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The Research Center of Medieval Art ”Vasile Drăguț”, University of Arts „G. Enescu”, Faculty of Visual Art and Design, Str. Sărărie, nr. 189, Iași, România, e-mail: centrulvasiledragut@arteiasi.ro,

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MEDIEVAL ART AND CIVILIZATION

La laura y coenobium de San Pedro de Rocas Un complejo rupestre de origen bizantino en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica

Jorge López Quiroga *
Natalia Figueiras Pimentel **

*The laura and coenobium of Saint Pedro of Rocas. A rupestrian complex
of Byzantine origin in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula.*

Abstract: *The building we see today when we approach the monastery of Saint Pedro of Rocas reveals the modern architecture: the priory house. But this architecture "hides" another one that corresponds to the various construction phases carved in the rock, both in its worship, residential and funerary function. An architecture excavated in the rock that is directly related to its hermitic origins linking Saint Pedro of Rocas with an anchoritic tradition characteristic of the territory in which it is located and which we know as Ribeira Sacra. Many are the questions, and the enigmas, which still contains Saint Pedro of Rocas and it is precisely in the rock where we find the answers to those questions. We do not intend to solve them within the framework of this article, but we will point out some reflections that allow us to understand the complexity and enormous historical dimension that enclose the rock of Saint Pedro of Rocas. The data that we are obtaining from the interdisciplinary research that we have been carrying out points to a clear oriental origin in the forms of community life that took place in Saint Pedro of Rocas. The influence of Saint Martín of Dumio (bishop of Braga, in the second half of the 6th century) in the importation of monastic life forms of Syrian-Palestinian origin ended up configuring an architecture carved into the rock at the service of a clearly Byzantine liturgy.*

Keywords: *Monasticism, Late Antiquity, Early Middle Ages, Ribeira Sacra, Martin of Dumio, Byzantine, Rupestrian Architecture, San Pedro de Rocas, Hermitism.*

San Pedro de Rocas (Esgos, Ourense)¹, constituye un complejo rupestre que en sí mismo encierra los elementos que singularizan a la Ribeira

* Jorge LÓPEZ QUIROGA. Senior Scientist. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM). Pabellón C (1^a planta, despacho nº 12). C/Einstein, 11. Carretera de Colmenar, Km. 15. E-28049 MADRID (ESPAÑA). Tel. 0034-914972038. Email: jorge.quiroga@uam.es

** Natalia FIGUEIRAS PIMENTEL. Director. AGORA. Art & Heritage. C/Ribeira de Canedo, 36, 3^º. E-32001 OURENSE (ESPAÑA). Tel. 0034-646016980. Email: investigacion@nataliafigueiras.es

Sacra como un espacio cultural sacrificado ya desde época pre-romana, posteriormente cristianizado y que es objeto desde época tardo-antigua de la expansión del movimiento anacorético y eremítico, culminando en la Alta Edad Media con la configuración de un espacio cenobítico, en la órbita del monacato de tipo benedictino. El edificio que hoy vemos cuando nos acercamos al monasterio de san Pedro de Rocas² es el que revela la fábrica de época moderna³: la casa prioral, junto con el cierre del conjunto y la iglesia nueva ubicada a los pies de las capillas. Esta arquitectura, en lo que conforma la última fase constructiva del complejo⁴, “esconde” otro tipo de edilicia que es la que se corresponde con las diversas fases constructivas de tipo rupestre, tanto en lo que respecta al ámbito cultural como al habitacional y funerario⁵. (Fig. 1) Una arquitectura excavada en la roca que está directamente relacionada con los orígenes, vinculados a su vez con el movimiento eremítico⁶, haciendo de san Pedro de Rocas un lugar que entroncaría con una importante tradición anacorética en la que conocemos como *Ribeira Sacra*⁷. La presencia de un área funeraria, visible ya de antiguo y objeto de excavaciones arqueológicas en 1987 y 1988⁸, de tumbas excavadas en la roca (la mayoría de ellas antropomorfas y que se fechan entre los siglos VIII y X, incluyendo tumbas infantiles)⁹ nos habla de una importante comunidad que no sería exclusivamente monástica¹⁰, apuntando más bien a un asentamiento habitacional y cultural de tipo rupestre, similar en su concepción y organización a los bien conocidos para otros ámbitos como la Tebaida

¹ Todo lo que a continuación se expone sobre el complejo rupestre de san Pedro de Rocas, forma parte del proyecto de investigación PETRA SACRA, promovido por la Dirección Xeral de Patrimonio Cultural de la Consellería de Cultura e Turismo (Xunta de Galicia), dirigido por Jorge López Quiroga (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, UAM) y Natalia Figueiras Pimentel (AGORA Art & Heritage).

² Declarado Monumento Nacional como “Iglesia y monasterio rupestre de San Pedro de Rocas” por Real Orden del 20 de septiembre de 1923 (Gaceta 26/0923); su delimitación como Bien de Interés Cultural (BIC) se aprobó por Decreto de la Xunta de Galicia el 18 de febrero de 1999 (DOG 03/03/99).

³ Estudiada a partir de la documentación conservada en el Archivo de la Diputación Provincial de Ourense (ADPO) por Malingre 2015.

⁴ Con excepción del centro de interpretación sobre el monacato en la *Ribeira Sacra*, instalado recientemente en el interior de la casa prioral.

⁵ Orero Grandal 1991; López Quiroga 2004, 2010, 2016, 2017; López Quiroga-Rodríguez Lovelle 1991.

⁶ Vázquez Núñez 1902-1905; Arias Sanjurjo 1914; Ferro Couselo 1967; Rivas Fernández 1971; Duro Peña 1972; Núñez Rodríguez 1978; Malingre 1995; López Quiroga 2004, 2010.

⁷ Aunque, como bien señala Freire Camaniel, este movimiento anacorético y eremítico se evidencie también a lo largo de los cursos del Miño o del Arnoia (Freire Camaniel 1998).

⁸ Orero Grandal 1987, 1988, 1991.

⁹ López Quiroga-Rodríguez Lovelle 1991, 1992a, 1992b; López Quiroga 2004, 2010, 2017.

¹⁰ Y en su fase cenobítica se enmarca en el conocido como “monacato dúplice” o “familiar” tan característico del noroeste peninsular: Orlandis 1956; Mundó 1957; Cocheril 1966.

egipcia, Oriente Medio y Anatolia¹¹; u otros conjuntos rupestres, de los que únicamente conocemos en la mayor parte de los casos los espacios cultuales y funerarios documentados en la propia Península Ibérica¹². Muchas son las preguntas y los enigmas que todavía encierra san Pedro de Rocas, y precisamente en su materia prima constructiva, la roca, están también las claves para resolver dichos interrogantes. No pretendemos exponerlos en el limitado espacio de este trabajo¹³, tan sólo apuntaremos algunas reflexiones que permitan comprender la gran complejidad y enorme dimensión histórica que encierra la “roca” de san Pedro de Rocas.



Fig.1A



Fig.1B

Fig.1

¹¹ Ashkenazi-Aviam 2017; Binns 1996; Budde 1958; Chitty 1966; Dahary 2000; Gabra-Takla 2017; Goehring 1999; Hamarneh 2003; Hedstrom 2017; Hirschfeld 1992; Leroy 2004; Meinardus 1992; Lemaigne Demensil 2010; Dell'Aquila – Messina 1998; Messina 1979; Palmer 1990; Patrick 2004; Restle 1978; Rousseau 1985; Thierry 1973; Wipszycka 2009.

¹² Alcalde Crespo 2007; Berzosa Guerrero 2005; Carrión Irún-García Guinea 1968; Fuixench 2000; Lamalfa Díaz 1991; Latxaga San Sebastián 1996; Monreal Jimeno 1989; Puertas Tricas 2006; Rubio Marcos 1986; López Quiroga 2017.

¹³ Que forma parte de un proyecto de investigación global sobre el conjunto del complejo habitacional, cultural y funerario rupestre, comenzado con un escaneo láser 3D y fotogrametría terrestre y aérea (drone), encargado y patrocinado por la Diputación Provincial de Ourense (López Quiroga-Muñoz Sánchez-Miguel 2018); y que continua bajo el impulso de la Dirección Xeral de Patrimonio Cultural de la Xunta de Galicia, con una investigación global transdisciplinar sobre todo el complejo rupestre de san Pedro de Rocas.

Petra sacra inter alpes: La sacralización milenaria de un espacio.

Debemos comenzar, naturalmente, preguntándonos por los orígenes: ¿cuándo se construyó san Pedro de Rocas? El primer testimonio documental es del 23 de abril del 1007¹⁴, donde se hace referencia, en lo que es un relato habitual en las amplias narraciones que suelen incluir este tipo de textos, a una iglesia (*ecclesia*) construida entre “montañas” (*inter alpes*) y conocida desde antiguo como Rocas (*antiquitus Roccas nominata*), consagrada a la santísima Trinidad, a los santos Pedro y Pablo, a santa María, san Miguel Arcángel y a todos los santos. En este revelador documento se incluye una extensa *narratio* que hace referencia a la época de Alfonso III, cuando se habría procedido a la “restauración” del monasterio, y donde se incluye el episodio de *Gemondus* y el “descubrimiento” de lo que sería algún tipo de espacio cultural rupestre, en el que este individuo “permanecería” (*ibi permansit*) hasta llegar a oídos del monarca que procedería a “donarle” dicho lugar. Aún teniendo en cuenta la parte de recreación o de invención que denota toda esta digresión, no resulta difícil enmarcarlo en un proceso que se documenta en muchos textos similares que reflejan “restauraciones” de supuestos lugares y monasterios abandonados, como un argumento para justificar derechos de propiedad sobre bienes aparentemente sin dueño¹⁵.

El arco temporal en el que tuvo lugar la donación de Alfonso III, permite deducir la existencia de una actividad cultural en Rocas a mediados/finales del siglo IX. Dos elementos, en este caso materiales, pueden ayudarnos a entender esa supuesta fase de “restauración” entre los siglos IX-X. Nos referimos a la conocida como “inscripción fundacional”, fechada en el año 573, y a un pie de altar, éste de clara cronología altomedieval. El epígrafe “fundacional” se fecha en la Era 611 (año 573) y es el siguiente: + HEREDITAS: N/ EVFRAXI: EVSANI:/ QVINEDI: EATI: FLAVI: / RVVE: ERA: DCXI:¹⁶, que en la lectura de Fita sería: “*El patronato hereditario de esta iglesia es de nosotros cinco, Eufrasio, Euga, Quinedio, Eato y Flavio, que la hemos edificado y dotado, siendo Vitimer obispo [de Ourense] en el año 573*”¹⁷. Interpretación considerablemente diferente a la de Fray Bartolomé de la Cueva, al menos en un aspecto fundamental, pues considera la expresión “*hereditas nostri Evfrasi*” como relativa a que “los que estamos aquí sepultados somos herederos de esta

¹⁴ Un privilegio de Alfonso V, confirmando las posesiones donadas al monasterio por parte de Alfonso III (Duro Peña 1972: 133).

¹⁵ López Quiroga 2004.

¹⁶ Fita 1903; Núñez Rodríguez 1978; Duro Peña 1972; Freire Camaniel 1998; López Quiroga 2004; Núñez Sánchez 2017, entre otros.

¹⁷ Fita 1903.

iglesia o sepultura”¹⁸. Por lo tanto, y aunque tradicionalmente se haya considerado una “inscripción fundacional”, no deberíamos excluir la posibilidad de que el contexto de dicho epígrafe fuera el funerario. Lo que resulta evidente, a pesar de opiniones diversas al respecto¹⁹, es que la fecha de la inscripción no tendría por qué situarse en la segunda mitad del siglo VI sino en el marco de la “restauración” del monasterio en tiempos de Alfonso III (entre mediados y finales del siglo IX), arco cronológico al que corresponde el pie de altar²⁰. Este elemento epigráfico en piedra, organizado a partir de una cruz procesional estuvo ubicado originalmente y realizado ex profeso para un pequeño habitáculo en piedra con forma de relicario en el arcosolio de la *paraecclesia* derecha (lado de la epístola). Dicho espacio que se crea específicamente mediante una tipología constructiva funeraria de bóveda de cuarto de esfera similar a los arcosolios funerarios de las catacumbas, aparenta ser una capilla para enterramientos, pero el lugar destinado al sarcófago no presenta vaciado, sino un pequeño cubículo para caja de reliquias, que estaría cubierta en su origen con esta lápida. Así pues la inscripción pasaría a tener un carácter funerario evidente además de memorial y sacro, por tratarse de un espacio “relicario” destinado a los posibles restos de aquellos que figuran en su inscripción. Ese relicario se encontraba parcialmente a la vista y protegido por unas rejas de metal en el lado izquierdo de este armario-relicario (la parte central y derecha era el lugar destinado a documentos, libros y objetos litúrgicos, no estando a la vista, sino cerrado mediante puertas). (Fig. 2). Confirmamos que esta lápida con inscripción se encarga y realiza a la vez que se excava y diseña el arcosolio de la *paraecclesia* derecha, en torno a los siglos IX y X y que se trata de una tapa de caja de reliquias. De la misma manera el pie de altar coetáneo, albergó en sus orígenes también una arqueta relicario, hoy desaparecida.

¹⁸ Cueva: 36-37.

¹⁹ Núñez Rodríguez 1977, 1978; Saco Cid 2004.

²⁰ Freire Camaniel 1998; López Quiroga 2004, 2016, 2017; Pérez Rodríguez-Aragón 2017; Núñez Sánchez 2017.

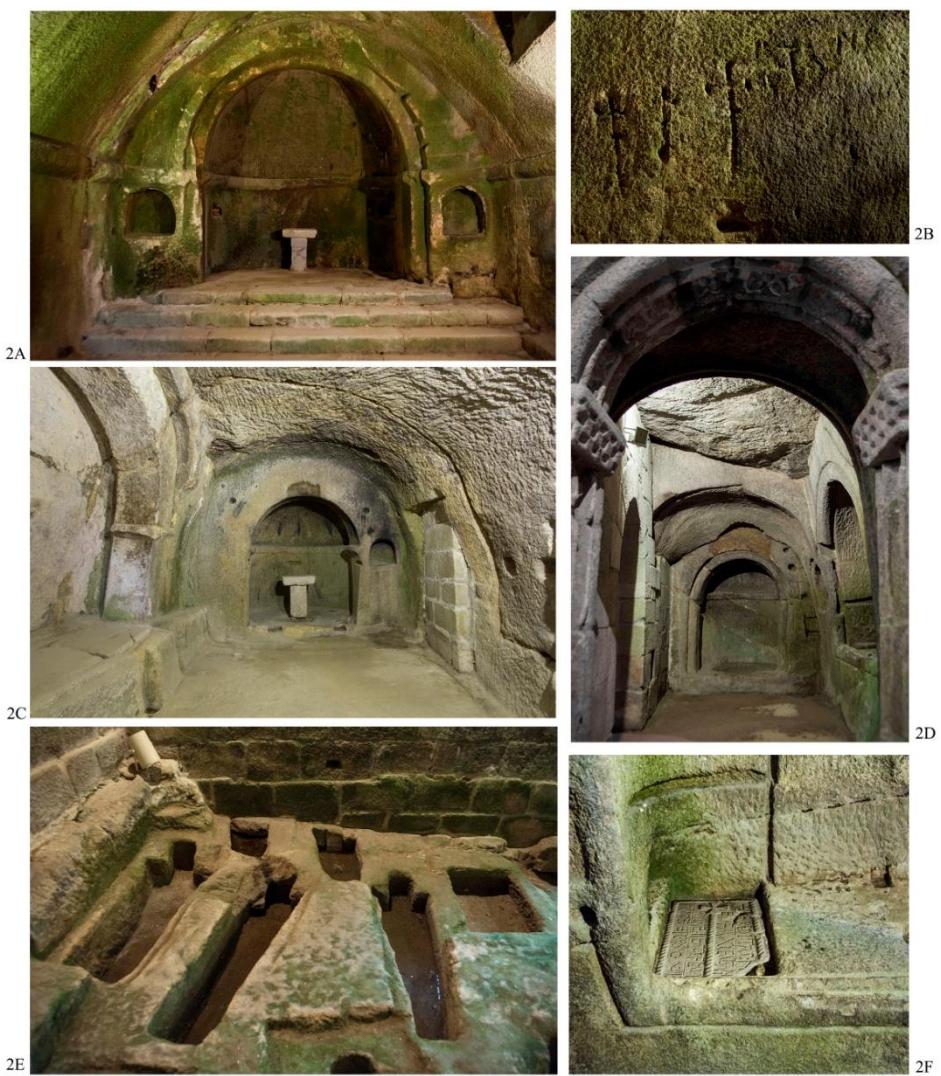


Fig. 2

Si los siglos IX-X constituyen el período en el que encajan toda una serie de elementos descritos en las líneas precedentes, así como toda una serie de piezas constructivas y/o decorativas reutilizadas en la fábrica de construcción de época moderna (que encuentran su explicación en el proceso de expansión de la monarquía astur que, entre otros aspectos, se acompañó de una importante actividad de “restauración” de carácter político de iglesias y/o

monasterios²¹), sigue no obstante abierta la cuestión de los orígenes de san Pedro de Rocas. Por ello, debemos detenernos, aunque sea brevemente, en la arquitectura de las tres capillas excavadas en la roca en forma de arcos de medio punto, dando lugar a lo que se había presentado como una planta regular y simétrica unitaria²². La realización de escaneado láser 3D del interior²³, además de corregir la planta del edificio, nos pone directamente sobre la pista de cómo se originó San Pedro de Rocas. En efecto, en la imagen y planimetría obtenida vemos cómo la *paraecclesia* izquierda es asimétrica con respecto a las otras dos, pues se evidencian tres ejes longitudinales en su construcción. Mientras que la *paraecclesia* derecha y el ábside de la *paraecclesia* izquierda y su arcosolio, parecen haber sido el resultado de un mismo momento constructivo que consideramos coetáneo al epígrafe, al pie de altar y al texto de la dotación que Alfonso II realiza a san Pedro de Rocas, entre mediados y finales del siglo IX.

La asimetría de la capilla izquierda, tan clara respecto a las otras dos, no se debe a la falta de pericia del que diseñó la planta y el trazado de las tres capillas excavadas en la roca, sino que es la consecuencia de la adaptación a un espacio ya previamente construido, en una fase anterior que debemos situar en época tardo-antigua, donde además hallamos las escaleras primitivas de acceso a la primera cavidad rupestre. Sin embargo, al analizar la planta en relación a ambas capillas central y lateral derecha, podemos concluir que la obra es fruto de una planificación en su ejecución (probablemente obra de un maestro constructor y operarios con conocimiento en el trabajo de la piedra y vaciado), que partiendo de las cavidades anteriores, traza los ejes perfectos, simétricos y paralelos entre sí, vaciando la roca como si de una escultura se tratase.

La cabecera de la capilla mayor con planta de herradura es buena muestra de ello, ya que en proporciones, escala y geometría presenta una planificación que parte de la esfera, de manera que la semicircunferencia es la misma en planta que en alzado, y que a partir de la línea de imposta se inscribe en un cuadrado perfecto.²⁴

²¹ Pensemos en los no lejanos monasterios de Santa Cristina de Ribas del Sil, San Esteban de Ribas del Sil o San Xoán de Camba, así el propio monasterio de San Salvador de Celanova (del que pasaría a depender San Pedro de Rocas); al tiempo que una serie de iglesias como San Xés de Francelos, San Martiño de Pazoo, Santa María de Mixós, San Breixo de Seixalbo, Santa Comba de Bande, Santa Catalina de Reza a Vella, San Miguel de Eiré, San Salvador de Soutomerille o Santa Eufemia de Ambía, por circunscribirnos a la provincia de Ourense (López Quiroga-Rodríguez Lovelle 1992b; López Quiroga 2004).

²² Gómez Moreno 1919; Núñez Rodríguez 1978; Malingre 1995.

²³ López Quiroga-Muñoz Sánchez-Miguel 2018.

²⁴ López Quiroga-Figueiras Pimentel 2018.

Estamos ante una arquitectura específica de sustracción, como es habitual en las técnicas rupestres, frente a la tradicional construida por adición; si en su proceso de ejecución se prescinde de referencias exactas espaciales, el resultado final sería mucho más orgánico y espontáneo, adaptado a la naturaleza del soporte y sus alteraciones, como fisuras, diaclasas o variaciones de dureza. En Rocas encontramos un dominio y control de las proporciones y medidas. La esfera en alzado inscrita es visible al tomar cotas del arco triunfal, ya que nos permite observar incluso que la línea de imposta es el centro de la misma.²⁵

Es necesario igualmente hacer mención a dos elementos claves en la construcción de este espacio cultual, la roca está íntegramente tallada y trazada con precisión, tanto en el interior como en la fachada y de manera especial en su parte superior y exterior, con un acabado fino de labra y un conjunto de escaleras externas que lo perimetran, por no añadir el trabajo de tumbas excavadas en la roca. Podemos confirmar que el espacio cultual está labrado íntegramente en suelos, alzados y cubiertas, como un todo trabajado exterior e interior.

En la zona del presbiterio hallamos otro elemento importante, el coro con banco corrido tallado en la roca, al tiempo que el resto de los elementos rupestres del conjunto, que ocupa prácticamente toda la planta de la *ecclesia* y está destinado a fines comunitarios y litúrgicos; estamos pues ante un cambio de uso del espacio, ante una vida cenobítica en común que convive con las prácticas y monjes ermitas. El banco en piedra delimita lo que ya podemos considerar el presbiterio. Por otra parte, los accesos naturales a la capilla central desde las laterales eran de alzado adintelado excavados en la roca, actualmente se encuentran cegados por los machones donde descansa el arco fajón de refuerzo que se construye posteriormente, pero mantienen su ubicación original. (Fig. 3)

²⁵ Geométrica y arquitectónicamente está pensada, diseñada, planificada y posteriormente llevada a la obra, pudiendo así hablar de un proyecto con trazas previas. Por último, es importante resaltar que ambas capillas están planificadas en base a un módulo (1:4), que se repite en superficie y que aporta el equilibrio espacial en planta y perceptible al ojo humano, mientras que en alzado, no se mantiene la geometría de la misma manera al tener que adaptarse a la realidad de la roca conforme se va avanzando en la talla, especialmente en los abovedamientos, de ahí que encontremos irregularidades y rectificaciones en los puntos de arco. Hay que tener en cuenta que la roca presentaba, ya desde los orígenes del complejo arquitectónico, las desplacaciones provocadas por la presencia de vetas de hierro y otros minerales, lo que implicaba rectificaciones progresivas a medida que se iba avanzando en la labra. Es interesante también destacar que la planta de estas dos capillas coetáneas mantiene el diseño de las tumbas antropomorfas que se encuentran, además, orientadas hacia ellas (López Quiroga-Figueiras Pimentel 2018)

*La laura y coenobium de San Pedro de Rocas
Un complejo rupestre de origen bizantino en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica*

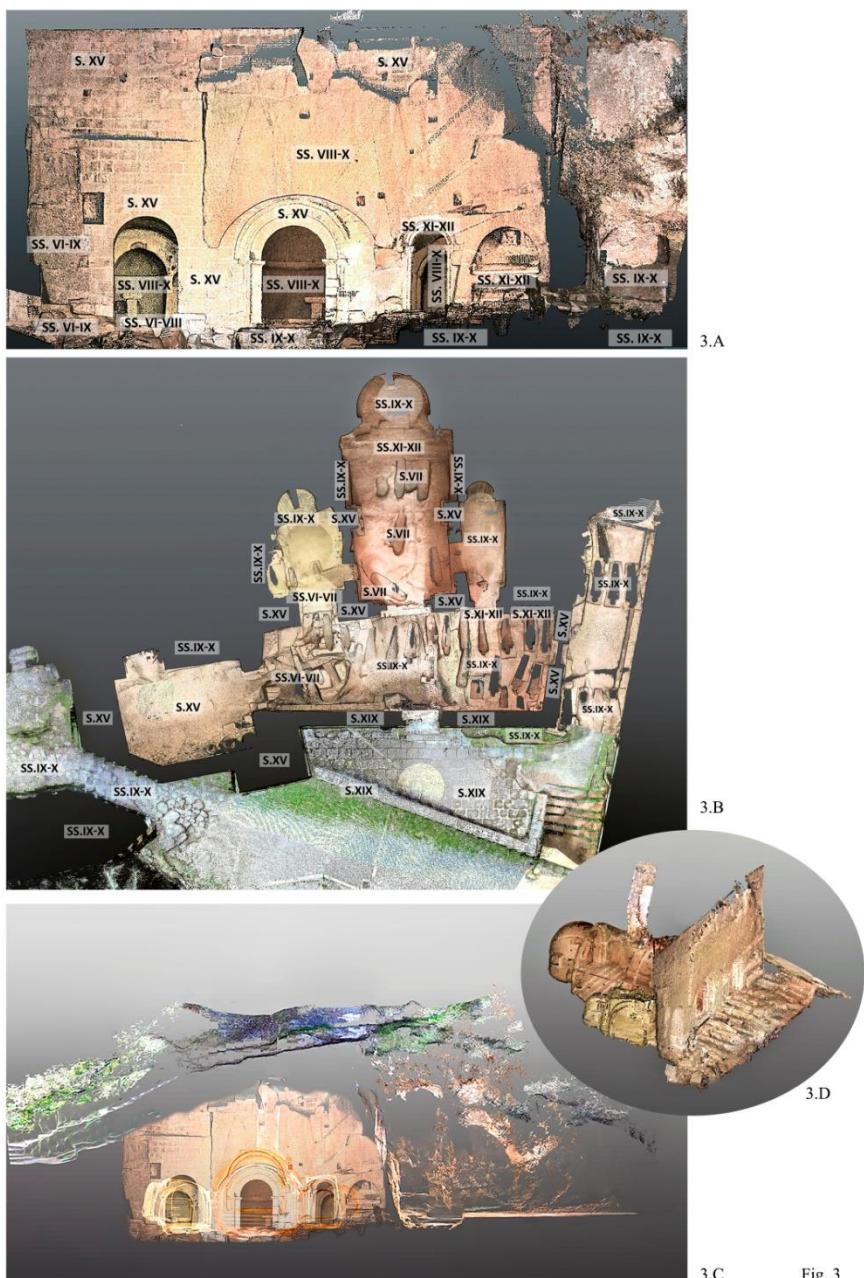


Fig. 3

Por lo tanto, consideramos que la planta que hoy es visible con las tres capillas excavadas en la roca, corresponde a una segunda fase constructiva del complejo rupestre en época altomedieval, que a su vez fue la

primera fase del monasterio, sucediéndole a una etapa anacorética otra cenobítica en tiempos de Alfonso III, en la segunda mitad del siglo IX. La primera fase tardo-antigua se evidencia por las huellas dejadas, aún hoy visibles en la propia roca, de lo que pudo haber sido un “abrigó rupestre” adaptado a un uso habitacional, cultural y funerario, así como por los enterramientos ovales que dirigen su orientación hacia este espacio y las escaleras anteriormente citadas.

Más claras, y muy presentes en la arquitectura de san Pedro de Rocas, son las tres fases siguientes, la correspondiente a la fábrica románica (siglo XI-XII), que se circunscribe a la monumentalización de los arcos de acceso a las capillas del que hoy sólo conservamos el izquierdo, además de los dos sepulcros con escultura en el arcosolio derecho²⁶; y la perteneciente a época moderna (siglo XV), el arco fajón de refuerzo que intenta consolidar la estructura de la bóveda, la ampliación de la nueva iglesia a los pies, además del refuerzo del arco de acceso a la capilla lateral izquierda, al tiempo que se rehace el arco central; por último, la construcción de la casa del prior en el siglo XVII²⁷. (Fig. 3)

De *laura* a *coenobium*: la configuración de un gran complejo cultural rupestre.

Refiriéndonos a las fases constructivas, sería pertinente preguntarnos en este punto ¿cómo se construyó san Pedro de Rocas? Inicialmente en el sector correspondiente a la capilla lateral izquierda, pudo existir, como indicábamos, un “abrigó rupestre” reaprovechado, parcialmente excavado y sucesivamente readaptado, en un período, aún por acotar con mayor precisión, situado entre los siglos VI-VII y IX.²⁸ Se correspondería este momento con una fase anacorética en la que un individuo, o un pequeño número de individuos readaptan un espacio natural rupestre²⁹. Ya en época altomedieval, entre los siglos IX-X, la segunda fase del complejo rupestre, primera del monasterio en su variante cenobítica, se evidencia un vaciado previamente planificado de la roca, ampliando el “abrigó rupestre” inicial,

²⁶ Núñez Rodríguez 1978.

²⁷ Malingre 2015.

²⁸ Jópez Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2018.

²⁹ Similar al de Las Gobas (Laño, Burgos): Azkárate Garai-Olaún - Solaún Bustinza 2008. El caso del monasterio *Servitano* (en Arcavaca, Cuenca), muestra igualmente la presencia de un individuo de origen norteafricano (Donato) que llega a la Península con sus discípulos y adapta un roquedo a un lugar habitacional y cultural en torno al cual se enterrarán otros individuos en lo que constituye un ejemplo de “inhumación *ad sanctos*”, pues la propia tumba del “hombre santo”, el ‘abad Donato’ es la que genera esa topografía funeraria tan característica: Morín de Pablos-Barroso Cabrera 2003.

para construir tres capillas con planta de salón cada una y con una clara independencia.

Es el momento de ampliar nuestra perspectiva y mirar más allá del edificio que constituye el conocido como monasterio de san Pedro de Rocas, pues en su entorno encontraremos las respuestas sobre su origen y la real dimensión de este singular complejo rupestre. En una extensión de 2.500 m² de superficie aproximadamente, en lo que constituye una primera fase de prospección, hemos identificado un total de 19 celdas, tres habitáculos exentos de madera, un articulado entramado ramificado y muy bien estructurado de escaleras, canales, zonas de paso y estructuras de contenedor a modo de silos asociados a estos, todo ello excavado en la roca. Es necesario destacar que la ubicación de cada uno de estos elementos se escalona en altura y se distribuyen en el espacio, tanto en alzado como en planta.

De la vía antigua, hoy *Camino Real* de época moderna, parten los arranques de escalera individuales que se dirigen a cada una de estas celdas, y que a su vez se proyectan en altura bifurcándose y ascendiendo hasta llegar a la celda superpuesta, hasta disponerse éstas de manera escalonada y contigua. Cada tramo de escalera presenta una tipología distinta, en diseño, dimensiones y morfología, según la mano que la traza. El desembarco de la escalera es uno de los indicadores que nos muestra el umbral de la celda así como de la zona de acceso, siendo éste uno de los elementos que nos permite identificar su orientación. Llama la atención el orden y recorrido que hacen las escaleras, ya que en ocasiones divergen, como las que se dirigen a cada una de las celdas, y en ocasiones convergen, como las que confluyen en un punto próximo que da acceso a un espacio común, como es la edificación en madera que identificamos sobre el complejo cultural, en el exterior, lugar donde se emplazaba la celda-habitáculo del hombre santo (nivel superior sobre el presbiterio de la *ecclesia*).³⁰

Encontramos del mismo modo una organización concreta en el desarrollo de los canales, que aprovechando las fisuras naturales de la roca provocadas por las diaclasas del granito, son excavados siguiendo su recorrido, desde las partes altas de la roca hasta las zonas más bajas. Estos canales están dispuestos perimetralmente las celdas, como reconducción de aguas o comunicando los silos y las tumbas entre sí. Los canales son de sección curva o cuadrangular, hoy muchos de ellos están erosionados por el paso del tiempo y la acción humana, pero todavía mantienen visibles las marcas de ejecución, herramienta y tipo de labra, sobre todo los de mayor profundidad. Hallamos canales tanto en el interior del espacio cultual-

³⁰ Jópez Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2019.

funerario (capillas), como en el exterior y, en definitiva, en todo el conjunto rupestre, suelos, alzados y cubiertas. (Fig. 4)

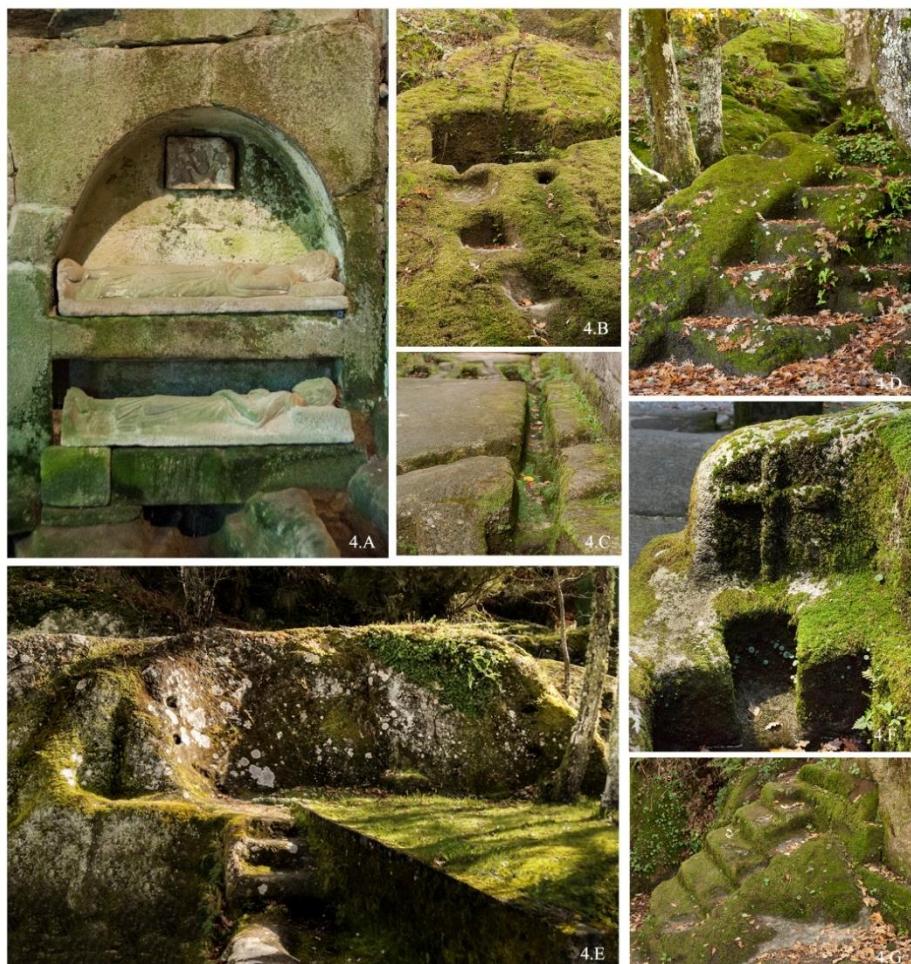


Fig. 4

Por otra parte, a escaleras y canales se disponen asociados los silos, contenedores de agua en el caso de los situados en cruces de canales, que servían de abastecimiento de agua a los anacoretas próximos, y como contenedores de otros posibles elementos o lugar de cocina, en el interior del espacio de culto, posteriormente transformados por la presencia de un enterramiento que los modifica parcialmente.

Si atendemos al conjunto de elementos relacionados (escaleras, canales y silos), podríamos pensar que estamos ante un diseño complejo y

unitario; pero si a eso le añadimos el modo en el que las celdas son construidas y cómo se ubican en el espacio, podemos afirmar que disponemos de evidencias claras de un primer momento de construcción conjunto, obra de un grupo de eremitas que llegan juntos, y que por lo tanto toda la estructura tiene un orden desde el inicio, sucediéndole una labra continua de la roca siguiendo siempre los mismos patrones de ejecución y distribución espacial. Existe una clara transmisión de conocimientos de unos individuos a otros, al tiempo que una perfecta planificación, optimizando y aprovechando al máximo las posibilidades que el paisaje y la orografía del terreno ofrecen a los eremitas; en este sentido, el paisaje construido estaría jugando también un papel socializador³¹.

Las celdas se articulan en un total de veinte, hasta ahora identificadas, en torno al camino y con epicentro en las capillas y se orientan la mayoría a poniente (oeste), recibiendo el sol a partir de mediodía. Las tumbas sin embargo se orientan al naciente (este), ya que su posición está en relación al día de resurrección.

Cada una presenta características similares en su planificación, pero diferentes en su ejecución.³² En cuanto a su sistema constructivo encontramos siempre el mismo procedimiento, la roca se talla a base de pico, en fases de desbaste y acabado, desde la parte superior de la roca hacia la inferior. Las celdas más elaboradas de planta cuadrangular se realizan a partir de dos paños de pared escuadrados en ángulo (7m^2), con tendencia a la verticalidad, pero no aplomados completamente; las más irregulares y menos complejas tienden a la planta ovalada o romboidal, con una superficie útil de 5 m^2 . Una vez la roca vaciada ha creado el espacio interior, proceden a realizar los mechinales o encastes para recibir la carpintería de armar en madera: vigas, viguetas, travesaños y soleras, soportados por los muros portantes de roca y los maestros de tabiques de entramados de madera. La tipología de estos elementos es diferente en cada celda, por lo que reconocemos estructuras más elaboradas, como vigas de sección cuadrangular, en las de planta regular y menos complejas, realizadas a partir de ramas de árboles de sección cilíndrica y menor diámetro, en las de planta ovalada. Llama la atención el hecho de que cada celda se va creando

³¹ O'Connell 2007; también: Mallarach – Corcó – Papayannis 2014.

³² Lo indicado anteriormente es visible en la zona hoy reconocida como cementerio, donde hallamos cuatro celdas adyacentes y superpuestas, siendo la primera en ejecutarse la central del primer nivel en altura (nº 10), y la que se construye a continuación es la que hoy está oculta por ambos paramentos de muro que cierran el recinto (nº 11), a la que se accede por una escalera. Con posterioridad se prolongan las escaleras que perimetran la primera celda mayor ascendiendo para acceder a las celdas superiores escalonadas (nº 12 y 13). Incluso se evidencia la presencia de una zona de paso, tallada en la roca a modo de pasillo, que permite acceder, una vez abandonada la escalera, a la celda nº 12 (López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2018).

progresivamente en relación a la ubicación de las otras, existentes previamente, con tendencia a la ascensión en la roca, creando un paisaje escalonado de cabañas de cubierta vegetal y cierre de madera. En san Pedro de Rocas la roca se encuentra completamente antropizada, intervenida intencionadamente por la mano del hombre.

Es importante destacar que las celdas se comunican directamente con la vía, hoy *Camino Real*, lo que puede hacernos pensar que dicha conexión de los habitáculos eremíticos con la vía de comunicación hacía posible el tipo de vida elegido, la caridad, y la posición alta en zona de arbusto, nos habla de una alimentación por recolección a base de frutos silvestres y bayas. Sin olvidar la mayor dimensión espiritual de una espacio relacionado con las zonas altas de la montaña, a la manera profética del diálogo con la divinidad de Moisés o Elías o la búsqueda de la comunicación con Dios que ya practican los padres del desierto en su vida ascética, como san Antonio Abad o san Pablo el Ermitaño; en definitiva, un espacio sagrado³³.

Del mismo modo, la vegetación característica del lugar, puede hacernos pensar que las cubiertas vegetales estuviesen realizadas por medio de ramas de arbusto trenzadas y superpuestas, si atendemos a la costumbre de los primeros Padres del Desierto en el empleo de la hoja de palma para múltiples usos: indumentaria y cubiertas, en zonas como la Tebaida egipcia.³⁴

La interconexión y proximidad física entre las celdas, junto con la accesibilidad cuidada a las mismas y su disposición topográfica en torno a una o varias vías de comunicación, configura esa simbiosis característica de los eremitas/monjes de la Tebaida egipcia entre la soledad individual en la propia celda con la presencia de gentes que visitaban y asistían, en una auténtica peregrinación, a estos “hombres santos”³⁵. (Figs. 5 y 6)

Pero, ¿quién realiza, diseña, talla la piedra y da forma a estas construcciones tan específicas? El análisis del material y de su transformación, hasta adquirir las funciones indicadas, implica que cada escalera, canal, silo o celda presenta un modo específico y único de ejecución. El trazado, la planta, la escala, las dimensiones y el sistema de construcción de madera anexa de cada uno, son distintos. Desde la escalera con huella rectangular hasta la de huella de forma oval, o desde la celda de planta ovalada a la de planta trapezoidal y así como cada estructura, desde las vigas de madera escuadrada hasta las viguetas de ramas de árboles. Los

³³ Kostof 1972; Wipszycka 2009; Gabra – Takla 2017; Goehring 1999; Patrick 2004; Kalas 2009.

³⁴ Palmer 1990; Patrick 2004

³⁵ Brown 1971; Frankfurter 1998; Grossmann 1998; Frank 2000; Hedstrom 2009.

resultados del estudio demuestran que cada elemento está realizado por una mano diferente, lo que nos hace pensar que es obra de cada eremita, como acción propia que entraña un trabajo duro y necesario para su asentamiento en el lugar, donde otros eremitas han decidido establecerse y llevar su vida asceta. Es revelador cómo el estudio arquitectónico de dichas construcciones, así como el del espacio distribuido, entronca con la tradición de los Padres del Desierto y sus Apotegmas³⁶.



Fig. 5

³⁶ Los Apotegmas de los padres del desierto se organizan en tres colecciones, la alfabética, la sistemática y la anónima (Ward 1975a, 1975b; Nau 1905, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1912 y 1913).



Identificamos en Rocas que las celdas se van disponiendo unas al lado de otras, ligeramente agrupadas y escalonadas en la roca en altura, de la misma manera que en la Tebaida Egipcia, Capadocia, Grecia o en Italia³⁷, comunicadas entre sí por un sistema de escaleras. No obstante, con una notable diferencia y singularidad en san Pedro de Rocas, la celda no es una cavidad íntegramente efectuada en la roca, sino que combina dos paños de pared y suelo en granito tallado con dos paños en madera construida con cubierta vegetal, pues probablemente la acción de tallar la roca implicaba un importante sacrificio físico y la estructura en madera, pericia e inteligencia.

Estamos por lo tanto ante un sistema de celdas que acentúan las penurias y dificultades que esta vida ascética y eremita entrañaba. No hay que olvidar que los padres del desierto y los sucesivos anacoretas tanto en Oriente como en Occidente, tenían como guión de vida la penitencia³⁸. Una vez la celda deja de tener su función, porque muere el anacoreta que la habita, es modificada o pierde su uso. Posteriormente, el ermitaño es enterrado en ella por sus hermanos, a la manera en que san Antonio Abad excavó la tumba y dio sepultura a san Pablo el ermitaño, tras amortajarlo³⁹.

A este estudio comparativo de los textos nos han llevado los resultados científicos del análisis de ejecución de algunas celdas; es el caso de la nº 6, próxima a las capillas.⁴⁰ Se identifica, en un origen, la presencia de una celda de planta ovalada, con acceso mediante escaleras y mechinales de sección cilíndrica y triangular para el sustento de la estructura de madera, todo ello excavado en la roca y labrado a base de pico. Con posterioridad se realiza un arcosolio que alberga una tumba antropomorfa excavada en la roca, en lo que en su día fue la pared maestra frontal de la celda, arcosolio que mantiene la forma de los que se encuentran en el interior de las capillas y que según la tipología de las tumbas nos estaría evidenciando un enterramiento altomedieval. El resto de inhumaciones antropomorfas miran hacia ésta, y en su ejecución cortan el canal original de la celda inicial, así como aíslan parte de las escaleras de acceso. Estamos pues, ante un claro ejemplo de cómo en una celda, tras la muerte del individuo que la ocupaba,

³⁷ Dahari 2000; Hedstrom 2009; De Jerfanson 1925-1942; Budde 1958; Thierry 1971, 1973, 2002; Jolivet-Lévy 1991; Giovannini 1971; Rodley 2010; Nicol 1963; Mylonas 1963; Dell'Aquila-Messina 1998; Mesina 1979; Crescenzi-Caparara eds. 2012.

³⁸ Véase: Mundó 1957; Díaz y Díaz 1995; Papachryssanthou 1973; Elm 1994; Binns 1996; Goehring 1999; Wipszycka 2015; O'Hara 2018.

³⁹ Steidle 1956; Rubenson 1995; Frank 1988. A este estudio comparativo de los textos nos han llevado los resultados científicos del análisis de ejecución de algunas celdas; es el caso de la nº 6, próxima a las capillas. Se identifica, en un origen, la presencia de una celda de planta ovalada, con acceso mediante escaleras y mechinales de sección cilíndrica y triangular para el sustento de la estructura de madera, todo ello excavado en la roca y labrado a base de pico.

⁴⁰ López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2018.

sus compañeros anacoretas, tallan su tumba y proceden a enterrarlo, dando lugar a un espacio de culto al que a continuación irán asociados unos enterramientos, por la presencia de un “hombre santo”, pero deja de ser habitada. Cada nuevo miembro de la comunidad eremítica, deberá tallar su propia celda para poder formar parte de ella. Encontramos otro ejemplo en el lugar conocido como “fuente de san Benito”, donde hemos podido identificar la construcción de al menos dos celdas, junto con la presencia de una tumba antropomorfa excavada en la roca, que hoy hace de pileta de piedra para dicho manantial.

Además de celdas, escaleras organizadas, canales comunicados en red, silos de contención y tumbas excavadas en la roca, es necesario destacar que identificamos otros elementos importantes, se trata de estructuras exentas en madera. Realizadas éstas mediante carpintería de armar, con vigas, viguetas, soleras, solados, pilares y probablemente tabiques verticales y escaleras interiores de acceso. Este sistema constructivo se evidencia por las plataformas encontradas trabajadas íntegramente y talladas a pico, tanto en los paños de pared como en el suelo de los niveles de soporte. Los encajes para estos elementos en madera están perfectamente elaborados y distribuidos estratégicamente. Localizamos estos elementos en la parte alta de la roca de la capilla mayor (espacio hoy cubierto pero en su origen exterior y visible), en la roca monolítica que soporta la espadaña y en la zona de acceso al actual cementerio. A esta parte alta se accedía por escaleras que bordeaban la roca a derecha e izquierda y que convergían en ese punto.

Es importante entender que, en su momento, la visión de san Pedro de Rocas era diferente, ya que la roca era visible, los accesos a las capillas se mostraban elevados y estas estructuras de madera, coronaban la roca tallada a una altura de cuarta planta. Dicho monolito hacía de puerta de acceso, de ahí que tuviese carpintería de cierre en todo su arco, y en el interior niveles en distribución de cuatro plantas, de las que separadas por forjados de madera se tenían que comunicar por escaleras también de madera, hasta desembarcar en las superiores que ascienden a la parte más alta, éstas ya en piedra. Con la reforma posterior, ya con fábrica de sillares, se mantuvo de alguna manera el sentido de ese espacio y el acceso a la espadaña que se instalaría en ese momento. Ambas partes altas con estructura de madera se encontrarían a la misma altura, lo que aportaría unidad al complejo visto desde la vía. El monolito granítico, que hoy es el campanario, fue en su origen una torre con múltiples funciones, de ella hemos perdido la parte rocosa que lo cerraba, pero podemos identificar su huella en los vestigios que restan en el suelo, tras la reforma del siglo XV con la que este elemento desapareció. Este elemento tuvo que ser además de campanario, lugar de control de viandantes así como zona de aislamiento o habitación, por presentar cuatro alturas y sobrevolar la

vía. A la vista del viajero, se elevaba unos diez metros al acceder por uno de los antiguos accesos, hoy oculto por la maleza, impracticable e inutilizado, lo que ha provocado la pérdida de visión real de todo el que llegaba a este punto. (Fig. 7)



Fig. 7.

Sobre la *ecclesia*, como ya hemos comentado, se alzaba otro elemento arquitectónico exento a la misma altura que la torre y en su interior albergaba la celda del hombre santo (ermita anciano, abad del monasterio en sus momentos de retiro, etc). Esta estructura configurada a modo de celda contenía en su interior un elemento de claro carácter bizantino y oriental: un gran hagioscopio longitudinal que comunicaba visual y sonoramente dicha celda, directamente con el presbiterio de la *ecclesia*, en la zona exacta en la que los monjes de la comunidad realizaban el oficio litúrgico y la salmodia.⁴¹ El sonido ascendía desde el nivel inferior a la parte superior, celda del hombre santo.

La presencia de hagioscopios en san Pedro de Rocas está directamente relacionada con la liturgia bizantina y el rito oriental específico que allí se desarrolló. En efecto, hay una deliberada planificación de la arquitectura en relación a cómo se debía visualizar el espacio desde el exterior y sobre qué había que enfocar dicha visión hacia el interior. Contamos, en este sentido, con algunos textos de carácter teológico, concretamente del asceta del siglo XI Niketas Stethatos (abad del monasterio de Stoudius) sobre la visibilidad en el interior de las iglesias bizantinas, aconsejando a los fieles “*cerrar, como si fueran puertas, los sentidos de nuestra contemplación del terror y los misterios sagrados*” para evitar las distracciones exteriores, “*todo vagar de la mente*”, y concentrarse en el ritual

⁴¹ López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2019

que se desarrolla en el interior del santuario⁴². Es evidente que existe una estrecha relación entre el diseño arquitectónico y la configuración de los espacios en relación a la línea/s de visibilidad del interior desde el exterior y respecto al ceremonial litúrgico que tiene lugar en la *ecclesia*⁴³. La visión privilegiada desde la parte superior del hagioscopio permite no sólo escuchar con total claridad la liturgia que tiene lugar en el interior, sino que es igualmente posible ver con absoluta nitidez aspectos concretos y centrales de la misma.

Ahora bien, es necesario determinar si esta visión tan privilegiada como restringida estaba reservada para varios individuos o para uno solo. En nuestra opinión, el *hagioscopio* constituye una solución arquitectónica que permite una audición-visión restringida para un individuo privilegiado. En efecto, en la arquitectura bizantina y particularmente en la Capadocia, encontramos numerosos ejemplos de visualización privilegiada restringida a un único individuo⁴⁴. En Capadocia, precisamente, el monasterio de *Archangelos* (cerca de Cemil) presenta una bóveda cónica central rematada por una abertura hacia una celda en la parte superior reservada para alguien especial, pudiendo tratarse de un recluso o el propio abad del monasterio⁴⁵. En lo que respecta a la arquitectura rupestre, contamos con la *Enkleistra* de san *Neophytos*, cerca de Paphos en Chipre, del siglo XII, una iglesia excavada en la roca y pintada *circa* 1183 formando parte de la ermita de un santo local luego convertida en monasterio⁴⁶.

En todos los casos estamos ante espacios reservados a individuos que poseen una especial significación para el conjunto de la comunidad monástica, objeto de respeto y veneración, ya bien se trate de un ermita o de un abad. No albergamos dudas respecto a la identificación de las aberturas

⁴² Taft 2006: 45-46.

⁴³ Marinis 2014.

⁴⁴ Como la iglesia de *Eski Imaret Camii* en Estambul, en la que hay dos celdas pequeñas aisladas accesibles solo desde la galería y ubicadas sobre los rincones occidentales de la cruz, que se identifican con las pertenecientes a los reclusos monásticos (Marinis 2014); otra celda con visión privilegiada y restringida la hallamos en el *Katholikon* de la “Gran Labra” en el Monte Athos, donde san Atanasio tenía una celda situada en el nivel de la galería sobre el nártex, con vistas a la nave (Curcic 1993); o en la iglesia de Cristo en el Monasterio de Chora (*Kariye Camii* en Estambul), donde se documentan algunas cámaras internas pequeñas que estaban equipadas con ventanas que se abrían a la *naos* (nave) o al *parekklesion* (capilla funeraria), y que pudieron haber sido también lugares reservados a los “solitarios” (Ousterhout 1987).

⁴⁵ (Jolivet-Lévy-Lemaigre Demesnil 2001; Lemaigre Demesnil 2010).

⁴⁶ La celda de *Neophytos*, añadida sobre la nave en 1197, es denominada como “Nueva Sión” y contaba con una pequeña cámara en su parte inferior llamada *Hagiosterion*, dotada de una ventana que se abría desde el piso de la celda a la cúpula de la iglesia, lo que permitía al “hombre santo” escuchar y supervisar la liturgia desde ese lugar (Mango-Hawkins 1966).

existentes en la nave central de san Pedro de Rocas (*ecclesia*) con un *hagioscopio* longitudinal que permitiría una comunicación exclusiva, y por lo tanto privilegiada, de la actividad litúrgica que tenía lugar en el centro de la nave y dos *hagioscopios* transversales que comunican la *ecclesia* con la *paraecclesia* lateral izquierda donde se halla la pintura mural. (Fig. 8)

Si la visibilidad era importante, no lo era menos la acústica, pues escuchar la liturgia y la salmodia tenían igualmente una significación particular que establecía una conexión auditiva exclusiva entre la persona que se situaba en el exterior, del otro lado del *hagioscopio*, y los que desarrollaban la liturgia en el interior⁴⁷. El espacio arquitectónico, su iluminación y acústica, están concebidos en san Pedro de Rocas para un tipo de liturgia de rito bizantino, por lo que si tenemos en cuenta que en la cabecera mayor se disponía una estructura de madera que ocultaba la capilla, iconostasio, y el que el presbiterio está flanqueado por dos bancos corridos a modo de sitiales para la congregación monástica en el oficio litúrgico, el espacio en cuestión se circunscribe a una zona precisa situada en el centro del presbiterio. Tanto el iconostasio como el cancel, a mayores de su función litúrgica y de culto, eran elementos que marcaban la jerarquía y el acceso restringido y diferenciado en el interior, de manera que quedaban al margen los espacios reservados. El momento de la consagración, que era el más importante por representar el sacrificio y la transubstanciación de Cristo, no era visible a los asistentes a la celebración litúrgica, más que al oficiante y, en su caso, al “hombre santo” que se encontraba al otro lado del *hagioscopio*. No es casual que la forma de dicho elemento pueda relacionarse directamente con el canal que comunica el mundo terrenal con el divino, a modo de embudo por el que ascienden las almas puras tras la muerte. Puede existir aquí un paralelismo entre esta simbología del elemento arquitectónico y el porqué el eremita singular se establece con su celda en la parte superior. Efectivamente, tras comprobaciones de ángulos visuales, proyección de la imagen y del sonido, se puede confirmar, que el *hagioscopio* está diseñado y ejecutado para transmitir ambos a la parte alta de la capilla mayor, ya que la transmisión es perfecta, desde los puntos exactos de mayor reverberación. La capilla lateral derecha e izquierda actúan de transmisores en su ábside, el presbiterio difunde el sonido de manera ascendente y la capilla mayor en un punto exacto central, es capaz de actuar como altavoz, ya que difunde el sonido por el interior del complejo y éste asciende a través del *hagioscopio*.

⁴⁷ Para Theodoro Metochitas (1270-1332), uno de los más importantes escritores y filósofos del siglo XIV, y estrechamente vinculado al monasterio de Chora (Constantinopla) al que se retiró en 1331, la comprensión acústica era tan importante como la visual: Featherstone 2011.

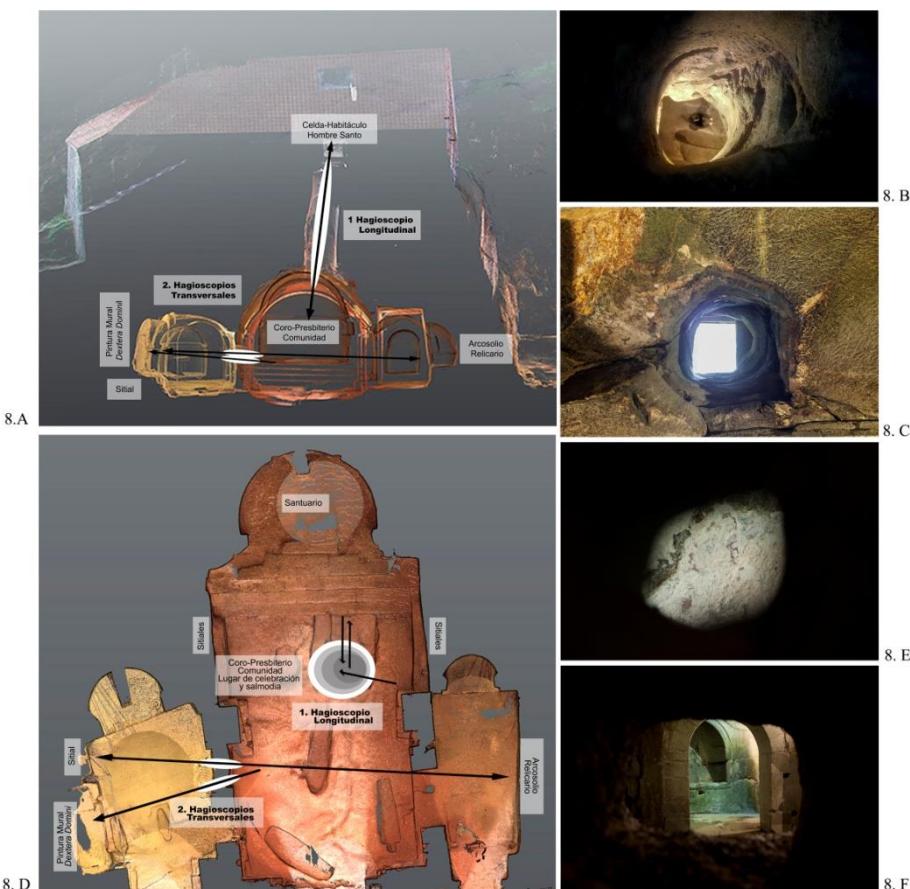


Fig. 8

Oficio litúrgico, consagración y salmos, son elementos que guardan gran intensidad simbólica, en lo sonoro, capaz de provocar la elevación del alma en un fuerte estado meditativo. Del mismo modo, la sección troncocónica de este elemento facilita una visión similar a la de un teleobjetivo-telescopio, ya que la imagen de lo que sucede en la nave central iluminada se proyecta en la oscuridad superior de la celda, haciendo que el oficiante sea visible directamente al abad y/o “hombre santo” en el preciso momento de la consagración.

El *hagioscopio* longitudinal está tallado en la roca, perforada por completo en su altura, desde la bóveda central hasta la parte exterior superior, donde se ubicaría la citada estructura; y de igual manera presenta perforaciones en su base, probablemente para albergar un entramado o celosía de madera y así no ser visto desde abajo, aunque sí permitir la visión y la audición desde arriba. Aunque debemos determinar con mayor precisión

la cronología de este singular elemento, no inusual en la arquitectura bizantina⁴⁸, creemos que está directamente relacionado con la construcción de las tres capillas excavadas en la roca en época alto-medieval, siglos IX-X.⁴⁹ Si ese fuera el caso, y tratándose de la fase cenobítica de Rocas, el uso del *hagioscopio* podría estar reservado al abad de la comunidad monástica o al eremita santo-anciano, pudiendo desde ese lugar visualizar, escuchar y controlar el desarrollo de la actividad litúrgica en el interior de la nave correspondiente a la *ecclesia*, no hay que olvidar que se constata vida erémica en Rocas hasta bien entrado el siglo XV y que confirmamos a partir del estudio material y arqueológico del complejo que la convivencia entre ermitas y cenobitas en Rocas se produce durante bastante tiempo. En todo caso, el *hagioscopio* longitudinal habría ayudado a “enfocar la visión y el oído” del individuo que observaba y escuchaba la liturgia desde el otro extremo⁵⁰.

A este hagioscopio longitudinal, hay que añadir la presencia de otros dos hagioscopios transversales que comunican la *ecclesia* (capilla mayor) con la *paraecclesia* lateral izquierda. Se trata de pequeñas perforaciones practicadas en la roca que atraviesan el muro divisorio, y que mediante la sección troncocónica, de nuevo permiten la audición y la visión, de un lado al otro. En este caso, dichos hagioscopios estarían destinados a la comunidad monástica que sería la que tendría acceso a la celebración de los oficios. Se encuentran realizados a media altura, es decir, para una visión humana natural (1,60cm de alto) y se ubican entre el cancel principal y la puerta primitiva de acceso adintelada que comunica de nuevo ambos espacios. La orientación de la visión de ambos hagioscopios es de nuevo estratégica; desde la *ecclesia*, por uno de ellos, se observa la cabecera de la *paraecclesia* del lado del evangelio con la que se comunican, y por el otro, se dirige la visión a la representación de la *Dexter Domini* en la pintura mural. Desde el interior de la capilla funeraria se observa a través de los canales la *paraecclesia* derecha, concretamente el arcosolio parejo, por ser este uno de los elementos importantes, el armario relicario de Rocas, del que hemos hablado anteriormente. Lo que nos indica una vez más, que los puntos de visión están relacionados con una liturgia de tipo bizantino. A ello se añade, que el paño de muro labrado presenta un rebaje a modo de puerta, simulando un vano de acceso, sin función, enmarcando ambas aperturas. Podría tratarse de una representación simbólica en la arquitectura del acceso a lo divino.

En definitiva, san Pedro de Rocas surge de la fusión entre una larga tradición arquitectónica rupestre oriental y la interpretación de un paisaje, el

⁴⁸ Ni en la arquitectura religiosa medieval: Le Pogam 2003.

⁴⁹ López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2018

⁵⁰ Oosterhout 2016: 865.

de la *Gallaecia*, que en su configuración natural por la presencia de granito difiere, pero que en morfología, transformación y simbolismo presenta un claro paralelismo al desierto de la Tebaida egipcia o la Capadocia y otros ámbitos rupestres del Mediterráneo⁵¹. Encontramos pues en Rocas la montaña sagrada como lugar donde habita la divinidad, la roca como manifestación de Dios y el agua como palabra divina.

Los propios creadores de este espacio sabían aplicar las técnicas creando nuevos modos de construcción por adaptación al material granítico y al tipo de orografía, berrocales de granito con exuberancia en la vegetación; por lo tanto, tipológica, tecnológicamente y por el lugar en el que se ubica, san Pedro de Rocas es único en su configuración⁵².

San Pedro de Rocas: un monasterio bizantino en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica.

No podemos obviar, si hablamos de una actividad constructiva en la roca para construir un complejo cultural, la cuestión relativa a quiénes vivieron en san Pedro de Rocas. Que no era un lugar aislado, resulta bastante evidente, pues el *Camino Real* de época moderna, heredero a su vez de un ramal de una vía romana, pasa mismo por el monasterio. No se trata, por lo tanto, de un emplazamiento incomunicado, sino perfectamente conectado y accesible⁵³ y ya sacralizado en época pre-romana. Tampoco era Rocas un ámbito reservado a una pequeña comunidad o grupo de individuos, ya que el área funeraria, tanto la que es visible en el interior y en el exterior del monasterio, como las numerosas inhumaciones, unas visibles, otras ocultas por obras posteriores y otras muchas desaparecidas, nos hablan de la presencia de un número muy importante de personas en Rocas. Poco sentido tiene pensar que allí viniera a enterrarse gente de otros lugares lejanos, por lo que la presencia de dos tumbas infantiles en la capilla lateral izquierda

⁵¹ Ashkenazi-Aviam 2017; Binns 1996; Budde 1958; Chitty 1966; Dahary 2000; Gabra-Takla 2017; Goehring 1999; Hamarneh 2003; Hedstrom 2017; Hirschfeld 1992; Leroy 2004; Meinardus 1992; Messina 1979; Palmer 1990; Patrick 2004; Restle 1978; Rousseau 1985; Thierry 1973; Wipszycka 2009.

⁵² La adaptación a las condiciones y la realidad geográfica local es uno de los elementos claves para entender la configuración arquitectónica y espacial de estos complejos eremíticos; para el caso concreto de la Tebaida egipcia véase: Godlewski 2015; como una referencia fundamental para la cuestión: Palmer 1990.

⁵³ En ninguno de los lugares donde se desarrollan estos complejos anacoréticos y eremíticos, sea en Anatolia o Oriente Medio, encontramos comunidades de “monjes” aisladas e incomunicadas; es más, la proximidad a núcleos de poblamiento, tanto rurales como urbanos, es una constante; a lo que se añade que la mayor parte de estos espacios eran objeto de paso frecuente de peregrinos que veían a estos individuos como auténticos “hombres santos” que eran, en vida como después de morir, objeto de veneración (Steidle 1956; Brow 1971; Cullum ed. 2013; Burton-Christie 1993; Farnkfurter ed. 1998; Grossmann 1998; Frank 2000).

(precisamente el área asociada con la 1^a fase constructiva del complejo rupestre) no puede relacionarse con una comunidad estrictamente monástica, no al menos en sentido estricto⁵⁴, aunque quizás se pudiera explicar por la referencia a la existencia de una escuela (no sabemos si monástica o no) a la que los niños acudían, recogida en el documento de 1007⁵⁵.

El origen de este área funeraria, lo que constituye además otro elemento a favor del origen que planteamos para san Pedro de Rocas, estaría relacionado con la capilla lateral izquierda, pues no sólo la presencia de las tumbas infantiles excavadas en la roca (las únicas conocidas de todo el complejo rupestre) se ubican en ese lugar, sino que las únicas tumbas no antropomorfas (una de las del tipo conocido como de “bañera” y otras ovales) situadas en la capilla central parecen estar asociadas con ese espacio originario, siendo la orientación de la tumba de “bañera” completamente diferente al resto de inhumaciones. Dicha orientación “busca” intencionalmente el espacio de la capilla lateral izquierda y, en nuestra opinión, estamos ante la tumba más temprana de toda el área funeraria vinculada al monasterio de san Pedro de Rocas, con toda probabilidad una “tumba fundacional”. Tanto las tumbas infantiles, como la de “bañera” y las otras dos ovales, son inhumaciones privilegiadas por su situación en el conjunto del área funeraria rupestre y respecto al espacio cultural⁵⁶. La mayoría de las tumbas antropomorfas excavadas en la roca se enmarcan temporalmente en el mismo momento de construcción de las tres capillas en época altomedieval, siglos IX-X⁵⁷.

La propia pintura mural⁵⁸, ofrece también algunas pistas sobre quiénes pudieron habitar y sobre todo construir san Pedro de Rocas.⁵⁹ La hasta ahora identificación de la representación pictórica como un mapa de la diáspora apostólica, influido por la tradición y el modelo de los conocidos como “mapas de los beatos”, ofrece interesantes elementos de reflexión sobre el quiénes y también sobre el qué⁶⁰. No es casual la ubicación de la pintura mural en la capilla lateral izquierda, origen del complejo cultural y funerario

⁵⁴ Como, por ejemplo, en Palestina: Harmaneh 2003 o Capadocia: Oosterhout 2005; Rodley 2010.

⁵⁵ López Quiroga 2004.

⁵⁶ López Quiroga 2010

⁵⁷ López Quiroga 2004, 2016 y 2017.

⁵⁸ Actualmente en proceso de estudio por nuestra parte, como todo el complejo rupestre de Rocas, por encargo de la Dirección Xeral de Patrimonio Cultural de la Xunta de Galicia.

⁵⁹ La pintura mural ha sido datada en el Proyecto *Petra Sacra* mediante análisis de mortero por termoluminiscencia en 1100-1110, con los índices que oscilan ±50 años, lo que la ubican en ejecución a inicios del siglo XII, dejando pues de contextualizarla como hasta ahora se hacía, a fines del siglo XII. López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2019.

⁶⁰ García Iglesias 1981; Moralejo 1986; Alberto Jiménez-Rodríguez Pascual 1986; Durliat 1987; Sáenz López-Pérez 2011; 2014; Fernández Santiago 2016.

rupestre, en un arcosolio que acoge en su base una tumba con al menos dos individuos en su interior, y en donde se hallan las dos únicas tumbas antropomorfas infantiles excavadas en la roca⁶¹. En la pintura mural hallamos por primera vez, una combinación iconográfica muy interesante que fusiona la idea de la diáspora apostólica y por lo tanto la labor evangelizadora de los apóstoles, con la idea del Juicio Final, anunciada por ángeles trompeteros representados como vientos y centralizada por la *Dextera Domini* (Mano de Dios), que desde el centro está señalando a la ubicación del sarcófago. (Fig. 9)

Nos encontramos ante una representación figurativa a modo de mapa, por las referencias a ciudades, edificaciones fortificadas representadas, por el número y tipo de rostros hallados y por las leyendas asociadas a estos elementos, en torno a la *Dextera Domini*, de marcada tradición judaica y cristiana oriental⁶². El tipo de mapa, relacionado con la diáspora apostólica hasta la fecha⁶³, hablaría de la evangelización desde Oriente a Occidente, lo que tendría una especial y directa vinculación con el conjunto de san Pedro de Rocas y sus orígenes, y todo aquello que los últimos estudios realizados nos han permitido descubrir⁶⁴, ya que de alguna manera la expansión del movimiento eremítico bien podría ser la diáspora anacorética que se produce en varios periodos de la historia, desde el siglo IV hasta la Alta Edad Media, al modo de los apóstoles.⁶⁵ La presencia del Juicio Final como momento futuro se vincula, sin embargo, al marcado carácter funerario y escatológico de san Pedro de Rocas, así como la idea de la resurrección tan estrechamente relacionada con el fenómeno de las tumbas excavadas en la roca. Hablaríamos pues de la representación de la expansión del anacoretismo en todo el orbe cristiano y su llegada a un lugar. Rocas es creado por una comunidad eremítica de origen oriental, que se establece y asienta, al modo en que otras comunidades lo hicieron en el sur o norte peninsular⁶⁶. Dicha pintura, estaría haciendo referencia al sentido originario y sacro del lugar, y a su dimensión anacorética. No hay que olvidar que los apóstoles y su labor de evangelización son un referente para estos monjes que deciden vivir de manera ascética y anacorética, así como también lo van a ser los profetas.

⁶¹ Los enterramientos infantiles son siempre “inhumaciones privilegiadas” no tanto por las características de la tumba sino sobre todo por su ubicación en el conjunto del área funeraria (López Quiroga 2010).

⁶² Sobre las influencias entre la tradición pagana antigua, el judaísmo y el primer Cristianismo: Brakke-Jacobsen-Ulrich eds. 2006.

⁶³ García Iglesias 1981; Durliat 1987; Moralejo 1986; Sáenz López-Pérez 2011; Fernández Santiago 2016.

⁶⁴ Jópez Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2019

⁶⁵ Jópez Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel 2019

⁶⁶ Riu 1972; Díaz y Díaz 1995.

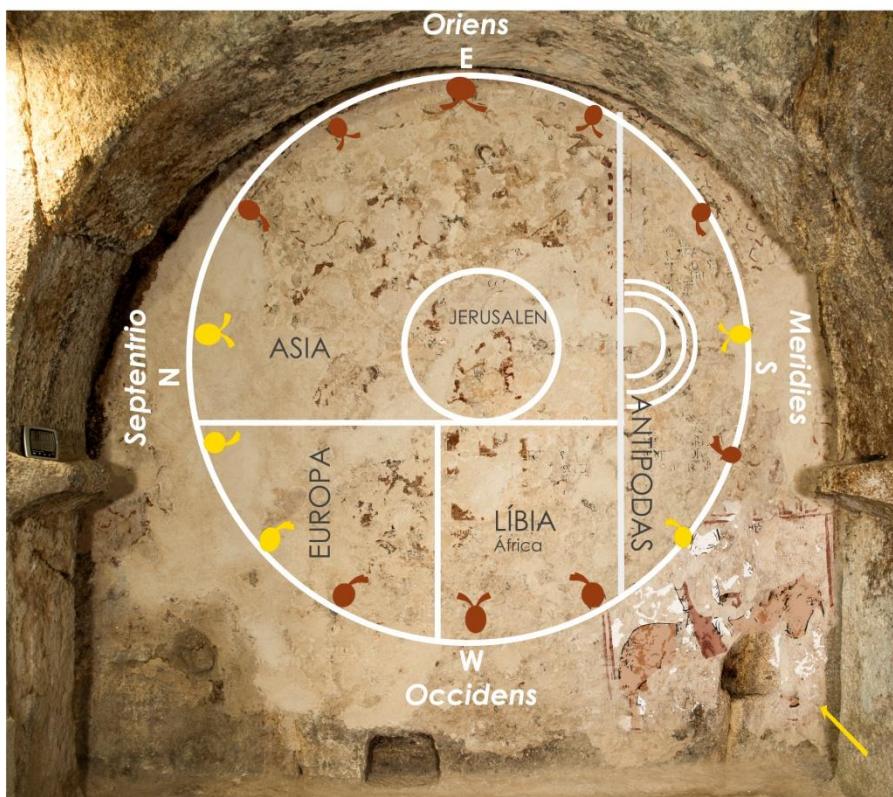


Fig. 9



Ángeles trompeteros / Anunciadores del Juicio Final / Vientos
(Identificados y conservados entre un 30-80%)



Ángeles trompeteros / Anunciadores del Juicio Final / Vientos (Desaparecidos)

Según el Evangelio de San Juan, son 7 los ángeles anunciantes, pero después se indican 9 y sucesivamente mayor aparición de ángeles (no se identifica si son diferentes, por lo que no está definido el número).



Jerusalén y Templo de Salomón en el centro



División *Orbis Terrae Tripartitus*



Caballero. Donante y mecenas de la ejecución de pintura.
Posible personaje yacente en el enterramiento del arcosolio funerario



Antípodas. Zona *australis frigida inhabitabilis*

Precisamente, la cuestión de qué es san Pedro de Rocas está directamente vinculada con su origen y con quién/es ocuparon este lugar dotándolo de una significación cultural cristiana. La pintura mural ofrece, sin

duda, interesantes y sugerentes elementos de reflexión, así como el análisis detallado de todo el espacio cultural rupestre, especialmente la roca en la que fue tallado, sin olvidar los numerosos grafitis que jalona todas las paredes y la propia organización espacial del área funeraria. Pero, como se constata en otros complejos rupestres del Mediterráneo⁶⁷, es en el entorno del monasterio de san Pedro de Rocas donde encontramos evidencias de que no estamos ante un edificio y una arquitectura aislados buscando una “soledad”, física y espiritual⁶⁸. Ciertamente, hay un deseo de soledad interior, en esta fase de anacoretismo (1^a Fase), casi individual, pero es una “soledad en multitud”, ya que los anacoretas se establecen muy próximos unos a otros, aunque viven y están recluidos en sus celdas individuales, en aislamiento interior y físico. Es en ocasiones especiales que se reúnen en un espacio destinado para tal fin siendo exclusivamente el único momento en el que establecen comunicación entre ellos. Habrá que esperar al paso al cenobitismo (2^a fase) para que dicho aislamiento sea interior y no físico, pasando a crear una comunidad en convivencia.

La propia roca, sobre la que se construye el complejo cultural de Rocas, contiene un número elevadísimo de elementos constructivos en negativo, que han dejado su huella. Estas estructuras horadadas en la roca se extienden por un amplio radio en torno al monasterio, en lo que es una sucesión ininterrumpida que evidencia una intensa ocupación del espacio, y que identificamos como un complejo sistema de asentamientos eremítico-anacoréticos que explican los verdaderos orígenes de Rocas, dándole una dimensión completamente diferente a la que hasta ahora se venía proponiendo. Además, la mayor extensión de lo que en su día fue un gran complejo habitacional, cultural y funerario rupestre, se enmarca y contextualiza en lo que son realmente sistemas de asentamientos, de hábitats rupestres anacoréticos, bien conocidos y documentados en otras áreas, inscribiéndose así san Pedro de Rocas en un fenómeno de amplia difusión como es el de la edilicia rupestre⁶⁹, en un ámbito espacial que no es otro que el de la propia diáspora reflejada en su pintura mural.

Los resultados de las últimas investigaciones nos permiten afirmar que el culto en san Pedro de Rocas se remonta a época prerromana, por lo que la sacralización de este espacio natural es anterior de lo hasta ahora documentado. El santuario prerromano de unos 100m² aproximadamente de

⁶⁷ De Jerfanion 1925-1942; Crescenzi-Caprara eds. 2012; Ashkenazi-Aviam 2017; Binns 1996; Budde 1958; Chitty 1966; Dahary 2000; Gabra-Takla 2017; Goehring 1999; Hamarneh 2003; Hedstrom 2017; Hirschfeld 1992; Leroy 2004; Meinardus 1992; Messina 1979; Palmer 1990; Patrick 2004; Restle 1978; Rousseau 1985; Thierry 1973; Wipszycka 2009.

⁶⁸ López Quiroga 2010, 2017.

⁶⁹ Crescenzi-Caprara eds. 2012; López Quiroga 2017.

superficie así lo confirman. Se trata de un santuario rupestre de origen prerromano, posteriormente romanizado, finalmente cristianizado y utilizado al menos hasta fines de la Edad Media. Este santuario está compuesto por un monumental altar rupestre prerromano de importantes dimensiones, constituido por un monolito labrado con escaleras talladas en la roca y hornacinas en origen de culto pagano. En él se localizan: un ara rupestre con epigrafía labrada en la roca de época romana, numerosas cruces de diferentes épocas de la fase de cristianización, hornacinas de sección cuadrangular que pudieron actuar de pequeños habitáculos para albergar tablas de madera con alguna representación, cruces de madera o cualquier otro elemento litúrgico y un conjunto de grafitis asociados a las cruces que están en relación con el resto del espacio del santuario. (Fig. 10)

Frente al altar prerromano, se encuentra la zona de asiento para la comunidad de monjes, donde otro monolito de roca es de nuevo tallado para albergar una magnífica cátedra episcopal y/o sitial abacial, a modo de sillón de brazos con respaldo alto y curvo, reposacabezas en forma de cuarto de luna invertida, cruz superior en el remate del respaldo, reposapiés para elevar la figura del sedente y dosel en madera que cubriría la parte superior. La tipología de sillón de brazos permite al abad u obispo sostener el báculo con los brazos flexionados hacia adelante. Este elemento rupestre excavado en la roca es de absoluta perfección y puede considerarse un *unicum* en la Península Ibérica y fuera de ella, hasta la fecha conocido. Otros paralelos tipológicamente similares, aunque no idénticos, los encontramos en la cátedra episcopal de la catacumba de san Genaro en Nápoles (siglo VI), en sitiales abaciales de refectorio en iglesias rupestres de la Capadocia (siglo IX) o ya posteriormente en la abadía de San Román en Francia (siglo XII). No obstante, la cátedra/sitial de san Pedro de Rocas destaca por su perfección en la ejecución, por su cronología temprana y por su diseño, ya que tiene una orientación al sol muy específica y se hizo pensada para un espacio exterior. A la derecha de este asiento jerárquicamente privilegiado se encuentra un banco corrido, en parte tallado en la roca y en parte en madera, de una longitud apropiada para una comunidad de unos 8 monjes aproximadamente. Otras estructuras localizadas en el mismo espacio nos indican que el santuario presentaba elementos en madera y que se trataba de un espacio abierto orientado al sur-oeste en la caída del sol e iluminado de manera especial durante el solsticio de invierno. Es pues un lugar comunitario donde la comunidad de ermitas realizarían sus celebraciones conjuntas los días señalados, según la tradición de las primeras reglas monásticas orientales, como la de San Pacomio, que ordenaba reunir a la comunidad una vez por semana y hacer celebración conjunta.



10. E

Fig. 10

En Rocas se documentan todas las características de las formas de vida comunitaria orientales. Estos orígenes orientales están directamente relacionados con la actividad misionera y reformadora de Martín de Dumio (obispo de Braga, nacido en Panonia) en la segunda mitad del siglo VI (circa

550-580). Martín llegó a la *Gallaecia* desde Palestina, lugar en el que se convirtió en monje y donde conoció y experimentó las formas de ascetismo y monacato oriental, acompañado por monjes sirios, como *Pascasius*, quien le ayudó en la traducción del griego al latín de las *Sentencias* y *Reglas* de los ‘Padres del Desierto’.

Lista de Figuras

Fig. 1. Ortofoto y curvas de nivel del complejo monástico de la Edad Moderna, en su estado actual. Imagen del monasterio benedictino moderno (©López Quiroga – Muñoz Sánchez Miguel).

1. A. Ortofoto de la cara oeste del monasterio, con el cementerio, campanario, iglesia y casa prioral. La iglesia parroquial oculta con el muro del siglo XIX, las capillas excavadas en la roca y su fachada (©López Quiroga – Muñoz Sánchez Miguel).
1. B. Curvas de nivel y mapa de alturas del monasterio benedictino. (©López Quiroga – Muñoz Sánchez Miguel).

Fig. 2. Interior del complejo cultual (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

2. A. Santuario o ábside de la *ecclesia*, espacio de culto y litúrgico comunitario. Hoy visible, en su origen oculto por un iconostasio de madera. Compuesto por una cabecera de herradura en planta y medio punto en alzado, con credencias que lo flanquean. Todo ello excavado en la roca y perfectamente orientado al este magnético.. (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
2. B. Grafitis de cruces latinas patadas de consagración y letras en el coro del lado de la epístola, talladas incisas en la roca (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
2. C. *Paraecclesia* funeraria del evangelio completamente excavada en la roca. Lugar donde se ubica la pintura mural románica del mapamundi (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
2. D. *Paraecclesia* funeraria de la epístola, excavada en la roca en su interior y ornamentada en su acceso en fase románica. Con ábside en herradura y arcosolio relicario (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
2. E. Enterramientos antropomorfos excavados en la roca orientados al este, en su origen ubicados en el exterior del complejo cultual y próximos a la capilla del relicario (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
2. F. Arcosolio relicario (detalle) en su lado izquierdo donde se ubicaba en su origen la lápida con epigrafía como tapa de reliquias (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

Fig. 3. Escaneado láser 3D de la arquitectura rupestre cultual (©López Quiroga – Muñoz Sánchez Miguel).

3. A. Levantamiento en alzado de la fachada rupestre original con sus tres capillas: *paraecclesia* funeraria lado evangelio, *ecclesia*, *paraecclesia* funeraria y relicario del lado epístola. Etapas constructivas y cronologías. Esta visión del complejo hoy no es visible, al estar cerrada por un muro del siglo XIX que se construye como creación de la iglesia parroquial a los pies (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

3. B. Sección en planta del complejo cultural. Etapas constructivas y cronologías (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
3. C. Levantamiento en alzado de la fachada rupestre original con sus tres capillas en relación con el paisaje natural, donde la posición del berrocal granítico, permite la perforación de la roca y a su vez, la integración de este monolito rocoso en la montaña (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
3. D. Vista en perspectiva de la fachada y las capillas en profundidad (©López Quiroga – Muñoz Sánchez Miguel).

Fig. 4. Elementos excavados en la roca ubicados en el exterior del complejo cultural, destinados a diferentes funciones (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

4. A. Arcosolio funerario para dos enterramientos nobiliarios, con lauda de yacente esculpido, de la fase románica y relieve del alma del difunto siendo elevada por dos ángeles. Siglo XI-XII (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
4. B. Escalera, canales y silo excavado en la roca, en zona elevada, tras el complejo cultural. De época altomedieval (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
4. C. Sistema entrecruzado de canales, de época altomedieval (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
4. E. Escaleras confluyentes excavadas en la roca que perimetran el complejo cultural y dan acceso a la parte superior de la *ecclesia*, donde hayamos la celda privilegiada con hagioscopio (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
4. F. Celda de eremita con acceso de escaleras, próxima a la vía y de planta oval, con sistema de muros excavados en la roca y muros de entramado en madera de ramas de árbol (hoy desaparecidos) (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
4. G. Enterramiento antropomorfo excavado en la roca, privilegiado, orientado al arcosolio exterior, con cruz latina en su cabezal (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
4. H. Escaleras talladas en la roca que dan acceso desde la vía a otra de las celdas de eremita. (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel)

Fig. 5. Historias de los padres del desierto (detalles). Fra Angélico. 1420 y Eremitas del Desierto de Belén, Córdoba (Fototipia de Hauser y Menet. 1920).

Fig. 6. Historias de los padres del desierto (detalles). Fra Angélico. 1420 y Eremitas del Desierto de Belén, Córdoba (Fototipia de Hauser y Menet. 1920).

Fig. 7. San Pedro de Rocas y sus orígenes. Imagen próxima a cómo fue san Pedro de Rocas en la Alta Edad Media (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

7. A. Vista de las inmediaciones de san Pedro de Rocas en un enclave muy específico, berrocales graníticos en zona montañosa (Duro Peña 1972).
7. B. San Pedro de Rocas y el monte Barbeirón. Reconstrucción sobre postal antigua (1920) donde se integra el complejo rupestre en el entorno natural rocoso. Hoy esta vista no es posible por la replantación del territorio con árbol de hoja perenne y la ocultación del complejo rupestre tras la fábrica de moderna (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).
7. C. Acceso original altomedieval al monasterio, donde encontramos la vía con pavimento de losas graníticas y la torre campanario con su perspectiva real, a modo

de monolito elevado monumental, con la puerta de acceso y su campanario (hoy espadaña del siglo XV) (Fototipia. Castañeira, Álvarez y Levenfeld. Madrid. 1920).

7. D. Entrada al monasterio por la vía romana a 3,5 km de distancia, dirección sur. Acceso al coto del monasterio, con vía pavimentada con losas de granito y tallada íntegramente en la roca, con escaleras de uno y dos huellas, así como puertas excavadas en la roca que en su día tuvieran cierres de madera, canales para paso de carros y conducción de agua (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

7. E. Vía romana, hoy Camino Real que perimetra el monasterio, a 4km de distancia del complejo, con la misma tipología de pavimento y construcción que la vía que cruza el monasterio bajo la torre (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

Fig. 8. Hagioscopio longitudinal y hagioscopios transversales del complejo cultural (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

8. A. Sección en alzado del complejo cultural con la posición de los hagioscopios y sus direcciones en la comunicación sonora y visual (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

8. B. Perspectiva del hagioscopio longitudinal desde arriba (celda del hombre santo) (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

8. C. Perspectiva del hagioscopio longitudinal desde abajo (coro de la comunidad monástica) (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

8. D. Sección en planta del complejo cultural con la posición de los hagioscopios y sus direcciones en la comunicación sonora y visual (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

8. E. Perspectiva del hagioscopio transversal izquierdo desde el cancel de entrada de la *ecclesia* (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

8. F. Perspectiva del hagioscopio transversal derecho desde el interior de la *paraecclesia* del evangelio (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

Fig. 9. Pintura mural románica funeraria y escatológica, con mapamundi y diáspora apostólica. Ubicada en el arcosolio funerario de la *paraecclesia* funeraria del evangelio (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

Fig. 10. Santuario rupestre (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

10. A. Zona de asiento del santuario rupestre, altomedieval. Con asiento comunitario y cátedra episcopal/sitial abacial, tallado y excavado en la roca en un gran bolo de granito de 10 m de ancho (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

10. B. Altar prerromano con escalera monumental, romanizado con ara romana tallada con epigrafía y cristianizado con hornacinas, cruces y sistema de altar. (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel)

10. C. Cátedra episcopal/sitial abacial rupestre, tallado en la roca, con tipología de sillón de brazos de respaldo alto y reposa pies (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

10. D. Cátedra episcopal de la catacumba de san Genaro en Nápoles (siglo VI) (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

10. E. Escaleras y cruces. Griegas y latina. Halladas en el altar rupestre y en el remate de la cátedra (©López Quiroga – Figueiras Pimentel).

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Tristan en reverdie: l’arborescence mythique d’un corpus

Brîndușa Grigoriu*

*Evergreen Tristan:
the Mythical Arborescence of a Corpus*

Abstract: In most of its European versions of the central Middle Ages, *Tristan* nurtures an arborescent dynamics in which human agents reveal a spectacular potential for vegetalization, from the living couple to its tombal avatars, from the French poems to the Norse and German adaptations of a greening narrative matter (Pastré 1999, Victorin 2009).

While exploring the affinities between the romance’s modeling of human ethos and its stylization of sylvan, vegetal figures under the sign of the philter, the present article focuses on the metamorphosis of the love tree in Béroul’s, *Marie de France*’s, Eilhart von Oberg’s and Robert’s realms of *Tristania*.

In Béroul’s version, the couple fuses into an Edenic matrix where sleeping becomes an ensavaging, liberating process excluding the possibility of corporeal fecundity. (Marchello-Nizia 1981). *Marie de France* takes the idea of a refuted genealogy one step further, via the symbiosis of the honeysuckle and the hazel tree; this vegetal self-sufficiency excludes God’s commandments by suppressing the mere possibility of achieving a living descendancy. In Eilhart’s romance, death is the catalyst of a revegetation of the consubstantial souls of the lovers, as they are transcendently reunited by the philter. Robert’s *Saga* crowns the textual regeneration of the *Tristanian* matter by resignifying its distinctive sign of mythical arborescence.

Keywords: *Tristan*, Edenic tree, intertextual revegetation, mythical arborescence.

Les amants de Cornouailles forment un couple aussi fécond, dans son corpus, qu’il est stérile dans sa corporalité: en accord avec les lois tacites de l’éternelle reverdie tristanienne , procréer revient à se faire recréer... au gré des mots et des folios. Essentiellement, l’arbre généalogique de l’Amerus n’est qu’une suite d’artes amandi, français, allemands, norrois, italiens, espagnols, portugais, tchèque... si bien que la filiation tristanienne fait du sang une encre en mouvance, susceptible de végétaliser l’humain en le transfigurant.

Certes, la métamorphose n’est pas totale: au XVe siècle, *Tristan* et *Yseut* trouvent un terroir leur permettant d’engendrer un héritier humain de la

* Maître de conférences à l’Université Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași, Roumanie, brindusagrigoriu@yahoo.fr

fole amor, qui se révèle amant fertile à son tour – Ysaïe le Triste. Cependant, à ce stade post-mortem , il est trop tard pour changer la donne mythique , et le roman fait piètre figure, se présentant, maladroitement, comme un acte de parole diffamatoire et culpabilisant, dont l'énonciateur est un losengier repenti qui « ne peut que tourner en rond » avec un récit où « le lignage de Tristan et d'Yseut est réductible à ce seul duo » .

Au coeur de Tristania, depuis la nuit des temps, deux corps suffisent pour l'enlacement final, car l'éternité de l'amour ne peut éclore que lorsqu'un couple se retrouve, au-delà de la mort, « corps contre corps, bouche contre bouche », comme le fantasme Thomas d'Angleterre au XII^e siècle, en brassant l'amer en mer pour un homme et une femme. Le reste relève du surplus ...

Au-delà de toute visée génératrice, « le mythe de Tristan mêle la sève et le sang, la symbiose de la chair et du végétal », dans un univers où « l'enlacement végétal appelle l'étreinte charnelle », comme le suggère Guy Paoli en ressourçant les fluides de la passion au suc de la Saint-Jean, au gré de ce « cheminement artériel qui relie les amants [...] au mythe primitif [en déroulant] ses vrilles dans l'imaginaire » . Yseut n'a pas besoin de devenir Madame Tristan, ni de prêter son utérus à Natura, pour que sourde, ensauvagée, la frondaison d'une verdeur mystique.

Béroul, l'amour et les têtes de feuilles

Nourrissant l'idéal du couple *evergreen*, la version commune entre l'amour tristanien sur la terre¹ du Morrois, en proposant à la postérité une trame vivement arborescente.

Avec Béroul, Tristan devient l'homme des bois, fin connaisseur des coins sombres et des zones protectrices, *Green Knight*² ou *Tête de feuilles*³

¹ Sur l'opposition fonctionnelle terre / mer dans la dynamique des amours tristaniennes, voir Pierre Gallais, *Genèse du roman occidental : essais sur Tristan et Iseut et son modèle persan*, Paris, Tête de Feuilles et Sirac, 1974, p. 163, 232.

² Sur « *the Green Man, that puzzling and ubiquitous creature whose purpose was usually apotropaic – to ward off evil spirits* » et sur le couronnement végétal de son avatar littéraire, le *Green Knight* du XIV^e siècle anglais, voir Celia Fisher, « Flowers and Plants, the Living Iconography », *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, éd. Colum Hourihane, Londres et New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 453-464, ici p. 454.

³ Sur les racines antiques et les significances mouvantes de ce thème décoratif, voir Stéphanie Derwael, « *Blattmasken. Un motif iconographique mêlant frontalité et dynamisme végétal* », *MethIS*, 5, 2016, p. 33–48. Pour une focalisation des « *foliateheads* » de l'art gothique médiéval, voir Gary R. Varner, *The Mythic Forest, the Green Man and the Spirit of Nature. The Re-emergence of the Spirit of Nature from Ancient Times into Modern Society*, New York, Algora Publishing, 2006, p. 143 sq.. Avec Michèle Pradalier-Schlumberger, « on notera combien la découverte du gothique est liée à la redécouverte de la figure humaine, fait qui est sensible [...] sur le chantier de la cathédrale de Béziers. Plus que ceux de Béziers cependant, les sculpteurs de Saint-Paul ont eu à cœur de faire passer dans la pierre l'autre nouveauté du monde sculpté gothique, le feuillage assoupli, généralisé » ; en particulier, l'auteur évoque «

dont le séjour sylvestre est une fusion de sèves et rêves avec Yseut, mais aussi un non-lieu pour les passants : « *Poor ont tuit par la contree. / La forest est si esfreee / Que nus n'i ose ester dedenz / Or ont le bois a lor talent* »⁴. C'est grâce à cette frayeur généralisée que Tristan revêt son image de monstre sacré, épousant l'être tentaculaire de la *silva* en véritable *Silvan*⁵. Il n'a pas à jouer au géant farceur – comme son hère littéraire face à Gauvain – pour faire craindre à tout adversaire potentiel que « ja n'i metroit autre ostage, / Fors la teste lairoit en gage »⁶. Émergeant de la ramée, cette force maléfique castratrice plie chaque arbre au « *talent* » de Tristan pour une femme, à la menace d'un ensauvagé contre la société. Fatal, le héros aux bras de branches⁷ « *bien lor*⁸*faisoita redouter ; / Qar, se Tristran les peüst prendre, / Il les feüst as arbres pendre* »⁹. Enraciné dans le Contre-Ordre¹⁰, paria de l'impossible, il noue en lui les nervures et les fibres, la verte élasticité du bois contre l'ultime rigidité de la chair.

Rien d'étonnant, dès lors, que cet homme, « affranchi » de son humanité par « *li vin herbez* »¹¹, appose sa signature sur l'Arc-qui-ne-faut : c'est par lui que le sang peut redevenir suc, en rebroussant le chemin de la Genèse... Il suffit de refuser la seigneurie sur les êtres et les choses, en se détournant de l'*ordo* de la création, pour que le rejet de « *celseignor qui fist Adan* »¹² (et de son messager, Ogrin) transforme Tristan en Caïn « errant et vagabond sur la terre »¹³, ou en « *mendis* »¹⁴ vivant « *d'erbes et de glan* ».

un décor de type prégothique où prédominent les chapiteaux à feuilles lisses, à boules, à griffons, à masques dévorant des feuillages, c'est-à-dire cette sculpture dépouillée par l'ascèse cistercienne qui s'est développée au même moment dans la partie occidentale du Languedoc. », *Toulouse et le Languedoc: la sculpture gothique, XIII^e-XIV^e siècles*, Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1998, p. 60-61.

⁴ Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. et trad. Daniel Poirion, dans *Tristan et Yseut. Les premières versions européennes*, éd. cit., p. 3-121, ici v. 1747-1750, p. 49.

⁵ *Silvan* est le nom attribué à une déité couronnée de feuilles (une « *Green Man face* » typique) sculptée sur une fontaine de la Basilique de Saint-Denis, illustrant une stratégie adaptative des croyants, une mesure de précaution répondant aux défis de la transition du polythéisme antique au christianisme; voir Gary R. Varner, *The Mythic Forest, the Green Man and the Spirit of Nature...*, op. cit., p. 154, n. 316.

⁶ Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. et trad. Daniel Poirion, éd. cit., v. 1847-1848, p. 52.

⁷ Au v. 3852, p. 105, la fatalité embrasse un corps d'arbre, et fait fusionner « *li maus* » et la « force » à même la sécheresse de l'écorce.

⁸ « *Lor* » réfère aux Cornouaillais, mais recouvre, en pratique, la sphère de toute intrusion sociétale, en contexte cynégétique.

⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 1665-1666, p. 47.

¹⁰ Sur la dialectique de l'Ordre et du Contre-Ordre, voir Françoise Bartea, *Les Romans de Tristan et Iseut. Introduction à une lecture plurielle*, Paris, Larousse, 1972, p. 53-82.

¹¹ Le syntagme, donné comme un synonyme immédiat et plus explicite (en ancien français) du « *lovendrins* » (anglo-saxon), est consacré par Béroul au v. 2138, p. 59.

¹² Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. et trad. Daniel Poirion, éd. cit., v. 1134, p. 33.

¹³ Genèse, 4, 12.

¹⁴ Voir v. 1418 et 1405-1406, p. 40.

L’arbre patibulaire¹⁵ se mue, au toucher de ses mains, en tremplin d’un nouveau monde possible, où le vert frais du bois se leste de lueurs infernales¹⁶. De par Yseut, Tristan est une menace en fleur.

Or, tout auteur du Moyen Âge sait que Dieu est l’Œil, le Lecteur des corps et des coeurs¹⁷ ; à cet égard, Daniel Poirion signale pertinemment que

même en prenant ses distances par rapport à la fonction religieuse de l’écriture, le texte à destination profane garde, par le symbole, une certaine affinité avec une transcendance qui complique le jeu littéraire. Il ne s’agit pas, en effet, comme dans la définition du message par les linguistes modernes, d’une simple communication faite entre un auteur et un lecteur, un émetteur et un receveur. Tout écrivain du XII^e siècle écrit en sachant bien que son message pourra être intercepté par Dieu, à sa table d’écoute. Cette mémoire qu’est l’écriture facilite l’interception.¹⁸

Aussi est-il d’autant plus troublant de voir un personnage briser le pacte triparti qui sous-tend cette communication transcendante (et métaleptique) pour envoyer, au cœur d’un regard aux aguets rejoignant celui du lecteur¹⁹, cette flèche qui ébranle les dernières lignes du manuscrit

¹⁵ Sur « l’arbre patibulaire » chez Béroul et sur le carrefour de significances qu’il est censé structurer, notamment lorsqu’il prend la forme du pin, voir Huguette Legros, « Du Verger royal au jardin d’amour : mort et transfiguration du *locus amoenus* (d’après *Tristan* de Béroul et *Cligès*) », *Vergers et jardins dans l’univers médiéval*, Aix-en-Provence, Presses universitaires de Provence, 1990, p. 215-233, article disponible en ligne sur <http://books.openedition.org/pup/2982>, consulté le 20 mai 2020.

¹⁶ Sur le vert infernal assigné dans l’iconographie du XII^e siècle aux démons et aux damnés, notamment dans le psautier de Winchester, voir Andreas Petzold, « The Iconography of Color », *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, op. cit., p. 437-452, ici p. 446.

¹⁷ Pour Hugues de Saint-Victor, il y a trois types visuels, ontologiquement distincts : « L’œil de la chair [*oculus carnis*] voit seulement l’extérieur des corps, et l’œil de l’esprit [*oculus mentis*] l’extérieur des coeurs ; l’œil de Dieu [*oculus Dei*] voit l’intérieur. L’œil du cœur est intérieur par rapport à l’œil de la chair, extérieur par rapport à l’œil de Dieu. Et de même que l’œil de la chair ne saisit pas ce que saisit l’œil du cœur, ainsi l’œil du cœur ne saisit pas ce que saisit l’œil de Dieu. Mais l’œil de Dieu saisit ce que saisit l’œil du cœur. Par conséquent, l’œil de la chair saisit seulement l’extérieur des corps ; l’œil du cœur, l’extérieur et l’intérieur des corps, mais seulement l’intérieur des coeurs ; l’œil de Dieu, lui, à la fois l’extérieur et l’intérieur des coeurs aussi bien que des corps. », *De Verbo Dei*, IV, 2, *Six opuscules spirituels*, Sources chrétiennes, n°155, Paris, Cerf, 1969, p. 73. Pour une interprétation contextualisée de la « voie du visible » chez le théologien victorin, voir Emmanuel Falque, *Le Livre de l’expérience. D’Anselme de Cantorbéry à Bernard de Clairvaux*, Paris, Cerf, 2017, chap. « La mise à nu », p. 188 sq.

¹⁸ Daniel Poirion, *Résurgences*, Paris, PUF, 1986, p. 28.

¹⁹ L’histoire est focalisée, pour un moment, par l’« *oculus carnis* » de Godoïne, qui « la cortine otdedenzpercie ; / Vit la chanbre, qui fujonchie, / Tot vit quant que dedenzavoit. [...] / Garda, si vit Tristran entrer », Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. et trad. Daniel Poirion, éd. cit., v. 4413-4415 et v. 4421, p. 120. Tous ces détails débordent la simple perception, allant jusqu’à nourrir l’interprétation par l’« *oculus mentis* » du lecteur... invité à lire les coeurs aussi bien que les corps, en frôlant l’*oculus Dei*... grâce aux images saisies par le fâlon.

béroulien. Dans un sens, la Vue, en tant que telle, est supprimée par la « *seete* » de Tristan, et l'horizon couve, outre néant, le « *saintisme cors* » de Dieu, mis « *a mort* »²⁰.

Par la force des liens qu'il trace entre croix et arme, Passion et immolation, Dieu et homme, par sa façon d'embrasser la « givre »²¹ en obéissant à la femme de sa vie, l'archer est une figure déicide, violemment aveuglante, brandissant une alternative au vécu sacrificiel du Christ. Au lieu d'endurer les coups et le mépris d'un public étranger au mystère, l'homme assène ici son coup et son mépris, annulant la représentation d'autrui pour y substituer la sienne. Tristan doit avoir le dernier mot, même si son écriture (bois sur pomme) est celle d'un analphabète de la grâce.

De même que Bacchus / Dionysos « abomine ceux qui refusent de vivre une vie heureuse »²², allant jusqu'à leur infliger la mort, Tristan opprime et (parfois) supprime ceux qui refusent de connaître et reconnaître axiologiquement l'amour. Dans ses veines coulent le philtre et le feu de la Saint-Jean : aviné, illuminé, délié²³, il est prêt à tuer²⁴, au cœur de la forêt, les frileux de tout horizon – ainsi que leur visions du monde.

Le roi Marc ne fait pas exception, lorsqu'il vient incarner l'Œil dans la loge du héros, secondé d'un rayon céleste. Le sopor rend le banni redoutable²⁵, pur, impénétrable, à l'image de ce masque feuillu qui hante les églises au XII^e siècle²⁶, faisant penser à un « homme vert » hybridé et pétrifié²⁷. Par un effet de dédoublement, un « *vert pomier* » donne corps au «

²⁰*Ibid.*, v. 4468-4469, p. 121.

²¹ Cette image serpentine d'Yseut est conçue et projetée par le lépreux Yvain au v. 1214, p. 35, lors de son plaidoyer pro-prostitution devant Marc.

²² Sur la logique dionysiaque du « bonheur inévitable à moins d'encourir sa punition terrible », voir Roberto Ruiz Capellán, *Tristan et Dionysos*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1995, p. 41, avec des allusions à Euripide, *Les Bacchantes*, éd. et trad. Henri Grégoire et alii, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1961, 424-426.

²³ Tristan incarne, lors de son séjour sylvestre sous la coupe du Vin, une hypostase de Bacchus connue, au XII^e siècle, sous le nom de Lyæus, « celui qui délivre ». Sur la « fureur de Bacchus », sa « tyrannie », et les dangers de la « bachilâtrie », voir Alain de Lille, *La Plainte de Natura...*, éd. cit., p. 157 et 116-117.

²⁴ S'il est vrai que « le philtre fait de Tristan un autre homme », c'est que, grâce aux herbes médicinales et magiques cueillies à la Saint-Jean, « à la maladie initiatique des deux amants succède [...] le passage initiatique dans la sylve », comme le remarque Jean-Marc Pastré dans son article « La Magie du végétal dans les Romans de Tristan », *Le Végétal*, éd. par Jean-Pierre Cléro, Alain Niderst, Rouen, Presses Universitaires de Rouen, 1999, p. 67-80, ici p. 74-75.

²⁵ Voir Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. et trad. Daniel Poirion, éd. cit., v. 1966-1968, p. 55.

²⁶ « From roughly the 12th century onwards, foliate heads appeared in the decoration of Christian churches. », Bob Curran, *Walking with the Green Man : Father of the Forest, Spirit of Nature*, Franklin Lakes, NJ, New Page Books, 2007, p. 198.

²⁷ Pour un premier panorama de la question, voir Lady Raglan, « The “Green Man” in Church Architecture », *Folklore*, 50, 1, 1939, p. 45-57, disponible en ligne sur [10.1080/0015587X.1939.9718148](https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1939.9718148), consulté le 20 mai 2020, ici p. 47.

*bois [...] qui mot onbroie*²⁸ et à l'énigme qui défie le forestier et déborde l'*« enprie »*²⁹ du roi.

Subtilement, par le biais du fruit paradisiaque, l'épisode propose une lecture à rebours de la Genèse³⁰, où le Père est appelé à prendre conscience de l'émancipation sans retour de ses créatures, aussi bien que de leur besoin de rester seul-à-seule : un Éden défendu à Dieu se profile, (enfin) intime, au seuil de ce monde aperçu par Marc, où le vent ne souffle pas, où personne n'aboie, crie ou pépie, où un sommeil *enceint* de possibles regagne l'humain, à contre-courant de l'Histoire. Tant que le pommier reste vert, le couple primordial reste vivant – et latent. En attendant (le coup ou le pardon), tout verdoie, tout végète dans la loge de feuillage où le réel se laisse transfigurer. Idyllique sans flagrance, l'*« asenblee »*³¹ suspend l'évidence d'une trahison et lui oppose un état de nature propre à innocenter les suspects, les rendant aussi intouchables que touchants : « endormi sont »³².

Faute de chérubin, « *l'espee nue* » du roi tremble et s'incline devant l'évidence offerte par la « *nue espee* »³³ de Tristan, les alliances glissent d'un doigt à l'autre et le viol de l'intimité se mue en protection gantée. C'est alors seulement qu'un rapport tutélaire s'instaure entre le Père et ses rejetons. Tout à son lierre, Tristan n'oppose aucune résistance au visiteur qui plante son signe de (virile) souveraineté dans l'entre-deux, sans pour autant évincer l'ombrage de l'amour.

En deçà de la charnière des vêtements, les sèves des dormeurs se fondent dans le langage élémentaire du songe, et la terreur d'Yseut colore l'émoi de Tristan, comme si les corps enlacés étaient devenus des vases communicants – en esprit... Quand l'un(e) est assailli(e), l'autre rougit ; quand l'un(e) est mordu(e), l'autre bondit sur ses pieds : la complémentarité des amants est totale, fructifiant la complicité des « *vers rains* »³⁴, des feuilles et de l'herbe qui englobe l'être-ensemble tel un placenta.

²⁸ Voir Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. et trad. Daniel Poirion, éd. cit., v. 1977 et 1960, p. 55.

²⁹ Voir v. 2026, p. 56.

³⁰ Pour une formulation du parallèle Tristan – Adam sous l'angle du péché originel, voir Jacques Ribard, *Du Philtre au Graal. Pour une interprétation théologique du Roman de Tristan et du Conte du Graal*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1989, p. 20 : « ce qui devait sceller l'union de Marc et d'Iseut, l'alliance de Dieu et de l'Homme, va se trouver détourné, perverti, au profit ou plutôt pour la perte de l'homme. [...] Le couple humain – Tristan et Iseut dans le Morrois – croira et voudra se suffire à lui-même dans une manière d'idolâtrie qui s'exprime dans l'amour réciproque et exclusif des amants l'un pour l'autre, à l'écart et à l'encontre de Celui dont ils se devaient de rester les vassaux, les créatures. ». Pour une première ébauche de cette lecture, voir ID., « Pour une interprétation théologique du *Tristan* de Béroul », *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 110, 28, 1985, p. 235-242.

³¹ Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. et trad. Daniel Poirion, éd. cit., v. 2010, p. 56.

³² V. 2014, p. 56.

³³ Comparer les vers 1987 et 1998, p. 55-56.

³⁴ V. 1801, p. 50.

Lorsque la forêt du Morrois accouche de son secret, les amants se laissent expulser vers la lande, le marais et la cour, loin de ce soleil (ag)gravant, sur leurs fronts, les contours des rameaux, l'interlude de la feuille et du nu. Malgré la fuite en avant, la sylve conserve son emprise. En effet, si le philtre de Béroul tarit au bout de trois ans, le continuum de l'amour se déclare dans l'idiome muet des sèves : Tristan et Yseut se plaisent à montrer qu'il reste possible de s'ensauvager, voire d'ensauvager le monde, au cœur même de rites civilisationnels aussi strictement codifiés que l'ordalie.

C'est ainsi que, lorsque le *puiot* de lépreux relaie, aux yeux des deux rois et de leurs cours réunies, l'épée nue des bois, l'entrelacs végétal fait éclater sa vérité de par les jambes de la reine ; un thyrse³⁵ vivant jouit alors de l'attention et de l'aveuglement généraux. Dans une parodie pulsatile de la chasteté, la symbiose de Tristan et Yseut remue le bourbier de la Cornouailles ; l'« *escorce* » des « *braz* »³⁶ porte la « *flor de lil* »³⁷ au-delà de la rouille rouge, tandis que « *ses cuises tient sor son puiot : / l'un piésorlieve et l'autre clot* »³⁸. Cette dynamique relève de la clôture autant que de l'éclosion, et les pétales prennent des dimensions tentaculaires. Ultimement, c'est Natura qui assure la réussite du serment, « *sor l'erbe vert* » recouverte de « *bestes* » brodées³⁹.

Au sein d'un cosmos où les reliques permettent aux revenants de (se) hanter, c'est la « *viriditas* »⁴⁰ de l'amour qui circule librement entre l'alcôve tapissée de feuilles et l'aubépine de la « *gaudine* », tandis que le sang des traîtres tombe au pied des pommiers, comme pour rappeler que l'Éden est à ceux qui restent unis face à la « *pome [...] mle* »⁴¹ de l'Histoire. Chez Béroul, Tristan et Yseut parlent une langue de *bois* ou plutôt de *forest*, où la vision

³⁵ Sur la pertinence mythique du thyrse, notamment en contexte de chevauchée végétale, voir Roberto Ruiz Capellán, *Tristan et Dionysos*, op. cit., notamment p. 22-23.

³⁶ Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. cit., v. 3852, p. 105. Sur ce point, Roberto Ruiz Capellán fait remarquer, à juste titre, « la forte imprégnation végétale du personnage dans l'image saisissante de ses bras secs comme de l'écorce, vie raide et sèche de la saison dormante », en l'associant à « la réapparition de Dionysos et, avec lui, de la vie [...] entendue comme la remontée des morts de leur séjour infernal », *Tristan et Dionysos*, op. cit., p. 100.

³⁷ C'est le comparant de Béroul pour le linge (« *chainsil* ») d'Yseut, tel qu'il est acheté par Ogrin pour le retour triomphal – et nuptial – de la belle rescapée à la cour. Voir v. 2738, p. 75.

³⁸ V. 3935-3936, p. 107.

³⁹ V. 4128 et 4127, p. 112.

⁴⁰ À l'époque où Yseut essaie de prouver, reliques sur herbe, que sa *flor* était réservée au bon homme et que sa chasteté pouvait rayonner au grand jour, comme sa chevelure nouée aux fils d'or, « *Hildegard believed that the earth's canopy of green grass was proof of God's creative energy, or viriditas, at work in the material world of creation. In the same way, she taught, within the world of the cloister, the virgins' long flowing hair was the external manifestation of their virtues, their work through viriditas to render God present to the material world.* », Sara Ritchey, *Holy Matter. Changing Perceptions of the Material World in Late Medieval Christianity*, Ithaca et Londres, Cornell University Press, 2014, p. 56.

⁴¹ Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, éd. cit., v. 4480, p. 121.

rejoint le rêve premier, en frôlant, gravide, le premier dormeur – en amont du Temps.

Le chèvrefeuille et le coudrier de Marie

Avec Marie de France, le patois des amants acquiert une graphie à la fois symbolique et symbiotique, tandis que Natura s'invite humainement, sans ravissement bachique. La sylve est ici un *locus amoenus* où l'« aaisement »⁴² bérolien devient « *joie mut grant* », « *leisir* », « *pleisir* »⁴³ savourés en toute fragilité ; elle s'ouvre seulement à ceux qui ont la clé des *chants*, en particulier des lais. Tristan lui-même y apparaît comme poète et harpeur, plutôt que monstre en monstruation ; être de l'ombre, il se profile comme un génie du langage elliptique, sachant s'accorder, pour l'honneur d'Yseut, au silence de la lettre.

Sous le couteau de cet *homo faber* aussi amoureux que laborieux, le bois se mue en un message où le signifiant fait corps avec le signifié⁴⁴. Grâce à la matière (brute!) d'une branche fraîchement taillée, la fonction poétique du langage creuse, à fleur de suc, son éloquence la plus pure. Sur « *une coudre* » équarrie, écorcée, formant un bâton-support, le nom de Tristan se déploie en un clin d'œil – et c'est *l'oculus mentis* qui prend corps. Aucun folio ne saurait épouser plus intimement la « *raison* » du couple, confortée par la forme phallique, la sensualité agonisante, le référent qui affirme et dépasse la *Tristitia*⁴⁵ dans un geste d'interlocution muette.

En attendant que *Le Roman de la Rose* consacre un rôle pénétrant au *bâton* de pèlerin et qu'il lui assigne un *bouton* sur mesure, le Tristan de Marie fait appel, avant tout, à l'entendement d'Yseut, en comptant sur la profondeur de son aperception. Voir, connaître, (se) *deduire*, sont des facultés humaines qui comptent avec la stérilité du rameau : arraché à l'arbre, il est investi d'une valeur unifiante où l'amour est un tout itératif qui hante l'éternité autant que la mort.

« *Pur les paroles remembrer* »⁴⁶, un lai vient exprimer le pouvoir-dire du bois dans un concentré de *viriditas*. Ainsi investi, le support ligneux

⁴² V. 1786, p. 50.

⁴³ Marie de France, *Le Lai du Chèvrefeuille*, éd. et trad. Mireille Demaules, dans *Tristan et Yseut. Les premières versions européennes*, éd. cit., v. 94-96, p. 215.

⁴⁴ Pour Jean-Marc Pastré, le bâton de Tristan évoque le « bois à pronostic » (*coelbren*) des prêtres et chefs de famille irlandais ; en même temps, la « magie du bois » se lit sur les copeaux. Voir art. cit, p. 71.

⁴⁵ Sur l'acception augustinienne de « *tristitia* » et son actualisation tristanienne au XII^e siècle, notamment chez Thomas, voir Tracy Adams, *Violent Passions : Managing Love in the Old French Verse Romance*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, chap. 5, « *Making Love in Béroul and Thomas's Tristans* », p. 156-157.

⁴⁶ Le v. 111, p. 215 peut être rattaché au bâton aussi bien qu'au lai : les deux sont des actes de parole pertinents pour la mémoire affective de Tristan, empreinte par Yseut.

se révèle un format parfait pour la mémoire affective des hommes et des plantes, pouvant circonscrire le temps long d'une attente menant aux retrouvailles : « *Ceofu la sume de l'escrit / Qui fu el baston que j'è dit : / Que lungesotilecesté / E atendu e surjurné, / Pur espier e pur saver / Coment il la peüstveer, / Ke ne pot nient vivre sanz li.* »⁴⁷. La « *sume* » relève du sens d'une vie, et représente une révérence à la vitalité-par-autrui ; revoir son élu(e), c'est revivre.

Et la végétalisation de l'humain se laisse conjuguer de manière visible, sans fusion ni consubstantialité : chacun devient une plante en soi, coudrier ou chèvrefeuille, et le demeure, malgré la proximité désirante⁴⁸. Certes, l'un doit servir d'axe de l'autre, et non seulement de complément – mais ce positionnement semble se faire à tour de rôle.

D'une part, la reine est la muse par excellence, suivie en tout par le suppliant se pliant à ses volontés⁴⁹. La description de l'être le plus visiblement dépendant de l'autre – « *Cumedelchevrefoilesteit / Kia la coudre se perneit : / Quant il s'i est laciez e pris / E tut entur le fust s'est mis* »⁵⁰ renvoie ainsi à l'agent principal de ces retrouvailles, qui n'est autre que Tristan.

Pour l'action « mourir d'amour », en revanche, c'est le corps le plus vertical qui tombe d'abord⁵¹, et rien dans l'attitude souveraine, maîtrisée, d'Yseut n'indique une telle précellence... Le coudrier redévient donc Tristan, dans une danse animiste où chacun joue à l'autre, vivant l'altérité sans s'aliéner.

Marie finit par brouiller les pistes et unir les amants comme victimes tout aussi probables de l'amour. Si Yseut pleure et meurt de façon spéculaire, elle le fait sans féminiser ou personnaliser son être-en-amour. La fleur parfumée n'est pas (constamment) une « elle » – du moins pas de façon fragrance / flagrante. Tristan peut très bien fleurir sa vie en grimpant pour l'atteindre et l'effleurer, dans un noeud de quêtes réussies, exemptes de fruit. Les *drus* sont végétalisés par métaphore et par cœur ; toutefois, le processus est, dans le *Lai du Chèvrefeuille*, réversible, et l'humanité prête-à-porter. Loin de l'idéal de la sépulture commune imaginée par l'Yseut de Thomas, chacun reste libre de se ressourcer à son territoire, que ce soit le Pays de

⁴⁷ V. 61-67, p. 214.

⁴⁸ Sans être un saint, le Tristan de Marie semble incarner cette « *viriditasdigiti Dei* » par laquelle une mystique contemporaine figurait l'œuvre hagio-graphique de Dieu ; voir Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Poet and His World*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984, chap. « Tradition and Innovation in Medieval Western Colour-Imagery », p. 55-104, ici p. 83 (autour d'une citation de Hildegard von Bingen, *Lieder*, éd. P. Barth, M. I. Ritscher, Salzburg, Otto Müller Verlag, 1969, p. 244).

⁴⁹ Voir Marie de France, *Le Lai du Chèvrefeuille*, éd. cit., v. 109-110, p. 215.

⁵⁰ V. 69-72, p. 214.

⁵¹ « *Li codresmuerthastivement* », v. 75, p. 215.

Galles ou la Cornouailles, l'exil ou le trône ; la géographie anthropique l'emporte sur la grâce des sèves, qui s'égoutte en larmes et s'évapore en lais.

Somme toute, l'interaction humaine que la symbiose végétale vient modéliser ici relève du couple édénique proposé par la Genèse 1.27 : deux êtres, deux corps sont appelés à peupler l'univers sans se fondre l'un dans l'autre, malgré un rapport identificatoire à l'image divine. Qu'elle soit une Lilith ou une Ève – le Moyen Âge connaissant les deux incarnations archétypales de la Femme⁵², que la chevauchée du Mal Pas, chez Béroul, évoque allègrement – Yseut peut bien adopter la posture chèvrefeuille ou bâton sans perdre son être-soi. Elle peut partir et revenir, libre d'accepter ou d'émender la sentence adamique de Tristan : « *Bele amie, si est de nus : / Ne vus sanzmei ne meisanz vus !* »⁵³. Le fatalisme de l'un ne coule pas forcément dans les veines de l'autre : la belle au « *clair vis* » n'est pas une *Tristana* ; malgré sa langueur, elle sait aussi régner sur son roi, lire et élire les signes sur son chemin, régir un avenir de (re)trouvailles avec son amant. Il n'est pas question, pour elle, de se mettre « *en abandun / De mort et de destructiun* », comme Tristan⁵⁴. Chez Marie, Yseut est une plante solaire, qui vit et fait vivre.

Branches et remaniements du *Tristan*

Si les textes français ne font qu'effleurer la mort comme métamorphose végétale, en jouant sur les métonymies (Béroul) et les métaphores (Marie de France), ou en occultant la dimension botanique de l'être pour laisser libre jeu à une fatalité humaine (Thomas d'Angleterre), les adaptations norroise et allemandes en font un trait distinctif de la légende, imposant la « ronce vivace »⁵⁵ de l'amour comme une forme de transcendance.

Dans les textes dérivés de la version commune, notamment chez Eilhart, où le charme de l'*estoire* primitive opère plus librement grâce à une

⁵² « According to medieval Jewish apocryphal tradition, which attempts to reconcile the two Creation stories presented in Genesis, Lilith was Adam's first wife. In Genesis 1:27, God creates man and woman simultaneously from the earth. In Genesis 2:7, however, Adam is created by himself from the earth ; Eve is produced later, from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21–22). In Jewish legend, the name Lilith was attached to the woman who was created at the same time as Adam. », Janet Howe Gaines , « *Lilith. Seductress, Heroine or Murderer?* », article disponible en ligne sur le site <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/lilith/> [1^{ère} édition *Bible Review*, oct. 2001], consulté le 20 mai 2020.

⁵³ Marie de France, *Le Lai du Chèvrefeuille*, éd. cit., v. 77-78, p. 215.

⁵⁴ Aux vers 19-20, p. 213.

⁵⁵ Pour reprendre la fameuse expression de Joseph Bédier, *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut*, Paris, H. Piazza, 1900, p. 77: « Il semblait à Tristan qu'une ronce vivace, aux épines aiguës, aux fleurs odorantes, poussait ses racines dans le sang de son cœur et par de forts liens enlaçait au beau corps d'Iseut son corps et toute sa pensée, et tout son désir. ».

tradition manuscrite restituant la diégèse originelle dans son ensemble⁵⁶, la régression au stade adamique illustrée par la vie au Morrois prépare le cadre à la scène finale, où les amants se ressourcent au troisième jour de la création, et embrassent non seulement la nouvelle réalité de l'autre, mais aussi une nouvelle ontologie, qui, loin d'effacer leur identité, la décline dans l'ipséité de la rose et de la vigne.

Thomas d'Angleterre inspire, lui, une distance civilisationnelle par rapport à la primitivité du mythe: la hutte devient une grotte, le frôlement des feuilles un raffinement statuaire, si bien que l'entrelacs des corps, à la fin, prête aux amants une prégnance de gisants plutôt qu'un noyau de verdeur éternelle. Se greffant sur cet ailleurs monumentalisé, le texte (également « courtois ») de Gottfried reste incomplet, et ce sont ses continuateurs, Ulrich de Türheim et Heinrich de Freiberg, qui redonnent la vie au fantasme végétalisant de Tristan ; mais il s'agit de rejetons déjà lointains de la rédaction d'Eilhart d'Oberg, contemporaine des poèmes français.

Heureusement pour l'arbre généalogique des héros de Cornouailles, le *Tristrant* d'Eilhart demeure incontestablement « la seule version complète que nous possédions pour le XII^e siècle »⁵⁷, qui intègre les suggestions herbées de Béroul, les portant à leur conséquence botanique la plus mémorable : la gerbe et la grappe.

Les corps des protagonistes passent d'abord par une expérience qualifiante : le régime végétalien du bois, dans la cabane bâtie par Tristan. À la façon de Béroul, le remanieur allemand insiste sur l'ensauvagement alimentaire des bannis, avec un accent tout particulier sur les jus refluant au philtre : « Je puis vous l'assurer, ces bonnes gens ne mangèrent que des plantes, qu'ils trouvaient dans la forêt là où il leur était possible d'en chercher. [...] Quiconque aurait à supporter ne serait-ce qu'un an – pour ne pas parler d'une deuxième année – un tel manque irait vers une mort certaine, car ils ne prenaient ni pain ni hydromel, ni vin ni boisson d'aucune sorte »⁵⁸. Se nourrir de plantes sylvestres, vivre de sèves crues, sans le moindre digestif courtois, est un premier pas vers la mort, aussi bien qu'un pis-aller pour la survie.

Lorsque les amants finissent par trépasser, sous la force de plusieurs circonstances ludiques qui investissent le poème d'Eilhart – des fléchettes à

⁵⁶ Pour Danielle Buschinger, le *Tristan* d'Eilhart est « la seule version romanesque complète de la légende au XII^e siècle », Eilhart von Oberg, *Tristrant*, éd. et trad. EAD& Wolfgang Spiewok, Paris, 10/18, 1986, p. 9. C'est le manuscrit Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codices Palatinigermanici 346, qui rendrait la version « la plus complète » de la « couche textuelle ancienne » (extrême fin du XII^e siècle); voir René Pérennec, « Eilhart d'Oberg, *Tristrant*. Notice », dans *Tristan et Yseut. Les premières versions européennes*, éd. cit., p. 1360.

⁵⁷ Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Tristan et Iseut. De la légende aux récits en vers*, Paris, P.U.F., 1987, p. 28.

⁵⁸ Eilhart d'Oberg, *Tristrant*, trad. René Pérennec, dans *Tristan et Yseut. Les premières versions européennes*, éd. cit., p. 323.

fleur de crinière au mât de la dernière voile, de la traque d'un chevreuil au « grand craquement » d'un humain⁵⁹ – ils sont non seulement déplorés par « toute la population », mais aussi excusés par Marc via la révélation de l'alibi romanesque du « breuvage funeste qui a fait naître entre eux, contre leur gré, une passion aussi intense »⁶⁰. Ce philtre n'est pas aussi explicitement « herbé » que le vin de Béroul, et ressemble davantage à un cocktail prêt-à-enivrer qu'à un alcool distillé au feu du solstice d'été. Néanmoins, il « avait été composé de façon à posséder quelques puissantes vertus », notamment celle d'inspirer les buveurs à « s'aimer de tout leur être si la mort ne les séparait pas »⁶¹. Or, la mort les sépare, et leur sang reflué, en toute visibilité, vers le suc de l'union première, comme dans un refrain pour nervures, obsédant.

L'« irrésistible » amour continue à se manifester, au-delà de l'humain, dans une tombe unique, ouverte par Marc. C'est lui qui, poussé par le remords, souhaite rendre hommage à ses (chers) disparus en faisant « planter un rosier à l'endroit où se trouvait la femme, et un cep de vigne là où était Tristan »⁶². Arbustes plutôt qu'arbres, ces êtres vivants recèlent l'essentiel de l'histoire : le narrème de la potion, et un langage de la passion. Le lecteur peut bien supposer, même si Eilhart ne le confirme pas, que ce rosier fleurit et cette vigne porte ses fruits, « selon leur espèce et ayant en eux leur semence sur la terre »⁶³, tandis que la mort-à-deux devient un terroir générésique paradoxalement fécond, dans l'ordre phytologique.

S'appuyant sur des sources anonymes (ou indicibles), Eilhart l'affirme avec force : « Les deux plantes s'entrelacèrent si étroitement – cela m'a été certifié – qu'il aurait été absolument impossible de les séparer, sinon en se résolvant à les briser. C'était là encore un effet de la force du philtre. »⁶⁴. Pour une fois, personne n'essaie de disjoindre ce lien transcendant, spirituellement motivé et physiquement noué. *Natura* reprend ses droits, sans autre miracle : le rosier ne se transforme pas en vigne, pas plus que la vigne en rosier. Comme Tirésias a mauvaise presse au XII^e siècle, l'androgynie est refoulé en « Vénus déréglée »⁶⁵, comme dirait Alain de Lille.

⁵⁹ C'est ainsi que Tristant succombe à la fausse nouvelle donnée par sa royale épouse (malgré le blanc de la voile et la réalité de l'arrivée d'Isalde en guérisseuse dévouée) : « La nouvelle ne plut pas à Tristant, et on put le constater: il reposa la tête sur le lit, ses membres se disloquèrent dans un grand craquement. C'est ainsi que le noble seigneur mourut en un instant. », *ibid.*, p. 386.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 387. Néanmoins, cette passion est dosée (et donc excusable) uniquement pour quatre ans fusionnels.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 388.

⁶³ *Genèse*, 1. 11.

⁶⁴ Eilhart d'Oberg, *Tristant*, éd. cit., p. 388.

⁶⁵ Voir *La Plainte de Natura. De planctunaturæ*, éd. cit., chap. VIII [Réponse à la première question], p. 81, au sujet de l'état d'androgynie (transsexuel) : « C'est ainsi que l'homme, devenu le Tirésias d'une Vénus déréglée, change anormalement la prédication directe dans son

Distincts, vécus et vivifiants, les avatars des amants parlent pour eux-mêmes, et Eilhart leur accorde ce répit devenant récit : « tout est écrit maintenant »⁶⁶.

Pour le Frère Robert, conteur du début du XIII^e siècle puissant à la version courtoise de Thomas d'Angleterre dans un style aussi désinvolte que serré, tout n'est pas écrit. Il faut que les arbustes se laissent supplanter, de façon unique⁶⁷, par des arbres, pour que les tombes soient brisées et que la vie perce, indomptée: « il se trouva qu'un chêne ou bien un arbre poussa de chacune de leurs tombes, si haut que leurs branches s'entrelacèrent au-dessus du faîtage de l'église. Et l'on peut voir par là combien l'amour entre eux a été grand »⁶⁸. Dans la *Saga*, il n'est plus nécessaire que ces arbres soient *plantés* d'après la correspondance d'une espèce pérenne avec une personne défunte; la végétalisation de l'humain touche à sa forme la plus franche, allant jusqu'à l'affranchissement de toute institution sociale, fût-elle conjugale, royale ou ecclésiale. Même si l'épouse du héros « avait fait enterrer Tristram et Isönd de part et d'autre de l'église, de sorte qu'ils ne soient pas proches l'un de l'autre dans la mort »⁶⁹, rien ne peut empêcher le vrai couple de reverdir au plus haut point de proximité am morale et boisée, comme si sa raison d'être pouvait remettre en cause, d'un seul geste dédoublé, les acquis de la civilisation et les accrocs de la religion.

Une fois de plus, l'histoire retourne le sablier : « Dieu créa l'homme à son image, il le créa à l'image de Dieu, il créa l'homme et la femme. »⁷⁰. Qu'ils s'appellent Adam et Ève, Adam et Lilith ou Tristan et Yseut, les deux humains retournent au sein⁷¹ d'un Créateur miroité par *Natura*, qui récrit la création en la figeant au troisième jour, pour la ramener à l'essence de la vie – la *viriditas*– en donnant le dernier mot au *Fiat lux* des commencements.

Végéter devient ainsi, pour les amants mythiques, plus qu'une façon de vivoter dans les marges : un art de vivre, en fécondant la terre « dans une

ordre et sa composition. Il quitte l'orthographie de Vénus, et, reculant, il devient un sophiste falsigraphe. ».

⁶⁶Eilhart d'Oberg, *Tristrant*, éd. cit., p. 388.

⁶⁷Chez les continuateurs allemands de Gottfried, comme au dénouement de leur source (le *Tristrant* d'Eilhart), le rosier et la vigne sont les seules plantes à prêter leurs corps aux graines de l'amour, brassées par le philtre et retournant à lui, avec la mort des enivrés.

⁶⁸Frère Robert, *La Saga de Tristram et d'Isönd*, trad. Régis Boyer, dans *Tristan et Yseut. Les premières versions européennes*, éd. cit., p. 783-920, ici p. 920.

⁶⁹Loc. cit..

⁷⁰*Genèse*, 1. 27.

⁷¹Ce *regressus* ne saurait surprendre au XII^e siècle francophone, quand l'ingratitude de l'humain par rapport aux autres créatures devient un véritable *topos*; voir aussi *Le Jeu d'Adam*, éd. et trad. Véronique Dominguez, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2012, p. 315-316. Voir aussi la suggestion d'un *regressus ad uterum* chez Roberto Ruiz Capellán, *Tristan et Dionysos*, op. cit., p. 68, avec un renvoi révélateur au « *primus Adam* » p. 79. Pour un approfondissement mythologique plus large et pertinent, cf. Jean Markale, *La Femme celte. Mythe et sociologie*, Paris, Payot, 1972, chap. VI, « Yseult ou la Dame du Verger », notamment p. 327-345.

sorte d'enlacement nuptial »⁷² où la « jeunesse du temps »⁷³, viride, flamboyante, s'éternise en s'élevant.

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⁷² Voir *La Plainte de Natura. De planctunaturæ*, éd. cit., chap. VIII [Réponse à la première question], p. 80.

⁷³*Ibid.*, chap. VI., Prose III [Natura s'adresse à Alain : l'ordonnance du monde], p. 62.

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The Icon, a Hexadic Analysis

Cristina Stratulat*

Abstract: *The present paper brings forward an analysis of the Orthodox icon, made by deploying the model of semi-logical hexade which describes the situation of creative communication. Starting with the presentation of the socio-cultural context in which the icon appears and continuing with the other parameters of the hexade – the purpose which justifies the activation of the creative act, whom is this icon addressed, who created it, what psychological mechanisms have concurred to its birth and which is the result of this creative process – our focus has been the defining and description of what the icon is.*

Keywords: *icon, gift, semiotics, hexadic model.*

Semiotics is considered *a methodology which can be efficiently used by any scientific discipline*¹. This methodology supposes, briefly, three analytical horizons, that is: the *structural* analysis of the sign, the *triadic analysis* – syntactic, semantic, pragmatic – and *situational* analysis (of the generated situation of communication).

The structural analysis of the (macro)sign refers to the analysis of the relations between signifier and signified, form and content, expression and meaning, surface structure and deep structure etc.

Triadic analysis refers to an approach from three distinctive perspectives, that is: *syntactic* – of the relationship between signs, *semantic* – of the relationship signified-referential (respectively signifier-referential, in the case of the relationship of motivation), and *pragmatic* – of the relationship between signified and signifier, on the one hand, between the sign and the interpreter, on the other hand.

Situational analysis (the hexadic model) supposes defining the “communication situation” (semiosis), through which one can find the answer to the series of questions of Harold Lasswell – *who, what, whom, why and on what communication channel?* – and to all these, one can add the sixth parameter – *context* – obtaining “an operational hexadic model”². This analysis has as focus the optimization of communication and it is made of

* Lecturer Cristina Stratulat, PhD, ”George Enescu” National University of Arts Iași.

¹ Traian D. Stănciulescu, *La început a fost semnul [”At the beginning, it was the sign”]*, “Performantica” Publishing House, Iași, 2004, p.217.

² *Idem*, p.226.

three steps: structural analysis, functional analysis and the elaboration of the optimizing model.

Structural analysis refers to the detailed research on the six structural parameters of the envisaged semiosis: the *context* in which communication takes place; the *emitter*, defined by personality factors (biological, psychological, social); the *content* of the transmitted message (the nature of the type of communication, the defining of content etc.); the used *means* of coding (the nature of the transmitted message – oral, written, drawn, sung etc., the type of language and the used channels, the blockings which can affect communication); the *receiver* of the message (the target group to which the message is addressed, the analysis of the personality of the receiver and the degree of orientation of the message); the *purpose* of the message (the intended purposes and effectively obtained goals).

Functional analysis supposes the establishment of some connections between the presented parameters, depending on the features of the communication situation itself.

The optimization phase refers to the modalities of stimulating the communication situation. It involves the evaluation of the efficiency and the attempt of optimizing each structural parameter, and also the entire redefining of the communication situation.

In the following pages, we will make an analysis of practical application of this method in order to attract the attention on this visual means of communication of the human being with God – the icon.

Just like the text, the icon is referential: it refers to another reality than that of the image itself, so that the reality targeted by the image is never instituted by it.

The term has its origins in the Greek term *εἰκόν* whose meanings are: image, portrait, image reflected in a mirror, phantom, image of the spirit, resemblance, similarity, the most used being the one of "analogical imprinting of the shape"³.

The basis of the Christian icon can be found in the dogma of the Incarnation of the Son of God through which "The unseen has become seen, while the non-representable – represented. Now He addresses people only through words and the conveyance of the prophets. He shows Himself in the Person of the Embodied Word"⁴.

³ Dan Chițoiu, *Repere în filosofia bizantină [Landmarks in Byzantine Philosophy]*, The Publishing House of Axis Foundation, Iași, 2003, p.163.

⁴ L. Uspensky, *Teologia icoanei [The Theology of Icon]*, "Anastasia" Publishing House, 1994, p. 24.

The structural analysis of the icon

Any type of human communication, implicitly divine-human can be studied as a semiotic situation, as an ensemble of factors which assure the elaboration and communication of specific information.

We will continue with the presentation of a structural analysis of the Orthodox Church, following the model of the semio-logical hexad which describes the creative communication situation⁵.

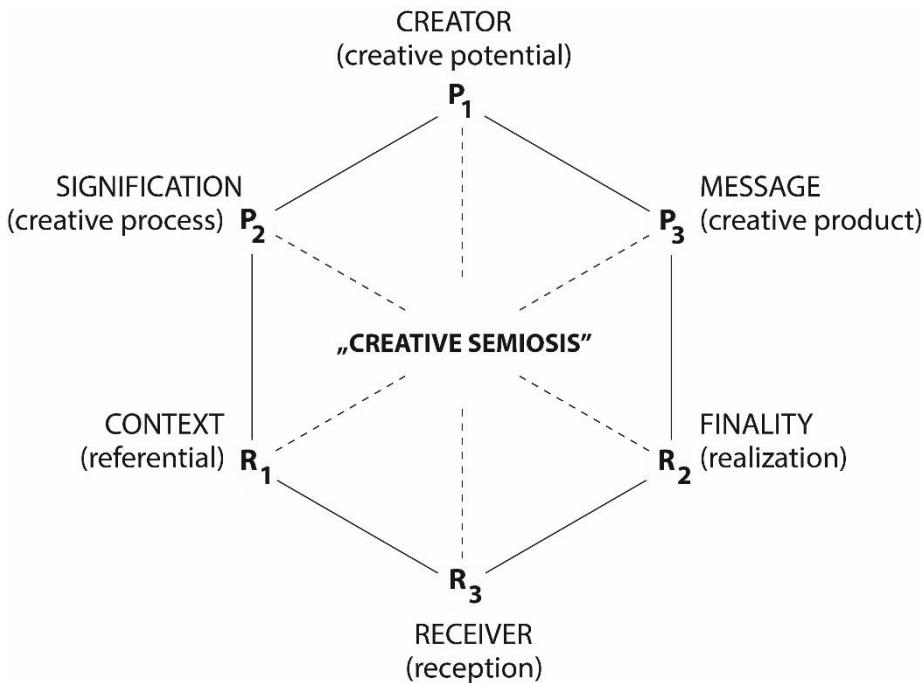


Fig.1 The hexadic model of the situation "creative communication"⁶

Starting with the presentation of the socio-cultural context in which the icon appears (R1) and continuing with the other parameters of the hexad – the purpose which justifies the triggering of the creative act (R2), to whom the mirror is addressed (R3), who creates it (P1) and what psycho-logical mechanisms have led to its birth (P2), which the result of this creative

⁵ Traian D. Stănculescu, *La început a fost semnul [At the beginning, it was the sign]*, "Performantica" Publishing House, Iași, 2004.

⁶ Traian D. Stănculescu, *Introducere în filosofia creației umane [Introduction in the Philosophy of Huma Creation]*, Junimea Publishing House, 2005, p.19.

process is, the transmitted message (P3) – we have focused ourselves on the defining and description of what the icon is.

Context. Placing ourselves in the moment when the icon appeared as an element of novelty in the history of arts, we realize it cannot be reduced to the category "work of art". Only by looking at the disputes which have taken place over centuries, we realize that by regarding it as a work of art and that is all, we deprive them of its defining meaning.

The new culture (Byzantium) which gives birth to the icon is a synthesis of the Greek, Roman and Christian cultures, but not only. And maybe it is difficult to show to what extent each nation with an old culture which was part of the Byzantine Empire, for example the Judeans or the Syrians, has contributed to the shaping of this new culture.

Christianity is based on Judaism, being a continuation and a fulfillment of it. This is the reason why many of the problems that have troubled Christianity have their origins in Judaism. Its refusal of any representation of the divinity is explained by the law transmitted by Moses: "*You shall not make graven image and no type of resemblance to anything from the sky, up, and what it is on earth, down and what it is in the waters underneath the earth!*" (*Escape 20,4*). But, the cherubs from the Ark of the Covenant do not constitute any breaking of the law, having been modelled according to the will of God (*Escape 25, 18-22*).

Regarding the Greeks, their position about the image is totally different, even if there were philosophers who claimed they were against the representations of gods and goddesses. The portrait of the sovereign was adored by the citizens, this thing was later taken over by the Romans. Spread up to the borders of the empire, the portrait had a judicial value, being the equivalent of the presence itself.

Still, there are theories which claim that "Christian art was born outside the Church". Step by step, it "accepted it, imposing it some rules, but Christian art was actually born from the initiative of the believers"⁷.

We can say that Christian art was born in catacombs. But in what way has this been done? There are numerous pagan symbols taken by the Christians from the primary Church and transformed to express the knowledge of the Church. At the beginning, Christian art used the forms of ancient art, adding a new content (the fish – symbol of fecundity and then of eroticism, becomes in Christianity the abridged formula of the Creed – IHTIS in Greek, it is the short form of "Iisus Hristos Theou Uios Sotir – Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour"; the peacock, the dove, the palm tree become foreshadowings of Heaven etc.). But they are not only taken, but also new symbols are invented. This symbolic language is explained first of all by

⁷ L. Bréhier, *L'Art Crétien [Christian Art]*, Paris, 1928, pp.13 and 16.

the need to express a reality which can not be explained without mediation. Biblical images were used, for example the lamb, the fish, the ark etc.

Especially in the 2nd century, new symbols are invented: the worship of the magi is connected to the conversion of the pagans to faith, the multiplication of loaves – to the Last Supper, the grape wine – to the sacrament of divine life to the ones that are baptised etc.

The purpose. On the one hand, the role of this art, of this painting language which was step by step configured was a didactic one, that is to keep the flame of the faithful neophytes alive. On the other hand, through images was formed a secret code step by step revealed to the catechumens, in a pagan world, hostile to Christianity.

The Church has slowly attributed to the image, implicitly to the icon, a great importance, not only because of its lecturing function, but also because of its Liturgical function, of worshiping God through all the created things. Thus, the icon has become an essential, fundamental element of the public divine cult that it embellished with its silent and intimate mightiness. Everything that is promoted through word is strengthened through the images which become a proof.

Because the Church has always strived for orienting the entire human senses towards the knowledge and worship of God, it was utterly important to direct the sense of sight towards God.

The icon helps the believer focus on prayer, it facilitates the connection, the communication with the One Who is represented. It is the support for meditation, the seen representations lead towards the contemplation of what is unseen. The lack of realism, the lack of conformity with nature remind us that the body is from now on more oriented towards the spiritual world. The refusal of naturalism in the representation of organs underlines the detachment from the noise of the world, in order to perceive the spiritual world. What is the most important regarding the icon is the fact that it asks for a personal relationship between the viewer and the represented person (or people).

The icon is the proof that we are not alone – "I will be with you until the end of all times". The Christian has the conscience that one takes part at the great family of saints. It is enough to contemplate the painted interior of churches in order not to feel alone. Every prayer is communication with God and His saints, with the victorious Church that they form. In this respect, the iconostasis is not a barrier between the priest and the believers, but it is "the maximum expression of what can manifest itself visually, because behind it, there is nothing to be seen, meaning that the sacrament which takes place there is not in the sphere of the visible, but of the communion".⁸ Besides making a recap of the history of deliverance, it also suggests the passing

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

through another world, not seen by bodily eyes, it is the border between the world of senses and the world of spirit.

By icon, the Holy Spirit of God is transmitted to the believers. This is the reason why negating the icon, in the space of the Church, is the equivalent of denying the Holy Spirit. Thus, we can even say that it has a therapeutic role, of offering spiritual healing, first of all, mental one and even bodily one, exactly through the Holy Spirit which it transmits.

The icon answers the deep psychological need of representation in order to have a harmonious life. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, it is heard the man's desire to see God: "God, show us the father and it will be enough for us!" At this request addressed by the Saint Apostle Philip at the Last Supper, the Saviour replies: "I have been with you for so long, Philip, and you still haven't recognised Me? The one who saw Me saw the Father; and how come you ask: <Show us the Father!> Don't you believe that I am inside the Father and the Father is inside Me?" (*John 14, 8-10*).

Moreover, the icon also has an anamnestic role, to remind us that God is present everywhere and permanently. This is the reason why the icon is always present in the Church, to visibly signal God who is not visible for our bodily eyes.

Through the icon, the aesthetic sense is educated. "Beauty will save the world", said Dostoevsky. The man is thirsty for beauty, and Paul Evdokimov considered that "if the man is searching for beauty, this is possible because he is bathed in its light, because in the man's nature itself, the man is thirsty, yearning for its light, because in man's deep nature, one is thirsty for Beauty and His face". In the absence of this Beauty, the world loses its meaning. The thought of every icon maker is precisely the creation of this Beauty.

The receiver. As we have seen, the icon is addressed to all believers, and also to the ones who have not got acquainted with the Christian faith. This happens because the icon preaches the Word of God to all people, no matter their faith. The icon has the capacity of transmitting its message to every human being who is searching for God. We have met people who have become Christian Orthodox being impressed by the beauty of icons. And not only the artistic beauty was the one that impressed them, but the Presence that the icon made perceivable.

Means. As far as the practical realization of an icon is made, it has always been done according to some rules, in many cases unwritten, but which have not been strictly respected, being transmitted from master to apprentice. In time, they have become a code of laws or principles that can guide the ones that want to transmit the Truth of faith through the icon.

If, initially, the necessity of some rules was not felt (and also regarding artistic realization), they have proven their necessity once some

heretic practices appeared in which the icon was involved. Coming to be worshipped as an object itself, not as a sign of the unseen by some Christian fractions, the icon was the object of some of the bitterest theological debates in the history of Christianity – the dispute between iconoclasts and iconophils.

At the ecumenic Synod 7 from 787 from Niceea, through the disputes connected to the legitimacy of representing the Son of God, deep aspects were made clear, regarding the dogma of the Embodiment and the way in which the faithful should perceive the icon, so that exaggerations are avoided, for example the one that made the icon, a cult object, become the object of disunion inside the Church. Thus, it was established that the icon be worshiped just like the Holy cross, meaning by kissing, being placed in a honorable place inside the church to be worshiped, because this worship is directed towards the prototype. Having brought these clarifications and other, also brought by Saint John of Damascus in *The Three Treaties against the Iconoclasts*, it was put an end to the split which existed in the Church on this topic.

In cultural environments, there is the tendency of looking at the icon just like an aesthetic object and belonging to the heritage, thus abolishing its defining quality, the one of sacred object through which it is transmitted the divine revelation

The emitter. Who creates the icon? The painter? The theologian? The Holy Spirit through both of them?

It existed and it still is the position according to which the painter is just a tool through which the grace of God works. According to this opinion, the man borrows the hands and eyes of God in order to paint the icon, and the personal contribution of the man would be "the good will".

Still, man has been created according to the face of God and it is asked to resemble the prototype. Does not this resemblance involve the capacity to create? Yes, of course, yes! But, one does not have the capacity to create out of nothing, but by using matter/ the things created by God. But, in order to have the ability to create, it is not enough the fact that the man was created according to the face of God, but he, the painter, must have the tendency to resemble God as much as possible. From this moment on, he truly starts to be a creator, if one has, of course, the artistic knowledge and the skill necessary for such an action. Given these aspects, at the beginning, the painters of icons are asked to respect the existent models and they are not allowed to experiment new representations. Despite all these, the road towards creative innovations regarding icon representations is not closed yet. Thus, new models can always appear which are part of the already existent tradition, though they bring elements of novelty. An eloquent example in this respect is the icon of the Holy Trinity made by Andrei Rublivov.

First of all, the icon maker had to "paint" one's own soul just like an icon, then one would be capable of painting that world unseen by us, but in which the painter is already living. Thus, new icons have appeared and they are not obviously different from the others regarding stylistic, artistic aspects, but they have that something which enters the heart of the one who looks at them, changing one's life. Maybe such a painter created the icon of the Virgin Mary, changing the life of the prostitute from Alexandria and determining her to become St. Mary from Egypt... Maybe such painters have created Hagia Sophia, which was seen by the emissaries of the Prince of Ukraine and who convinced him that they had found the place where God descends among people...

Art serving God can determine the artist to elevate himself at the state of servant of the grace of God. By answering the divine call, the painter becomes together worker with God at one's own salvation and of his fellows through the holy images that one paints as a fruit of this divine-human co-work.

The painter, before putting the icon on wood, gives birth to it inside his soul through prayer, serenity and ascesis. After having cleared his sight and through it, his heart, he reproduces the face of a transfigured world. One ought not to transmit through the icon one's emotional states which do not correspond to the spiritual reality of faith.

"The representation of God is a fearful task. [...] This is the reason why the Orthodox Church is very demanding regarding the painters who should conform to an ensemble of canons [...]. Defined canonically, the theme of the icon is not connected to the abilities of the artist. The same happens to its symbolism⁹. The icon is not the result of individual thinking, but it is specific to a synod of Orthodox thinking regarding the truth of faith and the holy sacraments of salvation which they reveal to us.

As a conclusion of what we have said so far, the icon cannot be painted only with God's grace and the human being's kindness, but, on the contrary, in the creative process, there are involved the moral and intellectual qualities the artist has not only talent as a gift from God, but also the inner drive to take them to perfection. This effort is, in most cases, a conscious act both intellectually and practically, being always enriched (consciously or unconsciously) by a divine inspiration which makes the creative act have a final goal which does not depend on the imagination of the artist who has started the creation process. Thus, while the creative act takes place, the initial purposes can be modified and can even become secondary. The spiritual being of the painter are transformed from subjective-creative values into objective-created values.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

The connection between *image*, which is the type and the represented person, the *prototype*, is the resemblance and the fact that they have the same name. Because of these two characteristics, the icon is saint, according to what the Patriarch Nichifor wrote in his treaty against the iconoclasts from the 8th century.

Content. In order to have an authentic relationship between God and the human being, it is necessary the real presence of the two persons that constitute the terms of this relationship. According to the wisdom of the Holy Bible, the human being has been created to rejoice with God. The divine presence offers the human being the true spiritual verticality. The moment when the human being turns one's face away from God, one will fall. The presence of the Face of God before the human being is necessary, even to the accomplished ones.

To always see God before you is the condition of maintaining spiritual ascension, just like the Psalmist David says: "I have seen God before me, for on my right is not to shake". (Ps. 15, 8)

The universe that the icon shows us is the one in which the divine grace rules, not rational categories or human morals. In it, there are also encapsulated the effort of ascesis and the joy of victory. As an expression of the revealable truth, the icon confesses the salvation "prepared beforehand to all peoples". It reveals the large vision which unites past and future in a continuous present through which the secret of the world to come is revealed.

The future transfiguration of the entire human nature is foretold by Christ's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. The entire body of Christ is transfigured, thus becoming, we dare say, the full of light cloth of His divinity. In this way, the bodies of the saints are worshipped and become light, being transformed through the power of the divine grace. They accomplish the main goal of existence by dressing up in the undying beauty of the Kingdom of God.

The human being has been created according to the Face of God and one is called to resemble One's Creator. This is the message of the icon. Beauty is not the beauty specific to the present phase of creation, but an attribute of the century which is to come. The value and beauty of the seen world do not consist in the ephemeral splendour of its present phase, but in its potential transfiguration, made with the help of the human being.

The icon thus transmits the divine beauty and praise with material means, visible to bodily eyes. The Church Fathers say that the icon is honorable and saint just because it transmits the godly condition of its prototype and it bears its name, this is the reason why the grace specific to the prototype can be found in it. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the one that awakens holiness both in the represented person and in one's icon, and in

Him is the relation between a believer and a saint, through the saint's mediation.

The harmony of the human body is correlated with the cosmic harmony and it is a source of beauty. It is harmony beyond time and space. "The icon is painted in a specific amount of time, but it calls the believer beyond time."¹⁰

Instead of conclusions. Everything that is seen (visible) is under the sign of endowment. The entire world is created by God as a gift for people, life itself is a gift. Everything that we eat or drink "after having worked"(Eccl. 3, 13), wisdom, science, joy are gifts of God.¹¹

A painting (the true painting, just like Jean-Luc Marion defines it) does not reproduce an existent visible, but it lets a totally new phenomenon manifest itself through it, no (longer) seen before which, because it does not imitate nature, completes the world. It is a ou, ne(mai)văzut care, pentru că nu imită natura, completează lumea. It is a no (longer) seen which gives itself to the visible through the intermediation of the painter, without the artist's help, it would have rested forever not-visible, therefore not endowed. It "is caught by neither the one who painted it, nor the one who looks at it". It appears through the eyes of the painter or the viewers, but it precedes them and determines them, it does not obey them.¹²

The painting offers itself, but the painting act limits itself to receiving, recording and framing an endowment on a support. Therefore, painting means waiting for an endowment. After this, in order to see [...] what is offered by the one which offers, we must make ourselves capable of offering."¹³ The complete dialogue of the gift consists in receiving and returning the gift, through this, the receiver truly enriches oneself. In the present case, both the viewer and the painter are receivers; the difference between them consists in the fact that the painter is in the same time a co-offerer with the unseen through one's diligence and skill. Through the act of painting, the painter also receives and returns the gift, thus completing the dialogue. The viewer can return the gift by worshipping it because "every gift asks to be received"¹⁴ and a gift is appreciated because before it is offered, it is subjected to critic analysis.

¹⁰ Dan Belu, *Iconografia ca izvor omiletic [Iconography as a Homiletic Symbol]*, in M.A., Sibiu, anul III, nr.11-12, 1958, p.878.

¹¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology]*, vol. I, The Publishing House of the Biblical Institute and of Mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1996, p. 234.

¹² Jean-Luc Marion, *Crucea vizibilului [The Cross of the Invisible]*, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2000, p. 64.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 74.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

The icon is a kenosis of the image in order to let appear in it "the track of the invisible that looks straight into our eyes"¹⁵. According to her prototype, the icon cleans itself out of image, of any illusion in order to make the look of the Invisible possible to be seen. It empties oneself of every praise, and the worship that it allows to take place towards its prototype does not keep it only for itself.

Somehow, the icon makes Jesus Christ Himself transparent, and through this, even God the Father becomes transparent (because "who has seen Me, has seen my Father") because it gives us the consciousness of His own presence with His own face before us, in an invisible environment.

By looking at His icon, the believer is challenged in a special and pressing way to think about Christ and to address Him prayer words, just like our neighbour challenges us to address her/him, or our face extremely powerfully presses the one that we address to answer us. And our presence which is addressed to God before His icon makes Him answer our words.¹⁶

God himself gives Himself to the human being through the icon, in the dialogue which one facilitates and thus, the icon becomes a double offering.

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¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 99.

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Study and Classification of Tombstones of the Safavid Period (Ardabil City)

Maryam Samari*, Reza Rezalou**

Abstract: Ardabil, now known as one of the provinces of the country, has been one of the oldest and ancient cities in various historical periods, including Islam. This province comes to the end of the majesty and power during the reign of Safavid. Tombstone is among the heritage of the past that reflects culture and civilization. The existence of a tombstone on the tombs of Islamic period has always been observed in all parts of Iran. Though this issue exists in most cultures, it has always been considered by Muslims as an indicator of burial in the culture of the Islamic era and of Iran. The purpose of this research is to identify and study tombstone in the relevant area during the Safavid period. According to the results, the status of Shia religion can be clearly seen in all the tombstones of the Safavid period of Ardabil. In fact, it can be said that the combination of art and belief has caused the tombs of stone to be of particular importance and variety, and the line drawn on them represents the beliefs and cultures, as well as the scope of the literature of this region. Most of the designs include Islamic designs, flowers and leaves, animal designs and Quranic verses. The method used in this study is based on field study.

Keywords: Ardabil, Safavid period, tombstone

Introduction

Archaeological studies in different parts of the world show the importance of the subject of death, worldly life, traditions, and customs as one of the most important human concerns in various cultures and periods. Signs of the importance of the life after death in different cultures can be found in the methods of burial of human beings, which have emerged in different forms. The presence of Islam in the Iranian history has had a great impact on culture and social structures. The effects can also be seen in art and

* Master's degree in archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Iran,
m.samari228@gmail.com

** Associate Professor of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Iran.
reza_rezaloo@yahoo.com

post-Islamic developments. Also, the Iranian culture influenced by the school of Islam can be clearly seen in Iranian customs and traditions. Tombstones, their structure and motifs are among the rituals and traditions influenced by Islamic culture. The tombstones contain many values in terms of historical, cultural and political information. The tombstone and its existing mosaics reflect the effects of the culture, art, and religious roots of a particular ethnic group at a particular time on the death of the deceased, and that the sample of religious beliefs associated with the beauty and inner feelings can be found in the tombstones of the Islamic period. Because of the special connection with humans, tombstones are a good platform for displaying their thoughts and symbolic images of them, the images and motifs disappeared from the tombstones today due to the forgetting of their concepts. The tombstones belonging to any ethnic group can be considered as part of the historical relics. It preserves the ritual and cultural characteristics of those people. The way they look at the category of death, which has always occupied the human mind, can be obtained from the form of this historical object. Awareness of the style and artistic techniques used in the tombstones of different periods provides us with very good information about the way of life of different civilizations. The purpose of choosing the subject is to study the motifs of tombstones, to examine, recognize and separate the tombstones in terms of appearance and motifs used on them; to classify and analyze patterns separately; to examine the symbol, the style of tombstone motifs visually, coherence, presentation of an appropriate analysis and response by carefully analyzing motifs in details and morphology, classification, type of application, date of construction, place of construction and builders of these tombstones in an accurate and appropriate research.

Ardabil province, located in the northwest of Iran, with an area of 17,953 km², makes up 0.91% of the total area of the country.

According to the archaeological evidence obtained in the Ardabil region, this area has been considered since prehistoric times and former communities have always lived in these areas. In the historical period, the importance of this region is always preserved and various relics of this period have been left in Ardabil region. However, some Muslim authors have attributed the building of Ardabil to "Sassanid Peroz" (459-483 AD) and have called it "Bazan Peroz", "Piroozabad" or " Firoozgard". But according to some of the writings, it was apparently built much earlier than Firooz's time. In the Islamic period of Ardabil, it has survived and has been mentioned in various texts. But with the advent of Sheikh Safiuddin, the head of the Safavid dynasty, Ardabil became the "Dar Al-ershad" and found a new significance at the time of the Safavid kings¹. Despite this, Ardabil was considered the spiritual capital of the Safavid kings and enjoyed a special

¹ Nasrollah Falsafi, *The Life of Shah Abbas I*, 1986, p. 108.

sacredness due to the fact that Sheikh Safi al-Din was buried there. Thus, the golden age of Ardabil culminated politically, religiously, and socially during Safavid period, but after that, Ardabil lost much of its political centrality and it was only satisfied with the religious importance and the shrine, which was constantly threatened and invaded by the Ottomans.

Tombs are treasures of motifs. The tombstones have not just been made to decorate the stones, and beyond their obvious form, they have various themes and meanings including these paintings originated from the beliefs of the people of the region or their themes have taken from everyday life.

The motifs of tombstones are divided into 5 groups: Herbal motif, animal motif, human motif, motif of tool and object, and abstract and geometric motif.

Animal motifs

The number of tombstones with animal motifs are extremely rare. These creatures, whose number is less than one hand, have often been designed and engraved on the south side of the stones. Animal motifs on these scenes include images of various animals such as horses, deer, birds and lions.

Lion

Lions in the culture and art of many nations symbolize courage, power, courage, pride and protection. "Lions may be regarded as the symbol of immortality in the endless time in connection with the god of times"³. In the ritual of Mithraism, the sun is the same as Mehr and the lion as guardian of the Mithra and has a high position. The motif of the lion and the sun represents the belief that the lion is seen as a guardian.

Bird

Birds are a sign of flying and ascension that in philosophy and mysticism indicates the ascension of the human soul and fly to the immaterial world and can be a reference to the ascension of the deceased soul. "The bird is a symbol of the spirit, and in ancient Persia, birds and hens were the symbol of clouds and the messenger of rain."²

Horse

This animal has a very valuable and praised motif in various historical periods as well as in mythology and ancient religious texts.

Manuscripts

There are few traces of such motifs. Only three pieces of tombstone are roughly decorated with an inimitable motif, except for a relatively healthy case, most of which are often confusing over time and their motif details are

² Sirous Parham, *Fars Tribal and Rural Achievements*, 1993, p. 154.

hardly recognizable so that sometimes a depicted human image, a member of Part of the body remains.³

In the thesis of the Islamic tombs and its cultural base in the northwest of Iran, "Azerbaijan" has come in the case of Kurestan Niar. During the investigations carried out on the tombstones of the Azerbaijan region, only two tombs in the Islamic tomb of Niar (eastern part of Ardabil county), two adjacent tombstones were found that were in different size and shape, but what is obvious was the motif of a man who was seen for the first time on the tombstone.

It is necessary to explain that Islam, with its order based on the denial of painting, caused the removal of sculpture from the agenda of Muslim artists, and in this regard, we rarely encounter the human body. Therefore, these two examples are very important. So in this respect, these two examples are very important for this reason.

Here we have to admit that our information about these two reliefs is very small, and the lack of any inscription on them adds to our aberrations. It is not exactly clear what the size of the rocks was at the beginning, and whether it was from the very beginning or has been carved or later created by the artist. What can be said about these reliefs is that they should be rooted in indigenous culture and arts, and they should be based on economic issues. The motifs, while being simple and primitive, show the artist's skill. However, in the studies carried out by the author, no trace of these tombstones was observed. However, no trace of this tombstone was found in the investigations carried out by the author (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Man sitting on a horse, Shahidgah's Cemetery of Sheikh Safiuddin Ardabili,
Ardabil county⁴

³ Hassan Yousefi and Malakeh Golmaghanizade Asl, *Shiite Arts in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili's Historical and Cultural Collection*, 2010, p. 384.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

Geometric and abstract motifs

In the era of Islamic art and its appearance in the motif of tombstones, to avoid material reality and closeness to the divine truth, the motifs deviate from the natural state and become decorative and abstract. The circle is among geometric motifs. The circle is the most complete form and symbolically has had a special historical significance in all periods. "In addition to the concept of perfection, the circle is a symbol of the creation of the world as well as the concept of time. It is a symbol of the continuous and circular motion of the sky and it is associated with divinity, and the spirit has also been introduced"⁵.

The craftsmen of Islamic arts have always sought to illustrate the beauty of the eternal world, with an unbelievable contemplation of the material world. Hence, they have placed allegorical and abstract forms in their arts. "The symbol is something used or implied rather than something else. It seems that there should be the natural tendency to create symbols in the way we think and should reflect the deep psychological manifestation"⁶.

Triangle: The geometric motif of the triangle had also been used in the decoration of tombstones that is seen alongside the motif of the flower and the star (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 The motif of the triangle, Kalkhuran cemetery, Ardabil county

Altar (Mihrab)

Other simplified geometric patterns include the design of the altar, which is crystallized in the physical form of the tombs as well as the frames of the altar. The motif of the altar is a symbol of world architecture and is clearly reminiscent of a cave covered by the sky and supported by the earth, and probably dates back to pre-Islamic times, but, during the Islamic period and the Umayyad caliphs, this motif was rebuilt and it was given a special importance, especially in mosques. Some associate its existence with Mithraic temple, which was called Mithraism, and due to its importance, this motif has been used in the arts of painting, architecture, carpet, zilou, carving, etc.

⁵ Javad Pouyan and Mojgan Khalili, *Semiotics of the Motif of Tombstones in Dar al-Islam Cemetery of Shiraz*, 2010, P. 106.

⁶ James Hall, *The Culture of the Images of Symbols*, 2001, P. 14.

"The altar is in fact the place of manifestation and presence of God and his inhabituation is the infinite existence on earth. The altar in the Christian tradition and other religious traditions is the pure sanctuary of God and it is the place to be considered for God. There is another form of the altar in the Buddhist and Indian traditions. The Indian or Buddhist sanctuary, in addition to being a place of solitude with God, also has a kind of centrality, that is, in Indian and Buddhist teachings, the sanctuary is also the center of the spiritual world. It has emerged in the form of a mosque in the Islamic tradition. Altar is the place of manifestation of the light of God in the Islamic tradition. His mysterious presence is in the form of words that are both recited and sometimes written on the walls of the altar. In addition, the shape of the altar in Islamic mosques is in fact a kind of door and entrance to the other world".⁷

Altar motifs, in various forms, are among the most common tombstones of the Islamic period and are very prominent in tombstones that are more simple. Of course, they can be seen even in tombstones with exquisite ornaments, Islamic motifs, flowers, leaves and Shah Abbasi ornaments.

This style of marble tombstone can be seen in abundance in Shahidgah's cemetery of Sheikh Safi complex and with sedimentary stones in Kalkhuran cemetery. This decorative technique is very simple and fast, so it has become common in other cemeteries in Ardabil. The taste of the sculptor has caused the motif of the altar to be performed each time with a unique variety with other designs. Although this form is always a special form in the main structure, it has changed in various ways and engraved on these tombstones (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 The motif of the altar, Shahidgah's cemetery of Sheikh Safiuddin Ardabili, Ardabil county

⁷ Nazari, Mostafa (2010). *Thesis Study of tombstones in the Seljuk period of Hamadan*, University of Tehran

Sun

Juan Eduardo Cirlot says: "In the genealogy of the Gods, sun (above all objects, in successive celestial dynasties) represents the moment when the heroic principle shines at its highest radiating point. The sun, with its youthful and childlike qualities in contrast to the father, which points to the heavens, is reminiscent of a hero. That is why the heroes promote to the point of the rising sun and even become united with the sun. At a certain historical period and at some cultural levels, worshipping of sun has been the predominant religion, or cult. Mithraism is a heroic, courageous, creative and groundbreaking force, and the core of solar symbolism, and can itself form a complete religion. The death of the sun is necessarily a sign of belief in the resurrection, and in fact this death should not be considered a real death".⁸

James Hall writes: "Once upon a time in the sun, as a god of God, was a clear goddess, omniscient, source of fertility and life, and as a sunset, it was a symbol of death and resurrection".⁹ (Fig 4)



Fig. 4 The motif of the lion and the sun from the tombs of Sheikh Jabrail Kalakhuran, Ardabil county

Tashtab (water tub)

Tashtab is a title for carvings motifs on old tombs, often created in the form of small or large ponds in different geometric shapes. Tashtabs, as their name imply, are the place where water accumulates (element of life and light) and are decorative and semantic elements of graves carved in the heart of tombstones and presented in beautiful and various forms along with other motifs such as trees, fish and angels.

Tashtabs are not only related to Iran and the Islamic world, but they also benefit from a common global thinking and attitude in different civilizations, especially in the Orient, so that these types of motifs, with steel bed, existed in plenty and abundance in the Armenian tomb of Jews in Isfahan and even the Far East. They are both practical elements and have semantic features that, although sometimes seemingly simple in form and image, these mysterious forms are associated with a sacred and eternal realm that is gradually associated with beautiful concepts gradually decorated epistemologically. These basins, which had a special place in some of the

⁸ Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *Culture of Symbols*, 2010.

⁹ James Hall, *The Culture of the Images of Symbols*, 2001.

tombs of the past, were carved in the heart of the tomb stones and presented in beautiful and various geometric forms with elements such as fish and angel, and at the same time, they were closely connected with laver, basins and Saqqakhana. Basically, the Tashtab should be carved and engraved to a size that takes into account the volumetric capacity of the water, and therefore shapes that are accidentally or for other uses engraved on the tombstone should not be considered the same as the tashtab¹⁰. "In a word, we can say that water is the secret of all potential things, the origin and source of all possibilities of the world", says Eliadeh. Water, which is the indistinguishable and potential source of everything, and the basis of the manifestation of the universe and the reservoir of all germs, is the mystery of the first and primitive essence, in which all forms are born, and return to it by regression or by the occurrence of melting. It has been existed at the beginning, comes back at the end of every historical or cosmic period, it is always there, though it is never alone, because water is always the name and includes all potential forms, in their unbreakable unity. Water, in the creation of the universe, rituals, and iconography, apart from the structure of their cultural wholes, always have a role. It is prior to any form and function, and it is the foundation of each creation. Immersing in water is a mystery of return to the state of pre-creation, full rebirth, and new reproduction, because any immersion is equal to the dissolution and demise of the face and the redeployment of the uncertain state precedes existence, and the abandonment of water is the repetition of face manifestation in the creation of the cosmos.

The connection with water always implies revitalization, because on the one hand, following any dissolution, there is a new birth, and on the other hand, immersion increases the potential facility of life and creation. Water, through the rite of mystery teaching, inherited a new birth, and with the help of the magical rite, is healing, and with the blessing of the rites related to the dead, causes the resurrection after death, and with all its potential facilities, has become the key to life¹¹ (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 The motif of tashtab, Kalkhuran cemetery, Ardabil county

¹⁰ Shahmandi, Akbar and Shahidani, Shahab, *Enduring motifs*, 2013.

¹¹ Mirce Eliade, *A Treatise on the History of Religions*, 1997.

Plant motifs

Among the types of motifs, what can be inspired directly or indirectly from plants, flowers and trees can be called plant motifs. These motifs include mostly used motifs in Islamic art decoration. Inside the middle frame and the northern end, a beautiful stony vase has been carved, and arabesque, Khatai and Shah Abbasi flower designs come out of the vase beautifully and surrounds the space around the vase and the upper parts. The surface of the most of the tombstones has been decorated with paintings of flowers, vases, leaves, plants, convolvulus, arabesque, Shah Abbasi flowers, and tools of war (Fig 6).



Fig. 6 Plant motifs in Kolkhuran cemetery, Ardabil county

Arabesque or spiral design

The main element in this design is spiral branches surrounded by flowers and leaves, and its branching ends in a designs. "Arabesque (Slimi) is a type of motif and painting, including complex lines, curves and rotational

arches drawn in decorations, inscriptions, and some other paintings. Arabesque has been sometimes used as main motif and other times along with other designs in Architectural, illumination of manuscripts and handicrafts arts¹². Flower and plant carving, in addition to filling the empty space of graves and considering its aesthetic aspect, after the integration of religion with people's lives, found other symbolic meanings and other special forms.

Tree

The tree is the most significant element that has been mentioned in religious beliefs both in pre-Islamic and post-Islamic scriptures. One of the most important abstract and symbolic motifs of the tree in Iranian art is the tree of life, whose crystallization in the tombstones can be considered as a cypress tree. In fact, in pre-Islamic Iranian mythology, cypress is the holiest tree. "In the world of human belief, despite immobility, the tree is considered a symbol of birth, growth, evolution and life in general. The tree is an example of life and a symbol of evolution and renewal"¹³. The tree of life represents a form of a belief or thought system that does not wear out in the passage of time, but continues its life in the realm of popular rituals and traditions. (Fig. 7)



Fig. 7 The motif of the tree of life in the southern surface of the tomb of Seyyed Hossein, son of Seyyed Ali, Sheikh Jabrail Kalkhuran tomb, Ardabil county (authors)

Vase

In most inscriptions, flowers and plants have been depicted in vases that can be considered as a symbol of the main shrine and place, and flowers and plants in it as the motif of the dead who have returned to God and were placed in the eternal vase.

"In the Egyptian pictorial system, the vase is a decisive symbol equal to the goddess of peace, immortality and contentment. The full vase is

¹² Eva Wilson, *Islamic Designs*, 2001, p. 5.

¹³ Fahimeh Ghani Nejad, *It is Legendary and Charm*, 2000, p. 46.

associated with the plant of life and a sign of fertility. Golden vase, full of white lily flowers, is a conventional sign of Madonna lily"¹⁴. Vase with a variety of natural flowers refers to the good qualities of the deceased and His heavenly position (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 The motif of the vase with arabesque motifs, Shahidgah's cemetery of Sheikh Safiuddin Ardabili, Ardabil county

Qandil

The motif of Qandil has a special religious message. Perhaps one of the reasons for using it is the visualization of light, because using Qandil in holy places and using this motif in altars also refers to verse 35 of Surah Noor: *Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp — the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star — lit from a blessed olive tree*"¹⁵.

Inscription

Most of the inscriptions are in Thuluth script and some are in the Kufic or Naskh script. Writings that contain Persian poems are usually in Nastaliq script. The study of Safavid tombstones shows the existence of verses and duas related to the official Shiite religion of the time.

In general, the array of most of the stones includes Quranic verses, prophetic hadiths, various duas, hymns of the names of the infallibles, great prayers and Persian poems in Nasta'liq, Kufi, Thuluth, and Naskh scripts in a prominent and concave manner. The most prominent tombstones of the Safavid era are calligraphy and inscription.

¹⁴ Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *op. cit.*, 2010.

¹⁵ Hassan Yousefi and Malakeh Golmaghanizade Asl, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

In today's world, paying attention to works carved on tombstones is a rich cultural expression in different historical periods, especially in Islamic period. In addition to traditional visual symbols, inscriptions have also played a major decorative role. Iranian designers also presented Islam in true Qur'anic words.

Duas, great salavat and the Shahada

Dua is the supplication or request of people from God and the manifestation of an inner experience of communication with God without any mediation. Nade Ali's dua and the mystic scriptures of Imam Ali (AS), as well as the word of Shahada are visible in most tombstones.

The script of Persian images

The use of Persian poetry and verses became widespread in the Safavid period. Most of them are related to the instability, futility, and unfaithfulness of worldly life and the condemnation of the material world. These inscriptions are carved in Nastaliq script on the surface of the tombstones with great skill and elegance among motifs and arabesque designs. Along with the spread of inscription decorations in other Islamic countries, in Iran, these arrays have been located at the top of the holiest and most beautiful architectural decoration, and have spread to various cultural periods with existing styles of that time. Inscriptions turn the human eye to another area of religious symbolism, and that is architectural decoration. In general, the effect of the inscriptions is a combination of beautiful writings, textures and colors, and their placement in a strip way may be aimed at designing larger decorations. Along with the diversity of roles, the completely different dimension of the inscription is their concept, with a number of Qur'anic verses which often emphasize the early performance of the buildings in which the inscriptions are inscribed.

The inscriptions of this historical collection, especially the mosaic faience inscriptions, has been manifested with circular or spiral arabesque straps, ornamental flowers and vases, and blossoms and leafy bushes. The color of the flowers and plants is different from the color of the inscriptions. Sample of these decorated inscription can be seen all around the dome of God and the inscription above the steel lattice window of the southern façade (Qaboos Qibla).

Some scholars consider arabesque designs as caressing poetry and music of the mystical soul of man. They believe that it is the rhythmic forms of arabesque that, with their spiral and circular movements, take the viewer from the Islamic starting point to another point which is the arabesque end. Others consider it as the transition from one state to another in the rhythmic rotation of arabesque and spiral circles and its left-to-right rotations. They

also interpret the mystic's steadfastness in a state of symmetry and facing each other as a combination of arabesques.¹⁶

Most of the inscriptions in Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili's complex reflect the Quranic verses and the connection with the Safavid way and principles. The Quranic texts of this complex are about self-purification, remembrance, sanctification of mosques, emphasis on reciting the Quran, educational instructions such as abandoning usury (riba), infaq, forgiveness, and the Ancillaries of the Faith, and the need to pay attention to human creation, the remembrance, praying of God, the promise of the punishment of the unbelievers and the promise of paradise to the pious (Fig.10).



Fig. 9 Persian poems carved on the tombstones of Shahidgah's cemetery of Sheikh Safiuddin Ardabili



Fig. 10 The Great Salavat has been carved on tombstones of the Shahidgah's cemetery of Sheikh Safiuddin Ardabili

Motifs of Tools and Objects

They are objects that a believer has used for religious ceremonies and rituals. This motif was a graph of the spiritual states and religious faith of the owner of the grave or the occupation of the deceased. The use of these objects in the Iranian religious community proves this. (Fig 11).

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

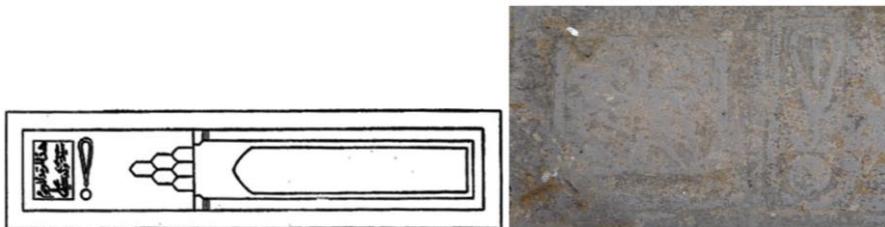


Fig.11 The motif of mohr and tespih, Kalkhuran cemetery, Ardabil county

Sword

The sword has been a symbol of bravery, courage and warfare. Also in the Safavid period, due to the formalization of the Shiite religion and the special belief towards the Imams and especially Imam Ali, the sword can be regarded as a symbol of Zulfiqar of the Imam and the devotion to him.

The sword is the symbol of power, ability, justice, and sign of the gods, heroes and martyrs of Jesus, and because their number is countless, it is difficult to identify them. "The weapon taken from the defeated enemy, in the hands of the conqueror, was a symbol of his invincible strength and power"¹⁷. The sword basically consists of a blade and a grip and is therefore considered a symbol of unity, especially when it was given the shape of a cross in middle centuries.

Among many primitive peoples, the sword was highly respectful. The custom of the Scythians (Sakas) was to sacrifice several horses for the blade of a sword, which was considered the god of war, during the annual sacrificial rites. Similarly, the Romans believed that iron could kill demons because of its connection to Mars. This belief is still prevalent in Scotland.

Such is the drawing of the Scythians. It was customary for the Scythians to sacrifice a few horses for the blade of a sword that they considered God of War at the annual sacrifice. Similarly, the Romans believed that iron was able to destroy the soul of the demons by reason of the relationship with Mars.

In any case, its main symbolic meaning is wound and the power of wounding, and therefore it means freedom and strength. Schneider shows that in the culture of the megalith age, the sword was the counterpart of the spinning wheel, which is a symbol of feminine and the continuity of life. Swords and spinning wheels symbolize death and fertility, respectively. That is, two contrasting objects that form the basic symbolism of the mountain. The sword had been regarded as a symbol of physical destruction and spiritual will, as well as a symbol of the spirit and the word of God. It was especially common in the Middle Ages.¹⁸

¹⁷ James Hall, *op. cit.*, 2001.

¹⁸ Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *op. cit.*, 2010.

Perhaps the motif of the dagger shows the social status of the deceased, and given that in various books the cemetery of Shahidgah is considered the burial place of the martyrs of the *Battle of Chaldiran*, this issue is also documented and shows the warfare of a deceased person (Fig. 12)

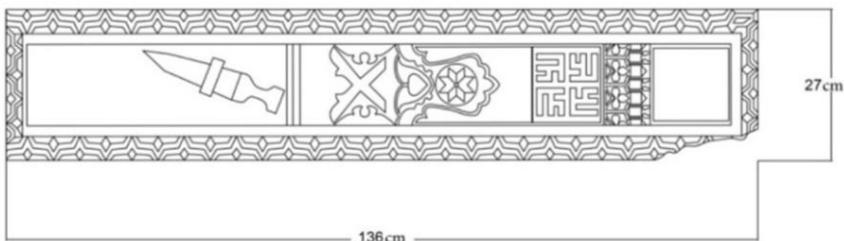


Fig.12 The motif of the sword, the Shahidgah's cemetery of the Sheikh Safiuddin Ardabili, Ardabil county

Conclusion

Death as an influential event has been the source of many human approaches to the world and its environment. All the rituals related to burying the dead, burning them or abandoning, and eating them have been influenced by animals and the creation of human from dust and return to dust has been one of the most influential thoughts in burying and building tombs and tombstones. On the other hand, the belief in life after death has transferred the idea of house architecture to graves and tombs. Tombstones are one of the most mysterious sources of the history of the past that are created to commemorate the dead. Tombstones of any region and country are influenced by the architecture and culture of that region. Introducing characters, verses and hadiths, poems and other historical information engraved on tombstones is a very good collection to study the history, culture and art of different regions and indicates the social status and beliefs of the people of each region that are now available to modern human. With the studies and surveys that have been done in the field of tombstones of Ardabil Safavid period, it can be stated that the predominant material of tombstones in different cemeteries of Ardabil often corresponds to the climate of that region. In all the cemeteries of Ardabil county and the tombstones in them, the place of Shiite religion can be seen well. One of the most important cemeteries in Ardabil is Shahidgah courtyard, which is located in Sheikh Safi's complex. The motifs used are often in the form of an altar frame. Then the motifs have been engraved around the altar on the tombstones. In many tombstones of the Islamic period of Ardabil province, scripts are written irregularly. Although Nastaliq or Naskh scripts have been skillfully used in a large number of tombstones, these scripts do not have generality and nobility over all tombstones. Raised tombstones in this province has been less used than other tombstones. In some of the tombstones, in addition to the main

surface of the tombstone, the other four sides of the stone were decorated with different motifs, which shows the importance of the deceased person. One of the most important motifs and decorations used in the tombstones of the Islamic period of Ardabil province are arabesque motifs, flowers and leaves, animal motifs and Quranic verses. Plant motifs often include intricate trees and plants, with tree trunks in the form of a vertical stem and several oblique branches on either side, and plant ornaments include arabesque, Khatai, and Shah Abbasi flowers inside decorative vases.

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Analysis of Ardabil's Business and Communication Routes in Survival and Prosperity Based on Historical Texts and Archaeological Data

Mehdi Hosseini Nia^{*}, Karim Hajizadeh^{},
Habib Shahbazi Shiran^{***}, Reza Rezalou^{****}**

Abstract: In the early Islamic centuries, Ardabil is considered to be the oldest and the first city in the Azerbaijani province due to its regional biodiversity in geographical texts. The present study investigates the communication routes to the peripheral points in the Islamic period and their role in the survival of the city based on historical literature and archeological data. The importance and safety of roads and communication routes were two important components that influenced each other, making Ardabil a city in the center of commercial and trading routes in the North-West. This situation can be seen and prosecuted during the Islamic period from the beginning of Islam to the late Islamic centuries. The research method is historical-analytical and the data were collected through the study of historical and geographical literature and the use of the archaeological reports of the area. The main question of this article is: "What effect did the communication routes have had on the survival of the Islamic period until the end of the Safavid period?" The results show that in the early centuries, the city's communication routes were significantly prosperous. The description of the roads and the importance of the buildings and the cities inside them are described together. In this period, roads have played a leading role in the survival and prosperity of the city. In the Middle Ages, this city became a trivial city in the region as the capital, trade and communication routes changed. During the Safavid period, the city was once again restored to its former prosperity due to the importance of the tomb complex of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili to the kings of the dynasty as well as the conversion of the city to the site of the Silk Road. During this period, numerous routes were created and led to the orientalists and tourists' travelling to this city.

Keywords: Ardabil city, historical texts, travelogues, business routes, communication routes

^{*} PhD student of the Archaeology of Islamic Periods, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, Mehdihosseyni5518@uma.ac.ir

^{**} Corresponding author, assistant professor, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran, k_hajizadeh@uma.ac.ir

^{***} Assistant Professor of the Department of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, shahbazidahabib@uma.ac.ir

^{****} Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Iran, reza_rezaloo@yahoo.com

Introduction

Ardabil has long been on the route of Azerbaijan-Gilan communication, as well as the connecting bridge between Zanjan province from Sarcham route to the border town of Parsabad and Azerbaijan. The four main communication routes in four geographic directions to the surrounding cities and adjacent provinces constitute the main morphology of the city. The communication axis of the western part, which today is the most important bridge connecting Ardabil to Sarein, Nair, Sarab and Tabriz with the east-west direction, had the greatest impact on the growth and development of the city, even though the city along this axis had the biggest physical development¹. Ardabil had a significant economic and commercial prosperity in the early centuries until the 4th century, as it was geographically regarded as the most important capital and the first capital of Azerbaijan². It has also been discussed in terms of its superior political status in the early centuries among the cities of the State of Azerbaijan³. From the 5th century until the establishment of the Safavid rule, the city has lost some of its former prosperity, so that there is no further mention of the importance of this city, but in the Safavid period, the city was restored to its former prosperity, because of the importance of Sheikh Safi's tomb complex for the kings of that period. During this period, travellers and orientalists went more to the city, which again stimulated and improved their communication paths. Ardabil's strategic position during historical periods has given rise to numerous trading routes and consequently provided many midway facilities in the region. Considering the importance of Ardabil in the archeological studies of the Islamic era and its role in commercial and cultural exchanges, as well as numerous references to historical geographical texts and travelogues, referred to as communication crossroads, identifying routes to surrounding cities and regions was essential based on geographical texts and archaeological data. The main questions of this article are the following two: 1. Why was Ardabil formed in this geographical location? and 2. What role did commercial roads play in the formation and survival of Ardabil during the Islamic era?

¹ Mohammad Reza Eqbal-Kuraim, Mohammad Soleimani Mehranjani; Musa Kamanroodi Kajvari; Ahmad Zanganeh, *Explaining the Spatial Structure of the City and the Formation of Sub-Centers in Ardabil*, 2019, p. 311.

² Al-Yaqubi Ahmad ibn Abi Yaqub, *Al-Baladan*, 1965; Abolghasem Mohammad Ibn Hawqal, *The face of the Earth*, 1988 ; Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Istakhri, *Book of Roads and Kingdoms*, 1990.

³ Abdül-Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Moqaddasi, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions (Fourth Century)*, 1983 ; Al-Yaqubi Ahmad ibn Abi Yaqub, *op. cit.*; Abolghasem Mohammad Ibn Hawqal, *op. cit.* ; Istakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim, *op. cit.*

Research Methodology

This research has been done with a historical and documentary approach and the method of data collection has been descriptive, using the travelogues and geographical texts of Islamic era. Also, according to the subject matter, the report of the archeological excavations of the area has been used for proper analysis. In this research, the business and communication routes in the formation and survival of Ardabil city during the Islamic period were studied through two groups of sources including historical texts and archeological findings and with a comparative approach along with factors such as environmental geographical conditions, the location of the geological place. Political and cultural boundaries have been explored.

Background of archeological studies and excavations in Ardabil

Asgari Namin⁴, in his book entitled *Ardabil in Oriental Travelogues with the Lives of European Tourists* examined and described these travelogues, as well as the biography of the tourists who came to Ardabil. Shah Mohammad Ardabili⁵, in his book entitled *From Artaville to Ardabil*, studied the history of the formation of Ardabil city in the works of historians, Orientalists, and internal scholars. The book also contains the oldest pictorial documents of Ardabil and its buildings. Javadi⁶, in his book entitled *Descriptive Bibliography of Ardabil Province (Part I)* described the name of the city in encyclopaedic texts, public books, and dedicated resources about Ardabil. Moreover, among the most important archaeological excavations and field visits in Ardabil province, the following can be mentioned: the excavations of the Islamic city of Owlstan Qalasi in Moghan plain⁷, the author Abdul Hamid Mohajeri Nejad became acquainted with the book of excavations of this place, the most important city of the Aras River in the Sassanid and early Islamic period. The pre-revolutionary archeological studies of Ardabil province in Islamic period are limited to three chapters of excavation on Jome mosque in Ardabil⁸. After the revolution which lasted up to the eighty decade, archeological studies of the Islamic era focused on Ardabil buildings such as Jome Mosque⁹ and Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili

⁴ Yahya Asgari Namin, *Ardabil in Orientalist Travelogues with the Lives of European Tourists*, 2014.

⁵ Rahman Shah Mohammad Ardabili, *From Artaville to Ardabil*, 2016.

⁶ Seyed Mehdi Javadi, *The Descriptive Bibliography of Ardabil Province (First Section)*, 2010.

⁷ Karim Alizadeh, *Preliminary Report on the Archaeological Excavations at Owlstan Qalasi, Moghan Plain of Ardabil*, 2007; Abdul Hamid Mohajeri Nejad, *Report on Exploring the Oltan Castle of Moghan*, 2007.

⁸ Ali Akbar Sarfaraz, *Report on the Exploration of Jome Mosque of Ardabil*, 1975; Bahman Kargar, *Report on the Exploration of Jome Mosque*, 1975.

⁹ Habib Shahbazi Shiran, *Surveying and Analyzing the Architectural Elements and Jome Mosque of Ardabil*, 2004.

collection¹⁰. The excavation of the tomb of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili¹¹ has led to the speculation of the Safavid caravanserai of Qanli Bolagh¹². Given the importance of Ardabil city in the archeological studies of the Islamic era and its role in the commercial and cultural exchanges referred to as "the communication intersection", the identification of gates and routes to the surrounding cities and adjacent areas based on texts, travelogues and archaeological excavations was essential.

The historical geography of Ardabil city

Moqadasi sees Ardabil as the center and a district of Azerbaijan, pointing to strong beliefs for the protection of the city and its deterrence from the invading enemies. He also refers to Jame mosque and city construction which is muddier. He also expressed that: There is a mountain where one hundred and forty parasanges are all blooded and cultivated. It is said that there are seventy languages in it and the charity of Ardabil is there. "Istakhri" considers Azerbaijan as the largest city and considers its size two parasanges on both sides. He also points to its four gates, saying that it is a blessed place¹³. Elsewhere, he regards Ardabil as Dar al-Amarah (house of king) of Azerbaijan and writes: "And Dabil is bigger than Ardabil and it is the Armenian city and Dar al-Amarah of Azerbaijan, just as Ardabil is the Dar al-Amarah of Arran Barda and Azerbaijan" Tousi" described Ardabil as a prosperous city with little famine and brave and religious people¹⁴. "Ibn Hawqal" considered Ardabil as the largest city in Azerbaijan, and said that "This city was a military place with native walls. It is about 30 miles wide and most of the buildings are made of mud and brick". Ardabil is larger than Maragheh and was once a place of military garrison. Dar al-Amarah, the state treasurer, and officers of the district were there¹⁵. Hamawi considers Ardabil as one of the most famous cities of Azerbaijan and states that it was the capital of the Azerbaijani states before Islam¹⁶. "Ibn Khordadbeh" mentioned Ardabil eight times, reminding Ardabil river in the season of the origin of the rivers, and only refers to the river's flow from West to East¹⁷. "Abu Dulaf" writes about Ardabil: "From there, I went to Ardabil and passed through the

¹⁰ Mahmood Mousavi, *Report of the Second Season of Excavation at Sheikh Safieddin Ardabili's Tomb*, 1999.

¹¹ Hassan Yousefi, *Report of Archaeological Speculations in the Tomb of Sheikh Safieddin Ardebili*, 2006.

¹² Ghaffar Ghanbarzadeh and Siavash Abdollahi, *Report of Archaeological Excavations at Caravanserai of Qanli Bolagh*, 2006.

¹³ Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Istakhri, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁴ Mohammad bin Ahmad Tousi, *The Wonders of Being and the Wonders of Existence*, 1978, p. 131.

¹⁵ Abolghasem Mohammad Ibn Hawqal, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 476.

¹⁶ Yaqt Hamawi Baghadi, *Mu'jam ul-Buldān*, 2004, p. 145.

¹⁷ Abu'l-Qasim Ubaydallah ibn Abdallah ibn Khordadbeh, *The Book of Roads and Kingdoms*, 1889, p. 164.

mountains of Wisor, Qiban, Khajin, Rob, Handan and Bazin. In this place, there is a mineral of alum¹⁸. According to the view of Pietro Della Valle, "Ardabil is located in Northern Iran and it is elevated and cool like the rest of Azerbaijan. In the travelogue of Pietro Della Valle, Ardabil is named "the intersection of communication"¹⁹". Olearius stated that "The Turks call Ardabil "**Ardavil**" and in foreign maps, it is called "**Ardounil**". It is this part of the territory of Azerbaijan that was called "Satrapean" in ancient times. He said that Ardabil is an ancient city and, for the Iranians, a famous city. Ardabil has almost the shape of circle with a diameter of about three miles²⁰".

Communication Routes in Early Centuries

Ardabil's wide plain in the early centuries had created a considerable space for every person to inhabit, making the city important and secure. The wide plain of Ardabil city was located in the main corridor of North-South, East, West and Caucasus. The communication routes of this city to other regions in the early centuries will be described and analyzed according to historical texts.

The most important route mentioned in most of historians' and geographers' books was the route of the city to the lands of Arran and the Caucasus.

In the section related to Northern cities, under the title of Azerbaijan and Armenia, "Ibn Khordadbeh" depicts a road that diverges from the Baghdad-Khorasan highway²¹. Yaqoubi describes Ardabil's way to Arran as follows: "... Ardabil is the first city in the Azerbaijani cities that you see. From Ardabil to Azarbaijan, it is three days²². "Istakhri" once described Maragheh's communication route to Ardabil and from Ardabil to Arran: ... from Ardabil to Mughan is ten parasangs and from Ardabil to Khashen is eight parasangs, then to Barzand sixth parasangs. Barzand was a ruined place where Afshin rebuilt it and turned it into an urban city, settling there. From Barzad to Sader Asb, where the first hazelnut is located, is two parasangs and to Zahrkosh, where the second hazelnut is located, there are two parasangs. From there to Dularud, where the third hazelnut is located, there are two parasangs, and from those two areas, Baz and Babak city, there is one parasang ... and the way from Barzand to the Balasjan's desert and to Varsan, the last province of Azerbaijan, there are twelve parasangs²³ "Ibn Hawqal" had shown the only way to connect Arran and Armenia with Iran and

¹⁸ Abu Dulaf, *Abu Dulaf's Travelogue*, 1964, p.4.

¹⁹ Pietro Della Valle, *Della Valle's Travelogue*, 2005, pp. 365-373.

²⁰ Adam Olearius, *Travelogue*, 1989, p. 3-492.

²¹ Abu'l-Qasim Ubaydallah ibn Abdallah ibn Khordadbeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

²² Al-Yaqubi Ahmad ibn Abi Yaquib, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²³ Istakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121.

Azerbaijan through Ardabil in a map drawn in the 4th century AH in his book named *The Face of the Earth* for Arran, Armenia and Azerbaijan²⁴. (Fig. 1).

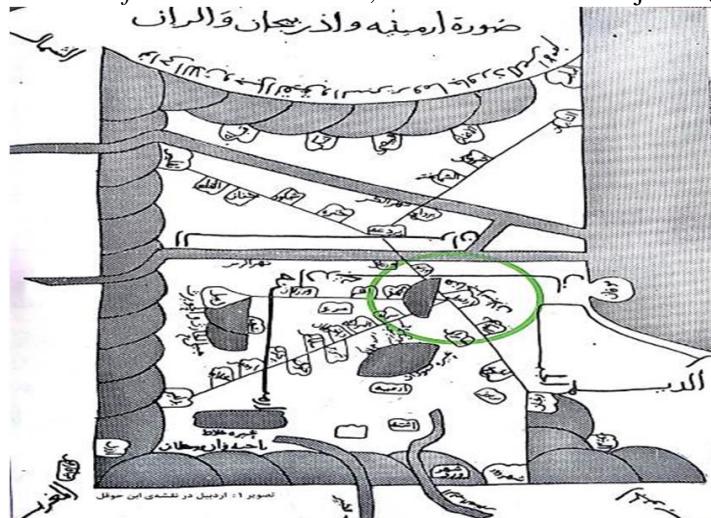


Fig. 1: Ardabil in the map of Ibn Hawqal

Qudama ibn Ja'far stated about the distance of Ardabil roads to the Northern and Caucasian regions that: "... From Ardabil to Khan Babak there are eight parasangs, from Khan Babak to Barzand – six parasangs, from Barzand to Behlab – twelve parasangs, and from Ardabil to Mughan – four parasangs"²⁵. In his travelogue on the route from Tbilisi to Ardabil, Abu Dulaf writes: "... after passing Tbilisi, "Syunik" heights of Armenia, and Babak Taghi's territory, I went to Ardabil and passed the mountains of Wisor, Qeban, Khajin, Raba, Handan and Bazin"²⁶. According to sources and adaptation to the existing space, many buildings were built along these routes. Firouzabad Castle was built along the old communication route of Khalkhal to the West road and the Northern and Caucasian regions. This castle created multiple midway facilities by providing security. In this way, it facilitates trans-regional business communication and enhances its credibility, and this brought about a two-way communication approach between security, importance and business communication in the region²⁷ (Fig. 2).

²⁴ Abolghasem Mohammad Ibn Hawqal, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²⁵ Qudama ibn Ja'far, *Al-Kharaj*, 1992, p. 66.

²⁶ Abu Dulaf, *op. cit.*, 1964, p.54.

²⁷ Hamid Khanali, *Studying the effects of Islamic period on Kowsar city of Ardabil province based on the archaeological study of the area*, 2013, p. 196.



Fig. 2: Firouzabad Castle – View from the North

In the early centuries, many cities were formed along this route that is considered important in terms of cultural and commercial relations between the Caucasus and North-Western Iran (Ardabil). Along the way, these cities boosted the communication routes between Ardabil and the surrounding areas. There are sources on the export and production of these cities. The two towns named Barzand and Olten Qale Si were more important on this route than the others.

The first city was Barzand, which was on the way to Ardabil and Maragheh, and also connected Ardabil to the Northern cities of the Caucasus. Istakhri mentions the characteristic of this city as "Barzand is a clean and thriving city with its running water and much cultivation²⁸". "Moqdisi" assumed Barzand as a small city and considered it as an Armenian market and useful commercial city in the Azerbaijani furnace²⁹. "Hamawi" considered Barzand a small and unimportant city³⁰.

The second city on this route, obtained through archaeological excavations was the ancient site of Olten Qale Si, which has been derived from the pre-Islamic period to the Islamic period by two excavation seasons in 2003 and 2004.

²⁸ Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Istakhri, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

²⁹ Abdül-Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Moqaddasi, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

³⁰ Yaqut Hamawi Baghdadi, *op. cit.*, p. 652.

Oltan Qale Si is an area on the South bank of the Aras River located in less than five hundred meters West of a village called Oltan. The village is located 12 kilometers southwest of Parsabad on the way to Pars Abad to Oltan. The area itself has not been mentioned in geographical texts or historical books. The city seems to have had a name other than Olton at some point in history. It is only from the Mongol period onwards that we see its name in one of the important sources. Among the cities that have been described and positioned in ancient historical texts and sources, and their last commercial route was Ardabil and Arran, is Varsan site that is closely matched and sometimes similar. The city of Varsan seems to have been the most important city of the Aras River basin³¹. The city was located on the Southern shore of Aras, on the passage from where people went to Arran, and the distance to Bileqan was seven parasangs (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Location of Oltan Qale Si in the area

Historical sources have described the distance of roads to Varsan as follow: "... and Barzand route to Balasajan desert and to Varsan, the last province of Azarbaijan, is twelve parasangs"³². Istakhri writes about Varsan as follow: "Some of the cities of Ardabil including Barzand, Varsan, Mughan, and Jabrovan were from the cities of this area. He reported the presence of fish in the areas near Aras to Varsan and exported them to Ardabil and Iraq. Ibn Hawqal writes of Varsan as follow: " Varsan is a city

³¹ Karim Alizadeh, *op. cit.*, pp.23-27.

³² Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Istakhri, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

larger than Bileqan with more population and has markets, business centers as well as large cities of acts, inns, and fences". Table 1 lists the communication routes of Ardabil to the Caucasus based on the books of historians.

Historical books	Writing date	Author's Name	Route type
Book of Roads and Kingdoms	280AH.(9 th century)	Ibn Khordadbeh	Introducing West Route to Ardabil
Kit ab al-Buldan (<i>Book of the Countries</i>)	28 4 AH	Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qubi	Introducing Road Route
<i>Kitab al-Kharaj</i> (the <i>Book of the Land Tax</i>)	310 AD or 337 AH	Abo Al-faraj Qudama ibn Ja'far	Caucasus Road
Travelogue of Ibn Hawqal	331 AH.	Ibn Hawqal Baghdadi	Introducing the route of Caucasian road
The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions	375 AH.	Abū 'Abd Allāh <u>Muhammad ibn Ahmad Muqaddasī</u>	Introducing the route of Caucasian road

Table 1: Description of the routes of Ardabil to the Caucasus in the early centuries

Ardabil's route to Tabriz and the western parts of the country has also been described by historians and geographers in the early centuries. "Ibn Khordadbeh" refers to Ardabil as a city in the furnace of Azarbaijan³³. "Qudama ibn Ja'far" says about Ardabil's route to Tabriz as follows: from Sarab to Nir is five parasangs, from Nir to Ardabil is 5 parasangs³⁴ "Istakhri" mentions the distances of the Azerbaijani cities with Ardabil as follows "... from Ardabil to Sefidrud is two stages, from Ardabil to Mianeh is two parasangs and Ardabil to Maragheh is forty parasangs"³⁵ Istakhri has a map that shows Ardabil in the midst of the cities of Mianeh, Maragheh, and Zanjan (Fig. 4 and 5).

³³ Abu'l-Qasim Ubaydallah ibn Abdallah ibn Khordadbeh, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

³⁴ Qudama ibn Ja'far, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

³⁵ Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Istakhri, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

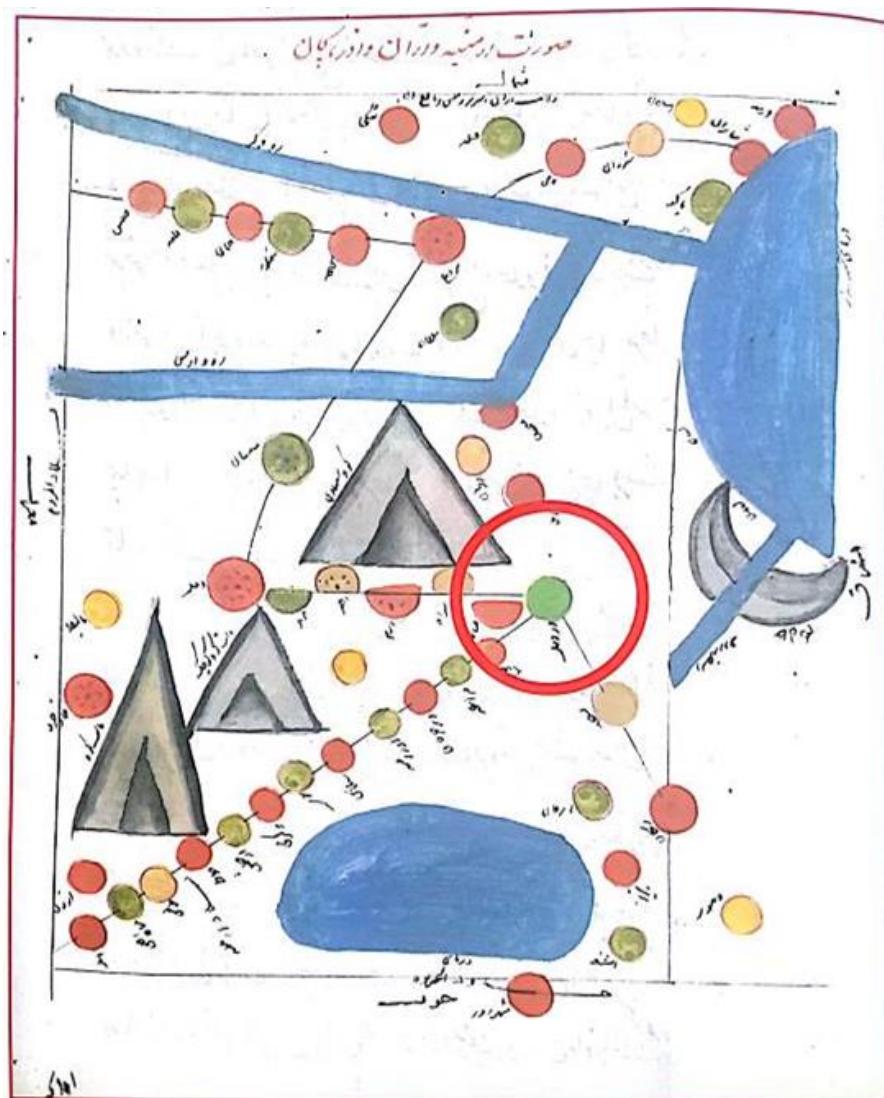


Fig. 4: Ardabil at the junction of Mianeh, Maragheh, and Zanjan



Fig. 5: Ardabil in lands of Istakhri

"Mohlabi" writes about Ardabil's route to Tabriz as it follows: "Around the West of Ardabil is a mountain with permanent snow. The people of it have a strong taste and are wicked and vicious, and the distance between Ardabil and Tabriz is 25 parasangs" *"Qalqashandī"* mentioned the distance of Ardabil to Tabriz 25 parasangs³⁶. Table 2 shows the route of Ardabil to Tabriz in the early centuries.

³⁶ Qalqashandi, Ahmad ibn Ali, *Subh al-Ashrafi Sinat al-Inshah*, 2005, p. 70.

Historical books	Writing date	Author's Name	Route type
Book of Roads and Kingdoms	280AH.(9 th century)	Ibn Khordadbeh	Introducing West Route to Ardabil and then Caucasian
Book of Land Tax and Art of the Secretary	337 AH	Qudama ibn Ja'far	Ardabil's route to Tabriz
Book of Roads and Kingdoms	3 century AH	Ibn Khordadbeh	Introducing the routes of Tabriz and Caucasus road
Dear book or Book of Roads and Kingdoms	557 AH.	Mohlabi	Introducing Ardabil Road to Tabriz
Morning of a dark night, in the writing ritual	3 century AH	Aḥmad ibn Ali Qalqashandī	Introducing Ardabil Road to Tabriz

Table 2: Introducing Ardabil's Route to Tabriz in Early Centuries

Communication ways of the city during the Ilkhanid period until the end of the Timurid period

After the formation of Ilkhanid government, attention was paid to business and trade, having in view the necessity of historical conditions and special considerations, and special attention was paid to business from the very beginning of the government. The prosperity of Ilkhanid era was impossible without the ways in which business was conducted. Thus, the Mongol rulers had a special interest in commerce, and so some of these trade routes reached their peak in the face of security provided by Mongol rule. The key role of Azerbaijan in the trade relations of this period and the link between the East and the West by this road, on which the Indian trade routes by land and sea also joined, was crucial and determinative. During this period, Azerbaijan gained the most important role in the East-West trade relations³⁷. At this time, the roads ending to Ardabil were very prosperous for exporting goods elsewhere. The most secure and convenient route in the relationship between Iran and the Golden Horde was the North-Western part

³⁷ Abolfazl Razavi, *Trading Roads in the Ilkhanid Age*, 2008, p. 70.

of Iran, a route that passed through Azerbaijan, Arran and the Caucasus and reached the Golden Horde. During the Mongol era, the main route of Tabriz in the silk trade was through Ardabil to Jolfa, Khoi and Moghan plain in Ardabil and from there to Europe. Mostofi described the Iraqi route to the Northern regions of Ardabil as follows: it started from Soltanieh and after reaching Zanjan, it becomes two branches. A branch through Kaghazkonan», was in Tuman Soltanieh and Qazvin, stretching to Ardabil and from there to the provinces of Arran, Georgia, Geshtasfi, and Armenia. Elsewhere, he describes Azerbaijan's communication way to Arran and Moghan and Georgia through Ardabil: from Ardabil to "Badzhiravan" in the Moghan State and from there, it reaches "Mahmoud Abad Gavbari" by passing 20 parasangs. The other branch of the road continued from "Badzhiravan" to Aras and reached *Qarabağ*. This branch stretched from *Qarabağ* to the other cities of Arran and then reached the city of Barda after passing 19 parasangs. The recent route passed from "Barda" to "Ganjeh" and stretched from Ganjeh to "Tbilisi" in Georgia³⁸ (Table 3).

Historical books	Writing date	Author's Name	Route type
<u>Mu'jam ul-Buldān</u> (Dictionary of Countries)	1218 AD.615 AH.	Yaqtū Al-Hamawi Baghdadi	Introducing the Routes of Caucasus and Khalkhal Road
<i>Nuzhat Al Qulub</i>	8 AH	Hamdallāh Mustawfī	Introducing the Caucasus and Khalkhal Road
<i>Figures of the Regions</i>	728 AH	Unknown	Description of Zoroaster Travel from Ardabil to Khorasan
Ardabil from the Passage of the History	1993	Safari	The Route of <i>Qarabağ</i>

Table 3: Introducing Ardabil Roads in the Islamic Middle Ages

Communication ways of the city in later centuries

Tavernier writes about the Ardabil route to Zazan and Qazvin as it follow: "From Ardabil to Qazvin, everywhere is good". The caravan usually goes five days from Ardabil to Arion, and from there to Tarom and to Qazvin, every journey lasts two days"³⁹. In his travelogue, Olearius describes the route from Ardabil to Soltanieh with the names of the points and located cities. Jaubert, who had traveled from Iran to Armenia during the Qajar era to

³⁸ Hamdallah Mustawfi, *Nuzhat Al Qulub*, 1987, pp. 180-182.

³⁹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Chardin's Travelogue*, 1958, p. 58.

design the maps of these areas, identified four routes for traveling from Iran to Armenia to summarize his trip to Iran. The first route is the one that comes to Ardabil after passing through Mianeh and Khalkhal, from there goes to Ganjeh and Elizabeth Bridge and enters Armenia⁴⁰. "Etemad al-Saltanah" writes about Ardabil's situation as it follows: "This is the great land of Azerbaijan and it is on the right side of Bok Chai in one hundred and forty thousand acres on the east side of Tabriz. When Della Valle left Ardabil to meet Shah Abbas, he passed Zanjan-Firouzabad-Ardabil route and when he wanted to return, he passed Ardabil-Firoozabad-Khalkhal-Qazvin route. In his journey from Tabriz to Ardabil, Tavernier writes: "... from Tabriz to Ardabil, there is no less than 12 parasangs⁴¹", "Bartold" wrote about Ardabil road to Maragheh and Ahar: the roads to Ardabil and Maragheh were separated near Zanjan. But, at that time, there was another way to Ardabil from Mianeh⁴². After describing his trip to Ardabil and the importance of the city, Maraghei discusses how to travel to Maragheh. He, in a book entitled "a review of Ardabil's tour", while assessing his visit to Ardabil at that time, he mentions the village "Male" and writes: ""At sunset, we reached the village of Male which is located on this side of Kettle Sain. There, we asked one of the villagers for a home". Given that Azerbaijan is located in the area in which the roads of Istanbul, Moscow, Tbilisi, Baku and Nakhchivan pass through, today it is a prestigious trading house. In describing Ardabil, Jaubert considered Ardabil a commercial warehouse for caravans where from he takes goods for Tbilisi, Darband and Baku to Tehran and Isfahan (Jaubert, 1969: 131).

Historical books	Writing date	Author's Name	Route type
New History	1203 SH to 1229 SH	Djahangir Mirza	How Russian Armies enter Ardabil
Tavernier	1336 SH	Ardabil Road to Qazvin and Zanjan	Ardabil to Qazvin
Travelogue of Pietro della Valle	1025 AH	Pietro della Valle	Introducing the Route of Caucasian Road
Mirrors of cities	1222 SH	Etemad Al-Saltaneh	Ardabil route to Tabriz

Table 4: Introducing Ardabil Roads in Late Centuries from the Viewpoint of Historians and Tourists

⁴⁰ Pierre Amédée Jaubert, *Traveling in Armenia and Iran*, 1969, pp. 365-366.

⁴¹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁴² Bartold, *Iranian Geographical Note*, 1930, p. 268.

At this time, two important factors contributed to the revival of communication ways. The first factor was the silk trade that peaked during the reign of Shah Abbas and the city of Ardabil was considered the passage of this commodity to the North-West to overseas areas. This was the second factor of the presence of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili's monument that was honored by the Safavid kings and the people themselves.

The most important commodity produced in the Safavid era was silk. It was therefore one of the most important commercial products of Iran. Silk products have been produced in the Safavid period mostly in northern Iran, Gorgan, Mazandaran, Gilan and to a lesser extent in Ardabil, Shirvan Shamakhi, and around Yazd⁴³. Silk products were exported from Ardabil to Europe. The city became a gateway to silk export at this time. Ardabil communicated with the silk trade in two ways. 1- Guilan route to Ardabil and its exportation to Europe 2- Divisions of the Caucasian way. In tourist travelogues, the Gilan-Astara-Ardabil trade route is renowned for its Silk Road and trade, and is interpreted as a route leading to Istanbul and Izmir. For this reason, the city of Ardabil has become a gateway and gained a great deal of profit in this way. In Chardin's Travelogue, it is stated that Ardabil's location is very important because it is located on the trade route of Astrara-Tabriz and Lankaran, and it is through the Caucasian trade and its inner cities. In 1925, the trade was about 10,000 tons and its export was 5,700 tons⁴⁴. Della Valle says that Ardabil can be accessed to Demirqapi and Baku to Armenia, Georgia, Kurdistan and Albania. Because of its proximity to Gilan, many goods have been brought to Ardabil and taken to different lands⁴⁵. Along the road from Gilan to Ardabil, there was a silk trade, which would have a direct and indirect benefit to the residents of the city. Tavernier writes about the silk trade that "people from all over Iran come to visit the Shah Safi's tomb, and this is caused by the silk trade which has made Ardabil one of the most famous cities in the country". To illustrate the importance of the silk trade, he adds: "The caravans of silk trade, sometimes reaching as many as eight hundred and nine hundred camels, have more to do with Ardabil's reputation. Due to the proximity of Gilan where silk is abundant and the close proximity to Shomakhi in which silk is also abundant and the passage is towards Istanbul and Ardabil city, the succession of merchants and businessmen is of great importance. There, as in Tabriz, all kinds of merchandise are found in extremes⁴⁶. The second factor that led to the development of communication in this period was the existence of Sheikh

⁴³ Mohammad Shurmig, *The Role of Gilan Silk in the Economics of the Late Shah Abbas I Early*, 2015, p. 131.

⁴⁴ Yahya Asgari Namin, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

⁴⁵ Pietro Della Valle, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

⁴⁶ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

Safi al-Din Ardabili's religious monument. By choosing the city as the religious and spiritual capital of the Safavids, and since the dynasty of the Safavid kings had begun to rise, it had gained popularity among the cities of that time. The Safavid kings visited the city several times each year to see the tomb of their great grandfather. The pilgrimage to the tomb of Sheikh Safi was not dedicated to Ardabil residents or his Iranian lovers, but had many pilgrims from other countries as well⁴⁷. Most touristic travelogues reported monumental endowments and how the sources of these endowments were collected, together with the number of revenue they received. Certainly, to facilitate convoys crossing the city and the endowments coming from nearby towns for this monument to reach their destination both quickly and safely and to ensure their safety, the number of roads increased and improvements were made. Also, the existence of public buildings such as caravans and bridges during this period had a significant impact on the safety of roads and the convenience of caravans.

Tabriz and Ardabil cities, which are important cities of this region, have had the most important business centers of Iran since the past times because of the East-West communication route (North Silk Road).

On these routes, houses were built according to texts and travelogues. Since most of these buildings have been destroyed, only a few buildings have survived from the Safavid period. The most important mid-way and resorts monuments of this route in Ardabil province, obtained through archaeological excavations, were caravanserai of Qanlu Bolagh and then Shur Gol in which caravans entered into Arran and the Caucasians after taking rest in these areas.

The caravanserai of Qanlu Bolagh: The building is located in the village of Arshaq, which today lies on the border between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Due to its special position, it is located on the northern side of the Aras River and Ardabil, and was once the crossing point for businessmen and travelers who entered from Shamakhi (the center of Shirvan State) to Ardabil and Tabriz. On his journey from Shamakhi to Ardabil, Adam Olearius mentions a number of caravans, one of which was built by Indian businessmen, saying that this place is located near one of the Moghan's villages called Barzand, which had a special economic boom during the Mongol and Safavid times, as it was the site of Armenian trade. In fact, this area was one of the crossings points of one of the Iran's way beyond the Caucasus. As you can see on the map, the caravanserai of Qanlu Bolagh is one of the North-Western caravanserais on the Silk Road.

⁴⁷ Safari, Baba, *Ardabil in the Transition of History*, 2005, p.291.

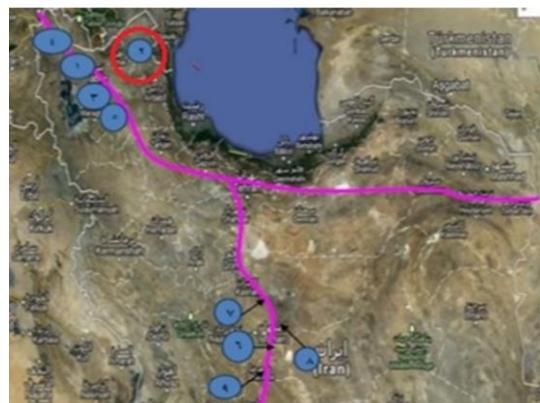


Fig. 6: The Route of Silk Road in the Safavid Period and caravanserai Inside the Route

This building was built in the style of a porch during the Safavid era and the reign of Shah Abbas. The total area of the building is 20.247 square meters and its central courtyard area is 640 square meters and its entrance door opens from the south porch. Like most buildings, it has stables, central yard, and living rooms for the passengers. Around it, there are 24 rooms in front of the courtyard that are symmetrically built on both East and West sides. The caravanserai of Qanoon Alhaq has a central courtyard with a rectangular 4-lane plan of 30 x 25 meters in width with seven springs at a depth of 143 cm and 270 cm and a wall thickness of 77 cm⁴⁸.



Fig. 7: View of the Moghan Plain and the caravanserai of Qanlu Bolagh

⁴⁸ Aydin Ghaemi Khiyavi, *Thesis on Restoration of Buildings*, 2008, p. 120.

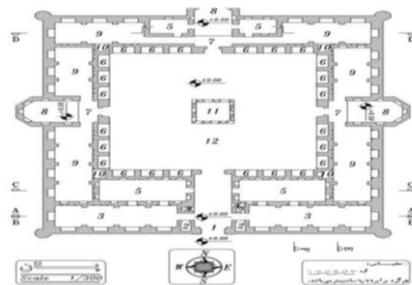


Fig. 8: Plan of the caravanserai of Qanlu Bolagh

The caravanserai of Shah Abbasi in Sain's neck is one of the midway buildings located along the Ardabil trade road to the North-West and mentioned in the Safavid era travelogue. The location of this caravanserai on this snowy and high country road shows the importance of the road in its time. According to the plan of the mountainous caravanserai of Iran, it has no yard and is covered with arch and dome. The whole building is made of stone. It is fully adapted to the climate of the region. Inside the building, the height of the entrance doors is reduced. The interconnections located in the center have relatively larger entrances than adjacent spaces. The whole building material is made entirely of stone and this type of material was present in the area. Closed and covered building on every side are features that could easily withstand constant winds and winter snow (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. The caravanserai of Shah Abbasi in Sain's neck

Conclusion

In historical texts and geographers' books, research has a central role in the study of Iranian architecture and urban planning. These sources provide scholars with extensive scientific information on the structure of Islamic cities in terms of politics, economy, culture and so on. This study was based on the examination of two groups of sources, including the findings of historical written sources, and the study of travelogues along with archaeological findings with respect to environmental geographical conditions, geographical location, political and cultural boundaries. According to the introduction of numerous routes to Ardabil to other areas

through the study of historical texts and travelogues, it is worth mentioning that the introduced routes had a great impact on the formation and survival of Ardabil. In the early centuries, the roads leading to the city were particularly prosperous. According to historians, at this time, the city was a communicative intersection connecting other points of the way together. In most of these sources, the ending routes of this city to other points are mentioned with the distances and cities located along these routes. So, the survival of the city at this time was based on strategic location. In the Middle Ages and from the Mongol invasion until the formation time of Safavids, it was established the importance of routes; communication routes were not found in historical sources, and by transferring the capital to Tabriz, historians began to mention the destruction and description of wars in their sources. Road development took place during the Safavid era. In this period, the spiritual significance of the tomb of Sheikh Safi has been mentioned for kings and people in historical sources and travelogues. Orientalist travelogues have mentioned many endowments for this monument from different parts of the country. These endowments brought enormous wealth to the caliphate. Also with the prosperity of the silk trade during the time of Shah Abbas, the city of Ardabil thus became an important communication crossroad for this product. The corridor of the Gilan state to Ardabil was a silk crossing that in addition to selling the city's own merchandise, they also received substantial profits for the city's residents through the right of way. There have been numerous references to the benefit of silk trade for this city. The importance of the silk trade was even greater than the religious tomb of Sheikh Safi. The importance of these two factors led to build mid-way buildings and providing roads such as bridges and caravans, and so on in areas leading to the city for the convenience of caravans and merchants. This lead to the increase of the importance of the city in the Safavid dynasty, so that the city prospered and the endowment increased, the accumulation of wealth through the revival of communication routes and the travel of Orientalists and tourists to this city during this period. The importance and security of trading roads are two important components which influenced each other, making Ardabil a city in the center of commercial routes in the North-East. This situation can be seen during the Islamic period from the beginning of Islam to the late Islamic centuries.

List and source of illustrations:

Fig. 1 Ardabil in the map of Ibn Hawqal, Rahman Shah Mohammad Ardabili, *from Artaville to Ardabil*, 2016, p. 80.

Fig. 2 Firouzabad Castle – View from the North, Hamid Khanali, *Studying the effects of Islamic period on Kowsar city of Ardabil province based on the archaeological study of the area*, 2013, p. 196.

Fig. 3 Location of Oltan Qale Si in the area, Karim Alizadeh, *Preliminary Report on Archaeological Excavations at Owltan Qalasi, Moghan Plain of Ardabil*, 2007.

Fig. 4 Ardabil at the junction of Mianeh, Maragheh, and Zanjan, Rahman Shah Mohammad Ardabili, *from Artaville to Ardabil*, 2016, p. 83.

Fig. 5 Ardabil in lands of Istakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Istakhri, *Book of Roads and Kingdoms*, 1990.

Fig. 6 The Route of Silk Road in the Safavid Period and caravanserai Inside the Route, Hashem Hamrahi, *A Comparative Study of the Architecture of Safavid Caravansaries of Azerbaijan with Isfahan Province (Case Study of Qanli Bolagh Caravanserai of Azarbayjan and Mother Shah Caravanserai of Shah Esfahan)*, 2014, p. 44.

Fig. 7 View of the Moghan Plain and the caravanserai of Qanlu Bolagh, photo author

Fig. 8 Plan of the caravanserai of Qanlu Bolagh, Hashem Hamrahi, *A Comparative Study of the Architecture of Safavid Caravansaries of Azerbaijan with Isfahan Province (Case Study of Qanli Bolagh Caravanserai of Azarbayjan and Mother Shah Caravanserai of Shah Esfahan)*, 2014, p. 63.

Fig. 9 The caravanserai of Shah Abbasi in Sain's neck, photo author.

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Stylistic Study of Gowijeh Qaleh's Rock-Cut Tomb from Maragheh

Saeid Sattarnejad*, Samad Parvin** & Maryam Mastalizadeh***

Abstract: *Rock architecture has a long history in Iran and all over the world, and many climatic, defensive, cultural factors have led to the emergence of architectural examples of this type. The chronology and usage of these works have always been discussed after the discovery of the rock works from Western Iran from the 19th century onwards. On the one hand, it can be said that the creators of these works have left a rather vague footprint of their time, making difficult the possibility of offering accurate and precise chronology and explaining usage for researchers and interested readers. On the other hand, due to the lack of knowledge and awareness of the beliefs of ancient people, some scholars have been mistaken in explaining the use and even the chronology of these works and sometimes, they presented different uses and chronologies for these works. Accordingly, such a mistake was made by a number of researchers in the city of Maragheh while explaining the use of Gowijeh Qaleh's rock tomb by the use of water storage. For this purpose, this article examined Gowijeh Qaleh's rock-cut tomb from an analytical perspective. Therefore, this work can be more confidently considered as a part of the first millennium BC, and it is referred to the culture of Urartu.*

Keywords: *Gowijeh Qaleh, User, Urartu, Rock Tombs*

Introduction

Gowijeh Qaleh's site, with its architectural and rock cutting work and arching of its joint, is located in the village of Ghouri-chay in Seraji district of Maragheh, 48 kilometers East, away from Maragheh¹, and the north-east of Miandoab. It is also situated 10 kilometers away from the South of Maragheh road to Zahak castle and it is one of the branches of Ghouri-chay

* PhD student of the Archaeology of Islamic Periods, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, saeidsattarnejad@yahoo.com

** Graduate of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, arjaan1370@gmail.com

*** PhD student of the Archaeology of Islamic Periods, University of Mazandaran, Faculty of Arts and Architecture, mastalizadeh@gmail.com

¹ Boris Piotrovsky, *Urartu Civilization*, 2004, p. 372.

in the same rural area². It is located at 37 degrees, 13 minutes North, the meridian 46° and 42 minutes West of the Eastern side.³ The village of Ghouri-chay is located in the west of Hashtrood province, and it is limited by Hashtrood province in the North, by Ajirloy of Maragheh in the South, by Maragheh province in the West, and to Charuymaq in the East.⁴

Gowijeh Qaleh's rock tomb was discovered and introduced by a German archeologist named Wolfram Kleiss in 1973. In the same year, he published a fairly complete report about this monument in the Amine Magazine, attributing it to the culture of Urartu. The technique of cutting the rocks of this unique rock tomb in Maragheh region did not remain unnoticed, it attracted the attention of many Maragheh scholars, and it opened up many theories about its use and its occasional chronology. However, the unknown aspects of rock tomb and the lack of reference to previous studies have always led to controversial issues of archeological studies and the history of Maragheh until today regarding the chronology and explanation of its use. Studying Gowijeh Qaleh's rock-cut tomb is a challenge, it represents the best platform for chronology; due to having the most historical evidence in comparison with other rock-cut tombs of Maragheh city, it is a great study object. In other words, the chronology and explanation of the use of Gowijeh Qaleh's rock-cut tomb is important because it can be used as a solution to reveal the regional history of Maragheh in the first millennium BC. In this paper, a comprehensive analysis has been made by analyzing the data of this rock tomb, by comparing proofs with other similar historical works. To accomplish this, the background of the tradition of building rock tomb has been studied in the area and Gowijeh Qaleh's rock tomb has been studied and compared with other Urartu branches in terms of stylistics.

Research question

The most important question launched in this article is related to its plan and stylistic study. Which one of these characteristics is comparable with the identified Urartian's rock tomb?

Research Methodology

The research method in this paper is based on field activities, which include field visits from a large number of rock-cut tomb architectural collections in different parts of Maragheh city. Moreover, library studies have been carried out on Urartu rock tombs in the West Azarbaijan Province and

² Karim Hajizadeh, *Investigation of Urartu Establishment Patterns in the North-West of Iran*, 1996, p.151.

³ Saeid Sattar Nejad, *Archeological Study of Architecture in Maragheh*, 2017, p. 84.

⁴ Behrouz Khamachi, *The culture of East Azerbaijani Geography*, 1992, p. 420.

the Anatolian region. It should be noted that the library studies in this field have also been complementary to field activities.

Significance of the study

Considering the special circumstances and restrictions of the history of Maragheh city in the first millennium BC on the one hand, and the lack of detailed study of the effects of the rock-cut tomb of Maragheh province on the other hand, we have made this native architectural research having a limited place in Maragheh's archeological studies. Therefore, the article can be regarded as the basis for the researchers of Maragheh, in order to get familiarized with the traditions of burial in the region during the first millennium BC, and it can also increase their desire to study the field of rock architecture in the region.

History of Studies

Kleiss was the first person who had made the first reference to the site of Gowijeh Qaleh castle in 1973. He considered this work to be belong to Urartian taxpayers⁵. In 1981, Van Hulsteyn referred to the site in his doctoral dissertation. Piotrovsky also mistakenly referred to this work as Gowjor Qaleh⁶. Later in the solar year of 1996, Dr. Karim Hajizadeh introduced the castle with the theme of the Investigation of Urartian Settlement Patterns in his thesis of postgraduate course. Of course, his only source was Kleiss's article.⁷ Among the researchers in the city of Maragheh, various people have written about this castle including Alireza Pashaei, a postgraduate student in the field of archeology, Islamic Azad University, Abhar Branch. Also, two papers at the Sahand-Khodajo's Regional Conferences and the International Conference on Tehran's rock-cut Architecture can be added to this collection.⁸ Tohid Hemati Aroghun at the Sahand-Khodayoo Conference, and Hossein Naseri Some studied this site in their two articles. In the solar year of 2017, Saeid Sattar Nejad studied the collection, while investigating the architecture of the city of Maragheh⁹.

Rock-cut tomb

Rock-cut architecture is a special type of architecture in which spaces are created consciously and specifically in rocks and mountains. Due to the

⁵ Wolfram Kleiss, *Urartu Architecture*, 1970.

⁶ Boris Piotrovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

⁷ Karim Hajizadeh, *op. cit.*

⁸ Alireza Pashaei, *Archeological Research of the Gowijeh Qaleh's Castle*, 2015

⁹ Saeid Sattar Nejad, *op. cit.*

cost, time, and expertise that the architect uses for this particular type of architecture, its use seems very important. Accordingly, a large part of rock-cut architecture has ritual and religious uses, and it relates to the history of religions. In some religions and nations, this type of architecture has been used as a rock tomb, ossuary, crypt, stone caverns and so on for burial. Rock tomb is said to be called "stone tombs" which were usually cut into a cliff or sloping rock face in mountains¹⁰. In the first millennium BC, we see the almost extensive use of rock-cut architecture for the construction of a tomb in the area. In this respect, the kingdom of Urartu has been preceded, and it seems that making rock tomb in Iran is rooted in the Uratian tradition¹¹. There are many rock tombs in the Eastern Anatolia, which preceded the territory of the Uratian kingdom. The history of Urartu has shown that they used chambers or rocks as tombs or basements¹². As a matter of fact, it may be possible to divide rock tombs into two types of single-room and multi-room rock tombs with a general assessment of their plan. However, it seems that the oldest created rock spaces are related to the central regions of Asia Minor and the era of the Hittite Empire. This tradition was continued by Urartians, Phrygians, Cilicia, and Lycian in the first millennium BC¹³. Osmanoğlu believed that the origin of the Urartu graves should be considered from the tomb of the Hourri tribes in Carchemish.

Introduction and stylistics of Gowijeh Qaleh's rock-cut tomb

The **Gowijeh's** rock tomb has been built in the North-Eastern side, towards the center of the castle and inside the castle fortress, where it can best protect it. Access to the tomb is possible, as in the case of Urartian, through two sets of stone stairs¹⁴. The use of stairs was something common in Urartian rock tombs. Sangar and Varahram rock tomb can be included in those works (Image 1). An archaeological report has been published on the existence of 30 stairs¹⁵. The use of the one-way staircase in Limestone Mountains, opposite the Sangar Village, establishes the link between religious stone building, probably special for god of khalid on the mountain, and large rock tombs at the foot of the mountain¹⁶. It seems that the use of a staircase in the façade of the Orarutian's rock tombs, in addition to access to the tombs, may have had a spiritual role. Accordingly, the existence of a

¹⁰ Gholamali Hatam, *Rock tombs in the Median period*, 2003, p. 106.

¹¹ Kazem Mollazadeh, *Med Archeology*, 2015, pp. 324-325.

¹² Bahman Kargar, *Urartu's tomb in West Azerbaijan*, 1990, p. 53.

¹³ Kazem Mollazadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

¹⁴ Hossein Naseri Somae et all, *Introduction and Survey of the Ancient Tomb of Gowijeh Qaleh in Maragheh*, 2015, p. 36

¹⁵ Wolfram Kleiss, *op. cit.*, pp.289-312.

¹⁶ Bahman Kargar, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

staircase in the Orarutian's rock tombs indicates that they were repeatedly used for burials¹⁷ (Images 2 and 3). A set of staircases consists of 6 stone stairs connecting the rock tomb to the North-East of the castle and the second set is over 30 stone stairs (Figure 4) extending from the East and the center of the castle to the mouth of the rock tomb.

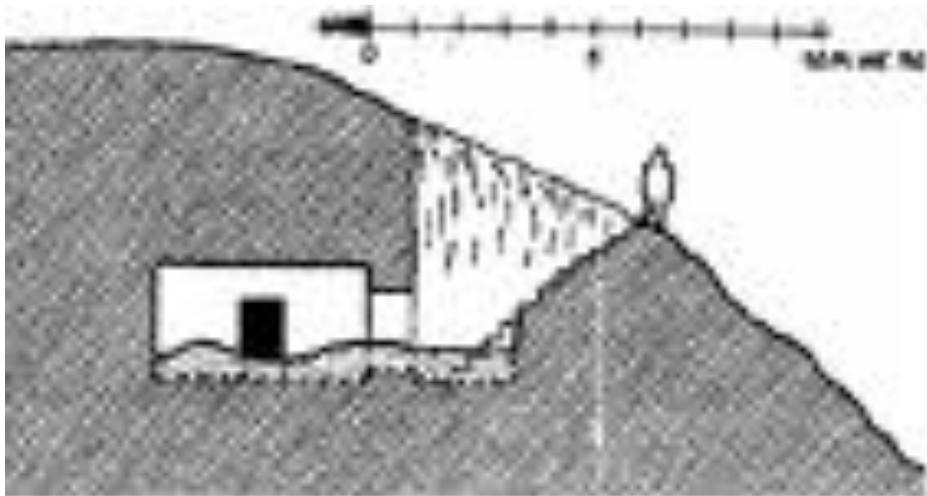


Fig. 1 The section of the rock tomb of Varahram¹⁸



Fig. 2 Van Castle

¹⁷ Kazem Mollazadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

¹⁸ Boris Piotrovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

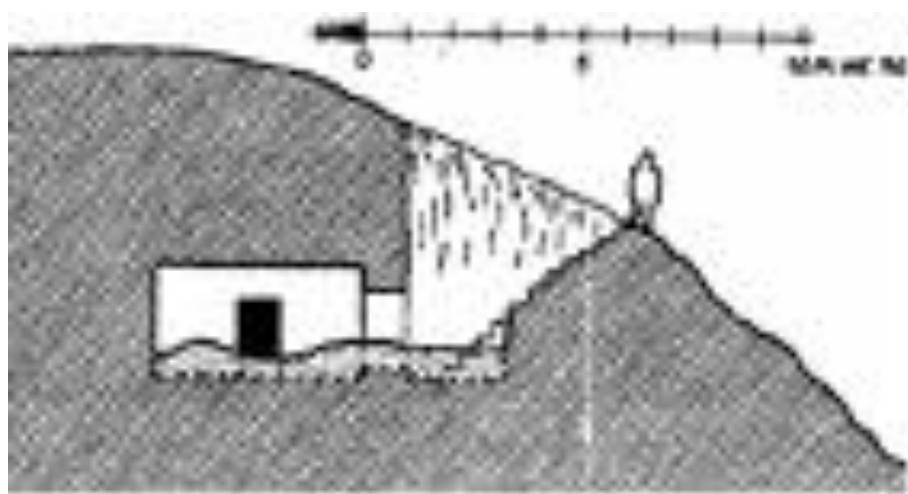


Fig. 3 Section of rock tomb of Van Castle



Fig. 4 Stairs used in Gowijeh Qaleh

The tomb consists of two parts. The first part is open having a width of 220×115 cm and a depth of 260 cm, and it has a frame. In the Urartian tombs of Azerbaijan, the use of a staircase or a small quadrangle space in front of the tomb is considered as an entrance gate or port. Similar to the quadrangle port, the staircase is available in Qarniyahrokh and Ismail agha. There is also a sample of combinations of stairs attached to the tomb chamber by the quadrangle port in the Urartian's Poldasht tomb¹⁹. You can enter the small port (110 x 110 centimeters) from the first part to the second part. The original space is approximately 340×340 cm in a square shape, extended in two steps from the West and North to the joining rooms. The height of these spaces is 160 cm and the roofs are flat, having arches in angles.²⁰

From the rocky architectural works up to the Achaemenid period, flat and right-angled surfaces with no curved lines can be seen in the port and roofs coating, but in the Parthian period, these coatings or coverings have been shaped into curves. The reason for changing the form of architectural elements from flat to curve can be attributed to the advancement of Iranians architecture in the creation of arches covering by using more conventional materials without the need for more durable wood. This change can be seen dramatically from this period on. The design of the rock tomb is flat. The Mannaean rock tomb of Fakhrigah has flat covering and it is right-angled and free-cutting²¹. The roof of Ismaili Agha's tomb had been carved roughly and irregularly, belonging to the 7th century AD, based on the obtained clays. Varahram's rock tomb located in Shutlo, West Azarbaijan, and Sheytanabad's rock tomb located 10 km North of Miandoab have a flat cover²²; Sangsar's rock tomb located 9 km North from the Maku River has also a flat cover. The rock tomb and squared room of Gowijeh Qaleh have a flat covering as well.²³ Accordingly, rock-cut spaces, particularly the rock tombs of the Urartu and the remaining Mannaean, have flat roofs. The follow of the creation of flat roof is an example that is equally observed in all of them, without any exception²⁴.

¹⁹ Bahman Kargar, *op. cit.*, p. 55-56.

²⁰ Hossein Naseri Somae et all, *op. cit.*, p.36.

²¹ Kazem Mollazadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

²² Karim Hajizadeh, *op. cit.*

²³ Wolfram Kleiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

²⁴ Bahman Kargar, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

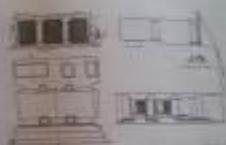
section	period	location	name
	Manna-urartu	Maragheh	Gowijeh Qaleh
	manna	mahabad	fahkrika
	Urartu	Urmia	Ismail Aqa
	Urartu	West Azerbaijan Province	varharam
	Urartu	Miandoab	Satan Abad
	Urartu	maku	sangar

Table 1 Section of rock tombs with flat covering

The Western space and then the Northern space were carved after the carving of the main square space and the reason for this is that the pit which was being constructed in the Northern space as a grave was left abandoned and incomplete. In the center of the Western space, there is a rectangular pit with a length of 168×115 cm and a depth of 80 cm whose usag has been recognized as a pit. The Northern space is a rectangle with a size of 440×210 cm, in the center of which a hole measuring 120×120 cm was created. Only 10 centimeters of its depth were cut and then abandoned incomplete for unknown reasons, thus its carvings remained unfinished. Considering the plan, the elements and the location of rock tomb, its comparison with other Urartian's rock tomb, especially the tomb of Ismail Agha, Varahram and Oshnavieh in the West Azerbaijan, it can be concluded that the rock tomb of

Gowijeh Qaleh is a kind of connected and continuous single-room rocky tombs and has been imitated from the Urartian plan of rock tombs. In ancient times, the place and type of tombs showed the social status of the buried²⁵. This tomb has been reported as the most eastern Urartian tomb in the north-west of Iran²⁶.

Conclusion

In this study, by examining the plan's form, the presence of the stairs and the flat roof of the rock tomb and generally, from the stylistic view, this tomb is considered to have a single-room plan, a flat roof, and stairs. From this point of view, this tomb is comparable to Van Castle, Ismail-Agha, Varahram and so on. Accordingly, although Wolfram Kleiss in his report describes and refers to the presence of pottery in the culture of Urartu in the structure of Gowijeh Qaleh, surely he does not consider that the site belongs to the culture of Urartu. He believes that due to pale works and a few potteries, the Urartian index of this site may belong to the Urartian taxpayers who learned the staircase technique and the rock tomb from their own Urantia conquerors. The stylistic study of this tomb has an undeniable similarity to the identified Urartian rock tomb. Accordingly, by an archaeological look into the category of burial and religious beliefs, it can be said that the Gowijeh Qaleh's rock tomb is the manifestation of the religious beliefs of the inhabitants of the region in the first millennium BC. The belief is only part of the Urartu burial patterns. This rock tomb is still the most eastern Urartu rock tomb in Iran.

Appendix

In Turkish, the letter "G" is pronounced "g" only at the beginning of the word, and it pronounced both "G" or "Y" in the middle and the end of the word. For example, Agri (crooked) is also pronounced Erie (Dictionary of Shahmiri, 2016: 10). Accordingly, the correct pronunciation of the castle is "Gowgja Qala".

Gowgja → Gowijeh

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²⁵ Hossein Naseri Somae et all, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²⁶ Karim Hajizadeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

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MEDIEVAL CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

The Hybrid Character - between the Representations of the Middle Ages and Today's Art

Cezarina Florina Caloian*

Abstract: This paper is a study of the fantastic character throughout the history of human civilization. This type of character has evolved from the hybrid creatures playing a divine role in the art of Assyro-Babylonian civilizations and of Ancient Egypt, to the monstrous characters of the Middle Ages which served as substitutes for sin and the force of evil, visible in the entrelacs of illuminated manuscripts or the gargoyles guarding the walls of Gothic cathedrals, to the characters of non-human origin in children's book illustrations, and up to the characters found in fantasy films or today's hybrids, who are in a perfect relationship with technological and cultural evolution. The paper discusses some original visions and working methods, from the slightly humorous portraits signed by Arcimboldo, the hybridization of animal kingdoms, in a much more tragic register, in the works of Hieronymus Bosch or the fantastic character used as a weapon of political and moral satire in the works of Goya and Grandville, to the unexpected, occult and mysterious visions of Ernst Fuchs' creations or the imaginary universe populated by hybrid beings, of 'extra-terrestrial origin, found in the works of HR Giger.

Keywords: hybrid character, miniature, imaginary, illustration, fantastic

Introduction

Throughout the history of mankind, man has always felt the need to express untranslatable phenomena using fantastic worlds, from imaginary creations such as myths, legends and stories, superstitions, heroes or superheroes, to allegorical representations of events and actions and the transposition of their consequences into visual elements. Hybridized deities, medieval bestiaries, sins and, implicitly, the punishments of purgatory, followed by the transfer of daydreams and dreams into images in avant-garde art – all these are representations of a plane that does not exist in real life but is extremely active in individual or collective imagination, because, *although ugly things and beings exist, art has the power to portray them in a beautiful way*¹.

* Lecturer, PhD. George Enescu National University of Arts

¹ Umberto Eco, *Pe umerii giganților* [On the Shoulders of Giants], Rao Publishing, Bucharest, 2018, p. 56.

In the course of time, everything that has not fitted common sense has been labelled as fantastic, starting from the half-human half-animal hybrid representations of Ancient Egyptian art, the utopian/dystopian characters and landscapes present in manuscripts, painting, sculpture and architecture, to the great cinematic masterpieces in which the imaginary is doubled by impressive technical achievements. Roger Caillois² describes it as follows: *the deliberately fantastic - present in the work of art to surprise and disorient the viewer by inventing an imaginary and enchanting universe in which nothing appears and nothing happens as in the real world, and the institutionalized fantastic - present in fairy tales, legends, mythology*³ (see ethnographic masks, the ‘dances macabre’ of the Middle Ages, the torments of Hell, the representations of the devil, the embodiments of superstitions and fears in the collective consciousness - the Egregore concept, etc.). A quick tour of the history of visual arts in search of the fantastic character brings to the fore the illuminated pages of the Middle Ages, the gargoyles carved by stonemasons in the walls of Gothic cathedrals, and the works of artists such as Arcimboldo, Dürer, Bosch, Bruegel, Goya, Blake, Odilon Redon, Dali, Max Ernst, Fuchs or Giger. Extrapolating to cinematography, animation, and literature, it is worth mentioning the literary works signed by Jules Verne, characters such as *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by Rabelais, the panoply of characters found in *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, *Golem*, such as it has appeared in Jewish mythology since the sixth century or in the literary work signed by Gustav Meyrink, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, the film *noir*, the fantastic characters in Tim Burton’s cinematographic work, Giger’s works transposed to the film *Alien* directed by Ridley Scott, or the diversity of character characters from fantasy filmography or video games.

In the Middle Ages, monstrosity fell into two broad categories: innate, more precisely malformation, associated with sin and a miserable life, and imagined monstrosity, which included apocalyptic monsters or the creatures found in bestiaries⁴. The appetite for such creatures was replaced, in time (16th-17th centuries), by a scientific interest in teratology, which materialised in the so-called *Curiosity Chambers* or *Cabinets*, whose exhibits were most often captured in engravings.

If in Ancient Greek art physical qualities were always doubled by moral ones, the association of major physical defects with moral flaws lasted for centuries, and we can mention here the famous work in the field of criminal anthropology, *Criminal Man* by Cesare Lombroso, in the century 19th century, the aesthetics of Karl Rosenkranz and the works of the French

² În inima fantasticului [At the heart of the fantastic], Meridiane Publishing, Bucharest, 1971.

³ Ibidem, p. 14

⁴ Umberto Eco, *Istoria Urâțului* [On Ugliness], Rao Publishing, Bucharest, p. 242.

philosopher Michael Foucault⁵. The association of physical traits with misery, nastiness, disease and disaster is also visible in the successive waves of anti-Semitism, which, at first, were based on *ethnicity* (see the periods of oppression and persecution happening in the Middle Ages, during the time of the Inquisition or the epidemics that decimated the European population), and then on *race*, having scientific foundations, in the 19th-20th centuries⁶. It is the physiognomy of the *enemy* that is studied, regardless of whether this enemy is a political, social (racial enemy: the Saracen in the Sicilian puppet theatre, the American black and the description of the Jew in World War II fascist propaganda) or religious one (see the Protestant illustrations that show the Pope as the Antichrist, etc.)⁷.

During the Middle Ages, the presence of ‘evil’ was embodied by monsters pertaining to universal symbolism or through allegory. There is a double perspective on life, marked by the dichotomy *good-evil*, materialized in the relationship between *virtue and sin, heaven and hell, God and devil*. Thus, those two aspects of human life are transferred to the visual level at a time when the link between the legible and the visible was remarkably close. Medieval miniatures take over the meanings of the sacred text, making them accessible, in order to bring the facts closer to the understanding of the ordinary man. Ideas were often expressed in narratives, which were much more accessible than the initiatory register of the sacred text. The illustration of religious texts was *a silent sermon*⁸ using suggestive and easily interpretable images, which, until the end of the 12th century, was produced exclusively in monasteries. According to their content, the illuminated texts of the Middle Ages may be grouped into religious texts - the most numerous - and secular texts; in turn, religious books may be divided into liturgical books (used during religious services) and prayer books. A special place was allotted to the *Holy Scripture*, the *New Testament* and its *Four Gospels*, according to *Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*, the *Epistles of St. Paul*, and the *Apocalypse* or the *Revelation to John*. The Bible ranked first in the preferences of miniature manuscript masters; it was usually made in a large or ‘pocket’ format, often encased in silver and gold, bound in leather or carved ivory plates; it was followed by *The Four Gospels*, books about the lives of the saints, psalm books, breviaries, antiphonaries (verses from the psalms), prayer books for the laity - called *books of hours* - grammar

⁵ Codrina Ioniță , *Monștrii și garguii în arta medievală* [Monsters and Gargoyles in Medieval Art], Proceedings of the National Symposium “Literature and the other arts”, Pim Publishing, 2009, p. 43.

⁶ *Op. Cit.*, p. 261-267.

⁷ Umberto Eco, *Pe umerii gigantilor* [On the Shoulders of Giants], Rao Publishing, 2018, p 82.

⁸ M. Shapiro, *Words and Pictures. On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text*, 1973, Apud. *Un'avventura e un'arte*, Milena, Bassolli, Trento, 2000, p. 24.

treatises, medical or herbal treatises, history, poetry, codes of laws or canonical books. At the end of the 12th century the first *Bestiaries* started to be produced. They included representations of animals (beasts, real or imagined), which were associated with moral teachings using biblical references (*Imago mundi* by Honorius of Autun, *De naturis rerum* by Alexander Neckham, *The Properties of Things* by Bartolomeo Angelico and *The Mirror of Nature* by Vincent de Beauvais⁹). These monsters, built from fragments of hybridized animals, were in fact what God *is not*, their purpose being to define Divinity by antithesis.

In the period between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, between the 6th and the 11th centuries, we notice the appearance of well-defined styles, bearing the mark of the geographical area and the political-religious coordinates in which they developed: the Irish miniature, the Spanish one (with obvious Arab influences), the German miniature and the Byzantine one. These schools of miniature, illustration, and ornamentation have as common features the *bark-made page*, on which decorative elements spread over the entire surface, the double or triple *ornate frames*, which enclose the illustrated text or scenes, the *ornamental arches* separating the text columns, the *letrine* or the ornate initial (in which writing and decorative motifs intertwine). The *incipit* (the beginning of the text) and the *explicit* (the end of the text) were written in ornate capital letters, occupying the entire surface of the page.

The Irish miniature stands out by its ornamentation; its specific traits are the *pointillé* of the lettrines, the *entrelac* (typical Celtic motif), the high letters and the spiral motifs that filled the blank spaces, the horn-shaped motif (specific to Celtic art), the geometric, floral, zoomorphic motifs - grotesque or with a touch of humour. The *Book of Kells*, a masterpiece of Irish miniature – along with the *Book of Lindisfarne* and the *Book of Durrow* – dates from around the year 800 and is now preserved at Trinity College Library in Dublin. The manuscript, in a 320/241 mm format, comprises 340 vellum folios, and includes the four Gospels and 678 pages decorated with miniatures, initials and symbols. From the perspective of our research, the most impressive elements in it are the initial letters (*entrelacs*) made up of labyrinthine graphic windings, in which numerous monstrous creatures appear alongside various divine figures. The almost 2000 capital letters in the text – three on each page – represent an incorporation of people, animals, birds, and snakes, with funny or grotesque expressions. These monstrous creatures, made up of stylized animal forms, four-legged beasts, swan-beaked greyhounds, contorted human figures, or tangled ornate spiral lines defy the rules of realistic representation and symmetry, but stand out due to the imagination with which their creators overcame the austerity of ordinary life,

⁹ Apud Umberto Eco, *Istoria urâțului* [On Ugliness], p. 116.

creating a twisted micro-universe overflowing with fantasy. Despite the abundance of details – from monstrous animals, jesters, acrobats, skeletons, to plant structures and simple decorative elements – the letters remain legible, and, in turn, each of their constituent elements is nevertheless easy to decipher. These initials embellished with plants and twisted, contorted, human and animal bodies are, in fact, the forerunners of the personalized letters metamorphosed into different shapes that we use today.



Fig. 1. *Book of Kells*, VII th century, Dublin, Trinity College

This appetite for the fantastic, for the monstrous, remained unquenched for centuries, materialising in the deformed creatures placed on the edge of manuscripts, called *marginalia*, or on the capitals of Romanesque churches, or the *gargoyles* placed on the walls of Gothic cathedrals. Having the role of draining rainwater from the roofs, *gargoyles* also played a decorative role, but with symbolic values. Above all, they represented the evil found in the world outside the church and served to remove not only water but also evil spirits; they were an expression of the biblical image or the human subconscious¹⁰. Their symbolic purpose was to protect people from the danger of evil, precisely through their frightening appearance: crooked-faced people, hybrid characters, imaginary beasts, mythological creatures – some resembled bats, owls, dragons, dogs, reptiles, with horns, wings, feathers, etc. Initially made out of wood or terracotta, then out of

¹⁰ Codrina Ioniță - *Ibidem*, p. 43.

stone, limestone or marble, these fantastic creatures, full of mystery, imposing due to their shape and location on the walls, became symbols of Gothic constructions; the best known examples are those of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, restored in the 19th century by the architect Viollet-le-Duc, but destroyed by a strong fire in 2019. Besides the famous *gargoyles* of Notre Dame, we should also mention here those that adorn the Sacré Coeur Basilica of Paris, the Notre Dame Cathedral of Reims, the Dome of Cologne or the St. Vitus Cathedral of Prague.



Fig. 2. *Gargoyles*, Notre Dame de Paris

The source of inspiration¹¹ of the Renaissance artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo (b. 1526 or 1527- d. 1593) could have been the medieval illuminated manuscripts with ornate initials, whose constituent elements could be easily deciphered. What the paintings signed by Arcimboldo and the miniature manuscripts have in common is precisely that particular way of composing the represented form with the help of elements coming from external sources. Thus, the viewer is required to decompose the form, to understand each item taken on its own, and then to reconstruct it, finally obtaining a completely new element. His portraits consist of plant structures, flowers, fruits, miniature human beings, books or fishes, representing an artistic view unique for the period in which they were made. In the *Portrait of Adam* (1578, private collection) and in the *Portrait of Eve* (1578, private collection), Arcimboldo constructs the face of the protagonists from miniature, contorted human beings, placed in dynamic positions, folded on the construction planes of the portrait. *Vertumnus (Portrait of Rudolf II)*, 1590, Skokloster Castle, Stockholm, is built entirely of fruits, vegetables, flowers and wheat ears, and despite its bizarre appearance, reflects the idea of a living character in an intimate relationship with nature. The portrait is part of the allegorical series *Four Seasons*, and it incorporates the harvest of a whole year in a single image, to emphasize the prosperity of the region but also the power of the emperor.

¹¹ According to Caillois, Roger - *Op. Cit.*, p. 21.



Fig. 3. Giuseppe Arcimboldo - *Vertumnus* (Portrait of Rudolf II), 1590, Skokloster Castle, Stockholm; Giuseppe Arcimboldo - *Portrait of Adam*, 1578, private collection

If in Arcimboldo the hybridization of the characters is accompanied by a note of humour, in the works of Hieroymus Bosch the hybridization of the animal kingdoms takes place in a tragic register, with terrifying aspects, showing that, *instead of getting closer to reality painting may just as vividly evoke an imaginary world using the same means*¹². Often using the triptych as a means to transpose the narrative into space and time, Bosch avails himself of symbolic images, allegories, visual metaphors and, of course, hybridization. In *The Haywain* (1495-1500, Prado Museum, Madrid), the artist starts from a Flemish proverb, and depicts the world as a haywain – a symbol of greed and the deceptive pleasures of life – arranged on the central panel. The left panel transposes into images the *Road of Life*, with the dangers that await man during his earthly journey, arranged in four registers: the fall of the rebellious angels – depicted as hybrid beings that look like insects with human bodies – the creation of Eve, the original sin, and the expulsion from Heaven. The right panel signifies Hell and the characters here are monstrous – creatures that are a crossbreed between humans, animals, and objects –, formidable demons, who provide Hieronymus Bosch with the power *to express in a concrete way the fears that were haunting people's minds in the Middle Ages*¹³. The same vision and means of representation are found in the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (ca. 1510, Prado Museum, Madrid), arranged on three panels: a central one, in which people are tempted with

¹² E.H. Gombrich, *Istoria Artei* [History of Art], Art Publishing, Bucharest, 2012, p. 365.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 359.

illusory happiness by monstrous creatures, Paradise on earth and the creation of Eve – arranged on the left panel –, and the terrifying scene depicting Hell on the right panel. The last one features evil machines made up of huge human ears, pierced by knife and arrow blades, demons hybridized from animals and human beings, torture and other sadistic gestures directed against a humanity lost in sin and disorder.



Fig. 4. Hieroymus Bosch - *Garden of Earthly Delights*, ca. 1510,
Prado Museum, Madrid

Moral satire, political, social and religious pressure were expressed through moralizing works which made ample use of fantastic characters. For instance, Goya (1746-1828) evokes phobias, prejudice, unjust practices, marriages of inconvenience, parental cruelty and poor education, fornication, stupidity, greed, and imposture by means of various hybrid characters in the series of etchings entitled *The Whims* (1797-1799), preserved at the Prado Art Museum of Madrid. The 80 works that make up the series include representations such as the lame devil, the cat-accomplice of the devil, the evil bird, the parrot – as a symbol of pompous rhetoric, or the donkey – as a substitute for stupidity and imposture.

The works of Jean Ignace-Isidore Gérard, also known as Grandville (1803-1847), a French illustrator, forerunner of surrealism and one of the greatest creators of hybrid, humanized characters in the history of book illustration, seem to have emerged from the realm of the fantastic too. In *Les Méthamorphoses du jour* (1829) and *Un autre monde* (1844), Grandville makes a full display of his genius as a master of the imaginary, depicting fantastic characters, with human bodies and animal heads, capturing the essential aspects of his work: overflowing fantasy in the service of moral

satire and political caricature. Charles Baudelaire thought that the distortion of reality through monstrous hybridizations, as in Grandville's works, was "scary"¹⁴ and Hans Seldmayer is intrigued by the fact that "everything can metamorphose into anything"¹⁵, because the artist never leaves the realm of the real and the plausible, succeeding in convincing us not to question the existence of reality.



Fig. 5. Ernst Fuchs – *Crucifixion*, 1950, Vienna, private collection
H. R. Giger - *Biomechanical Mia, Egyptian-style*, private Collection, Vienna

In the case of the Surrealists, the representation consists in the projection of an inner universe by using purely imaginary forms, or by getting close to natural or imagined elements, deformed, metamorphosed or transfigured. In the work *They have slept in the forest too long* (1927, Saarland Museum, Saarbrücken, Germany), signed by Max Ernst, the represented forms are hybrids between animals, plants and plant structures. After World War II, painters such as Ernst Fuchs, a representative of the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism, bring to the fore ancient myths and archetypes, presenting an unusual view of the fantastic. His works include religious scenes doubled by forgotten cosmogonies and superstitions, all shrouded in mystery and an air of the occult. A mystical-religious painter,

¹⁴ Apud. Brion Marcel, *Arta fantastică* [Fantastic Art], Meridiane Publishing, 1970, p. 334.

¹⁵ Idem.

in his works Fuchs creates an atmosphere specific to alchemist's labs, and each element/ character represents a mystery or a revelation. His extremely rich imagination is doubled by an extraordinary artistic technique, an innovative pictorial language. In *Crucifixion* (1950, Vienna, private collection), his personal way of interpreting the scene of the crucifixion of Christ presents a central corpse-like, extremely thin, character whose head is covered by an episcopal mitre, with two hybrid characters at his feet; they are a mixture of human and animal features, somewhere between mythological beasts and angelic piety. Although in Christian iconography the two characters to the left and right of Christ are Virgin Mary and the John the Apostle, in the work signed by Ernst Fuchs they are two bizarre, disproportionate creatures that recall the 'dances macabre' of the Middle Ages¹⁶.

The Swiss artist HR Giger (1940-2014) belongs to Fantastic Realism as well. He was the creator of the visual effects used in the film *Alien* – directed by Ridley Scott in 1978 – for which he won an Oscar. Known for his dark, surreal imaginary, populated by hybrid beings of 'extra-terrestrial' origin and futuristic objects, Giger proposes a perfect relationship between living beings and technology. One of his iconic works is *Biomechanical Mia, Egyptian-style* (Private Collection, Vienna), in which he creates a perfect symbiosis between the human being, the 'extra-terrestrial' and a series of mechanical devices that are interconnected to the body, recalling Egyptian mummies to one's mind¹⁷.

The hybrid character may also be found in the artistic creations signed by the performative artist Stelarc (b. 1946). By using implants, prosthetic devices, and microelectronics on his own body he does nothing but deconstruct the human body and reposition its anatomical elements.

In the course of time, hybrid characters have been built based on the structure of the human body, which was partially or totally replaced with elements belonging to different kingdoms/ species, animals, plants or beings of mythological or extra-terrestrial origin. Just like the perspective on the human body, which has changed throughout the history of art, from the harmonious and symmetrical body of the Antiquity – revived during the Renaissance –, to the dislocated and amputated human body from the avant-garde period or from contemporary art, the perspective on the fantastic character has transformed in the course of time. It has thus evolved from the hybrid creatures playing a divine role in the art of Assyro-Babylonian civilizations and of Ancient Egypt, to the monstrous characters of the Middle Ages which served as substitutes for sin and the force of evil, to the characters of non-human origin in children's book illustrations, up to the

¹⁶ Schurian Walter - *Fantastic Art*, Taschen, p. 68.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

characters found in fantasy films or today's hybrids, who are in a perfect relationship with technological and cultural evolution. The transformations undergone by the concept of *body* accompanied the modification of the notions of reality, space and time¹⁸. The cybernized organism present in the imaginary of science fiction, literature and cinema is built by disintegrating and reorganizing the human body using the techniques of robotics, cybernetics, virtual reality and artificial intelligence; the hybridized character based on the human body becomes a cyborg through electronic implants and prostheses¹⁹. In fact, the concept of cyborg has taken various shapes in the course of time, from the ancient myth of Pygmalion, to Golem, from the humanized robots in the comics of the 1990's, to the artistic and technical experiments reflected in contemporary cinema, animation and literature.

Fictional, hybrid beings aspire to human spirituality, they are capable of violent gestures but also of victimization. Monsters seem to defy the opposition between the real and the unreal, between the possible and the impossible. A masterpiece of literature, in our opinion, is *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, written by Mary Shelley in 1818. By discussing issues related to man's desire to overcome his mortal condition, matching God's ability to create life, ethical and moral issues, and the living being's incapacity to live alone, without love, *Frankenstein* also draws attention to the permanent and indestructible division of the human race, between the man created by divinity and the artificial being, created with the help of science. The monster created by dr. Frankenstein is endowed with devastating sensitivity, like the superheroes designed by Marvel Studios, the latter being endowed with well-defined character traits but also specifically human weaknesses; the panoply of fantastic characters that flood contemporary collective imagination would not be complete without mentioning those in *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien.

Man's constant need to invent fictional realities, to transpose non-existent dimensions into images, to transfer thoughts, dreams, and superstitions into the dimension of the reality of our perceptions, comes precisely from the desire to overcome his gravity-bound condition. *The imaginary*, in Gaston Bachelard's view, represents *the perpetually moving and forming space, always innovative and intimate, that matrix of the playful and the imagined, and soul and mind are indispensable for following the evolution of poetic images from the original state of reverie to that of execution*²⁰.

¹⁸ Lucia Simona Dinescu, *Corpul în imaginariul virtual [The Body in the Virtual Imaginary]*, Polirom Publishing, Iași, 2007, p. 7.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

²⁰ Bachelard, Gaston – *Poetica spațiului [The Poetics of Space]*, Paralela 45 Publishing, Ploiești, 2005.

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A Contemporary Approach of *Las Meninas*

Irina-Andreea Stoleriu*

Abstract: *The present study is meant to underline the importance of a famous work from the baroque period, Las Meninas, made by the painter Diego de Silva y Velásquez who has become a source of inspiration for future generations of artists. Numerous modern and contemporary artists have integrally or partially "paraphrased" Velásquez's composition by intercepting the portrait of revolutionary group for the time when it was created, extremely innovative regarding its compositional qualities and its hidden meanings which underlined the role and status of the artist in the context of a conservative society. Thus, the painting becomes the living proof of the way in which the artist manages to overcome the limitations of the social status of ordinary human beings, by portraying himself as a close friend of the royal family and by opening, through this type of representation, an important chapter in the history of portraiture.*

Keywords: *Las Meninas; Portrait; Painting; Interpretation.*

The 17th century was characterized as "the golden age" of Spanish art¹, it gave birth to a variety of creations, from dead nature and specific scenes to portraits, historical paintings, mythological or religious. The development of Spanish art was toilsome, most demands came, on the one hand, from the extremely conservative² Church, while on the other hand, from the royal court, where foreign painters were preferred, Tizian was one of the favoured³. Among the well-known personalities of the Spanish art from that period, we also mention here Francisco Pacheco (1564-1654), José Ribera (1591-1652), Francisco Zurbaran (1598-1664), Diego de Silva y Velásquez (1599-1660), Esteban Murillo (1617-1682) and others.

Belonging to small nobility, Diego de Silva y Velásquez started his career by creating devoutness⁴ paintings, *bodegones*, portraits and historical,

* Ph.D, Lecturer, University of Arts „George Enescu” Iași, România,
andreea_stoleriu@yahoo.com.

¹ Hermann Bauer, Andreas Prater, *Barocul [Baroque]*, Taschen Publishing House, Köln, 2007, p. 16.

² H.W. Janson, Anthony F. Janson, *History of Art: The Western Tradition*, vol. II, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004, p. 580.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Patricia Fride-Carrassat, *Maeștrii picturii [The Masters of Painting]*, RAO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p. 132.

mythological or allegorical paintings⁵. He learned in the workshops of Herrera the Old and then in the one of Francisco Pacheco⁶, being influenced by the chiaroscuro of Caravaggio⁷, by the compositions of El Greco and the ones of Tintoretto⁸, by the tardily chromatics of Tizian⁹ and by the "suppleness of touch, of the model, in the more vivid colour"¹⁰ of Rubens.

After the replacement of the portraitist Rodrigo de Villandrando (1588-1623) from the royal court of Philip IV¹¹, Velásquez shortly became, because of his position of official artist, one of the most reputed painters of the 17th century. Because he rejoiced the appreciation of the king, he was named "*chief of works regarding ornaments and royal paintings for the palaces Alcazar and Buen Retiro from Madrid*"¹², a year before his death, he received the title of knight of the *Order Saint Jacob of the Sword*¹³.

One of the most known paintings made by the artist is *Las Meninas* (1656) which has become one of the most loved sources of inspiration for modern and postmodern artists. They adapted and reinterpreted the message of the 17th century work, and also the compositional ensemble through the intercession of the new visions specific to nowadays creations.

The meaning of the painting *Las Meninas* was often brought into discussion by art critics, one of the first interpretations of the work appeared in the 19th century, when the art historian Carl Justi launched his theories, claiming that the image identified itself with "*a part of court life accurately preserved, more than perfected by a master of objective observation*"¹⁴. Another art historian, Charles de Tolnay, discovered new meanings for this painting, interpreting "*Las Meninas as an allegory of artistic creation*"¹⁵. In his turn, the art historian Jan Blanc synthesized these two opinions, the theory of Justi and the one of Charles de Tolnay, considering that this

⁵ Klaus Schwager, *Arta barocă [Baroque Art]*, in the vol. *Larousse – Istoria artei [Larousse – History of Art]*, coordinators Albert Châtelet and Bernard-Philippe Groslier, "Univers Encyclopedic" [,Encyclopaedic Universe"] Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, p. 629.

⁶ Hermann Bauer & Andreas Prater, *Barocul [Baroque]*, Taschen Publishing House, Köln, 2007, p. 70.

⁷ Karin Hellwig, *Painting in Italy, Spain, and France in the Seventeenth Century*, in vol. *Baroque: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting*, Edited by Rolf Tomas, Ullmann & Könemann, 2007, p. 400.

⁸ Jan Blanc, *Diego Velásquez – Printul școlii spaniole[Diego Velásquez - the Prince of Spanish Art]* in the vol. *Istoria vizuală a artei [The Visual History of Art]*, coord. Claude Frontisi, RAO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 265.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Patricia Fride-Carrassat, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

¹¹ Karin Hellwig, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

¹² Patricia Fride-Carrassat, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹³ Jan Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

¹⁴ Jonathan Brown, *Pictura spaniolă din secolul XVII [The Spanish Painting from the 17th Century]*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 151.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

painting is more of "a *chronical of palace life* (...),[the work being] a true allegory of his own activity as a Court painter"¹⁶.

Thus catalogued, the famous painting was interpreted as an expression of a specific vision of Velásquez regarding the status of the visual artist¹⁷. This idea was also underlined by the presence of the children of Rubens, discretely placed in the work, on the walls of the improvised workshop inside the Palace Alcázar, contributing to the delineation of a well-defined message which suggested "*the artistic culture and the function of conservatoire*" that the artist had internalized¹⁸. Consequently, the message of the painting remained open to various interpretations, being permanently renewed in time and staying open by this to "*the process of a perpetual revivification*"¹⁹.

Las Meninas impresses through the complexity and width of the composition, presenting a diversity of social classes inside the painting which is, in the same time, a specific scene and also a group portrait²⁰. The action seems to be interrupted by an unexpected event, each character being individualized in a rigorous manner, by doing a well-defined action²¹. The paper has numerous focus points, the workshop is divided in more plans. Thus, on the right side of the painting, the dwarves Nicolás de Pertusato, Mari-Bárbara and a dog are represented, in the centre – the infanta Margareta, framed by the two ladies of honour. On the left of the image, behind a painting which is work in progress, the artist himself is represented, while on the right, his image is in balance with the one of Marcela de Ulloa, framed by an unidentified escort²², probably the one of the *aposentador*²³ José Nieto Velásquez, and there is also an image in the mirror of King Philip IV together with Queen Mariana, marking the father away plan, offering depth to the pictural space.

Compositional qualities are accompanied by chromatic ones, the artist manages to establish an interesting visual balance between the characters and the described architecture. Moreover, the originality of the

¹⁶ Jan Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

¹⁷ Laurie Schneider Adams, *A History of Western Art*, McGraw Hill, 2008, p. 362.

¹⁸ Jan Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

¹⁹ Jonathan Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

²⁰H.W. Janson & Anthony F. Janson , *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 583.

²¹Jonathan Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 155, "The infanta came to see the artist while working. A few moments before the raising «the curtain», she asked for drinking water which is now being offered by the kneeled maid of honour in the left. While she is offering a small cup to the princess, the king and queen enter the room and they can be seen reflected in the mirror placed on the wall in the back. One by one, but not in the same time, the gathered characters perceive the royal presence. The maid of honour from the right, who saw them first, sketches a reverence. Velásquez has also noticed the entrance and he stopped in the middle of his work; he started to lower his brush and palette".

²²Jonathan Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

²³José López-Rey, *Velásquez*, vol. II, Taschen Publishing House, 1996, p. 306.

paper also consists in the fact that the presence of the artist in the same frame with he royal family has never before been met, the work becomes an act of artistic pioneerdom because of this aspect, also.

The manner of representation of the mirror reminds us of the well-known painting of the late Middle Ages – the beginning of Renaissance, of the artist Jan van Eyck – *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434), which was at the Spanish court in that period²⁴, in this work we also meet the same motif of the reflexion of a key image regarding the deciphering of the message of the work, almost every detail of the composition has a hidden meaning²⁵. In the painting *Las Meninas*, made at a temporal distance of two centuries compared to the Flemish one, the Spanish painter overtakes some elements specific to the original painting, in order to be interpreted, one of them being the mirror, placed, just like in the other painting, in the background, almost central, portraying the royal couple, this time. Just like in the work of Jan van Eyck, the mirror is used here as "a key metaphor of the pictural image"²⁶, leaving room for interpretations connected to the true subject of the painting and the placing of the royal couple in the scene described by Velásquez. The most powerful source of light comes from the window, just like in the case of the 15th century work, it thus underlines the fascination of the artist for éclairage²⁷ and also the influence of Caravaggio in the way of rendering it²⁸. Moreover, the mirror and the half-open door offer to the viewer other interst centres, marked by light and shadow, the Spanish artist paying special attention to the materiality of objects, the refined chromatics with more intense accents of colour intending to unify the ensemble.

The master offers the proof of his full creative maturity, *Las Meninas* becomes one of his reference paintings which has inspired, in time, many generations of painters of the epochs that followed. Furthermore, the reinterpretation of this masterpiece of the history of art gave birth to a true series of works inspired by its artistic and compositional qualities, by the action of the characters, by the message of the work, by the portrait of Margareta or by the selfportrait of the master.

The meaning of this remarkable work was reflected in later works such as Francisco Goya, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, Manolo Valdés and Rafael Solbes, Richard Hamilton, Cristóbal Toral, Micheline Lo, Herman Braun-Vega, Joel Peter Witkin, Fernando Botero, Celia Washington, Sophie

²⁴ Norbert Schneider, *The Art of the Portrait*, Taschen Publishing House, 2002, p. 150.

²⁵ Cf. Patricia Fride – Carrassat, *op.cit.*, p. 25, „ (...)the dog means fidelity, the last lit candle of the lustre symbolizes marriage. In the mirror, there is a more important world than the one reflected by the painting; in it, we can see three silhouettes, of the married couple and of an observer, the spectator or the painter, this creator introduces us in another universe, dumb, concentrated, eternal. «Johannes de Eyck fuit hic» (Jan van Eyck was here)»

²⁶ Victor Ieronim Stoiciu, *Instaurarea tabloului*, Editura Meridiane, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 217.

²⁷ H.W. Janson și Anthony F. Janson, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 583.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 584.

Matisse, Eve Sussman, Lluis Barba sau Alexander Stanuga, who have found in the work of Velázquez an important model. This modernizing of the painting *Las Meninas* was concretized, in the work of each modern or contemporary artist, in a distinct manner. Thus, Picasso created, in his specific style, numerous sketches and paintings, Salvador Dali and Fernando Botero found their inspiration in the selfportrait of Velásquez, Joel Peter Witkin interpreted the compositional ensemble through the means of the photography, while Eve Sussman directed a movie which underlined the action that took place in the royal palace.

One of the mentioned artists, the Spanish painter Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828) dedicated himself to portraiture, having three masters: Rembrandt, Velásquez and nature²⁹. Inspired by Velásquez's *Las Meninas*, Goya created sketches and engraving with the same name and a painting –*The Family of Carol IV*–, in which one can feel the stylistic influence of the original painting, synthesizing "psychological and physical truths"³⁰ through the realistic manner lacking any idealization of the representation of characters.

These works have marked a transition period for the reinterpretable evolution of the work *Las Meninas*, making the connection with modern times and with the most famous series of this kind, also made by a Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso(1881-1973). In the creation of Picasso, figurative art has played an essential role by "expanding the possibilities and the parameters of portraiture"³¹. The Spanish artist invented and reinvented abstract, surrealist, classic and expresionist painting, starting from the realistic vision that he gradually left behind in order to let his imagination transform the physiognomy of the model, distorting it and permanently challenging the viewer, given the novelty of his style³². By these features, Picasso marked the moment of a deep artistic change by deepening the analysis of the ambiguity of representation³³. Thus, the work of Picasso has also enjoyed a scientific approach, the one of Carl Gustav Jung, he analysed the psychology which was the basis of the Spanish artist, reaching the conclusion that "non-realistic art essentially receives its content from the «inner side» (...) [from] the unconscious soul"³⁴. Referring to this aspect, his work has known a major stylistic transformation, causing problems regarding the differences between

²⁹ Patricia Fride – Carrassat, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 177.

³¹ William Rubin, *Reflections on Picasso and Portraiture*, in the vol. *Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation*, Edited by William Rubin, Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1996, p. 13.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 14.

³³ Edina Bernard, *Arta Modernă 1905-1945 [Modern Art 1905-1945]*, "Meridiane" Publishing House, 2000, p. 41.

³⁴ Carl Gustav Jung, *Picasso*, in the vol. *Opere complete*, vol. 15: *Despre fenomenul spiritului în artă și știință [About the Phenomenon of the Spirit in Art and Science]*, "Trei" Publishing House, 2007, pp. 142-143.

the portraits made after real people and the ones which only schematically describe the face and human figure.

Having its roots in the art of the past, the cubist painter has created new ways of perceiving reality, sometimes finding his inspiration in more paintings in order to bring a single project to an end. Thus, in the late work of Picasso, after the year 1946, one can see the presence of a series of reinterpretations of some famous works, such as *Venus and Cupid* by Lucas Cranach, *Las Meninas* and *El Bobo* by Diego Velásquez, *The Man with the Golden Helmet* of Rembrandt van Rijn, *Women on the Shore of the Seine* by Gustave Courbet or *Breakfast on the Grass* and *Lola of Valencia* by Edouard Monet. Just like the art historian Ingo F. Walther claims, the re-interpretation of the works of the past in a modern manner was "an essential part of the creative process of Picasso"³⁵. This paraphrasing offered a new dimension to the creation of the artist, in his youth, making him shape his own formal language³⁶, and in his late work, as a method of reviving his style.

Velásquez's *Las Meninas* have also constituted the source of inspiration of a great number of creations signed by Picasso (according to some opinions, forty-four³⁷, while others claim fifty-eight³⁸), the inner motivation of the artist when choosing this work consists in the fact that he treated one of his favourite topics, the one of the connections between painter and model³⁹. On *Las Meninas*, the modern artist intervened, both at a compositional and a stylistic level, and also a chromatic one, the format of the original work being modified from vertical to horizontal. Furthermore, the realistic style of Velásquez was transformed in one close to Cubism and naïve painting, clid-made, and from the rich original chromatics, he chose a monochrome version.

After numerous studies, Picasso has managed to perfect the compositional structure, interpreting the hierarchical placing of the characters that initially seemed to constitute a radiography of life at the Spanish court of the 17th century. But, differences do not stop here, in the painting of the 20th century, the self-portrait of Velásquez was replaced by the one of Picasso, the modern artist thus re-upgraded the image. Unlike the original painting, the self-portrait of the cubist artist, placed in the left side of the painting, was represented at a much bigger scale (the entire face), occupying an important surface of the composition. Though, in this case, the work manner of the artist was typically cubist, the rest of the image has more of an infantile style, reminding us of the works of children and of *Guernica*, the master

³⁵ Ingo F. Walther, *Picasso*, Taschen Publishing House, Köln, 2003, p. 82.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ Carsten-Peter Warncke, *Pablo Picasso 1881-1973*, vol. II, Edited by Ingo F. Wsälther, Editura Taschen, 2007, p. 603.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

intentionally left the sensation of a rough sketch. Though it seems unfinished, the painting of Picasso was not deprived of the realization of some details, similar to the characters that appear in the work of the baroque artist. Unlike the work of Velásquez, the representation of the dwarf and of the dog in the right part of the image did not receive special attention. The same work manner also defined the way in which objects were made, the half-open door, the paintings on the wall, the windows on the right side of the work, the canvas and the easel used by the artist.

Moreover, except for this painting, Picasso has many other studies made after the infanta and one of the maids of honour, but all these attempts had an abrupt coming to an end, being finally catalogued as failures⁴⁰.

Another reference artist was Salvador Dali, he is also the one who elaborated the so-called method "*critic paranoia*"⁴¹. The creation of this extravagant artist who shortly became a true "star" of the artistic field⁴², was based on the theories of the psychoanalysis of Freud who tried to bring "*the subconscious to the level of conscious and thus, to heal the soul sick of one's own discharge*"⁴³.

Regarding the reinterpretation of the work *Las Meninas*, Dali has taken over just some details from the work that served him as a source of inspiration, focusing his attention on the selfportrait of Velásquez. Thus "*in a sequence of photographic montage, the face of Dali (...) [was]stept by step superposed to the one of Velásquez, in order to show that he(...) [is]the truemodern «reincarnation» of the classical master*"⁴⁴, the result being a hybrid image whose artistic realities gave the name to a new work of art: *From Velásquez to Dali*. Between the two faces, there have been obvious similarities that Dali knew how to speculate, proving his artistic genius.

Common aspects were synthesized in the central image, it presented both the elements which are characteristic to the portrait of Velásquez and the ones specific to Dali. The work *From Velásquez to Dali* was part of a larger series of photomontage, in which the surrealist painter showed himself as some famous characters, this workmethod reminding us of another famous

⁴⁰Carsten-Peter Warncke, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 611.

⁴¹Cf. Albert Châtelet, *De la întoarcere la ordine la cel de-al doilea război mondial* [From Return to Order to the Second World War], in the vol. *Larousse – Istoria artei* [Larousse – The History of Art], coordinators Albert Châtelet and Bernard-Philippe Groslier, "Univers Encyclopedic" Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, p. 793, *critic paranoia* represents a "spontaneous method of irrational knowledge, based on the interpretative-critic association of delirious phenomena".

⁴²Gilles Néret, *Dali*, Taschen Publishing House, Köln, 2003, p. 8.

^{43x x x}, *Istoria artei: Pictură, Sculptură, Arhitectură* [History of Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture], RAO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 276.

⁴⁴Gilles Néret, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

reinterpretation, the one of Picasso, both modern artists substituted the face of Velásquez, and also overtook a part of his visual and artistic identity.

Identity coincidences connected to the Spanish origin of these three creative personalities have helped this practice to become a success, their works constituting a landmark in the history of art and innovative styles that made them famous in the artistic field.

One of the representatives of British Pop-Art, Richard Hamilton (n. 1922), has made a series of interpretations after Picasso's *Las Meninas*, the purpose was to pay homage to the creation of this great modern master. Exhibited in 2010 in Prado Museum, his reinterpretations appealed to a various range of technical means which served as a way of bringing up-to-date *Las Meninas* of Velásquez.

Regarding the tribute paid to the creation of Picasso, in an interview from 2010⁴⁵, Richard Hamilton claimed that this reinterpretation combines both the compositional elements from the creation of Velásquez to the ones specific to modern artist, shaping the hint to the blending of the past with the present⁴⁶. From a compositional point of view, Hamilton has respected the compositions of his predecessors, bringing specific updates to the work. In this respect, the selfportrait of Velásquez was replaced by the image of Picasso, while in the way of representing the other characters, he reminds us of the work of the cubist master. Furthermore, the portraits of the king and queen, reflected in the mirror in the background, were replaced by the selfportrait of the postmodern artists and his wife, while the copies after Rubens on the walls of the workshop from the painting of Velásquez – with some of the works of Picasso. Regarding the chromatic aspect, Hamilton appealed to the self-colour specific to *Las Meninas* of Picasso, starting from the white of the paper (at the bottom of the work) and reaching the mat and sullen aspect from the upper part of the image. Between these two extremes, he used a various series of greys, suggesting in this way and through stylistic changes, the interet centres of the work.

This creation has enriched the portfolio of graphic works *Hommage à Picasso*⁴⁷ presented in the exhibition organized on the occasion of the celebration of 90 years from the birth of the great cubist artist, offering

⁴⁵ <http://www.museodelprado.es/en/exhibitions/exhibitions/at-the-museum/richard-hamilton-picassos-meninas/video/>, last seen on 23.03.2020.

⁴⁶ <http://www.museodelprado.es/en/exhibitions/exhibitions/at-the-museum/richard-hamilton-picassos-meninas/emlas-meninas-de-picassoem/emlas-meninas-de-picassoem-de-richard-hamilton/>, last seen on 23.03.2020.

⁴⁷ <http://www.museodelprado.es/en/exhibitions/exhibitions/at-the-museum/richard-hamilton-picassos-meninas/emlas-meninas-de-picassoem/hommage-a-picasso/>, last seen on 23.03.2020.

continuity to the reinterpretations of the baroque work, appealing not to the creation of Velásquez, but to the modern one of the Spanish cubist⁴⁸.

Beside Goya, Picasso, Dali and Hamilton, Cristóbal Toral and Sophie Matisse are other two artists who have reinterpreted the painting *Las Meninas*, conferring it new meanings. In *D'après Las Meninas*, Cristóbal Toral replaced the characters from the foreground of the painting of Velásquez with numerous suitcases and boxes similar to the ones of poor emigrants, transforming them into a true metaphor of global migration⁴⁹.

Recreating the space which is characteristic to *Las Meninas*, Toral left the viewer the liberty of interpreting this work, by placing just a few hints connected to the atmosphere of the workshop of Velásquez from Alcazar Palace.

Unlike the work of Toral, Sophie Matisse preferred a distinct approach, giving up on rendering characters and keeping only the ambient which reminded of life at the Spanish court of the 17th century. In this respect, the viewer can almost automatically remember the loading of the original composition, by contrast with it, specific affective sides become active, even nostalgic, motivated by the awareness of time passing. The impact of placing Velásquez's work near its 21st century reinterpretation is extraordinary, at the level of perception of the viewer, the ensemble of these two images creates the sensation of a "scene" common to the 17th and 21st centuries, in which people are bare actants at that moment.

Unlike the animated work of the baroque artist, the work of Sophie Matisse offers the sensation of entering a museum room in which the vital element is missing, the only aspect that is still trying to transmit something from the initial atmosphere is represented by the paintings from the background wall and the common inner frame of the two scenes. The absence of the characters from the contemporary painting and also the half-open door represent, in fact, a symbolic presence in the conscience of the viewer, the image of *Las Meninas* still persists, even after so many centuries, their absence emphasizes the impact and notoriousness of the work of Velásquez.

Another original approach of *Las Meninas* can also be encountered in the creation of the American photographer Joel Peter Witkin (n. 1931),

⁴⁸ Harold Rosenberg, *Art on the edge: creators and situation*, University Press of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 68.

⁴⁹ Silvia Spitta, *Misplaced objects: Migrating Collections and Recollections in Europe and the Americas*, University of Texas Press, 2009, p. 201.

known in the history of art for his grotesque and macabre works⁵⁰. Mainly, the influences from his works relate to two traditions, a religious one and a modern one⁵¹, the contemporary artist finds his source of inspiration in the works of great masters, as it is the case of the famous work which is the subject of the present part of our study.

The psychological explanation of the recourse to reinterpretation is offered in the present case by the artist himself, who, when he was six years old, was involved in a serious car accident that marked him forever, this event has been reflected in his later artistic creation⁵². A good example in this respect regarding the influences felt by the artist because of this difficult moment was the creation of the sketch for the photography *Las Meninas* called *Me, Crippled*, that the theoretician psychoanalyst Parveen Adams had interpreted as a substitution of the victims that the artist had seen in the accident from his childhood⁵³.

Regarding the photography *Las Meninas*, Witkin replaced the image of the infanta with the one of an infirm little girl, placed in the centre of the composition, sitting on a crinoline with roller skates and holding in leash the dog that was in the fore-front of the work. Just like his predecessors, the artist made his own portrait working on the left side of the image, taking Velásquez's place from the 17th century painting. The amalgam of characters, objects and styles found in *Las Meninas* of Joel Peter Witkin transforms the painting of Velásquez in an image which is difficult to decipher visually and conceptually, this imagistic renewal simultaneously reminds us of the composition of the Spanish artist, of Picasso's style, of religious art and the childhood obsessions of the author.

In the field of reinterpretation, Celia Washington has also become known, being considered one of the most talented contemporary artists, well-known for her works, preferring oil painting, drawing and stencilprocess. In her work, the artist was influenced by the representative masters of the history of art, ever since she was a student inspired by the works of Chagall and Munch, then the ones of Goya, Picasso, Dubuffet, Beckmann, Basquiat or Barceló⁵⁴.

In the work *Journey to the End of the Night/ Viaje al fin de la noche*, the artist has taken over and interpreted a character of Velásquez's *Las*

⁵⁰Mark Stevens, *Beauty and the Beast*, in *New York Magazine*, vol. 28, No. 45, 1995, p. 91.

⁵¹*Ibidem*.

⁵²Parveen Adams, „Se faire être une photographie”: *The Work of Joel-Peter Witkin*, in the vol. *Art: sublimation or symptom*, Editor Parveen Adams, Karnac Books, p. 166.

⁵³*Ibidem*.

⁵⁴Hearher Waddell, *London Art and Artists Guide*, Published by London Art and Artist's Guide, London, 2006, pp. 28-29.

Meninas - infanta Margareta -, transposing in etching her double portrait. Celia Washington thus manages to harmoniously combine human faces with writing, visual elements are put in light by the ornamental blue background.

The centre of the composition is occupied by the portrait of two feminine characters, the text being placed in the left superior corner and inferior right of the image, its placing thus emphasizing the decendent diagonal of the work. Structured in this way, the work of Celia Washington concretizes a new formula of reinterpretation of *Las Meninas*, establishing a rapport specific between the features of baroque work and postmodern elements that she manages in an innovative manner, characteristic to contemporary art.

The reinterpretable and descriptive process of *Las Meninas* of Velásquez was also continued by the American artist Eve Sussman, she transformed the painting of the 17th century in a contemporary movie called *89 Seconds at Alcázar* (2004). In an interview of the artist, she justified the idea of the movie by the powerful emotion she had when she saw with her own eyes the famous baroque work at Prado Museum in Madrid, evoking the almost photographic manner in which rendered space, characters and the action herself.

Underlining the precedential phases of painting, the artist underlined the moment in which the characters get prepared to model for the artist, whispering and transmitting through body language the relationship between them and the viewer⁵⁵. Regarding this new way of reinterpreting the painting *Las Meninas*, the film critic Geoff Andrew has mentioned that there are specific connections to the works from the past, intentionally made by contemporary artists or not, underlined by the relationship between the realism of Velásquez's painting, the way of treating characters, the passing of time, the presence or the absence of the artist from the work and last, but not least, by the way in which the painter and some of the characters directly look at the viewer⁵⁶.

For this project, the artist has collaborated with a team of specialists formed of the architect Robert Whalley, the choreographer Claudia de Serpa Soares, the clothes designer Karen Young and the eleven actors who played the role of the characters of Velásquez⁵⁷. Through this movie, this reinterpretation has artistically exemplified the enactment of the action from Velásquez's painting, Sussman thus contributing to the imagistic evolution of *Las Meninas* up to contemporary times.

⁵⁵ Richard Lewis & Susan I. Lewis, *The Power of Art*, Wadsworth Publishing, 2009, p. 470.

⁵⁶ John Gill, *Andalusia: a Cultural History*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009, p.133.

⁵⁷ <http://www.ricegallery.org/new/exhibition/89secondsatalcazar.html>, last seen on 12.03.2020.

In the end, we conclude on the fact that *Las Meninas*, the famous work of the Spanish painter Velásquez has become a reference point for the evolution of the European art from the 17th century, being appreciated for the rigorous composition, the accuracy of the details presented in a naturalistic manner and the diversity of the social typologies joined in a single image.

The permanent update through reinterpretations of this masterpiece of baroque art creates a bird's eye view on the manner of evolution of art, permanently rapporting itself to the past. This type of images continues to offer clues regarding the concept of work of art, through eloquent examples which target at stylistic and technical renewal, specific to each epoch.

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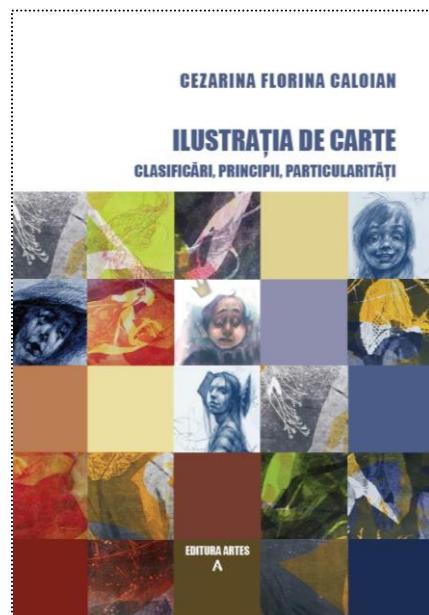
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BOOK REVIEWS

Book Illustration or the Art of Illustrating

Irina-Andreea Stoleriu

Cezarina Caloian, *Ilustrația de carte – clasificări, principii, particularități [Book Illustration – classifications, principles, particularities]*, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2020



The present book suggestively called *Book Illustration – classifications, principles, particularities* appeared at Artes Publishing House in 2020 and has 117 pages. In this volume, it is presented an interesting and original topic for specialized literature, having been written both for the students from Graphics specialization and for all the people who are passionate about illustration, just as the author herself mentioned, Cezarina Florina Caloian in her double posture, of academic professor at the Faculty of Visual Art and Design, "George Enescu" National University of Arts Vizuale și Design, Universitatea Națională de Arte „George Enescu” Iași and of graphician.

Even in the *Preliminaries* of the work, Cezarina Florina Caloian mentioned that the published text is part of her doctorate thesis –*Narrativity and Symbol in Book Illustration*–, publicly presented in 2009, having been supervised by Dimitrie Gavrilean, Professor, PhD. The adaptation of a specialized research such as the PhD paper, with a specific and original scientific content, rather complicated for ordinary public, becomes accessible in this volume and interesting for the readers less familiarized with the topic presented by the author.

The book is composed of *Preliminaries*, three chapters (I. General considerations over book illustration, II. Book illustration for children, III. Particularities of book illustration), divided in subchapters, and *Conclusions*. In the first chapter, **General Considerations over Book Illustration**, it is

described the importance of books for the mental and spiritual evolution of the human being, in the same time connected to the development of illustration on different supports: from stone, clay, papyrus and parchment to paper and electronic support. Still in this chapter, we meet a cataloguing of illustration depending on the text (the illustration of literary texts, the illustration having a scientific character, the illustration having a religious character, the illustration having a didactic character), depending on the category to which it has been addressed (illustration for children, illustration for adults), depending on the type of relationship which is born between image and text (illustration having a complementary character, illustration with a redundant character, purely ornamental illustration).

In the second chapter, **Book Illustration for Children**, the specific features of it are underlined, the importance of the didactic-educational role is mentioned, completed by the aesthetic one. On the one hand, the illustrator should understand the depth of the text, transcribing it into a magical world, attractive and capable of transmitting a specific message, directly or subliminal. On the other hand, the artist should follow the close connection between text and illustration, the last one having the result of developing the thinking, imagination and creativity of the child.

In the last chapter of this volume, **Particularities of book illustration**, the technical aspects of the process of conception and materialization of the book are put into light, a book is composed of a cover, a subcover, a title page, illustrated leaves and text pages. Along with these aspects, maybe the most important part of book illustration is connected to defining characters, rendered typologies and the interaction between them. In most cases, the illustrator on purpose underlines the positive characters that the readers come to appreciate and love. Thus, exactly as it is mentioned at the end of the book, "the attention paid for building the character from the illustrated book is also due to the public's taste for animation films, much more present in media because of the technical evolution of the past years" (p.103). Moreover, of major importance are the context and the atmosphere in which the action of the illustrated characters take place, having the role of transposing the reader in a real or fantastic world.

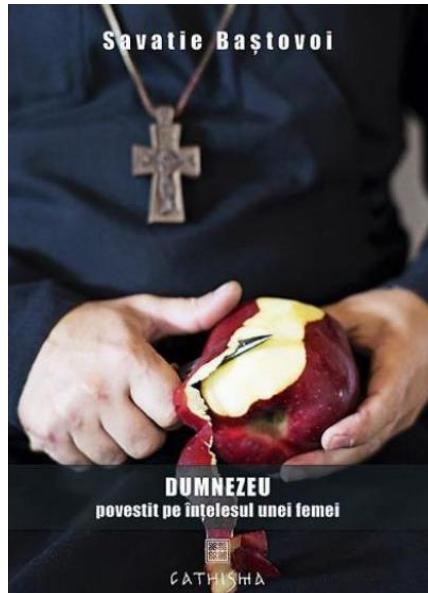
In conclusion, book illustration, a type of art which is in the same time extremely old and also very much actual, "presently attracts more and more artists, because of the complexity of the methods of conception and interpretation, of the diversity of styles and also of the interest shown to it by the great public who receives it" (p.102). Cezarina Florina Caloian facilitates the optimum understanding of the text, meeting the reader with a series of attractive images which also visually exemplify the theoretical notions of this text, by the creations of some illustrators which are known internationally or nationally – Livia Rusz, Thomas Berwick, Shaun Tan, Maurice Sendack, Quentin Blake, Rébecca Dautremer, Val Munteanu, Silviu Băiaș-, and also

through the remarkable creations of the students from the specialization Graphics – Florin Corodescu, Doina Axenti, Andreea Zabulic, Teodora Nălbaru,Geanina Malancă-, some of them having been coordinated by the author of the book herself.

God seen through the eyes of Savatie Baștovoi

Paula-Andreea Onofrei

Savatie Baștovoi, *Dumnezeu povestit pe înțelesul unei femei / God Narrated to be Comprehended by a Woman*
Editura Cathisma, București, 2017.



First and foremost, why have we chosen this book having such an intriguingly well-targeted audience, being addressed to women, why it cannot be regarded as a book which has been written for the large audience, for each and every reader interested in discovering God? In the introductory part, the author himself underlines that “the title does not hide any challenge, but it reveals a reality which is as simple as it can be: the book is called *God Narrated to be Comprehended by a Woman* because it offers my answers about God offered to a concrete woman, the journalist Doina Popa from Vip Magazin”¹.

Secondly, regarding the structure of the book, the author has launched the coordinates of this volume by asking the journalist to send his no more than 33 questions (of course, related to the symbolism of the age of Jesus Christ when He was crucified) that Savatie Baștovoi would answer taking full responsibility for his words, integrating Biblical and patristic sources in an accessible manner.

Thirdly, as far as the writing style is concerned, we believe that the author has applied the principle *multum in parvo*, each answer has exactly the

¹SavatieBaștovoi, *Dumnezeupovestitpeînțelesuluneifemei* [God Narrated to be Comprehended by a Woman], Cathisma Publishing House, Bucharest, 2017, page 5, my translation.

number of words which are considered enough to provide food for thought, according to Baștovoi's words².

Furthermore, it is of outmost importance to mention that this volume has two parts: the first is a collection of answers to the above-mentioned 33 questions, while the second contains Baștovoi's notes from Oricova, the things that he wrote down while he was building the church, as a sign of the fact that the beginning of this book was in Oricova. These poetic reflections about God and the world that surrounds us are "very much appropriate as a desert after the somehow sober dinner had in the first part of the book"³.

In order to stir one's interest, I am going to mention here the 33 questions that Doina Popa has launched, according to my translation:

1. When I was little, I used to spend hours watching the sky and imagining God sitting on clouds, looking at me in His turn. I sometimes moved like a doll on a scene, at that time, I only heard about theatrical performances from books, and I imagined that I am driven from above. I believe many children have these moments. Why do we picture God in this way? How is God seen in childhood?
2. Why would God *cry* today?
3. Regarding tears, I often ask myself where God is when my mother hurts and I know that she doesn't deserve to suffer...These questions, in time, have extended over other dear people. Does God give us suffering? Why does He do it?
4. Why should humbleness exist? Is dignity something we should condemn? On the one hand, God is Almighty, on the other hand, He tells us about being humble. If humility is something good, is God humble?
5. If God did everything right, why does sin exist? Who decides which thing is a sin or not?
6. Why are some sins forgiven, while others not, because it is said that the sin against the Holy Spirit is not to be forgiven? Who decides and who can know if a sin was forgiven?
7. How do women repent and how do men do it? In the Gospel, it is revealed to us that the woman who sinned washed the feet of Christ with her tears. Do men cry, also? Do men and women see sins in the same way?
8. Why does the Church not accept women as priests?
9. Is it necessary to know when and how to pray or you can pray the way you want to?
10. I am a mother...is the prayer of a mother stronger than anything?
11. I believe that God talks to me through randomly met people...most often, they appear in crowded buses, they can be old, children, women with serene

²Ibidem, page 6.

³ Idem, page 7, my translation.

eyes...who make me talk to them, sometimes they make me cry, they thrill me, they don't let me forget them. Is it like this? Are they truly random?

12. What does God say about being merciful and offering charity? Are there situations in which if you offer, you can do harm? Are there limits? Why is the Church accused of not offering enough charity?

13. Is it a sin to wash the laundry on Sunday and when it is a celebration day? What should I do if Saturday is a celebration day and Sunday is Sunday, when I wash the laundry? What other things are forbidden when it's Sunday or a religious celebration?

14. Can I confess my sins, directly to God? Often, words do not truly express what we feel or we cannot talk about the things that are a burden for our soul...Why must I confess to a priest and I cannot do it directly to God?

15. Why has God created flowers?

16. If God loves us so much, why does He enjoy seeing us on bedded knees?

17. What is the mission of the Church between God and I? Why must I pray inside the church, if I can also do it at home or in any other place?

18. Why are some people born being very beautiful from a physical point of view, while others are ugly? Does this have any connection to God's blessings or curses? Is beauty a blessing and ugliness a curse? Today, more and more people, especially women, go to the doctors to shape their physical appearance, because this type of intervention has become very much accessible. Is it a sin to have beauty surgeries?

19. When does pleasure become a sin?

20. Does the devil exist? What are charms, curses, bindings and undoings that make so many people be afraid? We have heard about priests that make undoing payers, I wonder...are exorcism prayers made by the Church still available today? To what extent a curse or a charm made by someone can influence our faith? Should we be afraid of charms or not?

21. God is the father of nature, why doesn't He stop it in case of calamity, when thousands and dozens of thousands of people are caught by the same "wave"? Or why has God created such enormous forces, that can destroy a lot?

22. People punish people, they judge them, they put them in jail, they decide how much they should stay there. How does God see this?

23. Why do priests wear black clothes?

24. Why is it in our human nature to always want what one does not have and to compare oneself with the others? How does envy manifest itself at men and at women?

25. Why in the Bible, genealogical series contain only men names? Isn't this a way of diminishing the importance of women?

26. Is it good to believe in signs? A lot of television and radio channels transmit the horoscope on a daily basis and a lot of people believe in astral predictions. There are even pieces of advice regarding sign matching and you

can often hear things like “what can you do about it, this is how lions are” or “this is how cancers are” or “he’s a bull and he will never forgive you”. Do signs influence our destiny in any way? What does the Bible say about astrology, taking into account the fact that Christ’s birth was foretold by a star and that the Magi were the first that came to worship Baby Jesus? Can we say that the event with the appearance of the star when Jesus was born and Magi’s worshipping are a sign that God approves astrology?

27. If we are all born with the original sin, it means that we do not have any chance to be the way God wants us to be. How is it possible to inherit a sin that someone else committed and why are we guilty for what Adam did in Heaven? Or does Christening erase this original sin?

28. The fact that God knows our life and deeds in advance means that everything is predestined? Or are there predestined things, decided by God to happen and others which depend on our choices? Why do we say that a human being has a specific calling, a vocation? If destiny exists, which part of our life is already established?

29. What has Jesus written on the sand?

30. How is the Kingdom of God?

31. Does God show His face?

32. Does God want to be asked questions?

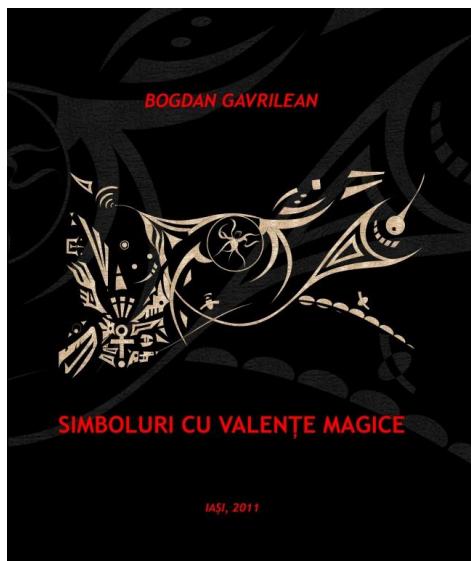
33. After 2000 years, the world hasn’t changed and doesn’t seem to ever change. According to Christ’s pieces of advice, the world is a utopia. Why has God given some commandments which can’t change the world? Is this a failure of God?

In conclusion, *God Narrated to be Comprehended by a Woman* is not a book about women, but it is entirely dedicated to God, a short, but meaningful presentation of what Our Saviour is, from a healthy Orthodox perspective, being written in a concise style, always bringing valid arguments which are well-chosen, having their roots in the large general knowledge of the author.

About the world of magical symbols, using the language of contemporary world

Adrian Stoleriu

Bogdan Gavrilean, *Simboluri cu valențe magice [Symbols with a Magical Value]*, "Artes" Publishing House, Iași, 2011



What is the place occupied today by the interpretations dedicated to the world of symbols, after having had so many studies on this topic in the past decades marked by opinions, beliefs, theoretical verdicts and specific interpretations? Given the large bibliography dedicated to this important area of research, the emergence of a new work having as topic the symbol and its interpretation is regarded in a complex manner, both from the perspective of scientific norms and rigors – which ask for the tribute of recognizing already established theories and studies in this field-, and from the point of view of an eternal curiosity, of a continuous need of discovering new meanings, reasons and valencies for what the symbol represents today. This endeavour is also justified by the fact that –in the present article- we have referred to a visual artist, equally interested in theoretical research, but also practical ones, specific to the world of art. The answer to the question we have just launched is maybe already known, the perennity of symbols determines – from now on – the start of a new and challenging research.

It is the case of the present paper, suggestively entitled *Symbols with magical valencies*, created by Bogdan Gavrilean, a visual artist and member of the academic staff of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from the National University of Arts "George Enescu" from Iași. Based on the admitted "*artistic obsession*" of the author, having deep roots, ever since he was doing research for his PhD paper, the present study is the expression of

his interest for "*the fascinating world of symbols, [an interest which] has its origin in ideatic quests and technical-artistic experiments which have lasted for a long time, focused on the direction of discovering a personal way of expressing individual sensitivity*" (p.15). The large research on symbols starts with Bogdan Gavrilean's declaration of honesty, proposing a complex analysis of different hypostases and interpretations of the symbol, by underlining its connections to the field of myths, magical rituals and religious representations.

The work is structured in three major chapters (I. Signs and symbols, II. The human dimension of creation and III. Symbols with magical valencies in personal artistic creation), each of them being divided in a rich structure of subchapters, treating different aspects, specific to the theory and artistic practice inspired by the world of symbols. The first of these major chapters debates on a complex topic, the purpose is to create a series of conceptual delineations regarding the signs, the symbols, the sciences and the theories involved in their study. The author presents a large typology of symbols, divided in sacred, magical and planetary symbols, in elements and manifestations of nature, in expressions of the human being, in geometrical symbols, in the symbolism of colours and last, but not least, the symbolism of metals.

An interesting vision, specific to this paper is about the expressive force of symbols, thus underlining the fundamental role played by perception, reason, sensibility and intuition for deciphering their plurivalence. The interpretation of symbols vacillates nowadays between "*potentiality and perversion*", between "*incantations and manipulation*", the two poles of analysis signaled by the author. Once the transition from traditional societies – known for their deeply spiritual vision about the world and existence -, to modern ones was made, secularized or even desacralized of the present, the symbol passes in its turn through a similar process of transformation, losing its original meanings in many cases, thus acquiring new, unexpected new ones or emptied of their primordial essence. The symbol thus becomes a bridge between past and present, reactivating the spiritual universes of long-forgotten worlds or itself becoming an expression of the way in which the contemporary world connects to these realities.

The second part of the paper is dedicated to the exploitation of some socio-cultural premises, by underlining the influence factors of the process of art spreading or the spreading of new conceptual perspectives due to "*the death of art*" or the innovative artistic shock which tends to attract more and more nowadays artists. The problematics of the genesis of the work of art, of the creative process and the impossibility of its rational translation into words become topics of an interesting questioning on the primordial factors which constitute the basis of the mechanisms of artistic creation. By oscillating between the argument of reason and sensitivity, the author reaches the

conclusion that "we cannot talk of a rational vision of the act of creation, if there is no intention of the artist in the first place, followed by a practical finality of the act of creation. This intention can sometimes be obvious, but in other situations, its deciphering can be difficult regarding the way of artistic or compositional expression of the artist, especially when one uses non-conventional techniques or methods."(p.127)

Therefore, this is the reason why the author stops to analyze the *intentional* or *non-intentional* character of art, introducing new categories in this already complicated theorem of artistic creation such as the *ludic* or the *pathological*. In the same manner, the author courageously launches himself into an analysis which is specific to theoreticians, argumentedly investigating a series of perpetual aspects of criticism, such as the interpretation of a work of art and the crisis of the artistic endeavour generated by the collation of the author's intention to the ones of the public. In his complicated attempt of reaching some conclusions, Bogdan Gavrilean signals in his turn this interesting intentional contrast, by asking himself: "*Which of these intentions has thus priority, the artist's or the one of the interpreter of the artist's creation?*". (p.135) The last part of this chapter (no.2) is focused on underlining the role that the subjectivity of the artist plays in accomplishing one's creation, defined as an enigma which will permanently attract the honest interest of artists and theoreticians.

The third and last part of the paper is the one dedicated to the representation of symbols with magical valences in personal artistic creation, this chapter starts with a series of questions regarding the meanings and implications of this concept on the human psyche, questionning by this the need of the human being, and in particular of the artist, of symbols.

Obviously, the passing through his own filter of thinking and feeling of the theories about symbols makes this part of his paper be the most original one, thus enjoying a rich imagistic material, of very good quality, extracted from the portfolio of personal creation. This is the part which underlines, in the clearest way, the double quality of this author, quality owned by the author while creating this book, the one of theoretician, respectively the one of visual artist, of practitioner directly involved in the process of artistic creation and in transposing in images the themes and subjects which preoccupy him, among which the symbols which certainly occupy a one of the top ranking places.

If we simply enumerate the titles of the papers that he describes and illustrates – *Germinație [Germination]*, *Ichthys [The Fish]*, *Nucleu [Nucleous]*, *Principiul uniunii [The Principle of Union]*, *Ritual de trecere [The Ritual of Passing]*, *Cădereea îngerului din Rai [The Fall of the Angel from Heaven]*, *Genesis, Alfa și Omega [Alpha and Omega]* – we believe it is a convincing pleading for the importance of sacred symbols for the artistic creation in general, but also for the personal one, in particular.

Thus structured, the 248 pages of the book *Symbols with Magical Valences*, published by Artes Publishing House in 2011 (but only recently printed, after a long process of germination), invites the reader to a large and challenging theoretical periplus, underlining the value of symbols in the development of culture and human spirituality. In this respect, Bogdan Gavrilean – the artist, researcher and academic professor – has as objective to fully take advantage of the "space" of his book, offering the proof of a special generosity towards his readers that he charms up to the last page with information, images, quotations, opinions or ideas meant to argument his discourse and its deep essence: "*Have a look and see everything there is on the face of the Earth. You will see, maybe, fortresses without walls, without laws, you will meet peoples that do not know how to write and use money, but no one has ever met a nation without God* (Plutarch)". (p.248)

