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## THE ASSIMILATION OF STEFAN DUŠAN WITH CONSTANTINE THE GREAT AND ARCHANGEL MICHAEL IN THE CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE AT POLOŠKO



*Key words:* political ideology, Byzantine art, monumental painting, St. George at Polosko, Stefan Dušan.

*In the church of St. George at Pološko is depicted one of the most representative images of Stefan Dušan and his family in the medieval art. This complex composition is full of symbolism that reflects the historic moment of its creation and Dušan's desire to proclaim himself as a rightful ruler of the newly conquered territories in Macedonia. The portraits of the royal family as well as the other decoration of the church reveals the development of this symbolism in the royal iconography. This paper pays special attention to the representation of the Serbian ruler and his assimilation to Constantine the Great and to Archangel Michael depicted in the naos of the church.*

### **Stefan Dušan as “new Constantine”**

The donor's composition at Pološko is developed on the west facade of the church (now an east wall of the narthex, fig. 1)<sup>1</sup> Serbian royal family is depicted in the upper register. The composition consists of the portrait of the Serbian king Stefan Dušan, his wife Jelena and his son Uroš. Above the royal family Christ Emmanuel “in Another Form”<sup>2</sup> crowns the king and

<sup>1</sup> The west facade of the church, now is integrated into the 17th century exonarthex. For the conservation of the frescoes in the church at Pološko and the removal of the seventeenth-century fresco layer, see: Ц. Грозданов, Д. Корнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком*, Зограф, 14, Београд 1983, 60-67, id., *Историјски портрети у Полошком (II)*, Зограф, 15, Београд 1984, 85-93, id., *Историјски портрети у Полошком (III)*, Зограф, 18, Београд 1987, 37-43.

<sup>2</sup> For the meaning of Christ Emmanuel in Another Form, see, A. Ristovska, *L'Église Saint-Georges de Pološko (Macédoine): Recherche sur le monument et ses peintures murales (XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Thèse de Doctorat, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris 2010, 43-45, ead, *Une moniale commanditaire: l'art au service de la propagande impériale au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Actes du 9<sup>e</sup> colloque étudiant du Département d'histoire de l'Université Laval, Laval 2010, 168-169.

his son. Two angels descend from heaven, one to crown the queen and the other to bring the sword to the king. In the lower zone is represented the post-humous portrait of Jovan Dragušin with his family: his wife, his mother, the founder Maria, and his son<sup>3</sup>.

This iconographic solution, where the Serbian royal family is represented above the donors, is introduced for the first time in Pološko. It is later repeated only in the narthex of Lesnovo<sup>4</sup>. The iconography of the composition is thus used to indicate the hierarchy of the two kingdoms - celestial and terrestrial, as well as the hierarchy within the Serbian kingdom - that of the king and his dignitary. By placing the royal family above that of the donors the painting indicates that the power of Dušan proceeds from Christ, in the same way that the donor's power proceeds from Dušan<sup>5</sup>. The portraits of the royal family are represented on a

<sup>3</sup> For the representation of the aristocratic family, see: Ristovska, *L'Église Saint-Georges de Pološko*, 39-43, ead, *Une moniale commanditaire*, 163-169, with bibliography. On the last place, see: Д. Павловић, *Питање ктитортства цркве Светог Ђорђа у Полошком*, Зограф, 39, Београд 2015, 107-118.

<sup>4</sup> С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново. Историја и сликарство*, Београд 1998, 167.

<sup>5</sup> This way of representing the hierarchy of powers is based on Byzantine tradition. The emperor figures above the portraits of the consuls already on the consular diptychs from the late antiquity, A. Grabar, *L'Art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, I, Paris 1968, 597-598. In most other Serbian aristocratic endowments, the subordination to the sovereign was expressed through painting the donors opposite or next to the rulers. They demonstrated their subordination by their position, posture and gesture, S. Marjanović-Dušanić, D. Vojvodić, *The Model of Empire: the Idea and Image of Authority in Serbia (1299-1371)*, Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages. Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art, Belgrade 2016, 314.

red background, while the donors are on a blue background. In this way the iconography, according to the Byzantine tradition emphasize the divine origin of the power of the Serbian sovereign<sup>6</sup>.

The figure of Dušan at Pološko occupies the most significant place on the wall and represents one of his most representative portraits. His proportions are significantly enlarged in comparison with the other surrounding figures and are close to the dimensions of his largest known portrait at Lesново<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the symbolism of dimensions contributes to the idea of submission to the supreme power of the sovereign<sup>8</sup>.

The power of Dušan is emphasized by his imperial insignia. On his head he wears a complex type of a crown - the *kamelaukion*<sup>9</sup>. The fame of the *kamelaukion* type crown derives from the tradition of the *kamelaukion* not made by human hands of Constantine the Great who received it from an angel. It was hung over the altar of St. Sophia and as a special crown was worn by the Byzantine emperor during liturgical ceremonies from the end of XI century<sup>10</sup>. It was only during the Paleologue dynasty that it became an official constitutional and royal insignia of the Byzantine Em-

<sup>6</sup> A. Carile, *Produzione e usi della porpora nell'impero bizantino*, in *La porpora. Realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico*, Atti del Convegno interdisciplinare di studio dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Venezia, 24-25 ottobre 1996, Venezia 1998, 243-269. This way of emphasizing the heavenly origin of the sovereign's power was introduced in the Serbian royal iconography from the second decade of the fourteenth century, Д. Војводић, *О живопису Беле цркве каранске и савременом сликарству Рашке*, Зограф, 31, Београд 2006-2007, 135-152.

<sup>7</sup> Габелић, op.cit., 167, fig. XLII. The figure of Dušan at Pološko is 2, 73 m while at Lesново is 2, 95 m. The custom of significantly enlarging the dimensions of the figure of the sovereign, in comparison with the surrounding figures was introduced in the Serbian art during the reign of Stefan Dušan. His enlarged representations in comparison to his wife can also be seen in Lipanj, Ljuboten, Lesново and Matejče, D. Vojvodić, *Newly discovered portraits of rulers and the dating of the oldest frescoes in Lipljan*, Зограф, 36, Београд 2012, 148, with bibliography.

<sup>8</sup> A. Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, London 1971, 89.

<sup>9</sup> The *kamelaukion* is a dome-shaped crown, adorned with pearls and precious stones. Sometimes, like in Pološko, strings of pearls fall from the edges called *prependulia*, E. Piltz, *Kamelaukion et mitra, Insignes byzantins impériaux et ecclésiastiques*, Stockholm 1977, 80.

<sup>10</sup> R. J. H. Jenkins, trans., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio*, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks 1967, 67-71, Cf. Cecily, J. Hilsdale, *The social life of Byzantine gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-invented*, Art History, 31/5, Oxford 2008, 613.

pire. Even though this insignia is found on the portraits of Serbian rulers preceding Dušan<sup>11</sup>, Stefan Dušan especially manifested the desire to equal the emperor of Constantinople<sup>12</sup>. Depicting himself with this type of crown he also wanted to emphasize the idea that as chosen by God he was a direct continuator of the legacy of Constantine the Great.

In his right hand he holds a sceptre while in his left hand he holds an *akakia* - a small roll-shaped bag tightened by a red thread<sup>13</sup>.

The imperial costume worn by the king decorated with precious stones consists of a purple *divitesion*<sup>14</sup> and a *loros*<sup>15</sup>. The most striking insignia in the representation of the Serbian king is his *loros*. The *loros*,

<sup>11</sup> For the portraits of Stefan Nemanja, Uroš I, Stefan Dragutin, Milutin and later for the portrait of king Vukašin, I. Kyutchoukova, *Etude sur les insignes du pouvoir et le costume à la cour de Serbie*, Cahiers Balkaniques, 31, Paris 2000, 121.

<sup>12</sup> Piltz, *Kamelaukion et mitra*, 67. C. Grozdanov saw in the *kamelaukion* an element of divinisation of King Dušan, relying on the fact that this type of crown became frequent towards the middle of the fourteenth century, on the images of Christ King of Kings in the area of Archdiocese of Ohrid, Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското судно сликарство од XIV век*, Охрид 1980, 55, 105, 107, fig. 27. Yet the usurpation of the imperial crown of Constantinople was always associated with a political aspiration, Piltz, *Kamelaukion et mitra*, 137. Thus this type of crown is also found on the portraits of Dušan in the churches of Lesново, Kučeviće and Ljuboten, З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *О ктиторским портретима у цркви Свете Богородице у Кучевишту*, Зограф, 16, Београд 1985, 42, fig. 2, 3, eadem, *О владарским портретима у Љуботену и времену настанка зидне декорације*, Зограф, 17, Београд 1986, 45-53, Габелић, op.cit., 168, fig. XLII.

<sup>13</sup> *Akakia* is a sign of imperial faith in Byzantium. It is visible on almost all representations of the Byzantine and Balkan sovereigns. On the portraits of Nemanjić dynasty it takes a form of a roll tightened by a red thread. Constantine Porphyrogenitus indicates that the emperor is supposed to hold it in his right hand. However, in most cases Serbian kings are depicted holding it in the left hand, as can also be seen at Pološko, J. Verpeaux, *Pseudo-Kodinos, Traité des offices*, Paris 1966, 201-202, Kyutchoukova, op. cit., 125.

<sup>14</sup> *Divitesion* is one of the garments which characterizes the costume of the Balkan and especially Serbian sovereigns. It is a long silk tunic, worn underneath the *loros* and *manikion*. Its colour varies between purple and black. *Divitesion* is considered to be an equivalent of the *sakkos*. It is decorated on shoulders and edges with rich golden patterns of sumptuous embroidery. On the upper part of the sleeve are applied strips of richly ornamented fabrics called *peribrachia*, Kyutchoukova, op.cit., 128.

<sup>15</sup> For the origin of the meaning of the *loros*, see E. Piltz, *Loros-ett bysantiniskt insignum*, Byzantina, 1, Gävle 1972, 8-15.



Fig. 1 Fig. 1. The 14th century west facade of St. George at Pološko (now east wall of the narthex)



Fig. 2 The Royal family, St. George at Pološko

which for centuries was part of the official costume of the Balkan sovereigns, appears on the Dušan portraits in a different form - crossed over the chest in the form of the Latin letter "X". This unusual form of *loros* already appears on the first known portrait of Dušan and it is not found on the portraits of other contemporary Byzantine or Bulgarian kings<sup>16</sup>.

Scholars have already tried to explain the meaning of this *loros* on Dušan's portraits as this ancient Byzantine imperial insignia had been removed from the Constantinopolitan court ceremonial in the 14th century. In this type of insignia, Cvetan Grozdanov saw a tendency for divinisation of the Serbian king because he noticed that in the the fourteenth century Constantine the Great is almost always represented with this type of *loros*, just as the Christ King of

kings in the composition "the celestial court", while king David and the Archangel Michael and Gabriel are fairly regularly represented with this insignia<sup>17</sup>. Dragan Vojvodić noticing this type of *loros* on the representations of ancient, non-Christian kings, as well as on the images of St. Constantine the Great concluded that its meaning lies in the desire of the Serbian dynasty to emphasise their primacy and pre-determination for imperium by providential connection with the first Byzantine rulers, such as St. Constantine<sup>18</sup>.

At Pološko, this insignia was above all used to assimilate the King Dušan to Constantine the Great. The source for the assimilation of Dušan with Constantin the Great lies in the ideology of the Byzantine sovereigns where comparisons with the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, played an important role<sup>19</sup>. Constantine was an idealized archetype of the

<sup>16</sup> The *loros* crossed in the shape of the letter "X", appeared on the portraits of Serbian rulers from the time of King Stefan Uroš III Dečanski, but was used the most frequently on the representations of Stefan Dušan. The insignia also appeared sporadically on the later Serbian rulers, Д. Војводић, *Укрштена дијадима и „торакион“*. *Две древне и неуобичајене инсигније српских владара у XIV и XV веку*. Трећа југословенска конференција византолога, Београд–Крушевац 2002, 249-276.

<sup>17</sup> Грозданов, op.cit., 55, Грозданов, Ђорнаков, *Историјски портрети у Полошком*, 61.

<sup>18</sup> Војводић, *Укрштена дијадима и „торакион“*, 249-276.

<sup>19</sup> For this ideology in the byzantine world, see: C. Walter, *The Iconography of Constantine the Great, Emperor*



Fig. 3 Stefan Dušan, *St. George at Pološko*

Christian ruler, a symbol of the emperor's legitimacy and identity and a model for comparison. Therefore, Byzantine emperor was considered heir of Constantine and the defender of the faith - he was considered "as new Constantine"<sup>20</sup>.

This Byzantine political ideology was also adopted in medieval Serbia<sup>21</sup>. In the 13th and the 14th century, this ideology was almost simultaneously developed in painting and literature. In the wall paintings this comparison was emphasized by placing the Serbian sovereigns face-to-face to Sts. Constantine and Helen or by juxtaposing them<sup>22</sup>. In literature,

*and Saint: with Associated Studies*, Leiden 2006, 104-105, with bibliography.

<sup>20</sup> For the comparison between the Emperor and Constantine the Great, see: O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung in höfischen Zeremoniel vom oströmischen Staats- und Reichsgedanken*, Darmstadt 1956, 129-134.

<sup>21</sup> For this ideology in medieval Serbia and Bulgaria, see: Walter, *op.cit.*, 105-110.

<sup>22</sup> These examples are found in the narthex of Mileševa (ca. 1225), on the coins of king Radoslav (first half of the 13th century), in King's Church at Studenica (1314), in Staro Nagoričino (second half of the 14th century), in

the comparison between the Serbian sovereigns and Constantine the Great as an ideal model of Christian sovereign was above all treated in hagiography and hymnography<sup>23</sup>.

In his charters, Stefan Dušan refers himself twice to his model, the Emperor Constantine<sup>24</sup>. In the preamble of his charter of the donation he made to the Serbian Church of the Holy Archangels in Jerusalem in 1348, he states that he followed the example of his great ancestors Nemanja and Sava for their love for the Church, as well as the life in Christ of the holy Emperor Constantine and other sovereigns living in

Psača (seventh decade of the 14th century) and in Marko's Monastery (1376-1377), V. Đurić, *Le nouveau Constantin dans l'art serbe médiéval*, Lithostrôton: Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte, Stuttgart 2000, 56, 57, with bibliography. However, the best example is probably the representation of Milutin and Simonida in Staro Nagoričino. In Nagoričino, the parallel between Milutin and Constantin is emphasized not only by the fact that they are painted side by side, but also by the fact that they are painted in the same position and in the same costume, Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, Београд 1993, 121.

<sup>23</sup> Đurić, *Le nouveau Constantin*, 58, with examples.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem.*, 58.

the Orthodox faith<sup>25</sup>. Later, in the preface to his Code of the Laws of the Empire, he thanked God for the rise of his power and the conquest of the new territories because He gave him all this in hand as he gave it to the great Emperor Constantine<sup>26</sup>.

Thus, this type of *loros* appears on the portraits of Stefan Dušan to highlight the similarities between him and Constantine the Great who, as his 14th century representation in Pološko (fig. 4) always wears the *loros* crossed in X. In order to proclaim the legitimacy of the reigning king, the iconography uses the reference to Constantine the Great presented as his ideal model.

The composition in Pološko also includes the symbolic crowning of the emperor (fig. 3). At the top of the composition, Christ Emmanuel crowns the emperor and his heir. This is the first example in the Serbian royal iconography where Christ himself crowns the Serbian sovereign and the prince<sup>27</sup>. The image of the crown extended to the basileus by Christ, the Virgin or an angel was part of the Byzantine iconography from the time of the Macedonian dynasty<sup>28</sup>. This iconography has its source in the legend reported in

<sup>25</sup> F. Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica*, Vienna 1858, 134.

<sup>26</sup> Б. Марковић, *Душанов законик*, Београд 1986, 88. The idea of the Serbian emperor as the New Constantine takes on its final shape in the years after 1346, in the last phase of Dušan's imperial programme. A number of sources make clear the universal pretensions of the Serbian Emperor, which also explain his war plans focused on Constantinople. С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Елементи царског програма у Душановој повељи уз Законик*, ПКЈИФ, 65–66, Београд 1999–2000, 3–20, Марјановић-Душанић, Vojvodić, op.cit., 302-303.

<sup>27</sup> The divine investiture by the angels was already depicted in Gračanica on the portraits of Milutin and Simonida and on the portrait of Stefan Dušan in Treskavec, G. Subotić, *L'Art Médiéval du Kosovo*, Paris 1988, fig. 39-40, С. Цветковски, *Портрети византијских и српских владара у манастиру Трескавицу*, Зограф 31, Београд 2006-2007, 158-166. For the examples of royal investiture in Serbian medieval art, see: J. Башић, *Примери инвестиуре владара у српској средњовековној уметности*, Viminacium 17, Požarevac, 2014, 147–184.

<sup>28</sup> С. Jolivet-Lévy, *L'image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin à l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne (867-1056)*, Byzantion, 57, Bruxelles 1987, 441-470, Eadem, *Images de l'empereur*, Economie et société à Byzance (VIIIe-XIIe siècle). Textes et documents, Paris 2007, 7-12. The symbolic coronation of the emperor by a delegated figure (on the first place angel or archangel) was developed in Byzantine iconography. This iconography is based on the legend reported in *De Administrando Imperio*, that the first imperial crown was sent to Constantin the Great by an angel, Jenkins, trans., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio*, 66-67.



Fig. 4 Sts. Constantine and Helen, St. George at Pološko

the *De Administrando Imperio*, that the first imperial diadem was sent to Constantine the Great by an angel. Therefore, the iconographic formula confirms the idea that the Emperor is a sovereign inspired and protected by God and that his reign is guided by the Divine Providence<sup>29</sup>. By depicting Dušan crowned by Christ himself, iconography could not express more

<sup>29</sup> For the symbolic investiture of the sovereign, see: Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 112-122. See also: T. Kambourova, *Du don surnaturel de la couronne: Images et interprétations*, Зограф, 32, Београд 2008, 45-58, for the example from Pološko, 54-55.



*Fig. 5 St. George, St. George at Pološko*

clearly the divine origin of his power. The crowning of Dušan and Uroš by Christ himself in Pološko was repeated three years later in Lesnovo, where Christ crowns Stefan Dušan and his wife Jelena<sup>30</sup>.

The portrait of the sovereign at Pološko is also distinguished from other images of Dušan by the representation of the delivery of the sword (fig.3)<sup>31</sup>. The image of the sword granted by the archangels or the Theotokos to the victorious sovereign, who obtains his victories by the will of God, is known in Byzantine iconography<sup>32</sup>. The granting of the sword to a Serbian ruler was depicted for the first time in Nagoričino where the patron of the church - St. George, hands the sword to King Milutin<sup>33</sup>. Vojislav Đurić explained the creation of this motif by a concrete historical event – Milutin’s victory against the Turks in Asia Minor in 1313<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Габелић, *op.cit.*, fig. XL, XLI, XLII.

<sup>31</sup> The sword is a sign of power well known in Byzantine symbolism, supporting the idea that the Basileus is the military leader of the empire. This element is also part of the portraits of Nemanjić dynasty, Kyutchoukova, *op.cit.*, 123-124.

<sup>32</sup> Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 86-87, 115-116, Jolivet-Lévy, *L'image du pouvoir*, 450-452.

<sup>33</sup> Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, fig. 121.

<sup>34</sup> В. Ј. Ђурић, *Три догађаја у српској држави XIV*

The episode of granting the sword in Pološko is also related to a historical event - Stefan Dušan in Pološko is painted with a sword immediately after his greatest victories in 1343, when he conquered the cities in the south Macedonia and Albania<sup>35</sup>. His successes in the battles near Velbužd (1330), and his victories won in the following years were considered by his contemporaries as battles won by the will of God. The same idea that he was guided by the help of God and the sign of the cross can be found in Dušan’s official documents of that time<sup>36</sup>.

Andronicus III Palaeologus after the armistice of August 1334, according to Dušan’s biographer, Archbishop Danilo, said: “I see that all this was gained as a gift from the Lord”<sup>37</sup>, referring to his territories lost in the war with Dušan. The same ideas are also contained in the first Dušan Charter granted to the Monastery of Treskavec and in the charter Dušan granted

*века и њихов одјек у сликарству*, ЗМСЛУ, 4, Београд 1968, 68-86.

<sup>35</sup> М. Динић, *За хронологију Душанових освајања византиских градова*. ЗРВИ 4, Београд 1956, 4-10.

<sup>36</sup> Л. Мирковић, прев., *Архиепископ Данило II и његови настављачи, Животи краљева и архиепископа српских*, Београд 1935, 166.

<sup>37</sup> *ibidem*, 170.

to the church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid<sup>38</sup> after the conquest of Prilep and Ohrid. Archbishop Danilo compares Dušan to Joshua<sup>39</sup>, while Dušan his famous preface to the Imperial Code attributes his victories and the elevation of Serbian kingdom to the rank of empire to Divine Providence that similarly elevated Joseph (son of Jacob) to the position of administrator of Egypt<sup>40</sup>.

Another confirmation that the granting of the sword was a manifestation of the military power of Dušan and the idea that his conquests were a result of God's will is also evident in by the dedication of the church. Again, like it was the case with Staro Nagoričino<sup>41</sup>, the church was dedicated to St. George Triumphant<sup>42</sup>. St. George Triumphant was venerated by Dušan and his father Stefan Dečanski as their ally. As a patron of Staro Nagoričino he was depicted above the entrance and on the iconostasis of the church<sup>43</sup>. Stefan Dečanski prayed before this icon before the battle of Velbužd (1330) which was the reason why this victory was associated with the help from St. George Triumphant<sup>44</sup>.



Fig. 6 Archangel Gabriel, St. George at Pološko

<sup>38</sup> С. Новаковић, *Законски споменици српских држава средњег века*, Београд 1912, 664, 672.

<sup>39</sup> Мирковић, прев., *Архиепископ Данило*, 140-141.

<sup>40</sup> Н. Радојчић, *Законик цара Стефана Душана 1349 и 1354*, Београд 1960, 142-144.

<sup>41</sup> This church is renovated and dedicated to St. George Triumphant by King Milutin, thankful for his victory against the Turks in Asia Minor in 1313 Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, Београд 1993, 27, 121, В. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, Belgrade 1999, 56.

<sup>42</sup> For the dedication of the church, see: Ristovska, *L'Église Saint-Georges de Pološko*, 24-25.

<sup>43</sup> Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, 36, 78, 87, 123, fig. 84.

<sup>44</sup> In 1330 Stefan Dečanski prayed in front of the icon of St. George in Staro Nagoričino, asking for help during the battle in Velbužd. After his victory he commanded the silver plating for the icon, И. М. Ђорђевић, *Две молитве Стефана Денанског пре битке на Велбужду и њихов одјек у уметности*, Зборник за ликовне уметности Матице српске, 15, Нови Сад 1979, 135-150, Ђурић, op.cit., 71, Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, 27, И. М. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарство српске властеле у доба Немањића*, Београд 1994, 88.

The idea of the divine providence transmitted through the help of St. George is emphasized once again through the fresco of the patron depicted next to the iconostasis on the south wall. St. George is depicted in his military costume waving his victorious sword while a shield is depicted behind his back (fig. 5). The upright sword of St. George symbolizing his military power<sup>45</sup> is depicted for the first time at the church of the Taxiarchis of the Metropolis in Kastoria (13th century)<sup>46</sup>, and in the church of the Virgin Olympiotissa in Elasson<sup>47</sup>. In the 14th century St.

<sup>45</sup> For this symbolism, see: K. P. Charalampidis, *Representations of military saints in the middle-Byzantine and late-Byzantine iconography of Greek Macedonia*, Byzantine Macedonia: Identity, Image and History, Papers from the Melbourne Conference July 1995, Melbourne 2000, 81-82.

<sup>46</sup> M. Chatzidakis, *Kastoria; Mosaics, Wall Paintings*, Athens 1985, fig. 19.

<sup>47</sup> E. C. Constantinides, *The Wall Paintings of the Pa-*





Fig. 7 Archangel Michael, St. George at Pološko

George is depicted waving his sword in Protaton<sup>48</sup>, on the iconostasis of Staro Nagoričino<sup>49</sup> in St. Nicetas near Čučer<sup>50</sup>, in Gračanica<sup>51</sup> and in the church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Zeygostasi<sup>52</sup>.

All these elements: the delivery of the sward, the dedication of the church to Dušan's ally St. George Triumphant, as well as the depiction of St. George

*nagia Olympiotissa at Elasson in Northern Thessaly*, Athens 1992, 212, pl. 64, 66.

<sup>48</sup> G. Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos, Les peintures*, Paris 1927, pl. 48/2.

<sup>49</sup> Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, fig. 84.

<sup>50</sup> П. Миљковић-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Еутихиј*, Скопје 1967, 56, fig. 88.

<sup>51</sup> Б. Тодић, *Грачаница – сликарство*, Београд 1989, fig. 70.

<sup>52</sup> I. Σίστου, *Οι μεμονωμένες μορφές Αγίων στο ναό της Παναγίας Ζευροστασίον Καστοριάς*, Ниш и Византија, 13, Ниш 2013, fig. 8.

waving his victorious sword, proclaim the divine origin of Dušan's victories<sup>53</sup>.

Prince Uroš is depicted to the left of Dušan. Although at the time of the decoration of the church, Uroš was only six or seven, he is raised, in a unique way, to the same height as his father so that Christ could also touch his crown: his *supedion* is placed above an empty square field<sup>54</sup>. He wears a *divitision* similar to that of his father but which is nevertheless decorated more soberly. For the first time in his portraits, he is painted with a *loros*, also crossed over the chest in X. Nevertheless, his crown differs from that of his father. In his right hand he holds a sceptre - a double cross, and in his left hand the *akakia*.

To the left of Uroš is depicted his mother Jelena. She holds a sceptre, in her right hand, while her left hand is stretched forward. On her head she wears *the propoloma*, a tall open crown<sup>55</sup>. Under the crown, the sovereign wears a veil, richly decorated down to the shoulders. She is adorned with rather imposing earrings of type "*ad modum slavicum*"<sup>56</sup>. The Serbian sovereign wears a long dalmatic with long sleeves at the ends, called *granatza*<sup>57</sup>.

On the other side of the wall in the first register in the naos (on the northern part of the west wall) are depicted Sts. Constantine and Helen<sup>58</sup> (fig. 4). They are depicted with many insignia that figure on the Serbian royal couple. Sts. Constantine and Helen holding the cross placed between them stand on imperial pillow – a *supedion* and wear the same royal robes as the Serbian sovereigns: Saint

<sup>53</sup> For another explanation of this iconographic solution, that the paintings such as the one in Pološko did not celebrate triumph in a particular battle, but that it rather glorified the triumphant nature of imperial authority as such, see: Marjanović-Dušanić, Vojvodić, op.cit., 313.

<sup>54</sup> In Serbian medieval painting there is another way of emphasizing the ideological importance of the heir. At St. Nicholas Bolnički in Ohrid (1345), Uroš at the age of eight is painted with the same size as his father, Ц. Грозданов, op.cit., 57, fig. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Kyutchoukova, op.cit., 121.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, 122.

<sup>57</sup> Some experts, however, have doubts about the correct use of this element. According to B. Cvetković this is a masculine habit worn by the Basileus and his archons, Б. Цветковић, *Прилог проучавања византијског дворског костима -Грантца, лалатџас*, ЗРВИ, 34, Београд 1995, 143-157.

<sup>58</sup> On the iconography of Sts. Constantine and Helen, see: Walter, op.cit, with bibliography.

Constantine is clothed in a purple *divitision* with a *loros* crossed over his chest in X, and wears the *kamelaukion* on his head. St. Helen is also depicted as Queen Jelena - she wears a dalmatic with long sleeves, called *granatza* and has *propoloma*, under which is the veil, that goes down to her shoulders.

By representing Sts. Constantine and Helen in an immediate proximity to the Serbian royal couple, and by depicting them in the same royal habits, the iconography confirms once again the analogy between these two couples.

#### *The comparison of Stefan Dušan with Archangel Michael*

The crossed *loros* depicted on the portrait of Stefan Dušan and St. Constantine the Great is repeated once again in the decoration of the church - on the representation of the Archangel Michael. In the naos of the church two archangels are depicted on the east pair of pilasters under the dome. Archangel Gabriel is depicted on the south-east pilaster while Archangel Michael is facing him on the north-east pilaster (O APXΩN MIXAHA)<sup>59</sup>. They are depicted in imperial costumes with *loros*<sup>60</sup>. But while Archangel Gabriel wears a simplified type of *loros* (fig. 6), Archangel Michael's *loros* is crossed over his chest in "X" (fig. 7). The both archangels hold their usual imperial attributes: a globe<sup>61</sup> and a scepter.

The type of the crossed *loros* worn by the Archangel Michael iconographically approximates him to the Serbian sovereign depicted on the facade of the church. This analogy is based on an ancient Byzantine tradition where the Basileus was assimilated to the archangels and especially to the Archangel Michael. The iconographic assimilation between emperors and archangels expresses the analogy of their status in respect of the celestial sovereign and the parallelism of their mission: ministers of Christ, servants on earth and in heaven. The privileged link between the Byzantine emperor and the Archangel Michael goes back to Constantine the Great when the imperial costume

and crown were brought to him by an angel. The Archangel Michael is therefore considered as protector of Imperial power and can play a role in accession to it<sup>62</sup>. Stefan Dušan repeatedly expressed his gratitude to the archangels through texts and images, for it was through them that he had received his victorious sword. It was also the Archangel Michael who had transmitted to him the insignia of sovereignty of divine origin, following the example of the emperor Constantine the Great<sup>63</sup>. By assimilating the Serbian sovereign to the Archangel Michael, the iconography affirmed both the sacredness of the power of the sovereign and his subordination to the heavenly power<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Culte et iconographie de l'archange Michel dans l'Orient byzantin: le témoignage de quelques monuments de Cappadoce*, Études cappadociennes, London 2002, 432, 434.

<sup>63</sup> Dušan dedicated to the Archangels his foundation at Prizren. Following his example, several dignitaries also dedicated their foundations to the Archangel Michael, even more so if they came from military backgrounds. This is the case of the despot Oliver in Lenovo, as well as the Protosevastes Hrelja who erected his church in the town of Štip, V. J. Đurić, *L'art impérial serbe: marques du statut impérial et traits de prestige*, Βυζάντιο και Σερβία κατά τον ΙΔ' αιώνα, Αθήνα 1996, 36.

<sup>64</sup> For the iconographic assimilation of the emperors and archangels, see: Jolivet-Lévy, *Note sur la représentation des archanges*, 447-461. The analogy between the emperor and the Archangel Michael is already established quite early. The best example in relation to the image of Pološko is the Church of Çavuşin (963-960), *ibidem*, 454-455. The two archangels depicted in the nave of the church wear sumptuous imperial *loros* that are different: Gabriel's is of the traditional type, crossed in front of the body, while the modified form is used for Michel. Nicéphore Phocas, who is depicted with his family in the north apse of the church, wears the same modified form as Michel. The intention to establish an iconographic link between the Archangel Michael and the emperor Nicephorus is revealed also by the attitudes of the archangels: Gabriel carries the globe with his left hand on the side, while Michael holds it from the right in a gesture which directs the attention of the viewer towards the image of the emperor. The latter is, moreover, represented in an attitude symmetrical to that of the archangel. The example of Çavuşin is related to Pološko by another element: in Çavuşin the proclamation of Nicephorus Phocas as a legitimate lieutenant of Christ on earth, was further emphasized by a suggestive approximation with Constantine the Great, represented with his mother Helen, on the south side of the central apse, in a way that he would only be visible if one places oneself in front of the imperial portraits. Thus the example of Çavuşin is closest to that of the church of Pološko in the sense that the sovereign is at the same time associated with the Archangel Michael and Constantine the Great. This equivalence is illustrated in other Byzantine works. On the famous ivory of the Berlin Museum, is shown an Emperor Leo - probably Leo

<sup>59</sup> For the depiction of the Archangels at Pološko, see: A. Popova, *Les Puissances célestes et la Seconde Venue du Christ sur les fresques de Saint-Georges de Pološko*, Palimpest, 1/2, Štip 2016, 135-137.

<sup>60</sup> On the representations of the archangels in the imperial costume, see: C. Lamy-Lasalle, *Les archanges en costume impérial dans la peinture murale italienne*. Synthronon: Art et Archéologie de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age, Paris 1968, 189-198, C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Note sur la représentation des archanges en costume impérial dans l'iconographie byzantine*, Études cappadociennes, London 2002, 447-461.

<sup>61</sup> For the globe as an attribute of archangels, see: Габелић, *op.cit.*, 134-135.

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In the church of St. George at Pološko is depicted one of the most striking galleries of historical portraits in the Serbian Medieval painting. In churches painted before Pološko, the members of the dynasty and the family of the noble founder were depicted face to face. In Pološko, the disposition of Dušan's family portraits better reflect superiority of the emperor's status. The face-to-face arrangement reflected the harmony between the rulers and their vassals, while the elevation of the image of the sovereign above the nobles insisted on the hierarchical difference that existed between them.

St. George of Pološko offers one of the largest and most representative images of the Serbian sovereign. At Pološko Dušan appears as a majestic ruler. In creating the portrait of Dušan in Pološko, the painter and his advisers adopted the language of a number of Byzantine Imperial images of that period, while complementing and reworking the solutions adopted for portraits and compositions dating back to the days at his predecessors. At the time that preceded the rise of the kingdom to the rank of empire, a set of symbols alluded to Dušan's "legal" right to the title of emperor. His portrait at Pološko consolidates the idea of the sacralization of the new Serbian emperor by assimilating him to Constantine the Great and to Archangel Michael. The iconographic solutions of the crowning of the sovereigns by Christ and the granting of the sword to the king by an angel constituted not only a symbol of the authority emanating from his status as a sovereign but also of the triumphant image of the victor whose power is from heavenly origin. This portrait of Dušan, like the other images of Serbian imperial iconography, was intended to present Dušan as a faithful continuator of the work of his predecessors, but also as an orthodox pretender to the Byzantine imperial title.

The pictorial demonstration of the political power of Serbia in Pološko is explained not only by the importance of the historical moment of its construction but also by its location. At the time of its construction, Pološko was on the border between Serbia and Byzantium. The image of the royal family in Pološko, as well as in other contemporary monuments built on newly conquered territories, shows a tendency towards a more pronounced "sacralisation" of the king and the Serbian royal family in relation to the monuments located in the territories of the central core of the Serbian State.

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VI (886-912) - crowned by the Virgin in the presence of the symmetrically placed Archangel Gabriel who has the same pose and the same costume as the Emperor. Archangel Gabriel occupies here the usual place of the Archangel Michael in the composition showing Theotokos flanked by the two archangels. Michael is according to the etymology of his name in Hebrew, „he who is like God“. The equivalence established between him and the sovereign indirectly refers to the idea of the emperor as the image of God on earth, *ibidem*, 436-437, with bibliography.

## ПОИСТОВЕТУВАЊЕТО НА СТЕФАН ДУШАН СО КОНСТАНТИН ВЕЛИКИ И СО АРХАНГЕЛ МИХАИЛ ВО ЦРКВАТА СВЕТИ ЃОРЃИ ВО ПОЛОШКО

### Резиме

Во црквата Свети Ѓорѓи во Полошко се насликани едни од најимпресивните историски портрети во средновековната уметност на територијата на Република Македонија. Портретите кои порано се наоѓале на западната фасада на црквата, а сега се дел од источниот ѕид на наосот, се распоредени во две зони. Во долната зона се насликани портретите на донаторите, додека над нив се наоѓаат портретите на владеечкото српско семејство: Стефан Душан, неговиот син Урош и кралицата Елена. Овој труд се осврнува на претставата на српското кралско семејство, пред сè на Стефан Душан.

Претстава на кралот Душан во Полошко спаѓа помеѓу неговите највеличествени претстави. Насликан е со големи димензии и изобилува со иконографски елементи кои имале за цел да го изедначат со првиот христијански цар Константин Велики. Паралелата помеѓу Стефан Душан и св. Константин Велики е нагласена повеќе пати. Прво, Душан е насликан со посебен вид круна *кемелеукион* која според легендата ангелите му ја донеле на Константин Велики. Небесното потекло на неговата власт ја потврдува и самиот Христос, кој од дел од небото го крунисува владетелот и неговиот наследник. Паралелата со св. Константин Велики е посведочена и со изборот на *лорос* со кој е насликан кралот. Станува збор за посебен вид на вкрстен *лорос*, со кој во 14-от век се слика св. Константин. Со истиот тип на *лорос* овој светител е насликан и во Полошката црква. Имено светите Константин и Елена се насликани од другата страна на истиот ѕид, во зоната на стоечки светители во наосот, во истите царски алишта со кои е насликано српското кралско семејство.

Поистоветувањето на Душан со Константин Велики во Полошката црква имало за цел да ја зацврсти неговата позиција како легитимен владетел на новоосвоените територии. За таа цел кралскиот портрет бил надополнет со уште еден иконографски мотив - ангел му го носи мечот на владетелот. Пред Полошко, мотивот на меч кој божествено му се доделува на српски владетел се сретнува во Старо Нагоричино каде Св. Ѓорѓи му го врачува мечот на кралот Милутин. Оваа иконографија е одраз на конкретна историска случка. Милутин го прима мечот од св. Ѓорѓи по неговите големи победи против Турците во Мала Азија. Небесното доделување на меч на Душан исто така се поврзува со конкретна историска случка. Ангелот му го носи мечот на владетелот непосредно по неговите големи територијални освојувања, кога за сметка на Византија освоил многу градови во Македонија и во Албанија. Дека овој иконографски елемент

имал за цел да ја истакне божествената промисла на Душановите освојувања сведочи и посветата на црквата. Имено, црквата била посветена на Св. Ѓорѓи Победоносец кого Душан го сметал за свој сојузник. Посебната почит што тој ја негувал кон овој светител се темели на фактот што победата во битката кај Велбужд која ќе го прослави Душан, всушност му била препишана токму на овој светител. Поддршката на Св. Ѓорѓи Победоносец е уште еднаш нагласена во мотивите прикажани во наосот на црквата: патронот на црквата, Св. Ѓорѓи е насликан до иконостасот како замавнува со својот победоносен меч.

Стефан Душан во Полошката црква не бил испостоветуван само со Константин Велики туку и со Архангел Михаил. Всушност, Архангел Михаил е насликан со истиот вкрстен лорос како и владетелот. Оваа аналогија се темели на древната византиска традиција каде императорот бил поистоветуван со архангелите, а особено со архангел Михаил. Ова поистоветување се темели на аналогијата на нивниот статус во однос на небесниот владетел, како и на нивната мисија: Христови застапници, слуги на Земјата и на небото. Почитта кој Стефан Душан ја негувал кон архангелите е посведочена и во пишаните текстови и во уметноста. Со поистоветувањето на српскиот владетел со Архангел Михаил, истовремено е нагласена светоста и моќта на неговата власт, како и неговата подреденост на Божјата сила.

Претставата на Душан во Полошко е инспирирана од византиската царска иконографија, како и од српската кралска иконографијата од времето на Душановите предци. Во времето кое му претходело на прогласувањето на царството, збир на симболи алудира на “законското” право на Душановата царска титула. Неговиот портрет во Полошко ја консолидира идејата за светост на новиот српски цар, кој се поистоветува со Константин Велики и со архангел Михаил чија моќ потекнува од небесата.

Иконографската истакнување на политичката моќ на Србија во Полошко се објаснува не само со важноста на историскиот момент во кој што црквата била изградена, туку и со нејзината местоположба. Во времето на нејзиното подигање црквата се наоѓала на границата помеѓу Србија и Византија. Сликата на кралското семејство во Полошко, како и во другите современи споменици изградени на новоосвоените територии, покажува тенденција кон поизразена дивинизација на владетелот во однос на спомениците кои се наоѓале на територијата на централното јадро на српската држава.