This paper deals with two monastic churches from the second half of the sixteenth century. It briefly presents their architecture as a whole and then focuses on its characteristic features. Based on these traits and on certain historical circumstances, questions related to the origins of their plans and exteriors are discussed. Models are sought in ecclesiastical building practices of the post-Byzantine period, i.e. during the period when the katholikon churches of the monasteries of Hopovo and Papraća were constructed.

**Keywords**

16th century; Serbian ecclesiastical architecture; Athonite triconch type; Balkans.

architecture and art from the period of Turkish rule constitute a significant part of the overall cultural history of the Serbs. At the same time, they are also an important part of the international culture of Christian lands in the Balkans as part of the Ottoman Empire. From the time of the loss of state sovereignty to the restoration of the Serbian church organization (the Patriarchate of Peć), church architecture followed the general trends and possibilities dictated by the limited material resources and the social circumstances of the time. This period was marked by the building of churches with very simple plans and modest architecture. Their construction kept alive the principles of old building practices. The prolonged politics of independence in regions north of the Sava and the Danube, in Southern Hungary, where the Serbs had fled from the Turkish conquests, provided the framework for the building practice of the last decades of the 15th and the first decades of the 16th century. Unfortunately, only a small number of churches erected in that period remain, some in greatly altered form resulting from subsequent restorations. Therefore, it is not possible to observe the

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** I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to my esteemed colleagues, prof. Jelena Erdeljan and Nikos Tsitsimelis, for the translation of this text.

1 That long period was marked by several major historical events: the fall of the Serbian Despotate (1459), the fall of Belgrade (1521), the Turkish conquest of Hungary (1526), the renewal of the Serbian church organization (1557), the Turkish-Austrian war at the close of the 17th century which resulted in the Great Migration of the Serbs (1690). This event marks the end of the period during which Serbian art and architecture relied exclusively on medieval tradition. See Istorija srpskog naroda, III, 1, 2, Belgrade 1993.

2 V. Korać, “Stara crkva u Slankamenu i njeno mesto u razvitku srpske arhitekture” (The old church in Slankamen and its place in the development of Serbian architecture), ZLU 6 (1970), 291-312. M. Šuput, Spska arhitektura u doba turske vlasti – 1459-
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currents and characteristics of this building practice, interrupted by Turkish-Hungarian conflicts, as a whole. According to the present state of our knowledge on the subject, and in relation to the Morava school, that architecture can be called "post-Morava school" –transformed in a number of elements, ways, except for the general spatial schemes. We know for certain that the first structures played an important role in the development of monastic life in the region north of the Sava and the Danube, in particular on Fruška Gora where, in time, a large group of monasteries were founded and functioned as the center of spiritual life under Turkish occupation. At the close of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century building activity in the central and broader regions of the original sovereign Serbian state was reduced mainly to the construction of smaller churches and of an almost insignificant number of somewhat larger church buildings.

The restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1557 laid the foundations of awareness that building and artistic activities were possible. The second half of the 16th century witnessed an all encompassing cultural renewal and a flourishing of art and architecture. This resulted not only in the restoration of the damaged monasteries and churches from the period of the state's independence, endangered to various extent, but also in the erection of a number of smaller churches as well as larger buildings of complex spatial programs. Observed as a whole, with the necessary note that the mentioned renewal lacked both a common chronological inception and stylistic unity, it can be seen as a movement of diverse conceptions, as a series of specific entities displaying particular spatial and visual traits. The architecture created in the vast region under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Peć in the second half of the 16th and during the following century, was determined by tradition in every aspect, just like post-Byzantine architecture in general. A direct emulation of older architecture, otherwise an often repeated phenomenon in Byzantine art and architecture, was not necessarily marked by a decrease in the value of the structures produced, nor by simple copying. The models themselves offered ample ground for the production of novel solutions. During the period in question, emulation implied a continuation of old concepts of architecture and persistent upkeeping of proven values of the architectural past. This provides indubitable proof of the existence of a strong and dedicated conviction among the milieu for which this architecture was intended: to remain beyond the reach of the religiously and culturally foreign Islamic world. The ktetors, mostly from the upper hierarchy of the church and the monastic world, but also from the lower strata of society, were intent on preserving their own cultural independence.

The lack of new takes on architecture among Christians under Turkish rule narrowed down the field of possible innovation. True and large-scale novelties were few in number. This led to a conservativism typical of all Balkan regions, including Greece where building activity was most prolific and diverse in a typological, architectural and spatial sense. The reconstruction of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1557 provided ample ground for the production of novel solutions. During the period in question, emulation implied a continuation of old concepts of architecture and persistent upkeeping of proven values of the architectural past. This provides indubitable proof of the existence of a strong and dedicated conviction among the milieu for which this architecture was intended: to remain beyond the reach of the religiously and culturally foreign Islamic world. The ktetors, mostly from the upper hierarchy of the church and the monastic world, but also from the lower strata of society, were intent on preserving their own cultural independence.

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1690 (Serbian architecture in the era of Turkish rule – 1459-1690), Belgrade 1984, 43-51. V. Matić, Arhitektura fruškogorskih manastira. Kasnosrednjovekovne crkvene građevine (Architecture of the Fruška Gora monasteries. Late medieval church buildings), Novi Sad 1984. B. Kulić, Manastir Rukavac, Belgrade 1999. M. Timotijević, Manastir Krušedol, 1-2, Belgrade 2008.  S. Ćurčić, Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Suleyman the Magnificent, New Haven – London 2010, 787-789, with earlier bibliography.

3 The idea of Fruška Gora as a holy monastic community developed and spread only in the 18th century and gained its full meaning in the 19th century. From then on, in literature it is referred to as the Holy Mountai in. See Timotijević, op.cit. (n. 2), 103-104.

4 Ćurčić, op.cit. (n. 2), with earlier bibliography.

5 M. Šuput, Spomenici srpskog crkvenog graditeljstva XVI-XVII vek (Monuments of the Serbian church building XVI-XVII century), Belgrade 1991. S. Petković, Srpska umetnost u XVI i XVII veka (Serbian art in the 16th and 17th centuries), Belgrade 1995, 16-20, 64-77. V. Korać – M. Šuput, Arhitektura vizantijskog sveta (Architecture of the Byzantine world), Belgrade 1998, 395-399.

6 M. Šuput, „Smisao tradicije u srpskoj arhitekturi postvizantijskog doba“ (The meaning of the tradition in the Serbian architecture of the post-Byzantine era), Leskovčki Zbornik XXXI (1991), 5-15. Ch. Bouras, “The Byzantine Tradition in the Church Architecture of the Balkans in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, J. J. Yiannias (ed.), The Byzantine Tradition After the Fall of Constantinople, Charlotteville – London 1991, 107-145.

7 S. Petković, “Art and Patronage in Serbia During the Early Period of Ottoman Rule (1450-1600)”, ByzF XVI (1991), 401-414, with earlier bibliography. S. Kalopissi-Verti, “Church Foundations by Entire Villages (13th-16th c.). A Short Note”, ZRVI 44/1 (2007), 333-340.
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Fig. 1. Serbia, monastery of Hopovo, church of St. Nicholas. General view from the southwest.

constructive and morphological sense. The actions of the church which was the sole institution bearing the continuity of the lost sovereign states and keeper of their tradition were consistent and decisive.

However, although it was based on older models, we should not overlook the fact that the architecture of the largest as well as of those churches smaller in scale achieved true architectural standards of creativity. It is precisely because of this creative component that it preserved the virtues of inherited architecture: a steadfast construction of space, characteristic forms, elements of structure and the noble complex of structure and measure.

The churches of the monasteries of Hopovo (Fig. 1) and Papraća (Fig. 2) appeared as part of the above mentioned architectural framework. Both rank as the largest among the monuments of their times and respective

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8 Ἐκκλησίες στὴν Ἑλλάδα μετὰ τὴν Ἀλώση, 6 vols, ed. Ch. Bouras, Athens 1979-2002. S. Vojadić, Συμβολή στην ιστορία της εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής της περιοχής της Ελλάδος κατά το 16ο αιώνα. Οι μονές του Αγίου Βησσαρίωνος (Δούσικο) και του Οσίου Νικάνορα (Ζάβορδα), Athens 2000. Ch. Bouras, Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική στην Ελλάδα, Athens 2001, with earlier bibliography.

9 Korač – Šuput, op.cit. (n. 5), 389-399. On differing opinions regarding Byzantine architecture, see Bouras, op.cit. (n. 6), 119.
regions. The katholikon of Hopovo is, whatsmore, a creation of the highest merit. Their significance is reflected also in the impact they exerted on the architecture of their respective and broader regions. The monastery of Hopovo with the church of St. Nicholas is located on Fruška Gora, in the vicinity of the town of Šeković. The construction of the katholikon in 1576 as an effort of several doubtlessly wealthy kòtòrs is attested by the inscription on the western portal.

The monastery of Paprača with a katholikon dedicated to the Annunciation to the Virgin is located in northeastern Bosnia. It was built on the bank of the eponymous river, close to the town of Šeković. The time of construction, as well as the kòtòrs, are unknown and its chronology is, thus, determined indirectly. Having in mind its monumental dimensions (14.45×30 m.) it could have been built around the time of the construction of Hopovo (1576), considering the favorable circumstances, or the large three-nave basilica of Piva monastery (1573-1586). Paprača was probably built at approximately the same time, that is in the 1570s.

The churches of both Hopovo and Paprača have a single dome and belong to the Athonite triconch type. Their architectural plans and spatial organization are very similar. Paprača, as opposed to Hopovo, has a spacious exonarthex (Figs. 3, 4). Undeniable typological analogies between the katholikon churches of Hopovo and Paprača and the churches of the so-called Morava school has prompted scholars to search for specific models in Morava architecture on which they could have been based. The two largest Morava churches, Ravanica (1376-1377) and Manasija-Resava (1407-1418), have been regarded as such models. However, there are several reasons to question such a possibility. Firstly, there is no written record testifying whether the builders modeled their work on any specific structure, even less on buildings of such antiquity. Such a choice would have to be due to quite particular reasons, such as those documented by reliable written sources as is the case with some medieval and later churches (Banjska, Kovilj) We should also keep in mind the unfavorable historical circumstances, with the frequent migrations of the Christian population and massive settlement of Muslims, which could not sustain such a hypothesis. On the other hand, considering the interpretations regarding models and followers, introduced to historiography by R. Krautheimer and G. Bandmann, although they refer to a broad range of symbolic, ideological and other motifs, it would be very difficult to prove that the churches in question were built after any single particular model. Finally, a comparison between the spatial programs of the katholika of Hopovo and Paprača with Morava style cross-in-square type churches with lateral conchs

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12 Šuput, op.cit. (n. 2), 56-57, 83.
13 In historiography, Hopovo is also called Novo Hopovo because an older, now destroyed monastery lays in its vicinity. A new one was constructed in its place in the 18th century. V. Matić, Manastir Novo Hopovo, Belgrade 2010, with earlier bibliography. B. Kulić – N. Srećković, Manastiri Fruške Gore, Novi Sad 1994, 117-130. Petković, op.cit. (n. 5), 155-157.
14 Šuput, op.cit. (n. 5), 188-192.
15 The proximity of the town of Zvornik is the point of reference for its location. However, today its location is associated with the somewhat closer town of Šeković, according to the documentation of the Committee for the protection of national monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo.
16 Šuput, op.cit. (n. 5), 202-207.
17 Ćurčić, op.cit. (n. 2), 789, is of the opinion that Paprača was not constructed much later than 1550.
18 P. Mylonas, “L’architecture du Mont Athos”, Thesaurusmata 2 (1963), 18-84. For a new interpretation of the origins of Athonite triconch churches, see A. Tantsis, “The so-called ‘Athonite’ type of church and two shrines of the Theotokos in Constantinople”, Zograf 34 (2010), 3-11. S. Mamaloukos, “A contribution to the study of the ‘Athonite’ church of Byzantine architecture”, Zograf 35 (2011), 39-50.
19 Šuput, op.cit. (n. 5), 202-207.
20 M. Šuput, Monastery Banjska, Belgrade 2003, 22. Eadem, Crkva manastira Resave kao graditeljski uzor, Manastir Resava. Istoriia i umetnost (Church of the Resava Monastery as a architectural master, Resava Monastery. History and art), Despotovac 1995, 135-160.
21 R. Krautheimer, Introduction to an iconography of Medieval and Renaissance art. Studies in Early Christian and Renaissance Art, New York 1969, 115-150. G. Bandmann, Architektur als Bedeutungs Träger, Berlin 1978.
22 For Morava school architecture, see V. Ristić, Moravska arhitekturna, Kruševac 1996.
reveals certain differences between the two. Hopovo and Papraća have an additional eastern bay between the altar space and the space beneath the dome (Figs 3, 4) which makes their plan similar to the spatial solution of the katholikon of Chilandar. We should also point out the difference in concept between the central, main spaces of the katholika of Hopovo and Papraća and those of Morava style churches. As opposed to the Morava triconchs in which it takes on the form of an elongated rectangle, passed on from Serbian architecture of the previous period, in Hopovo and Papraća this space is almost square. This, too, points to Athonite models\(^{22}\). As for the exterior, we can only speak about Hopovo, because the exterior appearance of Papraća is not original (Figs 5, 6)\(^{23}\). The facade of Hopovo which reflects simply

\(^{22}\) V. Korać, “Arhitektura katolikna manastira Hilandara između Atosa, Srbije i Carigrada” (Architecture of the Catholic Monastery of Chilandar between Athos, Serbia and Constantinople), Osam vekova Hilandara, ed. V. Korać, Belgrade 2000, 457-466.

\(^{23}\) The monastery and the church were seriously damaged at the end of the 17th century; as a result, the monastery was abandoned between 1717 and 1729. The church was first restored after 1853 and later in 1861. This second restoration probably gave it the appearance it had until 1985 when the mortar was taken off the facades, along with corbel friezes of Saracen arches. The dome, tambour carré and lateral niches received a new coat of mortar. The facades, tambour carré and lateral niches were given friezes of arcades. A wooden porch was raised in front of the western facade.
and directly the entirety of its monumental space (Fig. 8) displays significant differences in relation to the decorative architecture of the Morava school. The general structure of the facades of Hopovo built in roughly cut blocks of stone and brick, has a horizontal direction accentuated also by a stone moulded stone cornice. The facades of Morava churches, as is well known, display a vertical pull in their decorative system. What'smore, the architectural decoration of the facades of Hopovo has none of the polychromy of brick and low relief stone decoration of the Morava churches which represents the most valuable innovation of their architectural

For information on the mentioned works and photographs of the church's present-day appearance I relied on the documentation of the above-mentioned Committee (see op.cit., n. 13). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs. M. Mulović-Handan once again for her collegial assistance.
identity. The facades are divided into two zones. The upper zone is treated meticulously while the lower one stands without any decoration. The architectural composition of the facades consists of blind arcades applied to the upper zones and the lateral sides of the tambour carré. They are constructed with brick, topped by capitals, and rest on shallow pilasters. The arches of the arcades have approximately the same span and are symmetrically distributed in a regular rhythm (Fig. 7). This indicates a true observance of the real meaning of the architectural treatment of the facades. The facades end in highly elaborate straight corbels, also quite different from those found in the Morava style churches.

The dome of Hopovo with its unique structural and architectural solution is the dominant feature of the church building (Fig. 1). Its twelve-sided drum has elongated, arched window openings surmounted by a corbel frieze of the same moulding as that on the facades and the tambour carré. A bas relief arcade is placed on each space. The drum of the dome is narrower than the tambour carré so that its perimeter is dotted with free standing colonettes. They stand out and away from the drum thus forming a pseudo porch, i.e. a narrow gallery around the dome. The colonettes have polyhedral capitals and are decorated and reinforced by sculpted stone “spheres” placed half way down their shafts.

In view of all the above stated facts, there can be no doubt that the sources of the architecture of Hopovo and Papraća lie among the architectural solutions of Mount Athos. However, it is important to determine the place of the architecture of Hopovo and Papraća within the context of post Byzantine building activity in the broader area of the Balkans in the 16th century,

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24 N. Katanić, Dekorativna kamena plastika moravske škole (Decorative stone plastics of the Moravian school), Belgrade 1988. O. Ristić, op. cit. (n. 21), 96-141.

25 Vulović, op. cit. (n. 22). Šuput, op. cit. (n. 5), 270, 191-192. Ćurčić, op. cit. (n. 2), 789. Šuput, op. cit. (n. 2), 82-83.
i.e. at the time the two monuments were constructed. The impact of Mount Athos on cultural production in general is all too evident and needs no further explanation and the same holds true for ecclesiastical architecture of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. It can be compared with the impact of the Byzantine capital on the entire Eastern Christian world prior to 1453. The broad dispersal of Athonite influences, reaching the distant parts in which Hopovo and Paprača were erected, were greatly abetted by the continued ties the monastic communities maintained with Athonite monasteries. Chilandar which had throughout the centuries been an axis of Serbian historical tradition, played the important role of the intermediary. The influence of the monastic communities which nurtured strong ties with Mount Athos was manifested also in the transfer of various Athonite customs and monastic rules. The monastic communities of Fruška Gora of the 16th and 17th centuries had, among other things, also adopted Athonite typika. An openness towards all things Athonite, including the liturgical practice and rituals which had remained steadfastly traditional, influenced the creation of spatial programs of churches. This was the basis upon which rested the process of shaping spaces which hosted the performance of characteristic liturgical rites, such as narthexes-λιτές and lateral

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26 A. Fotić, Sv. Gora i Hilandar u Osmanskom carstvu XV-XVII vek (Mount Athos and Chilandar in the Ottoman Empire), Belgrade 2000.
27 Ibid., 83-180.
28 Timotijević, op.cit. (n. 2), 76.
29 S. Vojadžis, "Κιονοστήρικοι νάρθηκες – λιτές στη μοναστηριακή αρχιτεκτονική", DChAE 33 (2012), 37-54 (English summary:...
conchs—χοροί. These spatial units are present in both Hopovo and Papraća.

Athonite architecture had “exported” – to use the term employed by S. Ćurčić – a type of triconch building to late Byzantine architecture. Its distribution was uneven, depending on the different circumstances in the various regions of the Balkans. An active building practice on Mount Athos where over just a single decade (1540-1550) a total of six katholikon churches of previously founded older monasteries produced a strong impulse and inspired the construction of triconch churches in Greece where they appear in considerable numbers, the largest group of such churches in the Balkans. In Thessaly, and in Meteora in particular, in the ancient monastic community which grew into a great monastic center, older churches were enlarged and new ones were built. Building activity is noted also in western and central Macedonia and other parts of mainland Greece. Intensive construction works undoubtedly employed a large number of builders (master builders) and other craftsmen organized in companies (ταϊφάς). They built churches which perpetuated the concepts of Athonite katholika as well-established models which basically remained unaltered. However, changes can be noted in the glossary of architecture and forms of church exteriors. The above mentioned master builders did adopt the forms of Athonite katholika but only those dating from late Byzantine times, as seen in monuments located not too far away from the building sites of their employment. They transformed the shapes and forms offered by the models, both interior and exterior, and applied them in their work in accordance with their own understanding of building practice and their craftsmanship. Simply put, the masters take on an eclectic stance without much preconceived and systematic matching and choice of forms and details of different origin. Their works are, thus, not recognized as a specific style but rather as entities of particular characteristic traits, a typical feature of late Byzantine architecture which has no concept of a single style. However, common features do exist in the architecture of these entities, as well as a basic repertoire of its forms which consists of similar elements.

This brief overview of post-Byzantine architecture in the above mentioned regions of Greece poses the question of the means and modes of transferring the Athonite triconch type of church to the different areas where churches of this plan were built. More precisely, was this achieved through direct contacts with Mount Athos or through the mediation of the mentioned Greek regions? A thorough comparative analysis of triconch churches found throughout the Balkans, along with research into the broader historical framework of their making, could yield an answer. At the moment, I shall attempt to point out a possible answer indicated by certain data regarding painters and their organized

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“Column-Supported Narthexes – Lites in Monastic Architecture”.

30 Korać, op.cit. (n. 22), 457-458.
31 Bouras, op.cit. (n. 8), 245.
32 Vojadić, op.cit. (n. 30), 110-130.
33 Ibid. On Meteora, see G. Sotiriou, “Μονας Μετεώρων”, EEBΣ 9 (1932), 382-415.
groups. It has long since been established in historiography on post-Byzantine painting that artists from various regions of Greece were engaged in producing wall paintings of a considerable number of churches in the 16th and in particular the 17th century within the territory under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Peć. Thus

34 E. N. Kyriakoudis, “Les artistes grecs qui ont participé à la peinture murale des régions sur la juridiction du Patriarcat de Peć pendant sa rénovation (1557-1690)”, Balkan Studies 24/2 (1983), 489-510. M. Garidis, La peinture murale dans le monde orthodoxe après la chute de Byzance (1450-1600) et dans les frescoes of the altar space and the naos of the church of St. Nicholas at Hopovo, dating from 1608, along with those from the narthex, dating from the middle of the 17th century, are also the work of Greek painters, probably

Fig. 8. Serbia, monastery of Hopovo, church of St. Nicholas. General view from the east.
THE KATHOLIKON CHURCHES OF THE MONASTERIES OF HOPOVO AND PAPRAČA

from Mount Athos. It is possible, therefore, that ateliers of its masons and builders had also arrived from those parts. Unfortunately, as opposed to actual written records related to the painters, data on the builders is meagre. We are, therefore, far from possessing the necessary information regarding their work and the manner of their education. The only thing we know for certain is that knowledge was transferred from generation to generation within a family of a workshop (...). The exceptional value of the architecture of Hopovo indicates that the architect and his masons could have been in possession of such knowledge. The architecture of Hopovo is above all the result of the imagination of its master builder, inspired by the architecture of Mount Athos.

35 Pejić, op.cit. (n. 36), 159.

Illustration credits
Figs 1, 7, 8: Photos by Marica Šuput. Figs 2, 5, 6: Archive of the Committee for the protection of national monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Figs 3, 4: Architectural drawing: N. Aleksić, after Šuput, Srpska arhitektura, op.cit. (n. 2), p. 55, 82.

Marica Šuput

TA KAΘOΛΙΚΑ ΤΩΝ ΜΟΝΩΝ HOPOVO ΚΑΙ PAPRAĆA
ΚΑΙ Η ΘΕΣΗ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΤΗ ΜΕΤΑΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗ ΑΡΧΙΤΕΚΤΟΝΙΚΗ

Metá apó mia sýntomi anafóra sth σερβική ekklísmatikí arkhitektonikh ths eposis ths toýuko-khrósias kathús kai sta kyríótera geýmata kai χαρα-κτηριστικά tis, parousiázeTai h arkhitektonikh thn katholikón twn monon Hopoŝo kai Papraća, sputadáwn mneméwn thn deúterou mous thn 16ou auóna. Kató-pin, exérdáooun oi protásies ths éreunw gia thn pro-éleuwn thn schediów kai thn prootipwôn thn, diáleí th prótpita básei thn osoiów eînai ktiosth th Horo-ño kai h Papraća.

Me thn ékkseis thn istorikón geýnontwn ths eposis ekeínei kai th sýntomi ánaliw gia th arkhitektonikh thn thn dúo naoun dén uposthrizetai h kathieroménn eaðhseσi óti th prótpita ths bróixonta sta arh- kitektonikh thn televmatów òpsous thn sebeiokeúmeni-nikh naodoxías, th leugménhikh Xholís ths thn Mochába. Stímpwma me thn kathieroménn éppous, h Ravaníca kai h Manasija (Resava) theouórítai ta afíssia prótpita. Stin egragía autí episkenfrísetai h prósokh stis aisthítis diáforés, oi ópopes apoikhrrínon thn arkhitektonikh thn dúo monón thn 16ou auóna apo th Ravaníca kai th Manasija, pou kai autés oi idées állo- ste, diaphéróoun metaxéi thn wos pró th arkhitektonikh ths charaktetistikà. Loumbáontas upópsi ths diáfor- réis metaxéi autón thn osoiódhmatutor, tonúzetai óti h anažithei thn sunghkhrímewn prótpita, gia th ópopia dén upárchoyn graffes katartiès, ópas ekeínes pou upárchoyn gia kápopous apó thn èndwvounikí si mé kateútheni. Gína autó kai prosteiíetai edó, gia thn plhróstima kataánosia ths arkhitektoni- kí ths thn Horoño kai ths Papraća, h próseghi gia géni
και από άλλη οπτική γωνία. Αυτό σημαίνει ότι η αρχιτεκτονική τους πρέπει να εξετασθεί και κατόπιν να προσδιορισθεί η θέση τους στη μεταβυζαντινή ναοδομία της ευρύτερης περιοχής των Βαλκανίων, δηλαδή στον χώρο κατά τον οποίο κτίσθηκαν αυτές οι δύο εκκλησίες. Επειδή και οι δύο, ως προς τη βασική τους μορφή, ανήκουν στον τύπο του λεγόμενου αθωνικού τρικόγχου, αδιαμφισβήτητη είναι η αγιορειτική τους προέλευση, για την οποία, εννοείται, έχει ήδη γίνει λόγος και στις παλαιότερες υποθέσεις. Για τον λόγο αυτό τονίζεται ιδιαίτερα η μεγάλη σημασία του Αγίου Όρους στην όλη πολιτισμική δραστηριότητα των χριστιανών στον χώρο της Βαλκανικής κατά την περίοδο της τουρκοκρατίας. Από την άποψη αυτή, η ιδιαίτερη συμβολή του Αγίου Όρους μπορεί να συγκριθεί με εκείνη που η βυζαντινή πρωτεύουσα είχε μέχρι το 1453 σε σχέση με όλο τον ορθόδοξο κόσμο.

Η επίδραση της τέχνης και της ναοδομίας του Αγίου Όρους, συμπεριλαμβανομένων και όλων εκείνων που ζωγραφίζονταν και κτίζονταν σε αυτό και κατά τον 16ο αιώνα, είχε ευρύτατα επεκταθεί σε όλες τις περιοχές της Βαλκανικής. Είναι ευνόητο ότι πιο έντονα εκδηλώνεται στις ελληνικές περιοχές, όπου και αναπτύχθηκε και η μεγαλύτερη οικοδομική δραστηριότητα. Αυτή η επίδραση έφτασε όμως και στις απομακρυσμένες βόρειες σερβικές περιοχές, μετά το 1557 (αναφορά του Πατριαρχείου του Ιπεκίου), δημιουργήθηκαν προϋποθέσεις για πολιτιστική, και συνεπώς και για οικοδομική, δραστηριότητα, η οποία κατά το δεύτερο μισό του 16ου αιώνα, όταν κτίζονται το Ηπόβοβο και η Παπράθα, εμφανίζει μεγάλη ανάδομο. Οι συνεχείς δεσμοί των Σέρβων μοναχών με τις αγιορειτικές μοναστικές κοινότητες και το Χιλανδάρι συνεβαλλαν ιδιαίτερα στη διάδοση των αγιορειτικών επιδράσεων. Αποτέλεσμα αυτών ήταν η αποδοχή του τύπου του αθωνικού τρικόγχου ναού στη σερβική αρχιτεκτονική του 16ου αιώνα και μέσα από αυτήν και στη μεταγενέστερη αρχιτεκτονική. Όμως, παραμένει ερώτημα με ποιον τρόπο διαδίδονταν αυτές οι επιδράσεις. Αυτό ενδέχεται να ισοπαλίζει με την αποδοχή ως πρότυπο τους αγιορειτικούς ναούς και μέσω της τέχνης, χιλανδάριος, οι οικοδόμοι προέρχονταν από τις ίδιες περιοχές. Μάλιστα, οι τοιχογραφίες του Ηπόβοβο, στον κυρίως ναό (1608) και στον νάρθηκα (1654), είναι έργο Ελλήνων ζωγράφων, όπως και οι τοιχογραφίες ορισμένου αριθμού άλλων σερβικών ναών.

Αφετέρου, στη μοναδική αρχιτεκτονική του Ηπόβοβο έχουν συγκεντρωθεί διαφορετικά συστατικά της αρχιτεκτονικής των αγιορειτικών ναών καθώς και εκείνων του ελληνικού χώρου, οι οποίοι κτίσθηκαν με πρότυπο τους αγιορειτικούς. Αυτό ενδέχεται να έχει υποστεί με βάση κάποιο συγκεκριμένο πρότυπο. Το εξαίρετο της αρχιτεκτονικής του Ηπόβοβο είναι επίτευγμα της φαντασίας ενός υπέροχου πρωτομάστορα, εμπνευσμένου από την αγιορειτική αρχιτεκτονική. Αυτό είναι και ένα παράδειγμα –όχι μοναδικό στη μεταβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική–, για το γεγονός ότι με βάση τις παραδοσιακές λύσεις είναι δυνατή η οικοδόμηση ενός έργου με νέες και υψηλές αξίες.

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