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**“IUSTITIA SUBJECTIVA” OR “CRIMINA IMAGINATIVA” IN THE FRESCO ENSEMBLES OF “MACEDONIA BYZANTINA”**

By definition, **Justice** refers to just behaviour or treatment, in other words - concern for just actions towards establishing peace and genuine respect for people<sup>1</sup>. The concept of justice is based on numerous fields, as well as many differing viewpoints and perspectives including the concepts of moral correctness based on ethics, rationality, law, religion, equity and fairness. Often, the general discussion of justice is divided into the realm of social justice as found in philosophy, theology and religion, and, procedural justice as found in the study and application of the common law<sup>2</sup>. However, the concept of justice has been a different set of rules and regulations in different cultures and civilizations. If we look at the Bible, or to be more specific the New Testament, we will find a very interesting perspective of what justice has looked like at the beginning of our era in Jewish territory under Roman government<sup>3</sup>. In that regard, all four Gospels give substantial evidence of juridical actions and activities in the time of their creation, which, approximately, concurs with the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>4</sup>. Since the starring character of the New Testament is Jesus, who, has been accused by the Jewish religious authorities and sentenced to death by the Roman governor, in this paper we will be focusing on the “justice” done in the triple trial which preceded Jesus’ execution<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> D. Rubinstein, *The Concept of Justice in Sociology*, Theory and Society, Vol. 17/4, New York 1988, pp. 527–550.

<sup>2</sup> A. D Amato, *On the Connection Between Law And Justice*, Davis Law Review, Vol. 26, Evanston, 1992/93, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> A.Lewin, *The Archaeology of Ancient Judea and Palestine*, Los Angeles 2005, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> P. Perkins, *The Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles: Telling the Christian Story*, in: (J. Barton Ed. ), *The Cambridge Companion to biblical interpretation*, Cambridge 1998, p. 241; A. Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, London 2005, p. 18; M. Reddish, *An Introduction to the Gospels*, Nashville, pp, 108, 144.

<sup>5</sup> The paper refers to the trials before the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, as well as the one before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

If one follows the information in the Four Gospels<sup>6</sup>, one becomes aware that Jewish high priests in the course of Jesus' public ministry were Annas and Caiaphas. The first of them to judge the Rabin was Annas, son of Seth, appointed by the Roman legate Quirinius as the first high priest of the newly formed Roman province of Judea in 6 AD<sup>7</sup>. Since the examination before Annas was unproductive, he sent Jesus away to Caiaphas, the ruling high priest at the time of Jesus' ministry, in the period 18-36 AD<sup>8</sup>. Caiaphas, who was a son in law of Annas and thus under his strong influence, charged Jesus with blasphemy and sent him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor for sentencing. As a high priest and chief religious authority in the land, Caiaphas had many important responsibilities, including controlling the Temple treasury, managing the Temple personnel, performing religious rituals and serving as president of the Sanhedrin – the Jewish council and court<sup>9</sup>. Seeing Jesus as a threat to the existing religious order, Caiaphas sent the “culprit” to Pilate to have the death sentence carried out. Christian accounts of the trial before Pilate suggest either that he played no direct role in the decision to execute Jesus and put the entire blame on Caiaphas (*Gospel according to Peter*)<sup>10</sup> or that he ordered the crucifixion with some reluctance (*Mark: 15, 10-15*) or with a serious hesitation (*Luke: 23, 13-24; John: 19, 4-16*). In the end, the crucifixion of Jesus as a form of execution established that he was condemned as a violator of Roman and not of Jewish law. Both judges of the Rabin, Caiaphas and Pilate were dismissed from office by Syrian governor Vitellius in 36 AD according to Jewish historian Josephus<sup>11</sup>. In 1990, Israeli archeologists discovered an ossuary in a tomb, located 3 km. south of Jerusalem<sup>12</sup>. According to the written name

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<sup>6</sup> Gospel according to Mathew: **26**, 57-66, **27**, 13-26; Gospel according to Mark: **14**, 55-64, **15**, 1-15; Gospel according to Luke: **22**, 54-71; Gospel according to John: **18**, 13-14, 28-40, **19**, 1-16. Citation is according to *Holy Bible. King James Version*, Nashville, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> M. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, London 2007, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> H. C. Bond, *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus*, Louisville 2004, p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> G. A. Barton, *On the Trial of Jesus Before the Sanhedrin*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 41 (3, 4), Atlanta 1992, pp. 205-211.

<sup>10</sup> P. Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Editing and Commentary*, Leiden-Boston 2010, pp. 212-229.

<sup>11</sup> L. Feldman, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible*, Berkeley 1998, pp. 132-162.

<sup>12</sup> Z. Greenhut, *Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family*, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Washington DC, Vol. 18, 1992; J. H. Charlesworth, *Jesus and archaeology*, Grand Rapids 2006, pp. 323-329.

on the receptacle, they have assumed that they might have found the bones of Caiaphas, the high priest. If so, archeology has discovered the physical remnants of a sole person that was mentioned in the Holy Scripture.



Fig. 1 Saint George in Staro Nagoričino, *Trial before Annas*

If I was an attorney at law, I would have been interested in issues which are related to the legal side of Christ's conviction; first of all, why he was taken for interrogation to Annas' residence, when at that time, he was no longer occupying the position of high priest, which was given to Caiaphas by the Roman governor in the year of 18 AD; second of all, why did Caiaphas accuse Jesus of blasphemy with a gesture of tearing his robes when the Rabin proclaimed himself as a son of Man and not of God (*Mathew: 26, 63-64*); third of all, why did Pontius Pilate hesitate to sentence Jesus to death when Caiaphas (*John: 11, 49-52*) has already predicted the fatal outcome of his mission, and, last, but not least, why did Pilate, although reproached by the high priests, wrote a title which read *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* and put it on the cross. Fortunately, my competencies belong to a totally different field of expertise, which is less aggressive than law and much more

visually attractive, as well. Therefore, the trials of Jesus by Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate, illustrated within the Passion cycle in a number of Byzantine churches in the territory of Macedonia will be displayed in this paper through the most representative examples of their picturesque iconography.



Fig. 2 Saint George in Staro Nagoričino, *Trial before Caiaphas*

If we take into account only those from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and apply the chronological method of iconographic evolution, the “mini cycle” of the Trials in the church dedicated to **Saint George in the village of Staro Nagoričino**<sup>13</sup> would be the earliest one. This example discloses three genuine

<sup>13</sup> R. Hamann-Mac Lean and Horst Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien von 11 bis zum frühen 14 Jahrhundert*, pp. 34-36; P. Miljkovic-Peppek, *Deloto na zografite Mihailo i Eutihij*, pp. 23-24, 56-62, 190-197; B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, Beograd 1993, pp. 71-138; Idem, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, Beograd 1999, pp. 55-56, 65-68 et passim; S. Korunovski - E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia L' arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, Milano 2006, pp. 161-168; E. Dimitrova, S. Korunovski, S. Grandakovska, *Srednovjekovna Makedonija. Kultura i umetnost*, Makedonija.

components of its painterly depiction. The first one, although not exclusive, is the mismatch of the titles, as well as the arrangement of the depicted compositions whereat, the trial before Caiaphas, highly recognizable by the gesture of the high priest tearing his robe, is signed as the Trial before Annas (**Fig. 1**), and the other one which, is depicted as the first of the trials, bears the title of Trial before Caiaphas (**Fig. 2**)<sup>14</sup>. The second one is the depiction of the Trial before King Herod (described only in *Luke: 23, 8-11*)<sup>15</sup>, a composition which visually emulates the conventional iconography of the second trial before the high priest and the one before Pilate<sup>16</sup>, contrary to the dramatic atmosphere of the first trial visualized through the enhanced motion of the characters, as well as the accentuated volume of the architectural scenery (**Fig. 3**). The third genuine iconographic component is the scene in which the Roman governor sends Jesus away to the Jews (inspired by *John, 19, 5*), a spectacle exclusive for the Byzantine iconography, much more prominent in the western painting and well known under the title *Ecce Homo*<sup>17</sup>.

The arrangement of the Juridical saga of Christ in Staro Nagoričino is as follows: the first scene is the Trial before Caiaphas in which the dignified figure of the High priest is seated in front of a large group of Jews showing their resentment towards Jesus, comprised by an elaborated architectural backdrop – obviously the edifice of the Sanhedrin (as described in *Mathew: 26, 57 - 59*, and *Mark: 14, 53 - 55*). The second composition is the Trial before Annas in which a similar group of people stands behind the Jewish priest who tears his robe, all of them depicted in front of a building associative to a private palace or a residence (as described in *Luke: 22, 54*)<sup>18</sup>. The third composition, the Trial before Pilate, is visually divided in two parts, the left one shows the Roman Governor, accompanied by his military entourage and

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Mileniumski kulturno-istoriski fakti, Skopje 2013, pp. 1689-1699; E. Dimitrova, G. Velkov, *Seven Medieval Churches in the Republic of Macedonia*, Skopje 2014, pp. 82-101.

<sup>14</sup> B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, p. 76; Idem, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> S. Radojčić, *Pilatov sud u vizantijskom slikarstvu ranog XIV veka*, Uzori i dela starih srpskih umetnika, Beograd 1975, pp. 223-224.

<sup>17</sup> On this subject see: G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art: the passion of Jesus Christ*, London 1972.

<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the order of events described in the Gospel according to John: 18, 13- 14, where one can clearly see that Jesus was first taken to Annas and only than to Caiaphas.

seated in front of a scenery characteristic of his official court room, raising his hand in a gesture of addressing Jesus, while in the right portion of the picture, the calmly depicted Rabin is accompanied by the demanding Jews. According to the visual disposition of the painterly elements, this scene might be depicting the conversation of Pilate and Jesus described in the *Gospel according to John*(18, 37), referring to the crucial question of the Roman governor whether Jesus is the King of the Jews. The fourth composition is the Trial before King Herod, which follows the Denials of Peter<sup>19</sup>, while the closing spectacle of the Trials mini-cycle in Staro Nagoričino is the one showing Pilate sending Jesus away to the enraged Jews. As an addendum to these expressive vistas, one more composition was included in the Passion story – Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body of Christ (*Mathew*: 27, 57-58, *Mark*: 15, 43-45, *Luke*: 23, 59-52, *John*: 19, 38). Hence, judging from the composite of the depicted scenes, it looks that the painters have canvassed all four Gospels to create a visual story impressive by its outlook, dramatic by its components and picturesque by its inventive iconography.



Fig. 3 Saint George in Staro Nagoričino, *Trial before King Herod*

<sup>19</sup> B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, p. 76.



Fig. 4 Saint George in Staro Nagoričino, *Trial before Pilate*

In regard to the painterly features of the scenes depicting the Trials in Staro Nagoričino, one can see that the compositions showing juridical procedures before Annas and Pilate are represented with an accentuated dynamics in the exposition of the characters, as well as an enhanced energetic charge of the mise-en-scene. On the other hand, the trials before Caiaphas and Herod are toned down and represented with a milder atmosphere and highly controlled motions of the depicted protagonists. This is, most probably, due to the severity of situations described in the Holy Scripture which determined Jesus' destiny leading to the Crucifixion: the routine inquisition by the Jewish king and the unproductive examination of the old priest contrary to the dramatic exposure of repulsion by the president of the Sanhedrin, as well as the theatric demonstration of innocence by the Roman governor. Hence, the conventionally arranged scene in which Herod is accompanied with a group of soldiers and positioned opposite to Jesus who is escorted by the gathered Jews manifests entirely different painterly expression in comparison to the vigorous atmosphere in the Trial

before Pilate, electrified by the dynamic motion of the governor, as well as the kinetic energy of the demanding Jewish witnesses (**Fig. 4**). Similarly, although both crowded with multitude of figures, the scene showing the Trial before Caiaphas resembles a common juridical event with a seated judge and standing attendants, while the composition visualizing the Trial before Annas blasts with a great amplitude of emotional charge through the anxious gesture of the high priest who tears his robes as a token of repulsion. Although encompassed by the same mini-cycle of depicted events, the scenes of Jesus' trials in Staro Nagoričino disclose the painters' sense for visual gradation of the intensity of Biblical events in the transposition of the Gospels stories into the sensual medium of the fresco painting.



Fig. 5 Saint George at Pološko, *Trial before the High Priests, Denial of Peter*

One of the most representative depictions of Christ's passion prior to the crucifixion is certainly the illustration of the trials in the fresco arrangement of the church dedicated to **Saint George at the village of Pološko**<sup>20</sup>, an

<sup>20</sup> V. J. Đurić, *Pološko. Hilendarski metoh i Dragušinova grobnica*, Zbornik Narodnog muzeja VIII, Beograd 1975, pp. 327-342; C. Grozdanov - D. Kjornakov, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom I*, Zograf 14, 1982, pp. 60-66; Eadem, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom II*, Zograf 15, Beograd 1984, pp. 85-93; Eadem, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom III*, Zograf 18, Beograd 1987, pp. 37-42; I. M.Đorđević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, pp. 147-150; S. Korunovski - E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia L' arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, pp. 177-



ensemble well known for its inventively articulated and highly unconventional iconographic spectacles. In Pološko, the depiction of the Trials has been conceived in two elaborated scenes<sup>21</sup>, first of which shows Christ who has been brought to Annas and Caiaphas in a neatly arranged composition with Annas seated on a bench, while Caiaphas stands and tears his robes with a dramatic gesture of repulsion (Fig. 5).



Fig. 6 Saint George at Pološko, *Pilate washing his hands*

The two high priests, Jesus and the soldier are the main protagonists of this scene and therefore their figures are located in the front prospect of the vista; in the second plan of the view, however, a real drama is going on with Peter the apostle and his struggle to convince everybody that he is not one of Jesus' disciples. Both compositions are framed with a mutual arch

181; D. Kjornakov, *Pološki manastir*, Skopje 2006; E. Dimitrova, *The Portal to Heaven, Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, Niš & Byzantium Symposium, The Collection of scientific works V, Niš 2007, pp. 370-371; E. Dimitrova, S. Korunovski, S. Grandakovska, *Srednovekovna Makedonija. Kultura i umetnost*, pp. 1712-1717.

<sup>21</sup> I. M. Đorđević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, p. 149.

that serves as architectural scenery connecting the trials executed by the Jews with the inquisition of the Roman soldiers about the followers of the rebellious Rabin. The Trial before Pilate<sup>22</sup>, on the other hand, displays a highly inventive iconographic conception which unites the three different episodes described in the Gospel according to Mathew (27, 19 – 24): the Roman governor washing his hands as an expression of his innocence in the legal matter of Jesus' actions (**Fig. 6**), his wife telling her dream of Jesus' innocence and dispatching the servant to her husband (**Fig. 7**) and Pilate receiving his wife's message, whereat all three consecutive events are skillfully interconnected through the flow of painterly components.



Fig. 7 Saint George at Pološko, *Pilate's wife dispatching the servant*

<sup>22</sup> S. Radojčić, *Pilatov sud u vizantijskom slikarstvu ranog XIV veka*, p. 225-226.

Since the composition showing the Trial before Pilate unites three different moments of the Biblical story, it is quite obvious that the painters have put a great effort to create a spectacle coherent by its iconographic components, as well as consistent by the spatial and temporal references of the depicted events. In that sense, the symmetric level of the spatial qualities of the vista is acquired by the location of the three actors in front of the luxuriously conceived portico, while the episode of the dialogue of the governor's wife with the servant at the entrance of their home is located behind the procurator's throne<sup>23</sup>. Without disturbing the symmetrical *mise-en-scene* of the composition, the image of the young servant participates in the picture of the trial that goes on in the front prospect of the scene. Appearing in the narrow inter-space between the two plans of the composition, he simultaneously separates the figural components of the spectacle from the architectural ensemble in the backdrop of the scene. The energetic motion of Jesus depicted in the left portion of the picture, in front of the group of Roman soldiers and Jews, the figure of Pilate's servant as his spatial counterpart, the fluent kinetic movements of the messenger who brings the word to the governor, as well as the central position of Pilate's image that unites the dynamics of all the actors in the scene - are the main painterly qualities of this composition as one of the most representative depictions of this subject in Byzantine painterly tradition of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The decision of the iconographer of the frescoes in Pološko to articulate the Trial before Pilate in such an elaborated manner, while combining the two trials before the Jewish priests in one composition, could be, at least vaguely, credited to the notion that Jesus' legal procedure was overshadowed by the upcoming Passover (*Mathew: 27, 15; John: 18, 39*). In that regard, it seems that the High priests quickly condemned the Rabin, but the death sentence could be only passed by the Roman official authority.

At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a very elaborated iconography of the trials have been included in the arrangement of the Passion cycle in the painted decoration of the church of **Saint Demetrius at Marko's monastery**<sup>24</sup>. As

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<sup>23</sup> E. Dimitrova, *The Staging of the passion Scenes: A Stylistic Essay. Six Paradigms from 14th Century FrescoPainting*, Zograf 31, Beograd 2007-2007, p. 118.

<sup>24</sup> N. Nošpal-Nikuljska, *Za ktitorskata kompozicija i natpisot vo Markoviot manastir - selo Sušica, Skopsko*, Glasnik na Institutot za nacionalna istorija XV, Skopje 1971, pp. 225-235; V. J. Đurić, *Markov manastir - Ohrid*, Zbornik za likovne umetnosti 8, Novi Sad 1972,

the rest of the fresco ensemble in this temple, the depiction of the scenes referring to the “legal” phase of the Passion events is permeated with the dark veil of simplicity of the forms, minimum attention to decorative details and ravaging brutality of the depicted spectacle. Comprised of nine compositions and illustrated as a visual story inspired by the verses found in the Gospel according to John, the trial saga from King Marko’s temple acts as a mini cycle dedicated to the suffering of Jesus in the course of the juridical stage of his earthly mission<sup>25</sup>. In accordance to the basic *mise-en-scene* of the depicted spectacles in the painting of Marko’s monastery, the trials before the high priests are composed with a minimum of iconographic elements<sup>26</sup>. The trial before the Roman governor, however, is divided into seven dynamic episodes, spatially situated above the images of the Virgin and the Dead Christ from the Lamentation, or in this variant, better to say from the composition, most properly entitled Man of Sorrows<sup>27</sup>. Pilate’s conversation with Jesus, Pilate’s conversation with the Jews, Second Pilate’s conversation with Jesus, the scene named “Judge him according to your law”, Jesus and Pilate at the place called Gabbatha, the Flagellation and Pilate washing his hands<sup>28</sup> – are the constituents of this carefully articulated iconographic arrangement which accentuates the trial at the Roman governor as the most decisive for the future faith of the “problematic” Rabin (**Figs. 8, 9**). The

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pp. 131-160; Z. Gavrilović, *The Portrait of King Marko at Markov Manastir (1376-1381)*, Byzantinische Forschungen XVI, Amsterdam 1991, pp. 415-428; I. M. Đorđević, *Predstava kralja Marka na južnoj fasadi crkve Svetog Dimitrija u Markovom manastiru*, Kralot Marko vo istorijata i vo tradicijata, Prilep 1997, pp. 299-307; S. Korunovski - E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia Lárte medievale dal IX al XV seculo*, pp. 201-206; E. Dimitrova, *Za mizanscenot i za kulisite. Sceni od likovnata dramatopeja na makedonskoto sred-novekovno slikarstvo*, pp. 22-26; Eadem, *The Portal to Heaven, Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, pp. 378-379; E. Dimitrova, S. Korunovski, S. Grandakovska, *Srednovekovna Makedonija*, pp. 1744-1754; M. Tomić Đurić, *Freske Markovog manastira*, Beograd 2019; D. Mitrevski, V. Lilchikj, E. Maneva, E. Dimitrova, *Skopje. Osum mileniumi život, kultura, tvoreštvo*, pp. 526-553; E. Dimitrova, *The Church of Saint Demetrius (Marko’s monastery) at Sušica*, Skopje 2020.

<sup>25</sup> M. Tomić Đurić, *Freske Markovog manastira*, pp. 277-281.

<sup>26</sup> E. Dimitrova, S. Korunovski, S. Grandakovska, *Srednovekovna Makedonija*, p. 1750.

<sup>27</sup> Brilliant scholarly exposition by Marka Tomić, cf. M. Tomić Djurić, *The Man of Sorrows and the Lamenting Virgin: The Example of Markov Manastir*, Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta, 49, Beograd 2012, pp. 303-331; M. Tomić Đurić, *Freske Markovog manastira*, pp. 379-381.

<sup>28</sup> M. Tomić Đurić, *Freske Markovog manastira*, pp. 274-281.

representation of the “convict” in a frame associative to a window situated beneath a basilica-like edifice as an allusion to the *praetorium* where the trial before Pilate has actually taken place<sup>29</sup> is one of a kind invention of the painters with no painterly analogies in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine frescoes. Hence, the scenes depicting the two dialogues between Jesus and the Roman governor (*John*: 18, 33-38; 19, 10), although deprived of elaborated architectural backdrop, most certainly emanate the spatial dimension of the alleged historical environment.



Fig. 8 Saint Demetrius at Sušica, *Trial before Pilate*



Fig. 9 Saint Demetrius at Sušica, *Pilate and Christ at Gabbatha, Flagellation*

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 277.

Four of the compositions of the mini-trial cycle in Marko's monastery are situated in exterior: the Conversation of Pilate with the Jews (*John*:18, 38) and "Judge him according to your law" (*John*: 18, 31) are pictured in front of a neutral background formulated as a slightly decorated flat wall, while the dialogue between the Rabin and the Roman authority at Gabbatha (*John*: 19, 13) is placed on a sloppy hill as an association of a dramatic outdoor event; the Flagellation (mentioned in *Mathew*: 27, 26; *Mark*: 15, 15; *John*: 19, 1) in front of the walls of Jerusalem is an exclusive example of this motif which is very rarely inserted into the visual story of the trials, while the scene of Pilate washing his hands (*Mathew*: 27, 24) is a dynamic composite of the temperament group of Jews, the calm image of Jesus, the seated figure of the Governor and the two servants, one of whom is whispering the message of Pilate's wife to the Roman officer (*Mathew*: 27, 19). However, the chronologically arranged actions of Pilate related to his juridical engagement with Jesus' public activity are preceded by the Trials before Annas (**Fig. 10**) and Caiaphas as opening compositions of the mini cycle, depicting the stages of the legal procedure of the Rabin's case. Similarly to Staro Nagoričino<sup>30</sup>, as well as to a couple of other monuments<sup>31</sup>, the first of the two depicted scenes represents the Trial before Annas, while the gesture of the high priest is highly recognizable as the one tearing the robe, characteristic of Caiaphas' demeanor in the Gospel according to Mathew (26, 65)<sup>32</sup>. In that regard, standing vigorously, the angry priest in the first scene, passionately discloses his animosity toward Jesus, contrary to "his colleague" in the second scene who reproaches the Rabin with less accentuated repulsion. Visualizing the refined theological notion of the Gospel according to John which points to the death sentence involuntarily passed to Jesus by the Roman governor<sup>33</sup>, apparently extorted by the Jewish

<sup>30</sup> B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, p. 76; Idem, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, p. 132.

<sup>31</sup> As in Gračanica cf. B. Živković, *Gračanica. Crteži freska*, Beograd 1989, V, 1; and in Chilandar monastery, cf. G. Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos. Les peintures*, Paris 1927, pl. 71.1.

<sup>32</sup> The Gospel according to Mathew identifies the High priest as Caiaphas (26, 57), Mark does not mention him by name, yet mentions that he is the person in charge of the High Jewish council (14, 55), while only John points to the two trials – before Annas and before Caiaphas (18, 24)

<sup>33</sup> Gospel according to John: 18, 29-39, 19, 1-16.

high priests, the trials depicted in Marko's monastery, supplemented with elements taken over from the Gospel of Mathew and spiced with detailed visual anatomy of the Passion tale, are the most representative example of how well familiar the painters have been with the theologically subtle and critically profound evangelical testimony<sup>34</sup>.



Fig. 10 Saint Demetrius at Sušica, *Trial before Annas*

The painterly execution of the Trial scenes in Marko's monastery is very specific and differs drastically from the one applied to compositions devoted to the same subjects in the fresco ensembles mentioned so far. Hence, not only the number of pictures diverges from the standard set of three to five compositions, but their visual configuration and aesthetic dimension, as well. In that regard, the city wall, which, in a form of a basic architectural backdrop, closes the second prospect of all scenes, was utilized as a continuous façade that gives the spectacles a sense of consecutiveness of the depicted

<sup>34</sup> M. Tomić Đurić, *Freske Markovog manastira*, pp. 274-281.

events. The representation of Jesus framed by a window-like perforation certainly adds drama to the compositions and, moreover, gives an impression of isolation to the figure of the condemned Rabin. This further enhances the tense atmosphere of the represented events, deprived of any additional components that would have ennobled the vistas with anything but tragic ambience of a preconditioned expectance. The sole exception is the scene depicting the Trial before Pilate, i.e. Pilate washing his hands – a spectacle enlivened with the energetic charge of the protagonists whose theatrical motion empowers the visual aspects of the scene with a high dosage of synchronized dynamicity. Following the fundamental painterly pattern of the zographs, who in Marko's monastery created an optical oratory of ultimate suffering, the pictures of the Trials in the church of Saint Demetrius reflect the high resonance of passionate agony of Biblical stories, as well as the real historic disaster<sup>35</sup>.

The occupation of a judge, a barrister, a lawyer or a jurist is definitely not a relaxing one. It requires investigation, preparing legal documentation, interpretation of laws and regulations, presiding over hearings, determination if the information supports the charge, claim or dispute, analyzing the facts and conclusions, making decisions, giving legal instructions<sup>36</sup>, etc. All this components should lead to the ultimate goal of the legal system - which is the administration of justice. Whether all of these principles have or have not been applied during the trials of Jesus, we are in no position to find out. Judging from the information given by the Gospels, we are more inclined to doubt the fairness of Annas' and Caiapha's tribunal, as well as Pilate's court, although, according to John the Evangelist, the later has, at least, investigated the case<sup>37</sup>. Religious feelings aside, I would like to quote a sentence of Jesus, brilliantly played by William Dafoe in the highly controversial motion picture **The Last temptation of Christ**<sup>38</sup>, who, before the start of the trials, says: "*If I was a woodcutter, I'd cut; If I was a fire, I'd burn; But*

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<sup>35</sup> E. Dimitrova, *The Church of Saint Demetrius (King Marko's monastery) at Sušica*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>36</sup> S. Waddams, *Introduction to the Study of Law*, Toronto 2010, p.128; Lord Burnett of Maldon, Sir Ernest Ryder (Eds.), *Guide to Judicial Conduct*, London 2019, pp. 6-18.

<sup>37</sup> Gospel according to John: 18, 33-39, 19, 4-8.

<sup>38</sup> Universal Pictures, Martin Scorsese Director, Barabara de Fina Producer, Release date: 1988.



*I'm a heart and I love; That's the only thing I can do and I will suffer for it".*  
And that, to me, is the ultimate personal justice, no doubt about it.

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