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Monastery of the Ascension, Ellassona, Mount Olympus, Greece: Characterization of Late Post-Byzantine Wall Paintings

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The Monastery of the Ascension is located in Sykea, a village of Ellassona town near Mount Olympus, with a significant contribution in the area regarding charity and culture [1]. Its catholicon was constructed and painted in about the mid-17th century, while the iconographer remains unknown. The purpose of this study is the materials characterization of the catholicon's wall-paintings and the identification of the painting technique that was used, as post-Byzantine artistic period is characterized by the application of new painting materials and techniques. At the same time, many artistic guilds of ecclesiastical iconography remain faithful to traditional Old Masters' recipes.

The collected samples -including plaster and painting layers- were analyzed by means of optical microscopy, micro-Fourier transform infrared (micro-FTIR) spectroscopy, scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS), X-ray diffractometry (XRD) and thermogravimetry (TGA). This combination of complementary spectroscopic, thermal and microstratigraphic techniques was applied to free specimens, and also to embedded cross-sections. The results indicate the use of fresco technique; calcite with quartz and fibers of plant origin were used for the plaster layer [2]. The artist's palette is quite simple, as the painting layers consist of red, yellow and brown ferrous pigments, malachite and carbon black. This study is a part of a general project concerning the documentation of the late post-Byzantine artistic workshops, which acted in Central and Northern Greece [3].

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References

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