

The Symbolical Investiture of the Archbishop Basil of Bulgaria at Melnik

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The heretofore variously explained fresco in the apse of the church at Melnik showing the apostle Peter, a bishop and Christ is now interpreted as the symbolical investiture of archbishop Basil. The interpretation is based on iconographic analysis taking into account the other frescoes in the apse as well as on the sources relating to the short-lived union of the Bulgarian (Tirnov) Archbishopric with Rome. The fresco has been dated between 1204 and 1207.

The church of St Nicholas at Melnik, Bulgaria, is now almost completely stripped of frescoes. They were in place until 1939/1340, when they were removed from the walls and transferred to the Archaeological Museum in Sofia.¹ By that time, they had been carefully photographed by N. Mavrodinov, G. Traychev and A. Stránský.² The latter discussed them in a few shorter articles and a study,³ while L. Mavrodinova devoted them a monograph.⁴

The first researchers of the half-ruined basilica found well-preserved frescoes in the east portion of the church and another few here and there on other walls. Their date and ktetor remain unknown, but they probably were commissioned by brothers Vladimir and Frangos mentioned in the prayer inscription on the southern pilaster in front of the apse, both with the title of sebastos: Δέησις(ις) τοῦ δου(λοῦ) τοῦ Θεοῦ σεβαστοῦ τοῦ Βλαδιμήρου ἀδελφοῦ σεβαστοῦ τοῦ Φράγγου.⁵ History knows nothing of them.⁶ Vladimir, to judge by his Slavic name, might have been a sebastos at the time Melnik was under Bulgarian rule (1195–1246). The style of the frescoes, showing features typical of the transition from the late Komnenian to the early plastic style of the thirteenth century, is fully consistent with the most recent dating of the inscription; moreover, the excavated Byzantine coins of the second half of the twelfth and the thirteenth century have confirmed that the church was built and frescoed about 1200.⁷ This dating of the frescoes has been usually based on their style,⁸ beginning with A. Stránský, who defined them as “à peu près à partir du commencement du XIII^e siècle”.⁹ Purely Byzantine in style, they also, a few exceptions set aside, conform to Byzantine iconography.¹⁰

The conch of the main apse showed the Virgin enthroned with the Christ Child in her lap. Below her was a bishop and, next to him, the consecration of a bishop involving Christ and the apostle Peter. Above the three-light window were objects from the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant, and south of the window, four church fathers: Basil, John Chrysostom, Gregory and Athanasios. The vault

showed the Ascension and two prophets: Jeremiah and Isaiah. In the lowest register in the sanctuary only the bishops on the northern side were visible, all shown facing and holding gospels: adjacent to the Vision of St Peter of Alexandria were Sts Antim, Antipa, Gregory Decapolite, Leo of Rome, (Cyril?) of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa. In the upper zone in the direction of the naos were St John the Martyr and St Demetrios, and above the latter, the aforementioned prayer inscription of sebastoi Vladimir and Frangos. The apse of the prothesis showed the bust of the Virgin Orant and the Melismos below her: two angels, clad as deacons, holding rhipidia in the form of palm leaves and bending towards the Christ Child. The apse was flanked by two facing deacons and, above them, the busts of a bishop and

¹ Two of them are at the National Art Gallery in the crypt of the church of St Alexander Nevsky, and some, meanwhile cleaned and conserved, are on display at the Archaeological Museum in Sofia, v. L. Prashkov, *Новооткритые фрески церкви Св. Николая в городе Мелник*, in: *XVIII^e Congrès international des études byzantines. Résumés des communications II*, Moscow 1991, 930–931.

² Most of the photographs taken by Traychev and Mavrodinov are published in: L. Mavrodinova, *Црквата Свети Никола при Мелник*, Sofia 1975, figs. 1, 6, 10–32, while Stránský's photos are kept at the National Museum in Belgrade.

³ A. Stránský, *Les ruines de l'église de St. Nicolas à Melnik*, in: *Atti del V Congresso internazionale di studi bizantini II*, Rome 1940, 422–427.

⁴ Mavrodinova, *Свети Никола*, 8–64 (with the earlier literature); *eadem*, *Nouvelles considérations du chevet de l'église Saint-Nicolas à Melnik*, in: *Actes du XV^e Congrès international d'études byzantines II. Art et archéologie. Communications 1*, Athens 1981, 427–438.

⁵ The inscription has been published many times, with only minor differences in reading. The most accurate reading is by V. Beševliev, *Spätgriechische und spätleitnische Inschriften aus Bulgarien*, Berlin 1964, 170 (№ 238), fig. 257, who has dated it to the thirteenth century. An even more precise dating, to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, has resulted from paleographic analysis by H. Andreev, *Към въпроса за датирването на ктиторийския надпис од епископската базилика “Св. Никола” в цитаделата на средновековния Мелник*, *Археология* XXXIX/1–2 (1999) 102–103.

⁶ The long-held view that sebastos Frangos and despotes Alexis Slav are one person has been conclusively discarded by I. Bozhilov, *Фамилията на Асеновци — генеалогия и просопография*, Sofia 1985, 95–98.

⁷ S. Georgieva, *Археологически проучвания на късносредновековната църква “Св. Никола” в Мелник*, *Археология* XV/2 (1974) 29.

⁸ N. Mavrodinov, *Старобългарското изкуство XI–XIII в.*, Sofia 1966, 35; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, 436; Mavrodinova, *Свети Никола*, 48–51; Sh. E. J. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries. Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary*, Seattle–London 1999, 96.

⁹ Stránský, *Les ruines*, 423; v. also Andreev, *Към въпроса за датирването*, 102–103 (between 1208 and 1209); only two scholars believe them to be of a later date: Th. Vlachos, *Geschichte der byzantinische Stadt Melenikon*, Thessaloniki 1969, 61 (after 1246), and V. J. Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien*, Munich 1976, 240, note 12 (about 1271).

¹⁰ Detailed descriptions can be found in Stránský, *Les ruines*, 424–426, and Mavrodinova, *Свети Никола*, 9–13.



Fig. 1. Central apse of the church of St Nicholas at Melnik*

St Stephen. On the south wall of the prothesis were saints and the Nativity above them. The opposite, north, wall also showed the remains of saints and scenes. In the apse of the diakonikon was the Deesis and, above it, the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. On the north wall was the mounted figure of St Prokopios, and on the south wall were Judas' Betrayal and Christ before the Cross. The west façade of the church also displayed a few frescoes.

This brief overview of the frescoes once adorning the church of St Nicholas, gleaned from descriptions and old photographs, shows that their programme, and to a lesser extent their iconography, generally conformed to the patterns adopted in the Byzantine art of the eleventh to thirteenth century. A careful study, however, reveals a number of distinctive features, only some of which will be highlighted: the absence from the sanctuary of the Communion of the Apostles and the Officiating Bishops, virtually inevitable in Orthodox churches in the early thirteenth century; the absence of holy bishops from the Melismos in the prothesis; and an unusual scene in the lowest register in the central apse showing the consecration of a bishop, quite lonely in medieval art in terms of both appearance and location. What lay behind these deviations from the established programme and iconography, and what link connects them, are the questions we shall try to answer here.

At Melnik, in the lowest register in the main apse — where, from the eleventh century on, bishops holding open scrolls were shown, at first turned towards the Hetoimasia, and then towards the Amnos on the altar — was painted,

above the high-set synthronon, the consecration of a bishop. All the characters depicted belong into a single theme, as observed long ago.¹¹ The first figure on the north is a facing bishop with long hair and three-pronged beard, whose name has not survived. He holds a gospel in his draped left hand, while pointing to the neighbouring figures with his right.¹² The westernmost figure in the group is the apostle Peter in a chiton, himation and sandals. His identifying inscription has not survived, but he is easily recognizable by his standard portrait traits — wavy hair and short rounded beard. He holds a rolled-up scroll in his left hand, and blesses the neighbouring bishop with his right, almost touching his head with his fingers. Slightly bent forward, the latter also lacks the inscription. His face is badly damaged and the only surviving detail is his long and pointed beard. Similarly to the other bishops, he wears a white sticharion with river-like stripes (potamoi), epitachelion, polystaurion and omophoros. He does not seem to have been haloed. His arms are crossed, and the right one is slightly raised towards Christ. Jesus Christ, in a dark himation and light-coloured chiton, is standing on a low supedaneum and blessing the bishop.¹³

* Photographs are reproduced by courtesy of the Archive of A. Stránský, National Museum, Belgrade.

¹¹ Stránský, *Les ruines*, 424.

¹² *Ibid.*, pl. CXXXVII, fig. 1; Mavrodinova, *Свету Никола*, figs. 13, 32; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, 434, fig. 6.

¹³ Stránský, *Les ruines*, pl. CXXXVII, fig. 1; Mavrodinova, *Свету Никола*, fig. 14; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, fig. 7.



Fig. 2. Symbolical investiture of the archbishop Basil of Bulgaria, St Nicholas, Melnik

Behind Christ's back is a large three-light window above which are painted two ornamented candlesticks and a two-handled jar accompanied by the inscriptions ἡ χρυσῆ and [ἡ] λυχνία respectively, and at the end, two tablets inscribed with: αἱ πλάκαις τῆς δι[αθήκης].¹⁴

South of the window are four bishops with their hands raised to chest level, the first of them at a distance from the rest.¹⁵ His inscription has not survived, but the characteristic long black beard identifies him as St Basil. The bishop next to him has also lost his identifying inscription, but his hollow cheeks, high forehead and short beard unmistakably point to St John Chrysostom. The inscriptions accompanying the other two bishops used to be legible: St Gregory (ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος), and the one at the end, St Athanasios (ὁ ἅγιος Ἀθανάσιος).

Its place of honour in the apse clearly shows that the scene of the consecration of a bishop was very important in Melnik's fresco programme. Moreover, it included a large number of protagonists: Christ and the apostle Peter performing the ceremony, and five holy bishops. If its many peculiarities are set aside for a moment, the scene may be said to reiterate in the main the scenes showing the ceremony of chirotony at the centre, and bishops, priests or people, blessing or acclaiming, on the sides.¹⁶ The iconography of such scenes in Byzantine art was fixed, and it only varied in details depending on which particular moment of the ceremony was depicted (laying on of hands, blessing, holding an open book over the head, etc). The old euchologia prescribed that the rite should be performed in the sanctuary

and attended by several bishops: one performed the rite of chirotony of the new bishop, another one prayed, and the rest hailed "aksios".¹⁷

The presence of St Peter at Melnik, however, is unusual in at least two respects. Firstly, he is never mentioned in the prescribed Byzantine rite of episcopal consecration. Secondly, this is the only instance of St Peter blessing a bishop from behind or laying a hand on his head. Peter's presence in the scenes of chirotony is exceptionally rare anyway. As a matter of fact, there is a single surviving example in Byzantine art: in the New Church at Tokale Kilise (tenth century) St Peter is shown standing in front of

¹⁴ Mavrodinova, *Свету Николо*, fig. 15; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, fig. 7. Our reading has been enhanced from the photographs from Stránský's archives kept at the National Museum in Belgrade. Stránský, *Les ruines*, 424, lists: "le livre, la feuille avec l'inscription et deux chandeliers dans lesquels brûle une petit flammèche blanche, et une cruche ornementale à deux anses dont les contours sont ornés de perles"; and Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, 434, cites "l'amphore contenant la manne céleste, un Livre de la Loi et, entre les fenêtres, deux candélabres-flambeaux".

¹⁵ Mavrodinova, *Свету Николо*, 15–16, fig. 10; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, fig. 8.

¹⁶ Ch. Walter, *Church Appointments in Byzantine Iconography*, *Eastern Churches Review* 10 (1978) 108–125; idem, *Un commentaire enluminé des Homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze*, *Cahiers archéologiques* 22 (1972) 126, fig. 14.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Goar, *Ἐδχολόγιον sive Rituale Graecorum*, Venice 1730, 249–252; A. Dmitrievsky, *Описание литургических рукописей II: Ἐδχολόγια*, Kiev 1901, 17, 59, 153, 993–1052. Iconographic explanations are given by Ch. Walter (*Church Appointments*, 121–122, and, idem, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London 1982, 88, 91–95, 130–136).



Fig. 3. Objects from the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant, St Nicholas, Melnik

the other apostles and consecrating the first seven deacons by laying both hands on the first one's head,¹⁸ as recorded in Acts 6, 6. All other examples are related to the West, such as the scenes in the crypt of the basilica at Aquileia and in St Mark's in Venice (twelfth century), where St Peter with a pastoral staff blesses bowing Hermagoras,¹⁹ or on the altarpiece from Count Paolo Gherli Collection (about 1275), where he ordains Veranus as deacon.²⁰ Other examples of the apostles consecrating the first bishops (Ananias, Mark or Timothy) are also found beyond the Byzantine orbit.²¹ The fresco from Melnik is completely lonely even in that St Peter is standing behind the bishop, and not before him as was customary and as shown in all other instances.

St Peter's position behind the bishop must mean that the investiture of the unknown bishop is in fact performed by Jesus Christ standing in front of him and blessing. To the best of our knowledge, this is yet another detail which makes the scene from Melnik completely lonely in medieval art. Christ is not depicted in the scenes of episcopal consecration, except for few cases of his ordaining St James, the Brother of the Lord, as the first bishop of Jerusalem, all of a late Byzantine date (cf. below). Therefore, the possibility should be allowed for that Christ such as shown at Melnik might have been borrowed from royal iconography: standing before the ruler, he performs investiture and by the gesture of blessing lays emphasis on the divine origin of his power.²²

The rest of the Melnik scene, behind Christ and above the three-light window, shows objects from the Ark of the Covenant: two candlesticks, a stamnos and the tablets of the Law. Not even these items are known from any other scene of chirotony. If the reason for their presence at Melnik remains unknown, the source from which they were borrowed as an iconographic detail can be reliably identified. It should be noted, however, that a carefully written study²³ has shown that in the early centuries of Christianity the Ark of

the Covenant was interpreted exclusively in ecclesial and Christological terms, and that such was also the meaning of its depictions in the visual arts. Latin patristic literature has never abandoned this interpretation, owing above all to Isidore of Seville and Bede.²⁴ Byzantine theologians, on the other hand, began from the sixth century to associate the Ark of the Covenant and its contents with the Virgin,²⁵ and from the twelfth century this interpretation became prevailing in Byzantine art.²⁶ Because of the relevance of Kosmas Indi-

¹⁸ G. de Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce* 1/2, Paris 1932, 355–356, pl. 82, 1; Walter, *Church Appointments*, 110, pl. 1; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 132, fig. 32.

¹⁹ G. Brusin, *Aquileia e Grado*, Padua 1964, 50–54; O. Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*, 1–2, Chicago–London 1984, 283, pl. 24, fig. 44. Pala d'Oro in Venice shows St Mark presenting Hermagoras to St Peter (*Il Tesoro di San Marco*, vol. 1: *La Pala d'Oro*, ed. H. R. Hahnloser, Florence 1965, pl. XXXIX).

²⁰ G. Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting*, Florence 1952, 1003, fig. 1128.

²¹ St Paul consecrates Timothy by laying his hand on his head at Santa Pudenziana (G. Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Central and South Italian School of Painting*, Florence 1965, fig. 1114); St Mark ordains Ananias in the same way on the so-called Grado Chair [K. Weitzmann, *The Ivories of the So-called Grado Chair*, DOP 26 (1972) Fig. 10]; on the Pala d'Oro St Peter appoints Mark as bishop by granting him the pastoral staff (*Il Tesoro di San Marco*, vol. 1, pl. XXXIX).

²² It would suffice to point to the research done by A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris 1936, 112–122. Such scenes are quite frequently found in wall painting, in illuminated manuscripts and charters, in ivories, seals and coins.

²³ E. Revel-Neher, *L'Arche d'alliance dans l'art juif et chrétien du second au dixième siècle*, Paris 1984.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62–67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 53–61; E. Revel-Neher, *On the Hypothetical Models of the Byzantine Iconography of the Ark of Covenant*, in: *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, Princeton 1995, 409–410.

²⁶ N. Bêljaev, *Le "Tabernacle du témoignage" dans la peinture balkanique du XIV^e siècle*, in: *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves. Les Balkans*,

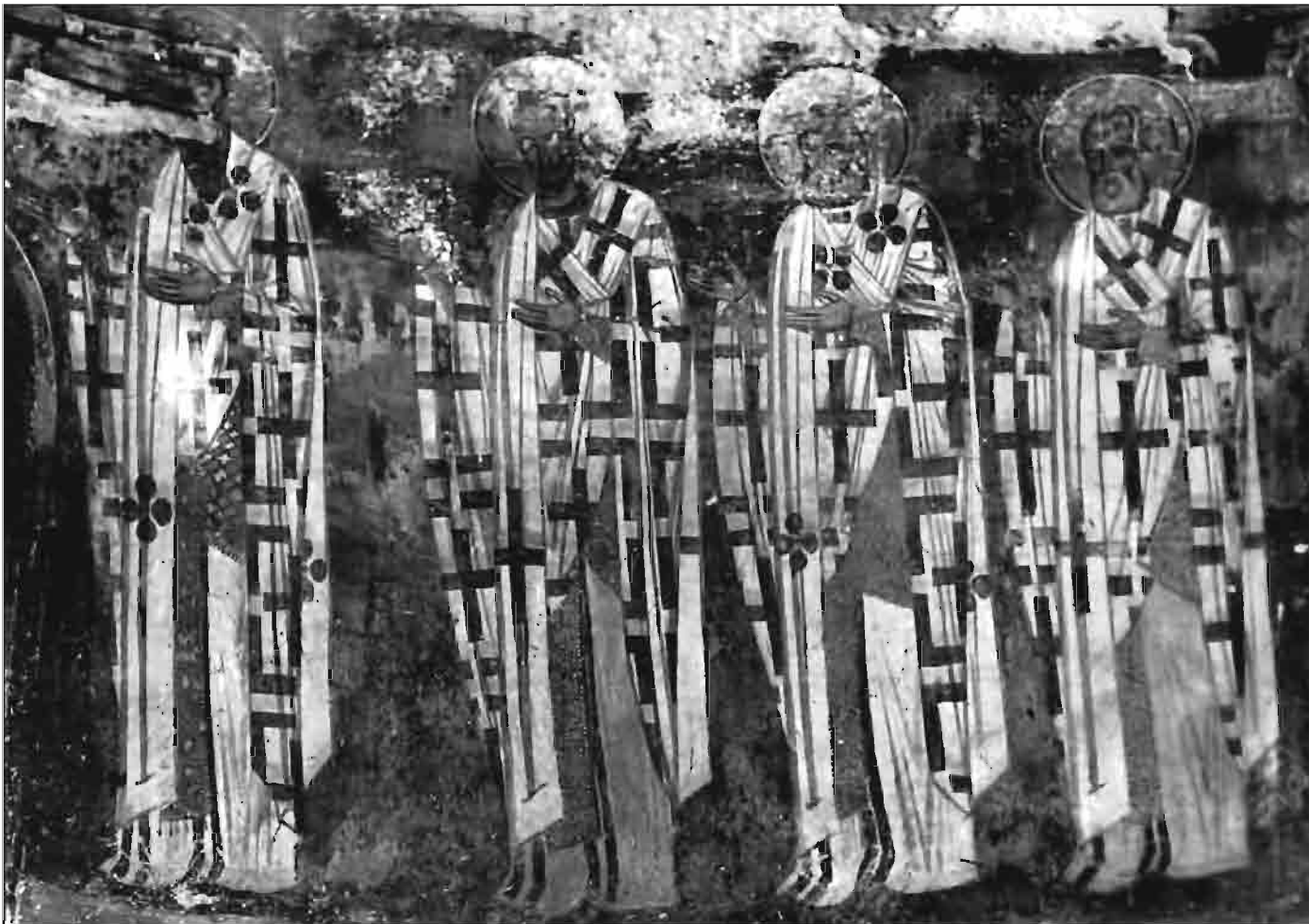


Fig. 4. Sts Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory and Athanasios, St Nicholas, Melnik

kopleustes' *Christian Topography* (sixth century) to the Melnik fresco, it should be noted that it interprets the Ark in cosmological and Christological terms, and so do the illuminations in its manuscript versions from the ninth (*Vat. gr. 699*) and the eleventh century (*Sin. gr. 1186* and *Laur. Plut. IX. 28*).²⁷ The same meaning is conveyed by the depictions of the Ark and its contents in the Byzantine octateuchs of the eleventh–twelfth century whose iconography was influenced by Kosmas' *Topography*.²⁸ However, it was already in the early twelfth-century Physiologus from the Evangelic School at Smirna (B–6), which contained excerpts from Kosmas' *Topography*, that these depictions were supplemented with images of the Virgin and Christ.²⁹ This iconography was further developed in Byzantine art, invariably carrying Mariological symbolism, but it found no echo in Melnik. The apse at Melnik did show the Virgin above the objects from the Ark, but there was no link between them because they were separated by a horizontal red border; indeed, the Ark was associated with Christ and included into the extensive depiction of the investiture of a bishop. The iconographic origin of the objects depicted can only be traced to the abovementioned illuminations from Kosmas' *Topography* (*Sin. gr. 1186*, fol. 77v and *Laur. Plut. IX. 28*, fol. 107r)³⁰ or to their version from the Smirna Physiologus, where the Ark of Covenant is represented symbolically, between the columns of an arcade, by the jar of manna, Aaron's rod and the tablets of the Law (fol. 177 or 179r), and accompanied by a text the quotations from which were used for the inscriptions at Melnik: Ἡ σκηνή, ἐν ἣ ἡ στάμνος, ἡ χρυσῆ, ἔχουσα τὸ μάννα, καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος Ἀρῶν ἡ βλαστήσασα, καὶ αἱ πλάκες τῆς διαθήκης.³¹ This is to say that it is the Ark of the Covenant that was depicted at Melnik:

it is not explicitly named as such and is somewhat simplified in comparison with the illuminations, but it is quite closely related to them in iconography and inscriptions.

Finally, Melnik shows four church fathers frequently depicted in the apses of Byzantine churches, Sts Basil, John

1/2, Paris 1930, 315–324; J. D. Ștefănescu, *L'illustration des liturgies dans l'art de Byzance et de l'Orient*, Brussels 1936, 135–139; Revel-Neher, *L'Arche d'alliance*, 44–47; Revel-Neher, *Hypothetical Models*, 405–411; M. Gligorijević-Maksimović, *Skinija u Dečanima. Poreklo i razvoj ikonografske teme*, in: *Dečani et l'art byzantin au milieu du XIV^e siècle*, Belgrade 1989, 319–334.

²⁷ C. Stornajolo, *Le miniature della Topographia cristiana di Cosma Indicopleuste. Codice Vaticano greco 699*, Milan 1908; *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne*, ed. W. Wolska-Conus, II, Paris 1970 (*Sources chrétiennes*, 159), 38–80.

²⁸ *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne*, I, ed. W. Wolska-Conus, Paris 1968 (SC, 141), 143–144; L. Brubaker, *The Tabernacle Miniatures of the Byzantine Octateuchs*, in: *Actes du XV^e Congrès internationale d'études byzantines II. Art et archéologie. Communications 1*, Athens 1981, 73–92; K. Weitzmann, M. Bernabò, *The Byzantine Octateuchs*, Princeton 1999, 175, 185, figs. 762–765, 812–814.

²⁹ J. Strzygowski, *Der Bilderkreis des griechischen Physiologus, des Kosmas Indikopleustes und Oktateuch nach Handschriften der Bibliothek zu Smyrna*, Leipzig 1899 (*Byzantinische Archiv*, 2), 54–64, pls. XXVI–XXVIII; *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne*, I, 94–99; O. E. Etingof, *Образ Богоматери. Очерки византийской иконографии XI–XIII веков*, Moscow 2000, 39–66.

³⁰ *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne*, I, fig. 8; II, 43–47; W. Wolska, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes. Théologie et sciences du VI^e siècle*, Paris 1962, 118, 119, pl. II. Here the tabernacle contains a table, a candlestick (λυχνία), Aaron's rod, a jar (στάμνος), tablets (αἱ πλάκες) and a brazen serpent.

³¹ Strzygowski, *Bilderkreis*, 59; *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne*, I, 99; H. L. Kessler, "Pictures Fertile with Truth". How Christians managed to make images of God without violating the second commandment, *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 49–50 (1991–92) pl. 9; Etingof, *Образ Богоматери*, 55, fig. 32.



Fig. 5. Melismos, north apse, St Nicholas, Melnik

Chrysostom, Gregory and Athanasios. All four seem to have been portrayed in that place for the first time in St Sophia at Ohrid (about 1054),³² and frontally. In the late eleventh century (the oldest known examples being the church of St John Chrysostom at Koutsoveni and the Virgin Eleoussa at Veljusa),³³ the holy bishops, holding scrolls inscribed with liturgical texts, began to turn towards the centre of the apse and the Amnos.³⁴ At Melnik, they are also shown in a three-quarter view, but only in one part of the apse, and without scrolls, but with their hands raised towards Christ who is consecrating a bishop. In that way, they assumed the role of anonymous clerics usually shown in the scenes of chirotony with their hands raised in acclamation.³⁵ This is another element that makes the Melnik fresco completely lonely in medieval art.

Generally and in few particular details, then, the chirotony scene at Melnik resembles older patterns, while some of its elements are borrowed from other themes of Byzantine art. The apostle Peter, Christ and the Ark pop in quite unexpectedly, while the church fathers take on a somewhat modified form so as to fit into the theme. Naturally enough, such an unusual composition has attracted considerable attention of the scholarly community, whose primary concern has been to identify the bishop being consecrated and then, based on that identification, to explain other elements of the scene. A great obstacle to them, and indeed to us, has been the loss of inscriptions and the considerable damage to the frescoes, many of which no longer exist.

At first the Melnik composition was interpreted as the bringing or "la présentation" of St Nicholas, the church's patron saint, to Christ by the apostle Peter,³⁶ but the interpretation was soon dismissed and instead the ordination of St James the Brother of the Lord was assumed.³⁷ A. Xyngopoulos rightfully dismissed the view of A. Stránský that the

apostle Peter presents St Nicholas to Christ, founding his dismissal on the fact that Byzantine art knows of no example of a saint presenting another saint, and taking him — as he put it — by the head; he also observed that the long-bearded bishop bore no resemblance to St Nicholas.³⁸ According to him, the chirotony at Melnik being performed by Christ, the bishop could be no other than St James, traditionally believed to have been appointed the first bishop of Jerusalem by Christ.³⁹ Scenes of the consecration of St James do occur in post-Byzantine icon painting, but their iconography considerably differs from that of the Melnik scene: wearing the omophorion and with his hands crossed, James is shown kneeling before Christ the Archpriest who is blessing him, while apostles or angels can be shown beside them.⁴⁰ Relying on the descriptions of the ceremony of episcopal consecration, Xyngopoulos interpreted the role of the apostle Peter as that of the chartophylax, the objects from the Ark of the Covenant as the gospel, the chalice and the inscribed sheet (περόν) on the altar table, and the four church fathers as painted according to the Apostolic Constitutions, where there is a reference to σιωπῆ προσευχομένων of the attending clergy.⁴¹ He assumed the iconography to be of Palestinian origin, and explained its appearance at Melnik as resulting from indirect oriental influences spreading to Macedonia via Thessalonike. What has remained unexplained, however, is why it appears at Melnik and nowhere else. Accepting Xyngopoulos's hypothesis about St James, Mavrodinova found the explanation for its appearance at Melnik in a sermon of Kosmas the Presbyter (tenth century) condemning the Bogomil rejection of liturgy,⁴² although this text in fact refers to the authors of the first liturgies, Peter, James and Basil, and only mentions the consecration of James by God in passing.

The main flaw in Xyngopoulos's interpretation, besides his many quite freely made assumptions, is in its being based on the descriptions of the rite of episcopal consecration from a late euchologion — № 362 (607) from the Patriarchate Library in Jerusalem (fourteenth century) — and a text of Simeon of Thessalonike (early fifteenth century).⁴³ These are accounts of the fourteenth-century and

³² R. Hamann-MacLean, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, Giessen 1963, plan 1, pl. 4; Gerstel, *Sacred Mysteries*, 83.

³³ Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 199.

³⁴ G. Babić, *Les discussions christologiques et la décoration des églises byzantines au XII^e siècle*, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 3 (1968) 368–386; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 199–214.

³⁵ Walter, *Church Appointments*, 121–122.

³⁶ Stránský, *Les ruines*, 424, pl. CXXX, fig 1.

³⁷ A. Xyngopoulos, *Παρατήρησεις εις τας τοιχογραφίας του Αγ. Νικολάου Μελενίκου*, *Επετήρις της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής Θεσσαλονίκης* 6 (1950) 115–118. This interpretation has been almost generally accepted, cf. Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken*, 240; A. Cituridu, *Zidno slikarstvo Svetog Pantelejmona u Solunu*, *Zograf* 6 (1975) 17; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, 434–436; Mavrodinova, *Свему Николу*, 14–18; Gerstel, *Sacred Mysteries*, 96–97.

³⁸ Xyngopoulos, *Παρατήρησεις*, 116–118.

³⁹ PG 42, col. 409 (Epiphanius of Cyprus); PG 61, col. 326 (John Chrysostom); H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, Brussels 1902, 155; Xyngopoulos, *Παρατήρησεις*, 119 and note 1.

⁴⁰ Xyngopoulos, *Παρατήρησεις*, 119 and note 2; Walter, *Church Appointments*, 110–111, fig. 1; M. Chadzidakis, *Εικόνες της Πάτμου*, Athens 1995, 139–140, figs. 147–148, assumes that the theme was inspired by later popular literature.

⁴¹ Xyngopoulos, *Παρατήρησεις*, 121–124.

⁴² Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, 434–436; Mavrodinova, *Свему Николу*, 18–21.

⁴³ PG 155, col. 396 sq; Dmitrievsky, *Εβχολόγια*, 299.

later rites⁴⁴ and cannot be used in interpreting the practices of earlier epochs and their visual depictions. Ch. Walter found the hypothesis unconvincing, as it failed to explain both the theme and its display in so important a place as the apse. The absence of similar scenes with St James in Byzantine art led him — similarly to Stránský — to reluctantly identify the bishop being consecrated as St Nicholas, based on the legend about the insignia being restored to St Nicholas by Christ, but also by the Virgin. In our turn we also note that the iconography of this legend was different and that the bishop depicted bears no resemblance to St Nicholas whatsoever. This “curious scene” in the apse of the church of St Nicholas at Melnik being completely lonely, Ch. Walter found its interpretation impossible.⁴⁵

It is exactly this loneliness of the scene, and a series of its curious details, that should take our thinking in a different direction. This primarily goes for the unexpected presence of the apostle Peter, which has not attracted much attention, but also for some other parts of the scene which, being unknown to the iconography of such themes in Byzantine art, call for reconsidering the view that the Melnik scene does not step out of the Eastern Orthodox framework and that it even communicates clear anti-heretical messages.⁴⁶ Stránský was the only to make a cursory and unsubstantiated remark that “la présentation de saint Nicholas à Christ dans l’autel montre les influences de Rome”,⁴⁷ which Xyngopoulos and Mavrodinova simply discarded without any explanation.⁴⁸ That Stránský was on the right track seems to be confirmed by a few other details: the absence of two central scenes in the sanctuary, Communion of the Apostles and Officiating Bishops, from the Great Schism of 1054 the most important visual expression of the Orthodox dogmatic and liturgical tenets in Byzantine churches;⁴⁹ Melnik shows the Melismos, but in the apse of the prothesis⁵⁰ and reduced to the Christ Child covered with an aer, on a simple bed, and two deacon angels. Obviously, the church fathers were deliberately omitted, given that the Orthodox rite of consecration of the holy gifts required their presence.⁵¹ The absence of themes otherwise compulsory for a Byzantine church, the Melismos without bishops, and the presence of St Peter at the consecration of a bishop, show clearly enough that Melnik’s programme and iconography depart from the Byzantine tradition, and under the influence of Roman Catholic doctrine.

Explanation may be sought for in political and ecclesiastical developments in Bulgaria in the early thirteenth century. It is well known that between 1199/1200 and 1207 there was an intensive correspondence (preserved almost in its entirety in the Regesta Vaticana) concerning union between Rome and the church in Bulgaria.⁵² Negotiations were motivated by the aspiration of pope Innocent III (1198–1216) for an eastward Roman Catholic expansion and the Bulgarian tsar Kaloyan’s (1197–1207) to secure from Rome the crown for himself, and the patriarchal title for the archbishop of Tirnovo. Without going into a detailed political account of the negotiations,⁵³ we shall remind that in late 1204 Kaloyan subordinated the Bulgarian church to Rome by his chrysobull,⁵⁴ which was then confirmed by archbishop Basil’s oath.⁵⁵ Kaloyan’s sudden death before the walls of Thessalonike on 8 November 1207, the reaction of his successor Boril (1207–1218) and the proclamation of the Synodikon of Orthodoxy at the Council of Tirnovo on 11 February 1211, marked the end of union with Rome, although it formally continued until 1232.⁵⁶ At the Council

of Tirnovo, almost all bishops who had supported archbishop Basil’s union now took sides with the Orthodox bishops.

From what is known, the nature of the union was primarily hierarchical and canonical. The Bulgarian church did become subordinate to Rome, but dogmatic, liturgical and ritual issues are generally believed to have been left for a later phase of negotiations.⁵⁷ There are sufficient indications, however, that Innocent III raised these questions straight away. Namely, the pope permitted chrism to be prepared according to the Roman rite,⁵⁸ and the Bulgarian archbishop, metropolitans and bishops were anointed because the Orthodox rite according to which they had been consecrated did not involve anointing.⁵⁹ The pope authorized his legates to rectify spiritual affairs in Bulgaria and to instruct the metropolitans, clerics and people in the Petrine doctrine (“eius sequamini doctrinam et formam, cui Dominus totius ecclesie magisterium contulit et primatum”).⁶⁰ Archbishop Basil himself requested of the pope to introduce the church order (“ut dispenses et adimpleas ordinem ecclesiasticum”) and to instruct him in anointing, baptism and other matters.⁶¹ The pope added: “si forsitan dubitaveris, cum a te fuerimus requisiti, fraternitatem tuam plenius instruemus.”⁶² Undoubtedly, archbishop Basil received instruction not only

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Darrouzès, *Recherche sur ὁφίκτια de l’Eglise byzantine*, Paris 1970, 149–153; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 132–133 and note 94.

⁴⁵ Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 132–133 and note 94.

⁴⁶ Xyngopoulos, *Παρατήρησεις*, 128; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, 436; eadem, *Свету Николоа*, 18–21, 51–53.

⁴⁷ Stránský, *Les ruines*, 426. Western influences are Stránský’s explanation for the image of pope Leo in the nave and the candlestick and jar in the apse (*ibid.*, 426–427).

⁴⁸ Cf. note 46 above.

⁴⁹ A. Lidov, *Byzantine Church Decoration and the Great Schism of 1054*, *Byzantion* 68 (1998) 383–389, 392–397. The introduction of these scenes into the programme of Byzantine churches used to be explained differently, cf. Babić, *Discussions christologiques*, 368–396; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 184–189, 198–217.

⁵⁰ Stránský, *Les ruines*, 424, pl. CXXXVIII; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, 428–429, fig. 3; Mavrodinova, *Свету Николоа*, 21–23, figs. 16–17; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 212–213.

⁵¹ The theme may be connected with the epiclesis prayer (S. Salaville, *Epiclesse*, in: *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* V, Paris 1931, col. 194–300), i. e. the invocation of the Holy Spirit to consecrate the offering gifts (cf. Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 209, note 227; idem, *The Christ Child on the Altar in the Radoslav Narthex: A Learned or a Popular Theme?*, in: *Studonica et l’art byzantin autour de l’année 1200*, Belgrade 1988, 219–220). The epiclesis is not known in or recognized by the Roman Catholic Church.

⁵² The correspondence has been published several times; the best critical edition is used here: I. Duichev, *Преписката на папа Иннокентия III с България*, *Годишник на Софийския университет. Историко-филологически факултет* 38/3 (1941/1942) 21–77.

⁵³ On this union, v. good studies by V. N. Zlatarski, *История на българската държава през средните векове* III, Sofia 1940, 149–211; P. Petrov, *Унията между България и римската църква през 1204 г. и четвъртият кръстоносен поход*, *Исторически преглед* XI/2 (1955) 35–57; V. Gjuzev, *Das Papstum und Bulgarien im Mittelalter (9.–14. Jahrhundert)*, *Bulgarian Historical Review* V/1 (1977) 34–58; cf. also Duichev, *Преписката*, 78–116, and I. Bozhilov, *Преписката на България с папа Иннокентий III*, in: *Държава и църква през XIII век*, Sofia 1999, 106–119.

⁵⁴ Duichev, *Преписката*, 43–44.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

⁵⁶ It was as early as 19 April 1213 that pope Innocent III invited the primate of Bulgaria to attend the Lateran Council in 1215 (Gjuzev, *Papstum und Bulgarien*, 44; I. Bozhilov, *Седем етюди по средновековна история*, Sofia 1995, 181–182).

⁵⁷ Zlatarski, *История*, 206–207; Petrov, *Унията*, 56.

⁵⁸ Duichev, *Преписката*, 38.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33, 51–52.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 43.

from the pope, but also from cardinal Leo and other papal legates in Bulgaria.⁶³ It may be assumed, therefore, that it was their intervention that led to the omission from the fresco programme at Melnik of typically Orthodox themes, and to the creation of the curious scene of a bishop being invested by Jesus Christ through the mediation of St Peter.

In light of these facts, the bishop is likely to have been a contemporary of the union events. Namely, as has been shown, this can be neither St Nicholas nor the apostle James; and this is unlikely to be the bishop of Melnik,⁶⁴ because such a dignitary is mentioned neither in the correspondence between Innocent III and the Bulgarians nor anywhere else in the early thirteenth century.⁶⁵ Therefore, this should rather be archbishop Basil, not only because of the role he played in the union affair, but also because the investiture is being performed by Jesus Christ and the apostle Peter. Another clue pointing to archbishop Basil is the figure of St Basil the Great at the head of, and somewhat apart from, the holy bishops on the other side of the apse.⁶⁶ Archbishop Basil had, of course, been consecrated according to the Orthodox rite, and in 1204, the year of his appointment as archbishop and primate of all Bulgaria and Vlachia,⁶⁷ the procedure was supplemented by anointing and the bestowal of the pallium and other usual insignia of Roman Catholic prelates. In the name of the pope, the ceremony was performed by cardinal Leo. Given that the ceremony in the fresco is being performed by the apostle Peter in the name of Christ, the scene is painted and understood as the symbolical investiture of a new primate.

Such a scene, with its iconographical elements borrowed from earlier Byzantine art and somewhat modified, demonstrates the origin of spiritual authority in Christ, which now, through the apostle Peter, is being invested into archbishop Basil. Apparently, the exact source of this composition and its meaning may be identified: the privilege of pope Innocent III to the archbishop of Timovo sent from Anagni and dated 25 February 1204.⁶⁸

The pope begins the privilege with an exposition of Christ as the beginning of all hierarchy: “Rex regum et Dominus dominantium, Ihesus Christus, sacerdos in eternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech, cui dedit omnia pater in manu.”⁶⁹ Christ established St Peter as his deputy: “Summum apostolice sedis et ecclesie Romane pontificem, quem in beato Petro sibi vicarium ordinavit”, thereby bestowing on him primacy and all authority,⁷⁰ which is extensively elaborated by Innocent III in his privilege. The apostle Peter transmitted to his successors the authority conferred upon him by Christ. Accordingly, as a successor in the Petrine primacy, pope Innocent assumes Peter’s role and care for the Bulgarian people (“cum ex precepto Domini oves eius pascere teneamur, populis Bulgarorum et Blachorum, qui multo iam tempore ab uberibus matris sue alienate fuerunt, in spiritualibus et temporalibus paterna sollicitudine providere volentes”),⁷¹ which gives him the right to appoint Basil as primate of the Timovo church: “Te quoque in regno Bulgarorum et Blachorum primatem statuimus et ecclesie Trinovitane presenti privilegio auctoritatem concedimus primatie.”⁷² The privilege contains various instructions as to the coronation of the tsar, the consecration of bishops, anointing, baptism, confirmation etc.

Whether of his own volition or instructed by cardinal Leo, archbishop Basil decided to depict at Melnik not the usual scene but a more extensive symbolical representation of his investiture as primate of Bulgaria,⁷³ probably encouraged by Innocent III’s privilege. In its extensive intro-

duction the pope expounded the Petrine doctrine, which obviously convinced the Bulgarian archbishop that he had been right in linking himself to Rome. Transposed into image, it expounded the origin of sacerdotal authority in Christ, its transmission to St Peter and, through him, to his successors, hence authorized to appoint new bishops. The Greek painters — certainly not fully on their own — took Byzantine patterns and modified them slightly so as to conform to a different context: the investiture of a new primate, archbishop Basil.

Innocent III’s privilege now makes it possible to explain some other curious elements of the Melnik fresco. The papal document begins with the words about Christ as King of Kings (probably the same as in the bull to tsar Kalojan) and as priest according to the order of Melchisedech (Ps. 109, 4; Hebrews 6, 20 and 7, 7–9). Christ brings together the Old and New Testament priesthoods and transforms them fundamentally, he is the beginning of all hierarchy and through him grace is transmitted to all those consecrated to orders. Both the Eastern and Western churches saw Melchisedech as a prefiguration of Jesus Christ.⁷⁴ In the Roman Catholic Church, Psalm 109 was sung at the consecration of bishops,⁷⁵ which probably inspired Innocent III to choose it for the opening of his privilege to the Bulgarian archbishop.⁷⁶ It was therefore Christ the Archpriest that was to be depicted at Melnik. Considering, however, that his iconography had not been fully developed in Byzantine art,⁷⁷ he

⁶³ This is tentatively allowed also by Bozhilov, *Cedem etiodu*, 168 (“Could some oral agreements not be hiding behind these documents, possibly mediated by cardinal Leo?”).

⁶⁴ A bishop of Melnik is first mentioned between 1170 and 1179, cf. H. Gelzer, *Ungedruckte und ungenügend veröffentlichte Texte der Notitiae episcopatum*, München 1901 (Abhandlungen der philos.-philol. Classe der Kgl. Bayer. Akad. der Wissenschaften, XXI/3), 587.

⁶⁵ The pope sent the pallium to the metropolitans of Velbuzhd and Preslav and the bishops of Braničevo, Skoplje, Prizren, Niš and Vidin, and they were anointed according to the Roman Catholic rite.

⁶⁶ A. Stránský, *Remarques sur la peinture du Moyen âge en Bulgarie, en Grèce et en Albanie*, Actes du IVe Congrès internationale des études byzantines, in: *Известия на Българския археологически институт X* (1936) fig. 3; Mavrodinova, *Nouvelles considérations*, fig. 7; Mavrodinova, *Свети Николо*, fig. 10.

⁶⁷ Vlachia featuring in the titles of tsar and archbishop suggests that Bulgaria extended north of the Danube and absorbed some Vlachian areas.

⁶⁸ Duychev, *Пренуцката*, 34–39. Basil received the privilege together with the ring, epistles and instructions, and was anointed and established as primate on 7 November 1204.

⁶⁹ Duychev, *Пренуцката*, 34 and 37.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷³ It is not known how exactly the ceremony at Timovo looked like. In a letter to the pope, Basil describes his being inducted a primate by cardinal Leo: “... et portavit universam plenitudinem patriarchalis dignitatis et paramenta omnia, que mihi a vestra magna sanctitate fuerunt delegata; tradidit similiter et anulum et privilegium et scripta et instructiones. Et precepto vestre sanctitatis unxit me crismate, mihi benedicens, et consecravit me in patriarcham mense novembris septimo die” (Duychev, *Пренуцката*, 67). For basic information on episcopal consecration in the Roman Catholic Church, v. P. de Puniet, *Consécration épiscopale*, *Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* III/2, Paris 1914, col. 2579–2604.

⁷⁴ Cf. G. Bardy, *Melchisedech dans la tradition patristique*, *Revue biblique* 35 (1926) 496–509; 36 (1927) 25–45; E. Čarnić, *Архујеј њо педу Мелхиседекову*, *Богословље XVII* (1973) 17–42; *XVIII* (1974) 17–46.

⁷⁵ PL 54, col. 145 (Leo the Great); P. de Puniet, *op. cit.*, col. 2602. During the ceremony a passage from Matthew (16, 16–19) on Peter’s faith and primacy was also read.

⁷⁶ The pope articulated a similar idea in yet another place: “Verum in Novo Testamento Christus ipse majores et minores sacerdotes instituit”, PL 217, col. 777 and col. 778–779.

⁷⁷ In eleventh and twelfth century painting Christ as a priest was tonsured: D. Aynalov, *Новый иконографический образ Христа*, Semi-

was depicted in front of or in the Ark of the Covenant, certainly according to the Epistle to Hebrews (5–10, especially 9, 11–12, 24–25), in order that his role as high priest would be clearly shown.⁷⁸ Models for the Ark of the Covenant were found in earlier Byzantine iconography. Other elements of the composition were also modified to suit the subject. The posture of archbishop Basil and the entire investiture resemble the usual scenes of episcopal consecration, the only exception being the apostle Peter introduced into the scene as Christ's vicar who, in the words of Innocent III, had been given the authority and responsibility to initiate others into the legacy he had been entrusted with. Finally, the church fathers, introduced long before into the programmes of the apses of Byzantine churches, assume a new meaning here, their poses and raised arms substituting those acclaiming a new bishop. Standing apart from the group is St Basil the Great, undoubtedly as Bulgarian archbishop's namesake and patron saint. All this resulted in a curious scene the singularity of which only becomes explainable if viewed against a background of union between the Bulgarian and Roman churches. Hence it should be dated between 1204 and 1207, as Melnik's other frescoes.

The union was too short-lived — a few years — to have been able to make itself felt more strongly in art, even at Melnik. The omission of some distinctly Orthodox compositions seems to suggest that it impinged upon certain dogmatic and liturgical aspects. The Bulgarian side does not seem to have intended a complete break with Orthodox practices; to judge by the words from tsar Kaloyan's bull, all clergy in his country will be subordinate to Rome, but they will “teneant legem consuetudinem et obsequium, quas tenuerunt beate memorie imperatores totius Bulgarie et Vlachie prisci illi nostri predecessores et nos eodem modo vestigia eorum imitantes”.⁷⁹ This appears to find support in a

letter of Demetrios Chomaten, bishop of Ohrid (1204). Referring to Bulgarian bishops, he says that, despite their link with Rome, they are not heretics but Orthodox, consecrated according to the Orthodox rite.⁸⁰ The Synod of the Ohrid Archbishopric, however, was much harsher, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate had never revoked its condemnation of Basil's action. Not even Basil seems to have renounced Orthodoxy altogether. In the aftermath of these events, he withdrew to Mount Athos and he died there.⁸¹ This may be the reason that the scene at Melnik showed a symbolical investiture, general and neutral enough to be acceptable both for the Roman Catholic and for the Orthodox, rather than Basil's literal consecration by the papal legate cardinal Leo. And this may explain why the fresco was not destroyed or repainted in 1246, when a Greek bishop entered the city and the church of St Nicholas.

narium Kondakovianum II (1928) 19–23; A. M. Lidov, *Христос-священник в иконографических программах XI–XII веков*, VV 55 (1994) 187–192. Christ did not begin to be painted with a sakkos and other high-priest insignia until the fourteenth century, cf. Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 214 sq; T. Papamastorakis, *Η μορφή του Χριστού — Μεγάλου Αρχιερέα*, ΔΧΑΕ 17 (1993–1994) 67–76.

⁷⁸ As far as we know, the only representation of Christ in the Ark of the Covenant in the Byzantine world is painted in the monastery church of Zarzma, Georgia, in the fourteenth century, cf. L. Evseeva, *Peinture murale du XIV^e siècle dans l'église du monastère Zarzma*, Tbilisi 1977, 4–6. Elsewhere, the theme was rigorously revised, cf. B. Todić, *Tradition et innovation dans le programme et l'iconographie des fresques de Dečani*, in: *Dečani et l'art byzantin au milieu du XIV^e siècle*, Belgrade 1989, 260–261.

⁷⁹ Dyuichev, *Препишката*, 44.

⁸⁰ P. Nikov, *Принос към историческото изворопознание на България и към историята на българската църква*, Списание на Българската академия на науките XX (1922) 48; Gjuzelev, *Papstum und Bulgarien*, 45.

⁸¹ Zlatarski, *История*, 362–365; Gjuzelev, *Papstum und Bulgarien*, 46–47.

Симболична инвестира бугарског архиепископа Василија у Мелнику

Бранислав Тодић

У цркви Светог Николе у Мелнику (Бугарска) готово да више нема фресака. Било их је, међутим, све до 1939–1940. године, када су скинуте са зидова и пренете у Софију; већина боље сачуваних данас се налази у Археолошком музеју. Претпоставља се да је ктитор живописа био севаст Владимир, брат севаста Франгоса, судећи по молитвеном натпису на јужном пиластру испред олтара. Фреске показују црте типичне за прелазак од каснокомнинског ка раном пластичном сликарству XIII века, а и на основу других, посредних података могу се датовати у време око 1200. године. Њихов програм и, у мањој мери,

иконографија у начелу се држе образаца усвојених у византијској уметности до почетка XIII века. Међу њима се нарочито истиче сцена рукополагања неког епископа у најнижој зони апсиде; по изгледу и месту на којем се налази потпуно је усамљена у средњовековној уметности. Натписи на композицији нису сачувани. У северном делу апсиде, поред непознатог светог епископа, чеоно окренутог, представљен је апостол Петар (препознаје се по одећи и особеној физиономији); он благосиља или додирује главу архијереја до себе. Затечен је оштећеног лица, изгледа без ореола око главе, са дугом и оштро завршеном

брадом; благо је погнут и руке су му прекрштене, док је десну, у гесту обраћања, мало подигао према Христу. Христос стоји испред њега, на ниском супеданеуму, и благосиља га. С том представом рукополагања епископа повезани су предмети из Старозаветне скиније (свећњак, ваза за ману и две плоче Завета), насликани у средишту апсиде, изнад трифоре, као и ликови четворице светих архијереја с друге стране прозора, окренутих према сцени рукополагања епископа и с рукама подигнутим до висине груди.

Не само што је целокупна сликана декорација најнижег дела апсиде сасвим усамљена у византијској и другој средњовековној уметности већ су и њени делови по својој иконографији доста необични. Хиротонија епископа не личи на друге представе у византијском сликарству, највише због лика апостола Петра, док је Христос тај који својим благословом обавља инвестиру над епископом. Нема назнака да предмети из Скиније носе Богородичину симболику, како је то готово увек у византијској уметности. Најзад, свети Василије, Јован Златоусти, Григорије и Атанасије нису приказани из литургијских разлога, већ се укључују у догађај са устоличавањем непознатог епископа. Због свих тих посебности разумљиво је што је фреска из Мелника привлачила пажњу и што је објашњавана на различите начине. Аутор ове студије одбацује покушаје да се она протумачи као рукополагање светог Николе или светог Јакова за првог јерусалимског епископа. Њена изузетност и њене необичне појединости упутиле су размишљања у другом смеру. Подстицај је пружио А. Странски, узгредним запажањем да се на мелничкој слици виде утицаји из Рима. Ово се запажање може оснажити тиме што су у Мелнику изостављени Причешће апостола и Служба светих отаца, теме које су после велике схизме 1054. године биле кључне за исказивање православних и литургијских опредељења у византијским храмовима, док у Мелизмосу у апсиди протезиса нису насликани црквени оци, неопходни да би се посвећење светих дарова представило на православан начин. Све то, уз појаву лика апостола Петра у рукополагању непознатог епископа, показује да су програм и иконографија фресака у Мелнику знатно одступили од византијске традиције, и то, чини се, заиста под утицајем римокатоличке доктрине.

Објашњење за таква одступања потражено је у политичким и црквеним збивањима у Бугарској почетком XIII века и у склапању уније између Рима и Бугарске цркве. Наиме, цар Калојан је крајем 1204. цркву у Бугарској потчинио Риму, а то је својом заклетвом потврдио и трновски архиепископ Василије. Образлажући мишљење да та краткотрајна унија (од 1204. до 1211, формално до 1232) није имала само хијерархијско-канонски карактер већ да је покренула и догматска, литургијска и питања обреда, па се могла одразити и у црквеном живопису, аутор ове студије објашњава изостављање неопходних православних тема у Мелнику унионистичким разлозима; тако је протумачена и необична слика посвећења епископа, над којим, посред-

ством апостола Петра, инвестиру обавља Исус Христос. У епископу се препознаје бугарски архиепископ Василије, који је био миропомазан 1204. и који је примио палијум и друга обележја уобичајена за римокатоличке прелате, док је обред, у име папе Инокентија III, обавио кардинал Лав. Пошто церемонију устоличења на фресци у Мелнику обавља Христос посредством апостола Петра, она је схваћена и приказана као симболична инвестира новог примаса. Таквом представом — уз помоћ иконографије чији су елементи позајмљени из старије византијске уметности и измењени колико је то било потребно — показано је порекло духовне власти у Христу, власти која се, по учењу о примату, преко апостола Петра предаје Василију, архиепископу и примасу целе Бугарске. Може се тачно показати и одакле је стигао подстицај за такву композицију: био је то привилегијум папе Инокентија III, упућен трновском архиепископу Василију из Анађија 25. фебруара 1204. године.

Текстом привилегијума могу се објаснити скоро сви наизглед необични делови фреске у Мелнику. Папа је своју исправу започео речима о Христу Цару царева и свештенику по чину Мелхиседекову (Пс 109, 4; Јев 6, 20; 7, 7–9). Христос спаја свештенство *Старог* и *Новог завета* и суштински га преображава; он је почетак сваке хијерархије и преко њега благодат прелази на све оне који се посвећују у свештеничка звања. Мелхиседек је и у Западној и у Источној цркви схватан као слика Исуса Христа. У Римокатоличкој цркви се приликом посвећења епископа певао 109. псалом, што је вероватно подстакло Инокентија III да њиме започне свој привилегијум бугарском архиепископу. У Мелнику је, дакле, требало приказати Христа Великог архијереја, али је он — пошто његова иконографија (којом су се ту служили грчки сликари) још није била довољно разрађена у византијској уметности — насликан испред Скиније или у њој, по *Посланици Јеврејима* (5–10, посебно 11, 11–12, 24–25), како би се јасно истакла његова првосвештеничка улога. За представу Скиније обрасци су нађени у старијој византијској уметности и, незнатно измењени, уведени су у нов контекст слике. И остали њени елементи прилагођени су теми. Читава симболична инвестира архиепископа Василија подсећа на уобичајене сцене посвећења, али је у њу введен апостол Петар као Христов викар, који је — по речима папе Инокентија — примио власт и обавезу да уводи и друге учеснике у наслеђе које му је поверено. Најзад, у тему су укључени и црквени оци, сликани већ дуго у апсидама византијских храмова, с тим што су добили другачији изглед и друго значење јер су заменили оне који акламују новог архијереја. Међу њима је издвојен свети Василије, свакако као имењак бугарског архиепископа.

Све је то довело до настанка једне необичне представе, чија се изузетност може објашњавати само посебним околностима у доба стварања уније између Бугарске и Римске цркве, па би је — као и остале фреске у Мелнику — требало датовати у време између 1204. и 1207, најкасније у 1211. годину.