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Religious Conflicts between Byzantium and the West Mirrored in the Iconography of Byzantine Lands under Latin Rule

The 13th century was a decisive milestone in the history of the Middle Ages, as the Latin West managed to dominate over the greatest part of the Byzantine East. In political and economic terms, the conquests of the East having on the background the liberation of the Holy Land from the Muslims led to the rotation of new sovereigns, to the formation of new principalities and the economic enrichment of the West.

On the ecclesiastical level the crusades succeeded on the one hand in consolidating the collective identity of the Roman Catholic church under papal leadership and on the other hand to establish Latin hierarchies in the East making the existence of the Schism clear and obvious[1]. This brought the Latin church in immediate contact with the »schismatic« – as they called them – Orthodox Christians of the East[2] with the challenging aim of their conversion by the papal representatives and the religious orders, who settled down in the Byzantine territories.

The activity of the »Uniate church« in the lands of the Byzantine Empire as result of the Second Council of Lyon (1274)[3] and later of the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1445) aimed at the recognition of the Pope by the local Orthodox population. This effort was supported by various administrative procedures, which were enforced upon the local Orthodox societies, according to the different ecclesiastical legal status of the various cases (e. g. autocephalous Church of Cyprus[4], Orthodox Church of Rhodes under the Hospitallers[5]): establishment of Latin clergy in the Byzantine lands[6], seizure of the Orthodox church's property[7], Oath of Fidelity[8], restriction on the number of the Orthodox monks, control over the election of the Orthodox abbots and clergy, limitation of intermarriages, takeover of Byzantine monasteries, etc.[9]. Furthermore the efforts to impose the Latin liturgical practices upon the Orthodox church as the performance

of Sacraments according to the Latin practice (Holy Communion, Baptism, chrism, use of liturgical objects, common altar, unleavened bread)[10], participation in common religious processions[11], as well as the pressure on accepting dogmatic issues (*filioque, transubstantio, purgatorium* etc.)[12] caused not only the reaction of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Nicaea or Constantinople[13], but also considerable tensions, which led to revolts and disobedience-cases by locals to the imprisonment and even persecution of Greek-Orthodox clerics[14].

An interesting aspect of the enslaved Byzantine society is an observed resistance to the doctrinal and liturgical pressures of the Latins as reflected to the pictorial art. A number of iconographic subjects that decorate churches express the devotion of the enslaved Byzantine society to the doctrines of the Orthodox church. These subjects either originate in the West or have been subjected to iconographic adaptations in order to become »Orthodox« or they belong to the traditional Byzantine iconography, which is widely disseminated during the Latin period with a confessional content. A third case is the content of dedicatory or votive inscriptions in churches of the Latin-occupied East, which reveal a society loyal to the Byzantine emperor and to the Ecumenical Patriarch initially in Nicaea and then in Constantinople, ignoring demonstratively the occupation of their region by the Latins, challenging indirectly the Latin political and religious authorities.

The first group of western iconographic subjects includes, among other, the western way of depicting the Holy Trinity in the form of the »Gnadenstuhl«, as well as scenes of the Second Coming. The influence of Venice on the art of its colonies (e. g. Crete, Cyprus) had shaped a new artistic trend. New pictorial and stylistic elements were introduced into the monumental painting. In the presentation of the »Gnadenstuhl«[15], God is depicted in the background, in front of him

1 Nichols, Churches 281.
2 Tyerman, Crusades 192-194.
3 Gill, Church Union 5-45.
4 Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 20-43, esp. 20-25.
5 Tsirpanles, Rhodos 256-286.
6 Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 20-24.
7 Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 20-25.
8 Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 22-25.
9 Chotzakoglou, Virgin of Kykkos 43-50, esp. 45-46.
10 Papadopoulos, Ekklēsia. – Chotzakoglou, Virgin of Kykkos 45-66 and note 51. – Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 22-23.

11 Richard, Multicultralism 129.
12 Chotzakoglou, Virgin of Kykkos 47.
13 Chatzipsaltis, Ekklēsia 141-168. – Papadopoulos, Ekklēsia 568. – Coureas, Latin Church 299 et sqq. – Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 22-25.
14 Georgii Acropolitae Opera I, § ιζ´, 29-30. – Papadopoullos, Martyrion Kypriōn 307-338. – Svoronos, To noēma 1-14, esp. 12-13. – Ahrweiler, Ideologia 70.
15 A similar work by the Cretan painter Dominikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) is preserved in Madrid, Museo del Prado (1577): Davis/Kendall/O'Collins, Trinity 345-346. – Mann, El Greco 32-36 fig. 6-7. – Triantaphyllopoulos, Theotoko-poulou 451 et sqq.

stands the crucified Son and in the foreground the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove in a variety of positions (between the Father and Christ, above the Father, in front of Christ etc.). The Byzantine painter although he adopts the subject, he proceeds to a significant pictorial intervention. He paints the breath to come out of the Father's mouth, ending in a dove, declaring actually in a pictorial way that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father and not from the Father and the Son (*filioque*), according to the Roman Catholic church doctrine[16].

A number of other pictorial representations fall into the second category. An interesting case offers the iconographic version of the Annunciation. Next to the traditional iconography of the Archangel Gabriel and the Holy Virgin the painter depicts between them Christ in a medal[17] in order to display the doctrine of the Incarnation.

The late Byzantine iconography, both in Byzantium and the West, prevails to depict an elderly figure within this medal, which in the East is identified through inscriptions with the Ancient of the Days[18] and in the West with the Father[19], who in fact sends the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove[20]. It should

be noted that the Byzantine iconography and hagiology, especially during the 11th century[21] identified the Ancient of the Days with the iconographic depiction of Christ's divinity (Logos) before his Incarnation[22]. On the contrary, the Roman Catholic church, in accordance to the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, identified the form of the Ancient of the Days with the iconographic depiction only of the Father[23].

In Latin-occupied Cyprus this iconographic variant is found in at least three monuments (Panagia Asinou in Niketari, Hagios Nikolaos of the Roof in Kakopetria, Hagios Mamas in Louvaras), where the Byzantine painter appears to express his devotion to the Orthodox theological interpretation, rejecting the Roman Catholic approach and the teachings of the famous theologian of the Latin church. In particular, in Saint Nicholas of the Roof[24] (**fig. 1**), he creates an iconographic version of Christ's depiction, adding to him the dense beard of the elderly form. In Louvaras (**fig. 2**) he clearly depicts the elderly figure, identifying him with the inscription »THE ANCIENT OF THE DAYS«, which clearly corresponds to the late Byzantine iconography found also in monuments of the Greek mainland[25] or Georgia[26]. In

16 Chotzakoglou, Phōtizontas 52-92. 202-206 fig. 39. – Chotzakoglou, Unveiling 434-435. – The iconographic subject of Gnadenstuhl was painted also in the Holy Virgin Roustika (1381/82), Rethymnon, Crete: Gallas/Wessel/Borboudakis, Byzantinisches Kreta 118. – Maderakēs, Themata 712-777, esp. 712. – Spatharakis, Rethymnon 33-34. – A similar interpretation was given to presentations of the Preparation of the Throne in Cypriot frescoes: Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 30-31 and note 77.

17 Jesus appears as Emmanuel in a bust in the Church of Holy Virgin Arakos in Cyprus: Chotzakoglou, Architektonikē 465-787, esp. fig. 477. – For the three ages of the Son and their representations see: Siomkos, Saint-Etienne 135-137. – Similar representations with the depiction of Jesus are found in late 13th century frescoes in churches of Rome (e. g. Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Maria in Trastevere).

18 Ouspensky, Theologia 470. – Siomkos, Saint-Etienne 137-139. 155. – Dile, Panagia Roeino 77-108, esp. 88. – These representations of the Ancient of the Days were used in Byzantine manuscripts in order to illustrate Orations on the Annunciation, as the manuscripts of the Orations (12th c.) of Jacob Kokk-

inobaphos: Skotti, Vision 181-192, esp.185-186 fig. 5-6. – The connection of the representation to the Annunciation is found also in frescoes of Euboea: Triantaphyllopoulos, Issues 141-154, esp. 145-146.

19 Freeman, Merode Altarpiece 103-139, esp. 133.

20 Freeman, Merode Altarpiece 133.

21 Kreahling-McKay, Christ's polymorphism 177-191, esp. 181 note 9. – Kreahling-McKay, Illustrating 51-68.

22 Skotti, Vision 181-192, esp. 189. – Onasch, Kunst und Liturgie 73.

23 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.59.1 obj. 2, ad 2.

24 The iconographical depiction of the divine breath, which comes out of the Son and upon which the personification of the Holy Spirit, the dove, is depicted, was mainly preserved in monuments of the so-called »School of Rome« of the late 13th century (e. g. Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Maria in Trastevere).

25 Dile, Panagia Roeino 77-108, esp. 88. – Triantaphyllopoulos, Issues 141-154, esp. 145-146. – Sisiou, Synthesē.

26 Kenia, Svaneti 383-394, esp. 389-390. – Burčulaže, Ubisi. – Kenia, Eschatological Motives 125-166. – Fyssas, Monē Oumpisi 134-138 fig. 18.

Fig. 2 Loubaras, Cyprus, St Mamas, The Annunciation with the Ancient of the Days. – (Photo Ch. Chotzakoglou).

Asinou (**fig. 3**), on either side of the elderly figure next the inscription: »THE ANCIENT OF THE DAYS« is also written »Jesus Christ«[27], thus clearly depicting the identification of the Ancient of the Days with Christ, according to the Orthodox theology (John 15: 267)[28].

One of the basic theological and liturgical differences between Orthodoxes and Latins, which were widely discussed at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, was the issue of the unleavened Bread. The Roman Catholic church rejected the way of consumption of the consecrated elements by the Orthodox clergy and laymen as well as the invocation of the Holy Spirit for the consecration of the holy elements. All three issues were depicted in the iconography of »Melismos«, a preexistent byzantine iconographical subject, which during the Palaiologan period received both, a confessional, as well as an educational character, addressed to the Orthodox clergy under Latin pressure and underlining the liturgical eucharistic way[29]. In order to symbolize the conception of the Holy Communion by the Orthodox priest, who receives both bread and wine, the Byzantine painter depicts the infant Jesus both in the disc (*patena*) and inside the chalice. At the same time, referring to the consumption of Christ's body and blood from the chalice for the Orthodox laymen, the figure of the blessing Eucharistic Christ was depicted in the chalice. Finally, the Orthodox approach to the consecration of the Eucharistic el-

ements by removing the liturgical veil of »Aër« from the Gifts and the invocation of the Holy Spirit was symbolized through the depiction of the totally naked infant-Jesus.

The pressures of the Roman Catholic church in the Latin-occupied areas aimed at the conversion of the Orthodox communities either into the Roman Catholic church or into the Uniate. Characteristic in these cases were the urge of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Orthodox flock, to avoid contact with such converted clergymen[30]. In other cases, the Orthodox hierarchy in the Latin-occupied areas threatened to punish with excommunication Orthodox clergymen, who were subjected to the Roman Catholics (Uniates) or followed their liturgical practices[31]. It is well known that clergymen were depicted among the sinners in the presentation of the Second Coming. However, in Latin-ruled areas, as Cyprus, the Byzantine painter depicted in the Hell not mainly the Roman Catholic clerics, but mostly the converted Orthodox clergy to the Roman Catholicism (Uniates)[32], since the prime purpose of the frescoes was to advise and protect the Orthodox community even with such indirect threats.

Indirect references to the rejection of the Roman Catholic church are found in Byzantine painting through the depiction of prelates in the Sanctuary. The Byzantine painter, seeking to portray the universality of the Orthodox church, depicts church fathers from all over the world. In the case of the

27 Weyl Carr/Nicolaïdès, Asinou 224-227 fig. 6.10.
28 Weyl Carr/Nicolaïdès, Asinou 211-310, esp. 224-227. – The analysis of the scene fig. 6.10 misinterprets the Orthodox doctrinal issues regarding the identification of the Ancient of the Days only with the Son and under the influence of the theory of A. and J. Stylianou, Cyprus 68 arguments the identification of the Son and the Father in the form of the Ancient of the Days.

29 Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 30-31 and note 81.
30 Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 24-25 and note 28.
31 Coureas, Latin Church 299 et sqq. – Chotzakoglou, Reconsidering 24-25.
32 Chotzakoglou, Phōtizontas 199 et sqq. fig. 35.

Church of Rome, however, he depicts only Popes before the Schism of 1054[33].

In a similar way the Byzantine painter seeks to highlight the dedication of the Orthodox believers to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. With an innovation in the iconography of the Communion of the Apostles, he discreetly places Apostle Andrew, the founder of the Church of Constantinople, distinctly in the Apostles' group, either by placing Andrew first in the rank or by separating him from the group of the other apostles[34].

To the emergence of Hesychasm, of this mystical tradition of Orthodox prayer, which the Roman Catholic church rejected, was related the painting of an extremely shining glory of Jesus in the representation of the Transfiguration and the depiction in prominent spots of the church of the anchoret Prophet Elijah[35]. Finally, an interesting element is also found in the Typika of the Orthodox monasteries and in the votive or dedicatory inscriptions of several churches under the Latin rule. While these regions were already under the Latin occupation, the composers of the Typika in Orthodox monasteries appointed as protector of the monasteries and supervisor for their correct implementation the Byzantine emperor and not the Latin ruler. The Cypriot Typika of the monastery of Holy Neophytos in Tala, as well as of the monastery of Machairas offer such examples[36].

The same tendency, expressed in another form, is found in the votive or dedicatory inscriptions of renovated or painted churches in mainland Greece or on the islands (e. g. Rhodes, Attica)[37], which commemorate the Byzantine emperor and/or the Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities (patriarch, bishop) ignoring or indirectly questioning the legal authority of the new rulers.

In conclusion, the research in monasteries and churches of the Byzantine world reveals that during the Latin occupation in the East, the Byzantines were under pressure to convert to the Roman Catholic or the Uniate church. The resistance of the locals was also reflected in the iconography of the churches and in the written sources of the era, leading to the conclusion, that in these cases the art gained also a confessional character and turned into a »protective wall« to the ecclesiastical assimilation of the Orthodox by the Roman Catholic church[38].

33 A similar iconographical approach in a similar religious context is also found during the painting of the Sanctuary Doors (1711) in the St Demetrios of Kola church in Zakynthos, where only Popes of Rome before the Schism were depicted: Triantaphyllopoulos, Thrēskeutikoi 243 and note 55.
34 Chotzakoglou, Unveiling 427-439, esp. 436 fig. 5-6.
35 Chotzakoglou, Architektonikē 465-787, esp. fig. 517. – Chotzakoglou, Unveiling 436-437.

36 Chotzakoglou, Virgin of Kykkos 43-50, esp. 45.
37 Bitha, Comments 159-168, esp. 162-164. – For a similar practice of dedicatory inscriptions in Cappadocian churches under the Seljuq rule see: Chotzakoglou, Book-Review 433-442, esp. 435.
38 Albani, Gregorios Palamas 110-111.

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