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DEESIS IN THE WALL PAINTINGS OF MACEDONIA DURING PERIOD OF SERBIAN RULE: ICONOGRAPHIC ASPECTS AND DEVELOPMENT²

Abstract: This article is devoted to the Deesis composition presented in several iconographic variants in the frescoes of the 14th Century in the territory of Macedonia. In addition to the traditional Deesis scenes common to the Byzantine art some of the considered versions reveal the specifics, which were mostly widespread precisely among Macedonian monuments during the period of Serbian rule. These specific variants demonstrate dependence on the political and cultural context of the historical period and accentuate the imperial themes relevant for this region during this period of time.

Keywords: Deesis, Royal Deesis, Macedonia, iconography, frescoes

Intensive incorporation of Macedonia into the Serbian state began since Stefan Uroš II Milutin of the Nemanjić dynasty (1282-1321) advanced to these territories, taking Skopje, Velbužd and Debar from the Byzantine Empire. The Serbian ruler, Stefan Dušan (1331-1355) completed the conquest by annexing to his state Ohrid, Prilep, Melnik, Strumica, Kastoria, Veria and other towns.³ Serbian kings acquired a region with multinational population, earlier subjected to the archbishopric of Ohrid. Thus, local church architecture and art developed within the common Byzantine framework, while being able to foster some regional specifics, characteristic for the art of these very lands. In order to study

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³ See the map of the borders of the Serbian state under Milutin and Dušan: Д. Војводић, *Српска уметност од почетка XIV столећа до пропасти државе Немањића*, Сакрална уметност српских земаља у средњем веку (Београд, 2016), 285.



Fig. 1 Heavenly Court. Fresco painting from the church of Assumption of the Theotokos in Treskavac monastery at Prilep, northern dome of the exonarthex, c. 1340. Photo by the author.

Сл. 1 Небески двор, фреска из цркве Успења Богородице у Трскавцу код Прилепа, северна купола нартекса, око 1340. Фотографија аутора

the process of fusing of the Byzantine iconography with the Serbian themes in the Macedonian churches built by Serbian rulers and the ruling sovereigns we will examine the Deesis composition.

The Deesis, which includes Christ in the center and the Virgin and St. John the Forerunner in a three-quarter spread with hands raised in a gesture of prayer, is one of the most famous scenes in the Byzantine art.⁴ Its content may

⁴ The bibliography on the subject Deesis is extensive and here the most significant are given: Ch. Walter, *Two notes on the Deesis*, REB 26 (1968) 311–324; A. Cutler, *Under the Sign of the Deesis: on the question of representativeness in medieval art and literature*, DOP 41 (1987) 145–154; M. Καζαμία-Τσέρνου, *Ιστορώντας τη Δέησης τις βυζαντινές εκκλησίες της Ελλάδος*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2005. All of these works provide extensive literature on the

have different meanings depending on various factors: will of a ktetor, new iconographic details, texts of the scrolls and the Gospel in the hands of the characters, location of the scene in the space of the church.

As a rule, the Deesis is reviewed in the works devoted to individual monuments,⁵ as well as in a general Byzantine context of images on altar barriers (templons).⁶ Also it was mentioned in reviews of certain types of Deesis compositions or included in the Deesis images.⁷ However, there is no special study devoted to the theme of Deesis in monumental paintings of Macedonia in the 14th Century. So the aim of this paper is to consider the Deesis in the murals of the Macedonian churches as a unified tradition with its origins and iconographic characteristics, explained by both the Byzantine traditions and the regional specifics. The chronological limits, the 14th Century, was chosen to facilitate the study of how the development of the Deesis composition was altered by introducing into the fresco cycles of this region the Serbian themes, which manifested themselves upon inclusion of these territories into the Serbian state.⁸

subject of the Deesis.

⁵ С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново. Историја и сликарство*, Београд 1998; Е. Димитрова, *Манастир Матејче*, Скопје 2002; И. М. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарство српске властеле у доба Немањића*. Београд 1994; М. Марковић, *Свети Никита код Скопља*, Београд 2015.

⁶ Г. Бабих, *О живописном украсу олтарских преграда*, ЗЛУМС 11 (1975) 1–41; М. Chatzidakis, *L'évolution de l'icône aux XI–XIII^e siècles et la transformation du templon*, XV^e Congrès International des études byzantines III. Art et archéologie, Athènes 1976, 159–191; Ch. Walter, *A new look at the Byzantine sanctuary barrier*, REB 51 (1993) 203–224; S. Kalopissi-Verti, *The Proskynetaria of the Templon and Narthex: Form, Imagery, Spatial Connection, and Reception*, *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. Sh. Gerstel, Washington D.C. 2006, 107–132; М. Н. Бутырский, *Богоматерь Параклесис у алтарной преграды: происхождение и литургическое содержание образа*, *Иконостас: происхождение — развитие — символика*, сос. А. М. Лидов, Москва 2000, 207–221; etc.

⁷ П. Мијовић, *Царска иконографија у српској средњовековној уметности*, *Старинар* 18 (1967), 103–117; М. Глигоријевић-Максимовић, *Сликарство XIV века у манастиру Трескавац*, *ЗРВИ* 42 (2005) 77–121; Ц. Грозданов, *Една варијанта на претставата на Христос Цар над Царевите и Голем Архијереј во поствизантиската уметност (според примерите од Охридската архиепископија)*, *Живописот на охридската архиепископија*. Скопје 2007, 359–377; С. Смолчић-Макуљевић, *Царски деусис и Небески двор у сликарству XIV века манастира Трескавац. Иконографски програм северне куполе приправе цркве Богородичног Успења*, *Трећа југословенска конференција византолога*, ур. Љ. Максимовић, Н. Радошевић, Е. Радуловић, Београд – Крушевац 2002, 463–472; S. Marjanović-Dušanić, D. Vojvodić, *The Model of the Empire – The Idea and Image of Authority in Serbia (1299–1371)*, *Сакрална уметност српских земаља у средњем веку*, ур. Д. Воводић, Д. Поповић, Београд 2016, 299–315.; К. Vapheïades, *Sacerdotium and Imperium in Late Byzantium*, *Niš and Byzantium XVIII*, ed. M. Rakocija (Niš 2020), 55–87.

⁸ The questions of influence of the Serbian themes on the iconographic programs of the churches in the Northern Macedonia are also considered in the following studies: Е. А. Немыкина, *Трансформација идеологије Неманичеве у споменицима епохи Милутина (1282–1321) на завојеваних македонских територијах*, *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 1 (2020) 89–106; Eadem, *Портреты ктиторов и правителя во фресковых ансамблях времени Душана Сильного*, *Актуалне проблеми теорије и историје искуства*

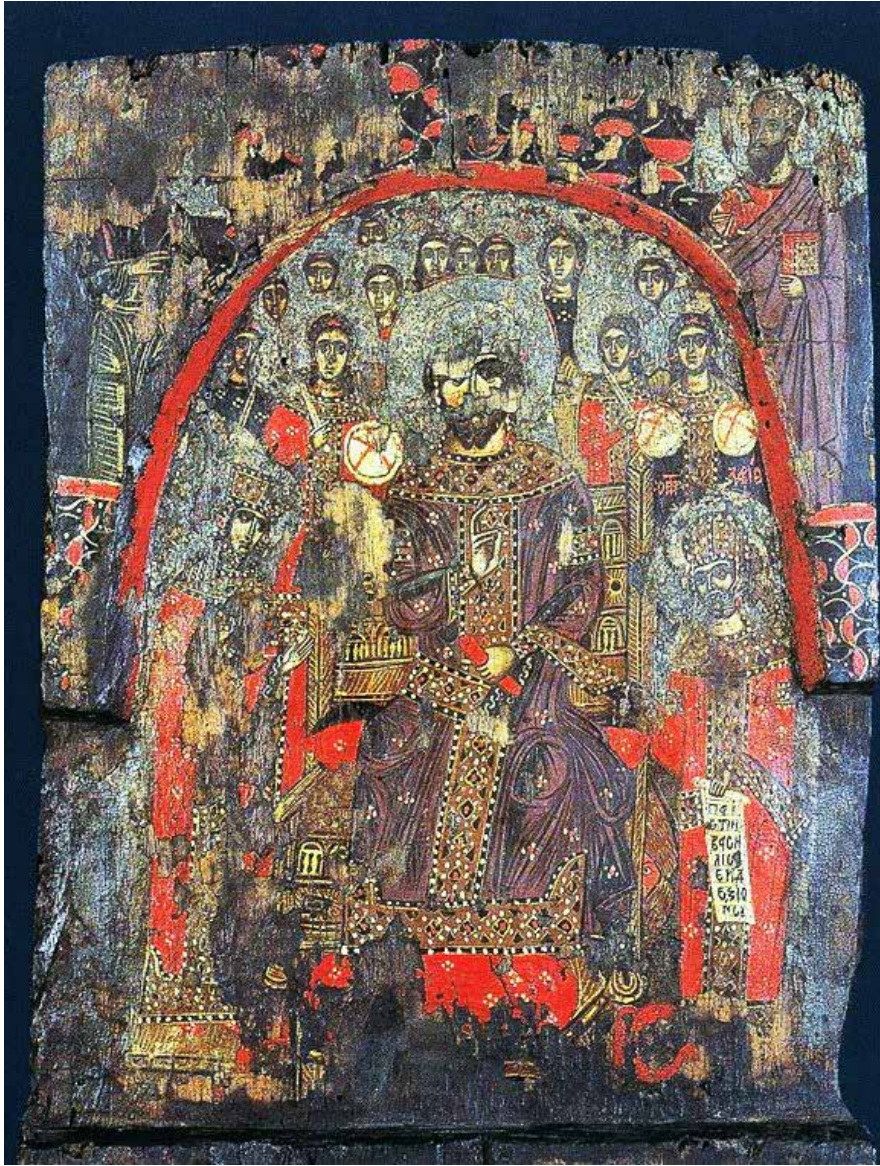


Fig. 2 The Queen Stands at Your Right Hand. Icon from the Art Museum in Veria (the third quarter of the 14th Century). Photo by the author.

Сл. 2 Краљица стоји код твоје десне руке. Икона из Музеја уметности у Верији, трећа четвртина 14. века. Фотографија аутора

Deesis compositions in the Macedonian frescoes of the 14th Century are

10, ред. А. В. Захарова, С. В. Мальцева, Е. Ю. Станюкович-Денисова. МГУ имени М. В. Ломоносова, Санкт-Петербург 2020, 799–808.

represented in the following versions: 1) spatial Deesis, 2) traditional three-figured Deesis and 3) Royal Deesis.

In the spatial Deesis,⁹ the images of Christ, the Virgin and St. John the Baptist are depicted at some distance from each other. This type of Deesis is placed most often in the eastern part of a church: the images of Christ and the Theotokos are located on the west sides of the altar pillars as parts of a templon, while St. John the Forerunner is usually located on the south wall near the altar screen. The Theotokos is represented in the traditional Deesis iconographic type of the Virgin Παράκλησις in a three-quarter spread with her hands turned towards Christ, while the Forerunner, unlike traditional Deesis, is depicted frontally, as in the spatial Deesis in the church of St. George at Kurbinovo (1191).

It should be noted that the images of Christ and the Theotokos depicted on the altar pillars, were not always associated with the Deesis composition, in certain cases they were part of the iconographic program of an altar barrier. There are many examples in different churches and there is no need to list them. G. Babić associates this motif with the tradition of placing icons in this part of a church, covering the intercolumniations. She drew attention to the fact that appearance of icons on the sides of an altar barrier has many interpretations, and, as a rule, they depicted standing figures of especially revered images of Christ, the Virgin and the saint to whom the church is dedicated. If there are no altar pillars, the images could be transferred to wall surfaces, as it happened at Kurbinovo.¹⁰

One of the earliest examples of the spatial Deesis of the 14th Century in Macedonia is the composition in the church of St. Nikita at Čučer (1316-1318),¹¹ created by the Greek painters Michael and Eutykhios.¹² On the northern wall opposite the Deesis St. Stephen the Archdeacon and warrior Saint Nikita are depicted, the church is dedicated to the latter. We will turn to the tradition of placing a patron saint of a church near the altar barrier opposite the Deesis a little later.

Probably, the Thesalonikan masters Michael and Eutykhios,¹³ relied on a certain common Greek model, since the spatial Deesis with images of

⁹ The term «spatial Deesis» is used by I. Djordjević and M. Marković, see: I. M. Djordjević, M. Marković, *On the Dialogue Relationship Between the Virgin and Christ in East Christian Art*, Зограф 28 (2000–2001) 13–48.

¹⁰ Г. Бабић, *О живописаном украсу*, 14–18.

¹¹ I. Djordjević and M. Marković attribute the frescoes of the church to a later date, after 1321, see I. Djordjević, M. Marković, *On the Dialogue Relationship*, 29.

¹² The figure of St. John the Baptist has been largely renewed, see П. Миљковић-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Еутихиј*, Скопје 1967, 55; I. Bentchev, *The restoration of the wall-paintings in the Church of St. Nikita at Čučer/Macedonia in 1483–1484*, 8th Triennial Meeting: preprints, ICOM committee for conservation (Sydney, Australia, 6–11 September, 1987), Los Angeles 1987, 536.

¹³ Note that the same Greek artists worked in the church of the Assumption in Gračanica monastery near Priština, where a similar composition is presented. However, in Gračanica the Theotokos is represented not with a scroll, as in Macedonian churches but with the Child in her arms so, there is no direct association with the Deesis. At the same time the Forerunner is located to the left of Christ, in the southern part of the church. He is presented frontally, not turning towards Christ but for the later Macedonian spatial Deesis such a pos-

Christ and the Virgin Παράκλησις on the altar pillars is also represented in several Greek churches. Thus, for example, it is located on the altar pillars of the church of St. Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki (the second decade of the 14th Century), where the Forerunner, due to the architectural features of the church, is depicted not on the southern wall, but on the northern face of the southeastern pillar. There is also a spatial Deesis in the church of Panagia Forbiotissa in Asinu, Cyprus: Christ is depicted on the southern altar pillar, while the figures of the Theotokos and St. John, which are turned to Him, are represented on the northern pillar. At the same time, St. John stands behind the Virgin, not on the other side of Christ, which evokes associations with the fresco at Kurbinovo. This layer of murals belongs to the second quarter of the 14th Century.¹⁴

Apparently, a spatial Deesis was also located in the eastern part of the church of St. Panteleimon at Ohrid (1330s),¹⁵ where fragments of the throne of Christ are visible on the western face in the lower zone of the southeastern altar pillar, while on the northeastern pillar there is an image of the Virgin Παράκλησις with an unrolled scroll. There are some fragments of an image of the Forerunner on the northern wall next to the altar barrier.

One more spatial Deesis is presented in the eastern part of the naos of church of St. Nicholas at Psača (1366–1371). However, unlike the above examples, the Forerunner is located not on the southern, but on the northern wall near the altar screen. Perhaps, this change was caused by the tradition mentioned above, according to which in Macedonian churches the saint patron is often placed on the southern wall near the altar barrier. So, the monumental image of St. Nicholas is depicted on the southern wall at Psača.

Spatial Deesis may be also located outside naos. It can be found in the narthex of the church of St. Archangel Michael at Lesnovo (1349): the Theotokos is depicted on the western face of the northeastern pillar, Christ – on the western face of the southeastern pillar, St. John the Baptist – on the northern face of the southeastern pillar in the narthex.¹⁶ Spatial Deesis is also depicted in the narthex of the church of the Holy Savior at Prizren (c.1348) and at the gallery of Grigorios' narthex in the cathedral of St. Sophia at Ohrid.¹⁷

ture of the saint would be quite common.

¹⁴ A. Stylianou, J. Stylianou, *The painted churches of Cyprus. Treasures of Byzantine art*, Cyprus 1997, 133; I. M. Djordjević, M. Marković, *op.cit.*, 24, n. 59. Among the earlier Greek monuments with a spatial Deesis we can also mention the frescoes of the church of Panagia tou Arakou at Lagoudera, Cyprus (1192). There are the Virgin Παράκλησις (north-east) and Christ Antiphonitis (south-east) on the eastern piers, and St. John the Baptist is on the north wall near the altar. The images of Christ, the Virgin and the Forerunner have approximately the same arrangement in the church of Panagia tou Moutoulla (1280), see A. Stylianou, J. Stylianou, *op.cit.*, 164, 170, 325, 329.

¹⁵ Ц. Грозданов, *Охридско зидно сликарство XIV века*, Београд 1980, 32–34.

¹⁶ There are also images of the Virgin and Christ on the eastern pillars in the naos of the church of St. Michael the Archangel at Lesnovo, painted a little earlier in 1346–1347, but they are covered with an iconostasis, see I. M. Djordjević, M. Marković, *On the Dialogue Relationship*, 13.

¹⁷ *Idem*, 30.



Fig. 3 Heavenly Court. Fresco painting from the church of St. Demetrius, Markov monastery near Skopje, northern wall, 1376-1381. Photo by the author.

Сл. 3 Небески двор, фреска из цркве Св. Димитрија, Марков манастир код Скопља, северни зид, 1376-1381. Фотографија аутора.

Iconography of the spatial Deesis consists of Christ, usually represented seated on a throne or standing full-length with an open book and the Theotokos, most often depicted in the iconographic type Παράκλησις with an unfolded scroll. According to observations of I. M. Djordjević and M. Marković,¹⁸ who analyzed the texts on the scrolls of the Virgin Παράκλησις in several Greek and Macedonian churches, most often they contain the same fragments. Moreover, the same texts are found not only on the scrolls of the Virgin in the spatial Deesis, but they can also coincide with texts on the scrolls in the traditional three-figured Deesis,¹⁹ which is another proof that the figures of the Virgin, Christ and the Forerunner spaced apart in a several cases, is logical to perceive as a Deesis composition. Usually, the scrolls contain a dialogue between the Theotokos and Christ, and a slight difference may lie in addition of individual words to the text, and also in some cases the dialogue is written not in Greek, but in Serbo-Slavonic, as, for example, in the narthex of the monastery at Lesnovo. Sometimes we can read both languages – Greek and Serbo-Slavonic on the scroll (the spatial Deesis of the gallery of Grigorios' narthex in the cathedral of St. Sophia at Ohrid, prior to 1355).²⁰

New iconography of St. John the Baptist is an important feature. In the Byzantine art of the 14th Century he is often depicted with wings and with a truncated head in his hands. In the Greek tradition this iconographic type is called St. John the Baptist 'kephalophoros'. This image adds the sacrificial,

¹⁸ *Idem*, 13–48.

¹⁹ For example, it is in the three-figured Deesis on the north wall of the church of St. Nicholas «tuTzotza» in Kastoria (third quarter of the 14th Century or 1360–1380). The only phrase preserved on the scroll of the Virgin coincides with the beginning of Her usual appeal to Christ.

²⁰ I. M. Djordjević, M. Marković, *op.cit.*, 30.

eucharistic aspect to the entire composition, which is also enhanced by location near the altar. At the same time, a scroll is an optional attribute of the Forerunner.

The earliest image of the winged St. John is preserved in the church of St. Achillios at Arilje (1296) in Serbia. He is located in the southern conch adjacent to the altar screen. On the eastern pillars there are also images of the Virgin Παράκλησις and Christ. However, at Arilje, in contrast to the later Macedonian paintings the patron of the church St. Achillios is also depicted between St. John the Baptist and Christ. Thus, connection between the spatial Deesis and the church's patron is established here. This tendency will actively manifest itself in the Macedonian frescoes, however, most often it is expressed there not with a spatial Deesis, but with a three-figured Deesis on the wall near the altar, which will be discussed below.

We should note that the spatial Deesis is also present in the 14th Century Raška which was the center of the Serbian state in the 11-13th Centuries, as evidenced by the frescoes of the Theotokos church at Karan (1340–1342), where St. John is depicted on the southern wall near the altar barrier, as in the Macedonian monuments. However, the Forerunner does not have wings, he is presented in a typical three-quarter turn for the traditional Deesis, not frontally, and he holds his head on a platter with both hands, bringing it to Christ. A standing figure of Christ is depicted in the southern part of the altar barrier. He holds a closed book in one hand, while blessing with the other. The Theotokos with a scroll in her hands is presented as a paired image to Christ, in the northern part.

According to I. M. Djordjević and M. Marković, at Arilje a unique spatial Serbian Deesis was created, in which Serbian rulers appear as new mediators.²¹ St. Simeon Nemanja is depicted on the western face of the northern pilaster in the western part of the church, as the progenitor of Nemanjić dynasty (north). The saint holds an unfolded scroll in his hands, and his position in a three-quarter turn is clearly directed towards Christ on the southern pilaster who is standing in a frontal pose with a closed Gospels. This motif of intercession, according to researchers, was adopted from representations of the Virgin Παράκλησις.

The tendency to associate the members of Nemanjić dynasty with the Deesis is especially noticeable in the Macedonian paintings during the reign of the Serbian ruler Stefan Dušan (1331–1355), who finally included Macedonia in the Serbian state. So, in the narthex of the church in Lesnovo monastery, along with the mentioned above spatial Deesis located on the eastern pillars, a large-scale composition is placed on the northern wall, including both portraits of Tsar Stefan Dušan's family with his wife Elena and son Uroš and portraits of the ktetor John Oliver's family.

In the church of the Theotokos at Mateič (end of the 1340s – 1360),²² Christ enthroned with an open Gospel is depicted on the western face of the

²¹ I. M. Djordjević, M. Marković, *op.cit.*, 42.

²² The dating of the frescoes of the Mateič monastery varies within the late 1340s-1360s. V. Djurić refers the murals to the 1356–1360, see В. Джурич, *Византийские фрески. Средневековая Сербия, Далмация, славянская Македония*, Москва 2000, 205. For another version of the dating of the church, between 1348 и 1352, see S. Marjanović-Dušanić, D. Vojvodić, *op.cit.*, 315; Е. Димитрова, *op.cit.*, 266. S. Ćurčić notes that this church was started



Fig. 4 Royal Deesis. Fresco painting from the church of St. Athanasius in Kastoria, northern wall, 1385. Photo by the author.

Сл. 4 Царски Дензис, Фреско сликарство цркве Св. Атанасија у Касторији, северни зид, 1385. Фотографија аутора.

southeastern pillar, the Virgin Παράκλησις is on the northern pillar, and to the left of Christ, on the pilaster of the southern wall, Tsar Stefan Dušan and his family are represented (in this case, the Nemanjić are depicted not only as members of the ruling dynasty, but also as patrons of this church). We also note their very honorable location since in the earlier Serbian monuments the Nemanjić, as a rule, were depicted in the western part of the church, however, at Mateič, the Dušan's family is located near the diaconicon. Such a movement of the Serbian rulers from the western to the eastern part in the Macedonian churches during this period is not unique.

Another illustrative and at the same time unique example of realization of the idea of a direct connection between the Nemanjić and the Deesis composition in the eastern part of the naos can be seen in a fresco of the church of St. Nicholas at Ljuboten (1340s).²³ Here the members of the royal house of Stefan Dušan are presented in a Deesis composition in the place of the Theotokos, that is, to the right of Christ sitting on the throne. However, in this case, it's not a spatial Deesis, but a traditional three-figured Deesis. It should be noted that Dušan with his wife and son are depicted in a representative frontal posture, typical for portraits of Byzantine emperors. This posture is also typical for other frescoes of the Macedonian monuments mentioned above. It is important to emphasize that the familiar three-figured Deesis in Macedonia is usually located in the naos near the altar. The location of the Deesis on the southern wall or more

in 1343 and completed with frescoes in 1352, see S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, Yale University Press 2010, 643.

²³ The dating of the frescoes varies, for 1344–1345 see И. М. Ђорђевић, *op.cit.*, 112, 145, and for 1348 see В. Джурич, *op.cit.*, 180.

often on the northern wall next to the altar barrier can be considered as a lasting tradition for the Macedonian churches, which began to take shape as early as the 13th Century, as evidenced by frescoes of the church of St. Nicholas of the Manastir monastery near Prilep (1271), the church of St. Demetrius (c. 1290), the church of St. Nicholas at Prilep (1298).

Another significant aspect, which also turned out to be quite persistent in the paintings in Macedonia, is the location of a saint patron of a church opposite to the three-figured Deesis, as already mentioned above. We list only some examples: the church of St. Nicholas of the Manastir monastery, the church of St. Nicholas at Varoš, the church of St. Nicholas the Hospital (1335–1336) and the church of St. Demetrius (late 14th century) at Ohrid, the church of St. George at Pološko (1343–1345), the church of St. George “tu Vunu” at Kastoria (the second half of the 14th Century) and many others. An extensive number of monuments, where the three-figured Deesis, depicted near the altar screen, is located opposite to the image of a patron saint of a church allows us to speak of this combination as an established iconographic formula.²⁴

As distinctive iconographic features of a three-figured Deesis, it can be noted that the Virgin does not have a scroll, the book in the hands of Christ is often closed, and the Forerunner is presented without a truncated head in his hands and without wings. In addition, in the Macedonian paintings, there are often holy warriors on the walls of the naos, depicted next to the three-figured Deesis and a patron of a church.

In addition to the “ruler’s composition” with the Nemanic, as at Ljuboten, the expanded three-figured Deesis may also include portraits of contemporaries. One example is the image of the Serbian Patriarch Ioannikije and Archbishop Nicholas of Ohrid in the chapel of St. John the Baptist in the church of St. Sophia at Ohrid (1347–1350).

An important variant of the three-figured Deesis in the frescoes of Macedonia is a new type, the so-called “Royal Deesis”, in which Christ is presented as the King of kings and the Great Archbishop, while the Virgin is dressed in royal clothes. It is rather rare. The earliest version of the “Royal Deesis” is considered to be a composition known as “The Queen Stands at Your Right Hand”, in which instead of St. John the Baptist to the left of Christ the Old Testament prophet David is depicted.²⁵ The first known example of this scene is located in the northern dome of the exonarthex of the church of Assumption of the Theotokos in Treskavac monastery near Prilep (c. 1340) (fig. 1). The closest iconographic analogies, where the prophet David is also represented to the left of Christ, are an icon from the Art Museum in Veria (third quarter of the 14th Century),²⁶ (fig. 2) and a miniature from the Munich Psalter (Munich Psalter,

²⁴ Recall that this tradition was also not alien to a spatial Deesis which was mentioned at the beginning of our article, see the frescoes of the churches of St. Nikita at Čučer and at Psača.

²⁵ For possible literary sources for the composition „The Queen Stands at Your Right Hand“, see: Ц. Грозданов, *Исус Христос — Цар над Царевите во живописот на Охридската архиепископија од XV–XVII век*, Id., *Живописот на Охридската архиепископија*, Охрид 2007, 335.

²⁶ X. Μαυροπούλου-Τσιούμη, «Παρέστη η βασίλισσα εκ δεξιών σου». Βηζαντινή ει-



Fig. 5 Royal Deesis. Fresco painting from the church of St. Nicholas “tu Tzotza” in Kastoria, above the conch on the eastern wall, third quarter of the 14th Century or 1360–1380. Photo by the author.

Сл. 5 Царски Деизис. Фреско сликарство цркве Св. Николе „ту Тзотза“ у Касторији, изнад конхе источног зида, трећа четвртина 14. века или 1360 – 1380. Фотографија аутора.

Cod. Slav. 4, fol. 28v, last quarter of the 14th Century).²⁷ However, they belong to a later period. The title “The Queen Stands at Your Right Hand” is a quotation from Psalm 44 (45) concerning the Virgin Mary as a queen. In addition to the icon and miniature mentioned above, this titles also used in relation to the fresco composition in the church of Christ the Savior located at Kovalevo (Veliky Novgorod, 1380),²⁸ and in relation to the icon stored in the church of the Assumption in Moscow Kremlin.²⁹ All the variants of this composition have their own characteristics: the image from the Psalter is closest to the icon from

κόνα στο Αρχαιολογικό μουσείο της Βεροίας, Μνείας χάριν. Τόμος στη μνήμη Μαίρης Σιγανίδου, έκδ. Μ. Λιλιμπάκη-Ακαμάτη, Κ. Τσακάλου-Τζαναβάρη, Θεσσαλονίκη 1998, 141–160.

²⁷ С. Радојчић, *Минхенски српски псалтир*, Зборник Филозофског факултета VII-1 (1963) 277–288.

²⁸ For more details about this composition at Kovalevo, see such works as В. Н. Лазарев, *Ковалевская роспись и проблема южнославянских связей в русской живописи XIV века*, Ежегодник Института Истории Искусства. 1957, Москва 1958, 233–278; Е. А. Немыкина, *Композиция «Предста Царица о десную Тебе» и гипотеза о новгородско-балканских связях в живописи XIV столетия*, Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства 3, ред. С. В. Мальцева, Е. Ю. Станюкович-Денисова, Санкт-Петербург 2013, 186–194; С. О. Дмитриева, *Фрески Спаса на Ковалево*, Москва 2011.

²⁹ В. Пуцко, *Икона «Предста Царица» в Московском Кремле*, ЗЛУМС 5 (1969) 57–74; Е. Я. Остащенко, *Об иконографическом типе иконы «Предста Царица» Успенского собора Московского Кремля*, Древнерусское искусство, ред. В. Н. Лазарев, О. И. Подобедова, Москва 1977, 175–187.

Veria, while the fresco from Kovalevo includes only Christ and the Virgin in royal robes, without the third personage. The Forerunner instead of David is depicted on an icon from the church of Assumption in Moscow Kremlin.³⁰

The “Royal Deesis” of the Treskavac monastery is not an independent composition, but a part of the scene the „Heavenly Court“,³¹ a detailed examination of which is beyond the scope of this article, but we will mention some of the monuments associated with it. In the Macedonian churches its location and composition differs. In the monastery in Zaum near Ohrid (1361) the composition is placed on the western façade above the entrance of the church; in the church of St. Demetrius at the Markov monastery (1376–1381) near Skopje (fig.3) and in the church of St. Athanasius in Kastoria (1385) (fig.4) it is located in the lower register of the northern wall of the naos near the altar barrier. The common features of all these compositions are rich aristocratic vestments and headdresses of Christ and the Virgin. St. John the Baptist is represented instead of a prophet everywhere, except in Treskavac. Most often the saint is presented in his traditional iconography, although in some monuments he is depicted with wings (Markov monastery).

It is also necessary to mention a unique composition of the “Royal Deesis”, which was uncovered above the conch on the eastern wall in the church of St. Nicholas “tu Tzotza” in Kastoria (third quarter of the 14th Century or 1360–1380).³² Christ (“King of kings”) in royal vestments and a crown and the Ancient of Days with a dove are depicted in the center on the throne with signature: „Holy Trinity“ (fig.5). The throne is surrounded by the host of heaven. Images of the Theotokos in royal vestments and the Forerunner are depicted at the flanks, two prophets David and Daniel are next to them. David is holding a scroll with the words from Psalm 44 (45), while Daniel’s scroll contains a quote from his book (7, 9-14).³³ The Royal Deesis in the church of St. Nicholas “tu Tzotza” has some parallels with the composition in Treskavac monastery, but its exact meaning is unknown. Note that there is also a traditional three-figured Deesis in the same church, which, according to tradition, is located on the northern wall near the altar.

So, having analyzed the Deesis compositions in Macedonian frescoes of the 14th Century we may note several facts. Firstly, we see a wide spread of the

³⁰ On the possible reasons for the actualization of the theme of the priesthood of Christ in the art of the Palaiologos, see E. A. Немыкина, *Тема священства Христа в византийской живописи Палеологовского периода*, Seminarium Bulkinianum IV, Санкт-Петербург 2017, 186-187.

³¹ For more details about this composition see M. Глигоријевић-Максимовић, *op.cit.*, 77-121; С. Смолчић-Макуљевић, *op.cit.*, 463–472; E. A. Немыкина, *Влияние императорской проблематики на монументальные росписи Сербии XIV в. на примере композиции «Небесный двор» в Успенской церкви монастыря Трескавац*, Вестник Православно-Тихоновского Гуманитарного Университета. Вопросы истории и теории христианского искусства 4 (24) (2016), 48–66.

³² For reproduction of this scene see: K. Vapheides, *op.cit.*, 59; I. Σίσσιου, *Μια άγνωστη σύνθεσης τον Άγιο Νικόλαο του Τζώτζα Καστοριάς. Συνένωση δύο σημαντικών θεμάτων της Βασιλικής Δέησης και της Αγίας Τριάδας*, Αφιέρωμα στην μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα, Θεσσαλονίκη 2001, 529–531.

³³ K. Vapheides, *op.cit.*, 69.

Greek variant of the spatial Deesis in Macedonia while presence of St. John the Forerunner “Kephalphoros” in this composition also emphasized the fact that the novelties of the Byzantine iconography were actively adopted in the region too.

Secondly, the presence of an iconographic formula, including the Deesis composition and the image of a saint to whom a church is dedicated is an important feature. This placement of the compositions opposite one another is characteristic also for the Greek tradition. Though the specifics of this formula, used in the monuments of Macedonia in times of the Serbian rule, lies in connection of the Deesis, placed near the altar barrier, with the portraits of the Serbian rulers. The connection of Deesis with the family of the reigning Tsar Stefan Dušan demonstrates the active response of iconography to historical realities in the context of implementation of the ideological tasks of the Serbian rulers from the dynasty of the Nemanjić. Inclusion of Dušan’s family in the Deesis composition continues the Serbian theme of mediation of the Nemanjić with Christ, traditional for the Raška frescoes of the 13th Century. However, now the ruler is depicted frontally, as was customary in the Byzantine imperial iconography. Thus, the local Serbian tradition associated with the depiction of the Nemanjić blends with the Greek tradition, which acquired local specific feature in the Macedonian monuments such as the placement near the altar. A clear proof of this fact is the above-mentioned scroll of the Virgin Mary from the spatial Deesis in the gallery of Grigorios’ narthex in the cathedral of St. Sophia at Ohrid, where the Greek and Serbo-Slavic languages are combined within one text.

Finally, a distinctive feature of the Macedonian Deesis is the appearance and active distribution in the wall paintings of such type as the “Royal Deesis”. It is also important that this composition appeared for the first time in the Treskavac monastery, which, until the conquest of Prilep by Dušan, played an important role as a Serbian diplomatic establishment in the Byzantine territories, as the Hilandar monastery on the Athos. The importance of the monastery for Dušan is also evidenced by the fact that in the charter sent to Treskavac, Dušan mentioned the victory over the Greeks and capture of Prilep, apparently linking his military triumph over Byzantium with the help of the Virgin Mary.³⁴

The pictorial examples we have cited provide a basis for further reflection on the reasons for new interpretations of traditional iconographic types, which depend not only on theological concepts, but also on the historical and cultural context of the era. The genesis of the Deesis composition in the Macedonian frescoes is also interesting in the context of studying the problems of coexistence in medieval painting of the Byzantine traditions and the Southern Slavic regional specifics.

³⁴ Л. Славева, В. Мошин, *Грамотите на Стефан Душан за манастирот Трескавец*, Споменици за средновековната и поновата историја на Македонија IV, Скопје 1981, 56, 69.

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ДЕЗИС У ЗИДНОМ СЛИКАРСТВУ НА ТЕРИТОРИЈИ МАКЕДОНИЈЕ У ПЕРИОДУ
СРПСКЕ ВЛАДАВИНЕ: ИКОНОГРАФСКИ АСПЕКТИ И РАЗВОЈ

Главна пажња је посвећена проучавању иконографских варијанти композиције Деизис пронађених у храмовима на територији Македоније. Испитано зидно сликарство настало је у 14. веку, у периоду када је територија Македоније улазила у састав српских земаља. Основни циљ студије био је да се идентификују локалне специфичности композиције, једне од најраспрострањенијих у византијској уметности. Као резултат студије, откривено је да су у фреско програмима који датирају из 14. века Деизис композиције заступљене у неколико кључних варијанти, које се могу поделити у следеће групе: 1) тзв. Деизис, 2) традиционални Деизис, у којем учествују три лика (Христос, Богородица и Свети Јован Крститељ) и 3) такозвани „Царски Деизис“. На основу проучавања иконографских варијанти композиције Деизиса у храмовима на територији Македоније, извучени су следећи закључци. Прво, пример ширења „просторног Деизиса“ показује блиску везу са општом византијском традицијом и иновацијама у византијској иконографији. Друго, важно је присуство иконографског обрасца, укључујући композицију Деизиса и лик светитеља коме је црква посвећена.

Коначно, композиција „Царски Деизис“ карактеристична је за овај простор. Оваква иконографска тема извесно први пут се појављује у манастиру Трескавац који је имао веома важну улогу. Није уочена повезаност овог типа Деизиса са одређеним архитектонским концептом храмова, иако је генеза овакве композиције занимљива за проучавање коегзистенције византијске традиције и јужнословенских локалних специфичности у живописању храма.