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**"A Comparative Approach to Artistic Techniques: Frescoes in the Monasteries of  
St. Mary of Driano, Prophet Elia in Jorgucat, and St. Cyricus and Julitta in  
Dhuvjan (Dropulli region Albania)"**

**Edlira Çausi**

Department of Archeology and Cultural Heritage

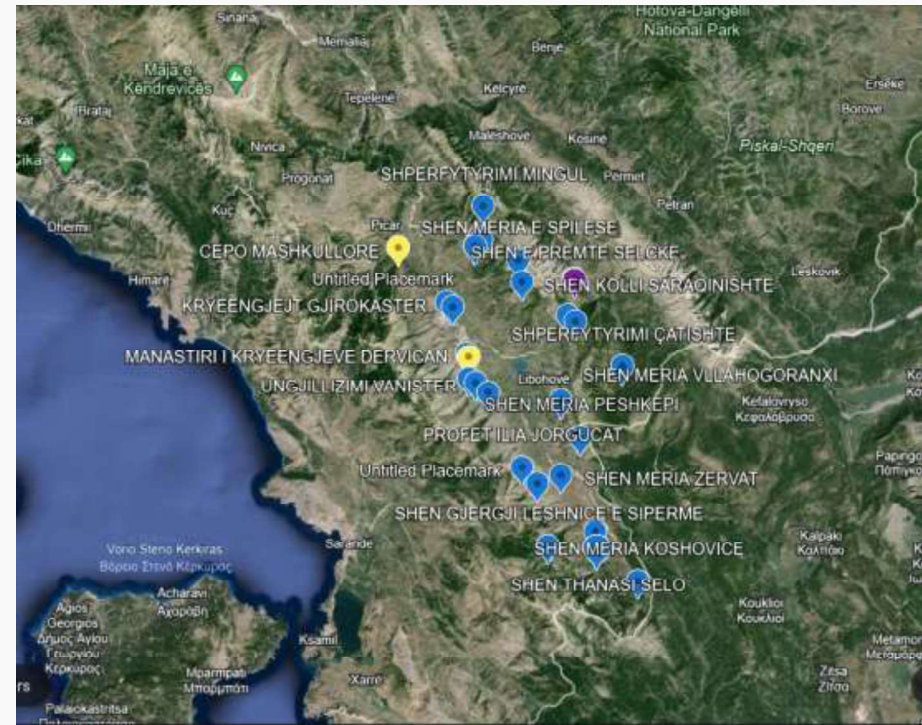
Faculty of History and Philology

University of Tirana

[edlira.caushi@unitir.edu.al](mailto:edlira.caushi@unitir.edu.al)

# Introduction to the Drino Valley Monasteries

- The Drino Valley is known as a “Little Mount Athos” due to significant post-Byzantine construction activity.
- Many monasteries in the region were originally built in earlier times but have undergone continuous reconstruction.
- Monasteries strategically positioned above villages along communication routes for protection and picturesque surroundings.





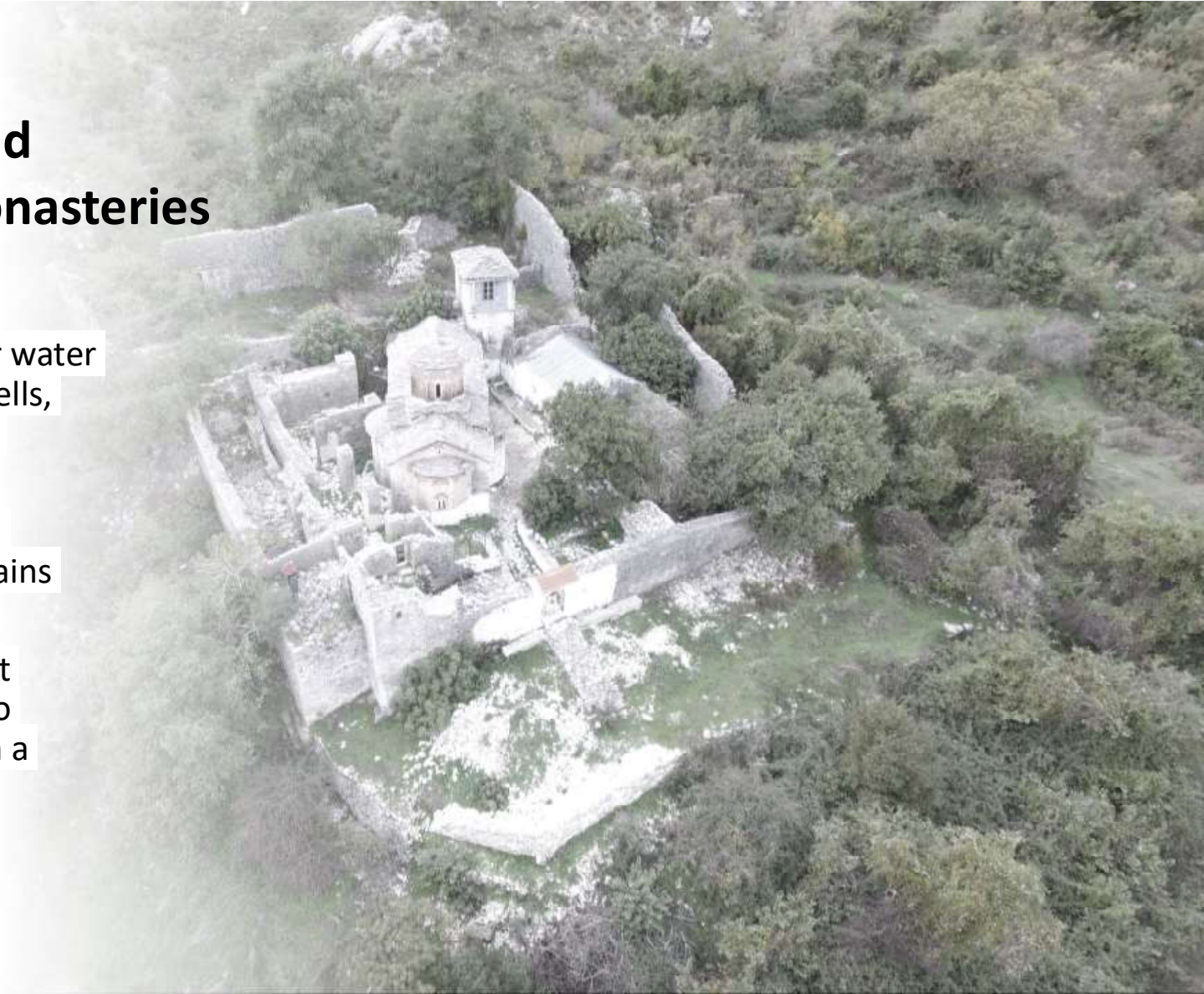
## Architecture and Structures of Monastery Complexes

- Monastery complexes comprise various sections, including places of worship, administrative rooms, and accommodations.
- Notable features include high walls with turrets and defensive towers for architectural protection.
- The main church or catholicon serves as the focal point of these complexes.



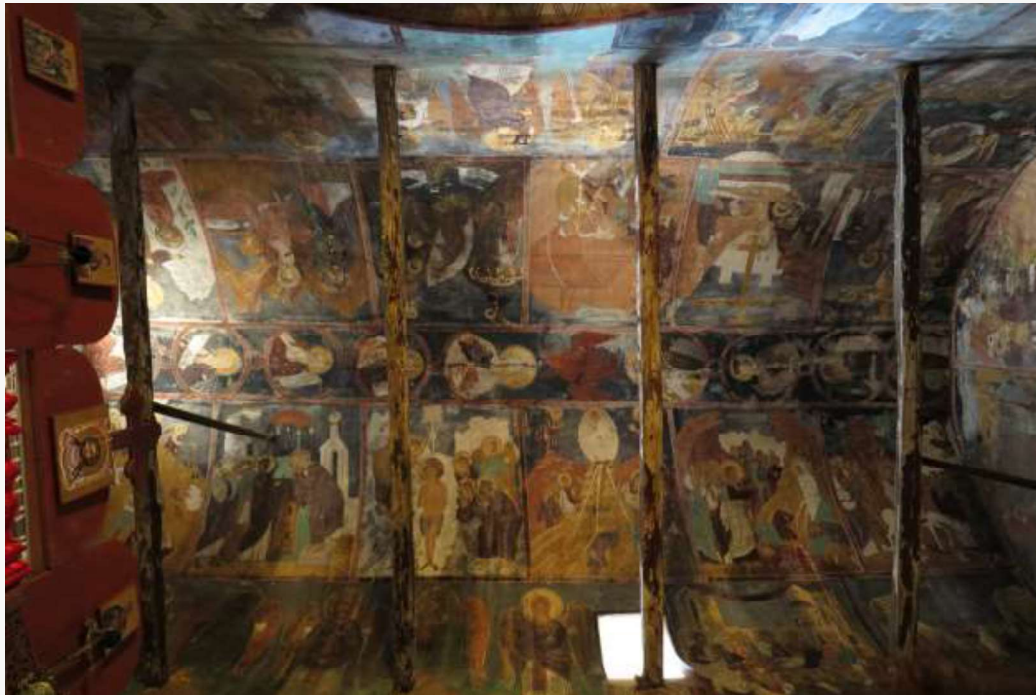
## Water Conservation and Preservation in the Monasteries structure

- Monasteries were responsible for water conservation, typically utilizing wells, cisterns, and special architectural features.
- The Vanishta Monastery's cistern, constructed as a lofty tower, remains preserved today.
- Despite preservation efforts, most monastery complexes in the Drino Valley are damaged, with many in a state of ruin.



# Evidence of Construction and Interior Painting Phases

- Interior walls of Prophet Elijah church adorned with murals in both naos and narthex.
- Naos painted by monk Nikephoros in 1588; narthex by Mihail from Linotopi in 1617.





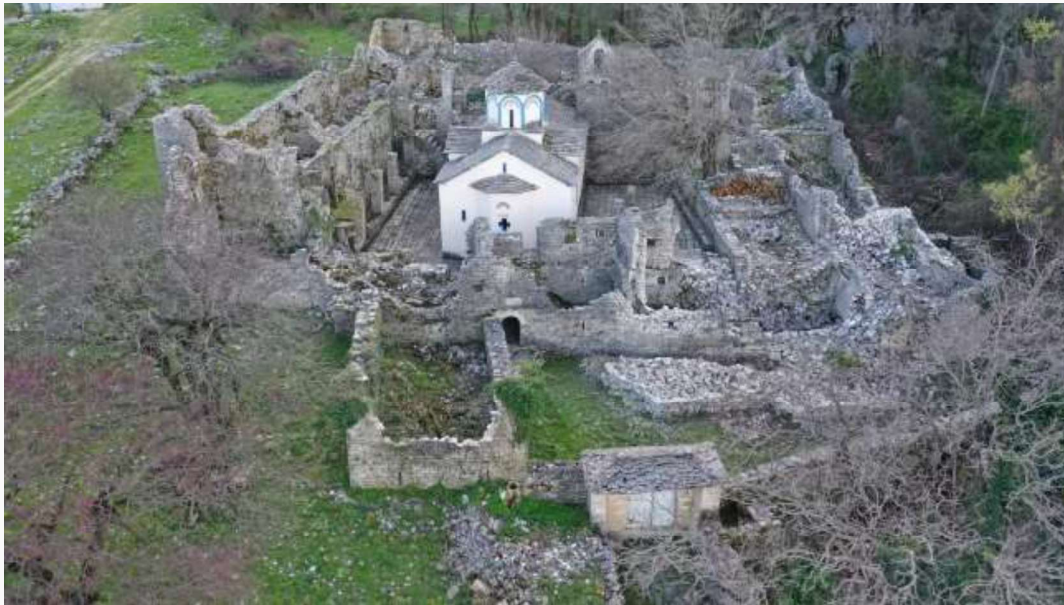
## Inscriptions and Additional Data st. Mary of Driano



- Inscriptions are crucial for understanding Jorgucati murals; but missing for Driano.
- Narthex possibly built by monk Kalist in 1569; plaque dated 1838 suggests monastery expansion.
- Lack of authorial inscription in Driano; repainting attributed to the first half of the 19th century.

# Construction of Dhuvjan Monastery and restoration intervention

- Church of St. Cyricus and Julitta in Dhuvjan constructed five years after Driano.
- Inscription from 1588 on narthex architrave suggests the construction of the catholicon; the church firstly was painted in 1595.
- Inscription from 1873 documents restorative intervention on paintings; another intervention occurred in 1922.
- **Three phases of evolution: late 16th century, third quarter 19th century, and first quarter 20th century.**





## Role of Monks in Monastic Life and the Contribution of Monk Nikephoros

- Monks played significant roles in fresco painting and construction activities of the monasteries.
- Inscriptions within various churches attest to monks' contributions.
- Monk Nikephoros, was a distinct painter with a unique style.
- Preparatory sketches observed in signed work at Jorgucati and two other murals.
- The two others are attributed to Nikephoros and his workshop due to technical similarity.





# Introduction to Execution Techniques of Preparatory Layers

*Purpose of this presentation: Highlight preparatory layers and their significance.*

- Traditional fresco technique involves marks on wet plaster with dissolved pigments.
- Ideal moment for quality results: during initial phase of drying plaster.

## Preparatory Techniques in Drino Valley Murals

Characteristic of preparatory drawing during 16th and 17th-century wall paintings in Drino valley:

- *Ocher color*
- *Red color*
- *Preparatory incision - delineates painting surfaces, usually used for saints' clothing.*





# Unique Technique of Jorgucat Fresco by Monk Nikephoros

## Technique Details and Characteristics

- Jorgucat fresco demonstrates distinctive preparatory layer treatment.
- Monk Nikephoros used scratching over humid plaster.
- Technique sets it apart from contemporary and subsequent painters.
- Monk Nikephoros "sculpted" portraits of saints on damp plaster.
- Deeply incised lines with beveled edges executed with precision.
- Attention to detail extends to rendering hair, eyebrows, wrinkles, and hands.



## Technique of execution of preparatory layer in Driano and Dhuvjan Murals

- Technique observed in Driano due to degradation and loss of painted layer.
- Meticulous preparation evident in lower register portraits of catholicon.
- Similar phenomenon noted in Dhuvjan murals, with subsequent repair phases.



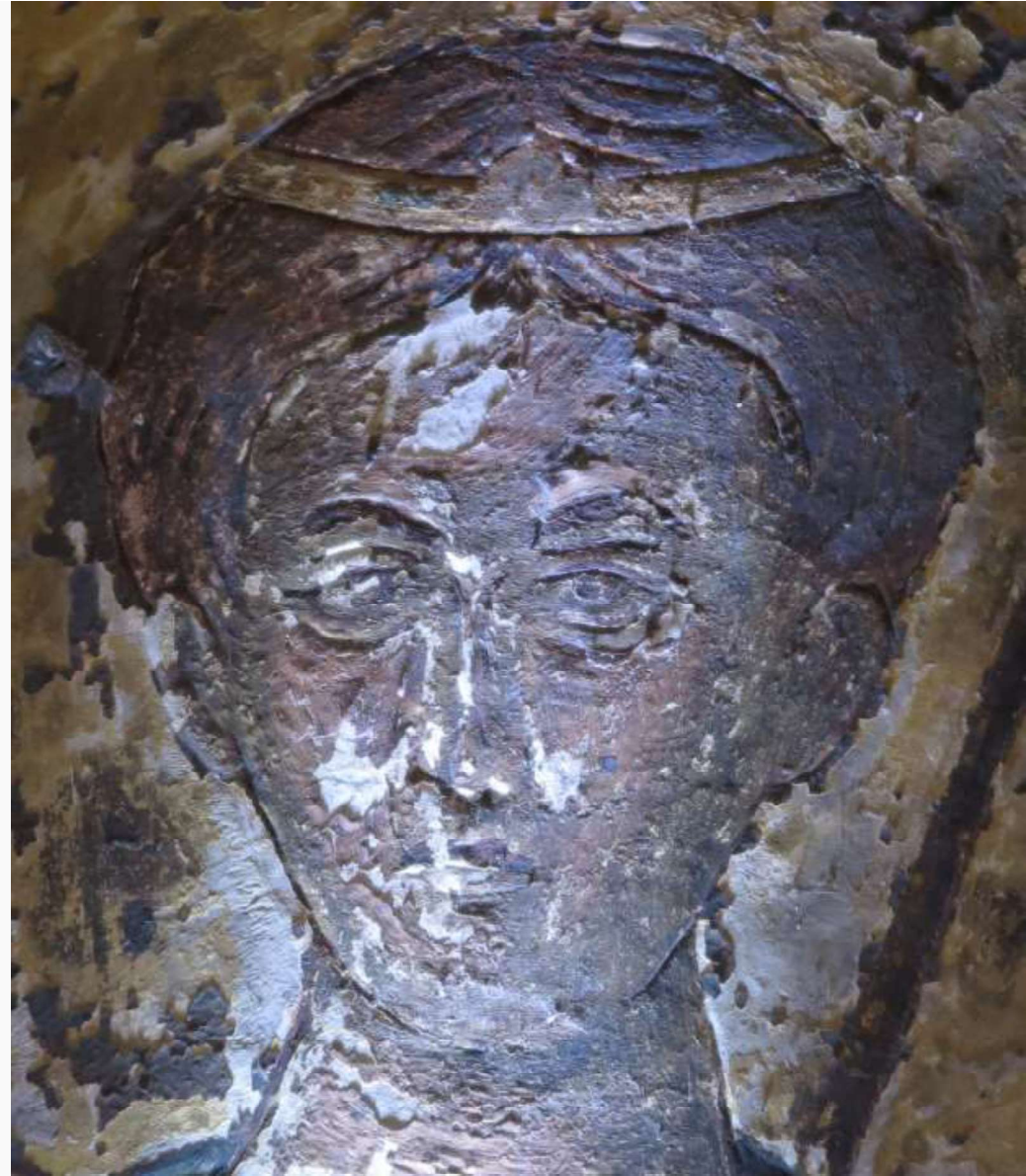


## Repainting and Final Observations

- Repainting of murals in Dhuvjan occurred in 1873 and 1922 (the only data we have of the three monasteries).
- Direct incisions on wet plaster are observed in Jorgucati, Driano and Dhuvjan.
- Details include portrait expressions, hair undulations, and various ornamentation.

## Decay Issues of wall paintings

- Notable decay issues: detachment and loss of paint layer.
- Meticulous work on figures, especially portraits, may prolong plaster preparation, hindering optimal adhesion of the paint layer.





## Other similarities in utilization of colors

- Utilization of a bright green color is noted in frescoes of Jorgucat-Driano-Dhuvjan, differing from other murals of the same period in the Drino Valley area.
- Additional chemical analyses can enhance understanding of compositions of pigments.
- Commonalities in execution techniques observed, particularly in preparatory layers.



*Jorgucat-Driano-Dhuvjan*

## Further repainting interventions

- Among the three artworks, only the fresco in Jorgucat has not undergone repainting phase.
- The late interventions don't propose a new iconographic program, but rather maintain the one underneath.
- Over time, considering that decay problems were likely to emerge, renovation became necessary, but it was only undertaken in Dhuvjani and Driano.
- Both feature various inscriptions related to reconstructions, with interventions predominantly dating back to the nineteenth and twenty centuries.





THANK you!