

# **OBSERVATIONS ON THE MURAL PAINTINGS OF THE NAVE OF THE CHURCH OF HOLY TRINITY (BERAT)**

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## **Abstract**

The church of Holy Trinity at the Castle of Berat has drawn the attention of a number of scholars. The relevant studies have formulated the opinion that the monument is commissioned by Andronikos Asan between 1300 and 1326 and executed by a local master, probably member of the aristocratic class. However, only a small part of the whole program has been considered and there is no analytical study on the nature of the program and its peculiarities as well as a thorough documentation of its iconography. Hence, our research focuses on the reconstruction of the thematic cycle, identifying the location of various scenes. The wall surface of the nave was divided into three painting zones – the lower one reserved for the representation of individual saints and the upper zones and the arches contains depictions based on the evangelical tradition. The apse reveals traces from the liturgical cycle while in the dome are still visible fragments from the garments of the Christ Pantocrator and the subject with the Prophets holding a scroll. The general program shows the peculiarities which differentiate the monument from other 14<sup>th</sup> century churches, introducing scenes like the Last Communion of St. Mary of Egypt, the Washing of the Feet etc. The paintings of Holy Trinity are crucial for understanding the development of ecclesiastical iconography during the Palaiologan era and the influences of Macedonian School in the Albanian monuments. The stylistic values of the paintings reflect the work of a capable master and associate it with the ensembles of Protatos (ca. 1290) and Hilandari (between 1299 and 1320). We suggest that the work is not committed by a local workshop and propose a dating between 1302 and 1316, when Andronikos Asan was proclaimed as governor of the city.