

Original Scientific Paper
УДК: 75.052(497.115)"15"
DOI: 10.5937/zrffp53-45896

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS AND THE VIRGIN KYRIOTISSA ON THE EAST WALL OF THE GRAČANICA EXONARTHEX

Aleksandra R. DIMITRIJEVIĆ¹
University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica
Faculty of Philosophy
Department of Art History

Jelena R. RATKOVIĆ STEVOVIĆ²
University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica
Faculty of Philosophy
Department of English Language and Literature

¹ aleksandra.dimitrijevic@pr.ac.rs

² jelena.ratkovic.stevovic@pr.ac.rs

Received: July 31, 2023
Accepted: September 29, 2023

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Keywords:
Gračanica
exonarthex;
Mother of God;
prophets;
the cycle of the
Virgin.

Abstract. The exonarthex of Gračanica has a rich and complex painted programme, which is a testimony to the medieval kingdom of Serbia ruled by the Nemanjić dynasty, after the arrival of the Ottomans in the Serbian regions. This painted programme has been preserved to a certain extent to this day, although the traces of the ravages of time are clearly visible; it is still possible to read and reconstruct the entire thematic programme, as well as to recognise the iconographic and stylistic features of this part of the church. The exonarthex was painted out several times, as it was repeatedly damaged during the turbulent and destructive centuries (14th, 15th, 16th). It was probably fresco painted after its construction (probably around 1330), but there are no physical remains or written sources testifying to this, while today two layers of fresco paintings are clearly visible in the Gračanica exonarthex. The iconography and themes of the younger layer of fresco paintings from 1570 form a more complex and intricate unity in relation to the one that was there originally. The new frescoes have a clear theological background, devotion to the Virgin Mary, who was also the patron of the Gračanica church. The depiction of the cycle of the Virgin celebrates the role of the Virgin in the Incarnation, foretold in prophetic visions. Almost the entire painted programme around the east portal of the Gračanica exonarthex is dedicated to the Mother of God; additionally, some related depictions are shown there, like the Mother of God on the throne with Christ Emmanuel on her lap surrounded by archangels in the lunette above the entrance. The entire composition was introduced with the theme “From above the prophets have prophesied thee”, as shown by the painted busts of six prophets (Isaiah, Solomon, David, Moses, Aaron and Jeremiah) entwined by a decorative vine on the inside of the arch, at the top of which is a waist-high image of Christ giving blessings with both hands. The main aim of this paper is to point out the importance of the restoration and painting of Serbian monasteries during the Ottoman rule since these topics are insufficiently represented in Serbian art history. The paper provides an iconographic analysis of the scenes dedicated to the celebration of the Virgin in the Gračanica exonarthex, as well as their theological background.

The two layers of painting that can be seen in the Gračanica exonarthex differ in certain stylistic and iconographic solutions, although the painters of the younger layer of fresco painting made great efforts to respect and follow the programme of the previous one (Тодић, 1988, p. 251), which can be clearly seen in some scenes.³ The problem that previous researchers dealt with, starting with B. Vulović, P. Mijović, S. Petković, B. Todić, and M. Čanak Medić, is the dating of an older fresco layer sometimes placed in the 14th century, due to its iconographic solutions based on older models, but also due to the washed-out colour and the damage of some frescoes.

According to the claims of Petković (Петковић, 1978, p. 204), one of the main reasons for dating the older layer of fresco painting in the 14th century, besides the iconographic solutions based on the models from the beginning of the 14th century and conceptually forming a unity with the painting programme created under the reign of King Milutin, is a record from the Minei transcribed by the monk Nikodim in 1383, on behalf of Simeon, Metropolitan of Lipljan. Based on the records that overestimate the contribution of Metropolitan Simeon to the reconstruction of Gračanica after the destruction and devastation following the Battle of the river Marica in 1371, it was concluded that the exonarthex could have been repainted at that time (Мијовић, 1968–1971, pp. 195, 196, 198). However, that claim was later refuted, because there are no analogous examples from that period which this painting could be compared to, and the strongest counter-argument is that the frescoes of the older layer contain exclusively Greek inscriptions (Петковић, 1978, p. 205; Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 127; Тодић, 1988, p. 251). In a cathedral church like Gračanica, which was the centre of the metropolis during the autocephaly of the Serbian Church, it was impossible for complete Greek inscriptions to appear on the frescoes, both on the scenes and next to the images of saints. Apparently, this phenomenon can be attributed to the period when the Ohrid Archbishopric had jurisdiction over

³ One of the examples is the scene of the Tomb of the Dead (*Во гробе њлојиски*) in the western part of the exonarthex, the lower part of which was painted in 1570, cf. Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, pp. 128–129.

the Serbian Church (during the second half of the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century), until the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1557. The Ohrid Church tried to assert its authority in the temples of these regions through Greek inscriptions and the presence of Greek painters (Петковић, 1978, p. 205).

The Gračanica exonarthex was repainted during the Ohrid Archbishopric jurisdiction, at the time when Metropolitan Nikanor of Gračanica was serving there and restoring the temple (1528–1551).⁴ He was a very learned and educated man, responsible for the establishment of a printing house in Gračanica in 1538/1539 (Тодић, 1988, p. 251; Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 22), as well as for painting icons and transcribing books, so it can be assumed that he himself also started the restoration of the fresco painting (Тодић, 1988, p. 205). One of the sources for this interpretation is the *Octoich* from Gračanica, the only book printed in the newly established printing house, in which the monastery is depicted on the cover page (Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, pp. 22, 128).

Of the fresco paintings made during the period of the restoration of the temple by Nikanor, between 1528 and 1538/1539 (Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 24), few frescoes have been preserved, mostly in the upper areas. This programme was certainly influenced by the older painting that covers the walls of the altar and the nave, because the new frescoes represent a logical sequence, i.e. an addition to the art of the time of King Milutin. The choice of themes was also influenced by the role of the church as a cathedral. Most of the preserved fresco painting belongs to the second, younger layer from 1570. The inscriptions preserved in two places in the temple provide reliable information about the time of creation of the second fresco layer in the exonarthex. The completion of the painting is associated with the early autumn of 1570, specifically September 12, 1570 (Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 23), which is mentioned in the founding inscription in the southern part of the west wall and in the prayer addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary written above the entrance to the nave (Тодић, 1988, p. 254). Why the exonarthex was repainted in such a short time is not known, as there are no sources to attest to this. It is assumed that there must have been a destruction that led to the initiation of such a large artistic endeavour (Тодић, 1988, pp. 254, 255). Certainly, the whole process could have been influenced by the fact that the frescoes were exposed to various atmospheric changes due to the older openings in the exonarthex. The closing of the mentioned openings on the side walls during the renovation could have led to changes in the painting programme by painting new scenes into them, or the old compositions were repainted for ideological reasons and new compositions were painted that correspond to the new church ideology (Петковић, 1978, p. 207). In this context, it is important to emphasise that the fresco painters who began to paint the exonarthex in the

⁴ His name is mentioned in sources related to the period 1528–1551, cf. Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 22.

seventh decade of the 16th century, respected the earlier thematic units, which can be seen in some of the preserved scenes (Тодић, 1988, p. 255).

This layer of fresco painting and its programme is dominated by scenes and cycles celebrating the Virgin Mary, the patron saint of the temple. The cycle of the Infancy and Youth of the Virgin was probably painted (Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 132; Тодић, 1988, p. 255) in addition to the Akathist of the Virgin, which was restored again in the seventh decade of the 16th century. One of the scenes of this cycle, the Blessing of the Three Priests, has found its place on the north wall (Петковић, 1978, p. 203). It is known that this scene was not painted independently of the cycle of the life of the Virgin (Тодић, 1988, p. 255), so that even in the exonarthex of Gračanica, although today it is a single one, it belonged to a larger whole that has not been preserved. It is significant that it can be identified with the same subject found in the altar area, painted between 1318 and 1321, which in turn suggests that the painters of the new fresco tended to repeat older iconographic solutions (Тодић, 1988, p. 255).

Another unit celebrating the Virgin is located near the entrance to the nave, on the east wall. The Virgin Kyriotissa is depicted on the throne with Christ Emmanuel surrounded by the archangels Michael and Gabriel, who glorify her, above the portal, in the lunette. On the inner part of the arch above the lunette, busts of prophets,⁵ part of the scene *The Prophets Have Foretold Thee*, are painted in decorative tendrils, bearing unfolded scrolls and objects symbolically representing the Mother of God.

The prophets are depicted in medallions decorated with stylized floral ornaments in the inner part of the arch of the eastern lunette, above the main portal. At the top of the arch is the bust of Christ performing the gesture of blessing with both hands, also in a floral medallion. He is dressed in a purple chiton and a navy-blue himation, carrying a cruciform nimbus with the letters WON, which translates as “the one who has come from heaven”. Six Old Testament prophets are depicted, three on the left and three on the right. The three on the left are the prophets Isaiah, Solomon and David and on the right, the prophets Jeremiah, Aaron and Moses. The physiognomy of the prophet figures was executed in accordance with the iconographic tradition, on the basis of descriptions from painting manuals or texts about the lives of the prophets (Томић-Ђурић, 2017, p. 52).

The prophet-scribes are depicted with open scrolls with the texts of their prophecies. However, what is striking about the prophet texts in the Gračanica exonarthex is that none of them, except for the text of the scroll King David is holding, belong to the prophet texts. These texts are not originally biblical, but were most likely created as excerpts from church poetry, based on the events and words of the prophets. Regardless of this specific assumption, all the texts written

⁵ Moses, Isaiah, Solomon, David, Aaron and Jeremiah.



Fig. 1. Prophet David,
Gračanica Monastery, exonarthex,
© Martin Candir



Fig. 2. Prophet Moses,
Gračanica Monastery, exonarthex,
© Martin Candir

on the scrolls, as well as the iconographic concept, can be interpreted as a prefiguration of the Mother of God.

The prophet David (Fig. 1) is depicted in half-profile, making a gesture of blessing with his right hand, while in his left hand holding an unfolded scroll with the text of the Psalm: *СЛЫШИ ДЪЩИ ВЪЖДЪ И ПР...* [*Слиши дъщии и вижд и ѿр*] – *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear* (Ps 45: 10). The Mother of God was born of the descendants of David, and this verse, like many others from his psalms, is considered prophetic and indicative of her divinely ordained mission. The text of this Psalm is read during the liturgy, on the day that celebrates the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Entry of St. Theotokos into the Temple. David is dressed in royal robe, an imperial blue dalmatic with ornated clavi and epimanikion, a purple mantle trimmed with a gold beaded band around his neck, and a crown richly decorated with pearls and precious stones. The Prophet has short, grey, curly hair and a short grey beard and moustache.

The prophet Moses (Fig. 2), the greatest prophet, leader and eternal mediator between the people and God (Prolović, 2008, p. 145), is depicted next to his brother Aaron, in half-profile, dressed in a priestly robe, not richly decorated. He is wearing a blue chiton with a purple cloak over it; he has long brown hair that falls over his shoulders and back, and a short brown beard and moustache. He is wearing a typical prophet's cap, a *Tephila*. In his left hand he is holding an unfolded scroll with the inscription: *СТАМНЪ ТЕ ВСЕ ЗЛАТЪЮ*

[*Сѣямну ѿе всезлаѣују*] – *You, a pot – A golden pot* (Moses 16: 33–34) and in his right hand he is holding a pedestal with a golden pitcher (*stamnno*) with two handles decorated with black vegetal and geometric elements. According to the tradition, the pitcher that Moses is holding in his hands contains manna, which Moses instructed his brother Aaron to gather, then present before the Lord, so that it would be passed from generation to generation (Проловић, 2008, p. 145). The manna in this vessel is a symbol of the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ, while the *stamnno* containing the manna represents the prefiguration of the Virgin. In this way, the symbolic connection between the Virgin and Christ is indicated, for like the manna in the pitcher, the Virgin carried Christ in her womb, indicating the Virgin's role in the incarnation of the Logos (Проловић, 2008, p. 145).

The prophet Solomon (Fig. 3) is depicted as a young, still-beardless man with short brown hair. He is dressed in a royal robe, in a blue undergarment with pearl-embellished golden epimanikion, and over it, he is wearing a purple cloak fastened to his chest and decorated around his neck with a golden



Fig. 3. Prophet Solomon, Gračanica Monastery, exonarthex, © Martin Candir

patch of pearls and precious stones. On his head, he wears a crown that spreads upward like a fan and is carefully decorated with pearls and precious stones. In his left hand, he is holding an unfolded scroll, on which he writes his prophecy with his right hand: *многѣ дѣщери* [*Многѣ дѣщери*] – *Many daughters*. Namely, the prophet Solomon mentions the daughters of Jerusalem in several places (Song 1: 5, 2: 7, 3: 5, 5: 8, 8: 4), and in church poetry, the Virgin is extolled as the only one chosen of all women to be the Mother of God.

The prophet Aaron (Fig. 4) is depicted as an old man with a long grey beard, which divides into two pointed parts at the ends, and long wavy grey hair. He is dressed in a splendid priestly robe, for he is called the first priest of the Old Testament, having been appointed by his brother Moses. On his head he is wearing a priestly hat, the *Tephila*, while his robe consists of a dark undergarment and, above it, a mantle hemmed with a band of pearls and fastened to his chest, decorated with pearls and precious stones. This rich clothing of his is described in the Second Book of Moses, Exodus 29: 4–10 (Поповић, 1991, p. 446). Aaron is usually depicted holding two symbols in his hands, while very rarely holding a scroll,⁶ as

⁶ Aaron holds the scroll also in *Manasija*, see Томић & Николић, 1964, p. 74.



Fig. 4. Prophet Aaron, Gračanica Monastery, exonarthex, © Martin Candir



Fig. 5. Prophet Isaiah, Gračanica Monastery, exonarthex, © Martin Candir

is the case in the Gračanica exonarthex, where in his left hand he is holding a scroll inscribed: *КАДИЛНИЦА ТЕ АЗЪ ПРОВИ...* [*Кадилницу ѿ аз ѿрови*] – *I foresaw you as a censer* (Moses 3, 16: 12), and in his right hand he is holding a censer. The censer can be interpreted as a symbol of the priesthood or the reflection of the human nature of Christ, which he received from the Mother of God; the embers stand for the divine nature of Christ, while the smoke rising from the censer is interpreted as the presence of the Holy Spirit. This explains the key role of the Mother of God in the incarnation of Christ (Проловић, 2008, p. 144).

The prophet Isaiah (Fig. 5) is depicted as an old man with a short, grey, curly beard and grey hair that falls in several wavy strands to his shoulders. He is dressed in a blue chiton and a purple himation with clavi. In his left hand he is holding a scroll with the inscription: *РУЧКА ТЕ ПРОВИДѢХЪ ДѢВО* [*Ручку ѿ ро видјех Дјево*] – *I have foreseen you as a vessel, Maiden*. The prophet Isaiah draws similar comparisons, referring to the Lord as a potter and to people as clay and pottery that the potter creates and shapes (Is 64: 8, 45: 9). The Mother of God was predestined and chosen to give birth to the God-Man Christ and to carry him within her as a sacred vessel, as hymns describe her. A handle is painted in his right hand, as he mentions on the scroll, in which the embers and curling smoke can be seen. The inscription on the scroll does not correspond to any

quotation from the Old Testament associated with the figure of the prophet. The image of the prophet Isaiah has changed iconographically over time. On the Sinai mosaic, he is depicted as a young man, with dark, short hair and a

beard (Поповић, 1991, p. 450), on the miniatures from the Macedonian period the image of this prophet grows older, to reach full maturity in Komnenian art, where he is depicted as a grey-haired old man. Such iconography of Isaiah will be respected throughout the following Byzantine periods (Поповић, 1991, p. 450).

The prophet Jeremiah (Fig. 6) is one of the great prophets whose representation was rarely omitted from the fresco paintings of Byzantine and Serbian churches.⁷ He is depicted as an old man with grey, dishevelled hair and a short, grey beard, and like the prophet Isaiah, he is dressed in a red chiton with blue clavi and a blue himation. Almost the entire appearance of Isaiah and Jeremiah is subordinated to one iconographic model that the painter, with minor differences, applied to both prophets (Томић-Ђурић, 2019, p. 61). Jeremiah is



Fig. 6. Prophet Jeremiah, Gračanica Monastery, exonarthex, © Martin Candir

holding a scroll with his right hand: *пѣть живота ꙗви се дѣво* [Пуй животиа јави се Дјево (Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 133)] – *As the way of life, you appeared, the Maiden*. In the book of Jeremiah, the concept of the road appears in three forms: as the life of man, that is, *the way of living*; then as the way of the Lord, more precisely *the way of life – the true way of living*; and the third form represents *the ways of Egypt – the ways of evil and death* (as an allusion to Israelites' enslavement in Egypt). By choosing this version of the text, the prophet Jeremiah presents people with the opportunity to choose and shape their lives. The Virgin, as the mother of God, is considered in church literature to be a true servant of God and an example of a true life and shaping of the soul (Jer 2:

17–18, 5: 4–5, 6: 16, 12: 1, 18: 11, 21: 8, 31: 9, 42: 3). Jeremiah's mention of *Zion* and the road leading to it should be emphasized (Jer 50: 5), because in church poetry the Virgin Mary was called Zion, i.e. the symbol of the Promised Land. However, what the prophet Jeremiah is holding in his left hand is most likely the door-portal, since this prophet once received the word of God to prophecy at the door of the house of the Lord, while the motif of the door of the temple often appears in his prophecies (Jer 7: 2, 17: 19, 22: 2). In church hymnography,

⁷ On the representation of Jeremiah in the group of prophets, see Поповић, 1991, p. 453.

the Mother of God was compared to the door of the temple through which only the God-Man Jesus passed and entered the world, whose archetype was the supreme high priest, who, as such, was the only one who had access to the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle of testimony and later in Solomon's Temple. In this way, it can be assumed that the prophet Jeremiah held the door of the temple in his hands as a prefiguration of the Mother of God.

On the intrados, there is a bust of Christ blessing the prophets on both sides with both hands. Christ is dressed in a purple chiton and a blue himation and has cinnabar clavi on his right arm.

In the lunette above the entrance to the nave, the Virgin Kyriotissa⁸ (Fig. 7) is depicted on the throne with Christ Emmanuel in her arms, with the archangel Michael with a scroll, on one side, and the archangel Gabriel with a scroll, on the other side. On the lintel of the entrance from the narthex to the nave, the prayer and praise to the Mother of God is inscribed, which reads as follows: *въ цркви стоице слави твоје. на нѣбы стоиати мнѣмъ се бже дѣры н... отвѣрзи на ны дѣри мѣсти твоје... лѣт 5. ѿ. ѿ. – Standing in the church of your glory, it seems to us that we are standing in the heavens; the Virgin of the Door, open onto us the doors of your mercy.*

The inscription on the lintel refers to a request addressed to the Mother of God, whose role is a key intermediary between the faithful and Christ.



Fig. 7. The Virgin Kyriotissa with the archangel Gabriel and the archangel Michael, Gračanica Monastery, exonarthex, © Martin Candir

⁸ About the Virgin Kyriotissa, see Тагић-Ђурић, 2007, pp. 253–273; Brubaker & Cunningham, 2011, pp. 206–207; Vassilaki, 2000.

The Virgin Kyriotissa is represented as sitting on a luxurious throne and is signed as the Mother of God. Christ Emmanuel is sitting on her lap and she is holding him with her left hand, while she is leaning on her knee with her right hand, holding a handkerchief. The Virgin is shown frontally, sitting on an oblong red cushion, the ends of which are decorated with golden circular patches, pressed at the top, and behind it, there is another oblong blue cushion, which is not additionally decorated. The throne with backrest has a cassette design, lavishly and meticulously decorated. The Virgin is resting her feet on a red-blue oval cushion, which is on a decorated square plinth. Kyriotissa is dressed in a purple maphorion, ornated with three characteristic golden stars decorated with pearls, one on each shoulder and one on the head. The Virgin's iconography with certain motifs such as red shoes, long blue lower dress, suppedion below her feet, the purple cushion on which she is sitting, as well as the richly ornamented throne, is in accordance with certain corresponding canons borrowed from the royal iconography (Милановић, 2004–2005, p. 144). The Virgin's clothing, which is normally depicted very modestly, is here hemmed with golden bands, which form a horizontal decorative band over her chest and arms, additionally decorated with tassels,⁹ while the sleeves of the lower dress end with bracelets (Милановић, 2004–2005, p. 144).

Christ Emmanuel is depicted with a cross nimbus, dressed in a white shirt with wide sleeves with decorative black elements; his collar is ornamented with graphemes, while over the white shirt he is wearing a long orange dress and has sandals on his feet. He is making gestures of blessing with his right hand, while holding an open scroll in his left hand. The white shirt is ornamented from the shoulders with characteristic shoulder straps, the ends of which form a belt under the chest. The shoulder straps, according to the testimony of Archbishop Simeon of Thessaloniki, point to Christ's unbreakable and indivisible connection of the Son of God, as one of the Holy Trinity, with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Милановић, 2004–2005, p. 160; Тодић, 1988, pp. 154–157). The white clothing in which Christ is dressed symbolizes his sacrifice, which, based on poetic and liturgical motifs, is connected with the cloth in which the body of Jesus Christ was wrapped when he was laid in the grave (*sindon*). It is important to point out the analogy of the Virgin's handkerchief and the clothes on Emmanuel, given that the handkerchief is shown in white, with ornamental details, very similar to those on Christ's shirt, so it can be said that it is actually a representation of Jesus, Lamb of God.

In her right hand, the Virgin is holding a white handkerchief,¹⁰ the folds and bends of which are accentuated in ochre-gold colour, with decorative geometrical

⁹ The maphorion decorated in this way, judging by the tradition of depicting the image of the Virgin in Byzantine iconography, is not an exception.

¹⁰ For more about the handkerchief, see Djordjević & Marković, 2000, pp. 45–47, with examples and bibliography. For the motif of the handkerchief interpreted as an imperial

elements – dots all over it, which are very similar to the ornaments with which the shirt of the Divine child is decorated, as is the case with the fresco of the Virgin and Christ at the entrance to the Church of the Virgin Hodegetria in Peć (Милановић, 2004–2005, p. 144). The identification of two completely different motifs on the fresco, such as in this case the handkerchief and Christ's clothes, aims to reveal the allusion to the unique context of the presented content, which indicates the firmly and precisely depicted thematic frames of the painting with carefully chosen elements that make it up (Милановић, 2004–2005, p. 160). The handkerchief motif in the iconography of the Virgin can be interpreted as a detail worn by courtiers and persons of high social status, which indicates the noble origin of the represented image of the Mother of God and a sign of respect (Ђорђевић & Marković, 2000, pp. 45–47; Милановић, 2004–2005, p. 160).

The two archangels standing on the side are dressed in regal robe, which suggests the scene of the heavenly court. The archangel Gabriel is wearing an azure sakkos and a loros, with crosses hanging from its ends, richly ornamented with pearls and gemstones, draped over his right hand. With his left hand he is holding an open scroll with an inscription: *прѣснодѣѣ и мѣтеры цѣра вышнихъ(ь) чинстѣнша сраца дѣховнѣ вѣрны възспїиш(ь). радун се бѣце дѣво. – Forever to the Virgin and the mother of the Emperor of almighty powers, pure hertedly. We, the faithful, cry out: Rejoice, Virgin Mother of God.*

The narrow bracelets of the undergarment are visible under the sakkos, richly ornamented with pearls. The edges of the sleeves, as well as the lower part of the sakkos and epimanikion, are very richly and minutely decorated with pearls and gemstones. On his feet he has purple shoes decorated with whitish details. The archangel Gabriel's hair is brown and curly, falls to his back and appears to be gathered in a braid, with two thin white ribbons dangling from it.

The archangel Michael is, just like Gabriel, depicted in imperial clothes, in a cinnabar-coloured sakkos with a meticulously decorated loros, the patterns of which are made of pearls and gemstones forming geometric ornaments. He is holding an open scroll in his right hand with the inscription: *прѣдстоеть раколѣпно, рождѣствѣ твоємѣ чинове нѣсных се достоно твоємѣ безсѣмненнѣ рождѣ(ь)ствѣ – In front the one born of you, the heavenly ranks stand wondrously as admiring servants, worthy of your virgin birth.*

The loros is draped over his left arm, while he is holding an unfolded scroll in his right hand. The edges of the sleeves and the lower part of the sakkos are ornamented with decorative strips, also made of pearls and gemstones. The epimanikion, which can be seen under the wide sleeves of the sakkos, are decorated with pearls and pearl crosses hang from both ends of the loros. On his

insignia (mandilion) which carries the meaning of the transience of the earthly kingdom, see Татић-Ђурић, 2007, p. 200. For an interpretation that connects the handkerchief with the ceremonial of the Byzantine court, see Бабић, 1987, pp. 114–115; Jolivet-Levy, 1991, p. 55.

feet, he has deep purple shoes with white details. The archangel Michael's hair is auburn, and that part of the fresco has been damaged, so it cannot be said with certainty whether he, like the archangel Gabriel, had white ribbons swaying from the braid. Both archangels are standing on a green surface, on which a throne with a representation of the Virgin Kyriotissa and Christ Emmanuel is shown, while a blue surface spreads in the background. The entire composition is reminiscent of a court ceremony, in the eternal home of the ruler of the universe, at the same time recalling the incarnation of Christ and the role of the Mother of God (Бабић, 1987, p. 114).

When performing this theologically complex programme, the painters were persistent to concise solutions, expertly and thoroughly conveying the basic messages contained both in the themes dedicated to the Virgin and when painting other compositions and holy figures (Николић, 1985, p. 71). The choice of themes in the exonarthex was subordinated to the cathedral character of the temple and the celebration of the Mother of God, patroness of the monastery, as well as the purpose of the space where the agiasm stood and where the epiphany water was sanctified (Пејић, 2016, p. 464). Almost the entire painted programme around the eastern portal is dedicated to the Virgin and the poetic texts that accompany the representation of the Mother of God are very extensive and explain the meaning of the painting, while both Old Testament figures and heavenly figures participate in the celebration of the Mother of God. The troparia depicted on the front of the arch, and the texts on the unfolded scrolls in the hands of the archangels Michael and Gabriel, Christ Emmanuel and the prophets, complete the role of the Mother of God in the incarnation of Christ (Тодић & Чанак Медић, 2017, p. 133).

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Александра Р. ДИМИТРИЈЕВИЋ

Универзитет у Приштини са привременим
седиштем у Косовској Митровици
Филозофски факултет
Катедра за историју уметности

Јелена Р. РАТКОВИЋ СТЕВОВИЋ

Универзитет у Приштини са привременим
седиштем у Косовској Митровици
Филозофски факултет
Катедра за енглески језик и књижевност

Иконографија старозаветних пророка и Богородице Кириотисе
на источном зиду грачаничког ексонартекса

Резиме

Рад се бави иконографском анализом две фреско целине у спољашњој припрати манастира Грачанице. Прву целину представљају погрсја шесторице старозаветних

пророка, Исаије, Соломона, Давида, Мојсија, Арона и Јеремије, насликаних допојасно у декорисаним лозицама у потрбушју лука који се налази на улазу из ексонартекса у наос манастира. У темену лука налази се допојасна слика Христа који благосиља обема рукама. Друга сликана целина представља Богородицу Кириотису са малим Христом на крилу, окружену арханђелима Михаилом и Гаврилом. Смештена је у лунети изнад улаза из спољашње припрате у наос. Иконографија, али и теме млађег слоја живописа из 1570. године, којем припадају ове две сликане целине, по свему судећи има сложеније и комплексније значење у односу на старији живопис изведен око 1330. године. На новим фрескама уочава се јасна теолошка подлога повезана са прослављањем Богородице, која је била и патрон грачаничке цркве. Приказивањем Богородичиног циклуса слави се њена улога у телотворењу, наговештена у пророчким визијама. Сликани програм око источног портала грачаничког ексонартекса, којем припадају две горе помену-те целине, готово у целости посвећен је Богородици, чију улогу у оваплоћењу Логоса наглашавају представе пророка, текст на свицима и предмети које држе у рукама. Рад доноси и осврт на неуобичајен избор текстова на свицима које држе пророци, а који се нису могли срести ни у једној цркви у периоду после обнове Пећке патријаршије.

Кључне речи: Грачаничка спољашња припрата; Богородица; пророци; Богородичин циклус.



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