

Article

Greek Painters for the Dominicans or Trecento at the Bosphorus? Once again about the Style and Iconography of the Wall Paintings in the Former Dominican Church of St. Paul in Pera

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Abstract: The recently discovered wall paintings of the Dominican church of St. Paul are perhaps the most fascinating part of the artistic heritage of Pera, the former Genoese colony at the Bosphorus. According to the researchers analyzing the fragments discovered in 1999–2007, they follow Byzantine iconographic tradition and were executed by Greek painters representing Paleologan style close to the decoration of the Chora church. After extensive discoveries in 2012 it was made possible to describe many more fragments of fresco and mosaic decoration and to make a preliminary identification of its iconography, which appeared to be very varied in character. Many features are typical of Latin art, not known in Byzantine tradition, some even have a clearly polemical, anti-Greek character. The analysis of its iconography, on a broad background of the Byzantine paintings in Latin churches, does not answer the question if it existed and what could be the goal of creating such paintings. There is a high probability that we are dealing with choice dictated by aesthetic and pragmatic factors, like the availability of the appropriate workshop. So, the newly discovered frescoes do not fundamentally alter the earlier conclusions that we are dealing with the work of a Greek workshop, perhaps primarily operating in Pera, which had to adapt to the requirements of Latin clients. It only seems that they should be dated a little later than previously assumed (around the mid-14th century).

Keywords: Pera; Constantinople; Genoese colonies; Dominicans; Byzantine painting; Trecento painting

1. Basic Information on the Dominican Church and Monastery in Pera

The church of St. Paul (or St. Dominic) in Pera (Figure 1), belonging to the Dominican Order, is one of the most intriguing monuments created in the eastern Genoese colonies, certainly the largest preserved sacred building from their territories (Figure 2). It is true that the dating of the construction of this church is not unequivocally accepted by all researchers, but most probably place it in the first quarter of the 14th century, specifically between 1299 and 1323.¹ The first of these dates means the foundation of a Dominican convent in Pera by brother Guillaume Bernard de Gaillac (Loenertz 1935, p. 336; Delacroix-Besnier 1997, pp. 10, 435; Violante 1999, p. 150),² while the second is recorded on the oldest dated tombstone from this church. At the same time, it is probable that the decision to embark on or accelerate, its construction lay in the expulsion of the Dominicans from Constantinople itself and the suppression of the monastic house there in 1307. It is also unclear whether and to what extent

¹ For the survey of different dating proposals (Quirini-Popławski 2017, p. 107).

² For general history of the Dominican outpost in Pera, see especially (Loenertz 1932, pp. 6–15; 1935, pp. 336–9; 1937, pp. 38–47; Violante 1999, pp. 150–62).

the church (probably under construction then) suffered during the catastrophic fire of the colony in 1315 (Belgrano 1877–1884, p. 322 [tombstone of Odone Salvago from 1323]; Müller-Wiener 1977, p. 79; Düll 1983, p. 234; Cramer and Düll 1985, pp. 313–19).



Figure 1. Pera seen from the opposite side of the Golden Horne, fot. R. Quirini-Popławski.

It seems, however, that this building was the result of a single act of construction, using brick and stone. Despite the controversy on this subject, I believe that it was probably a single-aisle structure consisting originally of a cross-ribbed vaulted eastern part, including the choir with a pair of flanking chapels (all three parts on almost square plans) and a non-vaulted single nave (Figure 3). Two entrances led to it: a western one and huge portal located in the middle of the southern wall. Along the eastern wall of the church runs a vaulted corridor, with its own ogival portal from the south, leading originally to the monastery located north of the church. Above the southern end of this corridor rises a square bell tower, the upper floors of which have been built entirely of brick (Quirini-Popławski 2017, p. 108).³

Despite the emptying of the archives and the most valuable interior furnishings in 1453, the Dominican monastery functioned for more than 20 years, and the church was converted into a mosque named Arap Camii between 1479 and 1481. Already fulfilling this function, the building was rebuilt twice—partially at the times of Sultan Mehmed III (1595–1603), and more fundamentally—from the Sultana Saliha’s foundation in 1734–1735. The mosque was later renovated after 1807, in 1868, and especially in 1913–1919, as a result of a fire (by the architect Kemaleddin), when, among other changes, it was widened towards the north. The plasters originally covering the exterior walls were removed only recently, between 1982–1984 (Quirini-Popławski 2017, p. 109; Sağlam 2018, pp. 117–18).

³ Superficial or random research of this church architecture see: (Gurlitt 1912, pp. 41–42; Müller-Wiener 1977, pp. 79–80; Cramer and Düll 1985, pp. 296–98, 311–19; Quirini-Popławski 2007, p. 209; Westphalen 2007, pp. 51–52, 58; 2008, pp. 277–79, 285; Ćurčić 2010, p. 543; Akyürek 2011, p. 330; Melvani 2017, pp. 38–39; Sağlam 2018, p. 114).

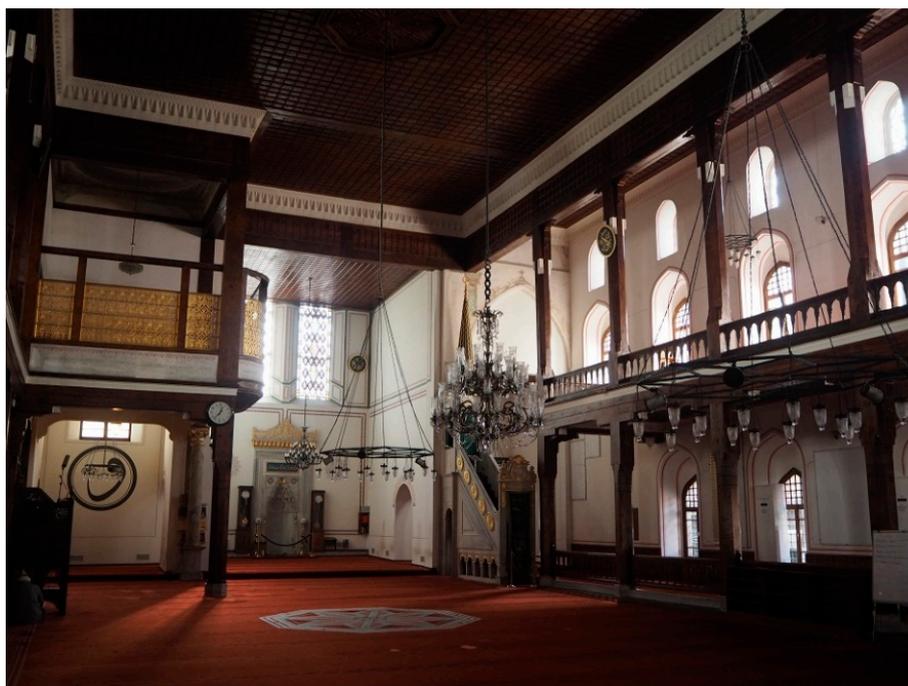


Figure 2. Pera, the church of St. Paul (first quarter of the 14th century), interior towards east, fot. R. Quirini-Popławski (2019).

This church is distinguished by numerous elements of bas-relief decoration and over 120 preserved tomb-slabs, which, since the restoration carried during World War I, have been kept at the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul.⁴ They confirm the role of this church as one of the most important burial places in Pera. Interestingly, there were not only Latins living in Pera buried in it, but also those living in other Levantine centers, sometimes very distant. The place of eternal rest was also found there by many members of the expedition of Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy, for example—Philippe de Lombéry (died in 1366), as well as eminent West European knights captured by the Turks after the defeat at Nikopolis in 1396, who died in captivity, for example “Lord on Truxin” (probably Enguerrand VII of Coucy, died in Bursa in 1397) (Janin 1969, pp. 591–92; De Clavijo 2004, pp. 106–7; Dalleggio d’Alessio 1936, p. 414).

2. Discoveries of Paintings before 2012 and Previous Research

Nevertheless, the most fascinating aspect of the church of St. Paul, from the art-historical perspective, was discovered only recently. In the years 1999 to 2012, significant fragments of its original painting decorations, including mosaics, saw the daylight. The significance of this discovery goes far beyond the boundaries of Pera or the world of the Genoa’s Levantine colonies: it sheds new light on a number of issues regarding art in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean basins in the late Middle Ages.

⁴ The entire collection of tombstones from this church was published by Dalleggio d’Alessio (1942). A few tomb-slabs are still preserved in the church floor.

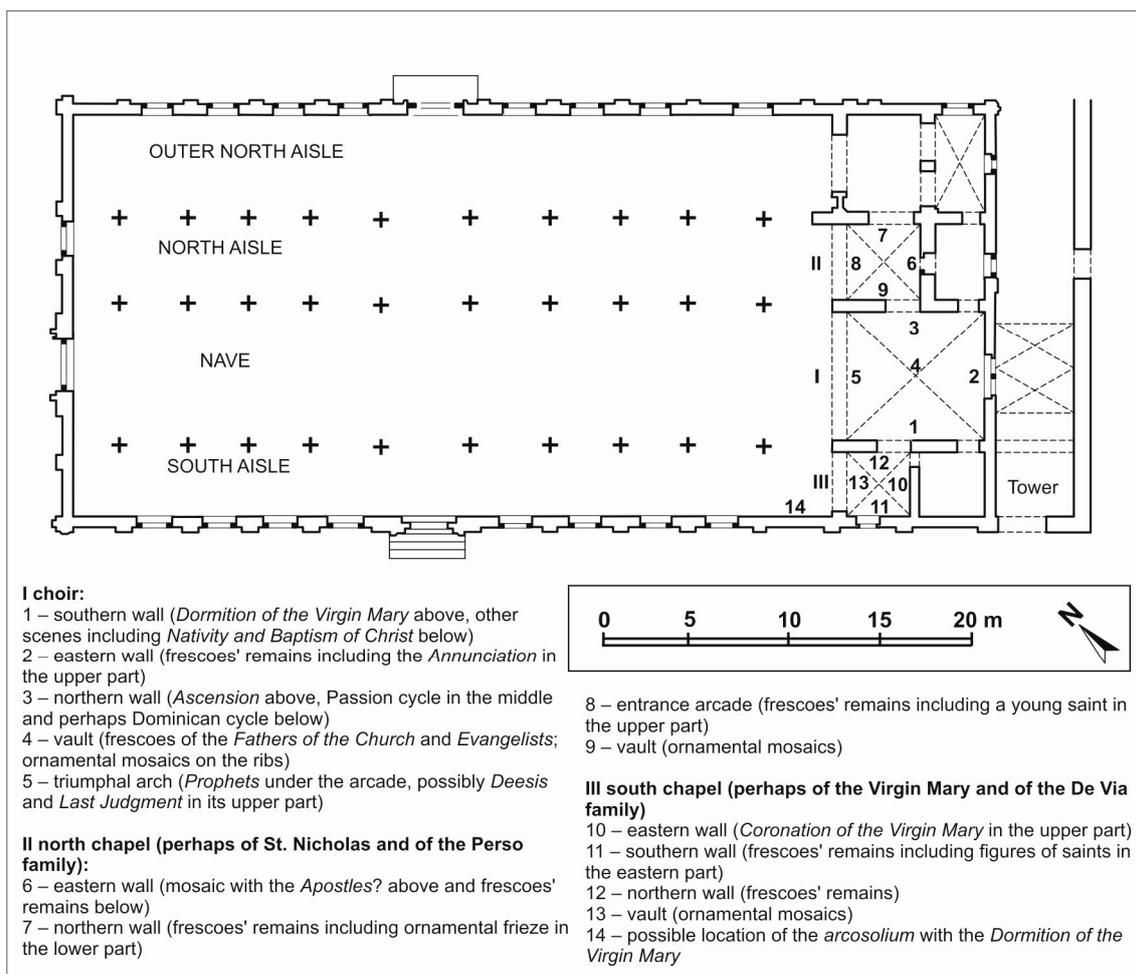


Figure 3. Pera, the church of St. Paul, present-day plan with the location of the discovered paintings, after Ivison (1996, p. 101), elaborated by Łukasz Quirini-Popławski.

Several authors noted the discovery of a fragment of the wall painting at the time of the conservation works during World War I, probably on the western wall of the church. It contained the figures of four saints in liturgical vestments standing in arcades (Hasluck 1916–1918, p. 158; Ebersolt 1921, pp. 40, 44, pl. XXXIV⁵; Dalleggio d'Alessio 1942, pp. 16–17; Mitler 1979, p. 87; Westphalen 2007, p. 53; Çetinkaya 2010, p. 173; 2011, p. 60; Akyürek 2011, pp. 331–32). However, only the decoration that was exposed in the church choir due to the 1999 earthquake aroused the wider interest of art historians. Since they have been described in sufficient detail and illustrated in several publications (initially by Stephan Westphalen and Engin Akyürek, then by writing these words), it is enough to recall only the most important elements (Westphalen 2007, pp. 53–56; 2008, pp. 282–86; Akyürek 2011, pp. 318–25, 332–36; Melvani 2017, 45–47; Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 145–50). Between the ribs of the vault on a blue background (Figure 4), the *Fathers of the Church* (*St. Ambrose* was identified on the basis of the inscription) and *Evangelists* (the images of *St. Mark* and *St. Matthew*) with their symbols, were unveiled (Figure 5). The *Evangelists* were shown as writers sitting on wide benches with backrests, opposite desktops. They are accompanied by *tituli* with inscriptions made of Gothic majuscule. On the southern wall, there were probably six scenes, arranged in two levels, which had to be watched from left to right, first the upper level, then the lower one. So the first scene was completely unveiled, the

⁵ According to him, the Byzantine style of murals testifies to the fact that it was formerly a Byzantine church occupied secondarily by the Dominicans.

Nativity (Figure 6), a fragment of the second (perhaps the *Presentation in the Temple*) and the *Baptism of Christ* (originally the fourth scene, under the *Nativity*). Under the entrance arcade, there were tondos surrounded by floral decoration, originally containing busts of fourteen *Prophets* (eleven images were preserved, of which Zacharias (or Malachias), Joel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah have been identified).

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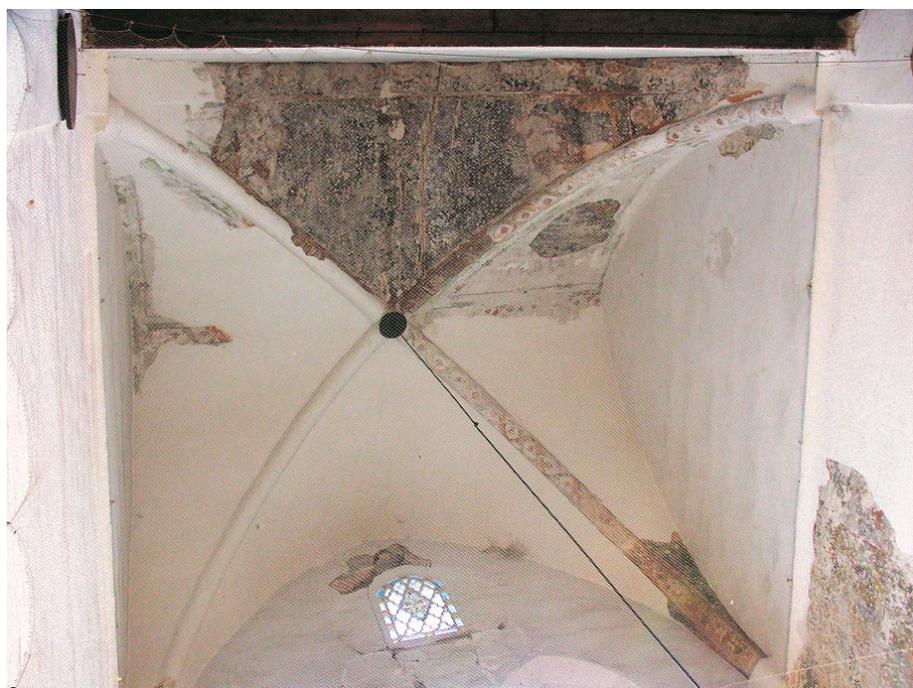


Figure 4. Pera, the church of St. Paul (first quarter of the 14th century), vault of the choir, fot. R. Quirini-Popławski (2007).

⁵ According to him, the Byzantine style of murals testifies to the fact that it was formerly a Byzantine church occupied secondarily by the Dominicans.



Figure 5. Pera, the church of St. Paul, the vault of the choir, *St. Mark* (mid-14th century?), fot. R. [Quirini-Popławski \(2007\)](#).



Figure 6. Pera, the church of St. Paul, south wall of the choir, scenes of *Nativity* and *Baptism of Christ* (mid-14th century?), fot. R. [Quirini-Popławski \(2007\)](#).

In turn, in 2007 Haluk Çetinkaya described the faintly visible remnants of paintings originally located in the upper part of the triumphal arch, today visible from the attic (Çetinkaya 2010, pp. 169, 175–88; 2011, p. 64). Above the key of the arch is shown a cross standing on a three-step basis between two leaves (trees?), and on the left side of the arch—scenes on three levels (Figure 7). At the top there are two persons identified as Christ and the Mother of God (from *Deesis*?), in the middle—five male figures facing the church axis and one kneeling figure (possibly part of the *Last Judgment* or Apostles and Prophets) and at the bottom—five figures standing in the front row and a dozen or so—behind them (all with halos, and some in episcopal vestments), mostly facing the north. It should be emphasized, however, that these identifications should be treated with a certain reserve because the attached illustrative material does not allow us to verify *de facto* their correctness.

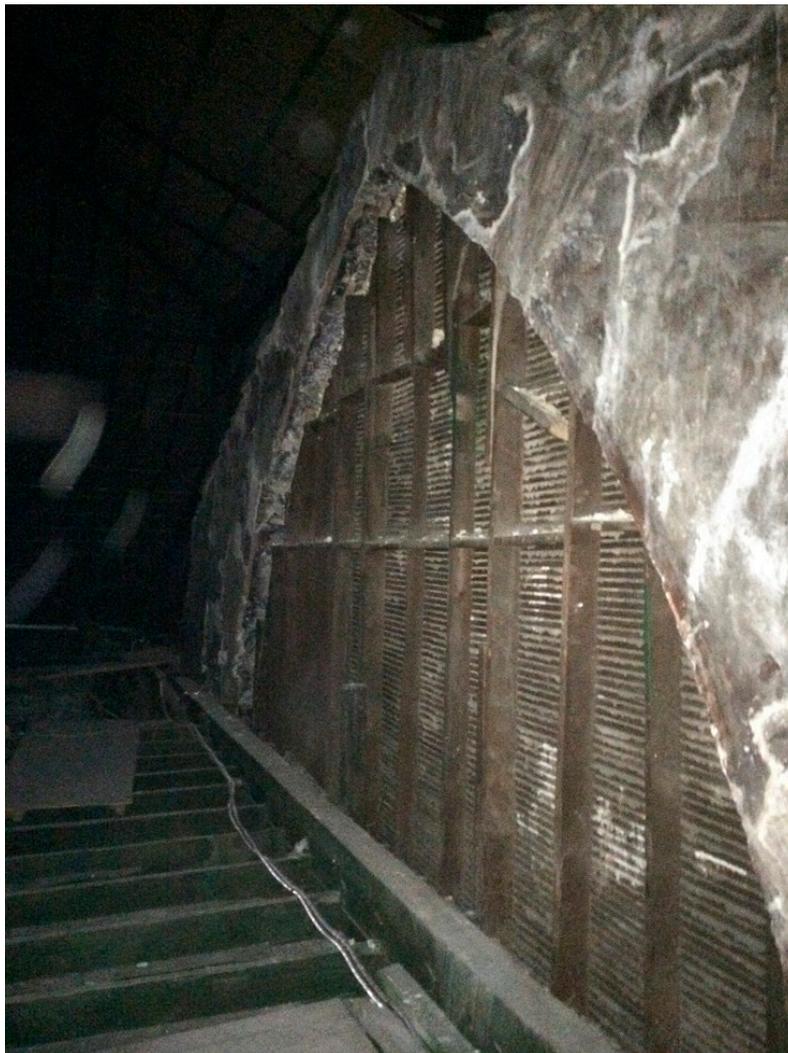


Figure 7. Pera, the church of St. Paul, the upper part of the triumphal arch seen from the attic, fot. H. Sercan Sağlam (2017).

There have been previous studies of the style and iconography of the paintings discovered in 1999 and 2007, their authors (mainly Westphalen and Akyürek, and later also Çetinkaya) came to very similar conclusions. They recognized that in terms of style and iconography, they belong to the works of the Byzantine paintings of the Paleologan period, representing the characteristics of the paintings in the church of the Saviour in Chora (around 1315–1321) (Westphalen 2008, p. 285; Akyürek 2011, pp. 338–41). At the same time, it was stated that their iconography is quite varied in nature. What's more, among them we can find solutions unknown in Byzantine painting. These include the pattern

of decoration of the choir vault (including images of the Western *Fathers of the Church*), for which the Central Italian examples from the first half of the 14th century were indicated as the closest: examples are the chapel at the church of San Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna (Figure 8) and Cappellone San Nicola at the Augustinian church in Tolentino (Westphalen 2007, p. 59; 2008, p. 286; Çetinkaya 2010, p. 175; 2011, p. 63; Akyürek 2011, pp. 326, 337–38).⁶ The images of the *Evangelists*, however, have a Byzantine character, similar to the mosaics in the Church of the Apostles in Thessaloniki (around 1312–1315) and paintings in the *parekklesion* of Chora (Westphalen 2007, pp. 57, 59; 2008, p. 284–87; Akyürek 2011, pp. 339–40). Such a character was, however, primarily attributed to both scenes located on the choir wall, the *Nativity* and the *Baptism of Christ* (Westphalen 2007, pp. 56–57; 2008, pp. 284, 287–88; Çetinkaya 2010, p. 175; Akyürek 2011, pp. 339–40), as well as hypothetically identified paintings on the triumphal arch (*Last Judgment* and *Deesis*) (Çetinkaya 2010, pp. 180, 186–88). It was considered that their iconography follows the tradition formed in the Middle Byzantine period, although it also finds its late Byzantine counterparts.

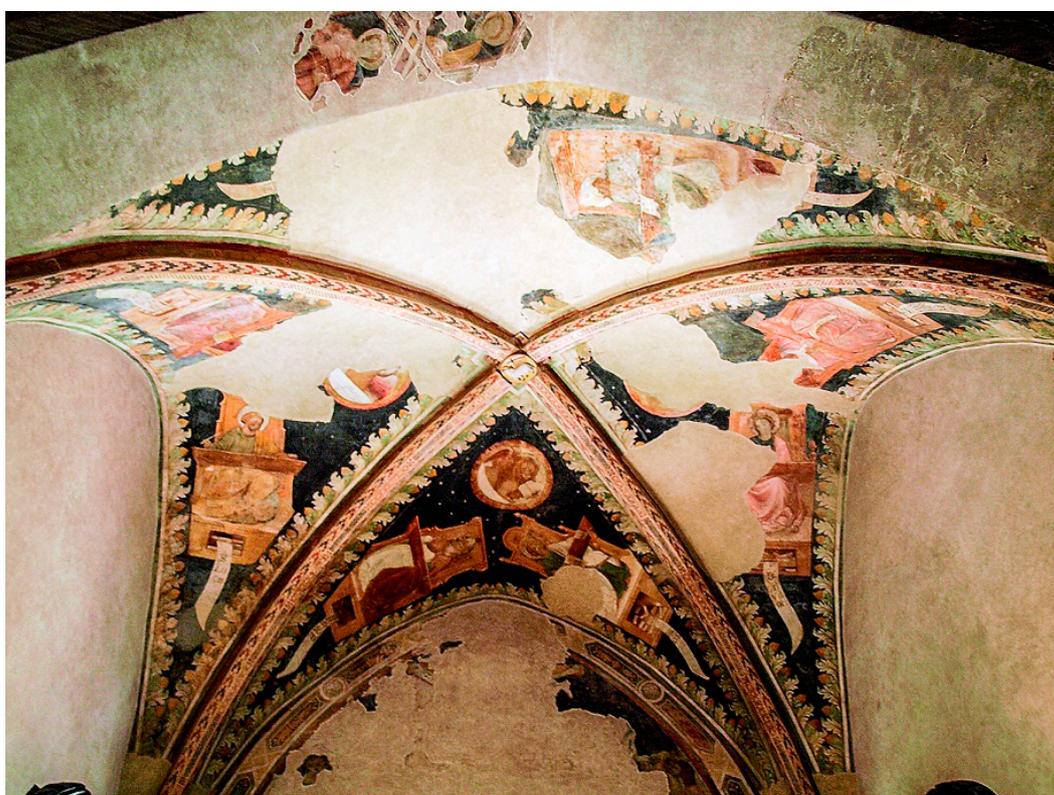


Figure 8. Ravenna, the church of San Giovanni Evangelista, north chapel (second quarter of the 14th century?), fot. R. Quirini-Popławski (2016).

Trying to explain their specific dichotomy, Westphalen suggested that the paintings were done by a Greek workshop that, while working in the Dominican church, had to adapt to the recommendations of Latin patrons (Westphalen 2007, pp. 56–58; 2008, pp. 281–91; Akyürek 2011, p. 341). A somewhat different, but at least equally fascinating explanation was presented by Çetinkaya. He drew attention to the events accompanying the expulsion of the Dominicans from Constantinople in 1307 at the initiative of the then Patriarch Athanasius I. Interestingly, along with the Dominicans, the pro-Union Greek monks

⁶ In both these decorations, the *Evangelists* and *Doctors of the Church* were presented in an identical manner, sitting at the pulpits, accompanied by the symbols of the Evangelists.

who were in opposition to the patriarch, moved to Pera, and they could have their part in the creation of the painting decoration of the local Dominican church before 1310 (Çetinkaya 2010, pp. 170, 188).⁷

3. Description and Preliminary Iconographical Identification of Paintings Discovered in 2012

The above observations and the hypotheses put forward on this occasion require a re-examination in connection with the discoveries that took place in this church in 2012. During its general renewal connected with the fact of granting Istanbul the title of the European Capital of Culture in 2010, numerous fragments of the painting decorations were discovered, including mosaics, much more than was known to the researchers who wrote earlier on this topic. It is extremely frustrating, however, that their professional documentation (if it has been made) has not yet been published, and the paintings themselves have been plastered again in a short time, moreover—the vaults of the three eastern parts of the church have been cut from the interior with wooden ceilings. As a result, unfortunately, these discoveries are known very fragmentarily—information about them is known to me only from two sources. The first of these is a short article, illustrated with several photographs, in the Istanbul-based magazine, “NTV Tarih”, on popular-historical subjects (Rönesans 2012), the second one—a short (only one and a half minute long) presentation of a three-dimensional laser scan of the eastern part of the church, made by also Istanbul-based architectural company “Solvotek” published on the internet⁸. Also, Çetinkaya referred briefly to fragments of paintings discovered at that time (Çetinkaya 2016, pp. 200, 208–10).⁹ It is difficult to locate all paintings shown in some of the mentioned photographs, and the low resolution of the presentation makes it difficult or even impossible to recognize the iconography of a large part of the scenes, let alone the possibility of closer stylistic analysis. What is particularly important, however, we do not know what part of the actually preserved paintings both these sources present. First of all, in the presentation, we see large fragments of walls still covered with the plaster, although, in most places where it was removed, paintings or mosaics were discovered. Secondly, the aforementioned scan does not include any part of the nave of the church, in which, in turn, there were certainly further paintings, including some known from photographs. These matters mean that the following arguments are subject to some risk of error, but seven years that have passed since the discoveries made, and the uncertainty when and if their professional documentation will be made public, authorizes the attempt to formulate them anyway.

What can be said about the discoveries made then based on the available materials? (Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 150–54). If we start with the choir, we can unequivocally state that in the upper part of the southern wall there was an extensive representation of the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary* showing (in the middle) Mary lying (head towards west) on a high bed covered with red fabric (Figure 9), placed between two groups of numerous figures in multicolored garments (Çetinkaya 2016, pp. 208–9). Among them, there are surely the Apostles, but also men dressed in costumes of the bishops of the Eastern Church (on the right). In the background, on the right, the buildings are schematically shown. Behind the bed is a slender figure of a standing Christ clothed in a golden robe, holding in his hands, on his left, a child symbolizing the soul of Mary in her swaddling-clothes. The double gray mandorla around Christ is particularly characteristic. On its outer edge, busts and heads of winged angels were shown in the *en grisaille* technique. Their accurately portrayed faces belong to artistically the best parts of frescoes discovered in the Dominican church¹⁰. The scene of the *Assumption of the Virgin Mary* was shown above—a seated figure of the Mother of God in a blue cloak against a round white mandorla supported by a pair of angels in pink robes. From the available documentation, unfortunately, we do not learn anything new about the decoration of

⁷ The background for these events is described by (Congourdeau 1987b; Violante 1999, p. 151; Maxwell 2016, pp. 211–12).

⁸ Arap Camii, Istanbul—3D lazer tarama (nokta bulutu animasyonu) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVYLF7QYqyk>).

⁹ For being able to understand the excerpts from this article, I owe my gratitude to dr Sercan H. Sağlam.

¹⁰ About monochromatic depictions of angels in Paleologan painting, see (Bacci 2017, pp. 108–9).

the central part of the southern wall. There is also no information at all about the paintings in its lower part.



Figure 9. Pera, the church of St. Paul, south wall of the choir, scene of the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary* and *St. Mark* (mid-14th century?); after [Rönesans \(2012, pp. 42–43\)](#).

As far as it can be judged on the basis of the available documentation, a large part of the remaining paintings (next to *St. Mark* and *St. Matthew*, known already before) of the choir vault have been unveiled, including the entire figure of *St. Ambrose*. Major parts of the figures in the eastern section of the vault have been preserved (*St. Augustine* on the north and *St. Gregory* on the south, according to Westphalen's earlier assumptions). On the other hand, the figure in the north section (*St. Luke*?) is well preserved, while in the south section (originally *St. John*?) a large part of the painted surface is lacking, except for fragments at the bottom and top. It seems that all these images repeat the basic iconographic scheme known from previously unveiled fragments. In addition, on the parts of the ribs of the choir vault, a painted decoration (mosaic?) in the shape of a vegetal osier formed into circles filled with the palmettes was unveiled (repeated in a simplified form in the Ottoman era) ([Akyürek 2011, pp. 334–35](#)).

On the other hand, the scenes on the eastern and northern walls were completely unknown. There seems to be no doubt that on both sides of the window (originally the oculus) located in the upper part of the eastern wall, the *Annunciation* was painted, divided between the figure of a kneeling angel on the left and Mary standing on the right. Three medallions were shown above this window—two on the sides probably contained busts of angels, and the middle one, perhaps, of *Christ*. Below the *Annunciation*, on both sides of the upper part of the lanceolate windows under the oculus, there are two busts (or perhaps the figures' upper parts) of the saints, in the red robe on the left and in the white on the right. It seems that also between the top parts of this window pair there was a figure in a

gray robe. There is also no doubt that painted decoration also covered the lower parts of this wall, but the only thing that can be said about this is that in the window jambs there was an ornamental decoration similar to the one on the ribs, while large fragments of the painting on the left from the later mihrab were lost forever. Perhaps there were also small scenes on the sides of the windows separated by stripes.

The northern wall of the choir contains the greatest number of previously unknown scenes. Its upper part is filled with a monumental *Ascension*, with Virgin Mary in the middle in a blue robe, surrounded by Apostles at the bottom and Christ in a round white mandorla supported by angels at the top. The composition and some details of this scene are therefore similar to the *Assumption* located opposite, both in terms of dimensions and two-zone division, placing Mary in the middle of the lower part of both scenes, and a similar display in their upper parts—with *Assunta* and Christ. It should also be noted that in the lower part of the scene of the *Ascension* there is a considerable loss of paint.

Below this scene, so this time in front of the scenes possibly from childhood and the early activity of Christ, six (a number which Westphalen had rightly guessed earlier) scenes of the Passion cycle, arranged in two lines, were shown. Their chronology, however, was arranged according to a different scheme than the scenes from the southern wall—they should be viewed first from the bottom, from the left to the right, and then the top, from right to left. The first scene is the *Entry to Jerusalem*, in which Christ is riding a donkey with a low bowed head, going towards the town on the right, surrounded by walls with a gate. Behind Christ, a tree is visible, and in the background—a slanting line of the slope. The *Last Supper* was shown next, with Christ in the middle, surrounded by the Apostles, among whom St. John on His right. They sit around a semi-circular red table, with a folded white curtain hanging in the front, on which there is a vessel, most probably filled with blood. Architectural motifs were shown in the upper corners of the painting. The next two scenes are difficult to identify unequivocally, but it seems that the last scene in the lower row shows the *Agony in the Garden* with the kneeling Christ turned to the right above and a group of Apostles below. Above this scene, there is probably the *Capture of Christ*. One can only guess that Christ was shown in the middle of a crowd of figures over which the upper parts of the soldiers' weapons are visible. There is no doubt, however, that we have the *Crucifixion* next to the left. The hands of Christ are raised up, forming the shape of the letter Y with His body, while His head falls deeply to His right side. It seems that on the sides there are no thieves on the crosses, but groups of figures in which stand out images of Mary (in a blue robe) on the left and of St. John (?) on the right. As far as the available picture permits the judgment, a small figure kneeling in a bright robe (perhaps a patron) was shown on the left side of the cross. The last scene depicts the *Resurrection of Christ*, who was shown in a red robe and with a cross (probably in a form of *labarum*) in his right hand, when he stepped with his right leg out of the grave, in the shape of a sarcophagus shown diagonally. The scene is flanked by two standing angels in white robes facing its center. Like the previously known scenes from the southern wall, these were separated from each other by straight lines of red-brown color.

Under this cycle, i.e., more or less at the height of today's mihrab top, a series of paintings was arranged horizontally, with the iconography difficult to recognize. It seems that it was formed by three or four scenes with a slightly smaller format than the Passion cycle. To the east, there is a representation of a saint in the Dominican habit and probably with a tonsure (perhaps of St. Dominic or St. Peter Martyr) turned to the right and extending his right hand¹¹. There is probably a vertical object in the left one. Further scenes are virtually unrecognizable. They contain, as it seems, figures shown on a smaller scale (sometimes their heads are visible). The first (or first two) scenes are shown on a landscape background, another takes place in the room and the last visible one—again in the landscape. If the

¹¹ Maybe on the basis of Robert Ousterhout's online entry, currently no longer available on the internet, but published by (Westphalen 2007, p. 62, note 24; 2008, p. 282, note 25), it appeared the hypothesis that among the fragments of frescoes discovered in 1999 on the southern wall there are scenes from the life of St. Peter Martyr (cfr. Derbes and Neff 2004, p. 451; Di Fabio 2005, p. 43).

object held by the Dominican saint could be identified as the lily, perhaps he was St. Dominic, and then scenes from his life possibly followed.

Earlier, nothing was known about the paint decoration of the chapels located by the choir, but this turned out to be very interesting. On the eastern wall of the north chapel, originally maybe dedicated to St. Nicholas and perhaps belong to the Perso family (Dalleggio d'Alessio 1942, pp. 17, 20; Janin 1969, p. 592; Müller-Wiener 1977, p. 79; Ivison 1996, pp. 91, 101; Çetinkaya 2010, p. 171; 2011, p. 58),¹² there is an ogival window, under which there was originally an oculus (now bricked up). Above the right part of the window's arch, an elaborate fragment of mosaic decoration was discovered, depicting torsos of three bearded saints on a golden background, turned to the left, with halos formed by alternating white and black *tesserae*. They were included in medallions of green leaves, complemented by a pink decoration in the form of three-leaf palmettes (flowers?). At the top, it is probably *St. Paul* with a book in his hands and a dark, rather long beard, dressed in a blue robe underneath and a red one on the top. In the middle there is probably *St. Peter* with a scroll in his left hand, performing the Greek gesture of blessing with the right one (Figure 10). He has a short white beard and hair, dressed in garments of yellow and gray with red accents. The lowest figure is shown with a short dark beard and lush hair covering his forehead. As it seems, he also made the Greek gesture of blessing with his right hand. Assuming that all the figures depicted here belonged to the cycle of the *Apostles*, it could be, for example, *St. James* or *St. Judas Thaddaeus*. Probably on the left side of the window, there were images of the next three saints. If we are indeed dealing with the apostolic cycle, the question is, where the remaining six were. The only, it seems, the logical solution was to place them on the sides of the lower part of the same window. The fragment of the mosaic in question was framed on one side, from the right, with a mosaic strip of ornamental decoration with a white background and golden circles filled with red and blue motifs similar to crosses. In the diamond-like fields between these circles, smaller red and blue Greek crosses alternating. Subsequent fragments of mosaic decoration were also unveiled on the vault of this chapel, including ribs, especially in its western and northern part, as well as on the edge of the entrance arch to the chapel from the west. Rib decoration presents ornamental forms similar to those on the ribs of the choir vault.

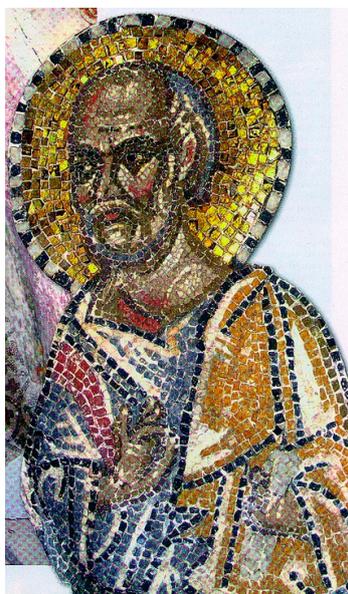


Figure 10. Pera, the church of St. Paul, north chapel (perhaps of St. Nicholas and of the Perso family), the upper part of the east wall, detail of the mosaic, *St. Peter?* (mid-14th century?), after Rönnesans (2012, p. 41).

¹² It seems that right before the Turkish invasion the chapel of St. Nicholas belong to Tommaso Spinola (Lercari 2013, pp. 145–47).

On the other walls of this chapel there was a painted decoration, the remains of which are visible on the northern wall and around the walled up oculus on the eastern one. In turn, on the south side of the western entrance to the chapel, the upper part of the probably full-length figure of a young saint is preserved, that seems to be of a very good artistic level. Of particular interest is the ornamental frieze, a fragment of which has been preserved at the bottom, in the western part of the northern wall. On a dark (perhaps blue or black) background, two larger medallions are visible and—in the middle—a smaller one, formed by a double white line, between which there is also a white decoration in the form of delicate floral interlace. In the larger medallions, the Byzantine symbols of power were shown: on the right a two-headed eagle, while on the left, a risen lion turned right. Unfortunately, it is not possible to recognize the motif inside a smaller medallion, although it could have been “only” an ornamental floral decoration. The described frieze is framed at the top and on the left in stripes of red color, similar to those that separate scenes placed on the walls of the choir. A scene placed directly above this frieze was similarly detached.

The south chapel perhaps belong to the De Via family, was probably dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and most probably in connection with it, in the upper part of its eastern wall the *Coronation of the Virgin Mary* by Christ, on a wide bench surrounded by five angels dressed in white robes, was painted (Figure 11).¹³ Christ is shown almost in profile, probably with a crown on his head and long hair falling in curls at the neck. He is wearing a blue coat, under which there is a purple robe with golden trimming, filled with an ornament in the form of hearts turned downwards, filled with leaved palmettes. With the hands extended forward, he holds the crown. The Virgin Mary, who sits opposite him, is shown *en trois quatre*, has a low tilted head and hands crossed on her chest. She is also dressed in a blue cloak, under which pieces of the veil and two other robes stick out, one of which has golden trimmings.¹⁴ The bench on which they sit is of yellow color and is covered with a red long cushion. The wide backrest with an arched top is decorated with a red fabric with a yellow lattice, behind which perhaps columns with leaved capitals emerge. Above the backrest, there are three angels with green wings, of which the middle one is *en face* and both lateral look at the *Coronation* below. The next two angels were shown (possibly standing) on the sides of the bench. The one on the right has the upper trimming of the robe decorated with a motif similar to that of the robe of Christ, except that the hearts are turned alternately upwards and downwards. It is worth noting that, in the photos showing this angel, as well as the entire scene, you can clearly see the subtle *chiaroscuro* modeling of the faces of angels (Rönesans 2012, pp. 34, 36–37).

The scene is enclosed in an ornamental mosaic border, it seems, similar to the one from the north chapel (crosses in green circles on a white background). It looks as if it partially covers the painting decoration. This can be seen in the close-up of the face of an angel in the lower right corner of the painting, on which the mosaic partially overlaps the halo (Rönesans 2012, p. 34, see also Çetinkaya 2016, p. 209). Although this is difficult to explain, it may indicate that at least in some parts of the church older paintings have been covered by newer mosaics. Analogous mosaic decoration was also located at the junction of the vault and the southern wall of this chapel. The vaulting ribs, in turn, are covered with the mosaics similar to those of the ribs in the choir and the northern chapel. Here, however, they are clearly visible and include brightly sharp-oval medallions on a dark blue background, filled with heart-shaped motifs, in which small palmettes can be seen. In addition, in the eastern part of the southern wall (to the left of the window), one full-figure and the upper part of the next saint was unveiled, probably a remnant of a painted decoration with a dark blue background covering the walls of this chapel. Another small outcrop of the painting was made in the upper part of the north wall.

¹³ On the dedication of this chapel, see (Violante 1999, p. 160).

¹⁴ Çetinkaya (2016, pp. 209–10) believes that Mary is dressed as a “Catholic nun” in this scene.



Figure 11. Pera, the church of St. Paul, south chapel (perhaps of the Virgin Mary and of the De Via family), upper part of the east wall, scene of the *Coronation of the Virgin* (mid-14th century?); after Rönnesans (2012, pp. 36–37).

In principle, the painted decoration inside the nave of the church remains a mystery for us. Near the window on the sidewall of the church (probably in the eastern part of the southern wall) a niche (*arcosolium*) was discovered, the interior of which was entirely covered with painted decoration.¹⁵ On the back wall, there is another scene of the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*, flanked by groups of saints, and framed in red. In the middle of the little vault, a small enthroned figure was painted in a blue dress (perhaps another *Assumption of the Virgin Mary*), and on its sides—two standing saints (on the left—bearded, in pink and gray dress, on the right—in a brown one). Mary is turned to the left and lies on a large bed, whose front is decorated with a fabric of a diamond pattern. Behind it, in the middle of the painting, there is a risen Christ standing with a clearly visible nimbus with a cross, holding Mary's soul on her left, in the form of an infant in her swaddling-clothes and directing his tilted head towards her. The figure of Christ, clad in red and gold, is surrounded by a double gray mandorla, in the inner circle of which angels are found. Above His head a seraph was painted with red paint.

On the sides of the bed there are the *Apostles*, among whom one can distinguish especially three: a man in pink robe reclining at Mary's feet, with a long black beard and an exposed forehead, undoubtedly *St. Paul*, another—with gray hair and beard, leaning against Mary's head, and a young man standing behind him, with his arms bent in his elbows and raised hands. If the object that the Apostle standing near Mary's head holds in his right hand is a censer, he would be *St. Peter*, and the one standing behind would be *St. John*. The Apostles are accompanied by three figures shown in the eastern rite bishops' robes—one on the right and two on the left, the first of which is shown in the foreground, holding a book filled with an inscription imitating the Greek alphabet. So it is probably *St. Dionysius the Areopagite*, the first bishop of Athens, perhaps *St. James*, as the first bishop of Jerusalem, and *St. Timothy*, the first bishop of Ephesus.

¹⁵ Çetinkaya (2016, p. 210) locates the *arcosolium* "in the northern apse" (?), and among the figures standing around Mary's bed, he recognized the "early Christian hierarchs". Both of these opinions, however, seem to be wrong.

It seems that the outcrops visible in the plaster on the south and west walls of the church indicate that these too were covered with painted decoration.¹⁶ Certainly, it is not on the north wall, because as already mentioned, the mosque has been widened in this direction, so the original wall of the church no longer exists. The possibility of the existence of some parts of the painting decoration on the outer southern wall of the bell tower has recently been suggested by H. Sercan Sağlam (Sağlam 2018, pp. 122, 132).

4. Preliminary Conclusions about Iconography

What general conclusions about iconography can be drawn from the above description? Should we see here, as Westphalen wrote, the work of Greek painters working for Latin patrons?

1. Among the paintings described there are much more scenes and schemes of essentially Western character, including those that are not found in Greek churches, than previously thought.
2. If we look for iconographic similarities, we will not find them in Genoa or Liguria.
3. The second group consists of scenes of essentially Byzantine iconography, although few are among them that would not be known from other Latin churches.

Among the parts characteristic for Latin iconography, unparalleled in the tradition of Byzantine painting, one should mention the already identified scheme of the distribution of images on the choir vault. One can find there the *Fathers of the Church*, *Evangelists*, and *Prophets* who were rather shown on the walls in the Byzantine churches. In the church of St. Paul images of the *Fathers of the Church* and the *Evangelists* are not only adjacent to each other but were also shown in accordance to one iconographic scheme, differently from Byzantine tradition. As already mentioned, for this scheme, convincing similarities in the Central Italian painting of the first half of the 14th century were indicated (Westphalen 2007, p. 59; 2008, p. 286; Çetinkaya 2010, p. 175; 2011, p. 63; Akyürek 2011, pp. 326, 337–38; Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 200–1).

The monumental representation of the *Ascension* also finds its counterparts in Trecento painting, to mention the extensive and similarly situated scene on the vault of Cappellone degli Spagnoli, the former chapter-house of the Dominican monastery Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1366–68) or in the upper part of the south wall in the upper church of Sacro Speco in Subiaco (perhaps the work of a Siennese painter).

Essentially, the Latin character has also a set of scenes of the Passion cycle shown below, including especially the iconography of the *Resurrection of Christ*, with Christ coming out of the tomb accompanied by two angels, known in the West since the Romanesque period (e.g., on the bracelet from the tomb of Grand prince Andrey Bogolyubsky [died in 1174] in the cathedral of Vladimir, the gift of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa [1170 ca, Paris, Louvre] or on miniature from Hours, made in England [1280–90 ca]). Slightly different arrangement—with a pair of angels sitting on the sides of the sarcophagus, and the Christ shown far above it—was realized in the fresco of Andrea da Firenze in Cappellone degli Spagnoli (Ladis 1982, p. 77, Figure 45).

It is difficult to clearly identify the subject of the scenes located in the lower part of the northern wall of the choir, but the figure of the Dominican saint depicted there indicates their clearly Latin character. If these were scenes from the life of St. Peter Martyr, it is worth noting that they were also present in the interior of the Florentine Cappellone degli Spagnoli.¹⁷

The most Western character, however, is noticeable in the iconographic scheme used for the *Coronation of the Virgin* with Mary and Christ sitting opposite each other on the bench, which was used in the works of Italian painting from the 13th to the 15th century. However, features such as hands

¹⁶ As already mentioned above (Hasluck 1916–1918, p. 158), on the west wall there was a fragment of paintings discovered during World War I.

¹⁷ On the iconography of St. Peter Martyr in Crete, see (Bormpoudaki 2016).

crossed on the breasts of the Virgin Mary, a lattice patterned fabric stretched in the background and composition surrounded by angels appeared often in the Sienese painting, as for example, in the stained glass window decorating the oculus in the cathedral in Siena (projects, attributed to Duccio, which were created in the years 1287–88), tabernacle wings by Monte Oliveto Master in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1320s?) or *Coronation* fragment by Niccolò di Segna in the Magyar Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest (ca 1335). All of these features together with an unpaired number of angels, with one of them shown frontally, on the axis, with wings spread, find counterparts also in the *Coronation of the Virgin Mary* by Jacopo di Mino del Pellicciaio (Figure 12), a Franciscan painter from Siena, probably done in the 1340s (Montepulciano, Museo Civico e Pinacoteca Crociani). Both, in the Sienese oculus and in the *Coronation* by Master 1355 (Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid) Virgin Mary appears in the dark blue robe, covering also her head (Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 197–98).¹⁸ It is worth noting here that this topic does not actually appear in the iconography of the Eastern Church, where the icons show the crowned Virgin Mary or her coronation by an angel or a couple of angels. This scene can even be interpreted as a polemical element with a clear anti-Greek character. A little earlier, this iconography was popularized by a monumental mosaic in the Roman basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (1290s, Jacopo Torriti).¹⁹



Figure 12. *Coronation of the Virgin Mary*, pictures by Jacopo di Mino del Pellicciaio (1340s?), Montepulciano, Museo Civico e Pinacoteca Crociani; Wikipedia Commons/public domain.

¹⁸ On Sienese examples (Stubblebine 1979, vol. 1, pp. 47–48, 100, 154, vol. 2, Figures 232, 475, 573), while on Madrid *Coronation*: <https://www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/artists/master-1355/coronation-virgin-five-angels>.

¹⁹ Kriza (2018, pp. 272–74, 278–81) presents also theological meaning associated with this scene. The spread of this iconographic type in southern Europe dates from the last third of the 13th century onwards.

This statement is more interesting because other fragments of the Dominican paintings in Pera, as mentioned above, correspond basically to the Byzantine iconographic tradition. They include both depictions of the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*—it is from the southern wall of the choir and from the *arcosolium*. It should be emphasized that the iconography of the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary* combined with Her *Assumption* was used in the late Duecento and Trecento painting, as in the stained glass oculus (described above) in Siena cathedral, in a miniature by Florentine painter Silvestro de 'Gherarducci from ca 1370 in *Gradual from Santa Maria degli Angeli*, f. 142; London, British Library, Add. MS 37955 A or, closer to the Byzantine pattern, in the central picture of a polyptych from the church of San Lorenzo in Vicenza by Paolo Veneziano from 1332 in Pinacoteca Civica in Vicenza), but nevertheless, the details of both scenes from Pera are closer to late Byzantine works. Particular parallels link these two scenes with a mosaic from above the entrance from naos to the narthex of the Chora church. The only clear difference is that in the choir the scene of the *Assumption* is represented above Christ, while in Chora—there are winged cherubs in this place. In the *arcosolium*, however, due to the limited space, the number of depicted figures is smaller, there is no architectural background, and it is not entirely clear whether there has also been a small *Assumption* here (Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 198–99). It is also worth emphasizing the very location of the latter scene, unusual for Western painting. Nevertheless, in the Byzantine tradition paintings in the *arcosolia* usually contained images of people buried in these places (Brooks 2004, pp. 95–97; Kontogiannis 2014, pp. 117–18). It seems that in places where this tradition met with the Latin one *arcosolia* with painted decoration appeared in the churches of both rites, as exemplified by the Cypriot Famagusta. In the church of St. George of the Greeks they were located in naos, not in the western part, which would have been closer to the Byzantine tradition. In some of them, painted figures of saints and angels have been preserved, maybe not accompanied by the founders' images. *Arcosolia* survived also in local Latin churches: the cathedral of St. Nicholas, Carmelites and St. Anne.²⁰ We also know the case of Latin patron burial in the *arcosolium* decorated with frescoes in the Byzantine style, and thus probably as it was in Pera. In 1311 in the monastery church of St. George in the Akraiphnion in Boetia the Flemish knight Anthony le Flamenc (inner sides of the arch decorated with angels) was probably buried (Kalopissi-Verti 2007, pp. 28–29; 2017, pp. 374–77²¹).

Features of Byzantine origin prevail in the scene of the *Nativity of Christ*. Its pattern, as well as elements of the landscape background, correspond essentially to the late Byzantine iconographies, such as fragmentary mosaic in the church of the Apostles in Thessaloniki or a painting from the Peribleptos church in Mistra (ca 1359). The only detail clearly deviating from the eastern scheme is the display of the Virgin Mary (in the church of St. Paul) on the bed, not on the fabric stretched on the ground in front of the grotto. It should be noted, however, that a similar bed was shown in the church of the Saviour in Chora on mosaics with the *Nativity* and the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*, as well as on the fresco *Healing the daughter of Jairus in parekklesion*. Such a motif is not known in contemporary iconography of Italian painting (Westphalen 2007, pp. 56–57; 2008, pp. 284, 287–88; Çetinkaya 2010, p. 175; Akyürek 2011, pp. 339–40; Quirini-Popławski 2017, p. 199). Similar images of the *Nativity of Christ* include the painting from the Cypriot church of Panagia tou Arakos in Lagoudera (1192), where the Child Jesus was shown to the left of the “half-sitting” Mary, or on a mosaic of the church of the Saviour in Chora, where the topic of the Three Magi was omitted, the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* was shown in the right part, *St. Joseph*—below the lying Mother of God, and the scene of the *Wash*—in the lower-left corner (, pp. 50 [Figures 3–4 59–60]B54-arts-587659).

It should also be noted that this was not the first representation of the *Nativity of “Byzantine type”* in the Latin church, because the scene similar in iconography to the painting from Lagoudera

²⁰ About *arcosolia* in Famagusta, see (Bacci 2014, pp. 207–9, 213, 215, 221, 251; Paschali 2014, pp. 300–3, 311). In the church of St. Anne representation of the *Assumption* was placed above the *arcosolium* (Bacci 2014, p. 24).

²¹ His burial proves a certain acculturation of this Latin patron within the Byzantine tradition.

was shown in a mosaic made between 1167 and 1169 in the Grotto of the Nativity in the Basilica of Bethlehem (Folda 1995, pl. 9.29; , pp. 51 [Figure 5 60–61]B54-arts-587659).

Slightly less attention has been paid so far to the iconography of the scene of the *Baptism of Christ*, known from Constantinopolitan examples in Chora and in the Theotokos Pammakaristos church. In Chora, however, this scene was shown in a different way, in principle as a meeting of Christ with St. John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan, while in the Pammakaristos church it is very similar to that from the Dominican cycle—above the figure of Christ, standing in the middle, there are the *Dove of the Holy Spirit* (from which radiate three rays) and a fragment of the blue vault in the form of a circle. On the right is shown a group of angels against the background of a rocky landscape, on the left—*St. John*. The difference between the two scenes is only that in the church of St. Paul the saint is probably standing upright, while in Pammakaristos he is kneeling above Christ, bent almost halfway, reaching His head with the right hand (Çetinkaya 2010, p. 175; 2011, p. 62; Akyürek 2011, p. 339; Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 199–200).

As already noted, the Byzantine character is also represented by the *Evangelists* on the choir vault. The gesture of *St. Marc* inserting the pen into the inkstand finds its close counterpart in the mosaic of the church of the Apostles in Thessaloniki, while the forms of the throne, footstool and pulpit are similar to the images from the *parekklesion* in Chora. Nevertheless, the persons are accompanied by their symbols, generally not used in Eastern churches (Westphalen 2007, pp. 57, 59; 2008, pp. 284–87; Akyürek 2011, pp. 339–40).

The same concerns the Passion cycle. Some scenes have been shaped in a way that is more common in Byzantine painting. For example, the *Last Supper*, composed around a semicircular table with a centrally placed Christ and St. John, is slightly closer to the scene from the church of St. George in Staro Nagoričane (finished in 1317–18).

If they were correctly identified, the “Byzantine” scenes include those discovered in the attic of the church: *Deesis* and probably a fragment of the *Last Judgment*. The latter scene, due to the small space intended for it, was arranged in short order, similar to the analogous scene located in the Chora *parekklesion* (Çetinkaya 2010, pp. 180, 186–88; Quirini-Popławski 2017, p. 198).

It should be noted that, as it seems, the decoration of the north chapel was consistent with Byzantine character. It is not only about the wider use of a mosaic technique than in other parts of the church (or perhaps of the better state of its conservation). It should be noted that two of the three saints depicted on the mosaic (*St. Peter* and the unidentified saint) made the Greek gesture of blessing. If their identification is correct, it is also important that *St. Paul*, considered to be the Apostle of the East, was placed above *St. Peter*, the first bishop of Rome.

The frieze located on the northern wall of this chapel is also very characteristic—containing Byzantine symbols of power. It should be noted that it is very similar to the marble inlays decorating the archivolt of the entrance to the church of Panagia Parigoritissa in Arta (1294–96) and the frieze inside the church of Theotokos Pammakaristos in Constantinople (ca 1310) (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 93–98).

In summary, three issues should be highlighted:

- I could not find any painting cycle of general iconography similar to that in the church of St. Paul in Pera, but I found only similarities to particular scenes or their fragments,²²
- the stylistic features of the Dominican frescoes seem quite homogeneous and the impression of uniformity is emphasized by dark-blue backgrounds and red-brown stripes separating individual scenes in different parts of the church (in the choir, in the north chapel, and in the *arcosolium*). So,

²² It is not possible to draw further conclusions, but merely to indicate comparisons with the decoration of the interior of the chapel of St. Elias in the Vazelon monastery near Trebizond, dated to 1219, where three scenes from Christ's childhood (*Annunciation*, *Christmas* and *Presentation in the Temple*) are shown on the southern wall, while on the north—two Passion scenes (*Crucifixion* and *Harrowing of Hell*), *Dormition of the Virgin Mary* is in the inner tympanum (western wall) (Rapti 2017, p. 29).

it seems that most of the known paintings were created, at one coherent time as part of a uniform decorative action, possibly made by one workshop,²³

- we do not know if the overlapping of the painting with a mosaic decoration noticed in the south chapel testifies to that as a subsequent or later creation in the scale of the whole church. As I pointed out, the mosaic decoration covering the ribs at least in both side chapels, and perhaps in the choir itself, has almost identical ornamental decoration. It is also possible to explain this partial “overlay” as some kind of inaccuracy in the mosaic position, which was certainly dealt with by a different workshop than the frescoes. This place, located at the junction of the wall and the vault, was hardly noticeable from the level of the church floor.

5. Date of the Paintings

For a correct assessment of the style and iconography of the paintings in question, one should ask oneself—what are the reasons for their dating? Most of the authors who asked this question earlier came out first of all from the question of the time when the church was constructed, which, is also uncertain. Even if we assume that the church was built immediately after the founding of the Dominican monastery in Pera in 1299 (and not, for example, only after 1307 or 1315), the time needed for its creation should be estimated for a dozen or so years. As it seems, it can be safely assumed that hypothetically paintings could start to be painted only after about 1315. The date on the oldest dated tombstone—1323—also has its meaning in this context. Such dating of the building excludes the possibility of dating paintings to the first decade of the 14th century, as proposed by Çetinkaya. Westphalen, who dated them within a wide range in the first half of the 14th century, was also in favor of the relatively early time of their creation—he assumed that they could be completed already in the period when the first burials appeared in the interior of the church, that is, around 1323 (Westphalen 2007, p. 58; Çetinkaya 2010, p. 188).

It is worth recalling here the inscription discovered by Siegrid Düll in 1982 on the cornice crowning the pillar found in the courtyard of Arap Camii. It announces that “brother Rainerus de Coronato made the sacristy covered with paintings, pray for him” (+FRATER RAINERUS DE CORONATO FECIT DEPINGI ISTAN SACRISTIAM HORATE PRO EO). The inscription is undated, but for reasons of epigraphy, Düll placed it around 1340–60. According to her, this indirectly indicates the mid-14th century as the *terminus ante quem* for the essential part of the painting decoration in the interior of the church. This last assumption, however, seems to be devoid of strong foundations, rather it just looks as if some part of the painting decoration was made then. Probably it also testifies to the existence of a number of patrons responsible for paintings in various parts of the church, although this does not necessarily entail their different dating (Düll 1983, pp. 233–35, Table 57/1-4²⁴; Westphalen 2008, p. 286; Melvani 2017, pp. 46–47²⁵).

What tips do the paintings themselves contain? At the current stage of research, it is difficult to indicate the explicitly dated elements of their iconography. It is worth noting, however, that most of the works similar to those from the church of St. Paul in Pera date back to the period between the first and the third quarter of the 14th century. The earliest (the first quarter of the 14th century) are Byzantine works, i.e. mosaics in the church of the Apostles in Thessaloniki and decorations of the churches of the Saviour in Chora and Theotokos Pammakaristos in Constantinople. In turn, similar Central Italian works were created in the second and third quarters of this century (*Coronation of the Virgin Mary* from Montepulciano or frescoes in the Florentine Cappellone degli Spagnoli). Interestingly, according to James H. Stubblebine the *Assumption* scene became popular in Italian painting only in the third decade of the 14th century. On the basis of these, only indirect hints, it seems that the creation of

²³ Melvani (2017, pp. 46–47) is of the opposite opinion.

²⁴ This author guesses that under the term *sacristia*, one of the choir chapels or other room near the choir was meant.

²⁵ It seems right to presume the patronage of paintings in the choir by the Dominicans, and in the side chapels—representatives of the families that founded them.

paintings from Pera should be placed around the mid-14th century, and therefore later than it was proposed so far (Stubblebine 1979, vol. 1, p. 47).²⁶

6. Workshop and Possible Goals. Byzantine Paintings in Latin Churches

The question about a specific workshop that executed the painting decoration of this church remains open. In the context of the notable similarities to the churches' decorations in Chora and Pammakaristos, the answer to the following question is of fundamental importance: are these similarities so close that they indicate direct workshop relationship,²⁷ or do they result from the common features of the style then used in both Constantinople and in Pera, which so far we knew mainly on the basis of paintings from Chora? As can be judged based on the preserved fragments and the available photographic documentation, the level of Dominican paintings' gives way to the level of frescoes in the Chora *parekklesion*, not to mention mosaics. One can also notice some unevenness in the level of their execution. It seems that the frescoes in the choir, and especially the scene of the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary* located there, present a better level than, for example, a scene with the same subject placed in an *arcosolium* (Quirini-Popławski 2017, p. 205).

We have enough information to assume that in the 14th century, Pera was an interesting and significant center of monumental painting. This was evidenced by the large mosaic and fresco decoration known today only from modern descriptions, adorning the church of St. Francis, as well as a smaller one—of St. Anne, both belonging to the Franciscan ensemble. Unfortunately, also, in this case, we do not have sufficient clues about their dating, although indirectly we can widely date them between the last quarter of the 13th and around the middle of the 14th century (at least one mosaic in the tympanum of St. Francis external portal can be dated to 1344) (Belin 1894, pp. 200–1; Dalleggio D'Alessio 1925, pp. 46–48²⁸; Matteucci 1967, pp. 319–55; 1971, pp. 171–74, 177–78; Капилов 2000, p. 48; Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 152, 201–3).²⁹ It is worth noting that in 1371, the painter Demetrius of Pera was recorded in Genoa, judging by his name—probably Greek (? p. 555 [reference from February 14, 1371B62-arts-587659; Di Fabio 1998, p. 276; 2005, pp. 42–43, 60). At the same time, Theophanes the Greek was active in Pera (Лазарев 1953, p. 248; Meyendorff 1981, pp. 140–41; Di Fabio 2005, p. 43).

If it existed, what could be the purpose of creating paintings that contain such strong references to the tradition of Byzantine painting, although at the same time containing elements unusual in it, or even polemic to the Greeks? We are dealing here with a situation where, within the Latin church belonging to the Mendicant Order, being at the same time one of the two (next to the Franciscans) most representative churches of the Genoese colony and the main burial sites on its territory, the decoration was made mostly Byzantine in style and partly using the mosaic technique.

Execution of a painting decoration in the Eastern, Byzantine tradition inside a representative Latin church was not really a rare phenomenon. This happened in many countries and in quite a long period of time—from the Great Schism to the end of the Middle Ages.³⁰ The examples of this are provided by the mosaic decorations of churches in present-day Italy (from Venice and Genoa to Sicily), followed by decorations created in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, Lusignan Cyprus, in the Genoese and Venetian possessions and colonies (e.g., in Crete), in Montenegro-Zeta, in Hungary and in Poland. These numerous examples, however, do not have a common denominator and are not easy

²⁶ From the point of view of the Greek-Latin rapprochement, the years of the second reign of Emperor John V Paleologus (1355–1374) would be exceptionally appropriate, see (Origone 2007, p. 105). Delacroix-Besnier (2012, pp. 100–1, 108) situates, however, the key years for this process in the period between 1334 and 1369.

²⁷ Akyürek (2011, p. 340) was inclined to this option.

²⁸ The account dating from around 1630, was probably written by brother Giovanni Mauri della Fratta.

²⁹ In May 1344, Federico di Podio founded a portal leading to the first monastery courtyard, containing an extensive mosaic decoration in the tympanum (Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 111–12).

³⁰ Generally on this topic (Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 204–5); Bacci (2006, pp. 216–18; 2008, p. 279; 2009b, 2014) analyzes "Byzantine" paintings in Famagusta, including those in the Latin churches (Carmelites and St. Anne).

to interpret.³¹ They differ even by the fact that sometimes they are accompanied by Latin or French inscriptions, but more often—Greek or Old Church Slavonic. This type of works appeared in principle in all countries ruled by Latin rulers, in which a large part of the population was Orthodox. However, not only there, as evidenced by the examples of Montenegro, whose rulers were Orthodox, and the majority of the population—Latin. In one country, such decorations could have a very diverse character and context, as evidenced by the remains of paintings in some of the churches created in Cyprus. In several of the Latin churches still standing in Famagusta (the southern chapel of the Franciscan church, the Carmelite church, and St. Anne's), paintings in the Byzantine style have survived. In some provincial Cypriot Orthodox churches (e.g., in the church of the Holy Cross in Pelendria from the third quarter of the 14th century), there were naves or chapels that probably served the Latin cult, decorated with Byzantine paintings. The provincial Byzantine style can also be identified in the paintings, bearing *tituli* in Old French, in the small Royal Chapel of Hagia Ekaterina in Pyrga, funded by King Janus around 1421 or, more likely, already after 1310—by Henry II and the queen Constance of Sicily (Wollesen 2010, pp. 85–111³²).

On the other hand, in Kotor then belonging to Serbia, in the first half of the 14th century a group of painters known in the sources as *pictores graeci* was recorded, which probably meant only the style they represented. Even if they are referred to as *graeci*, their national affiliation is not entirely clear, perhaps they were simply Serbian painters living in Kotor. They are considered as authors of the paintings fragmentarily preserved in the interior of the local cathedral of St. Tryphon (Radojčić 1953, pp. 67–69).³³

In this context, it is worth mentioning a group of paintings sponsored in the 15th century in the prestigious churches of the Kingdom of Poland by two kings from the Jagiellonian dynasty—Władysław (Vladislaus) II Jagiełło (mainly in Lublin, Wiślica, and Sandomierz) and Kazimierz (Casimir) IV Jagiellończyk (Kaplica Świętokrzyska Chapel at the Cracow Cathedral)—probably painted by Balkan and North Ruthenian painters.³⁴

It may be difficult, in principle, to indicate uniform reasons why paintings in the “Eastern” style were introduced into Latin interiors. In some cases, the intention was deliberately to refer to the prestige of the Byzantine Empire as part of a specific political project (Norman Sicily). In some, it resulted from political rapprochement with it (Kingdom of Jerusalem) or easy access to the workshops (Kotor). Confessional motivations could also be involved—that is, the promotion of the Church Union idea, or inter-faith polemic. As far as I know, in none of the above-mentioned countries have such motivations been proven convincingly.

One should be aware in this context of the key importance of the Dominican outpost in Pera for activities for the union of both Churches and the conversion to Catholicism of part of the Byzantine state elites, particularly intensified from the forties of the 14th century (Meyendorff 1981, pp. 52, 104–5; Delacroix-Besnier 1993, pp. 745–46; 1997, pp. 185–97, 277–315, 386, 389; Külzer 2008, pp. 363–65; Delacroix-Besnier 2013; Li Pira 2015, pp. 159–60; Melvani 2017, pp. 33–38). It was also often a place of discussion between the Greeks and Latins, and the place where important theological treaties were created, from the second half of the 14th century, mostly by Greek converts. This statement means that one should expect a reference to this mission in the decoration inside this church. The question that should be asked, however, is whether the style and iconography of the paintings were to lead to the union through their conciliatory, let's call it “hybrid”, character or polemically point out the “errors of the Greeks”?³⁵ Both these trends can be found in the rich literary heritage of the local Dominicans, to

³¹ For examples from the Latin domination in Attica, see (Kalopissi-Verti 2017, pp. 371–79; Kontogiannis 2014, p. 124).

³² He assigns these paintings to the Franco-Byzantine workshop, probably from Acre.

³³ The Byzantine style of these paintings shows, according to this author, a distinctive Italianizing taste.

³⁴ See, for example, (Różycka-Bryzek 2000).

³⁵ Interestingly, the author of the works pointing out the “errors of the Greeks” was father Simon of Constantinople, who was himself of Greek descent (Congourdeau 1987a, pp. 169–72; Delacroix-Besnier 1997, p. 189).

mention only the works of Simon of Constantinople, Guillaume Bernard de Gaillac, Philippe of Pera, Manuel Kalekas and Andreas Chrysoberges (Delacroix-Besnier 1997, pp. 201–71; 2011; 2013, pp. 57–64, 74). Perhaps to some extent, the reflection of this dichotomous position is the aforementioned difference in the decoration of both side chapels—by far the most “Greek” in the northern, and polemically anti-Greek in the southern.

There remains, however, one more, and one can say, the most trivial reason—a choice dictated by artistic taste and prestige associated with the Byzantine style. In my opinion, there is a high probability that in Pera we deal with a choice dictated by aesthetic and pragmatic reasons—the availability of the appropriate workshop. On this occasion, one can take into account the paintings made around 1312 in the Byzantine style in the cathedral of Genoa, perhaps by the painter Mark of Constantinople. It seems that it is difficult to see in them the effect of the conscious pro-unionist policy of the Genoese archdiocese or of the wider political project of the Republic of Genoa (Nelson 1985; Di Fabio 1998, pp. 275–76; 2005, pp. 41–42, 56–65; Kalopissi-Verti 2012, p. 51; Quirini-Popławski 2017, pp. 203–4). A similar situation was probably also in Famagusta. According to the research of Michele Bacci, there was a Byzantine workshop there in the second half of the 14th century, who came from Thessaloniki or Constantinople, working for the churches of various Christian denominations. Interestingly, in the decoration of the Armenian church, this workshop has not adapted to the Armenian tradition, but the Christological cycle found in it differs fundamentally from that in the church of St. Paul (Kouymjian 2012, pp. 142–48; Bacci 2014, p. 242; 2017, pp. 104–5). It seems that its employment in Latin churches also resulted from the admiration for a new, Paleologan formula of the Byzantine style on the part of the Famagusta patrons. Nevertheless, they also show features that refer to the Italian-Western tradition. By the way, it should be noted that the only known painter then operating in Cyprus is known as “Perrotus”, which was interpreted as his name. Should not it be interpreted as the indication of his origin “from Pera”, and, therefore, in principle “Peirotus” or “Peyrotus”? (Bacci 2009a, pp. 495–97; 2014, pp. 230, 245–46; 2017, p. 106).

As it seems, the Greek workshop was able to adapt to the iconographic requirements related to the wishes of the patrons. These conclusions broadly agree with those accepted for architecture, architectural decoration, and tombstones in the mendicant churches of Pera. As previously indicated by a few authors, Mendicant churches in Pera provide evidence of the vivid intercultural exchange, which resulted in the creation of the hybrid “Latin-Greek” works (Jolivet-Lévy 2012, pp. 26, 28; Kalopissi-Verti 2012, p. 51; Melvani 2017, pp. 47–50).

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