

Stefan Smjadovski (Sofia, Bulgaria)

**THE INSCRIPTIONS TO THE FRESCOES DEPICTING ECUMENICAL COUNCILS AT
THE ELESHNITSA MONASTERY (16th c.) – Sources and Problems**

(Summary)

The author analyses the frescoes illustrating the Ecumenical councils found in the Eleshnitsa monastery near Sofia. The accompanying explanatory inscriptions to the scenes as well as the iconography as a whole have no analogue either in preserved frescoes in other churches or in late iconography manuals. The inscriptions in Eleshnitsa show a remarkable resemblance to the well-known “Narrative of the Ecumenical Councils”, according to the transcript found in “Codex of Tsar Ivan Alexander”. The non-standard iconography, which might have come from an earlier epoch and is undoubtedly connected with the above-mentioned literary source, has been interpreted in two ways – on the one hand, emphasizing the Bulgarian church priority in anti-heretical struggles (two Ecumenical councils were held in Turnovo in the 14th c.), compared to the Church of Constantinople, and on the other – illustrating a monastery rather than a church iconographic tradition.