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ON THE MARGIN OF MEANING:
SOME REMARKS ON GESTURE IN ORTHODOX FRESCOES
IN POLISH CHURCHES

The Act of Union between the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania signed in Krevo on 15 August 1385 had enormous consequences for the whole of Central Europe, not only in a political, but also in a religious and a cultural sense. A pagan prince of Lithuania, Jogaila, was baptized, took the name Ladislaus, and became a Catholic. Simultaneously, under his rule was created a new and extensive state including not only the Polish and former Lithuanian territories inhabited mostly by Catholics (or newly baptized pagans), but also wide areas of the former Slavonic feudal states conquered by the Grand Duchy from the Mongols. These territories were populated by the heirs of Kievan Rus, who who were Christians adhering to the Orthodox rite. The influence of Orthodox culture on the Lithuanian court was already significant in pagan times. Most of the prince's brothers, who governed Christian provinces, adopted the religion of their subjects and often married Orthodox princesses, one of whom was Jagiello's mother, Juliana of Tver. As a zealous Christian it was necessary for her to have a palace chapel in Vilnus for the practice of her faith, while according to later tradition, she also founded the Basilian monastery affiliated to the church of the Holy Trinity there[1]. Even after the Union the chancellery of the Grand Duke continued to use Cyrillic script instead of the Latin alphabet in official documents[2].

Once King of Poland, Jagiello employed Orthodox artists to execute a programme of painting in the interiors of some of the most important churches in the

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[1] A. Różycka-Bryzek, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w kaplicy zamku lubelskiego,* Warszawa, 1983, p. 147. In the year 1387 – ten years after death of her husband, prince Olgierd – Julianna moved to the convent founded by her near Mohylev, where she died in 1392 under name Mary.

[2] See *Codex diplomaticus Lithuaniae 1253–1434,* ed. E. Raczyński, Breslau 1845, *passim;* cf. also S. M. Kuczyński, *Król Jagiełło ok. 1351–1434,* Katowice 1985, p. 20; T. M. Trajdos, *Kościół katolicki na ziemiach ruskich Korony i Litwy za panowania Władysława II Jagiełły (1386–1434)* Wrocław–Warszawa––Kraków 1983.

kingdom. His reason for inviting schismatic artists to work in Catholic churches remains unclear. It may have been an effort to unite different religions under his sceptre[3], but more probably, the Greek style appealed to his taste, as Jan Dlugosz states in his *Chronicle*[4]. Three of at least nine royal foundations known from written sources[5] have survived: the collegiate churches in Sandomierz and Wislica, and the chapel of Lublin Castle (August 1418). One should add to these the later paintings in the Chapel of the Holy Cross (November 1470) in Krakow Cathedral, founded by Ladislaus' second son, King Casimir IV (born in Krakow, 30 November 1427; ruled from 1447; died in Grodno, 7 June 1492;). Although in both collegiate churches the frescoes were confined to the presbyteries, the painters applied the full programme normally found in Orthodox churches, with only small changes introduced because of liturgical differences and doctrinal controversies. Stylistic differences and written sources suggest that the eastern masters came from various regions (Lesser Ruthenia, Northern Rus, and even Serbia), and the accounts of the king's chancellery indicate that after the execution of their commissions they all returned home[6].

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In spite of the stylistic variety that can be observed in local schools of the Paleologian period, all of them followed compositions and iconographical patterns transformed by Byzantine artists from ancient models over a long process.

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[3] Jagiello probably took part in preparations for the Florence-Ferrara Council, and he himself conducted negotiations with the Kiev Patriarch Gregory Camblak on the reconciliation of both churches, but the last one had been excommunicated by the Patriarch of Constantinople, see J. Gill, *The Council of Florence,* Cambridge 1982, p. 25. On 25. February 1418 during the Council of Constance Camblak proposed the union of both Churches, see G. P o d s k a l s k y, L'intervention de Grigorij Camblak, métropolite de Kiev, au concile de Constance (février 1418), *Revue des Études Slaves* 70 (1998), p. 289–297.

[4] J. D ł u g o s z, *Historiae Polonicae libri XII,* [in:] „Opera omnia" ed. A. Przeździecki, vol. 4, Kraków 1876, p. 536; see also B. W a p o w s k i, *Dzieje Korony Polskiej i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego od roku 1380 do 1535,* ed. I. Malinowski, Wilno 1847, p. 218., M. B i e l s k i, *Kronika polska,* ed. J. Bielski, Kraków 1598, p. 348, M. Cromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX,* Basileae, 1550, p. 453. Thesis about family influences on Jagiello taste formulated A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła ścienne w kolegiacie wiślickiej,* "Folia Historiae Artium" 2(1965), p. 49. One must exclude the possibility recently proposed by some Ukrainian scholars, that king could not find a proper artist in Poland, В. А л е к - с а н д р о в и ч, *Священик Гайль – маляр короля Владислава II Ягайла – і перемиське малярство XIV–XV століть,* (Українське малярство XIII–XV ст. Студії з історії мистецтва 1), Львів 1995, p. 119.

[5] According to the account of the royal chancellor, Jagiello commissioned frescoes in his Dormitory in the Wawel Castle, and in the Holy Cross monastery in Lysiec (as expiation for plundering by Lithuanians). Dlugosz' *Chronicle* mentions also paintings in the presbytery of Gniezno Cathedral and St. Mary Chapel in Wawel Cathedral. Later sources confirm the existence of eastern paintings in the Trinity Chapel in Wawel, Holy Trinity church in Blonie Mazowieckie and Troki Castle A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, Nie zachowane malowidła graeco opere z czasów Władysława Jagiełły, "Analecta cracoviensia" 19 (1987), p. 295–318.

[6] *Rachunki dworu króla Władysława Jagiełły i królowej Jadwigi (1388–1420),* ed. F. Piekosiński (Monumenta medii aevi historica 15), Kraków 1896, p. 211; A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w Polsce wczesnojagiellońskiej: problem przystosowań na gruncie kultury łacińskiej,* [in:] „Polska – Ukraina 1000 lat sąsiedztwa", vol. 2, Przemyśl 1994, p. 308.

H. Maguire, in his study of the influence of rhetoric on art, proves that Greek painters were often literate and well schooled in patristic writings[7]. There is no reason to suppose, however, that king Jagiello's painters, who came from provincial centres, were endowed with a sufficiently advanced level of knowledge of oratory and rhetoric to introduce their own types of gesture on the basis of religious literature. On the contrary, mistakes they made in inscriptions demonstrate that they were not familiar even with canonical texts[8].

Therefore, one can assume that they based themselves almost mechanically on iconographical schemata, which does not mean that Orthodox viewers of their works did not understand the messages conveyed by them. Gesture is an inseparable part of composition, and without knowledge of it, it is impossible to read its meaning properly. Gesture, despite being a vehicle for the expression of emotions, is not at all natural, but a highly conventional product of a specific culture. It is for this reason that a question arises concerning the reception of Orthodox scenes among Catholic beholders of Jagiello's paintings.

To provide an answer to this question we shall examine different kinds of expressions derived from various sources. The presence of the Byzantine tradition, following ancient patterns, is clearly visible in the poses of prophets and apostles. In Jagiellonian churches, they are depicted standing in contrapost, dressed in timeless mantles and tunics. The left hand usually hangs loosely along the body, or holds a scroll with the text of the prophecy, while the right one has been raised to the breast. The little and ring fingers touch the thumb in the gesture of an orator. This pose, borrowed from the ancient tradition of oratory, emphasized their gift of eloquence and the role they played in the History of Salvation.

In his manual of classical rhetoric, Quintilian advises keeping a static posture while delivering a speech (*actio, pronuntiatio*), presenting oneself properly while stressing the contents of the speech by means of gestures. He prescribes how the toga of the orator should be folded to create the desired impression on the audience. Moreover, the *Institutio oratoria* prescribes precisely which position of the fingers is proper for the preface, which one emphasizes the importance of a statement, and which one gives the impression of a sharper level of debate[9]. Of course, the iconography of prophets, as it had existed in Byzantine art from the time of the catacomb painting , and as it was found in the decoration of churches at least from

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the sixth century onwards[10], was not based directly on the theory of rhetoric. Instead, it derived from ancient representations of philosophers. In the West, the continuity of the ancient tradition was interrupted, with the result that the iconography of prophets in the late Middle Ages differs from that known in the East[11].

In other cases, especially during the Romanesque period, identical gestures, going back to a common classical root, could be found in both cultures. An example is the standing posture with the right hand lifted to the chest with the palm turned inward and the fingers stretched upward. In medieval art, it generally expresses surprise or anxiety. In orthodox paintings, it was used regularly in the representations of the Annunciation, signalling the astonishment of Mary at the appearance of Gabriel[12]. Polish frescoes with this composition are those in the upper tier on the north wall in the collegiate church of Wislica and on the south wall of the collegiate church of Sandomierz; while in Lublin, and on the south side of the upper tier of the east wall of the chapel of the Holy Cross in Wawel, the Virgin is depicted sitting on the throne.

From the tenth to the twelfth centuries, a standing pose with a raised hand was also familiar to western artists, who applied it not only in the depiction of Mary in the Annunciation[13], but also in images of other female saints, such as Mary Magdalene. Her sculpture on the wall of the Holy Sepulchre at Geronde (1080) expresses surprise because of the unexpected appearance of the resurrected Christ[14]. From the fourteenth century onwards, however, the "surprised" Virgin in the West was gradually replaced by another sitting or kneeling figure, although sometimes her hand is still raised in the old gesture[15]. One might wonder whether the pose of

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[10] General picture of a philosopher in toga holding scroll was popularized by the funeral relief, known also from ancient Byzantium, see N. Firatli, *Les stèles funéraires de Byzance gréco-romaine,* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul 15) Paris 1964, p. 33–35, No. 120–135.

[11] The earliest surviving representation of prophets in a type of ancient prophets can be found in miniatures of codices *Sinopsiensis* and *Rosanensis,* V. Nilgen, M. Restle, *c. Ikonographie der biblischen Propheten,* [in:] *Lexikon des Mittelalters,* vol. VII, Münich 1995, p. 257–259. From *Description of the Church of St. Sergios in Gaza* by Chorikios we know that similar images existed also in sixth century monumental painting.

[12] G. M i l l e t, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVᵉ, XVᵉ et XVIᵉ siècles: d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos,* Paris 1916, p. 67–92, esp. 70, fig. 22–28, 30–32, 34.

[13] See, for example. miniatures in the Gospel of the Emperor Otto II (or Otto III) in the Treasury of Cathedral in Aachen, Pericope of bishop Egbert of Trier painted by the monks Kerald and Heribert in Reichenau Monastery ca. 980, in Gospel from Hardhausen (ca. 1180, now in Landesbibliothek in Kassel), on the fol. 10v of 12ᵗʰ cent. Gospel in Wolfenbütel Library, *cod. Helmst 65;* W. B r a u n f e l s, *Die Verkündigung,* Düsseldorf 1949, p. X–XII, fig. 1, 3, 5; K. Weitzmann, Eine Spätkomnenische Verkündigungsikone des Sinai und die Zweite byzantinische Welle des 12. Jahrhunderts, „*Festschrift von Einem*", s. l. 1965, p. 299–312, esp. 308, pl. 71, fig. 4.

[14] For an interpretation of her gesture see D. H. O g d e n, *Gesture and characterization in the Liturgical Drama,* [in:] *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art*, ed. C. Davidson, Western Michigan University 2001, p. 26–47, here: 29–30, fig. 1.

[15] As a late example of earlier redaction can be used the fourteenth century fresco of the Umbrian-March school in the presbytery of Santo Speco monastery in Subiaco (Mid-Italy), see A. A p p i a n o C a r-p r e t t i n i, *Lettura dell' Annunciatione fra semiotica e iconografia,* Torino 1979, fig. 1 (and *passim* for latter

Mary enthroned in the Lublin and Krakow frescoes is not a borrowed from western iconography. But a parallel process of change can be observed in late Byzantine art (of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), when the sitting position of the Holy Spinner became equally popular[16]. The last example is unusual because of the kneeling attitude of the archangel, but we will come back to that later.

The format of another scene, too, can be explained from a parallel development in both cultures. A woman spreading her arms above her head in a gesture of suffering, painted in the background of the *Lamentation* in the northern part of the chapel of the Holy Cross in Wawel Cathedral, may at first glance seem to be of Western origin[17]. Middle Byzantine art, elegant and temperate in showing emotions, could not accept such an exaggerated expression of feelings. But in the Paleologian period this motif can be found in Byzantine painting, particularly in Northern Greek and Serbian murals[18]. A similarly constructed composition also appears in Novgorod, in the church of the Transfiguration in Kovalevo, and that of Theodore Stratilates (both ca 1380), which could be a direct model for the Krakow fresco[19]. In the light of these examples, we should treat this gesture as a continuation of the late Byzantine tendency rather than as the influence of Western composition[20].

The fact that so much in the iconography of the Jagiello commissions can be traced back to Byzantine art raises the question whether there are any gestures borrowed from Catholic art. In one specific instance, this seems to be the case. The typical Byzantine attitude of prayer was to lie prostrate with the forehead touching the ground, known under its Greek name of *proskynesis*. It was derived from Persian court ritual and was adopted by Alexander the Great and thus found its way into Roman imperial ceremonies. It became popular at the time of the Dominate, when it was permanently introduced as one of honours bestowed upon the emper-

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type of siting or kneeling Maria). Mary's raised hands in sitting redaction of the Annunciation appear for example on the Paris school (ca. 1390) panel in the Clevelend Museum of Art, H. S. F r a n c i s, *A Fourteenth-Century "Annunciation"*, "The Bulletin of the Clevelend Museum of Art" 42 (1955), p. 215–219 and cover illustration.

[16] M. V. A l p a t o v, *Eine Verkündigungsikone aus der Paläologenepoche in Moskau,* "Byzantinische Zeitschrift" 25 (1925), p. 347–357. Composition with sitting Mary was known just in mid-Byzantine art, G. M i l l e t, *o. c.,* fig. 10–21, 33. Л. И. Лифшиц, *Монументальная живопись Новгорода XIV–XVI веков,* Москва 1987, fig. 260–261, 364–365 (for example Annunciation scenes in Novgorod's churches of St. Theodore Stratilates and Archangel Michael of Skovorodski Monastery).

[17] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła ścienne w kaplicy Świętokrzyskiej na Wawelu,* "*Studia do dziejów Wawelu*", vol. 3, Kraków 1968, p. 175–293, here: fig. 29.

[18] The despairing woman appears, for example, in the frescoes of Greek churches in St. Nicolas in Kastoria, Lavra and Vatopedi in Athos and Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, and in Serbia e. g. in Čučer, Gračanica and Kučevište. G. M i l l e t, *o. c.*, p. 489-510, fig. 544–545, 550–551, 559–561.

[19] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *o. c.*, p. 249-250; fig. 58. Лифшиц, *o. c.,* fig. 187, 246.

[20] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w kaplicy zamku lubelskiego,* Warszawa, 1983, p. 80 turned also attention to the fainted figure of Mary in the Lublin's Crucifixion popular in Western Medieval painting since the thirteenth century, but also spread in local Serbian school of that time.

or[21]. From the Byzantine court, where it was still practiced, *proskynesis* also entered Church liturgy[22]. Alongside the fully prostrate position, there existed also a more moderate variant of *proskynesis*, with only the head and the back slightly bowed, usually in combination with a gesture of raised arms that resembled the praying posture of the ancient orant.

Both these types were included in Byzantine iconography and examples of them can be found in the Jagiellonian frescoes. Full *proskynesis* appears there only in the context of the *Dodekaorton* (the cycle of twelve scenes illustrating the most important Evangelical events), for example in the *Raising of Lazarus*, where the traditional compositional scheme developed after iconoclasm does not allow for the introduction of any changes in the pose of Mary and Martha lying prostrate at Jesus' feet[23]. Moreover, in the Wawel chapel, the *proskynesis* pose was applied to two women in a scene where they are confronted with the Resurrected Christ (*Chairete*), and to Christ himself in the *Agony in the Garden*, where He is shown twice, once prostrate and once standing. The double presence of the Saviour follows the Byzantine tradition of showing two subsequent phases of His prayer. In the first, He asks for the Passion to be averted, while in the second, He is reconciled with His fate[24].

The moderate form of *proskynesis* is even more common. It occurs both in narrative scenes, such as the Presentation in the Temple, and in symbolic ones, such as the *Deesis,* in which the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist intercede with the Pantocrator for the salvation of human kind. Related to the second category are representations of the saints, usually hermits with their palms turned inward before their body, e.g. St. Onuphrius in the Lublin and Krakow chapels[25]. The orans posture was well known from antiquity. Christianized in the catacomb decorations[26], it became the typical attitude of prayer both in the Orthodox and in the Catholic Churches[27].

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[21] According to Flavii A r r i a n i, *Alexandrii Anabasis,* ed. A. G. Roos, Lipsiae 1967, p 195–196, IV 11/8 – 12/5 the first king who received *proskynesis* was Cyrus, and the same habit was cultivated by his followers, and Alexander Macedonian forced his generals to do the same. B. H e n d r i c k x, *Die ,Proskynesis' van die byzantynse Keiser in die dertiende eeu,* "Acta Classica" 16(1974), p. 147–158; I. S p a t h a r a k i s, *The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art. A study in connection with a nomisma of Andronicus II Palaeologue*, "Bulletin Antike Beschaving" 49(1974), p. 191–192. See also C. S t i l l, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer,* Leipzig 1890, p. 157–159, who mistakenly claims that first time it was used by Diocletian (ca. 290 AD).

[22] I. S p a t h a r a k i s, *o. c.*, p. 192, 196–203.

[23] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła ścienne w kaplicy Świętokrzyskiej na Wawelu,* „Studia do dziejów Wawelu", vol. 3, Kraków 1968, fig. 15.

[24] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w kaplicy zamku lubelskiego,* Warszawa-1983, p. 70.

[25] Ibidem, p. 107, fig. 133.

[26] J. E n g e m a n n, *Orans,* [in:] *Lexikon des Mittelalters,* vol. VI, Münich–Zürich 1993, p. 1426–1427.

[27] For examples of orant representations in the Western art see also F. Garnier, *La langage de l'image au Moyen Âge,* vol. 1 "Signification et Symbolique", Paris 1982, p. 223 (Bible Moralisee first half 13th century, Vienna National Library *Cod. vindobonensis 2544,* fol 23B).

In the Latin West, however, a new posture was introduced under the influence of late twelfth-century treatises on methods of praying, such as *De oratione et speciebus* by Peter the Chanter: kneeling erect but with joined hands[28]. This new pose was popularized by the mendicant orders. It was prescribed by *De modo orandi*, a Dominican manual for novices probably composed in Bologna around the middle of the thirteenth century, as a means to express and emphasize the humility of a monk. The Franciscans introduced it into their new order of Mass (prescribed in the so-called Franciscan Regula, which was probably derived from the papal Missal of Honorius III of ca. 1230, and the *Indutus planeta* 1234). *Iunctis manibus* and kneeling during prayer was later taken over by the *Missale Romanum*[29]. Of course, the orans posture did not disappear from the ritual, and the kneeling position with outstretched arms was known much earlier in both the Latin and Byzantine cultures, as is shown by eleventh and twelfth century representations of Christ in the Agony in the Garden[30]. Nevertheless, the second half of the thirteenth century seems to be a key moment for the transformation of methods of praying in Western Europe, and this was reflected in iconography. The subject of a kneeling saint was popularized by cycles of St. Francis, and soon predominated in representations of prayer in Western art[31].

This tendency was also reflected in the Lublin frescoes, where one can find representations of people praying in a kneeling posture, either with their hands opened or held together. The former can be seen in the scene of the second phase of Christ's prayer in the Garden in the upper tier of the northern wall of the presbytery, a scene that can be interpreted as belonging to the Orthodox tradition. However, the presence of the angel with the chalice of bitterness – to whom the Saviour raises his hands – indicates that the artist behind this composition was familiar with Western iconography, where this latter element was very popular. Ruthenian artists may have known it from Gothic Altar panels, and – what is more probable – from numerous German woodcuts made during the fifteenth century[32].

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[28] R. C. T r e x l e r, *The Christian at Prayer. An Illustrated Pryer Manual Attributed to Peter the Chanter (d. 1197),* Binghamton–New York 1987, p. 187 and *passim* (Mode 4).

[29] W. H o o d, *Saint Dominic's Manners of Praying: Gestures in Fra Angelico's Cell Frescoes at S. Marco,* "The Art Bulletin" 68(1986), No 2, p. 195–206 (esp. p. 198–204, fig. 1–10); G. B. L a d n e r, *The Gestures of Prayer in Papal Iconography of the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries,* [in:] *Didascaliae, Studies in Honor of Anselm M. Albareda*, ed. S. Prete, New York 1961, p. 247–275 (esp. 265–269).

[30] The Kneeling Christ in the scene of Agony in the Garden appears just in the mosaics of San Marco in Venice painted by Byzantine artists. The same motif appears in the frescoes in Novgorod church of St. Theodore Stratilates (c. 1380), see R ó ż y c a - B r y z e k 1983, p. 70.

[31] On two of the earliest cycles of the St. Francis legend (panel of Pescia of 1235 by Bonaventura Berlingheri and of Pistoia of c. 1270) he was depicted as a kneeling with in turn outstretched and joined hands, see G. B. L a d n e r, *o. c.,* 270, fig. 16–17.

[32] See, for example, the works of the Master of Nürnberg Mary Altar; Master of the Wittinganer Altar, ca. 1380; Master of the "Linz Crucifixion" in Treppen Museum; German colored woodcut ca. 1470; Relief from Klosterneuburg (chalice is standing in the rock). A woodcut from the workshop of the Master of the Martyrium of the Ten Thousands from the Abbey of St. Peter, now in London , shows an angel bringing the

Western influences can also be detected in two other scenes in the Lublin chapel. The younger, typically Catholic, gesture of prayer was introduced into both of them. In the tier below that of the Agony in the Garden, the Communion of the Apostles was depicted. The Ruthenian painters did not follow the Eastern custom, according to which Christ was represented standing beside an altar as the highest priest, giving the chalice with wine and bread to two rows of apostles striding towards him. Instead they arranged two groups of apostles to the left and right of the central axis of the composition, where two figures of Christ each holding a host and chalice grow out of the body of God the Father. The apostles in the foreground are shown kneeling with joined hands but not in a prostrated posture. The folds of their mantles manifest the influence of Gothic painting from around the year 1400[33]. As yet, there are no known examples of contemporary Western compositions similar to the Lublin paintings. A. Różycka Bryzek, however, drew attention to a fresco in the Hospital church in Bolzano (1514), which presents all the elements known from the Jagiellonian scene in the same arrangement[34]. The unusual conjunction of God the Father and the two half-figures of Christ proves that both scenes must have derived from the same Gothic source.

Orthodox painters employed by the new Catholic king, were facing a very difficult challenge. They had to adjust the canonical programme of the Eastern Church to the demands of Western dogma and liturgy. The Byzantine artists showed two different moments from the Last Supper separately: the Announcement of Judas's betrayal, included in the narrative cycle of the most important evangelical events, and Christ as the highest priest giving Communion to the Apostles. The latter subject was not related to the *Dodekaorton,* but expressed the significance of establishing the Eucharist, and was therefore usually placed close to the altar in the apse. The beginning of the fifteenth century was the time of fierce polemics against the Utraquists in Western Christendom. They maintained that the Eucharist should be administered as bread and wine. For this reason, probably in combination with the strong association of the scene of the Communion of the Apostles with Orthodoxy, the patron is likely to have ordered the removal of this element from the chapel interior[35]. The painters, however, found another solution, justifying the presence of this scene by using a western model.

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chalice with the host, indicating the presence of eucharistic imagery – reproductions of all objects in the Warburg Institute Photographic Collection.

[33] T. M. T r a j d o s, *Treści ideowe wizerunków Jagiełły w Kaplicy Św. Trójcy na Zamku Lubelskim*, "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki" 41(1971), p. 316–320, argues for possibility that a few scenes in the presbytery of Lublin chapel were painted by western master.

[34] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w kaplicy zamku lubelskiego,* Warszawa, 1983, p. 84–86, fig. 104–105.

[35] This thesis formulated A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w Polsce wczesnojagiellońskiej: problem przystosowań na gruncie kultury łacińskiej,* [in:] *Polska – Ukraina 1000 lat sąsiedztwa,* vol. 2, Przemyśl 1994, p. 307–313.

In the Wislica murals, the same problem was solved in a more sophisticated way. The author of the composition presented the moment of the establishment of the sacrament by introducing into Last Supper scene a chalice and bread in the shape of *prosphora* under the right, blessing, hand of Christ. In this way, two subjects were united in one composition.

Coming back to the Lublin kneeling prayers, in the cylindrical staircase in the south-west corner of the chapel, a donation scene was painted with king Ladislaus in the new attitude of prayer, on his knees with his hands joined, and presented to the Virgin and Child enthroned by his patron St Nicholas. This formula of presenting the donor was unusual for Eastern art, which preferred a prostrate figure in the attitude of *proskynesis* or a triumphal composition of a standing ruler crowned by Christ. One can surmise that the choice of the new prayer gesture was designed to underline Jagiello's new Catholic religion. Both Lublin examples of the introduction of the new prayer gesture occur in a non-Orthodox context and are not derived from Byzantine iconography.

The influence of western iconography on the Jagiellonian paintings clearly appears only in the latest foundation in Wawel cathedral, decorated in the third quarter of the fifteenth century – that is, just after the fall of Constantinople. Artists isolated from imperial models of an art that no longer existed started to turn to the vivid tradition of Gothic painting, both in their representations of costume (such as the plate armour worn by the soldiers in the Passion scenes)[36] and in gesture, as is evident from the posture of the archangel in the Annunciation scene, who was painted kneeling on one knee. As was mentioned above, this attitude of Gabriel, unusual for Orthodox art, was introduced into Western iconography only in the fourteenth century and popularized in late Gothic and Renaissance painting, from where it was taken over by King Casimir's artists[37].

To conclude, one can state that with minor exceptions, the murals commissioned by the first rulers of the Jagiellonian dynasty in Polish catholic churches followed Byzantine iconography. Only in a few cases – always connected with the necessity to adapt Eastern contents to Catholic dogmatic requirements – new pictorial formulas were introduced. A re-creation of this relatively coherent system can help modern scholars to reconstruct the subject of heavily damaged scenes, such as the one on the north wall of the presbytery in Wislica, where only a small fragment showing Christ's blessing hand (*Benedictio Graeca*) has survived. Because of the

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[36] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła ścienne w kaplicy Świętokrzyskiej na Wawelu*, [in:] „*Studia do dziejów Wawelu*", vol. 3, Kraków 1968, footnote 49 on p. 271, pl. 1, fig. 23–25, 27; eadem, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w Polsce wczesnojagiellońskiej: problem przystosowań na gruncie kultury łacińskiej*, [in:] *Polska – Ukraina 1000 lat sąsiedztwa*, vol. 2., Przemyśl, 1994, p. 319, fig. 28, 30–31. P. Ł. Grotowski, *Motyw gotyckiej zbroi płytowej jako wczesny przejaw okcydentalizacji w ruskim malarstwie ikonowym XV wieku*, [in:] *Artifex doctus. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Jerzego Gadomskiego*, Kraków 2006, p. 49–58.

[37] A. R ó ż y c k a - B r y z e k, *o. c.*, p. 232, fig. 10.

popularity of this motif, which according to the Eastern tradition indicates the presence of the Holy Trinity in the scene of the Baptism of Christ, it is possible to recognize the theme of the destroyed composition[38].

By contrast, the conservative character of Orthodox iconography soon became a problem for the proper understanding of the subjects represented in Jagiellonian frescoes by Western spectators. Late medieval methods of pictorial communication were in a process of dynamic change, creating new gestures and compositional schemata and abandoning the old ones. Probably some effort was made to avoid misunderstandings in the reading of compositions made by Orthodox painters only a few generations after the creation of the decorations. Visible traces of these attempts might be the Latin explanatory inscriptions introduced into the Wislica paintings (and those recently discovered in the St. Mary chapel of Wawel Cathedral), which must have been written during some works of repair.[39]

On the other hand, the obvious interrelation between Orthodox iconography and Early Christian and Romanesque art caused later sources to stress the antique character of the Jagiellonian paintings, calling them *Opere Graeca* and recommending they be treated with the greatest care as being especially precious[40].

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[38] P. Ł. G r o t o w s k i, *Dwie nieznane sceny w prezbiterium kolegiaty wiślickiej,* [in:] *Ars Graeca – Ars Latina. Studia dedykowane Profesor Annie Różyckiej Bryzek*, Kraków 2001, p. 145–154.

[39] B. Wyrozumska and Z. Piech date inscriptions in Wislica (on the basis of shape of the letters) to the period between 1460 and the beginning of the sixteenth century. See also B. T r e l i ń s k a, *Gotyckie pismo epigraficzne w Polsce,* Lublin 1991, p. 89–116. On the recently discovered frescoes in St. Mary Chapel in Wawel Cathedral a preliminary report is about to be published : M. S m o r ą g - R ó ż y c k a, *Les fresques russes de la Chapelle de la Vierge à Wawel: une nouvelle découverte,* "Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia" vol. 5 "Byzantium and New Countries – New Peoples on the Frontier of Byzantino-Slavonic Area (IX–XV Centuries)" ed. M. Salamon (in press).

[40] J R o k o s z n y, *Średniowieczne freski w katedrze sandomierskiej,* [in:] *Sprawozdania Komisji Historii Sztuki*, vol. 9, Kraków 1915, p. 452.