

Reinterpretation of the Life of the Virgin in the King's Church of Studenica Monastery

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In Byzantine art, a remarkable treatment of the life of the Virgin Mary involves regarding the Jewish priest who refused the offering by Joachim and Anna as Zacharias, the future father of St. John the Baptist, and not as Ruben as in most textual recensions. In the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Giotto depicted Ruben's act refusing the offering of Joachim as spiteful and against God's will.⁽¹⁾ Contrastingly, in the sphere of Byzantine art, Zacharias consistently watches Mary's growth through scenes such as *Refusal of the Offering*, *Reception of the Offering*, *Three-Years-Old Mary's Presentation to the Temple (Hagia ton Hagion)*, *Mary Entrusted to Joseph (Marriage)*, and *Trial of the Water*.

Not through spite, why did Zacharias the priest turn down Joachim's offering? The refusal was part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind, since for the atonement of the original sin, Christ should appear in the world, and for that, Mary had to be born first by Joachim and Anna. The lambs offered by Joachim are regarded as a symbol of the Passion of Christ, and Zacharias' refusal of the sacrifice of Joachim and Anna prompted them to bear Mary. Daring adopt the rare version of the Protevangelium of James⁽²⁾, the Byzantine world consistently

(1) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/1joachim/joachi1.jpg>, accessed 9 June, 2021. In a following scene, *Joachim's Sacrificial Offering* (<https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/1joachim/joachi4.jpg>), God gladly receives Joachim's offering.

(2) After the edition of C. von Tischendorf (*Evangelia Apocrypha*, Leipzig 1876, 1-50), the manuscript Bodmer V (3rd or 4th century) papyrus MS with the complete text, was published (M. Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer V: Nativité de Marie*, Cologny-Genève 1958). Thereafter, De Stricker published an excellent edition mainly from the Bodmer manuscript, which was compared with many manuscripts, related texts, and various translations in detail; this is the best text we can hope for today. É. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques: recherches sur le papyrus Bodmer 5 avec une édition critique du texte grec et une traduction annotée*, Brussels 1961. De Stricker then worked with more than 150 Protevangelium manuscripts in 1971/75, reorganizing six groups on the recension. É. de Strycker, "Die griechischen Handschriften des Protoevangeliums Iacobi," rep. in: D. Harlfinger (ed.), *Griechische Kodikologie und Textüberlieferung*, Darmstadt 1980, 577-612. A manuscript in Venice, Marciana II, 82 (13/14th century), describes the Jewish priest as ἀνὴρ ἐκ φυλῆς ρουβὴμ (man from the tribe of Ruben). This Ruben is Jacob's first-born son in Genesis (29:32). The 1 Chronicles (5:7) lists the name of Zacharias as one of the descendants of Ruben, and moreover, the Byzantines merged him there with Zacharias, the father of St. John the Baptist.

gave Zacharias the priest the role of custodian of the Virgin Mary.

However, the Protevangelium (=PE), a second-century apocrypha, includes a narratological incoherence: the treatment of the *Trial of the Water* in Mary's story is contradictory. According to the PE (15-16), doubting Mary's faithfulness, Zacharias gave her baneful waters embittered by the Lord's curse (Num. 5:11-31). This implies that Zacharias, albeit the consistent custodian of Mary, was ignorant of her faithfulness. Michael and Eutychios, the painters of the King's Church of Studenica Monastery, dissolved this contradiction of the *Trial of the Water*, and gave the story a new meaning: a premonition of the Passion of Christ.

King's Church of Studenica Monastery

In addition to the Katholikon dedicated to the Virgin, there are three chapels in the large precincts of Studenica Monastery, among which the chapel called *Kraljeva Crkva* (King's Church) was constructed by the Serbian king Stefan Uroš II Milutin (r.1282-1321) in 1314/15 for Joachim and Anna, the parents of Mary.⁽³⁾ Although no inscription survives, it is widely accepted that the frescoes were painted by the Thessalonikan painters Michael Astrapas and Eutychios at about the same⁽⁴⁾ time as the architecture was constructed.⁽⁴⁾ I do not survey here the history of research on the Astrapades, but provide a list of monuments considered to be their works: Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid (1294/95), Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren⁽⁵⁾ (1307-13), Sveti Gjorgi in Staro Nagoričane⁽⁶⁾ (1316-18), and Sveti Nikita in Banjani⁽⁷⁾ (c.1320). Gračanica Monastery in Priština⁽⁸⁾ (before 1321) is said to be the work of their followers. Kouri, in addition, attributed the church of St. Peter in Bijelo Polje, Montenegro, to the painters, based on the style of its paintings.⁽⁹⁾ Recently, signatures were discovered in the Monastery of Prohor Pčinjski (Serbia, south of Vranje)⁽¹⁰⁾ and in the church of Protaton in Karyes on Mount Athos.⁽¹¹⁾ Among their works, Panagia Peribleptos, King's Church and Staro Nagoričane depict the cycle

(3) G. Babić, *Kraljeva crkva u Studenici*, Beograd 1987.

(4) R. Hamann-Mac Lean, H. Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, Gießen 1963, figs. 245-72; H. Hallensleben, *Die Malerschule des Königs Milutin*, Gießen 1963; P. Miljković-Peppek, *Deloto na zografite Mihalo i Eutihij*, Skopje 1967; E.I. Kouri, *Die Milutinschule der byzantinischen Wandmalerei in Serbien, Makedonien, Kosovo- Metohien und Montenegro (1294/95-1321)*, Helsinki 1982. In recent years, the theory that Eutychios is Michael's father has been proposed. M. Marković, "The Painter Eutychios — Father of Michael Astrapas and Protomaster of the Frescoes in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid," *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti*, 2010, 9-34.

(5) D. Panić, G. Babić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška*, Beograd 1988.

(6) B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, Beograd 1993.

(7) M. Marković, *Sveti Nikita kod Skoplja: Zadružbina kralja Milutina*, Beograd 2015.

(8) D. Milošević, *Gračanica Monastery*, Beograd 1989.

of the Virgin's life.

The King's Church has no structural pillars or columns, and its architectural plan is almost square. Accordingly, the walls for figural decorations are the north, south, east, and west sides, and the dome. In the concha of the apse, the Virgin with the Infant Christ is surrounded by Archangels Michael and Gabriel. In the middle frieze below the concha, on both sides of the central double windows, the *Communion of the Apostles* (bread/wine) is depicted (**Fig.1**). In the lowest frieze, the hierarchs of the early church holding the liturgical scrolls are arranged. In the small niche under the central windows, *Melismos* (or *Amnos*)⁽¹²⁾ is selected to represent the meaning of the Eucharist (**Fig.2**).

Because the decorations on the dome and the lunettes on the north and south walls have no relation to the purpose of this article, they are not described in detail here. Due to the small spaces in the chapel, only ten scenes are selected from the *Dodekaorton* (Twelve Great Feasts), skipping the *Raising of Lazarus* and the *Pentecost*. The most important in our context is the arrangement of the *Presentation of Christ to the Temple* (*Hypapante*), divided into two sections of the inverted U-shaped wall around the apse; Symeon the priest is placed in the right section (south of the apse), and the others (Mary holding the Infant Christ, Joseph, and Anna the prophetess) are depicted in the left section (north of the apse) (**Layout of the Scenes**). The

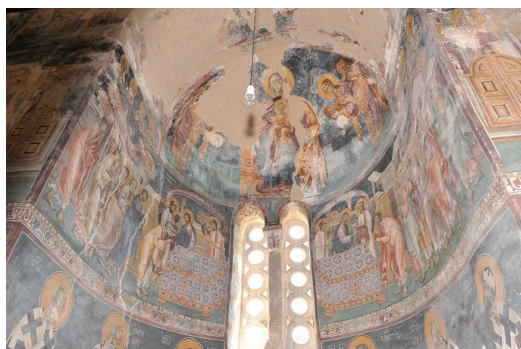


Fig. 1. King's Church, Apse, Communion of the Apostles



Fig. 2. King's Church, Apse, Melismos

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- (9) Kouri (1982); B. Todić, "Angels with Instruments of the Passion around the Virgin in the Apse: a local phenomenon in Serbian art," B. Katsaros, A. Tourta (eds.), *Αφιέρωμα στον Ακαδημαϊκό Παναγιώτη Α. Βοκοτόπουλο*, Athens 2015, 457-64, esp.457-58, figs.1-3.
- (10) G. Subotić, D. Todorović, "Painter Michael in the Monastery of St. Prohor Pčinjski"(in Serbian), *ZRVI* 34 (1995), 117-141.
- (11) Γ. Φουστέρης, "Μερική έκλειψη Πανσελήνου: μια αναμενόμενη έκπληξη," <https://www.agioritikiestia.gr/el/2018-08-07-11-00-36>, accessed 3 Jun. 2021.
- (12) Ch. Konstantinidi, *Ο μελισμός*, Thessaloniki 2008.

Annunciation is arranged above *Christ's Presentation*, at the apex of the inverted U-shaped wall. The layout of the two subjects, the *Annunciation* in the upper arc and *Christ's Presentation* below, divided into two parts, is likely to have been the painters' homage to the renowned Katholikon (Fig.4)⁽¹³⁾, or a specific instruction from the Monastery.

Dividing the *Annunciation* into the left and right sides of the apse is common in the Byzantine church decoration; thus, the *Annunciation* is more suitable for the place where *Christ's Presentation* is depicted, rather than at the apex of the arc. The arrangement of *Christ's Presentation* into two divided parts can also be found in the Cappella Palatina⁽¹⁴⁾ and la Martorana⁽¹⁵⁾ in Palermo,

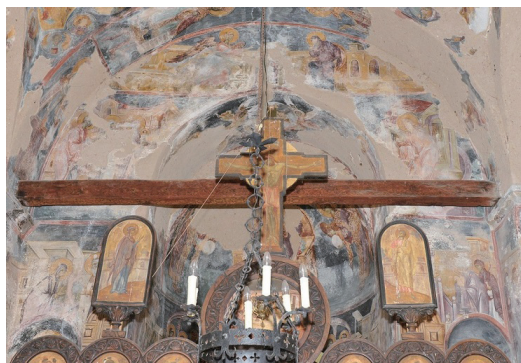


Fig. 3. King's Church, East wall, *Annunciation*, *Christ's Presentation to the Temple*

Sicily. In these churches, however, the scene is not placed on the east wall, but on the west spandrel wall below the dome, opposite the *Annunciation* on the east spandrel wall. The earliest example from the tenth century exists fragmentally in the old church of Tokalı Kilise in Cappadocia.⁽¹⁶⁾ Although the original apse was demolished when the new church was constructed, the southern fragment survived (Fig.5).



Fig. 4. Studenica Monastery, Katholikon, East wall



Fig. 5. Tokalı Kilise, Old Church (Göreme, Cappadocia), East wall, *Christ's Presentation to the Temple* (detail)

(13) M.Č. Medić, B. Todić, *Manastir Studenica*, Novi Sad 2011.

(14) E. Kitzinger, *I mosaici del periodo Normanno in Sicilia, fasc.II: La Cappella Palatina di Palermo. I Mosaici delle Navate*, Palermo 1993; Th. Dittelbach (ed.), *Die Cappella Palatina in Palermo. Geschichte, Kunst, Funktionen*, Künzelsau 2011.

(15) E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of St. Mary's of the Admiral in Palermo*, Washington, D.C. 1990.

Usually, the altar is depicted at the center of the composition of *Christ's Presentation*. The connotation of the iconography is the premonition of the Passion of Christ, textually through the words of Symeon ("as for thy own soul, it shall have a sword to pierce it"; Lk 2:35), and visually through Christ's body passing over the altar. When this composition of the image is divided, such as in the Tokalı Old Church, the Katholikon and the King's Church in Studenica Monastery, the altar cannot be placed in the center; instead, Christ's body passes above the real altar of the church when handed from Mary's hands to Symeon. Hence, the divided composition of *Christ's Presentation* on the east wall is a device that incorporates a three-dimensional real object into two-dimensional pictorial space.

In the Katholikon, *Christ's Presentation*, a premonition of the Passion, faces the monumental *Crucifixion* on the west wall. The main idea for this arrangement would have been to emphasize the dogma of the Atonement by arranging the premonition and the realization of the Passion on the opposite eastern and western walls.

Commissioned by King Milutin for the murals of the King's Church, Michael and Eutybios followed the iconographical program of the east wall in honor of the Katholikon, which had been erected a hundred years previously. The *Annunciation* is placed on the upper part of the inverted U-shaped wall, and underneath it, *Christ's Presentation* is divided into two parts. However, the homage to the Katholikon stopped there; the Katholikon's placement of the *Crucifixion* on the west wall was not adopted in the King's Church. The King's Church depicts the *Dormition of the Virgin* on the west wall, which is a typical selection for this place. The painters created a more elaborate program than the Katholikon for the Atonement; they connected the Virgin's cycle in the middle frieze of the chapel with the cycle of Christ. To demonstrate this, we must explore the Virgin's cycle in detail.

Cycle of the Life of the Virgin in the King's Church

The King's Church, dedicated to Joachim and Anna, depicts their life in the middle frieze between Christ's life in the upper tier and iconic images of the saints below. In fact, although the chapel is dedicated to her parents, the story focuses on the life of the Virgin Mary, and

(16) G. de Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin: les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, vol.1, Paris 1925, 262-376; M. Restle, *Byzantine Wall Painting in Asia Minor*, Shannon 1969 /Recklinghausen 1967, vol.1, 23-26, 111-116, vol.2, figs.61-123; L. Rodley, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia*, Cambridge 1985, 213-222; A. Wharton Epstein, *Tokalı Kilise. Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia*, Washington D.C. 1986; C. Jolivet-Levy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords*, Paris 1991, 96-108.

after *Mary's Presentation to the Temple*, her parents no longer appear. The life of the Virgin begins from the south side adjacent to the apse, proceeding clockwise. Since the *Dormition of the Virgin* is placed on the west wall, the story skips west, continues to the west end of the north wall, and ends at the east end adjacent to the apse. Its main source is the apocryphal book of the PE.⁽¹⁷⁾

The south side of the inverted U-shaped part of the eastern wall, directly below Symeon the priest in *Christ's Presentation*, shows the beginning of the life of the Virgin. Including a niche corresponding functionally to the Diaconicon, this part has an irregular shape. Joachim and Anna, as a couple who have long suffered from infertility, bring an offering of lambs to the temple, but Zacharias the priest rejects them (*Refusal of the Offering by Joachim and Anna*, Fig.6). Including this, the first three scenes of the life of Mary occupy narrow sections owing to

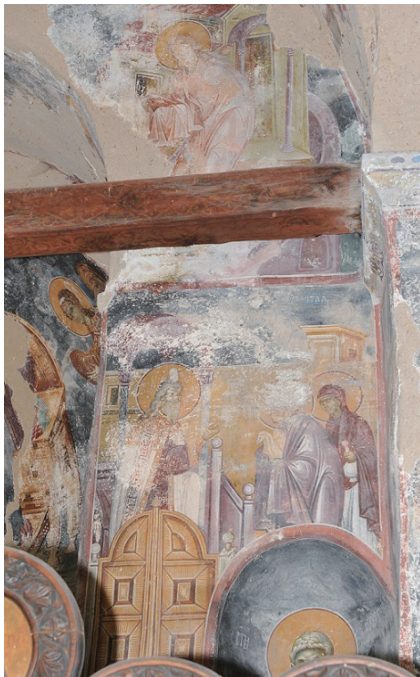


Fig. 6. King's Church, Refusal of the Offering by Joachim and Anna

to the shape of the wall surface. As mentioned above, Giotto depicted the Jewish priest in this scene as a villain who rejects the righteous Joachim's offering; after a few scenes, God is willing to accept the lamb directly from Joachim. This differs from Byzantine iconography. Giotto emphasizes that the Jewish priest's behavior went against God's will. However, in the Byzantine life of the Virgin, the priest who refuses the offering is nimbed Zacharias, the future father of St. John the Baptist.

In *Refusal of the Offering*, Zacharias stands on the left side, inside the sanctuary, and Joachim and Anna are lined up on the right side. Joachim holds two lambs,⁽¹⁸⁾ and his wife Anna has a jar in her left hand. Zacharias the priest refuses the offering of lambs under the view of God. The act of sacrificing the lamb to God is a metaphor for the Passion of

(17) On the Byzantine cycle of the life of the Virgin, see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantine et en occident*, vol.1, Brussels 1992²; Ead., "Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin," in: P.A. Underwood (ed.), *The Kariye Djami*, vol.4, Princeton 1975, 179-83; A.A. Tribuzadaki, *Θεομητορική Εικονογραφία. Η παιδική ηλικία*, Thessaloniki 2005.

(18) According to PE (1:1), "he (Joachim) brought all his gifts for the Lord twofold." W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol.1, Cambridge/ Louisville 1991, 426.

Christ. Christ must atone for the sins of mankind by dying on the cross, but the time for this has not yet arrived. As a premise, the life of Mary, who holds the Son of God, is required. It was for this reason that Zacharias rejected the suffering of Joachim and Anna: his rejection moved Joachim to fast and show penance in the desert for forty days, which made the conception of Mary possible.

Placed above and below on this wall are the priest Symeon (above, looking left, in *Christ's Presentation*) and the priest Zacharias (below, looking right, in *Refusal of the Offering*); both are old Jewish priests with white hair and beards. Later, Zacharias was murdered by King Herod, who was angry because he could not find the Son of God, and Symeon was chosen as his successor (PE 24:4). The two old priests were deeply involved with the life of the Virgin Mary. Despite refusing the offering of Mary's parents, Zacharias accepts the three-year-old Mary into the temple and raises her. Meanwhile, Symeon embraces the Infant on his fortieth day, and foretells Mary of his future death. The two old priests are often combined and play an important role in Byzantine art.⁽¹⁹⁾

The following scene, the *Return of Joachim and Anna from the Temple* skillfully depicts the couple walking to the right, using a narrow section (Fig.7). The couple, having had their offering refused, leave the temple disappointedly; the composition is arranged such that they appear to leave the real sanctuary of the chapel, heading west. The next scene is the *Prayer of Joachim*; using the west side of the pillar, a space that is even narrower than the previous scene, Joachim raises his hands to pray, and an angel appears in the sky to fulfill his wish. Usually in the cycle of the Virgin's life, Joachim is depicted praying in a green shrub that represents the wilder-



Fig. 7. King's Church, Return from the Temple, Prayer of Joachim, Prayer of Anna

(19) The most typical example can be found at the church of Panagia tou Arakos in Lagoudera, Cyprus. On the north wall, in *Mary's Presentation to the Temple* Zacharias stands on the upper lunette, and below that is depicted the iconic figure of Symeon *Theodochos* holding the Infant Jesus, which originated the narrative image of *Christ's Presentation to the Temple*. The two old priests are depicted in the same bent pose. On the church, see D. and J. Winfield, *The Church of the Panaghia tou Arakos at Lagoudera, Cyprus: The Paintings and Their Painterly Significance*, Washington, D.C. 2003; A. Nicolaïdes, "L'église de la Panaghia Arakiotissa à Lagoudera, Chypre. Etude iconographique des fresques de 1192," *DOP* 50 (1996), 1-137.

ness. Joachim sits down in a bush and rests his chin on his hand in a melancholy gesture. Often, there are several shepherds nearby. However, since it was impossible to place such a composition on the given wall surface, the painters drew Joachim in the same manner as the following scene, *Prayer of Anna*.

The story moves to the south wall, but the wall is a slightly irregular shape owing to the perforated windows. In the *Prayer of Anna*, water overflows from a two-tiered fountain⁽²⁰⁾, and an angel appears to Anna, telling her that she will have a child. Depending on the text⁽²¹⁾, bird's nest may be depicted on the tree, but it is omitted here because of the limited space.

The following scene, placed above the window arch, is the *Meeting of Joachim and Anna* (Fig.8); they are hugging, though the lower halves of their bodies are hidden by the arch. The Gate of Jerusalem on the far right forms the boundary with the next scene. The wide section between the windows is where the *Birth of the Virgin* is placed (Fig.9). Anna wakes up in a J-shaped bed and tries to receive postpartum food with the help of her maid. On the lower left, Mary is given her first bath, and on the right Joachim is visiting Mary in the cradle. The repeated depictions of the newborn baby are influenced by the iconography of the *Nativity of Christ*. In fact, the first bath of Jesus in the *Nativity* is placed above the first bath of Mary, suggesting that the lives of Christ and the Virgin are connected in many ways. Facing the scene of the *Birth of Mary* is *Mary's Presentation to the Temple* (*Hagia ton Hagion*) on the north wall. Together with the *Dormition of the Virgin* on the west wall, these three events in the life of the Virgin are celebrated with feast-day (September 8, November 21, August 15, respectively).



Fig. 8. King's Church, Meeting of Joachim and Anna



Fig. 9. King's Church, Birth of the Virgin

(20) Relief decorations such as lion and mask are a sign of the Palaiologan revival of the antiquity. D. Mouriki, "The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra," *DChAE* 4-10 (1981), rep. in: *Studies in Late Byzantine Painting*, London 1995, 81-124.

(21) "I am not likened to the birds of the heaven; for even the birds of the heaven are fruitful before thee, O Lord." (PE 3:2). Schneemelcher (n.18), 427.

The final scene on the south wall is the *Virgin Caressed by Her Parents*, arranged using the narrow section above and to the right of the window. Joachim and Anna sit in a chaise longue with a backrest, hugging Mary and squeezing her cheeks. The maid standing in the lower right probably serves no other purpose than filling space. There is no particular textual source for this heartwarming scene of an old couple who have managed to bear a child. It is an intimate, human scene, probably imagined by the late Byzantines. The west wall connected to this depicts the standard program of Byzantine church decoration, the *Dormition of the Virgin*, disrupting the time of the story, which skips the west wall and continues on the west end of the north wall.

Continuing the story, the *Blessing of the Priests* was placed on this wall, including the narrow part above the window (Fig.10); Joachim holds Mary and Anna moves forward from the left side. Three nimbed Jewish priests sit on the table on the right, each blessing Mary with their right hand. There are two paten-like metal vessels on the table, containing many pieces of communion bread. In addition, three triangular breads are placed on the table, and five half-eaten radishes⁽²²⁾ are also recognizable. The Byzantine cycle of the life of the Virgin has often depicted this iconography, even though there is no mention in the relevant part of the PE (6: 2-3) that there were three priests.

The depiction of the three priests resonates with the three-year-old Mary's age in the subsequent scene, *Mary's Presentation to the Temple*, while also naturally suggesting the Trinity. The bread placed on the table in the *Blessing of the Priests* will be given to Mary by the angel in *Mary's Presentation to*



Fig. 10. King's Church, Blessing of the Priests

(22) In depictions of the *Last Supper* by the Astrapades, such as in Ohrid and Staro Nagoričane, we encounter the radishes together with divided bread on the table. Moreover, in Ohrid, the *Philoxenia of Abraham* in the prothesis included radishes on the table. For the two painters, radishes on the table are indispensable for the Eucharist. See also, I. Anagnostakis, T. Papamastorakis, "... and Radishes for Appetizer' On Banquets, Radishes, and Wine," in: Δ. Μπακιρτζή –Παπανικόλα (eds.), *Βυζαντινών διατροφή και μαγειρεία, Πρακτικά Ημερίδας, Περί της διατροφής στο Βυζάντιο, 4 Νοεμβρ. 2001, Μουσείο Βυζαντινού Πολιτισμού Θεσσαλονίκης*, Athens 2005, 147-174.

the Temple. In other words, the *Blessing of the Priests* presents the key concepts of “three” and “bread” just before *Mary’s Presentation to the Temple*, and marks the prolegomena for the important scene that follows.

Mary’s Presentation to the Temple (*Hagia ton Hagion*, or *Eisodia tes Theotokou*) occupies a large section between the windows on the north wall (**Fig.11**). Anna and Joachim are depicted on the far left of the composition. Because Mary was a child given by God, her parents decided to give her to God. In order to prevent young Mary from getting homesick, the parents hired seven Hebrew maidens holding torches to hide them when Mary turned around. Standing in front of the sanctuary, Zacharias bends down and tries to hug the three-year-old girl. Although Zacharias had refused the offering of the lambs by her parents, the time was now right. Zacharias received Mary dedicated to God. We should remember here that in the scene *Refusal of the Offering of Joachim and Anna*, the door of the sanctuary was closed. Now, the sanctuary door is open. The painters Michael and Eutybios had a great ability to create meaning through visual contrast; the opening and closing of the sanctuary door symbolizes whether the passage to God is open or closed. The priest, Zacharias, serves as a common witness to both scenes.

In the upper-right corner of the composition, *Mary Nourished by the Angel* is arranged as a secondary motif, which is the normal pattern of iconography. In the text of the PE (8:1), it is simply mentioned that “Mary was in the Temple nurtured like a dove and received food from the hand of an angel,”⁽²³⁾ but the Byzantines have given a new interpretation here. The bread



Fig. 11. King’s Church, Mary’s Presentation to the Temple

(23) Schneemelcher, 429.

handed by the angel foretells the Eucharist of Christ. That is, Mary, at the age of three years old, has already been told by the angel that her child will die in the future. Examples in Geraki reinforce this interpretation: Mary in the church of Evangelistria receives not only bread but also wine from the angel (Fig.12).⁽²⁴⁾

The next scene from the eastern end of the north wall to the northeast pillar is *Mary Entrusted to Joseph* (the *Marriage of the Virgin*) (Fig.13).⁽²⁵⁾ In late-Middle-Age iconography of Western Europe, the subject is depicted as the wedding of Joseph and Mary, an adult of the same height as Joseph. However, in Byzantine art, respecting the textual account (PE 8:2), Mary is only half as tall as Joseph. Following nimbed Joseph on the right (east) end of the north wall unselected candidates are depicted on the window arch, who are also old. In other words, this is not depicted as a normal marriage, and Joseph is depicted as the custodian of Mary and the upcoming Jesus. On the west side of the pillar that touches Joseph's scene, the young Mary standing in front of the altar and the priest Zacharias are placed.

The *Trial of the Water*, the final scene of the life of the Virgin, is depicted by combining the south side of the pillar and the east wall (PE 15-16; Num. 5:1-31) (Fig.14). The south side of the pillar is severely



Fig. 12. Evangelistria (Geraki), Mary Nourished by the Angel

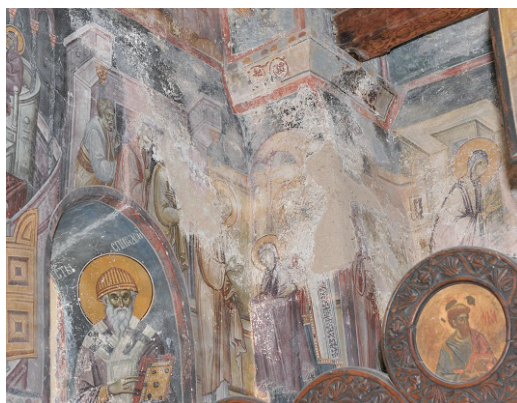


Fig. 13. King's Church, Mary Entrusted to Joseph (the Marriage of the Virgin)

(24) The same motif is also found in the churches of Hagios Sozon, Hagios Athanasios, and Hagios Ioannes Chrysostomos. Ν.Κ. Μουτσόπουλος, Γ. Δημητροκάλλης, *Γεράκι. Οι εκκλησίες του οικισμού*, Thessaloniki 1981; Γ. Δημητροκάλλης, *Γεράκι. Οι τοιχογραφίες των ναών του κάστρου*, Athens 2001. Particularly in Hagios Athanasios, the *Last Supper* and *Mary's Presentation to the Temple* are arranged facing each other in the bema, which reveals that *Mary's Presentation* was treated as a representation of the Eucharist.

(25) Inscription in Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid is: ὁ προφητὴς Ζαχαρίας παραδίδων τὴν Θεοτόκον τῷ Ἰωσήφ; in Chora Monastery in Istanbul: ἡ πρὸς τὸν Ἰωσήφ παραδόσις.



Fig. 14. King's Church, Trial of the Water

flaked, but it depicts the people gathered in the temple, with Joseph at the head. The eastern wall has an irregular shape because of the niche corresponding to the prothesis, and Zacharias, inside the sanctuary, is placed on the right. In his hand, we can recognize a jar with water mixed with temple dust. On the left is Mary, who bends and receives it. For those who know the story, Mary's innocence is obvious, but the image itself never explicitly shows this. From a dramaturgical point of view, it seems that would be interested in the next scene, expecting if Mary's innocence to be shown. However, the life of the Virgin in King's Church ends here. This raises the following question: was this inconclusive end to the cycle not unsatisfactory for the Byzantines?

Comparison of the Cycles of the Life of the Virgin

Middle-Byzantine church decorations usually compose the program of selected images for the cycle of the life of the Virgin in a larger section. A few existing monuments depict Mary's cycle on a large scale.⁽²⁶⁾ The Church of Panagia Phorbiotissa in Asinou, Cyprus (1105/06),⁽²⁷⁾ and the Church of St. Panteleimon in Nerezi (1164),⁽²⁸⁾ integrate the cycle of the Virgin into three scenes: the *Birth of the Virgin*, *Mary's Presentation to the Temple*, and the *Dormition of the Virgin*. The Church of Panagia tou Arakos in Lagoudera, Cyprus (1192)⁽²⁹⁾, adopts two scenes: *Mary's Presentation* and the *Dormition*.

(26) Exceptions from the twelfth century are, e.g., Ateni Sioni in Georgia, and Mirozh Monastery in Pskov. D. Mouriki, "Observations on the Style of the Wall Paintings of the Sion Church at Ateni, Georgia," rep. in: *Studies in Late Byzantine Painting*, London 1995, 443-71; V. Sarabianov, *Transfiguration Cathedral of the Mirozh Monastery*, Moscow 2002; V.D. Sarabianov, "Zhivopis serediny 1120-kh—nachala 1160-kh godov" (in Russian), in: L.I. Lifshits (ed.), *Istoriya Russkogo iskusstva*, tom 2/1: *Iskusstvo 20-60-kh godov XII veka*, Moscow 2012, 158-335.

(27) M. Sacopoulo, *Asinou en 1106, et sa contribution à l'iconographie*, Brussels 1966; A.W. Carr, A. Nikolaidès (eds.), *Asinou Across Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus*, Washington, D.C. 2013.

(28) I. Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi. Architecture, Programme, Patronage*, Wiesbaden 2000.

(29) See n.19.

Reinterpretation of the Life of the Virgin in the King's Church of Studenica Monastery

However, late Byzantine painting prefers a detailed narrative with a large number of characters in small subdivided sections. Multi-scene cycles of the life of the Virgin appear in secondary spaces such as the frieze under the cycle of Christ, the prothesis, or the narthex. Let us compare two typical examples with the cycle in the King's Church. Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid contains the earliest surviving frescoes by Michael and Eutychios (1294/95), and has a

Table: Selection of the Themes of the Life of the Virgin

King's Church [1314]	Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid [1294/95]	Chora Monastery [1316-21]
Refusal of the Offering by Joachim and Anna	Refusal of the Offering by Joachim and Anna	Refusal of the Offering by Joachim and Anna
Return of Joachim and Anna from the Temple	Return of Joachim and Anna from the Temple	Return of Joachim and Anna from the Temple
Prayer of Joachim	Prayer of Joachim	Prayer of Joachim
Prayer of Anna	Prayer of Anna	Prayer of Anna
Meeting of Joachim and Anna	Meeting of Joachim and Anna	Meeting of Joachim and Anna
Birth of the Virgin	Birth of the Virgin	Birth of the Virgin
Mary Caressed by Her Parents	Mary Caressed by Her Parents	Mary Caressed by Her Parents
Blessing of the Priests	Blessing of the Priests	Blessing of the Priests
	Mary's First Seven Steps	Mary's First Seven Steps
Mary's Presentation to the Temple	Mary's Presentation to the Temple	Mary's Presentation to the Temple
		Mary Nourished by the Angel
		Mary's Education
		Handing of the Scarlet Bunch of Wool to Mary
	Zacharias Praying before the Rods	Zacharias Praying before the Rods
Mary Entrusted to Joseph	Mary Entrusted to Joseph	Mary Entrusted to Joseph
		Joseph Bringing Mary Home
	Annunciation at the Well	Annunciation at the Well
		Joseph's Departure
	Joseph Reproaching Mary	Joseph Reproaching Mary
(Annunciation)	(Annunciation)	(Annunciation)
Trial of the Water	Trial of the Water	
	Joseph's Dream	Joseph's Dream
		Return from the Trial of the Water (?)
		Journey to Bethlehem

larger cycle of the life of the Virgin because of its greater architectural space. Chora Monastery in Istanbul (1316-21), a dated example in the Byzantine capital, includes the life cycle of the Virgin in the eso-narthex. By comparing these three depictions of the life of the Virgin, the selection of themes in the King's Church will clearly emerge (Table).

It is clear that depictions of the life of the Virgin in a larger church will select naturally more scenes. We can also see that the King's Church and Ohrid have about the same cycle, while Chora's cycle belongs to a different tradition. The difference between the King's Church and Ohrid is that the former omits some themes because of the size of the spaces.

Reinterpretation of the Life of the Virgin

We are now ready to discuss Michael and Eutybios's iconographical artifice. Let us examine the first and the last scenes in the life of the Virgin, arranged in the inverted U-shaped wall around the apse. They maintain a completely symmetrical composition, where the sanctuary doors are depicted, inside which Zacharias the priest stands. Zacharias bends his back slightly in both compositions, forming a mirror-image relationship. Behind him, the ciboria of the altars are visible. The shared depictions of the altar and Zacharias tell us that the two scenes are related. However, there are also differences: in the *Refusal of the Offering*, Joachim holds a pair of lambs and Anna holds a vase; in the *Trial of the Water*, Zacharias carries a vase.

The *Communion of the Apostles*, below the Virgin and the Child in the concha of the apse, connects the two scenes of the Virgin's life. On the left of the double windows, the communion of the bread headed by St. Peter is depicted, and on the right is the communion of the wine headed by St. John. When giving the bread and the wine to the disciples, Christ leans forward slightly, repeating the gesture of Zacharias in the Virgin's scenes. The repetition of the altars and priests (Zacharias and Christ the Priest) reinforces the link between the *Communion* and the two scenes of the Virgin's life.

If the lambs that Joachim tried to sacrifice to God are an allusion to Christ's Passion, then what does the liquid that Mary is made to drink by Zacharias in the last scene of her life symbolize? Just as Christ the priest gave the wine to St. John after noticing His destiny in the *Communion*, Zacharias, making Mary drink liquid from the vase, announced her son's death some thirty years later. As the cycle of Mary's life is based on the Protevangelium, it may seem inappropriate that the *Trial of the Water* is the final scene, in which Zacharias doubted Mary's faithfulness. However, if we consider that this scene at the same time foretells the Passion of Christ and emphasizes the dogma of the Eucharist, then it is exactly the right sub-

ject to occupy this place in the sanctuary.

So far we have examined the wall horizontally; the motives of the altar and the priest bending in front of it connected four scenes: *Refusal of the Offering by Joachim and Anna*, *Communion* (Wine), *Communion* (Bread), and the *Trial of the Water*. However, the ideas devised and communicated by the two painters did not end there. Next, let us look at the vertical relationship between above and below.

Above the *Refusal of the Offering*, Symeon the priest, whose hands are covered with his clothes, tries to hug the infant Christ in the right half of *Christ's Presentation* (**Fig.6**). Covering hands with clothes is a gesture symbolizing the reception of something from a higher person, and this motif is often used by the archangels who take the sacrifice of Christ. Symeon gives an ominous prophecy to the young mother on this occasion: as for thy own soul, it shall have a sword to pierce it (Lk 2:35). This means that the infant will pass away earlier than his mother.

In this case, the relationship between above and below is obvious; both depict old Jewish priests with white hair and beards. As mentioned above, Zacharias was killed by King Herod, who was angry because he could not find the Son of God, and Symeon was chosen as his successor (PE 24). Both priests lean forward; the direction of their postures is mirrored. However, their actions are diametrically opposed: Symeon receives the sacrifice of Christ, but Zacharias does not receive the lambs symbolizing the sacrifice of Christ, because the time has not yet come.

The iconographical interpretation in the King's Church relating Symeon and Zacharias as old Jewish priests was not the first such depiction; already in the late twelfth century, on the north wall of the church of Panagia tou Arakos in Lagoudera, Cyprus, Symeon *Theodochos* in the lower tier, and Zacharias the priest in *Mary's Presentation to the Temple* in the lunette above are connected both in form and meaning. In the icon Panagia Kykotissa in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai⁽³⁰⁾, executed around 1100, to the left and the right of the central Virgin with the Child, Symeon and Zacharias are placed symmetrically, constituting a complex program. Hence, the idea of associating two old priests to an iconographical program had been familiar to the Byzantine world, since at least the early twelfth century.

In the King's Church, the Astrapades continue this tradition; the images of the priests are particularly suitable for the decoration of the sanctuary.

In regards to the *Trial of the Water*, the final scene of the Virgin's life, four people, excluding Symeon, are depicted above in *Christ's Presentation* (**Fig.14**). The Infant Jesus, held by Mary, is followed by the prophetess Anna and Joseph. There is no altar traditionally depicted

in this subject, because the real church altar was incorporated into the composition. *Christ's Presentation to the Temple* foretells his Passion; Mary offers the sacrificial Infant towards both the altar and Symeon. Below that, the same Mary receives the wine of the Eucharist, a sign foretelling the Passion of Christ, from Zacharias the priest. We should remember that in the first scene of the *Refusal of the Offering*, Anna holds a vase while standing behind Joachim holding lambs. The lambs (Christ the sacrifice) and the vase (Eucharistic wine) were initially denied as sacrifice, because for the salvation of mankind by Christ, Mary, vessel of Christ, had to be born to the world. In the final scene, the pregnant Mary is given the wine and learns of her child's future death. Only by the death of Christ will the sins of mankind be redeemed.

Commissioned to paint the murals of the King's Church, Michael and Eutychios, with a tribute to the program of Studenica Monastery's prestigious Katholikon, presented *Christ's Presentation to the Temple* in a divided composition on the inverted U-shaped wall surrounding the apse. The architectural design of the narrow wall with an inverted U-shape around the apse may have been a deliberate intention of the monastery, and the painters could have been requested to follow the Katholikon's program. The painters placed the *Dormition of the Virgin* on the west wall, keeping to the normal decorative program of Byzantine churches rather than depicting the *Crucifixion* as in the Katholikon. Their main idea was to arrange the life of the Virgin in association with *Christ's Presentation to the Temple*.

Since the King's Church is a tiny chapel, the painters could not present a large cycle of the Virgin, as in Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid. Skipping several scenes, they started the Virgin's cycle from the *Refusal of the Offering* and ended with the *Trial of the Water*, with the sym-

(30) Γ. και Μ. Σωτηρίου, *Εικόνες της Μονής Σινᾶ*, Athens 1956-58, vol.1, figs.54-56; vol.2, 73-75; K. Weitzmann et al., *The Icon*, New York 1982 (Milano 1981), 17, 48; H. Belting, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich 1990, 326, 328, figs. 174, 178; M. Tatić-Djurić, "L'icône de la Vierge Kykkotissa," *Επετηρίδα κέντρου μελετών της Ιέρως μονής Κύκκου*, 1 (1990), 209-20; D. Mouriki, "Icons from 12th to the 15th Century," K.A. Manafis (ed.), *Sinai. Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, Athens 1990, 105, fig.19, 385 n.27; D. Mouriki, *Studies in Late Byzantine Painting*, London 1995, chap.VI: Thirteenth-Century Icon Painting in Cyprus, 341-442, esp. 359-361; A.W. Carr, "The Presentation of an Icon at Mount Sinai," *DChAE* 4-17 (Memorial Issue of D. Mouriki) (1993-94), 239-48; Ο. Γρατζίου, "Μεταμορφώσεις μιας θαυματουργής εικόνας. Σημειώσεις στις όνιμες παραλλαγές της Παναγίας του Κύκκου," *DChAE* 4-17 (1993-94), 317-30; M. Tatić-Djurić, "La typologie mariale de haute-Svanétie," Μ. Ασπρα-Βαρδαβάκη (ed.), *Λαμπηδών. Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη της Ντούλας Μουρίκη*, Athens 2003, vol.2, 805-14; Π. Α. Βοκοτόπουλος, *Βυζαντινές εικόνες (Ελληνική τέχνη)*, Athens 1995, figs.22-23, 196-97; H.C. Evans and W.D. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D.843-1261*, the Metropolitan Museum of Art 1997, no.244, 372; M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, Benaki Museum, Athens 2000, no.28, 314-16; Y. Piatnitsky et al., Exh.cat., *Sinai Byzantium Russia. Orthodox Art from Sixth to the Twentieth Century*, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg/ the Courtauld Gallery, London 2000, 110, cat.no. B90.

metrical mirror-image compositions. Thus, including the *Communion of the Apostles* in the same frieze, they reinterpreted the *Trial of the Water* as a premonition of the Eucharist (Fig.15). Simultaneously, the two subjects of the Virgin built a close relationship with *Christ's Presentation* placed above, and the sanctuary decoration program, suitable for the dogma of the Eucharist, was established.

If the vase presented by Zacharias the priest in the *Trial of the Water* suggests the Eucharistic wine, and the vase in the hands of Anna in the *Refusal of the Offering* symbolizes the denied offering of wine, how is another essential for the Eucharist, i.e., bread, treated? These Eucharistic breads are placed on the priests' table in the *Blessing of the Priests*. The bread that is handed to Mary by the angel in *Mary Nourished by the Angel* is nothing other than the bread of the sacrament.

Let us review the Eucharistic implications of the Virgin's life. The lambs offered by Joachim (Christ the sacrifice) and the vase in the hand of Anna (wine) were refused by Zacharias; for the Atonement to be fulfilled, the birth of Christ was indispensable, so we had to wait first for the *Birth of Mary*. Mary was born by the grace of God, she was blessed by three priests with the bread, the three-years-old Mary was presented to the temple, fed with the bread by the angel on the three-stepped altar (PE 7:3), and the altar door was now open. Eventually, Mary gave birth to the Son of God, and her innocence is proved by the *Trial of the Water* and *Joseph's Dream* according to the PE (14:2). However, according to the Astrapades' reinterpretation, Mary was given wine (instead of water) from the vase by Zacharias, and learned the destiny of her Son. Forty days after Christ's Nativity, in the *Presentation of Christ to the Temple*, Symeon predicted Christ's destiny. Mary's life proceeded with the premonition of the death of her Son.

The key to the well-elaborated decorative program exists in the symmetrical arrangement of the scenes, i.e., the mirror-image compositions of the *Refusal of the Offering* and the *Trial of the Water* on the east wall of the bema. This enabled the painters to create a relationship between the divided image of the *Hypapante* and the Marian iconographies. Their conception was never delivered from written texts, such as homilies of church fathers. In the sanctuary, inside the



Fig. 15. King's Church, Apse

real iconostasis of the church, the royal gate of the iconostasis is depicted in a self-referential manner. The altar of the synagogue, where Zacharia stands, is linked with the altar of the *Communion of the Apostles* on the same frieze. The images are related by form, and a new meaning is generated thereby; the way that is the new meaning is generated is unique to the sphere of painting.

The Old-Testament prefigurations share common narrative elements with Christian phenomena. Both *Isaac's Sacrifice by Abraham* and *Christ's Passion* have the same element of the sacrifice of son by father, and the common pattern of coming back to sunny places after three days of darkness connects *Jonah Swallowed by a Great Sea-Beast* with *Christ's Resurrection*. It goes without saying that this typological thinking is not based only on the similarity of the narrative patterns; Mary is called the second Eve not because of their similarity but because of causality: Mary will atone for the original sin committed by Eve, although, of course, there is a common pattern for both of them to lose their sons. The depiction of the events and people with typological relations of the Old and New Testaments is possible, but the typology is made up of textual stories, and it does not assume the existence of paintings; these typologies can be established without paintings.

The relationship between the life of the Virgin and Christ's life events is not a typological prefiguration connecting the Old and New Testaments. However, if we can call a universal way of thinking which connects different stories by the similarity of their patterns as typology in a broad sense, the reinterpretation of the life of the Virgin by the Astrapades clearly manifests typological thinking. This interpretation, not depending on texts but on the composition and motives of the paintings, can be called a visual typology.

Lastly, let us cite another example of visual typologies by Michael and Eutybios in the

King's Church. The *Birth of the Virgin* is connected with the *Nativity of Christ*, placed above, through the common motif of the baby's first bath. The *Nativity* includes another interesting detail: the depiction of the infant Jesus sleeping in a manger (Fig.16).



Fig. 16. King's Church, Nativity (detail)

The Infant Jesus was depicted twice in the Nativity scene to suggest the future baptism by the first bath and to show the Passion of Jesus sleeping in the manger. In other words, Jesus' double depiction in the *Nativity* is not only a representation of the

passage of time, but a summary of his future life. Whether this can be called visual typology is controversial, since the text alone can explain the relationship between the two events. However, the painting's ability to communicate is extremely high, because the stone manger, unsuitable for the cave barn, reminds us of the sarcophagus, and a child wrapped in cloth foretells Christ as a corpse. Furthermore, in the King's Church, the Virgin puts her cheeks with a sad expression on Jesus in the manger. Immediately upon seeing this, the congregations recall the *Lamentation of the Virgin* (*Threnos, Pietà*), the iconography of the mother nestling her cheek on the corpse of Jesus.

There are several sermons about Mary looking back on her son's childhood at the time of his death.⁽³¹⁾ Looking back on the past is a phenomenon that is possible only in language; painting speaks only of presence. However, the image may have a strong stimulatory effect on believers who have learned the basics of Christian iconography. In the theme of rejoicing in the birth of the Son of God, the mother frowns and puts her cheeks sadly on the child. This detail connects the *Nativity* with the *Lamentation of the Virgin*; Mary mourns in anticipation of the grief she will suffer thirty years later. Mary is thus a mother who can never escape the death of her child.

Michael and Eutybios, favorites of King Milutin, were painters with an excellent ability to create visual typology. It is not certain if Mary's sorrowful expression in the *Nativity* were derived from the ingenuity of the painters. However, the treatment of the life of the Virgin discussed above would not have been possible without its placement below *Christ's Presentation to the Temple*. The division of *Christ's Presentation* on the inverted U-shaped wall is a program peculiar to the Katholikon of Studenica Monastery; therefore, the decorative program of the King's Church, following that of the Katholikon, is a testament to the ingenuity of the painters on site. Although this is only a modest chapel, its paintings carry out Christian thinking as profound as a theological treatise.

【Acknowledgment】

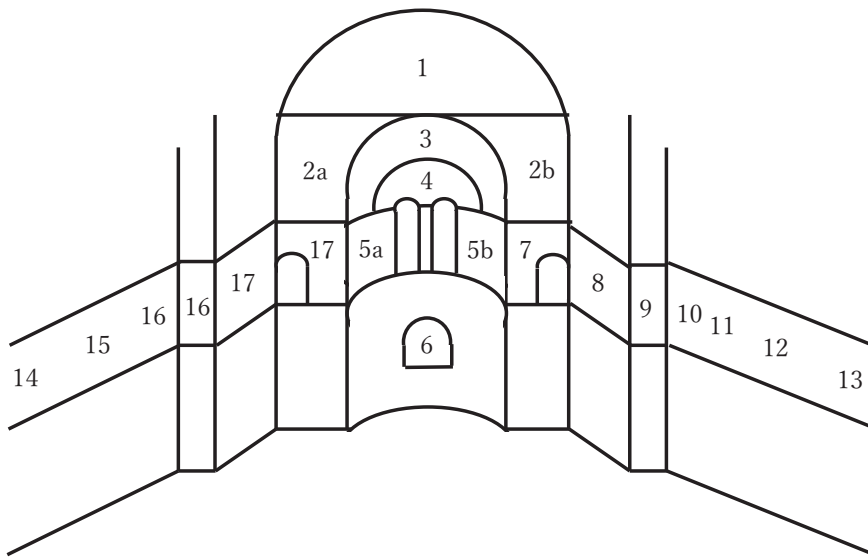
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【Photo Credit】

Fig. 15: Hirohumi SUGAWARA (Kanazawa University)

Figs. 1-14, 16: Author

(31) H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*, Princeton 1981, 91ff.



1: Annunciation

2a: Hypapante (except Zacharias)

2b: Hypapante (Zacharias)

3: Ascension

4: Virgin and Infant Jesus

5a: Communion of the Apostles (Bread)

5b: Communion of the Apostles (Wine)

6: Melismos

7: Refusal of the Offerings by Joachim and Anna

8: Return of Joachim and Anna from the Temple

9: Prayer of Joachim

10: Prayer of Anna

11: Meeting of Joachim and Anna

12: Birth of the Virgin

13: The Virgin Caressed by Her Parents

14: Blessing of the Priests

15: Hagia ton Hagion

16: The Virgin Entrusted to Joseph

17: Trial of the Water

Layout of the Scenes