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“TRACES DE “FÉMINITÉ” IN MACEDONIAN MIDDLE AGES – ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

In the Academy Award winning motion picture entitled “Scent of a Woman” (1992), the character named Lieutenant Colonel Frank Slade, extravagantly played by the phenomenal Al Pacino, expresses his emotions about the female gender. *Women! What can you say? Who made ‘em? God must have been genius. The hair... They say the hair is everything, you know. Have you ever buried your nose in a mountain of curls... just wanted to go to sleep forever? Or lips... and when they touched, yours were like... that first swallow of wine... after you just crossed the desert.* The rest of the quote is much more explicit, but one has to mention that it addresses the ladies with compliments which compare them with*a passport to heaven*. In that regard, femininity, as such, is considered as a set of physical and emotional attributes and qualities of the so called “tender gender”, which, influenced by variety of social and cultural factors, can define the female category as sensitive, gentle, elegant and graceful in opposition to the quite rougher male gender¹. As a social construction, femininity lies on both biologically created and sociologically established factors of recognition and includes traits such as: behavior and personality, traditional role and historic function, but, most of all, physical appearance, clothing and fashion, as well as aesthetic attraction².

In relation to the later, women (known as historic characters, as deities or as unidentified individuals) have inspired significant artistic works throughout entire history, starting from the Antiquity up to the modern times³. From the most gracious sculpture of Venus from the Greek island of Milo⁴, via Titian’s

¹ On this issue, see: M. van den Wijngaard, *Reinventing the sexes: the biomedical construction of femininity and masculinity. Race, gender, and science*, Bloomington 1997.

² K. Milestone, A. Meyer, *Gender & Popular Culture*, Cambridge 2012, 87-98.

³ C. Arscott, K. Scott, *Introducing Venus*, in: K. Scott, C. Arscott (Ed.), *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, Manchester and New York, 2000, 1-23.

⁴ G. Curtis, *Disarmed: the Story of the Venus de Milo*, New York, 2003.



Fig. 1 St. George at Kurbinovo, Three Gracias
Сл. 1 Свети Ђорђе у Курбинову, Три Грације

gorgeous Venus of Urbino⁵ and Leonardo's mysterious la Gioconda⁶ to Klimt's vehement Salome⁷ women have been celebrated as highly inspirational as subjects for multitude of antique, renaissance, modern and contemporary artistic creators. Yet, we have to ask ourselves, what if we turn our attention to Byzantium and its refined spiritual approach to female representations? Will we find examples as interesting as the ones executed by the great masters mentioned before? Will the Byzantine specimens be as exciting as those depicted by the hands of da Vinci and his colleagues? Will we be as thrilled as when we admire the calm facial composure of the enigmatic portrait of Mona Lisa and/or the glamorously dressed *femmes fatale* of the Vienna secession? We think that Byzantine art and archaeology might have some interesting answers to that question. The aim being one of completing the incomplete projection of the cultural "indolence" delineated within the spiritual remains that largely define Byzantium, this step into the world of female beauty hopes to reveal the flux of change on a bed of tradition⁸.

When we talk about female representations in Byzantine monumental art, we usually focus on the women depicted within khetorial compositions the images of whom radiate with appealing physical features, as well as highly accentuated social potency⁹. The same refers to the female representations executed

⁵ R. Goffen, *Sex, Space and Social History in Titian's Venus of Urbino*, in: R. Goffen (Ed.), *Titian's Venus of Urbino*, Cambridge, 1997.

⁶ F. Zöllner, *Leonardo's Portrait of Mona Lisa del Giocondo*, *Gazette des Beaux Arts* vol. 121, Paris 1993, 115-138.

⁷ F. Whitford, *Gustav Klimt*, New York 1990.

⁸ Angeliki E. Laiou, "Women in the History of Byzantium", in I. Kalavrezou and others, "Byzantine Women and Their World", Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2003, 23-24.

⁹ R. Franses, *Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art. The Vicissitudes of Contact between Human and Divine*, Cambridge 2018, 17-60.

in the monuments preserved in the territory of present-day Macedonia in which donors' ensembles encompass some very presentable images of ladies with different social status, thus pictured in different iconographic contexts¹⁰. However, these are not the only representative female depictions, although they are, by all means, the most significant when one has in mind the gender aspect of medieval fresco arrangements. In that regard, some of the portraits of female saints decorating the first register of the fresco ensembles have been pictured with accentuated physical attraction, manifesting pure and undisclosed features of femininity¹¹. Represented in line with the features of physical likeness, pleasing exposition and affectionate nature, dressed in fashionable garments and ornamented with precious jewelry, these females epitomize femininity in its visually most admirable horizon.

Fewer in comparison to their male colleagues, the woman saints arranged in the lowest register of the fresco decoration in the mediaeval churches in Macedonia "defend" their "minority" with the power of pictorial tools which give pleasant characteristics to their composites, corporal outlooks and psychological charisma, making their appearance lovely and charming, modestly affectionate and visually likable. Yet, different female individuals have gained different feminine qualities – some of them are physically potent and energetically well-balanced, others – sophisticatedly gentle and mild tempered, dependent on the characters' religious biographies, as well as the painterly trends favored by the masters who authorized their respective images. Hence, when one looks at the female individuals depicted as members of the saintly assembly situated in first zone of the fresco decoration in Byzantine temples, one can generally determine two categories of feminine constellation – one of physically attractive and fashionable character, the other of spiritually enlightened and religiously engaged type.

The first category encompasses representative specimens in the fresco ensembles from the 11th to the 15th century, some of which are placed on the top position according to their feminine attributes. Among them, one should mention the triage of aristocratic figures of Saint Barbara, Saint Kiriaki and Saint Catherine pictured on the western wall of the church of Saint George at Kurbinovo (1191)¹² (**Fig. 1**). Portrayed with gentle facial ovals, refined traces of discrete make up, glamorously ornamented clothing tailored to accentuate

¹⁰ З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Ктиторскиот портрет во судното сликарство во Македонија*, in: Средновековната уметност во Македонија (Ed. Д. Николовски), Скопје 2004, 291-302; E. Dimitrova, *The Portal to Heaven. Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, Niš & Byzantium Symposium. The collection of scientific works V, Niš 2007, 367-378.

¹¹ E. Dimitrova, *Amazing Vistas: Depiction of Male/Female Beauty in Byzantine Fresco Painting*, Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Sofia (22-27 August, 2011), vol. III, Sofia 2011, 265; Idem, *Colourful Sparkles of Imaginary Vistas: saintly beauty in the eyes of the beholder*, *Zograf* 37 (2013), Beograd 2014, 83-84; Idem, *Animae Pulchrae: Depiction of Sainly Images in Byzantine Mural Painting*, in: Perception of Beauty (Ed. M. Levine), Rijeka 2017, 34-35.

¹² Ц. Грозданов, Л. Хадерман-Мисгвиш, *Курбиново*, Скопје 1992, Fig. 28; Ц. Грозданов, *Курбиново и други студии за фрескоживописот во Преспа*, Скопје 2006, Fig. On pp. 176-177; E. Dimitrova, *The Church of Saint George at Kurbinovo*, Skopje 2016, Fig. on p. 17.

Fig. 2 Demir Kapija, Diadema, 14th century

Сл. 2 Демир Капија, Дијадема, XIV век

Fig. 2a Prilep, Markovi Kuli, Wreath,
14th centuryСл. 2а Прилеп, Маркови Кули, Венац,
XIV век

their slender figures, as well as elegantly composed bodily gestures these three ladies enlighten the mysterious interior of the temple with their exquisite feminine beauty. Among them, Saint Kiriaki, dressed in a red attire and warm-colored brownish cloak, amazes with her dark locks that peek from under the snowy-white veil, her miniature, round-shaped and scarlet-toned red lips, as well as the elongated fingers that give extra elegance to her toll and skinny figure. Her long neck, covered with a white scarf, the pale composure accentuated by the pinkish-shaded cheeks and the graceful shoulders elegantly structured under the soft cape are classic attributes of feminine appearance and stand for the most sophisticated variant of lady-like outlook, at least in the 12th century fresco ensembles in Macedonia. St. Kiriaki's subtle utterance of feminine beauty is impeccably amplified by the tokens of Byzantine vogue outlining her feminine aura. Adorned with remarkable jewelry embellishments denotative of both religious and social rank, the figure of St. Kiriaki in Kurbinovo becomes a true, almost palpable martyr "Bride of Christ"¹³.

The artist's brilliant insight epitomised her bridal repute through a single symbol – the diadema on her forehead. The archaeological treasury of Macedonia has unearthed few examples of diademas, chronologically extending from the end of the 10th until the climax of the 14th century (Figs. 2, 2a).

There is no doubt that the ornamental "ingredients" of this fresco masterpiece had its real-life counterparts, demonstrating the refined taste, the elegance and artistic elaboration of decorative accessoires of the costume. Made of bronze and/or precious metal and decorated in various artisans' techniques, supplemented with the semantics of the semi precious stones glowing from the base,

¹³ For the religious, social, symbolical, prophylactic and amuletic meaning of the head ornaments, especially the diadema, cf. E. Манева, *Крстевци средновековна некропола*, Скопје, 2000, 48-49, 77; Eadem, *Средновековна некропола Пепелиште – локалитет Трнче-Стреа*, Скопје, 2000, 44-48.



Fig. 3 St. George at Pološko, St. Kiriaki
Сл. 3 Свети Ђорђе у Полошком, Света
Недеља



Fig. 4 Holy Mother of God at Matejče, St.
Kiriaki
Сл. 4 Богородичина црква у Матеичу,
Света Недеља

these examples, although few in quantity, represent a qualitative notion of female beauty. It is a pity that the garments are poorly preserved in archaeological context, but one can surely imagine and reconstruct the radiance of the aristocratic female costume of the Byzantine era.

Same compliments can be given to some of the “younger” ladies, depicted in the fresco repertoire of Macedonian monuments from the Paleologan era, among which the image of Saint Kiriaki from the church of Saint George in Pološko (1345)¹⁴ deserves one of the top places in the aesthetic *countdown* of refined feminine exposition (**Fig. 3**). The crystal-ecru tone of her perfectly oval-shaped facial composition, the warm dark-brown color of her almond-like eyes framed with stylishly curved eye brows, the luscious, pinkish-shaded lips and the rich, ebony locks of hair combed in an aristocratic coiffure under the lavishly ornamented crown give her the looks of one of the most sophisticated female characters from the mid-14th century. In contrast to Saint Kiriaki’s polite, gracious and courtly manner of appearance, her namesake from the church of Holy Mother of God at Matejče (1348-1352)¹⁵ (**Fig. 4**) looks sturdy and corpulent, manifesting corporal potency and magnificent physical energy, both in

¹⁴ Д. Корнаков, *Полошки манастир Свети Ђорѓи*, Скопје 2006, 75.

¹⁵ E. Dimitrova, *The Church of the Holy Mother of God at Matejče*, Skopje 2016, Fig. on p. 21.



Fig. 5 Sts. Constantine and Helena in Ohrid, St. Catherine

Сл. 5 Свети Константин и Јелена у Охриду, Света Кагарина

her facial expression and bodily motion. Her proactive stance, the resolute locomotive energy of her moves, the suggestive gaze of her eyes, as well as the loose tailored garments that make her body looks monumental displays another, much more “feministic” type of female appearance vis-à-vis the tangible, respectful and fragile femininity of Saint Kiriaki in Pološko.

The Pološko type of feminine beauty (tender, lovely, mild-tempered) has its subtype in the church of Saints Constantine and Helena in Ohrid, where the image of Saint Catherine (ca. 1400)¹⁶ sublimates all the features of a model-like woman (**Fig. 5**) – tall figure, slender body, elongated extremities, elegant posture, charming facial exposition – all that stylishly “enveloped” in crimson attire tailored to disclose her perfectly shaped bodily silhouette. Compared to the slightly arrogant exposure of the corpulent Saint Kiriaki in Matejče, Saint Catherine from Ohrid altogether with Saint Kiriaki from Pološko are the true representatives of the class of feminine beauty marked by delicacy and grace, both in their physical aspect and psychological reflection. Yet, regardless of the mentioned distinction, the three of them belong to the same category – women with

accentuated physical manifestation of feminine beauty and fashionable outlook. Attractive due to the sensibility of the facial composure (Saint Kiriaki – Pološko, Saint Catherine - Ohrid), the delicate line of the figure (Saint Catherine – Ohrid), the powerful, almost athletic corporal appearance (Saint Kiriaki – Matejče), the tailor made dresses, as well as the glamorous jewelry decorating their images (Saint Kiriaki – Pološko, Saint Catherine – Ohrid), these three ladies testify to the three different types of feminine beauty encompassed by Macedonian medieval fresco ensembles – *delicate* (Saint Kiriaki – Pološko), *gracile* (Saint Catherine – Ohrid) and *vigorous* (Saint Kiriaki – Matejče).

Nevertheless, despite the difference in the physical corroboration of beauty, these three *hypostases* of femininity share the same affinity for bodily embellishment. The 14th century chronology of the frescoes compared to the synchronic archaeological jewelry finds reveals the tangible inspirations of the saints’ adornment. Namely, the massive earrings flanking the beautiful contours of the representations of St. Kiriaki in both Pološko and Matejče are archaeo-

¹⁶ Г. Суботић, *Свети Константин и Јелена у Охриду*, Београд 1971, 52, Fig. 31 (incorrectly identified as Saint Kiriaki).

Fig. 6 Kočani, Orizari,
Earrings, 14th century

Сл. 6 Кочани, Оризари,
Наушнице, XIV век



Fig. 7 Kratovo, Earrings,
14th century

Сл. 7 Кратово, Наушнице,
XIV век



logical facts. The gracious and gentle aura of St. Kiriaki in Pološko is marvelously complemented by the specific earrings, one of the obligatory elements of the imperial *perpendulia* depicted in stunning detail on this particular fresco. A pair of this astonishing jewelry pieces, being among the most luxurious types in the course of the 14th century, has been discovered in a treasury at the site of Crkvište near Orizari, Kočani (**Fig. 6**). This particular pair of gold earrings inserted with precious stones, amethysts, pearls and bluish crystal, the decorative rosettes of which were elaborated in filigree, becomes a symbiosis of artisan techniques transformed into a priceless work of art¹⁷. Massive and dominant in their appearance, a feature typical for the rounded and radiant type to which these belong¹⁸, this particular choice of the artist furthermore accentuated the gracile and tender feminine emanation of St. Kiriaki in Pološko, transforming her into the female paragon of the time.

The more active visual representation of St. Kiriaki in Matejče, once again represented in full splendor of the imperial *houte couture*, holds yet another real specimen of jewelry in her imperial *perpendulia*. A few such examples of rounded, massive and radiant earrings have been attested on archaeological sites in Macedonia, among which the pair discovered in Kratovo, dated in the 14th-15th centuries (**Fig.7**) and the single example originating from the medieval necropolis at the Church of St. Nicolas in Varoš, Prilep (**Fig. 8**) are one of the most beautiful, prestige and analogous to this particular depiction of St. Kiriaki, the second being visually closer to the pictorial representation. These high fashion *perpendulia* sets were made of gold i.e. silver and decorated in the

¹⁷ Е. Манева, *Средновековен накит од Македонија*, Скопје, 1992, 138.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 56-60.



Fig. 8 Prilep, St. Nicolas at Varoš, Earring, 14th century

Сл. 8 Прилеп, Свети Никола, Варош, Наушница, XIV век



Fig. 9 Prilep, Markovi Kuli, Agraphae, 14th century

Сл. 9 Прилеп, Маркови Кули, Копче – аграфe, XIV век

most sophisticated technique of filigree, additionally embellished with inserted pearls and precious stones¹⁹. St. Kiriaki's semblance in Matejče has yet another high fashion remark in her splendid attire – the agrapha holding her cloak. The *agrapha* (round brooch) is an important element of the aristocratic costume and the examples from Macedonia²⁰ stand up to the Byzantine fashion heights (Fig. 9). At an overall, it seems reasonable to justify the immortal beauty of these female saints, primarily spiritual, yet revealing of the Macedonian medieval physical archetype of beauty.

On the other side of femininity – the one inclined to spiritual qualities and religious respectfulness, one can find several representative examples, most exciting of them being the image of Saint Paraskevi from Pološko (1345)²¹ (Fig. 10), as well as Saint Anastasia Pharmakolytria from the chapel built adjacent to the church dedicated to Saints Constantine and Helena in Ohrid (ca. 1400)²² (Fig. 11). Both of them dressed in modest, monastic clothing, with heads fully covered with scarves and depicted with no additional accessories to make them more appealing than they are by nature, Saint Paraskevi and Saint Anastasia catch the eyes of the beholder with the simplicity of their physical attitudes,

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 139, 207.

²⁰ E. Dimitrova, O. Zorova, *Haute Couture of Macedonia Byzantina: Fashion, Jewelry, Accessories*, Niš & Byzantium Symposium. The collection of scientific works XVI, Niš 2018, 251.

²¹ Д. Ќорнаков, *Полошки манастир Свети Ѓорѓи*, 75.

²² Г. Суботић, *Свети Константин и Јелена у Охриду*, 52; Fig. 41; Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското ѕидно сликарство од XIV век*, Охрид 1980, 167, Fig. 201..

as well as the tender-heartedness of their facial expressions. The noble paleness of their images, the humble postures of their corporal integrity and the graceful radiance of their psychological serenity compose a type of feminine constellation founded upon moral sentiments, as well as immaterial qualities. Gently holding their iconographic attributes – the martyr cross (Saint Paraskevi) and the glass bottle full of recuperating potion (Saint Anastasia Pharmakolytria), both of them stand proud of their noble sacrifice – the first one for leaving her aristocratic life to become an ascetic²³, the second one for dying a martyr death, becoming a victim of Emperor Diocletian's most severe persecutions of Christian believers²⁴. Since both these women were born in affluent families and decide to give away their social position for the benefit of faith, they are, by default, represented in the iconographic variant of austere appearance and mild expression as a visual metaphor of two devoted females who waived all their privileges, including feminine advantages, for the grandeur of Christian belief. Yet, the serene countenance and the sweet-tempered glance of Saint Kiriaki's brown eyes, as well as the calm posture of Saint Anastasia who confidently holds her genuinely prepared pharmaceutical medicine, are, by all means, features of feminine generous character and womanly commitment to humanity and compassion.

Although physical attractiveness, as the most decisive attribute of femininity, and the humble appearance as a visual expression of female modesty, usually do not go hand



Fig. 10 St. George at Pološko, St. Paraskevi
Сл. 10 Свети Ђорђе у Полошком, Света Петка

Fig. 11 Sts. Constantine and Helena in Ohrid, St. Anastasia Pharmakolytria

Сл. 11 Свети Константин и Јелена у Охриду, Света Анастасија Фармаколутрија



²³ J. Поповић, *Житија светих за јул*, Ваљево 1975, 27.

²⁴ J. Поповић, *Житија светих за децембар*, Ваљево 1977, 23.



Fig. 12 Holy Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid, Annunciation

Сл. 12 Света Богородица Перивлепта у Охриду, Благовести



Fig. 13 St. Archangel Michael at Lesnovo, Christ and the Samaritan Woman

Сл. 13 Свети Арханџео Михаило у Леснову, Христ и Самарјанка

in hand, i.e. ladies with attributes of fashion and jewelry and the ones “deprived” of such privileges are not pictured together since they are representatives of different classes of female saints (both socially and in terms of their physical manifestation), there is one example in Macedonian fresco painting from the late 14th century which shows otherwise. Namely, in the first register of the fresco decoration in the church dedicated to saint Demetrius in Ohrid (eight decade of the 14th century), one can see two female martyrs standing next to each other, symbolizing the two opposite poles of feminine manifestation. The humbly portrayed Saint Paraskevi and the stylishly depicted Saint Barbara²⁵ radiate different feminine attitudes – moderate clothing versus modern garments, austere appearance versus attractive outlook, rough cloth versus soft silky fabric; yet, the modest Saint Paraksevi and the enchantingly compelling Saint Barbara are united by the mutual energy of their gentle motion, as well as their self-sacrificing dedication to Christian belief. Hence, Saint Paraskevi manifesting humility, endurance and devotion, as well as Saint Barbara gleaming with likeness, courtesy and aristocratic manners obviously belong to different types of feminine appearance. However, taking into account all their mutual differences (outlook, expression, style and manifestation) there is no doubt that, in comparison to their male colleagues (warriors, martyrs, monks, hermits, etc.) they surely belong to the quantitatively inferior, yet, aesthetically superior gender.

²⁵ Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското ѕидно сликарство од XIV век*, Fig. 179.

If one takes a peek in the iconography of Biblical spectacles represented within Macedonian medieval fresco ensembles, one can discover a vast number of attractive and exciting female representations that demonstrate femininity in the most diversified manners. Starting from the painted arrangement of the church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295) to the temple of Sts Constantine and Helena in the same city (ca. 1400), one can construct a massive catalogue of feminine figures that are both physically appealing and spiritually impressive. Acting as protagonists within the visual iconography of the Gospel illustrations and/or

Old Testament prophecies and metaphors, they have certainly added some aesthetic spice to the common concepts of painterly transposition of textual sources in the glamorous medium of fresco invention. In that regard, the two muscular and athletic maidens who help the Virgin to stay on her feet in the scene of the Annunciation in the Peribleptos church²⁶ (**Fig. 12**) fascinate with their corporal strength and powerful locomotion unlike the slender and fragile figure of the young woman who is delightfully showing her excitement with energetic movements in the scene of Christ and the Samaritan woman from Saint Archangel Michael church in Lesnovo²⁷ (**Fig. 13**).

The depiction of “The Sarmatian woman” from Lesnovo has one seemingly minor, yet striking detail – the bracelets adorning the graceful arms. The young woman is represented wearing the so-called stripe-like bracelets, examples of which have been archaeologically attested as prime choice of jewelry among the middle class ladies during 10th-14th centuries²⁸. The archaeological finds originating from the medieval necropolises in Macedonia offer a vast variety of this type of bracelets²⁹ (**Fig. 14**). Furthermore, some examples were even discovered on the upper arm of the female skeletons, thus asserting the accuracy of the female standards of beauty in this fresco depiction, while also attesting the “everyday” inspirations of the artist, since the bracelets placed on the



Fig. 14 Ohrid, Bracelet, 11th century

Сл. 14 Охрид, Наруквица, XI век

²⁶ Е. Димитрова, С. Коруновски, С. Грандаковска, *Средновековна Македонија. Култура и уметност*, Македонија. Милениумски културно-историски факти, Скопје 2013, 1684-1685.

²⁷ С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново. Историја и сликарство*, Београд 1998, Т. XVIII

²⁸ Е. Манева, *Средновековен накит од Македонија*, 71-73, Pl. 42-49; The specimens having snake heads are represented on Pl. 49 and these probably possessed some apotropeic meaning, protecting the female fragileness from “evil eye”.

²⁹ Е. Манева, *Средновековен накит од Македонија*, 71-73.



Fig. 15 St. George at Staro Nagoročino,
Denial of St. Peter

Сл. 15 Свети Ђорђе у Старом
Нагоричино, Одицање Петрово



Fig. 16 Marko's monastery at Sušica, Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin, Oikos X
Сл. 16 Марков манастир у Сушици, Богородичин Акатист, X икос

upper part of the arm are considered a local Slavic feature³⁰. The stripe-like bracelets are documented in numerous varieties of media e.g. bronze, silver or gold, as well as in diverse decorative matrixes closely related to the female symbology, such as birds, snakes, rhombs, zig-zag and wavy lines etc., thus accentuating the essence of femininity³¹.

On the other hand, the decisive, dynamic and reproachful attitude of the insolent, yet tall and elegant servant girl in the episode of the Denial of Peter depicted in the church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino (1317/1318)³² (Fig. 15) is quite different from the humble, obedient and inconspicuous stances of the ladies represented within the illustration of the oikos X in Saint Demetrius church in Markova Sušica (1376/77)³³ (Fig. 16). Similar differences can be observed when the pale, anxious characters of the two Lazarus' sisters from the scene depicting Christ Visiting Mary and Martha in Saint Niketas³⁴ (Fig. 17) are compared to the radiant and jovial maidens who follow the Virgin when she is presented in the Temple as pictured in the church dedicated to Saint George in Pološko (Fig. 18). Also, the modest, yet expressive appearance of Old Testament prophetess and Moses' sister Miriam who dramatically performs the "percussion" part of the 149 Psalm in Lesnovo (1349)³⁵ (Fig. 19) can be seen as a female contradiction to the lavishly styled personification of Alexandria



Fig. 17 St. Nicetas at Banjani, Christ Visiting Martha and Mary

Сл. 17 Свети Никита у Бањанима, Христ код Марте и Марије



Fig. 18 St. George at Pološko, Presentation

Сл. 18 Свети Ђорђе у Полошком, Ваведење

³⁰ *ibid.*, 68.

³¹ *ibid.*, 71-73.

³² Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, Београд 1993, Fig. 51.

³³ I. Spatharakis, *The Pictorial Cycles of the Akathistos Hymn for the Virgin*, Leiden 2005, Fig. 129.

³⁴ М. Марковић, *Свети Никита код Скопља. Задужбина краља Милутина*, Београд 2015, Fig. on p. 183.

³⁵ С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново. Историја и сликарство*, 187.



Fig. 19. St. Archangel Michael at Lesnovo, Psalm 149
Сл 19 Свети Арханђео Михаило у Леснову, Псалм 149



Fig. 20 Holy Mother of God at Matejče, Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin, Oikos VI
Сл. 20 Богородичина црква у Матеичу, Богородичин Акатист, VI икос

whose welcoming performance to the Holy Family in one of the scenes of the Akhatistos hymn of the Virgin in Matejče is the ultimate act of delicate and most gracious femininity³⁶ (Fig. 20).

Last, but not least, the sorrowful women, overwhelmed with feminine pain represented in the picture of the Lamentation in the church dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin in Kučevište (ca. 1330)³⁷ contradict the animated, talkative and enlivened maidens portrayed in the scene of the Presentation of the Virgin in the same temple³⁸. However, the ones that cry, as well as the ones that rejoice, are equally fond and affectionate, delicate and fragile as unique and genuine paradigms of true femininity. Thus, one can admit that the notion of female beauty in this significant Macedonian part of Byzantine legacy was not simply “a ready-made model”, but one thorough, aesthetic, individual and distinctive process of being, a statement of *féminité* caught in the eye of the beholder and transferred as majestic beauty on the walls of the Macedonian Christian monuments, thus altering these unknown muses in times immortal.

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ТРАГОВИ ЖЕНСТВЕНОСТИ У МАКЕДОНСКОМ
СРЕДНОВЕКОВЉУ – УМЕТНОСТ И АРХЕОЛОГИЈА

Као веома специфична друштвена конструкција средњовековног рода, женственост потиче од биолошки створених, као и социолошки етаблираних фактора препознавања, укључујући одлике као што су: понашање и индивидуалност, традиционална улога и историјска функција, али, свакако највише, физички изглед, облачење, модни стил и естетска допадљивост. У том контексту, у византијском сликарству на подручју данашње Републике Македоније могу се видети репрезентативни примери женских представа са карактеристикама маркантне физичке атрактивности, уникатног модног стајлинга и изванредних примерака скупоценог накита, насликаних у временском периоду од XI до XV столећа. Из збирке многобројних женских портретних представа, изабрале смо слике трију аристократкиња из цркве Светог Ђорђа у Курбинову, нарочито лик свете Недеље која носи раскошну дијадему - типолошки узорак откривен на археолошким локалитетима у Демир Капији и Прилепу; такође, св. Недеља из цркве Светог Ђорђа у Полошком, њена имењакиња из цркве Свете Богородице у Матеичу и света Катарина из цркве Светих Константина и Јелене у Охриду спадају међу најгламурознијим сликама женствености у македонском средњовековном живопису и припадају трима категоријама женске лепоте: деликатна (света Недеља из Полошког), грациозна (света Катарина из Светих Константина и Јелене) и енергична (света Недеља из Матеича). Наведене категорије женске атрактивности налазе своје паралеле у типолошким хоризонтима археолошке грађе у Македонији која се односи на накит и украсе. Тако, наушнице које носи света Недеља из Полошког појављују се као налази на археолошком локалитету код Оризара, недалеко

³⁶ Е. Димитрова, *Манастир Матејче*, Скопје 2002, 162.

³⁷ И. М. Ђорђевић *Сликарство XIV века у цркви св. Спаса у селу Кучевишту*, Зборник за ликовне уметности Матице српске 17, Нови Сад 1981, 93.

³⁸ *ibid*, 95-96.

од Кочана, док наушнице које на себи има света Недеља из Матеича налазе свој пандан у археолошким налазима из Вароша у Прилепу. На другој страни женствености, оној која тежи духовним квалитетима и верској преданости, могу се, такође, наћи примери репрезентативног изгледа, као што су света Петка из Полошког и света Анастасија Фармаколутрија из параклиса Светих Константина и Јелене у Охриду, обе одевене у скромне костиме, али насликане са психолошки неодољивим ликовима изграђеним на сентименталном фундаменту нематеријалних квалитета.

Нити у сценама које припадају Христолошким и осталим циклусима, женске представе нису лишене атрактивности у различитим варијантама – деликатне и динамичне, нарочито ако су украшене скупоченим накитом (девојка у сцени Христов сусрет са Самарјанком у Леснову, слушкиња у Одрицању Петровом у Старом Нагоричину, Лазарове сестре у сцени Христ код Марте и Марије, даме у илустрацијама појединих композиција Богородичиног Аклатиста у Матеичу и Марковом манастиру), чији се примерци налазе у богатој збирци средњовековне археолошке грађе изложене у археолошким и осталим музејима у Републици Македонији.