THE PATH TO REDEMPTION: RECONSIDERING THE ROLE OF THE IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN ABOVE THE ENTRANCE TO THE CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN HODEGETRIA AT THE PEĆ MONASTERY*

The church complex of the monastery at Peć achieved its final form with the projects undertaken by archbishop Danilo II (1324–1337). He began with the church of the Virgin Hodegetria (circa 1330) that would house his tomb. His sarcophagus was placed in the northwestern corner of the church below the vault of a small, elongated space. A shared narthex was added to the three monastery churches included in the Peć complex in the early 1330s. The western façade of the church of Hodegetria displays a monumental image of the Mother of God above the entrance that leads from the narthex to the interior.

The iconography of the Virgin in Peć has been compared to that of the Virgin as the Fountain of Life as well as with that of the icon of the Mother of God Zoodochos Pege from the homonymous monastery in Constantinople. Such imagery was not, however, associated with the sacrament of baptism and its role in salvation and resurrection. This paper argues that a shared association with the rite of baptism links the image of the Virgin Mary with the funerary function of the church and the tomb of Danilo II, reflecting Danilo II’s personal concern with the Last Judgment and salvation.

Keywords: Fountain of life, Virgin, Christ, baptism, redemption, salvation, resurrection

The church complex of the monastery at Peć was built on the remains of an older structure of unknown date. The first church in the complex, dedicated to the Holy Apostles was erected in the middle of the thirteenth century.1 The building program

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1 For more see, Đurić, Ćirković, Korać, Pečka patrijaršija, 26; Čanak-Medić, Arhiepiskop Danilo II i arhitektura, 295–309; Čanak-Medić, Arhitektura, 15–16 and 24–29.
at Peć achieved its final form with the projects undertaken by the archbishop Danilo II (1324–1337). Danilo began with the church of the Virgin Hodegetria (circa 1330) that would house his tomb. His elaborate sarcophagus was placed in the northwestern corner of the church below the vault of a small, elongated space (Fig. 1). A shared narthex was joined to the three monastery churches included in the Peć complex in the early 1330s. To the south of the Virgin Hodegetria, Danilo II added a parekklesion dedicated to St. Nicholas.

The western façade of the church of Hodegetria displays a monumental image of the Mother of God above the entrance that leads from the narthex to the interior (Fig. 2). The unusual iconography of the Virgin deviates from the type of Hodegetria expected in the location of the patron saint of the church. This Virgin of colossal dimension is represented with her arms fully outstretched in a gesture of intercession. An ochre-colored cruciform or quatrefoil, gilded vessel holding Christ-Amnos sits on her chest. The interior of the vessel is painted dark red with its lower edge following the curvature of the Virgin's cloak. The shape of this, her outstretched arms, and her head repeat the shape of the Christ Child in the vessel. Christ blesses the archbishop Danilo II and St. Nicholas who stands on either side of the Virgin with their hands held in gestures of supplication. The Virgin's dress has unusual details. In its lower portion, two gilded bands extend along the edge of her cloak from below the basin to her feet. In the upper part of the composition we find two angels positioned on both sides of the Mother of God as well as two rosettes.

The iconography of the Virgin at Peć has been compared to that of the Virgin as the “Fountain of Life,” or “Life-bearing Source” associated with the image of the Mother of God Zoodochos Pege (Ζωοδόχος Πηγή) from the homonymous monastery in Constantinople. Such imagery was not, however, associated with the sacrament

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2 The church of St. Demetrius, ca. 1321–1324, was built on the north side of the church of the Holy Apostles, see Subotić, L'Église Saint-Démétrios; Čanak-Medić, Arhitektura, 17 and 35–36. For the date of the construction of the church of Hodegetria and more on its plan see, Đurić, Ćirković, Korać, Pećka patrijaršija, 83–91; Čanak-Medić, Arhitektura, 17 and 36–37.
5 Čanak-Medić, Arhitektura, 42–43.
6 Đurić, Ćirković, Korać, Pećka patrijaršija, 135. For the date of painting, see Đurić, Vizantijske freske, 59; Gavrilović, Zidno slikarstvo, 37–44; Čanak-Medić, Todić, Manastir, 147–148.
7 Đurić, Portet Danila II, 345–355; Tatić-Durić, Bogorodica u delu arhiepiskopa Danila II, 391–408; Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 141–165.
8 Some scholars have compared the vessel form to a shell, see Babić, Liturgijske teme, 377–391, 383, also, Tatić-Durić, Bogorodica u delu arhiepiskopa Danila II, 406–407. For the name Christ-Amnos (the Liturgical Lamb), see Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 164.
9 On the possible meaning of the gilded bands and other details of the Virgin’s dress, see Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 157–159.
10 Medaković, Bogorodica ‘Živonosni istočnik’, 203–217; Velmans, Iconographie de la ‘Fontaine de Vie’, 119–134; Pallas, Θεοτόκος Ζωοδόχος Πηγή, 201–224; Todić, Ikonografski program fresaka,
Fig. 1. The tomb of archbishop Danilo II, nave of the church of the Virgin Hodegetria, Patriarchate of Peć, northwestern corner, marble, 14th century

Fig. 2. The fresco of the Virgin with Saint Nicholas and Archbishop Danilo II, east wall, narthex, Patriarchate of Peć, 14th century (photo: V. Todić)
of baptism and its role in salvation and resurrection. In this paper I will argue that a shared association with baptism links the image of the Virgin Mary with the funerary function of the church built by Danilo II, and thus with his tomb, reflecting a personal concern with the Last Judgment and salvation. The Vita of Danilo II written by one of his followers, states that the archbishop wanted to build a church that would accommodate his tomb and to dedicate it to the Virgin Hodegetria. Addressing Christ, Danilo vows: “To build the church in the name of your Holy Mother to be the one who will pray for me in the day of your second coming.”

The fresco above the church of Hodegetria’s door shows the Virgin in the orans position with a large vessel in front of her chest. The image of the Mother of God, Zoodochos Pege or “Life-bearing Source” as well an accompanying service was first established in Constantinople during the reign of the emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328) at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The earliest known example of this iconographic type with the ‘Zoodochos Pege’ inscription is a fresco in the church of the Aphendiko in Mistra. Located in the narthex above the entrance to the naos, this composition was likely painted soon after the construction of the church in 1311. Here, the Virgin again stands with hands raised and the Christ Child placed in front of her chest. A stream of water is painted below Christ. The Virgin’s parents, Joachim and Anna, flank Her and on both sides of the nimbus we find the inscription ‘Zoodoche Pege’, explicitly linking the fresco to the cult site of the same name in Constantinople.

Scholars have discussed the similarities of the Virgin in Peć with the iconographic type of ‘Zoodochos Pege’. Vesna Milanović, however, offered the first detailed explanation of the significant differences between these two representations of...
the Virgin. Milanović rightly points out that the Virgin in Peć, although iconographically resembling the source of life type, cannot be strictly tied to that of the monastery Zoodochos Pege in Constantinople. The type representing the Virgin as the source of life usually bears an inscription, and commonly represents the Virgin emerging from a vessel or hagiasma, with or without the Christ child.  

This is the case, for example, in the Church of the Archangel Michael in Lesnovo from the fourteenth century. Here, the Virgin is not only represented alone, standing in a vessel with two openings for water, but is also accompanied by the ‘Zoodochos Pege’ inscription (Fig. 3).  

Some earlier examples of the Virgin with the Christ Child in a vessel analogous to that in Peć have been identified by scholars, such as the representation of the Virgin in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, which predates the Peć fresco. Located in the apse conch of prothesis, this Virgin is of the orans type with a spherical vessel held before her chest containing Christ Emmanuel. Other, similar examples, younger than the Peć representation, also exist, such as those at Mali Sveti Vrači in

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Fig. 3. The fresco of the Mother of God ‘Zoodochos Pege’, the Church of the Archangel Michael in Lesnovo, ca. 1349 (photo: S. Gabelić)
Ohrid, the Church of St. Nicholas in Psača and the Church of Dormition in Aliveri.  
All of these examples represent a bust-length Virgin, except in Psača where she is painted full-length, and are found in altar apse conches. In these compositions, the Christ child is also not shown blessing with both hands like the one in Peć, but rather, holding a scroll in one hand while blessing with the other.

Mirjana Tatić Djurić has identified the closest iconographic type for the Peć’s image in the so-called Virgin of the Great Panagia. In the thirteenth century this image was placed on portable objects such as panagiaria, cameos and seals, all of which were associated with ecclesiastical use. Panagiaria were used for the elevation of the pieces of Eucharistic bread called the panagia, which were offered to monks before meals. 

This type of Virgin orans image was combined with the frontal figure of the Christ Child as a means of expressing the theological concept of the Incarnation. Through his Incarnation, Christ symbolizes the eternal Logos and is the source of eternal life.

The representation of the Mother of God above the entrance door to the church of Hodegetria in Peć therefore seems to conflate two preexisting types: the Virgin orans with the Child in front of her or not, and the “Fountain of Life”. There are several appellations used for Byzantine compositions in which the Mother of God raises her hands in prayer while the Child hovers in a medallion on her chest and either responds with a gesture of blessing or not; examples are: Episkepsis, Platytira, Great Panagia, Znamenie, Nikopoios, and Blachernitissa. Unlike such instances, where the medallion with Christ represents the womb of the Virgin in which the Word became Flesh and indicates Divine Incarnation, the version in Peć exhibits a new iconographic solution developed under Danilo II’s patronage.

At Peć, the Christ Child is not in a medallion, but in a vessel. As Milanović notes, in other known examples of the Virgin with the vessel on her chest, the vessel is usually depicted in a grayish, whitish color, emulating stone. In the example at Peć, however, it appears to be gilded and therefore resembles a chalice. Furthermore, its interior is painted red with pinkish rim that connotes marble. Milanović convinc-

19 Velmans, Iconographie de la ‘Fontaine de Vie’, 130–131; Đurić, Portet Danila II, 347–351; Grozdanov, Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo, 50–51; Đorđević, Zidno slikarstvo, 73, 175. For the images, see Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 150–151, fig. 11, 12.

20 Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 150–152.

21 Tatić-Đurić, Vrata slova, 61–89.

22 Kalavrezou, Mother of God in Steatite, 185–193, 190.


24 For the origin of the different appellations of the representations of the Virgin, see Tatić-Đurić, Ikona Bogorodice znamenja, 3–23, 4; Papaioannou, ‘Usual Miracle’, 177–189. For more on this iconographic type of the Virgin see, Kondakov P. N., Ikonografia Bogomateri, 19–124; see also Tatić-Đurić, Vrata slova, 61–89; Baltoyanni, The Mother of God, 139–155, 140; Tsigradas, Mother of God, 125–137, 125–129; Kalavrezou, Mother of God in Steatite, 190; Cormack, Mother of God, 91–105; Pentcheva, Rethorical Images, 34–55, 36–37.

25 Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 151–152.

26 This unique detail is connected in formal and conceptual terms with two depictions in the churches Aghios Nicholas tou Tzotza and Aghious Alypios in Kastoria from the later fourteenth century.
ingly argues that this innovation in Peć alludes to Christ’s sacrifice, and thus to the Eucharist. She further states that the Mother of God is represented in dual concept, as the supplicant and the recipient of divine grace. The composition of the Mother of God in Peć is of colossal size with the two archpriests St. Nicholas and Danilo II in easily-recognizable praying postures, which Milanović sees as the symbol of the Church. In her words, the image keeps “with the well known dogmatically firm vivid liturgical allusions of the Holy Fathers to the Church as ‘the body through which the blood of Christ flows’ and which ‘is sanctified by the Holy Spirit.’”

Building on the existing scholarship, I will now focus on another important element in the image that has not yet received much scholarly attention and provides further insight into the meaning of the fresco on the exterior of the church of the Virgin Hodegetria. Namely, some scholars have recognized the vessel in the fresco as being cruciform in shape. Such a shape resembles early Christian baptismal fonts such as one from Meninx in Africa of the Constantinian period (Fig. 4). Vessels of cruciform

In both cases, Christ is represented in a shell-shaped or acanthus-leaf shaped gold vessel with a red interior suspended on the Virgin’s chest and are depicted in apse conches, see Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 152–153. For images see, Tsagaridas, Κατοριά, 78, 150.

27 Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 149, 152–153, 156. Recognizing Christ as Amos or a Eucharistic sacrifice, Mirjana Tatić-Djurić designated the representation of the Virgin in Peć as Great Panagia, see Tatić-Durić, Bogorodica u delu arhiepiskopa Danila II, 406.
28 For detailed explanation, see Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 158–163.
29 Milanović, O fresci na ulazu, 164.
30 That the quatrefoil vessel on the chest of the Virgin in Peć refers to baptism, was first proposed by Mirjana Tatić- Djurić, see Tatić-Durić, Bogorodica u delu arhiepiskopa Danila II, 406–407.
31 The baptistery is in the Musée national du Bardo, Tunis.
shape were often represented in middle- and late-Byzantine monumental and manuscript art in the scene associated with baptism or Miracles of Christ and Public Ministry, which include the presence of water as the instrument of salvation. Its popularity derives from the symbolic implications of its form. An illumination from the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus from the ninth century now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (Paris. gr. 510) depicting the Mission of the Apostles includes a variety of baptismal fonts used by apostles for the baptism of the nations. Similarly, the scenes depicting Christ’s miracles and Public Ministry in the exonarthex of the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Sopoćani monastery include vessels of cruciform shape.

The peculiar iconography in the fresco at Peć’s referring to the sacramental symbolism of the Eucharist can also be aligned with another important sacrament, that of baptism. The importance of baptism and the Eucharist as marking a Christian’s initiation into “new life” is perhaps best exemplified by the words of Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) who declared that “in these two [sacraments] our whole salvation is rooted, since the entire economy of the God-man is recapitulated in them.” These words of Palamas, a contemporary of Danilo II, together with Danilo’s concern for salvation and Christ’s second coming, suggests the creation of a specific iconographic program at Peć, one that emphasizes the function of the church as a mausoleum and his burial place.

The representation of a vessel in the fresco at Peć’s with coloring that resembles a chalice, and with a cruciform shape similar to that of a baptismal font, could be an allusion to the liturgical mixing of wine and water. The Byzantine rite of mixing of the wine and water symbolizes the blood and water flowing from Christ’s wound after the crucifixion. For Byzantines, this use of water indicates Christ’s human and perishable nature, while the wine represents His divine and imperishable nature, manifesting death and the resurrection of Christ. For the faithful, baptism had connotations of death and burial, and thereby functioned as a guarantee of resurrection and eternal life. The cruciform shape of the vessel in which Christ is placed in the fresco at Peć can be read

32 Drpić, Tri scene iz ciklusa, 114–115.
33 Lafontaine-Dosogne, La tradition byzantine, 56–68.
34 Brubaker, Vision and Meaning, 243–245, fig 42, f. 426v. For other later examples, see Drpić, Tri scene iz ciklusa, 114–115.
35 Drpić, Tri scene iz ciklusa, 113–115.
36 The vessel depicted in the fresco at Peć may be associated with baptism not only through its shape echoing that of baptismal fonts, but also by the fact that its color and material are strongly associated with another vessel used as an indirect allusion of Christ Baptism. Nativity scenes in Byzantine and Serbian medieval art often included the bathing of the infant Christ. Following the fourteenth century, such bathing scenes increasingly represented Christ as young boy standing in a washtub with the shape of a baptismal font, Bedard, The Symbolism of the Baptismal Font, 4–17
37 Gregory Palamas, Homily 60 in Tou en agios patros hémôn Grégoriou archiepiskopou Thessalonikēs, tou Palama: omiliai KB’, ed. S. Oikonomou, 258, as cited in Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, 192.
38 Kalezić, Arhiepiskop Danilo II, 121–128.
40 Wybrew, Orthodox Liturgy, 88.
41 Underwood, Fountain, 43.
as an expression of the doctrine that through baptism, the Christian shares in Christ’s death and resurrection, dying together with Christ and a rising again with Him, thus symbolically referring to the vessel as a mystical tomb.\(^{42}\) In his homilies on Romans, John Chrysostom (ca. 349–407) equates baptism and crucifixion declaring:

> What does being “baptized into His Death” mean? That it is with a view to our dying as He did. For Baptism is the Cross. What the Cross then, and Burial, is to Christ, that Baptism hath been to us, even if not in the same respects. For He died Himself and was buried in the Flesh, but we have done both to sin. Wherefore he does not say, planted together in His Death, but in the likeness of His Death.\(^{43}\)

Baptism and resurrection had been connected since early Christian times. *The Apostolic Constitutions*, a canonical and liturgical compilation created in fourth-century Syria, prescribed a formula for the blessing of the waters as follows: “Look down from heaven, and sanctify this water; give it grace and power so that he who is baptized according to the command of thy Christ may be crucified with Him and may die with Him and may be buried with Him, and may rise with Him to the adoption which is in Him...”\(^{44}\) Resurrection and salvation, as well as the Second Coming of Christ, were of much concern for archbishop Danilo II. They were prominent themes in his literary work and were reflected in the art that was constructed under his supervision.\(^{45}\) Besides numerous carved crosses, rosettes and a whirling disc on the lid, his tomb also bears a representation of *Hetoimasia* or the Ever-Ready Throne.\(^{46}\) Scholars have noted that Danilo II’s works were inspired by the Gospels, notably the Gospel of Matthew, the Psalms, the writings of the prophets, and in particular, the Letters to the Apostles.\(^{47}\) In Paul’s Letter to the Romans (Rom. 6:3–5) he offers his lesson on baptism, describing it as a sacramental dying with Christ and rising again with Him:

> Know ye not, that so many of us were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.

This symbolic equating of baptism and the mystical tomb is perhaps best represented in the *katholikon* of the Dečani monastery from the fourteenth century, which

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\(^{42}\) *Bedard*, Symbolism of the Baptismal Font, 4–17.


\(^{47}\) *Tomenkovic*, Monaka tradicija o zaduzbinama, 425–443, 432.
was overseen by Archbishop Danilo II. It is likely that Danilo II played a significant role in determining the sculptural program and it is therefore noteworthy that the south portal’s lunette of the narthex bears a representation of the Baptism of Christ consisting of symbols that do not appear in other depictions of this theme (Fig. 5). In the scene showing Christ being baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist, the streaming rivulets of the river are placed within a sarcophagus. According to Janko Maglovski, this indicates that through baptism, corruptible matter may achieve eternal salvation, symbolically represented on the northern portal of the same narthex by a Leafed Cross (Fig. 6). In addition to the representation of the river Jordan, a pair of rosettes on both ends of the lateral sides of the casket at Dečani, bring to mind similar ones depicted in the scene above the main entrance to the church of the Virgin Hodegetria as well as the one carved on the sarcophagus of Danilo II.

The eschatological meaning of baptism in relation to the funeral function of the church of the Virgin Hodegetria in Peć and the tomb of Danilo II is further emphasized inside the church itself. The diakonikon, on the south side of the altar is dedicated to John the Baptist and houses his painted cycle. Furthermore, on the north arm of the naos, just beside the tomb, one finds a monumental composition of the Anastasis. Unusually, John the Baptist is depicted preaching in Hades (Fig. 7). Such a deviation from established iconographic models indicates Danilo II’s involvement in the creation of a program in which baptism is figured as a means to salvation and redemption.

The question of redemption returns us to the figure of the Virgin above the entrance to Danilo II’s church. The Mother of God functions in the mural at Peć both as a vehicle for the incarnation of Christ, but also as a vessel though which sin is cleansed. The role of the Virgin as the Vessel of Salvation through which the Divine Logos was brought into the world and through which sin was taken away played an important role in Byzantine theology. Hymnographic texts often compare the Virgin to the Holy Vessel. In the Akathistos Hymn, oikos 21 the Virgin is linked to both the sacrament of baptism as well as the Eucharist.

Hail, you who prefigure the baptismal font;
Hail, you who take away the filth of sin
Hail, basin that washes clean the conscience;
Hail, bowl wherein is mixed the wine of mighty joy.

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48 It is likely that Danilo II made a donation to the monastery as well, see Todić, Čanak Medić, The Dečani Monastery, 19. On Danilo’s role in building the monastery and the iconographic program of its sculpture see, Todić, Čanak Medić, Dečani Monastery, 22–25 and 301.
49 Todić, Čanak Medić, Dečani Monastery, 281–283.
50 Maglovski, Dečanska skulptura – program i smisao, 193–225.
51 Đurić, Ćirković, Korać, Pečka patrijaršija, 162.
52 Gavrilović, Pogledi arhiepiskopa Danila II, 476–477.
Fig. 5. Baptism of Christ, south portal of the narthex, the Church of the Christ Pantocrator, Dečani monastery, 14th century

Fig. 6. Leafed Cross, north portal of the narthex, the Church of the Christ Pantocrator, Dečani monastery, 14th century
Mary’s role as an assistant in the Incarnation who played a necessary part in the redemption is stressed in the so-called Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, whose origin may be traced to the First Council of Constantinople of 381. The creed, which was confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon and was originally a baptismal creed, states: “For us humans and for our salvation he came down from the heavens and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.” The Virgin’s womb can be conceived as an original site of baptism from the words of Didymus of Alexandria (d. 398): “For she is the baptismal font of the Trinity, the workshop of salvation of all believers; and those who bathe therein she frees from the bite of the serpent and she becomes mother of all, a virgin dwelling in the Holy Spirit...” Didymus regards the Virgin as the second Eve. The baptismal font signifies the rebirth of the baptized, which results in their spiritual regeneration in the present and perfection in eschatological time.

The concepts of resurrection and rebirth are further linked in the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia in his Mystagogica Catecheses (ca. late fourth century) when he analogizes baptism and the Eucharist. He writes: “It is indeed evident to us,

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55 Papadakis, Constantinople I, vol. 1, 512.
56 ACO II.1.2.128. For translation see, Decrees of the ecumenical councils, vol. 1, 24
58 Peltomaa, The Image of the Virgin Mary, 133.
according to the words of the Apostle, that when we perform either baptism or the Eucharist we perform them in remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ.”

The representation of the Mother of God with Archbishop Danilo II and St. Nicholas reveals the twofold function of the Virgin. She is not only a patron saint but also a guide for those who enter the church seeking redemption and salvation. The primary function of the images located above a church’s entrance was the exaltation of the patron saint. In Peć, in addition to glorifying the Virgin, the fresco over the main door also affirmed that Christ was the path to salvation. This was achieved by a series of unified allusions to the mystery of the Eucharist, baptism and the Virgin as a second Eve. The emphasis on the sacraments of the church directly refers to the role of the priest, specifically, of the role of archbishop Danilo II. The relationship between baptism and the church as a burial place of Danilo II is symbolically underscored by the depiction of Christ inside the vessel of cruciform shape above the main church entrance. The image of the Virgin with Christ Child above the door refers to the rebirth of the baptized, of spiritual regeneration in the present moment, and hope of eventual spiritual perfection. The mural’s sacramental symbolism leads the viewer from outside to inside, from birth to death and rebirth, marking the path to redemption.

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ПУТ СПАСЕЊА: РАЗМАТРАЊЕ УЛОГЕ ПРЕДСТАВЕ БОГОРОДИЦЕ НАД УЛАЗОМ У ЦРКВУ БОГОРОДИЦЕ ОДИГИТРИЈЕ У ПЕЂИ

Коначни облик манастирског комплекса Пећке архиепископије и касније Патријаршије остварен је додавањем три грађевине у време архиепископа Данила II (1324–1337). Постојећој целини од две цркве, Св. апостола и Св. Дионисију, Данило II је око 1330. додао Цркву Богородице Одигитрије као своју задужбину у којој ће бити сахрањен. Његов саркофаг је постављен у северо-западном углу цркве испод свода одвојеног, издуженог простора. Почетком четврте деценије XIV века Данило II је све три цркве повезао припратом са кулом-звоником, а са јужне стране Цркве Богородице Одигитрије додао је параклис посвећен Светом Николи.

На западној фасади Цркве Богородице Одигитрије изnad улаза који води из припрате у наос, а на месту предвиђеном за патрона храма, насликана је монументална представа Богородице. Својом необичном и комплексном иконографијом издија се од уобичајених представа Богородице Одигитрије. Наслика на је фронтално у молитвеном ставу раширених руку са длановима окренутим нагоре, а испред њених груди у сасуду крстоликог облика налази се Христ Емануил. Сасуда је споља окер-златасте боје, док јој је унутрашњост обојена црвено, чије ивице подсећају бојом на шаре мермера. Христ благосиља са обе руке, а цела представа је фланкирана фигурама Светог Николе и архиепископа Данила II.

Научници су често поредили представу Богородице из Пећи са иконографским типом Богородице Зωοδόχος Πηγή повезаног са култом истоименог манастира у Цариграду или Богородицом Живоносни источник. Историчари су уверљиво демонстрирали да се представа у Пећи разликује од ових типова по иконографији и најближу аналогију су пронашли у иконографском типу Богородице Влахернитисе или Знамења. За разлику од иконографије Богородице Знамења за коју је карактеристичан медаљон на грудима у коме је представљен Христ Емануил, на пећкој фресци Христ је у крстоликој посуди која подсећа на путир. У досадашњим истраживањима закључено је да иконографска иновација у Пећи упућује на Христову жртву, а самим тим и на свету тајну Евхаристије и веру у спасење кроз цркву и да је овако својствена иконографија свакако настала по налогу и жељи самог ктитора Данила II.

Васкрсење и спасење, као и Христов други долазак били су од велике важности за архиепископа Данила II и биле су истакнуте теме у његовом књижевном делу као и уметности изведеној под његовим надзором. Oвај рад ослањајући се на претходна истраживања разматра концептуалну повезаност фреске изnad
улаза у Цркву Богородице Одигитрије у Пећи и њеног самосвојног иконографског решења са светом тајном крштења као и са наменом цркве као маузолеја и гробом архиепископа Данила II у контексту спасења и васкрсења.

Крстолики облик посуде у којој је приказан Христ на фресци у Пећи подсећа на ранохришћанске крстионице. Овакав облик посуде је често представљан у сликарству и рукописним минијатурама у средњој и позно византијској уметности. Популарност овог облика произилази из симболичних импликација његове форме и може се тумачити као израз доктрине која наглашава да кроз крштење, хришћани симболично учествују у Христовој смрти и васкрсењу, умиру заједно са њим и поново васкрславају. На тај начин посуда постаје симболично мистички гроб.

Да су васкрсење и спасење, као и Христов други долазак били од велике важности за архиепископа Данила II огледа се и на саркофагу над његовим гробом на коме доминира рељефна декорација крстова, розета и ротирајућег диска, а посебно место заузима представа Хетимасије. Есхатолошка симболика крштења у односу на фунерарни карактер цркве и гроб Данила II је даље истакнута унутар саме цркве. Наиме ђаконикон са јужне стране олтарског простора је посвећен Јовану Крститељу у коме доминира рељефна декорација крстова, розета и ротирајућег диска, а посебно место заузима представа Силаска у ад. Представа одступа од уобичајеног иконографског модела јер је на њој представљен Јован Крститељ како проповеда у ад. Такво одступање указује на умешаност Данила II у стварању програма у коме се крштење схвата као средство спасења и искупљења.

Питање спасења нас враћа на лик Богородице над улазом у цркву. Она је овде представљена као инструмент инкарнације Христа али и као сасуда у коjoј је грех очишћен. Улога Богородице као сасуде спасења кроз крстову Божански Логос доведен на свет и кроз коjу је грех очишћен имала је важну улогу у византијскоj теологији. Богородица је представљена као друга или нова Ева, а вода у њеноj утроби одржавала живот и чисти грех. Богородичина утроба, као место оваплоћења, сагледавана је и као оригинално место Христовог крштења, а самим тим и део Христовог искупљења.

Представа Богородице са архиепископом Данилом II и Светим Николом изнад улаза у Цркву Богородице Одигитрије у Пећи открива двострук улогу Богородице. Она није само патрон светитељ храма, већ и водич за оне који уђу у цркву тражећи искупљење и спасење. Примарна функција слика које се налазе изнад улаза у цркву био је поштовање патрона светитеља. У Пећи је поред величана Богородице, фреска изнад улазних врата потврдила да је Христ пут који треба следити ка спасењу. Ово је постигнуто кроз одређено ликовна решења формирањем низа јединствених алузија на свете тајне причешћа, крштења као и Богородице као друге Еве. Нагласак на светим тајнама цркве директно упућује на улогу свештеника представљених на фресци, посебно, на улогу архиепископа
Данила II. Однос између свете тајне крштења и фунерарне намене цркве у којој је сахрањен њен ктитор Данила II симболично је истакнуто представом Христа унутар посуде крстастог облика изнад главног улаза цркве. Тако, фреска са иконографијом која својом симболиком упућује на свете тајне причешћа и крштења води гледаоца од спољашњости ка унутрашњости цркве, од рођења до смрти и поновног рађања, означавајући пут спасења.