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THE ICON OF TRPO ZOGRAPH FROM 1806 AT THE CHURCH OF THE DORMITION OF THE VIRGIN IN BOTUN*

Keywords: *icon, zograf Trpo, Mother of God*

Abstract: *The text studies the icon of the Mother of God with Christ painted by zograf Trpo from Korçe. According to the preserved donors' inscription, the icon was painted in the year of 1806. This icon is one of the rare few signed icons by Trpo which is now preserved at the church of the Mother of God in the village of Botun, Ohrid.*

The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Botun, despite its relatively small dimensions, contains interesting, thematic and iconographical wall-paintings created in two chronological phases, fully visible through the icon painting of Avram Dičov and the frescoes of the brothers Krste Nikolov and Kosto Nikolov from Lazaropole.

In addition to Avram Dičov's icons, there are two older icons in the church, the proskinetary icon of the Mother of God with Christ from 1806 and the hagiographic icon of St. John the Baptist from 1793.

Special attention is drawn to the icon of the Virgin (**Μ̅Ρ̅ Θ̅Ѵ̅**) with Christ (**Ι̅Ϲ̅ Χ̅Ϲ̅**) sat on a throne decorated with palmettos and floral ornaments, stylized birds and angel representations (fig. 1). Particularly impressive is the representation of the Virgin who carries Christ, embracing him with one hand and calmly rests the other at Christ's feet. Her ochre-red maphorion is decorated along the edges with golden-yellow piping and rhomboid motifs resembling precious stones, while the right sleeve below the piping is embroidered with golden prependules that descend the length of the sleeve. Jesus Christ is represented in a white chiton and a red himation with the sphere in his left hand divided by a golden band into three fields symbolizing the universe, day, and night, and with his right hand he blesses.

The solemn, parade, but tight and stiff appearance of the Mother of God and Christ, the wide-open eyes underlined with a thin line and emphasized shadow, the light green incarnate with mild red shades and tones, the folds of the sumptuous maphorion that follow the line of the body and hand contribute to an emphasized monumentality. The desire for decorative forms is expressed by painting the stars on the maphorion, as well as the thin golden prependules on the upper arm of the right sleeve. In the upper part of the icon, carried on a cloud, the Archangels Gabriel and Michael are facing the Virgin with open scrolls in one hand and blessing with the other.

Recently, during the conservation work and the cleaning of the icon, the donors' inscription was also discovered, which only confirmed our previously expressed thoughts about the painter who painted the icon, and which, due to its stylistic and artistic peculiarities, we attributed as the work of the painters from Korca and the workshop of Constantinos and Athanasios Zographs, i.e. Trpo Zograph[1]. The newly discovered donors' inscription imposes the need-obliges to return once again to the icon from Botun, valorizing it in the context of the chronology of his signed works.

The donors' inscription «... ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΤΕΡΠΟΥ ΖΟΓΡΑΦΟΥ ΕΚ ΚΟΡΙΤΖΑ(Σ) ΔΙΑ ΜΝΗΜΟΣΥΝΟΝ ΜΟΥ + ΑΦΙ(Ε)ΡΟΜΑ .....ΣΗ ΕΤΟΥ(Σ): α ω ς · Ν(Ο)ΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ Κ̅. (....to your servant Trpo Zograph from Korca for my memorial. Dedicated in the year 1806, November 20" (fig. 2), clearly states that Trpo Zograph from Korca painted

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[1] С. Цветковски, *Неколку непознати икони од XVIII век во црквите на охридска Дебарца и Кичевско*, Patrimonium.mk 9, Скопје 2011, 241-242.

Fig. 1 – Icon, Mother of God with Christ, church of the Dormition of the Virgin, village Botun, 1806, by Trpo Zograf

Fig. 2 – Donors' inscription, icon of the Mother of God with Christ, 1806, by Trpo Zograf

and gifted the icon. The discovery of the donors' inscription is of particular importance for researchers, first of all, in terms of understandding and monitoring the continuity in the painting work of Trpo and of course the expansion of the circle and the number of already known works of this painter in the painting of the Ohrid-Moschopolis artistic cycle from the end of the 18th and the very beginning of the 19th century.

When we talk about Trpo Zograph's works created on the territory of Macedonia, central place without any doubt takes his engagement in painting of the southern chapel and the catholicon of the monastery of St. Nahum in 1799-1800 i.e. 1806[2]. Special importance and attention draws the discovery of his, until some time ago, the only signed icon on the territory of Macedonia from 1818 in the church of St. Petka (Paraskevy) in the village of Malovišta (fig. 3)[3]. In addition to these signed and dated art works we add the attributed icon of the holy apostles Peter and Paul from the church of St. Nicholas in the village of Dolno Kosovrasti, Debar as well as the icon of the Holy Mother of God Life-giving Source dated at 1800, from the Slivnica Monastery (fig. 4)[4].

Perceived through the icons painting of the artistic workshop of the brothers Constantinos and Athanasios and their sons Trpo and Nahum, one comes to the realization that the iconographic representation of the Virgin on the throne with infant Christ is a frequently painted subject. As a direct analogy to the icon from Botun, we cite several icons of the Virgin and Christ signed or attributed as works by Constantinos and Athanasios Zographs: the icon from 1752 painted as a throne icon for the iconostasis in the church of the Mother of God Life-giving Source from Korca[5] (fig. 5), the two icons from 1757 painted for the catholicon of the monastery of St. John of Rila, the icon of the Virgin on the throne and the icon of the Virgin with Christ together with St. George and St. Demetrios[6] as well as the icon from 1783 painted for the Xiropotamou monastery on Mount Athos[7]. These four icons show an identical iconography to the icon

[2] Ц. Грозданов, *Живописот на гробниот параклис на свети Наум Охридски*, in: Наум Охридски, Историски архив Охрид, Охрид 1985, 85-97; Idem, *Тематските основи на живописот на Трпо Зограф во црквата Свети Наум Охридски*, 1.100 години од хиротонизирањето на св. Климент во епископ и доаѓањето на св. Наум во Охрид, Зборник на трудови, Македонска православна црква, Дебарско-кичевска епархија – Охрид, Брегалничка епархија – Штип, Охрид 1995, 69-75; Idem, *Свети Наум Охридски*, Скопје, 1995, 91-153

[3] Р. Палигора, *Црквата Света Петка во Маловиште*, Битола, 2007, 97, кат. 39.

[4] В. Поповска- Коробар, *Охридскиот иконопис од XVIII век*, Скопје, 2005, 77, сл. 3.

[5] Th. Popa, *Icônes et miniatures de Moyen âge en Albania*, Tiranë, 1974, 83.

[6] И. Гергова, Стенописите "Хиландарски параклис" св. Йоан Рилски, Светогорска обител, Зограф III, София 1999, 339-341, ил. 1-2; М. Енев, *Рилски манастир*, София 1997, 397, ил. 348; Е. Мутафов, И. Гергова, А. Куюмджиев, Е. Попова, Е. Генова, Д. Гонис, *Гръцките зографи в България след 1453*, София 2008, 33, 71. 125,150, ил. 13,15 (Е. Попова).

[7] Γ. ΧΡ. ΤΣΙΓΑΡΑΣ, ΟΙ ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΙ ΚΟΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΚΟΡΥΤΣΑ, ΤΟ ΕΡΓΟ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΤΟ ΑΓΙΟΝ ΟΡΟΣ (1752-1783), ΑΘΗΝΑ 2003, 452, Πιν, 200.

from Botun, the Virgin on a throne, which is always lavishly decorated with painted floral motifs and applications, and sometimes thematically and compositionally enriched and expanded by including representations of Old Testament prophets and apostles. The solemn, emphatic attitude of the Mother of God, the position of her right hand with which she does not point to Christ but simply lays it on her knee, as well as the representation of Christ with the open scroll and sphere in his hand are iconographic details that are identically repeated on all of the listed icons, including and the icon of Trpo from the church in Botun. As an important analogy in terms of typological identity with the image of the Virgin of Botun, we cite the icon of St. Petka (Paraskevy) from the Church of St. Germanos on Prespa, where the painters Athanasios and Constantinos accomplish the early, initial works in their long painting career. The icon was recently published for the first time and attributed to this artistic workshop[8]. Trpo himself, son of Athanasios in 1787, for the church of St. The Virgin in the Venje, Permet, depicts an identical icon of the Virgin with Christ (fig. 6), which contains all the iconographic peculiarities that we singled out as immanent for the previously mentioned representations, and of course for the icon from Botun[9].

Fig. 3 – Icon, the Dormition of the Virgin with saints, church of st. Petka (Paraskevy), village Malovišta, Bitola, 1818, by Trpo Zograf

Very close, almost identical in terms of their monumentality, typology and stylistic-artistic features, we also mention the representations of the Mother of God from the conch of the apse of the monastery of St. Nahum, which Trpo painted in 1806[10] (fig. 7), the icon of the Virgin of Trpo Zograph from 1800 from the museum in Korca[11], as well as the representation of the Virgin Life-giving Source from the Slimnica Monastery, also from 1800[12] (fig. 4). It is clear that Trpo for the painting of the Virgin and Christ from Botun uses the painted templates that were used in the Zographs family workshop before, retaining all the iconographic features of the early prototypes from the mid-18th century. At the same time, Trpo remains consistent with his artistic expression and painting sensibility in relation to the typology of the figure of the Virgin and his artistic performance as well, a process-procedure that always leads to the repetition of already painted patterns.

Trpo Zograph's greatest activity, seen over the years and his signatures, undoubtedly took place between 1779/1800 and 1808/9, when most of his preserved works date from.

In science, there is an opinion among researchers that Trpo Zograph received and learned his earliest knowledge and lessons in the painting craft in the

[8] В. Поповска-Коробар, *Охридскиот иконопис од XVIII век*, Скопје 2005, 77, сл. 3; On the wall-paintings of this church with monographic approach in the presentation, cf. Μ.Σ Πελεκανιδου, Βυζαντινα και μεταβυζαντινα μνημεια τησ Πρεσπασ, Θεσσαλοηικη, 1960 51-105.

[9] *Icons from the Orthodox communities of Albania*, ed. A. Tourta, Thessaloniki 2006, 177, (E. Drakopolou).

[10] Ц. Грозданов, Свети Наум Охридски, Скопје 1995, 151.

[11] *Icons from the Orthodox communities of Albania,* 178-180, (E. Drakopolou).

[12] В. Поповска-Коробар, *op. cit.*, 98, сл. 7

Fig. 4 – Icon, Mother of God Life-giving Spring *Zoodochos Pege,* monastery Slivnica, 1800, by Trpo Zograf

family workshop alongside his father Constantinos and his uncle Athanasios Zographs.[13] The earliest mention of Trpo Zograph is witnessed in the foundation inscription of the church of St. George in Libovš, Muzakia from 1782[14]. Then, in 1787, Trpo Zograph painted the icon of the Virgin on throne with Christ from the church of the Virgin in Venje, Premet[15] and in 1791 he signs the icon of the Virgin with Christ and the prophets from the church of the Virgin from Zvernec[16]. In the same year, 1791, it was noted that Trpo Zograph also painted the chapel of St. John the Forerunner in the monastery in Neguši, Northern Epirus[17]. But the period from the very end of the 18th century and the first decade of the 19th century are undoubtedly the most fruitful, the most intense and the most significant period of his work.

In 1799–1800, Trpo Zograph painted the burial chapel of St. Nahum in the monastery of St. Nahum[18], and in 1802 his signature is found on the icon of the Virgin in the church of St. Constantinos in Drenovo near Korca[19]. In 1804, he signs several icons in the church of the Virgin in Plase near Korca, today in the museum in Korca[20].

In 1806, Trpo Zograph paints the catholicon, the nave and the narthex of the monastery of St. Nahum[21], as well as the church of Holy Mother of God in Ljubonje, Kolonja[22], Our icon from the church in Botun also dates from 1806. In 1807, Trpo Zograph signs the icon of St. George in the church of St. Nicholas in Šamol near Korca[23]. The following 1808, Trpo Zograph writes the donors'

[13] On this matter with own personal author observations for the earliest beginnings of Trpo's engagements at the monastery church of Sts. Peter and Paul in Vithkuq from the 1764 , v. В. Поповска- Коробар, *op. cit*., 95-97.

[14] Th. Popa, *Piktorët mesjetarë shqiptarë*, Tiranë 1961, 98-99.

[15] *Icons from the Orthodox communities of Albania,* 176-177, No. 60, (E. Drakopolou).

[16] Th. Popa, *Piktorët mesjetarë shqiptarë*, 99-100, Foto 67-68. The author dates the icon wrongly at 1819, although on the reproduction of the icon is clearly visible year 1791. This is especially important because, as far as we know, this is actually the only reproduction of this remarcable icon of the Virgin on a throne surrounded by prophets in medallions, in the composition "The Prophets Had Announced You" and in the lower section under the throne the prophet Jesse as well, (cf. Ibid. 99, Foto 67).

[17] Th. Popa, *op. cit*., 99.

[18] Ц. Грозданов, *Живопису на гробниоș параклис на свеș Наум Охридски*, 85-97; Idem, *Манасș ир Свеș и Наум*, 95-104.

[19] Th. Popa, *op. cit*., 99; Idem, *Mbishkrime të kishave në Shqipëri*, Tiranë 1998, 189, No. 395

[20] Th. Popa, *Mbishkrime të kishave në Shqipëri*, 189-190, No. 397.

[21] Ц. Грозданов, *Манасș ир Свеș и Наум*, 105-153.

[22] Th. Popa, *Mbishkrime të kishave në Shqipëri*, 190, No. 398.

[23] Ibid., 190, No. 399.

Fig. 5 – Icon, the Mother of God with Christ, church of the Virgin Life-giving Spring *Zoodochos Pege*, Korca, 1752 (according to Th. Popa)

Fig. 6 – Icon, the Mother of God with Christ, church of the Virgin at Venje, Permet, 1787, by Trpo Zograf (according to the catalog Icons from the Orthodox Communities of Albania)

inscription in the church of St. Petka (Paraskevy) in Premet, Kolonja[24].

After an intense creative period during the first decade of the 19th century, it is noticeable that in the years of the second decade his activity decreases. Trpo Zograph signed his last works in 1818, the throne icon of the Virgin from the iconostasis of the Church of the Mother of God in Vodice, Kolonja[25], as well as the icon of Christ in the church of St. Constantinos and Elena in Drenovo near Korca[26].

What is particularly important for us and our research is that in 1818, Trpo also painted the icon of the Dormition of the Virgin with saints from the church of St. Petka (St. Paraskevy) from Malovište near Bitola[27].

From 1819, the last currently known works were created for the church of St. Nicholas in Zej near Zagorice, where Trpo signed the icon of Jesus Christ[28].

The icon of the Virgin from 1806, from the church in Botun seen through the chronology of his overall opus belongs to the period of his mature and most fruitful painting phase, when he, as an experienced painter, and at that time apparently also the leader of the famous group of painters from the Zographs family from Korca painted the nave and the narthex of the monastery of St. Nahum, thematically and iconographically, probably his most significant achievement.

In the years from the beginning of the 19th century, Trpo together with some of his contemporaries, primarily painters from the Tzetiris family from Grabovo, will

[24] Ibid., 191, No. 400.

[25] Ibid., 196, No. 419.

[26] Ibid., 196, No. 420.

[27] Р. Палигора, *Св. Пе̄тка Маловиште̄*, Битола, 2006, 97, кат. 39.

[28] Th. Popa, *Piktorët mesjetarë shqiptarë*, 99; Idem, *Mbishkrime të kishave në Shqipëri*, 269, No. 696.

Fig. 7 – Mother of God with Christ, conch of the catholicon of the monastery St. Nahum, 1806, by Trpo Zograf

sovereignly rule the artistic processes taking place between Korca, Ohrid, Berat and Kolonja.

As for the stylistic features, the icon from Botun possesses all the essential features of the artistic expression recognizable in the icon painting of Trpo from the previous period, the last decade of the 18th century, without any noticeable artistic evolution and refreshing of the stylistic procedure.

Such an approach leads to constant repetition of the already established patterns, which is reflected in the typology of the characters, especially the Virgin and Christ, the clothes and maphorion of the Virgin, but also the construction of the composition and the treatment of the architecture and in the shaping of the setting[29].

[29] On the stylistic-artistic particularities of the fresco-writings of Trpo Zograph, consistently with pointing out strings of features, (v. Ц. Грозданов, *Свети Наум Охридски*, 140-145; В. Поповска Коробар, *op. cit.*, 94-99).

Сашо ЦВЕТКОВСКИ

ИКОНАТА НА ТРПО ЗОГРАФ ОД 1806 ГОДИНА ВО ЦРКВАТА УСПЕНИЕ НА БОГОРОДИЦА ВО БОТУН

Резиме

Иконата на Бобородица со Христос од црквата Успение на Богородица во село Ботун, Охридска Дебарца е дело на зографот Трпо од Корча. Според содржината на ктиторскиот натпис кој беше откриен за време на конзерваторските зафати, иконата била насликана во 1806 година, како подарок од зографот. По своите иконографски особености, пред сè, монументалноста и свечениот, параден но помалку вкочанет став на Богородица и Христос, нагласен и со особената типологија на нивните ликови, иконата се вбројува меѓу неколкуте кои Трпо ги слика за црквите во Корча, Рилскиот манастир, иконата во манастирот во Слимница како и фреско-иконата од олтарната апсида на манастирот Св. Наум. Ктиторскиот натпис со потписот на зографот и точната година на сликањето 1806., открива дека иконта е насликана во истата година кога Трпо го слика фрескоживописот во на католиконот на манастирот Св. Наум. Освен иконата од црквата во Ботун и фрескоживописот во манастирот Св. Наум, како потпишано и точно датирано дело на Трпо ја имаме иконата на Успение на Богородица од црквата Св. Петка во Маловишта, Битолско од 1819 годона. Како дело со сите особености на неговиот стилски и ликовен израз се атрибуира иконата на Богородица Живоносен источник од Слимничкиот манастир од 1800 година.