

**ORTHODOX COSMOLOGY AND COSMOGRAPHY:
ICONOGRAPHIC MANDORLA AS *IMAGO MUNDI****

Iconography and Cosmography

Iconography as a symbolic expression of the truths of faith is inseparable part of the Orthodox Christian tradition. Serving as “theology in images”¹ equal to the theology in words, according St. Basil the Great², it reveals religious doctrine of Orthodoxy in its fullness. Dogmatic and liturgical character of iconography does not consist only of visual representation of sacred images and events. Orthodox icons are themselves depicted eschatology – a glimpse to the future perfect world that is to come, according to the eschatological words of St. Apostle Paul /”I Cor. 13:12”/ - and as such, they express Orthodox understanding of the world in its entirety.³

Orthodox iconography is focused on the idea of representing the cosmos, the essence of God’s *creatio ex nihilo*, thus serving as a visual cosmology and thence - as cosmography of all being. Icons depict image of the archetypal world in its integrity, unachievable for the limited humans’ abilities, and are ontologically inseparable from this archetype.⁴ Therefore, although not identical at all with cartography, iconography has been always related with the idea of representing the world through symbolic images, cartographic symbols, and topographic elements.⁵

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¹ Ouspensky, L. *Theology of the Icon*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992, 6

² St. Basil the Great. A Homily of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, In: *Patrologia Graeca* (J.P. Migne ed.), Paris, 1857-1866, 31, 509A

³ Todorova, R. *Ikonnata perspectiva*. V. Turnovo: Faber, 2009, 9-10

⁴ Bychkov, V. *The Aesthetic Face of Being: Art in the Theology of Pavel Florensky*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993, 81-83

⁵ Della Dora, V. “Windows on Heaven (and Earth): The Poetics and Politics of Post-



Fig. 1 *Transfiguration of Christ*, apse mosaic, St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, 550-565 AD

Сл.1 Преображење Христово, мозаик у апсиди, манастир Св. Катарине, Синај, 550.-565

Byzantine Cosmology

Very often Byzantine cosmology has been considered as primitive because of two main reasons – its theocentricism and its identification with the treatise of Cosma Indicopleustes “Christian topography”, written in VI c. AD.⁶ However, Cosma's perception of the world had not been a part of the official doctrine of the Orthodox Church, and what is more, it even had not been considered as scientific.⁷ The earliest sufficient evidence about this fact is that in VIII c. AD, when St. John Damascene writes his treatise *Fountain of Knowledge* considered as the first known *summa theologiae*, he completely ignores Cosma's ideas in his cosmological arguments. A century later St. Photius I Patriarch of Constantinople in his “Library” describes Cosma's perceptions as “fables”, defines him as “unreliable” source and estimates his style as “poor and the arrangement hardly up to the ordinary standard”.⁸

Despite, at prima facie, the long-lasting popularity of Cosma's concept⁹, ancient knowledge and ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy and Plotinus on the structure of cosmos, sphericity of Earth, and arrangement of continents on it has been the central axe in the writings of the most famous Church writers of that time – Michael Psellus, Symeon Seth and Eustratius from Nicaea. This scientific tradition has not been interrupted during the next centuries, and Ptolemaic cosmology has been standing in the center of a number of works of such scholars and writers as Patriarch John X Kamaterus, Gregory Choniades, Theodore Metochites, Theodore of Millet, and George Pachymeres.

Byzantine “Cartographic Icons”, *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 2012, 38 (1), 84

⁶ Jones, Ch. „The Flat Earth”, *Thought*, 1934, 9, 296-307

⁷ Pognon, E. “Cosmology and Cartography”, *Arctic*, 1984, 37 (4), 334-340

⁸ Photius of Constantinople. *The Library of Photius*. Trans. Freese, J. H., London: Macmillan, 1920, 36:31-32

⁹ Woodward, D. “Reality, Symbolism, Time and Space in Medieval World Maps”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 1985, 75 (4), 517

Advanced and scientific based, Byzantine cosmology inherits the rich cartographic tradition of Rome, as evidenced by the map of emperor Theodosius (beginning of V c. AD) and Ravenna Cosmography (beginning of VIII c. AD). However, religious core of Byzantine cosmology and cartography leads to the creation of special symbolic cartographic images that express theocentricity of the world. The earliest extant examples in this regard are the maps of Cosma Indicopleustes and two contemporary mosaic floor images – from the Basilica of St. Demetrius at Nikopolis, Epirus (550-575 AD) and from the Church of St. George at Madaba, Jordan (VI c. AD).

In the Cosma's "Christian topography", the cosmos is presented as a rectangular vaulted box, divided in upper and lower parts by the firmament. The lower part illustrates the visible world of men and angels, while the upper part represents the invisible world where God dwells. Cosma's idea of the cosmos includes also the concept of the flat, rectangle earth.¹⁰ Nevertheless, his perceptions are mixture of classical and Hellenistic knowledge, and biblical teaching, showing that the Greco-Roman idea of spherical world was never forgotten.¹¹

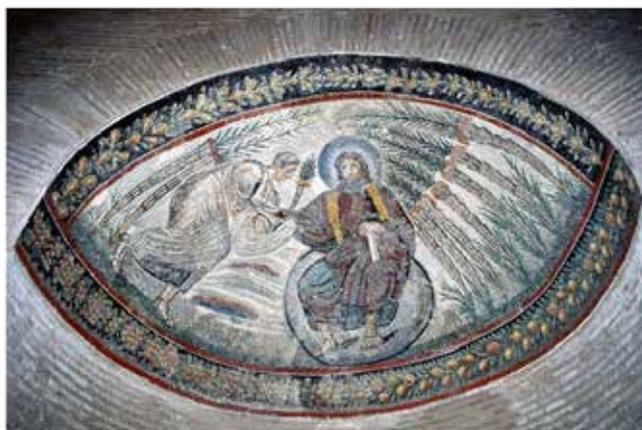


Fig. 2 Tradicio clavium, apse mosaic, Santa Costanza, Rome, mid. IV c. AD

Сл. 2 Tradicio clavium, мозаик у апсиди, Санта Констанца, Рим, сред. IV в



Fig. 3 Christ the King of the Universe, mosaic, San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, Rome, 570-590 AD

Сл. 3 Христ краљ универзума, мозаик, Сан Лоренцо флори ле Мура, Рим, 570.-590

¹⁰ Dilke, O. A. W. "Cartography in the Byzantine Empire", In: *The History of Cartography*, vol. 1, University of Chicago Press, 1987, 258-265

¹¹ Woodward, D. "Medieval *Mappaemundi*", In: *The History of Cartography*, vol. 1, University of Chicago Press, 1987, 286-370



Fig. 4 *God Cosmocrator*, Byzantine mosaic, Monreale Cathedral, Sicily, XII c. AD

Сл. 4 Бог Космократор, византијски мозаик, Катедрала Монреале, Сицилија, XII в

The idea for arrangement of symbolic cartographical images on the church floor relates with the Christian notion that Church is a model of the Universe and its floor is the base of the cosmos, therefore the images on it represent the whole world surrounded by the ocean - *oikoumene*.¹² The general function of these mosaic maps was the same as the medieval *mappaemundi* – to instruct the faithful by presenting the allegories of biblical lore.¹³ The Nikopolis mosaic map could represent the earth as it is, but it could also represent the earth before the creation of man, when it was paradise.¹⁴ The Madaba map – probably the best-known Byzantine cartographic image – was clearly intended to instruct the faithful. Its place faces the laity part of the church, and its parts are full with Old and New Testaments remarks.¹⁵

Mandorla in Christian Iconography

Byzantine tradition that forms the core of Orthodoxy is extremely visual in its character and its primary mean of expression has always been the language of symbols. Symbolic images have their place not only in Byzantine cartography, but also they play significant role in the development of Byzantine iconography.¹⁶

One of the most intriguing iconographical symbols is mandorla, which has found its place in the Christian image tradition as a visual sign of the indescribable phenomenon of the “glory of God”. Mandorla is an oval, oval-pointed or round device, which in particular iconographical scenes circumscribes figure of Christ, the Holy Trinity, the Virgin, or in rare cases – different saints.

Depiction of the “glory of God” concerns those rare cases in the Old and the New Testaments, when God decided to reveal Himself in front of the humans’ eyes.¹⁷ Origins and semantics of mandorla as visual device are still a matter of scholarly discussions. Its meaning is complicated and corresponds with the multifaceted manifestations of God’s nature, but most often, it has been defined as a metaphysical area, a “meeting point” of the material and the spiri-

¹² Barry, F. “Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages”, *The Art Bulletin*, 2007, 89 (4), 627-656

¹³ Dilke, O. A. W., *op. cit.*, 263

¹⁴ Kitzinger, E. “Studies on Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine Floor Mosaics. I. Mosaics at Nikopolis”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 1951, 6, 100

¹⁵ O’Callaghan, R.T. “Madaba (Carte de)”, *Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplement*, ed. Pirot, L. and Robert, A. (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1928-), vol. 5 (1957), 627-704

¹⁶ Uspensky, B. *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*. Peter de Ridder Press, 1976, 14-18

¹⁷ “Glory of God”, *The International Standart Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1979, 477-483; 750-751



Fig. 5 *The Creation of the World*, tempera on wood, Russian icon, first quarter of XVIII c. AD

Сл. 5 Стварање света, темпера на дрвету, руска икона, прва четвртина XVIII в



Fig. 6 *The Covenant with Noah*, miniature, Ms.G.I.8, c. 1150, Topkapı Sarayı Library, Istanbul

Сл. 6 Завет са Нојем, минијатура, Ms.G.I.8, с. 1150, Библиотека Топкапи Сарај, Истанбул

remaining unknowable in His essence,¹⁸ and at the same time it denotes a *locus sanctus* of His presence.¹⁹

tual space, where sacred events take place. (Fig. 1) The mandorla is a visual symbol of the uncreated light in its capacity of a manifestation of the divine energies, through which God reveals Himself to people,

Iconographic Mandorla as Imago Mundi

In Orthodox iconography, the mandorla has its function as a *vision of Divine*. It can be called even *Imago Dei*, expressing invisible to the eyes and incomprehensible for the mind essence of God.²⁰ However, in a number of iconographic scenes the image of God is related theologically and artistically with the cosmological perceptions of Christianity about the theocentricity of the cosmos. Thus, mandorla as *Imago Dei* often plays the role of a symbolic *Imago Mundi*.

Mandorla is frequently perceived as a symbol of cosmos, according to interpretations of St. Maximus the Confessor on the cosmological dimensions

¹⁸ Giakalis, A. *Images of the Divine: The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Revised edition*, Brill, 2005, 51

¹⁹ Todorova, R. "New Religion – New Symbolism: Adoption of Mandorla in the Christian iconography", In: *Collection of Scientific Works IX, NIS AND BYZANTIUM* - "Towards the celebration of the Edict of Milan anniversary", Nis: NKC, 2011, 47-64

²⁰ Todorova, R. "Visualizing the Divine: Mandorla as a Vision of God in Byzantine Iconography", *IKON*, 2013, 6, 287-298



Fig. 7 *The Crucifixion*, fresco, church of St. Nicholas in Molingkates, Kythera, XIII c. AD, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens

Сл. 7 Распеће, фреска, црква Св. Николе у Молинкатес, Китерија, XIII в. АД, Музеј Византије и хришћанства, Атина



Fig. 8 *Transfiguration of Christ*, A. Rublev, 1405., Moscow

Сл. 8 Преображење Христово, А. Рубљев, 1405., Москва

of the Transfiguration of Christ.²¹ Its inner concentric circles are considered as an image of all spheres of the created Universe.²² Such kind of interpretation is linked to the Neoplatonic philosophy²³ as well as to the notion of the celestial hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.²⁴ Although mandorla is not always considered as an image of the whole Universe²⁵, it always has spatial characteristics and in some cases, it bears visible signs demonstrating its cosmic character.

The earliest extant depiction of mandorla that symbolizes the entire Universe is the apse mosaic of the basilica Santa Costanza at Rome from the middle of IV c.AD. (**Fig. 2**) Here Christ is sitting on a globe mandorla in accordance with the biblical verse “Heaven is My throne, and earth My footstool” /”Is. 66:1”/; /”Acts 7:49”/ as well as /”Ps. 11:4”/ and /”Mat. 5:34-35”/. This type

²¹ Maximus the Confessor. *Ambigua* 10, 17, PG 91, 1125D-1128D

²² Evdokimov, P. *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, Redondo Beach, California, 1990, 305

²³ Plotinus, *Ennead*, IV, 3, 17 and *Ennead*, VI, 4, 7

²⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius. *Celestial Hierarchy* 1, 2 (121ab) and *Divine Names* 1, 4 (592c)

²⁵ Andreopoulos, A. “The Mosaic of the Transfiguration in St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai: A Discussion of its Origins”, *Byzantion*, 2002, LXXII (1), 29

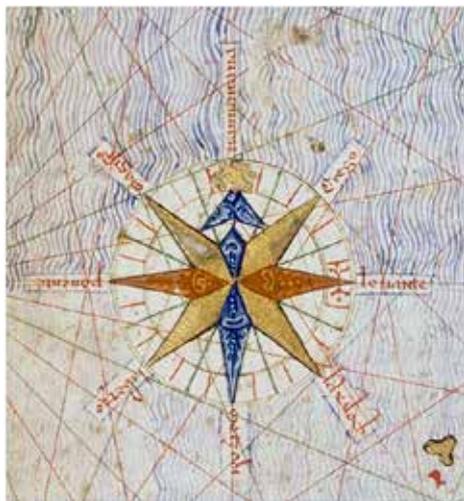


Fig. 9 First Compass Rosette, Catalan Atlas, 1375, Bibliotheque national de France, Paris

Сл. 9 Прва компас-розета, Атлас Каталан, 1375., Народна библиотека, Париз



Fig. 10 T-O map, Guntherus Ziner, 1472 г., Etymologiae of Isidorus

Сл. 10 T-O мапа, Гунтерус Зинер, 1472. г., Етимологија Исидоруса

of depictions in Early Christian art are borrowed from the classical models²⁶ and are popular between IV and VIII c. AD in Italy, where a few more examples are preserved: the apse mosaic in the church of Santa Agata dei Goti (460-468 AD) shows Christ sitting on a globe amidst standing apostles;²⁷ the mosaic in the basilica of San Vitale at Ravenna (547 AD) depicts Christ Savior sitting on a blue globe mandorla; the mosaic in the basilica San Lorenzo fuori le Mura at Rome (570-590 AD) depicts Christ King of the Universe sitting on a blue globe mandorla with three colour layers (**Fig. 3**); the mosaic in the basilica San Teodoro at Rome (583-590 AD) depicts Christ King of the Universe in the same way, but here mandorla is filled with golden stars; the fresco in the catacomb of Comodila (VII c. AD). In a modified variant in the baptistery of San Giovanni at Naples (second half of IV c. AD), we can see a depiction of *Tradicio legis* where Christ stands on a blue globe mandorla.²⁸

There are also a number of extant patterns of independent representations of cosmic mandorla. Good examples can be seen in the depiction of the Holy Cross in the dome of the baptistery of San Giovanni in Fonte at Naples (the late IV c. AD)²⁹; the allegorical representation of the Transfiguration of Christ in the basilica of San Apollinare in Classe at Ravenna (VI c. AD)³⁰; and the apse

²⁶ Cook, W. "The Earliest Painted Pannels of Catalonia (II)", *The Art Bulletin*, 1923, 6 (2), 38

²⁷ Spieser, J.-M. "The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches", *GESTA*, 1998, 37 (1), 63-63, 71

²⁸ Cook, W. *Op. cit.*, 39

²⁹ Jensen, R. *Living Water: Images, Symbols and Settings of Early Christian Baptism (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Early Christian Life and Language)*, Brill, 2010, 191-194

³⁰ Longhi, D. "The Cosmic Cross as Logos' Theophany: First Version of

mosaic in the basilica of Santa Agnese fuori le Mura at Rome (VII c. AD)³¹. Depiction of stars inside the mandorla has become one of the common ways for denoting its cosmic character and can be seen very often during centuries, as in the Sinaitic icon of the Ancient of Days (VII c. AD)³² and the fresco of the Resurrection of Christ in the pareclission of Chora Monastery (1315-1321 AD)³³.

Mandorla as an image of the Universe takes part also in the iconographical scene of the Creation of the World. Iconography of God Κοσμοκράτωρ has developed three main types. First of them represents the biblical story of /"Gen. 1-2"/ as a cycle of single depictions of the seven days of the Creation. Here mandorla is depicted not only as a throne of God, but also represents the separation of the waters and the creation of the heavenly bodies. (**Fig. 4**) Second iconographical type shows God in mandorla holding the globe of the world, and the third consists in portraying only the most important moment of the whole Creation process – creation of Adam and Eve (**Fig. 5**).³⁴

Often the cosmic nature of mandorla as *Imago Mundi* is stressed by adding of other iconographic symbols such as rainbow, and images of Sun and Moon. The rainbow is a frequent iconographical element of the Ascension of Christ and Christ in Majesty. It has been considered as a common feature of the Palestinian and Byzantine iconographical type of Christ's Ascension³⁵, as well as of the East iconographical type of mandorla in Christ in Majesty scenes.³⁶

Representation of a rainbow portrays the throne of God as described in /"Rev. 4:3"/; /"Ez. 1:28"/ in two ways – symbolically and naturalistically.³⁷ One of the earliest known depictions of mandorla with rainbow is the apse mosaic of Christ in Majesty in the church of Hosios David, Thessaloniki (end of V or beginning of VI c. AD)³⁸. In many cases, mandorla is combined with two rainbows as a visual reference of the already described notion about heaven as throne of God and earth as His footstool. Particular iconographical scenes

Sant'Apollinare in Classe's Apsidal Mosaic and Jerusalem's Staurophany of AD 351", *IKON*, 2013, 6, 275-286

³¹ Rodley, L. *Byzantine Art and Architecture: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 122-123, fig. 92

³² Weitzmann, K. *The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai: The Icons*, I, Princeton, 1976, 41-42 and pl. XVIII

³³ Ousterhout, R. *The Art of the Kariye Camii*, Scala Publishers & Archeology and Art Publications, 2002, 78, pl. 90

³⁴ Hermando, I. "Creation of the World and Creation of Adam and Eve", In: <http://www.ucm.es/centros/cont/descargas/documento21342.pdf>

³⁵ Dewald, E. "The iconography of the Ascension", *American Journal of Archeology*, 1915, 19 (3), 282-284, 291-294

³⁶ Cook, W., *Op. cit.*, 40-47

³⁷ James, L. "Colour and the Byzantine Rainbow", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 1991, 15, 71-72

³⁸ Stewart, C. *Domes of Heaven: The Domed Basilicas of Cyprus*, UMI Dissertations Publishing 2008, 175

Fig. 11 *Ancient of Days*, tempera on wood, Cretan icon, second half of XVII c. AD, Snite Museum of Art, Indiana

Сл. 11 Старац Данима, темпера на дрвету, критска икона, друга половина XVII в., Снајт Музеј уметности, Индијана



such as the Covenant with Noah (**Fig. 6**), combine naturalistic representation of rainbow with images of stars, Sun and Moon, thus create a symbolic picture of the Universe.³⁹

In addition, solar and lunar depictions are inseparable element of the iconography of the Crucifixion (**Fig. 7**) and often take part in the other scenes related to the Holy Cross as the Exaltation of the Cross or St. Helen and St. Constantine the Great iconography.⁴⁰ Sometimes in the Crucifixion scenes mandorla is missing, but even then, portraying of the heavenly powers in combination of stars, Sun and Moon demonstrate the cosmic character of the sacred event of Christ's Crucifixion, which lies in the very base of Christianity, and thus in the foundation of the Orthodox theocentric model of the cosmos. During the first four centuries AD, the Crucifixion scene is rare and has predominantly symbolic character, but after the V c. AD, its iconographical interpretation has been rapidly developed. Presence of solar and lunar images is a typical feature of the Byzantine iconography of the scene, although sometimes they are replaced by symbolic representation of angels.⁴¹

Hesychastic Mandorla and Medieval mappaemundi

In the end of XIII and the beginning of XIV c. AD, iconographical symbol of mandorla has been gradually changed because of the Hesychastic theological

³⁹ James, L. *Op. cit.*, 70

⁴⁰ Walter, C. *The iconography of Constantine the Great: Emperor and Saint*, Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2006

⁴¹ Quenot, M. *The Resurrection and the Icon*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997, 166-173



Fig. 12 *The Holy Trinity*, ceiling fresco, entrance of the Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos, XIX c.

Сл. 12 Свето Тројство, фреска на таваници, улаз Светог и Великог манастира Ватопеда, Света Гора, XIX в.

mainstream of the time. Its oval or round form has begun to include two superimposed rectangular shapes.⁴² (Fig. 8) Among other theories about the origins of the new shape, one connects it with the tradition of cartography.⁴³ Being rather a summary of the contemporary cosmology, semantics of the medieval *mappaemundi* actually approaches more closely religious cosmography than practical travel maps.⁴⁴

Sacral cartographic character of the Hesychastic mandorla has been explained in two ways - through the religious symbolism of geometric figures and through its visual resemblance with medieval maps and compass rosettes.⁴⁵ (Fig. 9) From patristic exegetical point of view, Hesychastic mandorla portrays the Holy Trinity – the circle symbolizes God the Father and the other two geometrical forms symbolize Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the eight beams of the inscribed geometric forms can be interpreted from eschatological point of view as a symbol of Ogdoad – the new world after the Second Coming.⁴⁷ In some

⁴² Todorova, R. "New Religion – New Symbolism: Adoption of Mandorla in the Christian iconography", 58-59

⁴³ Della Dora, V. "Windows on Heave (and Earth): The Poetics and Politics of Post-Byzantine "Cartographic Icons", *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 2012, 38 (1), 84-112

⁴⁴ Woodward, D. "Reality, Symbolism, Time and Space in Medieval World Maps", 512-515

⁴⁵ Andreopoulos, A. *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005, 235-242

⁴⁶ Makseliene, S. *The Glory of God and its Byzantine Iconography*, M.A. Thesis in Medieval Studies. Budapest: Central European University, 1998, 68-69

⁴⁷ Andreopoulos, A. *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography*, 147-148

post-Byzantine icons Hesychastic mandorla has been additionally changed⁴⁸ in order to enhance symbolic representation of the Universe as *oikoumene* of cosmos, Sun and stars.

Visual resemblance of Hesychastic mandorla with the manner of depicting geographical space in the medieval Western European⁴⁹ and Islamic tradition⁵⁰ also cannot be missed. Particular similarity could be found with the compass rosette of the Catalan atlas of the world⁵¹ created in the same epoch (1375 AD).⁵² Thus, Hesychastic mandorla can be interpreted as a sacred cartographic representation of the theocentric world, showing the four cardinal and the four intermediate geographical directions emanating from the figure of Christ as the *axis mundi*.⁵³

Conclusions

Regardless of how close or how far Orthodox icons are standing from our personal understanding of the maps of the world, their universal cosmographical character cannot be denied.

Besides of their liturgical function, Orthodox icons have always played the role of means that help men to overcome the objective limitations of human nature, and to see the world in its entirety, unachievable for the eyes. One of the most direct visual evidences for the relevance of such reading of the sacred images is the iconography of God as the Ancient of Days, based on the prophetic visions.⁵⁴ Iconographic conception of this type of representations always has cosmological character and their composition closely reminds the structure of the medieval T and O maps.⁵⁵ (**Fig. 10**)

A Cretan icon from the second half of XVII c. AD, (**Fig. 11**) portrays a Divine Liturgy around the Holy Trinity. The throne of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, together with the heavenly powers in Their feet, imitate the T-form representation of the Mediterranean, Nile and Tanais. The mandorla-like shape of heavens circumscribing the Holy Trinity has strong resemblance with the O-representation of the River Ocean around Europe, Asia and Africa in the *Beatus* maps.

Such type of images is not rare in the post-Byzantine period of development of the Orthodox iconography. Sometimes symbolic depiction of the

⁴⁸ Alpatov, M. *Early Russian Icon Painting*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974, 303

⁴⁹ Harley, J.B. and Woodward, D. *The History of Cartography*, vol. 1, University of Chicago Press, 1987, 381

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2a, 191

⁵¹ Bagrow, L. *History of Cartography*, Transaction Publishers, 2009, 66

⁵² Winter, H. "Catalan Portolan Maps and Their Place in the Total View of Cartographic Development", *Imago Mundi*, 1954, 11, 1-12

⁵³ Andreopoulos, A. *Metamorphosis: the Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and iconography*, 235

⁵⁴ Bigham, S. *The Image of God the Father in Orthodox Theology and Iconography and Other Studies*, Oakwood Publications, 1995, 57-60

⁵⁵ Pogon, E., *Op. cit.*, 339-340

theocentric cosmos is so literal that iconographic scenes include direct cartographic representations, always connected with the visual symbol of mandorla. (Fig. 12) Thus, semantically complicated sign of Christian mandorla reveals its multifold meaning as *Imago Dei* and *orbis terrarum* in the same time – a metaphysical symbol of the “glory of God” that penetrates the entire Creation.

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ПРАВОСЛАВНА КОСМОЛОГИЈА И КОСМОГРАФИЈА:
ИКОНОГРАФСКА МАНДОРЛА КАО *IMAGO MUNDI*

Православна иконографија фокусира се на идеју представљања космоса, суштине Божије *creatio ex nihilo*, тако служећи као визуелна космологија а потом као космографија читавог постојања. Иконе приказују слику архетипског света у свом интегритету, недостижном за ограничене људске способности, и онтолошки су неодвојиве од овог архетипа. Дакле, иако није идентична са картографијом, иконографија је увек повезана са идејом представљања света кроз симболичке слике. У том контексту, она постаје визуелна космологија, а самим тим и врста космографије целокупног постојања. Иако није идентична са картографијом, православна иконографија ствара симболичке слике које се могу тумачити као слика целог света - *oikoumene*.

Један посебан пример у том погледу односи се на семантику и коришћење *mandorla* симбола. У православној иконографији, мандорла има своју функцију као визија Божанског. Може се чак назвати *Imago Dei*, изражавајући, невидљиву очима и неразумљиву уму, суштину Бога. Међутим, код извесног броја иконографских сцена слика Божија је теолошки и ликовно повезана са космолошким схватањима хришћанства о теоцентризму космоса. Тако, мандорла као *Imago Dei* често игра улогу симболичке *Imago Mundi*.

У том смислу, овај рад ће истражити неколико иконографских сцена, где мандорла симболизује целокупни Универзум: ране мозаике из Рима, Напуља и Равене, са приказом Христа како седи на глобусу, мандорли у складу са библијским стиховима „Небо је престо мој и земља подножје ногама мојим“ / „Ис. 66:1“; / „Дела 7:49“ / као и / „Пс. 11:4“ / и / „Мат. 5:34-35“; независне представе космичке мандорле са Светим крстом или са *Dextera Domini*; космичка мандорла у иконографији Бога *Κοσμοκράτωρ*, Распеће и Воздвижење часног крста. Посебна пажња биће посвећена тренду садашњег истраживања, повезујући исихастички симбол мандорле са средњовековном *mappe mundi*. Сакрални картографски карактер исихастичке мандорле објашњен је на два начина, кроз религијску симболику геометријских фигура и кроз своју визуелну сличност са средњовековним мапама и компас розетама.

Без обзира на то колико се близу или далеко православне иконе налазе са тачке гледишта нашег личног разумевања мапа света, њихов универзални космографски карактер не може се порећи. Поред своје литургијске функције, православне иконе играју улогу средства које помаже људима да превазиђу објективна ограничења људске природе и да виде свет у свој својој целокупности, недостижној за наше очи. Тако, семантички компликован знак хришћанске мандорле открива своје вишеструко значење истовремено и као *Imago Dei* и као *orbis terrarum* - метафизички симбол „славе Божије“, који се простире кроз читаву Креацију.