

29 Ιουνίου 2017

The scene of the Apostles Peter and Paul embracing (Efthymios N. Tsigaridas)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



There are in the Monastery three fragments of wall-paintings, whose origin is unknown. Two of these are from decoration of the Late Comnenan period, while the third belongs to decoration of the Early Palaeologan period.

On the two earlier fragments, measuring 50 x 65 and 65 x 65 cm., the Apostles Peter and Paul are shown embracing, and St Mark is depicted¹.

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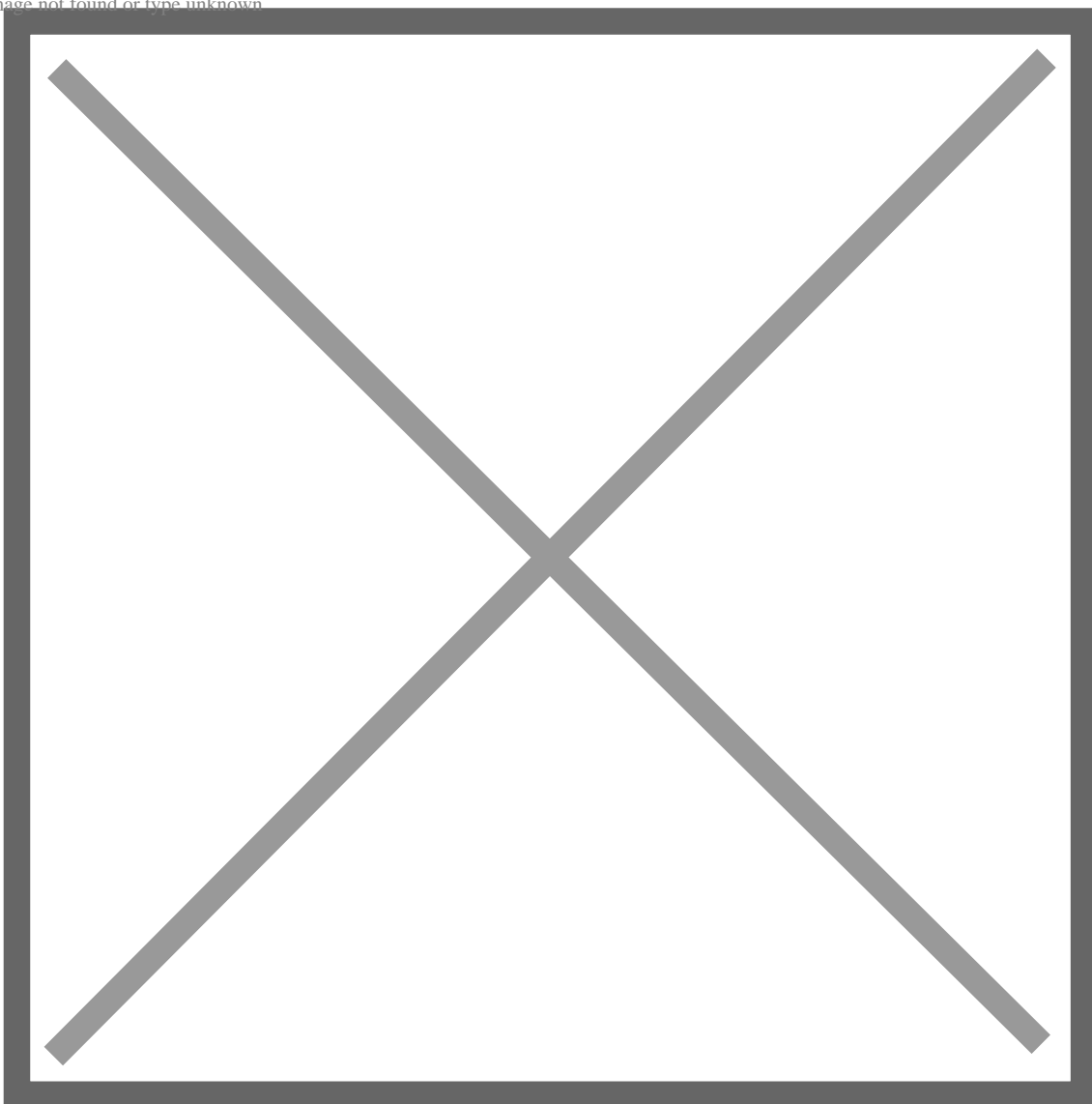
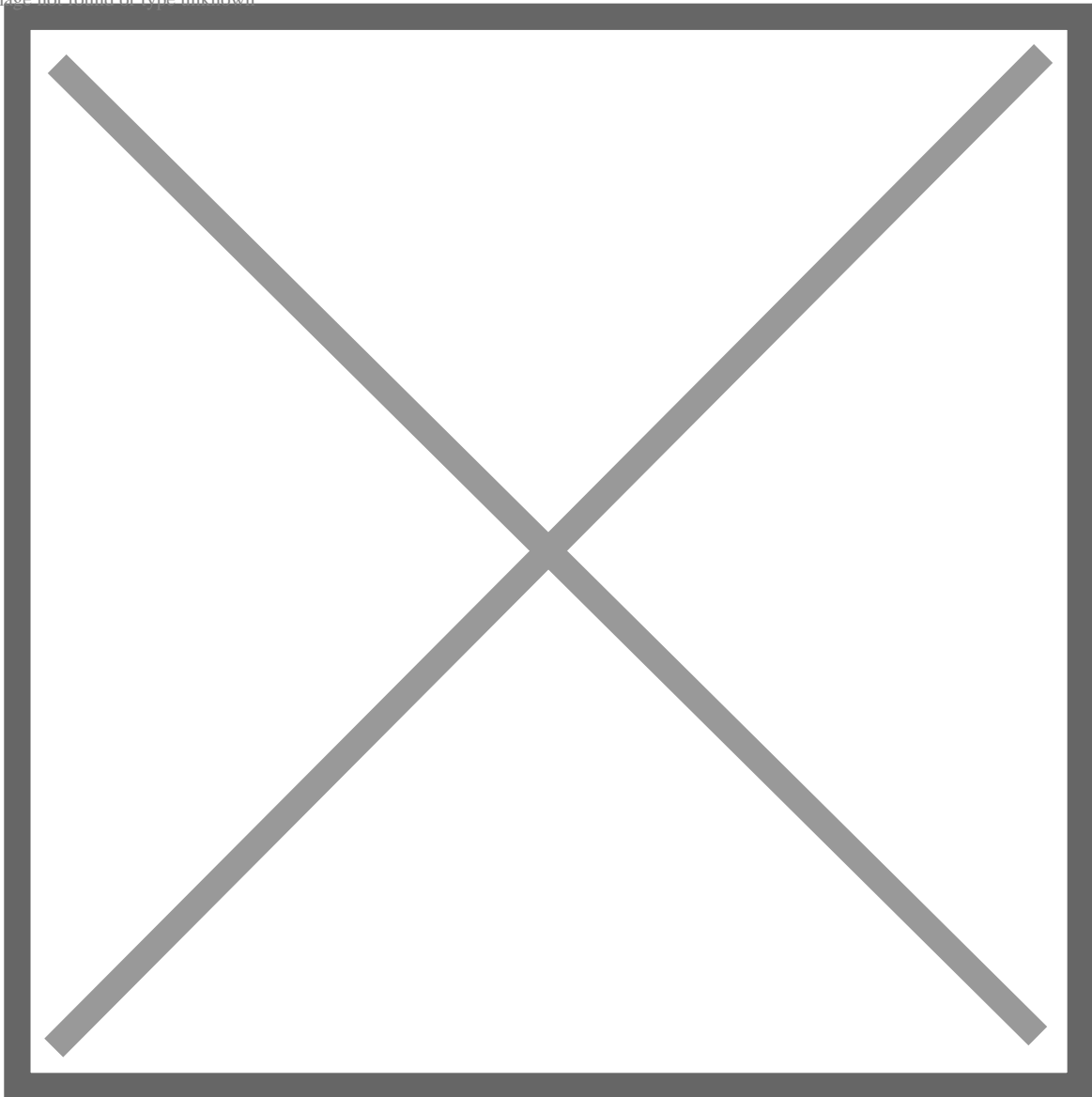


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The scene of the Apostles Peter and Paul embracing, as an autonomous subject which expresses ecumenical peace and the unity of the local Orthodox churches², was adopted early in Byzantine art, following models known from Early Christian art³.

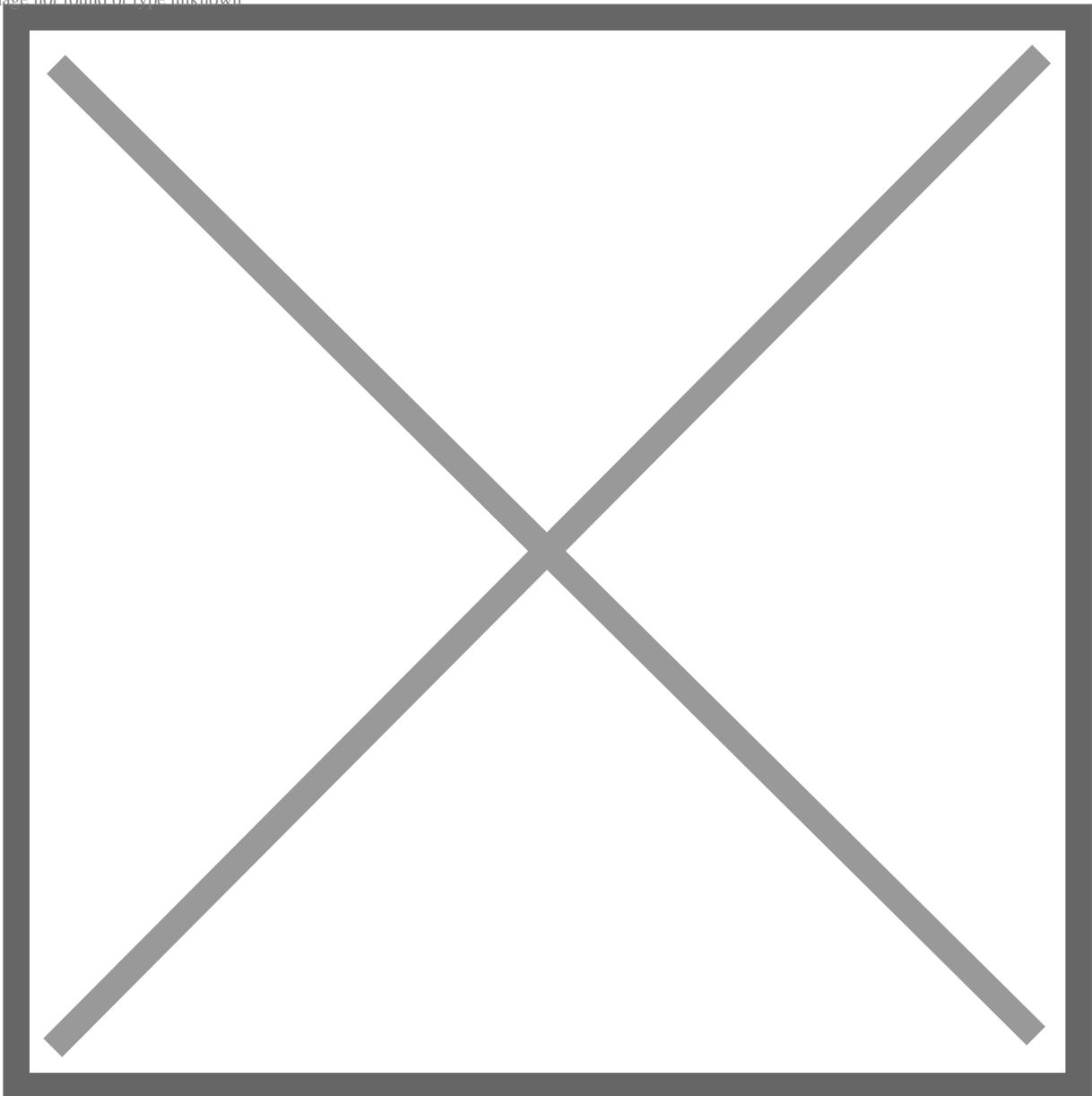
From an artistic point of view, these wall-painting fragments in the Vatopaidi Monastery are marked by the breaking up of the mass of the face into individual units, which contrasts with the character of the painting of the wall-paintings in St George at Djurdevi Stupovi (c. 1175) in Serbia, with which Prof. Radojicic would link them⁴. Thus the feeling of sculpture, particularly marked in the Vatopaidi wall-paintings, sets them apart from the wall-paintings in the Church of St George at Djurdevi Stupovi and links them in artistic terms with the wall-paintings in the katholikon of the historic Monastery of Christ the Saviour 'tou Latomou' (Hosios David) in Thessaloniki (1160-1170) and those in the Chapel of Our Lady and of the

first phase of the decoration of the refectory of the Monastery of Patmos (1176-1180)⁵. Consequently, the view expressed by Radojicic⁶, to the effect that the wall-painting of the embrace of the Apostles Peter and Paul is the work of painters from the Greek workshop which decorated - at the expense of the Kral of the Serbs Stephen Nemanja and of St Sabbas - the Church of St George at Djurdjevi Stupovi, is, in our opinion, based on artistic criteria, incorrect.

The absence of a connection with the work of the artist who was responsible for the wall-paintings of Djurdjevi Stupovi means that the Vatopaidi wall-paintings cannot be included among the activities of the Kral of the Serbs Stephen Nemanja and St Sabbas, as Radojicic would have them. Thus the view that these wall-paintings come from the refectory of the Vatopaidi Monastery - the decoration of which, according to Serbian sources which Radojicic invokes, was undertaken at the expense of Stephen Nemanja and of St Sabbas⁷ - and their dating to 1197-98, must be pronounced incorrect. The manifest artistic affinity of the Vatopaidi wall-paintings with the wall-paintings of the Latomou Monastery (Hosios David) in Thessaloniki and in the Patmos Monastery leads to their dating to around 1170-1180.

On the third fragment, measuring 99 x 60 cm., the Blessed Virgin is depicted to the waist, enthroned and holding the Holy Child in the type of the *Glykophilousa*, flanked by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel⁸.

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In spite of the fact that the original painting is preserved only in the case of the faces of the figures depicted and of the garment of the Virgin, the high quality of the work is obvious⁹.

From an artistic viewpoint, the oblique positioning of the enthroned Virgin and the noble stances of the archangels, with their broad, well-fleshed bodies, rendered not statically, but with counterbalancing movement, demonstrate the wish of the artist to integrate the figures into the space.

This wall-painting has been dated to c. 1260¹⁰. However, a comparison with works of this period, such as the wall-paintings of Sopocani and of the Chapel of the Holy Trinity in the Chilandari Monastery, shows that it differs from them. The 'soft' character of the painting in the case of the wall-paintings of Sopocani and of the

Chilandari¹¹ chapel is replaced in the Vatopaidi wall-painting by a stringent shaping, sculptural in character, reminiscent of the painting in the Church of the Protaton in Karyes on Mount Athos (c. 1290).

Furthermore, the breadth and the mass in the rendering of the bodies of the figures, the artistic types, the facial features and the technique used in the rendering of the face point to the painting of the Protaton¹². More specifically, the olive green shadows, the warm ochre of the expanses of flesh, the linear white highlights above the eyebrows, the red parallel lines on the bridge of the nose, the schematisation of the sternum at the base of the neck, the fleshy, half-open lips, and the reflective gaze are typical features of the painting of the artist of the Protaton, Panselinos, and his workshop.

It is, then, our view that in this wall-painting in the Vatopaidi Monastery we can not only recognise the manner of the painting of Panselinos, but also the incomparable spiritual ethos of his works. For this reason, a dating of the wall-painting to the late 13th century or around 1300 is very likely.