

Newly discovered portraits of rulers and the dating of the oldest frescoes in Lipljan*

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UDC 75.052.041.5(497.11 Lipljan)»13»

929.731(=163.41)»13»

DOI 10.2298/ZOG1236143D

Оригиналан научни рад

On the façade of the church of the Presentation of the Virgin, in Lipljan, the damaged depictions of two rulers were discovered under a more recent layer of fresco mortar. The depictions can be identified as portraits of the Serbian king and the emperor Stefan Dušan (1331–1355) and his wife Jelena. That provides the basis for the more reliable dating of the original wall painting in the interior of the church. For their part, the stylistic characteristics of that expressionistic painting suggest that the original Lipljan frescoes came into being around the mid-fourteenth century. Probably, they were executed by the same workshop that did the frescoes in the Church of St. Peter near Unjemir in Metohia, not very far from Lipljan.

Key words: Serbia, Lipljan, wall paintings, stylistic trends in the Late Byzantine painting, rulers' portraits, Stefan Dušan

The study of monuments of Serbian medieval art in Kosovo and Metohia occupies a significant place in the rich and thematically diverse work of academician Gojko Subotić. He has dedicated three books and a series of articles to these monuments.¹ Among them is the well-known and manifoldly significant study dealing with the chronology of the Dečani painting.² Our jubilee celebrator devoted exceptional care to this highly endangered heritage in managing the project for the digitalisation of scientific documents about the monuments of Kosovo and Metohia. Bearing all this in mind, we present this paper about a Serbian church in Kosovo in this issue of *Zograf*, which is being published in his honour. Let it be a modest expression of gratitude to Gojko Subotić for the extraordinarily valuable contribution to different spheres of scholarship and for his sincere dedication to the preservation of ancient artistic heritage.

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The cleaning, repair and presentation of the wall paintings from the fourteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries in the Church of the Presentation of the Mother of God in Lipljan,³ not far from Gračanica, was performed during the autumn of 2009 and spring of 2010. In the course of these activities, remains of the initial painting were discovered on the façade of the church, under a layer of fresco mortar from the beginning of the seventeenth century (fig. 1).⁴ Although the newly discovered depictions thus became visible to the eyes of researchers and visitors, they were not given the at-

ention they deserve. The reason why this occurred was the failure to recognise their iconographic content due to the significant damage to the frescoes. However, despite that, now being reduced mostly to a basic drawing in brown, marked in some parts with a sharp object on the fresco mortar, the painted surface still contains enough information for the verifiable identification of the depicted figures.⁵ This identification provides the basis for a more reliable dating of the oldest painting in the church, which is indeed interesting regarding the characteristics of its style. Furthermore, conditions were thus created for finding the appropriate place in the developmental framework of Byzantine and Serbian medieval art, for the initial Lipljan frescoes.

Above the entrance, slightly to the north, a ruler is painted, facing forward, in a characteristic ceremonial posture (fig. 2, 3, 6). His portrait is preserved from the waist up, and on it one can make out the insignia of the Serbian kings and emperors of the fourteenth century. The ruler is clad in a *sakkos* of brown, now mostly washed off from the face of the fresco. The base drawing of the *peribrachia* on the upper arms and the *epimanikia* above the hands, which decorated the rulers' *sakkos*, can barely be distinguished. The sovereign is girded with a *loros* (i.e. a diadema, after Pseudo-Kodinos) over the *sakkos*, which is crossed over the chest in the form of the Latin letter "X". It is this form of rendering the crossed *loros* that is characteristic of the Byzantine art of the

* The article contains some of the results achieved in the projects no. 177036 — *Serbian medieval art and its European context* — and no. 177032 — *Tradition, innovation and identity in the Byzantine world* — which are supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

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¹ These books are: G. Subotić, *L'église Saint-Démétrios à la patrie de Peć*, Beograd 1964; idem, *Terra sacra. L'arte del Cossovo*, Milano 1997; idem, *Dolac i Čabići*, Beograd 2012.

² G. Subotić, *Prilog hronologiji dečanskog zidnog slikarstva*, ZRVI 20 (1981) 111–135.

³ To that interesting church, as a valuable architectural monument, attention, even then, was drawn by Sir A. J. Evans in his *Antiquarian researches in Illyricum, Parts III, IV*, *Archaeologia: or, Miscellaneous tracts relating to Antiquity* 49 (London 1885) 64–66, fig. 34, 35.

⁴ The project was conceived and conservation works were done by experts from Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, under the management of Mr. Dragan Stanojević, MA, paintings restorer.

⁵ D. Vojvodić, *Stefan Dušan i Jelena, srpski vladarski portreti nad dverima lipljanske crkve*, *Politika*, no. 35357 (Beograd, 14. i 15. april 2012), *Kultura, umetnost, nauka*, str. 2–3.



Fig. 1. Lipljan, Church of the Mother of God, western façade

so-called “Palaiologan Renaissance”.⁶ In earlier periods, the crossing was in the shape of the Latin letter “Y”, except on rare occasions.⁷ The rear part of the loros, which folds over the ruler’s right hip and crosses over the belly, was undoubtedly folded over the ruler’s left arm. Unfortunately, this part of the image is completely destroyed and one cannot confirm if he held an *anexikakia* (*akakia*) in the left hand, which was customary. In the right hand, elevated to the middle of the chest, the ruler is holding a sceptre,⁸ of which only traces of the drawing are preserved. On the head, the portrayed character wears a dome-shaped crown, once abundantly decorated with pearls, but now significantly damaged in the upper segment. Two pairs of strings of pearls fall from the edges of the crown, over the ruler’s temples — *seia*, i.e. *prependulia*. The sovereign’s face is greatly damaged and one can only distinguish the upper part of the nose with the eyebrows and parts of the eyes (fig. 5). Still, the outline of the face and the fact that almost the entire neck and cheeks are visible, assure us that the ruler might have had only a very short and thin beard and moustache. With some effort, their remains can be traced thanks to darker patches of colour along the edge of the lower part of the face and under the nose. The head of the portrayed character is lit by a halo — an unavoidable element of portraits of Serbian rulers ever since the second half of the thirteenth century.⁹ To the left and right of the halo, several lines were drawn for writing an elaborate accompanying inscription, of which only parts of some letters are preserved.

Opposite the sovereign’s portrait, south of the entrance, the picture of a woman ruler was found (fig. 2, 4, 7). Indications of this are the oval female face and noticeably smaller dimensions of the figure compared with the one

described previously. The particularly telling signs are the characteristic female rulers’ insignia and ceremonial gestures. First of all, it is evident that the portrayed character is wearing a dress with sleeves that have very wide openings. Such a dress did not appear on the portraits of Serbian women rulers before the second decade of the fourteenth century,¹⁰ although Byzantine empresses started wearing them in the second half of the eleventh century.¹¹ The front end of the loros hangs from a collar (*kontomanikion*) that is visible on the chest and decorated with pearls. The rear end of the loros is folded over the left forearm, which is resting against the waist. In the left hand, the ruler’s wife holds a sceptre, barely visible now.¹² One can still discern its basic drawing and a few pearls with which it was strewn. The portrayed figure holds the palm of her right hand to her chest in a gesture of prayer, which was common for representations of eastern Christian rulers’ wives of the high middle ages. The faint outlines suggest that the woman ruler wore on her head a tall open crown (*propoloma*), a characteristic insignia of wives of eastern Christian sovereigns during the mature period of the Paleologues. Her head was illuminated with a halo, too, and the rather faint traces of the large earrings (*oboce*) can still be seen next to her temples. The portraits of the ruling couple are painted on the sides of the niche situated directly above the entrance to the church. The image of the patron of the shrine — the Mother of God — must have stood in that niche, once.¹³ One should assume that a bust of Jesus Christ, blessing the rulers or placing crowns on their heads, was painted above the couple, as was customary.

⁶ Idem, *Portreti vladara, crkvenih dostojanstvenika i plemića u naosu i priprati*, in: *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana. Gradnja i studije*, ed. V. J. Djurić, Beograd 1995, 288–292; idem, *Ukrštena dijadima i “torakion”*. *Dve drevne i neuobičajene insignije srpskih vladara u XIV i XV veku*, in: *Treća jugoslovenska konferencija vizantologa*, ed. Lj. Maksimović, N. Radošević, E. Radulović, Beograd–Kruševac 2002, 267.

⁷ Cf. E. Condurachi, *Sur l’origine et l’évolution du loros impérial*, *Arta și Archeologia* 11–12 (Jasy 1935–36) 37–45; P. E. Schramm, *Von der Trabea Triumphalis des römischen Kaisers über das byzantinische Loros zur Stola der abendländischen Herrscher*, in: idem, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, Stuttgart 1955, 25–38; E. Piltz, *Loros — ett bysantinsk insignium*, *Kunsthistorisk Tidskrift* 41 (1972) 55–62; eadem, *Trabea triumphalis und Loros*, in: *Reallexikon zur byzantinische Kunst* III, Stuttgart 1973, 428–444.

⁸ This was in accordance with the ancient rules of Constantinopolitan court ceremony, which were observed during the Palaiologan epoch, too. Cf. Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, ed. J. Verpeaux, Paris 1966, 202²⁵⁻²⁹.

⁹ S. Radojčić, *Portreti srpskih vladara u srednjem veku*, Beograd 1996², 23, 77. Radojčić’s explanation of the reasons why nimbooses were depicted around the heads of Serbian medieval rulers was critically reconsidered by D. Vojvodić in his article: *Portreti prvih ktitora u prizemlju žičke kule. Poreklo ikonografije*, Niš i Vizantija 10 (2012) 336–337.

¹⁰ Radojčić, *Portreti*, 83.

¹¹ K. Wessel, *Die byzantinische Emailkunst vom 5. bis 13. Jahrhundert*, Recklinghausen 1967, Abb. 38, 46b; I. Spatharakis, *The portrait in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts*, Leiden 1976, fig. 7, 11, 46, 47, 70, 93, 136, 139, 155, 162, 170, 181.

¹² The rule that the scepter had to be held in the right hand was not reflected on the portraits of women rulers in the Orthodox Christian world as strictly as on the portraits of male sovereigns. In Serbia, too, exceptions appeared, like here, in Lipljan. In a similar way, Jelena, wife of Stefan Dušan, holds the scepter in the left hand on her portraits in Pološko and St. Nicholas Bolnički in Ohrid. Cf. Radojčić, *Portreti*, sl. 45, 73.

¹³ It is well known, on the bases of medieval charters, that the church in Lipljan was dedicated to the Virgin from the time of its foundation. Cf. *Monumenta Serbica spectantia historiam Serbiae Bosnae Ragusii*, ed. F. Miklosich, Wien 1858 [=Graz 1964], 120–124 (no. CXI); *Actes de l’Athos, V, Actes de Chilandar, Deuxième partie, Actes slaves*, ed. L. Petit, B. Korablev, *Vizantijskii vremennik. Prilozhenie k XIX tomu*, No. 1 1 (1915) 451–455 (no. 24).



Fig. 2. Lipljan, Church of the Mother of God, portraits of rulers on the western façade, drawing by N. Krstić

Several iconographic and programme elements that are present on the frescoes of the façade of the Lipljan church have a crucial role in identifying the portrayed ruling couple. Let us first consider the insignia. The loros crossed in the shape of the letter “X”, worn by the depicted ruler, as an unusual and anachronous insignia, appeared on the portraits of Serbian rulers from the time of King Stefan Uroš III Dečanski.¹⁴ This is an ancient insignia of Byzantine rulers, somewhat altered in shape, which almost completely vanished from ceremonies by the time of the Komnenoi. It was reaffirmed for a brief period, before being finally rejected, during the reign of the first emperor of the Palaiologan dynasty.¹⁵ Like the “thorakion” on the dresses of rulers’ wives — another long forgotten insignia of the Byzantine world — the crossed loros was introduced in the portrayal of Serbian rulers for ideological and propaganda reasons. The appearance of ancient rulers’ insignia on the Nemanjić portraits was directly connected with the growing political ambition of the Serbian dynasty.¹⁶ The crossed loros was used the most frequently on the representations of the son and heir of Stefan Dečanski — the king and emperor Stefan Dušan.¹⁷ It is certain that it is his portrait on the façade of the Lipljan church, although the mentioned insignia appeared sporadically, not only on the portraits of his father, but also on those of some later Serbian rulers from the Mrnjavčević, Lazarević and Branković dynasties.¹⁸ Other iconographic and programme elements additionally indicate that this is really the representation of Dušan.

On the one hand, it is a fact that the depicted ruler had a conspicuously broad face, and thin and short beard, which is characteristic of Dušan’s portraits.¹⁹ On the other, one must note that the woman ruler is painted on the opposite side of the sovereign in Lipljan. Dušan’s father, Stefan Dečanski, was always portrayed with a thick and particularly long beard, ending in two locks.²⁰ Besides, for dynastic reasons, as a ruler he was not painted with his wife as a pair, but with his son, the co-ruler — Young King Dušan.²¹ The two known portraits of Dušan’s successor, the last Serbian em-

peror, Uroš, lead to the conclusion that during his reign, too, it was not the custom to portray the woman ruler beside the sovereign in the endowments of their subjects.²² In this regard, it is interesting to note that the legal documents of Emperor Uroš, unlike the charters of Stefan Dušan, contained no mention of the ruler’s wife. Neither was she mentioned in Uroš’s charters issued immediately after their marriage, nor in later ones. This quite clearly testifies to the fact that Uroš’s wife was completely isolated from the political life of the empire, which was slowly falling apart. Moreover, the influence of the emperor himself was not much greater in certain parts of the Serbian empire.²³ Therefore, it is not surprising that Uroš’s portraits were omitted from the painting programme in the endowments of certain noblemen (Church of St. John the Theologian in Zemen, Church of the Virgin in Sušica, Church of the Virgin on the island of Mali Grad in the Great Prespa Lake, etc).

Another convincing argument that rules out the assumption that the representations in Lipljan could be portraits of Uroš and his wife is the appearance of the painted

¹⁴ Vojvodić, *Ukrštena dijadima i “torakion”*, 259–267.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 250–259.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 267–273.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 262–266.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 272–273.

¹⁹ D. Vojvodić, *Srpski vladarski portreti u manastiru Duljevu*, *Zograf* 29 (2002–2003) 149.

²⁰ Radojčić, *Portreti*, sl. 31, 34, 37, 39, 71; D. Vojvodić, *Donor portraits and compositions*, in: *Hilandar monastery*, ed. G. Subotić, Belgrade 1998, 257 and figures on pages 252, 256.

²¹ D. Vojvodić, *Personalni sastav slike vlasti u doba Paleologa. Vizantija — Srbija — Bugarska*, *ZRVI* 46 (2009) 426–429.

²² C. Grozdanov, *Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo XIV veka*, Beograd 1980, 123, crt. 30; I. M. Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele u doba Nemanjića*, Beograd 1994, 173, sl. 26, 27. F. Kämpfer endeavoured to explain the absence of the Serbian empress’ portrait in Psača. Cf. F. Kämpfer, *Die Stiftungskomposition der Nikolauskirche in Psača — Reichentheoretische Beschreibung eines politischen Bildes*, *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 10/2 (1974) 55.

²³ R. Mihaljčić, *Kraj srpskog carstva*, Beograd 2001, 39–205.



Fig. 3. Lipljan, portrait of a ruler on the western façade



Fig. 4. Lipljan, portrait of a woman ruler on the western façade

ruler. Emperor Uroš was married in the summer of 1360, to Anča (Anka), the daughter of the Wallachian duke, Alexander Besaraba.²⁴ He was already 23 or 24 years old at the time and, on the portrait in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, created when he was 27 or 28, Uroš is depicted with a characteristically long and thick beard, covering his neck.²⁵ He also has a strong beard, parted into two locks that fall on his chest, on the portrait in Psača. This portrait was once categorically dated to the period after 1365, and before September 26th, 1371. In more recent times, the view was put forward that it was created a little earlier, before the marriage of Emperor Uroš, i.e. between 1358 and 1360.²⁶ One should also remark that both portraits of the emperor Uroš depict the ruler wearing a loros of simple, not crossed form.

One must also dismiss the possibility that in Lipljan, Uroš was painted before his marriage, while he was still a very young ruler, in the company of the empress-mother Jelena. It is well-known that Jelena was never regent to the emperor Uroš (born in 1336/1337), who was already an adult by the time of Dušan's death (20. December 1355). In the early years of her widowhood, she retained a certain amount of political influence, but it was limited to the parts of the state which were under her direct control.²⁷ She governed the great principality of Serres and the trading centres (*trgovci*) on the Serbian Maritime land (Zeta), and was not considered as the ruler of the entire state. In the charters he issued until the end of the 1350s, as the supreme ruler, Uroš mentioned his mother only in the context of legal activities that concerned the areas under her control — the principality of Serres and the Maritime land.²⁸ Similarly, the joint mentions of the young emperor and his mother as rulers are found solely in the contemporary, written monuments of the principality of Serres.²⁹ Besides, the opinion accepted in scholarly circles

is that Dušan's widow Jelena very quickly exchanged the imperial robe for a monastic one. She assumed her monastic name, Jelisiveta, probably some time in the first four months of 1356.³⁰ Perhaps this took place on April 24th, on the day of St. Jelisiveta, which was on Easter Day in 1356.³¹ One

²⁴ Cf. K. Jireček, *Srpski car Uroš, kralj Vukašin i Dubrovčani*, Zbornik Konstantina Jirečeka, I, Beograd 1959, 357; S. Ćirković, *Kralj u Dušanovom zakoniku*, ZRVI 33 (1994) 158. There are different opinions about the data, presented by Mavro Orbini, that the Serbian emperor later married the daughter of Vojislav Vojinović (cf. I. Ruvarac, *Kraljice i carice srpske*, in: *Zbornik Ilariona Ruvarca. Odabrani istorijski radovi*, I, Beograd 1934, 28–30; Mihaljčić, *Kraj srpskog carstva*, 78–79).

²⁵ Grozdanov, *Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo*, 121–123, crt. 30; G. Subotić, S. Kisas, *Nadgrobnni natpis sestre despota Jovana Uglješe na Menikejskoj gori*, ZRVI 16 (1975) 174–178.

²⁶ That portrait and the question of its dating were discussed in detail by Z. Rasolkoska-Nikolovska in her article: *O istorijskim portretima u Psači i vremenu njihovog nastanka*, Zograf 24 (1995) 39–43.

²⁷ G. Ostrogorski, *Serska oblast posle Dušanove smrti*, Beograd 1965, 3–6; Mihaljčić, *Kraj srpskog carstva*, 28–32; *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije*, VI, Beograd 1986, 559–560, n. 627 (S. Ćirković, B. Ferjančić).

²⁸ *Monumenta Serbica*, 153 (no. CXXXIV), 155 (no. CXXLI); *Actes de Chilandar*, II, 526 (no. 53); A. Solovjev, V. Mošin, *Grčke povelje srpskih vladara*, Beograd 1936, 202/203 (no. XXVIII); R. Mihaljčić, *Hrisovulja cara Uroša melničkom mitropolitu Kirilu*, Stari srpski arhiv 2 (2003) 85–97; idem, *Mletačke isprave cara Uroša*, Stari srpski arhiv 3 (2004) 71–87; M. Aleksandrovna Chernova, *Gramota Ćsarĭa Stefana Urosha Dubrovčanam o trgovle*, Stari srpski arhiv 8 (2009) 81–86; eadem, *Pis'mo Ćsarĭa Stefana Urosha Dubrovčanam*, Stari srpski arhiv 9 (2010) 87–92.

²⁹ Cf. Ostrogorski, *Serska oblast*, 4–5.

³⁰ Recently, Dj. Bubalo has presented the reasons to doubt that. Cf. Dj. Bubalo, *Falsifikovana povelja cara Stefana Uroša o Stonskom dohotku*, Stari srpski arhiv 2 (2003) 124–125.

³¹ B. Milutinović, R. Radić, *O vremenu zamonašenja carice Jelene. Jedna pretpostavka*, ZRVI 33 (1994) 195–201.



Fig. 5. Lipljan, head of a ruler

should assume that the empress spent some time in at least a symbolic novitiate before taking her vows, and extensive painting works were not usually done in the early months of spring. Therefore, by all accounts, in Lipljan, Dušan's widow could not have been painted next to the emperor Uroš, especially not in imperial robes. Admittedly, the assumption was put forward recently that in Psača, some time between 1358 and 1360, the empress Jelena was initially portrayed alongside of her son, but as the nun Jelisaveta. There, under the fresco layer with the image of King Vukašin, the remains of a figure were discovered, dressed, as it seems, in dark blue monastic robes³². This assumption, which is hard to accept, in our opinion, has yet to be submitted to serious scrutiny.

It is not certain if the subsequent successors of Serbian royal rule, the Mrnjavčević family, at all held the area of Priština with Lipljan.³³ If they did, this could have lasted only for a brief period, a few years. Besides, one must bear in mind that Uroš's co-ruler, King Vukašin, recognised the supreme authority of the Serbian emperor. Thus, Uroš's portrait would be expected alongside that of King Vukašin in the territory of Raška.³⁴ All the more so, considering that they were painted together in Macedonia (Psača). One must also note that, during the period of co-rulership, when he might have ruled Lipljan, King Vukašin was a very old man. His portraits from the Psača, Prilep and Markov Manastir depict an old man with completely grey hair and a long white beard,³⁵ quite different from the ruler depicted on the Lipljan fresco. The circumstances after the military disaster at the Maritza in 1371 rule out the basis for the assumption that King Marko is depicted in Lipljan. It is also very unlikely

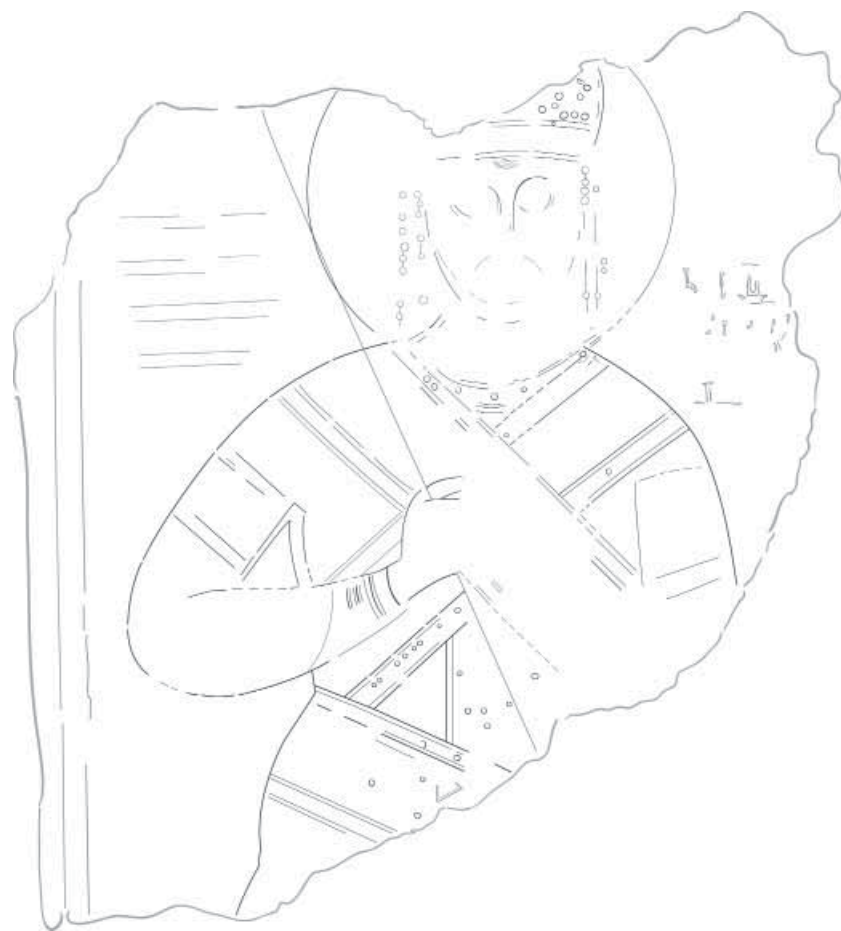


Fig. 6. Lipljan, portrait of a ruler; drawing by N. Krstić

that he truly ruled Priština, even for a brief period. In this regard, it is interesting to note that in the year of Vukašin's death, probably while Emperor Uroš was still alive, King Marko was depicted in a white *sakkos* — a sign of mourning — next to the entrance to the Holy Archangels in Prilep. Furthermore, he is depicted there with his father, not his wife.³⁶ The two of them were represented in the same way, next to the southern entrance to the Markov Manastir in 1376/1377.³⁷ Whatever the case may be, both portraits of Marko depict a dark-haired ruler with a long, voluminous beard. It is therefore certain that King Marko is not depicted on the façade of the Lipljan church. Finally, the dome-shaped crown on the head of the sovereign from Lipljan, and other insignia of the ruling couple, especially the woman's insignia, rule out the possibility that these are portraits of subsequent Serbian dynasts — the Lazarevićs and Brankovići.

Therefore, it can quite reliably be concluded that the portraits preserved on the façade of the Church of the Mother of God in Lipljan are those of Stefan Dušan and his wife Jelena. Almost regularly, the king and emperor Dušan was portrayed with his wife Jelena, as a pair, and, from the start

³² Rasolkoska-Nikolovska, *O istorijskim portretima u Psači*, 39–51.

³³ M. Dinić, *Oblast Brankovića*, Prilozi za književnost, jezik i folklor 26/1–2 (1960) 5–6; Mihaljčić, *Kraj srpskog carstva*, 130; idem, in: *Istorija srpskog naroda*, I, Beograd 1981, 590.

³⁴ The emperor Uroš issued a charter in Priština on 11 March, 1365. Cf. *Monumenta Serbica*, 171–173 (no. CLIII); R. Mihaljčić, *Hrisovulja cara Uroša Manastiru Hilandar u daru kaludjera Romana*, Stari srpski arhiv 5 (2006) 139–148.

³⁵ Radojčić, *Portreti*, 63, sl. 54; V. J. Djurić, *Tri događaja u srpskoj državi XIV veka i njihov odjek u slikarstvu*, ZLU 4 (1968) 87, sl. 16; Rasolkoska-Nikolovska, *O istorijskim portretima u Psači*, 49–50, sl. 21.

³⁶ Radojčić, *Portreti*, 62–64.

³⁷ Djurić, *Tri događaja*, 87–89, sl. 16.

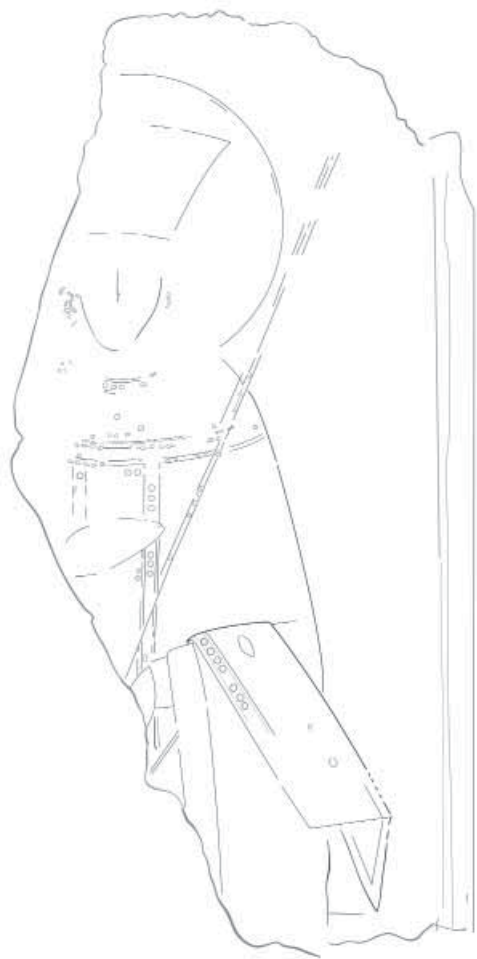


Fig. 7. Lipljan, portrait of a woman ruler, drawing by N. Krstić

of the 1340s, their son Uroš is depicted alongside of them. Other, less ambiguous testimony can be found in favour of the conclusion that the figures portrayed in Lipljan are Dušan and Jelena. For instance, the custom of painting the ruler's image and other portraits on the façades of Serbian churches has been followed since Dušan's time, when it was very widespread.³⁸ It was an old and well-known Byzantine practice. The most convincing parallel to the Lipljan solution is found in the painting of the façade of the Church of St. George in Pološko near Kavadarci. There, King Stefan Dušan, Queen Jelena and their son Uroš are portrayed in the second zone of the painting of the façade, around the bust of the patron, above the entrance to the church.³⁹ An appropriate solution was also implemented on the façade of the Church of St. Nicholas in Palež near Studenica. The images of the Serbian rulers, identified as Stefan Dušan and the members of his family, were painted in the second zone of the Palež church. They stood next to the lunette with a rendering of the saint to which the church was dedicated.⁴⁰ The portraits of King Dušan, Queen Jelena, their son Uroš and of Ohrid Archbishop Nikola are assembled around the image of the church patron above the entrance on the façade of St. Nicholas Bolnički in Ohrid.⁴¹ In Dušan's mausoleum, St. Archangels near Prizren, a similar iconographic solution was expressed in relief technique. The figures of Emperor Stefan Dušan and King Uroš in proskynesis are depicted in the lunette above the main portal, around the figures of the Virgin and the archangels.⁴²

The number of cited examples shows that the custom of placing ruler portraits on a church's façade, usually in the second zone of the painting, was carefully fostered dur-

ing the reign of Stefan Dušan. Still, it cannot be said that it was characteristic only of Dušan's time. The custom of depicting the portraits of rulers and the nobility on the façade, sometimes in the second zone, lasted in the Serbian medieval state for a certain period after the death of Emperor Dušan. However, it is possible to cite only a few monarchical portraits painted on façades, from those later times. Thus, the emperor Uroš was represented in the company of local aristocracy and clergy on the façade of St. Gregory's prothesis next to the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid.⁴³ Portraits of the members of the Mrnjavčević dynasty were painted next to the doorposts of the Holy Archangels in Prilep and above the southern entrance to the Markov Manastir.⁴⁴ Soon after that period, the custom was completely abandoned in Serbian art. Serbian churches from the period of the Lazarević and Branković dynasties do not have a single, even approximate analogy with the painting on the façade of the church in Lipljan. Like the positioning of the image of rulers in the second zone of the façade painting, another custom was introduced in the Serbian art of portraiture during the reign of Stefan Dušan. It was to significantly enlarge the dimensions of the figure of the supreme master of the state, in comparison with the surrounding figures. As in Lipljan, the portrait of the Serbian sovereign in Ljuboten, Pološko, Lesnovo and Mateič was obviously larger compared with the figure of his wife.⁴⁵ After the death of the emperor Dušan, this practice endured for an even shorter time than the previous one. Only one obviously enlarged representation of the ruler is known in the later Serbian art of the fourteenth century — the portrait of the emperor Uroš in Psača.⁴⁶

Perhaps one should point to another element in the ruler's image in Lipljan, which is characteristic of the portraits of Stefan Dušan. On some portraits of the first Serbian emperor, particularly on those in the narthex of Dečani and in Lesnovo, the ruler's *sakkos* shows the contours of the body more consistently than was usual in the Byzantine and Serbian depictions of monarchs. On these representations of Dušan, the volume of the chest and the protrusion of the hip, the curvature of which is outlined beneath the *sakkos*, are accentuated. Below the hip, the robe curves again, and then shows the rounded, tensed calf of the weight-holding leg.⁴⁷ It is this, manifoldly and strikingly undulating silhouette line of the body that is clearly visible on the left side of the ruler's portrait in Lipljan.

One written source also brings Stefan Dušan into direct connection with the Church of the Mother of God in Lipljan. King Dušan issued a charter, whereby the Church of the Mother of God in Lipljan was donated as a metochion to

³⁸ D. Vojvodić, *O vremenu nastanka zidnog slikarstva u Paležu*, Zograf 27 (1998–1999) 124–127, with a review of earlier literature.

³⁹ C. Grozdanov, D. Čornakov, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom*, I, Zograf 14 (1983) 60–66; idem, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom*, II, Zograf 15 (1984) 85–93.

⁴⁰ Vojvodić, *O vremenu nastanka zidnog slikarstva u Paležu*, 123–134, sl. 2–4.

⁴¹ Grozdanov, *Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo*, 54–58, crt. 7.

⁴² D. Popović, *Predstava vladara nad "carskim vratima" crkve Svetih arhandjela kod Prizrena*, Saopštenja 26 (1994) 25–35.

⁴³ Grozdanov, *Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo*, 121–123, crt. 30.

⁴⁴ Radojčić, *Portreti*, 62–64; Djurić, *Tri događaja*, 87–97, sl. 16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, sl. 42–44, 47–48, 73.

⁴⁶ Radojčić, *Portreti*, 61, sl. 51; Z. Rasolkoska-Nikolovska, *O istorijskim portretima u Psači*, 40, 49, sl. 1–2 (where additional explanations for the reduction of the scale of Vukašin's portrait are set forth).

⁴⁷ Radojčić, *Portreti*, 56, sl. 42; Vojvodić, *Portreti vladara, crkvenih dostojanstvenika i plemića*, sl. 8, 20; S. Gabelić, *Manastir Lesnovo. Istorijska i slikarstvo*, Beograd 1988, 168.



Fig. 8. a) Lipljan, St. Athanasius of Alexandria; b) Unjemir, Church of St. Peter, St. Joachim (?)

the Hrusia Tower near Hilandar.⁴⁸ The document, the authenticity of which is not contested, is not dated, so researchers date it differently. In our opinion, which was explained in detail in another paper, it is certain that the charter was issued between the start of 1336 and the end of 1344.⁴⁹ This time frame provides the *terminus ante quem* of the building of the church, but does not give an accurate basis for the more precise dating of the initial painting,⁵⁰ and for the portraits on the façade. The actual portraits, on the other hand, only provide the possibility for an approximate dating. They must have been painted between July 1332, when Dušan married Jelena,⁵¹ and December 20th, 1355, when he died. The damage to the portraits and to the accompanying inscriptions does not allow any kind of precise determination of the time when the façade was painted. It seems that in the field separated by borders, in which the Serbian ruling couple was painted, in the second zone of the façade of the Lipljan church, above the lunette, there was no room for other portraits. One may therefore think that Dušan and Jelena were painted without their only son — Uroš. This means that the initial paintings in Lipljan were done before the birth of Uroš in 1336/1337. Unfortunately, the wider programme context which the portraits of the Serbian rulers on the Lipljan façade belonged to, is completely unknown. The initial fresco mortar can be observed beneath the greatly damaged layer of paintings from the beginning of the seventeenth century, in the large blind niches on the sides of the façade, outside of the bordered field with the portraits of Dušan and Jelena.⁵² This proves that the older fresco painting of the façade expanded into these wide niches, to the windows at least, and that its programme was richer than it may look at first. Uroš could have been painted a little farther from his parents, as is the case on the façade of St. Nicholas Bolnički in Ohrid.⁵³ Therefore, one must be very cautious regarding the precise dating of the creation of the frescoes on the façade of the church in Lipljan.

It is quite certain that the initial frescoes on the Lipljan façade did not only extend upwards⁵⁴ and sideways, with re-

spect to the remains that now exist, but also descended to the ground-floor zone. Images of the saints were painted beneath the portrait of the ruler on the façade of the church of St. Nicholas in Palež.⁵⁵ On the other hand, beneath the portraits of the members of Dušan's ruling family, in Pološko and Lesnovo, the images of noblemen-ktetors were depicted.⁵⁶ For some reason, in the charter granting the Lipljan church to the Hrusia Tower, contrary to custom, there was no mention of the ktetor of the church.⁵⁷ King Dušan appeared as the sole donor although according to the contents of the charter it is certain that he did not build the Lipljan church. Some researchers considered the ktetor of the church, or the donor of its paintings, to be the person depicted in the naos, in a niche in the western section of the northern wall.⁵⁸ This was

⁴⁸ *Monumenta Serbica*, 120–124 (no. CXI); *Actes de Chilandar*; II, 451–455 (no. 24); *Spomenici za srednovekovnata i ponovata istorija na Makedonija*, I, Skopje 1975, 353–358.

⁴⁹ On the dating of that charter, an article was written, which is expected to appear in the *Hilandarski zbornik* No. 14.

⁵⁰ For a different opinion cf. R. Ljubinković, D. Djokić, S. Vučenović, A. Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi na crkvi Vavedenja u Lipljanu*, *Zbornik zaštite spomenika kulture* 10 (1959) 72–73, 91 (R. Ljubinković).

⁵¹ M. Purković, *Jelena žena cara Dušana*, Diseldorf 1975, 6–7.

⁵² For the opposite claim, issued before the removal of the upper fresco layer, cf. Ljubinković, Djokić, Vučenović, Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi*, 78, sl. 2 (R. Ljubinković).

⁵³ Grozdanov, *Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo*, crt. 7.

⁵⁴ The upper part of the fresco painting is cut off by the roof of the subsequently built narthex. On that narthex cf. Ljubinković, Djokić, Vučenović, Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi*, 109–110 (S. Vučenović).

⁵⁵ Vojvodić, *O vremenu nastanka zidnog slikarstva u Paležu*, 129, sl. 2.

⁵⁶ Grozdanov, Čornakov, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom*, I, 60–66; idem, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom*, II, 85–93; Gabelić, *Manastir Lesnovo*, 167–172.

⁵⁷ Radivoje Ljubinković attempted to resolve the problem. Cf. Ljubinković, Djokić, Vučenović, Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi*, 71, n. 9.

⁵⁸ Ljubinković, Djokić, Vučenović, Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi*, 83, 91, sl. 7 (R. Ljubinković); V. J. Djurić, *Vizantijske*



Fig. 9. Lipljan, St. Gregory the Theologian
(photo: Ivan M. Djordjević)

an unusually clad man of very small dimensions, shown as praying at the feet of a holy archpriest, probably St. Nicholas. So, he was not praying to the Mother of God, or to Christ through her mediation, as befitted the ktetor of a church dedicated to the Mother of God. In point of fact, the iconography of his portrait “stresses the act of praying and not the deed of donorship”.⁵⁹ All in all, it was not customary to represent ktetors in that way in the Serbian monumental painting of the Middle Ages. They were usually given much more space and significance in the painted programmes.

The singularly reduced dimensions and the place beside the feet of a holy person in Byzantine and especially in Serbian medieval art are more often a feature of the iconography of some other persons, who deserve less credit for the building or painting of a church.⁶⁰ Such portraits sometimes appear parallel to those of the ktetors. The portraits in the church of the Virgin on the island of Mali Grad in the Great Prespa Lake offer an interesting parallel to the Lipljan example. There, a monk, probably the *hegoumenos* Jonas, is depicted on a reduced scale, standing in an attitude of prayer beside the feet of St. Paraskeve.⁶¹ The donors of the church decoration, the caesar Voihna, the caesar’s wife Kali and their children are painted in the second zone of painting on the western façade.⁶² They are even larger than the Mother of God with the Infant Christ, to whom they are praying. Therefore, one may reasonably conclude that the unknown suppliant from the northern wall of the Lipljan church could have



Fig. 10. Lipljan, Incredulity of Thomas, Jesus Christ

been a person who was less significant for its construction or decoration, for instance, a benefactor. Perhaps the real donors were depicted on the opposite, southern wall, where the wall painting had crumbled away completely. However, it is more probable that they were represented on the façade, as in Pološko,⁶³ below the ruler’s portrait. In that way, the accent was placed on the hierarchy in the structure of earthly power, and the nobility expressed submission and allegiance to their suzerains.

On the basis of numerous, well-known examples, one can reliably conclude that the façades were not painted before the interior of the medieval churches.⁶⁴ Where it con-

freske u Jugoslaviji, Beograd 1974, 83; Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, 109, 153, crt. 28.

⁵⁹ Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, 109.

⁶⁰ A considerable number of these examples were collected by S. Cvetkovski, *Beleške iz Bogorodičine crkve na Malom gradu*, *Zograf* 34 (2010) 112–118. For the opinion that less significant contributors in the Bela crkva in Karan are depicted on a reduced scale, contrary to the actual ktetors, cf. D. Vojvodić, *O živopisu Bele crkve karanske i suvremenom slikarstvu Raške*, *Zograf* 31 (2006–2007) 140, n. 47.

⁶¹ Cvetkovski, *Beleške iz Bogorodičine crkve na Malom gradu*, 112, sl. 2, 3.

⁶² Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, 177, sl. 84, 85.

⁶³ Grozdanov, Čornakov, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom*, I, 60–66; idem, *Istorijski portreti u Pološkom*, II, 85–93, sl. 1.

⁶⁴ That practice is explained by G. Subotić and S. Kisas in their article: *Nadgrobnii natpis sestre despota Jovana Uglješe*, 176, 177. For the wall paintings on the façades of the Byzantine churches see in detail: M.



Fig. 11. Lipljan, Christ's Elevation on the Cross
(photo: Blago Archives)

cerns the Lipljan church, some additional, quite specific reasons must have influenced such an order in decorating the church. The outer side of the walls of the Church of the Mother of God in Lipljan consisted of a careful arrangement of stone and brick in cloisonné technique. That is plainly visible on most of the building, which was not rebuilt (fig. 1). The arches, blind niches and higher zones of the wall surface on the western façade were decorated with diagonally placed and rhythmically arranged bricks, separated by wide strips of mortar.⁶⁵ The tympana of the niches display the herringbone brick pattern used as a decorative fill in. That is why it is quite certain that, initially, there had been no intention to cover the Lipljan church façade with frescoes. The later applied layer of mortar with portraits of the Serbian ruling couple concealed from view the main ornament of the western façade — a band of bricks placed in relief, in a serrated fashion, framing and connecting the arches of the niches (fig. 1, 2).⁶⁶ This flagrant ignoring of the façade ornament could not have occurred before the painting of the whole church. The rulers' portraits and accompanying iconographic contents were painted on the façade only when it became clear that they would not be placed in the interior of the church. Hence, it emerges that the portraits were contemporary with the initial painting in the church or were done a little later.

The scanty remains of the painted layer seem to point to the conclusion that the rulers' portraits were the work of the painters who decorated the church interior. On Dušan's face, one observes the traces of accentuated dark rings under the eyes, and special accents of light around the eyes and on the nose (fig. 5), of the kind one encounters on the faces from the initial layer of painting in the altar and eastern sections of the naos.

Unfortunately, neither was the painting in the interior of the Lipljan church dated more accurately. In his time, based on a stylistic analysis of the frescoes and the parallel appearance of Serbian and Greek inscriptions, Vojislav J. Djurić concluded that the initial wall painting of Lipljan was done after 1375 or around 1380.⁶⁷ Ivan M. Djordjević had reason to doubt his opinion. He judged that the several-decade long period separating the time of erecting and painting the church, according to Djurić, was too long. Not one metochion of the Hilandar monastery had been left waiting to be painted for so long. Apart from that, Ivan Djordjević remarked that one could also notice the appearance of mixed, Greek-Serbian inscriptions in monuments dating from the first half of the fourteenth century. In Djordjević's view, the stylistic analysis could not offer completely reliable results because "the stratigraphy of the special 'expressionist trend' in Serbian fourteenth century painting had not yet been sufficiently studied". Nevertheless, based on the particular features of the painting, he was inclined to date the Lipljan painting to the mid-fourteenth century.⁶⁸ The discovery of the portrait of Stefan Dušan and his wife Jelena on the church façade provide credible proof of the views of Ivan Djordjević.

In contrast to the classicistic approach, and even coexisting with it, in Serbian monumental painting, the so-called expressionistic trends can already be found during the fifth decade of the fourteenth century. The tides and development trends of that "expressionism" are distinguishable thanks to a whole series of monuments. One should certainly mention the painting of the narthex and southern nave of Treskavac (c. 1340), the space beneath the dome of Lesnovo (c. 1342), the Church of St. Nicholas in Čelopek (c. 1342), certain sections of St. George in Pološko (1343–1345), the exonarthex of Djurdjevi stupovi in Budimlje (1343–1345), the western pilasters with the arch above them in the Holy Apostles in Peć (1338–1345), the narthexes of the Pantokrator church in Dečani (1343–1347), and the Church of St. Athanasios in Lešak (c. 1350).⁶⁹ To this series one should add the earli-

A. Orlova, *Naruzhnye rospisi srednevekovykh khramov. Vizantiĭa. Balkany. Drevnĭaĭa Rus'*, Moskva 2002.

⁶⁵ The carefully and skillfully built façades of the church in Lipljan were even then described by Sir Arthur Evans, who thought that the church originated in the Pre-Slavonic period (Evans, *Antiquarian researches*, 66, fig. 35). For the thorough analysis of the articulation and decoration of the Lipljan façades cf. S. Ćurčić, *Two examples of local building workshops in fourteenth-century Serbia*, *Zograf* 7 (1977) 48–51.

⁶⁶ Ljubinković, Djokić, Vučenović, Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi*, 78, sl. 2.

⁶⁷ Djurić, *Vizantijske freske*, 83.

⁶⁸ Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, 54–57, 152–153.

⁶⁹ About "expressionistic" paintings in the itemized churches cf. S. Gabelić, *Jedna lokalna slikarska radionica iz sredine XIV veka. Dečani — Lesnovo — Markov manastir — Čelopek*, in: *Dečani i vizantijska umetnost sredinom XIV veka*, ed. V. J. Djurić, Beograd 1989, 367–377; V. J. Djurić, S. Ćirković, V. Korać, *Pečka patrijaršija*, Beograd 1990, 210–213, sl. 132–135 (V. J. Djurić); Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, 54–57; I. M. Djordjević, D. Vojvodić, *Zidno slikarstvo spoljašnje priprate Djurdjeviĥ stupova u Budimlji kod Berana*, *Zograf* 29 (2002–2003) 174–179; B. Todić, M. Čanak-Medić, *Manastir Dečani*, Beograd 2005, 496–500 (B. Todić); S. Gabelić, *Prvobitno slikarstvo crkve Sv. Nikole u Čelopeku kod Tetova*,



Fig. 12. Lipljan, Annunciation, Archangel Gabriel (photo: Blago Archives)

est frescoes of the Church of the Mother of God in Lipljan. They are heavily damaged and preserved only in part. Still, according to many artistic features, the initial Lipljan wall painting is comparable to the achievements by some artists in the above listed monuments. What all those artists have in common is a tendency towards robust, voluminous figures of strong bodies, tense to a considerable degree, with striking, slightly deformed physiognomies, and accentuated rings under the feverishly staring eyes and a network of accents of light on the incarnate. Older persons are depicted with deep wrinkles that divide the forehead and cheeks into segments (fig. 9). They usually have elongated, bulbous, curved noses, divided, as it were, into lobes, and the grey strands of their hair and beards are in restless, almost whirling movement. An impressive example of such an artistic approach can be seen in the image of St. Athanasius of Alexandria on the southern wall of the altar space in Lipljan (fig. 8a), who was erroneously identified as St. Blasios.⁷⁰ However, one should not lose sight of the fact that the colouring in the Lipljan frescoes is significantly changed. Since the palette of colours is reduced, due to the heat effects of some fire long ago, and the contrasts of the tones are overstated by the darkening of certain colours and the loss of the finer transitions in the modeling, the frescoes in Lipljan acquired an additional “expression” that was not original.

A certain similarity was observed a long time ago between the representations of the officiating archpriests in Lipljan and the images of the monks painted in the lowest zone

of the Dečani narthex.⁷¹ It seems that the face of the Jesus Christ from the Incredulity of Thomas (fig. 10) or the executioner in Christ’s Elevation on the Cross (fig. 11) in Lipljan correspond more closely to some faces from Lesnovo, Lešak and the Dečani *Menologion* than to those from Kučevište.⁷² By its other elements, the remains of the scene of Christ’s Elevation on the Cross from the Lipljan church bring to mind the details of the calendar scenes of Dečani, too. In the two mentioned monuments, the shaping and modeling of the naked bodies of the martyrs are very similar, as are the overstated poses and movements of the participants in the scenes, as well as the manner of draping their garments. In Lipljan,

in: *Vizantijski svet na Balkanu*, II, ed. B. Krsmanović, Lj. Maksimović, R. Radić, Beograd 2012, 481–499.

⁷⁰ Ljubinković, Djokić, Vučenović, Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi*, 81 (R. Ljubinković); Djurić, *Vizantijske freske*, sl. 90; Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, 153. St. Blasios had to be depicted with a long, pointed beard. However, the representation of the saint in Lipljan that we refer to has a fan-like beard. St. Athanasios of Alexandria and St. Gregory the Theologian are almost regularly depicted with such a beard in the representation of the Officiating Church Fathers. The image of St. Gregory, who is commonly portrayed as a bald man, is identified undoubtedly on the northern part of the eastern wall of the bema in Lipljan (Ljubinković, Djokić, Vučenović, Tomašević, *Istraživački i konzervatorski radovi*, 80).

⁷¹ Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele*, 55–56.

⁷² For the typological and stylistic links between the painted figures in Lipljan and Kučevište cf. *ibidem*, 56. Regarding the similarities of mentioned depictions in Lipljan with those in Lesnovo, Lešak and Dečani cf. Gabelić, *Jedna lokalna slikarska radionica*, fig. 3, 10, 23.



Fig. 13. Lipljan, Annunciation, Archangel Gabriel, detail

the rocks of Mount Golgotha, to some extent, resemble the rocky landscapes in the background of the scenes depicted in the Dečani narthex.

Still, typologically and in the way the painting was executed, one can find slightly closer parallels to the images from the Lipljan church of the Mother of God. This refers to the initial painting from the Church of St. Peter near Unjemir, a less known monument in Metohia, not very far from Lipljan.⁷³ According to the shape and drawing of the bulbous, curved nose with pronounced lobes, the arched line painted on the cheek, the way in which the rings under the eyes are emphasised and accents of light are executed, one can notice a great similarity in the image of St. Athanasius from Lipljan and the image of a righteous man from the Old Testament (St. Joachim), until recently only preserved in Unjemir (fig. 8, 14). The resemblance is so strong that one should not exclude the likelihood that the same painter did both of the representations. Or, at least, we may be dealing



Fig. 14. Unjemir, Church of St. Peter, St. Joachim (?) (photo: Blago Archives)

with two artists who belonged to the same painting workshop. Judging by the very high artistic values of its achievements, this workshop did not have a narrow, local character. The painting of the ruins of St. Peter in Unjemir was dated on the basis of the stylistic features, to around the mid-fourteenth century.⁷⁴ In our view, too, the Unjemir frescoes came into being during the fifth decade of the fourteenth century, that is, circa 1350.⁷⁵ As they were very near each other, it becomes quite plausible that the churches in Lipljan and Unjemir were painted by the same workshop of painters within a relatively short span of time in the mid-fourteenth century.

Unfortunately, the wall painting of the Church of St. Peter in Unjemir was even more damaged than that of the Lipljan church. Not one scene has been preserved in the higher zones of the Unjemir church which could offer a foundation for broader comparisons. Some scenes in the higher zones in

⁷³ For this monument cf. B. Todić, *Crkva Sv. Petra kod Unjemira*, *Starine Kosova* 9 (1989–1990) 5–32, with a review of earlier literature.

⁷⁴ Todić, *Crkva Sv. Petra kod Unjemira*, 30.

⁷⁵ As for dating those frescoes, it is very instructive to compare the depiction of St. Joachim from Unjemir with the very similar one of St. Mark the Evangelist in Lesnovo (c. 1342). Cf. Gabelić, *Jedna lokalna slikarska radionica*, fig. 11.

Lipljan, however, demonstrate the need and ability of their creators to express a classicistic creed besides an “expressionistic” one.⁷⁶ This particularly refers to the remains of the representation of the Annunciation on the eastern wall of the altar space. Although the Archangel Gabriel is depicted in lively motion, with strikingly dynamic contrasts of light and shade on the folds of his robes, the position and shape of the herald’s figure are rendered with unequivocally classicistic inspiration (figs. 12 and 13). The deformation and stylisation of the forms are almost completely restrained. The artist demonstrated classicistic principles and knowledge in many elements of that part of the Annunciation. They can be recognised in the manner in which the well-developed architectural setting is introduced and drawn, in the persuasiveness and spontaneity of the archangel’s movement, the roundness of the ample forms, and in the balance of the verticals, hor-

izontals and diagonals in the composition. It refers to the original and lively classicism that did not decline into the lifelessness of academism but was awakened by certain “expressionistic” elements and temperament. The classicistic balance was even more evident on the picture before its colour was thermically changed. All this additionally confirms the conclusion that the Lipljan fresco-painting was created around the mid-fourteenth century, at the very time when the still lively classicistic trends in Serbian painting were being interwoven with a new expressionistic approach. At the same time, one discovers the particular breadth of artistic knowledge and great artistic skill of the painters who decorated the Church of the Mother of God in Lipljan.

⁷⁶ The classicistic traits are more obvious in the wall painting of the higher zones of the narthex in Djurdjevi stupovi in Budimlja; cf. Đorđević, Vojvodić, *Zidno slikarstvo spoljašnje priprate*, 174–179.

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Новооткривени владарски портрети и датовање старијих фресака у Липљану

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Током јесени 2009. и пролећа 2010. године очишћено је, санирано и презентовано зидно сликарство из XIV, XVI и XVII века у цркви Ваведена Богородичиног у Липљану, недалеко од Грачанице. Том приликом откривени су на фасади цркве, изнад улаза у храм, остаци првобитног сликарства. Новооткривене представе веома су оштећене, углавном сведене на основни цртеж, изведен мрком бојом и помоћу оштрог предмета у свежем малтеру. Сликани слој сачувао је ипак довољно података за веродостојно препознавање насликаних личности. Разматрање особености њихових физиономија и инсигнија, односно програмског места представа и начина на који су насликане, води закључку да је реч о портретима српског владара Стефана Душана и његове супруге Јелене. Управо је краљ Душан између 1336. и краја 1344. издао повелу којом се Богородичина црква у Липљану са имањима поклања хиландарском пиргу Хрусији. Нажалост, шири програмски контекст којем су припадали владарски портрети на липљанској фасади није познат. Није извесно ни то да ли је крај Душана и Јелене био насликан њихов син Урош, рођен 1336/1337. Стога се новооткривени портрети на фасади могу поуздано поставити само у доста широк хронолошки оквир. Они су настали након јула 1332. године, када се Душан оженио Јеленом, а пре 20. децембра 1355, када је преминуо.

Извесни стилски елементи оштећених портрета на фасади Богородичине цркве у Липљану указују на могућност да је те владарске ликове извео сликар који је украсио и унутрашњост цркве. У сваком случају, портрети су морали настати кад и првобитно сликарство у храму или убрзо након њега. Веродостојну потврду добија стога мишљење да је занимљиво „експресионистичко“ сликарство у источном делу липљанске цркве изведено знатно пре 1375, а не после те године, како су неки од

истраживача сматрали. Ликовне особености првобитног живописа у Липљану заиста одговарају токовима српског и византијског сликарства из средине XIV века. По свом „експресионизму“ липљанско сликарство блиско је живопису припрате и јужног брода Трескаваца, поткуполног простора Леснова, Светог Николе у Челопеку, појединих делова Светог Ђорђа у Полошком, егзонартекса Ђурђевих ступова у Будимљи, западних пиластара с луком над њима у Светим апостолима у Пећи, припрате Пантократорове цркве у Дечанима и Светог Атанасија у Лешку. Сва наведена сликарска дела повезује склоност ка робустним, волуминозним фигурама снажних тела у извесном напону, са изразитим, помало деформисаним физиономијама, наглашених подочњака, ужарених погледа и с мрежом светлосних акцената на најосветљенијим деловима инкарната. Старије особе представљане су с дубоким борама које деле чела и образе у сегменте. Оне обично имају подуже меснате и извијене носеве подељене у режњеве, а седе власи њихове косе и браде у немирном су покрету, готово усковитлане. Ипак, ликовима из липљанске Богородичине цркве најближа паралела, типолошки и по начину обраде, може се пронаћи у старијем сликарству цркве Светог Петра код Уњемира. Реч је о мање познатом споменику у Метохији, не много удаљеном од Липљана. То сликарство, с правом датовано у средину XIV века, вероватно је дело сликарске дружине која је радила у Липљану. Поједине сцене у вишим зонама у Липљану откривају пак способност својих творца да искажу, уз „експресионистичка“ схватања, и она класицистичка. То даје додатну потврду закључку да липљански живопис настаје у временима око средине XIV века, управо онда када се још живи класицистички токови у српском сликарству преплићу с новим, „експресионистичким“ приступом.

