



**THE CHURCH OF SAINT ANDREAS
IN THE GORGE OF MATKA**

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The church dedicated to Saint Andreas is the last representative Byzantine monument in the territory of present-day Macedonia, erected and decorated with fresco arrangement in the closing years of Macedonian Middle Ages. Situated in the vicinity of Skopje, in the picturesque gorge of the Treska River and located beneath the harsh rocky massifs of the Matka canyon, the temple dedicated to Saint Andreas - the first-summoned apostle of Christ, rises out of the mystical uterus of the magnificent mountain region, ennobled with multitude of archaeological sites and sacral edifices chronologically dated in the Antiquity and in the course of Medieval era. The church is located amidst the enigmatically secluded and vertiginous labyrinths of the barely accessible ambient distinguished by its remarkable geo-strategic position right in front of the entrance to the medieval town of Skopje. Situated in the region discernible by a large number of feudal estates of the noble families who inhabited the wider surroundings of the metropolis, the church of Saint Andreas, guarded by the natural dam of the rocky defile, has survived the dramatic centuries of the Ottoman period and has managed to preserve the historical references of its creation, as well as the supreme

1. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
south façade





2. St. Andreas, Matka



3. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
north façade

aesthetic qualities of the artistic attainments to a respectable extent. Located high above the riverbed, amidst the amazingly green landscape of mountain flora and authentic eco-systems, the church dedicated to Saint Andreas represents one of the most impressive vistas of Macedonian medieval history, surviving as a precious jewel of the visual culture from the chronological finale of the Byzantine artistic production.

According to the data from the preserved khetorial inscription executed in fresco technique and located in the interior, above the entrance to the temple, the edifice has been erected in 1388/1389 by the

nobleman Andreaš, the son of King Volkašin and Queen Elena, as well as younger brother of King Marko. In the context of his efforts to provide the endowment with feudal privileges, the commissioner donated numerous real estates to the newly found monastery, all noted in the text written along the walls of the church interior in a form of a band, fragmentarily preserved at the foot of the dome - in the space between the scenes of the Festal and the Passion cycles. Erecting an edifice with modest dimensions, yet with harmonic proportions of the building corpus, as well as vividly executed features of the architectural matrix, the nobleman Andreaš has employed reliable personnel for the ambitious realization of his khetorial project. Devoted to the task given by their benefactor, the masons and the painters have accomplished the erection of the temple and have participated in every step of the process of its functional operability. One of them, the “many time sinner” Caest Cyril has left his name within the inscription preserved above the niche of the diaconicon, south of the altar apse, giving the details that the engagement of the monastic brotherhood has started simultaneously with the beginning of the khetorial activities. The inscription located above the niche of the prothesis, on the other hand, discloses the name of the author of the painted decoration, who was commissioned to crown the representative khetorial project with the most remarkable features of his artistic mastery. Painter with a glamorous talent and a prestigious education, as well as a high-ranking church dignitary, the Metropolitan John, altogether with his assistant, the monk Gregory, has ennobled



4. St. Andreas, Matka,
apse

the church interior with the elite attributes of his masterful painterly vision. Executing the fresco ensemble of Andreaš monastery, he has created the last master-piece of Byz-

antine artistic production in the territory of Macedonia at the very end of the medieval epoch. In the mid-16th century, to the west of the temple, a rectangular narthex has been added, decorated with frescoes by an artist with modest painterly qualities in 1559/1560.

Architectural and spatial features of the edifice

According to its architectural conception, the catholicon of Andreaš monastery is an interesting sublimation of two distinctive building types united in a single spatial matrix, marked by compact scheme and monolithic visual expression. Although the church has small dimensions, it was erected in a form of triconchal ground plan enclosed by an outer rectangle and crowned by a dome. The combination of a triconchal plan and a cruciform matrix is what makes this temple attractive for analysis in relation to the origin of the applied architectural solution, since it unites two characteristic building patterns – one of them born at the very beginning of creation of the medieval architecture in Macedonia (triconchal edifice), the other very rarely utilized in Macedonian building practice of the Middle Ages (cruciform building with four wings of the cross). Although the configuration of the ground plan in the church interior speaks in favour of the tradition for building triconchal temples founded in Macedonia as early as in the era of Saint Clement of Ohrid (turn of the 10th century), the manner of execution of the inner

space of Saint Andreas' church mostly refers to the architectural principles of the triconchal churches built on Mount Athos, the impact of which has spread remarkably towards north, i.e. continental Balkans in the second half of the 14th century. Due to the relatively modest dimensions and as a result of the simplified forms in the execution of the ground plan, the triconchal matrix of the temple has gained an outer enclosure with rectangular shape, the exposition of which configures a perimeter of an edifice with a silhouette of a cross. In that manner, within the inventive merger of the two architectural schemes, the church of Saint Andreas represents a compact triconchal edifice in the interior, as well as a cruciform building in the exterior.

The harmonically formatted architectural core in the interior of the building, which represents the bay under the dome, is encased by the altar apse and the two subsidiary conchs which have shallow radius, due to which they are enclosed by the rationally condensed wall mass belonging to the subsidiary arms of the cruciform ground plan. The altar portion of the church has a tri-sized disposition in the exterior, while the prothesis and the diaconicon are shaped as semi-circular niches in the church interior, with no exposition in the exterior. The dome rests on four pandantives placed in the angles of the central bay above the naos and is located over the medial axis of the edifice - at an equal distance from the outermost eastern point of the altar space, as well as the west-



5. St. Andreas, Matka, Painting in the altar



6. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
The Virgin in the altar

ern line of the perimeter of the naos. In that manner, the ground plan of the church in its interior displays extraordinary proportionality of the architectonic solution in the execution of the structural components.

The exterior of the edifice comprises the façades executed in combination of stone and bricks, ennobled with semi-circular niches rhythmically arranged in two parallel zones. The building opus of the temple is robust, while the building technique is irregular and relatively rough. The system of elaboration of the façade walls with the double register of blind niches, however, refers to the inspiration of the Andreaš masons

by one of the most representative creations of Late Byzantine architecture in Macedonia – the church dedicated to Saint Demetrius at the village of Markova Sušica (known as Marko’s monastery). Although the execution of the altar apse of the temple commissioned by Kings Volkašin and Marko at Sušica is based on the principles of regular and precise opus while the niches are filled with richer brick-work ornamentation, both churches share the common principles of similar structural design in the elaboration of the eastern exterior. The impact of the architecture of Marko’s monastery can also be acknowledged in the execution of the dome of Saint Andreas’ church, which rises above the monolithically constructed edifice with a powerful silhouette and relatively high disposition of the structural elements. The brick-work decoration executed within the niches of the altar apse of Andreas’ church is modest according to the scope and consists of relatively simple motifs in the upper part of the niches – in the portion under the archivolt. The niches placed on the subsidiary facades of the edifice are decorated similarly to those of the altar apse. Small by its dimensions, yet with a remarkable proportionality of architectural masses, as well as harmony of the building corpus, the church of Saint Andreas is a true representative of the delicate taste of the commissioner and the building skills of its masons at the historic sundown of the medieval era.



7. St. Andreas, Matka, Officiating Church fathers, detail

The programme and the iconographic features of the fresco painting

Due to the relatively small dimensions of the church building, the iconographic repertoire of the fresco decoration consists of illustration of the thematic contents traditionally exposed on the walls of medieval temples, encompassing the elaboration of the Festal and Passion cycles, supplemented with the commonly executed programme applied in the dome and on the walls of the altar space. Since the uppermost portions of the architectural corpus of the church have been damaged, portions of the painted decoration in the calotte, as well as in the area under the dome, have been demolished, thus the upper sections of the Festal scenes have disappeared; the image of *Christ Pantocrator*, who, as the Lord of the Universe, watches over the faithful from the highest point of the church edifice, has been completely destroyed. Foretold by the prophets and praised in the works of the evangelists, he was hovering in His cosmic sphere, accompanied by, at present-day, destroyed figures of the archangels, cherubims and seraphims. In the drum of the dome, the preserved figures of the prophets are represented in different positions, while their motions are vividly dinamized. Besides the traditionally dressed figures of the Old Testament preachers Isaiah, Zacharias, Ezekias, Jonah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah, among the ones who have announced the messianic role of Christ the ascetic image of St. John the Baptist can be seen, while

8. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Cycle of the Great
Feasts, Archangel Ga-
briel from the Annun-
ciation





9. St. Andreas, Matka,
Cycle of the Great
Feasts, Virgin from the
Annunciation



10. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Cycle of the Great Feasts,
The Crucifixion and Har-
rowing of Hell

the youngish image of the prophet Daniel is represented in his authentic “Persian” attire, holding an open prophetic book instead of a scroll. In the space between the pendentives, the images of the evangelists are shown in front of the luxurious illusionistic panoramas of the painted architectural backdrop. Although the basic principles for depiction of



the authors of Christ's biography, circulated for centuries among the iconographers and painters who have executed the iconography in the domes of Byzantine churches, have been formally met, the authors of the four Gospels in Andreaš monastery have surpassed the canonic restrictions of older iconographic models with the opulence of painted details,



11. St. Andreas, Matka,
Cycle of the Great
Feasts, The Dormition

as well as the picturesqueness of painterly components. Saint Mathew who reads the text written on the open scroll (in the north-eastern pendentive), Saint Mark who deeps the quill in the luxurious ink-stand (in the south-western pendentive), Saint Luke who contemplates over the open book (in the north-western pendentive) and Saint John accompanied by young Prochor in front of the rocky landscape structures of the backdrop (in the south-eastern pendentive) can be perceived as quite exclusive examples of artistic invention in the design of this, usually traditionally conceived, register of the church decoration.

In the limited spatial dimensions of the altar apse, the painters have created a mini-ensemble, “chamber-like” by its program configuration and compact by its iconographic structure, which reflect the traditional Eucharistic and liturgical connotation of the sanctuary. Omitting the scene of the *Communion of the apostles*, they have depicted the image of the Virgin in the apsidal conch and the *Officiating Church Fathers* in the lowest register; the images of the deacons Stephen and Euplos have been placed in the niches of the prothesis and the diaconicon, while the busts of the Old Testament Kings David and Solomon, as well as the figures of the Virgin and the Archangel Gabriel from the scene of the *Annunciation* have been depicted in the highest registers of the eastern wall. In the middle zone of the altar decoration, the painters have depicted the busts of the elite representatives of ecclesiastic institutions from the wider territory of the Empire, among which the portraits of the Roman pope Sylvester and the Slavonic intellectual sage Saint Clement of Ohrid have been included, as well. Situating the composition of the *Pentecost* on the surface of the apsidal vault, the authors of the painted decoration have enclosed the program construction of the altar space in which the idea of Christ’s incarnation and His benevolent sacrifice for the salvation of humanity has been reflected in the holy sacraments of the church ritual. With the proportionally structured program concept, as well as the carefully selected iconographic features of the compositions, a compact vista of the Earthly church has been illustrated in

the altar of Andreaš' monastery, funded upon the sacrifice of the incarnated Saviour, exalted by the most eminent followers of the faith and glorified in the sanctity of church ceremonies.

From the cycle of the Great Feasts, illustrated in the area under the dome, eight compositions have been preserved. Located in the highest register of the painterly decoration, the Festal scenes have shared the tragic destiny of demolition and devastation with the architectural skeleton of the building, thus suffering serious destruction in regard to the chromatic component, as well as the mortar bed. Therefore, out of the one-time luxurious iconographic configuration of the *Nativity* only the lower parts of the scene with the depiction of the episode in which the women bathe the newborn are still visible, as well as a part of the upper half with the figures of the angels who arrive for the Adoration. Although a large portion of the composition has been demolished, one can easily notice the centric character of the scene with the proportional arrangement of the figural groups in the corners around the central motif, which is only partially visible in the medial section of the iconographic spectacle. The perfect balance of the structural elements in the iconographic configuration of the centric compositional schemes is the main feature of the rest of the Festal scenes in the Andreaš church, as well: the rhythmically arranged figural ensemble crowned by the ciborium in the depiction of the *Presentation in the temple*, the skillfully balanced structure of compositional masses



which flank Christ's figure in the *Baptism*, the harmonically assembled arrangement of the characters in the scene illustrating the *Harrowing of Hell*, as well as the perfectly configured symmetry of the visual matrix in the *Crucifixion* are the most representative examples of the rationally organized compositional schemes, superbly included in the available space of the area under the dome.

12. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Passion cycle, The Last
Supper



13. **St. Andreas, Matka,** Passion cycle, The image of King Solomon

For the depiction of the Festal scenes located on the western wall of the naos, the painters have designed more elaborated iconographic schemes. Liberated from the restrictions imposed by the spatial construction in the area under the dome, they have enriched these compositions with a multitude of picturesque elements and unusual visual details. Although the carefully balances arrangement of the compositional masses within the iconographic assemblage of the pictures is the main feature of the structural design of the fresco painting in Andreas' temple, the vividness of the numerous details

has not disrupted the compactness of the visual concept of the scenes. In that regard, the grouping of the actors in both parts of the composition displaying the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, as well as the inclusion of the boys who moan under the weight of the lid of the open sarcophagus, have contributed to the clarity of the iconographic design and to the spontaneity in the depiction of the illustrated event. The skillful arrangement of the apostles, archbishops and angelic creatures around the catafalque of the Virgin in the multi-figured scene of the *Dormition*, on the other hand, has resulted in condensation of the drama act, creating an atmosphere of an intimate ceremony in the depiction of the tragic event. In that manner, with the dexterous design of iconographic components, the painters have managed to create an atmosphere of spontaneity in the represented vistas, as well as unpretentiousness in the illustration of the most celebrated feasts of the Orthodox Church.

In regard to the iconographic execution of the scenes, compositions encompassed by the cycle of Christ's Passion, illustrated in the register beneath the Festal scenes, in the second zone of the fresco decoration of the temple are particularly impressive. Rationally formatted and marked by a wealth of depicted iconographic details, the tales of the Passion illustrated in the decorative programme of Andreaš' church have been encountered among the most impressive vistas of Christ's agony in the Late Byzantine mural painting.



14. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Passion cycle, Washing
of the Feet

Among them, the scene of the *Last Supper*, as an opening event of the illustration of the Passion, pictures the Jerusalem's shelter of the apostles with an abundance of iconographic oddities in the painterly description of the spectacle. In front of the luxuriously designed architectural backdrop, the young apostle John addresses Christ who is seated at the head of the table, while Judas greedily and treasonably stretches his arm towards the dishes. The semi-circular table, represented as a symbolic shape of the apsidal space in which the Eucharist takes place, is illuminated by two tall candle sticks and is covered with ceramic vessels filled with food, vegetables,

round bread loafs and a glass receptacle filled with red wine. In the upper part of the composition, The Old Testament King David and the prophet Jeremiah hold the scrolls with the Biblical passages referring to the Betrayal. Christ's disciples talk to one another vividly, manifesting the exciting content of their discussion with different postures of their energetic bodily gesticulation. The two apostles, depicted in front of the table, are represented with their backs turned towards the spectators and pictured in temperament mutual conversation, enclosing the picturesque atmosphere of the scene permeated with dynamic interaction of all depicted protagonists.

The rest of the compositions belonging to the subject of the Passion cycle also display temperament waves of motion which have permeated the actors, as well as the illustrated Biblical events. In the scene picturing the *Washing of the feet*, the puzzled images of the apostles rush to prepare themselves for the action; within the composition illustrating the *Prayer in the garden at Gethsemane*, the triple representation of Christ in the upper portion of the view crowns the figures of the half-asleep apostles, pictured in various positions; in the scene of the *Betrayal*, a gale-force whirlwind of motion permeates the crowd of characters who scramble around Christ, while in the spectacle showing the *Mocking of Christ*, the cacophony of different sounds produced by the street musicians, packet together with the torturers, spreads in all angles of the dramatic view. Unlike the



15. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Passion cycle, The
Betrayal

atmosphere of spontaneous mobility of the actors that looks like an element of a genre sight in the scene in which *Christ refuses to drink vinegar*, the severe movements in the composition displaying *Christ mounting the cross* prefigure the tragedy of Golgotha. The extraordinary *mise-en-scene*, as well as the refined manifestation of actors' emotional outburst in the scene illustrating the *Deposition from the cross*, pictured with the skilful arrangement of the figural components, make this composition one of the most representative examples of the mentioned iconographic subject in the history of late Byzantine painterly production. The *Lamentation* and the *Entombment*, on the other hand, are united



by a simplified iconographic matrix marked by compact, yet visually articulated approach to the configuration of the sorrowful, yet ceremonially expressive optical impression.

16. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Passion cycle, The Be-
trayal, detail

In the register below the compositions encompassed by the Passion cycle, a zone consisting of fifty two busts portraying highly respectable representatives of arch-bishopric hierarchy, monastic communities, eremitic circles, martyrs, hymnographies and soldiers was conceived as a row of the most renowned members of the Orthodox Church. The suggestive representations of the bishops in the eastern bay, the impressive



17. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Passion cycle, The
Mocking

monastic characters depicted on the semi-circular surfaces of the conchs, the energetic images of the holy warriors in the western bay, as well as the picturesque portraits of the martyrs depicted on the western wall of the temple – are the constituents of this gallery of saintly portraits, chamber-like according to its dimensions, yet remarkable according to its typological differentiation. The nobly illuminated image of Saint Anthony the Great and the ascetically idealized portrait of Saint Euthimius in the southern conch, the graceful depiction of Saint Simeon Nemanja - the founder of the Serbian state in the northern conch, the nonchalant facial expression of the image of the martyr Saint Mardarius, as well as the sensual countenance of young Saint Nestor painted on the western portions of the



southern and northern wall – are only some of the examples of the inventive iconographic design in the conception of the register that encompasses the representative half-length saintly portraits.

In the lowest zone of the painterly decoration of the church, a gallery of full-size saintly figures was formatted, in the conception of which a total number of fourteen individuals have been included. In that regard, the archangels Michael and Gabriel were depicted guarding the entrance, the powerful figures of the holy warriors were placed in the western portion of the side walls, the apostolic princes (Peter and Paul) were situated in the eastern parts of the conchs, while the

18. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Passion cycle, The
Deposition



19. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Row of saintly busts,
detail

evangelists were pictured on the semi-circular surfaces of the conchs. In that manner, the painters have created a highly thoughtful concept that matched the carefully selected, as well as skillfully configured assembly of saints. In context of the symbolic connotation that followed the program arrangement of the saintly figures, the archangels were flanking the gate as guardians of the entrance to the sacral space of the church interior; Saint Demetrius and Saint George, altogether with their counter partners, Saint Theodore Tyro and Saint Theodore Stratelates, comprise the mighty militant “quartet” situated on the main constructive parts of the church walls - with a prophylactic function as defenders of the church edifice. In the northern conch, where the officiating service has been starting regularly, Saint Andreas, the patron of the temple and the first-summoned disciple of Christ, was accompanied by Mathew the Evangelist,

the author of the earliest biography of Christ (Gospel according to Mathew), by Peter the apostle, the prince among the twelve apostles, as well as by the figure of the Virgin Mary as “*conditio prima*” of Christ’s incarnation. On the opposite wall, in the southern conch, the three evangelists – John, Mark and Luke, together with Paul the Apostle, enclose the elite assembly of the fundamentals of Christendom, i.e. the creators of the New Testament history, as well as the promoters of Christ’s biblical soteriology.

Metropolitan John and his painterly expression

The engagement of the highly regarded church dignitary, as well as a leader of the renowned family atelier - Zo-graph John in the painterly decoration of the church of Saint Andreas has enabled the creation of the last representative artistic work of the medieval production in the territory of Macedonia. Within the compact church interior of the edifice, Metropolitan John’s painting illuminates the walls of the temple with the glamorous energy of the supreme creative expression of the last extraordinary individual in the development of Byzantine artistic practice in this region. Inspired by

20. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Row of saintly busts,
detail







21. St. Andreas, Matka, Painting in the north conch

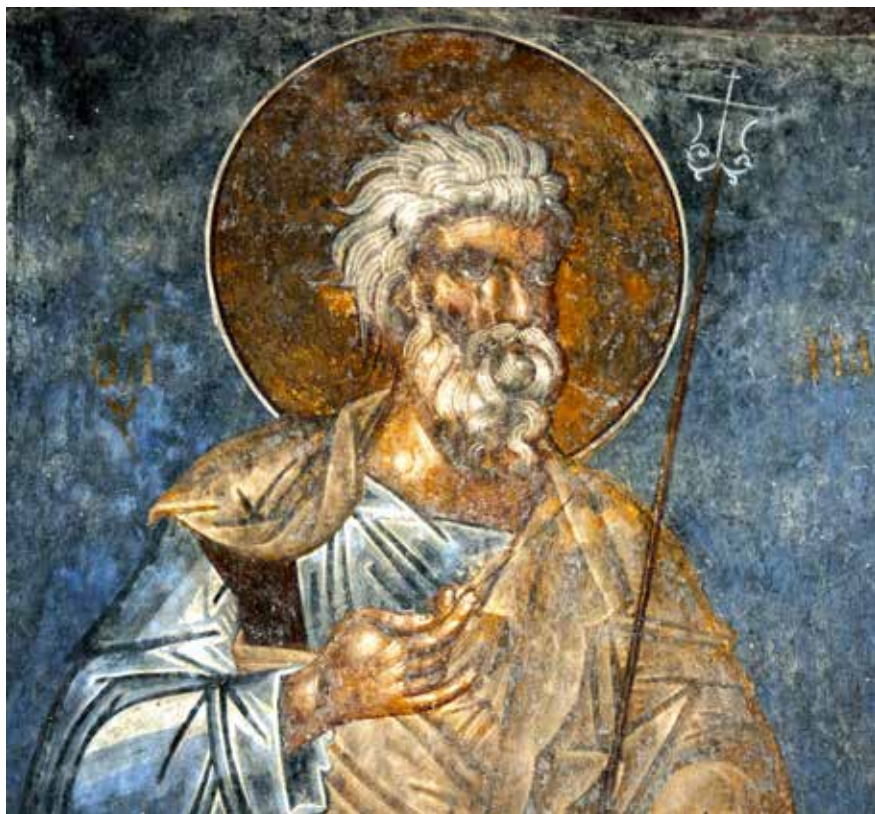


22. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Peter the Apostle in the
north conch

the creative sources of the traditional streams of Paleologan painting, yet permeated with the picturesque painterly imagination of the author, the Andreaš' fresco decoration fascinates with the thrilling diapason of means of expression at the very end of the Middle Ages. Energetic by its visual potential and dignified by its creative capacity, Metropolitan John's painting awakes the most resounding creative impulses of the era, embodied in the epic painterly resonance of his best achievement. Marked by an academic consistency in the execution, as well as luxurious amplitude of expression in the realization of the visual structures, Metropolitan John's artistic perfor-

mance in the monastery of Andreaš represents the triumphant finale of the dazzling treasury of cultural heritage of Medieval Macedonia.

Monumental in the expression and vivid in the plastic succulence of the vistas, the metropolitan John's art in Andreaš is marked by the enthusiastic outburst of energy which permeates the forms with the fresh dynamic charge of the painterly components. The rationally organized format of the compositional schemes, the perfect balance of the scenic arrangements, the picturesque *mise-en-scene* of the illustrated events and the epic atmosphere of the depicted spectacles are the basic elements of Metropolitan John's mastery in the creation of Andreaš' painterly panorama, featured by the serenity of the kinetic qualities, as well as the energetic picturesqueness of the vistas. The monumental character of the shapes and the playful anatomic architecture of the depicted figures, the sensual nobility of the images and the elegant protocol of their motion, the luxurious illusionistic panoramas of the scenographic arrangement and the succulent valeurs of the saturated colouristic palette are, by all means, the most recognizable features of the painterly "handwriting" of Metropolitan John. In his aesthetic vision dynamically disseminated across the walls of the Andreaš' temple, the athletically configured saintly figures, monumentally playful in their powerful anatomy, move through the interior with the energy of cosmic heroes descended from the heights of Biblical ages. The consistent rhythm of the motion and the temperament



23. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
Andrew the Apostle in
the north conch

whirlwind of dynamic qualities, the calculable measurements of kinetic values and the controlled balance of bodily gestures in the depiction of the saintly characters are the most authentic contributions of the Metropolitan John to the creation of the resounding epic resonance of the fresco painting in the church.

The thoroughly and meticulously elaborated modelation of the forms, the perfect equilibrium of the compositional elements, the athletic elasticity of the movements, as well as the luxuriously elaborated architectural coulisses in the

backdrop of the scenes, permeated with the energetically conceived dynamic composite of the execution, have resulted in production of fascinate spectacles that illustrate the most significant events of the evangelic story. The immaculate spatial qualities and the skillfully balanced arrangement of the protagonists in the scene depicting the *Presentation in the temple*, the vivid kinetic energy of the harmonically organized figural ensemble in the composition of the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, the ceremonial elasticity of movements and the exclusive sense for ritual expression of the characters in the scene of the *Deposition from the cross* are but a few examples of Metropolitan John's mastery in the configuration of playful compositional schemes. The temperament interaction of the apostles in the *Last Supper*, the monumentally conceived action of Christ's disciples in the scene of the *Betrayal*, the anxious agitation of the crowd in the spectacle of the *Mocking of Christ*, as well as the dignified restraint of emotional expression of the characters in the picture of the *Deposition from the cross* have been encountered among the most representative examples in the achievement of energetically enhanced dynamic composite of the painting in Andreaš. The pretentious elaboration of the furniture in the scene of the *Presentation in the temple*, the outstanding arrangement of visual components in the composition of the *Last Supper*, the skillfully elaborated spatial qualities of the picture illustrating the *Washing of the feet*, as well as the breathtaking perspective in the scene depicting the *Deposition from the cross* are the supreme achievements of the zograph John in the conception of the spatial design of compositional



matrixes. Obtaining his painterly inspiration from the fount of the centuries-long tradition of Byzantine artism and ennobling his artistic handwriting with a vigorous surge of fresh creative energy, Metropolitan and zograph John has produced the last representative piece of art in the great finale of mediaeval era. In the sonorous blueness of colourful resonances, as well as the epic transcendence of the Andreaš' painting, the centuries-long heroism of medieval Macedonian creativity has reached its final and outmost triumph.

Out of the fresco painting executed in the narthex, added to the west façade of the church, only the representations applied on the eastern and the western walls have been preserved. The bust of the patron saint – Saint Andreas, painted in the lunette above the entrance to the naos, the image of the Virgin Mary above it, the illustrations of oikos VIII and kontakion VIII, as well as the remnants of oikos VII and kontakion IX from the Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin are the elements of the decorative programme that has survived in the western part of the edifice. The composition showing the *Deisis*, the figures of the apostles Peter and Paul, as well as few saintly images depicted in the first register of the fresco ensemble are the “refugees” from the demolition of the gallery of saintly characters painted within the decoration of narthex of the church. Although the author of the fresco arrangement had obviously strived to emulate the artistic handwriting of Metropolitan John which was glowing in front of his eyes while executing the frescoes

24. **St. Andreas, Matka,**
The Virgin from the
north conch

on the walls of the narthex, his plastic forms, swollen with the ambitiously elaborated carnal anatomy of the saintly figures, lack the freshness of the energetic mobility, as well as the dignified dynamics of Metropolitan John's saintly individuals. The precise drawing, the pedantic elaboration of the forms, as well as the soundly constructed spatial effects determine this master painter as a successor of painterly principles from the time of the last boom of Paleologan painting, at the end of 14th century. However, the impotence in capturing the full-blooded swing of bodily motion, the lack of fresh energetic charge in depiction of the facial characteristics of the images, as well as the absence of the succulent palette of colours are more than a testimony that the gate of the heroic phase in the development of Byzantine painting has been already firmly closed. With the harmonic architectural qualities of the edifice, the supreme painterly achievements of Metropolitan John's painting in the naos, as well as the creative consistency of the post-Byzantine frescoes in the narthex, the church of Andreaš monastery has earned its place among the most remarkable artistic performances of the medieval epoch.

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the south conch



26. St. Andreas, Matka, St. Archangel Michael



27. St. Andreas, Matka, St. Archangel Gabriel



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29. St. Andreas, M
the east wall



Matka, Painting on
of the narthex

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