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HAUTE COUTURE OF MACEDONIA BYZANTINA:FASHION, JEWELRY, ACCESSORIES

If one should talk about designer's clothing, trying to chronologically define the beginning of fashionable looks and appearances, the historic landing of Maria de Medici in the port of Marseilles on November 3rd, 1600 should never be omitted from the tale. The arrival of the Italian aristocrat in France, aside from other duties she was expected to fulfill, can be pointed out as a moment in time when the Mediterranean styles in dressing and decoration were transferred in the heart of the European continent. Lacy undergarments, luxurious dresses, silky stockings and high heels were but a few of the many glamorous items Maria de Medici has brought to Paris, where she arrived to become the wife of the French King Henri IV¹. Although thirty years later, she was banished from the court by her son, King Louis XIII, the fashion she has brought to the French royalty has established itself as a landmark of the Monarchy, that from Paris, as a center, has been disseminated all over Europe. Custom made dresses, garments opulent in gold and silver ornamentation, clothing tailored with extraordinary precision and precious jewelry created for the ladies, as well as gentlemen from the highest circles of social and political power, have been produced at large ever since. However, even prior to the arrival of the misfortunate Maria de Medici in France and the beginning of the European vogue as we know it today, fancy clothes and attractive jewelry have been worn by the aristocratic personalities, the images of whom appear in the artistic production of the medieval west and the Renaissance, as well as in the Byzantine painting, starting from the 11th century onwards. The luxuriously dressed Byzantine empresses in Saint Sophia in Constantinople², the stylishly adorned Sicilian King at Martorana³, the fashionably clothed celestial creatures in Cappella Palatine at

¹ On the political issues surrounding Maria de Medici after her arrival in Paris cf. H. Hübner, E. Regtmeier, *Maria de Medici. Eine Fremde*, Dialogues 14, Florenz, Paris, Brüssel, London Köln, Frankfurt 2010.

² Ch. R. Morey, *The Mosaics of Hagia Sophia*, Metropolitan museum of art, Buletin, New York 1944, Figs. on pp. 203, 204; E. W. Kleinbauer, H. Matthews, A. White, *Hagia Sophia*, London 2007, pp. 69, 70-75.

³ E. Kitzinger, *On the portrait of Roger II in the Martorana in Palermo*, The Art of



Fig. 1 – Khetorial portrait of Ana Maria in the narthex of Lesnovo (1349)

Сл. 1 Ктиторски портрет Ане Марије у натеку Леснова (1349)

Palermo⁴, the modern outfits of the protagonists in the scenes illustrated in the cathedral of Saint Mark in Venice⁵ and particularly the trendy oriental costume of the prime minister Theodor Metochites in his khetorial composition in the Chora monastery⁶, are but a few examples of the rich catalogue of Byzantine fashion in the period from the 11th until the 14th century.

When we talk about fashion, particularly medieval fashion in the fresco painting of Byzantine Macedonia, we have to start our inquiry examining the donors' compositions⁷, where we notice the most fascinating spectrum of high budget gowns and expensive jewelry. Moreover, some of the jewelry pieces decorating the images of certain historical or saintly personages can be found among the archaeological artifacts exhibited in the museum collections all over the country. This especially refers to two exemplars of personal ornaments: earrings characteristic of the presentable female individuals and round buckles known as *agraphae* – worn by both sexes. Embellishing the crimson upper garments of Saint Barbara and Saint Kiriaki in Kurbinovo⁸, clasping the

Byzantium and the Medieval West, Selected Studies (ed. W. E. Kleinbaum), Bloomington 1976; Idem, *The Mosaics of St. Mary of the Admiral in Palermo*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies vol. 27, Washington 1990, pp. 189-197.

⁴ W. Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Rogier II and Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, Princeton 1997, pp. 140-143.

⁵ O. Demus, *The Mosaic Decoration of San Marco, Venice*, Chicago 1988.

⁶ P. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami I, Historical Introduction and Description of the Mosaics and Frescoes*, New York 1966, pp. 42-43; I. Aksit, *The Museum of Chora. Mosaics and Frescoes*, Istanbul 1999, Figs on pp. 58, 60.

⁷ З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Ктиторскиот портрет во судното сликарство во Македонија*, Средновековната уметност во Македонија, Скопје 2004, pp. 291-303; E. Dimitrova, *The Portal to Heaven. Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, Niš & Byzantium Symposium. Collection of scientific works vol. V, Niš 2007, pp. 367-380.

⁸ C. Grozdanov, L. Hadermann-Misguich, *Kurbinovo*, Skopje 1992, Fig. 28; Ц. Грозданов, *Курбиново и други студии за фрескоживописот во Преспа*, Скопје 2006,

geometrically designed cloak of Saint Catherine in Pološko⁹, holding the burgundy red cape of Saint Kiriaki in Mateič¹⁰ and pinning the softly woven capes of the elegant noblemen comprised by the illustration of the Heavenly court in Treskavec¹¹, *agraphae* can be seen as luxury emblems of the nobility that usually came together with other status accessories, such as veils, hats and bowlers. Yet, these pieces of jewelry were usually used to attach the ends of the elegantly adorned garments mainly worn by the Byzantine court women and the most prestigious ladies of the society. Made of precious metals and decorated with pearls, precious stones and luxurious artistic techniques such as filigree or granulation, they expressed the vogue of the époque. The presence of one such lavish example on the kthetorial portrait of the glamorized despotessa Ana Maria, whose garment is attached with a stylish rounded brooch in the Monastery of Lesново (Fig. 1), speaks of her high rank, importance and prestige in the 14th century society. Although just a small detail in the entity of the overall depiction, this element of the popular wardrobe is a significant example for the scientific research of the jewelry types and their socio-cultural significance. So far, few examples of these round brooches have been discovered in some of the most significant medieval archaeological sites in the Republic of Macedonia. Such are the examples discovered in a deposit from Saint Athanasius, Prilep (Fig. 2), as well as one luxurious example in the deposit from Skopje's Fortress (Fig. 3), all dated in the 14th century.

Band-earrings, on the other hand, are a pure supplement to female's beauty, displaying a wide range of types and variants, subtypes and replicas.

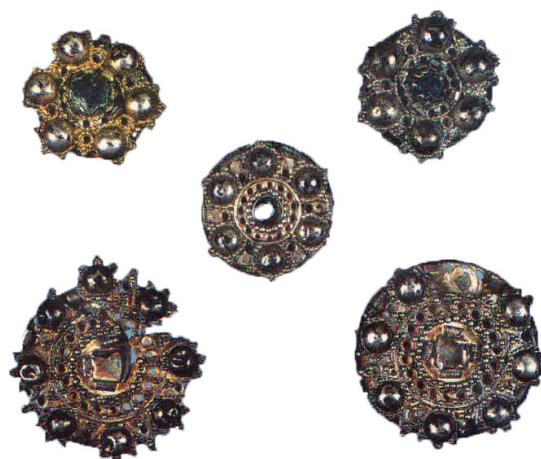


Fig. 2 - Agraphae, deposit from St. Athanasius, Varoš, Prilep, 14th century;

Сл. 2 Аграфе, депо из Светог Атанасија, Варош, Прилеп, XIV век



Fig. 3 - Agrapha, deposit from the Skopje Fortress, 14th century;

Сл. 3 Аграфа, депо са Скопске тврђаве, XIV век

Fig. on pp. 176-177; E. Dimitrova, *The Church of Saint George at Kurbinovo*, Skopje 2016, Fig. on p. 17.

⁹ Д. Ћорнаков, *Полошки манастир*, Скопје 2006, p. 75.

¹⁰ Е. Димитрова, *Манастир Матејче*, Скопје 2002, Т. LVII; Eadem, *The Church of the Holy Mother of God at Matejče*, Skopje 2016, Fig. on p. 21.

¹¹ С. Смолчић-Макуљевић, *Царски Деизис и Небески двор у сликарству XIV века манастира Трескавац. Иконографски програм северне куполе припрате цркве Богородичиног Успења*, Трећа југословенска конференција византолога, Београд - Крушевац 2002, Figs. 4, 6.



Fig. 4 – Band-earrings, deposit from Gorno Orizari, Kočani, 14th century;

Сл. 4 Наушнице, депо са локалитета Горно Оризари код Кочана, XIV век



Fig. 5 - Band-earrings, deposit from Markovi Kuli, Varoš, Prilep, 14th century;

Сл. 5 Наушнице, депо са локалитета Маркови Кули, Прилеп, XIV век



Fig. 6 - Band-earrings, deposit from the Skopje Fortress, 14th century;

Сл. 6 Наушнице, депо са Скопске тврђаве, XIV век

From the massive, round specimens of band-earrings ornamenting the pale composure of Queen Simonida depicted within the donor's composition in Staro Nagoričino¹², the serene face of duchess Vladislava from Kučevište¹³, as well as the dignified image of Ana Maria Liverina in Lesnovo¹⁴, the rounded band-earrings i.e. the *prependulia* of the Byzantine imperial jewelry set or the *cercelli rotundi slavici*, as mentioned in the Ragusan archives of the 14th century, have been discovered in Macedonian sites and deposits dated in the 14th century¹⁵. There are several sub-variants of this type, but the

closest examples to those worn by the mentioned dignified ladies are the gold earrings elaborated with filigree technique and inlaid with gemstones, discovered in the deposits from Gorno Orizari – Kočani (Fig. 4)¹⁶, Markovi Kuli, Prilep (Fig. 5)¹⁷, as well the pair discovered in the Skopje Fortress (Fig. 6), all dated in the course of the 14th century. Unlike band-earrings worn exclusively by females attached on the head-dress, the hoop earrings - pierced through the

¹² Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, Београд 1993, Drawing 21.

¹³ З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Ктиторски портрети во црквата Св. Богородица во Кучевиште*, Средновековната уметност во Македонија, Скопје 2004, p. 205.

¹⁴ С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново*, Београд 1998, Fig. 78.

¹⁵ Е. Манева, *Средновековен накит од Македонија*, Скопје, 1992, pp. 56-60.

¹⁶ Eadem, *Ancient Jewelry from Macedonia – Middle Ages*, Скопје, 2005, Cat. No. 23ab and 24 ab of the round type and Cat. No. 26 ab of the radiate type.

¹⁷ Ibidem, Cat. No. 25.

Fig. 7 – Khtetorial composition in the church of Saint George at Pološko (1345), lower register;

Сл. 7 Ктиторска композиција у цркви Светог Ђорђа у Полошком (1345), прва зона



ear, were worn by women and men alike, as well as children. Such pieces of jewelry depicted on the frescoes (the personification of the River Jordan in a form of a toddler in the representation of the Baptism in the church of Saint George in Kurbinovo) have been discovered all over the medieval necropolises in Macedonia¹⁸. Among the most common specimens are the ones made of bronze, iron and silver, while the golden hoop earrings, utilized for their prophylactic purpose (like the example in Kurbinovo where the child wears a single earring on the right ear), are scarce finds in terms of archaeological context.

The fourteen-century historian Nikephoros Gregoras in his *Historia Byzantina* lamented the fact that at the coronation of John VI Kantakouzenos (1347-1354), in the aftermath of the devastating civil war, the imperial crowns were made of gilded leather, while the jewels adorning them were nothing more than colored glass¹⁹. During this exact period of political and geo-strategic turmoil, the territory of present-day Macedonia was the “play ground” of ambitious political figures whose wealth, judging by their historical portraits and the chronologically analogous archaeological finds, stood *even*, if not beyond that of the mentioned Byzantine emperor himself. These influential noblemen and noble-ladies are revealed through their sacral edifices which publicly manifested the donors’ devotional zeal. The particular casting selection of historical figures which follows reveals the exclusive features of the Late Byzantine *haute couture* trends in Macedonia, in which the Byzantine DNA code was mixed and upgraded with the unique local and even individually exquisite stylistic tendencies, which divulge the socio-subliminal complexity behind the 14th century vogue. In that regard, if we turn our attention to clothing, an interesting example of dressing up can be found among the characters depicted within the com-

¹⁸ E. Maneva, *Ancient Jewellery of Macedonia – Middle Ages*, Cat. no 8.

¹⁹ M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Brill-Leiden-Boston, 2003, p. 29.



Fig. 8 – Khtetorial composition of Saint Nicholas at Psača (1365-1372), detail;

Сл. 8 Ктиторска композиција у цркви Светог Николе у Псаћи (1365-1371), детаљ

missioner's ensemble of the church dedicated to Saint George at Pološko²⁰, where one can notice a bit of a medieval prêt-à-porter since the nobleman Jovan Dragušin and his wife wear shirts made of the same fabric – white linen decorated with florets encompassed by circlets printed in red and golden brown (Fig. 7). Yet, their outfits are quite different – he is wearing a leather belt over his upper garment printed with golden medallions and two-headed eagles, as well as decorated with rich pearly ribbons and peribrachia, while she, being more slender, is dressed in a tight attire, ornamented austere and unfussy. Contrary to the linen which was soft enough to provide the necessary comfort for the undergarments, the upper ones were made of firmer textiles in order to be properly tailored and were toughened with cotton wool or felt lining²¹.

Raw silk, velvet or brocade were the materials usually employed in the production of costly attires worn by the members of the highest circles of aristocracy, reflected in the portraits encompassed by the already mentioned khtetorial arrangements: despotessa Ana Maria in the narthex of Lesnovo (white undergarment, crimson

dress decorated with medallions encompassing double-headed eagles, purple cloak), duke Dejan in the narthex of Kučevište (dark olive-green dress decorated with violet stripes embroidered with pearls)²², nobleman Jovan Prosenik in the cathedral of Saint Sophia in Ohrid (white undergarment, dark crimson dress with decorative stripes) and others. Slightly different taste in regard to the designing of the garments show the two ladies depicted within the khtetorial in Psača (Fig. 8) since the sleeves of their dresses are made of embroidered tulle and thus appear transparent and trendy²³. Of course, one cannot forget the animal fur, which, in the times marked by a general absence of eco-friendly approach, decorated the sleeves of the upper garments or the rim of the cloaks:

²⁰ Ц. Грозданов, Д. Корнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком I*, Зограф 14, Београд 1982, pp. 60-66; Ц. Грозданов, Д. Корнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком II*, Зограф 15, Београд 1984, pp. 85-93; Ц. Грозданов, Д. Корнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком III*, Зограф 18, Београд 1987, pp. 37-42.

²¹ Т. Вулета, “Стаде шкрипа жутијег кавада”, Зборник, н. с. 7/2011, Музеј примењене уметности, Београд 2011, p. 18.

²² З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Ктиторски портрети во црквата Св. Богородица во Кучевиште*, p. 203.

²³ Е. Димитрова, С. Корунски, С. Грандаковска, *Средновековна Македонија. Култура и уметност*, Македонија. Милениумски културно-историски факти, Скопје 2013, Fig. on pp. 1756-1757.

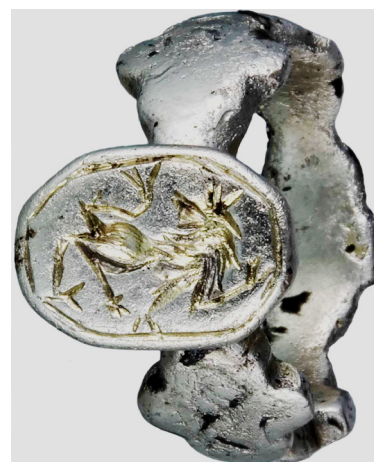


Fig. 9 - Signet ring, grave find from Lesnovo Monastery, 14th century;

Сл. 9 Прстен са печатом, гробни налаз из манастира Лесново, XIV век

Fig. 10 – Signet ring, Skopje Fortress, 14th century;

Сл. 10 Прстен са печатом, Скопска тврђава, XIV век



cesar Isak Duka in the church of Saint Panteleimon in Ohrid, as well as despot Jovan Oliver and his wife in the chapel built within the cathedral of Saint Sophia in Ohrid²⁴.

In regard to the jewelry worn by the personages depicted within the khetorial ensembles, nobleman Jovan Dragušin and his young wife* present a very interesting example (Fig. 7). Jovan Dragušin²⁵, is represented wearing a *stematogirion* - despot's crown adorned with pearly prependicularia²⁶ and correspondingly his wife Ana is represented with a golden head-dress inlaid with pearls and supplemented by rounded *prependicularia* earrings. Ana also has a tight golden necklace with inlaid pearls and most probably wears thin bracelets i.e. sleeves' armlets on her wrists, while both spouses have rings on their small fingers. On the subject matter of *ring-wearers*, Jovan Dragušin and his wife belong among the few 14th century elite figures represented wearing this small, but obviously important fashion and status statement in the historical portraiture²⁷. The archaeological finds of luxurious 14th century rings testify that ring-

²⁴ Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското судно сликарство од XIV век*, Охрид 1980, pp. 35, 62.

*Since only two letters have been preserved from the name of this character (An) for the purpose of this text we will call her Ana.

²⁵ For the origin and family ties of Jovan Dragušin cf. J. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996, p. 229; Ц. Грозданов, Д. Ђорнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком I*, pp. 60–66; Ц. Грозданов, Д. Ђорнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком II*, pp. 85–93; Ц. Грозданов, Д. Ђорнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком III*, pp. 37–42.; I. Mikulcic, *Lion seal ring from the Skopje Kale*, *Folia Archaeologica Balcanica III*, Skopje 2015, p. 517.

²⁶ The *stephanos* was a circlet of gold set with pearls and gems and having one or more arched projections, cf. M. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, p. 69.

²⁷ For the *ring-wearers* in the Byzantine and Byzantinized historical portraiture cf. M. Popović, S. Gabelić, B. Cvetković, B. Popović, *Crkva Svetog Nikole u Staničenju*, Beograd, 2005, especially the chapter about the khetorial portraits, pp. 79–84.



Fig. 11 – Female ring, grave find, necropolis Krstevi, village of Korešnica, Demir Kapija, 11th century;

Сл. 11 Женски прстен, гробни налаз, некропола Крстеви, село Корешница, Демир Капија, XI век

wearing trends were active among the nobility. The silver signet ring with double headed eagle, probably a family inheritance of the feudal lord Jovan Oliver from Lesново (Fig. 9)²⁸ and the silver gilded signet ring with presumed “heraldic” lion figure from the Skopje Fortress (Fig. 10)²⁹ are among the most provocative Macedonian archaeological finds belonging to high hierarchy representatives during the politically turbulent decades of the mid- 14th century. At the same time, these finds undoubtedly stress the importance of the ring as an element in the *haute couture* of the Macedonian political magnates.

Whether or not Jovan Dragušin wore

a massive signet ring is difficult to determine from the Pološko portrait, but it is clear that the noblemen were more likely to possess practical fashion accessories that at the same time served their office and status matters.³⁰ The rings worn by the female nobility on the other hand, were more likely to be products of the fashion trends and amid the Macedonian archaeological finds there are few luxurious female rings that can be used to conceive the elegance and taste of the elite ladies (Fig. 11). What is striking at first glance is the very position of the rings. Namely, even today the wearing of a ring on the small finger (as in the

²⁸ This ring was originally published as Jovan Oliver’s, cf. Д. Бардиева, *Прстенот на Јован Оливер*, Историја XXI, Скопје, 1985. However, К. Трајковски undoubtedly presented that the direct ownership cannot be proven, leaving the possibility that one of Jovan Oliver’s sons was buried with this ring cf. К. Трајковски, *Дали е откриен прстенот на Јован Оливер?*, Macedonia Acta Archaeologica 9, Скопје, 1988, pp. 235-236. Nevertheless, it is clear that Jovan Oliver utilized the double headed eagle as an emblem even prior the official granting of the despot title, since the naos of the Lesново church contains artistic representations of blue eagle in the time when Jovan Oliver held the title of sebastocrator, cf. С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново*, Београд, 1998, p. 141. The scientific stances concerning Jovan Oliver’s title of sebastocrator have been recently revised and it becomes obvious that he received this title from John Kantakouzenos, the pretendant to the throne during his stay in Serbia in 1342-1343, cf. В. Г. Алексин, *Наследници Мрњавчевића и територије под њиховим влашћу од 1371 до 1395*, pp. 34-35.

²⁹ I. Mikulčić, *Lion Seal Ring from the Skopje Kale*, pp. 515-520; S. Todorovski, *Ring-Seal from Kale Skopje*, Patrimonium. Mk 14, Скопје 2016, pp. 103-106.

³⁰ For more examples of male rings and their articulation and display of different aspects e.g. status, class, rank, religious beliefs and social values cf. М. Parani, “Optional extras or necessary elements? Middle and late Byzantine male dress accessories”, ΔΑΣΚΑΛΑΑΠΟΔΟΣΗ ΤΙΜΗΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΟΜΟΤΙΜΗ ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ ΜΑΙΡΗ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΩΤΙΔΗ ΚΕΣΙΣΟΓΛΟΥ, Athens 2015, p. 404.

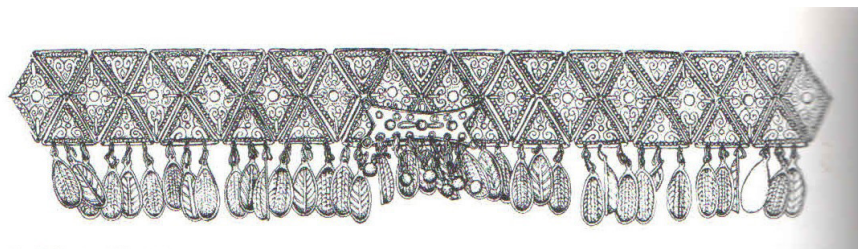


Fig. 12 – Female head-dress, grave find, necropolis Krstevi, village of Korešnica, Demir Kapija, end of 10th- beginning of 11th century;

Сл. 12 Женски украс главе, гробни налаз, некропола Крстevi, село Корешница, Демир Капија, крај X – почетак XI века;

example from Pološko) is a signal of prestige, high status and even pomposity in certain circles. Thus, we can assume that both spouses were keen to accentuate their rank and social scale even with this small element of fashion.

Ana's modish costume is embellished by a set of jewelry pieces which articulate her status and prestige, one of which being the *diadem/tiara* adorned with pearls. There are few types of head-dresses discovered in the medieval graves and deposits in Macedonia dated from the end of the 10th until the 14th century, all testifying to the aesthetic and denotative meaning of these elements in the female dress-code³¹. The head-dresses were made of metal which could have been additionally gilded, inlaid with gemstones and pearls or decorated with ornaments executed in some artistic technique e.g. repoussé, granulation etc. (Fig. 12). It is interesting that in the course of the 11th to 13th century, only young and unmarried women were (occasionally) considered decent if wearing a head-dress bare-headed³², but as we can see from Ana's portrait her diadem lays on her hair, thus probably introducing a new socially acceptable fashion trend. On her wrists, Ana wears a pair of *golden bracelets* i.e. armlets which are not massive and thus it is impossible to determine the precise type. On the territory of Macedonia there are several examples of luxurious bracelets discovered on the archaeological sites and in comparison to the fresco representation in question, we can assume that Ana's armlets were at least as precious and beautiful as these examples (Fig. 13)³³.

If we turn our attention back to the costumes, the garment of Jovan Dragušin, besides the regal print of the fabrics, as well as the rich embroidery,

³¹ Е. Манева, *Средновековна некропола Крстevi*, Скопје, 2000, pp. 44-50; Е. Манева, *Древниот накит од Македонија – некропола Водоча*, Скопје, 2007, кат. бр. 1.

³² T. Dawson, *Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure: "The Parameters of Women's Dress in Byzantium, A.D. 1000-1200"*, *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800 – 1200*, Routledge, 2006, p. 48.

³³ Armlets were an obligatory part of a woman's propriety in Byzantium. Ana Komnene in the *Alexiad* makes much of the claim that the graceful gestures with which her mother accompanied her speech only showed her hand to the wrist and never beyond, thus defining the noble and virtuous demeanour of the gender cf. T. Dawson, "Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure: "The Parameters of Women's Dress in Byzantium, A.D. 1000-1200", pp. p. 61.



Fig. 13 – Armlet, grave find, necropolis Krstevi, village of Korešnica, Demir Kapija, end of 10th - beginning of 11th century; Armlets, deposit from Markovi Kuli, Varoš, Prilep, 14th century;

Сл. 13 Наруквица, гробни налаз, некропола Крстиви, село Корешница, Демир Капија, крај X – почетак XI века; Наруквице, депо са локалитета Маркови Кули, Варош, Прилеп, XIV век

has another distinctive feature – a leather belt, decorated with golden circular ornaments around the waist and golden applications on the part of the strap hanging down the right side of his body (Fig. 7). Similar belt is depicted around the waist of duke Dejan in the narthex of Kučevište³⁴, while the belts of the two noblemen in Psača³⁵ (Fig. 14) are ornamented with proportionally designed decorative golden pieces along the whole length of the accessory and can be compared to the strap worn by despot Jovan Oliver in the narthex of Lesnovo³⁶ (Fig. 1).

As a part of the male costume,

the leather belt decorated with ornaments made of precious metals was the most appreciated symbol of social position, feudal rank and economic power. It was adjusted around the nobleman's waist, buckled up front and was hanging loose by either the left or right side of his body.³⁷ The position of the loose part of the belt in regard to the hierarchic status of the individual cannot be determined; however, one can notice that the most expensive belt, in other words, the one almost fully covered with thick golden plates is the one adorning the attractive figure of the feudal lord Jovan Oliver, the commissioner of the Lesnovo monastery (Fig. 15). Embracing his low-cut waist, the belt – *centura* depicted as an element of Oliver's khetorial portrait in the naos of the church is quite similar to the one decorating his garment in the narthex of the temple; the slightly visible distinction between the two in regard to the number of the golden plates³⁸ was most probably due to painterly rather to symbolical reasons.

Tall and slender, firm and athletic, Jovan Oliver is, by all means, the best looking male character in the medieval Balkans. Depicted within the donor's composition in the Lesnovo naos, he is dressed in a luxurious ensemble of stylish garments: linen shirt decorated with circlets printed in two different shades of the colors red and blue with floral ornamental motifs inside them, sleeves

³⁴ И. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарство српске властеле у доба Немањића*, Београд 1994, p. 135.

³⁵ З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Историските портрети во Псаџа и времето на нивното сликање*, Средновековната уметност во Македонија, Скопје 2004, p. 254; S. Korunovski, E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, Milano 2006, Fig. 146.

³⁶ И. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарство српске властеле у доба Немањића*, p. 160; С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново*, p. 170.

³⁷ M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, p. 65.

³⁸ Е. Манева, *Средновековен накит од Македонија*, Скопје 1992, p. 30.



Fig. 14 – Khtetorial composition in the church of Saint Nicholas at Psača (1365-1371), detail;

Сл. 14 Ктиторска композиција у цркви Светог Николе у Псачи (1365-1371), детаљ



Fig. 15 – Khtetorial portrait of sebastocrator Jovan Oliver in the Lesnovo naos (1342/43), detail;

Сл. 15 Ктиторски портрет севастократора Јована Оливера у наосу Леснова (1342/43), детаљ

buttoned with a row of twelve white pearls each and gold-like wristbands embellished with circular adornments. Above the shirt, he wears a short-sleeved royal-blue garment - *cavadion* made of firm, yet soft material³⁹, decorated with vertical stripes embroidered with pearls, a waist band and arm ribbons of the same design. On the front side of the attire, a heart shaped breast plate made of crimson red broadcloth is stitched on⁴⁰, covered with genuine pearls and golden medallions with the motif of eagle in them. The belt and the silky handkerchief as accessories, as well as the *diadem* as a head ornament - are the finishing touches to the impeccable outlook of the breathtaking trendsetter. As much as the image of Jovan Oliver in the naos of Lesnovo reflects his respect of the dress-code designed to match his social status⁴¹, the lavish execution of the cus-

³⁹ Т. Вулета, *Лесновски кавади Јована Оливера*, Patrimonium.Mk 13, Скопје 2015, p.181.

⁴⁰ By some scholars treated as a real “cloud collar” originated in the Far East, cf. Т. Вулета, *Лесновске облак-кразне*, Patrimonium. Mk 12, Скопје 2014, pp. 157-182. In generally oriental elements, such as the cloud collar were widely adopted by the Byzantine nobility in the course of the 14th century, cf. M. G. Parani, *Cultural Identity and Dress: Byzantine Ceremonial Costume*, Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik, band 57, Wien 2007, pp. 113-114.

⁴¹ Б. Тодић, *Натпис уз Јована Оливера у наосу Леснова. Прилог хронологији лесновских фресака*, Зборник радова Византолошког института 38, Београд 1999/2000,



Fig. 16 – Head-dress, deposit from Markovi Kuli, Varoš, Prilep, 14th century.

Сл. 16 Украс за главу, депо са локалитета Маркови Кули, Варош, Прилеп, XIV век

tom made breast plate speaks not so much in favor of the handsome as a trail-blazer, rather of his desire to stress his social background and feudal privileges as a member of the highest circles of political and financial power⁴². Imposing and graceful, elegant and vane, Jovan Oliver from the Lesnovo naos can be put on the pedestal of a medieval supermodel who met the highest standards of Byzantine style and fashion. His trendy attitude is also confirmed by the portrait of the *bell home* depicted in the narthex of his endowment in Lesnovo⁴³, where he wears quite similar costume tailored for his athletic figure, only, in this occasion, his garment is purple and is decorated with embroidered golden medallions encompassing two-headed eagles, as the most appropriate color and design for the dress-code of the highest feudal title he acquired in 1346⁴⁴.

In the composition depicted in the Lesnovo naos, the *loyal “separatist”*, Jovan Oliver, as one can notice, is meticulously painted, whereas each inch of the figure expresses dominant self-confidence and stamina. His historical portrait reveals a unique selection of jewelry pieces, an assembly precisely and tastefully arranged and perfectly intoned in his masculine charisma and charm. On his head Jovan Oliver wears a head-dress decorated with gemstones and pearls. Having in mind the preserved depictions of Byzantine *sebastokrators* wearing the rank crowns called *stephanos* (e.g. Isaak Komnenos in Chora), in the case of Jovan Oliver’s headdress, the arched projections mentioned by the sources are missing. In this portrait Jovan Oliver is probably wearing a *sebastokrator’s* diadem in its original form, designed prior to the 11th century *haute couture* mélange utilized by the imperial officials, i.e. the diadem adorning the caesar’s head of the early Byzantine court⁴⁵. Regrettably, the portrait of Jovan Oliver in the Lesnovo narthex is not precisely visible due to the devastation of the fresco; still the semi-circular shape of the head-dress resembles the

pp. 379-381; E. Dimitrova, *The Portal to Heaven. Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, pp. 373-374.

⁴² E. Dimitrova, “The Da Vinci Mode”. *Unsolved Mysteries of Macedonian Medieval Fresco Painting*, Niš & Byzantium Symposium. Collection of scientific works vol. VIII, Niš 2010, pp. 256-257; Eadem, *V. I. Personalities in Medieval Macedonia. Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionership (11th–14th Century)*, Folia Archaeologica Balkanica III, Skopje 2015, pp. 616-617.

⁴³ С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново*, т. XLIV.

⁴⁴ А. Нитић, *Тканине и профани костим у српском сликарству XIV и прве половине XV века. Порекло и развој стила*, Niš & Byzantium, Collection of scientific works vol. II, Niš 2004, p. 323.

⁴⁵ For the caesar’s head-dress cf. M. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, pp. 67, 329 (Appendix 3, nos. 23, 24).

form of *camelaukion* – one of the imperial regalia, also visible in his representation depicted in the paraklesion built within the cathedral church of Saint Sophia in Ohrid⁴⁶. Unlike the specific head-dress of Jovan Oliver in the Lesnovo naos, most probably made of red leather decorated with gems and pearls, the *stematogirion* of Jovan Dragušin in Pološko and the unexpected *camelaukion*-like crowns worn by Jovan Oliver in the Lesnovo narthex and Saint Sophia paraklesion, the archeological treasury of Macedonia Byzantina offers only one luxurious example discovered in the deposit from Markovi Kuli, Prilep in a form of a stripe made of silver gilded plaques executed with filigree and granulation and inlaid with precious stones with green, gray and blush color (Fig. 16).

In the khetorial composition depicted in the Lesnovo narthex, the wife of Jovan Oliver, signed as “ΠΑΝΕΥΧΣΤΑΤΗ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΣΣΑ”, wears a lavishly executed head-dress known as *modiolus*. The *modiolus* (literally meaning “little pot”) is an open voluminous cylindrical gold crown with sides that flare out, the upper rim of which is richly elaborated with pointed (or arched) projections supplemented by precious gemstones and pearls. The mid part of the crown is inlaid with larger precious stones forming polychromic sections on the crown’s core, the background of which is meticulously invigorated with pearls and smaller gemstones. The lower rim i.e. the base of the crown is adorned with pearls and smaller gemstones. Four Byzantine historical authorities mention this crown being used exquisitely at royal coronations⁴⁷. However, it seems that from the 12th century onward and during the Palaiologan époque the *modiolus* was used only by the empresses, whereas its depiction has been regularly testified on khetorial portraits of the Serbian queens, as well as on some representations of noble-women in the course of the 14th century. Whether this type of a crown worn by Ana Maria in Lesnovo can be associative to the title written next to her portrait, is still an open issue; however the *modiolus*, her title of ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΣΣΑ, the illustration of the Psalm 148 representing Oliver’s portrait with a round headdress, as well as the *camelaukion* worn by Jovan Oliver in Saint Sophia church could be a viable argument to the idea that the handsome “separatist” in the Lesnovo narthex wears this exact type of a crown epitomized to his mega ambitious strive to be the leading authority in one else’s realm. By all means, he was more than an important political and economical magnate of the time, an entrepreneur who ruled over the revived exploitation of the silver alloys in the eastern Macedonian regions, an icon among the most prestigious Byzantine fashionable gentlemen of the époque, an ambitious clairvoyance who saw his rise in the fragmented political turmoil of the 14th century and a marvel that in a given momentum simply disappeared from the secular *mise-en-scene*⁴⁸. As one of the contemporary fashion moguls would say: *a suit does not*

⁴⁶ С. Габелић, *Нови податак о севастократорској титули Јована Оливера*, Зограф 11, Београд 1980, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁷ Genesis, the Continuator of Theophanes, Constantine Porphyrogenetos in his *De Cerimoniis* and John Skylitzes in his *Synopsis of Byzantine History (811-1057)*, whereas Constantine is the only one to give information concerning the constitutional role of this prerogative, cf. P. Charanis, *The Imperial Crown Modiolus and its Constitutional Significance*, Byzantion, Vol. 12, No. 1/2 (1937), pp. 189-195.

⁴⁸ Whether or not the 14th century monk Jovan Kalivit was actually the despot Jovan

make a man, but it helps him to be more attractive, Jovan Oliver might have been vain as a courter and politician, but, judging from the images preserved in Macedonian fresco ensembles, he was surely spotless in terms of his masculine outlook, as well as his fashionable appearance.

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“ВИСОКА МОДА” У ВИЗАНТИЈСКОЈ МАКЕДОНИЈИ: ОДЕЋА, НАКИТ, УКРАСИ

У оквиру ктиторских композиција приказаних као део фреско аранжмана у задужбинама из XIV века на подручју данашње Републике Македоније, издвајамо примере раскошних одевних комбинација представника феудалне елите, који говоре у прилог специфичних модних трендова епохе, као год и личних аспирација племићког укуса и естетске наклоности. У том контексту, указујемо на модне детаље женских костима (ктиторке у цркви Светог Николе у Псачи, Ана Марија Ливерина у нартексу Леснова, ктиторова супруга у Полошком), као и на специфике мушке одеће високе властеле (Јован Оливер у Леснову, Јован Драгушин у Полошком, ктитори у Псачи), наглашавајући социолошке карактеристике феудалне костимографије, као и лични приступ поменутих особа ка савременим одевним трендовима касног средњег века. У домену накита, указујемо на раскошније примерке женског украшавања на фрескама: брошеви (Ана Марија Ливерина у Леснову), наушнице (краљица Симонида у Старом Нагоричину, војвоткиња Владислава у Кучевишту, Ана Марија Ливерина у Леснову), као и на примере археолошких налаза поменутих украсних предмета на македонској територији (локалитет Маркови кули у Прилепу, Скопска тврђава, локалитет Горно Оризари код Кочана). Од мушког накита, издвајамо прстен Јована Драгушина у Полошком и украсе на глави високих представника српске властеле који означавају хијерархиски ранг њихових власника у односу на највишу владарску титулу (од кожне траке на глави Јована Оливера у наосу Леснова, преко деспотског венца који краси лик Јована Драгушина у Полошком до полукружне Оливерове круне у нартексу Леснова и у капели Светог Јована Претече у Охридској Светој Софији која наличи краљском камелаукиону). Од свих набројаних примера високе моде у каталогу средњовековних фреска на подручју савремене Македоније, прво место, свакако, припада моћном властелину и највећем “трендсетеру” XIV века, Јовану Оливеру, који је, без обзира на титулу, највише уложио у свој модни изглед (скупе тканине, ексклузивни костим, панцирни прслук, појас са златним плочицама), што је, с обзиром на његов беспрекорни изглед, више него оправдано.

Oliver remains an open question, although the contemporary scientific researches offered a number of arguments *pro* this assumption, cf. В. Г. Алексић, *Наследници Мрњавчевића и територије под њиховим влашћу од 1371 до 1395*, (докторска дисертација), Београд, 2012, pp. 34-37.