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Examples of Icons with Western Influences in Iconography in the Art of Macedonia
Case Study of the Icon *Virgin with Child* (inv. no. 81) from the Ohrid Gallery of Icons

It was probably after King Dušan's promotion to emperor that he and his wife Helena gifted the Church of Peribleptos in Ohrid with several icons, among which is an icon of the Virgin Mary with Child, inv. no. 81, now in the Ohrid Gallery of Icons, the subject of this paper. Behind the Virgin and Christ according to the stylistic and physical characteristics may be hidden the image of Empress Helena and her son Uroš. The portrait of the Virgin Mary and Empress Helena bear a striking resemblance if we refer to her portrait from Lesnovo church (1345). It is possible that the same master who painted Uroš in the fresco of Dečani may have painted the icon of the *Virgin with Child*. Dečani paintings in the narthex with the Nemanjić dynasty family tree date from 1347-1348 when Uroš was eleven or twelve. The icon was painted approximately around 1343-1344. Dečani's main architect was a Franciscan monk Fra Vita from Kotor. An opinion has been expressed that the icon painter was a Byzantine artist working in the Adriatic region, from Dubrovnik, Kotor or Venice, but he could be a western artist, coming from Italy, more precisely from the Siena region. As for the royal portraits on the icon, it is not uncommon subject. There are several portraits of members of the Komnenian, Laskaridi and Palaeologan dynasties, who have been portrayed as saints and there are also many saints dressed like royals in the fresco painting in the Republic of Macedonia and Greece. Thus, the icon of the *Holy Virgin with Child* from the Ohrid Peribleptos church may be added to this series of royal portraits as a kind of *Imitatio Christi*.