reflecting upon the phenomenon of the periphery and opens the possibility of viewing the development of painting through the polarity of the terms centre and periphery. Namely, the shift between two reigns in Kotor brought important changes on an economic, social and cultural level. In the late medieval and early modern periods, two suzerain powers, Serbia and Venice, ruled the longest and left the strongest marks on the town and its surroundings. Serbian rule lasted from 1185 until 1371, and Venetian from 1420 until 1797. In short, Kotor experienced a transformation from a distinctive cultural, diplomatic and trade centre in the framework of the medieval Nemanjić state to a border town on the periphery of the Venetian Republic². The declining and finally termination of the local painting production was a process which had its own specific development. The point in time when Kotor entered the Venetian Republic was also initiated by importing of Venetian High Renaissance and Mannerist works, which would culminate with the start of a more decisive application of the decisions of the Council of Trent. The commune's submission to Venetian suzerainty put an end to its role as a trade intermediary on which its prosperity depended, reducing it to a port which served the economic interests of the Venetian Republic. Venice saw Kotor as the *antemurale* of Dalmatia, and the entire Adriatic Sea as the *Golfo di Venezia*. The mode of visual representation of the prevailing religious themes changed with the changing cultural and artistic influences, which were closely dependent on the political situation in the period under study.

Researchers which investigated medieval Kotor fresco painting during the sixth, seventh, and eighth decades of the 20th century, noted the link between the development of Kotor's church painting with the political and economic circumstances of the time³. However, at that time the basic issues which art historians attempted to resolve were attribution and scene identification, while the analysis of the phenomenon of painting in the context of history was left on the side. The results and presumptions were later on used in order to strengthen the idea of the existence of certain types and schools. This kind of method, at least involving the fragmentarily preserved medieval Kotor painting, in the first place reflects the personal desire of the researchers for clearly defined schools of painting and methods. However, the preserved written and art

² Dabinović 1934; *Istorija Crne Gore* 2/1; 2/2, 1970.

³ Radojčić 1953, pp. 59-66; *Istorija Crne Gore* 2/1, 1970, p. 270; Đurić 1974, p. 58; 1980, pp. 225-240.

sources could not (nor can they today) adequately sustain the existence of such an assumption. On the other hand, such an approach brought with it a more serious consequence – the unfeasibility of an ample understanding of a very personal part of church art, considering that the needs of the Catholic Church services were conveyed with a semantic characteristic for Byzantine wall painting. The inequitable tendency of style analysis within the framework of Byzantine painting, along with a disregard for a social, economic, religious and cultural context within which the works occurred, failed to shed a light on the basic issue – the reasons of the emergence of Kotor's *pictura graeca*. Thus, there is a need for the style and iconography of Kotor's fresco painting to be viewed in a clear historical context, as well as specifically emphasizing the relationship between fresco painting and the taste and sensitivity of the public (the Kotor diocese believers), which was formed within certain social, cultural, economic and political conditions.

2. *The historical context*

The emergence of Greek painters and the development of a personal art form occurred at a time when Kotor was a coastal trade and diplomatic centre within the Serbian state under the Nemanjić dynasty. What made its unhindered growth possible was the fact that the Serbian sovereign recognized its municipal institutions and business mores. Thus Kotor was not only allowed to retain its commercial traditions but even entered, in the early 13th century, into a thriving stage of rapid growth. Its privileged position in the medieval Serbian state meant that, besides Dubrovnik (Ragusa), it was the most important trade intermediary between Italy, the eastern Adriatic coast and the interior of Serbia. The economic surge of Serbia, largely resulting from the opening of rich silver mines, led to the flourishing of Kotor's urban life⁴. In regards to the local government, during the time of the Nemanjić dynasty, Kotor retained a significant autonomy within its own legal and court system, city government, administration and communal organization, preserving the basic postulates of the municipal tradition which the city had developed in the earlier centuries. The tendency of Kotor to preserve its own autonomy can be seen best in the statutory provisions which served to defend the city's independence. From such an idea arose the provisions on the primacy of acknowledging the traditions and laws of the city, which even extended to the charters issued by the King⁵.

⁴ The history of Kotor within the Nemanjić state is given in the following: *Istoriija Crne Gore* 2/1 1970, pp. 28-45.

⁵ Cap. CCCXLIX (*De cartis, & ponellis adductis à Dominatione contra consuetudinem Ciuitatis*), see *Statvta Civitatis Cathari* 2009, pp.189-190.

By entering the Venetian Republic, Kotor experienced several significant changes. Symbolically speaking, the first law which was brought after the accepting of Venetian rule announced a series of regulations which would follow and which significantly repressed the town's autonomy. Namely, with the beginning of the mandate of the first Venetian governor in Kotor, Antonio dalle Boccole, a decree was brought that every year Saint Marco would be celebrated in the same way as the town's patron, Saint Tryphon. What is especially relevant and which reflects more than the decree itself was the fact that it was enacted on February 2, 1421, a day before the beginning of the greatest holiday in Kotor, the celebration of Saint Tryphon Day⁶.

Very soon after the entry of Kotor into the *La Serenissima*, numerous changes occurred which deeply penetrated into the very tissue of Kotor's civic identity. Though the Venetians acknowledged the 1420 Statute regarding the town takeover, the reality of the situation was entirely different – *La Serenissima* demanded the including of changes and amendments of Kotor's town laws, in order for such a changed text to be accepted in 1446. The town governor of Kotor was the Doge's envoy with the full title of *Magnificus et Generosus vir de mandato Illustrissimi Ducalis Domini Venetiarum honorabilis Comes et Capitaneus Cathari*. The altered political circumstances in the town itself, but also the Turkish conquests of the countries surrounding Kotor, had an impact on the economic circumstances. From the perspective of Kotor, this represented a final weakening of the role of trade with the hinterland, which had been the foundation of the town's prosperity, and turned Kotor into a port for the commercial needs of the Venetian Republic⁷.

The considerable political changes which Kotor went through during the Middle Ages reflected primarily on the dynamics of construction and the emergence of the town's fortification system (fig. 1). During the lasting of the Serbian rule over Kotor, the town walls were not defined in the present day structure. Considering this was a relatively peaceful period in which the town experienced economic prosperity, the determining of the town nucleus was carried out predominantly according to the needs which were determined by the land and sea trade. The building of strong walls reinforced with bastions began only after the Venetian took over of the city⁸. Venetian rule over Kotor had a primarily military character, and thus the security of the town and building of

⁶ Farlati 1800, p. 458. The translation of the decision on the celebrating of the Saint Mark's holiday in: *Monumenta Montenegrina* 2001, pp. 244-245. The following wrote about the decision: Dabinović 1934, p. 109; Marinović 1957, pp. 91-93; Butorac 1963, p. 95.

⁷ On the economic and political weakening of Kotor, see Dabinović 1934, pp. 11-31; *Istorija Crne Gore* 2/2 1970, pp. 124-133. On the measures which Venice undertook in order to stabilize the economic crisis which was also manifested in the ecclesiastical economy in the Kotor diocese, see Blehova Čelebić 2005, pp. 1-14.

⁸ On the walls of Kotor, see the following authors: Fisković 1953, pp. 71-73; Đurović 1956, pp. 119-145; Milošević 2003, pp. 204-228.

forts were of a primary relevance for the defence of Venetian interests before the mounting Turkish attempts to conquer the coast. A metaphor used in a decision of the Venetian Senate from 1517 portrays how Venice experienced the strategic position of the town: Kotor is in the lion's mouth (*in faucibus leonum*)⁹.

3. *The Bishopric of Kotor*

Kotor was a Catholic bishopric under the jurisdiction of the Bari archbishop. The first news regarding this date was from the 11th century, from the time when the town was still under Byzantine rule¹⁰. There were exclusively Catholic churches in the very hub of Kotor during the Middle Ages and the beginning of the new century – the Orthodox got their first temple within the city as late as at the end of the 17th century. The existing of entirely Catholic temples within the city walls themselves enabled the directing of a unique church policy (concerning only the town centre). Due to the fact that the Orthodox Christian population mostly lived in the villages nearby the town of Kotor, it can be said that there was a bi-confessional population in the Kotor district. Based on the available written historical sources, there is the impression that the relations between the two churches depended primarily on the economic prosperity of the city. On the other hand, certain decisions which were carried out in the name of the church as well as civil policies had a tendency towards a violating of relationships. This was especially emphasized in the 15th century. Namely, after the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, the issue of creating a union between the eastern and western churches once again became current at the Council of Florence in 1439. The attempts of applying the Union from the 15th century were felt in Kotor, leaving a trace on church painting (for example, a parallel existing of Latin and Greek annotations in the Church of Saint Michael, and entire programs of painted decorations in the Church of Saint Our Lady in Stoliv near Kotor)¹¹. During those years, the Venetian Marino Contareno, the Kotor bishop from 1429 to 1453, had an especially large impact on the Kotor church and town government¹². Contareno

⁹ The strategic relevance of Kotor was pointed out, as a secure Venetian port, and compared with the fortress of Corfu. When in 1528 a military bakery was built in the town, the *proveditore Zuan Vituri* expressed his opinion that Kotor had become a better port than Corfu; see Milošević 2003, pp. 204-228.

¹⁰ Božić 1953, pp. 11-17.

¹¹ On the presence of annotations in both, Greek and Latin, and the programs of painted decorations during the attempts of applying the Union, see Đurić 1996, pp. 9-56; 1997, p. 261.

¹² He often participated actively in public life, in order, from 1445 to 1446, after the death of duke Leonardo Bembo, to actually perform the functions of the Doge. The city legislation was under his influence, and the material position of the church was bolstered. The main contribution which the bishop gave to the Kotor church was a large inventory of church properties and the establishing of an order in church finances. On the role of Bishop Contareno, see Dabinović 1934,

was an active participant of the Council of Florence, and during his governing of the Kotor bishopric, an active Unionist policy was conducted in the district. In 1431, in the aim of strengthening the diocese, Marino Contareno started to advocate the linking of Catholic churches in Serbia to the bishopric of Kotor¹³. The Franciscans also had a significant role in maintaining the Union, bolstered by the Observants reform. Their church politics and activities especially came to the fore in the sensitive peripheral and border areas such as Kotor¹⁴.

4. *Fresco painting*

The term *pictura graeca* was taken from the 1605 record of the Kotor bishop Angelo Baroni, in which he classified frescoes in a concise manner, those dating most probably from the 14th century which he had seen in two churches: in Saint Nicholas (the meeting place of *confraternitas nautarum*) and Saint Jacob: *tota depicta picturis grecis*. The frescoes which are mentioned by Baronius have not been preserved and his annotations, simple, short and what is important, clear and recognizable for the inhabitants of the Kotor of the age are the only trace of their existence¹⁵.

Researchers nowadays can gain merely a slight insight into the accurate number of painted medieval churches in Kotor. The sources which inform us of this are fragmentarily preserved – as remainders of frescoes in churches, and also as written sources in which they are mentioned. Except for the churches of Saint Nicholas the Sailor and Saint Jacob, a document about the dedication of the old church of Saint Nicholas (near the gardens, outside the city walls) from October 9, 1289 in which it is noted that it was painted in an admirable way was also preserved:

*Ecclesiam beati Nicolai mirabili modo depictam ad honorem et laudem dei et dicti beati vir nobilis Tryphon Balduinus de Dragone et filii sui Drago et Germanus fundaverunt, haereditaverunt et consecrari fecerunt de sua propria substantia. Admodum reverendo domino Domino episcopo Catharensi et suo capitulo donant dictae ecclesiae omnes possessiones suas circa ecclesiam dictam, scilicet vineas, zardinos et hortos pro remedio animarum suarum*¹⁶.

pp. 134-137; Božić 1953, pp. 11-15; Mitrović 2007, pp. 97-160.

¹³ Spremić 1997, pp. 239-254. The issue of the Union is analyzed by: Đurić 1996, pp. 9-56. On the conflicts between confessions in the mid 15th century, see Božić 1979, pp. 37-82; *Istorija Crne Gore* 2/2 1970, pp. 327-329; Stjepčević 2003, pp. 118-119.

¹⁴ Especially prominent as a supporter of the Unions was Bernardino da Siena, a Franciscan Observant, whose cult very soon after canonization became very popular and developed in Kotor, see Živković 2010b, pp. 88-92, *et passim*.

¹⁵ Data from the Kotor Diocese Archives relayed by Stjepčević 1938, pp. 58, 61, 97, 99.

¹⁶ *Actum in praesentia episcopi et sui capituli et totius populi civitatis. Thomas de Firmo*

The remains of the wall painting in Kotor's churches which have been preserved until today originate from a wide-ranging time period – from the beginning of the 13th to the second half of the 15th century. The first remains of fresco painting are dated around year 1200. This involves a fresco on the southern wall of the western arcade in the Church of Saint Lucas, unique for the link of Byzantine and Roman Catholic iconographic and stylistic features¹⁷. Three saintly figures have been painted under the leaning arc: in the middle an older bishop is surrounded by two young martyrs in aristocratic dress. Considering that no inscriptions have been saved, there are only assumptions concerning the identification of the painted figures¹⁸. V.J. Đurić stressed the stylistic and iconographic connection with the cave paintings of Apulia and Lucania, and suggested the participation of Greek painters as the authors of Kotor's frescoes (due to the cultivating of a purer Byzantine type of the late Komnenian style)¹⁹. Another example of Kotor's *pictura graeca* has been preserved from the 13th century, albeit extremely fragmentarily: in the arcosolium on the western wall of the Church of Saint Paul there are remainders of the Deesis composition and part of the apostles' figures. The wall painting is approximately dated in the seventh decade of the 13th century²⁰.

The preserved frescoes in a significant number date from the 14th and the 15th centuries and enable the acquiring of a broader picture on the forming of the taste and sensitivity of the Kotor faithful. The auspicious occurrence is that the first notary public record books were also preserved from this period, which include an occasional mentioning of Greek painters and their families. Late medieval painting has been preserved in four city churches: in the Church of Santa Maria Collegiata, the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, Saint Michael and Saint Anne. The frescoes in the apse of the Church of Santa Maria Collegiata were probably painted in the first decades of the 14th century²¹. The central part

Cathari notarius scripsit et roboravit, see Smičiklas 1908, p. 675.

¹⁷ The fresco was discovered in 1971 and the first published comments followed soon after: Skovran 1972, pp. 76-78 and Đurić 1974, pp. 28-29, 190. The names of two researchers should be mentioned, who wrote about a preserved fresco in the Church of Saint Lucas as an example of the specific style and iconography of Kotor in the first decades of the 13th century. In accordance with the elements which were imbedded in the very essence of Kotor medieval painting, the best comments were given by a Serbian researcher, the late Vojislav J. Đurić 1980, pp. 225-240, as well as an Italian one, Valentino Pace 1997, pp. 107-111.

¹⁸ One opinion is that Saint Basil can be recognized as the portrayed bishop, and Saint Helen as the saint with the crowned head (Skovran 1972, pp. 76-78). The second identification is that the Roman Pope Saint Sylvester is represented, surrounded by the martyrs of Saint Catherine or Saint Agatha (Đurić 1980, pp. 225-240). The third, and newest, insight was given by Pace in 1997, pp. 107-111, stressing that it is hard to say if the prelate of the Greek or Latin churches is represented based on the liturgical signs, while the female martyrs are considered to be Saint Catherine and Saint Marina (Margaret).

¹⁹ Đurić 1980, p. 232.

²⁰ Koprivica 2001, pp. 90-95.

²¹ It was proposed that they had emerged either around 1300, see Đurić 1997, p. 259 or in the first decades of the 14th century, Živković 2010b, pp. 280-281. On the frescoes in the Collegiata, see also Vujičić 1995, pp. 365-378; Živković 2000.

of the altar apse is dominated by a representation of the *Crucifixion*. The cycles of the *Passion* and *Resurrection Appearances* are arranged in three registers, separated by red bands, around the central *Crucifixion* scene. As some kind of fresco *croce dipinta*, the *Crucifixion* is larger and constitutes the formal and conceptual backbone of the program. In the uppermost zone, going from the northern to the southern side of the apse, we see the following scenes: *Christ Judged by Pilate*, *Mocking of Christ* (fig. 2), *Crucifixion*, *Descent from the Cross*, *Three Women at the Sepulcher*. Just two scenes are preserved in the central zone. On the northernmost side of the apse, directly below the scene of *Christ Judged by Pilate*, is the *Road to Calvary* (fig. 3). The other preserved scene in this zone is the *Laying Out of the Body of Christ* and it stands on the southernmost side of the apse, directly below the *Holy Women at the Sepulchre*. In the lower register of the apse the scenes should be read from south to north: the *Entombment with the Lamentation* (fig. 4), the *Holy Women at the Empty Tomb*, the *General Resurrection motif* (as part of the central *Crucifixion*), the *Holy Women Telling the Apostles about the Empty Tomb*, and the *Apostles at the Empty Tomb*²². In the western bay there are three scenes on the southern wall (the *Marriage at Cana* from the cycle of Christ's *Miracles* is represented in two episodes and a part of a considerably damaged scene which could possibly be identified as the *Miracle of St. Francis with the Veil*) as well as several single figures on the southern and the western wall (fig. 5)²³. The partly preserved frescoes in the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon in Kotor also date from the 14th century. Like the Collegiata, the cycle of the *Passion of Christ* was also in the altar apse in the Cathedral, judging from the remains of the *Crucifixion* and the *Descent from the Cross*²⁴. Also, a representation of female saints in pairs were preserved on the intradoses in the nave (*Sts. Maria Magdalene and Martha*, *Sts. Margaret and Catherine*, *Sts. Agatha and Thecla*, *Sts. Lucia and Clara*, *Sts. Anastasia and Veneranda*) and two male saints (*Sts. Augustine and Ambrose*)²⁵.

The subsequent preserved parts of the painted decoration emerged in the mid-15th century. The choice of frescoes is especially interesting in the Church of Saint Michael in the altar apse and the eastern wall. A typical Byzantine scheme with representations of the *Annunciation*, the *Ascension* and *Deesis* (fig. 6), has been altered by a lack of the usual carrying out of the Bishop's

²² Živković 2010b, pp. 244-246.

²³ In the zone of standing figures, in the western corner of the southern wall, the single preserved figure is that of St. Francis. On the western wall, also in the zone of standing figures, there are four monumental figures of saints. One archangel and one saint are painted on either side of the entrance to the church.

²⁴ Milošević 1966, p. 34; Luković 1966, pp. 65; Đurić 1974, p. 58; Živković 2010b, pp. 248-250.

²⁵ An inventory of the newly found representations of the female and male saints on the arches of the Cathedral was given by Popović-Grgurević 1999, pp. 107-137. On the cults of the painted saints in the context of the history of the Kotor diocese, see Živković 2010b, pp. 208-238, *et passim*.

Liturgy in Orthodox temples, in place of which were painted drapes of large dimensions and geometrical and floral decoration. This kind of scheme was also accompanied by the representing of saints who were of the greatest importance for the Kotor medieval commune and tradition: Saint Tryphon and Saint Nicholas on the eastern, altar wall and Saint George on the southern wall close to the entrance into the temple²⁶. In the second half of the 15th century, there emerged a wall painting which today is dedicated to Saint Anne. Two saintly figures which flank the altar apse were preserved, Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Martin (fig. 7). Underneath the representations are the prayer votive annotations in the traditional language of two female inhabitants from Kotor, Katarina and Maruša²⁷. On the south wall partially saved are the representations of the Madonna on a throne and the Stigmatization of Saint Francis (fig. 8)²⁸.

5. Pictores graeci

Researchers which have dealt with the Kotor *pictura graeca* most often commence with referencing the Greek painters in written sources in the archives of Kotor and Dubrovnik²⁹. However, the sources do not mention the names of the painters who worked on Kotor's frescoes, which in turn makes it hard to establish a direct link between the written and visual sources of Kotor's *pictura graeca*. Thus, it is necessary to reassess the previous conclusions and the possibilities which the link between the written and visual sources offers in order to form a sense regarding the specific emergence of church art in the town. A sole textual source in which the work of Greek painters is mentioned (though names are not cited) in Kotor Cathedral is the document in which the procurators make a commitment to reimburse the Greek painters for their work:

Anno domini millesimo trecentesimo trigesimo primo, mense iunii, die decima, coram testibus infrascriptis nos infrascripti Marinus Mexe, Petrus Bugoni, Micho Buchie, Iohannes Dabronis obligamur pictoribus Grecis sancti Triphonis eis soluere integraliter de omni opere, quod facient ab hodierna die in ultra. Si non autem, sint in pena de quinque in sex per annum super nos et omnibus bonis nostris. Actum in presentia iurati iudicis Pascalis

²⁶ Živković 2011, pp. 279-290. R. Vujičić described the figure dressed in a bishop's robes (Saint Nicholas) as a saint dressed in the Dominican habit and based on several letters preserved from the note (NIC) concluded that it was Saint Dominic who was portrayed; see Vujičić 1985, pp. 291-301.

²⁷ Vujičić 1983, pp. 433-434.

²⁸ Živković 2000-2001, pp. 133-138.

²⁹ On painting and Greek painters in Kotor and Boka in the Middle Ages, see Ćorović 1930; Luković 1953, pp. 220-223; Radojić 1953, pp. 59-66 e 1955, pp. 48-49; Đurić 1963, pp. 11-14; 1975, p. 58; Vujičić 1986, pp. 55-59; Popović-Grgurević 1999, pp. 124-125.

*Martoli, auditoris Mateus Abrae. Et ego Petrus de Saignanis, abreviator comunis Catari, abreviaui*³⁰.

On the other hand, the actualization of the issue of Kotor's *pictura graeca* from the viewpoint of the changes which had occurred in the cultural, political and economic areas demands a researching of the character of Greek painters in the context of their acceptance and adapting into the environment of Kotor's Catholic bishopric.

Three Greek painters who lived and worked in the town are mentioned in the Kotor and Dubrovnik written sources only from second half of the 13th century and from the 14th century: Nicholas, Manuel and Gregory (Nikolaos, Emmanuel and Grigorius)³¹. Especially interesting for this topic and in reviewing the adjustment of Greek painters and their families in the environment of Kotor, are the records of the family of Nicholas the Greek. Nicholas is mentioned as being deceased in 1327, having a family and house in Kotor, as well as vineyards and land in the vicinity. It was presumed that Nicholas, prior to his coming to Kotor, had lived in Dubrovnik and that he should be recognized in the references in certain Dubrovnik sources from 1284-1285 (that is, in the claim he submitted against the housekeeper who was caught pilfering)³².

Furthermore, one of Nichola's sons compiled a testament before he left for Apulia³³. This is an especially intriguing and complex testament for many reasons. Among the first is that it belongs to the infrequent wills preserved in the corpus of notary public records from the 1326-1337 period, in which the testator mentions the reason for compiling his last will. At the very start, *Stoyanus* (Stojan) stresses that he is of sound mind and body, and that the reason for writing is his relocation (retirement) in Apulia: *Ego Stoyanus, filius condam Nycole Greci, sanus mente et corpore, volens recedere in partibus*

³⁰ *Monumenta Catarentia* 1951, p. 662 (June 10, 1331).

³¹ On the archive data linked with the Greek painters in Kotor, see Kovijanić, Stjepčević 1957, pp. 93-101.

³² Tadić 1952, pp. 1-2. The sources from 1333 and 1334 mention *Elia quondam Nycole Greci de Ragusio*, see *Monumenta Catarentia* 1981, pp. 508, 510, 569, 830. Elia was a trader and made trading deals as well as collaborating with tradesmen from Italy (mostly from Venice) in very lucrative deals. Another Greek painter from Kotor also lived and had a workshop in Dubrovnik – Gregory the Greek (active in the second half of the 14th century). He is mentioned in 1398 as being deceased – *Nuçe Gisda uxor quondam Georgii grecis pictoris de Catharo*. This is the only mention of Gregory in a scantily preserved written record from that period, but he is mentioned in Dubrovnik sources from 1377 to 1387 as *Georgius Grecus pictor olim de Catharo*, see Tadić 1952, pp. 22, 25.

³³ *Monumenta Catarentia* 1951, p. 628 (September 1, 1330). Ivo Stjepčević and Risto Kovijanić observed the following: «It may be impudent to connect the departure (perhaps relocating) of one of Nichola's sons to Apulia, with which Kotor was then in sound trade and cultural connections, with the earlier homeland of Greek painters from our coast» (Kovijanić, Stjepčević 1957, p. 96).

*Apulee puta[n]s euentus mortis, hoc meum ultimum condo testamentum*³⁴. What also makes this testament special is the sequel of usual individual *item* legacies *ad pias causas*, from which it is no different than the other local wills of the time. The conclusion which can be reached based on this is that he was of Catholic faith, or had accepted it subsequently³⁵. Stojan bequeathed the sale of his real estate in order to serve masses *pro anima patris et matris mee et mea meorumque defunctorum*, as well as to make *unum prandium pro anima patris mei. Et similiter unum pro anima matris mee*. He also bequeathed the following for the salvation of the soul: *unus calix in ecclesia sancte Marie Magdalene*, as well as *una planeta in ecclesia sancte Marie de flumine*. He left ten perpers *pro male ablato. Et de residuo pretii dentur perperi decem presbytero Basilio, patri meo spirituali, et faciat me scribere pro ecclesie cum residuo*. After some more determining of property legacies, he concluded the following: *Item monumentum meum sit ecclesie sancti Triphonis*. Furthermore, accepting the Catholic faith was not a regular occurrence with the Greeks who lived and worked in Kotor in the 14th century. The testament of a certain *Costa Grecus* does not contain even one *pro remedio animae* legacy, as was usual in the structure of Kotor testaments of the age, which with much certainty attests that Costa was of Orthodox faith³⁶. Such and similar mentions of property by the Greek painters in Kotor and their families speaks in favour of the assumption that they were not travelling painters, but rather lived and were well assimilated in the Kotor environment³⁷. However, one should be wary in making conclusions, considering that the names of the Cathedral and the Collegiata fresco authors are unknown, and thus it cannot be ascertained who they actually were.

The most famous Kotor painter of the 15th century was Lovro Dobričević (born in Kotor around 1420, died in Dubrovnik in 1478). He learned the craft of painting in Venice in the workshop of Michele Giambono and Jacobello del Fiore, and worked in Kotor as well as in the neighbouring Dubrovnik³⁸. His

³⁴ Stojan's reason for writing the testament was mentioned by Zoran Ladić, writing on the reasons for making a testament in several medieval towns on the eastern Adriatic coast, including Kotor, see Ladić 2012, pp. 163-180.

³⁵ Pavle Mijović noticed and stressed the bequeathing of *Stoyanus, filius condam Nycole Greci*, and concluded that it testifies on the assimilating of foreigners with the local populace also as regards to the issue of the Catholic faith in the second generation of immigrants. See *Istorija Crne Gore* 2/1, 1970, pp. 282-283.

³⁶ *Ego Costa Grecus cum sana memoria et loquela facio meum ultimum testamentum*. He left the vineyards, house and land to his daughter and cousin, and if they should pass, everything should be left to the Saint Tryphon Church. Also, there were no priests in the role of witness or guardian, but *Gregorius Guimanoy et Domaia, filia Costi, epitropi testamneti Coste Greci* brought forward the testament for transcribing and certification – *rogando, ut eam transcriberem et reducerem in publicam formam, ut est moris*, see *Monumenta Catarentia* 1981, p. 412 (July 28, 1333).

³⁷ *Istorija Crne Gore* 2/1 1970, p. 283.

³⁸ Fisković 1953, pp. 96-97; Đurić 1963, pp. 55-56, 69-89, 96, 108-116, 249-250, 267-268; Đurić 1967, pp. 83-89; Prijatelj 1968, pp. 16, 18-20; *Istorija Crne Gore* 2/2 1970, pp. 519-527;

painting expression represents a transition between the Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance styles, but due to its specific appearance and the complexity of the issue, it exceeds the topic of this paper.

6. *The iconographic and stylistic traits of Kotor's pictura graeca*

Unusual solutions represented in the program of painted decorations in Kotor's churches are present equally in the contents of the iconographic and the formal stylistic plan. Recent research and analyses of Kotor painting, especially from the 14th century, show a clear expression and the demands of the environment on this small town commune. Its iconographic elements and the formal aspect varied with the changing of cultural and artistic trends, which in turn were closely connected with the changing political situation in Kotor in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. A distinctive feature of Kotor art of the period is the absence of clear-cut boundaries between styles³⁹. Namely, the Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance styles produced a variety of combinations. Generally speaking, it can be concluded that the tendency towards a symbiosis of styles is the basic trait of Kotor's late medieval and early modern art.

The first example of Kotor's *pictura graeca* which was preserved in a larger amount is the wall painting in the Church of Saint Maria Collegiata. This was a time when Kotor was within the Serbian state ruled by the Nemanjić dynasty and had a very privileged place in the economic, diplomatic and cultural sense. The painted decoration of Kotor's Church of Saint Maria Collegiata represents an entirely exceptional whole. Namely, according to the iconographic and stylistic features, it can be said that the Collegiata frescoes mainly belong to the Byzantine painting from the Paleologan Age. However, the specific character of late medieval Kotor painting in this shrine was realized on the stylistic level – by inserting Gothic elements in the Byzantine art treatment, and in the iconographic level – a free interpretation of Byzantine solutions in the service of typifying the main segments of Catholic dogma.

The combining of Byzantine and Gothic iconographic and stylistic elements is also present on the Cathedral's wall painting, albeit of a significantly weaker range in regards to the Collegiata. When we look at the two preserved fresco ensembles from the 14th century – the frescoes in the Saint Maria Collegiata and those in the Cathedral show that that painters of a diverse talent had rendered very similar iconographic solutions. While in the Cathedral we can notice a

Đurić 1973; Brajković 1980, pp. 387-402; Gamulin 1986/1987, pp. 345-378; Vujičić 1991, pp. 179-184; Vujičić 1997, pp. 34-44; Demori-Staničić 2007, pp. 187-197; Prijatelj Pavičić 2013.

³⁹ On the similar problem of combining Byzantine and Gothic styles in the painting of Crete and Albania, see Ranoutsaki 2011; Vitaliotis 2011, pp. 173-215.

certain robust note, a strong and somewhat rough drawing, in the Collegiate the figures exude Hellenic freshness and voluminosity in which the Gothic realistic form is partly instilled. In the Cathedral, the symbiosis of Byzantine and Gothic styles are not realized by permeation, but rather with different templates. On the other hand, the wall painting of the Collegiata shows that the Byzantine and Gothic elements do not necessarily preclude each other on the stylistic or iconographic level, and that this symbiosis can reach a high artistic level for which it is hard to find direct parallels. Such differences in art treatment and quality did not bring with them a departure from the basic *pictura graeca* framework of the period, which is a symbiosis of Byzantine and Gothic stylistic elements. Kotor's *pictura graeca* of the 14th century implies the existing of a comprehended conceptual framework even when this involves the contents, that is, the iconography, the use of a nearly untainted Byzantine iconography in a specific and unrestricted way in order to express Roman Catholic religious preoccupations, characteristic for the late medieval religiosity: the doctrine of transubstantiation (the belief in *praesentia realis*), the devotion to the host and *Quinquepartitum vulnus*. The choice of scenes in the apse of the Church of Santa Maria Collegiata and the remaining fragments of the *Passion* in the apse of the Cathedral of St. Tryphon reflects themes which were a novelty in late medieval and early modern piety when Communion and especially the rite of the *elevatio* became central religious events for medieval man. It should be noted that the cult of the host was very closely associated with that of the relics of the *lignum crucis* enshrined in the two churches at the time they were frescoed with the scenes of Christ's suffering on the cross⁴⁰.

Changes which occurred after the entry of Kotor into the Venetian Republic and which marked the further development of Kotor's *pictura graeca* have been noted on the preserved frescoes from the 15th century in two Kotor churches, St Michael and St Anne. On the frescoes in Saint Michael's church (which emerged probably in the mid-15th century)⁴¹ the art tradition of Kotor nurtured in the 13th and 14th centuries still prevails – the Byzantine stylistic and iconographic form, with a smaller influence of the Gothic. In the Byzantine composition and iconography, the influences of the late Gothic and early Renaissance style can be seen in the face drawings and the colour treatment. By combining light and dark tones of blue, red, bright yellow and green, the painter had created a special and fresh type aspect of colour dynamics, which became an active element in forming compositions. These kinds of stylistic characteristics stand side by side with the iconographic solution which the patron used in the attempt to adapt the usual Byzantine apse arrangement to the demands of the Catholic service.

⁴⁰ Živković 2010b, pp. 195-208, 238-276.

⁴¹ After the uncovering of all the preserved frescoes, iconographic similarities with the wall painting of Saint Basil were determined, and a dating of around the mid-15th century was proposed, as well as different attributions of frescoes being presumed, see Vujičić 1985, pp. 296-298; Đurić 1996, pp. 30, 37, 50.

A special accent is given to painting the saint protector of the Kotor commune, Saint Tryphon and Saint Nicholas who represent a conceptual whole with the Deesis of large dimensions which dominates over the altar space.

On the frescoes which emerged in the mid-15th century in the Church of St Anne, there are an increasing number of late Gothic and Renaissance style elements, that is elements of the painting styles learned in Venetian workshops. This can be seen primarily in the colouring, based on a harmony of clear colours: red, dark blue, green and yellow. An expressive linearity can be seen which prevails in the drapery drawing, on the face drawing and drapery of Saint Catherine of Sienna and Saint Martin. Regarding the attribution of frescoes, it is for certain that we can recognize the artistic specificity and manner of Kotor painter Lovro Dobričević⁴².

For the end, it is necessary to turn to another phenomenon in painting decoration in the Church of Saint Michael. Namely, the stylistic and iconographic solutions characteristic for the Kotor *pictura graeca* on these frescoes are followed by a parallel existing of Greek and Latin inscriptions. It is possible to analyse their appearance in several frameworks and contexts: first, they without doubt represent the basis from which the Kotor spiritual tradition emerged; further, viewed in the context of Venetian government and the interests of the Church, the parallel Greek and Latin inscriptions testify of the then very actual (and applied in Kotor) issue of the union of two churches which was initiated at the Council of Florence⁴³.

By their structure, the frescoes in the Church of Saint Michael are deeply permeated by Byzantine and Gothic iconographic and stylistic elements and they are very similar to the more than a century older frescoes in the Collegiata. What these two have in common is an unforced and natural way in which the symbiosis of Byzantine and Gothic styles and iconography were realized. The originality and dynamics of both the art expression and the contents has been achieved by an unrestricted and free use of differences. The beauty of the painting expression realized in these frescoes testifies that Kotor's spiritual environment of the 14th and 15th century was able to accept a very original artistic solution. Also, two fresco decorations testify of the duration of a specific artistic and religious sensibility and taste.

The process of extinguishing the town painting production (especially fresco painting) and an increasingly frequent turning towards works imported from Venice can be noticed from the end of the 15th century. It is assumed that the importing of Venetian works into Kotor had started in the '80s of the 15th

⁴² More important than presuming authorship is that Lovro's artistic sensibility and manner at that time were very much accepted in his birth town. On the authorship and dating of the frescoes in Saint Ana there are various opinions, see Vujičić 1983, p. 432; Đurić 1997, p. 265; Živković 2000-2001, pp. 133-138; Đorđević 2002-2003, p. 205; Prijatelj Pavičić 2013, pp. 207-209.

⁴³ The appearance of bilingual inscriptions was linked with a unionist policy, cfr. Đurić 1997, pp. 261-262.

century, from the date of the panel painting *Imago pietatis*⁴⁴. Considering that it shows the stylistic traits of Giovanni Bellini and the Santacroce family, the *Imago pietatis* belongs to the same artistic category as the altar painting which was painted for Kotor's brotherhood of leather makers painted by Girolamo da Santacroce⁴⁵. What they have in common is the nurturing of the conservative style, which has brought success to the painting workshops in the entire Venetian Dalmatia. The second category are the paintings which emerged from the workshops of Jacopo Bassano, Tiziano and Veronese, and which were imported for the altars of the Kotor churches during the 16th century. Renaissance and Mannerist painting arrived in Kotor only with the imported altar paintings, which was a big change in relation with the previous style and had a strong impact on the change in the taste of Kotor's inhabitants. The age when paintings of a larger size were ordered from Venetian painters can be determined with certainty based on a preserved document – in 1529 a contract was signed between the guard of the relics of Saint Tryphon (the patron saint of Kotor) and the *magistro Dominico pictore de Venetiis*. According to the contract, the painter *Dominico* was commissioned to paint thirty paintings on canvas with scenes from the Life of Saint Tryphon (*hystoriam martirii et miraculorum prefati gloriosi martiris in quadris triginta*) for the Reliquary Chapel vaults in the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon⁴⁶.

The development of Kotor's *pictura graeca* and its special stylistic and iconographic expression is viewed in the context of social, political, church, economic and cultural conditions which changed several times during several centuries in this coastal town. After the summary review of archival sources and the preserved fragments of wall paintings, it can be concluded that the specific combining of formal solutions from different cultural and artistic environments in Kotor reflected the very essence of the tradition of this town and daily life in it. The period of Kotor's economic prosperity within medieval Serbia until the first century of Venetian rule saw several stylistic trends developing in its art, a process that died out during the 16th century, when imported works in the Venetian High Renaissance and Mannerist style came to prevail. Another very important conclusion which should be mentioned is

⁴⁴ The picture which was first located in the Church of Saint Paul, from where it was transferred to the Church of Santa Maria in Lower Stoliv, was a part of a larger polyptych which was not preserved, see Gamulin 1960, p.13; Luković 1965, pp.140-141; Đurić 1963, pp. 220-221.

⁴⁵ Regarding this altar picture, see Westphal 1937, p. 33; Prijatelj 1957, p. 191; Djurić 1963, p. 220; Prijatelj 1965-1966, pp. 25-30; Luković 1966, p. 67; Grgurević 1993-1994, pp. 89-90; Živković 2010a. The painting done by Girolamo da Santa Croce for Dalmatian churches has been in recent times analysed by Ivana Čapeta Rakić 2006, pp. 185-195; 2008, pp. 159-168; 2010, pp. 311-320; 2011, pp. 93-102.

⁴⁶ Stjepčević 1938, p. 21. It is likely that the painter of the Reliquary Chapel of Kotor's Cathedral is the same person who signed his name as Domenico Sanguinallo on the painting of the Madonna (*Immaculata conceptione*), which comes from Kotor, and can be found in the Sarajevo Art Gallery. See Đurić 1963, pp. 170-171.

that confessional belonging in late medieval Kotor did not necessarily imply an opting for the “appropriate” art form which would express theological and dogmatic concepts. The changes which transpired in this area ran parallel with the prevailing of importing paintings on canvas from workshops of Venetian painters. The change in the taste of the Kotor public occurred slowly – first with ordering the works of painters who nurtured the conservative style, and then with works from workshops of painters who created in the High Renaissance and Mannerist style. However, in a border town of the Venetian Republic such as Kotor, the influence of Renaissance painting topics were of a very limited nature. The insistence on “unsoiled” topics from Christian history testifies on the rigorous control which the church held in the town. It should be specially emphasized that the elements of Renaissance revival of antique motifs were present only with Kotor poets whose works were intended for the educated social and economic elite. On the other hand, the nurturing of an expressed conservative Christian spirit was a trait of religious painting intended for a wide circle of the Kotor diocese faithful. This reflects a well-thought out policy of the Catholic Church and the Venetian Republic for the town which was located on the border with the Ottoman Empire and in whose vicinity the Orthodox Christian population lived.

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Appendix

Fig. 1. Giuseppe Rosaccio, *Cattaro*, engraving, 16th century, Cetinje, The State Archives of Montenegro, Department of Herceg Novi



Fig. 2. *Mocking of Christ*, Cattaro, church of Santa Maria Collegiata, 14th century



Fig. 3. *Road to Calvary*, Cattaro, church of Santa Maria Collegiata, 14th century

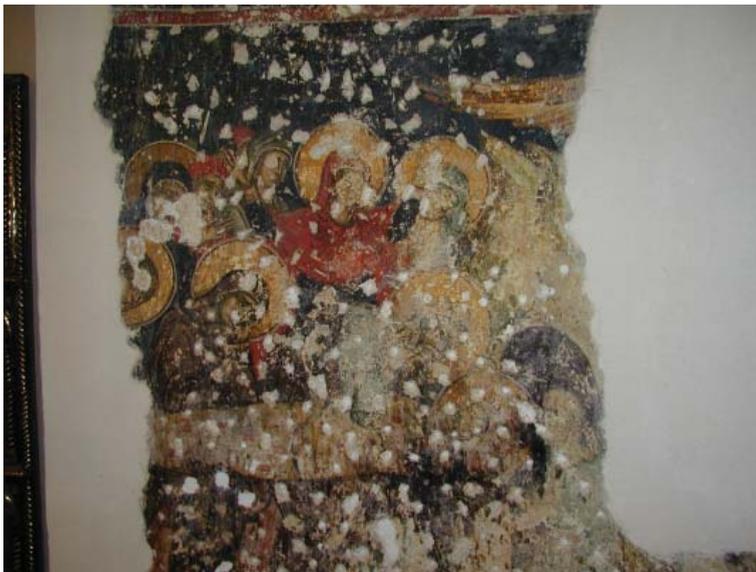


Fig. 4. *The Entombment with the Lamentation*, Cattaro, church of Santa Maria Collegiata, 14th century



Fig. 5. *The Apostle and the Archangel*, Cattaro, church of Santa Maria Collegiata, 14th century



Fig. 6. *Deesis*, Cattaro, church of Saint Michael, 15th century



Fig. 8. *Stigmatization of Saint Francis*, Cattaro, church of Saint Anne, 15th century



Fig. 7. *Saint Martin*, Cattaro, church of Saint Anne, 15th century

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