

Notes About the Commemoration of the Powerful Men in the Medieval Art in Macedonia

Prof. Filipova Snežana

Department of Art History and Archaeology,

University Ss Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

snezanaf@zfz.ukim.edu.mk

Abstract

Rulers' portraits as symbols of the institution of monarchy were used on coins, legal acts and seals, as a guarantee of authenticity and legal effectiveness. They are usually the highest category of propaganda images. Each civilization has the praxis of representing to a certain extent real or "beatified" image or portrait of the emperor. By adding various symbols of power, like crowns, caps, beard, throne, *spendium*, chariot, and number of the animals driving it, we are directly observing the image of the most powerful representatives of people, nations, states, empires, era, usually blessed by or alike god(s). Roman emperors preferred to be represented in sculpture, and the copy of the ruling emperor was placed in every city of the Empire. It was roman art and sculpture where actually the portrait was invented in the 2nd century B.C. Sometimes Emperor's portrait in Byzantium had the status of replacing the real presence of the sovereign. The early portraits of byzantine emperors in monumental art are preserved in St. Vitale in Ravenna, where the emperor Justinian I and his wife with ecclesiastical and court dignitaries attend the liturgy.¹ St Sophia in Constantinople has preserved later portraits of the emperors Justinian and Constantine, who are giving the church St. Sofia and the city of Constantinople to the Mother of God (2/2 of the 10th C.), the portrait of Constantine IX Monomachos or initially Romanos and the empress Zoe², from 1034–1042; the portrait of John II Komnenos and the empress Irene from the beginning of the 12th C.³ In the time of the Komnenian dynasty (especially the time of Manuel I Komnenos), group royal portraits were frequently depicted.⁴ Negrău says in churches, the images of the rulers expressed the relation of monarchs with God, who gave them the power of monarchy in exchange to undertake the defense of Christian law. The images are addressed to the masses with the purpose to present monarchs as generous donors, as well as ubiquitous authorities.⁵ Usually God is representing putting the crown on ruler's head from above or blessing. The medieval artistic treasures are united by the ktetors who, using their political power, social reputation, cultural impact, theological erudition, as well as artistic taste, "have enabled the creation of artistic legacy of representative sacral monuments." As producers of the artistic enterprises, they were "playing the role of creators of the cultural matrixes in certain periods maintaining the traditional values in the artistic practice or establishing a background for their transformation in sustainable components of the progressive development of artistic innovations."⁶

Keywords: Notes, Commemoration, Powerful Men, Medieval Art, Macedonia

Introduction

The founders' portraits were most often painted in royal palaces (Vlahernae, mosaic of John II mourning his late father)⁷, narthexes, exonarthexes (Holy Virgin Zaumska, Staro Nagoričino), naoses (Holy Archangels, Lesnovo) and refectories of the monastic churches where the founder was the emperor or member of a royal family and a high dignitary, as well as on

¹Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (4 ed., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986, p. 234

² The panel of Zoe and Constantine IX in Hagia Sophia has been altered, and it is possible that it originally depicted Zoe with Romanos, thus making it a striking pendant to the panel at the Constantinopolitan Peribleptos monastery. See Mark J. Johnson, *The Lost Royal Portraits of Gerace and Cefalu Cathedrals*, *DOP* 53, 237-262, 258.

³ Viktor Lazarev, *Istoriia vizantijskoj živopisi II*, Moscow 1986, figs. 135–142;

⁴ Andre Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris 1960.

⁵ Elisabeta Negrău, The ruler's portrait in byzantine art, a few observations regarding its functions, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, June 2011, Vol.7, No.2, 63-75, 74.

⁶ Elizabeta Dimitrova, V. I. Personalities in Medieval Macedonia, Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionership (11th – 14th century), in *Folia Archaeologica Balkanica* 3, Skopje 2015, 601-621, 601-602.

⁷ Bakirtzis, Warrior Saints or Portraits of Members of the Family of Alexios I Komnenos? In *British School at Athens Studies* Vol. 8, MOSAIC: Festschrift for A. H. S. Megaw (2001), 85-87 87.

the facades of the churches, as in Kurbinovo, probably in St. Panteleimon, Nerezi (1164), St. Nicholas Bolnički, Old St. Clement (30es of the 14th C.),¹St. Demetrius, Sushica, Marko monastery near Skopje (1389) etc.

There are numerous preserved examples of founders' portraits painted in the narthexes or exo- narthexes of orthodox churches elsewhere within the Byzantine Empire in the period of the 12th-15th C. like in Bulgaria (Boyana), in Serbia and Kosovo (Mileševa, Gračanica, Studenica, Lipljan), Greece (Daphne, Fere), monastery church of the Virgin in Apollonia, Albania, St. Sophia, Constantinople, the Mother of God Pamakaristos=Fetie Mosque (Andronicus II Palaiologos and his wife Ana, narthex)²etc.

Portraits of Byzantine emperors on seals coins and chrysobulls had the meaning of a guarantee of authenticity. Portrait of the rulers were also embroidered on costumes of the empress, officials, churchmen or foreign vassals, as a sign of honor and obedience. These mobile portraits and the portraits in mural painting were viewed equally; they only had different functions, to commemorate/to express obedience. In image is being revealed the emperor's essence of being³, theorized Saint Athanasius of Alexandria in the 4th century, about icon as portrait, using the widely shared perception of the image of emperor as analogy in his argument concerning the veneration of icons.³ It seems a monument is not tied only to a single figure but often involves the desire to establish a memory of the 'political family' of predecessor and successor rulers tied together by a continuous political tradition. The role of the monument in Byzantine tradition is thus essentially memorial: through his work, the founder wishes to remain alive over time in the memory of society.⁴

The icon of St Theodor Thiron from the shrine of St. John Theologos on Patmos represents actually the portrait of Theodor I Laskaris (1173-1222), before he became despot of Nicaea in 1204. The portraits were made from approved model sent by the Emperor-made by court artists and then redistributed when needed. Even in Byzantium the chief commander of the army and governor of Constantinople, the megalos dux Alexius Apohawk has his portrait made iconographically following some model of St. Demetrius on horse back, as the Codex graecus 2144, fol. 11r, collection of the works of Hipocrates shows. He was described as very highly ambitious man with megalomaniac plans to reach the political top in the Roman Empire. So he might have considered himself appropriate to be identified with the very much appreciated martyr and protector of Thessalonica, St. Demetrius.

There is another portrait of the same saint, that is regarded as portrait of Byzantine emperor, painted in the late 12th C. (the portrait has been repainted in the 14th C.). In 1105 in the narthex of the Holy Virgin church Asinou Panagia Phorbiotissa, in Cyprus, there is a lord represented like St. George some scholars think represents Alexius I Komnenos-1118. His shield shows large half golden moon with a small cross between its ends. The whole shield is filled with small suns-stars.⁵ Built around 1100, the edifice is decorated with accretions of images, from the famous fresco cycle executed shortly after initial construction to those made in the early 17th C.

The sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos in the typicon of his monastery of Holy Virgin Kosmosoteira mentions there were icons of his father and mother in the monastery church.⁶

In the case of Macedonia, the portraits of the rulers and members of the ruling family are represented not only as ktetors of churches or actual rulers next to the feudal lords who are the ktetors, but on icons and frescoes as holy warriors, to mention only the icon of Virgin Mary with child from the Virgin Perivleptos in Ohrid iconostasis, the holy warriors in St.

1 Lidia Hadernann-Misguich, Une longue tradition byzantine. La décoration extérieure des églises, *Zograf* 7 (1976), 7-8; Cvetan Grozdanov – Donka Bardžieva, Sur les portraits des personnages historiques à Kurbinovo, *ZRVI* 33 (1994), 74-80; C. Grozdanov, *Ohridskata slikarska škola od XIV vek*, Skopje-Belgrade 1980, 50, fig. 54, C. Grozdanov, *Portreti na svetitelite od Makedonija od 9-18 vek*, Skopje 1983, 56, drawing 5.

2 T. Velmans, Le portrait dans l'art des Paléologues, in: *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues*, Venise 1971, 99-100. Donka Bardžieva-Trajkovska, New Elements of the Painted Program in the Narthex at Nerezi, *Zograf* 29, 2002-2003, 35-46, 36. Andre Grabar, Portrait oubliés d'empereurs byzantins, in: *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age I*, Paris 1957, 192-193; Zabraveni portreti na vizantijski imperatori, in: *Izbrani sochinenija II*, Sofia 1983, 158-160; Branislav Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, Belgrade 1992; Todić, *Gračanica, Slikarstvo*, Belgrade-Priština 1988, 171, fig. 105, 17 Smiljka Gabelić, *Manastir Lesnovo*, Belgrade 1998, 167-172.

3 Saint Athanasius, Oratio III contra Arianos, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Patrologiae graecae*, J.P. Migne (ed.), vol. 26, Imprimerie Catholique, Paris, 1857, col. 332. http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/athanasius_orat_con_arianos_III_29-34.htm (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204>)

4 Negrau, The rulers portrait in byzantine art, 72.

5 *Asinou across Time*, Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus, DOP 43, ed. by Annemarie Weyl Carr and Andréas Nicolaidēs, 2012, 315.

6 Bakirtzis, Warrior Saints or Portraits, 87, footnote 16.

Panteleimon, Nerezi or St. Constantine and Helene in St. George, Kurbinovo are exclusive and enable us to see what kind of religious practice the rulers practiced in the 12th century.

The monastery church of St. Panteleimon in Nerezi, near Skopje, from the 12th century (1164), erected by Alexios Angelos Komnenos¹, who belongs to the Komnenian dynasty on his mother's side – Theodora, the youngest daughter of the late Emperor Alexios I Komnenos and sister of Manuel I Komnenos. The fresco painting has exceptional quality, painted by anonymous masters that were best Byzantine imperial fresco painters of the period. The walls from the entrance to the naos contain saints images of six holy warriors with heraldic shields.² It seems to me not only are they saints represented as high dignitaries and high rank soldiers but they are portraits of the members of the Imperial family. The frescoes in the church date from 1164, and some parts were repainted in the 15th, 16th, and 19th centuries.³ The Nerezi frescoes represented a break with the contemporary painting because the painter didn't depict the saints in the customary representative-type manner but introduced figures from the real life. It may be related to the intention of the ktetor to represent the Emperor and the family he belonged to as it was done in the church of Virgin in Fere, Greece, around 10 years earlier. There torsos of Isaac (St. Menas, the ktetor and Sebastokrator), and his sons Andronic (St. Procopius), St. Theodor Stratilat (John II) and Theodor Thiron (Alexius) are represented.⁴

The fragment of a fresco on the very end of the second zone of the eastern wall in the narthex of Nerezi may indicate a royal portrait was painted in full length, on a purple pillow decorated with precious stones and pearls. From the royal figure, the lower decorated part of the division is visible. As a member of the Komnenos dynasty, Alexios may have demanded a founder's composition to be painted with the contemporary Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180) with his second wife.⁵

The next church where we face again portraits of at the already late Emperor Manuel I Komnenos is the church of St. George in Kurbinovo. It is among the most beautiful, most original, though fragmentary preserved frescoes from the late 12th C. The work of the three anonymous masters in Kurbinovo is a continuation of the work of the Nerezi masters, with a great deal of originality in style and expression. Here the emperor and his wife are represented as St. Constantine and St. Helene.⁶ The preserved portrait of the royal family in Kurbinovo so far is considered the oldest of this type of Byzantine art. According to Grozdanov and Bardjieva, there is also a representation of Isaac II Angelos in Kurbinovo.⁷

The imperial images at Hagia Sophia are scattered about the galleries and in the narthex, while Justinian's image at San Vitale in Ravenna appears in the sanctuary. There seems to have been no set policy regarding the placement of such images in the Byzantine world, and none in the Norman kingdom either.⁸

Several examples of combining portraits of donors with documents may be cited, including the two above mentioned imperial panels of Hagia Sophia.⁹ Very similar to the decoration at Cefalu is a fresco found in the exo-narthex of the

1 Ida Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi. Architecture, Program, Patronage*, Wiesbaden 2000

2 Филипова, "Medieval Paintings in Macedonian Churches and Applied Arts as the Echo of the Heraldic Society", *Culture of Memory in East Central Europe in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*, Conference Proceedings, Poznan 2008, 277-287; Filipova., Ликовни хералдички извори во Република Македонија, Зборник на трудови од Simpozium na INI Skopje & BAN Sofija, *Tranzicite vo Kulturata*, Скопје, 2008; Filipova, Комненовската династија и нивното хералдичко влијание врз фрескосликарството во Македонија", *МН* 36, 2010, Filipova, *Studii za heraldikata vo Makedonija*, Makedonika Litera: Skopje 2015.

3 Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi*; Donka Bardjieva, St. Panteleimon at Nerezi : fresco painting, Skopje, Sigma Press 2004. In 1923-1926 the Russian prof. Nikola Okunjev uncovered the old 12th century frescoes in one part of the St. Panteleimon church. The conservation work from 1954-1957 completed the removal of the late frescoes and the exposure of the old.

4 D. Mouriki, Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, *DOP* 34–35, 103–107, 125–177; Bakirtzis, Warrior Saints or Portraits? 85, 86.

5 Donka Bardžieva-Trajkovska, New Elements of the Painted Program in the Narthex at Nerezi, 37.

6 Lidia Haderman Misquish, *Kurbinovo. Les fresques de saint Georges et la peinture Byzantine du XII siècle*, Bruxelles 1975, 43-318, 321-551, fig 141; Lydie Hadermann-Misquich, La grande Theophanie se Saint-Georges de Kurbinovo et le décor du registre des prophetes, *Zbornik posveten na Dimče Koco*, Arheološki Muzej Skopje, 1975, 285-316.

7 Grozdanov–Bardžieva, Sur les portraits des personnages historiques à Kurbinovo, *ЗПВИ* 33 (1994), drawing on pages 72–73.

8 Mark J. Johnson, *The Lost Royal Portraits of Gerace and Cefalu Cathedrals*, *DOP* 53, 237-262, 258.

9 The panel of Constantine IX Monomachos and Zoe is offertory in nature, with the emperor holding a moneybag, and Zoe a scroll that seems to be a charter of donation, but is unopened. So the inscription simply identifies the emperor but has the function of giving authority to the charter. In the panel of John II Komnenos and Irene, it is again the empress who holds a closed scroll of donation.

monastery church of the Virgin in Apollonia, Albania, which contains a family portrait of Michael VIII Palaiologos with his wife, Theodora, their son, Andronikos II (1282- 1328), and his son, Michael IX (1294-1320). There are parallels with Cefalu, a dedicatory panel with several Family members, the founder who presents a church model, and the pictorial legal document, all depicted near the entrance on the west wall of the church. ¹

At the end of the 12th C. golden square crosses on red began to be used as an emblem of the emperors bodyguard, that is saint protector. Such small part of the shield is visible on an icon of St Theodor Thiron from the shrine of St. John Theologos on Patmos. It is actually the portrait of Theodor I Laskaris (1173-1222), before he became despot of Nicaea in 1204. The portraits were made from approved model sent by the Emperor-made by court artists and then redistributed when needed. It is only in the Komnenian art that we see the one head or double headed eagle embroidered on the suppedaneum under the feet of the emperors. Later on, in the 13 and 14th C. this fantastic animal became much more frequent on the cloth of the dignitaries in the Byzantine empire.

In Macedonia the Palaiologan style begins with the works of the Constantinopolitan painters Michael and Eutychius, who, in 1295, on invitation from Progon Zgur, the great heteriarch of Byzantium, started decorating the church of the Most Holy Theotokos Peribleptos in Ohrid and represented his and the portrait of his wife, Eudoia Komnenos (who was also relative to the tsar Andronic II Palaiologos).² According to Grozdanov, in Peribleptos church the painters have represented within the composition of the Virgin the ruling byzantine emperor Andronic II Palaiologos with his wife, Irene from Monferato, and his father, Michael IX Palaiologos, represented with his mother, who stand in the group of rulers behind the archbishops, leaded by St. Constantine and Helene.³ The same tsar was represented in Holy Virgin Peribleptos within the composition of the Eastern hymn, and in the cave church of St. Erasmo around 1300.⁴ Todić explains that while the Byzantine emperor attempted to recapture Balkan territories by military force, the archbishop of Ohrid, Makarios, strove to demonstrate visually on the walls of the church of the Virgin Peribleptos the supposed origins of his archbishopric and thus also to claim its rights, through the images of the apostles Peter and Andrew and saints Clement and Constantine Kabasilas. Because of its political engagement, this painted decoration remained unique in medieval art and should be explained by particular ideological and political motives.

On the other hand, we have here the images of the ruling Byzantine emperors and their family. The painters seem to found their way to oppose the political program of the ktetor by representing the real rulership.

Within these Paleologian monuments in Macedonia we already face frequent representation of double headed eagle (golden on red) on the ceremonial cloths of the high dignitaries ktetors and as well representations of St. Helene (Lesnovo). Again it is this saint and ruler painted in the time of Manuel I Komnenos to represent the late empresses, Maria of Antioch.

At the monastery church dedicated to the holy Archangel Michael, in Lesnovo from 1347⁵ there are the portraits of the ktetor despot Jovan Oliver⁶ and his wife Ana Maria Lavarina, their monograms on the liturgical equipment from the contemporary time, but also extraordinary larger than any other full figure portrait of the ruling Serbian tsar Dušan and his

1 Mark J. Johnson, *The Lost Royal Portrait*,

2 Todić Branislav, Frescoes in the Virgin Peribleptos Church referring to the origins of the archbishopric of Ohrid, *ZRVI* 39, 2001, 147-163. Later, these painters painted the churches of St. George in Staro Nagoričane, in Kumanovo (around 1317) and of St. Nicetas in the village of Banjani, in Skopje (around 1320). Their work is a masterpiece, extraordinary in its expression and its high artistic and spiritual qualities.

3 ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ. Collection of Papers Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Institute for Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Cvetan Grozdanov, Les Portraits des premiers Paléologues dans le narthex de l'église de la Vierge Péribleptos (St-Clément) à Ochrid, une hypothèse, Belgrade 2012, 227-236, 235

4 Grozdanov, *Portreti*, 140, drawing 23. He bases it on V. Djuric opinion (Voislav Djuric, *Portreti na poveljama vizantijskih I srpskih vladara*, ZFF, VII-1, Beograd 1963, 268. Goce Angelicin Zura, on the contrary, thinks it is Theodor Komnenos Ducas. See Goce Angelicin Zura, *Pesterni crkvi vo Ohridsko Prespanskiot region*, Struga 2004, 95, 100.

5 The names of three out of the four painters of this fresco painting are known: Michael, Mark, and Sebastos. The name of the chief master is damaged and thus unknown.

6 Despot (from Greek: δεσπότης, *despótēs*, "lord", "master") was a senior Byzantine court title that was bestowed on the sons or sons-in-law of reigning emperors, and initially denoted the heir-apparent. From Byzantium it spread throughout the late medieval Balkans, the Latin Empire, and the Empire of Trebizond. It gave rise to several principalities termed "despotates" which were ruled either as independent states or as appanages by princes bearing the title of despot. For the title and its meaning in the Balkans see Ferjančić, Bozidar (*Despoti u Vizantiji i južnoslovenskim zemljama*, Belgrade 1960).

wife Helene. The tsar is even larger than Christ which indicates the ktetor have indicated which power was more important or what power prevailed, or that the king becoming a tsar while Byzantium went through crisis the very year when the church has been finished must have changed the usual iconography.

Another detail related to heraldry in this church is the blue double headed eagle with lily between the heads painted on the frontal side of the altar table. This is the only known image of blue double headed eagle with a heraldic lily between eagle's heads.¹ This color of the eagle may be related to the blue color being dedicated for the Sebastokrator title.²

There are various kesar, despot and Sebastokrator's portraits in the Ohrid area of the 14th C. painted as frescoes in the churches, as well as in Prilep, containing embroidered double headed eagle enclosed in a circle, made of pearls. But none of them has lily between the heads except the cloth of kesar Duka adjoined by his son Demetrius from Holy Archangels church on Plaošnik (he wears red cloth decorated with golden double headed eagle). It is mere coincidence or has to do with the dedication of the church to the Holy Archangels where ktetors use such eagle?

In the cave Holy Virgin church, isle Mal Grad, near Ohrid³(1369), kesar Novak wears blue-green costume decorated with golden double headed eagle, as well as Grgur Golubić, known as Caesar Gregory -Kesar Grgur in the Holy Virgin church, Zaum, near Ohrid (1361). The cloth of the kesar Duka represented as ktetor with his son on the southern wall of the Old St. Clement church dedicated to St. Panteleimon in Ohrid, 3rd decade of the 14th C. ⁴, has also such golden double headed eagles on red, with the difference there is a heraldic lily between the heads.

Icons and the realistic portraits

Even in Byzantium the chief commander of the army and governor of Constantinople, the megalos dux Alexius Apohawk has his portrait made iconographically following some model of St. Demetrius on horseback, as the Codex graecus 2144, fol. 11r, collection of the works of Hippocrates shows.⁵

Another portrait of the same saint is regarded as portrait of Byzantine emperor, painted in the late 12th C. (the portrait has been repainted in the 14th C.). In 1105 in the narthex of the Holy Virgin church Asinou Panagia Phorbiotissa, in Cyprus, there is a lord represented like St. George some scholars think represents Alexius I Komnenos–1118. His shield shows large half golden moon with a small cross between its ends. The whole shield is filled with small suns-stars.⁶ Built around 1100, the edifice is decorated with accretions of images, from the famous fresco cycle executed shortly after initial construction to those made in the early 17th C.

The Sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos in the typic of his monastery of Holy Virgin Kosmosoteira mentions there were icons of his father and mother in the monastery church.⁷

The icon of Virgin with child, 14th C. from the iconostasis of the Perivleptos church is special type of western icon of Italian gothic style made for eastern donor, either to be gifted to the very church, or later on, after the death of Dušan in 1355 by his wife who became a nun. Some of the authors that were mentioning this icon think of Dušan as donor of this and several more icons of the iconostasis of this church. It is related to the archbishop Nicholas of Ohrid who was also present at the coronation of the king into a tsar in Skopje. We know that his wife Helene stayed in 1350 in Venice. What could be the reason to order such an icon for the church together with the icon of St. Nicholas (the latter may not be from the same time and author or region, since it is heavily repainted in the 19th century.)⁸My theory is it was a private icon of

1 Smiljka Gabelic, *Lesnovo*, Stubovi Culture, Beograd 1998, fig. 64.

2 Dragomir Acović, *Heraldika i Srbi*, Beograd 2008, Zavod za Udjbenike, 145, footnote 344. He has in mind the color of the shoes this feudal lords wore, according to Pseudo Kodin.

3 Goce Angelićin Žura, *The cave churches in the Ohrid-Prespa region*, 164. He ruled with Ohrid from 1366-78.

4 Zagorka Rasolkovska Nikolovska, Arhimandritot Jovan, igumen na klimentoviot Manastir vo Ohrid, *Kulturno Nasledstvo* 28-29, 2003/3, 104.

5 Милодрог Марковић, Запажања о најстаријим иконама из Марковог манастира, *ЗОГРАФ* 37 (2013) [147–167], 157.

6 *Asinou across Time*, Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 43, edited by Annemarie Weyl Carr and Andréas Nicolaidès, 2012, 315.

7 Bakirtzis, *Warrior Saints or Portraits*, 87, footnote 16.

8 Milco Georgievski, *Icon Gallery Ohrid*, Ohrid 1999, 67.

Helene, maybe painted to celebrate the coronation of the king, or her giving a birth to a child?¹ When her husband became a tsar or when he died in 1355, she gifted this icon to the church of Perivleptos and became a nun.

Imperial portrait as commemoration

The mid 14th C shows not only examples of Serbian rulers –represented as almighty and even larger than Christ (tsar Dušan, Lesnovo), but also images of the Holy Virgin resembling a lot the wife of the tsar (Helena, wife of Dušan, icon from Perivleptos church in Ohrid)².

The monastery of St. George, near Polog is located on the shore of the Crna, region of Kavadarci. A 1340 charter of King Dusan states that his brother Dragušin was buried in this monastery. So it is another funeral monument meant to commemorate the members of the Serbian dynasty. The oldest layer of frescoes (1343-5) contain the portraits of Dušan, his wife and son, and the ktetor despot Dragušin and his wife, son and mother.³

It is interesting to note that the dedication of the funeral churches in the 14th C. Serbia is related to the Holy Archangels (Prizren, the tomb of Dušan; Lesnovo, the planned tomb of despot Jovan Oliver), St. George (Polog) while at the time of Komnenoi, it was Holy Virgin (Fere, Greece). Constantine, Justinian and some other emperors were buried in the Rotunda of the Church of the Holy Apostles. Basil II was buried in the Church of St. John the Theologian outside the walls. All those who ruled before Leo V and after his reign until the beginning of the 11th C. were buried in the church of the Holy Apostles
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As we see, the praxis of representing the dignitaries and emperors and rulers as holy warriors prevailed. Komnenos preferred to have St. Theodor as personal protector, representing him on the coins, icons and his images show shield decorated with golden lion on blue (Church of the Holy Virgin in Studenica, Kosovo and Holy Virgin in Matejče, Kumanovo). Also some of the Serbian rulers considered this saint as protector, beginning with Nemenja, St. George church, Ras (1170), and others (Milutin) prayed to St. George who gives his a sward (Staro Nagoričino, Kumanovo, Macedonia). This composition seems to be directly inspired by an image of Manuel I Komnenos.⁵ King Milutin also dedicated a church to this saint in Skopje (unknown location, probably near Kale).

The genealogical tree from the fresco in the Monastery church near v. Matejče, created after 1347, shows certain disputable facts, the kinship with the Emperor Isaac Komnenos, and through it the right of the Nemanjić dynasty to the Byzantine Imperial Crown to precede the right of the Palaiologos and Kantakouzenos families.⁶

The portraits of the rulers and members of the ruling family represented on icons and frescoes as Virgin Mary, holy warriors or St. Constantine and Helene are exclusive and enable us to see what kind of religious practice the rulers ruling parts or the whole region of Medieval Macedonia practiced.

1 Snežana Filipova, Examples of icons with Western influences in iconography in the Art of Macedonia, *ICON* 9, 2015 (in print).

2 *Idem*.

3 Viktorija Popovska Korobar, *Pološki manastir Sv. Gorgi*, Skopje 1998 (catalogue)

4 Gianville Downey, The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 79 (1959), pp. 27-51, 41. About the other funeral churches, Monastery of the Augusta. (Justin I and Euphemia.), 2. St. Mamas (Maurice and his family.), 3. Staurakion. (Stauracius and Theophano), 4. The Lady Euphrosyne (Constantine VI and his family; Anna, daughter of Theophilus), 5. Gastia. (Theodora, wife of Theophilus, and her relations), 6. St. Euphemia in Petriion. (Basil 1's relations), 7. St. Michael Promotou, see Philip Grierson, Cyril Mango and Igor Ševčenko *The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337-1042)*; *DOP*, vol. 16 (1962), 1-63, 7, 59-60.

5 Miodrag Marković, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika u istočnohrišćanskoj umetnosti I o predstavima ovih ratnika u Dečanima, u: *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana*, Posebna izdanja SANU, knjiga 22, 567-630, 601.

6 Pirivatić, Ulazak Stefana Dušana u Carstvo, *ZRVI XLIV*, 2007, 409; Elizabeta Dimitrova, *Matejče*, Skopje 2002.