

CHRIST PANTOCRATOR SURROUNDED BY THE SYMBOLS  
OF THE EVANGELISTS: THE PLACE AND THE MEANING  
OF THE IMAGE IN POST-BYZANTINE MURAL PAINTING.  
THE CASE OF MOLDAVIAN CUPOLAS (15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES)

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From the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the image of Christ in glory surrounded by the four symbols of the Evangelists is represented in the mural painting of the Moldavian churches as the central composition of the dome. This typology of the Pantocrator is however very unusual for the iconography of Byzantine cupolas. A close parallel to the Moldavian case is provided by a group of small barrel vaulted churches in the region of Ohrid, where the image of Christ in tetramorph, pictured on the vault of the naos, becomes very popular in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Along with Byzantine and post-Byzantine mural representations of the topic, the paper considers the evidence of a series of manuscript illuminations that reveal various aspects in the formal and semantic development of the image representing Christ in Majesty as part of liturgical Gospel Books.

**Keywords:** Pantocrator, iconography of the dome, Moldavian mural painting (15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> Centuries)

The representation of the Pantocrator in Moldavian cupolas in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries reveal a typology that is rather foreign to the Byzantine depictions of the same subject. The image of Christ in glory, framed by the four symbols of the Evangelists is not encountered during the Middle and Late Byzantine period as a typology for the central image of the naos dome. Despite a few exceptions, that will be discussed below, this particular iconography, relying simultaneously on different biblical sources (the Books of Ezekiel 1 and 10, Isaiah 6, 1–3, Daniel 7 and St. John's Apocalypse 4, 2–8)<sup>1</sup> is usually assigned to other iconographic contexts of the sacred space.

\* This paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/159/1. 5/S/136077.

<sup>1</sup> For a commentary on the sources on which the iconography relies see: Gabriel Millet, *La Dalmatique du Vatican. Les élus. Images et croyances*, Paris 1945, pp. 44–53 and Tania Velmans, A. Alpago Novello, *Miroir de l'invisible. Peintures murales et architecture de la Géorgie (VI<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> s.)*, Paris 1996, chapter 2, "Stabilisation du décor de l'abside : la vision des prophètes (IX<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> s.)", pp. 20–21. Although the individual representation of the four symbols of the evangelists – the eagle, the angel, the lion and the calf – was most probably inspired by the apocalyptic text of St. John, the signs of the evangelists framing the Christ's throne were denoting, along with other elements inspired by Isaiah (chapter 6), Ezekiel (chapters 1 and 10) and Daniel (chapter 7), the visionary character of the image.

Rev. Études Sud-Est Europ., LIII, 1–4, p. 131–153, Bucarest, 2015

Later on, in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> and during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the figure of Christ framed by the four faces of the tetramorph becomes the central image of the composition illustrating the Praise Psalms 148–150, thus acquiring very much popularity among the privileged topics of post-Byzantine iconography. Although Psalms illustrations emerge already in the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>, the earliest evidence of the last three Psalms (known as the *Ainoi*)<sup>3</sup>, showing Christ surrounded by Heavenly Powers and the four Living-Beings of the Apocalypse can be found in late monastic mural ensembles, such as the Metamorphosis church in Roussanou monastery (1560) at Meteora, St. Michael and Gabriel church in Dochiariou monastery (1568) on Mount Athos or St. Vissarion church (1557) of Dousikou monastery in Thessaly<sup>4</sup>. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the subject becomes a very common feature of the narthex and it is the many small barrel-vaulted churches in Greece that retrieved this image on the vault of the naos, as an image of the Pantocrator<sup>5</sup>.

However, in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the image of Christ surrounded by the four Living-Beings is still seldom encountered in the decoration of post-Byzantine churches. In the Moldavian mural painting, the illustration of Psalms never found a place in the iconographic program of the narthex. Under what circumstances this typology started to be associated in Moldavian murals with the Pantocrator of the dome, and what was the meaning the image promoted in these later programs still remains to be clarified.

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Given the irreversible loss of the frescoes in the Holy Cross church from Pătrăuți (1487), one must relay on to the representation of Voroneț (1486)<sup>6</sup> as the earliest depiction of Pantocrator in Moldavian mural painting<sup>7</sup>. Here, the central

<sup>2</sup> As we can see in the narthex of St. Michael church at Lesnovo (1349), or in the manuscript version of the Serbian Psalter in Munich (14<sup>th</sup> century). These early pictures exhibit nevertheless a different iconographic formula, in which the tetramorph is missing: See Smiljka Gabelić, *Manastir Lesnovo : istorija i slikarstvo*, Belgrad 1998, color plates LI–LIII and plate 87, p. 156; Joseph Strzygowsky, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters*, Vienna 1906, plate XLI (fig. 95, 96).

<sup>3</sup> For the use of the *Ainoi* in the Liturgy, see Neil K. Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*, Leiden, 1986, pp. 89–92.

<sup>4</sup> For diagrams of the iconography see: Magdalene Parcharidou, *Οι Αίνοι στη μνημειακή ζωγραφική του 16ου αιώνα (Συμβολή στη μελέτη του θέματος, με αναφορές σε μνημεία του 16ου–19ου αιώνα)* (doctoral thesis), Thessaloniki 2000, pp. 32–33, pp. 34–35 and 57. For the development of this subject in the art of the Holy Mountain, see also Günter Paulus Schiemenz, “Die Hermeneia und die letzten Psalmen. Gibt es eine spezifische Athos-Kunst?”, in *Byzantinische Malerei. Bildprogramme – Ikonographie – Still*, Wiesbaden 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Miltiadis-Miltos Garidis, *La peinture murale dans le monde orthodoxe après la chute de Byzance (1450–1600) et dans les pays sous domination étrangère*, Athens 1989, pp. 254–255, and note 1415.

<sup>6</sup> Maria Ana Musicescu, “Considerații asupra picturii din altarul și naosul Voronețului”, in Mihai Berza (ed.), *Cultura moldovenească în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, Bucharest, 1964, pp. 367–370.

<sup>7</sup> The representation of the Pantocrator in the narthex of Pătrăuți could be taken as a reference. However, the glory surrounding Christ’s figure on in the small dome of the narthex does not

image of the dome shows the half portrait of Christ framed by a compelling *grissaille* depiction of the four Living-Beings, assigned with the initials of the four evangelists (fig. 1).

Very close in time is the representation of St. Nicholas church at Popăuți Monastery (1496), now in Botoșani, which seems to rely instead on the same model as the image in the church dedicated to St. Elijah (1496?)<sup>8</sup>, near Suceava. The two are supposed to have been finished almost at the same time.

Around 1500, at the Church of St. Nicholas in Bălinești, the Pantocrator surrounded by the symbols of the evangelists is placed in the center of the barrel vault of the naos, between the Throne of Preparation, located East, and John the Baptists' half portrait placed to the West. All three representations are circumscribed in medallions<sup>9</sup> (fig. 2).

Unfortunately, the dome of the Ascension church (1497) at Neamț Monastery, being altered by 19<sup>th</sup> century repaintings and subsequent smoke depositions, cannot be taken into account. Instead, the frescoes in the church of St. Nicholas in Dorohoi<sup>10</sup> which are at the moment under restoration, will soon bring forward new iconographic information.

During the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Pantocrator image follows the same pattern. In Părâuți, at the church dedicated to All Saints (1522?), where frescoes are badly damaged, we can still distinguish the circular medallion with the symbols arranged in the corners of the octagonal glory of Christ<sup>11</sup>. Unfortunately the paintings in the church of St. George in Hârlău (dated in 1530) cannot come into question for now, because of their bad state of conservation, thus obstructing the iconographic analysis<sup>12</sup>.

An exception to the formula which has become common for the Moldavian cupolas is provided by the mural ensemble of St. Nicholas church of the Proboata monastery, where the representation of the four Evangelists' symbols around the

encompass the four faces of the tetramorph. For an analysis of the iconography of the vaulting system in the Holy Cross church, see Emil Dragnev, "Programul iconografic al sistemului de boltire al naosului bisericii Înălțarea Cinstitei Cruci din Pătrăuți", in V. Spinei, L. Rădvan, A. M. Bodale (ed.), *Retrospecții medievale. In honorem Profesoris emeriti Ioan Caproșu*, Iași 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Tereza Sinigalia, "Ctitori și imagini votive în pictura murală din Moldova la sfârșitul veacului al XV-lea și în prima jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea", in *Arta istoriei. Istoria artei. Academicianul Răzvan Theodorescu la 65 de ani*, Bucharest 2004, pp. 42–47.

<sup>9</sup> Corina Popa, *Bălinești*, Bucharest, 1981, pp. 35–37; Constanța Costea, „Referințe livrești în pictura murală moldovenească de la sfârșitul secolului XV”, *Anuarul Institutului de Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol”* (Iași), 29 (1992), p. 278.

<sup>10</sup> Sorin Ulea, „Datarea ansamblului de pictură de la Sf. Nicolae-Dorohoi”, *SCIA-AP*, 11 (1964), pp. 69–79.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion concerning the date of the frescoes and the earlier bibliography of the monument, see Constantin Ciobanu, „Eroare și adevăr în cercetarea iconografiei Părâuților”, *SCIA-AP*, serie nouă, 2 [46], (2012), fig. 8.

<sup>12</sup> The Dormition church in Baia (1535–1538) and the church of the Descent of Holy Gost of the Dobrovăț Monastery (1529) have unfortunately lost their decoration along with the original vault.

Pantocrator has been omitted. An original interpretation is given instead to the program of the high drum and dome of the church, the usual sequence of topics (heavenly powers, prophets and apostles) being replaced by an image of the angelic hierarchy, following the description given by Pseudo Dionysius in *De caelesti hierarchia*.<sup>13</sup>

A few years later, at the Metropolitan church in Suceava, the image of the Pantocrator in majesty, with the apocalyptic symbols placed in the corners of the eight pointed star, reappears (fig. 3). This time, it is accompanied by an additional element, namely the Greek inscription surrounding Christ's figure, from which unfortunately only the beginning has been preserved. The text of the inscription conveys an explicit eschatological message : [...]/[Ε]γὼ Θε(ε)ός [τε καὶ κρι]τὴς πάντων πέ[λω ἰ]δοὺ [πρ]οκ[ύψας ὑ]ψόθ[εν πρὸ τῆς δ]ίκης [...], "I, God and Judge of all flesh, showing me from Highness before the Judgment. (...)"<sup>14</sup>, echoed likewise by various elements of the dome's program.

To complete the series of visual evidence within the considered group of monuments, three further representations should be brought into discussion. The first one, which shares common features with the depiction of the Pantocrator in St. George's church, is to be found in the dome of the Dormition church of the Humor monastery (1535). The vaulting of the church consists actually of a low dome, that despite not having a drum, retains the specific superposed system of pendentives that allows painters to conceive the decoration program of the vaulting in the accustomed manner, creating for the central image of Christ a context the significance of which will be discussed below (fig. 4 ).

In the dome of the Annunciation Church at Moldovița monastery (1537), the Pantocrator is surrounded by an inscription, reproducing the liturgical prayer pronounced by the priest at the consecration of Gifts: † ΠΟΤΕΡΑΝΑ ΠΕ(Ε)ΠΟΤΑΜΕ · ΕΥΠΝΙΑΣΕ ΕΥΖΗΚΑΣΙΕ ΓΛΑΓΟΛΕΨΕ ΕΥΕ ΕΥΕ ΕΥΕ ΓΕ ΣΑΒΑΩ(Φ) · ΗΣΠΕ(Λ)ΝΕ ΝΕΟ Η ΖΕΛΙΝ

<sup>13</sup> For a complete image of the program see: *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery 1996–2001*, Paris 2001, plates 1 and 2; Tereza Sinigalia, Voica-Maria Pușcașu, *Mănăstirea Probota*, Bucharest 2000, fig. 23/p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> Inscriptions containing the same *incipit* are to be found in the domes of the Holy Cross church in Peliandri, Cyprus, second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century: Athanasios Papagheorghiou, "The Paintings in the Dome of the Church of the Panaghia Chryseleousa, Strovolos", in Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, Christopher Moss (eds.), *Medieval Cyprus : Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki*, Princeton 1999, p. 150, and Tania Velmans, "Quelques programmes iconographiques de coupoules cypriotes du XII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 32 (1984), fig. 5, p. 142 and p. 140; St. Nicholas church Philantropinon (the fresco layer dated in 1542) on the island of Ioannina: M. Garidis, A. Paliouras (ed.), *Μοναστήρια νήσου Ιωαννίνων: πρακτικά συμποσίου „700 χρόνια 1292–1992"*, 29–31 Μαΐου 1992, Ioannina 1999, fig. 31, 32; St. Nicholas chapel of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos (1560) : Heinrich Brockhaus, *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöstern*, Leipzig 1891, p. 274, as well as in the cemetery chapel of St. Nicholas in Kleidonia (Konitsa) of the Epirus region, dated some time later, in 1631: Dimitri D. Triantaphyllopoulos, "Εκκλησιαστικά Μνημεία στην Κλειδωνιά Κονίτσας", *Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά*, 19 (1975), p. 28 și fig. 34, 35, 36).

САВИ ЕГО УСА(Н)А ИЖЕ ВЪ ВИ(Ш)НИ(Х) БЛАГОСЛОВЕ(Н) ГРЪДН ВЪ ИМѢ Г<о>(с)П<о>(Д)ИѢ  
УСА(Н)А ИЖЕ ВЪ ВИ(Ш)НИ(Х)“.

Quite different in terms of overall iconographic conception appears the decoration of the cupola in the church dedicated to the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in the village of Arbore, painted long after the church was built, around 1540<sup>16</sup>. Despite a clear shift in the stylistic view, the iconographic vocabulary employed by the painters of Arbore preserves the same elements (fig. 5) that have defined the composition of the domes in the previous monuments.

Unfortunately, its actual state of conservation does not allow a conclusion in the case of St. Nicholas church in Râșca Monastery (1554), since its dome underwent repaintings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Work of the Greek painter Stamatelos Cotrona from Zakynthos<sup>17</sup>, the wall paintings of St. Nicholas church represent the last preserved mural ensemble linked to the group of monuments discussed above, separated by almost half a century from the new stage of artistic development which starts in Moldavia with the princely foundation of Sucevița monastery (1595).

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During the late Byzantine period, certain iconographical patterns were employed in the representation of the Pantocrator. A specific element of the Byzantine and Balkan depictions of Christ in the center of the dome is the plain blue medallion that always provides the background for the bust of the Blessing Christ; besides its symbolic connotation, this geometrical form is the one that best reflects the shape of the dome.

To put the image of Christ in a specific context, painters choose among different iconographic formulas. Selections of angelic orders<sup>18</sup>, floating angels sustaining Christ's medallion<sup>19</sup>, angels depicted in hieratic frontal postures or prostrated angels surround the figure of the Pantocrator. In many of the Athonite programs (Dionysiou, Dochiariou, Koutloumousiou, St. Nicholas chapel of the Great Lavra) the presence of the Mother of God among the angelic hierarchies, facing either John the Baptist or the Hetoimasia throne asserts a Parusiac implication of the

<sup>15</sup> “Singing, crying, shouting, and saying”, followed by the intonation of Trisagion hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and Earth are full of Thy Glory; Hosanna in the Highest: blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest”.

<sup>16</sup> Constanța Costea, “Herod's Feast at Arbore”, *RRHA-BA*, 41–42 (2004–2005), pp. 3–6.

<sup>17</sup> S. Ulea, *Un peintre grec en Moldavie au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle : Stamatētos Kotronas*, *RRHA-BA*, 7, 1970, pp. 13–26.

<sup>18</sup> As in the Paregoritissa church in Arta: Anastasios K. Orlandos, *Ἡ Παρηγορήτισσα της Αρτης*, Athens, 1963, color plates 1, 3, 4, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Which is an old pattern that occurs in the mosaics of Ag. Sophia Thessaloniki as well as in the church of St. Clement (Peribleptos) in Ohrid.

composition<sup>20</sup>. At the same time, in Serbian churches, it is the image of Christ surrounded by the Heavenly Liturgy, that is favored to be depicted in the center of the dome, against the recurrence of some aforementioned formulas<sup>21</sup>.

The image of Christ accompanied by the four Living-Beings can be found in some isolated instances during the Byzantine period, without being one of the pictures traditionally associated with the Pantocrator of the dome. The earliest example that can be mentioned is the one preserved in the cupola of the Metamorphosis church in Koropi (Attica), dating back to the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>22</sup>. Although many monuments are still preserved in the Greek province of Attica, many of them have lost important parts of their decoration, and no other similar iconography can be identified<sup>23</sup>.

The other two examples known to us date back to the late Byzantine period, namely to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The image of Christ framed by the tetramorph in the rotunda of St. George in Sophia provides an interesting example in that sense, as it was meant to cover the older layer of frescoes in the dome. This earlier decoration, going as far back as the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>24</sup>, is in part visible today, and reveals the common pattern of flying angels carrying Christ's medallion or his mandorla. On the other hand, in the royal church of Studenica, shows a lower level of interest for the subject, as the symbols of the evangelists are merely attached to the medallion of the Pantocrator, surrounded by an extensive depiction of the Heavenly Liturgy, circumscribed into the hemisphere of the cupola.

According to the preserved visual evidence there is more than just a lack of continuity in depicting the image of Pantocrator among the four Living Creatures as the main subject of the dome during the Byzantine period. The absence of this typology of the Pantocrator from the iconographic subjects of Byzantine medieval cupolas, may also echo certain changes produced during post-iconoclastic period,

<sup>20</sup> St. Nicholas Philantropinon church on the island of Ioannina or in the Peribleptos church at Mistra. In the region of Cyprus, there are a significant number of medieval churches (Asinou, Lagoudera, Sf. Ioan Lampadistis, St. Apostles in Pera Chorio, the church of the Holy Cross in Pelendri) that repeat the same iconographic topic in different versions, the Preparation throne being placed often in close proximity to the Pantocrator.

<sup>21</sup> Representations of the Heavenly Liturgy can be seen during the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the Royal church of Studenica (St. Joachim and Anna), in Peć (church of the Hodegetria), Gračanica, Staro Nagoričino, Dečani (approx. 1350); in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Ravanica (1385–87), Kalenić (1413), Donja Kamenica (14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century) or in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the athonite church of Molivoklisia (1536).

<sup>22</sup> Karin M. Skawran, *The Development of Middle Byzantine Fresco Painting in Greece*, Pretoria 1982, p. 15 and fig. 45; T. Velmans, "Quelques programmes iconographiques", fig. 19, p. 153; Nausica Panselinou, "Τα σύμβολα των ευαγγελιστών στη βυζαντινή μνημειακή τέχνη. Μορφή και περιεχόμενο", *Δελτίον ΧΑΕ* 17 (1993–1994), fig. 5 and fig. 6, p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> See Charalampos Bouras, A. Kalogeropoulou, Rena Andreadē, *Εκκλησίες της Αττικής*, Athens 1969, pp. 9–26.

<sup>24</sup> According to Bogdan Filov, the older layer of paintings in the cupola belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup> century: *Софийската църква Св. Георги/Die Georgskirche in Sofia*, Sofia 1933, pp. 77–78. André Grabar places them in the 12<sup>th</sup> century: *La peinture religieuse en Bulgarie*, Paris 1928, p. 60–64.

when the image of Christ was transferred from the apse of the sanctuary to the dome of the cross in square churches. In the middle of the cupola Christ Pantocrator can no longer be the God of prophetic visions. The tendency of separating Christ's image from the elements recalling the previous prophetic and apocalyptic composition of the apse reflects thus – as André Grabar explained – the idea promoted by the defenders of images, according to which direct contemplation of God became possible after the Incarnation to all humanity<sup>25</sup>.

As a general phenomenon, despite its Eastern early Christian roots<sup>26</sup>, the image showing Christ framed by the four Living Creatures of the Apocalypse, never reached the same popularity in Byzantine art as it did around the Western world, where it came to be known as *Majestas Domini*<sup>27</sup> and assumed a privileged place in the sanctuary<sup>28</sup>, acquiring a semantic and formal stability over the centuries<sup>29</sup>.

In the Byzantine world, the image of the Theotokos holding the Child marks the main axis of the post-Iconoclastic program of the Byzantine church. Even Eastern Christian provinces, as Cappadocia or Georgia, where metropolitan trends have not been necessarily or immediately adopted, the scenes of “theophanic-visions” in the apses of the sanctuary proclaimed a gradual “paradigm shift” in Deesis compositions, restraining the visionary language to isolate elements, such as the four faced cherubim of Ezekiel placed sometimes beside Christ's throne.

Scenes of Old Testament Theophanies, based on the prophetic Visions of Ezekiel, Isaiah Daniel or Habakkuk came to be later associated to the narthex space, which is likewise a symptomatic fact for the conception of Middle Byzantine programs<sup>30</sup>. Since the iconography of the naos is built around the History of

<sup>25</sup> See the extensive commentary of André Grabar on the reception of the “Vision of God” by the iconophile theologians in *L'iconoclasme byzantin. Dossier archéologique*, Paris 1957, pp. 241–257.

<sup>26</sup> For this subject see: André Grabar, “Les théophanies-visions dans les absides des chapelles coptes”, in *Martyrium, Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, vol. 2, Paris 1946; Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Théophanies– visions auxquelles participent les prophètes dans l'art byzantin après la restauration des images”, in *Synthronon*, Paris 1968, pp. 139–140; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords*, Paris 1991.

<sup>27</sup> The enthroned Christ, sitting on a rainbow and surrounded by the mandorla to which the four symbols of the evangelists are attached.

<sup>28</sup> Gabriel Millet, *La Dalmatique du Vatican*, p. 44–48.

<sup>29</sup> See the recent study of Anne-Orange Poilpré, *Majestas Domini: une image de l'Eglise en Occident, V<sup>e</sup>–IX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 2005.

<sup>30</sup> See Elka Bakalova, *The Ossuary of the Bachkovo Monastery*, Plovdiv 2003, pp. 81–82, fig.17 and 75. A rare depiction of the Vision of Prophet Ezekiel in the field of bones is painted on the west wall of naos, in the crypt of the Bachkovo ossuary: E. Bakalova, *The Ossuary*, fig. 9, pp. 59–61). Other examples can be mentioned: the theophanic Vision of Christ based on Ezekiel in the church of St. Mercurios in Corfu, 1074/75; the Vision of Christ on the vault of the narthex in the church of the Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295); the multiple Old Testamentary theophanic Visions in the narthex of St. Michael church from Lesnovo (1346/7): Smiljka Gabelić, *Manastir Lesnovo : istorija i slikarstvo*, Belgrad 1998, fig. 78, 97, the Vision of Christ-Wisdom in St. Demetrios church at Marko monastery (1376–1381), the Vision of Ezekiel is the side chapel of St. Demetrios or Metropolis church in Mistra

Incarnation and the new established reality, the western parts of the church are more appropriate to show the Son of God, the Logos, before the Incarnation. In the Bachkovo ossuary (11<sup>th</sup> century) for instance, an impressive picture of Christ Emmanuel in Glory accompanied by the Four symbols of the Evangelists on the eastern wall of the narthex recalls the 5<sup>th</sup> century apse mosaic in the church of Hosios David in Thessaloniki<sup>31</sup>.

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During the medieval period, visual evidence of the image representing Christ surrounded by the Four Beasts can also be found in other artistic contexts.

For example, in the Serbian Psalter in Munich (14th century), on fol. 97<sup>v</sup><sup>32</sup>, one can notice a medallion with the representation of the Ancient of Days holding Christ Child, that is enclosed in a square with the four symbols of the evangelists displayed in the corners. The miniature is connected to verses 2–3/1–3 of Psalm 76/77: “I cried unto God with my voice, [even] unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord...”, and is referred to in the explanatory note as “The vision that Isaiah, the son of Amos saw in the days of Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz, (cf. Isaiah 1, 1)”<sup>33</sup>. The Belgrad Psalter, known to be a copy of the first, reproduces the same icon shaped illumination, reducing the composition to the figure of Christ the Ancient of Days alone, framed by the symbols of the evangelists<sup>34</sup>.

An interesting case is however that of the series of Byzantine illuminated Gospel Books (*Tetraevangelia*), presenting an introductory prologue of theological content which are accompanied by images of Christ in glory surrounded by the four symbols of the Evangelists, examples dating from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century and onwards. This category of Gospel Books is of special interest for the iconographic typology we are dealing with, since the meaning assigned to the composition in question can be confronted in these cases with the textual evidence<sup>35</sup>.

(Suzy Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, Paris 1970, pp. 32–33), the Vision of prophet Daniel in Kurbinovo: Cvetan Grozdanov; Lydie Hadermann-Misguich, *Kurbinovo*, Skopje 1992, fig. 62, 63.

<sup>31</sup> For the apse mosaic in Hosios David, see the study of A. Grabar, “A propos d’une icône byzantine du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle au Musée de Sofia”, *Cahiers Archéologiques* 10 (1959), pp. 289–304.

<sup>32</sup> See Joseph Strzygowsky, *Die Miniaturen des serbischen Psalters der Königl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München : nach einer Belgrader Kopie ergänzt und im Zusammenhange mit der syrischen Bilderredaktion des Psalters untersucht*, Wien 1906, plate XXV, fig. 55.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Belting (ed.), *Der Serbische Psalter. Faksimile-Ausgabe des Cod. Slav. der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München. Textband unter mitarbeit von Suzy Dufrenne, Svetozar Radojčić, Reiner Stichel, Ihor Ševčenko*, Wiesbaden 1978, pp. 117–118 and pp. 216–218.

<sup>34</sup> J. Strzygowsky, *Die Miniaturen*, plate 25/ fig. 55.

<sup>35</sup> Two studies published almost simultaneously are dealing with the subject extensively: Robert Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface and Miniature in the Byzantine gospel Book*, New York 1980 and George Galavaris, *The Illustration of the Prefaces in the Byzantine Gospels*, Vienna 1979.



One of the most frequently encountered prologues in this group of Gospel Books belongs to St. Irenaeus of Lyons, and includes his well known theological interpretation of the “four faces of the cherub”, called by the autor “images of the dispensation of the Son of God.” St. Irenaeus explains the significance of the symbols by analogy to christological attributes: “The one (face) like the lion indicates the pragmatival, royal, and authoritative nature. The one like the calf states the sacerdotal and priestly nature. The manlike form depicts the Incarnation, and the one like eagle represents the Descent of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>36</sup>

The relationship established between the introductory texts and the accompanying images in this particular group of liturgical books has been studied by art historians<sup>37</sup> and it revealed different kinds of approaches from one book to another. The illustrations related to the Gospel prefaces appear either as frontispiece compositions or as full-page illustrations. Deriving from representations of Old Testamentary Visions of God, they exhibit, however, different degrees of abbreviation or further elaboration compared to what textual and previous iconographic examples provide<sup>38</sup>.

We shall discuss in addition certain aspects in the formal and semantic development of the image representing Christ in majesty in these liturgical books, that may be relevant to some extent for the post-Byzantine mural depictions of the Pantocrator, belonging to the same typology.

What made us aware of some precise iconographic formula, like that in the Oxford Gospel Book (E.D. Clarke 10, f. 2v), dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>39</sup>, it is a selection and distribution of compositional elements similar to the principles displayed by monumental programs of Moldavian churches (fig. 6). The title page composition in the Oxford Gospel Book is geometrically structured. The first rectangle with the half-portraits of the Evangelists located in the corners encompasses a second one, where Christ's standing figure is encircled in a central medallion framed by the four symbols of the Evangelists. Christ's white garment indicates the theophanic character of the image recalling the color of Christ's robe in the Transfiguration scene as depicted throughout all of Byzantine art<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> The passage reproduces a fragment of one of the prologues published by Hermann von Soden in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt. Hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte von Hermann Freiherr von Soden*, Bd. I/1, Berlin 1902, p. 303. See also: Robert Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>37</sup> See above, note 35.

<sup>38</sup> The Parma Gospel Book at the Palatine Library in Parma (Parma. Pal. 5, fol. 5r, 11th century) is particular proof of the direct influence of the prologue on the miniature accompanying the text in the frontispiece of the page; George Galavaris, *The Illustration of the Prefaces*, p. 21 and fig. 50; R. Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface*, pp. 56–57.

<sup>39</sup> Accompanying the same prologue of Irenaeus to the four Gospels: R. Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface*, fig. 34.

<sup>40</sup> The detail in the image is related to the evangelical texts of Mark 9, 3 and Luke 9, 29. For an analysis of the iconography of the Transfiguration scene as a prophecy to the Second Coming, see Suzy Dufrenne, “La Manifestation divine dans l'iconographie byzantine de la Transfiguration”, p. 185–189.

Other visual interpretations, like the one of the Greek Tetraevangelion from the National Library in Paris (Ms. gr. 81, f. 7v, dating from 1092), resemble the mural versions we discussed due to a certain tendency towards abridgement of previous compositions of Old Testament theophanies (fig. 7). The full page illumination in the Paris gr. 81 shows a half figure of Christ encircled in a medallion, with the symbols represented as shining from behind, freed from any other elements that may have recalled the former visionary context of the image (wheels of fire, cherubim or the rainbow at Christ's legs).

It has been emphasized that the habitude of such an association, of visionary-theophanic images of Christ with Gospel Books, was developed not only under the influence of prefatory texts, but also under the influence of many other factors. Liturgical exegesis and the ritual itself are supposed to have played an important role in this affiliation, promoting the idea that Gospels themselves, through their content have a *theophanic* character. This would explain – as Robert Nelson states<sup>41</sup> – the presence of Christ's image in glory surrounded by the four symbols in Gospel Books, even in the absence of the explanatory texts of the prefaces<sup>42</sup>.

Another example we should pay attention to is the Gospel (Dd.9) in the Library of the Cambridge University, where the figure of the Ancient of Days in glory, surrounded by the symbols of the evangelists is believed to have been added in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, on the back of the page representing Evangelist Luke (Ms. Dd. 9.69 fol.139r)<sup>43</sup>. The miniature shows the half-portrait of Christ as Ancient of Days, inscribed in a turned rectangle superposed over a second one, shaping altogether the octagonal glory. This manner of enclosing Christ's portrait in the octagonal glory, although a rarely employed one, it is sometimes encountered in the mural painting<sup>44</sup>, but for the dome of the naos it is a very rare formal detail<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface*, p. 64–68.

<sup>42</sup> Such an interpretation is to be found in the work attributed to Patriarch Germanos *Historia Ecclesiastica* (8<sup>th</sup> century), where the First Entrance of the priest, which consists of placing the Gospel in the sanctuary, is compared to Christ's First Parousia: Τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν ἐστιν ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καθ' ἣν ὠράθη ἡμῖν. (...) περὶ οὗ ὁ πατὴρ μαρτυρεῖ καὶ λέγει οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, σοφία <καὶ> λόγος καὶ δύναμις, ὁ ἐν προφήταις μὲν προκηρυχθεὶς ἡμῖν, ἐν εὐαγγελίοις δὲ φανερωθεὶς... (P.G. 98, col. 412 D–413A, *apud* Shigebumi Tsuji, "The headpiece miniatures and Genealogy Pictures in Paris gr. 74", *DOP* 29 (1975), p. 180 n. 60. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Nicholas Cabasilas explains in a similar manner the signification of the same moment in the Liturgy, performed in the middle of the church, under the dome of the Pantocrator: "Their significance, however is this: they represent the manifestation of the saviour, by which he became known soon after his showing. The first showing of the Gospel, with the book closed, represents the first appearance of the Saviour" (St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, transl. J. M. Hussey, P. A. McNulty; New York 2002, p. 62).

<sup>43</sup> Hans Belting, "Stilzwang und Stilwahl in einem byzantinischen Evangeliar in Cambridge", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1975), fig. 6, p. 226.

<sup>44</sup> In the church of the Pantanassa at Mistra, an eight pointed star encompasses the half-figure of the Mother of God in the small dome of the western tribune: Maria Aspra-Vardavaki, Emanuel Melita, *H Μόνη της Παντανάσσας στον Μυστρά οι τοιχογραφίες του 15ου αιώνα*, Athens 2005, pp. 85–86.

<sup>45</sup> The detail of the octagonal glory, which encompasses Christ's medallion, can be seen in the church of *Bogorodica Ljeviška church from Prizren, in Kosovo*.

\*

A similar type of composition appears though in the mural paintings of St. George's church from Ubisa, in Georgia, painted around 1380<sup>46</sup>. Due to its composite and complex iconographic program, the mural ensemble of Ubisa reveals the type of message assigned to the icon of Christ surrounded by the symbols of the Evangelists in the late monumental painting of Byzantine tradition<sup>47</sup>.

As the rectangular shape of the church requests, the Pantocrator is depicted in the center of the barrel vault, between the Ancient of Days and the Holy Spirit, in a sequence of three medallions disposed alongside the axis of the vault<sup>48</sup>. Inside this trinitarian formula, is shown Pantocrator's glory outlined by the Evangelists' symbols in the four corners, that consequently becomes the attribute of the Incarnate Logos, since the Ancient of Days is represented according to Daniel's prophecy (Dan 7, 9) and to Psalm 80,1, namely surrounded by cherubim<sup>49</sup>. The image of the Pantocrator receives a redemptive meaning, by symbolically marking the idea of the salvation plan revealed in the four Gospels<sup>50</sup>. As for the compositions themselves, we may assume, considering the manuscript versions referred to above, that the representations of Christ in Ubisa are probably rooted in the tradition of book illumination.

Extensive syntaxes of this kind, gathering the three faces of Christ or the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are of significant importance since they detail the understanding of the Pantocrator in relation to the overall iconographic setting of the naos. They explicitly point to the idea of Revelation and the History of Salvation on the high surfaces of the nave. In line with the iconographic formula at Ubisa, we should mention the small hospital church of the Bistrița monastery (1520) in Wallachia that repeats a similar formula on the barrel vault of the naos<sup>51</sup> (fig. 8).

<sup>46</sup> J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Monumental Painting", in Adriano Alpago-Novello, Vahtang Beridze, J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Art and Architecture in Medieval Georgia*, Louvain-la-Neuve 1980, p. 100-101.

<sup>47</sup> Both in style as in iconography, the wall paintings in Ubisa show Byzantine Palaeologan features along with elements depending on local Georgian tradition; see Šalva Amiranašvili, *Gruzinskij chudožnik Damiane* (The Georgian Painter Damian), Tbilisi 1974. The book contains a reach photographic material, including detail pictures of the frescoes; see T. Velmans, *Miroir de l'invisible*, pp. 160–164.

<sup>48</sup> T. Velmans, *Miroir de l'invisible*, plates 33–35; Š. Amiranašvili, *Gruzinskij chudožnik*, plates 34, 35, 36.

<sup>49</sup> "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow..." (Dan. 7, 9); "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth" (Ps. 80, 1).

<sup>50</sup> Moreover the selection of feast scenes points to the same interpretation since there is not only a compositional relation between the feast scenes and the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but also an intended theological connection: To the west, the Holy Spirit is depicted as a ray descending from God's hand to the Baptism scene, while the Ancient of Days appears between the Annunciation and the Nativity scenes. The Pantocrator, on the other hand, is placed between the Presentation of Christ in the Temple – a foreshadowing of the Passion (Luke 2, 34–35) – and the Resurrection of Lazaros – an anticipation of the universal Resurrection (John 11), as Tania Velmans already noticed: T. Velmans, *Miroir de l'invisible*, pp. 161–163.

<sup>51</sup> In this context we must mention a the 17<sup>th</sup> century icon of Athonite or Macedonian origin from the Xenophon monastery, which strikes through its close resemblance with the image of the

Yet, the group of monuments in the Moldavian Principality remains not an isolated case in the post-Byzantine artistic world in what regards the tendency towards developing iconographic typologies based on earlier sources. The iconographic evidence of the rectangular, barrel-vaulted churches from the region of Ohrid provide an important comparison in what regards the iconography of the vaulting system.

Dating back to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, these programs are the result of the activity of a local painting school aiming to conceive programs adapted to a particular architectural typology. Over this period, painters perpetuate a formula achieved already in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Along the transversal vault of the nave, from North to South, they paint Christ *Pantocrator* (either half-portrait or as part of the Ascension scene), the *Ancient of Days* with the four faces of the tetramorph and the *Preparation Throne*, all of them enclosed in medallions.

Such examples can be seen in the church of St. Constantine and Helen (1400)<sup>52</sup> and in the hospital church of the Mother of God, *Bogorodica Bolnička* (around 1400)<sup>53</sup> in Ohrid (fig. 9, 10), in the church of St. Elijah in Dolgaec (1451–1454)<sup>54</sup>, in that dedicated to All Saints in Lešani (half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>55</sup> near Ohrid or in the Resurrection church in Lescoek<sup>56</sup>. They show the particularity of a vaulting system displaying almost the same iconographic formula<sup>57</sup>.

In the fresco ensembles from Dragalevski and Boboševo in Bulgaria, that Gojko Subotić attributes to a team of painters trained in the same environment of the Ohrid school<sup>58</sup>, changes are made to the patterns provided by the earlier examples in Ohrid, but even so the common iconographic language can be traced through the images<sup>59</sup>.

Pantocrator in the cupola of the small Transfiguration church from the Bistrița monastery. The icon is thought to be part of a former iconostasis, but its compositional features approach it to the tradition of mural representation of the same topic: Evangelos N. Kyriakouides, Nikos Minos *et alii*, *The Holy Xenophontos Monastery: The Icons*, Mount Athos 1999, fig. 85, pp. 198–199.

<sup>52</sup> Gojko Subotić, *Sveti Konstantin i Jelena u Ohridu/L'eglise des saints Constantin et Helene a Ohrid*, Belgrade 1971, pp. 73–74 and figs. 11, 13, 14, 15.

<sup>53</sup> Cvetan Grozdanov, *Ohridskoto dzidno slikarstvo od XIV vek/ La peinture murale d'Ohrid au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Belgrade 1979, fig. 205.

<sup>54</sup> G. Subotić, *Oхридска сликарска школа XV века/L'ecole de peinture d'Ohrid au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Ohrid 1980, fig. 29, pp. 52–53.

<sup>55</sup> G. Subotić, *Oхридска сликарска школа*, fig. 52, p. 77 and plates 40, 41.

<sup>56</sup> G. Subotić, *Oхридска сликарска школа*, fig. 76, pp. 100–101.

<sup>57</sup> The earlier murals of St. Nicholas (1340–1350) church, which assumed the same function as the Bogorodica church, do not seem to be the model followed by the painters of the later one, which is indeed situated very close to St. Nicholas Church. The three medallions displayed on the longitudinal vault of the naos picture Christ as Pantocrator, the Ancient of Days and the figure of an Angel, without any other iconographic insertions.

<sup>58</sup> G. Subotić, *Oхридска сликарска школа*, pp. 130–131.

<sup>59</sup> The iconography of the barrel vaulted nave at Dragalevski consists of two medallions, one of which shows the orant figure of the Mother of God, the other the figure of Christ Ancient of Days, surrounded by the symbols of the Four Evangelists; G. Subotić, *Oхридска сликарска школа*, fig. 93, p. 122.

Almost at the same time, representations of the Pantocrator framed by the symbols of the Four Evangelists appear in Moldavian cupolas. The extent to which they are indebted to influences coming from the artistic milieu in Ohrid or the exact elements the painters owe to book sources is difficult to determinate. However, the way in which the typological image of Christ is assimilated and integrated in the overall program of the naos in each of the considered examples, proves the understanding of its semantic resorts in the Moldavian art.

At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the mural program of St. George's church in Voroneț stands out through the extensive use of illuminated Tetraevangelia as source of its unique iconographic program of the vaulting system of the naos (on the tympana and pendentives at the base of the drum), where painters have chosen to illustrate the beginning of each of the Four Gospels, instead of representing the traditional selection of Great Feasts<sup>60</sup>. The iconographic syntax brings forward a series of unusual compositions as well as an original selection of biblical inscriptions. Among them, Constanța Costea noticed a less common one, taken from Mark (1, 15): "Repent ye and believe the Gospel" – sentence attributed to Christ in the scene of the South – Eastern pendentive (Christ addressing the crowd, while John is imprisoned)<sup>61</sup> – which concentrates the overall message that painters of Voroneț, assisted very likely by theologians of their time, intended to communicate.

The iconographic typology of the Pantocrator in the dome of St. George's church at Voroneț was reiterated, with probably few exceptions (among which only Probota is a sure one), in all other Moldavian religious monuments of the time. The reason may also be its meaning, as the image has the quality of containing *in nuce* the Christological perspective of Salvation revealed in the Gospels and foreshadowed by the Evangelists symbols in the corners of Christ's glory. This is particularly significant in the context of Moldavian mural programs, where the specific architectural setting of the vaulting system imposes the rise of the *Dodecaorton* scenes at the base of the drum, so that the key moments of the First Parousia are transposed beyond the chronological narrative of the naos, in a circular arrangement, under the dome of the Pantocrator (fig. 11), a display that is repeating in each church.

The textual evidence of the inscriptions preserved in the hemicycle of the cupolas of the St. George's church in Suceava and in that of the Annunciation church

<sup>60</sup> After a first study of the iconography of Voronet owned to Maria Ana Musicescu: "Considerații asupra picturii din altarul și naosul Voronețului", in M. Berza (ed.), *Cultura moldovenească în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, Bucharest 1964, a comprehensive interpretation of the iconographic setting in the naos of St. George's church, based on new discovered illuminated sources, was offered by Constanța Costea: "John the Persian's emperor", *RRHA*, sér. Beaux-Arts, 45 (2008), pp. 31–44. Manuscripts stemming from the Byzantine prototype Paris. gr. 74 (11<sup>th</sup> century) like the 14<sup>th</sup> century Tetraevangelion commissioned by the tsar Ivan Alexander (British Museum Add. 39627) circulated in Moldavia during the reign of Stephen the Great and influenced the monumental decoration of the churches.

<sup>61</sup> C. Costea, "John the Persian's Emperor", pp. 31–33.

of the Moldovița monastery proves the multiple connotations assigned to the image of the Pantocrator in the dome.

In St. George's church, the inscription surrounding the central figure of the dome, which is a less common one for Byzantine cupolas<sup>62</sup>, conveys an explicit eschatological message "[...] I, God and Judge of all flesh, showing me from Highness before the Judgment [...]" which, if it would have continued according to one of its closest parallels – the cupola inscription of St. Nicholas Philanthrophinon church on the Lake of Ioannina (1542) – would have ended by expressing God's commandment before the Final Judgment and the imminent punishment of the trespassers: "I command you to obey my laws, anyone who wants to escape the torments"<sup>63</sup>. Thus, in relation to the central icon of the cupola, painters make clear assertion of the two attributes assimilated by tradition to the Pantocrator of the dome, that of *Judge* evoked in our case by the inscription and that of *Redeemer* of human condition through the plan established before the ages – as foreshadowed in the octagonal glory marked by the Four symbols of the Evangelists.

Moreover, the same duality of Christ's revelation reappears in the lower registres of the drum of St. George's church: One can find it in the selection of Prophets and their messages in the drum of the dome, as well as in the two monumental representations of the *Mandylion* and *Preparation Throne* arranged opposit each other in the small pendentives of the dome, to East and West, respectively.

On the other hand, in the Annunciation church of Moldovița monastery, Christ Pantocrator is surrounded by a passage taken from the Liturgy of St. John Chrisostom,<sup>64</sup> pronounced by the priest during the Liturgy of the Faithful. The symbols of the Evangelists, linked to the inscribed ring of the Pantocrator recall certain manuscript compositions the type of Iveron Lit. 5 (fol. 24v and fol. 64v, first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>65</sup>, where the four symbols of the Evangelists are associated to the same liturgical prayer, said at the Consecration of Gifts.

This specific correlation – probably based on liturgical exegesis<sup>66</sup> – is a common place of Byzantine art, and appears not only in manuscript illumination<sup>67</sup>, but also

<sup>62</sup> For parallels of this text, see above, note 15.

<sup>63</sup> Ἐγὼ Θεός τε καὶ κριτὴς πάντων πέλω, ἰδοὺ προκύψας ὑψόθεν πρὸ τῆς δίκης ἐντέλλομαι μόνους ἔμοὺς τηρεῖν νόμους ὅστις θέλει τῶν εκφυγεῖν τὰς βασάνους (M. Garidis, A. Paliouras (ed.), *Μοναστήρια νήσου Ἰωαννίνων*, fig. 32).

<sup>64</sup> See the transcription above.

<sup>65</sup> G. Galavaris, *The Illustration of the Prefaces*, fig. 72 and 74.

<sup>66</sup> See Guillaume de Jerphanion, "Les noms de quatre animaux et le commentaire liturgique du Pseudo-Germain", in *La voix des monuments*, Paris 1930.

<sup>67</sup> This type of association can be noticed, for instance, in the liturgical roll of the Great Lavra (Athos Lavra, liturgical roll 2, 12/13 century): G. Galavaris, *The Illustration of Prefaces*, fig. 71, as well as in the liturgical manuscript from the Iviron monastery (Athos Iviron V, fol. 24<sup>v</sup> and fol. 64<sup>v</sup>): G. Galavaris, *The Illustration of Prefaces*, fig. 72 and 74.

in monumental painting<sup>68</sup> and in the liturgical embroidery (namely on epitaphs), where the four participles of the liturgical prayer: “Singing, crying, shouting, and saying”, border the Evangelist’s symbols in the corners of the *Threnos* composition<sup>69</sup>.

At the time the image of Christ in glory framed by the four symbols of the Evangelists entered the decoration of the Moldavian cupolas, it was already reintegrated in the decoration of the naos, as shown by the case of the small rectangular churches in the town of Ohrid and its surroundings. Thus by reiterating this specific typology of the Pantocrator in similar formulas from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the half of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the Moldavian artistic milieu becomes connected to the contemporary tendencies in the Balkan Peninsula, directed towards assimilating images from different types of sources and developing topological structures within the iconographical program of the church. In Moldavian art, the same typology of the Pantocrator will be employed later on, in the cupola of the Resurrection church of Sucevița monastery at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in the church of Dragomirna monastery, at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>68</sup> A famous exemple is that of the Three Crosses church in the region of Güllü Dere in Cappadoce: J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, “L’église aux Trois Croix de Güllü Dere en Cappadoce et le problème du passage du décor «iconoclaste» au décor figuré”, *Byzantion* 35 (1965), p.189–190, but examples can be seen in other cave churches from the Cappadoce as well: G. de Jerphanion, “Les noms de quatre animaux”, p. 252–254; see also René Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la Divine liturgie du VI<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1966, p. 164.

<sup>69</sup> This formula occurs very frequently on Moldavian embroidered *epitaphoi*. For example, on Siluan’s epitaph at Neamț, dating from 1437 (Corina Nicolescu, “Broderiile din Moldova I. Aere și epitafe (Fișe de catalog)”, *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* 49 (1973), nr. 9–10, p. 660–662; I. D. Ștefănescu, *Autels, tissus et broderies litrgiques*, Bucharest 1944, fig. 44), on the epitaph from Putna monastery, dating from 1470 (C. Nicolescu, “Broderiile”, p. 665–667; I. D. Ștefănescu, *Autels, tissus et broderies litrgiques*, fig. 49, Maria Ana Musicescu, Ana Dobjanschi, *Broderia veche românească*, Bucharest 1985, p. 37, nr. 22 in the catalogue), as well as on the epitaph from Dobrovăț, dated in 1506 (C. Nicolescu, “Broderiile”, p. 668–671).



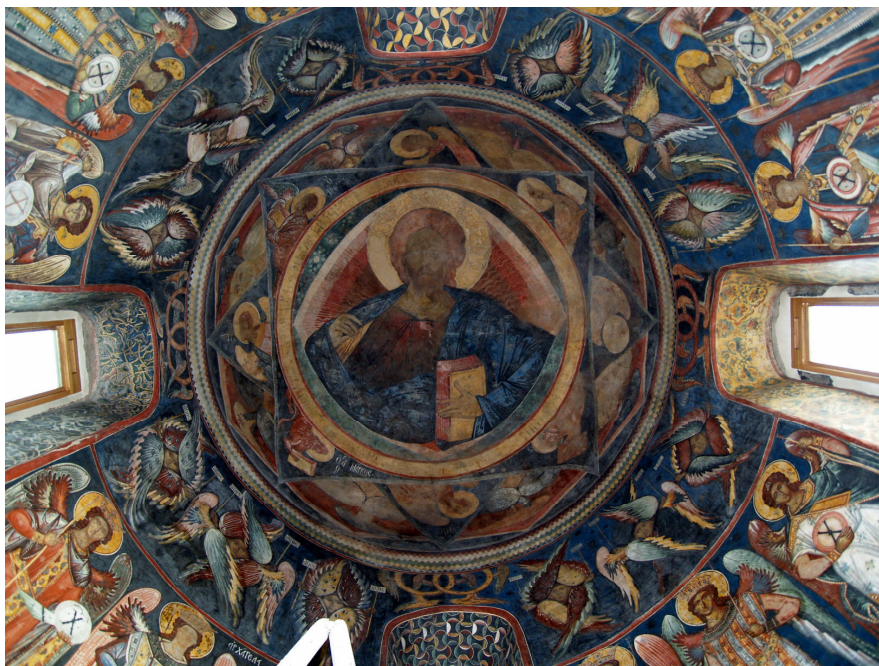


**Fig. 1.** Church of St. George, Voroneț monastery, Christ Pantocrator in the dome of the naos (photo: CERECs Art)



**Fig. 2.** Church of St. Nicholas in Bălinești village, Christ Pantocrator, vault of the naos (photo: the author).





**Fig. 3.** Church of St. George in the monastery of John the Neomartyr from Suceava, dome of the naos (photo: CERECs Art).



**Fig. 4.** Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God in the Humor monastery, dome of the naos (photo: the author).



**Fig. 5.** Church of the Beheading of John the Baptist in Arbore village, dome of the naos  
(photo: the author).





Fig. 6. Oxford, MS. E. D. Clarke 10, fol. 002<sup>v</sup>

(source: <http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/view/all/what/MS.+E.+D.+Clarke+10>).



**Fig.7.** Paris Bibl. Nat. Gr. 81, fol 7<sup>v</sup>, fol 8<sup>r</sup>  
(source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8470422z/f28.image>).





**Fig. 8 a.** Hospital church of Bistrița monastery, barrel vault of the naos (photo: Vlad Bedros).



**Fig. 8 b.** Hospital church of Bistrița monastery, barrel vault of the naos (photo: Vlad Bedros).





Fig. 9 a. St. Constantine and Helen church, the transversal vault of the nave (photo: the author).



Fig. 9 b. St. Constantine and Helen church, the transversal vault of the nave (photo: the author).





**Fig. 10.** Bogorodica Bolnička, the transversal vault of the nave, detail of the Ancient of Days with the symbols of the Evangelists (photo: the author).



**Fig. 11.** Church of St. George in the monastery of John the Neomartyr from Suceava, dome of the naos (photo: CERECs Art).