



Filipova SNEŽANA

IMAGES OF CITIES IN THE MACEDONIAN COLLECTION OF ICON PAINTINGS

Keywords: Macedonia, Ohrid, icon, architecture, model of churches, palace, meaning of painted architectural representations, sacral space, reverse perspective, linear perspective, temple veil

Abstract: Images of cities and their architecture are significant as works of art as well as source for history and culture. They are special case of representation of landscape that is of great importance for understanding and visualizing the world.

Within the first, mostly schematized paintings of Medieval European cities that appeared only in the 15 C. the city has been turned into a formula that reduced it into a sum of important elements like gate, tower, and church in its center. The city walls with battlements and towers were symbol of power and sovereignty. The Ancient city depictions and small images of urban architecture within the maps were two dimensional or single - dimensional. Architecture and landscape depicted in the Byzantine icon paintings, and the Macedonian collection of icons show beautiful architecture of ancient origin, or modern eastern - Byzantine style buildings, and high quality stone used for capitals and columns. The architecture within the icons becomes independent and equally important part as the depiction of saints. It becomes an icon. Naturalistic and illusionistic representations are regarded as false, because humans cannot fully comprehend the God created world in its entirety.

Byzantine paintings show reversed linear perspective, thus creating the illusion of expanding images in the distance. The impression of being looked upon or encircled by God is emitted, alluding thus to God's omnipresence. The heavenly space was visualized as the imperial palace and vice versa, political ideology dictated that the sacred palace and the imperial court be seen as replicas of the heavenly kingdom and the heavenly order. The images of buildings, parts of cities or church furniture with baldachin from the post byzantine period represent modern architecture. The number of ciboria used, many details, intensive colors of building facades plus various church models are the main differences with the previous period. Buildings are oriented in the same

direction as the figures in the foreground. The Temple Veil as the flesh of Christ became an image of his sacrifice and one of the most widespread symbols in Christian culture. Buildings develop around the figures or the scene, or from the left to the right side, or repeat the same angle and position of the figures. There are three nave and one nave churches, or simple straight walls ending with barracks, and walls as bridges connecting buildings from the left to the right side. The wall behind the figures denoting the fortification of the Heavenly Jerusalem may have many towers, and even watchers from the windows, flying monochromatic figures etc.

Images of cities and their architecture are significant as works of art as well as source for history and culture. They are special case of representation of landscape that is of great importance for understanding and visualizing the world. The pictures of landscapes and cities has gone through persistent change in the course of history, as a result of change in the relation between man and nature, or better to say towards his environment.

Within the first, mostly schematized paintings of Medieval European cities that appeared only in the 15 C. the city has been turned into a formula that reduced it into a sum of important elements like gate, tower, and church in its center. The city walls with battlements and towers were symbol of power and sovereignty. The crucial step towards representation of landscapes with real illusion of a space was made in the old Nederland's painting, or better to say old French Painting in the beginning of the 15-th century. It was connected with the pictures of authentic places and buildings that are recorded precisely on a topographic plan.

The Ancient city depictions and small images of urban architecture within the maps were two di-



1. Illumination with the image of the temple,
Ashburnham Pentateuch, 7th C.,
National Library of Paris

1. Илуминација со претстава на храмот,
Ашбурнхам Пентатеух, 7 век,
Национална Библиотека, Париз



2. Chludov Psalter, mid 9th C., page no. 86,
State Historical Museum, Moscow,

2. Хлудов Псалтир, средина на 9 век, страница
бр. 86, Државни Историски Музеј, Москва

mensional or single - dimensional. Architecture and landscape depicted in the Byzantine icon paintings, and the Macedonian collection of icons as part of this artistic sphere show beautiful architecture of ancient origin, as well as modern eastern - Byzantine style buildings, and large variety of high quality stone used for capitals and columns. It is interesting to see how the architecture within the icons becomes independent and equally important part as the depiction of saints. Architecture becomes an icon. Naturalistic and illusionistic representations have been inconceivable in Byzantium first because they would have been regarded as false, and second, because humans cannot fully comprehend the God created world in its entirety, notes Evangelia Hadjityrphones. The third dimension in visual arts was known in Byzantium and used but limited to the decorative art (friezes and frames of compositions, some with continual antique origin as unfolded zig zag lines, deltoids etc).¹

¹ S. Ćurčić, E. Hadjityrphones, with contributions by K. McVey, H. Saradi, *Architecture as Icon, Presentations and representations of architecture in Byzantium: the thought behind the image*, 113-154, Princeton University Art Museum, 2010, 126.

Byzantine architectural representations were made for spiritual, symbolic, artistic, professional and other reasons, to allude to reality as part of a much broader context, or to meanings linked to the dominant cultural view of the world. Images of architecture were triggering intellectual process in the mind of the perceiver. The earthly and heavenly realms are symbolized by domes, vaults, and arches to the point that the symbolic view of the dome has contributed to the evolution of domed architecture and construction.² In the decorative sculpture the motif of arcades may be explained as symbolic representation of the gates of heavenly Jerusalem.³

Hagia Sophia was crucial church model and has influenced all Orthodox architecture by establishing the central dome as the dominant element in a church, promoting it as symbol of the vault of Heaven. "The central dome, sense of unity and use of effortless grace reflect the image of the ideal church

² *Ibid.*, 96.

³ H. Buchwald, *Chancel barrier lintels decorated with carved arcades*, JOB, 45 band (1995), 233-274, 239. Filipova, *A fragment of Middle Byzantine Epistyle decorated with carved arcades*, Macedonian Heritage 8, 1998, 83-93.



3. *Homilies on the Virgin Mary by James Kokkinobaphos*, 1/2 of the 12th C.,
National Library of Paris

3. *Хомилија на Богородица на Јаков Кокинова-фоса*, 1/2 12 века, Национална Библиотека, Париз



4. *Holly Forty Martyrs*, Museum of Macedonia,
1/4 of the 17th C., inv. no.72

4. *Свети 40 Маченици*, Музеј на Македонија,
1/4 17 век, инв. бр. 72

to be imitated and glorified.”⁴ Yet, it was done on a much smaller scale. The mystery of the liturgy was also preserved by the templon or iconostasis, often highly decorative and provided a devotional function as well as a liturgical one with their orders of icons.⁵

Lidov has explored the Hierotopy (formation of sacred space) within the Christological and Mariological cycles. The numerous Jerusalem motifs which become common in these cycles of the 11-15 C should also, he thinks, be considered in the liturgical sense.⁶ The author argues that the imagery of the Sacred Veil separating the Holy from the Holy of Holies at the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was a very powerful spatial icon which considerably influenced art and culture of the Byzantine world and the Latin West.⁷ “Perhaps time came to extend the

context with the introduction of a special figure of the creator of sacred space. Some projects of sacred space were of high artistic character although realized on a different level in comparison with the creation of art objects and architectural form.” (Lidov, *The Temple Veil*, *IKON* 7, 99.)

Reverse perspective

Within the history of Christian icon painting, there is a tendency of reversing the rules of linear perspective rather than ignoring them. The reason may be creating the illusion of expanding images in the distance. The impression of being looked upon or encircled by God is emitted, alluding thus to God’s omnipresence, an intentional attempt to depict objects involved in religious scenes according to the Geometry of the Heavens, the realm above the horizon. Images produced by this unconventional Geometry bear strong resemblance to images created by accepting multiple viewpoints.⁸

⁴ H. Buchwald, *Form, Style and Meaning in Byzantine Church Architecture*, Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999, 41, 46.

⁵ G. Steeber, *An Architectural Reflection of Community*, (MA Theses 2012), 18-19, accessed March 2016 at http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/ma_theses/25/

⁶ A. Lidov, *Hierotopy, The Creation of sacred spaces as a form of creativity and subject of cultural history*, Moscow: Centr Vostochnochristianskoj Kul’tury, 2006, 32-58

⁷ *Ibid.*, *The Temple Veil as a Spatial Icon Revealing an Image-Paradigm of Medieval Iconography and Hierotopy*, *IKON* 7, Rijeka 2014, 97-108.

⁸ This explanation of reverse perspective places the technique among the meaningful, elaborate vocabulary developed and employed throughout the centuries by Christian iconographers. See <https://pavlopoulos.wordpress.com/2011/04/> accessed on 1.2. 2016



5. *The Communion of the Apostles, end of 11th - early 12th C., inv. no. 282,*

5. Причестувањето на апостолиите,
крај 11 - ран 12 век, инв. Бр. 282

The space of the sacred palace as an image of the heavenly space

The heavenly space was visualized as the imperial palace and vice versa, political ideology dictated that the sacred palace and the imperial court be seen as replicas of the heavenly kingdom and the heavenly order.⁹

God the architect arranged the universe in two spaces: he created a 2nd heaven, midway between the previous heaven and earth. The earth was flat and rectangular and to its extremities God attached heaven in the form of a barrel vault. At the ends of the earth God raised walls enclosing the space, so that it resembles a domed house.¹⁰

The likening of the cosmos with a house originates in remote antiquity and the image of the world as a two-tiered building is found in Diodorus of Tarsus (1st C. A.D), in Ephraim the Syrian (4th C.) and in cosmologies of the East. Kosmas imaged the Universe as two worlds, one visible terrestrial and perishable and the other invisible, spiritual and eternal.¹¹

For Jelena Bogdanović, in the complex network of rhetoric of architecture¹² in Byzantine art, it is cru-

⁹ Saradi, *Architecture as icon*, 97.

¹⁰ *op.cit.*, 89.

¹¹ *op.cit.*, 90.

¹² The rhetoric is understood as codified visual and ar-



6. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, 2/2 of 14th C., processional icon (on the reverse, the Mother of God Peribleptos), inv. no. 4,*

6. Воведение на Богородица во храмот, 2/2 14 века, процесиска икона (на другата страна Богородица Перивлепта), инв. бр. 4

cial that architecture links topography, being, time, and memory. The concept of topology – based on a literary and a mnemonic understanding and a transcendental thinking of place (*topos*) within larger networks, that include topography and cultural landscapes, questions how the local changes over time affected the history of that place. The “typical” Byzantine church is often reduced to a box-like structure with a prominent dome, lavishly decorated with monumental mosaics or frescoes of religious figurative and narrative images in its interior. In addition, the repetitive formulae of rhetorical texts about architecture and the ancient rhetorical, site-related techniques of *ars memoriae* appear crucial for remembering

chitectural conventions as a series of transpositions that frame specific meanings other than and beyond visible and spatial. In her text, Jelena Bogdanović focuses on its capacity as a “mnemonic tool” and about the “craft of composition” rather than about persuading others or about representation based on exact likeness. This concept is particularly significant in the creation of the sacred. See J. Bogdanović, *The Rhetoric of architecture in the Byzantine context: The case study of the Holy Sepulcher*, ЗОГРАФ 38 (Beograd 2014), 1–21, 1.



7. *The Annunciation, early 14th C., processional icon (on the reverse Holy Virgin Psychosostria), inv. no. 10*

7. Благовещение, ран 14 век, процессиска икона (на другата страна Богородица Психосострија), инв. Бр. 10



8. *Annunciation, detail of Virgin throne and palace behind it, fresco from St. George, Kurbinovo, 1191*

8. Благовещение, детал на тронот и палата-та позади Богородица, фреска, Св. Ѓорѓи, Курбиново, 1191

specific works of Byzantine architecture, both real and imagined. In the case of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and its Shrine of the Tomb of Christ, the vivid collective image of their often interchangeably referenced architecture was reduced to the spatial image of a **domed structure with columns** that stood equally for the structures of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Shrine of the Tomb of Christ itself, and the domes of numerous Byzantine churches, thus revealing the non-imitative potency of Byzantine architecture based on exact likeness. Holy Sepulcher prevailed over its numerous changes, including the destruction of the site in 1099 and subsequent reconstructions.¹³

The image of a city with a church in manuscripts and frescoes

The iconographic formula used in the Chludov Psalter (State Historical Museum, Moscow, mid 9th C., figure 2) showing the gate in a kind of a tower crowned with a church can be conceived as the symbolic prototype of a church over the gate which became a widespread feature in the architecture of the eastern Christian world. The church over the gate of a city reminded the viewer of Heavenly Jerusalem unit-

ing the symbolic motif of the gate, church and tower. Chludov Psalter contains even ten miniatures with illustration of the Heavenly Jerusalem, where the most interesting is the one signed as Saint Sion, page 86. There we see three-nave church with tower erected on a high fortification with a portal and stairs. Virgin Mary with Christ child inscribed in medallion are painted on the walls to whom St. David points, standing on a pedestal. The text explains the iconography as St. David divinizes about Heavenly Jerusalem, symbolically the Holy Syon.¹⁴

In the Homilies on the Virgin Mary by James Kokkinobaphos, 1/2 of the 12th C., National Library of Paris, (figure 3), one of the illuminations shows the church of the Holly Apostles in Constantinople, with five domes, with the images of Christ in majesty, apostles, Virgin Mary, with façade decorated with four double knotted columns. In the manuscript of the Liturgical Homilies of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, ca. 1150, St Catherine's monastery, Sinai (gr. 339, fol. 4v., figure 4), St. Gregorius Theologos writes his book

¹³ *Op.cit.*, 14-15.

¹⁴ А. Лидов, *Небесный Иерусалим. Особенности образа в византийском и древнерусском искусстве*, Православный поклонник на Святой Земле, 2005, 95-119, 100-101.



9. *The Incredulity of Thomas*, early 14th C., inv. no. 7
9. Томино неверство, ран 14 век, инв. бр 7

within a city under trelobed arch with knotted columns, on his left and right and beneath him there are parts of a palace visible. In Dobreišo Tetraevangelium, National Library of Sophia, 13th C., on the page with St. Marc there is symbolic architecture above him with three arches. The knotted columns with arcades here indicate holiness and importance of the represented figures and are shortened symbolic indication of paradise.¹⁵

The depiction of architecture in Macedonian frescoes

According to Dimitrova, within the Palaiologan fresco paintings executed in Macedonia, there is artistic intention to create three-dimensional architectonic constructions, with plastic firmness of the shapes and illusionistic accents. She further explains Michael and Eutychios had employed the dynamic principles in the construction of the scenography, while Metropolitan John was overcoming the pending issues of Byzantine inversed perspective by the illusionistic accents in the conception of the architectural décor, the lavishly elaborated edifices, geometrical precision in the construction of the architectural coulisses, the inventive inclusion of furniture between the first plan and the architecture as one of the ways of optical

¹⁵ S. Filipova, The cult of St. George and the political situation in Macedonia in the Middle Ages, MH 16, 2001, 18-37; *Ibid.*, Comparative methodology of the Heracles' knot and its meaning in medieval Macedonian Art, *Patri-monium.mk* 14, Skopje 2016), 345-354, 351.



10 *The Crucifixion*, early 14th C., processional icon (on the reverse, *Virgin Psychosostis*), inv. no. 11

10. Распятието, ран 14 век, процесиска икона (на другата страна Богородица Душеспасителка), инв. бр. 11

extension of the depth.¹⁶ She singles out the basilica as the basic typological feature of the architectural coulisses. The simplified, cubical shapes of the represented edifices, the plain surfaces of the massive walls of the buildings and the small windows make the restricted scenographic repertoire. The basilica is replaced by domed structures and monumental porticos, the cubical towers, the luxuriously configured palaces and the spacious courtyards in the exonarthex of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Ohrid. Despite the tiny format of the scenes there is magnificent elaboration of the architecture. The three-dimensional design of the depicted fortifications, the spatial arrangement of the balustrades in the construction of the two-storey terraces, the luxuriantly decorated columns that carry the monumental barrel vaults and the rich ornamented facades of the royal halls in the illustration of the cycle of Old Testament Joseph, for Dimitrova is the specific approach of master Theorianos' studio in creation of a picturesque palette of the scenery for the noble atmosphere of the represented sights. At St. Demetrius in Marko's monastery in Sušica "...robust architectural structures are the main elements of the

¹⁶ E. Dimitrova, *Spiritual Architects, The Construction of Architectural Backdrops in the Work of Some Painting Studios from the 14th Century*, Nish and Byzantium VII, (Nish 2009), 227-250, 235-236.



11. *The Dormition of the Mother of God, early 14th C., from the Church of St. Nicholas Gerakomia, inv. no. 9*

11. Успение Богородичино, ран 14 век,
црква Св. Никола Геракомија, инв. бр. 9

restricted scenography, with the repetitive templates of ornamental decoration.”¹⁷

Meaning of the architectural parts and architectural shapes

Slobodan Ćurčić thinks church architecture itself may be treated as icon, and there was dual perception of church architecture according to the surviving textual evidence. It was perceived simultaneously as material structure (container of community members) as well as in symbolic terms (alluding to Divine presence through features such as altar table, which symbolically denoted God’s throne).¹⁸

For Ousterhout a historical building could be viewed as a sacred relic, it ultimately became part and parcel of the ritual experience.¹⁹ Representations of architecture enjoyed a meaning and status equivalent to those of the saints depicted on icons as primary objects of religious veneration. Christian tradition regards church buildings as a sacred creation. God ordered Moses to build a tabernacle identical to the one revealed to him on Mount Sinai. The exterior of the tabernacle was a model of the visible world, and

¹⁷ Dimitrova, *Spiritual Architects*, 240-241.

¹⁸ S. Ćurčić, E. Hadjityrphones, *Architecture as Icon*, 9.

¹⁹ R. Ousterhout, *Architecture as Relic and the Construction of Sanctity: The Stones of the Holy Sepulchre*, *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2003), pp. 4-23, 4. *Ibid.*, *The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy, Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.



12 *The Annunciation-Royal Doors, middle of 15th C., Church of the Mother of God village of Botun near Ohrid, inv. no. 320/321*

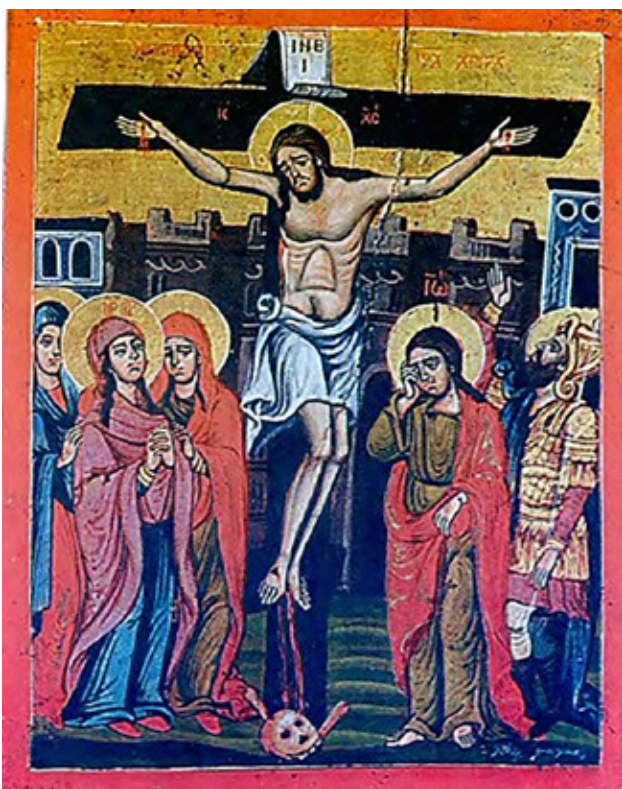
12. Благовештение, Царски двери, средина на 15 век, црква св. Богородица во селу Ботун кај Охрид, инв. бр. 320/321

the interior behind the curtain was a replica of heavenly space, the kingdom of heaven. The curtain corresponds to firmament; the table in the northern part symbolizes the earth. Around it a cyma, twisted in a circle symbolizes the ocean, while around the cyma a frame set like a wreath symbolizes the earth beyond the Ocean where the paradise is situated to the east. It is there that the ends of heaven are placed and join the ends of the earth (II.36).²⁰

The stucco arches found under the altar floor, the painted arches in the frescoes and those inscribed on the floor in St Achill, Prespa Lake, early 10th C.; the stucco arches from St. Panteleimon, Nerezi and the marble arch from St. Sophia, Ohrid show how great role did the arch have to indicate the most important saints in Macedonian churches at first glance. It continues to be used later, for instance at Slimnica monastery church all the figures in the naos of the first zone are put under arches. The upper story row of icons of the iconostases in the post byzantine period usually have golden arches as kind of frame that stresses the represented compositions and holy figures.

Direct comparison of the Virgin and the church city (gates of Heaven behind the throne of the Virgin)

²⁰ H. G. Saradi, *Architecture as Icon*, 73-111, 90.



13. *Crucifixion, painter Michael, 19th C. painted for the Holy Virgin of Hospitality (Bolnička)*

13. *Распятие, мајстор Михајло, 19 век, црква Богородица Болничка*



14. *Annunciation, painter Jovan Teodorov from Gramosta, 1535, inv. no. 191*

14. *Благовештение, сликар Јован Теодоров од Грамоста, 1535 година, инв. бр. 191*

Chludov Psalter represents one of the most important byzantine iconographic themes, the identification of the Mother of God with the Church. L. Haderman Misguish speaks about the meaning of the Virgin throne (=altar) in the composition of the Annunciation in Kurbinovo while behind the throne raises a fabulous city that looks like a temple (figure 8).²¹ From the 12th C. on, the depiction of the gates of Heaven behind the throne of the Virgin became an established iconographic motif and the entire scene frequently unfolded against the background of a city wall.²² The combination of a basilica and a stepped rotunda presented in the form of a tiered tower is known as a pictorial Device from early Byzantine times onward. From the late 13th C. a depiction of the city wall became common in scenes of the Communion of the apostles and the Crucifixion. The elements like the apse, holy table, ciborium, ambo, etc., are not only a part of the building, but represent “hierarchical steps intended for the access into the living mystery accomplished therein.”²³ So there is a transition of space from the outer world into the holy space of

the nave through a narthex, side aisles or atrium. The orientation is to the east as Scripture says Christ will come from the east in the Second Coming and the altar is the throne that awaits him. Thus the naos, bema, altar and semi-circular apse where the clergy sat are directed eastwards in preparation.

The depiction of architecture in Macedonian Icons

In Macedonia the iconostases’ usually have three, rarely four tiers of icons. Macedonian collection of icons is one of the best in the Orthodox world. The painters who painted frescoes in the churches also used to paint icons for their iconostases. It seems that this practice occurred very frequently in the churches in Ohrid. For instance, the author of the wall painting in the church of the Mother of God Bolnička painted the Royal doors for its iconostasis.²⁴

Sometimes the painter makes kind of comical accents, giving the capitals with animal or human heads the ability to express emotions and making them look like live beings. This kind of capitals with human heads that used to be disguised in the Ancient period by large leaves turns into capitals that become alive since their eyes are very expressive and point

²¹ L. H. Misguish, *Kurbinovo, Les fresques de saint Georges et la peinture Byzantine du XII siècle*, Bruxelles 1975, 96-103.

²² A. Lidov, *Heavenly Jerusalem, the Byzantine approach*, *Jewish Art* 23/24, 1997/1998 (1998), pp. 340-353, 348.

²³ B. Ruggieri, *Insight into Byzantine Religious Architecture*, *Studi sull’Oriente Cristiano* 14.2 (2010), 137.

²⁴ B. J. Ђурић, *Иконе из Југославије*, Београд, 1961, 29-30.



15. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, 1711, painter David from Selenica, monastery of St. Nahum*
 15. *Воведение на Богородица во храмот, 1711, сликар Давид од Селенице, Манастирска црква Св. Наума*

to certain parts of the icon, and look like a kind of comic commentary (Annunciation icon, Tretyakov Gallery). Capitals with masks continued to be used later on (16th C. paintings in the churches of the monasteries in Nerezi, Slepče etc.).

The images of buildings, parts of cities or church furniture with baldachin from the post byzantine period show different parts of cities that are modern scenery and show the new trend of representing modern architecture. The number of ciboria used, many details, intensive colors of building facades plus various church models are the main differences when architecture is concerned. Usually the buildings are oriented in the same direction as the figures in the foreground. There are several icons made by different painters that show remarkable representation of architecture, once part of the iconostasis of Holy Virgin Peribleptos or other Ohrid churches, today exhibited in the Ohrid gallery of icons. Usually the comments and notes regarding these icons were description, stylistic notes and explanation of iconography. Yet, equally important part of the icon is the architectural context of the painted figure or feast. It has been scholarly valued in the last decade by professors Slobodan Ćurčić, Alexei Lidov, and Robert Ousterhout.



16. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, 1730, painter David from Selenica, Bitola*
 16. *Воведение на Богородица во храмот, 1730, сликар Давид од Селенице, Битола*

Especially representative are the works of the 16th century Jovan Teodorov from Gramosta and the famous early 18th C. painter David from Selenica. Their temples, fortifications, towers, domes and ciboria show the most elegant solutions and fashion of the time. Yet their beauty and freshness has no time and space limitations.

Icons from the Church of the Mother of God Peribleptos (St. Clement) in Ohrid, made in tempera, plaster ground on canvas overlaid on board, exhibited in the Ohrid Gallery of icons²⁵

The Communion of the Apostles, end of 11th - early 12th C., inv. no. 282, catalogue no. 3, figure 5

The communion with bread and wine is presented in the mid, while on the left side, under a baldachin, Christ is presented in a strictly frontal pose. A holy dining table is placed in front of him. The baldachin with cupola like form, painted in grayish-rose with golden arches stands on four columns with golden capitals. The architecture behind is actually a one dimensional wall painted in ochreous-rose tones with white decorations and a blue frieze in the upper section. There are traces of decoration with relief loz-

²⁵ M. Georgievski, *Ohrid Gallery of Icons*, Ohrid 1999 (catalogue). All the icons analyzed here are according to this catalogue numbers.

enges and circles in the mid of the wall that ends with classical tooth shaped gray cornice.

The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, second half of 14th C., processional icon (on the reverse, the Mother of God Peribleptos), inv. no. 4, (catalogue no 26) **figure 6**

The images of buildings show the new trend of representing modern architecture with according to Georgievski precisely measured and skilful perspective. Still we see the reverse perspective and several angles of view. The characteristic deformations of the physiognomies and the quite limited use of colours on this icon, point to the style of the painter who painted the frescoes in the chapel of St. Gregory around 1364/65. Gregory, the bishop of Devol, erected this chapel on the northern side of the church of the Mother of God Peribleptos.

The Annunciation, early 14th C., processional icon (on the reverse Holy Virgin Psychosostria), inv. no.10, catalogue no. 18,²⁶ (**figure 7**)

The luxurious golden baldachin has two columns with kneeling colossi under the human mask capitals, painted in light gray and ochre. The elegant architecture behind the archangel is painted with violet, gray and olive nuances with white, lightened sections. There is a red cloth spread on the frontal part of the baldachin above the Virgin head, while God's ray comes from above. Behind is a wall of a palace, represented only from the left side where the archangel approaches, and his golden halo merges with the golden background thus covering the rest of the building. We can see two small human (saint) figures on the walls. The architecture that is far away seems to give not only indication of where the scene takes place and thus helping the viewer to discover which event has been represented, but also to put us in the mid of the scene like we are part of it. This kind of research of the perspective in the West happens in the same 14th C., yet the results will be visible in the Renaissance paintings of the 15th C. The detail with the colossi makes the scene special. There was a revival of interest in the depiction of subjects from classical mythology.

The Incredulity of Thomas, beginning of 14th C., inv. no. 7, catalogue no 26, **figure 9**

In the background of the central Christ figure with raised right hand, with lateral groups of six apostles is a painted facade of some architectural construction with a two winged ochre door, richly hatched with gold. On both sides there are arches and columns with capitals with volutes that seem to be a kind of porches to the building that develops like niche that shows



17. *Crucifixion*, painter David from Selenica, 1739/40

17. *Распятие*, сликар Давид из Селенице, 1739/40

its inner concave surface to our eyes. In the upper part there is a frieze of stylized leaves of acanthus and the shell like conch²⁷ above the door and Christ, divided into eleven segments painted in cobalt-blue, ochre and golden. The door is not the real end of the inner conch but a symbol to the “entrance” that is Christ as door for the believers to Heaven. The inner and outer side of the “building” meaning probably the Salvation= Heaven that can be reached through strong believe and obedience are shown at the same time. The shell like conch is used in the early Christian mosaics and medieval manuscripts, inherited from the ancient art vocabulary, apart from funeral context, denoting the holiness, importance of the figure under it and the home in Heavenly city gifted to those who deserve it.²⁸

The Crucifixion of Christ, early 14th C., processional icon (on the reverse, Jesus Christ Psychosostis), inv. no. 11 (catalogue no. 20) **figure 10**

²⁷ The conch had an important place in the art of the Near East, and entered Egypt already in the 1 millennium B.C. usually having amulet function. For details on Jewish connotation of conch in art see R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish art and archaeology in the Land of Israel*, Brill, 1988, 280.

²⁸ I will note here only several examples: the painting of the Thora Scrine in the Synagogue in Dura Europos, the mosaics from the 2nd zone of S. Apollinare Nuovo, the Chludov Psalter etc.

²⁶ Georgievski, *Ohrid Gallery of Icons*, 51.



18. *Christ tsar as part of Diesis, church of Holy Archangel, Kučevište, late 16th C.,
Etnographic Museum Belgrade, inv. no 1314*

18. *Христос Цар, Деизис, црква Св. Арханђели, Кучевиште, доцен 16 век,
Етнографски Музеј во Београду, инв. бр 1314*

The big dark brown cross stuck in a rock, with Adam's skull in its cavity, dominates the scene. The crucified Christ is painted in olive-green as well as the fortification and the wall behind him and the images of the Virgin, St John, and the two angels. Thus it makes a kind of curtain, while in the vicinity of the figures are rare plants and a small tree. The first fortified wall ends with barracks that are like descending backwards. The other wall of a palace = city behind it has decorative frieze in the mid and ends with protruding small sculptural elements turned towards the first plan.

Icons from other Ohrid churches

The Dormition of the Mother of God, beginning of 14th C., from the Church of St. Nicholas Gerakomia in Ohrid, inv. no. 9 (catalogue no 15), **figure 11**

In the middle of the lower part of the icon there is a catafalque with the dead body of the Mother of God, behind it in the mid stands Christ and around are the apostles, archpriests and angels. There is a requisite architecture in olive-gray tones with greenish-black roofs in the back. On the right is three nave basilica and on the left a palace with a protruding porticos with red veils (that looks like rectangular high tower), connected by a kind of bridge. Both buildings are giving accent to the composition like a theatrical scenery that encompasses the scene like half circu-

lar frame, where the mid of the bridge is higher and stands above Christ, thus accenting him.

The Annunciation-Royal Doors, around the middle of 15th C., from the Church of the Mother of God in the village of Botun near Ohrid, inv. no. 320/321, (catalogue no 33), **figure 12**

The Archangel Gabriel is presented in full-length on the left wing and the Virgin on the right. The Virgin is standing in front of the throne with two pillows on it. She stands on an ochreous pedestal with red edges. Behind them there are two buildings, a basilica behind the Virgin, and a palace with red roof made of veil behind the angel. The facades of the buildings decorated with floral ornaments are gray-olive, ochreous, and red. Small red curtains hang from the windows. The church has two very tall portals, the side one shows many stairs starting from the top of the portal descending towards the Virgin throne.

Post byzantine icons

Later on, ciborium represented in the icons may have the shape of almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a sphere dome, simple stone wall made of white stone blocs is representing the Heavenly wall, (church St. Nicholas Gerakomia, Ohrid, 18th C. icon). This type of wall with white stones was also painted in St. George in Kurbinovo fresco *Meeting at the Golden Gate*. Yet, there the buildings behind the wall are two towers and the red

velum goes through their windows and imitates the embrace (position of the hands) of the two women.

Process of simplification (instant association) happens already in the 15th century. Heavenly Jerusalem becomes small red house with red velum or dome, Virgin Mary helps the soul of the martyrs settle in. There is only one small entrance to this building (Icon of Holy Forty Martyrs, 1/2 of the 15th C., Museum of Macedonia icon collection²⁹).

At the **Crucifixion icon** painted by painter Michael in the 19th C. for the church Holy Virgin of Hospitality (Bolnička), figure 13, we can see the Heavenly Jerusalem behind the wall filled with houses of blue gray color with towers and high portals, instead of the green olive wall on the 14th C. icon. In 1739/40, figure 17, David from Selenica paints a wall that is not monotonous, even though monochromatic, olive gray green, like Christ body, it becomes lower and there is triangular opening behind the Cross Christ is crucified. He also introduces another ciboria in the icon The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple in the mid of the scene, while on the left the little Virgin approached by an angel seats on the roof of the building covered by a large ciborium. The mid ciborium is not within the frontal first level of the picture, but behind the wall that unfolds in front of us like made of panels (cards). Its lower four columns are red.

Annunciation, painter Jovan Teodorov³⁰ from Gramosta, 1535, inv. no. 191, figure 14, depicts the palace (Heavenly City) behind the wall in front of which the Archangel and the Virgin stand, while the church connected to her throne is within the outer part of the wall.

David from Selenica was a great painter, which is obvious by the way he paints architecture, organises space, composition, anatomy. He imports baroque decorative elements within his buildings denoting churches or palaces. Yet he is also using Paleologian art inspirations. The architecture represented in the icons is, according to Viktorija Korobar, subordinated to the composition. To my opinion this is not true and is very obvious that the buildings are equally important part of the compositions. Especially their closeness to the figures and variety of shapes, decoration and colors speaks in favor of this conclusion. The facades have been decorated with monochromatic human masks, red veils are put over the roofs of the buildings, and small curtains with knots hang at the windows.³¹ Above the conch of the ciboria and



19. *The Annunciation-Royal Doors*, end of 14th C., Church of Ss. Constantine and Elena in Ohrid, inv. no. 97

19. Благовештение, Царски Двери, крај 14 века, Св. Константин и Елена, Охрид, инв. бр 97

above the capitals there is decorative element that resembles flame. Capitals often end with lion heads or grape forms.³²

At the icon **Meeting at the Golden Gate**, 1711, monastery of St. Nahum, figure 15, behind the ciborium within the architecture there is human mask depicted and on the left building façade there is a flying rather large male figure resembling some ancient flying creature with wings painted with the same colour as the building. The ciborium actually dominates the whole scene. At Hilandar Abraham hospitality scene, painted the same 1711 year, there are dancing naked monochromatic figures on the walls of the building. At the icon **Resurrection of Lazarus**, from Moskopole, in the background there is architecture with several columns. Here the rocks among which apostles walk

²⁹ Коробар, *Икони од Музеј на Македонија*, Скопје, 2004, cat. no.146.

³⁰ Коробар, *Икони*, catalogue no. 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*, *Иконописот во Охрид во XVIII век*, Скопје 2005, 58, 62, 63.

³² *Ibid.*



20. *The Annunciation-Royal Doors, 18th C., Church of St Athanasius, Museum of Macedonia, inv. no. 258*

20. Благовештение, Царске Двери, 18 век, Св. Атанасије, Долно Водно, Скопје, Музеј на Македоније, инв. бр 258

by look like architectural concrete blocks. In the **Resurrection** from St. Nahum, 1711 and the **Resurrection** from St. Demetrius, Bitola, 1730, the pose of the painted figures along with the similar architecture indicates the same atelier even though there is no signature preserved. At the icon of **The Annunciation**, painted around 1726, Museum of Tirana, David applies real “golden” linear perspective. At **Entering Jerusalem**, Bitola, 1730, figure 16, and the same composition painted on the icon from Moskopole, dated in 1726, we see the same model of city with a fortress, same arch above the portal, and same decorative embellishment of the facades.

The baldachin, the shell, the bridge and the red veil (curtain)

The baldachin represented has the role of stressing the ruling, or heavenly character of the person seating under it or the event going on (in the Communion of the apostles, in the scene The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple).

At the same time, there is a continuation of indication of heaven and heavenly home with the symbol of the shell, actually the dome or domed dwelling as it

used to be in the early Christian and early Byzantine art. A kind of a bridge, an arch that connects the two buildings behind **The Dormition of the Mother of God, early 14th century, from the Church of St. Nicholas Gerakomia** in Ohrid makes an accent and frame of Christ head and halo. The red cloth or curtain (the iconic veil) above the architecture seems to be a must within this kind of architectural scenery. It is another characteristic example of the image-paradigms that played a great role in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic cultures. The all-embracing symbolism of the iconic veil can be found in almost all church decoration, presented on different levels, from a concrete pictorial motif to a general structure.

Curtains appeared in early Byzantine art (archaeological data indicate traces of hangings in the early Syrian sanctuaries, documented also in the murals of the Bawit monasteries and the mosaics of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome), and they became an established device in the middle Byzantine period. Scholars have suggested different interpretations of this motif: the incarnation, Eucharistic sacrifice or association to the

Temple veil symbolism, the boundary between the visible (the place of change) and the invisible creation.³³

According to Saint Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, the veil is designated as the flesh of the Lord: "The new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh" (Hebrews, 10:19-20).

The Temple Veil as the flesh of Christ became an image of his sacrifice and one of the most influential and widespread symbols in Christian culture. "A theological interpretation of the apocryphal story of the Virgin weaving the Temple veil became a popular theme of early Byzantine hymnography and homiletics, in which the weaving came to be compared with the incarnation of the Logos." (Lidov, *IKON* 7, 12)

In contrast to the Jewish tradition, a topos of the open curtain was highly emphasized. In the period of iconoclasm, the Temple veil became one of the arguments of the icon worshippers presented at the Second Council of Nicaea: "Thus, this Christ, while visible to men by means of the curtain, that is his flesh, made the divine nature - even though this remained concealed - manifest through signs. Therefore, it is in this form, seen by men, that the holy Church of God depicts Christ". (Lidov, *IKON* 7, 13-14).

³³ The Jewish tradition perceived the veil as a symbolic representation of the **cosmos and eternity**. Later Jewish mystic theology suggested that the veil was also an image of the sacred time simultaneously representing the past, the present and the future. See A. Lidov, *The Temple Veil as a Spatial Icon Revealing an Image-Paradigm of Medieval Iconography and Hierotopy*, *IKON* 7, Rijeka 2014, 97-108, 101. The first mentioning of the veil (paroket) of the Tabernacle's separating the holy place from the Holy of Holies and screening the Ark and the seat of God indicates that it was a kind of image, "the skilled work", woven from blue, purple, crimson and linen and embroidered with cherubim.

In the 10th C. Josephus stated that the veil depicted a panorama of the heavens. Its colors had symbolic meaning: the scarlet signified fire; the linen, earth; the blue, air; and the purple, sea. The veil thus represented the matter, the substance of the visible creation and the universe. The Third Book of Enoch and Philo interpret the veil as the boundary between the visible and the invisible creation. The world beyond the veil was unchanging and without a temporal sequence of events, but the visible world outside the veil was a place of change. The holiest realm, placed beyond the veil and existing outside time and matter, creates the eternal pattern for the changing sacred environment in front of the veil. Some traces of Philo's vision can be found in the Byzantine theology of icons. "The holy image, following the veil paradigm, is not just "the door to Heavens",... but also the living spatial and transparent boundary connecting two heterogeneous sacred realms. It provides an explanation of the special concept of time and space that we may discover while contemplating icons." See Lidov, *Hierotopy*, *IKON* 7, 101.

In Syrian sources from the 4th century onwards, there are several testimonies to the use of altar curtains, as an interactive system of veils. There were various iconic curtains hanging within the churches, the largest one displayed beneath the triumphal arch for the wider central opening of the sanctuary barrier, smaller ones between the columns of the altar screen, and a great curtain at the entrance.³⁴

Thus Roman churches looked much more like a cloth tabernacle than a stone church, as illustrated in the 7th century miniature of the Ashburnham Pentateuch (figure 1), representing the Old Testament Tabernacle as a Christian church with the eight different types of curtains arranged as a system of sacred screens. At the 19th C. Ohrid icon of the Annunciation, from the Holy Virgin of Hospitality³⁵, behind the Virgin we see tabernacle (tent with a dome). It stands for the Church and the Basilica behind the angel is the Heavenly Jerusalem above which is God. Buildings have changed places.

Composition

Possible compositions of the scene within the feasts are: buildings developing around the figures or

³⁴ The evidence of written sources is proved by archaeological data indicating traces of hangings in the early Syrian sanctuaries. They were concealing, respectively, the door of the sanctuary barrier, the ciborium and the holy gifts on the altar table. Theologians identified these curtains with the Temple veils - the symbolism is reflected also in the terminology of the church spaces divided by curtains. In one of the oldest Byzantine liturgical commentaries, ascribed to Sophronius of Jerusalem, it is said that the Kosmites is a symbolic image of the Katapetasma (Temple veil). Multiple sources mention curtains in different contexts, such as imperial ceremonies or miraculous events in Constantinople. The Byzantine accounts and the Liber Pontificalis testifies numerous iconic curtains presented by Roman popes to the main Rome basilicas. There were at least three different sets of iconic curtains decorating the spaces between the columns in the sanctuary barriers. Iconic curtains representing another cycle: Christ's Passion and Resurrection. Another group of curtains displayed on that basilica's great beam was connected with the sanctuary barrier's decoration. The most significant among them was "a great veil of interwoven gold, with 7 gold-studded panels and a fringe of Byzantine purple". According to Krautheimer, this large veil with seven images displayed beneath the triumphal arch was for the wider central opening of the sanctuary barrier; thus, it had to serve as an actual replica of the Temple veil over the sanctuary door and hung in juxtaposition to "a great Alexandrian curtain, embellished and adorned with various representations" at the entrance to S. Maria Maggiore. The two veils engaged in a visual and symbolic dialogue with a third, situated on the same horizontal axis, probably, behind the throne in the opening of the central arcade. See A. Lidov, *The Temple veil*, 105.

³⁵ М. Георгиевски, *Големите празници во охридскиот живопис од 15-19 век*, Охрид 1998 (каталог), сл. 1.

the scene, or from the left to the right side of the icon, or repeating the same angle and position of the figures. Elongated horizontally developed architectural scenery, appears in an 14-15th C. icon, Institute for protection of monuments of Culture and Museum, Ohrid, inv. no. 290.

Tendency towards decorative approach

There is also visible tendency towards decorative approach and polichromia. Jovan Teodorov workshop from Gramosta, Slepče Monastery, 1535, uses small ornaments to beatify the red velum and the wall behind the Annunciation scene. The walls of the buildings (tower and church) are decorated with small floral ornaments. The red velum gets white small suns or flowers and it connects the buildings as a kind of bridge, while buildings are part of the first and second plan of the icon.

Orientation

The buildings are usually oriented in the same direction as the main figures in the foreground. At Kurbinovo scene **Meeting at the Golden Gate**, the position of the women's' hands embracing are imitated by the tower veils.

Church plans

Apart from the three nave and one nave churches, and simple straight walls ending with barracks, walls bridges that connect buildings from the left to the right side, ciboria and porches with capitals with human or animal masks and collosi, in the post byzantine period icons show tall churches with towers, polygonal domes, with white, blue and red facades and even polygonal churches, and rotundas when St. Paul and St. Peter are represented together.³⁶ The wall behind the figures denoting the fortification of the Heavenly Jerusalem may have many towers, and even watchers from the windows, flying monochromatic figures etc. Human or animal masks are decorating the palaces and churches extensively. In some royal doors of the 18th century, behind the Annunciation figures, buildings are represented twice, two churches and two palaces.³⁷

The throne of Christ and the Virgin look like a palace

In the post byzantine period, Christ throne begins to look like fortification or palace (Kučevište, icon of **Christ enthroned**, as part of Diesis, church of Holy Archangel, Kučevište, late 16th C. Ethnographic Museum, Belgrade, inv. no 1314, figure 18; Slepče monastery church (1673-4), animal heads with human eyes are used as upper part of the legs of the throne,³⁸ The Annunciation-Royal Doors, Church of Ss. Constantine and Elena in Ohrid, end of the 14th C.,³⁹ inv. no. 97. figure 19, etc. That this is not a fashion of the period that will make any throne look like fortification or palace speaks the throne of St. Nicholas from Slepče monastery church that is much simpler and resembles no architecture compared to the throne of Christ.

³⁶ В. Коробар, *Икони*, 157,158.

³⁷ Church of St Athanasius, Museum of Macedonia, inv. no. 258. See Désirée M. D. Krikhaar, *Ongekende Schoonheid, Ikonen uit Macedonië*, Utrecht 2011, 113, figure 145.

³⁸ Ц. Грозданов, *Живописот на Охридската Архиепископија*, Скопје 2007, МАХУ, figure on page 352 .

³⁹ M. Georgievski, *Ohrid Gallery of Icons*, cat. no. 33.

IMAGES OF CITIES IN THE MACEDONIAN COLLECTION OF ICON PAINTINGS

Резиме

Обично коментарите и забелешките што се однесуваат на иконите содржат опис, стилски забелешки и објаснување на иконографијата. Но, подеднакво важен дел од иконата е архитектонскиот контекст на насликаната светечка фигура, фигури или празник што најчесто се третира од страна на истражувачите како секундарен елемент подреден на темата. Последниве години неколку големи имиња во историјата на уметноста го докажуваат подеднаквото значење на архитектонскиот контекст на иконите и светците. Дури, Слободан Чурчиќ архитектурата ја разбира како икона.

Третата димензија во визуелните уметности во Византија е позната но се користи ограничено во декоративните уметности. Во историјата на иконописот постои тенденција за употреба на обратна перспектива. Како можно објаснување за истата е креирање на илузија дека претставите се зголемуваат во далечината. Се создава впечаток дека претставените фигури ги гледа одозгора или опколува самиот Бог, на тој начин алудирајќи на неговата сеприсутност.

Во однос на плановите се сликаат еднобродни и тробродни цркви, како и едноставни прави сидови, и сидови мостови кои ги поврзуваат градбите од левата и десната страна, со кули, цибориуми и портици украсени со капители од кои некои имаат форма на човечки глави (маски) или цели фигури-колоси. Во поствизантискиот период црквите се високи со многу високи портици и кули, а се сликаат и полиаголни цркви и ротонди (најчесто кога се сликаат Св Петар и Св. Павле, тие држат модел на ротондална црква во рацете). Зидовите зад фигурите го претставуваат Небесниот Јерусалем и може да имаат кули, како и гледачи од прозорите, дури и моногратски ситни суштества (фигури) кои летаат.

Кај иконите со тема празници, архитектурата може да биде поставена околу фигурите или сцената, или од лево кон десно, или повторувајќи го

истиот агол и позиција на фигурите. Балдахинот најчесто служи да ја нагласи владарската улога или небесниот аспект на ликот кој седи под него или целиот настан, како на пример Причестувањето на апостолите или Воведение на Богородица во храм.

Во Хлудовиот Псалтир е претставена една од најважните византиски иконографски теми, идентификацијата на Богородица со Црквата. Зад нејзиниот трон се прикажани вратите на Рајот. Мисгиш зборува за значењето на тронот на Богородица како олтар во Благовестите на Св. Ѓорѓи во Курбиново. Шаторот (табернаклот) со купола обично се претставува зад Богородица и ја претставува Црквата, а базиликата позади анѓелот во Благовестите е Небесниот Јерусалем.

Индикацијата на Небото (рајот) односно небесниот дом во континуитет се изразува со школка, која претставува купола односно куполна градба, како што се користело и во ранохристијанскиот период. Постои видлива тенденција кон декоративен пристап и полихромија на градбите. Сидовите се украсуваат со ситни флорални елементи. Црвената завеса добива мали сонца и цветови и ги поврзува градбите како еден вид мост, а самите градби се дел од првиот и вториот план на иконата. Завесата во храмот како тело Христово станува слика на неговата жртва и еден од највлијателните и најраширени симболи во христијанската култура. Тронот на Исус и Богородица почнуваат да наликуваат на палата.

Од 15 век започнува процес на поедноставување. Небесниот Јерусалем се прикажува како мала црвена кука со црвена завеса или купола, пред чија мала порта стои Богородица и им помага на душите на мартирите да влезат и да се сместат. Деловите од градовите и градбите што се прикажуваат се современи на времето кога иконата е сликана. Се зголемува бројот на цибориуми и кули, а градбите имаат живи бои, обично црвени, или сини.