

# CLOTHING AS AN IMAGE OF PERSONAL NOTABILITY – PORTRAITS OF NOBLEWOMEN IN THE CHURCH IN DONJA KAMENICA

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**Abstract:** *The paper was created to analyse the clothes of the ktetress and her daughter in the patroness composition in Donja Kamenica's Church of the Virgin. Along with the analysis of the clothes made, a small review of their headdresses, which are an integral part of the mediaeval costume, is also given. However, the emphasis is on textiles, textile design, dress design, and finding examples of comparison in mediaeval portrait painting of the 14th century from the area of mediaeval Serbia and Bulgaria. The intention is to point out the similarities and differences in clothing between other noble females and the ktetors of Donja Kamenica, as well as the specifics in the dress of these others.*

**Keywords:** ktetor, textile, dress, headdress, design, mediaeval portrait.

## ODEĆA KAO SLIKA PERSONALNOG NOTABILITETA – PORTRETI VLASTELINKI U CRKVI U DONJOJ KAMENICI

**Apstrakt:** *Rad je nastao sa idejom analize odeće ktitorke i njene kćeri na ktitorskom portretu u Bogorodičinoj crkvi u Donjoj Kamenici. Uz analizu odeće pravi se mali pregled njihovog oglavlja, koji su sastavni deo srednjovekovne nošnje. Ipak akcenat je stavljen na tekstilu, dizajnu tekstila, dizajnu haljina i nalaženju primera poređenja u srednjovekovnom portretnom slikarstvu XIV veka sa područja srednjovekovne Srbije i Bugarske. Cilj je ukazati na sličnosti i razlike koje postoje u načinu odevanja između ostalih vlastelinki i ktitorki iz Donje Kamenice, kao i istaći specifičnosti u odevanju ovih drugih.*

**Ključne reči:** ktitor, tekstil, haljina, oglavlje, dizajn, srednjovekovni portret.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Clothes speak about the people who wear them, the concept of themselves, and the environment they are in. Through it, they respond to the social environment with an aesthetic experience of themselves and define themselves by their social and family status. Clothing's significance has not changed over the centuries; only its appearance, form, and symbolism acquire meaning through social norms and written rules. The medieval costumes of the upper social classes played an essential role in the mutual gradation

of its members and the underprivileged, or rulers, in this context.

The feudal costume of the late Middle Ages from the area of the central Balkans, shaped by Byzantine court etiquette, developed in correlation with respect for the defined norms of clothing according to position and the development of personal taste according to material possibilities. Deviations from the rules of official display of a certain dignity were not frequent and were closely related to the country's social and political circumstances. Nobleman acquired the right

to portray himself and his family members with his founding act. A complete visual presentation in the temple is a form of legitimacy for his action and confirmation of his belonging to the established system. Contrary to the responsibility that belonged to the nobility with the title they carried, their wives knew how to afford to satisfy their desire for beautification by introducing details in clothing that could not always be interpreted through the prism of set standards.

The ktetor of the Church of the Virgin in Donja Kamenica is an unknown person. As a result, ktetor portraits can be a helpful guide in determining the importance of their social reputation and significance, their manner of dressing in a specific area, their familiarity with current fashion, and their need to express individuality. The ktetors are shown through two compositions and seven characters, i.e., five personalities, considering that two paint twice. In the nave is the principal ktetor's composition, which shows the ktetor with his son and presumably his brother. On the floor of the chancel is the second ktetor's composition of the family type, which consists of the ktetor, his wife, and their two children, a girl and a boy [1]. In addition to these portraits, there are no inscriptions that would reveal their names and the titles they bore.



**Figure 1:** Ktetor's composition  
**Slika 1:** Ktitorska kompozicija

There have been attempts in historiography to connect the historical circumstances of the area of Donja Kamenica and the broader context of the region of Timočka Krajina with the findings of these historical portraits. It is essential to point out that the estimated time for the construction of the church, and therefore the possible painting of the portraits, is the first half of the 14th century [2]. Panayiotova was among the first to draw attention to these portraits, emphasising that their depictions are crucial for illustrating the dress code of members of the ruling family as she inter-

prets them [3]. According to her, a significant segment is the use of fur in clothing decoration for both male and female family members [4]. Due to its luxury, the fur is reserved for rulers clothing and relatives clothing. The interest in ktetor portraits persisted into later epochs. The accent is on a segment of the analysis of portraits ktetors, their costumes [5], methods of decorating with jewellery [6], and the form of headdresses [7]. Because the subject of this work is a female aristocratic costume, the depiction of the ktetress and her daughter on the composition from the narthex floor would receive special consideration.

## 2. COSTUME OF NOBLEWOMEN FROM CHURCH IN DONJA KAMENICA

The painter paid close attention to emphasising individual facial features in the portraits, implying that the models, i.e., the ktetor's family, either posed for him or he was well acquainted with them. The ktetress is wearing a dress that only slightly hints at the line of her body. That is, it is noticeable that it is a heavier fabric under which the body's contours are hidden. The dress has a simple cut line, falling freely down the body with a slight extension in the back as a shlep, which gives an elegant line to the figure. The dress has an opening to the area halfway up the chest in the form of a flap, and around the neck is a semi-circular opening. A notable detail on the dress is the hanging sleeves that are behind the arm and are unusual in their shape. As these sleeves seem more like fabric attached to the back of the shoulder, it is clear that they do not have the natural form of a sleeve, and it was impossible to pull them on the arm as needed.

Although the fresco's surface is damaged, the red fabric of the ktetress's dress is visible. The pattern on the textile is less noticeable, so it is more difficult to assess the quality and type of material from which the dress is made. The entire surface of the dress is patterned with rhombs, between which there is a diagonal network of squares. It is not possible to say with certainty whether this pattern on the textile was created by embroidery or weaving. However, from how it clings to the ktetress's body, it could be assumed that the fabric is heavy precisely because of the combination of woven materials. Additional weight to the dress provides patches on the edges, i.e., around the neck, on the fold on the chest, and along the entire bottom edge.

The sleeves, from the shoulders to the ankles, are visible from the underdress shirt. It is white and has a decoration in the form of eight-leaved small flowers placed in several rows. It could be assumed that this

shirt decoration was made using embroidery. The sleeves of this dress are narrowed in the area of the wrist and end in a pointed shape on the back of the hand. This sleeve part is reinforced with additional embroidery, perhaps with a patch in the form of a lining so that the fabric retains its given shape. In contrast to this narrowing in the lower part of the sleeve, the region from the elbow upwards is expanded and has a puffy shape.

The sleeves are also an exceptional detail on ktetress's daughter's dress. They differ in shape from the sleeves of the mother's dress, although it is known that there was a practice of having identical or very similar clothing for parents and their heirs [8]. While at first glance, one gets the impression that the girl's clothes are more straightforward than their mothers', a closer look at her representation, which is damaged due to the lower position in the composition, reveals details worth mentioning. The dress is without cuts and openings; it falls freely following the body line, has no tailoring accessories, and gradually widens from below the hips. The girl's subtly curved figure in the shape of the letter S was additionally given elegance with the extension, i.e., the miniature shlep the dress has in the back. The sleeves of her dress flare out sharply from the elbow area and reach the floor. On the sleeve's hem is a band of white tape, which one



**Figure 2:** Portrait of ktetress, detail  
**Slika 2:** Portret ktitorke, detalj

might assume is the lining fabric that the sleeve has. From the lower dress shirt, which is certainly not pure white like the mother's, only the sleeves are visible in the area of the wrist, also with a pointed end on the back of the hand and some reinforcement in the form of stitching or embroidery.



**Figure 3:** Portrait of little girl  
**Slika 3:** Portret devojčice

The dress for the girl is made of textile, which gives the impression of a lighter material. It is designed with small yellow-orange circles on a green background on the part of the body figure, while the sleeves are of red fabric with the same pattern. This colour combination softens the simplicity of her dress. An additional decoration on the clothing, apart from the white border hem on the sleeves, is fur on the semicircular opening around the neck and the entire lower edge of the dress.

### 2.1. Costume and textile analysis

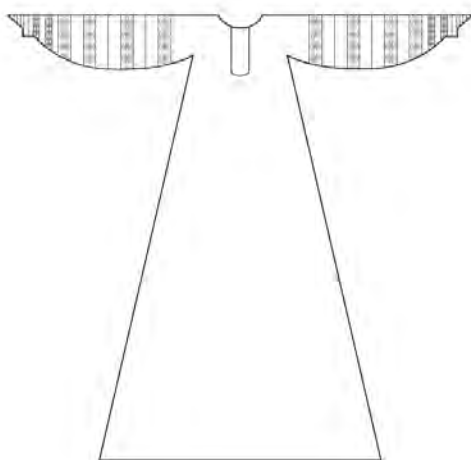
The possibilities for assessing the material type for ktetress and girl dresses are limited. The level of richness, complexity, and importance these ladies placed on their clothing can be determined by analysing and comparing the noble lady's dresses in other

ktetor portraits. The colour of the fabric of the dress in feudal portrait painting, especially regarding women, was not strictly connected to and conditioned by the status of the family, i.e., the title the husband-landlord held [9]. The red colour of the fabric, which is present on the dress of the ktetress of Donja Kamenica, in the case of men's clothing, was reserved for holders of high court titles such as *sevastokrator* or *despot*. However, examples of portraits of Serbian noblemen with lower tags or without labels dressed in red robes show deviations during the 14th century. That is why it is not possible in all cases to associate the colour of clothes with high dignity [10]. Although the ktetor of the Church in Donja Kamenica does not wear red clothes, which indicates his lower title of dignity, his wife did not follow his example, which does not necessarily point to her high origin. However, perhaps we should not discard this possibility altogether. Ktetress Struja in the Church of the Annunciation in Karan [11] followed the example of her husband with her daughters and put on dresses identical in colour and fabric pattern. As a result of a more thorough analysis of the quality of the textile and the origin of the motif, it was determined that a lower-quality colour was used in the treatment of the fabric. It is reasonable to expect that in the case of the dress of the ktetress from Donja Kamenica, a textile of similar quality was used in the processing procedure [12].

The highest quality textiles, whether wool, linen, cotton, or especially silk, had yarns of the finest fibres in selected interweaving techniques, which made up the spectrum of fine material for clothing. There are numerous written sources from the area of the medi-

aeval Balkan in which the names of various expensive fabrics from the treasuries of rulers are recorded [13]. However, it is essential to point out that the most costly and highest quality fabrics were reserved for the rulers and members and relatives of the ruling families, to whom the ruler could send such an expensive gift, as well as for the highest clergy, i.e. for the needs of the liturgy [14]. One of the examples of expensive fabric with motifs expressing the ruler's special relationship with his noble cousin is a find in a tomb near the church of St. Nicholas in Stanicenje [15]. Gold embroidery and gold weaving are primarily used to refine the appearance of textiles [13], and the motifs were complex, ranging from floral to zoomorphic to figural representations of people [16], in some cases with the meaning of insignia [17, 18]. This is noticed by depictions of rulers and their nobility in portraits in temples [13], charters [19], gospels [20], records in charters, inscriptions [16], or rare preserved pieces of clothing [21] and textile fragments from archaeological finds [22].

In the case of the textile of the dress of the ktetress of Donja Kamenica, there was no elaborate decoration using embroidery or sewn strips in the form of a hem on the dress, woven with independent motifs concerning the fundamental textile. Such elements can be found on the dresses of noblewomen in Staničenje or the White Church of Karan. This monochrome fabric received a pattern by interweaving materials of the same colour but possibly of different manufacture or even origin, resulting in another shade of red. Suppose a comparison is made with the examples in portrait and religious paintings of the



**Figure 4:** Illustration of a petticoat  
**Slika 4:** Crtež donje haljine  
scetch by M. Savić



**Figure 5:** Illustration of a leading dress  
**Slika 5:** Crtež gornje haljine  
scetch by M. Savić

14th century [13, 16]. In that case, the simple rhomboid grid, in the centre of which there are diagonally placed squares, speaks of a more modest variety of motifs on textiles. This pattern is found in the older period up to the XI century on preserved Byzantine fabrics, while the one from the XIII century was already of Italian origin [23].

More precisely, the motif of a rhomboid network with an element in the middle, which could also be of a floral type, is most often found on depictions of dresses in Balkan paintings during the 12th and 13th centuries [13]. In contrast, a more complex variant of floral motifs and zoomorphic elements intensified in the 14th century. Therefore, one can conclude that the ktetors of the church in Donja Kamenica made their ceremonial clothing from textiles of a more modest quality during production and decoration [24, 25].

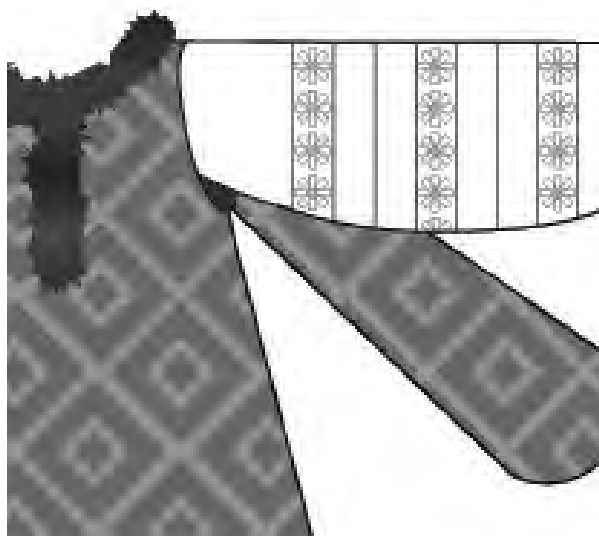
The material could originate from some Byzantine workshops, such as those in Thessaloniki [26] or the Dubrovnik workshops [13]. We should not rule out the possibility that textiles originated in some Asian workshops whose wares were distributed through Pisan and Genoese merchants from the Black Sea area in the Central Balkans and beyond, most intensively in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. [27]. It meant that the trade caravans went through mediaeval Serbia, Bulgaria, and further to the West, and vice versa. Since the 13th century, intensive work has been done on developing textile workshops in Italian cities whose goods were distributed to Byzantium [28], which could not always cover its own needs, or

was still forwarded to the East [29]. Italian textiles were also valued in the Serbian environment, as their presence can be traced through the motifs of the material in mediaeval paintings [23]. Due to his proximity to vital trade routes, Donja Kamenica's ktetor had the opportunity to obtain textiles within his financial capabilities. It is essential to mention again that the portrait of the founder in the temple was undoubtedly a public act, and the benefactors wore their best clothes for the occasion [30].

Along with the simplicity of the designing of the textile, it is critical to pay attention to the analysis of the cut images of the ktetress and her daughter's dresses. In the case of both dresses, the common feature is the shlep. It is undoubtedly an element of clothing fashion from the West [31], as confirmed by examples in painting [32], which began to penetrate Byzantium more intensively in the 13th century after the Crusades. This fashion became established with the arrival of foreign princesses to the court in the central Balkans, specifically in mediaeval Serbia [12]. The length and massiveness of this shlep, supported by the layered forms of clothing through the dress and cloak, had stages of development and were justified by the position and wealth of the portraited person. The examination begins with a portrait of Anna Komnena in Radoslav's Chapel in Studenica (third decade of the 13th century) [33] to the noble portraits from the first half of the 14th century (noblewomen in Karan) [34].



**Figure 6:** Illustration of the ktetress's dress  
**Slika 6:** Crtež ktitorkine haljine  
scetch by M. Savić



**Figure 7:** Illustration of the ktetress's dress,  
detail of design  
**Slika 7:** Crtež ktitorkine odeće, detalj dizajna  
scetch by M. Savić

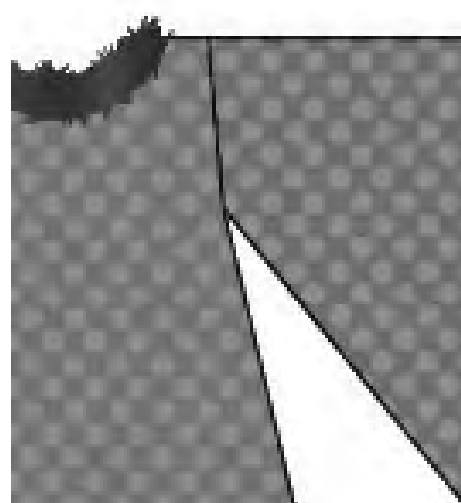
In the Donja Kamenica examples, the girl's figure stands out in a dress with a shlep, and it gets an elegant note supported by the sleek line of the wide sleeves. One of the closest examples of comparison is the depiction of the girl in the scene of Saint George kill the Dragon in the church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino [35]. Besides the shlep on the girl's dress, wide sleeves are also an essential part of the dress. In the case of the girl in Donja Kamenica, the contrast between the sleeves and the body is highlighted, combining different colours. Examples of the comparison with wide sleeves can be found in the vestments of the nearby Staničenje Church's landlady, Areta. However, these wide sleeves are not an integral part of the upper dress but are part of the lower or lower dresses, considering that from the forearm to the wrist, you can see the tight-fitting sleeves of another dress shirt [36]. At the ktetor's composition in Gornji Kozjak, Tihoslava was presented in a garment made up of two dresses, the lower white one having long, i.e. wide, sleeves [37]. Finally, we must mention the portrait of the despot Anna Maria from Lesnovo in vibrant clothes, on which the tailoring elements that play the role of insignia are clearly defined [38]. However, the long, fan-shaped sleeve segment is more significant in this case. The previously mentioned comparison examples, except for the last one, show that the wide sleeves were part of, or one of, the lower dresses. In contrast, in the case of the Donja Kamenica girl, the leading dress has wide sleeves, but the highlighting of this element was achieved through the use of a different material for them and a border along the edge of white tape.



**Figure 8:** Illustration of girl's dress  
**Slika 8:** Crtež devojčicine haljine  
 scetch by M. Savić

Another prominent element in the tailoring images of these two women's dresses is the sleeves, which differ in construction. The ktetoreess of Donja Kamenica has hanging sleeves on her dress. If the earlier division of hanging sleeves is accepted according to how the sleeves are cut, i.e. according to the way they hole, the Donja Kamenica example would be classified in the second subgroup of the second type. We are talking about sleeves that have an opening in the shoulder area, that is, at the point where the sleeve and the front part meet. Sleeves constructed in this way are tucked behind the shoulders and differ in length and style of wearing [39]. In the case of Donja Kamenica's ktetoreess, the sleeves have lost their shape and appear more like decorative fabrics that fall onto the shoulders. Examples of the comparison are in the dresses worn by the ktetoreesses of Zemen, Psača [11], Staničenje [36], and Kalotino [40], but with the difference that the form of an entirely constructed sleeve can be recognised. In the portrait and religious paintings of the Balkan countries of the late Middle Ages, various examples of men's dresses can be found, according to models and designs. This Eastern trend was accepted at the Byzantine court [41] and then transferred to the surrounding countries, so it was inevitable to share this fashion with women's costumes.

The shirt, or the underdress of the ktetoreess of Donja Kamenica, is an exceptional piece of clothing that makes a successful combination with a dress. Classy elegance is achieved through a uniform and clear textile pattern, with the simple tailoring of the dress enhanced by a more miniature shlep, which added to the lengthening of the figure, and hanging sleeves, which



**Figure 9:** Illustration of girl's dress, detail of design  
**Slika 9:** Crež devojčicine haljine, detalj dizajna  
 scetch by M. Savić

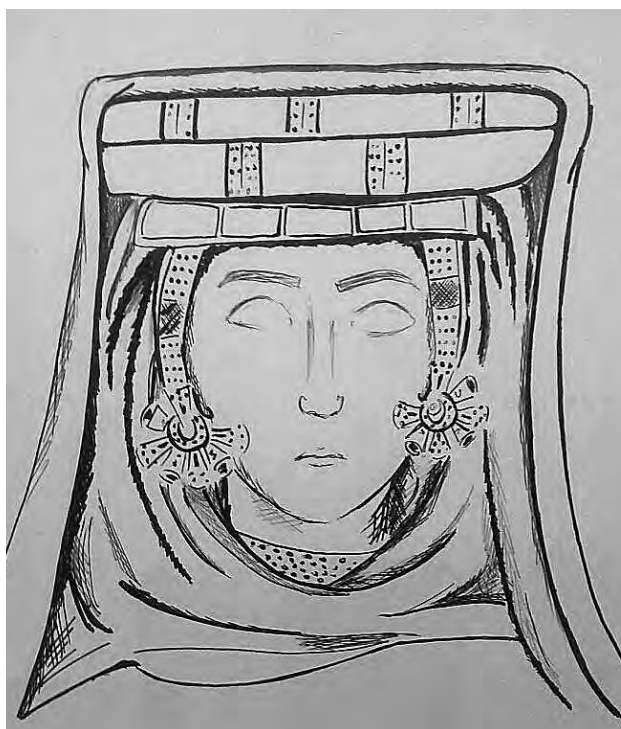
contributed to the openness of the entire figure. In the end, it was refined by a shirt that also carried a combination of various elements. The white surface of the fabric is embroidered with eight-leaf flowers that are rhythmically arranged in rows, and the shape of the sleeve indicates the ktetores' significant fashion taste. On the part of the wrist where the sleeves narrow and end in a pointed shape on the back of the hand, lines are drawn that would indicate embroidery or stitching to strengthen to achieve a solid structure of the fabric. A fuller, i.e. puffer, shape can be seen in the area around the elbow, which is a consequence of the wide sleeve creasing at its end. From this, it can be concluded that the sleeves of this shirt are unusual. In terms of motifs, they have decoration elements that are closer to folk creativity. They have an individual trait in their creation, possibly given by the creator herself, which is why this detail differs from the portraits of other landladies. Doja from Zemen [11] has close-fitting sleeves on her lower dress along the entire length; so do Princess Ozra and Sevastocrator Vladislava from Psača, as well as the wife of Jovan Dragušin from Pološko. The difference is in the design of the material, although the dominant colour is white, that is, a lighter shade compared to the colour of the main dress. In addition, for greater practicality when dressing, there would be expected to be openings on the sleeves that are fastened with buttons. However, evidence of their exist-

ence is not visible, as is the case with the upper dress, which has a vertical opening up to the middle of the chest, but as it is lined with fur, it is impossible to see the form of buttons.

It is essential to point out that in earlier research, there were indications that it is possible to find a connection between the elements of the founder's clothing and folk clothing [6]

## 2.2. Headdress description and analysis

When looking at how women are dressed in the portraits of the ktetors of the Church of the Virgin in Donja Kamenica, it is necessary to give equal importance to the dresses and the way they decorate their heads, i.e. their headdresses. Headdresses are made of scarves in combination with crowns, diadems, caps, or diadems adorned with earrings and other small valuables [9]. The ktetores of Donja Kamenica stands out with her headdress, which is made of a hat in combination with two scarves [6] and jewellery in the form of a diadem at the base of the cap and lunula earrings hanging from two straps hanging from the cap [7]. The authenticity of her headdress is confirmed by the absence of examples of comparison in such a set of elements. However, it is unavoidable that there are examples of diverse decoration on headdresses among the noblewomen of the central Balkans during the 14th century [44].



**Figure 10:** Illustration of ktetores's headdress

**Slika 10:** Crtež oglavlja ktitorke



**Figure 11:** Ktetores's headdress, detail of portrait

**Slika 11:** Oglavlja ktitorke, detalj portreta

If we accept the classification of headdresses into several types [7], depending on the way of combining one or two headscarves with a head decoration in the form of a cap or crown with or without accessories in the form of jewellery, the headdress of the ktetoress of Donja Kamenica would belong to the group of complex headdresses with a cap combined with two headscarves and rich jewellery in the form of earrings and diadems [44]. Then, it finds examples of comparisons for individual or multiple elements. The ktetoress Doja from Zemen [45] has a headdress with a high hat, from which, as in the Donja Kamenica case, it isn't easy to determine the material from which it was made. One scarf is attached to the cap and falls on the back, while the other falls in a wide arc on the chest with its ends attached to both sides of the hat. Textile hats with scarves tied in the back are worn by the ktetoress and her cousin from Kalotino [46] and the principal ktetoress of Staničenje [36], while her cousins wear hats with their hair styled in a hairstyle and without a scarf. In both cases, the women's headdresses in the mentioned churches feature the younger type's decadent, rayed lunule earrings [47]. They are thus excellent examples for comparison with Donja Kamenica's ktetoress. A small number of portraits of noblewomen are shown without earrings or with earrings on a chain [9], which testifies to their popularity, and the family's social status was not an



**Figure 12:** ktetoress's daughter, detail of portrait

**Slika 12:** Ktitorkina kćer, detalj portreta

element limiting the noblewomen from wearing this expensive piece of jewellery [48].

Rare archaeological findings such as the one from Markova Varoš have confirmed the artistic and material value of lunule earrings, whereby the Donja Kamenica specimen was found as an element of comparison on an equal footing with the jewellery of other rulers and nobles [49].

The combination of scarves, in this case, two, that completely covers the hair and neck of the Donja Kamenica ktetoress is not unusual and has some close parallels. The most comparable model to Donja Kamenica is from the White Church of Karan [34], where the ktetoress Struja wears two scarves, but she has a rich crown instead of a hat [12]. A somewhat simpler model with two scarves that cover the neck and head is in the portraits of Princess Ozra in Psača [42] and Empress Kali in Mali Grad on Prespa [50]. However, the cap segment is missing; there is already jewellery in the form of a headpiece or a wreath in the second. It is impossible to precisely determine the social status of Donja Kamenica's ktetoress in the system of manorial titles based on the information provided above. The title of the noblewoman's family did not consistently influence how the headdress was decorated, especially since some elements in women's headdresses, such as the crown, should not be interpreted as insignia.

The ktetoress of Donja Kamenica wears a more traditional (older) model of veiling with scarves, covering her hair and neck, and the rich version of the hat in the form of a crown was missing. At the same time, individual pieces of jewellery compensated for the previous modesty in the material in the form of oversized earrings and a diadem.

The already-mentioned indications that the elements of folk clothing can be recognised in the portrait of the founder refer to the headdress. It is possible that the ktetoress of Donja Kamenica used some forms of folk clothing [51, 52], modified them, and adapted them to her taste [53], or vice versa. It is also possible that noble dressing influenced the development and shaping of national dress, i.e. headdresses. It is known that the head covering of women with two headscarves and using "trvelj" was present in the broader area around Donja Kamenica. Furthermore, used caps in the larger area of Timočka Krajina and Vidin [54] were similarly decorated and made of materials similar to the Donja Kamenica ktetor's headdress.

The headdress of the ktetoress's daughter is more straightforward than the mother's; it is made of a scarf and earrings. In the feudal portrait paintings of the



Byzantine cultural world, in this case, the central Balkans, there are examples of portraits of mothers and daughters or younger relatives, where the similarity in their costumes is immediately noticeable [8]. The most obvious difference is in the headdress, where the more youthful members do not wear scarves to cover their hair, especially their necks. The custom of covering the hair with a headscarf was reserved for married women, while girls were uncovered with headscarves or some other jewellery as an element of head decoration [13]. The girl from Donja Kamenica is younger, more childlike, and could be compared to the youngest daughter of Struja, the ktetress of the Karan Church [12], but unlike her, the girl from Donja Kamenica has her hair covered with a white veil. Her face is framed by beautiful lunula earrings, modelled after her mother's but only slightly smaller, hanging from pearl chains. Concurrently, despite the fresco's damage, diadem (počelica) elements are hinted at in the forehead [6].

Donja Kamenica's ktetress and her daughter are rare examples of how to wear popular jewellery such as rings and necklaces. It is known that rings are a favourite type of jewellery for both men and women [13]. However, there are not so many representations in the portrait fresco painting [55] of mediaeval Serbia and Bulgaria. The little girl from Donja Kamenica has rings in the form of trimble, several on one finger. The same example can be found among the ktetor couple and noble lady Areta in Staničenje [36]. However, the custom of wearing one ring on each hand persisted, as seen with the ktetor couple in Pološko [56]. Equally popular among the frequently worn jewellery were necklaces [48], which are not shown so often in aristocratic portraits. The ktetress from Donja Kamenica and her daughter are shown with necklaces tightly attached to their necks and are, therefore, significant evidence of how this type of jewellery was worn. The little girl has a necklace made of a string of pearls around her neck. The ktetress's necklace is somewhat more complex, in the form of a ribbon with decorations in the form of pearls. It could be assumed that the primary material is leather or some fabric that could fit closely to the neck and thus remain visible in the free part of the neck between the scarves. Jovan Dragušin's wife wears a similar way of dressing at the performance in Pološko, and the necklace is used as jewellery in the depictions of the ktetress and noble lady in the nearby Staničenje Church.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The ktetress's dress is made of fabrics whose quality cannot be fully assessed due to the damage to the fresco. A significant segment is the red colour of the textile, which refers to expensive models worn by high dignitaries. But it was also established that more modest and cheaper replicas of that textile were more widely represented, especially among the middle and lower nobility. The fact that the fabric pattern is more modest suggests that the ktetors of Donja Kamenica used this type of textile. It is a geometric rhomboid scheme. This modesty of the applied material cannot influence the determination of the title of the ktetor and his family because perhaps it is a matter of a time when the possibilities for obtaining better quality textiles were limited. Nevertheless, it is significant that the distribution and trade of fabrics in the Balkans were branched out by a network of merchants from Byzantium and further from the East, but also Dubrovnik and Italian cities.

As already noted, the ktetress of Donja Kamenica does not have a cape. Her upper dress is the leading dress, on which there are not many details in the tailoring, but the textile pattern comes to the making, which, unfortunately, is not visible to us today. The design of the ktetress's and her daughter's dresses are plain but with striking elements—sleeves. This highlights knowledge of current fashion trends in the clothing of noblewomen in this area during the 14th century. The given examples are only a confirmation of what has been said. Fur, which was expensive and reserved for the upper social classes but was also used in folk clothing, filled the void left by the absence of costly and elaborate decoration. Therefore, the use of fur could be justified as applying a more readily available material. A similar justification could be given for the application of embroidery on the ktetress's shirt, which bears elements of folk creativity. From the previous cut, it would be concluded that a regional type of clothing was created by the ktetress' capabilities and the available material. This is how noble and folk clothing symbiosis became such a successful and unusual combination. Let's consider that, from the middle of the second half of the 14th century; it is possible to observe clothing among noblewomen that are not always part of the set norms. It is easy to justify the unusually we find among noblewomen in Donja Kamenica.

This is supported by the unusual headdress, which parallels portrait paintings from the 14th century among mediaeval Serbian and Bulgarian noblewomen. Still, it is impossible to find an identical model. However, the truth is that even for the mentioned

examples, it is not easy to find a comparable sample comparison. So, the women's costume was a product of the family's financial means and the mistress's taste and desire. The men's costume is more diverse in that there is a formal and military one [57], while the ladies do not have that opportunity. However, they were not always limited by the rules. They used them successfully, skilfully using the available material and combining it into unique fashion creations, which would impact generations of women centuries later [58]. The ktetors of Donja Kamenica, especially the ktetress with her daughter, were women who presented themselves and their family according to the possibilities, following the trends in clothing and creating a unique fashion expression in the details. This created an authentic look, primarily through the pieces she used to highlight the importance of herself and her family within the Medieval understanding of notability.

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