

The Image of the Kay Kavus in the Works of Decorative and Applied Art of Byzantium and Iran

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to find and highlight the finest works of art created by artists and goldsmiths of the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic East on the example of the image of Kay Kavus on Garuda, dating from the 5th to the 12th centuries. The study reflects the following aspects: how the iconography and typology of the image of Kay Kavus on Garuda was formed, with what plots his image was most often associated in works of art, and how this oriental plot, modified over the centuries, was organically synthesized with Christian works of art in relation to works of secular use, made in various techniques and materials. A comparative characterization of the iconography of the items in question is given separately, considering the attribution and places of creation of the works of art.*

Keywords: iconography, Byzantine Empire, Islamic East, Iran, Caucasus, decorative and applied art, courtly art

Introduction

The depiction of Kay Kavus on the Garuda is one of the most unique and less-studied subjects in the context of the influence of West Asia and the Islamic East on the art of the Byzantine Empire. In Iranian tradition and mythology, Kay Kavus was one of the legendary kings of Iran, as mentioned in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, the Book of Kings. In this epic, he appears as the personification of the thirst for power, domination, and pride. According to this poetic source, Kay Kavus sought to ascend to heaven with the help of the fantastic bird Garuda, a powerful mythological creature. Hence, in this article, we will try to solve the following issues: (1) to consider, according to the chronology, the earliest artworks in which the use of the still unformed iconography of this plot can be traced; (2) to identify which plots were grouped with the image of Kay Kavus on Garuda. In order to solve these tasks, it is proposed to consider the works presented in the collections of the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest, the Dumbarton Oaks Collection,

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the Shuryshkar Regional Historical Museum Complex in Muzhi, the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, the Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck, the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya and the mural paintings of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo, Italy.

Research Methodology

This study is based on the analysis and attribution of the selected works of art reviewed in the scientific periodicals of Byzantine scholars, as well as in research presented in their articles at the Symposium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in the early 2000's. In parallel with the geographical and geopolitical factors that shaped the territory of the Byzantine Empire, the attribution of specific artworks to locations and places of creation from the state museum collections identified in the study is also considered. It should be emphasized that in the study of the achievements of Greek masters who worked in the Byzantine Empire, spreading their skills in the Balkans and then in the territory of Kyivan Rus, researchers paid less attention to the study of the influence of Islamic art on the development and adaptation of the iconography of early Christian subjects, which primarily took as models the examples of late antiquity, which for a long time was confidently held in various forms of art (monumental painting, jewelry, and even illuminations of the manuscripts¹).

Thus, the study will use the following methods, such as cultural and art historical methods, which allowed us, when analyzing the works, to see the internal cultural relations between countries and individual territories of the Byzantine Empire, West Asia, namely the Caucasus and the Islamic East. The hermeneutic method was used to interpret the plot and analyze works of art, considering a certain period, region, stylistic trends, and traditions within which the monuments were created to determine their distinctive features in different countries. The semiotic method was used to distinguish between the symbols found in the works in question and to study them. The historical and genetic methods allowed us to consistently research how the origin and development of the iconographic traditions of the image of Kay Kavus on Garuda took place in the context of its sources of inspiration. The historical-comparative method was used to compare the iconography of the monuments, researching the features of the Greek and Eastern traditions, and their interaction in the example of comparing the plot with the image of the Ascension of Alexander the Great, a plot that was widespread not only in the decorative arts of the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic East, but also in the monumental decorations of architecture in European countries. The historical

¹Dmytrenko N., *Differences in the Iconography of the Plot 'The Last Supper' in the Illuminations of the Gospels and Psalters of the 10th – 14th centuries Created in the Byzantine Empire*. Anastasis. Research in Medieval Culture and Art. Iași: The Research Center of Medieval Art « Vasile Drăguț ». 2021. pp. 102–104.

and cultural method was applied to the study of periods according to historical factors and how the Byzantine Empire changed under the influence of the various ethnic groups to its territory, which later became one of the main explanations for the changes in the historical and cultural contexts in which jewelry makers worked. The cross-cultural method contributed to the study of intercultural relations between countries that were part of the Byzantine Empire or were influenced by it. The typological method allowed us to study the monuments by identifying specific samples according to materials and place of execution. The formal and stylistic method was used to describe and analyze the artistic features of the works depending on their purpose. The method of iconographic analysis was chosen to study the plot and figurative component, as well as to identify the solution of individual images for their representation. The method of art historical analysis helped to identify various key aspects of the study, to consider the formation of iconography, semantics, and stylistics of the plot of Kay Kavus on Garuda and the Ascension of Alexander the Great as a holistic phenomenon, taking into account the location of the monuments, the influence of socio-cultural, religious, and political factors².

Among the surviving works, special attention should be paid to a golden jug made in the techniques of embossing, minting, and engraving, dated to ca. 500–700 from the Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós (collection of the Museum of Art History in Vienna; a copy is kept in the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest) (**Fig. 1**). This hoard, although it belongs to the outstanding examples of late Avar culture, namely the period of the decline of the Avar Khaganate in the late eighth century, attracts attention for its early iconography. It is advisable to compare it in the context of typology with works belonging to the Byzantine and West Asian heritage. It shows a unique early iconography that had no analogs in art until the fifteenth century.

²Evans H. C., *The Final Flowering of the Byzantine World*. The Arts of Byzantium. New the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2001. Vol. 58, № 4. p. 68.



Fig. 1. Kay Kavus on Garuda. Jug. Late Avar culture. ca. 500–700 AD.
Gold, minting, embossing, engraving. Budapest, Hungarian National Museum.
Photo: N. Dmytrenko, 2016

Thus, in the example of the artwork mentioned above, one can see the following, earlier version of the iconography: on the surface of the jug, the chasing technique is used to emboss the figure of a man on the body of a huge fantastical bird, to whom he holds a small bowl in one hand, and a stylized plant resembling a branch with leaves in the other. The characters are depicted against the background of stylized sprouts. The composition of the plot is enclosed in a circle, around which the floral ornament is repeated. The main character is presented in a complex angle, facing the bird.

The story of the ascension of Kay Kavus was also depicted on Iranian silk fabrics of the 11th and 12th centuries, which contained inscriptions in Arabic and Old Arabic (**Fig. 2**). Let us consider this exceptional example of decorative and applied art in detail. In the center of the composition is the protagonist holding on to the ropes on the body of a huge bird, which occupies most of the composition. In this image, a smaller version of two paired griffins placed on the upper part of the wings of a fantastic animal, which is characterized by active detailing in the form of feathers on the wings and a wide tail, is added. In the lower part, there are winged animals

resembling lionesses facing the center. The composition is characterized by symmetry, the use of active ornamentation, and detail. This iconography represented on the fabric indicates a very important transitional stage in the comprehension of the plot. It is one of the first artworks that gives grounds to see how paradoxically griffins joined the plot in the Eastern tradition.



Fig. 2. Kay Kavus on Garuda. Iran, 11th Century. Saljuq Silk from the Naqqārakāna of Ray. Dumbarton Oaks Collection, acc. no. 30.1. *Photo:*

[https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abrisam-silk-index#prettyPhoto\[sidebar\]/6/](https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abrisam-silk-index#prettyPhoto[sidebar]/6/)

It is necessary to consider the inscription in Arabic at the top of the fabric, which has not been translated before. The upper part of the fabric has the same inscription, which is repeated twice in the mirror image. Thus, after our translation from Arabic, we learned that the inscription reads: “Al-Hassan” – the eldest grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. The inscription on the lower part of the cloth is in an ancient language, so the translation of this part remains unknown and requires the intervention of an experienced expert who could make it. The inscription in the upper part of the cloth emphasizes the mythologized exaltation of the prophets. It is worth noting that, in

addition to fabrics, the plot was also widespread on Iranian bowls of the 10th century, as evidenced by an exhibit from the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

To compare the iconography, the works of Byzantine heritage from the State Hermitage collection are of particular interest. The first exhibit is a 12th century silver bowl made in the technique of chasing, engraving, and gilding, 9.5 cm high. It entered the State Hermitage collection in 1885 from the collection of A. P. Bazylevsky. It depicts two scenes: The Ascension of Alexander the Great and Kay Kavus on Garuda. The first surviving fragment of this scene is a frontal image of Alexander the Great in a solemn loros with a central vertical fabric insert with diamond-shaped elements (**Fig. 3**).



Fig. 3. Ascension of Alexander the Great. Bowl. Byzantium. The Caucasus (?) 12th century. Silver, chased, engraved, gilded. Height – 9.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum. Fragment. *Photo: P. Darkevych*

His hands holding the scepters are bent at the elbows and raised. The lower part of the plot is lost. At first glance, different subjects are used in the same work, but they are united by the idea of ascension, although with different semantic meanings. The historical figure of Alexander the Great,

according to the events described in Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexandria*, was perceived in Byzantium as an image that was equated with Jesus Christ and the idea of the Resurrection, exalting a historical figure who, even for the conquered nations, was perceived not as hostile but as majestic and heroic. Instead, the flight of Kay Kavus on Garuda conveys the opposite meaning: the emphasis shifts to the punishment for the excessive thirst for power of the historical character. Let's examine the iconography used by the jeweler in this piece, as it is presented with certain modifications. On the bowl, Kay Kavus is depicted riding a bird. He holds the bird's neck with his left hand and majestically raises a long scepter in his right. The figure is dressed in an exquisite *loros* and wears a headdress (**Fig. 4**).



Fig. 4. Kay Kavus on Garuda. Bowl. Byzantium. The Caucasus (?) 12th century. Silver, chased, engraved, gilded. Height – 9.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum. Fragment. *Photo: P. Darkevych*

This version of the iconography omits the mythological element of the plot, and instead, secular features and motifs begin to appear in the image. These two subjects in the above-mentioned exhibit are complemented by the

image of The Fighting of the Lion, which once again emphasizes the secular nature of the artwork. The origin of the bowl is still unknown. The work is generally considered Byzantine, although, in the studies of art historians of the first half of the twentieth century, it was suggested that it could have been made in the Caucasus. It is worth noting that this assumption is quite likely, as the Caucasus was under the influence of Byzantium due to the following historical and geopolitical factors. The Western Caucasus was under the protectorate of the Byzantine Empire, as the latter was fighting both the Khazars and Persia for these territories. Similarly, Byzantium and Persia fought for the western part of the Caucasus, which fell to the Arabs at the end of the seventh century.

The next extremely important factor is that the *Shahnameh*, or the Book of Kings as it is called, as a monument of Persian-Tajik literature, had an impact on the culture of the Caucasus, namely on Georgian literature, which traces the influence of Iranian epics. Moreover, the *Shahnameh* traces vectors like mythological, heroic, and historical. It is worth noting that the use of both plots in one artwork, namely Kay Kavus on Garuda and The Ascension of Alexander the Great is not accidental, since it is the figure of Alexander the Great that is mentioned in *Shahnameh*. As you know, in the Persian tradition, Macedonian is known as Dhu al-Qarnayn, which means “The Owner of Two Horns”. This explains the image of the conqueror on minted coins wearing a helmet with horns. In *Shahnameh* his image is based not only on Greek or Macedonian sources but also on Islamic and Iranian legends, focusing on his travels, exalting the figure of a wise king and conqueror who sought the source of immortality³.

In the context of historical aspects, it will be interesting to explore the following exhibit – a silver plate from the collection of Shuryshkar Regional Historical Museum Complex in Muzhi (OF 798). In 2003, the exhibit was transferred to the collection of the State Hermitage Museum (Inv. № W–1501) in St. Petersburg, where it is kept to this day (**Fig. 5**).

³Maguire H., *Images of the Court*. The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A. D. 843–1261. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (ed.). New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997. pp. 183–187.



Fig. 5. Ascension of Alexander the Great. Plate. Crusader, about 1208–1216. Silver with a repoussé medallion and engravings. Diameter – 28 cm, height – 3,3 cm.

Shuryshkar Regional Historical Museum Complex, Muzhi (a branch of the Yamalo-Nenetz District Museum, Salekhard), Siberia (OF 798). Inv. W–1501, Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage. *Photo: State Hermitage*

<https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/digital-collection/43743?lng=ru>

Previously, this exhibit was studied in detail by T. Steppan in the thorough article “The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the Middle Byzantine Period and the Relation to the Islamic East” in the context of comparing two decorative bowls depicting the Ascension of Alexander the Great. Dating from ca. 1208–1216, it was made using the technique of chasing and engraving, with a diameter of 28 cm, and preserved the Ascension of Alexander the Great in the central relief part of the artwork. Alexander the

Great is depicted in the center, seated on a carved throne. He is dressed in imperial clothes with a rounded fibula holding his cloak on his chest. A crown is placed on his head. He looks formidable, and his face is covered with a beard. In his hands, he holds baits that resemble wands, to which griffins symmetrically placed on both sides are facing. On either side of the hero's head there are two small medallions with abbreviated inscriptions in Greek: “Ἀλέξανδρος βασιλεύς”, which means “Alexander. Ruler.”

Turning to the decoration of the overall area of the plate, which is made in the engraving technique, we can trace the image of Kay Kavus on Garuda in one of the medallions, which was not previously noted or identified by T. Steppan in his research. The hero is depicted as a young man with his arms raised, holding a rounded object in his left hand, probably a bird bait. The latter, in turn, is represented with massive paws and claws, as if holding on to the ornamental conditional field of the artwork. It is important to note and emphasize the presence of dynamics in the decoration of the item, namely, the floral ornate elements and sprouts that resemble a vine.

These sprouts form ten decorative medallions, each of which features a character or plot, presented in full-face or frontal view, which creates a fairy-tale world full of secular elements, mythological characters, and historical figures. Secular motifs, such as hunting scenes and floral ornaments, also appear in this work. This exhibit is important for art historical analysis in the context of the synthesis of Byzantine and Oriental art⁴.

An interesting observation is that in T. Steppan research published before in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia*, in article “The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the Middle Byzantine Period and Its Relation to the Islamic East”, he has already addressed this exhibit, mentioning and listing the images in the medallions, although the image of a young man on top of a bird was not mentioned or identified in the list as Kay Kavus on Garuda.

Nevertheless, the most interesting in terms of tracing the iconography is the third image on the silver plate from Muzhi, which represents the hero on a large bird (the upper part, the third medallion) (**Fig. 6**).

⁴Steppan T., *The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the middle Byzantine Period and the Relation to the Islamic East*. Perceptions of Byzantium and its Neighbors (843–1261). New York. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. P. 88



Fig. 6. Kay Kavus on Garuda. Plate. Crusader, about 1208–1216. Silver with a repoussé medallion and engravings. Shuryshkar Regional Historical Museum Complex, Muzhi (a branch of the Yamalo-Nenetz District Museum, Salekhard), Siberia (OF 798). Inv. W–1501, Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage. Fragment.

Photo: T. Steppan

The researcher J. Folda suggests in his article “Crusader Art” that the third medallion depicts an allegory of Jupiter⁵. It is also important that in the analysis of the same plate, art historical studies trace the attribution of the image in the medallion as a “crowned man on the back of an eagle,” which is most likely an astrological personification. When analyzing iconography, researchers noted that since the tenth century, there have been only two versions of the composition “The Ascension of Alexander the Great to Heaven” – on griffins or on huge birds (but in no case on one).

Nevertheless, the question of the identification of the subject can be explained by the following: the Romans revered Jupiter as the patron saint of the power of the emperors, as well as the god of the heavens, which explains the presence of a sphere in his hand. That is why even in the frescoes of Herculaneum or marble statues dating back to the first century, one can see

⁵Folda J., *Crusader Art*. The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A. D. 843–1261 / Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixson (ed.). New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997. P. 399–400.

allegorical images of Jupiter in full-length, with a bird next to him. It is worth noting that this iconography is very different from the image of a hero flying on a bird. It is also worth recalling that a similar iconography of a full-length figure with an eagle can be traced in the image of Ganymede, a character in Greek mythology whose image was often traced in the jewelry of ancient Greece of the 3rd century BC, the decoration of bronze mirrors of the 2nd – 4th century BC, and mosaic decorations of the 2nd century AD. A striking example of the latter is illustrated by the perfectly preserved mosaics of the House of Dionysus in the Paphos Archaeological Park in Cyprus (**Fig. 7**).



Fig. 7. Ganymede Abducted by the Eagle. House of Dionysus. 2nd century. Mosaic. Paphos Archaeological Park. Paphos, Cyprus. *Photo: N. Dmytrenko, March 2018*

Without sharing the opinion of researchers regarding the previous attributions of the image of a male figure riding a bird in the medallion, we can assume that the image of the hero on a bird on the surface of the plate is the same image of Kay Kavus on Garuda (as on the previous bowl from the State Hermitage Collection), which was created using earlier iconography, but with secular features, which was not mentioned by researchers in the above sources on the research of images in medallions.

The last two artworks under consideration give grounds to assert with confidence that the simultaneous use of the image of the Ascension of Alexander the Great and Kay Kavus on Garuda indicates that the iconography of both subjects had not yet been fully developed at this time of creation and that Eastern traditions of depicting the plot not only coexisted

simultaneously with artworks of Byzantine origin, but also continued to be actively used by jewelers until the thirteenth century⁶.

In addition, the researcher T. Stepan actually claims that the last plates depicting dancers on the crown of Constantine IX Monomachos⁷ were taken from a Sassanian bowl from the collection of the State Tyrolean Museum in Innsbruck, which indicates that Persian products as sources of iconography were actively used in Byzantine art since such decorated bowls preserve the traditions of the far East⁸.

Dwelling on the exhibit from the Tyrolean Museum, it is worth noting that this artwork dates back from the period 1114–1144, according to an inscription in Arabic placed around the item on the front side, thus indicating the owner of the bowl. Namely, the Artukid emir Rukh ad-Daula Abu Sulayman Daud, whose years of rule in the eastern Anatolian cities of Hisn Kayfa and Khartpert fall within this period⁹. The inscription around the outer surface is in Persian and has not yet been translated (**Fig. 8**).



Fig. 8. Artukid Bowl (obverse and reverse). Byzantine (?). 1114–1144. Cloisonné enamel on copper, with gilded partitions: Diameter, 27 cm; height, 5 cm. Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck. Photo: <https://beyondborders-medievalblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-artuqid-plate.html>

⁶Settis-Frugoni C., *Historia Alexandri elevati per griphos ad aerem: origine, iconografia e fortuna di un tema*. Studi Storico. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1973. P. 358–360.

⁷Kiss E., *The State of Research on the Monomachos Crown and Some Further Thoughts*. Perceptions of Byzantium and its Neighbors (843–1261). New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. P. 60–76.

⁸Stepan T., *The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the middle Byzantine Period and the Relation to the Islamic East*. Perceptions of Byzantium and its Neighbors (843–1261). New York. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. P. 84–97.

⁹Stepan T., *The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the middle Byzantine Period and the Relation to the Islamic East*. Perceptions of Byzantium and its Neighbors (843–1261). New York. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. P. 84–86.

On the front of the bowl, in the central medallion, there is an image of the Ascension of Alexander the Great. According to the established iconography, which was already formed in the twelfth century, when this plot was most frequently used and disseminated, the main character is placed in a chariot, just as on the marble decoration of the northern facade of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice¹⁰. This indicates that the artworks belonging to the Arab and Sassanian cultural heritage that accompany the depiction of the hero's fantastic flight as a personification of glorification were synthesized with the plots that were actively used in the jewelry art of the Byzantine Empire and were used in the court of the rulers of Anatolia. The central image is complemented by six medallions on the front and back sides, between which there are additional compositions depicting dancers, which set the dynamics of the image and create an organic artistic ensemble. The bowl features images of peacocks, lions, palm trees, acrobats and musicians, and court dancers, which are also often seen in works of Byzantine heritage, as exemplified by the decorative arts of both courtly and secular art of the 12th century book miniature. Blue, turquoise, green, white, and yellow pigments dominate among the enamel colors¹¹.

After examining the two previous artworks, their decorative setting, and the study of the iconography used, it is worth noting that similar motifs, ornamentation with zoomorphic elements, and human figures were also widespread in 13th century, as evidenced by the gemellions from the collection of the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. We propose to consider several of these pieces of art. Particular attention is drawn to another gemellion dating from the 13th century from the collection mentioned above, made in the enamel workshops of Limoges (**Fig. 9**).

¹⁰Bettini S., *Venice, the Pala d' Oro, and Constantinople*. The Treasury of San Marco. Venice. Milan: Olivetti, 1985. pp. 51–74.

¹¹Anderson J. C., *Manuscripts*. The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A. D. 843–1261. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (ed.). New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997. pp. 82–88.



Fig. 9. Gemellion. Precious metals, copper engraving, Limoges enamel. 13th century. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. *Photo: perlesmedievales*
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFbS8W1oYYS/?igsh=OHBmYjF3ZG1hY2lk>

Having examined it in more detail, first of all, we should highlight a similar composition and artistic decoration that were used in the previously discussed plate from Muzhi. In this case, it is a central medallion depicting a knight, from which six round petals extend in a circle, overlapping each other. Each of these images contains anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images of men and animals that resemble birds and lions. Between these elements are stylized plant elements in the form of shoots. The central medallion features two full-length figures. The perimeter of the gemellion is generously covered with a wavy ornament.

The next piece from the same collection is the gemellion, made of precious metals and champlevé enamel which dates back to the 13th century. It was acquired by the museum in 1907 and shows a similar design to the previously examined piece (**Fig. 10**). It has a central medallion and six rounded decorative elements around it. The surface of the work is generously covered with decorative elements in the form of plants, and an ornament with triangular elements stretches along the edge. Despite the state of preservation of the artwork, it is possible to identify some images. For instance, in the center you can trace a figure taming a mythical creature. The medallions around it contain male figures with animals, and several medallions make it difficult to identify the image due to the poor state of preservation of the surface¹².

¹²Grabar O., *The Crusades and the Development of Islamic Art*. The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World, Dumbarton Oaks. 2001. pp. 235–245.

Thus, even though the museum exhibits in question from the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya are of European origin, it is safe to assume that the influence of oriental motifs was actively eradicated even in the courtly Romanesque art of the 13th century. By borrowing certain artistic elements, details, and patterns of arrangement from artworks of Byzantine and Oriental origin, enamellers and jewelers who used to work in Europe were also able to use such samples in their practice, synthesizing them to suit local court orders¹³.



Fig. 10. Gemellion. Precious metals, champlevé enamel. 13th century. Inventory number: 012102-000. Photo: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya
<https://www.museunacional.cat/en/colleccio/gemellion-washbasin/anonymous/012102-000-0>

It is worth noting that the spread of the plot of the ascension of Kay Kavus on Garuda can also be traced in the European tradition, in particular on a bronze plate from the Ivrean Cathedral casket (Turin province, 12th century), on frescoes of the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo (12th century). In the latter case, the composition is complemented by a scene of the Deisis praying in the upper part, although sometimes in the literature this work is identified as a depiction of the Ascension of Alexander the Great, due to the presence of a halo on the main character and the Deisis (**Fig. 11**).

¹³Redford S., *The Innsbruck Plate and its Setting*. Muqarnas. Leiden, 1990. № 7. pp. 119 – 135.



Fig. 11. Kay Kavus on Garuda (?). 12th century. Fresco. Palatine Chapel, Palermo.

Photo:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fe/Arabischer_Maler_der_Palastkapelle_in_Palermo_001.jpg

In the latter case, early iconography was used, depicting a full-length hero. Nevertheless, the frescoes on the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo are quite rare from the point of view of returning to the iconography and traditions of the past centuries. Dating back to the 12th century, the fresco preserves a fantastic plot in an interpretation that is familiar to us from the Iranian bowl and Iranian silk fabric which have already been examined, dating from the 10th and 11th–12th centuries, respectively, repeating the composition in which the main character is placed on the body of a fantastic bird, to which the ropes holding the hero are stretched. Just as in the fabric mentioned above, the composition is flanked by two fantastic animals on either side of the bird's long tail. In addition to the halo around the hero's head, which is almost not traced in iconography, the composition includes images of two bust figures with halos that resemble the composition of prayer – Deisis.

Conclusion

Thus, the image of Kay Kavus on Garuda, occupying an important place in the mythology and decorative arts of West Asia and the East, was further developed in Byzantine jewelry and decorative arts among jewelers. In this context, it was synthesized with the ancient images described in Greek epics, and at the same time opposed to them, acquiring a new semantic meaning. Thereby, the Kay Kavus on the Garuda was simultaneously depicted with such a plot as the Ascension of Alexander the Great to heaven, being traced in art pieces that were created by Byzantine court jewelers, Caucasian craftsmen, or commissioned for rulers as pieces of courtly consumption.

The plot, which at first glance seems quite controversial, was in demand among court enamel artists who combined it with the depiction of mythological, secular scenes, and even scenes that later became crucial part of the classical heritage of Christian sacred art of Byzantine heritage.

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1 Kay Kavus on Garuda. Jug. Late Avar culture. ca. 500–700 AD. Gold, minting, embossing, engraving. Budapest, Hungarian National Museum. *Photo: N. Dmytrenko, 2016*

Fig. 2 Kay Kavus on Garuda. Iran, 11th Century. Saljuq Silk from the Naqqārahāna of Ray. Dumbarton Oaks Collection, acc. no. 30.1. *Photo: [https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abrisam-silk-index#prettyPhoto\[sidebar\]/6/](https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abrisam-silk-index#prettyPhoto[sidebar]/6/)*

Fig. 3 Ascension of Alexander the Great. Bowl. Byzantium. The Caucasus (?) 12th century. Silver, chased, engraved, gilded. Height – 9.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum. Fragment. *Photo: P. Darkevych*

Fig. 4 Kay Kavus on Garuda. Bowl. Byzantium. Caucasus (?) 12th century. Silver, chased, engraved, gilded. Height – 9.5 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum. Fragment. *Photo: P. Darkevych*

Fig. 5 Ascension of Alexander the Great. Plate. Crusader, about 1208–1216. Silver with a repoussé medallion and engravings. Diameter – 28 cm, height – 3,3 cm. Shuryshkar Regional Historical Museum Complex, Muzhi (a branch of the Yamalo-Nenets District Museum, Salekhard), Siberia (OF 798). Inv. W-1501, Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage. *Photo: [State Hermitage https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/digital-collection/43743?lng=ru](https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/digital-collection/43743?lng=ru)*

Fig. 6 Kay Kavus on Garuda. Plate. Crusader, about 1208–1216. Silver with a repoussé medallion and engravings. Shuryshkar Regional Historical Museum Complex, Muzhi (a branch of the Yamalo-Nenets District Museum, Salekhard), Siberia (OF 798). Inv. W-1501, Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage. Fragment. *Photo: T. Stepan*

Fig. 7 Ganymede Abducted by the Eagle. House of Dionysus. 2nd century. Mosaic. Paphos Archaeological Park. Paphos, Cyprus. *Photo: N. Dmytrenko, March 2018*

Fig. 8 Artukid Bowl (obverse and reverse). Byzantine (?). 1114–1144. Cloisonné enamel on copper, with gilded partitions: Diameter, 27 cm; height, 5 cm. Tiroler

Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck. Photo: <https://beyondborders-medievalblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-artuqid-plate.html>

Fig. 9 Gemellion. Precious metals, copper engraving, Limoges enamel. 13th century. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Photo: *perlesmedievales*

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFbS8W1oYYS/?igsh=OHBmYjF3ZG1hY2lk>

Fig. 10 Gemellion. Precious metals, champlevé enamel. 13th century. Inventory number: 012102-000. Photo: *Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*

<https://www.museunacional.cat/en/colleccio/gemellion-washbasin/anonymous/012102-000-0>

Fig. 11 Kay Kavus on Garuda (?). 12th century. Fresco. Palatine Chapel, Palermo. Photo:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fe/Arabischer_Maler_der_Palastkapelle_in_Palermo_001.jpg

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