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## The implementation of cloisonne method to byzantine church architecture in Albania. ( XII – XIII centuries )

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### Abstract

*Study of byzantine church architecture in Albania, during the Middle Ages, represents important to highlight the construction traditions of our country. Their scope not only in important centers, or near them, but also in other areas, pay attention to objects of worship and their continuity. Comparison of these churches with contemporary architecture of neighboring countries, not talking to her backwardness provinces byzantine architecture, but about them and about the masters and their ateliers. At the same time, creative impulses coming from Constantinople, in some cases, were intertwined with those of the West, found a cultural terrain, a vibrant construction activity that made possible the creation of works which differ for particular elements or whole from other types of provinces. A proof of this construction activity are Mesopotami church and Labova of Cross church, with individual solutions required, the first of which remains unique in all the byzantine architecture. But as an initiator, cloisonne method in Albania, held in the church of St. Mary Kosinë (Përmet). Construction techniques and decorative methods of this church date back to the twelfth century. Using cloisonne method in architecture during this period indicates its recognition by the builders, but understood that it is not made a common way to build walls. Over time, because of the economic opportunities and aesthetic requirements, it was possible that the cloisonne method was always more present in Albanian byzantine church architecture. On the walls of these churches were used antique and medieval reliefs, combined bricks, to be uplifted and completed carving décor to achieve the required size. The values mentioned above, help us to a better understanding of the byzantine cult constructions and for their artistic level.*

*Keywords: Albania, church, cloisonné*

### 1. Introduction

As in the entire Mediterranean world, under the influence of Byzantine architecture, even in our country, during the X-XIV centuries, finds the dissemination architectural type, with cross-shaped layout, with cupola. The territory, the technical level of execution and architecture, size and décor, to lead to the conclusion that to us this type has been especially dominant during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Churches of this type were built not only in cities but also in monasteries and villages, confirming a dominant architectural taste in the same time remain a proof of the high level of economic development, social and cultural development of our country. (Apollon Bace, Aleksander Meksi, Emin Riza, Gjerak Karaiskaj, Pirro Thomo, 1980, p. 274)

On the exterior they are characterized by pyramidal building, which culminates with the drum Dome, which highlighted the ornamental treatment of which part, and that starts with the more processed on Downstream direction. For the construction of the walls, in the lower part of the wall have brick stones and debris, that the color of their gray coloration to break stones, stands above methods while cloisonne with a wide use of brick on the part of Fronton, the arms of the cross . As above, the building of drum caps, which generally built only with bricks. Scaling and ratio of specific areas on the outside is in accordance with their place inside the church. These features are not equally mature in all churches. Among them excel it Labova of Crosst, Holy Trinity and St. Michael in Berat. Architectural development path we can see if we compare Saint Mary Vllaherna in Berat, with St. Michael is in this city. The differences are in the treatment of the walls, the proportion of the totality separate sides, where there is an altitude jumps that gives a special flavor to the building. Of interest is that the treatment of foreign picturesque evaluated. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 103-104)

## 2. Monuments during XIII-XIV centuries.

**2.1 Church of Saint Mary in Kosina, of Permet**, has quite archaic traits. Those observed in the plan and build the exterior, with the lowest proportion of heavy and flat surface. At the same time noticed Kosina attempt to overcome these. This is seen in the plastic processing embellishing the walls (drum, frontone, apse), the passage still unresolved best of cylindrical drum that polyhedron. All these data, as well as building techniques walls and ornamental simultaneously, speak to a church dating in Kosina, in XII century. Its architecture is about starting a cloisonne that method. (Meksi, 2004, p. 161)

Pages of the walls are built of brick with stone. And raw stones are placed in irregular rows. In the ornamental motifs are created, by means of which is avoiding the messy appearance of Masonry. There are generations in the form herringbone brick and meandra. Important is the use of cloisonne method, which shows its recognition by developers, but you still do not understand has become a common way to build the walls. (Meksi, Arkitektura mesjetare ne Shqiperi, 1984, pp. 110-111)

**2.2 Church of St. Michael in Berat**, is built on the steep rock on the south side, under the castle walls. This part of the hill, apparently, has been fortified by the end of the century. XIII and during the century. XIV. (Bace, 1971, p. 50) The level of construction is good. Here we have an example where the walls are built with cloisonne method in the entire height of the building, while the drum is all brick, which speaks to a concern for the aesthetic outcome. In contrast to other churches to Berat, here observed proportionate to cast a high level of architectural and a trend for a permanent forms. Listed in these respects after Vllaherna and Holy Trinity, St. Michael church should be built in the fourteenth century. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 211)

**2.3 Ristozi Church in Mborje, Korce**, is powered beam of Morava Mountain, southeast of Korca. The church consists of a central nave and porch of late, adding to the western and southern side, built with technical and materials not good. In the outer side of the church appears quite compact. Naos central cubic volume of the drum placed on the Dome. Moving from

bottom-up done in pyramid form, movement and fragmentation through roofs. The four arms of the cross terminate with frontone, taking part in the lower corners in this way form that clearly cross the roof, unlike the Church of St. Michael in Berat. (Thomo, 1967, pp. 157-159)

The niches are covered by a stone arch of bricks exchanged, surrounded by a brick strip that go vertically and shoulders of the niche. Rectangular portion of niches is built with cloisonne method with two vertical bricks. In the vaulted part have a small window, while areas around its brick is placed in zig zag form in horizontal rows. The frontones finish with a double frame saw tooth shaped bricks. Church itself should be built in the fourteenth century, this building demonstrates techniques and developed its forms. (Meksi, Te dhena mbi rindertimin e kupoles se kishes se Ristozit ne Mborje, 1972, pp. 199-202)

**2.4 Church of St. Mary the Vllaherna in Berat** , is the oldest among churches that preserved today in important medieval town of Berat . The northern and the southern wall represent approximate view . Naos parts of it , to rise up and become part of the wing and an additional cross over into the environmental side to create the same level of the wall . The surface of the cross arm , once in the form of a frontoni , and includes its niche covered arc , between which the window is located Shoulders east wing cross are cloisonne method . Niche is included within a brick arch , placed under rays surrounded by a row of bricks that continues vertically sideways niche . In the center of the window is double niche , covered with arches scalable . Niches surface is decorated with bricks placed zigzag . Double window is between a rock column on the capitals of bricks . Supported on a column of bricks up with some circles . From the window of the former limestone skeleton and partly preserved fragments windscreen . The lower part of the wall under the foundation of niche , is plastered . It is built with stone and brick and tile debris placed horizontally between the stones , walls characteristic for XIII - XIV centuries the construction of Berat , including the citadel . (Meksi, Tre kisha Bizantine te Beratit, 1972, pp. 59-62)

East side of the church, which belongs to the altar the environment, completely preserved. At its center three sided apse appears uneven. Doubles its window is surrounded by two rows of staggered bricks. Two other windows, with brick arches and scalable shoulders, are on the side of the apse for diokonikon and prothezis. On each of these windows are made with bricks crosses drawings. As the apse, as well as other eastern walls of the frame finish with saw teeth shape. After the changes the church has undergone, it is difficult to judge on its values. She has a serious view and primitive proportions and decoration of exterior walls. It should have been built in the early thirteenth century, when the city of Berat take a big leap buildings. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 214-216)

**2.5 Holy Trinity Church, Berat**, was built in the vicinity of the walls of the second siege of the castle, garrison headquarters and the rulers, whom seemed to serve. The masonry of the church consists of two generations that are the same as for the central nave and the narthex added to its close. The lower band is built of stone masonry mortar of lime, some places having brick and tile pieces placed one above the other between the stones. The upper band is built with cloisonne method, with a row of bricks laid horizontally and vertically between two brick stones. He started at the same height as well as for the central nave to narthex. Cloisonne is the method that the site is built and sees the narthex, the western wall of the naos. This thing, clear gaps between them

and the fact that in this area there is left to push the window to think that the construction of the narthex was made not long after the construction of the naos. (Meksi, *Tre kisha Bizantine te Beratit*, 1972, pp. 63-67) Truncated inscription in the narthex southern port retains the name "Cyrus Paleolog Andronicus" could indicate that the building belongs to the years 1302-1316. (Meksi, *Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise*, 2004, pp. 216-219)

**2.6 Church of St. Mary at the Labova of Cross, Gjirokastra**, located in the middle of the village, surrounded by a yard. The church in its present state consists of a core group of old nearly square in plan and side extensions in southern, northern and western. Also in 1776 have been rebuilt apse and reinforcements have been made to keep the inside of the damaged structures of the church. (Apollon Bace, Aleksander Meksi, Emin Riza, Gjerak Karaiskaj, Pirro Thomo, 1980, pp. 276-277)

Old church itself consists of the central part of the dome-covered square which opened four arms of the cross covered with barrel vaulted, among which it is less easterner. The central part of the dome divided by lateral triple arcades through two floors, emphasizing in this way as the central volume of naos. Domes supported on arches carrying on pilastra four corners of this mass in the central volume. These pilastra the east side, serving to form the environment of the altar, while the western side to separate as cross exonarthex western side and the angular environments. (Meksi, *Dy kisha bizantine ne rrethin e Gjirokastres*, 1975, pp. 82-91)

On the outer walls of the church were built of brick stone. Up to level with the arms of the cross frontone masonry is cloisonne method, characterized in that the vertical bricks accompanied by both sides with half bricks to set aslant. Other parts, frontoni and the cupola drum are decorated only with bricks laid in by different drawings, by wearing these parts with a brick red carpet. With its large size and the image processing ornamental exterior, this monument manages to create the feeling of greatness and infinite space. Typologically special shapes can be explained primarily by the effects of old types of Thessaloniki and Constantinople, which identifies the central environment and secondly, with efforts being made in Constantinople and elsewhere at the end of the century. XII, to find new architectural expression in the formation of the central part. The church dates back to the second half of the thirteenth century for these last links to typological and momentum that takes architecture in the Despotate of Epirus. (Meksi, *Arkitektura e Kishave te Shqiperise*, 2004, pp. 230-235)

**2.7 Monastery Church of St. Nicholas in Mesopotam, Sarande** (Meksi, *Arkitektura e kishes se Mesopotamit*, 1972, pp. 47-94) is located in the south side of the monastery, where tradition says were old guest house, in a slightly raised platform from the ground nearby. The monastery is the type of fortified medieval town near the same name, the oldest mention of which is in shek.XI. (Meksi, *Te dhena te reja per kishen e Mesopotamit*, 1975, pp. 151-159) It is preserved and transformed quite crippled by its original forms because it is subjected to two significant reconstruction over the years 1793 and 1845. Old building consisted of quadratic central nave with a column in the middle, covered with four domes on drums, narthex on the western side, covered with three spherical cap and connected with the central nave with an arcade, environment altar with two bema, now completely transformed and porch open on three sides pilastra in that

today is being preserved partially collapsed on the floor and the bottom parts of pilastrave. (Apollon Bace, Aleksander Meksi, Emin Riza, Gjerak Karaiskaj, Pirro Thomo, 1980, p. 278)

The church walls are composed, the external side, the three generations distinct from each other. The lower band is built of limestone carver big, squared clean on the outside only. In the inner side have the form of wedge, to connect better with the hanging of underwear, with stone brick mortar abundant. The upper band appears with cloisonne method, thin brick. This generation of upper frieze and ends with a double frame in shape serrated teeth. In the north and south wall frame is horizontal, while in the eastern and western follows the roofs frontonet two aquaculture. Frieze, which is the same everywhere, preserved complete in the southern wall, which is interrupted by windows. In this generation are triple windows that illuminate the central nave and narthex. They are built with bricks, laid in different ways. Intermediate generation, without any apparent regularity, is built of brick with stone cmersi, which constitute the heel of the coverage that the old vault to vault to the porch, which looks better than anywhere in the southeast corner. Southeast wall, unlike the others, there are two generations, the framing beneath the stone, it up with irregular masonry. The whole of this wall is rebuilt with the overthrow of the old environment to the altar and was repaired in 1793. This reconstruction going and part of the northern wall, which, in the part that belongs naos, is a reconstruction of 1845. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004)

### 3. Conclusions

1. The architecture of St. Mary's church Kosina, in Permet shows for implementation during the XII century cloisonne method, which dates back to the time of the construction of this church. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 156-159) Its stated before St. Mary's Church in Upper Peshkëpia which dates back to the XI century. At the base of the cupola drum, immediately above the inscription is spherical triangles, more likely an old copy of the inscription, which says the church has built Alexis Comnenus empire that ruled Byzantium between the years 1081-1118. (H.Holland, 1815, p. 481)

If we examine the architecture of the monument, we see that not still find the full features of the inscribed cross type with dome is seen clearly in pilastra, which are ongoing on walls rather than genuine pilastra, if the proportion was observed in heights small to the size of the plan, especially the drum, either from lack of method and cloisonne. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 159-162) Therefore conclude that the technical level of the building walls Kosina invites you to think that cloisonne in Albania belongs XII century and not before. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 159-162)

2. Cloisonne method belongs of cross-shaped church . A new architectural type this in Albanian territories, which as we saw introduced with delay and with a special way of local feature. However at the end of this period we can say that local developers are able to build by this type. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 156)

3. For centuries, the architecture of these search results that was among the picturesque basic principles for formulating architectural exterior space. As the entire Byzantine architectural realm, this is achieved not by size, but by proportion, emphasis on drum and cupola above all and beautifying treatment niche decorated facades with brick, with arched windows and shoulders scalable, frieze, frames . Requirements for treatment as a rich foreign side, bring timely addition

of brick and stone decorations using more and more bricks. Beautifying the external walls of brick church not limited only to their construction with cloisonne method, but it now includes large areas of the arms of the cross, frontone and frames. Up and building bricks for use with modest arc covers the doors, windows and niches, for the saw tooth roofs frames. But ornamentation in buildings with aesthetic requirements receive such size and shape that can be said to come back in order in itself. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, pp. 122-123)

So are churches like Labova of Cross (Meksi, Dy kisha bizantine ne rrethin e Gjirokastrës, 1975, pp. 82-91), and Mesopotam church (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishes se Mesopotamit, 1972, pp. 47-94) where in each realized this thing and means quite different forms. In contrast, in the church of Kurjan (Meksi, Dy ndertime te tipi trekonkesh, 1974, pp. 229-234) in contrast, in the church of Kurjani the walls entirely of brick used antique and medieval reliefs, which indicates a particular aesthetic taste. In all these brick church performed by different drawings, simultaneously also carved them to have the necessary size and to enliven the décor. From traditional decorations neighboring plates missing bricks and glazed, coated, printed tubes in cross form, letters cufike, bricks decorated with motifs taken from classical Antiquity (meandra other), these signs of a local architectural language. (Meksi, Dy ndertime te tipi trekonkesh, 1974, pp. 229-234)

4. Such architectural forms will serve as an example during the next centuries. So, during the XV-XIX centuries in our country begin to build an increasing number of major Islamic shrines and other buildings that served him cult. Even in this genus see the outlines construction accounts, building and forms that already belonged to the tradition of our country construction. At shrines hall with dome-type building these show pyramidal roof with integrity and sitting in corners, both with clear parallel architecture of churches inscribed cross type with dome. Even the plan and volumetric construction of churches with a nave seems to have influenced the type of mosques with wooden roofs. (Meksi, Ndertimet e kultit myslyman ne Shqiperi, 1980, p. 192)

Also, we see used in a number of mosques built in the XV-XVIII centuries cloisonne method, the model of which course is taken from the medieval churches of our country. This technique is used and with any distinction as having permanently brick two horizontal rows, between which in some cases used more than a stone block, which is permanently plastered. (Meksi, Arkitektura e kishave te Shqiperise, 2004, p. 124)

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