



The most significant values
of the cultural and natural heritage

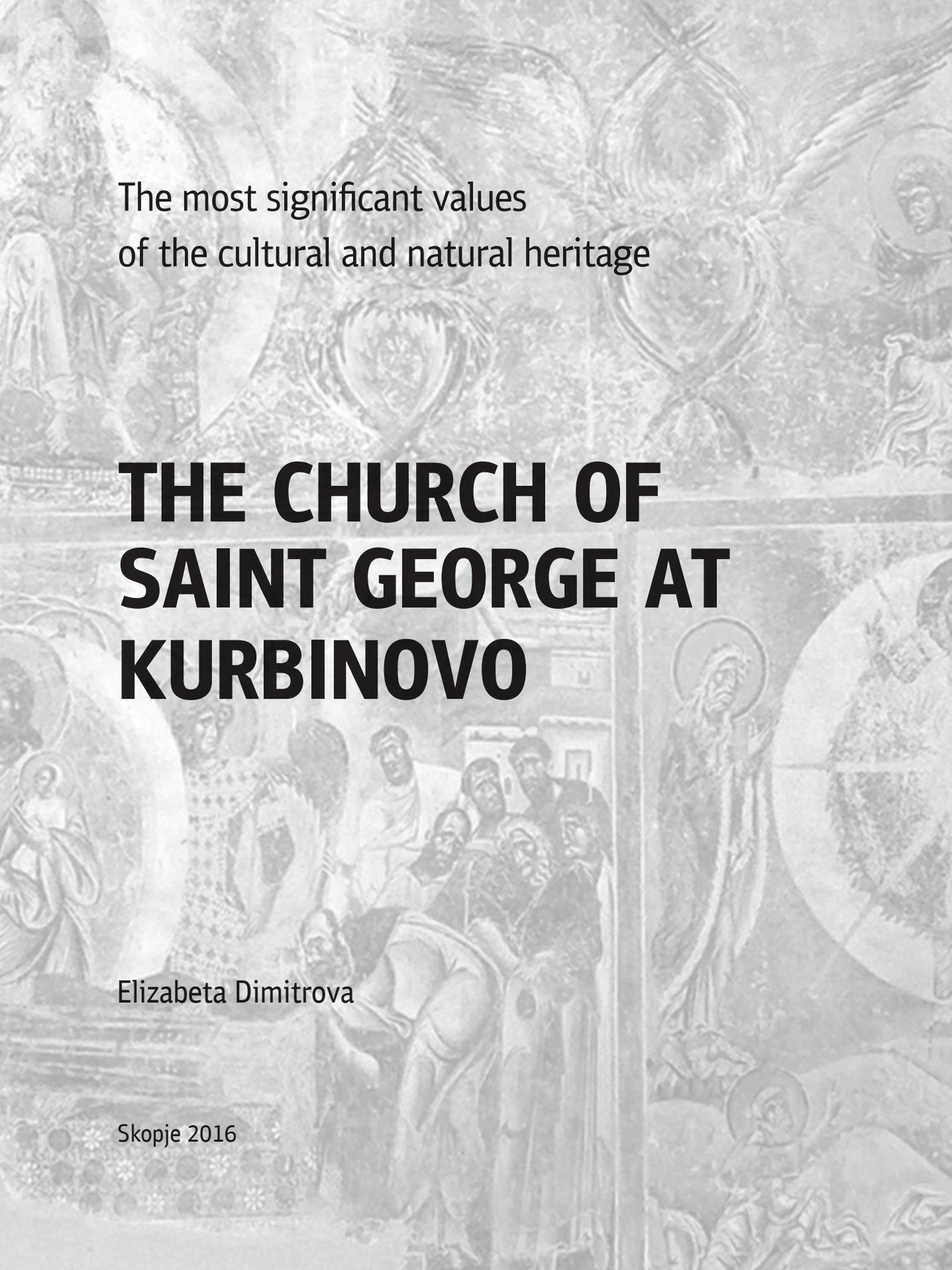
THE CHURCH OF SAINT GEORGE AT KURBINOVO



Elizabeta Dimitrova

This work has been published
with the financial support of the
Government of the Republic of Macedonia



The background of the cover is a collage of various religious artworks, including frescoes and icons. It features depictions of saints, angels, and scenes of religious significance, all rendered in a monochromatic, sepia-toned style. The central focus is the title, which is overlaid on a large, detailed fresco depicting a group of people, possibly a church council or a teaching scene, with one figure in the foreground bowing or kneeling.

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THE CHURCH OF SAINT GEORGE AT KURBINOVO

Elizabeta Dimitrova

Skopje 2016

FOREWORD

MACEDONIAN CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Over the past 4.5 million years since the creation of Earth, the ancestor of the modern man, “the wise man - Homo sapiens”, appearing on the African continent 150,000 years before this day, quickly settled throughout the territories of the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

His cultural evolution is recorded in the Republic of Macedonia, as well.

While travelling through the prehistoric era of the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, as well as the historical epochs of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, man created civilizations on the soil of the Republic of Macedonia by introducing and using the natural resources. He established the magnificent kingdoms of the Agrianians, Paeonia, Pelagonia, Lyncestis, Macedonia, and the principalities of Deuriopus, Dessaretia and the Penestae.

The Roman Empire, Byzantine, the medieval states - all left a powerful civilizational imprint.

The belief in the natural phenomena, followed by the belief in the many gods, to finally worship our only God - all left indelible cultural traces.

All this enormous cultural and natural heritage of the Republic of Macedonia was subject of the capital project of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, “Publications of the most significant values of the cultural and natural heritage,” carried out by the Cultural Heritage Protection Office.

130 monographs featuring the Archaeological Heritage, Sacral heritage, the Treasures of the churches and monasteries in Macedonia and the Natural heritage were created.

Macedonia - the high forest land in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, as the name suggests, furrowed by the deep valleys of the Vardar tributaries and the river Drim, adorned with the blue - green waters of Lake Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran, with the proud giants Kozuv, Shar Mountain, Korab and Jablanica, Selecka Mountain and other mountain ranges, today lights 130 torches of its own, as well as the world's, cultural and natural heritage; a legacy to preserve, use wisely and pass on to future generations of the Macedonian road to eternity.

Prof. Viktor Lilchikj Adams, Ph.D.

THE CHURCH OF SAINT GEORGE AT KURBINOVO

In the course of the mediaeval epoch, dynamic according to the character of historic events and glorious by the quality of artistic creativity, the territory of present-day Macedonia has produced a significant number of monuments that belong to the circle of the supreme aesthetic achievements of Byzantine painterly culture. Originated in the periods of social growth, economic prosperity and artistic regeneration and marked by authenticity of their creative energy, they witness to the wealth of creative ideas, as well as the inventiveness of the ambitious enterprises in all of the evolutionary stages of the mediaeval era. Despite wars and natural disasters, as well as the fall of ruling dynasties and military devastations, the monuments of the representative Byzantine artistic production have survived throughout the long centuries as a testimony to the bright side of medieval history. Built of shiny marble and erected towards the skies as symbols of the unifying faith, they were embellished with luxurious fresco ensembles the beauty of which will celebrate the names of their donors forever. Emperors and kings, noblemen and priests – they have put their efforts to commission the famous builders and painters for creation of their khetorial endowments. Some of the best medieval fresco masters who belonged to the most representative Balkans' painterly ateliers, have worked in the territory of Macedonia and left their masterpieces to our admiration.



View of the western facade

One of those works of art, a product of an extraordinary creative inspiration, as well as supreme aesthetic ideas of the leading masters of the 12th century which, at the same time, is enumerated among the most remarkable accomplishments of the artistic treasury of the Middle-Byzantine era, is the church dedicated to Saint George at the village of Kurbinovo, in the Prespa region.

The patron saint of the church is the brave and loyal soldier of the Roman army named George, who, despite the great respectability gained as a member of the imperial guard, was subdued to many tortures due to his religious confession. Murdered by decapitation in the Palestinian town of Diospolis in the year of 303, he became an example of a true Christian martyr, sacrificed in the time of the most severe persecutions of Christians by the Roman emperor Diocletian. His cult, which started to spread during the 4th century, in the 5th century can be observed in the cultural stratification of Jerusalem and Constantinople, while in the course of Christian Antiquity the cult of Saint George was also disseminated all over the Balkan territory where a significant number of sacral edifices dedicated to this saint have been established. Representing one of the most popular military saints in Christendom and acquiring the role of a protector of Christian rulers and noblemen, Saint George became a patron of a great number of churches, established in honour of his patronizing function. Many members of the “highest society” of rulers and governors, as well as members of the respectable church elite, have chosen Saint George as a patron saint of their khetetiorial endowments. The church of Saint George at Kurbinovo is one of the most representative specimens of this medieval tradition.

On the chronology and the khetetor

The sole chronological information in relation to the historic analysis of the church dedicated to Saint George at Kurbinovo as a monument of the Byzantine culture, is the inscription written on the eastern side of the altar table located in the sanctuary where the pedantic and highly responsible painters have left a “note” that the fresco painting of the temple began in April, 1191. This inscription, linked with the initial date of the execution of the fresco decoration, indirectly also points to the possible chronological reference of the erection of the sacral edifice; according to the dimensions of the church building and in context of the relatively modest architectural model applied in the spatial configuration of the interior, the temple was most probably erected in the chronological interval of one to two seasons prior to the execution of the fresco painting, which points to the period of ca. 1190. Although we lack precise information about the accurate date of the erection of the church, its chronological determination would certainly not deflect significantly from the temporal line of the painting, i.e. it should slightly antedate the momentum related to the start of the painterly decoration of the temple.



View from the south-west



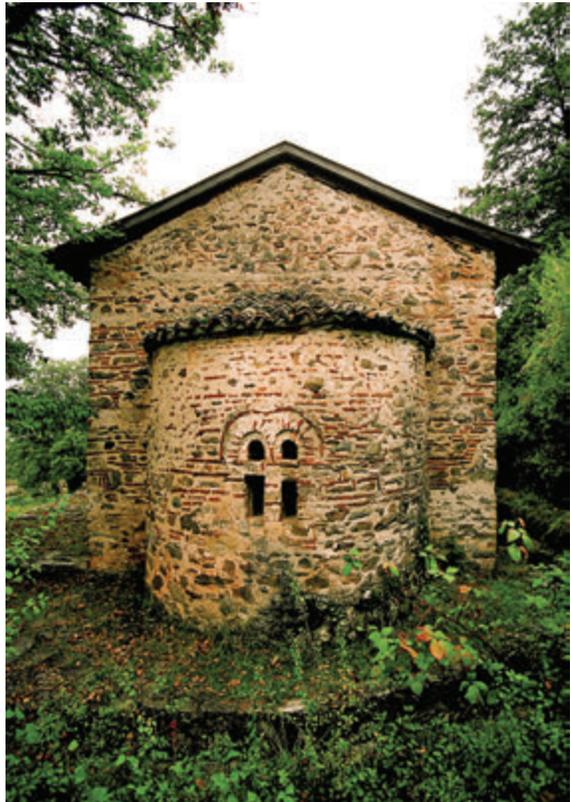
The painted decoration of the west wall

The identity of the person who took care of the activities related to the erection and fresco decoration of the Kurbinovo church is not known. No written documents, nor khetorial inscription in the temple have been preserved that would disclose his name as well as his social status. However, the khetorial scene, depicted on the western façade of the church, although only partially preserved, points to the probable social rank of the Kurbinovo donor. Despite the serious destruction done to the second zone of the decoration of the façade wall, where, above the image of the patron saint depicted in the semi-circular niche and accompanied by his equestrian comrades, the four characters of the donors' scene were represented, the costumes enable their historical identification to a great extent. This particularly refers to the pair of figures portrayed in the northern half of the scene, where, the visible *loroses* as parts of the costumes, as well as the purple cushions under their feet, reveal the luxurious design of imperial garments. In the context of the chronological information on the execution of the frescoes preserved in the altar space of the temple, as well as within the traditional canons of khetorial iconography of that time, Emperor Isaac II Angelos (1185 - 1195) and his wife, Byzantine Empress Margareta, would be the most appropriate historical characters for the most reliable recognition of the demolished figures.

According to the tradition of representation of concurrent secular and spiritual leaders within khetorial ensembles of the newly erected churches, the image of the person dressed in more modest clothing, who, while turned towards the imperial figures, presents the donor with a festive gesture of his hand, should depict the contemporaneous supreme authority of the Ohrid diocese on the territory of which the Kurbinovo temple was established - the Archbishop John Camateros. Who his protégé is, i.e. the individual who proudly presents himself in front of the imperial couple by the mediation of the Ohrid Archbishop, could not be disclosed so far. The tiny remnant of his right foot and the lower edge of his garment are not sufficient for any speculation, let alone determination. However, his appearance in the company of the Byzantine ruling couple, as well as the Head of the Ohrid Archbishopric speak in favour of his affiliation with the highest social circles of the State. Starting from the structural design of the khetorial scene in which the constructive symmetry of the visual scheme is accomplished by the proportional arrangement of the characters in both parts of the composition, as well as keeping in mind the strict rules for cautious disposition of the depicted characters in the donors' ensembles of that time, we can only assume the social identity of the Kurbinovo commissioner. Represented opposite the imperial couple and accompanied by the Ohrid Archbishop who introduces him to the Emperor, he could, by all means, be a member of the clerical hierarchy, i.e. the highest circles of church nobility. However, his affiliation with the secular nobility should not be excluded, as well, particularly if one takes into consideration the specific features of the fresco painting: the wealth of genre components within the scenes, the esoteric "sparkles" within the iconographic composite of the sights, as well as the untamed creative freedom of the author in the painterly execution of the arrangement.

On the ground plan and building design of the church

According to the commissioner's desire, the temple dedicated to Saint George at Kurbnovo was erected with an elongated ground plan, which belongs to the longitudinal typological category of mediaeval sacral edifices. Built with no narthex and accentuated by a deep semi-circular apse on the eastern side, the church has been designed without an elaborated altar space, a characteristic that is a common feature of the edifices with a modest typology of their ground planes. Due to the small dimensions of the two small niches which were constructively shaped only in the interior of the temple and had the symbolic function of a prothesis and diaconicon, the liturgical performance was concentrated in the spacious apsidal portion of the church, where a monolithic altar table was located. Despite the modest shape of the ground plan which, with the one-aisled disposition was commonly characteristic of less ambitious architectural enterprises of mediaeval master builders, the church has relatively large dimensions (15 meters in length, 7 meters in width) according to which it can be enumerated among the largest one-aisled buildings on the territory of Macedonia.



View of the eastern facade

The building technique chosen for the erection of the church, as well as its architectural ground plan, can not be determined as representative. Above the quite roughly executed dado-zone, the walls of the temple are built of semi-hewed stone blocks, laid one next to the other and joined with an irregular quantity of mortar. The building opus does not lack bricks as building components, yet their utilization is significantly smaller in relation to the primary building material, while their concentration is more frequent within the niches above the entrances, as well as the surface of the façade registers. Nevertheless, the builders have tried to substitute this lack of "warmer" building components with the decorative pattern of ornamentation of the facades, ennobled by the manner of false brick-work execution. By utilizing a fresco technique with an emulation of different ornaments designed according to the common brick-work patterns, the masters have accomplished the impression of more representatively embellished facades, although their execution of the exterior had a character of a skillfully designed pseudo decoration. By imitating the building system *cloisonné*, as well as painting the nonexistent brick-work ornaments

frequently shaped in the form of decorative letters, the builders of the Kurbinovo temple were actually following the older patterns of Kastorian architects in the formulation of specific models for a more representative appearance of the modestly executed church facades.

The effort for determination of the prototype of the Kurbinovo architectural specimen, as well as definition of its place in the development of the regional building tendencies of the Middle-Byzantine epoch, could start from the two basic features of its architectonic corpus: the respectable dimensions of the one-aisled ground plan, as well as the pseudo-building arrangement executed in a fresco technique on the walls of the church exterior. In regard to the choice of a longitudinal typological model, which was shaped with a very accentuated dimension of the east-west axis and the construction of the deep semi-circular apse in the eastern portion, as well as the wooden roof placed above the naos, the Kurbinovo church, in a significantly simplified version, follows the concept of the most representative sacral edifice in the Prespa region – the cathedral temple dedicated to Saint Achilles at Prespa. Some of the churches in Kastoria that also manifest a longitudinal ground plan, deep semi-circular apse and a wooden roof testify to the affiliation of the Kurbinovo architectural plan in regional building patterns. The execution of the ornamented letters in a fresco technique, incorporated within the building system *cloisonné* on the facades of the Kastorian churches is the final link which connects the Kurbinovo temple with this significant Balkan artistic metropolis. Hence, the contribution of the Kastorian builders in the erection of the church of Saint George at Kurbinovo should not be doubted, even more so if one keeps in mind that the fresco painting of the temple is a work of art of painters belonging to the same renowned cultural center.



The painted decoration of the eastern wall



The fresco icon of Christ on the south wall

On the program concept and iconographic novelties of the painting

The church of Saint George at Kurbinovo has been given the label of one of the most beautiful monuments originating in the era of the Komneni due to the extraordinary features of its painted programme that equally refer to the remarkable invention in the iconographic conception of the themes, as well the luxurious amplitude of the artistic mastery of its painters. Limited, to a certain extent, by the architectural characteristics of the church interior, the fresco painters were faced with the challenge for the arrangement of the canonically modeled program conception of the painting within the quite austere spatial construction of the one-aisled edifice. Thus, due to the absence of a dome structure from the building composite of the church, the painters had to design an authentic iconographic pattern as a substitute for the traditional program model designated for the decoration of the dome. In that context, the illustration of the prophetic vision of the Old Testament wise man Daniel was located in the third zone of the western wall of the naos; sitting on his throne and accompanied by the celestial guard, the Holy Father in the iconographic variant of Christ – the Ancient of Days replaces the representation of the Pantocrator from the nonexistent dome, uniting the thematic elements of the dome decoration in Byzantine churches with the exposition of the prophetic figures depicted in the highest registers of the northern and southern walls. The thirty figures of the Old Testament wise men (today heavily damaged) who announce Christ's incarnation and his messianic role on behalf of mankind in their prophetic texts and complement the iconographic structure of the Theophany, due to the absence of a dome structure, were depicted in the highest zones of the painted arrangement.



Virgin with the Child between Angels in the apse



The Ancient of Days on the western wall

The most significant contribution of the Kurbinovo fresco decoration to the development of authentically conceived and inventively visualized iconographic novelties is the repertoire executed in the apse, where the two painted registers sublime the essence of the messianic prophecies of the soteriological role of Christ among people. Following the already established program pattern for depiction of the Virgin's figure in the altar conch as a symbol of the earthly Church, the Kurbinovo fresco painters have chosen the iconographic variant of the Mother of God seated on a throne gently hugging the newborn baby. Instead of the theological and speculative form of depiction of the incarnated, the not-yet born Saviour represented in a mandorla which appears quite frequently as a décor of the altar conchs of Byzantine temples, the Kurbinovo painting visualizes the more realistic variant in the representation of Christ's incarnation, as well as his preparation for sacrificial offering on behalf of sinful mankind. In the context of the desire for a more spontaneous explication of the dogmatic character of the mandatory altar décor, beneath the image of the Virgin with a Child, the Kurbinovo fresco painters have depicted the Church fathers officiating and thus commemorating Christ's sacrifice; however, instead of to the Hetiomasia, they bow to the newly born Christ laid on the altar table, prepared for a ritual sacrifice.

The refined Eucharistic allusion from the representation of the Hetiomasia depicted in the altar programme of Saint Achilles at Prespa (end of the 10th century) in the Kurbinovo altar is transformed into a concrete iconographic model that reflects the sacrificial dimension of Christ's incarnation. Symbolizing the Eucharistic bread laid on the altar table prepared for a liturgical ceremony, the Amnos (the body of the newborn Christ) from Kurbinovo is the earliest example of the specified image of the sacrificial offering in the altar decoration of Byzantine temples. Uniting the soteriological significance of the sacrificed Christ with his role in the Eucharistic service as a part of the Liturgical ceremony, the picture of the Officiating Church Fathers in Kurbinovo enabled the painters to omit the Communion scene from the altar décor of the church, simultaneously inspiring them to construct the most characteristic component of the altar program, which soon after is going to become a mandatory element of the painting of Byzantine temples. Hence, the breakthrough of the scene with the Church Fathers Officiating to the Amnos in Kurbinovo, which sublimates the

complex symbolism of sacrifice, deliverance and salvation, is the most significant contribution of the Kurbinovo fresco painting to the historic evolution of Byzantine iconographic matrixes.



Saints Methodius, Cyril and Cyril of Alexandria



Saint Clement of Rome



Saint Euplos, the Deacon

The thematic conception of the Christological cycle, which is a compilation of the Festal and Passion events, follows the iconographic configuration of the execution of the scenes in the church of Saint Panteleimon at Nerezi near Skopje. However, the Kurbinovo masters went further in the process of experimenting with the compositional elements and their arrangement and surpassed the imagination of their older colleagues in the inclusion of symbolic, allegoric and inventively structured genre components. In that regard, the depiction of the Annunciation, which even in Nerezi derives from the subtle inspiration of the Old Testament verses of the Song of Solomon, in Kurbinovo becomes finalized into a compositional unity with a great mastery in the configuration of the painterly exposition of the Biblical synopsis. The refined allusion to the virginity of the Holy Mother of God as a prerequisite of the Incarnation, taken over from the picturesque verses of King Solomon's song, has not only grown into a structural element of the architectural décor in the second plan of the scene, but it is also shaped as a luxurious "finishing touch" to the scenographic setting of the illustrated motif. "A garden enclosed" and a "spring shut up" as synonyms for the divine innocence from the superb love poetry of King Solomon's song (4:12) have become an integral part of the iconographic structure of the Annunciation in Kurbinovo, ennobling the standard architectonic coulisses of this scene with the delicately constructed optical allusion to the Virgin's role in Christ's incarnation.



The Amnos from the Officiating Church Fathers



Saint Ane Nursing



Saint Panteleimon

The narrative episodes in the representation of the images of the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth, the dynamic locomotion of the figures in the Lamentation, the vivid picturesqueness of the scene depicting the Holy Women at the Sepulchre, as well as the enriched *mis-en-scene* of the Crucifixion are but a few examples of the inventive approach of the Kurbinovo masters in the iconographic formulation of Christological motifs. The unpretentious inclusion of the personified details in the Baptism, the associative expression of the landscape vistas in the Harrowing of Hell, as well as the illustrative symbolism of the compositional elements in the Pentecost are probably the best examples that speak in favour of the ennoblement of the standard iconographic matrixes with the inventive “quips” of the creative phantasy of the painters. The impressive genre elements, inserted in the common iconographic configuration of the pictures, are another noticeable example of the creative invention of the masters: the depiction of the shepherd dog that watches over the sheep pen while his masters are gone for the adoration of the newborn Christ in the scene of the Nativity, the effort of the little bit player to test the veracity of the miraculous event by lifting the heavy marble lid in the Resurrection of Lazarus, as well as the wounded child who touches his injured foot while curiously watching Christ’s “*adventus*” in the Entry in Jerusalem are testimonies to the creative approach of the Kurbinovo painters to the inventive structuring of the iconographic matrixes.

Nevertheless, the elaborated iconographic configuration of the Ascension, the pyramidal composite of which, adjusted to the constructive shape of the eastern wall of the naos, has skillfully joined the compositional elements of the two registers in the illustration of the Evangelic description, has surpassed the spheres of creative invention and speaks in favour of the theologically permeated aesthetical orientation of the Kurbinovo fresco painters. Inspired by the soteriological allusions encompassed by the last chapter of the Old Testament Book of the prophet Zacharias and carried away by the apocalyptic vividness of the verses of John's Revelation, they have conceived the depiction of the Ascension as a triumphant picture of the victory of eternal life over death. By representing the resurrected Savior who departs into the celestial heights with a victorious gesture of his cosmic elevation above the symmetrically arranged figures in the lower zone, the Kurbinovo fresco painters have created almost an emblematic iconographic model of the uncrowned Master of the redeemed humankind. By filling Christ's mandorla with the dynamic waves of the water element, as well as the vivid forms of the sea fauna as a visual association to the Biblical sintagma of the "live waters", the authors of the Kurbinovo fresco painting have created the most luxurious image of the ascended Christ as a salvational source of immortal life for all of humanity.



Saints Thekla, Paraskevi and Theodora



Saints Barbara, Kiriaki and Catherine



The Nativity

The gallery of the standing saintly figures, arranged in the first zone of the painted decoration of the church, besides the traditional images of the holy healers gathered in the common trio (Saints Cosmas, Damian and Panteleimon) and the patrons of the Christian belief (Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena) on the southern wall has encompassed the earliest representation of the Nursing Anne, as well as the portraits of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who, as patrons of the Byzantino – Slavic mediaeval culture, were commonly included in the painted arrangements of the monuments - starting from the Middle Byzantine era. Across them, on the eastern portion of the northern wall, Saint Clement, accompanied by a demolished saintly figure, has gained the most festive position as a portrait of the initial Christian missionary among Macedonian Slavs, while the bust of Saint Euphrosinos confirms the authenticity of the program conception of the Kurbinovo fresco painting with the earliest representation of this saint in the history of Byzantine painting.

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The Baptism



The Entry in Jerusalem



The Dormition

Nevertheless, the most exciting “quip” of the masters in their desire to authentically structure the decorative ensemble is the grouping of female saints whose figures are located on the surface of the western wall of the temple. Arranged from both sides of the door and categorized according to the typological features of the depicted garments, they are characterized by specific iconographic features in the execution as their male “colleagues”. However, the preserved signatures reveal the identity of the luxuriously dressed noble women, as well as of those depicted in monastic clothing, uniting the most significant representatives of the category of female martyrs for the orthodox faith in one place. Followers of the apostolic princeps, martyrs due to the most severe persecutions of the Roman emperors or passionate devotees to ascetic ideals, Saint Thecla, Saint Paraskevi and Saint Theodora, altogether with Saints Barbara, Kiriaki and Catherine configure the most compact depiction of the most representative female assembly in the Byzantine painting of that time. Situated on the western wall of the naos, where they have been given their own space within the depiction of the gallery of saintly images, they symbolize the iconographic sublimate of the nonexistent narthex, where commonly the images of the female saints were portrayed. Representatives of passionate devotion to Christ’s faith and examples of female endurance in dedication to spiritual ideals, the images of the Kurbinovo lady saints sublime the functional substitutes in the organization of the church space and the aesthetic paradigms of the iconographic imagination of the fresco painters.

On the painterly features and the artistic code of the masters

In the history of Byzantine painting, the fresco ensemble of the church of Saint George at Kurbinovo represents the closing stage of the painterly evolution of Comnenian art, which, abandoning the challenges from the earlier epoch, focuses on the formal structure of the compositional schemes based on the linearistic principles and constructive graphicism. Following the stylistic examples set by the earlier monuments originated in the Comneni era, in which the geometric rules for rationally organized compositional structures have been applied with an extraordinary preciseness, the Kurbinovo fresco painting appears as tolerant towards the unpretentious deviations from the strict metrical canons for symmetry and order of the painterly elements, but not abandoning, at the same time, the already approved methods for proportionality and harmony of the scenic arrangement. The harmonious structure of the pictures, which, besides the calculated picturesqueness in the arrangement of the visual components, as well as the perfectly orchestrated dynamic balance in the execution, is the core of the painterly handwriting of the masters and speaks in favour of their ambitions to keep the principles of formal neatness of compositional models inherited from their older colleges – the authors of the fresco decoration in the church of Saint Panteleimon at Nerezi (ca. 1166).



The Transfiguration



The Deposition from the Cross



The Lamentation



Holy Women at the Sepulchre

However, the enhanced dynamics of the drawing, the accelerated mobility of the masses, as well as the untamed easiness of the forms of the Kurbinovo fresco painting surpass the festive expressiveness of the Nerezi ensemble, permeating the sights with the luxurious vividness of the painterly approach. The gracious figures that float in their sacred corporal lightness, the elegant movements captured by the fluid energy of the weightless unrest, as well as the untamed temper of the elastic corporal gestures – these are the main features of the painterly approach of the Kurbinovo masters towards the selection of the structural components of their artistic expression. The spiritual beauty of the forms and the transcendent energy of the movements, the unstoppable whirlpool of bodily motion and the glamorous waviness of the vivid draperies - these are the most recognizable formal features of the painterly handwriting of the Kurbinovo artists. The filigree



Harrowing of Hell

preciseness in the illumination of exciting details hidden beneath the complex structure of their pre-tentiously emphasized graphicism and the secret coded messages embedded into the seemingly abstractly configured segments of the floating draperies – these are the elements of their painterly esoterism, unseen in the artistic evolution of the entire Byzantine era.



The Meeting of Mary and Elizabeth



The fresco icon of Christ on the south wall (detail)

The leader of the Kurbinovo painterly atelier, who has formulated his stylistic codex in the church dedicated to the Holy Physician Saints in Kastoria (ca. 1180) and thus traced the course of his elastic and wavy fresco expression before reaching the climax of his creativity in the Prespa ensemble, is the most distinguished representative of the dynamic tendencies of Comnenian artistic production. Not restraining from manifestation of the mysterious messages through the unstoppable play of the painterly elements, he also did not restrict his luxurious painterly temperament visualized through the irresistible energy of his creative fantasy. The impeccably orchestrated harmony of the structural elements of the Ascension, the glamorous elegance of the drawing in the Annunciation, the dynamic synchronicity of the motion in the Harrowing of Hell, the glorious expression of the gestures in the Resurrection of Lazarus, as well as the magnificent preciseness in the execution of the patron figure of Saint George – these are the most distinctive features of his painterly performance. Nevertheless, the inclusion of innovative program contents, the creation of new iconographic matrixes, as well as the cultivation of a regional artistic legacy in the concept of the painterly decoration – these are more than a precious contribution of the Kurbinovo fresco master to the development of Byzantine mural painting.



Virgin with the Child between Angels in the apse (detail)



Saint Achilles from the Officiating Church Fathers

Anonymous for the history, elusive and highly incomprehensible for a standard scholarly analysis, plunged in the esoteric fluid of the hidden theological meanings, as well as rippled in the dynamic specter of his majestic painterly creation, he still remains nameless and mysterious, glorious and fascinating, magical and immortal, as eternity itself.

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Published by

Cultural Heritage Protection Office
Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia

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Translation from Macedonian

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English translation proofread by

Jason Bradford Miko

Photos

Mishko Tutkovski

Graphic design and printing

DATAPONS SKOPJE

Copies

500



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Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia
Cultural Heritage Protection Office

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

726.54.033.2(497.773)
930.85(497.7)

DIMITROVA, Elizabeta

The church of Saint George at Kurbinovo / Elizabeta Dimitrova ;
[photos Mishko Tutkovski]. - Skopje : Cultural Heritage Protection
Office, 2016. - 32 стр. : илустр. во боја ; 25 см. - (The most
significant values of the cultural and natural heritage)

Foreword: Macedonian cultural and natural heritage / Viktor Lilchikj;
стр. 6. - Библиографија: стр. 28

ISBN 978-608-4549-35-2

а) Црква "Св. Горѓи" - Курбиново - Ресенско б) Културно наследство
- Македонија
COBISS.MK-ID 101576970

