

VIVERE MILITARE EST

FROM POPULUS TO EMPERORS - LIVING ON THE FRONTIER
VOLUME I

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IMAGE AS A WAY OF SELF-REPRESENTATION, ASSOCIATION AND TYPE CREATION FOR LATE ANTIQUE WOMEN IN THE CENTRAL BALKANS*

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ABSTRACT

The ancient Romans valued portraiture as a means of communication and self-representation. Men and women were commemorated in a variety of media, from carved cameos, to gold glass medallions, to paintings and statuary. The tomb, was the most common location for these portraits. This paper examines the portraits of women from the late antique Balkans. It demonstrates how the portraits of women communicated ideas about the person portrayed through iconographic markers, such as hairstyle, gesture, or clothing. Often these markers of identity were borrowed from empresses or from goddesses, so that one can speak of types that the artists commonly deployed. Along with these empire-wide types and markers of qualities, portraits from the Balkans also demonstrate local specificity.

KEYWORDS. – IMAGE, WOMEN, SELF-REPRESENTATION, ASSOCIATION, TYPE, EMPRESS, MOTHER, WIFE, GODDESS.

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INTRODUCTION

Images of men used the following markers of identity: status, achievements, origin etc. Images of women relied on iconographic elements often borrowed from goddesses or the empress.¹ Portraiture, therefore, communicated through symbols, emblems and signs and was often joined by inscriptions. This is what Hölscher has termed the “language of images” in Roman art.² Whether we are speaking of works of art or schematic, emblematic images, their purpose in most cases was achieved and understood by targeted observers. Without any specific knowledge about the possibilities of what would be, in modern times, called image or visual communication, ancient masters and commissioners of works of art successfully managed to create memorable images which could have transferred messages via iconography and based on an understanding of an image’s place within a cultural context.³

The political situation in the late antique Central Balkans brought about various economic and cultural changes. A brief review indicates the many challenges that the region went through. In the 3rd century, eighteen Roman emperors originated from the territory of present day Serbia, a fact that brings the region into focus.⁴ The Tetrarchial reorganization of the Empire caused a shift in the importance of Balkan provinces. The Tetrachs favoured some provinces at the expense of others. Until the end of the 4th, the Central Balkans belonged to the Western division of the Roman Empire.⁵ After Theodosius’s death (395), the region became a part of the Eastern Roman Empire. Since the second half of the 4th, attacks of barbarian tribes often destabilized the region until the 7th, when Roman domina-

1 One of the examples can be seen in the assimilation of men and women to Mars and to Venus. (Hölscher 2004, 63, 65; Kleiner 1981, 512-544).

2 Hölscher 2004.

3 Paul Martin Lester said in his study of visual communication and, specifically, visual analysis “Image analysis teaches two important lessons about the creation of memorable pictures: A producer of messages should have an understanding of the diversity of cultures within an intended audience and she should also be aware of the symbols used in images so that they are understood by members of those cultures”. These two lessons were clearly followed by ancient artists, while for us today the perception of images and analysis of them can be interpreted on many levels of analytical perspectives, such as personal, historical, technical, ethnic, cultural and critical. Lester 2013, 128-146.

4 Јовановић 2006; Korać et al. 2016.

5 Teall 1967, 13-36; Ферјанчић 2013, 26-35.

tion in the Central Balkans ceased with the final settlement of Slavic tribes.⁶ The political turmoil caused migrations of people and brought about cultural changes including changes in artistic production. Due to the closeness to the Danube Limes and continuous presence of the army in this region, cultic practices and religious beliefs were subjected to various influences. Eastern cults were very popular, so was Arianism.⁷ The traces of these religious beliefs can be noticed in craft and art production. Yet, as in the whole Empire, art was usually associated with the imperial or religious cult or funerary practices and decoration of urban centres or imperial commissions. Very well known models were followed and it can be said that, in general, art production was under the same influence of the East and West. Along with influence from the centre, it is also possible to trace the existence of local some production centres, which were mostly located in cities along the Danube Limes or its hinterland. Specific decoration of fresco painted tombs, much better known in the Eastern Mediterranean world is also characteristic for the region of the Central Balkans, giving the notion that several painting workshops worked here during late antiquity.⁸

In such a context it would be possible to consider various interpretations of images of women in all varieties of their appearances. As with all other images, female imagery was shaped by personal, public, political, or religious goals. In late antiquity, there emerged a new portrait type, which fused classicism with spiritualism and expressionism: the “soft” style based in Greece and the Latin West with the “hard” style mostly current in the Oriental provinces.⁹ The mixture of Roman classical artistic values and styles with eastern influences, aiming at highlighting emotional states and the inner workings of the spirit characterizes many late antique images of women.¹⁰

The aim of this paper is to examine feminine imaging and its various meanings, interpretation and significance within the visual culture of late antiquity. The first female images were considered as powerful weapons used to transfer messages by

6 Зечевић 2002; Максимовић 1980, 17-57.

7 About the Eastern religions in this territory in: Gavrilović in this volume. About Sirmium as “caput Illyrici” and Christianity in: Popović 2013c, 115-117.

8 Rogić, Anđelković Grašar 2015, 201-210.

9 Age of Spirituality 1979, 3, 286.

10 On portraits in Late Antiquity and Middle Ages in: Tomić 2004, 105-120.

creating/adhering to a desired look. This means that late antique women were aware that by the creation of a certain type and by following the example-the role model, they would be able to present the best idea of themselves to the public. Two main goals needed to be achieved: first, to create an image that imitates a portrait of the Roman empress; and, second, to follow the exemplary matron type and such a way of life. The same goals were pursued in images intended for daily life and funerary purposes. Imitation of a model was one of the suitable tools in achieving the ideal image. Secondly, in the later paragraph entitled *Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno*, as the translation suggests, will be considered several examples of various female image types remained stable across media. No specific types were invented for different media, rather one type suited all. Thus, in the conclusion, all of the examples and suggested interpretations are considered in order to shed light on how women wanted to be seen and what kind of image they aspired to project about themselves in the late antique Central Balkans territory.

IMITATION OF AN EXEMPLARY MODEL AND CREATION OF AN IDEAL IMAGE

Roman classical art followed the ideals of Greek classical art and all of its principles concerning symmetry, balance or proportion, and dynamism. By contrast, late antique art prefers frontality, often disregards proportion and the rules of how to render three-dimensional objects. In addition, that art displays a great diversity of visual production, encompassing a plurality of styles, subject-matter and visual media.¹¹ Imperial statues, especially from the period of the Tetrarchy, characterize the late antique style. A number of late antique imperial portraits made of porphyry was found on the territory of present-day Serbia.¹² At the same time, the more traditional way of representing the emperor, in the classical Roman imperial style, recalling the glorious predecessors like Octavian Augustus or Trajan, or deities such as Apollo-Helios, was also present.

¹¹ On argument about Late Antique Art in: Elsner 2006, 271-309.

¹² Поповић 2017; Поповић 2013a, 176; Срејовић 1959, 253-263; Срејовић, Цермановић-Кузмановић 1987a, кат. 13, 14; Sreјović 1987, 98, kat. 221; Sreјović 1994a, 41-47; Sreјović 1994b, 143-152.

The same style of a combination of the traditional and the late antique styles, specific for male portraiture, can be seen on several preserved portraits of the late antique empresses. Official state images of empresses were the most prominent, especially on coins or various miniatures and objects of everyday use, such as oil lamps, glyptics, etc. Unlike monumental art images, smaller objects emphasise specific details that were not important for the specific individual but, rather, for the status or the role which that individual held. Besides imperial regalia, other details provide specificity, such as, coiffure, jewellery, costume, attitude, posture, and gesture.

Although imperial portraits are usually marked with all the necessary imperial insignia, there are a number of portraits that resemble the imperial ones, but lack the insignia. There is a tendency in the scholarship to assume that all portraits that look like the imperial ones are in fact imperial. Coins of the empress Galeria Valeria, daughter of Diocletian (305-311), such as the aureus from the National Museum in Belgrade, represent this late antique empress with all the facial features that correspond to Tetrarchic imagery; her hairstyle is in accordance with the fashion of the time, with a braid which is lifted up and fastened to the back of the head. On her head is depicted a triangular hairpiece, which can be associated with the *stephane* – type of headgear worn by goddesses or empresses with the title of *Augusta*, since the diadem as specific imperial regalia and as *perpetuum diadema* is associated with the reign of Constantine the Great.¹³ The same manner of rendering of a portrait and hairstyle, but in this case without a diadem, can be seen on the portrait depicted on a cameo from the *Horreum Margi* (Ćuprija), which is identified as well as Galeria Valeria (Fig. 1a, 1b).¹⁴ But that cameo may simply represent a woman who wanted to be seen portrayed in the imperial fashion.

The features of late antique empress portraits are characteristic of other portraits, some of which, because of the similarity, have been thought to represent empresses. Two cameos from Remesiana represent, in Ivana Popović's words, "the prototype of the figure of Constantine's wife Fausta" (307-326).¹⁵ By prototype, Popović understands the mother figure of the future emperor or his wife, both important in dy-

13 Stout 1994, 93; Поповић 2013, 93-108; However, in the description of the portrait of Galeria Valeria on this coin the term diadem appeared in the catalogue of Roman Imperial Coinage, and later quoted by two authors. Васић 2008, 292, кат. 417; *Antički portret u Jugoslaviji* 1987, 242; RIC VI, 562 br. 53.

14 Поповић 1989, 36-37, кат. 49; Popović 2010, 210-211, No. 38, Pl. XIII, 38; Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1963, 119-125.

15 Popović 2010, 220.



Fig. 1a - Cameo from Horreum Margi (Ćuprija), identified as empress Galeria Valeria (documentation of the National museum of Belgrade).



Fig. 1b – Aureus of Galeria Valeria from the National Museum of Belgrade (After: *Antički portret u Jugoslaviji* 1987, cat. 239).

nastic politics and propaganda, to which the mass production of cameos with such images was especially suitable.¹⁶ The cameos depict female busts in right profile, with sophisticated facial expressions and coiffure with fine waves which follow the shape of the face and are combed at the back into a bun (Figs. 2a, 2b)¹⁷. This hairstyle is characteristic for Fausta's depictions on coins, as is the case with the bronze medallion, minted in Sirmium after 316/17.¹⁸ This type of image, first disseminated on coins, is also found on glyptics. This is the method by which imperial propaganda travelled from one medium to another. In contrast to the coins, although there are no many examples with the diadem, the images on cameos do not display any imperial regalia, or the diadem, something that can be taken as a consequence of Fausta's death shortly after Constantine's adoption of the diadem. Fausta's portraits on coins minted in the period between 324 and 326, after she was proclaimed Augusta, are distinctive by her image in profile, according to the fashion of the time and with the bun at the nape of the neck, sometimes with, but usually without a diadem.¹⁹

Although there was a tradition to represent the imperial family on cameos, as well as notions that these were representations of women with a high social status, on cameos with female busts discovered in a large number along the Danube Limes, figures of empresses in the form of a prototype are most probably represented.²⁰ These prototypes can testify to the taste and fashion dictated by empresses which were followed by noble women whose images were not too different from this role model. The same style characteristics of an idealised profile image according to the empress' role model can be seen on cameos of the *dubitandae* or [considered doubtful], type in the National museums of Belgrade and Požarevac. Ivana Popović characterised them as questionable and that they were placed in such a type because of their unknown origin and provenience. They are dated to the post antique period but are modelled in accordance with the Roman glyptic manner

16 Popović 2010, 218.

17 Кузмановић-Нововић 2009, 85-86, сл. 20; Поповић 2009, 56-61, сл. 1-5; Поповић 1992, 402-403, кат. 1, 2; Поповић 2010, cat. 39, 40, pl. XIII; Поповић 2001, кат. 71, 80; Srejović 1993, 81, cat. 119.

18 Calza 1972, 248-256, XXXV, 301, 304; Gneccchi 1912, 22, Tav. 8. 10-12.

19 Absence of the diadem on Fausta's portraits on coins some authors interpret as accentuation of Helena's stronger influence and higher rank in the state (RIC VII, 45) while its existence is associated with the practical significance of an adornment, according to other authors. Drijvers 1992, 503.

20 Popović 2010, 217-218, with the reference 21.

and techniques.²¹ Since the majority of these cameos were brought to these museums as gifts and the context of their find is impossible to know, it is only possible to judge the images based on an analysis of the characteristic of the portraiture and manner or style of the production. Two ellipsoid cameos from the National Museum of Požarevac, made of white quartz, were brought to the museum by the people who found them. One originates from the site of Dubravica-Orašje and the other from Kostolac-Ćirikovac, both locations in the vicinity of ancient Viminacium, which was one of the production centres on the Danube Limes. Since the archaeological site of Viminacium was for years known as a site where illegal excavations and looting were conducted,²² one of the curators from the National Museum in Požarevac – Dragan Jacanović, stated to the author of this paper that the people who brought the cameos to the museum had already been known to the Museum's employees for years as those who were digging across the Viminacium archaeological site and that the real provenience of both cameos can certainly be associated with this ancient site.²³ One of these cameos is described as a relief bust of a woman, facing right with wavy hair combed into a bun on the back of her head and with a richly draped collar around her neck (Fig. 3a). After the cameo's cleaning the collar disappeared, the fine wrinkles on the woman's neck appeared (perhaps a reference of Venus' rings?); it turned out that there was no collar, but some kind of a tunic. The second cameo's iconography did not change after cleaning. The woman's head in relief is facing left, with long hair modelled in braid at the back of her head which is raised up to the ribbon which resembles a diadem (Fig. 3b).

Arti minori were an ideal medium for representations of an ordinary woman during a politically and economically insecure time in the Empire, suggesting that the private life was influenced by the public. Some examples constitute real works of art, while others were manufactured with all of the craft characteristics and images subordinated with the aim of imitating the imperial model. Copying the imperial model resulted in the creation of a specific type.

21 Поповић 1989, 45, кат. 74, 75, 76, 77, 78; Поповић 1991, 60, кат. 15, 16.

22 Korać et al. 2016, 114-116.

23 I would like to thank Mr Dragan Jacanović, curator in the National Museum of Požarevac, for the consultations regarding this topic and for providing information used in this paper. Also, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the curator of the National Museum of Požarevac, Mrs Teodora Branković, for providing me with material and photographs for this paper.



Fig. 2a – Cameo from Remesiana, identified as empress Fausta (documentation of the National museum of Belgrade).



Fig. 2b – Cameo from Remesiana, identified as empress Fausta (documentation of the National museum of Belgrade).



Fig. 3a – Cameo with the female bust from the National Museum of Požarevac (Documentation of the National Museum of Požarevac).



Fig. 3b - Cameo with the female bust from the National Museum of Požarevac (Documentation of the National Museum of Požarevac).

Besides the ideal self representation of a woman as a dignified Roman matron who followed the fashion of the time and who was very similar to the empress in her appearance, gesture and image quality, female imagery was also oriented toward communicating two ideas central to women's lives – being a wife and mother. Image associations were made, in the first place, between the family portrait and an imperial one while, on the other hand, models of an ideal spouse and maternal type were ever present in the imagery of goddesses and their family roles. Thus, again, portraits fused three ideas: a similarity to the empress, maternity and wedlock, conveyed through deities.

Examples of a family portrait, associated with the portraiture of the imperial family, is represented on the preserved part of the bottom of a glass vessel made in the gold glass technique, from *Aquae*, from the middle of the 4th century. In the medallion is depicted a married couple with a child and above them there is an inscription of a Christian aspiration *VIVAS IN DEO*, representing their wish for a good life (Fig. 4).²⁴ The medallion shows three busts: a man, a woman and a child. All figures are depicted *en face* with a similar treatment. On their elongated, oval faces, big eyes are accentuated by strong eyebrows and their look is directed upwards in the direction of the inscription. The woman is dressed in a long tunic with a palla, richly decorated with a stylised spiral element.²⁵ The woman's coiffure corresponds to another 4th century hairstyle popular in sculpture or fresco painting. The hair is flowing down to the chin, covering the ears and is decorated with an ornament that suggests a veil or a fine net.²⁶ Around woman's neck is a rich collar with an adornment similar to precious stones. The woman is represented wearing an expensive decorated dress and jewellery and a fashionable hairstyle which can be seen on other depictions in glass vessels or any other artistic medium from

²⁴ Ранков 1983, 85; Кондић 1993, кат.131; Kondić 2005, cat. Nr. 109. Kondić 2007, Kat. Nr. I.11.33. Lutraan 2006, 83; More about the Christian context of this image in: Ilić, Jeremić in this volume.

²⁵ This spiral decorative dress element is known from the funerary portraits, but as well as suggests the notion of popular golden embroidery, testified from several late antique graves. Korać 2007, 106; Anđelković Grašar et al. 2013, 138; Спасић-Ђурић 2003, 59-86.

²⁶ Such hair decoration can be visible on some other examples of gold glass, cf.: <http://www.musee-lapidaire.org/oeuvres-antiques/fr/oeuvre/fond-de-recipient-avec-un-couple-et-un-enfant> or it can be said that is also known from other artistic media, cf.: Anđelković Grašar 2015, 270; Anđelković Grašar, Tapavički-Ilić 2015, 17-19 and online <http://journal.exarc.net/issue-2015-2/int/mural-painting-roman-lady-viminacium-roman-matron-modern-icon>

the period of the 4th to the first half of the 5th century.²⁷ All of the details on the female figure suggest her high social status and the origin of her role models are in the depiction of Roman noble ladies, as can be seen on the medallion of the cross of Galla Placidia, from Brescia (*Musei Civici*), referring to values of family life and aristocratic charity.²⁸ There are other images of the imperial family that could be understood as models for the tondo composition, such as the Severan Tondo and Julia Domna, one of the most popular empress role models.²⁹ The most similar composition can be seen on a tondo from the Vatican Library, where a family portrait is depicted, consisting of parents and a child, dressed in the fashion of the time and with typical hairstyles, and with their gaze directed directly toward the observer.³⁰ Similarities between the compositions on gold glass discovered in Rome or even in the provinces in the Balkans, suggest that regardless of one's religious affiliation, there is a sense of prosperity and a desire to look like the upper strata, even if one is not quite a member. This points not only to self-presentation, but to the self-construction of the people represented on these objects.³¹

Regarding the female figural statues from the territory of Upper Moesia, unlike portraits, it can be said that they were larger in number than male. From the late antique period, six known statues belong to the iconographical model characteristic of the large and the small Herculaneum, or Pudicitia type, most common in the period between the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Fig. 5a-d).³² These statues were created according to the commissions of high status and wealthy Roman ladies. Their popularity throughout the Empire is explained by the association between Roman copies of the Praxiteles cult statues of Demeter and Kore and Roman matrons, who aspired to be represented with dignity and grace, as were the goddesses of whose cult they worshiped.³³



Fig. 4 –Glass medallion with the depicted family portrait and an inscription VIVAS IN DEO from Aquae (documentation of the National museum of Belgrade).

27 Cf.: Korać 2007, 106; Anđelković Grašar et al. 2013, 138. Lutraan 2006, 32, 35-36.

28 Elsner 2007, 17-18.

29 Baharal 1992, 110-118.

30 Morey 1959, Pl. XVI, No. 97.

31 Kampen 2007, 135.

32 Except the statue from Naissus, which is dated to the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century. Tomović 1992, 63-64, kat. 44-49; Vulić 1931, 104, br. 250. Hereby I would like to express my gratitude to the director of the National Museum of Belgrade, Mrs. Bojana Borić-Brešković, senior curator of the National Museum of Niš, Mrs Vesna Crnoglavac and the museum advisor at the Museum of Krajina-Negotin, Mr Gordan Janjić, for providing me material and photographs for this article.

33 Tomović 1992, 63-64.



Fig. 5a – Female portrait statue “Small Herculanean”, Singidunum (documentation of the National museum of Belgrade).

Fig. 5b – Female portrait statue “Pudicitia type”, Aquae, Museum of Krajina, Negotin (documentation of the Museum of Krajina, Negotin)

Fig. 5c – Female portrait statue, Naissus, National Museum of Niš (documentation of the National Museum of Niš)

Fig. 5d – Female portrait sculpture, Aquae, Museum of Krajina, Negotin (documentation of the Museum of Krajina, Negotin)

Comparing sculptural portraits of men and women, female portraits are fewer in number, at least when we speak about late antiquity. In female sculptural portraiture, the same problems with the identification of a represented person occurred as with cameos. To recognise some of these persons as some ordinary woman or an empress, sculptural material could be, but is not necessarily, helpful. The same is true of the quality of rendering, as well as the hairstyle. On these portraits, some features of the Eastern style can be noticed, and some such examples are two portraits from Viminacium and one from Ulpiana.³⁴ From the 4th century onwards, the private portrait almost disappeared from sculpture in the territory of Upper Moesia.³⁵

Self-representation is usually associated with the term portraiture. However, it is not easy to identify a portrait when the portrayed woman is made to look like an empress or a goddess; the differences are often minute. Sculptural portraits were probably used for some kind of public use, to be represented in some public space,

³⁴ Tomović 1992 52, kat. 13, 15, 78.

³⁵ Tomović 1992, 58.

within the private family house or in the atrium among the portrait gallery of the ancestors. On the other hand, funerary portraits can be seen on stelai, sarcophagi or in tomb paintings. The significance of a portrait in funerary art is associated with the memory of the dead and many types of these memorials addressed an audience. Funerary monuments were often commissioned *ante mortem* by the tomb owner and thus reflect the personal choices regarding the way individuals defined their social image, or *post mortem* by surviving kin to commemorate their loved ones and equally attest to a desire to present the family in a particular light.³⁶ For women, as for men, it was important to represent who these people were during their lifetimes, and all iconographical solutions were directed toward this idea. Motifs, symbols and portraits were important to highlight the most important moments of their life and material status during the lifetime, as well as appealing to their future in the afterlife. The practice of inserting the portrait head of the deceased person onto an idealised figure on the relief-adorned marble sarcophagi was a practice popular during the Imperial period, in and around Rome. This practice forged the *post-mortem* identity of the person buried in the sarcophagus.³⁷ On funerary monuments the portrait in classical artistic terms is rare, and a woman is represented as a stylised figure without individual portrait features, but with other remarks that can help in personalizing her image. Most common are women's frontal depictions, together with the husband or within the image of a family. In such compositions, the spouses are represented in a similar manner and style, very schematically rendered. Family portraits on Roman tombstones are characterised by the standardisation of composition with distinctive gestures which emphasise the physical contact between the family or spouses. There are eight examples of funerary portraiture representing physical contact from the province of Upper Moesia, one of which is from the late Roman site of *Timacium Minus*.³⁸

In such a treatment on funerary monuments it can be said that female representations are distinctive only owing to the accentuation of the clothes, jewellery and decoration, or material status, and gender specification. The common characteristic of these funerary monuments is visible in the flat surface of the relief, which

36 Carroll 2013, 562.

37 Birk 2014, 33.

38 More on the topic of the motif of physical contact on Roman tombstones in the province of Upper Moesia in: Marjanović 2018, 77-88.

is distinctive with linear treatments. The schematisation characteristic of this new style can be attributed to the settling of large numbers of Oriental people in the territory of the Central Balkans.³⁹ During the reign of the Severan dynasty, in the 3rd century, a population of Eastern origin, mostly from Asia Minor, was present in the army and inhabited major military camps and urban centres of *Moesia Superior*. These ethnic changes, besides their influence on art, led to the appearance of religious syncretism, which was noticeable in funerary rites, epigraphic inscriptions, cult icons or funerary goods.⁴⁰

This kind of schematic, female representation is characteristic for the period of the 3rd century, while from the 4th century onwards, female imagery on funerary monuments almost disappeared.⁴¹ Although characteristic in the decoration of sarcophagi and stelai during the Empire, from the 4th century portraits, were found within the tomb. In the region of the Central Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean we find masonry tombs with painted compositions which were a very popular funerary practice, as an expensive type of funeral was usually associated with a deceased of a high social status.⁴² The wish to preserve of memory of the self after death created a fertile ground for the importance of the portrait in funerary art. The creation of the funerary portrait, whose origin dates back to ancient Egypt and is also connected with the role of funerary masks, the *imagines*, encompasses the desire for preserving not only the face, but also the self of ancestors, actually the human desire for “the survival of the self” and the idea of “to never die”⁴³

Among funerary images, those which are represented in fresco decorated tombs are the most indicative, because all of the motifs, symbols and portraits of the deceased were not available to see. To whom were these images designed to communicate and what kind of messages could they have conveyed? Art, with all of its possibilities, is always directed toward an audience, to an observer. That is why art has always transferred messages. But what would be the significance of an

39 Srejović 1987, 237.

40 Зотовић 1986, 41-59; Марић 2003, 105-119; Спасић-Ђурић 2002, 167, 184-185; Спасић-Ђурић 2015, 95-97, 100-103.

41 Поповић 2013, 541-556; Поповић 2014, 216-221; Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1965; Srejović 1987, kat. 228.

42 Спасић-Ђурић 2002, 186; Зотовић 2000, 15-16; Valeva 2001, 167-208.

43 Andelković et al. 2013, 95; Hanfmann 1973, 260, 266; Della Portella 2000, 62-63.

image rendered in a space where no viewing is possible? What is the role of this image? It could be said that all of the image qualities, content, significance and symbolism were oriented in this case only toward a nonexistent world with nonexistent observers. These paintings were designed to be seen not by “the living public” but by *diis manibus* and the gods of the Underworld.⁴⁴ In the world of death, for which all of these people were preparing, their afterlives and roles were predetermined, referring to the previous, the ones while living. Burials were conducted in various grave constructions depending on the deceased’s material status, with fresco decorated tombs among the most expensive methods of burial.⁴⁵ Luxuriously decorated tombs testified to the social status of the deceased, while the artistic decoration on the walls within them testified to owners’ ideas about life and death. The grave space was largely painted with motifs of a cultic-symbolical character. These images represented paradise and mythological figures, subordinated to the deceased and their apotheosis, which brought the portrait into the focus of funerary painting. An interesting notion is that all of the funerary equipment, such as the usual iconography and specific symbolism, similar to funerary goods in graves, were already set up (painted) in the tomb, while after the death of the deceased his or her portrait would be painted additionally.⁴⁶ Funerary images of women in tomb frescoes of late antiquity in the Central Balkans are divided between representations of mistresses of the tomb or maidservants who participated in the offering scene/funeral procession. Depicted as a mistress of the tomb she could be represented in a pair with her husband, the master of the tomb, as can be seen in tombs from Beška, Silistra, Osenovo, Plovdiv and Thessalonica. In rare cases, the deceased woman can be painted alone, as in the tombs from Čalma and Viminacium (Fig. 6a). The motif of a maidservant in an offering scene is preserved in tombs from Plovdiv, Silistra, Osenovo, Thessalonica, Beška and Viminacium (6b, 6c).⁴⁷

All of these specific examples of female portraits can be seen as common for representations of goddesses, empresses and ladies of high social rank. Besides

44 Špehar 2017, 20.

45 Спасић-Ђурић 2002, 186; Зотовић 2000, 15-16.

46 Popović 2011, 238; About the associations between the symbolism of funerary goods from female graves and iconography from painted tombs in: Tapavički-Ilić, Anđelković Grašar 2013, 65-84.

47 More about the individual images of mistresses and maidservants in tomb frescoes of the late antique period in the Central Balkans, about the associations between them, iconography and symbolism in: Anđelković Grašar 2015, 269-275.



Fig. 6a – Portrait of a mistress of the tomb G 2624



Fig. 6b – Portrait of a maidservant from the tomb G 160 from Viminacium (Source: Documentation of the institute of Archaeology, project Viminacium).

remarkable similarities in gestures and postures, the most often are those associated with the fashion, specifically coiffure and clothes and all of the additional adornments, such as jewellery or headdress. All these means were used in order to create a specific manner of self-representation, associations between the aforementioned three female representations and finally a sort of ideal type which was desirable in works of art or craft.

UNUS PRO OMNIBUS, OMNES PRO UNO

With this widely popular phrase, we can speak of one type of image which could serve as a representation of any woman, be she ordinary, a goddess or an empress. Portraying and representing a woman followed forms and designs already known and established over a long period of time. Facial features and body shapes were more or less similar for any kind of female representation, whether the woman was an empress, a mother or a wife in some private sphere of life or a goddess. Within the image, similarities existed with the gestures, clothing, shoes, hairstyles and other motifs used for decoration. Artists even used the same prospective, pictorial elements and principles, even techniques sometimes in the representation of the completely different roles of these women.

What could be different in imaging an empress, married woman or goddess? Differences can be noticed in the achievement of a certain idea, the success of an imitation, the striking accentuation of attributes or regalia, etc.⁴⁸ All of these specific motifs can be considered as signs which would be helpful in understanding the image on a semiotic level, signifying that the images would be much more interesting and memorable if signs that are understood by many were used in the picture.⁴⁹ It is very important to point out the iconographical similarities than the differences, since the similarities can be helpful in understanding the concept and the background of feminine imaging.

48 About the attributes and regalia in representation of late antique and Early Byzantine empresses in: Angelova 2015, 185-198.

49 Lester 2013, 51.

Among depictions, which are undetermined is one used as decoration of an oil lamp from Pontes, dated to the 6th century (Fig. 7a).⁵⁰ Similarly rendered oil lamps have been found at the sites of Mokranjske stene (Fig. 7b)⁵¹ and Gamzigrad,⁵² also dated to the 6th century, with the difference that the heads are more like masks than female portraits. Masks in the shape of a human face are among the habitual decoration on Early Roman oil lamps.⁵³ Female faces were used as decoration on the handles of three paterae from Caričin Grad (7c).⁵⁴ Another expression of a human face, which alludes much more to a mask than a portrait, is used as a decoration of the lower part of a pitcher handle, also from Caričin Grad.⁵⁵ Another female face is depicted on a padlock from Ravna, dated to the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century, defined as a human mask, although without such physiognomy (7d).⁵⁶ These images resemble each other, whether they are interpreted as human masks or as images of women. Among this pictorial poetic, which is half way between the real human face and a mask, there is a mythological example of Medusa's face, which throughout various transformations in art, was also visualised in two ways, either as a beautiful female face or a horrifying mask. Medusa's face, among others, was one of the popular decorations on jewellery, especially cameos, and in such a way directly brought her into connection with the matrons who wore them (7e).⁵⁷

All of these images were created and formed according to a prototype. This is why here we cannot speak of portraiture. The facial features are characterised by a small mouth, a straight nose, large accentuated eyes and a hairstyle divided in the middle, which flows down to the chin. This idealised image, with highlighted eyes which reinforce a spiritual look and with a neglect of naturalism is something characteristic of feminine imagery of the time. Such images are found on

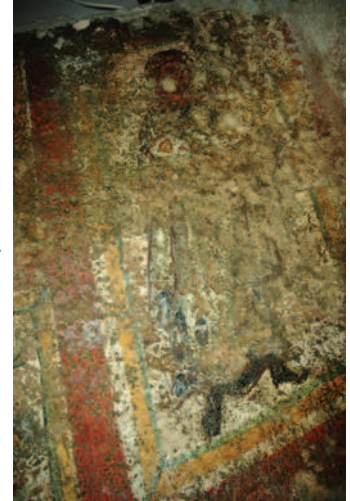


Fig. 6 c – Figure of a maidservant from the tomb G 160 from Viminacium (Source: Documentation of the institute of Archaeology, project Viminacium).

50 More about this oil lamp in: Petković et al. 2015, 79-89.

51 Sretenović 1984, 221-225, Sl. 216/8.

52 Јанковић 1983, 132, 134, кат. 175.

53 Крунић 2011, 364-365.

54 Although the handle of the third patera is not preserved it can be supposed that it had the same decoration. Bjelajac 1990, 172-173, pl. XVI/18.

55 Bavant, Ivanišević 2003, kat. 14.

56 Петровић, Јовановић 1997, кат. 20, 77.

57 Milovanović, Anđelković Grašar 2017, 167-182.

Fig. 7a – Fragmented oil lamp with the depiction of a female head from Pontes (After: Petković et al. 2015, 81, Fig. 1).

Fig. 7b - Oil lamp from Mokranje Stene (After: Petković et al. 2015, 82, Fig. 4.).

Fig. 7c: Patera with the handle ended in a shape of a female head from Caričin Grad (After: Bjelajac 1990, 172-173, pl. XVI/18).

Fig. 7d - Padlock with human face from Ravna (After P. Petrović, S. Jovanović 1997, 77, cat. 20).

Fig. 7e - Medallion with cameo decorated with Medusa's image from Viminacium (Source: Documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, project Viminacium).

Fig. 7f – Cameo with en face female bust, National museum Belgrade (After: Поповић, 1992, кар. 3).



some utilitarian objects and objects of everyday use, which could be associated with their significance. These typological images were convenient for transferring messages, as was the case with the examples of coins, steelyard weights or lamps, which were decorated with the images of empresses.⁵⁸ This kind of image signified the figurative presence of the depicted person, especially on those objects which were in everyday use, so if this image referred to the imperial type, ordinary people were encouraged during their daily activities to venerate the imperial cult.⁵⁹ Image type was not the same as image, but it had its own significance and such a symbolical representation was often the personification of the imperial virtue.⁶⁰ That is also one of the reasons why, in such images, there was no space for details or the individual characteristics of a portrait.

Likewise, depictions on cameos which were considered to be ideal, typified images of empresses could be interpreted in another way, as images of ordinary women that followed the ideal empress type and her figure as a role model. A depiction of the aforementioned idealised, schematised type can be seen on a cameo at the National Museum of Belgrade, dated to the first half of the 5th century (7f).⁶¹ This frontal type of representation is much more frequent for this ideal type of female representation, while the profile depiction on Roman cameos is more specific to the region of the middle and lower Danube, in the period between the 2nd and the 4th century.⁶²

Another female image of the same pictorial register is represented on the rectangular, flat bone plaque of a pyxis from Caričin Grad, found near the basilica beneath the Acropolis. Within the ornament made of carvings in the shape of a fish bone, an almost complete stylised figure of a woman is represented *en face* (Fig. 8).⁶³ The complete representation is rendered in a very linear and schematic manner, while all human forms are geometrised. On a circular face, the nose and eyes are modelled with small carvings like dots, while the mouth is depicted with a small dash. Above the forehead is an ornament made of short lines, which could

58 Angelova cat. 10-14, in: *Byzantine Women and Their World* 2003, 52-56; Petković et al. 2015, 81-83.

59 Herrin 2000, 9; St. Clair 1996, 147-162.

60 Herrin 2000, 10.

61 Поповић 1992, 403, кат. 3.

62 Поповић 2010, 203-224.

63 Кондић, Поповић 1977, 188, Т. III, сл. 2.

suggest a braid or even a diadem, while in the middle there is an adornment in the shape of concentric circles, which are repeated on both sides of the neck, and continue to the “coiffure” over curved lines. The dress is long and decorated with rhomboid carvings all along the surface, while at the endings it is edged with vertical stripes. An adornment around the neck is rendered with the same type of cuts as in the hair, and it could represent a necklace or a kind of rich collar, popular and already known from the described female decorations. The hands of the woman are not depicted, probably because of a lack of space, which is limited by a decorative frame. Although the schematic image of this woman fits with the overall expression of a late antique art, the object on which the woman is depicted itself and its context could be helpful for her identification. Knowing that pyxides were an ordinary part of a lady’s toilette, in which cosmetics or jewellery were kept, it would, thus, be appropriate to expect a representation of a woman of high social status, dressed in accordance to the fashion of the time.⁶⁴ However, the fact that the pyxis was found in the sacred place of a basilica, among other archaeological material that it contained and a copper cross, makes this identification difficult.⁶⁵ The costume is rendered linearly but the wealth of adornment, a suggestion of gold embroidery or precious stones on the collar, dress and clavi, as well as the conspicuous frontality, suggest solemnity, which was characteristic, as already mentioned, for the typological images of empresses.⁶⁶ The content of such pyxides is most usually brought into connection with the scenes and motifs that are depicted on them. If these are scenes from the Old and the New Testament than it could be supposed that the content was associated with the liturgy (bread or incense).⁶⁷ This depiction of a woman on the bone plaque of a pyxis from Caričin Grad resembles the solemn gesture of an empresses depicted on ivory diptychs, so if we really can speak of the empress type of imagery then the pyxis could have possibly contained some of the relics associated with the imperial cult or an imperial gift to the church.⁶⁸

64 Walker 2003, cat. 148.

65 Мано-Зиси 1959, 301, сл. 26.

66 The crossed lines that create the net of rhombuses on the dress are visible as the clothes’ decoration on the female depiction within the family portrait on the brick from Caričin Grad. In some cultures, female clothes were often decorated with rhombuses as distinctive female symbols signifying the womb of life, in: Gerbran, Ševalije 2004, rhombus: 788.

67 St. Clair 1979, 132-133. About the content of various pyxides in: Nees 2014, 67-77.

68 A representation of an Early Byzantine empress is depicted on the ivory plaque from Trier, most



Fig. 8 – Bone plaque of a pyxis with the female depiction from Caričin Grad (Source: Documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, project Caričin Grad).



CONCLUSIONS

Empresses' representations on coins which were imitated and often turned in their typified or prototype images on cameos were present in the consciousness of citizens, and it is suggestive that those interpreted as "Galeria Valeria" and "Faus-ta" were found in the territory which was important to the Tetrarchic emperors and Constantine himself.⁶⁹ These female faces on cameos, without any individual facial characteristics, but with a specific hairstyle, which was accepted by women from a higher social status, were made by templates or cardboards with the image of an empress, which were used in workshops along the Danube limes.⁷⁰

The portraiture of Roman women in the Central Balkans was affected most significantly by the Roman custom of imitation of the empress's image. This was still the most important method of self-representation, with a difference that, with the cessation of sculpture, the majority of production was transferred to the *arti minori*. On the other side were desacralised statues of goddesses which became models for representations of noble woman and prominent ladies during the 3rd and 4th century. Sculptures in draped chiton and himation, in cases where the head or some other attribute is missing, suggest adaptations which could have occurred during late antiquity, i.e. changes from a cult to a portrait statue by adding another head or by the adaptation of some other body part.⁷¹

Images of women from the 4th century onwards can be found on utilitarian objects in everyday life or in funerary practice. In funerary art the relationship between the deceased and the idealised figures could have been understood on many levels: firstly they presented analogies to roles, values and ideals generally accepted by society, and secondly, they related the individual virtues and qualities of the deceased.⁷²

What unifies all these images is the tendency toward the fashionable appearance and accentuation of status symbols. In order to achieve the ideal type, women adopted standardised hairstyles, jewellery and types of clothing – gold em-

probably a part of a reliquary box with relics of the True Cross, in: Spain 1977, 279-304.

69 Popović 2010, 220.

70 Popović 2013b, 189-190.

71 Tomović 1992, 63-64, 67.

72 Birk 2014, 34.

broidery and rich adornment with precious or semi-precious stones, gems, etc. Women were represented as wives and mothers, as part of a family portrait or as individuals, sometimes according to the realistic manner and Roman classical style with predominate profile compositions during the 4th century, sometimes with the characteristics of the Eastern, spiritual style and frontal images as almost the only artistic solution from the 5th century onwards, within the compositions created of lines and dots, with barely recognisable human/female features.

Translated by Jelena Anđelković Grašar

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