The Iconographical Cycle of the Eothina Gospel pericopes in Churches from the reign of King Milutin*

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The paper deals with the examination of the iconographic cycle of the Eothina Gospel pericopes, in which are depicted not only the appearances of Christ after his Resurrection, but also additional events, which have an expository function and give a visual rendering of the theological message of the Resurrection pericopes. During the Palaeologan period the Eothina were depicted in all possible detail, in order that as many scenes as possible could be produced. Thus, although there are only eleven Eothina pericopes in all, in a number of churches from the time of Milutin the cycle includes up to sixteen scenes, of a clearly narrative character. Several of the iconographic motifs of the cycle in the above churches are unique creations, which mark a renewal of Palaeologan painting.

1. The liturgical development of the Eothina

The name Eothina is given to the eleven Gospel passages in which the appearances of Christ after the Resurrection are recounted. They are read during Orthros (matins) on the Sundays between Easter and Pentecost, as well as during the Liturgy on the Sunday of Thomas, the Feast of the Ascension and Pentecost.

According to the Armenian Typikon of Jerusalem (5th c.), which is one of the most important sources for the early systematic reading of Resurrection pericopes, at Orthros of the Agrypnia-Pannychis (all-night vigil) on Easter Sunday were read the passages from the four Gospels that recount the visit of the Myrrhophores to the tomb. For this reason in the later typika, which set out the liturgical practice in Jerusalem, the reading in Orthros on Easter Sunday is one of the so-called Gospels of the Myrrhophores. In the Typikon of St. Sabas monastery the passage from Matthew (28, 1–20) was read at Orthros on Easter Sunday.

Likewise in accordance with the Armenian Typikon during the services of the first week after Easter the resurrectional pericopes were read in the following order:

1 Owing to the limited length of the present paper, only original material is presented from my doctoral thesis (see below n. 10). I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Marica Šuput, for making it possible for me to visit all the churches in which the cycle is depicted, and also for her help in researching photographic archives, with bibliography and, generally, for all the assistance she gave me during my research in Belgrade. For the photographic material, bibliography and stimulating discussions, my warmest thanks go to the academicians G. Subotić, Prof. B. Todić, Prof. I. Stevović and the late Prof. I. Djordjević, whose kindness and generosity will always be engraved deeply in my heart.


Monday Lk. 24, 1–12 The Myrrhophores at the tomb
Tuesday Lk. 24, 13–35 Christ’s appearance on the way to Emmaus
Thursday Lk. 24, 36 Christ’s appearance to the disciples
Friday In. 21, 3–14 Christ’s appearance at Lake Tiberias
Saturday Jn. 21, 15–25 Peter speaks with Christ
Sunday Jn. 20, 26–31 The Incredulity of Thomas

It should be pointed out that this practice of reading the *Eothina* from the *Agrypnia* on Easter Sunday to the end of Easter week (*Diakainisimos*) would later also be adopted in Constantinople, as attested by the *Typikon* of the Casole (Κασούλων) Monastery, which dates the 11th century:

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 Ιστέν ὁτι εν Κωνσταντινουπλει και εν Παλαιστίνῃ ἤλθην την ἐβδομάδα της διακανησίας φαλλεται εις τον άρθρον τω Ανάστηθι Κυριε και τα ἐωθικα ευαγγελια κατὰ ταξιν (”let it be known that in Constantinople and in Palestine during the week of Easter the Arise O Lord and the Eothina Gospels readings will be sung at Orthros”).
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The reading of the whole Resurrection pericope from Matthew (28, 1–20) in accordance with the Sabaitic *Typikon*, which, as we know, was included in liturgical rite of the Serbian Church, explains why in many monuments from the time of Milutin all the episodes described by the Evangelist are depicted (The Myrrhophores at the Tomb, The Appearance of Christ to the Myrrhophores, the announcement of the Resurrection by the Myrrhophores and the last Appearance on the Mount in Galilee).

In contrast, according to the cathedral *Typikon* of the Great Church, only the passage 28, 16–20, was read from the pericope of Matthew (1st Eothinon), which is the source for the depiction of the last Appearance of Christ on the Mount in Galilee.

From the 10th–11th centuries there is increasing evidence about the liturgical use of the *Eothina* Gospels, especially in monastery typika. The *taxis* (order) of the *Eothina* Gospels is set out in its final form in two important codices from this time, *Codex 40* from Jerusalem and the *Codex 266* from Patmos, which formed the cathedral *Typikon* of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

*Codex 40* from the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, dating from the 10th century, is an especially important source as it establishes the eleven *Eothina* pericopes to be read at *Orthros* on Sunday and in the Liturgy on intervening feasts during Pentecost and throughout the year.

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6 See below, n. 8.
2. Iconography

The Myrrhophores at the Tomb (I Eothinon Mt. 28, 1–7. II Eothinon Mk. 16, 1–8. IV Eothinon Lk. 24, 1–10). In the churches from the time of Milutin, as a rule, the pericope of Matthew is illustrated, in which it is mentioned that the two Myrrhophores visited the Tomb of Christ.11

In Gračanica (1319–1321) (Fig. 1), alongside the depiction of the Myrrhophores at the Tomb (Lithos),12 the same scene will be repeated in a distinctive depiction: four women on the right led by the Virgin identified by the inscription ΜΗ(ΘΗΡ) Θ(ΕΟ)Υ and the halo,13 fast 2005, 358–359, 366–368, 358, 359, 606–609, 632–634, 654–657; N. Zarras, Ο εικονογραφικός κύκλος των εωθινών Ευαγγελίων στην παλαιόλογα μνημειακή ζωγραφική των Βαλκανίων (unpub. PhD), Athens 2006, 55 (hereafter: Zarras, Ο κύκλος των εωθινών Ευαγγελίων).


12 Among the most important examples are: Staro Nagoričino (G. Millet, A. Frolow, La peinture du Moyen âge en Yougoslavie III, Paris 1962, pl. 73, 1, hereafter: Millet, Frolow, La peinture, Chilandar Monastery (G. Millet, Monuments de l’ Athos I. Les peintures, Paris 1927, pl. 73, 1, hereafter: Millet, Frolow) and St. Nicetas near Skopje (Millet, Frolow, La peinture, pl. 45, 2).


15 PG 132, col. 644CD.

16 PG 151, col. 244 BC.

17 Ibid., cols. 237D, 269C.

18 PG 147, col. 561A.

19 Millet, Frolow, La peinture, pl. 95, 1; Todić, Serbian Medieval Painting, 140.


22 D. Čornakov, Po konservatorske raboti vo crkvata Sv. Bogorodična Pernikov (Sv. Kliment) vo Ohrid, Kulturno nasledstvo 2 (1901) 75, fig. 3.
2), in St. John Kaneo (after 1295),\(^{23}\) in the Protaton on Mount Athos (ca. 1300),\(^{24}\) in Staro Nagoričino (Fig. 3),\(^{25}\) in Gračanica\(^{26}\) and in the Chilandar Monastery (1320–1321).\(^{27}\) Christ stands on a low rock at the edge of the scene, raising his right hand in a gesture of blessing or speaking, as he turns to the disciples in front of him, while in his left hand holds the rolled scroll.

On the south wall of the north aisle in Bogorodica Ljeviška is preserved a badly damaged scene that is still unidentified. G. Babić has included it within the Eothina cycle, since it forms part of a group of scenes depicting the events after the Resurrection.\(^{28}\) B. Todić takes the same view, though without giving other details.\(^{29}\) The figure of Christ in three-quarter profile is shown up to the height of his chest. He raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing, while his left hand holds a rolled-up scroll. The right-hand section of the scene, which probably showed the disciples, has been lost. I believe that it must have depicted the Appearance on the Mount in Galilee (Poreuthendes), because this is the scene that completes the Eothina cycle, which must portray the last Appearance of Christ to the disciples. This view is supported by the fact that the last episodes of the cycle in Bogorodica Ljeviška are depicted in an order that follows the same historical sequence found a few years later in Staro Nagoričino and in Gračanica. In these two churches the last scene of the Eothina cycle is the Appearance on the Mount in Galilee. Furthermore, the scene in Ljeviška appears to follow the same iconographic type that is found in the other churches from the time of Milutin.

On the north face of the south-east pier in St. Nicetas near Skopje (after 1321) (Fig. 4), directly below the scene showing the visit of Peter and John to the Tomb of Christ is fragmentarily preserved that is probably the scene of Poreuthendes.\(^{30}\) From the figure of Christ on the left only the legs remain and of the disciples, depicted on the right, the first, who must be identified with Peter, contorts his body dramatically as he bows before Christ. Following the iconography of the scene at Staro Nagoričino and Gračanica, at St. Nicetas (aka Čučer) Christ must have been depicted with the right hand ges-
turing as though in the act of speaking, while in his left hand he held a rolled scroll.

At the Protaton Christ’s halo is inscribed in a quadrangle with curved sides. During the Palaeologan period this iconographic element is often found in depictions in which the divine nature of Christ is emphasized and has been interpreted as a mandorla. This view is supported by the fact that in the dome of Bogorodica Ljevšika the medallion with the bust of the Pantokrator is inscribed on two acute-angled quadrangles, which are arranged diagonally one on top of the other, so as to form an eight-pointed star, and which have also been interpreted as a mandorla of light.

Indeed, from the second half of the 14th century the combination of the acute-angled quadrangle with other geometric forms that represent the glory of Christ, pictorially has been fairly frequently observed in depictions of the Theophany. A characteristic example is the scene of the Transfiguration in the Paris codex with the theological works of the emperor John IX Cantacuzene, which were influenced by Hesychasm. The figure of Christ is shown in an acute-angled quadrangle, which is inscribed in a rhomboid mandorla. This double mandorla is circumscribed within a circle, from the center of which rays of light shine forth. In the examples we have cited, Patristic thought concerning the glory of Christ, which symbolizes the very Holiness of the Lord, is reflected in the most eloquent fashion. Metropolitan Theophanes III of Nicaea (11380/1381), defender of the ideas of Gregory Palamas, observes that the light of the Prosopon of the Lord is Christ himself, while the light of the garments is the light of the light of his Prosopon (Godhead).

Consequently, in the depiction of the Poreuthenides in the Protaton the depiction of the mandorla only in the halo of Christ emphasizes two notions: firstly the holiness of the Risen One, who clearly manifests himself during the time of his appearances to the circle of the disciples, and secondly the trans-temporal nature of the appearances, since in them the dimension of historical time is abolished. This iconographic peculiarity in the Protaton echoes the mystical current of the time and anticipates the influence of the hesychastic conceptions, which are, as a rule, reflected in the art of the later Palaeologan period, with the ornate rendering of the mandorla.

The III Eothenion reading (Mk. 16, 9–18) is the source for the scene in which Christ rebukes the disciples for the disbelief with which they greeted the words of the Myrrhbearers. It is only depicted at Staro Nagoričino (1316–1318) (Fig. 5) and at Gračanica (1319–1321) (Fig. 6). In both depictions we find the same iconographic motif, with Christ on the right addressing the disciples on the left, raising his right hand and holding a rolled-up scroll in his left. This rare iconographic motif appeared during the Palaeologan period as part of an extension of the Eothenia cycle, but the motif does not appear to have survived into the post-Byzantine period.

The depiction of Christ rebuking his disciples for their lack of faith is found in only two churches, in which the decoration was carried out by Michael Astrapas and Eutychios and their workshop. This fact, together with
the omission of the motif from later extensive Eothina cycles, demonstrates the artist's close association with original artistic creations of the period and of course, the unquestionably advanced spiritual level they had attained.\textsuperscript{41}

The Appearance of Christ to Luke and Cleopas on the way to Emmaus (V Eotheinon Lk. 24, 13–28). At Bogorodica Ljeviška,\textsuperscript{42} Staro Nagoričino\textsuperscript{43}, Gračanica\textsuperscript{44} and Chilandar Monastery the narrative type of the scene prevails,\textsuperscript{45} whose structure is based on the description of the event by the evangelist Luke. As Christ advances he turns his head back towards the two disciples and raises his hand in a gesture of speaking, while in his left hand he usually holds a rolled scroll.

At Bogorodica Ljeviška Christ is not portrayed with the usual facial features, but \textit{en etera morphi}\textsuperscript{46} (in another form) according to the Gospel narration. He has a youthful face with short hair and beard and we should note the epikouritha (tonsense) and tunic, the latter decorated with \textit{potamoi} (decorative gold bands), which end low down on the border running around the edge of the tunic. At Staro Nagoričino, where the scene is largely destroyed, Christ is also only wearing a tunic decorated with \textit{potamoi}. As far as we can make out, Christ does not have the features of \textit{en etera morphi}, as he does at Ljeviška, but is portrayed as a mature man.

With the depiction of Christ \textit{en etera morphi}, the painters were seeking pictorially to represent the trans-temporal character of Christ's Theophany. According to the interpretation of the Church Fathers,\textsuperscript{47} Christ manifests his divine nature during his meeting with the disciples. This iconographical type of Christ is used very often in representations of the Supper at Emmaus, in which, as we shall examine below, it has a symbolic character, associated with the Eucharistic character of the scene. Consequently the portrayal in the same scene at Ljeviška has been influenced by the depiction of the Supper, which is shown directly adjacent.

The Supper at Emmaus (V Eotheinon Lk. 24, 29–31).\textsuperscript{48} In the Virgin Peribleptos at Ochrid\textsuperscript{49} (Fig. 7) and in Staro Nagoričino\textsuperscript{50} (Fig. 8) Christ is depicted in the act of breaking the bread, while in Bogorodica Ljeviška\textsuperscript{51} (Fig. 9), in Gračanica\textsuperscript{52} and in the Chilandar Monastery,\textsuperscript{53} Christ offers the pieces of bread as he holds his hands out to Luke and Cleopas.

In the Virgin Peribleptos at Ochrid, the Supper at Emmaus is depicted in Prothesis with the inscription IC XC O EN ETIKA MOPHIN.\textsuperscript{54} Of particular iconograph-


\textsuperscript{42} Panić, Babić, \textit{Bogorodica Ljeviška,} 56, fig. 13, p. 122, sch. 7; Živković, \textit{Bogorodica Ljeviška,} sch. VII. 12.

\textsuperscript{43} Todić, Staro Nagoričino, 110; idem, \textit{Serbian Medieval Painting,} 322.

\textsuperscript{44} S. Radojičić, \textit{Gračanické freske,} in: \textit{Symposium de Gračanica. L’art byzantin au début du XIV siècle,} Belgrade 1978, fig. 3; Todić, \textit{Gračanica,} pl. VI.


\textsuperscript{46} Spatharakis (op. cit., 259), points out that in Bogorodica Ljeviška is found the oldest depiction of Christ \textit{en etera morphi}, while this type of Christ is depicted earlier in the Peribleptos church in Ochrid. See also, N. Zarras, \textit{Ο Χριστός «εν ετέρα μορφή»,} ΔΧΑΕ 28 (2007) 215, fig. 3 (hereafter: Zarras, \textit{Ο Χριστός «εν ετέρα μορφή»}).

\textsuperscript{47} See below, n. 96–97.


\textsuperscript{49} Miljković-Pepek, \textit{Deloto,} 50, 80, n. 411; Todić, \textit{Serbian Medieval Painting,} 140, 143.

\textsuperscript{50} Millet, Frolow, \textit{La peinture III,} p. 98, 1; Todić, Staro Nagoričino, 132.

\textsuperscript{51} Panić, Babić, \textit{Bogorodica Ljeviška,} 56, fig. 13, pl. XXII, 122, sch. 7; Todić, \textit{Serbian Medieval Painting,} 142–143, fig. 77.

\textsuperscript{52} Petković, op. cit. (n. 14), pl. 51b; Todić, \textit{Gračanica,} pl. VI.


\textsuperscript{54} Under the inscription IC XC O EN ETIKA MOPHIN Christ is depicted as isolated figure, either in bust form or shown down to his waist. He has short hair without tonsure, a short beard and is dressed in the usual way. In the same iconographical mo- tif Christ is depicted in the conch of prothesis in the Protaton (A. Xyngopoulos, \textit{Mανουήλ Πανσέληνος,} Athina 1956, sch. on p. 24, pl. 9; E. N. Tsagaridas, \textit{Μασώνιο Πανσέληνος,} Εν τού ιερού ναού του Παναγίας,} Thessalonica 2003, 25, fig. 90) and in the small
ic interest is the depiction of Christ with short hair that comes down only to his ears, the short beard and epikou
ritha. He wears only a tunic, the neck and sleeve edges of which are decorated with small circles, picked out with pearls, enclosing crosses.\textsuperscript{55} Between Christ and the disciples four other male figures are depicted in pairs, who should be identified as servants, since they are shown without a halo and standing.

Scholars have interpreted the iconographic type of Christ with short hair, short beard and epikouritha, which is already known in the middle-Byzantine period, as indicative of his sacerdotal status.\textsuperscript{56}

In Bοgorodica Ljeviška, where the inscription has been lost, Christ is depicted with the same physiognomical features. He holds out his hand and offers bread to the disciple who is still visible on the right and who is depicted much lower in height than the figure of Christ. The left section has been lost, but we can surmise that Christ was also offering bread to the other disciple with a corresponding movement. The potamoi running to the bottom of his purple tunic, resemble those of the sacerdotal sticharia. According to Symeon of Thessalonica, the potamoi are a distinguishing feature of episcopal sticharia.\textsuperscript{57} S. Radojičić conjectures that the decoration of Christ’s tunic, with crosses in Peribleptos and with potamoi in Ljeviška, in conjunction with the tonsure, underline Christ’s holiness.\textsuperscript{58}

In the Protaton on Mt. Athos\textsuperscript{59} the central part of the scene in the conch of diakonikon has suffered significant damage. Of the figure of Christ only a small section of his left side has survived. It is likely that Christ was depicted only in a tunic, as he is in Peribleptos and in Bogorodica Ljeviška, and part of its decoration can still be made out today. The disciple to the left receives the bread from Christ, while the one to the right holds his arms in front of his chest, with his palms turned outwards, in an expression of surprise. From the disciples’ gestures we understand that Christ is stretching out his right hand to offer bread to the disciple, while his left hand must be around the level of the chest.\textsuperscript{60}

The position of the hands in the breaking and distribution of the pieces of bread semantically links the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{57} PG 155, col. 256BC.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Zarras, \textit{Ο κύκλος των εωθινών Ευαγγελίων}, 105.
\end{itemize}
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Supper at Emmaus with the Last Supper. The presence of Christ has unambiguous Eucharistic symbolism, for according to Theophanes Kerameus it symbolically connotes the revelation of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, in which the Risen Christ is eternally present. Consequently, though the figure of Christ in the Supper at Emmaus has no historical foundation, it underlines his presence through time in the unceasing celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The dimension of Christ that exists outside time is represented by his youthful image, which transcends the limits of historical time and symbolizes the imperishability and eternal beauty of the Godhead.

The Eucharistic character of the depiction is clearly shown by its location in the sanctuary. In St. Antonios at Vrontisi in Crete (the end of 14th c.) the depiction of the Supper at Emmaus is depicted on the apse of the bema. The scene, as has already been observed, forms an integral part of a wider composition of liturgical themes, which start from the upper part of the vault of the bema with the composition of the Heavenly liturgy, and continue in the apse with the Communion of the Apostles and the Supper at Emmaus.

The Appearance of Christ ton thiron kekleismenon – Behind the Closed Doors (VI Eothinon Lk. 24, 36–40). In the passages from Luke and John this episode is described in the same way, except for one difference. In the narration of the first evangelist Christ blesses the frightened disciples, while according to John (Eothinon IX) Christ shows the disciples the wounds of his Passion. In the churches from the reign of Milutin the passage of John is more frequently illustrated, as will be discussed below.

In the north aisle of Bogorodica Ljeviška, among the scenes of the appearances after the Resurrection, there survives a small section of a ruined scene that still remains identified. Christ holds out his left hand to one side and blesses the disciples who are at the right of the scene. It is likely that his right hand was also depicted in the same way. Consequently, Christ must have been shown frontally, blessing the apostles on both sides, with his two hands. This portrayal is typical of Christ in all the monuments, in which the pericope from Luke is illustrated. Consequently, the partially surviving scene at Ljeviška, must depict the Appearance of Christ ton thiron kekleismenon.

In the church of the Ascension at Žiča (ca. 1310) the scene in question no longer exists. According to the drawing made by M. Valtrović and D. Milutinović, it was depicted under the tympanum of the north wall.

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64 Papamastorakis, op. cit., 150.


66 Babić (Bogorodica Ljeviška, 122, sch. 12) includes the scene in the cycle of Appearances and records it as an appearance of Christ to the apostles.

67 See, for example, St. Apostles at Peć (Petković, La peinture, II, pl. XXVI), Sopočani (Millet, Frolow, La peinture, II, pl. 3, 5, V. J. Djurić, Sopočani, pl. 35; G. Papadopoulos, La peinture, II, pl. 35, 36, 38, 61, 71, 78), Peć [M. Ivanović, Bogorodičina crkva u Pečkoj patrijaršiji, Belgrade 1972, pl. 32; eadem, Crkva Bogorodice Odigitrije u Pečkoj patrijaršiji, SKM II-II (1972–1973) 144, fig. 33], Dečani (Petković, Bosković, Dečani, pl. CXXIX), and Curtea de Argeș (O. Tafradi, Monumente byzantine de Curtea de Argeș I-II, Paris 1931, 72–73, pl. XXXVII).

68 Izlozi srpskog učenog društva, Belgrade 1978, 198.
beside the scene of the Incredulity of Thomas, in accordance with the established iconographic motif. V. Djurić supported the view that the iconographical programme of the Holy Apostles at Peć (ca. 1260), the oldest church in the new Archiepiscopal see of the Serbian Church, followed the programme of the Holy Sion at Jerusalem, which was also dedicated to the Holy Apostles. This programme was carried out by Arsenuis, the second Archbishop of the newly-established Serbian Church. Furthermore, Djurić stated that the iconographical programme of Žiča during the second phase of the wall-paintings in about 1310, was carried out according to that of the first phase in 1220, as well as the programme of the Holy Apostles at Peć. Consequently, the depiction of the iconographic theme of the Appearance of Christ, the meal with fish and honey, and the meal with the disciples occurred.


73 Vincent, Abel, op. cit., 448 ff.

74 V. J. Djurić, Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien, München 1976, 68, n. 50 (hereafter: Djurić, Byzantinische Fresken); V. J. Djurić, S. Cirković, V. Korać, Pečka patrijaršija, Belgrade 1990, 48–51. See also, S. Tomeković, Les saints ermites et moines dans le décor du narthex de Mileševa, in: Mileševa dans l’histoire du peuple serbe, 63; Todić, Serbian Medieval Painting, 156.

75 The same view is expressed from Todić, op. cit., 155–157.

76 The same name is borne of course by the church of St. Apostles in Peć, because of its iconographic links with the church of Sion. Cf. Djurić, La peinture serbe, 162; Todić, op. cit.

77 This tradition is confirmed by Hesychios of Jerusalem, cf. PG 93, col. 1445B, 1448B. See also, Vincent, Abel, op. cit., 474.

scene in which Christ eats fish and honey, must be depicted in the church of Sion together with the Appearance of thron kekleisomenon or the Incredulity of Thomas.

In Staro Nagoričino\(^79\) (Fig. 10), in Gračanica\(^80\) (Fig. 11) and probably in St. Nicetas near Skopje (ca. 1322)\(^81\) is found the hieratic iconographic type of the scene, with Christ facing forward, in front of a closed door, stretching out his hand above the food that is being offered to him on plates by the first two disciples from each group on either side of him. This type is a seminal work of the Palaeologan period, directly or indirectly linked with the artistic productions of Michael Astrapas and Eutychios.

The scene is depicted later in the Holy Trinity in Manasija (1407–1413),\(^82\) but in a way that suggests a different iconographic model from that used by the above artists, one that also manifests a different ideological basis, since emphasis is given to the meal.\(^83\)

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84 S. Dufrenne, Les programmes iconographiques des églises de Mistrà, Paris 1970, 28, 31, fig. 11.
86 See, for example, the ivory panel in Darmstadt and the Egbert Evangelist. Cf. Schiller, Ikonographie, 107, fig. 276; F. J. Ronig, Codex Egberti. Das Perikopenbuch des Erzbischöps Egbert von Trier (977–993), Trier 1977, p. 89.
87 Millet, Frescos, La peinture, III, pl. 95, 1; Miljković–Pepek, Deloto, fig. 150.
88 Petković, op. cit., pl. LXXXVII.
90 PG 59, col. 469.
91 PG 74, col. 696C.
92 PG 132, col. 680A.
find in Dečani, has a different theological basis. In western ecclesiastical writings Mary Magdalene is identified with the sinful woman who anoints Jesus during the dinner held in his honour by the Pharisee, as Pope Gregory I relates in his 33rd homily on the Gospels.

In Gračanica Christ is shown in a star burst mandorla, which is in turn enclosed in an oval. The mandorla in scenes depicting the appearances of Christ (Theophanies) symbolizes the eternal luminous light of the Resurrection, surrounding the figure of the Lord with rays as it diffuses his divinity. An example of this is found in Gračanica.

In the Patristic writings of the Palaeologan period we find that the light of the Godhead of the Risen Christ is identified with the light that surrounds the figure of Christ during His Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. Light, as a physical expression of divine glory, is according to St. Gregory Palamas the light of the Transfiguration, the glory of God, which the disciples saw on Tabor. This light according to Theoleptos of Philadelphia (1250–1322) “opens” the spiritual eyes of Luke and Cleopas to the Theophany at Emmaus.

The ornate representation of the mandorla in Gračanica, like those found in depictions of the Transfiguration, can be considered the pictorial representation of these conceptions of Christ’s appearances after the Resurrection, as they were formulated by the leading exponents of Hesychasm. In any case, we know that heschastic theology concerning the Light of Tabor influenced its pictorial representation in the iconography of the Transfiguration with the form of geometric shapes. Furthermore, both in Gračanica and in other churches included in the artistic output of Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, the influence of heschastic ideas has been identified in the rendering of the light in the Pantokrator’s mandorla in the decoration of the dome.

Christ shows the discipules the wounds of his Passion (IX Eothinon Jn. 20, 19–23). The scene is found in Bogorodica Ljeviška (Fig. 14), Staro Nagoričino (Fig. 15), Gračanica (Fig. 16) and in Chilandar Monastery. Christ is shown facing forward in front of a closed door, flanked by disciples and holding out his hand with the wounds of his Passion.

In Bogorodica Ljeviška the scene is rendered in an unusual way. Christ is shown elevated above the head of his anxious disciples, showing the marks of the Passion in the hands and side, as described in the Gospel pericope from John. As has already been pointed out, the elevation of Christ at the moment he appears to the disciples, is only mentioned in the pericope from Luke (24, 51), showing the Ascension of Christ immediately after his appearance before the disciples.

The singularity of the depiction in Ljeviška is both in the absence of basic iconographical elements usually found in the motif, such as the closed doors, and in the introduction of elements from the iconography of the Ascension. For example, the elevation of Christ, as well as the poses and gestures of the disciples as they gaze upward in astonishment, are strongly reminiscent of corresponding poses and gestures in the iconography of the Ascension. This view is confirmed by the fact that in the post-Byzantine wall-paintings in the first narthex of the Monastery of John the Forerunner in Serres (1630), the artist illustrating the 6th Eothina Gospel, will link the Blessing of the disciples with the Ascension.

The Appearance of Christ at Lake Tiberias (X Eothinon Jn. 21, 1–11). The scene is found in Bogorodica Ljeviška, in Staro Nagoričino (Fig. 17), in Gračanica (Fig. 18) and in Chilandar Monastery. Christ is shown on the shore of the lake and as a rule is raising his hand as though to speak. In his left hand holds a rolled-up scroll. Next to Christ’s feet the glowing embers are shown with the fish and bread. The remaining section is occupied by the boat with the disciples.

In Bogorodica Ljeviška there is a detailed depiction of all the minor episodes that accompany the Appearance at Lake Tiberias. However, the main scene on the north wall of the Prothesis has been almost entirely lost with only the right-hand part of the figure of Christ still surviving. The lack of further iconographical elements does not permit us to make a thorough study. However it should be emphasized that Ljeviška is the first surviving example in monumental painting of the depiction of this theme in the Sanctuary. Immediately adjacent to the eastern wall is illustrated verse 9 of the passage from John: ὡς ὅπερ ἑβηκόντα εἰς τὴν γῆν, βλέποντα ἀνθρακῶν κηθείτην καὶ ὑπείκειμένον καὶ ἄρτον. This particular episode, which follows the miraculous catch of fish and precedes the meal, is, according to the surviving monuments, only depicted as an isolated scene at Ljeviška. The position of the scene in this place clearly emphasizes its Eucharistic character. The same scene is linked with that of the meal in the Hagia Sophia at Trebizond (1250–1260).

105 Petković, Bošković, Dečani, pl. XXIV. This type is also found in St. Sava of Kyriotissa (third quarter of the 14th century) in Veronia, cf. Th. Papazotos, Η Βέροια και οι ναοί της, Ιστορική και αρχαιολογική σπουδή των μνημείων της πόλης, Athens 1994, 181–182, 260–26, pl. 54d.
106 PG 94, col. 1101 A.
107 Millet, Ţiriac, 135.
108 Petković, op. cit., 135.
109 Panić, Bor. cit., 121, sch. 5; Živković, Bogorodica Ljeviška, sch. VII, 15; Gkioles, "Πορευθέντες", 134, n. 101.
110 Šešelj, Serbian Medieval Painting, 322.
111 Živković, Gračanica, s. c. 30.
112 Millet, Athos, pl. 62, 4.
113 Petković, Bošković, Dečani, 1968, 125, 171–172, 235–244, fig. 88, pls. 47–48; A. Eastmond, Art
116 Panić, Babić, op. cit., 121, sch. 5; Živković, Bogorodica Ljeviška, sch. VII, 2.
117 Millet, Frolow, La peinture, III, pl. 96, 2; Todić, Staro Nagoričino, 132, fig. 62.
118 Petković, Peinture serbe, II, pl. LXXIX.
119 Millet, Frolow, op. cit., pl. 63, 1.
In Staro Nagoričino111 (Fig. 19) is depicted the episode of the apostles carrying the net, from the boat to the shore, as related in John (21, 8). The seven disciples carry the net on their shoulders and make their way towards Christ. Judging from his physiognomical features, the first of these must be Peter, whose presence is confirmed by the Gospel pericope (21, 11). In middle-Byzantine iconography we only find the scene of the nets being dragged by Peter, or with the help of the other disciples. In Dečani the episode of the transportation of the nets is not shown as an isolated scene, but forms part of the Appearance by Lake Tiberias.112

In Bogorodica Ljeviška, Christ is shown with three disciples. This badly damaged scene, has been identified113 with the third appearance of Christ to the disciples, which is more generally called by John (21, 14) the Appearance at the Lake Tiberias and consequently all the episodes that form part of it are classified under this name. The artist most probably depicts the moment when Christsummons the disciples to eat.116 This view is supported by the fact that the same episode is depicted in a similar manner in Par. gr. 74, f. 212.117 It should be observed that in the Paris codex the summons to the disciples is placed after the Appearance at Lake Tiberias and before the Supper, exactly as it is in Bogorodica Ljeviška.

In Patristic texts the Eucharistic character of the meal at Lake Tiberias is emphasized, since the use of bread and fish refer to the liturgical life of the ancient Church. The gesture of Christ at Ljeviška, offering the bread and the fish to the disciples while blessing them with his right hand, links the meal at Lake Tiberias with the Divine Liturgy.118 Indeed, Gregory Palamas119 states that with the gesture of blessing the bread Christ affirmed his identity. The depiction of the meal in the Prothesis at Ljeviška is fully justified by the Eucharistic character of the theme.

The dialogue of Christ with Peter (XI Eothinon Jn. 21, 15–19). The scene is known in western works of art from the 9th century,120 while in Byzantine art the theme121 appears during the Palaeologan period.

In Bogorodica Ljeviška,122 where the scene has been destroyed, Christ is depicted on the left. He raises his right hand and in his left hold a rolled-up scroll. G. Babić123 stated that in the now lost right-hand section Peter would have been depicted with the apostles behind him. Consequently, the scene in Ljeviška follows the iconographic motif that is also found in later depictions


111 Todić, Staro Nagoričino, 110, fig. 61; idem, Serbian Medieval Painting, fig. 78.


113 Panić, Babić, op. cit., 121, sch. 5; Živković, op. cit, sch. VII. 2.

114 Millet, Recherches, 573–574, fig. 607; V. N. Lazarev, Old Russian Murals and Mosaics, London 1966, 102, fig. 79.

115 Panić, Babić, op. cit., 54, fig. 11; Živković, op. cit, sch. VII. 3.


117 H. Omont, Évangiles avec peintures byzantines du XIe siècle, Paris 1908, pl. 186.

118 PG 74, col. 749A.

119 PG 151, col. 301D.

120 Schiller, Ikonographie, 117–118, figs. 383–384.


122 Panić, Babić, op. cit., 54, sch. 11 and 121, sch. 5.

123 Ibid., 56.
of the theme, as in Dečani and the Panagia Gouverni-otissa in Crete.

Peter asks Christ about John (XI Eothinon Jn. 21, 20–25). The scene is an original work of the Palaeologan period, which is only found in churches from the time of Milutin. In Staro Nagoričino (Fig. 21) and in Gračanica (Fig. 22) it is depicted on the north wall of the Bema, before the last Appearance of Christ on the mountain in Galilee. As Christ moves forward he turns back to answver Peter’s question, as the latter shows Him John, who is following with the other disciples. In St. Niketa near Skopje the artist places the figures in a different way from their positions in the above mentioned churches. Peter is further away from the other figures and is almost next to Christ as he walks. They converse together in a lively manner, as is apparent from the expression on their fac-es and their gestures. John follows further behind with the other disciples. In this way the artist, who is faithful to the details of the text, wishes to give the impression that John is not taking part in their conversation, as Peter secretly but eagerly asks Christ what life has in store for John. The inscription which annotates the depiction is Christ’s severe response to Peter according to Jn. 21, 22:

\[ \text{γλαγόλε πετρεί, μισήσεις, αν η πρόβατα, δείξει, τι καὶ τὸ τιμήθη, ἔφε αὐτῷ} \]

The atmosphere created by the expression and gestures of the figures depicted is eloquently reflected in the interpretations of the scene found in Patristic writings, of which those of Cyril of Alexandria and Nikephorus Kallistus Xanthopoulos\(^{128}\) are the most representative.

3. The place of the Eothina cycle in the churches’ iconographic programme and the influence of the liturgical use of the sources in the arrangement of the scenes

It is apparent from the surviving examples that Bogorodica Ljeviška contained the first extended Eothina cycle, with twelve or thirteen scenes, of which six are in the nave, four in the Prothesis and two in the north aisle.\(^{131}\) The inclusion of the cycle, with such a large number of scenes, in the iconographic programme of the Byzantine church was a pioneering undertaking in its time, largely due to the artistic personality of Michel Astrapas.

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\(^{124}\) Petković, La peinture, II, pl. CXXVIII.


\(^{126}\) Millet, Frolow, op. cit., pl. 97, 2; Todić, Staro Nagoričino, 110, fig. 87.

\(^{127}\) Todić, Gračanica, 124; idem, Serbian Medieval Painting, 332. The same iconographic motif is found and in Curtea de Argeș, cf. Tafrali, op. cit. (n. 67), pl. XXXVI, 2.

\(^{128}\) The same inscription is found in Curtea de Argeș judging by the French translation from Stefănescu, op. cit. (n. 24), 26.

\(^{129}\) PG 74, col. 753BC.

\(^{130}\) PG 145, col. 740D.

\(^{131}\) R. Hamann – Mac Lean, H. Hallensleben, Die Monumentalmale-<br>
sis are not recorded.
The arrangement of the scenes from the cycle on the side walls of the central aisle at Ljeviška was to some extent determined by the liturgical use of the sources. On the south wall the events depicting the visit of the Myrrh-bearing Women to the Tomb are an unusual combination of the I and II Eothina, which are read at Orthros on the Sunday of Thomas and the Liturgy on the Sunday of the Myrrphophores. On the north wall opposite, the events linked to Christ’s appearance at Emmaus are depicted (the journey, the Supper, the announcement of the Resurrection) as described in the V Eothinon, which is read on the following Sunday of the Paralyzed Man. The cycle continues in the Prothesis, where the artist has depicted Christ’s appearance at Lake Tiberias (X Eothinon) and the events connected with this. The location of the meal at Tiberias on the south wall of the Prothesis is justified by the Eucharistic nature of the theme. For the same reason, in several churches the scenes depicting meals are located in the Sanctuary. Examples of this are the location of the Supper at Emmaus in the Prothesis of the Peribleptos in Ochrid, in the conch of the diakonikon in the Protaton and in the Chilandar Monastery.

Soon after painting Bogorodica Ljeviška, Michael Astrapas and Eutychios went on to complete the Eothina cycle at Staro Nagoričino, uniting the three parts of the cycle as at Ljeviška, in a continuous frieze-like band that runs along all the walls. The cycle begins on the south wall of the Bema, continues on the south and north walls of the nave and comes to an end on the north wall of the Bema. In accordance with artistic developments of the time regarding depictions of narrative elements, the Eothina cycle was presented in its most advanced form, comprising sixteen scenes derived from the iconography of the eleven Eothina pericopes.

A basic aim of the painters at Bogorodica Ljeviška and at Staro Nagoričino was to depict the cycle in such a way that the influence of the liturgical use of the sources was apparent, while preserving the historical sequence of the Resurrection.


Hamann – Mac Lean, Hallensleben, op. cit., sch. 32, V, 1–9, 33, V, 10–15; Todić, Staro Nagoričino, 107–110; idem, Serbian Medieval Painting, 322.
events as a general framework, given that the Gospel narratives do not tell us the exact time at which the appearances took place.

The cycle begins with the visit of the Virgin to the Tomb of Christ, accompanied by the Myrrh-bearing Women, and continues with the visit of only the two Myrrhophores as described in the I Eothinon. It is followed by Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene, described in the VIII Eothinon, because I and VIII Eothina are read at the Orthros and the Liturgy on the Sunday of Thomas respectively. Next, the VII Eothinon is portrayed on the south wall, depicting the announcement of the Resurrection by Mary Magdalene and the visit of Peter and John to the Tomb. This combination of the two scenes enhances the historical cohesion of the events, as derived from Gospel tradition, but it diminishes the influence of the liturgical function of the sources. Next come the events associated with Christ’s appearance at Emmaus (V Eothinon). The depiction of the III Eothinon where Christ rebukes the faithlessness of the disciples, and of the VI, showing the Appearance τον θιρόν κοκλείσμον, reflect the liturgical use of the pericopes at the Orthros and the Liturgy on the Thursday of the Ascension respectively. These are followed by the X Eothinon on the north wall, showing the Appearance at Lake Tiberias, as in the series of readings on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers, immediately after the Ascension. Christ’s meal with fish and honey and the Incredulity of Thomas, whose sources are in the VI and the IX Eothina, are combined, and then the XI Eothinon, showing Christ in conversation with Peter on the north wall of the Bema.

Nagoričino comes to an end with the last Appearance of Christ at the mountain in Galilee (I Eothinon).

Some years later the Eothina cycle would be similarly depicted at Gračanica. The minor changes that were made, such as the depiction of two Myrrhophores, rather than the Magdalene alone, in the scene of the announcement of the Resurrection, and the placing of the episode in which the disciples offer Christ fish and honey before the Appearance at Lake Tiberias, do not preclude the overall conclusion that the prototype for the Eothina cycle at Gračanica is the cycle found at Staro Nagoričino.

At Chilandar Monastery and at St. Nicetas near Skopje, the entire Eothina cycle is located within the Sanctuary area. The appearances after the Resurrection, Nagoričino would be similarly depicted at Gračanica. The minor changes that were made, such as the depiction of two Myrrhophores, rather than the Magdalene alone, in the scene of the announcement of the Resurrection, and the placing of the episode in which the disciples offer Christ fish and honey before the Appearance at Lake Tiberias, do not preclude the overall conclusion that the prototype for the Eothina cycle at Gračanica is the cycle found at Staro Nagoričino.

At Chilandar Monastery and at St. Nicetas near Skopje, the entire Eothina cycle is located within the Sanctuary area. The appearances after the Resurrection, Nagoričino would be similarly depicted at Gračanica. The minor changes that were made, such as the depiction of two Myrrhophores, rather than the Magdalene alone, in the scene of the announcement of the Resurrection, and the placing of the episode in which the disciples offer Christ fish and honey before the Appearance at Lake Tiberias, do not preclude the overall conclusion that the prototype for the Eothina cycle at Gračanica is the cycle found at Staro Nagoričino.

134 Exarchos, op. cit. (n. 11), 56; Millet, Recherches, 34.
135 Exarchos, op. cit.
being Theophanies, are entirely appropriate to the eschatological character of the Holy Bema, which favoured scenes of this nature.

The close chronological and theological link of the appearances of the Risen Lord with the Ascension and Pentecost, which is apparent from the Gospels and is affirmed in Patristic writings, is the strongest justification for depicting the Eothina cycle in direct relation to these two events.

Thus the fact that both Ascension and Pentecost were already traditionally depicted in the Sanctuary from the 10th century onwards, would also determine the location of the cycle in the iconographic programme in this location, so that the theological and liturgical unity of the period of Pentecost would also be affirmed iconographically. Furthermore, the position of the Eothina cycle in the Sanctuary, which places it in direct relation to the altar, is justified by the well-known fact that in ecclesiastical literature the altar, considered as the Tomb of Christ, is associated with his Resurrection and Ascension.

4. General observations about the Eothina cycle in the churches from the time of Milutin

In the Palaeologan period the depiction of the Eothina pericopes became standardized, which had a significant influence on the iconographic programme within churches. As a result it became one of the most important cycles of this period. The most fundamental reason for the development of the cycle is the influence of liturgical readings of the Eothina Gospels pericopes, in which the theological underpinning and the significance of the fact of the Resurrection is presented through different episodes. This fact, in conjunction with the narrative element characteristic of art of this period, gave a great impulse to the development of the cycle. The Eothina are illustrated in exhaustive detail; as a result there is a steady increase in the number of possible scenes. A typical example is the X Eothinon (the Appearance at Lake Tiberias), which provides the subject matter for the creation of at least four distinct iconographic scenes.

Each of Christ’s appearances is accompanied by additional events, which have an expository function and give a visual rendering of the theological message of the Resurrection pericopes, in other words the incarnate Resurrection of Christ. This aim is furthered particularly by the depictions of meals, such as the Supper at Emmaus, the meal with fish and honey and the meal at Lake Tiberias, as well as the showing of his wounds at the Appearance ton thiron kekleismenon and the Incredulity of Thomas. Thanks to this depiction of secondary events, which complement Christ’s main appearances, the cycle became extended. Thus, although there are only eleven Eothina pericopes in all, in a number of churches in the Serbian kingdom the cycle includes up to sixteen scenes, of a clearly narrative character. Furthermore, from the time of Milutin on, the need to decorate extensive surfaces of the larger churches favoured the creation of narrative cycles that included rare iconographic scenes, such as at Staro Nagoričino and at Gračanica.

In addition to the above, the development of the Eothina cycle, especially in churches from the time of Milutin, took on ideological dimensions. The depiction of the cycle serves to link the churches of the time of Milutin with the church of the Holy Sion, where scenes of the Resurrection were also depicted. As previously in Žiča and the Holy Apostles in Peć, where the Appearance ton thiron kekleismenon and the Incredulity of Thomas were displayed, the churches from the time of Milutin

142 PG 98, col. 421 and PG 155, col. 292A.
also produced icons from the church of Sion the Mother of churches. The adoption of the liturgical order in the Jerusalem Typikon and the assimilation, as well as extension, of scenes from Palestinian iconography, served the ideology of the Serbian Church in its self-perception as a new earthly Jerusalem. This ideology is most clearly expressed in the prologue to the Jerusalem Typikon by the archbishop Nicodemus, who connects Moses and the Tabernacle of the congregation, which was built at divine prompting, with St. Savas and its holy seat, the church of the Ascension at Žiča.

Several of the iconographic themes in the cycle are original creations that fostered the enrichment of Palaeologan iconography. Typical examples are Christ rebuking the faithlessness of the disciples, the iconographic motif of Christ en etera morfi at the Supper at Emmaus, Christ’s meal of fish and honey the announcement of the Resurrection by the disciples to Thomas the disciples carrying the net on their shoulders and Peter’s question to Christ about John. Most of the above themes are not found in post-Byzantine cycles, or else they are depicted in a simplified form.

Furthermore, rare scenes, such as Christ’s invitation to the disciples to eat with him after the Appearance at Lake Tiberias, the showing of his wounds in the upper room in Jerusalem and the Appearance to Mary Magdalene, which are known from middle-Byzantine manuscripts, continue to be used in the Palaeologan period, in conformity with the pictorial requirements of the age: they take place in settings with rich naturalistic or architectural elements and emphasis is placed on conveying the intensity of feeling of the persons involved.

Besides the liturgical readings of the Eothina Gospels, Patristic writings also provide a significant source of inspiration for the artists. In the Palaeologan period interpretations of the events after the Resurrection are found particularly in the work of leading personalities in the Hesychast movement, through whom a new interpretative dimension is offered: the appearances after Resurrection and the Transfiguration of the Lord have a common theological basis, since the theophanies are the true expression of the divine nature of Christ. The depiction of the mandorla, which surrounds all or part of the figure of Christ in certain scenes from the Eothina, is the pictorial element that most characteristically indicates the influence of Hesychast ideas in the iconography of the cycle.

Most of the churches in which the cycle of Eothina cycle is depicted were decorated by the artists Michael Astrapas and Eutychios from Thessalonica, while a number of the others are ascribed to them (Gračanica) or form part of the same artistic current (Chilandar Monastery). It is noteworthy that these were the only artists of the Palaeologan period whose artistic career is known to us from works bearing their signature, covering a period...
greater than twenty-five years. From the Virgin Perivleptos in Ochrid (1295) until St. Nicetas near Skopje (c. 1322) we are able to follow the development of the cycle.

Their profound spiritual and artistic culture is already apparent from the Perivleptos in the depiction of the Supper at Emmaus, which links them with the group who decorated the Protaton. After Bogorodica Ljeviška, where the cycle is probably at an experimental stage, as regards the choice of the scenes and their arrangement, in Staro Nagoričino the depiction of the cycle is characterized by its iconographic completeness. The artists are continually seeking new forms of expression in the way they depict the scenes. For example it is clear that, in comparison with Ljeviška, the two artists in Staro Nagoričino distanced themselves noticeably from the iconographic type of Christ en etera morfi, reduced the number of events connected with Lake Tiberias and added other scenes, such as Christ rebuking the faithlessness of the disciples, Christ’s meal of fish and honey and Peter asking Christ about John.

Through the development of the Eothina cycle the artistic career of the artists themselves is effectively illustrated, from the experimental stage to their maturity. Beside the Gospel text, the source of their inspiration is to be found in Patristic writings. Western influences can also been recognized in their work. Their talent is manifested in the pictorial rendering of texts, in which complex theological concepts are brought together. They demonstrate their innovativeness in the representation of original iconographical motifs, but remain authentic exponents of the artistic tendencies of their age. Thus the Eothina cycle forms an exceptional model for the study of the narrative element that characterizes Palaeologan art.
Иконографски циклус Васкрсних јеванђеља у црквама из времена владавине краља Милутина

Нектариос Зарас

У епохи Палеолога представе Васкрсних јеванђеља постају стандардизоване, што је имало значајан утицај на иконографски програм цркава. Неколико иконографских тема у циклусу језуса оригинална дела, која су подстакла богаћење иконографије уметности Палеолога. Типични примери су сцена Христос прекорева ученике због неверовања, мотив Христа у другом обличју у Вечери у Емаусу, као и сце- не Христос једе мед и рибу, Ученици јављају Томи да је Христос васкрсао, Ученици носе мрежу на раме- нима и Петар пита Христа о Јовану. Већина тих тема није нађена у поствизантијским циклусима или су сликане у једноставнијој форми.

Ретке сцене, попут Христовог позива учени- цима да једу с њим после јављања на Тиверијадском језеру, Христос показује своје ране ученицима у јерусалимској Горници и Јављање Марији Магдалени, које су биле познате из средњовизантијских ру- кописа, сликају се и у епохи Палеолога, али у сложе- ности са сликарским захтевима епохе. Радња је смеш- тена на сцену богату природним или архитектон- ским елементима, а наглашена су снажна осећања приказаних личности. Поред литургијских читања Васкрсних јеванђеља, и патристички списи били су значајан извор инспирације за уметнике. У епохи Палеолога у своме сликању богаћење иконографије уметности Палеолога. У епохи Палеолога тумачење догађаја после васкрсења нала- жена је на сликању у олтару од X века такође је одредила положај циклуса у оквиру иконографског програма управо на том месту, тако да је теолошко и литургијско јединство периоде Педесетнице иконографски потврђено. Уз то, положај Васкрсних јеванђеља у олтарском простору, што довође циклус у непосредну везу са часном трезом, опправдан је добро познатом чињеницом да се у црковној литературни трезама, посматрано као Христов гроб, повезује с Васкрсењем и Васкрса."}

Главни разлог за развој циклуса јесте утицај литургијских читања зачала Васкрсних јеванђеља, у којима је значај Васкрса представљен различитим епизодама. То даје снажан импулс развоју циклуса, а у вези с наративним елементом карактеристичним за уметност епохе. Васкрсна јеванђеља изложена су веома исцрпно, и појављују се све већи број сцена. Развој циклуса Васкрсних јеванђеља примно је идеолошке димензије нарочито у црквама из времена краља Милутина. Представљање тог циклуса цркве Милутинове епохе повезује се са црквама на Сиону, где су такође биле насликана сцена Васкрсења. Усилање литургијског поретка изложеног у јерусалимском типику, као и сцена излагана из палестинске иконографије, усилавало је саморазумевање Српске цркве као новог земаљског Јерусалима.

Многе цркве у којима је насликан циклус Васкрсних јеванђеља живописали су уметници Михаило Астрап и Евтихије. Њихова продубљена духовна и уметничка култура очигледна је је такође у их јерусалимском тапету, као и у апликацији из палестинске иконографије. Уметници континуирано траже нове форме израза у начину на који сликају сцене. Њихов талент показује се у сликарском преношењу текста у којем су скупљене сложене богословске идеје. Склоност к новинама исказана је сликањем оригиналних иконографских мотива, али они остају аутентични заступници уметничких тежњи свог времена. Тако се циклус Васкрсних јеванђеља показује као изузетан модел за разматрање наративног елемента који карактерише уметност епохе Палеолога.