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‘SHE BEGGED THE CHILD: LET ME EMBRACE THEE, LORD!’ A BYZANTINE ICON WITH THE VIRGIN ELEOUSA IN THE POOR CLARES CONVENT IN CRACOW*

Byzantine icons are extremely rare in Poland. A twelfth-century miniature mosaic icon with the Virgin Hagiosoritissa, that has been kept in the Poor Clares Convent in Cracow since the times of the Blessed Salomea (d. 1268), unquestionably has a pride of place among them.¹ Since fairly recently we have known of yet another icon held in the same convent, that was discovered during the preparations for the exhibition *Pax et Bonum. Skarby Klarysek krakowskich* [Pax et Bonum. The Treasures of the Cracow Poor Clares], presented in the Arsenal of the Czartoryski Museum in September and October 1999. During the conservation treatment of a Virgin and Child panel, which until then was believed to be a Gothic picture repainted in the seventeenth century, a singularly beautiful icon of the Virgin Eleousa [Figs 1–2], which displayed stylistic features of the Palaiologan-era painting, emerged beneath a few layers of repainting.²

* I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Most Reverend Mother Abbess Barbara Dragon for her gracious consent to putting the icon under scholarly examination, for making available to me primary source and iconographic materials and for allowing for their publication. I convey my heartfelt thanks to Sister Elżbieta OSC for her constant help and unfaltering friendliness during my work on the present paper.

¹ A. RÓŻYCKA-BRYZEK, ‘Matka Boska Hagiosoritissa’, in *Pax et Bonum. Skarby Klarysek krakowskich*, ed. by A. Włodarek, exh. cat., Cracow, 1999, pp. 42–46; *eadem*, ‘Mozaikowa ikona Matki Boskiej Hagiosoritissy w klasztorze ss. Klarysek w Krakowie’, in *Magistro et Amico amici discipulique. Lechowi Kalinowskiemu w osiemdziesiątce urodzin*, ed. by J. Gadomski *et al.*, Cracow, 2002, pp. 405–426.

² The results of my initial identification of the style and iconography of this icon were presented at the scholarly conference

The picture of the Virgin and Child, recorded in the *Catalogue of Historic Monuments in Poland* in 1971, had remained outside the scope of scholarly interest until 1999, when Wioletta Malska revealed its original Byzantine paint layer.³ In the catalogue of the *Pax et Bonum* exhibition it was tentatively described as an Italian painting from the second half of the fourteenth century and illustrated with a photo taken before the conservation.⁴ At the same time, following my initial and rather cursory first-hand examination of the original, I concluded that this painting was an icon of the Virgin Eleousa executed around 1300 in the Balkan milieu of Byzantine art.⁵ Fr Michał Janocha, who was the first to publish a photograph of the icon after conservation, attributed it to Italo-Byzantine school

‘Sztuka w kręgu krakowskich franciszkanów i klarysek’ [Art in the Milieu of the Cracow Franciscans and Poor Clares], organised by the Art History Institute of the Jagiellonian University and the Franciscan Friary in Cracow, held on 21–23 May 2015. The paper awaits publication.

³ See W. MAŁSKA, *Konserwacja obrazu sztalugowego na podobrazu drewnianym – ‘Matka Boska z Dzieciątkiem’ z klasztoru S.S. Klarysek w Krakowie*, diploma work carried out under the supervision of Prof. M. Schuster-Gawłowska at the Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, The Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, 2000. All references to this work in the present paper are based on a copy kept in the Poor Clares convent in Cracow.

⁴ *Pax et Bonum*, p. 47 (as in note 1).

⁵ M. SMORAĞ RÓŻYCKA, ‘Kościół wschodni i jego sztuka na ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej’, in *Cerkiew – wielka tajemnica. Sztuka cerkiewna od XI wieku do 1917 ze zbiorów polskich*, exh. cat. Muzeum Początków Państwa Polskiego in Gniezno, Gniezno, 2001, p. 24, n. 35.





1. The Virgin Eleousa, 1300 (?), Cracow, convent of the Poor Clares. Photo: J. Podlecki

and dated to the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries.⁶ A short note on the icon was published by Mirosław Piotr Kruk who determined its iconographic type as the *Sweet-loving* (Gr. *Glykophilousa*), pointed in general terms to its Balkan origins and dated it tentatively to the fourteenth century (?).⁷ He also repeated the supposition, already stated in the *Catalogue of Historic Monuments in Poland* and subsequently in the *Pax et Bonum* exhibition catalogue, that the icon, after having been re-painted, served as a central panel of a triptych whose wings were donated to the National Museum in Cracow by Abbess Anna Rodakowska (1895–1898) in 1896. Yet, in reports dealing with this donation no mention had been made of the central panel. Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, the then director of the National Museum, which at that time was housed in the Sukiennice [Cloth Hall], in a letter of 21 May 1896 asked Abbess Anna Rodakowska about ‘two little winglets from a triptych, painted on both sides, nowadays no longer useful and put in storage.’⁸ In the same letter Łuszczkiewicz mentioned that, when he and Stanisław Tomkowicz had been examining the treasures of the convent a few days earlier, Abbess Rodakowska decided ‘in her generosity to donate wings of the triptych to the collection of the National Museum in Sukiennice [Cloth Hall]’, and that this donation was ‘related to patriotic objectives and [will be of service to] Polish learning.’⁹ The paintings must have been removed to the museum within a few days since, already on 24 May 1896, Łuszczkiewicz issued an official letter with thanks for the gift: ‘In appreciation of the noble sacrifice of the Convent of St Andrew made for the benefit of the national collection, which consists in donating to the museum, as its perpetual property, two wings, painted on both sides, of a seventeenth-century triptych, measuring 0.20 × 0.55, the Committee of the National Museum in Cracow has the honour to express their gratitude for the gift and commend the Museum to the Convent’s generosity also in future.’¹⁰ What follows from the correspondence is merely that the paintings used to be parts of an otherwise unknown triptych. Łuszczkiewicz does not mention the central panel at all. Nor was this problem clarified by Feliks Kopera, who dated both panels to the second half of the sixteenth century and tentatively attributed them to Jan Ziarnko: ‘The two little paintings – wings of a small triptych in the National Museum, depicting saints, painted subtly in a style reminiscent of an engraver’s, using a combination of oil and tempera – could be ascribed

to Ziarnko.’¹¹ The problem of authorship was ultimately solved, so it seems, when an inscription, written in an open book depicted in the *Annunciation* (on the obverse of the left wing), reading: SA[M]V|EL|CRUG:|ERAN[N]O|1630 PINX[IT], was deciphered. According to it, the panels were painted by Samuel Cruger.¹² What could not be determined, however, was the date when the triptych was dismantled. In 1896, Łuszczkiewicz and Tomkowicz saw already two wings ‘put in storage’.

The painting of the Virgin and Child underwent conservation treatment twice. The first one was carried out by Irena Świącicka in 1963, as testified by an inscription on the reverse: ‘X–XI w’, ‘konserwowana | IRENA ŚWIĘCICKA | STARANIEM MATKI ANTONINY | JANUSZ | 1963’ [‘X–XI c’, ‘restored by | IRENA ŚWIĘCICKA | ON THE INITIATIVE OF MOTHER ANTONINA | JANUSZ | 1963’]. The second treatment, conducted by Wioletta Malska from 13 January 1999 to 28 June 2000, revealed a hitherto unknown original paint layer which exhibits similarities in composition and iconography with the image on the surface, but is completely different from it in style and colours.

A limewood support measuring 54 × 40 × 1 cm and covered with a layer of gesso priming, represents a half-length image of the Virgin and Child, painted in tempera against a gold background [Fig. 1]. The panel is mounted in a moulded limewood frame measuring 4.5 × 2.7 cm, and fixed by means of larchwood dowels.

Mary is shown in a purple dress, trimmed with gold, and a light-blue maphorion, under which a red skull-cap covering the hair is visible. She carries the Christ Child on her left arm, pressing his cheek to her face. The left hand of the Child is placed in Mary’s right; his right hand is missing owing to the loss of the paint layer. The Child wears a white patterned chiton with application in the form of a red stripe, and a golden himation wrapped around his waist and draped around his legs. The Child’s bare feet, in a characteristic crossed position, are visible under the himation: the right foot, its sole turned towards the viewer, is put across the left one, thus partially obscuring it. Original halos were lost along with substantial portions of the gold ground, of which only three small fragments survive: two larger areas – one on the right-hand side, with legible incised acanthus leaves arranged in the candelabra form, and one on the left, as well as the smallest one, above the Virgin’s head, which was inpainted by Wioletta Malska in order to give the background a uniform appearance.¹³ Numerous marks left by nails, revealed during the most recent conservation treatment, likely suggest that

⁶ Fr M. JANOCHA, *Ikony w Polsce. Od średniowiecza do współczesności*, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 420–421, Fig. 314.

⁷ M.P. KRUK, *Ikony-obrazy w świątyniach rzymsko-katolickich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, Cracow, 2011, pp. 30–31, 323, Figs 4–5.

⁸ ‘dwa skrzydełka małe od tryptyku malowane obustronnie a dziś niepożyteczne więcej i złożone na skład’, Archives of the Poor Clares Convent (Archiwum Klasztoru Klarysek), ms B 22, p. 45.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

¹¹ F. KOPERA, *Malarstwo w Polsce od XVI do XVIII wieku. (Renesans, Barok, Rokoko)*, Cracow, 1926 (*Dzieje malarstwa w Polsce*, pt II), pp. 173–174, fig. 175; see also F. KOPERA, J. KWIATKOWSKI, *Obrazy polskiego pochodzenia w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie*, Cracow, 1929, pp. 92–93, fig. 80.

¹² See *Pax et Bonum*, p. 49 (as in note 1).

¹³ W. MALSKA, *Konserwacja obrazu sztalugowego*, p. 26 (as in note 3).



2. The Virgin Eleousa, 1300 (?) (detail). Photo: J. Podlecki

some areas of the painting (halos) had been decorated with metal revetments and probably also with crowns.¹⁴

The faces have been very well preserved and some minor craquelures do not obliterate their soft features, modelled using tonal light effects [Fig. 2]. The Virgin's distinctive eyes, set beneath the arcs of her eyebrows, are delicately shaded. She has a straight nose, prominent lips and rounded chin. Minute light-coloured hatchings in the corners of her eyes, above the upper lip and on the chin delicately brighten up the face. The equally distinctive eyes of the Child are more circular than those of his mother, his nose is shorter and slightly upturned, and the shape of his face is more rounded. Particularly noticeable are the Virgin's hands with long, slim fingers and beautifully delineated nails. The best preserved fragments of Mary's maphorion and the Child's chiton reveal soft folds: more numerous on the Virgin's right shoulder, in her bent arm as well as on the Child's left sleeve, where they are modelled by means of subtle passages from darker tones in the furrows to lighter ones on bulging parts, which are additionally brightened up with white highlights. Even the more substantial losses to the paint layer in some parts do not obscure the superb workmanship of the icon, which

was painted freely and with flair, manifesting the artist's full command of his craft. Also the exquisitely balanced proportions of the figures can be appreciated, even though the panel was likely truncated and the painted surface was additionally reduced by the frame that was applied on top of it. The palette, which is rather limited, consists of the white and gold colours of the Child's garments and the blue and red of the Virgin's robes, as well as the beautiful ochre hues in the flesh tones of both figures. Undoubtedly the most prominent is the intense light-blue tone of the Virgin's maphorion. An analysis carried out during the painting's conservation treatment has revealed that these parts belong to the original paint layer and were executed using azurite and lead white.¹⁵

THE BLUE MAPHORION OF THE THEOTOKOS

In Byzantine art the robes of the Virgin are usually maintained in saturated tones of sapphire blue and dark purple, and often trimmed with gold. There was, however, no uniform or fixed pattern that would assign particular

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 9–10, 35ff.



3. The Virgin Eleousa, Novgorod, early 13th c., Moscow, Cathedral of the Dormition of the Virgin. Photo: www.icon-art.info



4. Saints Peter and Paul, Novgorod, mid-11th c. (detail). Photo: www.icon-art.info

colours to individual items of clothing. And thus, there exist depictions the Virgin in entirely blue or entirely purple garments, but she is also shown wearing a blue maphorion and a purple gown, or the other way round, in a purple maphorion and a blue robe. This variability can be seen across the entire realm of Byzantine art. Nevertheless, a particular popularity of depictions of the Virgin in entirely blue garments is evident especially in Constantinopolitan painting of the post-Iconoclastic period. Chronologically first among these examples is the mosaic in the apse of the Church of Saint Sophia (867), followed by the commemorative mosaic in the tympanum over the gateway to the south vestibule in that church, which shows the founders: Constantine I with a model of the city and Justinian I with a model of the Church of Saint Sophia before the enthroned Virgin and Child (10th c.), and finally, the foundation mosaic on the eastern wall of the church's south gallery, representing John II Komnenos and Empress Eirene addressing the Virgin Kyriotissa [Fig. 5], from about 1118–1122.¹⁶ Artists who executed mosaics in

¹⁶ See C. MANGO, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, Washington, DC, 1962 (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 8); C. MANGO, E.J.W. HAWKINS, 'The Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 19, 1965, pp. 115–151; N.B. TETERIATNIKOV, *Mosaics of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul: The*

the Church of St Mary Pammakaristos as well as mosaics and frescoes in the Monastery of the Chora alluded to this tradition at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when they depicted the Virgin in intensely blue robes.¹⁷ Also in a scriptorium of the capital city was produced an illuminated manuscript copy of the works by Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (cod. Louvre A53), dated to 1403–1405, that was offered to the famous Saint-Denis Abbey in 1408. Its dedication miniature (fol. 1^r) depicts the Virgin and Child in half-figure blessing the emperor and his family [Fig. 6]. Mary's garments: a maphorion and a dress worn underneath are intensely blue.¹⁸

The absence of similar images among icons is to some degree compensated by two bright-blue stripes, recently discovered during a conservation treatment of the famous *Annunciation* icon from the Monastery of Saint Catherine

Fossati Restoration and the Work of the Byzantine Institute, Washington, DC, 1998.

¹⁷ *The Kariye Djami*, ed. by P. Underwood, New York, 1966, vol. II, fig. 187, vol. III, figs 211, 249; H. BELTING, C. MANGO, D. MOURIKI, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul*, Washington, DC, 1978 (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 15), fig. IV.

¹⁸ *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, Paris, 1992, pp. 463–464.



5. The Virgin Kyriotissa, c. 1118–1122, Constantinople, Church of St Sophia

on Mount Sinai dated to the end of the twelfth century.¹⁹ Perhaps some future treatments will reveal a similar feature also in the image of the Virgin herself.

Among examples produced outside Constantinople, we should first consider the works executed in the capital's immediate proximity, that is, in Rus'. The icon with the Eleousa Mother of God from the Uspenskii (Dormition) Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin (1075 соб/ж-267), painted on a panel whose dimensions are similar to the Cracow work (approx. 52 × 38.5 cm), shows the Virgin holding the Christ Emmanuel in her arms and hugging his face against her cheek [Fig. 3]. The Child's left hand is slightly raised while he holds a scroll, propped on his left knee, in his right. He is dressed in a red chiton and a himation decorated with abundant gold hatching. Mary is singled out by her short purple veil, patterned with gold lattice and trimmed with a gold band, put on top of a maphorion in strikingly light-blue hue. Hardly visible beneath the maphorion is the red skull-cap and a fragment of Mary's purple dress, trimmed with double gold band. The icon is dated to the beginning of the thirteenth century and associated with the Novgorod milieu.²⁰ Its presence

in the Uspenskii Cathedral is confirmed only from the eighteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century it was included in the iconostasis at the church's south wall and, hidden under a silver revetment from 1875, it did not attract scholarly attention until 1961, when the revetment was removed and a painting layer dated to the eighteenth or early seventeenth century was revealed. Only in October 1965, after preliminary examination of the surface of the painting had been conducted, was it decided that the re-painting be removed, and thus the original medieval layer, tentatively dated to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries and ascribed to the Novgorod school, was uncovered.²¹ The bright-blue maphorion, which belongs to the original paint layer, was executed using azurite.²²

A similar bright-blue maphorion was discovered during the conservation treatment of a Novgorodian icon of Our Lady of the Sign (Znamenye) in the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Novgorod (inv. no. Соф. 1; 2175), dated to the mid-twelfth century (before 1169).²³ The icon has been associated with a miraculous image of the Mother of God that reportedly saved Novgorod from the attack of the prince of Suzdal' in 1169.²⁴ What, however, is of particular interest for the painting under discussion is the original colour scheme of the icon, revealed as late as in the 1980s.²⁵ The former, still surviving uppermost layer of the icon contrasts with the bright-blue hue of the Virgin's maphorion and likely also of her dress underneath, painted using azurite.

This kind of intensely light-blue hue can be found in later works as well, such as, for example, the four icons (depicting *Anastasis*, *Ascension of Christ*, *Pentecost*, and the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*) from the Feast tier of the iconostasis in the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Novgorod, dated to 1341.²⁶ The saturated bright-blue tones, discovered after the icons had been cleaned, are found mainly in the mandorla of Christ, but also in the garments of the apostles.

This could have been a constant feature of the Novgorod painting, present there from the very outset, provided the icon with the Apostles Peter and Paul [Fig. 4], dated

khudozhestvennaia kul'tura domongol'skoï Rusi, Moscow, 1972, pp. 270–288; V.N. LAZAREV, *Russkaia ikonopis': ot istokov do nachala XVI veka*, pt 1, Moscow, 2000, pp. 37, 165.

²¹ See O.V. ZONOVA, "Bogomater' Umilenie", pp. 272–274 (as in note 20).

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 280–281.

²³ V.N. LAZAREV, *Russkaia ikonopis'*, p. 38, 166 (as in note 20); E.S. SMIRNOVA, 'Novgorodskaiia ikona "Bogomater' Znamenie": nekotorye voprosy bogorodichnoi ikonografii XII v.', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Balkany, Rus'*, Saint Petersburg, 1995, pp. 288–310.

²⁴ E.S. SMIRNOVA, 'Novgorodskaiia ikona "Bogomater' Znamenie"', pp. 300–301 (as in note 23).

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 288.

²⁶ V.V. FILATOV, *Prazdnichnyi riad Sofii Novgorodskoi: Drevneishaia chast' glavnogo ikonostasa Sofiiskogo sobora*, Leningrad, 1974; *Ikony Velikogo Novgoroda XI – nachala XVI veka*, Moscow, 2008, cat. no. 9, pp. 130–152.

¹⁹ *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843–1261*, ed. by H.C. Evans, W.D. Wixom, (exh. cat.) New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997, pp. 374–375.

²⁰ See O.V. ZONOVA, "Bogomater' Umilenie" XII veka iz Uspenskogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremliá, in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo:*



6. The Virgin Blachernitissa, 1403–1405, cod. Louvre A53, fol. 1^r (detail), Constantinople. Photo: after *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, Paris, 1992

approximately to the mid-eleventh century, was indeed produced in this milieu. It is generally assumed that it was intended for the Novgorod Cathedral of Saint Sophia, but owing to its substantial size (2.36 × 1.47 m) was never part of the iconostasis.²⁷ The uncovered parts of chitons of both Apostles revealed areas of bright blue paint.

Another group of comparative material can be found in the works of art from the artistic circles of the Kingdom of Serbia in the Palaiologan era (1261–1453).

A brightened-up palette – especially the bright blue tones with additional white highlights in the tonal modelling of the garments – similar to that of the Cracow icon, can be seen in the frescoes of the Holy Trinity Church at Sopoćani, from about 1265, commissioned by King Stefan Uroš I Milutin (1243–1276).²⁸ Similarities extend also to the physiognomical types, with their rounded oval faces. The frescoes belong to the first period of Palaiologan painting.

It should be remembered that scholars usually distinguish two main periods in Palaiologan painting. The first one, spanning the last decades of the thirteenth and the

first quarter of the fourteenth century, is characterised by free, painterly style. The subsequent, second, period is distinguished by an expressive linear manner which at the end of the fourteenth century evolved into academic mannerism.²⁹ The principal feature of painting in this period was the return to classical style and a repertory of ancient

²⁷ V.N. LAZAREV, *Russkaia ikonopis'*, pp. 33, 163 (as in note 20).

²⁸ V.J. DJURIĆ, 'La peinture murale serbe du XIII^e siècle', in *L'art byzantin du XIII^e siècle. Symposium de Sopoćani 1965*, Belgrade, 1967, pp. 151–153, 159; T. VELMANS, 'Les valeurs affectives dans la peinture murale byzantine au XIII^e siècle et la manière de les représenter', in *ibidem*, pp. 52–54.

²⁹ See V.N. LAZAREV, *Istoriia vizantijskoi zhivopisi*, 2 vols, rev. edn, Moscow, 1986 (1st edn: Moscow, 1947–1948), pp. 156–189, with ample literature in the notes; A. XYNGOPOULOS, *Thessalonique et la peinture macédonienne*, Athens, 1955; O. DEMUS, 'Die Entstehung des Paläologenstils in der Malerei', in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, Munich, 1958, pp. 1–63; *idem*, 'The Style of the Kariye Djami and its Place in the Development of Palaeologan Art', in *The Kariye Djami*, ed. by P. Underwood, New York, 1966, vol. IV, pp. 107–160; S. RADOJČIĆ, 'Die Entstehung der Malerei der paläologischen Renaissance', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 7, 1958, pp. 105–123; A. GRABAR, 'Les sources des peintres byzantins des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles', *Cahiers Archéologiques*, XII, 1962, pp. 351–380; M. CHATZIDAKIS, 'Classicisme et tendances populaires au XIV^e siècle', in *Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Bucarest 6–12 Septembre 1971*, Bucharest, 1974, vol. I, pp. 153–188; H. BELTING, C. MANGO, D. MOURIKI, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos* (as in note 17); D. MOURIKI, 'Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece at the Beginning of the Fourteenth Century', in *L'art byzantin au début du XIV^e siècle. Symposium de Gračanica 1973*, Belgrade, 1978, pp. 55–83.



7. The Virgin Eleousa, second half of the 15th c., circle of Andreas Ritzos. Photo: after N. Chatzidakis, *Ikonen – die Sammlung Velimezis*, Athens, 2001

iconographic motifs, with simultaneously expanding the narrative Marian and Christological cycles. A new canon of human figure appeared – with monumental proportions and expressively modelled garments, amply folded or picturesquely draped. Physiognomic types changed as well: the former ascetic and serious appearances were replaced by more serene types, with softly modelled facial features. The palette became simpler but markedly brighter, with a predominance of bright blue and green as well as amethyst violet. The richness of their various hues can be best appreciated in the tonal modelling of garments and in the landscapes.

Similar features can be seen in the faces of the Virgin and the Christ Child in the painting under discussion. The oval, softly modelled outlines of Mary's face, with ochre-yellow underpainting of flesh colours and delicate highlights in the form of minute lines along the lower eyelid, above the upper lip and in the dimple of the chin were standard features of painterly modelling at that time. Particularly notable is also the painterly manner of rendering the shape of the narrow nose, with its rounded tip highlighted in white by means of a delicate oval patch. The painter masterfully combined cold and warm hues in order to achieve the natural warmth of the flesh colour.

The same Palaiologan attributes can be seen in the face of the Christ Child, with its markedly rounded cheeks, large eyes and short, as if upturned, nose.

At the present, preliminary stage of research it would be difficult to indicate works of art comparable to the Cracow icon, but many of its characteristics suggest the

work's stylistic affinities with the painting of the Palaiologan era from the last quarter of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century.

THE ICONOGRAPHY: THE ELEOUSA OR THE GLYKOPHILOUSA?

A distinctive iconographic feature of the Cracow icon is the Christ Child tenderly pressing his face against the Virgin's cheek and his hand nestled inside that of his mother. In my first note about the painting I used the epithet *Eleousa*, focusing on the characteristic motif of the Christ Child hugging his face against the cheek of his mother.³⁰ The same term was used by Fr Michał Janocha to describe the painting in a short catalogue entry, and by Paweł Pencakowski, in whose opinion the repainting made the icon look similar to the images of the so-called Cracow Hodegetrias.³¹ Mirosław P. Kruk, in contrast, used the epithet 'Sweet-loving', being an equivalent of the Greek term *Glykophilousa*.³²

There has been a noticeable increase in scholarly interest in Marian iconography in Byzantine art since the first decade of the twenty-first century. It was likely stimulated to some extent by the excellent exhibition, *Mother of God*, opened in October 2000 in the Benaki Museum in Athens. A conference, entitled *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, organised jointly by the museum and the Institute for Byzantine Studies in Athens, was held in January of the following year. Both the exhibition catalogue and conference proceedings were published under the editorship of Maria Vassilaki of the University of Thessaly (Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας) at Volos.³³ Yet, the question of Byzantine images of the Virgin Eleousa had a merely marginal position in the catalogue entries and papers appearing in both of these publications.³⁴ At the same time, the Russian scholar Olga Etingof published an extensive study of Byzantine Marian iconography loosely based on the investigation of the Eleousa Mother of God of Vladimir.³⁵ Etingof proposed to replace the epithet of the Eleousa with that of the *Glykophilousa* (Γλυκοφιλούσα) and its Russian equivalent *Ласкающая*

³⁰ See note 5 above.

³¹ M. JANOCHA, *Ikony w Polsce*, pp. 420–421 (as in note 6); P. PENCAKOWSKI, *Recepcja dzieł dawnej sztuki i pamiątek przeszłości w diecezji krakowskiej w epoce kontrreformacji*, Kraków 2009 (Studia i Materiały Wydziału Konserwacji i Restauracji Dzieł Sztuki w Krakowie, XVIII), p. 161.

³² M.P. KRUK, *Ikony-obrazy*, p. 323, figs 4.1–4.2 (as in note 7).

³³ *Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. by M. Vassilaki, exh. cat. Athens, Benaki Museum, Athens and Milan, 2000; *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. by M. Vassilaki, Burlington, 2005.

³⁴ *Ibidem* (according to index).

³⁵ O.E. ÉTINGOF, *Obraz Bogomateri. Oчерки vizantijskoj ikonografii XI–XIII vekov*, Moscow, 2000.

['Laskaiushchaia', caressing], referring it to various iconographic and compositional variants of a portrayal of a tender relationship between the Virgin and the Christ Child, such as kissing, hugging against the cheek or touching the face.³⁶ At the same time, she admitted that the epithet had appeared only on late icons, in the post-Byzantine era.³⁷ It was mentioned, among other denominations of the Virgin used in inscriptions on icons, by Dionysius of Fourna in his painter's manual, the *Hermeneia*.³⁸ According to Etingof, in Byzantium, the composition in question was imbued with complex symbolic and theological content combining the love of Mary-Ecclesia and the sacrificial Christ. The tenderness of the Virgin and the Christ Child – her son – is a simultaneous expression of God's love of the people and unified love of the faithful of Christ, the Incarnate Logos.³⁹ Of different opinion was Anastasia Drandaki who assumed that the term Glykophilousa did not refer to the Virgin but to the mutual relationship between two persons, in this case, between Mary and her son. In contrast, the epithet Eleousa referred to the Mother of God.⁴⁰

In the normative typology of Marian iconography, initiated by Nikolai Pyotrovych Likhachev and Nikodim Pavlovych Kondakov, toponymic or poetically-theological epithets, borrowed from written devotional tradition and identified in inscriptions on paintings, were ascribed to particular iconographic and compositional formulae of the images of the Virgin.⁴¹ And although it was noted, already a long time ago, that artistic tradition considerably differs from iconographic typology, the terms introduced by Likhachev and Kondakov have been still employed in research on Byzantine (and to some degree also on Western medieval) painting.

Therefore, it has been customary to use the epithet of the Eleousa for an image of the Virgin hugging to her cheek the Christ Child, who is usually holding a scroll – a symbol of the Incarnate Logos – and sometimes encircles Mary's neck with his arm.

Initially, the research on Byzantine Marian iconography was dominated by the conviction that the Eleousa type had originated outside Byzantium. N. P. Likhachev thought that it emerged in medieval Italian painting and was transplanted to Byzantine art only in its late period, in the Palaiologan

era, and through the Balkans found its way also to Rus'.⁴² Kondakov, likewise, did not single out a separate Byzantine type of the Eleousa, referring this term to a variant of the Virgin Hodegetria.⁴³ The only depiction of the Virgin hugging the face of the Child against her cheek mentioned in his work – a relief in San Zeno Chapel in San Marco in Venice – was called using the Russian word *Умиление* ['Umilenie', tenderness].⁴⁴ He considered this term to be the equivalent of the epithet Eleousa – *Милостива* ['Milostiva', compassionate].⁴⁵ The Venetian relief shows the Christ Child standing on his mother's lap, who holds him with her right arm at the waist, with her left pointing in a gesture typical of the Hodegetria images. The inscription in Greek above Mary's throne uses the epithet *Aniketos* (*H ANIKHTOS*), calling her 'the Invincible'.⁴⁶ According to Henry Maguire, the relief was executed approximately in the third quarter of the thirteenth century in the milieu of Byzantine art and reproduced the no longer surviving prototype image venerated in the Marian shrine in the Blachernai Church in Constantinople, known from its depiction in a twelfth-century icon in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai.⁴⁷ He believed the epithet used in the inscription to be a later and local, Venetian addition.⁴⁸

It was not until the original twelfth-century paint layer of the Virgin of Vladimir icon was revealed in 1918 and the results of the subsequent research were published by Mikhail Alpatov and Viktor Nikitych Lazarev in 1925, that a conviction about the Byzantine origin of compositions depicting Mary hugging the Child to her cheek and the name of the Eleousa for such compositions gradually took hold.⁴⁹ On the basis of the stylistic features of the faces of the Virgin and Child – the best preserved fragments of the painting – Alpatov and Lazarev dated the icon to the eleventh or twelfth century and attributed it to a Constantinopolitan workshop. This attribution has retained its validity also in the current literature, although most scholars date the icon to the first quarter or first half of the twelfth

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 67–97.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

³⁸ DIONIZJUSZ z Furny, *Hermeneia, czyli objaśnienie sztuki malarzkiej*, trans. by I. Kania, introduction and ed. by M. Smorąg Różycka, Cracow, 2003, p. 285.

³⁹ O.E. ÉTINGOF, *Obraz Bogomateri*, pp. 52–53 (as in note 35).

⁴⁰ A. DRANDAKI, *Greek Icons 14th–18th Century. The Rena Andreadis Collection*, Athens and Milan, 2002, p. 15, n. 1.

⁴¹ N.P. LIKHACHEV, *Istoricheskoe znachenie italo-grecheskoï ikonopisi: izobrazheniia Bogomateri v proizvedeniakh italo-grecheskikh ikonopistsev i ikh vliianie na kompozitsii niekotorykh proslavennykh russkikh ikon*, Saint Petersburg, 1911; N.P. KONDAKOV, *Ikonografiia Bogomateri*, 2 vols, Saint Petersburg, 1914–1915.

⁴² N.P. LIKHACHEV, *Istoricheskoe znachenie*, especially pp. 168–175 (as in note 41).

⁴³ N.P. KONDAKOV, *Ikonografiia Bogomateri*, vol. II, pp. 183–184 (as in note 41).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 381–382.

⁴⁵ N.P. KONDAKOV, *Ikonografiia Bogomateri. Sviazi grecheskoï i russkoï ikonopisi s ital'ianskoïu zhivopis'iu rannego Vozrozhdeniia*, Saint Petersburg, 1910, pp. 150–151.

⁴⁶ C. DAVIS, *Byzantine Relief Icons in Venice and along the Adriatic Coast: Orants and other Images of the Mother of God*, Munich, 2006, p. 33; H. MAGUIRE, 'The Aniketos Icon and the Display of Relics in the Decoration of San Marco', in *San Marco, Byzantium and the Myths of Venice*, ed. by H. Maguire, R. S. Nelson, Washington, 2010, pp. 91–111.

⁴⁷ H. MAGUIRE, 'The Aniketos Icon', p. 98 (as in note 46).

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

⁴⁹ M. ALPATOFF, V. LASAREFF, 'Ein byzantinisches Tafelwerk aus der Komnenenepoche', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 46, 1925, pp. 140–155.

century, associating it with a group of icons removed by Grand Prince Andrei Bogoliubski to Vladimir in 1155:

The same summer [6663/1155] Andrei left his father for Suzdal' and brought there an icon of the Holy Mother of God that had been brought from Tsargrad [Constantinople] on the same ship as the Pirogoshcha [Mother of God icon]; and covered it in more than thirty hryvnas of gold, not to mention silver, precious stones and pearls, and [thus] decorated, he put it in his church in Vladimir.⁵⁰

As far as the iconographic type of the Virgin Eleousa is concerned, V. N. Lazarev, just as N. P. Kondakov, derived its origins from the Hodegetria, in a broader discussion emphasising the Byzantine lineage of this formula, which was shaped in Constantinople around the eleventh century, and from where it spread to Rus', Georgia and Western art.⁵¹

Following this train of thought, Mirjana Tatić-Djurić challenged the mere existence of the iconographic type of the Virgin Eleousa, arguing strongly that '[...] le type iconographique d'Eléousa n' existe pas. Ou pour mieux dire il n' existe pas de forme unique sous laquelle il apparaîtrait. Les artistes médiévaux ont bien su prouver le large sens de l'appellatif Eléousa signant dans les différentes époques tout un caléidoscope de variations sur le sujet mariologique' ['the iconographic type of the Eleousa does not exist. Or, to be more precise, there does not exist a distinct form in which it appeared. Medieval artists knew how to express the broad sense of the epithet of the Eleousa which in various epochs assumed a whole spectrum of different meanings, variations on the Mariological theme'].⁵² The kind of 'migration', so to speak, of the term 'Eleousa' between various Marian images, indicated

by Tatić-Djurić, has led the scholar to a compelling conclusion that this epithet was an expression of a dogma of Mary's virginal motherhood combined with the Passion and death of the Incarnate Logos.⁵³ This complex content and the metaphorical epithets stemmed mainly from religious poetry from which Byzantine artists in the post-Iconoclastic period abundantly drew inspiration.⁵⁴ According to Tatić-Djurić, it was Andrew of Crete who first associated the name 'Eleousa' with the eschatological sense of Mary's love.⁵⁵

'SHE BEGGED THE CHILD: LET ME EMBRACE THEE, LORD!'⁵⁶

Many works of art from the eleventh and twelfth centuries testify to the fact that the iconographic formula of the Virgin Mary hugging the Christ Child to her cheek had been known in Byzantium at that time and that such images enjoyed particular veneration.

From some time scholars have been interested in the icon with a cycle of Christ's Passion and his miracles in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, from the end of the eleventh or the twelfth century. The reason for this interest is a sequence of five images of the Virgin in the painting's upper part. The four portrayals of the Virgin in half-figure are labelled with individual epithets: Blachernitissa, Hodegetria, Hagiosoritissa and Chimeutissa. The enthroned Mother of God with the Christ Child – *Meter Theou* – and a founder in monk's garb kneeling before her were depicted in the midpoint of the four images.⁵⁷ Apparently, these four icons were especially venerated by the founder or, more generally, were most venerated in Constantinople. The image of the Virgin Mary hugging the Child to her cheek was identified here with the epithet 'Blachernitissa', alluding to the miracle-working icon kept at the Blachernai in the north-western corner of the city where the imperial palace complex with the famous chapel of the Virgin Mary was located.

⁵⁰ 'Того же лета [6663/1155] иде Андрей от отца своего Суждалю, и принесе ида икону святую Богородицю, юже принесоша в едином корабли с Пирогощею из Царяграда; и вкова в ню боле триидесят гривен золота, кроме серебра и камня драгого и жемчуга, и украсив и постави и в церкви своей Володимери', *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. I: *Lavrentievskaja i Troitskaja lietopisi*, Saint Petersburg, 1846, p. 148. See *Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereia. Katalog sobraniia*, vol. I: *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo X – nachala XV veka*, Moscow, 1995, pp. 35–40; O.E. ÉTINGOF, 'K rannei istorii ikony "Vladimirskaia Bogomater'" i traditsii Vlahernnskogo Bogorodichnogo kul'ta na Rusi v XI–XII vv', in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Vizantiia i Drevniaia Rus': K 100-letiiu Andreia Nikolaevicha Grabara (1896–1990)*, ed. by E.S. Smirnova, Saint Petersburg, 1999, pp. 290–305.

⁵¹ V. N. LASAREFF, 'Studies in the Iconography of the Virgin', *The Art Bulletin*, 20, 1938, especially pp. 36–42; V. N. LAZAREV, 'Etiudi po ikonografii Bogomateri', in V. N. LAZAREV, *Vizantiiskaia zhivopis'*, Moscow, 1971, pp. 282–290.

⁵² M. TATIĆ-DJURIĆ, 'Eleousa. A la recherche du type iconographique', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 25, 1976, p. 266.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

⁵⁴ See H. MAGUIRE, *Art and Eloquence*, Princeton, 1981.

⁵⁵ M. TATIĆ-DJURIĆ, 'Eleousa', pp. 264–265 (as in note 52).

⁵⁶ Quoted after [Saint Ephraim the Syrian] Św. Efreim Syryjczyk, 'Pieśń Maryi do Boskiego Dziecięcia', in *Ojcowie Kościoła greccy i syryjscy. Teksty o Matce Boskiej*, transl. and introduction by W. Kania, Niepokalanów, 1981, p. 45.

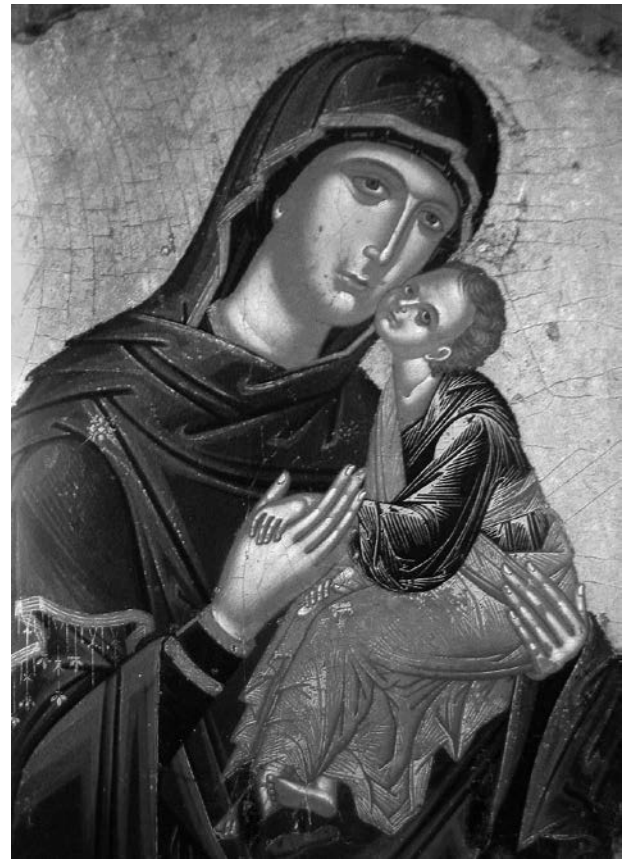
⁵⁷ G. and M. SOTIRIOU, *Icones du Mont Sinai*, vol. I, Athens, 1956, pp. 125–128, vol. II: Athens, 1958, figs 146–149; G. BABIĆ, 'Les images byzantines et leurs degrés de signification: l'exemple de l'Hodegetria', in *Byzance et les images. Cycle de conférences organisés au musée du Louvre par le Service culturel du 5 octobre au 7 décembre 1992*, Paris, 1994, p. 200, fig. 4; O.E. ÉTINGOF, *Obraz Bogomateri*, pp. 59–61, 111–113, 128, figs 33, 57 (as in note 35); A. WEYL CARR, 'Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 56, 2002, pp. 75–92.

On the basis of written and iconographic sources, four different images of the Virgin Mary can be associated with the Blachernai shrine in the Byzantine capital: the Virgin Orans; the *Episkepsis*, with Christ Emmanuel in a medallion on her breast; the *Nikopoia*; and the Eleousa.⁵⁸ The Sinai Monastery icon seems to suggest that it was precisely the Eleousa type that was given the toponymic epithet of the Blachernitissa. Yet the depiction of the Child in this painting, shown with straight legs, departs from the later representations of the type, as for example in the icon of the Virgin of Vladimir.

Another location in Constantinople where the Virgin Eleousa enjoyed special veneration was the Monastery of the Pantocrator, erected around 1118–1136 by emperor John II Komnenos and his wife Eirene. Three interconnected churches were built in the monastery: one on the south, dedicated to Christ Pantocrator, one on the north, dedicated to the Virgin Eleousa, while the imperial tomb church, dedicated to Archangel Michael, was located between them.

From a typikon conferred on the monastery in 1136 one can learn about an especially venerated icon of the Virgin Eleousa, kept in the eponymous church.⁵⁹ It follows from the wider context that there were two images of the Eleousa in the church, one of which, apparently portable, was located in the nave, and another, executed in mosaic, perhaps on wall, was in the narthex.⁶⁰ Regrettably, the typikon does not mention any details informing about the forms of the depictions of the Virgin in these images.

Some clues, however, can be inferred from a wall painting in the monastery of Saint Neophytos at Paphos on Cyprus, dated to the last decade of the twelfth century, which depicts St Stephen the Younger with an icon of the Virgin Eleousa.⁶¹ An unrolled scroll below bears the following inscription in Greek: *Ei tis ou proskyni ton k[yrion]*



8. The Virgin Eleousa, c. 1500, Ioannina, bishop's palace chapel. Photo: after *Byzantine and Post-byzantine Art*, Athens, 1985

[...] *k[ai] ten achranton autou M[ete]ra en ikoni perigrapto e[st]o anathema* ('If a man does not reverence our Lord Jesus Christ and his spotless Mother depicted on an icon, let him be anathema').⁶² According to his *Life*, Stephen the Younger came to the world thanks to a miraculous intervention of an icon of the Virgin from the Blachernai. Stephen's mother repeatedly offered prayers to 'the Virgin Mary holding her son in her arms'. One day the Mother of God appeared to the pious woman in the flesh, in human form (*homoioplastōs*), foretelling the birth of her son. Since then the miraculous Blachernai image of the Theotokos became permanently associated with the life of the future defender of images. It should be noted that the painter of the Cypriot fresco depicted the Blachernai image in the type known from the icon of the Virgin of Vladimir: Mary, hugging the Child against her cheek, holds him on her right arm.

In the Cracow icon, the left hand of the Child is nestled in Mary's right. N. P. Likhachev traces the origins of this feature to the Italo-Greek school, in which a type of a miraculous icon with the Roman Virgin – a copy of

⁵⁸ The theme of the enthroned Blachernitissa has been extensively developed by I. ZERVOU TOGNAZZI, 'L'iconografia e la "vita" delle miracolose icone della Theotokos Brefokratoussa e Odighitria', *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, 40 N.S., 1986, pp. 262–287; see also M. SMORAG RÓŻYCKA, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie miniatury Kodeksu Gertrudy. O kontekstach ideowych i artystycznych sztuki Rusi Kijowskiej XI wieku*, Cracow, 2003, pp. 175–177.

⁵⁹ For the typikon see P. GAUTIER, 'Le typikon du Christ Saviour Pantocrator', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 1974, 32, pp. 1–145; 'Typikon of the Imperial Monastery of the Pantocrator', transl. and with a commentary by R. Jordan, in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founder's Typika and Testaments*, ed. by J. Thomas, A.C. Hero, Washington, 2000 (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 35), pp. 725–781.

⁶⁰ M.N. BUTYRSKIĪ, 'Vizantiiskoe bogoslužhenie u ikony soglasno tipiku monastyria Pantokratora 1136 goda', in *Chudotvornaia ikona v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi*, ed. by A.M. Lidov, Moscow, 1996, pp. 145–158.

⁶¹ On the monastery of Saint Neophytos at Paphos see C. MANGO, E.J.W. HAWKINS, 'The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and its Wall Paintings', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 20, 1966, pp. 119–206;

R. CORMACK, *Writing in Gold. Byzantine Society and its Icons*, London, 1985, pp. 215–251.

⁶² C. MANGO, E.J.W. HAWKINS, 'The Hermitage of St. Neophytos', pp. 156–157, figs 41 and 43 (as in note 61) (quotation on p. 156); R. CORMACK, *Writing in Gold*, p. 243, fig. 94 (as in note 61).



9. The Virgin Eleousa, c. 1343, Dečani, Monastery of the Pantocrator (detail of the iconostasis).
Photo: www.decani.org

a miracle-working image from Lydda sent to Rome by Saint German, a patriarch of Constantinople – was reproduced.⁶³ Indeed, this type was very popular in Italo-Greek icon painting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, appearing in a few iconographic and compositional variants, as for example the icons from the Likhachev collection.⁶⁴ A work that seems to reveal closest affinities with the Cracow painting is the icon in the bishop's palace at Ioannina, from about 1500 [Fig. 8], and icons associated with the milieu of Andreas Ritzos (1421–1492) to whom Manolis Chatzidakis attributed the invention of the type [Fig. 7].⁶⁵ The icon at Ioannina bears an inscription reading: *HEAEYCA*. Yet, a significant feature of icons in this

type – a sandal falling off the Christ Child's foot – is absent from the Cracow painting.

A similar rendition of the Child's hand held by Mary can be seen in the icon of the Virgin *Episkopiani* (Zakynthos, the Museum). It is dated to the twelfth century and, following an inscription at the bottom left, was 'restored' – that is, repainted – in 1657.⁶⁶ Mary's face is the only untouched fragment of the original paint layer. If the artist who restored the icon repeated the original iconographic and compositional scheme, then the painting would determine a substantially earlier date for the Child's hand motif.

Earlier the iconographic type under discussion had been known in the milieu of medieval art in Serbia, as testified by a poorly researched icon with the Virgin Eleousa in the iconostasis in the Church of the Pantocrator in Dečani [Figs 9–10]. The sizeable painting (164.5 × 56 ×

⁶³ N.P. LIKHACHEV, *Materialy dlia istorii russkago ikonopisaniia*, Saint Petersburg, 1906, vol. 1, p. 159.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, figs 71–73.

⁶⁵ *Byzantine and Post-byzantine Art*, Athens, 1985, p. 121, fig. 119. M. CHATZIDAKIS, 'Les débuts de l'école crétoise et la question de l'école dit italogrecque', in *Mnimosynon Sophias Antoniadi*, Venice, 1974, pp. 169–211 (reprinted in M. CHATZIDAKIS, *Études*

sur la peinture postbyzantine, London, 1976 [Variorum Reprints], p. 181).

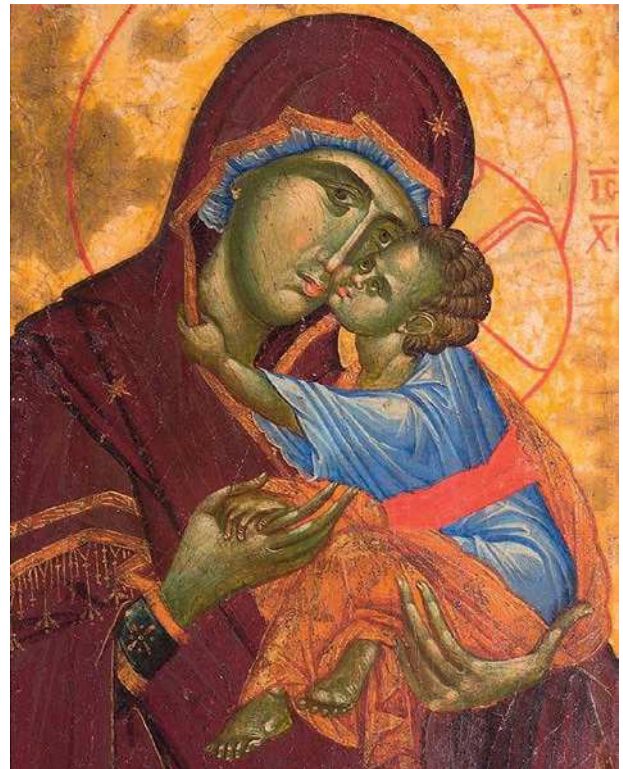
⁶⁶ *Byzantine and Post-byzantine Art*, pp. 73–75, fig. 76 (as in note 65).

5 cm), executed in tempera on wood, depicts a full-figure image of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child in her arms, hugging his face to her cheek. The Child takes the edge of Mary's maphorion with his left hand and places his right hand in his mother's right [Fig. 10]. The icon, generally dated to around 1350, is believed to be a copy of the Constantinopolitan prototype from the Komnenian period or of a fresco with the Virgin Eleousa from the Parekklesion of the Chora Monastery.⁶⁷ Branislav Todić recently moved its date to 1343, associating its execution, along with that of three other paintings: Christ Pantocrator, John the Baptist and Saint Nicholas, with the relocation of the remains of the monastery's founder, Stefan Uroš III Dečanski (1321–1331), from the western part of the church to the nave, opposite the iconostasis' northern part, in 1343.⁶⁸

It follows from the above that the date of the Dečani iconostasis would set a *terminus ad quem* of the iconographic type of the Virgin Eleousa taking the hand of the Child in hers, if the rigour of iconographic typology is to be assumed as a rule. This feature appears also in other depictions of the Virgin Mary, as for example in an icon with the Virgin Hodegetria from the fourteenth century (The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, inv. no. 1274, OC 118), formerly ascribed to the Moscow school and nowadays to the Serbian milieu in the Balkans or a Byzantine painter who was active there.⁶⁹ A Slavonic inscription on either side of Mary's halo identifies the image as: *Мати Божија Молебница* [Mati Bozhiiia Molebnitsa].

The above analysis has shown that the icon with the Virgin Eleousa in the Cracow Poor Clares convent displays features that are characteristic of painting of the early period of the Palaiologan era, of the fourteenth century. But closer and more directly comparable analogies should still be looked for.

It has not been established in what circumstances the painting found its way to the Cracow convent. The already mentioned icon with the Virgin Hagiosoritissa has been associated with the Blessed Salomea on the basis of an enigmatic archival note dealing with the paintings and



10. The Virgin Eleousa, c. 1343 (detail). Photo: www.decani.org

images donated by the convent's foundress, which mentions only: 'tabulae et ymagine depictae'.⁷⁰ Should it be assumed that also the icon with the Virgin Eleousa was included in the plural form of the nouns? It is known that, before becoming a nun, Salomea had spent many years, first in the Halych Rus' and then in the Hungarian court, where she could have easily come into contact with venerated icons.

A POSTSCRIPT

Romuald Biskupski has noted a popularity of the images of the Virgin Eleousa in the icon painting on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, stemming, as he asserts, from a copperplate engraving signed by Raphael Sadeler, from 1614.⁷¹ The engraving bears a striking resemblance to a print reproduced by N. P. Likhachev which shows an image venerated in the Roman church of San Francesco (a Ripa) in Trastevere.⁷² Both prints present

⁶⁷ M. ČOROVIĆ-LJUBINKOVIĆ, 'Dve dečanske ikone Bogorodice Umiljenija', *Starinar*, 3–4, 1952–1953, pp. 83–87; W. FELICETTI-LIEBENFELS, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Ikonmalerei*, Olten and Lausanne, 1956, p. 87, fig. 109A; V.J. DJURIĆ, *Ikônes de Yougoslavie*, Belgrade, 1961, pp. 102–103, pl. XLV; A. GRABAR, 'Les images de la Vierge de tendresse. Type iconographique et thème (à propos de deux icônes à Dečani)', *Zograf*, 6, 1977, p. 25, fig. 1.

⁶⁸ B. TODIĆ, 'Ikonostas u Dečanima – prvobitni slikani program i njegove poznije izmene', *Zograf*, 36, 2012, pp. 115–129.

⁶⁹ V.I. ANTONOVA, N.E. MNEVA, *Katalog drevnerusskoj zhivopisi XI – nachala XVIII vv.*, vol. I, Moscow, 1963, pp. 246–247, fig. 152; *Vizantiia. Balkany. Rus'. Ikony kontsa XIII – pervoi poloviny XV veka. Katalog vystavki, Gosudarstvennaia Tretyakovskaia galereia*, Moscow, 1991, cat. no. 74, pp. 243–244; *Gosudarstvennaia Tretyakovskaia galereia. Katalog sobraniia*, vol. 1: *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo X – nachala XV veka*, pp. 173–175 (as in note 50).

⁷⁰ A. RÓŻYCKA-BRYZEK, *Matka Boska Hagiosoritissa*, p. 43 (as in note 1).

⁷¹ R. BISKUPSKI, 'O dwu wariantach przedstawienia Matki Boskiej Eleusy w sztuce ukraińskiej XVII–XIX wieku', in *Zachodnio-ukraińska sztuka cerkiewna. Dzieła – twórcy – ośrodki – techniki. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej 10–11 maja 2003 roku*, ed. by J. Giemza, Łańcut, 2003, p. 273, fig. 4.

⁷² N.P. LIKHACHEV, *Istoricheskoe znachenie*, fig. 380 (as in note 41).

the same type of the Virgin Eleousa taking the hand of the Christ Child, and both also feature the motif of the Child's sandal falling off his foot. As the chronologically first in a sequence of a dozen icons which reproduce the print, Biskupski mentions the image of the Virgin Łopieńska, from the first half of the seventeenth century, in the church of Our Lady Queen of Poland (formerly

an Orthodox church of the Holy Martyr Paraskeva) at Polańczyk. As Biskupski rightly observed, the falling sandal does not appear in any of these icons. This very feature, along with the characteristic iconographic and compositional arrangement, likens these icons to the image of the Virgin Eleousa in the Cracow Poor Clares convent.