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СРПСКЕ АКАДЕМИЈЕ НАУКА И УМЕТНОСТИ

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## WARRIOR SAINTS AT NEREZI – THE SELECTION OF FIGURES AND OTHER REMARKS ON THEIR ICONOGRAPHY\*

The paper deals with the figures of warrior saints in the nave of the Church of St. Panteleimon in Nerezi. Within this group of saints, in addition to the most famous, easily recognizable ones, there are also those warriors on the identity of which scholars have expressed different opinions. Based on the iconographic analysis, the depictions of the saints in question are identified in the article. The figures of some military saints in Nerezi are also analyzed in the broader context of their representation in the art of the Byzantine cultural sphere. In addition to the above, attention is paid to the specific way of grouping the Nerezi warriors, as well as to two different iconographic models of depicting its members.

*Keywords:* Nerezi, warrior saints, iconography, Byzantine art, wall painting, 12<sup>th</sup> century

The wall paintings in the Church of St. Panteleimon in the village of Nerezi near Skopje, whose construction in 1164 was funded by the Byzantine aristocrat Alexios Angelos Komnenos, grandson of Emperor Alexios I (1081–1118), have long been known as one of the most important achievements of 12<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine art. Almost a century ago, Nikolai Lvovich Okunev introduced the international academic public to those unique frescoes after having discovered previously unknown sections of the original murals beneath the paintings executed on the walls of the Church of St. Panteleimon in 1885.<sup>1</sup> This significant discovery had a strong impact in academic circles. The awareness of the extraordinary

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<sup>1</sup> Okunjev, *Stari srpski živopis*, 38–39; *idem*, *Manastir u selu Nerezi*; *idem*, *La découverte*; *idem*, *Les peintures*.

stylistic merit of the painters of the Nerezi frescoes grew in time, and at first, scholars mostly focused on the artistic features of their works, held in high regard in the history of Byzantine and, more generally, medieval art.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the thematic repertoire of the Nerezi wall paintings, as an ensemble, was largely neglected for a long time, although Okunev noted certain interesting features in some of its segments. Almost half a century ago, shortly after the completion of the first restoration-conservation works on these frescoes,<sup>3</sup> Horst Hallensleben and Richard Hamann-Mac Lean were the first to compile an exhaustive overview of their iconographic contents.<sup>4</sup> However, it was not until several decades later that the Nerezi wall paintings were subjected to systematic research in a monograph published by Ida Sinkević in 2000. Based on the author's doctoral dissertation defended at Princeton University six years earlier, the book, in addition to the architecture and sculpture of the church, discusses its earliest murals and the later fresco layer (second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). It minutely analyzes the programmatic structure of the oldest frescoes, considers their iconographic characteristics and assesses their stylistic features in a broader comparative perspective.<sup>5</sup> Then, the original wall paintings at Nerezi were the subject of two more doctoral dissertations. In 2004, almost concurrently with the publication of the drawings of the Nerezi frescoes,<sup>6</sup> Donka Bardžieva-Trajkovska published a monograph on the wall paintings in the Church of St. Panteleimon. This book is particularly valuable in the research of the thematic program because the author attempts to name the saints whose identity remained unresolved in earlier research and to provide a more in-depth exploration of the repertoire of the wall paintings in the narthex, where some remnants of the cycle of the patron saint have survived.<sup>7</sup> Very recently, Olga Ovčarova published another monograph on the Nerezi murals.<sup>8</sup> This extensive, richly illustrated book provides a detailed

<sup>2</sup> For a critical overview of the research of the Nerezi frescoes in the first fifty years following their discovery see Đurić, *Vizantijske freske*, 182–183, n. 8. For a bibliography of the papers on the subject up to 1989 see Vitlarski, *Bibliografija*.

<sup>3</sup> The first round of conservation works lasted from 1955 to 1960 (cf. *Spirovski*, *Konzervatorske radovi*); they continued in the following two decades after the church suffered damage in a devastating earthquake that struck Skopje in 1963, cf. *idem*, *Konzervatorski intervencii*. The most recent conservation-restoration interventions at Nerezi were made in the 1990s.

<sup>4</sup> *Hallensleben, Hamann-Mac Lean*, *Die Monumentalmalerei*, plan 6–7. Cyril Mango corrected several identifications of saints in his review of the book, cf. *Mango*, *Die Monumentalmalerei*, 439. Cf. also *Hamann-Mac Lean*, *Grundlegung*, 261–276.

<sup>5</sup> *Sinkević*, *The Church of St. Panteleimon*.

<sup>6</sup> *Nerezi. Crteži na freski*.

<sup>7</sup> *Bardžieva-Trajkovska*, *St Panteleimon at Nerezi*. The book is an expanded version of the author's doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Skopje in 2004. Bardžieva-Trajkovska had previously written about the Nerezi frescoes in several papers: *eadem*, *Za tematskata programa*; *eadem*, *Dogmatskiot aspekt*; *eadem*, *New Elements*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ovčarova*, *Freski Nerezi*. The monograph is based on the author's doctoral dissertation defended at the Moscow State University M. V. Lomonosov in 2018. The results of Ovčarova's years-long research have also appeared in several papers: *eadem*, *Obrazy monakhov i gimnografov*; *eadem*, *Images of the Holy Hymnographers*; *eadem*, *Obraz apostol'skogo tselovaniia*; *eadem*, *Freski Nerezi. Obraz i stil'*; *eadem*, *Tri tipa*; *eadem*, *Istoriia izucheniiia*; *eadem*, *Stil' Nerezi*; *eadem*, *Nerezi*.



examination of the artistic features of the earliest Nerezi frescoes and analyzes their iconographic content. The author supplemented the available material for some segments of the program, also offering some thought-provoking interpretations of its ideational underpinnings.<sup>9</sup>

Although research of the iconographic program of the murals in the Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi was undertaken several times in the last two or so decades, it can still be added to in some aspects. This paper will focus on an important group of saints in the naos:<sup>10</sup> the figures of warriors in the first zone of the western bay. This group warrants a reinvestigation due to the different opinions expressed in scholarly literature about the identity of some of its members. The doubts and uncertainties concerning this fundamental problem are the result of the lack of accompanying inscriptions and the fact that these figures have yet to be subjected to a more detailed iconographic analysis. However, once we place these intriguing representations – which, in some cases, display not entirely standard typological characteristics – in an appropriate comparative framework, they can be identified with a fair degree of certainty. Furthermore, in regard to their iconography and even their very appearance, it seems sensible to take a closer look at some already identified holy warriors as examples that can provide a reference point in the history of representing these saints in (Middle) Byzantine art. A more in-depth consideration of the military saints shown at Nerezi, in other words, offers an opportunity to draw attention to some infrequently used and under-researched variants of their visual representations and to offer a clearer placement of some of them in the art of the Byzantine cultural sphere, particularly in wall painting. Hence, an attempt to accurately identify the members of the warrior saint “cohort” in the naos of St. Panteleimon is important not only as a contribution to our knowledge about the thematic repertoire of this valuable Komnenian monument but also, at least to an extent, as a contribution to the research of the iconography of this category of saints in general.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Besides the three scholarly monographs, the church at Nerezi was also the topic of some publications intended for a wider circle of readers (cf. *Miljković-Pepek*, *Nerezi*; *Dimitrova*, *The church of Saint Panteleimon*); recent publications on the Post-Byzantine frescoes and icons in the church include *Popovska-Korobar*, *Ikonite*, 233–235 (no. 34–35); *Mašnić*, *Friz svetitelja*; *Božinovski*, *Postvizantiskoto slikarstvo*.

<sup>10</sup> It should be said here that the representations of some groups of saints at Nerezi were discussed in special studies. In her book on the representations of holy monks in Byzantine wall painting, Svetlana Tomeković included the figures of this type of saint at Nerezi, which she had already discussed in some earlier papers, *Tomeković*, *Les saints ermites et moines*, 2011, 262 et passim. Besides Olga Ovčarova (cf. n. 8 supra), Nancy Patterson Ševčenko has recently taken an interest in the images of holy hymnographers at the Church of Saint Panteleimon, cf. *Ševčenko*, *Five Hymnographers in Nerezi*. Finally, the Nerezi depictions of holy physicians were considered by Tatjana Starodubcev in her works on the cult and visual portrayals of this distinctive type of saint, cf. *Starodubcev*, *Lekar i čudotvorac*, 26, sl. 2; *eadem*, *Sveti lekari*, 2018, 83–84, 113–114, 121, 124, 150, 158, 157, 169.

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that images of the warrior saints have also survived in the northwestern domed room of the Nerezi katholikon. Here, St. Orestes, one of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, is shown as a soldier, and St. Menas of Egypt and St. Alexander of Thessalonike (?) as “regular martyrs,” cf. *Sinković*, *The Church of St. Panteleimon*, 72, fig. 72–73; *Ovcharova*, *Freski Nerezi*, 237–238, colour fig. 121, 123, 169–170. Those figures will not be discussed in this paper.

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Six warrior saints on the northern and southern walls of the western bay in the Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi were correctly identified a long time ago. The first zone of the southern wall features representative, frontal figures of three youthful soldiers: George, Demetrios and Nestor (Fig. 1). As their counterparts, Theodore Tyron, Theodore Stratelates and Prokopios appear on the opposite, northern wall, their bodies again in hieratic positions albeit with somewhat more varied movements (Fig. 2).<sup>12</sup>

The principle that guided the organization of this set of figures is by no means difficult to determine and interpret. Understandably, it includes the most renowned warriors – those whose presence was almost mandatory in collective images of saints from this category in Middle Byzantine art and later. They are George, Demetrios, Theodore Tyron, Theodore Stratelates and Prokopios. Intriguingly, the group does not include St. Merkourios, one of the six most venerated military saints in the Byzantine Empire, or Eustathios Placidas, who was also commonly shown in Middle Byzantine art.<sup>13</sup> Instead of one of these two, the group at Nerezi includes St. Nestor – ΝΕ<C>|ΤΩΡ<sup>14</sup>, a companion of St. Demetrios who, on behalf of the latter, fought against the imperial champion Lyaeos and was martyred after having defeated him in a duel.<sup>15</sup> However, although it was not particularly common for Nestor to be included, it was not an oddity either because his representation had already appeared in this programmatic context earlier, even in some first-rate works of Constantinopolitan art.<sup>16</sup> Due to the same number of shown saints, a notable example is a miniature from the psalter illuminated for Emperor Basil II (976–1025) and now kept

<sup>12</sup> The representations of St. George, Demetrios, Theodore Tyron and Theodore Stratelates were identified, with some reservations, in *Hallensleben, Hamann-Mac Lean, Die Monumentalmalerei*, Plan 6. II (no. 9–10), Plan 7. II (no. 17–18). The first to venture an identification of all six warrior saints was *Tomeković, Les répercussions*, 28, n. 23–27, but she erroneously believed that it was St. Merkourios and not Nestor who was shown with George and Demetrios. The correct identifications, brief descriptions and reproductions of the figures of the six warrior saints were provided in *Sinkević, The Church of St. Panteleimon*, 59–60, fig. LX, LV, 56–63. They were revisited by *Bardzieva-Trajkovska, St Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 70–72, fig. 46–48, 52–53, who groundlessly claims that St. Merkourios and not Prokopios was shown next to the two Theodores (for a debate on the subject cf. n. 62 infra). Cf. also *Nerezi. Crteži na freski*, 20–22; *Ovcharova, Nerezi*, 29; *eadem, Freski Nerezi*, 174, 281, colour fig. 88–89. The garments and military equipment of the Nerezi warrior saints were discussed in *Škrivanić, Oružje*, 43, 73, 78–79, 142, 143–144, *cl.* 80–81; *Marković, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 599, n. 260; *Parani, Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 118, 132; *Grotowski, Arms and Armour*, 143–144, 169, 221, 234, 269, 284; *Nelson, A Miniature Mosaic Icon*, 53, 56, 58.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Marković, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 591–593; *Walter, The Warrior Saints*, 101–108, 163–169.

<sup>14</sup> For the fragmentarily preserved inscription with the saint's name, slightly different from my reading, cf. *Nerezi. Crteži na freski*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> On the cult of St. Nestor, with a bibliography, cf. *Pravoslavnaia éntsiklopediia (=PE)* 49, 90–92.

<sup>16</sup> For the most exhaustive overview of St. Nestor's iconography: *ibid.*, 92–94 (*E. M. Saenkova, E. P. I.*).



Fig. 1. Nerezi, St. George, St. Demetrios, St. Nestor, St. Artemios, St. Niketas  
(photo: M. Živković)

at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice (Cod. Marc. gr. 17, fol. 3r), which contains the emperor's representative portrait surrounded by the busts of six holy soldiers. Judging by his physiognomy, one of them seems to be St. Nestor, shown below St. Demetrios. Unlike the group at Nerezi, this miniature includes St. Merkourios among the six warrior saints, but Theodore Tyron is missing.<sup>17</sup> Besides in illustrated manuscripts and objects of the applied arts, in which he was usually shown with St. Demetrios,<sup>18</sup> Middle Byzantine representations of St. Nestor have survived in some wall painting ensembles from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>19</sup> In monumental painting, too,

<sup>17</sup> Marković, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika, 592, n. 196, with an overview of the typological features of St. Nestor in Middle Byzantine art. For the reproductions of the miniature and a broader discussion of its iconography, including the earlier literature, cf. Stephenson, Images of the Bulgar-slayer, 45–57, fig. 1; *idem*, The Legend of Basil, 51 sqq, pl. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Der Nersessian, L'illustration, 46, fig. 204; Splendeur de Byzance, 180 (no. Br. 23); The Treasury of San Marco, 171, no. 19; Walter, The Warrior Saints, 227–228, pl. 1, 47, 67; El Menologio de Basilio II, 141; Duić-Serdar, Ilustracije, 76. Cf. also Koltsida Makrē, Μολυβδόβουλλα; Makarov, Zaiceva, Ikonka.

<sup>19</sup> Marković, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika, 592, n. 196, with examples and the relevant literature.





Fig. 2. Nerezi, St. Theodore Tyron, St. Theodore Stratelates, St. Merkourios and two unidentified martyrs (photo: M. Živković)

he was sometimes depicted together with the patron saint of Thessalonike, which seems to be the case in the Church of St. Sophia in Kiev<sup>20</sup> and the Palatine Chapel in Palermo, where he has slightly different facial features from the same saint in the Church of St. Panteleimon (Fig. 3).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it was already noted that, besides at Nerezi, St. George, St. Demetrios and St. Nestor appear next to each other in several other 12<sup>th</sup>-century churches. That is the case in the Cathedral of Cefalù in Sicily<sup>22</sup> and in another important monument of Komnenian art in Macedonia, the Church of St. Nicholas του Κασιντζη in Kastoria, frescoed in the second half of the century, where the arrangement of the three saints is only slightly different (Demetrios,

<sup>20</sup> Gerasimenko, Zakharova, Sarab'ianov, *Izobrazheniia sviatykh III*, 123, ill. 11.

<sup>21</sup> These are the busts of St. Nestor and St. Demetrios in the northern transept of the church, cf. *La Cappella Palatina*, 175–176, no. 225–226, 465. Theodore Tyron and Merkourios are shown together with them, cf. *ibid.*, 172–173, no. 223, 177, no. 227, 465.

<sup>22</sup> Demus, *Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, 13, pl. 7A. Cf. Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon*, 60.



Fig. 3. Palermo, Palatine Chapel, St. Nestor  
(after: La Cappella Palatina)

George, Nestor).<sup>23</sup> Finally, the figures of St. George, Demetrios and Nestor were grouped together in the Virgin's Church at Studenica (1208/1209), at least judging by the figures of these three saints on the restored fresco layer from 1568.<sup>24</sup>

The group of saints on the northern wall of the western bay in the naos at Nerezi follows the model that can be seen in other representative examples of Komnenian monumental art and even some later fresco ensembles. In other words, it is by no means difficult to find chronological and geographic analogies for the representation of the two Theodores with St. Prokopios. Those three saints are also shown one next to another in the churches of Kastoria, the abovementioned Church of St. Nicholas and the Church of the Holy Anargyroi.<sup>25</sup> The same triad was painted

<sup>23</sup> Pelekanidis, *Chatzidakis*, Kastoria, 52, (no. 17), 61, fig. 13. Cf. Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Živković, *Najstarije zidno slikarstvo*, 65 (no. 155–157), 212–216.

<sup>25</sup> Pelekanidis, *Chatzidakis*, Kastoria, 24, (no. 32–33, 45), 52 (no. 39–41).





Fig. 4. Nerezi, St. Artemios and St. Niketas (photo: M. Živković)

in the Virgin's Church of Studenica, on the southern wall of the space below the dome.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the figure of Prokopios follows behind Theodore Tyron and Theodore Stratelates in the Church of St. Nicholas and Panteleimon in Bojana (1259).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The representations of the two Theodores in the Studenica katholikon belong to the fresco layer from the 16<sup>th</sup>-century restoration and the heavily damaged figure of St. Prokopios to the original wall paintings (1208/1209), cf. Živković, *Najstarije zidno slikarstvo*, 66 (no. 167–169) 204, 206–207, 218. The arrangement of the figures of these three saints seems to have been repeated in Žiča, but again on the later fresco layer from the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, cf. Vojvodić, *Srednjovekovni živopis Žiče*, 88, 267 (no. 37–39).

<sup>27</sup> Penkova, *Obraz sviatosti*, 139.

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Besides the saints on the southern and northern walls, the group of warriors in the Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi includes at least two more figures. Admittedly, those two saints were not shown in military dress and with weapons but in tunics and chlamyses. There is no doubt, however, that the two figures on the southern half of the western wall, whose identity can be determined with almost complete certainty, albeit not without some effort, belong to the same category (Fig. 4).<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, we cannot rule out the possibility that the pair of martyrs on the opposite side of the same wall should also be added to the group of warrior saints (Fig. 2).<sup>29</sup> It is impossible to ascertain today whether this was indeed the case because their figures are heavily damaged. The figure on the left side, next to the entrance to the naos, is in better condition. Unfortunately, the left half of the halo is all that has survived of this saint's face, who holds a white martyr's cross in his right hand, and therefore any possibility of his identification has been lost forever. The figure of the martyr next to him has suffered even heavier damage, with only a fragment of the right hand and the lower half of the body still in existence.

Of the two soldier martyrs in the southern part of the western wall, the one on the left is easier to identify (Fig. 5). Horst Hallensleben and Richard Hamann-Mac Lean proposed that this was St. Artemios.<sup>30</sup> Donka Bardžieva-Trajkovska agreed with this view, basing her conclusion on the saint's facial features and the remnants of an inscription with his name.<sup>31</sup> Those remains are scarce indeed, but they are nonetheless informative enough to confirm the proposed identification. On the left side, the first two letters of the saint's epithet have survived – O A, as have the first two letters of his name – AP.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Millet, *Frolow*, La peinture du moyen âge I, pl. 20/2, already claimed that these were warrior saints; more recently, their programmatic link with the figures on the southern and northern walls was noted by Bardžieva-Trajkovska, *St Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 70–71, fig. 49–51; Ovcharova, *Freski Nerezi*, 282–283, colour fig. 9. On the other hand, Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon*, 60, pl. 19, fig. LIV, 59, minutely describes these two figures but does not discuss them in conjunction with the representations of the remaining warrior saints. Some distinctive characteristics of their clothing have been noted by Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 95.

<sup>29</sup> Bardžieva-Trajkovska, *St Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 70, already proposed that these were warrior saints. For a description and reproduction of the two images cf. Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon* 60, fig. LIV.

<sup>30</sup> Hallensleben, *Hamann-Mac Lean*, *Die Monumentalmalerei*, Plan 6. II (no. 12), Abb. 35. The two authors, however, did not rule out the possibility that this could be St. Sergios.

<sup>31</sup> Bardžieva-Trajkovska, *St Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 70, fig. 49, 51. She compares the image of St. Artemios with the depiction of the same saint in the Church of St. Nicholas at Manastir (1270/1271), cf. Kostovska, *Sveti Nikola Manastir*, 222–225, sl. 253. Cf. also Nerezi. *Crteži na freski*, 21 (no. 13), where the proposed identification has a question mark. The most recent monograph on the Nerezi murals also identifies this figure as St. Artemios, cf. Ovcharova, *Freski Nerezi*, 237, 282–283, colour fig. 9, ill. 61, 90.

<sup>32</sup> Different yet consistently inaccurate information about the inscription has been cited in the literature. Hallensleben, *Hamann-MacLean*, *Die Monumentalmalerei*, Plan 6. II (no. 12), propose a reconstruction of the legend as Ar[temios]. On the drawing published in Nerezi. *Crteži na freski*, 21 (no. 13), only the first letter of the saint's epithet appears, whereas Ovcharova, *Freski Nerezi*, 282, only mentions the first letter in the name of St. Artemios.



Fig. 5. Nerezi, St. Artemios (photo: M. Živković)

The figure of St. Artemios at Nerezi warrants a consideration in the context of the history of representing this megalomartyr of Antioch and wonderworker of Constantinople in Eastern Christian art. On one hand, this approach will help us to more clearly assess his appearance in the Nerezi group of warrior saints. At the same time, it will provide an opportunity to add to the evidence of his representations in Eastern Christian art, which have remained under-researched.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Entries on the iconography of St. Artemios in lexicographic publications contain a relatively short and incomplete list of his representations, cf. LcI 5, col. 253–254 (*U. Knoblen*); ODB I, 194–195 (*A. Kazhdan, N. Patterson Ševčenko*); PE 3, 457 (*V. E. Suslenkov*). That is also the case in the relevant chapter of the study on warrior saints in Byzantine art, cf. *Walter, The Warrior Saints*, 192–193. Walter does draw attention to several important representations of St. Artemios in 12<sup>th</sup>- and 13<sup>th</sup>-century wall paintings, drawing on the research published in *Marković, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 594, n. 212. For an attempt to compile a more exhaustive iconographic dossier for St. Artemios, particularly his representations in monumental painting, cf. *Živković, Najstarije zidno slikarstvo*, 186–188.



Based on relatively reliable historical sources, we know that St. Artemios was a *doux* in Alexandria during the reign of the Arian emperor Constantius II (337–361). The hagiographic texts report that he also served as the *augustalios*, i.e., prefect of Egypt. As a staunch Christian, St. Artemios, the sources inform us, was martyred in Antioch under Julian the Apostate (361–363).<sup>34</sup> Established shortly after his death, his cult was the strongest in Constantinople, especially in the Early Byzantine period. The saint's wonder-working relics, laid to rest in a crypt beneath the altar of the Church of St. John the Forerunner in the city quarter of Oxeia, were believed to have miraculous healing powers, described in a special miracle collection compiled between 658 and 668.<sup>35</sup> The said cultic text makes several references to representations of St. Artemios in the visual arts.<sup>36</sup> However, just one stand-alone Constantinopolitan work of art bearing his image has reached us: a relief icon dated to c. 1000.<sup>37</sup> Besides this icon, some of the Middle Byzantine illustrated manuscripts, mostly calendars (20 October), with miniatures of St. Artemios were produced in the Byzantine capital.<sup>38</sup>

Luckily, there are far more extant examples in wall painting. As far as I could determine, the earliest representation of St. Artemios in monumental wall painting has survived in the territory of ancient Georgia. It is located in the lower-level chapel of the two-story Church of Christ the Savior in the village of Laghami near Mestia, in the Upper Svaneti region, and its frescoes are usually dated from the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 6).<sup>39</sup> The full-length figure of St. Artemios is shown on the southern wall of the naos in this small church, in the first zone, between St. George and, most likely, one of the two Theodores. Like the two other soldiers, Artemios holds a spear in his hand and is dressed in armor with

<sup>34</sup> For the basic information on the cult and biography of St. Artemios cf. Syn. CP, col. 151–153; BHG I, 64–66; Auctarium BHG, 34–35; Novum auctarium BHG, 34–36; *Lieu*, From Villain to Saint; *Walter*, The Warrior Saints, 191–192; *Burgess*, The Passio S. Artemii.

<sup>35</sup> The Miracles of St. Artemios. Cf. *Kazhdan*, *Sherry*, Anonymous Miracles of St. Artemios; *Czepregi*, The Compositional History, 70–75 et passim; *Alwis*, Men in pain; *Euthimiades*, Collection of Miracles, 111–113; *Busine*, The Dux and the Nun, 93–111.

<sup>36</sup> The Miracles of St. Artemios, 16–17, 108/109, 162/163, 180/181. 176/177. Cf. *Mango*, On the History of the Temple, 42–43; *Weyl Carr*, Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage, 82.

<sup>37</sup> *Lehmann*, Ein Reliefbild des Heiligen Artemios. This is, in fact, a reworked antique relief, so the saint's image on it is not relevant for research of St. Artemios' iconography.

<sup>38</sup> El Menologio de Basilio II, 126; *Ševčenko*, Illustrated Manuscripts, 19, 56, 163, figs. 1A7, 1A9, 4E12, 6B9–1B10; *Duić-Serdar*, Ilustracije, 19, 74; *Vokotopoulos*, Ένα άγνωστο Μηνολόγιο, 172, εικ. 13; *Der Nersessian*, L'illustration des psautiers grecs, 26, fig. 56; Οι Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους II, 368–369, εικ. 331–332. The martyrdom of St. Artemios also appears on the menologion icon-hexptych from St. Catharine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, cf. *Galavaris*, An Eleventh Century Hexptych, 57, pl. 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Thierry*, Notes d'un voyage archéologique, 176–177, dates the frescoes to the late 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> century, a claim accepted by *Schrade*, Byzantium and its eastern barbarians, 196, fig. 11.12. *Kenia*, Upper Svaneti, 36–39, argues that the church was frescoed at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, *Evseeva*, Les peintures du rez-de-chaussée, who has done the most exhaustive stylistic analysis of the Laghami frescoes, believes that they were painted in the first quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 6. Laghami, Church of Christ the Saviour, St. Artemios (after: *Evseeva*, *Les peintures*)

a cloak draped over it.<sup>40</sup> St. Artemios is also featured, again in Georgia, in the Ateni Sioni Church, frescoed in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, possibly in the ninth decade.<sup>41</sup> His frontal figure is located in the second zone of the pilaster flanking, on

<sup>40</sup> *Evseeva*, *Les peintures*, 83, 84, fig. 2–4. This paper incorrectly reports the positions of the representations of St. Artemios and Theodore. For their accurate placement cf. the entry about the church in Laghami in the digital database of medieval Georgian wall painting compiled as part of a project implemented by the Institute of Art History and Theory of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University: <http://arthistory.tsu.ge/murals/painting/laghami-first-layer-of-murals-of-church-of-savior/> (accessed on 30 March 2022). The database includes the accompanying inscription –  $\text{P}(\text{C})\text{I}(\text{C})\text{C} \mid \text{C}\text{J}|\text{P}'\text{I}\text{C}'\text{I}$ . The same order is reported in *Schrade*, *Byzantium and its eastern barbarians*, 196, fig. 11.12.

<sup>41</sup> For the date when the church was painted cf. *Eastmond*, *Royal Imagery*, 45–49, 235–237. For a discussion of those frescoes in the broader context of the evolution of Eastern Christian painting, with the conclusion that the chief artist had direct knowledge of the leading trends in Byzantine and Constantinopolitan art, cf. *Mouriki*, *Observations*.



Fig. 7. Ateni, Sion, St. Artemios (after: *Virsaladze, Rospisi Atenskogo Siona*)

the west side, the southern conch in the naos of this monumental church (Fig. 7).<sup>42</sup> Once again, the Constantinopolitan miracle-worker wears armor and a cloak and holds a long spear in his right hand and a sword in his left. Depictions of St. Artemios as a soldier took a long time to appear beyond Georgia, although it is, of course, possible

<sup>42</sup> The representation of St. Artemios in Ateni has been reliably identified based on the accompanying inscription –  $\text{P}(\text{P}^{\text{I}}\text{D}\text{C})\text{D} \parallel \text{C}\text{J}\text{P}^{\text{I}}[\text{P}^{\text{I}}]$  – in the overview of the iconographic program of the church available at: <http://arthistory.tsu.ge/murals/painting/murals-of-church-of-ateni-sioni-second-layer/> (accessed on 30 March 2022). In the monograph *Вирсаладзе, Росписи Атенского Сиона*, таб. 94, the saint was incorrectly identified as St. Eusthatios.





Fig. 8. Asinou, Church of the Virgin Forbiotissa, St. Artemios (photo: G. Fousteris)

that there were some but did not survive into modern times. Judging by the available evidence, in other corners of the Byzantine cultural sphere, the saint seems to have been shown as a martyr, in a tunic and chlamys and often with a cross in his hand, well into the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Among those examples, the earliest representation is found on a fresco in the Church of St. Sophia in Kiev, painted in the fifth or sixth decade of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. St. Artemios is shown as a full-length figure on the inner northern gallery, with a few other well-known soldier martyrs.<sup>43</sup> Next, “portraits” of St. Artemios in several churches frescoed over the course of the following century belong to the same iconographic type. The earliest are the ones in two Cypriot

<sup>43</sup> Gerasimenko, Zakharova, Sarab'ianov, *Izobrazheniia sviatykh I*, 32–33 (no. 72), 55, ris. 34; Zakharova, *Images of Saints*, 300, 301 (no. 134).



Fig. 9. Kakopetria, Church of St. Nicholas, St. Artemios (photo: G. Fousteris)

monuments. At Panagia Forbiotissa in Asinou, Cyprus (1105/1106), his bust graces the arched surface above the northern portal of the naos, together with another warrior saint in patrician garments, St. Arethas, not far of the figures of the two Theodores in the first zone of the northern wall (Fig. 8).<sup>44</sup> In contrast, at St. Nicholas “of the Roof,” near the village of Kakopetria, on a fresco layer from the beginning of the same century, there is a full-length figure of St. Artemios in the first zone. However, it is not situated in the naos but on the southern wall of the narthex, quite far from the representations of warrior saints in the main part of the church (Fig. 9).<sup>45</sup> In the

<sup>44</sup> *Stylianou, Stylianou, The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 122; *Weyl Carr, The Murals*, 254. For a reproduction see *Ovcharova, Freski Nerezi*, ill. 92.

<sup>45</sup> *Stylianou, Stylianou, The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 62.

upper church of the Ossuary of the Bachkovo Monastery, the image of the famed Constantinopolitan miracle worker is also located in the narthex, but this space also features representations of other warrior saints shown as martyrs.<sup>46</sup> An even clearer programmatic communication of his bust with the other members of the same group of saints is found on the soffits of the arches in the naves of Palerman churches, the Palatine Chapel and the Martorana.<sup>47</sup> The same programmatic-iconographic association was strikingly realized in the iconographic program of Panagia Krena in Chios (1197), where the figure of St. Artemios appears on the southern wall of the naos, among other members of the soldier martyr group.<sup>48</sup> In Karşı Kilise (1212), Cappadocia, he is included in the rather selective “band” of warrior saints in the zone of standing figures, together with George, Demetrios and Prokopios, although he is the only one depicted without armor and weapons.<sup>49</sup> Finally, several monuments of 13<sup>th</sup>-century Serbian painting have also preserved representations of St. Artemios in a tunic and chlamys and in the company of other warrior saints, also shown as martyrs.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, in the programmatic context and iconographic form in which they appeared in Georgia as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century, as attested by the abovementioned examples from Laghami and Ateni, depictions of St. Artemios continued to be painted in this milieu even in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As an armed soldier, in the company of other celebrated warrior saints at prominent places in the main part of the church, he was likely shown in the Church of St. Nicholas

<sup>46</sup> This is a youthful, long-haired martyr, with only the last four letters of his name still legible (MIOC). The saint's figure can be discerned on a reproduction in the most recent book on the Bachkovo frescoes, although the work does not offer an identification, cf. *Ossuary of the Bachkovo Monastery*, fig. 85. I have proposed that this is St. Artemios in an earlier work (cf. *Živković*, *Najstarije zidno slikarstvo*, 187, n. 1143). At the time, I was not aware that Alexander Grishin had proposed the same identification in his doctoral dissertation on the Bachkovo frescoes, while also publishing the fragment of the saint's name: *Grishin*, *The Bačkovo Ossuary frescoes*, 104, 106–107, pl. 27.b. It bears mentioning, despite not being particularly relevant for the subject at hand, that the earliest frescoes of Bachkovo have yet to be securely dated, although they are generally believed to have been painted in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This chronological problem was discussed very recently in *Oreškaia*, *On the style*, with an overview of different opinions and the conclusion that the frescoes were most likely painted at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, although the possibility that this could have happened in the following century was not ruled out.

<sup>47</sup> La Cappella Palatina, 687, 888, no. 1291; *Kitzinger*, *The Mosaics*, 159, 281, (no. 39), fig. 64; *Marković*, *O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 594, n. 212.

<sup>48</sup> *Pennas*, *Panagia Krena*, 107–108, fig. 151 (no. 145), 244.

<sup>49</sup> *Jolivet-Lévy*, *Images et espace culturel*, 167, fig. 1, 5.

<sup>50</sup> At the Virgin's Church of Studenica, a depiction of St. Artemios has survived on the fresco layer from 1568, but there is very little doubt that it occupied the same spot – the second zone of the northeastern pilaster – in the original program (1208/1209), cf. *Živković*, *Najstarije zidno slikarstvo*, 64 (no. 136), 186–188. At Mileševa, his figure graces the same zone of the northeastern pilaster in the naos, cf. *Živković*, *Mileševa*, 20 (no. 15), 23. Together with St. George, Demetrios and Prokopios, St. Artemios was painted in the *parekklesion* of St. Stephen at Žiča, on the fresco layer from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which probably repeated the original 13<sup>th</sup>-century program, cf. *Vojvodić*, *Srednjovekovni živopis Žiče*, 112, 244 (no. 10), 272 (no. 10), sl. 180. For the hypothesis that St. Artemios was also featured in the katholikon of Sopoćani cf. *Tomčić*, *Zidno slikarstvo*, 258, 259.



in Kintsvisi (after 1207)<sup>51</sup> and certainly in the church of the Timotesubani Monastery (first quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>52</sup> That also seems to have been the case at the Church of Sts. Nicholas and Panteleimon in Bojana (1259),<sup>53</sup> and it was no doubt so in the Church of St. Nicholas Rhodias in Arta, frescoed in the second half of the century,<sup>54</sup> and in the abovementioned church dedicated to the same saint in the Macedonian village of Manastir.<sup>55</sup> In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., in the art of the high Palaiologan period and later, representations of St. Artemios as a warrior became more common throughout the Christian East.<sup>56</sup>

The above-presented overview of the representations of St. Artemios in the monumental painting of the Byzantine world from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries suggests that the inclusion of this saint in the group of holy warriors at Nerezi is not surprising in the least. That is also true of the placement of St. Artemios's image in the iconographic program of the church and its iconographic characteristics. By the time when Nerezi was frescoed, painting St. Artemios, in the first zone or some other prominent spot in the thematic repertoire and in direct programmatic conjunction with other warrior saints, had long become customary. Furthermore, besides Georgia, where early representations of St. Artemios as a soldier have survived, the saint was shown in other Eastern Christian areas in the same iconographic form as in Nerezi – in the costume of Byzantine courtiers – until the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. From the programmatic-iconographic perspective, a particularly important example for discussing the Nerezi image of St. Artemios is his representation at Panagia Forbiotissa in Asinou, although it is not located in the first fresco zone. In this Cypriot church, St. Artemios appears as a martyr, together with St. Arethas, whereas the other, more renowned warrior saints (St. Theodore Tyron and St. Theodore Stratelates) are shown in military garb and with weapons.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, at Karşı

<sup>51</sup> *Amiranashvili*, *Istoriā gruzinskogo iskusstva*, 227; *Tatarchenko*, *Rospis*, 92, 124, 132, ill. 1.42, 1.68, 1.83. For a dating of the frescoes in the church of St. Nicholas in Kintsvisi cf. *Eastmond*, *Royal Imagery*, 146–147. In the cited studies, St. Artemios was obviously identified based on his physiognomy as the inscription with his name has not survived. It should be noted that there is a possibility, however slight, that these are representations of St. Niketas, who was usually painted very similarly to St. Artemios. For the typological characteristics of these two warrior saints cf. *infra*. For the same reason, caution is advised when discussing an earlier Georgian example – the possibility that St. Artemios was painted in the Church of the Dormition at the monastery complex in Vardzia (1184–1185). The appearance of one warrior saint at this church matches his physiognomy, but it is equally possible that this was in fact St. Niketas: *Gaprindashvili*, *Vardzia*, fig. 123 (with no identification of the saint).

<sup>52</sup> *Privalova*, *Rospis' Timotesubani*, 98. Cf. *Marković*, *O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 594, n. 212.

<sup>53</sup> *Penkova*, *Obraz sviatosti*, 140–141, ill. 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Fundić*, *Zidno slikarstvo*, 89 (no. 38), 103.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. n. 31 *supra*.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Marković*, *O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 594, n. 212; *Walter*, *The Warrior Saints*, 193, n. 19, with the earlier literature.

<sup>57</sup> *Weyl Carr*, *The Murals*, 241–242, fig. 6.18. The figures of the two Theodores in Asinou belong to the 14<sup>th</sup>-century fresco layer but, judging by the remnants of earlier murals, it is almost certain that they were located in the same places in the original program.



Fig. 10. Nerezi, St. Prokopios (photo: M. Živković)



Kilise, St. Artemios was represented as a “regular” martyr, unlike the other warrior saints. Another example of remarkable comparative value is his figure in the first fresco zone at Panagia Krena in Chios, although all warrior saints in this church wear tunics and chlamyses, unlike at Nerezi. Finally, the depiction of St. Artemios in the Church of St. Panteleimon is a characteristic example of the saint’s typological features. The facial features he has in the foundation of Alexios Angelos Komnenos – long, neat, softly wavy hair parted in the middle and a short beard and mustache – reappear, with some minor, understandable variations, in the vast majority of the discussed examples, although, generally speaking, the Nerezi “portrait” seems closest to St. Artemios’s depictions at Asinou and Kakopetria. The described physiognomy was conceived in an attempt – long recognized but not compellingly explained – to align the saint’s facial features with the appearance of Jesus Christ.<sup>58</sup>

Several hypotheses have been advanced about the identity of the martyr next to St. Artemios (Fig. 4). Donka Bardžieva Trajkovska was the first to try to identify him. She argued, based on the saint’s physiognomy, that “it can be assumed, with great certainty,” that this was an image of St. Prokopios.<sup>59</sup> This view, however, does not rest on compelling iconographic arguments. In Byzantine art, Prokopios was usually shown as quite young and beardless (Figs. 11–12),<sup>60</sup> not with a beard and mustache like the martyr on the western wall of the Church of St. Panteleimon.<sup>61</sup> In addition, it is almost certain that St. Prokopios does appear at Nerezi, but in a different spot: he is, as noted above, the saint on the northern wall of the western bay, next to the two Theodores (Figs. 2, 10, 12a). All other authors have rightly recognized this warrior, not a martyr on the western wall, as St. Prokopios.<sup>62</sup> I believe

<sup>58</sup> In the guidelines for painting St. Artemios, the *Hermeneia* by Dionysios of Fournia expressly states that he is “like Christ in appearance,” cf. *Medić*, *Stari slikarski priručnici III*, 402/403.

<sup>59</sup> *Bardžieva-Trajkovska*, *St Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 70–71, fig. 51. Ida Sinkević did not discuss the martyr’s identity, cf. *Sinkević*, *The Church of St. Panteleimon*, 60, pl. 19, fig. LIV, 59.

<sup>60</sup> On the iconography of St. Prokopios in Eastern Christian art cf. *Walter*, *The Warrior Saints*, 96–99; *Gabelić*, *O ikonografiji svetog Prokopija; Schandrovskaia, Mokhov, Izobrazheniia sviatogo Prokopija; Tsantelas, H λατρεία του αγίου Προκοπίου*; PE 58, 330–333 (*M. A. Makhan’ko, E. M. Saenkova*).

<sup>61</sup> This iconographic inconsistency was already noted by *Spahiu*, *Razvojniot pat*, 57, n. 17, in her rejection of the hypothesis that this is St. Prokopios. *Ovcharova*, *Freski Nerezi*, 78, also thinks that there is not enough evidence to support this identification. In an attempt to show that St. Prokopios was shown next to St. Artemios, *Bardžieva-Trajkovska*, *St Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 71, n. 225, mentions this warrior saint’s representation at the Church of St. Nicholas in Manastir as its closest analogy. On that fresco, however, St. Prokopios has his usual youthful physiognomy, cf. *Kostovska*, *Sveti Nikola Manastir*, 214–216, sl. 246, 392.

<sup>62</sup> *Tomeković*, *Les répercussions*, 28, n. 25; *Maguire*, *Icons of Their Bodies*, 20–21, 50, fig. 10; *Sinkević*, *The Church of St. Panteleimon*, 59–60, fig. 60; *Grotowski*, *Arms and Armour*, fig. 45b; *Ovcharova*, *Nerezi*, 29; *eadem*, *Freski Nerezi*, 174, 281, color fig. 88; *Grotowski*, *Οι στρατιωτικοί άγιοι*, Εικ. 32. On the other hand, *Bardžieva-Trajkovska*, with a dose of caution, argues that this could be a figure of St. Merkourios. She bases this hypothesis on “the typological features” of the saint’s face but does not offer a comparison with other depictions of St. Merkourios to support her claim. In addition, she incorrectly reports that the warrior in question has “a very short, dark beard”, cf. *Bardžieva-Trajkovska*, *St Panteleimon at Nerezi*, 71, fig. 52. In fact, he is beardless, but the contours of his jaw are additionally emphasized with two thicker lines. As is well known, St. Merkourios was always painted as a mature man, with a beard and mustache.

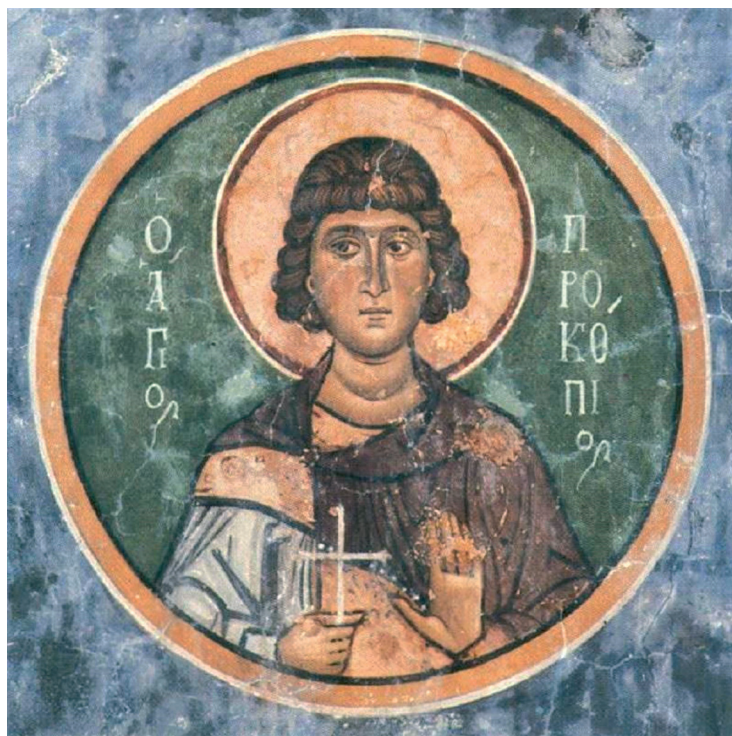


Fig. 11. Koutsovendis, St. John Chrysostom Monastery, Church of Holy Trinity, St. Prokopios  
(after: *Mango, Hawkins, Boyd, The Monastery of St. Chrysostomos*)

that this identification should be accepted with no reservations. Moreover, it can be elaborated in more detail. Firstly, a more general argument speaks in its favor: in the post-Iconoclast period of Byzantine art, St. Prokopios was often classed among the most highly revered warrior saints.<sup>63</sup> This is attested by his depictions in 12<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine monumental painting, a body of art chronologically closer to the Nerezi frescoes.<sup>64</sup> Admittedly, the physiognomy of St. Prokopios at Nerezi is not entirely typical, at least not in the period when it was painted. However, it is easy enough to prove that this should not be seen as a relevant enough factor to challenge the proposed identification but rather a testament to a degree of flexibility in the saint's iconography. The most unusual feature is his hair, which is parted at the top of the head and combed behind his ears and not wavy as usual (Fig. 11). But the same hairstyle

On his iconography cf. n. 69 *infra*. The caption for the drawing published in Nerezi. *Crteži na freski*, 22, states, probably accidentally, that St. Nestor was shown next to the two Theodores, although the same book mentions his image earlier, together with St. George and St. Demetrios, cf. *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>63</sup> *Marković, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 592–593.

<sup>64</sup> For a list of examples see *Živković, Najstarije zidno slikarstvo*, 207–208.

appears on a depiction of Prokopios in another first-rate monument of the 12<sup>th</sup> century – the Palatine Chapel (Cappella Palatina) in Palermo, on a mosaic made by Constantinopolitan artists sometime after 1143 (Fig. 12b).<sup>65</sup> Admittedly, the ends of St. Prokopios's hair on the Sicilian image are not the same as in Nerezi, where it ends in a few coiled, strikingly stylized strands. This detail on the Nerezi depiction of St. Prokopios is somewhat reminiscent of the saint's representation at the Holy Anargyroi in Kastoria (1170–1180).<sup>66</sup> There, the strands of the saint's hair are once again tucked behind the ears, although they are not nearly as luxuriant as in the foundation of "Kyr Alexios Komnenos" (Fig. 12c). Even much later, in Palaiologan art, there were depictions of St. Prokopios that can be associated with his Nerezi representation in terms of this stylistic-iconographic detail, for instance, his images at the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, the katholikon of the Chora monastery in Constantinople, the King's Church of Studenica and the Holy Apostles at the Patriarchate of Peć, on the fresco layer from c. 1380 (Fig. 12d).<sup>67</sup>

So, another martyr must have been painted next to St. Artemios at Nerezi rather than Prokopios. Very recently, it has been proposed that it is, in fact, a depiction of St. Merkourios.<sup>68</sup> Although this claim has much more grounds than the previous one, I am inclined to reject it as well. Like the martyr on the western wall of St. Panteleimon, St. Merkourios was indeed shown in Byzantine art with a short beard and mustache and curly hair, but not with almost shoulder-length hair like the saint at Nerezi.<sup>69</sup>

A third possibility was proposed in the most recent monograph on the Nerezi frescoes. Its author, Olga Ovčarova, argues that the image on the western wall of the naos, next to St. Artemios, represents St. Niketas.<sup>70</sup> This hypothesis seems the most

<sup>65</sup> La Cappella Palatina, 687, 889, no. 1292.

<sup>66</sup> *Pelekanidēs*, Καστοριά, πίν. 23β. For the time when those frescoes were painted cf. *Pelekanidis, Chatzidakis*, Kastoria, 44 (*M. Chatzidakis*). The curls behind the ears of St. Prokopios are even less conspicuous on the bronze icon of the Deisis with the figures of three warriors (11<sup>th</sup> century), most likely of Constantinopolitan origin, now kept in the Museum Mayer van den Bergh in Antwerp, cf. *Splendeur de Byzance*, 180, no. Br. 23 (*J. Lafontaine-Dosogne*). The same detail can be seen on the mosaic representation of St. Niketas at the Martorana, although its present-day appearance is the result of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century restoration, cf. *Kitzinger*, *The Mosaics*, 163, 288–289, fig. 65.

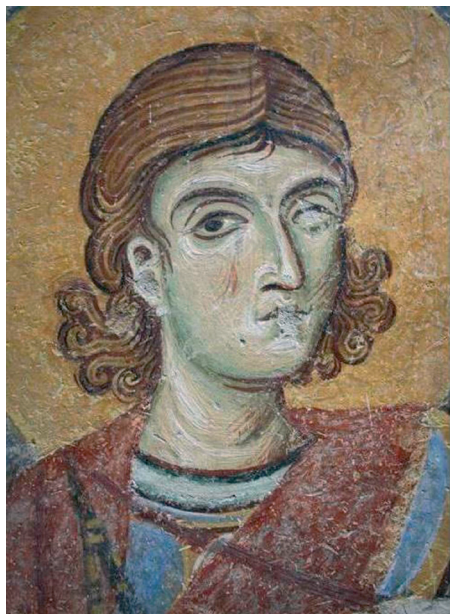
<sup>67</sup> *Marković*, The painter Eutychios, Fig. 9a; *Underwood*, Karye Djami, I, 249, 255–256; III, pl. 500–501; *Babić*, Kraljeva crkva, 207, sl. 177; *Tasić*, Živopis, 235, sl. 2. For a dating of the frescoes of the choir spaces at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Peć see *Vojvodić*, *High Medieval Times*, 268.

<sup>68</sup> *Spahiu*, *Razvojniot pat*, 57, sl. 1a (= *eadem*, *Sveti Merkurij*, 7, sl. 1).

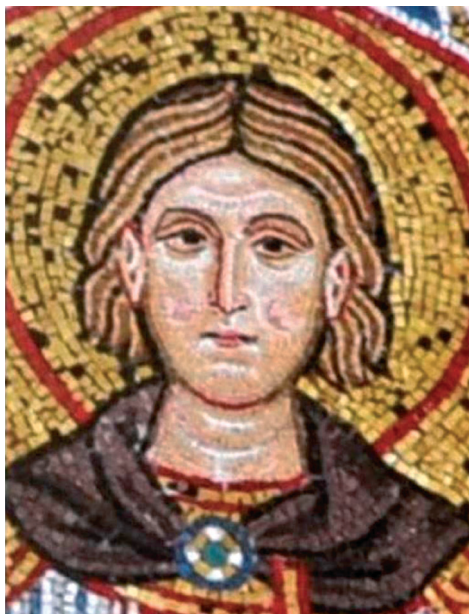
<sup>69</sup> The described and certainly not negligible iconographic differences become apparent already in a comparison with the closest analogy on which the view that St. Merkourios was depicted at Nerezi is based – the representation of this saint in Panagia Kosmosotira in Vira, cf. *Spahiu*, *Razvojniot pat*, 57, n. 58, with literature. On the iconography of St. Merkourios, besides the cited works by Jehona Spahiu, cf. *Marković*, *Sveti ratnici iz Resave*, 204–206; *Walter*, *The Warrior Saints*, 102–108; *Gabelić*, *Manastir Konče*, 167–171; PE 44, 738–741 (*N. V. Gerasimenko*, *E. M. Saenkova*, *IU. N. Buzykina*).

<sup>70</sup> *Ovcharova*, *Freski Nerezi*, 282–283. Ovčarova had earlier proposed the same view in her overview of the iconographic program of the Nerezi frescoes: *eadem*, *Nerezi*, 29. The entry on the iconography of St. Niketas in PE 49, 532 (*E. M. Saenkova*, *M. A. Makhan'ko*) also reports that he was painted on the western wall of the Nerezi katholikon.

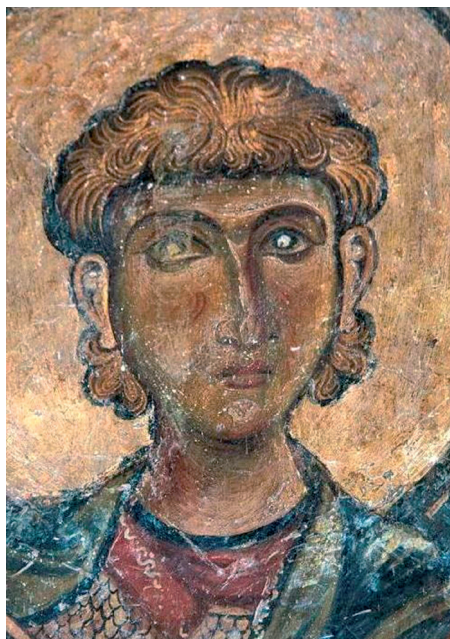




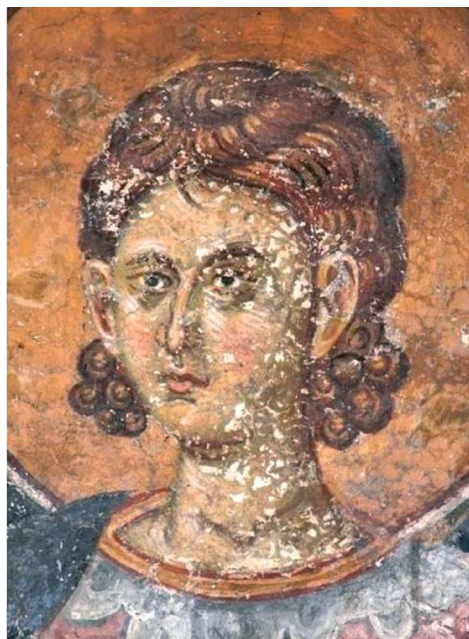
a)



b)



c)



d)

Fig. 12. Depictions of St. Prokopios: a) Nerezi; b) Palatine Chapel in Palermo; c) Church of St. Nicholas in Kastoria; d) Church of Holy Apostles in the Patriarchate of Peć



Fig. 13. Dečani, St. Niketas (photo: Blago Fund)

sensible, although it still lacks a proper explanation because the arguments Ovčarova cites in its favor do not seem convincing enough. Namely, to support her claim, the author only reports that the martyr next to St. Artemios also has a Christ-like physiognomy.<sup>71</sup> However, that is only partially correct. The faces of the two saints are indeed similar – both are mature men with a mustache and a short, tidy beard, almost identically executed, and the shape of their eyes and nose are also very much alike. But one highly characteristic detail, present on the representation of St. Artemios and the Christ-like depictions of St. Niketas, is missing from the image of the unidentified martyr: he does not have the neat, slightly wavy hair parted at the top with which St. Niketas was routinely painted when his representation sought to emulate Christ's.<sup>72</sup> As is well known, such representations of St. Niketas became prevalent in 14<sup>th</sup>-century painting (Fig. 13),<sup>73</sup> so it is understandable that the *Hermeneia* by Dionysios of Fournas notes that he, like St. Artemios, is “like Christ in

<sup>71</sup> *Ovcharova*, *Freski Nerezi*, 282–283, where the closest analogies for the appearance of both saints are said to be their images in some 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century Serbian monuments.

<sup>72</sup> On the Christ-like representations of St. Niketas and the reasons behind their emergence cf. *Marković*, *Predstave*, 504–505. On the iconography of St. Niketas in general see *ibid.*, 497, 502–506. Cf. also *LcI* 8, col. 42–43 (*G. Kaster*); *Walter*, *The Warrior Saints*, 231–233; *PE* 49, 531–535 (*E. M. Saenkova*, *M. A. Makhan'ko*).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Marković*, *Predstave*, 504, n. 90, with the earlier literature; *ibid.*, *Sveti Nikita*, 192; *PE* 49, 532.

appearance.<sup>74</sup> The history of this very suggestive iconographic concept dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, judging by his depiction in the evangelistary with a menologion from the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana from the third quarter of that century (Vatic. gr. 1156, fol. 252r).<sup>75</sup> This solution spilled over into monumental art no later than the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as attested by the image of St. Niketas at the Holy Trinity church of the St. John Chrysostom Monastery at Koutsovendis in Cyprus (c. 1100).<sup>76</sup> Slightly later, in the fifth decade of the century, a Christ-like representation of Niketas was painted in the Palatine Chapel in Palermo<sup>77</sup> and, at its very end (1197), in Panagia Krena in Chios.<sup>78</sup> This variant also appears in the fresco ensembles of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, up to its closing years. This is evidenced by the examples in some Serbian churches (Holy Apostles in Peć)<sup>79</sup> and the monuments in Mani, Kythira and the Dodecanese.<sup>80</sup>

Taking into account all of the above-presented information on the emergence, evolution and iconographic characteristics of the “Christ-like variant” of representing St. Niketas, we would expect this warrior saint to be shown at Nerezi with wavy hair parted at the top of the head, especially because the church was most likely frescoed by Constantinopolitan painters, who would have been very familiar with the iconographic standards of Byzantine art. In other words, since the appearance of the martyr shown next to St. Artemios is somewhat different from the most widespread variant of St. Niketas’s representations, the view that it is an image of the great martyr of Caesarea must not be accepted without some reservations. However, although not without significance, those iconographic inconsistencies do not seem to be a strong enough reason to discard the view that this is indeed a figure of St. Niketas the Goth. Besides the similarity of his face with the “portrait” of St. Artemios next to it, this view is supported by the existence of an alternative iconographic template for painting St. Niketas. Firstly, it should be noted that his representations in Middle Byzantine manuscripts and some works of the applied arts from the same period considerably differ from the ones discussed above. He was shown there with slightly

<sup>74</sup> *Medić*, Stari slikarski priručnici III, 402/403.

<sup>75</sup> *Duić-Serdar*, Ilustracije, 68–69. A digital reproduction of the miniature is available at: [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1156](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1156) (accessed on April 12, 2022).

<sup>76</sup> *Mango*, *Hawkins*, *Boyd*, The Monastery of St. Chrysostomos, 92, fig. 166; *Parani*, A Monument of His Own?, 24, 28, fig 1 (no. 55).

<sup>77</sup> La Cappella Palatina, 687, 886, no. 1287. In this example, the hair of St. Niketas is slightly shorter than usual but that is also the case with St. Artemios, cf. n. 47 supra.

<sup>78</sup> *Pennas*, Panagia Krena, 108, fig. 151 (no. 147), 244. St. Niketas was identified on the murals of the Transfiguration Church of the Monastery of St. Euphrosyne in Polotsk (c. 1161), cf. *Sarab'ianov*, Spaso-Preobrazhenskaia cerkov', fig. on p. 153. However, the possibility that this is a representation of the other Christ-like saint, Artemios, cannot be ruled out.

<sup>79</sup> This unpublished depiction of St. Niketas is located on the soffit of the western arch supporting the dome.

<sup>80</sup> *Drandakēs*, Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες, 78 (no. 28), 91–92, fig. 20. on p. 94; *Chadzidakis*, *Bitha*, Kythira, 116, fig. 7; *Katsiōtē*, Επισκόπησι, 283, πίν. 98–99.



longer hair, not parted but combed straight at top of the head.<sup>81</sup> Examples of another variant, preserved in 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century painting, are even more relevant. The most prominent among them is the representation of a beardless St. Niketas in the katholikon of the monastery of St. Luke of Steiris in Phocis, whose hair is made up of large, round curls.<sup>82</sup> For our comparison with the image of the unidentified martyr at Nerezi, an even more valuable example is the depiction from Panagia Phorbiotissa in Asinou, Cyprus.<sup>83</sup> There, like at Nerezi, the strands of the saint's hair are positioned vertically, and the execution of the curls falling on the sides of his face is very similar in both examples. Admittedly, at Asinou, the hair is considerably shorter, and his very sparse mustache and beard are only indicated with lines. Further, there are examples that seem to employ a combination of the iconographic variants of St. Niketas discussed so far, and it is these that are of critical importance for the topic at hand. In those images, St. Niketas was shown with a short beard and mustache and long hair, like in the "Christ-like variant," but his hair is curly rather than being straight and parted. First of all, let us take a look at his representation on the recently published bronze icon from the Paul and Alexandra Canellopoulos Museum in Athens, dated, rather broadly, to the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 14).<sup>84</sup> Here, St. Niketas's hair is made up of pronounced curls, like in Phocis and Asinou, but it is somewhat longer than in those two images, which makes it more similar to the martyr at Nerezi. Finally, St. Niketas has very similar facial features in a church in the territory of Byzantine Macedonia, frescoed approximately a hundred years after Nerezi. This comparative example, in my view, has a decisive role in affirming the opinion that it was indeed St. Niketas who was painted next to St. Artemios at Nerezi. It is the representation of this megalomartyr in the Church of St. Niketas in the village of Manastir, in the Mariovo region near Prilep, built by the monk Akakios, formerly *protostrator* Alexios, from 1270/1271.<sup>85</sup> The two images are almost identical in terms

<sup>81</sup> Ševčenko, *Illustrated Manuscripts*, 17, 121, 177, fig. 1A1, 3E2, 5D2–5D3; *El Menologio de Basilio II*, 37. In *Metaphrastian menologia*, St. Niketas appears as mature and with a beard and mustache and in the *Menologion of Basil II* as a bare-faced young man, which is also the case in the *synaxarion of Euthymios, hegoumenos of the Iviron Monastery* (cf. *Alibegashvili*, *Hudozhestvennyi princip*, tab. 6.a). The saint is also beardless on the reliquary from the Great Lavra Monastery (cf. *Mathews, Dandridge, The Ruined Reliquary*, 120, fig. 14) and the processional cross from the George Ortiz Collection in Geneva, cf. *Marković, Predstave*, sl. 4. The varying age of St. Niketas the Goth has already been noted in scholarship. A likely explanation would be the identification of this saint with the eponymous martyr from Nicomedia, who is described in hagiographical sources as very young, cf. *ibid.*, 503–504, with other representations in art, sources and literature.

<sup>82</sup> *Chatzidakis-Bacharas, Les peintures murales*, 100–101, fig. 45, 48. St. Niketas has curly hair of the same length on a bust in the crypt of the monastery katholikon, but he also has a beard and mustache (cf. *Connor, Art and Miracles*, 13, fig. 16), which is also the case in the Church of St. Panteleimon near Ano Boulari, Mani, Greece and the katholikon of Nea Moni in Chios, cf. *Drandakēs, Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες*, πίν.92; *Mouriki, The Mosaics of Nea Moni*, 74, pl. 85.

<sup>83</sup> *Weyl Carr, The Murals*, 244, fig. 6.21.

<sup>84</sup> *Byzantium, 330–1453*, no. 209 (*M. Bacci*); Skampavias, *Ανάγλυφα μεταλλικά εικονίδια*, 207, εικ. 4.

<sup>85</sup> *Kostovska, Sveti Nikola Manastir*, 216–219, 248–249, sl. 411.



Fig. 14. Athens, Paul and Alexandra Canellopoulos Museum, bronze icon of St. Niketas (after: Byzantium, 330-1453)

of their typology (Fig. 15). At Manastir, the beard is only slightly fuller and less neat at the ends than in the Church of St. Panteleimon. The hairstyles of the two saints also seem to support the claim that they were based on the same iconographic template, although there are some differences of secondary importance in their execution. On both representations, the part above the forehead consists of a horizontal line of thick curls, which also form the curls combed behind the ears and reaching to the saint's shoulders. Only the hairs at the top of the head were executed differently: in Mariovo, they are more curled than at Nerezi.

\* \* \*

Besides the typological features of some figures, the Nerezi group of warrior saints also deserves attention for the fact that six of its members are shown as soldiers while the others are dressed in the costume of Byzantine court dignitaries.



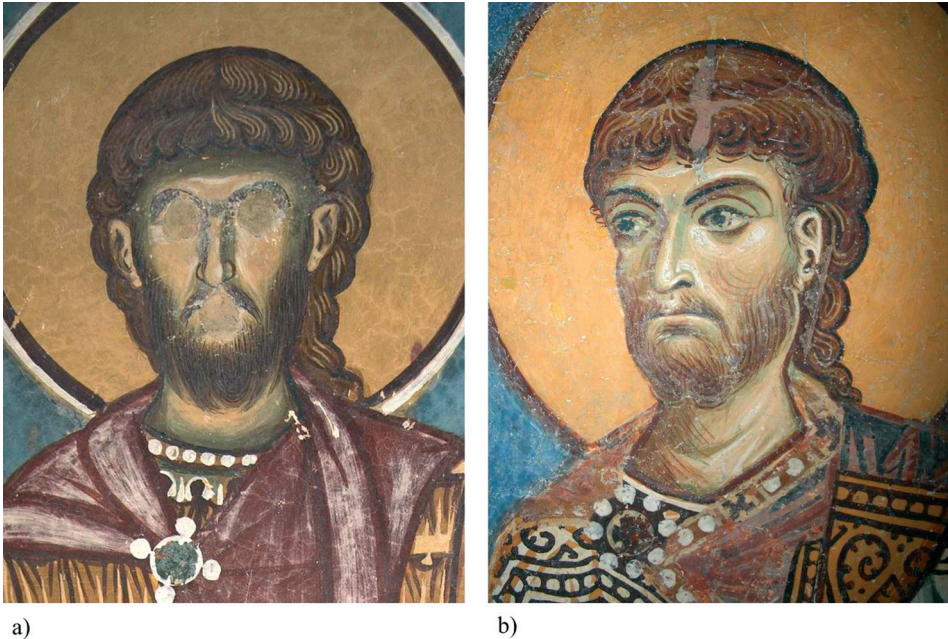


Fig. 15. a) Church of St. Nicholas in Manastir, St. Niketas; b) Nerezi, St. Niketas

The described concept was well known in earlier Byzantine art. Particularly representative analogies are found in the well-known ivory triptychs produced in Constantinople in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and now kept in the Louvre Museum and the Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica in the Vatican, whose side panels feature frontal figures of eight warrior saints (Fig. 16).<sup>86</sup> On these reliefs, like at Nerezi, there is a clear iconographic distinction and a conspicuous programmatic hierarchy among the soldier saints. The most renowned among them, shown with weapons and military equipment, are positioned in the upper zones, with the minor saints or some highly venerated ones whose cult had yet to acquire a full military character (Demetrios, Prokopios) placed below them.

And yet, the described iconographic combination would have been archaic at the time when the Nerezi church was frescoed. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the practice of depicting processions of armored and armed warrior saints in the first fresco zone or some other, more or less prominent spot in the church had become well-established.<sup>87</sup> However, group representations of soldier martyrs had not completely disappeared. They occasionally surfaced throughout the century in different corners of the Byzantine world. As martyrs, warrior saints were shown, in the shape of busts

<sup>86</sup> For the latest discussion on the two triptychs, with an exhaustive bibliography, cf. *Eastmond*, *The Heavenly Court*, 96–97 (no. 2), 98–99 (no. 3) et passim.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Marković*, *O ikonografiji svetih ratnika*, 590–591, with examples and literature.



Fig. 16. Paris, Musée du Louvre, The Harbaville Triptych  
(after: Byzantium, 330–1453)

in medallions, in the *parekklesion* of the Holy Trinity at Koutsovendis (c. 1100)<sup>88</sup> and the Palerman churches whose mosaics were made by Constantinopolitan artists.<sup>89</sup> Until the last decades of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was possible for warrior saints to be represented in patrician costumes rather than in the iconographic form that had, by then, become customary for them. This is attested by their depictions in the hermitage of St. Neophytos near Paphos (1183)<sup>90</sup> and Panagia Krena in Chios (1197).<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Mango, Hawkins, Boyd, *The Monastery of St. Chrysostomos*, 89, pl. 8, fig. 141–146; Parani, *A Monument of His Own?*, 24, 28, fig. 20–21.

<sup>89</sup> La Cappella Palatina, 686–687, 886, 888–889, 890, no. 1285–1294, 1297; Kitzinger, *The Mosaics*, 159, 288–291, fig. 59–65. Some later depictions of warrior saints as soldiers have survived in the Palatine Chapel, cf. n. 21 supra.

<sup>90</sup> Mango, Hawkins, *The Hermitage of St. Neophytos*, 175–176, fig. 86–88. Cf. Tomeković, *Les répercussions*, 27; eadem, *Ermitage de Paphos*, 153.

<sup>91</sup> Pennas, *Panagia Krena*, 106–112, fig. 244, 247, 251–253.





Fig. 17. Asinou, Church of Panagia Forbiotissa, St. George and St. Eustathios Placidus (photo: G. Fousteris)

Further evidence of the use of the “archaic” iconographic template is provided by some depictions on icons, such as the busts of Theodore Stratelates and St. George on the bottom edge of an icon of Jesus Christ from Panagia Arakiotissa in Lagoudera (c. 1192)<sup>92</sup> or the mosaic icons of St. George and St. Demetrios from the Xenophontos Monastery, if they were indeed made in that century, as scholars tend to believe.<sup>93</sup> The discussed iconographic concept endured longest in Serbian art. In several foundations of Serbian rulers from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, warrior saints were depicted

<sup>92</sup> *Papageōrgiou*, Εικόνες της Κύπρου, 19, εικ. 10. The representations of the two warrior-saints on this icon were noticed by *Tomeković*, Les répercussions, 27, n. 21.

<sup>93</sup> For the most recent discussion of the time when these works were created, with earlier literature, cf. *Semoglou*, Mosaic Icons, 245–246, fig. 1–2, who allows the possibility that the icon of St. George was made toward the end of the century but notes that the icon of St. Demetrios seems to be of a slightly later date. *Tomeković*, Les répercussions, 27, n. 21, notes that the iconography of the two warrior saints would have been unusual at the time when the icon was made, which she dates to the late 12<sup>th</sup> century.

in tunics and chlamyses with *tablia*, although some could also be shown with weapons and some elements of military equipment.<sup>94</sup>

The closest analogy for the concept employed at Nerezi – a combination of soldierly and martyrial representations of the warrior saints – has already been mentioned in this text: the figures of the warrior saints in Panagia Forbiotissa in Asinou, although their arrangement is not as programmatically principled or visually effective as the one in Nerezi.<sup>95</sup> In Asinou, it bears repeating, besides the two Theodores, the busts of the soldier martyrs Artemios (Fig. 8) and Arethas were painted on the northern wall of the church, in the second zone.<sup>96</sup> The opposite, southern wall of the naos features a full-length figure of St. George as a soldier, restored in the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>97</sup> with St. Eustathios Placidus, dressed in a tunic and chlamys and holding a martyr's cross in his right hand, shown next to it, on the same layer (Fig. 17).<sup>98</sup> As the counterpart to this saint, on the corresponding surface of the northern wall, on the original fresco layer, there was a representation of St. Nikephoros of Antioch, of which only fragments have survived,<sup>99</sup> and the figure of Niketas the Goth, also depicted in a courtier's costume, is located in the western bay of the naos.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>94</sup> For more details see *Marković*, O ikonografiji svetih ratnika, 603–604; *Vojvodić*, Zidno slikarstvo, 159–160; *Živković*, Najstarije zidno slikarstvo, 219–220.

<sup>95</sup> The described iconographic differentiation was implemented even less consistently in the above-mentioned Karši Kilise, where St. Artemios is the only warrior saint dressed in patrician clothing. Cf. n. 49 supra. Similarly, at the Hermitage of St. Peter of Koriša, frescoed after 1219, in the first fresco zone, with the saints shown as soldiers, St. Niketas appears in the costume of Byzantine dignitaries, cf. *Đurić*, Najstariji živopis, 174–175; *Starodubcev*, Pitanja umetničkih uticaja, 49.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. n. 44 supra.

<sup>97</sup> *Weyl Carr*, The Murals, 242, fig. 6.22.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 245–246, fig. 6.22. In my view, the author baselessly questions the possibility that the image of Eustathios Placidus was located in the same spot in the original fresco layer. The doubt is a result of the fact that the paper fails to note that the saint's figure belongs to the warrior saint group although he was not shown as a soldier. Cf. next footnote.

<sup>99</sup> This spot is now occupied by a figure of St. Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, painted in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, since there are visible remnants of a chlamys and tunic beneath the original fresco layer, it has been inferred that the original figure represented the martyr of Antioch rather than the patriarch who bore the same name. His inclusion in the program could be explained by the fact that he was the namesake of *magister* Nikephoros, the ktetor of the Virgin's Church at Asinou, cf. *ibid.*, 244–245, fig. 6.20. Another argument in favor of this identification is that St. Nikephoros was venerated as a warrior saint although there is no mention of him in Christopher Walter's extensive study on representations of this type of saint in Byzantine art (cf. *Walter*, The Warrior Saints). There are, however, several Byzantine seals from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries with representations of St. Nikephoros as a soldier, cf. *Alekseenko*, Pechat', 276–278, with examples and literature. I will discuss the iconography of St. Nikephoros of Antioch in a forthcoming text; for the purposes of this paper, suffice it to mention that his figure was included in the soldier martyrs group at the Virgin's Church of Studenica, cf. *Živković*, Najstarije zidno slikarstvo, 175–176.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. n. 83 supra. St. Demetrios was shown as a martyr in the narthex of the church (the murals from the 14<sup>th</sup> century) not far from another equestrian representation of St. George, cf. *Kalopissi-Verti*, The Murals of the Narthex, 164–165, fig. 5.1, 5.34.

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## СВЕТИ РАТНИЦИ У НЕРЕЗИМА – ПЕРСОНАЛНИ САСТАВ И ДРУГА ЗАПАЖАЊА О ИКОНОГРАФИЈИ

Зидно сликарство Цркве Светог Пантелејмона у селу Нерезима код Скопља, која је 1164. године саграђена средствима византијског аристократе Алексија Анђела Комнина, унука василевса Алексија I (1081–1118), представља, одавно се зна, једно од најзначајних остварења византијског сликарства XII столећа. У новије време, фрескама Нереза посвећене су чак три монографске студије, које су написале Ида Синкевић, Донка Барџијева-Трајковска и Олга

Овчарова. Иако је иконографски програм сликарства Цркве Светог Пантелејмона подробно анализиран у трима поменутиим књигама, његово истраживање се у појединим аспектима може допунити и продубити. У овом раду пажња је посвећена фигурама светих ратника које се налазе у првој зони живописа западног травеја наоса. Том групом нереских светитеља има смисла изнова се позабавити због тога што су о идентитету појединих њених припадника изношена различита мишљења у научној литератури.

Шесторица светих ратника на северном и јужном зиду западног травеја цркве Светог Пантелејмона у Нерезима одавно су тачно идентификовани. Прву зону јужног зида запремају репрезентативне, фронтално постављене фигуре тројице младоликих војника – Ђорђа, Димитрија и Нестора (сл. 1). Као њихови пандани на наспрамном, северном зиду насликани су Свети Теодор Тирон, Теодор Стратилат и Прокопије, чија су тела такође хијератично приказана, али уз нешто израженију варијацију покрета. Готово сви ратници о којима је реч били су, као што је добро познато, најпоштованији у оквиру скупине светих ратника и њихово присуство је било готово обавезно у групним представама припадника те светитељске категорије у средњовизантијској уметности, па и касније. Занимљиво је, истина, да у Нерезима није представљен Свети Меркурије, који је спадао у скупину од шесторице најпоштованијих светих ратника у Византији, нити Свети Јевстатије Плакида, чији је лик у средњовизантијској уметности такође веома често сликан. Уместо неког од поменуте двојице, у нереску групу ратника уврштен је Свети Нестор. Иако његов избор није сасвим уобичајен, није посредни изразита особеност, пошто се лик Светог Нестора у датом програмском контексту појављивао и раније у монументалној уметности византијског света (сл. 3). Штавише, Свети Георгије, Димитрије и Нестор су, осим у Нерезима, и у неколико других храмова XII и XIII века сликани један до другог (Ђефалу, Свети Никола у Касторији, Богородичина црква у Студеници). Коначно, и група светитеља на северном зиду западног травеја наоса уобличена је по моделу који се среће у другим репрезентативним споменицима комнинске монументалне уметности, па и у неким млађим фреско-ансамблима. Двојица Светих Теодора су, тако, заједно са Светим Прокопијем представљени у црквама Касторије (Свети Никола, Свети Врачи), Богородичиној цркви у Студеници и Цркви Светог Николе и Пантелејмона у Бојани.

Поред шесторице светитеља на јужном и северном зиду западног травеја, и неке друге фигуре припадају групи светих ратника. Истина, светитељи о којима је реч нису приказани у војној опреми и са оружјем, већ у туникама и хламидама. Сасвим је могуће да пар мученика на северној страни западног зида (сл. 2) спада у категорију светих ратника. То се, међутим, данас не може поуздано установити јер су њихове представе тешко оштећене. Сасвим је, с друге стране, извесно да у назначену скупину треба убројати двојицу



мученика на јужној половини западног зида (сл. 4 и 5), чији се идентитет може готово сасвим поуздано установити, премда не без извесног напора. Од двојице светих ратника-мученика на јужном делу западног зида лакше је поуздано препознати оног на левој страни. Посреди је представа Светог Артемија, као репрезентативан пример у историјату представљања тог светитеља у средњовизантијској уметности. Колико смо успели да установимо, најстарија представа Светог Артемија у монументалном сликарству сачувана је у Цркви Христа Спаситеља у селу Лагамију, у близини Местије, у Горњој Сванетији, чије се фреске датују у распону од прве четвртине X до прве половине XI века (сл. 6). На тлу Грузије, Свети Артемије је потом насликан и у цркви „Сион“ у Атенију, осликаној у другој половини XI века, можда у деветој деценији (сл. 7). У оба грузинска споменика, светитељ је приказан као војник. Међутим, судећи према расположивој грађи, на другим странама византијског културног простора је тај светитељ све до зрелог XIII столећа приказиван у облику мученика, то јест у туници и хламиди, неретко и са крстом у руци. О томе сведоче његове представе у Светој Софији у Кијеву, Цркви Богородице Форбиотисе у Асину (сл. 8), Светог Николе  $\tau\eta\varsigma$   $\Sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\eta\varsigma$  у близини села Какопетрије (сл. 9), горњој цркви у костурници Манастира Бачкова, храмовима Палерма (Палатинска капела, Марторана), Панагији Крини на Хиосу и Карши килисе у Кападокији. С друге стране, у виду наоружаног војника, у друштву других славних светих ратника, на истакнутим местима у програму, Свети Артемије је приказан у неколико споменика XIII века (Свети Никола у Кинцвисију, Тимотесубани, Бојана, црква Светог Николе  $\tau\eta\varsigma$   $\text{Ροδίας}$  у Арти, Црква Светог Николе у Манастиру).

О идентитету мученика који је приказан поред Светог Артемија (сл. 5) изнето је неколико претпоставки. Прва је покушала да га препозна Донка Барцијева-Трајковска, сматрајући, на основу физиономије светитеља, да се „са великом сигурношћу може претпоставити“ да је у питању лик Светог Прокопија. Сасвим је, међутим, извесно да је Свети Прокопије насликан на другом месту у Цркви Светог Пантелејмона. У питању је, као што је раније речено, светитељ на северној страни западног травеја, приказан поред двојице Светих Теодора (сл. 2, 10, 12а). Треба, додуше, признати да физиономија Светог Прокопија у Нерезима није сасвим типична. Необично је понајвише то што је његова коса подељена на темену и зачешљана иза ушију, а не коврцава као обично (сл. 11). Такво решење среће се, међутим, и на представи Светог Прокопија у једном другом прворазредном споменику XII века – Палатинској капели у Палерму, у оквиру сегмента мозаичког програма који су после 1143. израдили цариградски уметници (сл. 12б). Сасвим недавно, изнето је мишљење да је, заправо, реч о представи Светог Меркурија. Ни такву идентификацију не сматрамо прихватљивом, из иконографских разлога. Трећа могућност предложена је у најновијој монографији о фрескама Нереза. Њена аутока Олга Овчарова верује да је на западном зиду, поред Светог Артемија, насликан Свети Никита. По нашем

мишљењу, наведена идентификација је најразложнија. Истина, Свети Никита није приказан са стандардним типолошким одликама лика, то јест са валовитом косом раздељеном на темену, као обично (сл. 13). Ипак, тај лик је веома сличан двама примерима једне нешто другачије варијанте његовог „портрета“, на којима је приказан са брковима, кратком брадом и дугачком, коврцавом косом. О томе сведоче недавно објављена бронзана икона из колекције Канелопулу у Атини, која се широко датује у XIII век, као и представа Светог Никите у Цркви Светог Николе у Манастиру, у Мариову, у близини Прилепа (сл. 15).

Осим по типолошким особеностима појединих ликова, група нереских светих ратника заслужује пажњу и по томе што су шесторица њених чланова приказани у облику војника, док су остали одевени у одежде византијских дворских достојанственика. Таква иконографска диференцијација је добро позната из старије византијске уметности. Нарочито су репрезентативне аналогije чувени цариградски триптиси од слоноваче из X века, који се данас чувају у париском музеју Лувр и Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica у Ватикану, на чијим су бочним крилима приказане фронталне фигуре осморице светих ратника (сл. 16). Па ипак, у време осликавања Нереза је назначена иконографска комбинација била архаизам. У XII веку била је већ увелико заживела пракса да се у првој зони живописа, или на неком другом, мање-више истакнутом месту у храму, представљају поворке наоружаних светих ратника у панцирним оклопима. Међутим, ни у то време групне представе ратника-мртира нису биле сасвим потиснуте. Оне су се местимично појављивале током целог столећа, на различитим подручјима византијског света (Капела Свете Тројице у Куцовендису, Цркве Палерма, Испосница Светог Неофита код Пафоса, Панагија Крина). Најдуже се иконографско решење о коме говоримо задржало у српској уметности. У Србији су, у неколико владарских задужбина XIII века, свети ратници представљани у туникама и хламидама са тавлионима, иако је било могуће да поједини међу њима буду приказани и са оружјем и неким деловима војне опреме. Што се тиче решења који је примењено у Нерезима – комбинације војничких и мученичких представа – најближу аналогију представљају фигуре светих ратника у Цркви Богородице Форбиотисе у Асину, премда оне нису распоређене тако програмски принципијелно и формално ефектно као у Нерезима. У тој су кипарској цркви, уз двојицу Светих Теодора на северном зиду храма насликана, у другој зони, и попрсја светих ратника-мученика Артемија (сл. 8) и Арете. На наспрамном, јужном зиду наоса налази се стојећа, ратничка представа Светог Георгија, обновљена у XIV веку, уз коју је, на истом слоју, насликан Свети Јевстатије Плакида, одевен у тунику са хламидом и са мученичким крстом у десној руци (сл. 17). Као пандан том светитељу, на одговарајућој површини северног зида, на оригиналном слоју сликарства био је приказан Свети Никифор Антиохијски, од чије су представе сачувани само фрагменти, док се фигура Светог Никите Гота, приказаног такође у одежди дворанина, налази у западном травеју наоса.

