

## THE EARLIEST IMAGES OF MARIA REGINA IN ROME AND THE BYZANTINE IMPERIAL ICONOGRAPHY

Maria Regina or Mary the Queen is a term usually used to designate a specific type of Marian representation which was one of the most widespread images in the early medieval painting of Rome.<sup>1</sup> It became an exceptionally popular theme in the Western Medieval Art but was practically unknown in the Byzantine World until the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> It gains popularity in the Paleologian period, when Mary was often depicted as Queen in the scenes representing Psalm

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<sup>1</sup> For the general studies on this iconography, theological ideas underlying it, and the earliest examples in medieval painting in Rome, see: N.P. Kondakov, *Ikonografia Bogomateri*, St.-Petersburg 1914, T. I, 270-304; M. Lawrence, *Maria Regina*, *Art Bulletin* 7, 1925, 150-161; C. Cecchelli, *Mater Christi*, Roma 1946, vol. I, 78-86, 102-113, 309-312; H. Barré, *La royauté de Marie pendant les neufs premiers siècles*, *Recherches de sciences religieuses* 29, 1939, 303-334; C. Bertelli, *La Madonna di S. Maria in Trastevere. Storia, iconografia, stile di un dipinto romano dell'ottavo secolo*, Roma 1961, 45-59; G. Steigerwald, *Das Königtum Mariens in Literatur und Kunst der ersten sechs Jahrhunderte* (Phil. Diss.), Freiburg 1965; C.A. Wellen, *Theotokos. Eine ikonographische Abhandlung über das Gottesmutterbild in frühchristlicher Zeit*, Antwerpen-Utrecht 1961, 158-163; G. Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani. Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter*, Weinheim 1990, 119-124; U. Nilgen, *Maria Regina - Ein politischer Kultbildtypus?*, *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 19, 1981, 3-33; eadem, *Eine neu aufgefundene Maria Regina in Santa Susanna, Rom. Ein römisches Thema mit Variationen?*, in: *Bedeutung in den Bildern*. Festschrift für Jörg Traeger, Regensburg 2002, 231-245; J. Osborne, *Early medieval painting in S. Clemente, Rome: the Madonna and Child in the Niche*, *Gesta* 20, 1981, 299-310; idem, *Early Mediaeval Wall-Paintings in the Lower Church of San Clemente, Rome*, N. Y. & London 1984, 112-125. M. Stroll, *Maria Regina: Papal Symbol*, in: *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*. Proceedings of a conference held at King's College London (April 1995), ed. by A.J. Duggan, Woodbridge 1997, 173-204; Th. Noble, *Topography, Celebration, and Power: The Making of a Papal Rome in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries*, in: *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by M. de Jong and F. Theuvs with C. van Rhijn, Leiden 2001, 45-91, in part. 56-72. See also note 5 of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The example of the crowned Virgin in throne in the frescos of Takiegi Camii on Rhodes might be the earliest known example, but its dating is not very clear, as well as a special research is need in order to exclude the probable western influence. For the image, see: P. Lojaco, *Pitture parietali bizantine rodiate*, *Atti dell'VIII Congresso di Studi Bizantini*, Roma 1953, 178, Tav. XXXII, fig. 7.

45:9 “upon thy right hand stands the queen” or in Slavic “Predsta Tsaritsa”.<sup>3</sup> Numerous examples are to be found in the decoration of late Byzantine churches of Kastoria, Serbia and even Russian icons.<sup>4</sup>

The popularity of this representation in the Western world, especially in Rome, and the fact that it is almost unknown in Byzantine art gave reason to regard the Maria Regina as a specific Western variant of Marian imagery, which emerged and became widespread in Rome under strong papal influence.<sup>5</sup> However, this assumption is contested by the fact that the earliest existing images of Maria Regina do not imitate but directly quote official representations of the Byzantine empresses and emperors. This finds ample proof in numerous Imperial images that were widespread at the time and today survive in the San Vitale mosaics, fragments of full length statues, ivory, metal weights and coins. Hitherto links between the formation of the Maria Regina representative iconography and the development of the official portraiture of Byzantine empresses<sup>6</sup> have not been carefully studied or explained.

The basic goal of this paper is an attempt to analyze a range of representations that would allow to track down the character of the interaction between the Constantinopolitan secular Imperial iconography and the sacred images of Maria Regina in Rome.

<sup>3</sup> On this iconography with references to previous literature, see: C. Grozdanov, *Hristos Tsar, Bogoroditsa Tsaritsa, nebesnite sili e svetite vojni vo jivopisot od XIV i XV vek vo Treskavets*, in: Grozdanov C. *Studii za ohridskiot jivopis*, Skopje 1990, 132-150.

<sup>4</sup> E. Ostashenko, *Ob ikonograficheskom tipe ikoni “Predsta Tsaritsa” Uspenskogo sobora moskovskogo Kremliia*, in: *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Problemi i atributzii*, Moscow 1977, 175-187.

<sup>5</sup> These ideas were first expressed by earlier scholars of western medieval art and then shared and developed by later authors who accentuated the special political role of the Maria Regina iconography in the “official propaganda” of Roman pontiffs: H. Belting, *Papal Artistic Commissions as Definitions of the Medieval Church in Rome*, in: *Light on the Eternal City. Observations and Discoveries in the Art and Architecture of Rome*, Pennsylvania 1987, 14-15; idem, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago 1994, 127 and others (see studies by C. Bertelli, U. Nilgen, Th. Noble in note 1). The problem of presumable conflict between the secular Imperial iconography and religious images of the Virgin in royal garments was brought up as one of the arguments of the western origin of Maria Regina’s type: H. Belting, *Ibid.*; J. Herrin, *The Imperial Feminine in Byzantium, Past & Present* 169, 2000, 14-19. The contrary point of view, stating its Byzantine origin, was characteristic of earlier studies on Marian iconography conducted by N.P. Kondakov and C. Cecchelli (see note 1), and found new supporters in recent publications, in which new arguments were presented to the discussion: M. Andaloro, *I mosaici parietali di Durazzo o dell’origine costantinopolitana del tema iconografico di Maria Regina*, in: *Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst*, Bonn 1986, Bd. III, 103-112; J. Osborne, *The Cult of Maria Regina in Early Medieval Rome*, in: *Mater Christi*, ed. by S. Sande, L. Honde, Roma 2009, 95-106.

<sup>6</sup> In the last decade the topic related to the figures and representations of early Byzantine empresses has received a great scholarly attention: L. James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*, Leicester 2001; A. McClanan, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire*, N.Y 2002; D. Angelova, *Gender and Imperial Authority in Rome and Early Byzantium, First to Sixth Centuries* (Phil. Diss. Harvard University 2005) (forthcoming).

The earliest survived examples of a fully developed iconographic type of Maria Regina can be found on a palimpsest wall of the Santa Maria Antiqua church on the Roman Forum, the *acheiropoietos* icon in Santa Maria in Trastevere and the orant Virgin in the Oratory of John VII (705-707) in the Old St. Peter's cathedral. In all three instances the Virgin is represented as Queen, which is conveyed through her vestments that reproduce, down to the smallest detail, the official attire of a Byzantine empress: the dark purple *dalmatica*, the lavishly ornate *maniakion*, the bright crimson shoes, and most of all the crown of the *stephanos* type very close in its forms with and, thus, equal to the rank of the emperor's *stemma*.



Fig. 1 Maria Regina, palimpsest wall, Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome.

Сл. 1 Марија Регина, палимпсест зид, Санта Марија Антика, Рим.

The earliest among these images is on the palimpsest wall of the Santa Maria Antiqua on the Roman Forum (Fig. 1) and is normally dated to the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of church history and the dating of the subsequent layers of paint.<sup>7</sup> The mural represents the Virgin on a sumptuous lyre-backed throne. She is vested in ceremonial attire and wears a crown, a gorgeous *loros*, royal band, is running around her purple dress. The Child Christ is seated in her lap while two angels, formerly represented to Mary's sides,<sup>8</sup> slightly bent toward her as they gave her crowns. The composition was initially within the architectural frame of a triclinium finished with semicircular and triangular arches.

The image survived only several decades to be replaced first by the representation of the Annunciation and subsequently covered once again by another

<sup>7</sup> J. Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. - XIII. Jahrhundert*, Freiburg 1917, vol. II, 658-660; vol. IV, Taf. 133-134; W. Grüneisen, *Sainte Marie Antique*, Rome 1911, 136-139; N.P. Kondakov, *op. cit.*, T. I, 270, 276-280; G. Steigerwald, *op. cit.*, 185-193; P.J. Nordhagen, *The Earliest Decorations in Santa Maria Antiqua and their Date*, Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia, Institutum Romanum Norvegiae 1, 1962, 56-57 (Rpt. in: *Studies in Byzantine and Early Medieval Painting*, London 1990, 160-161).

<sup>8</sup> Only one is still preserved to the Virgin's left, while the other one was destroyed during the transformation of the original rectangular niche into a semicircular apse.



Fig. 2 Gold consular solidus of Emperor Maurice Tiberius (582-602).

Сл. 2 Златан конзуларни солид императора Марициа Тиберијуса (582-602).

fresco cycle created no later than the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The upper painted layers peeled off with the disastrous earthquake of 847. However, the image of the Virgin revealed by it was not open for contemplation in the abandoned church. Regrettably, we do not know the context of the appearance of the image in the church interior, though it might be of essential importance – especially because the church was adjacent to the Imperial palace on Palatine.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the image of the crowned Mary is itself the basic source of information.

It is evident that the attire of the Virgin reproduces the official Byzantine Imperial vestments in every

detail. In particular, one can remember the consular images of emperors on Byzantine coins. For example, the representation of emperor Maurice Tiberius (582-602) on a 6<sup>th</sup> century gold solidus. (Fig. 2) An ornate *loros* and a crown are the most salient features of both images under discussion.

The artistic treatment of the image from Santa Maria Antiqua bears an amazing likeness to numerous portraits of Byzantine empresses – in particular, the three marble heads identified in historiography as empress Ariadne (450-515) or Amalasunta, the daughter of ostrogothic king Theodoric (526-534).<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 3-4) Despite the difference of the headgear, the likeness of the treatment of the Imperial image and the sacred one, as well as the similarity of their small caps, adorned with divaricated rows of gems, indicate the typological closeness

<sup>9</sup> The former Roman structure was converted into a church known as Santa Maria Antiqua only in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, before it served as a guard room or an entrance adjacent to the ramp leading to the Palatine palace. See: R. Krautheimer, S. Corbett, W. Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, vol. II/1, Città del Vaticano 1959, 249-268.

<sup>10</sup> R. Delbrück, *Porträts Byzantinischer Kaiserinnen*, Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 28, 1913, 310-352; K. Wessel, *Das Kaiserinnenporträt in Castello Sforzesco zu Mailand*, Jahrbuch der deutschen archäologischen Instituts 77, 1962, 240-255; S. Sande, *Zur Porträtplastik des sechsten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts*, Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia, Institutum Romanum Norvegiae 6, 1975, 67-81; *Head of Ariadne*, in: *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, third to seventh century*, ed. by K. Weitzmann, N.Y. - Princeton 1979, 30-31; A. Acconci, № 269-271, in: *Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana*, a cura di S. Ensoli ed E. La Rocca, Roma 2000, 581-583.



Fig. 3 Maria Regina, Santa Maria Antiqua (detail).

Сл. 3 Марија Регина, Санта Марија Антиква (детал).



Fig. 4 Empress Ariadne or Amalasunta, Louvre.

Сл. 4 Царица Аријадне / Амаласунта, Лувр.

of the images. This likeness does not appear occasional. On the contrary, it might be regarded as testimony to their belonging to one and the same circle of representations and artistic creations.<sup>11</sup>

Of essential importance in this sense is specifying which woman potentate is represented in the portraits. If it is Amalasunta, we can assume (especially taking into account that the three surviving sculpture fragments were most probably unearthed in Rome) that the Maria Regina of the Santa Maria Antiqua was contemporaneous to them, id est, it was made during ostrogothic rule of Rome in the 1<sup>st</sup> third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> However, the routes and character of the interaction between those images remain obscure at this stage of research.

<sup>11</sup> Similar reflections one may find in marginal remarks made in recent publications by Maria Andaloro: M. Andaloro, *Pittura romana e pittura a Roma da Leone Magno a Giovanni VII*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo XXXIX, Spoleto 1992, T. II, 612; M. Andaloro, *Le icone a Roma in età preiconoclasta*, ibid. XLIX, Spoleto 2002, T. II, 752-753, XVIII-XIX.

<sup>12</sup> This dating is also confirmed by a spectacular similarity between the fresco in Santa Maria Antiqua and the famous image of the Virgin in throne in the Commodilla catacombs. The latest was made in the memory of the deceased Turtura and dated to the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (528). Though it is rather improbable that the images belong to the same hand the terms of style and the identical iconographic scheme used in both cases for the figure of the



Fig. 5 The icon “Madonna della Clemenza”,  
Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome.

Сл. 5 Икона „Madonna della Clemenza”,  
Санта Марија у Трастевере, Рим.



Fig. 6 Empress Euphemia (?), Niš.

Сл. 6 Царица Еуфемија (?), Ниш.

The other example that I would like to mention here is an extraordinary icon of the Virgin that can be found in Santa Maria in Trastevere, one of the oldest churches in Rome.<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 5) Its imposing size (164 x 116 cm.) is unique and makes it the largest iconic image survived from the early Byzantine period. The icon represents the Virgin seated on a bejeweled throne, holding the Child Christ in her lap. To either side stand two archangels holding staffs, at the foot of the Theotokos, in the lower part of the icon, is a kneeling male figure – presumably, the donor. He looks straight at the viewer, touching Mary’s crimson shoe with the fingers of his right hand. His right eye and part of the wrinkled forehead are the only remains of the original encaustic painting while the papal vestments

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enthroned Virgin, with the exception of the Imperial *insignia* and details of costume, speak in favour of their contemporaneity and mutual echoing of same prototypes. Besides, the original decoration of Santa Maria Antiqua reminds the program of Theodoric with the counterpart mosaics of Christ and Virgin in throne from Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.

<sup>13</sup> C. Bertelli, *op. cit.*, Roma 1961; M. Andaloro, *La datazione della tavola di S. Maria in Trastevere*, *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte* 19-20 (1972-1973), Roma 1975, 139-215; P. Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae. Antiche icone romane*, Roma 1988, 42-46 ; M. Andaloro, *Icona della Madonna della Clemenza*, in: *Aurea Roma.*, 662-663.



Fig. 7 Maria Regina, icon from Santa Maria in Trastevere (detail).

Сл. 7 Марија Регина, икона из Санта Марије у Траставере, (деталј).



Fig. 8 Empress Theodora, San Vitale, Ravenna.

Сл. 8 Царица Теодора, Сан Витале, Равена.

and square nimbus are later additions of an unknown date made in tempera.<sup>14</sup> The use of wax colors together with the characteristics of style allowed scholars to date the icon from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup>.

The Imperial robes of the Virgin on the icon have many differences from the Maria Regina of the Santa Maria Antiqua – the crown is of a much more developed type, the undercap is not discernible. Only three plates of the gem-studded octal crown are visible. The central is topped with a pearl cross, and the side ones adorned with large pearls. Analogous pearl tops are extant in the bronze portrait of a Byzantine empress (possibly, Euphemia) of the Narodniy Museum of Niš<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 6) and many others and are even sometimes mentioned in the sources.

Ornate *prependoulia* go down in long pearl strings to the sides of Mary's face. Just as the overall solemnity of the image, this element brings the icon of Trastevere close to the portrait of empress Theodora at San Vitale in Ravenna.<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 7-8) In both instances, the *prependoulia* - prerogatives of the Byzantine empress' ceremonial attire - are attached to the *stephanos* crown.

<sup>14</sup> G. Urbani, *Le condizioni del dipinto ed i provvedimenti adottati, Il restauro della Madonna della Clemenza*. Bolletino dell'Istituto Centrale del Restauro 41-44, 1964, 15-24.

<sup>15</sup> *Age of Spirituality*., 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> The bibliography on this mosaic is too vast to be cited at length. I will limit myself to the latest publication which contains detailed information on previous bibliography: S.R. Bassett, *Style and Meaning in the Imperial Panels at San Vitale*, *Artibus et historiae* XXIX/57, 2008, 49-57.

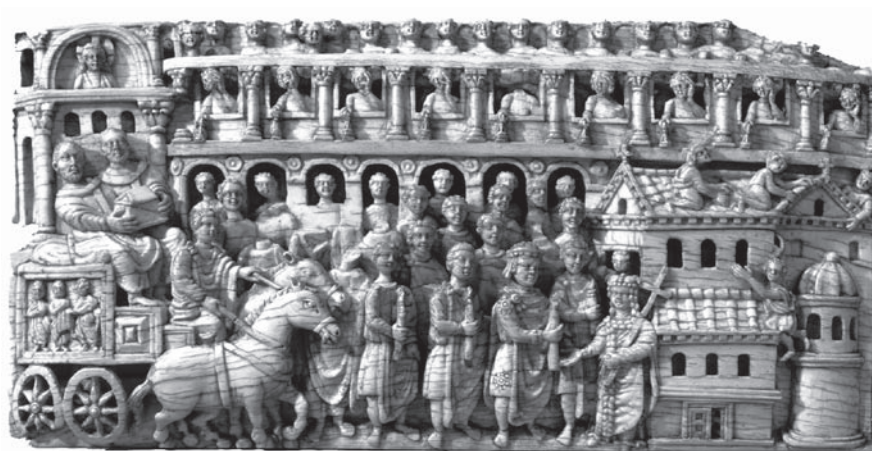


Fig. 9 The relic-carrying procession, Trier.

Сл. 9 Процесија проношења реликвије, Тријер.

The absence of a lavishly decorated *loros* thoroughly differs the icon from the *Maria Regina* of the *Santa Maria Antiqua*. Obliquely indicating the band is a slanting stripe<sup>17</sup> on the chest and a part of a band under the diagonally truncated purple dalmatic. This element allowed single out two independent iconographic types of the Virgin—with the *loros*, and without. According to American researcher Bissera Pentcheva, the former emerged in Byzantium, while the latter was a Roman variation of the same theme.<sup>18</sup>

This is a disputable hypothesis due to evident closeness of the *Maria Regina* of Trastevere to many contemporaneous portraits of Byzantine empresses. Despite the absence of precise dating of the analyzed monuments, they evidently belonged to one vast period—the 6<sup>th</sup> century, marked by a constant research in the official iconography of Byzantine empresses.<sup>19</sup> The Roman images of *Maria Regina*, which repeat them in detail, do not so much borrow a fully formed foreign canon as build into the overall formative process of a complicated and hierarchically arranged idiom of Imperial portraiture.

Indicative from the point of comparison of the Imperial and Marian iconographies is also the precious cross in Mary's right hand. The object we see today is a distemper representation of the original metal cross. It is vague just when and why the cross was removed from the icon to be replaced by its tempera imitation. The motif is frequent in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century art in the images of Christ and many saints. However, this essential Christian symbol is traditionally represented as the scepter in Imperial portraiture. The enormous precious cross in the Trastevere icon, resembling a long staff, might have been borrowed from both

<sup>17</sup> Identified by some scholars as *loros* (C. Bertelli, 1961), it is seen as *trabea* by others (B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*, Pennsylvania 2006, 22).

<sup>18</sup> B. Pentcheva, *Ibid.*, 21-26.

<sup>19</sup> D. Angelova, *The Ivories of Ariadne and Ideas about Female Imperial Authority in Rome and Early Byzantium*, *Gesta* 43/1, 2004, 1-16.

sources. Of principle importance to this study, however, is the existence of many testimonies confirming that the Byzantine empress, just as the emperor, could be depicted holding a precious cross on a long staff. One example, the Trier ivory, represents the meeting of a relic-carrying procession in Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> (Fig. 9) On this plaque the empress stands upright in full Imperial *regalia*, holding a long staff cross in her left hand. The identification of the empress, as well as the dating of this ivory, remain problematic and are widely discussed in scholarly circles. Nevertheless, it belongs either to the pre-iconoclastic period or was made immediately after the end of Iconoclasm.

Curiously, not only the imagery but also the general composition of the Trastevere icon finds parallels in Imperial iconography—clamorous is the example of the well-known miniature representing empress Anicia Juliana from the Vienna Dioskurides manuscript, made before 512.<sup>21</sup> As the Virgin on the Roman icon, the empress is represented enthroned, with two figures to her sides—not angels but personifications. Last but not least, the female figure is depicted at the foot of the throne, kissing the Empress' purple shoe, analogous to the posture of the assumed donor at the foot of the Virgin.

Unlike the mural of the Santa Maria Antiqua, which was forgotten fairly soon, the Marian icon of Trastevere was destined to become widely worshipped. More than that, it was considered to be not made by hand, according to early extant written sources.<sup>22</sup> To all appearances, the renown and exceptional religious importance of the icon determined its use as prototype of many later images not only of Maria Regina but also of the Virgin in a maphorion (e.g. the decoration of the apse of Santa Maria in Domnica, of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century).

The most pointed discussions concern the interrelation of the Trastevere encaustic image and the monumental mosaic of Maria Regina of the San Marco basilica in Florence, which formerly adorned the oratory of John VII at Constantinian basilica of St. Peter in Rome.<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 10) The image repeats in

<sup>20</sup> K. Holum - G. Vikan, *The Trier Ivory, Adventus Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33, 1979, 113-133. The dating of this ivory plaque as well as the subject it represents is widely discussed in the scholarly literature. For one of the latest contributions which contains numerous references to previous literature, see: L. Brubaker, *The Chalke gate, the construction of the past and the Trier ivory*, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23, 1999, 258-285.

<sup>21</sup> For the latest analysis of this miniature and further bibliography: B. Kiilerich, *The Image of Anicia Juliana in the Vienna Dioskurides: Flattery or Appropriation of Imperial Imagery*, *Symbolae Osloenses* 76/1, 2001, 169-190.

<sup>22</sup> R. Valentini - G. Zucchetti, *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, Roma 1942, vol. II, 101-105.

<sup>23</sup> For the decoration of this chapel and the analysis of the remaining fragments, see: P.J. Nordhagen, *The Mosaics of John VII (705-707 A.D.)*, *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia, Institutum Romanum Norvegiae* 2, 1965, 121-166 (Rpt.: *Studies in Byzantine and Early Medieval Painting*, 58-130); M. Andaloro, *I mosaici dell'Oratorio di Giovanni VII*, in: *Fragmenta Picta. Affreschi e mosaici staccati del Medioevo romano*, Roma 1989, 169-177; A. van Dijk, *The Oratory of Pope John VII (705-707) in Old St. Peter's* (Phil. Diss. John Hopkins University) Baltimore 1995. For the reconstruction of the original setting: *La pittura Medievale a Roma, 312-1431: atlante, percorsi visivi*, a cura di M. Andaloro, Milano 2006, vol. I, 40-41.

detail all the basic parts of Maria Regina's attire. However, it was placed within a vast narrative cycle, unlike the Trastevere icon, and was its central iconic image.

Scholars offered varied interpretations of the evident likeness of the two images. Some discerned one donor and same time of the creation behind it,<sup>24</sup> while others regarded the St. Peter's mosaic as a close replica of a miraculous icon.<sup>25</sup> Though both icons retain the same principal elements, their main difference is that the image of the oratory used another iconographic treatment, representing the Virgin as Orant – not enthroned but standing in adoration.

This might bear out the assumption that Imperial portraiture was rejected as a model for this particular iconographic treatment if we did not know at least one early image of the Imperial couple with hands raised in supplication in Rome. That is the representation of Justin II (565-578) and Sophia his wife on a cross sent from Constantinople in its time, and now preserved in the treasury of St. Peter's cathedral.<sup>26</sup> It is impossible to ignore that, on the whole, this iconographic type was not very characteristic of early Imperial portraiture, and its appearance might have been determined by the votive nature of the Imperial gift. It might as well testify to the transfer of the religious imagery of impassioned prayer to secular iconography.

Due to the space limits, a wide range of Imperial images that could be discussed in connection with the earliest representations of Maria Regina in Rome had to be considerably restricted. Nevertheless, the analyses brought to attention here allow to encircle the general issues of the relationship of a specific type of Marian representation and secular Imperial iconography. As has been demonstrated, the main characteristic of Maria Regina imagery lies in the fact that neither the pose nor the compositional scheme determines iconographic identity but the royal garment and rich Imperial headdress. The similarity of the attire of the Virgin was great enough to make researchers initially mistake certain images of Maria Regina, such as the mural in the lower church of San Clemente and the mosaic in Durazzo, Albania, for Imperial portraits.<sup>27</sup>

Imperial iconography was borrowed at several levels. First of all, the costume and *regalia* of the empress were reproduced. The most solemn and so the fullest dress, worn for especially important ceremonies in Byzantium, was chosen. Graphically testifying to that point were the representations of *loros*, purple vestments, lavish jewelry and, last but not least, the most magnificent of the Imperial crowns.

<sup>24</sup> C. Bertelli, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> M. Andaloro, *La datazione...*, 139-215.

<sup>26</sup> *Picturing the Bible: the earliest Christian Art*, ed. by F. Worth, J. Spier, New Haven 2007, 283-285.

<sup>27</sup> For the critical analysis of this situation in connection with the fresco in the lower church of San Clemente, see: J. Osborne, *Early Mediaeval Wall-Paintings...*, 117-118. For the wrong interpretations of the figure in royal garments represented in the mosaics in Durrës: V. Toçi, *Amfiteatri i Dyrrahit*, Monumentet 2, 1971, 37-42; D. Dharmo, *Le Moyen Âge (X-XIXe siècles)*, in: *L'art albanais à travers les siècles* (Exposition à Petit Palais), Paris 1974, 44; A. Ducellier, *Dernières découvertes sur des sites albanais du Moyen Âge*, *Archeologia* 78, 1975, 40-45.



Fig. 10 Maria Regina from the oratory of John VII in St. Peter's basilica, San Marco, Florence (detail).

Сл. 10 Марија Регина из ораторијума Јована VII у базилици Светог Петра, Сан Марко, Фиренца, (деталј).

It was an easily recognizable attire. The Imperial couple could be seen wearing it during the official ceremonies. Frequently represented in statues, diptychs and on coins, it was known in the most distant parts of the Byzantine Empire. Last but not least, as many 6<sup>th</sup> century historical sources testify – e.g., the Malalas' Chronography (Malalas, 17.9) and Agathias' History (Agath., 3.15) – the Imperial insignia of the crown, purple robes, a precious belt and red shoes were given to local rulers in Constantinople not merely as precious gifts but also in token of the recognition of their rule.<sup>28</sup>

As shown above, the earliest images of Maria Regina not only represent in detail (cite, in fact) the crucial details of Byzantine Imperial attire but also, as a rule, follow the iconographic scheme conventional for its representation. Despite the known influence of Imperial portraiture on the formation of numerous traditional iconographic types of the Byzantine world, it acquired its fullest – the greatest possible, in fact – embodiment only in the images of Maria Regina.

Direct borrowing of the iconography from the Imperial cult, with its utterly un-Christian essence, brought in its wake the transfer of semantic and hierarchic accents from secular iconography to the Marian. Thus, the image of Maria Regina deliberately used the symbolism and dramatic emotional impact intrinsic in the official Imperial iconography. Such borrowing rested on the typological stability of Imperial portraits and on wide acquaintance of the population of the Empire with them. So it allowed embody the idea of Imperial majesty in all its earthly details in the sacred images of the Virgin.

The exceptional closeness of the images of Maria Regina and emperors, just as the deliberately used artistic device of recognizable semblance, could never be implemented without direct approval by the emperors because Byzantium

<sup>28</sup> Ioannis Malalae Chronographia, ed. by I. Thurn (Corpus Fontium Byzantinae 35), Berlin 2000; Agathiae Myrinaei historiarum libri quinque, ed. by R. Keydell (Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae 2), Berlin 1967, 103; Agathias, The Histories, transl., ed. by J. Frendo (Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae 2A), Berlin 1975, 84-85. I would like to thank Ekaterina Nechaeva for bringing these passages to my attention.

had inherited from the Antiquity the idea of sacredness not only of the emperor but even of his portraits. However, the appearance of Maria Regina imagery reflected, first of all, intense iconographic search for adequate artistic expression of Marian theology and absorbed a number of essential theological ideas formulated in connection with the figure of the Virgin in the Early Byzantine period. The royal status of the Virgin is justified both by historical reasons, as she came of the House of David, and by her importance as Mother of the King of Heaven. The wide range of ideas underlying the iconography of Maria Regina<sup>29</sup> could not be discussed here at length but I would like to point out that these ideas cannot be considered specifically Roman but only Byzantine in a more general sense as they were pivotal for the Christian thought and shared by the entire Early Byzantine world. Therefore, the turn to the Byzantine Imperial iconography in order to reveal a rich semantic meaning of Marian theological “image” may serve as a strong indication to Constantinople – the place where official portraiture of the potentate took shape – as a center where the Maria Regina type most probably originated.

Марија Лидова  
НАЈРАНИЈИ ПРИКАЗИ ЛИКА МАРИЈЕ РЕГИНЕ У РИМУ  
И ВИЗАНТИЈСКА ЦАРСКА ИКОНОГРАФИЈА

Марија Регина (Maria Regina) или Марија Краљица је назив који се обично користи за означавање посебне врсте приказивања лика Марије, који је био један од најраспрострањенијих приказа у раном средњовековном сликарству Рима. Главна особеност сликовног приказа Марије Регине лежи у чињеници да нити поза нити композициона шема не одређују иконографски идентитет, већ то чине краљевска одећа и богати царски шешир.

Најранији пример који је опстао може се пронаћи на палимпсет зиду цркве Санта Марија Антиква (Santa Maria Antiqua) на римском Форуму. Кљивевни извори и важност локације указују на то да су најмање друга два приказа лика Марије Регине обележавала пут сваког рано-средњовековног римског ходочасника: нерукотворена икона у Санта Марији у Траставере (Trastevere) и Богородица која се моли у Ораторијуму Јована VII (705-707) у старој катедрали Светог Петра.

У сва три случаја Богородица је представљена као краљица, о чему нам говори њена званична одежда која репродукује, до најмањег детаља, званичну одећу византијске Царице: тамно љубичаста далматика, раскошно украшен маљниак, светло гримизне ципеле, и више од свега, круна типа *stephanos*, по рангу једнака Царичиној стеми.

Популарност оваквог приказа лика у западном свету, посебно у Риму, и чињеница да је он скоро непознат у византијској уметности дали су разлог да се Марија Регина сматра посебном западњачком варијантом сликовног приказивања Марије, која се

<sup>29</sup> See note 1 and also for short and general overview: M. Lidova, *Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia. On the Perception of the Icon of S. Maria in Trastevere in the Early Byzantine Context*, in: *Proceedings of the 21<sup>st</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies* (London, 21-26 August 2006), Aldershot 2006, vol. III, 293-294.

појавила и постала распрострањена у Риму под јаким папским утицајем. Међутим, ова претпоставка може се оспорити чињеницом да раније постојећи прикази лика Марије Регине не имитирају већ директно наводе званичне представке ликова византијских Царица и Царева. За ово постоје обимни докази у бројним царским приказима ликова који су у то време били широко распрострањени а данас опстају на мозаицима Сан Витале, фрагментима статуа у природној величини, слоновачи, металним притискачима и новчићима. До сада се нису пажљиво проучавале или објашњавале везе између формирања репрезентативне иконографије Марије Регине и развоја званичног портретирања византијских царица.

Директно позајмљивање ове иконографије из царског култа, са крајње нехришћанском суштином, доносило је у својој црквеној слави и премештање семантичких и хијерарскијских акцената са секуларне иконографије на иконографско приказивање лика Марије. Тако се у приказивању лика Марије Регине намерно користио симболизам и драматичан емоционалан утицај који је суштински у званиној царској иконографији. Заокрет ка византијском царском сликовном приказивању може послужити као јак показатељ правца ка Константинопољу - месту где се обликовало званично портретирање потентата – као центру одакле највероватније потиче овај тип приказивања лика Марије Регине.

