The Byzantine wall-paintings in the church of Saint Theodore at Platanos, Kynouria (Arcadia)

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The church of St Theodore (also known as "Sts Theodoroi") at Platanos, Kynouria, is a single-nave building of small dimensions. The interior surfaces of its walls preserve their Byzantine paintings, which are partially visible under the coat of plaster that covers most of them. The paintings exhibit affinity with wall-paintings of churches in the Peloponnese (neighbouring Laconia included), and can be dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

Keywords: Kynouria, Greece. Byzantine wall-painting, last quarter of the thirteenth century

The church of St Theodore (also known as "Sts Theodoroi", fig. 1) stands in the locality called “Mother of water” ("Μάνα νερού") in the village of Platanos on Mount Parnon, in the district of Kynouria. The interior surfaces of its walls preserve their Byzantine paintings, which are partially visible under the coat of plaster that covers most of them (pl. 1). A despotic icon of St Theodore on horseback on the modern iconostasis attests the dedication of the church to this saint, reflecting, in all probability, its original dedication too, judging by the representation of an equestrian saint on the north wall, close to the sanctuary, now largely covered by plaster.

The earliest written source mentioning a church of St Theodore at Platanos dates to 1696 and is the codex B.54, no. 157 (ff. 84, 85v) of the Archive of the Venetian Grimani family (Archivio Grimani dai Servi) in Venice (Archivio di Stato di Venezia).1 According to this codex, at that period the village of Platanos numbered 258 inhabitants, and nine churches and chapels. As far as the Byzantine era is concerned, there has been no archaeological survey of the area so far to confirm the existence of the village. However, the church of St Theodore itself, as well as the report of "Plantano" in a 1450 inventory of toponyms and castles in the codex Marc. It. VII 2571 (12463, fol. 458r), and of "Platanos vile" in the inventory of the Annali Veneti by Stefano Magno (fol. 215r), of the year 1463,2 testify the presence of a village or a settlement in the area in the Palaiologan period. According to local tradition, the village was founded during the Middle Ages by Cycladic islanders who came to Kynouria to escape piratical raids.3

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2 On the report in the codex Marc. It. VII 2571 v. E. Fenster, Nochmals zu den venezianischen Listen der Kastelle auf der Peloponnes, BZ 72 (1979) 330, 332, whereas for the Annali Veneti by Stefano Magno v. Ch. Hopf, Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues, Berlin 1873, 203; A. Bon, La Morée Franque. Recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la Principauté d’Achaïe (1205–1430), Paris 1969, 693. It should be noted that the village is not mentioned in the early Ottoman taxation cadastre TT10−1/14662 (ca. 1460–1463), as G. Liaiopoulous, historian–ottomanist, was kind enough to inform me. However, according to G. Liaiopoulous, this does not mean that the village did not exist at that time; it may have been mentioned in some folios which have not survived. On the cadastre v. G. Liaiopoulous, A study of the early Ottoman Peloponese in the light of an annotated edition princeps of the TT10−1/14662 Ottoman taxation cadastre (ca. 1460–1463), London – Istanbul (in press). In a 1467 list of the Morea castles there is a reference to a ruined fortified "Platanos villa" [Hopf, op. cit., 206; Bon, op. cit., 694; W. McLeod, Castles of the Morea in 1467, BZ 65 (1972) 356, 362, 363], corresponding to "Plantano" and "Platanos vile" mentioned in 1450 and 1463.

3 I. E. Peppas, Μεσαιωνικὲς Σελίδες τῆς Αργολίδος, Αρκαδίας, Κορινθίας, Ἀττικῆς, Athens 1990, 180.
The church is a single-nave building of small dimensions (length: 5.40 m without the apse, width: 3.80 m), with a semicircular apse presenting a slight diminution in height. It is covered by a saddleback timber roof, which was added in 1987–1988, when the building underwent some serious reconstruction. In all probability the original roof, at least in the interior, would have been a barrel-vault set on the thick (about 70 cm) walls. The entrance of the church is in the west part of its south wall. The church, nowadays coated with cement mortar to a significant degree, is built of rubble masonry, as can be seen in earlier photographs belonging to the Ephorate of Antiquities of Arcadia. A wooden iconostasis of simple structure, dated to the early twentieth century, isolates the sanctuary from the nave, which were not separated when the church was constructed. The altar is built, covering the lower part of the apse, whereas a built construction in the northeast part of the sanctuary served as a prothesis altar.

As a result of painting losses or the sporadically bad preservation of the paintings, most of the surfaces had already been covered by plaster before 1987–1988. The wall-paintings on the major part of the apse and the west wall, and in places on the east and the lateral walls, in excellent condition, are the exception to the rule and will be examined in this paper.

In the sanctuary apse, the semi-dome is occupied by the full-length frontal figure of the Virgin with Christ Child in the Kyriotissa type, flanked by two venerating archangels; represented on the half-cylinder is the Melismos with the Child in the paten with an asteriskos on the top and four concelebrant hierarchs to the side, visible almost to the thighs under the plaster: St John Chrysostom and St Basil the Great to the north and south of the paten, accompanied by St Athanasios of Alexandria and St Gregory of Nazianzos, respectively. Two partially visible frontal deacons are depicted on the surfaces close to the sanctuary apse, above the prothesis altar: a beardless deacon with short hair on the north part of the east wall, probably St Stephen, and a second deacon with short hair, a thin moustache and a short beard on the east part of the north wall. An unidentifiable wall-painting fragment – a brick-red surface on blue background – is visible on the lower south part of the east wall, next to the altar. A fragment of another painting (garments?), of ochre, brick-red and blue, is visible on the lower part of the south wall close to the iconostasis, whereas on the west part of the wall, next to the entrance of the church, we see the right brick-red.

5 Could he be St Romanos, who is occasionally depicted close to St Stephen? On representations of the saint close to St Stephen v. A. Koumoussi, Les peintures murales de la Transfiguration de Pyrgi et de Sainte-Thècle en Eubée (Rapports avec l’art occidental), Athens 1987, 74 n. 204, pl. 17.1–2.
boot with white details of a figure standing on a brick-red object, which, if we are not mistaken, could be identified as a footstool. Taking into consideration the position of the figure, the presumable footstool and the type of the footwear, he could be the “guardian” archangel of the church, commonly represented close to the entrance of churches from the thirteenth century onwards.8 Two more standing frontal figures, visible to the lower parts of their body, St Nicholas and a female saint, whose name is covered by plaster, are depicted on the south part of the west wall, almost at the level of the faithful. Next to them, on the north part of the same wall, is an equestrian saint moving to the right and slaying a dragon. The feet of the saint and the greater part of the horse and the serpent are still coated with plaster, but the physiognomy of the figure and his white horse lead to the conclusion that this is St George. More warrior saints had been depicted on the north wall, as attested by a partially visible standing frontal saint in armour, on the west part, and parts of the forelegs of the horse of an equestrian saint to the east of it, next to the abovementioned unidentifiable deacon. Both the standing and the mounted warrior saints, covering a significant part of the surfaces – at least the north wall and the north part of the west wall – can be attributed to the dedication of the church to a warrior saint; they also recall the widespread tradition during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of depicting more than one warrior saints in churches of the Peloponnese after the Latin conquest.7

As far as the frame of each painting is concerned, we still see the thin red band separating the wall-painting of the semi-dome from that of the half-cylinder of the apse, as well as parts of the bands to the side of the deacon on the north wall and intermittently around the equestrian St George on the west wall. The background of the paintings is blue, except in the semi-dome of the apse, where it is divided into two zones, an upper blue zone and a lower ochre one.

**Iconography**

The Virgin Kyriotissa with archangels (fig. 2) The frontal figure of the Virgin standing upright on a brick-red footstool with the Christ Child, IC XC, in her bosom occupies the semi-dome of the apse; with her right hand she holds the torso of the Child, while with her left hand he left foot. Her dress is blue and her maphorion brick-red decorated with three white stars and white brush-strokes marking the edges. The Child has a crossed halo with white oblong lines forming both sides of the arms of the cross; each arm is decorated with a red dot imitating gems. He is clad in white garments with green brush-strokes. He blesses with his right hand at a distance from the torso while holding a rolled white scroll with the left before his torso. The two figures are accompanied by the archangels Michael and Gabriel in their luxurious imperial costume, in brick-red and ochre. Turned in three-quarter profile towards the centre of the apse, they venerate with their hands bare. The visible wing of each archangel is upturned, painted in brick-red with white geometrical motifs marking the outline.

The representation follows the pre-iconoclastic type of the Virgin Kyriotissa.9 Judging by the way the Virgin holds the Child, it resembles the variant on the apse of the church of the Transfiguration at Koropi (1020–1030),9 of St John the Baptist at Megali Kastania, in Messenian Mani (mid-thirteenth century)10 and of St Nicholas at Achragias, Laconia (fourth quarter of the fourteenth century),11 the
same variant has also been used for the mosaic representation of the Virgin and Child between the emperors John II Comnenos and Irene in Hagia Sophia at Constantinople (ca. 1118). The Child's gestures can be compared mainly with those in the examples from Koropi and Achrugas.

The archangels Michael and Gabriel are also present in the Kyriotissa depictions of the aforementioned churches at Koropi, Kastania and Achrugas, although in different poses than in the Platanos church. In the churches at Koropi and Kastania they also wear the imperial costume, whereas in the church at Achrugas their attire consists of a chiton and a himation. The pose and gestures of the archangels in St Theodore at Platanos find closer parallels in the archangels depicted to the side of the enthroned Virgin and Child on the apse in the Omorphi Ekklesia of Aigina (1289). On the other hand, their upturned wings and their imperial costume are two commonly repeated features of twelfth-century painting, which were transmitted to Palaiologan art. Also common to Late Komnenian until the early fourteenth century Palaiologan painting is the luxurious decoration of their garments, and especially the diaper pattern on the dalmatic, modified here by white dots imitating pearls. On the dalmatic of the north archangel lozenges are decorated with one off-white and four white pearls, whereas those on the dalmatic of the south archangel with a blue gem in a circle of white pearls.

The Melismos and four concelebrant hierarchs (figs. 2–5) The Melismos is painted with the living Christ Child, half-length and naked in the light red paten with a white asteriskos on the top. The paten is most probably depicted on a painted altar, now covered by plaster. To the side of the paten stand St John Chrysostom, O AΓIOS,


13 Drosouyan, op. cit., pl. B II III IV.

14 V. Foskolou, Η Ομορφή Εκκλησία στην Αίγινα, Ευκονογραφία και τεχνογνωσία της και της τοιχογραφιών, Athens 2000 (unpublished doctoral dissertation), figs. 7, 8, 9b; Ch. Pennas, H βυζαντινή Άγινα, Athens 2004, fig. 24.


16 M. Chatzidakis, Άστρον της παρακλήσεως. Η επανάσταση του Χριστού και της Αγίας Μαρίας, Athens 2000, 94.

17 Compare also with the annotation on footnote 18.

18 For bibliography and examples cf. Foskolou, op. cit., 263–264.

19 Because of the plaster, we cannot discern whether more letters of the word AΓIOS are written.
The hierarchs wear a sticharion and epimanikia of ochre, a white phelonion decorated with blue crosses in blue gammatia, and an omophorion with blue crosses; the omophorion of St John Chrysostom and St Gregory is painted in white, of St Basil in ochre, whereas of St Athanasios in light red.

The Melismos with the Child alive and naked in the paten follows a variant of the iconographic type B, according to Chara Konstantinidē’s classification, a type known in art since the end of the twelfth century. The additional detail of the asteriskos appeared almost a century later, in the wall-painting of the south church of St George at Lathreno, on the island of Naxos (late thirteenth century), symbolizing the part of the Holy Anaphora, during which the Holy Gifts are placed on the altar covered only with the asteriskos. Unique so far is the depiction of the half-length Child.

The representation of the concelebrant hierarchs in the programme of the apse, their vestments and the way of holding the scrolls with both hands, are commonly encountered in art from the Middle Byzantine period. Similarly common are the liturgical prayers on the scrolls of St Basil, St Athanasios and St Gregory. An interesting detail that bespeaks the painter’s decorative disposition is the coloration of Chrysostom’s and St Gregory’s scrolls. Colour, red, brick-red or purple has been chosen in some thirteenth-century cases, in the Cave of Mount Penteli (1233/1234), in St Peter at Kalyvia near Kouvarα and St Prokopios at Kastania, Messenia (last third of the thirteenth century), whereas ochre has been used in St Nicholas at Istiaia, Euboea, of the late fourteenth century. The painter’s penchant for the decorative is also apparent in the rendering of the bishops’ omophoria, forming either a semicircle around the shoulders (St Basil, St Athanasios) or an angle on the torso (St Chrysostom, St Gregory), as well as by painting, as mentioned before, St Basil’s omophorion in ochre and St Athanasios’ in light red, in correspondence to the colours of the scrolls of the bishops depicted next to them.

Deacons (figs. 6–7) The two deacons in the sanctuary – as already mentioned, probably St Stephen, on the north part of the east wall, and the unidentifiable deacon on the north wall – are frontal at Kurbinovo (1191); red, brick-red or purple has been chosen in some thirteenth-century cases, in the Cave of Mount Penteli (1233/1234), in St Peter at Kalyvia near Kouvarα and St Prokopios at Kastania, Messenia (last third of the thirteenth century), whereas ochre has been used in St Nicholas at Istiaia, Euboea, of the late fourteenth century. The painter’s penchant for the decorative is also apparent in the rendering of the bishops’ omophoria, forming either a semicircle around the shoulders (St Basil, St Athanasios) or an angle on the torso (St Chrysostom, St Gregory), as well as by painting, as mentioned before, St Basil’s omophorion in ochre and St Athanasios’ in light red, in correspondence to the colours of the scrolls of the bishops depicted next to them.

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tal. St Stephen holds a censer in his right hand, whereas the second deacon has his left hand covered by a brick-red mandylion and holds a partially visible ochre object, perhaps a livanotida. The inner dress of the deacons is brick-red on its neckline and the sticharion off-white. In the case of St Stephen green brushstrokes are painted on the sticharion, whereas the neckline of the inner dress is decorated with white semicircles, which are observed also in the figure of the same deacon in St Nicholas at Agori-ani, Laconia (ca. 1300).

St Nicholas (fig. 8) On the west wall, St Nicholas, [...] KO/ΛΑ/Ο/S, is depicted frontal, with both hands before his torso; he blesses with the right hand while holding with the left a closed Gospelbook painted in ochre with precious binding. Nicholas wears episcopal vestments – a sticharion, a brick-red phelonion and a white omophorion patterned with three large crosses of dark colour.

The popular saint depicted on the south part of the west wall, as is also the case in the church of the Ta-xiarchs at Geraki (early fifteenth century), is in direct contact with the faithful who enters the church. The saint has also been depicted in the west part – on the west part of the south wall – of the single-nave churches of St George at Dourianika (1275) and St Demetrios (?) at Palaiochora (fourteenth century), on the island of Kythera, as well as of St Demetrios at Makrychori on Euboea (1302/1303), but usually he is depicted inside the sanctuary or close to it. Glad in his usual episcopal vestments, the saint is represented according to an iconographic type already found in one of the wings of a Mount Sinai triptych dated to the seventh/eighth century and widespread from the tenth century onwards. In the Peloponnese, we mention

Fig. 7. Unidentifiable deacon

Fig. 8. St Nicholas and a female saint

40 A part of the saint's name is hidden under the plaster.
42 The saint is enthroned. Cf. J. Papageorgiou, Τοιχογραφίες του 15ου αι. στο κάστρο Γερακίου Λακωνίας, Ένα ζωγραφικό εργαστήριο της όψιμης παλαιολόγειας περιόδου στους ναούς της Ζωοδόχου
43 The saint may also be depicted in the same pose on a poorly-preserved encaustic icon dated around 600 from the R. Cabal Collection: B. Davezac, Greek icons after the fall of Constantinople. Selections from the Roger Cabal collection, Houston 1996, 16–17, no. 1. 44 N. Thierry, Le costume épiscopal byzantin du IXe au XIIe siècle après les peintures datées (miniatures, fresques), REB 24 (1966) 310.
45 Zias, op. cit., 279.
the similar Middle Byzantine paintings in Ai-Giannakis at Zoupena (Sts Anargyroi, first quarter of the twelfth century) and in the Ai-Stratigos church at Ano Bouliarioi (late twelfth century phase) in Laconian Mani. In the thirteenth century the type is represented in Episkopi (ca. 1200), St Peter at Gardenitsa (early thirteenth century), St Zacharias at Logia (second half of the thirteenth century) and Sts Arsygiroi at Kepoula (1265) in the Mani, as well as in St Nicholas at Vlachioti near Monemvasia (late thirteenth century), whereas in the fourteenth and the fifteenth century, in the Panagia Vrestenitissa at Vrestena of Laconia and the Taxiarchs at Agriakona of Arcadia, two painting ensembles of the same workshop (ca. 1300/early fourteenth century), in St Niketas at Karavas in Laconian Mani (early fourteenth century) and in the church of Prophet Elijah at Geraki (first half of the fifteenth century).

Female saint (fig. 8) Depicted adjacent to St Nicholas is a frontal female saint, [...]ΓΙ/Α, 60 painted in the usual; the brick-red dress, a palm turned upwards. She wears the imperial costume: a small white cross, while venerating with her left hand, the circular earrings with three beads-pearls almost to its lower edge, is observed also on the prophets Solomon and David in the representation of the Resurrection in Sts Arsygiroi at Kepoula (1265) and on the image of St Catherine in Ai-Giannakis at Zoupena (fourth quarter of the thirteenth century phase). The circular earrings with the three beads-pearls adorn also St Helen in the Palaiomonastero at Vrontamas, Laconia (thirteenth century phase).

Equestrian St George (fig. 9) In the image of St George slaying the dragon, the saint, O/A/TT/O/S, is depicted mounted on his white horse, the brick-red saddle of which is ornamented with pearls; parts of the body of the dragon and its head are visible in the lower part of the

crown with pearls and prependoulia, and a pair of white circular earrings with three beads-pearls each, complete her regal raiment. The crown with the prependoulia emerging from its upper edge and terminating in three pendants almost to its lower edge, is observed also on the prophetic Solomon and David in the representation of the Resurrection in Sts Arsygiroi at Kepoula (1265) and on the image of St Catherine in Ai-Giannakis at Zoupena (fourth quarter of the thirteenth century phase). The circular earrings with the three beads-pearls adorn also St Helen in the Palaiomonastero at Vrontamas, Laconia (thirteenth century phase).
scene. The face and torso of the saint are frontal. With his left hand he holds the headstall and with his right hand he thrusts a spear diagonally into the serpent’s mouth. The saint wears a white chiton with long sleeves, a cuirass with metal protective flaps in ochre and stripes with pearls, a brick-red mantle with white geometric motifs, a white belt and the usual diadem of pearls, while a brick-red, probably circular, shield hangs behind his left shoulder.

St George is distinguished by a) the existence of the frame isolating him from the other two saints on the west wall, b) his representation on horseback next to standing saints, c) the frontal pose of his head and torso, despite his intense movement, indicating a devotional icon, and d) his ornamented halo, in high relief (fig. 13). We do not know the reason why the painter chose to honour St George in all these ways, since he was not the patron saint of the church; however, we should not forget that St George is one of the major saints of Orthodoxy.

The type of the equestrian St George, with his head and torso in frontal pose, and holding the spear and the headstall in a similar way, finds close parallels in his representation in the church of Christ the Saviour at Megara (third quarter of the thirteenth century), of St John Chrysostom at Geraki (ca. 1300), of St Demetrios at Makrychoro, Euboea (1302/1303), as well as of the Panagia Kera at Kritsa, Lasithi (thirteenth century), and St Marina, Chalepa at Mylopotamos (mid-thirteenth century). Crete. This type has also been reproduced in the depiction of St Demetrios in St Nikon at Tripi (second half of the thirteenth century) and of St Theodore (?) in St Paraskevi at Diros (ca. 1300), Laconia.

Ornamented haloes, already known in monumental painting of the late twelfth century, in churches of Kastoria, become more frequent in the Palaiologan art, especially of the Peloponnese and Crete, a tendency which has been associated with the influence of Crusader and Italian art. Because of the coat of plaster that covers St George’s halo, we cannot be sure about the type of its ornamentation (fig. 13), which is most probably covered on its circumference with a tendril motif. We note that different types of tendril, either painted or in relief, are also used on haloes of holy figures in the Holy Trinity at Lampelia, Elis (thirteenth century), the Taxiaarchs near Saida on Messenian Mani (thirteenth century), the cave-chapel of St John the Baptist near Chrysapha (fourth quarter of the thirteenth century) and St Kyriaki at Marathos (painted tendril, ca. 1300), Laconia, as well as in St Nicholas of Mouri, Crete (twelfth/thirteenth century). The highly raised halo adorns the figures of the Taxiaarchs in the homonymous church at Agriakona (ca. 1300/earl-ly fourteenth century) in the Peloponnese, but examples are also encountered in the Palaiologan painting of Crete: in the representation of St George Xififoros in St George at Apodoulou (mid-thirteenth/early fourteenth century), as well as in holy figures in Archangel Michael at Kakodiki (ca. 1370), Christ the Saviour at Potamies (last quarter of the fourteenth century). St Nicholas at Nispatà of Pigi (late fourteenth/early fifteenth century) and Archangel Michael at Prines (1410). Among the abovementioned examples, we note that those from Agriakona and Apodoulou resemble the shape of St George’s halo in the Platonas church.


66 V. the relevant part of the paper on p. 1.

67 The type has already been used in an image of St Mercurius in the tenth-century Copinic icon in the Sinai monastery: Weizmann, op. cit., 78–79, B.49, pl. XXXI, CIV; G. Galavarès, Πρώιμες εἰκόνες στὸ Σινά απὸ τὸν 6ο ὡς τὸν 11ο αἰώνα, in: Πρακτικά Β Επαρχίας Σελίνου (1988) 351, fig. 3.


69 Most of the halo is covered by plaster, thus impeding further analysis.


71 Deliyannē-Dorē, op. cit., 577, fig. 23 (on the dating of the paintings v. n. 57 supra). We do not know whether the halo of St John the Baptist in the homonymous cave-chapel near Chrysapha is also highly raised or not.

72 I. H. Volanakis, Ο εἰς Αποδούλου Ἀμαρίου βυζαντινὸς ναός του Ἁγίου Γεωργίου Ξιφηφόρου, in: Παραγωγή τοῦ Δ’ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Πράκτικα, Β (Αθήνα, 29 Αυγούστου–3 Σεπτεμβρίου 1976), B, Athens 1981, 55, pl. 43; Spatharakis, Van Essenberg, op. cit., fig. 70–71.

73 N. E. Trambakos, Αἱ βυζαντιναὶ τοιχογραφίαι τῆς Κρήτης. Πρώιμες εἰκόνες στὸν κάμπο τῶν Μεγάρων καὶ τοιχογραφίες τῆς Κύπρου καὶ τοῦ ἑλλαδικοῦ χώρου, Yi9, pl. 28.

74 K. E. Lassithiotakēs, London 1999, 157. I wish to thank Mrs. N. Pyrrou, archaeologist of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Rethymnon, for providing me with a figure of the painting.

Warrior saint (fig. 10) Only parts of the body of the frontal warrior saint depicted in the west part of the north wall are visible: a part of his torso and thighs, most of his right hand, which, judging by its pose, might hold a sword raised before the chest, and the lower part of his left hand supporting on the torso a circular shield from its external side. A brick-red *chiton* with long sleeves, decorated with white motifs, an ochre cuirass, a belt (?) and a dark-ochre mantle form his military attire. The type of the shield is common in Byzantine art. On the contrary, exceptional is the way the saint holds the shield, because there seems to be no suspension point on its surface. If this has not been caused by a loss of paint, the way the saint holds the shield finds resemblance to a limited number of representations, such as the mosaic of St Demetrios in the Cathedral Basilica of Cefalù (after 1148) and the representation of a soldier on fol. 361r of the Vatopedi Octateuch (*Cod. 602*, ca. 1270–1300).

To sum up, the paintings under examination follow iconographic types and details common to the monumental painting mostly of the second half of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century in the periphery of the Byzantine Empire, often recorded within the boundaries of the Despotate of the Morea.

**Stylistic study**

The wall-paintings under examination present a remarkable stylistic homogeneity, demonstrating that they are the work of only one painter. Characteristic traits of all figures, both standing upright and on horseback, are the static poses and the calm gestures; even in the case of the equestrian St George (fig. 9), who is shown killing the dragon, the impression of movement is moderated by the frontal pose of his head and torso.

The anatomical details and the facial features are linearly rendered, with brick-red brushstrokes (figs. 6–7, 11–14). An exception to the rule is noted only on the lower outline of faces, which the painter models using wide brick-red planes. The eyes are large and almond-shaped, formed by two curves which join and extend to the temples, while the pupils convey an intense gaze. The eyelids are indicated usually by two curves, the eyebrows are thick and curved, and the nose is straight on frontal figures, and slightly crooked on figures turned in three-quarter profile. The lips are painted in brick-red; the upper one is wavy and recalls a swallow's tail, whereas the lower one is formed by a concave curve of smaller size. The chin is painted in a convex curve. The ears, when they are visible, are also linearly rendered. The neck is normal and the fingers thin and long. In contrast to the schematic treatment of the facial features, the naked parts of the body of the Christ Child in the *Melismos* (fig. 3) are executed with greater freedom.

The flesh is dark ochre (figs. 6–7, 11–14). The protruding parts are stressed by a few white highlights, curved or oblique, without much schematization, and the wrinkles are painted with brushstrokes of ochre mixed with white. Because of the use of green shade in broad planes, in the area of the eyebrows, to the side of the nose and on the outline, the aspect of the faces is rather unnatural and ‘heavy’. However, variants in the use of the green shadow exist. In the three-quarter profile figures...
the shadow covers only the visible side of the face (figs. 4–5), whereas in the Christ Child of the Melismos (fig. 3) it is completely absent, in order the painter to illuminate the childish countenance. Lastly, in the case of female and youthful male figures, the green plane covers a part of the neck, in most cases the right one.

The painter chooses ochre for the flesh of the hands, often using the green shade on parts distant from the source of light, such as on the centre of the palm of the Christ Child’s right hand in the Kyriotissa representation. He also stresses the prominent points with white free-drawn highlights, for example on the Virgin’s right hand of the same image. On the other hand, in the case of the Child of the Melismos (fig. 3) the green shadow is absent from the naked body, just as from the face of the figure, in order to enhance the chubbiness.

In most cases the hair and beard are painted with curved brushstrokes. In the case of young figures (figs. 6–7, 11–13) the brushstrokes are brick-red and ochre, whereas in the elder ones (figs. 4–5, 14) brick-red, green and white, with variants. In St John Chrysostom brick-red is the predominant colour. In St Basil the Great the painter uses brick-red with a few white strokes, in St Gregory and St Athanasios he uses ochre, on which he adds brushstrokes of white and – to a lesser extent – of brick-red, whereas in St Nicholas green and white are combined with some brick-red strokes.

As scholars have already remarked, the wide use of the line characterizes Komnenian art and survives to the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century in the conservative painting of Southern Greece and the islands, the Peloponnese included – especially the southern parts of the peninsula – as well as the neighbouring island of Kythera.89

88 V. mainly S. Kalopissē-Vertē, Τάσεις της μνημειακής ζω-
gραφικής περί το 1300 στον ελλαδικό και νησιωτικό χώρο (εκτός από τη Μακεδονία), in: Ο Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος και η Εποχή του, Athens 1999, 72–75; eadem, Επιπτώσεις της Δ’ Σταυροφορίας στη μνημειακή ζωγραφική της Πελοπονησίας και της Ανατολικής Στερεάς Ελλάδας έως τά τέλη του 13ου αιώνα, in: Η βυζαντινή τέχνη μετά την Τετάρτη Σταυροφορία, Διεθνές Συνέδριο, Ακαδημία Αθηνών, 9–12 Μαρτίου 2004, ed. P. L. Vocotopoulos, Athens 2007, 69−70, n. 43 with bibliography and examples. I wish to thank warmly Mrs. S. Kalopissi-Verti, Professor Emerita of Byzantine Archaeology, for her remarks on the Palaiologan monumental painting in Laconia.

The shading of the flesh with green is also attested during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Here, the wide use of this colour, not only on the outline of the faces and to the side of the nose, as usual, but also on the area of the eyebrows forming a unified plane, its tonal gradation and its combination with the rest of the colours of the flesh find the closest parallels in some figures of the scenes of the Last Supper and the Betrayal painted by the so-called ‘A’ painter in St Theodore at Tsopakas in Lacconian Mani, dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century (fig. 15). Moreover, the face of the Child of the Melisinos displays similarities to the face of a child in the scene of the Entry into Jerusalem in the church of the Ascension at Myriali, dated also to the second half of the thirteenth century (2nd phase), both in the modeling of the flesh and in the physiognomy. Also common in the second half of the same century are the large eyes with the intense pupils (“rolling-eyes”), an element of Western origin that was widespread in the periphery of the Byzantine Empire during the thirteenth and the early fourteenth century, such as in neighbouring Laconia or in Aigina, Attica, Euboea, even in Crete. This applies also to the swallow’s-tail shape of the upper lip and the schematic ears.

The simplified drapery covers the body without enhancing it. The concelebrant hierarchs (figs. 4–5) stand out among the figures because of their motionless omoiphoria and the absence of folds on the phelonion, which cover the body without revealing the pose or the gestures of the figure. The conception is the same when it comes to the luxurious costume of the archangels of the apse (fig. 2); the part of the loros folding smoothly above the arm is the exception to the rule. Similarly smooth is the flurrying part of St George’s mantle (fig. 9), with parallels in wall-paintings dating to the second half of the thirteenth century in Laconia, especially in Inner Mani, Chrysapha and Myriali on Mount Taygetos, as well as on the island of Kythera. On the rest of the figures, the folds are straight, heightening their static pose. The oblique, pipe-like fold on St Nicholas’ phelonion (fig. 8), typical of the painting of the Late Komnenian period, lives on until the early fourteenth century. Moreover, the less schematic folded edge of the maphorion to the side of the Kyriotissa’s face (fig. 11) recalls the maphorion of female saints or of the Virgin in churches of Inner Mani of the thirteenth century. The richly folded edge of the maphorion is also encountered in this period.

The edges of the folds are usually painted in a darker tone than the local one – as on the figures on the west wall (figs. 8–9), the warrior saint (fig. 10) and the deacon (fig. 7) on the north wall. In some cases a different colour has been used, achieving stronger contrasts – white on the blue dress of the Kyriotissa (fig. 2), green on the white garments of the Christ Child of the Kyriotissa image (fig. 2), as well as of St Stephen (fig. 6).

Brick-red, ochre, white, blue and green are the main colours in the artist’s palette for the garments. The choice of brick-red and ochre (archangels’ costume, fig. 2, St George’s and female saint’s garments on the west wall, fig. 9, 8, warrior saint’s attire on the north wall, fig. 10), as well as of blue and white (hierarchs, figs. 4–5) dominates the painted surface. White is usually combined with some green, which is used on the edges of the folds and/...
It is apparent from the aforesaid that the style of the wall-paintings in the church of St Theodore at Platanos exhibits affinity with wall-paintings of the periphery of the Byzantine Empire — neighbouring Laconia included — dating mostly to the second half of the thirteenth century. Moreover, exceptional is their resemblance to the paintings of the so-called ‘A’ painter in the church of St Theodore at Tsopakas in Inner Mani, of the last quarter of the thirteenth century, in terms of the rendering of the flesh of the figures. Therefore, the wall-paintings under examination can be dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century as well. The fact that most of the parallels, both iconographic and stylistic, of the paintings are found in the mural painting of churches located in Laconia, allows the conclusion that the painter had a very good knowledge of the painting in this region, which could actually be the place of his origin.


Δράσας N. B., Ο Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος και η εποχή του, Athens 1999, 63−100 [Kalopissē-Vertē S., in: Ο Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος και η εποχή του, Athens 1999, 63−100].

Византијско зидно сликарство у цркви Светог Теодора у Платаносу, Кинорија (Аркадија)

Марија Агреви

Црква Светог Теодора (такође позната и као Свети Теодор) у селу Платанос, у Кинургији, једнобродна је грађевина малих димензија, покривена модерним дрвеним кровом на две воде. На унутрашњим површинама њених зидова очуване су византијске фреске, делимично видљиве испод слоја малтера који их већим делом прекрива. Насупрот томе, зидне слике у апсиди и на западном зиду у одличном су стању и то сликарство истражено је у овом раду.

У апсиди светилишта полукалоту заузима фронтална фигура Богородице Кириотисе са Христом дететом, а крај ње су два анђела која јој указују поштовање. У средишту ниже зоне приказан је Мелисмос са Христом Агнцем у патени са звездицом на врху, док су са страна четворица архијереја која саслужују: свети Јован Златоусти и свети Василије Велики северно и свети Атанасије Александријски и свети Григорије из Нише јужно. На површинама у близини олтарске апсиде, изнад проскомидије, фронтално су представљена двојица ђакона, данас делимично видљива: на северном делу источног зида вероватно је насликан свети Стефан, а на источном делу северног зида налази се неидентификовани ђакон. На западном делу зида, крај улаза у цркву, виде се чизма цинобер боје и бели детаљи фигуре која стоји на предмету цинобер боје, а то би, уколико не грешимо, могао бити супедион. Ако се узму у обзир положај фигуре, претпоставка да она стоји на супедиону и врста приказане обуће, реч би могла бити о анђелу „чврaru“ цркве, често сликаном у близини улаза у храмове од XII века. Сачуване су још две стојеће фронталне фигуре, насликане на јужном делу западног зида и видљиве до доњих делова тела – свети Никола и женска светитељска фигура чије је име прекривено малтером. Уз њих је, на северном делу источног зида, књижевна фигура светитеља који носи подигнуто копље и њиме саслужује. Светитељева стопала и већ део представе која саслужују, али физиономија лица приказане на белом копљу води ка закључку да реч је о светом Георгију. Још неке ратничке фигуре биле су насликане на северном зиду, о чему сведочи и делимично видљива слика насликана у апсиди на западном зиду, али те фигуре, захваљујући налазу на супедиону, не могу бити прецизно описана. Судећи према свему наведеном, закључује се да зидно сликарство цркве Светог Теодора у Платаносу може бити датовано у последњу четвртину XIII века, након латинског освајања.

Разматране фреске показују уобичајене иконаграфске и стилске одлике зидног сликарства цркава на Пелопонезу током друге половине XIII века, особито у оближњој Лаконији. Поред тога, изузетна је њихова сличност са зидним сликама такозваног сликара „А“ у цркви Светог Теодора у Цопакасу (Меса Мани, Лаконија), датованим у последњу четвртину XIII века на основу начина приказивања фигуре. Судећи према свему наведеном, закључује се да зидно сликарство цркве Светог Теодора у Платаносу може бити датовано у последњу четвртину XIII века и да је његов аутор врло добро познавао зидно сликарство Лаконије, која би могла бити место његовог порекла.


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