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## **THE DEPICTIONS OF THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS ON THE UPPER FLOOR OF ST. SOPHIA, OHRID**

*Abstract:* The former beauty of the wall painting on the upper floor of the narthex of St. Sophia in Ohrid, a work attributed to the famous painter John Theorianos and his collaborators and created between 1346 and 1350, can be still easily recognized, despite severe damage particularly to the upper fresco lawyer. This paper deals with the scenes of the Seven Ecumenical Councils that are depicted on the northern and southern part of the vault of this sacred space. The images of the councils are rendered chronologically in a clockwise direction, also in consideration of their symbolic meaning in respect to the other scenes in this holyspace. By carefully reading the traces of the inscriptions and through a comparative iconographical analysis, this study identifies the depictions of all pictured council participants and determines their seating arrangement, which accords with their rank in the Christian Ecumene.

*Key words:* St. Sophia-Ohrid, Ecumenical Councils, John Theorianos, Pentarchy

This article discusses the depictions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils that are situated on the vault of the upper floor of the narthex in St. Sophia in Ohrid, and aims by means of their thorough examination to further complete existing knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The fresco decoration of this sacred space was executed between 1346 and 1350 for Archbishop Nicholas by the painter John Theorianos and his collaborators.<sup>2</sup> This paper will focus particularly on the identification of the depicted figures, which has hitherto not been the subject of scholarly research.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Theorianos' signature was first detected by Vojislav J. Đurić, who also gave the first exact dating of these frescoes – cf. V. Đurić, *Света Софија у Охриду*, Beograd 1963, X-XI; idem, *Марков манастир – Охрид*, ZLUMS 8 (1972), 151–154; idem, *Византијске фреске у Југославији*, Beograd 1974, 68–69.

<sup>3</sup> The representations of the Ecumenical Councils in the Ohrid cathedral were exa-



Fig. 1. Ohrid, St. Sophia, Upper floor of the Narthex, northern part of the vault with the Depictions of the Ecumenical Councils © N. Spasovska

Сл. 1. Охрид, Св. Софија, горњи спрат нартекса, северни део свода са претставама екуменских сабора © Н. Спасовска

mined first by Richard Hamann-Mac Lean and Horst Hallensleben, who indicate an incorrect arrangement of the scenes, R. Hamann-Mac Lean/H. Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, Giessen 1963, Plan 1. This was followed by Christopher Walter, who in his book identified the fifth, sixth and seventh councils on the basis of the inscriptions of the emperors, but confused the first with the second council – C. Walter, *L' iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine*, Paris 1970, 114-115. This mistake was rectified by Cvetan Grozdanov, who made an iconological connection between the depictions of the third and fourth Ecumenical Councils and the illustration of the second canon of John Damascene dedicated to the Koimesis of Theotokos on the blind calotte above the narthex, identified more emperors, provided a detailed description and produced a schematic drawing of all seven synods – C. Grozdanov, *Прилози проучавању Св. Софије Охридске у XIV веку*, ZLUMS 5 (1969), 43-44; idem, *Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo od XIV vek*, Beograd 1980, 69-73. Most recently, Milan Radujko has dealt with differentiating the hand of the painter John Theorianos from those of his collaborators, mistakenly exchanging the second council with the third one – cf. M. Radujko, *Прво сликарство Љуботена: Тематика, стил и мајстори*, Patrimonium MK 7-8 (2010) ed. D. Nikolovski, 171, 189, fig. 30, 190, fig. 31; idem, *Ауторски рукопис и историја уметности: Живопис спратних одаја нартекса и трема Свете Софије охридске и зидно сликарство Охрида и суседних области*, Zograf 35 (2011), ed. D. Vojvodić, 159 (fig. 4), 160, 161. Fundamental studies on the iconography of the Ecumenical Councils in Byzantine art are provided by: C. Walter, *L' iconographie des concile* (op. cit.); idem., *The Names of the Council Fathers at Saint Sozomenus, Cyprus*, REB 28 (1970), 189-206; H. Stern, *Les représentations des conciles dans l' église de la Nativité a Bethléem*, Byzantion 11 (1936), 105-152; S. Sévérien, *L' iconographie des sept conciles oecuméniques*, Échos d' Orient 25 (1926), 144-176; G. Kühnel, *Die Konzildarstellungen in der Geburtskirche in Bethlehem ihre kunsthistorische Tradition und ihr kirchepolitisch-historischer Hintergrund*, BZ 86/87 (1993/1994), Heft 1, 86-107. On the history of the councils – cf. A. V. Kartašev, *Васељенски сабори*, Beograd 2009; C. J. Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils, from the original documents*, Vol. I: *To the close of the Council of Nicea, A. D. 325*, Book I-II, Edinburgh 1871; Ibid. Vol. II: *A.D. 236 to A.D. 429*, Book III-VIII, Edinburgh 1876; Ibid. Vol. III: *A.D. 231 to A.D. 451*, Book IX-XI, Edinburgh 1883; ibid. Vol. IV: *A.D. 451 to A. D. 680*, Book XII-XIV, Edinburgh 1895; ibid., Vol. V: *A.D. 626 to the close of the Second Council of Nicaea, A.D.*

Consequently, it will also point out their hierarchical placement corresponding to their rank within the Christian Ecumene, while analyzing historical facts, in particular contemporary theological discussions and political influences, which are reflected in the iconography of the Synods.

The seven chronologically depicted scenes of the Ecumenical Councils in St. Sophia Cathedral follow a circular arrangement and run clockwise starting in the south-eastern part of the vault, just above the Deësis depiction and the donor composition on the wall below, and ending in the north-eastern part of the vault (Fig. 1). The center of the vault contains a blind calotte, subsequently walled up, with the illustration of the second canon by John Damascene dedicated to the Koimesis of the Theotokos. Since the resolutions of the Third and Fourth Councils, which respectively declared the role of the Mother of God as Theotokos and the two-nature doctrine of Jesus, are connected with the Koimesis of the Theotokos, the placement of this scene in the blind calotte of the Ohrid narthex corresponds visually with the depictions of these two councils. The image of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria, which usually accompanies the First Ecumenical Council, is placed in the Ohrid Cathedral next to the composition showing the Second Council. Nevertheless, the symbolism of this arrangement is maintained, because Arius' heresy was the subject of dispute and censured at the First Council, while the decision on the condemnation of Arius and his adherers was declared during the Second Council.

The Ecumenical Councils of the Ohrid church follow an iconography that was typical of their depiction during the late Palaiologan times. They essentially conform to the instructions for painters found in the later *Hermeneiai* of the Zografski family (written in 1885 after a Slavic translation of 1728) and of Dionysius of Fournā (1729-1732), which seem to have been based on similar pattern books from the 12th-14th centuries.<sup>4</sup> In the upper part of the scene, the emperor is shown enthroned in the center, flanked by altogether four identically seated Orthodox bishops, two on either side of the emperor. In the lower part of the scene, two groups of Council participants are depicted facing each other, with the Orthodox hierarchs standing on the left and the heterodox on the right. Between the upper and lower part of each Council image ran an inscription, unfortunately preserved in most only in traces, which provides more detailed information about the circumstances of each gathering, including the names of the respective emperor and the most prominent church dignitaries. Today, this inscription is partially preserved only in the depiction of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, while the traces of the auxiliary lines for the respective text are still visible in the remaining Council depictions.

The Ecumenical Councils were depicted in Christian art already before the period of iconoclasm.<sup>5</sup> Late Byzantine presentations follow patterns that

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787, Book XVI-XVIII, Edinburgh 1896.

<sup>4</sup> М. Medić, *Стари сликарски приручници*, Vol. II: *Први јерусалимски рукопис, 1566 – Типик Нектарија Србина, 1599 – Књига попа Данила, 1674 – Ерминија породице Зографски, 1728*, Beograd 2002, 645-648; *ibid.*, Vol. III; *Ерминија о сликарским вештинама Дионисија из Фурне – Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, Ἐρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης*, Beograd 2005, 434-439.

<sup>5</sup> C. Walter, *L'iconographie des conciles* (op. cit, n. 3), 21-25, 74-75.

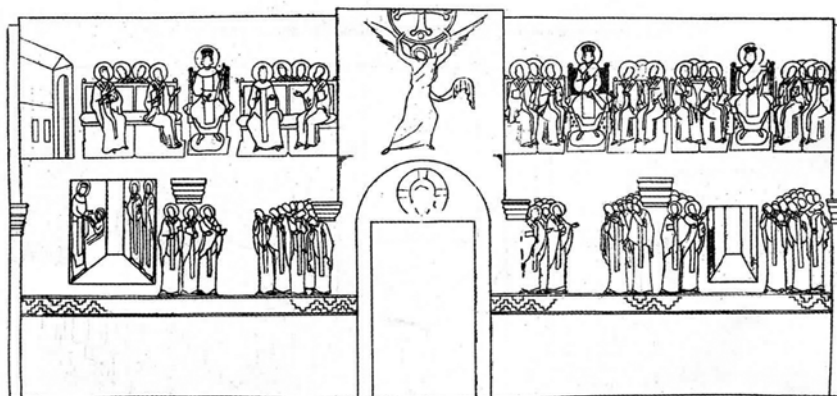


Fig. 2. Gelati Monastery, Drawing of the Western wall of Narthex of the Catholicon with the Images of the Ecumenical Councils © after E. Gedevanishvili, *The Depiction* (op. cit. n. 7)

Сл. 2. Манастир Гелати, цртеж западног зида нартекса католикона са претставама екуменских сабора © Е. Gedevanishvili, *The Depiction* (op. cit. n. 7)

were advanced especially from the time of the Macedonian dynasty. The upper part of the scene, in fact, follows the iconographic structure of the representation of Pentecost, as well as scenes glorifying the emperor.<sup>6</sup> The difference is shown only by the fact that in the center of these scenes a representation of the throne on which a Gospel book or a cross is placed, while in the late Byzantine period the enthroned emperor is depicted in the center of the scene. The lower part of the scenes also finds parallels in the art of the Middle Byzantine period, for example, the 12th-century depictions in the Georgian monastery of Gelati, probably ended in 1130 (Fig. 2).<sup>7</sup> The Councils were apparently painted in the narthex of the churches even before iconoclasm.<sup>8</sup> This placement of the scenes within church decoration schemes continued to be handed down in the following period almost without exception. This is also attested by several depictions

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-198, 215-216. This scheme is seen in the miniatures of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus (879-882) and the Menologion of Basil II (around 1000), in which the Second and the Seventh Ecumenical Council, respectively, are represented. Cf. L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium, Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Cambridge 1999, 210-217, Fig. 36 (fol. 355r); *El Menologio de Basilio II. Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Gr. 1613. Libro de estudios con ocasión de la edición facsimil*. Dir. por Francesco d' Aiuto. Ed. esp. a cargo de Inmaculada Pérez Martín. Vatican – Atenas – Madrid 2008, fol. 108; [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1613/](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613/).

<sup>7</sup> T. Virsaladze, *Фрагменты древней фресковой росписи главного Гелатского храма*, *Ars Georgica* 5 (1959), 163-204, Ris. 1-3, Pl. 101-107; E. Gedevanishvili, *Some Thoughts on the Depiction of the Ecumenical Councils at Gelati, Iconographica*, *Rivista di iconografia medievale e moderna* 6 (2007) 54-60; *idem.*, *The Depiction of the Ecumenical Councils at Gelati Monastery. Interpretation between Image and Text*. In: *Bild und Text im Mittelalter*. ed. K. Krause, B. M. Schellewald. Köln – Weimar – Wien 2011, 313-328, Scheme 1, Fig. 1-3; A. Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in medieval Georgia*, Pennsylvania University Park 1998, 62-67, Fig. 39-41, Pl. IX.

<sup>8</sup> Walter, *L'iconographie des conciles* (op. cit. n. 3), 22-25.

from the 13th century, with most examples extant in Serbian foundations.<sup>9</sup> The representations in the Ohrid cathedral are among these. But unlike most Serbian churches, in Ohrid the images of the Ecumenical Councils are not combined with the synods of the Serbian Church.

In St. Sophia in Ohrid the representation of the First Ecumenical Council, which took place in Nicaea in 324,<sup>10</sup> is partially destroyed on the left side, while the fine upper layer of the remaining part of the fresco is especially damaged in the lower part (Fig. 3). The upper fragment of the Ohrid fresco shows the Emperor Constantine I (324-337) enthroned with a right raised hand and flanked from behind by a guardsman armed with a spear and a dagger. On



Fig. 3. Ohrid, St. Sophia, First Ecumenical Council © N. Spasovska

Сл. 3. Охрид, Св. Софија, Први екуменски сабор © Н. Спасовска

either side of the emperor there are two church dignitaries, each seated on a cathedra, holding a book, and accompanied by a deacon standing behind. In the extensively damaged left side of the lower part of the image are standing the orthodox, distinguished by a halo and led by St. Spyridon of Trimythontos. The saint is recognizable by his typical shepherd's cap made of straw, a symbol of his holy pastoral vocation. Behind him, according to his iconographic features, one can discern St. Nicholas, who was also a participant at this Council. St. Spyridon is illustrated with his hands extended forward, in which he is supposed to have squeezed a miraculous jug, from which simultaneously water flowed downwards and flame shot upwards (sadly, due to the severe damage to the fresco, this detail cannot be seen with certainty). With this supernatural deed Spyridon surprised the heterodox, whose leader Arius stands directly opposite him. He wears a brown cloak, while his proponents are shown in light-colored robes; none of these can be identified by name.

The hierarchs seated in the upper row next to the emperor can be deciphered with certainty to some extent. Seated to the left of the emperor is Pope

<sup>9</sup> On the existing examples *ibid.*, 88-90, 96-99, 103, 106-120.

<sup>10</sup> The First Ecumenical Council was convened due to the conflict that broke out in Alexandria over the Arian doctrine. The main theme of this council was related to the Holy Trinity. It was in this context that the Nicene Creed was established and the date of the Easter celebration was set – Cf. R. Kim, *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*. Cambridge – New York 2021, *passim*; Kartašev, *Васељенски сабору*, (op. cit. n. 3), 29-132; Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. I, 262-447.

Sylvester I (314-335), whose naming inscription is partially visible in dark traces – Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΙΛΒΕΣΤΡΟΣ. Although he was represented by his two envoys at the first Christian council in Nicaea,<sup>11</sup> he is included in the representation of this Council session in Byzantine art, which is also confirmed in the Ohrid fresco. This distinguished saint is pictured here as an elderly man with a long beard, which corresponds with his description in the painters' manuals.<sup>12</sup> However, whether he also exhibits a papal headdress, with which he is frequently depicted, can no longer be determined because of the damage to the fresco.<sup>13</sup> Sylvester is represented similarly in the First Council scene in the Demetrius Church of the Patriarchal Monastery in Peć (ca. 1322-1324) and in Dečani Monastery (1348).<sup>14</sup> Unlike in Ohrid, in Dečani, Sylvester is seated unusually as second in row on the right side of the emperor. In the Council fresco of the monastery church of Matejče he is clearly recognizable in the depiction of the hierarch also stationed to the left of the emperor, although his naming inscription is missing there.<sup>15</sup> However, he features the same facial characteristics, hair, and beard as Pope Sylvester in Ohrid. The great accordance can be explained by the fact that some of Matejče's frescoes (1348-1352) are also attributed to the studio of John Theorianos.<sup>16</sup>

The bishop sitting next to Pope Sylvester I in the First Council depiction in the Ohrid church poses a problem for identification. He is depicted as a middle-aged man with dark, somewhat hoary hair and an equally medium-length beard. The letters of his naming inscription are visible in very faint traces and are covered by thin white lime layer, which causes great difficulty in reading them. It could be Archbishop Metrophanes of Constantinople (325-326), who appears as a fourth bishop on the fresco of the First Ecumenical Council in Dečani. His iconography there, however, differs significantly from that of the bishop in Ohrid. Several arguments suggest that Makarios I of Jerusalem (314-333) is more likely to be seen here. On the one hand, the traces of the letters seem to reveal his name (Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ). On the other hand, the high rank of the Jerusalem bishop within the pentarchy of this period also makes his representa-

<sup>11</sup> Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 31; Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. I, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 1192-193, 540; *ibid.*, 360-361; Vol. III/ 394-395.

<sup>13</sup> On the cult and representation of Pope Sylvester I – cf. A. Gavrilović, *Култ римског папе Силвестера Првог у српским земљама од 1166. до 1459. године, Crkvene studije* (Niš 2019), 501-519 (with numerous examples).

<sup>14</sup> M. Čanak-Medić – B. Todić: *Дечани*, Beograd 2005, 429 (fig. 351), 494 (fig. 411); V. Milanović: *Програм живописа у припрати: Зидно сликарство манастира Дечана. Грађа и студије = Mural Painting of Monastery of Dečani. Material and Studies*. ed. V. J. Đurić. Beograd 1995, 363, fig. 1-2; [https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Fresco\\_Collections/Ecumenical\\_Councils/CX4K3381.html](https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Fresco_Collections/Ecumenical_Councils/CX4K3381.html); <https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Pec/Demetrios/Pictures/Nave/ArchBetwenNaveWestBay/282N0769.html> (october 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Dimitrova offers an illustration of the saint without an attempt at identification – cf. E. Dimitrova, *Манастир Матејче = The Monastery of Matejče* (sum.), Skopje 2002, 200, Drawing VII/218, fig. 74.

<sup>16</sup> *idem*. 246.

tion here more likely. Moreover, unlike that of Metrophanes, his name is mentioned in the context of the description of the council scene in the *Hermeneiai* of Dionysius of Fournā.<sup>17</sup> Even though as an elder, this prominent saintly figure is painted with similar facial features in the Chapel of Our Lady in the Monastery of John Theologos on Patmos (last quarter of the 12th century) and in the prothesis of the Church of Our Lady in Matejče.<sup>18</sup>

While the Roman pope was assigned the respectable place on the emperor's left side, Alexander I (313-326) received his position on the right side of the ruler (Fig. 3, 4). Accordingly, the young deacon behind him is supposed to represent Athanasios, his disciple and famous



Fig. 4. Ohrid, St. Sophia, St. Eustathios of Antioch and St. Alexander of Alexandria, Detail of the First Ecumenical Council © N. Spasovska

Сл. 4. Охрид, Св. Софија, Св. Евстатије Антиохиски и Св. Александар Александриски, детаљ првог екуменског сабора Council © Н. Спасовска

successor to the Alexandrian bishop's throne, who accompanied his teacher at this council.<sup>19</sup> Alexander's privileged seating position next to the emperor corresponds to the high rank that the Alexandrian patriarch held within the pentarchy at that time. His name is preserved in traces but is clearly legible: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ. This illustrious saint is depicted as an old man with grey hair and a medium-length pointed beard wearing a headdress, though heavily destroyed, which according to tradition was a privilege of the Roman and Alexandrian popes.<sup>20</sup> He is painted similarly, but without the head gear, to his portrayals in Veljusa (1085-1093), Andreaš, and to some extent to that in the First Council depiction in the narthex of Dečani; though in Dečani he appears somewhat younger and with curly hair and beard.<sup>21</sup> His depiction in Staro

<sup>17</sup> Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. III, 434-435.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Kollias, *Patmos*, Athens 1986, 23/fig. 23; F.W. Volbach – J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*, Bd. 3: *Byzanz und der christliche Osten*, Berlin 1985, fig. 180 (here, however, the frescoes are incorrectly described as being located in another part of the monastery; Dimitrova, *Matejče* (op. cit. n. 15), 109, 301.

<sup>19</sup> Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 45-48. The painters' manual of Dionysius of Fournā recommends that painters depict Athanasios in this Council scene; Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. III, 434-435.

<sup>20</sup> On the bishop's headdress as an attribute and its meaning; cf. E. Piltz, *Kamelaukion et mitra: insignes byzantins impériaux et ecclésiastiques*, Stockholm 1977, 21-22, 53-55; C. Walter, *Picture as Language*, London 2000, 69-81; idem, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London 1982, 104-108; W. T. Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium*, Oxford 2012, 28-29.

<sup>21</sup> P. Miljković-Pepek, *Bejzjca*, Skopje 1981, 209-210, Fig. 67; J. Prolović, *Die Kirche des Heiligen Andreas an der Treska. Geschichte, Architektur und Malerei einer palaiologischen Stiftung des serbischen Prinzen Andreaš*. Wien 1997, 107, Fig. 38. On Dečani



Fig. 5. Ohrid, St. Sophia, Second Ecumenical Council (upper part) © N. Spasovska

Сл. 5. Охрид, Св. Софија, Други екуменски сабор, (горњи део) © Н. Спасовска

Nagoričino differs in that his beard is divided into two round strands, while this saintly figure exhibits a round but short beard in the First Council depiction in the Demetrios Church in the Peć Patriarchal Monastery.<sup>22</sup>

The bishop next to Alexander of Alexandria can be identified as Eustathios, Patriarch of Antioch (324 or 325-330).<sup>23</sup> Though preserved in traces, his name is clearly discernible: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΕΥΣΤΑΘΙΟΣ. His placement next to Alexander of Alexandria coincides with the prevalent opinion that both presided over this ecumenical synod.<sup>24</sup> Since the Alexandrian patriarch was ranked higher within the pentarchy, he is depicted directly next to the emperor himself. Like the others, Eustathios is depicted holding a book in his left hand (Fig. 3, 4), but only his is open, in which, although eroded, the following inscription is still legible: Καρδί(αν) καθαρὰν δός μοι, βοήθη μοι Κύριε ὁ Θεός (Fig. 6). These quotations

from Psalm 50:12 – Καρδί(αν) καθαρὰν (on the left page) – and Psalm 108:25 – Βοήθη μοι Κύριε ὁ Θεός (on the right page of the book) with the complementary words δός μοι (recognized in the upper row of the right side of the book) – convey a logical statement: Give me a clean heart, help me Lord God.<sup>25</sup> Yet, that this is an image of St. Eustathios is revealed above all by the iconography of the bishop, which corresponds to his description in the now lost work *Antiquities of Christian History* by Elpios Rhomaios.<sup>26</sup> In fact, he is

cf. supra, n. 14.

<sup>22</sup> B. Todić, *Старо Нагоричино*, Beograd 1993, 71. Fig. 73. About Peć cf. supra, n. 14.

<sup>23</sup> More on this saint; R. V. Sellers, *Eustathius of Antioch and his Place in the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, Cambridge 1928; H. Wallace/ D. Sutherland, *Christian Antioch. A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East*. Cambridge 1982, 31-32 et passim; R. W. Burgess, R. W., *The Date of the Deposition of Eustathius of Antioch*. *Journal of Theological Studies* 51/1 (2000), 150-160; *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, Vol. I. Bruxelles 1957, 201-202; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Ed. A. P. Kazhdan [et al.]. New York – Oxford 1991, II, 753.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. J. M. Schröckh, *Kirchengeschichte*, Vol. 5, Leipzig 1783, 335; Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit, n. 11), Vol. I, 38; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sobori* (op. cit. n. 3), 34.

<sup>25</sup> I thank Ioannis Großmann, who helped me to decipher this inscription correctly and to find its citation sources.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. F. Winkelmann, “Über die körperlichen Merkmale der gottbeseelten Väter”. *Zu einem Malerbuch aus der Zeit zwischen 836 und 913*, in: *Fest und Alltag in Byzanz*. ed



depicted as a middle-aged man with dark, somewhat hoary hair and an equally medium-length beard, in accordance with his age at the time of the meeting of the council. He is found with a similar iconography already in a 9th-century miniature in the Paris *Sacra Parallela* (Paris. MS gr. 923, fol. 346<sup>r</sup>).<sup>27</sup> His portrayal is subsequently encountered in a monumental painting in the diaconicon of the church of St. Nicholas near Monembasia (13th century) and more frequently in the 14th century, such as in Gračanica (1321), Staro Nagoričino (1317-1318), Chilandar (1321), in the churches of St. Nicholas Orphanos (ca. 1320) and St. Panteleimon in Thessaloniki (ca. 1310), in Dečani (both in the sanctuary and within the First Ecumenical Council scene), and Ravanica (1384-1387).<sup>28</sup>

Of the image of the Second Ecumenical Council – the so-called First Council of Constantinople, which was convoked by Emperor Theodosius I the Great and met in May and July 381 in the St. Irene Church in Constantinople<sup>29</sup> – only the upper part of the



Fig. 6. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS gr. 510, Second Ecumenical Council © Paris, BNF

Сл. 6. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS gr. 510, Други екуменски сабор © Paris, BNF

G. Prinzing und D. Simon. München 1990, 107-127 and especially 112/43 and 125/43 (with further bibliography); C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453. Sources and Documents*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1972, 214-215; J. Lowden, *Illuminated prophet books. A Study of Byzantine Manuscripts of the Major and Minor Prophets*, University Park, Pennsylvania 1988, 53; M. Chadzidakēs, *Εκ τὸν Ἐπιτομὴν τοῦ Ρωμαίου, Ἐπετηρίς Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 14 (1938), 414; Walter, *Art and Ritual* (op. cit. n. 20), 106-107.

<sup>27</sup> cf. K. Weitzmann, *The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallela. Parisinus graecus 923*, Princeton, NY 1979, 227, Pl. CXXXVIII/Fig. 632; His image is also attested in the mid-11th century fresco on the south wall of the diaconicon of the Sophia Church in Ohrid (ca. 1045), showing an elder with a white hair and beard, cf. S. Radojčić, *Прилози проучавању најстаријег охридског сликарства*, Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta 8 (1964), 369.

<sup>28</sup> B. Živković, *Грачаница. Цртежи фресака = Gračanica. Les dessins des fresques*, Beograd 1989, 64 (Nr. 6), 67; Todić, *Старо Нагоричино* (op. cit. n. 22), 71, fig. 73; P. Miljković-Perpek, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Еутихиј*, Скопје 1976, pl. CXXX; T. Hostetter – J. William, *In the heart of Hilandar. An Interactive Presentation of the Frescoes in the Main Church of the Hilandar Monastery on Mt. Athos*, Beograd 1998 (CD-ROM); A. Tsitouridou, *Ο ζωγραφικός διάκοσμος του Αγίου Νικολάου Ορφανού στη Θεσσαλονίκη*. Thessalonike 1986, 53, Pin. 7; idem: *Зидно сликарство Светог Пантелејмона у Солуну*, Зограф 6 (1975), 17, Fig. 5; V. Petković, R. – Bošković, Đurđe: *Манастир Дечани*, Beograd 1941, Vol. II, Pl. CLXVI/2; M. Belović, *Раваница. Историја и сликарство*, Beograd 1999, 72, 108, 174, sl. LI. For further examples cf. M. Živković, *Из иконографског програма Богородичине цркве у Студеници (1568): Појединачне светитељске представе у северном вестибилу*, Niš i Vizantija 12 ed.(M. Rakocija), (Niš 2013), 412, 417-425 (with further bibliography).

<sup>29</sup> The Arian controversy was ended at this synod with the final condemnation of



Fig. 7. Ohrid, St. Sophia, Third Ecumenical Council (upper part) © N. Spasovska

Сл. 7. Охрид, Св. Софија, Трећи екуменски сабор, (горњи део) © Н. Спасовска

scene is preserved in the St. Sophia Cathedral in Ohrid (Fig. 5). The scene follows the old iconographic template according to which the council participants are arranged sitting on a semi-circular exedra as in the miniature of the famous manuscript of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus of the Bibliothèque National de France (Paris, gr. 510, fol. 355<sup>r</sup>), dated between 879 and 882 (Fig. 6).<sup>30</sup> In the Ohrid scene, however, the center is not occupied by the codex on the throne but by the Emperor Theodosius the Great flanked by two guardsmen. To his left and right are two bishops carrying codices in their hands, and behind them stands one deacon on each side.

In the case of this council, the painter of the narthex of St. Sophia's Cathedral basically adhered to the historical events and depicting in this scene solely the members of the pentarchy who participated in the meeting. Since the then-Pope Damas I (366-384) was not present at the session, nor had he sent envoys to Constantinople, the usual respectable position to the imperial left was allocated to the bishop of Antioch, Meletios (361-381), whose naming inscription is clearly readable: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΜΕΛΕΤΙΟΣ ΑΝ(Τ)ΙΟΧΕΙΑΣ. He was not only a high-ranking bishop within the pentarchy, but also an originally elected president of the Second Council, who was prevented only by his unexpected death in the course of the meeting from leading this honorary session until the end of the synod.<sup>31</sup> His iconography of a man with a few white hairs over his ears and a curl on his forehead, with a likewise grey, medium-length beard falling loosely onto his chest coincides with his description in the paintings manuals, as well as almost entirely with his portrait in the scene of this council in Dečani, where he is also shown to the left of emperor, but as second-ranking next to the Pope Damas.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, he is also depicted in the sanctuary of

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this doctrine, and the teaching of the Trinity was stipulated by the completion of the Nicene Creed. Furthermore, pneumatomachianism, the Macedonian doctrine and the doctrine of Apollinaris of Laodicea were also anathematised. Cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit, n. 3), Vol. II, 340-374; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 140-222.

<sup>30</sup> Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning* (op. cit. n. 6), 210-217, fig. 36 (fol. 355<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>31</sup> Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit, n. 3), Vol. I, 35-36.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Medić, *Сликарска приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 194-195; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 398-399; Čanak & Todić, *Дечани* (op. cit. 14), 429 (fig. 351); Milanović, *Програм живописца* (op. cit. n. 14), fig. 3-4; [https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani/Church/Pictures/Fresco\\_Collections/Ecumenical\\_Councils/CX4K3464.html](https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani/Church/Pictures/Fresco_Collections/Ecumenical_Councils/CX4K3464.html) (october 2021).



Fig. 8. Ohrid, St. Sophia, Fourth Ecumenical Council (upper part) © N. Spasovska  
Сл. 8. Охрид, Св. Софија, Четврти екуменски сабор, (горњи део) © Н. Спасовска

the Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid, although there he is painted as a middle-aged with black hair and beard, while in Staro Nagoričino he appears with somewhat grayish curly hair and beard.<sup>33</sup>

Next to St. Meletios is represented Timotheos I of Alexandria (380-384), whose naming inscription has also been preserved: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΤΙΜΟΘΕΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΑΣ. This saintly figure is also recognizable by the severely eroded headgear that was only worn by the Roman Pope and the Alexandrian bishops, as above mentioned. With a long-pointed beard, he can also be seen in the Menologion below the north-western dome of Gračanica and in the sanctuary in Dečani, but without the distinctive headdress.<sup>34</sup>

On the Ohrid fresco to the emperor's right sits the honorable Gregory I Theologos (also known as Gregory of Nazianzus), who was consecrated as patriarch of Constantinople in 380, succeeding the late Maximos I during the preparation for the Ecumenical Synod. He is regarded as one of the most important scholars of Christianity, and one of only four shepherds of the Church to have obtained the title "theologian". His naming inscription, which exactly denotes this title, is well preserved on the Ohrid fresco: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΣ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ. However, we can also discern Gregory based on his typical iconography, which was clearly formed in the 11th century: he is a bald elder with few hairs over the ears, a curl on the forehead and a straight-cut trapezoidal beard. He is depicted with this iconography in numerous monuments mainly within the liturgy of the Holy Fathers. The painter of Ohrid additionally lent to his portrait a high inner spirituality and great vibrancy through the fine modeling and skillful accentuation of the cheekbones.

<sup>33</sup> С. Grozdanov, *Попреја архиеереја у олтару цркве Богородице Перивленте у Охриду*, Zograf 32 (2008), 83, fig. 13; Todić, *Старо Нагоричино* (op. cit. n. 22), 71, Fig. 73.

<sup>34</sup> В. Živković, *Грачаница* (op. cit. n. 28), 16 (Nr. 10), 17; В. Роровић, *Програм живописа у олтарском простору*. In: *Зидно сликарство манастира Дечана. Грађа и студије = Mural Painting of Monastery of Dečani. Material and Studies*, Ed. V. J. Đurić, Beograd 1995, fig. 14.

The prominent position of Gregory I next to the emperor is explained not only by the fact that he presided over this synod after the unexpected death of Meletios of Antioch, but also the fact that the hierarchical order within the pentarchy had changed by the time of this council. Thus, according to the new rule, the Constantinopolitan Patriarch should be mentioned as the Bishop of New Rome, respectable after the Roman Pope and thereby surpassing firstly the bishop of Antioch, who had hitherto been considered first in the East, as well as the bishop of Alexandria, who bore the title of “pope” like the Roman bishop.<sup>35</sup> Gregory I took advantage of the ignited dispute, resigning from the bishop’s office, which he had reluctantly accepted anyway, so that eventually Nectarios was elected as the new bishop of Constantinople at the same synod.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, on the representation of the Second Ecumenical Council in Dečani, Nectarios appears as the second bishop in the row to the imperial right. In the Demetrios Church of the Patriarchal Monastery in Peć, however, as in Ohrid, Gregory the Theologian is depicted respectfully next to the emperor, though on his left side.<sup>37</sup>

On the Ohrid fresco, like in the monastery church of Peć, Cyril of Jerusalem (350-386), whose inscription has partially survived – Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ [Κύριλ]ΑΟΣ [Ιε]ΡΟΚΟΛΥ[μωv] – is painted as second in row next to Gregory the Theologian. He is portrayed as a bald elder with white strands of hair falling over his ears, a long pointed hoary beard, a prominent nose, and a somewhat emaciated ascetic face, bestowing him a severe countenance. Thus, this depiction resembles his representation on the fresco of the Second Council in Dečani, where he was given a respectable, but for the Jerusalem patriarch unusual, seat next to the emperor himself. Such a representation, however, deviates significantly from his portrait within the Council fresco in Peć and most of his numerous images, in which he appears as a man with a white beard and long hair like Elpios Rhomaios described him.<sup>38</sup> The usage of this iconographic type on the Council depiction in Ohrid accords with his advanced age at the meeting of the Synod; he was born in 313 probably in Jerusalem or its surroundings and died likewise in Jerusalem in the year 386.

Of the fresco of the Third Ecumenical Council, which was convoked by Theodosius II in 431 purposeful in Ephesus due to its connection with the questions raised about Mary, as a place of her stay and strongly cultivated cult, is fragmentarily preserved only in the upper left part of the composition (Fig. 7). The head of the emperor with his partially legible name ΘΕΟΔΩΧΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΚΡ[άτορας] and the bust of his guardsman standing behind him on the right can still be discerned, along with the busts of two seated bishops and their deacons, also to the right of the emperor. The representation of the bishops in

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. I, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 342.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Pec/Demetrios/Pictures/Nave/WestBay/Vault/282N0792.html> (october 2021).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Winkelmann, *Über die körperlichen* (op. cit. n. 26), 112/41; Mango, *The Art* (op. cit. n. 26), 215; Lowden, *Prophet Books* (op. cit. n. 26), 53; Chadzidakēs, *Εκ τών Ελπίου* (op. cit. n. 26), 413-414. In the painters’ manuals he is noted as a man with a round beard – cf. МЕРІС, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 194-195; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 399.

the scene of this synod conditioned the stormy dispute, accompanied by anathemas, about the designation of Mary, and was strongly influenced by the rivalry between the two main early Christian centers of biblical exegesis and theology, Antioch and Alexandria, and by the struggle for prestige between Constantinople and Rome as the main power centers of the Empire. The emperor supported the followers of the doctrine of Nestorius of Constantinople, while the group of opponents was led by Cyril of Alexandria, on whose side stood Pope Celestine I (422-433). Cyril argued that a proper name for Mary should be the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), which was ultimately accepted at this council, although the question of the divine and human nature of Christ remained unresolved. In the end, the emperor joined the victors and also approved the results of the synod.<sup>39</sup>

Since the bishops belonging to the pentarchy fought against each other at this synod, the condemned heretics Nectarios of Constantinople and John of Antioch, are omitted the row of the emperor of this depiction, and the two vacant seats were assigned to some respected orthodox church dignitaries.<sup>40</sup>

On the fresco in Ohrid the presider over the Third Council, Cyril of Alexandria (412-444), received his honorable place right next to the emperor. His naming inscription – Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΛΛΟΣ ΑΛΕ(ΞΑΝΔ)ΡΕΙΑC – is still legible despite damage. Behind him stands one of two of his well-known deacons, Dioscorus or Anatolius, who were present at this synod.<sup>41</sup> His iconography differs from most of his otherwise frequent depictions, with only exception, that he is shown here without the common headdress of Alexandrian church leaders.<sup>42</sup> He also appears according to the same iconographic pattern in the fresco of the Third Council in Dečani, also sitting on the right side of the emperor, while next to him is positioned the bishop Memnon of



Fig. 9. Ohrid, St. Sophia, St. Maximos II of Antioch, Detail of the Fourth Ecumenical Council © N. Spasovska

Сл. 9. Охрид, Св. Софија, Св. Максим II Антиохиски, детаљ четвртог екуменског сабора © Н. Спасовска

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. III, 1-114; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 225-274; E. Honigmann, *Juvenal of Jerusalem*, DOP 5 (1950), 267-268.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 646-647; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 436-437.

<sup>41</sup> Dioscorus later succeeded Cyril on the Alexandrian patriarchal throne, while Anatolius occupied the throne of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch.

<sup>42</sup> His description is found in Oulpios Rhomaios [Winkelmann, *Über die körperlichen* (op. cit. n. 26), 112/40; Mango, *The Art* (op. cit. n. 26), 215; Lowden, *Prophet Books* (op. cit. n. 26), 53; Chadzidakēs, *Εκ τῶν Ελλείων* (op. cit. n. 26), 413] and later several painters' manuals [Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 190-191, 358-359, 540; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 392-393].

Ephesus.<sup>43</sup> In the Georgian monastery of Gelati, he also sits next to the emperor, but next to him is Cyril of Antioch, who replaces the condemned John.<sup>44</sup> On the Ohrid fresco, however, next to Cyril is found the bishop of Jerusalem Juvenal (bishop 422-451; 451-458 first Patriarch of Jerusalem), whose inscription is clearly legible: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΙΟΥΒΕΝΑΛΙΟ[ς].<sup>45</sup> He is depicted as a middle-aged man with brown hair, a long beard, and fine facial traits, which, without ruining the morphology of this visage, are emphasized by the cheekbones and the two straight lines of the nose and eyes, reflecting his strong character with a determined and penetrated look. The Ohrid portrayal of Juvenal resembles that in a row of bishops on the south side of the prothesis arch at the Church of Dečani, and within the Third Ecumenical Council in the narthex of the same church, where he is seated to the right of the emperor next to Pope Celestine I.<sup>46</sup> Juvenal is depicted next to the Roman Pope in Gelati as well.<sup>47</sup> It is to be expected that the destroyed right side of the Ohrid fresco contained a depiction of the Roman Pope, although he did not participate in this council personally but was represented at the gathering by his envoys.<sup>48</sup> Next to him could well have sat Memnon of Ephesus like in Dečani, or Cyril of Antioch like in Gelati.

The depiction of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, summoned in 451 in the Church of St. Euphemia in Chalcedon on the Asia Minor side of the Bosphorus,<sup>49</sup> is also fragmentarily preserved only in the upper part (Fig. 8). Merely the busts in the emperor's row are still extant, and their naming inscriptions are missing. As usual, the reigning emperor Marcian (450-457) is enthroned in the center of the composition, accompanied by a guardsman armed with a large sword standing behind him to the left. The prominent place to the left of the emperor was assigned probably to the Roman pope Leo I (440-461), who confirmed the decisions of this council, although he did not attend the gathering personally, but was represented by his dispatchers.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the image of an elder with a long beard corresponds to his description in the painters' manuals.<sup>51</sup> He exhibits similar iconographic features at the New Tokali Kilise (before 969), although

<sup>43</sup> Čanak & Todić, *Дечани* (op. cit. n. 14), 495 (fig. 412); Milanović, *Програм живописа* (op. cit. n. 14), fig. 5-6; [http://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Fresco\\_Collections/Ecumenical\\_Councils/CX4K3401.html](http://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Fresco_Collections/Ecumenical_Councils/CX4K3401.html) (october 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Virsaladze, *Фрагменты* (op. cit. n. 7), 166, (Ris. 1), 172.

<sup>45</sup> On this bishop of Jerusalem – cf. Honigmann, *Juvenal of Jerusalem* (op. cit. n. 39), 213-274.

<sup>46</sup> Čanak & Todić, *Дечани* (op. cit. n. 14), 495 (fig. 412). In the sanctuary in Staro Nagoričino he is depicted as a bald-headed elder with a beard parted in two strands – cf. Miljković-Pepek, *Делото* (op. cit. n. 28), 9, fig. CXXVII.

<sup>47</sup> Virsaladze, *Фрагменты* (op. cit. n. 7), 166, (Ris. 1), 172.

<sup>48</sup> Celestine sent the Roman bishops Arcadius and Projectus and the Roman priest Philip as his legates to this council – Cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. I, 34.

<sup>49</sup> The Alexandrian miaphysitism and diophysitism were thereby confirmed as true beliefs – cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. III, 285-464; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 277-344.

<sup>50</sup> cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. I, 31-32.

<sup>51</sup> Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 541; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 396-397.

there he appears somewhat younger and with dark hair.<sup>52</sup> In the council scene in Dečani, in the same place next to the emperor sits a hierarch, who was mistakenly marked as the non-existent Pope Methodius. However, since his iconography coincides greatly to the suggested portrait of Leo I in Ohrid, it can be assumed that the painter of Dečani had this pope in mind after all.<sup>53</sup> In the same council scene in Gelati he is also represented, but there he exhibits a completely different iconography.<sup>54</sup>

In the best-preserved portrait of the bishop sitting to the left of the pope, one can recognize the patriarch Maximos II of Antioch (449-455). He is represented as a middle-aged man with short black hair finely shaped in curls, one strand of which falls over his forehead. His serious but gracefully built face with wide open eyes, dark eyebrows, and a straight nose adorns a round black beard of medium length (Fig. 8, 9). His portrayal conforms greatly to his portrait on a fresco of the Fourth Council in the narthex of Dečani, and both share the same seating arrangement (Fig. 10). In Gelati, this prominent church dignitary occupies the same place, however he is pictured as an elder and next to Anatolios of Constantinople.<sup>55</sup>

The Patriarch Anatolios of Constantinople (451-459) is also depicted in Ohrid next to the emperor, but on his right side. He is recognizable by his similar iconography and the almost customary placement of the Constantinopolitan patriarch at that time, which also corresponds to his depictions in the council scene in Dečani.

On his right is probably situated Juvenal of Jerusalem, the former miaphysical bishop, who was confirmed as patriarch at this council.<sup>56</sup> Since, he also participated in the Synod of Ephesus, the painters' manuals recommend depicting him in the scene of the two councils.<sup>57</sup> Unlike his image within the Third Council scene, he is shown here in accordance with the passage of time as an old man with white hair and a rounded beard. In Gelati, Juvenal is positioned as second in the row as well, but next to the Pope Leo and there he is middle-aged as in his portrayal in the Third Council in Ohrid.<sup>58</sup> On the depiction of



Fig. 10. Dečani, St. Maximos II of Antioch, Detail of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of © Blago Fund

Сл. 10. Дечани, Св. Максим II Антиохијски, детаљ четвртог екуменског сабора, © Blago Fund

<sup>52</sup> A.W. Epstein, *Tokali Kilise. The Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Cappadocia*, (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 22). Washington 1986, fig. 113.

<sup>53</sup> Čanak & Todić, *Дечани* (op. cit. n. 14), 495 (fig. 412); Milanović, *Програм живописа* (op. cit. n. 14), fig. 7-8; [https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Frescoes/Narthex/Central\\_Nave/Central\\_Dome/CX4K3388.html](https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Frescoes/Narthex/Central_Nave/Central_Dome/CX4K3388.html)

<sup>54</sup> Virsaladze, *Фрагменты* (op. cit. n. 7), 166, (Ris. 1), 173, color drawing between 174 and 175, Pl. 104.

<sup>55</sup> Idem.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Honigmann, *Juvenal of Jerusalem* (op. cit. 39), 240.

<sup>57</sup> Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 646-647; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 436-437.

<sup>58</sup> Virsaladze, *Фрагменты* (op. cit. n. 7), 166, (Ris. 1), 173, Color drawing between



Fig. 11.  
Ohrid, St.  
Sophia, Fifth  
Ecumenical  
Council (upper  
part) © N.  
Spasovska

Сл 11.  
Охрид, Св.  
Софија, Пети  
екуменски  
сабор, (горњи  
део) © Н.  
Спасовска

the Fourth Council in Dečani, the painter made another mistake, inscribing the bishop seated next to Anatolios of Constantinople as Eusebios of Samosata.<sup>59</sup> In truth this martyr-bishop was a fervent opponent of Arianism and lived in 4th century (†ca. 379).<sup>60</sup> It is likely that the painter in Dečani had intended Eusebios of Dorylaeum, who advocated Orthodoxy at both the convocations in Ephesus and Chalcedon.<sup>61</sup>

Of the composition of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, which assembled for the second time in Constantinople in 553,<sup>62</sup> most of the upper half of the scene is preserved, which contains at its center the usual representation of the enthroned emperor, Justinian I. (518-527) – inscribed as ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΙΟΥΣΤΙΝΙΑΝΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥΣ, protected by a soldier standing on his left side behind the throne and armed with a sword (Fig. 11). Since Pope Virgilius (537-555) did not attend the sessions, his seat on the emperor's left was given to the Melkite patriarch of Antioch Domnos III (546-561), who can be identified mainly by the still legible name of his see: [Α]ΝΤ(Ι)ΟΧΕΙΑΣ. His portrait, that of a middle-aged man with short, barely graying hair and a delicately fashioned, medium-length beard, is the best preserved in this council scene. Because he was obviously portrayed infrequently and is not mentioned in any context in the painters' manuals, the painter of the council scene in Dečani confused him and marked the then reigning Antiochian patriarch as Timothy I, which was actually a pseudonym

174 and 175, Pl. 104.

<sup>59</sup> *Зидно сликарство манастира Дечана. Грађа и студије = Mural Painting of Monastery of Dečani. Material and Studies*. Ed. V. J. Đurić. Beograd 1995, 21 (946).

<sup>60</sup> *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Vol. III. Freiburg – Basel – Rom – Wien 1995, 1012.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1010.

<sup>62</sup> At this council, the Alexandrian philosopher and theologian Origen (185-254) and his followers, as well as the founder of Pelagianism and the precursor of Nestorianism, Theodore of Mopsuestia († 428), were posthumously anathematised– cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. IV, 289-365; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 347-464.



Fig. 12. Ohrid, St. Sophia,  
Sixth Ecumenical Council ©  
N. Spasovska

Сл. 12. Охрид, Св. Софија,  
Шести екуменски сабор ©  
Н. Спасовска



of the namesake presbyter of Jerusalem and who lived in 6th century<sup>63</sup>; both his iconography and placement greatly differ from the depiction of Domnos in Ohrid.<sup>64</sup>

Next to the Patriarch of Antioch on the Ohrid depiction is also seated Eustochios of Jerusalem (552-563), whose naming inscription is fully readable, Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ [Ευ]ΣΤΟΧΙΟΥΣ ΙΕΡΟΣΑΛΥΜ[ων]. His iconography can be compared with his image in Dečani. However, a difference can be noticed in its seating arrangement, as in Dečani he was allocated the honored position next to the emperor.

In this representation of the council in Ohrid, the primary chairman of this council, the Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople (552-565), received his place to the right side of the emperor. His very badly damaged name can still be deciphered: [Ο Ἅγιος] ΕΥΤΥΧΙΟΣ ΚΟΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ[πόλεως]. His iconography is nicely comparable with his portrait in the sanctuary of the Church of Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295), and his iconographic features coincide even more strongly to his depiction within the same scene in Dečani, where he is also represented next to the emperor.<sup>65</sup> On the right side of Eutychius sits the last remaining member of the Pentarchy who participated at the Council, namely the Alexandrian Patriarch Apollinarios (551-569). Despite extensive damage, his name can be read completely – Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΙΝΑΡΙΟΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡ[είας]. The iconography of this very rarely depicted patriarch in Byzantine art accords to great degree with his depiction on the fresco of the

<sup>63</sup> Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, Vol. X. Freiburg – Basel – Rom – Wien 2001, 44-45.

<sup>64</sup> Milanović, *Програм живописца* (op. cit. n. 14), fig. 9-10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*; Grozdanov, *Попрсја архиепископа* (op. cit. n. 32), 87-88, fig. 4.

same council in Dečani, where he is also painted as second-ranked, though on the emperor's left. In the Georgian monastery of Gelati he is also included in the otherwise quite damaged council scene.<sup>66</sup>

The representations of the Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils are rendered on the east side of the vault of the upper floor of the Church of St. Sophia. The spectacle of the Sixth Council, which convened for the third time in Constantinople in 680-681,<sup>67</sup> is almost completely preserved (Fig. 12). Only in the lower fragment of the depiction has part of the group of the orthodox been lost, but the fully preserved figure of the leader of the group, obviously Pope Agatho (678-681), and the partially remaining halos of his followers can still be seen. Opposite the orthodox, the images of the heretics are quite well visible, showing likely Sergius I of Constantinople (610-638) and the Pope Honorius I (625-635) in the foreground, even though they were condemned posthumously at this synod. The long inscription placed between the upper and lower parts of the image, which provides the main information about this synod and accordingly its most significant participants, is partially readable.<sup>68</sup>

In the center of the upper scene, as usual, is shown the enthroned emperor Constantine IV escorted by a guardsman standing on his left side behind the throne (668/69-685), inscribed as ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ Π(ΑΤ)Ρ(Ο)Υ ΙΟΥΚΤΙΝΙ(ΑΝ)ΟΥ (= Emperor Constantine, the father of Justinian).<sup>69</sup> According to the very well preserved naming inscription, his usual seat on the emperor's left was given to the Pope Agatho – Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΑΘΩΝΟΣ Π[άπας Ρώμης] – who sent seven envoys with charters for the councils to Constantinople.<sup>70</sup> One of the two delegated deacons, John or Subdeacon Constantine of Rome, should be recognized in the figure of a young deacon behind the pope's back. The pope's visage is quite damaged, though it is possible to discern an elder man with a somewhat longer and almost pointed beard, which does not differ significantly from his depiction in the Menologion of Basileios II.<sup>71</sup> Next to the pope is depicted Theophanes of Antioch (ca. 681), whose name is also clearly legible: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΘΕΟΦΑΝΗΣ. He is represented as bald-headed and with a firm straight-cut curly beard. In the painters' manuals his name is not noted, so he was rarely depicted. In Gelati monastery he is

<sup>66</sup> Virsaladze, *Фрагменты* (op. cit. n. 7), 173.

<sup>67</sup> This council was convened to formulate the true faith against the monotheistic heresy – cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. V, 137-205; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 467-492; H. Ohme, *Das Concilium Quinisextum und seine Bischofsliste. Studien zum Konstantinopler Konzil von 680*. (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 56), Berlin – New York 1990.

<sup>68</sup> The transcription of this inscription is being prepared in cooperation with Ioannis Großmann and will be extra published soon.

<sup>69</sup> Constantine IV (668-685) was the father of Emperor Justinian II Rhinometos (685-695 and 705-711), the last of the Heraclian dynasty. The epithet Pogonatos (the Beard-ed) attributed to Constantine IV may in fact refer to his father, Constans II.

<sup>70</sup> Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. V, 142-149; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 469.

<sup>71</sup> *El Menologio de Basilio II., Edición facsímil* (op. cit. n. 6), f. 417; [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1613/](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613/).

Fig. 13. Ohrid, St. Sophia,  
Seventh Ecumenical Council  
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Сл. 13. Охрид, Св. Софија,  
Седми екуменски сабор, ©  
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integrated into the council scene as well, where he is probably also seated next to the pope, whose name is unfortunately no longer legible.<sup>72</sup> In this council scene in Dečani, this position is occupied by a bishop, inscribed as Epiphanius of Ephesus, who cannot be found in any sources.<sup>73</sup> This attribution could have been another mistake of the painter, because it is well known from the charters that, at that time, Theodoros participated in the council and occupied the bishop's throne in Ephesus.

On the emperor's right, Patriarch George I of Constantinople (679-686) took his usual position, from whose naming inscription the abbreviated designation of his see is legible: Κω(N)CΤΑΝΤ(IN)ΟΥ(ΠΟΛ)ΕΟC. Next to him is seated another participant in bishop's vestment, whose name is fully discernible: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟC. His iconography with a straight-cut beard appears somewhat similar to that of the patriarch Theophanes described above. On the one hand, he could be a papal dispatcher at this council, which is recorded in the painters' manuals.<sup>74</sup> However, his sitting position behind the Constantinopolitan patriarch argues against it, since he should have been rendered instead next to the pope. Therefore, it is more likely that the bishop of Hesbon, the trustee (*Proedros* = president) of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is meant here. He was not present personally in Constantinople, but dispatched the monks Andrew and George there as representatives of the patriarchy. This does not mean, however, that he was excluded from being represented in the Ohrid

<sup>72</sup> Virsaladze, *Фрагменты* (op. cit. n. 7), 167 (Ris. 2), 174.

<sup>73</sup> Milanović, *Програм живописа* (op. cit. n. 14), fig. 11-12;  
[http://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Fresco\\_Collections/Ecumenical\\_Councils/CX4K3498.html](http://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Decani//Church/Pictures/Fresco_Collections/Ecumenical_Councils/CX4K3498.html)

<sup>74</sup> Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 647-648; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 438-439.

scene, because the pope Agatho was also integrated into the council image despite his absence. In addition, the depiction of the representative of the See of Jerusalem could highlight the orthodox direction of the Jerusalem patriarchy and the important role of the patriarch Sophronius († 638), who was the first to condemn monotheletism at his Jerusalem Synod even before the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

The accession to the throne of Empress Irene, who ruled from 780 in the name of her minor son Constantine VI (780-797), ended the first phase of the iconoclastic controversy, which was also officially declared over by the Seventh Ecumenical Synod held in Nicaea in 787, at which the decisions of the iconoclastic council of 754 were annulled and the defenders of the holy icons were acknowledged.<sup>75</sup> The image of this synod differs from the other council scenes in that only two hierarchs are situated in the upper part of the depiction (Fig. 13). This results, on the one hand, from the fact that due to the conflict with the Arabs the eastern patriarchs were absent from the council; on the other hand, the representation of the imperial couple enthroned in the middle of the upper scene occupies more place here. Irene (right) and her son Constantine VI (left) are accompanied by one guardsman solemnly clad and equipped with a sword, who stands in the background at Constantine's right side. On the usual papal seat, next to the Empress Irene, is apparently depicted Pope Hadrian I (772-795), who was represented at the meeting by his envoys.<sup>76</sup> Behind the pope is standing his deacon, whose representation is merely discernible in a small fragment.

The church dignitary sitting next to Constantine VI can be identified as Patriarch Tarasios of Constantinople (784-806) by the naming inscription – [Ο Ἅγιος Τ]ΑΡΑΣΙΟC ΚΩ(N)CΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΟC – preserved in pale traces. Behind his back, the portrait of his young deacon is still in relatively good condition. During the preparations for the council, as personal secretary of Empress Irene, advisor of Constantine VI, Tarasios was elected as the new patriarch of the imperial capital in 784, in place of Paul following his resignation.<sup>77</sup> His portrayal shows a bald old man with a few gray hairs above the ears and with a medium-length, delicately shaped curly beard terminating in three points. Thus, here his depiction follows the description provided by Oulpius of Rome, according to which Tarasios resembled Gregory the Theologian, apart from the completely grey hair and scarred eye.<sup>78</sup> The portrait of Tarasios is found rela-

<sup>75</sup> This did not end the struggle of the iconodules, since Leo V proclaimed iconoclasm again in 815, which was finally defeated in 843 by the Empress Theodora. On the controversy of the iconoclasm and the Seventh Ecumenical Council – cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. V, 260-393; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 495-582. Cf. also several contributions in: F. Bæspflug, – N. Lossky, (Ed.): *Nicée II, 787-1987. Douze siècles d'images religieuses*. Actes du colloque international Nicée II tenu au collège de France, Paris les 2, 3, 4 octobre 1986, Paris 1987.

<sup>76</sup> The painters' manuals suggest depicting the papal envoys in this scene – cf. Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 647-648; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 438-439.

<sup>77</sup> Hefele, *History of the Councils* (op. cit. n. 3), Vol. V, 345; *ibid.*, Vol. I, 30; Kartašev, *Vaseljenski sabori* (op. cit. n. 3), 527-528, 536.

<sup>78</sup> Winkelmann, *Über die körperlichen* (op. cit. n. 26), 112-113/44; Mango, *The Art* (op. cit. n. 26), 215; Lowden, *Prophet Books* (op. cit. n. 26), 53; Chadzidakēs, *Εκ τὸν Ἐλλίῶν*

tively frequently in Byzantine art; from the iconographic point of view his portraits in the Cappadocian New Tokali Kilise (before 969), in the diaconicon of the Church of the Mother of God in Studenica (1208/09), in the sanctuary of the Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295) and in the southern chapel of the catholicon of Žica (ca. 1312-1313) are particularly close to his representation in the council scene in Ohrid.<sup>79</sup>

In the lower left part of the composition only the strongly faded representations of the orthodox, who as usually face the now lost images of the heterodox, are recognizable. In the foreground are depicted three hierarchs; two of whom are dressed in a robe of the highest-ranking church dignitaries – *polystavrion*. The one in the middle with a straight cut beard apparently represents Patriarch Tarasios, who here looks much more like Gregory I the Theologian than in the upper part of the scene. The figure standing on the right side of the fresco is probably once again Pope Hadrian I, whose visage and especially his long-pointed beard are somewhat better preserved. Only the hierarch standing on the left wears an *omophorion* over his simple cloak, which indicates that he is not a bishop, but could rather represent one of the papal envoys.

The depictions of the Ecumenical Councils in the Ohrid Cathedral faithfully reflect the relationship between the rulers and the Church, the current politics, and other historical events of the early Christian world, with which John Theorianos and his collaborators were well-acquainted. It is notable that they adhered closely to the established hierarchy in their paintings, depicting the highest-ranking bishops of the pentarchy next to the emperor himself. Thus, they tried to consistently implement the rule, according to which the Roman pope is most often seated on the left side of the emperor, while on his right are the presidents of the council, who in most cases was the Constantinopolitan patriarch. It would be iniquitous not to mention that all of the surviving figures of the participants of the councils distinguish great individuality and refinement in expressing emotions – from the gentle looks of the younger deacons to the authoritative and severe physiognomies of the presiders over the synods, as well as the disturbed and horrified expressions of the heterodox. In this regard, these painters deserve recognition as authors of a complex iconographic program and theologically erudite frescoes of the highest artistic level.

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(op. cit. n. 26), 414; Walter, *Art and Ritual* (op. cit. n. 20, 106-107. Similarly, he is noted later in the painters manuals. – cf. Medić, *Сликарски приручници* (op. cit. n. 4), Vol. II, 194-195, 360-361, 541; *ibid.*, Vol. III, 396-397.

<sup>79</sup> Epstein, *Tokali Kilise* (op. cit. n. 52), 67, fig. 53; M. Živković, *Najstarije zidno slikarstvo Bogorodičine crkve u Studenici i njegova obnova u XVI veku*. Doktorska disertacija, Beograd 2019, 127, 129; [https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Studenica/Main/Pictures/Interior/Sanctuary/Diaconicon/STUD\\_2\\_IMG\\_7384](https://www.blagofund.org/Archives/Studenica/Main/Pictures/Interior/Sanctuary/Diaconicon/STUD_2_IMG_7384). Grozdanov, *Понепча архиепископа* (op. cit. n. 33), 86 (Fig. 6); 294, 504, fig. 211; M. Čanak-Medić – D. Popović – D. Vojvodić, *Manastir Žiča*, Beograd 2014, 242, 309 (fig. 211).

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ПРЕТСТАВЕ ЕКУМЕНСКИХ САБОРА НА СПРАТУ НАРТЕКСА  
ЦРКВЕ СВ. СОФИЈЕ У ОХРИДУ

Некадашња лепота зидног сликарства на спрату нартекса Свете Софије у Охриду, дело познатог сликара Јована Теоријана и његових сарадника, настало између 1346 и 1350 године, се упркос оштећењу, које је погодило углавном горњи слој фресака, још увек може лако препознати. У овом прилогу бавимо се анализом сцена седам Васељенских сабора које су претстављене на северној и јужној страни свода спрата нартекса. Сцене сабора поређане су хронолошки у кружном току следећи правц казаљке на часовнику. При томе се водило рачуна и на њихов симболичан однос са другим сценама. Тако на пример трећи и четврти сабор на којима су донесене важне одлуке о Богородици, фланкирају у међувремену зазидану слепу калоту на којој се налази илустрација Дамаскиновог канона посвећеног Богородичином Успењу. Пажљивим исчитавањем трагова сигнатура и упоредном иконографском анализом успели смо да идентификујемо претставе свих приказаних учесника ових сабора и утврдимо њихов распоред седења који одговара њиховом рангу у хришћанској екумени. У тексту се такође анализирају и историјске чињенице, актуелне теолошке расправе као и политичких утицај који се рефлектују на иконографију екуменских сабора.