Reliquary-chapel of Saint Demetrios
at the Davitgareji Desert*

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The paper addresses a recently discovered rock-hewn chapel in the Davitgareji Desert, which has preserved late twelfth-early thirteenth century wall paintings dominated by a cycle of St Demetrios. The cycle, which finds no parallel in Georgia, is remarkable in many regards and raises important questions as to the chronology and geographical spread of such cycles, the provenance of unknown iconographical redactions, the history of the relics of St Demetrios, the function of the chapel dedicated to the saint, and the interaction between Georgian and Byzantine artistic and cultural traditions, in general.

Keywords: Medieval Georgian painting, cultural interaction, *vita* cycle of St Demetrios, holy relics of St Demetrios

A lot has been written about the cult and the holy relics of the Great Martyr Demetrios of Thessaloniki, apparently the most Byzantine of all Christian saints, as well as the religious, historical, political and social aspects relating to the veneration of the saint and his relics, his individual images and narrative *vita* cycles in medieval art. Therefore, presentation of new observations, not to mention a hitherto unknown artefact, to scholarly community would seem highly unexpected – especially from Georgia, where very little is known about the veneration of the saint.

Several years ago, a small single-naved church adorned with murals was discovered in the rock-hewn Dodorka Monastery of the Mother of God at Davitgareji (fig. 1). Its location in a royal monastery next to the main church, as well as a high quality of its murals painted by using precious pigments (e.g. lapis lazuli in the backgrounds, gold on haloes, cinnabar in the background and on clothes) and above all, a distinctive painting programme, point to the importance of the commission. The murals are dominated by a cycle of St Demetrius, which finds no parallel in Georgia.

The painting programme at Dodorka is highly laconic with its conceptual accents being strongly pronounced. The sanctuary features a bust image of the Virgin Platytéra (figs. 2, 3), a symbolic icon of the Incarnation of Christ, flanked by two bishops; on both sides of the sanctuary niche is depicted the Annunciation, a historical illustration of the Incarnation and its narrative confirmation (figs. 4, 5, 6); the vault has a large triumphal scene of the Ascension of the Holy Cross; the corners of the vault are marked by the busts of Evangelists set in medallions (fig. 7); the adjoining sections of the sanctuary show the Warrior Saints with St George and St Theodore to the south (fig. 8), and St Demetrios, patron of the church, to the north (fig. 9).

The remaining section of the chapel, i.e. the area extending from the south-west corner to the north, presents the scenes from the life of St Demetrios arranged in a single register. The *vita* cycle illustrates only the Passio text depicting its six episodes combined in four scenes, namely: St Demetrios before Emperor Maximian (figs. 10, 11); the Scorpion Miracle and an Angel Placing a Crown to the south (figs. 12, 13, 14); St Demetrios Blessing St Nestor and Triumph over Lyaios also united in one scene (fig. 15); and lastly, the Martyrdom of St Demetrios (figs. 16, 17).

In terms of its scenes, the Dodorka cycle follows the Byzantine cycles the majority of which also serve to illustrate the Passio scenes. The scenes included in it can be

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1 Ph. Grierson, *Byzantine coins*, London–Berkeley 1982, 211–238, 276–310; *Virgin Blachernitissa*, in: ODB III, 2170–2171 (N. P. Ševčenko); R. G. Ousterhout, *The Virgin of the Horà: an image and its contexts*, in: *The sacred image East and West*, ed. I. M. Brubaker, Urbana–Chicago 1995, 94–96; E. Tsagaridas, *The Mother of God in wall-paintings*, in: *Mother of God. Representation of the Virgin in Byzantine art*, Milan – New York 2000, 127; M. B. Cunningham, *Mary as intercessor in Constantinople during the Iconoclast period: the textual evidence*, in: *Presbëia Theotokou. The intercessory role of Mary across times and places in Byzantium (4th–9th century)*, ed. L. M. Peltoama et al., Vienna 2013, 139–152, etc.

2 It is noteworthy that the figures represented in the sanctuary, as well as in the Annunciation scene bear golden halos. Of the original gold halos only the violet lining used for gold has survived.

3 For example, the miniatures of the menologion of Demetrios Palaiologos (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Gr. th. f.1, fol. 54v–55r; 1322–1340), Church of St. Demetrios at Mistra (late thirteenth century murals), Bogorodica Ljeviška at Prizren (1310–1313), Markov monastery (1376–1377), the Church of Prophet Elijah in Thalames
found separately in almost all the known cycles depicting the life of the saint. The Dodorka cycle differs from them only in terms of the arrangement of certain scenes. The scenes from the vita of the saint, lacking detail and narrative richness, presumably follow iconographic redactions from an early period. They feature only two

at Mani (late thirteenth–early fourteenth century), etc. Of the mural cycles, the Dečani cycle (around 1345) that includes several scenes of the posthumous miracles of the saint, is an exception. Cf. I. Hutter, Der despotes Demetrios Palaiologos und sein „Bildmenologion“ in Oxford, JOB 57 (2007) 183–214; M. Chatzidakis, Mistra: la cité médiévale et la forteresse, Guide des palais, des églises et de la forteresse, Athènes 1981, 38–42; M. D. Tomić Ðurić, Ideje osnove tematskog programa živopisa crkve Svetog Dimitrija u Markovom manastiru, Beograd 2017, 672–678 (doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet u Beogradu); N. Kontogiannis, S. Germanidou, The iconographic program of the Prophet Elijah church in Thalames, Greece, BZ 101/1 (2008) 55–87; J. Radovanović, Heiliger Demetrios – die ikonographie seines Lebens auf den Fresken des Klosters Dečani, in: L’art de Thessalonique et des pays Balkaniques et les courants spirituels XIIe siècle, ed. R. Samardžić, Belgrade 1987, 75–88, etc.

For example, St. Demetrios before Emperor Maximian is depicted in the Metropolis at Mistra, in the miniature of the menologion of Demetrios Palaiologos, in Thalames, and in the Church of St. Demetrios at Peć; the Scorpion Miracle is featured on the Vatopedi reliquary, at Mistra and in the menologion, while St. Demetrios blessing St. Nestor, Triumph over Lyaios and the Martyrdom of St. Demetrios are represented in almost all cycles.

The combination of the Scorpion Miracle and the Placing of the Crown of Martyrdom on the Head of St. Demetrios within one scene can be found in iconographic redactions known from the Palaiologan times, while the combination of St. Demetrios Blessing St Nestor and Triumph over Lyaios is without a parallel.

With their short iconographic redactions, the Dodorka scenes find the closest affinity with the Vatopedi reliquary featuring a cycle dated to the second half of the twelfth century, which is believed to be the earliest cycle bearing this content. Cf. A. Xyngopoulos, La relique de saint Dimitri. L’église mosaique de la basilique des Martyrs, Athens 1936; 131–134; A. Grabar, Quelques reliques de saint Démétrios et le martirium du saint à Salonique, DOP or three characters represented against a plain background marked by a hill, an arch or few buildings. Each scene contains a traditional iconographic image showing St Demetrios as a young man, which can be found in the fifth–seventh century mosaics adorning the basilica erected on his tomb in Thessaloniki. In Dodorka the saint is depicted with a yellow halo and short hair, wearing the garments of patricians – a long rose tunic and emerald-green chlamys (fig. 13). Only the image in the Martyrdom scene (fig. 16) and a separately standing figure of the saint, the largest in size, bear golden halos to indicate their centrality in the entire cycle. One of them shows him as a martyr, while another points to his military prowess and protective power. Although the full figure representation of St Demetrios is not framed, it assumes the role of a cult icon and is reminiscent of Byzantine proskynetaria icons of church patron saints (fig. 9).

Given that the Dodorka cycle finds no parallel in Georgia, it is natural to assume that the majority of the

5 (1950) 3–28; idem, Un nouveau reliquaire de saint Démétrios, DOP 8 (1954) 305–313; Ch. Walter, The warrior saints in Byzantine art and tradition, Aldershot 2003, 67–93.

6 S. Ćurčić, Prosiknetaria icons, saint’s tomb, and the development of the iconostasis, in: Iconostas. Proiskhozhdenie – razvitie – simvolika, ed. A. Lidov, Moskva 2000, 134–142; S. Kalopissi-Verti, The prosiknetaria of the temple and narthex: form, imagery, spatial connections, and reception, in: Threshold of the sacred. Architectural, art historical, liturgical, and theological perspectives on religious screens, East and West, ed. Sh. E. J. Gerstel, Washington 2006, 107–132.
scenes of this typically Byzantine cycle were rendered according to traditional Byzantine iconographic models. However strange it may seem, some of the scenes contain iconographic elements that could be found neither in the Greek texts on the passion of the saint nor in the images illustrating such texts.

In this light, of particular note is the Martyrdom of St Demetrios, which differs from all the other works featuring this scene to such extent that it would be difficult to identify it if not its belonging to the cycle. Its iconographic scheme is similar neither to earlier Byzantine works offering a short redaction, in which St Demetrios stands on his feet facing one or two executioners bearing spears [Menologion of Basil II, late tenth century, Ms. Vat. gr. 1613 (fig. 18); Vatopedi reliquary, second half of the twelfth century (fig. 19)], nor to standardized scenes offering extensive iconographic redactions known from the Palaiologan times. The latter commonly present an angel placing a crown on the head of the enthroned saint with his right hand raised and a group of executioners, on the opposite, piercing the saint, behind whom his servant, St Lupus, is visible (fig. 20). The Dodorka scene features naked St Demetrios with a loincloth. He is shown severed, facing two executioners armed with a spear and a dagger. Parts of the saint’s dismembered body are depicted in the lower section of the scene, in the forefront. The right hand extending from heaven gives blessing to the Great Martyr (figs. 16, 17).

The theme of equating the passion of St Demetrios with that of Christ that is highlighted in numerous encomia to St Demetrios (including those by Theodore Metochites, Nikephoros Gregoras, Gregory Palamas, Nicholas Kabasilas, Symeon of Thessalonike), and is

9 Α. Ξυγγόπουλος, Η τοιχογραφία του μαρτυρίου του Αγίου Δημητρίου εις τους Αγίους Αποστόλους Θεσσαλονίκης, ΔΧΑΕ 8 (1975–1976) 1–18; E. N. Kyriakoudis, The scene of the martyrdom of Saint De- metrios in post-Byzantine art, Zograf 31 (2006–2007) 203–213; Kontogiannis, Germanidou, The iconographic program, 55–87.

10 E. Russell, St Demetrius of Thessalonica. Cult and devotion in the Middle Ages, Bern 2010, 29–64, 83–110.
represented in Byzantine works, by a raised hand of the saint and his side ready for being pierced, finds a more dramatic representation at Dodorka. The latter features a naked figure of St Demetrios with a shroud around his loins inviting direct association with Crucified Christ.

Peculiar interpretation of the Passion scene at Dodorka, which differs markedly from the one offered in the Byzantine originals, can be explained not only by the adherence to different visual models, but also by a different redaction of the saint’s vita. Close comparison of the images and the texts led us to believe that it was the Georgian redaction that was followed.

The earliest known, i.e. the eleventh century Georgian redaction of the Martyrdom of St Demetrios belongs to St Euthymios of Athos and represents a translation of an interim redaction – the so-called Passio Altera. The text contains several important elements absent in the Greek originals, including an unusual version of the martyrdom of the saint according to which St Demetrios is killed not only with spears, but also with a dagger. He is first dismembered and then pierced by spears. All these innovations are accurately illustrated in the Dodorka paintings.

Furthermore, the use of several uncommon iconographic details in the scenes depicting the conversation between St Demetrios and Emperor Maximian and the Scorpion Miracle can be explained by the adherence to St Euthymios’ redaction. According to the text, the saint drops an honorary regalia at the feet of the Emperor as a gesture of his rejection of earthly honours. That the regalia is a belt is indicated only in the Georgian text. These details provide sufficient evidence to believe that the redaction of the now lost vita or the oral narratives that St Euthymius the Athonite followed were available in the eleventh century, i.e. at the time when the translation was made. Yet the fact that they are present only in the Georgian painted cycles indicates that by the time of the creation of the cycles of the saint’s life in Byzantium, these sources had either been neglected or were regarded unreliable.

At Dodorka, St Demetrios is depicted in the moment of dropping a belt (fig. 10). In the Scorpion Miracle scene, St Euthymios offers a more vivid and emphatic description of the unbearable heat of the Roman thermae, where the saint was kept prison, and of the unnaturally large size of the scorpion, than the authors of the Greek originals. The prison in which the saint is detained is rendered in red to indicate the raging fire, while the scorpion is represented as an enormous creature also caught in fire (fig. 13). Unlike the Martyrdom scene, the new iconographic details included in these episodes do not change the traditional iconographic scheme.

Present in the Georgian redaction of the Martyrdom of St Demetrios, these details provide sufficient evidence to believe that the redaction of the now lost vita or the oral narratives that St Euthymius the Athonite followed were available in the eleventh century, i.e. at the time when the translation was made. Yet the fact that they are present only in the Georgian painted cycles indicates that by the time of the creation of the cycles of the saint’s life in Byzantium, these sources had either been neglected or were regarded unreliable.

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11 M. Matchavariani, Cminda Dimitris c’ikl (cameba, sasculebi, lexema) K’art’ul mcerlobaši, Tbilisi 2006 (doctoral dissertation, Korneli Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts).

12 Camebay cmidisa dikbulisa mocamisa Dimitrisi, in: Oktombris metap’rasebi. Žveli K’art’uli Targmanebi, ed. N. Gogudzhe, N. Shalamberidze, N. Natradze, Tbilisi 2014, 349–350.

13 Ibid., 346–347.
Both the chronology and the geographical distribution of the life cycles of St Demetrios have been firmly established. The earliest of the preserved cycles, dated to the second half of the twelfth century, is featured on the Vatopedi silver reliquary designed to contain the blood and myrrh of St Demetrios (fig. 19). Judging by the dates of all the other painted works, it is believed that these cycles did not spread wide until the Palaiologan times. They

16 Ξυγγόπουλος, Βυζαντινόν κιβωτίδιον, 101–136; Grabar, Quelques reliquaires, 3–28; idem, Un nouveau reliquaire, 305–313; Walter, The warrior saints, 67–93.

17 Few surviving works include the miniatures of a menologion made for Demetrios Palaiologos, Despot of Thessaloniki (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Gr. th. f. 1, fol. 54v–55r; 1322–1340), late thirteenth century murals of the Church of St. Demetrios (Metropolis) at Mistra, paintings in Bogorodica Ljeviška at Prizren dating from 1310–1313, St. Demetrios at Peć (1322–1324), Markov monastery (1376–77), the Church of Prophet Elijah in Thalames at Mani (late thirteenth–early fourteenth century), Tarnovo icon of St. Demetrios (mid-fourteenth century) and the most extensive Dečani cycle containing twelve scenes (around 1345). Cf. Hutter, Der despotes Demetrios Palaiologos, 183–214; Chatzidakis, Mistra, 38–42; Tomić Đurić, Idejne osnove tematskog programa, 672–678; Kontogiannis, Germanidou, The iconographic program, 55–87; Walter, The warrior saints, 67–93; Radovanović, Heiliger Demetrios, 75–88; G. Gerov, Une oeuvre inconnue du XIV siècle: icône de saint Demetrios avec son cycle hagiographique, Scripta & e-Scripta 2 (2004) 143–155, etc.
became especially popular in Byzantium proper as well as in its Slavic neighbourhood.\(^{18}\)

In this light, the early iconographic redactions of the Dodorka scenes and their similarity with the Vatopedi reliquary scenes of the second half of the twelfth century are highly remarkable.

That the paintings date from before the Palaiologan period is also suggested by their artistic peculiarities. Extending on a single plane, its placid, balanced compositions feature elegant figures with almost classic proportions, in standing positions, either static or in slight motion, dominating against plain backgrounds in which settings are only conventionally marked; the figures are drawn with thin, placid lines marking the forms hidden behind the freely falling drapery. On the other hand, the overall structure of the paintings is characterized by certain latitude and dynamism, which is achieved by extending separate scenes along walls (St Demetrios before Emperor Maximian in the south-west corner – fig. 10; St Demetrios Blessing St Nestor in the north corner – fig. 13, 15); rhythmic transitions from one scene to another unite the entire wall decoration into one whole adding an element of narration lacked by the scenes (fig. 17).\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) F. Dvornik, Byzantine missions among the Slavs. SS. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, New Jersey 1970, 1–49, 230–258; D. Obolensky, The cult of St Demetrius of Thessaloniki in the history of Byzantine–Slav relations, BSt 15/1 (1974) 3–20; idem, Byzantium and the Slavs, Crestwood – New York 1994, 280–300.

\(^{19}\) The free structure of the Dodorka murals reflects the trend toward dynamism that can be traced in Georgian wall paintings from the late twelfth and early thirteenth century (i.e. Vardzia, Betania and Timotesubani). In this light, the more conservative character of the scenes can be explained by the earlier date of the model. Cf. E. L. Privalova, Rospis Timotesubani. Issledovanie po istorii gruzinski srednevekovo monumental’noi zhivopisi, Tbilisi 1980, 51–88; T. B. Virsaladze, Osnovnye etapy razvitii gruzinski srednovekovo monumental’noi zhivopisi, in: Gruzinskai srednovekovai monumental’naia zhivopisi: izbranny trudy, ed. V. Beridze, Tbilisi 2007, 10–24; M. Didebulidze, Wall paintings, in: Georgian Christian art, ed. D. Tumanishvili et al., Tbilisi 2008, 45–49, etc.

Judging by the iconographic and artistic peculiarities, the Dodorka paintings must be dating from the late twelfth-early thirteenth century.\(^{20}\) If this were the case, Dodorka is the earliest painted cycle, indicating that such cycles were created even before the Palaiologan period,\(^{21}\) and that they spread farther to include the eastern regions of the Orthodox oikoumene.

Fig. 7. The Ascension of the Cross, the vault

\(^{20}\) The proposed date is suggested by separate iconographic elements and painting techniques, e.g. the Ascension of the Holy Cross, a scene traditionally represented in the domes of Georgian churches, which first appears in the vaults of the Gareji rock-hewn churches from exactly the same period (The Motsameta chapel and the diaconicon of the main church of Udabno monastery, main church of Bertubani monastery). Cf. E. Privalova, Garejis mravalm’is ‘Udabnos’ monastris ’Mocamet’as’ eklesiis șesaxeb, Sak’art’velos sätzele ni 3 (Tbilisi 2003) 196–204; T. B. Virsaladze, Gruzinskii kupol’nye shkemy zrelogo srednevekov’iia, in: Gruzinskii srednovekovai monumental’naia zhivopisi: izbranny trudy, ed. V. Beridze, Tbilisi 2007, 225–261; A. Volskaia, Bert’ubnii monastris moxatulobani, Sak’art’velos sätzele ni 13 (Tbilisi 2009) 53–63. Slightly raised gilded gesso halos adorning the most significant representations at Dodorka are distant reminders of the gesso pattern on the halos present on the Sinai and Cypriot icons from the period of Latin domination, etc. K. Weitzmann, Icon painting in the Crusader kingdom, DOP 20 (1966) 49–83; idem, Thirteenth century crusader icons on Mount Sinai, ArtB 45/3 (1963) 179–203; M. S. Frinta, Raised gilded adornment of the Cypriot icons, and the occurrence of the technique in the West, Gesta 20/2 (1981) 333–347; D. Kotoula, ’Maniera Cypria’ and thirteenth century icon production on the island of Cyprus: a critical approach, BMGS 28 (2004) 89–100, etc.

\(^{21}\) Α. Ξυγγόπουλος, Ο εικονογραφικός κύκλος της ζωής του Αγίου Δημητρίου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1970, 49–52.
The content of the Dodorka paintings reflects the increased interest in Warrior Saints in the eleventh-twelfth century Byzantium and the tendency of replacement of the early Christian ideal of holy martyrs by military saints.22

As is well known, being a protector and patron of Thessaloniki, St Demetrios was also recognized as an intercessor and patron of warriors during battles. Remarkably, it was the Virgin Platyereta, one of the Blachernai icons representing both the protective power associated with the Virgin Orans and military prowess of the Nikopois, rarely used in Georgia at the time, that was selected for decorating the apse.23 Together with the maphorion of the Virgin, also housed in the Monastery of Blachernai, it was vested with the power of miraculous protection and believed to bring victory.24

However, bearing in mind that St Demetrios (unlike the Virgin, St George and St Nino) was not an object of particular veneration in Georgia, it can be assumed that

22 A. P. Kazhdan, A. Wharton Epstein, Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1985, 110–119; Walter, The warrior saints, 67–93; M. White, Military saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900–1200, Cambridge 2013, 32–33, 64–94; P. L Grotowski, Arms and armour of the warrior saints, Tradition and innovation in Byzantine iconography (843–1261), Leiden–Boston 2010, 104–117, etc.

23 Widely used in Byzantine art, this iconographic type first appeared in Georgia on a tenth century relief of the Korogholy church, while in wall painting, the earliest works date no earlier than the fourteenth century. Cf. N. Chichinadze, Konstantinopolis sascaulmokmedi xateli da XI–XIV sasvaneebis kurtuli perecuruli xateli, Sak’artvelos sziveleni 6 (Tbilisi 2004) 73–89; U. Khuskivadze, Doret’Kari – cminda Barbares eklessis moxatuloba, Sak’artvelos sziveleni 13 (Tbilisi 2009) 104–122; T. Dadani et al., Medieval Georgian sculpture, Tbilisi 2017, 115, fig. 262; M. Qenia, Qovladcminda qveni’ismodieli da xvane’is saa sauskuneebis mxatvroba, Sak’artvelos sziveleni 22 (Tbilisi 2019) 176–205.

24 The protective and military functions of the Blachernai icons of the Virgin and the maphorion have been noted many times. However, an exact iconographic type of the icons often referred to as Blachernitissa has not been always established. In this regard, of note is an episode from the history of Russia, namely the 1169 battle of Novgorodians against the army led by the Prince of Suzdal, during which the former displayed on the city walls the icon of the Virgin Platyereta, known as Bogomater’ Znamenie in Russian tradition, as a protection from the enemy and a sign of their hope for victory. Cf. Ė. S. Smirnova, Novgorodskiai ikona ‘Bogomater’ Znamenie: nekotorye voprosy Bogorodichnoi ikonografii XII veka, in: Drevenersasxoe ikuskstvo. Balkany. Rus’, ed. A. I. Komech et al., Sankt Peterburg 1995, 288–310; A. Weyl Carr, Treads of authority: the Virgin Mary’s veil in the Middle Ages, in: Robes and honor. The medieval world of investiture, ed. S. Gordon, New York 2001, 59–93; J. Wortley, The Marian relics at Constantinople, CRBS 45 (2005) 171–187; B. V. Penticheva, Icons and power. The Mother of God in Byzantium, Pennsylvania 2006, 61–108; S. J. Shoemaker, The cult of fashion: the earliest life of the Virgin and Constantinople’s Marian relics, DOP 62 (2008) 53–74; H. Maguire, Body, clothing, metaphor: the Virgin in early Byzantine art, in: The cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium. Texts and images, ed. L. Brubaker, M. B. Cunningham, London – New York 2011, 39–52; Ch. Angelič, T. Papamastorakis, Picturing the spiritual protector: from Blachernitissa to Hodegetria, in: Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium, ed. M. Vasilaki, Aldershot–Burlington 2005, 209–224; A. Kaldeellis, The military use of the icon of the Theotokos and its moral logic in the historians of the ninth-twelfth centuries, Estudios bizantinos 1 (Madrid 2013) 56–75; B. Mjiljkovic, Čudotvorna ikona u Visantiji, Beograd 2017, 129–146, 239–240, etc.
the creation of a typically Byzantine cycle in a royal monastery was guided by a more specific reason.

In this light, of note again is the scene of the saint’s martyrdom, which includes an iconographic detail not found in any of the other scenes from his *vita*. This is St Demetrios’ miracle-working emerald-green chlamys, which, as if deliberately, recurs as a vivid, colourful accent on the saint’s attire, including on his military dress, and is inserted in the foreground as an important relic, rather than a mere illustration, unlike the dismembered parts of the body. Instead of spreading out as a piece of fabric, it is placed obliquely and is knotted at the neck as if worn by a man (fig. 21).

The relation between the hagiographic cycle and the representation of a holy relic in this scene is very similar to the one observed on the reliquary, which features an image of the saint on its surface pointing to the contents of the repository. Dodorka only combines the two sides within a single plane.

Such an unparalleled representation of the relic of St Demetrios, as well as the dedication of the entire painting programme to the saint’s life, appears to suggest that this small chapel served as a so-called ‘monumental reliquary’ and was created specifically for the relic of the saint translated to the royal monastery.

Along with an unusual representation of a chlamys, my assumption that the holy relic was kept at Dodorka is supported by a strange architectural layout of the chapel apse and its artistic solution, which finds parallel neither in Gareji, nor in Georgian or Byzantine architecture, in general.

The sanctuary of this chapel, which actually represents a small niche terminating in a conch, is cut in rock. The surrounding walls are built, as is a recess with a semi-circular summit, coloured in red, which extends along the entire width (2.50 m.) of the church and is about ten centimeter deep. It dominates the east section of the chapel forming a strong, vivid and architectural accent in the simple rock-hewn space articulated by few small niches. The artistic decoration of the niche is designed so that the arch, which actually represents a triumphal arch of the sanctuary (the surface bears the text of Psalm 93.5 - Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever), appears to ‘rest’ upon the pillars of the structures which are part of the Annunciation scene. Their spherical roofs of tile project into an inscription area from both sides. Close visual observation, as well as a technical study of the paint layer revealed that the niche had never been covered with paintings, but it was coloured in red, by applying a layer of ochre beneath and cinnabar on top (figs. 2, 23).

The fact of designing such a structure specifically for the chapel and painting its surface with precious cinnabar, and above all, the representations of Warrior Saints, near the sanctuary, as guardians, clearly indicates that it was to serve a special function by being home to a precious object, possibly a part of the saint’s chlamys.

The chlamys of St Demetrios belongs to a circle of the so-called ‘contact relics’ the translation of which from Thessaloniki, unlike the bodily relics, was ‘approved’ by St Demetrios himself.

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25 That the chlamys is deliberately included into the scene is, along with artistic accents, suggested by the fact that it is absent in the martyrdom episode of any of the *vita* redactions. This is even more remarkable if we take into account the fact the painter of Dodorka closely follows the Georgian redaction of the Passio text.

26 A. Weyl Carr, *Icons and the object of pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople*, DOP 56 (2002) 75–92; J. Elsner, *Art and pilgrimage*, in: *The Oxford handbook of Byzantine studies*, ed. R. Cormack et al., Oxford 2008, 741–749; H. A. Klein, *Materiality and the sacred: Byzantine reliquaries and the rhetoric of enshrinement*, in: *Saints and sacred matter*, 231–252.

27 The painted cycles of St Demetrios are usually included in extensive iconographic programmes.

28 A technical study of the paintings has been conducted by Prof. Nana Kuprashvili.

29 As is known, the Thessaloniki clergy refused to disclose the location of the bodily relics of the saint and rejected the emperors Justinian (527–565) and Maurice (582–602) who made numerous attempts to obtain the relics and translate them to Constantinople. The refusal would be justified by the will of the saint and the emperors would get only contact relics. Contact relics of St. Demetrios included an orarion, a ring, fragrant earth from his tomb and later, myrrh that...
The texts of the *vita* first refer to the chlamys in relation to the story of Leontius, Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum, who was miraculously healed at the tomb on St Demetrios. As willed by Demetrios Leontius, transferred the chlamys and a part of an orarion, instead of the desired bodily relics, from Thessaloniki to the city of Sirmium and placed them in the church dedicated to the saint, which he had built himself. Later, the chlamys was to be found in Constantinople and according to the Latin version of the Greek description of the metropolitan relics, it was stored in Constantinople in the eleventh century.30 As long as the bodily relics of St Demetrios could not be traced, the chlamys, the miracle-working powers of which were affirmed by the saint’s *vita*,31 was regarded so precious that instead of being placed in any of the churches

30 K. N. Ciggaar, *Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglais*, REB 34 (1976) 211–263 (in Latin); *Opisanie svyatyn’ Konstantinopola v latinskoĭ rukopisi XII veka*, trans. L. K. Masieli Sanchesa, in: *Chudotvornyia ikona v Vizantii i drevnei Russii*, ed. A. M. Lidov, Moskva 1996, 436–463.

31 The *vita* tells the story of how the prefect Leontius and persons accompanying him were rescued from the overflowing Danube

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Fig. 10. St Demetrios before Emperor Maximian, the south-west corner

Fig. 11. St George and St Theodore; St Demetrios before Emperor Maximian (detail), the south wall (drawing)
Fig. 12. The west section of the chapel

Fig. 13. The Scorpion Miracle; St Demetrios Blesses St Nestor (detail), the west wall
or monasteries dedicated to St Demetrios, it was located in the Imperial Pharos chapel, where the Holy Mandylion, the Crown of Thorns, Holy Nails and other important relics were kept. on their way to Sirmium thanks to the chlamys of St Demetrios; it also accounts numerous miracles and healings performed in Sirmium.

32 There are sources that indicate the presence of several churches of this type, e.g., according to Konstantin Porfirogenet’s Vita Basilii, among thirty one churches restored by Emperor Basil I, was a church of St. Demetrios in the district of Deuteron, which confirms the presence of such churches before the ninth century. It is also known that the Grand Heteriarch George Palaiologos, who had made a highly successful career at the court of Manuel Komnenos, dedicated a monastery to St. Demetrios, a celestial protector of the Palaiologan dynasty, successful career at the court of Manuel Komnenos, dedicated a monastic foundation.

33 This was most probably the chapel that Leo VI the Wise (866–912) added to the Pharos chapel after his liberation with the intercession of St Demetrios as a sign of gratitude. The chapel was designed to allude to the saint’s ciborion in the Thessaloniki basilica. Cf. P. Magdalino, Saint Demetrios and Leo VI, BS 51/2 (1990) 198–201.

34 V. de Clari, Zavoevanie Konstantinopolia, Moskva 1986, 59–60; N. Mesartis, Dekalog o relišviakh Strastey, khramiščeskikhv v Čerki Bogomateri Ferasskii, in: Relišvi v iskastvè kulture vostoch-nokristianskogo mira, ed. A. M. Lidov, Moskva 2000, 127–131; H. A. Klein, Sacred relics and imperial ceremonies at the Great palace of Constantinople, in: BYZAS V. Visualisierungen von herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell, ed. F. A. Bauer, Istanbul 2006, 79–99; A. Lidov, A Byzantine Jerusalem. The imperial Pharos chapel or the Holy Sepulcher, in: Jerusalem as narrative space, ed. A. Hoffmann, G. Wolf, Leiden–Boston 2012, 63–104, etc.

There is no written evidence to prove that the chalums of St Demetrios was kept in Thessaloniki. However, there is a seal of the late twelfth-early thirteenth century commissioned by Constantine Mesopotamites, Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, which features St Demetrios placing his own chlamys, as a sign of protection, over the head of the commissioner, who is shown in the pose of proskynesis. The inscription imprinted on the seal refers to the chalums as a guardian and protector of the archbishop (fig. 22).

The scene on the seal cannot certainly serve as conclusive evidence for proving the presence of this relic in Thessaloniki, yet it clearly indicates that at the turn of the thirteenth century, the cult of chalums did exist and that it was firmly believed to have protective powers. Therefore, the Thessalonian origin of the relic shall not be ruled out.

It then appears that a part of the chalums, supposedly kept in Dodorka, may have originated either from Constantinople or from Thessaloniki. At present, it is not possible to establish with certainty how this relic could reach Georgia. It may have been given as a gift by a Byzantine Emperor or high-ranking authorities of the Thessaloniki
Church, or have been purchased either from them or, after 1204 – from the Latins. What is without doubt, judging by the earlier (the Pharos chapel) and later (the Davitgareji royal monasteries) locations of the relic, is the high social status of its owner. By all indications, it belonged to a royal family.

It is possible that the part of chlamys was placed in the reliquary, but it appears more plausible to believe that it was located in the reliquary icon of St Demetrios, which was the main, proskynesis icon of the church. This assumption seems to be further supported by historical records, according to which, in the middle of or at the end of the twelfth century, i.e. by around the time when Dodorka was decorated with paintings, apart from relics, icons began to be disseminated from Thessaloniki, including those that represented the saint depicted on the lid of the sarcophagus placed in the ciborion. It has been as-

37 These were accepted ways of acquiring relics, while presenting the latter as gifts to the rulers of foreign countries was a constitutive part of imperial diplomatic practice. Cf. P. V. Geary, Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics, in: The social life of things. Commodities in social perspective, ed. A. Appadurai, Cambridge 1986, 169–191; H. A. Klein, Eastern objects and western desires: relics and reliquaries between Byzantium and the West, DOP 58 (2004) 283–314.

38 Kalopissi-Verti, The proskynetaria of the templon and narthex, 107–132.
It may well be that in the chapel, which lacked a chancel barrier and in which points of attachment of altar veil have not been discovered so far, the icon was placed in the above the sanctuary niche in imitation of Byzantine templons, the architraves of which were traditionally decorated with stationary icons and crosses.42 The back-

40 A. A. Vasiliev, The historical significance of the mosaic of Saint Demetrios at Sassoferrato, DOP 5 (1950) 29–39; M. Dennert, Displaying an icon: the mosaic icon of Saint Demetrios at Sassoferrato and

41 It may well be that the reliquary icon was placed deep in the niche of the chapel of St Demetrios, rather than hung, as was the case in some of the rock-hewn chapels at Gareji, whose niches were definitely used to hold icons.

42 K. Weitzmann, I. Ševčenko, The Moses cross at Sinai, DOP 17 (1963) 385–398; J. A. Cotsonis, Byzantine figural processional crosses, Washington 1994, 26–29, 32–38; 106; Holy image hallowed ground. Icons from Sinai, ed. R. S. Nelson, K. M. Collins, Los Angeles 2006.
ground of the niche, the red colour of which symbolizes the royal power and martyrdom, can be a reference to a veil or fine silk cloth. It is well known that precious cloth was an important attribute both in court and ecclesiastical ceremonies and was widely used for covering icons, altar tables and liturgical vessels, as well as for wrapping relics.

212–213, cat. no. 35; V. Marinis, Architecture and ritual in the Churches of Constantinople: ninth to fifteenth centuries, Cambridge 2014, 29–30, 41–48; Kalopissi-Verti, The proskeniatos of the temple and narthex, 107–132.

43 L. James, Colour and the Byzantine rainbow, BMGS 15 (1991) 66–94; eadem, Color and meaning in Byzantium, JECS 11/2 (2003) 223–233.

44 A. M. Muthesius, Silk, power and diplomacy in Byzantium, in: Textiles in daily life, ed. B. Gordon, St. Paul MN 1993, 99–110; M. G. Parani, Mediating presence: curtains in Middle and Late Byzantine imperial ceremonial and portraiture, BMGS 42/1 (2018) 1–25.

45 V. Grumel, Le "miracle habituel" de Notre-Dame des Blechernes à Constantinople, EO 30 (1931) 129–146; W. Seibt, Die Darstellung der Theotokos auf byzantinischen Bleisiegel, besonders im 11. Jahrhundert, Studies in Byzantine Sigillography 1 (Washington 1987) 35–56; A. Weyl Carr, Court culture and cult icons in Middle Byzantine Constantinople, in: Byzantine court culture from 829 to 1204, ed. H. Maguire, Washington 1997, 83; M. Evangelatou, Textile mediation in Late Byzantine visual culture: unveiling layers of meaning through the fabrics of the Chora monastery, in: Catalogue of the textiles in the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine collection, ed. G. Bühl, E. Dospel Williams, Washington 2019; eadem, The purple thread of the flesh: the theological connotations of a narrative iconographic element in Byzantine images of the Annunciation, in: Icon and word. The power of images in Byzantium, ed. A. Eastmond, L. James, Aldershot 2003, 261–279; N. P. Constas, Symeon of Thessalonike and the theology of the icon screen, in: Thresholds of the sacred. Architectural, art historical, liturgical, and theological perspectives on religious screens, East and West, ed. Sh. E. J. Gerstel, Washington 2006, 163–183; idem, Weaving the body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the loom of the flesh, JECS 3/2 (1995) 169–194.

46 B. V. Pentcheva, The Performance of relics: concealment and desire in the Byzantine staging of leipsana, in: ΣΤΠΜΕΙΚΤΑ. Collection of papers dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the Institute for art history, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, ed. I. Stevović, Belgrade 2012, 55–72; M. Bagnoli, Dressing the relics: some thoughts on the custom of relic wrapping in medieval Christianity, in: Matter of faith: an interdisciplinary study of relics and relic veneration in the medieval period, ed. J. Robinson et al., London 2014, 100–109; M. M. Fulghum, Under wraps: Byzantine textiles as major and minor arts, Studies in the Decorative Arts 9/1 (Chicago 2001–2002) 13–33.

Fig. 17. St Demetrios Blesses St Nestor (detail) and St Nestor Triumphs over Lyaios; The Martyrdom of St Demetrios; St Demetrios, the north wall (drawing)

The placement of relics in the east niche does not seem to contradict the tradition of the time, bearing in mind the versatility of the locations used for keeping relics.

A portico-like architectural element with its tympanum supported by two pillars, the design of which looks very similar to the Dodorka apse, often recurs on early Christian, i.e. fourth-seventh century ivory, marble and silver objects. It conventionally marks a background structure before which is represented either a saint or a certain scene. A similar structure forms a background of the im-

47 A. M. Yasin, Sacred installations. The material conditions of relic collections in Late Antique churches, in: Saints and sacred matter, 133–152; Y. Tsafrit, The loca sancta and the invention of relics in Palestine from the fourth to seventh centuries: their impact on the ecclesiastical architecture of the Holy Land, in: Eastern Christian relics, 56–64; M. Bacci, Relics of the Pharos chapel: a view from the Latin West, in: Eastern Christian relics, 234–246; N. Teteriatnikov, Relics in walls, pillars, and columns of Byzantine Church, in: Eastern Christian relics, 77–92; J. Smith, Care of relics in early medieval Rome, in: Rome and religion in the medieval world, ed. V. L. Garver, O. M. Phelan, Farnham–Burlington 2014, 179–205, etc.

48 V. Age of spirituality. Late Antique and early Christian art, third to seventh century, ed. K. Weitzmann, New York 1979, cat. no. 474, 481, 486, 502, 517, 547.
age of St Demetrios in the fifth-sixth century mosaic decoration adorning the little north colonnade in the Thessaloniki basilica dedicated to the saint. The structure has been identified by scholars as the saint's ciborion (fig. 24).

Set halfway down the nave of the basilica of St Demetrios, on the north side, the ciborion – a hexagonal silver structure with a cone-shaped roof supported by six columns – sheltered a silver bed or couch upon which was engraved a bust or effigy of the saint, which was believed to be the tomb of the saint and the site of his true presence. Due to the lack of bodily relics, it was a main object of veneration related to St Demetrios. Of note is that the saint's relics (i.e. blood and myrrh) were disseminated both within and outside the Empire through reliquaries, the majority of which were associated with a ciborion. Some of them (the Kremlin reliquary, 1059–67; fig. 25) were exact replicas of the ciborion, while others were designed to imitate the architectural features of its interior (reliquaries of St Demetrius from the British Museum (fig. 26) and Dumbarton Oaks, both from the twelfth-thirteenth century; a group of three reliquaries from the treasury of the cathedral at Halberstadt, tenth, twelfth century, etc).

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49 Xyngopoulos, The mosaics, 30–31, fig. 29, 32; Cormack, Writing in gold, 50–94; idem, The mosaic decoration of S. Demetrios, Thessaloniki: a re-examination in the light of the drawings of W. S. George, ABSA 64 (1969) 17–52; Skedros, Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki, 70–81.

50 P. Lemerle, Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius I. Le texte, Paris 1979, 66, 114–115; C. Mango, The art of the Byzantine empire: 312–1453. Sources and documents, Toronto–Buffalo–London 1986, 129–130, 206; D. I. Pallas, Le ciborium hexagonal de Saint-Démétrios de Thessalonique, Zograf 10 (1979) 44–58; Cormack, Writing in gold, 63–64; Ch. Bakirtzis, Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: the tomb of St. Demetrios, DOP 56 (2002) 175–192; Skedros, Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki, 88–94; J. Bogdanović, The performativity of shrines in a Byzantine Church: the shrines of St. Demetrios, in: Spatial icons. Performativity in Byzantium and medieval Russia, ed. A. Lidov, Moscow 2011, 275–316.

51 Grabar, Quelques reliquaires, 3–28; idem, Un nouveau reliquaire, 307–313.

52 I. A. Sterligova, Vizantiiskii moschevik Dmitrii Solunsogo iz Moskovskogo Kremlia i ego sud’ba v drevnej Rusi, in: Dmitrievski sabor vo Vladimirе. K 800-letiю sozdaniia, ed. eadem, Moskva 1997, 255–273; L. Veneskey, Truth and mimeis in Byzantium: a speaking reliquary of Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki, AH 42/1 (2019) 16–39.

53 J. Elsner, Relic, icon, and architecture: the material articulation of the holy in East Christian art, in: Saints and sacred matter, 13–
It might be possible to assume that the unusual design of the apse of the ‘monumental reliquary’ at Dodorka symbolized a ciborion, conventionally replicating the open tympana supported by columns, elements that can be best adapted to the shape of the apse.

This is just an assumption, yet, irrespective of what this specific architectural element might be suggesting, the content of the paintings and the representation of a relic provide sufficient evidence to conclude that this small chapel at Dodorka was conceived in memoria of the Thessaloniki basilica of St Demetrios, ‘the most sacred church of all-glorious martyr’.54

It is well known that in the Middle Ages, replication of the holy sites and sacred spaces did not necessarily involve precise imitation of their topography and architectural forms; just the opposite – craftsmen show certain ‘indifference’ towards precise imitation of the original. To indicate spiritual connection or identity with the prototype, repetition of certain elements, measurement units or even a name was believed sufficient. The reference to the archetype was even stronger if it was materially represented and if the newly created space sheltered icons and more importantly, relics associated with it.55 Relics formed a material and spiritual axis of the sacred space they created around themselves, space in which believers could experience a sense of spiritual connection with or true presence in the famous locus sanctus.

It is remarkable that two other reliquary churches of St Demetrius, namely that of Vladimir (1197) and Tarnovo (1185), both created to allude to the sacred site of the basilica of St Demetrios, date from around the same period as Dodorka. Tarnovo was even declared by its founders a new abode of St Demetrios, i.e. a substitute of Thessaloniki.56

Similar chronologies of the creation of reliquary churches of St Demetrius in such distant areas of the

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40; B. A. Hostetler, The function of text: Byzantine reliquaries with epi-
grams, 843–1204, Florida 2016, 52–58 (doctoral dissertation, Florida State University).

54 Among numerous examples of replicating the sacred sites, the main church of the Enkleistra monastery near Paphos (Cyprus) is especially noteworthy for its typological similarity with Dodorka. Founded by St. Neophyto in memoria of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusa-
lem, it was built for storing a part of the True Cross. Main architectural

55 R. Krautheimer, Introduction to an “iconography of media-
val architecture”, JWCI 5 (1942) 1–33.

56 V. n. 39.
That Georgians were fully familiar with the cult of St Demetrios and acknowledged the sacral value of his holy relics is without doubt. Although very little is known of the exchange between Georgia and the ‘second city’ of the Byzantine Empire, as well as of the spread of the cult of St Demetrios in the early period, it is apparent. That already in the ninth century Demetrios was regarded a Great Martyr and his tomb was believed so sacred that it was one of the sites, along with the first-rate relics in Palestine, Rome and Constantinople, to which the great Georgian saint Ilarion Kartveli (Hilarion the Iberian) made pilgrimage.57 While St Ilarion’s journey to Thessaloniki might be viewed as a reflection of the learned monk’s personal pi-

57 It is noteworthy that St. Ilarion continued his career as monk in Thessaloniki, which would definitely contribute to the deepening of ecclesiastical and secular relations between Georgia and Thessaloniki. V. C'oreba da mok'alakobay Ilarion K'art'velisay, in: Żveli k'art'uli agiografiuli literaturis żeglebi II, ed. I. Abuladze et al., Tbilisi 1967, 9–37.
Relics of St Demetrios were among highly desired sacred objects. The strong determination to retain the holy relics of the saint and enjoy his undivided protection encouraged separatist movements in Thessaloniki, which, by the thirteenth century, generated the city’s ambition to seek ecclesiastical and political independence from Constantinople. By claiming the saint’s patronage, Bulgarian and Russian rulers strove to demonstrate their status, political legitimacy and power, while the Holy See sought to use the cult of St Demetrios as an instrument in its competition with Byzantium, and also, as a political and diplomatic message for internal allies both when in 867 Anastasius Bibliothecarius (Anastasius the Librarian) translated the saint’s passion for the Frankish emperor Charles the Bald into Latin and later, in 1098, when the Crusaders attempted to ‘obtain’ his protection.

Having centuries-old uninterrupted dynastic monarchical tradition, Georgia would have no need to prove the legitimacy of the Bagrationi house or to seek the strengthening of its royal power. But that the Georgian crown would have a desire to become a regional player and cherish an ambition to emulate Constantinople at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century is natural, and also supported by evidence. For the Bagrationi royal house, then at the zenith of its military power and glory, it was a matter of prestige to gain the protection and benediction of the saint which, by that time, had become a symbol of the military victory of the Empire, and the possession of his holy relics and the creation of sacred space for them in memoria of the Thessaloniki loca sancta had become a trend.

The possible import of the most treasured relic of St Demetrios to Georgia, as well as the creation of a reliquary chapel decorated with the scenes from the saint’s life for keeping the relic should be viewed as part of the political and cultural processes that unfolded in the Orthodox world in the twelfth and thirteenth century.

As is well known, apart from its religious and ideological importance, the possession of holy relics in the Middle Ages had a political bearing. Sacred objects, and especially primary relics, highlighted the legitimacy of the rule of their owners and granted a state possessing them a privileged status among other Christian countries. Therefore, both Orthodox Christian and Latin rulers spared no effort to acquire holy relics.

58 Timarion, trans. B. Baldwin, Detroit 1984, 44; B. MacDougall, The festival of Saint Demetrios, the Timarion, and the Athiopika, BMGS 40/1 (2016) 136–150.
59 P. J. Geary, Furta sacra. Thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages, Princeton NJ 1978, 88–94; T. Dell, Stolp-relikvari sv. Marka. Politika chudes i ikonograficheskie programmy v srednevekovoi Venerii, in: Chudotvornai ikona v Vizantii i drevnei Rusi, ed. A. M. Lidov, Moskva 1996, 96–116; E. Bakalova, Relikvii u istokov kulta svatyykh, in: Eastern Christian relics, 19–44; H. A. Klein, Sacred things and holy bodies: collecting relics from Late Antiquity to the early Renaissance, in: Treasures of Heaven. Saints, relics, and devotion in medieval Europe, ed. M. Bagnoli et al., New Haven – London 2010, 55–67; A. V. Masiorov, Vostochnokhristianskie relikvi i idei “perenos imperii”; Vizantii, Balkany, Drevnei Rus’, Religiovedenie 1 (Eباتеринбург 2011) 17–24; D. Popović, Relics and politics in the Middle Ages: the Serbian approach, in: Eastern Christian relics, 161–180; eadem, “God dwelt even in their bodies in spiritual wise” – relics and reliquaries in medieval Serbia, in: Byzantine heritage and Serbian art II. Sacral art of the Serbian lands in the Middle Ages, ed. D. Vojvodić, D. Popović, Belgrade 2016, 133–147; Macrides, Subversion and loyalty, 189–197; J. W. Barker, Late Byzantine Thessalonike: a second city’s challenges and responses, DOP 57 (2003) 5–33.
60 Macrides, Subversion and loyalty, 189–197; Barker, Late Byzantine Thessalonike, 5–33.
61 Smirnova, Khramovai ikona, 220–254; M. White, Relics and the princely clan in Rus, in: Byzantium and the Viking world, ed. F. Androshchuk et al., Uppsala 2016, 391–408; Dobrychina, A “divine sanction”, 113–126.
62 R. Neil, Seventh-century popes and martyrs: the political hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius, Turnhout 2006, 58, 90–91; E. Lapina, Demetrios of Thessaloniki: patron saint of crusaders, Viator 40/2 (Turnhout 2009) 93–112; R. Forrai, Byzantine saints for Frankish warriors. Anastasius Bibliothecarius’ latin version of the Passion of Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki, in: L’héritage byzantien en Italie (VIII–XII siècle) III. Décor monumental, objets, tradition textuelle, ed. S. Brodbeck et al., Rome 2015, 185–202.
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Реликвиарная капела Святого Димитрия у пустины Давид Гареца

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Национальный центар для изучения грузинской истории и защиты памятников

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Рад посвященный капели усеченной в стену, недавно открывшегося в монастыре Додорка в пустини Давид Гарец. Капела украшена живописью из позднего XII или раннего XIII века. Ее тематический программой доминирует цикл Жития светого Димитрия, который в Грузии нигде не присутствовал. В цикле пантеон изображения, в цикле изображены силуэты святых в хронологическом и географическом порядке, таких как циклус, в цикле с портретами незнакомых иконо графских образов, историографии реликвий светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконографических образов, историографии светого Димитрия, наместом своему посвященное капелу и упоминания упоминания грузинских и византийских иконогр
Благовести, историјска представа Отеловљења и његова наратива. На своду је велика тријумфална сцена Вазнесења Часног крста. На бочним странама олтарског простора насликани су свети ратници: свети Ђорђе и свети Теодор на јужној страни, а свети Димитрије, патрон храма, на северној. У престолном делу капеле, то јест на западном крају јужног зида, на западном зиду и већем делу северног представљено је шест епизода из живота светог Димитрија у виду четири сцене смештене у доњу зону живописа.

Колико год то необично изгледало, циклус који је углавном заснован на византијским иконографским моделима садржи иконографске елементе какве се нису могли пронаћи ни у грчким текстовима житија светог, нити на сликама насталим на основу тих текстова. Поређење одговарајућих представа и текстова покајало је да необичности у интерпретацији појединих сцена (Мучење светог Димитрија, Свети Димитрије пред царем Максимијаном и Чудо са шкорпијом) могу објаснити привреженост сликара грузијској редакцији житија из XI века, чији је аутор Јевтимије Атонски, а која садржи низ важних елемената што се не налазе ни у једном од грчких изворника.

Утврђивање времена настанка циклуса из До дорке чини се нарочито значајним будући да је реликвијар из Ватопеда, онај с најстаријим сачуваним циклусом Светог Димитрија, датован у другу половину XII столећа, док се сви други сликани циклуси приписују добу Палеолога или каснијем времену. Пошто се одликује иконографским и уметничким особеностима карактеристичним за остварење раног периода, живопис Додорке мора се датовати у касни XII или рани XIII век. Стога разматрани циклус, најранији познати сликани циклус Житија светог Димитрија, пружа довољно основа за уверење да су сликарском техником изведена дела са овом тематиком настајала и пре доба Палеолога, те се тако реликвијарни краљевски манастир сматрају као „контактне реликвије“ светог Димитрија, које је због непостојања светитељевих телесних реликвија пренето у краљевски манастир.

Захваљујући особеним архитектонским и уметничким својствима, источни део капеле, попут већине реликвијара намењених реликвијама светог заштитника Солуна (крви и миру), повезан је с киворијумом – жижом култа светог Димитрија – који је поштован као његова гробница. У тематику сликарства и представу поменуте реликвије у том живопису, особено обликовано светилиште јасно указује на то да је ова иконографска елементарна смарагдозелена хламида приказана у првом плану сцене свечевог мучења светог Димитрија, која је због непостојања светитељевих телесних реликвија сматрана посебно вредном.

Задобијање заштите и благослова светог ратника – до тог времена већ велико симбола војне победе царства – било би питање престижа за краљевски дом Багратиона, којем је, по свему судећи, припадао део хламиде светог Димитрија и који је врхунац војне моћи и славе досељен управо на прелазу између XII и XIII столећа. Поседовање реликтне светог Димитрија и уобличавање светог простора према моделу из солунског светилишта представљали су својевластан израз тадашњих култних токова и ратници. Претпостављено допремање најцењеније реликвије светог Димитрија у Грузију и подизање реликвијарне капеле украшене сценама из његовог житија за чување тех реликвије треба сагледавати као део политичких и културних процеса који су се одвијали у православном свету у XII и XIII веку.