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The Painter Eutychios — Father of Michael Astrapas and Protomaster of the Frescoes in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid¹

ABSTRACT: This study primarily deals with the identity of the protomaster of the frescoes in the church of Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid and with the painters' signatures in the church of St. George in Staro Nagoričino and the church of St. Niketas near Skopje.

KEY WORDS: Michael Astrapas, Eutychios, Byzantine painters, Staro Nagoričino, the church of St. Niketas near Skopje, the church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, painter's signatures, Byzantine painting, Serbian medieval painting

Professional circles, for the first time, heard of Michael and Eutychios, the well-known Byzantine painters from the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century, almost one hundred years ago, when Gabriel Millet and Louis Bréhier discovered inscriptions with their names in the Church of St. George in Staro Nagoričino (Figs. 1a, 1b, 1c and 2a, 2b, 2c).² The names of the two artists were later discovered on a fresco in the Church of St. Niketas near Skopje (Figs. 3a, 3b, 3c) and, in the mid-1900s, several of their signatures were fo-

¹ This text was read out at the symposium entitled „*The Artistic Life of Pskov and Late Byzantine Art*” held in Moscow, in September, 2003. The papers from that symposium were published only recently in the new issue of the *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo (Khudozhestvennaia zhizn' Pskova i iskusstvo pozdnevizantiiskoi epokhi. K 1100-letii Pskova)*, Moscow 2008; our text is found on pp. 411—416). Unfortunately, the text was published without any illustrations, even though the author had submitted them in time. Besides, parts of the text that were written in the Greek language were printed with numerous mistakes so that they were illegible or it was difficult to read them. Given that the text primarily concerns the artists' signatures written in Greek, the said errors rendered the text useless. Therefore, we are publishing it here, once more, and express our gratitude to the editorial board of the *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovnu umetnost* for their understanding.

² First Millet read the name of Eutychios on the tunic of St. Theodore Teron (Figs. 1a, 1b, 1c) in 1906, and then Bréhier, in 1928, discovered Michael's name on the shield of a holy warrior, probably St. Artemios, painted on the northern wall of the naos (Figs. 2a, 2b, 2c), see G. Millet, *La dernière évolution de l'art byzantin*, in: *Histoire de l'Art, depuis les premiers temps chrétiens jusqu'à nos jours*, ed. A. Michel, t. III/2, Paris 1908, 952; idem, *L'école grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, Paris 1916, 12, fig. 2; L. Bréhier, *Les vieilles églises serbes. Impressions de voyage d'un congressiste*, Nova Evropa XXIV/1 (1931), 12.



Fig. 1a St. Theodore Teron. The Church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino



Fig. 1b St. Theodore Teron, a detail (signature with the names of Michael and Eutybios).
The Church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino (drawing P. Miljković-Peppek)



Fig. 1c St. Theodore Teron, a detail (signature with the names of Michael and Eutybios).
The Church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino (drawing B. Todić)



Fig. 2a St. Artemios. The Church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino



Fig. 2b St. Artemios, a detail (signature of Michael). The Church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino (drawing P. Miljković-Peppek)



Fig. 2c St. Artemios, a detail (signature of Michael). The Church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino (drawing B. Todić)



Fig. 3a St. Theodore Teron. The Church of Saint Niketas near Skopje



Fig. 3b St. Theodore Teron, a detail (signature with the names of Michael and Eutychios).
The Church of Saint Niketas near Skopje



Fig. 3c St. Theodore Teron, a detail (signature with the names of Michael and Eutychios).
The Church of Saint Niketas near Skopje (drawing P. Miljković-Peppek)

und in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid (Fig. 4).³ Almost simultaneously with the discovery in Ohrid, an inscription was found in the exonarthex of the Church of the Virgin Ljeviška in Prizren (Fig. 5), which lead to the conclusion that frescoes of the Prizren cathedral also have a connection with the painters' workshop of Michael and Eutychios.⁴ The oldest layer of wall paintings in the Church of St. Prohor of Pčinja, near Vranje, was recently included in the opus of the two fresco painters. There, on one of the few preserved fragments of the old frescoes, another signature of Michael was discovered (Fig. 6).⁵

All of the mentioned discoveries attracted the particular attention of art historians. In that respect, the discovery of the signatures in Ohrid is the most significant. After their publication, numerous texts of various scope and character — articles, monographs and dissertations

³ About the discovery in St. Niketas, see G. Millet, *Sur le nom de deux peintres à St. Niketas*, Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres. Comptes rendus des séances de l'année 1934. Bulletin de d'avril—juillet, Paris 1934, 222—224. About the discovery in Ohrid, see Dj. Bošković, *Nouvelles byzantines de Yougoslavie*, Atti dello VIII Congresso internazionale di studi bizantini (Palermo, 3—10. IV 1951), II, Roma 1953, 92—94, Fig. 7—9.

⁴ About the discovery of this inscription, see B. Živković, *Konzervacija fresaka Bogorodice Ljeviške u Prizrenu*, Zbornik zaštite spomenika kulture III/2 (1952), 257—260. Cf. also our note 8.

⁵ About the discovery of the painter's signature in St. Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje, see G. Subotić, D. Todirović, *Slikar Mihailo u manastiru Svetog Prohora Pčinjskog*, ZRVI 34 (1995), 126.

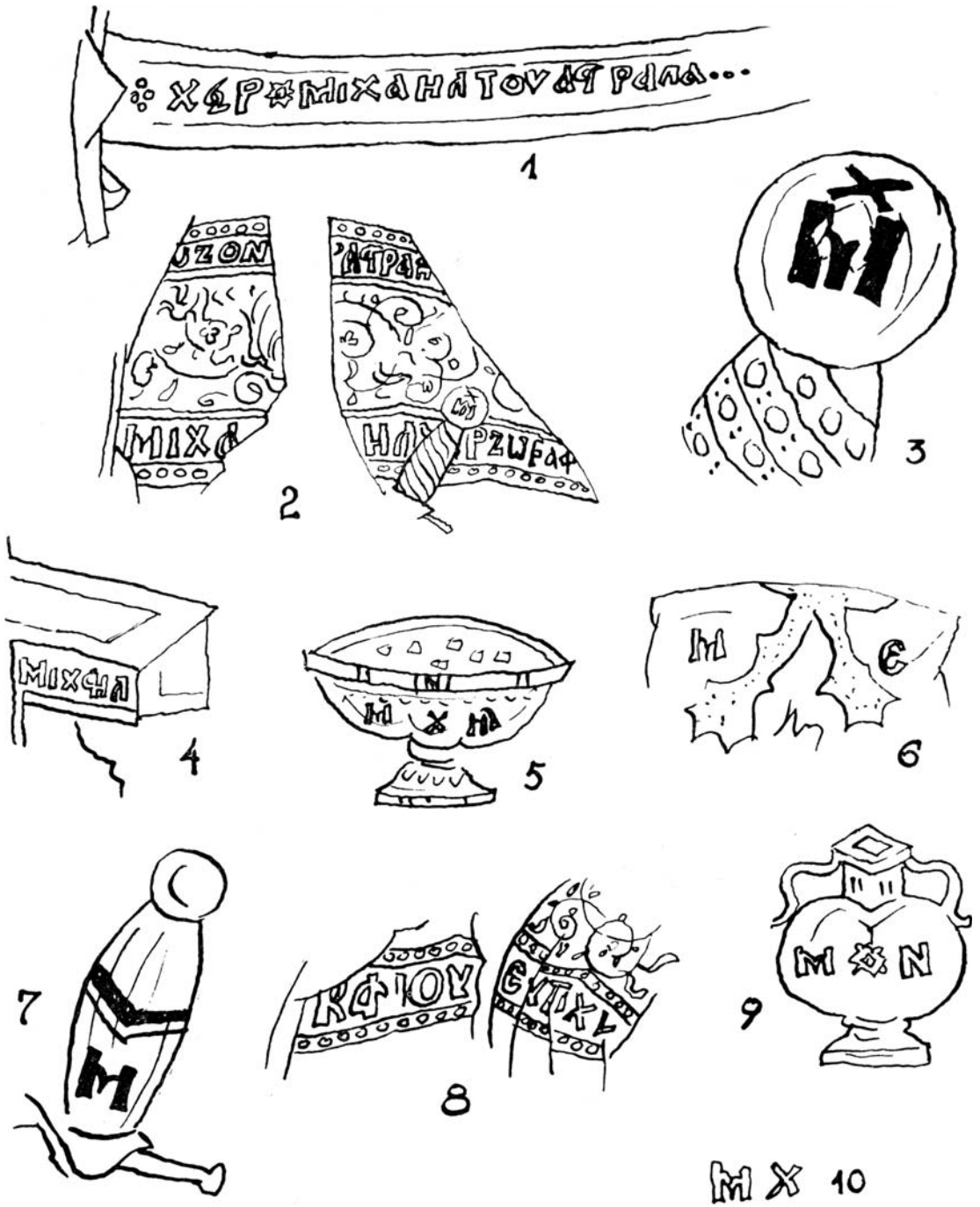


Fig. 4 Signatures of Michael Astrapas and Eutyichios in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid (drawing P. Miljković-Peppek)

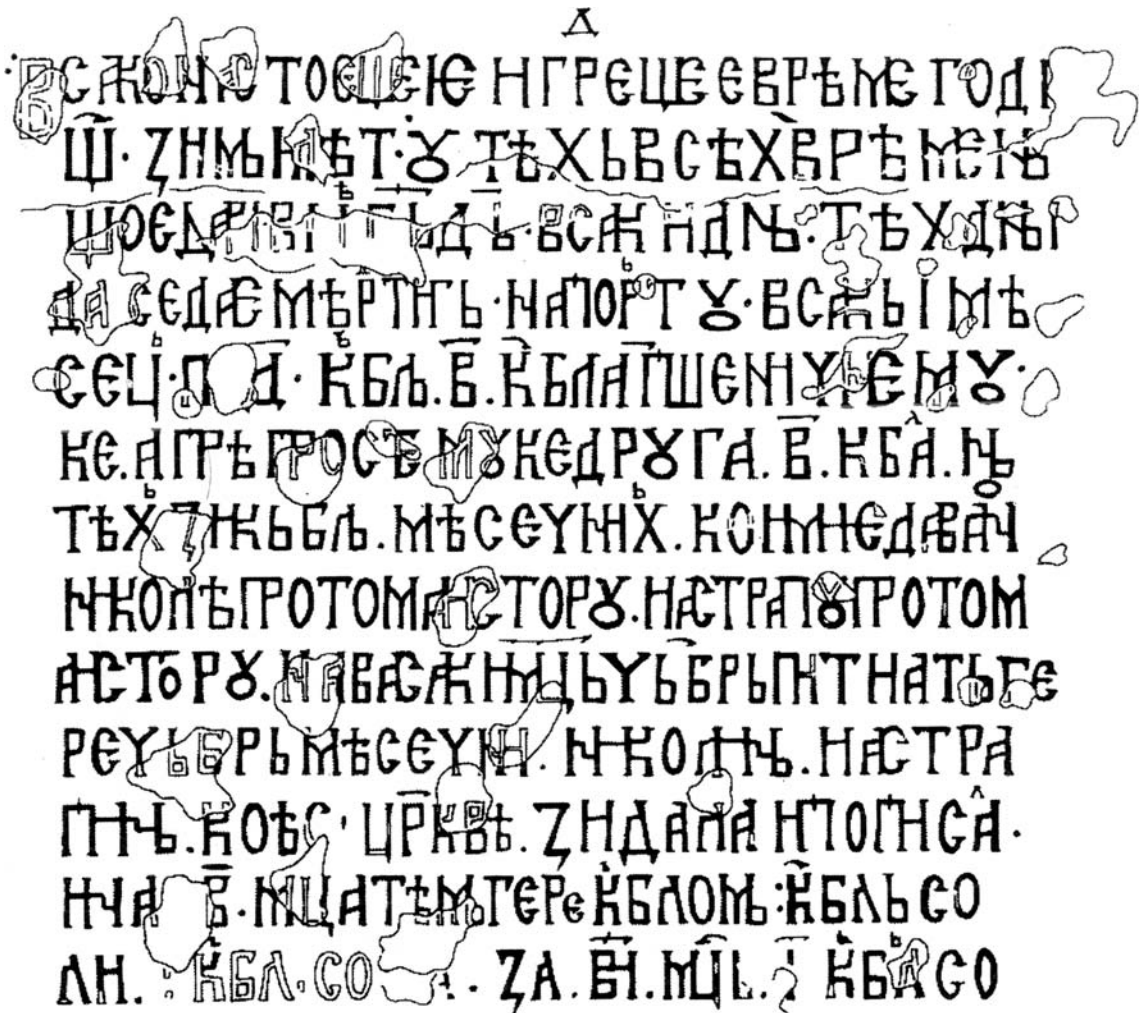


Fig. 5 Inscription mentioning „the protomaster Astrapas”. The Church of the Virgin Ljeviška, Prizren, the exonarthex (drawing B. Todić)

— were written about the work of Michael and Eutybios. These texts studied in detail not only the works which the two painters signed, but also the fresco ensembles for which it has been established beyond doubt, through the method of attribution, that they were painted by the same masters (the frescoes in the King’s Church in Studenica and those in the Gračanica monastery).⁶ In spite of this, many important issues remain somewhat unclear. The purpose of

⁶ For literature dedicated to the work of Michael and Eutybios, see Subotić, Todorović, *op. cit.*, 117—122; B. Todić, *Serbian medieval painting: the age of King Milutin*, Belgrade 1999, 284—286; B. Schellewald, *Michael u. Eutybios*, in: *Reallexikon zur byzantinische Kunst*, ed. K. Wessel, VI, Stuttgart 1999, 361—362; B. Todić, „Signatures” des peintres Michel Astrapas et Eutybios. *Fonction et signification*, in: *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίσσα*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2001, 643—644.

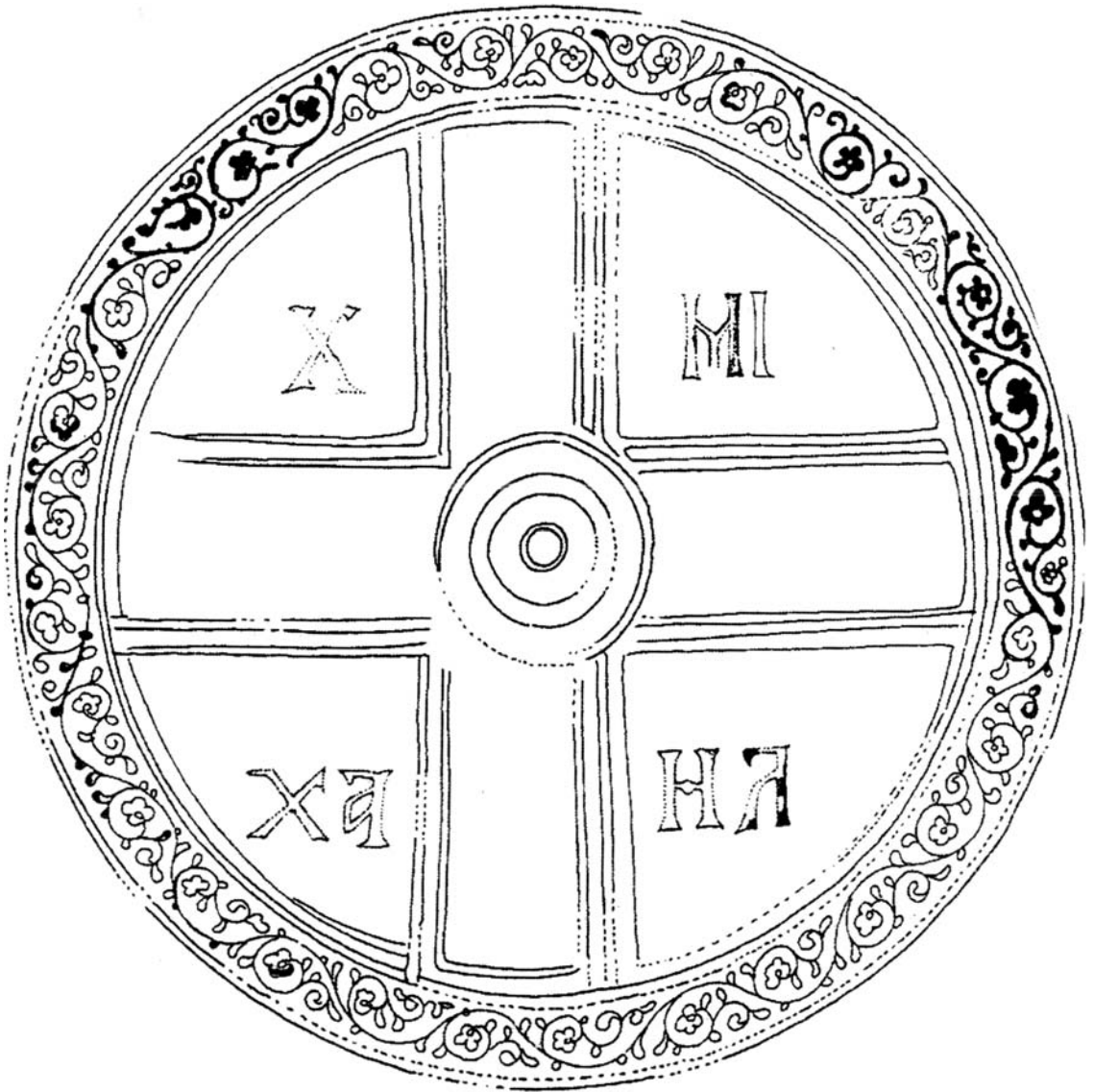


Fig. 6 Signature of Michael Astrapas in the Church of St. Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje
(drawing G. Subotić, D. Todorović)

this paper is to reconsider some of these issues. We believe this can serve as an incentive for new research.

Narrative historical sources have no information about the life and work of Michael and Eutybios. However, it is certain that they were Greek, because they signed themselves in the Greek language, both in the Byzantine (the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid) and in the Serbian churches (St. George in Staro Nagoričino, St. Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje, St. Niketas near



Fig. 7a St. Merkourios, The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid

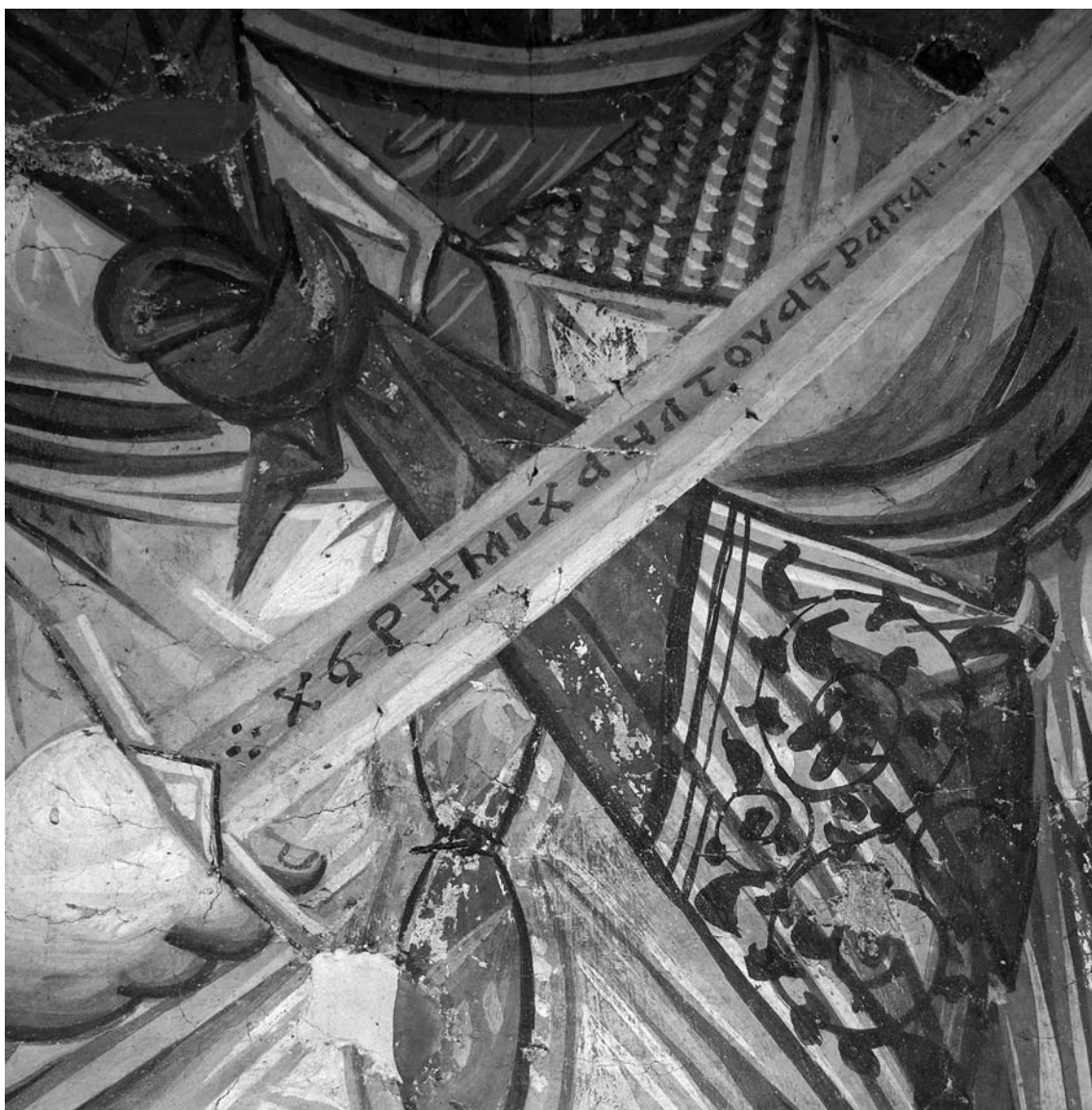


Fig. 7b St. Merkourios, a detail (signature of Michael Astrapas).
The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid

Skopje).⁷ Michael's origin can be established even more precisely, thanks to the fact that in the Virgin Peribleptos, the family name Astrapas is inscribed next to his name on the sword of St. Merkourios — ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΤΡΑΠΑ (Figs. 7a, 7b).⁸ This family name existed in Thessalonike at the beginning of the 14th century. Sources mention John and Makarios Astrapas. John was a scribe and illustrator of books, and Makarios a monk in the Chortaites monastery.⁹

According to certain researchers, it can be concluded on the basis of the preserved signatures of Michael and Eutychios that, of the two painters, Michael had the more important role.¹⁰ An argument in favor of this opinion is that his name is placed first in the „joint” signatures (in the Virgin Peribleptos, Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas), and the fact that there are many of his separate signatures. In the Ohrid church, the „joint” signature was found on the cuirass of St. Alexander. Actually, the letters „M” and „E” were written on it, and these letters are interpreted as the initials of the two painters (Fig. 4/6).¹¹ In Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas (Figs. 1b, 3c), the names of Michael and Eutychios are written one next to the other on the chiton and on the shield of St. Theodore Teron respectively (Staro Nagoričino — <ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙ>ΧΑΗΛ ΕΥΤΥΧΙΟΥ; St. Niketas — ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΕΥΤΥΧΙΟΥ).¹² As for Michael's separate signatures, there were at least seven in the Virgin Peribleptos — ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΤΡΑΠΑ, ΑΣΤΡΑΠ(Α) ΜΙΧΑΗΛ <X>[ΕΙ]Ρ ΖΩΓΡΑΦ[ΟΥ], Χ[ΕΙΡ] Μ[ΙΧΑΗΛ], Μ[ΙΧΑΗΛ] Χ[ΕΙΡ], ΜΙΧΑΗΛ, Μ[Ι]Χ[Α]ΗΛ, Μ[ΙΧΑΗΛ],¹³ and one each in Staro Nagoričino (ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ <ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΥ>) and St. Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje (Χ[ΕΙΡ] ΜΙΧΑ-

⁷ It is well known that the founders of the church in Ohrid were the Byzantine nobleman Progonos Sgourous and his wife Eudokia Komnene, while all other churches in which signatures of Michael and Eutychios have been found were endowments of the Serbian king Milutin. For preserved signatures of Michael and Eutychios, see P. Miljković-Pepek, *Pišuvanite podatoci za zografite Mihail Astrapa i Eutihij i za neкои nivni sorabotnici*, Glasnik na Institutot za nacionalna istorija IV/1—2 (Skopje 1960), 141—161; idem, *Deloto na zografite Mihailo i Eutihij*, Skopje 1967, 18—23, fig. 1—3; Subotić, Todorović, *op. cit.*, 126; Todić, „Signatures”, 646—648 (with older literature).

⁸ Already A. Xyngopoulos (*Thessalonique et la peinture macédonienne*, Athènes 1955, 34—44) has shown that this is a family name. In the Virgin Peribleptos, this surname is also inscribed next to Michael's name on the mantle of St. Demetrios, whose depiction decorates the eastern side of the southwestern pillar of the naos (Figs. 8a, 8b). Still, the inscription on that mantle has not yet been deciphered with certainty. The interpretation provided by Petar Miljković-Pepek — ΑΣΤΡΑΠ(Α) ΜΙΧΑΗΛ <X>[ΕΙ]Ρ ΖΩΓΡΑΦ[ΟΥ] — seems the most acceptable, v. Miljković-Pepek, *Pišuvanite podatoci*, 143—147 (for other opinions, see Todić, *op. cit.*, 646). It is also important to bear in mind the fact that the inscription in the outer narthex of the Church of the Virgin Ljeviška in Prizren mentions the „protomaster Astrapas”: ...астрaпѣ протомaнсторѣ; ...ннкoлннѣ и астрaпннѣ коѣ с<та> цр(ю)квѣ зидала и попис(а)ла, v. D. Panić, G. Babić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška*, Belgrade 1988², 23. This Astrapas is commonly believed to have been the protomaster of the wall paintings of the church in Prizren and that he was Michael Astrapas, who painted the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, see V. J. Djurić, *Vizantijske freske u Jugoslaviji*, Belgrade 1974, 49; G. Babić, *Kraljeva crkva u Studenici*, Belgrade 1987, 218; Subotić, Todorović, *op. cit.*, 126; Todić, *Serbian medieval painting*, 230 sq, 312, 316—317.

⁹ About John Astrapas and the family name of Astrapas, see S. Kisas, *Solunska umetnička porodica Astrapa*, Zograf 5 (1974), 35—37; *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (= PLP), red. E. Trapp, Fs. 1, Wien 1976, 149—150 (nr. 1593). About Makarios Astrapas, see PLP 1, 150 (nr. 1594). For other reasons for which the Thessalonian origin of Michael and Eutychios can be taken as correct, see e.g. Todić, „Signatures”, 653—661.

¹⁰ See e.g. Miljković-Pepek, *Pišuvanite podatoci*, 148, 151, 162; idem, *Deloto*, 21, 23.

¹¹ Miljković-Pepek, *Pišuvanite podatoci*, 150, fig. 1/6; idem, *Deloto*, 19, fig. 1/6.

¹² For the signature from Staro Nagoričino, see Millet, *L'école grecque*, 12, fig. 2; Miljković-Pepek, *Deloto*, fig. 3/2; B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, Belgrade 1993, 26—27, 137, dess. 26. For the signature from St. Niketas, see Miljković-Pepek, *op. cit.*, fig. 2; Todić, „Signatures”, 651, fig. 5.

¹³ Miljković-Pepek, *op. cit.*, 19, figs. 1/1, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, 1/7, 1/10.



Fig. 8a St. Demetrios, The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid



Fig. 8b St. Demetrios, a detail (signature of Michael Astrapas).
The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid

ΗΑ).¹⁴ On the other hand, only one such signature by Eutychios has been preserved — on the decorative ribbon on the mantle of St. Prokopios in the church in Ohrid (Figs. 9a, 9b).¹⁵ Besides, this signature, too, is probably part of the „joint” signature of the two masters, because it has an incomplete form (ΚΑ<Μ>ΟΥ ΕΥΤΙΧ[ΙΟ]Υ — *and me, Eutychios*) and cannot be viewed as a separate whole.¹⁶ It gains meaning if brought into connection with the nearby signature of Michael Astrapas, on the sword of St. Merkourios (Figs. 7a, 7b). Michael would be mentioned first — ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΤΡΑΠΑ | ΚΑ<Μ>ΟΥ ΕΥΤΙΧ[ΙΟ]Υ.¹⁷

In spite of the above said, the inscription on the mantle of St. Prokopios calls for the reconsideration of the issue of the chief painter of the frescoes in the Virgin Peribleptos. It contains the word „καμού” (crasis for „και εμού”), and this word had a very specific meaning in the signatures of the old Greek painters. With it, the person who wrote the signature pointed

¹⁴ For the most acceptable reading of the said inscription from Staro Nagoričino, see Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, 26, 30, dess. 4. For signature in St. Prohor of Pčinja, see Subotić, Todorović, *Slikar Mihailo*, 126, dess. 1.

¹⁵ Miljković-Peppek, *Deloto*, 19, fig. 1/8.

¹⁶ In order to be complete, Eutychios’ signature would have to have some of the common initial phrases, like „ετελειώθη δε υπό χειρός”, „διά χειρός”, „ιστορίθη δε διά χειρός” or „χείρ” (cf. examples quoted *infra* and see literature mentioned in our note 18). It is not very likely that this phrase is „hidden” on the invisible part of Prokopios’ mantle.

¹⁷ Miljković-Peppek, *Pišuvanite podatoci*, 151; idem, *Deloto*, 18, note 35. The figures of St. Prokopios and St. Merkourios were painted on the same (the western) side of the western pair of pillars of the naos (Prokopios on the southwestern pillar, Mercurios on the northwestern pillar).



Fig. 9a St. Prokopios. The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid



Fig. 9b St. Prokopios, a detail (signature of Eutybios).
The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid

out his role in the task.¹⁸ Since the most interesting churches for our topic are the ones which were painted by at least two painters, like the endowment of Progonos Sgouros in Ohrid, we shall list several signatures from such churches here:

1) Ετ<ελει>όθι δε ηπό χιρός καμού Νηκολάου του ηστωριογράφου από χόρας Ρέ-
τζητζα(ς) <μετά> του αυτάδελφο(υ) κ(αι) μαθ(η)τού μου Θεοδόρου (the Church of Holy
Anargyroi in Kiroula, Laconia, from 1265);¹⁹

2) Διά χειρός καμού α(μαρτ)ολού και ατέχνου Μανουήλ και Ιωάννου των Φωκάδων
(the Church of SS. Constantine and Helena in Avdou, Crete, from 1445);²⁰

3) Ιστορίθη δε και διά χειρός καμού του αμαρτωλού Νεοφύτου μοναχού του Κριτός,
ομού δε και μετά του Κυριαζή τω ιερί (the Church of the Dormition in Kalampaka, from
1573);²¹

¹⁸ Cf. D. Feissel, A. Philippides-Braat, *Inscriptions du Péloponnèse (à l'exception de Mistra)*, Travaux et mémoires 9 (1985), 311, 312, 315, 338; M. Χατζηδάκης, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την άλωση (1450—1830)*, τ. I, Αθήνα 1987, 154, 172, 238, 257, 263, 267, 268, 273, 282, 295, 306, 308, 320, 326; τ. II (with E. Δρακοπούλου), Αθήνα 1997, 52, 130, 139, 192, 197, 211, 239, 241, 243, 255, 256, 272, 399, 443, 451—452, 460, 468; S. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece*, Wien 1992, 64, 68, 72.

¹⁹ Feissel, Philippides-Braat, *op. cit.*, 312; Kalopissi-Verti, *Inscriptions*, 68.

²⁰ Χατζηδάκης, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι*, II, 451—452.

²¹ Χατζηδάκης, *op. cit.*, II, 130.

4) Ιστορήθη δε και διά χειρός καμού του αμαρτωλού Ιωάννου ιερέως μετά των τέκνων αυτού (the Parecclesion of the Three Holy Hierarchs in the Monastery of Barlaam, Meteora, from 1637);²²

5) Διά χειρός καμού του ταπηνού δούλου του Θεού Νηκολάου και τον υιόν αυτού Θεοδοσίου ιερέως (the Church of the Monastery of Zidanios, Servia, from 1756).²³

Bearing in mind that in the cited and all other signatures of that type, the word „καμού” refers to the chief painter, there is a realistic basis for the following conclusion: the formulation ΚΑ<Μ>ΟΥ ΕΥΤΙΧ[ΙΟ]Υ, that is ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΤΡΑΠΑ | ΚΑ<Μ>ΟΥ ΕΥΤΙΧ[ΙΟ]Υ, points to Eutychios as the protomaster of the frescoes in the Virgin Peribleptos. Naturally, caution is advised in this case because of the said arguments in favor of the hypothesis that Michael was the chief painter of the endowment of Progonos Sgouros. It seems, however, that the abundance of Michael’s signatures in the Ohrid church points to the beginner’s desire for affirmation.²⁴ The same artist signed his name less frequently on works created after the Virgin Peribleptos.²⁵ As for Michael’s priority over Eutychios expressed through the order of the letters „M” and „E” written on the cuirass of St. Alexander (Fig. 4/6), one should also bear in mind that it is not at all certain that these are the initials of Michael and Eutychios. Let us recollect that, in the narthex of the Ohrid church, on the cup in the composition of the Wisdom of God, the letters „M” and „N” are written (Fig. 4/6). These have been deciphered as the initials of Michael Astrapas and one of his anonymous associates.²⁶ Analogously, the two letters „M”, written on the collar of the tunic of St. Damianos, also in the narthex (Fig. 10), could be interpreted in the same way.²⁷ Consequently, one may conclude that Michael Astrapas had at least three assistants in the painting of the Virgin Peribleptos, and that they all signed themselves by placing Michael’s initial in front of their own. Since such signatures of painters are not found elsewhere in Byzantine art, one could also think of other possibilities for interpreting the letters on the cuirass of St. Alexander. It is possible, for instance, that this is another form of Michael’s signature — Μ[ιχαήλ] Ε[γροα-ψε], but also Eutychios’ invocation in the form of a cryptogram — Μ[έμνησων] Ε[υτυχίου] or Μ[νήστητη] Ε[υτυχίου].²⁸ Even if these are truly the initials of Michael and Eutychios, the order in which they are placed cannot have the strength of an argument. As mentioned earlier,

²² Χατζηδάκης, *op. cit.*, I, 326.

²³ Χατζηδάκης, *op. cit.*, II, 466, 468.

²⁴ Cf. K. Petrov, *Novi formi na avtorskite signaturi od XIII vek vo našata zemja, II*, Likovna umetnost 10—11 (Skopje 1983/1984), 168.

²⁵ As already said, two of his signatures have been preserved at Staro Nagoričino, and one each at St. Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje and St. Niketas (*v. supra*). In the wall paintings of the Virgin Ljeviška, the King’s Church and Gračanica, which have been rightly attributed to the workshop of Michael Astrapas, none of the painters’ signatures were preserved, although, with the exception of the church in Prizren, these are very well preserved fresco ensembles.

²⁶ Miljković-Pepek, *Pišuvanite podatoci*, 150—155, fig. 1/9; *idem*, *Deloto*, 18—19, 22, fig. 1/9 (with the assumption that the anonymous associate could be the protomaster Nicholas who is mentioned in the Virgin Ljeviška).

²⁷ See M. Marković, *Umetnička delatnost Mihaila i Evtihija. Sadašnja znanja, sporna pitanja i pravci budućih istraživanja*, Zbornik Narodnog muzeja XVII/2 (2004), Fig. 4. It is interesting that the letters Ω and Ν are written on the collar of the tunic of St. Kosmas (Fig. 11), painted next to St. Damianos. These letters could have a decorative function (for similar examples, see Miljković-Pepek, *Pišuvanite podatoci*, 143—144).

²⁸ One can neither exclude the possibility of this being a cryptographic form of the signatures found in Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas — Μ(ΙΧΑΗΛ) Ε(ΥΤΥΧΙΟΥ). For the interpretation according to which these signatures do not contain the names of the two painters, but Michael’s name and patronym, see *infra*.



Fig. 10 St. Damianos. The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid

it is very probable that there is the „joint” signature of the two painters in the church in Ohrid, in which Michael is mentioned first, although Eutybios pointed out his role in the characteristic way of protomasters — ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΤΡΑΠΑ | ΚΑ<Μ>ΟΥ ΕΥΤΙ-Χ[ΙΟΥ].²⁹

In connection with the question of the protomaster of the frescoes in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, it is important also to bear in mind the „joint” signatures of the painters from Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas because here, too, Michael is mentioned before Eutybios.³⁰ However, in both signatures the conjunction „καί” is omitted between the names of the two painters (Figs. 1b, 3c), which requires the word ΕΥΤΥΧΙΟΥ to be interpreted as Michael’s patronym, and not as the name of Michael’s co-worker.³¹ True, Miljković-Pepel

²⁹ Cf. *supra*.

³⁰ About those signatures, see *supra*.

³¹ This would be the patronym formed of the father’s name in the genitive, without the article. Such a type of patronym was usual in the Greek language from ancient times. Among other places, it also occurs in the Scriptures: Σίμων Ἰωνά (John 21:15-17), Ἰούδας Σίμωνος (John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2; 13:26), Ἰακώβος Αλφραίου (Acts 1:13), etc. See also our note 41.



Fig. 11 St. Cosmas. The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid

was thinking of an asyndeton, but there is little likelihood that this poetic figure would have been used in the painters' signature, even if it were not formulated so simply as it was in Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas.³² Apart from that, by omitting the conjunction, the meaning of the signature would essentially change („the hand of Michael, son of Eutyichios", instead of „the hand of Michael /and/ Eutyichios"). Furthermore, it is a fact that in the signatures of the Greek painters preserved in the churches that were jointly painted by the two artists, the coordinating conjunction („και" or, more rarely, „μετά") regularly occurs between the names of the protomaster and his assistant.³³ The conjunction „και" also occurs, within the crasis „καμού", between the names Michael Astrapas and Eutyichios in their „joint" signature from the Virgin Peribleptos.³⁴

³² Miljković-Peppek, *Pišuvanite podatoci*, 151, 156, 158.

³³ See examples quoted *supra* (our notes 19—23). Cf. also A. Ορλάνδος, *Δύο Βυζαντινά μνημεία της Δυτικής Κρήτης*, Αρχαίον των Βυζαντινών μνημείων της Ελλάδος 8 (1955/1956), 166, fig. 24; Χατζηδάκης, *Ελληνες ζωγράφοι*, I, 155, 157, 159, 163—165, 208, 217—218, 227, 299, 306, 318, 326, 328; t. II, 130, 132, 139, 170, 192, 197, 211, 220, 223, 238, 239, 241, 243, 272, 451, 468; Kalopissi-Verti, *Inscriptions*, 81.

³⁴ About this particular form of „joint" signature of the two painters, see *supra*.

As a counter-argument to our interpretation of the painters' signatures in Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas, one could mention the fact that in the Virgin Peribleptos, Michael signed only his name or his name and surname.³⁵ However, we should not overlook the possibility that the „signature” on the cuirass of St. Alexander in the Ohrid church (Fig. 4/6) represents a cryptographic form of the signature from Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas.³⁶ Apart from that, it is important to draw attention to the fact that right until the end of the 18th century, there were Greek artists whose signatures consisted of their name and patronym.³⁷ For the sake of illustration, we shall mention Theodore, son of Daniel (Δυά χηρός Θεόδωρου Δανιήλ), who painted the Church of Christ Soter in the village of Meskla, Crete, in 1303,³⁸ John, son of Maximos (Εγρόαφη διά χειρός Ιωάννου Μαξίμου), who painted the icon of the Holy Virgin in the Esphigmenou Monastery on the Mount Athos, in 1673,³⁹ and Athanasios, son of John (Χείρ Αθανασίου Ιωάννου του εξ Αθηνών), a *zographeos* from the mid-18th century.⁴⁰ Those painters and other artists, who signed their names in the said manner, did so undoubtedly out of respect for their fathers-teachers.⁴¹ So, Michael Astrapas may have used his patronym instead of his family name for the same reason, especially if Eutychios was no longer among the living at the time when Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas were being painted.⁴² Besides, one should not exclude the possibility that Michael was influenced by the environment where he lived and worked. In Serbia, right until the 15th century, the personal name and the patronym were dominant anthroponomical categories and, it was not until much later that family names appeared.⁴³ Be that as it may, it is a notable fact that Michael did not write out his surname in the inscriptions that have been preserved in the Serbian churches.

Likewise, the viewpoint that the signatures from Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas mention „the hand of Michael, son of Eutychios”, and not „the hand of Michael /and/ Eutychios” is supported by the fact that even when two or more medieval painters were working together

³⁵ Cf. *supra*

³⁶ Cf. our note 28.

³⁷ Cf. e.g. Ορλάνδος, *Δύο Βυζαντινά μνημεία*, 166, fig. 24; Χατζηδάκης, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι*, II, 132, 169, 188, 251, 338; Φ. Ι. Πιομπίνος, *Έλληνες αργογράφοι μέχρι το 1821*, Αθήνα 1984², 42, 56, 68, 98, 147, 285. Cf. also our note 41.

³⁸ Ορλάνδος, *op. cit.*, 166, fig. 24.

³⁹ Χατζηδάκης, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι*, II, 169.

⁴⁰ It is interesting that this Athanasios in some places signed his name also with his patronym and his surname: Χείρ δε εμού Αθανασίου Ιωάννου Ντούντα του εξ Αθηνών (Χατζηδάκης, *op. cit.*, II, 251).

⁴¹ It is possible that tradition also played a particular role. As we know, the ancient Greek artists often signed their name and patronym. Here, we quote two less known examples. On the fragment of a statue from the first century AD, found in the village of Marvinci near Gevgelija (Macedonia), the sculptor signed his name as „Adymos, son of Euandros” (ΑΔΥΜΟΣ ΕΥΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΒΕΡΟΙΑΙΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΙ), v. V. Sokolovska, *Antička skulptura vo SR Makedonija*, Skopje 1987, 168, Pl. 50/fig. 4. On a Syrian mosaic from the IV century, depicting Dionysios and Ariadne, „Agroik(i)os, son of Pamphilos”, left his signature (ΑΓΡΟΙΚΟΣ ΠΑΜΦΙΛΟΥ ΗΡΓΑΣΑΤΟ), v. P. Canivet, J.-P. Darmon, *Dionysos et Ariane. Deux nouveaux chefs-d'oeuvre inédits en mosaïque, dont un signé, au Proche-Orient ancien (IIIe—IVe siècle apr. J.-C.)*, Monuments et mémoires 70 (1989), 9—10, fig. 1—2.

⁴² On the chronology of Eutychios' life, with the assumption that Eutychios was most probably born between 1230 and 1250, see Marković, *Umetnička delatnost Mihaila i Evtihija*, 107—108.

⁴³ R. Marojević, *Slovenski antroponimi*, Onomatološki prilozi 5 (1984), 186—187; Z. Kowalik-Kaleta, *Stabilizacija slovenskih prezimena kao samostalan proces istorijske semantičke evolucije*, Onomatološki prilozi 8 (1987), 26—33. In Byzantium, the use of the family name was widespread in the 11th century onwards, see A. P. Kazhdan, *Sotsial'nyĭ sostav gosподstvuyushchego klassa Vizantii XI—XII vv.*, Moscow 1974, 26, 124, 185—186, 222—225; E. Patlagean, *Les débuts d'une aristocratie byzantine et le témoignage de l'historiographie: système des noms et liens de parenté aux IXe—Xe siècles*, in: *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold, Oxford 1984, 25, 33.

on some assignment, they signed their names separately, each on his own work. This was also the case in the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, where the fact that Michael and Eutychios worked together is unquestionable.

Confirmation of the aforesaid view regarding the signatures from Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas also exists in what the stylistic analyses of the frescoes, attributed to the two painters from Thessalonike, show.

As is well known, since the middle of the last century, researchers of the artistic development of Michael and Eutychios have encountered significant difficulties in explaining the striking stylistic differences that exist between the earliest known work by Michael and Eutychios, the painting of the Virgin Peribleptos, and the frescoes attributed to them in the endowments of King Milutin. Those differences are particularly noticeable when one compares the signed works, so it has frequently been observed that the wall paintings of the Ohrid church, on the one hand, and the frescoes of Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas, on the other, could be considered as being the works of the same painters only on the basis of the preserved signatures of Michael and Eutychios. However, the new interpretation of those signatures allows for a different view of the whole problem. If Eutychios was Michael's father, he was most likely born sometime between the year 1230 and 1250.⁴⁴ This would mean that in all probability he did not take part in the painting of Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas. Namely, at the time when the Staro Nagoričino frescoes came into being (they were completed in 1317/1318), Eutychios would, if he was alive at all, most certainly have been older than 65 years of age, while at the time of painting Milutin's endowment near Skopje (around 1324), he would at least have been in his seventies.⁴⁵

Assuming that Michael and Eutychios painted the Virgin Peribleptos, and that Michael alone was engaged in painting Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas, the distinct stylistic differences between the frescoes in the Ohrid and in the aforesaid churches erected by Milutin would be far easier to understand. What is more, if Eutychios played the principal role in creating the frescoes of the Virgin Peribleptos, which the specific formulation of his signature in the Ohrid church leads one to believe, there would be no need for any explanation. Even if Michael Astrapas is to be credited with the considerable part of the painting in the endowment of Progonos Sgouros, one may assume that during the work in Ohrid (around 1294), he — as a young man — had not yet developed his own style of painting and therefore he was under the powerful influence of his father.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cf. our note 42.

⁴⁵ For dating the frescoes in Staro Nagoričino, see Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, 26—27. For dating the wall paintings in St. Niketas, see M. Marković, *Manastir Svetog Nikite kod Skoplja — istorija i živopis* (doctoral dissertation), Belgrade 2004, 97—107. It is difficult to tell the age when the creative activity of the Byzantine painters ceased, in general, because of the lack of archive material about their life and work, and because of the specific factors that limited the working life of a man. Nevertheless, one can draw certain conclusions on the basis of the available sources about the painters who lived and worked in the West during the epoch of the Palaiologoi or immediately afterwards. Those sources show that in the 14th and 15th centuries very few painters went in for fresco painting after their 65th year. Given the difficult working conditions of a fresco painter, this is easy to understand. About this entire matter and, in general, about the chronology of the activities of Michael and Eutychios, see Marković, *Umjetnička delatnost Mihaila i Evtihija*, 101—108.

⁴⁶ Michael must have been a relatively young man at the time of painting the Virgin Peribleptos. This is indicated by the fact that he is reliably known to have been occupied with painting after 1321 as well, i.e. about three decades after he had worked for Progonos Sgouros.

In a similar manner, it would be easy to explain the stylistic differences between the frescoes of the Virgin Peribleptos and the painting in three more fresco ensembles that are usually attributed to Michael and Eutybios — in the King's church, St. Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje and Gračanica. If Eutybios was Michael's father, it is not very likely that he was active in the time of painting the aforesaid churches, either (i.e. between 1314 and 1321).⁴⁷ The preserved signature from the Church of St. Prohor would substantiate such a view because only Michael is mentioned in it (Fig. 6).⁴⁸

Only the frescoes in the Virgin Ljeviška, which also differ considerably from the painting in the endowment of Progonos Sgouros, remain controversial. They were painted sometime between 1308 and 1313, when it was possible that Eutybios, if he was Michael's father, was still active as a painter, though admittedly, in the twilight of his career.⁴⁹ Besides, with such an assumption, „the protomaster Astrapas” who was mentioned in the exonarthex in the Cathedral of Prizren could also be linked with Eutybios because he too belonged to the Astrapas family.⁵⁰ However, if one takes into account that the frescoes in the Virgin Ljeviška are closer in terms of their stylistic features to the wall paintings of Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas than to the frescoes of the Virgin Peribleptos,⁵¹ it would be more justified to assume that nor did Eutybios take part in the painting of the Prizren church, either. Finally, if the new interpretation of the signature from Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas is correct, there would no longer be any confirmation that this painter worked for the Serbian king. His signature would exist only in the Ohrid Peribleptos, the endowment of the Byzantine nobleman Progonos Sgouros.

The stylistic uniformity of the frescoes in the churches of King Milutin would also speak in support of the assumption that Eutybios did not take part in their painting. In literature it was often thought that in working together, the two artists from Thessalonike managed to bring their painting procedures very close to each other and consequently, their fresco ensembles, especially in Staro Nagoričino and St. Niketas, have the effect of harmonious wholes.⁵² However, this distinct harmony, of a kind never perceived in other churches that were painted by two or more masters, becomes easily understandable in the light of the new interpretation of the artists' signatures in these two churches built by Milutin. As we have already mentioned, it follows from the conclusion that Eutybios was Michael's father, that he had no role whatsoever in painting Milutin's endowments and, furthermore, it means that the frescoes in the King's Church, St. Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje, Staro Nagoričino, Gračanica, St. Ni-

⁴⁷ For dating the wall paintings in the three said churches, see Babić, *Kraljeva crkva*, 22, 66; Subotić, Todorović, *Slikar Mihailo*, 123—124, 137; Todić, *Serbian medieval painting*, 318—319, 326—327, 330—331.

⁴⁸ For the signature of the painter in St. Prohor of Pčinja, see Subotić, Todorović, *op. cit.*, 126, dess. 1. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that in St. Prohor of Pčinja, a large part of the painting from the 14th century was destroyed, so it is quite possible that with the destruction of the frescoes, some of the painters' signatures were destroyed as well.

⁴⁹ For dating the frescoes of the Virgin Ljeviška, see S. Mandić, *Jedan vladarski lik u Bogorodici Ljeviškoj*, *Zograf* 1 (1966), 24—27; Djurić, *Vizantijske freske*, 201—202, note. 49; Todić, *Serbian medieval painting*, 311.

⁵⁰ For the text of the inscription, see Panić, Babić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška*, 23.

⁵¹ Cf. Panić, Babić, *op. cit.*, 70—93; Djurić, *Vizantijske freske*, 49—50; Todić, *Serbian medieval painting*, 230—233.

⁵² Cf. e.g. S. Radojčić, *Majstori starog srpskog slikarstva*, Belgrade 1955, 29; Djurić, *op. cit.*, 52; Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, 136, note 34.

ketas, and probably the Virgin Ljeviška, were created only by one protomaster — Michael Astrapas, and his apprentices. In each of the aforesaid monuments, one does indeed notice the dominance of one artist's hand. Nevertheless, for more reliable conclusions, it is necessary to conduct new, very thorough analyses of all the material that has been preserved, including the wall painting of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, where Eutykhios' role in its creation is certain.

Миодраг Марковић

СЛИКАР ЕВТИХИЈЕ — ОТАЦ МИХАИЛА АСТРАПЕ И ПРОТОМАЈСТОР ФРЕСАКА
У ЦРКВИ БОГОРОДИЦЕ ПЕРИВЛЕПТЕ У ОХРИДУ

Резиме

Обично се сматра да је у живописању Богородице Перивлепте у Охриду зограф Михаило Астрапа имао важнију улогу од зографа Евтихија. Такво мишљење аргументује се бројношћу Михаилових издвојених сигнатура (седам) у охридској цркви. С друге стране, у Богородици Перивлепти сачуван је само један Евтихијев потпис. И он, међутим, представља део заједничке сигнатуре двојице мајстора јер се због непотпуне формулације (КА<М>ΟΥ ΕΥΤΙΧ[ΙΟ]Υ) не може сматрати засебном целином, а лако добија логичан смисао ако се доведе у везу с оближњим потписом Михаила Астрапе на мачу св. Меркурија — ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΤΡΑΠΑ | ΚΑ<М>ΟΥ ΕΥΤΙΧ[ΙΟ]Υ. Иако је Михаило поменут пре Евтихија, натпис са плашта св. Прокопија налаже, ипак, да се питање протомајстора живописа Богородице Перивлепте још једном размотри. У њему се јавља реч „μαῖου” (краза за „μα εἰου”), а она је имала врло одређено значење у сигнатурама старих грчких сликара. Њоме је личност која је исписала сигнатуру истицала своју улогу у обављеном послу. Како је та личност увек била главни сликар, чини се да постоји реалан основ за претпоставку да је Евтихије био протомајстор фресака Богородице Перивлепте.

У вези с питањем протомајстора сликарске дружине Михаила и Евтихија важно је узети у обзир и њихове „заједничке” потписе из Старог Нагоричина и Светог Никите. И у њима је Михаило поменут пре Евтихија (Нагоричино: <ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙ>ΧΑΗΛ ΕΥΤΥΧΙΟΥ; Свети Никита: ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΕΥΤΥΧΙΟΥ). Међутим, у оба потписа је између имена двојице сликара изостављен везник „μα” што налаже да се реч ΕΥΤΥΧΙΟΥ протумачи као Михаилов патроним, а не као име Михаиловог сарадника. Петар Миљковић-Пепек је, истина, помишљао на асиндетон, али мало је вероватно да би та песничка фигура била употребљена у сликарском потпису, чак и када он не би имао тако једноставну формулацију каква постоји у Старом Нагоричину и Светом Никити. Осим тога, чињеница је да се у сигнатурама грчких сликара сачуваним у црквама чији је живопис настао сарадњом два зографа редовно јавља саставни везник („μα” или, ређе, „μετά”) између имена главног мајстора и његовог сарадника. Мора се, такође, имати у виду и то да је све до краја XVIII stoleћа било грчких уметника који су се потписивали именом и патронимом. Они су то чинили из поштовања према својим очевима и учитељима. Михаило Астрапа је могао употребити патроним уместо породичног имена из истог разлога. Уз то, не сме се искључити ни утицај средине у којој зограф тада живи и ради. У Србији су све до XV века лично име и патроним представљали доминантне антропонимске категорије, а презимена су формирана знатно касније.

После нових тумачења сликарских потписа из Старог Нагоричина и Светог Никите морају се другачије тумачити и стилске особености фресака које се приписују радионици Михаила

Астрапе и Евтихија. Као што је познато, у науци је више пута с правом примећено како се о живопису охридске Богородице Перивлепте, на једној страни, и фрескама Старог Нагоричина и Светог Никите, на другој, може говорити као о делима истих сликара само на основу потписа. Ново тумачење тих потписа допушта, међутим, другачије виђење проблема. Ако је Евтихије био Михаилов отац, он због ограничености људског радног века највероватније не би могао сарађивати са својим сином и у Охриду и у задужбинама краља Милутина. Црква Светог Ђорђа у Старом Нагоричину осликана је више од две деценије након заједничког рада Михаила и Евтихија у Охриду, а од живописања охридске Богородице Перивлепте до живописања цркве Светог Никите код Скопља протекло је око тридесет година. Проистицало би, дакле, да су Богородицу Перивлепту заједно живописали Михаило и Евтихије, а да је на живописању Старог Нагоричина и Светог Никите радио само један протомајстор — Михаило. Уколико је такав закључак тачан, оштре стилске разлике између фресака Богородице Перивлепте и фресака две поменуте Милутинове задужбине постале би лако објашњиве. При томе питање протомајстора фресака Богородице Перивлепте не би имало пресудан значај. Ако је у њиховој изради главну улогу имао Евтихије, свако објашњење било би излишно. Уколико је, пак, значајан део живописа Стгурове задужбине урадио и Михаило, смело би се претпоставити да је он у време рада у Охриду, још увек веома млад, био под снажним утицајем свог оца и да је формирао лични стил тек касније, када је у својим зрелим годинама радио за српског краља.

Ново тумачење сликарских потписа из Старог Нагоричина и Светог Никите важно је и за питање појединачног удела Михаила и Евтихија у живописању задужбина краља Милутина. У литератури се најчешће истиче како су двојица зографа, радећи заједно, успевали да сасвим приближе своје сликарске поступке и да због тога њихови фреско ансамбли, нарочито Старо Нагоричино и Свети Никита, делују као стилски јединствене и складне целине. Међутим, тај склад би могао имати и другачије објашњење ако се прихвати претпоставка да је Евтихије био Михаилов отац. Као што је већ поменуто, тада би било скоро извесно да он није ни имао никаквог удела у осликавању Милутинових задужбина (изузетак би могла да буде једино Богородица Љевишка у Призрену јер је она можда осликана већ око 1310. године, петнаестак година након охридске Богородице Перивлепте). То би даље значило да је стилско јединство фресака Краљеве цркве, Старог Нагоричина, Грачанице и Светог Никите последица околности да је за живописање тих цркава заслужан један протомајстор — Михаило Астрапа.