ANASTASIS

Research in Medieval Culture and Art
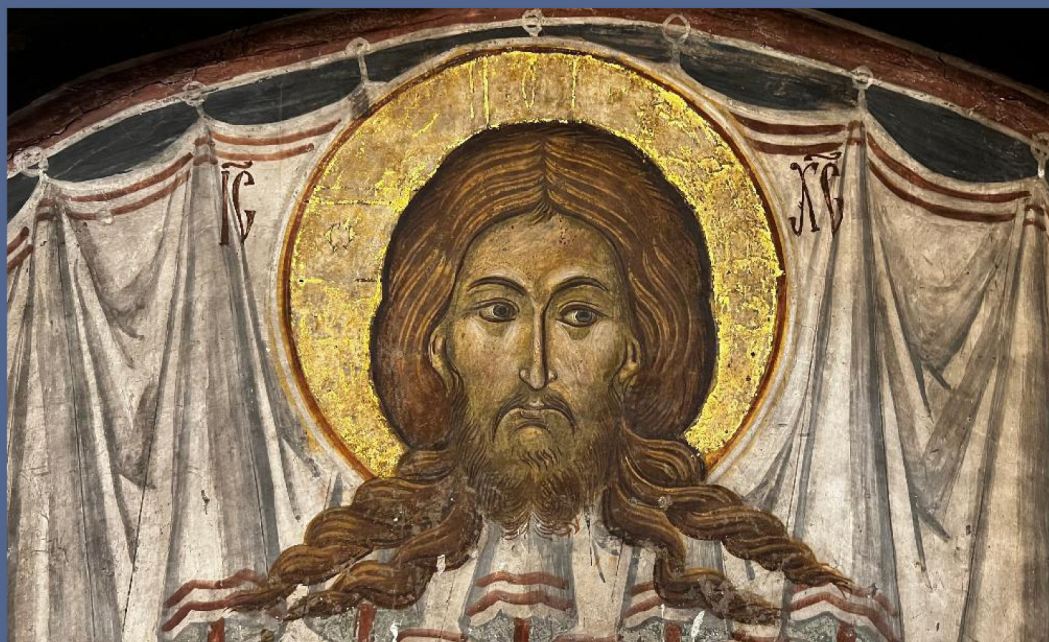
ANASTASIS
Research in Medieval Culture and Art

The Research Center of Medieval Art "Vasile Drăguț"

ANASTASIS
Research in Medieval Culture and Art

Volume XI, No.1/May 2024

Table of Contents

MEDIEVAL CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

BOOK REVIEWS

MEDIEVAL ART AND CIVILIZATION

The Holy Forgery of Bromholm

John Giebfried [*]

Abstract: *This article describes the history of a medieval English True Cross relic, known as the Holy Rood of Bromholm, supposedly acquired from Constantinople by an English cleric during the Fourth Crusade. It compares the English monastic accounts of the Holy Rood's translation with accounts of the Fourth Crusade and its aftermath to explore the biography of the English cleric who gave the relic to Bromholm Priory and determine the historicity of his account. However, in exploring the supposed origins of the Bromholm Cross, this article demonstrates that not only can it not be the relic it claims to be, because that relic continued to be used in Constantinople after its supposed departure for England, but points out that the descriptions and artistic depictions of the Bromholm Cross match a very different True Cross relic from Constantinople than the relic it purports to be – thus proving it to be a forgery.*

Keywords: *Holy Rood of Bromholm, Bromholm Priory, Relics, Relic Forgery, True Cross, Fourth Crusade, Latin Empire of Constantinople, Constantinople*

In February 1537, a year after Parliament had approved Henry VIII's suppression of the monasteries, Richard Southwell, former High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk and tutor to Gregory Cromwell, son of Thomas Cromwell, the Chancellor of England, rode into the precincts of Bromholm Abbey and declared it suppressed.[1] He took with him that day the abbey's most cherished relic – a cross which the monks had claimed was brought to the abbey from Constantinople in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. Relics of the True Cross were nothing new to the agents of Henry VIII, they had seized dozens on their journeys across England, most only the size of a splinter, but the relic of Bromholm was different because of its massive scale, larger than a man's forearm. In fact, if genuine, it would be one of the largest true cross relics anywhere in the world.[2] Southwell informed his friend Cromwell of the acquisition of the relic and Cromwell requested the relic be

---

[*] PhD, *Universitätsassistent* in History and Digital Humanities Institut für Geschichte, Universität Wien, john.giebfried@univie.ac.at.

[1] Francis Wormald, "The Rood of Bromholm", *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1/1 (1937), p. 43.

[2] Anatole Frolow, *La relique de la Vraie Croix: recherches sur le développement d'un culte*, Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, Paris, 1961, pp. 68-72, 81-94.

sent to him personally in London, which Richard sent on Feb 26th, 1537.[3] What became of it once it reached Cromwell's desk is unknown, did he keep it for private devotion, or as a Protestant iconoclast, strip its silver reliquary, and toss the wood into his fireplace?

It is clear to see why Cromwell may have been interested in the Rood of Bromholm. The relic had a long and storied tradition in England and the Cluniac monks who protected the cross grew rich, receiving patronage from king and commoner alike. In fact, King Henry III was one of the first converts to the cult of the Holy Rood. Henry travelled to Bromholm on pilgrimage many times during his reign, normally during Lent or shortly after Easter.[4] On his first visit to the site in 1226 he granted the monks the right to hold a weekly market day and an annual fair around the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.[5] The pious king's devotion to the relic did much to strengthen the cult at Bromholm. Bromholm eventually became a famous pilgrimage site in England, perhaps only second to Canterbury. Of the relic, the early fifteenth century hagiographer John Capgrave wrote that no fewer than forty-nine people were raised from the dead and nineteen blind people were restored to sight by the Rood of Bromholm.[6] Edward I granted the priory a manor in the nearby town of Bacton and just after his victory at Agincourt Henry V granted the monks of Bromholm five pipes of wine a year (that is 725 gallons or 3700 bottles) in perpetuity for their prayers.[7] The site was so well known that it was referenced in the two greatest classics of Middle English William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.[8]

While Protestant iconoclasts certainly held the cross to be a forgery, and some medieval monks – as will be seen below – had some serious doubts, modern historians have almost completely accepted the Constantinopolitan origins of this relic. In the seminal article on the cross, Francis Wormald opens his article by defining his subject: "Briefly it may be described as a relic of the true cross brought to England from Constantinople between 1205 and 1223 and the object of a pilgrimage at Bromholm Priory during the Middle Ages."[9] In his discussion of the relic D. J. Hall writes:

> The events leading to the defeat of Baldwin I in 1205 are historical, the rest of the account given here is a composite of writings which vary only in detail. Nothing has ever appeared to confute them so we may accept, as the

---

[3] Wormald, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-3.
[4] His documented trips were on 5 April, 1226, 16 February, 1232, 1 July, 1234, 16 February, 1234, 13 March, 1235, 23 March, 1242, 28 March, 1245. F.M. Powicke, "The Oath of Bromholm", *The English Historical Review* 56/224 (1941)*, p.* 531.
[5] Ibidem, pp. 533-4.
[6] D.J. Hall, *English Mediaeval Pilgrimage*, Routledge, New York, 2020, p. 211.
[7] Wormald, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[8] Wormald, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.
[9] Wormald, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

poor prior and monks did, that in some such way there came to a remote corner of north-eastern Norfolk this holy relic from the imperial feretory. Originally accepted by the Greeks or looted for the greater glory of the Eastern Church, it was looted by the crusader-pilgrims of the West as a treasure for the new Western emperor, only in turn to be taken by a humbler rogue into a simple place where it acquired fame far greater than it had in its distant, exotic home.[10]

This acceptance is mirrored in subsequent commentaries on Bromholm's cross relic by many English historians, including Diarmaid MacCulloch, Kathryn Hurlock, Margret Aston, and Michael Schmoelz.[11] True, a few scholars will toss on a qualifier such a 'supposedly,' but to date no scholar has yet laid out the case for the Rood of Bromholm as a forgery.[12] This article will demonstrate that not only is the Rood of Bromholm a forgery, it is a forgery of a different Constantinopolitan relic than the one it claims to be. Through this investigation, this article will also explore the identity of the Bromholm forger and try to fill in the gaps in the accounts of its origins.

Accounts of the Holy Rood

Any details about the origins of the Holy Rood of Bromholm from the monks who venerated it disappeared with the suppression of Bromholm Priory in 1537. Instead, the only substantial independent accounts were written by a pair of contemporary monastic historians, Ralph of Coggeshall and Roger of Wendover. Ralph was a monk and later the abbot of Coggeshall Abbey in Essex.[13] Roger was a monk at St. Albans Abbey, whose history lies in the shadow of his continuator at St. Albans, Matthew Paris. Matthew

---

[10] Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

[11] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life*, Viking, New York, 2018, p. cclxx; Kathryn Hurlock, "A Transformed Life? Geoffrey of Dutton, the Fifth Crusade, and the Holy Cross of Norton", *Northern History* 54/1 (2017), p. 20; Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, p. 724; Michael Schmoelz, *Pilgrimage in Medieval East Anglia. A Regional Survey of the Shrines and Pilgrimages of Norfolk and Suffolk* Unpublished PhD Dissertation (University of East Anglia, 2017), pp. 39-42.

[12] In the most recent article on the Holy Rood, Gail writes that it "was supposedly taken there following the Sack of Constantinople in 1204". Byzantinist Michael Angold also uses "supposed," but more or less accepts the story. David Perry, who wrote the definitive account of relic transfer after the Fourth Crusade, refers to it as "legendary", but does not directly address or debunk the myth, and uses the story to put forward his arguments, something also done by Filip van Tricht in his history of the early Latin Empire of Constantinople. Gail Turner, "An Early-16th-Century Prayer Roll and the Holy Rood of Bromholm", *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 174/1 (2021), p. 23; Michael Angold, *The Fourth Crusade, Event and Context,* Routledge, London, 2014, p. 230; David M. Perry, *Sacred Plunder: Venice and the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade,* Penn State University Press, University Park, 2015, p. 39; Filip Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, Brill, Leiden, 2011, p. 90.

[13] Andrea, *op.cit.,* p. 265.

repeats Roger's account of the arrival of the Holy Rood in Bromholm almost verbatim in his *Chronica Majora*, and references it in two of his minor works, providing no new information about the Holy Rood.[14] There is also a two-sentence description in the Annals of Dunstable.[15]

In the most general terms, the accounts of Coggeshall and Wendover both relate how the cross was brought from Constantinople by a former chaplain to Emperor Baldwin I, who gave the relic to the monks of Bromholm in return for a comfortable retirement for himself and his two sons. While they agree on the broad strokes, there are significant differences in their accounts. Generally speaking, Ralph of Coggeshall's story is more detailed on events in the Aegean, whereas in this area Roger of Wendover talks in generalities, and even makes important factual errors, such as saying Emperor Baldwin ruled for many years (his reign lasted barely a year) and died in battle with unnamed infidels (he died in captivity after being defeated by the Christian Bulgarians).[16]

In his account Coggeshall relates that "it happened that a certain priest (English by birth), having completed his pilgrimage, returned from the land of Jerusalem to Constantinople because he had heard that the Franks had just gained possession of the land of the Greek emperor, Kirisac [Isaac II Angelos], and had made Count Baldwin emperor."[17] While this priest might have been on a simple independent pilgrimage, it is more likely that he is part of one of the contingents of the Fourth Crusade who sailed to Acre, rather than travelling from Venice with the main army to Zara and Constantinople. This is what happened to Emperor Baldwin I's wife, Marie, as well as several prominent nobles including Stephen of Perche and Renaut of Montmiral.[18] Several of these contingents, unable to accomplish much in the Holy Land, sailed to Constantinople to take part in the consolidation of Latin power in the region after they heard news of the city's capture.

Next Coggeshall's account says that the chaplain, by his diligence in singing in the imperial chapel, became entrusted with the keys for relics and treasures by Emperor Baldwin.[19] Now comes an important difference in the histories of Coggeshall and Wendover. Both agree a crucial turning point in the story is the battle of Adrianople, where the Bulgarians and Cumans defeat and capture emperor Baldwin I in 1205. Both authors ascribe the defeat to

---

[14] The minor difference is one word in the description of the battle of Adrianople, see Wormald, *op.cit.*, p. 34, n. 3.

[15] *The Annals of Dunstable*, ed. Henry Luard, Annales Monastici 3 (London, 1866-7), p. 97.

[16] Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum,* ed. Hewlett, ii, p. 274*;* trans. Giles, ii, p. 447.

[17] "contigit ut quidam presbyter natione Anglicus rediret a terra Hierosolimitana in Constantinopolim, peregrinatione sua peracta, eo quod audisset quod Franci terram imperatoris Kirisaci Graeci jam obtinuissent, et comitem Balduinum imperatorem fecissent" Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum,* ed. Stevenson, p. 201; trans. Andrea, p. 288.

[18] Geoffrey Villehardouin, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, ed. Faral; trans. Smith, § 315.

[19] "Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum,* ed. Stevenson, p. 201; trans. Andrea, p. 288.

two primary causes, first being the decision of Baldwin to charge into a far superior Bulgarian force, and second the fact that he went into battle without the relic of the True Cross that Byzantine emperors traditionally brought with their armies into battle.[20] Wendover's English priest does not go to the battle, instead staying in Constantinople – but when he hears about the battle he makes off with a trove of sacred and secular treasures.[21] Coggeshall's account instead tells how on the eve of battle Baldwin realized he did not bring the relic of the True Cross that Byzantine emperors traditionally used as a battle standard, and sent his relic-keeper back to fetch it, but engaging in battle before the relic-keeper returned, Baldwin was defeated and captured.[22] Hearing the news, Coggeshall's protagonist, like that of Wendover, takes the cross and runs for home.[23] In opposition to this, the one-sentence version of the story found in the Dunstable Annals does not suggest the relic was stolen, saying instead that the English cleric received it directly from Baldwin, but this account can be dismissed as uninformed.[24]

There are the echoes of historical truth in Coggeshall's account. Geoffrey of Villehardouin recounts how Baldwin rushed into battle with the Bulgarians refusing to wait – not for a cross – but for the reinforcements from his brother Henry.[25] The account of the battle in Coggeshall also contains important and correct historical details of the battle, knowing the name of the Bulgarian opponent, John the Vlach, and also that the battle took place on Easter Week, as well as the participation of Louis of Blois, and that the loss was due to a fatal foolhardy charge into their opponents with small numbers – sixty knights in Coggeshall, one hundred-forty in Villehardouin.[26] Likewise, mirroring these accounts, after the defeat, Villehardouin describes a mass exodus of crusaders from Constantinople, 70,000 men in total, though that number is clearly exaggerated.[27] Before the city's capture, all the crusaders had vowed to stay on a year after the conquest of the city to help complete the conquest of the empire; now that time had come and gone, and with the situation in Constantinople on the verge of collapse, it seemed like a good time to go.[28] In this chaotic period, when the crusaders prepared to

---

[20] "Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum,* ed. Stevenson, pp. 201-2; trans. Andrea, p. 289; Wendover, *Flores Historiarum,* ed. Hewlett, ii, . 274*;* trans. Giles, ii, p. 447.

[21] Wendover, *Flores Historiarum,* ed. Hewlett, ii, p. 274*;* trans. Giles, ii, p. 447.

[22] Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum,* ed. Stevenson, pp. 201-2; trans. Andrea, p. 289.

[23] Andrea 289, Wendover, *Flores Historiarum,* ed. Hewlett, ii, p. 274*;* trans. Giles, ii, p. 447.

[24] 'Eodem anno multiplicate sunt miracula apud veram crucem de Bromholm, que fuerat Baldewini, imperatoris Constantinoplitani; et quam ab eo accepit quidam caellanus suus Anglicus, et eam in Angliam attulit, et loco contulit memorato' *Dunstable Annals*, p. 97.

[25] Villehardouin, *Constantinople*, ed. Faral; trans. Smith, § 347-8

[26] Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum,* ed. Stevenson, pp. 201-2; trans. Andrea, 289; Villehardouin, *Constantinople*, ed. Faral; trans. Smith, § 348.

[27] Villehardouin, *Constantinople*, ed. Faral; trans. Smith, § 376-9.

[28] Villehardouin, *Constantinople*, ed. Faral; trans. Smith, § 235.

depart for home, there was also a large spate of relic thefts. For instance, in
another account of a similar crime, a knight by the name of Dalmase of
Sercey stole the head of St. Clement and brought it to Cluny after
misunderstanding a papal legate that he could take home a relic, but that it
was sinful to buy and sell relics. He thus stole the relic at sword point, instead
of simply asking for a relic from a church, as the legate intended.[29] Hence the
account of an English cleric stealing a relic in Constantinople as the empire
seemed on the verge of collapse after Adrianople, is altogether plausible and
lines up with the conditions of this period.

Once the pilgrim returns to England the narratives diverge again.
Coggeshall writes how the priest settled in his native Norfolk near
Weybourne Priory; there he kept the existence of the cross a secret. However,
wishing to care for his two sons he offers the relic to the priory of
Weybourne, if they take care of the boys. This request is turned down, being
suspicious that they never heard about their neighbor having such an
important relic before. Thus, the cleric offers it to nearby Bromholm Priory,
who accept the gift.[30] In Wendover's account, the priest visits Wendover's
own community, the monastery of St. Albans, where he sells a silver gilt
cross, two fingers of St. Margaret, and some rings to the monks.[31] However,
the monks gets suspicious when the cross is also offered; they refuse to buy
it, and later hear that he went everywhere trying to sell it off until Bromholm
accepted it.[32] Now these stories, while different, are not mutually exclusive.
Perhaps our priest first went to St Albans, selling off some of his treasures
there, before shopping around the cross to several monasteries including
Weybourne, before Bromholm accepted his offer. One detail that lends
credence to this account is the reference to the relics of St Margaret, as her
relics were kept in Constantinople and another Fourth Crusader, Abbot
Martin of Pairis, is recorded to have taken back part of her relics to his
monastery.[33]

Now with the cross installed at Bromholm, miracles began to be
attributed to it, and the old worn-out buildings at Bromholm were replaced by
a new beautiful priory. This building was partly financed by Richard de
Marsh, bishop of Durham and Chancellor of England, who donated all his
supplies of marble to help furnish the church; this is confirmed by a note in
the close rolls dated to October 12, 1226.[34] Exactly when the relic arrived at

---

[29] Paul Edouard Didier Riant, *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae: fasciculus documentorum minorum, ad byzantina lipsana in Occidentem saeculo XIII translata, spectantium Historiam Quarti Belli Sacri imperii; gallo-graeci illustrantium*, Société de l'Orient latin, Paris, 1877-8*, i*, pp. 136-8.
[30] Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum,* ed. Stevenson, p. 202; trans. Andrea, p. 289.
[31] Wendover, *Flores Historiarum,* ed. Hewlett, ii, p. 274*;* trans. Giles, ii, p. 447.
[32] Wendover, *Flores Historiarum,* ed. Hewlett, ii, p. 275*;* trans. Giles, ii, pp. 447-8.
[33] Gunther of Paris, *Historia*, p. 127.
[34] Wormald, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

Bromholm is unknown, the first definite reference to it is only in 1225, but based on a later papal indulgence, Wormald suggests that the relic may have been officially installed there on Passion Sunday, March 15th, 1220. [35] However, Wendover explicitly dates the arrival to 1223, and Coggeshall's account precedes and follows his account with events from the same year, so that date should be preferred.

Who was the English Cleric?

Trying to discover a name for the English cleric at the heart of the Holy Rood accounts is an exercise in frustration. Compared to all crusades but the First, the Fourth Crusade is incredibly well documented because alongside a mountain of documentary evidence, there were more than half a dozen book-length eyewitness accounts, likely because its participants felt the need to write down a history that justified their widely-criticized actions. In 1978, Jean Longnon published an extensive prosopography of the Fourth Crusade, there is no record of any English crusaders, let alone clerics with ties to Norfolk, in the volume. [36] Longnon's prosopography, however, has clear weaknesses, being based heavily on evidence from French chronicles, rather than the full array of available diplomatic document and thus, for example he does not include a single Venetian in the volume! Looking at the registers of the Latin Empire of Constantinople compiled by Benjamin Hendrickx and the Venetian and papal documents compiled by Tafel and Thomas, there are also no recognizably English surnames. [37]

Trying to figure out which contingent of the crusade the English crusader travelled with at least yields possible candidates. As mentioned above, he did not accompany the main army from Venice to Zara and onto Constantinople. In this, he is not alone, there were half a dozen contingents who broke off from the main force, many of them making it to Acre. Looking for English connections among these, the most prominent is Simon IV of Montfort, who was Earl of Leicester by marriage. [38] G.E.M. Lippiat discovered an Anglo-Norman crusader, Gerard of Furnival, in his discovery of a charter made by the contingent in Acre. [39] However, because neither of

---

[35] *Ibidem*, p. 37.

[36] Jean Longnon, *Les Compagnons de Villehardouin: Recherches sur les Croisés de la Quatrième Croisade*, Droz, Geneva, 1978.

[37] Benjamin Hendrickx, "Régestes des empereurs latins de Constantinople (1204-1261/1272)", *Byzantina* 14 (1988), 7-222; Gottlieb L.F. Tafel, and Georg M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels-und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig, mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante: Vom neunten bis zum Ausgang des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, K.K. Hof- und Staatsdr,Vienna, 1857)

[38] For this period in his career, see G. E. M. Lippiatt, *Simon V of Montfort and Baronial Government, 1195-1218*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, pp. 56-79.

[39] G. E. M Lippiatt, The Zaran company in the Holy Land: an unknown fourth crusade charter from Acre, *Historical Research* 94/266 (November 2021), p. 874.

these men were known to travel to Constantinople, and Simon especially was vehemently against any attacks on fellow Christians – since that is why he left the crusade at Zara, the most likely candidate for a lord for our cleric to accompany is Stephen of Perche, who came to Constantinople from Acre and received rich promises of territorial rewards, including the duchy of Philadelphia, and a place in the hierarchy of the new Latin Empire.[40] Stephen of Perche had built a career for himself in the service of King Richard I of England in the 1190s, that he had an English chaplain attached to his retinue would not be out of the question.[41] Stephen of Perche also dies at the Battle of Adrianople, giving any cleric associated with him, or with Baldwin I through the patronage of Stephen, an especially good reason to want to leave after the defeat. However, while plausible, this association between the English cleric and the entourage of Stephen of Perche can only be an educated conjecture.

Trying to trace records associated with the imperial chapel, where our cleric allegedly held a post, is another dead-end. We know that Baldwin I set up thirty conventual churches, or *praepositurae*, in Constantinople which he received in the partition of the empire, including the chapels of the imperial palaces.[42] Control over who could appoint the *praepositi* and deans of these churches was a point of contention between the emperors and the Venetian-controlled patriarchate of Constantinople, leading to the Patriarch excommunicating the non-Venetian clerics in charge of these churches and two papal legates being sent to settle the dispute.[43] We do not, however, have any list of appointments to these churches. Perhaps the English cleric was appointed to serve in the chapters of one of these conventual churches, perhaps even the chapter of the Boukoleon palace, where the imperial relic collection was kept. However, it is unlikely that our cleric was the keeper of the relics. We do know that under Baldwin's brother and successor, Henry, there is a recognized role of guardian of the imperial relic collection, but that was delegated to a cleric from Hainaut, the Benedictine abbot, Hugh of St. Ghislain.[44] Abbot Hugh may have held that role under Baldwin as well, or it may be that the role of keeper of the imperial relics was part of his other recorded job as chancellor of the Latin Empire and that the two previous chancellors, John of Noyon and Walter of Courtrai, both Flemish clerics, had been relic keepers before him.[45] In what is a particular ironic parallel, one of

---

[40] Villehardouin, *Constantinople*, ed. Faral; trans. Smith, §315.

[41] Kathleen Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of the Perche, 1000–1226*, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2002, pp. 140-1.

[42] Robert Lee Wolff, "Politics in the Latin Patriarchate of Constantinople, 1204-1261", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954), p. 245.

[43] This dispute is explained in *Ibidem*, pp. 244-6.

[44] Benjamin Hendrickx, "Les institutions de l'empire Latin de Constantinople (1204-1261): la Chancellerie", *Acta Classica* 19 (1976), p. 126.

[45] *Ibidem*, pp. 124-6.

the two surviving documents of Hugh's time as keeper of the relics collection is a letter validating the fact that he also left Constantinople to go to the West with a relic of the True Cross which he bestowed on a monastery as he took up the life of a simple retired monk there, albeit with imperial approval.[46]

Another place where the cleric might have left a trace was in the records of the abbeys of Weybourne or St Albans. Weybourne, founded in the reign of King John, was always a small and poor community down to its dissolution in 1536 and leaves no evidence to help corroborate the story.[47] St Albans was one of the largest and wealthiest communities in England with an unmatched tradition of history writing, however here too, most of the records were lost in Henry VIII's suppression and the search for additional evidence does not turn up a name.[48] It does however turn up two small mentions of note, namely that in the twelfth century St Albans had previously acquired a relic of the True Cross, with full documentary proof of authenticity, from an English cleric who had served in the kingdom of Jerusalem, and that the abbot Robert of Gorham prayed to St Margaret to save him from a shipwreck and that afterwards the community maintained a special reverence to her.[49] Perhaps having a True Cross relic with definite provenance made them less interested in the cross that would go to Bromholm, and that their interest in St. Margaret's relics was due to the community's record of devotion to her.

The Wrongly-Forged Cross

Having discussed the accounts and having tried to trace the identity of the English cleric, this paper will now demonstrate that this relic is a forgery. This is simply done because the cross relic supposedly taken to Bromholm continued to be used in battle by crusader emperors of Constantinople long after the cleric returns to England. While Baldwin may not have used the cross relic at Adrianople, there are plenty of records of Baldwin's successor, his brother Henry, using the cross in battle. This is attested in the chronicle of Henry of Valenciennes and in Emperor Henry's own letters to the West.[50] This relic would remain in the hands of the Latin emperors, until it was mortgaged and then given to Louis IX by the last Latin

---

[46] Riant, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 78.

[47] William Page, "Houses of Austin canons: The priory of Weybourne", in William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Norfolk*, 2, Victoria County History, London, 1906, pp. 404-406. British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/norf/vol2/pp404-406 [accessed 16 July 2022], pp. 404-6.

[48] I want to express my thanks to the curatorial team at St. Albans Cathedral, and particularly Rob Piggott, who helped me with this part of my research.

[49] *The Deeds of the Abbots of St Albans,* ed. James G. Clark, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2019, pp. 225, 413.

[50] Günter Prinzing, "Der Brief Kaiser Heinrichs von Konstantinopel vom 13. Januar 1212. Überlieferungsgeschichte, Neuedition und Kommentar", *Byzantion* 43 (1973), p. 416; Valenciennes, *Histoire*, §524.

Emperor Baldwin II.[51] At this point, it is taken to Saint-Chapelle in Paris and stored with the Crown of Thorns and the other passion relics acquired by Louis IX from Constantinople. There they remained until the royal relic collection was dispersed and largely destroyed in the French Revolution.

      In 1247, Baldwin II describes the full relic trove given to Louis IX. There are three pieces of the true cross included. The first is described as "a large portion of the life giving cross of Christ," the second "another large portion of the wood of the Holy Cross" and the third, "another small cross, which the ancients called the triumphant cross because the emperors used to take it to wars in hope of victory."[52] That final cross is also described by Gerard of St. Quentin, who wrote the official account of their translation to Paris, as *"mediocris*," but he also links it in detail with the triumphal battle cross used by Constantine.[53] All three relics of the True Cross are visible in medieval and early modern depictions of the passion relics of Saint-Chappelle. Below are two of the earliest examples, as well as an image of the first of these relics being displayed on arrival by Matthew Paris, who was an eyewitness. Compare them to the images of the Bromholm Cross compiled by Wormald, also below:

Fig. 1: Images of the Cross of Bromholm.

[51] Jannic Durand and Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet, *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle: Paris, Musée*

du Louvre, 31 mai - 27 août 2001, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 2001*,* pp. 38-41.

[52] Riant, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 134-5; translation in Nicolotti, *Mandylion of Edessa,* p. 190.

[53] *Ibidem*, iii, pp. 108-9, Erat cum hoc quedam crux mediocris, sed non modice viitutis, que propter causas inferius annotatas dicitur triumphalis. Cum enim olim invectissimus et Deo acceptissimus imperator Constantinus se quadam vice ad preliandum contra incredu-los prepararet, et de progressu suo sollicitus procuraret, datum est ei a Domino certum et omnino infallibile. victorie ac future salutis indicium, quia manifestissime ostensum est ei in celo victoriosissime crucis signum, et statim vox celitus emissa subsecuta est dicens : « In hoc signo vinces. » Ad cujus rei ostensionem et stupendi oraculi visionem effectus hylarior miles Christi, hostium cuneos securus aggreditur, ac superatis eis victor in pace revertitur.

Fig. 2: Matthew Paris' sketch of the True Cross relic

Fig. 3&4: Relics of Sainte-Chappelle

In the Sainte-Chapelle images, the two larger cross reliquaries stand front and center, while the smaller triumphal cross is hanging on the top right and are labelled 'cruc. vittorie' and 'Crux Victorie.' Both images show the relic surrounded by pearls and the Morgan Library image shows its edges covered with gold. Instead of looking like the smaller cross, images of the Cross of Bromholm instead look nearly identical to the largest of the three cross relics, which is on the right in both images. Compare also the image of Louis IX carrying this relic upon its arrival in Paris, and the image of a monk of Bromholm holding that cross. From these images it is clear to conclude that the Bromholm cross is a forgery, not of the smaller imperial battle-cross of Constantine, but instead the largest of the three True Cross relics kept in the imperial chapel in Constantinople.

What can be concluded from this? While the relic itself is a forgery, the details from the narratives provided by Coggeshall and Wendover lines up with the fact the forger might have been a Fourth Crusader, the story told has enough true details to make it seem like the story was not made up of whole cloth. Perhaps he was a chaplain to Stephen of Perche or another lord in the crusader host who, after seeing his lord die at Adrianople, fled home to England. Whether or not he served in one of the conventual churches set up by Baldwin I, he could have seen the cross relics of the imperial chapel during his time in Constantinople. We know from the descriptions of Robert of Clari that ordinary crusaders were allowed to view the imperial relic collection after the capture of Constantinople.[54] Thus his mistaken forgery would be the result of him visiting the chapel and seeing the relics, but

---

[54] Clari, *Constantinople,* pp. 100-3.

misunderstanding or perhaps later forgetting the difference between the three cross fragments kept there. He likely left after the defeat at Adrianople, taking with him the relics of St Margaret and other treasures. Inventories of the relics of the imperial chapel from before 1204 do not mention the relics of St Margaret, so he likely acquired them from another church, or from another crusader.[55] Perhaps he also acquired a piece of wood from Constantinople with a similar shape to the True Cross relic, or he forged it later based on his memories of the chapel. The fact that he misremembers which cross he was forging, and the reference to Coggeshall on no one having heard of the relic in his possession until the sale, make the latter option more likely. The mistake also means it is less likely he had the close contact with the imperial chapel and the precious relics than he claims.

This also fundamentally answers the obvious critique – what if the 'real' relic was stolen and Emperor Henry and his chaplains forged a replacement? Why would Henry forge a much smaller cross than the one taken by the forger? Clearly someone would notice that what was once a grand relic was now quite small. Also, for this to be true, generations of pilgrims to Constantinople would have recorded three large crosses (the two sent to Paris and the Bromholm battle cross) in the imperial collection, however none record more than two.[56] Moreover, all of the major chroniclers of the Fourth Crusade were still actively writing in 1205, that none of them would mention the theft of one of the most valuable relics in Christendom seems unlikely. Thus, we can safely conclude that the Holy Rood of Bromholm is a forgery.

Unanswered Questions

While it has been conclusively demonstrated that the Bromholm cross cannot be the relic it claims to be, there are many unanswerable questions left in this account. For instance, why does a supposed cleric have two young sons? Was he unfaithful to his vows, or is the fact that he was a cleric in Constantinople another invention? Also why does Wendover say that immediately on his arrival in England he began to sell his trove of relics, when he fled Constantinople in 1205 and the relics only arrived in Bromholm in the early 1220s?

Perhaps another possible answer comes in the papal response to the flood of relics that flowed out from Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade, at the Fourth Lateran Council, the sale of relics was explicitly banned.[57] Wendover clearly states that the monks bought relics from the Bromholm forger, but Coggeshall says the forger offers the cross in return for a promise

---
[55] Michele Bacci, Relics of the Pharos Chapel: A View from the Latin West, in: Alexei Lidov (ed.) *Eastern Christian Relics*, Moscow, 2003, pp. 243-5.
[56] *Ibidem*., pp. 243-5.
[57] Perry, *op. cit.,* pp. 180-1.

to take care of his sons. Perhaps this suggests that the sale of the rings and relics of St Margaret occurred shortly after his return to England, following his flight from Constantinople in 1205, before the decrees of Fourth Lateran; but that the transfer of the cross to Bromholm happened only in 1223, after those new rules were in effect, that decree might also be part of the reason he was reportedly turned down by several monasteries before being accepted by Bromholm.

This reading of events, however raises the question about whether or not the Holy Rood had its origins in Constantinople or whether it was forged in England. Roger of Wendover says that the forger tried to sell the cross to the monks of St. Albans shortly after his return. This would mean that his quest to pawn off the last of his supposed 'treasures' took him nearly two decades of on-and-off work. But, this raises a question with Coggeshall's account which says the monks of Weybourne, near where the forger lived, had no idea about the existence of the cross – if he were actively hawking it around Norfolk for two decades, this would make no sense, also if he came right from St Albans to sell it, they would not have known him long enough to make that comment about not knowing about it. That suggests one of three options. First, Wendover was wrong about the cross being offered to St Albans shortly after his arrival, the forger sold relics to them initially, but – perhaps needing money or a place for his children – fabricated the cross in the early 1220s. He may have then approached St Albans again and Wendover conflates the two visits, or he hears second hand of the relic's path and misremembers him offering the same relic years earlier. The second is that Coggeshall's account of the monks refusing it on the grounds they did is incorrect, perhaps he did not know the full context, or just invented a reason. The third and least likely is that both accounts are correct and the monks at Weybourne were somehow ignorant of their neighbor possessing a gigantic relic of the True Cross for almost two decades. Ultimately the answer to this last riddle is unknowable, my personal guess is that the Bromholm forger invented the relic in the 1220s as a 'retirement policy' to help find a home for himself and his sons.

Conclusion

The Bromholm forger was not the only charlatan exploiting the legacy of Baldwin of Flanders in the 1220s. The historical Baldwin I died in a Bulgarian prison, leaving Flanders to his daughter Jeanne, then only a toddler. After a long regency, she married Ferrand, the brother of the king of Portugal, who promptly was imprisoned in Philip Augustus' dungeons after his capture at the battle of Bouvines.[58] Jeanne had no children, and with an

---

[58] Robert Lee Wolff, "Baldwin of Flanders and Hainaut, First Latin Emperor of Constantinople. His Life, Death and Resurrection, 1172-1225", *Speculum* 27 (1952), p. 293.

imprisoned husband that was unlikely to change, meanwhile the people of Flanders were growing increasingly unhappy with her rule.

At this moment a cadre of twenty-eight men dressed in Franciscan habits purportedly arrived in Flanders, saying that they had gone on the Fourth Crusade, fought with Baldwin and Henry and after Henry's death joined a crusade to help the king of Portugal, the brother of their new Count; tired from their adventures they had become Franciscans and returned to Flanders.[59] Rumors soon began swirling that Baldwin himself was also soon to come into their midst. Attention swirled around a beggar and hermit living outside Valenciennes, although he initially denied being Baldwin, after a cabal of the most prominent anti-Jeanne lords in the Low Countries met with him, he changed his story and claimed to be the true emperor of Constantinople.[60]

Everywhere the common people rose up in support of the imposter and Jeanne was forced to flee to France. At Pentecost, the hermit appeared wearing his 'imperial crown' and participated in a ceremony where he knighted ten of his followers, issued charters, and divided fiefs.[61] The false emperor then made a triumphal progress throughout Flanders dressed in a purple robe, with his banners as Count and Emperor, and bearing before him a triumphal cross.[62] Two contemporary chroniclers single out this cross, explicitly linking it to the cross of the emperors of Constantinople, a clear reference to the same Cross of Constantine that the English cleric had passed off to Bromholm two years earlier.[63]

However, Jeanne found an ally in King Louis VIII of France who in 1225 summoned the imposter to an audience – there he brought out Baldwin's sister, Sibella of Beaujeau, who could not recognize her 'brother', the false Baldwin then failed to answer basic questions at the audience that the real Baldwin surely would know.[64] The false Baldwin could not remember the whereabouts and details of his having done homage to Philip Augustus for Flanders, of his having received knighthood, or of his marriage to Marie of Champagne. His partisans maintained his truth, but the imposter sealed his fate by fleeing the castle at night. The fraud unmasked Jeanne had the false Baldwin hanged, and after a cleric buried the body against her orders, she had it dug up and left to rot on the gallows, meanwhile all who supported the imposter faced harsh fines or fled the county.[65]

What became of the cross that the false Baldwin used is lost to history. That forged relic of the imperial battle cross did not find its way into

---

[59] *Ibidem.,* pp. 294-5.
[60] *Ibidem.,* p. 295.
[61] *Ibidem.,* p. 297.
[62] *Ibidem.*
[63] *Ibidem.,* p. 317, n. 146.
[64] *Ibidem.*, pp. 297-8.
[65] *Ibidem.*, pp. 298-9.

a monastery which then found royal patronage and hosted scores of supposedly miraculous healings. However, they both demonstrate the lasting relevance of the Fourth Crusade in the life of medieval Europe, even though two decades had passed since Baldwin and his knights charged foolheartedly into the Bulgarian lines at Adrianople, the battle cross he forgot to carry could serve as the basis of two great forgeries on both sides of the English Channel. All great relic transfers need a great story and the story of the Rood of Bromholm is epic in its own right. Although the truth of the story is demonstrably false, like the hermit of Valenciennes who became the returned Count Baldwin, the story told about it was epic, and served the interests of its backers. While this article can, like Louis VIII's audience, pull the mask off what is, in retrospect, an obvious forgery, it cannot erase the fact that the story behind the forgery was compelling enough to turn a simple piece of wood into the second most famous pilgrimage destination in Britain for more than three centuries.

List of illustrations: [66]

Fig. 1 Images of the Cross of Bromholm
From: Wormald, Bromholm, 33.
Fig. 2 Matthew Paris' sketch of the True Cross relic.
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 016II: Matthew Paris OSB, Chronica maiora II, 142 v https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/qt808nj0703
Fig. 3 & 4 Relics of Sainte-Chappelle
Images from Durand and Avisseau-Broustet, *Sainte-Chapelle,* 114, 116.

Bibliography:

Primary Sources:
*The Annals of Dunstable***,** ed. Henry Luard, *Annales Monastici* 3, Longmans, London, 1866-7.
The Deeds of the Abbots of St Albans ed. James G. Clark, Boydell and Brewer, Woodbridge,
2019.
Geoffrey of Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Edmond Faral, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1961). *Trans.* Caroline Smith, in *Chronicles of the Crusades,* Penguin, New York, 2008.
Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri de Constantinople,* ed. Jean Longon, Librarie Orientaliste Paul Gauthier, Paris, 1948.
Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum,* ed. Joseph Stevenson, Longman, London, 1875. Trans. Alfred Andrea, in *Contemporary Source for the Fourth Crusade* Ashgate, Burlington, 2000.

---

[66] All images are faithful photographic reproductions of a two-dimensional, public domain, work of art from Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org. The images has been identified by Wikimedia Commons as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights.

Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. and trans. Peter Noble, Societe Rencesvals British Branch (Edinburgh 2005).

Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum,* ed. Henry G. Hewlett, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1887. *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History,* trans. J.A. Giles, Henry G. Bohn, London, 1849.

Secondary Sources:

Angold, Michael, *The Fourth Crusade, Event and Context,* Routledge, London, 2014.

Aston, Margaret, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015.

Bacci, Michele, Relics of the Pharos Chapel: A View from the Latin West, in: Alexei Lidov(ed.)
Eastern Christian Relics, Moscow, 2003.

Durand, Jannic and Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet, *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle : Paris, Musée du Louvre, 31 mai - 27 août 2001*, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 2001.

Frolow, Anatole, *La relique de la Vraie Croix: recherches sur le développement d'un culte*, Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, Paris, 1961.

Hall, D.J., *English Mediaeval Pilgrimage,* Routledge, New York, 2020.

Hendrickx, Benjamin, "Les institutions de l'empire Latin de Constantinople (1204-1261): la Chancellerie", *Acta Classica* 19 (1976), 123-31.

Hendrickx, Benjamin, "Régestes des empereurs latins de Constantinople (1204-1261/1272)", *Byzantina* 14 (1988), 7-222.

Hurlock, Kathryn, "A Transformed Life? Geoffrey of Dutton, the Fifth Crusade, and the Holy Cross of Norton", *Northern History* 54/1 (2017) 15-27.

Lippiatt, G. E. M., *Simon V of Montfort and Baronial Government, 1195-1218*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017.

Lippiatt, G. E. M., "The Zaran company in the Holy Land: an unknown fourth crusade charter from Acre", *Historical Research* 94/266 (November 2021) 869–885.

Longnon, Jean, *Les Compagnons de Villehardouin: Recherches sur les Croisés de la Quatrième Croisade,* Droz, Geneva, 1978.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life,* Viking, New York, 2018.

Mély, Fernand de, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae* Société de l'Orient latin, Paris, 1904.

Nicolotti, Andrea, *From the Mandylion of Edessa to the Shroud of Turin, The Metamorphosis and Manipulation of a Legend,* Brill, Leiden, 2014.

Page, William, Houses of Austin canons: The priory of Weybourne, in: William Page (ed.) *A History of the County of Norfolk*, 2 (London, 1906), pp. 404-406. British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/norf/vol2/pp404-406 [accessed 16 July 2022].

Perry, David M., *Sacred Plunder: Venice and the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade* Penn State University Press, University Park, 2015.

Prinzing, Günter, "Der Brief Kaiser Heinrichs von Konstantinopel vom 13. Januar 1212. Überlieferungsgeschichte, Neuedition und Kommentar", *Byzantion* 43 (1973) 395-431.

Powicke, F.M., "The Oath of Bromholm", *The English Historical Review* 56/224 (1941) 529–48.

Riant, Paul Edouard Didier, *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae: fasciculus documentorum minorum, ad byzantina lipsana in Occidentem saeculo XIII translata, spectantium Historiam Quarti Belli Sacri imperii; gallo-graeci illustrantium* Société de l'Orient latin, Paris, 1877-8.

Schmoelz, Michael, *Pilgrimage in medieval East Anglia A regional survey of the shrines and pilgrimages of Norfolk and Suffolk,* Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 2017.

Tafel, Gottlieb L.F. and Georg M. Thomas*, Urkunden zur älteren Handels-und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig, mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante: Vom neunten bis zum Ausgang des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, K.K. Hof-und Staatsdr, Vienna, 1857.

Thompson, Kathleen, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of the Perche, 1000–1226,* Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2002.

Turner, Gail, "An Early-16th-Century Prayer Roll and the Holy Rood of Bromholm", *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 174/1 (2021) 16-33.

Van Tricht, Filip, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium,* Brill, Leiden, 2011.

Wolff, Robert Lee, "Politics in the Latin Patriarchate of Constantinople, 1204-1261", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954) 225–303.

Wolff, Robert Lee, "Baldwin of Flanders and Hainaut, First Latin Emperor of Constantinople. His Life, Death and Resurrection, 1172-1225", *Speculum* 27 (1952) 281-322.

Wormald, Francis, "The Rood of Bromholm", *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1/1 (1937): 31–45.

L'église Saint-Georges de Mazraaet el-Chouf et son abside peinte.
Un exemple de l'architecture religieuse chrétienne au Liban à l'époque ottomane

Hany Kahwagi-Janho[*]
Rita Kalindjian[**]

Abstract: *With the advent of the Ottoman Empire in the Levant region and particularly in Mount Lebanon, we witnessed a sort of unification of the Christian religious architecture in the region, particularly for the typology of single-naved churches. This unified model, apart from a few variants, is based on a plan most often with two bays and a supporting structure formed by pilasters supporting edge vaults. The Saint George Church of Mazraaet el-Chouf, dating from the 18th century, forms a typical example of this architecture. With its apse covered by a multitude of layers of painted coatings, it forms one of the rare examples in Lebanon where several specimens of wall paintings, characteristic of this period, overlap and are still preserved while, in dozens of similar churches, these coatings have completely disappeared following the stripping of the monuments' walls.*

Keywords: *Lebanon, church, ottoman, architecture, metrology, wall paintings*

Introduction

Située au centre du village de Mazra'et el-Chouf, l'ancienne église de Saint-Georges occupe le côté sud d'une place dont le côté nord est occupé par une église homonyme construite vers le milieu du XXe s. Installé dans la pente d'une colline, le monument adosse son côté ouest contre la pente qui, quelque peu abrupte, induisit des changements de niveaux rapides. Ce fait obligea les constructeurs du monument à aménager des terrassements devant l'église dont les niveaux intérieurs du monument ont dû aussi suivre. Au niveau légal, l'église est classée monument historique par décret n. 8, date 12/04/1969, ce qui n'empêcha tout de même pas certaines interventions

---

[*] Architect-Restorer, PhD. in built Archaeology, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Hany_kj@yahoo.fr

[**] Researcher and Ethnography Museum Director, University of Balamand, rita.kalindjian@balamand.edu.lb

abusives, comme le décapement de l'ensemble de ses murs de leur enduit d'origine, à l'exception de la zone de l'abside.

1. **Le monument: architecture et évolution (H.K.-J.):**
   Description du monument:

L'église **(Fig. 1)**, mononef, fait partie d'une construction plus large, incluant du côté ouest une salle annexe au premier niveau et la maison paroissiale en deuxième niveau **(Fig. 2)**. La longueur totale du monument atteint ainsi 26,15 m pour une largeur allant de 7,90 m à l'est jusqu'à 9,60 m à l'ouest **(Fig. 3-4)**. Sa hauteur du côté oriental atteint 9,90 m **(Fig. 5)**; elle n'est que de 6,67 m au niveau de la terrasse inférieure de la place, 8 m au niveau de la terrasse supérieure de la place (en englobant la hauteur de la maison paroissiale) et seulement 4,30 m (hauteur du niveau de la seule maison paroissiale) du côté occidental, là où le niveau du sol s'élève sensiblement en suivant l'escalier qui joint la place de l'église à la rue principale qui passe plus haut, à l'ouest du monument. Le volume est construit avec des blocs en calcaire à bossage, placés suivant des assises régulières quasiment isodomes d'une hauteur moyenne de 0,22 m. Quelques irrégularités sont cependant à pointer dans la maçonnerie de la façade nord. Mis à part les irrégularités structurales (dévers du mur oriental de plus de 0,15 m, soit 2° vers l'extérieur, détachement d'une zone complète du corps du mur nord correspondant au bouchage de la voûte de la travée occidentale de l'église…), des irrégularités constructives sont à dénoter. La plus intéressante serait le coup de sabre situé à environ 3,50 m à l'ouest de la paroi du mur de terrassement divisant la place en deux niveaux. Ce coup de sabre, zigzagant dans le mur, est principalement marqué par un désalignement de ses assises, marquant un raccordement entre les deux moitiés orientale et occidentale de la façade **(Fig. 6)**. Plusieurs ouvertures s'évasent dans celle-ci: il s'agit principalement des deux portes qui s'ouvrent, l'une au niveau inférieur de la place et l'autre au niveau supérieur, ainsi que d'une fenêtre (0,70 x 1,12 m) placée à l'est de la porte inférieure et une lucarne (0,42 x 0,72 m) percée au centre de la façade nord. La porte du niveau inférieur, large de 1,25 m et haute de 2,32 m, est placée dans un encadrement en pierre dont les blocs, à la surface polie, ont parfois une couleur rougeâtre. Elle est surmontée d'un fronton triangulaire haut de 1,08 m, dont le tympan est incrusté de blocs longitudinaux eux aussi rougeâtres. La deuxième porte s'ouvre au niveau supérieur de la place. Large de 0,94 m, elle est échancrée d'un arc segmentaire et a une hauteur totale de 2,10 m. Ses piédroits ainsi que l'encadrement de son couvrement sont réalisés avec des blocs ocres à la paroi lisse. La clef de son arc est gravée d'une petite croix filaire, le seul symbole religieux de l'ensemble de la façade. Par ailleurs, les restes du clocher sont conservés au-dessus de la lucarne **(Fig. 7)**. Ce clocher avait originellement un plan carré faisant 1,80 m de côté et basé sur quatre

piédroits de section carrée (0,58 m). De cet ensemble, il subsiste les zones inférieures des deux piédroits ouest, conservés sur une hauteur de 1,15 m et surmontés du linteau qui les joignait, ainsi que les bases des deux piédroits est.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2
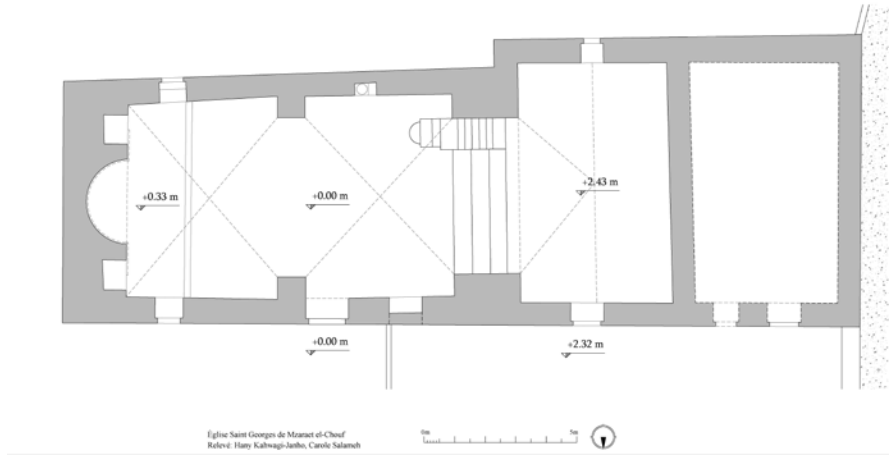
Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5
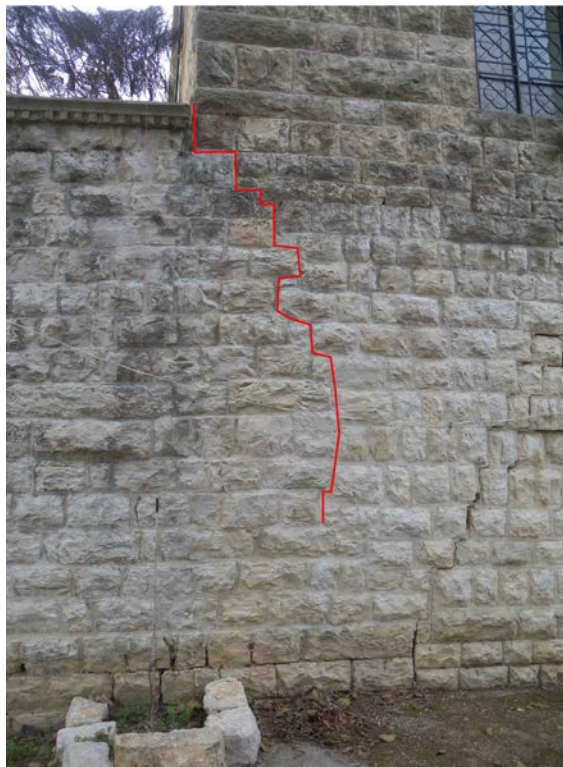
Fig. 6

Fig. 7

L'église elle-même, mononef, est composée de trois travées axées est-ouest **(Fig. 8)**. Sa longueur intérieure totale atteint 17,90 m (19,15 m avec la profondeur de l'abside centrale), pour une largeur intérieure variant entre 6,30 m et 6,66 m pour les deux premières travées et égale à 7,88 m pour la troisième travée, côté ouest. Sa hauteur totale intérieure atteint 6,66 m. La première travée, côté est, a une longueur variant entre 6,30 m côté est et 6,66 m côté ouest, pour une largeur variant entre 4,90 m côté nord et 4,96 m côté sud. Son espace est divisé en deux par un escalier en deux marches d'une hauteur respective de 0,20 m et 0,11 m et placé à 1,90 m de la face du mur de chevet. Deux petites fenêtres échancrées d'arcs segmentaires, larges de 0,92 m et 0,88 m et hautes de 1,56 m, s'ouvrent dans ses murs nord (épaisseur = 0,84 m) et sud (épaisseur = 0,72-0,84 m), respectivement à 0,95 m et 1,04 m de la paroi intérieure du mur oriental. Ce dernier, épais de 2,10 m, englobe dans son épaisseur l'abside centrale et les deux absidioles latérales qui l'encadrent **(Fig. 9)**. L'abside centrale, d'un plan semi-circulaire, a un diamètre de 2,78 m pour une profondeur de 1,33 m. Elle est recouverte par une conque haute de 2,21 m, qui prend naissance à partir d'une corniche saillante épaisse de 0,17 m et placée à 2,33 m du niveau du sol du sanctuaire. Ainsi la hauteur totale de cette abside est égale à 4,71 m. Notons que cette corniche prend en plan la forme d'un Ω dont les bras vont s'étendre des deux côtés de l'abside en guise de consoles s'arrêtant en dessus des pointes des arcs des absidioles latérales. Ces dernières, d'un plan rectangulaire, ont une largeur de 0,95-0,98 m pour une profondeur de 0,77 m. Surélevées d'une

marche (0,21 m) par rapport au niveau du sol du sanctuaire, elles ont une hauteur intérieure totale de 1,87 m et leur couvrement en conque, marqué par une légère saillie, est placé à 1,34 m de leur sol.

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

La travée centrale a une largeur qui varie entre 6,69 m et 6,61 m pour une longueur allant de 4,88 m au nord à 4,81 m au sud. Elle est séparée de la travée orientale par deux piliers larges de 0,92 m et qui s'avancent dans l'espace de la nef de 0,72 m. Le mur nord de cette travée est traversé par deux portes. La première s'accole au pilier intermédiaire. Large de 1,40 m, cette porte est échancrée d'un arc segmentaire d'une hauteur totale de 2,70 m. Une deuxième porte, actuellement bouchée **(Fig. 10)**, s'ouvrait à 1,34 m à l'ouest de la précédente. Elle a une largeur de 1,08 m pour une hauteur de 2,09 m. Cette porte semble avoir été bouchée lors de travaux d'aménagement extérieur ayant conduit à la création de la terrasse subdivisant la place en deux niveaux et dont l'emplacement à l'est de la porte cache totalement son emplacement sur la façade extérieure. Toujours dans la travée intermédiaire, côté sud, une niche large de 0,70 m et profonde de 0,41 m s'ouvre dans l'épaisseur de ce mur, à 1,63 m du pilier intermédiaire sud. Elle englobe une cuve taillée dans un bloc en calcaire ayant sans doute servi comme fond baptismal. Du côté ouest, cette travée est délimitée par deux piliers larges de 2,17 m et qui s'avancent dans l'espace de la nef respectivement de 0,71 m pour celui du côté nord et 0,80 m pour celui du côté sud. Un coup de sabre, situé à 1,27 m de leurs faces orientales, traverse leur maçonnerie ainsi que celle de la voûte à arêtes qu'ils supportent **(Fig. 11)**. Un mur originellement haut de 2,19 m, puis rehaussé d'une assise pour atteindre 2,43 m[1], joint ces deux piliers **(Fig. 12)**. Trois marches larges respectivement de 0,60 m, 0,59 m et 0,55 m pour des hauteurs respectives de 0,155 m, 0,21 m et 0,20 m, s'adossent contre ce mur. Par ailleurs, un escalier qui s'accole contre la face nord du pilier sud, formé de dix marches dont la largeur varie entre 0,92 m et 1 m, donne accès à la plate-forme surhaussée de la troisième et dernière travée. Celle-ci a une largeur de 7,89 m pour une longueur variant entre 4,90 m et 5 m. Du côté nord, cette travée présente une largeur supérieure à celle de la travée centrale de 0,26 m, moyennant un amincissement du mur nord qui, du côté extérieur, reste aligné avec le reste de la façade. Par contre, du côté sud, cette travée est d'un mètre plus longue que la précédente, ce qui se traduit par une saillie de 0,90 m vers l'extérieur de l'ensemble du volume de ce côté-ci. Cette travée est éclairée d'une petite fenêtre, large de 0,74 m, qui s'ouvre dans son mur sud, épais de 0,77 m et est directement accessible, du côté nord, à partir de la terrasse supérieure de la place, à partir d'une porte large de 1,09 m et haute de 2,50 m. Le couvrement de cette travée est réalisé avec une voûte hybride, à moitié à arêtes côté est et dont l'autre moitié, côté ouest, est en berceau brisé. Sa hauteur s'aligne avec celle des voûtes des deux premières travées.

---

[1] Ce rehaussement semble avoir été effectué à une période moderne pour pouvoir mettre en place un dallage recouvrant l'espace de la travée occidentale.

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Histoire et chronologie:

Nous ignorons la date exacte de la construction de l'église, qui semble remonter au XVIIIe s. De cette période, nous disposons d'une mention qui lui est relative et qui remonte à l'an 1791, lorsque l'archevêque Youhanna el-Helou éleva Mikhayel Lotfeh au rang de diacre (chidiac) sur son autel. Le deuxième épisode mentionnant l'église remonte à l'an 1845, lors de ce que le P. Ibrahim Harfouch désigne par «l'incident de l'église», qui opposa des chrétiens maronites à des druzes des villages environnants, qui les assiégèrent dans l'église. L'affaire se solda par plusieurs dizaines de morts des deux côtés et se termina grâce à l'intervention de l'émissaire.

Au niveau architectural, l'église semble avoir été construite ou bien organisée en deux phases. La première est celle de la zone des deux travées orientale et centrale. Celles-ci, situées au même niveau, formaient l'espace de la nef originelle. La travée occidentale, surélevée, est un ajout ultérieur au monument, qui, semble-t-il, n'était pas destiné à faire partie de l'église. La fonction de cet espace, d'après les témoignages des locaux, était celle d'un pressoir à huile qui a été démonté vers les débuts du XXe s., tandis que le mur le séparant de la nef de l'église fut démantelé pour ouvrir son espace sur celui de cette dernière.

Caractéristiques typologiques du monument:

L'architecture originelle du monument en fait une église typique de l'époque ottomane, avec ses deux travées couvertes par des voûtes à arêtes, ses fenêtres symétriques ainsi que par la disposition des éléments de son chevet. Toutefois, la présence du gynécée surélevé reste une particularité rare parmi les églises libanaises connues. En effet, nous retrouvons trois types de gynécées connus: un premier type consistant en une simple barrière subdivisant la nef, sans changement dans le niveau du sol, comme ce fut le cas à titre d'exemple pour l'église de Notre-Dame de la Dormition à Gharzouz (avant le démontage de ce dernier) (source orale). Un deuxième type consiste en une tribune à claires-voies en bois surélevée, reposant sur des solives ou bien des corbeaux encastrés dans les murs, et accessible à partir d'un escalier généralement inséré dans l'épaisseur d'un des murs de la nef. Ce type de gynécée est encore conservé dans l'église de Notre-Dame des Grecs Orthodoxes de Choueifat, Notre-Dame des Grecs Orthodoxes à Hasbaya ainsi que dans celle du monastère de Saint-Siméon de Wadi el-Karm. Le troisième type consiste en une plate-forme en maçonnerie surélevée par rapport au sol d'origine, dont un modèle est conservé dans l'église de Notre-Dame de la délivrance à Deir el-Qamar et Notre-Dame des Grecs Orthodoxes de Hasbaya, où il est associé à la tribune surélevée. C'est ce type que nous retrouvons à Mazraet el-Chouf. Malheureusement, la pose d'un nouveau dallage dans cet espace, allant jusqu'à l'aplomb de la paroi orientale du mur de support de la plate-forme et l'ajout d'une assise à ce mur ont caché toute trace potentielle de fixation de la claire-voie en bois qui aurait dû créer la séparation visuelle entre cet espace et le reste de la nef. Cependant, la typologie de ce gynécée n'est pas due à un choix délibéré des bâtisseurs, mais, comme nous l'avons déjà vu ci-dessus, il est la résultante de la nature du terrain en forte pente d'une part et, de l'autre, de l'ouverture de cet espace sur celui de la nef à une période ultérieure.

Proportions et métrologie:

L'église actuelle est constituée d'une zone originelle, consistant en deux travées (l'orientale et la centrale) et d'un ajout, consistant en l'espace occidental surélevé. La restitution du volume d'origine **(Fig. 13)**, en suivant les coups de sabre dans les deux piliers centre-ouest, permet de constater que la longueur extérieure totale du monument était de 15,05 m, tandis que la longueur intérieure était de 11,95 m (13,32 m avec la profondeur de l'abside). Basée sur ces mesures, l'étude modulaire du monument a révélé l'usage d'un module égal à 0,556 m. Ainsi, l'abside a une largeur de 5 modules, la nef une longueur de 24 modules (profondeur de l'abside incluse), une largeur de 12 modules et une hauteur égale à la largeur **(Tab. 1)**.
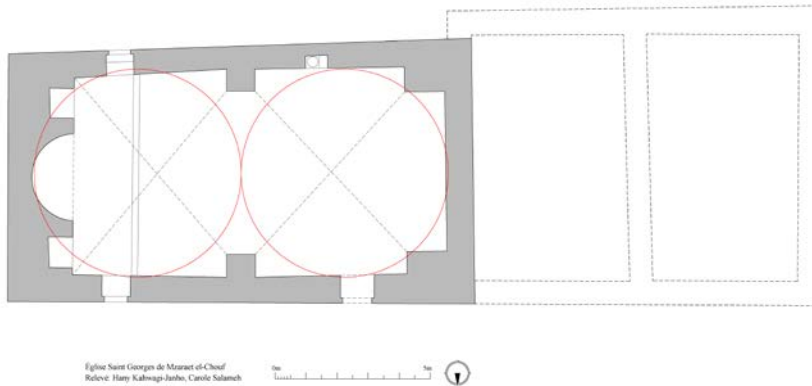
Fig. 13

Valeur du module	abside	mod	largeur	mod	Long (nef+abs)	mod	Hauteur	mod
55,6	278	5	666	12	1333	24	666	12
Valeur du module	Ep. Mur	mod	Ep. Piliers	mod	Largeur porte	mod	Largeur niches lat.	mod
55,6	84	1 1/2	93	1 2/3	140	2 1/2	97	1 3/4

Tab. 1. La métrologie de l'église et de ses principales composantes.

La valeur de cette unité modulaire s'apparente à deux unités utilisées dans la région dès l'antiquité et dont l'usage semble s'être prolongé jusqu'au XIXe s. Il s'agit, d'une part, de la coudée et, d'autre part, du pic byzantin. La valeur haute de la première est proche de 0,54-0,55 m, tandis que la deuxième a une valeur égale à 0,56 m. L'usage d'un sous-multiple de la coudée a été attesté sur un ensemble d'églises de la région de Koura remontant au XVIIe s. La valeur de ce sous-multiple varie entre 0,35 m et 0,366 m, soit les 2/3 d'une coudée variant entre 0,525 m et 0,55 m. (Kahwagi-Janho 2017: 14). Quant au pic, son usage a été attesté à titre d'exemple dans la conception du plan de l'église de Notre-Dame de la Délivrance de Mina-Tripoli (étude inédite de l'auteur).

Quant à l'étude modulaire, nous constatons que l'espace intérieur de la nef, profondeur de l'abside incluse, avait une proportion de 1/2, vu que la largeur de la nef mesure 6,65 m. Cette proportion est assez courante aussi bien pour les monuments antiques tels que les temples d'époque romaine que pour les églises de l'époque médiévale et ottomane (Kahwagi-Janho 2017: 25). Toutefois, pour les églises, l'intégration de la profondeur de l'abside dans le tracé global reste relativement rare. Nous retrouvons une telle intégration par exemple sur les églises de Saint-Mames à Kfarsaroun, Saints-Serge-et-Bacchus de Kousba ainsi que Notre-Dame de Batroumine. Par ailleurs, la profondeur de l'abside (1,33 m) constitue exactement le 1/5e de la largeur de la nef. Ainsi, le rapport proportionnel de la nef, abside exclue, devient égal à 5/9 **(Tab. 2)**.

D'un point de vue structural, l'espace entre les piliers centraux supportant les deux voûtes à arêtes de la nef, rapporté à la largeur totale du monument, présente un rapport de 64% (soit un rapport situé entre les 3/5 et les 2/3). L'épaisseur des murs occupe de son côté presque les 2/5es du total de la largeur (19%, laissant 81% pour la largeur intérieure libre) **(Tab. 3)**.

Largeur extérieure	Largeur intérieure (entre piliers)	Rapport 3/5 (60%)	Ecart	Ecart %	Rapport effectif
821	523	492	31	1%	64%

Tab. 2. Rapport structural de la largeur de l'église

Largeur extérieure	Largeur intérieure (entre murs)	Rapport 5/6 (83%)	Ecart	Ecart %	Rapport effectif
821	666	684	18	2,6 %	81%

Tab. 3. Rapport spatial de la largeur de l'église

Ces chiffres sont à comparer avec l'étude des proportions structurales et spatiales de deux lots d'églises: le premier lot est formé d'un ensemble de sept églises construites entre le XVIIIe et le XIXe s. situées dans les régions du Keserwan et du Metn, tandis que le deuxième lot est situé dans la région de Koura (Kahwagi-Janho 2017: 40-41). Les deux groupements montrent que leurs églises respectives présentent des rapports structuraux situés entre 58% et 62%, avec une moyenne qui s'établit aux alentours de 60%, soit 3/5. Quant au rapport spatial, il reste plus variable avec des valeurs allant de 78% à 87%, avec une moyenne au Koura (83%) sensiblement supérieure à celle de la région centrale du Mont-Liban (80%, avec une majorité de monuments ayant un rapport de 78-79%). L'ensemble de ces données permet de constater que, d'une part, les éléments structuraux de l'église de Mazraet el-Chouf sont relativement petits (7% plus petits que la moyenne dégagée) et que, d'autre part, les murs latéraux associés à ces piliers sont plutôt épais (3-4% plus épais que la moyenne de la région de Koura, presqu'égale à celle de la région centrale du Mont-Liban). Le rétrécissement des piliers aurait-il eu une conséquence sur la stabilité de l'église ? L'état actuel du monument présente en fait plusieurs anomalies structurales. Son angle nord-est présente un double dévers de 1° vers l'Est (0,12 m du toit jusqu'au niveau du sol d'accès) et de 0,6° vers le Nord (0,07 m jusqu'au niveau du sol d'accès, 0,10 m jusqu'au sol des cimentières). À part ces dévers dans les murs, plusieurs fissurations y ont été notées: une première, au niveau de la zone supérieure de la façade nord, à 5,40 m de l'angle nord-est ayant entraîné la brisure en deux du long bloc surmontant la fenêtre située à l'est de la porte d'entrée **(Fig. 14)**, ainsi qu'une seconde, majeure, au centre de la maçonnerie de la paroi intérieure de l'abside **(Fig. 15)**. Cette fissure, dont la largeur atteint par endroits au niveau inférieur de l'abside les 0,04 m, n'est par contre pas visible du côté extérieur du mur est. Aucune confirmation quant au rôle du dimensionnement des éléments de structure dans ces problèmes structuraux

ne peut actuellement être émise, en l'absence de sondages de vérification. Toutefois, ce fait peut être avancé parmi les hypothèses potentielles.
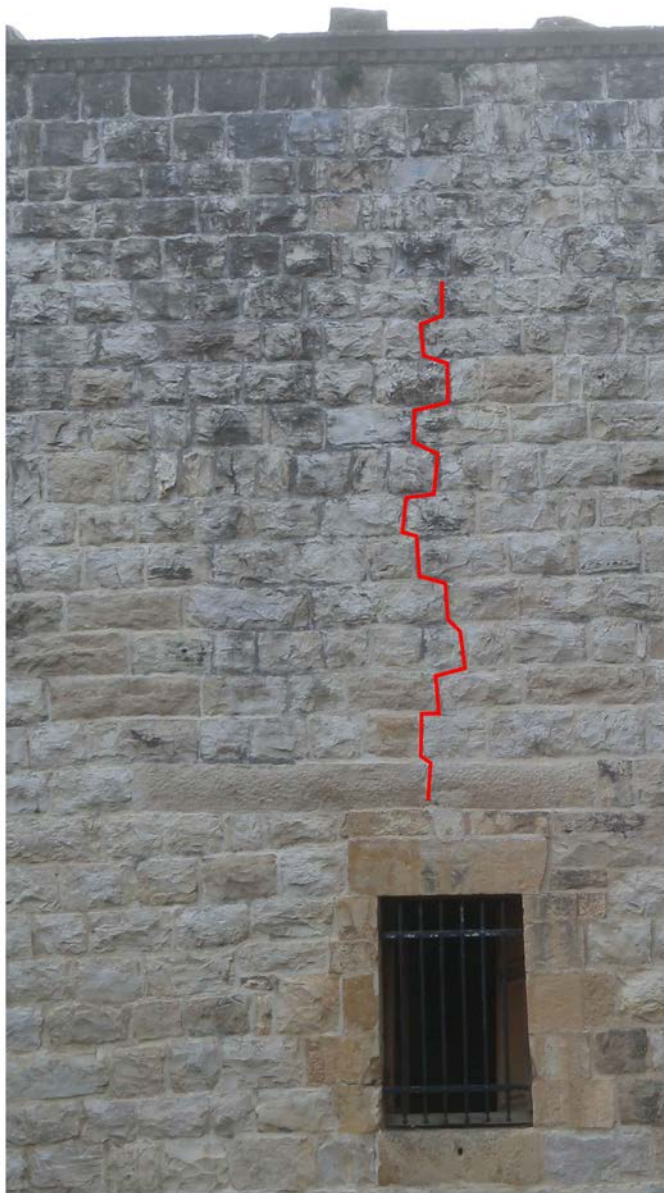
Fig. 14

Fig. 15

2. Les peintures murales (R. K. et H.K.-J.):

Selon les témoignages du curé de la paroisse, l'ensemble des parois intérieures de l'église étaient enduites avec un mortier de chaux. L'ensemble de cet enduit a été décapé dans les années 2000 et seule la paroi du mur oriental a échappé à ces travaux. Il conserva ainsi la plupart de son enduit à l'exception de certaines zones situées au niveau du piédroit sud de l'abside ainsi que la surface de l'arc triomphal et la zone qui le surmonte, où l'enduit se perd par désolidarisation. Trois couches principales ainsi que de potentielles couches de réfection intermédiaires sont identifiables **(Fig. 16).**
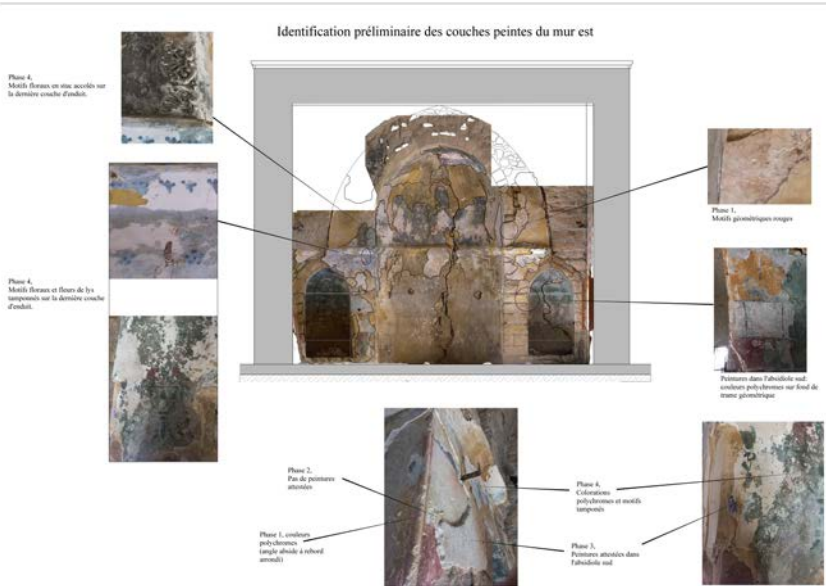
Fig. 16

Ces décors picturaux ont été probablement exécutés entre le XIXème et le début du XXème siècle. L'observation a été effectuée à l'œil nu, sans analyse mécanique ni prélèvement chimique. Elle a montré que la surface peinte qui comprend, comme nous l'avons déjà mentionné, trois à six couches superposées de peinture et qui se trouvent dans de mauvaises conditions de conservation et de dégradation très avancée. Un grand nombre de lacunes dues au manque d'entretien et certainement au décapage destructeur s'observent sur la paroi de l'abside. Le martelage du plâtre entre les couches est également visible partout. Le style et peut-être aussi la technique d'exécution de chacune des couches sont variés. Nous n'avons pas pu définir la technique d'exécution des différentes phases.

On présentera en détail, les première, troisième et cinquième couches uniquement, les deuxième, quatrième et sixième étant probablement des couches de réfection ou de réparation intermédiaires. On signalera aussi, s'il y a lieu, des exemples de comparaison entre les techniques, les couleurs, le style et les motifs communs à cette église et à d'autres à travers le Liban.

On présentera les couches de façon chronologique.

➢ La première couche

Un mortier de couleur grise, d'une épaisseur qui varie entre 1 et 2 cm, et formé principalement de cendre, comprenant des particules de charbon et de chaux, est posé directement sur la pierre **(Fig. 17)**. Cette couche est recouverte par un badigeon lisse de 1 cm d'épaisseur, qui sert de support à la peinture. Elle présente une fine couche d'un rouge-pâle sans motif visible.

Des traces de martelage indiquent l'application d'une deuxième phase de peinture murale. La couche de cette phase est absente par endroits sur l'ensemble du mur absidial et particulièrement dans les niches.

Fig. 17

➤ La troisième couche

Cette couche est assurément la plus intéressante. Elle est partiellement bien préservée par les quatrième et cinquième couches, voire même la sixième. Un mortier jaune à base de sable, d'une épaisseur de 1 à 2 cm, est recouvert par un enduit de plâtre d'une épaisseur de 1 cm. Cet enduit est posé sous forme de plaques rectangulaires et triangulaires très fines – technique jamais observée jusque-là au Liban dans d'autres églises de la même période. Ce mortier est, par endroits, directement appliqué sur les blocs de pierre; en d'autres endroits, il recouvre la première couche ou encore, il sert de base à la cinquième. Notons toutefois que cette couche remplace ici et là la couche précédente ou se confond avec elle, rendant la lecture des différentes réfections, restaurations et multiples remplacements extrêmement difficile.

On observe aussi sur le mur absidial et l'imposte une peinture imitant des appareillages de pierre **(Fig. 18)** qui affichent une superposition de trois bandes d'une hauteur de 25 cm: une première de couleur jaune ocre, une seconde rouge et une troisième d'un blanc bleuâtre, séparées par des lignes horizontales et verticales noires de 0.5 cm de largeur. Cette imitation semble être née du besoin de valoriser ou d'anoblir le bâtiment en utilisant des décors peu onéreux. Cet appareillage a été observé, par exemple, sur les parois des églises paroissiales de Mar Abda-Bikfaya, peint en 1907 par Porphipopoulos et à Mar Roukoz-Baskinta, probablement peint vers la fin du 19e s. par P. Schlaweck. Notons par ailleurs, que dans au moins trois églises (les églises paroissiales de Notre-Dame à Menjez **(Fig. 19)**, de Saint-Charbel à Maad **(Fig. 20)** et l'église monastique de Mar Mtanios Qozhayya à Qannoubine **(Fig. 21)**) des appareillages de pierres peints imitant le ablaq, technique alternant une surface de couleur claire à une autre plus foncée – ont un style artistique de loin plus raffiné.

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Un motif géométrique à chevrons orne l'arc absidial **(Fig. 22)**. La conque de l'abside est presque entièrement recouverte par le mortier jaune ocre et les restes de la couche de peinture la plus récente. On entrevoit quelques lignes et traces colorées de pinceau, la silhouette d'un arbre de vie dans l'abside **(Fig. 23)**, une croix peinte en vermillon **(Fig. 24)** ainsi qu'une bande décorative pointillée (Figure 6). Une moulure verticale longe l'arête du mur absidial **(Fig. 25)**. Cette technique de moulure décorant les arêtes des voûtes est très répandue dans les églises de cette période (église rurale de Saydet el Bir à Sin el Fil, église monastique de Notre-Dame de l'Assomption à Baatouta, cathédrale St. Georges Orthodoxe à Beyrouth…etc). Signalons aussi la présence de l'empreinte d'un autel à cinq gradins dans l'abside **(Fig. 26)**. L'emplacement de l'autel à gradins qui flanque la paroi absidiale a été observé dans plusieurs églises maronites du Liban. Le prêtre célébrait la messe le visage tourné vers l'est et le dos aux fidèles (église paroissiale de Mar Nohra à Smar Jbeil, église de Mar Abda à Bikfaya).

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

➢ La cinquième couche

Cette très fine couche de couleur, peinte sur un badigeon de plâtre de 0.4 mm, comporte des soulèvements et des craquelures et s'écaille facilement. Les parties subsistantes sont situées soit directement sur la couche de peinture précédente, soit sur le mortier jaune de la phase encore plus ancienne. Ces parties sont peintes dans une teinte de bleu virant au vert ou au gris presque uniforme et plat. Dans l'abside, le niveau sous l'imposte est peint en gris clair et la conque en gris foncé; tandis que dans les niches, il semble qu'on ait des bandes de couleur allant de bas en haut, du gris anthracite au gris clair, ensuite au gris verdâtre, ce dégradé était probablement destiné à créer un effet de clair-obscur.

Par endroits, on observe sous cette couche, quelques touches de pinceau de couleur rouge qui devraient appartenir à une couche intermédiaire qui repose aussi sur une autre couche de plâtre. La partie inférieure du mur absidial porte la trace d'un cercle en stuc de couleur vert foncé, cerné par une ligne gris clair et surmonté d'une surface bordeaux **(Fig. 27)**. Sur la partie nord de l'arc absidial subsistent deux appliques de palmettes à flammes en plâtre. Notons aussi la signature de l'artiste en lettres arabes et peut-être une date (شغل ٣٠؟ في-؟و- -د) **(Fig. 28)**.

Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Ici et là, des formes stylisées voire naïves sont appliquées au pochoir comme éléments décoratifs. Il s'agit, sur les murs flanquant l'abside, de fleurs bleues à 5 pétales **(Fig. 29)**, munies d'une tige et de deux feuilles opposées; dans l'abside on découvre un calice bleu surmonté de touches de peinture bordeaux, une croix carrée rouge aux bras fleuris ainsi qu'un reste de blason(?) en bleu clair.

Fig. 29

L'imposte est agrémentée d'une frise à motifs de fleurs de lys maladroitement peintes à main levée, mal accordée avec l'ensemble **(Fig. 30)**. Notons que, sur le côté nord de l'imposte, cette dernière couche est appliquée directement sur le mortier jaune de la couche précédente, ce qui peut être interprété comme une réfection de la peinture (quelques retouches), après une période de détérioration. D'ailleurs, on peut voir sur l'imposte même, un motif beaucoup plus soigné **(Fig. 31)**.

Fig. 30
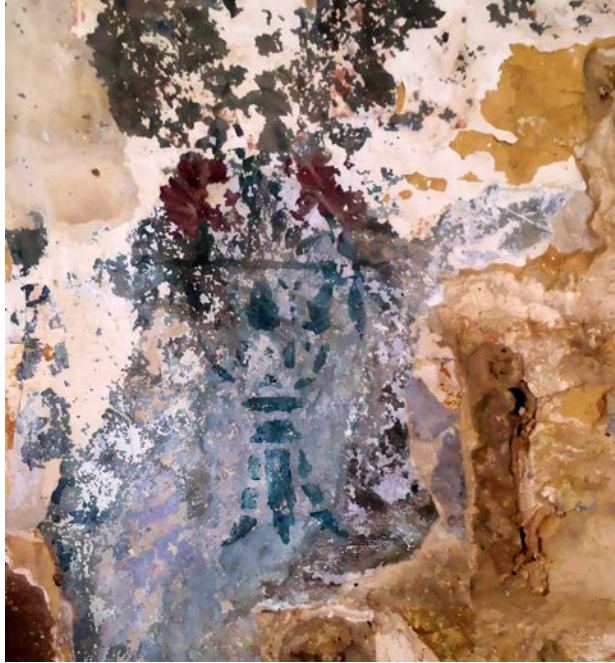
Fig. 31

Notons que des exemples de ces petits motifs décoratifs ont été observés dans plusieurs églises rurales, notamment celle de Mar Roukoz à Baskinta, la technique du pochoir dans le Hammam Ezzedine à Tripoli, le stuc vert, imitant le marbre des églises italiennes, dans la Cathédrale St Georges des Orthodoxes à Beyrouth.

Une étude plus poussée des couches chromatiques serait souhaitable pour déterminer la procédure de la restauration. Il faudrait faire probablement appel à des spécialistes pour décaper la couche picturale la plus récente en gardant quelques éléments en place tout en tenant compte de l'aspect esthétique final pour mettre en valeur la couche picturale sous-jacente.

Bibliography:

Davie, M., *Églises et chapelles orthodoxes du Qornet ar-Roum (Pays de Jbeil): une étude d'histoire de l'architecture religieuse du Liban*, Balamand, 2012.
Kahwagi-Janho, H., «L'évolution de la conception structurale et proportionnelle des églises orthodoxes de Koura», *Chronos*, 36, p. 7-52, 2017.
Nordiguian L., «Recherches sur l'architecture des églises maronites: l'Église Saint Georges de Baabdat», *Annales d'Histoire et d'Archéologie* (USJ), 4, p. 55-85, 1985.
Yasmine, J., *Complexes cultuels ruraux d'époque romaine dans la Beqaa (Liban): le cas de Hosn-Niha: problèmes d'architecture et d'archéologie*, thèse, université Paris I- Panthéon, Sorbonne, 2007.

Music and Dance in the Scene the *Mocking of Christ* in the Mural Paintings of the Churches in Moldavia, Romania, During the First Half of the 16th Century

Eduard Rusu[∗]

Abstract: *The period of time encompassed between the second half of the 15th century and the first half of the following one represented a stage in which the Byzantine culture flourished exponentially in the Romanian Principalities, as a consequence of its migration to the North of the Danube, after the shock caused by the Ottomans in the year 1453. One of the directions in which the Byzantine influence was very powerful, leaving a visible imprint until nowadays, was the art of church painting. The canon of Byzantine painting referred to a complex series of images largely inspired from the Biblical text, as well as from the hagiographic texts and even from daily life. One of the favourite succession of images in the Byzantine art, entitled by specialists The Passion Cycle, reunites sequences referring to the arrest, the trial and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Mocking of Christ represents one of the paintings which includes important contemporary aspects of the moment in which the scene was painted, in addition to the transposing in colours of the facts which took place in that context. Such aspects were music and dance, but also the ceremony in which these were included, thus offering a very important source of information about the way that period of time "looked like" in terms of sound and choreography. Not only South of the Danube, where the scene appears in the entire area of Byzantine culture and influence, but also later, North of the river, the Mocking of Christ reunites the same constituent elements, but still different in their essence, according to the time and the region where they appeared. These elements show the musical and choreographic specificity of each and every country or region, facilitating for us today a better understanding of this cultural branch. The ten scenes of the Mocking in the church frescoes in Moldavia, achieved in the first half of the 16th century, to which we shall be referring here, represent a certain proof of the existence of a solid artistic culture in Moldavia, comparable to the ones of the neighbouring countries, and in accordance with the model "dictated" by the West, especially in what regards the musical instruments used at the Court, around the sovereign, as it happened in our case.*

Keywords: The Mocking of Christ, music, dance, musical instruments, frescoes, Moldavia, Romania.

[∗] Doctor în Istorie, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași, artist liric, Opera Națională Română din Iași, Manager cultural, Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei,
e-mail: eduard.rusu91@yahoo.com

Introduction

The end of the 15th century represented for Moldavia a blooming period, experienced in many aspects, largely due to the long and glorious reign of Stephen the Great. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 represented a time of crossroads for the world, with a strong impact on the entire Europe, especially the Orthodox region. Starting at this crossroads, the Orthodoxy sprung from the Byzantium which moved its epicentre from Constantinople, which is now occupied by the Ottomans, to the Orthodox countries around it. Among the most important ones were also Moldavia and Wallachia. The rulers of these countries, just as before 1453, set themselves up as protectors of the holy places, like Mount Athos or the Sinai Peninsula, supporting, first and foremost financially, the existence and development of the monasteries there. Due to these reasons, but also due to others, the Byzantine culture, especially the religious one, had a strong impact on the Romanian Principalities, which is very easily seen in the mural painting of the churches.

The beginning of the 16th century is marked by the ending of Stephen the Great's glorious reign (1457-1504), a time in which the building and painting of churches in the Byzantine style continues. Now two important boyar foundations are built, about which we shall speak further. After this, two shorter reigns occur, the reign of Bogdan the Blind and the one of Ștefăniță Vodă, which were also marked by certain important foundations. The next stage is a very important one for the Byzantine art in Moldavia – the reigns of Petru Rareş (1527-1538 and 1541-1546). During this time, many of the churches built by Stephen the Great and also those founded by Petru Rareș himself were painted, while the art of Byzantine painting developed and reached new heights.

Sources and content of the *Mocking of Christ* scene

The painting of churches, according to the Byzantine tradition, also meant observing a certain canon. The craftsmen, both the local ones and the ones coming from other places, used to know very well how a church had to be painted. They used to take their inspiration from the Byzantium, most likely through the South-Slavonic connection. The Byzantine principles also meant, among other things, the illustration of the cycle the *Passions of Christ*, divided into several sections, from which one is called the *Mocking of Christ*, a scene inspired by the Biblical accounts referring to the arrest and the trial of Christ by the Jews and by Pilate. In this scene, various eclectic elements are reunited; in addition to the Gospel accounts, also intrusions from the *Old Testament* appear, from the Book of Job, as shall be seen further.

In the case of the scene the *Mocking of Christ*, the Biblical verses refer to the arrest and mocking of Christ by the Jews, but also by the Romans, starting with the preliminary stage of the trial and peaking with the trial in

front of Pilate. The trial through which Jesus goes is a double one; the first one, that of the Jews, is done out of religious reasons, and the second one, the one of Pilate, as a representative of the Roman Empire in Israel, is done out of political reasons. The Jews, as a religious authority, mocked Christ because he had claimed to be the Son of God (John 5, 18), and the Romans, as a secular authority, did it for the statements according to which He considered Himself king (Mark 15, 2). For this reason, they adorned Christ in an ironic manner, parodying the crowning ceremony, but also the symbols of royalty: the scarlet colour, the crown and the sceptre, by giving Him a scarlet robe, a crown of thorns and a cane staff. Then, bowing in front of Him, they jeered at Jesus, saying "Hail, King of the Jews!", striking him, spitting on Him, humiliating Him and asking Him to prophesy who had hit Him[1]. Parodying the behaviour meant for a king, they kneel in front of Jesus, and then they strike Him on the head. Both these details belong to the image in which Jesus is being crowned with a thorn crown, after having been submitted to the trial by Pilate, and after Pilate gives him to the Jews, not having found Him guilty. All these facts are described in the Biblical text written by Matthew 26, 67-68; 27, 27-31; Mark 14, 65; 15, 17-19; Luke 22, 63-64 and John 19, 2-3.

Similarities, regarding the scene the *Mocking of Christ* illustrated in the West under the influence of the Byzantine art, have been also found between medieval representations of the sufferings and the mocking endured by Job, especially on behalf of his friends, and the representations of Christ's mocking, these two aspects being correlated also with the life and struggles of Francis of Assisi. Thus, the western representations of the *Mocking* stem from three sources of inspiration[2], these having also, most likely, a model coming from the Byzantine Empire, which was not kept to the present day.

Moving from the Biblical source of the scene to the concerned details in this text, we can see one of the reasons for which also musical instruments appear in the Byzantine representations of the *Mocking*, which are many and various, not only a horn (shofar), as it is the case for the representations in the Latin space, like the painted cross in Sta. Chiara, San Gimignano, probably the year 1261. This reason is given by the fact that the Biblical text of the *Old Testament* often makes a connection between the music of instruments and the devotion to God[3]. Therefore, because Jesus was saying about Himself that He was the Son of God, and the Jews did not believe Him, mocking Him, the

---

[1]Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levanti*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge New York, 1996, pp. 94-95. In Luke 23, 11, the *Gospel* text says that Jesus was dressed with a shiny piece of cloth, not with crimson, and this aspect was captured in the illustration of the *Mocking of Christ* at "Saint Nicholas" church in Dorohoi and at Probota Monastery. In all the other scenes mentioned by us, Jesus is wearing crimson.

[2]*Ibidem*, pp. 101, 107-112.

[3]*Ibidem*, p. 105.

artists caught the moment and transposed it by representing Christ "adorned with the royal symbols", accompanied by different instrument players, belonging to different musical categories, playing for Him as for a god and king. In all these representations they catch both the Jews' trial and their vision on the facts on the one hand, that is the religious reason of the mocking, namely Christ-God (John 18, 36), as well as the worldly perspective of the Romans, on the other, that is Christ- the king (John 18, 37). However, in the *Old Testament* music had also another meaning, that of ridicule and mockery, according to the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* 3, 14: "I have become a laughingstock to all my people, their mocking song all the day", or according to *The Book of Job* 30, 1, 9: "But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs. And now those young men mock me in song; I have become a byword among them". This is why these texts, especially the one of Job, seem to have influenced and inspired artists, because in some of the Byzantine representations of the *Mocking* there is also a group of children or young people who dance, most likely in an ironic and savage manner, if we take into account the painting details, while being accompanied by the music of those with musical instruments. Within the same frame, we can see that Job answers to his friends like this: "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ". (Job, 21, 11-12)[4]. The juxtaposition in the same image of musical instruments and dancers may represent an allusion to Job's struggles, taking into account that he was seen as a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ[5].

In addition to the reasons for the "composition" of Christ's image in which he is mocked, placing together in the same picture firstly the facts mentioned in the *New Testament* referring to Jesus's trial, and secondly overlapping Job's image from the *Old Testament* and identifying the Messiah with him, but also with Francis of Assisi, in the Byzantium, the artists had also another source of inspiration, that is the ridicule and the parody of certain imperial or religious ceremonies. Examples of parodies and ridicules of certain ceremonies by the Byzantine artists, captured in *The Life of Basil I* from the 10th century, or in Skylitzes' history from a century later, have as their purpose the demonizing of emperor Michael III, out of political reasons – in an attempt to justify his assassination by his successor, Basil I – because he must have supposedly ordered a certain jester called Groullos to be ironically named patriarch, and his friends to be metropolitans, in order to satirize and amuse at the expense of religious ceremonies, while walking in a procession and singing obscene and offensive songs accompanied by the sacred melodies. Moreover, the participants to this cortege were hopping like

---

[4]*Cf. Ibidem*, pp. 105-106.
[5]*Ibidem*, p. 105.

satires in the sounds of cymbals and other musical instruments. The same elements can be found also in later reports of the simulated imperial rituals, from which dancing and music are not missing[6]. Another example of parody of the Byzantine ceremonies can be found in *The Chronographia* authored by Michael Psellus, the one who tells about an event which took place during the reign of emperor Constantine IX, during a rebellion, when he presented himself to the mutineers in all his imperial glory, in order to dismiss the rumours about his death. Nevertheless, the mutineers organized a similar ceremony in which they ridiculed the emperor, using music and hilarious dances[7]. Another parody is described by Niketas Choniates, the one who tells about the 1149 fighting between the Byzantines and the Venetians, when the latter ones capture the ship of emperor Manuel I and adorned it in a pompous manner, placing there an Ethiopian man as emperor, ridiculing and making rasial allusions to the emperor. As well, the same historian describes also the splendorous parade to which emperor Andronicus has been submitted, carried through the city together with a cortege meant as a parody of the imperial cortege[8]. All these simulated ceremonies have a certain recurrence, recognizable in the use of musical instruments, probably playing them in a loud and disharmonious manner, in the use of acclamations with offensive texts, in interpreting naughty songs and in dancing. In this respect the Byzantine art has been impacted by this type of parody, especially in the case of the mocking of Christ, when the Biblical texts which we have mentioned can follow the pattern found in the parodies of the imperial Byzantine parodies, as Jesus had been submitted to a similar treatment[9]. This is how they came to the insertion of certain elements not mentioned in the *Gospels*, like musical instruments and dancing, but which are mentioned in the *Old Testament*, especially in the *Book of Job*, as we have reminded. Besides this, the introduction of musical instruments and dancing may be due to the inclusion by the artists of certain contemporary elements, thus making us assist to one of the few cases in which the Byzantine art assimilates and reflects contemporary social elements[10]. Moreover, the scenes of the *Mocking*, which we shall mention again, are tightly connected with the parodies of the Byzantine ceremonies from the beginning of the 14th century, period which has been labelled as one of "realism" in what regards the illustration of costumes and accessories within Byzantine religious art, a

---

[6]Henry Maguire, *Parodies of Imperial Ceremonial and Their Reflections in Byzantine Art*, in Alexander Beihammer, Stavroula Constantinou, Maria Parani, edit., *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean. Comparative Perspectives*, Brill, Leiden•Boston, 2013, pp. 417-419.

[7]*Ibidem*, pp. 420-421.

[8]*Ibidem*, p. 421.

[9]*Ibidem*, p. 423.

[10]*Ibidem*, pp. 423-424.

reality which most probably had expanded over daily life, catching certain aspects, as we shall also notice from the images[11].

Going further, the oldest image preserved from Byzantine art, which illustrates the scene of Christ's mocking, dates back from 1299 and can be found in "Saint Nicholas" church in Prilep, Northern Macedonia. Here we can notice a group of musicians, two of whom are playing large horns or rudimentary variants of the trumpet, while other two are playing a certain type of flute and cymbals. The next such representation chronologically speaking is the one from "Saint Nicholas" Orphanos church in Thessaloniki, Greece, which has been painted approximately between 1310-1320 **(Fig. 1)**.

Fig. 1: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Saint Nicholas" Orphanos church, Thessaloniki, Greece

---

[11]*Ibidem*, pp. 426-427.

This scene seems to have its roots in the 12th century, when the emperor used to appear on a bandstand in the sounds of musical instruments[12]. Here we can see, next to those who are playing two rudimentary trumpets (buisine), drums, cymbals, as well as an idiophonic instrument in the shape of sticks, with which one produced sounds by striking them against each other, also the person who is striking Christ on the head with a cane stick, the ones who are kneeling in front of Him (*Cf.* Matthew 27, 30; Mark 15, 18-19), and the soldiers (*Cf.* Matthew 27, 27; Mark 15, 16), in accordance with the biblical accounts.

The most remarkable representation of the *Mocking*, belonging to the late Byzantine art, is the one painted between 1316-1318 in "Saint George" church in Staro Nagoročino, Northern Macedonia **(Fig. 2)**.

Fig. 2: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Saint George" church in Staro Nagoročino, Northern Macedonia

---

[12]*Ibidem*, p. 424.

Here the scene is richly illustrated; the musical instruments are more numerous than in the previously mentioned examples: horns/trumpets, flute, drum and cymbals. Moreover, now the dancers also appear. They are two young men dressed in long-sleeved garments, which is the same kind of clothing encountered in the secular Byzantine art, presenting scenes of daily life[13]. This aspect helps us understand once more that artists, at least in the case of illustrating this scene, used to get inspiration from their surrounding reality at the time when those frescoes were achieved.

Besides the scenes of the *Mocking* reminded so far, and other similar ones, but each of them with its own particularities, can be found also in "Saint George" church of the Polog Monastery, Northern Macedonia, painted around 1343-1345; in the "Saint Archangel Michael" church of Lesnovo Monastery in Northern Macedonia, painted around the year 1346, then in the church of Dečani Monastery in Kosovo, painted around 1350; in "Saint Mary" church in Kotor, Montenegro, the 14th century; in "Saint Heraklion" church of "Saint John Lampadistis" Monastery in Cyprus, the 14th century; in "Saint Demitrius" church in Boboshevo, Bulgaria, painted around 1488; in the church of the "Holy Cross" in Plantanissa, Cyprus, painted around 1494; in the church of Stavronikita Monastery in Mount Athos, painted around 1545, and, most probably in other places. Within the Russian space, we can find this scene painted on an icon which dates back from the end of the 15th century, and is hosted now at the Museum of Architecture in Novgorod.

In what regards the dances and their characteristics, appearing in the various representations of the *Mocking*, these differ from case to case, depending on the specific of the place but also on the painted details like garments or choreographic movements. In the entire Medieval Europe, and not only then, there were ensembles of rudimentary performers who used to travel and entertain people with their music, dances and acrobatics. These were named jugglers in the West, while in the East, in the Slavonic world, especially in the Russian space – "skomorokhs", and in the Orient and the Muslim world they were called "köçek"[14]. Their art was simple and based on a type of music using musical instruments which were of very little performance and refinement. Their costumes were also simple, and the choreography used to contain folk dances, gruesome and sometimes obscene dances, sometimes making use of masks, generally representing animals. They would also have with them trained animals, usually bears, which had a great impact on the public.

While remaining in the sphere of Byzantine art and of the representations for the scene called the *Mocking of Christ*, we can notice that

---

[13]*Ibidem*, p. 425.
[14]Arzu Öztürkmen, *Performance, Iconograph, and Narrative in Ottoman Imperial Festivals*, in Barbara Sparti, Judy Van Zile, edit., *Imaging Dance. Visual Representation of Dancers and Dancing*, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zürich, New-York, 2011, pp. 81-82.

the images which represent also the dancers illustrate them having large costumes with long sleeves, as we can also see in the painting at Staro Nagoročino **(Fig. 2)**, as the street performers were in Macedonia. They were not well seen by the church, being considered propagators of immorality. However, they were appreciated by the people, reason for which we can find them in this scene. Some of these we can often find painted on the walls of churches, usually for illustrating psalm verses, including in the Romanian Principalities. The first such representation known in the Orthodox world is the one in the church "Saint Sofia" in Kiev, painted in the 11ᵗʰ century[15]. Their dances are ostentatious, full of joy and energy, opposing the Christian precepts, ridiculing and offending without restraint, while their moves were falling under what the Biblical texts called "ὄρχήσις". "Ὀρχήσις" referred to individual dances or movements, and come in a certain opposition to "χορεία", another Biblical term which refers to movements or dancing in a group[16]. The culture and art of the Middle Ages contains many examples where acrobats, jugglers and skomorokhs are represented in the scene of Salome dancing for Herod – for example – suggesting through their movements passion and sin. These performers present that entertaining and cheerful side, which is sometimes exaggerated or uncontrolled, aspects which have become thematic materials in the cycle called the *Passions of Christ*[17].

The *Mocking Christ* scene in the churches of Moldavia

In what regards the churches painted in the first half of the 16ᵗʰ century in Moldavia, in which the *Mocking of Christ* scene has been noticeably kept from the ensemble of the passions cycle, they present the illustration of the scene in a somewhat different manner, from case to case, offering many details about the music and the dance caught by the painter, which are at the same time testimonies of everyday life for those times, as we shall see. There are as well churches in Moldavia in which the scene of the *Mocking* is represented, and they date back from a time period before the 16ᵗʰ century, all these being foundations of Stephen the Great, but also some which date from the second half of this century, all with their particularities. Thus, the churches to which we are referring in this text are: "Saint Nicholas" church of "Saint Nicholas" Monastery Bălinești, Suceava County **(Fig. 3)**, foundation of Ioan Tăutu, built and painted between 1501-1505[18]; "The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist" church of the monastery with the same name, in Arbore, Suceava County **(Fig. 4)**, foundation of Luca Arbore in

---

[15]*Cf.* Sonja Zdravkova Djeparoska, "Performance and Religion: Dancing Bodies in Macedonian Orthodox Fresco Painting", in "Arts", 10 (4), 88, p. 8.
[16]*Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.
[17]*Ibidem*, p. 10.
[18]Ștefan S. Gorovei, "Un tablou votiv și o necropolă familială. Biserica logofătului Tăutu de la Bălinești", in "Analele Putnei", No.1, 2015, pp. 12-19.

1503 and painted in the following two years[19]; "Saint Nicholas" church in Dorohoi, Botoşani County **(Fig. 5)**, founded by Stephen the Great in 1495, but painted between 1522-1525[20]; "The Descent of the Holy Spirit" church of Dobrovăţ Monastery, Iaşi County **(Fig. 6)**, one of the last foundations of Stephen the Great (1504), painted during the reign of Petru Rareş, in 1529[21]; "All Saints' Day" church of Părhăuţi Monastery, Suceava County **(Fig. 7)**, founded by Gavriil Trotuşan in 1522 and painted between 1530-1531[22]; "Saint Nicholas" church of Probota Monastery, Suceava County **(Fig. 8)**, founded by Petru Rareș in 1530 and painted in 1532[23]; "The Dormition of the Mother of God" church of Humor Monastery, Suceava County **(Fig. 9)**, founded by Toader Bubuiog in 1530 and painted in 1535[24]; the "Annunciation" church of Moldovița Monastery, Suceava County **(Fig. 10)**, founded by Petru Rareș in 1532 and painted in 1537[25]; the "Saint Demetrius" church in Suceava **(Fig. 11)**, founded by Petru Rareș in the year 1535 and painted between the years 1536-1538[26] and "Saint Nicholas" church of Râşca Monastery, Suceava County **(Fig. 12)**, founded by Petru Rareș in 1542[27] and painted in the same period, with the mentioning that some of the paintings, among which also the scene of the *Mocking*, have been renewed according to the original models in the year 1827[28].

---

[19]I. Caproşu, "Biserica Arbure", in "Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei", no. 1-2, 1976, pp. 404-419.

[20]Carmen Cecilia Solomonea, Alina Budianu, *Biserica "Sfântul Nicolae" Dorohoi – efectele acţiunilor factorilor biotici şi abiotici la pictura murală*, in Sorin Iftimi, Aurica Ichim, Lucian-Valeriu Lefter, coord., *Simpozionul Naţional "Monumentul – Tradiţie şi viitor"*, 10th edition, vol. 2, Iaşi, 2008, pp. 491-492.

[21]Voica Maria Puşcaşu, Nicolae N. Puşcaşu, *Mănăstirea Dobrovăţului. Monografie arheologică şi istorică*, printed under the blessing of His Eminence Pimen, Archbishop of Suceava and Rădăuţi, Mitropolit Iacov Putneanul Publishing House, Suceava, 2012, pp. 15-16.

[22]Pr. Ilie Gheorghiţă, *Biserica din Părhăuţi*, in Prof. Dr. Vasile Drăguţ, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Corina Nicolescu, edit., *Monumente istorice bisericeşti din Mitropolia Moldovei şi Sucevei*, The Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava Publishing House, Iaşi, 1974, p. 164; Alexandru Prelipcean, *Mănăstirea Părhăuţi, 500 de ani (1522-2022): de la ctitorie boierească la citadelă monastică*, Crimca Publishing House, Archdiocese of Suceava and Rădăuţi, 2022, p. 13.

[23]Tereza Sinigalia, *Mănăstirea Probota. Biserica "Sf. Nicolae"* (http://www.medieval.istoria-artei.ro/resources/Probota%2C%20programul%20iconografic%2C%20Tereza%20Sinigalia.pdf), pp. 3, 52.

[24]Ecaterina Cincheza-Buculei, "Pictura pronaosului bisericii Mănăstirii Humor", in "Attitudes and Research in Art History. Fine Arts", new series, tome 4 (48), 2014, p. 183.

[25]Corina Nicolescu, *Mănăstirea Moldoviţa*, 2nd edition, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1967, pp. 8, 12.

[26]Paraschiva-Victoria Batariuc, "Din istoria bisericii «Sfântul Dumitru» din Suceava", in "Historia Urbana", vol. 16, 2008, pp. 65, 75.

[27]Narcis Creţulescu, *Istoria Sfintei Mănăstiri Rîşca din judeţul Suceava*, Fălticeni, 1901, p. 28.

[28]Prof. Dr. Vasile Drăguţ, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Corina Nicolescu, edit., *Monumente istorice bisericeşti din Mitropolia Moldovei şi Sucevei*, The Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava Publishing House, Iaşi, 1974, p. 199.

Fig. 3: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Saint Nicholas" church of "Saint Nicholas" Monastery Bălinești, Suceava County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Fig. 4: "The Mocking of Christ", "Beheading of Saint John the Baptist" church of "Beheading of Saint John the Baptist", Arbore, Suceava County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Fig. 5: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Saint Nicholas" church in Dorohoi, Botoşani County (photo: Eduard Rusu) (photo: Stelian Ciurciun)

Fig. 6: "The Mocking of Christ", in "The Descent of the Holy Spirit" church of Dobrovăţ Monastery, Iaşi County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Fig. 7: "The Mocking of Christ", in "All Saints' Day" church of Părhăuți Monastery, Suceava County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Fig. 8: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Saint Nicholas" church of Probota Monastery, Suceava County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Fig. 9: "The Mocking of Christ", in "The Dormition of the Mother of God" church of Humor Monastery, Suceava County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Fig. 10: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Annunciation" church of Moldovița Monastery, Suceava County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Fig. 11: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Saint Demetrius" church in Suceava (photo:
Eduard Rusu

Fig. 12: "The Mocking of Christ", in "Saint Nicholas" church of Râșca Monastery,
Suceava County (photo: Eduard Rusu)

Musical elements

To highlight even more the two elements under discussion here – music and dance – in the representations of the scene the *Mocking of Christ*, in the ten cases in Moldavia considered so far, we shall proceed to the identification and detailing of every illustrated music genre, the same way that we shall do also in the case of the dances, establishing, as far as it is possible, also a connection between dance and music.

As we have already noticed, in the art of Byzantine mural painting, both in the world of Byzantine influence and in the Western world (but which has its roots in this case in the Byzantium), the scene of the *Mocking*, part of the *Passion Cycle*, is built on the Biblical story, first and foremost on the New Testament, but also on the Old Testament. This happened because of the echo *The Book of Job* had in the Middle Ages, Job's suffering being compared to that of Christ. From all these, the most important aspect here is the degree of authenticity and „dailiness" as source of inspiration for painters. One must take into account that in the examples from the South of the Danube, which we have researched, especially in the case of those achieved around the 14th century, the degree of resemblance between art and reality in the case of clothing, musical instruments and dancing, is very high, this entire period representing a time in which realism influenced very much the art of Byzantine mural painting. This is why our attempt has as purpose to highlight, through corroboration with other categories of sources, the musical and choreographical reality of the time period when the paintings were achieved, as much as it can be re-established, in the same way we have already done in other situations, when we are referring to some of the mural paintings in the churches in Romania.

From the *Gospels* we notice that Jesus was betrayed by Judas and surrendered in the hands of the Jews, who were trying to find Him guilty and kill Him (Matthew 26, 57-68), taking Him afterwards to Pilate to judge Him. Here, the soldiers take Him in front of the Praetorium and dress Him up with the symbols of royalty, mocking Him and parodying the coronation ceremony: "Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again". (Mathew, 27, 27-30. *Cf.* Mark 15, 16-20; Luke 23, 11; John 19, 2-3). These verses are also illustrated in all the scenes of the *Mocking* in our examples and, despite the fact that some details are missing from certain scenes (for instance the kneeling of the soldiers), all the important elements, taken into account by us here, can be noticed in all the cases. In every group of soldiers there are also instrument players who play different types of trumpets and drums, even if

the accounts of the *New Testament* do not mention anywhere the presence of any type of music. However, the explanation for this consists in the fact that the Romans have parodied the ceremony of the coronation, and music could not be absent from a coronation, especially taking into consideration the tight connection between music and political power, as well as the fact that in the Middle Ages, when these paintings appear, but also in the immediately following period, music represented one of the main means through which a sovereign manifested his political power. Furthermore, as we have seen in the case of the *Mocking* scenes from the South Slavic area, the imperial and even the ecclesiastical ceremony have often been parodied, thus influencing also the mural painting. In this context, the instruments painted in our country only reflect the musical reality from the princely Court of Petru Rareș, reality which matches not only the information from the written sources, but also the fashion of the time, especially the Western one.

More precisely, in our examples we encounter two categories of music – the official one and the one for entertainment, which was tightly connected with dancing. The official one is in its turn divided into two distinct subdivisions – the military music and the music of the city, of the princely court. The military music was the music which served only the sovereign, the one that accompanied him on the battlefield, effectively contributing to the conduct of hostilities through the various sound signals necessary for the military manoeuvres, as well as for highlighting the person and the power the sovereign represented in front of his subjects and especially in front of his enemies. Outside the battlefield, the military music, next to the one of the city, was a component of various retinues and processions of the sovereign, accompanying him and marking his presence with sound whenever he travelled[29]. The musical instruments for this music were the trumpet and the timpani, and this was valid for the entire Western Europe. However, in Eastern Europe also cymbals were used in the military music before the timpani and later concomitantly with them. They had been taken from the Ottoman military practice and can be noticed in Dobrovăţ **(Fig. 6)** and Râşca **(Fig. 12)**. The presence of cymbals in these paintings makes us believe that in this period the cymbals used to replace sometimes the timpani, probably until the establishment of the "ritual formula" made of trumpet and timpani. The cymbals also appear in the South of the Danube, in some of the reminded examples (Thessaloniki, Kosovo, Staro Nagoročino, Lesnovo, Polog and Cyprus).

The timpani, which have become so specific for the Western military music and then for the art music, are introduced in the West through the Hungarian military musical practice, with the occasion of the wedding

---

[29]Eduard Rusu, *Muzica şi puterea politică în Moldova şi Ţara Românească, secolele al XV-lea – al XVIII-lea*, The "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Publishing House, Iaşi, 2021, pp. 87-103.

embassy sent in 1457 by Ladislaus the Posthumous to France. In their turn, the Hungarians have taken the timpani from the Ottomans through the military conflicts between them[30]. In this situation, taking into account the fact that the timpani appear painted in Moldavia in the second half of the 15th century, and in Wallachia, in all probability, even a century earlier, at Cozia, we believe that the presence of the timpani in the military music of the Romanian Principalities is at least concomitant with the one of the Hungarian Kingdom and previous to the West. This aspect is very important in the economy of the subject, because one can see the "trajectory" of this instrument from the Orient to the Occident, even though the timpani had been known to the Europeans even earlier, in the time of the Crusades, in smaller versions (kettledrum) and used in other contexts than the military one. The timpani were used in the battle always in pairs, carried on each side of the horse. In the scene the *Mocking of Christ* they appear at Bălinești **(Fig. 3)**, Arbore **(Fig. 4)**, "Saint Nicholas" in Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)**, Dobrovăț **(Fig. 6)** and Humor **(Fig. 9)**.

The contact between Europeans and Orientals through the Crusades facilitates also the evolution of trumpets – the most important military musical instrument – which have existed also in Europe for centuries, but through this contact their aspect is modified, and new sonority is being created, depending on the purpose for which they were used. The scenes of the *Mocking* in Moldavia, similar to Wallachia, restore several trumpet types, with multiple uses and sonorities. Such a trumpet, the one also named "right trumpet", appears at Bălinești **(Fig. 3)**, Moldovița **(Fig. 10)**, "Saint Demetrius" in Suceava **(Fig. 11)** and Râșca **(Fig. 12)**. These trumpets have been mostly used in the military music of the chivalry or in special contexts when they accompanied the sovereign in certain places.

If we look at the other kind of official music, we know that the music of the city meant to be that ever-present music of the city or town, where the sovereign's residence used to be. This music served for sound signalling the possible dangers or the different stages or events during a day, playing from the towers or buildings with the role of observation. Furthermore, it used to be present, next to the military music, to all the manifestations which had the sovereign in the centre, highlighting his attributes and grandeur. It was usually played mainly by trumpets and drums, but which were different from those belonging to the military music. In addition, they used oboes, zurnas, bagpipes and flutes. These aspects are recognizable also in the Romanian Principalities, according to the written sources, confirmed also by the visual ones like mural painting, including the scene of the *Mocking* in our examples.

---

[30] Curt Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*, W. W. Norton & Company Inc., New York, 1940, p. 329; Jeremy Montagu, *Timpani and Percussion*, Yale University Press, New Haven•London, 2002, pp. 42-43.

The sound signaling of the important moments and events used to be done in the West mainly through the trumpet and the drums. This trumpet had the shape of the letter "S" and was used between the end of the 14ᵗʰ century and the 17ᵗʰ century, being an evolved instrument in terms of shape and sound, as compared to the military straight trumpet, which generated more acute sounds. In the first half of the 15ᵗʰ century, the two curls which gave the trumpet the shape of the letter „S" overlap, thus resulting a trumpet similar to the present one[31], called "clairon" or "clareta"[32]. These modifications occur as a result of the evolution of the technology of metal processing, but also due to the necessity to reduce the dimensions of the instrument, to make it more easily manoeuvrable[33]. However, the "S" trumpet continued to be used in the Romanian Principalities until late, in the 18ᵗʰ century, one piece of evidence being again the church painting, especially the one in Wallachia. Both models are to be recognized also in our paintings, in the scene of the *Mocking*. The "S" shaped trumpet appears at Dobrovăț **(Fig. 6)** and Humor **(Fig. 9)** and the "clareta" appears at Bălinești **(Fig. 3)**, Arbore **(Fig. 4)**, "Saint Nicholas" in Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)**, Părhăuți[34] **(Fig. 7)**, Humor **(Fig. 9)**, Probota **(Fig. 8)** and Moldovița **(Fig. 10)**.

The other instrument representative for the city music was the double membrane drum, an instrument with a very large spreading area and with multiple uses. This type of drum appears also in the paintings from the South of the Danube, at Staro Nagoročino, Polog and Lesnovo in Northern Macedonia, at Platanissa in Cyprus, but also in Moldavia, at Arbore **(Fig. 4)**, Bălinești **(Fig. 3)**, "Saint Nicholas" in Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)**, Dobrovăț **(Fig. 6)**, Părhăuți **(Fig. 7)**, Humor **(Fig. 9)**, Probota **(Fig. 8)** and Râșca **(Fig. 12)**. They also appear in Wallachia in several places. However, a very interesting aspect related to this drum is the fact that not only by the South Danube examples, but also by those in Moldavia, the drummer is represented as being on the move, while rhythmically supporting the dance of the young people, aspect which can only make us believe that this drum was used also in the dance music.

Another instrument belonging to the city music, present throughout the whole Western area, in the East, but also in our region, is the "surla" or "zurna". The surla belongs to the family of medieval oboes, it is made of

[31]*Cf.* Anthony Baines, "The Evolution of Trumpet Music up to Fantini", in "Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association", Vol. 101 (1974 -1975), p. 7; Curt Sachs, *op. cit.*, p. 328.
[32] Francis W. Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music. Their History and Character*, second edition, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1911, pp. 199-206.
[33]Elisa Gerolimetto, *La tromba nella musica veneziana del XVII secolo*, [Magistrali biennali], Padova, 2019, p. 25.
[34]As the *Mocking of Christ* scene from Părhăuți Monastery is hard to descipher because of degradation, within this text we shall refer only to the musical instruments which we can distinguish. After the restauration it will be possible to see clearly also the other elements of the scene.

wood, and it generates acute sounds. In Moldavia, the instrument has been attested even since the time of Stephen the Great, through the mentioning of Mircea Purcel the surla player[35], and it appears in the scene of the *Mocking* at Bălinești **(Fig. 3)**, Arbore **(Fig. 4)**, Dobrovăț **(Fig. 6)**, Humor **(Fig. 9)**, Probota **(Fig. 8)** and very probably at "Saint Nicholas" in Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)**. It is to be noticed in the case of the surla represented in our examples the fact that the surla-player holds the instrument with both hands, especially because the surla was designed with holes for making the sounds, unlike the trumpet players, who hold the trumpet, in most of the cases, with only one hand, because the trumpets did not use to have such orifices or plugs as they have today. However, in certain cases, the straight trumpets are held with both hands, but at the inferior part, not at the middle, due to the dimensions and the weight which were greater than in the case of the other trumpets mentioned here. Going back to the matter, initially we labeled the surla at "Saint Nicholas" in Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)** to be a straight trumpet, while we guided ourselves by colour and form, but when noticing better the dimension and the holding manner, we believed that it is rather a surla.

In addition to these three well-known and documented instruments, the music of the city used to include sometimes, according to circumstances and preferences, also other instruments, as the bagpipe, represented at Bălinești **(Fig. 3)** and Arbore **(Fig. 4)**, or different types of flutes, all these being used also in the dance music, for which reason it is quite difficult to establish their purpose based on the here mentioned paintings.

Moving on to the entertainment music, the one which accompanies the dance of the young people or the children in the scene of the *Mocking*, we may notice a great variety of instruments, reason for which we consider that the entertaining music in Moldavia at that time, especially the one at the Court of the sovereign, was a diverse one. As we have mentioned earlier, the double membrane drum, the bagpipe and some flutes have been certainly used also in the dance music, having as proof other dance scenes painted in our churches, separate from the *Mocking* one, while the same idea emerges also from the written sources. But the most often used instruments in the dance music of that time period in the entire Europe and especially in the Orient were the different types of drums, mentioned as being dance music, starting with the biblical text, the main information sources for the painters. These are tambourines or "daires", single membrane drums or "bendirs", made to resonate with a stick or the hand, while the instrument players also perform dance movements. Thus, the tambourine or daire appears in the *Mocking* scene at Arbore **(Fig. 4)** and Moldovița **(Fig. 10)**, and the single membrane drum or bendir at Probota **(Fig. 8)** and Moldovița **(Fig. 10)**.

---

[35]*Documenta Romaniae Historica*, A. Moldova, vol. III (1487-1504), prepared by C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu and N. Ciocan, The Academy Publishing House of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Bucharest, 1980, doc. 168, p. 306.

With the exception of these drums, we also have two exceptional cases: one encountered at Bălinești **(Fig. 3)**, which we have discussed on another occasion[36], where a combination of drum and flute appears, instrument called in the West "tabor-pipe" or "recorder", representing an instrument preferred by the Western medieval dance music, especially the one for the street dance. The second case, which is more difficult to identify and catalogue, is encountered at "Saint Demetrius" in Suceava **(Fig. 11)**, where there are two dancers holding two species of drums, which seem to have a metal membrane or surface, and which is also slightly curved. One of them is beating the drum with the palm of the hand and the other one with a stick. This drum, uniquely represented in the Romanian space from what we have known so far, can be that instrument called "hang", which may explain certain old phrases maintained in the Romanian language: "a ține hangul" (to hold the hang), "a bate hangul" (to beat the hang) și "a bate în tingire" (to beat the pan), which make one think of dancing, of keeping the rhythm of the dancers with the help of this instrument. As well, another tambourine or timbrel[37], made only of small metal plates, which generate sounds by clashing, is represented in "Saint Nicholas" church, Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)**.

Excepting the drums, the rhythm of the dance could be maintained by means of other musical instruments, such as castanets, depicted at Bălinești **(Fig. 3)**, or other similar ones named "clappers", represented by two specially made sticks, which produce sounds while being hit against each other, used like castanets in dance music. These are painted at "Saint Nicholas" in Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)** and at Humor **(Fig. 9)**.

Choreographic elements

Moving from the music suggested by the musical instruments depicted in the scene of the *Mocking* to the dances interpreted on this music, we face a problem even more difficult to solve than it might seem at the first sight. Identifying dances is a meandering matter, because of their multitude, even if we only take into account the fact that Dimitrie Cantemir states that only a certain category of dancers, called in Romanian "călușari", knew how to dance over one hundred different dances ("for they have more than one hundred rhythms and games to match them"[38]), without considering also the other dancers in the country.

If the dances represented in the scene of the *Mocking* in the South of the Danube have been labeled as dances performed by that category of street

[36]Eduard Rusu, "Muzica în Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare. Certitudini și ipoteze", in "Analele Putnei", Year VIII, No. 1, p. 247.
[37]"Timbrel" represents the English term for this instrument, used even since the Middle Ages. *Cf.* Christine Ammer, *The Facts On File Dictionary of Music*, Facts On File, Inc., New York, 2004, p. 421.
[38]Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei*, translation after the Latin original by Gh. Guțu, The Academy Publishing House of Socialist republic Romania, Bucharest, 1973, p. 315.

artists – jugglers or skomorokhs – the ones who most often used to ridicule and parody dances from the high society, certain ceremonies or even popular dances, going up to identifying them and their moves as being one specific to the Macedonian dances, as we could notice in the case of the fresco in Staro Nagoročino **(Fig. 2)**, the dances in the Moldavian examples, considered altogether, have a distinct aspect, not encountered in other cases, and this is given by the handkerchieves held by the dancers in their hands. Worthy of mentioning is also the fact that in the depiction at "Saint Demetrius" in Suceava **(Fig. 11)**, the dancers dance with drums not with handkerchieves in their hands, which may suggest that this is a different dance than the one with the handkerchieves.

The dance with the handkerchief has been located in the Romanian territories by the foreign travelers, who describe them as being group dances, performed especially by women, but also by men and women combined, contrary to the ones in the scene of the *Mocking*, as the latter ones seem to be individual dances, performed only by boys.

The dance with the handkerchiefs, named by Franz Joseph Sulzer "the Greek belt"[39], is the same or very similar with the dance called "romeika", the one which, according to James Dallaway's account, has been performed entirely by women since 1784, and only the leader of the group shakes a handkerchief in her hand[40]. The same dance is located also at the Russians, in the 17th century, also performed by women and also with white handkerchiefs in their hands, as Adam Olearius[41] tells, but as well in the Ottoman Empire, where it was danced in the Christian communities[42], the dances being popular ones and performed in groups[43].

Paul Henry stated that the dances with the handkerchief in the *Mocking* scene in the church frescoes from Moldavia are a faulty interpretation of the long sleeve dances from Staro Nagoročino **(Fig. 2)**, statement rightfully labeled by Ion Solcanu as wrong, because images of the handkerchief dance appear also in other places South of the Danube, in approximately the same time period, like Lesnovo, but not in the *Mocking*

---

[39]*Cf. Fr. J. Sulzer în Dacia cisalpină și transalpină*, translated and taken care of by Gemma Zinveliu, The Music Publishing House of the Composers and Musicologists Union in Romania, Bucharest, 1995, p. 132.

[40]*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part II, taken care of Maria Holban, Maria M. Alexandrescu-Dresca Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu, Publishing House of the Romanain Academy, Bucharest, 2001, p. 1216.

[41]Philip Ross Bullock, *Women and Music*, in Rosslyn Wendy, Alessandra Tosi, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture*, Open Book Publishers, 2012, pp. 120-121.

[42]Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau Général de l'Empire Ottoman*, tome quatrième, second partie, Paris, 1791, p. 428. See also Filippou Filippos, George Mavrides, Stella Rokka, Ivoni Harahoussou, Theodossia Harahoussou, *La femme et la danse dans la société grecque traditionnelle et contemporaine* (www.fcomte.iufm.fr/ejrieps/ejournal4), no. 4, p. 57.

[43]Danica S. Janković, Ljubica S. Janković, *Serbian Folk Dance Tradition in Prizren*, în „Ethnomusicology", Vol. 6, No. 2 (May, 1962), p. 117.

scene, as it has been erroneously stated, but only in the scene of "The feast of the seven lepers cured by the Archangel Michael". The depiction of the handkerchief dance, in both geographical spaces, is merely a transfer of a choreographic reality of that time period[44].

Interesting is the fact that this handkerchief dance, in a different form than the one suggested in the *Mocking* scene, appears in the painting in Moldavia at Cetăţuia Monastery in Iaşi, for instance, as being a group dance, performed by girls/women. The images correspond to the later depictions in the written sources, reason for which we tend to believe that the dancers, usually two, from the *Mocking* scene, attempt an allusion, a caricature of the real handkerchief dance from the choreographic repertoire of the country, contemporary with the making of the frescoes. If we take into consideration also that these dancers were very probably the correspondents of the jugglers in the West and of skomorokhs in the East, that is the players and the conjurers mentioned in the Romanian written sources, the ones who ridiculed and satirized real life aspects, we can state that dances in the *Mocking* scene are nothing more but parodic versions of real life, just as it happens today with the various games and dances performed around winter holidays, which reflect real life aspects in a comic, amusing manner, even though people nowadays find it harder to identify them. In fact, the terms in Romanian for "buffoonish" or "buffoonery" ("caraghios", "caraghioslâc") are common in the Romanian sources, always used for describing entertainment scenes from the princely court, both in Moldavia and in Wallachia. Another idea which can lead us to the thought that the dances in the *Mocking* scene aim at ridiculing and parodying reality is given by the fact that normally the handkerchief dance was performed by women, while here are the ones who dance are always young men or even teenagers, as they appear also in the example from the *Book of Job*, reminded above. Let us also keep in mind that Dimitrie Cantemir describes the "căluşari" as being disguised in women's clothing and carrying swords in their hands[45], which means coss-dressing existed also in the Romanian society.

In the Byzantine Empire and then in the entire Balkan area, the dance/dances with handkerchiefs or scarves are very common, specific to various communities and events. They are performed mostly by women and rarely by women and men. The scarf is a clothing item known even since the Antiquity, indispensable to women. In Christianity, the scarf has been a clothing item always worn by women, especially during occasions related to the public divine service and the clothing modesty preached by the Holy Fathers. In time it has become also a luxury piece, made of expensive

---

[44]Ion I. Solcanu, *Artă şi societate românească (sec. XIV-XVIII)*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 159-160.
[45]Dimitrie Cantemir, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

materials and decorated with precious gems, worn by high society women[46].
In this respect, the lack of reference to exclusively masculine dances, having
as accessory a handkerchief or a scarf, makes us believe that the dances from
the *Mocking* scene are only a satire and a parody of the feminine dances, in
accordance with all the other constituent elements of the scene. Moreover,
the most suitable ones to accomplish this thing are no others, but the players
mentioned in the written sources, always together in accounts of music
accompaniment.

One must necessarily take into consideration also the battle of the
Church against dances, because through them various sins could appear,
while distracting the attention from prayer and piety. Through dancing people
remained connected with the pagan customs and traditions, which were
fought against by the Church, keeping the idolatrous superstitions, while the
dance movements were considered to be hedonistic and obscene elements,
leading to fornication. At the same time, the Church was promoting the
"humble" dances, the ones which were performed in religious ceremonies or
similar contexts[47].

Very important elements for at least guessing the character of the
music on which the young men with handkerchiefs are dancing, are the
musical instruments which appear in the same paintings. The common
element for all the scenes where the dancers appear is the drum, both the
double membrane drum and the daires or tambourines, held even by dancers
in their hands. Furthermore, it is very intriguing that in all the cases in which
the double membrane drum appears near the dancers, the drummer is always
caught in movement, not in a static position like the other musicians. This
aspect makes us believe that he used to dance together with the dancers, like
it happens nowadays with the drummers in the groups of carolers. These
movements are today merely reminders or parodies of certain traditions or
customs from the past. Returning to the drummer's movements, we must take
into account that he used to keep the rhythm for the young men's dance, just
as they themselves are doing in the scene at Moldovița **(Fig. 10)**, when they
are holding drums in order to keep the rhythm by themselves.

In what regards the other musical instruments appearing in these
scenes, we must establish a delimitation between those of the official music,
the military music and the city music, as they belong to the picture suggested
by the *Gospel* texts, while those regarding dance music are based on texts of
the *Old Testament*. Thus, speaking about the dance music, we may also

---

[46]*Cf.* Magdalini Parcharidou, *Interpreting the Female Dances of "Ainoi" (Laudes) in the Post-Byzantine Painting*, in Sophia Germanidou, edit., *Secular Byzantine Women. Art, Archaeology, and Ethnography of Female Material Culture from Late Roman to Post-Byzantine Times*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London•New York, 2022, p. 170.
[47]Konstantinos Dimopoulos, "Are Sergiani Dances Female Byzantine Dances? Common Features in Different Periods", in "International Journal of Education and Social Science Research", Vol. 4, No. 3, May-June, 2021, pp. 371-372.

notice other instruments specific to this context, like the instrument called the tabor-pipe from Bălineşti **(Fig. 3)**, one used mainly for this music, the different castanets or sticks for keeping the rhythm, as in Bălineşti, "Saint Nicholas" in Dorohoi **(Fig. 5)** and Humor **(Fig. 9)**, but also the bagpipe, when it served for dance music, illustrated at Bălineşti **(Fig. 3)** and Arbore **(Fig. 4)**, as well as various species of drums, which appear in the majority of the scenes.

Conclusions

The *Mocking* scene from the *Passion Cycle* contains a very important source of information about the Romanian musical past, which is in agreement with the written sources, these two leading, maybe in a surprising way, to the music specific to the West, placing Moldavia in the same sphere of influence, at least from a musical and choreographic point of view, despite some ideas not in accordance with reality, but strongly rooted, which deny the Romanian Principalities orientation and development, even when regarded only from certain perspectives, according to the Western principles.

Music and dancing have been the main ways of reaching recreation and entertainment in all times and this is why they are so diverse. At the same time, they have also been parodied, quite often, with the purpose of obtaining an even greater cheerfulness or for mocking and laughing at certain aspects or elements of everyday life. This is why, in the case of illustrating the *Mocking of Christ* scene from the examples brought here to attention, the parody and the ridicule made out of Christ's coronation represent the central idea which is the foundation for "making" the scene, with all the transformations and influences appeared in terms of time and space. We believe that the reflection of everyday life in this case is eloquent, and the multitude of specific elements which mark the differences from one region to another or from a certain time period to another is precisely the strongest argument to consider that in the depiction of these scenes many elements of everyday life have been caught, elements which were contemporary with the moment of painting. Although, on a first evaluation one cannot highlight many distinct elements when comparing the *Mocking* scenes in the south of the Danube and the ones in Moldavia, for instance, still, after a closer approach, the differences start to appear clearer and in accordance with the musical and choreographic character of each and every region. Moreover, the most notable differences are between Moldavia and Wallachia, the most important example being the lack of dances in the latter case, aspect which makes us believe that in Wallachia a different model for the illustration of the *Mocking*[48] scene has been followed, even though we know that such dances have existed here as well.

---

[48]I mention that I have seen only a part of the *Mocking* scenes in Wallachia, and dancing was not represented in any of them.

List of figures:

Bibliography:

Ammer, **Christine**, *The Facts On File Dictionary of Music*, Facts On File, Inc., New York, 2004.
Baines, **Anthony**, "The Evolution of Trumpet Music up to Fantini", in "Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association", Vol. 101 (1974 -1975), 1-9.
Batariuc, **Paraschiva-Victoria**, "Din istoria bisericii «Sfântul Dumitru» din Suceava", in "Historia Urbana", vol. 16, 2008, 65-89
Bullock, **Philip Ross**, *Women and Music*, in Rosslyn Wendy, Alessandra Tosi, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture*, Open Book Publishers, 2012, 119-136.
Călători străini despre Ţările Române, vol. X, part II, taken care of Maria Holban, Maria M. Alexandrescu-Dresca Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu, Publishing House of the Romanain Academy, Bucharest, 2001.

Cantemir, **Dimitrie**, *Descrierea Moldovei*, translation after the Latin original by Gh. Guțu, The Academy Publishing House of Socialist republic Romania, Bucharest, 1973.

Caproșu, **I**., "Biserica Arbure", in "Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei", no. 1-2, 1976, 404-419.

Cincheza-Buculei, **Ecaterina**, "Pictura pronaosului bisericii Mănăstirii Humor", in "Attitudes and Research in Art History. Fine Arts", new series, tome 4 (48), 2014, 183-218.

Crețulescu, **Narcis**, *Istoria Sfintei Mănăstiri Rîșca din județul Suceava*, Fălticeni, 1901.

d'Ohsson, **Ignatius Mouradgea**, *Tableau Général de l'Empire Ottoman*, tome quatrième, second partie, Paris, 1791.

Derbes, **Anne**, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levanti*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge•New York, 1996

Dimopoulos, **Konstantinos**, "Are Sergiani Dances Female Byzantine Dances? Common Features in Different Periods", in "International Journal of Education and Social Science Research", Vol. 4, No. 3, May-June, 2021, 369-401.

Documenta Romaniae Historica, A. Moldova, vol. III (1487-1504), prepared by C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu and N. Ciocan, The Academy Publishing House of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Bucharest, 1980.

Drăguț, **Prof. Dr. Vasile**; **Nicolescu**, **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Corina**, edit., *Monumente istorice bisericești din Mitropolia Moldovei şi Sucevei*, The Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava Publishing House, Iași, 1974.

Filippos, **Filippou**; **Mavrides**, **George**; **Rokka**, **Stella**; **Harahoussou**, **Ivoni**; **Harahoussou**, **Theodossia**, *La femme et la danse dans la société grecque traditionnelle et contemporaine* (www.fcomte.iufm.fr/ejrieps/ejournal4), no. 4, 54-65.

Fr. J. Sulzer în Dacia cisalpină și transalpină, translated and taken care of by Gemma Zinveliu, The Music Publishing House of the Composers and Musicologists Union in Romania, Bucharest, 1995.

Galpin, **Francis W.**, *Old English Instruments of Music. Their History and Character*, second edition, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1911.

Gerolimetto, **Elisa**, *La tromba nella musica veneziana del XVII secolo*, [Magistrali biennali], Padova, 2019.

Gheorghiță, **Pr. Ilie**, *Biserica din Părhăuți*, in Prof. Dr. Vasile Drăguț, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Corina Nicolescu, edit., *Monumente istorice bisericești din Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, The Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava Publishing House, Iași, 1974, 163-167.

Gorovei, **Ștefan S.**, "Un tablou votiv și o necropolă familială. Biserica logofătului Tăutu de la Bălinești", in "Analele Putnei", No.1, 2015, 7-30.

Janković, Danica S.; Janković, Ljubica S., *Serbian Folk Dance Tradition in Prizren*, în „Ethnomusicology", Vol. 6, No. 2 (May, 1962), 115-125.

Maguire, **Henry**, *Parodies of Imperial Ceremonial and Their Reflections in Byzantine Art*, in Alexander Beihammer, Stavroula Constantinou, Maria Parani, edit., *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean. Comparative Perspectives*, Brill, Leiden•Boston, 2013, 417-432.

Montagu, **Jeremy**, *Timpani and Percussion*, Yale University Press, New Haven•London, 2002.

Nicolescu, Corina, *Mănăstirea Moldoviţa*, 2nd edition, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1967.

Öztürkmen, **Arzu**, *Performance, Iconograph, and Narrative in Ottoman Imperial Festivals*, in Barbara Sparti, Judy Van Zile, edit., *Imaging Dance. Visual Representation of Dancers and Dancing*, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zürich, New-York, 2011, 77-86.

Parcharidou, **Magdalini**, *Interpreting the Female Dances of "Ainoi" (Laudes) in the Post-Byzantine Painting*, in Sophia Germanidou, edit., *Secular Byzantine Women. Art, Archaeology, and Ethnography of Female Material Culture from Late Roman to Post-Byzantine Times*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London•New York, 2022, 163-184.

Prelipcean, **Alexandru**, *Mănăstirea Părhăuţi, 500 de ani (1522-2022): de la ctitorie boierească la citadelă monastică*, Crimca Publishing House, Archdiocese of Suceava and Rădăuţi, 2022.

Puşcaşu, **Voica Maria**; **Puşcaşu**, **Nicolae N.**, *Mănăstirea Dobrovăţului. Monografie arheologică şi istorică*, printed under the blessing of His Eminence Pimen, Archbishop of Suceava and Rădăuţi, Mitropolit Iacov Putneanul Publishing House, Suceava, 2012.

Rusu, **Eduard**, "Muzica în Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare. Certitudini și ipoteze", in "Analele Putnei", Year VIII, No. 1, 237-262.

Rusu, **Eduard**, *Muzica şi puterea politică în Moldova şi Ţara Românească, secolele al XV-lea – al XVIII-lea*, The „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Publishing House, Iaşi, 2021.

Sachs, **Curt**, *The History of Musical Instruments*, W. W. Norton & Company Inc., New York, 1940.

Sinigalia, **Tereza**, *Mănăstirea Probota. Biserica "Sf. Nicolae"* (http://www.medieval.istoria-artei.ro/resources/Probota%2C%20programul%20iconografic%2C%20Tereza%20Sinigalia.pdf)

Solcanu, **Ion I.**, *Artă şi societate românească (sec. XIV-XVIII)*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002.

Solomonea, **Carmen Cecilia**; **Budianu**, **Alina**, *Biserica "Sfântul Nicolae" Dorohoi – efectele acţiunilor factorilor biotici şi abiotici la pictura murală*, in Sorin Iftimi, Aurica Ichim, Lucian-Valeriu Lefter, coord., *Simpozionul Naţional "Monumentul – Tradiţie şi viitor"*, 10th edition, vol. 2, Iaşi, 2008, 491-503.

Zdravkova Djeparoska, **Sonja**, "Performance and Religion: Dancing Bodies in Macedonian Orthodox Fresco Painting", in "Arts", 10 (4), 88, 1-15.

The Complex Roots of the Figures Modellate in Stucco inside the Khirbat al-Mafjar - Some Observations

Siyana Georgieva[*]

Abstract: *The paper refers to the decorative art made in stucco sculptures in the Umayyad palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar, a significant example of early Islamic cultural heritage in Palestine and worldwide.*
Khirbat al-Mafjar represents the Early Islamic architecture and decorative art as distinctive identity of Umayyad arts and architecture and as cultural interaction. For this reason, it is recommended to highlight the uniqueness of the representation of humans and animals in Umayyad decorative art as well as the identity of this art resulting from the synthesis of native Islamic elements and imported ones: Coptic, Roman and Sassanid.

Keywords: *Islamic Art, Stucco, Modelled figures, Umayyads, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Symbology*

The Umayyad palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar in Jericho (known as Hisham's Palace) (724-748 AD) is decorated with a complex of stucco sculptures (now in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem) that had both men and women figures, animals and hybrid creatures and head friezes. The first group includes monumental sculptures depicting people and animals (caliphs, women, lions, horses, etc.); in addition, four sculptures depicting female figures survive from the Khirbat al-Mafjar sculpture complex. They were discovered and restored by Robert W. Hamilton, who excavated the palace between 1936 and 1948. Another has busts, some freestanding, others framed in medallions, including imaginary creatures such as winged horses; and the third can be defined as a combination of people and plants, including a human head on a sofa dome, books and inhabited scrolls.

Figurative art in the Islamic world exists despite condemnation by jurists; one of the privileged areas is the decoration of manuscripts, but in the field of architecture it remains marginal. Moreover, when one tries to trace a connection between the figurative presences in Islamic architecture, they most often appear relatively independent aesthetically, thematically, and functionally.[1]

---

[*] Ph.D student in Anthropology, Religion and Oriental Civilization-UniToscana, e-mail: siyanageo@gmail.com
[1] Clévenot Dominique, Degeorge Gérard, *Décors d'Islam*, 2017, p.126.

Throughout its history, Islam has often manifested, through the voice of its jurists, a certain skepticism towards figures, based on the interpretation of certain passages in the Qur'an. With reference to the hadiths, or the speeches of the Prophet, according to some jurists, the depiction of living beings would have been contrary to the divine will and therefore it was necessary to be condemned.[2]

The main accusation was aimed at the painter rather than the work of art, as the painter himself, by making an image, and creating something "that is endowed with real or potential life",[3] becomes in fact a competitor of God.

Major archaeological discoveries of buildings from the Umayyad period, such as Qasr Amra, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Qasr al-Hayr West and Samarra have brought to light astonishing evidence of architectural decoration of a figurative nature.[4] In these monuments, themes with zoomorphic and anthropomorphic elements are depicted, but they are the exception rather than the rule. In fact, they are private monuments for private use and enjoyment and do not represent the official or formal artistic style.[5]

Islamic decorative art draws inspiration from various traditions: Greco-Roman, Near Eastern, Christian and Sasanian iconography. In the Islamic world, a figurative art exists as already mentioned, tracing the links between different figurative presences in Islamic architecture. The result often appears as an accumulation of themes, in which it is difficult to recognize a precise identity, as in the figures modelled in stucco or in the floor mosaics at Khirbat al-Mafjar (Fig. 1).[6] While a representation of Umayyad power[7] can be recognized in the mosaic, it is uncertain whether the modelled figures had a symbolic value.

A particular example of this accumulation of images is found in the small Qasr al-Amra palace, where walls and vaults are frescoed with polychrome paintings on plaster illustrating an iconographic cycle whose meaning remains uncertain[8]. Along the axis of the entrance or in the so-called 'audience room', we find, on the back wall, a prince resembling the Byzantine

---

[2] *Ivi*, p.125

[3] Grabar Oleg, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, London, 1973, p.99.

[4] Clévenot Dominique, Degeorge Gérard, *Décors d'Islam*,2017, p.126.

[5] Grabar Oleg, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, London, 1973, p.103.

[6] Clévenot Dominique, Degeorge Gérard, *Décors d'Islam*, 2017, p.129.

[7] The tree of life represented as the pomegranate is in the center of the floor of the castle reception room, representing the caliphal power and the new order it brought. The lion attacking the gazelle to the right of the tree represents the regal/solar power that dominates and disciplines the lunar power (earth, agriculture). The two gazelles to the left of the tree graze peacefully and are turned one to the left and one to the right to represent the whole known world under the Sun, from sunrise to sunset. The figuration is enclosed by an unbroken skein frame, a symbol of steadfastness against adversity. cf. Spinelli Anna, *Arte Islamica* The measure of the metaphysical, Perugia, 2008, p. 53.

[8] Fontana Maria Vittoria, *Islamic painting from its origins to the end of the fourteenth century*, Rome,2002, p.22.

Fig. 1 Mosaic floor with lion and gazelles, 724-43 or 743-46. Reception Room, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Palestinian Territories. Scala/ Art Resource, NY

Fig. 2 Qusayr Amra (Jordan), building/ bathroom, 2nd quarter century. VIII, large entrance hall, "audience hall", prince on the throne and two personalities; (col. drawing by A. L. Mielich; from
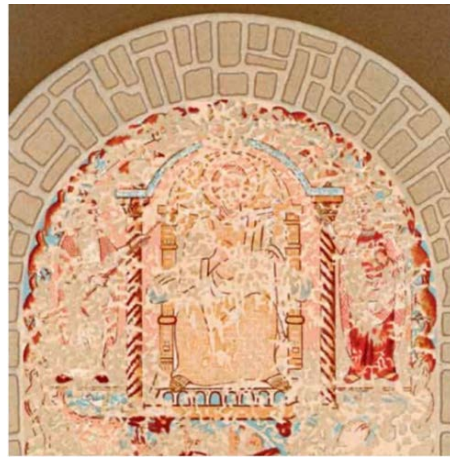
Fig. 3 Drawing of six kings. Fresco, 705-15. West wall, hall, Qusayr 'Amra, Jordan. Reproduced by Alois Musil. Kusejr' Amra und Schlösser östlich von Moab. Vol. 2, pl. XXVI. Vienna, 1907

iconography of Christ (Fig. 2). On a side wall of the great entrance hall, six kings are depicted, representing a classic Sasanian theme referring to the Kings of the Earth, but as Fontana says: "it fits the Umayyad situation"[9] (Fig. 3). In the thermal rooms we find scenes of hunting, bathing, nautical games, daily life with the trades of those who built the building, musicians, drinkers, bare-chested dancers, acrobats, erotic scenes, and allegorical figures of Victory.[10]

As Maria Vittoria Fontana explains in *La pittura islamica dalle origini alla fine del Trecento*, a particular theme of the caldarium dome is an astronomical image reproducing the celestial constellations [11](Fig. 4).
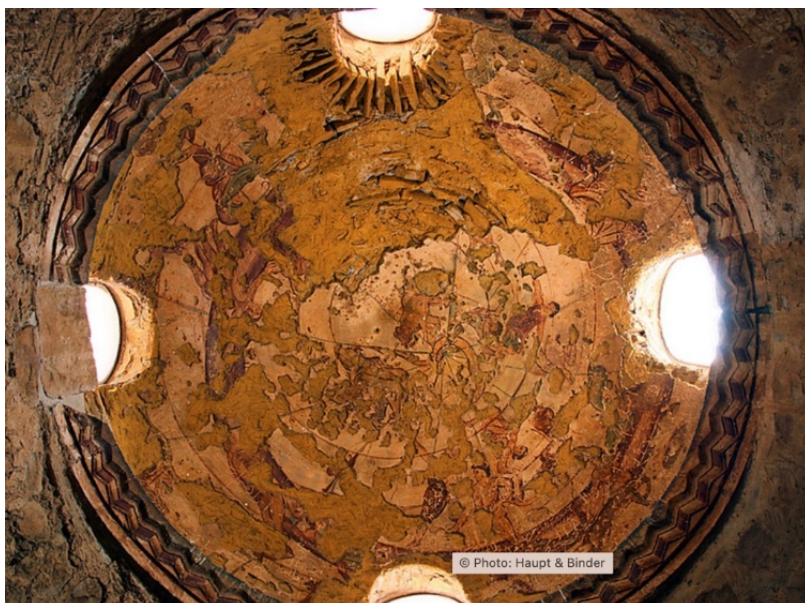
Fig. 4 The Zodiac of Quṣayr 'Amra, 1933.
Du Mont Kunstreiseführer Jordanien, 2011, p. 221

We note that the pictorial cycle of Qasr al-Amra appears with different themes and styles within which Islam did not yet seem to have made its choice, remaining as a connection between the Classical and Late Medieval Oriental styles.[12]

Another palace contemporary to Qasr al-Amra and Khirbat al-Mafjar is the Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, near Palmyra, where there is a floor fresco that will have a long continuation in the art of the Islamic court. It depicts a figure of a horseman hunting ibex with a bow (Fig. 5). The composition perfectly

---

[9] *Ibidem.*

[10] *Ibidem.*

[11] *Ivi, p.24.*

[12] *Ibidem.*

recalls Sasanian imperial iconography, but in this case the crown identifying the king is replaced with the Arab turban. This substitution sums up both the appropriation of power by Islam and the adoption by the new lords with the clothing of defeated rulers.[13]

If the images with figures we have encountered in Islamic architectural ornamental decoration are reminiscent of the representation of power, they may in fact have meanings involving heraldic, astrological symbolism or Ptolemaic or magical beliefs. This explains the presence of angels, eagles, lions, serpents, zodiac figures, dragons, and griffins that we find in civil or military constructions such as bridges and bastions or on the façades of some religious buildings.[14]

Fig. 5 Fresco from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, the iconography of a knight hunting with a bow demonstrating the continuity of Sasanid art in the Umayyad period. (Dominque Clevenot Décors d'Islam, 2017, p. 126)

The Khirbat al-Mafjar palace was adorned with a complex of stucco sculptures that are now in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, which included male and female figures, animals, and hybrid creatures.

The interest in the representation of animals is found in Khirbat al-Mafjar, where real animals are placed side by side with fantastic creatures. Statues or stucco reliefs of humans and animals were sometimes found

---

[13] Clévenot Dominique, Degeorge Gérard, *Décors d'Islam*, 2017, p.129.
[14] *Ivi*, p.130.

independently of the surrounding ornamentation, in niches, on cornices or on spandrels. The sculptures, whose untreated backs were attached to the wall, were painted red, yellow, and black, so that the colored stucco could be seen from afar. Hamilton divides the statues representing various human types, male or female, at about three-quarters life-size; another group he recognizes are the smaller scale equestrian groups and figures of animals and birds.[15]

The equestrian figures and the horse's head (Fig. 5) represent fragments of a series of small figures found in the atrium of the palace. According to Hamilton, they were probably located above the cornice that spanned the walls and pillars of the atrium, as well as on either side of a window.[16] In addition, the fragments also depict two horsemen moving to the right and two to the left. Interestingly, although the fragments are scarce, they reveal the way the Umayyad horsemen dressed (Fig. 6). One can see the baggy trousers the horsemen wore over boots created tight at the ankles and made of a patterned material.[17]

Fig. 6 Figure sculpture, Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.255

[15] Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 228.
[16] *Ivi*, p.237
[17] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 7 Figure sculpture, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.255

Fig. 8 From the bath porch cornice. Horse's head - stucco Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 267

Fig. 8. 1 Horse's head - stucco, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Each of these equestrian figures was leaning against the wall with the horse's head turned outwards. Looking at the figure (Figs. 8, Fig. 8.1), we see that in each of these equestrian figures there is the horse's headboard also made with studs where the reins are hidden by the mane. In the figure (Fig. 7), we see that the three riders used a more rounded saddle, which fits a saddle girth

of the same shape with a girth that was, as the stucco figure shows, created from a fabric with chevrons or diamond patterns.[18]

Hamilton points out that the Umayyad sculptors were following the example of the tradition of Persia several centuries earlier, where, as he points out:

> The incongruity here consisted in the introduction of relief as a substitute for painting and doing it without adjustment of the architectural setting. In this the Umayyad sculptors were following an example of some centuries' standing from Persia, where, as Herzfeld has remarked, the famous rock sculptures and the subsequent dependent works in plaster were an interpretation in relief of the dominant art of painting.[19]

The models from which the Umayyad sculptors drew inspiration for the horse fragments are Persian equestrian models from Nizamabad in northern Persia: a partially silver-plated plate with royal hunting subjects and an equestrian figure in the center has come down to us and is now in the Berlin Museum (Fig. 9).

Fig. 9 Partial silver-plated plate with royal hunting subjects, 7th century, Museum of Islamic Art Berlin

---

[18] *Ibidem.*
[19] Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.239.

The definition of ornamental details such as the eyes or manes of horses, represented as a novelty in Palestinian or Syrian architectural contexts, is sufficient evidence of a very close cultural-historical relationship between these equestrian figures and the art of stucco relief in Iraq and Persia.[20]

Hamilton further recognizes the Persian imprint in the winged horse figures found in situ (Fig.10). The main element presents a figure in a circular crown, with a simple outline in the shape of a yellow disc, where the relief of a winged horse was depicted (Fig.11). From the fragments collected (Fig.10) there were originally four horses, two facing right and two facing left. In the figures of the reassembled horses as in Figure 11 we see that they are depicted in full flight with their wings spread forward and backward so that both can be seen.[21] The crowns of some Sasanian rulers precisely feature a pair of spread wings in addition to the ribbons fluttering used as a support for figurative elements. On top of each horse the scarf of Sasanian royalty flowed in and out like a ribbon from the near side of the mane, passed under the neck and then wound up high at the back. On the rump of each horse was engraved the distinctive seal.[22]
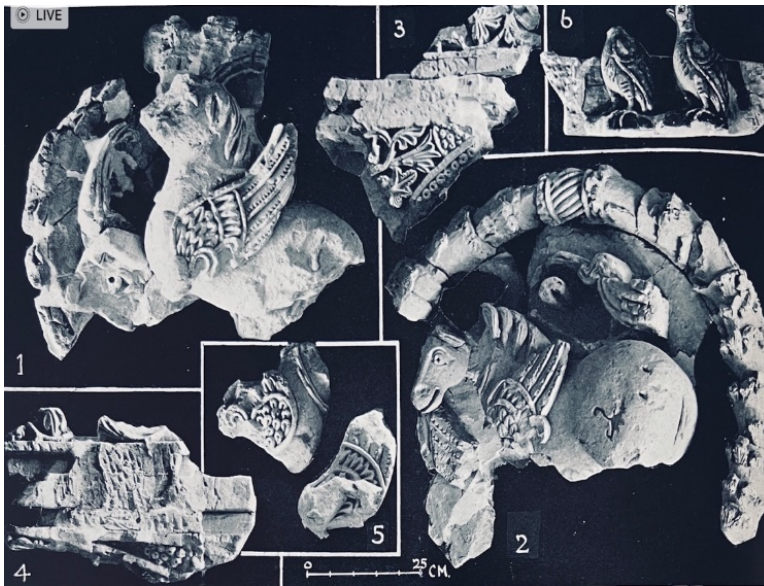
Fig. 10 The diwan, details of stucco from 1-5 winged horses, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 297

---

[20] *Ibidem.*
[21] *Ivi, p.240.*
[22] Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.240.

Fig. 11 Winged horse - stucco (Khirbat al-Mafjar) Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 12 Decorative band for clothing with winged horses inside medallions;
Département des Arts de Byzance et des Chrétientés en Orient

Winged horses of this type appear in every branch of Sasanian art, drawn in detail. In the symbolic iconography of the Persian court, their meaning was to "support or lift the royal throne" but as Hamilton explains: "it cannot be assumed that the Umayyad sculptor was vaguely aware of the symbolic aspect of his subject."[23]

Fig.13 8th c.AD Winged horses. Silk serge. Fragment. From Sancta Sanctorum, Byzantine.Museo Sacro, Vatican | Ancient art, Art, Textile art

In Islamic literature, the phoenix or the *buraq*, another mythical otherworldly mount, has the same function of connecting heaven and earth, human and divine, as the phoenix and Persian authors who are clearly connected to the afterlife.[24]

In seals from the Sasanian period, one finds the figure of *pegasus* with one of its front legs bent forward; in other cases, it is depicted with a type of harness. The main feature of the *pegasus* is the wings with thick plumage

---

[23] …but it is not to be supposed that the Umayyad sculptor was more than vaguely aware of the symbolical aspect of his subject. Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.240.

[24] Comparetti Matteo and Scarcia Gianroberto, *Notes on the Iconography of the Pegasus and the Bardato Horse in Iranian Art, Ilfalcone di Bistam*. lntorno al1'iranica Fenice/Samand: synthesis project for the flight of the Iranian Pegasus between Ponto, Alessandretta and Insulindia, © 2003 Universita Ca' Foscari, Venice, 2003, p. 28.

attached close to the shoulder where the end is also made of longer and curled feathers;[25] the division comes from a string of pearls separating the two parts. Another depiction with the same scene of a *pegasus* is found in textiles, mostly made of silk, which were decorated with zoomorphic or phytomorphic figures, contained within circular frames often known as beaded medallions.[26] These fabrics with the pearl medallion decoration including the *pegasus* ornaments were typically of Iranian origin, often widespread in Central Asia and Persia, as well as in China and the Byzantine Empire.[27] The ornamental motif of the pearl medallions consists of a large flower in the central points, the *pegasu*s on the inside has some geometric elements, precisely the ribbons described by Hamilton in Khirbat al-Mafjar. These fluttering ribbons are tied around the neck and a rod on the head often crosses a crescent moon that contains a floral motif at its tip: perhaps this is how astral symbolism is expressed (Fig.12, Fig.13).[28]

Hamilton advances the hypothesis that the equestrian figures and winged horses of Khirbat al-Mafjar, like other zoomorphic figures, were designed and sculpted by Persian craftsmen. [29]

In conclusion, according to this hypothesis still valid for other scholars, one could consider the evident versatility of Umayyad sculptors, as well as the uniformity of style in Khirbat al-Mafjar between plaster and stone and even fresco painting. The spread during the Umayyad period of Persian motifs in textiles and other articles of commerce precisely demonstrates this versatility in the Khirbat al-Mafjar region.[30]

We can group the recurring themes in Khirbat al-Mafjar figurative art in the themes of natural and cosmological symbols in that of the ruler and power.

Among the human figures depicting power is the so-called statue of the caliph (Fig.14).

According to Hamilton, it is probable that the male's lower torso and head were almost full, which was probably on the front porch of a bathhouse (Fig 15):[31]

> The conclusion there reached that a single large statue-niche surmounted the entrance archway, the two side niches being much smaller, removes any serious doubt that the head and this body, though not joining, belonged together.[32]

---

[25] *Ivi*, p,29.
[26] *Ivi*, p.30.
[27] *Ibidem.*
[28] *Ivi*, p.32.
[29] Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.240.
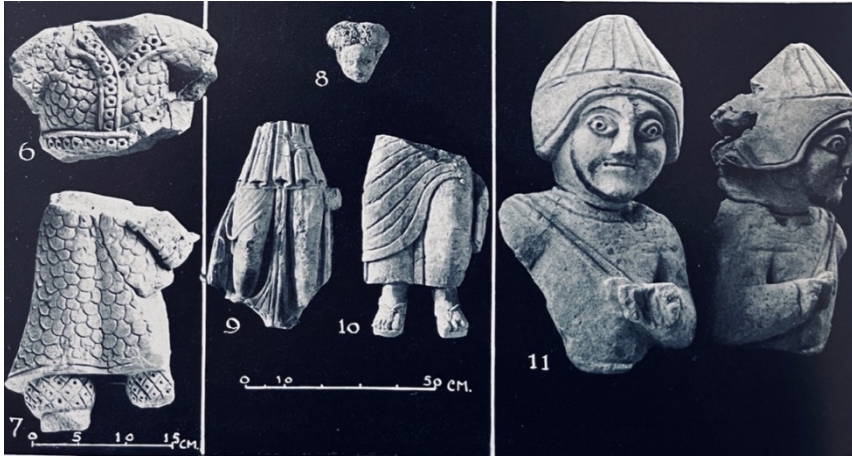[30] *Ibidem.*
[31] *Ivi, p.228.*
[32] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 14 The 'Caliph 'and The 'Caliph's' head, Hamilton Robert William,
Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley,
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 299

The statue depicts an upright man, looking forward, dressed in a long cloak, with a belt decorated with ornaments resembling square jewels and diamonds.[33] This masculine, bearded figure carries a sword in his hand. It should be noted that the cloak is raised over the upper back of the two lions (in relief) in a conqueror style that resembles the caliph himself (Fig.15). His face is reminiscent of the Mongol cast, while his clothing and posture are like Kushano-Sasanian models.[34]

The pedestal of lions and the ibexes are characteristic of Sasanian royalty, depicting princely rank. Between the lion reliefs is an eight-pointed medallion with palmettes divided around a central daisy.

In Figure 14 representing the head, we can see the total loss of the nose, the eyes and beard, the cheeks protruding abruptly, the large lozenge-shaped eyelids, the prominent eyeballs, and the deeply punctured pupils. An almost Mongolian mark already noted by Hamilton can be seen in the slightly deepened and accentuated corners of the eyes.[35]

---

[33] Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 228.
[34] *Ibidem.*
[35] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 15 Caliph standing from the entrance portal of the bath of Khirbat al-Mafjar. Molded plaster 724-43 or 743-46. Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Robert Hillenbrand in *La dolce vita in Early Islamic Syria* offers a description of the caliph's fine clothes: on special occasions he was dressed entirely in gold brocade and used to wear an under tunic (*qamis*). The caliph's preference was for colorful patterned robes in the shade of saffron yellow.[36] Hillenbrand recognizes traces of a floral motif on the trousers of a caliphal statue; the fingers, which were adorned with rings, also refer to the caliph of Khirbat al-Mafjar, Al-Walid II. According to historical sources, Al-Walid II

---

[36] Hillenbrand Robert, *La Dolce Vita in Early Islamic Syria. The Evidence of Later Umayyad Palces,* in: Art History 5,1;1-35, Oxford 1982, p. 12.

wore jewelry around his neck that was changed daily, wore wide trousers of heavy damask with a tunic of the material (qasab) and gold brocaded shoes. Such trousers can be glimpsed in the statue of Khirbat al-Mafjar (Fig.15).[37]

Hamilton explains that the mantle of the stucco figure:

> was a pinkish red, perhaps originally crimson, but the depths and edges of the pearl border were black, as were the depths of the jeweled belt. The trousers were a dark red, with a floral pattern of a lighter shade, too faint to be recovered. There were traces of red on the sword, while the sides of the shoes were black.[38]

To understand whether the stucco statue of the caliph found in Khirbat al-Mafjar belonged to or was the royal symbol of Al-Walid II, Hamilton proposes a comparison with the statue of King 'Uthal of Hatra (3rd century), found in 1951 in the temple of Ba'alshamim. Hamilton sees a real similarity between the caliph and the richly decorated and crowned head of King 'Uthal, as well as in the position in which it is sculpted.[39]

In his analysis, Hamilton surmises that the statue of King 'Uthal and the other similar statues in Hatra were already ancient monuments when Khirbat al-Mafjar was built:

> I would not ascribe or impute to the Umayyad craftsmen any antiquarian research. What we must infer is that a style of personal appearance which had been de rigueur with the Arabic-named aristocracy of Parthian Hatra had survived in Arabia and was more congenial to the Umayyad princes than the very different official style of the Sasanian court, which otherwise the costume of our statue might bring to mind. Thus, it might come about, through the existence of a real historical style of Arabian appearance, that an artist delineating the person of an Umayyad prince could arrive at an expression of character and appearance not very different from the half-Arabian, half-Parthian portraiture of five centuries before.[40]

If the features of the statue of the caliph can be described as 'Arab' and reflect a style in force since at least the 3rd century, the costume had an equally long history; and it too could be illustrated by Hatra. In the 'First Temple', excavated in 1951, the strange figure of Nergal-Ade (Fig. 16) wears just such a tunic as that of the caliph, not very long but draped at the sides, trimmed with embroidery, and folded at the front. [41]

---

[37] *Ibidem.*

[38] Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valle*y, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 229.

[39] *Ivi.*

[40] *Ivi, p.230.*

[41] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 16 Ancient Parthian relief of the god Nergal da Hatra from I-II century BC,
found in Hatra in Iraq.

We can certainly recognize the slit cloak on a horseman in the hunting
scene at Täq-i-Bustän (Fig.18) and on the aides of Khosrow II presented on a
silver cup preserved in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (Fig.18.1). Hamilton
explains that the same king at Tãq-i-Bustan, standing on a boat, wears a similar
long cloak, edged with pearls, and folded at the front, held by a belt full of
precious ornaments.[42] A remarkable example with the statue of the caliph at
Khirbat al-Mafjar is the enthroned and haloed prince in a long robe under a
dais at Qasr Amra (Fig.2). Another similarity we find with the caliph from
Khirbat al-Mafjar is found at Qasr al-Hayr West, a standing man dressed in a
typical Sasanian garb (Fig.17). In these cases, the symbolic iconography
implies an official glorification of the prince. Sometimes, the considerable
variations between the images we have analyzed lead one to suppose a
borrowing directly from Sasanian and Byzantine princely representations and
indicate that the Umayyads did not develop their own royal iconography, at
the level in which Umayyad princes wanted to be identified.[43]

---

[42] *Ibidem.*
[43] Ettinghausen R., Grabar O., and Jenkins-Madina M., *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650–1250*,
Yale Press, 2003, p.45.

Fig. 17 Pieces of a stucco figure found in Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi on display at the National Museum of Damascus.

In this context, the stucco statue at Khirbat al-Mafjar probably represented the person of the reigning Caliph himself or the strength and power of the Arab princes. [44] Due to the coarse modelling of the stucco and the features, we do not actually have an actual portrait of Hisham or any other living person. Likely, according to the conventions of the time, such a relief reproduction was recognized as a representation of the real person indicated by the symbols of his office.

Hamilton also analyzing the origin of the statue brings us back to this conclusion:

> If the statue, then, is to be interpreted as an honorific symbol, proclaiming the benign sovereignty of the ruler of Islam, we must choose either to attribute the structure to some other person of high estate in the realm, to whom a gesture of loyalty to the Caliph might without absurdity be ascribed; or to interpret the effigy as a self-portrait of al-Walid himself, depicted by anticipation in the

---

[44] *Ibidem.*

sovereign estate he hoped and intended one day to assume. And this second alternative is the one that I personally adopt.[45]

The royal theme, derived from the ancient East via the Iranian kingdoms subjugated by Muslims, finds some correspondence in Umayyad practices, and remains a constant presence in Islamic princely life thereafter. Another theme is the royal pastime,[46] which includes activities such as hunting, horse riding, athletics and love expressed not in narrative style, but in symbolic figures of original character. In most cases, the protagonist is a prince who is idealized through two aspects of Umayyad art: his earthly character and his great decorative value.[47]

Fig. 18 A knight in the hunting scene at Täq-i-Bustän, Orbeli, I. A. and Trevor, K. V., Orfèvrerie Sasanide: Objets en Or, Argent et Bronze Moscow and Leningrad, Academia, 1935

From the sculptural ensemble of Khirbat al-Mafjar, four sculptures representing female figures have survived. The female sculptures were displayed in the atrium of the palace; only one of the figures, known as the

---

[45] *Ibidem*
[46] Ettinghausen R., Grabar O., and Jenkins-Madina M., *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650–1250*, Yale Press, 2003, p.46.
[47] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 18.**1.** Silver plate with Cosroe II and the nobles Iran, end of the 6th - beginning of the 7th century, The Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg

'Girl of the Palace' (Figs.19, Fig.19.1), remains in situ. The others, according to Hamilton, were in the drum of the dome of the bath porch. All the figures of women were in arched niches, facing the viewer.

The girl from the palace, presents a better preservation (Figs.20, Fig.21), we only see the left hand and all that it contained:

> …Her costume was not extravagant: a length of loosely crinkled or pleated material wrapped about the legs and held on the hips by a heavy twisted cord; a bangle on each arm, and a pair of anklets; a spade-shaped pendant on her breast, suspended by a cord; and a posy of narcissi to hold. The folds above her girdle are of abundant flesh, not drapery. Her parted hair is coiled in three heavy twists on each side, from which a corkscrew curl depends before each ear. A row of scarcely natural ringlets adorns the brow, and a rosette conceals the lower end of the parting.

> The position of the two arms appears to have been the same, and we could probably restore a second posy in the missing hand. The neck was incomplete, and has been restored in plaster, perhaps a little too high.[48]

---

[48] Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.233.

According to Hana Taragan, the surviving figures display bare breasts, and their clothing is characterized by long, tight-fitting skirts, which cleverly imitate a transparent fabric, and are supported by a thick rope-like belt that hugs the hips.[49] The figures present rounded shapes and emphasized the female physique. Some are presented with stylized curls on the forehead, but all have the single symbolic curl, known as *love-locks*, in front of the ears.[50] The richness of the jewellery is noticeable: one of the girls wears a necklace with a crescent-shaped medallion around her neck and bracelets on both arms (Fig.22), another wears a wire necklace and an ankle bracelet (Fig.23). Some have dangling earrings. A bouquet of primroses clutched in one girl's hand expresses happiness; other girls hold baskets of flowers, which enhance the women's beauty. Each figure is different from the other, yet they are connected by their similarity expressed through their decorative motifs and feminine posture.[51] In this way, the beauty of the female world is represented with erotic characters: the plump face, the well-protruding chin, arched eyebrows outlined in black, large eyes with eyelids that curve gracefully over the eyeballs.[52]

Hamilton explains that:

> The figures of all the girls were unnaturally squat and bulky; but as they were to be seen at a great height that defect would not have been so obvious to an observer on the ground, content probably to note the opulent hairstyle, bright colours, confident breasts, and well-appointed bellies."[53]

According to Myriam Rosen-Ayalon and Richard Ettinghausen, "this naturalistic style in the nude, most likely with roots in the classical tradition, reflects a well-defined taste for plump women, such as those admired in the poetry of the *Jahiliyyah"*.[54]

Regarding the figures who carried drinks, the sommeliers mentioned in the anecdotes about Al-Walid II, Hillenbrand suggests that "the statues of semi-nude girls at Khirbet al-Mafjar bore flagons of wine in their outstretched hands, as do their Sasanian predecessors on many a gilded ewer."[55]

---

[49] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*, 2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.69.
[50] *Ibidem.*
[51] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*,2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.69.
[52] *Ibidem.*
[53] Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.234.
[54] Rosen-Aylon Myriam, *The Female figure in Umayyad Art*, in: Sarah Milledge Nelson/Myriam Rosen-Aylon (edits.), in pursuit of gender, Walnut Greek,2002, p.293.
[55] Hillenbrand Robert, La Dolce Vita in Early Islamic Syria. The Evidence of Later Umayyad Palaces, in: Art History 5,1;1-35, Oxford 1982, p.13.

Fig. 19 Female figure from the entrance hall to the main residential building, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.254

Fig. 19. 1 "The girl in the palace" detail, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.301

Fig. 20 Female stucco figures, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.307

Fig. 21 Female figure from the bath, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 22 Female figure from the bath, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 23 Female figure from the bath, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

All these features point towards an interpretation, which comes from the archetypal mythological images as of the Great Mother[56], the Earth or Nature of death and rebirth, who awaits and at the same time encloses in the eternal cycle the constant existence of her perspective with dual character, bringing femininity on the one hand and fertility on the other hand.

Several interpretations have been advanced on these female images of Khirbat al-Mafjar. According to Taragan, their court function is depicted as a royal and ceremonial attribute, an element close to the symbolism of the ruler, rather than as a reflection of a particular activity.[57]

According to Myriam Rosen-Ayalon she sees the origin of Islamic iconography in "Byzantine civilization, the legacy of Western culture up to that time, and Sasanian civilization, the custodian of the legacy of Mesopotamian-Iranian culture in the period of the rise of Islam".[58]

According to Taragan, the erotic aspect of these figures would reflect the personality of Al-Walid II ibn Yazid, who reigned for only one year (744-745 AD) and became famous for his reckless life. Thus, the nude figures could represent girls:

> ... of the singing-girls (*kiyan*, sing, kayna) already known to have appeared in Mecca and Medina, and later at the Umayyad courts in Damascus and Iraq. These girls studied singing at special establishments sponsored by wealthy men and entertained their patrons and visitors to the court with their voices, and sometimes with their bodies as well. The court also included slave girls (*jawari, sing, jariyya*), who would appear beside the caliph and prominent members of his court on various public occasions.[59]

Hamilton interprets the iconographic image of the girls as a kind of dance:

> In particular, I suppose, they were girls performing a special dance, to which the flowers belonged, and which all who entered could recognize; so that the point would have been to include in the ornament of the palace and baths an allusion to that kind of entertainment with dance and verse, by *jawar* of the palace, that the guests of an Umayyad prince might expect to enjoy.[60]

Taragan looks for meaning in the approaches that have attempted to interpret the appearance in the historical context of these female figures at the Umayyad court. In early Islam, this interpretation raised questions that so often

---

[56] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*,2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.69.
[57] *Ibidem.*
[58] Rosen-Aylon Myriam, *The Female figure in Umayyad Art*, in: Sarah Milledge Nelson/Myriam Rosen-Aylon (edits.), in pursuit of gender, Walnut Greek,2002, p.302.
[59] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*,2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.70.
[60] Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.235.

no one can answer: why was the female body depicted naked? However, the questions continue as Taragan states, about their nudity, the flowers in their hands, their jewelry, their postures; even who was allowed to look at them and for what reason.[61]

In Islam, the female body was viewed according to two codes: the legal, controlling code, which urged order against chaos, and the subversive, erotic code, which concerned sensual pleasures and conveyed a predominantly cursed desire, in its various manifestations.[62]

The Umayyad dynasty, the first Islamic dynasty (661-750AD), sought visual sources for a formal and iconographic mode of representation in various traditions, deliberately chosen from all regions of conquest because they totally lacked their own artistic language. This desire to create one's own tradition was often based mainly on the art of the first centuries A.D. in Syria and Palestine on the one hand, and on eastern art (Iran, India, and Central Asia) on the other.[63]

From the encounter between classical and oriental styles, we can find the answer for the depiction of the nude body in Umayyad art. Coptic art, especially in textiles, represents the connection reminiscent of the girls from Khirbat al-Mafjar, with the completely nude figures placed under pointed arches (Fig.24). These girls are depicted dancing: by crossing their legs and swinging their arms, they evoke the Bacchae or Maenads, the female helpers of Bacchus, whose rituals were widespread in Hellenistic Egypt due to its identification with the Egyptian god Osiris.[64]

The female sculptures of Khirbat al-Mafjar also show similarities with Indian female sculpture. In fact, this sculpture is often characterized by sensual elements showing the curvilinear, S-shaped body of the female representation. The female figure is always richly adorned with earrings, bracelets, and anklets.

Finally, female representations from the Sasanian period also present similar elements to Coptic and Indian images (Fig.24). In this tradition, women are often depicted naked, with their lower bodies anatomically massive, their female organs are in evidence and their raised hands sometimes hold a veil, objects, or flowers. Some scholars associate the naked women depicted on Sasanian silver vessels with Dionysian ritual, or celestial symbols. In this context, it was noted that the proximity of the nude dancer to the king seated on the throne proves that the dish is Sasanian (Fig. 25). Probably this accurate image is the source of inspiration for the girls of Khirbat al-Mafjar, who, as

---

[61] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*,2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.70.
[62] *Ibidem.*
[63] *Ibidem.*
[64] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*, 2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.72.

Taragan states, "like their Sassanian "sisters" appear close to the "Caliph" and thus endow the representations with a courtly meaning."[65]

Fig. 24 Coptic fabric, female figures under the arches. V-VI s. A. D.

Fig. 25 Nude dancer, silver cup, VI-VII c. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery

---

[65] *Ivi, p.74.*

As we have seen, some of the images described seem celestial, perhaps derived from goddesses, while others simply emphatic, courtly. In the Umayyad palaces, this nudity may have served as a visual and formal source. One could use the word 'migration' of this very world with the images from the region mentioned above to the Umayyad court of Khirbat al-Mafjar. This 'migration' is represented directly through objects, booty, or artists, sometimes indirectly, through artistic centers, craftsmen who were ruled by the Umayyads, who were mainly responsible for the transfer of images,[66] ideas and artistic works from Mesopotamia and Iran to Khirbat al-Mafjar and Qasr Amra (Fig.26).[67]

Fig. 26 Detail of the so-called Dancers frescoed in the castle of Qusayr' Amra (VIII century, Jordan)

[66] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*,2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.74.
[67] *Ibidem*

According to Hamilton, Umayyad court life was represented by the girls, the dancing, the sumptuous clothing; indeed, these very elements lead to a pre-Islamic history, "no remote influence or obsolete symbolism is required to explain them."[68]

To return to the subject of the form and body of women and the way they are dressed, we should recall the female sculptures at Mshatta or the frescoes at Qasr Amra with drawn women, which Oleg Grabar interprets as scenes of nomadic life.[69]

It would therefore not be an indication to follow Creswell's point of view in dating Qasr Amra to the reign of Walid I (705-715AD), but Hillenbrand's suggestion is perhaps more correct (743-744 AD).[70] Both castles are attributed to Al-Walid II. In this regard, if we attribute Mshatta and Khirbat al-Mafjar to Al-Walid II, we must point out the stylistic differences in the female sculptures of Mshatta and those of Khirbat al-Mafjar. This type of criterion does not coincide with the time of creation of the sculptures in the round, nor with the date of construction of the desert castles.

We have seen that the basic stylistic features in the ornamentation of the female sculptures in the round from Khirbat al-Mafjar show connections with Coptic elements in the textiles, with the depiction of Gaia, the earth, and Aphrodite, or in the female figures in India.

Sometimes, the iconography is different, but only the aspects related to nature, fertility and abdication are common to all, and show the same decorative features, presumably in connection with ancient fertility symbols.

In conclusion, the female images of the Umayyad palace, inspired by Coptic, Sassanid, Indian and Central Asian art, can be interpreted in various ways as baccans, dancers, celestial or alternatively simply the girls of the palace; the images of Khirbat al-Mafjar were perhaps there to represent their femininity.[71]

The artists created a "world" in Khirbat al-Mafjar, which was occupied as we have seen by human figures, collections of animals in different postures, birds of different sizes represented with plant motifs that are inserted in a playful way one on the other (Figs.27, Fig.27.1, Fig.27.2). Among the images carved in stucco there are also birds of various types, easily distinguishable thanks to the details applied to the figures, such as the graphic declination of the eyes, the soft appearance created by the representation of feathers and feathers as well as the tail. Such types of birds were naturally present in Roman and Byzantine mosaics in Syria and Palestine.

[68] Hamilton Robert William, *Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.236.
[69] Grabar Oleg, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, London, 1973, p.20.
[70] Hillenbrand Robert, *La Dolce Vita in Early Islamic Syria. The Evidence of Later Umayyad Palces,* in: Art History 5,1;1-35, Oxford 1982, p.2.
[71] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*,2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.77.

Fig. 27 Details birds in stucco, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE,
The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

27. 1 Stucco details birds, Hamilton
Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar
An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan
Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1959, p. 267

27. 2 Details in putty, Hamilton
Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar
An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan
Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1959, p. 258

The human figures, those of birds and animals, seem subdivided, enclosed in loops or medallions, and present a strong bond in some way with the bunches of grapes. These figures were depicted in the atrium of the palace of Khirbat al-Mafjar, protruding about 10-12 cm from the surface with an almost three-dimensional[72] appearance and different heights (Fig.28, Fig.29). At present, the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem contains several portraits, including pigs, cats, a monkey, a camel, and a deer. All represent the stucco

---

[72] *Ivi.p.95.*

technique, with long bodies and rounder in the belly. From the stucco engraved strokes, you can notice particular characteristics. We can also see the eyes taking the shape of a round hole for the pupil, and the additional material glued for the face. Let's look at the method by which the palmet ears were glued.[73]

Fig. 28 Fragments of animals and human figures, the entrance of the palace, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.259
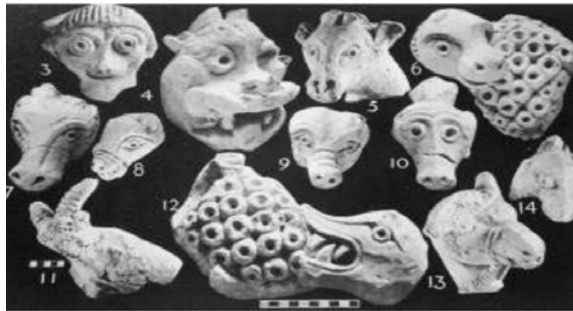
Fig. 29 Fragments of animals, the entrance of the palace Khirbat al-Mafjar, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959

Despite the anatomical inaccuracies, the group of animals shows a desire to represent their own identity. The artists of Khirbat al-Mafjar testify

---

[73] *Ibidem.*

to the attempt to make a distinction between animals by creating a colorful and wonderful fauna. The winged horses support the throne of the great king and the rams, which symbolize royal power, represent the domino of Al-Walid II.[74] The best-preserved sculpture of a lion from Mshatta, destined to be placed around the throne, also represents the symbol of royal strength, bearing in mind that the client loved the presence of lion hunters. At the beginning of the 8th century the Syrian steppes were still inhabited by lions.[75] At the beginning of the 8th century the Syrian steppes were still inhabited by lions. [76]A lion's paw confirms that Mshatta probably had a second lion with its front legs pointing forward. This shows that the style of these sculptures, such as those of Khirbat al-Mafjar, fits into the simplicity and attention to detail, such as the lion's mane, which were added later.[77]
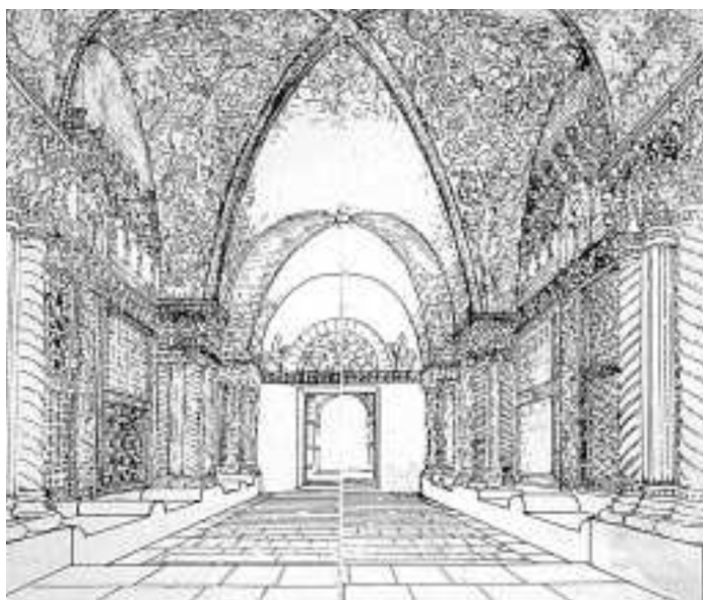
Fig. 30 Khirbat al-Mafjar, the Palace Entrance Hall. A Reconstruction
(after Hamilton 1988)

Excavations at Mshatta in 1903 found a complete set of sculptural fragments, including life-size figures of women and men. Here, as in Khirbat al-Mafjar, a sculpture of a woman with a basket of flowers was born. In Berlin museums, on the other hand, there is a sculpture of a woman holding a baby.[78]

---

[74] Hattestein Markus, Delius Peter, *Islam Art and Architecture*, Konemann,2001, p.83.
[75] *Ivi.p.84.*
[76] *Ibidem.*
[77] *Ivi, p.84.*
[78] *Ibidem.*

Both figures are semi-naked with garments sliding down their hips. The figures of dancers with Sasanid veils made of metal take up the same iconography.[79]

The data and analyses provided by Hamilton made it possible to reconstruct the entrance hall of the Khirbat al-Mafjar (Fig. 30), where the stucco figures were located, unfortunately destroyed along with other parts of the building by the earthquake of 748. According to Taragan, the stucco side areas were made of a uniform and homogeneous material that represented a harmonious unity; the covering was reminiscent of an ornament like a carpet, so much so that the textile appearance of the walls, covered with muqarnas in medieval mosques, could be a presence or a hint. Probably, as Taragan points out, the stucco decoration of the ceiling of Khirbat al-Mafjar represents the first stage of this ornamentation:

> Does the stucco ed ceiling decoration at Khirbat al-Mafjar mark the first stage of this "textile conception", which became such a characteristic feature of Islamic architectural decoration?[80]

The Umayyad artists tried not only to convey an idea of decoration by imagining a textile curtain, but perhaps also to represent an embodiment of the abstract idea of Paradise in its various figurative aspects.[81]

This idea of paradise continues among reliefs of this kind, sometimes in human heads found in the diwan, on capitals and on cartilages reminiscent of the artistic program followed by other cultural traditions, such as Sasanid, China and India in the Kushan period before Islam.

The famous frieze of heads in a braid is always at the entrance of the palace and precisely represents this way of thinking about Paradise, where stylized drawings of heads are at the center of the braid, surrounded by pearl medallions (Fig.31, Fig.31.1). Similarly, the decoration with human heads with designs of leaves is in the ceiling of the diwan. With a symbol linked to the number eight, it is represented an eight-pointed medallion with palmettes divided around a central daisy (Fig.32, Fig.33): eight points or the symbol of eight which is used five times in the Koran, a number representing eternity or self-destruction. This number indicates the way to the coherence and creation of a new movement or simply the symbol of a new life, towards Paradise. The tendency to occupy the entire surface of the wall and the presence of many decorative elements with different characters are the peculiarities of the Umayyad ornament.

---

[79] *Ibidem.*

[80] Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*,2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001, p.95.

[81] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 31 Part of a wall decorated with sculptures of human heads (Khirbat al-Mafjar),
The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 31. 1 Part of a wall decorated with sculptures of human heads, Hamilton Robert
William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford:
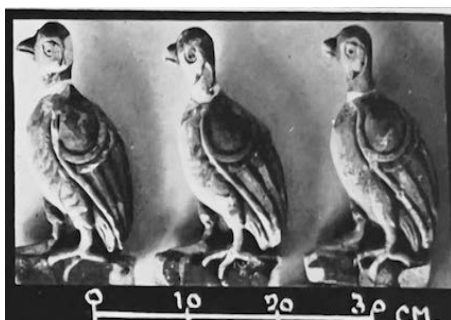Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 545.

This element is not yet refined with the characteristics that will follow
in Islamic decoration, but it has detached itself from the traditions of the
Mediterranean and Iran, although as we have seen individual units in
ornamental and figurative decoration derive from these traditions.[82]

---

[82] Ettinghausen R., Grabar O., and Jenkins-Madina M., *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650–1250*,
Yale Press, 2003, . . . it could be mentioned that many elements of art, which now elude
explanation, are comparable to almost contemporary Irish and Northern European art. p. 51

Fig. 32 Rosette with six busts, male and female between stucco acanthus leaves, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 565.


Fig.33 Detail from the rosette, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

The Sasanian impact is frequently mentioned. Rina Talgam emphasizes the use of stucco in Umayyad palaces, which was clearly a novelty in Palestine. There was no stucco in the pre-Islamic buildings.[83]

According to Hamilton, the use of stucco dates to Sasanian Persia and Iraq. He generally sees the usage of round sculptures and reliefs made of stucco as a replacement for earlier flat paintings.

The amount of research conducted on Umayyad monuments will have a significant impact on future preservation operations. Archaeologists and art historians should look at the little-discussed aspect of Umayyad polychrome revetment. Furthermore, it is critical that the existence, qualities, and quantity of existing stucco repertoires be thoroughly documented.

---

[83] Talagam Rina, *The Stylistic Origins of Umayyad Sculpture and Architectural Decoration*, Wiesbaden 2004. p.52

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1 Mosaic floor with lion and gazelles, 724-43 or 743-46. Reception Room, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Palestinian Territories. Scala / Art Resource, NY

Fig. 2 Qusayr Amra (Jordan), building/bathroom, 2nd quarter century. VIII, large entrance hall, "audience hall", prince on the throne and two personalities; (col. drawing by A. L. Mielich; from Alois Musil 1907).

Fig. 3 Drawing of six kings. Fresco, 705-15. West wall, hall, Qusayr 'Amra, Jordan. Reproduced by Alois Musil. Kusejr 'Amra und Schlösser östlich von Moab. Vol. 2, pl. XXVI. Vienna, 1907.

Fig. 4 The Zodiac of Quṣayr 'Amra, 1933. Du Mont Kunstreiseführer Jordanien, 2011, p. 221.

Fig. 5 Fresco from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, the iconography of a knight hunting with a bow demonstrating the continuity of Sasanid art in the Umayyad period, Dominque Clevenot Décors d'Islam, 2017, p. 126.

Fig. 6 Figure sculpture, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.255.

Fig. 7 Figure sculpture, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.255.

Fig. 8 From the bath porch cornice. Horse's head - stucco Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 267

Fig. 8. 1 Horse's head - stucco, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem.

Fig. 9 Partial silver-plated plate with royal hunting subjects, 7th century, Museum of Islamic Art Berlin.

Fig. 10 The diwan, details of stucco from 1-5 winged horses, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.297.

Fig. 11 Winged horse - stucco (Khirbat al-Mafjar) Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem.

Fig.12 Decorative band for clothing with winged horses inside medallions; Département des Arts de Byzance et des Chrétientés en Orient.

Fig. 13 8th c.AD Winged horses. Silk serge. Fragment. From Sancta Sanctorum, Byzantine. Museo Sacro, Vatican | Ancient art, Art, Textile art.

Fig. 14 The 'Caliph 'and the 'Caliph's' head, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.299.

Fig. 15 Caliph standing from the entrance portal of the bath of Khirbat al-Mafjar. Molded plaster 724-43 or 743-46. Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem.

Fig. 16 Ancient Parthian relief of the god Nergal da Hatra from I-II century BC, found. in Hatra in Iraq.

Fig. 17 Pieces of a stucco figure found in Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi on display at the National Museum of Damascus.

Fig. 18 A knight in the hunting scene at Täq-i-Bustän, Orbeli, I. A. and Trevor, K. V., Orfèvrerie Sasanide: Objets en Or, Argent et Bronze Moscow and Leningrad, Academia, 1935

Fig. 18.1 Silver plate with Cosroe II and the nobles Iran, end of the 6th - beginning of the 7th century, The Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg

Fig. 19 Female figure from the entrance hall to the main residential building, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 254.

Fig. 19.1 "The girl in the palace" detail, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 301.

Fig. 20 Female stucco figures, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al- Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 307.

Fig. 21 Female figure from the bath, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 22 Female figure from the bath, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 23 Female figure from the bath, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 24 Coptic fabric, female figures under the arches. V-VI s. A. D.

Fig. 25 Nude dancer, silver cup, VI-VII c. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery

Fig. 26 Detail of the so-called Dancers frescoed in the castle of Qusayr' Amra (VIII century, Jordan), https://universes.art/en/art-destinations/jordan/desert-castles/qusayr-amra

Fig. 27 Details birds in stucco, Khirbat al-Mafjar, second quarter 8th century CE, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 27.1 Stucco details birds, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 267.

Fig. 27.2 Details in putty, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.258

Fig. 28 Fragments of animals and human figures, the entrance of the palace, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.259.

Fig. 29 Fragments of animals, the entrance of the palace Khirbat al-Mafjar, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959

Fig. 30 Khirbat al-Mafjar, the Palace Entrance Hall. A Reconstruction (after Hamilton 1988)

Fig. 31 Part of a wall decorated with sculptures of human heads (Khirbat al-Mafjar), The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem.

Fig. 31.1 Part of a wall decorated with sculptures of human heads, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.545.

Fig. 32 Rosette with six busts, male and female between stucco acanthus leaves, Hamilton Robert William, Khirbat al-Mafjar An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, p.565.

Fig. 33 Detail from the rosette (Khirbat al-Mafjar), The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem.

Bibliography:

Comparetti Matteo.,2003: Comparetti M. and Scarcia G., *Notes on the Iconography of the Pegasus and the Bardato Horse in Iranian Art, Ilfalcone di Bistam*. lntorno all'iranica Fenice/Samand: synthesis project for the flight of the Iranian Pegasus between Ponto, Alessandretta and Insulindia, © 2003 Universita Ca' Foscari, Venice, 2003

Clévenot Dominique, Degeorge Gérard, *Décors d'Islam*, 2017

Ettinghausen Richard, Grabar Oleg, and Jenkins-Madina Marilyn, *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650–1250*, Yale Press, 2003

Fontana Maria Vittoria, *Islamic painting from its origins to the end of the fourteenth century,* Rome, 2002

Grabar Oleg., *The Formation of Islamic Art*, London, 1973

Hamilton Robert W., Khirbat al Mafjar. An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959

Hattestein Markus, Delius Peter, *Islam Art and Architecture*, Konemann, 2001

Hillenbrand Robert, *La Dolce Vita in Early Islamic Syria. The Evidence of Later Umayyad Palces*, in: Art History 5,1;1-35, Oxford, 1982

Rosen-Aylon M., *The Female figure in Umayyad Art*, in: Sarah Milledge Nelson/Myriam Rosen-Aylon (edits.), in pursuit of gender, Walnut Greek, 2002

Spinelli Anna, *Arte Islamica The measure of the metaphysical*, Perugia 2008

Talagam Rina, *The Stylistic Origins of Umayyad Sculpture and Architectural Decoration*, Wiesbaden 2004

Taragan Hana, *The Female Images in the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*, 2001, © Faculty of the Arts Tel Aviv University, 2001 ISSN 0793-8381Printed in Israel, 2001

Two Churches on Anacopia Mountain (Abkhazia): An Attempt of Virtual Reconstruction[*]

Ekaterina Yu. Endoltseva[**]
Nikolay I. Bystritskiy[***]
Danila Olegovich Dryga[****]
Alexander Dmitrievich Karnaushenko[*****]
Ella Nikolaevna Karnaushenko[******]
Lyubov Konstantinovna Kazennova[******]

Abstract: *The article is devoted to the experience of constructing three-dimensional models of two churches on Mount Anakopia (Abkhazia), which houses one of the richest lapidary collections with relief images (X-XI centuries) in Abkhazia. Two monographs by one of the authors of this study (E. Endoltseva) were devoted to a detailed study of this lapidary collection, the themes and plots presented on the reliefs, their classification and dating, as well as the architectural features of these buildings. This study continues these research efforts. The article describes in detail the additional research carried out and the principles of reconstruction of the two churches. The text is accompanied by drawings of reconstructed facades and altar barriers from these churches published for the first time. The reconstruction used fragments of stone plastic found on Mount Anakopia. The reconstructed images of churches are placed in the artistic context of the era (Middle Byzantine period, 9th – 11th centuries).*

Keywords: *medieval reliefs, three-dimensional image, zoomorphic images, polygonal model, principles of reconstruction.*

[**] Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, kat345@yandex.ru, orcid: 0000-0003-1558-2819
[***] Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, nb@rusistin.ru, orcid: 0000-0001-9002-4804
[****] Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, dryga_do@pfur.ru, orcid: 0000-0003-0557-2481
[*****] Sevastopol State University, Sevastopol, adkarnaushenko@sevsu.ru, orcid: 0009-0007-6592-6276
[******] Sevastopol State University, Sevastopol, ankarnaushenko@mail.sevsu.ru, orcid: 0009-0005-3634-5865
[*******] Sevastopol State University, Sevastopol, lkkazennova@mail.sevsu.ru, orcid: 0009-0008-9982-8620

The church, located in the citadel of the fortress on Mount Anakopia (New Athos, Republic of Abkhazia), housed one of the richest and most mysterious lapidary collections (about 90 fragments of stone carvings) in the territory of Abkhazia. When we started working with it (2007), the dating of the reliefs, the origin of the ornamental patterns that decorated them, the stages of history that they could reflect, etc. were unclear and did not add up to the overall picture. Since then, a lot has been explained, and most importantly, literally from small fragments, a complete image has been reconstructed.

In addition to fragments of architectural decoration, which since 2016 have been stored in the so-called Museum of the Abkhazian Kingdom[1], on Mount Anakopia, the ruins of the so-called religious buildings (i.e. Christian churches) have been preserved, i. e. Church of St. Theodora and the foundation of the Lower Church.

The history of the study of Christian monuments on Mount Anacopia, as well as the main conclusions regarding the dating of the reliefs and considerations regarding the general cultural context to which they might belong, are presented in detail in three monographs[2]. Let us recall the main milestones and theses.

The fortified city on Mount Anakopia and its two Christian churches have repeatedly attracted the attention of researchers. In addition to mentions in the notes of Countess P. S. Uvarova [3] and descriptions made by Archimandrite Leonid[4], mention must be made of V. V. Latyshev[5], who first read the inscriptions made on reliefs from Mount Anakopia.

An important stage in the study of the history of Anakopia, its fortifications and the Lower Church was the archaeological excavations of the field seasons of 1957–1958 under the leadership of the famous Abkhaz

---

[1] Endoltseva E. Yu. Arhitekturnaja plastika Abkhaziji v period Abkhazskogo tsarstva (VIII – XI vv.) [Architectural plasticity of Abkhazia during the period of the Abkhazian kingdom (VIII–XI centuries)]. Moscow, 2020. P. 32.

[2] Vinogradov A. Yu., Beletsky D. V. Tserkovnaja arhitektura Abkhaziji v epohu Abhazskogo tsarstva. Konets VIII – X vv. [Church architecture of Abkhazia in the era of the Abkhazian kingdom. The end of the 8th–10th centuries]. Moscow, 2015. P. 103 – 104, 110 – 124. Endoltseva E. Yu. Arhitekturnaja plastika Abkhaziji… P. 32 – 187. Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva VIII – XI vv. Hristianskije pamjatniki Anakopijskoj kreposti [Art of the Abkhazian kingdom of the 8th–11th centuries. Christian monuments of the Anakopia fortress] / resp. ed. and comp. E. Yu. Endoltseva. St. Petersburg, 2011.

[3] Uvarova P. S. Hristijanskije pamjatniki Kavkaza [Christian monuments of the Caucasus]. MAC. IV. M.: A. I. Mamontov Printing House Partnership, 1894. P. 7 – 34.

[4] Archimandrite Leonid [Kavelin L.A.]. Abkhazia i ee hristianskije drevnosti [Abkhazia and its Christian antiquities]. Moscow, 1887.

[5] Latyshev V.V. K istoriji hristianstva na Kavkaze. Grecheskije nadpisi Novoafonskogo monastirja [On the history of Christianity in the Caucasus. Greek inscriptions from the New Athos Monastery] // Collection of archaeological articles presented to Count A. A. Bobrinsky. St. Petersburg, 1911. P. 169 – 198.

archaeologist M. M. Trapsh[6]. L.G. Khrushkova[7] first published and analyzed images on some reliefs from Mount Anakopia; however, the dating she proposed was subject to significant adjustments later. The collective monograph of 2011 examines in detail various aspects of the history of Christian monuments on Mount Anakopia, separate chapters are devoted to the temple architecture of the Anakopia fortress (D. V. Beletsky, A. Yu. Vinogradov), stone reliefs (E. Yu. Endoltseva), epigraphy inscriptions (A. Yu. Vinogradov) and iconographic materials of antiquities (old photographs and postcards) (A. S. Agumaa) [8]. In this study, for the first time, a comprehensive analysis of the artistic features of relief images was carried out using data from archeology and epigraphy, and the historical context was identified. A catalog was published, which included all 89 reliefs discovered at that time in the altar of the church, which was considered to be dedicated to St. Theodora.

As a result, it was possible to show that the stone reliefs were most likely made during the reign of Constantine IX Monomakh (who is mentioned in the inscription on one of the reliefs)[9], when the Byzantines were in the fortress. Regarding the Lower or Small Fortress Church, D. V. Beletsky and A. Yu. Vinogradov agreed with the opinion of M. M. Trapsh, who attributed it to the 10th–11th centuries[10]. However, later, in a monograph devoted to the church architecture of Abkhazia during the era of the Abkhazian kingdom, D. V. Beletsky and A. Yu. Vinogradov corrected this hypothesis in favor of the 10th century[11]. In construction works in the so-called Church of St. Theodore, the construction of the Lower Church and the production of reliefs, they saw traces of the active construction campaign of King George II[12]. In our opinion, there are not enough arguments for such precise dating, but the stylistic and iconographic features of the reliefs do not contradict it. More convincing, however, seems to be evidence of the improvement that was carried out in the fortress under the Byzantines (40s of the 11th century), so we will assume that the reliefs and the Lower Church were made between the mid-10th and mid-11th centuries[13].

Let us recall that the main milestones in the history of the Anakopia fortress can be reconstructed thanks to archaeological and epigraphic data, which complement the chronicle evidence[14].

---

[6] Trapsh M. M. Trudi [Proceedings]. T. IV: Materials on the archeology of medieval Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1975. P. 88 – 149.

[7] Khrushkova L. G. Skulptura rannesrednevekovoj Abkhaziji [Sculpture of early medieval Abkhazia. V–X centuries]. Tbilisi, 1980. P. 26 – 32.

[8] Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva…

[9] Ibid. P. 115.

[10] Ibid. P. 23.

[11] Vinogradov A. Yu., Beletsky D. V. Tserkovnaja arhitektura… P. 104.

[12] Ibid. P. 165.

[13] Endoltseva E. Yu. Arhitekturnaja plastika… P. 38.

[14] Ibid. P. 47 – 53.

Based on the results of the analysis of epigraphic data, it was concluded that the church in the citadel, together with other buildings of the complex inside the citadel, may have been decorated under Constantine IX Monomakh and consecrated in honor of St. Theodore in 1049. The basis for such conclusions was provided by four stones with inscriptions[15].

The most serious archaeological research was carried out on the territory of Anakopia under the leadership of M. M. Trapsh in the field seasons of 1957–1958. The purpose of the expedition was to study the defensive lines of the fortress. Based on the features of the masonry, the scientist concluded that the construction of the walls of the citadel should be dated "to a time no earlier than the turn of the 5th–6th centuries." The researcher noted that the towers of the citadel could have been built later, in the 7th–8th centuries. This statement does not specify the dating of its walls. When examining the church in the citadel, M. M. Trapsh discovered its repeated reconstructions. The scientist agreed with the opinion of A.S. Bashkirov, who believed that the main volume of the temple was erected before the 8th century, and dated the reconstruction of the temple to the 11th–12th centuries. When examining the cultural layer inside the towers of the second line of defense, the expedition found, among other things, the remains of ceramics and coins, from which M. M. Trapsh established the following chronology of the development of the settlement on Mount Anakopia: IV–II centuries. BC – Hellenistic settlement on the slopes of the mountain; VII–XI centuries n. e. — the period of operation of the Anakopia fortress; VIII–IX centuries — the first period of intensive construction of defensive structures; XI century — the second period of intensive construction and renovation of defensive structures. The latter period is associated not only with the renovation and restoration of the towers and walls of the second line of defense, but also with the construction of civilian buildings and other facilities. These include a lime kiln discovered on one of the terraces of the fortress, and a small single-apse church (Lower Church), found in 1957 near the southern wall of the outer ring of defensive structures[16].

The next archaeological research took place inside the citadel in 2004 in connection with preparations for the restoration of the eastern tower. The work was supervised by Yu. B. Biryukov. Examining the cultural layer inside the structure, the archaeologist came to the conclusion that, judging by the nature of the ceramics and fragments of carved slabs with wickerwork found in the upper layer, it can be dated to the 11th century. At the same time, Yu. B. Biryukov noted that the thickness of the cultural layer does not make it possible to talk about active construction activity here earlier than the 8th–9th

---

[15] Ibid. P. 212 – 220.
[16] Trapsh M. M. Trudi [Proceedings]. T. IV: Materials on the archeology of medieval Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1975. P. 147.

centuries. No traces of the existence of more ancient buildings on the territory of the citadel have yet been discovered. A. Yu. Vinogradov and D. V. Beletsky, rethinking some of their observations, proposed a more detailed chronology of work in the temple in the citadel and in the Lower Church. They suggested that the reconstruction of this building was carried out under George II, between 928 and 955[17]. Comparing epigraphic and archaeological evidence, which are in perfect agreement with each other, we can conclude that the temple inside the Anakopia fortress was built no earlier than the 6th century and no later than the beginning of the 10th century. It functioned until the 11th–12th centuries [18]. In the 11th century under the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomakh, according to the inscription on the lost relief published by V.V. Latyshev (date 1046) [19] and the archaeological excavations of M.M. Trapsh, large-scale construction work was carried out in the fortress to strengthen the southern wall and towers of the second line defense. At the same time, a small single-apse church was built inside the fortress, and the main church of the citadel was possibly decorated (lined). A lime kiln found in the fortress indicates that building materials were made on the territory of Anakopia. From the reports of "Kartlis Tskhoverba" it is clear that the battle with the Arab commander Mervan ibn Muhammad played a decisive role in the fate of the fortress. In 737 he approached the walls of the city, but was forced to leave Abkhazia[20]. From this moment a new page begins in the history of Anakopia as the main center of the independent Abkhazian kingdom. In the 80s VIII century The Abkhaz ruler Leon II abandoned the power of the Byzantine emperor and proclaimed himself king. The process of annexing neighboring lands begins, as a result of which the eastern border of the Abkhazian kingdom in the first half of the 10th century "extended to the Suram ridge, and in the south to the Chorokh River, that is, to the borders of Tao, Klarjeti and Kartli"[21]. By the beginning of the 11th century, a new state entity arose - the "kingdom of the Abkhazians and Kartlians" led by King Bagrat III, who, on his mother's side, was the grandson of the Abkhazian king George II (929–957), and on his father's side came from the Bagratid family[22].

From the "Chronicle of Kartli" it is known that the second wife of King George I, the Ossetian princess Alda, together with her son Demetrius

---

[17] Vinogradov A. Yu., Beletsky D. V. Tserkovnaja arhitektura… P. 123.

[18] Bgazhba O. Kh., Lakoba S. Z. Istorija Abkhaziji s drevnejshih vremen do nashih dnej [History of Abkhazia from ancient times to the present day]. M., 2007. P. 89 – 90. Khrushkova L. G. Vostochnoje Prichernomorije v Vizantijakuju epohu. Istorija. Arhitektura. Arheologija [Eastern Black Sea region in the Byzantine era. Story. Architecture. Archeology]. Kaliningrad–Moscow, 2018. P. 62 – 67.

[19] Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva… P. 115.

[20] Anchabadze Z.V. Iz istoriji srednevekovoj Abkhaziji (VI – XVIII vv.) [From the history of medieval Abkhazia (VI–XVII centuries)]. Sukhumi, 1959. P. 93.

[21] Anchabadze Z.V. Iz istoriji… P. 117.

[22] Vinogradov A. Yu., Beletsky D. V. Tserkovnaja arhitektura… P. 17 – 89.

lived in Anakopia from 1027 and tried to organize a conspiracy to overthrow Demetrius's elder brother, King Bagrat IV (1027–1072). After a failed coup attempt, Demetrius surrendered Anakopia to the Byzantines, who held the city until the mid-1070s[23]. It was at this time that large-scale construction work was carried out here, reflected by archaeological and epigraphic evidence. In all likelihood, the reliefs from the Anakopia collection were made precisely at this time. It is possible that under the Byzantines, local craftsmen or those who came from Anatolia[24] worked in Anakopia, who in their work reproduced artistic forms that existed in the territory of the Abkhazian kingdom, Tao and Klarjeti or Cappadocia about half a century earlier. R. Shmerling explains this cultural phenomenon by the masters belonging "not to the younger, but to the older generation of artists of this time"[25].

From about the 15th century the fortress falls into disrepair. After the annexation of the Abkhazian principality to the Russian Empire (1866), the territory of the Anakopia Mountain with ancient buildings was transferred to "the Russian part of the Greek-Russian brotherhood of the Russian monastery on Mount Athos (1875)[26]. When landscaping the territory, the monks collected ancient reliefs (89 fragments) from the slopes of Mount Anakopia and mounted them in the form of an improvised iconostasis into the wall inside the apse of the church, which was believed to be consecrated in the name of St. Theodora.

In October 2016, by order of A.V. Argun, director of the National New Athos Historical and Cultural Reserve "Anakopia", without the sanction of the Ministry of Culture and Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Abkhazia, all reliefs were cut out and transferred to the foot of Mount Anakopia, to the newly opened Museum of the Abkhazian Kingdom, where they remain now.

The results of the stylistic and iconographic analysis of the reliefs originating from the altar part of the church in the citadel on Mount Anakopia are consistent with epigraphic and archaeological evidence. They can be attributed to the middle of X - beg. XI centuries[27]. Based on the nature of the images presented, they can be divided into three groups: zoomorphic images, crosses, woven geometric patterns of various types.

---

[23] Anchabadze Z.V. Iz istoriji… P. 79. Seibt W., Jordanov I. Στρατηγὸς Σωτηριουπόλεως καὶ Ανακούπης. Ein mittelbyzantinisches Kommando in Abchasien (11. Jahrhundert)// Studies in Byzantine sigillography. 2006. Vol. 9. P. 231–239.
[24] Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva… P. 97 – 98.
[25] Shmerling R. Malije formi v arhitekture srednevekovoj Gruziji [Small forms in the architecture of medieval Georgia]. Tbilisi, 1962. P. 115.
[26] Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva… P. 227.
[27] Ibid. P. 101 – 207.

The task of the final phase of research into the lapidary collection originating from Mount Anakopia was to create a virtual reconstruction of the architectural decoration (including small forms) of each of the two churches, as much as possible, using reliefs transferred to the Museum of the Abkhazian Kingdom.

The project described in this work for the virtual reconstruction of the Upper and Lower Churches on Mount Anakopia synthetically uses the previous experience of domestic and international projects for the virtual reconstruction of monuments of cultural and historical heritage. The composition of scientific work on the reconstruction of the monument under study consisted of the following main stages:

• research and digitization of preserved sites and fragments;
• creation of 3D models, analysis and attribution of fragments (stones);
• creation and verification of a 3D model of the altar barrier and the building.

At the first stage, ground photogrammetric survey was performed to obtain a three-dimensional metric model of the temples at the site. In order to accurately preserve the scale, control measurements of the main structural elements, the length and width of the structure were obtained; additional measurements were taken of doorways and the height of individual sections of the preserved masonry. During the shooting process, marked tablets were used, which made it possible to automate the process of scaling a three-dimensional model. To orient the model in space, a GNSS receiver built into the camera was used.
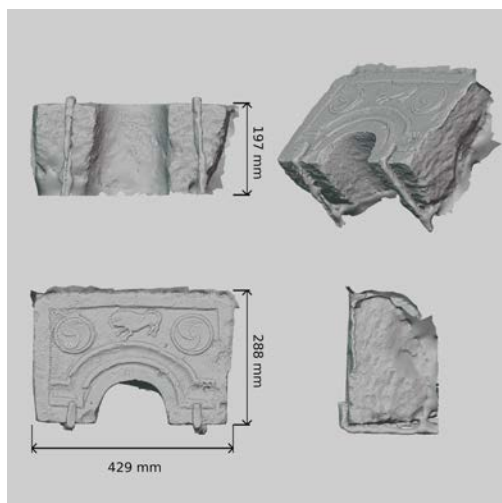
Fig. 1 Model of the upper window casing with the image of a lion.
D. O. Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova
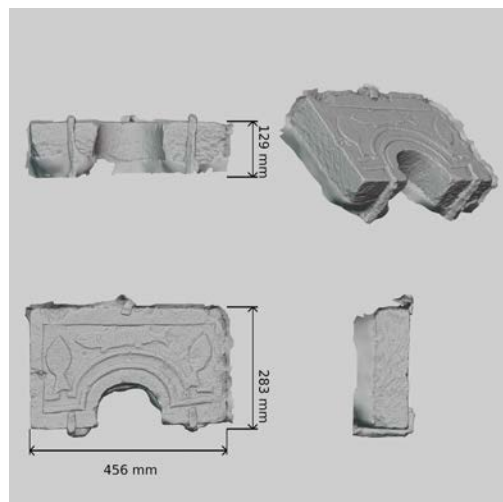
Fig. 2 Model of the upper window casing with the image of a fish.
D. O. Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

While working on the church in the citadel, aerial photography and terrestrial laser scanning were also carried out.

As a result of photogrammetric processing, a surface triangulation model of the Upper and Lower Church was obtained, as well as orthophotomaps and digital models of their surfaces (Fig. 1, 2). The combination of an orthophotomap and a DEM made it possible to quite accurately identify the main contours of the walls at the site. The 3D model was subsequently used to create a virtual reconstruction.

In addition, three-dimensional models of some surviving fragments were obtained; they were located in the Museum of the Abkhazian Kingdom. Since the shooting was done indoors, an artificial light source was used to achieve optimal image resolution.

At the second stage of work on the project, the resulting groups of photogrammetric 3D models were divided into separate fragments. Each fragment was analyzed and classified according to its purpose: wall cladding, facade decoration, fragments of the altar screen, window and door frames and other architectural details. Thus, a complete catalog of all decorated stones was compiled, and a number of hypotheses was put forward about their location in the ensemble of the building.

At the third stage, reconstructions of the Upper and Lower Churches were created in the form of polygonal 3D models. Historical and architectural materials, measurements of photogrammetric 3D models of buildings, as well as the results of comparisons with the results obtained with similar

monuments of the era were used as sources. The fragments are placed in the proposed locations of the restored buildings, taking into account their shape, size and decorative features, physical properties and architectural feasibility. Thus, it was possible to visualize both the current state of the buildings and their conditional reconstructions, which show what the temples could have looked like at the time when they were operational. The original appearance of the buildings themselves is presented in the form of a low-poly model, with a roof, window and door openings.

To demonstrate the results, a special virtual environment has been created, which allows you to view the reconstruction with the fragments placed in it from any angle. Additionally, for each individual fragment, images (renderings) were created indicating their dimensions, as well as a video to show the detail and the characteristics of each stone element[28].

When developing the principles of reconstruction for both churches, the results of a visual analysis of some of the most characteristic reliefs were taken into account. Thus, among the studied fragments of the external cladding of churches, one can distinguish a group of five reliefs, which, judging by their shape, can be identified as the upper casings of slit windows. However, according to stylistic features and the depicted subjects, they clearly fall into two groups: reliefs with images of animals (a bull and a lion at the cross, a bull, a fish) and reliefs with images of crosses ("Golgotha crosses" and a single cross, in both cases - under the arches) (Fig. 3 - 5) Thus, it would be logical to assume that they come from two different churches (Fig. 6, 7).

Fig. 3 Lost upper window casing with a bull and a lion near a cross and an inscription. Endoltseva E. Yu. Architectural plasticity of Abkhazia during the period of the Abkhazian kingdom (VIII-XI centuries). Moscow, 2020. pp. 80 – 83

---

[28] reference to the site: https://arch.ivran.ru/.
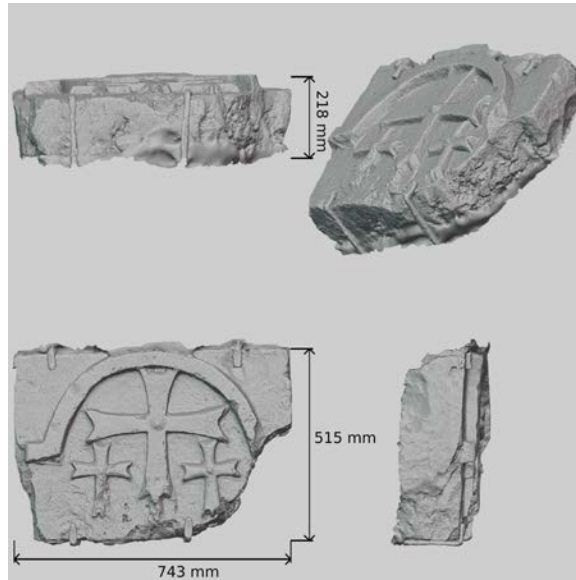
Fig. 4 Model of the upper window casing with the image of three crosses.
D. O. Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova
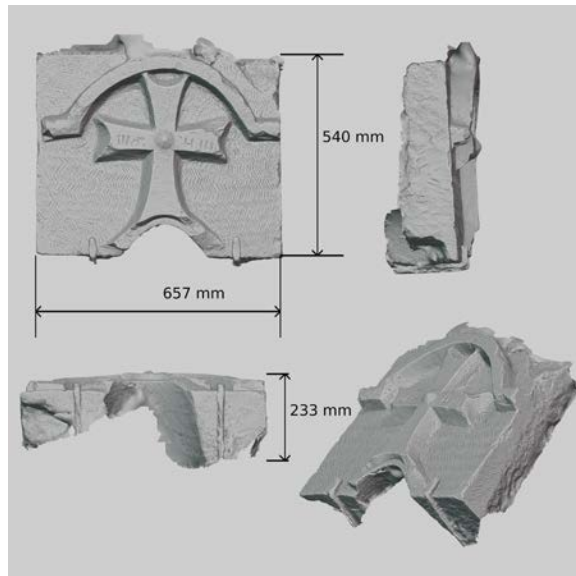
Fig. 5 Model of the upper window casing with the image of a cross. D. O.
Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 6 Orthophotomap of the Upper Church on Mount Anakopia.
D. O. Dryga

Fig. 7 Eastern facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E.
Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko,
L. K. Kazennova

Principles of reconstruction of the Upper Church (the so-called Church of St. Theodore)

During the field research, an orthomosaic map of the citadel and the church in it was made (Fig. 1). In constructing the 3D model of the Upper Church, we relied on photogrammetric surveys followed by construction of the model, as well as plans and drawings by A. S. Agumaa, D. V. Beletsky, A. Yu. Vinogradov[29].

---

[29] Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva… App. 3 – 14.

Based on the data presented, the church was rebuilt during the medieval period. The most striking evidence of this is the pentagonal apse instead of the original semicircular one, the placement of side windows (southeast and northeast) in the apse of the temple, and significant thickening of the walls[30].

The reconstruction reproduces the expected appearance of the temple after medieval reconstruction: a pentagonal apse with one central window, thick walls, barrel vaults with arches resting on pilasters, a door in the middle of the southern facade of the temple naos, two narthexes - these are the main elements of the temple after the reconstruction. Since at the moment the walls of the temple are of considerable height, it is even possible to determine where the arch of the apse began, and by one of the pilasters to determine the beginning of the girth arches of the vault. "Currently, on the southwestern corner pilaster there is an impost on which a girth arch rested, thrown onto a symmetrical pilaster in the northwestern corner: both of them are somewhat "recessed" into the thickness of the western wall. Undoubtedly, there were girth arches on all the pilasters of the church: there were seven pairs of them - accordingly, there were seven girth arches. Moreover, the easternmost of them partially covered part of the eastern wall located above the triumphal arch"[31]. It must be emphasized that the pilasters were not located clearly opposite each other on the opposite wall, but with some displacement, which is why the supporting arches are located not at 90 degrees to the axis, but at different angles. This was probably due to the fact that the existing windows, niches and doors corrected the location of the pilasters, that is, they were added later where possible.

In the south wall of the naos there are two niches on either side of the door. Perhaps they "housed some revered shrines: it can be assumed that in one niche there was a church image of St. Theodore, and in the other - an icon of the Virgin Mary, which was considered at the end of the 11th century as guardian of the city"[32]. One of the stones with a semicircular ark is placed in a niche, as it resembles part of an icon.

The southern opening is arched; on the façade it has a portal frame, which has been preserved almost completely, and consists of two half-shafts that go around the opening on three sides: on the sides and on the top.

The south wall should definitely have arched windows. In the preserved part of the wall we have only 1 option, where there could only be 2 windows. One window is above the southern door, the second is a little to the west of it, since the wall has collapsed in this place. The placement of the window between the 4th and 5th pilasters adjacent to the southern entrance is

---

[30] Ibid. App. 4.
[31] Ibid. P. 48.
[32] Ibid. P. 53.

logical. The second window is at the same height, but is located between the 3rd and 4th pilasters, if you count from west to east. The upper parts of the window were most likely no higher than the imposts on which the arches of the vault rested. We have 2 stones for the upper window frames, similar in theme and design: these are stones with a lion and with a fish. We placed these stones above the windows of the southern wall of the naos. Based on the parameters of these reliefs, the stones framed slit-like windows no more than 0.2 m wide.

In the Middle Ages, the temple was quite simple and hardly had the kind of substructure that we see now. The temple probably simply stood on top, with the northern part resting on a rock and the southern part on a retaining wall. There were windows in the northern wall, presumably three; traces of window openings in the walls can still be traced. We have stones with reliefs, which are possibly part of the arched frame above the window. The window opening in the northern wall makes it possible to conclude that the window width was no more than 0.6 m and the height was about 1 meter. The diameter of the arch of the proposed casing is also within 0.6 m. The windows of the northern wall fit between the 2nd and 3rd, 3rd and 4th, 5th and 6th pilasters. Inside the church, we modeled a platform that probably served as a seat during long services. "There is a low (a little more than half a meter) ledge along the northern wall. It could have been used for seating during long services (which may be an indication of a probable monastic character of the church). On the opposite wall, such a ledge was preserved only between the third and fourth pilasters from the west"[33].

The landscape on which the church is built gives significant originality to the entire structure. The difference in heights from east to west and from north to south leads to the fact that all rooms have a significant difference in floor level. The altar space is raised above the floor of the narthex by almost 0.7 m, the floor of the naos is 0.6 m above the narthex, and the floor of the narthex is 0.9 m from the floor of the exo-narthex. Therefore, several steps lead to each subsequent room and to the altar.

When constructing the narthex and exo-narthex, there is data that was used as a starting point. The narthex, according to the drawings, has a maximum wall height of 9.41 m. The exo-narthex has 8.1 m. Probably the ceilings were cylindrical, and they could only begin above these heights. By adding the height of the vault (thickness of the vault stone + mortar + tiles), you can calculate the height of the roof. The narthex is wider than the church, so the walls of the narthex on the outside coincide with the walls of the church, but they are much thinner. Therefore, the distance from the southern to the northern wall is greater than in the temple. And since the vaults were stone, cylindrical or box-shaped, the vault of the vestibule began no higher than 9.3 m. Since its vault could not rise higher than the vault of the temple,

---

[33] Ibid. P. 51.

there were most likely no windows in the northern and southern walls, otherwise they would have been located low from floor, which made the building inaccessible. But on the western wall, above the roof of the exonarthex, there could be not one, but three windows. These three windows fit logically under the arch of the narthex vault and are located just above the gable roof of the exo-narthex.

Fig. 8 Southern facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 9 Western facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova
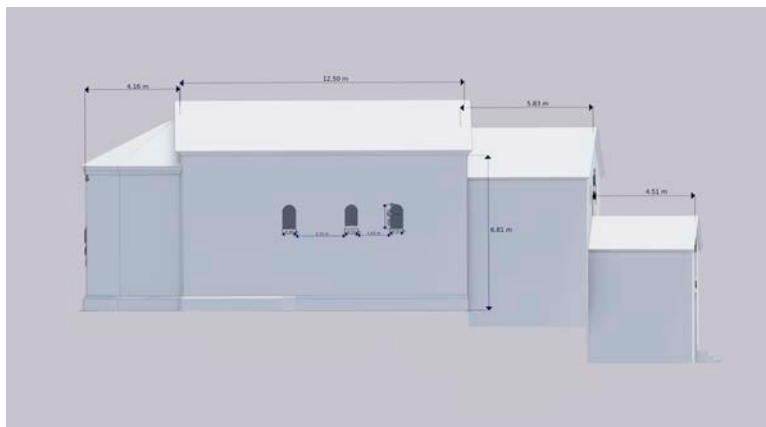
Fig. 10 Northern facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga,
E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko,
L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 11 Altar barrier and altar of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O.
Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko,
L. K. Kazennova

Thus, the reconstruction of the eastern facade could probably look like this (Fig. 8) with individual stones from the analyzed collection. The southern facade in this case contains two of the three reliefs with animals as the upper frames of the windows (Fig. 9). The western one has a complex structure (Fig. 10) with images of individual stones, and the northern one could look like this (Fig. 11).

Returning to the altar part, let us recall that there was a sintron in the temple, which can be seen to this day, it is modeled in the altar. When discussing the principles of constructing the altar barrier and the throne, you need to keep in mind the following considerations. Based on the existing width of the altar apse of about 5 meters, it is most likely to assume that the

altar barrier of the temple rested on 6 pillars-columns, had a central entrance about a meter wide, side openings blocked by slabs had a width of about 0.7 m. Width of the pillars of the altar barrier was about 0.17 m. We determined this width thanks to the existing stone reliefs, which are suitable as pillars of the altar barrier due to their proportions and because they have grooves on the sides, which could be grooves for fastening the altar barrier slabs. For a large temple, you can select several columns based on these parameters. Sometimes the columns have a certain indentation from the ground, that is, the ornament does not start from the beginning of the column, but at some distance. We admit that the ornament of the columns could be repeated, or could vary. We have two columns with intersecting circles and diamonds, both have an indentation from the edge of the slab, the same dimensions in cross-section, but the ornamentation varies in small details. These are "Relief depicting interlocking circles and rhombuses"[34] and "Relief depicting an ornament of interlocking circles and rhombuses"[35].

There is a column "Relief with an ornament of mesh loops"[36], which differs in its ornament, but in cross-section has the same dimensions. It also has grooves on the sides. Based on the fact that the ornament could be different, we include it as part of a column in the altar barrier of a large church.

If it is acceptable that the slabs of the entire altar barrier had different ornaments, then the solid part should have had a uniform ornament. Based on this, the available fragments were distributed into groups. Each group conventionally represents one integral fragment of the altar barrier.

The first group: "Relief depicting circles of small diameter and loops"[37], "Relief depicting a woven geometric ornament composed of circles of small diameter and circles of small diameter with a drilled center"[38], "Fragment of a slab with a geometric ornament composed of circles of small radius and circles of small diameter with drilled center"[39].

The second group will consist of stones with intersecting circles and rhombuses, such as "Relief depicting an ornament composed of rhombuses and circles"[40]. There is a similar ornament on the altar columns.

The third group is "Relief with loop ornament"[41].

The fourth group from one fragment "Relief with an ornament of woven circles of the same size"[42].

---

[34] Ibid. P. 179.
[35] Ibid. P. 173.
[36] Ibid. P. 168.
[37] Ibid. P. 156, № 24.
[38] Ibid. P. 158, № 26.
[39] Ibid. P. 160, № 28.
[40] Ibid. P. 176, № 44.
[41] Ibid. P. 170, № 38.

There is also one fragment, "Relief with woven ornament and fragment of a flourished cross"[43] which, judging by its shape and ornament, was most likely part of the architrave. This is indicated both by the location of the reliefs on planes located at an obtuse angle relative to each other, and by their ornament. Thus, the altar barrier, based on the above considerations, could look like this (Fig. 12).

"Relief depicting arches and pilasters"[44]. "It is difficult to determine the functional purpose of the slab. Perhaps it was used in the internal or external cladding of the building, or, as D. Beletsky and A. Vinogradov suggest, it was the basis for the leg of the throne or its lid"[45]. In the museum, this slab is currently turned towards the viewer with its smooth side, and not the side with relief. The smooth side is well processed and lines up in one plane. At the same time, the side with relief has a slight rounding. If this stone is a fragment of the throne cover, then this explains the smoothness and evenness of its one side and the presence of a groove for the foot of the throne on the other side. Square groove: width – 0.07 m, height – 0.10 m, depth – 0.05 m, round groove diameter – 0.02 m.

Around the recess (groove) there is a protruding relief part, the one called the pilaster. I think that this rectangular protrusion, measuring 0.26 x 0.19 m, coincided with the foot of the throne. The protrusion of the leg with dimensions slightly less than 0.10 x 0.07 x 0.05 fit into the groove of the cover. Perhaps the only straight edge of this fragment is the edge of the tabletop, and then the width of the upper part of the throne can be hypothetically assumed. If we measure the distance from the middle of the groove to the smooth edge of the fragment, we get 0.54 m, and then we can assume that the width of the tabletop is 1.08 m. Perhaps the arcs emerging from the corners of the relief protrusion around the groove were not arches, but led to corners of the throne. In this light, the slight roundness of the lower part of the tabletop is clear. The place where it connects with the leg is the deepest - 0.15 m. Towards the corners the depth decreases - 0.10. If you try to mentally complete the tabletop, then its width, as was said, will be 1.08 m, and its length will be at least 0.85 m. Having built the leg of the throne, we built its support based on the proportions of the tabletop. And it turned out that the support coincided in size with another fragment No. 61.

"Slab with a groove"[46]. "Limestone. Dimensions: wide 0.54 m, height 0.62 m. Protruding groove: wide. 0.23 m, height 0.28 m, depth 7.5 cm. Internal groove: wide. 0.12 m, height 0.14 m, depth 4 cm. According to the assumption of D. Beletsky and A.Vinogradov, it was the basis for the leg of

---

[42] Ibid. P. 181, № 50.

[43] Ibid. P. 128, № 4.

[44] Ibid. P. 189, № 60.

[45] Ibid. P. 190.

[46] Ibid. P. 190, № 61.

the throne or its lid"[47]. The size and shape of a slab with the image of a flourishing cross is suitable as the foot of the throne[48].

The size of this stone is suitable for the foot of a throne. Thus, the throne of the Upper Church could look like this (Fig. 12, 13).
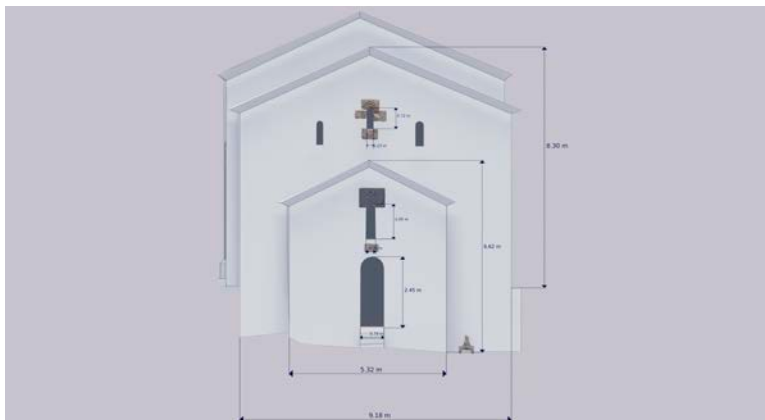

Fig. 12 Altar barrier and p altar of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova
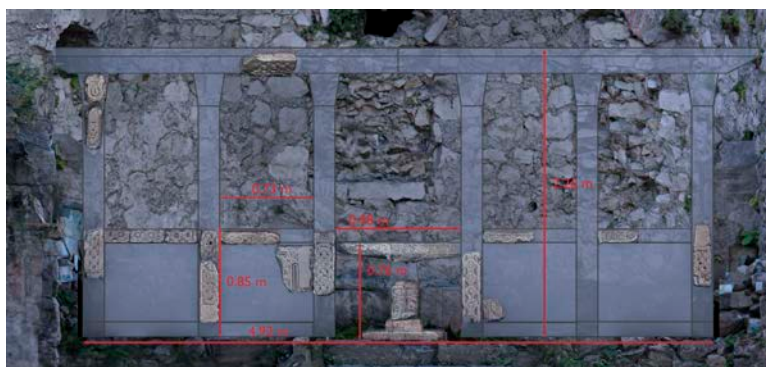

Fig. 13 Orthophotomap of the Lower Church on Mount Anakopia. D. O. Dryga

It is not possible to talk about the location of all the reliefs in certain places, but there are such grounds, although they are hypothetical.

---

[47] Ibid. P. 191.
[48] Ibid. P. 130 – 132, № 5.

Principles of reconstruction of the Lower Church[49].

The lower church of the Anakopia fortress in its architecture was single-apse, hall-shaped and had a modest size. Only the foundations of the walls have survived. The base of the apse has been partially preserved. The threshold of the western entrance is clearly visible. Using it, you can quite reliably determine the width of the doorway, which is equal to 0.85 m. As a result of field research, an orthophotomap of the Lower Church was made (Fig. 2).

The 3D model of the Lower Church was built using a photogrammetric model in Blender. According to the model, the length of the temple is 6.65 m, the width is 4.63 m, the width of the doorway is 0.85, the outer diameter of the apse is 3 m, the inner diameter of the apse is 1.84 m (Fig. 14).

Fig. 14 Three-dimensional model of the Lower Temple. View from the southeast. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

M. M. Trapsh dates the temple to the 10th–11th centuries, in which D. Beletsky and A.Vinogradov completely agree with him[50].

In the book "Church architecture of Abkhazia in the era of the Abkhazian kingdom. The end of the 8th - 10th centuries" there is the

---

[49] Endoltseva E. Yu., Bystritsky N. I., Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko A. D., Karnaushenko E. N., Kazennova L. K. Niznaja tserkov na gore Anakopja (Novij Afon, Respublika Abkhazia): opit virtualnoj rekonstruktsiji arhitekturnogo ubranstva [Lower Church on Mount Anakopia (New Athos, Republic of Abkhazia): experience of virtual reconstruction of architectural decoration]// *ByzantinoCaucasica*. Vol. 3. Moscow, 2023. pp. 65 – 89.

[50] Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva… P. 23.

following remark: "from the architecture of Abkhazia at the end of the 9th - 10th centuries the beam and rafter ceiling completely disappears: all hall churches and basilicas, not to mention domed churches, are covered with vaults"[51]. Based on this statement, it can be assumed that the church could have been covered with a semicircular vault. In addition, "... all the roofs known to us over the arches of the churches of Abkhazia at the end of the 9th - 10th centuries were gable"[52]. In this case, the roof was probably gable.

The floor "in the lower church of the Anakopia fortress is made of ceramic tiles"[53]. During further work on the model, it is possible to pave the floor with ceramic tiles.

Fig. 15 Three-dimensional model of the Lower Temple. View from the northwest. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

We placed windows in the church only in the most likely places. One window is in the center of the apse, the second is on the western wall above the door and the third is on the southern wall, a little closer to the altar. We did not place windows on the northern wall for two reasons: firstly, in the temples of Abkhazia they tried not to have windows on the northern wall, and secondly, the northern wall faces the hillside (Fig. 15). A set of two slabs with crosses under arches is placed above the windows on the southern and

---

[51] Vinogradov A. Yu., Beletsky D. V. Tserkovnaja arhitektura Abkhaziji… P. 268.
[52] Ibid. P. 269.
[53] Ibid.

eastern facades (Fig. 17, 18). The appearance of three Calvary crosses above the window of the eastern apse is due to the iconographic tradition recorded in some Christian churches in the Caucasus during the Middle Ages[54].

Fig. 16 Eastern facade of the Lower Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 17 Southern facade of the Lower Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

---

[54] Rcheulishvili L. Kompozitsija iz treh krestov v arhitekturnom dekore gruzinskih hramov srednevekovija [Composition of three crosses in the architectural decoration of Georgian churches of the Middle Ages] // IV International Symposium on Georgian Art. Tbilisi, 1983. pp. 1 – 14.
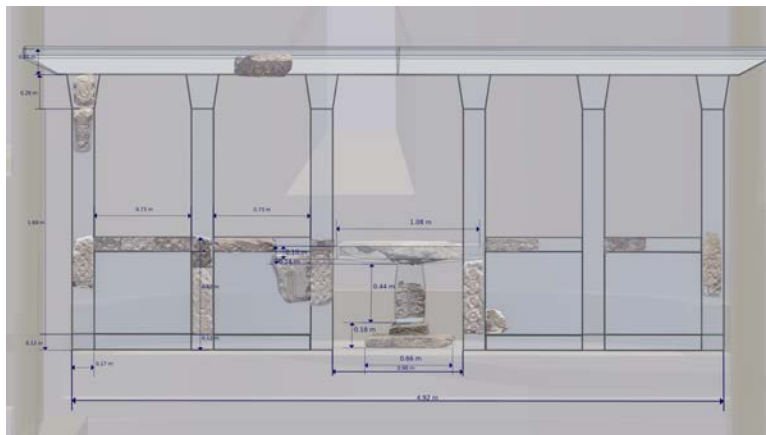
Fig. 18 Altar space of the Lower Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E.
Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

When reconstructing the altar space, the following considerations
were taken into account: "the space of the altar in almost all churches of
Abkhazia, not only the hall ones (except for the Lesnyanskaya I Basilica and
the croix libre at Krion Nero), is highlighted by raising the floor (up to 0.5 m,
in the Monastery and Aba Ante), according to the usual practice of the
Byzantine East. <…> Judging by the churches in Achanua and the
Monastery, the altar barrier in the hall churches ran directly along the line of
the apse abutment"[55]. Based on this, there is a slight elevation in the altar.
The altar barrier is along the apse junction line.

When reconstructing the altar screen and altar, several key details
must be taken into account (Fig. 16). From the Lower Church comes a stone
slab with a relief in the form of a braided pattern with intertwined rhombuses
and circles, and a slab with intertwined squares (catalog no. 88, 89)[56].
According to Trapsch, both reliefs from this church can be dated to the 11th
century. The remaining fragments for the reconstruction of the altar barrier
were selected by analogy with the two above mentioned.

The shape and size of the semicircular slab with an inscription on the
end suggests that it could have been used as a throne cover[57].

"Relief with a Maltese cross and circles on the corners of the
crossbars[58]: "Limestone. Dimensions: wide 0.27 m, height 0.48 m, diagonal
(lower left - upper right) - 0.41 m, diagonal (lower right - upper left) - 0.39
m. Relief depth from 0.4 to 1.2 cm. Groove dimensions: width. 3 cm, h. 6.5
cm, depth 2.2 cm." This piece may be a throne leg, since its lower part was
probably inserted into a groove in the throne support. The slab has a rather

---

[55] Vinogradov A. Yu., Beletsky D. V. Tserkovnaja arhitektura…
[56] Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva… P. 208 – 209.
[57] Ibid. P. 218 – 219, № 4.
[58] Ibid. P. 132, № 6.

skillful relief depicting a cross, at the base of which there is a relief element in the form of a house or temple, in the middle of which there is a small niche. This niche looks like a hole for placing relics. Its framing may refer to both the image of the temple and Golgotha, especially since it is located at the base of the cross.

It is important to note here that the inscription on the end of the slab, which can be considered the lid of the throne, is the only inscription that mentions the fact of lighting a certain church in the name of St. Theodora. Thus, if the proposed reconstruction is correct, then we can say that the dedication in the name of St. Theodora did not have the Upper Church in the citadel, as previously assumed, but the Lower Church. In this case, the Upper Church may have been consecrated in the name of the Mother of God (since, according to legend, it was in it that the miraculous icon of the Mother of God was kept). The combination in one place of two small churches with consecration in the name of the Mother of God and a holy warrior (for example, St. George) has analogies in some regions of Georgia. For example, in the village of Akhalsopeli (Bza) there are also two churches of the same time and similar in design and architectural decoration as the churches from Anakopia. One of them is consecrated in the name of the Mother of God, and the second, smaller one, in the name of St. George.

Thus, in the course of the conducted research using virtual reconstruction methods, it is possible to formulate a reasonable hypothesis about what the architectural decoration of the Upper and Lower Churches on Mount Anakopia could have looked like. Judging by the available data, the appearance of these churches was typical of small church buildings in mountainous regions or fortresses in the Caucasus, starting from the second half of the 10th century. Paradoxically, it combined the features of the "severe" style characteristic of western and central Georgia, South Ossetia, etc. (for example, two churches in Akhalsopeli (near the Trialeti range, Kvemo Kartli) and others, Ubisi (Imereti), Armaz, in fragments - Nadarbazev, Kasagina, Kvaisa, etc.) and decorative motifs that were spreading throughout the territories of the Byzantine Empire from the Greek provinces (workshops of Thebes, Skripou, Peloponnese) and Asia Minor (woven ribbon ornaments, such as, for example, on the altar barriers from Hosios Loukas), starting from the 9th century[59].

---

[59]Endoltseva E. Yu. Pletenij lentochnij ornament na Kavkaze v period Makedonskoj dinastiji: istoki I znachenije motiva [Braided ribbon ornament in the Caucasus during the Macedonian dynasty: the origins and significance of the motif (using the example of architectural plasticity)] // ByzantinoCaucasica. Vol. 2, Moscow, 2022. pp. 131 – 158.

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1 Model of the upper window casing with the image of a lion. D. O. Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 2 Model of the upper window casing with the image of a fish. D. O. Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 3 Lost upper window casing with a bull and a lion near a cross and an inscription. Endoltseva E. Yu. Architectural plasticity of Abkhazia during the period of the Abkhazian kingdom (VIII-XI centuries). Moscow, 2020. pp. 80 – 83

Fig. 4 Model of the upper window casing with the image of three crosses. D. O. Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 5 Model of the upper window casing with the image of a cross. D. O. Dryga, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 6 Orthophotomap of the Upper Church on Mount Anakopia. D. O. Dryga

Fig. 7 Eastern facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 8 Southern facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova
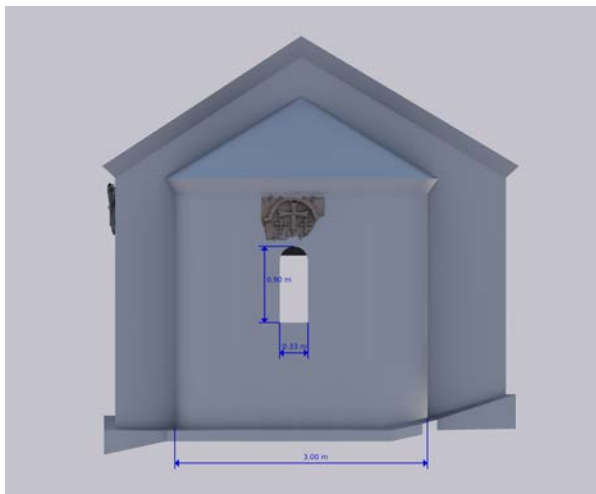
Fig. 9 Western facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova
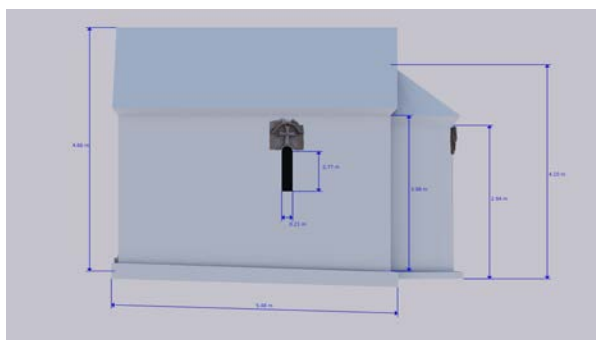
Fig. 10 Northern facade of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 11 Altar barrier and altar of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 12 Altar barrier and p altar of the Upper Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 13 Orthophotomap of the Lower Church on Mount Anakopia. D. O. Dryga

Fig. 14 Three-dimensional model of the Lower Temple. View from the southeast. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 15 Three-dimensional model of the Lower Temple. View from the northwest. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 16 Eastern facade of the Lower Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Fig. 17 Southern facade of the Lower Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova
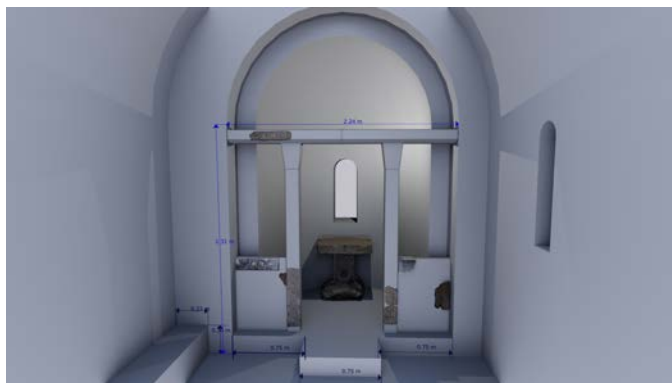
Fig. 18 Altar space of the Lower Church. Reconstruction. D. O. Dryga, E. Yu. Endoltseva, E. N. Karnaushenko, A. D. Karnaushenko, L. K. Kazennova

Bibliography:

Anchabadze, Z.V., *Iz istoriji srednevekovoj Abkhaziji (VI – XVIII vv.)* [From the history of medieval Abkhazia (VI–XVII centuries)]. Sukhumi: Abgiz, 1959. 303 p.

Archimandrite Leonid [Kavelin L.A.]. *Abkhazia i ee hristianskije drevnosti* [Abkhazia and its Christian antiquities]. Moscow: Printing house of I. Efimov, 1887. 104 p.

Bgazhba, O. Kh., Lakoba, S. Z., *Istorija Abkhaziji s drevnejshih vremen do nashih dnej* [History of Abkhazia from ancient times to the present day]. M.: Abkhazia, 2007. 392 p.

Vinogradov, A. Yu., Beletsky, D. V., *Tserkovnaja arhitektura Abkhaziji v epohu Abhazskogo tsarstva. Konets VIII – X vv.* [Church architecture of Abkhazia in the era of the Abkhazian kingdom. The end of the 8th–10th centuries]. Moscow: Indrik, 2015. 372 p.

Endoltseva, E. Yu., *Arhitekturnaja plastika Abkhaziji v period Abkhazskogo tsarstva (VIII – XI vv.)* [Architectural plasticity of Abkhazia during the period of the Abkhazian kingdom (VIII–XI centuries)]. Moscow: IV RAS, 2020. 432 p.

Endoltseva, E. Yu., Pletenij lentochnij ornament na Kavkaze v period Makedonskoj dinastiji: istoki I znachenije motiva [Braided ribbon ornament in the Caucasus during the Macedonian dynasty: the origins and significance of the motif (using the example of architectural plasticity)] // *ByzantinoCaucasica*. Vol. 2, Moscow, 2022. pp. 131 – 158.

Endoltseva, E. Yu., Bystritsky, N. I., Dryga, D. O., Karnaushenko, A. D., Karnaushenko, E. N., Kazennova, L. K., Niznaja tserkov na gore Anakopja (Novij Afon, Respublika Abkhazia): opit virtualnoj rekonstruktsiji arhitekturnogo ubranstva [Lower Church on Mount Anakopia (New Athos, Republic of Abkhazia): experience of virtual reconstruction of architectural decoration]// *ByzantinoCaucasica*. Vol. 3. Moscow, 2023. pp. 65 – 89.

Endoltseva, E.Yu., Bystritsky, N.I., Arhitekturnaja plastika hristianskih tserkvej v vostochnom Prichernomorije v X – XI vv.: vozmoznaja popitka rekonstruktsiji dekorativnoj sistemi [Architectural plasticity of Christian churches of the Eastern Black Sea region of the 10th–11th centuries: a possible attempt to reconstruct the decorative system] // *Orientalistica*. 2022. No. 5(3). pp. 614–631, https://doi.org/10.31696/2618-7043-2022-5-3-614-631.

Iskusstvo Abkhazskogo tsartstva VIII – XI vv. Hristianskije pamjatniki Anakopijskoj kreposti [Art of the Abkhazian kingdom of the 8th–11th centuries. Christian monuments of the Anakopia fortress] / resp. ed. and comp. E. Yu. Endoltseva. St. Petersburg: Publishing house RKhGA, 2011. 272 p.

Latyshev, V.V., *K istoriji hristianstva na Kavkaze. Grecheskije nadpisi Novoafonskogo monastirja* [On the history of Christianity in the Caucasus. Greek inscriptions from the New Athos Monastery] // Collection of archaeological articles presented to Count A. A. Bobrinsky. St. Petersburg, 1911. S. 169 – 198.

Rcheulishvili L., *Kompozitsija iz treh krestov v arhiturnom dekore gruzinskih hramov srednevekovija* [Composition of three crosses in the architectural decoration of Georgian churches of the Middle Ages] // IV International Symposium on Georgian Art. Tbilisi, 1983. pp. 1 – 14.

Trapsh, M.M., *Trudi* [Proceedings]. T. IV: Materials on the archeology of medieval Abkhazia. Sukhumi: Alashara, 1975. 227 p.

Uvarova, P.S., *Hristijanskije pamjatniki Kavkaza* [Christian monuments of the Caucasus]. MAC. IV. M.: A. I. Mamontov Printing House Partnership, 1894. 197 p.

Khrushkova, L.G., *Skulptura rannesrednevekovoj Abkhaziji* [Sculpture of early medieval Abkhazia. V–X centuries]. Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1980. 127 p.

Khrushkova, L.G., *Vostochnoje Prichernomorije v Vizantijakuju epohu. Istorija. Arhitektura. Arheologija* [Eastern Black Sea region in the Byzantine era. Story.

Architecture. Archeology]. Kaliningrad–Moscow: Publishing House "ROS-DOAFK", 2018. 480 p.

Shmerling, R., *Malije formi v arhitekture srednevekovoj Gruziji* [Small forms in the architecture of medieval Georgia]. Tbilisi: Publishing House Acad. Sciences Cargo. SSR, 1962. 293 p.

Seibt, W., Jordanov, I., Στρατηγὸς Σωτηριουπόλεως καὶ Ανακούπης. Ein mittelbyzantinisches Kommando in Abchasien (11. Jahrhundert)// Studies in Byzantine sigillography. 2006. Vol. 9. P. 231–239.

The Funerary Character and Symbolism
of the First Christian Images[*]

Sabina-Maria Azoiței [**]

Abstract: *The first two centuries of our era constitute a period devoid of sacred images, and this aniconic phase of Christianity was not only determined by the observance of the Old Testament prohibition. The lack of interest of Jesus and the apostles towards the idea of preaching through images, the absence of information about the appearance of Christ, but also the precarious economic situation of the Christian community before the legalization of Christianity, are important factors that must be taken into account when discussing this absence of cultic representations characteristic of the first two Christian centuries. However, despite the initial aniconism, the development of the new cult in the Greco-Roman world, where images of divinities were omnipresent, led to the emergence of a Christian art. The first spaces dedicated to visual representations of the sacred are the catacombs. On the walls of the underground cemeteries, the adherents of the new religion depicted various symbols taken from the funerary repertoire of pagan imagery, which they adapted to acquire Christian significance, the cross, the fish, the vine and the lamb, included.*

Keywords: *aniconism, sacred images, symbols, catacombs, pagan imagery, Christian meaning*

Aniconism from the dawn of Christianity

Historically, early Christianity, spanning from the 1st century to the end of the 5th century, can be divided into two main stages, before and after the year 313, when the Christian cult is officially recognized by the emperor Constantine the Great, using it as the ideological support of his imperial power. Christianity becomes the sole state religion at the end of the 4th century, in 380, under the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395), who puts an end to the religious tolerance specific to the reign of Constantine, banning pagan cults. In the 5th century, the unity of the Roman Empire, already administratively divided, is destroyed by the barbarian

---

[*] This article is an excerpt from my PhD thesis entitled *The Image of Christ in Christian Art. The transgressions of the representational canons in contemporary times.*

[**] PhD student in the second year at the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu University of Arts, Iași, sabinaazoitei@yahoo.com.

invaders, which will determine different artistic developments of Western and Eastern Europe.

In a first stage of development (1st and 2nd centuries AD), Christian art goes through an aniconic phase[1], being influenced by Judaism, a religion constantly concerned with the implications of idolatry [2], refusing the figurative representation of the sacred[3]. Thus, the divine command given to Moses and his people in Exodus 20:4 is respected: *You shall not make for yourself a graven image, nor any likeness of those who are above, in heaven, or below on the earth, or in the water and under the earth. Do not worship them.* For Jews, making images (especially statues) of God, the supreme being, constitutes an act of desecration[4], since these are man-made objects, contain no divine essence, and are therefore not fit to depict the sacred. In any case, over the following centuries, the acceptability of the depiction of the deity would be debated by Jewish, Christian, as well as Islamic religious authorities.

Thus, at the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by Titus, in 70 AD[5], the commandment in the Decalogue is interpreted to mean a strict prohibition that does not admit visual representations of the divinity, nor of living beings, nor the display of such images in synagogues. This fear of idols also extends to the effigy of the emperor and the military insignia of the Roman armies. Therefore, the image of the emperor is not allowed either, because it implies a cult, a form of idolatry[6]. However, in environments where the influence of the scribes and Pharisees is not so strong, there is a more liberal tendency, which manifests itself from the second century onwards [7], and which allows especially symbolic representations (the candlestick with seven arms – the *menorah*, the ram's horn with ritual function, the ark containing the Torah scroll. Diaspora Jewish communities also adopt plant, animal, and figurative motifs from the Greco-Roman iconographic repertoire. In other cases, synagogues may even house images from the Old Testament, such as the one at Dura-Europos, where you can see forty or fifty murals depicting episodes from the Hebrew Bible[8].

---

[1] Very few material artifacts that have survived to the present day can be clearly associated with the Christians of the first two centuries of our era (Robin Margaret Jansen, Mark D. Ellison, *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, Routledge, 2018, *Introduction)*.

[2] The word *idolatry* first appears in the New Testament, but equivalent terms exist in Hebrew and rabbinical literature (Cf. François Boespflung, *Dieu et ses images*, Ed. Bayard, Paris, 2008, p. 61).

[3] Frédérick Tristan, *Primele imagini creştine/ First Christian Images*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucureşti, 2002, p. 30.

[4] François Boespflung, *Dieu et ses images*, Ed. Bayard, Paris, 2008, p. 59.

[5] Michelle P. Brown, *Ghid de artă creştină/Guide to Christian Art,* Ed. Casa Cărţii, Oradea, 2009, p. 16.

[6] François Boespflung, *op.cit*., p. 60.

[7] *Ibidem*.

[8] Michelle P. Brown, *op.cit*., p. 16.
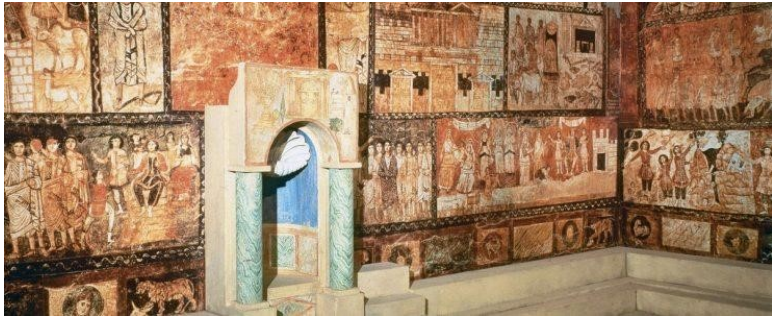
Fig. 1 Synagogue interior, Dura Europos

Fig. 2 *Moses Bringing Water Out of the Rock*, 3rd century, wall painting, Synagogue of Dura-Europos, Syria

The absence of cultic representations characteristic of the first two centuries of our era cannot be justified only by the Jewish origin of the Christian religion. There are several factors that should be considered when discussing this topic. From the beginning, Christianity is meant to be a faith without visual support – Christ shows no interest in images, and neither do the apostles. They do not embrace the idea of preaching through pictorial or sculptural images[9], encouraging at the same time to abstain from everything that could have reminded of the cult manifestations specific to the Greco-Romans. In the case of Saint Paul[10], the reluctance towards them takes the

---

[9] François Boespflung, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-60.
[10] Paul of Tarsus (AD 5-62) whose real name was Saul, was born into a wealthy Jewish family in the province of Cilicia, Asia Minor. This ensures him a classical education, being trained at

form of a declared aversion, harshly criticizing in his writings the cultic practices of the pagans[11]: *And they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of the image of the corruptible man and of the birds and of the four-footed and creeping things* (Romans, 1:23). This hostility is also present in the early Christian writers, especially the apologists – the Church Fathers of the first two centuries (Athenagoras, Justin the Martyr, Tatian, Theophilus, Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, etc.) generally concerned with defending the Christian faith. They express their disapproval of the making and use of images, arguing that God and matter are irreconcilable, and true faith does not need visual representations of the sacred[12]. Tertullian (155-220), one of the earliest Christian theologians and moralists[13], regards idolatry as the fundamental sin of pagan mankind. Of all art forms, sculpture or the *carving of faces* is indisputably associated with idols, being considered by both Jews and Christians to be the archetype of Greco-Roman culture[14].

Another factor worth considering, which may have delayed the appearance of Christian art and depictions of Christ, is the lack of information regarding his appearance. The New Testament writings are the most authentic sources that should inform us about the physical appearance of the Savior[15]. However, neither the Gospels nor the other New Testament epistles provide almost any information related to the physiognomy of Jesus. They speak only of His sermons and the miracles He performed, illustrating rather the beauty and gentleness of *His inner countenance*[16]. Even the episode of the *Transfiguration* on Mount Tabor does not give clues about his physical features: *And his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light* (Matthew 17, 2). Thus, we cannot speak of a literary portrait of Christ, as if his actions and teachings eclipsed his appearance[17]. In any case, this ignorance regarding the external appearance of Jesus opens the way to many hypotheses and divergent opinions and explains the diversity of

---

the same time in the mysteries of the Torah. He begins by persecuting Christians, but converts after having a vision of the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. Shortly after his conversion, Saint Paul begins his missionary activity, propagating Christianity outside of Judaism, among the pagans. He dies as a martyr in Rome in the year 62, during the reign of Emperor Nero (Cf. Mircea Eliade, Ioan P. Culianu, *Dicționar al religiilor/ Dictionary of Religions*, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2007, pp. 138-139).

[11] François Boespflung, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

[12] *Ibidem*.

[13] Numerous works on themes such as the defence of the faith, prayer and devotion, morality, as well as the first Christian book on baptism are linked to his personality, *De baptismo* (****Enciclopedia Universală Britanică/ Encyclopedia Britannica*, Ed. Litera, București, 2010, pp. 184-185).

[14] François Boespflung, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-62.

[15] Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu, *Chipul Mântuitorului în iconografie/ The Face of the Savior in Iconography*, Ed. Bizantină, București, 2001, p. 20.

[16] *Ibidem*.

[17] François Boespflung, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

appearances attributed to him in apocryphal, theological writings, in hagiographical literature and, for several centuries, in art, determining, in the first millennium of the Christian era, a *polymorphism* of the figure of the Savior[18].

We should also take into account other aspects that contribute to the maintenance of this aniconic phase of early Christianity, such as the precarious economic situation of the Christian community before the Constantinian era. A cult that glorifies the suffering of the oppressed does not generally attract citizens from the elite of society (who can afford to commission works of art), but from the humbler and poorer classes, such as servants or simple manual workers[19]. They are considered atheists and accused of all sorts of illegal acts by the authorities who resort to torture and persecution to stop the spread of Christianity. So, the unfavorable nature of their life circumstances does not allow them to leave behind many material possessions, let alone artistic expressions of their faith[20].

However, the development of the new faith in the Greco-Roman world, where images are present everywhere, both in public spaces and in temples and private homes, eventually leads to the emergence of a Christian art, beginning in the 3rd century. Perhaps the followers of the new faith are beginning to realize the power of images in the spread of Christianity. Clement of Alexandria is the first Christian theologian to explicitly authorize the representation of certain iconographic motifs (*Paedagogus*, work written in the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD) on portable objects such as rings or seals[21]. The symbols are taken from the funerary repertoire of pagan imagery, being chosen due to their neutral character from a religious point of view and the semantic malleability that allows the appropriation of a Christian meaning – the dove, the fish, the ship pushed by the wind, the anchor, etc. These ornamental motifs, to which figurative ones and biblical narrative scenes will be added shortly, will be part of the iconographic ensemble characteristic of the funerary art of underground cemeteries and sarcophagi, marking the way to salvation through faith.

The Art of the Catacombs

Before the Constantinian era and the official recognition of the Christian religion, the preferred spaces reserved for various representations with a sacred theme were the catacombs, those necropolises arranged along the circulation routes, beyond the edges of the big cities. They are set up in a terrain made of volcanic rocks, composed of galleries with many

---

[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 63-64.
[19] Mary Hollingsworth, *Arta în istoria umanității/Art in Human History*, Ed. Enciclopedia Rao, București, 2008, p. 95.
[20] Michelle P. Brown, *op.cit*., p. 19.
[21] François Boespflung, *op.cit*., p. 66.

ramifications that are usually arranged one above the other, thus forming several floors[22]. *Cubicles* are larger burial chambers found at the end of the galleries. *Loculi* are dug into the walls of these spaces, that is, individual graves, arranged one above the other to receive the bodies of the deceased, being similar to rectangular niches, closed vertically by a thin wall of marble, tiles or bricks. Epitaphs accompanied by symbols, engraved or painted, were found on these closing materials. The larger tomb is called *arcosolium*, being dug under an arch and closed by a horizontal slab[23].

Fig. 3 Catacomb of St. *Callistus*, Rome

Fig. 4 Catacomb of Domitilla, Rome

---

[22] Jürgen Christen, *Arta paleocreștină/Early Christian Art*, in ****Istoria artei/ Art History*, Larousse collection, coord. Albert Châtelet, Bernard Philippe Groslier, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, București, 2006, p. 310.
[23] Frédérick Tristan, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

Contrary to popular opinion, the catacombs were not clandestine meeting places of a persecuted religious community[24], nor spaces where worship was celebrated in secret. Community graves dug underground were more reserved for funerary ritual and decoration. The followers of the new religion were against cremation because of their belief in the immortality of souls and the resurrection of bodies, and they could not even afford to buy plots of land for their own grave[25]. The authorities also knew about the catacombs, confiscating them twice, thus prohibiting them from practicing their new religion. The first time they were confiscated under the reign of Emperor Valerian (258-260), and the second time under Emperor Diocletian (303-310)[26]. The authorities considered them centers of rebellion, wanting to ban public gatherings in these spaces.

In the catacombs of Rome, Naples and Sicily, the earliest evidence of images with Christian significance has been found. Such cemeteries were not only discovered on the territory of Italy, but also in North Africa and Asia Minor. In Rome there is the most important set of catacombs[27], and the area of these necropolises is very large, like the cemetery of Domitilla on Via Ardeatina or the catacomb of Saint Priscilla on Via Salaria, or that of Saint Callistus on Via Appia. In the same way that they take up and adapt Greco-Roman imagery to create images with Christian meaning, believers establish brotherhoods (*cultores*) after the pagan model. Those confraternities of Hercules, Jupiter, Diana and other deities are transformed by the first Christians into the confraternities of Lucinae, Priscillae, etc., the names of the first martyrs[28]. Thus, the underground cemeteries receive the names of those associations founded by them. Starting with the 5th century, these spaces were abandoned, the catacombs being transformed into places of pilgrimage[29].

---

[24] Michelle P. Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 21.
[25] Mary Hollingsworth, *op.cit.*, p. 95.
[26] Frédérick Tristan, *op.cit.,* p. 49.
[27] *Ibidem.*
[28] *Ibidem*.
[29] Jürgen Christen, *op.cit.*, p. 310.

Fig. 5 *Hypogeum of Tellus*, catacomb on the Via Latina, Rome

Images depicting fish, sheep, crosses, vines, palm trees, anchors, seven-armed candelabra, doves, *canthari*, peacocks, etc. are some of the symbols most frequently used for the decoration, in the form of fresco[30] or engraving, of vaults and walls catacombs, carrying *the spiritual charge of the transition from the worldly, ephemeral life to the eternal one*[31]. They also appear on the walls of houses of prayer, as bas-relief on sarcophagi, as decoration on various household objects (glasses, cups, clay lamps, ceramic tableware), or on jewellery. The symbols most often represented on the latter

---

[30] The people in charge of creating these images generally used the *fresco* technique, which was most popular in the Mediterranean area. The walls were first plastered with a layer of gritty lime and sand mortar. On top of the first layer lay the second, thin one. After it dries, the third layer is applied. After the execution of the three layers of plaster with sand mortar, the puttying began. The first layer of plaster was made with slightly grained marble mortar, and when this was spread and almost dry, a second layer of medium-thick marble mortar was spread. After it was well rubbed, a third thinner layer was spread. Thus, the walls, further to reinforcement with three layers of sand mortar and marble mortar, did not crack or suffer other damages (Cf. Bogdan Maximovici, *Arta tehnicilor murale/ The Art of Mural Techniques*, Ed. Art XXI, Iași, 2009, p. 162).
[31] Adrian Stoleriu, *Reprezentarea vizuală a sacrului/ Visual Representation of the Sacred*, Ed. Institutul European, Iași, 2013, p. 85.

are the anchor, the fish, the ship or the lyre [32]. All these symbols are reminiscent of those used by the Romans to illustrate the much-loved maritime, pastoral and harvest themes that often adorned the interiors of their homes. If in Greco-Roman art, these images suggested the beauty and richness of nature or alluded to the attributes of a god, in the Christian funeral context, the symbols acquire other meanings, referring to the person of the Savior, the Eucharist, the Resurrection or eternal life. There are also numerous wall paintings illustrating episodes from the Old Testament.

Although numerous symbols found on catacomb walls or sarcophagi may have Christic significance, only the cross, the fish, and the lamb are the symbols which, in the context of the catacombs, clearly refer to the person of the Savior[33]. Later to these simple symbols another suite of figures will be added, namely, the Good Shepherd, Orpheus among the wild beasts, Christ-Helios, and the ancient Teacher or Philosopher. The images that depict Christ in these poses will be enriched by joining the representations that narrate the miracles performed by the Savior or various episodes from the Old and New Testaments.

As for the color range, it was quite limited. The walls of the underground cemeteries were covered with a white background on which a geometric network of red, white, green and black lines was detached, the white of the walls and ceilings giving more depth to the surrounding space. Considering the fact that we are talking about an art that developed in the darkness of the catacombs, it was necessary for Christian artists to use bright and contrasting colors [34]. One can even speak of a symbolism of colors. White, the color of deities in many ancient beliefs, can be in Christianity a sign of grace, transcendence, revelation, but also a harbinger of death. Or it is the uncreated light that suggests divine love and the presence of the Holy Spirit [35]. Red symbolizes earth and life, vital energy, but it also refers to sacrifice, love, or it can mean hell fire. Green is symbolic of spiritual regeneration. Black, often having negative connotations, in early Christian art could suggest the night of divine ignorance or the mystery of the original creation[36]. Yellow, used later in Byzantine art especially in the rendering of halos, refers to Christ and eternal life.

---

[32] Codrina-Laura Ioniță, *Simboluri ale artei medievale/ Symbols of Medieval Art*, Editura Artes, Iași, 2009, p. 13.

[33] Arhim. Sofia Boghiu, *op.cit.*, p. 39

[34] Robert Milburn, Early *Christian Art and Architecture*, Wildwood House, 1988, p. 27.

[35] Codrina-Laura Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

[36] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 6 *The Good Shepherd*, fresco, Cubiculum of the Veil,
catacomb of St. Priscilla, Rome

Jews and Christians alike tended to avoid statuary art because of its widespread use in the cults of pagan Greco-Roman deities[37]. Instead, bas-reliefs are made on sarcophagi and small figures. Many of the sarcophagi from the early Christian period are decorated with the complex symbols of the Good Shepherd, the Teacher or the Philosopher. Of Oranta, with scenes of Old Testament salvation and with images of Baptism. At the end of the 3rd century, Christ begins to be represented in New Testament scenes. An example of an early Christian sarcophagus is the one housing the remains of Junius Bassus, from the 4th century, discovered under St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. The ancient colonnades frame scenes treated in a naturalistic manner illustrating: *Traditio legis*[38], *Sacrifice of Abraham*, *Arrest of Peter*, *Arrest of Christ*, *Christ before Pilate* (upper register); *Job, Adam and Eve, Entry into Jerusalem, Daniel in the lions' den, St. Paul on his way to martyrdom* (lower

---

[37] Michelle P. Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 17.
[38] The transmission of the New Law by Christ to Saints Peter and Paul.

register). This iconographic arrangement tries to associate the martyrdom of the Fathers of the Roman Church with the passions of Jesus and with the Old Testament prophecies concerning him[39].

Fig. 7 *Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus*, 4th century,
Treasury of St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican

***

During the turbulent times at the dawn of Christianity, believers adopted various symbols taken from the pagan artistic ensemble and adapted them in such a way that they acquired a Christian meaning or depicted the Incarnate Christ. Not obviously suggesting belonging to the new cult, these iconographic motifs offer protection to Christians and have a very important role in the practice of the new cult, being a secret, initiatory recognition sign[40], through which they can identify themselves as part of this religious community. Through the use of signs, the first Christians can manifest their faith, even if in a clandestine way; this was also a way by which they communicated more easily with each other. The first works of Christian art depict plant and animal symbols, to which later anthropomorphic ones will be added. These reasons can be found both in the culture and iconography of several ancient peoples and in the writings of the Old Testament, which have the role of transmitting the prophetic message.

Also, the importance of the symbol in the Paleo-Christian period resides in the fact that it assumed a detachment from polytheistic beliefs, through the attempt to reproduce the immaterial. For a pagan those images were part of Greco-Roman iconography and had a certain meaning, unable to penetrate their new meaning. Christians are the only people able to decode or

---

[39] Michelle P. Brown, *op.cit*., p. 24.
[40] Codrina-Laura Ioniță, *op.cit*., p. 13.

interpret those symbols, as if access to salvation and eternal life is reserved only for those who have renounced paganism, embracing the new faith in Christ.

Therefore, these signs used by the first Christians during their life to prove their belonging to the new religion and to recognize each other, accompany them in the afterlife, being present on the walls of the hypogea and on the sarcophagi housed at their turn in crypts or chapels. In this funereal setting, they suggest the belief in the immortality of souls as well as the hope of resurrection.

The cross, the emblematic symbol of the Christian religion, is originally a universal sign, present in the culture and art of many ancient civilizations (Egypt, China, Crete), often symbolizing the meeting between heaven and earth[41], between material and immaterial. According to some oriental legends, *the cross is the bridge or ladder on which human souls climb to God[42]*. This is a totalizing symbol, with a function of synthesis and measure, pointing to the 4 cardinal points and constituting the basis of all symbols of orientation, at the different levels of human existence[43].

Fig. 8 Cross and peacocks, bas-relief on sarcophagus, Basilica of
Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna

In Christian iconography, the cross is the symbol of Christ, referring to his death by crucifixion and the Resurrection, constituting one of the characteristic symbols by which the followers of the new cult acknowledged

---

[41] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *A Guide to Christian Art*, published by T&T Clark, London, 2020, p. 231.
[42] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicționar de simboluri vol. I A-D/ Dictionary of Symbols vol. I A-D*, Ed. Artemis, București, 1994, p. 398.
[43] *Ibidem*, p. 395.

themselves[44]. Artists of the early Christian centuries took up and adapted this symbol to suggest Christ's sacrifice and the permanent presence of Jesus: *where the cross is, there is the crucified*[45]. The cross, as a sign associated with Christ, becomes a symbol of victory over hell[46]. Sometimes the cross appears disguised under other symbols of pagan origin, such as the anchor or the trident.

In the art of catacombs but also as a decoration on sarcophagi, this symbol is rendered in various forms, such as the Latin cross with unequal arms, the Greek cross with equal arms, the cross of the Resurrection, thinner, etc. According to Christian tradition, Christ would have been crucified on a Latin cross, thus becoming a symbol of the Savior's Passion. The Greek cross, with its four equal arms, came to symbolize the church and to be used as the plan for most sacred edifices[47], especially in the Orthodox space. Also, the cross can sometimes be associated with the Tree of Life, as it is an ancient tradition that the cross on which Christ was crucified was made of this wood[48]. Later, especially in Byzantine art, the cross will be represented on the nimbus of Christ, on the Gospel that he holds in his left hand when he is rendered as the Pantocrator, or in various scenes from the Passion Cycle, the best example being the Crucifixion. The cross, given that it is a symbol of the intermediary, of the meeting between the sacred and the pagan, is not only an image of sacrifice and redemption, but can also suggest the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human.

This Christian sign is often accompanied by various symbols that also refer to Christ or the Christian faith. The Chi-Rho symbol, an X over which a P is superimposed, these coming from the Greek letters chi, X, and rho, P, represents an abbreviation of the Greek word Christos, meaning *the Anointed One*. These together with the sign of the cross form the monogram of Christ, a hook-like sign on the right upper arm[49]. Other symbols that represent the Savior are the letters Alpha and Omega, also from the Greek alphabet, which mean the Beginning and the End: "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End", says the Lord God, He who is, He who was and He who is comes, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).

---

[44] Arhim. Sofian Boghiu, *op.cit*., p. 40.
[45] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *op.cit*., p. 397.
[46] Gabriel Herea, *Mesajul eshatologic al spaţiului liturgic creştin. Arhitectură şi icoană în Moldova secolelor XV-XVI/ The Eschatological Message of the Christian Liturgical Space. Architecture and Icon in Moldova in the XV-XVI Centuries*, Ed. Karl A. Romstorfer, Suceava, 2013, p. 29.
[47] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *op.cit*., p. 231.
[48] Arhim. Sofian Boghiu, *op.cit*., p. 40.
[49] Michelle P. Brown, *op.cit*., p. 18

Fig. 9 *Chi Rho and Alpha and Omega* symbols,
4th century, Pio Cristiano Museum, Vatican

Also, dove or peacock symbols accompany this cross symbol in certain early Christian works. In Greco-Roman art, the dove, a symbol of love, was the bird of Aphrodite, suggesting the harmonious union of erotic love and purity, as well as the bond of affection between two lovers. This motif often appears on Greek funerary vessels, probably alluding to the immortal soul of man[50]. In Christian art, the dove primarily symbolizes the Holy Spirit, based on the Gospel according to Matthew: *As soon as He was baptized, Jesus came up from the water. And at that moment the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending in the form of a dove and coming toward Him* (Matthew 3:16). But it can also suggest the spirit that leaves the body after death[51]. In the writings of the Old Testament, the dove was used in purification rituals[52], thus being a symbol of purity, but it signifies hope and peace, especially when it brings an olive branch to Noah's Ark (Genesis 8:11).

---

[50] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicționar de simboluri vol. II E-O/ Dictionary of Symbols Vol II E-O*, p. 122.
[51] *Ibidem*, p. 123.
[52] Judith Couchman, *The Art of Faith. A Guide to Understanding Christian Images*, published by Paraclete Press, Brewster, Massachusetts, 2012, p. 159.

Fig. 10 *Dove*, catacomb of *St. Lorenzo*, Rome

The symbol of the peacock is also of pagan origin, being an image of beauty, pride and vanity, due to its special plumage. In Greco-Roman mythology, the peacock was the bird of Hera, the wife of Zeus, and was considered a solar symbol because it twirled its tail. It often appears on Roman funerary sarcophagi. This motif is also found in the culture of Asian peoples, especially in India, being associated with energy and solar rays, as well as the element of fire[53]. In the early days of Christianity, this sign appeared countless times on the walls of the catacombs. Christian artists assimilated this symbol to suggest immortality and eternal life, as it is said that after death, their flesh would not rot. Thus, the image of the peacock may represent Christ.

Fig. 11 *Peacock*, fresco, catacomb of *St. Priscilla*, Rome

---

[53] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicționar de simboluri vol. III P-Z/ Dictionary of Symbols Vol III P-Z*, pp. 59-60.

The symbol of the vine, and by extension that of grapes and wine, was frequently represented in Greco-Roman art, especially in images depicting harvest scenes, being closely linked to the cult of Dionysus. This cult of the god of wine was associated with knowledge of the mysteries of life after death. Dionysus' connection with the mysteries of death, which are also of rebirth and knowledge, gave the vine a funerary symbolism that was later taken up by Christianity[54].

In Christian iconography, the vine is the image of Christ, actually being a reference to his words: *I am the vine, you are the branches* (John 15:5). The connection between Jesus and the believers is like between the vine and its cords, and the wine is the symbol of his blood[55]. The symbol of the vine is closely related to that of the cross, because the latter represents the instrument of the Savior's Passion, and the color of the grapes and the wine, which are the fruit of the vine, recall the drama of Christ and his redemptive death, being at the same time a reference to the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Maritime themes are popular subjects in both Greco-Roman home decoration and ancient funerary art. However, the fish and the fisherman could have a specifically Christian resonance[56], as they appear frequently in the writings of the New Testament, such as the Gospel of John, Luke or Matthew. The apostles are the fishers of men, and the future Christians are the fish. But it should not be overlooked that the fish motif has a universal character, as it was present in the art and mythology of several peoples of Antiquity (Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Phoenicians, Indians), being associated with cyclical birth or restoration[57]. At the same time, the fish is a symbol of fecundity, fertility and knowledge, because it, living in the seas and oceans, penetrates the mysteries of the unknown.

Fig. 12 *Fish and basket of loaves*, fresco, catacomb of St. Callistus, Rome

---

[54] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *op.cit*., p. 464.
[55] Arhim. Sofian Boghiu, *op.cit*., p. 43.
[56] Robin Margaret Jensen, Mark D. Ellison (edit.), *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, Routledge, Philadelphia, 2018, p. 4.
[57] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *op.cit*., p. 72.

In Christian iconography, the fish primarily represents Christ, as the Greek word ichthys (fish) is considered to be an ideogram, each letter of the word being the initial of a word in the phrase Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter (Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Savior). This phrase thus summarizes the Christian doctrine, being its first confession of faith[58]. The fish can be a baptismal symbol (Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 1). Baptism, through immersion in water, implies a spiritual rebirth[59], Christ being the guide of people in this internal metamorphosis. On the walls of the catacombs, the fish may be an allusion to one of the foods eaten during the funeral meal[60], but at the same time it may refer to the miracle of the sharing of loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:13-21) or to the Eucharist, if accompanied by a basket with bread, as can be seen in a fresco in the Catacomb of St. Callistus, Rome. In this context, bread is the sign of essential, spiritual food[61], representing the body of Christ. When the fish is represented next to an anchor, it represents the disciples of Jesus caught by the anchor of faith. The image of the fish on funerary inscriptions suggests belief in resurrection and hope in the afterlife[62]. The fish symbol is used in Christian art with these meanings until the 4th century, when it begins to be depicted less and less, especially in ornamentation, having a decorative character[63].

Fig. 13 *Fish caught by the anchor of faith*, catacomb of Domitilla, Rome

The symbol of the Dolphin is closely related to that of the fish, and can be considered a precursor of the latter in Christian iconography. It is par excellence a symbol of water and transfiguration, often depicted alongside

---

[58] Frédérick Tristan, *op.cit.*, p. 75.
[59] Codrina-Laura Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 14.
[60] François Boespflung, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
[61] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *op.cit.*, p. 103.
[62] Codrina-Laura Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 13.
[63] Arhim. Sofian Boghiu, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

the trident and anchor. It appears frequently in Roman art, being associated with the image of Apollo, Aphrodite, Poseidon and Dionysus. According to a mythological legend, Dionysus was tied to the mast of the ship of some pirates who, after getting drunk, fell into the sea and were changed into dolphins. Thus, the dolphin becomes a symbol of regeneration[64], and also of metamorphosis. In Roman funerary art, this water mammal is often depicted on sarcophagi, suggesting the passage of souls to the afterlife and its role as psychopomp, guide of the dead, an image that will be taken over by early Christian art. Thus, Christian iconography uses the symbol of the dolphin to depict Christ as the guide of people in the afterlife.

The dolphin symbolizes salvation and resurrection, due to its habit of swimming alongside the boats to show them the way, in the same way that Christ, through his words, guided his disciples and other believers. In certain early Christian depictions of the Jonah story, the dolphin replaces the whale. Also, in certain situations, in order not to create ambiguity between pagan and Christian meanings, the dolphin was associated with a cross, but when accompanied by the trident, it can be a reference to the Christian sacrifice[65].

Fig. 14 *Dolphin chained around the anchor*,
mosaic from the House of the Trident, Delos

---

[64] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicționar de simboluri vol. I A-D/ Dictionary of Symbols Vol I A-D*, p. 439.
[65] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *op.cit*., p. 182.

The lamb which, in Christian art, became the symbol of Christ and His Passion, can be found in the culture of Mediterranean civilizations, suggesting innocence, renewal, the cyclical victory of life over death, as well as the salvation achieved through sacrifice[66].

Fig. 15 *Lamb of God among the saints*, fresco,
Catacomb of St. Peter and Marcellin, Rome

The lamb, along with the other sheep (sheep and ram) occupies an important place in the Bible and the Koran, as well as in the religious iconography and symbolism of the Mosaic, Christian and Muslim communities. Lambs, sheep and rams were sacrificed in rituals, being sacrifices of salvation. The symbols of the lamb and the sheep appear frequently in the Old Testament because the patriarchs, being shepherds, had flocks of sheep[67].

In early Christian art, the image of the lamb was used by believers to portray Christ, influenced by a passage in the Gospel of John, in which John the Baptist calls Christ the lamb of God: *Behold the Lamb of God, behold the One who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29). In Christian iconography, Christ is the sacrificial lamb for the forgiveness of people's sins. However, the figure of Jesus under the pose of a lamb could also have been determined by the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the sacrifice of the Savior, such as the one in which Isaiah (53, verse 7 especially) announces

---

[66] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicționar de simboluri vol. II E-O/ Dictionary of Symbols Vol II E-O,* p. 299.
[67] Frédérick Tristan, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

the arrival of a tormented Messiah, symbolized by the image of a lamb to be sacrificed (Acts 8, 32)[68].

Depending on how lambs or sheep are depicted, these sheep acquire various meanings within Christian art. On the walls of catacombs or on sarcophagi, flocks of lambs or sheep grouped around Christ the Shepherd may represent the faithful or the apostles. The lamb carrying the cross and bleeding from a wound is the *Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)*, which symbolizes Christ, also suggesting the Mystery of the Eucharist. A lying lamb was an image of the tortured Christ, while a standing lamb was a symbol for the triumphant Church. When the lamb is depicted with a cruciform nimbus it is a reference to the Risen Jesus[69]. Instead, when it appears represented on a mountain from which four rivers flow (the four rivers of Paradise and the four Gospels), the image is an evocation of a passage from the Apocalypse[70]: And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion (Revelation, XIV, 1).

In early Christian art (up to the 4th century) images depicting the lamb and the cross could symbolize the Crucifixion, because in the first centuries of our era, Christians refused to paint Christ crucified, believing that a scene of torture would frighten the members of the new religious communities. Thus, the symbol of the lamb is represented to replace the crucified Jesus. In any case, starting from the 7th century, this image of Christ as a crucified lamb will no longer be used, as a result of the decisions of the Second Trulan Council held in Constantinople in 692 which decided that the image of the lamb should be replaced with the figure of the Saviour, to depict His incarnation, passions and redemptive death[71].

The motif of the lion, in contrast to that of the lamb, was taken over by Christian iconography to portray Christ as well as the evangelist Mark. In a general sense, the lion is a solar symbol, of authority and wisdom, but at the same time it suggests arrogance, pride and ferocity. In Paleo-Christian art, the lion symbolizes regeneration and rebirth, and certain sarcophagi are decorated with this motif. The lion can also be a symbol of the Father, the Master and the Sovereign, being an image of God. At the same time, it can refer to the tyrant blinded by the power he possesses, or even to the devil[72]. Also, the lion appears on the walls of the catacombs alongside Daniel, signifying death that was conquered by Christ or being an allusion to the persecution of Christians.

---

[68] Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *op.cit*., p. 300.
[69] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *op.cit*., p. 184.
[70] Frédérick Tristan, *op.cit*., p. 102.
[71] Gabriel Herea, *op.cit*., p. 57.
[72] Codrina-Laura, *op.cit*., p. 88.

Fig. 16 *Samson fighting the lions*, fresco, *Via Latina* catacomb, Rome

If in the Old Testament most of these symbols had the quality of a verbal image of a revelation, in Christianity they acquire visual qualities, associated with the destiny of Christ and his redemptive death. Although after the emergence of Christian art from the darkness of the catacombs, the anthropomorphic representation begins to prevail as a visual symbol of the sacred, based on the fact that Christ became incarnate and suffered on the cross, the prophetic symbol is not completely removed, it continues to be part of the whole Christian iconography, with the function of suggesting the fulfilment of prophecy[73].

Translated by Ana-Magdalena Petraru, lect. PhD

---

[73] Gabriel Herea, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

List of illustrations:

Bibliography:

***, *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*. Catalogue of the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977, through February 12, 1978, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1979.

***, *Arta. O istorie ilustrată/ Art. An Illustrated History*, editorial consultant Andrew Graham-Dixon, Ed. Litera, București, 2020.

***, *Istoria vizuală a artei/ The Visual History of Art*, coord. Claude Frontisi, Editura RAO, București, 2007.

***, *Enciclopedia Universală Britanică/ Encyclopedia Britannica*, Editura Litera, București, 2010.

APOSTOLOS-CAPPADONA, Diane, *A Guide to Christian Art*, T&T Clark Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London, 2020.

ARHIM. BOGHIU, Sofian, *Chipul Mântuitorului în iconografie/ The Face of the Savior in Iconography*, Ed. Bizantină, București, 2001.

BECKWITH, John, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, Yale University Press, 1986.

BOESPFLUNG, François, *Dieu et ses images*, Editura Bayard, Paris, 2008.

BROWN, Michelle P., *Ghid de artă creştină/ Guide to Christian Art*, Ed. Casa Cărţii, Oradea, 2009.

CHÂTELET, **Albert** (coord.), **GROSLIER**, **Bernard-Philippe** (coord.), Istoria artei/ Art History, Larousse collection, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, București, 2006.

CHEVALIER, Jean, GHEERBRANT, Alain, *Dicţionar de simboluri vol. I A-D/ Dictionary of Symbols Vol I A-D*, Editura Artemis, București, 1994.

CHEVALIER, Jean, GHEERBRANT, Alain, *Dicţionar de simboluri vol. II E-O/ Dictionary of Symbols Vol II E-O*, Editura Artemis, București, 1994.

CHEVALIER, Jean, GHEERBRANT, Alain, *Dicţionar de simboluri vol. III P-Z/ Dictionary of Symbols Vol III P-Z,* Editura Artemis, București, 1994.

COCAGNAC, Maurice, *Simbolurile biblice, Lexic teologic/ Biblical symbols, Theological Lexicon*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1997.

COUCHMAN, Judith, *The Art of Faith. A Guide to Understanding Christian Images*, Paraclete Press, Brewster, 2012.

DANIÉLOU, Jean, *Les symbols chrétiens primitifs*, Points, 1996.

ELIADE, Mircea, CULIANU, Ioan P., *Dicţionar al religiilor/ Dictionary of Religions*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2007.

ELIADE, Mircea, *Istoria credinţelor şi ideilor religioase*, vol.2. *De la Gautama Buddha până la triumful creştinismului/ History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas, vol.2. From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*, Editura Polirom, 2011.

GOMBRICH, E.H., *Istoria artei/ Art History*, Editura Art, București, 2020.

HEREA, Gabriel, *Mesajul eshatologic al spaţiului liturgic creştin. Arhitectură şi icoană în Moldova secolelor XV-XVI/ The Eschatological Message of the Christian Liturgical Space. Architecture and Icon in Moldova in the XV-XVI Centuries*, Ed. Karl A. Romstorfer, Suceava, 2013.

HOLLINGSWORTH, Mary, *Arta în istoria umanităţii/ Art in Human History*, Editura Enciclopedia Rao, București, 2008.

IONIȚĂ, **Codrina-Laura**, *Simboluri ale artei medievale/ Symbols of Medieval Art*, Editura Artes, Iași, 2009.

JENSEN, Robin M.(edit.), **ELLISON, Mark D.** (edit.), *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, Routledge, 2018.

JENSEN, **Robin-Margaret**, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, Routledge, New York, 2000.

MAXIMOVICI, Bogdan, *Arta tehnicilor murale/ The Art of Mural Techniques*, Ed. Art XXI, Iași, 2009.

MILBURN, Robert, *Early Christian Art and Architecture*, Wildwood House,1988.

STOLERIU, Adrian, *Reprezentarea vizuală a sacrului/ Visual Representation of the Sacred*, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2013.

TRISTAN, Frédérick, *Primele imagini creștine. De la simbol la icoană secolele II-VI/ The First Christian Images. From Symbol to Icon II-VI Centuries*, Editura Artă și Religie, București, 2002.

WILLIAMSON, Beth, *Christian Art. A very short introduction*, Editura Oxford University Press, New York, 2004.

From East to West – the Image of Saint George in the Art of the Middle Ages

Cristina Safta[*]

Abstract: *Among the representative figures of the Middle Ages, symbolizing courage, verticality, spirit of sacrifice, the Saint and Great Martyr George stands out by far. Considered a hero and a protector, the saint was an example to all those who showed their virtue and bravery in the fight to defend faith. Impressive is the large number of countries that settled under his rule, starting with the Kingdom of England, Portugal, Spain; almost the whole of Europe invoked protection through the flags and blazons dedicated to the Holy Victor. In this context, it was natural for a large number of religious edifices to be dedicated to Saint George, and his representations in sculpture, painting, embroidery, were extremely valuable not only from a religious point of view in invoking divine help, but also from an artistic one.*

Saint George, the Great Martyr, lived in the 4th century during the time of the Roman emperor Diocletian. Due to his qualities, he ends up in the service of the emperor, as a soldier, and is familiar with the persecution of Christians, which began in 303. Saint George confesses his faith in Christ and is imprisoned, tortured and then killed by beheading.

What made him so beloved by Christians was, of course, his courage to confess his strong faith in Christ before the emperor, as well as the miracles that were performed during his passion[1]. As a sign of gratitude and appreciation, Christians bear his name, appoint him as the protector of cities, of many places of worship, and depict him in icons[2].

The present work aims to identify some representations of the Byzantine type, mainly belonging to medieval Moldavia, in order to then analyze several works of some important artists of the Renaissance from Western Europe. In addition to trying to identify some typologies of representation in the iconography of Saint George in the medieval period, the analysis also aims to emphasize the existing differences, beyond the very

---

[*] Doctoral student of "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași, Romania, email: cristina.m.safta@gmail.com

[1] *Viețile Sfinților* vol III (aprilie)/ *Lives of the Saints*, vol III (April), Publishing House of Episcopia Romanului si Hușilor, pp. 152-168.

[2] https://doxologia.ro/viata-bisericii/documentar/sfantul-gheorghe-iconografie

different social context of the two territories brought into the analysis, in the evolution of the image that the saint has in Byzantine art compared to Western European art.

   In the area of Byzantine influence, the representation of Saint George in the iconography developed over time is presented by Dionysius of Furna, in his *Painter's Manual*: young, tall, beardless, with curly hair, reaching behind the ears[3]. As for clothing, the *Manual* refers to military garments and the red cloak that the Saint usually wears. Dionysius of Furna also dwells on certain important moments in the life of Saint George, guiding the iconographer in the realization of his works[4]. Thus, there are icons of the saint that depict him imprisoned, suffering torments or performing miracles. As the Saint met his end by the sword, he is sometimes depicted carrying his head in his hand or on a tray, as a precious offering to the Saviour.

Fig. 1 *Saint George the Martyr and scenes from his life*,
icon from *Saint Catherine Monastery*, 13th century

---

[3]Dionisie din Furna, *Erminia picturii bizantine/ A Painter's Manual*, Ed. Sophia, Bucharest, 2000, p. 154.

[4] *Ibidem*.

The most common representation of the saint is, however, the one in which he is riding a white horse, piercing a dragon with his spear, a visual description of the legend in which Saint George saves the fortress of Silena, as well as the emperor's daughter, from a fearsome dragon. The image also refers to the fight against demons and sins; the thin spear having a cross at the top and remaining unbent, symbolizes the power and help of God, and the Holy Victor illustrates the model of courage in the fight with the devil.

An exceptional work of art is the statue of Saint George on horseback, in the victorious fight with the dragon, created by the Cluj artists Martin and Gheorghe, which can be found in Prague, in the courtyard of the palace of King Charles IV. Cast in bronze, the statue shows the jewel formation of the two craftsmen, which excels in rendering the quality of the figures and the elegance of the details presented[5].

Fig. 2 *Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon*,
Prague, equestrian statue, bronze (1373)

The rider's shield, now lost, bore an inscription preserved in a note, which specified the date of the work, the name and origin of the craftsmen. Made in 1373, the work is rendered slightly below normal dimensions, the Saint having a built size of a teenager and face traits that show his young age. The composition is simple and clear, and the three characters are rendered on a scale smaller than life size. The rider is represented at the very moment when he pierces the dragon writhing at the horse's feet with his spear, still managing to catch his tail on the horse's front leg[6]. The spear, today lost and

---

[5] Vasile Drăguț, *Arta românească/ Romanian art*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1982, p. 116.
[6] Bogdan-Mihail Danielescu-Chirlomez, Anita Paolicchi, article *Statuia ecvestră a Sfântului Gheorghe ucigând balaurul* (Praga).*Considerații istorice și iconografice/ Equestrian Statue of Saint George Slaying the Dragon (Prague). Historical and Iconographic Considerations,* http://diam.uab.ro/istorie.uab.ro/publicatii/colectia_bcss/bcss_20/8 , p.130.

replaced, represents the central axis of the composition which seems to rotate around this axis.

What the great European artists of those times did not dare to do was to rotate the sculptural group in place: "We are dealing with neither the rigid static of the horses in the few equestrian representations of the Romanesque and Gothic, nor with the emphatic movement of the horses in the baroque era. It can be said that the sculptors from Cluj created here an authentic round sculpture and, at the same time, an admirable study of a horse in motion."[7] Analyzing the representation, one can see, even admire, in the rendering of the details, a jeweller's talent of the two artists. Historian Vasile Vătășianu emphasized that, through all its qualities, this work definitely indicates the formation of the two artists in a goldsmith's workshop. There they could acquire the necessary dexterity to render the details with refinement and finesse, to execute the elements of armor or harness with such precision.

In full harmony with the movement of horse and rider, "the supporting ground is agitated, the rocks that compose it being rendered with the flavor of representing a landscape in a miniature of those times. The two sculptors are not satisfied with creating a volumetric support for the main group, but tell with real pleasure everything that happens in the rocky landscape populated by small flowers, with lizards and snakes, so that the silhouette of the dragon that emerges from this natural environment acquires the virtues of verisimilitude." Also, the composition of a period armor was accurately reproduced, as was the type of harness and even the system of decorating the horse's croupe with circular movements; by means of all these characteristics, the work of the brothers from Cluj pertains to "the stylistic world of court Gothic"[8].

All these achievements constituted such an obvious novelty, that it was believed for a while that such an innovative work could not belong to simple Transylvanian craftsmen. But the presence of other similar works by the two artists led historians to recognize their incomparable value. Moreover, in the opinion of the researcher Béla Lázár, there are other representations of the iconographic programs that could be related to the location of the two craftsmen as being *from Cluj*. A conclusive example in this sense is the painting of the Mălâncrav evangelical church, whose patron saint is Saint George. The southern wall of the church presents a rather complex theme, and the upper register is reserved for a particularly beautiful representation of Saint George on horseback fighting the dragon, which, surprisingly, shows similarities in the rendering of the statue in Prague. Regarding the rider, the similar elements are the armor and the posture of the legs; with respect to the horse, the representation of the mane, the harness and the type of tail

---

[7] Vasile Drăguț, *Arta gotică în Romania/ Gothic Art in Romania,* Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1979, p. 277.
[8] Vasile Drăguț, *op.cit.*, p. 281.

connection are similar to those shown on the bronze statue. The dragon is also presented in the same way, the posture of the head, with the twisted neck, the representation of the nostrils, the wings, and, last but not least, the scales, which are circulations in both cases. There are also similarities in the stylization of tree trunks or in the rendering of rocky relief elements. It is assumed that the artist who painted the church was the father of the two craftsmen, from him starting this idea of representing the Saint. It should also be mentioned that the historian Vasile Drăguț did not share this opinion of the historian Béla Lázár, noting that it was necessary to be reluctant regarding the connection of the craftsmen with the painting from Mălâncrav, Transylvania[9].

Another representation of Saint George on a horse, next to Saint Demetrius this time, is the wooden bas-relief, on the doors of the Chapel at the Snagov Monastery, dated as belonging to the 15th century. The proportions of the execution are harmonious, the movements full of elegance, which give rhythm to the whole ensemble. The carved wooden doors with longitudinal opening have two leaves with three panels each, worked in bas-relief, representing biblical scenes or characters. The two wings are framed by inscriptions, which also separate the middle panels from the lower ones. The state of conservation is good, at the moment, and the doors are part of the heritage of the National Art Museum. Historians believe that, disregarding the Slavonic inscription on the doors, the work can be placed in a period of Italian creation from before the Renaissance, and has a beneficial influence on the sculptures made in Wallachia, in the following century[10].

In 16th century Moldova, one of the most original pages in the history of art was born – the exterior painting of religious edifices. Practiced in other countries only on small surfaces – for the decoration of the entrance portal – exterior painting knew its full development and power of expression only in Moldova, becoming an artistic phenomenon of universal value. Research in the field led to the idea that exterior painting gained such a large scale in Moldova due to the need to express the theological message used by the church in the religious education of the faithful. At the same time, if we are to refer to the historical moment in which the religious edifices were painted – the establishment of Stephen's successor, Petru Rareș, on the throne of Moldavia – we must consider as an important message of these paintings, the resistance against those who threatened the independence of the country and, the emboldening of the entire people. Thus, a more appropriate choice among the representations that could meet all these beliefs and hopes could only be the Great Martyr George. Not only embodiment of courage and military skills, but also the ability to make sacrifices in the name of faith, chosen by Stephen the Great to adorn his flag that was carried on the battlefield, Saint George was already recognized as the Defender of Moldavia.

---

[9] Bogdan-Mihail Danielescu-Chirlomez, Anita Paolicchi, *op.cit.*, p. 133.
[10] Vasile Drăguț, *Arta românească/ Romanian Art*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1982, p. 11

Therefore, it was only natural that the invocation of heavenly support for the defense of the country should be directed at one of the greatest military saints.

A frequently encountered component in the iconographic program of Moldavian exterior painting is represented by the lives of saints. At Arbore, the hagiographic legends of Saint George are rendered by an artist gifted with the talent of a good storyteller, capable of imprinting a narrative style on his works. Located in the niche on the west wall, the representation has a distinctive touch. The image most frequently painted in icons, *The Fight of the Saint with the dragon and the rescue of the princess*, is present here at the end of the cycle, and not at its beginning, as would be natural. Moreover, the scene is located in a less visible area – on the north face of the niche – being then followed by two other sequences: *The Saint's Journey with the Princess to the Citadel* and *the Meeting with the Emperor*. The following three scenes, unique in the Moldavian representation, are played to illustrate the emperor's conversion. The scenes are the Emperor, the Saint and a hierarch in front of the church, *The three on a synthon surrounded by crowds* – a fragment that occupies a large part of the register and the *Banquet offered by the emperor in honor of the holy savior*[11].

Fig. 3 Church from Arbore, *Scenes from the life of Saint George*,
detail of the western wall, fresco (date uncertain)

---

[11] Corina Popa, Oliviu Boldura, *Arbore - istorie, artă, restaurare / Arbore – Art, History, Restoration,* Ed. ACS, Bucharest, 2016, p.120.

The painter seems to master both the Byzantine style of painting and the one with Gothic influence equally well. The traditional Byzantine style is evidenced in the rendering of slender figures with elegant, graceful postures. It is also found in the sumptuousness of the vestments of the saint or the emperor, which seem to reconstruct the Byzantine world to which they belonged. The painting of Gothic influence, more precisely the Italian one, is present both in the picturesqueness of the landscapes and in the costumes from the scenes with crowds; these are rich, diverse costumes, with details that are tastefully rendered. In fact, the two styles, Byzantine and Gothic, coexist, often functioning in a relationship of complementarity.

The range of pigments is generous. The chromatic richness can also be seen in the artist's mastery in joining shades of green with pink or blue with red, the preparatory drawing of the portraits, which was made in brown ocher and which enriches the chromatic expression. The faces are often modeled in warm or olive-green colors, executed with the meticulousness of an iconographer, and their white or colored costumes and draperies prove the ease with which the artist created them[12].

Inside the church in Voroneț, there is another special representation of the saint, who is also the patron saint of the church. There appears here, the image of the *Saint - great bearer of victory*. This iconographic type is interesting, Saint George seated on the throne with a sword in his hand, which represents the image on the battle flag of Stephen the Great, yet the dragon is missing[13].

This iconographic type is also taken over for the "Battle Flag" from the year 1500, i.e. from the last part of the reign of Stephen the Great, preserved today in the Central Military Museum in Bucharest. The flag, a rare and particularly beautiful piece, depicts Saint George, as the patron saint of victorious Moldova. The artist did not represent the saint on horseback, fighting the dragon, as tradition demanded, but enthroned in a see, with a sword in his hand and with his feet on a three-headed dragon, which is not killed, but seems to be under the saint's control. Two angels, carrying a sword and a shield, place a jewelled crown on the saint's curled hair, all of which is masterfully and minutely worked, on a background of red satin, with fine details traced with gold, silver and silk thread[14].

---

[12] Corina Popa, Oliviu Boldura, *Op. cit.*, p.140.

[13] George Oprescu, *Istoria artelor plastice în România/ The History of Fine Arts in Romania,* Meridiane, Bucharest, 1968, p. 374.

[14] Vasile Florea, *Arta Românească de la origini până în prezent/ Romanian Art from Its Origins to the Present*, Litera, Bucharest 2017, p.112.

Fig. 4 *The battle flag of Stephen the Great,* Embroidery (1500)

Fig. 5 *Saint George on a white horse*, Voroneț, south facade fresco (1547)

The reason for the choice of St. George as the protector of Moldova by ruler Stephen finds a clear answer in the foundation of so many religious edifices, which have military saints as their spiritual patrons, obviously the most important place being held by St. George. The gratitude towards the divinity, but also the desire to pay homage to the soldiers who fell in battle, as well as the increase of the people's adherence to the ruler's military policy is also evident by invoking the help of the great victorious saint in this way[15].

The exterior painting of Voroneț, and even more so the image of *Saint George on a white horse slaying the dragon*, located in a key point of the architecture – on the wall to the left of the entrance – is not placed here by chance. The narrative character of the composition, the generous surface of the representation, the vivid chromaticism, the colors with great resistance over time thanks to the technique perfected by the Moldovan craftsmen[16], make this representation of the saint remarkable, along with the entire pictorial ensemble of Voroneț.

An original representation of the saint can be found in the nave of the church of which he is the patron, within the premises of the Monastery of *St. John the New from Suceava*. In the southern apse, in the lower register, Gheorghe appears next to St. Dumitru, in sumptuous brocade clothes, with

---

[15] Ion I. Solcanu, *Artă şi societate românească/ Romanian Art and Society,* Ed. Enciclopedica, Bucharest, 2002, p. 270.
[16] Tereza Sinigalia, Oliviu Boldura, *Monumente Medievale din Bucovina/ Medieval Monuments from Bucovina*, Ed. ACS, Bucharest, 2015, p. 195.

rich hair, of Byzantine inspiration[17]. The costumes here give the impression of secularity, of court ceremonial, perhaps bringing to the fore the splendor of the Imperial Court of Byzantium. The magnitude of the size of the register, the monumentality of the two characters, otherwise characteristics of the entire painting that adorns the church are elements that complete its beauty.

Fig. 6 *Saint George and Saint Demetrius*,
fresco - the nave of the church of Saint George, Suceava (1534)

In Moldovița, on the southern facade, on the pillar of the porch, three military saints are represented, all three on horseback, George, Demetrius and Mercurius. The strategic placement, the fact that each representation is framed by a border that highlights the compositions, each one separately, emphasizes even better the role and importanțce of the saints. Bearers of victory were once again invoked in the country of Moldavia threatened by the danger represented by the Turks and Tatars. As for the chromatic range used here, in Moldovița, it can be said that it is bright. We could say there is a lot of yellow, blue, red colors, which also have a certain sonority, necessary to accompany the message of the anti-Ottoman struggle[18].

If the Byzantine-inspired iconography of the medieval period presents Saint George in scenes that respect the church canon, recalling his

---

[17] Tereza Sinigalia, Oliviu Boldura, *op.cit.*, p. 61.
[18] Vasile Drăguț, Vasile Florea, *Pictura românească în imagini/ Romanian Painting in Images,* Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1970, p.63.

martyrdom, or proving his military skills, in the representations from Western Europe, the saint acquires all the attributes of a knight, being otherwise perceived as patron of knights, par excellence.

Fig. 7 Donatello, *Saint George*, Bargello National Museum,
Florence, Marble sculpture, 209 cm, (1515-1417)

Donatello has among his works a sculpture, with which it can be said that he reaches a compositional peak – *Saint George* – located in the Bargello, Florence. The saint, with a simple but firm figure, unmatched among artistic representations, energetically supports his body on both legs. Our attention is also drawn to the shield, on which the cross appears in relief, but also to the frowning gaze of the Saint, directed at the imaginary opponent in the distance – the dragon. "The triangular position of the legs and the combination with the inverted geometric shape of the shield, the way the cloak thrown over the shoulder connects the left shoulder with the top of the right foot, the fall, not without a potential strain, of the right arm and hand all fit into a composition in which the plastic conception, as well as the ethical expression of the figure, have reached a harmony that can be called perfect; no unnecessary detail disturbs it"[19].

---

[19] Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei europene- Arta din perioada Renașterii/ History of European Art - Renaissance Art*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1972, p. 28.

Fig. 8 *Saint George Freeing the Princess*, Pisanello,
Church of Saint Anastasia - Verona, fresco (1433-1438)

Pisanello's masterpiece, "Saint George Freeing the Princess", painted in the church of Saint Anastasia, in Verona, between 1433-1438, brings to the fore the meticulous rendering of people, animals, extravagant architecture, all combined with emotion, poetry, giving life of medieval chivalry[20]. Figures and animals are represented plastically in the foreground of the work. The background, instead, presents, as in a nightmare, a magical fortress, with gallows next to it.

Saint George prepares for the fight with the dragon to save the princess, and the serious and controlled looks of the two protagonists, with attitudes of forced calm, betray the complex feelings of mutual affection, shadowed by the approach of a fatal moment. Pisanello actually illustrates here not the deed of St. George, but a page from a novel of chivalry.

Another work by the same artist, *Madonna with Saint Anthony and George*, now at the National Gallery in London is also full of subtle emotions and fairy tale atmosphere. And here the artist captures the costume of the knight heroes, as extravagant as their exploits[21].

In the same tone of knightly representations, the saint is depicted by Bernat Martorell, a Spanish artist belonging to the Gothic in Catalonia, an

---

[20] *** *Enciclopedia picturii italiene/ Encyclopedia of Italian Painting*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest 1974, p. 181.
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 70.

artist also close to the Flemish style. His works have great technical precision, Martorell using a meticulous brushwork and a special coloring, which makes his works true historiographical documents.

Fig. 9 Bernat Martorell, *Saint George Slaying the Dragon*, tempera on panel, 155 x 98 cm (1434-1435)

The work *Saint George slaying the dragon* is a tempera on wood, part of an altar made by the artist between 1430 -1435 and which is currently distributed between the Chicago Museums and the Louvre. The central panel shows the saint fighting the dragon to save the princess and is considered a work of great plastic beauty, which "looks like a wonderful illustration of a fairy tale" [22], but also has the virtue of showing a knight in complete armor from a historical moment of which few vestiges of it are preserved.

Using an interesting perspective, the artist managed to provide a complete view of the scene, ensuring that everything is perfectly arranged in three different planes: the entrance to the dragon's cave, where the fight between the saint and the beast takes place, the area where the princess is seated, accompanied of a ram grazing quietly, oblivious to danger. In the background you can see the walled city by the sea, with the king seated in the place of honor and his subjects watching the scene with interest. The dragon, in the foreground, a rare creature, is represented as having quite small dimensions, but sufficiently dangerous, as evidenced by the bones of people and animals that can be seen around.

Saint George riding a white horse is seated in a light saddle, but which gives the rider a safe and firm support; the fully extended legs are supported by stirrups in a type of mount, characteristic of heavy cavalry that could keep the knight as firmly seated as possible, to increase his strength and effectiveness at the moment of collision with the opponent. The air of "modernity" of the representation of the knight is striking. He appears to us dressed in an armor that follows the most innovative styles, apparently imported from the specialist centers of Italy, possibly Milan. The armor, completely black, owed its color to a technique by which the metal was protected from corrosion, at the same time giving it a pleasant appearance, in contrast to the golden elements that adorn it. The saint is protected with a type of helmet that covers his entire head and is equipped with a folding visor and a collar to protect his face and neck. The helmet is also of Italian origin. It is possible that this work is one of the first artistic representations of this type of helmet in the Iberian Peninsula. The cuirass that protects the knight's chest is partially covered by a cloth, on which the "Cross of Saint George" appears, in red, on a white background.

The metal protections for the shoulders present an important novelty – they are asymmetrical; the one on the right is small so as not to interfere with the movements of the knight's arm or the support of the spear during combat. The one on the left is larger, to better protect the most exposed part of the fighter, to the opponent's attack. Arms, elbows and forearms are perfectly covered. So are the hands, with Italian-style gloves and metal finger

---

[22] J. A. Gaya Nuno, *Istoria artei spaniole/ History of Spanish Art*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1975, p. 157.

guards. Also, the legs are protected by metal pieces, perfectly joined and placed, noting the long golden spurs, symbols of the knight, so necessary when he rides.

The weapons carried are beautifully represented, also highlighted by the contrast with the black of the armor. In his left hand the knight holds the reins of the horse, while with his right hand he holds the spear with the insignia of Saint George at the very moment of launch on the dragon. On the right side, on the hip, a dagger with prismatic faces can be seen, extremely effective against opponents covered in armor, and on the left side there is a sword, of which only the golden hilt can be seen. The shield is not represented, the new knight feels invincible with its metal protections, properly reinforced at all vulnerable points[23].

Paolo Ucello, in *Saint George slaying the dragon*, oil on canvas, dated 1456, found in the National Gallery, illustrates the famous legend of the rescue of the princess, interpreted here with originality. Saint George does not kill the dragon, but tames it, and the princess brings it on a leash to the city, where all the inhabitants quickly convert to Christianity. Interestingly, the saint attacks the dragon, supported by the eye of the storm, located in the extension of the spear, thus suggesting the presence of the divinity. Also interesting are the image of the horse that seems to have just been brought from a carousel, but also the way of representing the landscape, the grass growing in geometric shapes – perfect rectangles[24].

A work belonging to Andrea Mantegna, Saint George, captures the very moment when the dragon's conqueror can be declared victorious, as after a real jousting tournament. Moreover, the artist dresses the saint in armor produced in Italy, specific to 15th century knights[25]. Both the metal protections and the details with which the artist decorates the knight's armor, make the Renaissance painter's work a true historiographical source, necessary in the analysis of the evolution of medieval knights.

A less common appearance can be found in Coreggio, in an altar panel made in 1532, a work that is today in the Pinacoteca in Dresden. The scene is a select, demanding one, and is treated with ease and courage; it conveys to the viewer enjoyment of life, enjoyment of beauty, but, perhaps strikingly, physical attraction as well.

---

[23] https://caballerosyarte.blogspot.com/2014/02/san-jorge-y-el-dragon-por-bernat.
[24] Manfred Wundram, *Painting of the Renaissance*, Ed. Taschen, Koln, 1997, p. 26.
[25] Lawrence Gowing, *The Encyclopedia of Visual Art*, vol. 4, Ed. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Oxford, 1983, p. 652

Fig. 10 *Madonna and Child with Saint George*, Coreggio,
oil on panel 285 cm -190 cm (1530)

All the artistic representations presented create the image that Saint George had in the medieval era. Handsome, slender, always a young soldier or knight, savior, protector, characteristics that once again prove the admiration and respect he was given, both in the church and in the secular space. From early times, seen as a symbol of courage for keeping his unshakable faith, the saint was a model and protector of those who fought for the right faith. The very name of Victor, attributed to the Saint in the area of influence of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, proves the gratitude and admiration for the Saint's fight with the ultimate evil.

Translated by Ana-Magdalena Petraru, lect. PhD

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1 *Saint George the Martyr and scenes from his life* – icon Saint Catherine's Monastery, 13th century,
source https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:St_George_Icon_Sinai_13th_century.jpg
Fig. 2 *Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon*, Prague, bronze equestrian statue (1373),
source https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Saint_George,_Prague_Castle
Fig. 3 Arbore Church, *Scenes from the life of Saint George*, west wall detail, fresco (uncertain dating), source Tereza Sinigalia, Oliviu Boldura, *Medieval Monuments from Bucovina*, ACS, Bucharest, 2015, page 116.
Fig. 4 *The battle flag of Stephen the Great*, embroidery (1500), source https://www.crestinortodox.ro/liturgica/vesminte/steagul-sfantului-stefan-mare-125902.html.
Fig. 5 *Saint George on a white horse*, Voroneț, fresco south facade (1547), source personal archive
Fig. 6 *Saint George and Saint Demetrius*, fresco - nave of the church of Saint George, Suceava (1534), source Tereza Sinigalia, Oliviu Boldura, Medieval *Monuments from Bucovina*, ACS, Bucharest, 2015, page 61.
Fig. 7 *Saint George*, Donatello, Bargello National Museum, Florence, marble sculpture, 209 cm.
source https://delphipages.live/ro/arte-vizuale/sculptura/donatello
Fig. 8 *Saint George Freeing the Princess*, Pisanello, fresco Church of Saint Anastasia, Verona, Source https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_George_and_the_Princess
Fig. 9 Bernat Martorell, *Saint George slaying the dragon*, tempera on wood panel, source https://caballerosyarte.blogspot.com/2014/02/san-jorge-y-el-dragon-por-bernat
Fig. 10 *Madonna and Child with Saint George*, Coreggio, oil on panel, source https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madonna_and_Child_with_Saint_George

Bibliography and webography:

***Arta din România din preistorie în contemporaneitate/ Romanian Art from Prehistory to the Present, vol I ,coord. Răzvan Theodorescu, Marius Porumb, Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy Publishing House, Mega, 2018.
***Enciclopedia picturii italiene/ Encyclopedia of Italian Painting*, translated by Constantin Ioncică, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1974.
***Istoria artelor plastice în România/ The History of Fine Arts in Romania, coord. George Oprescu, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1968.
Cavarnos, **Constantine,** *Artă sacră bizantină/ Byzantine Sacred Art*, Translated from English by Prof. Paul Bălan, Ed. Doxologia, Iași, 2017.
Cavarnos, **Constantine,** *Ghid de iconografie bizantină/ Guide to Byzantine Iconography,* Translated from English by Anca Popescu, Ed. Sophia, 2005.
Danielescu-Chirlomez, Bogdan-Mihail; Paolicchi, Anita, article *Statuia ecvestră a Sfântului Gheorghe ucigând balaurul (Praga). Considerații istorice și iconografice/ Equestrian Statue of Saint George Slaying the Dragon (Prague). Historical and Iconographic Considerations,*
http://diam.uab.ro/istorie.uab.ro/publicatii/colectia_bcss/bcss_20/8

De Ste. Croix, **Geoffrey E. M**., *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

Delehaye, **Hippolyte,** *Les Origines du Culte des Martyrs*, Bureaux de la Societe des Bollandistes, Bruxelles, 1912.

Delehaye, Hippolyte, *The Legends of the Saints*, translated into English by Donald Attwater, Fordham University Press, New York, 1962.

Dionysus of Furna, *Erminia picturii bizantine/ A Painter's Manual*, Bucharest, Ed. Sophia, 2000.

Drăguţ, Vasile, *Dobrovăţ*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1984.

Drăguţ, Vasile, *Arta creştină în România, sec. al XVI-lea/ Christian Art in Romania, 16th century*, vol. 5, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1985.

Drăguţ, **Vasile**, *Arta creştină în România, sec. al XV-lea/ Christian Art in Romania, 15th century*, vol. 4, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1985.

Drăguţ, **Vasile***, Arta gotică în Romania/ Gothic Art in Romania,* Ed. Meridiane*, Bucharest, 1979.*

Drăguţ, **Vasile**, *Arta românească/ Romanian Art*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1982.

Drăguţ, **Vasile; Florea, Vasile**, *Pictura românească în imagini/ Romanian Painting in Images*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1970.

Drăguţ, **Vasile**, *Treasures of Romanian Art. Humor*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1973.

Florea, Vasile, *Arta Românească de la origini până în prezent/ Romanian Art from Its Origins to the Present*, Ed. Litera, Bucharest 2017.

Gaya Nuno, J., A., *Istoria artei spaniole/ History of Spanish Art*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1975.

https://caballerosyarte.blogspot.com/2014/02/san-jorge-y-el-dragon-por-bernat

http://cottesimple.com/armour/prague-st-george-armour/

https://doxologia.ro/viata-bisericii/documentar/sfantul-gheorghe-iconografie

Lawrence, Gowing, *The Encyclopedia of Visual Art*, vol. 4, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Oxford, 1983.

Popa, Corina; Boldura, Oliviu, *Arbore- istorie, artă, restaurare/ Arbore - History, Art, Restoration,* Ed. ACS, Bucharest, 2016.

Sinigalia, Tereza; Boldura, Oliviu, *Monumente Medievale din Bucovina/ Medieval Monuments from Bucovina*, Ed. ACS, Bucharest, 2015.

Solcanu, Ion, *Artă şi societate românească/ Romanian Art and Society,* Ed. Enciclopedică, Bucharest 2002.

Vătăşianu, Virgil, *Istoria artei europene/ European Art History*, vol. *Arta din perioada Renaşterii/ Art from the Renaissance Period*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1972.

Vieţile Sfinţilor/ Lives of the Saints, vol. VIII (April), pp. 152-168.

Wundram, Manfred *Painting of the Renaissance*, Ed. Taschen, Koln, 1997.

Symbolic and Comparative Study of Griffin in the Works of the Achaemenid Era[*]

Vahid Azadi[**]
Karim Hajizadeh Bastani[***]
Habib Shahbazi Shiran[****]

Abstract: *The griffin is one of the symbolic animals that is deeply rooted in the culture and beliefs of different governments. The motif of this animal is present both in mythology and the history of literature, as well as in the majority of architectural elements, dishes, ornaments, textiles, which manifest the beliefs and opinions of the people of ancient times. The griffin is one of the mythical birds of the ancient world, shaped like an eagle from the front half and a lion from the back half. It can be said that the exact origin of the griffin is not known and many names have been mentioned for this animal in different civilizations and it has appeared in various forms in the art of different nations. Based on this, the present research studies the symbology of this special and rare animal (along with its motif) in numerous works of art in Iran in the Achaemenid era and the comparative study of this image in that era. The research method is descriptive and analytical, and its information is collected through library sources and published images of ancient times. The results of the analysis show that the griffin has concepts and beliefs that among the ancient people suggest greatness, opposition between good and evil, royal power, protector and guardian. At the same time, these motifs are symmetrically created in a static and dynamic state, which is completely abstract. The motif of Griffin in each region has been influenced by the native culture of the people of that region and has various concepts that have been changed at any time according to the ethnic, cultural, artistic conditions and beliefs of the time.*

Keywords: *Griffin, Achaemenid era, mythological concepts, ritual concepts, use of motifs*

[**] Ph.D. student of archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran, v.azadi66@gmail.com.
[***] Corresponding author, Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran, kar.hajizadeh@gmail.com.
[****] Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran, habibshahbazi35@gmail.com.

Introduction

In the ancient world, myths as a manifestation of culture had a direct relationship with ethnic creativity and mythological motifs; Arts had the same origin and purpose. Among the elements of the mythological world are imaginary and legendary creatures with a combination of two or more animals that the people of the ancient world believed to have extraordinary power. Among the monuments and works that have an important contribution to introducing the culture and beliefs of the people of the ancient world are these composite animal motifs. Most of these motifs carry important concepts and often rely on people's ideals and beliefs[1]. A griffin is a mythical creature with a lion-like body and an eagle's head and horse's ears. In the Persian language, the name Griffin is Dal. *Dal* is native to Iran and is one of the largest birds in the world that belongs to the eagle family[2]. The griffin was used as a guardian in the architecture of the ancient Elam era, which was noticed on the thigh of a griffin found in Susa, which was written in Elamite cuneiform. This statue was made for the god of the gods of Elam (Inshushinak), which is related to the reign of Ontash Gaul[3]. The griffin was first seen in the art of Egypt and Mesopotamia, but it became more prominent in the mythology of India, Iran, Rome, and Greece. As a matter of fact, the griffin is one of the mythical birds of the ancient world.

This strange creature is shaped like an eagle from the front half and a lion from the back half. It can be said that the exact origin of the griffin is not known and many names have been mentioned for this creature in different civilizations and it has appeared in various forms in the art of various nations. The motifs of mixed animals have been seen a lot in the art of the Achaemenid era. Consequently, many books, theses, and articles have analyzed this motif. In most of the research, these works have been investigated in a comparative way by taking into account the two civilizations of Iran and Mesopotamia with an animal like the Simorgh. Thus, until now, no comprehensive and independent research that examines the symbology and comparative aesthetics of these works in Iran has been done. Therefore, it seems necessary to carry out this research to solve some of the deficiencies and to identify and understand the place of this composite animal in the art of the Achaemenid era as a widely used element. The main goal of this research is to investigate, analyze and match these numerous works left from the Achaemenid era. For this purpose, several works of the Achaemenid era, from museums and archaeological sites, have been studied.

---

[1] Hamidah Jabransari, *Griffin Symbolism and its Formal Evolution in Pre-Islamic Art, MahHanar Magazine*, 2005, p. 98.

[2] D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, published by Oxford University Press, London, 1990, p. 17.

[3] Daniel Thomas Potts, *Archeology of Ilam*, 2009, p. 231.

Research questions

1. The motif of the griffin is used in which of the Achaemenid works of art? And how was their implementation?
2. What symbolic concepts did the griffin have in the artworks of the Achaemenid era?
3. What are the commonalities and differences between motifs in terms of aesthetics?

Research background

Investigating the motif of the griffin in a historical era in Iran, especially in the Achaemenid era, we notice that it has been the subject of much research, which can be mentioned as follows: Heide-Marie Koch in the book from the language of Dariush[4], Roman Girshman in the book Iranian art during the Median and Achaemenid eras[5], Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Bahman Firouzmandi in the book "Art of Iran in the Historical Era"[6], John Curtis in "The Forgotten Empire of the Ancient Persian World"[7], Mehrnaz Karmi in his dissertation entitled "Reviewing the mutual effects of mythical and hybrid creatures in the civilizations of Iran and Mesopotamia on each other with the emphasis on form and meaning"[8]. It should be noted that the works mentioned in the background section of the research are short and brief and sometimes only a reference is made to the motif of Griffin, so the difference between the present research and the investigations carried out is that it independently focuses on the symbology and formal characteristics of the motif of Griffin and its analysis has been done in the context of the Achaemenid Empire. As a result, the necessity of researching the griffin painting and its analysis in the Achaemenid era was felt, and the authors of this article have been greatly encouraged to write in this field.

Method and importance of research

The works left in Iran contain mythological beliefs and religious and cultural ideas. Perhaps it can be said that the most documented documents for the reconstruction of beliefs are the works left over from that era, which have reached us with minimal changes. Symbolic motifs and pictures all convey a special message to the audience, which can be analyzed in a wide range of political, economic, religious, and mythological concepts. Our knowledge

---

[4] Heidemarie Koch, From the language of Dariush, 2006, p. 139.

[5] Roman Ghirshman, *Iranian art during the Median and Achaemenid eras*, 1992, p. 147.

[6] Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Bahman Firouzmandi, *Archaeology and art of Iran in the historical era*, 2014, p. 110.

[7] John Curtis, *Ancient Iran according to the British Museum,* 2008, p. 88.

[8] Mehrnaz Karmi, *Investigating the mutual effects of mythical-hybrid creatures of two ancient Iranian and Mesopotamian civilizations on each other with an emphasis on form and meaning*, 2002, p. 127.

and awareness of past societies are somewhat dependent on the study of the concepts of these works. The research method is descriptive-analytical, and the method of collecting library information includes the study of books and articles, as well as the published images of ancient times. First of all, the research is based on the motif of the griffin in the Achaemenid era; second, the symbology of this motif is examined. These motifs have been discussed here in terms of aesthetics (composition, representation, and dynamics) so that to identify the artistic characteristics in a comparative way.

General information about the Achaemenid government

By defeating Astyages, Cyrus the Great put an end to the ruler of the Medes and established an empire called the Achaemenians in 550 BC[9]. This government was further developed during the time of his successors, especially during the time of Darius I, and included from the Indus Valley in the Indian subcontinent to northern Greece and Egypt[10]. Many artists and craftsmen were employed in the Achaemenid court, and art historians or art history specialists praised the skill of the artists of the Achaemenid Empire era[11]. The Achaemenid art is a kind of earthly classification admired and influenced by cosmic thoughts[12]. The works and manifestations of this art and thoughts can be seen among the cultural works found, such as architecture, ornaments, textiles, seals, dishes, pottery, etc. The art of the Achaemenid Empire era is an abstract of all the ages of Iran. One of the characteristics of this civilization is represented by the decorative patterns that include animal, human being, plant, geometric, motifs etc. During this era, some animals were considered sacred and respected, and their symbols were made in different ways according to the iconography in the place of their government. Among these animal pictures was the griffin, which has been repeated many times. In the continuation of the research, the symbology of the motif of animals in the works of the Achaemenid era will be investigated first, as we have already mentioned, and then the symbology of this image of the griffin among the cultural works will be closely discussed.

Introduction to animal motifs

Realistic and symbolic forms of animals are one of the oldest motifs that humans have depicted. In the art of ancient Iran, animal motifs are one of the most abundant subjects; even the pattern of the Iranian flag was derived

---

[9]*Briant, Pierre, Achaemenid Empire, translated by Nahid Foroughan, 2002, p. 341; Vahid Azadi et all, Investigating the representation of the Lydian delegation in the reliefs of the eastern staircase of Apadana (case study: vessels and jewellery),2023.*
[10] Yaghoub Azhand, *History of ancient art*, 2011, p. 34.
[11] Roman Girshman, *op.cit.*, p. 130.
[12] Karimian, Hassan; Sarafraz, Ali Akbar and Ebrahimi, Nasrallah, (2010), Restoring Achaemenian palaces in Barazjan by relying on archaeological excavations, Bagh Nazar Magazine, No. 14, Year 7, p. 46.

from animals [13] . On the other hand, in ancient Iran, the respect and importance of animals were such that we see the names of some animals like boar and horse in the combination of many names of ancient Iranians, the most famous of which is the presence of the name of camel in the combination of the name of the prophet of Iran, Zoroaster[14]. It can be said that animal images are one of the oldest motifs that humans have drawn in their works. These motifs in Iran, like other motifs, were not merely decorative, but sometimes they expressed hope, fear or recourse to a force to fight against the dangers of nature and life. Sometimes they expressed religious beliefs and legends. Occasionally these special values and expressions turned motifs into a kind of conventional and symbolic signs that were used throughout history as message transmission[15]. These motifs are among those that have been dominantly and repeatedly observed in many ancient civilizations, including Iran. During the Achaemenid Empire, some animals were considered sacred and respected, and artists used them as symbols and showed them in relief on the walls of palaces and temples. These animals were: cow, lion, horse, goat, and eagle. Most of the times they appeared in their natural image and their real design. Having this in view, artists found it easier to graft the head of one body to another and thus create a strange creature of legendary creation. They loved the cow because of its usefulness, the horse because of its inherent nobility and usefulness, the lion due to its strength and the fact of being the ruler of the forest, and the eagle because of its agility and intelligence. Therefore, the artists considered this very aspect in their works.

In this part of the article, we examine the symbology of the motif of the griffin in the works found in the Achaemenid era.

Griffin in history, myth, and literature

According to archaeologists, the Griffin, this legendary and symbolic creature has long been known among ancient civilizations such as Iran, Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, and Greece, and it also had a high place in the art of these nations[16]. This bird has been called "Homa" in some historical eras of Iran. "Homa" or "Homai" means *auspicious* and in some dictionaries, including in Moin culture, it is known as an eagle. In Zoroastrian texts, it was considered a symbol of the kingdom. Griffin or Homa can be the legendary Simorgh mentioned in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. From a psychological point of view, this animal is a symbol of the connection between mental forces and cosmic forces[17]. In the dictionary of symbols in Eastern and Western art, the

---

[13] Xenfon, *Kuroshnameh*, 2001, p. 194.

[14] Ebrahim Pourdavoud, *Mazdasena and Yashta Literature*, 1980, p. 230.

[15] Mohammad Khazaei, Shial Samavaki, *Investigation of the bird motif on Iranian pottery*, 2002, p. 8.

[16] Hamidah Jabransari, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

[17] Juan Eduardo Serlo, *The Culture of Symbols, translated by Mehrangiz Ohadi*, 2010, p. 539.

description of the griffin indicates an animal whose front half is similar to an eagle, its back half is similar to a lion, and its tail is similar to a snake or a scorpion, which gives a distinguished and outstanding character to this mythological creature[18].

It should be noted that the lion and eagle are both symbols of Mitra (seal), the sun goddess in ancient Iran. The Asian continent is likely the origin of the griffin, which the Greek historian Herodotus named a mountain range called Isidon in the north of the Asian continent. This opinion is a promising hypothesis to consider the griffin as belonging to the Scythian people who lived in the north of the Asian continent, and the ideas and beliefs related to the griffin went to other places such as Iran and Greece by the immigrants of these people (Scythians). But in the meantime, another theory suggests that the origin and root of the griffin are related to the land of India and its ancient civilization, and it gradually entered Iranian art through cultural and social connections[19]. The land of Mesopotamia during the Sumerian civilization is one of the other civilizations where the motif of the griffin is evident in its art, one of which is related to the epic of Enzo. In this epic, Enzo, who is depicted similar to a griffin in reliefs, is evil, usurping, and an ambitious bird defeated by Ninurte, who is one of the gods of war[20]. Some scientists, including Arthur Pope, think that the image of the griffin is a symbol of the sun and should be killed so that the earth does not burn from its heat[21]. One of the most important findings that show the motif of the griffin in art before the Achaemenid era is the golden ring discovered from the Arjan treasure from the New Ilam era, as well as the griffin statue from the ancient site of Chaghazanbil in Khuzestan. These objects dated back to the 6th and 7th centuries BC[22]. The griffin motif has been seen on the body of the Golden Cup in the Iron Age from Marlik Hill in northern Iran, which has a date of 1500 BC[23]. In some of the bronze works discovered in the Lorestan region (now kept in the Museum of Ancient Iran), griffin shapes have been seen on some of them[24]. The ancient site of Ziviyeh in Saqez city in Kurdistan province, where most of the works discovered in it are related to the Medes era, among these works, the head of an animal in the form of a gold griffin is visible, and in this work, the animal's mouth is open as a sign of anger[25]. Examples of griffins in the art of the Achaemenid era date back to 500 BC to

---

[18] James Hall, *Anthologies of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*, 2001, p. 290.

[19] Hamidah Jabransari, *op. cit.* p. 101.

[20] Yusuf Majidzadeh, *History and civilization of Mesopotamia*, 2001, p. 247.

[21] Hamidreza Mohebi, *Study and analysis of hunting motifs in Iranian art until the end of the Safavid era*,1998, p. 78.

[22] Maitham Rezaei Mehwar, *The golden ring object revealed from Arjan, a discussion on form, meaning, place and time*, 2009, p. 11.

[23] Ezatullah Negheban, *Marlik Excavations*, 2000, p. 309.

[24] André Godard, *Iranian Art*, 1998, p. 58.

[25] Mehrnaz Karmi, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

330 BC, which include large sizes for capitals and small sizes for ornaments, textiles, dishes, rings, seals, etc.It can be concluded that the griffin's motif was not only a symbol of good and evil but also included opposite meanings and dual nature, which was influenced by the art of Mesopotamia. In fact, the combination of these two animals (eagle and lion) is a symbol of rulership. It is on the sky and the earth, which includes religious, ritual, and religious symbols.

The analysis of the present article continues with several works from the Achaemenid era, including the motif of the griffin.

Griffin on the capitals and reliefs

Takht-eJamshid is one of the important capitals in the Achaemenid era. Some of its capitals have been decorated with griffin motifs **(Fig 1)**. In addition to the ritual aspect - protection and guardian of buildings and palaces - they also have a practical aspect; that is to say, they hold the columns. In the capitals of Persepolis, this image of the griffin is a beautiful symbol of the protector and guardian of this region. In the Khwarazm region in the northwest of Uzbekistan (namely the two regions of Kiuzligir and Kalaligir, which are the power base and seat of the Achaemenid satrapy in the 5th century BC), artifacts have been found, one of which is the discovery of a fragment of a griffin-shaped capital in the Kalaligir region, which in terms of artistic style is similar to the capitals of Persepolis palaces and are comparable to each other[26]. Achaemenid columns and capitals with large-sized griffin decorations and the use of symbols of power show the political goals of the kings. The main scope is to reflect the splendor and majesty of the empire to the audience, and the desire for power and immortality, evident in Achaemenid beliefs and culture.

---

[26] Ali Bahadori and Bahman Firouzmandi, *Khwarazm in the Achaemenid Era from Satrapy to Independence from the Empire*, 2012, p. 151.

Fig. 1 of the pillar head with griffin decorations in Persepolis[27]

Reliefs are another form of art in which artists have used animal motifs to decorate the walls, including the griffin motif, which can be seen in Sadstun Palace in Persepolis. On the body of one of the walls of this palace, there is a relief of the king fighting a legendary animal in the form of a griffin (**Fig 2**). In this picture, the king plunges his dagger into the animal's body and kills it. In addition to decorating the wall of the palace, this painting includes a kind of symbol that evokes victory over the enemy, evil, and the victory of right over wrong.

Fig. 2 of the relief of the king fighting with the griffin
in the Hundredth Century Palace[28]

Griffin in stamp

Seals express secrets and whispers and mirror the entire culture, civilization, and art of society[29]. The representation of griffins in Achaemenid seals has many variations, which usually include the battle of two griffins with the king, having a symmetrical composition[30]. In the battle scenes, the

---

[27] Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Bahman Firouzmandi, *op.cit*., p. 132.

[28] Farida Dashti, *Lion image in Achaemenid thought and art*, 2002, p. 52.

[29] Abulqasem Dadour et all, *The motif of hunting in the New Era era (650 - 1000 BC) with a view on cylinder seals and simultaneous relief motifs in Mesopotamia (Assyria)*, 2014, p. 6.

[30] Abulqasem Dadour and Roya Rozbahani, *A comparative study of hybrid animals in Achaemenid and Assyrian art with an emphasis on relief motifs and seals*, 2016, p. 21.

griffin stands on his own two feet in front of the king, against the king's power. The king's battle with mixed animals is the subject of many dramatic scenes in Achaemenid culture and civilization. The griffin pattern on the Achaemenid seals has a ritual and religious symbol (the idea of praying is included). The ritual symbol of the king is in the centre of the image and the combined animals, especially the griffin, symmetrically placed around it, are fighting with the king **(Fig 3)**. The images of both griffin animals are displayed on the seal in the form of open mouths on the right and left sides of the seal, begging for forgiveness from the king; the ruler is in the center of the seal.

Fig. 3 Achaemenid era seal with griffin decorations[31]

Griffins in ornaments and utensils

Among the discovered works of art from the Achaemenid era, one relevant example is related to the golden ring with the griffin's head decorations, which is kept in the Victoria Albert Museum in London **(Fig 4).** This ring, discovered in the treasure of Jihun, is empty in some parts, but it is most likely that these empty places were filled with precious stones and then decorated. The mentioned treasure was found by the Jihun or Amu Darya River in the present territory of Tajikistan and most likely from the ancient hill of Tal Qabad (which is a passage on the north bank of the river), between

---

[31] Otto Rava, *A Catalogue of Oriental Cylinder Seals and Seal Impressions in the Danish National Museum*, 1960, No. 163.

1877 and 1880 AD in non-scientific exploration[32]. One of the most important features of the griffin described in his description is his love for gold and his interest in gold, which is related to the iconography of the painting. Gold is a symbol of the sun, and since this animal motif is dedicated to the god of the sun, the relationship between the two (griffin and the sun) seems natural[33]. The griffin has the instinct to find gold, emeralds, and other buried treasures, and that is why he is hostile to people who want to steal his treasure, and the egg of this legendary bird is made of opal, and the miraculous use of this animal's feathers in healing Blindness and blindness are attributed to him. The griffin motif is one of the important images of ancient Eastern thought and art, which is abundantly seen in many cultural works. This composite motif sometimes appears as a symbol of royal power and sometimes as a religious symbol. The image of a griffin on the gold ring of the Victoria and Albert Museum is shown as a horn, which is a symbol of respect and holiness in the art of this era of the Achaemenid Empire. The motif of griffins on the gold ring of the Victoria and Albert Museum is shown symmetrically and facing each other. It is a sign of the conflict between the two forces of good and evil and the superiority of good over evil.

Fig. 4 Gold ring of Victoria Albert Museum in London
with griffin decorations

In addition to rings, amphorae are also influential in introducing a small part of Achaemenid art, one of which is the silver amphora in Sofia

---

[32] John Curtis, *op.cit.*, p. 102.
[33] S. W. Helms, *Introduction in Khozhaniyazio*, 2006, p. 25.

Museum, Bulgaria **(Fig 5)** which was discovered in Duvanli region[34]. In the decorations of this work, especially in its handles, the griffin motif is widely used. The griffins are displayed symmetrically and angrily, with their heads back as if they are the guardians and protectors of the container and its contents. It evokes power and greatness in the minds of the audience, and in terms of the type of motif representation, they tend to be abstract. The silver amphora of the Sofia Museum in Bulgaria, which has griffin decorations, shows a great and undeniable similarity with the amphora as carved in the body of the eastern staircase of the Apadana of Persepolis, brought by the Armenian and Lady Trade delegations.

Fig. 5 Sofia Museum silver amphora with griffin decorations[35]

Griffin in textiles

What is the greatness and elegance of Achaemenid art is the very use of various motifs and the way of harmonizing them. They have a deep impact as well as attractiveness. The motifs of this era include lion, goat, winged goat, cow, fish, snake, scorpion, eagle, griffin, etc. In the Achaemenid era, Iran's weaving industry was especially famous for weaving silk, and soft and delicate woolen fabrics. As a consequence, the kings of this era were known for having beautiful clothes. Gold fabrics, whose thread was drawn from both gold and silver, as well as Iranian velvet, woolen and linen fabrics, were

---

[34] Diana Gergova, *Orphic Thrace and Achaemenid Persia*, 2010, p. 70.

[35] Diana Gergova, *op.cit.*, 2010, p. 70.

extremely desirable in the Achaemenid era[36]. The motifs of the fabrics of this era were divided into three groups of animal, plant and geometric symbols. Animal motifs included birds that not only predicted the weather but also created it in a way and were worshiped as evangelists of the sun and storm. The motifs used in the fabric, which were sometimes woven and sometimes embroidered or stitched with gold and silver, included animal, flower, plant, and human motifs.

Fig. 6 Pazyrik carpet of the Leningrad Hermitage Museum
with griffin decorations

Another work studied in Achaemenid textiles is the Pazyryk carpet (**Fig 6**), which is kept in the Hermitage Museum of Leningrad, in Russia, is known as one of the oldest carpets. One of the motifs identified on the edge of the carpet is the griffin motif, which is repeated 123 times in the center, while their heads are turned back[37]. The griffin is woven in a very simple and abstract manner in the Pazyrik carpet. The repetition of this image is woven inside the square frames of the inner and outer borders of the carpet. The square shape in the Pazyrik carpet is a symbol of peace, stability, and the four corners of the world. Since in the Pazyrik carpet the griffin pattern is repeated alternately in the outer and inner edge of the carpet and the direction of the photo, it can be the symbol of the guardian and protector of the ritual parade. Placing the symbolic motif of the guardian next to the parade of other animals emphasizes the vigilance and power of the griffin in taking care of

---

[36] Nahid Mohammad Ebrahimi et all, *Examining the symbolic motifs of Iranian fabrics from the first century AH to the Mongol invasion in the design of jacquard fabrics*, 2012, p.42.
[37] Abdullah Mirzaei, *Symbolic concepts of Pazyrik carpet motifs*, 2018.

the parade against demons and evil spirits[38]. The griffin pattern (along with the plant, geometric, and animal motifs) is directly related to Achaemenid culture, ritual, thought, and the designer of the carpet tried to depict the conflict between good and evil.

After the Achaemenid era and during the Parthian and Sasanian eras, the griffin pattern was used to decorate walls, metals, especially rhytons, and textiles. In the Islamic era, the griffin pattern gradually gave way to other composite animals, which can be seen in the remains of the Seljuk and Timurid eras.

Conclusion

The griffin consists of a horn and a lion's body, which is rooted in the ancient stories of various nations. Some researchers consider its origin to be in the north of the Asian continent, and others consider it to be a legendary bird belonging to India or Indo-Iranian. In the works of the Achaemenid era, this bird has a completely abstract form, which is not only a symbol of the conflict between good and evil or the two opposing forces of good and evil, but it also has different meanings such as a protector, a guardian and a symbol of power. The works of the Achaemenid era were full of greatness and royal glory. By examining the griffin painting on the works found from the Achaemenid era inside Iran and outside the political borders of Iran, it can be concluded that this motif was a symbol of power, royal majesty, a symbol of the protector and guardian, a religious symbol, as well as a symbol of the kingdom. In terms of representation, this painting tends towards abstraction, symmetry, static and dynamic states.

The examination and analysis of animal motifs in works of art show that each animal has a specific concept and symbol, and they generally speak of the worldview of Iranians during the Achaemenid Empire era. Therefore, among the Achaemenid cultural works, simplicity and order are the most important principles. The artistic feature of the images of this government is that with this simplicity they have created the most important impact on the meaning and concept of the creation of this work. Humans have always used symbols to express their extraterrestrial aspirations to keep them in the turbulent flow of history. On the other hand, when human thought wants to reach a goal, it turns to symbolism to make it smoother. Achaemenid art is a combined art influenced by the arts of neighboring nations and an adaptation of the arts before it. This art can be seen in the construction of tombs, the construction of buildings, and the production of metals, pottery, etc. The motifs of this era included: animal, plant, human, and geometric motifs.

In this research, the motif of the griffin in the Achaemenid era has been closely investigated. The eagle and the lion - each alone had magical

---

[38] Mircea Eliade, *Myth, dream, secret/Myths, Dreams and Mysteries. The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities,* 2001, p. 280.

powers and both of them were rulers of their territory, but when they were combined, they acted as protectors and guardians for the buildings, which received a different name in each culture. The combination of these two animals received a supernatural power in terms of religion, politics, culture, etc. The griffin motif has been found in Achaemenid textiles, seals, capitals, reliefs, dishes, and ornaments. At the same time, these motifs are created symmetrically and in both static and dynamic modes, and they are completely abstract. In the Achaemenid era, these animals are a general ritual, a symbolic and self-centered subject that, while being simple, induces a state of power, which is the main criterion for dealing with this image of the griffin in order to indicate a sense of status, dignity, and power. In this motif, they are a symbol of majesty, royal power, protector, and guardian. Finally, it can be said that they have had the greatest impact in generating the image of this animal.

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1. of the pillar head with griffin decorations in Persepolis, Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Bahman Firouzmandi, source *Archaeology and art of Iran in the historical era*, 2014, p. 132
Fig. 2. of the relief of the king fighting with the griffin in the Hundredth Century Palace, source Farida Dashti, *Lion image in Achaemenid thought and art*, 2002, p. 52.
Fig. 3. Achaemenid era seal with griffin decorations, Otto Rava, *A Catalogue of Oriental Cylinder Seals and Seal Impressions in the Danish National Museum*, 1960, No. 163.
Fig. 4 gold ring of Victoria Albert Museum in London with griffin decorations
Fig. 5 Sofia Museum silver amphora with griffin decorations, source Diana Gergova, *Orphic Thrace and Achaemenid Persia*, 2010, p. 70.
Fig. 6 Pazyrik carpet of the Leningrad Hermitage Museum with griffin decorations

All permition granted

Bibliography:

Azadi, Vahid, Hajizadeh Bastani, Karim, Shahbazi Shiran Habib, *Investigating the representation of the Lydian delegation in the reliefs of the eastern staircase of Apadana (case study: vessels and jewellery)*, Cercetări Arheologice, Vol. 30.1, pp. 45-60, 2023.
Azhand, Yaghoub, *History of ancient art*, Tehran, first edition, Marlik Publications, 2011.
Bahadori, Ali, Firouzmandi, Bahman, Khwarazm in the Achaemenid Erafrom Satrapy to Independence from the Empire, Journal of Archeology, No. 2, Volume 2, Pages 141-159, 2012.
Briant, Pierre, *Achaemenid Empire*, translated by Nahid Foroughan, Tehran, second edition, Qatre Publishing, 2002.

Curtis, John, *Ancient Iran according to the British Museum*, Translated by Azar Basir; Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishing House, first edition, 2008.

Dadour, Abulqasem, Rozbahani, Roya, A comparative study of hybrid animals in Achaemenid and Assyrian art with an emphasis on relief motifs and seals, *Negreh Magazine*, No. 39, pp. 17-33, 2016.

Dadour, Abulqasem; Ebrahimzadeh, Farzaneh; Mobini, Mehtab, the motif of hunting in the New Era era (650 - 1000 BC) with a view on cylinder seals and simultaneous relief motifs in Mesopotamia (Assyria), Jaloh Art Magazine, No. 10, pages 5-18, 2014.

Dashti, Farida, Lion image in Achaemenid thought and art; Yazd: thinkers of Yazd, 2012.

Eliade, Mircha, myth, dream, secret, Translated by Astrologer's dream. First edition, Tehran, FekarRooz magazine, 2001.

Gergova, Diana, *Orphic Thrace and Achaemenid Persia*, In Achaemenid Impact in the Black sea,eds J. Nieling & E. Rehm, 67-86, Aarhus University Press, 2010.

Girshman, Roman, *Iranian art during the Median and Achaemenid eras*, translated by IssaBehnam, Tehran, second edition, scientific and cultural publications, 1992.

Godar, Andre, *Iranian Art*, translated by Behrooz Habibi, first edition, Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University Press, 1998.

Hall, James, *Anthologies of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*, translated by RoughiehBehzadi, first edition, Tehran, FarhangMasazer Publishing House, 2001.

Helms, S. W, Introduction, in Khozhaniyazio, G. The Military Architecture of Ancient Chorasmia, pp. 25-32, 2006.

Jabransari, Hamidah, Griffin Symbolism and its Formal Evolution in Pre-Islamic Art, MahHanar Magazine, No. 118, Pages 98-105, 2005.

Karimian, Hassan; Sarafraz, Ali Akbar and Ebrahimi, Nasrallah, Restoring Achaemenian palaces in Barazjan by relying on archaeological excavations, Bagh Nazar Magazine, No. 14, Year 7, Pp.45-58, 2010

Karmi, Mehrnaz, Investigating the mutual effects of mythical-hybrid creatures of two ancient Iranian and Mesopotamian civilizations on each other with an emphasis on form and meaning, Master's thesis, Tarbiat Modares University, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Tehran, 2002.

Khazaei, Mohammad, Samavaki, Shial, *Investigation of the bird motif on Iranian pottery*, Visual Arts Quarterly, No. 18, pp. 6-11, 2002.

Koch, Heidemarie, *From the language of Dariush*; Translated by ParvizRajabi; Tehran: Karang Publications, 2006.

MacKenzie, D. N, A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary, London, 1990.

Majidzadeh, Yusuf,*History and civilization of Mesopotamia*, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 2001.

Mirzaei, Abdullah, Symbolic concepts of Pazyrik carpet motifs. Shabak magazine, bi-monthly research in art and humanities, volume 3, number 6, pp. 27-38, 2018.

Mohammad Ebrahimi, Nahid; Dadour, Abulqasem, Khajeste, Mohammadreza and Khalsi, Navid, Examining the symbolic motifs of Iranian fabrics from the first century AH to the Mongol invasion in the design of jacquard fabrics, 3rd National Conference on Textile and Apparel Engineering, Yazd, Islamic Azad University Yazd, 2012.

Mohebi, Hamidreza, *Study and analysis of hunting motifs in Iranian art until the end of the Safavid era*, first edition, Tarbiat Modares University Publications, 1998.

Negheban, Ezatullah, *Marlik Excavations*, first edition, Tehran, Cultural Heritage Organization, 2000.

Potts, Daniel Thomas, *Archeology of Ilam*, translated by Zahra Basti, Tehran, Samit Publishing, 2009.

Pourdavoud, Ebrahim, *Mazdasena and Yashta Literature*, Volume 1, Tehran: Tahuri Publications, 1980.

Rava, Otto,*A Catalogue of Oriental Cylinder Seals and Seal Impressions in the Danish National Museum*, Kobenhaven: Nationalmusseet, No: 163, 1960

Rezaei Mehwar, Maitham,*The golden ring object revealed from Arjan, a discussion on form, meaning, place and time*, scientific research conference on Iranian art, national identity, Isfahan, Isfahan University of Arts, 2009.

Sarfaraz, Ali Akbar, Firouzmandi, Bahman*, Archaeology and art of Iran in the historical era*, Tehran: Marlik, 2014.

Serlo, Juan Eduardo,*The Culture of Symbols*, translated by Mehrangiz Ohadi, first edition, Tehran, Dostan Publishing House, 2010.

Xenfon,*Kuroshnameh*, translated by Reza Meshaikhi, Tehran: scientific and cultural publications, 2001.

The Art of Sculpture and the Development of Christianity in Ukraine

Roman Odrekhivskyi[*]

Abstract: *The purpose of the article is to offer a comprehensive study on the meaning of sacral art in the formation of Christianity in Ukraine. The scientific novelty of this research is that the artistic features of the sculpture in Ukraine analysed in the process of the formation of Christianity in the region are highlighted for the first time. Based on the elaborated material, it is the interrelation of the art of the Christian sculpture of the area with the developed local pagan traditions that is mostly shown. After all, religious sculpture played an essential role regarding the sacred culture of ancient Ukrainians.*

As a result of the study, it was found that the art of sculpture in wood and stone in Ukraine has ancient traditions. Christianity has drawn all the best from this tradition and adapted it according to its cult: the technique of wood and stone processing, the range of plots, mythological traditions. The mentioned approach may also be applied to other types of sacred art: painting, artistic metal processing, etc., which should be considered in subsequent scientific studies.

Keywords: *the art of sculpture, Christianity, art culture, development of religion, plastic arts, development of art*

The relevance of the problem. Researchers from the independent Ukrainian state have had the opportunity to engage more widely in sacred art and religion. However, even now there is a gap in the achievements of sacred art and culture, particularly when it comes to the period of the rise of Christianity.

Analysis of research and publications. O. Boliuk considered a wide range of art literature on the theme of the use of artistic products made of wood in the equipment of the church[1]. However, the analysed works do not take into consideration the problems of using the artworks made of the wood in the religious cult of the formation period of Christianity in Ukraine.

---

[*] Dr. hab. in Art Studies, Professor of the Department of Choreography and Art History, Ivan Boberskyi Lviv State University of Physical Culture Lviv, Ukraine; Email: odre2010@ukr.net
[1] Oleh Boliuk, Art studies studio of artistic wood products in the church: a brief overview of the historiography of the problem, *Narodoznavchi zoshyty*, 5 (137), 2017, p. 1019-1037.

Some works, though affecting the connection between the art of carving and sacred culture, mainly cover the period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that is, another chronological frame[2].

More on the mentioned issue is done in the field of cultural studies, at least from the perspective of the spiritual culture. The idea of the immortality of the soul and eternal life was worked out in the study of P. Herchanivska[3].

The review of professional publications shows that regarding contemporary Ukrainian scientific thinking the significance of sacred art in the period of the formation of Christianity is quite unexplored.

The aim of the study is to provide for a comprehensive research on the subject of the significance and application of sacred art in the period of the rise of Christianity in the Ukrainian lands.

The methodology of the research is based on the general principles of scientific work: systematicity, authenticity, historicism, and logic. The systematic method of study is chosen to create a credible image of the evolution of the art of sculpture and to determine its place in the sacred culture of Ukrainians of Galicia. The historical and cultural method is involved in the disclosure of historical preconditions of the development of sculpture art in Ukraine.

Results. According to historical science, the artistic treatment of the wood was distributed on the territory of Ukraine from ancient times. What we are interested in is its application in the sacred cult. Thus, according to archaeological data, sculptures of idols were known in the Bugan tribe (who lived in the basin of the Western Bug River) during the III-IV centuries A.D. The facts of the application during funeral ceremonies of idol sculptures "in the form of people" were clearly recorded (at least in 922 A.D.[4]).

With regard to the material from which idols were made, the ancient chronicles mention idols carved out of wood. The chronicles indicate not only the material but also the tools by which they were made: "Not gods, then the wood. Today is, and tomorrow is rotten. Do not eat because do not drink, do not speak, but made by the hands of a tree, an ax and a knife"[5]. In the chronicle mentioned above, we read that the German ambassadors tell Volodymyr the Great, with the aim of persuading him, to accept Christianity from the Pope: "Pope said to you: your land is like our land, and your faith is

---

[2] Roman Odrekhivskyi, Ukrainian national revival and development of the art of carving in Galicia (the end of 19 – the beginning of 20 century), *Visnyk Natsionalnoi akademii kerivnykh kadriv kultury I mystetstv*, 2. 2018, p. 239–243.

[3] Polina Herchanivska, Invariance and openness of Ukrainian folk religious culture, *Kultura i suchasnist*, Volume 1, 2010, p. 92–96.

[4] *The history of Ukrainian art: in 6 volumes* (head. Ed. M. P. Bazhan), Kyiv, URE, 1966–1970, V. 1, p. 334.

[5] *The story of past years. On the Ipad list.* Translation from Old Ukranian by V. V. Yaremenko, Radianskyi pysmennyk, Kyiv, 1990, p. 139.

not like our faith. Our faith is light, we bow to God, who created the heavens, and the earth, and the stars, and the moon, and all that breathes, and your gods are wood"[6].

Thus, according to researchers and chronicles, the ancient Slavic idols were predominantly wooden, therefore almost not preserved to these days. Their style and character remain unknown to us. Single stone sculptures are preserved in Podillia, where there are rich deposits of stone. Stylistically, the mentioned sculptures are similar to stone women of the Scythian age, which manifests themselves not only in the general form of the images, but also in many characteristic details (for example, the motive of the horn for drinking, which the deity holds in his hand, or the sword on the belt)[7].

The ancient chronicle transmits only specific details of the appearance of some of the idols, from which one can understand that the ones described have anthropomorphic appearance:

> And Volodymyr began to reign in Kyiv alone,
> And he put gods on the hill behind the courtyard:
> Perun is wooden, and his head is silver, and his mustache is golden;
> Both Horse and Dazbog, and Strybog, and Simargal, and Mokosh[8].

Among the surviving of the most famous is, undoubtedly, the Zbruchansky idol, found in the river Zbruch in 1848 (Svyatovyt). The god is a tetrahedral pillar, on each side of which we see three tiers of images. The upper level on all four sides is a man in a cap, the middle tier – also on all four sides – a person with an unnecessarily large head, short legs, and helplessly diluted hands. On the lower level (only on three sides) carved reliefs of faces[9]. Researchers interpret this three-tier division as three spheres of the world: the sky is the place where the gods live; the earth is inhabited by people, defenseless in the face of the other, and, finally, hell – the kingdom of evil spirits.

The idea of the immortality of the soul is widespread in Ukrainian mythology and culture. Related to this aspect, the researcher P. Herchanivska states:

> This idea (birth, life, death, and immortality) permeates the entire national religious culture – its subject-practical, ritual-ritual, practical-

---

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 139.
[7] *The history of Ukrainian art: in 6 volumes* (head. Ed. M. P. Bazhan), Kyiv, URE, 1966–1970, V. 1, p. 115.
[8] *The story of past years. On the Ipad list*, Translation from Old Ukranian by V. V. Yaremenko, Radianskyi pysmennyk, Kyiv, 1990, p. 133.
[9] *The history of Ukrainian art: in 6 volumes* (head. Ed. M. P. Bazhan), Kyiv, URE, 1966–1970, V. 1, p. 116-118.

spiritual level. The mentioned invariant complex, which determines the cyclicity of human existence, manifests itself in various forms of popular consciousness (mythological, religious, philosophical, artistic, aesthetic, memorial), defining the specifics of ritual acts and rituals, folk art-figurative vision of the world, and determines the pattern of behavior and orientation of a human in the context of practical spheres[10].

M. Hrushevsky believes that the treatment of the wood was widespread in the Slavonic way of life. "The remains of woody graves and wood-dishes are widespread in the graves"[11], – writes M. Hrushevsky, unfortunately, not specifying which part of Ukraine is being discussed.

If we talk about the Ancient Rus times, then there are already known specific terms like "woodworker" and even "wood unions". About the XI century in Ancient Kyivan Rus' we know that "on every step, we cite the mention of dwarven structures, walls, bridges; the structure of the stone appeared under the influence of others and was very rare"[12].

Thus, eventually, woodworking has developed into a separate branch of professional activity, in particular in large cities, such as Kyiv. D. Doroshenko mentions the foreign traveler Titmar Merzenburg, who noted that in 1018 there were 400 churches in the city of Kyiv[13]. There was a certain amount of woodworkers who would serve specific needs. To conclude everything mentioned above, it can be assumed that most of the churches were wooden.

Christianity, which came from Byzantium to change paganism, was, undoubtedly, a more structured religion than the previous one, and required the existence of a particular group of people to serve the worship – priests and masters of various branches, in particular, wood carvers and stone. As to the level of organization of pagan pre-Christian religion, the views of scientists are divided here. Some researchers believe that Pagan Faith was less organized than Christianity. The adherents of the mentioned ideas are D. Doroshenko and M. Hrushevsky. According to D. Doroshenko, the ancient gods did not have a clear image and strictly delineated functions. There were no temples or priests, the place of which was occupied by ordinary diviners or healers[14].

M. Hrushevsky believes that during the times of Igor or Volodymyr the pagan cult of honoring the gods in the form of anthropomorphic images

---

[10] Polina Herchanivska, Invariance and openness of Ukrainian folkreligious culture, *Kultura i suchasnist*, Volume 1, 2010, p. 94-95.

[11] Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, *The history of Ukraine-Rus': in 11 volumes*, Kyiv, Naukova dumka, 1991-2010, V. 1, p. 264.

[12] *Ibidem.*

[13] Dmytro Doroshenko, *Essay on the history of Ukraine: in 2 volumes*, Kyiv, Globus, 1991, V. 1, p. 46.

[14] *Ibidem.*

could only be at the initial stage of its development. Probably, idols were placed in public spaces, whereas "the masses of the people could stand at the old sacrifices and prayers in the circle of trees and wells"[15]. The religious outlook of our people in pre-Christian times was based on the cult of nature [16]. Moreover, there is no wonder that the image of the tree has remained in the religious symbolism of the Ukrainian people to these days: for example, planting trees or image trees on the graves. According to the testimonies of the contemporaries of the pagan period, the Slavs replaced temples or images with the tree where people prayed, sacrificed, etc. [17].

Researchers who worked on the issue of the introduction of Christianity in the Ancient Rus believe that the main direction of the process of formation of philosophical thought, the development of the own philosophical ideas autochthon pagan religion revealed a relatively small influence – it has always remained a marginal side factor of the historical and philosophical process. The period of the XI century is called the era of Orthodox-pagan syncretism. It is important to mention that certain pagan remnants have remained in Christianity in Ukraine.

Consequently, it can be assumed that at the time of the remarkable rise in the historical scene of the Galician-Volyn principality (XII-XIV centuries), sacred and memorial sculptures should be regarded as such, which served only Christian religion among the other cults. The burial process was conducted as the process of the burial of the deceased into a dug hole (with the exception of specific graves of prominent people in the churches, etc.).

Thus, P. Herchanivska notes:

> Christianity has become a culture of the people with an already established set of rules in the field of Christian dogmatics, cult, church organization, and artistic norms – canons that built a system of rigid guidance, a kind of coordinate system that regulates religious life the people and his artistic creativity. The folk craftsmen perceived not only the Christian canonized iconographic system (a set of plots, rules of the image of biblical plots and characters, symbols, attributes of holiness, etc.), but also a system of views on a picturesque image – as evidence of truth, the reality of biblical legends as well as a reminder of the foretype[18].

Conclusions

With the spread and affirmation of Christianity in the Galicians lands, it was logical to gradually transfer the art of carving to service from

---

[15] Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, *The history of Ukraine-Rus': in 11 volumes*, Kyiv, Naukova dumka, 1991-2010, V. 1, p. 326.
[16] *Ibidem*, p. 315.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 325.
[18] Polina Herchanivska, Color in the Ukrainian folk culture. *Aktualni problemy istorii, teorii ta praktyky khudozhnoi kultury*, XXX, 2013, p. 45.

the pagan worship to Christianity religion. The mentioned issue was provided due to the fact that the art of carving wood and stone has ancient traditions and is deeply rooted in the sacred culture of Ukrainians. Christianity chose the best of the wood carving tradition – the technique of woodcraft and stone processing, the range of plots, mythological ideas, etc. Therefore, in the further epochs, a high development of church sculpture art has occurred. However, the mentioned idea deserves a separate study. In the prospect of future research, similar studies regarding the development of church painting, bone carving, metal craft, and other forms of art as well as their significance in the formation of Christianity in Ukraine are planned to be conducted.

Nowadays we are familiar with some names of the stone sacral carving masters of ancient Ukraine – Bakun[19] and Avdiy[20]. The carving masters' skills of the Galicia-Volyn principality were high, and they also worked on other lands. In particular, master Bakun and other stone carvers of Galicia in the 13th century who worked on the Vladimir-Suzdal lands[21], established their school of white stone carving on the basis of the Ukrainian tradition. The style and the plot of the Galician white stone carving was close to Western European one. Carved mascarons, rhombic motives etc. – we can find analogues in the Western European carving.

The artistic image of Christianity in Ukraine was established on the basis of ancient Ukrainian and Western Romanesque traditions. According to M. Fihol, local Christian structures in Ancient Halych are the result of the combination of the Eastern Slavic structure of temples and architectural-plastic Romanesque architectural decoration.

In the ruins of the Assumption Cathedral in Halych a large number of fragments of architectural details with stone carvings, profiled pilasters, fragments of columns, curly masks have been found. In general, the cathedral was not marked by the wealth of architectural decorations. M. Fihol compares this with the laconic application of sculpture in the exteriors of Ukrainian wooden churches[22].

Unfortunately, only a few sculptures and carvings of the Galicia-Volyn principality of the period we covered have survived until nowadays.The reason for this is not only the destructive power of time and wars, but also the actions of individual historical figures. Thus, in the castle of Peremyshl, there was a stone-built "square stone" cathedral of St. John, erected by Volodymyr Rostyslavovych (apparently one of Rostyslav Volodymyrovych's three sons, Yaroslav's grandson). Prince Volodar himself was buried in this church. However, during his time in power in Peremyshl,

---

[19] Mykhailo Fihol, *Art of ancient Halych*, Mystetstvo, Kyiv, 1997, p. 127.
[20] *The history of Ukrainian art: in 6 volumes* (head. Ed. M. P. Bazhan), Kyiv, URE, 1966–1970, V. 1, p. 243.
[21] Mykhailo Fihol, *Art of ancient Halych*, Mystetstvo, Kyiv, 1997, p. 127.
[22] *Ibidem,* p. 44-45.

Lithuanian prince Jagiello gave the cathedral to Roman Catholics in 1410, and in 1470 an old Ukrainian cathedral was dismantled and a new Roman Catholic cathedral was built from its stone[23].

Obviously, the whole carving and other decorations of the temple were lost. Such cases were not rare. On the territory of Ukraine (the Galicia-Volyn principality region), in particular in its Galician part, there were many cave monasteries and churches carved from stone. It also testifies to the prevalence of masonry traditions. These include the Sinevid Monastery, mentioned in 1240, which was situated on the shortest route from Halych to Hungary (which ran over Stryi[24], below from Halych on the Dniester river), Bokatyn Monastery of St. Michael, known in the 14th c. and cut in the limestone cliffs of the steep mountain above the Dniester[25] and several others. It is possible that some places, including the altars of these monasteries, were decorated with wood carvings. In the XII-XIII centuries the production of stone and clay icons became widespread in the art of ancient Rus'[26]. This kind of art has existed in all lands of ancient Rus', including the Galician land[27].

Carved icons have often been used in the Christian cult. After all, at this difficult time, they were very practical – easy to carry and more resistant to the environment than the colored ones. In addition, the theme of these icons, as we can see from the surviving ones, fully corresponded to the turbulent fighting times of the period of newly established Christianity – the image of Jesus Christ, Theodore Stratilate. The latter is depicted as a warrior in chain mail. Thus, the sculpture not only served as an icon for prayings, but also affirmed the spiritual strength and belief in oneself as a victorious warrior. All these aspects were associated with the sacred culture of the new Christian religion, which coexisted for a long time with the parallel existence of the old pagan one. Thus, together with the approval of Christianity in Ukraine, carving has played an important role in the decorative and illustrative decoration of the Christian cult.

---

[23] Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, *The history of Ukraine-Rus': in 11 volumes,* Kyiv, Naukova dumka, 1991-2010, V 2, p. 470.

[24] *Ibidem.*

[25] *Ibidem,* p. 471.

[26] *The history of Ukrainian art: in 6 volumes* (head. Ed. M. P. Bazhan), Kyiv, URE, 1966–1970, V. 1, p. 244.

[27] Mykhailo Fihol, *Art of ancient Halych*, Mystetstvo, Kyiv, 1997, p. 176.

Bibliography:

Boliuk, Oleh, Art studies studio of artistic wood products in the church: a brief overview of the historiography of the problem, *Narodoznavchi zoshyty*, 5 (137), 2017, p. 1019-1037.

Doroshenko, Dmytro, *Essay on the history of Ukraine: in 2 volumes*, Kyiv, Globus, 1991.

Fihol, Mykhailo, *Art of ancient Halych*, Mystetstvo, Kyiv, 1997.

Herchanivska, Polina, Invariance and openness of Ukrainian folk religious culture. *Kultura i suchasnist*, Volume 1, 2010, p.92–96.

Herchanivska, Polina, Color in the Ukrainian folk culture, *Aktualni problemy istorii, teorii ta praktyky khudozhnoi kultury*, XXX, 2013, p. 4–80.

Hrushevskyi, Mykhailo, *The history of Ukraine-Rus': in 11 volumes*. Kyiv, Naukovadumka, 1991-2010.

Odrekhivskyi, Roman, Ukrainian national revival and development of the art of carving in Galicia (the end of 19 – the beginning of 20 century), *Visnyk Natsionalnoi akademii kerivnykh kadriv kultury i mystetstv*, 2.2018, p. 239–243.

The story of past years. On the Ipad list. Translation from Old Ukrainian by V. V. Yaremenko, Radianskyi pysmennyk, Kyiv,1990.

Savchyn, Ivan, *Busk. In the age of centuries*, Lviv, Lvivski novyny, 1996.

The history of Ukrainian art: in 6 volumes (head. Ed. M. P. Bazhan), Kyiv, URE, 1966–1970.

The Functions and Usages of Waqf in the Architectural Structure of Yazd
(from Ilkhanate to Qajar)

**Seyyed Saeid Hosseini *, Habib Shahbazi Shiran **,
Behrouz Afkhami *****

Abstract: *One of the most important characteristics of Waqf in Yazd city, which has been less noticed so far, is its role in the formation of architecture and urban planning. Therefore, in the following article, while examining the history of Waqf in Yazd from the Muzaffarids to Qajar period, its impact on the physical-spatial structure of Yazd, as well as the role of Waqfs deeds and stone inscriptions in the field of Islamic art and architecture of Yazd, are discussed. In the following, referring to the background of the research in this field, the questions raised include the role of Waqf in the development of architecture and urban development of Yazd, the characteristics of Waqf deeds and stone inscriptions, answers are given to how the usages and functions of the Waqf are. The result is that encouraging and supporting People to immigrate and paying attention to estates and tenements in cities, bequeathing Waqfs to male children, family support in the protection of properties and estates to prevent the risk of usurpation of property, the public utility activities of the nobles, affluent, local influential People and their spouses to commemorate Ahl al-Bayt and Imams has been effective in the field of Waqf and the development and expansion of the architecture of Islamic buildings. The importance of Waqf sources, such as books, Waqf deeds and inscriptions, can also be helpful in retelling the social, artistic, religious, economic, geographical problems raised about Waqf elements.*

Key words: Waqf, architecture, Yazd, Ilkhanate to Qajar, usages and functions, Waqfs

Introduction

The Waqf tradition is one of the most prominent religious beliefs that had a great impact on the creation of Islamic cities, especially Yazd as its

---

* Ph.D. student of archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran, seyyedsaeidhosseini6@gmail.com
** Corresponding author, Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran, habibshahbazi35@gmail.com
*** Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran, bafkhami@uma.ac.ir

existence can be easily seen in the parts of the city that play a prominent role in the functioning of urban life. (Qadiri-1989-36). The influence of vaqef (endower) in the construction of Yazd city is undeniable. Because the presence of Waqf on the one hand caused the creation of religious buildings with political and religious function, and on the other hand, it caused preservation, expansion and renovation. And in this way, the cost of religious facilities was provided. In fact, Waqf is one of the Islamic commandments, which played an effective role in encouraging People to build religious and public buildings, and also contributed to the development of the city, actions that were carried out with emphasis on the Waqf concept, and spontaneously led to the physical expansion of the city. A large part of the characteristics of Yazd city, such as the fabric and appearance of the city, was considered a reflection of Islamic wisdom. The most important support is the belief in the oneness and worship of God, which must be crystallized in a specific way in the city. Undoubtedly, supporting the Waqf organization, managing the Waqfs, and paying attention to the endowed buildings, shows the importance of the Waqf and its impact on the construction and development of the city. One of the goals of the Waqf in Yazd city was the creation of public structures and activities that would significantly contribute to the architectural fabric of the city, and their appearance would create the ability for People to migrate to the city and it ultimately lead to the expansion and development of Yazd.

Research background

In line with the discussed topic, no book or article that directly refers to it has been published yet. At the same time, the local history books of Yazd, the collection of Waqf deeds of Yazd province, as well as some articles have dealt with the conditions of Waqf according to each historical period, Waqf inscriptions and various functions and usages of Waqf. Including comprehensive book of Jafari[1], Monuments of Yazd[2], New History of Yazd[3], comprehensive book of Mofidi[4], Jame Al-Khairat Waqf deed. Booklet of Waqfs of Yazd[5], Waqfs of the Amir Chakhmaq and his wife Seti Fatemeh[6], analysis of Waqf culture in the Safavid period[7], socio-economic

---

[1] Mohammad Jafar Nayini, *Comprehensive Book of Jafari*, trans. Iraj Afshar, Tehran: National Antiquities Association, 1973.
[2] Iraj Afshar, *Monuments of Yazd*, Yazd: National Antiquities Association, 1994.
[3] Ahmad bin Hossein bin Ali Kateb, *New History of Yazd*, Tehran: Amir Kabir, 2006.
[4] Mohammad Mofid Mostowfi Bafghi, *Comprehensive Book of Mofidi*, vol. 3, Yazd: Asatir, p. 1962.
[5] Mirza Abd al- Wahab Taraz, *Booklet Yazd Waqfs*, Tehran: Iran Zamin, 1961.
[6] Mohammad Kazemini, *The Waqf Deed of the Amir Chakhmaq and His Wife Seti Fatimah*, Qom: Sahifey-e Kherad, 2018.

background of khans in Yazd[8]. The list of Waqf deeds in Iran - Yazd[9], the current tradition of Waqf, the factor of stability in the development and architecture of Yazd city in the 8th and 9th Ah centuries[10], the Waqf in Yazd culture based on stone inscriptions[11]. The importance of Waqf in urban development, especially in Yazd province[12], Yazd and the continuing traditional of Waqf[13], examining the historical background and social-cultural effects of Waqf in Yazd[14].

The importance of Waqf in the physical-spatial structure of Yazd city

The architectural structure and urban elements of Yazd have been related to the tradition of Waqf in different historical periods. Benevolent People at every point of time have started to create the constituent parts of the neighborhoods (mosque, bathhouse, cistern, bazaar, Saqqakhaneh, etc.). The economic and social conditions of each era played a significant role in the amount of Waqfs. As the spatial division and spread of various types of Waqf elements were not only important in intensifying and facilitating the function of Waqf, but also played an important role in the spatial structure of the city. The religious duty of Waqf made the trustees to strive for the development and improvement of the Waqfs of the city. By constructing buildings and expanding and developing Waqf properties and increasing its revenues. With the change of the social life style in the Islamic society the Waqf, took its evolutional proses and development from each period to another, and Waqfs played an influential role in civil affairs at any time according to the historical conditions. Supporting the Waqf organizations, encouraging this

---

[7] Fatemeh Danesh Yazdi, "Analysis of the Waqf of Waqf Culture in the Safavid Period Based on Stone Inscriptions in the Islamic Buildings of Yazd City," *Miras-e Javidan* 60, 2006, pp. 88–103.

[8] Nobuaki Kondo, "Socio-Economic Background of Khans of Yazd," *Miras-e Javidan* 29, 2000, pp. 73–82.

[9] Mohammad Javad Erfan Far, *List of Iranian Waqf Documents, Yazd City and Suburbs*, Yazd: Charitable Administration of Yazd Province, 2007.

[10] Saeedeh Hosseinizadeh Mehrjardi, "The Current Tradition of Waqf as a Factor of Sustainability in the Development of Architecture and Urban Development in Yazd in the 8th and 9th Centuries AH" The First National Conference on Construction, Architecture and Sustainable Development, 2013, pp. 1–6.

[11] Fatemeh Danesh Yazdi, "Waqf in the Culture of the People of Yazd Based on Stone Inscriptions," *Farhang-e Mardom-e Iran* 4, 2007, pp. 77–102.

[12] Seyyed Mansour Emami Meybodi and Hadis Razzagianpour, "The Importance of Waqf in Urban Development (Especially Yazd Province)" Razavi National Culture Conference, 2018, 1–6.

[13] Seyyed Ahmad Mousavi, "Yazd and the Long-Lasting Tradition of Waqf," *Miras-e Javidan* 23–24, 1997, p. 65

[14] Mohammad Jafar Mir Jalili, *Researching the Historical Course and Social-Cultural Effects of Waqf in Yazd*, Tehran: Broadcasting of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2000, p. 7.

duty, paying attention to the garden, house and land on which the Waqf was done, as well as their management, showed its impact on the prosperity and development of Yazd city. One of the other purposes of Waqf was the public services, which included a large part of architectural fabric in Yazd, the creation of which led to the migration of People and ultimately the development and expansion of the city. Naturally, the purpose of building such organizations came from the benevolence of the ruling class, the affluents, and the local influential People, so that Waqfs were considered for them to be more determined to continue it. On the other hand, Waqfs were used in the form of religious facilities in order to protect and support the family of nobles in order to preserve and protect their properties so that they would not be exposed to property violations. It seems that the construction of religious and even non-religious buildings could strengthen the relationship between the rulers and different classes of the society, and in this way the rulers would get the maximum support of the People. In general, the Waqf policy played a significant role in the development of the city because the tradition of Waqf was considered to support the creation of endowed religious buildings, especially considering the political concept and religious functions, and it led to the preservation and maintenance of facilities such as bazaars, palaces, bathhouse, and other public affairs that were being restored and revived for more income should find a double value and in this way provide the cost of the infrastructure.

The process of historical transition of Waqf in Yazd from Ilkhanate to Qajar

Waqf in the Ilkhanate period (1256-1356 AD)

Scientific, cultural and religious, Yazd city has had an important place in this historical period. Many Waqfs have been made by the local rulers and political and religious figures in Yazd. The existence of prominent figures such as Rashid al-Din Fazl Allah Hamadani, Seyyed Rokn al-Din and Seyyed Shams al-Din was one of the most important factors influencing the development of Waqf places in Yazd. This period has a distinction compared to the Timurid period, and that is the one-dimensionality of the Waqfs of this period from the usage viewpoint [15]. Part of the Waqf allocated for the maintenance and establishment of public buildings, especially the construction of schools, poverty alleviation and other charitable affairs, social, cultural and economic functions. With the migration of scholars and scientists to Yazd and the growth of Sufism, on the other hand, the rule of the Ilkhanate was effective in the types of Waqf properties such as construction of religious schools next to mosques, Khanqahs, shrines for Sufi elders, and

---

[15] Abbas Attaabadi, "Waqf Buildings of Yazd from Ilkhanid to the End of Timurid Period" Master's thesis, Yazd, Yazd University, 2015, p. 80.

the Waqf of water, land, and gardens[16]. The presence of shrine-tombs, mosques and welfare buildings around it and special attention to their construction and restoration during the Ilkhanate government, which caused Shiites to gather around the holy places and use it as a focal point for their activities. With the expansion of Shia Waqfs by influential People such as Seyyed Rokn al-Din and his children, like a continuous and powerful financial supporter, they not only did maintain and strength the financial independence of Shias and met the needs of the necessitous Shias, but also by using the large income of Waqfs as the most stable financial resources and scientific and cultural activities lead to expansion of shiism. Activities such as commemorate of Ahl al-Bayt and establishing and developing Shia seminaries as institutions of religious education to provide for the expenses of students of religious sciences, expansion and restoration the tomb-shrines, meeting the needs of the poor, Building libraries and observatories was done with the support of Shia Waqfs.

Waqf in the Timurid period (1369- 1497 AD)

After the arrival of Amir Jalalal-Din Chakhmaq Shami along with his wife Seti Fatemeh Khatun by Shahrokh Timuri in Yazd, this family created many Waqfs. They dedicated the Waqfs to special things and in addition to construction of public buildings, they determined many Waqfs for them. These Waqf deeds, with all dependencies, annexation, additions and appointments by influential People, were transferred as a Sharia sale and then with a 90-year lease of Bibi Fatemeh Khatoon[17]. It seems that the idea of building the city and giving it prosperity was well accepted among the residents of Yazd, especially nobilities and aristocracies. All the endowers were from the upper classes of the society and governmental positions, including rulers, ministers, and judges. This common thought in the city put the rulers in a position where they considered civil and construction as a suitable tool to gain social honor and popularity in the society. The dependence of most of the institutions on the government reduced the motivation of the Waqf among the ordinary People. The central government was an important feature of the cultural and educational institutions in the Timurid domain. Most of the mosques, schools and Waqf public utilities were built by the order of the rulers or with their financial support.

---

[16] Mohammad Jafar Mir Jalili, "Waqfs of Yazd in the 7th and 8th Centuries AH," *Culture and Anthropology* 4, 2001, p. 612.
[17] Mohammad Kazemini, *The Waqf Deed of the Amir Chakhmaq and His Wife Seti Fatimah*, Qom: Sahifey-e Kherad, 2018, p. 34.

Waqf in the Sfavid period (1501-1736 AD)

In this period, the unification of Iran and the formalization of Twelver Shi'ism by the Safavids, it should be considered a turning point in the tradition of Waqf. With the encouragement of the religious scholars, in addition to the special classes and nobles, the middle class of the society also strengthened the Waqf in the direction of religious affairs, which, with the formation of the position of Sadr, Waqf office, and the stability and economic prosperity in the society, gave prosperity and development to the Waqf as well[18] as Tavernier has also pointed to Waqfs and endows in his travelogue. In this period, the tradition of Waqf was followed by Nemat Allah Baqi from the Shah Nemat Allah Wali dynasty and Mirza Mohammad Shafi' Wazir Yazdi in the reign of Shah Sultan Suleiman in the construction and completion of a mosque and a school[19] and Waqfs were used for various religious, social, economic, and cultural purpose, which in fact had more of a religious aspect[20]. Because on the one hand, Waqfs and for religious reasons, in addition to the welfare of the poor, have been spent on things such as pilgrimages , lighting the mosque and holy places, holding prayers, reciting the Qur'an, and strengthening and spreading the Twelver Shia religion, as well as Waqf of cistern. A part of Waqfs despite maintaining religious approaches was spent to consumption, creation and maintenance of public buildings, construction of Rabat and Caravanserais for travelers and other charitable works with social, cultural and economic functions[21].

Waqf in the Afsharid (1736-1796 AD) and Zand period (1751-1794 AD)

After the attack of the Afghans until the Qajar period, Waqfs were reduced and Waqf abuse became widespread. This factor caused the names of their endowers to remain unknown in the beginning of this period. During the invasion of Mahmud Afghan, the documents and Waqf deeds were destroyed, and during Nader Shah's reign, many Waqfs were confiscated by the government and courtiers, the incomes were spent on the army and the military, and as a result, the Waqf situation stagnated[22]. From the end of the

---

[18] Mohammad Jafar Mir Jalili, *Researching the Historical Course and Social-Cultural Effects of Waqf in Yazd*, Tehran: Broadcasting of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2000, p. 18.
[19] Mohammad Kazemini, *The Waqf Deed of the Amir Chakhmaq and His Wife Seti Fatimah*, Qom: Sahifey-e Kherad, 2018, p. 46.
[20] Seyyed Mohammad Reza Shahabi, "The Foundations of the Theoretical Framework of the Waqf Effect in the Formation of Urban Spaces," *Geographical Research Quarterly* 72, 2013, p. 142.
[21] Zohreh Cheraghi and Safa Zare Sangderazi, "Waqfs of Women in Yazd from the Muzaffarids to the End of the Qajar Period," *Research Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies Social-Economic History* 2, 2018, p. 52.
[22] Mohammad Jafar Mir Jalili, *Researching the Historical Course and Social-Cultural Effects of Waqf in Yazd*, Tehran: Broadcasting of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2000, p. 28.

Afsharid to the Qajar period, Yazd progressed for half a century, and during this period, Muhammad Taqi Khan Bafqi, in addition to the establishment of public buildings, endowed many properties, including Khan Square and Qaysariyeh Bazaar. During the Qajar period, the development of Yazd was continued by his descendants. According to comprehensive book of Jafari, Mohammad Taqi Khan endowed the Janat Abad garden to qods-e razavi charity, but this garden was destroyed in 1243 AH. Khan school which order of its inheritance and Waqf was determined, was given to the first son and the next male children. Other Waqfs, included, water right of qanat, waterskin, land, Waqfs located on the bazaar include Qaysiryyah and mint. Charity on tomb shrines and establishing a permanent organization to prevent the change in the division of water rights and maintaining of kanat, alms giving to pilgrims, Sadat, the poor and holding Ashura, Ta'ziyeh, Eid al-Fitr, Eid Ghadir and feeding food and sweets were among these usages. Although it is not possible to comment with certainty about the motivation of Muhammad Taqi Khan regarding the Waqf of his property, but the acquisition of the afterlife reward and social status should be considered. He added to his estate and divided it among his children by the cultivation of barren lands, which according to the sharia, these lands after cultivation, becomes the property of the same person. Then he dedicated all of them, probably to avoid paying taxes, as a lasting legacy for his children, and also endowed trusteeship from generation to generation among them. The purpose of Mohammad Taqi Khan and generally the khans of Yazd from the Waqf was to use it for the poor and pilgrims holding religious events, the salary of the servants of shrines, allowance for the maintenance of the endowed property and the irrigation of the gardens. Also, the owners could protect their properties from the danger of usurpation through Waqf and transfer to religious constructions.

Waqf in the Qajar period (1796-1925)

From the beginning until the reign of Naser Al-Din Shah, Yazd was governed by the khans, and after that, rulers were appointed to the governorship of Yazd by the central government. In this period, despite the fact that Yazd is considered as part of Isfahan and Kerman provinces, the area of Waqf investigation was independently assigned to Yazd and its nearby cities[23]. During this period, the Waqf situation was chaotic. Some of the Qajar princes were endowed including Muhammad Wali Mirza, who built shahzadeh library and school in Yazd in 1240 AH. But in general, the actions that were taken in this period in the direction of Waqf were very few, and in that period most of the Waqf were subject to the embezzlement, desire and

---

[23] Mohammad Jafar Mir Jalili, *Researching the Historical Course and Social-Cultural Effects of Waqf in Yazd*, Tehran: Broadcasting of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2000, p. 7.

profit seeking of opportunists [24]. Dealing with Waqfs and appointing a guardian for them began seriously during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, and he appointed individuals to manage the Waqfs. For example, in 1275 AH, he chose the Mirza Bozorg Nawab Razavi, who was famous for his integrity and efficiency, as the representative of the Waqfs in Yazd[25]. Investigations show that during this period, despite all the fluctuations in the Waqf affairs, in addition to the cases of the previous period, Waqfs related to the house and its belongings, trees and other reforms were also added[26].

Usages of Waqf

Waqf properties in each period have been different in the field of items and using cases, and it reflects the concerns and needs of the society in each period. Therefore, the function of Waqf is generally divided into religious and public benefit. Therefore, the function of Waqf is generally divided into religious and public benefit:

1) Religious buildings
Mosques

Most of the religious buildings have a deep and firm connection with the Waqf tradition. By using the incomes from the Waqf buildings such as mosques, tekyehs, Hossainiyehs, tomb shrines, due to the religious attachment of People, in terms of obtaining construction credits, renovation and restoration naturally are self-sufficient. The mosques are the best places for the gathering of Muslims, where the worship of the Allah takes place. Performing congregational prayers, performing religious ceremonies, giving sermons, teaching and delivery of government orders were held there.

Tombs and Shrines

The respect and reverence for the tombs and shrines according to the religious beliefs of the people, in addition to being a place for worship, pilgrimage and religious ceremonies and providing for the spiritual needs of people, has shown a valuable and sacred place among people. They were naturally independent Construction, renovation and restoration and Waqf properties support most of them in order to maintain and expand.

In general, tombs and shrines rely on Waqfs that can play the role of pilgrimage, tourism, education, and worship and Cash and non-cash offerings to pilgrimage places help the prosperity and economic credibility of the shrines.

---

[24] Mahnaz Mousavi Bafroui, "Waqf and Its Administrative Developments in Yazd," *Miras-e Javidan* 36–37, 2008, p. 50–51.

[25] Ibidem, p. 52.

[26] Zohreh Cheraghi and Safa Zare Sangderazi, "Waqfs of Women in Yazd from the Muzaffarids to the End of the Qajar Period," *Research Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies Social-Economic History* 2, 2018, p. 59.

Khanqahs

The popularity of Sufism among the common People due to the economic support of Waqf and benefiting from the presence of the powerful shahs, sultans, ministers and rulers, amirs and wealthy relatives attracted special popularity among the society. In fact, the founders of the khanqahs were pursuing two main purposes: some of them were trying to allocate Waqfs due to their devotion and attachment to Sufism, and some others were trying to use such influence for specific political purposes and due to the popularity of the khanqahs among the people they allocate Waqfs for khanqahs.

2) Public buildings
Caravanserai

Caravanserais were built as a place for landing and resting for travelers and caravans who wanted to cross a route, by the order of the shahs, amirs, local governors and merchants, and the profits that were earned were intended to provide food and clothing for the poor, food for travelers and passers-by. Therefore, the purpose of endower to create Rabat and caravanserais was its economic aspect and played an important role in the well-being of travelers and visitors, securing the roads and ultimately expanding commerce.

Cisterns

Cisterns are among the Waqf public buildings built in the central and desert parts of Iran, owing their permanence and stability to the properties and Waqf incomes for their restoration, repair and maintenance. Philanthropists and wealthy people play a significant role in the construction of cisterns by donating land, qanats, gardens and crops and other people also participated with buying salt for dredging the Qanats, bringing materials, removing sludge, and emptying and filling water in the cisterns. Among the reasons and motivations of people for endowing cisterns, according to inscriptions, inspiration from the thirst of Imam Hossain and his martyrdom on the day of Ashura, and dependence on the culture and customs of the past can be mentioned. The founders of cisterns were usually People who did not have children or male children, so they left a monument as a symbol to preserve their family name.

Qanats

Due to its difficult structure, the construction of a Qanats requires continuous maintenance to access underground water resources. Therefore, social and religious institutions put the Waqf of the Qanats at the top of their agenda. The creation of an urban water network using the Qanats to meet the daily needs of the localities was the basis of the Waqf, so that the revenues

and earnings of the Qanats can be spent on the costs, maintenance and dredging of the Qanats.

Saqqakhaneh

Saqqakhaneh (a public water fountain) had a special spiritual and mystical significance for the People, and like the cisterns, since it commemorated Imam Hossein and the victims of the Karbala incident, its construction was considered as a good deed. The founders used Waqfs for their sqqakhaneh so that they would not be left unused after them and that they would always be ready for the use of thirsty passers-by.

Bathhouses (publing bathings)

The importance of the bathroom among Muslims made many benefactors and to build bathhouses. Along with the bazaar, mosque and school, the bathhouse was one of the main pillars of the localities and was considered as a public building of the city. In addition to maintaining cleanliness, the bathhouse was used as a source of economic income for other religious and non-religious buildings such as the mosque, Dar al-Siadeh, and Dar al-Shafa.

Schools

Educational centers were created mainly in the construction and Waqf of theological schools and the provision of financial resources for construction and human expenses. Before setting up an organization or an office for education, the people found schools. By doing this, the emphasis was placed on people being driven in buildings, and this would make the buildings more stable over time.

Waqf properties in Yazd

Waqf deeds are the best type of resources to studying the history of Iranian architecture. The contents of the Waqf deeds include a lot of information from the macro scale such as the city and region to the micro scale such as the components and elements of buildings[27]. Studying the Waqf documents informs about the stability and security of the society, which is suitable for the creation of numerous works and the hope that they will remain and benefit the public[28]. The hypothetical reconstruction of a complex of buildings that are completely destroyed and lack of maps or historical texts provide good information about the name of the space and even how they are placed next to each other. In some of the Waqf deeds, the buildings are described in detail, which include things such as appearance, materials, and construction techniques. By studying the Waqf deeds, one can get to know the exact date of the construction of the building, its background and location, climate and the nature of the region, architectural patterns, furniture and vessels inside the building, water facilities, arts related to architecture,

---

[27] Iraj Afshar, *Monuments of Yazd*, Yazd: National Antiquities Association, 1994, p. 14.
[28] Ibidem, p. 11.

building customs and patterns of social and individual life[29]. The Waqf inscription has played an important role in the history of the People of Yazd. Due to the nature of these types of documents, in order to preserve the secrets and identity of history, it has a special advantage over Waqf documents, and by using them, many historical, political, social, religious, artistic events can be achieved. These type of Waqf documents are a well-argued document that, due to the lack of access to the original paper decree, according to the events, play a bolder and more vital role, and they even go beyond that, and in addition to completing our information, they can be fruitful in not rejecting the contents and incidents mentioned in the old historical books.

The features of Waqf inscriptions

The best artistic heritages of different eras include the most beautiful motifs, calligraphy, writing, idioms and vocabulary of the time of inscriptions, artistic decorations, identification of unknown calligraphers and introduction of contemporary calligraphers with each historical period are extracts from these inscriptions[30]. The art of calligraphy on these stone inscriptions shows the most beautiful and brilliant old calligraphies that have remained. They have used the most practical scrips (Thulth, Naskh, Nastaliq) on the stones. The types of stones used are gray, white and black marble. The decorations used on the stones are usually simple, and in some cases, they have Slimi niche, maqrans, column, vase curvature, four-petaled flowers and dome motifs. The purpose of installing the inscriptions was clear, but their place of installation was different in religious and non-religious buildings, so that the places used varied from the top door of the main entrances, the entrances, corridors and porches. The contents used in the inscriptions included: the purpose of the endower, the reason and date of creation of Waqf, which were sometimes carved by Quranic verses and hadiths, or Arabic, Persian, and poetry texts and poems. The inscriptions generally begin with some Quranic verses or Arabic phrases, then the name of the endower, sometimes only the name of the endower and her/his father were mentioned, then the subject of Waqf was discussed, and it mentioned the guardianship of the place, and ends with Mentioning a verse on the topic of avoiding any destruction and changing the identity of that place, which is accompanied by the date of the Waqf (A.H.) which was accompanied by a command of Waqf from the endower[31]. Briefly, regarding the Waqf inscriptions, it can be stated as follows:

---

[29] Ehsan Tahmasbi, "Examining How Documents Are Used in The Studing of the History of Iranian Architecture," *Quarterly Journal of Iranian Architectural Studies* 6, 2013, p. 167.
[30] Iraj Afshar, *Monuments of Yazd*, Yazd: National Antiquities Association, 1994, p. 6.
[31] Fatemeh Danesh Yazdi, "Waqf in the Culture of the People of Yazd Based on Stone Inscriptions," *Farhang-e Mardom-e Iran* 4, 2007, p. 89.

1. The Waqf property is generally specific water, qanat, garden, land and a place.

2. The responsibility of the endower is to preserve and maintain the Waqf property.

3. The cost of restoration, repair and maintenance of the Waqf building related to lighting and other infrastructure structures or special places

4. The endower's motivation was for divine nearness and God's pleasure.

5. In some of the Waqf documents, there are solutions to preserve and maintain the Waqfs and avoid their seizure and encroachment, which would preserve the assets of the endower for the next generations and their children.

Waqf deeds of Yazd

The Waqf deeds of Rub-e Rashidi and Jame Al-Khairat are considered the biggest Waqf documents of Iran and Yazd, which is not only significant in terms of quantity and quality and type of Waqf, but its content is also useful in providing cultural, economic, social, geographical information and Waqf estate in this period. The Waqf inscription of Rab-e Rashidi, which was written by Khwaja Rashid al-din Fazl Allah, the vizier of oljaito, for the purpose of the beneficial administration of the complexes and the town that he had built (mosques, schools, hospitals, pharmacies, libraries,...) and perhaps to protect his property from the circulation of instability in the political history of Iran and its numerous scandals, he made the decision to establish a Waqf deed for his assets and its revenue as the Waqf deed of Rab-e Rashidi. The noteworthy point in this Waqf deed, in addition to mentioning a part of his assets, including his properties in Yazd (700 items), about the geographical names of different areas of Yazd, terms related to Qanats, water, land and water scales of Yazd, clues about the facilities and buildings attributed to the Zoroastrians in Yazd, the identification and classification of the Sadats in Yazd, the recognition of the titles of the social classes of Yazd provides us with valuable information[32]. In the Waqf deed of Jame Al-Khairat, which includes the history and type of Waqf usages of a part of the property of Seyyed Rokn al-Din Hosseini and his son Seyyed Shams al-Din, The description of all the conditions of Waqf, the type of Waqf, the subject of it, the resulting income, how they are spent, and the subject of the Waqf are mentioned in this Waqf deed under ten headings as follows:

---

[32] Mojtaba Minovi, *Rab'-e Rashidi's Waqf Deed*, trans. Iraj Afshar, Tehran: Association of National Artifacts, 1976, p. 45.

1- Waqf buildings including 23 buildings by Seyyed Rokn al-Din and 22 buildings by Seyyed Shams al-Din, including schools, mosques, caravanserai, Khanqah, Dar al-Shefa (hospital), etc.)
2- Waqf for Bani Fatimeh's sadat(descendant of Fatimeh)
3- Waqf for Sadats who settle for a while in Yazd
4- Waqf for endower's descendant
5- Waqf for endower's relatives
6- Waqf for ka'ba shrine
7- Waqf for Madinah shrine
8- Waqf for the Najaf Ashraf shrine
9- Waqf for Imam Hussein shrine
10- Waqf for freedom of slaves who had father and children

Waqf deeds in Timurid period

The context of the Waqf deed of Amir Chakhmaq is considered the second Waqf deed of Yazd after the Waqf deed of Jame Al-Khairat. The Waqf deed of Amir Nezam al-Din Chakhmaq Shami, who gave his name to the Amir Chakhmaq Mosque, expresses the Waqf of the properties donated by him and was copied by Afshar and others. This Waqf deed includes an introduction and like other Waqf deeds, it begins with praise of God and introduces the Waqf properties in the form of 5 titles (jame mosque, khangah, cistern, stream, cold water well, parts of lands and qanats[33] Amir Chakhmaq and his wife Seti Fatemeh had many Waqfs, each of which could be separated from each other, but this couple did not endow all their property, and it seems that their motivation was to preserve property for their children in addition to benevolent intentions[34].

One of the reasons for the development and expansion of Yazd city was formed by the economic activities of Amir Chakhmaq, who coordinated himself with urban civilization under the category of Waqf, respected the law and presented himself as an outstanding statesman.

The Waqf deeds of Safavid period

Among the notable Waqf deeds in this period, we should mention the Waqf of Khanesh Begum, the daughter of Shah Ismail Safavi's and the daughter in low of Nematullahi Darizd dynasty in Yazd, as well as the Waqf of Ishaq Beg in the Yazd mosque and school.

Khansh Begum's Waqf deed

---

[33] Mohammad Javad Erfan Far, *List of Iranian Waqf Documents, Yazd City and Suburbs*, Yazd: Charitable Administration of Yazd Province, 2007, p. 83.
[34] Akio Iwatake, "The Waqf of a Timurid Amir the Example of Chaqmaq Shami in Yazd," trans. Seyyed Mohammad Mahdi Hashemi, *Miras-e Javidan* 49, 2004, p. 44.

The Waqf deed of Khanesh Begom, who is considered to be one of the influential of the Safavid period, was written in 963 AH, and it contains Waqfs for Twelver Shiites (conditions of Waqf on the shrine of Hazrat Seyyed al-Shahda) and the Khajeh garden in the village of Mehrjerd, which was endowed to it[35]. In the Waqf deed of Khanesh Begum, she mentioned the extent of Waqf properties outside (Ernan, Rashkoiyeh, Junabad) and inside Yazd city (Qazi bathhouse in Sarrig neighborhood and a bazaar located in a mosque near the tomb of Sheikh Jamal al-Islam). She also placed Waqfs on the tombs of her children, including the properties located in the village of Mehrjard Meybod and Khajeh Hosseini garden in Naimabad village, in Yazd. In the continuation of this Waqf deed, Khanesh Begum, in addition to giving away his dowry and all his belongings, mentioned the condition of freeing his slaves and maids after his death.

Waqf deed of Ishaq Beg Yazdi

Ishaq Beg Yazdi, who is known as the founder of the Mosalla mosque and school, is one of the greatest endower of Yazd during the Safavid era. He has many Waqfs, including school, mosque, dokkan (traditional shop), bazaar, cistern, and qanats.

The type of general Waqf, which used the estates and properties in the Waqf deed, for the repair of shrine tombs, mosques, and caravanserai, in the context of the mosque school, the creation of twelve rooms for seminarians and supply their pensions, the construction of a mosque with a pool house, garden and curb in this mosque, the construction of a factory, bazaar, and the repair of Rabat and etc.

And in relation to the qanats such as Yaqoubi, Ahrestan, Khoidak, Firouzabad, and casesi such as mosque lamp oil, muezzin and imam of the mosque, reciting the Roza and sermon in the mosque, he had taken measures[36].

The Waqf deeds of Afsharid and Zandiyeh

In this period, Waqfs were made by Mohammad Taqi Khan Bafqi, and his sons. so that after the settlement of legal funds, real estate expenses, and trustees fees, they were spent on various things, including farms, subordinate lands, houses and bathhouses, fuel of Najaf Ashraf, Deha Muharram, Taaziya ceremony for Imam Hossainand help the pilgrims, poor and students.

Waqf deed of Dowlat Abad Qanat

Among the many Waqfs of the Bafqi dynasty, the Waqf of Dolat Abad qanat attracts more attention than other. This Waqf deed, in addition to

---

[35] Mohammad Reza Tasdighi, *A Lasting Monument of Yazd*, Yazd: Setayesh, 2000, p. 453.
[36] Fatemeh Kamalian Mehrizi and Zohreh Cheraghi, "Analytical Study of the Proses of Waqfs for Specially Water in Yazd (a Case Study of the Waqf of Qanat during Ilkhanate and Timurid)," *Miras-e Javidan* 114, 2020, p. 100.

booklet of Waqf in Yazd[37], is also mentioned in detail in comprehensive book of Jafari[38]. Daulat Abad Garden in Yazd, is one of the buildings of the Afsharid and Zand periods during the reign of Mohammad Taqi Khan Bafqi. It includes Waqfs that have spiritual-religious, social and public benefit aspects. On the one hand, the purpose of Muhammad Taqi Khan Bafqi from the Waqfs of Qanat in Daulat Abad garden was to use it for the poor, pilgrims, holding Ashura and Roza ceremony, and spending in Najaf, Karbala. Mashhad, Kufa Mosque, Students' feasts on religious holidays, salaries for servants, allowances and maintenance of gardens and properties. On the other hand, in order to give charity to the tomb shrine, the development of lands and gardens that were drunk from the water of the Daulat Abad qanats, and also the importance of the water was considered to strengthen the motivation for endowers in the direction of water facilities[39].

The Waqf deeds from the Qajar period

Based on historical sources related to Waqfs in Yazd city from the Qajar period, we are faced with several Waqf inscriptions, which will be mentioned below,

Shahzadeh Fazel Hosseinieh

This Hosseinieh, which is one of the buildings of Mohammad Wali Mirza, the governor of Yazd during the Qajar period, on the wall of the eastern entrance of the Hosseinieh, an Waqf inscription has been found from its Saqqakhaneh, With the content that believers and Muslims should drink water and remember the thirsty of Hussein ibn Ali and remember and rejoice the endower and his parents of with prayer, and may the one who covets the stone be cursed by God. Year 1294 AH[40].

Biouk Alley Hosseinieh

The Waqf inscriptions obtained from this Hosseiniya, which are written in naskh script and dated 1277 and 1309 AH, indicate that they contain interesting points about the related Waqf usages.

In the first Waqf inscription, 5000 m2 of land, 2 rooms with a vault and located in Buyuk alley, whose incomes should be used annually for the ta'zieh ceremony, and whoever asked the heirs to sell it, will be cursed by God. In the second Waqf inscription, while referring to several hectares of mulberry trees located in Ahrestan, known as Baba Haq Muhammad's garden, it is mentioned that every year lamp oil was used for the lighting of the mentioned mosque, and after his death, it would be transferred to the

---

[37] Mirza Abd al- Wahab Taraz, *Booklet Yazd Waqfs*, Tehran: Iran Zamin, 1961, p. 44–45.
[38] Mohammad Jafar Nayini, *Comprehensive Book of Jafari*, trans. Iraj Afshar, Tehran: National Antiquities Association, 1973, p. 345.
[39] Ibidem, p. 359.
[40] Afshar, Iraj. *Monuments of Yazd*. Yazd: National Antiquities Association, 1994, p. 751.

decedent and then to the next generations otherwise, the violator would be condemned to eternal damnation[41].

Molla Ismail saqqakhneh

This Saqqakhaneh was endowed in 1245 AH to Hossain ibn Ali with Nastaliq script. All the profits from it should be spent on the repair and maintenance of a dokkan with a closet located behind the Saqqakhaneh[42].

Imam Hosseini house

In Fahadan neighborhood and near Bazaar Now, there is a residential house belonging to the Qajar period (1250 A.H.), where every year a mourning ceremony in the commemoration of Hossain ibn Ali, was held and the owner of this house was Haj Mohammad Lari. A stone inscription written in Naskh script left on the walls of the vestibule and inside the house says that the endower has endowed two houses with furniture, a day of Hosseini farm and sources of fifteen jars of water in Mohammad Abad to Hossain ibn Ali and with many expressions such as prayers and curses for the endower and the destroyer has emphasized on preservation and maintenance of the house[43].

Dowlat Abad garden Cistern

Iraj Afshar have given a detailed description about this cistern[44]. The garden, cistern and caravanserai of Mohammad Taqi Khan were built for the rest of Khorasan caravans and these Waqfs were endowed to Imam Reza.

Seyyed Sahra cistern

This cistern is located next to a tomb shrine with the same name, which based on the Waqf inscription at its entrance portal written in naskh script, was built for the purpose of drinking, ablution, purification, and endowed to imam Hossain. It includes a prayer for its repairers, and a curse for those who waste the water.

Godak bathhouse Cistern in Fahadan

This cistern is located in Fahadan neighborhood and has been made by Haj Abdul Karim, the son of Agha Ali Akbar Tajerizdi Afshar, one of the well-known merchants in Yazd. The Waqf inscription on the stone at the entrance portal of the building, which is written in naskh script and the date 1287 AH is engraved on it, contains all the items and topics of the inscription of Seyyed Sahra cistern.

Badgiri cistern

This cistern is located in the Panbeh Karan neighborhood in Yazd. Its Waqf inscription was written in 1862 AD. Its endower (Haji Mohammad Hossein, son of Nurolah Yazdi) had considered the income from the gardens, land, Qanats he had in Yazd and Taft, expenses for buying water, oil for the

---

[41] Afshar, Iraj. *Monuments of Yazd*. Yazd: National Antiquities Association, 1994, p. 753.
[42] Ibidem, p. 754.
[43] Ibidem, p. 716.
[44] Ibidem, p. 794.

lights of the corridors, a reciter who said the call to prayer three times in front of the cistern, and the water carrier for bringing water to cistern.

Conclusion

By studying the physical fabric of Yazd city, we realize that the function of Waqf played a significant role in urban life. Because the endowment was not only for the purpose of building and improving the city and with the help of the encouragement and support of the people, it caused the establishment of religious and non-religious Waqf buildings with a political meaning, but also with the intention of maintaining the development and modernization of the city in this way, provided the budget for religious institutions. Another act of Waqf was the creation of public facilities, which appeared in the fabric of the architecture in the cities, consequently, attractions were created for the migration of people to the city, and as a result, the development and construction of the city followed. On the one hand, the motivation for building such facilities was done with the purpose of benevolence and commemoration of the ruling class, their wives, merchants, marketers and influential People. On the other hand, by bequeathing Waqfs to their children, sultans and rulers provided family support in order to protect their properties and assets in order to prevent the risk of usurpation of property. In each period, the Waqf usages had a great variety and was formed based on the needs and concerns of the society. The function of the Waqf was generally divided into two categories: religious and public buildings. In religious buildings, there was a deep and firm connection with the tradition of Waqf and according to the belief and attachment of the People to religious duties and beliefs. Regarding the spiritual and emotional needs of people and devotion to the imams, there was an attempt to develop religious buildings. In respect to public buildings, economic aspects were also adopted to obtain income in order to cover the costs of religious buildings, as well as the income from estate and Waqf income expended for the restoration, repair, preservation and maintenance of various buildings. Waqf deed is considered the best document to study in the history of Yazd architecture. So that it provides us with valuable information on a micro scale about urban elements and religious and non-religious buildings in the city. The supposed reconstruction of a complex of dilapidated, destroyed, or unplanned buildings is revealed by Waqf deeds. Also, exact date of the construction of the building, its background, location and the climate of the region and the architectural patterns... are the result of the existence of the Waqf deeds.

However, Waqf inscriptions have a special advantage due to their hard and resistant material and due to the lack of access to the original paper command and can be used in addition to completing personal information about the events and incidents mentioned in Waqf deeds. The art of

calligraphy, applied script, applied stone, decorative motifs on the stone, purposes of Waqf, place of installation, contents and text of Waqf had their own characteristics.

Bibliography:

Afshar, Iraj. Monuments of Yazd. Yazd: National Antiquities Association, 1994.
Attaabadi, Abbas. "Waqf Buildings of Yazd from Ilkhanid to the End of Timurid Period." Master's thesis, Yazd University, 2015.
Cheraghi, Zohreh, and Zare Sangderazi, Safa. "Waqfs of Women in Yazd from the Muzaffarids to the End of the Qajar Period." Research Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies Social-Economic History 2, 2018, pp. 31–83.
Danesh Yazdi, Fatemeh. "Analysis of the Waqf of Waqf Culture in the Safavid Period Based on Stone Inscriptions in the Islamic Buildings of Yazd City." Miras-e Javidan 60, 2006, pp. 88–103.
Danesh Yazdi, Fatemeh. "Waqf in the Culture of the People of Yazd Based on Stone Inscriptions." Farhang-e Mardom-e Iran 4, 2007, pp. 77–102.
Emami Meybodi, Seyyed Mansour and Razzagianpour, Hadis. "The Importance of Waqf in Urban Development (Especially Yazd Province)", Razavi National Culture Conference, 2018, pp. 1–6.
Erfan Far, Mohammad Javad. List of Iranian Waqf Documents, Yazd City and Suburbs. Yazd: Charitable Administration of Yazd Province, 2007.
Hosseinizadeh Mehrjardi, Saeedeh. "The Current Tradition of Waqf as a Factor of Sustainability in the Development of Architecture and Urban Development in Yazd in the 8th and 9th Centuries AH," 2013, pp.1–6.
Iwatake, Akio. "The Waqf of a Timurid Amir the Example of Chaqmaq Shami in Yazd." Translated by Seyyed Mohammad Mahdi Hashemi. Miras-e Javidan 49, 2004, pp. 34–49.
Kamalian Mehrizi, Fatemeh, and Zohreh Cheraghi. "Analytical Study of the Proses of Waqfs for Specially Water in Yazd (a Case Study of the Waqf of Qanat during Ilkhanate and Timurid)." Miras-e Javidan 114, 2020, pp. 89–102.
Kateb, Ahmad bin Hossein bin Ali. New History of Yazd. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 2006.
Kazemini, Mohammad. The Waqf Deed of the Amir Chakhmaq and His Wife Seti Fatimah. Qom: Sahifey-e Kherad, 2018.
Kondo, Nobuaki. "Socio-Economic Background of Khans of Yazd." Miras-e Javidan 29, 2000, pp. 73–82.
Minovi, Mojtaba. Rab'-e Rashidi's Waqf Deed. Translated by Iraj Afshar. Tehran: Association of National Artifacts, 1976.
Mir Jalili, Mohammad Jafar. Researching the Historical Course and Social-Cultural Effects of Waqf in Yazd. Tehran: Broadcasting of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2000.
Mir Jalili, Mohammad Jafar. "Waqfs of Yazd in the 7th and 8th Centuries AH." Culture and Anthropology 4, 2001, pp. 604–616.
Mostowfi Bafghi, Mohammad Mofid. Comprehensive Book of Mofidi. Vol. 3. Yazd: Asatir, 1962.
Mousavi Bafroui, Mahnaz. "Waqf and Its Administrative Developments in Yazd." Miras-e Javidan 36–37, 2008, pp. 49–59.

Mousavi, Seyyed Ahmad. "Yazd and the Long-Lasting Tradition of Waqf." Miras-e Javidan 23–24, 1997, p. 65–69.

Nayini, Mohammad Jafar. Comprehensive Book of Jafari. Translated by Iraj Afshar. Tehran: National Antiquities Association, 1973.

Shahabi, Seyyed Mohammad Reza. "The Foundations of the Theoretical Framework of the Waqf Effect in the Formation of Urban Spaces." Geographical Research Quarterly 72, 2013, pp. 135–150.

Tahmasbi, Ehsan. "Examining How Documents Are Used in The Studing of the History of Iranian Architecture." Quarterly Journal of Iranian Architectural Studies 6, 2013, pp. 159–170.

Taraz, Mirza Abd al- Wahab. Booklet Yazd Waqfs. Tehran: Iran Zamin, 1961.

Tasdighi, Mohammad Reza. A Lasting Monument of Yazd. Yazd: Setayesh, 2000.

The Church in Densuș.
Between the Sacred and the Profane

Luchian (Tanana) Petruța-Iulia[*]

Abstract: *Temple of Zamolxe, pagan Roman temple of the god Mars, mausoleum of Trajan's best friend, the general Longinus Maximus, church built by the Goths in the 4th century, "divine work stolen by nocturnal genies"[1], the first church in Haţeg and perhaps in the entire country, "unparalleled in all Romania"[2], foundation of Litovoi, a church similar to Sân-Nicoara in Curtea de Argeş, or a church with a triptych as valuable as that of the famous Rubliov, "St. Nicholas" Church is an Orthodox place of worship in Densuș, Hunedoara county; one of the oldest churches in Romania, apparently dating from the 12th-13th centuries, built on the ruins of a building from the 4th century AD, it has a square plan, with the nave pierced by a tower, resting on a vault and equipped with a deep semicircular apse; the entire construction is covered with stone slabs, and most of its material (river boulders, marble slabs with Latin inscriptions, capitals, tombstones, sewer pipes) comes from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, the capital of Roman Dacia (located nearby); the mural painting of the monument dates from the 15th century. The Densuş church, like any unclassifiable and imprecisely dated monument, becomes a mitigating argument for any demonstration about the descendants of the Dacians, the beginning of Christianity, the paths of migratory peoples, the existence of Romanians or about the creative and universal genius of our people.*

Keywords: *church, monument, Romanesque, Byzantine, harmony, art, stone, architecture, painting, chromatic, vault, apse, cross, spirituality, saints, registers, Christian, Densuş, time, magical, mystery*

The country of Haţeg[3] is an area full of charm, poetry, mystery and history in the south-east of Transylvania. It is considered to be one of the

---

[*] Student majoring in *Art History and Theory*, 3rd year, National University of Arts "G. Enescu" Iasi, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, e-mail: luchianpetruta@yahoo.com.
[1] George Călinescu argued it was a "bizarre church, made of marbles and columns, collected from Sarmizegetusa. a small pillar of the four supporting the narrow spire is a Roman stela bearing the name of Longinus. It is a marble with an elegant inscription, bright, beautiful like a statue. Hidden in the shadows, barely illuminated by a few strands of sunlight coming through some windows, it gives the impression of a divine work stolen by nocturnal genies.", George Călinescu, *Studii şi conferinţe*, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1956, p. 10
[2] Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l'histoire de la vie byzantine*, Ed. Mihai Breza, Bucureşti, 1971, p. 21.
[3] Radu Popa, *La începuturile Evului Mediu românesc. Țara Haţegului*, Ed. Dacia, Bucureşti, 1988, p. 18.

densest regions in the country from the point of view of historical monuments. The depression between Retezat, Poiana Ruscă and Șureanu mountains is divided by the natural border of the Dumbrava, Ploștina and Poieni hills into two territories: Haţeg to the west and Pui to the east. The area is also known as Haţeg-Pui and is mentioned in the *Ioaniţi Diploma* in 1247[4].

The imagination of the visionary writer Jules Verne places the action of a well-known novel, *Castle in the Carpathians*[5], in the Haţeg county, in the Colţ Citadel, whose ruins guard the road and a stone church, which are shrouded in a special mystery.

The people of Haţeg, inhabitants of the territory once occupied by the great city of the province of Dacia Colonia, Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa Metropolis[6], did not refrain themselves and came up with the construction of stone, marble and metal from the ruins of ancient buildings in the Roman Empire[7]. These materials, many of them with Latin inscriptions still visible, can be found in the structure of the solid walls of the stone churches, treasures of the local history, insufficiently known and exploited.

Among the existing stone churches in the Haţeg country, four are reproduced in the images of the postage stamps of the show "Stone Churches in the Haţeg country". On the postage stamp with the nominal value of 3 lei, the image of the *Saint Nicholas* Church is reproduced in Densuş, the oldest Romanian church where religious services are still held today, dating from the 13th century.

---

[4] I. Voledi, *Drumuri în Haţeg*, Ed. Stadion, București, 1971, p. 20.

[5] Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Castelarea Carpatică*, Ed. Mega, Cluj-Napoca 2005, p. 15.

[6] Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Monumente medievale din Ţara Haţegului*, Ed. Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 50.

[7] Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (full name: Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa) was the capital of the Romanian province of Dacia. Located at a distance of 40 km from Sarmizegetusa Regia, the former capital of the Dacian kingdom, the Ulpia Traiana colony was founded after its conquest by the emperor Trajan, between the years 108-110. According to an epigraphic monument, the city was founded by order of the emperor by the governor-general Decimus Terentius Scaurianus. Under Hadrian, the name Sarmizegetusa was added, and during the reign of Emperor Alexander Severus it became a *metropolis*. The settlement experienced a period of development that lasted until the second half of the 3rd century, when the Aurelian retreat took place. During this period, it was built using various materials, such as local river and rock stone, marble, brick and tile. The most imposing building, the amphitheater, had a capacity of approx. 5000 people. The ruins of the ancient city constitute an archaeological complex (LMI code HD-I-s-A-03205) located in the village of Sarmizegetusa in the Hunedoara county. Nearby is the Sarmizegetusa Archeology Museum, established in 1924, which houses objects recovered during archaeological research. To date, a large part of the surface of the ancient city has not been excavated by archaeologists.

Fig. 1 Postal stamps   **Fig. 2** Densuș image   **Fig. 3** 5000 lei banknote

I learned about the church in Densuș for the first time when I was a teenager, due to the money[8]. The church appeared, next to the gate of the Alba Iulia fortress and the Dacian wolf on the 5000 lei banknote in the early 1990s. The purple banknote had the bust of Avram Iancu on the front, and on the reverse a landscape from the Apuseni mountains with a church before the Aurelian withdrawal. Then I found it mentioned very often in the articles of dacophiles who referred to the birthplace of the Densusian family[9], especially that of Nicolae, who authored *Dacia Preistorica* (only when I entered the Hațeg country and saw the church did I realize that it was normal for an intelligent man, like Nicolae Densușianu, to go crazy and believe that the whole civilization of the world was born inside the Carpathian arch). I have always wanted to see the building catalogued by Nicolae Iorga as "unparalleled in all of Romania". Densuș[10] is a quiet village, where time

---

[8] https://www.romfilatelia.ro/ro/biserici-de-piatra-din-tara-hategului/.

[9] Nicolae Densușianu (b. 18 April 1846, Densuș, Hunedoara - d. March 24, 1911) was a Romanian jurist and historian, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, best known for his work *Dacia preistorică*. As a historian, Densușianu stood out as one of the successors of Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki's work: he published between 1887 and 1897 six volumes of documents related to Romanian history, the monograph from 1884, entitled *Revoluția lui Horea în Transilvania și Ungaria, 1784-1785*, and many studies of military history. Influenced by the Transylvanian School, he was a follower of the Latin movement. Like Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, he attributed the ideas of his generation to the previous era and had an obsession with elucidating the beginning of Romanian history, an undertaking during which he appealed, in the absence of reliable sources, to traditions, legends and folklore. He worked on the book *Dacia preistorică*, published posthumously in 1913, for a quarter of a century; it was described by contemporary and later historians as a work of fantasy. If at the time of publication, the *opus* only aroused the emulation of some amateur historians, clashing with the professionalism of the critical school, during the communist regime it became a source of the protochronist current. The son of the united parish priest in Densuș, *Bizantius Pop*, and of *Sofia*, Nicolae was the brother of Aron Densușianu, poet and literary critic, professor of Latin at the University of Iasi. Professor Aron's son was the poet Ovid Densușianu. Nicolae's family name was *Pop*, and the first to have his name changed was his brother Aron. When he arrived at the Gymnasium in Blaj, he received the name Densușianu to be more easily distinguished from the other students who bore the name of Pop; the new name was later appropriated by Nicolae.

[10] Densuș commune is located in the central-western part of Hunedoara county, at the foot of the Poiana-Ruscă mountains, having as a relief form extensions of the radial peaks of the

seems to stand still. It houses a real Romanian treasure: the oldest stone place of worship in our country where services are still held. The church in Densuș has something magical, hard to put into words, but which will forever link you to this blessed land.

Fig. 4 Densuș village

Fig. 5 Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa

The area is charged with a special energy; could it be from its neighbors, the enchanted mountains of the Retezat and the ruins of the fortress of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, the former capital of Roman Dacia? We do not know exactly, it is certain that it conquers you irremediably. The short road from Hațeg to Densuș is a delight, you cross a smooth area of the Hațeg Depression, and the image of the Retezat Mountains is wonderful.
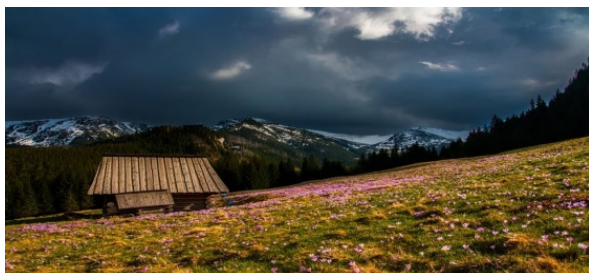
Fig. 6 Hațeg depression

Fig. 7 Bust of Nicolae Densușianu, at the Church gate

---

mountains that unfold in the form of a fan lost in the depression of the Hateg Country, similar in appearance to a real plain, which according to some geographers, was once a sea bay. The climate, in general, meets the characteristics of the mountainous area with the four seasons, with a temperate-continental character with submontane specificity. The precipitation regime is quite rich, a characteristic of the areas at the foot of the mountains. Densuș commune, located in the south-western part of Hațeg town, is connected to it by DJ 687 G Densuș-Totești and further by DN 68 Totești-Hațeg.

I would like to tell you the date of construction of this mysterious church, but even historians have not agreed on this point. Some say that before the arrival of the Romans, there was a temple dedicated to Zamolxe on the site of the church. Others claim that the mausoleum of the general Longinus Maximus would have existed on the site of the church in Densuș.[11] Just as many say that the church in Densuș was built in the 2nd – 3rd century, on the ruins of a pagan temple dedicated to the god Mars, at whose altar the Romans brought to Dacia used to make sacrifices. This hypothesis is supported by the presence of an unusual aspect for an Orthodox church: its altar is not built on the east side, but is oriented to the south. After the adoption of the Christian religion, the temple of Mars would have been transformed into a paleo-Christian church, then rebuilt in the 13th - 14th centuries, when it underwent the most important changes since the first documentary attestations exists.
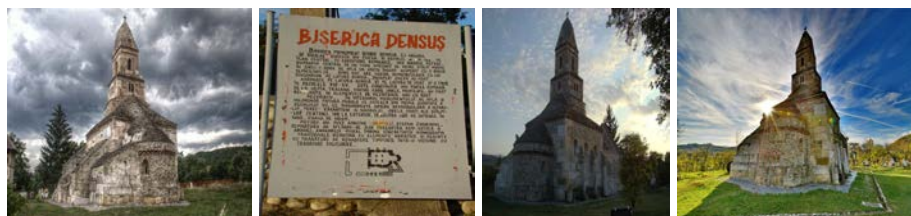
Fig. 8 Images of the Densuș Church and the plan of the

Leaving the elucidation of the origins of the monument to the archaeologists and the investigations on a wider territory than the strict perimeter of the church, and the impressionist appreciations in the service of those passionate about the mysteries of history, we will begin the description of this monument of architectural uniqueness, generally placed by art historians after the churches of Sântămărie - Orlea and Strei; precisely because of this, precise dating of the construction is impossible[12].

The textured walls of materials of different consistencies from different eras, as well as the proportion of the monument, which resembles the monument from Adamclisi rather than a church, raised the spirits of those who, with more or less aplomb, examined it from the second half of the 18th century until recently.[13] Architraves, thresholds, canal tubes, votive altars, columns and capitals, gate slabs, large blocks of dressed stone, marble,

---

[11] David Prodan, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, Ed. Dacia, București, 1967, p. 65.
[12] Radu Popa, *Viața bisericească a romanilor din spațiul intracarpatic în secolele XII-XIII. Biseica din Densuș,* Studii si articole I, Ed. Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 25.
[13] David Prodan, *op.cit*., p. 36.

limestone or sandstone, raw stone and bricks are the pieces that make up the palimpsest of the monument[14].

A new day seems to be born from the abyss of darkness. Drowsily, the sun tries to open its eyes on the walls of the Densuş church. Its glow leads us towards the two lions on the roof, then flowing smoothly on the construction of river stones, marble and columns, old ruins of Sarmizegetusa, which changed its name to Ulpia Traiana after the Roman conquest. A mysterious monument that bewitches you with its beauty is waiting to be discovered... Densuş Church has been there for hundreds of years, as a call to not forget, to rediscover history. It does not look like any of the churches I have seen before. It is bizarre and fascinating, a wonder whose secrets have not been and perhaps will never be discovered. Its history is all the more interesting because it is said that, before becoming an Orthodox church, the monument was a Roman temple dedicated to the god Mars, that cruel god of war, whom only bloody battles made him happy, to the despair of his father, Jupiter.

With an unusual severe appearance, this "conglomerate of several eras" rises on a central plan somewhat similar to the Byzantine simple Greek cross plan with a vaulted semicircular apse. The central square nucleus is marked in elevation by what would have been the spire in a church of this type, the space around it being vaulted in a quarter cylinder. Here it is rather about a bell tower made up of two superimposed prismatic bodies, with a pyramidal stone covering, as can be seen in the two churches mentioned above. The period most often used for framing the church is placed in the last quarter of the 13th century, corresponding to the late Romanesque, and the constructive stages vary depending on the researcher. The problem of appendages attached to the central body not being elucidated, will simply be mentioned in the order of their importance[15]. To the south of the semicircular altar covered with inscribed Roman bricks, a diaconicon of considerable size which entered under a Gothic stone portal, was attached. An L-shaped corridor started from the southern side, near the cloakroom, and ended at the northern end. Probably built in the 15th century, the fact that the icon of the patron saint is placed, according to custom, above the entrance to the church, was cited as an argument; this space was assimilated to a porch, demolished in 1842-1843 to save the church and the tower. The eastern end of this corridor-pronaos seems to have been the site of a side chapel with vaulted altar and nave. To the west, the church ended with a facade with a triangular pediment. There were also disputes regarding the function of the place as a

---

[14] Virgil Vatăşianu, *Vechile biserici de piatră româneşti din judeţul Hunedoara*, Tip. "Cartea Românească" S.A., Cluj, 1930, p. 80.
[15] Dobrei Florin, *Tezaur hunedorean - bisericile ortodoxe monument istoric*, Editura Episcopiei Devei și Hunedoarei, Deva, 2014, p. 72.

cnezial court church or a monastery. The annexes were interpreted as a transition towards the latter function.

Fig. 9 Priest serving at the Densuș Church

Inside, a few rays of light boldly penetrate through some tiny windows, as if wanting to cut the power of the darkness that tends to hide everything. The feeling you get when entering here is one of peace and mystery, and the priest who greets us seems like a character who is part of this painting. His kind look makes you think of a keeper of treasures or a wise man who is waiting for you to go and ask him, and he kindly answers: "The church is one of the oldest in Romania, being declared a historical monument. It has the Patron Saint Nicholas. The nave, square in shape, is centrally superimposed by a tower supported on four massive pillars, around which there is a narrow space covered by a semi-cylindrical vault. The mural dates from the first half of the 15th century and belongs to the artist Ştefan Zugravul. The iconostasis, but also the scene of the subsequent judgment, were painted in 1789, by Popa Simeon from Pitesti. In the church there are eight Roman altars, dedicated to the gods, some of which have inscriptions in Latin... Inside the narrow and high interior, the tower is supported by four pillars formed by two Roman votive altars placed one above the other, connected by raised arches.[16] Above the place where the bell hung, you entered the tower directly from the roof to a secret, through a shorter corridor, vaulted in a quarter cylinder.[17] An escalator led to another room, flanked by stone benches. Under the roof, on the cornice of the tower and the central body of the nave, as well as in the upper part of the apse, there are decorative girdles made of bricks laid in a zigzag pattern, and at the southeast corner of the base of the spire there are two sleeping lions"[18].

I think the most interesting thing about the church in Densuș is the fact that the stones from which it is built were brought from the ruins of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, located just a few kilometres away. The building is massive with late Romanesque influences and has an unusual

[16] Mădălina Mirea (autor), Dominica Macri (trad.), Şerben Bonciocat (foto), *Haţeg, Ţara Bisericilor de Piatră,* Ed. Igloo, Bucureşti, 2007, p.18.
[17] https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biserica Sfîntul Nicolae din Densuș.
[18] Radu Popa, *Viaţa bisericească a românilor din spaţiul intracarpatic în secolele XII-XIII. Biseica din Densuş*, Studii si articole I, Ed. Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 55.

appearance with a square nave. The roof is built entirely of stone, and the altar is oriented to the south, and not to the east, as in normal Christian churches. Right next to the roof, above the altar there are two statues in the form of lions, which once touched their tails. And the roof is not an ordinary one at all, having the shape of a bird with open wings in flight.

The stone tower dominates the surroundings. It is covered with stone slabs. The stone casing system of the tower is also present in the towers of the churches in Strei, Sântamaria-Orlea or the Colț Monastery. The jagged decorations of the tower are made of Roman bricks. This type of decoration can be found in the traditional architecture of Maramureș, but it is carved in wood and is called "wolf's teeth", having, according to traditions, an apotropaic role (role of defence against evil spirits). At the top of the tower there is a stone cross of the "Latin cross" type. On the edge of the second section of the tower, the craftsmen placed a Corinthian capital upside down in a corner. Why is this? The vents at the top of the tower are actually ingeniously reused ancient Roman ceramic piping elements[19].

In the immediate vicinity of the Densuș Church there are the family tombs of the famous historian Nicolae Densușianu (born Pop, 1846-1911), originally from the village of Densuș. The Greek-Catholic priest Byzantius Pop, Densușianu's father, is buried here. Historian Nicolae Densușianu is the author of the controversial book "Dacia Preistorica" published posthumously in 1913. This historian and his brother, Aron Densușianu, launched quite bold hypotheses about the origins of this church in their native village.

This architectural conglomerate is composed of rough quarried stone in the form of slabs, "of large squared blocks, partly of marble, partly of limestone and sandstone, of spindles and bases of columns, of slabs from gates, sewer pipes and votive altars with inscriptions, to which additions of raw stone, probably quarried nearby, and bricks for an ornamental frieze can be seen." The building materials were not uniformly used, but certain parts of the building contain more stone pieces of large size (the nave and the diaconicon) and others are exclusively made of raw stone (the apse, the awning and the corridor). Regarding the plan of the church in Densuș, this monument appears to have a square plan, with a spire in the center, and a semicircular apse. Some authors consider this plan to be an adaptation of a Byzantine church of the central Macedonian type, with a Greek cross plan.

The problem that gave historians a lot of trouble was the handiwork of the first craftsman who gave life to the church. This problem found two conflicting possible solutions. Virgil Vătășianu claims that: "However, the elevation presents details that indicate that the craftsman from Densuș has never seen a church of this type" (Byzantine church of central Macedonian type). He states that the vaulting system, composed of a support vault in the

---

[19] Dobrei Florin, *Bisericile ortodoxe hunedorene*, Ed.Eftimie Murgu, Reșița, 2011, p. 32.

shape of a quarter cylinder and arranged around the central span, is a very different stability solution from the typical vaulting system for the Greek cross plan.

In opposition there lies the opinion of Vasile Drăguţ[20] who believes that the craftsman Ştefan of Densuş travelled over a geographical area that covered the Romanian extra-Carpathian countries. The craftsman was therefore familiar with inscribed Greek cross architecture.

A satisfactory argument in this sense can be found in Adrian Andrei Rusu who states that "At the end of the 13th century, the master builder from Densuş proved that he was in a relationship with what had been built outside Haţeg. The Catholic model from Sântămaria-Orlea, with the specific shape of the roof, was not the only one for him. The alignment of the reused Roman columns clearly indicates that the role of the buttresses was already known, even if they had no functional purpose at Densuş. However, nowhere, in contemporary Haţeg, did the craftsman have anywhere to observe buttresses".[21]

As discontinuous and eclectic the architecture of the church in Densuş, as chronologically and partially stylistically the fragmentary preserved painting. Painted "in the year 6952 (1443) the month of October 23", the ensemble here is significant for the way in which the Byzantine iconographic program was adopted in the Transylvanian Orthodox environment during a period of strong Catholic offensive, but also for the privileged position it held. This is because of the victories of the Romanian princes in the 14th and 15th centuries. Under the south-eastern window of the apse of the altar there is signed in Cyrillic letters the name of the painter Ştefan, with whom a second craftsman, "smaller among the painters", also worked.

The western wall retains vague traces of the Last Judgment scene. The advanced stage of degradation does not allow a thorough analysis of the paintings in this area.

The paintings of the central pillars were also unknown in the past. *Saint Marina* is painted on the western face of the NW pillar and is preparing to hit a devil with the hammer, which she holds tightly by the forelock with her left hand. On the western face of the pillar, the Holy Trinity is depicted, in a completely original iconographic composition. The southern face of the same pillar is decorated with the figure of a crowned holy martyr – represented up to the hip. On the northern face of the SE pillar, there appears the figure of *Saint Bartholomew* carrying his skin on a stick[22].

---

[20] Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Biserica Sfântului Nicolae şi curtea nobiliară a Arceştilor de la Densuş (jud. Hunedoara)*, *Arheologia Medievală VII*, p. 52.
[21] *Ibidem*.
[22] I.D. Ştefănescu, *Iconografia artei bizantine şi a picturii feudale româneşti, Editura Meridiane*, Bucureşti, 1973, p. 27.

On the eastern walls of the nave, on either side of the triumphal arch, two important painted areas are preserved. Divided into four registers – the first two upper ones flanked towards the triumphal arch by a wide decorative bandeau with a zigzag ribbon (light red and grey-green on a dark red background) – both areas have a similar compositional organization. In the NE corner, the upper registers are dedicated to the saints, "doctors without silver", represented up to the hip, with the usual iconographic attributes: chalice, box, spoon. Of large size, group two in each register, the holy *anarchs* cannot be precisely identified due to the lack of inscriptions. The figures from the first register are preserved only fragmentarily, the upper part being destroyed. The third register, much narrower than the previous ones, includes four bust images of saints: Kison with a cross and a bowl, Cliporta with a cross, Paul with a scroll and Peter with a scroll, as well. In the lower, wider register, two warrior saints are depicted – Procopius drawing an arrow from his quiver and Theodore with spear and shield; there is also St. Nicholas as bishop, blessing. In the SE corner, from the upper register, only one figure is preserved, a holy martyr with a crown, next to the triumphal arch. The second register includes three figures of saints, the last two in a precarious state of preservation. Repeating the arrangement in the NE corner, the third register is much narrower, iconographically devoted to the representation of some saints. Efimia, Donosia, Anastasia can also be identified, a saint dressed in white, followed by the fragment of another figure (probably also a saint). In the last register, the Archangel Michael and the holy warriors George, Dumitru and Theodore appear.

In the altar, the painting[23] has been satisfactorily preserved only in the lower register. The very small remains that are preserved in the other areas still allow the reconstruction of the overall iconography. The central area of the vault was probably reserved for *Platitera* (The Mother of God with the Enthroned Child) between the Archangels and the Prophets. In the SE part of the vault only an old, haloed figure with a beard and white hair, definitely a prophet, is visible, if one is looking up. From *Împărtăşania apostolilor/ The Apostles' Eucharist,* which occupies the next register, only one erased figure of an apostle is preserved, in the NE part of the hemicycle. There is also a trace of register with busts of prophets of which only five vague figures remain in the north side. The lower register contains a theory of great hierarchs and deacons; in the center, Jesus is represented Jesus in a paten, on a canopied altar, with an officiating deacon angel on either side. In the assembly, the register has the following composition: holy hierarch (mutilated face) in a sackcloth decorated with black and white checks, followed by two silhouettes of hierarchs, almost completely erased, an image of Jesus in pain, projected on the background of a cross, Arsenius holding a

---

[23] *Ibidem.*

locked gospel, Athanasius with a phylactery, angel with censer, canopy altar and Jesus in paten; angel burning incense, candlestick, archdeacon with censer, holy hierarch Gregory with the gospel, hierarch with phylactery (door to diaconicon), deacon, hierarch. It should be noted that all the hierarchs are dressed in tunics with clavis, they have epitrachelia and cassocks, sackcloths and omophoria decorated with crosses. The lower part of the wall is decorated with the usual drapery pattern[24].

In addition to the fragments listed so far, we should also mention the patron saint icon, very mutilated, from the deep rectangular niche above the entrance door, representing the Mother of God with the baby – *Glykophilousa type* – and Saint Nicholas. The sides of the niche are decorated with a wide border composed of a band of semi-palms arranged in a circle with mutual alternations and of a band decorated with a zigzag ribbon having at the entrances small rhombuses provided, in the corners, with tiny lily flowers with three petals and, in the center, with the cross motif made up of dots. Remains of colour can also be seen on the eastern wall of the room added on the southern side of the church.

What is surprising about the paintings of the church in Densuș is the limited iconographic program, the essence of the complex representations from the Christological cycle, the entire decoration being concentrated around the rendering of the main categories of saints.[25] Emphasizing the importance of the fact that the entire ensemble bears the stylistic and iconographic stamp of Orthodox painting – in the Byzantine tradition – therefore integrating into the artistic family of which the Romanian countries were part, we justify the comparisons with distant monuments. The iconography of the Densuș Church finds an equivalent in the Moldavian painting of the period, in the pronaos of the famous founder of Dolheștii Mari of the hetman Șendrea, the gatekeeper of Suceava, whose decoration was made before 1481. As there, the original iconographic decoration occupies the restricted surface and was made up of several unequal registers affecting several categories of saints.

Some more special iconographic aspects are revealed by the analysis of the paintings on the interior pillars. The representation of the *Holy Trinity* from the *New Testament* is rarely found in old orthodox iconography. At Densuș, it appears as follows: on a blue background, God the Father is depicted, with white hair gathered in two tails falling on his shoulders; with a white beard, in white clothing, he holds his hands on the shoulders of the baby Jesus dressed in a white shirt, which is reminiscent of peasant shirts through its decoration. Jesus blesses with his right hand and holds a twisted

---

[24] *Ibidem.*

[25] Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Istoria Transilvaniei medievale: de la etnogeneza românilor până la Mihai Viteazul*, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p. 15

candlestick with his left. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, whose head, with a halo, exceeds the frame of the panel, is painted on the crest of God the Father. Also, quite unusual for Orthodox historiography, Saint Bartholomew is depicted as a martyr. The ochre-pale silhouette of the council, completely naked, skinned or rather wearing his skin on a stick placed on his left shoulder is drawn on a vaguely bluish background, in brown colour; in his right hand, he holds a small sickle, an iconographic symbol[26].

Artistic virtues – the monumentality of vision[27], the firm but also generous design, the chromatics with serious modulations – prove that the craftsman Ștefan is the author of the paintings in the altar, of the first two upper registers in the nave and of the patron icon. Against the ultramarine background of the support, the figures painted by this craftsman stand out with majesty and grace alike, enveloping themselves in the broad rhythm of the drawing, in the calm chromatic harmony, in the mysterious solemnity of the ritual. Of particular beauty are the two thaumaturgist saints. Represented from front to hip, the first holding a box, the second a chalice, both make the same gesture as if they want to offer the healing medicine with the spoon held in the right hand. The saint on the left is a beardless young man with a pouty face, his hair combed in tight curls, after the Hellenistic fashion taken up by the painting of the Palaiologan period. The face, calligraphed with purity, the long and fine nose, the small mouth, the large and expressive eyes – recall the models of the same era, as well as the subtle modelling, rarely emphasized with white flashes. His garment, consisting of a white tunic and a yellow cloak, is richly decorated with pearls, either arranged in strings along the borders, at the cuffs and at the collar, or scattered in groups of four. The wide folds are harmoniously grouped but the modelling is flat, achieved either by darker tones of the local colour or by flashes of white. Presenting the same stylistic characters, the neighbouring saint is depicted with the face of a mature, bearded man with a stern expression, almost ascetic. His green cloak, fastened with a pin over his right shoulder, falls in stiff folds, emphasizing the impression of severity, while in the young personage the carelessness of the folds echoed his youthful expression. This consonance of plastic language is a proof of artistic fullness, of deep understanding of the means of artistic communication and mature mastery of it.

---

[26] I.D. Ștefănescu, *Iconografia artei bizantine și a picturii feudale românești*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1973, p. 25.
[27] Studii și cercetări de istoria artei seria arta plastica, Tomul 13, 2, 1966, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, p. 10.

Fig. 10 Paintings in the Densuș Church

In the Hațeg country, the heart of the ancient Dacian Kingdom, which leads to the Poiana Ruscă Mountains, resides one of the oldest Romanian churches where religious services are held – Densuș. Strange in form, but proud and elegant, it stands as a symbol of the power of faith. Historians have not agreed on an exact date, so it is said that the place was originally a temple dedicated to the god Mars, then it became the tomb of one of the Roman generals during the time of Trajan, Cneius Pompeius Longinus.[28] After the first Daco-Roman war, he commanded the remaining Roman garrisons in Dacia.[29] In 105, he was captured by Decebalus, who demanded war reparations and the withdrawal of the troops in exchange for his release. It is said that Trajan did not yield to the Dacian king's demands, and Longinus took his own life. The chimney in the middle of the church, used to expel the smoke during sacrifices, and a Latin inscription commemorating the Roman general, are testimonies that support this point of view[30].

Built of massive blocks of stone and marble, columns and statues brought from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, Densuș shows its antiquity[31]. Austere, full of Latin inscriptions, with a low entrance, the church urges you from the first moments of the meeting to make a gesture of humility. Here, time stood still; the chronicle of bygone times is still written in stone, speaking of emperors, legions, generals, of nobles and raids, of courage and faith. The medieval wall painting has been partially preserved, as proof of its existence. The church in Densuș did not budge, still bearing the footprints of its ancestors. Cross its threshold and you will find not only history preserved with sanctity, but also closeness to God, the emotion of a place that offers you peace and an opportunity for silence.

---

[28]https://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserici-manastiri/biserica-sfantul-nicolae-densus-67830.html.
[29] Dobrei Florin, *Tezaur hunedorean - bisericile ortodoxe monument istoric*, Editura Episcopiei Devei și Hunedoarei, Deva, 2014, p. 67.
[30] Mălinaș Ioan Marin, *La umbra Sarmizegetusei Romane, Basilica din Densuș, Reflexii istorice și liturgice inspirate de o carte tipărită la Viena în 1775*, Viena, Editura Mihai Eminescu, Oradea, 1997, p. 66.
[31] https://www.Densuș, cea mai veche biserică în care se slujește, 10 septembrie 2011, Alexandru Briciu, *Ziarul Lumina*.

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1 Church St. Nicholas of Densus, June 25th 2012, *CrestinOrtodox.ro*
Fig. 2 Church St. Nicholas of Densus, June 25th 2012, *CrestinOrtodox.ro*
Fig. 3 Church St. Nicholas of Densus, June 25th 2012, *CrestinOrtodox.ro*
Fig. 4 Densuș village, personal archive
Fig. 5 Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, personal archive
Fig. 6 Hațeg depression, personal archive
Fig. 7 Bust of Nicolae Densușianu, at the Church gate, personal archive
Fig. 8 Images of the Densuș Church and the plan of the church, June 25th 2012, *CrestinOrtodox.ro*
Fig. 9 Priest serving at the Densuș Church, personal archive
Fig. 10 Paintings in the Densuș Church, personal archive

Bibliography:

Mirea, Mădălina (autor), **Macri, Dominica** (trad.), **Bonciocat, Șerban** (foto), *Hațeg, Țara Bisericilor de Piatră,* Editura Igloo, București, 2007.
Dobrei, Florin, *Tezaur hunedorean - bisericile ortodoxe monument istoric*, Editura Episcopiei Devei și Hunedoarei, Deva, 2014.
Dobrei, Florin, *Bisericile ortodoxe hunedorene*, Editura Eftimie Murgu, Reșița, 2011.
Iorga, Nicolae, *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l'histoire de la vie byzantine*, Editura Mihai Breza, București, 1971.
Mălinaș, Ioan Marin, *La umbra Sarmizegetusei Romane, Basilica din Densuș, Reflexii istorice și liturgice inspirate de o carte tipărită la Viena în 1775*, Viena, Editura Mihai Eminescu, Oradea, 1997.
Pescaru, Adriana, Pescaru, Eugen, *Valori ale patrimoniului hunedorean*, Deva, 2000.
Pop, Ioan-Aurel, *Istoria Transilvaniei medievale: de la etnogeneza românilor până la Mihai Viteazul*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 1997.
Pop, Ioan-Aurel, *Instituții medievale românești. Adunările cneziale și nobiliare (boierești) în secolele XIV-XVI*, Cluj-Napoca, 1991.
Popa, Radu, *La începuturile Evului Mediu românesc. Țara Hațegului*, Editura Dacia, București, 1988.
Prodan David, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, Editura Dacia, București, 1967.
Rusu, Adrian Andrei, *Biserica Sfântului Nicolae și curtea nobiliară a Arceștilor de la Densuș (jud. Hunedoara)*, în Arheologia Medievală VII
Rusu, Adrian Andrei, *Monumente medievale din Țara Hațegului*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2008.
Rusu, Adrian Andrei, *Castelarea Carpatică*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2005.
Ștefănescu, I.D., *Iconografia artei bizantine și a picturii feudale românești*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1973.
Ștefănescu, I.D., *Arta feudală în țările române*, Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, Timișoara, 1981.
Virgil, Vatășianu, *Vechile biserici de piatră românești din județul Hunedoara*, Tip. "Cartea Românească" S.A., Cluj, 1930.
Voledi, I., *Drumuri în Hațeg*, Editura Stadion, București, 1971.

MEDIEVAL CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

Sacred Art from the Frontline:
The Iconography and Symbolism of the Contemporary Ukrainian Art Project
"Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes"

Andriy Lesiv[*]

Abstract: *The paper is highlighting the unique phenomenon of modern Ukrainian sacred art – holy icons painted on panels made of ammunition boxes brought from the war zone in Ukraine. The aim of this paper is to conduct a comprehensive study of the project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" from the point of view of art history and social culture; to understand the prerequisites for the appearance of the art project "Holy Icons on the Ammunition Boxes" and its functions as social and volunteer project; to carry out an art analysis of separate holy icons and icon painting cycles of this art project. Several interviews with the creators of the project – artists Oleksandr Klymenko and Sofia Atlantova – were conducted, based on which the necessary conditions for the creation of holy icons, their symbolism, iconography, and social function (which is manifested in the support of the First Voluntary Mobile Hospital named after Mykola Pirogov) were analysed. The project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" carries an important function of unification and fusion: stitching together the rear and the frontline. Its symbolism is based on the antithesis of death and life, the transformation of death into life, not only on a symbolic level, but also literally since all funds from the holy icons' sales are directed to saving the lives of wounded Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. Weapons, which are originally instruments of death, acquire the opposite symbolic qualities, and become sacred artifacts. The article analyses both the artistic features of the project and its social function, which is no less important.*

Keywords: icon painting, holy icon, ammunition boxes, art, war, volunteering.

Main part

The Russian war in Ukraine has been going on for over ten years. On February 24, 2022, the war entered the phase of a full-scale Russian invasion and continues to this day, taking thousands of military and civilian lives,

─────────────────
[*] Andriy Lesiv, PhD in art studies, senior researcher, The Ethnology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Art studies department, Svobody ave. 15, 79000, Lviv, Ukraine; orcid: 0000-0002-3408-7496; e-mail: lesivandr@gmail.com

making millions displaced both within Ukraine and abroad. Unfortunately, in the period from 2014 to 2022, for a huge part of Ukrainians and residents of other countries, this war was remaining practically invisible, virtual like, known only from individual posts on social networks and statistical reports in the media. Paradoxically, Jean Baudrillard was right when in his essay "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place" he raised the topic not of the war itself, but of the "picture" of this war, its simulacrum[1]. War as a game, as virtual reality. Most of the world's population does not experience this war, but consumes its simulacrum created by the mass media – similarly, many Ukrainians living far from the frontline did not experience the Russian-Ukrainian war personally, perceived it as a kind of computer game, the progress of which could be followed sitting in front of a monitor or TV. Of course, everything changed after the full-scale invasion, when almost all Ukrainians realized the new reality of Russian aggression, thousands took up arms and stood up for the defence of Ukraine, and the rest of the majority got involved and actively worked to support the economy and life of the state.

The art project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" was started years before the full-scale invasion of 2022 precisely with the aim of pulling out passive and indifferent observers from this virtual perception of the Russian-Ukrainian war that prevailed at that time. The founders of the project are the couple of Kyiv based artists Sofia Atlantova and Oleksandr Klymenko. The project, which was born during the hybrid war, became a hybrid itself in a certain way – artistic and volunteer. From its very beginning, since October 2014, all funds from the holy icons' sales were directed to the financing of the First Voluntary Mobile Hospital named after Mykola Pyrogov, who treats the wounded in the war zone[2].

What is the project itself? The Army stores and transports ammunition and weapons in special boxes mostly made of wood. After the ammunition is used, these boxes are usually just thrown away like any other packaging. Sofia and Oleksandr have noticed that the wooden boards from which these boxes are made paradoxically resemble the traditional wooden bases of the holy icons – they are made according to the same principle: separate boards are joined into panels and fastened with pegs. This is how the idea of using these boards from boxes as panels for holy icons appeared – an idea that is very simple at first glance, but extremely deep and symbolic in its essence. It is about transforming military objects that carry death into a holy icon that carries life – both in a symbolic and literal sense, because the purpose of creating this holy icon is to save the lives of the wounded.

---

[1] Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1991.
[2] Olena Maksymenko, *Holy Icons painted on ammo boxes save lives*. 2016, Cenzor.net.ua, date of access: 20.03.2024 [in Ukrainian]

The wood itself as a material has a deep sacred symbolism. Turning to the history of Christianity, the wooden cross on which Jesus was crucified was a symbol of shameful death but became a symbol of life after His resurrection. The same concept is developed by the authors of the project. The antinomy of Christian existence, where things are inherently opposite, contrasting, can be merged, combined into a single wholeness. According to the artists, to understand the entity and, in this case, this war, it is necessary to collide things that, it seems, cannot be collided. This is the antinomy of life and death. The symbol of death is ammunition boxes (and not only them, but weapons in general, because we are talking about different scales – from boxes for small arms to large artillery shells). The holy icon in our tradition symbolizes the Incarnation, and the purpose of the Incarnation of Christ was to defeat death and give life. One of the symbolic goals of the "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" project is an attempt to reflect the Easter joy of life's victory over death, to continue the biblical theme, the Old Testament's lines: "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4). Artists emphasize this idea of turning death into life, merging the incompatible[3]. These antinomies are key for them in the project not only in the biblical context, but also in the context of Ukrainian history.

When asked to outline the symbolic base and the origins of the project more deeply, Oleksandr Klymenko claims that he is mainly referring to both the classical Byzantine holy icon and the Western European artistic tradition, medieval art, and attributes of modern warfare. He builds the symbolic construction of the project in the context of Ukrainian history, starting from the time of Volodymyr the Great and ending with our days. And in this context, the current war acquires an epic colour of the struggle between good and evil. The first exhibition of the project took place in Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv[4], and one of the symbolic concepts of the construction of the Sophia Cathedral was victory over nomads, pagans. That is the theme of confrontation between Kyivan Rus' as a cultural and civilizational space, and the world of pagans, nomads, and chaos. Today, the war in the East of Ukraine is often compared to Igor's military campaigns, Sviatoslav's military campaigns, even with the battles of the Cossacks and the Tatars – this in a certain way reveals the Ukrainian code. In this context, according to Klymenko, this struggle is built into the paradigm of "war in the steppe" familiar to Ukrainians. But it is very important for the artist to reveal not only this struggle in the steppe, but also to investigate the eternal question "what is the struggle against evil", how it takes place. We remember that in

---

[3]*We are fighting to make an icon from a weapon, not to turn an icon into a Weapon*, 2019, Heart to heart, coradcor.us, date of access: 20.03.2024) [in Ukrainian]

[4]Iryna Ryndych, *Holy Icons on ammo boxes: an unconventional approach to iconography in contemporary Ukrainian art*, 2015, Relihijno-informatsijna sluzhba Ukrainy, risu.org.ua, date of access: 20.03.2024) [in Ukrainian]

the classical Christian tradition, an icon is a prayer, but in the context of this project it also becomes a weapon of personal struggle against evil in oneself – one can defeat the enemy only by overcoming the evil in oneself. These are some of the important conceptual principles of this art project.

Speaking about the sources of iconography, whether it is mainly the Ukrainian tradition of icon painting, or whether the authors rely on a more generalized Byzantine canon, Oleksandr Klymenko answers that he is focusing not only on the Ukrainian tradition. The artist's sources are Kyivan Rus', the Balkans, and even Western European painting. However, the base is a Byzantine icon painting. The author has a special view of the Byzantine tradition in the context of the Crimean annexation: "The reason for the Russian annexation of Crimea is not only that it is an important military base, but it is also Russia's attempt to become a part of the Mediterranean culture, in which Byzantium is very important. It is an Aramaic heritage. Somehow it is so firmly perceived that Ukrainian culture is mainly Ukrainian baroque. The Ukrainian discourse today does not work at all on the fact that Byzantine heritage is also ours, Ukrainian. Instead, Russia took such a problematic step as annexation precisely for the sake of confirming the Russian imperial myth about the rightful succession of Byzantine culture." Through the art project Oleksandr Klymenko argues with the Russian discourse that Byzantium is not a Russian tradition, it is a Kyivan tradition, and Kyivan Rus' is a Ukrainian tradition. In this context, another important function of the project is clearly manifested – the struggle for historical origins, the struggle for cultural sources.

The entire project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" is inextricably linked with the theme of the Russian-Ukrainian war, its landmark events, the history that is happening here and now – that is why the authors of the project constantly emphasize not only the artistic component of the project, but also its political and historical context. We should mention that three artists participated in the first exhibition: Sofia Atlantova, Natalka Volobuyeva and Oleksandr Klymenko. Natalka Volobuyeva left almost immediately after the first exhibition, and since then Sofia and Oleksandr have worked on the project together. At the beginning authors united around the idea of creating holy icons specifically on ammunition boxes, without forming any generalized concept of iconography or choosing specific subjects. Subsequently, Sofia and Oleksandr began to form separate cycles of holy icons – this is how the cycles "Ilovaisk' Deisis" and "Passion" appeared.

"Ilovaisk' Deisis" (Fig. 1-2) is one of the key cycles of the entire project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes", because it precisely reveals its peculiarities and its inclusion in the context of war. The traditional composition "Deisis" is a central object of the Ukrainian iconostasis and means "Prayer". Atlantova and Klymenko created a cycle of "Prayer" for the victims of the bloodiest event of the first year of Russian-Ukrainian war – the

battles for Illovaisk in August 2014. During the presentation-performance of the "Ilovaisk' Deisis" project, which took place in the "Kalita Art Club" gallery in Kyiv in 2017, artists inscribed the names of the fallen Ukrainian soldiers directly on the surfaces of holy icons. This became a symbolic gesture, as if adding the fallen to the rank of saints, symbolic gratitude for their greatest sacrifice for the Homeland.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

The cycle consists of thirteen large format holy icons painted on panels made of artillery shell boxes. The boxes were brought from the frontline by employees of the First Voluntary Mobile Hospital named after Pirogov. These are panels with a height of 103–118 cm and a width of 35–48 cm. The traditional Deisis triptych for icon painting – the central image of the Saviour, and two holy icons of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist – in this cycle is expanded and continued with pairs of holy icons of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, the Apostles Peter and Paul, saints John Chrysostom and Nicholas, Saints George and Dmitri of Thessalonica and images of the holy hermits Macarius and Mark. The boards on which the holy icons are painted have practically not been processed or changed by the authors. There is no gesso (levkas) used, the painting is placed directly on the wooden panel. Fragments of metal fastenings of boxes, locks and curtains, various military markings, inscriptions, remnants of protective khaki paint remained on the boards – everything indicates that these are the boxes of weapons brought from the war zone. The artists deliberately leave the original appearance of the panels. They minimally interfere with the nature of this wood, which carries the memory of terrible events of war. According to the authors, their entire apartment, balcony, garage, cottage – the entire personal space of the artists is piled with these boxes brought from the frontline. They are with them all the time, there is always a dynamic process of thinking about which image will suit this or that board. The authors do not cover the panels with gesso, because according to Oleksandr, if you cover the base with gesso, you will lose not only the formal appearance of ammunition boxes, but also the texture of the wood, which is very beautiful. Due to the lack of gesso, the holy icons are perceived as translucent, the impression of the saints' images appearing directly on the plane wood is created.

Sometimes the authors create a background made of camouflage fabric, also brought from the frontline – these are the fragments of military uniforms worn by soldiers. The camouflage texture sometimes appears as a veil, and sometimes as a decoration element of the clothes of the saints. Otherwise, artists do not use just plain camouflage fabric, but decorate it, draw on it with their own hands, so that it is no longer perceived as camouflage uniform, but as some kind of expensive vestment. They also suggest the idea of a metaphor of camouflage as an invisibility cloak, in which the enemy cannot see you. In the context of the icon painting, it is not only a literal, real enemy, but also the "enemy of this world" – the devil. This is exactly the principle used in the holy icons of the "Ilovaisk' Deisis" – the cloth and vestments of the depicted saints are interspersed with camouflage motifs. Art critic Zoya Chehusova, describing the paintings of the "Ilovaisk' Deisis", says: "the camouflage-styled vestments of the saints are, of course, not camouflage in the literal sense, but are only associated with military uniforms and symbolize the approach of the saints to the needs of people.

The barrier between our world and the divine realm is being erased, the sky is getting closer to the earth, and the saints standing before Christ are among those who saw the bottom of the Ilovaisk hell with their own eyes, and can testify about it, this hell"[5]. Is the camouflage a kind of symbolic hiding place from evil for the authors? Oleksandr says that only to a small extent. He carefully approaches this, avoiding delving into the pagan context. The authors try to distance themselves from apotropaism, their interpretation minimizes the magical context, because, according to them, there is already a lot of magic in the war. For example, the children's drawings, which are used there by soldiers as talismans or charms.

Fig. 3   **Fig. 4**

The style of the painting, in which "Ilovaisk' Deisis" are made and its visual language create in a certain way parallels with the children's drawings. The artists combine tempera painting, traditional for icon painting, with coloured pencils and pastels (Fig. 3–4). The faces, hands, feet of the saints are painted with tempera. The vestments are shaded with pencils and pastels, sometimes rather chaotically, expressively, as if really imitating children's drawings, but then expertly supplemented with light tempera dyes. Such a combination of tempera and pencils creates a rather original style.

---

[5] Chehusova Zoya, *«Ilovaisk' Deisis» by Sonia Atlantova and Oleksandr Klymenko*, KalytaArtClub, Kyiv, 2015, p. 4-6.

Sometimes it seems that the holy icons were created directly at the frontline, in field conditions with the help of materials at hand – pencils, pens, pastels. In what other ways can holy icons be drawn in conditions of war? That is why authors practically do not use gold in icons, because there is no place for gold and luxury in wartime. There is modesty and restraint, and this is exactly the impression made by the holy icons on the ammunition boxes.

Fig. 5

Another icon painting cycle by Sofiya Atlantova and Oleksandr Klymenko as part of the project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" is dedicated to the iconography of "The Passion" (figs. 5–6). The cycle was presented in the spring of 2019 in Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv and had two dedications: the first – to all military and civilians fallen in the war, and the second dedication – to all mothers and women who lost sons and husbands in the war. The style of the icon painting of this cycle is somewhat different from the holy icons of the "Ilovaisk' Deisis". The authors move away from the use of coloured pencils and pastels, the icons are dominated by tempera painting, which is placed directly on the wooden panel, without the gesso layer. The colours of the cycle have also been slightly changed:

muted, restrained colours prevail. Painting is very light, translucent. The viewer, looking at the image, seems to be watching the development of a photograph in a darkened laboratory – this is the impression that comes from contemplating these icons.

Fig. 6

The events that took place and continue to take place in Ukraine, the artists integrate directly into the theme of Holy Week. The anniversaries of the beginning of the war, the biggest battles – these important moments of history are projected on Holy Week, either Orthodox or Catholic. The very beginning of this war was woven into the context of the Passion and reflections on what war is and who are the people who died in this war. For artists, the only possible association is precisely the comparison of those who died in the war with the sacrifice of Christ, with His sacrificial love and willingness to die for the sake of love. This is the path of every person in the war, and in general of Ukraine, which in a symbolic sense is currently experiencing the Passion. There is a belief that after these sufferings there will be a resurrection. Therefore, among the Passion cycle at the exhibition, there were two holy icons on the theme of resurrection: "The Myrrh-Bearing Wives" and "The Descent into Hell" (Fig. 7). However, they were slightly

different from the rest in terms of colour, painted on dark green military boards.

Fig. 7

Collages from newspaper clippings appear on the margins of some holy icons of the Passion cycle. These "Vytynankas" (traditional Ukrainian art form of papercutting) lay symbolic bridges to Ukrainian folk art, however, here they have a relatively different context. Clippings from newspapers brought from the cities at the frontline were used for the collages. Atlantova and Klymenko used pre-war newspapers brought from the territory where hostilities later began. According to their idea, this is a kind of metaphor for what is happening in the East of Ukraine: "Donbas is like a Vytynanka in the hands of God. Reading these newspapers already after the war started, – admits Oleksandr, – it becomes scary the level of misinformation that was spread there, and in a certain sense it becomes clear why the war happened there". Implantation of these clippings into the holy icon structure carries the symbolic meaning of cleansing from lies and misinformation. On the other hand, collages on holy icons, like camouflage, carry symbolic meanings. During the war, according to the artists, it is wrong to use gold as an ornament, instead as a symbol of wealth it should be sent to the frontline as an aid. And the decoration on the holy icon should be modest. Paper and

camouflage fabric is almost the only possible type of decoration for the holy icons during the war.

Fig. 8

At the "Passion" cycle exhibition in Lviv in June 2019, six icons with the image of "The Eleusa" (fig. 8) were exhibited – a dedication to mothers and women who lost their husbands and children in the Russian-Ukrainian war. These icons in the Byzantine tradition have their own symbolism of the Passion – mother tragically witnesses what is happening to her son. For Oleksandr Klymenko, this dedication to mothers and women who have lost someone is very important. You can truly empathize with a loss and survive the tragedy of losing a close one only in dialogue – with loved ones, with God, with yourself. And in the context of the post-Maidan understanding of our existence, a holy icon is a way of dialogue. This is Ukraine's dialogue with the world. Atlantova and Klymenko's project is a dialogue of artists with God and with the audience, a dialogue of civilians with the military. These holy icons, these panels made from ammunition boxes – they are real, not virtual, they are from the war zone. Here we are back again, one of the functions of the holy icons in general is to testify the Incarnation. Holy icons on the ammunition boxes testify not only to the

Incarnation, but to the war in Ukraine, reminding the audience that the war is still going on.

When asked what the authors of the project think about the concept of canonicality of an icon painting and whether they consider their holy icons to be canonical, Oleksandr Klymenko expresses the opinion that tradition cannot be permanent, but there is a certain tradition of the icon painting and when working with a holy icon, one must respect this tradition. According to Oleksandr, this project is not completely a project of sacred art but exists simultaneously in two planes – sacred art and secular culture. At first glance, this project has features of postmodernity: citation, the use of compatible-incompatible, collage – these components inherent in postmodernism are present here. But Klymenko himself rejects postmodern connotations: "During the war, postmodernism does not work. There is no postmodern game here, there is a clearly defined theme of good and evil, i.e., things that postmodernism is struggling with." There is a theme of transforming death into life, and postmodernism is never going to transform anything. The transformation of death into life in this project occurs not only in the symbolic sense, but also in the literal sense. In Alexander's opinion, this is no longer post-, but meta modernism.

So, if this project actually exists on the border between sacred and secular art, then the question arises, what are these icons – objects of prayer or artifacts of contemporary art? The authors admit that it is also a certain paradox for them that this project is well perceived by religious people (for example, the exhibition in Philadelphia in the Greek Catholic Cathedral of Sophia[6]), and at the same time this exhibition works perfectly in secular space. That is, these two worlds coexist. Apparently, the holy icon is a sacred object of prayer, but it also becomes clear to secular people, because the holy icon is open for any public, it becomes understandable to people of Christian and post-Christian civilization. For example, Orthodox, Catholics, Greek Catholics, Lutherans rather perceive its religious component, and secular people better dealing with the symbolic context. Somewhere on a subconscious level, one feels that the icon is something holy, connected with reconciliation, with peace, something that is always opposed to war. This project sometimes requires its secular interpretation. The authors would like this project to become a bridge between traditional religious denominations and secular, or even atheistic space. Because, again, the theme of unification, merging and stitching is very important in this project.

The artists admit their co-authorship – and they emphasize this from the very first exhibition – with people who are at the frontline, volunteers, soldiers of the Armed Forces. Those people who are there, who often feel a mental gap between themselves and the civilians, feel misunderstanding,

---

[6]Weigel George, *Icons on Ammo Boxes*, 03.07.2019, Ethics & Public Policy Center, eppc.org, date of access: 20.03.2024.

detachment, alienation, but thanks to this project they become complicit, co-create something with authors, searching for and collecting ammunition boxes, and in fact – taking them out from under fire.

So, in such a case, when is the initial act of creating a holy icon, where is the starting point? At what point does its creation begin? Klymenko claims that its creation begins from the moment when soldiers and volunteers under fire and shelling find boxes for the project and take them away – this is already the process of creation. The main thing is that these people are there, they did not forget about the project, even under bullets and shelling. "We still call, talk, discuss," says Oleksandr, "this is, in fact, such a complex process of understanding this war, instilling it in me and instilling me in this war. Such a reflection on the war, which would not have happened without this project. In fact, this is a continuation of what I wrote about in the book *Summer-ATO*[7], with this project I finished my book at the beginning of September 2014, at the same time the idea for the project with holy icons arose. It turned out that verbally this war did not let go and had to continue to tell visually. These holy icons are my dream of peace, not the sacralization of war. This project arose after Ilovaisk. I worked on it during the battles for Debaltseve, during the tragic events at the Donetsk airport, and in fact it was a dream that the war and all this horror would end. Not just a dream, but faith and affirmation that the Passion will end, and the resurrection will come."

Conclusions

The artistic value of the project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" is particularly evident in its metaculturality, its artistic and social unity. Military artifacts being transformed into sacred works of art, are inextricably linked on the one hand with traditional Byzantine and post-Byzantine icon painting, its symbolism and theology, and on the other hand with the theme of the Russian-Ukrainian war, its landmark events, a story that is happening right here and right now. The authors of the project constantly emphasize in their stories not only the artistic component of the project, but also its political and historical context. This project exists simultaneously in sacred and secular realms, stitches those realms together and destroys established boundaries.

The iconographic base of the project consists of cycles of icons, the most notable of which are "Ilovaisk' Deisis", "Passion", "Saints of the Gray Zone". Each of the cycles has its own stylistic features, manifested in the style of painting, the use of artistic materials, dedications to specific events, or war victims. The unifying factor of the various icon painting cycles of the project is not only the boards from the ammunition on which they are

---

[7]Olaf Klemensen, *Summer-ATO*, Liuta Sprava, Kyiv, 2015.

painted, but also the most important purpose of their creation – giving life to the wounded and victims on the frontline of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The project "Holy Icons on Ammunition Boxes" is unique and had no analogues in the world before its beginning. Over the past few years, similar projects have begun to appear, but Sofia and Oleksandr remain pioneers, systematically working and developing the project, feeling a great responsibility for the operation of the mobile hospital, and in fact for the lives of thousands of people whom the hospital helps every day.

Bibliography:

Baudrillard, Jean, *The Gulf War did not take place*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1991.
Chehusova, Zoya, *«Ilovaisk' Deisis» by Sonia Atlantova and Oleksandr Klymenko*, Kalyta Art Club, Kyiv, 2015, p. 4-6
Klemensen, Olaf, *Summer-ATO*, Liuta Sprava, Kyiv, 2015.
Maksymenko, Olena, *Holy icons painted on ammo boxes save lives*. 2016, Cenzor.net.ua, date of access: 20.03.2024 [in Ukrainian]
Ryndych, Iryna, *Holy Icons on ammo boxes: an unconventional approach to iconography in contemporary Ukrainian art*, 2015, Relihijno-informatsijna sluzhba Ukrainy, risu.org.ua, date of access: 20.03.2024) [in Ukrainian].
We are fighting to make an icon from a weapon, not to turn an icon into a weapon, 2019, Heart to heart, coradcor.us, date of access: 20.03.2024 [in Ukrainian].
Weigel, George, *Icons on Ammo Boxes*, 03.07.2019, Ethics & Public Policy Center, eppc.org, date of access: 20.03.2024

Power and Peace: A Batik Creation for King Hamengku Buwana X

Farid Abdullah [*]

Abstract: *There are very few studies on the creation of batik clothing that explore the themes of power and peace. So far the creation of batik clothing is still limited to the art of decorating, but has little to do with power - peace. Many power conflicts lead to war, the purpose of this research was to create batik with a philosophy that power leads to the goal of peace. Expressions of power and peace are represented through form and strengthened by the creation of written batik techniques on a piece of cotton cloth. To achieve this goal, we apply a creative approach to the creation process, namely: (a) formulating the concept of written batik creation; (b) creative exploration of written batik; (c) the process of making batik using cotton cloth; (d) the creation of batik works using the written batik technique using canting, coloring, drying and cutting into a piece of batik clothing. This approach describes the representation of power and peace in the form of written batik clothes worn by a king, namely King Hamengku Buwana X from the Yogyakarta palace, Java, Indonesia. This research produced special batik for King Hamengku Buwana X. The batik that was made depicts a motif that symbolizes the authority of power but also brings peace to mankind, i.e. the creation of batik for King Hamengku Buwana X.*

Keywords: *batik, creation, power, peace, King Hamengku Buwana X*

Introduction

The story of patriotism related to power and peace has deep roots in Southeast Asian history and culture, especially in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia. These stories have been a source of inspiration for leaders and people in the region for centuries.

One striking example is the story of patriotism in traditional performing arts such as wayang orang in Indonesia and several forms of traditional performing arts also in Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand. Wayang orang, as a form of traditional Javanese theater, often tells the stories of heroes and patriots who fought to protect their society from threats and injustice. These stories emphasize the importance of wise power and justice in creating peace for society.

[*] Assoc. Prof. PhD, Art Education Department, Faculty of Art and Design Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, E-mail: farid.abdullah@upi.edu

In addition, epic stories such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata from India's cultural heritage also have a strong influence throughout Southeast Asia. In both epics, conflict, power, and peace are central themes. The heroes and characters in these stories fight to restore a just social order and peace disturbed by wrongful ruler. They are examples of patriots who fought to create peace for their society .

The power referred to in this context is the power used to ensure the welfare of society and maintain peace. These stories of patriotism teach the importance of using power wisely, putting the interests of society before personal interests, and taking action to overcome injustice and conflict in order to achieve sustainable peace.

Thus, stories of patriotism related to power and peace in Southeast Asia have universal values that are relevant in the context of current social and political life. They remind us of the responsibility of leaders to use their power for the good of society and inspire us to fight for peace and justice in society.

In recent decades, research around creation with themes of power and peace has become a landscape that fascinates and provides an inspiring impetus to many artist-researchers. In this process, we have witnessed the emergence of ideas that are not only creative, but also thought-provoking. As part of this journey, artists from various historical periods, from ancient times to the Middle Ages, even to the present day, have chosen to address the themes of power and peace in various forms of their art.

Power, as we see in history, is often the main cause of conflict and suffering for those involved in it. However, paradoxically, power also has the potential to be a source of peace when used wisely by a supreme leader, such as king, president, sultan, tribal chief, or prime minister. They have an important role in resolving problems, reducing conflicts between countries, even at the most intimate level, namely within the family.

In this context, artists have understood the complexity of the relationship between power and peace, and they have tried to depict it through their works of art. These works are a reflection of humanity's long journey in establishing and managing power, as well as efforts to achieve peace in this challenging framework. In doing so, they inspire us to better understand the important role of power in shaping our world, as well as the importance of maintaining a balance between power and peace.

This can be seen from the journey of several rulers or leaders in the Medieval era who were famous for their efforts in promoting peace such as King Charlemagne (Carolus Magnus). Charlemagne, who ruled as King of the Franks and later became Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in the 8th century, known for his initiative in uniting the divided regions of Western Europe. Apart from attempting to end internal conflict within his kingdom, he also encouraged the development of education and culture which became

known as the Carolingian Renaissance. In addition, he provided strong support to the Roman Catholic Church and played a key role in maintaining stability in the territories under his control. An example is the Treaty of Verdun in 843 made by King Charlemagne and his sons which divided the Carolingian Empire into three kingdoms to end a long civil war.

Later, King Alfred the Great of England, who ruled in the 9th century, was known for his dedication to maintaining peace in England during a time of instability caused by Viking attacks. He carried out the development of a stronger defense system and a more structured legal system, while encouraging the development of education and literature in the midst of a stressful political and military situation in order to create a more educated society, which was not easily provoked and chose to avoid unnecessary conflict or war.

Then there is King Louis IX (Saint Louis) of France, who came to power in the 13th century and was renowned as a very pious leader with a vision to create peace and justice in his kingdom. He highlighted his role in promoting just legal policies and peace in his country. Additionally, he actively participated in the Crusades with the aim of promoting peace in the Middle East.

The most famous leaders in Islamic history is King Saladin. He ruled in the 12th century and is known for successfully recapturing Jerusalem from the Crusaders during the Second Crusade. Although he had great military power, he was also renowned for his just and merciful attitude towards civilians during times of conflict.

Batik has a deep meaning in Indonesian culture. Batik has long been an integral part of Indonesian society and is a symbol of culture and national identity. Batik is a unique artistic manifestation, combining traditional elements with modern creativity. More than just a decorated cloth, batik also reflects the history, beliefs and values of Indonesian society. As a symbol of culture and national identity, batik has been recognized internationally as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. This shows the importance of batik in maintaining and promoting Indonesian culture at the global level. Therefore, the creation of batik works with themes of power and peace is not only a creative artistic expression, but also a form of preserving and respecting Indonesia's rich national culture and identity.

Several batik motifs have meanings of peace and power such as: the *Tumpal* motif which is a batik motif often used as a symbol of power and luxury. This motif is usually upward facing a diagonal line or triangle, symbolizing success and progress. In some cultures, the use of *Tumpal* on batik can also be understood as an effort to create peace by achieving success and prosperity. Also the lotus flower is a symbol of peace and purity, often used on batik cloth. Lotuses grow in dirty water but have beautiful and clean flowers. So, in many cultures, the lotus symbolizes the ability to remain calm

in every difficult situations. In batik designs, lotus flowers are often used to convey messages of peace and wisdom.

Meanwhile, abstract geometric symbols are batik motifs that include abstract geometric symbols such as circles, rectangles, or repeating motifs which are often used as symbols of strength and calm. This motif creates a symmetrical and structured look, reflecting stability and control. Peacocks are often used in batik as a symbol of beauty, strength and prosperity. The presence of peacocks in batik designs can represent the ideals of peace and power based on beauty and wisdom. The *Parang* batik motif is a classic motif that often contains symbols of power and peace. This motif consists of diagonal lines that form a repeating symmetrical motif. This motif can represent unity and balance which are important aspects in achieving peace.

Currently, there are some research discussing the depiction of power and peace in batik motifs in Javanese culture. Batik motifs inspired by the history of Queen Kalinyamat in Jepara, Indonesia also relevant with power and peace concept. Queen Kalinyamat from Java was an important figure as a ruler in carrying out the executive power of the government, apart from the aggression against Malacca against Portuguese imperialism. So the batik motifs developed are related to symbols of power. Then research conducted by Haryono examined the value and meaning of *Basurek* batik cloth from Jambi, Sumatera. This *Basurek* batik contains a very deep meaning, namely as a form of respect for God, as a tool to remind people about the concept of monotheism, and as a means to spread the teachings of the Islamic religion. Apart from that, *Basurek* cloth also has other significant values, including aesthetic value, religiosity, socio-cultural aspects, art and historical significance. Then, inside the *Basurek* cloth there is a rhombus ornament in which there are calligraphic carvings in the form of flowers. Apart from adding aesthetic value, this also contains other meanings that make people aware of God's power.

Meanwhile, the theme of peace is also symbolized in batik motif. Sudardi's research showed that developing batik motifs was a means of building peace. In his research, Sudardi revealed that peace can only be achieved through patience which was reflected in the symbols on batik motifs[1]. An example of peace is harmony between God, nature and creatures. The sperm motif is associated with a harmonious relationship with God, represented by a form like a god's palace, symbolizing humans and Gods. Batik motifs depicting nature, including the *Parang* motif, the *Sekar Jagad* motif (flower of the universe), the *Truntum* motif which depicts harmony with the night sky, stars and flowers. Various batik motifs depict the harmonious relationship between humans and nature as creatures of God.

---

[1] Sudardi, B. (2021). Batik motifs as a means of building peace: a Javanese perspective. International Journal of Law, Government and Communication, 6(25), 09–16.

This symbol of harmonious relationship is a means of conveying the message of world peace.

Safitri's research discusses *Sasambo* batik based on history, their motifs and meaning. In their research, it was revealed that *Sasambo* batik contains a meaning of hope and values of the people of West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, related to life such as the values of unity, harmony, prosperity, security from disasters, sources of good fortune, peace and protection. In the various *Sasambo* batik motifs, there is one special motif that illustrates the value of peace. This motif is called the peace motif. The Peaceful batik motif consists of a main motif arranged horizontally. The main motifs in this batik include the barn, *Keris, Lekoq* (which is a symbol of betel leaves), *Buaq* (symbolizing the betel nut), *peninang*, and fan. At the bottom, there are border decorations arranged horizontally with a kepeng motif. The color motif used for the Peaceful motif is brown, and applied evenly to all parts of the batik[2].

Even though there has been a lot of research that studied the depiction of power and peace in batik motifs, until now there has been no research that dares to combine these two elements into one piece of batik clothing specifically dedicated to a historical figure. Therefore, this research has a noble aim, namely developing a batik motif that carries the theme of power and peace, which will be dedicated exclusively to one of the leading figures in Java, Indonesia, namely King Hamengku Buwana X.

The main uniqueness of this research is that this motif with the theme of power and peace will be specifically designed for King Hamengku Buwana X also as the governor of Yogyakarta. His presence as a figure who leads a region and has a high position in the hierarchy of power makes the selection of King Hamengku Buwana X the subject of this research very relevant.

This research also brings an important message that power does not always have to be in conflict with peace. On the contrary, through the batik produced from this research, we can visualize that power actually has the potential to have a positive impact on peace. We will see how the symbolism in this batik motif depicts the harmonious relationship between the power possessed by King Hamengku Buwana X and the concept of peace that is upheld in Javanese society.

In other words, this research is a real step in deconstructing the common view that power and peace are always in conflict. Through the batik clothing produced, we hope to convey a strong message that power, if used wisely and responsibly, can be an important instrument in achieving peace and harmony in society.

---

[2] Safitri, AI, Sudarmawan, A., & Sudita., IK (2019). Sasambo Batik in Rembitan Village, Pujut, Central Lombok. 7(1).

Methodology

The manifestation of power and peace as the theme of batik creation is carried out through a creative and artistic approach. The method of creation places great emphasis on the process of extracting creative ideas in producing works of art such as batik. The exploration of the basic ideas in this creation is aimed at creating a work of batik craft with the theme of power and peace. At this stage, first a study was carried out on the theme of power and peace as a source of creative ideas, namely by conducting observations and reviewing literature. The findings are based on the understanding, selection process and creation of batik using the writing technique of *canting*. Second, the author creates written batik art using the following traditional techniques: (1) drawing on cotton cloth, (2) canting using batik candle wax, (3) coloring on pieces of cloth that have been canting, (4) sewing into written batik clothing.

This creation method aims to carry out an exploration of form, in order to obtain a visual artistic expression of the themes of power and peace. Researchers conducted experiments in the form of processing the shapes of the symbols worn by a king, namely King Hamengku Buwana X, with the aim of strengthening the expression of power and peace. This method includes: (a) formulating the concept of written batik work; (b) carrying out creative exploration in the form of shape design, (c) processing cotton batik cloth, (d) making batik using the canting technique, (e) dyeing batik cloth for coloring, (f) drying colored batik cloth, (g) sewing strands of cloth into ready-to-wear batik clothing, (h) analyzing the final results of written batik creations.

Findings and Discussion

Power and peace as ideas for creating written batik

In creating written batik works with the theme of power and peace, many craftsmen from various countries around the world have succeeded in expressing this. Various shapes, styles and manufacturing techniques, with all their uniqueness and novelty, have been successfully displayed in various mediums. However, creation with the theme of power and peace, using written batik as a medium on pieces of cloth, has not yet been carried out. Depictions of the themes of power and peace are often found in medieval mural art in Europe, such as those found in room decoration works in churches or palaces[3]. Depictions of the themes of power and peace in medieval mural art often show religious figures or rulers who were in power at that time and also scenes from biblical stories or popular legends of that

---

[3] Raharja, IGM (2014). Proceedings of the National Seminar on the Advancement of Fine Arts and Design to Build Culture and Civilization with Personality. Indonesian Art Institute Denpasar.

time[4]. The figure of a king who is authoritative, strong, but also pious is rendered[5]. This depiction clearly shows the theme of power and piety as a form of peace.

Many illuminated manuscript works from the Middle Ages (c. 500–1500 AD) in Europe deal with similar themes. In stark contrast to today's modern era depictions, which attempt to capture an accurate likeness of a particular person, medieval depictions were highly valued for the artist's ability to express a person's social status, religious beliefs, or political position. Medieval mural artists, rather than reproducing the exact facial features of their subjects, more often identified individuals by depicting clothing, coats of arms, or signs of objects associated with them. The aim of medieval portraiture was to present the subject not at a particular moment in time, but as the person would be remembered for centuries to come.[67]

The concepts of power and peace are not actually paradoxes, but rather mutually integrated principles. When a leader, such as a king, is at the peak of his power, this also means that the burden of responsibility he must bear becomes greater, including efforts to create peace and stability in the region he leads.

Within the framework of social contract theory, power plays an important role in the mission of creating peace, by securing the freedom of each individual in accordance with applicable law.[8] In this theory, it emphasizes that a ruler is not only bound by an agreement, but also by its fundamental purpose, namely creating peace.

Thus, state power is not an entity that stands alone above individuals, but instead, it functions as a tool to achieve a greater goal, i.e., creating peace. Awareness of this purpose should guide leaders in carrying out their duties wisely and responsibly. In this context, state power must always be in the service of the interests of the wider community, and uphold the principle of peace as the main foundation in every government policy and action.

Following the thoughts of Thomas Hobbes, if a state is defined by its objectives, then state power in the context of an agreement is applied absolutely and cannot be revoked by any party, including the ruler himself. In

[4] Susandro, S., Taruan, H.N., & Ghifari, M. (2020). Community and Tourist Reception of Mural Art Works in the Krueng Dho and Krueng Daroy Areas, Banda Aceh City. Gorga: Journal of Fine Arts, 9(1), 70. https://doi.org/10.24114/gr.v9i1.17905
[5] Lusiana, I. (2011). Beautiful, Concrete, and Ananta as Slices of Beauty: A Study of Proportions in the Dialectic of Art. In Dissertation. University of Indonesia.
[6] Ekowati, VI (2017). Javanese Philology: A Complete Guide to Philological Research Practices. UNY Press.
[7] Nurhayati, E. (2018). The World of Javanese Manuscripts: Theory, Methods and Applications in Javanese Manuscript Practice (1st ed.). Library Cantrik.
[8] Wijaya, D.N. (2016). The Social Contract According to Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Journal of Humanist Sociology of Education, 1(2), 183–193.

this view, state power is considered as an authority that is final and does not depend on individual wishes.

With this understanding, effective and responsible power within the state can play an important role in creating and maintaining peace. Therefore, in the context of this research, the concepts of power and peace are the basis for the proposed creation of written batik.

Through the batik produced in this research, we try to illustrate how power used wisely and responsibly can contribute to achieving peace. In this case, written batik is not only a beautiful work of art, but also a symbol of the hope that power based on correct principles will lead to peace and harmony in society. Thus, power and peace are the main ideas that inspired the creation of written batik in this research.

Basic Process of Idea Creation

The stage of realizing The Power and the Peace fashion work is a process of changing from a basic idea to a creative concept, then it becomes a form of work. At this stage of the realization process, the ability to achieve is required, armed with knowledge and experience in changing an idea into a form of batik work. This activity really requires the ability to use methods that can elaborate initial ideas and proceed to concept creation, in the form of aesthetic exploration. These are all the initial stages of the work creation process. The realization of a creative concept so that it becomes a solid and complete work of fashion art really requires strengthening the concept of work content. Strengthening the concept of creation can be achieved through strengthening ideas and technical forms. So, at this stage aesthetic exploration is very necessary as a process to be achieved. This expression can be achieved through sketches (Figure 1) which form a unified theme. The following is an initial sketch of the creation which is explained below:

Fig 1. Initial sketch of written batik technique with title Power and Peace

In the sketch above **(Fig. 1)** the front of the shirt depicts a *Parang* motif. The depiction of the *Parang* motif runs 450 across the chest. The word *Parang* comes from the Javanese word "*pereng*" which is depicted in the form of curved lines resembling waves in the sea. *Parang* has an arrangement of motifs that form the letter S and are related to each and never-ending enthusiasm. The *Parang* motif implies the power used by the king. Therefore, the *Parang* batik motif is also called prohibited batik because it cannot use by other, and symbolize continuity. The "S" shape itself symbolizes power, worn by king which explains the reward symbol for the user. In the sketch above **(Fig. 1)**, two initial ideas can be seen which became the basis for creation. In part (a), there is the front view of the batik clothing work that will be made, while (b) is the back view of the batik clothing work entitled Power and Peace.

The source of the basic idea for the design above is 2 ancient batik motifs, namely *Parang* **(Fig. 2)** which was created by King Agung Hanyakrakusuma The Great, a king who succeeded in uniting the island of Java in the 16th century AD. As king of the Mataram kingdom, Agung Hanyakrakusuma The Great was born in 1593 AD in Kota Gede, Mataram, Central Java. When he was born, Agung Hanyakrakusuma The Great was given name Raden Mas Jatmika and was better known as Raden Mas Rangsang. He was born to a father named Prabu Hanyokrowati, the second king of Mataram, and queen mother Mas Adi Dyah Banowati, a daughter of the king of Pajang named Pangeran Benawa.
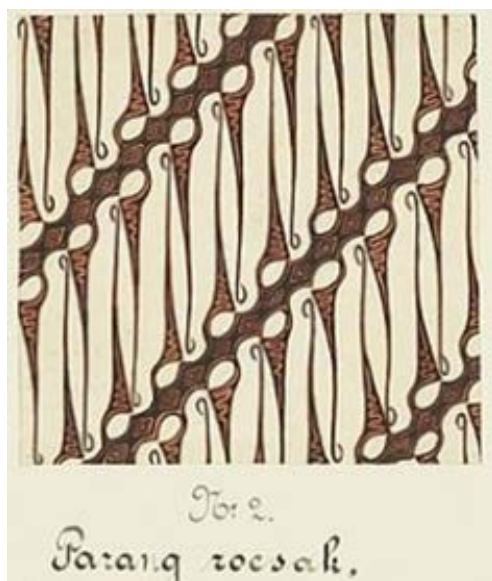

Fig 2. *Parang* motif created by Agung Hanyakrakusuma The Great

The main element of the *Parang* motif above is *mlinjon* or symbolizes a place of water. *Parang* is a batik motif that takes the form of a decorative motif with diagonal and lined slashes. There is a philosophical meaning of *Parang* as the obligation of a king who must always be careful and be able to control himself from all evil desires. Visually, the philosophical meaning of the *Parang* motif is a symbol of power. A symbol of the strength and hope of the user, to gain magical powers from the *Parang* visualization. Through the use of the *Parang* motif, a king or leader is required to always be careful, to be able to control himself in order to become a leader with responsibility, character and noble behavior. In terms of Yogyakarta palace color, *Parang* is dominated by white, black and red, soga, which is a symbol of purity, firmness and courage.

The second batik motif is *Gurdha* which comes from the word eagle bird **(Fig. 3)**. The *Gurdha* motif shown in the illustration below is the wings of a Garuda or eagle bird spreading its wings. This *Gurdha* motif is depicted as symmetrical, balanced between the left and right sides as seen in the following visualization:

Fig. 3. *Gurdha* motif on batik

In ancient Javanese culture, the *Garuda* or eagle was a bird as well as a mythological creature, a figure believed to have strength, might, and magic. In batik motif, *Gurdha* is also often combined with peacock wings. The open wings resemble the wings of a peacock also known as the *Sawat* motif. Tracing the history of the *Gurdha* motif **(Fig. 3)**, is closely related to Hindu influence which entered Java in the 7th century AD. *Gurdha* is a symbol of

the vehicle of God Vishnu in Hindu culture, an upper God who has an important position in the Tri Murti. In the Hindu conception, Tri Murti is known as the God Brahma who is the creator, the God Shiva who is the dissolution agent and the God Vishnu who is responsible for maintaining the world. God Vishnu, the keeper of wisdom, however, is presented with an Islamic nuance that the form of living creatures is disguised). The basic form of the *Gurdha* motif consists of the first three, each of which spreads its wings symmetrically with two to five wings, with both birds spreading an odd number of feathers arranged like a cone. The third is an abstract symbolic form of a bird or human body depicted with contour lines. All of this is said to be for beauty because according to Islamic teachings, it is forbidden to describe living creatures in their entirety with their forms disguised. *Gurdha* motif batik symbolizes divinity in Hinduism, has become a symbol of the source of life in Islam which contains prayer and hope. The *Garuda* was then adopted as the national symbol of Indonesia to this day.

The Process of Turning a Concept into a Work

To apply a concept to a work, techniques and media are needed. The technique is the main part for an artist, because through technique, a unity with artistic problems is created. Concepts, ideas, thoughts, ideals, intuition, are the driving force to be transformed into a work, whereas techniques and materials are a means of expressing them. The technique used in this creation is written batik.

The stage of the written batik technique before creating the work is processing the fabric. Before making the batik, basic preparation of the mori or cotton is carried out on a piece of cloth. The next stage is making a batik motif design, and the third stage is painting on the cloth using hot melted batik wax. The fourth stage is to fill the entire white part of the cloth by coloring the batik motif design with wax. The fifth stage is to add color to the waxed fabric. The sixth stage is to remove the wax by boiling it in hot water. The final stage after forming a motif on the fabric is to hang the fabric until dry.

The first step in making written batik is to formulate the concept of the idea for written batik work. Figure 1 shows documentation of the written batik development team formulating the concept of written batik work (**Fig.4**). This stage is a process of creative exploration and depiction of the themes of power and peace in shape design. The drawn shape designs are then arranged into certain batik motifs.

Fig. 4. Process of formulating the batik concept

Apart from preparing the batik motif design, making batik requires cotton fabric, textile dyes and canting equipment. Figure 5 shows the canting preparation and heating of the wax used for batik **(Fig.5).** Batik wax is a material used to cover the surface of the cloth according to the batik motif image, so that the covered surface rejects or is resistant to the color given to the cloth. After the wax is melted, the next process is batik making.

Fig. 5. Preparation of wax and canting for batik

Batik is drawing motifs on cloth using wax. The word batik consists of a series of words in Javanese, namely "*mbat*" (throw many times) and "*tik*" (dot). So it can be said that batik is throwing dots repeatedly to form a motif.[9] The picture below shows the batik making process using the writing canting technique **(Fig.6)**. Batik motifs with themes of power and peace are depicted on cloth using canting filled with liquid wax.

After the motif is depicted on the cloth, the cloth is then dipped in textile dye. Coloring can use textile dyes or natural dyes such as teak leaves for red, indigo leaves for blue, manga leaves for green, *longan* leaves for orange, *ketapang* leaves and *gambir* twigs for black, *tageran* wood, breadfruit leaves and *noni* roots for yellow[10,11,12,13]. motif images covered in wax will resist color when the fabric is dyed. After the fabric is dyed, it is then dried under indirect sunlight. Afterwards the remaining wax on the cloth is removed by dipping the batik cloth in hot water until the wax melts again. This process is called *melorod* or *pelorodan*[14]. The batik cloth is then dried again and ready to be sewn.

---

[9]Probosiwi, P., & Gusnanda, K. (2020). Visual aesthetics of elementary school students' "batik" design. *PrimaryEdu: Journal of Primary Education*, 4(2), 146-159(Probosiwi, P., & Gusnanda, 2020).

[10]Agustarini, R., Heryati, Y., Adalina, Y., Adinugroho, WC, Yuniati, D., Fambayun, RA, & Perdana, A. (2022). The development of Indigofera spp. as a source of natural dyes to increase community incomes on Timor Island, Indonesia. *Economies*, 10(2), 1-30.(Agustarini et al., 2022).

[11]Hartono, L., Murni, ES, Handayani, ES, & Nurcahyanti, D. (2022). Teak Trees as Source of Inspiration for Developing Batik Motifs. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research & Education*, 22(2), 241-253.(Hartono, L. et al., 2022).

[12]12Ayele, M., Tesfaye, T., Alemu, D., Limeneh, M., & Sithole, B. (2020). Natural dyeing of cotton fabric with extracts from mango tree: A step towards sustainable dyeing. *Sustainable Chemistry and Pharmacy*, 17, 1-8. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scp.2020.100293.(Ayele et al., 2020).

[13]Rahman, R., Irawati, R., Mutaqin, EJ, & Kamis, N. (2023). Exploration of Jambi batik on learning geometry transformation. *Prima: Journal of Mathematics Education*, 7(1), 89-99(Rahman et al., 2023).

[14]Andria, F., Rahmi, A., Sunarzi, M., Nuramanah, S., Salmah, S., Tosida, ET, & Harsani, P. (2022). Community-based local wisdom development: Strengthening accounting and production management skills "batik village new normal Bogor*".* *International Journal of Research in Community Services*, 3(2), 63-70(Andria et al., 2022).

Fig. 6. The process of depicting batik

After the batik cloth has been made, the strands of batik cloth are sewn into ready-to-wear batik clothing. Figure 6 shows batik clothing with the theme of power and peace which was made into clothing and worn by King Hamengku Buwana X. This motif is dominantly placed on the back of batik clothes. The placement of this motif aims to show dominant power and valor, pride in Indonesian cultural heritage, show belief in the power of the God Vishnu who is considered the owner of the *Garuda* or eagle bird in the strength and protection and mainly in the state Indonesia that has the *Garuda* or eagle as a national symbol.[15] (Puspita, 2017).

Meanwhile, peace is represented by the *Parang* motif located on the front of the cloth, as if it were a scarf that runs from left to right. This *Parang* motif depicts the relationship between humans, mountains and the sea. To reach the sea, mountains must have a suitable slope. In Javanese, the terms "*pereng*" or "*parang*" refer to slopes. This *Parang* motif is a symbol of peace between humans and nature. When humans establish a harmonious relationship with nature, peace is created. Thus, batik work is not just a visual representation of power and peace, but also a symbol that illustrates that power and peace can actually be united in beautiful harmony, not as a paradox.

The presence of written batik created specifically for King Hamengku Buwana X who also served as governor of the Yogyakarta

---

[15]Puspita, RRSID (2017). The Garuda Bird as a Source of Ideas for Creating Batik Motifs for Party Clothing [Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta]. In Doctoral dissertation.(Puspita, 2017).

Special Region would be an extraordinary achievement in the world of Indonesian written batik creation. The use of written batik by a king, which is a symbol of a strong leader, as well as a creator of peace, has a deep meaning for all Indonesian society. The symbols manifested in written batik reflect the authority, power and simplicity of a leader. The symbolic attributes worn by a king have remained unchanged since the Middle Ages.

Therefore, the creation of exclusive written batik for King Hamengku Buwana X will become a symbol of wise power and peace realized by a leader who leads by example of power, peace and also wisdom.

This work does not have to be translated as a frozen tradition, but further as a form of bringing to life the concept of peace followed by power. A leader such as a king, president, prime minister, tribal chief, is required to create lasting peace, stability and balance for the people he leads. The concept of peace is realized through the protective wings of the eagle or *Garuda*.

Fig 7. The batik creation used by The King Hamengku Buwana X.

In the creation above **(Fig. 7)** the message of power and peace is not depicted explicitly. The creation of this clothing does not aim to be a form of visual sacralization through symbols. It is a form of the messenger's effort to maintain peace and the responsibility of a powerful leader to always create peace. A person with great power, like King Hamengku Buwana X embodies the contradiction between the power to create peace and reject war which can be united in one work used by a king who is in power. The visualization of *Garuda* or eagle wings and the *Parang* motif in this creation is a "metaphor" expressed in the visualization of batik clothing motifs.

The disclosure of the work of creating batik is more about the philosophical aspect, namely the nature of duality, power and peace, but also the symbolization of strengthness and gentleness. The main aspect of symbolism in the creation of the batik clothing worn by King Hamengku

Buwana X also integrated duality, between strength and softness, as the basis for the creation of this work. Hence the researcher's thinking in this philosophical batik fashion work. The form created is a blend of highly symbolic elements.

The creation of this batik work is far from functional, practical and representative in its aspects. The artist's expression in making batik art, departs from the Middle Ages in Yogyakarta, Java ideas into a contemporary work, and penetrates the historical dimension. So it will be very difficult to find a visual aspect with tangible creative work. The batik creation work above **(Fig. 7)** is very philosophical, as a form of expression of individual creation and does not direct the viewer's understanding to certain objects that are easy to understand. The work of creating batik is very non-representational, but the author has a lot of consideration for the creative subject.

Conclusion

This research aimed to create batik with the theme of power and peace for King Hamengku Buwana X by describing the representation of power and peace. The form of written batik clothing worn by a king, namely King Hamengku Buwana X from the palace of Special Region of Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. This research accounted for the special batik of King Hamengku Buwana X. The batik made depicts motifs that symbolize the power of authority, but also bringing of peace to all mankind. It is hoped that the creation of batik for King Hamengku Buwana X will enhance the role of batik artists in the process of creating batik clothes with the theme of power and peace related to aesthetic visual and technical abilities achieved through the application of written batik techniques. On the other hand, the creation of written batik art is closely related to the culture and background of batik artists who want to express the values of power and peace that leaders must have all over the world. There are aspects of human values, respect for life, policies in using power, highest efforts to create peace, including the ability of artists to master hand skills to make written batik, along with ideas as the basis for creation.

Acknowledgment

thanks also to Izzatul Iffah S.Pd., and Rifkhi Rinaldi, S.Pd. as the personal assistant who has provided data for the completeness of this writing.

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1 Initial sketch of written batik technique with the title Power and Peace
Fig. 2 *Parang* motif created by Agung Hanyakrakusuma The Great
Fig. 3 *Gurdha* motif on batik
Fig. 4 Process of formulating the batik concept
Fig. 5 Preparation of wax and canting for batik
Fig. 6 The process of depicting batik
Fig. 7 The batik creation used by King Hamengku Buwana X.

Bibliography:

Agustarini, R., Heryati, Y., Adalina, Y., Adinugroho, WC, Yuniati, D., Fambayun, RA, & Perdana, A. (2022). The development of Indigofera spp. as a source of natural dyes to increase community incomes on Timor Island, Indonesia. Economies, 10(2), 1–30.

Andria, F., Rahmi, A., Sunarzi, M., Nuramanah, S., Salmah, S., Tosida, ET, & Harsani, P. (2022). Community-based local wisdom development: Strengthening accounting and production management skills "batik village new normal Bogor." International Journal of Research in Community Services, 3(2), 63–70.

Asmah, A.E., Okpattah, V., Padditey, E. (2023). Cotton Fent Fabric as an Alternate Material for Batik Making. Journal of Science and Technology (Ghana), 41(2), 83–101.

Ayele, M., Tesfaye, T., Alemu, D., Limeneh, M., & Sithole, B. (2020). Natural dyeing of cotton fabric with extracts from mango tree: A step towards sustainable dyeing. Sustainable Chemistry and Pharmacy, 17, 1–8.

Cowdrey, H.E. J. (1970). The Peace and the Truth of God in the Eleventh Century. Past & Present. 46, 42–67.

Druon, M. (1970). Saint Louis et la notion de justice. Revue Des Deux Mondes, 524–532.

Ekowati, VI (2017). Javanese Philology: A Complete Guide to Philological Research Practices. UNY Press.

Gusti, O. (2011). The Leviathan State and the ethics of peace in the view of Thomas Hobbes. Response: Journal of Social Ethics, 16(1), 37–65.

Hakim, LM (2018). Batik as a National Cultural Heritage and Indonesian Nation Brand. NationState. Journal of International Studies (NSJIS), 1(1), 173–182.

Hartono, L., Murni, ES, Handayani, ES, & Nurcahyanti, D. (2022). Teak Trees as Source of Inspiration for Developing Batik Motifs. Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research & Education, 22(2), 241–253.

Heathhorn, S. (2002). The Highest Type of Englishman": Gender, War, and the Alfred the Great Commemoration of 1901. Canadian Journal of History, 37(3), 459–484.

Kershaw, & Paul. (2011). Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power and the Early Medieval Political Imagination. Oxford Academic.

Kurniawan, O., & Iskandar, R. (2021). Multicultural Education in Elementary Schools: Exploration of Indonesian Batik Based on Local Wisdom. Journal of

Elementary Education, 12(2), 173–182.

Lane-Poole, S. (1903). Saladin. Рипол Классик.

Latowsky. (2013). Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority. Cornell University Press.

Lusiana, I. (2011). Beautiful, Concrete, and Ananta as Slices of Beauty: A Study of Proportions in the Dialectic of Art. In Dissertation. University of Indonesia.

Na'am, MF, Setiawan, D., & Prasetyaningtyas, W. (2020). Spirit and Phenomenon as a Basic Idea for Batik Motive Making. In 4th International Conference on Arts Language and Culture (ICALC 2019), 186–193.

Nurhayati, E. (2018). The World of Javanese Manuscripts: Theory, Methods and Applications in Javanese Manuscript Practice (1st ed.). Library Cantrik.

Probosiwi, P., & Gusnanda, K. (2020). Visual aesthetics of elementary school students' "batik" design. PrimaryEdu: Journal of Primary Education, 4(2), 146–159.

Puspita, RRSID (2017). The Garuda Bird as a Source of Ideas for Creating Batik Motifs for Party Clothing [Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta]. In Doctoral dissertation. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/144238046.pdf%0Ahttp://repository.isi-ska.ac.id/1774/

Raharja, IGM (2014). Proceedings of the National Seminar on the Advancement of Fine Arts and Design to Build Culture and Civilization with Personality. Indonesian Art Institute Denpasar.

Rahman, R., Irawati, R., Mutaqin, EJ, & Kamis, N. (2023). Exploration of Jambi batik on learning geometry transformation. Prima: Journal of Mathematics Education, 7(1), 89–99.

Safitri, AI, Sudarmawan, A., & Sudita., IK (2019). Sasambo Batik in Rembitan Village, Pujut, Central Lombok. 7(1).

Smyth, A. P. (1995). King Alfred the Great. Oxford University Press.

Sudardi, B. (2021). Batik motifs as a means of building for peace: Javanese perspective. International Journal of Law, Government and Communication, 6(25), 09–16.

Susandro, S., Taruan, H.N., & Ghifari, M. (2020). Community and Tourist Reception of Mural Art Works in the Krueng Dho and Krueng Daroy Areas, Banda Aceh City. Gorga: Journal of Fine Arts, 9(1), 70. https://doi.org/10.24114/gr.v9i1.17905

Susanti, DI, Sudhiarsa, RI, & Susrijani, R. (2019). Traditional cultural expressions and intellectual property rights. Dioma Malang Printing.

Thiruchelvam, C.C., & Abdullah, S. (2019). The essence of wayang in modern Indonesian Artworks: Examining the works of Nasirun and Heri Dono. Malaysian Journal of Performing and Visual Arts, 5, 57–78.

Wijaya, D.N. (2016). The Social Contract According to Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Journal of Humanist Sociology of Education, 1(2), 183–193.

**Wyse, A**. (1944). The" Enquêteurs" Of Louis IX. Franciscan Studies, 34–62.

Yousef, NT (2021). Saladin, The Latin Crusaders, and Palestine: David Eldridge's Holy Warriors and the 'Clash of Civilizations' Propaganda. Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies, 20(2), 199–222.

BOOK REVIEWS

Views on the Middle Ages: Ages, Genders and the Expression of Emotions

Vladimir Crețulescu[*]

Luminița Diaconu, Corina Anton (dir.), *Âges et genres des émotions médiévales*, București, Editura Pro Universitaria, 2023, 195 pages.
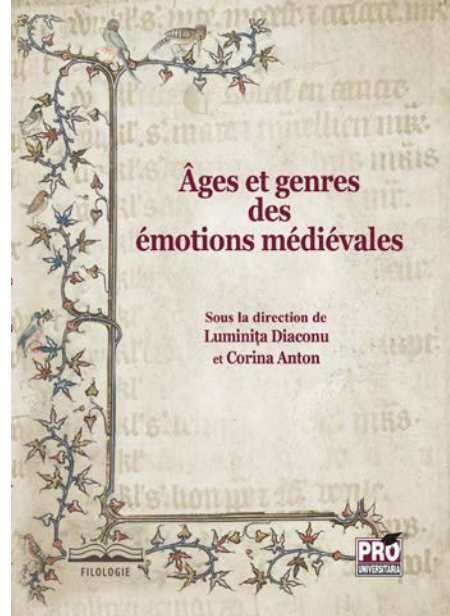
The collective volume *Âges et genres des emotions médiévales* belongs to an academic tradition which may rightfully be termed as illustrious, in the context of the European humanities and social sciences. I am referring, of course, to the intellectual legacy of the Annales School, which has, rather recently (throughout the last three decades or so), joined the generous disciplinary confluence of cultural history/ cultural studies. Throughout its multiple "generations", the Annales School has evolved from the practice of a predominantly quantitative social and economic historiography, to qualitative approaches geared towards cultural history and historical anthropology. Thence has emerged the preoccupation for the history of ideas and mentalities, and then, for the history of the senses (with the Annales historians studying subjects such as the history of smells, or of color perception, for instance). Finally, throughout the last two decades, cultural historians descended from the Annales tradition have

[*] Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, vladimir_cretulescu@yahoo.com

dared to venture into the ineffable realm bounded by the study of the history of emotions.

As such, by subscribing thematically to the research field of the history of emotions, the present volume contributes to the development of one of the research paths which is currently commanding the attention of litterateurs and historians, but also of philosophers, theologians, sociologists and anthropologists[1]. The volume comprises diverse and original contributions, and its conceptual premise – that of investigating the emotionality of the Middle Ages from an interdisciplinary perspective, in its dynamic relationship with gender, age and the historical period – constitutes, in itself, an innovative approach[2].

Overall, the tome explores the complex and multifaceted problem pertaining to the modes of expression, codes and social role of emotions in the Middle Ages, in the light of a multitude of thematic approaches which bring to bear the various categories of sources available. In fact, topics run the gamut, including discussions of: diverse aspects and dimensions of emotional expression by protagonists of medieval literary works (see the contributions of Mihaela Voicu, Monica Ruset Oancă, Luminița Diaconu, Caroline Blot, Corina Anton, Tristan Fourré and Davide Artico); the codes of expressing affects in the context of Byzantine diplomatic practice, as found in the accounts of Byzantine chroniclers (see Ecaterina Lung's article); the appropriateness / inappropriateness of the emotional expressions of two queen-mothers of the late Western Middle Ages, in their bitter struggle for the enthronement of their sons (see the article of Melina Rokai); the iconographic portrayal of contemplative suffering (pensive grief) in the medieval imagery (see the pages authored by Simona Drăgan); finally, the complicated relationship between emotionality and 12th century religious music, in light of a certain ancient philosophical tradition which nourishes the reflection of medieval theologians (in the contribution of Mihaela Pop).

---

[1] See also the first contribution of the Centre for Medieval Studies in this field: Luminița Diaconu & Mihaela Voicu (dir.), *Amitié /vs/ Hostilité au Moyen Âge*, București, Editura Universității din București, collection "Mediaevalia", no. 4/ 2013.

[2] Luminița Diaconu & Corina Anton, "Émotions médiévales à l'épreuve de l'âge et du genre », in Luminița Diaconu & Corina Anton (dir.), *Âges et genres des émotions médiévales*, Actes du Colloque international organisé par Le Centre d'Études Médiévales, Université de Bucarest (26-27 novembre 2021), București, Editura Pro Universitaria, 2023, p. 7-14.

The great diversity in the themes discussed and in the types of sources studied throughout the volume goes, quite naturally, hand in hand with the mobilization of a varied assortment of methods and theories, characteristic of several disciplines running the gamut of the humanities and social sciences, including: the history of the body, philosophy, historical, social and cultural anthropology, art history and translation studies.

The profoundly interdisciplinary conception and character of the volume *Âges et genres des émotions médiévales* recommends it both to the layman reader desirous of an indiscreet look into the phycho-emotional intimacy of the medieval man, and to the specialist (be she or he a historian, litterateur, anthropologist, philosopher or art historian) interested in one or several of the themes discussed in the pages of this collective tome, the contents of which is as diverse, as it is surprising and interesting.

On Romanian Imagery and Artistic Heritage from a Transdisciplinary Perspective

Ana-Magdalena Petraru[∗]

Corin Braga (coord. general), *Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România, vol. V,* Liviu Malița (coord.), *Imaginar și patrimoniu artistic/ The Encyclopedia of Romanian Imaginaries*, *vol. V, Imaginary and Artistic Heritage*, Polirom, 2020, 504 pages.

The project of Romanian imaginaries is a unique one coordinated by prof. Corin Braga and has gathered specialists from the humanities that contributed to various fields, i.e. literary (vol. 1), linguistic (vol. 2), historical (col 3), religious (vol. 4) and artistic (vol. 5). There have been many echoes in the press[1] and our focus is on volume 5, in general and on the chapters devoted to architecture and visual arts, in particular. According to the coordinator, Liviu Malița, the aim was to illustrate all significant arts and the approach is holistic,

---

[∗] Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of Letters, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, România; alina.petraru@gmail.com

[1] *Cf. "*Enciclopedia imaginariilor în România, Masă rotundă moderată de Ovidiu PECICAN cu Corin BRAGA (coordonator general), Elena PLATON, Sorin MITU, Ioan CHIRILĂ, Liviu MALIȚA și Adrian TUDURACHI, coordonatorii volumelor din Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România (pagina de Facebook a Editurii Polirom, 17 decembrie 2020)**,** *Observator cultural*, 25 Feb. 2021, https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/enciclopedia-imaginariilor-din-romania/. Retrieved on March 29th, 2024.

overviewing the subfields from a transdisciplinary viewpoint, diachronically (p. 12). Archaism can be grasped in the anthropological and aesthetic discourse, and drawing on masks, it allows Ștefana Pop-Curșeu to account for an archetype of theatre. Moreover, the way in which avant-garde reinvents tradition, through revisiting, is the perspective adopted by Rada Niță in her discussion of folklore in modern and contemporary Romanian visual arts. An impulse of recovery and reconnection to nature in Romanian art over the last 60 years is highlighted by Adrian Guță (*ibidem*). Valentina Sandu-Dediu speaks of a constant concern of postwar Romanian composers to cite and process traditional folklore songs so as to reconnect to interwar modernism, after the hiatus imposed by socialist realism and a tendency towards western neo-modernism. A defining factor in our culture is ruralism as Ioan Pop-Curșeu points out, i.e., we are 'a people of peasants' (p. 13). An enticing study is that of Corina Iosif and Adrian T. Sîrbu on folklore as media product (p. 14).

Regarding religious imagery, Romanian mentality, similarly to the European one, draws on the Judeo-Christian paradigm, as testified by Cristina Cojocaru's research on religious imagery in modern fine arts. This can also be seen in Romanian fine arts starting with the first lay paintings that pragmatically conceptualize notions related to religion and sacrality. The chapters in this volume tackle the historical relation between religion and Byzantine culture (at an iconographic and architectural level), as well as between mystical structures and Orthodoxy. In Vlad Bedros's study, for instance, post-Byzantine painting in Romania deals with the way in which the option for Orthodoxy led to the assimilation of specific formal configurations of the sacred space (icons, embroidery, furniture and other religious objects); the author reached the conclusion that stylistically, post-Byzantine cultural heritage in our country exhibits some variables of visual arts, tributary to a Byzantine Commonwealth. In music, this can be seen in chromatic writing (p. 15).

With respect to the integration of religion in a perennial conscience of national identity, the analytical approach has to do with the specificity of our country where there are significant gaps between the rural and the urban, traditional and modern, according to Bogdan S. Pecican. Politics and identity also have a say in a country's identity and the debates on *ethos* reflected in Romanian art are part of the volume, as well. Anca Hațiegan deals with the relation between the birth of Romanian theatre and the shaping of its identity as mythology

(similar to religion), a state institution in the 19th and 20th centuries, focusing on Caragiale (p. 16). A similar approach pertains to Miriam Cuibus who, in an integrative methodological stance, allows the author to outline major stages of Romanian theatre from the perspective of Western influences (mainly French and German, to be replaced with the Soviet ones). She minutely analyses postwar theatre during the last decades of the communist period when the great directors part in self-exile, thus orphaning this art in our country (p. 17). Laura Pavel tackles the theatre of interiority with an egotistic imagery rendered by characters with hypertrophic subjectivities, a symptomatic perspective that suits not just modern formulas of dramatic writing, but also contemporary performance. She brings into play Matei Vișniec's meta theatricality and Vlad Zografi's postmodern drama to support her claims (p. 20).

Florinela Popa approaches the Europeanizing imagery in Romanian music dealing with the process of institutionalization from the second half of the 19th century to the end of the interwar period accounting for the embrace of West-European forms and genres which led to the establishment of conservatories, symphony orchestras, choral societies and musical publications, to name but a few; herein, George Enescu's music particularly distinguishes itself by means of personal syntheses that dilute its eclecticism. Daniel Iftene studies how historical fiction in film overcomes the documentary function and defines national identity since at the beginning of the 20th century, Romanian cinematography favourably relates to national identity to become slightly negative in the communist period (when national history was mystified and mythicized) and gloomier after 1989 (p. 17).

Research on architecture pleads for the existence of a national style. Thus, Virgil Pop approaches the imagery of Transylvanian architecture by advocating for a unique architectural program kept as such, i.e., that of the Church with the instance of Transylvania in which an eclectic style was formed (pp. 17-18). Ana Hajdu would focus on the architecture of Moldavia and Wallachia in a regional and European context, expanding on the ideas that a national heritage has to do with modernisation, hence the local appropriation of European models, as in the case of Ion Mincu who distinguished himself as key figure for the departure from the pure Byzantine style (p. 18).

Studies such as Ruxandra Demetrescu's deal with a more special identity, the artist's creative one that changed in status during modern Romanian civilization from craftsman to artist. Theodor Aman

is chosen to illustrate this as the signature of the artist is a mark of artistic identity and the self-portrait, of emancipation. Our first modern painter is considered to be Grigorescu. In his study, Horea Avram exclusively deals with the postwar condition of the artist by historically and critically approaching media art in Romania, in general and the technological imagery after 1960, in particular (p. 20).

Regarding transition, Liviu Malița claims that there is a lack of a communist imagery if we leave aside propaganda works or those reflecting socialist realism. As Radu Toderici shows in his study, films dealing with the period 1950-1989, namely contemporary dramas and political films are such an exception. Claudiu Țurcuș also underlines the way in which anti-communist discourse, post-communist transition and the phantasm of Western civilisation have shaped the imagery of Romanian films for 30 years (pp. 21-22).

Of particular interest to visual artists are the chapters on architecture in which Ada Hajdu deals with the genesis of the national style in the field, since active architects in Romania between 1850-1950 draw on history in creating a national heritage to employ as source for their own projects[2]. It was Alexandru Odobescu (1834-1895) who urged Romanian architects to study the past and involve it in contemporary architecture (p. 271). The author considers Byzantine architecture to be local heritage and provides Romanian sources for a national Romanian style, the interest in ruins showing in literature, as well (p. 274). Cozia, for instance, enters architecture, through history (p. 275). Stavropoleos church in Bucharest was associated with Brâncoveanu's style as one of the privileged sources of a national style (p. 278). Vernacular architecture is also a source of Romanian national style in the sense that architecture views Romanian specificity as associated to outstanding instances in history such as those pertaining to the Gothic (p. 280). Ion Mincu is deemed as the architect with the most important role in creating a national style in our country (p. 282). National style competed with the eclecticism of French influence which seemed modern and progressive and during the interwar years,

---

[2] Nowadays, the tendency is towards 3D modelling of the cultural heritage for research, restoration and educational purposes. In Romania, wooden churches are particularly aimed at, and a record of a case study in the field is the "Saint Martyrs Constantin Brâncoveanu and His Sons" wooden church from Oradea Municipality, Bihor County, *Cf.* Herman G.V., Caciora T., Ilies Dorina Camelia, Ilies A., Deac Anca, Sturza Amalia, Sonko, S.M., Suba N.S., Nistor S. "3D Modeling of the Cultural Heritage: Between Opportunity and Necessity", *Journal of Applied Engineering Sciences*, VOL. 10(23), ISSUE 1/2020, pp. 27-30, https://intapi.sciendo.com/pdf/10.2478/jaes-2020-0005. Retrieved on April 2nd, 2024.

formal allusions to the medieval past which were incorporated into architecture, started to be questioned (p. 286). The author concludes that conceptual labour is required for tradition to be assimilated by modernity to avoid the depersonalization of architecture (p. 289).

Architectural imaginary of Transylvania is analysed by Virgil Pop starting from Romanesque art that follows the model of Southern Germany, the oldest preserved being the one in Cisnădioara (p. 291). The Gothic follows and the first construction works date from the second half of the 13th century in Cârța (p. 299). Transylvanian Renaissance is derived from the Renaissance at the north of the Alps and the current was a fashion coming from Italy (p. 302). In some cases, the Renaissance makes itself felt as a wish to take over some forms in the pipeline, yet adjusted to the situation as in the case of the house on Avram Iancu street in Sibiu with wooden frames of the window (p. 305). Regarding baroque, due to political developments, Transylvania remained isolated from Europe and the first church pertaining to the movement is the Jesuit one in Cluj (pp. 306-307). With respect to eclecticism and modernism, in the 19th century, westernizing and emancipation show themselves more and more strongly; furthermore, in Transylvania modernisation came from Vienna and in the second half of the cent., from Budapest. The company Fellner & Hellmer would project over 60 theatres in Europe, including the ones in Cluj, Oradea, Iași and Cernăuți (p. 315). The author concludes that along with the communist regime, the regional character of Transylvanian architecture vanishes[3] as it was the centralism of the totalitarian period that made this aspect of the daily and cultural life uniform (p. 317).

The chapters on visual arts deal with the path from craftsman to artist in modern Romanian civilisation, Ruxandra Demetrescu tackling modernity and the occidentalising trend in 20th century Romanian art, the former being defined as rejection of classical academism pertaining to the French painting of the 1860s and the American one of the 1960s (p. 321). The latter shows in the instance of the foreign artist, the artist travelling to the Romanian principalities, one of the most illustrative

---

[3] Art historians generally mention troubled times in the regional art of Transylvania, arguing that artistic monuments testified to Hungarian superiority over the Romanian one in culture if politics dictated it. For an account of the (inter)war period, see V. Trifescu, "Écrire l'histoire de l'art pendant la guerre. Les églises en bois des Roumains de Transylvanie dans l'historiographie hongroise de 1940", *Text și discurs religios V*, Ed. Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013, pp. 207-223, https://www.diacronia.ro/ro/indexing/details/A219/pdf. Retrieved on April 15th, 2024.

cases being that of Karl Storck from the German city of Hanau (p. 322) as from the perspective of continuity between art and craftsmanship, he resembles Tattarescu and distances himself from Aman (p. 324). The signature of the artist is considered to be a symptom of artistic dignity in a process of ongoing continuity against the background of a paradigm shift in art from religious to lay; thus, the signature functions as intertextual presence of the creative subject and authenticity mark (p. 325). It is also a self-portrait, mark of modern artistic personality drawing on Renaissance self-portraits of the 15th and 16th centuries when they linked the creative self and the receiving public (p. 327). In our country, the 1848 moment undoubtedly witnessed a development in the emancipation of the artist and the configuration of modern identity since along with writings of literary figures on artists, the first portraits of artists are recorded. Thus, August Strixner (1820-1862) carried out the portrait of Tattarescu working, whereas Theodor Aman and Karl Storck would mutually achieve their self-portraits eleven years later (p. 329). Theodor Aman is a significant figure from the viewpoint of his biography, between myth and the artist's status, a challenge for artistic historiography; it was concluded that as mentor, forerunner, institutional builder, he was overcome by Grigorescu, the 'national painter' (p. 331). The latter is also representative as the first modern, marking the transition from lateness to synchronization and 'the gift of forgetfulness', in Andrei Pleșu's terms. The former helped him on the path of his artistic career, ranging from a minor icon painter to a painter drawing on Barbizon after having assimilated and overcome the classical and romantic lesson (p. 333). The Prolog group is regarded as a return to apprenticeship where the drawing on visuality and the lesson of nature mingle with an apologetics of apprenticeship understood as obedience of glance and spirit (p. 335).

In "Post-Byzantine Painting on Romania's Territory", Vlad Begros argues that our population was under the religious Byzantine sphere via Balkan intermediary, a fact under debate by ecclesiastic history (p. 336). During middle and late Byzantium, the sacred space is envisaged as a microcosm that reiterates the celestial world; thus, the imperial Byzantine court was perceived as a mirroring of the perfection of the Celestial King's Court. A parallel with Lewis Carroll's *Alice Though the Looking Glass* is attempted in the sense that critics viewed such type of court as the image of the other since it was possible for the characters to cross it for the mirror mediated the

reflexion in question[4]. The Mother of God plays a seminal role in the iconography of the apse (at Curtea de Argeș or in the paintings dating from the time of Stephen the Great, Petru Rareș and Neagoe Basarab, the instance of Arbore stylistically distinguishing itself during the 14th-16th centuries) (p. 340). Furthermore, the Holy Communion of the Apostles and hierarchs officiating religious services are the closest related to Eucharistic sacrifice. Sometimes a grotesque stance is added for Judas is depicted as holding the bag with the 30 pieces of silver in 16th century Moldavia at Humor or wearing a devil on one of his shoulders at Hârlău (p. 341). The iconography of passage from the nave and the apse of the altar has the role of threshold, of passage to sainthood. A central theme is that of Deisis (p. 344) in which problematic iconographies of Late Byzantium with Trinitarian participation to Eucharistic sacrifice are present (as in the case of Moldova in the 16th century at Probota) (p. 345). The author reaches the conclusion that the Byzantine Commonwealth has eventually become an Orthodox one in which mutations would only be recorded in the early modernity of South-Eastern Europe (p. 352).

As previously mentioned, in her study on religious imaginary in modern Romanian fine arts, Cristina Cojocaru claims that the mentality of our space in the field circumscribes fundamentally to the Judeo-Christian paradigm; in addition, particularly during 1927 and 1947, maximum interest in domestic spirituality was recorded because of the political context that favoured radical right views, only to disappear completely after WWII until the 70s in the communist period (p. 353). There are three major directions in 19th-20th century fine arts that give the expression of religious imaginary, i.e., concerning the subject, the form/ style and the spirit/ idea/ concept; rare are the works in which the three converge, an exception being Olga Greceanu's (1890-1978) that managed to render the idea of sacred in iconography along with the preservation of the lay character (p. 354). The first motif derived from religious art to be integrated in lay art is the silhouette of the ecclesiastical building (p. 355), and a canon of enlightened rulers can be grasped under the sign of romanticism and academism, to reach historical mythology for the popular masses during the totalitarian regime (p. 356). Free art manifested itself after 1989 and some artists that enjoyed recognition

---

[4] *Cf.* Henry Maguire, "The Heavenly Court", in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Washington, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997, p. 248, *passim*.

before publicly affirmed their conversion to religious discourse (Horia Bernea, Sorin Dumitrescu, Silvia Radu and Vasile Gorduz, Ion Grigorescu, etc.); an orthodox radical wing also rose with the New Jerusalem of Pucioasa (p. 368).

Rada Niță's view on folklore in modern and contemporary Romanian visual arts starts from the premise that artists generally offered their own perspective on the traditional world and folklore based on their artistic and sometimes political orientations. The Avant Garde was known to be international in character, yet it showed interest in traditional art, as well as can be seen in the works of the surrealist Victor Brauner (1903-1966) who drew on Romanian fairy tales and domestic mythical figures according to Amalia Pavel (p. 370). Alongside artists, the role of institutions promoting folklore cannot be denied; two seminal ones are the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest founded in 1990 and The Comparative Art Museum in Sângeorz-Băi established in 1995 (p. 384).

Nature in contemporary art is accounted for by Adrian Guță considering the years after 1960, a traditional perspective drawing on the representation of nature in fine arts and its siblings (sculpture, photography, etc.); moreover, the artist may initiate or carry out actions or *performance art* in nature, not to mention the particular case of *land art* that can be included in *environmental art*. Our first instances of landscape as autonomous genre are represented by an urban view showing the church in Câmpulung around 1837 by Ion Negulici (1812-1851) (p. 386). Between 1960-1980, realism, postimpressionism, neo-expressionism and the fantastic movement coexist, the author arguing that Țuculescu's paintings influenced the beginnings of the School of Poiana Mărului in the 60s (p. 387). Regarding nature and the other media, the relation between sculpture and nature was given by the symposia of sculpture that took place in open air between 1970-1980 (at Măgura Buzăului and other locations) (p. 391). Furthermore, the Bucharest workshop on engraving located on Str. Speranței had been one of the friendliest spaces of art for decades during the second half of the 20th century and nature was one of their topics (p. 392). With respect to performance and land art, the neo-Avant Garde Sigma group of Timișoara (1969-1980) consisting of Ștefan Bertalan, Constantin Flondor, Doru Tulcan, Ioan Gaita, Elisa Rusu and the mathematician Lucian Codreanu practiced alternative art forms aiming at urban aesthetics (p. 393).

The identity imaginary in the digital era tackled by Bogdan S. Pecican starts from the (modern) metaphysics of the subject in philosophy (p. 396) and passes to the metamorphoses of the postmodern subject that can be traced in cyberspace, a product and effect of the technological and communication revolution (p. 397). The *new media* constellation took shape, and it includes interactive *multimedia* such as *hypermedia, intermedia* and *transmedia* (p. 398). The new media thus pertains to a 'semantic basin' and the art deriving from such contexts is 'an emergent Avant-Garde' (p. 403). Last but not least, the status of the artist is uncertain: is there a new artist out there or simply another form of subversion of a marginal, *underground* artist? (p. 405) In Romania, where the concern for cybernetics and computers anticipated similar western developments (thanks to Ștefan Odobleja), progress was delayed by communism and art was desynchronised in the 1980s with few experiments in the media field (exceptions are the cineclubs among popular art schools in Arad and culture institutions of the students in Cluj-Napoca or Timișoara) (p. 408). However, it is difficult to quantify how Romania takes part in the art of new media in recent years, the sheep Miorița finding itself reproduced in bytes or among pixel storms with the preservation of the space of alternance between valley and hill (p. 413).

The last chapter deals with the technological imaginary in visual arts, Horea Avram claiming that media technology developed mainly in Western Europe and North America, contemporary art revolving around it, whereas the communist block, Romania included, stood in the shade of Yalta (p. 415). Against this background, from a chronological viewpoint, there are four stages with intersections and overlaps among them: a progressive utopian one (1965-end of the 1970s), an underground one (1970-1980), a connection one (in the 1990s) and a diversification one (after 2000) (p. 415). Even during the communist period in the magazine *Arta* there were articles discussing topics in the pipeline such as cybernetics, Cinetic art or computer art despite the low interest of museums in the field (p. 417). Underground is seen as strategy of resistance against the totalitarian ideology as the art in question operates outside the *mainstream* channels of distribution (via Paul Neagu, Horia Damian, Geta Brătescu, Ion Grigorescu, Mihai Olos or Diet Slayer) although some ambiental works conveyed a political message (p. 420).The group kinema ikon founded in Arad in 1970 has been a constant presence for over 50 years in Romanian

underground (p. 421), the author concluding that in our country, the option for media art has been a statement in itself (p. 434).

To summarize, this book invites readers from all fields of art to plunge into Romanian imaginaries, minutely accounted for at all levels from a multi and transdisciplinary perspective. Students, researchers, and professors may use it as bibliography for their mainstream courses in theatre, film, music, architecture, and visual arts studies.

Lux Magna. The Spectacle of Light in Architecture and Art

Irina-Andreea Stoleriu⁎

Oana Maria Nae, *Lux Magna: o istorie culturală a utilizării luminii în artele vizuale din antichitatea târzie până în zorii modernităţii/ Lux Magna: A Cultural History of the Use of Light in Visual Arts from Late Antiquity to the Dawn of Modernity*, Editura Universităţii „Al. I. Cuza", 2023, 315 p.

Lux Magna: o istorie culturală a utilizării luminii în artele vizuale din Antichitatea târzie până în zorii modernităţii/ Lux Magna: A Cultural History of the Use of Light in Visual Arts from Late Antiquity to the Dawn of Modernity came out at "Al. I. Cuza" University Publishing House from Iasi, in 2023, totalling 315 pages. From the beginning of the book, Oana-Maria Nae thanked the professors who guided her and referred the doctoral thesis (prof. Tereza Sinigalia – the scientific coordinator of the doctoral thesis, prof. Ruxandra Demetrescu and prof. Petru Bejan), as well as the university professors George Bondor and prof. Cristian Nae who encouraged her to publish this extensive research.

The author, doctor of philosophy in visual arts, art historian and member of the teaching staff at the "George Enescu" National University of Arts Iaşi, made a rich foray into aesthetics and art history. Her approach was different from the already existing research that highlighted the artistic

---

⁎ Assoc. Prof., PhD. Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu National University of Arts Iaşi, România; andreea_stoleriu@yahoo.com.

changes according to the most representative eras and regions in the history of art. Oana-Maria Nae offered the reader a complex reading from a conceptual point of view, drawing on the history of culture, the history of art, theology and the aesthetics of light. The author mentioned different theories in this work, referring to emblematic works of architecture, sculpture and painting.

The book Lux Magna was divided into three chapters and numerous sub-chapters, of which we mention the introduction, with three very important sub-points for the understanding of this research – Methodological preliminaries – the intention of elaborating a cultural history of the use of light in visual arts, The metaphor of light – from theophany to aesthetic experience and Light in visual arts – artistic environment and aesthetic device –, the first chapter – The metaphor of light in medieval thought, the second chapter – Light and space in medieval art and architecture, the third chapter – Renaissance, Baroque, Enlightenment and the light show and conclusions. By reading this book, one feels guided by a certain historical, cultural and visual context, which emphasizes philosophical, artistic, religious changes, as well as the continuous evolution of the concept of light.

Over time, numerous philosophers, theologians and scientists have focused their attention on the concept of *light*, each acquiring different symbolic valences, from Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Saint Augustine, Saint Bonaventura, Robert Grosseteste, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg, to Nicolaus Copernicus and Isaac Newton.

Natural light and artificial light were very important in architecture, in general, and in the ecclesiastical one, in particular, Oana Maria Nae noting that through them the builders managed to intensify or weaken the religious feeling, of anxiety or even fear. The book was divided into two from a temporal point of view, in the first two chapters problems related to medieval thought and art were described, and in the third chapter an incursion was made through several periods such as the Renaissance, the Baroque and the Enlightenment.

In the first part of the book, the one dedicated to Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the role of light was defining for the relationship between architecture and mural decoration. In medieval churches, natural light, filtered through simple windows or decorated with stained glass, was intended to inspire the presence of God in the church, devotion and the idea of spiritual enlightenment.

In the first chapter, The metaphor of light in medieval thought, definitions and interpretations of light in the aesthetics of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages were given. This incursion began with the three theories of the Greeks, that of the rays of light belonging to Empedocles, of the simulacra of Leucippus and Democritus, as well as that of the diaphanous of

Aristotle. The term diaphanous arose from the fusion of two Greek words that suggest *visual acuity* or *luminous clarity*. In Aristotle, the diaphanous was a mediator, representing the manifestation space for light in various environments, forms or spirits act. This journey through the history of light was continued with the ideas of Themistius and those of Plotinus, who associated light with the diaphanous and the metaphor. The ideas of the two philosophers were important because they achieved the transition from the thinking specific to Antiquity to a new system of thought, a theological one, characteristic of the Middle Ages. Plotinus was considered a pioneer in mysticism. In his conception, light referred to the spiritual field, being associated with divine thinking. Plotinus' theories about art, beauty, light and spirit were of major importance for medieval thought, and, as a rule, light was associated with the image of God.

References to the aesthetics of medieval light were divided into two distinct branches, that specific to the Eastern Middle Ages and that of the Western Middle Ages. The Fathers of the Church highlighted the fact that light can be associated with God and with the acquisition of eternal life. As Oana-Maria Nae specifies in the first chapter, Byzantine aesthetics and Byzantine art had as their central element light as a metaphor for God, Christ and the eternal world. The theologian Origen brought new meanings to the concept of light, which is identified with Christ – the Light of the world, the true Light, the Light of men. The same theologian associated light with sudden awakening and progressive illumination, while Dionysius linked the idea of beauty with the idea of emanation on the hierarchical scale of divine power that contained original beauty.

In the West, light played an essential role during the Gothic period, when stained glass was perceived as a gateway to God through the new architectural and lighting solutions used in churches. Saint Augustine adapted the specific ideas of Antiquity to Christian theology, emphasizing three main elements associated with the Holy Trinity – God is spiritual light, intangible truth comes from God and divine illumination.

In the second chapter, Light and space in medieval art and architecture, the author presented us with certain aspects that belong to different fields such as theology and art, which are harmoniously intertwined when we talk about the sacred image. Byzantine religious architecture was inspired by ancient architecture, taking over some plans that had nothing in common with the architecture of pagan temples. The plans often encountered in the Paleo-Christian period were the basilican and the central one, with mixed plans appearing later – the basilican plan covered with one or more domes. In the Byzantine Empire, churches with an austere exterior were decorated opulently, with much gold appearing in mosaics, frescoes and icons. The works of Byzantine art were designed according to certain rules, called Byzantine canons of representation, which aimed at the use of the

reverse perspective, the use of the gilded background and certain specific stylizations of the human figures. There was a dependency relationship between Byzantine architecture and decoration, having light as common denominator.

Regarding artistic representations, natural and/or artificial light had a privileged role in the reception of mosaics, frescoes, icons, miniatures and stained-glass windows by believers, highlighting particularly important spiritual aspects in the liturgical context inside churches. The connection and harmonization between the images and the service performed by the priest emphasized over time the formative and didactic role that works of art had in the Eastern and Western Churches.

At the beginning of the third chapter, Oana-Maria Nae made a transition from medieval art to Renaissance, Baroque art, culminating in the Enlightenment. The author of the book highlighted from the beginning of this chapter that aesthetics and art during the Renaissance followed a revival of the humanist spirit specific to Antiquity. In shaping the emblematic particularities of the Renaissance, the works of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus were rediscovered, becoming important sources of inspiration for both writers and artists.

Oana-Maria Nae grasped the changes that occurred in medieval and renaissance art, emphasizing the importance of humanism in this context. The most important characteristic of the art of this period concerned the secularization and diversification of the sources of inspiration, which during the Middle Ages were predominantly religious.

From a visual point of view, the changes materialized in the artists' desire to render three-dimensionality and the pictorial illusion of spatiality with the help of linear perspective, to the detriment of reverse perspective – used extensively during the Middle Ages. Lighting played an essential role in highlighting the three-dimensionality and spatial depth, the light in the works of religious inspiration gradually transforming, from that which captures spirituality/divinity to the natural/real. In the same innovative spirit, changes appeared in the works with religious themes – the gilded backgrounds and symbols of the divine world being replaced by concrete elements from nature. Also, halos were drawn much more subtly than in medieval art or disappeared altogether. In this way, lovers of art and beauty gradually witnessed a desacralization of religious art and a proliferation of subjects inspired by Greco-Roman mythology. From the multitude of artists representative of Renaissance art, Oana-Maria Nae proposed a selection of a few names, starting with a representative artist of the Proto-Renaissance, Giotto di Bondone, then continuing with Masaccio, Fra Angelico, Pierro della Francesca, Carlo Crivelli, Leonardo da Vinci and Titian.

Leonardo da Vinci, a brilliant Renaissance artist, was passionate about light, identifying three types of illumination – direct or solar light,

diffuse light in cloudy weather, and discreet light – before dawn. The games of light and shadow were highlighted with the help of sfumato and especially chiaroscuro, procedures so loved by painters from various periods in the history of art.

As far as baroque art is concerned, it brought major changes from a visual point of view, being considered eminently dramatic, theatrical and dynamic. Regarding the light, it played a primary role for the understanding of the works of art, through the luxuriant use of chromaticity and chiaroscuro, which gave a certain drama to the images.

In the last part of this chapter, the focus was on scientific innovations, the Copernican revolution, Newton's prism and optical devices. Isaac Newton was among the modern researchers concerned with aspects related to the perception of light. He studied the refraction of light with the help of a glass prism that can break down white light into seven colors. Along with Newton, Marco Antonio de Dominis, Francesco Maria Grimaldi, Giovanni Batistta Riccioli had a significant contribution to the development of optics.

Continuing this journey through the history of light with the Enlightenment, it represented a metaphor of reason, marking the spiritual evolution of humanity. The scientific aspects of this chapter have been supplemented with examples of representative works from the history of art.

In conclusion, the present study accounted for essential artistic changes, the light turning into a research direction in the context of art history, cultural history, scientific discoveries and different specific ideologies. Oana-Maria Nae developed a piece of interdisciplinary research, managing to combine different fields of knowledge, light often acquiring metaphorical values specific to both the visual and the aesthetic spectrum. The book Lux Magna becomes essential reading for students, researchers or readers passionate about art history, having the role of systematizing essential information about the use of light from Late Antiquity to the dawn of modernity.

Monumental Mural Art And Ceramics Today

Elena Ramona Biciușcă[*]

Adrian Stoleriu (coord.), *30 de ani de artă murală la Iaşi: repere esenţiale/ 30 Years of Mural Art in Iaşi: Essential Markings*, PIM, Iași, 2022, 304 pages.

The publication "30 Years of Mural Art in Iaşi: Essential Markings", coordinated by Mr. Adrian Stoleriu, is the first Romanian synthesis study, which presents in detail the entire didactic, technological and aesthetic experience within the Mural Art specialization.

I confess that, during my student days, I would have liked to have had such an album. Instead, we found fragmentary approaches where art was presented in the public space. I have never found such a comprehensive study in the Romanian language, such a complex database that presents mural art, ceramics and the beautiful results of the teachers and students of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design for the last 30 years. It is good that such a work was able to see the light of print and I recommend its re-editing in other international languages, as well.

[*] Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași, ramonabic@yahoo.com

"30 Years of Mural Art in Iași: Essential Markings" represents the fruit of a valuable documentation, a real visual archive. Not only has someone done some real detective work, documenting and selecting most of the undergraduate and dissertation papers into a valuable database, but has investigated and shared a huge amount of information. In its pages you can find the activities of the professors who are part of the first generation of professors of this institution, from the 90s: Jenő Bartos, Ion Neagoe, Dimitrie Gavrilean, who outlined an educational program offering. Later, another generation of energetic teachers joined: Maria Urmă, Mihai Pamfil, Dan Acostioaei, Bogdan Maximovici and Ramona Biciuscă. Along with them, Adrian Stoleriu, currently dean of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, Daniel Sofron, Andrei Timofte, Irina Grosu and Nicu Oniciuc completed the teaching staff.

Since 2007, when professor Mihály Jenő Bartos, as head of the department, rebuilds the entire collective of the Mural Art specialization, gradually inviting artists such as Mihai Pamfil, Ramona Biciușcă, Ionela Mihuleac and Irina Grosu to become teachers, there opens an unprecedented experimental direction in the sense of monumental research in the field of Iași monumental ceramics.

Since the establishment of the Ceramics sub-specialization within the Mural Art section of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design in Iasi until now, the expressive potential of this field has been redefined through the reinvestigation of the means of expression, the novelty of the form, the spontaneous experimental nature of color and the randomness of the processes of combustion.

Currently, the Ceramics field of study is becoming remarkable as a domestic artistic activity, through research, contracts, international exchanges with contemporary art galleries and companies active in the field. In this sense, we mention the collaboration with the Spanish brand *Bussoga*, which defines the freedom to approach new processes and techniques in the field of ceramics, such as screen printing. The fourteen years of activity in the field of ceramics form new generations of ceramic artists, with a personal, recognizable artistic imprint. The creations of the graduates of the Ceramics department of study cover an unlimited subject and a series of interdisciplinary concerns. In this sense, we recall the *sculptural-monumental* approaches signed by the graduate Daniel Adăscăliței, the *real-superreal* object of Georgiana Grădinariu, Andreea Maximovici, Daniel Doboș and Cătălin Aprofirei, the *organic abstraction* of Luminita Avădana Trofin, Alexandra

Sofronia and Cătălina Aprofirei, the *organomorphic* sculpture signed by Andrei Alupoaiei, the *decorative expression* of Cristina Toma's *oversized* ritual jewel.

In this journey of research in the field, one of the most beautiful experiences was the one related to the establishment of the *Firekultur* group (Daniel Pop and Ramona Biciușcă) which approaches an interdisciplinary theme with monumental dimensions and proposes works intended for domestic and international public space, offering outstanding solutions, in line with contemporary ambient art trends.

In the current context, wall ceramics represents a contemporary practice of actuality, which is usefully included in the contemporary urban area. In this sense, ceramic artists, in collaboration with architects and interior designers, through ambitious projects, reconstruct the internal and external environment.

The dynamics and diversified approach of the fields of art but also the current demands of the market have opened new directions of study: ambient mural art, ceramics, sacred art. Workshop practice and student guidance often responded to their needs, and teachers sought to lead them in the direction of each person's passion. Practically, through the problems that the student encounters, the teacher promptly intervenes through guidance and direction. Thus, the student defines himself, and the teacher, through professional collaboration, discovers new educational offers and development stages, being constantly attentive to the changes that define the current period and professional needs of the student. Practically, this exchange of experience passes as mutual "modelling". In this sense, within the Ceramics Department, the permanent requirement of students to adapt the field of ceramics to the study of contemporary porcelain jewellery opens a new chapter of possible disciplines.

In fact, this publication is a celebration of the graduates of the Mural Art and Ceramics Specialization, of the professional efforts of the mentors, the teachers who contributed to the training of future artists, the generations of graduates, today in their turn teachers, entrepreneurs, designers, ceramists.

However, the most important aspect of this volume is its documentary value, quantifiable in valuable information and meaningful images, of the work of entire generations of graduates and professors, a starting point towards the freedoms of expression of today's students.