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A STUDY OF THE STANDING FIGURES IN THE FIVE DOMES OF THE VIRGIN LJEVİŞKA IN PRIZREN

To ensure proper identification of scenes or individual figures, Byzantine masters followed well established iconographic traditions and used accompanying explanatory inscriptions. In the instances when such identifying texts are lost, the subject of the compositions may be recognized by other means, such as body language used to underscore the actions of the protagonists. As far as individual figures are concerned, traditional head types or occasionally present attributes might help with the identification. In spite of these iconographic factors, many saints with lost name inscriptions remain anonymous. Such is the case with a number of standing figures in the cathedral of the Virgin Ljeviška in Prizren, painted after 1307, most probably between 1310 and 1314. These figures are represented in the lowest as well as in the highest zones of this church.

Although examined from multiple points of view in a monographic study by Gordana Babić as well as in certain much later works, the substantially damaged frescoes in all five domes and drums have not been given the focused attention and lengthy analysis needed to identify and to interpret at least some of the figures. As best as this author can determine, the majority of the twenty-four standing figures under consideration have lost their name inscriptions, and some of the texts inscribed upon the opened scrolls that some of these figures carry are rendered illegible. Additionally, all of the fresco surfaces suffered extensive damage, especially to the heads and the upper parts of the figures' bodies.

1 Gordana Babić, Slikarstvo Bogorodice Ljeviška, in Draga Panić i Gordana Babić, Bogorodica Ljeviška, Umetnički spomenici Jugoslavije (SKZ, Belgrade, 1975) p. 47; hereafter it will be quoted as G. Babić, Slikarstvo... (1975) followed by page or image number; the same system which follows MLA rules is applied throughout this article to the scholarly apparatus.


3 All of the observations made for this article are based on the line drawings by Branislav Živković, Bogorodica Ljeviška: crteži fresaka (Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, Beograd,
Because of their places within the iconographic program of the Virgin Ljeviška and their locations in the drums of the church’s domes, the figures standardly are identified as belonging to the general category of the prophets. This classification is further strengthened by the fact that above twelve of these figures the partially conserved epithet “prophet” (σφήνα) survives, and that with the exception of two, all the
figures wear classical garments. Furthermore, either rolled or opened and inscribed scrolls — a total of six in the main dome — are held by figures sufficiently preserved for scholars to examine and suggest this attribution, helping with the identification as well. In addition, due to his exotic clothing, young Daniel, from the main dome, is the only one among prophets immediately recognizable, which also supports this categorization.

Although the other scenes which include the prophets are dispersed throughout this cathedral’s iconographic program, this paper focuses upon the twenty-four standing figures represented between the windows in the five drums of the pentaturation-type church of the Virgin Ljeviška. This author stresses the images and the theological context of the central dome, due to their complexity and somewhat better state of survival, over those in the small domes. A reconstitution of prophets’ identities is attempted through a comparative method and an analysis of iconographic types of the twenty-four figures in question. However, that half of the figures have lost their name inscriptions complicates this quest.

Four different hypostases of Christ depicted in the calottes of the small domes of the Virgin Ljeviška are represented as busts contained within simply outlined medallions. In contrast, one of the most successful variations, both visually and iconographically, is executed around the bust of the Pantokrator in the main dome (Fig. 1). Typically, in the great majority of Byzantine domes, this image of Christ is encircled either by a rainbow design or by a simple multicolored band, which in a number of cases contains an inscription. In the cathedral under consideration, an eight-pointed star frames the medallion with the Pantokrator, behind whom burst out eight rays of light. To the best of this author’s knowledge, such an unusual iconographic feature remains insufficiently explored. One may find its immediate source of inspiration in the theological literature popular at that time, as G. Babić has suggested. However, one might ask if the concept of the star of light around the Pantokrator originates in a biblical text, for example that of the prophet Habakkuk, who is painted, as this analysis demonstrates, below the Pantokrator in the drum of the dome. Verses 1 (2) and 3 from Chapter 3 of Habakkuk were the most frequently inscribed quotations on the scroll carried by this prophet, and were also included in


5 The rainbow associated with the seat of Christ survives in a rather early example, the mosaic in the monastery of Christ Latomon in Thessalonike, dated in the late 5th c., see: Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, Early Christian Art (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1961) fgs. 134–135. This idea was transferred to the image of the Pantokrator, which is occasionally surrounded by the frame in color of that heavenly phenomenon. Such a representation existed in Hagia Sophia, see: Cyril Mango, The Mosaics of St. Sophia in Istanbul (Washington, D.C., 1962) p. 31 and pls. 22 and especially 24; for the surviving examples in St. Sofia in Kiev, in Veljusa or Daphne, see: Nikolaos Gkioles, O Byzantinos Troullos kai to Eikonografiko tou Programma (Mesa 60th ai. – 1204) (Ekdoesis Kardamitsa, Athens, 1990) fgs. 13, 17 and 18. The inscription framing the Pantokrator can be followed from the church of Panagia Prototronos and subsequently throughout the entire Byzantine and Post Byzantine periods, see: N. Gkioles, O Byzantinos Troullos..., (1990) fgs. 16, 22, 23, 24, 37.

6 G. Babić, Bogorodica... (1975) pp. 74–75.
the Great Canon by Andreas of Crete.  Therefore, these and the following lines must have been familiar to the learned theologians involved in planning the iconographic programs for the important churches like the cathedral of Prizren. Both Greek and Church Slavonic versions of the text from Habakkuk 3:4 contain all the words necessary to inspire and visually formulate such a radiant frame around the Pantokrator: "And His brightness was as the light; he had horns [rays] coming out of his right hand: and there was the hiding of his power:..."\(^8\) Habakkuk's words could have provided the iconographer responsible for the creation of the original image with the inspiration for the radiance comparable to that of the sun, an idea rendered in the main dome of the Virgin Ljeviška and elsewhere in this church.\(^9\) The rays that emanate from behind the depiction of the Pantokrator and the points of the star precisely coincide with window openings, thus making a metaphysical union between divine radiance and natural light.

Due to the lack of comparable preserved monumental painting predating the representation in the Virgin Ljeviška, it is impossible to establish whether or not the visual exegesis in the main dome of the Prizren cathedral was an original creation of the Bishop Sava\(^10\) or if the iconographic idea expressed in this dome was imported by him into Serbia, and thus derived from an ultimate Byzantine prototype. The latter seems the most likely case. Constantinus Rhodiou's tantalizing words from Description of Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople come to mind: "(737) In the middle of the costly ceiling, it (the church) bears a representation of Christ as if He were the sun, a wonder exceeding all wonders;..."\(^11\)

Eight angels in half-figure representing divine powers emerge from behind the rays of the eight-pointed star framing the Pantokrator. They fly downward, toward the prophets painted in the drum, delivering the Lord's message (Fig. 1). The image of one of the angels is completely lost, and among the remaining seven, three display tightly rolled and sealed scrolls. The other three display their partially opened scrolls inscribed with the following words originally written in Greek: "Thus spoke the Lord; behold I, "Sabaot," and "Thus spoke the Lord" (Fig. 2). Only one of them is identified by inscription as seraph; the others most likely were inscribed "Angels of the Lord." The seraph holds a spoon-like object providing the key for unlocking the

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\(^8\) It is important to mention that mistranslation of the word "rays" into "horns", caused the iconographic rendition of Moses with horns; see: James Hall, Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art (Icon Editions, 1996) pp. 194–195. For all the biblical quotations in this article, the following translations of the bible are used: The Scofield Reference Bible (New York, Oxford University Press, 1917); Sveto pismo Staroga i Novoga Zavjeta, trans. by Dj. Daničić and Vuk St. Karadžić (London, 1952).

\(^9\) As eloquently discussed by G. Babić, Bogorodica... (1975) pp. 73–74.

\(^10\) G. Babić, Bogorodica... (1975) p. 50.

identity of the prophet directly below him. Once established in the Ljeviška dome, this theologically poignant theme, together with the radiant image of the Pantokrator, found its reflections in other churches in King Milutin’s domain. One can cite here Staro Nagoričino (before 1318) where the angels are depicted in whole figure, or in the church of the Virgin Hodegetria in Peć (before 1337) where the seraphim, projected against a radiant light, hand to the prophets the scrolls inscribed with their divinely inspired messages.\(^\text{12}\)

Below the descending angels and between the windows of the drum of the main dome stand eight prophets (Figs. 3 and 4). They have lost their name inscriptions, and the Church Slavonic texts inscribed on those scrolls which are open are heavily damaged, and in most cases difficult to decipher (Fig. 5). These facts have rendered five of these prophets anonymous, the exception being Daniel, at least after a cursory examination. However, one can add to this recognition two young and beardless prophets, who certainly represent Habakkuk and Zechariah the Younger.\(^\text{13}\)

In the first space south of the eastern window an old prophet is depicted (Fig. 3 and Fig. 6, no. 1). He has long, well groomed hair, which clearly outlines his domed cranium, falling in wisps on his forehead and shoulders. His cheekbones seem high; his face appears gaunt. The mustache blends with the long beard which cascades in corkscrew-like locks, forming a single point on his chest. The prophet’s right arm is raised to the level of his ear, and he points upward while blessing. Such a gesture is frequently employed with the figure represented in that location and marks the much emphasized focal point of the whole group, the easterly direction.\(^\text{14}\) The left arm is wrapped in the folds of the himation, and the emerging left hand holds the downward


\(^{13}\) Without giving specific indication for the basis of her identification, *G. Babić in Slikarstvo...* (1975) pl. XV, identified the 5th figure south of the eastern window of the main drum as Zechariah the Younger.

hanging scroll. The other end of the himation falls back from the right shoulder of the figure, and cascades downward, thus counterpointing the raised arm and balancing the scroll. The old prophet is depicted frontally, and his left leg carries the weight of his body. A number of figures, ranging from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel to Moses and Elijah, or the king-prophets David and Solomon are given the same easterly location in painted drums of the Byzantine churches.\footnote{For the placement in the eastern segment of the drum, see: Lj. D. Popovich, “Compositional and Theological Concepts...” Cyrilmethodianum VIII–IX (1984–1985) schemata I–IV (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel); Lj. D. Popovich, “Figure proroka u kupoli...” L’archevêque Danillo II (1991, published in 1992) schema I (David and Solomon); Hans Belting, Cyril Mango, Doula Mouriki, The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul, Dumbarton Oaks Studies XV (Washington, D.C., 1978) p. 49, figs. 27 and 29 (Moses and Isaiah); Lj. D. Popovich, “Hitherto Unidentified Prophets...” Zograf 19 (1988) fig. 1 (Elijah and Daniel).}

Although body language alone is insufficient to identify a prophet, when combined with the facial type and the position in regard to the eastern window, the choices become much narrower. Buttressed by other evidence generating from the context of the entire group, it seems very plausible that the figure in question could and should be identified as Jeremiah.

The letters on Jeremiah’s scroll are nearly destroyed (Fig. 5, no. 1). In other Byzantine style churches he is depicted delivering various messages such as Jer. 2:18; Jer. 5:18; Jer. 11:19; Jer. 23:5; Jer. 38:15; and Jer. 38:31. However, most frequently he offers the text from Baruch 3:35 (3:36).\footnote{For the prophet Jeremiah and the text that he carries, see: Ljubica D. Popović, “Figure proroka u kupoli...” L’archevêque Danillo II (1991, published in 1992) pp. 453–455 and notes 89–97.} A comparison of surviving letters with any of the above cited quotations did not yield a clue to deciphering the damaged text used in the Virgin Ljeviška. The quotation is rather short, and in that respect it is similar in form to all others given to the prophets in this group, containing between four and six lines. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that this se-

Fig. 5. Texts held by the prophets in the drum of the main dome (after B. Živković [1991], p. 10)
Fig. 3. Standing figures of prophets, southern half of the main dome (after B. Živković [1991], p. 10)

Fig. 4. Standing figures of prophets, western half of the main dome (after B. Živković [1991], p. 11)
lection might have been totally different from those more standardly chosen. Also, one cannot be certain that what B. Živković actually saw inscribed on the scroll, what he thought that he saw, and finally what he recorded in the drawings serving as the main visual documentation for this study, is absolutely correct.

The next prophet due south is young and seems to have short hair (Fig. 3 and Fig. 6, no. 2). His figure shows a slight serpentine curve; the lower part of his body turns to the prophet on his right, while the head and the blessing hand are directed toward the following figure. He places his right arm against his chest, wrapped in a sling-like fashion in the folds of his himation, thus emulating the mode of dressing by ancient authors and philosophers as exemplified best by the figure of Sophokles. The young prophet's left hand holds an open scroll, which hangs from waist height. An obliquely placed fold of his himation seems to bind his legs just above the ankles, the folds on his knees almost forming rays. As aforementioned, during the Palaeologan period, only two of the classically dressed prophets are represented young. Occasionally, Habakkuk shows traces of a beard or a full beard, which is not the case here. If G. Babić's identification of the prophet in the fifth position counting clockwise from the eastern window is accepted as that of Zechariah the Younger, then the prophet in question ought to be Habakkuk. His placement within the group too, is comparable to that of Habakkuk in St. Jovan Kaneo.

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17 John Boardman, Greek Sculpture: The Late Classical Period and Sculpture in Colonies and Overseas (Thames and Hudson, New York, c. 1995) p. 105, and ill. no. 106: copy of Sophokles, Vatican.
18 For bearded Habakkuk, see: Ljubica D. Popović, “The Prophets in the Drum and Soffits of the Arilje Katholikon: A Study of Figure Identities and Interpretations of their Texts”, Sveti Ahilije u Arilju, Žbornik radova naučnog skupa, 1996 (Beograd, 2002) p. 130, fig. 1.
The writing preserved on the scroll (Fig. 5, no. 2) with the presence of certain letters leads this author to suggest that this is the fragment of the text from Habakkuk 3:2 (3:1 Septuagint version): “Gospode, čuh riječ tuoju, i uplašiš se;...” (“O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid:...”). This reading is confirmed further by the fact that only two of the quotations from the book of Habakkuk were chosen to be inscribed on the scrolls held by this prophet in all the preserved examples of Byzantine monumental mosaics and frescoes. The other text is Habakkuk 3:3.20

The right arm position and hand gesture of the prophet next to Habakkuk repeat that of Jeremiah (Fig. 3 and Fig. 6, no. 3). He too is old, frontally depicted, with his weight carried on his left leg. His long hair falls on his forehead, as well as on his left shoulder. His long beard is divided into two pointed strands. A himation fold almost binds his legs just below the knees and crosses his chest, serving to drape his left arm, and to fall from his right shoulder, alongside his body. His left hand grips the open scroll that hangs down from hip level. Since the physical characteristics, primarily the division of the beard, are more generalized rather than specific features of an elderly man, a particular prophet cannot be discerned among them. Without being able to decipher and connect into meaningful words the remaining letters on his scroll, any speculative identification cannot be justified (Fig. 5, no. 3). By process of elimination, which will become obvious during this discourse, this author believes that the prophet in question is not one of the four major ones. From among the minor prophets, the two youthful ones, Habakkuk and Zechariah the Younger, together with Jonah and Zephaniah may be eliminated on iconographic grounds as candidates as well. A statistical analysis of the frequency of selecting the remaining eight minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Haggai and Malachi) for the inclusion in this group would provide only a numerical probability, which is not a guiding principle in prophet choices and it does not serve as a proven method for identification. So, until new technologically advanced methods are applied to reading the effaced letters, this prophet will remain anonymous.

The prophet occupying the fourth position is depicted with a strong S-curve movement, head turned to his left, and the body to his right (Fig. 3 and Fig. 6, no. 4). In this manner he makes a visual connection with the figure that follows. The right hand emerges from beneath the folds of the himation, clutching a rolled scroll. The left hand is placed in front of the chest, palm out, in a frequently used gesture for the standing figures. He too is an older man with smoothly combed hair. His medium length beard, ending in even strands almost in a “broom-like” fashion, curls slightly inward and to his right side. All of this is insufficient iconographic evidence to make even a tentative suggestion toward identification at this stage of research, except to ascertain that he too represents one of the minor prophets.

20 Anne-Mette Gravgaard, Inscriptions of Old Testament Prophecies in Byzantine Churches (Copenhagen, 1977) p. 44–46 for a short list of monuments with the representations of Habakkuk and his quotations.
In her study of the frescoes in the Virgin Ljeviška, G. Babić supposed that one of the young prophets is Zechariah the Younger (Fig. 4 and Fig. 6, no. 5);\textsuperscript{21} thus the proposed identification of Habakkuk confirms this suggestion. He is shown as beardless, young, and with long hair falling on his forehead and back. His body also exhibits torsion, and rotates in the direction of Daniel, but his head faces the preceding figure, thus visually connecting them. The himation falls in large folds from his right shoulder on his back. He places his right arm across his body, and the left, hanging alongside it, holds an open scroll.

In Byzantine miniature and monumental painting this young prophet often is entrusted with delivering his message through a variety of quotations.\textsuperscript{22} However, the most frequently employed text among the preserved examples this author has collected over the years is Zechariah 9:9. When comparing this text with the remaining letters preserved on the Ljeviška scroll (Fig. 5, no. 5), one can reconstruct it as following: “Raduj se mnogo, kćeri Sionska, podviku, kćeri Jerusalimska:...” (“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:...”), from Zechariah 9:9. Therefore, the restored reading of this quotation leaves no doubt that this is the representation of Zechariah the Younger, since prophet-authors infrequently exchange their texts.

Only the identity of Daniel in this group was never in doubt, since his exotic garment style and head gear set him apart from the others. He holds the sixth position from the eastern window (Fig. 4 and Fig. 6, no. 6). The young Daniel, as usual, is depicted in a frontal position. His right arm is placed across his chest, and with his left hand draped in his short chlamys he clasps the rolled scroll at his waist. No iconographic distinction from other representations of Daniel can be observed in Ljeviška image. Because his scroll is rolled, his message remains hidden. When Daniel’s scroll is inscribed, a number of quotations are used, among the most popular ones Dan. 2:34 or Dan. 2:44 which are very similarly worded and related to the Nativity, and then Dan. 7:9, which makes a reference to the “end of days.”\textsuperscript{23} However, even a closed codex or a rolled scroll finds its explanation in Dan. 12:4: “A ti Danilo zatvori ove riječi i zapečati ovu knjigu do posljednjega vremena; mnogi će pretraživati, i znanje će se umnožiti” (“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”). Thus the closed book with its reference to “the end of time” carries multiple implications, with additional details provided in the Book of Revelation. Among preserved Serbian monuments in which Daniel holds a closed book or a rolled scroll, one can cite examples from the dome’s drum in Dečani and Ravanica.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} See above, note 13.

\textsuperscript{22} A.-M. Gravgaard, Inscriptions... (1977) pp. 90–92.

\textsuperscript{23} A.-M. Gravgaard, Inscriptions... (1977) pp. 23–26.

\textsuperscript{24} Vladimir R. Petković, Djurdje Bošković, Manastir Dečani; V. R. Petković, Živopis (SKA, Beograd, 1941) p. 28, pl. CLXIX; Marina Belović, Ravanica. Istorija i slikarstvo (Zavet, Beograd, MCMXCI) p. 87, fig. XXXI.
The prophet north of Daniel, in the seventh place, assumes a powerful stance excuding the impression of a strong and rugged figure (Fig. 4 and Fig. 6, no. 7). He stands with his legs apart, the left carrying the weight of his body. His head is depicted as fully frontal, but his body is turned almost in a three quarter view to his left. His himation tightly envelopes his body and his right arm is placed alongside it. The left hand holds an open scroll resting on his thigh. The most characteristic features of this prophet are his face, hair, and beard. His eyes are deeply set under his bushy eyebrows, and his furrowed forehead gives him an intense look. The face has a narrow and hooked nose, and prominent cheeks. The abundant and somewhat rumbled curly long hair and very full beard almost overwhelm his powerful features. A comparison with various facial types used as icons for different prophets indicates that, in a majority of instances, the figure with disheveled hair, untamed beard, and a very intense expression characterizes Ezekiel.  

Therefore, the iconography of this prophet, as well as his inclusion and placement within this group, allows one to assume that this figure indeed portrays Ezekiel. Furthermore, enumerable Byzantine variations in prophet selection for a dome’s drum suggest that there are certain patterns: in the case of the four major prophets, if three out of four are depicted, Daniel is first omitted. If only two of the major prophets are included in such a group, Isaiah and Jeremiah are selected, thus eliminating Ezekiel. From the subsequent argument it will be seen that besides already identified Jeremiah and Daniel, Isaiah is also included in the main dome of the Prizren cathedral. It follows that with a certain amount of assurance, the prophet standing in the seventh space of this drum should be identified as Ezekiel.

Of all the texts inscribed on the scrolls within this gathering of prophets, his is the best preserved, but unfortunately, it reveals the least. It simply reads: “Tako glagolaet Vsedržitelj” (“Thus spoke the Lord”) and nothing more (Fig. 5, no. 7). Many cases exist in which scrolls held by prophets start with these words, so this text does not offer an inroad to the identity of this figure or his intended quotation. Often, these words are an indication that the texts of the prophets were not direct biblical quotations but were copied from parimeiniki. The evidence collected by this author, as well as that published by Gravgaard, documents that the most frequently used texts with this prophet are: Ez. 44:2 and Ez. 37:1. However, there are instances in which his chosen quotation starts with the above cited words, for example: Ez. 37:5, so at least the usage of the words “Thus spoke the Lord” do not negate the above suggested identification for the prophet.

The prophet painted north of the eastern window in the eighth space proceeding clockwise from that window is also an old man, with a medium length beard and hair which seems to fall on his back, and not on his shoulders (Fig. 4 and Fig. 6, no. 8). His relaxed right leg indicates a slight hip-shot position. The prophet’s left arm is

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25 H. Belting, C. Mango, D. Mouriki, The Mosaics and Frescoes... (1978) fig. 46.
placed beside his body with the left hand holding tightly the top of the hanging scroll. This prophet differs from the other seven painted in this group in one aspect: while the others face forward, looking straight, or slightly incline their heads, gazing sideways, the prophet in question raises his right arm from the folds of his himation and uplifts his head toward the images above him, the seraph and ultimately the Pantokrator. In this way, a formal and psychological connection is made between the source of inspiration: the Incarnated Logos, the Messenger-seraph, and the recipient of the divinely inspired words, the prophet. This arm position and the uplifted head, which are just two elements of a rich body language used in the images of the prophets, alone do not provide possible clues as to the identity of this figure. However, if the identification of the prophet south of the eastern window is accepted as that of Jeremiah, it would then be most likely that the image here represents Isaiah. This supposition is based, besides iconographical traits, on the principle of pairing the prophets in Byzantine art that is mentioned above, and placing the most important messengers to flank the eastern window. Comparisons with other representations of Isaiah further confirm this suggestion. The visual context and written words justify his animated movement.

What clinches this identification is the presence of the seraph, who should not be holding a spoon-like object, but the tongs with live coal taken from the altar. The well preserved words from Isaiah’s scroll make sense: “I posla k mne odin ot serafimie” (“and sent to me one of the seraph”) (Fig. 5, no. 8). Here one recognizes a paraphrase of the text from Isaiah’s vision of the Lord, described in Isaiah 6:6: “Then flew one of the seraphims onto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:....” Besides the most popular and famous quotation of Isaiah 7:14, many other selections from his book are included on the scrolls he carries. Among the material that this author has collected and identified, this is the first preserved example where the paraphrase of Isaiah 6:6 is used in the drum of a dome. The earliest instance of this quotation that this author can trace comes from the miniature illustrations of Christian topography by Cosmas Indicopeleuc, Cosma Indicopleucus (Vat. Gr. 699), a ninth century copy of a sixth century original. The inclusion in this manuscript indicates the usage of that quotation might go back as far as the sixth century. In the church of Sveti Petar in Bijelo Polje (1318–1321), Isaiah is depicted in the Nativity where he carries a scroll inscribed with Isaiah 6:6. The usage in this context provides the exegesis of this quotation, and gives it the meaning in the Ljeviška’s main dome.

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29 The closest visual parallel comes from Kraljeva crkva; see: Gordana Babić, Kraljeva crkva u Studenići (Prosveta, Beograd, 1987) fig. II.


31 Cosimo Stornajolo, Le miniature della topografia Cristiana di Cosma Indicopleuc, Codice Vaticano Greco 699 (Milano, 1908) pl. XX, fol. 72v.

Thus, the main drum of the Prizren cathedral contains all four major prophets and four from the group of twelve minor ones. Two of them are identified as Habakkuk and Zechariah the Younger, and two must remain anonymous at least for the time being. Furthermore, without all the scrolls' texts preserved or chosen to be inscribed upon the scrolls, a cohesive idea of the entire prophetic message from this drum can only be partially understood and interpreted. While the text of Habakkuk 3:1 (3:2) does not have liturgical reading, the other two texts do. Quotation of Zechariah the Younger 9:9 is read on Saturday of the Holy Week, and it is related to Christ's Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:5). Finally the line from Isaiah 6:6 with its description of the "living coal" is compared to the liturgical bread as the spiritual coal; visually it is connected with the Nativity scene, but it is read on Thursday during the second week of Lent.33

The order of addressing the subsidiary domes is dictated by the age of Christ depicted in them. Thus, one starts with the southwestern dome in which the image of Christ Emmanuel, inscribed in Greek (₥צ χ¢ ο€€€ µNano), is represented (Fig. 7). The four figures below the Emmanuel are so heavily damaged that little more than their bare outlines survive. One can see that all four are represented as old, two depicted with shorter and two with longer beards, implying age differences. Their body lan-

guage and gestures are very restrained; in three of four figures, the right arm is placed against the chest, and it seems that, in three cases, the left holds a rolled scroll alongside the body. Furthermore, they are conceived as a formal compositional unit: the two flanking western windows form a visual pair as they face each other; the two framing the eastern window are visually connected with their gestures. However, the name inscriptions are in a much better stage of survival than the figures. In two instances the abbreviations of the epithet prophet are preserved as well as three of the four names. Therefore, Elisha can be identified as the first figure south of the eastern window, followed by Jonah. The third figure is inscribed as Nathan and in the fourth space (the first north of the eastern window) one can recognize Elijah, although only the last three letters of his name survive. This identification is based on his garment type since he wears a cloak fastened in the middle of his chest. This observation is further confirmed by the presence of Elisha, and by the tradition of pairing prophets; Elijah with Elisha forms such a pair. Although not the book authors, these two characters from the Book of Kings are standardly labeled as prophets and frequently included within the group of prophet-authors in monumental painting. It is obvious here that Elijah and Elisha are connected since the first seems to be blessing toward the second. Elisha’s hand gesture seems to indicate the speech because it is pointing toward his mouth rather than blessing. This might be a visual reference to the dialogue that these two prophets carry on when their scrolls are inscribed with the text from II Kings (IV) 2:2, 2:4, and 2:6.

Jonah is the one among the minor prophets most often included in the drum below the Pantokrator in the main dome of a church, because his book is interpreted as an Old Testament prefiguration of the resurrection and for that reason his entire book is read during Saturday of the Holy Week. He is easily recognized due to his characteristic iconography: tall, rounded forehead, and balding domed cranium with short hair on the sides. Jonah’s right arm is placed across his chest with his hand pointing toward the third figure in this group, identified as Nathan, the prophet from the Book of Samuel (2 Samuel 7:1–6) who acts as an intermediary between the Lord and King David when the Lord intended for David to build the Lord’s house. Since none of the figures carry scrolls with text, it is not an easy task to connect them with the image of the Emmanuel and thus understand the reason for their particular selection. Perhaps an exception is Nathan, who might be related to the Emmanuel in a very broad context of building the House of the Lord, or Davidic Covenant. In this instance, it might be understood as a reference to the New Covenant. The presence of three other figures, even without texts, implies the following: Jonah is the prophet of the Resurrection, and Elijah, together with Elisha, prefigure Christ’s Ascension.

34 See above, note 28.
Thus, the iconographic combination of prophets, with the Emmanuel, found in this
dome and its drum is very unusual and to the best of this author's knowledge does
not have any parallels among the preserved monuments.

In the calotte of the northwestern dome, Christ is identified by G. Babić as the
High Priest, based on the inscription in Greek, indicating that he is "in his other
form" (--- ΜΟΡΦΗ), although he does not wear the episcopal garment (Fig. 8).39
This image is inspired by Psalm 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou art a priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek." It was St. Paul who intro-
duced the idea of Christ as the High Priest into the New Testament in his epistle to
the Hebrew (Hebr. 5:6, Hebr. 6:20, and Hebr. 7:21) in which he paraphrases the
Psalm 110:4. Like all other images of Christ in the subsidiary domes of the Virgin
Ljeviška, he holds a rolled scroll and his blessing hand is placed in front of his chest.
The four figures in the drum wear classical type garments and carry rolled scrolls in
their left hands, which they clasp before their bodies. Two prophets flanking the
western window hold their right hands against their chests, while the pair flanking

39 G. Babić, Bogorodica... (1987) p. 49.
the eastern window, extend their right arms, while the right hands assume the blessing gesture.

The epithet prophet is preserved over two of the figures, and some of the letters from their names are preserved with all four. However, that does not appear sufficient for an immediate and positive identification. Furthermore, a formal and iconographic analysis without textual confirmation would yield only speculative results as to their identities. One cannot be certain that they represent some of the minor prophets. This uncertainty is evident when one takes into consideration that, in this church, forefathers and other figures considered prophets are intermingled with authors of the prophets’ books in the Bible. Nevertheless, the two letters remaining with the figure south of the eastern window together with his iconographic type, which is very close to that of the prophet Micah in Fethiye Camii (St. Mary Pammakaristos) might provide enough supporting evidence to identifying him almost certainly as the prophet Micah. Furthermore, none of Christ’s ancestors’ names start with those two letters supporting further this suggestion.40

In the calotte of the northeastern dome, Christ is depicted as himself (εχε) (Fig. 9). The four figures below him wear classical type garments, and are rendered

40 For a representation of the prophet, see: H. Belting, C. Mango, D. Mouriki, The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos... (1978) figs. 35 and especially 38. Furthermore, an iconographically similar image of Micah is preserved in the drum of the main dome in Ravanica; see: M. Belović, Ravanica... (MCMXIX) fig. XXXIV with the accompanying name inscription μα κχι. At the same time it must be acknowledged that the iconographic tradition of the less frequently depicted minor prophets was not as consistent as that of the more often depicted minor and major prophets during the
Fig. 10. Southeastern calotte and drum: Christ as the Ancient of Days with prophets Malachi and Obadiah, Job the Just and an unidentified figure (after B. Živković [1991], p. 15)

as the most animated among the whole group of sixteen figures distributed among the four subsidiary drums. Two of them carry rolled scrolls. All four are rather well preserved with their epithets and names intact, therefore their identities are not problematic. In spite of being labeled as prophets, they are selected members from the genealogy of Christ. Starting from the eastern window and moving clockwise, one finds the figure of Asher followed by Zebulun, Naphtali, and Gad. These sons of Jacob are represented as the members of the genealogy of Christ in the lower zone of the south dome in the essonarthech of Kariye Djami. Thus, the idea of representing the ancestors goes well with the icon of Christ as “himself.”

Christ as the Ancient of Days is represented in the calotte of the southeastern dome and inscribed in Church Slavonic (חֹכַּם בֵּיתִם) (Fig. 10). Out of the four figures in the drum, two have sustained considerable damage; two among them carry rolled scrolls. One of the figures has the epithet prophet preserved and two others complete names. The first figure south of the eastern window must remain anony-

Palaeologian period. As an example of such a deviation, the image of Micah from the Virgin Hotgetria at Peć can be cited. He is depicted as balding; see: Lj. D. Popović “Figure proroka u kupoli...” L’archevêque Danilo II (1991, published in 1992) fig. 3. Micah is the prophet of Nativity, Micah 4:6 and Micah 5:1 fol.; see: A.M. Gravgaard, Inscriptions... (1977) p. 76. Furthermore, he is the prophet of the Messianic Age, Micah 4:4; see: Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art (New York Graphic Society Ltd, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1972) v. 2, p. 135. Without an actual text with this prophet, the original intention of the iconographer in including him in this group is impossible to guess, although either of the ideas cited above might go well with the image of Christ in his “other form.”

mous at this stage of research, but the identities of the other three can be ascertained. The next figure represents the prophet Malachi as a young person, but this is iconographically outside the canon and highly unusual since Malachi is always depicted in monumental painting as bearded, to the best of this author's knowledge.42

Malachi is an infrequently chosen prophet for inclusion within the medium-sized group of prophets in a drum below the Pantokrator in the main dome of a church. Furthermore, according to this author's collected evidence, only three of his quotations are selected to be inscribed on the scroll that he carries (Mal. 1:5–6; Mal. 2:6; and Mal. 3:1–2). The text of Malachi 3:1 is connected with the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, but its liturgical reading occurs on the Feast Day of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist, celebrated on August 29.43 In his exegesis of the text of the prophets, Justin the Philosopher interprets Malachi 1:10–11 as a foretelling of Christ's sacrifice.44 Nicholas d'Andida explains Mal. 1:11 as a prefiguration of the Eucharist.45 In the Painter's Manual by Dionysius of Fournia one finds that the text of Mal. 3:19 is taken as a reference to the Last Judgement.46 The text of Mal. 4:2 is connected with the Nativity and the Resurrection, and to this quotation belong the famous words: "the Sun of Justice." Thus, although seldom used, the lines of some of his prophecies are extremely meaningful, but most likely the text of Mal. 3:19 (Mal. 4:1), "For behold the day shall come kindled with a furnace:..." a clear reference to the Last Judgement might have motivated his inclusion underneath the image of the Ancient of Days.

Based on the remaining letters from the name, the third figure is most likely Obadiah (Abdiou). It seems logical that Obadiah is included within this context. He too is not a frequent choice among the prophets to be represented in a dome's drum, and only a few of his texts are quoted on the scrolls (Oba. 1:1; Oba 1:8; Oba 1:17 and 15).47 His book is short but mystical, and in Chapter 1:21, he speaks about the day of the Lord: "And the Savior shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Essau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." The idea expressed by these words also goes well with the representation of the Ancient of Days. These last two are definitely the minor prophets.

Since it was not customary to duplicate representations of prophets in domes, the presence of Malachi and Obadiah in the southeastern drum and possibly Micah in the northwestern drum narrows possibilities down to five, the number of Old Testament characters who could have been chosen for the two yet unidentified prophets in the drum of the main dome. With an assurance that they belong to the group of minor

prophets and not to another category of Old Testament figures, a further comparative study aided with precise visual documentation and based on well established iconographic traits of prophets as old men might help unlock the identities of the two unknown figures painted here. 48 The fourth figure here is Job the Just, who is occasionally included among the prophet-authors. This practice is especially prevalent during the Turkish period. The inclusion of Job is based on liturgical reading. Many of the lines from his dramatic narration are read during the Lenten season. 49 His text questions suffering of the just, but also mentions its rewards, and on the basis of these two ideas, he too justly might belong underneath the Ancient of Days.

In conclusion, it is important to restate that which was already observed by G. Babić in her study about the high quality of frescos painted in the Virgin Ljeviška by master Astrapa and his assistants. 50 The selection of figures in the domes' drums was inspired by liturgical reading, 51 but as a whole, the theological program in these lofty places in this cathedral remains unique among the surviving pentatrunion type churches. 52 Therein lies its documentary value, which reflects possibly an older iconographic tradition now lost. Two factors seem to confirm this supposition: one formal and the other ideological. The concurrent usage of figures carrying opened and inscribed scrolls, with those holding closed and rolled scrolls, harks back to a much older convention, well documented by the prophet figures which once existed in the northern and southern tympana of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (the last

48 The remaining choices would be among the minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Nahum, and Haggai.


50 G. Babić, Bogorodica... (1975) pp. 81–93.

51 Liturgical readings certainly inspired selections of figures, the prophets included, to be depicted in the iconographic programs of Byzantine churches. Two weeks before Christmas, and on Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, these figures are celebrated. The reading mentions all those, from Adam to John the Baptist. See: M. Belović, Ravancia... (MCMXCIX) p. 98, note 3, but this list does not include all the names of figures which are identified in the domes' drums of the Virgin Ljeviška. The same can be said for the selection of the Old Testament figures in the monastery church of Christ in Chora; see: P. A. Underwood, The Kariye Dżami (1966) v. 1, pp. 49–50.

52 In Staro Nagoričino (before 1318) the Evangelists are in the minor domes with church fathers and other figures; the Pantokrator with prophets is in the main dome and its drum. The group of eight prophets from the main drum is augmented with the figures of other prophets and Old Testament High Priests on the dome's supporting piers; see: B. Todić, Staro Nagoričino (1993) pp. 94–100. In Gračanica (ca. 1320–21), the Evangelists are again in the minor domes, surrounded by either church fathers or the ancestors of Christ; the prophets and the other Old Testament figures labeled as prophets are in the drum of the main dome and on the piers: see Branislav Živković, Gračanica. Crtéži fresaka (R.z.z.z.s.k., Beograd, 1989) drawings I and II. In Ravancia, the now lost image of the Pantokrator was surrounded by twenty-two prophets; the southeastern dome contained the Virgin Orant, the northwestern dome the Archangel Michael. Two representations of Christ which correspond to those selected for the Virgin Ljeviška are placed in different locations. Thus, in Ravancia the Emmanuel is in the northeast dome (in the Virgin Ljeviška in the southwest), and Christ as the Ancient of Days is in the southwest dome (in the Virgin Ljeviška that image is in the southeast dome). The drums of the small domes in Ravancia and spaces below have representations of the ancestors of Christ; see: M. Belović, Ravancia... (MCMXCIX) pp. 77–98. In Resava, representations of the Heavenly powers survived in the subsidiary domes, and in the drum of the main dome twenty-four prophet figures remain; see Branislav Živković, Manasija. Crtéži fresaka (R.z.z.z.s.k., Beograd, 1983) drawings I and II.
third of the ninth century).\(^{53}\) The mixture of prophet-authors with a variety of the Old Testament characters, which are also labeled as prophets, might go back to the early stages of programmatic development in the domed, post-Iconoclastic churches of the Macedonian period, as indicated by their descriptions, for example, by the Emperor Leo VI (886–912).\(^{54}\) An indication that the iconographic program of the domes of the Virgin Ljeviška might have followed a Byzantine prototype, at least in general if not in details, is found in the mixture of categories of figures as well as in the inscriptions and the name identifications written in Greek which are used simultaneously with the text in Church Slavonic during the appropriation processes. If this significant monument of Byzantine culture survives the present day trouble in Kosovo, there might be a possibility that the new advancement in photo technology and computer-generated enhancement of images will help identify not only still anonymous figures in the five drums of this church’s domes, but the other unidentified representations of male and female saints depicted in other areas of this church.

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\(^{53}\) C. Mango, The Mosaics... (1962) pp. 58–62, figs. 78–89.

\(^{54}\) C. Mango, The Art of Byzantine Empire... (1972) pp. 203–204 and notes 106–107. This is Sermon 34 in which the Emperor Leo VI describes the church build and decorated by Stylitamus Zaoutzas after 886 and before c. 893.
Тражећи начин да се идентификују бар још неки од насликаних пророка, употребљено је, поред иконографског, још неколико истраживачких метода. То су: принцип представљања пророка у одређеним паровима; стављање најзначајнијих личности са обе стране источног прозора у тамбуру; систем укључивања и исключивања пророка при њиховом избору у групе мање од шеснаест фигуре; упоређења са цитатима исписаним на ротулусима које носе пророци у другим црквама са оним сачуваним у Богородици Љевишкој, и најзад идентификација општећених текстова из главне куполе ове цркве. Коначни резултат ових истраживања је следећи: шест од осам пророка и четири од шест исписаних текстова су идентификовани у тамбуру главне куполе (Сл. 3 и 4). После идентификације фигуре у осталим тамбурима, закључено је да две још безимене фигуре из главне куполе припадају групи малих пророка, тј. да су два од следећих пет: Осија, Јоил, Амос, Наум и Агеј. Могуће је да би даља специфично иконографска истраживања успела да установе и њихове идентитете. У југозападном тамбуру пророк Илија је препознат и по свом типичном оделу, а и по непосредној близини пророка Јелисеја са којим чини формалан пар (Сл. 7). Овој листи треба додати пророка Абдију у југозападном (Сл. 10), и Михеја у северозападном тамбуру (Сл. 8). Од укупно двадесет четири стојеће фигуре насликane у тамбурима Богородице Љевишке остало је само још шест неидентификованих пророка. Препознавање ових библијских личности доприноси много и бољем разумевању Христових ликова који су представљени у пет калота ове катедрале.