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# DISKUTIME

## International Journal

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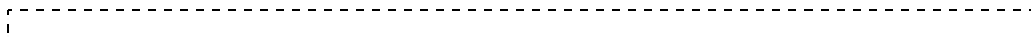
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## **CONTENTS**

### **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

<b>ERJON MARKU</b>	<b>8</b>
THE STABILITY OF THE BALKAN REGION	
<b>DIANA SKRAPARI</b>	<b>20</b>
THE FATHERS OF A UNITED EUROPE, ROBERT SCHUMAN AND JEAN MONNET AND THE VISION OF CHARLES DE GAULLE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF THE EU	

### **DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS & RESEARCH**

<b>LORENA PRIFTI</b>	<b>32</b>
RESOURCES AND EFFECTS OF STRESS ON STUDENTS	
<b>MITJANA PROFIRI</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>INA ZALLEMI</b>	
<b>MARIA DOJCE</b>	
THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY, THE DISCRIMINATION OF MIGRANT POPULATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION, A PRIORITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION	

### **ART**

<b>ANDREA LLUKANI</b>	<b>62</b>
DICO ZOGRAF ICONS IN NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM	

Andrea Llukani<sup>1</sup>

## Dico Zograf icons in National Historical Museum

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### ABSTRACT

This year, 200 years have passed since the birth of iconographic painter Diço Zografi, who has been active in Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia. Diço learned the art of iconography from his teachers, Mihal and Dhimitër Anagnosti, while working together at Bigorski monastery. Diço Zografi in 1853 painted the icons of the church of St. George in Vërnicë of Golloborda.<sup>2</sup> This fact is confirmed by the icon inscription of St. Mary: "By the hand of Diço Zograf, from the village Tresance, December 4th, 1853" . The inscription is written in Cyrillic, while for the date it was used Byzantine Greek.<sup>3</sup>

In 1855 Dico Zografi painted the icons of St. Koll's church in Elbasan. (Fig.1) Dico Zografi had two sons, Abraham and Spiridhon, who taught the art of iconography. The elder son, Abraham painted many churches, but he did not have his father's talent, while Spiridhon died early. The particular thing about Zografi is that, almost in every icon has left his own signature. For the engagements of the icons' donors' dedication, he used Slavic or Byzantine Greek, according to the orders. He was the most prominent iconographer in Macedonia. The customers had been waiting for years to have an icon painted by his hand. The theme of his painted varied a lot. The main activity was held in the village of Tresonik, where his atelier was located.<sup>4</sup>

**Keywords:** Diço Zografi, St. Koll's church in Elbasan, Tresance, Bigorski monastery, the church of St. George in Vërnicë of Golloborda.

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<sup>1</sup> Punonjës në Muzeun Historik Kombëtar

<sup>2</sup> -Kristofor Beduli, *Ortodoksët e Gollobordës*, "Neraida", Tiranë, 2008, faqe 20.

<sup>3</sup> -Theofan Popa, *Mbishkrime të kishave në Shqipëri*, Tiranë 1998, nr. 59, faqe 72.

<sup>4</sup> -Sasho Cvetkovski, *The icons of Dico Zograf from the churches in Deber and Mala Reka*, Struga 2013, page 299-310.

## Introduction

According to the cartelization and scientific study program of all the material found in the National Historical Museum's fund, three large icons, which are thought to have been painted by Diço Zografi: The Icon of St. Koll (Fig.2) with the dimensions 105x67,5 cm and inventory number 5947, St. Harallamb's icon (Fig.3) with dimensions 102x62.5 cm and inventory number 6025, as well as the icon of St. Athanasius (Fig.4) with dimensions 110x69 cm and inventory number 5914. These icons belong to the church of St. Koll in Elbasan. At the end of the icon of St. Athanasius Diço Zografi has left a bilingual inscription (Fig.5) in Byzantine Greek and in Slavic languages: 1855. "By the hand of Diço Zograf from the area of Dhevron, 1855".<sup>1</sup>

## Small icons of the iconostasis of St. Koll's church

According to the program for the cartelization of all the material found in the fund of the National Historical Museum, some small icons belonging to the church of St. Koll in Elbasan were found during the survey. Among the small icons we can mention the icons of: St. Stephen with dimensions 42.5x35.5 cm and inventory number 5755; James the Apostle with dimensions 43.5x30 cm and inventory number 6052; Three Horsemen with dimensions 44x32 cm and inventory number 5826; Teodor Tironi and Teodor Stratilati with dimensions 45x31 cm and inventory number 5423.

We have icons from the holiday cycle: St Anne's cave with dimensions 45x30,5 cm and inventory number 5408; Birth of the Baptist and inventory number 5438; Women of Miraculous size 43x29,3 cm and inventory number 5801; Width 44x31.5 cm and inventory number 5802; Christmas size 42x29 cm and inventory number 5833; Thomait's Sunday with dimensions 44x29 cm and inventory number 6016; Baptistery with 42x34 cm dimension and inventory number 6049; etc.

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<sup>1</sup> -Andrea Llukani, *Ikona e Mihal Anagnostit në Muzeun Historik Kombëtar*, Studime Muzeologjike, Nr. 5, Tiranë, 2015, faqe 59; Andrea Llukani, *Mihal Anagnosti, piktori i fundit i artit pasbizantin në Shqipëri*, Le Radici, Anno 13, n.3, Novembre 2015, pagina 23.

## **The beautiful doors of the iconostasis of St. Koll church**

The beautiful icons of the iconostasis of St. Koll church in Elbasan are currently in the iconic pavilion of the National Historical Museum. The beautiful door carving sculptor is unknown, but they are painted by Dico Zografi in 1859. This fact is confirmed by the inscription that Zografi left in the beautiful Doors (Fig.6) of the iconostasis: Διά χειρός δήττου ζ, 1859, "By the hand of Dico Z, 1859 ". (Fig.7). At the height of Beautiful Doors, Zografi has painted Christ the Pandocrator. At the front of the Beautiful Doors, he painted the Archangel Gabriel and in front of him Saint Mary. While at the bottom of the door he painted Saint Basil, St. John the Gothard, St. Grigory Theologian, and St. Nicholas.

## **History of St. Koll church in Elbasan**

The church of St. Koll in Elbasan is thought to have been built around 1700. Years later it was burnt and then repaired in 1849. This fact is confirmed by Sultan Mexhit's decree to the Prefect of Ohrid, Haxhi Fahir Bey and the wisemen of Naib Kadi Elbasan's qaddaa. (Fig.8) From the decree we learn the size of the church: 39 meters long, 28 meters long and 13 meters high. The church had two doors as well as six windows. According to this decree addressed to the Prefect of Ohrid Prefecture, Haxhi Fahir Bey, that the church was rebuilt according to its size.<sup>1</sup> St. Koll's Church in Elbasan in 1980 was totally destroyed and a residential palace was built on its place. The church was rebuilt after the 90s.

## **Diço translator of the iconography manual**

Dico Zografi has translated an iconography manual purchased by Zografi brothers. Diço has left his notes in the manual.<sup>2</sup> In 1791 the pictograph painter Terpo Zografi, the son of Constantin Zografi, worked in the church of the monastery of St. Prodhrom in Nausa and bought a manuscript from the son of Joakim. The manual was purchased at Mount Athos on October 3ed, 1791. The manuscript was a manual for canonical regulation of ecclesiastical iconography. Some of the topics discussed were:

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<sup>1</sup> -*Fermentar, Të shkruash historinë me tolerancë*, TIKa, 2005, faqe 116-117; AQSH, F. 143, D. 1281, fl. 1.

<sup>2</sup> -Sasho Cvetkovski, *The icons of Dico Zograf from the churches in Deber and Mala Reka*, Struga 2013, page 299-310.

How do icons and frescos become? How are the colors prepared? How are brushes prepared? How do scenes matrices become? How do I paint gold icons? How are old icons cleaned? What are the icons? How should they be honored? The manual shows many secrets of craftsmanship of iconographic painters. It draws attention to the production and the process of preparing the paint, how it mixes, how it becomes radar, how to make linen oil, how to become the colors of the faces and limbs of the saints, how the gold color is prepared, the plaster of the walls to paint the frescoes etc. This sketched script and explanation shows how canonical iconographic paintings were. The manuscript is a manual for the painting of the Eastern Church. In this manuscript there is also a piece written by the Serpente Zografi himself. The manual has a devotion to the XIV century mastermind, Emanuel Panselinon, called as "the Byzantine Art Rafael". The manuscript of Terpo Zografi has been translated and served as a guide for Albanian iconography researchers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> -Moikom Zeqo, *Universi i Artit Bizantin*, Arnissa Edition, Tiranë, 2009, faqe 90-120.



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6-Moikom Zeqo, *Universi i Artit Bizantin*, Arnissa Edition, Tirana, 2009, p 90-120.

7-Sasho Cvetkovski, *The icons of Dico Zograf from the churches in Deber and Mala Reka*, Struga 2013, page 299-310.

8-Theofan Popa, *Mbishkrime të kishave në Shqipëri*, Akademia e Shkencave, Tirana 1998.

## **TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

Fig.1. View from St.Koll’s Church in Elbasan

Fig.2. St. Koll’s Icon

Fig.3. The Icon of St. Harallamb

Fig.4. The Icon of St. Athanas

Fig.5. Diço Zografit’s inscription

Fig.6. Beautiful Doors

Fig.7. Diço Zografit’s inscription

Fig.8. The decree of Sultan Mexhit



Fig.1. View from St.Koll's Church in Elbasan



Fig.2. St. Koll's Icon



Fig.3. The Icon of St. Harallamb



Fig.4. The Icon of St. Athanas

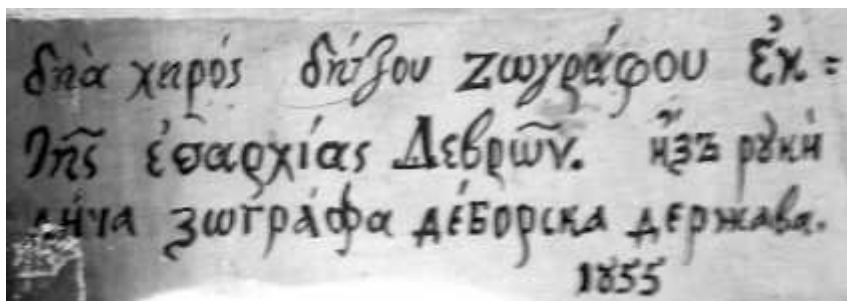


Fig.5. Diço Zografit's inscription



Fig.6. Beautiful Doors



Fig.7. Diço Zografit's inscription



Fig.8. The decree of Sultan Mexhit