

The Research Center of Medieval Art "Vasile Drăguț"

ANASTASIS
Research in Medieval Culture and Art

Volume I, Nr. 1/November 2014

**MEDIEVAL ART IN THE HORIZON OF
MODERNITY**

Artes, 2014

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ISSN 2392 – 862X (print)
ISSN-L 2392 – 862X
ISSN 2392 – 9472 (on-line)

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INAUGURAL STUDY

VARIATIONS ICONOGRAPHIQUES : CONSTANTIN LE GRAND DANS LES PEINTURES DES EGLISES DE PĂTRĂUȚI ET D'ARBORE

Tereza Sinigalia*

Abstract : Iconographic Variations: Constantine the Great in the Paintings of the Churches of Pătrăuți and Arbore. The article, written in 2013, the Constantinian Year, takes back and develops some ideas which can be found in my previous articles concerning the murals in both of churches in discussion. „The Exaltation of the Holy Cross” of the former nun’s monastery Pătrăuți and the church dedicated to „The Beheading of St John the Baptist” in the village Arbore. The first is the foundation of the Moldavian prince Ștefan the Great (1487) and the second was built by Luca Arbore, chef of the army of the same Ștefan and of his heirs, Bogdan III and Stephen the Young, in 1503. The last was under the guardianship of Arbore during his nonage time, but was beheaded by him for high treason in 1523.

As a reflex of the political situation of the Moldavia, see the military actions of the Ottomans in their endeavor to conquer Stephen’s country, the prince took the Emperor Constantine as a model in his struggle against the enemies of the Cross. The great „Cavalcade of the Emperor Constantine the Great/The Vision of the Emperor”, painted on the western wall of the narthex of the church in Pătrăuți and the presence of the same Emperor as intercessor in front of Christ in the Votive painting of Stephens’s family and in the company of his mother, Helen, in some other images, so as in the scenes illustrating the History of the Holly Cross, found by Helen in Jerusalem, proves the special spiritual and political interest of the founder in this issue.

The great chef of the army, Luca Arbore, demonstrates a similar idea when he asked the painters of his church to introduce in the narthex, on the western wall „The vision of the Emperor Constantine”, „The Discovery of the Cross” and „The Exaltation of the Holy Cross”. The datation of the painting rests an open discussion. I offered some supplementary arguments supporting the painting of the church during the life time of the founder (until 1523) and a restoration of the parts damaged by the Turks in 1538, as a disappeared inscription mentioned. Discovered in 1926, these inscription mentioned the name of Dragos

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Coman and the year 1541. The information was considered by the majority of researches that Dragos painted the whole ensemble in 1541 without taking in consideration visible modifications in some parts of the painting itself.

Keywords: Constantin the Great, Holy Cross, mural painting French

On connaît depuis longtemps la grande composition intitulée « La Cavalcade de l'Empereur Constantin » [Fig. 1], peinte sur la paroi ouest du narthex de l'église connue sous le nom de « L'Exaltation de la Sainte Croix » du village de Pătrăuți (département de Suceava), bâtie en 1487, selon l'inscription sculptée en pierre de la façade ouest¹ [Fig. 2]. Sa présence a été mise en relation avec la dédicace même de l'église, à son tour liée aux actions militaires du prince Ștefan cel Mare /Etienne le Grand de Moldavie (1457 – 1504) contre les ennemis de la Croix.

Ayant accédé au trône de Moldavie quatre ans après la chute de Constantinople (1453), Etienne le Grand s'était engagé dans un combat acharné afin de sauvegarder l'indépendance de son petit pays, ce qui a entraîné des conflits avec Mehmet II le Conquérant lui-même. Les armées du Sultan, vaincues en janvier 1475 à Podu Înalt, revient l'année suivante et le prince moldave, seul devant un ennemi beaucoup plus fort, a été vaincue cette fois-ci. Il accepte de payer un « haratch », en conservant toujours l'indépendance de son pays.

L'engagement contre les Ottomans lui a valu l'admiration du Pape Sixte IV, qui l'a nommé « *Vere athleta fidei christianae* » et qui a demandé aux souverains chrétiens de l'Europe de lui octroyer leur soutien dans ses actions armées², ainsi qu'une sorte de *laudatio* inhabituelle de la part du chroniqueur polonais Jan Długosz, qui le considéra comme le seul prince capable de conduire une offensive européenne contre le Sultan³.

L'hypothétique croisade n'a pas eu lieu, mais Etienne le Grand a transféré ses intentions anti-ottomannes de la sphère de l'action belliqueuse vers celle de la prière concrétisée dans la construction d'églises et dans leur décoration peinte. La petite église d'un monastère de nonnes nommé Pătrăuți marque le début d'une campagne constructive hors du commun : des églises rattachées aux monastères, des églises auprès des résidences princières dans les villes et sur les propriétés rurales sont bâties pendant les 17 dernières

¹ André Grabar, « Les croisades de l'Europe orientale dans l'art », in *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, II, Paris, 1930, p. 19 – 23.

² Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Cod. Vat. 578, ff 92 - 93v, *Lettre du Pape Sixte IV de 13 janvier 1477*, publiée dans « Stefano il Grande Ponte tra l'Oriente e l'Occidente, Catalogue de l'Exposition », Musées Vaticans, 2004, Cat. p. 86 -87 (version italienne, avec l'image), p. 146 (version anglaise).

³ *Ioannis Dlugossii Longini canonici quobdam Cracoviensis Histiriae Polonicae*, Liber XIII, Lwow, Imprimeria Gleditschii & Maurutii Georgii Weidermani, 1712, le meme « Catalogue », p 88 – 89 (version italienne, avec l'image), p. 147 (version anglaise).

années de règne du prince. Deux de ces églises sont dédiés à la Sainte Croix, celui de Pătrăuți (en 1487) et celui de Volovăț (en 1503).

Le choix de la dédicace n'est guère aléatoire. Il correspond à cette intention précise d'Etienne le Grand (dont on a parlé plus haut) de continuer son combat sur le plan spirituel. On y ajoute, d'une manière manifeste, la présence, sur le plan des idées, de l'Empereur Constantin le Grand, canonisé par l'Eglise Orthodoxe à côté de sa mère, Hélène, et représenté de différentes manières dans la peinture murale intérieure de quelques-unes des fondations du prince moldave, vu par celui-ci comme un modèle⁴.

On trouve la première série de représentations complexes dans l'église de Pătrăuți même.

La plus spectaculaire est la *Cavalcade*, déjà mentionnée et dont on va parler plus tard. Mais la plus significative se trouve dans le *Tableau votif* peint sur les parois ouest (moitié sud) et sud de la nef [Fig. 3]. Ce *Tableau* inaugure un type particulier de composition votive en Moldavie : le Christ assis sur un trône monumental reçoit le don du fondateur sous la forme de la maquette du bâtiment par l'intermédiaire du Saint patron de l'église. Le fondateur est suivi par les membres de sa famille : femme, enfants [Fig. 4].

Dans le cas spécial de Pătrăuți, vu que l'église n'est pas vouée à un saint, mais à une célébration – l'Exaltation de la Sainte Croix – on a choisi comme intercesseur dans l'image votive le saint considéré comme le plus impliqué dans une action menée au nom de la Croix : l'empereur Constantin, victorieux de Maxence, d'après la relation d'Eusèbe de Césarée, présente dans la rédaction de sa *Vita*. Le texte a été connu en Moldavie par une copie faite dans le scriptorium du monastère de Putna, fondation d'Etienne le Grand (1466), par un moine Iacov, en 1496 d'après le *Panégyrique du Saint Empereur Constantin le Grand*, du patriarche Euthymios de Tarnovo. A son tour, Euthymios a utilisé comme point de départ pour sa composition la version de la *Vie de Constantin* de l'œuvre de l'écrivain grec Nicéfore Calliste Xanthopoulos (1256 – 1317), *Historia ecclesiastica*⁵.

L'exceptionnel portrait de l'intercesseur [Fig. 5], un des plus beaux de toute la peinture byzantine et post-byzantine, est complémentaire à l'image intensément spiritualisée du Christ. Cette partie de la composition, disons la céleste, appartient à la première couche de peinture, correspondant à l'ensemble peint de l'église, tandis que les images du fondateur et de sa famille – de la paroi sud – ont été repeintes sur une nouvelle couche de préparation, quelques années plus tard, vu le changement de la situation

⁴ J'ai traité le sujet des représentations peintes de l'empereur Constantin le Grand en Moldavie dans un article intitulé *Stefano il Grande e il culto della Santa Croce in Moldavia alla fine del Quattrocento*, publié dans le recueil *Costantino, Enciclopedia Costantiniana sulla figura e l'immagine dell'Imperatore del cosiddetto Editto di Milano 313-2013*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giorgio Treccani, 2013, vol. 2, p. 813 - 821, 12 illustrations hors texte.

⁵ *Ibidem.*, p. 816 – 817.

politique de l'héritier du trône⁶. Des détails techniques et des différences de style sont clairs de ce point de vue. Dans cette situation, l'ensemble original pourrait être daté autour de 1489 -1490, tandis que pour le changement on a proposé comme *terminus post quem* le mois de juillet 1496, date à laquelle Bogdan, le fils cadet d'Etienne le Grand, vient d'être nommé héritier du trône après la mort de son demi-frère Alexandre⁷.

De la phase originale, toujours dans la nef, viennent d'autres images de l'Empereur Constantin, qui marquent le début d'une thématique présente dans les nefs des églises moldaves jusqu'à la fin du XVI^e siècle. La première fait partie d'un type de composition fréquente dans les Balkans aux XII^e-XV^e siècles, en Macédoine (Kurbino, 1191 ; Staro Nagoričino, 1316 - 1318 ; Lesnovo, 1343 - 1346 ; Markov Monastir - 1376/1377, etc), Thessalie (églises de Kastoria), Bulgarie (monastère de Kremikovtsi, 1492). Il s'agit de l'image double de l'Empereur et de sa mère, Hélène, tous les deux soutenant entre eux une croix haute et mince, plutôt symbolique que l'objet réel de la passion du Christ, peinte sur la moitié nord de la paroi ouest, de l'autre côté de la porte vers le narthex, en pendant avec le *Tableau votif* de Pătrăuți [Fig. 6]. Il faudrait observer une fine différence et dans le traitement des figures et dans la pose des personnages. La silhouette frêle de Constantin est vue de trois-quarts et entraînée dans un mouvement sensible, souligné par le habit pourpre, dans l'image votive, tandis que l'on a changé la pose des deux personnages - fils et mère - vus strictement de face, immobiles et figés dans leurs costumes d'apparat. Tous les deux portent des habits impériaux byzantins, rouges, avec des *loroi* et des galons dorés parsemés de perles et de couronnes qui ne sont ni typiquement byzantines ni totalement occidentales. Celle portée par l'empereur est ouverte, suggérant des fleurons, tandis que sa mère porte par-dessus un voile fin tombant sur les épaules.

La troisième série d'images de la nef a été découverte à l'occasion de la restauration en train de se dérouler. Il s'agit de deux portraits, traités comme des icônes indépendantes, Constantin et sa mère, Hélène, peints à l'intrados du grand arc qui sépare l'abside de l'autel de la nef [Fig. 7a, b]. Ils se trouvent dans la compagnie des *Saints Martyrs*, comme une référence à l'acte de Constantin par lequel il a mis fin aux persécutions des chrétiens. L'image du fils surmonte celle de sa mère ; leur présence dans ce type de composition est unique en Moldavie et parle une fois de plus de l'importance que l'on a voulu accorder à leur représentation.

⁶ Tereza Sinigalia, « Ctitori și imagini votive în pictura murală din Moldova la sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea și în prima jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea. O ipoteză », in *Arta Istoriei. Istoria Artei. Academicianul Răzvan Theodorescu la 65 de ani*, Bucarest, Editions Enciclopedica, 2004, p. 60 - 65, illustrations hors texte.

⁷ Maria Ana Musicescu, « Considerații asupra picturii din altarul și naosul Voronețului », dans le recueil *Cultura moldovenească în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, Bucarest, Edition de l'Académie de la RPR, 1964, p. 365 - 417.

Quant à leur style, il est plus simple encore que celui dont nous venons déjà de parler. Avec ces peintures nous sommes ici devant le travail d'une équipe, composée de plusieurs peintres, qui est presque certainement venue de Grèce. Beaucoup d'éléments d'iconographie, de style et les légendes en grec en font la preuve.

D'autres peintres sont les auteurs des grandes compositions du narthex. La diversité des thèmes traduit une incertitude dans le choix, mais il semble que l'idée dominante soit celle du Triomphe de la Croix. Placés face à face, sur les parois est et ouest, les deux Triomphes entrent dans un dialogue subtil, plastique, conceptuel et surtout spirituel.

Tout au long de la paroi ouest se déploie la grande « Cavalcade » [Fig. 1], solennelle procession de Saints Guerriers à cheval guidés par l'Archange Michel suivi par l'Empereur Constantin. L'Archange indique dans le ciel ouvert une croix blanche, le *signum* de la victoire, pas seulement sur Maxence – fait historique déjà vieux depuis plus d'un millénaire – mais d'une victoire perpétuelle, pour tous ceux qui partaient à la guerre au nom de la Croix. Et Etienne le Grand était l'un d'entre eux.

Sur la paroi opposée, quatre scènes – deux mal conservées, deux bien lisibles – sont dédiées exclusivement au Triomphe de la Croix retrouvée à l'initiative de Sainte Hélène, mère de l'empereur Constantin : *La décision d'aller chercher la Vraie Croix de Jésus ; La recherche ; La découverte des trois croix sur le Calvaire ; Le miracle de la Vraie Croix* [Fig. 8].

Le cycle ainsi défini s'inscrit dans la tendance générale observable dans la décoration peinte des narthex à l'époque d'Etienne le Grand : une partie majeure du programme iconographique de cet espace liturgique était réservée à l'illustration des épisodes de la *Vita* du Saint patron de l'église en question.

Avec cette assertion, nous revenons à ce que nous avons dit au commencement. L'église de l'ancien monastère de Pătrăuți, maintenant siège d'une simple paroisse rurale, mais inscrite dans la Liste du Patrimoine Mondial de l'UNESCO, n'était pas dédiée à un saint quelconque, mais sa dédicace représenta une idée beaucoup plus généreuse et plus profonde : la valeur du combat au nom de la Croix et pour la Croix.

*

Un autre ensemble mural prouve que cette idée représenta une permanence à l'époque.

Il s'agit cette fois-ci de l'initiative d'un haut dignitaire d'Etienne le Grand, le « Portar de Suceava » (Châtelain de Suceava qui occupait la fonction de chef de l'armée en même temps), Luca Arbore, qui a fait construire une élégante église près du manoir de sa propriété de Solca (aujourd'hui, le village nommé Arbore, dans le département de Suceava), en 1503 [Fig. 9]

La dédicace de l'église est peu habituelle et inexplicable, ou alors on pourrait la voir comme prémonitoire : *La Décollation de St. Jean Baptiste*. Dans ce contexte, il faut préciser que le fondateur avec ses deux fils seraient décapités en 1523 par le prince Etienne le Jeune, petit-fils d'Etienne le Grand, ancien protégé – avant d'atteindre la maturité – de Luca Arbore lui-même.

En dépit du fait qu'on a présumé que l'ensemble peint a été réalisé en 1541 par le peintre roumain Dragoș Coman, donc longtemps après la mort de Luca Arbore⁸, beaucoup d'éléments viennent soutenir une datation antérieure, ça veut dire durant le vivant du fondateur. Sa position politique de premier choix durant les règnes successifs d'Etienne le Grand (au moins 20 ans avant la fin de son règne, en 1504), de Bogdan III, son fils (1504 – 1517) et d'Etienne le Jeune, son petit-fils (de 1517 jusqu'à sa majorité, en 1520, et puis jusqu'à 1523) a fait de lui un des personnages les plus importants du pays et on pourrait justifier ainsi la commande d'un ensemble mural afin d'accomplir le don d'une église, qui dans la mentalité de l'époque devrait correspondre aux exigences liturgiques complètes de l'espace sacré : bâtiment adéquat, peinture murale intérieure conforme à un programme prédéfini d'une manière canonique dans ses lignes théologiques essentielles. Ainsi, c'est sûr qu'il a eu et les possibilités et la motivation de les faire, circonstances qui n'existeraient plus après sa mort violente.

Le programme intérieur, même celui du narthex, justifie une datation dans les deux premières décennies du XVI^e siècle. Ce programme est plus proche aux solutions communes appliquées à la fin du XV^e siècle en Moldavie (églises de Pătrăuți, St Georges de Voroneț, St Elie de Suceava, St Procope Milișăuți⁹, St Nicolas de Botoșani, St. Nicolas de Bălinești) que des fondations peintes pendant le règne du fils naturel d'Etienne le Grand, Pierre (Petru) Rareș (1527 – 1538, 1541 -1546).

Comme dans les églises mentionnées plus haut, un thème principal de la décoration peinte du narthex est l'illustration développée de la *Vita* du saint patron.

L'église d'Arbore respecte ce principe, la paroi est étant occupée presque entièrement par un cycle complet de la *Vie de Saint Jean Baptiste*, depuis sa *Naissance* jusqu'à la *Decouverte de son chef*. La composition la

⁸ Vasile Drăguț, *Dragoș Coman, maestrul frescelor de la Arbore*, Bucarest, Editions Meridiane, 1969, en utilisant la bibliographie plus ancienne.

⁹ Détruite pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale par un obus. Heureusement, on connaît les grandes lignes du programme iconographique grâce à la description offerte par le savant polonais Wladyslaw Podlacha avant le désastre (*Malowidla sciennie v tserkwiah Bukowini*, Lwow, 1912, passim). Pour la reconstitution du programme entier, voir Tereza Sinigalia, *Vechi autori și bisericile Bucovinei – Încercare de recuperare a unui monument*, in « Monumentul, Lucrările celei de a X-a ediții a Simpozionului național « Monumentul. Tradiție și Viitor », Iași, 2009, p. 31 – 47.

plus remarquable du point de vue iconographique et compositionnel est le *Banquet d'Hérode*, scène qui suivit à la *Décollation du Saint* [Fig. 10].

En sachant que l'inscription dédicatoire de l'église, montée comme d'habitude à l'extérieur, près de l'entrée, au moment de la consécration, commandée par le fondateur, le grand hetman Luca Arbore, mentionne la date de 1503 et que la dédicace – La Décollation de St Jean Baptiste – sont hors de doute, ce serait normal que le *Cycle de St Jean* ne soit pas mis en relation avec la décollation d'Arbore lui-même, de presque 20 ans plus tardive.

Le grand cycle de la *Vie du saint patron* fait face sur la paroi opposée à un cycle plus restreint mais pas moins significatif, celui de la *Vision de l'Empereur Constantin* et celui de l'*Exaltation de la Sainte Croix* [Fig. 11, 12].

Séparé en deux parties par l'intermédiaire de la fenêtre en axe, il représente vers le nord la *Vision de la Croix de l'Empereur Constantin*. Celui-ci, toujours à cheval et suivi de sa Cour, regarde les cieux ouverts faisant place à une Croix brillante blanche. Il ya une différence énorme entre la majesté de la procession des *Saints Guerriers* de la « Cavalcade » de Pătrăuți et la simplicité de cette composition tirée presque d'un conte de fées, avec des personnages petits et délicats à califourchon sur les chevaux-poupées. C'est le *signum* de la victoire militaire promise, mais dont le croyant savait qu'elle s'était déjà accomplie.

De l'autre côté de la fenêtre, à un thème unique correspondent deux autres compositions, superposées, liées aux épisodes de l'*Invention de la vraie croix du Seigneur*, respectivement de son *Exaltation*. En bas, les gens fouillent en présence de l'Empereur Constantin et de sa mère Hélène afin de trouver la Croix sur la montagne du Calvaire. En haut, la Croix retrouvée est élevée par le patriarche de Jérusalem Macaire, toujours dans la présence des mêmes personnages impériaux. On reconnaît Constantin à sa longue chevelure rousse, à la tête nimbée et à l'habit impérial byzantin, mais stylisé à la manière occidentale.

C'est sûr que le choix de ces trois thèmes n'était pas dû au hasard ou laissé au bon gré du peintre. Il y a ici une profonde signification, d'un côté politique, mais aussi, comme toute composition religieuse d'une église orthodoxe, munie d'un sens spirituel profond.

Pour un chef chrétien d'armée, qui avait lutté auprès de son souverain contre les Ottomans, c'était normal de proclamer la victoire de la Croix contre ses ennemis biens connus.

Ce n'était pas un fait de memoire vieux de quelques décennies qui a été célébré ici par une descente qui voulait commémorer, par une métaphore, les exploits militaires de son ancêtre, comme on pense d'habitude, en interprétant une inscription peinte, aujourd'hui presque entièrement disparue,

mais visible encore en 1926, quand elle était premièrement publiée¹⁰ et plus tard reprise et commentée par d'autres chercheurs¹¹. L'inscription parlait d'une Anna, qui a commandé au peintre « *Dragosin, le fils du pan Coman de Iași* » la peinture de l'église en 1541, pour une somme modique, très loin de la valeur réelle d'un ensemble mural absolument exceptionnel. Le nom du peintre a été lu d'abord « *Dragoș zugrav* » et associé selon la manière courante au Moyen Age à celui de son père, si bien qu'il est devenu « *Dragoș Coman* »¹². Un autre chercheur a lu correctement « *Dragosin* »¹³ et puis on a observé dans la copie transcrite de l'inscription que le nom du père était précédé par le mot « *pan* » (*monsieur*) et non par « *popa* » (*pope, prêtre*)¹⁴. En 1975 déjà, Ion Solcanu a avancé l'idée que l'inscription en discussion se réfère à une réparation nécessaire après les dégâts causés par les Turcs probablement à l'occasion de l'invasion de 1538, quand ils occupaient la ville de Suceava et le prince Pierre Rareș a perdu son trône et beaucoup d'églises ont souffert¹⁵.

Ainsi, les réparations de 1541 s'avéraient nécessaires et le renouvellement partiel du *Tableau votif de la famille de Luca Arbore* de la paroi ouest de la nef en est la preuve.¹⁶ [Fig. 13]. Le fait a été démontré hors de doute par la restauration récente de la peinture¹⁷.

Au service du « Nouveau Constantin », son souverain, Etienne le Grand, Prince de Moldavie, le Grand Châtelain de Suceava a suivi l'exemple de son maître : il a bâti deux églises, l'une, la plus importante, étant celle dont on parle ici¹⁸, lieu du repos éternel préparé dès le moment même de la construction. Dans une niche spécialement réservée dans l'épaisseur du mur sud du narthex, placé au-dessous d'une pièce unique en Moldavie, un arcosolium gothique de mode royale polonaise, sculpté en pierre et muni d'armoiries personnelles, les siennes et celles de son père, toujours revêtu de la dignité de « *pârcălab de Neamț* » (Chastelain de Neamț) dans les années

¹⁰ Dimitrie Dan, *Citoria hatmanului Luca Arbore*, in « Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice » an XIX, 1926, fasc. 47, p. 45.

¹¹ Sorin Ulea, *Arta în Moldova în secolele XV - XVI*, capitolul *Pictura*, în "Istoria artelor plastice în România", coord. G. Oprescu, vol. I, Editura Meridiane, 1968, p. ; Vasile Drăguț, *op. cit.*

¹² Vasile Drăguț, *op. cit.*

¹³ Ion Solcanu, *Datarea ansamblului de pictură de la biserica Arbore (I). Pictura interioară*, in „Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie „A.D. Xenopol”, Iași, tome XII, 1975, p. 35 – 57.

¹⁴ Tereza Sinigalia, *Din nou despre picturile din pronaosul bisericii din satul Arbore*, in “Revista Monumentelor Istorice”, 2005, p. 44 – 55.

¹⁵ Ion Solcanu, *op. cit.*, loc. cit.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Oliviu Boldura, *Restaurarea Tabloului votiv de la biserica din Arbore*, in “Revista Monumentelor Istorice”, 2005, p. 44 – 55, 2007, p. 32 – 39.

¹⁸ L'autre se trouvait dans le village Șipote, près de Iași, bâtie en 1507 et refaite partiellement au XVII^e siècle (apud Nicolae Stoicescu, *Repertoriul bibliografic al localităților și monumentelor medievale din Moldova*, Bucarest, 1974, p. 835).

'70 du XV^e siècle, pendant le règne d'Etienne le Grand¹⁹ [Fig. 14], se trouve le tombeau du fondateur, muni d'un *Tableau funéraire* peint à l'occasion du décès de deux de ses fils, encore enfants [Fig. 15]. La comparaison entre les deux *Tableaux*, celui *funéraire*, qui est sûrement le premier, et celui *votif* de la nef, partiellement refait après les destructions de 1538, offre des arguments supplémentaires en faveur de la datation des peintures quelques années après la construction de l'église. L'activité de Dragosin, fils du pan Coman de Iași, se résume ainsi aux réparations décelables dans le *Tableau votif* de la nef et dans le remplacement des têtes de différents *Saints* du premier registre en bas de la nef et du narthex, des parois intérieures de l'arcosolium, y compris les têtes de Luca Arbore et de sa femme Iuliana. Seules les têtes des deux fils ont manqué d'être repeintes. C'est un argument pour la continuation de la recherche.

Illustrations:



Fig. 1. Pătrăuți, narthex, paroi ouest. *La Cavalcade de l'Empereur Constantin*

¹⁹ Nicolae Stoicescu, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova. Sec. XIV – XVII*, Bucarest, Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1971, p. 261 – 262.



Fig. 2. Pătrăuți. Eglise de L'Exaltation de la Sainte Croix



Fig. 3. Pătrăuți, nef, parois sud et ouest. Tableau votif d'Etienne le Grand, nef



Fig. 4. Pătrăuți, nef, paroi sud. *Tableau votif d'Etienne le Grand (détail) : La famille du fondateur*



Fig. 5. Pătrăuți., nef, paroi ouest, moitié sud. *Tableau votif d'Etienne le Grand (détail) : Saint Empereur Constantin le Grand comme intercesseur*



Fig. 6. Pătrăuți, nef, paroi ouest, moitié nord. *Les Saints Emperors Constantin et Hélene*



Fig. 7a. Pătrăuți., intrados de l'arc triomphal. *Les Saints Empereurs Constantin et Hélene*, intrados de l'arc triomphal



Fig. 7b. Pătrăuți., intrados de l'arc triomphal. *Les Saints Empereurs Constantin et Hélene*, intrados de l'arc triomphal



Fig. 8. Pătrăuți, narthex, paroi est. *Cycle de la Croix : La décision d'aller chercher la Vraie Croix de Jésus ; La recherche ; La découverte des trois croix sur le Calvaire ; Le miracle de la Vraie Croix*, narthex, paroi est



Fig. 9. Arbore. Eglise de La Décollation de St. Jean Baptiste



Fig. 10. Arbore, narthex, paroi est. *Cycle de Saint Jean Baptiste*



Fig. 11. Arbore, narthex, paroi ouest, moitié nord. *Vision de l'Empereur Constantin*



Fig. 12. Arbore, narthex, paroi ouest, moitié sud. *L'Exaltation de la Sainte Croix*



Fig. 13. Arbore, nef, paroi ouest, moitié sud. *Tableau votif de la famille de Luca Arbore*



Fig. 14. Arbore, narthex. Arcosolium abritant le tombeau du fondateur



Fig. 15. Arbore, paroi sud, *Tableau funéraire de la famille de Luca Arbore*

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MEDIEVAL ART IN THE HORIZON OF MODERNITY

NOUVELLES PERCEPTIONS DE LA LUMIERE DANS LA CATHEDRALE RESTAUREE UN REVETEMENT POUR UN VETEMENT DE LUMIERE

Jean-Paul Deremble*

Abstract: New Perceptions of Light in the Restored Cathedral. A Coating for a Light Garment. The recent restorations of the Chartres cathedral, on the inside as well as on the outside, concerning the sculptures as well as the stained-glass windows, greatly modify our perception of the building. Revived in its original shape, the cathedral delivers a new light, which astonishes by its power. The present study focuses on the strategies at work in the restoration process, aiming at the rediscovery of the original significance of the monument, in spite of modern clichés; the question of our origins and of our future lies behind this attempt to challenge our view of the possible worlds of the past.

Keywords: the Chartres cathedral, the restoration process, light

Les récentes restaurations de la cathédrale de Chartres tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur, tant pour les sculptures que pour les vitraux, mais surtout du fait du ravalement intérieur, modifient en profondeur notre perception²⁰ du

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²⁰ La perception est constitutive d'une réalité qui existe comme phénomène, réalité en soi et réalité pour l'autre. L'apparence n'est pas un élément secondaire, superflu, de la réalité, mais un élément inhérent à la réalité. Il est fait référence ici aux travaux de E. Husserl, *Chose et espace. Leçons de 1907 (Ding und Raum, Vorlesungen, 1907)*), tr. fr. J.-F. Lavigne, Paris, P.U.F., 1989. Elle est systématisée chez M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 1945. La position de Heidegger demeure la grande référence, Pavlos Kontos a bien précisé cette question dans *D'une phénoménologie de la perception chez Heidegger* (Phenomenologica, 137), Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996 (éd. française). De façon plus proche des questions esthétiques, il faut citer les travaux fondamentaux de C. Norberg-Schulz sur le *Genius loci*, Bruxelles, Malaga, 1981, et aussi David Marie, *Expérience quotidienne et expérience esthétique chez Heidegger et Merleau-Ponty, l'inattendu*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2002.

bâtiment. La cathédrale, ravivée dans ses formes d'origine, délivre une lumière nouvelle, qui étonne et enchante par sa puissance. Mais ce n'est pas sans nous surprendre ! Il en va ainsi des grandes entreprises de restauration que de bousculer des visions anciennes devenues des clichés parasites et ainsi de permettre la redécouverte des œuvres originelles²¹. De telles opérations n'obéissent pas seulement aux impératifs de son entretien, mais correspondent à une volonté de mieux le comprendre pour mieux le transmettre. Cela passe par des remises en question et des engagements plus vrais pour ces chefs d'œuvre qui sont à l'origine de ce que nous sommes et aussi de ce que nous sommes appelés à devenir. Les récents travaux entrepris dans la cathédrale nous obligent à reconsidérer nos préjugés et à mieux accueillir notre tradition.

Le premier cliché à voler en éclats est celui de l'obscurité. Déjà lors de la restauration des verrières de la façade occidentale en 1974, la translucidité retrouvée n'a curieusement pas fait l'unanimité²². Un préjugé tenace loge volontiers le mystère dans une ambiance sombre, quelque peu

Enfin les derniers travaux d'E. Palazzo pour une approche synesthésique de l'œuvre d'art engagent bien l'Histoire de l'art sur la voie d'une phénoménologie de l'art, cf. les deux tables rondes organisées au CESC de Poitiers, *Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge*, 1-2 juin 2012 et 29-31 mai 2013, et aussi "Lumière et synesthésie dans la liturgie de l'Antiquité et du Haut Moyen Âge", in Colloque international *De verres et de pierres, l'architecture religieuse médiévale*, (dir. N. Reveyron) Université de Lyon II, 6-8 décembre 2011 (à paraître). Du même : « Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge : de la question et perspectives de recherche », *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 55, 2012, p. 339-366.

J.-P. Deremble, "Le Musée en miroir de soi", in *Le musée et le don, expression de soi*, revue de l'AGCCPF, décembre 2012.

²¹ Les restaurations choquent parfois tant on s'habitue à une vétusté synonyme d'antiquité à peu de frais. Il faut se rappeler la polémique suscitée par la restauration des verrières de la façade occidentale de Chartres dans les années 1976, dénoncée à juste titre par L. Grodecki : « il est certes parfaitement légitime de s'attacher à l'aspect dramatique, expressionniste et romantique des vitraux ainsi corrodés, "désaccordés", réduits à l'état de ruine, tant pour la couleur que pour la brillance. Je crois pourtant que les responsables de la conservation des vitraux anciens qui sont en train de se désagréger, ont le devoir de les sauver de la destruction – même au prix de l'altération de leur effet coloré actuel – et que les historiens attentifs aux procédés techniques et à l'esthétique du vitrail roman, ont le devoir de justifier, sur le plan de l'histoire, ces interventions conservatoires. » in "Le chapitre XXVIII de la *Schedula* du moine Théophile, technique et esthétique du vitrail roman", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres*, 1976, vol 120, n°2, p. 345-357.

On pourrait ouvrir un dossier similaire à propos des restaurations des fresques des voûtes de la Sixtine (1981-1989), dont l'éclat retrouvé des peintures vives de Michel-Ange, injustement appelé du fait de la crasse accumulée, « le terrible souverain de l'ombre », n'a pas manqué de surprendre, cf. Gianluigi Colalucci, *Michelangelo's Colours Rediscovered in The Sistine Chapel*, ed. Massimo Giacometti, New York, Harmony Books, 1986. L'historien d'art James Beck, d'ArtWatch International, a dénoncé une trahison des intentions de Michel-Ange.

²² Cf. J.-M. Bettembourg et Fr. Perrot, "La restauration des vitraux de la façade occidentale de la cathédrale de Chartres", in *Actes du 9^{ème} colloque du Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (Verres et réfractaires)*, 1976,1, p. 92-95.

caverneuse. Les romantiques en cultivant l'image de la grotte primordiale ont largement contribué à cette conception d'un espace souterrain comme condition du sacré²³. De ce point de vue l'architecture romane considérée, à tort, comme essentiellement sombre, semble plus religieuse que l'architecture gothique éclatante de clarté, mais moins intimiste. Rien n'est plus contraire à la conception chrétienne que ce besoin de ténèbres, la basilique choisie par les chrétiens des premiers siècles, mais aussi des siècles postérieurs²⁴, à l'époque romane notamment, est un lieu public et lumineux²⁵, à l'opposé des temples qui enferment le sacré dans une cella obscure et inaccessible. L'encrassement progressif des parois, des voûtes et surtout des vitraux a malheureusement renforcé le préjugé. Chaque fois que l'on entrait dans la cathédrale de Chartres, on était surpris par le peu de lumière, décontenancé par cette vision d'un gothique aussi pingre en clarté à la différence de Bourges ou d'Amiens, et surtout des édifices de la Renaissance ou de l'époque baroque, mais aussi rassuré de voir son intimité préservée. Il est vrai qu'en quelques minutes, l'œil s'accommodant et gérant la différence de luminosité intérieure et extérieure, on redécouvrait vite une ambiance lumineuse satisfaisante. Mais le mal était fait, la conviction que le christianisme confine à l'obscurantisme renforcée.

Les très importants travaux réalisés dans la cathédrale de Chartres depuis les années 1980 vont totalement bouleverser cette conception finalement païenne de l'édifice chrétien. Mais quel travail pour retrouver l'ambiance lumineuse originelle ! Celle qui était perceptible dans les années 1214-1250, quand, par le fruit d'une campagne de travaux extrêmement soutenue, la cathédrale était entièrement achevée dans son architecture et sa décoration, comme le relate Guillaume le Breton reprenant la suite du moine Rigord pour la *Chronique* officielle du règne de Philippe Auguste (entre 1209 et 1214), et plus encore dans le poème qu'il dédie au roi à partir de 1214 (*La Philippide*)²⁶. Si la restauration des verrières inférieures désormais terminées

²³ Brian Juden, *Traditions orphiques et tendance mystique dans le romantisme français, 1800-1855*, Paris, éd Slatkine, 1971. Joëlle Prungaud, *Figures littéraires de la cathédrale, 1880-1918*, Lille, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2008.

²⁴ On peut lire sur la tombe de l'architecte Buschetto, à Pise, « Nigra domus laberinthus erat, tua Dedale laus est, At sua Busketum splendida templa probant. Non habet exemplum niveo de marmore templum, Quod f[ic]it Busketi prorsus ab ingenio. », épitaphe qui oppose la blancheur de l'église construite en marbre blanc comme la neige à l'obscurité du labyrinthe, Bruschetto est supérieur à Dédale.

²⁵ Voir à ce sujet les pages d'E. de Bruyne qui pose avec force le principe de la lumière dans les édifices chrétiens, *Études d'esthétique médiévale*, Bruges 1946, 3 vol., en particulier le chapitre 3 du vol 3 : "Esthétique de la lumière". Cf. J.-P. Deremble, "L'espace ecclésial comme réception de la lumière chrétienne", *Arts sacrés*, n°16, mars 2012, p. 34-41.

²⁶ C. Manhès-Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs de la cathédrale de Chartres, étude iconographique*, Corpus vitrearum, France, Etudes II, Paris 1993, p. 12-15. Guillaume le Breton insiste sur la qualité du décor (*decus*) : "ecclesieque decus, cui scemate, mole, decore"

a été spectaculaire, il faut attendre la fin de celle des verrières de l'étage supérieur pour que le vaisseau principal soit enfin correctement éclairé ; la nef en particulier souffre toujours d'une privation de lumière dans les parties hautes, mais déjà le chœur brille comme aux premiers jours.

Plus spectaculaires, et aussi assez inattendus, sont les effets du ravalement intérieur qui restituent un enduit d'origine très clair, mais là encore seule la fin des travaux, en particulier dans le transept et la nef, produira l'effet révolutionnaire escompté. D'ores et déjà de nouvelles perceptions nous saisissent. Jusqu'alors on avait l'habitude de voir un vitrail, même sérieusement corrodé, comme une source lumineuse prévalant sur le reste, le mur noir ne faisant que renforcer la source, par contraste radical. On retrouve ce parti-pris jusque dans l'édition des livres d'art qui privilégie systématiquement l'impression de l'image du vitrail sur un fond noir. Désormais le vitrail clair est sur fond clair. Plus généralement le vitrail n'est plus la seule source lumineuse, la paroi murale, les colonnes, les voûtes redevenues blanches contribuent à nouveau à l'éclairage général.

Les enduits ont aussi une valeur spirituelle²⁷. Considérés malheureusement comme de simples habillages, donc des éléments secondaires de la construction, on a oublié l'extraordinaire attention dont ils ont fait l'objet sur le chantier. Enduire était systématique pour des raisons matérielles de protection de la pierre, ou pour des raisons esthétiques de masquage d'appareils grossiers, mais aussi spirituelles de manifestation d'un état nouveau du matériau²⁸. Il en va de l'enduit comme d'un vêtement, il habille et met en fête. Notre goût récent pour le matériau nu, qui a poussé certains restaurateurs à des décapages intempestifs et catastrophiques, aurait

(H.-F. Delaborde, *Etude sur la Chronique de Guillaume le Breton*, Paris, 1881 et *Œuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton, historiens de Philippe Auguste*, Paris, 1882-1885, tome II, p.55. Le chroniqueur insiste sur l'état d'achèvement de l'église qui force son admiration (*jam consummata decore*), vers 1214 elle est non seulement restaurée (*renovatio facta est*) mais totalement investie (*corpore toto*) de tout son décor (paroi, voûte et vitraux).

²⁷ L. Grodecki, "Fonctions spirituelles", in *Le Vitrail français*, Paris, 1958.

²⁸ L'adage hérité d'Ovide à propos du temple du Soleil qu'il décrit (*Métamorphoses* 2, 5) et repris par Suger à propos de l'autel d'or de l'abbatiale de Saint-Denis dit bien la supériorité de l'œuvre d'art sur le matériau : *materiam superabat opus* (*De administratione*, chap. XXXIII). De même sur les portes de l'abbatiale Suger fait graver la phrase : « n'admire pas l'or ni la dépense, mais la perfection de l'œuvre (*opus*), le noble ouvrage brille, mais que l'œuvre, qui brille dans sa noblesse, illumine les esprits afin qu'ils se rendent parmi les vraies lumières (*au pluriel*) jusqu'à la vraie lumière (*au singulier*) où le Christ est la vraie porte. ». Ce sont Plotin et ses suiveurs néoplatoniciens qui disent le mieux la supériorité de l'art sur le matériau : « après avoir reçu de l'art la beauté de la forme, le second marbre (celui qui a été travaillé par l'artiste) paraîtra beau, non en vertu de son essence qui est d'être marbre, sinon l'autre bloc de marbre (brut) serait aussi beau que lui, mais en vertu de la forme qu'il a reçue de l'art » *Ennéades* 5, livre 8,1.

Cf. *Materiam superabat opus, Hommage à Alain Erlande Brandenburg*, dirigé par Agnès Bos, Xavier Dectot, Jean-Michel Leniaud et Philippe Plagnieux, Paris, Réunion des Musées nationaux, 2006.

certainement passé pour un manque de goût notoire au Moyen Âge. La pierre nue est le signe d'une nature primaire, qui renvoie à l'origine du monde, mais son utilisation dans l'église est l'occasion de signifier sa destinée, il faut donc la revêtir du vêtement de lumière²⁹ des habitants de la Jérusalem céleste³⁰. L'enduit fait oublier l'état de nature et révèle l'état de grâce du monde nouveau en Dieu. Selon le principe qui commande la création artistique dans la pensée néoplatonicienne médiévale³¹, l'œuvre d'art ne renvoie pas à la nature mais fait voir la création transfigurée et ressuscitée.

Raoul Glaber³² aux alentours de l'an mil parle d'un puissant mouvement de reconstruction des bâtiments-églises (il utilise le terme de *basilica*), bien que les anciennes constructions soient encore de bonne qualité et il interprète ces différents chantiers comme l'épanouissement de l'Église

²⁹ On pourrait citer la parabole des invités à la noce (Matthieu 22, 11-14), assez proche de celles des Vierges sages et des Vierges folles (Matthieu 25, 1-13). Mêmes les invités de la dernière heure ne peuvent pénétrer dans la salle du festin sans revêtir l'habit de fête, faute de quoi ils sont refoulés : "mon ami, comment es-tu entré ici sans vêtement de noces ?".

³⁰ "Et j'entendis comme une voix d'une foule nombreuse, comme un bruit de grosses eaux, et comme un bruit de forts tonnerres, disant: Alléluia! Car le Seigneur notre Dieu tout-puissant est entré dans son règne. Réjouissons-nous et soyons dans l'allégresse, et donnons-lui gloire; car les noces de l'agneau sont venues, et son épouse s'est préparée, et il lui a été donné de se revêtir d'un fin lin, éclatant, pur. Car le fin tissu de lin, ce sont les œuvres justes des saints. Et l'ange me dit: Écris: Heureux ceux qui sont appelés au festin de noces de l'agneau! Et il me dit: Ces paroles sont les véritables paroles de Dieu. *Apocalypse* 19.6-9.

"Après cela, je regardai, et voici, il y avait une grande foule, que personne ne pouvait compter, de toute nation, de toute tribu, de tout peuple, et de toute langue. Ils se tenaient devant le trône et devant l'agneau, revêtus de robes blanches, et des palmes dans leurs mains. Et ils criaient d'une voix forte, en disant: Le salut est à notre Dieu qui est assis sur le trône, et à l'agneau." *Apocalypse* 7.9,10.

"Heureux ceux qui lavent leurs vêtements. Ils auront le droit d'entrer dans la Ville en franchissant ses portes et de manger de l'arbre de vie". *Apocalypse* 22, 14.

"Autour du trône je vis vingt-quatre trônes, et sur ces trônes vingt-quatre vieillards assis, revêtus de vêtements blancs, et sur leurs têtes des couronnes d'or". *Apocalypse* 4, 4.

"Et l'un des vieillards prit la parole et me dit: Ceux qui sont revêtus de robes blanches, qui sont-ils, et d'où sont-ils venus ? " Je lui dis: Mon seigneur, tu le sais. Et il me dit: Ce sont ceux qui viennent de la grande tribulation; ils ont lavé leurs robes, et ils les ont blanchies dans le sang de l'agneau. " *Apocalypse* 7,13-14.

³¹ Il faut encore citer Plotin dont la pensée irrigue le Moyen Âge par les écrits de ses suiveurs, Denys l'Aréopagite et Maxime le Confesseur, dont les écrits sont traduits en latin et dans la bibliothèque de Saint-Denis, notamment.

"Phidias fit son Zeus, sans aucun modèle sensible, mais de sorte que s'il consentait à paraître à nos yeux, Zeus se reconnaîtrait", *Ennéades* 5, 8,1.

³² Outre l'édition des textes de Raoul Glaber dans la *Patrologie latine* de Migne (vol CXLII, col. 611-198 pour le texte de la *Chronique de l'an mil*, édité en 1849-1855) et l'édition de Maurice Prou, *Raoul Glaber, Les 5 livres de ses histoires (900-1044)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1886, on trouve une première traduction en français de François Guizot, *Collection des mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de la France*, tome VI, Paris 1824 (récemment rééditée aux éditions Paléo, "Les sources de l'Histoire de France, Clermont Ferrand, 2000, 8 èd. 2011, et aussi une traduction d'Edmond Pognon, *L'An mille, œuvres de Liutprand, Raoul Glaber, Adémar de Chabannes, Abaldéron, Helgaud, réunies, traduites et présentées*, Paris, Gallimard 1947.

(il utilise alors le terme d'*ecclesia*). Il parle alors du fameux blanc manteau d'*Ecclesiae* (et non de basiliques), d'Églises et pas seulement d'églises, c'est-à-dire qu'il parle de la réalité spirituelle, et le blanc manteau renvoie au vêtement blanc (*candidus*) celui du candidat au baptême, celui que revêt l'homme nouveau au sortir de la cuve baptismale. Un discret jeu de mots renforce ce passage du monde de la nature à celui de la grâce par le rapprochement sémantique *de vetus/vestus*, le vieux monde promis à la mort s'est paré d'un nouveau vêtement de lumière³³.

Le souci de transfigurer la matière demeure la raison de la création artistique, au Moyen Âge des bâtisseurs comme au 21^{ème} siècle des restaurateurs. Il se traduit jusque dans certains détails comme le rendu, sur ces enduits ravivés dans leur candeur d'origine, du dessin des joints blancs qui restituent non pas l'état du mur matériel, mais font voir l'état d'un mur idéal³⁴, celui de la Jérusalem céleste, si parfaite dans ses formes³⁵ : « Et je vis

³³ « Infra supradictum millesimum tertio jam fere imminente anno, contigit in universo pene terrarum orbe, praecipue tamen in Italia et in Galliis, innovari (dans le sens de remettre à neuf) ecclesiarum basilicas (des églises-basilicales contenant l'Église-assemblée, l'expression renvoie à la formule latine *domus ecclesiae*, bien analysée par Pierre Grimal (avec Caroline Rose) in *Les églises de Rome*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1997, expression rendue en français par la distinction Majuscule/minuscule, contenu/contenant, assemblée/bâtiment, Église/église), licet pleraeque decenter locatae, minime indignissent (ce n'est pas l'état de ruine, selon la caricature ordinaire de l'an mil, âge prétendu de terreur et d'obscurité, qui justifie la rénovation/innovation, mais le désir d'une nouvelle splendeur). Aemulabantur tamen quoque gens Christicolarum adversus alteram decentiore frui. Erat enim instar ac si mundus ipse excutiendo semet, rejecta vetustate (c'est le monde qui est vieux, et non l'Église qui est force de nouveauté, à l'instar du rapport entre le Vieux Testament et le Nouveau Testament), passim candidam (de la couleur du vêtement du 'candidat', de celui qui aspire aux responsabilités les plus hautes, *candidus* (blanc éclatant, rayonnant, radieux, d'une innocente candeur, en latin classique on aurait dit *splendidus*) et non *albus* ou *blancus*, dans les langues romanes, tiré d'une racine germanique *blank*, en usage dans le latin médiéval) ecclesiarum vestem indueret (et non *basilicarum vestem*, un radieux manteau d'une blancheur éclatante d'assemblées chrétiennes). Tunc denique episcopaliū sedium ecclesias (les Églises, 'dépendant ?' des sièges épiscopaux, formulation qui ignore le mot « cathédrale » et insiste une fois de plus sur l'importance de l'*ecclesia*, en particulier celle qui abrite le siège, la cathèdre, de l'évêque) pene universas ac coetera quaeque diversorum sanctorum monasteria (les monastères par distinction des églises sous l'autorité de l'évêque), seu minora villarum oratoria (belle hiérarchie des différents types d'églises), in meliora quique permutavere (améliorer, transformer en mieux). » *Chronique de l'an mil*, lib. III, cap. 4, PL Migne, vol. CXLII, col. 651.

³⁴ Il y a de ce point de vue une erreur d'interprétation commune qui conduit à considérer la blancheur dont parle Raoul Glaber comme le fait de la seule couleur littéralement blanche. Il y a certes des textes qui parlent du blanchiment littéral des églises, comme la *dealbatio* de l'abbatiale de Saint-Albans (la blancheur désignée par *albus* et non par *candidus* peut faire écho au saint patron de l'abbaye), réalisée en 1160, puis encore en 1220 : « Hic etiam pia memoriae abbas Robertus ecclesiam s. Albani, quam dum secretarius fuerat, plumbo pro maiori parte cooperuit, interius et exterius decenter dealbavit, et quaedam vetustate consumpta reparavit » *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Waler un Schotland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307*, édités par O. Lehmann-Brockhaus, Munich, 1955-1960, tome 2, p. 426, n°3847.

descendre du ciel, d'auprès de Dieu, la ville sainte, la nouvelle Jérusalem préparée comme une épouse qui s'est parée pour son époux. (...) Son éclat était semblable à celui d'une pierre précieuse, d'une pierre de jaspe transparente comme du cristal. (...) La muraille était construite en jaspe et la ville était d'or pur, semblable à du verre pur. » (*Apocalypse*, 21)³⁶. Mais nos

Ou encore un document à propos de la rénovation d'York en 670 par saint Wilfrid : « *Parietes quoque lavans secundum prophetam super nivem dealbavit* » cité par H.-P. Autenrieth, "Architectura dispinta", in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale*, Milan 1991. Mais l'allusion à la prophétie d'Isaïe 1, 18 : « si vos crimes ont la teinte du sang, peuvent-ils devenir blancs comme neige ? » dénote une claire allusion non à la blancheur matérielle mais à la symbolique de la rédemption qui redonne à l'homme sa blancheur/pureté originelle.

Mais considérer que le blanc manteau d'églises renvoie à la couleur physiquement blanche dénaturée, on l'a vu, le propos de Glaber ; parler du "mythe du blanc manteau d'églises de Raoul Glaber" pour justifier une étude de la polychromie des cathédrales à travers les sources médiévales (Anne-Vuillemard-Jenn, *Cahiers de rencontres avec le patrimoine religieux* n°26, Orléans, 2008, p. 131-139) relève d'une compréhension insuffisante du texte cité, d'autant que l'auteur ne fait pas la différence entre les deux termes *basilica* et *ecclesia*, indistinctement traduits par église.

Erlande Brandenburg interprète bien la couleur/blancheur comme une métaphore d'une Eglise vivante en lien avec le réforme de l'Eglise du 11^{ème} siècle, *Quand les cathédrales étaient peintes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.

Voir aussi Roberto Cassanelli, « Les cathédrales du Moyen Âge étaient-elles peintes ? », *La couleur dans l'art*, Paris, Citadelles-Mazenod, 2006, chap. 5.

A. Timbert, « Les identités chromatiques de la lumière : la polychromie d'architecture », Colloque international *De verres et de pierres, la lumière dans l'architecture médiévale*, Université de Lyon II, 6-8 décembre 2011, à paraître.

³⁵ Otton de Freising, issu de la haute noblesse germanique, abbé cistercien de Morimond en 1138 et élu évêque de Freising la même année, apprécie les joints parfaits des montants de pierre de la *Porta romana* de Milan, réalisés « *ad similitudinem romani operis* » (*Scriptores rerum germanicorum*, XLVI, Hanovre, 1912, édition de 1978, p. 216.

³⁶³⁶ La problématique des couleurs dans l'*Apocalypse* est tout à fait claire, avec le mot même d'apocalypse qui signifie l'au-delà des couleurs (*caluptô*, couvrir, cacher, la couleur couvrante) (cf. J.-P. Deremble, « Couleurs et lumière blanche, les conditions d'une 'apocalypse' », *Chroniques d'art sacré*, n°79, 2004, et « L'école de la couleur lumineuse », in *Le Nouvel art de la couleur, vitraux contemporains d'Eure et Loir*, Chartres, Centre International du Vitrail, 2007). Les couleurs habillent, revêtent et permettent de sortir de l'obscurité des indistinctions (*celere* : cacher), mais elles doivent être levées pour donner à voir la lumière pure, celle du cristal. Le verre lui-même a besoin d'être peint pour accompagner et signifier le transit de la lumière ; l'expression utilisée par Suger, *vitri vestiti* (*de Administratione*, chap. 34) traduite par verres peints illustre bien l'importance du mot *vestis*. Le vêtement/revêtement vaut pour signifier le message de la révélation. Les descriptions médiévales des bâtiments combinent les rendus physiques des couleurs (*varietas colorum, variis coloribus, diversis coloribus*) et la description de l'édifice spirituel dont la matière témoigne avant de s'effacer devant la claire vision de l'invisible. Saint Bernard fait l'économie des couleurs pour aller plus directement à la vision de l'intangible. Mais le moine Théophile s'attarde davantage sur le miroitement sensible des couleurs, non sans les allégoriser aussitôt ; ainsi il décrit la magnificence des constructions édifiées à la suite de David et de Salomon, bâtisseurs exemplaires du Temple divin : « les *opéra*/œuvres d'art forcent la créature à louer Dieu son créateur », « L'œil de l'homme ne sait d'abord où il fixera sa vue ; s'il l'élève vers les voûtes (plafonds *laqueira*), ils fleurissent comme de brillantes draperies ; s'il considère les parois (*parietes*), c'est un tableau du ciel ; s'il contemple la

mentalités sont tellement rétives à l'évidence du projet spirituel qui transforme la matière en lumière pure, qu'une fâcheuse expression vient anéantir la volonté médiévale, celle de 'faux joints'. Très peu de personnes comprennent ce travail patient des peintres qui in fine dessinent sur un mur déjà très préparé pour la fête les traces de la lumière. Parler de 'faux joints' c'est avouer une fois de plus un préjugé matérialiste, comme si la vérité était dans le matériau brut, dans ce fameux état de nature que des philosophies modernes ont mis en exergue non sans des nuances d'interprétation qui évitent de tomber dans le piège du naturalisme intégral. Il faut se battre pour contredire cette expression funeste et affirmer qu'il s'agit de 'vrais joints', ceux de la construction divine, faite de pierres réelles, mais transfigurées, dématérialisées, divinisées. C'est à cette condition que l'on peut comprendre la proclamation de saint Pierre : « devenez les pierres vivantes qui servent à la construction du Temple » (*1^{ère} Lettre de saint Pierre*, 2, 5). Il est même question dans ce passage d'une pierre rejetée par les bâtisseurs qui devient la pierre d'angle ! On retrouve ce thème de la pierre rejetée de façon constante dans la Bible, le Christ lui-même la prononce pour son propre compte (*Marc* 12, 10). Elle est énigmatique et fait intervenir la logique de la négation. Ce qui est rejeté doit s'entendre ici comme ce qui est dépassé, comme ce qui passe du régime de la première apparence à celui de la seconde. L'enduit est une façon de « rejeter » le premier travail des maçons en arrière, pour mettre en avant le travail des peintres, les faiseurs d'images qui révèlent ce qui est de l'ordre de la vision supérieure, idéale, spirituelle. Dans le même passage

grande abondance de lumière versée par les fenêtres, il admire l'incalculable éclat du verre, la variété du travail le plus précieux » (*si luminis abundantiam ex fenestris intuetur, inestimabilem vitri decorem et operis preciosissimi varietatem miratur*), *Diversarum artium schedula*, imprimé à Brunswick en 1781, traduit en français : *Theophili presbyteri et monachi libri tres, seu diversarum artium schedula*.- Théophile prêtre et moine, essais sur divers arts, trad. par le comte Charles de l'Escalopier, introduction par J-M. Guichard, 1844, p. 123.

On peut lire un texte semblable dans le *Tractatus de laudibus parisis* écrit par Jean de Jandun, en 1323, à propos de la Sainte Chapelle : « la plus belle des chapelles, la chapelle du roi, excellemment située dans les murs du palais, bénéficie d'une structure complète et indestructible, en la pierre la plus solide. Les couleurs les plus magnifiques des peintures, la dorure précieuse des images, la transparence subtile des fenêtres rutilantes sur tous les côtés, les plus beaux parements d'autel, les faits miraculeux des saintes reliques, les figures des châsses ornées à l'extérieur de gemmes éblouissantes, donnent une telle beauté surabondante à cette maison de prière, qu'en s'y rendant, on est comme ravi au ciel, et que l'on croit entrer dans une des meilleures chambres du Paradis. O combien sont salutaires les prières au Dieu tout-puissant prononcées dans cette chapelle, lorsque la pureté intérieure et spirituelle de ceux qui prient correspond proportionnellement à l'élégance extérieure et physique de la chapelle, ô combien est source de paix la louange chantée dans ce lieu saint, quand les cœurs des chanteurs deviennent de belles images de la présence divine, analogiquement embellie par les vertus de ceux qui font les offrandes sur l'autel, quand la vie des personnes brille en correspondance avec la lumière dorée des autels! " (*Gesta*, XLII / 1 (2003), 63-85). C'est toujours la même recherche d'une correspondance entre le contenant et le contenu, entre ceux qui constituent l'Église et l'église. Cf. D. Poirion, « Merveille architecturale et fiction narrative au Moyen Âge », *Venezia Arti*, 1987, 1, p. 15ssq.

de Marc, il est question de deux mots grecs pour parler de la pierre : *lithos*, pour nommer la pierre qu'il faut dépasser, oublier, transformer, et *kephale* pour nommer la nouvelle pierre, moins le matériau lithique que la fonction de tête, de guide, de dimension spirituelle. Ainsi le joli trait blanc qui dessine l'angulation parfaite de l'assemblage des pierres devient-il l'expression d'une dynamique ecclésiale puissante, celle de la fondation de l'entreprise humaine dans un projet divin. Une fois de plus, la raison de la matière est dans sa négation, dans l'immatérialité, c'est-à-dire dans la révélation d'un ordre supérieur qui tire l'inférieur vers sa perfection.

Il est vrai que parfois, quand les pierres sont taillées de façon parfaite à joints vifs, comme chez les cisterciens, ou de façon moins structurelle dans les pierres de plaquage des murs faits de moellons inégaux et de mortiers abondants, l'étape de l'enduit n'est plus nécessaire, mais il s'agit de travaux d'exception dont le prix confirme la valeur accordée à la perfection de l'apparence angulaire.

On pourrait analyser encore longuement les options variables dans le temps en matière de restauration et parler de l'époque où non seulement on a enlevé les enduits d'origine, mais où on a remplacé les joints de chaux d'origine par un gros ciment qui soulignait bien malheureusement un assemblage irrégulier... mais il faut se réjouir aujourd'hui de l'intelligence des restaurations en cours, une intelligence qui puise sa source dans le principe d'une spiritualité agissante³⁷. Une spiritualité qui s'investit généreusement dans la matière pour en extraire sa signification dernière. Tout est lié, le moindre geste du tailleur, le moindre choix des matériaux, la

³⁷ Le Corbusier ne s'est pas trompé de combat lors de son ouvrage-manifeste *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches, voyage au pays des timides*, Paris, 1937 : loin de toute nostalgie d'un Moyen Âge perdu, Le Corbusier pose les bases d'un monde nouveau animé par une soif de vivre nouvelle, non sans faire résonner la phrase de Raoul Glaber parlant du vieux monde qui secoue sa vétusté pour aspirer à la nouveauté : « Les cathédrales étaient blanches parce qu'elles étaient neuves, les villes étaient neuves ; on en construisait de toutes pièces, en ordre, régulières, géométriques, d'après des plans. La pierre de France, fraîche de taille, était éclatante de blancheur, comme avaient été luisantes les pyramides d'Égypte (...). Sur toutes les villes ou les bourgs encerclés de murailles neuves, le gratte-ciel de Dieu dominait la contrée. On l'avait fait aussi haut qu'on avait pu, extraordinairement haut. C'était une disproportion dans l'ensemble. Mais non, c'était un acte d'optimisme, un geste de courage, un signe de fierté, une preuve de maîtrise ! (...) Le monde nouveau commençait, blanc, limpide, joyeux, propre, net et sans retours, le monde nouveau s'ouvrait comme une fleur sur les ruines. On avait tout quitté de ce qui était usages reconnus : on avait tourné le dos. En cent années, le prodige s'accomplit et l'Europe fut changée. »

On a souvent mal interprété la pensée du Corbusier en voulant croire qu'il voulait une blancheur brute. Il parle de vie nouvelle et ne manque pas de crier sa colère devant les restaurations abusives de Saint-Front de Périgueux : « Saint-Front, violée par les restaurateurs, est désormais perdue (...) Je crois à la peau des choses comme à celle des femmes. A Saint-Front, ils ont tout raclé, retouché, refait cm par cm. Ils ont tout falsifié. menteurs, faussaires ! » (*idem*, p. 22-23).

moindre volonté des bâtisseurs/restaurateurs a une valeur spirituelle et réciproquement la pensée théorique la plus sublime ne serait pas grand chose sans un corps-à-corps soutenu avec les éléments naturels.

Pour exploiter correctement l'immense potentiel de lumière que recèle la cathédrale, il faudra continuer ce double travail manuel et intellectuel, du fond et de la forme, de la matière et de l'Esprit. Il reste encore beaucoup à faire, tant pour les parties en attente de chantier que pour les mentalités insuffisamment nourries par les traditions scripturaires.

En particulier parmi les chantiers attendus, il convient d'évoquer celui de l'éclairage artificiel. La mise en place de luminaires pour les offices de nuit, pour les célébrations de jour, pour les concerts et autres rassemblements si prégnants dans la cathédrale, demande une réflexion théologique et une recherche technologique poussées. Comment retrouver l'éclairage qui va du bas vers le haut si différent de celui qui descend des projecteurs et écrase l'espace ? Comment retrouver ces modulations qui respectent l'ambiance nocturne sans chercher à supprimer la différence du jour et de la nuit ? Comment retrouver l'ambiance liturgique des offices des Ténèbres qui préludent à la joie des Laudes quand le soleil se lève comme une résurrection ? Les travaux de Catherine Vincent³⁸ et les réalisations de Jean-Marie Dutilleul nous orientent déjà vers de nouvelles pratiques³⁹ bien en accord avec les travaux déjà réalisés de restauration des murs et des vitraux.

Le succès de toutes ces entreprises matérielles dépend en tout cas de la richesse et de la pertinence de la quête d'immatérialité. La célébration de la Lumière que l'architecture gothique exalte avec tant de magnificence a besoin d'être sans cesse ravivée, revitalisée, restaurée, repensée, reformulée. Il existe bien sûr une lumière naturelle que l'homme reçoit sans qu'il puisse d'aucune manière agir dessus, mais il existe une autre lumière spirituelle faite de cette lumière naturelle, mais traversée, transcendée, transfigurée pour

³⁸ Catherine Vincent. « *Fiat lux* » : lumière et luminaires dans la vie religieuse du XVe au XVIe siècle, Paris, Le Cerf, 2004.

St. Daussy, « Liminaire et lumière entre « locus » et « iter » : le tref de Noyon », Colloque international *De verres et de pierres, la lumière dans l'architecture médiévale*, Université de Lyon II, 6-8 décembre 2011, à paraître.

³⁹ Les travaux réalisés dans la cathédrale de Strasbourg, dans les églises de Saint-Maurice en Valais, de Saint-François de Molitor à Paris (16^{ème}), dans la chapelle du collège Notre-Dame d'Enghien, dans le chœur de Notre-Dame de Paris et dernièrement à Saint-Germain-des-Près, reposent sur une conception de l'espace comme lieu de vie et d'échanges, lieu d'eccllesia, à l'instar des gares, lieux d'échanges par excellence, dont il est le rénovateur le plus zélé pour le compte de la SNCF, *Jean-Marie Dutilleul and Etienne Tricaud : AREP. Monographs*, Images Publishing, Victoria (Australie), 2008, chapitre 3 et 4.

Cf. J.-P. Deremble, Colloque international *Architecture et Liturgie au vingtième siècle, Expériences européennes en dialogue*, organisé par le Patriarcat de Venise avec la Biennale de Venise (9. Mostra Internazionale di Architettura), Venezia 7-8 octobre 2004, "Architectures des églises en France au 20^{ème} siècle", in *Architettura e liturgia nel Novecento, esperienze europee a confronto*, Venise, éd Nicoldi, 2005.

qu'elle exprime quelque chose du mystère divin⁴⁰. Les recherches et les résultats dépendent de l'engagement des hommes et des femmes, mobilisés par des chantiers permanents, ceux du désir de Lumière.

Le critère de la spiritualité⁴¹ doit être bien compris ici, non comme une qualification supplémentaire, une sorte de parure sans rapport avec la réalité, mais bien comme ce qui anime le désir de maintenir ensemble deux réalités distinctes et complémentaires à la fois, un lien, un joint, une médiation : la matière et son immatérialité⁴², le contenant et son contenu, l'intérieur et l'extérieur, l'assemblant et l'assemblée. La philosophie de la perception explore cette voie de l'assemblage de l'en soi et de l'apparence du phénomène, maintenir ensemble la réalité et la réalité autre. C'est pourquoi la question du revêtement n'est pas une question d'accident superficiel, mais bien la réalité qui fait voir l'autre réalité matérielle dans sa tension vers son accomplissement, la visibilité au service de l'invisibilité, celle qui est cachée parce que vêtue et celle qui apparaît insoupçonnée, « reçue de l'art » (Plotin)... visible dans l'invisibilité dévoilée ou révélée au travers de ses voilements⁴³.

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⁴⁰ J.-P. Deremble, « La verrière traversée par l'Esprit d'incarnation, la métamorphose théologique du verre », Colloque international (dir N. Reveyron), *De verres et de pierres, la lumière dans l'architecture médiévale*, Université de Lyon II, 6-8 décembre 2011, à paraître. *Du visible à l'intelligible, Lumière et Ténèbres de l'Antiquité classique à la Renaissance*, sous la direction de Chr. Trottmann et A. Vassiliu, Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2004.

⁴¹ La référence à Kandinsky demeure, toujours opératoire pour comprendre le travail de la création artistique, et de la peinture tout spécialement, c'est-à-dire l'acte de couvrir une toile vierge, Vassily Kandinsky, *Du Spirituel dans l'art et dans la peinture en particulier*, terminé en 1910, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, Munich, 1911 (daté 1912). Cf. J.-P. Deremble, « L'abstraction comme condition de l'universel », *Esthétique et spiritualité II, circulation des modèles en Europe* (dir B. Decharneux, C. Maignant et M. Watthée-Delmote), Fernelmont, E.M.E., 2012, p. 105-120, il faut entendre ici la peinture comme l'abstraction des réalités matérielles concrètes vers leur réalité révélée. Comme le fait inscrire Suger, amoureux des revêtements, dans le vitrail de Moïse de Saint-Denis : « Quod moyses velat, Christi doctrina revelat », *De Administratione* chap. XXXIV, où le voilement est constitutif du mouvement de révélation/manifestation.

⁴² J.-P. Deremble : « Penser l'articulation des contraires avec Plotin, une clé de l'église médiévale entre terre et ciel » in *Matérialité et immatérialité dans l'Eglise au Moyen Age* (Bucarest 22-23 octobre 2010), éd. S.-D. Daussy et alii, Bucarest, Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2012.

⁴³ On pourrait faire une analyse semblable pour comprendre le sens d'un drapé sur une statue. C'est par le drapé, savamment travaillé, sculpté, peint ou dessiné que le corps s'exprime, non en tant que corps de pierre que le drapé cache, mais en tant que corps spirituel que le drapé, sublimant l'anatomie charnelle, médiatise, cf. M. Boudon-Machuel, « Nier la matérialité pour exprimer l'immatériel : une proposition de la sculpture française du 16^{ème} s. », in *Matérialité et immatérialité dans l'Eglise au Moyen Age* (Bucarest 22-23 octobre 2010, Bucarest, Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2012.

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ÉMOTIONS LITTÉRAIRES MÉDIEVALES : UNE APPROCHE *EMOTIONOLOGIQUE*

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Abstract : Medieval Literary Emotions: an Emotionological Approach. Literary emotions can be an interesting field of research for historians and hermeneutists. Our study focuses on the possibility of investigating the most ancient text of French literature, *La Cantilène de sainte Eulalie*, with the instruments provided by the new paradigm of emotionology, which aims at exploring « *the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression* », as Peter N. and Carol Z. Stearns put it in their ambitious study of 1985. Although this epistemological branch is well represented in the English-speaking world, the approach has been but rarely practiced in the literary critique of French works. What we attempt to do in this paper is to test the explicative and descriptive power of such conceptual tools as “emotional styles”, “feeling rules”, “emotives” and “emotional communities” in the reading and interpretation of the narrative data provided by the 29 lines of the paraliturgical poem in Old French. The characters in the story can be relatively well individualized, like Eulalia and Maximian, or collectively relevant, like the pagan community that strives to convert the young virgin to idolatry. The most fascinating puzzle, in terms of emotionology, is provided by the God character, whose behavior is far from being simple or even cohesive : at first a witness to the scene of torture, *He* seems to get (emotionally?) involved in a rescue mission, in order to keep Eulalia safe from the fire; this pyretic immunity is a strong emotive act, meant to enrage the king, who then decides to use the sword against her. At this point, this first French literary God (so to say) seems to be “moved” by the prayer of his Christian servant, whom *He* allows to die beheaded. Of course, Eulalia’s soul sets an example of happy blessed ending, and rises to the sky in the shape of a white dove. But the question remains : is God’s emotional profile, in this paraliturgical, proto-literary work, permeable to fresh emotions, ready to change the divine plans under the “spur” of the moment, or is there a different framework for the representation of the affective conduct of this particular character? If love is said to shape the profile of the Christian God, how can an emotional disorder fit in this exemplary piece of narrative? Is it a higher form of emotional (already literary) order?

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Keywords : French Literature; The Sequence of Saint Eulalia; Emotionology; Feeling rules; Emotive acts; Emotional communities.

Le IX^e siècle est l'époque qui voit naître le premier monument de la littérature française : la *Cantilène de Sainte Eulalie*. D'inspiration théologique et de forme déjà littéraire, ce texte se présente comme un remaniement inventif du *Cantica* latin dédié à la même sainte⁴⁴, mais aussi comme le premier accomplissement esthétique des lettres françaises. À ce titre, il suscite des émotions mélangées : il appelle non seulement à une vénération rituelle de la martyre célébrée, mais aussi à une admiration toute neuve pour l'expressivité expérimentale de la langue romane, sous le signe d'une saisie spirituelle du *sermo vulgaris*, du *vulgus* et des enjeux linguistiques de la Pentecôte.

C'est le concept d'émotionologie, lancé en 1985 par les historiens américains Peter N. et Carol Z. Stearns, qui nous semble le plus prometteur pour rendre compte du modèle émotionnel qui informe cette première œuvre vernaculaire. L'émotionologie représente « les attitudes et les standards qu'une société, ou un groupe qui puisse se définir dans le cadre d'une société, maintient envers les émotions de base et leur expression appropriée »⁴⁵. La société qui nous intéresse est celle des créateurs de cette première page de la littérature française, dont l'humanisme naissant s'avère un bon milieu pour la culture des émotions de base : ambition et fierté pour sa langue, digne de « s'élever enfin aux honneurs de la langue tudesque, son heureuse rivale, si longtemps préférée à la cour des rois Francs »⁴⁶, culture du rythme et incitation à l'admiration de la beauté, à l'empathie pour la jeune persécutée, à la colère contre le roi Maximien, à l'indignation contre les tentatives de séduction des païens, à la pitié, à l'espoir et à l'émerveillement devant la réussite du martyr (qui ne trahit aucune déception pour le ratage de la survie).

⁴⁴ Il s'agit du texte latin *Cantica uirginis Eulaliae*, qui se ressource à un poème de Prudence, mais n'exploite pas, comme l'Eulalie romane, « les Passions de la sainte et les textes liturgiques qui la concernent » ; pour plusieurs raisons développées par les chercheurs qui ont élaboré une comparaison entre les deux textes juxtaposés du manuscrit 150 de la Bibliothèque de Valenciennes (folio 141 r et 141 v), les deux Eulalies « ne sont pas une traduction l'une de l'autre. Elles sont approximativement coulées dans le même moule [...], ont même prétexte, mais diffèrent radicalement dans la manière de traiter le sujet », Roger Berger et Annette Brasseur, *Les Séquences de Sainte Eulalie*, Genève, Droz, 2004, p. 8.

⁴⁵ En anglais, il s'agit de « *the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression* », Peter N. Stearns et Carol Z. Stearns, « Emotionology : Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards », *American Historical Review*, XC, 1985, p. 813.

⁴⁶ *Elnonensia. Monuments de la langue romane et de la langue tudesque du IX^e siècle, contenus dans un manuscrit de l'abbaye de Saint-Amand, conservé à la Bibliothèque publique de Valenciennes, découverts par Hoffman de Fallersleben, et publiés, avec une traduction et des remarques, par J. F. Willems, Gand, F et E Gyselynck, 1845, p. 14.*

L'émotion est le fruit d'une faculté humaine qui traverse les époques : celle de s'émuvoir, qui relève, étymologiquement, d'un dynamisme corporel⁴⁷, mais aussi d'un potentiel d'action psychique⁴⁸, se ressourçant, comme le français au latin, à l'énergie du verbe *emovere* («remuer, ébranler» aux sens propre et figuré)⁴⁹. Comme cette faculté humaine a des racines biologiques – à savoir des programmes de réaction à base neurologique et hormonale⁵⁰ – elle sous-tend la possibilité, pour l'homme («neuronal»⁵¹) moderne, de réactiver les émotionologies transmises, plus ou moins compréhensiblement, par ces vestiges que sont les textes.

Autrement dit, la Séquence carolingienne peut être considérée comme un moyen d'accès universel aux codes de conduite émotionnelle de cette époque, et illustre, tout particulièrement, la salutation d'une sainte dont les reliques viennent d'être accueillies en terre française ; l'émotion dominante est suscitée par l'appropriation d'une figure étrangère (ici, espagnole) et l'amorce des pratiques de vénération, ce qui promet des réjouissances à la fois spirituelles et matérielles autour de l'abbaye d'Hasnon, aux environs d'Elnon⁵². Ces codes visent, certes, des publics précis (socio-historiquement), mais peuvent exercer une certaine emprise sur les esprits modernes aussi, d'autant plus que ces esprits se meuvent (toujours !) dans une culture fortement codifiée émotionnellement, qui assigne des rôles à chaque sexe pour la plupart des situations d'interaction ; ces codes survivent, sémantiquement, sinon pragmatiquement, grâce à la survie – médiate – de la langue.

⁴ Ca 1100 « mettre en mouvement » – *Roland*, éd. J. Bédier, 2813 : Li amirals, ki trestuz les *esmut*, voir le portail lexical du Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales sur la page web <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/%C3%A9mouvoir>, consultée le 7 janvier 2013.

⁵ Ca 1170 « troubler, porter à certains sentiments » – *Rois*, éd. E.-R. Curtius, III, 3, 26, p. 118, *loc. cit.*

⁶ Le verbe *emovere* est le résultat d'une dérivation préfixale : *ex* et *movere* (« mouvoir, remuer »), *loc. cit.*

⁷ Pour une approche psychologique de l'émotion, voir Keith Oatley et Jennifer M. Jenkins, *Understanding Emotions*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 1996 ; pour une mise au point épistémologique adaptée aux exigences de la médiévistique, voir *The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature. Grief, Guilt and Hypocrisy*, éd. par Jeff Rider et Jamie Friedman, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, notamment le chapitre introductif de Jeff Rider, « The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature », p. 1-26.

⁵¹ L'expression est celle de J.-P. Changeux, *L'Homme neuronal*, Paris, 1983.

⁵² D'après Yves Chartier, le transfert des reliques est réalisé le 23 octobre 878, avec l'autorisation de l'archevêque de Narbonne, Sigebord. C'était le deuxième transfert de ces reliques, déjà transférées une fois de leur lieu sacré d'origine : « Vénérées jusque-là principalement à Mérida, les reliques d'Eulalie firent l'objet d'un culte renouvelé lors de leur invention en 877 à l'église Santa Maria del Mar (ou de Las Arenas) et de leur transfert à la cathédrale de Barcelone, en grande pompe, par l'évêque Frodoïno », Yves Chartier, « L'Auteur de la cantilène de sainte Eulalie », communication présentée le 30 mars 1985 au XIII^e colloque annuel de la Société des Médiévistes et des Humanistes d'Ottawa-Carleton, Université d'Ottawa, *Miscellanea Medievalia et Humanistica*, 14, 1986, p. 163.

Il n'est pas exclu, pour le dire plus simplement, qu'un lecteur du XXI^e siècle, en lisant *La Cantilène de sainte Eulalie*, à l'aide du dictionnaire ou d'une traduction, se trouve sous l'empire de ce code de comportement émotionnel qui prescrit un dosage subtil de pitié et d'admiration, de célébration de la sainteté et d'accueil bienveillant (voire enthousiaste) d'un trophée attestant une victoire de plus des chrétiens sur les païens, autant dire des victimes sur les bourreaux. L'empathie avec un être humain persécuté, la solidarité, l'attendrissement collectif ne sont pas des dimensions affectives défuntes ; notre époque, si elle n'a plus le culte généralisé du martyr, garde le sens de ce que l'on appelle, actuellement, « le devoir de mémoire », et prescrit, par exemple, la commémoration et la commisération à l'égard des victimes de l'Holocauste. Mû donc, dans le cas d'Eulalie aussi, par des émotions qui lui sont familières, le lecteur moderne devient alors un des « membres honorifiques ou correspondants de la tradition culturelle pour laquelle [le texte] fut composé »⁵³ – sinon un croyant qui se joint à la prière finale... ou un apprenant qui fait son exposé en tentant sa chance émotionnelle⁵⁴.

Le cimetière de la littérature française, où gît cette première œuvre, se révèle un véritable champ de forces vives, dont notre étude compte illustrer le potentiel d'action⁵⁵. En effet, le monument n'empêche pas de « saisir le jour » ou le moment ; l'émotion d'antan, filtrée par son axiologie culturelle, limitée par la compréhension de cette axiologie aujourd'hui, invite à une lecture littéraire sensible aux idiomes somato-psychiques du passé.

Parmi les concepts opératoires les plus pertinents pour rendre compte de l'« histoire de l'affectivité »⁵⁶ littéraire, nous retenons, pour les besoins de notre analyse :

⁵³ Il s'agit du statut de « *honorary or corresponding members of the cultural tradition for which it was composed* » ; l'expression est celle de Jeff Rider, « The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature », introduction citée, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Voir la mise en scène didactique créée dans le cadre du programme « *Performing Medieval Narrative* » à la Maison Française de l'Université de New York, en octobre 2005, enregistrement disponible sur le site mednar.org, créé par Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, Marilyn Lawrence, comme complément au livre qu'elles ont édité, **Performing Medieval Narrative**, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2005 ; voir <http://mednar.org/2012/06/17/sequence-de-sainte-eulalie-sequence-or-song-of-st-eulalia/>, site consulté le 6 février 2013.

⁵⁵ Le risque de croire au « fantôme du passé ressuscité », subtilement décrit par Piroska Nagy et Damien Boquet dans l'Introduction à l'ouvrage de référence *Le Sujet des émotions au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Beauchesne, 2005, p. 42, ne nous décourage pas ; notre approche s'appuie sur la faculté du lecteur moderne à appréhender la possibilité que des mondes construits, textuellement, par les premières œuvres de la littérature française, fonctionnent selon une émotionologie qui n'est pas entièrement inaccessible, et qui peut être dégagée, replacée dans son contexte d'emploi et analysée.

⁵⁶ « Si l'histoire des émotions avait été essentiellement francophone, elle aurait probablement été dénommée *histoire de l'affectivité*, couvrant un large domaine allant des dispositions affectives et des traits de caractère aux sentiments durables et aux émotions qui, en français,

- le *style émotionnel*
- l'*émotif*
- la *communauté émotionnelle*
- les *feeling rules* (normes du sentiment).

Loin de constituer des outils théoriques au sens strict, ces notions demandent à être spécifiées par la réalité de chaque monde textuel, compte tenu de sa configuration générale et de son insertion particulière dans la réalité d'une période historique.

Ainsi, le **style émotionnel**⁵⁷ sert à qualifier le type de manifestation émotionnelle représenté par une entité littéraire, compte tenu du genre qu'il illustre ; il invite à écrire une stylistique du personnage adaptée au profil générique de chaque œuvre / genre / époque. Ainsi, il y aurait une stylistique propre au saint, et plus particulièrement au martyr, enracinée dans la stylistique du genre hagiographique, et modifiée par les exigences profanes qui correspondent à la littérarité croissante des textes. Ainsi, dans le cas d'une *Séquence*, l'amplification textuelle des thèmes liturgiques laisse une certaine place à la créativité, qui s'exerce dans l'interprétation édifiante de l'exemple de sainteté féminine offert par la tradition⁵⁸.

En dehors de cette stylistique des genres, à forte vocation philologique, il existe un cadre théorique plus élaboré, qui embrasse les dernières

désignent clairement un mouvement psychique bref, le plus souvent reflété par le corps. », Damien Boquet et Piroska Nagy, « Une Histoire des émotions incarnées », *Médiévales*, 61, 2011 (p. 5-24), p. 11. Pour une étude consacrée à la corporéité dans les discours didactiques au XIII^e siècle, voir Karin Ueltschi, *La Didactique de la chair. Approches et enjeux d'un discours en français au Moyen Âge*, Genève, Droz, 1993.

⁵⁷ William M. Reddy véhicule le concept d'« emotional styles » en l'associant à des performances richement sensorielles comme la prédication et d'autres rituels sociaux, mais aussi spécifiquement artistiques : le théâtre, la littérature, la musique, l'iconographie, l'architecture, le design vestimentaire ; voir *The Navigation of Feeling*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 331. Peter Stearns infuse un sens impersonnel et historicisant à la notion ; il parle de la nécessité de saisir les « styles émotionnels caractéristiques d'une période particulière [...] comme un moyen d'enrichir le portrait de cette époque du passé et de lancer le processus de comparer une période révolue à une autre » (*grasp the characteristic emotional styles of a particular period [...], as a means of enriching the portrayal of that past time and launching the process of comparing one previous period to another.*), Peter N. Stearns, « History of Emotions ... », art. cit., p. 16. Le chercheur Jeff Rider, dans son introduction à l'ouvrage *The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature*, déjà citée, reprend et réinvestit la notion, en lui attribuant un sens historique plus compatible avec l'anthropologie culturelle : en explorant ces « styles émotionnels », l'approche historique d'un corpus tâche d'« aller au-delà des représentations des émotionologies et d'arriver à quelque chose de plus *réel*, comme la nature humaine ou des sentiments authentiques » (*go beyond or get through the representations of emotionologies to something more "real" such as human nature or genuine feelings*), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Sur l'importance musicale et textuelle de ces amplifications introduites par les tropes, dont les séquences sont un exemple parlant, voir Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: a Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991, chap. « Holy Perfection in Old French Tradition », notamment p. 28.

découvertes sur l'activité cérébrale humaine : Richard J. Davidson et Sharon Begley proposent, en 2012⁵⁹, une grille minutieuse pour l'identification des styles émotionnels, fondée sur le degré de réactivité aux émotions négatives et positives. Il dégage six dimensions pertinentes dans la stylistique du cerveau : la résilience, la perspective, l'intuition sociale, la conscience de soi, la sensibilité au contexte, la faculté d'attention, qui joueraient, toutes, dans l'établissement d'un profil émotionnel de l'être humain de tout temps, rationnellement appréhendé. Nous verrons dans quelle mesure ces axes peuvent se révéler utiles dans notre analyse de la réactivité d'Eulalie aux tribulations du martyre.

En ce qui concerne l'**émotif** ou l'acte émotif, la notion désigne, par une allusion au « performatif » de John Langshaw Austin⁶⁰, tout énoncé ou geste susceptible de changer l'état affectif des interactants, fussent-ils émetteurs ou récepteurs⁶¹. Si l'émotion est extralinguistique, prélinguistique, comme le suggère William M. Reddy⁶² en la comparant à la pensée, alors l'*émotif* articule l'émotion et le langage tout comme le signe linguistique articule le son et le langage⁶³ dans la vision de Ferdinand de Saussure⁶⁴. Pour l'émotif (comme pour le signe linguistique), cette articulation n'est pas gratuite ; elle

⁵⁹ Richard J. Davidson et Sharon Begley, *The Emotional Life of Your Brain. How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think, Feel, and Live – and How You Can Change Them*, New York, Hudson Street Press, 2012. Pour la grille des "emotional styles", voir Introduction, p. XIV.

⁶⁰ Voir John Langshaw Austin, *Quand dire, c'est faire*, Paris, Seuil, 1970 [1962]. La performativité d'un énoncé se réfère à sa capacité de changer l'état des choses ; elle relève de l'efficacité d'un acte de langage, de sa réussite, liée à des facteurs comme le statut du locuteur, les rapports hiérarchiques des interactants, autant de paramètres situationnels pris en charge par la pragmatique.

⁶¹ Ces actes décrivent l'émotion et, ce faisant, l'activent, l'intensifient ou la modifient. Ils sont descriptifs, relationnels, intentionnels et auto-référentiels, mais aussi auto-modifiables : « *Emotional expressions can thus be considered as utterances aimed at briefly characterizing the current state of activated thought material that exceeds the current capacity of attention. Such expression, by analogy with speech acts, can be said to have (1) descriptive appearance, (2) relational intent, and (3) self-exploring and self-altering effects.* » (Ainsi, les expressions émotionnelles peuvent être considérées comme des énoncés visant à caractériser brièvement l'état courant du matériau à penser lorsqu'il est activé et excède la capacité courante d'attention. Une telle expression, par analogie avec les actes de langage, peut avoir, pour le dire ainsi, (1) une apparence descriptive, (2) une intention relationnelle (3) des effets comportant l'exploration et le changement du moi), William M. Reddy, *op. cit.*, p. 102-105, notre traduction. Ce sont les théoriciens de l'EMMA qui proposent l'équivalent nominal « l'émotif » pour traduire « the emotive » de Reddy ; pour une vulgarisation francophone de la notion, voir Damien Boquet et Piroška Nagy, art. cit, p. 13-14.

⁶² William M. Reddy, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁶³ La comparaison est proposée par Jeff Rider, dans le chapitre introductif cité ci-dessus, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Le nom du linguiste suisse Ferdinand de Saussure est essentiellement associé à la théorisation et vulgarisation du « signe linguistique », défini comme unité bicéphale, composée d'un *signifiant* (« une image acoustique ») et d'un *signifié* (« un concept »). Voir Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, [1916], Paris, Payot, 1979, p. 98.

visé à produire une émotion qui corresponde à l'attente sémantique et sentimentale de l'émetteur-émoteur.

La littérature française des commencements se propose, sans doute, d'émouvoir son public / lectorat. En effet, la sensibilité du public à laquelle elle s'adresse est à satisfaire, mais aussi à défaire, refaire, selon une triple visée : *plaire, instruire, émouvoir*. Grâce à cette rhétorique dont Cicéron avait d'abord relevé les principes⁶⁵ et que des *autorités* comme Horace⁶⁶ et saint Augustin⁶⁷ ont largement diffusée dans l'enseignement européen médiéval, l'émotion a sa place dans l'art scribal des commencements. Tout auteur vernaculaire se devait de connaître les *Auctores* et l'art de bien dire, ne fût-ce que pour acquérir une légitimité culturelle aux yeux des mécènes.

Compte tenu de cet héritage rhétorique, nous pourrions dégager les « émotifs » les plus employés dans notre corpus. En outre, il sera intéressant de voir quels personnages (à côté du personnage-auteur) endossent le plus

⁶⁵ L'homme d'État et l'auteur latin Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 av. J-C) révélait, à travers la doctrine de l'orateur Antonius, exposée à son confrère Crassus dans un dialogue fictionnel, les effets qu'il convient de provoquer chez les juges pour remporter la victoire juridique. Il s'agit de « ces trois points : plaire, instruire, émouvoir. De ces trois points, le premier demande un ton doux et insinuant ; le second, un esprit pénétrant ; le troisième, des mouvements pathétiques. Pour que le juge soit amené à prononcer en notre faveur, il faut, ou que sa propre inclination l'y porte, ou que la force de nos arguments l'y détermine, ou que de profondes émotions l'y contraignent. » (*tres sunt res, ut ante dixi: una conciliandorum hominum, altera docendorum, tertia concitandorum. Harum trium partium prima lenitatem orationis, secunda acumen, tertia uim desiderat; nam hoc necesse est, ut is, qui nobis causam adiudicaturus sit, aut inclinatione uoluntatis propendeat in nos aut defensionis argumentis adducatur aut animi permotione cogatur.*), Cicéron, *De oratore (De l'orateur)*, Livre II, Chapitre XXVIII, 121 et Chapitre XXIX, 129 dans *Œuvres complètes de Cicéron, avec la traduction en français*, dir. Jean-Marie Napoléon Désiré Nisard, tome I, Paris, Éditeurs J.J. Dubochet et Cie, 1840, p. 242, publié en ligne par l'Université Catholique de Louvain, Bibliotheca Classica Selecta, consulté le 7 février 2013 sur le site http://agoraclass.fltr.ucl.ac.be/concordances/cicero_de_oratore02/ligne05.cfm?numligne=29&mot=Q.

⁶⁶ Le poète romain Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 av. J-C) formule en son propre nom une recette explicite du succès littéraire : « il obtient tous les suffrages, celui qui unit l'utile à l'agréable, et plaît et instruit en même temps ; son livre enrichit Sosie le libraire, va même au-delà des mers, et donne au poète une notoriété durable. » (*Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, lectorem delectando pariterque monendo; hic meret aera liber Sosis, hic et mare transit et longum noto scriptori prorogat aeuum*), Horace, *L'Art poétique ou Épître aux Pisons*, trad. François Richard, Paris, Garnier, 1944, p. 343-346, fragment disponible sur le site <http://bcs.fltr.ucl.ac.be/hor/pisonstrad.html>, consulté le 7 février 2013.

⁶⁷ Le philosophe et théologien Aurelius Augustinus (354-430), évêque d'Hippone, communément désigné comme saint Augustin, reprend l'idée des trois visées : « *ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat* » (instruire, plaire et toucher) en soutenant, toutefois, que le plaisir n'est pas toujours nécessaire, puisque la vérité seule a tous les charmes nécessaires à la séduction des esprits ; voir *De Doctrina Christiana*, livre IV, chapitre 12, in *Œuvres complètes de Saint Augustin, traduites pour la première fois en français*, sous la direction de M. Raulx, Bar-le-Duc, L. Guérin et Cie, 1866, tome IV, p. 1-87, sur le site http://agoraclass.fltr.ucl.ac.be/concordances/augustin_doct_chris_04/lecture/12.htm, consulté le 7 février 2013.

souvent le rôle d'agents émotionnels. Hommes ou femmes ? Agir, subir ? Les émotifs médiévaux et renaissants risquent de conserver, au moins en partie, leur efficacité, et de produire des émotions au sein du public moderne.

La notion de *communauté émotionnelle* vient compléter le tableau : elle reflète le caractère social de l'émotion, sa force cohésive. Lorsque le narrateur s'adresse aux chrétiens, en fin de *Cantilène*, il entend coaliser, autour d'une spiritualité sacrificielle, tous les humains censés devenir ses lecteurs. Il vivifie les émotions de l'héroïsme sacré, en ranimant une tradition qui se ressourcent aux régimes stoïciens de l'antiquité.

Enfin, toute communauté repose sur des normes ; aussi est-il tentant de parler, avec Arlie Russell Hochschild, de « *feeling rules* »⁶⁸ ou **normes du sentiment**⁶⁹. Dans les textes liminaires de la littérature française, la mort du saint est suivie non seulement de deuil et de pleurs, mais aussi d'une vague d'émois qui traduisent la joie d'un triomphe, d'une élévation, d'une sorte de promotion morale réussie. Il faut que le chrétien salue ainsi, par une juste adéquation sentimentale, le succès de la sainteté.

Il est toujours utile, pour un écrivain de toute époque, de renforcer, par des émotifs conventionnalisés, les liens avec son public, à travers une prise de conscience (ou un vécu participatif inconscient !) de la « communauté » en question. Il était donc rassurant de se dire, comme récepteur de la *Cantilène*, qu'il existait bien une communauté émotionnelle durable et légitime, « correctement » confirmée, des admirateurs du martyr – et de la martyre.

Reste à ouvrir le cimetière de cette émotionologie liminaire, et à expérimenter l'efficacité de ces « techniques de l'émotion » sur le « homo emotus »⁷⁰ du XXI^e siècle.

La *Cantilène* ou *Séquence de sainte Eulalie* est un premier seuil à franchir pour approcher la littérature française⁷¹. Sans être de la « littérature » au sens

⁶⁸ C'est Arlie Russell Hochschild, dans son article « Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure », *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 85, n° 3, 1979, p. 551-575, qui soulève la question de l'existence des « *feeling rules* ». L'idée est reprise et approfondie par Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2006, p. 15. Voir aussi Peter Stearns, « History of Emotions : The Issue of Change », in *Handbook of emotions*, éd. Michael Lewis et Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, 2^e éd., New York, Guilford Publications, 2004 [1993], p. 20.

⁶⁹ Jacques Cosnier parle, lui, de « règles de cadrage affectif », voir son article « *Synchronisation et copilotage de l'interaction conversationnelle* », *Protée*, 20, 2, 1992, p. 10, consulté sur http://icar.univ-lyon2.fr/membres/jcosnier/articles/II-8_Synchronisation_interaction-.pdf, le 7 février 2013.

⁷⁰ Dans « le » monde actuel, ce n'est pas une espèce en voie de disparition ; voir, par exemple, l'ouvrage (néo-normatif) de Michael Sky, *The Power of Emotion. Using Your Emotional Energy to Transform Your Life*, Rochester, Vermont, Bear & Company, 2002, qui centre la réflexion sur le potentiel énergétique de *homo emotus*, p. 3.

plein, cette œuvre de fiction cultive des émotions esthétiquement orientées, dans 29 vers à vocation musicale et paraliturgique qui représentent le premier poème écrit en langue française⁷².

En ce IX^e siècle de la Renaissance carolingienne où l'écrit acquiert une « place essentielle », où les livres « se multiplient et participent à l'épanouissement de la création artistique » via « la révision des textes sacrés et la redécouverte de textes anciens »⁷³, le champ de la francophonie littéraire est vierge – et c'est une vierge qui vient l'ensemencer, « sur les pages finales restées vierges d'un manuscrit latin »⁷⁴.

Historiquement parlant, Eulalie est une chrétienne andalouse ayant vécu au IV^e siècle de notre ère. Elle devient *sainte Eulalie* autour de 878, à Barcelone, lorsque l'on trouve ses reliques ; vers 881, l'histoire anonyme nourrie par cette trouvaille vient habiter le fameux manuscrit 150 de la Bibliothèque municipale de Valenciennes. La *séquence* fait donc suite à l'événement historique (la translation du corps à Barcelone, puis à Hasnon) ; textuellement, elle représente la réécriture romane d'un cantique latin destiné au culte de la sainte, cantique qui se ressource au style poétique de Prudence et au style musicologique des tropes qui suivent à la célébration de la liturgie⁷⁵.

Au cœur du manuscrit 150, ce premier récit français occupe un seul folio et se situe dans le prolongement des sermons du théologien Grégoire de Naziance, traduits du grec en latin et regroupés autour de la Pentecôte, fête des langues. Il n'est pas le seul texte vernaculaire : le manuscrit de Valenciennes, outre son trésor roman (du folio 141 verso), abrite aussi le *Rithmus Teutonicus*, l'un des premiers monuments de la langue

⁷¹ Nous avons déjà franchi ce seuil dans notre livre *Talent / Maltalent. Emotionologies liminaires de la littérature française*, Craiova, Universitaria, 2012 ; voir notre premier chapitre, intitulé « Une émotionologie virginale : Eulalie », p. 43-53.

⁷² Ce premier stade du français est généralement désigné sous le nom de « roman » ; sur la précocité artistique et l'importance linguistique de la *Cantilène*, voir l'Introduction au colloque de 1989 consacré à cette œuvre par Marie-Pierre Dion, conservateur de la Bibliothèque municipale de Valenciennes sur le site <http://bookline-03.valenciennes.fr/bib/decouverte/histoire/colloqueintro/frameset.htm> consulté le 7 février 2013, notamment page 9.

⁷³ Pour une présentation de la Renaissance carolingienne riche en couleurs et en *clergie* (ancien français : savoir, instruction), voir le dossier thématique élaboré par Marie-Pierre Laffitte et Charlotte Denoël, Marianne Besseyre et Jean-Pierre Caillet, chercheurs rattachés à la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, responsables de l'exposition « Trésors carolingiens », notamment la fiche pédagogique II, sur le site http://expositions.bnf.fr/carolingiens/pedago/fiche_2.pdf, consulté le 7 février 2013.

⁷⁴ Marie-Pierre Dion, *Introduction*, art. cit., p. 9.

⁷⁵ La *Cantilène* est « un chant ecclésiastique, comme le chant de saint Etienne [...] comme la Passion du Christ et la Vie de saint Léger » ; ce chant « est composé de versets de deux vers se correspondant exactement pour la mesure comme pour l'assonance », Paul Meyer, « Note sur la métrique du cant de sainte Eulalie », *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 22, 1861, p. 254.

germanique⁷⁶. Dans cette tour de Babel où le monde est appelé à s'entendre, sous la coupe de Dieu, le multilinguisme s'inscrit avec bonheur sur la toile de fond du latin. Pour honorer la Pentecôte, il fallait une émotion fraîche, sinon une langue de feu : la sainteté d'Eulalie a environ trois ans quand elle inspire la cantilène.

Étymologiquement, Eulalie est « celle qui parle bien »⁷⁷ – et dont la vie est parlante. Pourtant, dans sa *Cantilène*, elle ne parle pas « en langues », comme pourrait le supposer l'émotionologie de la Pentecôte ; en fait, Eulalie est une locutrice laconique, qui excelle à endiguer les discours des autres. La tradition hagiographique prévoit en général, dans les textes latins, une section consacrée aux discours du saint lors de sa passion. Ici, rien de tel n'est représenté⁷⁸. Seule l'ébauche d'une prière, jamais explicite, est confiée au lecteur.

En revanche, c'est le langage du corps qu'elle investit le plus puissamment, lors des affrontements humains. Bonne, belle et chrétienne⁷⁹, Eulalie incarne la résistance au féminin, et fait preuve d'une « résilience » miraculeuse lorsqu'elle est confrontée au feu. Ce n'est pas son cerveau qui résiste aux flammes, c'est son esprit qui infuse au corps, miraculeusement, ce pouvoir de tenir à l'écart l'émotion négative qui consiste à se voir obligée de monter sur un bûcher, lors d'une exécution publique – voire de la convertir, mystérieusement, en émotion positive.

Rétive, différente, incomprise, Eulalie dit « non » à toute intrusion, « non », de tout son corps. Elle n'écoute pas les mauvais conseillers, ne se plie guère aux menaces et ne se soucie point de l'ordre du roi. Maximien a beau maximiser son intervention : rien n'y fait ; les relations de pouvoir⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Voir le site consacré à la *Séquence de Sainte Eulalie* par la Bibliothèque de Valenciennes, <http://bookline-03.valenciennes.fr/bib/decouverte/histoire/cantilene/presentation.htm>, consulté le 7 février 2013.

⁷⁷ Voir Philippe Walter, *Naissances de la littérature française (IXe-XVe siècle)*. Anthologie, Grenoble et Montréal, ELLUG et Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1998, p. 23.

⁷⁸ « *The Sequence alludes to the interrogation scene that constitutes the climax of traditional Latin Passions, but without transcribing the speeches uttered by the heroine.* », Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint...*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁷⁹ Sur l'alliance entre la beauté et la bonté, entre le visible corporel et l'invisible divin, voir l'étude de Jean-Paul Deremble sur la philosophie de Plotin, déterminante pour la pensée médiévale de la spiritualité, « Penser l'articulation des contraires avec Plotin, une clé de l'église médiévale entre terre et ciel », dans *Matérialité et immatérialité dans l'Église au Moyen Âge*, Actes du colloque de Bucarest, 22-23 octobre 2010, éd. Stéphanie Diane Daussy, Cătălina Gîrbea, Brîndușa Grigoriu, Anca Oroveanu et Mihaela Voicu, Bucarest, Éditions de l'Université de Bucarest, 2012, p. 419-430.

⁸⁰ Certes, l'instance productrice du texte relève d'une « communauté émotionnelle d'élite », de veine cléricale ; les récepteurs, en revanche, sont virtuellement des gens de toutes les couches sociales, rassemblés autour des rites liturgique et paraliturgique. Le « *class bias* » (le biais induit par l'appartenance à une classe sociale) que suppose la dynamique émotionologique médiévale est ici surmonté par la visée pan-sociale du genre de la cantilène. Sur l'approche sociologique en matière de constitution et diffusion d'émotionologies, voir Jeff Rider, *op. cit.*, p. 10-11.

sont ébranlées, politiquement, sexuellement, métaphysiquement, et cela précisément parce qu'Eulalie respire dans une autre émotionologie, où l'offre de cadeaux, par exemple, ne produit pas la joie, et la condamnation à mort ne produit pas la peur. Pour la manipuler, ces adultes hommes qui l'entourent devraient simplement partager son code émotionologique, afin de prévoir ses réponses affectives. Or, il n'en est rien ; et Eulalie reste imprévisible, elle réagit positivement aux stimuli émotionnels négatifs, et neutralement aux stimuli positifs, ce qui ajoute à ses autres beautés la faculté de surprendre, d'émerveiller, de couper le souffle en se laissant couper la tête.

On pourrait se demander à quoi pensait un récepteur du IX^e siècle quand on évoquait, dans sa langue de tous les jours, une femme du IV^e siècle, devenue sainte après la mortification de son « bel [...] corps » (vers 2). La beauté de cette jeune fille, au moment de son chant de cygne, relève, certes, de la visibilité de sa belle âme, mais aussi, pragmatiquement parlant – en termes carolingiens – de la présence d'un teint blanc, d'une riche chevelure blonde et d'une fraîcheur bien mise en valeur⁸¹. C'est cette luminosité naturelle qui est donc imaginée, à l'époque de la Cantilène : et c'est contre la luminosité du bûcher qu'elle se détache, or sur pourpre, lumière sur feu.

D'autre part, la jeunesse du personnage, réputé avoir 13 ans, exclut, paradoxalement, l'idée de vulnérabilité. Ni naïve ni ouverte, ni crédule, Eulalie est en plein accord avec l'émotionologie chrétienne de l'humilité et du silence⁸², et n'ouvre sa bouche que pour le Christ, auquel elle adresse son unique acte de parole – une prière. Elle fait comme si les autres n'existaient point, ne comptaient pas, et focalise toute son attention sur les réalités du monde céleste, si bien que l'on pourrait parler, dans son cas, d'une sorte de faculté d'inattention, propre aux grands ascètes (à commencer par le Christ, dans la fameuse scène de l'interrogatoire devant Hérode, Luc 23, 9, ou devant Pilate, Mathieu, 27, 13-14).

Enfin, quand elle rouvre sa bouche, elle le fait simplement pour expirer : c'est une colombe qui prend alors son envol, dans une « perspective » qui éternise les émois de l'ascension.

Pour reconstituer le régime émotionnel⁸³ de cet univers proto-littéraire, l'art de vivre et le modèle de personne qu'il met en chant⁸⁴, deux instances

⁸¹ « *The male Carolingian gaze then expected to observe young, fair skinned, and pleasantly scented laywomen with long hair* », Valerie I. Garver, *Women and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2009, p. 65.

⁸² Pour le chrétien médiéval, parler rime souvent avec pécher ; voir Carla Casagrande et Silvana Vecchio, *Les péchés de la langue. Discipline et éthique de la parole dans la culture médiévale*, Paris, Cerf, 1991.

⁸³ Il s'agit d'un système de normes de conduite affective (« *feeling rules* ») à forte connotation politique : « *Any enduring political regime must establish as an essential element a normative order for emotions, an 'emotional regime'* », William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling, op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁸⁴ Chaque texte narratif fournit, d'après les théoriciens des émotions, des éléments de réponse aux problèmes concernant les bonnes façons d'agir et d'être une personne dans la société

normatives sont indispensables : Dieu et la royauté païenne. C'est la sainte elle-même qui assure la réception de l'une et le rejet de l'autre, en légitimant, par son propre exemple, les *feeling rules* du martyr chrétien.

Dans ce monde proto-littéraire, le bon plaisir de Dieu est immédiatement compréhensible à Eulalie. Une telle compréhension ne va plus de soi pour le lecteur moderne : Dieu serait-il un stratège de l'émotion, prêt à infliger son *émotif* au public ? ou bien un agent émotionnel sans intention précise, qui se laisserait émouvoir par les prières d'une vierge ?

Pour voir comment il accueille l'amour d'Eulalie⁸⁵, et comment il met en scène son propre amour, il suffit de « visionner » le supplice de la sainte.

Au début, elle fait face, brillamment, à la force coercitive de la parole : « lo Deu manestier » (le service de Dieu⁸⁶) et la présence du Créateur « sus en ciel » (là-haut dans le ciel)⁸⁷ suffisent pour muscler l'opposition de la pucelle. À cette phase, Dieu n'assure pourtant pas son soutien direct ; il est juste le bénéficiaire céleste des actes d'Eulalie et règne dans sa sphère, sans honnir « li Deo inimi » (les ennemis de Dieu)⁸⁸, comme s'il ne pouvait ressentir que des émotions positives, censées appuyer, de loin, l'immunité, la vie et la survie de ses créatures.

Lorsque le supplice charnel commence, le Dieu de l'histoire s'implique, semble-t-il, plus activement dans la vie de sa servante. En effet, le corps d'Eulalie est sauvé des flammes – mais le souhait divin agit comme une loi impersonnelle, puisque, de toute façon, « elle colpes non avret, poro no's coist » (elle n'avait pas de péché, donc ne brûla pas)⁸⁹.

Avec le martyr proprement dit, le profil émotionnel de Dieu défie la logique commune, en soulevant une question d'herméneutique : pourquoi ne protège-t-il pas la sainte de la « spede » (l'épée)⁹⁰, comme il l'a protégée du feu ? Ce n'est pas une question de pouvoir autant que de vouloir : celui qui fait sortir une colombe de la bouche d'une pucelle pourrait bien émousser la pointe d'une épée. Or, ce Dieu ne le *veut* pas. Eulalie est résignée d'avance, et expire « a grand honestet »⁹¹. Le Seigneur lui fait grâce de la laisser

illustrée (« *stories provide pieces of solutions to the problem of how to act and how to be a person in the society that is depicted* »), Keith Oatley et Jennifer M. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

⁸⁵ « Niule cos non la pouret omq pleier, / La polle sempre non *amast* lo Deu menestier » (Rien ne put amener la jeune enfant à cesser d'*aimer* le service de Dieu), dit le poème (notre italique), *La Cantilène de Sainte Eulalie*, éd. cit., in Philippe Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁸⁶ Pour ce vers, la traduction est celle donnée par le site de la Bibliothèque Municipale de Valenciennes, *La Séquence d'Eulalie*, v. 11, <http://bookline-03.valenciennes.fr/bib/decouverte/histoire/cantilene/transcription.htm>, site consulté le 7 février 2013.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 23-24.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 26.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, v. 21.

mourir, et une entente des plus spirituelles se trame : « volt lo seule lazsier, si ruovet Krist » (elle veut laisser le siècle, et en adresse sa prière au Christ)⁹². Une sorte d'émulation inspire Eulalie, qui, déjà innocente et vierge comme le Christ, semble désirer une crucifixion pour parfaire son identification au modèle. Une émotionologie de la Passion⁹³ colore cette aspiration proprement céleste.

Avec le vécu d'Eulalie, le texte transmet en filigrane ces motivations divines qui impulsent la « décision » finale : faire de l'héroïne une martyre. Le premier Dieu de la langue française est mouvant : il se plie à la loi de la pureté immune, au désir thanatique d'une pucelle⁹⁴ et aux exigences du spectaculaire.

Devant la tête qui tombe et la colombe qui s'envole⁹⁵, le public comprend une seule chose : Dieu est mystérieux.

Il est plus facile de reconstituer le profil émotionnel des païens, qui sous-tend la deuxième instance normative du texte. Leur motivation est clairement de « veindre » (vaincre) Eulalie.

Initialement, ils choisissent des stratégies de parole, si bien que le narrateur les qualifie de « mals conseillers » (mauvais conseillers). Leurs arguments se greffent sur les valeurs du siècle – statut social, sécurité vitale, attractivité esthétique. Bientôt, à la tentation de l'or et de l'argent suivent les prières et les menaces. Comme la « virginité »⁹⁶ est une forme de résistance

⁹² *Ibid.*, v. 28.

⁹³ « En effet, les dogmes de l'Incarnation et de la Passion impliquent d'emblée une relation corps-âme et corps-émotion : Dieu s'est incarné par amour des hommes, et pour cette même raison il a souffert la Passion dans son corps. Le Dieu chrétien est donc tout affect, entretenant avec les hommes un lien d'amour, au point de faire souffrir son Fils pour eux. Ce lien est on ne peut plus charnel et il s'actualise jour après jour dans le rituel eucharistique. L'affection divine pour l'homme se manifeste également d'une manière très concrète et corporelle à travers les récits et les représentations de l'Incarnation et de la Passion, mais aussi par imitation dans les vies de saints. », Damien Boquet et Piroska Nagy, « Une Histoire des émotions incarnées », art. cit, p. 21.

⁹⁴ Dans ce monde narratif, Dieu est une personne (invisible) qui se ravise et finit par donner suite à la prière d'une autre personne ; or, il est connu, entre émotionologues, que la faculté de l'émotion participe de l'instance décisionnelle d'une personne ; en effet, elle est censée impliquer une synthèse des données et une évaluation de la situation préparant le choix (« *Emotions are a precondition of volition and motivation* »), William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling, op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁹⁵ Le motif de la colombe qui s'envole au seuil de la mort est promis à un bel avenir : le miracle XXXVI du Gracial d'Adgar, au XIIe siècle, montre que l'on peut exhaler son âme sous forme de colombe même sans être décapité(e) – en contrepartie symbolique de cette colombe qui plane sur Jésus au moment du baptême dans le Jourdain. Pour une présentation vive et bien fournie du miracle « Le Clerc amoureux », voir Jean-Louis Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar. Miracles de la Vierge*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, p. 137.

⁹⁶ La « virginité » n'est pas nécessairement liée au pucelage ; elle nomme une vertu traduite par « la pureté de son âme », vertu jugée corrompible par le luxe et la conscience de sa propre beauté, *Cantilène de Sainte Eulalie, ibid.*, v. 20.

féminine, la lutte qui s'engage relève, indirectement, de la séduction autant que de la subjection ; les « paramenz » (parures) sont l'expression la plus claire de cette invitation païenne à tourner la beauté en vanité, le don de Dieu en service du « diaule » (diable). Pourtant, les païens ne sont pas des violeurs, et leur émotionologie n'est pas érotique : elle s'avère plutôt idéologique, leur tentative de séduction ressemblant beaucoup à une propagande pour les valeurs du « siècle ».

Comme le roi Maximien entend régner sur terre, il faut qu'Eulalie se rende à l'évidence : l'autorité en matière de crédos est terrestre, royale, païenne. Trêve d'amour ! Place à la loi du plus fort ! S'il commence par exhorter la chrétienne à renier le nom de Dieu, le roi renonce vite à la diplomatie et se tourne vers l'« element » (le feu)⁹⁷ pour imposer sa raison – qui est aussi une forme d'émotion. La *Séquence* brûle les étapes discursives : un bûcher est apprêté sans répit, et Eulalie y endure le supplice. En fin de compte, le personnage négatif n'est ni le roi, ni le feu, ni le diable : il est un pluriel indéfini, au vouloir concerté – une corporation du mal qui s'acharne sur un corps de femme.

Cette force tentaculaire échoue, comme le feu, mais le verbe « adurer » (endurer) suggère que la torture réussit physiquement, comme pour faire valoir le durcissement d'une incorruptible. En effet, Eulalie ne cède pas à toutes ces pressions qui se manifestent, ultimement, comme une oppression. Elle n'en est pas affectée émotionnellement : « dont lei nonque chielt »⁹⁸ (il ne lui en chaut). La résilience d'Eulalie devient une forme d'indolence.

Qui plus est, l'échec païen traduit – provisoirement – la défaite d'une émotionologie mâle qui prône le sadisme, la persécution du plus faible⁹⁹ et la conversion par la violence.

C'est uniquement quand le roi joue la carte de la décapitation qu'une réussite se fait, obscurément, jour. Mais comme l'exécution est un martyre et comme la punie rayonne d'innocence, la « spede » ne vainc pas l'esprit. Les païens restent bouche bée, âme éclosée. Le pluriel sur lequel se clôt le poème est celui de l'Église : « tuit oram que por nos degnet preier » (Prions tous,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 18.

⁹⁸ « Peine perdue », dit la traduction du vers 15, sur le même site <http://bookline-03.valenciennes.fr/bib/decouverte/histoire/cantilene/transcription.htm> de la Bibliothèque municipale de Valenciennes, site consulté le 7 février 2013.

⁹⁹ Les « externalités vulnérables : celles qui peuvent être affectées par des événements échappant à son propre contrôle » (Martha Nussbaum, « Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance », *Thinking about Feeling : contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*, éd. Robert C. Solomon, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 193, notre traduction) affectent davantage les femmes dans la littérature médiévale, ce qui conduit à l'attribution fréquente d'émotions négatives aux personnages féminins ; le désir de mourir d'Eulalie fait exception à cette règle, dans la mesure où le désir de mourir est une « émotion positive » pour le public médiéval sensible aux motivations des martyrs.

afin qu'elle daigne intercéder pour nous !) ¹⁰⁰. Les ennemis sont donc évincés : seul reste le *nos*, signe d'une communauté émotionnelle qui aspire, comme cette jeune fille, à s'unir au Christ, post-mortem.

Pour assurer le triomphe de l'émotionologie céleste sur celle terrestre, c'est le désir d'Eulalie qui se révèle décisif.

La *buona pulcella* (bonne pucelle) n'est pas une coquette ; pourtant, trépasser en public, avec l'acquiescement de Dieu, c'est mourir avec ambition, comme pour exhiber la beauté d'une âme, supérieure à la beauté d'un corps (déjà remarquée). Le spectacle d'envol et décapitation est son apothéose.

En somme, le style émotionnel d'Eulalie repose sur la traduction de la bonté en beauté, mais aussi sur un certain exhibitionnisme de la sainteté. La belle vierge prête son corps à la révélation, au didactisme du spectacle mystique. L'idéal qu'elle propose – au Dieu et aux mourants de ce monde fictionnel – est percutant émotionnellement : réussir sa vie, c'est réussir sa mort. Pour l'illustrer, le narrateur (comme *Dieu*) tourne le corps de la vierge en figure ¹⁰¹. Il montre ainsi, par un émotif puissant, l'instabilité ontologique de toute matière, son pouvoir de conversion, de transgression des limites physiques et physiologiques. Eulalie devient le vecteur d'une commotion.

L'envol final, outre les rapports conventionnels qu'il noue avec l'imagerie du Saint-Esprit, a une dimension cognitive : il enseigne la Grâce par la beauté, l'émotionologie christique par une prière sans sang ni sueur, la Passion par une victoire gracieuse sur la mort.

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¹⁰⁰ *La Cantilène de Sainte Eulalie*, consultée le 7 février 2013 sur <http://bookline-03.valenciennes.fr/bib/decouverte/histoire/cantilene/transcription.htm>, v. 30.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, v. 29.

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THE MUSIC OF SPHERES [GOD AS A GEOMETER]

Cristian Ungureanu*

Abstract: The rediscovery and enhancement of the standards, canons or constructive techniques of the pictorial space used by the masters of the traditional periods in art history, could be a viable alternative to the identity crisis that defines contemporary art. The Gothic miniature of the 13th century, known under the name of “God as a Geometer”, displays the undeniable artistic qualities specific to the miniature genre, qualities that enhance the symbolic meaning of the image. However, the aim of our essay is to reveal the internal geometric structure used by the French monk in the making and symbolic loading of his painting, a scheme that gravitates and develops around the two circles clearly marked as the halo of the character and of the universe created by him through the compass. Precise numerical ratio obtained through the expansion of these two circles reveals the place and significance of all the elements of the miniature we analyzed.

Keywords: *miniature, Gothic art, geometry, scheme, composition, symbol, halo, Universe*

Thirsty and curious as any artist is, not falling asleep shortly after the light is *turned off*, I started to “drink water after others” – as a friend says. In this case (and not only) we don’t even know the name of the French monk who began to make illustrations of the Bible (Fig.1), *convinced* that God created the Universe and Its numerous laws on the basis of the numerical ratio between circles and spheres.

It is very possible that the medieval monk also heard the music of the spheres while he was trying to enclose circles into squares (which resemble the circles in length and size so much that you almost believe that they are equal to each other, if it hadn’t been for the irrationality of π).

This reminded me of the character from Richard Linklater’s movie “Waking Life”, who was concerned with “...not just Eternity, but Infinity”, but also of the contemporary astrophysicist Stephen Hawking who said that we are going to discover the “thinking” of God when the unified theory of the six main laws that govern our jar with stars will be discovered...

Up to now (because Gino de Dominicis stated in the ‘60s that he is older than the Egyptian artist and that he prefers the pre-diluvian art!), because if we go 50 years forward, I might see that, in fact, there are about sixteen laws

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which make us so imperfect and beautiful in our growth caused by *longing*... We are longing to go back *home*! That's why we frantically stampede on this planet, which is certainly the calmest and most patient being that has ever been seen.

Just as his physicist friend, contemporary with us, the French monk, who is mystical and unknown to us, was interested in the nature of God and he marked it simply by using a circle¹⁰² around the head of the Single Character (who more likely resembles Christ rather than the Old Man with beard and long white hair - but this is too strong a water, which I *miss* .. but I do not know if I can drink of it). In the lower circle (just one and a half times larger than the circle of "Thinking") is our Universe (as if the monk had looked at *Juan Miro* when he drew the Universe), and if we induce them a movement of expansion until each of them doubles (Fig.2), we find that they are perfectly tangent into an immovable point on the *axis mundi*, in which God is holding a compass, point which is also projected onto "us", in the *middle* of the Universe, a middle that makes us lose our minds, since we saw with our own eyes through the Hubble telescope that the middle is everywhere, in every point ... Not to mention that in the middle of God's "circle of thought" there is a point that is "even more immobile", if my friend allows it, even if he's not yet consenting to drink the water...

And if we double the circles once again (Fig.3), we will see that the big Universe (in pink - where life should *only* be this way) is tangent to the small blue circle of God's Thinking from the Beginning. It is as if the small circle would spin the large and pink Universe, into a vision that I wouldn't venture considering it only mechanistic.

This aspect of doubling does not "hold true", because, from a *conceptual* standpoint or from one that relates to the teachings of the *primordial Tradition* which came down to us in the form of myths and revealed religions, the circle of the expansion of the Universe cannot go beyond the point that is *immovable and without attributes*, from which all things came, including the Ideas and their manifestations.

Therefore, the large circle that belongs to the Universe can only expand until it reaches the centre of the aureole and the Thinking of God which is always the *centre* but also the *circumference*, will encompass everything that is below or above, in the expansion of His *embrace*. If we are *willing* to accept that the limit of the expansion of circle (or sphere) that represents our world is itself the point of origin of the concept (until it reaches a diameter of 5/10... 1/2 respectively), then neither the distension of the circle of God's Thinking will not go farther than the maximum extension of the Universe (diameter 1). His Thinking surely will not stop from expanding, but what comes next does not concern us directly... When the white circle of our Universe is at the parameters set by the French monk in his gothic miniature

¹⁰² aureole, *nimbus* (lat.).

(3/20 out of 1), the white circle of God's Thinking (7/20 out of 1), tangent to the circle belonging to our world, it would be the ideal prototype of *that which generates us* by 'reflecting' itself and, because it is larger in this intermediate phase of becoming our world and the "affirmation" of God (manifested but also hidden to us), it becomes a representation of the dictum found in *Tabula Smaragdina*: "Therefore the small world is created in the likeness of the great universe"¹⁰³. The same thing is also stated by Robert Fludd¹⁰⁴ in his *Dies Microcosmicus Nox Microcosmica* diagram, (Fig.4), drawing in which the *surface of the waters* is itself the horizontal plane of the diameter of the universal sphere (respecting the proportions and measurements of *the Human*), spread out between *Ortus et Occasus*, Sunrise and Sunset- realm with favourable conditions of the emergence of life.

It is worth mentioning that the series of concentric circles that correspond to the expansion of our world is positioned slightly on the left of the vertical axis on which the sole centre of God's Thinking can be found, and, therefore, He pushes our world with His left hand, on a spiralled trajectory (just as the prehistoric cave drawings and the current "crop circles" tell us) which starts from the centre of the aureole and *always* ends on the orbit from the centre of the maximum expansion of the Thinking, so that we can get "centred" too, and *axis mundi* to become one with *axis Deus*. In this case, what the anonymous monk shows us could be just an intermediary phase, from the middle of the actual circle of the Universe (as the old oriental doctrines say), respectively even the chapter in our own cultural era, whose way of being located in time is itself - according to all the Christian cosmogonical teachings (starting with the Gospels and the texts of the holy Priests from the first centuries and ending with Rudolf Steiner's¹⁰⁵ cyclical cosmogony)- *year zero* of our era, without many of the inhabitants of our planet even realizing the fact that this moment represents the descent, real or imaginary ("as you like it"....) of Jesus onto Earth and that since then we measure the illusory nature of the passing of time in an ascending direction. It is rather *funny*, but also very *serious*, the fact that God rolled up his left sleeve until He reached the *surface of the waters* (the blue horizontal line placed on the top of our world) so that He wouldn't wet his superior clothing with our water, in this

¹⁰³ after Titus Burckhardt, *L'Alchimie, Science et Sagesse*, Paris, Planète, 1967.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Fludd- (1574-1637), astrologist, mathematician, cosmologist and English kabbalist.

¹⁰⁵ Let's not forget that phenomena like *Theosophy* and *Anthroposophy*, movements which have homogenized the Orthodox elements of the Christian school of thought with those of the oriental traditions, have branded the thinking of great scientific and artistic personalities of the 20th century: among which Wassily Kandinsky, the famous creator of abstract art, whose book "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" was connected to the beginning theories of physics and modern mathematics but also with the birth of some great works of restoration of *primordial Tradition* values (René Guénon. *Mircea Eliade*, Julius Evola...) spread throughout the great religious and metaphysical traditions but also in the homogenous network of mythological structures preserved similarly or even identically in the folklore of peoples from all the continents.

ineffable and wonderful action, of which the anonymous monk speaks of, but also the astrophysicist Stephen Hawking.

In this final sequence of the cycle of expansions corresponding to the birth of our Universe, the circle of God's Thinking has increased its radius ten times compared to the *unity* circle (*One*, measurement of *All*) of the aureole (yellow, small), fact which sends us immediately towards the cosmogonical doctrine, but also towards Pythagorean metaphysics, whose roots are in ancient Egypt, according to the teachings pertaining to area along the Mediterranean Sea... And if we decide to take into consideration the Sumerian clay tablets, rigorously translated by a number of German scientists- not just by Zecharia Sitchin, we could presuppose that the extramundane civilization that visited our planet in search of gold, has pushed our biological evolution by some thousands of years and, even if it did it with "lucrative" purposes, some basic notions of the theory of knowing the world and the universe we live in slipped through the cracks and these notions, in a way or another, have reached us. But, if the things told on the clay tablets are real (and they can't be untrue, because they're too science-fiction for a time when all the biped humanoids on Earth just managed to tame goats, akin to Robinson Crusoe when he was *forced* to rewrite the history of civilization...) then there isn't anything left but to give credence to old Darwin but also to philosopher Berdiaev who was deliberating in a harsh and paradoxical way the question of our nature, saying that we have two kinds of people: those who *think* we have descended from monkeys, actually do come from monkeys and those who *think* that they are a creation of God, actually come from God. It is a certainty that, if the texts on the tens of thousands of Sumerian clay tablets from museums around the world reflect a historical truth, then we are not the only humanoids in our Universe which, just as all the sacred texts say, from the Upanishads to the Quran- after it was made and *calibrated* in the optimal way, it was clothed with *life*, which we know only emerges when there's water present, a planet with good soil (in Mendeleev's periodic table of elements there can't be any changes in this regard) and a star adequately sized and young enough to give light and warmth just like in an *athanor*, at a low temperature with negligible variations, for this relatively long process to *be put in motion, beginning with unicellular organisms from the craters of volcanoes and culminating with Homo Sapiens*. Paradoxically, a large part of the few cohabitants of our planet that are gifted with patience, intuition and know-how to scientifically theorize the favourable conditions for the emergence and evolution of life (laws and conditions which they gathered in a theory named *The Anthropic Principle*), refuse under all circumstances to theorize about hypotheses like those talked about in the Sumerian tablets (even though they were the ones that authenticated them through radiocarbon dating) and not even the testimonials of the sacred texts or the internal experiences of some "religious" or "dreamy" people, spread

around all known history and from the farthest “corners” of the planet, data that is so similar with one another and with what was (re)discovered by themselves today, looking only *scientifically* at the stars or at the atomic micro particles from nuclei that are bombarded in particle accelerators... Not to mention the forms of energy that cannot be known or quantified yet. When speaking of the state of the work of art and the *evident* but *ineffable* energy that an extraordinary work of art can “generate” in sometimes impressive intervals of time, the conceptual artist Gino de Dominicis states at the end of the ‘70s that: “A work of art, once finished, must surprise and give me more energy than it was required to make it. The work of art, in this way, is antientropic and contradicts the second law of thermodynamics. Therefore we revisit the problem of death and the immortality of the body, without delegating it to the realm of science and to scientists, which would be quite dangerous”¹⁰⁶.

The Sumerian texts also say that, by means of flying devices (or natural functions, Fig.6) with which our visitors were endowed, they located themselves in many places on all the continents of our planet, at large intervals of time and that not only the Sumerian civilization was a fruit of their presence and civilizing bioengineering intervention. Not to mention the fact that it is just as likely that they were not the only intelligent and ultra-technological humanoids coming from the sky.

But, we all know, Darwinians or Berdiaevians, how uncomfortable it is to be discredited by higher scientific and academic communities, fixed like a magnet on the refrigerator door on the absolute necessity of experimental evidence obtained *only* through the means of our external senses, which itself repeats the mistakes of the church¹⁰⁷ but only this time they are “mirrored”, systematically neglecting the evidence of some research in other fields of knowledge (traditional sciences, mysticism, poetry, music, arts, etc), older or more recent, data which comes from explorations into the unseen dimensions, which are not seen by the physical eye but are just as “real” in their presence (or effects of a reality yet hidden to our current senses and capacities) and which illustrate similar or identical results to the scientific ones, on the basis of research on the same *fundamental* questions and answers.

To further explain the image in question, I have positioned another two points on the diameter of the circle that constitutes the vertical axis of God’s Thinking, when this circle embraces the maximum of possibilities of expansions of the circle corresponding to our Universe. All the authorities in the field of history which managed to systematically put on display the

¹⁰⁶ Quotes by Gino de Dominicis gathered by Cecilia Torrealta in the Catalogue of the La Biennale di Venezia – 55th International Art Exhibition. ‘Present, Past, Future’ section – Venice, 1997, pag.145.

¹⁰⁷ Further research on the modern history of scientific strategies and weapons of war is encouraged.

fundamental data concerning the *primordial tradition* reflected in different religious and metaphysical traditions of the old world, talk about a *three-part structure* of the manifestation of God and His Creation. Just so we can stay in the spiritual realm of the anonymous author of the manuscript page which represents our subject matter of study and meditation, we are reminded that the *Christian Trinity* has pictorial characteristics which propel it in an exceptional position in the framework of all the other types of *sacred triads*¹⁰⁸. The series of three coloured dots, placed at the same distance from one another on the vertical diameter of the big circle in the diagram, brings to mind the chromatic symbolism of the Christian Trinity (The Father – blue, The Son – red and the Holy Ghost – green) just as we currently find it in the *Holy Trinity* icon belonging to the Russian monk Andrei Rubliov (around 1425). The points represent the centre of the three identical circles, divided into ten equal *subdivisions*, just like the model of the central circle (with the centre in the blue point), resulted from the ratio of successive growth of the aureole circles and of the Universe. Starting from the *hypothesis* that the three *states* of the Trinity are manifested in equal measure and belong to the same Source (same blue centre of the middle circle, representing the Father), we induced a movement of dilation, moving further away on the vertical line of the circles corresponding to the Son (red) and Holy Ghost (green), until they become equal and tangent to the circle of the Father (which undergoes the same expansion, keeping Its Centre immutable).

The model of the intersection of two equal circles with six subdivisions offered by theosophist G.R.S.Mead¹⁰⁹ in the first publication of the translation of one of the oldest Christian manuscripts, was the source of inspiration for the geometric model proposed in the analysis of the manuscript pages belonging to the French monk. Equally, the study done by philosopher and physicist Basarab Nicolescu on the cosmogony pertaining to Jacob Boehme's¹¹⁰ philosophy, has proven that some realities of contemporary scientific thinking have been inferred by mystics and thinkers from centuries predating the birth of modernity (toroidal energetic structures-Fig.8). Diagrams such as those of medieval alchemists or those of Jacob Boehme can be found, identical in their symbolic and organizing principle, in

¹⁰⁸ René Guénon, *The Great Triad*, Herald Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005

¹⁰⁹ G. R. S. Mead – author of the first translation into English of the Christian Gnostic text “Pistis Sophia” (2nd-4th centuries), published in the theosophical magazine “Lucifer” (1920, vol. 4, march-august 1890); with a degree in mathematics, ancient languages and visual arts from Oxford, G. R. S. Mead has illustrated his own translation with a series of diagrams which reflect, in the specific manner of the sacred geometry, sequences of the apparitions of the spiritual hierarchs and the birth of the manifested universe.

¹¹⁰ Basarab Nicolescu, *Science, Meaning, & Evolution: The Cosmology of Jakob Boehme*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007.

the practice of the organization and dynamizing of visual and musical compositions belonging to the artists from the same cultural period.

Notions such as *levels of reality*, *the discontinuity principle* or the *included third*, are put forth and theorized by illustrious physicists focused on the metaphysical intuition, were meditation platforms for spiritual navigators from all times and religions. The necessity of identifying a *third* element among the pairs of the great metaphysical, psychic and spiritual antagonistic forces which govern the worlds has always been an innate reflex for all the spirits creating religions and unveiling ideas, and the level of supreme Reality, inspired and rigorously named *the Hidden Third* by Basarab Nicolescu, has always been described in an allusive and poetic manner in the traditional metaphysics as being the *Source* of all the other levels of reality, always intangible, not only at our level of reality (the only one with which us, already postmodern, still identify with in a “scientific” way) but also at the higher ones, in the order of spiritual becoming. The prototype of the Orthodox icon of the *Transfiguration* (Fig.9), presents the conflict between the homogenized cosmic forces which are supposed to have transformed *everything* into a unique, monolithic model, provided that the differentiation forces (also just as necessary...) did not oppose them. The overwhelming prevalence of one of these categories of forces presupposed the emergence of a catastrophic scenario, but the equilibrium is constantly maintained by the third category of forces, which is superior to the plane of manifestation of the previous ones and congregate, in a paradoxical way, the attributes of the other two. Not by chance, Christ is clothed in the symbolic White, the optical mixture of Moses’ Green with the dominant Red of Elijah’s clothes.

The middle circle (corresponding to the Father) is the one that gave birth to the other two and, according the logic of traditional oriental doctrines but also to some theorists of modern astrophysics, it is possible that everything that was emanated (*seen* and *unseen*) will come back to the Origin (Aleksandr Friedmann), following the rhythm of the great cyclical breathing of *Brahman*, of which many spoke of including the old saints, the Hindu Rishi or the enigmatic Tamil Patanjali, considered as a sort of Einstein of the “spiritual science” and whose *Yoga Sutras* are placed two centuries before Christ. In geometrical fashion, the meeting of the three specific *aspects* of the Divine Trinity are displayed one after another if we were to believe Gioacchino del Fiore, the medieval Italian mystic who divided the Testamental history in three great successive periods, corresponding to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. What is certain and what fits best, from the visual standards of our geometric model, is this approach of successive and equal distribution of the two categories of circles corresponding to the Son (at first) and to the Holy Ghost (secondly) above the circles of the Father (Fig.11).

The two extreme categories of circles go down and up respectively, until they overlap and identify with the circles and the centre of the Father (blue) and the *discontinuity* between the two vertical movements is placed right at the centre of our world, which is born by their intersection with the circles of the Father, at which they “return” at the same time as the two hundred and one white points which circumscribe the arches of all the intersections between the circles, from being tangent (one point, blue) to the final overlapping. The process of intersecting of the circles of the Son with the circles of the Father generates a rhombus of thirty six points (34 white, one red- fused together at the end of the descent with the blue one- and another green point) and the internal circles of the Son and Holy Ghost are yet again *tangent* and *equal* with the one of the Father (blue) which “descends” concentrically, into our world and unites them, in order to remake the script of the *Trinity* from the “beginning”.

The ascend of the circles corresponding to the Holy Ghost carries forward the process of downsizing of the circles’ tangent subdivisions and raises “the surface of the waters” towards the Source from which everything came. Their intersections with the ones of the Father (with which the Son is already merged) will generate the other eighty five points of the great final rhombus (80 white and five blue, because the Father is always the Centre but also the circumference) which will total 121 points of interaction. The following sequences of our analysis are inspired and derived from the six circular subdivision diagrams of G.R.S. Mead, attached to the translation from 1920 of the manuscript “*Pistis Sophia*”, diagrams which have their origin most likely in Sumer (Egypt-Greece), where the sexagesimal¹¹¹ numeral system was in use, system that is very alike the Hindu mandalas or those pertaining to Tibetan Buddhism. The polarizations of the circular subdivisions at the one and unique Centre or at the six orthogonal correspondents of it on the circumference of the spherical space described by the “embrace” of the three-dimensional expansion of the Father, remind us of the visual projections of other laws of physics regarding the refraction of light but also of the pyramids or the crosses of the Druids, Celts or Templars. And if the spheres colored in RGB of the *Trinity* from the “beginnings” of the world speak of the *uncreated light* seen and theorized by the orthodox mystic Priests, the centrifugal polarized diagrams, colored in primary and secondary shades of the chromatic spectrum, tell us the story of the birth of world dear to us (Fig.12), which broadcasts corpuscular and wavy signals, since the first second of the Big Bang, through the vast intergalactic fields webbed, here and there, with the edgeless voids of the black holes and warmed by discrete variations of the quantum microwaves left behind from the “beginnings”, which roam the vacuum between the stars. The first complex and stable compositions of molecular structures that are supposed to have appeared

¹¹¹ See Fig.6.

from the great *cosmic soup* of the beginnings of the universe, have evolved, so demonstrates in the '70s the mathematician John Conway in his model entitled "Game of Life", until they gained the ability to duplicate or to give birth to new forms and even living beings, through the creative and unpredictable force of the *free will*. The fact that the birth of the Universe was a quantum event is an event on which the anonymous French monk and astrophysicist Steven Hawking also meditated, the difference being that the latter dodges to address scientifically the *crucial* and evident importance of the necessity of *placing the initial model* in which the "Game of Life" must be configured for it to be able to generate complex forms, self-duplication, *life* and free will, model which must be just as complex and *finely tuned* as the constants that define the six fundamental forces, "fixed" just like in a laboratory with high precision instruments. But by whom?

By dint of right of reply the cultural navigator, the artist and reader who buys and consumes these books which ingrain concepts and form opinions, I affirm that it is incorrect, inopportune and even risky, especially now in the era of digital communication, not to open up to a *transdisciplinary* vision on the problem of knowledge, in the way enunciated by French physicist and philosopher, of Romanian origin, Basarab Nicolaescu. The exhaustive fixation on the data of a single specialization can only lead to chopped statements regarding certain truths, even some of the most evident ones. Just as it is stated in the *Transdisciplinary*¹¹² manifesto, the break through the isolation imposed by the monochromatic knowledge of the fundamental problems proves to be the only solution for overcoming the cultural identity crisis of the current era and for averting the imminent collapse of our post-industrial civilization.

¹¹² Basarab Nicolescu, *Transdisciplinaritatea* (manifest), Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 1999.

Illustrations:



Fig.1. *God as Geometer*



Fig.2 . *God as Geometer* – the first doubling of the aureole circles and of the Universe



Fig.3 . *God as Geometer* – the second doubling of the aureole circles and of the Universe

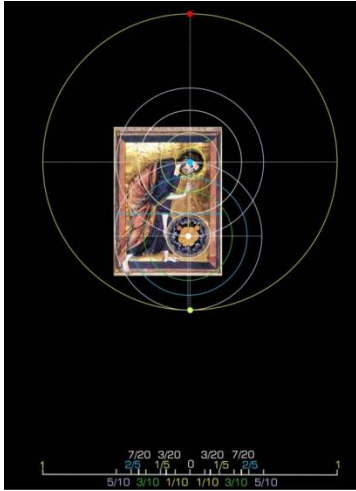


Fig.4 *God as Geometer* – the final expansion of the circles of the aureole and of the Universe

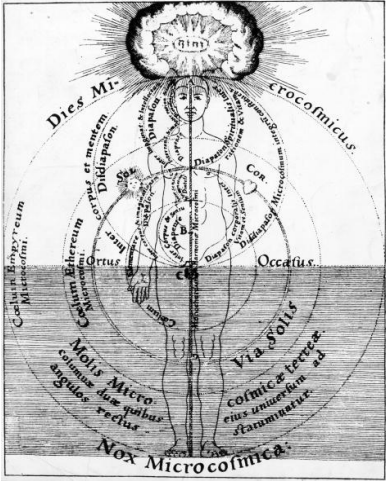


Fig.5 Robert Fludd- *Dies Microcosmicus Nox Microcosmica*

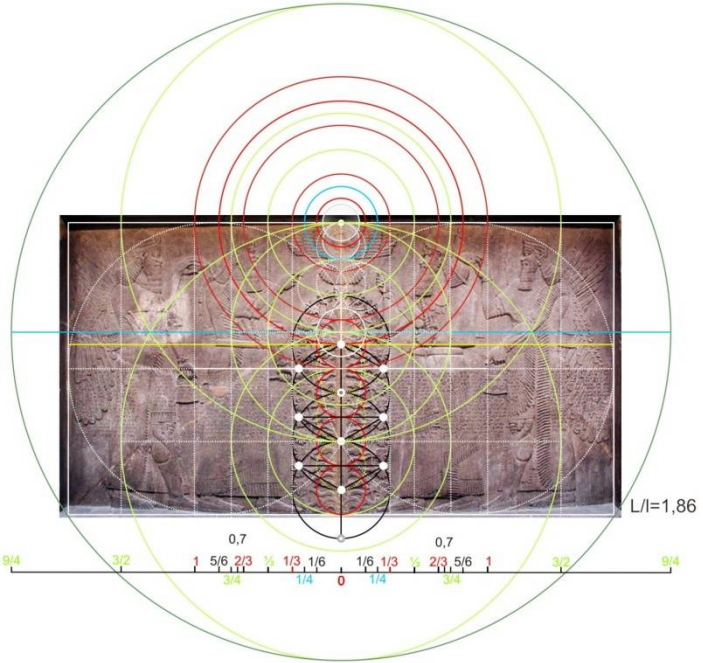


Fig.6 *Guardians of the Tree of Life* – Assyro-Babylonian relief

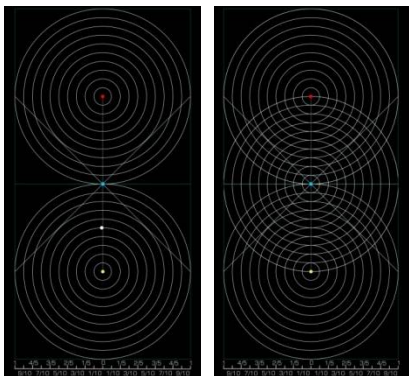


Fig.7 God as Geometer – the diagram of final expansion of the aureole circles and of the Universe

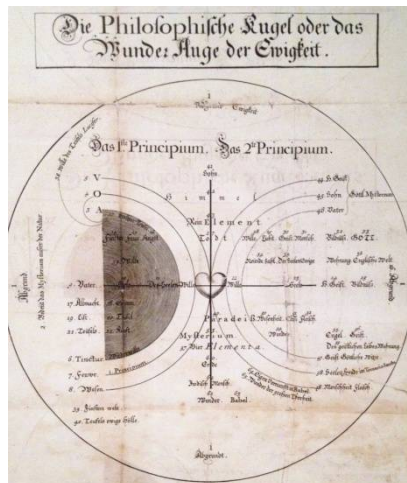


Fig.8 Jacob Boehme - Representation through drawing/diagram of his cosmogony

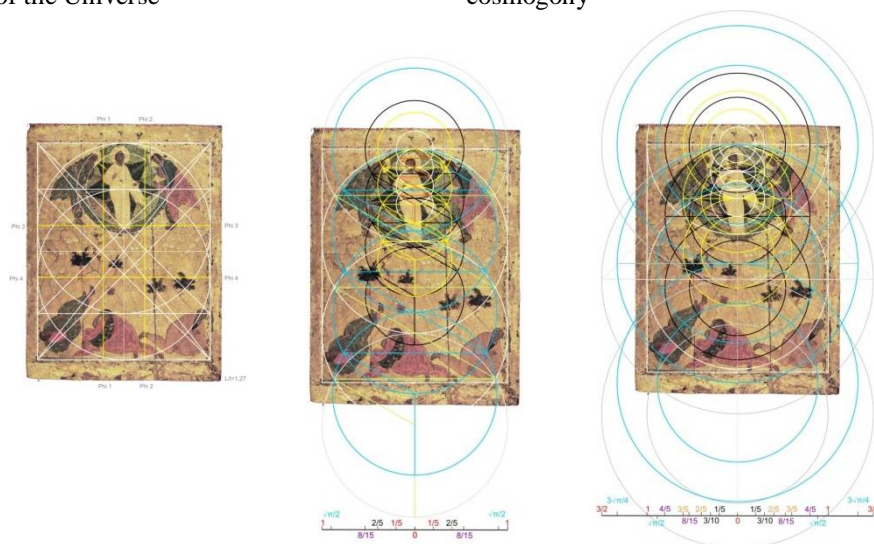


Fig.9 Andrei Rublev- *The Transfiguration*, around 1405. "The sephirothic Tree" of $8/15$ out of 1- width of the painted rectangle ($L/l = 1,27$, *the rectangle of the pyramid*), is the central element of the pictorial composition "framework" of the icon, in simple form (when it borders the circle of "Praise" of Jesus) but also in a more extended "toroidal" form ($4/5$, when it marks the circular contour of the characters that flank the "Praising" – Moses and Elijah).

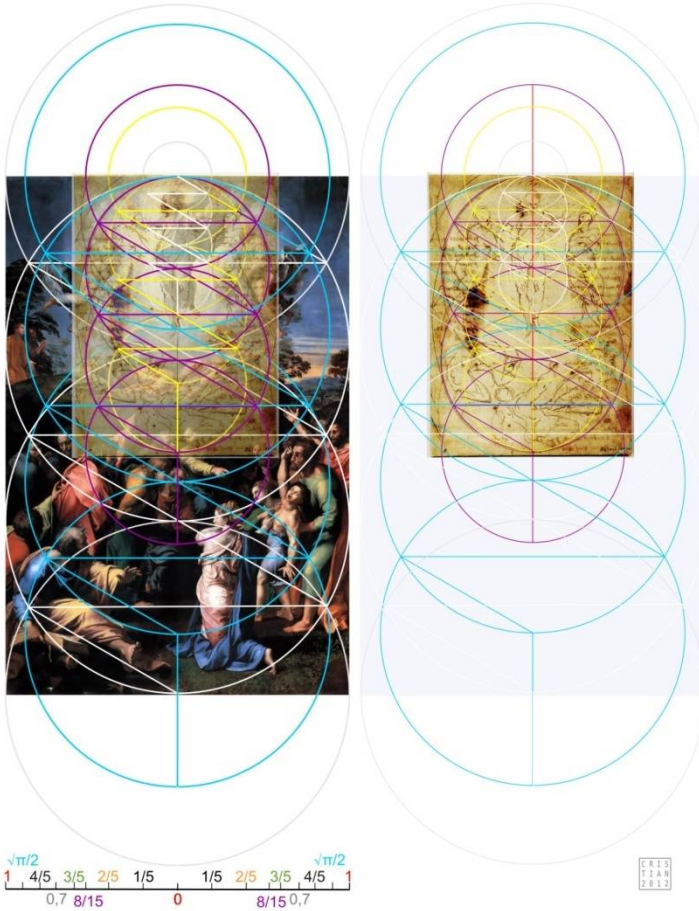


Fig.10 Raffaello Sanzio- *The Transfiguration*, 1520. In his last composition, Raffaello uses a geometrical pattern articulated from the same successions of circular structures utilized by the Russian monk Andrei Rubliov a century before him. The sketch made in sepia for this evangelical scene (drawing which now belongs to the British Museum – London and is catalogued as a “fantasy drawing” of the master of composition from the Italian renaissance) is an anagram of the pattern utilized in the final painting.

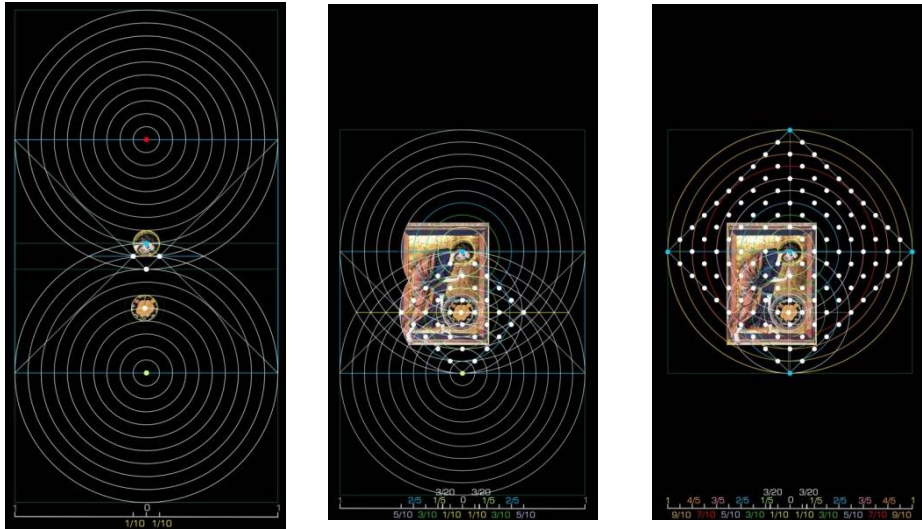


Fig.11 The two categories of vertical bridging, of the group of superior circles (with the red centre which descends, sequences a and b) and inferior respectively (with the green centre, rising, sequence c, until the overlapping of the blue centre)

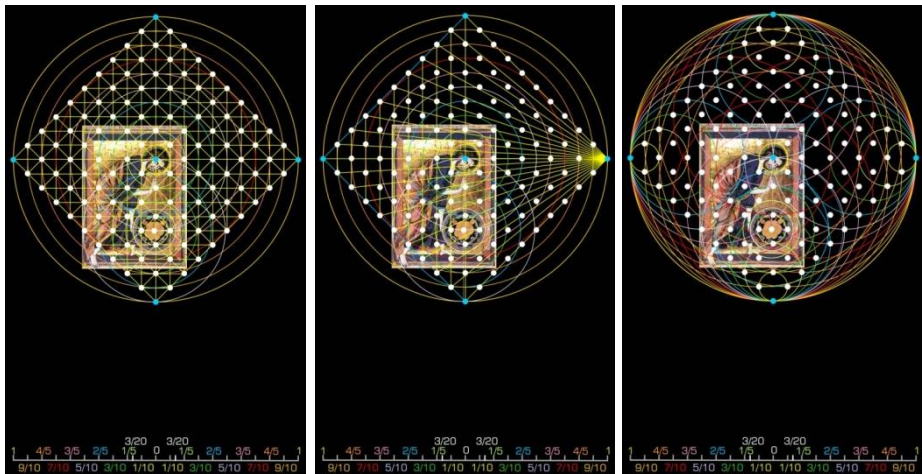


Fig.12 The topographical definition of the space populated by the 121 points resulted by the intersections of the three great categories of circles

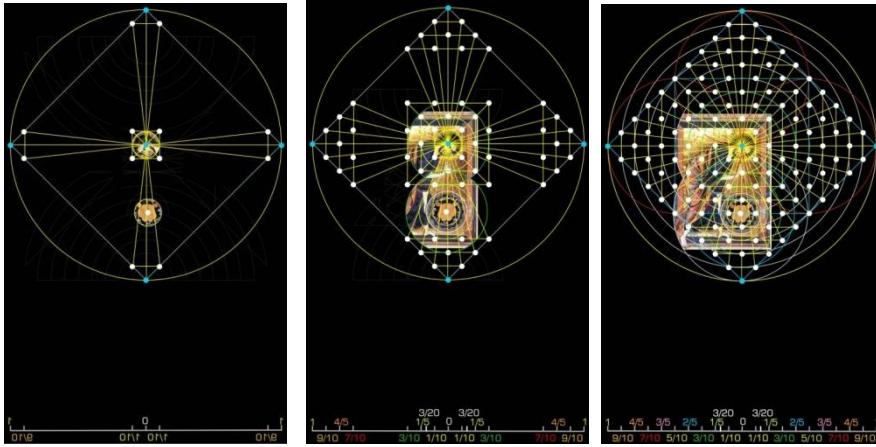


Fig.13 The topographical definition of the space populated by the 121 points resulted by the intersections of the three great categories of circles.

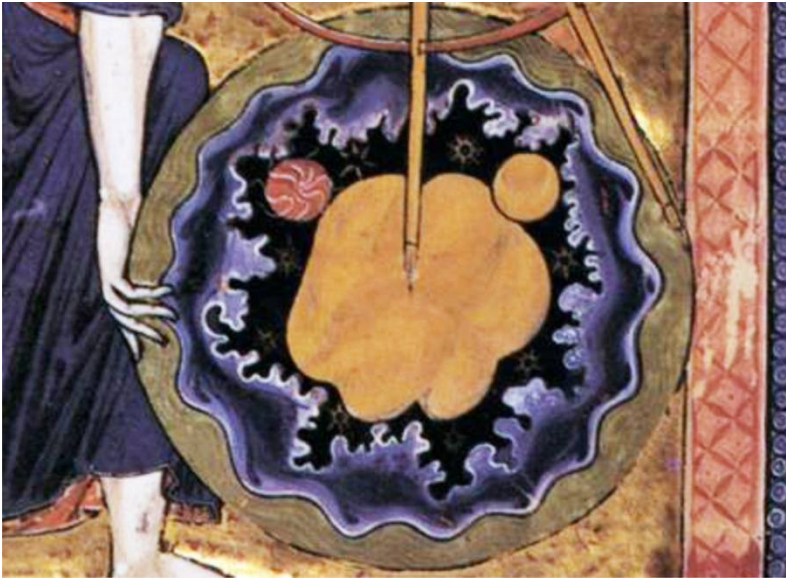


Fig. 14. *God as Geometer*, French gothic miniature, *The Bible moralisée*, 13th century, *the Universe* (detail)

Liste of illustrations:

- Fig.1. *God as Geometer*, French gothic miniature, The Bible moralisée, 13th century
- Fig.2. *God as Geometer* – the first doubling of the aureole circles and of the Universe
- Fig.3. *God as Geometer* – the second doubling of the aureole circles and of the Universe
- Fig.4. *God as Geometer* – the final expansion of the circles of the aureole and of the Universe
- Fig.5. Robert Fludd- *Dies Microcosmicus Nox Microcosmica*
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- Fig.7. *God as Geometer* – the diagram of final expansion of the aureole circles and of the Universe
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- Fig.10. Raffaello Sanzio- *The Transfiguration*, 1520. In his last composition, Raffaello utilised a geometrical pattern articulated from the same successions of circular structures utilized by the Russian monk Andrei Rubliov a century before him. The sketch made in sepia for this evangelical scene (drawing which now belongs to the British Museum – London and is catalogued as a “fantasy drawing” of the master of composition from the Italian renaissance) is an anagram of the pattern utilized in the final painting.
- Fig.11. The two categories of vertical bridging, of the group of superior circles (with the red centre which descends, sequences a and b) and inferior respectively (with the green centre, rising, sequence c, until the overlapping of the blue centre)
- Fig.12. The topographical definition of the space populated by the 121 points resulted by the intersections of the three great categories of circles.
- Fig.13. The sequences of pyramidal defining of the six directions of the three-dimensional space (which gain different symbolic characteristics when they are lectured from a two-dimensional perspective, the one of generating the space from two simultaneous sources, located inside the circle but also on the circumference of the great Circle)
- Fig.14. *God as Geometer*, French gothic miniature, The Bible moralisée, 13th century, *the Universe* (detail)

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READING CONTEMPORARY IMAGINARIES INSPIRED BY MIDDLE AGES NARRATIVES THROUGH MASS MEDIA IMAGES

Teresa Torres Eça* and
Rosângela Aparecida da Conceição**

Abstract : In this article, the authors will approach images from film and games industry to discuss trends in contemporary young people and young adults' subcultures. The images will serve as a basis to debate digital natives fascination by metanarratives grounded on stories inspired by Middle Ages stories. A set of images will be discussed through methodologies of visual analysis that may give some insights about the fascination transmitted by medieval stories to young people and young adults' subcultures.

Keywords: *Contemporary imaginaries, Middle Ages narratives, mass media images, MMORPG.*

From the beginning of this article, the authors apologize for the incursion in this field, for the authors of this research are not art historians and their knowledge about art in the Middle Ages is very limited. However, they dare to suggest a vision, coming from the field of arts education informed by visual culture, hoping it may bring particular insights in the way Middle Ages metarratives are used and manipulated in images of contemporary subcultures, driven by the powerful tools of media dissemination and media technologies. As art based researchers, the authors are interested in all sorts of images from popular subcultures and the way they are produced, displayed and recycled by the audiences; as community artists, we are interested in debating the images produced for mass consumption by creative industries. As art educators, we are interested in the way people interpret and recreate mass media images.

Teresa and Rosangela met some years ago in a forum about digital arts in Internet. Teresa is a Portuguese woman aged 51 and Rosangela is a 36 year old Brazilian woman. To write this article, Teresa invited Rosangela to choose images from film or video industries she believed they were related to stories about the Middle Ages. Teresa chose 'Assassin Creeds' video game images after having asked her eighteen year old daughter about the most

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popular youth games related to the Middle Ages imaginary on the Internet. Rosangela chose games inspired by the film 'The Lord of the Rings'. These two starting points lead the authors to an incredible journey through Internet games and forums of fans of the so-called 'medieval role play games'. In this short article, the authors want to raise a few questions about this topic.

The researchers Teresa and Rosangela situate their approaches in the broad area of art based research because they have used artistic processes for dealing with images (in producing; interpreting and recycling them). Art-based research is a socially responsible practice that uses a variety of methodologies that partner art and social science research (Knowles & Cole, 2008). The domain of art-based research, a more focused application of the larger epistemological process of artistic knowing and inquiry, has come into existence as an extension of a significant increase of studies researching the nature of art experience in higher education and professional practice (McNiff, 1998). Art-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all and different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience both by researchers and the people that they involved in their studies. These inquiries are distinguished from research activities where the artists, artistic or visual works may play a significant role, but they are essentially used as data for investigations that take place within the academic disciplines that use more traditional scientific, verbal, and statistical descriptions and analyses of phenomena.

Visual image research

Visual image research has a long tradition in social sciences (Grady, 2008). Visual data record how someone responds to an object or event, and address the question: what do I feel about what I am responding to? Visual data may include various kinds of images and pictures that have been consciously constructed to either record or represent the world. Photography, films and drawings are major expressions used by social sciences. Analyzing images such as drawings is not a simple task, unless we reduce the interpretation to obvious, rather useless checklists. Image analysis offers a unique richness that must be taken as visual storytelling. Images can be categorized according to the formalistic principles of art and design such as line, tone and color, and principles of composition like similarity, juxtaposition, and balance. We can also look for lighting, angles of view, and framing. Drawings can be clustered according to their titles, topics or themes in an effort to seek meaning. We can look for intertextuality - visual quotes or references to other images if any. But, if we want to go further in searching for meanings, we will need to enter the images' subjacent ideologies.

Ideology is expressed through cultural sign systems that are constitutive of social practice; ideology informs the way people act in the world and the way people act in turn tends to justify and reinforce ideology. Visual images are saturated with ideologies that reveal the hopes, fears, expectations, certainties, uncertainties, and ambiguities of our lives. By means of images, we engage in widely shared social assumptions about the way the world is, should be, or should not be. All imagery is ideological, meaning that imagery arises from a matrix of competing ideas, values and beliefs and it is always made with a purpose¹¹³.

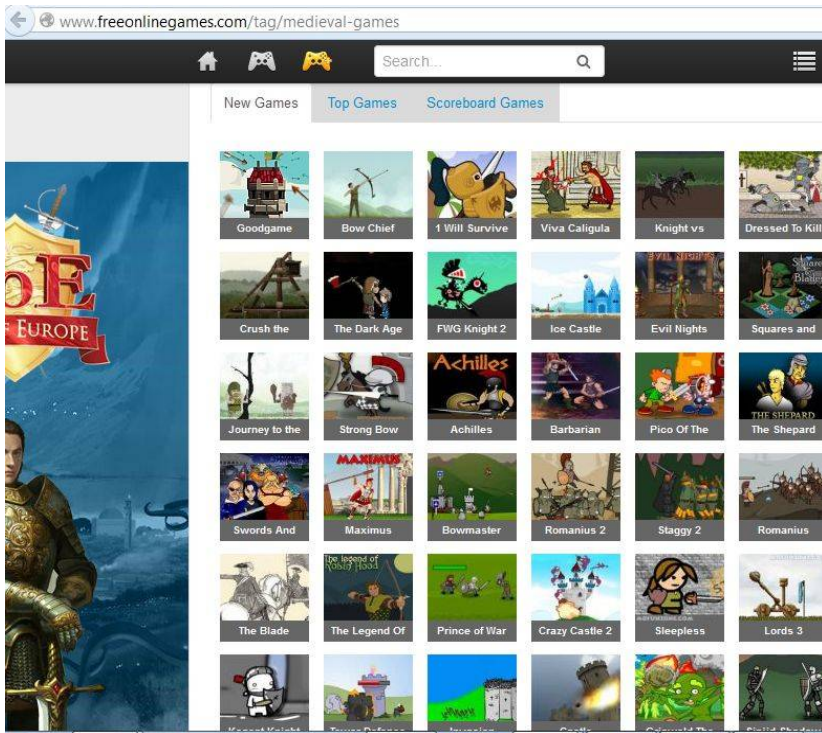


Figure 1. Screenshot of the web page of FOG- Medieval Games . Retrieved from: <http://www.freeonlinegames.com/tag/medieval-games>.

Images often express ideologies through *metaphors* and *metonyms*. Through *metaphors* and *metonyms*, we make sense of the world and we make relationships accessible to our senses. For this purpose, when we use film images or play virtual games embodied in stories and images evoking a certain period of time, we make a unique appropriation of the imaginaries of that time, through the lens and mediation of what others imagined about that time. We experience collective metaphors in the 'in-between' space of interpretation. Figure 1 is a screenshot of a very popular web page for role play games inspired by the Middle Ages imaginary. The images used in the

¹¹³ Duncum, P. Seven principles for visual culture education. *Art Education*, 6-10, 2010, p.10.

games associated with this webpage are very eclectic, the great majority in a 'comic' or graphic novel language adapted to digital tools. Each one of the images depicts a great amount of fascination concerning the ideal of epic Middle Ages times, in their own and contemporary ways they act as metaphors in the mind and body of its users.

Stories

To continue this discussion, we shall refer to the concept that history of art is a set of stories of art¹¹⁴, so the authors will make their own appropriation and understanding of images through stories, and stories about stories. Conversations about periods among art historians usually have to do with particular periods and transitions between them, but since the authors are not art historians, their conversations will flow freely from one period to another, focusing the search on the similarities and differences, continuities and discontinuities of images. For that, they will use the metaphor of the cyborg, the avatar and the time portal to give a corpus to the discussion about the imaginaries of some contemporary subcultures inspired by the metanarratives about Middle Ages tales, myths, legends and images, in short images that were inspired by Middle Ages imaginaries as for example those illustrated by Figure 2.



Figure 2. Screenshot of the web page of RPG game ' Kingdom of age'. Retrieved from: <http://www.kingdom-age.com/>

Cultural studies are concerned with the study of forms and practices of culture (in all its outcomes and media), their relationships to social groups

¹¹⁴ Elkins J., *Stories of Art*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

and the power relations between those groups as they are constructed and mediated by forms of culture¹¹⁵. By endorsing this perspective, the authors will direct their choice to subcultural products targeted by young people and young adults, and especially in products that are somehow inspired by Middle Ages images, tales and legends and conveyed by new technologies and media entertainment markets. Those markets include a wide range of products that are linked together; from film industries to personal gadgets and fashion accessories. The target audience use those products and recreate them contributing to the construction of one peculiar imagery displayed in their virtual daily lives. Images displayed and manipulated in their video or internet games, in groups, in their interaction with other players; collectively in cosplay events or lonely in their private spaces filled with images and objects illustrating their preferred games or movies.

In a certain way, we are cyborgs. Users of the RPG 'kingdom-age' (Figure 2) or the 'Agamemnon' games act as cyborgs using avatars in time portals, not really very far away from the chimeras, described by Donna Haraway, "chimeras theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs"¹¹⁶. We are creatures of both fiction and lived social reality, playing our different identities, our different avatars using hybrid technologies to understand and recreate the world. And in that way we built our worlds with intertextual information conveyed by available narratives. Stories of art are narratives profusely used and abused by media products in the entertainment industries, and the so-called 'creative industries'.

Films, comics, video games are constantly referring to images from stories of art, and from all periods of western culture. Myths and legends which are evoked by literature, film and theatre are re-interpreted in the so-called re-mix culture adapted with digital tools for the collaboration and sharing process used by individuals, groups or companies¹¹⁷. The most popular period among young people and young adults' imagery at the beginning of the 21st century seems to be the Middle Ages. It could be interesting to seek explanations for that singular attraction. The Middle Ages have persisted in contemporary world via digital games. Digital gaming translates, adapts and remedies medieval stories, themes, characters and tropes in interactive electronic environments. The Middle Ages artifacts, images, tales and stories evoked by these media products are reinterpreted according to contemporary concerns and conflicts, in all their complexity; an

¹¹⁵ Lister, M. & Wells, L., Seeing beyond belief: cultural studies as an approach to analysing the visual. In: van Leeuwen, T. & Jewitt, C. (Eds.) *Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: Sage Publications. 2001, p. 61.

¹¹⁶ Haraway, Donna, "A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge. 1991, p. 150.

¹¹⁷ Lessig, L., *Remix: making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. London: Bloomsbury, 2008.

example may be visited in the Internet Role Play Game ‘Agamemnon’, inspired by the legends of King Arthur and Avalon. Jacques Le Goff claims that the origin of King Arthur’s myth can be situated in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain), written between 1135 and 1138 probably by a Welsh chronicler: Geoffrey of Monmouth, a canon of Oxford, his text has been one of the most inspirational widespread works, found in novels, theatrical plays, music and films, contributing to the imaginary medieval re-mix¹¹⁸.

The new narratives present images inspired by Middle Ages stories intertwined with contemporary images and believes. Rather than a distinct time in the past, the Middle Ages form a space in which theory and narrative, gaming and textuality, identity and society are remediated and reimagined¹¹⁹.

It is possible that our cyborg culture has Neomedieval fascination trends; feeding our imagination with metanarratives from fiction books such as *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley (1979) or *Eragon* by Paolini Christopher (2008) or with epic and children films such as *Robin Hood* or *Shrek*. Although popular media products do not directly acknowledge Middle Ages sources - they do not claim to depict this period in time - , they are often produced using extensive researches on Middle Ages stories and images. Online shopping offers us a series of costumes and artifacts clearly inspired by Middle Ages, associated with the brand chain of book and or films best sellers. Neo-medieval attraction for gaming — for example — creates cultural palimpsests, multiply-layered trans-temporal artifacts. And video and internet players of such games do not only buy products associated with to the brand or game, but they also produce them in edupunk learning processes. Individually players search for tutorials and information on Internet forums to extract what they need to perform the virtual experiences of the game in real life - for example a helmet, a crossbow or a sword.

Games

According to Huizinga (2007), the Middle Ages culture is based and inherited from classic antiquity fixed forms in the domains of poetry; rituals; philosophy, politics and war. For Huizinga, the ecclesiastic spirit of the chivalric code was directly inspired by the Greco-Roman ideals and novel ludic behaviours created in the Middle Ages, for example the knighthood ceremonies which were extremely innovative. And, it is interesting to notice how chivalric codes of behavior are reproduced and recreated in contemporary internet and video games (MMO and MMORPG games) where

¹¹⁸ Le Goff J., *Heróis e maravilhas da Idade Média*. (Stephania Matousek, Trans). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Editora Vozes, 2010. p.30-31.

¹¹⁹ Kline, D.T., *Digital Gaming Re-imagines the Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge. 2013.

the players assume roles explicitly inspired by knighthood orders and codes of behaviour.

Images

Having said so, let's now start to look for images that in certain way may support these intuitive claims. According to Hickerman, we need to acknowledge that art works [and images] can be seen as “an appropriate way of not only recording events or thoughts but interpreting them in a way which exposes a greater number of realities”¹²⁰. The metaphors call for an understanding of contextual and cultural considerations. They must not be seen as truth claims, which are either right or wrong. Rather, we can dispute them, offer arguments for and against them, and judge some as more powerful or better than others¹²¹. According to Didi-Huberman (2009), visual representation has an “underside” in which seemingly intelligible forms lose their clarity and defy rational understanding, this underside, where images harbor limits and contradictions, visual representation is a mobile process that often involves substitution and contradiction and calls for subjective judgments.

In this section, images from two productions of young people popular culture will be displayed. The first series of images (Figures 3 and 4) are screenshots of web pages about the movie 'Lord of the Rings' illustrating contemporary fascination for the Middle Ages' imaginary, the film has been extensively studied by sociologists and cultural studies experts. The last image is a screenshot of one webpage about the video/ internet game 'Assassins Creed'.

The Lord of the Rings is a novel written by J. R. R. Tolkien between 1937 and 1949. The title of the novel refers to the story of the Dark Lord Sauron, who at an early age created the One Ring to rule the other Rings of Power as the ultimate weapon in his campaign to conquer and rule all of Middle-Earth in an imaginary time and space. The heroes of the story are imaginary creatures called Hobbits. Tolkien's work has been the subject of extensive analysis of its themes and origins. The enduring popularity of *The Lord of the Rings* has led to numerous references in popular culture, the founding of many societies by fans of Tolkien's works and the publication of many books about Tolkien and his works. *The Lord of the Rings* has inspired, and continues to inspire artwork, music, films and television, video games, and subsequent literature. The award-winning adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* have been made for radio, theatre and film. In the film industry, *The Lord of the Rings* is a film series distributed by New Line Cinema. It consists

¹²⁰ Hickerman, R., Visual Art as a Vehicle for Educational Research. In *The International Journal of Art & Design Education*, Blackwell. UK. 26 (3) 314-324, 2007, p. 317.

¹²¹ Parsons, M., Art And Metaphor, Body And Mind. In L. Bresler (Ed.) *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*. (pp.533–542). N.Y. Springer, 2007.

of three epic co-written and directed by Peter Jackson. The films are, by subtitle, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003). Each film in the series had special extended editions released on DVD a year after their respective theatrical releases. While the films follow the book's general storyline, they do omit some of the novel's plot elements and include some additions to and deviations from the source material.

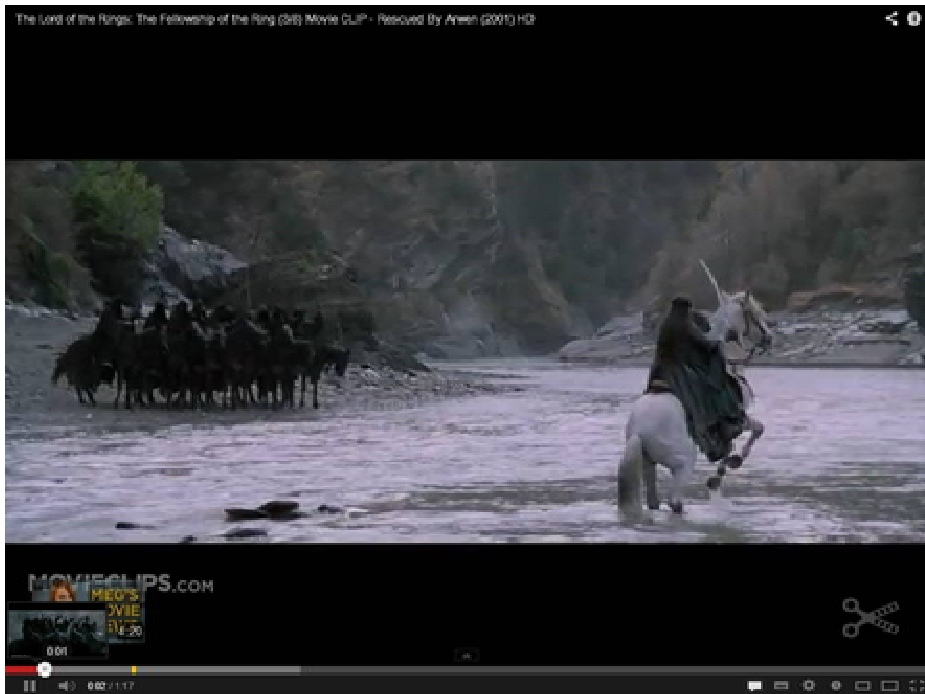


Figure 3: Screenshot from: 'The Lord of the Rings'. Movieclips (Youtube) webpage. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0L-Zqr0eyDg>

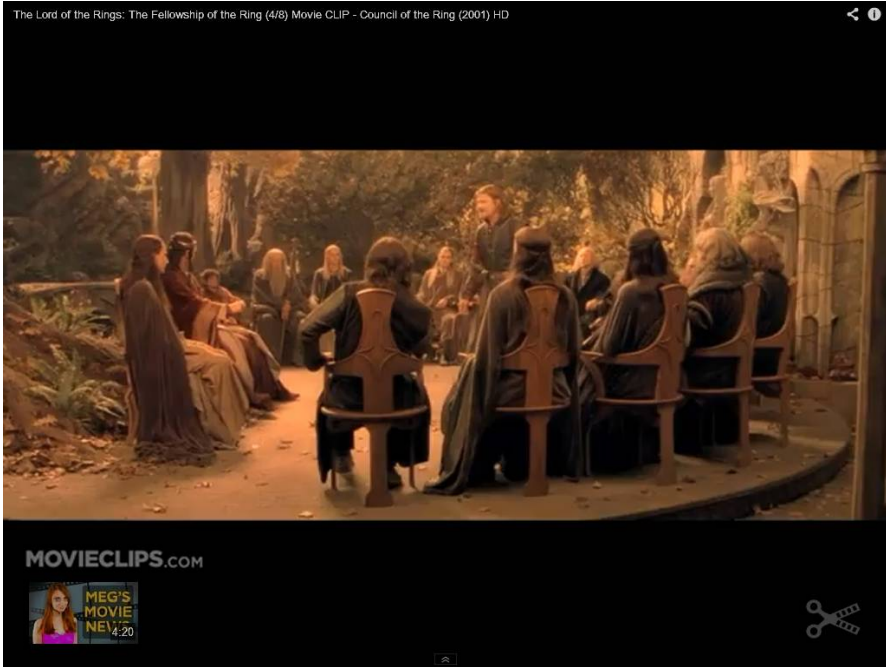


Figure 4 Screenshot from: 'The Lord of the Rings'. Movieclips (Youtube) webpage. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdFKfRmmbk0>

Assassin's Creed is a video and internet game series published by Ubisoft Montreal and consisting in five main games and a number of supporting materials. The series was inspired by the novel *Alamut* by the Slovenian writer Vladimir Bartol. The games appeared on the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X, Nintendo DS, PlayStation Portable, PlayStation Vita, iOS, HP webOS, Android, Nokia Symbian Windows Phone platforms, and the Wii U. The main games in the franchise were developed by Ubisoft Montreal, with the handheld titles developed by Gameloft and Gryptonite Studios, with additional development by Ubisoft Montreal. The games take the idea from the inspirational book that “Nothing is true, everything is permitted”; this is also a current trend in the creative industry products and among video and internet games users. Players or users are protected by fictitious personalities (avatars) to live virtual experiences with no limitations except for those regulated by the game creators, inspired by chivalry behaviours and war games.

The game offers a virtual experience inspired by the story told by Vladimir Bartol about the story of Hassan-i Sabbāh, or *Hassan aṣ-Ṣabbāh* (c. 1034 - 1124), a Persian Nizārī Ismāʿīlī missionary, who lived in the fortress of Alamut. From the game series, we chose Figure 5 for analysis.



Figure 5: Screenshot from Assassin Creeds games. Zangado Games (Youtube) web page. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO0emuFDuEE>

Visual analysis

Images, like other documents are important data for researchers. They have been used in various forms in different fields of research in sciences and social sciences. They can convey 'objective evidence', later leading to obtaining findings. Generalization about what is depicted in images (mass media communication, creative and communication industries, etc.) requires observable, more or less 'objective' evidence. Content analysis has been used to study evidence based on images for a long time in social sciences. According to Bell¹²², maybe content analysis has been widely used because it seems like the 'commonsense' way to research. Like all research methodologies, content analysis is an effective procedure only if precise hypothesis and clearly defined concepts underpin its use. Categories of visual content must be explicitly and unambiguously defined and employed consistently to yield meaningful evidence relevant to the hypothesis. To observe and quantify categories of content, it is necessary to define relevant

¹²² Bell, F., Content analysis of visual images. In: van Leeuwen, T. & Jewitt, C. (Eds.) *Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: Sage Publications, 2002, p. 13.

variables of representation. Each variable value can be distinguished to yield to the categories of content which are to be observed and quantified¹²³. For example, in the variable “gender”, we can look for values of role, setting and size. For example, we may start to analyze Figure 3 and Figure 5 by doing content variables or categories of content such as dimension (size, color, position in the image, range), a list of represented participants (male/female; adult/child) or a number of alternative settings such as outdoor; indoor; palace; house; river; ocean; mountain. Variables refer to aspects of how something is represented. We can later attribute values to each of the variables and interconnect them to see differences and similarities (See table 1).

Variables		Gender	Role	setting	artifacts
Values	Figure 3	Males	warrior	outdoor	Metal weapons, dress
	Figure 5	Males	warrior	indoor	Metal weapons, dress

Table 1: content analysis: categories of content

Variables and values are very useful for coding if we define them unambiguously. However this is not always possible, some 'subjective' variables are crucial for understanding the meaning of the images and the coders will have to make 'subjective' judgments to analyze the images. Images are not only denotative, they carry on connotations and invite readers to personal interpretation through the lenses of their life experience. The image may be static, but the meaning is always in the eyes of the beholder. Images may convey feelings through codes of shapes, color and framing. An image can engage the viewer in a compulsive urge to look and look again.

When we examine the content and the character of images as data, we are engaged in direct analysis. Collier¹²⁴ claims that direct analysis is a very simple basic model. In the first stage, we look at data as a whole, to discover connecting contrasting patterns, to make us think and ask questions that may be useful in the future. In the second stage, we make an inventory or a log of all our images, looking at categories grounded on our research goals. In the third stage, we structure our analysis, going through the evidence with specific questions – measuring, distance, counting, comparing. In the fourth stage, we search for meaning by returning to the image, going back to our questions in an open manner, viewing the images in its contextual wholeness.

¹²³ Bell, *Ibidem*, p.16

¹²⁴ Collier, M., Approaches to analysis in visual anthropology. In: van Leeuwen, T. & Jewitt, C. (Eds.) *Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: Sage Publications 2002, p. 39.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 evoke a certain imaginary in the way they are related to other images in art, films and books, they quote other contexts, the type of sword in figure 3; the way the group is settled in figure 4, the type of dress in figure 5; the depicted landscape in Figure 3 or the interior scene in Figure 5 appeals to our senses and memories making us travel between spaces and stories. We know this is all fiction, Figure 3 was filmed in New Zealand and Figure 5 is a virtual architectural space. We know that the characters in figure 5 are not a representation of crusades, but we are transported to a fictional space where 'everything is possible', because it is a non-space, a space where polycentric and perspectivist views of reality are merged. For thinkers like Felix Guattari (1995, 2000) and Rosi Braidotti (2006), 'reality' is described as fluid, openly created and understood through a polyphony of diverse discourses and practices, within which 'individuals' and groups are free to navigate more or less strategically, according to desires and partial commonalities and differences. The solid 'self' is substituted by 'practices of self' and an ideal of the 'human being' as a self-creating, aesthetic formation, able to transcend or transform power/knowledge constructions such as age, gender or ethnicity in new unforeseen manners. The images produced by creative industries are always quoting stories from other contexts in a non-linear time and space for entertainment purposes. We could say in a very poststructuralist perspective, that these visions suit individualist and neoliberal tendencies in society, tendencies that - unfortunately for sustainability - also fueled a wave of individualism, precarity and consumerism (e.g. Gielen, 2009).

Although Figure 3 and Figure 5 may seem harmless, not very different from war games played in the past, we may have some questions about its real purposes in the western so-called 'information/knowledge' society. The images need meta-reflexive, multiperspective approaches to understand the purposes of producers and users. They denote the complex interactions that take place between the viewer and the viewed. We cannot 'read' the images without thinking for what purposes they had been produced. But why this fascination for contemporary multimedia products like films and games by stories about Middle Ages periods? What is so attractive regarding the Middle Ages' imaginary, codes of behavior, rites of war, social organizations? Visual events are always geographically, historically, socially, and culturally situated, and they always imply specific ways of looking (Rogoff 1998). Figures 3, 4 and 5 tell us much more about our times and our subcultures. By going through and searching how the audiences use such visual events, we may understand this fascination more. Film fans have Internet forums to meet, some of them using replicas of appropriate clothes or referential tee-shirts and other fashion accessories (Cosplay). MMO/MMORPG game players organize themselves in groups, play in real time, sometimes in real spaces (they rent game rooms to be together); some

of them buy or make all sort of dress and artifacts related to the games. What does this mean about contemporary societies in terms of relational needs?

Enlarging the boundaries to understand digital images

From the moment you begin to play Agamemnon you become a part of ancient medieval life. The time when medieval Knights were the icons of valour and protectors of their home-land. You will find the time of the Middle Ages here in all its glory. You might as well dig deeply into this website, especially if you have not played a MUD or an online RPG before: Agamemnon can be thought of as a part of these categories. The textual aspect of Agamemnon can often be very daunting. However, do not let this dissuade you. Once you have become accustomed to allowing your imagination to paint the images for you, there is much to be seen and imagined in a textual environment which cannot be gained from graphical medieval games or other games of this type. You should think about Agamemnon as being an ever unfolding interactive novel. The outlines, the substance of medieval England and all that medieval life came to stand for, will be there for you. However, much of your success and the role which you would choose to fulfill within the Middle Ages will be achieved by you and your actions. Your road and where it ends will be governed by each interaction with those who also choose to share the Middle Ages with you. Medieval England is populated and brought to life by other people who are also connecting to Agamemnon over the internet. They play just as large a role in the shaping of the society and medieval life as you will. They, and how you choose to interact with them, can often be the deciding factors of your character's fate¹²⁵.

This fragment of text belongs to the introduction of the RPG Agamemnon. If we compare the text with the image in Figure 5 retrieved from the Game Assassins Creed, we will get a picture of what a virtual immersion in a digital game is. The Middle Ages is recreated not only as a time, but also as a time-space, inhabited by 'people' interacting and allowing their 'imagination to paint the images'. The plot works as an hypertextual process where the user decide the flow of the story within the limitations of the game creators, but nevertheless creating in the mind of the user the impression of unlimited freedom of imagination and social cohesion between players.

¹²⁵ RPG Agamemnon. (2003 c). Retrieved from <http://www.agamemnon-rpg.com/introduction.html>

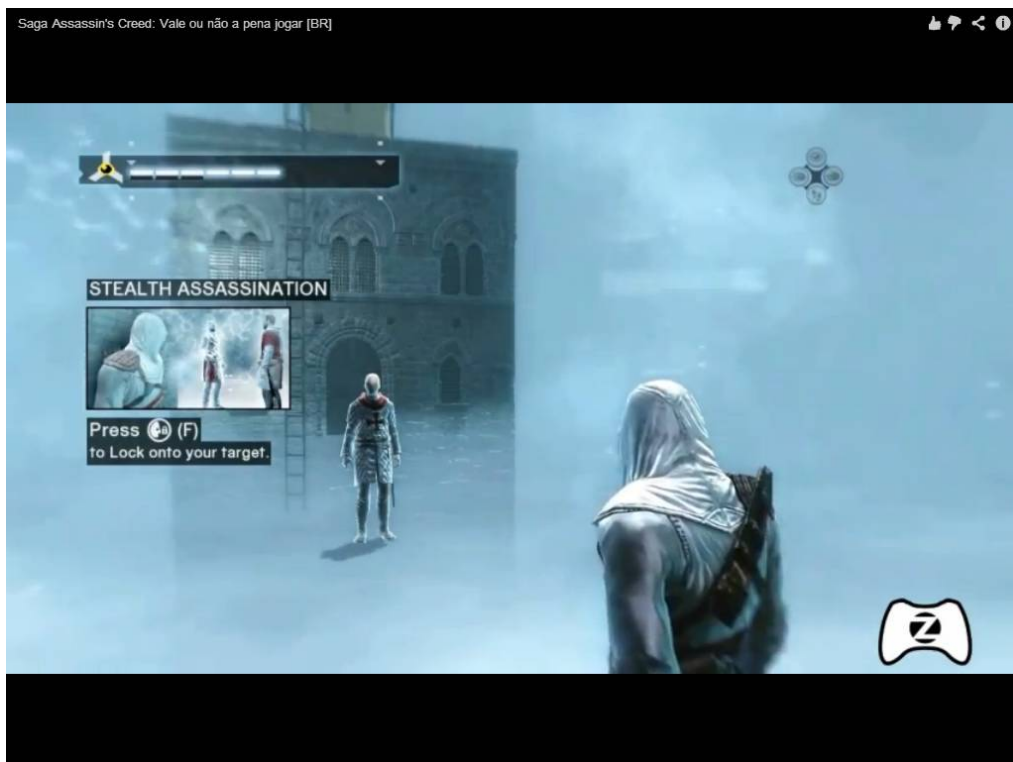


Figure 6 Screenshot from the webpage of the game 'Assassins Creed III'. Zangado Games (Youtube) web page. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO0emuFDuEE>

Images such as those reproduced in the chosen screenshots (Figure 1 to Figure 6) are not easy to analyze, even using cultural studies approaches strengthening the context of viewing, because the viewer is not only expected to look to the image, but also to be embodied in the image. Although we can try to focus also on the context of production and distribution, the meaning is difficult to understand. We can look at the form, describing the pictorial conventions that may be vaguely related to photography or drawing, or film, or comic visual conventions; this will give us great amounts of useful information. But, something is missing. Maybe the missing link has to do with the type of images, digital images are interactive and raise different levels of connection with the 'reader'. We can start to think about approaching the interacting levels in the images like Dubberly, Pangaro and Haque (2009) had argued. In this respect, we need to blur the borders and enlarge the boundaries of analysis in an interdisciplinary way, for example going through the participatory systems Pangaro (2000), analyzing images not only in a dual mode (image and decoder of the image), but also in a tripod relationship:

between player; game and other players. We will seek to understand their characteristics as “participants” that “act on their own, behave in complex ways that make sense to us, interact with us directly, work with us for achieving our goals, modify their own goals, partner with us in the creation new goals, collaborate with us on the design of new partners”¹²⁶. Therefore, in order to understand the existing interactions with the participants and to propose new and more interesting ones, we need a framework to characterize degrees of: autonomy, complexity, interactivity, collaboration, goal-setting¹²⁷. Therefore, the authors went through this approach to confirm some of their intuitive claims derived from a first attempt of the image analysis described in the previous section. They wanted to understand the degree of interactivity generated by images (and games) and they started to look at the communities of players taking into account the topic and the name of the game. Rosangela registered for the following internet forums MMORPG.com, MMOsite.com, PlayStation Forum, UBISOFT Uplay Forum. Rosangela also designed a short questionnaire [1] called 'Medieval Games Questionnaire (MMO and MMORPG) and posted it on 23.12.2013 on these Internet forums and Facebook pages. The aim of the questionnaire with 10 multiple choice questions was to identify profiles and habits of players and also to get insights about players' contextual knowledge regarding the history of the Middle Ages.

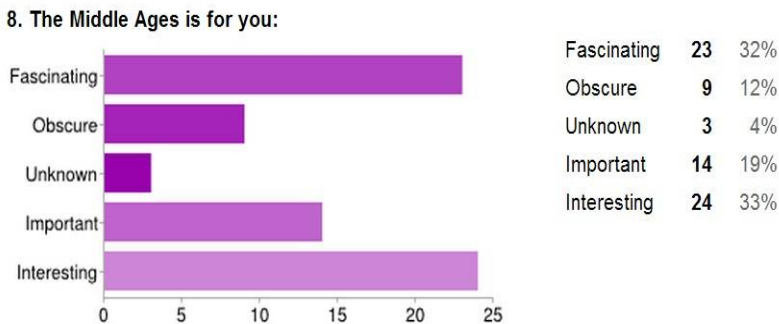


Table 2: Graphic results to the question 8 in the . 'Medieval Games Questionnaire (MMO and MMORPG), 2013.

¹²⁶ Pangaro, Paul, *Participative Systems*, 2000, In: <http://www.pangaro.com/PS/PS2005-v1b-4up.pdf>, accessed 22-2-13.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*.

9. What more catches your attention in the Middle Ages?

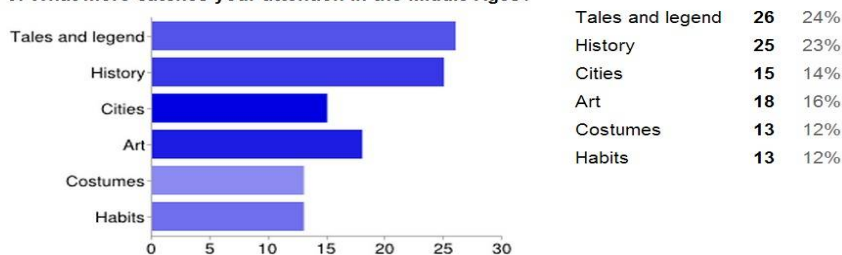


Table 3: Graphic results for the question 9 in the 'Medieval Games Questionnaire (MMO and MMORPG), 2013.

Between 23- 25.02.2013, Rosangela received thirty-six replies that had corroborated the author's claims that the medieval trend in young people and young adult's subcultures is a living presence in contemporary culture. Tables 2 and 3 and 4 illustrate some results obtained from the questionnaire that has helped the authors in their research for this study.

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Notes

The questionnaire used in this study can be accessed at:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1N0mcIumI_-0qUFaELYUICK3-rDVecur9JFQRChPiofg/viewanalytics, accessed 25-2-13

HISTORY OF ART

THE INVERSE PERSPECTIVE IN THE BYZANTINE PAINTING

Maria Urmă*

Abstract: The inverse perspective is a method of representing spatial depth used only in Byzantine painting. It is different from Renaissance perspective (a method of realistic, conventional, subjective, subject to a single point of view).

The inverse perspective, with two-dimensional axonometric representations, is more complex, offering multiple possibilities of symbolization.

Various theories have considered either optical-geometric aspect or artistic-cultural aspect as the main factors that generated it. But they have not led to a unified conclusion.

This study highlights the common elements of these theories, bringing together the two issues and providing a philosophical-religious interpretation.

Keywords: Byzantine painting, inverse perspective, theory, interpretation

Description

The representations of the Byzantine painting are different from the usual ones: spatial depth and objects' tridimensionality are obtained differently compared to the direct perspective. Representations comparable to those in the Byzantine painting appeared in other periods too (Ancient Egypt, the 20th century BC) by resorting to bidimensionality. But the inverse perspective method appeared only during the Byzantine period.

What does this method consist of?

At a simple look at the Byzantine painting, one may notice that the tridimensionality of objects is rendered through a procedure which is in opposition to the direct perspective. Whereas the vanishing point in the direct perspective is within the space of the painting, thus the represented space inviting us in-depth, in the Byzantine painting the vanishing point is in the space of the onlooker, not of the painting, and the convergence of lines lies outside the area of the painting (Fig. 1).

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The procedure isn't limited only to the linear perspective, it can also be found in the overall organization of the composition. If several characters are superposed, the heads of those in the back are bigger than those in front, so that one may have the impression that the characters come nearer the onlooker (Fig. 2). It is the same thing as in the inverse perspective of objects, where the backside is larger than the front side, unlike the representation in the direct perspective, where it is, thus showing that the emphasis is laid on the forefront. There is a tendency to reduce space to bidimensionality, so as to offer more possibilities of symbolizing. Moreover, the closer the object is to the onlooker, the freer from the linear perspective, which results in the hiding of perspective effects under the clothing as a refusal to render depth (Fig. 3). One may also notice that there is no relation between the height of the characters and the size of the buildings. Therefore, there is no procedure of scale representation or of relative measure which supposes dimensionality of spaces and objects in relation to people's height (Fig. 3). The explanation consists in the fact that faces in an icon belong to another world, the transcendental world, which is different from the real world of things. Disproportion of the different parts of the body suggests immateriality.

Apart from the inverse perspective, there is also a preference for axonometry where the fundamental characteristics of the object remain constant (proportions, parallelism, symmetry). Axonometry is a procedure by means of which the object is neuter, a simple presence or enunciation of a truth, independent from the onlooker, beyond space and time. The objects from the direct perspective are forced into a hierarchy, the image depends on the point of view of the observer, illustrating a certain time and a certain place.

Generally speaking, one may observe a refusal of the closed space, (which would generate the representation of the spatial depth), which is contrary to the representation of the Renaissance emphasizing interior space. In the Byzantine painting the scenes take place outside the buildings even when the action carries on inside. the Renaissance space is a contained space, and this conception remains dominant until the modern period when space becomes relative, marked by temporality. The space of the Middle Ages is a space = condition of the presence of bodies in space, an object-space, a theory borrowed from Antiquity. This refusal of representing the interior may be explained by the fact that the divine world that is represented cannot fit in the common space, which is tridimensional; rather, it belongs to a space without dimensions, a heavenly space.

The vertical line is kept rigorously, as an emphasis on spiritual values. Also, each object in the space of the painting has its own perspective (some of the objects are in axonometry, others in inverse perspective and others in bidimensionality, with different orientations of the axes or with different

vanishing points). They are juxtaposed based on a compositional principle that takes into account their meaning (Fig. 5).

There are also procedures related to colour and light. Through special rules of colouring new aspects of objects are stressed: the emphasis through colour of an element in the back (the Holy Gospel is brought to attention by placing it in the most lighted part of the icon), (Fig. 4). the non-uniform chromaticity of the buildings (the side walls are of a different colour than the facade) (Fig. 5); in both cases the result is the inverse perspective. The chiaroscuro law is broken: even if there isn't any source of light, the light in the icon comes from everywhere "...*The true light that shines on everyone that is born into the world*" (Bible, John 1/9). The golden background suggests immateriality and the transcendent world beyond. The contour is drawn in a bright colour (metal, golden leaflet), inserting new power lines in the composition (Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Fig. 6).

Comparison: the direct perspective – the inverse perspective

In the direct perspective the perception is static, generating a hierarchy in depth; in the inverse perspective, the perception is dynamic because it uses several points of view and even more systems of representation (different orientations of the objects' sides, different axonometric systems) so that we can say that it is not only a problem of several points of view, but also of several spaces represented. It is as if we had representations in parallel worlds. In fact, in the Christian religion, it is often spoken of the terrestrial world and the heavenly world, this world and the world beyond ...

According to Paul Florensky, the lack of direct perspective (also to be found in the Chinese or Egyptian art) actually demonstrates maturity of the art rather than lack of experience. In this way, the art of the Middle Ages can be interpreted as a moving away from the realistic representation of the Greek and Roman Antiquity. The Renaissance can be understood as a new start after the irrational peak of the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages freed itself from perspective in the name of religious objectivity and the supra-personal metaphysics. The direct perspective is an illusion that completes reality. Florensky contends that this was used initially in theatre scenery and only later, Giotto introduced it into painting. The inverse perspective doesn't complete reality, rather it takes you to another, parallel reality where the vanishing point is in the space of the onlooker and not in the space of the painting. Consequently, the real world belongs to the onlooker, to the terrestrial, and the icon's world belongs to the transcendent, which must be contemplated without touching it, without being part of it.

The Middle Ages "tears apart" the Antiquity's direct perspective and discovers or goes back to a new modality of representation not because it lacked access to the knowledge of perspective of the Antiquity, but because such views didn't correspond with the ideology of the new epoch. Arnheim is

wrong when he says that the perspective “*has been discovered in a single moment and in a single place in the entire human history*”. As a matter of fact, we have remarkable representations in perspective dating from the Antiquity. The Renaissance simply rediscovered this modality of representing space. Its merit is that it took it up again, theorized about it, made it accessible and polished it, which culminated with the discoveries of baroque art.

Arnheim observes that the procedures of reproducing the space in bidimensionality or in axonometry were discovered independently in the entire world. One may conclude that these modalities of representation, in comparison with the direct perspective, are more natural and significant. This can be explained through the fact that the perspectival image only catches a moment of the visual perception, the moment when the image is projected onto the retina. From this point of view, axonometry and the bidimensional projection is closer to the truth than the image from the direct perspective, because, through these representations, the fundamental characteristics are maintained (proportions, parallelism). Paradoxically, though the direct perspective produces a distortion of the objects, it claims to be closer to reality but it is only closer to a moment of the visual perception, when the image projects in a distorted way onto the retina.

The preference for bidimensionality or axonometry follows from the tendency of Medieval man to affirm a reality independent of him. Medieval man is different from the Renaissance man or from Greek Antiquity. He is mystical and religious, and the Medieval human ideal is that of the ascetic, altruistic man, capable of sacrifice (in the Christian religion, sanctification involves sacrifice). From the Renaissance until the modern and contemporary time, man is the centre of the universe and submits everything to his point of view. That is why Renaissance representations are circumscribed to a single point of view while Medieval representations lack subjectivity and go beyond reality. One may observe how the religious impact leads to less realistic, symbolic representations (prehistoric art, Ancient Egypt’s art, Medieval art). As they got closer or farther away from reality, the artists used the direct perspective accordingly. This explains the short periods of representation in perspective, why it was theorized so late and why, during the modern period, it was replaced by photography.

Arnheim speaks about the European painter from the 14th-15th century, his “groping” after convergence in space, and of axonometry and bidimensional representations as “elementary” procedures of rendering space. However, this search must not be understood as a mistake but as a step towards naivety, purity and truth, the characteristics of a representation that presupposes a religious feeling, such as painting an icon. By appealing to bidimensionality and axonometry, prehistoric, Egyptian Antiquity, Far East, Middle Ages and 20th century art representations are more significant because

in these representations the artist shows what he feels, not what he already knows about objects and space. There are a lot of analogies with children's drawings. Indeed, children, just like primitive man, draw what they see, not what they know about objects, as adults do. Florenski says that the inverse perspective is lost at the moment of cutting off the direct relationship with the world. The inverse perspective is generated by the nature of the synthesis of the world. According to Florenski, the system of representation in the inverse perspective is deliberate and conscious, an artistic complex calculation. In fact, I think that this way of representation is spontaneous, pure, as in children's drawings. The difference between direct and inverse perspective is that the direct perspective is taught, it is artificial, while the inverse perspective is natural, generated by feeling and talent. The marked digressions from the direct perspective give the quality of Byzantine icon which belong, most of the times, to great masters. They impress through the primitive, naïve, but also profound character, being more a feeling than a representation. Ancient Egyptian art and Medieval art take this type of representation further, achieving a degree of subtlety. The 20th century, when it goes back to bidimensionality (in cubism, abstractionism), is aware of these qualities. Byzantine art, through representation in the painting does not look for similarities with reality, but for symbols of reality.

These two ways of representation follow from the manner of understanding space: "the space of sensorial reality" and the "space of spiritual reality". Even the "space of sensorial reality" may be different from the geometric, Euclidian, isotropic, homogenous, infinite, tridimensional space. Consequently, any attempt of other than geometric representation of space offers yet another possibility of detecting its characteristics. In the Byzantine painting perspectival space and unaperspectival space are met simultaneously (Fig. 7).

The Byzantine representation is the opposite of the Renaissance painting. It is not a window through which the spirit enters the world. (Sendler 1981). In it the represented world discovers itself, it opens for the onlooker. The icon's space is active, unlike that of the onlooker, as in the Renaissance painting.

In the icon space is reduced to bidimensionality, it unfolds towards the onlooker. Through the convergence of lines in the space of the onlooker, not that of the painting, the inverse perspective throws the depth of space from the inside out. The tridimensionality belongs only to the viewer's space, to the terrestrial world, not to the divine universe of bidimensional representation.

Theories about the reverse perspective. Interpretation

Many theories have tried to explain this special type of representation, found in the Byzantine painting exclusively. Some of the theories explain the

phenomenon with the help of optics and geometry, others see in the inverse perspective the expression of a cultural datum. These two tendencies, essentially different, have a few principles in common. Research has not reached any viable solution, this is the reason why our paper tries to combine these theories into a synthesis.

A. V. Babušinski's theory of the double perception explains the inverse perspective by means of the binocular vision, a different image corresponding to each eye. The superposition of the two projections leads to an image in which both sides of the object are represented, as in the inverse perspective. The theory has shortcomings because it is valid for objects seen from close by, less than 30 cm away (Sendler). Besides, the two images combine in perception to make up a single tridimensional image. Thus, the two images don't separate so that we can analyze them separately.

L. F. Žeghine elaborated the theory of dynamic space (Sendler). He asserts that man in movement sees many facets of the object which he unifies mentally into a single image. He sees things from both sides and from above at the same time. The curve of space results from movement. The joining of these many perspectival images generates distortions: a straight line seems curved, a curve slightly concave becomes more concave, a convex curve looks almost like a straight line. The result is a dynamic, spherical space. One can make analogies with the theory of relativity that speaks about the curving of the ray of light.

These two theories would be interesting as far as they could go beyond an optical explanation of the phenomenon, towards a philosophic, religious interpretation.

In the direct perspective space is plane; the image is represented on a plane surface (perspective painting). All the objects submit to a hierarchy, to a center that is the point of view of the observer. Besides, in the direct perspective the representation on a plane surface is a geometrical convention, an artifice practiced for easiness of representation. In reality, the image projected onto the retina belongs to a curve surface (the curve of the ocular globe); from this point of view the direct perspective is a simplified, artificial representation of reality. The ancient Greeks resorted to optical corrections to diminish the illusions created by projection of large-size plane figures (the facade, the interior floor of the temple, sculptures placed at great heights) on the spherical surface of the eye. If the image projected onto the retina could be caught by sectioning the visual cone with a spherical surface, straight lines wouldn't be straight anymore, but curved and at the same time convergent. In addition, the representation on a plane surface is, generally, a convention. Thus, we consider the direction of the force of gravity perpendicular on the surface of the Earth, while in reality it moves towards its centre, the surface of the Earth being spherical. The non-Euclidian theories amended Euclidian plane geometry, the result being complex geometrical systems that opened

new vistas in science. Babušinski's and Žeghine's theories can be merged if we accept the hypothesis of dynamic perception in a spherical space.

In the Byzantine painting each object has its place, its own existence because it is separated from the other objects and viewed from many points of view, in movement. In the direct perspective, during the Renaissance, which is a representation on a single plan, the objects submit to a geometric conventional system, to a single point of view. As a consequence, the multitude of representational systems in the Byzantine painting is more in keeping with the perception of a reality which, through its transcendent, immaterial character, can't even submit to a single, fixed representation. Žeghine's deduction according to which in the inverse perspective the vanishing point appears under the horizon line as an image in the mirror of the direct perspective, leads to the idea of the real world's image as a mirror of the icon's world. This convergence of the vanishing lines in the space of the onlooker resembles the upside down image of the world that we see (in the direct perspective). It is an image of our space seen by the icon's world. So, the icon's saints look at us from their world as we look at reality, as through a window, in the direct perspective.

B. V. Rauschenbach has the merit of drawing attention to the fact that the inverse perspective in the Byzantine painting isn't the result of a single factor. Thus, one should take into account the optical aspect as well as the artistic aspect of the phenomenon. He asserts that the preference for axonometry is explained through the fact that the painter doesn't start from a simple contemplation of nature but is preoccupied by the essence of things. He accepts the effect of binocular vision, the mobility of points of view, because in the Byzantine painting there is not only one point of view; each architectural form, each piece of furniture has its own perspective. So each object has its own existence, a certain degree of independence in relation to the whole, each object has its importance, its meaning.

Rauschenbach also speaks about the *persistence of forms* in the sense that the painter brings to the onlooker's conscience aspects which, normally, wouldn't be visible (he paints the roof of the building as seen from above, like in aerial perspective, the surface of the table, lifted to onlooker, on which there is a book with its pages turned towards him, or enlarges the back feet of table) (II. 1, II. 4, II. 8)

We must admit the difficulty of gathering these elements into a single composition since the unifying principle of the direct perspective is missing. The unifying principle in the Byzantine painting could be the fact that everything is circumscribed to the character, to the main scene (II. 2, II. 9)

But we must specify that the geometric structure of the forms is not as important as the world vision that created them (Sendler).

This is why the theories that deal with the cultural aspect of the problem are more valuable. The idea of compositional unity doesn't really count in

relation to the geometrical procedure of the direct perspective but it is very important for the cohesion given by the artistic, ideological sense of representation. In the Byzantine painting the painter doesn't represent the world as he knows it but through its symbolic sense.

P. A. Michelis makes the difference between the "sensitive space", which is the perceptive space, determined by the three coordinates, and the "feeling of space", which is subjective and belongs to the category of the sublime, only appearing when the means of representation become irrational and bursting with feelings.

K. Onasch (Sendler) speaks about the "importance perspective" and the "epic perspective". The first refers to the fact that the main characters of the scenes are of bigger dimensions (a procedure used not only in the Byzantine painting but also in the oriental art, in Rome, in Egypt) (Il. 5, Il. 8). The main character in the icon, enlarged, seems to be getting out from the interior of the icon and welcome the onlooker. Similarly, as we have already showed, in the representation of groups of persons, the characters in the back have their heads enlarged, giving a inverse perspective effect, as if coming to the front. The psychological perspective consists of rendering evident the main characters by enlarging their figure, their head and eyes, by placing them in the centre of the composition, by modifying the natural proportions of their bodies so as to express their virtues and spiritual moods. The disproportions of these bodies show immateriality. The epic perspective refers to the fact that the icon has a narrative character. Besides, we find no tendency to build the space in which the events occur but rather, the space opens to the onlooker, becoming transparent. Indeed, the vanishing lines from the direct perspective create mystery by going in-depth, while the vanishing lines reversed in the onlooker's space, in the inverse perspective, offer the scene to the onlooker, make it noticeable, explorable. The feeling of suspending time appears during the narration of some events. Thus, events that had taken place at different moments are represented in the composition as if they had happened simultaneously. This offers a compressed view upon the events described in the Gospels. This is a compressed time, the icons are *concise memorials (hypomneseis syntomoi)*, as Saint John the Damascene says (Cavarnos). So, in the icon's world there is no time and no space. Onasch's theory agrees with the other theories that admit the reduced depth of the representation, the movement of the forms towards the onlooker. Still, it doesn't explain clearly enough the formal details that create space. The other theories explain this but they reduce things either to the optical aspect or to the cultural one.

Conclusions

As an outcome of these studies, the authors have agreed upon some common elements such as: the image in the Byzantine painting is the

representation of ideas, the scenes are presented as if they were on a spherical surface, of reduced depth, the details create a characteristic space, the other elements of the painting have their own role (movement, colour, light) in the making of the inverse perspective.

Generally speaking, in the Byzantine painting the scenes are to be read on a concave surface that offers itself to the onlooker. Though on small area, the icon's universe is like a vault on which the onlooker reads, in a panoramic view, the details of the object. From this point of view, the Byzantine representation is in agreement with the viewer's vision, developing circularly, in front of the observer.

These theories testify to the richness of the Byzantine conception about the possibility of representing reality based on idea, not on observation. The Byzantine representation can also makes the otherwise un-representable elements show. Our study admits that the scientific interpretation is limited since, although it offers an exact knowledge of the phenomenon, it cannot interpret it satisfactorily.

The explanation of this type of representation must be searched within the ideas that generated it and the particular world view of the time. One of the explanations may be directly connected to the philosophical and scientific ideas of the epoch. Thus, according to Dionisie Areopagit, a philosopher and theologian who influenced the way of thinking in the Middle Ages, everything is a "waterfall of light" (Besançon). As a consequence, the scenes in the icons shed a divine light towards us; this is why the iconic space opens to the onlooker. The relationship man / world changes in the Byzantine faith. So, it is normal that the structures and the laws of representation appear inverted. This research supports the idea that the history of art must not be studied as a phenomenon in itself, but closely related to the philosophical, religious, scientific conceptions of the epoch. One also finds out that the origin of the remarkable artistic achievements is always an idea, a concept that unifies and makes the representation original.

The role of the icon is to help us discern that particular something lying behind the image. The icon is "a window to the sky", it renders realities from the other world.

Illustrations:

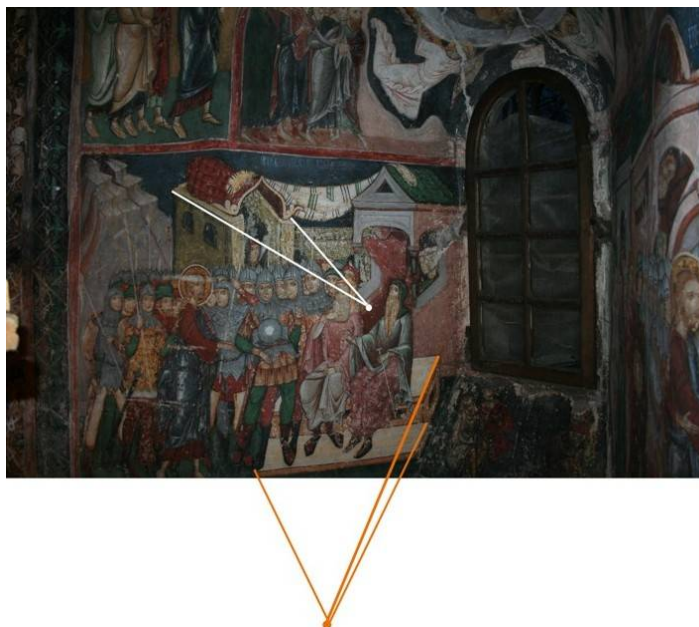


Fig. 1: Arbore Church 1503; inside fresco from nave, the 16th century

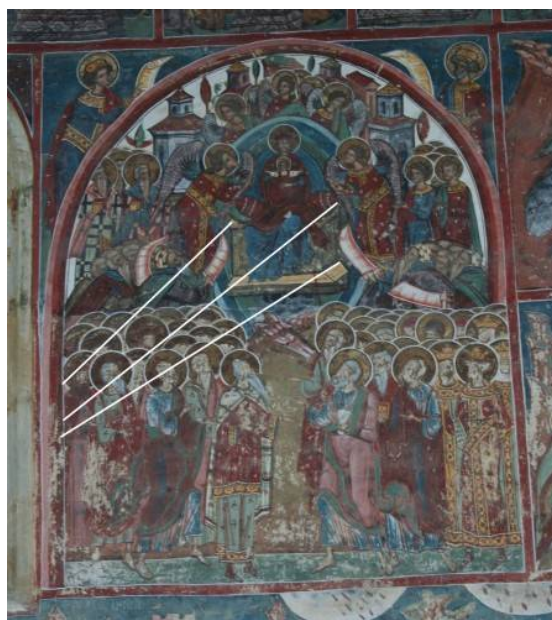


Fig. 2: Church of the Humor Monastery; fresco from south façade, 1535



Fig. 3: Bălinești Church (1494-1499); interior painting from narthex, the 15th century



Fig. 4: Pătrăuți Church (1487); fresco above the entry portal of the church, last decade of the 15th century



Fig. 5: Church of the Moldovița Monastery, (1532); fresco from south facade, 1537



Fig. 6: Popăuți Church (1496); inside painting from narthex



Fig.7: Arbore, Church (1503), inside fresco from nave, the 16th century



Fig. 8: Church of Voroneț Monastery (1488), exterior fresco from south facade (Deisis), the 16th century



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LATE ANCIENT ADORNMENTS ON THE TERRITORY OF ROMANIA – A MEANS OF RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA AT THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract: Though unjustly considered minor, miniature arts served political propaganda, bringing the Roman artistic concepts to the provinces of the Empire. In the late ancient period, the phenomenon of religious propaganda appeared, this propaganda was done by using these objects of reduced dimensions, the new ideology of Christianity in formation. Among these, adornments are one of the most ornamental pieces which record the triumphant path of the new religion, these luxury items are suitable means of promoting the new forms and the new symbolics.

Keywords: *cloisonné, cabochon, au repoussé, torques, lunulae, saltaleone, chrismon*

Adornments are items which are a means of propaganda, even political one (they are luxury objects), but they are used especially for religious purposes, Christianity found in jewelry an appropriate vehicle for the new symbolics. Their reduced dimensions (just like gliptics) favours their spreading and penetration in the most remote areas. Ancient garments found on the territory of Romania reflect the transformations suffered in the technique of their execution, from the side effects obtained by alternating the mat areas with the bright ones of the gold leaf – from the 1st century A.D. –, to the *repoussage* combined with coloured stones – specific to the next centuries. In general, the adornments found in our country follow the features of the Roman jewels of the time, together with Hellenistic elements having an oriental influence (the spindles, the acanthus leaves).

Regarding the technique of metal working (either precious or not), the techniques used for creating adornments can also be found in toreutics. Old methods, such as hammering, pressing, polishing, fount, torsion, are completed in the Roman age by grain, tooling or specific techniques of the wandering populations (*cloisonné, cabochon*).

Worn both by women and men, **rings** are the most numerous jewels that have been preserved on the territory of our country since ancient times. There were two types: digital (worn on the finger) and curl or temple rings (worn in the hair). The earliest digital rings that reached our times are those from the Dacian times: generally speaking, silver chain joints with one end put on the

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other, or bronze rings – as it is that from the necropolis from Cașolț (the County of Sibiu), with a sketched horse¹²⁸.

In the Roman epoch, both in Dacia and in Scythia Minor, there were rings made of different materials, with a multitude of forms and decorations, those from Ulpia Traiana or those from the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., found in the Pontic fortress (Noviodunum – Isaccea, the County of Tulcea, Troesmis – Iglia, the County of Tulcea, Beroe – Piatra Frecăței, the County of Tulcea) (Fig.1); or those from the late thesaurus, from the 6th century A.D., from Histria – Istria, the County of Constanța – where, except for the earrings and the crosses, two rings of different forms and equal sizes were preserved (3,4cm height, 2,2cm diameter), but with different ornaments. One of them is artistically created: it has an exterior granulated part, decorated with the motif of the wheat ear in the middle part. Both rings have a piece of coloured glass in the centre, caught around a circle of pellets¹²⁹. In the late ancient period, the rings from the barbarian hoards are added: the ring of the German chief Omharus (the treasury from Apahida I – the County of Cluj), with a dotted graved inscription, preceded by a cross; rings with embedded diamond- and cruciform-shaped gemstones, become mere ornaments, without engraving depth, so that they no longer are seal rings (from the culture of Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov – Apahida: cruciform-shaped golden rings, with granates in *cloisonné*, in a polichrome geometric style). From the treasury of Someșeni (the County of Cluj), from a grave of a Christian German princess (from the middle or the second half of the 5th century A.D.¹³⁰), there are three rings with diamond-cruciform batten¹³¹; from the treasury of Șimleu Silvaniei (the County of Sălaj) (around 400 A.D.), a protome zoomorphic ring was found and preserved. The hair rings have been used ever since the Superior Neolithic, from the Age of Bronze and from the beginning of the first period of the Iron Age: the objects made of gold from the treasuries from Ostrovu Mare, Curtea de Argeș, Buzău, Biia (the County of Alba) or the oval twisted gold rings for hair from Brăduț (the County of Covasna); there are not so many rings from the time of the Dacians (three hair rings from the treasury of Rociu, the County of Argeș¹³²), these were replaced by earrings in the Roman and late-ancient periods¹³³.

¹²⁸ Mihail Macrea, *Viața în Dacia Romană*, București, Ed. Academiei Române, 2007, p. 222.

¹²⁹ Em. Popescu, *Cap. VII. Cultura (Partea a IV-a. Dobrogea în secolele IV-VI)*, in Dumitru Protase, Alexandru Suceveanu (coord.), *Istoria românilor*, vol. II, *Daco-romani, romanici, alogeni*, București, Academia Română, Ed. Enciclopedică, 2010, p. 655

¹³⁰ Mihai Bărbulescu, *I. De la începuturile civilizației la sinteza românească*, in Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, Pompiliu Teodor, *Istoria României*, București, Ed. Corint, 2007, p. 92.

¹³¹ H. D și R. F. in Radu Florescu, Hadrian Daicoviciu, Lucian Roșu (coord.), *Dicționar enciclopedic de artă veche a României*, București, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980, p.316, s.v. *Someșeni*.

¹³² R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 293, s.v. *Rociu*.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p. 195, s.v. *inel*.

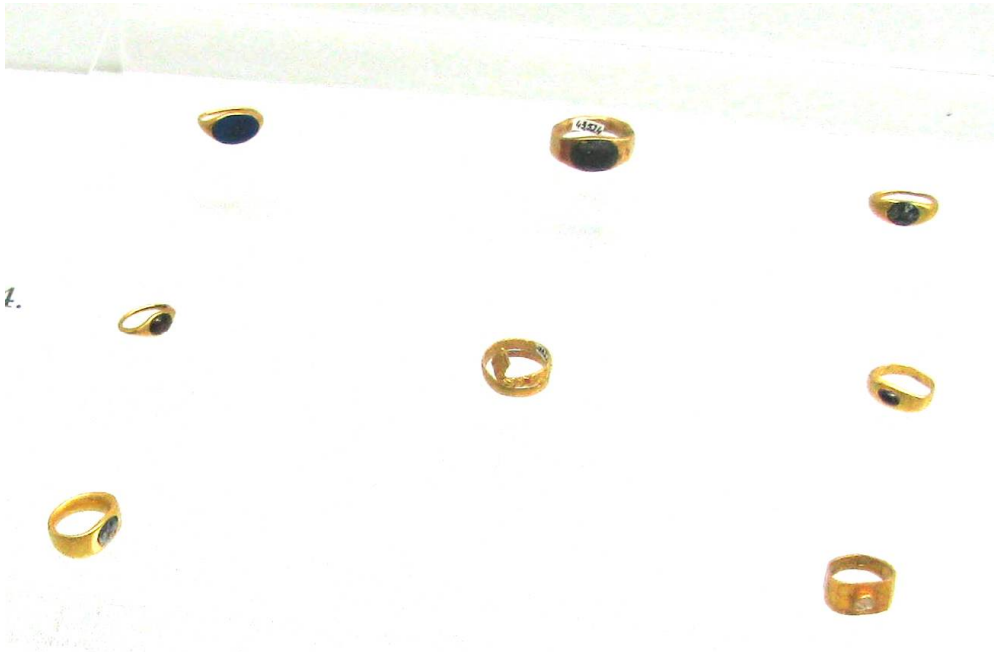


Fig.1: Rings, 2nd-3rd centuries A.D., Noviodunum, Troesmis, Beroe (museum of Aegyssus)

From the paleochristian period – we mention here the bronze cruciform rings, found in the stream of Caraș and, respectively, in the Turkish Sacoșu (near Timișoara)¹³⁴. We do not have reliable evidence referring to the Christian character of the rings with the inscription "Use it being happy" (Resculum, Bologa, the County of Cluj, Potaissa – Turda, the County of Cluj, Dierna Orșova, the County of Mehedinți, Sucidava – Celei, the County of Olt)¹³⁵. Two types of seal rings – the one made of silver of Capidava – the County of Constanța, the 6th century A.D. and the gold one from Tomis – Constanța – have two Greek carved inscriptions; it is interesting the fact that the monograms are not written from right to left (they were probably worn as a distinctive sign by an official person): Ioannes, a Semitic Christian name frequently met in the inscriptions from the 4th -6th centuries A.D. in Scythia Minor (the monograms and this name have analogies in the commercial seals from the 6th -7th centuries from Tomis, Sucidava, and also from Corint); respectively, AN(A)ST(A)SIE or

¹³⁴ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, Iași, Ed. Trinitas, 2004, p. 90.

¹³⁵ Nelu Zugravu, *Geneza creștinismului popular al românilor*, București, Ministerul Educației, Institutul Român de Tracologie, Bibliotheca thracologică, XVIII, 1997, p. 179.

A(U)XENTI(U)S (in the second ring). The importance of these pieces consists in the fact that they are the only ones having a monogram¹³⁶.

Embellishing the ears of the ladies (but also the hair by using curl rings), **earrings** are another type of adornment largely spread in our country. Since the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, curl rings were found in the two treasuries from Șmig (the County of Sibiu), Ostrovu Mare (the County of Mehedinți), Curtea de Argeș. Curl rings had the same form with the Dacian rings (individualized earrings were not found, but silver chain links which were used as earrings, having the dimension of a ring or of a bracelet). Before the Roman conquest, in the Pontic area, the Hellenistic earrings resembled chain links with an ornament placed in the opposite side where they were attached, or links of conic section, having a flimsy point which entered the hole of the ear, the thicker point ended in an artistic element, for example, the earrings found in Tomis, Callatis – Mangalia, the County of Constanța, or the oval ones from Tomis, dating from the 1st century A.D., probably having a gold leaf with the representation of Gorgon with Pegasus *au repoussé*¹³⁷.

From the Roman period, what is specific to the provinces of Dacia and Scythia Minor (the 2nd – the 3rd centuries A.D.) are the chain links with ornaments: a gem stone or a metal element (Romula – Reșca, the County of Olt, Tomis, Callatis, Noviodunum, Troesmis, Beroe, Fig. 2), or pendant earrings, with a circular buckler (as those from Tomis, autochthonous products made from a gold leaf and ornamented with a palmette) (there are similarities with the earrings from Thracia)¹³⁸; pearl rings were also found (like the one from Tomis). The earrings from Capidava, from the 2nd century A.D., without a pendant, have the form of a disc decorated with a vegetal motif, having a green cylindrical bead in the middle, attached with a gold thread; there are similarities with a pair of earrings found in a tomb from Sexaginta Prista (Ruse, Bulgaria), the difference is that they have a pendant¹³⁹. A unique piece of work is a pair of Roman earrings from the collection Orhidan which respects the Hellenistic model of the chain link thickened at one end, in this case having the form of a cornucopia decorated with filigree and druse (grapes, pomegranates, flowers) and made from gold leaf (the vine); from the cornucopia, a winged Eros springs – having his wings and the chest decorated with filigree, and the curls – by grain. The originality consists in the fact that the earrings are not made from gold leaf, but they are molten, this massiveness is specific neither to the Roman jewels,

¹³⁶ Zaharia Covacef, *Inele sigilare*, in *Pontica*, XXXV-XXXVI, Constanța, 2002-2003, p. 323-327.

¹³⁷ Radu Florescu, *Daco-romanii*, București, Ed. Meridiane, 1980, p. 149.

¹³⁸ Mihai Gramatopol, *Arta romană în România*, București, Ed. Meridiane, 2000, p. 136.

¹³⁹ Zaharia Covacef, *Considerații asupra unor articole de podoabă descoperite la Capidava*, in *Pontica*, XLII, Constanța, 2009, p. 466.

not to the Hellenistic ones¹⁴⁰. From the 3rd century A.D., in the Roman provinces – the ornamental element consists in metal battens, decorated with geometric patterns or in gems attached in *cabochon* (Tomis). What is specific to the 3rd and the 4th centuries A.D. are the polychrome earrings, with semiprecious stones¹⁴¹.



Fig.2: Earrings, 2nd-3rd centuries A.D., Noviodunum, Troesmis, Beroe (museum of Aegyssus)

In PaleoChristianity, there are earrings having a cruciform pendant, in *cloisonné* (the treasury from Histria, the 6th century A.D.): they weigh almost 8,9g and their length is of 6,3cm, being composed of an equal-arm cross (rounded at the ends) made from glass, enclosed by a gold thread with granules, and under the cross, there is a gold ball; the style entwines the Byzantine tendency with that of the migratory peoples, but the artistic achievement is modest¹⁴².

The necklace, worn around the neck and composed of several similar elements, reached our territory in Neolithic. We are left with gold necklaces from the Bronze Age and the beginning of the first period of the

¹⁴⁰ Mihai Gramatopol, *op. cit.*, p. 133-134.

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

¹⁴² Em. Popescu, *Cap. VII. Cultura (Partea a IV-a. Dobrogea în secolele IV-VI)*, in Dumitru Protase, Alexandru Suceveanu (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 653.

Iron Age: trumpery annulars (Turnu Măgurele); 5 silver bugles and 158 of gold from the treasury of Șmig (the County of Sibiu)¹⁴³; spherical beads from gold leaf (Boarta, the County of Sibiu)¹⁴⁴; flat, faceted beads, made of choral or white translucent glass (miniature amphorae (the Sarmatian necropolis from Chișcani, the County of Brăila, the 1st century A.D.); glass beads or vitrified glass, coloured, imported (Cetățeni, Popești, Poiana, the County of Gorj)¹⁴⁵. Beautiful paste glass beads, blue and purple, with white or yellow mosaic (having "the peacock eye") were found at Bâtca Doamnei, the County of Neamț, they had been brought from the East¹⁴⁶. Coloured glass pearls, melon shaped, from the Dacian fortresses, were found in the necropolis from Cașolț (the County of Sibiu) and Sopor de Câmpie (the County of Cluj)¹⁴⁷. Anyway, before the Roman conquest, the Dacians preferred silver for jewels. The *torques* are simple stranded metal bar necklaces (Poiana) or ending in snake protomes (gold, silver, bronze), having a Dacian origin (Marca, the County of Sălaj, Slimnic, Mediaș, the County of Sibiu, Senereuș, the County of Mureș, Colțești, the County of Alba – a *torques* made from four twisted threads, two of them neat and the other two pearled, with two zoomorphic endings¹⁴⁸. On the territory of today's Dobrogea, there were found, from the Hellenistic period, chains used by the Greeks: made of fine twined gold or of engraved semiprecious stones, or metal beads having an amphora shape, dies (Tomis, Callatis); glass beads were found in the Hellenistic tombs from Tomis.

After the conquest, these jewels become more and more refined. From the 1st century A.D., some forms of Hellenistic adornments are found in the Roman time: necklaces with motifs such as the crescent are specific to the embellishment of the Greek and Alexandrian East – these *lunulae* from the 1st century A.D. were found in the tombs of Tomis¹⁴⁹. The necklaces found in the cities on the territory of Dobrogea are extremely refined, made of semiprecious stones or of glass, fixed in gold threads, for example a necklace from the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. (Tomis) with bitronconic pearls and a clasp from the thread having two rosettes¹⁵⁰, or oval or round gold beads from the 2nd - the 3rd centuries A.D., from Noviodunum (Fig. 3) or Troesmis (Fig. 4). A gold chain from Callatis is composed of 8 cornelians and a pendant with a feminine bust *au repoussé*. Imported beads from coloured glass were also found in the Southern Dacia (from the 3rd century A.D.); from

¹⁴³ H. D. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 327-328, s.v. *Șmig*.

¹⁴⁴ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 63, s.v. *Boarta*.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 107, s.v. *colier*.

¹⁴⁶ Silviu Sanie, *Civilizația romană la est de Carpați și romanitatea pe teritoriul Moldovei, secolele II î.e.n. – III e.n.*, Iași, Ed. Junimea, 1981, p. 68.

¹⁴⁷ Mihail Macrea, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁴⁸ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 107, s.v. *Colțești*.

¹⁴⁹ Mihai Gramatopol, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

the area of Drobeta or that of Dierna, we mention a gold chain with black cylindrical or facet agates and with a glass paste cameo (a white relief on a dark background), depicting Hercules fighting against Cerberus (the 3rd century A.D.)¹⁵¹. Not even in the late ancient period do glass or vitrified glass beads miss, and also flat strings, having a *cloisonné* decor, for example the two simple strings (Pietroasa, the County of Buzău), made of massive cylindrical bar, the fragmented one has a runic inscription; the so-called "string-collar" is decorated in *cloisonné* with panels having vegetal motifs, embedded with semiprecious stones. Spherical and bitronconic octahedral glass beads remained (Târgșor, the County of Prahova) or were found on the territory of Dobrogea, at Beroe, the 4th century– the 6th century A.D. (Fig. 5) – a necklace with polyhedral glass and amber elements, worked according to the culture of the people living in Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov, a proof of the coming in of the jewellery forms of the migrators¹⁵².



Fig. 3, 4: Necklaces, 2nd -3rd centuries A.D., Noviodunum, Troesmis (museum of Aegyssus)

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

¹⁵² Radu Florescu, *Daco-romanii*, p. 171.



Fig. 5: Beads, semiprecious stones, Beroe (museum of Aegysus)

Closely connected with the type of necklace adornment is the **pendant** – also worn at the neck, but it is a single jewelry – a semiprecious stone, a medallion, an amulet, a small cross etc. – in general on a chain. From the ancient times, the so-called Dacian *saltaleone* are very well known (silver entwined chains ending in pendants), like it is the one from Rociu (the County of Argeş), or the one from the treasury of Cojocna (the County of Cluj), ending in three nails, or the one from Bistrița, ended in a triangular plate with a dotted decor). Having its origins in the dacian period also, we have a gold medallion with a feminine effigy, similar to the ones from the phaleras from Herăstrău, discovered in Popești. From the hellenistic time, in the 3rd century has its origins a gold pendant from Tomis, decorated with the bust of a nature deity (Aphrodite?) in relief *au repoussé*; the style is late classic, with harmonious anatomic proportions (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: Hellenistic medallion (museum of Tomis)

After the Roman conquest, specific iconography appears, especially mythological one – like in the case of the beater-shaped pendant-amulet of Hercules (Noviodunum), dating from the 3rd century A.D. by analogy with pieces from Bulgaria¹⁵³. From the late ancient period, we are left with gold chains with figure pendants (Șimleu Silvaniei, Someșeni, Sf. Gheorghe): from the treasury of Șimleu Silvaniei (around 400 d.Hr.) comes a gold necklace made from a chain that ends in a topaz globe, having hung pendants (5 vine leaves, the figurine of a man in a boat, 47 models of different tools), the style being a mixture of the Byzantine tradition with the geometric polichrome style of the German migrators¹⁵⁴; from the treasury of Apahida (the County of Cluj), we have a gold pendant with two opposite animal protomes, surrounded by 5 small bells at the end of a chain. From the treasury of Someșeni (the County of Cluj), it is very well known a big massive gold *pectoral* having the shape of a circular medallion, suspended by a weaving chain, with snake-shape ending catch; it was discovered at Someșeni, in a tomb of a Christian German princess (the 5th century A.D.), and the monogram of Jesus Christ is rendered. The decor is in *cloisonné*, with two registers which bolster the balance of the composition with a geometrical structure: a lateral register with the motif of the peacock eyes, the other is central discoidal, with an inscribed cross with widened arms, with semiprecious stones (that are now missing)¹⁵⁵. From the same treasury come the cruciform diamond pendants, a

¹⁵³ Mihai Gramatopol, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

¹⁵⁴ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 327, s.v. *Șimleu Silvaniei*.

¹⁵⁵ Radu Florescu, *Daco-romanii*, p. 210.

polyhedral bush shaped bead (similarities with the products of the Merovingian goldsmiths¹⁵⁶).

Among the PaleoChristian jewels, we have engolpion crosses (used by the hierarchs of the Eastern Church as ritual adornments) – as it is that from the 6th century A.D. from Capidava: a (Latin) bronze cross with clubs ends, which had a semiprecious stone in the centre and on the bottoms attached in *cabochon* (they are perished now, having been burnt in the fire that destroyed the late settlement). Inside, the cross had a saint relict¹⁵⁷. Again in Scythia Minor, they were found, in the treasury of the 6th century A.D. from Histria, two red gold crosses of 20 carats (of 4,4cm and respectively of 3,5cm heigh). They are similar regarding the shape, the style and the technique: small gold battens firstly gated and then agglutinated. The big one has flared arms, with a red stone in the centre; the incised lines in the shape of a fir branch decorate the arms; at the intersection angles of the arms, there is a rosette; in the middle of the decorative net, one can see the *chrismon* surrounded by a circle. The small cross has a granat in the centre, surrounded by a ring of granules; the decor is identical with the one from the big cross; the endings of the arms are less flared and they have only the holes where the gold granules were ingrained. The execution of the jewels is modest¹⁵⁸. Sucidava – Izvoarele, the County of Constanța is the place where fifteen small plumb crosses have their origin, two made of bronze and two of silver, most of them are fragmented (the 4th - the 6th centuries A.D.)¹⁵⁹; one of the crosses made of plumb is relief decorated, immitating pearls¹⁶⁰. Gold crosses were found in callatis, too, from the 4th - 5th centuries A.D. (Fig. 7), also having precious stones in the middle, with the widened endings of the arms. Small crosses were also found in the Trajan Dacia – for example, a cross imported from Porolissum – Moigrad, the County of Sălaj (Fig. 8)¹⁶¹ – a plumb pendant from the 5th - the 6th centuries A.D., of 5cm heigh, a Latin cross now corrupted, briefly worked and having a decor formed of pointed circles and a later made hole which replaced the hanging link (what places her among pectoral crosses)¹⁶² –, templets of burnt clay were discovered – as the one from the 5th – the 6th century A.D. from Sânmiclăuș (the County of

¹⁵⁶ H. D. și R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 316, s.v. *Someșeni*

¹⁵⁷ Radu Florescu, *Capidava*, București, Ed. Meridiane, 1965, p. 19.

¹⁵⁸ Em. Popescu, *Cap. VII. Cultura (Partea a IV-a. Dobrogea în secolele IV-VI)*, in Dumitru Protase, Alexandru Suceveanu (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 653.

¹⁵⁹ Radu Vulpe, Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei*, vol. II, București, Ed. Academiei R.S.R., 1968, p. 500.

¹⁶⁰ V. Culică, *Obiecte de caracter creștin din epoca romano-bizantină găsite la Pîrjoaia – Dobrogea*, in *Pontice*, II, Constanța, 1969, p. 356.

¹⁶¹ Dumitru Gheorghe Tamba, *Porolissum. Mic ghid arheologic*, Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Artă-Zalău, Zalău, 2007, p. 18.

¹⁶² Nicolae Gudea, *În legătură cu o nouă descoperire cu caracter creștin la Porolissum*, in *Acta Musei Porolissensis*, Zalău, VI, 1982, p. 155.

Alba¹⁶³) or the ones from Străulești (Bucharest), Dulceanca (the County of Teleorman), Budureasa (the County of Bihor), Ploiești, Cândești (the County of Vrancea), Izvoru Dulce (the County of Buzău), these being a proof of the series production of these pieces. These materials belonged to the local population that remained in the area after the Visigoths and the Taifals went away in the Empire¹⁶⁴. Also the east of Moldavia also offers such objects such as the ones from the 3rd century A.D., they are in a reduced number and their dating is uncertain, such as the nacre crosses from Barboși (the County of Galați): a 2cm pendant-cross made from nacre was discovered in a house (the coins from Severus Alexander date it in the first half of the 3rd century A.D.¹⁶⁵) – a rectangular pendant with a cross made from interior fret sawing¹⁶⁶ – characterized by Ion Barnea as having a ”probable, but not absolutely certain Christian character”, because of the too early data¹⁶⁷; moreover, again at Barboși, a nacre 1,7cm¹⁶⁸ small cross was discovered, as a piece of jewelry to be applied on wood or on cloths or worn as an amulet¹⁶⁹: with equal arms and slightly spread at the endings and terminated in an angle (dated from the first half of the 3rd century A.D. by the coins from Heliogabalus – 218-222 A.D.) (similarities can be made with almost identical crosses from the Crimea and Palestina, from the 3rd – 4th centuries A.D.¹⁷⁰). Templets and jigs for producing Christian objects, especially small crosses were discovered at Davideni (the County of Neamț), Traian (the County of Bacău), Costești (the County of Iași), Botoșana (the County of Suceava). A templet made from an elephant’s bone, discovered in Costești has the images of three characters¹⁷¹. Crosses – like the bronze one from Davideni (the County of Neamț), the second half of the 5th century – the first half of the 6th century A.D., or the one made from plumb discovered in Ruginoasa (the County of Iași) –, but templets for crosses were also found in many settlements from Moldavia in the second half of the 6th – 7th century A.D. They were local products, which indicates the fact that a big number of the inhabitants of the area in this period were Christianized (Traian, the County of Bacău, Davideni, Botoșana – where workshops for teeming small crosses were discovered)¹⁷². Also from the extra-Carpathian space, from the

¹⁶³ Mircea Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁶⁴ Nelu Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

¹⁶⁵ Virgil Lungu, *Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic*, Sibiu – Constanța, Ed. T.C. Sen, 2000, p. 24.

¹⁶⁶ Dan Gh. Theodor, *Creștinismul la est de Carpați, de la origini și pînă în secolul al XIV-lea*, Iași, Ed. Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, 1991, p. 75.

¹⁶⁷ Nelu Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁹ Virgil Lungu, *Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic*, p. 24

¹⁷⁰ Dan Gh. Theodor, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁷¹ Mircea Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, p. 93; Mihai Bărbulescu, *I. De la începuturile civilizației la sinteza românească*, in Mihai Bărbulescu et al., *op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹⁷² Nelu Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

necropolis of Mihălășeni (the County of Botoșani), we have three circular medallions from teemed glass, oriental imports from Syria and Egypt¹⁷³ probably, just like others of this type discovered in the former provinces of the Roman Empire – Balcanic, Sicillian, German regions: analogies with glass or faience representations from Panonnia (the necropolis from Keszthely-Dobogo or on the territory of Poland, from the 3rd and the 4th century A.D., or of the Crimea, from the 1st and the 2nd centuries A.D.)¹⁷⁴. But analogies can also be made with glass medallions found in Tulcea and Babadag-Topraichioi¹⁷⁵. A medallion is olive, with a relief turtle ingrained on one of the faces, the second is blue and has a representation of a front-seen feminine bust, similar to the imperial effigies on the coins¹⁷⁶, the third is olive and it has the image of Daniel as a orant, flanked by two lions. The first are pagan, the last one is PaleoChristian (they are dated from the 5th – 6th century A.D.)¹⁷⁷.



Fig. 7: Gold crosses (museum of Callatis)



Fig. 8: Plumb crosses, Porolissum (museum of Sălaj)

The fibula is a wire stich with a leg, an arch and a bristle that has appeared on our territory since the Bronze Age, it became a jewel in the Iron Age – Ostrovu Mare (the County of Mehedinți), Apulum (Alba Iulia); from Trestiana (the County of Vaslui), there are two bronze fibulae with a spring leg and wire stich protective object having the shape of a buckler decorated with punched circled¹⁷⁸. There are several types of fibulae from the Dacian times: with zoomorphic motifs, sometimes having the shape of gammée cross

¹⁷³ Octavian-Liviu Șovan, *Zorile creștinismului în nord-estul Moldovei – repere arheologice* (3), in *Forum cultural*, anul VI, nr. 1, martie, Botoșani, 2006 (20), p. 5.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁵ Idem, *Un mormânt cu medalioane romane de sticlă din necropola de la Mihălășeni (jud. Botoșani)*, in *Arheologia Moldovei*, XI, Academia Română – Filiala Iași, Institutul de Arheologie – Iași, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, 1987, p. 232.

¹⁷⁶ The first time, it appears as a front representation on a coin – of the Empress Licinia Eudoxia (the wife of Valentinian III from 437 A.D.). *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁷ Dan Gh. Theodor, *op. cit.*, p. 79-80.

¹⁷⁸ L. R. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 342, s.v. *Trestiana*.

(Șaeș, the County of Mureș), with bows, sometimes with the battle-axe shape of the leg (Cojocna, the County of Cluj), with a rhombic buckler decorated with semicircular incisions (Șaeș, Merii Goala, Sărăcsău, the County of Alba) or with a sword shape pendant (the treasury from Suseni, the County of Mureș)¹⁷⁹, or with a deltoid buckler decorated with incisions, bends and beads (Sărăcsău). Fibulae were found, having a buckler decorated *au repoussé* with an effigy (Bălănești, Coada Malului)¹⁸⁰, those from the treasury of Bălănești have a leaf shape, with a detailed feminine figure, with a curled combing and a tiara.

After the Roman Conquest, in the two Roman provinces – and even outside them (in Poiana, Răcătău, Brad) – fibulae from the 1st century A.D. could be found, they have several types, "powerfully profiled", trumpet-shaped, "with eyes", Nauheim (spoon-shaped)¹⁸¹, the type brought from the Empire: for example, the crossbow fibulae – Ulpia Traiana, from the 3rd century A.D., made of iron, with a very curved body, with a 8 spire resort¹⁸², or those from Libida, the 4th century A.D. (Fig. 9), made of golden bronze, with a leg twisted beneath (these are not specific to the Romans, but they were brought from Germany¹⁸³); there are also the fibulae of the Vârtope type: three anchor-shaped fibulae from Ațel (the County of Sibiu), Beroe (the 4th century A.D.) (Fig.10). Moreover, enamelled fibulae can be found, from the 2nd – the 3rd centuries A.D. (this practice was sorbed by the Romans from the Celtic Gallia and spread in Dacia) – therefore, import pieces from Gallia, Germany, maybe even local ones (a workshop in Tibiscum?)¹⁸⁴. The special military-type fibulae from the 2nd century A.D. were discovered at Săpata de Jos (the County of Argeș) and, respectively, at Porolissum, they are almost identical: they have the word "RMA" ("R(O)MA") fretted; furthermore, the letter-shaped fibulae from Porolissum and Sântămăria de Piatră (the County of Hunedoara), the 2nd century A.D., are rare¹⁸⁵. The cross-shaped fibulae having bulbs at the end belong to the late epoch: Apahida – with the batten decorated *en creux*, and also those bulb-ended: Ațel, the County of Sibiu, or those found in the County of Bihor or at Apulum, Potaissa, Micia, Sucidava – Celei)¹⁸⁶; Tomis, Histria. The fibulae of the Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov type (Alexandru Odobescu, the County of Ialomița) are made of bronze, with

¹⁷⁹ H. D. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 325, s.v. *Suseni*.

¹⁸⁰ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 154, s.v. *fibulă*.

¹⁸¹ Silviu Sanie, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁸² D. Alicu, S. Cociș, *Podoabe romane de la Ulpia Traiana*, in *Apulum*, XXV, Alba Iulia, 1989, p. 227.

¹⁸³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁴ Sorin Cociș, *Fibule emailate din Dacia romană*, in *Apulum*, XXIII, Alba Iulia, 1986, p. 159-167.

¹⁸⁵ Idem, *Fibule cu inscripție din Dacia Romană*, in *Acta Musei Porolissensis*, Zalău, XI, 1987, p. 160-161.

¹⁸⁶ Sever Dumitrașcu, *Fibule romane de tipul „capete de ceapă” descoperite în Crișana*, in *Crisia*, VI, Oradea, 1976, p. 35-57.

the leg twisted beneath and having a half disc, or the fibulae having a deltoid head and a rhomboidal leg (from the Christian necropolis (?) of the beginning of the 5th century A.D. from Botoșani). Among all the jewels of the migrator peoples, fibulae are those which were mostly sorbed by the autochthonous people: those made of silver, with a half disc, having north-Pontic origins, brought by the Goths, for example those found in Napoca – Cluj-Napoca or those from Apulum – one made of silver and the other – of bronze (the first half of the 5th century A.D.)¹⁸⁷. Like all the adornments of the migrators, (the big) fibulae are covered in precious stones placed in metal or in pendants; the forms cleverly take up the Roman ones, the execution is delicate. Ten pairs of big fibulae made of golden silver – two circular pairs, two ending in lion heads, the others of the half disc type, decorated with garnet cabochons and also a fibula with bulb ends and an onyx disc (from the treasury of Șimleu Silvaniei, around 400 A.D.)¹⁸⁸ – shows a mixture of the Byzantine style with the geometric polychrome style of the German migrators¹⁸⁸. A big fibulae from the tomb of a German princess from Starchiojd (the County of Prahova), made of silver, has a half disc with zoomorphic bumps (bird heads)¹⁸⁹ with gold elements; the decor is a netting of warm and *cloisonné*; it is a type of jewel which is characteristic for the beginning of the 5th century A.D.¹⁹⁰. The fibulae with hominoid endings discovered at Plenița and Coșoveni (the County of Dolj) are also barbaric, or the digital ones or with buttons from Drobeta, Histria, Dinogetia – Garvăn, the County of Tulcea, Beroe. The onion-ended fibulae or the digitate ones from Dobrogea have a controverted origin (German or Slavonic) and dating (the 6th -7th centuries A.D.), the most valuable one is the big fibula from Histria (19,8cm length), in teemed and golden bronze, ending in a sketched animal protome, having an excised geometric decor: spiral motifs, completed by 11 semiprecious stones¹⁹¹; the same type of fibula is the one from Beroe, ended in a motif that suggests an animal head. Zoomorphic fibulae also belong to the migrator peoples, with *cabochon* and *cloisonné*: from the "Treasury of Pietroasa", we are left with a big bird of prey shaped fibula, the body ornamented with *cabochon* and four gold pendants; a pair of identical fibulae (and also of the "bulb-headed" type, just like the big one), united by a bird-shaped chain, in *cloisonné* and *cabochon*; there is also an identical fibulae with the pair, but it is small and simple. The groups of sparkling stones create a certain rhythm of the "composition" on each of these pieces' body, there are subtle visual

¹⁸⁷ Mihail Macrea, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

¹⁸⁸ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 327, s.v. *Șimleu Silvaniei*.

¹⁸⁹ The motif of the bird head is preferred by the Goths who adopted it from the Iranian and the central Asian repertory. Cf. Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, *Tezaurul de la Pietroasa*, București, Ed. Meridiane, 1967, p. 45.

¹⁹⁰ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 317, s.v. *Starchiojd*.

¹⁹¹ Radu Vulpe, Ion Barnea, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 497.

dialogues established among them; clarity and order somehow annihilate the impression of overagglomeration of the decor.



Fig. 9: Fibula, Libida (museum of Aegyssus) Fig. 10: Fibulae, Beroe (museum of Aegyssus)

For the PaleoChristian period, a beautiful fibula comes from the extra-Carpathian space, (from an inhumation tomb from Barboși): made of gold, with an onion bulb shape for the ends, with the arch having a ring-barked inscription in Latin with the name INNOCENS (of the deceased) (name that belongs to the early Christian onomatology of the time, but also to the pagan religious one¹⁹² (the second half of the 3th century A.D.¹⁹³) (dated by the coins from Claudius Gothicus, 268-270 A.D.)¹⁹⁴. Furthermore, the fibule from the 6th century from Davideni is PaleoChristian, having the image of a nimbed face on the arch, it may be Christ: details of the beard face can be distinguished, represented in a very small space (the entire piece has 4,8cm). Analogies can be made with the fibule that belongs to the same century, found at Odarci (Dobrič), Bulgaria, having a nimbed face surrounded by 4 birds¹⁹⁵.

The bracelet has embellished the arms (or the forearms) of women since Neolithic times. Dating from the first Iron Age, a gold bar bracelet with crescent-shaped ends and with an engraved linear ornament was found at Pipea (the Village of Nadeș, the County of Mureș)¹⁹⁶; bracelets with a linear and hachured decor, with geometrical motifs that have their origin at the end of the Bronze Age, from the treasury from Șpălnaca (the County of Alba)¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹² Nelu Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

¹⁹³ Victor Henrich Baumann, *Sângele martirilor*, Constanța, Ed. Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, 2004, p. 41.

¹⁹⁴ Virgil Lungu, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Dan Gh. Theodor, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹⁹⁵ Ioan Mitrea, *Romanitate și creștinism în secolele V-VI în lumea satelor din spațiul carpato-nistrean*, in *Zargidava*, I, Bacău, 2002, p. 28.

¹⁹⁶ H. D. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 275, s.v. *Pipea*.

¹⁹⁷ L. R. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 328, s.v. *Șpălnaca*.

The Dacians left us with their typical spiral bracelets, as it is that dating from the end of the Iron Age from Băiceni (the County of Iași), having rock-goat protomes at their ends. Other simple circular Dacian bracelets end in sketched heads of animals: the treasury from Sâncrăieni (the County of Harghita), or the one from Poiana (the County of Galați) – snake heads; snake protomes are also the ends of the one-spiral bracelets from Totești (the County of Hunedoara); from the treasury of Slimnic (the County of Sibiu), we have the bracelets with horse heads or the spiral bracelets from the treasuries of Cojocna (the County of Cluj), Bălănești (the County of Gorj), Rociu (the County of Argeș), Coada Malului (the County of Prahova)¹⁹⁸. After the Roman Conquest, bracelets continued to be used: bracelets with free, closed ends or with a closing system were found at Ulpia Traiana – in analogy to the other provinces¹⁹⁹); it is frequently met the type of metal bar bracelet, with thickened ends: a silver bracelet from a later settlement (the 5th century A.D.) comes from the Fortress Bănița (the County of Hunedoara)²⁰⁰, or with sketched snake protomes: Velț (the County of Sibiu), Șimleu Silvaniei. Similarities between the gold bracelets that belong to the treasury from Suluc (the County of Tulcea) with pieces from Apahida and Someșeni prove the fact that they were re-used in the Roman period²⁰¹. An extraordinary bracelet from the point of view of form and decoration is the one discovered in Orșova (now to be seen at the Museum of Vienna): it is composed of a closed circular gold strand, having three hanged pendants – one is just a square bar, the other two are each made from a square bar connected with other square- and triangle-shaped bars²⁰².

The tiara, a sign of power, but also a jewel worn on the forehead, has existed ever since the beginning of the first Iron Age. Two golden tiaras were found at Galeșu (the County of Constanța): cone head, having the borders ornamented with three arrays of hammered relief points. From the Hellenistic period, in Dobrogea, the Greek tombs preserve narrow metal ribbons ornamented with linear motifs *au repoussé* (Tomis, Neptun, ornamented in the centre with a false gem from blue glass attached in *cabochon*, surrounded by leaves from golden leaf²⁰³).

The crowns from bay laurel leaves made from golden leaf (Apulum, Callatis) are the tiaras specific to the Roman age: two leaves were probably left from a tiara (it may have been made from textile, given the holes on these elements), tooled by compression in the gold leaf (Beroe).

¹⁹⁸ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 68, s.v. *brățară*.

¹⁹⁹ D. Alicu, S. Cociș, *Podoabe romane...*, in *Ap*, XXV, Alba Iulia, 1989, p. 229.

²⁰⁰ H. D. și R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 57, s.v. *Bănița*.

²⁰¹ Mihai Gramatopol, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

²⁰² Radu Florescu, Ion Miclea, *Tezaurul transilvane la Kunsthistorisches din Viena*, București, Ed. Meridiane, 1979, p. 38.

²⁰³ Radu Florescu, *Daco-romanii*, p. 152.

The Hun migrators have rich and extraordinary artifacts, their tiaras, found in the extra-Carpathian territory, are characterized by the ornaments with gems in cabochon (deltoid granates, for example, as in the case of the item from Gherăseni, Buhăeni, the County of Iași, from the 5th century A.D.) or with pearls (the treasury from Conțești, the County of Iași, the same century)²⁰⁴. The golden tiara from Rotopănești (the County of Suceava) also needs to be mentioned²⁰⁵.

Therefore, the fingerprint of Christianity is more than visible, the new religion influenced the art of garments especially from the point of view of the symbolics which decorate these items.

Anyway, each type of jewelry records the transformations that took place in the period of Late Antiquity, concerning form, ornaments and the ancient technique, going as far as the aspect of PaleoChristian ones.

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²⁰⁴ R. F. in Radu Florescu et al. (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 132, s.v. *diademă*

²⁰⁵ Mihai Bărbulescu, *I. De la începuturile civilizației la sinteza românească*, in Mihai Bărbulescu et al., *op. cit.*, p. 91.

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THE ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOTIVE PAINTING

Raluca Minea*

Abstract: Votive painting is a theme inspired by some monetary emissions issued in some cities of Asia Minor conquered by the Romans. The pieces relate to the conquest of important fortress-cities as Smyrna, Perinthos, Tarsos, Nicomedia. In Byzantium, the theme of the votive painting adopts the idea that the autocratic emperor is Lord of the terrestrial church, but in the same time an ordinary mortal. The illustrations show the ruler in a kneeling or standing position founded in both the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

Keywords: votive painting, worship, divinity, *apocombion*.

The votive representation very well reflects the relationship between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar, between the Church and the State, the power relationship between the leaders of the two institutions and how Man belongs to the two worlds. Votive paintings are also the source of theological and political messages. The image of the founders in votive paintings provide information about physical stature and their attitude, about the aspect of the churches and the personages clothing, fashion time, but also about the ceremonial costumes of the rulers.

The etymological origin of the terms *votiv* and *ex voto* has in common the concept of “faith promise”, an offering of an object to divinity. Unlike the first term that comes from lat. *votivus* <*votum* meaning promise, *ex voto* includes the idea of offering an object to commemorate a vow or to express thanks for a favor received or a danger resolved positively²⁰⁶.

“ex-voto is a formula to denote an offering, a gift made to a deity, following promises. (<lat. ex voto)”²⁰⁷.

“votive, a adj. Which concerns a promise; which was given to divinity, to perform a solemn promise. Votive painting = painting fragment of a monument depicting the founders, usually with miniature monument in his hands. [See fr. votif, lat. votivus <*votum* - promise]”²⁰⁸.

“Votivus,-a,-um - adj. votive, promised the gods; wanted, pleasant”²⁰⁹.

Votive painting is a theme inspired by some monetary emissions issued in some cities of Asia Minor conquered by the Romans. Such coins, medals and seals are relatively rare, with one side that represents the bust of the

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²⁰⁶ <http://dexonline.ro>

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁸ <http://www.archeus.ro/lingvistica>.

²⁰⁹ <http://www.limbalatina.ro/dictionar.php>.

conqueror king and the other side with the protective deity in the act of dedication, holding the model of the temple²¹⁰. These are examples of homage or consecration of an "object" to a person or deity, in general terms.

A monarch could worship a gift, a building dedicated to a deity. Such examples exist in Egyptian Assyrian and Babylonian antiquity.

In Antiquity, the monarch was considered sacred, and he was the beneficiary of a veneration that was preserved and transfigured in time in the Christian church. The highest human virtues were attributed to kings, seen by the theologians as similar spiritual reason leading bodies²¹¹. The list of imperial virtues, inspired by classical ethics, comprised justice, bravery (courage and perseverance), philanthropy, generosity, chastity, love of truth, intellect (reason)²¹². In the Middle Ages, the monarch had to have the same religion as the majority in the state church to have adhesion people. Iconography conceived for the ruler's image was supposed to represent the divine right of his power by convincing formulas and to glorify his virtues and victories. The monarch's gesture of building a church was a moral duty and a fulfillment way of the ancient tradition virtue, the *kalokagathia*.

In ancient Rome, there was a custom, that the victorious generals will build temples, to which they will offer part of the spoils of war. These buildings constructed in the last centuries of the Republic are described as "monuments of victory" by modern authors. L. Pietilä-Castrens enumerates more than thirty such edifices built by victorious generals. More than 4-5 are temples²¹³.

Many ancient religions consist of a continuous negotiation between humans and deities, more widespread in the Roman religion, and expressed according to the dictum *do ut des* ("I give so that you will give")²¹⁴. One of the pivotal concepts of the Roman religion was *deorum pax* ("peace of the gods"), in which human freedom was in close relationship with the one of the gods, becoming equal partners with each other in a perpetuum mobile of mutual benefits and obligations. The idea of mutual obligation (*fides*), assumed on the one hand the respect for the ancient religion, coming from the gods themselves (it was the belief that the peoples who lived in ancient times

²¹⁰ Voica Pușcașu, *Actul de ctitorire ca fenomen istoric în Țara Românească și Moldova până la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea*, București, 2001, p. 133; Mrs. Voica Pușcașu actually write that on these coins "Roman emperors appear in representations wearing in their hands the model of the temple dedicated to the protective goddess"; V. Lazarev, *Istoria picturii bizantine*, ed. Merdiane, București, 1980, vol. I, p. 294.

²¹¹ Aristotel, *Etica Nicomahică* (ed. Stela Petecel, București, 1988), Cartea IV, 1122 b.

²¹² D. Angelov, *The ideology of Imperial Government in Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium (1204-1330)*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 134-155.

²¹³ L. Pietilä-Castren, *Magnificentia publica. The Victory Monuments of the Roman Generals in the Era of the Punic Wars*, Helsinki, Societas Scientiarum Fennica (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum; 84), 1987.

²¹⁴ N. Zgrăvu, *Curs de istoria religiei romane*, partea I, Iași, 2001, p. 90.

were closer to gods²¹⁵), and on the other hand, keeping the promises (*vota*, sg. *votum*) made to divinity - building temples, organizing games or festivities, worship offerings and so on)²¹⁶. Thus, the act of worshipping objects is a form of establishing a religious relationship between the person who dedicates the offering and divinity, thereby recognizing the membership to a certain cult, and expecting a divine sign or answer in the same time.

On these exhibits, it stands out clearly what and who offers and the religious symbol of the city - the temple image - as well as the gratitude towards the one to whom the offering is made. The pieces relate to the conquest of important fortress-cities as Smyrna, Perinthos, Tarsos, Nicomedia (Fig.1, Fig.2, Fig.3, Fig.4, Fig.5).

Temples of worship exist in every town. Every temple is dedicated to one god (or pharaon). Inside it, there is a statue of the god, which represents the place of formal religious rituals.

For the Romans, there was a close relationship between divinity (Gods) and the imperial propaganda. The official numismatic iconography was seeking to spread worldwide the idea of universality and absolute power. In Byzantium, this power is reinforced by the total identity of the emperor with the divinity. The monarch validates his legitimacy in front of the world (Christian or not) with a magnificent gesture, building a cathedral, church or temple (before Christianity) (Fig.6, Fig.8).

A seal belonging to a private collection, Georgi Stoianov-Mokana, of Novi Pazar, has the icon of Virgin Mary with the Child in her arms, on one side and also a man wearing a tiara and laurel and offering the Virgin the model of a church. On the other side, there is a monogram. This is the only seal with the founder described not being a ruler. It seems that the male figure represents Andronikos Rogerios, the son of John Rogerios and Mary Comnenos. He was born in 1124, and in 1139 he married Irene Doukaina (Fig.7).

It seems that there are narrative sources which establish a close connection between this name and the seal. It is about the lyrics of a court poet, Theodore Balsamon who glorifies in verses the construction of Monastery Virgin Chrysokamariotissa by "sebastos" Andronikos Rogerios. By comparing the seal text with the lyrics text, it was established the connection between the founder and the name.

Adopted by the late Roman Empire iconography, the theme of the votive portrait became widespread in both the Western and the Eastern Empire²¹⁷.

At the beginning, Christian art adopted imperial forms of art. Christ is represented as the Lord seated on the throne, surrounded by apostles and

²¹⁵ *Ibidem*, apud Cicero, *De leg.*, II, 11, 27.

²¹⁶ R. D. Weigel, *Roman generals and the vowing of temples*, 500-100 BC, in *CM*, 49, 1997, p. 122.

²¹⁷ V. Lazarev, *Istoria picturii bizantine*, București, 1980, vol. I, p. 294.

saints, ready to receive the law in His covered hands as demanded the ceremony at the imperial court. The emperor was His representative on earth, thus establishing a link between the Church and the State.

Paleochristian art has developed in the ancient Christian period (1th-5th century AD). In the early days of Christianity, in the catacomb paintings, we can notice the use of figurative and symbolic imagery (fish, pigeon, lamb), avoiding precise anthropomorphic representations. Later on, ecclesiastical art took secular symbols, especially those related to the imperial power, turning them into symbols of divine power.

In the middle of 3rd century, the first edict of acceptance allows the construction of house-churches in Rome (*domus ecclesiae*), but they were destroyed in the 4th century, during the last great persecution²¹⁸ (Fig. 9).

In votive painting, it is portrayed the donor in communion with the Church. This image was, therefore, a confession of faith particularly important for strengthening the authority of the Christian Prince.

In Byzantium, the theme of the votive painting adopts the idea that the autocratic emperor, which has divine power given by the Holy Spirit for earthly leadership, and blessed through unction, is Lord of the terrestrial church, but in the same time an ordinary mortal²¹⁹.

In Byzantine art, the symbol of offering was represented in iconography according to the Roman tradition as symbolic image of votive objects held by the donor in his hands; in the case of religious worship buildings, the founder was featured holding the church *in nuce* in his hands and offering it to deity²²⁰.

The idea of presenting the founders offering the model of the edifice to the deity is reinforced in the 10th century, and it will become classic for the Orthodox Christian world, concomitantly with the representation of *apocombion* (represented by a bag with gold coins) as an offering for a particular ecclesiastical edifice²²¹ (Fig. 9).

It is known that the Akathistos Hymn has an important votive connotation in Constantinople, even if we can not know for sure if the original purpose for which it was composed was votive or purely liturgical²²². It represented a religious service for the Mother of God by "the city of Constantinople, following her release from the "enemies' tyranny" and from the greedy invaders' attacks. Military and patriotic symbolism is quite often met in Byzantine hymnography, especially with reference to the Mother of God (Theotokos). This fact is obvious if we take into account the

²¹⁸ <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/diverse/arta-primelor-veacuri-69639.html>.

²¹⁹ Voica Pușcașu, *Actul de ctitorire ca fenomen istoric în Țara Românească și Moldova până la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea*, București, 2001, p. 134.

²²⁰ Elisabeta Negrău, *Cultul suveranului sud-est European și cazul Țării Românești. O perspectivă artistică*, Iași, 2011, p. 21.

²²¹ *Ibidem*.

²²² Elisabeta Negrău, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

close relationship between the Church and the Byzantine State and the dedication of the imperial city to the Virgin, so all positive political events were attributed to her intercession.

The votive mosaics from St. Sophia present the imperial family participating in the ceremonies. The oldest of the two mosaics depicts Jesus sitting on the throne between the empress Zoe (1028-1050) and the emperor Constantine Monomachos (1042-1055). Zoe gives Jesus a scroll listing the donations for St. Sophia, while Constantine Monomachos, (Zoe's third husband), offers an *apocombion*²²³ (Fig. 10).

On the other side of the window, the right and left part of the Virgin and the Child are decorated in the tradition inherited from the predecessors, John II Comnenus, with his first wife, the Hungarian Princess, King Ladislau's daughter, Pirsca, rebaptized Irene. Like Zoe, the Empress wears a list of donations²²⁴ (Fig. 10).

The mosaic above the south entrance in the church St. Sophia of Constantinople (end of 10th century), depicts the two greatest emperor: Constantine and Justinian. Both of them have offerings for the Virgin, Constantine offers the city he founded, Constantinople, and Justinian offers the model of St. Sophia that he build²²⁵ (Fig. 11).

The founder of the former Chora church, now called Kariye Djami, Theodor Metochites, appears kneeling in the traditional costume of ceremony, offering the model of the church (built approximately in the range 1315 to 1320) to Jesus, represented on the throne²²⁶.

The general motivation of the monarchs for the building of ecclesiastical edifices is the Christian duty to perform acts of piety. There was not a theology of Christian donation, however, in patristic writings, these acts of piety constitute ways of fulfillment, of mercy and sacrifice by the faithful²²⁷. The monarchs' mentality of respecting the personal duty to build a religious monument was based on the Scripture, on the example of the Kings David and Solomon, the founders of the Temple of God in Jerusalem, a concept that appears in Byzantium, in the largest town programs, belonging to the Emperors Constantine and Justinian.

Since the beginnings of ecclesiastical architecture, in Moldavia and Wallachia, it was used the procedure of painting of worship places, as demonstrated during the archaeological research study on some churches²²⁸.

²²³ <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/arta-bizantina/arta-bizantina-ix-xiii/panouri-votive-sfanta-sofia-constantinopol-67334.html>.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²²⁵ A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin. Recherche sur l'art officiel de l'Empire d'Orient*, Paris, 1936, pp. 109-110.

²²⁶ Voica Pușcașu, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

²²⁷ Elisabeta Negrău, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²²⁸ Such researches has been conducted to Putna, Probota, ancient Humor, ancient Moldovița, Neamț.

Also, documented information such as the act issued after December 20, 1414 and before April 8, 1419, concerning the donation given to painters Nikita and Dobre shows this fact²²⁹.

Many of the ecclesiastical buildings have disappeared, and among those who remained, many do not preserve the original painting which in many cases was removed and replaced. In addition, recent investigations emphasized the great ecclesiastical known edifices. Too little references are made to other edifices which hold important data regarding this research.

In the ecclesiastical mural painting from the Romanian space, takeovers of the Byzantine culture medium - direct or mediated - were made creatively and not mimetic, as evidenced by the existence of an exploratory stage, in terms of the location of the votive painting in churches' iconography. Another element found in paintings was in the presentation of the donation act, which was inspired by the European Orthodox context²³⁰.

The Argeş church preserved some of the oldest examples of such paintings. The prince Nicholas Alexander is presented kneeling in the same place in the church, as in the votive painting of Kariye Djami. Both paintings are considered votives, but the Romanian voivode appears in the Deisis scene. He does not hold a model of the church in his hands, unlike Theodor Metochites' paintings, which worship Christ in the Chora church (Fig. 12).

Thus, in the narthex of St. Sophia in Constantinople, Emperor Leo VI (886-912) is depicted miniaturized in the *proskinesis* act at the feet of Jesus²³¹. This gesture of deep devotion is related, at its origin, with the custom of kissing the feet of the emperor, or symbolically, of those of Christ (Fig. 13). In iconography, this gesture represents kneeling with the body bent to the ground in front of Christ sitting on the throne²³². Such scenes are spread in the iconography of the mosaics, wall paintings and in the Byzantine icons²³³.

The mural painting of Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (1305), presents the donor Enrico Scrovegni kneeling, as he offers the model of the chapel to the Virgin Mary. For the first time one hundred years before Van Eyck, in the painting of Giotto, Virgin Mary and the saints have the same size. This painting did not become an artistic convention at the time, but much later²³⁴ (Fig. 14).

Some examples are found in Wallachia, in the portrait of Nicholas Alexander, already mentioned, and in Moldavia in the votive paintings from Bălineşti²³⁵ and Părhăuţi²³⁶ churches. In these paintings, the ruler is

²²⁹ DRH, A, I, pp. 55-57.

²³⁰ Voica Puşcaşu, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

²³¹ V. Lazarev, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

²³² <http://www.galeriadearta.com/dictionar>.

²³³ Voica Puşcaşu, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

²³⁴ <http://www.pinpush.com/painters/Giotto-Di-Bondone.htm>.

²³⁵ Corina Popa, *Bălineşti*, Bucureşti, 1981, p. 20.

represented kneeling and his portrait is described in a smaller size compared to divinity and holy intercessors. There are no examples of rulers represented in this position in the worship act in the votive paintings in Transylvania.

At Bălinești, the votive painting is similar to the funeral representation with a votive significance of logothet Tăutu from Arbore church. The miniatural stature, the schematic style, but characterized by a rich colourful palette with gold accents, also characterize the painting of Arbore church.

The church model representation respecting the essential characteristics of the monument as well as the meticulous description of the founder's family costumes give those votive paintings a documentary value.

In mural votive painting in the Romanian space, this system of representation was abandoned relatively early (faster in Wallachia) - as evidenced by the votive paintings from Cozia and Cotmeana monasteries and those dating from the period that begins with the reign of Stephen the Great for Moldavia²³⁷. Besides, except the already cited cases, in which the founders are represented in kneeling position, all votive paintings preserved until today comprise only representations in standing position.

The existence of a phase of searches before the crystallization of a system of representation is proved by choosing the place where the votive painting is located. Votive paintings are placed in Byzantium in various locations of the building, from the altar to the narthex and the chapel. During the 9th and 10th centuries, as changes occur in the arrangement of scenes contained in iconographic representations, "portraits of founders are transferred from the nave to the narthex"²³⁸. However, in 1118, in St. Sophia Cathedral, it is made the votive portrait of John Comnenus and his wife, Irene, mentioned above, placed in the southern tribune.

Beside the portrait of Nicholas Alexander, already mentioned, in the north of the western wall of the nave of the same royal church Argeș, it is made the votive painting of Vladislav I and of his wife, Ana (repainted in the 19th century), who supports the miniaturized model of the church on both sides. Above the picture, in the medallion, Jesus appears blessing²³⁹.

In the two already mentioned cases, Bălinești and Părhăuți, the votive picture is placed in the nave, on the west wall, while at Dolhești²⁴⁰ the same scene is painted under the south window of the same room.

Later, from the 16th century, the iconographic program began to readjust to indoor architectural changes, replacing the wall between the nave and the narthex with arches supported by columns; this lead to the search for solutions in the iconographic program. For the first time, at Galata Church,

²³⁶ Bogdana Ieremia, *Semnificația picturilor murale de la Părhăuți*, RMM/MIA, I, 1976, p. 57-66.

²³⁷ Voica Pușcașu, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

²³⁸ V. Lazarev, *op.cit.*, p. 263.

²³⁹ Voica Pușcașu, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

²⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

the dividing wall between the nave and the narthex was replaced by arches supported by columns. In this case, the votive picture was located on the north wall of the nave²⁴¹. From the 17th century, in the Romanian countries, the votive paintings were placed in the narthex area on its western wall²⁴² as it is the case of Cetatua and Three Hierarchs.

The portrayal of monarchs shows the eloquent proclamation of political legitimacy and their main protector situations: as a supporter of the Church, the source of law, the father of the people²⁴³. The political messages contained in their founded edifices had to be understood directly by masses. The votive images and inscriptions were frequently used by rulers to legalize their donation act. "Word has accompanied thus artwork in the form of inscription, but the relationship between visual and verbal, between image and inscription in Byzantine art wasn't primarily one of comment, but it was double function"²⁴⁴.

Votive paintings have a documentary value. An important aspect is the portrayed painted character²⁴⁵. The physical description and the ruler posture in votive paintings are the only representations of the characters involved. The same can be said about the images of the founded model churches²⁴⁶. The depiction of the characters' clothing in votive images brings to light much information about fashion at that time. It also shows the ceremonial costumes of the rulers.

The worship act conferred prestige, authority and helped the rulers and nobles in the political arena.

²⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

²⁴² *Ibidem*.

²⁴³ A. Eastmond, *The Functions of Royal Imagery*, in *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, pp. 187-200.

²⁴⁴ *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 12 (1988), Editor: Peter Mackridge (St Cross College, Oxford, UK), Ruth Macrides (University of Birmingham, UK), p. 47.

²⁴⁵ Voica Pușcașu, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



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Fig. 9



Fig. 10



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List of abbreviations:

NAC: Numismatica Ars Classica

CNG: Classical Numismatic Group

BMGS: Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies

DRH: Documenta Romaniae Historica

RMM-MIA: Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor. Monumente Istorice și de Artă,
București

DOP: Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Washington DC

C&M: Classica et Medaevalia

HETIMASIA'S THRONE

Ștefan Mera *

Abstract: The term "Hetimasia" is of Greek origin and its basic meaning is "preparation." Hetimasia's Throne is an iconographic motif of the Christian art arising in the period of the primary church, approximately during the 4th century; it symbolizes the persons of the Holy Trinity and starting with the 11th century, the throne of the Last Judgment (cf. Ps. 9.7-8); as such, it inherits an eschatological connotation. The term **ἡτοιμασία** is mainly used in the Biblical Greek of the Old Testament - in Septuagint - and in the New Testament, where it is especially employed for the Hebrew verb **קָנָה**, whose various meanings it assimilates. Hetimasia's Throne is nothing else than an elongation in history until the end of times, up to the Last Judgment, of Yahweh's Throne amidst the people of Israel, the idea of an empty throne being taken over by the nations surrounding Israel, and extending on a secular line, as a symbol of the divinely-conferred authority of the king. After the Edict of Milan, in 313, this symbol has been assumed by the liturgical art of early Christianity, Christ being the Emperor and the Lord, true man, but also true God, the inheritor of the Davidic throne, together seated with the Father and the Holy Ghost (cf. Apocalypse 3.21). In the same time, the Holy Fathers assert the sacrificial altar of Christ as Divinity's true throne, the Holy Table on which the hierarchs and the priests deliver the Liturgies on Sundays and at holy feasts. Even our Mother of God is named throne of the Divinity, because in her Christ was born, and so she becomes the bridge between the presence of Yahweh in the Holy of Holies, in the Old Covenant and the unseen presence of God on the Holy table in the Holy Altar. This is the reason why the Mother of God is presented on the calotte of the Holy Altar; she is the stair on which the divine glory descends and, at the same time, the burning bush which never deliquesces. The central placement of Hetimasia's Throne in the ample composition of the Last Judgment renders it the keystone by which the entire whole could be translated. The proto-fathers knelt in front of the throne, mediating for the human race, emerge as a second Deisis. As a conclusion, Hetimasia's Throne is the Throne of Christ's sacrifice, the Holy Liturgies that sanctify and prepare the believers for the fearful Last Judgment.

Keywords: *Hetimasia, Last Judgment, The Throne of Judgment, The Holy Table, Mother of God, Judgement's Preparation, Judgement Day;*

Etimasia or Hetoimasia come from the Greek **ἡτοιμασία**, **αἶ**, **ἦ** – *hetoimasia*, which means *preparation, diligence, toil, expediency* ²⁴⁷,

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²⁴⁷ Anatole Bailly, *Le Grand Dictionnaire Grec-Français*, Rédigé avec le concours de E. Egger, Edition revue par L. Sevchan et P. Chantraine, Hachette, 2000, pg. 822.

*availability, finishing, training, preparation, equipment*²⁴⁸. The “Hetoimasias’ Throne” (il. 1-6) is a motif from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine age, derived from the pre-Christian motif of “The Empty Throne of the sovereign”(il.7) named “*divus*”, (or of a god like Zeus²⁴⁹ - il. 8, 9) which was representing the absent emperor, especially placed for his subjects’ veneration, in his absence. On the throne, there was a pillow on which the royal regalia were placed²⁵⁰. It is well known the fact that this tradition has been being acknowledged even from Antiquity, brought from an Oriental context, a Syrian-Palestinian one (il. 10).

This iconic motif is composed of an empty throne on which a book is placed, the Book of Life, Christ’s Gospel, the cross and the passions of Christ’s tools. The throne is prepared for the Saviour Who will come to sit as the World’s Judge, at His second Coming, on the Judgment Day; there is also a symbol of the Holy Trinity: God the Father is symbolized by the throne itself, God the Son by the Holy Cross, the tools of the passions and the Holy Gospel, and the Holy Ghost by the Dove; but Hetoimasias’ Throne is closely related to the Pantocrator, because God, the Creator of the world, is also its Judge²⁵¹, with an eschatological connotation: “But the Lord sits enthroned forever; **he has established his throne for justice**, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness” (Ps. 9:7-8); so the Hetoimasias is painted also in the narthex, at the base of the central steeple (il. 5, 11, 12, 13).

Based on the theological-artistic testimonies which have crossed the historical layers to us, the first representations in the Christian art of the empty throne appear in the 4th century. The empty throne on which we could find, under different groupings, the Gospel, the Cross, the Spear, the sponge, the crown of thorns, the lamb as a symbol of Christ’s sacrifice, and the Dove as a symbol of the Holy Ghost, was introduced in the iconographic schemata in the period of the early Christianity and the Byzantine one. The representation could be observed as being part of the icons of the Pentecostal (il. 14, 15) and of the Last Judgment, or the icons that share an eschatological connotation (il. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20).

²⁴⁸ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon With a Revised Supplement*, revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie, CLARENDON PRESS, OXFORD, 1996, pg. 703.

²⁴⁹ We can speak about a easy connection between empty throne of a pagan god and the Altar of “Unknown God” **αγνωστω θεω** from Areopag St. Paul preaching (cf. Acts 17.23), or cf. Diogenes Laertios, *Despre viețile și doctrinele filosofilor*, X, 110, Polirom Publishing, Iași, 2001, pg. 90-91, with a good analyse by Iustin Moisesescu in *Activitatea Sfântului Apostol Pavel în Atena, Opera integrală vol. IV*, Anastasia Publishing, București, 2002, pg. 189-200.

²⁵⁰ Frederick Tristan, *Primele imagini creștine, De la simbol la icoană, secolele II-VI*, „Meridiane” Publishing, Bucharest, 2002, pg. 352.

²⁵¹ Pr. Prof. Ene Braniște, Prof. Ecaterina Braniște, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Cunoștințe Religioase*, Diocesan Publishing Caransebeș, 2001, pg. 158.

Up to the 11th century, the representation is not accompanied by the inscription of Hetimasia. Moreover, Hetimasia's Throne does not appear added in a Biblical scene long before the 11th century. This fact indicates that, up to now, it is very possible that it has never been connected to the Judgment Day, initially designating equality between The Persons of The Holy Trinity.²⁵² Of course the Throne is here the icon of the Father, the Gospel and the Cross, the icon of the Son, and the haloed Dove, an icon of the Holy Ghost; it is a Trinitarian image, even if in some of the first representations of the empty throne there are no elements which would symbolize all the three persons of the Holy Trinity²⁵³. The idea of joining the empty throne and the tools of the passions, even in the earliest examples, has probably occurred following the discovery of these relics by Heraclius, in 634²⁵⁴. What remains to be mentioned here is the fact that in the early representations of the Judgment Day, Hetimasia's Throne remains unemployed (il. 21, 22, 23, 24) (sometimes even in some of the later representations - il. 25, 26); only much later, it will be introduced, after the recognition of its eschatological symbolism²⁵⁵ (il. 27, 28).

Taking into account the fact that Hetimasia's Throne is an iconographic symbol with profound theological valences which self-declines - etymologically but also conceptually - its significance, in numerous occurrences in the pages of the Holy Gospel, some of its basic but also derivative forms which are implicated more or less in collocations that define, one way or another, the concept, such as: *Hetimasia's Throne, the Empty Throne, the Throne of the Preparation*, and the intercession of the preparation in the divine act, but also in man's act, *the Throne of the Last Judgment*, etc., with terminological instances from the Old Testament, but also from the New one, taken together fill out the whole significance of the basic term: *Hetimasia*.

Thus, the lexical field of the term **ετοιμασία**, Hetimasia: ετοιμοβ, ετοιμαζω, ετοιμασια, proetoimazw, in its clear, basic meaning, means **preparation**, in the active meaning of "preparing, finishing/ending", but also in the passive meaning of "finitude", "ability" or "resolution"²⁵⁶. So, in the New Testament, **etoimazw** is the most common verb, with the meaning of "**to prepare**", "**to make it ready**", encountered in approximately forty different

²⁵² I. D. Ștefănescu, *Iconografia artei bizantine și a picturii feudale românești*, Meridiane Publishing, București, 1973, pg. 59.

²⁵³ Andreu Grabar, *Christian iconography, A study of Its Origins*, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1961, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., Bollingen Series XXXV-10, Princeton, University Press, 1968, pg. 115 and 122.

²⁵⁴ Dalton O. M., *Byzantine Art and Archeology, with 457 illustrations*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1911, pag. 669.

²⁵⁵ Cf. footnote 5 in Dalton O. M., *Byzantine Art and Archeology...*, pg. 666.

²⁵⁶ Walter Grundmann, the term ετοιμοβ, ετοιμαζω, ετοιμασια, proetoimazw, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. II, Editor Gerhard Kittel, WM. B. EERDMANS Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., 2006, pg. 704-706.

contexts; the mission of Saint John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of the messianic king, in the person of Jesus Christ, is described in Mt. 3.3; Mc. 1,3; Lc. 1.76; 3.4, and the sitting on the right and the left side of Christ “*it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared by my Father*” (Mt. 20.23; Mc. 10.40).

The verb **Hetoimazo etoimazw** refers also then to *the preparation undertaken by God Himself*, including even *the preparation of a nation* for Himself (Lc. 1.17); of a kingdom that would have been inherited by His people (Mt. 25.34) and the salvation for His people (Lc. 2.31). The texts of John 14.2; Heb. 11.16 include the pledge that *Christ and God the Father together have been preparing an eternal fortress for the faithful people*²⁵⁷.

This group of words gains a religious significance only in the biblical Greek, in the Septuagint, where it is used especially for the Hebrew word *kun* / WB, whose diverse meanings are assimilated by it²⁵⁸ (and sometimes for the verb עָשָׂה *asah*, or the verb כָּרַח *karah* and others) and in the New Testament.

The Throne of Hetimasia is nothing else than an extension in history to the end of times, on Judgment Day, of Yahweh’s Throne from the midst of Israel people “God’s first born” (Exod 4.22,23), from the Biblical times of the Old Testament, a throne which is to be found in the Sanctum, above the Ark of the Covenant (אֲרוֹן / aron) in which the golden bowl or the pot (năstrapă, non-translatable – n.t.²⁵⁹) with the desert manna, for recollection, Aaron’s stick and the Tables of the Law, and on whose cover (*kapporet* כַּפֹּרֶת)²⁶⁰ were seated two cherubs carved in locust wood, gilded, with abated wings with which they covered/overshadowed the Holy Ark. These angels with unfolded wings and the cover of the ark (*kapporet* כַּפֹּרֶת which was made of gold, represented the throne of Yahweh’s presence in the midst of the people, the throne of the divine grace, the beheld sign of the alliance between Yahweh and Israel. From the numerous representations that bear witness to the appearance of the Ark of Law, (today, lost) we specify the representation

²⁵⁷ Stephen D. Renn, Editor, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Hendrickson Publishers, 2005.

²⁵⁸ The meanings of the verb **Kun** /WB are more numerous, such as “to rise”, “to create”, “to find”, “to establish, to install, to invest, to inaugurate, to promote, to propose”, “to prepare”, “to establish”, cf. F. Brown, S. Driver and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, Coded with Strong’s Concordance Numbers, With an appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, U. S. A., Ninth Printing – September 2005, pg. 465-467.

²⁵⁹ Năstrapă – noun, non translatable, meaning a bowl, a vassel, a container, a pot.

²⁶⁰ The term כַּפֹּרֶת *kapporet* is a noun deriving from the verb כָּפַר *kaphar*, meaning “to cover”, “to ransom”; a ritualistic term describing the meaning by which the sins of Yahweh’s people have been forgiven under the old pledge. This forgiveness was obtained by offering a bloody sacrifice, which “covered” the sins of the person bringing the sacrifice. So the term *kapporet* כַּפֹּרֶת is translated as “*the throne of mercy*” or “the covering of the ransom”. F. Brown, S. Driver and C. Briggs, op. cit..

of the ark from the Capernaum synagogue (around IV-III century B.C.) (il. 29).

So, on a scriptural level, the idea of “God’s throne” crosses like a red thread the entire history of humanity, up to *Hetimasia’s throne*, in which the world will be judged. But from a representational point of view, as a consequence of the Ark of Covenant being lost, the idea of “royal throne” or “empty throne” registers some synopses. But this idea of a divinity’s throne is assumed, of course in a veiled way, by Israel’s neighbouring peoples, as testified by irrefutable evidences on the co-existence of this idea of *a throne of a divinity which cannot be seen*, the idea of an empty throne, joined by uncountable *representations of local gods seated on this throne*, specific to different peoples. We restrain ourselves to presenting a single example in this direction: a representation of Assyrian origin (around 1243 B.C.) which is hosted by a museum in Berlin and which shows King Tukulti-Ninurta I knelt in front of an empty throne on which a flame would be represented, as a symbol of the god of fire Nusku (il. 10).

In the Christian areal, after the Edict from Milan in 313, when Christianity is given freedom of expression, liturgical art begins to develop itself in the same rhythm as the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church, which demonstrate Christ’s Messianity, but also the fact that He is the inheritor of the Davidic throne, a throne which, even in the Old Testament period, has had profound Messianic connotations. So Christ is King and Lord, true man, but also true God, the dogmas discussed and established starting with the first eccumenical Synod, held in Nicaea, in 325, modeled by the wordings of the Cappadocian Fathers, but also by the succeeding fathers²⁶¹ who assert the sameness in being and, at the same time, the homotrony and the syntrony of the Son with The Father and the Holy Ghost (this means that Christ is together with the Father and the Holy Ghost on a seating chair, being of the same being with the Father and the Holy Ghost)²⁶².

So in this theological climate, it was only natural the rising of “artistic formulations or expressions” for the laying out of the theological ideas in question. But the non-theological artistic climate was already emphasized, fact that has facilitated the attempts of theological visual expression.

In the non-theological climate of the age, it was known that the **Empty Throne** - bearer of the royal paraphernalia seated on a cushion – was

²⁶¹ We are referring to the Cappadocian Fathers: Saint Basil the Great in the treatise “*On the Holy Ghost*” Ch. VI, and Saint Gregory the Theologian, in the sixth Homily “*On peace*”; about the hymnographer fathers: Saint Andrew of Crete in “*The Great Canon*” Song IV, Saint John of Damascus, in his 8th song from the second canon of Matins, in the Pentecostal Sunday, Mitrophan of Smyrna in some of the troparia he composed, etc.

²⁶² Nicolae Ozolin, *Iconografia Ortodoxă a Cincizecimii, izvoarele sale și evoluția schemei iconografice bizantine*, Translated by Vasile Manea, Patmos Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pg. 112-118.

presenting in the armchair the absent emperor who was worshipped as if he would have been there. He was considered present as if he were there. A speaking example in this context, taken from the life of the Church itself, could be considered the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325, at which the emperor Constantine the Great took part, but not to all the sessions, as Eusebius of Caesarea underlines. The council has lasted for more than three months, from 20th May 325, when the opening took place, and lasting until 25th August of same year²⁶³. While missing, Emperor Constantine has been leaving behind the scepter, gesture by which the emperor was expressing his will of participating in the council, assuring the participants of his presence even in absence, but an absence conditioned by the affairs of the empire which were absorbing him, but not totally, because his heart and soul were there, in the middle of the synodic debates, fact effected by the presence of the imperial insignias: the empty throne in which the emperor's scepter is seated²⁶⁴.

A more eloquent example, which shows this time the passing made from the recognition of the imperial insignias of the earthly emperor to the worshipping of the heavenly emperor, took place at the third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, in 431, when there was once again an empty throne, but this time, instead of the empirical scepter, the Holy Gospel has been seated on the cushion. This fact has been recorded in the letter send by Saint Cyril of Alexandria (who was presiding the council) to Emperor Theodosius the Second,: “The Holy Council has reunited in the Holy Church of Mary having as a member or, better said, as a leader Christ Himself. In this effect, in the throne the venerable Holy Gospel was being seated”²⁶⁵ (il 30 – with specification that image refers to the second council, Constantinople 381). By these examples we are able to practically observe the adoption of the lay symbols and their metamorphosis in the blossom of the Christian Church. Christ is considered true God and the Lord of everyone, who governs each of our actions when being invoked and his divinity is asserted.

It deserves mentioning the fact that before the appearance of the empty throne in the Christian art, a representation of the empty throne also appears at the renowned Synagogue of Dura Europos, which is dated from 3th century AD, respectively 244 AD, based on an Aramaic inscription, its frescoes being re-placed in the National Museum of Damascus, Syria. The reference is to the space above the niche where the Torah was kept. Taking into account the fact that the image is quite dull, but also the fact that the picture was intervened

²⁶³ Pr. prof. dr. Ioan Rămureanu, Pr. Prof. dr. Milan Šesan, Pr. Prof. dr. Teodor Bodogae, *Istoria Bisericească Universală, vol. I (1-1054)*, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing, Bucharest, 1987, pg. 316;

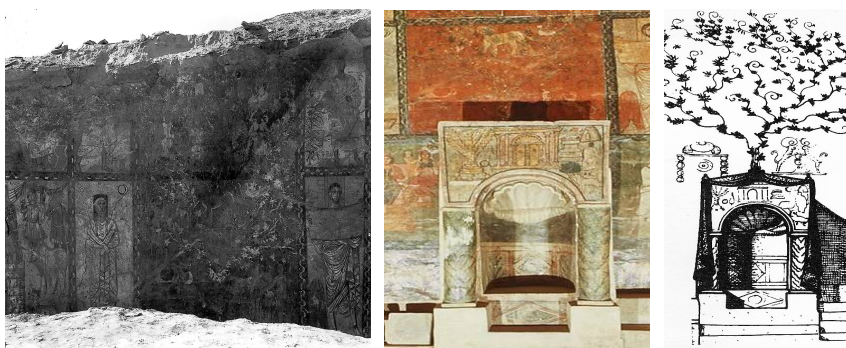
²⁶⁴ Cf. Frederick Tristan, *Primele imagini Creștine*, Meridiane Publishing, Bucharest, 2002, pg. 352-353;

²⁶⁵ Idem;

upon, with great pains could we distinguish the initial subject of the composition.

So researchers like Goodenough resorted to the reconstruction of the image and to its detailed description. As a consequence, on the right side of the fruitless vineyard, an empty throne is painted, without a backrest, with a cushion on the seat, and under the throne there is a trestle in such way that the empty throne to represent the sky, and the trestle – the cosmic orbit²⁶⁶.

This aspect exhibits an eschatological connotation because of the place of the location (above the niche for storing the Torah), but also because of the symbols with which it's corroborated (the vineyard – central, the altar – on the left side, and the empty throne – on the right side; under the throne, in the centre, the scene “Abraham's sacrifice” – all of them arranged in such a way that form a symbolic program, a well-outlined one, which comes to enforce the idea that the Jews were still expecting Messiah here, on earth, and of the future things of the world that will come, idea that emerges in reality from the entire program of Dura Europos's representations²⁶⁷.



Dura Europos Synagogue, west wall: central panel; first reconstruction after Goodenough²⁶⁸

Taking into account the fact that both in the synagogue of the first centuries of the Christian eve, and in the early Christian church the image of the empty throne is used as a Messianic symbol, we could take a glimpse to a direct link between the synagogue and the early Christian church.

So starting with 4th century, we find the first examples of “empty throne” from the Paleo Christian art:

- The sarcophagus of Tusculum, with the monogram of Christ and His robe seated on the empty throne, 4th century (il. 31);

²⁶⁶ Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of The Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection XXVIII, Washington D. C., 1990, pg. 161;

²⁶⁷ Idem, pg 163-164;

²⁶⁸ Cf. Figure 195 from *The Frescoes of The Dura Synagogue ...*;

■ Bas-relief of marble, at the present in Bode Museum – Berlin (cca. 400), with two lambs represented under the throne (il. 32);

■ The coffin for holy relics of Samagher, near Pola (Istria), which exhibits Hetimasia's throne in its center, 440 AD; now it is to be found in Venice, the Archaeological Museum (il. 33);

■ The mosaic with the empty throne from Saint Matrona's Chapel, today Santa Maria di Capua Vetere (Saint Mary of Capua Vetere), 5th century; it is an eschatological throne, placed on clouds, surrounded by two of the four apocalyptic beings, bearing the Book of Life, with seven seals, and the Holy Ghost disguised in a dove seated on the backrest (il. 34);

■ Clypeus with an empty throne on the Arch of Triumph in Santa Maria Maggiore, 5th century, with the four apocalyptic beings (il. 35);

■ The lamb and the opened Gospel, on the empty chair from the apsidal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore Church; it is a throne which governs the entire universe represented here by the blue sky with the sun, the moon and the stars surrounding it (il. 36);

■ Ravenna, the orthodox baptistery, belonging to Neon, cca 451-473. The dome includes four eschatological thrones (il. 37);

■ Ravenna, the Baptistery of the Arians, the Mosaic of the Dome, 5th century (il. 38);

■ Marble capitellum with the representation of the empty throne, 5th - 6th century, Louvre, Paris (il. 39);

■ The Church of Saint Cosmas and Damian, Rome, 527 AD; - mosaic detail, the Throne with the Lamb – Christ bringing Himself as a sacrifice (il. 40);

■ Detail of the triumphal arch with Hetimasia's throne, with Christ the Lamb, Santa Prassede of Rome, years: 817-823; during the governing of Pope Paschalis I; it's a copy after the representation from "Saints Cosmas and Damian" Church, Rome, 6th century²⁶⁹ (il. 41);

■ Santa Prassede, The Chapel of Saint Zenon, 9th century, Rome (il. 42);

²⁶⁹ cf. Frederick van der Meer, *Apocalypse, Vision from the Book of Revelation in Western Art*, Alpine Fine Arts Collection, Ltd., Publishers of fine art books, New York, 1978, pg. 57;

■ The Arch of Triumph: Hetimasia's Throne with the Gospel, crown and cross, between two angles; Santa Maria, foris portas, Castelseprio, Varese, probably the first half of the 9th century, Italy (il. 43);

■ The empty throne of Hetimasia in the midst of the participants in the second Ecumenical Council in 381, under the presidency of Emperor Theodosius the Great²⁷⁰ (il. 30);

■ The empty throne surrounded by the four apocalyptic beings, by "the lion of Judaea and the lamb of God"; in the bottom, it is represented Moses on the throne, the unveiling of Moses's face by Evangelical symbols; frontispiece by Apocalypse from Moutiers-Grandval, Tours, cca. 840; London, British Library²⁷¹ (il. 44);

In the Orthodox churches, on the eastern side of the altar's apse, there is the chair reserved for the bishop, which symbolizes the heavenly chair of Our Christ the Savior²⁷². In this way, **the sinthron or the upper chair** is a high chair, with many chairs surrounding it, in which there are seated the vicar and the co-liturgical priests during the reading of the Apostle²⁷³, imaging the Savior surrounded by the Holy Apostles. But this is not the throne of the Last Judgment.

In his work *Mustikhvqewria kai ekklesiastikhvistoria* **the patriarch Germanus the Second of Constantinople** says:

"The Church is the sky on earth, in which lives and walks God Who is in Heavens;... she is glorified more than the Tent of Testimony, of Moses's, it was prefigured through the patriarchs, founded on the Holy Apostles..., heralded by prophets and adorned by hierarchs, perfected by martyrs and seated on their holy relics, as on a throne."²⁷⁴

Saint Maximus the Confessor says about the church: "*The Holy Church of God is an icon of the sensible world. She has as a gift the godly altar, and*

²⁷⁰ Manuscript including the Homilies of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, 879-992, Paris, BNF; The Greek Manuscript, foil 355v.

²⁷¹ cf. Frederick van der Meer, *Apocalypse, Vision from the Book of Revelation in Western Art*, Alpine Fine Arts Collection, Ltd., Publishers of fine art books, New York, 1978 (first publishing), pg. 74.

²⁷² *** *Învățătura de Credință Ortodoxă*, în „Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei”, Doxologia Publishing, 2009, pg. 236.

²⁷³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica Generală, vol. II Noțiuni de artă bisericească, arhitectură și pictură creștină*, 3rd edition, revue par pr. Eugen Drăgoi, Episcopia Dunării de Jos Publishing, Galați, 2002, pg. 98.

²⁷⁴ Germanus the Second of Constantinople, *Mustikhvqewria kai ekklesiastikhvistoria*, Greek Patristics, tome 98, columns 383-453, Romanian translation Pr. Nicolae Petrescu, *Descriere a bisericii și tâlcuire mistică*, in „Mitropolia Olteniei”, No. 5-6, 1964, pg. 357-360.

as a ground, the beauty of the nave.”²⁷⁵ And **Saint Simeon of Thessaloniki** underlines: “The Church is the house of God... made for God and God is its inhabitant and in it it’s the glory, the power and His Gift... *The holy altar fancies the above-heaven things, where it is said that the chair of God resides, symbolized by the Holy Table.*”²⁷⁶ And again, the Patriarch Germanus the Second of Constantinople, in his work “*About the things of the Church*”²⁷⁷, says about **the Holy Table** that symbolizes, among others, “... **God’s chair over the cherubs...**”, as does the Shrine of the Law from the Holy of Holies from the period of the Old Testament, the place of the divine presence, the holiest locus of the Tent of Covenant and, later, of the Temple of Jerusalem. But with God being invisible for the physical eyes, this throne of glory and divine presence appeared as being empty and still a throne of the Divinity. In a prayer that the priest was privately saying during the Holy Liturgy, right after the prayer “Pater Noster”, it is said: “*Beware, our God from your holy place and from the chair of your Kingdom’s glory, and come to sanctify us, the One that above together with the Father sits and here, in invisible way, together with us you are...*”²⁷⁸ That the Church is the House of God the priest confesses every time when he enters the church by the prayer delivered at that moment: “*But I, by your great love, can come into your house in reverence I bow down toward your holy temple, in my fear of You, my God...*” (cf. Ps. 5.7-8)

The Holy Table is at the same time the place of sacrifice for “the slain Lamb” (Apocalypse 5.6). This is the reason why in numerous early representations of the throne of the divine glory, Christ was represented in the likeness of a lamb, following the words of the prophet Isaiah who prophesized about Christ (Is. Ch. 53.7): “like a lamb to the slaughter He would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and He would not open His mouth.” These words are said by the priest during the Prothesis office at the preparation of the Holy Eucharist, at the delivery of the Holy Agnus, respectively (the term “**agnus**” comes from the Latin **agnus**, meaning lamb).²⁷⁹ And when Saint John the Baptist says in reference to Jesus Christ: “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1.29), he is alluding exactly to the words of the prophet Isaiah. Likewise, during the Holy Liturgy, at the moment of sharing, when the priest

²⁷⁵ Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Mistagogia*, trans. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing, Bucharest, 1999, pg. 27.

²⁷⁶ Simeon of Thessaloniki, *Despre sfințirea bisericii*, ch. 132, Greek Patristics, tome 155, Romanian transl. Toma Teodorescu in the paper “*Tractat asupra tuturor dogmelor credinței noastre ortodoxe*”, Bucharest, 1865, pg. 110-129.

²⁷⁷ Germanus the Second of Constantinople, *Despre lucrurile bisericii*, Greek Patristics, tome 155, Romanian translation Toma Teodorescu in his work *Tractat asupra tuturor dogmelor credinței noastre ortodoxe*, Bucharest, 1865, pg. 110-129.

²⁷⁸ ****Liturghierul*, printed with the blessing of His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Vadu, Feleac and Cluj, third edition, Renașterea Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, pg. 79.

²⁷⁹ Gheorghe Guțu, *Dicționar Latin – Român*, Humanitas Publishing, Bucharest, 2007.

crushes the Holy Body and puts Him on the holy disk, says: “It is crushed and it is shared the Lamb of God...”²⁸⁰

Over the first covering of the Holy Table, the white shirt – *katasavka*, which prefigures the shrouds in which Christ was wrapped at His putting in the grave, there is another covering named “endotion”, made of silk, a golden or reddish shiny material fancying the glory of God. It worths mentioning that even Hetimasia’s Throne is represented as covered with this silky shiny white, red or blue *endotion*, sometimes accompanied by a white cloth symbolizing Our Savior’s shrine, as the last garment of Christ before Resurrection²⁸¹, as we could find it represented on the horizontal arm of the cross from above the empty throne in the Baptistry of the Arians (il. 38).

On the Holy Table there is permanently located the Holy Cross, the symbol of the supreme sacrifice for human’s redemption from the sin, and the Holy Gospel, the Book of Life, in which there are the very words of Christ the Savior, of His teachings, the New Law, Law under which all the peoples are to be judged, as under a “judicial code” of Christian living.²⁸² The same holy objects are evidenced on Hetimasia’s throne, with the specification that on the Holy Gospel it’s painted the Holy Ghost in the likeness of a dove, this meaning that, after the Ascension of the Savior to heavens, He send us the Ghost of truth and the Giver of Life as a Caresser, Who confesses and discovers Christ to us; and the fact that the Caresser is painted on the Holy Gospel signifies that the teachings of the Savior, the words of Christ’s Gospel are made comprehensible, they are translated by the Ghost, and the authors of the Holy Gospel have drafted Christ’s words inspired by the Holy Ghost.

So this is the artistic visual means of underlying the fundamental hermeneutical role played by the Holy Ghost in understanding the godly Word, the authentic interpretation of the Holy Gospel being achieved, beyond the powers of human reason, into the Holy Ghost, the Ghost of the truth: “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16,13).

So the **Holy Table** from the Holy Altar on which every Sunday the Gospel is read and on which Christ sacrifices Himself in an unseen way for the redemption of humankind’s sins, **is in fact the Throne** which is being prepared for the Last Judgment, **the Sacrifice of the Savior and of His Saints being the measure by which the world will be judged** (il. 45 - Here Hetoimasia appear like a Holy Table with a chalice,²⁸³). This is the reason why sometimes the Throne appears with a lamb, (il. 36, 40, 41) named in the Apocalypse “the Throne of the Lamb”, this being Christ brought as a

²⁸⁰ ****Liturghierul*, pg. 80.

²⁸¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica Generală, vol. II...*, pag. 97.

²⁸² *Ibidem*.

²⁸³ Cf. AndreuGrabar, *The great centuries of painting, Byzantine Painting*, Historical and critical study by AndreuGrabar, Collection planned and directed by Albert Skira – Lausanne and Geneva, 1953, pg. 188.

sacrifice. And the idea that Hetimasia's Throne – of the Preparation – will be in fact the Throne of Judgment also is plastically suggested in the iconography by the fact that sometimes under the throne, the hand of God protecting His Saints, keeps also the scale of measuring the deeds, the scale of the judgment (il. 2, 3, 4).

Then, the scene of Lord's Ascension to heavens is painted in the Orthodox churches in the upper side of the dome of the Holy Altar because through His Ascension, Christ left the throne of His sacrifice deserted – the Holy Table – in order to go to the Father on the throne of glory, of adoration (il. 18, 19) and, based on the words given to us by the angel in (Acts 1.11): "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go to heaven."; from here it follows that at the Parousia Christ will come on the throne of the aggrandizement surrounded by His angels and by much glory. But this throne of glory is not also the throne of judgment, but the throne of judgment is the one of preparation, the one prepared by Christ through His sacrifice, but also the one which prepares all people for the judgment: it is the Holy Table on which priests and hierarchs present the Liturgy till the end of times, preparing for God a chosen nation – the saints, "members of God's household" (Eph. 2.19). At the feet of this Throne of the Last Judgment there are the bones of the martyrs: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (I Cor. 6.2). This is the reason why in most representations of the scene of the Last Judgment, under Hetimasia's Throne, a hand is painted in which the souls of the saints are sheltered: it is the very hand of God that harbors the saints, those martyrs who sacrificed themselves for faith and whose holy relics are disposed at the food of the Holy Table, but also in a corner of Saint Antimis, in a little bag specially prepared for this purpose (cf. Book of Revelation 6.9,11): "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne... Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been."

Another truth that must be carefully highlighted is the fact that on the calotte of the altar, above the Holy Table, Mother of Our Lord is painted, the one who encompassed in Her womb the sky, the wholly saintly ark, the bright cloud, the staircase on which the divinity descended, making possible "**The mystery hidden from eternity and unknown to the angels**": The incarnation of Christ the Savior. In such way, Virgin Mary is named **the Throne of the Divinity**, because she has been deemed worthy of receiving and bearing the One Born for Eternity from the Father, the Son of God; Mary is as such being Theotokos, namely The Bearer of God, the Empress of the Angels, "Fairer than the cherubs and seamlessly more honored than the seraphs" – the ardent ones who await in the proximity of divinity's fire. So

through the Mother of God, who is named “The wholly saintly Ark”, etc., the connection is made, like a red thread, between the Old and the New Testament, between the presence of Jahweh in the midst of the Jewish people above the Holy Ark and the Incarnation of the Savior and, by this means, with the Holy Table which is the Sacrificial Altar of the Savior and the throne of divinity, and between the Holy table and Hetimasia’s Throne, of the future Judgment (il. 46, 47).

An important fact that must be specified is that the entire compositional ensemble of the Last Judgment scene must be mandatorily read from up to bottom, as an impressive reversed perspective, (il. 48, 49) as a consequence in descending order, fact determined by the very subject of the composition. So in the register following right after the register depicting Parousia, downwards, in the center, Hetimasia’s Throne is represented, the Throne of Judgment Preparation, which is an element of powerful theological symbolism, through the symbolic elements contained, but also in itself, because it is a symbol. It is worth mentioning the position of Hetimasia’s Throne in the compositional ensemble. The very central layout of the Throne, the entire composition gravitating around this element, seems to imply the idea that Hetimasia’s Throne would be the keystone of the entire composition, the element by which the whole could be deciphered.

Notable is the fact that in some depictions of the Judgment day, as the one from Proboata, the throne is framed by a rainbow, the symbol of the covenant between God and the human race of not wasting the human being, because of the disobedience sin, through the means of the flood (Gen. 9.9-17). Framed in the same rainbow is the Ancient of Days as the One Who made the covenant with the humankind after the flood, through Noah, but also Christ in glory is sitting on rainbow like on a throne, as the One by whom this covenant has come to fulfillment: the redemption of humankind from the shadow of the sin, by His redeeming Sacrifice (il. 50). But this throne is represented as surpassing the rainbow, in other words, the moment of the judgment transcends the promise of the redemption made in the perimeter of time, to the springs of time and which has otherwise been fulfilled from the perspective of time, in Christ, through Incarnation-Death-Resurrection, humankind being objectively redeemed, but which will take possession of the fruits of redemption, in a subjective way, in this interval: Resurrection-Parousia. And so, the moment of Parousia will take place in the future, beyond time, at the end of all ages, after the scroll of times would have been rolled in, and all the people standing alive shall change in a glimpse and “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4.17).

On another side of Hetimasia’s Throne are presented the proto-fathers of the humankind, Adam and Eve, with auras, meaning they are absolved, redeemed, because in the Redeeming Sacrifice of Christ, the entire human

race was reviewed, including the first humans, the ones by whom the sin entered the world. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15.2). The iconography suggestively represents this universal redemption in “The Harrowing of Hell” scene, in which Christ delivers from the bounds of hell first the proto-fathers of humankind. For this reason, Adam and Eve are being represented with auras, albeit knelt and begging the divine forgiveness for the entire humankind, through them spoiled by sin. We could say by extrapolating the facts, that this prolonged wailing cry of the first people at the gates of Heaven from where they have been banished, a cry which, in corroboration with their reviewing in Christ’s sacrifice, brought the redemption to them. We could say, with the mandatory quotes, that it is another Deisis, a second Deisis, having as mediators, intercessors the very fathers of the human race.

As a conclusion, we would like to underline the fact that even if the term of “Hetimasia”, “Hetimasia’s Throne,” in other words “The Throne of the Preparation” entered the artistic language quite late (around 11th century), the symbolic elements accompanying the representation of the Empty Throne were reinforcing, starting with the very first representations, the idea of Christ’s sacrifice, which prepares the redemption of the humankind, and only based on this redeeming sacrifice, the idea of a Throne for Preparing the Last Judgment, Hetimasia’s Throne, has been accomplished. Because of the redeeming Sacrifice of Christ, humankind in general and every man in particular can appropriate for himself the fruits of an objective redemption, each of us working for individual redemption, *preparing* as such the soul for the Judgment. This throne of Preparation of the Judgment (of Hetimasia), which we have specified it’s the Holy Table, at the Judgment time will be transformed in the Throne of the Last Judgment; in other words, the **Holy Liturgies** which consecrate the believers, preparing them for judgment, **will be the measure of the judgment of humankind.**



* Left, (il. 1.) Hetimasia’s Throne, detail from “Last Judgment” fresco, first half of 15th century, Probota Monastery;

* Right, (il. 2.) Hetimasia's Throne, detail from "Last Judgment" fresco, the western façade of Voronet Monastery, first half of 15th century;



*Left, (il. 3.) Hetimasia's Throne, detail from "Last Judgment" fresco, the Eastern wall of the open exonartex, Moldovita Monastery, first half of 15th century ;

* Right, (il. 4.) Hetimasia's Throne, detail from "Last Judgment" fresco, the Eastern wall of the open exonartex, Humor Monastery, first half of 15th century ;



* Left, (il. 5.) Hetimasia's Throne, New Saint John of Suceava Monastery, first half of 15th century;

* Right, (il. 6.) Hetimasia's Throne, detail from "Last Judgment" fresco, the Southern façade, Arbore Monastery;



* Left, (il. 7.) Roman Empty Throne, 1st century CE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California;

**Right (il. 8.) Coin, Empty throne of Zeus Olbius facing slightly right / Thunderbolt; Cilicia, Olba, Circa 1st Century AD.*



**Left (il. 9.)Tetradrachm, from Siria Seleucia Pieria 98-97 B.C., Turreted and veiled bust of Tyche wearing necklace; Rev. ΣΕΛΕΥΚΕΩΝ / ΤΗΣ ΙΕΡΑΣ - ΚΑΙ / ΑΥΤΟΝΟΜΟΥ; On stool, thunderbolt placed on filleted cushion, between legs, date BI (= year 12 of the local era);*

**Right (il. 10.) Assyrian Basrelief. King Tukulti-Ninurta kneeling in front of the empty throne of the god of fire Nusku – 1243 BC; Museum of History– Berlin;*



**Left (il. 11) Monreale, Sicilia, Duomo - vault with empty throne, Hetoimasia;*

**Middle (il. 12) Bethlehem, St. Helena's Chapel - Hetoimasia above Pantocrator, 12th century;*

**Right (il. 13) Palermo, Cappella Palatina - Apsis with Hetoimasia,Sicilia, Italy, 1140-1170;*



** (il 14) The empty throne or hetoimasia, surrounded by the twelve Apostles, Basilica San Marco, Venice 11th century;*



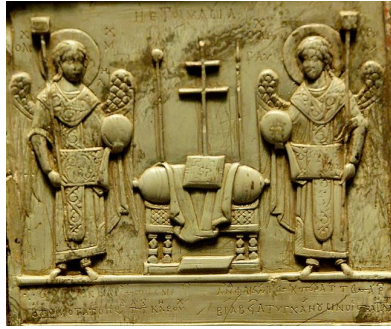
** (il. 15) The Triumphal arch with Hetoimasia, Santa Maria di Grotta Ferrata Monastery, Italy, 12th century;*



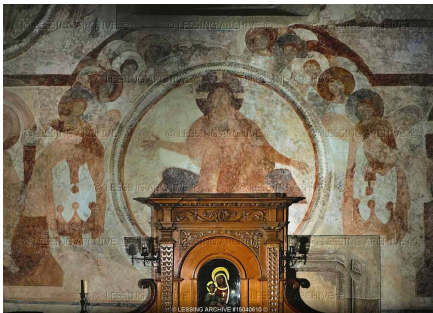
*Left (il. 16) Russian Reliquary of the true cross with Hetoimasia, Constantinople (1075-1125 CE) St. Petersburg Hermitage;
 *Right (il. 17) Pala d'Oro with Empty throne or Hetoimasia, Basilica di San Marco, Venice, Italy;



*Left (il. 18) Andreas Ritzos (1421 Iraklio - 1492), Ascension of Christ with the Hetoimasia, 15th century, Tokyo, National Museum of Western Art;
 *Right (il. 19) The All Saints Icon with Hetoimasia, Leimonos Monastery, Is. Lesbos, Greece, ? century;

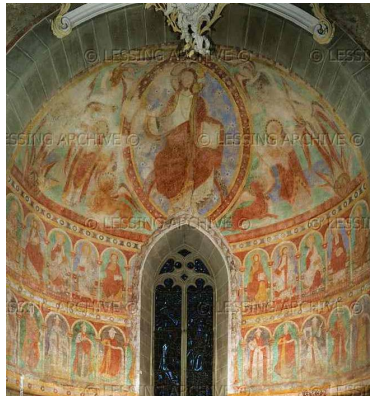
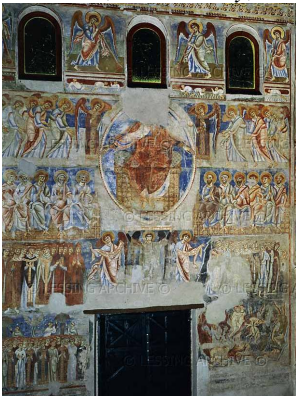


** (il. 20) Byzantine ivory plaque, detail Hetoimasia, Inscription above the throne (middle top): HETOIMASIA, with The Angels Mihail and Gavriil, and four saints: St. Dimitrie, St. Teodor, St. Gheorghe, St. Procopie, Constantinople 1000 CE - Louvre Paris;*



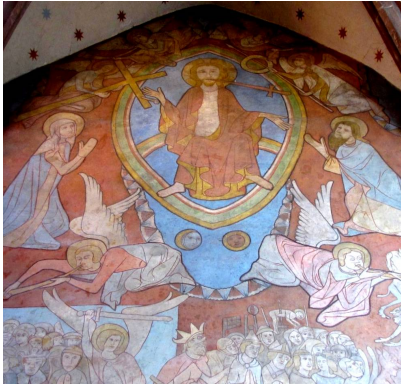
** Left (il. 21) Last Judgement, Muestair Monastery, western wall, Swiss, around 800 C.E.; - without Hetoimasia*

** Right (il. 22) Last Judgement, St. George Church, western façade, Reichenau-Oberzell, Germania, 11th century;*



** Left (il. 23) Last Judgement, Sant Angelo in Formis Church, Capua, 1072-1078; - without Hetoimasia*

** Right (il. 24) Christ in Glory surrounded by evangelist's symbols and angels, St. Peter and Paul Church, Reichenau-Niederzell, Germany, 11th century; - without Hetoimasia*

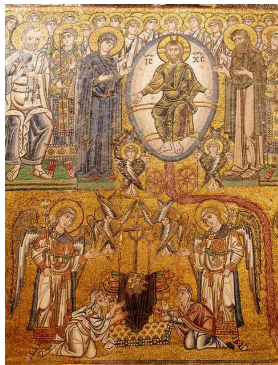


*Left (il. 25) Last Judgement –al fresco, Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church, Alsacia, Bas-Rhin, Rosenwiller 14-15centuries; - without Hetoimasia

*Right (il. 26) Last Judgement, St. Trinity Church, Makariev Monastery, Rusia, 17 Century;

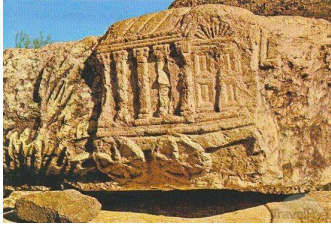


*(il. 27) Last Judgement, detail Hetoimasia, Constantinopol, ivory plaque, London Victoria & Albert Museum, 1000-1100 CE;²⁸⁴

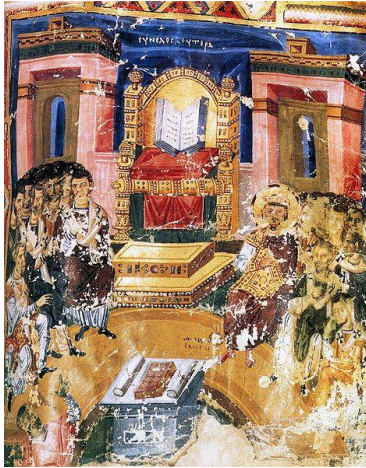


*(il. 28) Last Judgement - inlaid, Hetoimasia s detail, St. Maria Assunta Cathedral, Torcello, 11th - 12th Century;

²⁸⁴ Cf. Kurt Weitzmann, Gaiane Alibegasvili, Aneli Volskaja, Manolis Chatzidakis, Gordana Babic, Mihail Alpatov, Teodora Voinescu, *The Icon*, Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1982, pag. 39.

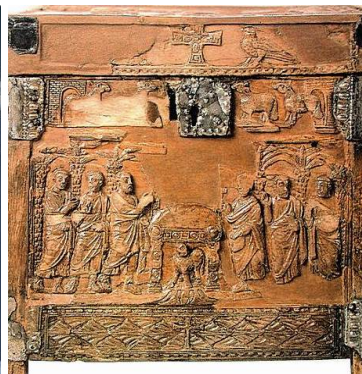


**Left (il. 29) The Ark of Covenant Representation from Capernaum synagogue, Bas-Relief, (around IV-III century B.C.);*



**Left (il. 30) Council of Constantinople 381 CE with empty throne or Hetoimasia, Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus, 879-882, 9th century Byzantine manuscript, Paris BNF MS Gr 510 fol-355v;*

**Middle and right (il. 30 a and 30 b) Empty Throne in Dura Europos Synagogue, Damascus, Syria, 3rd century – 244 C.E;*



**Left (il. 31) The sarcophagus of Tusculum, with the monogram of Christ and His robe seated on the empty throne, IV century;*

**Middle (il. 32) The empty throne of the Lord, Bas-relief of marble, Constantinopolis about 400 CE, now in Bode Museum – Berlin;*

**Right (il. 33) The Empty Throne on a ivory casket for holy relics, Samagher, near Pola (Istria), about 440, now in Archaeological Museum of Venice;*



**(il. 34) The mosaic with the empty throne from Saint Matrona's Chapel, today Santa Maria di Capua Vetere (Saint Mary of Capua Vetere), 5th century;*



**Left (il. 35) Clypeus with an empty throne with the four apocalyptic beings on the Triumphal Arch in Santa Maria Maggiore, 5th century;*

**Right (il. 36) Clypeus with The Lamb and the opened Gospel, on the throne from the apsidal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore Church;*



** (il. 37) The Ravenna dome - includes four eschatological thrones, the orthodox baptistery, belonging to Neon, cca 451-473;*



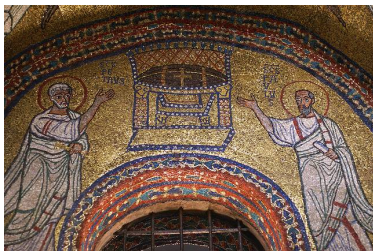
*Left (il. 38) *Hetoimasia, the Baptistry of the arians, the mosaic of the Ravenna Dome, 5th century;*

*Right (il. 39) *Marble capitellum with empty throne, 5-6th century, Louvre, Paris;*



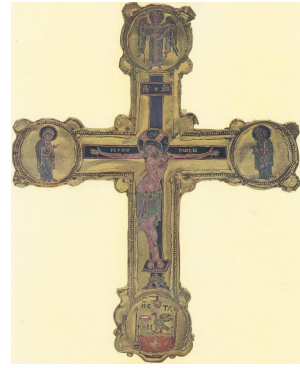
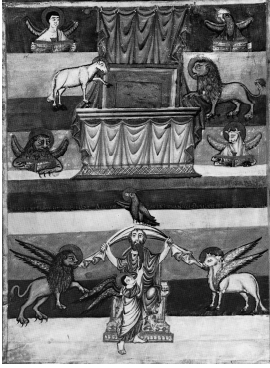
*Left (il. 40) *The Throne with the Lamb – Christ bringing Himself as a sacrifice, St. Cosmas and Damian Church, Rome, 6th century;*

*Right (il. 41) *The Throne with the Lamb, Santa Prassede of Rome, 817-823;*



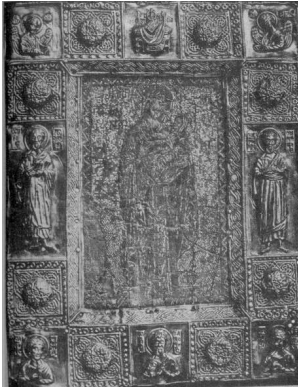
*Left (il. 42) *The Empty Throne, Santa Prassede, The Chapel of Saint Zenon, 9th century, Rome;*

*Right (il. 43) *The Throne with the Gospel, crown and cross, between two angles, the arch of triumph; Santa Maria, foris portas, Castelseprio, Varese, probably the first half of the 9th century Italy;*



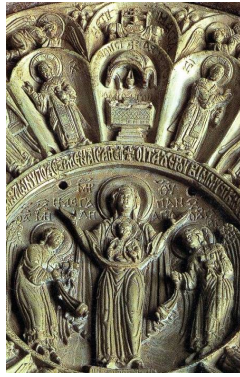
**Left (il. 44) The empty throne surrounded by the four apocalyphtical beings, by “the lion of Judaea and the Lamb of God”, frontispiece by Apocalypse from Moutiers-Grandval, Tours, cca. 840; London, British Library;*

**Middle and right (il. 45) Hetoimasia like a HolyTable, detail from a reliquary cross, double faces, Cosenza Cathedral, Calabria, South Italy, 12th century;*



**(il. 46) St. Ana with Virgin Maria, and upstairs in the middle is Empty Throne, like a simbol of Virgin Maria, and two angels, a portable mosaic icon, 11th-12th century, Vatopedi Monastery, Athos;²⁸⁵*

²⁸⁵ O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1911, pag. 433;



**(il. 47 a, b, c) The "Pulcheria" Paten; in Center of paten: Virgin Platytera between two angels, middle line: Christ distributing The Eucharist, angels and archangels; upstairs in the margins line The Hetoimasia; 14th century, steatite, silver gilt mount, diameter 16 cm, Mount Athos, Xeropotamou Monastery;²⁸⁶*



**Left (il. 48) Last Judgement with Hetoimasia in the middle of composition, panoramic photo, Voroneț Monastery, Bucovina, Romania;*

**Right (il. 49) Last Judgement with Hetoimasia, Exonartex, Probota, Romania;*

²⁸⁶ Jannic Durand, *Byzantine Art*, FINEST SA/Édition PIERRE TERRAIL, Paris, 1999, English Edition with the assistance of the French Ministry responsible for Culture Centre National du Livre, Printed in Italy, 1999, pag. 194;



*(il. 50, a, b, c) The same rainbow surround God and Hetoimasia, but Jesus Christ is sitting on the rainbow, Exonartex, Probota Monastery, Romania, 16th century;

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THE ART OF THE PORTRAIT IN THE RELIGIOUS PAINTING OF WALLACHIA AND MOLDAVIA IN THE 15TH – 17TH CENTURIES

Valentin Sava*

Abstract: Beyond the diversity of the forms of socio-economic and cultural-artistic development, at the end of the 14th century, Wallachia, Moldavia and the *knights of Romanian origins* of Transylvania, Banat and Maramureş were gathered in one single system, with feudality institutions of Occidental inspiration, but with mostly Orthodox spirituality, a system that is permanently struggling to find the perfect equilibrium between the Islamic-Ottoman expansionism and the insistent conversion actions of Western Catholicism. Medieval painting promoted the portrait as an artistic genre beyond the canonical constraints of the painting of Byzantine inspiration. The votive portrait of the founder did not necessarily reproduce the individual features of the portrayed person, not even in the last period, when the artistic and technical evolutions could initiate tendencies to a desacralization of the religious themes. The introduction of the portrait reflecting the social class in the Court of the two Romanian Countries through the Central – European sources of Austria, Hungary or Poland produced a major change in the aesthetics of the portrait when the artist came to have a new vision on the way he rendered the physical features and later the mental experiences of the model, sometimes making use of an obvious descriptive exactness in rendering the physical features, the physiognomy of the portrayed person. Just like in the medieval votive portrait, in the case of easel portraits, the artist focused on the representation of external features, according to the social importance and rank of the portrayed person. Gradually, the evolution of the corresponding capture of the physical features, initially sufficient, went up from a qualitative point of view to complete this first effort with a precious performance of the expression of the spiritual characteristics of the portrayed character, insistently claimed by both the artist and the contemplator.

Keywords: Votive portrait, medieval, founder, Byzantine, canon, painter, monastery, voivode, church.

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1. Wallachia

After the defeat from Nikopol (1395), the confrontation between Christianity and the Ottoman expansion, namely the Islam, remained a real fact on the Danube line. The coming of the Ottomans in Eastern Europe and their advance to Central Europe was marked by the fall of the Byzantine Constantinople of 1453. For the Romanian voivodes, the fall of the Christian states in the south of the Danube determined the appearance of different evolutions from one reign to another, according to the character of the respective voivode and also to interior and exterior circumstances, which influenced the ability to resist the Ottoman expansion. As it was in the front line of the anti-Ottoman resistance, Wallachia was the first one to enter a system of specific relations with the High Porte, relations that in the 15th century gradually evolved to an Ottoman domination.

In 1420, for the first time in Wallachia, the Ottomans imposed a voivode of their own will, so in 1432 the first personal *bowing down* of a voivode before the sultan was recorded. In 1436, Vlad Dracul, the father of Vlad the Impaler, was personally going to present *the tribute* to the sultan, while Moldavia, somehow unexposed to the Ottoman expansion of the time, bowed down only two years after the fall of Constantinople, in 1455, during the reign of Aron Vodă, as the said bowing down was necessary to open the market of the areas over the Black Sea, which were already under the Ottoman control, for the Moldavian merchants.

Just like in Moldavia, the voivodes of Wallachia were generally depicted in western outfits, although the Court and the Holy Offices ritual were Byzantine. The Court was itinerant, even if, just like Suceava in Moldavia, Wallachia also had a powerful citadel in Târgoviște. Overall, the power of the voivode, at first disputed with the boyars, gradually prevailed, towards the end of the 15th century. In Wallachia, religious life – which remained mainly tolerant, especially in Moldavia, where the Hussite heretics found shelter after the Catholic Council of Constanza, intertwined with the Eastern influences coming from the south of the Danube, determining significant evolution from an artistic point of view, too, especially at an ornamental level and less or not at all at a structural level. These evolutions came to gradually dominate the art and culture of the following century in Wallachia. The original painting of the narthex of the catholicon of Cozia monastery- Vâlcea, executed according to the style of the Paleologan monastic painting contemporary to the reign of Mircea the Elder (who died in 1418) is preserved even from the year 1391. We also have the 14th century paintings of the Princely Church *Saint Nicholas* in Curtea de Argeș, whose painting was made during the reign of Vlaicu Vodă (1364 – 1366) and which, from a stylistic point of view, belongs to the Byzantine – Paleologue era that was characterized by a remarkable richness and clarity of the iconographic program, demonstrating high artistic qualities. One of the first Romanian

artists known as a representative of the Byzantine – Paleologue style was Stephen, a master painter, probably born in Wallachia, who painted the church of Densuș – Transylvania, in 1443 and the patron icon of the church of Ostrovul Mare –Hațeg Land.²⁸⁷

The artistic creations of the 16th century are even more famous as, due to the evolution determined by the influence of oriental art in the south of the Danube, real schools of religious painting, represented by highly appreciated artists, master painters, appeared and developed.

Thus, Dobromir the Painter, also known as Dobromir of Târgoviște, painted the church of Bistrița Monastery of Vâlcea, a foundation of the boyars of Craiova, in collaboration with two other artists – the painters Dumitru and Chirtop. The church infirmary preserves mural paintings that also contain a votive picture representing Barbu Craiovescu. The founder's portrait bares the date 1513 – 1514. The same painter, Dobromir, painted – 1517-1526 – the Episcopal Church in Curtea de Argeș and the original paintings are partly preserved in the National Art Museum of Bucharest. Also, in collaboration with Jitian and Stanciu, Dobromir of Târgoviște made the original painting of Dealu Monastery Church from Dâmbovița (1515), which is now faded away.²⁸⁸

Towards the middle of the 16th century, the painter David, together with his son, Radoslav, painted the church infirmary from Cozia Monastery (1543). There, together with another master painter, Maxim, he made valuable frescoes that impress with the vigour of their drawing, accompanied by chromatic harmonies subtly dominated by the earth reds. Certain scenes – like the one representing *Doubting Thomas* – are impressive because of the dramatic dynamism of the composition. Together with Radoslav, David also created an impressive votive picture representing the portrait of the great spatharioi Stroe, considered to be one of the first portraits of realist expression of the old medieval Romanian art.

During the second half of the 16th century, another important painter – Dobromir the Younger of Târgoviște – performed his activity. He painted the narthex of the Tismana Monastery Church in 1564, upon the order of the vornic Nedelco Bălăceanu. Dobromir the Younger realized a really valuable composition characterized by the suppleness and dynamism of the drawing, large rhythms, doubled by a certain musical elegance of the compositions. It is supposed that the same Dobromir the Younger of Târgoviște also painted the Snagov Monastery Church near Bucharest; this painting was subject to a lot of subsequent repainting.

²⁸⁷ Radu Popa – *Cetățile din Țara Hațegului / The Citadels of Hațeg Land*, BMI,3/1972, as well as Vasile Drăguț – *Pictura murală din Transilvania (sec. XIV-XV) / The Mural Painting of Transylvania (14th – 15th centuries)*, București, 1970, or Vasile. Drăguț – *Dicționar enciclopedic de artă medieval românească / Encyclopedic Dictionary of Romanian Medieval Art*, p.292.

²⁸⁸ Vasile Drăguț - *Dicționar enciclopedic ...* p.128.

Built by Neagoe Basarab between 1517 and 1521, the Snagov Church remains, until today, a study object for researchers, at least regarding the original painting, which is attributed to Dobromir the Younger with a certain degree of probability.

Towards the end of the 16th century, during the reign of Michael the Brave, at least two important painters were remarked because of their activity; Mina – a painter and courtier of Michael the Brave – painted the Căluș Monastery Church (1594) where he created the portrait of Michael the Brave. For that matter, the votive paintings made by Mina the Painter represent a valuable document of the epoch as – together with Michael the Brave – they illustrate the voivode Petru Cercel and the entire Buzești family. Another artist of that time, Nicholas of Crete, was a religious painter and artist at the Court of Michael the Brave. An educated spirit, Nicholas of Crete was also one of the most important diplomats of Michael the Brave at the Central – European Courts. Nicholas of Crete is believed to have painted some churches from Transylvania, like the chapels from Târgu Mureș and Alba Iulia.²⁸⁹

The first half of the 17th century was marked by numerous violent changes of reign, revolutions and foreign invasions that messed up the Carpathian-Danubian territory, which was already marked by the dramatic events that culminated in the tragic end of Michael the Brave and the end of the first Unification of the three Romanian countries, in 1600. The memory of Michael the Brave was not forgotten and the Unification remained an opened objective, also assumed by voivodes like Radu Șerban or Mihnea III, as far as the second half of the 17th century. In the middle of this turbulent century, only the reigns of Vasile Lupu in Moldavia, of Matei Basarab in Wallachia and of the two Rákóczi in Transylvania, due to their longer duration, offered a relative stability, favorable to the art and culture development.

Analyzing the medieval religious art in Wallachia during the 17th century, one needs to remark the evolution of the portrayal representations of the votive pictures towards an accentuated tendency of laicization of the represented figures, as the artists often made use of the representations of simple people, builders, constructors, carpenters or house painters, together with the voivodal figures, of great boyars or important officials of the Court, founders of places of worship built on the entire territory of Wallachia.

In 1644, the painter Stroe of Târgoviște decorated the interior of the Arnota Church, the necropolis of Matei Basarab built between 1633 and 1636, with mural paintings of remarkable artistic quality. Among these, one may notice the votive picture of Matei Basarab and Lady Helen portrait, a

²⁸⁹ Vasile Drăguț - *Dicționar enciclopedic de artă medievală românească*, p. 215.

painting of perfect sense of composition, characterized by the elegance of the drawing and a special chromatic refinement. It particularly surprises the realism and expressive force of the portraits.

Another representative of religious painting was Ianache who, in 1667, together with Monk Michael, both master painters, made the mural composition decorating the Săcuieni Church – Dâmbovița, foundation of the clucer Badea Săcuianu, previously built in 1655. Ianache is the author of the Passions cycle, the Deesis, as well as of the suite of military saints in which he demonstrated an archaic vision, dominated by dark tones. Monk Michael painted episodes from Saint Nicholas' life, as well as the figures of the Altar hierarchs, revealing a synthetic concept of the compositions. Later on, Tudoran the Painter painted the church of the fortified Court of Băjești – Argeș (1669) where one may notice a laicization tendency and an obvious preoccupation for the portrayal of the characters of the votive picture. Thus, the portrait of the builder Dragomir is the first portrait of a worker in the history of mural painting of Wallachia.

In 1673, the painter Dima the Romanian together with George the Greek painted the church of the Topolnița hermitage – Mehedinți. A representative of the post-Byzantine art in the original and an autochthonous version of the painting of Wallachia, Dima the Romanian, together with George the Greek stood out by his monumentality and a good knowledge of the compositional organizations.

A main role in the art of the 17th century in Wallachia was played by the painting school from Hurezi – Vâlcea, founded around monastery built between 1690 and 1697, as a foundation of Constantin Brâncoveanu. The painting school from Hurezi was run by Constantinos, a painter of Greek origin, author of the decorations of some representative churches of the 17th century from Wallachia. Thus, between 1688 and 1689, together with the painter John, Constantinos painted the Lady Church from Bucharest, then, between 1693 and 1704, he painted the Great Church from Hurezi Monastery, together with the following painters: John, Andrew, Stan, Neagoe and Joachim. Considered to be the chief of the painting school from Hurezi, Constantinos was an adept of an Athonite painting, having an eclectic vision, with a supple drawing and an elegant and refined coloring.

The great church from Hurezi Monastery (1690 – 1693) presents an ample votive picture made of a true gallery of portraits of priceless artistic and documentary value. It represents Constantin Brâncoveanu with his entire numerous family, with his four sons and seven daughters, as well as his direct ancestors: the relatives of the Basarab and Cantacuzino family. The infirmary, a foundation of Lady Mary, Constantin Brâncoveanu's wife, built in 1696, was painted by Preda, Nicolae and Ianache. The *Saint Apostles* Hermitage of the same monastery complex from Hurezi, the foundation of the hegumen John of 1698, was painted in 1700 by the hierodeacon Josef and

by the painter John and later on, in 1703, Ianache, Istrate and Hranite painted the *Saint Stephen Hermitage*, a foundation belonging to Stephen, Constantin Brâncoveanu the elder son.

Together with the first representatives of the painting school from Hurezi ran by the Greek Constantinos, other master painters appeared, like the already mentioned Hranite, together with Pârvu, Stephen, Simion, Istrate, George etc. The painting school from Hurezi was the most famous painting workshop in the history of Romanian medieval art. By practicing a refined eclecticism and by manifesting a special interest for decorations, the painting school from Hurezi promoted new suggestions of the post-Byzantine painting, of Cretan influence²⁹⁰, also promoting the approach to reality in the portrait representation.

The painting school from Hurezi influenced the entire Romanian painting of the 18th century. Seeming to continue the tradition initiated by Tudoran the Painter who, in 1669, at Băjești Muscel, was the one to create the first portrait of an artisan from Wallachia, namely the portrait of Dragomir the Builder, the image being colored in dark tones of black, coffee-tinted, red and white, some representatives of the School from Hurezi also made portraits of simple people, master builders, carpenters or house painters, in the porch of the Great Church from Hurezi. Joachim, a master painter of the School from Hurezi, painted the Great Church of the Hurezi Monastery (1694), as well as the Princely Church from Târgoviște (1699). He made the portrait of master Istrate the carpenter on the walls of the verandah of the Great Church from Hurezi.

Assuming the idea of the compositional representations from Topolnița – Mehedinți, we also need to mention the valuable scene painted in 1673 by the painters George the Greek and Dima the Romanian, which is an unusual compositional representation for the iconography from Wallachia; it is a decoration of the Western façade of the church, representing the scene of the *Doomsday*, which is then frequently met in the iconography of Stephen the Great in Moldavia.

Another painting school, which is representative for this period, though without reaching the ampleness of the School of Hurezi, was the painting school from Câmpulung Muscel – Argeș, with the fortified church of *Santa Marina*, a school that also instructed numerous painters who worked especially over the Carpathians, in Bârsa Land. This is where the painter Ioan Negulici (19th century) took his first painting lessons.

Another painter, iconographer and school creator developed his art and talent at the turn of the 17th – 18th centuries. We are talking about Pârvu Mutu

²⁹⁰ Vasile Drăguț and Nicolae Săndulescu – *Arta brâncovenească / The Brancovean Art*, Bucharest, 1971, as well as Vasile Drăguț - *Dicționar enciclopedic...* p. 171.

(1657 – 1735), who worked both during the reign of Șerban Cantacuzino and of Constantin Brâncoveanu. Born in Câmpulung, but trained as an artist in the faraway north of Moldavia, Pârvu Mutu painted churches for the Cantacuzino family, in Filipeștii de Pădure, Măgureni, Lespezi, Bordești. His painting evolved towards an accentuation of the laic features, through the realistic dimension of the votive pictures containing the portraits of the postelnic Cantacuzino together with his family, in the church from Filipeștii de Pădure. He created one of the first self portraits marked by realism, like the one from the Bordești church, in which he is represented as a painter with a paintbrush in his hand. A remarkable drawer and a good colorist, Pârvu Mutu was a great painting teacher and his most important apprentice was Radu the Painter. Staying in the portrait area, the galleries of founders represented by Pârvu Mutu strongly anticipated the art of the portrait in Wallachia, an art that developed later, in the 19th century. A remarkable piece representing the portraitist work of Pârvu Mutu is the votive picture containing 55 characters, 1692, placed in the narthex of the Filipeștii de Pădure Church, an ample composition with a rich chromatic range representing figures that are clearly defined through a synthetic drawing of great evocative power.

2. Moldavia

In Moldavia, amid foundation and consolidation of the feudal state under the reign of Dragoș and Bogdan, the gothic tendencies mostly coming from Poland strongly influenced the architecture of certain churches, thus creating an original synthesis to which the local element also contributed. The Rădăuți Church, founded by Petru I Mușat, the Ruler of Moldavia between 1375 and 1391, still proves this synthesis that led to the development of the later Moldavian style.

In the 15th century, a central figure of the Moldavian portrait art was Gabriel the Hieromonk, who is also considered to be the founder and leader of the painting workshop that made the interior painting from Bălinești – Suceava in 1493. The votive picture representing the logothete Tăutu is considered to be one of the successes of the Moldavian portraiture, characterized by a vivid and realistic illustration, by a suppleness of the drawing and a shine of the chromatic harmonies. The fragments of exterior painting executed later, in the 16th century, during the reign of Petru Rareș, gracefully completes the tradition of the Moldavian religious painting inaugurated in Gabriel the Hieromonk's workshop. Considered to be the most important artist of Stephen the Great's era, he was the main author of the valuable painted composition from Bălinești, a mural painting belonging to the Byzantine – Paleologue style, a painting characterized by grace and nobleness, richness of the chromatic harmonies and by a note of humanism of

the figures.²⁹¹ The scenes from the *Passions* cycle, represented in a continuous, non-compartmentalized frieze came to define the new style imposed in the Moldavian mural painting of the next century.

Staying in the area of the mural painting of the 15th century in Moldavia, we should mention the mural paintings before 1481 from Dolhești Mari-Suceava, the Saint Parascheva Church, founded by the hetman Șendrea, porter of Suceava. In the votive picture, the image of the hetman Șendrea is tributary to the characteristics of the first phase of Stephen the Great's period in the religious painting, a feature that was preserved despite certain transformations subsequently suffered by the church construction, in the 18th century.

The interior frescoes of the *Ascension* Church from Neamț, made in 1497, are also attributed to the 15th century. They are considered to be the last painting composition dating from Stephen the Great era, a composition that was subsequently affected by some repainting of the 19th century. Among the master painters, Nichita is mentioned in a document of 1415, during the reign of Alexander the Good (1400-1432), together with Dobre, as they were both hired to paint for several churches from Roman (*in Târgul de Jos*) and Rădăuți, for the voivode Alexander the Good. We also have to mention Stephen the Painter, who is recorded in a document of 1425 where it is said that Alexander the Good gave him four villages as a reward, thus making the *material* proof of the artist's high value and appreciation.

The analysis of the human face representation in the portraitist work of the 15th century would be incomplete if we do not mention the contribution of the embroidery workshops and of the miniaturists. The Moldavian embroidery developed during the reign of Stephen the Great (1457-1504) promoted a monumental vision, an expressive sobriety of the compositions, calm and noble chromatic harmonies, as well as a perfect technical execution. Several works of art like the *Epitrachelion* from Putna (1469), the Funeral veil of Mary of Mangop (1477), the *Epitrachelion* from Putna of 1480, containing the votive portraits of Stephen the Great and his son Alexander are recorded as remarkable examples. Other examples may be the following: the Dvera representing the *Ascension* (Putna -1484), the Dvera representing the *Dormition* (Putna – 1485), the Epitaph from Putna (1490), the Dvera from Putna representing the *Crucifixion* (1500) – containing the portraits of Stephen the Great and of Mary Voichița, the Dvera from Putna representing the *Annunciation* (1500) or the *Epitrachelion* from Dobrovăț-Iași, made in 1504 and representing the embroidered portraits of Stephen the Great and Mary Voichița.

In the case of miniature, both before and during the time of Stephen the Great, it was created by several high value miniaturist artists. The most

²⁹¹ Vasile Drăguț – *Dicționar enciclopedic...* page 51. The Church of the Bălinești Court, Grămești commune -Suceava, a foundation of the logothete Tăutu before 1493.

important miniaturist of the 15th century was Gabriel Uric, a calligrapher and miniaturist coming from Neamț Monastery. By the making of the *Tetraevangelion* ordered by Lady Marina, the wife of Alexander the Good, in 1429, nowadays kept in the Bodleian Library of the Oxford University – England, Gabriel Uric proved the force of his talent in humanizing the expression of the characters he represented. By using a calm drawing, a particular chromatic refinement, soft harmonies, Gabriel Uric with his way of representing the four evangelists created a model that was then constantly continued by the Moldavian mural painters and miniaturists of the 15th century and of the following periods. A follower of the miniaturist Gabriel Uric, Theodore Mărișescu was an important representative of the calligraphic art and miniature from the time of Stephen the Great. Between 1491 and 1500, he illustrated five tetraevangels, richly adorned with frontispieces and miniatures, demonstrating his appetite for a solid construction of the composition, an elegance of the pagination, as well as for a large and natural drawing. Another artist, Philip, a miniaturist monk from the time of Stephen the Great, used a compositional scheme in which the stylized motif (geometrical, floral or zoomorphic) was extended by repetition. A remarkable example is represented by the *Tetraevangelion* made in 1502 that was offered as a gift to the Zografu Monastery, nowadays being part of the patrimony of the National Library of Vienna. Another calligrapher and miniaturist was Nicodim, author of the famous *Tetraevangelion from Humor* (1473) that contains the votive image of Stephen the Great in miniature. Together with the miniatures representing the four evangelists, Nicodim also created several frontispieces and initials. At Stephen the Great's command, Pahomie, another calligrapher, copied the *Evangel from Voroneț* (1490), a remarkable work, famous for the beauty of its frontispieces, vignettes and initials, all made from gold and colours, nowadays part of the collections of the History Museum of Moscow, Russia. Just like Pahomie, another calligrapher and miniaturist, Palade remained known as the author of the *Evangel from Putna*. Made between 1488 and 1489, this work of the Moldavian decorative art is famous for its special decoration representing frontispieces and initials of an exceptional value.

Returning to painting and portrait representation in the religious painting from Moldavia, once with the next century, the 16th century, we witnessed the apogee of the religious painting development in the Moldavia of Peter IV Rareș; during his two reigns, the most representative works that remained until today were created: Voroneț, Humor, Moldovița, Probota, Dobrovăț, Hârlău etc.

Voroneț, which was built in 1488, during the reign of Stephen the Great, was enlarged in 1547, when the Metropolitan Gregory Roșca added an opened porch. The nave preserved the original paintings characterized by the

specialists²⁹² through a marked monumental expression, a clarity and vigour of the drawing, as well as through a calm harmony of the colors. The church titivation brought to its present form after 1547, with exterior mural paintings, transformed Voroneț and other churches treated on the same manner in a jewel of the Moldavian medieval art, remarkable for its chromatic harmony and the compositional rigor of the painted images. The presumptive author of the exterior paintings would be Mark Pristavu²⁹³ who created a really balanced compositional assembly, a kind of the *Sistine Chapel of the East* where the dominant color is the already famous *Voroneț blue*.

Voroneț shelters one of the most precious votive pictures of Stephen the Great, which was discovered quite recently, due to some operations of fresco cleaning. On this occasion, the specialists presumptively identified the real physiognomy of Stephen the Great, without a beard, with a short mustache, which is a different representation from that of the “iconography” that was known almost up to the end of the 19th century and that showed Stephen the Great wearing a beard, according to the “classic” model of the voivodal iconography²⁹⁴. The narthex of the Voroneț Church was painted in the same period.

Humor, a monastery founded in the 15th century by Oană the Vornic, was re-founded in 1530 by the logothete Theodore (Toader) Bubuioag. The external painting of the church, made in 1535, was executed by Thomas, the Court painter of Peter IV Rareș. The exterior of the church, which does not have a tower on the nave and it has an opened porch, presents a rigorously space distributed painting on the walls surface, with a warm chromatic harmony, doubled by a certain, graceful rhythmic of the drawing. The interior of the church was decorated by three masters, led by Thomas and it is still known for the exceptional quality of the painting from the narthex vault. At Humor, we record several votive pictures illustrating the portraits of Peter IV Rareș and his family, on one side, and the funeral picture of the Logothete Theodore Bubuioag and of his wife, Anastasia, on the other side. The Humor Church also has a valuable iconostasis and icons dating from the 16th century and made by the iconographer masters of the time.

Built in 1532 by Peter IV Rareș, the interior and exterior of the Moldovița Monastery Church were also painted five years later, in 1537, by Thomas of Suceava, who was a painter and a team leader. The first

²⁹² V. Vătășianu – *Pictura murală din nordul Moldovei / The Mural Painting from the North of Moldavia*, Meridiane P.H., Bucharest, 1974, as well as in *Studii de artă veche românească și universală / Studies of Old Romanian and Universal Art*, by the same author, Meridiane P.H., Bucharest, 1987, p. 101.

²⁹³ According to V. Drăguț, the name of Mark Pristavu figures on an inscription painted on the Southern façade of the church.

²⁹⁴ Also see the oil portrait made by Gheorghe Asachi, found in Stephen’s the Great at Putna Monastery.

Moldovița Monastery that was previously built in 1410 and known as “the new monastery” ruined because of the instability of the terrain it was built on. Just like at Humor, the portrait of Peter IV Rareș is presented in the votive picture from the nave, together with Lady Helen and their sons, Stephen and Iliăș. In the votive picture from Humor, the voivode is illustrated together with Lady Helen and their only son, Iliăș.

Thomas of Suceava can be considered not only a *painter*, but a great master of old art. A document from 1541, calls him “*Thomas, painter of Suceava, courtier of the glorious and great Moldavian voivode Peter*”.²⁹⁵ Author of the exterior frescoes from Humor (1535), he led the team of painters from Moldovița who worked two years later (1537) realizing a magnificent chromatic subtleness dominated by a warm red that covered a large compositional movement according to which the scenes were organized. The drawing is fine and firm through its varied and noble typology, demonstrating virtuosity and a solid schooling in the representation of the images inspired by the Old and New Testament. A representative work for Moldovița is the scene of the *Siege of Constantinople*.

Staying on the Northern Moldavia territory, we need to mention another great emblematic artist for the religious painting coming from the 16th century Moldavia, namely the painter Dragoș Coman (also known as Dragoș, the son of father Coman of Iași). Main author of the interior and exterior mural paintings from Arbore, Dragoș Coman created a successful synthesis between the traditional background of the autochthonous painting and the stylistic elements of the occidental art, in 1541.

Owner of a very supple drawing and of a noble and sparkling coloring, through the two votive pictures from the narthex and from the nave, Dragoș Coman made a varied and convincing typology, together with a perfect harmony and equilibrium of the compositional solutions.

In the votive picture from the narthex, on the southern wall, under the arcosolium, Dragoș Coman represented the hetmam Luca Arbore and his wife Juliana, together with their two deceased children, Theodore and Nichita. The votive picture situated on the western wall of the nave represents the hetman Luca Arbore together with his wife Juliana and all their five children. For the recognized qualities of his art, Dragoș Coman was considered the most important Romanian artist of the 16th century.²⁹⁶

Another foundation of Peter IV Rareș, the Probota Monastery Church, was also painted in 1532, both in the interior and the exterior. Later, the interior painting suffered some re-paintings, while from the exterior painting little was preserved, being mainly degraded.

²⁹⁵ Vasile Drăguț – *Dicționar enciclopedic...* p. 303.

²⁹⁶ P. Philippot – *Die Wandmalerei*- München, 1973, quoted by Vasile Drăguț in *Dicționar enciclopedic...*p. 132.

The tradition of the votive pictures from Voroneț representing Stephen the Great, who is illustrated together with Mary Voichița and his son Bogdan, or the pictures from Pătrăuți, also from the 15th century (1487) where Stephen the Great is represented together with one of his daughters, also records the representation of Stephen the Great from the *Descent of the Holy Spirit* Church (1503-1504) from Dobrovăț-Iași. The painting, executed in 1529, surprises through the monumentality of the compositions, the expressivity of the drawing and an almost severe subtleness of the coloring. The votive picture represents Stephen the Great together with his son, Bogdan III (the One-Eyed) and Peter IV Rareș. The iconographic scenes from the walls of the Dobrovăț Church have a strongly monastic orientation, illustrating themes like *The Ladder of Vertues* or *The Miracle of Saint Sava*. The chapel and the gate tower are different from the rest of the monastery complex, presenting Baroque – Moldavian decorations belonging to the 18th century.

Of course, by going back to the representations of the painting from Pătrăuți, the *Holy Cross* Church, built in 1487 preserves the high artistic quality painting in which the portrait of Stephen the Great is considered to be one of the most beautiful representations of this voivode. Together with the votive picture, we may notice two other compositions of great value: the scene of the *Grief*, the *Cavalcade of the Military Saints*, clear works, of remarkable composition. The drawing is also refined and expressive, doubled by a subtle colouring that represents the Byzantine – Paleologue tradition assimilated to the Moldavian artistic environment. The *Doomsday* scene from the western façade was painted later, in the second half of the 16th century.

Also, from the period of Peter IV Rareș reign, we can mention the interior painting of the *Saint George* Church from Hârlău founded by his father Stephen the Great, a really valuable painting, assimilated to the great contemporary creations of Northern Moldavia. Towards the end of the 16th century, one can record the works of two other important painters, John and Sofronie, masters of the mural painting compositions decorating the Sucevița Monastery Church, built before 1596. Even today, it continues to impress with the richness of the painted adornment decorating both the interior and the exterior of the Sucevița Monastery, the compositions that are dominated by the epic spirit, in a diverse chromatic range dominated by green, as the painting has a strongly ornamental orientation, receptive to the innovations of the Renaissance painting. The drawing refinement is accompanied by a varied and harmonious coloring, sprinkled with subtle modulations of chromatic intensity.

It also surprises the savant distribution of the compositional units in scenes that became emblems of Sucevița: *The Ladder of Vertues*, *The Bringing of Saint John the New of Suceava Relics*, *The Legend of Saint Nicholas* or *The Legend of Moses*. As regards the portraitist's art, the votive

picture in the nave represents the family of the voivode Ieremia Movilă. The Prince is accompanied by the following persons: Mary, the voivode's mother, followed by Lady Elisafra, Ieremia Movilă's wife and three sons and five daughters. The above mentioned physiognomies are vivid, full of expressiveness, demonstrating the influences of the Renaissance style representations coming from the West. The perceptible difference between the way in which a portrait is represented, for example, the portrait of the Logothete Tăutu from the votive picture from Bălinești (16th century) made by Gabriel the Hieromonk and the portrait representations from the end of the 16th century made by John and Sofronie, exempts the viewer from any other comment.

Also towards the end of the 16th century, the documents record George (Ghiorghi) and Gregory (Gligori) as builders of the Aroneanu Church – Iași, built in 1594 and, probably, the Hlincea Church – Iași, also built in 1597. The record of these monuments is connected more to their quality of bearers of the Wallachian influences over the Moldavian architecture, influences that were felt at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Together with these great names of the autochthonous religious painting, we should also mention the names of some painters who came from abroad, like George of Tricala, who died in 1530, a painter from Thessaly and Stamatello Cotronas, a Greek painter. George of Tricala is believed to have painted the *Holy Cross* Church from Pătrăuți and the *Saint Procopius* Church from Milișăuți.²⁹⁷ Deceased in 1530, he was buried in the *Saint George* Church from Hârlău. His funeral stone is preserved at the National Art Museum from Bucharest. In his turn, Stamatello Cotronas made the exterior mural paintings of the Râșca Monastery Church, on the southern façade, which is better preserved, representing sequences from *The Life of Saint Anthony* and fragments from the composition called *The Ladder of Vertues*. Punctually, we also should mention the existence of some other valuable compositions of mural paintings dating from the 16th century, both in the chapel of the Bistrița Monastery Church, Alexander the Good's necropolis and in Părhăuți, where the *All Saints' Church*, built in 1522 by the logothete Gabriel Troțușan, shelters a mural painting that was executed after 1530, illustrating a rigorous and cursive drawing, an elegance of the contours, but most of all the presence of some realist, plastic observation elements.

Of course, in the decorative arts as well, the presence of portrait representation continued its evolution began in the previous century. We are talking about the great and the small dvera from Slatina made in 1561 representing the portrait of Alexander Lăpușneanu together with Lady Ruxandra, the voivode's wife. At the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, we should mention Zosima and Mardarie, the first Romanian embroidery masters, famous authors of the dvera from the Putna Monastery, given by

²⁹⁷ Vasile Drăguț – *Dicționar enciclopedic...* p. 152. The artist's birth year is unknown.

Bogdan III the One-Eyed, son of Stephen the Great, in 1510. The dvera has a representation of the *Dormition*, with no equivalent in the Byzantine art from the point of view of the iconography,²⁹⁸ equally proving in a superlative manner, the unique artistic qualities of the composition, from the point of view of drawing and chromatics. The Putna Monastery, a strong monastic center built by Stephen the Great between 1466 and 1469, which subsequently became a voivodal necropolis, is a strong artistic center able to coagulate the great artistic energies of the two centuries, the 15th and the 16th. Its influence as an artistic center also extended over the next century, especially after the reconstruction of the church between 1654 and 1662 by Vasile Lupu and George Stephen. In the 16th century, we find Spiridon of Putna, a calligrapher and miniaturist who, inheriting Gabriel Uric with his large and firm drawing, created the Gospel of 1502 that still impresses by the solid artistic construction and the elegance of the pagination.

Staying on the Moldavian territory, especially the field of the embroidery and miniature workshops of the 17th century, we talk about one of the most important Romanian scholars, miniaturists and artists of the Middle Ages, Anastasie Crimca (Crimcovici). Born in the second half of the 16th century, somewhere between 1605 and 1608, he was bishop of Roman and twice, between 1608 and 1617 and between 1619 and 1629, Metropolitan of Moldavia and a founder of the Dragomirna Monastery. He created several graceful, brilliant miniatures by which he proved a surprising compositional inventiveness and a predilection to narration. He also cultivated an expressive graphism and decorativism, he made a Liturgical Book in 1610, a Gospel in 1614 and a Psalter in 1616. Regarding the present investigation theme, we need to mention that in the Gospel of 1614, Anastasie Crimca made his self portrait that is nowadays preserved in the Dragomirna Monastery Museum.

Once consecrated, the tradition of embroidery in the Moldavian decorative art constantly cultivated the voivodal portraitist representations. At the beginning of the 17th century, the funeral veil for Ieremia Movilă (1606) and for his brother, Simion Movilă (1608) were created under the influence of the Polish Court portrait, *of Sarmatic influence*²⁹⁹. The portrait of Ieremia Movilă is “*the only one in the art of the Moldavian laic embroidery in which aulic intentionality is outlined... and the first psychological portrait in the Romanian medieval art*” (see, next¹⁵, Maria Ana Muzicescu, *The Medieval Embroidery ...*). Later, during the reign of Vasile

²⁹⁸ Vasile Drăguț – *Dicționar enciclopedic...* p. 322. Masterpiece of the Moldavian medieval embroidery, representing the Dormition in the center and medallions of the 12 citadels where the apostles were preaching at the time of the Dormition on the margins.

²⁹⁹ Ana Dobjanschi and Victor Simion – *Arta în timpul lui Vasile Lupu / Art during the Time of Vasile Lupu*, as well as Vasile Drăguț - *Dicționar enciclopedic*, p. 183. A more detailed version, Maria Ana Muzicescu-Broderia medievală românească / *The Romanian Medieval Embroidery*, Meridiane P.H., București, 1969, pp. 17, 18.

Lupu (1634-1653) we can mention the embroidered portraits of Lady Tudosca, the voivode's wife and of his son, John, two portraits that, together with the votive representations from the Churches of the Three Hierarchs or Golia – Iași, preface the appearance and development of the realist portrait.

During the 17th century, we can mention several church painters, respectable successors of the religious painting workshops tradition of the previous centuries. Thus, in the Dragomirna Monastery Church – Suceava, a foundation built by Anastasie Crimca between 1606 and 1609, the nave preserves precious mural paintings executed by the masters Crăciun, Mătieș, Ignat and Gligorie. The painter Crăciun is considered to be the main master of the paintings from the nave and altar of the Dragomirna Church (1610). Together with Mătieș, Ignat and Gligorie, Crăciun resorted to an accentuated complication of the architectonic compositions and backgrounds, according to a vision of his own, with strong decorative tendencies.

Towards the half of the 17th century, Vasile Lupu brings foreign masters to decorate the interior of the *Three Hierarchs* Monastery from Iași, a commercial center that became the capital city of Moldavia even from the time of Alexandru Lăpușneanu's reign (1564). A jewel of the decorative art, sculpted in stone and gilded, the interior of the *Three Hierarchs* Monastery Church had to be painted in order to be worthy to be the place meant to shelter Saint Parascheva of the Balkans relics, redeemed for a great amount of money given by the voivode to pay the debts of the Constantinople Patriarchy, a church that temporarily became a Metropolitan Church as well. That is why Vasile Lupu brought to Iași the Muscovite master Sidor Pospeev, who also worked on Miron Barnovschi's order, between 1628 and 1629, together with the painters Iacov Gavrilov, Deico Iacovliev and Pronca Nichitin. Between 1641 and 1642, these four masters painted the *Three Hierarchs* Monastery Church from Iași, realizing a special painting in which the fresco facing was made according to the Russian recipe, with rice straws. There is a lot to tell about the prosperous reign of Vasile Lupu, but at the same time we could talk about the enlightened era of Varlaam Moțoc, the Metropolitan of Moldavia, who, between 1632 and 1653, supported the politics of construction and endowment of the churches of Vasile Lupu's Moldavia. From Varlaam's time, we still have proofs of exterior painting on the southern façade of the *Saint Elijah* Church from Șcheia – Suceava, built starting with 1488, during the reign of Stephen the Great, a church that is very similar to the one from Voroneț, built in the same year. On the interior, the *Saint Elijah* Church from Șcheia – Suceava shelters the votive picture of Stephen the Great and his family.

Going back to the *Three Hierarchs* Monastery Church, the votive picture represents the portrait of Lady Tudosca, John, Vasile Lupu's children and the portrait of the voivode himself. On the occasion of the empiric restoration made at the end of the 19th century, when the monument was demolished in

order to be rebuilt, with certain architectural modifications, the *Three Hierarchs* Church lost its original painting made by Pospeev and his team. A few pickled fragments (about 20) were preserved, being deposited partly in the National Art Museum of Bucharest and partly in the deposit of the *Three Hierarchs* Church from the Gothic Hall – Iași, the ex refectory of the monastery. Among these fragments, the viewer might be surprised by the beauty of an angel head, made by the Muscovite masters in a realistic manner and with great sensitivity.

The second church, built and decorated during the reign of Vasile Lupu, was the Golia Monastery Church from Iași, a foundation of the Logothete John Golăi and his wife, Anna. The church has existed from the 16th century, under a basic form, its construction being continued and defined with the help of Vasile Lupu, with a new architecture that reunites the Eastern tradition with elements of late Western-European Renaissance architecture, in a surprisingly unitary and natural whole. The painter who painted the interior of the church was an autochthonous master, Mathew, son of John, who performed the most valuable mural décor of that epoch from the 1660 Moldavia. Preserved until today, partially in original, some of the paintings were partly and clumsily remade in the 18th century. Visiting this church on February 3rd 1653, Paul of Aleppo mentioned its beauty, also remarking the existence of an old and “*miraculous icon of Virgin Mary*”³⁰⁰ inside the church. From Paul of Aleppo we also have a description of the votive picture representing Vasile Lupu with his Lady and daughters, as well as Stephen, son of Vasile Lupu. According to some researchers³⁰¹ the traces of older painting discovered on the porch and narthex walls and brought to surface on the occasion of a restoration performed in 1943, by the way in which the characters are distributed, prove that Vasile Lupu did not demolish the old church built in the 16th century, but it enclosed it in the new construction made between 1650 and 1653, only remaking the altar, doubling its length and making it higher. In fact, a grafitto mentioning *anno 1594* was brought out on the porch walls, without giving any certitude that the said sign dates from the time of the first founder of the old church, the logothete Golăi.

It is interesting to notice that some researchers consider that the painter Mathew, son of John, the one that is believed to have performed the interior painting of the Golia Church in 1660, is, in fact, only a restorer of these paintings, the restoration being made much later, in 1838.³⁰² During the same period, another master, Sylvan the Painter executed the mural painting of the *Saint Michael* Church from Rădeana – Neamț (1652), another master painter,

³⁰⁰ Paul of Aleppo, *Călători străini în Țările Române / Confessions of Foreign Travelers about the Romanian Countries*, volume II-VI, București, 1970, 1976.

³⁰¹ Ana Dobjanschi and Victor Simion – *Arta în timpul lui Vasile Lupu / Art during the Reign of Vasile Lupu*, page 46, as well as Vasile Drăguț - *Dicționar enciclopedic...* pp. 154 and 173.

³⁰² Vasile Drăguț - *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Romanian Medieval Art*, p. 198. The author does not give the names of those researchers.

painted for Ștefăniță Lupu in 1660 the Hlincea Church near Iași, a foundation of Mary Zotta, the daughter of Peter V the Lame.

The last great composition of mural painting from Moldavia, executed according to the Post-Byzantine traditions, was the interior painting composition from the Cetățuia Monastery Church – Iași, a foundation of Gheorghe Duca of 1672. The painting was made by a complex team made of the painters Michael, Dima and George of Ianina and the painters Nicholas and Stephen of Iași.

Despite a certain *heterogeneity*³⁰³ mainly determined by the contribution of some master painters coming from outside Moldavia, one can certainly state that the 17th century is *Vasile Lupu's era in the Romanian culture* as the 19 years of regency represented a real *epoch* just like in the case of the reign of Stephen the Great and of Peter IV Rareș (15th – 16th centuries).

The last example could be that of the creation of another master painter, Joseph of Vatopedi who, at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the next century, made valuable paintings like those from the *Domnition* Church of Deleni – Hârlău (Iași), initially built between 1668 and 1669 and then transformed, in 1722.

In its faithful contact with the art and culture of its neighbors, whether it was Wallachia or Transylvania, or the strong influence coming from Poland, the Romanian medieval art from Moldavia did not transpose, but each time it creatively interpreted those elements that were accepted and assimilated, the interpretation being produced including the level of the voivodal or boyar portraiture, taking into account the specific data, determined by the existence of the Romanian spiritual background protected by the Orthodoxy shield, without excluding the non-Orthodox influences coming from the West or the Christian influences coming from the Russian East.

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³⁰³ Ana Dobjanschi and Victor Simion – *Arta în timpul lui Vasile Lupu / Art during the Reign of Vasile Lupu*, page 50, 51 as well as Vasile Drăguț, *Dicționar enciclopedic...*p. 154. or Răzvan Theodorescu and Ioan Oprea – *Piatra Trei Ierarhilor / The Stone of the Three Hierarchs*, The Meridiane P.H., Bucharest, 1979 and reediting 2008, pp. 35-37.

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**LES ROUES DU CIEL DE SUCEVIȚA. BREVE
INVESTIGATION MULTIDISCIPLINAIRE SUR UN
ELEMENT PLASTIQUE DECORATIF DE LA FRESQUE
INTERIEURE DE L'ÉGLISE « LA RESURRECTION DE
JESUS-CHRIST » DU MONASTERE DE SUCEVIȚA**

Emilian Adrian Gavrilean *

Abstract : The Wheels of the Sky of Sucevița. Brief Multidisciplinary Investigation over a Decorative Artistic Element of the Interior Fresco of the Church The Resurrection of Jesus Christ of the Monastery of Sucevița. In the study *Sucevița's wheels of the sky* I have undertaken a multidisciplinary investigation of some ornamental elements like the stars painted on the inside wall painting of "Învierea Domnului" Church of Sucevița Monastery and which are quite common elements at first sight in the sacred art of the Romanian Middle Ages. These stars are spectacular due to their size, spontaneity and quantity of design in the „sky” and maybe, especially due to the structure and the painting manner chosen by painters. Sucevița's sky is unique among all the important churches and monasteries built by voivodes between the 15th and 17th century in the North of Moldova: the painters Ioan and Sofronie painted symmetrically lots of big stars with angles formed of six rays as thin from center to the end. By using a nail and a wire or a compass they sketched equally spaced circles on which they traced the angles of the stars. After the recent restoration we do not know for sure if the circles were also golden circles as the stars but with the lapse of time they have become noticeable and now we have the so-called *wheels of the sky*. "Sucevița's sky" uniqueness lies not only in the technical innovation regarding star representation but also in its ability to raise some questions: are the stars inscribed in the circle pure ornamental elements taken from somewhere or are they symbols within the context of the monumental assembly? Is their source of inspiration only technical or also ideological? Why take pains to sketch some circles which would become invisible? Could this have been sketched only to exercise a new technique ? If they sketched the circles only as a guide mark in order to paint the stars symmetrically, why did they leave the circles without covering them somehow? Were the painters so unexperienced or careless that they didn't realise that in time the effects of such technique would become noticeable? Or maybe was this done on purpose? If that was the case, what was the source of inspiration and what is the message? We can

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answer these questions only by undertaking an investigation on this topic, especially as the whole painting of Sucevița is the representation of an organic mix of tradition, influences and original creation. The multidisciplinary method allows me to gather information from certain fields like wall painting techniques and restoration, history of medieval art, history of Christian art, dogmatic and symbolic theology of byzantine tradition, ethnology, mythology and native traditions in order to create an overall perspective on this ornamental element of Sucevița's wall painting. This study may be further developed, and, thanks to the multidisciplinary approach of investigation, the issues raised here – regarding an apparently common ornamental element of wall painting of the Romanian Middle Age – may lead to an unexpected outlook on the medieval art research from a modern point of view.

Keywords: Sucevița, sky, circle, stars, wheels, investigation, multidisciplinary

Situé au confluent de l'Occident et l'Orient, le Moyen Âge roumain a affirmé vraiment son identité dans la culture européenne à l'époque de la formation des premiers villages roumains (XI^e-XIII^e siècles) – une identité chrétienne, ayant de profondes racines byzantines et des particularités ethniques spécifiques.

Le principe de la symphonie byzantine, l'harmonisation entre le pouvoir laïc (de voïvode) et le pouvoir ecclésiastique (hiérarchique) aux XIV^e-XVIII^e siècles, surtout en Valachie et Moldavie, a permis la création d'établissements religieux uniques dans le paysage médiéval européen, établissements mis au service de la foi et de la dignité nationale. On pense non seulement aux monuments d'architecture sacrée d'une grande originalité, mais aussi à la plastique qui a embelli brillamment les anciens établissements roumains des voïvodes, la présente étude étant consacrée à l'analyse d'un élément de décor de la fresque intérieure de l'église du Monastère Sucevița du Nord de Moldavie, église incluse sur la Liste du patrimoine culturel mondial UNESCO à compter de l'année 2010, à côté de sept autres monuments d'architecture religieuse peints au Nord de la Moldavie.³⁰⁴

L'église « La Résurrection de Jésus-Christ » de Sucevița est la fondation commune de la famille des Movilă lors des dernières décennies du XVI^e siècle. Le monastère est attesté en 1586, comme résultat de l'initiative du métropolitain Gheorghe Movilă. Construite dans le style de l'architecture moldave – une synthèse d'éléments de l'art byzantin et gothique, auquel on ajoute des éléments d'architecture des anciennes églises en bois de Moldavie – l'église conserve le plan trilobé et le style consolidé à l'époque d'Etienne le Grand, avec l'exonarthex fermé. Les deux petits exonarthex ouverts ont été

³⁰⁴ Arbore, Humor, Moldovița, Pătrăuți, Probota, Suceava, Voroneț;

ajoutés en 1595 par le prince régnant Ieremia Movilă et constituent un évident écho de l'architecture de la Valachie.

C'est toujours pendant le règne d'Ieremia Movilă que les peintres moldaves, Jean le Peintre et son frère, Sophrone, peignent l'intérieur et l'extérieur de l'église, en réalisant une fresque. La peinture de Sucevița est l'expression d'un mélange organique, original, entre tradition, influences et création propre.

Par conséquent, les peintres Jean et Sophrone ont réalisé par leur art une mutation d'accent du mystique vers le laïc, du monumental vers la miniature, créant une ambiance plus décorative et mettant l'accent sur un langage dont le texte obtient un spécifique autochtone. L'on observe leurs tentatives – abouties – d'exprimer leur personnalité, leur propre vision sur le monde, à partir de traditions et modalités de penser familières. Les peintres ont commencé par l'expression visuelle d'une modalité populaire de comprendre la tradition biblique et ils en sont arrivés à exprimer quelques aspects spécifiques de notre vie rurale. Malgré cela, la peinture de Sucevița n'est pas une peinture populaire. *« Elle respecte fermement la tradition byzantine et si elle essaie de la renouveler, ce n'est pas conformément à la vision artistique paysanne visant le géométrisme et la stylisation du réel, mais au contraire par sa recherche et l'effort de rendre son authenticité. »*³⁰⁵

Quant aux diverses influences que l'on peut observer à Sucevița, elles prouvent que les peintres ont été des gens de leur époque qui connaissaient le phénomène artistique européen tant oriental qu'occidental, ainsi que les différents courants artistiques. Un exemple éloquent est représenté par les décors architectoniques des scènes du narthex.

Il y a des scènes qui rappellent le paysage citadin des fresques de Giotto et d'autres ont la réalité des citadelles fortifiées de la Transylvanie contemporaine. De temps en temps, un clocher d'église rappelle la Moldavie d'Etienne le Grand, un arc trilobé du monde musulman, la toiture en bulbe d'un clocher ayant la silhouette d'une église russe. Tout le Moyen Âge occidental et oriental ébauche sa massivité ou fantaisie architecturale sur les toiles de fond des fresques du narthex de Sucevița.³⁰⁶

Certains types iconographiques sont d'influence catholique, importés par les relations diplomatiques avec Pologne, tel *le Couronnement de la Vierge* de la fresque extérieure du mûr de sud et les vastes compositions *On se rejouisse de Toi/ L'Ancien des Jours/Fils Unique-Né* et *Cette prière nous sauvera/ Toi que l'on nomme bénite* de la paroi ouest et des demi-calottes des absides latérales de la nef contiennent des éléments à effet scénique, que l'on retrouve seulement dans l'iconographie russe du XVI^e siècle. Les scènes qui

³⁰⁵ M. A. Musicescu et M. Berza, *Mănăstirea Sucevița (Le Monastère de Sucevița)*, Les Editions de l'Académie, București, 1958, p.190, notre traduction.

³⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p.132.

illustrent *La vie de Moïse*, présentes dans la chambre des tombeaux, évoquent les miniatures perses et les éclats d'or qui vibrent intensément sur un fond bleu foncé nous font rêver aux mosaïques byzantines. Dans le tableau votif de la nef « on reconnaît un réflexe direct de l'art de faire des portraits polonais de l'époque, cet art de type effigie où l'imposant était cultivé jusqu'à l'exagération et qui, par un désir curieux – amusant de tradition historique, a été nommé sarmatien. »³⁰⁷

Les peintres de Sucevița ont introduit dans la peinture ecclésiastique non seulement le décorativisme chromatique, mais aussi le paysage. En plus, l'on peut observer les intentions, au juste un peu maladroitement, de représentation de la perspective linéaire. « *Les lignes qui s'enfuient vers le lointain sont placées correctement, le relief lisse du premier plan se perd peu à peu à l'horizon, la cité située au haut de la colline suit sa courbe descendante.* »³⁰⁸

Située au confluent de la tradition et de l'innovation, la peinture de Sucevița n'a pas épuisé encore son message spirituel et artistique, incitant toujours le désir des chercheurs à approfondir, par une ample investigation visuelle, la mentalité politique, culturelle et religieuse de la société de la fin du XVI^e siècle de Moldavie et à déchiffrer le message visuel laissé à la postérité.

Dans ce contexte, l'on situe notre démarche visant l'analyse d'un élément décoratif qui semble à première vue assez habituel dans le contexte de l'art sacré – les étoiles du ciel, mais qui impressionnent à Sucevița par leurs dimensions, par la spontanéité et la nature de l'arrangement dans l'espace dénommé « ciel » et peut-être, par ce qui est plus important : par la structure et par la solution plastique choisie par les peintres (II.1).

Les roues du ciel à Sucevița est la dénomination métaphorique que j'ai donnée aux étoiles qui embellissent le champ plastique du ciel dans le cadre des frises consacrées à des saints ou des compositions plus amples ; cette étude se propose d'éveiller l'intérêt sur un élément décoratif qui pourrait sembler banal, de prime abord, mais qui occupe un espace significatif dans la fresque intérieure de Sucevița.

Chacun des grands établissements des voïvodes des XV^e – XVII^e siècles du Nord de la Moldavie a « son ciel ». Par « ciel », on comprend le fond de la peinture, cet espace du champ plastique peint en bleu foncé, embelli le plus souvent par des étoiles faites en feuille d'or et qui, dans le cadre des frises avec des saints représentés debout, occupe deux tiers de la surface, à la différence de « la terre » qui occupe seulement un tiers. Dans le cas des compositions plus amples, « le ciel » occupe presque un tiers ou parfois moins, et il est décoré souvent non uniquement par des étoiles, mais

³⁰⁷ Vasile Drăguț, *Arta Românească* (L'Art roumain), Editions Vremea, București, 2000, p. 231;

³⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p.133;

aussi par les deux grands astres, le soleil et la lune (dans la scène de la *Résurrection* ou de la *Genèse* de la nef de Sucevița).

De même que l'on peut reconnaître les églises peintes des XV^e-XVI^e siècles à leur dominante chromatique – l'église de Pătrăuți d'après la nuance d'ocre-doré, le monastère de Voroneț d'après le célèbre bleu qui porte son nom, l'église d'Arbore d'après la nuance de vert, le monastère de Humor d'après l'ocre-rouge, le monastère de Moldovița d'après le rouge-brun, et le monastère de Sucevița d'après la nuance de vert qui a « *l'intensité de l'émeraude et la vigueur de l'herbe fraîche après la pluie* »³⁰⁹ – de même, l'on peut distinguer ces monuments sacrés en faisant une attentive lecture du « ciel » de chacun. *Le ciel étoilé* de chaque église a sa propre *grammaire*.

Par conséquent, à l'église « Saint Nicolas » de Bălinești, la peinture se déploie sur un fond bleu-foncé, couvert d'étoiles dorées, réparties en files parfaitement ordonnées, « *faites probablement à l'aide du pochoir* ». ³¹⁰ Les étoiles qui semblent brodées au fil d'or sont faites à six branches minces et aiguës. Dans ce sens, la scène de « *La Mère de Dieu Platytera* » de la conque de l'autel impressionne (II.2). A Arbore, sur le fond bleu, on a représenté sporadiquement des étoiles dorées à huit branches aiguës. Elles ressemblent à celles de Probotă et Pătrăuți. A Voroneț, le fond bleu des fresques est embelli par des étoiles dorées, à six, respectivement huit branches irrégulières et assez volumineuses (II.3) et les peintures des voûtes de la nef et du narthex sont décorées par des étoiles ayant différentes dimensions et un nombre différent de branches. L'on y remarque une singulière spontanéité dans la réalisation de ces éléments de décor. A Humor, les étoiles du ciel comportent six branches aiguës, bien proportionnées et assez volumineuses. L'Eglise du monastère de Moldovița se distingue par le fait que « le ciel » se réduit seulement à la nuance de bleu foncé, les étoiles manquent presque en totalité. Dans le cadre des églises « Sfântul Ilie » (« Saint Elie »), du village éponyme de Suceava et « Sfântul Dimitrie » (Saint Démétrios de Thessalonique) de Suceava, le fond bleu des peintures est jonché d'étoiles dorées ayant différentes dimensions et configurations, et en certains endroits on a intercalé des globes dorés (II.4). A l'église « Sfântul Gheorghe » (Saint Georges) de Suceava, tout comme à Dragomirna, une particularité des étoiles est qu'elles sont figurées seulement par le tracé de rayons minces et longs (II.5), ce qui donne au fond plus d'élégance et de vibration.

Le Ciel de Sucevița est unique. Sur un fond bleu-salt, les peintres Jean et Sophronie ont représenté symétriquement de nombreuses étoiles dorées, de grandes dimensions, dont les branches sont six rayons minces qui ont presque la même épaisseur du centre jusqu'à la fin. Par rapport aux étoiles de Bălinești, ordonnées linéairement, les étoiles de Sucevița ont un dynamisme et une vibration tout particuliers, étant disposées de manière

³⁰⁹ M. A. Musicescu, *op.cit.*, p.177.

³¹⁰ Corina Popa, *Bălinești*, Les Editions Meridiane, București, 1981. p.27.

circulaire. Le dynamisme des étoiles de Sucevița n'a pas été exprimé seulement par leur disposition plastique dans l'espace, mais aussi et surtout par la solution technique choisie par les peintres.

Dans la représentation de chaque étoile, les peintres n'ont pas utilisé de pochoirs, comme on le pensait dans le cas de Bălinești, mais le compas ou le clou à ficelle à l'aide desquels ils ont tracé des cercles à des distances égales, au centre desquels ils ont disposé des rayons allant jusqu'à la circonférence. C'est ainsi que les rayons sont inscrits dans un cercle parfait. On ne sait pas à coup sûr si les cercles ont été eux aussi dorés, mais la patine du temps les a rendus visibles, pour qu'on puisse avoir aujourd'hui ce que l'on appelle métaphoriquement *les roues du ciel*. Au premier contact visuel, elles ressemblent vraiment à des roues : elles ont un moyeu d'où partent les roues disposées de manière symétrique sur un cercle et qui vibrent sur le bleu-violet du fond (II.6).

L'unicité du *ciel de Sucevița* provoque quelques questions : les cercles où sont inscrites les étoiles ont-ils été dorés ou font-ils partie seulement de la technique de travail ? S'agit-il seulement d'une innovation technique ou du désir de transmettre un certain message ? Sont-ils de simples éléments décoratifs empruntés à une source ou ont-ils une signification dans le contexte de l'ensemble monumental ? La réponse ne peut venir qu'après une pertinente investigation effectuée dans ce sens.

Si l'on fait converger des connaissances de divers domaines, comme les techniques de la peinture murale, la restauration de la peinture en fresque, l'histoire de l'art médiéval, l'histoire de l'art chrétien, l'ethnologie, la mythologie et le folklore autochtone, la théologie dogmatique et symbolique à tradition byzantine, la méthode pluridisciplinaire nous offre la chance d'aboutir à une vision d'ensemble sur un élément décoratif de l'art sacré médiéval.

On commence par l'analyse de la solution technique appliquée par les peintres pour réaliser *les étoiles qui tournent en rond du ciel de Sucevița* et par certaines informations offertes par ceux qui sont parvenus à des conclusions bien documentées suite aux travaux de restauration de ce monument UNESCO.

Si l'on regarde attentivement, de certains angles, le fond de la peinture, l'on peut observer que l'opération de tracement des cercles a été exécutée par le peintre sur la fresque sèche, par sgraffite, après avoir appliqué la couche de couleur, comme on peut l'observer dans le cas du tracement de la partie haute de l'écriture (II.7-a,b). Les petites étoiles dorées, comme toutes les décorations métalliques en or, ont été appliquées après le séchage complet de la chaux ; après tout cela, on a fait les dernières retouches en bleu-smalt, de sorte que l'on observe même de nos jours les traces consistantes des traits de pinceau sur le fond bleu du ciel qui contournent les petites étoiles dorées. C'est probablement alors que l'on a

bouché les points de repère offerts par les cercles sgraffités. L'on observe donc que la peinture de l'église a été appliquée en technique mixte : « *a fresco sur une préparation fraîche de chaux, avec des interventions a secco.* »³¹¹ Cette méthode de réalisation des étoiles inscrites dans un cercle sgraffité semble avoir été appliquée pour la première fois à Sucevița. Elle a été reprise et utilisée par les peintres de Dragomirna mais d'une manière moins spectaculaire (II.8).

Si les cercles obtenus suite au sgraffite ont été couverts par une tache de couleur a secco, pourquoi sont-ils devenus si visibles avec le temps ? C'est quelque chose que les peintres n'ont pas souhaité. La réponse à cette question peut venir des spécialistes qui se sont occupés des ouvrages de conservation de Sucevița et qui ont consigné quelques conclusions des recherches entreprises sur les surfaces étendues du fond bleu-smalt qui ont été aussi les plus altérées.

Dans l'ouvrage, « *La peinture murale du Nord de la Moldavie. Modifications esthétiques et restauration* »³¹², Monsieur le professeur Ovidiu Boldura explique les raisons qui ont causé l'altération dans le temps du pigment bleu-smalt utilisé à Sucevița. On sait que le smalt est un pigment de couleur bleue

« avec des particules transparentes, dans des nuances qui tirent sur le violet. [...] Le smalt est un verre de potassium coloré par oxyde de cobalt qui, s'il est broyé en poudre, perd l'intensité de la couleur et devient transparent. Il a une bonne stabilité à la lumière, mais utilisé dans la peinture murale, il a souffert des altérations de nature chromatique. Dans certaines conditions, le verre n'est pas stable du point de vue chimique, c'est pour cela que le smalt est indiqué dans les techniques aqueuses (tempera et fresque) et moins en huile, vu qu'il y a des transformations du pigment dans ce milieu. Les dégradations chromatiques du smalt », dit Monsieur le professeur Boldura, « sont des altérations anormales de la couche de couleur, ayant des manifestations spécifiques en fonction de la technique de la peinture. Cette forme d'altération du smalt a été identifiée aussi par les restaurateurs à l'église du monastère de Sucevița »³¹³,

peinte, comme on l'a vu, en technique mixte. Dans ce cas, « *le processus d'altération du smalt a modifié l'aspect original de la couche de couleur du bleu intense, jusqu'au blanc crème avec un aspect crayeux, passant par une variété de semi-tons* ».³¹⁴

³¹¹ Ovidiu Boldura, *Pictura murală din nordul Moldovei. Modificări estetice și restaurare* (La peinture murale du Nord de la Moldavie. Modifications esthétiques et restauration), Éditions Accent Print, București, 2007, p.70-77;

³¹² *Ibidem*, p.70-77;

³¹³ *Ibidem*, notre traduction.

³¹⁴ *Ibidem*;

Il est très probable que le phénomène d'altération du bleu-smalt ait provoqué aussi la détérioration des cercles dorés, s'il y en a eu, ou la détérioration du pigment bleu-smalt de la surface sgraffitée, rendant visibles les traces des cercles. Il est à remarquer la sagesse dont les restaurateurs ont fait preuve, sans modifier du tout ces structures circulaires qui continueront à inciter diverses questions.

On pourrait arrêter l'investigation ici et se contenter seulement des informations techniques offertes par les peintres et les restaurateurs. La méthode pluridisciplinaire vise quand même l'étude du phénomène dans sa complexité. Par conséquent, il y a des questions qui attendent des réponses : pourquoi tant d'efforts pour tracer des cercles que l'on ne verra plus ? L'on sait que les peintres travaillaient dans un rythme assez rapide, les restaurateurs pouvant observer qu'à cause de la hâte, il y a eu des écoulements de mixtion sur la surface de travail, des écoulements retouchés après par des taches de couleur. Peut-être fut-ce seulement pour exercer une nouvelle technique ? S'ils ont sgraffité les cercles uniquement comme points de repère pour une structure de rayons symétrique, pourquoi les peintres les ont-ils laissés tels quels et ne les ont-ils pas couverts ? Est-il possible qu'ils aient été si peu expérimentés ou si négligents qu'ils ne se soient pas rendu compte que les effets de ces procédures pourront être observés dans le temps ? Peut-être ont-ils désiré tout cela ? Si oui, d'où se sont-ils inspirés ?

A partir de la nouveauté apportée par les peintres Jean et Sophrone dans la réalisation de cet élément décoratif dans la peinture des fresques, l'on se demande si les peintres se sont inspirés de quelque part, non seulement de point de vue technique, mais aussi conceptuel. Et cela d'autant plus si l'on met en balance la technique de travail avec la démarche conceptuelle qui était à la base de cette technique. L'on pourra observer que du point de vue du concept, l'investigation n'est pas du tout épuisée.

Une incursion faite dans l'art civil et religieux du Moyen Age, et plus particulièrement de la période contemporaine des peintres de Sucevița, pourrait constater que le motif décoratif des étoiles inscrites dans le cercle ou de la roue solaire était assez bien représenté. On le retrouve sur les pierres des tombeaux, sur les fauteuils des princes régnants (II.9), dans les décorations en pierre des façades (II.10) et le dernier mais non le moindre, sur les broderies à destination liturgique ou funéraire, qui étaient à l'apogée en Moldavie des XV^e-XVI^e siècles. L'on sait que dans la réalisation des broderies étaient impliquée aussi la technique dite « peindre mince », par l'exécution de quelques pochoirs. Il est très possible que Jean et Sophrone, qui connaissaient sans doute les broderies de l'époque, aient appliqué la technique de réalisation des astres en s'inspirant de quelques broderies plus anciennes ou même de leur époque. Dans ce sens, il y a des broderies éloquentes : *L'épitaphe* du prieur Sylvain du Monastère de Neamț (1437), *L'épitaphe* de Sucevița (1494) – (II.11), *L'épitaphe* de Dobrovăț (1506),

L'épithaphe de Voroneț (1516), *L'épithaphe* de Slatina (1556), *L'épithaphe* que Ieremia Movilă a offerte au monastère de Sucevița (1592), la broderie avec le portrait funéraire de Ieremia Movilă de Sucevița (1606).

Analysant attentivement la fresque intérieure de Sucevița et les broderies présentées ci-dessus, on a la sensation que les étoiles du fond des fresques étaient brodées. Bien sûr qu'il s'agit d'une technique de travail, mais si l'on analyse l'image dans le contexte du phénomène artistique médiéval des XV^e-XVII^e siècles dans son ensemble, l'on peut observer qu'il s'agit non seulement d'un simple élément décoratif – une étoile du ciel ou une roue solaire, mais d'un symbole ayant des valeurs universelles et de profondes significations spirituelles dans l'histoire de l'humanité. L'investigation pourrait s'orienter vers l'histoire comparée des religions ou vers l'histoire universelle de l'art, mais, puisqu'on se propose de retrouver la source dont les peintres de Sucevița se sont probablement inspirés, on s'orientera vers l'histoire de l'art chrétien, analysant la manière dont on a représenté les étoiles du ciel et les roues solaires dans l'art sacré. Les connaissances de la théologie dogmatique et symbolique de tradition byzantine nous seront très utiles ; on pourrait y trouver les motifs des artistes dans leur représentation et les significations de ces éléments au fil du temps.

Même si l'on connaît peu de choses sur la vie personnelle des peintres médiévaux, beaucoup d'entre eux restant dans l'anonymat, quant à cette occupation, il faut savoir que c'est aux XV^e-XVII^e siècles que l'art mural a atteint son apogée en Moldavie. Les peintres n'étaient pas seulement de bons spécialistes, mais aussi des gens cultivés, éduqués et formés près des monastères d'Athos, Constantinople ou Moldavie, où il y avait aussi de vrais ateliers d'iconographie. Par exemple, certains documents mentionnent les frères Jean et Sophrone comme peintres d'icônes au Monastère de Pîngărați (Neamț).³¹⁵ A part la connaissance des Manuels d'iconographie byzantins, les peintres connaissaient bien les Saintes écritures (certains étaient des hiéromoines), des événements historiques dont ils étaient les contemporains ; en outre, *ils ont voyagé aussi*, bien plus qu'on ne le croirait. Ils avaient des relations non seulement avec les pays de l'Orient orthodoxe, mais ils accompagnaient souvent les émissaires dans les pays de l'Occident catholique.

La peinture de Sucevița « est l'expression d'un mélange organique entre tradition, influences et création propre. »³¹⁶ On se demande si l'élément décoratif que l'on investigue appartient à la tradition, s'il est une création des peintres ou un élément emprunté à quelque source. Quant à la représentation des étoiles sur le fond de la peinture religieuse, l'on sait qu'il s'agit d'une pratique habituelle de l'art sacré murale de l'époque des peintres

³¹⁵ Voir Alexandru Efremov, *Ioan și Sofronie, zugravi de icoane/(Jean et Sophrone, peintres d'icônes)*, dans la Revue des Musées, 1969, no. 2, p. 84-88;

³¹⁶ M. A. Musicescu et M. Berza, *Op.cit.*, p. 5-6;

de Sucevița, mais dont les débuts descendent vers l'aube du christianisme (II^e-III^e siècles).

Même si l'on ne sait pas si les plus anciens Manuels d'iconographie byzantins avaient des prévisions claires quant à la représentation du *ciel étoilé* comme règle décorative ou théologique en iconographie, l'on sait certainement qu'au début, ces représentations ont eu un fondement religieux et une valeur symbolique. Le plus connu Manuel d'iconographie de nos jours, mais aussi le plus récent - de Denys de Fournas³¹⁷ contient des prévisions spéciales dans la représentation des astres célestes dans ces types iconographiques qui ont à la base des textes évangéliques qui justifient leur présence ou des normes canoniques fixées par les synodes oecuméniques qui illustrent visuellement des dogmes de la foi. Or, aucune norme ne porte sur une éventuelle obligation de décorer le ciel par des étoiles.

Les premières représentations chrétiennes d'une étoile ont eu à leur base les Saintes Écritures, liées à la prophétie de Barlaam quant à Jésus-Christ, consignée par l'Ancien Testament (Nombres 24,17) et représentée en fresque dans la catacombe de Priscille (III^e siècle) et la Naissance de Jésus Christ quand trois Rois mages guidés par une étoile se sont présentés avec des dons devant la Vierge qui tenait dans ses bras l'Enfant divin (Mathieu 2, 9-11), moment illustré graphiquement sur une épigraphe du tombeau de Sèvres, à Rome - III^e siècle (II.12).

Dès le début du II^e siècle, Saint Justin le Martyre et le Philosophe mentionnait dans « *Le dialogue avec le Juif Tryphon* »³¹⁸ les prophéties de l'Ancien Testament qui appelaient Jésus-Christ « *Etoile lumineuse* » et « *l'Orient du monde* », montrant que Jésus Christ a été associé symboliquement à une étoile étincelante que les peuples de la terre vénéreront. « *Il est appelé étoile même par Moïse, Orient par Zacharie.* »³¹⁹ Dans *La première apologie*, XXXII, 12-13, Justin déclare: « *Un autre prophète, Isaïe, annonce la même chose en d'autres termes. Une étoile se lèvera de Jacques et une fleur poussera sur la tige de Jessé. Cette étoile lumineuse qui se leva, cette fleur qui pousse sur la tige de Jessé, c'est le Christ.* »³²⁰ Pour soutenir sa démarche, il a apporté aussi une citation de l'Apocalypse où Jésus-Christ dit : « *Je suis la racine et la postérité de David, l'étoile brillante du matin.* » (Apoc. XXII, 16). Cette étoile de David est

³¹⁷ Denys de Fournas, *Manuels d'iconographie de la peinture byzantine*, traduit de C. Sândulescu-Verna, *Erminia picturii bizantine*, Les Editions Sophia, București, 2000;

³¹⁸ Justin le Martyr, *Acta SS. Iustini et sociorum*, Migne, P.G. VI, 1565-1592, traduction, introduction et notes des T. Bodogae, Olimp Căciulă, D. Fecioru par le titre *Dialog cu iudeul Trifon* (*Dialogue avec le juif Tryphon*), dans: *Apologeți de limbă greacă* (*Apologistes de langues grecque*), PSB Collection, vol.2, Les Editions de l'Institut Biblique et de Mission de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine, București, 1997;

³¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.46;

³²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 37;

l'accomplissement des attentes messianiques, l'arrivée de Jésus-Christ au monde, que les peuples ont vénéré par les trois rois mages.

Une autre représentation, cette fois-ci, d'un groupe d'étoiles accompagné des deux grands astres, le soleil et la lune, se trouve dans l'ancienne synagogue de Dura-Europos (début du III^e siècle) dans une fresque qui représente un personnage au-dessus duquel il y a deux astres du ciel – le soleil à droite et la lune à gauche, entourée par un groupe de sept étoiles à huit rayons qui ont au milieu un point (Il.13). C'est probablement la première fresque chrétienne où l'on retrouve un groupe d'étoiles et les deux astres. Même si, de prime abord, on croirait qu'il y a seulement des éléments décoratifs, le contexte et la manière dont ils sont disposés dans l'espace ont un rôle symbolique.

Cette manière de disposer les astres dans l'espace relève de l'iconographie byzantine de la *Résurrection*, où le soleil est toujours à droite et la lune à gauche du Sauveur crucifié, et les étoiles remplissent le ciel. Selon les interprétations proposées pour rendre compte de cette iconographie, on considère le soleil qui est à droite comme le symbole de l'Eglise chrétienne, l'équivalent de l'arrivée de la lumière au monde, et la lune entourée par les étoiles, à gauche, comme le symbole de la Synagogue, de la nuit qui touche à sa fin. Cette interprétation est renforcée aussi par la scène de la *Résurrection* de la demi-calotte de l'abside du nord de la nef de Proboata par la représentation de deux personnages, à droite et à gauche, sous les bras de la croix qui sont, en réalité, conformément aux interprétations, *l'allégorie de l'Eglise* (à droite, sous le soleil) et *l'allégorie de la Synagogue* (à gauche, sous la lune).³²¹ Par conséquent, la fresque de l'ancienne synagogue de Dura-Europos, dans le contexte où on l'a représentée, peut être le point de départ de cette interprétation où la présence des astres a non seulement un rôle décoratif, mais aussi une signification théologique.

A part ces trois représentations *grossières* d'une étoile ou d'un groupe d'étoiles avec un symbolisme qui indique les prophéties messianiques de la création de l'Eglise chrétienne, vers la fin du III^e siècle, il y a eu une série de représentations de l'*Adoration des Rois mages* où, à la place de l'étoile qui guide, apparaît la représentation du *monogramme de Jésus Christ* inscrit dans un cercle. Dans ce sens, une scène présente dans la catacombe Santa Ciriaca est significative où l'un des rois mages pointe le monogramme de Jésus-Christ entouré d'un cercle, à la place de l'étoile étincelante.

Le graphisme du monogramme de Jésus-Christ a mené à l'extraordinaire synthèse entre la superposition des initiales I et X inscrites dans un cercle avec une rosette solaire à six rayons. C'était quelque chose qui ressemblait à un symbole graphique de cette époque-là – le poisson dont les initiales IHTIS signifiaient « Jésus Christ Fils de Dieu, le Sauveur ». La

³²¹ Voir Gabriel Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru bucovinean/(Pèlerinage dans l'espace sacré de Bucovine)*, Editions Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p.135-138;

synthèse entre le monogramme de Jésus Christ et « l'étoile de l'est » montrée aux rois mages se rapporte non seulement à la présence du Nom de Jésus-Christ dans les rayons d'une étoile, mais aussi et surtout à la Gloire de Christ le Sauveur symbolisée par le cercle qui inclut ces *initiales – rayons*. Il s'agit d'un symbole adopté par les chrétiens dans leur iconographie, du monde gréco-romain et égyptien – le symbole du disque solaire ou du *médailon – clipeus*³²² qui allait devenir *la gloire des saints* concrétisée dans leurs auréoles. Les premières images de Jésus-Christ à auréole coïncident avec les premières représentations graphiques du monogramme chrétien et de la croix inscrite dans un cercle. Dans la scène *Jésus-Christ entre Pierre et Paul* de la fresque des catacombes Saint Marcel et Pierre de Rome (III^e siècle), d'une part et de l'autre de l'auréole de Christ le Sauveur sont représentées les deux initiales du monogramme – Alpha et Oméga (II.14), et sur l'épigramme d'un tombeau, toujours à Rome, on a représenté plusieurs croix inscrites dans un cercle (II.15).

Vu ce qu'on vient de présenter, l'on observe que dans les premiers siècles chrétiens, les étoiles étaient représentées graphiquement de deux manières : sous forme d'étoile à branches et de stylisation du monogramme de Jésus-Christ. Dans la deuxième, on remarque la présence du disque, avec tout son symbolisme. Les deux avaient un rôle symbolique, secret, indiquant la Personne de Jésus-Christ comme accomplissement des prophéties messianiques et comme arrivée de la lumière au monde qui équivalait à la naissance de l'Eglise Chrétienne. Les deux modalités de représentation allaient changer de sens avec l'apparition des basiliques chrétiennes (IV^e siècle) où les étoiles proprement dites ont commencé à avoir un rôle décoratif sur le fond des peintures ou des mosaïques, et les étoiles inscrites dans le cercle, comme stylisation du monogramme, allaient devenir *des roues du ciel* qui symbolisaient la gloire de Jésus-Christ.

Avec l'avènement de l'empereur Constantin le Grand au trône de l'Empire Roman et l'Edit de Milan de 313, qui offrait aux chrétiens la liberté de s'exprimer, le monogramme de Jésus-Christ apparaît accompagné du signe de la sainte croix inscrite dans un cercle. Le symbolisme du disque solaire s'affirme fortement en tant qu'image de Jésus-Christ – la vraie lumière – ; quant à la représentation des initiales de Jésus-Christ près du signe de la croix, quand on superpose ces éléments graphiquement pour les inscrire dans un cercle, il en résultera une étoile à huit branches inscrite dans un cercle ou plus exactement une rosette solaire. Il est probable qu'elles illustrent graphiquement le miracle de l'apparition du signe de la Sainte Croix au ciel, entourée des étoiles, devant l'Empereur Constantin le Grand, miracle suite auquel il est devenu empereur de l'empire entier et a dicté le

³²² Voir Nikolai Ozolin, *L'iconographie orthodoxe de la Pentecôte*, trad. Vasile Manea, avec le titre *Iconografia ortodoxă a Cincizecimii. Izvoarele sale și evoluția schemei iconografice bizantine*, Editions Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p.118-124;

célèbre Edit. Les sarcophages de l'antiquité chrétienne (IV^e siècle) (Il.16), et puis les mosaïques byzantines des V^e-VII^e siècles illustrent pleinement les éléments visuels dudit miracle.

A l'époque où les artistes des V^e-VII^e siècles ont compris la signification profonde de Jésus-Christ comme « Lumière du monde » et par conséquent, la symbolique du disque solaire, ils ont recouru à quelques représentations symboliques de Jésus-Christ, représentations qui prenaient la forme stylisée du monogramme – la roue solaire (six rayons des deux initiales I et X superposées et inscrites dans un cercle). En plus, dans le cadre des célèbres mosaïques des basiliques chrétiennes de Rome, Ravenne, Naples, Thessalonique, le disque solaire, le signe de la croix, le monogramme stylisé, les étoiles dorées sur un fond bleu foncé sont des éléments dont la symbolique renvoie à Jésus-Christ – « La lumière du monde » et « Le soleil de la justice » (Il.17 – a,b,c).

A partir du IV^e siècle, quand on a fixé la fête de la Naissance de Jésus-Christ, les chrétiens faisaient l'éloge du grand événement par l'hymne liturgique suivant: « *Ta Naissance, ô Christ Notre Dieu, a fait resplendir la lumière de la connaissance. En elle les serviteurs des astres enseignés par l'étoile apprennent à t'adorer Toi, Soleil de la justice et à te connaître Orient d'en haut, Seigneur, gloire à toi.* » La mystique chrétienne est une mystique de la lumière. Dans les écritures bibliques, les saints sont comparés avec le scintillement des étoiles :

Il y a aussi des corps célestes et des corps terrestres ; mais autre est l'éclat des corps célestes, autre celui des corps terrestres. Autre est l'éclat du soleil, autre l'éclat de la lune et autre l'éclat des étoiles ; même une étoile diffère en éclat d'une autre étoile » (I Corinthiens 15, 40-41).³²³

Ce scintillement vient de *Jésus-Christ – Soleil de la justice*. La présence des étoiles dans la décoration iconographique ne peut pas être séparée de la lumière solaire ; voilà pourquoi elles sont dorées, et la stylisation des initiales de Jésus-Christ dans un disque augmente le symbolisme des étoiles créant des *disques solaires*.

Dans le contexte présenté, l'on remarque que *les roues du ciel à Sucevița*, les étoiles dorées qui vibrent circulairement sur un ciel bleu foncé autour des médaillons avec des scènes des vouîtes ou des absides, présentent des ressemblances extraordinaires avec ce qu'on vient de décrire. On a souligné au début de notre démarche que parmi les influences existantes à Sucevița, il y a aussi les mosaïques byzantines. Les peintres Jean et Sophrone ne se sont pas bornés seulement à dorer le ciel étoilé, mais ils ont désiré le faire *vibrer* comme la mosaïque dorée, le faire *tourner* par des rayons de

³²³ sainte bible.com/lsg/1_corinthians/15.htm

lumière. Des deux modalités de représentation du fond – l'une décorative, les étoiles du ciel se rapportant à la lumière physique (Il.17 a,c), et l'autre symbolique – les roues du ciel se rapportant à *Jésus-Christ – la vraie lumière* (Il.17 b), ils ont choisi le fond symbolique. Il est difficile à croire qu'ils ont tracé tant de disques seulement parce qu'ils aimaient une technique ou qu'ils ont appliqué visuellement la théologie chrétienne. Il est certain qu'ils ont vu quelque part cette modalité de représentation. Il est très possible que les peintres moldaves, dans leurs voyages, aient pris contact visuel avec l'une d'elles, car il est tout à fait possible qu'ils aient connu les plus anciennes icônes orthodoxes que l'on conserve (VI^e siècle) au Monastère Sainte Catherine du Sinaï, où, dans l'une d'elles, Jésus-Christ est représenté sur un fond bleu foncé vibré par des étoiles dorées ayant une structure pareille à celles de Sucevița (Il.18).

Et même si l'on suppose que les peintres de Sucevița n'ont pas voyagé assez pour visualiser ces symboles de l'antiquité chrétienne et qu'ils n'ont pas connu assez de théologie pour pouvoir arriver à des interprétations iconologiques comme celles décrites ci-dessus, il y avait assez d'images avec des motifs solaires dans leur propre culture archaïque, traditionnelle ou religieuse. Par conséquent, on dirige notre investigation vers la zone ancestrale de notre pays et vers l'influence des différentes cultures qui s'y sont succédé.

La symbolique de l'étoile ou du disque solaire n'est pas éminemment chrétienne, elle a des valeurs universelles et a existé dans les cultures du monde même avant le christianisme qui les a prises et leur a donné une nouvelle signification. Par exemple, la religion des Daces était urano-solaire et l'iconographie du soleil s'y exprimait par allégories et symboles, comme « *le char solaire, la roue solaire, le disque, le cercle et la spirale solaire, des figurines d'oiseaux solaires, etc.* »³²⁴

L'apparition du christianisme chez nous suite à l'influence des colons romains dès le III^e siècle a mené à la disparition du culte de Zamolxis³²⁵, et la pénétration des missionnaires byzantins à compter du X^e siècle dans les zones de Dobrogea a eu pour effet la christianisation des éléments ancestraux qui tenaient du culte du soleil. Les églises rupestres de type byzantin de Basarabi sont des preuves incontestables dans ce sens³²⁶.

Les anciens symboles de l'astre solaire ont été transfigurés par le signe de la croix de type byzantin. Par conséquent, les plus importants

³²⁴ Romulus Vulcănescu, *Mitologie română* (Mythologie roumaine), Editions de l'Académie, București, 1987, p.104.

³²⁵ Voir Mircea Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului* (Aspects du mythe), Editions Univers, București, 1978, p. 80.

³²⁶ Voir Ionuț Holubeanu, *Reprezentările iconografice din complexul rupestru de la Basarabi și semnificația lor* (Les représentations iconographiques du complexe rupestre de Basarabi et leur signification), dans *Cinstirea Sfințelor Icoane în Ortodoxie* (La Vénération des Saintes icônes en Orthodoxie), Editions Trinitas, București, 2008, p. 199-235;

symboles cruciformes ont été : la croix de Saint André, la croix aux bras égaux, la croix en « palettes », la croix en « croix », la croix aux bras en « M », la croix inscrite dans un cercle. Cela ne signifie pas que les anciens symboles n'ont pas survécu.

Les historiens mentionnent l'existence, sur le territoire de notre pays, de quelques monuments sacrés liés au culte des arbres³²⁷ et que le christianisme a transformés plus tard en croix votives. Or, sur ces piliers ou ces *colonnes du ciel*, il y avait des représentations plastiques où le symbole le plus utilisé était le disque solaire en tant qu'expression des anciennes croyances, mais aussi de la nouvelle. Le chercheur Romulus Vulcănescu a fait un graphique des motifs géométriques présents sur les colonnes du ciel, parmi lesquels le plus complexe est celui du cercle (II.19).

Le symbole du disque solaire est resté présent comme représentation même sur les croix votives chrétiennes, qui sont en fait un mélange intéressant d'axes verticaux et horizontaux sur une structure circulaire. Situées « aux carrefours des roues », à la frontière, aux tombeaux, les croix votives avaient différentes formes : « *croix votives -croix en cercle, croix votives discophores, croix votives -croix triples inscrites dans un cercle, croix votives -croix inscrites dans des arcs de cercle, croix votives -croix paires, croix votives -croix complexes ...* »³²⁸ Les croix votives, en tant que relais des anciens monuments sacrés, sont un intéressant idéogramme plastique du processus de christianisation sur le territoire de notre pays et il est probable qu'elles aient exprimé le passage des anciennes croyances vers le christianisme sur un mode culturel. Elles se trouvent aujourd'hui non seulement « aux carrefours des routes », mais en place d'honneur dans les cours des églises. Quant à cet aspect, le grand historien Nicolae Iorga affirmait :

...les croix votives sont des fondations pas chers de certains croyants qui n'avaient pas de moyens pour montrer leur foi par la construction d'une église. Je pense qu'à l'origine, elles ont été autre chose. A des époques plus anciennes que nos règnes, même les églises en bois étaient très rares. Alors, autour d'une telle croix, on faisait l'office ; elle remplaçait l'église, la résumait dans ce qu'elle avait de plus caractéristique.³²⁹

Voilà quelques raisons de plus pour avancer l'hypothèse selon laquelle les peintres de Sucevița connaissaient ces symboles anciens, qu'ils ont eu l'occasion de visualiser et même d'appliquer. L'on doit préciser que certains éléments graphiques tels ceux liés à la roue solaire ne sont pas

³²⁷ Voir Romulus Vulcănescu, *Coloana Cerului/(La colonne du Ciel)*, Editions de l'Académie, București, 1972;

³²⁸ I. Opreșan, *Troițe românești.O tipologie/(Croix votives roumaines. Une typologie)*, Editions Vestala, București, 2003, p.72-110;

³²⁹ *Ibidem*, notre traduction ;

entièrement d'origine autochtone. Leur présence sur le territoire de notre pays peut être due par exemple aux Celtes qui ont colonisé la Plaine de Tisza et le Plateau de Transylvanie lors de leur pénétration dans les Balkans, aux IV^e-III^e siècles av. J.C.. Les motifs circulaires de l'art celtique rendent compte du fait que dans leur religion préchrétienne, la croix et la roue à rayons étaient des symboles du soleil et des déités solaires. La version celtique de Jupiter était associée à la roue.³³⁰ Certains éléments décoratifs de la peinture sacrée médiévale roumaine de Humor, Moldovița, l'église « Sf. Dumitru » (Saint Démétrios de Thessalonique) de Suceava (Il.20) ressemblent aux « tapis » celtiques qui embellissent les pages du Livre de Durrow - au VII^e siècle (Il.21).

Par conséquent, l'on observe que *les roues du ciel de Sucevița* ne sont pas seulement l'expression d'une technique de travail ou d'interprétations théologiques élaborées, de même que d'une culture millénaire. Les peintres de Sucevița, comme tous les autres peintres autochtones, connaissaient bien non seulement la tradition iconographique, mais aussi les traditions locales, les coutumes, les mythes et les légendes à peine christianisés qui circulaient dans le pays par voie orale. Ils ont surpris dans leurs ouvrages plusieurs aspects de la société roumaine des XIV^e-XVIII^e siècles, tels que la vie économique, la vie militaire, l'ethnographie et le folklore.³³¹

Une série de légendes chrétiennes liées à la vie de Saint Elie, un saint souvent retrouvé dans la dévotion populaire, le situe dans un chariot traditionnel tiré par les chevaux sur les nuages du ciel, apportant la pluie ou dissipant les tempêtes. La présence de ce véhicule dans l'espace céleste a été associée dans la mythologie roumaine au « Grand chariot » qui signifiait « La voie des âmes », une voie de passage de la terre au ciel. Les morts étaient conduits au tombeau dans un chariot tiré par des boeufs.

Par conséquent, la présence des chariots traditionnels roumains dans la scène de *l'Exode* du caveau de Sucevița (Il.22) dans un décor comportant *les roues du ciel*, entre profondément en résonance tant avec le milieu culturel propre qu'avec l'esprit de la théologie chrétienne. On considère la sortie du peuple hébreu de l'esclavage égyptien aussi comme « le passage », comme une préfiguration de la résurrection de Jésus-Christ qui a fait que l'humanité passe « *de la mort à la vie et de la terre au ciel* ». Ce « passage » a la vibration du ciel étoilé de Sucevița.

³³⁰ Voir Robert Adkinson, *Sacred Symbols*, trad. de Oana Zamfirache, *Simboluri sacre. Popoare, religii, mistere*/(*Symboles sacrés. Peuples, religions, mystères*), Editions Art, 2009, p. 92-167.

³³¹ Voir Ion I. Solcanu, *Artă și societate românească (sec. XIV-XVIII)*/(*Art et société roumaine (XIV^e-XVIII^e siècles)*), Editions Enciclopedica, București, 2002.

L'investigation faite sur les *roues du ciel de Sucevița* peut être développée, mais par la présente démarche, on a essayé de problématiser un élément décoratif apparemment habituel de la fresque du moyen âge roumain mais qui, comme on l'a vu, peut susciter beaucoup de questions. Grâce à la multidisciplinarité, on a cherché à obtenir une vision d'ensemble sur cet élément, en dépassant les limites strictes de la technique de la peinture murale ou de l'histoire des arts visuels. Des connaissances émergent de vastes domaines, telles la théologie à tradition byzantine, l'ethnologie de même que la science de la restauration, peuvent aller plus loin dans le déchiffrement du message théologique, politique ou social caché dans d'autres éléments plastiques des fresques de Sucevița et pas seulement et ouvrir des horizons insoupçonnables à la voie de la modernité.

Illustrations :



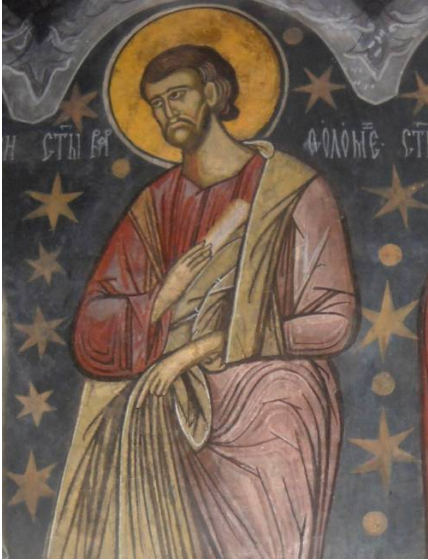
II. 1



II.2



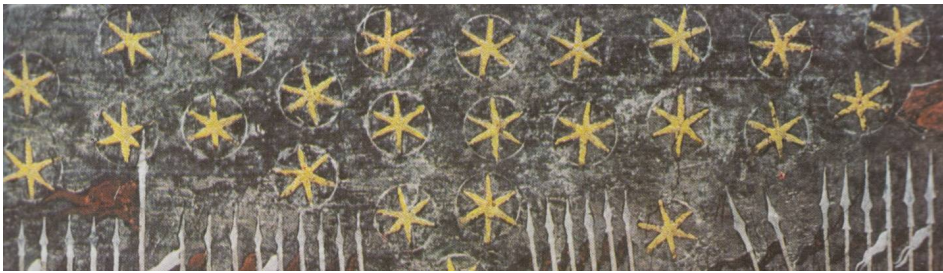
II.3



II.4



II.5



II.6



II.7(a)



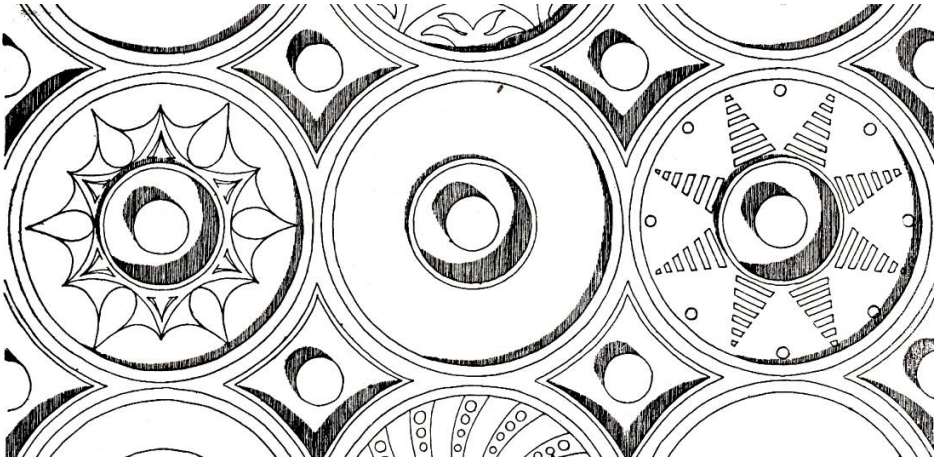
II. 7 (b)



II. 8



II. 9



II. 10



II. 11



II. 12



II. 13



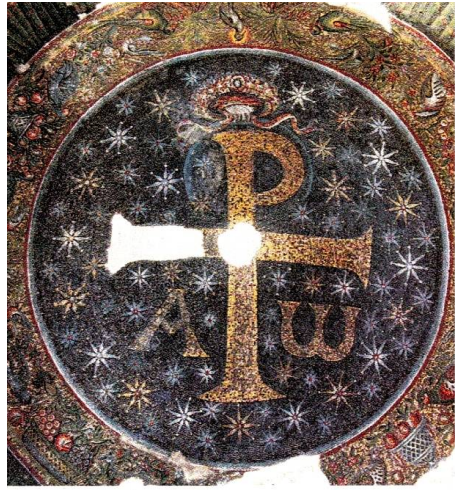
II. 14



II. 15



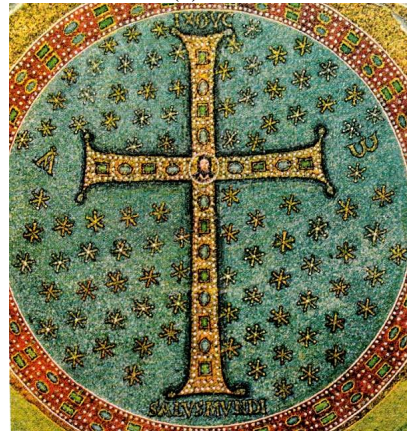
II. 16



II. 17 (a)



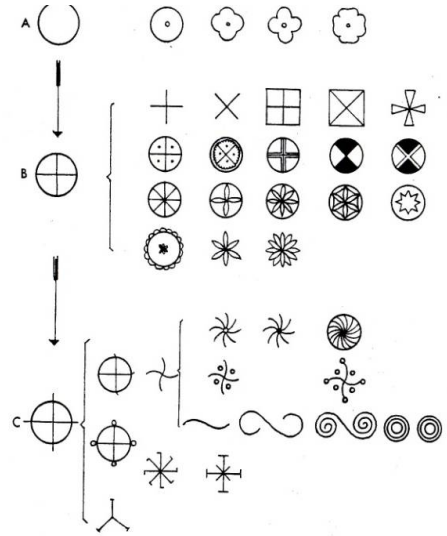
II. 17 (b)



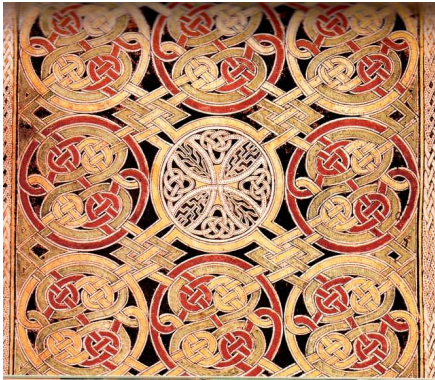
II. 17 (c)



II. 18



II. 19



II. 20



II. 21



II. 22

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- III. 6 - détail de la fresque à l'intérieure de l'église du monastère Sucevița;
- III. 7 - (a,b) détails de la fresque l'intérieure de l'église du monastère Sucevița;
- III. 8 - détail de la fresque l'intérieure de l'église du monastère Dragomirna;
- III. 9 - détail de la chaire de Petru Rareș, musée du monastère Moldovița
- III. 10 – frise de céramique sur la façade sud de l'église du monastère de Neamț, détail, contour;
- III. 11 – l'épithape de broderie, 1494, Musée du monastère Sucevița;

- Ill. 12 - épigraphe sur la tombe de Severa, *Adoration des Mages*, Musée du Latran, Rome;
- Ill. 13 - *un personnage*, détail, Synagogue de Doura-Europos, Musée National, Damasc;
- Ill. 14 - *Christ entre les saints Pierre et Paul*, détail, crypte des catacombes de Saint-Pierre et Marcelino, Rome;
- Ill. 15 - *Good Shepherd*, épigramme sur la tombe, détail, l'église „S. Lorenzo”, Rome;
- Ill. 16 – sarcophage, détail, Musée du Latran, Rome;
- Ill. 17 (a) - *Monogramme du Christ*, l'église „S.Givanni”, Neapoli;
- Ill. 17 (b) - mosaïque détail, Ravenna;
- Ill. 17 (c) - détail de la basilique „Saint-Apollinaire”, Ravenna;
- Ill. 18 - *Emanuel Christ*, icône en bois, VII-ème siècle, Monastère de „Sainte-Catherine”, Sinai;
- Ill. 19 - motifs solaires gravés sur triptyques, croquis, Romulus Vulcănescu, *Coloana Cerului*, Ed. RSR, București, 1972, p. 202;
- Ill. 20 - *Livre de Durrow*, ilustrație, illustration, VII siècle, image de source, Robert Adkinson, *Simboles sacrés*, traduction Oana Zamfirache, *Simboluri sacre. Popoare, religii, mistere*, Ed. Art, București, 2009, p. 165;
- Ill. 21 – détail de la fresque à l'intérieur de l'église „Saint Demetrius”, Suceava;
- Ill. 22 – *Exode*, détail, fresque, crypte de l'église de monastère de Sucevița.

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